NEWSLETTER

MICHAEL CLARK
PHOTOGRAPHY



FALL 2026

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The valley of Gangtey, as seen from the Gangtey Lodge, is one of the most beautiful and unspoiled places in Bhutan. The surprise of finding such a wide, flat valley without any trees after an intense drive up through dense forests is an extremely rare experience in Bhutan where most of the valleys are tightly enclosed.

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Cover Image: The Boudhanath Stupa, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and spiritual home to the Tibetan exile community in Nepal. It is considered to be one of the world's largest and most ancient Buddhist stupas, located on the original trade route leading to Lhasa. Opposite Page: The Punakha Dzong, also known as "Palace of Great Happiness," at sunset in Punakha, Bhutan.





An Unusual Newsletter

A Travel Photography Issue of the Newsletter

As many of you no doubt experienced, this summer was pretty brutal in terms of heat and here in New Mexico it was by far the hottest and driest on record. I feel we got pretty lucky in that we did not have that many fires, unlike the rest of the western USA. For me, summer is typically not as busy as the spring and fall so I was home a fair bit working on various projects here in the office. This year started out with a lot of travel, and this fall has me doing quite a few assignments for the New Mexico Tourism department. Sadly, I cannot share any of the images I have been creating lately for New Mexico Tourism but hopefully here at some point I will be able to share some of the best images I have been creating all over the state of New Mexico.

As the title above suggests, this entire issue is filled not with the normal adventure sports images but with an abundance of travel and landscape photography—and even a few wildlife images. I am aware that not all of my readers fully connect with the adventure images I normally feature here in the Newsletter so hopefully this issue is a breath of fresh air that inspires adventurous travel. The feature article in this issue includes images from Nepal. Bhutan and Japan. In the adventure travel vain, I do have a few very exciting photography workshops and tours coming up in 2027 that will see us rafting the Grand Canyon and photographing remote tribes in Kenya.

On the gear front, while I have directed and shot some video for various projects over the last fifteen years, I have not fully committed to building out a video kit of my own—until now. In the past I have always brought in partners that had a ton of gear, and we also rented and borrowed gear as needed for each assignment. But in the last few years, Fujifilm and others have created video camera options that offer incredible image quality and more importantly for my needs they also happen to be relatively compact and lightweight. In this issue of the Newsletter I dive into all of the video specific gear that I have recently invested in. Perhaps this equipment article will help you build out a video kit if you are looking to jump into motion. Here's hoping you enjoy this issue and it offers up an escape for an hour or two—and some inspiration to get out and explore the World. Until next time....

Opposite Page: The view looking south out of the main entrance of the Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge near Pokhara, Nepal. This lodge sit just under the Annapurna range and offers incredible views in all directions, with some of the world's highest mountains visible just off the back porch.

Recent Clients: New Mexico Tourism, Red Bull, New Scientist Magazine, Geo Magazine, 5280 Magazine, Andy Biggs Safaris, Nobechi Creative and the Southern Ute Indian Tribe.



Photography Workshops

An overview of workshops and online classes with Michael Clark

Each year I teach a few workshops on a variety of topics including adventure sports photography, landscape photography, digital workflow and artificial lighting. Below is a listing of the in-person and online workshops I will be teaching in 2027. For more information on these workshops, and to find out how to register, go to the Workshops page on my blog or click on the links in the descriptions below.

ONE-ON-ONE WORKSHOPS

In-Person or Online via Zoom

Email info@michaelclarkphoto.com to Schedule

In addition to my in-person group workshops listed here I also teach one-on-one workshops both in-person or virtually via Zoom. In the past photographers have come to Santa Fe, New Mexico for one-on one workshops custom designed for exactly what they want to learn—these have been one-day to three-day private workshops. Alternatively, I have also done one-on-one private workshops in other locations as well—chosen by the photographer to meet their needs. These custom workshops are a great way to dial in your photography because we can cover way more ground specific to your needs and in a shorter time-frame than we can in a group workshop. Prices start at $900/half day and $1,400 per full day. Half days are five hours or less and full days are eight to ten hours.

If you would like to set up a one-on-one Skype or Zoom session to discuss any photography related topics please contact me. From portfolio reviews to digital workflow, lighting techniques and career development and anything in between we can set up a session and cover whatever you want. If you have any questions about these sessions please don't hesitate to reach out. I have found that we can cover a wide variety of topics in these one-on-one sessions. Pricing for online sessions starts at $150/hour and discounts apply for multiple hour sessions.

THE INVISIBLE CAMERA

A Nobechi Creative Online Workshop

January 9 & 10, 2027

Present day digital photography, with its complex array of settings and options, can overwhelm even the most seasoned of photographers. Once you settle on a camera brand, understanding your camera to its fullest extent and knowing how to best operate it can be a challenge. Luckily, nearly all cameras made in the last decade are incredible photographic instruments and are capable of photographing just about any subject under (and not under) the sun.

In this online weekend intensive, we will break down all of the confusing elements, unlock the features you may be



Being able to see the final image before you even put your camera up to your eye is the mark of an advanced photographer. The ability to pre-visualize the image requires practice, a deep knowledge of how the camera sees the world, and the ability to quickly manipulate the camera so that what you want to create comes through in the final image. My new online class "The Invisible Camera" aims to help participants get to that place where the final image matches the image you conceived beforehand. This class will cover a lot of ground and will help all participants understand what goes into capturing an image they have dreamt up.

missing, and make the cumbersome setting hunting disappear, so that the camera essentially becomes "invisible" and you can concentrate on composition, framing, and expression, rather than trying to remember that one setting in the user manual.

Not only will we demystify the process of how to get the best out of your camera, but we will also analyze and discuss some of the most impactful images created in the last hundred years to see how they were created and what techniques were used to capture the image.

In this course Michael covers the following topics and much more including visualizing the final image without the camera, a deep dive on the basics (Aperture, Shutter Speed and ISO), choosing an aperture to give your auto focus more room for error, using advanced auto focus techniques, anticipating the action with hyperfocal focus settings, photography in low-light, astrophotography, and much more.

This online course will have three 3-hour live sessions conducted via Zoom covering an array of topics

concerning digital photography for those seeking to create the best possible images. Video recordings of each session will be made and uploaded to a participants-only private channel in case you miss a session or wish to go back and watch something over again. Video recordings will be made available indefinitely so even if you cannot attend all sessions, you can still sign up for this course and get all the information you need.

This course is intended not just for beginners, but seasoned photographers who feel there are features on their cameras they are missing, or have recently switched from DSLRs to mirrorless cameras and want to better understand the differences and how to utilize them to their advantage, this class will start with the basics and quickly move onto more advanced techniques that can help you take your photography to a higher level. The goal is to dial in your camera so you can simplify the photographic process and concentrate on the image you are trying to create.

Workshop Cost: $450 USD per person.

For all the details and logistics and to register for this online class visit Nobechi Creative.

