



# MPA PHOTO TOURS

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MCKAY PHOTO  
TOURS

Photography - Travel - Friendship - Adventure

# **WELCOME**

Hello McKay Photography Tour Participants!

Welcome to your upcoming photography expedition! This tour packet is your go-to reference, loaded with valuable information on photographic gear suggestions, travel and packing tips, and practical details for a fantastic photo tour experience.

In the past months, we've sent you emails with flight recommendations, itinerary updates, and essential information. Combined with this tour packet, our aim is to keep you well-informed at all times. Please feel free to reach out to our team with any questions (keep in mind that we might refer you back to the tour packet if we've already covered the subject). We suggest downloading the PDF version of this packet onto your smartphone or tablet, so it's easily accessible during the tour.

Embrace the spirit of adventure as we embark on this photography tour! ***While we have a planned itinerary, expect the unexpected and be open to change.*** Our goal is to maximize your photographic experiences by ensuring flexibility for capturing ideal light and weather conditions while accommodating preset commitments with hotels, guides, etc.

Please note that touring in such locations may require adjustments based on various unforeseen circumstances. Trust that our team's commitment is to provide an exceptional experience even if there's a need to alter the itinerary without prior announcement. Throughout the trip, remember that "flexibility" is our guiding principle.

Capture incredible images and immerse yourself in spontaneous moments without fixating on strict schedules. When you embrace flexibility and maintain a positive attitude, you'll discover a photographic adventure like no other!

Do not hesitate to contact us at [hello@mckaylive.com](mailto:hello@mckaylive.com) for any inquiries or assistance. At McKay Photography Academy (MPA), we are dedicated to offering unparalleled experiences and exceptional photographic education worldwide.

Happy adventuring!

The MPA Team

FYI - You are about to go on one of the most incredible wildlife tours imaginable. There is no other tour like it and very few photography workshops offer something on such a ship that can get to these places. We know of two.

They each charge over \$13,000 pp for the tour. We have tried to make this as affordable as possible for the quality of photo tour this will be. With that said, we know you are going to experience a truly remarkable journey and I wish I was personally going with you! Have an incredible time. I am sure you will and Toby LOVES this tour! - David



# MPA TOUR TEAM



Toby Gelston  
Photorec.Tv

MPA Lead Instructor/Logistics



\*Team is scheduled but may be changed out if need occurs.

# ITINERARY



Base itinerary\*

Base itinerary\*Arrival and Departure Kodiak, AK

August 18th - Arrival into Kodiak, AK (or earlier if you prefer) , you can arrive at any time. Book a hotel room - The Compass Inn and Best Western are both nice options very close to each other.

August 19th - Embark on - Island -C

August 25th - Disembark Island- - Depart late afternoon or evening flight OR depart on the 26th

Weight Restrictions. - Part of the tour you will fly on a float plane. **WEIGHT IS LIMITED.** We **NEED YOU TO KEEP YOUR** weight at 50lbs for gear and clothing. We know big lenses are heavy. But it is possible to pack light for sure. Please see gear suggestions as a long lens will be the one lens you use most times.



\*Subject to change based on many factors but dates are set

\*Due to weather conditions, and other factors, times, and routes may change



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# FLIGHT INFORMATION

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## **Kodiak, AK Airport**

Please note, you are responsible for making sure flight arrangements are correct and that you arrive NO LATER than August 18th for the tour into Kodiak, AK

We will embark on the Island -C on August 19th in the morning. We will return on August 25th. Usually, it is fine to take an evening flight out after 5 pm. I

f flights are not available for you later, I would recommend staying the night in Kodiak one more night. Catching an early flight can be difficult if there are any delays getting into port. You can book directly with Alaska Airlines.

However, if you want to book on a carrier as we do such as Delta for status reasons, you could fly to Anchorage on the 17th, stay the night and fly to Kodiak on the 18th.

Below is what we suggest. We do our best to provide travel details and help, but in the end, please make sure everything makes sense from your end as we have SO MANY details at the moment going on.

