

Concealed Carry Weapons

Soon after Missouri became a “Shall Issue” state, I purchased the ideal concealed carry weapon. As you’ll see, I continue to purchase the ideal concealed carry weapon. Here’s a short list of my quest for the perfect carry gun:

Firearm	Purchasing Rationale
Glock 26	Everybody says you need a Glock. No comment regarding its attractiveness.
Walther PPK	I love PPKs. Had it customized with a hand checkered frontstrap, action job and dehorn. Waited three months for a Milt Sparks Versa-Max II IWB (Inside the Waist Band) holster, which is a work of art. It’s a beautiful gun and holster.
1911 Officers Model	Complete custom gun, built on a Caspian titanium frame and stainless steel slide. I added a pair of beautiful double-diamond rosewood grips. Ordered another Versa-Max II holster. A really beautiful gun.
S&W 642	I needed to buy a revolver for my daughter. At the time, handguns were a bit unfamiliar to her so the simplicity of the 642 was very attractive.
NAA Guardian 32	A really small gun will be a great concealed carry weapon. Upgraded by the North American Arms custom shop. A really nice gun.
Seecamp 32	The Seecamp is the “real thing” which was copied by NAA for their Guardian 32. The Seecamp 32 is 2.5 oz. lighter than the Guardian and I had to have one.
S&W 340PD	I decided I needed a light gun in a respectable defensive caliber, such as 357 Magnum. Not wanting to leave well enough alone, I added a pair Eagle Secret Service rosewood grips and had the action completely worked over. I waited twenty weeks for a Milt Sparks pocket holster. After carrying this revolver for a few years, I upgraded it with the addition of Crimson Trace LG-105 laser grips. It’s a really beautiful revolver.
Kahr PM9	Automatics are so modern and the Kahr PM9 might be the best one for concealed carry. It’s small, light, extremely reliable and in 9mm. I had to have one.
Kel-Tec P3-AT	The Kel-Tec 32 ACP and 380 ACP are the lightest pocket automatics available. I went with the 380 ACP. This is a really ugly gun.
Seecamp 380	The Seecamp 380 is identical to the 32, but in a larger caliber, 380 ACP. They are in limited production with a delivery time exceeding one year. Something this hard to get must be really good. I received mine after waiting thirteen months. It’s sort of like the Rolex of pocket automatics.
Ruger LCP	The LCP is quite similar to the Kel-Tec P3-AT, but slightly heavier. It is a very well made pistol and is quite attractive. Mine has slightly customized with a reduced magazine release and the slide has been electroless nickel plated.
Diamondback DB9	The DB9 is the smallest and lightest 9mm pistol on the market today.

After lots of experimentation with various weapons and holsters, I’ve reached a few conclusions and recommendations that I’ll share with you.

Smith & Wesson 642 Airweight

Description: The 642 is the aluminum and stainless steel version of the hammerless S&W Centennial. What the weapon lacks in glamour and coolness, it makes up in simplicity and reliability. If it doesn’t fire, commence



PTA routine (Pull Trigger Again). Semi-automatic pistols, while extremely reliable, do occasionally malfunction, requiring corrective action (TRB – Tap the magazine to firmly seat. Rack the slide to chamber a fresh cartridge. Pull the trigger and it should go Bang.). In forty years of shooting, I've never had a revolver jam. The 642 is also a great value.

Caliber: 38 Special

Capacity: 5 shot

Weight: 16.6 oz., loaded (est.)

MSRP Price*: \$ 449.00

Carry: Holster, pocket or purse. Although not the smallest gun, it is great for pocket carry due to its thinness at the muzzle and rounded grip, resulting in minimal printing (the ability to see the shape of a concealed weapon through clothing). The DeSantis Nemesis is an excellent and economical holster for pocket carry. If you want the best, order a Milt Sparks pocket holster. It features a band of metal around the perimeter that lets you mold the holster to the contour of your thigh. Milt Sparks makes some of the finest holsters in America; normal delivery is about twenty weeks. Buy a DeSantis and wait for the arrival of your Milt Sparks. For traditional belt carry, talk to the people at Milt Sparks. Unfortunately, the 642 is equipped with rubber grips that grab fabric. That's the last thing you want when drawing a weapon from a pocket or from under a cover garment. Order a set of smooth Secret Service grips (no checkering) from Eagle Grips. These grips are thin, fit perfectly and available in a number of materials. Although rather expensive, the ultimate upgrade are Crimson Trace LG-105 laser grips. Place the laser dot on the target and pull the trigger.

