

TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHY WITH PROS

This month we spoke to three travel photographers who told us about their journey across the globe. From American photographers Gary Arndt's stunning travel landscapes, Ralph Velasco's sharp eye for capturing travel portraits, to Delhi, India based photographer, Dheeraj Paul's knack of shooting the colourful essence of a city, we will take you on a journey across the world. These photographers talk about everything, from the reason they like travel photography to what sort of preparation goes into it.



GARY ARNDT

Having visited all seven continents, over 170 countries and territories around the world, every US state and territory, every Canadian province, every Australian state and territory, over 125 US National Park Service sites and over 285 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Gary Arndt is no novice to travel photography. This American photographer sold his house in 2007 and has been travelling the world and photographing it ever since. He is known for his dynamic travel shots and has been published across the world. Gary has won numerous awards, including the prestigious Gold Medal, Travel Photographer of the Year, Society of American Travel Writers in 2014 and Travel Photographer of the Year, North American Travel Journalists Association in 2013.

Why your interest in travel photography over other genres?

I travel for a living. I don't have a home and live on the road 365 days a year. If it wasn't for travel, I probably wouldn't be interested in photography at all.

Which are some of your favourite locations to photograph?

Some of my favourite places to photograph are the Namib Desert in Namibia, the Canadian Rockies in Alberta, Antarctica, the Galapagos

Islands, and many of the national parks in the United States, Canada, and Australia.

What sort of preparation is required for travel photography?

I think, there is very little preparation required. You should certainly do some research on a location before venturing, but much of what I do is very spontaneous. Most travel photography is done with natural lighting and on location, so there is less work than studio photography.







TIPS

Being in the perfect place at the perfect time is more important than having perfect gear.

You don't need a lot of gear. The basics will serve you better than a giant bag of lenses.

Be aware of the light. Light is everything.

Look out for the little things. Scenic landscapes are great, but also pay attention to smaller things like flowers or ornaments on a building.

Be patient. I've sat for hours in one spot waiting for conditions to be just right. You will often have no control over your subject.





What are some of the key things one must keep in mind when doing travel photography?

Recognize that your subjects are humans and they are not there for you. Respect them and honour their wishes.

How important is equipment in travel photography?

It is less important than in many other photography genres. I carry one body and three lenses. That's it. Getting in place to get the right shot is far more important than having the best camera or the perfect lens.

What are the challenges and the rewards of this genre?

The rewards are getting to travel around the world. The challenges are getting to the right place at the right time. A great photo might only occur when conditions are right with light, time and weather.

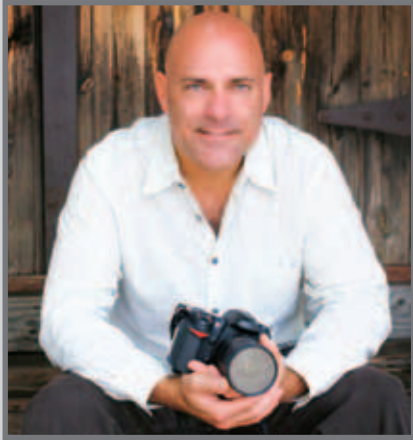


What role does post-processing play in travel photography?

It plays a lesser role than it does in fashion photography perhaps, but I do edit all my photos, usually, nothing more than 30-60 seconds of editing in Lightroom. Most of what I do is trying to compensate for lighting conditions I can't control.

What would you like to advise an upcoming travel photographer?

Don't expect to make a lot of money and be prepared to travel a lot. Most of the great travel photographers I know have been to over 100 countries during their career.



RALPH VELASCO

Ralph Velasco has been travelling since he was as young as 15, and started shooting with a point and shoot film camera. Today, he is a photography instructor and international guide who has photographed in over 50 countries on 6 continents. He was selected as one of the Top 100 Travel Photographers in the World by a site in the UK, also as one of the Top 10 Travel Photography Bloggers by USA Today's 10best.com. Additionally he was chosen as the "Open Photographer of the Year" for two years in a row by the Professional Photographers of Orange County.

Why your interest in travel photography over other genres?