RAFTING THE GRAND CANYON

Visionary WILD - Grand Canyon National Park, USA
April 25 - May 8, 2027

This trip will be led by master landscape photographer Justin Black and top adventure photographer Michael Clark, both veteran Grand Canyon river runners. The planned itinerary absolutely maximizes the photographic potential and overall quality of experience to be had during twelve days on the Colorado River in the mile-deep Grand Canyon.

Applying our experience of our prior Grand Canyon raft trips, and in collaboration with our hand-picked boat crew from Arizona Raft Adventures (AZRA), we've developed an itinerary that takes advantage of favorable spring conditions and sets us up for the best landings for photo excursions and camps along the river. Detailed planning and the expert skill of experienced boat crews we've worked with before are critical, because there's no going back upstream on the Colorado River.

Our itinerary starts in Flagstaff, Arizona, at the Little America Hotel. The day before our departure for the river, we will convene to get to know each other (and catch up with returning friends), and Justin and Michael will make a presentation to get your creative juices flowing and prepare you for photography in the Canyon. This will be followed by an orientation by AZRA staff to go over the game plan, safety, answer questions, and distribute dry bags for packing your personal gear. We'll set off early the following morning for Lee's Ferry, where our raft and crew will be waiting for us at our launch point.

A little about the rafts: We will travel aboard two 32-foot-long motorized rafts built around a strong aluminum frame with a below-deck cargo hold for important items that tolerate getting wet, like camp chairs and cans of beer. Personal gear and camera bags will be stored in dry-bags strapped down on the deck above the waterline. A crew of two expert AZRA guides will crew each raft, equipped with a quiet four-stroke Honda motor for steering purposes. The motor is shut off as we drift with the current down the river in stretches of calm water. We will



I am very excited to go back to the Grand Canyon with Justin Black and Visionary WILD in 2027. This trip will be an amazing adventure packed full of incredible photography opportunities. In my experience as a former backpacking guide in the Canyon, rafting it instead of hiking it is the way to go. Each night we will have a very comfortable camp and excellent food—and we will be able to explore various parts of the canyon that are very difficult to reach except from river level.

be running a great deal of whitewater, and where you sit in the raft and how you dress will determine whether you get soaked or stay dry (or dryish). In the mid-afternoon sun, getting soaked by a big splash is a great way to cool off. What are the chances of taking an unexpected swim in the river? Slim to none, if you follow your guides' instructions. On our many prior raft trips using AZRA's large, stable motor rafts and their immensely experienced boat crews, we have never flipped a boat, only one participant has ever gone for an unintentional swim, and he wasn't following orders to hold on in a rapid.

Once on the Colorado River, we quickly enter Marble Canyon and from there the canyon rim towers higher and higher as we pass through ever more ancient rock strata. From the raft, we'll take in the stunning mesas and rock formations all around us, watch bighorn sheep just a few meters away at the water's edge, marvel at condors soaring and ravens playing overhead, and watch the light and shade play across the water and reflect in hues of gold and red on the canyon walls. Landings at some of our favorite side canyons, waterfalls, and rock formations along the way will provide the opportunity to stretch our legs

and explore Grand Canyon's intimate landscapes. Each afternoon, we'll pull into riverside beaches, which will serve as our camps. These are selected in advance for group comfort and excellent photo opportunities close to camp in the evening, and to position us strategically to target the next morning's photography location.

As we arrive in camp each afternoon, we'll form a "bag line" as a team to unload personal gear and camp equipment from the raft to the beach. This group bonding experience is not to be underestimated. After that, we each locate a nice personal piece of Colorado River beach to put down our tarp, comfy sleeping pad, pillow, sheet, and sleeping bag (all provided, as are tents, though few seem to bother with tents after a night or two). Then, while the boat crew prepares a fabulous and well-deserved dinner, we'll photograph in the evening light. We'll gather the camp chairs in a circle to chat over a beer or glass of wine, have a rinse in the river, or just relax and enjoy the peace, solitude, and crystal-clear night skies.

When our time on the river comes to an end, it will be too soon. Back at the hotel in Flagstaff, after a proper shower and calls to loved ones to confirm that we've reemerged into civilization, we'll meet for a final celebratory dinner with our boat crews at one of Flagstaff's finer restaurants. After breakfast the next morning, we'll meet for a classroom session to edit and project images for review. Wrapping up by mid-afternoon, we'll say "until we meet again," and our merry band will part company with hard drives full of amazing images, heads full of incredible memories, spirits uplifted by the experience, and hearts just a little bit sad that our adventure had reached its conclusion. We hope you'll join us for this trip of a lifetime!

Workshop Costs: $10,595 to $10,995 depending on lodging.

For all the details and logistics and to register for this adventure visit the Visionary Wild website.

KENYA SAMBURULAND MASTERCLASS

Andy Biggs Safaris - Kenya

October 15 - 25, 2027

In October 2027 we have a very unique safari experience lined up, which will be a cultural photography trip to northern Kenya and home to the Samburu. This trip combines a heavy dose of instruction, as well as setting up photographic scenarios. The Samburu are a beautiful semi nomadic tribe, similar to the Masai, who live in some of the most beautiful and remote landscapes on the African continent. We will split our time between two different camps, which are remote, yet authentically luxurious in a timeless way. Our days will be filled with cultural immersion, taking photographs as bystanders, as well as inviting those we meet along the way to do some formal sit-down portraits in any place that is photographically rich. One day it may be on top of a hill at sunset and another day it may be an impromptu backdrop at camp and we have Samburu warriors drop by to have their portraits taken with natural or artificial light. The goal is to have a great time and to have unique moments with new friends that we meet along the way. And of course going home with photographs that go alongside these wonderful memories. This is a once in a lifetime experience. This trip is visiting areas that we know well and have experience working in.

Guest instructor Michael Clark will be joining us, making



This Kenyan portrait masterclass will be a very unique safari experience in northern Kenya. The image above, crafted by Andy Biggs, shows just one example of the possible portrait images we can create with the incredible Samburu tribe. We will be bringing battery-powered strobes to create a wide variety of portraits of the tribe and to further our understanding of portraiture in general.

this a teaching workshop for those who want to learn flash photography. We are bringing along studio lighting equipment, so you only need to bring your cameras and lenses. We will be teaching studio lighting for two days at the beginning of the trip, so show up and learn in a controlled environment before we head into the field.

The cost of this all-inclusive safari is $15,950 per person. This fee includes all in-country ground and air transportation as well as hotel accommodation (double occupancy) and all meals. Due to the limited number of spaces available, if a solo guest is willing to share a room and we can match with another guest of the same gender, we will do so. If a solo guest is unwilling to share, then a single supplement will be charged $1,800 (please contact us if you would like to have your own accommodation as we have a very limited number of single slots available).

For the full details and logistics or to register for this exciting adventure please visit Andy Biggs website where you can find many more details. This will be a once in a lifetime epic adventure—hope to see you there.

