Death Valley Photo Tour

March 20th - 23rd,2022

TOUR PACKET

Photography - Travel - Friendship - Adventure

Hello Death Valley Photography Tour Participants!

This tour packet serves as your reference for your upcoming photography expedition! It is FILLED with information for you. Covering photographic gear recommendations, travel and packing tips as well as any practical information you may need to know for this photo tour.

Over the past few months you should have received emails with flight suggestions, itinerary updates and various essential information. Between the tour packet, and email updates, it is our goal to keep you as well informed as possible. As always, please don't hesitate to ask our team questions (although we may refer you back to the tour packet if that information has already been covered). We do recommend downloading this packet to your smartphone or tablet for easy access during the tour.

Please keep in mind that this tour is an ADVENTURE. This tour is also very unique in how we will go about day to day!

Although we do have an itinerary planned, you are coming with us to adventure, photograph, learn and have an experience! We like to keep things flexible to ensure the best possible photographic experience. This may mean changing plans last minute to catch the best light, weather, etc. That is part of the fun and experience with us!

Touring in areas such as this is subject to continual changes and adjustments, necessitated by conditions or other unforeseen circumstances. Our team, is committed to providing the best experience possible, and may need to adjust the intended itinerary in order to do this.

This might be done without any advance announcement to clients. You will soon come to learn that our favorite word during these trips is "flexibility." Some of the most incredible images come from adventuring and just experiencing without being too locked into a set time frame

Our goal is to make this an enjoyable photographic adventure unlike any other available. To make this happen, please be flexible and enjoy! *WE ASK FOR NO NEGATIVE moods!*

Please feel free to email if you have any questions or need any help. We are here to serve and we strive to provide experiences and photographic education that is truly exceptional and unlike anywhere else in the world.

Photography – Travel – Friendship – and Adventure!

The 4 key ingredients to each MPA tour are: Photography – Travel – Friendship – and Adventure! It is our sincere hope that all 4 of these are fulfilled.

Our clients, as many of you are doing on this trip, return again and again. We are always trying to improve the experience. Please know we will be there with you working hand in hand on this adventure!

Below are some travel tips to help you in preparation for this incredible experience we are all about to embark on together.

Before the tour, check out the MPA tour preparation resource page!

Here you will find helpful camera tutorials, tips, videos and more to prepare you fully for your photography tour!

TOUR PREPERATION RESOURCE PAGE

https://mckaylive.com/tour-resources/

The McKay Photography Academy Tour Team

Toby Gelston - Photorec tv & Gearhead Hippie

Steve Scurich - PPA M.Photog - Steve Scurich Photography & Shaggy Stylist

Instructor Creed

- We hold our core ingredients Photography, Travel, Friendship, Adventure as first and foremost in all we do. Understanding that all are of equal important components and importance to the way we do business and to what we desire our clients to experience.

- We do what we do because we enjoy it, are passionate about it, and want our clients as well as ourselves to have an incredible experience with every tour. We will place our client's photographic needs first and foremost on every tour.

- We will be giving and generous in who we are and what we do with each other, with our clients, and our travel partners. We will always give it everything we have!

- We recognize we cannot make everyone “happy”. We will work hard to see that every client has an incredible experience, but we also understand that it is impossible that everyone will always be happy. We understand everyone is unique and we may or may not be the best fit for some. With that, we will always strive to be the best at what we do for all clients!

- We will be true to ourselves, with each other, and our clients. We will strive to be authentic and honest in our words and deeds. This will allow us to continue to be passionate about what we do and give us the ability to give 100% of who we are individually and as a team, to each other and our clients without holding back for fear of saying or doing the “wrong” thing.

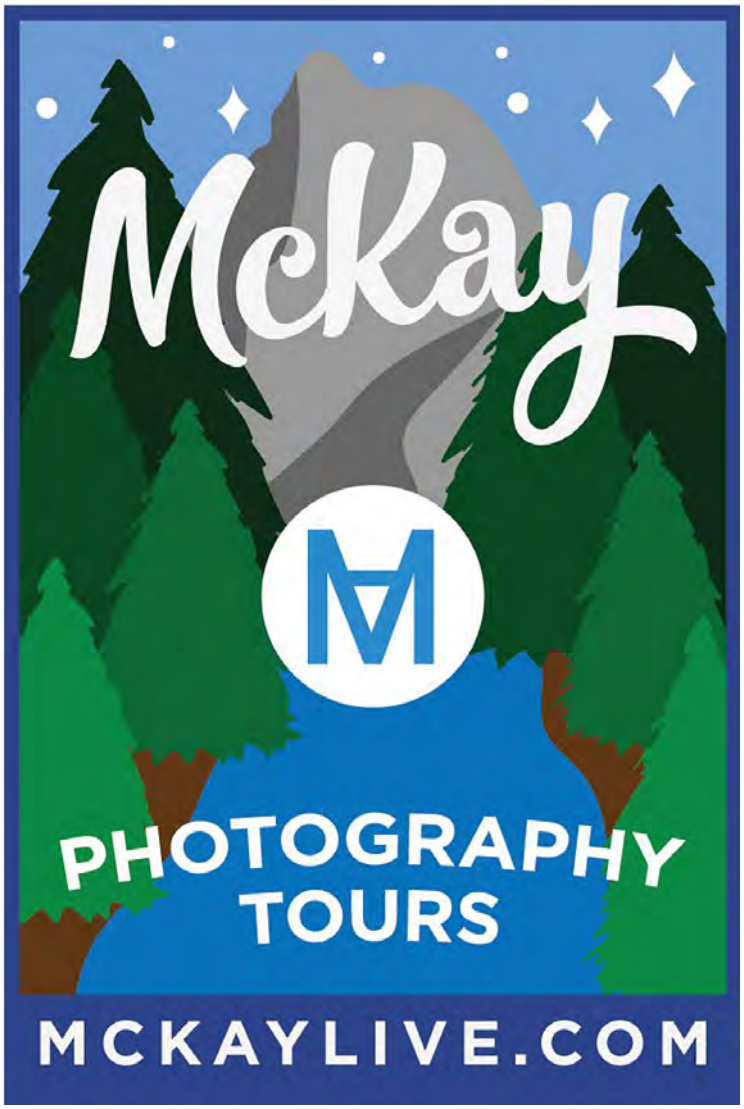
- We will speak up about what we feel and think. This includes even if it means a client may disagree because we value integrity each other,,other clients, the planet, and our overall client experience more than anything.

- We value truth, equality, and justice for all people of all backgrounds and belief systems. Nothing less will be tolerated.

- We value the world in which we live and the environment. We recognize how we are a part of it as well as how we can help be a voice of change.

- We will not be silent when we hear or see someone treating us, others, or the world that we live in with disrespect.

- We are a team! We will always work together to help educate each person on a photography tour to the best of our abilities. As instructors, we are each unique and carry various abilities and tools within our education “toolbox”. We cannot, nor should we be expected to have every answer. However, we will do all we can to find the answer for our clients and seek help from each other in doing so.



Client Creed

At McKay Photography Academy we have crafted our team and tours over many years. We continue to grow and learn ourselves. We also work to create the best possible environment for our clients we feel we can offer.

In order for our team and our clients to get the most out of every photographic tour , we present to you the MPA Instructor/Client Partnership Creed.

• At MPA , we are a team! We are friends, individual business owners, and professional photographers with thousands of hours each as our background. Individually, and as a team, we continue the pursuit of our own education to always become better as photographers and educators.

• We consider our relationships with our clients as much more than just client/instructor relationships. We consider them a partnership where we all bring something to the table to help each other grow and learn and see the beautiful world and all that is in it. Through this, we also hope to bring change and create a better place then where we started. MPA is MUCH more than just photographic educational tours. It is life experiences!

• We work to help each person on a photography tour to the best of our abilities with all we have to offer.

• As instructors , we are each unique individuals within the team and carry various abilities and tools within our education “tool box”.

• We cherish that we each have a different way we present the way in which teach. This allows for our clients to have various thought processes in which to learn. We are not here to tell you “our” way, but to hell you learn and start understanding what works best for you as an individual! To help you find “your” way.

• We cannot nor should we be expected to have every answer to every system or lens on the market. However, we will do all we can to find the answer for our clients and seek help from each other in doing so.

• We do not know it all nor do we or others enjoy when people like to be “know it alls”.

• Clients should expect that all MPA instructors will do their very best to help you achieve top notch photography education . We will pour ourselves into you. We do not take that lightly and we ask you do the same.

• We are here to serve but not be your servants. We respect our clients and ask that we are respected. The instructor/client relationship should be one of partnership!

• We will not tolerate aggressive behavior (vocally or physically) towards us , other clients, or those we partner with.

