

What's In The Bag in 2018?

by

E.J. Peiker

The numerous "What's In The Bag" articles and videos may be a bit cliché' but they continue to be one of the most common questions that are submitted to professional photographers. For that reason, I have prepared this article for my current state of photography. My equipment lineup is probably in more of a state of flux than most so this does change somewhat throughout the year and sometimes changes dramatically from year to year. In 2017 I completed my transition for my most serious landscape photography from the 35mm format to the 645 format - a transition that has its roots all the way back in the late 1980's when I first used a borrowed Mamiya 645 camera. It was 2013 when I first shot with the Mamiya derived Phase One medium format system in northern Italy's spectacular Dolomites. My travel and back-country photography continues to be 135 format based so I maintain a state of the art Sony mirrorless system but rather than a bag full of prime lenses, I now use primarily the best zoom lenses made for the Sony Full Frame E-mount (commonly referred to as FE, but not to be confused with Canon's EF mount). For my wildlife/bird photography, I continue to use the Nikon DSLR system but as my Nikon lenses wore out, I have mostly replaced them with the more affordable and in many ways superior Sigma lenses from their Global Vision Sport series. I am also doing more infrared photography and currently use a hybrid Nikon/Sony set-up which is less than optimal and may see some changes through 2018. With that preface, here's what's in the bag in various situations in 2018:

Wildlife/Birds:

Camera: Primary - Nikon D500 with battery grip, Backup - Nikon D7200 with battery grip

Long Telephoto: Primary - Sigma 500mm f/4 and Sigma TC-1401 1.4x teleconverter, Secondary - Sigma 150-600mm f/4.5-6.3 OS Sport

Intermediate Telephoto: Nikon 80-400mm f4.5-5.6G

Wide to Short Telephoto Zoom: Nikon DX 16-80 f/2.8-4E

Tripod/Head: Gitzo 3532LS, Uniqball 45XC

Bag: GuraGear Bataflae 26L or Guragear Kiboko



Commentary: It is important to note that both cameras are APS-C cameras (DX in Nikonese) so the effective reach is multiplied by 1.5x. As an example, the Nikon 16-80 would be similar to a 24-120mm lens on a full frame camera or the Sigma 500mm with 1.4x teleconverter would be similar to a 1050mm optic on a full frame camera. If I am driving to the shooting location I will generally take both the 500mm f/4 and the 150-600mm f/4.5-5.6 lens in the large GuraGear Kiboko photo backpack but since they are both large 7lb lenses, if I am flying to the destination, I will make a determination on which lens to take based on the likely shooting scenario at the destination. In those cases I have to make a choice and possibly a compromise on whether low light performance is more important (500 f/4) or the versatility of the zoom lens (150-600mm) is more important. If the 150-600mm lens is in the bag, I will generally not take the 80-400mm lens. In addition to my standard wildlife kit, I may pack the Irix 11mm ultra-wide angle if I anticipate significant landscape opportunities where the 16-35 may not be wide enough or if I anticipate some vast animal scape photography. On the camera support front, for travel, I have switched to the larger model Uniqball due to much smaller travel size and weight than a Gimbal head like the Wimberley Head II. While I still prefer the way the Wimberley Head and other full Gimbal heads work, the size and weight disadvantages of these heads in today's travel environment overshadow the slightly less convenient Uniqball for wildlife shooting. Additionally, a second ballhead for any incidental landscape shooting is no longer necessary since the Uniqball can be pressed into service for that type of photography with some compromises there as well.

Landscape Photography:

Camera: Primary - Phase One XF
- IQ3100, Backup - Sony a7R III

Telephoto: Schneider Kreuznach
BR 75-150mm f/4-5.6LS (approx-
imately 48-96mm full frame equiv-
alent)

Standard: Primary - Schneider
Kreuznach BR 40-80mm f/4-5.6LS
(approximately 26-52mm full
frame equivalent), Sony 24-70
f/2.8 GM

Wide: Schneider Kreuznach BR
35mm f/3.5LS (approximately
22mm full frame equivalent)

Ultra Wide: Schneider Kreuznach
28mm f/4.5LS (approximately
18mm full frame equivalent)