Negatives: Long and heavy trigger pull. Standard sights are difficult to see and use. Reloads are slower than with a semi-automatic pistol.

Smith & Wesson 340PD Airlite

Description: The 340PD is the scandium and titanium version of the S&W Centennial and is chambered for the 357 Magnum. Basically, it's the same design as the S&W 642, but much lighter and more powerful. The very low weight and powerful caliber results in the 340PD boasting the highest power to weight ratio of any weapon on the market. Many of the advantages of this weapon are listed above, in the description of the S&W 642. When first picked up, most people are shocked at the revolver's light weight. While dimensionally the same as the Smith & Wesson 642, the 340PD is 3 oz. lighter. 3 oz. is the weight of 12 Quarters. Due to its light weight, the 342PD is perfect for pocket carry. The 340PD is available with either a red ramp or fiber optic front sight. The 340PD with Crimson Trace LG-105 laser grips is the ultimate personal defense, "no-compromise," weapon.



Caliber: 357 Magnum

Capacity: 5 shot

Weight: 13.6 oz., loaded

MSRP Price*: \$ 1,019.00

Carry: See above under S&W 642 listing. Same advantages plus very low weight and the ability to use the far more powerful 357 Magnum cartridge (38 Specials can also be fired in the 340PD).

Negatives: Long heavy trigger pull. Substantial recoil. Keep in mind that defensive handguns are carried a lot but seldom fired. Reloads are slower than with a semi-automatic pistol.

Glock

Description: With the introduction of the full-size Glock 17, the modern handgun was redefined with Glock's use of polymer as a material for firearms construction, resulting in lighter handguns. Now, most manufacturers offer weapons with polymer frames. Since then, Glock has introduced reduced sized "Compact" models and even smaller "Mini Glocks." Glocks are, without a doubt, outstanding weapons. Due to the double stack design of their magazines, they are rather thick. Glocks are extremely reliable and simple to operate and are available in a wide range of calibers. Glocks are available with standard, adjustable or night sights that glow in the dark. All Glock sights are excellent and work very well. For concealed carry, standard or night sights are preferable.



Caliber: 9mm, 40 S&W, 45 GAP, 45 ACP, 357 SIG. For concealed carry, 9mm and 40 S&W are the most popular.

Capacity: Varies, depending on caliber and model. The Glock 26 "Mini" in 9mm has a capacity of 10+1.

Weight: 26.6 oz. (Glock 26)

MSRP Price*: \$641.00 (Standard sights); \$669.00 (Night sights)

Carry: Holster or purse. Due to their thickness and weight, Glocks are not well suited for pocket carry. Kydex belt and IWB holsters work very well. Milt Sparks has many outstanding leather holsters for all Glock pistols.

Negatives: Notwithstanding what some experts say, an automatic is more complicated and less reliable than a revolver. TRB (Tap, Rack, Bang) is more complicated than PTA (Pull Trigger Again). Glocks are thick and heavy (even the G26 or G27), making them impractical for comfortable pocket carry.

Kahr PM9 and PM40

Description: Kahr makes some of the finest concealed carry semi-automatic pistols available. The PM9 (9mm) and PM40 (40 S&W) are single stack designs which make them thinner than double-stack configurations, such as the Glock 26 or 27, making the Kahrs ideal for IWB holsters. Compared to the Mini Glocks, the PMs are smaller, thinner and lighter. The pistols can be configured with standard or night sights, either of which are excellent. The Kahr PM pistols are outstanding choices for concealed carry.



Caliber: 9mm or 40 S&W

Capacity: PM9 6+1, PM40 5+1.

Weight: 19.4 oz. (PM9)

MSRP Price*: \$786.00 to \$957.00 (Depending upon slide finish and sights)

Carry: Holster or purse. Due to its blocky design, the PMs are not the best choice for pocket carry. Because they are so thin, the pistols are perfect for IWB holsters, such as the Comp-Tac Infidel.

Negatives: Lower maximum capacity due to single-stack design. Expensive. See notes in Glock section regarding semi-automatic reliability.

Random Thoughts and Personal Opinions

DAO

All of the above firearms have DAO (Double Action Only) actions. This means that they have long and rather heavy trigger pulls that minimize the chance of accidentally pulling the trigger.

22 Magnum and 25 ACP

I don't recommend defensive pistols in either of these two calibers. Both use small bullets and do not provide sufficient energy to be effective.