• To give the best educational experience, we want to work with each client individually and in a group setting. We will have a small client to instructor ratio on every tour in order to give you what we believe to be the best photographic educational experience available.

• We understand that we have various people of all types of photographic abilities and personalities on our tours. We are here for everyone.

• Clients should expect that all tours are a “two way” street where we will ask questions of our clients, but our clients must ask questions of us as we cannot “read” minds.

• As a partnership , we all must be flexible on a tour. It must be understood that everyday will present unexpected situations and occurrences. Flexibility and a great attitude are a necessity of both the MPA instruction team as well as clients on a tour. This allows for a better educational and overall environment for all in a tour.

PASSPORT
Let the
ADVENTURE
Begin
designed by freepik

BASE ITENERARY

*Subject to Change

March 20th – 23rd , 2022
Base Itinerary – This is base and subject to change based on conditions and overall thoughts to get the best images possible! Always be flexible!

This will be a ALOT of time in the field.

Sun Mar 20th- Meet 6pm –
Head out for Astrophotography (back by 10pm)

Mon Mar 21st -Dawn at Zabriskie Point –
After dawn walk on short trail in the area.
Late Breakfast and mid day break
Sunset at Mesquite Sand dunes
Dinner in park
Astrophotography at Sand Dunes

Tue Mar 22nd – Sunrise at Sand Dunes
Artists Drive and Palette
Astro at Harmony Borax Works

Wed Mar 23rd..Depart at your leisure

*Each day will present various photographic opportunities. Based on a number of factors, each day will be flexible to where we go and exactly what we photograph. This keeps everything fresh and exciting! Depending on time, light, weather etc, we also try to work in an editing and image review session!

Flights:
For the tour, you can fly into and depart from Las Vegas which is a 1:45 minute drive

Transportation:
On this tour, we will be utilizing our rented vehicles and car - pooling each day.

Contact info:
Groupme App - This will be set up prior to the start of tour. Please be sure to have the app downloaded. MPA Travel Cell - 916-458-2897
E-mail - hello@mckaylive.com

Accomadations: Stovepipe Wells Village

RESERVATIONS, To ensure that all Individual-Pay Group Members of MCK221 receive the associated discount,

GROUP CODE: MCK222

Contact is Phil Gorham 760-786-7090
You will need to call Phil directly to book.OR email groups@deathvalleylodgingco.com

Location - Stovepipe Wells
Highway 190, Death Valley Junction, CA 92328
Geo Coordinates: 36.606812, -117.145929

Please double-check the essentials! Make sure you have all prescription medications in your carry-on, check your warm weather gear according to our suggested packing list, and pay particular attention to these items:

- Make your flight and/or transportation arrangements.
- If you plan to arrive EARLIER than the day of leaving for tour as recommended, please be sure that you have booked and paid for hotel reservations for the additional night(s).
- Please confer with your physician if need.
- Make sure all of your hotel reservations are confirmed.
- Dressing properly for the environment and having the correct gear is a must. Please take a few moments to review our packing and clothing guidelines.
- Please note that recreational use of UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles) or drones are not permitted without prior permission and are not allowed in some areas and are NOT allowed in National Parks or at many locations. If you plan on bringing a drone, please contact hello@mckaylive.com so we are aware and can make sure each time you intend to fly.
- MPA is NOT responsible for the legalities of a drone in flight/injury or in any scenario.
- Be sure the Groupme app is downloaded and working on your phone.
- Check ALL of your camera gear. Cameras, Lenses, Batteries and Charger, Tripod etc.
- Please read the entire tour pack.

Group Dynamics

Traveling as a photography group should be awesome. There are many advantages to doing so. We have found that 99% of the time everyone gets along great and lifelong friendships are formed. Tours typically end with lots of hugs and tears because of the unity of the group that is formed.

We expect this tour to be fun, flexible and an awesome opportunity to learn photography and to travel together. We always work VERY HARD to bring you the McKay motto which is Photography, Travel, Friendship, and Adventure.

With that, there can be that 1% of the time where for whatever reason, someone has a hard time in a group setting or overall just is a negative type person. We ask you to be kind and courteous to each other. We recognize that you will gravitate towards certain personalities and that is great. If there is someone that you do not seem to get along well with, please just do your best and avoid confrontation.

The best way to handle being in a group setting is to have fun, meet others, relax, be FLEXIBLE, and just enjoy the journey. This is the place you CAN let go and not have to worry about getting from point A to point B or what bus seat is best.

Getting worked up, frustrated and annoyed over silly situations will ruin the tour for yourself and can have a negative impact on the group as a whole. We will NOT allow that to happen. Likewise, having a positive, flexible, and fun attitude, will also rub off as a group! We really find that tours that have great energy, fun dynamics, and flexibility, end up being the best for everyone involved!

At MPA we pride ourselves in giving you a great photography tour. We have led hundreds of clients around the world and love what we do! We cannot control everything and there WILL BE CHANGES that occur and items that come up that will be totally unexpected and outside of our control or yours. That is part of touring.

This is a place for you to sit back, relax, and just enjoy your time with us and the experience you are embarking on. Please let the MPA team help you and educate you with your photography. Simply put, enjoy each other as we travel, photograph and journey together!

Group Communication

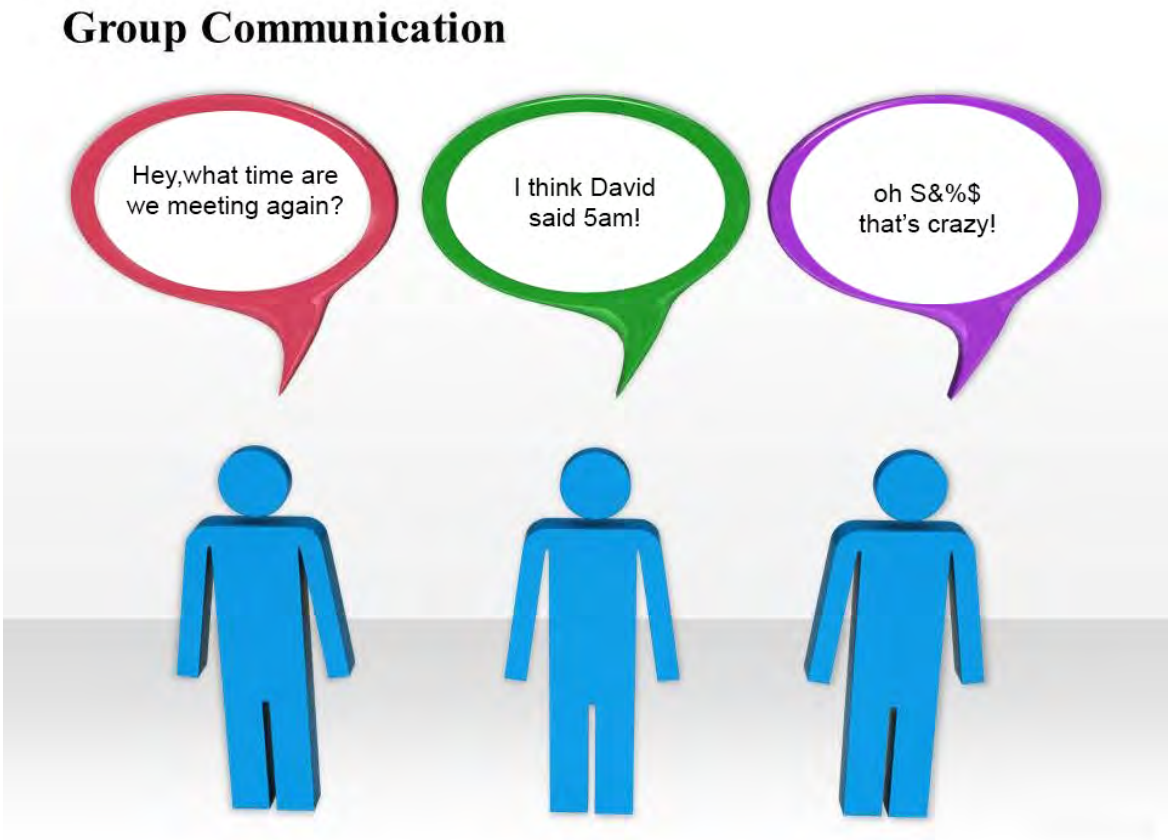
About 2 weeks or so prior to the tour and during our tour we will utilize the app “GroupMe” to stay in touch and provide you with updates throughout our time together. GroupMe provides free group messaging - like a private chat room for a small group. This is a great way for you to also communicate with your fellow photographers and tour members.

We recommend installing the app on your phone and signing up for the free service prior to the start of the tour. We will send out invitations to join the chat in the weeks leading up to the tour.