## **Times- for Arrival and Departure Kodiak, AK**

Arrival - August 18th into Kodiak, AK (or earlier if you prefer) , you can arrive at any time. Book a hotel room - The Compass Inn and Best Western are both nice options very close to each other.

Departure - August 25th - Depart late afternoon or evening flight OR depart on the 26th.

# Accommodations



## Accommodations

Rooming/On-Board etiquette, etc - This has been shared a few times, but it is important to share again. This is a working vessel. Although you will have a chef on board and amazing food and hospitality, it is a working small vessel that allows us to get into locations most people never would see. That includes being up close and personal with the Coastal Brown Bears!

This also means that it is bunk-style rooms and cozy quarters. It is very comfortable and most of your time is spent either outdoors or when on board in the main area. But please be prepared to get to know each other. :) There are two bathrooms and showers on board that are private.

If you snore, please consider a Cpap or a device to help. I know we have people that will have a CPAP and if so, there are outlets so no problem. Again, this is tight quarters. You should also bring earplugs.

Bring flip-flops to walk around the ship on easily.

Bring a towel for showers.

Prior to leaving, a drink, snack, and alcohol run can be made in town. There will be plenty on board for sure!







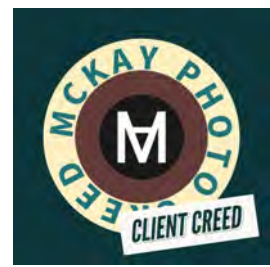
## Photography - Travel - Friendship and Adventure!

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.

- 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, diversity 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, dedicated to supporting and educating each individual on our photography tours to the best of our abilities. As instructors, we each possess distinctive skills and resources within our educational toolbox. While we cannot be expected to know every answer, we pledge to do our utmost in finding solutions for our clients and will rely on one another's expertise to achieve this goal.

# CLIENT CREED



## Photography - Travel - Friendship and Adventure!

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 help 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 well4as clients on a tour. This allows for a better educational and overall environment for all in a tour.



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# TRAVEL INSURANCE

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

**A MUST HAVE FOR MANY REASONS!**

## PLEASE READ

**YES YOU NEED IT! 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 are 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](mailto: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 policies. 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 site, 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.**

**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.**

# SAFETY



**WHATEVER THE CAPTAIN AND GUIDE SAYS - GOES! You WILL be CLOSE to Bears!**

As an adult participant in our photography tour, we trust that you will prioritize your safety and avoid unnecessary risks. While traveling anywhere in the world can involve potential hazards, it is crucial to avoid putting yourself or others in danger.

Keep in mind that you have signed a liability risk agreement, acknowledging your personal responsibility during the tour. However, this does not grant you the freedom to engage in reckless behaviors or jeopardize the safety of others.

Please exercise caution and common sense during your adventures. We have witnessed numerous instances of individuals putting themselves in perilous situations for the sake of a photograph – such as venturing too close to cliff edges, raging waters, or busy roads.

As tour leaders, we will intervene if we observe any unsafe activities. Nevertheless, it is ultimately your responsibility to ensure your own safety and avoid endangering others. While capturing unique photographs is an exciting aspect of our journey together, remember that no image is worth risking life or limb.

## 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.*
- **NEVER APPROACH BEARS or MOOSE!**



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# HEALTH INFO & VACCINATIONS

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## Vaccinations

Some destinations require certain vaccinations such as Yellow Fever. Please check with your Doctor or travel clinic as well as the country specific web sites about what vaccinations are required. This can also vary depending on where you are originating your flight from if outside of the US. **(No vaccinations are required for this tour)**

## Medications

You should carry along an adequate supply of any prescribed medications you may require while traveling. *Prescription medicines should always be carried in your hand luggage (not in checked baggage) in their original, labeled containers only.*

## Motion Sickness

Be prepared with your own medications that work for you. Ask your doctor for advice.