Travel photography is a blend of most, if not all, genres, so I think that this potential for variety keeps me interested and allows me to tell the complete story of each destination. I consider myself a traveller first and a photographer second. I'm much more interested in the cultural exchanges and experiences I have, but great photo ops always seem to present themselves along the way, although, they're just the icing on the cake.

Which are some of your favourite locations to photograph?

Each place has its own pros and cons, but some of the recent locations I've been to that I found extremely good for photography are Nepal, Bhutan, Cambodia, Cuba, Turkey and Romania.



The rich diversity of each of these places; and by that I'm referring to the people, the food, the music, the history, the customs, the culture and more; adds so much to the overall experience.

What sort of preparation is required for travel photography?

I recommend to my clients that they do a fair amount of research before a trip so that they know what to expect. I'll also send out a very detailed set of Orientation Information to help each participant to prepare for each trip, and this includes a gear list, cultural tips, dos and taboos, information on safety, how the money works, etc. It's great

to be spontaneous, but the amount of preparation and research a person does can often be directly correlated to the success of their trip.

What are some of the key things one must keep in mind when doing travel photography?

I think it's extremely important to give the viewers of our photography an overall sense of the place, so I always recommend working from a shot list so that you come back with a variety of images, and not just people photographs, or just monuments, or just plates of food.

How important is equipment in





travel photography?

Equipment is somewhat important, but not the only consideration, in fact, the first tip in my ebook is that it's not about the camera. People are surprised to hear that I travel with a single DSLR body and a single 24 – 120 mm f/4 lens, although I do also have a fixed 50 mm f/1.4 that I use to challenge myself once in a while, and as a backup just in case the other lens fails. If one truly wants to improve his or her travel photography, spend money on travel, not more gear.

What are the challenges and the rewards of this genre?

As I've referenced before, the challenge with travel photography is telling the complete story, which may require coming back to a location over and over again, as it's very difficult to do with limited time in a destination. The reward is the finished story itself. And having that variety of images can result in some





great content for other uses, whether it be a book, presentation, website or blog post. There are so many outlets for our photography these days.

What role does post-processing play in travel photography?

If you ask me, shooting RAW is the only way to go, and so a RAW file needs to be post processed. That being said, I spend about 30 seconds on each image in post. Of course, I try to get the image right in camera, and then I have little work to do after, but with the amount of travel I do and the amount of images I make each year, I couldn't spend much more than that, even if just on the best of the best. One other thing I'll say is that for someone who travels and shoots as much as I do, it's imperative to keep up with downloading, sorting, rating and post-processing images almost on a daily basis along the way. I couldn't possibly come back to face that job all at once after each trip, but need to do it little by little over the course of the trip.

What would you like to advise an upcoming travel photographer?

The first thing a person who wants to get into travel photography should do is to develop a first class

TIPS

- Be aware of your backgrounds. Always look deeper into the scene to see if there's something in the background you'd like to include or exclude, to help tell a story.
- My mantra has become, "Either it's in or it's out." Take an extra second or two to scan all four edges of the frame while looking through the viewfinder so that you can include what you want in the frame, or exclude what you don't want.
- Often times I see photographers waiting until everyone is out of the scene before they make the image, but I'm typically the opposite. I want at least one person in most scenes to add what I call a "human touch," or a definite point of interest. Additionally, this provides a sense of scale, but also brings the viewer of the image into the scene by giving them something to relate to.
- Watch your horizons. I do a lot of image reviews and critiques and the first thing that pops out at me is if a horizon in the image is off. This could be a natural horizon like a sunset or landscape, but it might also be a man-made horizon, like the altar of a church or the windowsill of a building. If you have trouble keeping horizons level in-camera, there's no harm in simply shooting a little wider and then fixing them in post.
- Shoot both a landscape (horizontal) and portrait (vertical) version of every scene. Photograph each scene the way it looks most natural to you, then simply turn the camera 90 degrees to get another, often completely different, feeling version of the same scene. This works in most cases, so try it and soon you'll be in the habit of doing this, and it could double your photo opportunities.



portfolio of images. That portfolio is your calling card and has to be top notch in order to be taken seriously. This, of course, requires travel, but you can also start in your own area and then branch out over time to other destinations. Then get your

work out there, whether with your own website (this is mandatory), on Facebook, entering quality photo contests, and the like. No use clicking great photographs and keeping it on your hard drive, it needs to be shared.