Please also note the Group Dynamics section further in to the tour packet. Saying hello via the Groupme app ahead of time, is an excellent way to start getting to know and bonding with the group ahead of the tour!

GroupMe works over cell networks, wifi and via SMS.

You can find more information here. https://groupme.com/apps



Luggage Recommendations

1 Suitcase or Duffle Bag - Checked Please limit to ONE suitcase per person!
1 Camera Backpack/Bag - Carry-On - Overhead Storage Bin
1- Small Personal Item Carry-On

As always, make sure to check with your airline carrier to find out bag weight limits for both checked and cabin baggage.

ALWAYS CARRY YOUR CASH AND PASSPORT ON YOU AND PROTECTED!

Please see Ally's Packing tips on the MPA tour resource page. Including how to handle Carry-Ons while flying with weight restrictions!

Luggage: It is a good idea to place your contact info in your luggage as well, just in case a luggage tag comes off.
Use TSA approved luggage locks.

Weather: Check the weather a couple weeks prior to travel and again every 3-4 days to see the trend. Weather is always unpredictable so be prepared for ANYTHING! Have good rain gear (hooded lightweight jacket is best and a pair of water proof hiking style shoes).

Reusable bottles: In an effort to do our part reducing plastic, we ask clients to consider bringing reusable water bottles. We will provide jugs of water to all guest.

Smoking: Smoking is permitted in designated areas only. We kindly ask you to be patient to this feature and respectful of non smokers. Also, PLEASE bring a small disposable bag(s) to place used cigarette butts in. Do NOT under any circumstances, throw away on the ground.

Health and Safety: It is important for your own safety that you are in good health and have taken all appropriate precautions. We cannot be responsible for your own health related issues. PLEASE take all needed precautions.

If you have mobility issues or walk with assistance devices, carefully consider the activities you can participate in while on tour. Walking on sometimes rocky and slippery terrain can be challenging. Our team members can help you in decisions.

NEVER EVER leave your gear un-attended at hotel lobby.

ATMs/Currency Exchange: ATMs are in some locations in cities, though not all ATMs are accessible 24 hours. ATMs generally accept all major debit, credit, and cash-only cards. Cirrus (tel. 800/424-7787; www.mastercard.com) and PLUS (tel. 800/843-7587; www.visa.com) cards are almost universally accepted in ATMs .

Credit & Debit Cards: Credit cards are safe, convenient, and generally offer good exchange rates. Note, however, that many banks now assess a 1% to 3% "foreign transaction fee" on all charges you incur abroad. It is NOT recommended to use a debit card for purchases except for obtaining cash at an ATM.

In most locations, you'll need a PIN to withdraw cash advances on your credit card. You will not need a PIN for most credit card purchases, but occasions may arise. If you've forgotten your PIN, call the number on the back of your card and ask that it be provided to you. Note: This information can change without notice.

You need to let your bank and credit card companies know where you will be traveling so they don't think it is fraud. It is a good idea to bring your credit card company's phone number along as well.

CBD and Hemp Products: Please note that YOU are responsible for carrying any products which may be illegal in some states or countries. In many countries, the punishment even for CBD oils is SEVERE! We suggest leaving them at home!

Fruit , Animal Products, Foods: These products may also be illegal to carry across state lines and from country to country. BE SURE TO DECLARE ANY ITEMS YOU MAY HAVE. Keep in mind, it is very easy to forget that banana that was handed to you on the plane! This can cause great difficulty for you while traveling. Especially abroad!

Air Travel: To avoid jet-lag try to stay hydrated on the plane, and if possible avoid alcohol. Getting up, stretching and muscle flexing exercises can help circulation. Some people find it helpful to bring sleeping pills for the longest flight. “Pick me ups” can be helpful such as Vitamin B. Drink mixes like Zipfiz, Emergen-c, Airborn and No-Jet-Lag tabs can be good to have handy as well. Some people experience constipation after long flights so you may want to bring along something for that as well.

MAKE SURE you have ALL NEEDED medications with you on your flight. If your luggage was delayed for any reason, then you have your medications!

An extra change of clothes is also advised in case luggage gets “misplaced” by airline for a day.

Keep camera batteries and any lithium batteries in carry on. DO NOT store in camera in flight as electronics at altitude can result in “dead pixels” in your sensor.

If you bring an extra ‘collapsible bag’ with you then you might have extra room to hand-carry something home with you. It is not recommended to put any breakables in your checked luggage.

Please respect the customs and traditions of the places you visit and be appreciative of any help you are given. BE FLEXIBLE, because you will NEED to be! It is exciting and fun to have things different from our days at home. The reality of travel is that schedules and time frames WILL change. The more you can just go with the flow, the better off you will be!

How To Pack:

Our recommendation is to bring clothes that will fit into a layered clothing scheme. For example, packing, light-weight long-sleeve t-shirts, turtlenecks, and a water-proof shell is better than packing five big, cotton sweaters and two huge “winter-down” coats. Three to five pairs of active wear pants, which are designed to respond to temperature variations, is much better than seven pairs of jeans.

Keep in mind that you may experience anything from t-shirt weather to cooler temperatures in the evenings and various regions. Each day’s temperature may vary– layers are essential. The tips and packing list, below, will help act as a guide in the packing process.

Packing suggestions:

Clothing:

- Short-Sleeved Shirts
- Long-sleeve shirts (for layering, evening warmth, and sun/insect protection)
- Shorts (personal preference) Convertible, lightweight zip-off pants - Travel pants
- Underwear (for women, bras/sports at bras as well)
- Fleece or insulated jacket (for cool nights)
- Waterproof windbreaker
- Wide-brim, tie-on sun hat
- Bathing suit
- Lightweight, comfortable sleepwear (personal preference)
- Please check the weather in the areas we will be before traveling to ensure your needs are met!

Footwear:

- Running or walking shoes, or light hiking boots Water Proof are always good.
- Flip-flops/Teva-type sandals (recommended for use in showers)
- Socks (7 pairs)

Essentials:

- Travel documents (valid passport with visa, documentation of vaccines, airline tickets, money)
- Flashlight and/or headlamp (with extra batteries)
- Sunglasses (100% UV screening w/retainer straps)
- Sunscreen and sun- blocking lip salve
- Mosquito repellent containing DEET - 30% Citronella based repellent -5%

Essentials Cont:

- Moist towelettes/hand wipes (1-3 per day per traveler)
- Hand sanitizer
- Toilet kit (toothbrush and paste, biodegradable shampoo and conditioner, moisturizing lotion, small packet of tissues, shaving gear, etc.
- Washcloth (thin, quick-drying is preferable)
- Assortment of stuff sacks, zip-lock bags
- Spare glasses (contact lens wearers should bring extra solution or wear glasses when it gets dusty.

Personal First Aid Kit:

- Alcohol wipes
- Antibiotic ointment (Neosporin) and hydrocortisone
- Band-Aids, Tweezers, Ibuprofen, Aspirin, or Acetaminophen Cold Remedies
- Motion sickness medication (if you are susceptible to motion sickness)
- A mild laxative Pepto-Bismol, anti-diarrhea pills
- Ciprofloxacin (as advised by a doctor)
- Medications you are currently taking - An antihistamine in case of allergy
- Seat cushion (for those with a bad back)

Optional Items:

- Eye drops
- Wristwatch or travel alarm clock
- Reading material
- Electrical outlet adapter’s
- Artificial sweeteners (Sweet ’N Low Splenda)
- Travel mug for morning coffee or tea
- Earplugs. Earplugs may be useful if you are sharing a cabin with a snorer

NON - Optional Items:

- Adventurous Spirit
- Great Attitude
- Sense of Humor
- Flexibility

Safety:
As an adult on this photography tour, we are going to do our best to trust that you will keep yourself out of unnecessary harm's way. The reality is, that anywhere you go in the world, there is always a chance of getting hurt, ill, or worse. However, when people take unnecessary risk and place themselves and possibly others in danger, this becomes a problem not only for themselves but also for the tour leaders and rest of the group.

This is a reminder that you have signed a liability risk agreement and you are going on this tour at your own risk. However, this does not give you the freedom to place yourself in harm's way, create an issue for others, place others at risk, or create a safety hazard for the tour as a whole. We ask you to refrain from taking a risk that there is no need to take.

We have seen many instances of our clients and others in perilous areas taking a risk that frankly are just stupid. This includes walking on cliffs, being out on rocks near a raging ocean, standing in the road and many other situations.

If at any time we as tour leaders see you taking a risk or being involved in any activity we feel is unsafe for yourself or for others on the tour, we will say something. However, it is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to be safe, use common sense, and not put yourself or others at risk.

It is easy while photographing to forget about your surroundings and own safety in order to "get the shot". Remember, no photograph is worth injury or death.

