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Photo Tip #1, Image Management

Schwert

- Skills and guides - Photography -



Publication: Wednesday 23 August 2006

Description :

Memory cards, Portable Hard Drives, CD's and DVD's....a digital dilemma. Moving into the digital image world completely changed my photo management schemes. This article discusses my "during trip" and "post trip" memory management strategies.

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Once I added a digital camera to my bag I immediately found that managing memory was my number one concern. Not only did I have image files that needed storage after a photo trip but I had more immediate management issues during a trip. As a film photographer I would frequently shoot several rolls of 36 exposure slide films during a day. On a typical 10 day trip I would usually take 60-80 rolls of film, generally exposing between 40 and 70 rolls. This resulted in tall stack of green boxes that needed sorting, cataloging and storage, but while somewhat chaotic, was at least manageable and familiar....and more importantly could be endlessly delayed. I recently converted to digital and now have had to improve my image management dramatically.

Fifty rolls of film produces 1800 images. I have three digital cameras that I travel with and these store images at about 1MB, 4.5MB and 16MB each. If I were to shoot 1800 images with my digital SLR at 16MB each I would need 28.8 GB of storage for a trip.

One strategy that I could employ is having sufficient Compact Flash (CF) cards for all the shooting I planned on doing on a trip. Even though 1GB compact flash cards have become much more affordable, this strategy would require about 25 cards (and at about \$35+/GB) at a cost of about \$875. So this strategy was definitely out. Not only is the cost very high, but the "fiddly factor" was excessive with that many cards. If I was a more conservative shooter or only used my smaller cameras, this strategy can and does work.

The second strategy is to travel with a laptop with a sufficiently large hard drive, one potentially with a CD or DVD burner. This is likely what most people do, but I really do not like to lug along my archaic laptop on most trips, so have chosen instead to use a small hard drive/viewer. My Epson P-2000, is a 40 GB hard drive with superb viewer. This is about the size of a small digital camera and has both SD and CF card slots. The excellent viewer allows me to not only review a day's work, but edit with confidence any images that are definitely not "keepers". The viewer is also a nice player. An album of select images can be created and then the viewer attached to a TV for a "slide show". This aspect is nice for trips that include the necessary visitations to relatives.

So my "during trip" image management strategy is to have sufficient cards for a days shooting, then download them to the Epson P-2000 as I can, but definitely nightly. The P2000 is small enough to carry with my cameras during the day, but I generally do not do so as I would like to minimize potential damage or loss. This strategy is a bit of "all eggs-in-one-basket" so may not be for everyone, but so far, has worked well for me. Adding a portable DVD burner would give me backup potential, but a laptop would likely be a better alternative.



Epson P-2000 Hard Drive/Viewer

Currently I have 8 CF cards for a total of 7.4GB of storage for the 3 cameras. I use my smaller capacity cards in my

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pocket camera and the larger cards for my more capable point and shoot which my wife uses, and my digital SLR. I found a GEPE Extreme card case which I really like to carry my extra cards. It holds 4 CF cards. I put unused cards in with the label up and used cards in with the back up.



GEPE CardSafe Extreme



GEPE CardSafe Extreme

On most of my trips where photography is a main concern I divide my day into two or three blocks. Early morning images are shot and downloaded over breakfast, and then any day images can be downloaded prior to getting set for evening light shots. This keeps the total requirement for cards lower than if I shoot continuously throughout the day.

Once I return from each trip I move all my images to a 300GB external USB hard drive and then burn DVD's for long term storage and backup. I work my select images off of the hard drive and burn additional CD's or DVD's of the final images. I have yet to find a satisfactory way to catalog my images, but have started to use Nikon Picture Project. This like all aspects of digital photography is an open area of learning for me.

Resources

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Epson makes both the 40GB [P-2000](#) and the 80GB [P-4000](#) hard drive/viewer. These are identical except for their memory capacity. If I was buying today I would spring for the Epson P-4000 for its larger capacity. This USB storage device is simple and intuitive and the high quality viewer makes editing relatively easy. It is not super fast to load images (especially large file sizes) but it has worked very well for me. I nearly bought a DVD burner instead of this, but worried that I could not confirm that my images were actually on the DVD prior to formatting my cards. This device is not cheap, but at least for now, less expensive than an equivalent number of CF cards and offers editing and playback features which are quite handy.

[GEPE CardSafe](#) Extreme. This Swedish made pocket "safe" is waterproof and holds cards firmly. It can store CF, SD, MMC, SmartMedia, and memory stick cards. I really like this case. I had a similarly sized case but the cards laid loose....with a huge potential for them to drop out when the case was opened. This is a very secure case and allows easy organization of used and unused cards. Highly recommended.

Post-scriptum :

Version 1.0 08/22/2006 Inception

Version 1.1 08/22/2006 Images and Fini

Version 1.2 05/11/2007 Total memory error corrected...thanks Grantmeliberty.