

2019 GUIDE TO TRAVEL LENSES: HOW TO CHOOSE, PLUS NEW PRIME & ZOOM OPTIONS

Digital Photo

GUIDE TO TRAVEL PHOTOS

NIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY
SHEDDING LIGHT ON A CHALLENGING GENRE

PHOTOGRAPHING JORDAN

In The Footsteps Of Lawrence Of Arabia

TRAVEL TOOLKIT

Discover The Best Gear

GREAT LIVE MUSIC PHOTOS

Improve On-Location Shots Of Performers

DPMAG.COM

\$6.99US \$7.99CAN



SUMMER 2019

Display until 9/10/19

/// EQUIPMENT ///

So many of today's digital cameras have truly impressive sensors that can capture a wide dynamic range. This allows me to pull more highlight and shadow detail out of a single exposure than ever before.



TRAVEL TOOLKIT

IF YOU'RE TRAVELING AND WANT TO PHOTOGRAPH YOUR
ADVENTURE LIKE A PRO, DISCOVER THE TOOLS YOU NEED TO
MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR TRIP

TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN MATIASH



I love the agility that small prime lenses afford me. I can get in tight without drawing my subject away from their normal activities.

As a pro photographer, I've obviously done more than my share of travel photography. But one thing I've noticed in my personal experiences as well as those from other travel shooters: The genre of travel photography is so broad and expansive that it's almost impossible to make recommendations without first learning more about the intent of the photographer who is traveling. In other words, what travel photography means to me may be very different from what it means to you.

But it's not just about individual tastes and needs. Broadly speaking, the destinations I visit during my travels often dictate the type of photography I need to prep for: mentally, physically and logistically.

In my experience as a travel photographer, I can lump my intent into two primary buckets: journalistic and landscape (or nature) photography. Sometimes the destination is the first decision made, which usually dictates which bucket I should plan for. Other times, I decide that I want to focus on a particular bucket and choose a destination that is best suited for it.

For example, I know that when I visit Nicaragua or Cuba, I'm going to be in more of a journalistic mode, focusing on documenting the countries' denizens, their culture and their general way of life. This style of photography comes with its own host of requirements. I tend to appreciate smaller, faster prime lenses on these types of trips. I also pack lighter, and my tripod and filters are usually afterthoughts because they are counterproductive to my mission. On these shoots, the name of the game is being nimble, agile and inconspicuous.

But when it comes to travel photography that focuses on landscape shooting, I have an entirely different approach in how and what I prepare. Everything—from the time I begin to when I'm calling it a day—is different. And that translates into what I'm bringing with me. For example, my bag is also much heavier in these instances because I tend to favor the larger and heavier zoom lenses. And that's because I rely on the convenience of using these bulkier zooms.

I also need a sturdy tripod, at least one filter system and a second camera body. And when I'm in a natural location, for the most part, the last thing I worry about is being inconspicuous.

THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE

While you can clearly delineate between the specific gear I use based on my intent



While the gear I typically pack on a landscape travel shoot is quite heavy, it is totally worth it to have the creative flexibility that heavier zoom lenses, tripods and filters offer.

or destination for travel photography, the overarching gear categories are the same. I always need a camera body, some lenses and a variety of accessories. While I'm going to share my rationale for the gear I use with journalistic and landscape travel photography, you can easily co-opt these recommendations for virtually any type of intent.

THE CAMERA BODY: We really do live in a wonderful time, especially for photography. Digital cameras have matured at such an aggressive pace, and each new camera model, or iteration, that manufacturers release further pushes the envelope in terms of capabilities. And what's even better is that these innovations aren't tied to just one company. Canon, Nikon, Sony, Fujifilm, Panasonic, Olympus, Leica and the

rest have all thrown and answered each other's gauntlets by releasing some truly impressive cameras. All of this is to say that regardless of which brand you identify with for your camera needs, you likely have some pretty great options available.

In my case, I made the switch from Canon to Sony many years ago, when the first-generation full-frame mirrorless camera system, the a7, was released, and I've been with them since. As you could also imagine, I'm a big fan of mirrorless camera systems, especially now that all of the major players have released versions for themselves.

As I mentioned earlier, my needs for the camera vary based on the intent of my shoot. If I'm on a street or journalistic shoot, my top two priorities are blazing-fast autofocus (when I'm using a lens that supports AF) and a deep buffer.

One of the caveats of being inconspicuous is that people will go about their day at whichever pace they choose. The camera has to be able to match that pace by quickly and accurately locking focus and giving you enough of a buffer to rifle off the number of frames needed to get that ideal moment.

With landscape shoots, I'm not nearly as concerned about AF speeds or the camera's buffer because I almost always manually focus, and I tend to shoot more methodically. For these shoots, I prioritize sensor size and video capabilities over anything else.

Having a large sensor gives me the flexibility to crop, even aggressively, and not worry about losing critical sharpness or resolution. I also spend a lot of time recording video clips that I contribute to my stock agency, and the cleaner the footage, the better. Ideally, I prefer a camera that allows me to record 4K-resolution video clips at 24- and 60-frames per second.