***Some* things to avoid:**
Standing too close to edges of cliffs or in places, you could easily fall or be swept out to sea being seriously injured or dying. Standing in or too close to the road.
Carrying too much gear while hiking and/or climbing.
Hiking trails that are too difficult for your ability.
Not being aware of your surroundings at all times.
Not carrying water.
Not knowing your own limits.
Wearing shoes that are not meant for the task at hand.
Using drugs/and or alcohol that alters the mind and your safety.
Going out alone or without letting the tour leaders know where you are at.

These are just some of the items we have seen and are asking you to avoid.
As you are an adult, it is your responsibility to be safety conscious and minimize risk.
Please use common sense.

Covid19 Measures: Ever Changing! This is SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS NEEDED.

During this time, we must adhere to CDC guidelines, local agencies and any law enforcement guidelines locally.

Proof of a negative Covid test must be taken within 72 hours of every tour unless you have shown proof of vaccination OR proof of recovery of Covid with a current antibodies test.

Please be sure to practice safe distancing from other groups.

Please be sure to bring a comfortable mask. You may have to wear in some areas and we will require in our vehicles.

Please adhere to any guidelines we are given in areas we will be.

If flying, please check with your airline about any guidelines they will have for traveling.

We realize there is still uncertainty, we are asking you that if you feel you have been exposed to anyone with Covid, OR you are experiencing any symptoms yourself, shortly before the tour, to please reschedule with us for the following year OR make sure you have a Covid test done. It has become much easier and quick to get a Covid test even at local pharmacies such as CVS.

Please note that you are choosing to go on this tour, and we cannot be responsible for you with Covid. Please do not hesitate with any questions as your safety is of utmost importance to us.

Car-pooling with others is at your own risk .

Tips & Gratuities

Thank you for joining us on this very special tour. As part of this tour, we have a truly top-notch instructional team. The team is here to serve you and will do anything they can to make your tour the most incredible experience it can be. Please never hesitate to ask any questions or for any help!

Clients always ask about tipping guidelines and suggestions. With that in mind, we have placed this guideline for you to use. This is totally at your discretion and a suggested amount. You are of course welcome to do more if you desire and know that these guys truly appreciate it and will do all they can to help you with anything on this tour!

Suggested amounts:

For a domestic tour of this length, we find the average person as a photographer tends to give $65-$80 per photographer to each instructor for the tour. Please do not feel any pressure if you are unable to do so. But if you are, and find that you appreciate the team and all the extras they will do, they will greatly appreciate the generosity. Please do not give David and Ally any tips. They would prefer anything to go directly to the team. *On this tour it would also be appropriate to tip the Prodigal Overland folks if you are on that portion of the 4x4 experience!*

More Info on why our tipping policies are the way they are and a few other thoughts!

We receive a LOT of thoughts and feedback on tipping from clients. It seems that the amount of opinions on it are as varied as the Arctic weather! Here is a well thought out question that came our way and a response to those questions to help people understand our policies. We understand the thoughts on tipping can be very sensitive and for us it is as well. There is a lot that goes into why our policies are the way they are.

If you are interested, this will help clarify in a very honest approach to why we have the polices we have in place. Personally, we as a company also work to be generous in our own tipping to vendors and those we work with as well.

Q. I've been thinking about a couple of things and wanted to share them with you and get your thoughts/perspective on them. When I look at the cost of the trips, the flight(s) and tipping, drivers and instructors, it gets expensive.

A. Yes, it does and I understand. Yet travel in small groups with professional instructors is more for sure as well. Well sometimes. As an example, our Iceland tour would be VERY difficult to do on your own for less. Same with a number of our tours actually for what you get. Hotels in Iceland run $700-$800 a night as an example where we stay and dinner can run well over $75 for one dinner at a hotel.

Q. Tipping: I think the tipping of the drivers should be part of the cost of the trip. Among other things, it means having
the right amount of money every day we travel. I've been on trips with National Geographic, BackRoads, Road Scholars and Overseas Adventure Travel. Tipping was included in the cost. Overseas used to, but enough participants complained so Overseas took care of it.

Regarding tipping the photography staff (minus you and Ally) can be sensitive, not for not wanting to show appreciation. Sometimes it's a matter of money, based on the number of people to tip. Neither National Geographic or BackRoads recommended tipping. Overseas suggests that at the end of the trip, participants might want to collectively purchase something nice, but it doesn't have to be expensive, for the staff, as a token of appreciation and remembrance of the trip. Of course, all gratuities are welcome and usually split between the staff.

A. We have tried many varieties of all of this and no matter what we do, people complain or disagree. We tried having tipping added in and people thought "well we want to tip what we want"...mostly more, but some people didn't. Tipping as you said is VERY VERY sensitive and VERY HARD for us to handle sometimes. Keep in mind that larger companies such as Overseas (I know personally who started that company) would do this, but the reality was the tipping was not very generous. That is not good.
It's just not an easy situation no matter how you slice it and believe me, we have tried it all sorts of ways. But I think the biggest thing in all this is to understand we are not a Nat Geo or RoadScholar type company in many ways and nor do we want to be that big or operate on that scale.

We like our business to be very personal as you can tell. We are VERY involved with each and every client on a different level than just business. For MPA, having people just choose on their own has worked the best. If someone doesn't want to tip, that is also their prerogative. When all is said and done, our goal is to work as hard as we can to give our clients the best photography tour and instruction there is. We love our team and they always go out of their way for everyone. You will find that for sure.

Amounts:

We DO ask our clients to be generous especially with our guides as they work so very hard for people and their living wages are not much. As far as our instructors, these guys are subcontractors and a lot comes into play here as well.

MOST Photography tour companies, if they employ an instructor, have to adhere to the 8-hour rule, breaks, overtime laws, etc. Trust me as I have had to do this including overtime when an instructor is simply flying on a plane! Our tour price would go up substantially if we had to keep doing that and we had to pay per hour and all that goes with this.

We have amazing instructors, total pros that run their own businesses as well, are eager to please everyone, will work and give you all they can many days well over 8 hours, and so yes, we feel they should be tipped. Honestly, it is the only way we can make it work. So for MPA, we had to make decisions and have tried MANY options. No matter what we do, some people feel one way and others another.

We have found that when we include the tip in the price, the price of the tour obviously goes up, then many people say this is too expensive as they do not consider that as part of the cost. A current example, last year I priced the Winter Yellowstone up just $300 to include tipping our guides and our instructors, people thought it was too expensive. I dropped the price back down and it sold out in a day. YET, they still spent the same and maybe even a bit more when all was said and done!

For Tanzania, we offered to have people pre-pay tips as an option in their price.....only about 15% of the people wanted to
and then most people actually tipped far above what the pre tip price we gave them was.

International:

Other issues we have as a smaller company is we would have far too much cash on us which is not smart and we are only allowed to carry so much with us BY LAW.

Keep in mind as we are a small private company unlike the companies you mentioned above, (which are very large) it is far different for us with legalities and lots of reasons most consumers are not aware of. Most people do not realize that. This is because so many tour operators have abused those funds and pocketed portions for themselves plus we have to declare certain amounts of cash when we enter a country.

Every dollar that comes in as a tour dollar has to be accounted for by law, INCLUDING tips. Believe me when I say that also creates more issues, bookkeeping, time etc. Even keeping track of where each dollar went to each guide etc!

The way we are doing it actually keeps your overall cost of a tour down when all is said and done, although you may not see that when you are handing out tips. But again if incorporated into the tour price, you would easily be paying the same and actually a bit more.

I think there is a lot of ways to look at it. But to be honest, we keep our prices very reasonable for what we do and also for the fact we bring instructors with such a great client ratio. So many photography tour companies do 12-15 guests and 1 instructor. We feel that people would much rather spend the same on a tour but get far better photography instruction but have found the only way to do that and see our team get taken care of, is to have people tip. As I have mentioned, trying to include that, within the price, presents and has presented ALOT of obstacles for us in the past.

Q. Thoughts?

A. Hopefully, this helps clarify why we do it the way we do. I have tried to be very detailed and take time as much as I could so there is an understanding. I think the realities are that no matter what we do, someone has varying opinions on it, so we have done what we feel is the best option and we have seen work the best as a whole. - David

PHOTOGRAPHY
The MPA experience is first and foremost about photography. The idea to be around like minded photographic enthusiast, learn new skills and enhance the knowledge you already have is at the core of all MPA photography tours. Each instructor is a working professional and yet has the ability to teach at all levels with patience and encouragement making sure no one is intimidated.

With MPA, all levels of photographers are encouraged and welcome! Whether you are a new beginning photographer, or have years of experience, you will have access to some of the most talented image makers in the world today working on creating images of your tour with an small client to instructor ratio. In this way, you are assured to have amazing instruction in a small intimate manner as you travel throughout the tour.