Workshop Testimonials

"Michael certainly knows his stuff. From Capture to Print: The Complete Digital Photographer's Workflow is delivered in an easy to follow and comprehensive manner that covers many things that you may not expect – such as how to choose proper lighting to view and evaluate your prints or what color shirt to wear when you're correcting images. I really appreciated that this is a pro workflow course delivered by a pro photographer. Michael is also a superb teacher, a superb communicator, who is welcoming and inviting of questions from all his participants. I took this workshop in June of 2020, using Zoom software. I was really amazed by how Michael made it seem like he's been doing these workshops forever this way! It was a great pleasure being part of this workshop with so many other amazing photographers. I learned much which is valuable to me and enjoyed doing so at the same time. And just to reiterate, as to the workshop: I'm impressed." – Stephen Starkman, Toronto

"Michael is the best instructor I have taken a workshop from." - Participant, Cutting-Edge Lighting Workshop

"Michael set an incredibly high bar for his workshop. He gave 110%, covered a broad range of topics and did an outstanding job." - Chris Council, Adventure Photography Workshop

"Within the short time I've been studying and practicing photography, I have had teachers who are good educators, but not great photographers, and vice versa, but few who are both. Count yourself in these narrow ranks. I went through four years of college and several careers getting less candid advice and encouragement than I got in four days with you. For what it is worth, thank you for that." – Brandon McMahon, Adventure Photography Workshop

"My mind is still spinning and I can't help but smile every time I think of the wonderful experience garnered from our workshop. Between what I learned from the two of you, as well as from my talented classmates – this was a great experience, and I would do it again." – Participant in the 2008 Balloon Fiesta workshop taught by Andy Biggs and I.

"Just wanted you know how much fun I had during the workshop last weekend! I learned a lot and look forward to doing other workshops with you." – Jason Quevedo, Philadelphia Mentor Series Trek

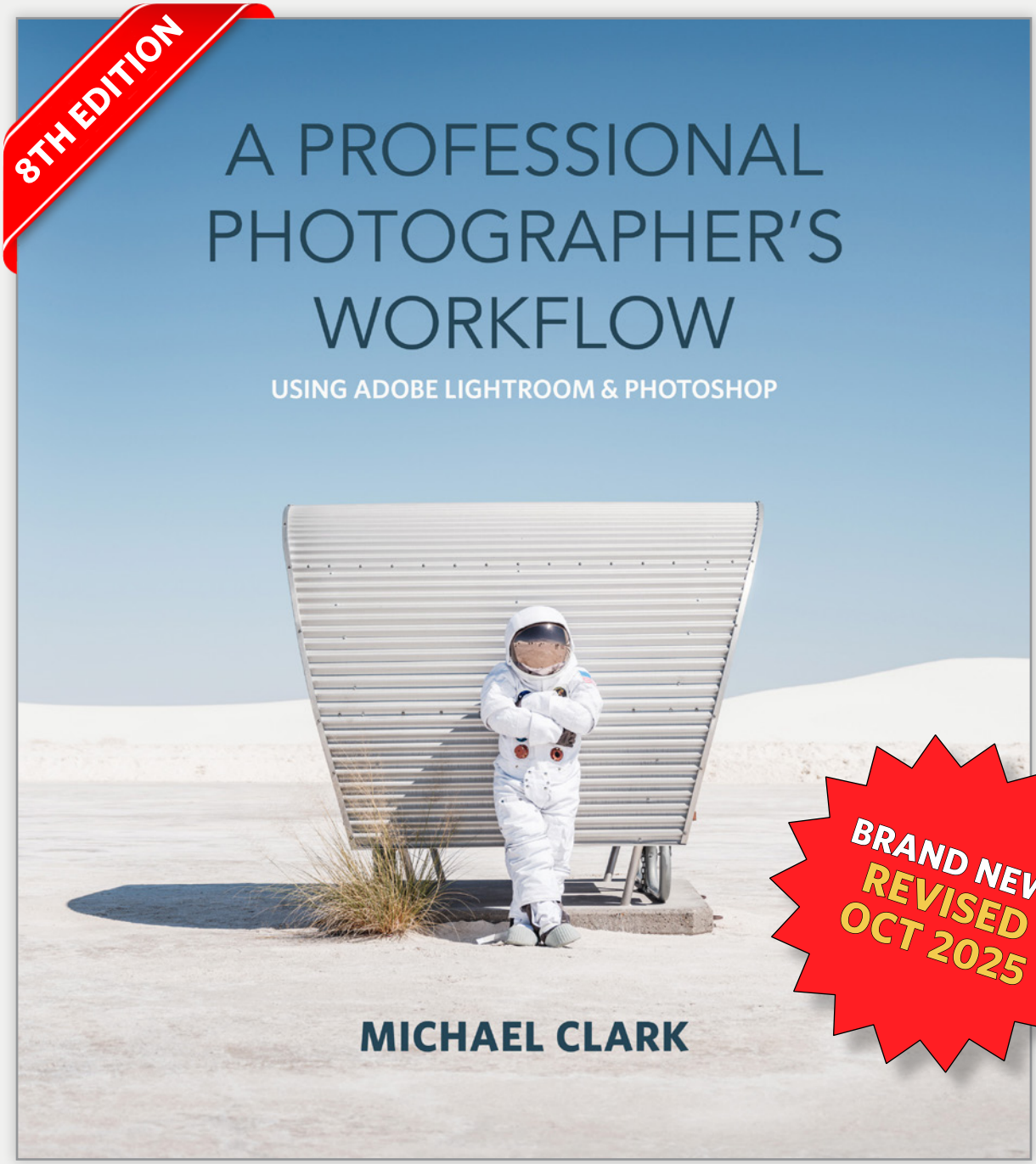
"Your workshop at Santa Fe was too good and I came away with a lot of knowledge and renewed energy. The level of expertise that you and Michael shared was top-notch and I hope to repeat this experience again. Thanks for such a great workshop!" – Participant in the Balloon Fiesta workshop taught by Andy Biggs and myself.

For more information on my upcoming workshops please visit the Workshops page on my blog. For any questions regarding my upcoming workshops please email me.

If you would like to sign up for a private workshop please contact me and we can figure out a time and location that works for your needs. I have done several private one-on-one workshops over the last few years and participants really get a lot out of them since we can delve into the subjects and topics they want to explore—and help take their photography to an entirely new level.

