

# Accommodating Photography in the Travel Plans

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We all travel for a variety of reasons and we like to take pictures. Sometimes carrying the elaborate photography equipment can interfere with the business or the vacation experiences that we want to create. I am sharing my thoughts in order to enhance your travel experiences with photography.

Recently I had the privilege to share my travel experiences with the Nevada Camera Club. I am sharing my thoughts from the presentation in a more usable format in order to enhance your travel experiences with photography. I hope you find these tips useful

## Planning:

Careful planning is critical to creating great experiences whether you are travelling for business, family vacation or a trip focused on photography. First step is to make a list of all the potential locations that you may be able to photograph. In my experience there are common threads on what to photograph

- Places of Worship, (Churches, Temples, Mosques, other faith based locations)
- Markets, Gathering Spots, Town squares, Old town
- Architectural landmarks and famous buildings (monuments, palaces, historical homes, museums, lighthouses)
- Government buildings (current and historical)
- Places of learning, i.e universities
- Skyline and Bridges (morning, evening, twilight)
- Current events, festivals
- Bodies of water (lakes, rivers, ocean, piers)
- National parks and other protected areas (wildlife, flowers, landscape, nightscape}. You may want to check whether there are migratory birds or animals before packing long lenses
- People in their natural surroundings
- Family

I use a variety on tools on the internet to previsualize the opportunities and plan for the light. It is important to check the best times to photograph each of the locations and build a plan that puts you in those locations. I make a simple spreadsheet for the number of days, dividing each day in three sections for the Sunrise, Day, and Sunset/ Twilight. Once you have these locations identified by the best time, try to stay close to them and make dinner plans near some of them.

- Research - Internet search (Google, Bing)
- Tripadvisor to see what activities people have been enjoying

- Flickr (what other people are seeing in that location)
- Weather during your visit. You may have to move your plans around based on weather
- Google Maps
  - Mark the locations of interest during the research phase. This helps to find the clusters of interesting places so that you can plan to stay close to them
  - Satellite view and street view to previsualize
  - Custom maps (<https://www.google.com/maps/about/mymaps/>)
- Find lodging near the area of interest
- The Photographer's Ephemeris
  - Be aware of celestial events near the target date (Full moon, new moon, eclipse, solstice, milky way location)

## Equipment Considerations

An important consideration is what to carry. If you are going on a short business trip, you may want just one camera, lens and a light tripod that can be packed in the suitcase. If you are going on a road trip you can afford to take everything you have. Everything else is in between. In any case it helps to think about the problem in two parts, how will you take the equipment to your destination and how will you take it around. My experience is that a general purpose backpack works well at the location as you can have a body, 2 lenses, a flash and some water bottles. I often place a sweater or a towel at the bottom of the bag for cushioning as the bag may not be padded. Here is how I think of what to carry

### Lenses

- City : Wide to super wide, rectilinear if you can afford it (14mm, 10-22mm, 16-35mm)
- Walkabout: 24-105mm
- Occasional distance shots (airshows, birds, wildlife ) 100-400mm with 1.4x convertor
- Recent favorite: Tamron 28-300mm (new one being released is 18-300mm)

### Bodies

- Full size: 5D Mark III, 7D Mark II, IR converted 100D with 17-55, f2,8 lens, GoPro.

### Bag(s)

- Many strategies. I will not have a dedicated bag if I am travelling on a short business trip. Sturdy photo/ travel vest with huge pockets can often be used in place of a bag. In any case think how to transport and how to carry on your photo walk. Using your clothes as padding in a suitcase works well. Lenses are the heaviest and most expensive, take them in carry on. In order to minimize my luggage I never pack for more than five days, there are laundry facilities everywhere.

### Tripod(s) and heads

- Even though we believe in the sturdiest tripods and they have their place. For travel get carbon fiber tripod legs and ball head that can fit in a 22" carry on suitcase

### Flash

- It is a critical item if you will take people shots, Use it as a fill flash
- Voltage convertor
- Voltage convertor, multiplug tvel adapter or a power strip will save you a lot of agony. If you carry your own power strip you can share an outlet at any airport.

## Electronics

- Hard drive, laptop, extra cards, card reader. If a travel ban on laptops take effect, you can use a cyber café or hotel computer to backup your photos.
- Phone with data plan (international travel issue). Check with your phone company. E.g if you have a 15 GB+ plan with AT&T, roaming in Canada and Mexico is free. It is \$10/day in other countries. Many countries you can buy a local sim, so you need an unlocked phone

## Typical Issues:

As in any plans it is important to be flexible. There are some typical issues that you will face that can be turned into advantage

- Weather can change: If weather is bad, move to indoor subjects
- Crowds in the photo. : Use it to your advantage, find something interesting as a foreground. Also crowds show scale. You may also try different perspective and early morning to avoid people in the shots.
- Dynamic range of the scene
  - Shoot for HDR.
  - If there are people moving, you can use strong ghosting in processing
- Cutting off the subject, because of limited room to back up: Wide angle lens in the bag is critical
- Usage of wide angle lens
  - Unflattering people shots
  - Distortion in tall objects
  - Point of interest in a scene
- Depth of field
- Unwanted objects in the frame: Try to avoid, but often you will find electric lines, poles etc. that have to be removed in post processing
- Personal and equipment security: Carry minimal things on you. Leave other stuff in hotel safe.

## Specific considerations in different types of trips:

- Business Trips (limited time and baggage)
  - Minimal equipment
    - Camera with 24-105 lens (one of the lighter lenses)
    - Carbon fiber tripod that folds to less than 22” with a ballhead
    - Regular backpack rather than a briefcase or a camera bag
    - Depending on weather and area you may consider additional lens
  - Travel
    - Add a weekend day, it may be cheaper

- Selecting flights may give you one extra sunrise, sunset or a blue hour (and save money)
- Stay closer to the interesting subjects
- Get up early and photograph before going to work
- Make careful choices for dinner venue, close to the photo opportunity
  
- Family Vacation (experience is most important)
  - Planning is critical. Involve everyone and make it fun
    - Research weather and locations and the experience
    - Pre-visualize the locations
    - Stay close to the photo opportunities if possible
  - Research the light direction and times at the potential locations
    - Photographers Ephemeris or other similar apps
  - Create an itinerary with each day divided in 3 sections
    - Based on light pick the spots to see in the best light
    - Indoor things and shopping during middle of day
    - Dinner close to your blue hour location
  - Be flexible and patient with weather
    - Substitute locations
  - Have a smaller bag to carry the camera and water bottles etc. Leave the larger bag in the room
  
- Photography Trips (With non-photographer companions)
  - Add interesting activities for the non-photographer
  - Get them interested, everyone loves to take pictures (or get their pictures taken)
  - Everyone likes to see beautiful places (just not before dawn)
  - Research weight limits with the airlines. Carry only what is necessary
    - There may be intermediate storage facilities (hotels)
  - Extend trip to include non photography activities (e.g. shopping, spa...)

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It is all about improving the experience

Happy Shooting

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