TRAVEL
Learning to photograph and capture images in some of the most incredible travel destinations in the world is another core ingredient to any MPA photographic tour. Taking place domestically and internationally, MPA photography tours are built to give you not only an incredible photographic opportunity, but an incredible travel opportunity.

Photographing your travel experience is such an awesome way to see and learn culture and other lands. Although every MPA tour is based around photography at its core, travel should be much more than just photography based. MPA tours are set to allow you awesome times of shooting and learning, but also times to relax, take in the culture, enjoy good food and wine and the experience of the location you are visiting.

After all, your “experience” should feed your photography. In order to feel something about what you are photographing, experiencing it and taking it in is a key component. We truly believe that you must experience travel and all it has to offer in order to photograph it to the fullest. In order to do this, we will not be photographing from sunrise to sunset every day, all day. Each day will have various opportunities we feel are photographically best, and you will have the flexibility to go along or stay and relax as you feel the need. There will also be scheduled “free times” and days to just sit, relax and enjoy the local area we may be in.

FRIENDSHIP
Imagine enjoying your travels and photographing with a group of people all interested in the same thing! No more hearing from your travel mates “can you hurry up please and take your picture” as you are hoping to capture that special image you are setting up. Joining an MPA photographic tour will allow you the opportunity to meet others interested in photography and travel and to create lasting friendships to last a lifetime. Many people from all walks of life including couples, singles, and younger to older generations enjoy MPA photography tours.

You are sure to meet people on this journey and make new friendships forged by the camaraderie of such an experience. MPA has seen MANY people return again and again to our tours and come back with a friend they have met on a previous tour. With this, never feel you will be alone. From the moment you arrive, you will be in good company, with good people and great friendships to be made!

ADVENTURE
Life should be full of adventure! Let’s face it, sometimes people spend their entire life talking about all their plans and what they will do but never do it. The challenge, to actually get up, make a plan and go for it! Congratulations, YOU are doing just that!

Adventure comes in all forms. MPA works hard to give you experiences in photography but filled with adventure on each and every tour. Life truly is but a glimpse of time. Be sure to live it and have adventure. We are excited you are joining us on what is sure to be an adventure of a life time!

Equipment List

For many of you, this may be your first photography tour and not only are you unsure of what to do and how this will go, you may be overwhelmed with what to bring! Do not worry, we are here to help!

Please understand there will be various levels of photo participants on this trip. If you are a serious photographer, really adhere to what we are saying below. If you are the one traveling with the serious photographer, we will still be instructing you as much or as little as you want as long as you paid the photographer rate.

If you are a beginning photographer we will help you every step of the way! We are here to help EVERYONE. If all this seems a little daunting for you, no worries, we will help you get what you want/need for this trip. There is no need for you to feel intimidated or out of place if this is your first trip with McKay Photography Academy.

Recommend Gear List:

- Camera(s)* (Having a backup body is recommended - at the minimum a point and shoot could be used as a backup)
- Camera Lenses (See below)
- Comfortable Camera Strap (Check out the SpiderHolster system below)
- Camera Bag (We love ThinkTank and Mindshift Gear-See below)
- Lightweight Bag for day excursions
- Plenty of Memory Cards (Multiple 64GB, 128GB cards)
- Batteries & Charger Minimum 2 batteries- Cold Weather tours 3.
- Tripod AND an extra plate
- Cable Release - You can also use the built in self-timer for long exposures.
- Laptop - Optional but recommended
- External hard drive - For images storage & backup
- Rain Sleeve - Covers your camera and allows for shooting in rain/heavy snow
- Small Flashlight
- Lens cloth or lens wipes
- Knee pads for kneeling on rocks and comfort

***Back Up Camera Body**

We always recommend a backup camera body or even a simple basic backup camera. Even a point and shoot is better than nothing. Due to the busy schedule and locations we will be in, we are likely unable to get to camera stores etc.

If your camera goes down, it obviously creates a real issue for you. For very little extra money, you should consider renting a backup camera body, or at the very least, bringing a small point and shoot back up for this trip!

The last thing you want to do is get all the way to our destination and NOT get great images! See LensProToGo gear rental below! Unfortunately WE ARE NOT ABLE TO LOAN OUT GEAR IF YOURS GOES DOWN!

Equipment Recommendations

Lenses: ALL lens choices will be useful on this tour! We recommend a wide angle, medium range and a telephoto for this tour!

Beyond all of the regular gear, you may be considering bringing; your lenses are a huge part of the gear list. Again, please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions about your gear, what you may be considering purchasing or renting, and in general just any help you need with choosing lenses.

It is important to understand first and foremost, there is no one lens that is perfect. We are asked all the time what lens should I use. Our answer is always the same. What do you see? How do you want to see it? What do you want to capture in the scene? The answer to those questions will dictate lens choice.

Remember that EVERYONE sees differently and there is no wrong choice for a lens. How you want to capture and interpret a scene becomes the way you choose what lens to use. This can be as unique and personal as each person on a tour.

When preparing for a tour, these are some items to consider. Weight - How much gear do you really want to lug around? Personally, I do not carry everything with me when hiking or walking around cities. However, I do usually bring most of my lenses on a tour with me and if we are not walking a lot and have access to our bus or vehicles easy enough (most tours this is the case)

I keep them in the vehicle with easy access to get to. It never hurts to bring the gear, except when weight is a major factor. With this in mind, the main lenses to consider bringing are a wide angle, a medium range, and a longer telephoto.

Each tour is specific as well. If we are doing a ton of wildlife, you will need your longest telephoto lens whereas for mostly landscape, a wider and medium range lens will be excellent choices. A wide angle and/or a medium range lens may be useful for the landscape scenes we will photograph.

Equipment Recommendations

Lenses Cont: A wide angle lens for night time star shooting is a must on this tour! A wide angle lens with an f stop of 2.8 or lower is best to allow the most amount of light in. Please reach out if you are unsure and you need help for this.

A wide-angle or medium range overall lens, will be useful for the landscape scenes we will photograph. Personally I am a huge fan of wide angle lenses for scenic and landscape shooting. Typically, I find that I use a wide angle much of the time on our excursions UNLESS I am photographing animals, sports, or aviation. Every lens has a purpose and the wide angle lens can be really cool to allow people to "take a journey" through your image. Many people are not used to a wide angle lens and this is one more reason we love to show people how to use them.

A good mid-range over all type lens is also an excellent choice. The two lenses I will carry with me at all times on a trip like this would be a wide- angle and a medium range lens. However, as we will have access to the vehicles very easily, I would not hesitate to bring a variety of lenses including a longer telephoto.

One camera body and lens over my shoulder, one lens in my sling bag with extra memory cards and an extra battery as I walk around. This way, I am prepared for most shooting situations and yet carrying very lightweight gear.

If you do not have good lens choices, be sure to call LensProToGo and get a lens rented if needed! Call them and tell them you are going out with us and they will help you get what you need.

All in one lens option: If you are looking for a great versatile "all in one" style lens that will not break the bank and give you the ability to pretty much capture everything except the widest angle images, in one lens that covers fairly wide to long telephoto, the new Tamron 18mm-400mm is a fantastic choice for Canon and Nikon users.

This is not the best most expensive lens choice available, but for the price and versatility, it is a great amateur lens that people love and we have found to be excellent for the value. This lens is only available for the crop sensor cameras such as the Canon Rebel Series, 60d 70d 80d etc and Nikon 3, 5 or 7000 series. At this time, it is not available for Sony.

Again, if you are not sure, please do not hesitate to let us know what camera you have (Make and Model and what lenses you have or are considering bringing. We are happy to help!
You may consider purchasing OR renting a more expensive top of the line lens and camera as these trips tend to be once in a life time experiences!

Star Photography Tips
Preparation - Find somewhere with darker skies

(https://darksitefinder.com/maps/world.html#4/39.00/-98.00) not get discouraged if you don't have the darkest skies near your home - Your camera can capture stars that you don't see. It's worth trying from anywhere except maybe Times Square NYC. If the drive is too far for an evening plan a weekend trip somewhere that will take you to darker skies.

Check the moon schedule - You want to find out the rise and set times and if it is rising while you are out - how full is it? If Illumination is less than 50% don't worry and if it is greater than 50% but not in the sky during the night, don't worry :)

Make the plan and put in on the calendar - this can help you stick to the plan and not remember 1/2 way through that episode of Cheers that you meant to go out and shoot the stars tonight. And watch the weather. Partly clear or clear is best.

