



The Photo Traveler

Quarterly Newsletter of the PSA Photo Travel Division

Volume 14 - Issue 3 - July 2026



The Photo Traveler

HONORABLE MENTION AWARD WINNER
2025 PSA NEWSLETTER COMPETITION

BHUTAN

by Kathryn Dannay

P 7 - 15

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2

Message from the Editor
Lisa Marie Cirincione

3

PTD Officers and Directors
PTD Disclaimer

4

Letter from the Chair
Carolyn Todd-Larson

5

PTD Star Path Information

6

Photo Travel Webinar

7-15

Bhutan

Kathryn Dannay

16

Image Discussion Groups
Isaac Vaisman

17-23

Kyrgyzstan

Roberto De Leonardis

24-25

PTD Members'
Favorite Images

26-32

Antarctica

Alan Lichtenstein

33-35

PTD Interclub
Round 3 Results
Venkatesh BS

36-39

PTD Interclub
End-of-Year Winners
Venkatesh BS

40

PSA Promos
PTD Newsletter info

Message from the Editor

Lisa Marie Cirincione
PPSA, AFIAP

Welcome to The July Photo Traveler!

We wish to correct an error in the promotional flyers for the 2026 PTD Photo Travel Essay contests. These winning images and their titles from the 2025 PTD Mini Photo Travel Essay competition were accidentally transposed. The flyers appeared in the April issue of The Photo Traveler and were shared with PSA members on social media. We apologize for any confusion this may have caused.



Mini Photo Travel Essay - Gold Medal
Divinity on the Streets - Ramasamy Krishnaswamy



Mini Photo Travel Essay - Silver Medal
Anatolian Vistas - Siyas Abdul Salam

Don't forget... Hyperlinks! Click on the bottom left of the page to go back to the Table of Contents. Then click on a page number to go to an article.

Personnel

Photo Travel Division

Officers (as of July 2026)	<i>click on a name to send an email</i>
Chair	Carolyn Todd-Larson PPSA, AFIAP
1st Vice Chair	Dr. Isaac Vaisman APSA, PPSA
2nd Vice Chair	Venkatesh BS GMPSA/G, EFIAP/G
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Immediate Past Chair	Stan Bormann FPSA, MPSA
Member-at-Large	Tom Tauber APSA, MPSA
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Exhibition Standards Mentor	Nadia Filiaggi APSA, MPSA, EFIAP
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Historian and Honors & Awards	Shirley Bormann APSA, EPSA
Image Evaluation Services	Tom Tauber APSA, MPSA
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Inter-Club Competition	Venkatesh BS GMPSA/G, EFIAP/G
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Photo Essay Competition	RH "Sam" Samarakone QPSA
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Photo Traveler Newsletter Associate Editor	RH "Sam" Samarakone QPSA
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Star Ratings Director, Stars 1-5 & Galaxy	Judy Kuo GMPSA
Star Ratings Director, Galaxy & Diamonds	Jenn Yeokkian Koh GMPSA
Divisions Vice President	Ralph Durham APSA, BPSA
Divisions Coordinator	Mohammed Arfan Asif FPSA, MPSA, EFIAP/D3

Disclaimer

Photo Travel Division

The Photo Traveler is the newsletter of the PSA Photo Travel Division (PTD). In general, images submitted should adhere to either of the Photo Travel Definitions, (PTDD or PTDW), but the PTD realizes that in an article describing a journey, trip, or visit, it would be acceptable to include a limited number of images that do not. However, before submitting a draft article for publication, the author should review and understand the Photo Travel Definitions (PTDD or PTDW), which can be found at psaphotoworldwide.org/page/division-definitions

Educational resources for Photo Travel that provide further clarification on definition issues and concerns are available to PSA members. These resources can be found at psaphotoworldwide.org/page/mo-ptd-resources

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Letter from the Chair

by Carolyn Todd-Larson PPSA, AFIAP

Greetings!

There are lots of things happening as usual in PSA as well as in the Photo Travel Division. Recently, we held a Photo Travel Division meeting and received updates from many of the volunteers we rely on so heavily and value so much, who do the Division's important work.

Of particular interest to all in PSA is the status of Photo Travel. **Donna Hom MPSA, AFIAP**, Photo Travel's Exhibition Standards Director, shared some analyses that, to me, are encouraging. Photo Travel sections are growing as a percentage of PSA exhibitions. From January to June 2025, 58% of PSA exhibitions had Photo Travel sections. For 2026, January to June, 68% of PSA exhibitions had Photo Travel sections, a 17 percentage-point increase!

Photo Travel World in Focus accounts for much of that growth. PSA exhibitions adopted PTD World in Focus (PTDW) very quickly, perhaps because of its less restrictive definition. In the first few months of 2026, it seemed that PTD Documentary (PTDD - which uses the traditional PTD definition) was doomed. PTDD sections were offered only five times in January, three times in February, once in March, and twice in April. This caused considerable concern among people seeking the next step in the PTDD star path. May and June, thankfully, tell a more balanced story. In May, 44% of the Photo Travel sections were PTDD, and in June, 36% were PTDD. Right now, July is looking promising as well.

It's too early to know whether this latest trend for PTDD will last, and May is likely influenced by the PSA Annual Photo Travel exhibitions, where we offered several PTDD themes in each exhibition. But I'm noticing more exhibitions offering both PTDW and PTDD sections, and some are offering just PTDD. I am encouraged that the future of PTDD may be more solid than the first few months suggested.