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Building a Video Kit

A review of several items I have acquired while building a new video kit

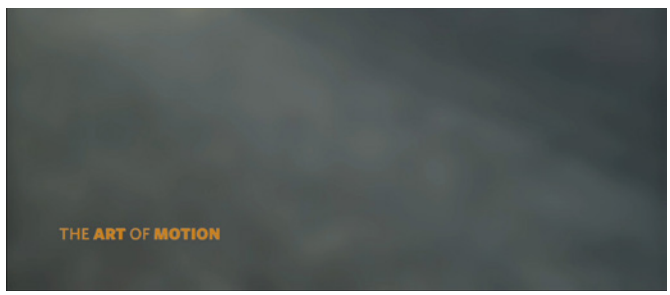




This summer I have built up a video kit for future projects (some of which will be forthcoming soon) and in the course of building up that gear I thought I would share my thoughts here on what is working and what items I chose. As a preamble, most folks reading this Newsletter know that I am primarily a still photographer. But, I have also dabbled in video for a long time. My first reel, which I co-directed with Charles Fryberger way back in 2009, was shot on the RED One—one of the first high-end 4K digital cinema cameras on the market. The







Above: Here are some frame grabs from my first reel ever, shot on the original RED One camera with Chuck Fryberger, way back in 2009. Chuck had a RED One camera before anyone else I knew of in the outdoor industry and we spent a week shooting four different sports and interviews. Previous page: Shown on the previous page are two small, lightweight video rigs. On the left is my trusty FUJIFILM GFX100 II built out with a SmallRig cage and an Atmos Ninja monitor and a Rode microphone. For an even smaller, lighter setup I often remove the cage and just go with the swivel mount viewfinder that Fujifilm makes and let the internal camera microphones record the scratch audio to sync up with better audio later on. On the previous page on the right is my tiny Nikon ZR setup in a SmallRig cage with the hot-shoe mount Nikon microphone and a SmallRig handle on the side. I sometimes swap the handle to the other side of the camera or remove it altogether if I want the setup even smaller.

image quality from that first reel stands up even today among modern cameras—and that experience also solidified my preference for the RED color science. I have since directed several motion pieces for various clients and have been around a lot of motion sets, including major Hollywood feature films on a few occasions. In most cases I was directing and producing, not actually operating the cameras.

My hesitation with video—at least on the technical side—these past fifteen years mostly had to do with replicating the color and look of my still images in video. It has only been in the last few years where I feel like DaVinci Resolve has given us normal folks—who aren't working with giant Hollywood budgets—the control and color adjustment tools to really dial in footage to a high level. And if I am being honest, in the last ten years I didn't want to have to spend $100K to buy a high-end RED digital cinema camera and a new set of lenses along with everything else you need to get top-end video.

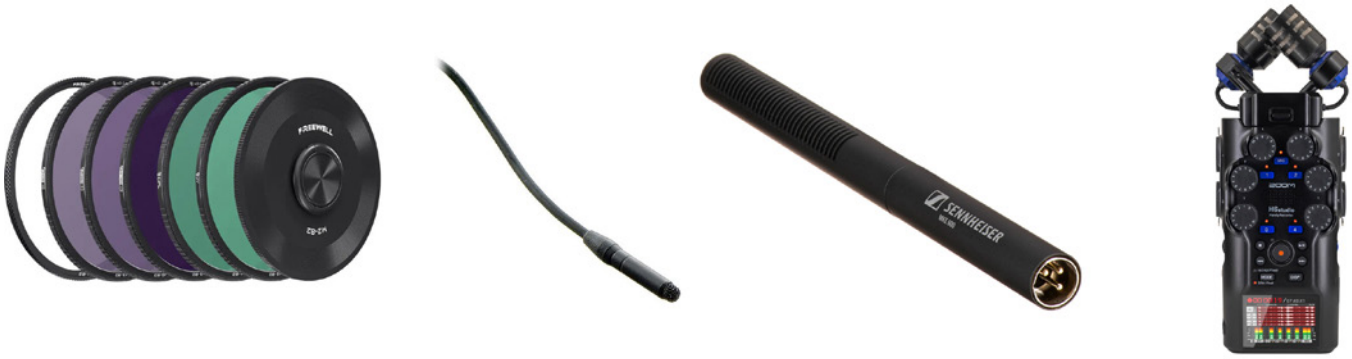
I still consider myself mostly a still photographer, and I much prefer still photography to the complex and difficult process of video. Regardless of my preferences, I have seen the writing on the wall and it is time I start to produce more motion pieces in addition to my still photography work. I am not interested in just creating "content" for social media. I prefer to create in-depth stories and some of that will undoubtedly end up on social media. Enough pre-amble, let's get into it.

Of course, the main building block of any video rig is the camera itself. In terms of cameras, I have quite a few that I can use. As someone who mainly uses Fujifilm and Nikon cameras my main video cameras these days are the FUJIFILM GFX100 II (which is an exceptional medium format video camera), my Nikon Z8 and Z9, and the new Nikon ZR. The reasoning for sticking to Fujifilm and Nikon options hopefully is self-explanatory as I have a lot of Fujifilm and Nikon lenses I can use for video as well as stills. The video out of the GFX100 II is incredible and has a very unique look and of course also has Fujifilm's excellent color science. The Nikon ZR, a relatively new addition to my kit, has an absolutely mind-blowing RED codec built into the camera which records high-quality raw footage using RED's color science. In tests, it seems to produce footage almost identical to RED's much more expensive cinema cameras and comes at a fraction of the price. At only $2,200 USD, the ZR might just be the best video camera you can get for the money. In the last two years, and especially in the last year with the release of the ZR and now the Sony FX5, I really feel like we finally have true cinema quality video options that don't cost tens of thousands of dollars.

So, for a true do-it-all video kit (at least for my current needs), there is obviously much more that is needed than just a camera and a few lenses. Microphones, a video tripod, a boom pole (for the shot gun microphone), a wireless mic setup, neutral density filters, camera cages, monitors and much more are all needed to put together a rig. Building off my GFX100 II and the ZR, I purchased SmallRig camera cages for both of these cameras so that



Above are two separate images of the Sennheiser Profile Wireless microphone kit. This kit includes two lav microphone bases and one receiver as shown on the right. Just about everything that comes with the kit fits inside the rectangular brick you see above—and it is extremely well made. The receiver and transmitters literally pop-out of the larger brick and they also charge with one connection when mounted into the brick.



From left to right are the Freewell M2 Magnetic Neutral Density filters, the Sanken COS-11D Lavalier Microphone (which connects to the Sennheiser Profile wireless transmitters), a Sennheiser MKE 600 shotgun microphone and the venerable Zoom H6 Studio audio recorder. As sound is a critical component of video, I have purchased fairly high-end microphones. The Sanken COS-11D is an industry standard microphone and actually costs more than the Sennheiser Profile kit.

there is a base to rig up the cameras. Aside from the cameras, audio gear and neutral density filters were the biggest holes I had in my kit.

For these upcoming projects I need a few different types of microphones—on camera mics, lavalier mics and a shotgun microphone as well. For the on camera microphones I have had an older version of the RODE VideoMic Pro+ for quite a while now. I have never liked the sound quality from that mic all that much but it was functional. For my ZR, I ordered the wireless hot-shoe mount Nikon ME-D10 shotgun microphone that goes along with it. The ME-D10 has exceptional audio quality and works in 32 Bit Float which is a huge advantage for run and gun type work. But for higher end audio, I need higher end microphones and I chose the Sennheiser MKE600 shotgun microphone and the new Sennheiser Profile Wireless Lavalier microphones. I have used the MKE600 on lots of productions and at some point I will add a Sennheiser MKH416, which is the more expensive and higher quality industry standard Sennheiser microphone. I chose the new Sennheiser Profile lavalier system over the older industry standard Sennheiser EW 112P G4 system because it can record in 32-bit float and seems like a more modern system. We will see how that goes and if the Profile wireless lavs are up to snuff.