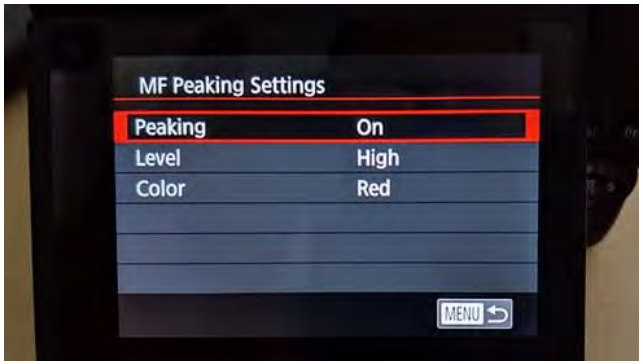
Gather your gear - Camera, your fastest & widest lens and a tripod. Your kit lens is fine. If you grow to love star and astrophotography as much as me - you could explore some faster lenses. I have a list of my favorite astrophotography lenses.

Optional gear - remote release and if you will be shooting somewhere where dew appears on the grass each morning- a hand warmer and a rubber band to keep the end of your lens fog free. Just attach the hand warmer under the front side of your lens. A headlamp with a red light can also be helpful. Using the red light preserves your night vision making everything easier to see.

Before you leave the house - take a moment to familiarize yourself with the gear. Can you attach your camera to your tripod with your eyes closed? Can you find the playback and playback magnifier buttons without a light? This can greatly help and avoid wasted time in the dark.

Find your infinity focus. Sometimes this is lined up with the infinity mark on your lens, sometimes it is close and sometimes you don't even have an infinity mark on the lens. The easiest way we have found to find infinity - setup with a brighter light in the distance, street lamps work well. They should be at least 300' or 100 meters away. About the length of a soccer field. Turn live view on and use the live view magnifier to enlarge the image. Now carefully turn the focus dial looking for the sharpest results. It can be tricky with the low light and noisy live view but there will be a point on the dial when it looks the best. Take note of that or use a small piece of gaff tape to secure your focus ring in place.

If you have a sky with brighter stars you can use the same technique, skip the street light and magnify on the brighter star(s) - when the stars are in focus they will be tiny points of light. They grow larger when out of focus.

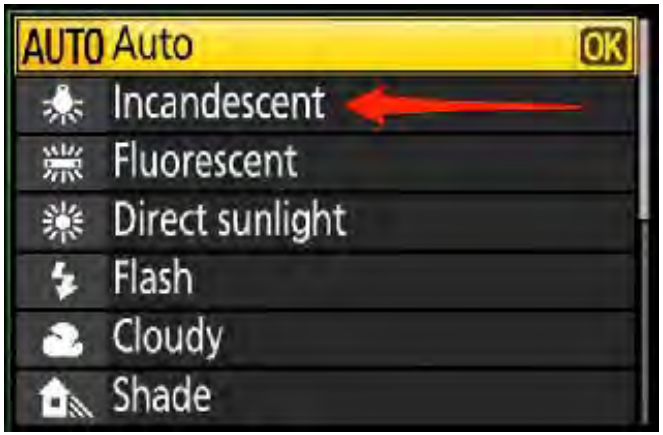


If you have a mirrorless camera - you can turn on focus peaking. Focus peaking outlines in focus objects with small colored dots. When used with stars the focus peaking actually completely consumes the star when focus is achieved. If you can still see the star it is probably not in focus.

Photographing
Camera Setup - check that the tripod is stable and secure and carefully check that you have firmly locked the camera onto the tripod before letting go - it's easy to think everything is connected in the dark but can turn tragic when your camera is at your feet seconds later.
Getting Composition - it's unlikely that you will be able to see much in your viewfinder or on the LCD - I generally estimate and try for 1/3 ground and 2/3 sky. Use your camera's level to make sure your horizon is straight.

Test Shots - I like to start around 8-10 seconds exposure, ISO 3200 and your widest aperture available to you. The resulting image might be noisy and darker than you want but it should give you a good idea about your composition and allow you to double check focus. Zoom in on the stars. They should be sharp little dots. Adjust if necessary and shoot again. if you don't have a remote release use the 2 second timer on your camera.

Making the pretty photos - Once you have nailed composition and focus I typically extend the shutter speed and lower the ISO. Your shutter speed is limited by your focal length and the speed of the rotation of the Earth. The easy method - divide 500 by your focal length to get the suggested maximum speed. If you are shooting with a 24mm lens on full frame camera (500/24 = 20) 20 seconds is the longest shutter you can use before the stars will start to streak or trail. With many high megapixel sensors the actual time is shorter. If you plan to print you should follow the NPF rule and the wonderful App,Photo Pills includes a calculator that will give you a more precise time. Typically 10-15 seconds is safe. Just keep in mind when using the 500 rule you do have to account for crop factor if not using a full frame lens. The NPF calculator takes into account crop factor.



WB - You can leave the camera in AWB or switch it to Incandescent or Tungsten for a more blue sky. This really just helps you preview what the edited shot might look like. When shooting RAW you can always change the WB after.

Final bit of advice - Shoot and shoot some more - try various compositions, interesting foreground elements and you can even experiment with light painting the foreground.

If all this is new to you, NO PROBLEM! We are here to help! This is to help you start understanding the process. You will find the hardest part of nighttime star photography is getting focus at infinity. If you can work with that ahead of time, it will help!

What about Star Trails?
You will have the option on this tour to try out photographing anc creating Star Trails if you like! AGain, we will be there to help you do this!

Quite simply, you will take several images over an extended period of time of 45min to an hour, and then blend those images in software to create epic circular star trail patterns!

In order to do this, you will need your camera to have a built in "intervalometer" OR to purchase one to plug into your camera. Many of todays latest cameras have this as a feature directly built in. Google your camera model to check or ask us for help if you can't find the info.

What is an intervalometer?

An intervalometer is a device that plugs into a camera or is built in, and controls how often, how long and how many shots are taken.

The idea is to take many images throughout a specific long period of time without moving the cameras. During that time that the earth rotates, you can then blend those images into one epic photograph of star trails!
DON'T do extra-long exposures like 40 mins. Instead set your camera on bulb and do a series of 2 min exposures with a 3-5 second break in between each exposure. Use your built in or purchased intervalometer to do this.

•You may find that you can lower the ISO to get a good exposure. Be sure you shot for 40 minutes, make sure you are happy with everything!

• You can also simply go to 30 second exposures and take more images.

• This may require a little higher ISO such as 2500 or 3200

• Set your intervalometer to take a 30 second image with a 2 -3 second break in between. Be sure to shoot at a minimum 45 minutes.

• In order to get a circular pattern, you must face the North Star in the Northern Hemisphere. The Southern Cross in the Southern.

• At the end of doing a sequence of images, take one image with your lens cap on so you know where the last image of that sequence ended.
.
• Import into LR or Star Stax. Star Stax is free, quick and easy!
• Watch the magic happen!

Filters:

Don't waste money on UV filters.

In general I am not a fan of UV filters, they offer little protection from a fall and the glass at the end of your lens is pretty tough, it's not going to get scratched unless you are very careless. I prefer lens hoods as they do offer some protection from falls and nicely protect the end of the lens from coming into contact with random objects without degrading image quality.

I do prefer camera brand lens hoods, I have tried a few of the third party and they often fit just a bit awkwardly making the putting on and taking off just a bit slower. Some of the very cheap 3rd party lens hoods actually use the filter threads to attach, this is bad as it blocks you from adding a filter and is very cumbersome to put on take off.

Circular Polarizer filters are useful.

The one filter I do recommend landscape photographers own (or anyone taking scenic view photos) is a circular polarizer (CP Filter).

Some benefits of a CP filter include:

- CP filters reduce reflections and glare
- Reduces Haze and blue cast in landscapes
- Adds saturation to your sky and greenery

More about CP filters. There are other specialized filters worth owning for some situations but a CP is one that many don't know they need and gives you a look that is not reproducible with post processing. The brands I list I find to be safe choices at each of those price points, there are certainly other brands/choices at each price point.

- Budget (Tiffen)
- Middle (Hoya)
- High-end (B+W)

With all filters, be sure to get the right size screw on for your lens. Ex 77mm. 72mm etc.

Specialty Filters and Systems

ND Filters: ND (Neutral Density) filters are used to take away light in the middle of the day to create longer exposures. As an example, if you want a waterfall to have that silky smooth look, but it is the middle of the day, it will be difficult to take a long exposure as too much light is coming in over exposing the image.

By placing a ND filter on, you reduce light and therefore can do the longer exposure. You can do this for other images as well such as clouds moving and smoothing out a lake.

We recommend AVOIDING a Variable ND filter. No matter what the store says to get! The reason is that at higher aperture settings, you can see where the variance changes in your image. It tends to look like a weird X through the image.

