

What's The Best Camera To Take Traveling?

By Susan E L Lake
©2022 SusanLakePhotography.com

I frequently get the question “What camera should I take traveling?” The best response, of course, is the camera you already have. I’ve had lots of friends buy a brand new wonderful camera because they were going on the proverbial “trip of a lifetime.” They don’t buy it months in advance but instead more like days. They are so proud and rightfully so. But here’s the glitch. Travel is demanding and often stressful because it’s an adventure not a vacation. Trying to take photographs while having an “adventure” is not a recipe for success. You see the cutest orangutan or the scariest python when you least expect it so of course your camera isn’t “on.” You pull out your shiny new camera trying to remember the location of the elusive on button, how to focus, and where to click. But the snake has slithered away or the monkey has scampered up the tree before you can do all those things. Working with a camera (or phone) you already have experience with gives you a **much** better chance of capturing these moments. That doesn’t mean you shouldn’t buy new equipment. Just be aware that you need to give yourself plenty of time to get used to it. I once told a friend she needed to take 1000 pictures before leaving. That’s still true.



Trinidad, Spain: passing underneath a rather impressive snake.

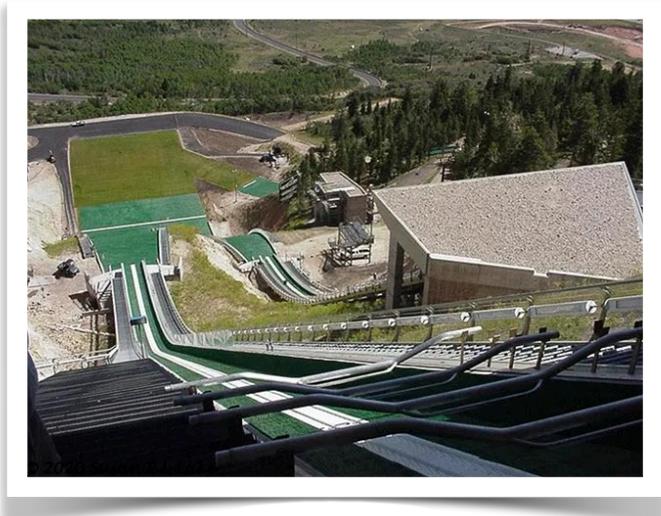
A variation of the original question is “What camera do you use?” Most folks find that query results in more of an answer than they wanted. I’ve traveled with all kinds of photographic equipment. I acquired my travel photography habit with an early Sony digital camera. This Mavica was so “early” that it used 3.5 inch floppy disks (the little ones with a plastic shell) as a “memory card.” The images didn’t have many pixels, but it had one advantage that made it better than the Konica film camera we had: you could take as many pictures as you wanted. I was in love. I could shoot and shoot. And I did. I learned to experiment with angles and subjects in ways I had never done before because I no longer had to factor in the cost. With the Konica, it was 12 shots or maybe 24 and that’s it. I developed them when I got home and had maybe one that was any good – meaning it wasn’t overexposed or shaky. With the Sony I was set free. And by the way, even though those early images were digitally small, even today they



Early digital camera: a Sony Mavica that used a floppy disk as a memory card.

look good. This is one I took nearly 20 years ago with the Mavica. Still brings back vivid memories and reminds me why I'll never be a luge racer. That's a swimming pool at the bottom to "catch" the racers in training.

I moved on to better and better digital cameras as I could afford to upgrade. The day I got a 5 megapixel camera I thought it could never get any better. Hah! Then I got the urge to try a camera with interchangeable lenses. And once you have that, then of course you start adding lenses. I packed around pounds of gear on each trip and my long suffering spouse learned to hold one lens while I changed to a longer or a shorter one because some work great shooting from a bus but aren't any good inside a museum. I got good shots and loved that camera and the others to follow.



Salt Lake City, Utah: a view from above the luge training run for the 2002 Winter Olympics

But the day came when I got tired of hauling that gear through airports (and security). My aging body also didn't much approve of miles of travel walking with a good sized camera bag slung over my shoulder. I had started to leave all but the most essential lenses at home which sort of defeated the purpose of having a camera that could zoom way out or shoot up close. So I experimented with a "point and shoot" with a very good zoom. It weighed less than even one of my lenses and fit into a "fanny pack" I could strap on quickly. I got some nice shots and loved that camera. Do you see a pattern here?

Along the way I had used my cell phone camera to get "quick and dirty" shots when I didn't have my "real" camera with me or when I didn't want to change out the lens on my camera or when my point and shoot couldn't get close enough. It became my always present backup camera.

I upgraded my phone to one that had three lenses as part of the camera: standard, telephoto, and wide angle. On the first trip I took with it, I found myself relegating my regular camera to the fanny pack and shooting with the phone. On my next trip the traditional camera may not go with me at all.

The point of this history of cameras is that I got images I wanted regardless of the camera. Whether you want to carry multi-lens equipment, a point and shoot, a smart phone, or an iPad (I have a friend who uses just that and gets great pictures), it's not your camera, it's you and your eye. Unless you are going to sell your travel pics to National Geographic, use the camera that works for you.

[Return to SusanLakePhotography](#)