So far, in my testing the Sennheiser Profile lavalier microphones sound very similar to the other Sennheiser lav mics I have used in the past, which is just what I wanted. They are also very low profile and I have also purchased top-end Sanken COS-11D Lavalier microphones to plug into the Profile wireless recorders. The Sanken lavalier mics seriously upgrade the sound quality and they are so small that you can run them under a shirt with a little double sided tape and the included rubber mount that comes with the Sanken microphones. The Sanken COS-11D microphones are fairly expensive at $389 each, which is considerably more than the Sennheiser Profile kit, but they will last for a long time and can work with any wireless recording system.

To round out my audio kit I also purchased an Auray Carbon fiber boompole and the Camvate Boompole Cradle Mount. While these might seem like smaller pieces of the kit, a decent boompole is critical to get a shotgun mic into the action. The boompole is also perfect for interview setups and the cradle mount lets you mount the



From left to right are the Auray Carbon Fiber Boompole, the Auray DUSM-1 Universal Shockmount for mounting the Sennheiser MKE600 shotgun microphone on the boompole, and the Camvate Boompole Cradle Mount. While these components are relatively inexpensive they are critical for getting the best audio when I have an assistant to wield the boompole—or for a backup audio track when filming interviews.

boompole with the shotgun microphone onto any heavy duty lightstand with a grip head. I typically use the cradle mount on a C-Stand so that I can record a second source of audio with the shotgun microphone into an external recorder like a Zoom H6.

I should add here at this point that my goal with this video kit was to build something that can produce exceptional high-end video quality but I also wanted this kit to be relatively small and light weight so that I can integrate it with my still photography kit. I also wanted to have a separate system specifically dialed in for video so that I can just grab that camera and roll video fairly quickly—and not have to change anything on my still cameras. I realize both Nikon and Fujifilm both have switches on their cameras that go from still photography mode to video mode but it isn't as simple as just flipping a switch to record video. Hence, the idea was to have a completely separate video camera solution that could fit into my camera bag and sit right along side my still cameras so that it was relatively easy to shoot both stills and video.

To keep this video kit on the minimalist side, I also chose not to buy a matte box and instead purchased magnetized neutral density filters from Freewell. I opted for the Freewell M2 Magnetic Quik Swap filters which come in a kit with five different ND filters. This kit is not a variable ND filter kit but rather a set of individual ND filters. I do have a few other vari-ND filters that I use from time to time but as many die-hard video folks know vari-NDs can exhibit some strange patterns in certain scenarios if you aren't paying attention so basic ND filters are a bit easier and safer (in terms of image quality) to use. These Freewell filters are very high quality and the fact that they can snap on and off with the magnetic filters makes them really easy to swap out. The ND filters are absolutely essential when capturing video outdoors in bright sunlight using fast apertures since the shutter speed is fixed and you might only want to work with a few different native ISO settings (like ISO 800 and 6400 on the Nikon ZR).

There are a few other odds and ends I picked up to round out the kit. One of those items was a shock mount that



In the past I have used Adobe's Premiere Pro video editing software for quite sometime. While that software is very powerful and it is the software I learned video editing on, I was never satisfied with the color editing and grading tools—and Premiere Pro still has an export bug where your color after export looks quite different to how you adjusted it in the software. Hence, I have in the last few years switched over to DaVinci Resolve as shown above. I have found DaVinci Resolve to be an incredible video editing platform and the color management and color grading tools are second to none. I highly recommend DaVinci Resolve.

goes onto the end of the boompole and isolates the microphone from vibrations. I also got a new XLR male to female cable to plug the shotgun microphone into the Zoom recorder. And for the Sanken Lavalier microphones I also purchased a few windjammer deadcats to go on those mics if it is windy. I also found some Super Stick It! Double-Sided Hi-Tack Wardrobe Adhesive Tape from Film Tools. This double sided tape is a mainstay in Hollywood and is a specialized tape that sticks well to garments but doesn't leave a residue when you pull it off. It works extremely well when using the Sanken microphone mount that comes with the COS-11D lavalier mics.

I have quite a compliment of lenses for both my Nikon and Fujifilm systems so I am fairly well set on lenses. If I need more for a specific project I can always rent video specific lenses or borrow some of the incredible Fujifilm video specific GF lenses they have released in the last few years. In addition, I also have quite a slew of high capacity CFExpress Type B memory cards as well. Using wicked fast memory cards are a key component of any video kit and luckily I needed the fastest cards available for capturing still images at 20 frames per second with my Nikon Z9 and at 10 fps with the GFX100 II. Given that the video files from the Nikon ZR when using the RED Raw codec are massive the memory cards can be a very expensive part of any video kit.

On the backend, I already have DaVinci Resolve for post-processing of the video files. I used to use Adobe Premiere for video editing but the color pipeline in Premiere is a total nightmare—especially since the color

shifts when exporting. I don't know how or why Adobe has not fixed that export bug but it is a major issue if you care about color. For anyone doing video editing, I highly recommend BlackMagic's DaVinci Resolve over and above any other video editing software. The powerful color editing built into Resolve blows the doors off all other video editing options that I have seen. It has quickly become the industry standard for many applications.

Lastly, hard drives are a major concern when producing video. Especially when working with raw video files, they can be massive and having plenty of wicked fast SSD hard drives to download footage to and to work off of is critical. I have several super fast SSD travel drives and a few larger SSDs that stay in the office. I also already have about 200 TB of hard drives in RAID enclosures on my desk so I have a decent amount of storage. But the reality is that video footage eats up hard drive space at an alarming rate. Those that have been doing video for any length of time know this and having a RAID solution with many terabytes of storage is a must if you want to save and back up your video footage. I have several OWC ThunderBay enclosures loaded with 12 TB and 20 TB hard drives. No one likes to spend money on hard drives but that is just part of the game these days with digital media.