## CBD and Hemp Products

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 require leaving them at home on International tours. Be sure to check your pack items if you regular use CBD PRIOR TO LEAVING!**

## 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!

## Physical Disabilities and Mobility Issues

Travelers with physical disabilities and those who require frequent or ongoing medical attention should advise us of their health situation at the time of booking.

## Smoking

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

## Basic 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.



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# GENERAL TRAVEL TIPS

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## 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.

## Batteries

All lithium and camera batteries should ONLY be with you as carry-on. Do not pack in your regular luggage. 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.

## Luggage

- One Suitcase or Duffle Bag- Please limit to one suitcase per person if we are traveling in vehicles as a group.
- Camera Bag
- One Carry on and personal item
- 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.
- Use packing cubes.
- Place an air tag or tracking device in each piece of luggage you an track!

## Change of clothes in carry-on

An extra day or two of change of clothes in a carry on, is also advised in case luggage gets misplaced” by airlines.

## Extra Collapsible Bag

If you bring an extra ‘collapsible bag’ with you then you might have extra room to hand-carry something home with you and/or bring souvenirs. It is not recommended to put any breakables in your checked luggage if it can be avoided.

## 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!
- Please do not ask us each day what the weather will be like. Everyone has their own comfort and temperature levels. We simply go outside and see and use the weather app.
- We are at a high elevation and it will get cold in the evenings! In the day it can be warm to hot!

## Reusable Water 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 when traveling in vehicles for photography sessions.

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# GENERAL TRAVEL TIPS

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## ATMs/Currency

- ATMs are in most locations in cities now throughout the world, 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](http://www.mastercard.com)) and PLUS (tel. 800/843-7587; [www.visa.com](http://www.visa.com)) cards are almost universally accepted in ATMs
- PLEASE check with your bank AHEAD of the trip to make sure your debit/credit card can be used at an ATM and that you have a correct PIN number
- If you try to get monies out of an ATM, and it does not work , DO NOT ATTEMPT MORE THAN THREE times or the machine will KEEP YOUR CARD! Stop trying and call your bank.

## Debit vs Credit Card

- We always have one Debit card to use for cash withdrawal from ATM's as sometimes, a CC does not work at an ATM we have found.
- Use your Credit Card vs. an ATM card for all purchases for security reasons. A debit card is tied to your bank account and a CC offers much more protection.
- Carry TWO different Credit Cards. In this way, if one is compromised or not working, you have a back-up.
- 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.
- Cash advance on a CC is possible at some banks. Be sure to know and have your secret password and pass code you will need to do so.
- Never use CC or banking transactions on any hotel or public wi-fi!

## Cash

- The question of how much cash to bring is asked of us often. This is a difficult question as everyone has different spending habits and preferences of how they spend.
- Our standard rule of thumb is that Cash is King and always have \$750- \$1000 USD bills that are newer than 2012 with no tears as a safety cushion above gratuities suggestions.
- Be sure to have plenty of smaller bills of 1's and 5's for other small tips etc you may encounter.
- The MPA team each take cash for gratuities but also take Venmo and Paypal.

## Passport/ Visa

- International Travel Only- Make sure your passport is valid for a minimum of 6 months from time you depart the tour.
- If a Visa is required for the countries we are visiting, we will let you know how to obtain and the time to do so.

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# GENERAL TRAVEL TIPS

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## Travel Adapter

- We recommend carrying a simple All in One Adapter that works with various outlets around the world.
- There is no need to bring a heavy and bulky power converter, they tend to not work well.
- Most electronics run between 110 and 220/240 volts
- Carry a small extension cord with USB outlets to plug into the adapter that will go into the wall.
- Masking or Gaffers Tape to help keep outlet in wall sometimes.



## Glasses

- If you need glasses too function, be sure to bring an extra pair of glasses.
- Remember your sunglasses.