DHEERAJ PAUL

Hailing from a family of well-known skilled professional photographers, Dheeraj Paul has been surrounded by cameras since his childhood. After being mentored by his father, the legendary photographer, S. Paul, he went on to shoot across various genres, from travel and street to editorial and advertising photography, and have his work displayed in a number of countries. His proficiency and the quality of his work have helped him bag numerous awards in India and across the globe.

Why your interest in travel photography over other genres?

I am a people photographer; I enjoy travel photography which allows me to document portraits, emotions and living conditions of humans irrespective of their region. Travel is part of street photography where you don't like to pose or stage situation rather you need to be spontaneous to capture the fleeting moment through the lens.

Which are some of your favourite locations to photograph?

India as a whole is full of pictures, and every step is a picture opportunity. I love Varanasi for its rich culture and spirituality, Delhi, my homeland, inspires you to shoot both historic and modern way of life. Pushkar is



another wonderful place for a photographer to be at during the famous Camel Fair. I have been mentoring Photo Expeditions to all these places for photo enthusiasts from across the globe and they just enjoy photographing these cities. Lastly, witnessing Kumbh Mela is a photographer's delight. Travel photographers from all over the world visit India to capture the Nagas at Kumbh,

which is known as the largest gathering of humans on planet earth.

What sort of preparation is required for travel photography?

I recommend travel photographers to travel light but at the same time take your favourite lenses along. Unlike advertising, travel Photography is not about showing off.





I am a hardcore technology guy and have moved to compact yet high-quality Sony Alpha 7 Series Mirrorless full-frame cameras, they allow me to carry all my favourite lenses along with three bodies in a small camera bag.

I always make sure to keep ample amount of formatted memory cards and extra batteries during my travel assignments and expeditions.

What are some of the key things one must keep in mind when doing travel photography?

The most important is to be original in what you capture. One needs to conceive new perspectives and angles when it comes to shooting famous landmarks. One needs to think beyond pretty postcard images. Try to candidly capture people along with the monuments. The essence of the destination should be visible in the frame.





TIPS

Best time for taking pictures is two hours after the sunrise and two hours before the sunset. Utilise these 4 hours of the day the most for your travel pictures. For taking travel pictures one needs to get out from their comfort zone.

Try to capture candid moments. However, talk to the strangers on streets, and make them comfortable before you ask them permissions.

Don't argue when you are in new city, if they don't want to be photographed, leave them on their own. There is always next opportunity coming up.

Don't hesitate to experiment with light and exploring new vantage points.