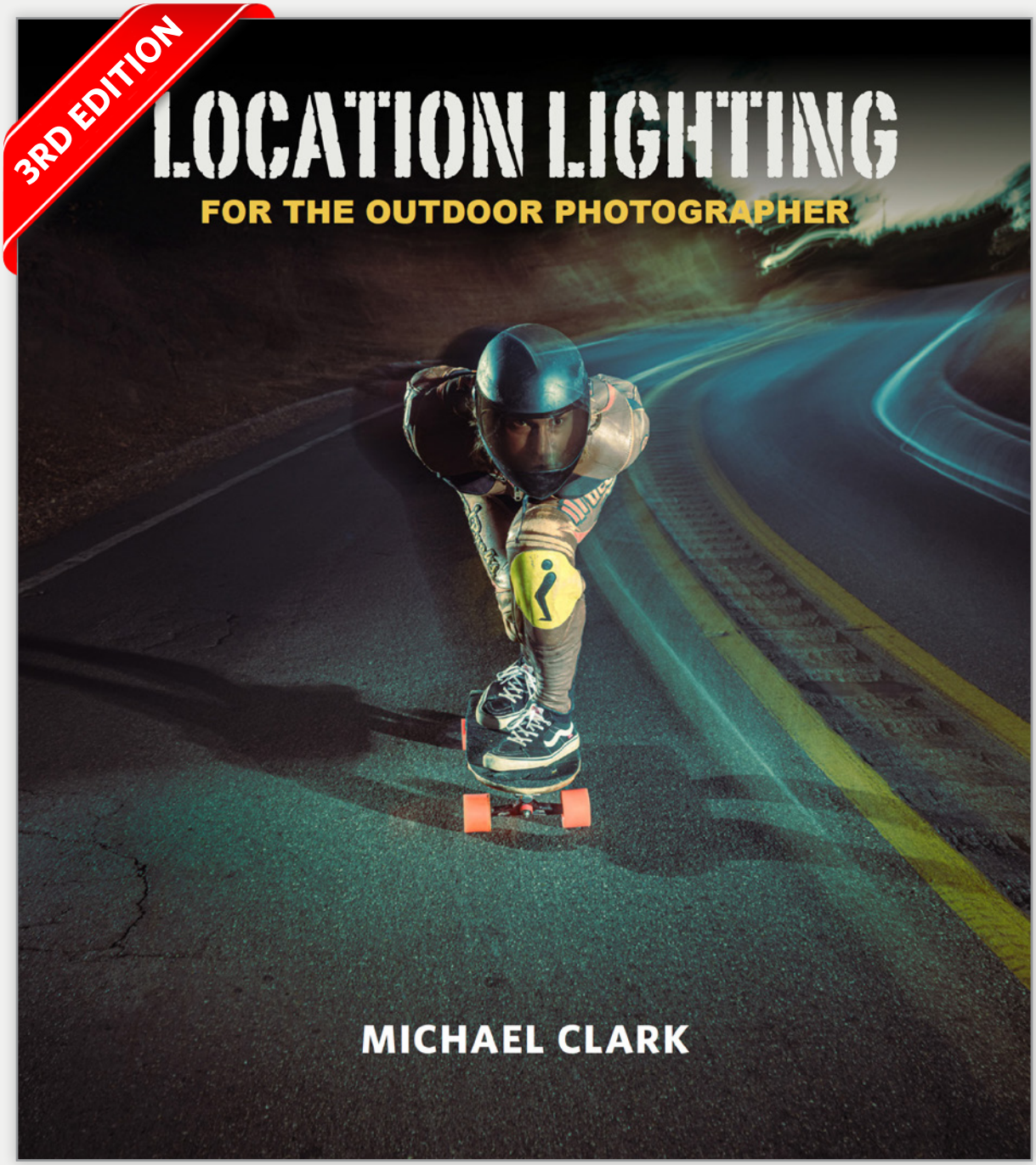
The reality is that many of the video cameras on the market these days are good enough for most things we will capture. I have chosen a relatively affordable video camera (at least in the Nikon ZR) but if you need more options for attaching microphones directly or using timecode then a more expensive video camera might be a better choice. For my work, I can always rent larger cinema cameras so I did not want to sink a ton of money into the video gear. I just needed the basics. When I get bigger jobs that need a crew of people to produce the motion content I bring in my friends who already have mountains of high-end video gear, including uber expensive RED digital cinema cameras.

The other reality is that recording and capturing the video (and the sound) is usually—at least in my experience—the easy part. Putting all of your video files together in post-production and creating something that people want to watch is definitely the harder part of the equation. This is the part that many struggle with. Editing video and color grading it are two very different arts and each one requires a specific skill set and workflow. On big projects I often hire an editor and then do the color correction myself, but for smaller projects that is not an option. On personal projects, I often have to do everything myself or hire a small crew to come in and help film the project. For high end video you simply have to have a second camera operator and a sound person at a minimum. Those two items alone can easily be $2k per day. And for a personal project that can add up fast.

Of course, all the gear in the world doesn't mean anything, it is what you do with that gear that counts. I have a lot of work to do to get up to speed and dial everything in. Over the next few months I will likely be creating a lot more video footage than still images. Still photography and video are very different disciplines, but I do feel like my still photography skills (like a keen eye for composition) will translate well and my experience directing and producing videos for clients in the past is also a huge help. For those of your looking to build yourself a small video kit I hope this article was helpful to at least make you aware of the basic gear required.

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on assignment:

FROM THE HIMALAYAS TO HOKKAIDO



Earlier this year I had five straight weeks of travel in Asia, starting with a week in Nepal and then heading to Bhutan and finally to Japan for three more weeks. This excursion saw me co-lead two separate photography tours, the first in Nepal and Bhutan with my good friend Andy Biggs and the second in Japan with the renown George Nobechi. It is unusual to have two long tours back to back but the dates lined up so closely that it made sense to go directly to Japan after the Bhutan trip. Here in this article, I won't share the blow by blow details of the adventures we had but rather aim to share some of the highlights and let the images do most of the talking.

This trip to Nepal was quite different than my last trip there in 2019, where we went to climb a mountain named Cholatse (6,440 m, 21,130 feet) that sits just down the valley from Everest. On this trip, we spent the entire time in Kathmandu and Pokhara—the second largest city in Nepal. This was definitely more of a cultural trip and since it was February (i.e. winter) the mountains were a bit tougher to access and explore. Having been to Kathmandu, I had already seen and explored quite a bit of the city. So Pokhara was new for me, and the views of the Annapurna range were breathtaking—as can be seen in the opening spread of this article on the previous two pages and on pages 28-29. The view of Annapurna and Machapuchare from the back porch of our hotel, the Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge, were absolutely incredible.

After a week in Nepal, we flew to Bhutan. Having never been to Bhutan, I had no idea of what to expect. The flight from Kathmandu to Paro was one of the most beautiful flights I have ever experienced. Floating out the window of the plane on the north side was half of the entire Himalayan range laid out before us. Luckily we had a clear day so we could see the mountain range. As you come in to land at the main airport in Bhutan (Paro) you descend into steep valleys and carve your way down to the airport making steep turns in the valley. For many folks they have never been in a large passenger jet that makes such steep banking maneuvers so it can be a bit exciting. Once you step off the plane and enter the incredible airport at Paro you quickly realize that you are in for a completely different experience than Nepal and India. The air is clear and fresh, the pollution is gone (for the most part) and the pace of life is much more relaxed than the big city vibe in Kathmandu.

Personally, I was blown away by Bhutan. I didn't know that much about it before this trip save for the basics that turn up when you research a place before a trip. Bhutan is not a giant country but even so it only has a population of around 803,000 in the entire country. And while the mountains may not be quite as high as the high Himalayas in Nepal and Pakistan they are still huge—and have deep valleys with steep slopes. There is a considerable tourist tax of $100 per day to visit Bhutan, but this tax pays for free healthcare and free education for every Bhutanese citizen. The tourism tax also is used for conservation. Also, way back in 1952 the King of Bhutan decided that they should preserve their forests and set them on the path of retaining at least 60% of the countries forests. Today, 70% of the country is forested. Hence, beyond the landscape Bhutan has a government that is keen to do what is best for the people and the land, which makes it incredibly unique in the world. As a result of these policies, Bhutan was also the first country in the world to become carbon-negative.