## Security

- Do not use your debit card for purchases.
- Keep your passport on you at all times or in a hotel safe.
- Keep an extra Credit Card available.
- Leave expensive valuables such as jewelry at home.
- Make sure to have copies of all important documents(Passport, Drivers license, Vax Card,Travel Insurance Documents, Itinerary etc). A digital copy on your phone AND stored via digital so you ca retrieve is also recommended.
- Make sure your family and friends have emergency contact information for you.
- Use TSA approved travel locks on your luggage.
- NEVER leave your camera gear on the ground behind you!
- Use the buddy system. Please be sure to let people know where you are going and go with a friend!
- Make sure your phone is charged and carry a spare phone charger with you.
- Keep aware of where you are and all your surroundings.
- Be aware of pick-pockets and those looking to exploit tourist, especially in larger cities.
- When leaving a hotel, take a business card with you so you can give that to a taxi drive to get you back safely.
- Be observant of what is happening around you and use common sense. Trust your gut if something doesn't feel **right**.



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# GENERAL TRAVEL TIPS

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## Culture, Differences, Respect

- Please respect the customs and traditions of the places you visit and be appreciative of any help you are given.
- Treat everyone including those serving you with kindness , grace and without ordering them to do what you need.
- 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! If you are set on knowing everything two days in advance, you will find that you will be frustrated with the tour and with us.
- For many reasons, we sometimes change itinerary. Please trust that we know what we are doing, we are working on your behalf, and to have the best experience possible for everyone.

## Food

- We will accommodate those with food allergies, vegetarians, and various dietary needs as long as we know in advance. We will do our best to do so, but please understand, sometimes in foreign countries, communication is difficult.
- Please note that in many places in the world, beef is not what's for dinner!
- Traveling means trying new things and that includes food.
- Do not under any circumstances say "ewwww, that's gross, I'm not eating that" when someone brings out food. It is rude and disrespectful. Simply pass and try something else.
- Katmai - specific - There will be FRESH FISH served on this tour. However, if you do not like fish or have any allergies, we will need to know that as well. The chef can prepare meals for vegetarians etc.
- Prior to embarking, beverages, snacks ,etc can be purchased at the local grocery store.



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# GROUP DYNAMICS

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Traveling as a photography group is an amazing experience, offering numerous benefits such as lasting friendships and unforgettable memories. To ensure the best possible outcome for all participants, maintaining a positive and flexible attitude is crucial.

Embrace the diversity within the group and avoid confrontations with individuals you may not get along with. Focus on enjoying the journey and learning from each other's experiences. Keep in mind that unexpected changes may arise, but by staying adaptable and supportive, these challenges can be overcome.

We will not tolerate negative and bad moods.

Trust the MPA team to assist you in improving your skills during the trip, and cherish the bonds formed with your fellow travelers as you explore the world through photography together.





# COMMUNICATION



About 30 days 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.

GroupMe works over cell networks, wifi and via SMS.  
You can find more information here.  
<https://groupme.com/apps>

## Communication with MPA

Clients try to reach us in many ways. **Please note that we cannot be available 24 hrs a day on all forms of communication apps .**

Please start with emailing [hello@mckaylive.com](mailto:hello@mckaylive.com) This email is seen by David, Ally and Toby. This allows an appropriate response as quickly as possible from the team.

Please use the MPA Business line via text or call 916-458-2897 . **Please note that most times, email will get a faster response as we all see that.**

Please do not use David or Ally's personal cell phones or FB messenger or other forms of communication unless it is an emergency. Please also note that while groupme allows for PM's. The team does not always see a private message. Those easily get buried in the communication happening with all of the various tour groups coming on and many times get missed.

While on tour, if you need to communicate directly with a team member privately, please send a message via Groupme in the tour group and ask the team member to reach out to you directly. They will set up a time to meet with you or to communicate separately via preferred methods of each person.

**Emergency Contact**  
**McKay Photography Academy (Anytime)**

**MPA Travel Cell: +1 (916) 458-2897 Please call this line AND email [hello@mckaylive.com](mailto:hello@mckaylive.com)**  
**Make sure to communicate via GroupMe to the group.**



# **GRATUITIES**



Tipping is always done at the discretion of the guest.