Zoom lenses play a very important role when I travel for landscape work. A big part of that is because I won't know if, or when, I would return to a particular location, and I want to make sure that I can compose my photos as effectively, and conveniently, as possible.

CAMERA BODY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Sony a7 III - \$1,999

Pound-for-pound, the Sony a7 III is one of the most capable full-frame mirrorless cameras on the market today. It offers features for virtually every type of photographer and truly is a jack of all trades. I've used this camera on both journalistic and landscape travel shoots and have not regretted it once.

- Fujifilm X-T3 - \$1,499

Cropped-sensor mirrorless cameras have also seen an explosion in performance and functionality. One company that has redefined this is Fujifilm, and its X-T3 body is a wonderful example of how you can pack a ton of power and thoughtful features in a svelte body. If I was a Fujifilm shooter, this would be the camera I'd use.

THE CAMERA LENSES:

Like camera bodies, manufacturers have

been releasing very impressive lenses that span speed, focal length and price. There are plenty of compelling lenses that won't break the bank and won't require you to sacrifice in optical quality.

Generally, your hierarchy of needs related to lens choice falls into three categories:

1. The maximum, or widest, aperture
2. The focal length, or range
3. The size and weight

Once you determine your needs for these three categories based on the type of shooting you'll be doing on your travels, it should be pretty straightforward to find the appropriate lenses.

I almost always veer toward prime lenses for street, or journalistic, shoots. That is doubly true when I'm traveling because I prefer to travel as light as possible on these shoots. Additionally, my experience with prime lenses is that they're typically very fast, with wide apertures, and are usually much smaller and lighter than zoom lenses. I'm especially fond of

the Zeiss Loxia lens lineup because of how tiny yet sturdy they are. However, they are all manual focus lenses, so I almost always rely on my camera's focus peaking feature to facilitate focusing.

The complete opposite is true for landscape travel shoots. I almost always grab my zoom lenses that range from 12mm all the way to 400mm or longer, if I pack a teleconverter. While these lenses are significantly heavier and bulkier than primes, it is impossible to beat the convenience of zooming.

Also, because I almost always shoot using an $f/11$ to $f/16$ aperture range, I'm not as concerned about wide apertures (unless I'm going to shoot a lot of night, or star, photography).

CAMERA LENS RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Zeiss Loxia 2/35 - \$1,299

As you might have guessed, I'm recommending my favorite of the Zeiss Loxia line. This 35mm has long been regarded



Once I find an accessory, or combination of them, that I particularly like, I stick with it for a long time. It's very easy to get lost in constantly changing the gear you use. I've found that investing in the right gear, even if it is pricey up front, yields the best results.



as the definitive focal length for street photography, and this lens is suitably up to its challenges. With a maximum $f/2$ aperture and a precise focus ring, it's a complete pleasure using this lens with journalistic intentions in mind.

- Sony FE 24-70mm F2.8 GM - \$2,199

Regardless of which manufacturer's version of the 24-70mm zoom lens you own or buy, you really can't go wrong, especially if it's an $f/2.8$ version. Because I'm a Sony shooter, I own its version, and it really is an excellent lens, both in performance and size. The focal range is also just wide enough and just long enough to be the only zoom lens to grab if you were limited to one.

THE CAMERA ACCESSORIES:

As far as camera accessories are concerned, my top three categories have always been tripods, filters and bags.

Tripods and filters factor in almost exclusively in my landscape shoots because I prefer a pared-down kit for street shooting. However, I definitely have specific camera

bags based on whether I'll be traveling for journalistic or landscape intent.

There are a number of other accessory categories to consider, of course, such as media cards and shutter cable releases. So, depending on how you shoot, you might want to consider additional accessories.

CAMERA ACCESSORY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Really Right Stuff TVC-24L Mk 2 Tripod with BH-40 Ballhead - \$1,445

At this point, I've exclusively used Really Right Stuff tripods and ballheads for almost a decade because of how critical this accessory is for my landscape shoots. Because I'm 6 feet tall, I prefer a tripod that can be extended to a length that's taller than I am. This system does so with ease and can deftly handle any camera and lens I mount to it. Yes, it's pricey, but I believe that it's worth every penny.

- Wine Country Camera 100mm Master Filter and Holder Kit - \$1,099

Aside from being an art piece in and of itself, the Wine Country Camera filter

system has been one of my favorites because of how easy it is to control the integrated circular polarizer. It's also effortless to slide in and stack multiple ND filters, which is critical when time is of the essence.

- Peak Design Everyday Backpack 30L - \$289

The Peak Design Everyday Backpack is my go-to choice for camera bag when I'm focusing on street photography in my travels. It's sleek, inconspicuous (especially in black) and can hold a ton of gear. It's also very comfortable to wear, which is a big plus.

- Shimoda Explore 40 Pro Kit - \$479

I've owned more adventure camera bags than any sane person should admit, and I've never found one as capable as the Shimoda Explore 40. For me, it strikes the perfect balance between features and comfort, along with including some truly innovative usability options. This bag, and its larger 60L sibling, has traveled with me all around the world, and I'd never go on a landscape travel shoot without it. DP