On our trip, we did a fairly normal tourist route in the



middle of the country going from Paro to Thimphu then onto Gangtey and back to Punakha before returning to the airport in Paro for our departure. Driving in Bhutan is not for the feint of heart or for those that easily get car sick. The roads fold in on themselves curving up and down the steep valleys as you move from one city to the next—and these never-ending switchbacks make travel quite slow as you can rarely build up any speed on a straight section of road. Regardless of the wild roads, the people of Bhutan are the star of any experience in Bhutan. The country has a gentle, relaxed pace to it and the people exhibit this stellar way of living in just about every encounter. I came away from Bhutan thinking that many countries in the World, especially the USA could learn a lot from Bhutan.

On our trip in Bhutan, several of the participants and both Andy and myself had medium format cameras with a panorama mode on them, and we as a group started to really explore the panorama aspect ratio (65x24) built into all of our cameras. Most of the participants had the Hasselblad X2D II and I had my trusty FUJIFILM GFX100 II and GFX 100S with me. Over and over on that portion of the trip, many of the scenes we encountered just seemed to fit the wide panorama landscape format and with all of us experimenting with the wide format I ended up creating a lot of images with this 65x24 crop. Luckily, since we had 102 MP cameras the final image size was still a whopping 50 megapixels. When capturing panorama images on the Fujifilm GFX cameras even though you are seeing the crop in the viewfinder the camera is still recording the entire 102 MP frame so that you can revert back to the full 4x3 image aspect ratio after the fact when editing the images in post. A few of the panoramas that I captured in Bhutan are shown on page 31.

The highlight of the Bhutan trip for me was the Gangtey valley. Gangtey was the highest point of our travels in Bhutan, as the village is at an elevation of 3,000 m (9,483 feet) and the village sits on a hill above a sweeping valley as shown on pages 50-51. Even though I was under the weather on this part of the trip, the views from our hotel were expansive and the valley is unique (at least in our travels) as it is one of the few places that is not forested from end to end.

Back in Thimphu, we visited a farmer's market, which was the cleanest market of any kind I have ever seen and it was overflowing with fresh fruits, vegetables and various other goods. The quality of the food brought in from farmer's in the area was beautiful. And the food in Bhutan was excellent as well—and if you asked for it they had plenty of spicy food to try out. As I said earlier, Bhutan surprised me in so many ways. It is an incredible country. It is also one of the few I have been in where it generally feels like everyone is trying to improve the country, themselves and the environment. You could feel this cohesion in the people and the landscape everywhere you went.

Moving on to another spectacular country, from Bhutan I flew to Tokyo, Japan. After two solid weeks of travel, I luckily had a day or two to relax in Tokyo and catch up on sleep and get over the respiratory illness I collected in the prior weeks. Having been to Japan several times, being back in such an incredible culture is always invigorating. In my opinion, Japan might just be the height of civilization. The food, the people, the honesty (and honor) and the countryside are all spectacular. After a few days of rest, and some stellar food, I flew up to Hokkaido to meet my good friend George Nobechi (who set up this whole trip) and met the rest of our group.







I have wanted to explore Hokkaido, the northern island of Japan ever since I first went to Japan. Hokkaido is one of the snowiest places on Earth. On average, Hokkaido gets anywhere from six to fifteen meters (20 to 50 feet) of snow a year. Here in the USA, we generally measure snow in inches, not feet or meters. By comparison, the Alta Ski area in Utah (in a good winter these days) gets around 545 inches (45 feet) of snow each year—but that ski area is at an elevation of 8,500 to 11,000 feet (2,590 to 3,352 m) not at sea level.

From the get go, when we arrived in Sapporo, the weather greeted us with bone-chilling cold and stiff winds, which is just what we expected. We were all prepared for the cold with plenty of big jackets, hats and gloves as well as winter boots and even micro-spikes for those icy areas. For the first week we explored the landscapes to the south and west of Sapporo. This area is well known for several epic ski areas, but it also holds quite a few magical caldera lakes (i.e. volcanic crater lakes) and remote fishing villages along the coastline. The weather was rough those first few days, with strong winds and sideways snow, but that also made for some wild images—as shown in the seastack panorama on pages 36-37. This panorama captured along the western coastline south of Sapporo might be the best image I created on the entire five week adventure in Asia. It is an image that needs to be seen in a large format to fully appreciate, which is why I placed it here in the Newsletter as a double-page spread. If it was printed five or six feet wide and hung on a wall I think it would have more impact and show the stormy, wild nature of that scene even better.

After exploring the area south of Sapporo, we ventured east through Daisetsuzan National Park in the center of Hokkaido and then onwards to the northeastern coast and Shiretoko National Park before heading south to the Kushiro region. We covered a lot of ground on this trip. In Daisetsuzan National Park we also encountered the most snow we saw on the trip. The snow was so deep that our driver totally missed our hotel when we drove right by it. Our hotel in the park was literally buried and there were snow tunnels dug out to allow cars and buses to even get near the front door of the hotel. Signs everywhere warned of falling ice and snow—and that you could be buried if you stepped out at the wrong moment and the twenty feet of snow slid off above you. The hotel seemed to be built to be buried. I have never seen such a building where they knew there would be so much snow that you just had to build it so that it could support the load.

Not far from Daisetsuzan National Park we also visited the famous Hokkaido trees that are near the town of Biei, in the Kamikawa District. There are several different trees and stands of trees that have become quite famous—and many of these sites are overrun with tourists. We spent one day cruising around to many of the iconic trees and tried to stay out of the melee. On pages 40-41 is one image of the Larch trees at "Mile Seven Hill." This stand is well known and in a farmer's field just next to their house. The farmers have graciously built a pullout for tourists to come photograph the stand of trees. In other locations the number of tourists has exploded and entire roads are basically jammed so tight the locals have to find other ways out. I can definitely see why the trees are so popular as the graphic patterns and the trees on the snowy landscape are quite beautiful.

On the photography tour in Japan, many of our participants also had medium format cameras (mostly the







FUJIFILM GFX100 RF), which could also capture 65x24 panoramas. Hence, after playing with the panorama aspect ratio in Nepal and Bhutan, I continued to capture a lot of images in Hokkaido using this same panorama format—as did many of our participants. If you would like to read more about the thinking behind the panoramas—and see more of those images check out a recent blog post entitled, An Ode to Panoramas.

Aside from the incredible amounts of snow and ice, one thing I was not completely aware of was just how much wildlife there is on the island—especially on the northeastern side. Our adventure quickly became a wildlife tour in the last week. I was very surprised by the number of tourists who were avid wildlife photographers and the array of wildlife there was to photograph. We met tourists from all over the world that last week—from Asia, Europe, Australia and the USA. The greatest number of the tourists we met were actually from China, which obviously isn't that far away. We photographed Ezo red foxes, swans, eagles and red-crowned cranes. Along the way, we also visited several aquariums, which are numerous in Japan, and photographed penguins, seals and other marine wildlife as well. Before the trip, George was insistent that I borrow the new FUJIFILM GF500mm lens to bring along as I would need it for the wildlife—and I am very glad he talked me into it as I needed that long 400mm full-frame equivalent lens to photograph the wildlife.