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 weather!

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. We have tried every possible way and suggestion for tipping including it being included in the tour, set amounts, having it paid in advance and many others.

The reality is we cannot carry personally that much cash ourselves into a country for many reasons. Also, EVERY DIME that we receive as a business, by law, has to be accounted for by tourism boards. It simply becomes unmanageable for us.

Personally, we as a company, work to be generous in our own tipping to vendors and those we work with as well that are working so hard to make sure everyone is taken care of. This goes beyond what we are "paying" them.

## **The MPA Team**

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 minimum amounts for MPA team members.

Domestic - Short Tour (3-4 days) \$70-\$80 per photographer to each instructor.

Domestic Longer Tour -(5-7 days) \$90 - \$100 per photographer to each instructor.

International Tour - We find the average person as a photographer, tends to give \$100 to \$150 per photographer to each instructor for the tour depending on the length of the tour.

Beyond Toby, Please plan on tipping the crew of Island-C. They will work incredibly hard for you.  
\$100-\$150 pp is good to plan on.

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# PHOTOGRAPHY GEAR

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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 not as serious, 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.

## **Base Equipment List**

- Camera(s)\* (Having a backup body is recommended - at the minimum a point and shoot or a phone if under 2 years old could be used as a backup)
- Camera Lenses (See Lenses page)
- Camera Bag (We love ThinkTank and Mindshift Gear-(See upcoming pages)
- Lightweight Bag for day excursions
- Plenty of Memory Cards (Multiple, 128GB or 256 GB cards)
- Batteries & Charger Minimum 2 batteries- Cold Weather tours - 3
- Sturdy 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/Headlamp
- Lens cloth or lens wipes

## **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 for 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! Unfortunately WE ARE NOT ABLE TO LOAN OUT GEAR IF YOURS GOES DOWN!

# LENS CHOICES



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.***

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.

The main lenses to consider bringing are a wide angle, a medium range, and a longer telephoto.

***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.***

Lenses can and will range from a few hundred dollars to thousands of dollars each depending on the quality and expectations of performance, focal length, and aperture available. As you develop as a photographer, you will learn what best suits your needs and budget.

When preparing for a tour, weight can be a deciding factor. 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 vehicles easy enough (most tours this is the case), then 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 when we have very small internal flights in a country.

Each tour is specific as well. If we are doing lots of wildlife, you will need your longest telephoto lens whereas for night time star photography, a wide-angle lens with a small aperture is preferred.

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 does NOT WORK for mirror-less systems.

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, 70d 80d etc and Nikon 3, 5 or 7000 series. At this time, it is not available for Sony nor for mirrorless.

If you have specific questions on gear, please contact Toby Gelston [Toby@mckaylive.com](mailto:Toby@mckaylive.com) and use his links he will provide you with.



# TOUR SPECIFIC GEAR SUGGESTIONS



## Katmai Tour Specifics Needed

- Camera
- Back-Up Camera ( A must have)
- All Lenses will work well for various scenes and compositions. This includes a wide angle, medium range and longer telephoto. The long tele-photo will be your most used lens!
- Plenty of memory cards and/or back up options to re-use cards if need.
- Circular Polarizer filter may be helpful
- Dry Bag for in Zodiac to keep camera in if waves.
- Mono Pod if you do not want to always hold the camera
- 2-3 Camera Batteries
- Battery Charger
- Comfortable Camera strap

## Lens Choice

A long tele-photo with minimum of 400mm range will be your go to lens!



# LENS FILTERS



In general we are not fans of UV filters. We recommend that you do not spend money on them. They offer little protection from a fall and they reduce the quality of your lens. People will spend thousands of dollars to have very sharp glass, only to place a \$35 filter over it.

Use a lens hood! 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.

We do prefer camera brand lens hoods,. We 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 we do recommend landscape photographers own (or anyone taking scenic view photos) is a circular polarizer (CP Filter).