ND Filters come in all types of numbers that represent how much light is taken away. from very little (1 stop) to totally dark (10 stop). This is why sales people like to recommend the variable all in one. The darker the filter, the more light you can take away thus creating even longer exposures.

However, rather than that, using just one or two will usually get the results you like. If you have to choose one for now, start with a 6 Stop ND filter. This will take away 6 stops of light and get you results for most situations you may want.

Again, these are great brands.
Budget (Tiffen)
Middle (Hoya)
High-end (B+W)

Filter Systems: For those that are ready to take their images with filters to the next level and have worked with filters in the past, filter systems such as the Nisi, Breakthrough and Lee are all excellent and high-end systems for the serious photographer. They are expensive but the best.

A filter system simply mounts to the front of your lens, and then you can slide various filters into place for various needs and reasons.

Tripod:
A tripod is a necessity for night time photography and long exposure images. Having a versatile lightweight BUT strong tripod is the key. EVERY tour, we deal with people having a very flimsy tripod. You really need a sturdy tripod. PLEASE HAVE A DECENT TRIPOD!

By no means do you have to spend big bucks to get one, but a $39 video tripod from Best Buy or the loaner from your Uncle will not cut it. There is no sense taking images at night or late evening, if your camera is not still. If you need a tripod or are considering one, feel free to email us with questions regard it.

The MeFOTO Road Trip Tripod Kit (Titanium) is an excellent VERY REASONABLE priced tripod at about $139. It is lightweight and yet sturdy for most applications.

We talk more about purchasing gear further into the packet.

Head Lamp:
Bringing a head lamp so that you can work at night/early mornings with your hands free is also invaluable. Be sure to have one that has the red lamp on it as well as this helps keep bring light down to a minimum while we are shooting.

Rain Sleeves:
Buy an inexpensive plastic one, which should cost less than $10. You can also cut a hole in a shower cap from your hotel room for free! This is a great option.

Our friends at ThinkTank Photo have released a new new concept in weather protection, t he Emergency Rain Cover. It can be quickly and easily deployed when outdoor conditions change. They will be a welcome small and lightweight addition to the kits of any photographer shooting out of doors. Click here to check it out.

Memory Cards:
You will shoot WAY more images than you would ever expect on this trip. Because we are photographing almost the entire time and you will want to shoot A LOT to get the best images, have EXTRA CARDS! We will also be teaching you to shoot RAW mode, which is the highest quality but also uses the most memory. From experience, every trip, people do not bring enough memory cards and have to try and find a store. We cannot stress enough the importance of having enough memory cards as there are no stores available out on the tour!

Do not try to shoot everything on a single big memory card. If that card goes bad and all your images are in one place, that would be a painful lesson to learn! We prefer to use a few 64GB or 128GB cards over the duration of the trip.

To clean cards, it is best to format your cards in camera vs hitting delete. This entirely cleans the card and leaves no hidden memory. Make sure all cards , including new ones, are formatted and READY BEFORE arriving!

Batteries and Charger:
Make sure your batteries are all FULLY CHARGED before we go out to shoot! We recommend having at least 3 batteries with you.

Remember, travel with your batteries in your camera bag and NOT in your camera body. They cannot be checked in luggage and do not keep them in the camera.

Due to FAA Regulations all lithium ion and lithium metal batteries must be carried in carry-on baggage only. When a carry-on bag is checked at the gate or at plane-side, all spare lithium batteries must be removed from the bag and kept with the passenger in the aircraft cabin. For this reason, we suggest having your batteries easily accessible to grab in a separated small container within your camera bag.

Downloading & Backup tips:
Download your cards each day to your laptop AND to an external drive OR download cards to a computer and save exposed memory cards as is. The key is to have your images in 2 places and packed separately from each other.

Be sure ALL images have transferred to TWO locations before formating a card for reuse!

Your equipment can be replaced, however your memories and images cannot. You will want to back up EVERYTHING each day! Store your external drive in your suitcase and used memory cards in a waist belt.
Online backup can seem like a good option but can take too long to upload raw images in the field and where no Internet is available.

Camera Settings
Quick quiz. Without looking at your camera, what are the steps you need to take to change your camera's ISO sensitivity? Spend extra time becoming familiar with all the controls on your camera at home, where it's nice and warm, before venturing out into the cold. In extreme situations, when you're using heavy gloves, it can be difficult to adjust your camera's settings. Knowing where your entire camera's controls are located helps you work quickly should you need to take off your gloves to make an adjustment.

We know that many of you consider yourselves beginners. Do not feel intimidated. We are here to help and will be with you instructing with our great staff. This will help you in preparation!

Please be familiar with your settings AND tripod BEFORE the trip. This does not mean you need to know and understand everything as you are there to learn, however, please know how to change your manual settings. The shutter speed, F- Stop/ Aperture and ISO are the settings to know how to change on your camera. Again, please know how to change those settings. ***This will help us a great deal in being able to instruct you on location.***

Manual Settings:
It is VERY important to understand that in any given situation, you will be using a combination of all 3 of the below Manual settings. There are usually many combinations possible to get the same amount of light control; HOWEVER, depending on what your preferences are to the character of the image, you may choose different ones at any given time. This is something you will learn in detail on our trips and do not have to fully understand at this time. On the Photo Safari, you will be learning how to use all 3 of these elements to get the best results in your images. This is why it is important for you to start becoming familiar with how to change each of the settings now on your camera. With these Manual settings, we will be able to help you get the most out of your camera.

ISO - Light Sensitivity:
Think of this as what you use to do with film. You would go to the film store and choose the speed of film you wanted. In today's digital environment, we have the flexibility to be able to change our ISO in each shot if we want. This gives us much more power than in previous film camera days where we were stuck with whatever we put in the camera.

The LOWER the ISO, such as 100 or 200, the BETTER the quality, however, MORE light is needed. Light can be available through ambient light (natural light) OR the use of a flash. Higher ISO speeds such as 1600 and above, result in a loss of image quality and "noise" in the image. However, the higher ISO may be needed in order to use faster shutter speeds in lower light situations and when a tripod may not be available.

Shutter Speed:
A time value represented by the amount of TIME the shutter opens and closes to allow light on the sensor. The LONGER the shutter speed setting, the MORE light comes into the sensor. Yet motion is not stopped. The FASTER the shutter speed setting, LESS light comes in but action can be stopped. A fast shutter stops action, a slow shutter allows motion. Never hand hold the camera in a setting under 1/60th of a second. This usually results in blurry images because of “camera shake”. However, this “rule” is also based on the length of lens you are using. See the Youtube Video tip links below!

Aperture, F-Stop:
These 3 terms are all for the same item. Your F Stop setting controls how much light comes into the sensor through the opening of the lens.

The SMALLER the number F-Stop, the MORE light comes in. The LARGER the number F Stop, the LESS light comes in. Think of the Aperture like an eye. When you are in a dark setting, you may need a bigger opening (just like your pupil of your eye). The opposite be true in a bright setting.

F Stop also controls Depth of Field. The smaller the number has a shallow depth of field. The higher the number, more Depth will be in your image.

Using all three Exposure elements to control light:
Remember, in any image, you are using a combination of ALL 3 exposure elements. What combination of the 3 you choose depends on each situation and the light available. This is a big part of what you will be learning!! As an example, you may need a fast shutter speed to stop action. This may require a small number (larger opening) of the lens to compensate for the lack of time the shutter is allowing light in because it is fast.

Or, you may want the images to have a lot of Depth (Sharper from front to back). This requires a larger number F Stop(Less light) and that may mean a slower shutter speed to compensate for the light. Now you may need a tripod in order to achieve the results.

In each of these situations, your ISO setting will be chosen accordingly as well. These are just two examples of using the manual settings. We will be teaching you how to use these settings and the cameras built in light meter to get great images! Please just come prepared to learn and with the knowledge on how to physically change the settings already known.

Video Tutorials:
Use the MPA Video Tutorials to help you prepare for your photographic tour! Visit - https://mckaylive.com/tour-resources/ for tutorials!

We are SO EXCITED and are sure you must be as well about your upcoming trip! You are joining us on this amazing photographic adventure! In our experience leading trips, we have seen a lot of things come up, and in many cases, LAST MINUTE. For this reason, it is HIGHLY recommended to have trip insurance. Remember, airfare, hotels, tours, as well as our policies are non-refundable. Trip insurance can help in the event of any unforeseen legitimate issue before OR during a trip.

You MUST understand the importance of this and why we constantly tell people to get insurance!
Protect yourself~protect your investment.

You would never imagine that you won't be taking the wonderful trip you are planning! Life happens! There are so many things that can change before your travel dates that might prevent you from traveling. There are also events that can change your plans while you are traveling that might require you to alter your trip, return home early or be delayed due to accident or illness. Lost luggage, lost documents or lost belongs can also hamper your well made plans!

