[Test] Best practices for today's photography

1 message

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"There is only you and your camera. The limitations in your photography are in yourself, for what we see is what we are."
– Ernst Haas

A slow cruise on Lopoc River, Bohol Island, Philippines

Photographed with a GoPro Hero 12

Inspiration

It is early in the year to be sending out the first newsletter, but it has been an inspiring start to 2025. This year started on a beach watching fireworks at midnight on the island of Cebu in the Philippines with family and it could not have been a better way to be reminded about what really matters. Travel, especially to places that are completely new and unusual creates what feels like an unlimited amount of photographic opportunities but I wanted that to be secondary to spending time with my son Ryan and his family, and therefore a different plan was required. I was going to a place I'd never been, and wanted to have some amount of photographs and videos capturing a very busy schedule of activities and places, however, I did not want it to involve carrying the "big cameras" around and having to worry about moisture and heat and security so a different plan was required. And I wanted it to be about the things we did together, not just pretty pictures of landscapes, although there going to be some of those.

Simplifying things

This all comes back in some ways to what I consider the three basic rules of photography are:

1. Have a camera - any camera. The best camera is the one you have with you.

2. Take your camera with you everywhere possible because you never know what opportunity might occur.

3. Use it. A lot. Practice makes perfect, or at least good enough. Learn as you go.

When you hang around with photographers there are many discussions about the next big camera and lens, and generally the drive is to newer, faster, sharper. And that is great for many things, but I've become convinced we overdo that direction often. I've mentioned before that we often go after perfection, but don't recognize when we've passed good-enough on that path, and even turned up our noses at a simpler but effective solution for some things.

I am fully aware that smartphones and action cameras have come a long way. This was the right opportunity to dig into what those offer. And, I decided that everything had to fit into pockets on my cargo shorts so I had a total size in mind. A camera (recording device?) could come out when the opportunity was there, and just be put away once that was done. And this is what it came down to:

I had an iphone, a GoPro, and a mirrorless Olympus camera that is small enough to go into my pocket. The long handle on the GoPro serves as a tripod, a selfie-stick, and a floating device when the GoPro was in the water where we actually did spend a lot of time. I only carried the handle when needed, and didn't feel badly that it broke the pocket-fitting rule. I had a lot of fun with these tools, without much of the associated worry. My granddaughter even found a sealed plastic cell-phone holder for me that meant I didn't have to worry about the phone getting wet - it just hung around my neck when needed.

I gave myself three weeks in advance to carry these things around and get used to them. That was especially true for the GoPro which is wildly useful but has an operating system designed by an alien from Alpha-Centauri I think. Just a very different perspective, but also very clever once I got used to it. The quality of 4k videos from the GoPro is very high with the result that for the first time I brought home more video than still photos. Some of those videos are in the links below.

One advantage was that our guides for snorkelling, whale-shark swimming, ATV treks, and anywhere else we went were very used to both smart phones and the GoPro so they could take it and shoot for us, and just hand it back to me when done so I had that footage available. And, because Wifi and cell coverage seemed to be everywhere we travelled I could easily move videos and still shots from the GoPro to my iPhone, and then into iCloud while we were travelling. It was a easier and more convenient than I expected, and that meant I didn't lose time with the family by fiddling around with photos.

It was absolutely a very successful idea for this case, the outcomes speak for themselves. Even the follow-up work was easier and quicker so I was able to share everything back to family and friends in a couple of days after getting home. All in all, a satisfying outcome.

Just click/press on the photos below, that will take you to a collection of videos and stills from around Cebu, and Bohol. There are photos from all of the tools shown above, and I quickly was able to decide which fit the bill best for a given need.
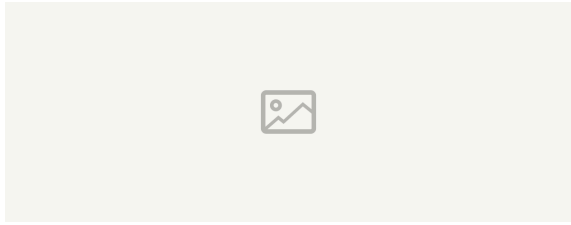
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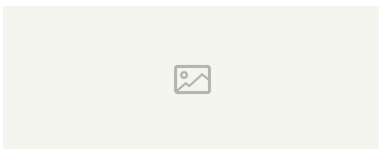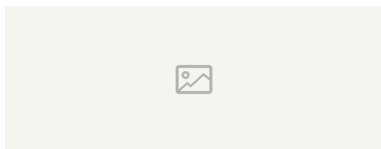
Options

This was a great experiment using different tools to get a job done. I am off to Florida for the start of the motorsports season soon, and that is definitely a job for the big cameras and lenses, but I don't think it is either/or now. I'm testing a couple of tools to connect the GoPro to my Canon mirrorless cameras so that I can shoot videos and still shots at the same time, and I started using the iPhone last year for videos with decent results. I need to look at some better bluetooth microphones for the iPhone and GoPro to handle wind noise. I am really happy that I could start this newsletter with a photo from a GoPro, and that kind of option really opens up some good opportunities.

A belated happy New Year to all, I hope that 2025 brings success and peace to all.