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



# **LENS FILTERS**



## ND Filters

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.

## **NEW Magnetic 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 we HIGHLY recommend the new Maven Filter System that is magnetic.**



ALWAYS purchase the largest size filter you will need. Ex. If you have an 82 mm lens and 77mm lens, buy 82 mm filters. You can then purchase an adapter(Step-down ring) for the smaller lens and use the same filters!

Purchase MAVEN FILTERS HERE



# MEMORY CARDS/ BACK-UP SYSTEM



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 always available out on the tour! We recommend 128gb and 256gb cards.

Do not try to shoot everything on a single big memory card UNLESS YOU BACK UP daily to at least two locations. If that card goes bad, your camera gets stolen, and all your images are in one place, that would be a painful lesson to learn! Even if you choose to do this, ALWAYS HAVE A BACK UP CARD ALONG!

## Preparing and Formatting Memory Cards for Use

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!**

## 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 formatting 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 your carry-on.

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.

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# TRIPODS/MISC. GEAR

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## TRIPODS

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 if you plan on doing any longer exposure images.

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 long exposure 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 regarding 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. The Oben AT-3565 Aluminum Travel Tripod and B-217T Triple-Action Ball Head is also a good starter tripod at around \$114.

## RAINSLEEVE

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 in a pinch if the weather is going bad. If there is a chance of rain, this is good to have if your camera is not weather sealed.

Our friends at ThinkTank Photo have released a new new concept in weather protection, the 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.

## HEADLAMP

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.

Make sure you can operate the red light function easily as you will use this to not distract other photographers as much.



Toby's Favorite Headlamp

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# TOUR SPECIFIC CLOTHING

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Katmai National Park can have weather that changes **DRASTICALLY** within hours. Layers will be important and early morning will be chilly. Afternoons may warm up considerably but also , can still be cool or even rainy.

## Under Layer

This layer is the most important! We wear polypro under layers (breathable, soft fabric that isn't cheap but it's so worth it.

Even if you don't have fancy polypro, any type of long johns is better than nothing. They should fit you snugly without a lot of baggy area so that you can wear them under a variety of clothing. Avoid cotton, as it retains moisture and makes you cold. Also, nylons are **NOT** the same as long johns or poly pro base layers, and will make you cold!

**IMPORTANT - You WILL NEED a Rain Jacket.** We also recommend in case it rains, to have an outer water proof shell pant available. **RUBBER WADERS WILL BE PROVIDED!**

## Footwear

Water-Proof hiking style shoes or boots are recommended. Slip on shoes and flip flops are good around the boat.

## Light Gloves

Hat -Any type of hat that helps with sun can be useful.

## Mosquito Net Head Covering -

They usually have on board but may not. You never know how the situation will be,so we recommend having one just in case they are out.





# General Photo Tours

## PACKING CHECKLIST

### DOCUMENTS

Personal ID  
Passport and copies  
Insurance(s)  
Booking details  
Tickets  
Itinerary  
Visa (if required)  
Debit and Credit Cards  
Bank Notified

### CLOTHING

Underwear/Bras  
Lightweight Pants  
Lightweight Shirts  
Shorts  
Socks  
Glasses-Spare/Sun  
Water-proof  
Windbreaker  
Jacket/Sweater  
Bathing Suit  
Hat

### HEALTH

Prescriptions  
Vitamins  
Pain Reliever  
Throat lozenges  
Motion Sickness Meds  
Antibiotics  
Ani-Diarrhea Meds  
Antihistamine  
Alcohol Wipes  
Band-Aids  
Seat Cushion  
Lip Balm  
Eye Drops  
Sunscreen  
Hand Sanitizer  
Insect Repellent  
Toothbrush  
Mouthwash  
Shaving Kit  
Brush/Comb  
Skin Care/Lotions  
Shampoo/Conditioner  
Make-up/ Remover