32 ACP

In recent years, the 32 ACP has enjoyed a renewed popularity due to the greatly increased sales of small pocket semi-automatic pistols, such as the Seecamp and Guardian. The 32 ACP is, by no means, a powerful cartridge, and should be considered a marginal choice. If, due to clothing and lifestyle issues, you are unable to carry a larger weapon in a more effective caliber, a quality 32 ACP might be a reasonable alternative. A 32 ACP in your pocket is better than a 9mm at home. Also, bullet placement is what's most important. A 32 ACP bullet in the chest is more effective than a 357 Magnum bullet in the hand. For decades, the 32 ACP was widely used by European police. World War I was started with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand with a 32 ACP FN Model 1910. Adolph Hitler committed suicide with a 32 ACP Walther PPK. Obviously, the 32 ACP is lethal.

380 ACP

Many of the same pistols chambered for 32 ACP are also available in the more effective 380 ACP. The 380 ACP uses a larger and heavier bullet than the 32 ACP and is a better choice for a defensive pistol.

Kel-Tec Pistols

Kel-Tec makes small pocket pistols in 32 ACP and 380 ACP. Due to their small size and polymer frames, these guns are very light and compact, making them a popular choice for concealed carry. They are also very affordable.

Ruger LCP

Basically, Ruger copied very popular Kel-Tec P3-AT (380 ACP), extensively refining the design. Their efforts resulted in a well-designed and highly refined pocket pistol.

Seecamp

Seecamp pistols are very small and are available in both 32 ACP and 380 ACP. These pistols are handmade with limited availability (delivery on the 380 ACP is approximately one year). The Seecamp could be described as the Rolex of pocket pistols. Due to their small size, they are difficult to shoot and easy to conceal. Due to its all steel construction, the Seecamp pistols are heavy for their size.

Diamondback DB9

The DB9 is the smallest and lightest 9mm semi-automatic on the market. Let me stress one point...the DB 9 is not a pistol for everyone. The combination of a serious caliber/cartridge, low pistol weight and small size results in a pistol that makes certain demands on the shooter. The pistol requires a firm and solid grip. It also requires what I refer to as, "Enough man behind the pistol." Let me clarify that last

point: On a number of occasions, I've seen semi-automatic pistol malfunctions with shooters of small stature. No matter how firmly they grip the pistol, their size/weight does not provide sufficient mass for the pistol to function properly. The most often experienced issues (failure to feed, failure to extract, stovepipe jams, etc.) can be a serious problem. The DB9 is small and light enough for easy pocket carry. Also, the sights are better than most found on small pistols. The DB9 can also be a bit picky when it comes to ammunition selection. Following Diamondback's recommendation, I only use Hornady Critical Defense, which functions flawlessly. It's a bit of a beast to shoot.

North American Arms Guardian

The NAA Guardian 32 is very similar to the Seecamp 32 ACP. The pistol is slightly larger and heavier than the Seecamp, making it a bit easier to shoot.

Sights

Pistol sights are typically configured with a post front sight and a notch rear sight. They are available with many variations, including night sights that glow in the dark. With any configuration, it's necessary to line up the sights and maintain the alignment while aiming the gun at the target. It takes a lot of practice to accurately shoot a handgun. An alternative is a laser sight, such as those made by Crimson Trace. With laser sights, a red laser beam is projected from the gun to the target. Place the red dot on your target and shoot. You don't have to align the sights or even have the gun directly in front of your eye. Just place the glowing red dot where you want the bullet to go. Quality laser sights are expensive but are an outstanding upgrade to any defensive weapon.

Compromise / No-Compromise Weapons

Almost all of the small pocket automatics (Seecamp, Guardian, Kel-Tec, Ruger LCP etc.) are compromises. They provide high concealability but reduced power and effective range. Some of these pistols don't even have sights. No-Compromise weapons are chambered for higher powered cartridges and have good sights. With practice, they have an effective range of 25 yards and beyond. The Smith & Wesson 642 and 340PD, in addition to the Kahr PM9 (or 40 S&W PM40), the Glock pistols are "No-Compromise" weapons. Unfortunately, these handguns are not practical for pocket carry but are ideal when you can use a belt holster. The small pocket automatics, on the other hand, are ideal for pocket carry. Recently, Diamondback Firearms introduced the DB9, a 9mm pistol that is small and light enough for pocket carry.

What Do I Carry?

My normal, weekday attire is business casual; i.e., dress trousers and a cotton dress shirt. I will typically carry a Diamondback DB9 in a custom pocket holster. If I'm wearing a jacket, I'll carry either a Smith & Wesson 340PD or a Kahr PM9. Both are carried in custom belt holsters.

*The firearms business is highly competitive and the street selling pricing is typically far below the MSRP (Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price). Shop around for the best price.