We are NOT an insurance provider and we can simply refer you to someone that can help you obtain coverage. There are several trip insurance carriers and it can be confusing to know where to get the best coverage and rates. For this reason, we have recently started working with Brandon Hughbanks of Travel Insurance Center. Brandon represents most of the top travel insurance carriers and can help you get the best rate for the options you need based on where you live as well.

Contact Brandon directly at:
Toll Free: 1-866-979-6753 Ext. 3636 Direct: 402-343-3636
bhughbanks@travelinsurancecenter.com

We LOVE our tours and we LOVE what we do. In order for them to be the very best available anywhere, we must clarify once again, McKay Photography Academy polices. In an effort to make sure that as a photography tour participant, our policies are understood with-out question.

Due to an influx of people contacting us asking us for help, understanding, refunds, credit and more when something unexpected happens and they are unable to attend, we need to address this once again. This is written notice that if for ANY REASON you are unable to attend, that we are unable to refund or credit your trip.

We are being very clear as stated in our policies, contracts, web sites, emails and conversations that trip insurance IS your security for the unexpected. We are not, and cannot be responsible to do much when a choice is made by someone to not obtain insurance especially considering the amount of time we spend informing people to obtain it.

EVERY trip there is a situation and we cannot stress enough, PLEASE get insurance. We cannot require it of you, you have to make the effort to obtain. If something happens and you are unable to attend for a variety of possible covered reasons, proper trip insurance will help you. ALSO, IF YOU WERE TO GET HURT ABROAD, YOU DO NOT WANT TO BE WITHOUT IT! Of course we would never want or expect something like that to happen, but it is best to be covered and prepared!

Any specific questions about insurance coverage, provisions, claims, etc MUST be answered by your chosen provider as McKay Photography Academy or any of their team, is unable to do more than give you the facts of our policies and that we highly recommend trip insurance.

David explains Travel Insurance Video

We have a very special relationship and partnership with Tobias Gelston of PhotoRec.tv. Toby runs a VERY COOL YouTube channel focusing on camera gear and equipment. He has over 300k subscribers! Toby's goal is simple: He wants to help you be a better photographer by helping you find the gear you need and the know-how to use it. If you have any questions about gear, you can email Toby directly and he will help you get what you need. He knows TONS of gear info.

Toby is a participant in the Amazon Services LLC Associates Program, an affiliate advertising program designed to provide a means for sites to earn advertising fees by advertising and linking to amazon.com. Toby also participates with B&H Photo Video.

If you use Toby for advice, and even if you don't please purchase through his links to either Amazon or B&H. You will get the best prices and help him out as well! This costs no more for you and helps support our friend Toby, which in turn, helps us give you even better photographic education!

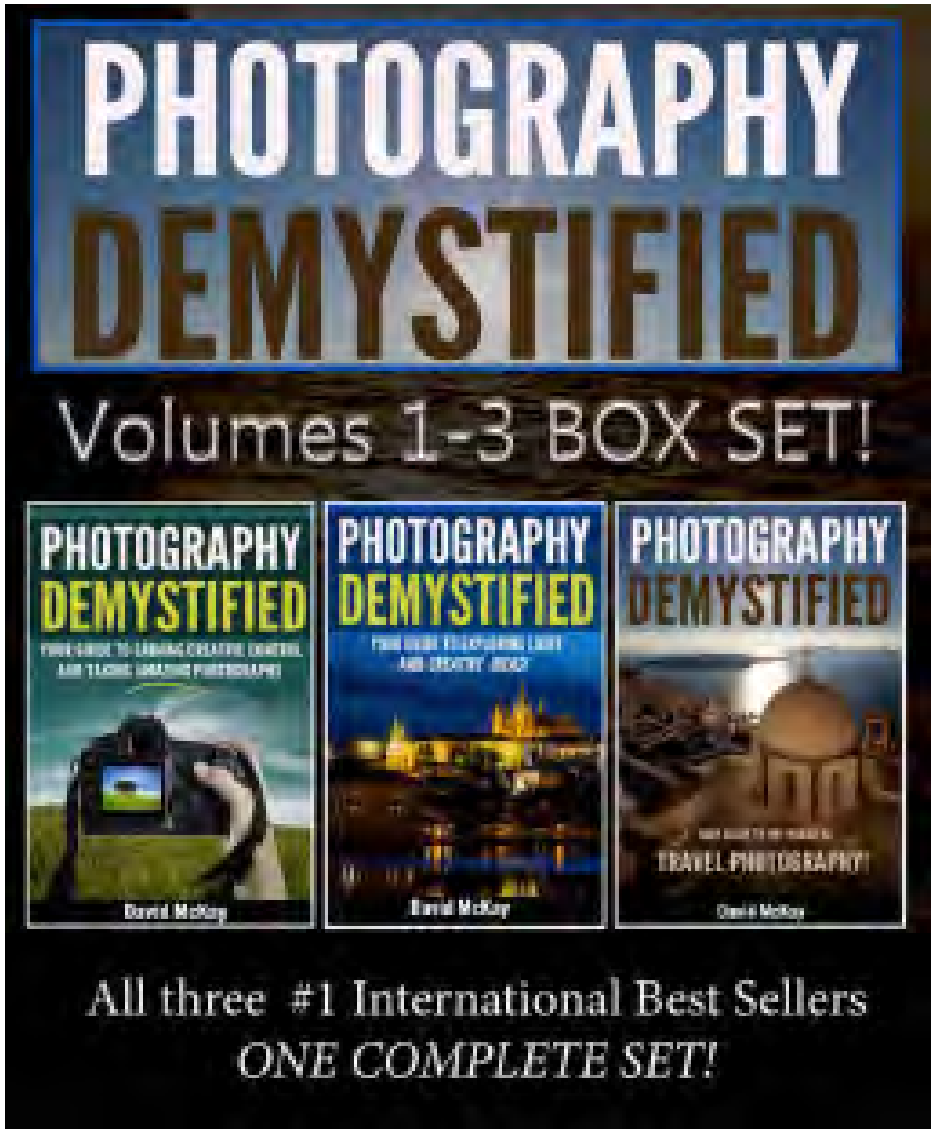
Here are the links:

B&H Photo CLICK HERE

Amazon CLICK HERE

Questions on gear? Send Toby and email and tell him you are traveling with us. He will help you get what you need! toby@photorec.tv

Subscribe to Photorec Tv Youtube!



These three books by David McKay are available in digital form on Amazon. These are a GREAT way to learn ahead of your tour and also to have available on your smart phone while out photographing.

All 3 titles have gone on to become number one International Best Selling books and are available at an awesome price on Amazon.

Click here to learn more.

PHOTO ENTHUSIAST NETWORK

Interested in starting your photographic education before the tour and are not yet a member of Photo Enthusiast Network? We encourage you to join today!

This a great place for you to grow, learn and belong in a wonderful photographic community run by the MPA team! Not only that, as an annual member you receive a tour discount voucher that more than pays for the membership! Join today!

To get started with LensProToGo click here.

ThinkTank
Airport Roller Derby

Mindshift Backlight 26L

MindShift Gear
PhotoCross™ 13

We LOVE working with ThinkTank & MindShift Gear and sharing their gear with our clients. When ordering cases and packs through our links you receive a free gift when you purchase at least $50 of gear, free ground shipping, and the best customer service in the industry! Click here to order directly from ThinkTank.

Ally and David currently use the ThinkTank Airport Roller Derby bag to fit all their gear in while GETTING to the location. Once there, we do NOT want to carry everything all the time. So we use smaller bags as seen below to carry limited gear. We've recently been introduced to the new MindShift Gear PhotoCross backpacks. We LOVE this new pack.

We personally like to walk around light! These packs allow us to do just that. We typically carry a camera with one lens, and in the TurnStyle or PhotoCross we can carry another lens of our choice, extra battery, extra memory cards, lens cloths etc! Easy and VERY lightweight!

There are also MANY various camera bags on the market. The Mindshift Backlight 26L is also one of our favs!

Our Favorite Camera Support System!

We love the SpiderPro Single Camera System! The SpiderPro Camera Holster is Spider Holster's breakthrough product, offering unique, unparalleled comfort and safety. Mounting your camera to your belt is a great way to relieve the weight and stress a camera with a heavy lens can add to your neck and back with a traditional camera strap. We've used the Spider system all over the world and LOVE this product.

Click to learn more!
http://spiderholster.com

Before the tour, check out the MPA tour preparation resource page!

Here you will find helpful camera tutorials, tips, videos and more to prepare you fully for your photography tour!

TOUR PREPERATION RESOURCE PAGE

https://mckaylive.com/tour-resources/