### ELECTRONICS

Electrical Adaptor  
Short Extension Cord  
Cell phone  
Head Lamp  
Camera Gear  
Air Tags/ Tracking

### OPTIONAL

Thermos  
Water Bottle  
Artificial Sweeteners  
Reading Material  
Ear Plugs  
(roommates snore)  
Walking Poles  
Seat Cushion  
Pillow

### NON OPTIONAL

Adventurous Spirit  
Great Attitude  
Sense of Humor  
Flexibility



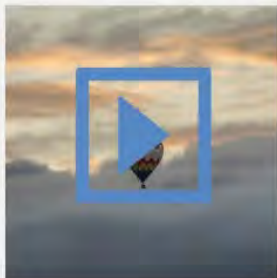
The more you are prepared with your gear, the better your experience will be. We have many videos and written tutorials to help you prepare and understand getting around your camera and tripods as well as general packing tips and suggestions.

Please visit the MPA preparation tour page at the link below prior to the tour.

# TOUR RESOURCES

Everything You Need to Be Prepared for Your Tour With Mckay Photography Academy!

## Photography & Gear Tips



Video Tutorials

Video Tutorials: Use the MPA

### Landscape Photography

#### Aperture Priority - A or Av on the Mode Dial

- Hit **Av** (Aperture or Manual) on the Mode Dial
- Turn **W** (White Balance) to **AWB**
- Turn **ISO** (ISO Speed) to **Auto**
- Turn **AF** (Autofocus) to **AF-S** (Single Frame)
- Turn **DR** (Dynamic Range) to **DR-L** (Low)
- Turn **WB** (White Balance) to **AWB**
- Turn **ISO** (ISO Speed) to **Auto**
- Turn **AF** (Autofocus) to **AF-S** (Single Frame)
- Turn **DR** (Dynamic Range) to **DR-L** (Low)

#### Manual Mode - M on the Mode Dial

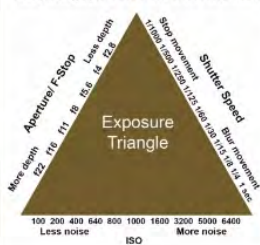
- Hit **M** (Manual) on the Mode Dial
- Turn **W** (White Balance) to **AWB**
- Turn **ISO** (ISO Speed) to **Auto**
- Turn **AF** (Autofocus) to **AF-S** (Single Frame)
- Turn **DR** (Dynamic Range) to **DR-L** (Low)
- Turn **WB** (White Balance) to **AWB**
- Turn **ISO** (ISO Speed) to **Auto**
- Turn **AF** (Autofocus) to **AF-S** (Single Frame)
- Turn **DR** (Dynamic Range) to **DR-L** (Low)

#### Helpful Hints

- Make sure you are in **Aperture Priority** or **Manual** mode before you start shooting.
- Make sure you are in **Aperture Priority** or **Manual** mode before you start shooting.
- Make sure you are in **Aperture Priority** or **Manual** mode before you start shooting.

Quick Reference Guide

### Your photograph is made of these 3 elements.



Exposure Learning

Camera Settings: Quick quiz.



Equipment List

Equipment Check List: For

Privacy & Cookies Policy

**MPA Tour Preparation Resources!**





# PHOTO ENTHUSIAST NETWORK

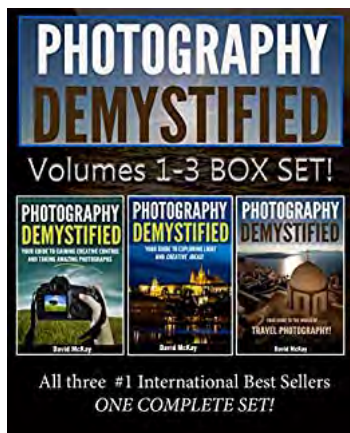
Interested in starting your photographic education before the tour and are not yet a member of Photo Enthusiast Network? We encourage you to join today!

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!