Tripod/head: Gitzo 4532 LS,
KPS-T5 Geared Ballhead

Bag: Mindshift Backlight 26L



Commentary: Many readers may wonder why I would call a 28mm an ultra wide lens! The digital 645 format has a “crop factor” of about 0.65 so that would be equivalent to about 18mm on a 35mm camera. It is the widest lens available for the Phase One XF camera system. Similarly the 35mm lens would be about 22mm equivalent, the 40-80mm lens would be equivalent to 26-52mm and the 75-150mm would be equivalent to 48-96mm. These lenses are large and heavy so I typically have anything longer than 150mm (98mm full frame 35mm camera equivalent) but realize I can crop this image to 50% of the frame and still be left with slightly over 50 megapixels with an equivalent 200mm field of view which is generally long enough for most landscape applications and still provides plenty of very high quality pixels. I do have a 300mm f/4.5 Mamiya lens that I take if I feel like I am going to need something much longer but that would have to be packed in a separate bag. On driving trips, of course this lens will be along for the ride but for flying trips, I almost never bring this lens. One of the problems with the medium format system is its size, weight and cost making a medium format backup camera and digital back prohibitive. In those situations I still take a Sony a7R III body with 42 megapixels and a 24-70mm lens in case disaster strikes or I need the nimbleness of a small camera in certain situations - this is packed separately and usually makes the trip in my computer bag. The a7R III and 24-70mm f/2.8 combination of camera and lens weighs less than one zoom lens for the 645 system. In addition to the lenses above, I also have an mint condition and optically exceptional 1990's vintage Mamiya Sekor 45mm f/2.8 (~30mm full frame equivalent) fully manual lens whose mount has been modified to work on the Phase One XF camera body. I will take it if I anticipate low light or night-time shooting. For Camera Support, the precision adjustments of a geared head are a boon to precise composition, this the KPS-T5 ballhead is always used. For the 40-80mm and 75-150mm lenses (and the 300mm), I use a lens support bracket made specifically for the Phase One system by Hejnar Photo.

Travel Photography:

Camera: Primary - Sony a7R III,
Backup - Sony a7R II

Telephoto: Sony 100-400mm
f/4.5-5.6 GM

Standard: Sony 24-70 f/2.8 GM

Wide: Sony 16-35mm f/2.8 GM

Ultra Wide: Voigtlander 12mm
f/5.6

Tripod/head: Really Right Stuff
TVC-24L, Really Right Stuff BH-40

Bag: Ruggard Outrigger 45

Commentary: Travel photography, in my world, can mean extensive travel by air including the potential for airlines and/or aircraft where there is a weight or size



limitation smaller than standard US airline carry-on allowances for large planes (737/A319 or larger). It can also mean situations where mobility and ease of carrying gear for long periods of time with maximum versatility are necessary such as last year's trip to Singapore where I walked 18 hours a day in 90+ degree/90%+ humidity conditions for several days. As such, this would also be the typical kit for a photo trip with extensive hiking, either distance wise, or difficulty wise. Even under those conditions, I would still travel with the 100-400mm lens but may not take it with me on outings where there is likely no need. This category is all about maximizing image quality while minimizing the weight and size of the gear.

Infrared:

Camera: Sony a6000 - 665nm, Nikon D7100 - 720nm

Standard: Sony 24-70mm f/2.8 GM, Nikon 16-80mm f/2.8-4E

Wide: Sony 16-35mm f/2.8, Irix 11mm f/4

Ultra Wide: Irix 11mm f/4

Tripod/Head: Really Right Stuff TVC-24L, Really Right Stuff BH-40

Bag: Mindshift Backlight 26L

Commentary: My IR set-up is most definitely not optimal since my two infrared cameras are of different mounts with different batteries. I primarily use the Sony a6000 with a 665nm visible light cut-off for false color infrared and my Nikon D7100 with a 720nm visible light cut-off for black and white IR photography. I will likely be transitioning to Sony 100% in 2018 for IR photography. In addition to what is listed above, I will usually take a Novoflex Nikon mount to Sony E-mount adapter so that I can also use the Irix lens on the Sony camera if I need something wider than 16mm (remembering that 16mm on APS-C is equivalent to 24mm on full frame and 11mm is 17.5mm equivalent on full frame)

I will slightly modify these as necessary for specific situations but in general the above kits are what I shoot with on location in 2018. If I am just going on a "non-shooting vacation" (Is there such a thing for a photographer?), I tend to take a Sony a6300 with the 16-35mm and 24-70mm lenses along with a MeFoto Globetrotter travel tripod. If there is the possibility of some birds, since I often travel to tropical islands for vacations, I will also take the 80-400 which has the field of view of a 120-600mm lens on the a6300. The bags that I use and which tripods and heads I take may vary based on specific situations but again, in general, what I wrote above is what I tend to go with. In addition, of course there are, polarizing and neutral density filters (6 stop and 10 stop), battery chargers, spare batteries, lens cloths, rain covers, media cards, a computer, card reader, data cables, and whatever else is necessary.

While I realize my gear choices are more extensive than the majority of photographers, I hope that my "What's In The Bag In 208?" summary and the reasoning behind my choices can be helpful to some of my readers.

Disclaimers

E.J. Peiker conducts consulting services and product design services for a number of photographic product companies. Those that know me know I would not endorse a product even for compensation if I did not feel it were a superior product.

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "E.J. Peiker". The signature is stylized, with the first letters of the first and last names being large and prominent.

E.J. Peiker - Nature Photographer