Five straight weeks of travel can be pretty taxing. I find that teaching workshops and leading photo tours is incredibly draining but of course it is also a lot of fun. I am quite the introvert back home and in the office. On photography tours, especially when traveling internationally, the group basically sticks together and travels non-stop together. Sadly on this five week excursion, I picked up something on the first trip and recovered from it early on in the second trip in Japan, but then I picked up something else along the way. Hence, I was pretty run down for four of the five weeks and it took me another few weeks once I got back to the USA to fully recover. Luckily there were two leaders on each trip so that we could support each other—and also it was lucky that I did not get so sick that I was completely down for the count.

One of the things that really surprised me about Hokkaido was the number of active volcanoes. I have always known that Japan was on the "ring of fire" and had a lot of seismic activity but driving around Hokkaido you really see the volcanic activity clearly. We saw numerous volcanic plumes and experienced a few earthquakes—all of them relatively small. Hokkaido is a land of constant change. It seems the people living there are accustomed to change, and know that at any moment there could be a large earthquake or a huge volcanic eruption. I suppose that is a part of the allure of this northern island.

The one thing that I did not do in Hokkaido was go skiing. In Daisetsuzan National Park we went to a ski area and it looked absolutely, off-the-charts epic. I will confess I had a few thoughts about ditching the group and heading up the mountain with some rental gear but I will have to go back and sample the fantastic powder some other time. My sincere thanks to both Andy Biggs and George Nobechi for bringing me in to help shepherd these two trips. Also a huge thanks to all of the amazing voyagers that came along with us on these trips. Andy and I have a trip in 2027 to Kenya and George and I are planning another tour in Japan for the fall of 2027 as well. Stay tuned!



























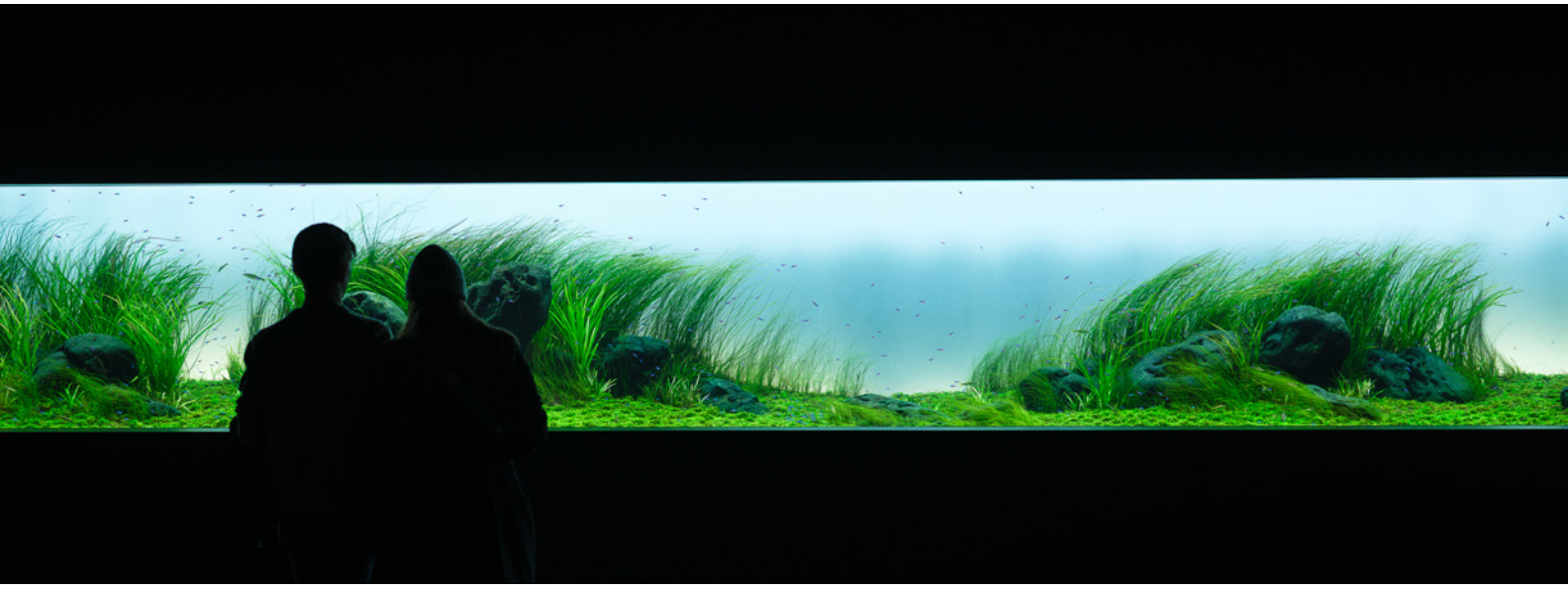

















portfolio



Personal Work

by Michael Clark

I remember quite clearly a photographer's agent saying the moment a photographer stops producing personal work it is just a matter of time before their career winds down. That stuck with me for decades. Most of my best work, the work that got licensed by some of the biggest companies on Earth, was created as personal work—otherwise known as "testing." A lot of my most well known images were created while testing out various lighting scenarios and new lighting techniques. During the Covid pandemic, many of us—myself included—stopped producing a lot of personal work because budgets dried up and assignments fell off. Sadly, while assignments have come back to some degree, at least for me things have never gone back to what they were before the pandemic. Part of this is that image licensing, which used to be a fair percentage of my income has vanished. Regardless, I am still incredibly passionate about photography and creating wild, imaginative images.

Over the last few years I have been able to create a variety of personal work, much of it not in the adventure genre. I have photographed all of the NASA Artemis launches in the last four years. I have also created a wide variety of travel imagery while exploring Japan, Nepal, Bhutan, Canada and all over the US. Lately, I really dove into panoramas—as detailed in my blog post entitled An Ode to Panoramas. Currently, I am working on a few different video projects as well. Hence, the article on new video gear in this issue of the Newsletter. But even so, with all of this work that was created outside of assignments, very little of it will result in new assignments.

Even with all of these side projects, I feel the need to reinvent my work even further. Every so often, as a freelancer, you have to show just how you can push your work forward. Sometimes you can do that on an assignment, but usually it has to happen on personal projects where you have time to really get creative in a way an assignment may not allow. While the photography industry has changed massively in the last few years, the art of attracting eyeballs and creating work that really stands out has not changed at all. It takes hard work, experimentation, and time for the creativity to really flow. Starting now, and going into 2027, I hope to spend time on personal projects and will be showing that work here in the Newsletter and on social media.

I don't want to be the old guy rehashing the glory days. 2026 has been a decent year and I have had some very exciting projects (like the Red Bull Aurora Borealis project). But even with those exciting projects under my belt, shooting some personal work that pushes my skills forward is the way to open up new doors. And through those doors, as I have learned for three decades now, are new exciting assignments and opportunities that are beyond my own comprehension.

parting shot



An elusive Ezo red fox on the run crossing some icy farmland in Hokkaido, Japan.

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