Photo Enthusiast Network is the educational and fun photography community run by David and Ally McKay, and Toby Gelston! FILLED with educational tutorials, videos, and weekly education as well as an amazing community of Photo Enthusiast to help share in your passion for photography!

We are SO PROUD of the community of over 500 members we have built and this is such a great resource. PLUS, as a member after you first year you get a \$150 discount once a year for any MPA tour of your choosing!

Join Today!



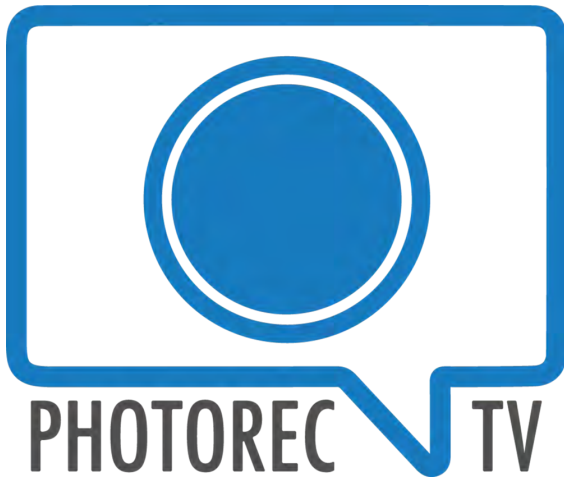
The number one Best Seller Series by David McKay are available as a digital download and in hard copy.

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. Order yours today!

If you are a Photo Enthusiast Network member, you can download for FREE on the PEN web site!





Toby Gelston Photorec.tv and MPA Instructor

We are proud to 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 340,000 subscribers!

Toby is also one of our main instructors. 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 via [Toby@photorec.tv](mailto:Toby@photorec.tv) 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](https://www.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.

Please use these links for your purchases!



Email [Toby@mckaylive.com](mailto:Toby@mckaylive.com) for gear advice!



The Original Photo Gear Protection

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 and MindShift.

Ally and David currently use the ThinkTank Airport Roller Derby bag to fit all their gear in while GETTING to the location. Their Roller Derby's have traveled to all 7 continents more than once and continue to stand up to the hardest of travel conditions. Once there, using a bag such as the MindShift 13L to carry what is needed out for a shoot is there go to.

Once there, the McKay's prefer to travel lighter and do NOT want to carry everything all the time. We've recently been introduced to the new MindShift Gear PhotoCross backpacks. These are great , but some times people prefer a larger back-pack based on what they are carrying and how it fits their body shape.

The MindShift 26L Back Pack is awesome for those that want to carry more while on the go. The 18L is a smaller version. New on the block is the new MindShift Photocross 13L and 15L which has become the preferred bag of David.



Think Tank Roller Derby



Mindshift 26L Larger Bag



Mindshift 13L & 15L Smaller bags

Visit the web site to see what options are best for you.

The MindShift 13L is smaller but will still hold a camera body and 2 lenses for day trips etc.



# LENS PRO TO GO

We have partnered with LensProToGo for camera and lens rentals! Can't afford to buy or want to try it out first? Then RENT IT! Visit [LensProToGo.com](http://LensProToGo.com) today! You can rent TOP OF THE LINE cameras and lenses and tripods for very little money.

Let them know you will be on this tour with us! You can use the code below from Photo Enthusiast Network for 15% off any order. Sometimes, they have a special going as well, so always call, let them know you are going on our tour, and see what they have available. They are always very helpful!

Use Code **PEN15** for 15% at anytime!



As an example, this Canon 100-500mm lens that cost \$2900 can be rented for 25 days for \$275 with the 15% off code!







# SPIDER

## CAMERA HOLSTER

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.

The leather hand strap is also very comfortable and feels safe around your hand.



Order Spider Holster System Here



MCKAY PHOTO  
TOURERS

A central logo consisting of a white, bold, sans-serif letter 'M' centered within a solid black circle. This circle is set against a dark red background that has a subtle, wavy texture.

Photography - Travel - Friendship - Adventure