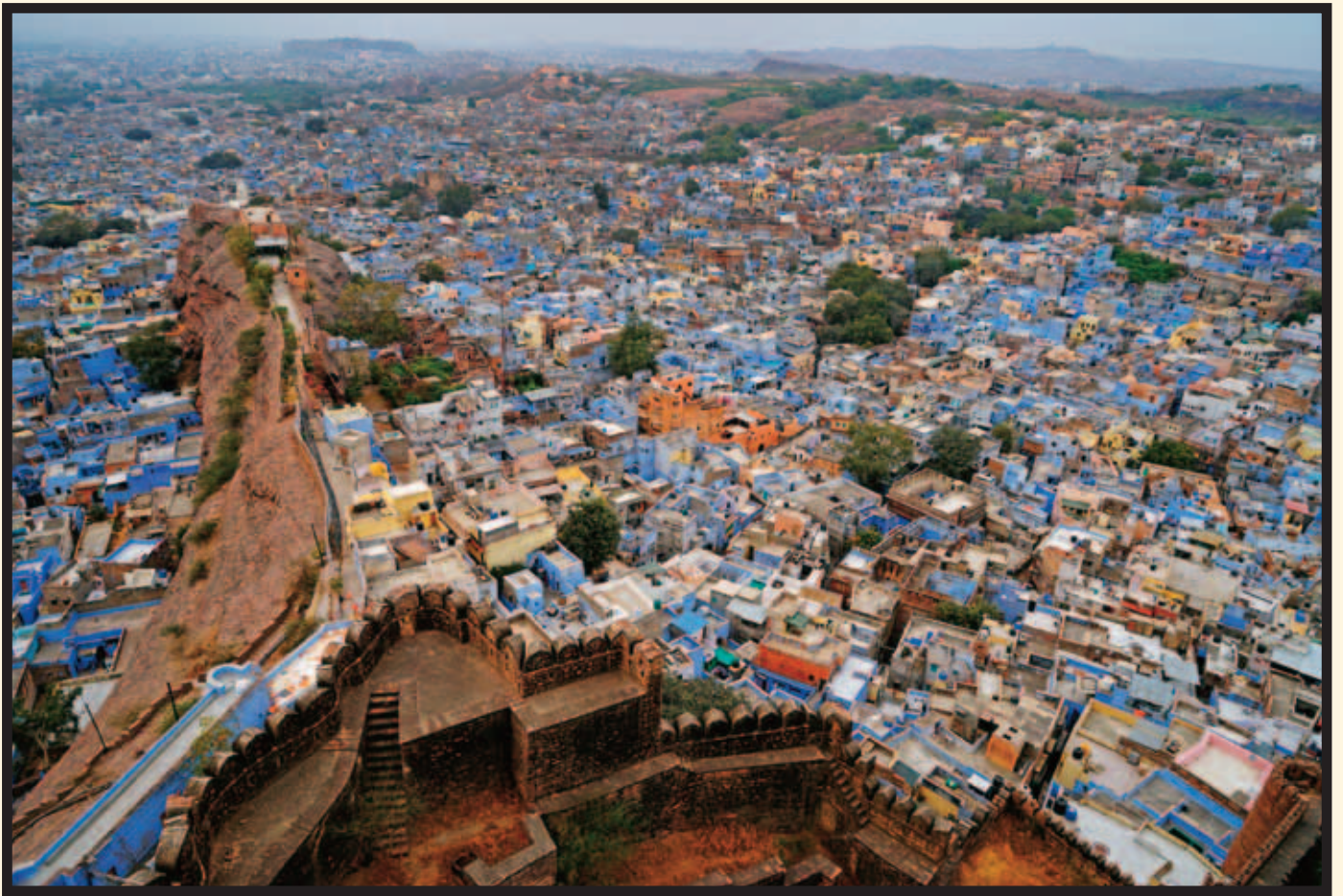


How important is equipment in travel photography?

A photographer needs vision to frame his composition but to make it happen one needs a modern sophisticated camera as well.

In this megapixel wars of 24MP, 36MP and 50MP cameras, one needs a camera which is fast in capturing with precise AF capabilities, as during travel people are always on the go, and it's all about capturing in real time; one

miss and you have to repent forever. There is no second chance in street and travel photography. Lenses play a vital role in travel photography. If one needs to capture architectural monuments,



super wide-angled zooms are required. If one needs to concentrate more on emotions and expressions, then telephoto zooms are best, and for taking pictures in available light or poor lighting situations, fast prime lenses are required.

What are the challenges and the rewards of this genre?

Travel photography is always challenging, as a photographer always needs to be on their toes to capture moments on the go. The real task is to freeze an ordinary scene in an extraordinary way. That makes a snapshot turn into a creative picture. Capturing night scenes are also very difficult to expose, yet look spectacular with neon lights or lighted monuments. A lot of patience and precision is involved when photographing people at dusk or after the dark.

What role does post-processing play in travel photography?

In this digital era one cannot ignore post-processing. In fact to enhance digital work by software or in camera effects is not wrong at all, but photographers should know their

limits. Too much edited or saturated pictures look artificial and amateurish. We as photographers are not allowed to remove or add any other elements through editing software in travel and people photography. Be as pure as possible.

I would suggest a lot of post-processing of the pictures should be avoided. Multiple HDR shots are fine in landscapes, or composite images in star trails, but should be avoided in people and portraits.

What would you like to advise to upcoming travel photographers?

As I mentioned before, be original and innovative when it comes to aesthetics. Try new style of compositions. Don't be lazy; wake up early to follow the light. For capturing, it is said that one must reach the location before the very first light. Do your homework before visiting a new place. Find out what are the interesting or important places to visit, local language or people behaviour, as all of this is important to know well in advance.



Prepare prior written permissions, if required, to avoid last minute disappointment.

TEXT: ABHISHEK DESAI