I try to enter as many exhibitions that offer PTDD sections as I can, especially when there are circuits with several salons, since they are a more efficient use of my competition dollars. If people



are concerned about the future of Photo Travel Documentary, I suggest entering exhibitions that offer PTDD sections as one way to help. Exhibitions choose sections based on demand. If there is no demand, traditional economics would suggest that the supply of PTDD sections would dwindle.

Will your PTDD dollars be wasted if you focus on PTDD? PSA is unveiling a new recognition system that's not so reliant on star paths. Your acceptances will count in this new system, or you can continue, perhaps more slowly, on the star path system. More information will be forthcoming about this new system once the testing phase is complete.

Are you coming to the **PSA Photo Festival in Las Vegas** this September? If so, be sure to sign up ahead of time for the **PSA Photo Travel Division Annual Meeting and Luncheon**, to be held **Thursday, September 17, 12 noon - 1:30 pm PT**. NOTE: Do NOT sign up for Tour #12 Springs Preserve Tour on Thursday morning. You will not be able to register for the luncheon if you do.

If you can't make it in person, a Zoom link will be sent by PSA Headquarters for all the Division meetings. **The Zoom meeting for PTD will begin about 12:25 pm PT.**

I so appreciate all of you who support and contribute to the Photo Travel Division! And I especially appreciate the writers and editors of The Photo Traveler who continue to make this publication so special!

Safe Travels!

2026 New Star Paths

Photo Travel Division

Did you know... Before January 2026, PSA had only one star path: PTD, with a reality-based definition, honed over time, that was very specific about what's allowed and what's not allowed.

As of January 1, 2026, the PTD star path has ended and PTD sections in exhibitions will no longer be allowed. Instead, it has embraced a wider range of subject matter by creating two star paths with different definitions: **Photo Travel Division Documentary (PTDD)** and **Photo Travel Division World in Focus (PTDW)**. An exhibition may choose to offer **PTDD** or **PTDW**, or it may choose to offer both.

Photo Travel Division Documentary remains a reality-based PTD definition, portraying the world as it is found naturally, through images of distinctive places or through images of people who exhibit distinct cultural characteristics or activities. In **PTD Documentary**, images must avoid studio-like settings and setup or arranged photography.

If you have been progressing on the PTD star path, your PTD acceptances will automatically be applied to **PTDD** for your next star rating because **PTDD** is essentially the same as the former PTD definition. If your goal is to advance on the PTD star path, you need to find and enter exhibitions with **PTDD** sections.

You might want to consider circuits with more than one salon to maximize fee efficiency. Or look for Photo Travel-only theme exhibitions, such as those offered by the PSA Annual, to maximize your dollars. Exhibition listings can be found at listings.psaems.org

In contrast, **Photo Travel Division World in Focus** is aligned with the FIAP World in Focus definition. **PTDW** allows for images of places or people found naturally, as well as a more diverse range of content, such as food and studio portraits. In **PTDW**, images that are setup or arranged are allowed.

PTDW is a new star path with a different and broader definition. You can use any of your titles that were accepted in PTD or PTDD and enter those again in **PTDW**, or you may use different travel images that didn't qualify for PTD, such as studio portraits or setups. In **PTDW**, your acceptances begin at Star 1. The definitions can be found at psaphotoworldwide.org/page/division-definitions

PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA WORLDWIDE

PSA PHOTO TRAVEL OVERVIEW

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26th
6 PM EASTERN DAYLIGHT TIME

CAROLYN TODD-LARSON
PPSA, AFIAP



A Photo Travel image is a portrayal of the world we live in without geographic limitations. New for 2026, the Photo Travel Division (PTD) has two Star Paths: PTD Documentary (PTDD) and PTD World in Focus (PTDW).

This presentation reviews the content guidelines for each star path and provides illustrative examples of photos. Editing guidelines will also be discussed. Concerns about star path transition from the former PTD will also be addressed. The presentation will conclude with an overview of learning opportunities in Photo Travel and online resources that PSA members can access that will help you succeed in Photo Travel.

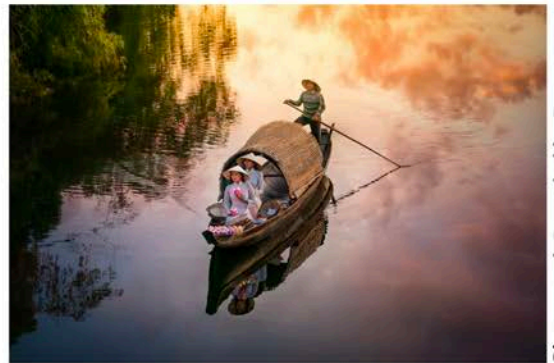
Carolyn Todd-Larson is Chair of PSA's Photo Travel Division. As Chair, she works with and leads Division Officers and Directors in managing the Division's programs.



2026 Webinar



© Tom Tauber 2025



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© Carolyn Todd-Larson 2025



© Donna Hom 2025

WEBINAR REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED!

To register for the webinar, please click [here](#).

We hope you will join us for this informative presentation!

Look for announcements from PSA Headquarters about the webinar as well.

Into Bhutan

by Kathryn Dannay

Into Bhutan

The plane descends rapidly through a sub-range of the Himalayan mountains towards the world's most dangerous airport. We bank left, and we bank right, winding our way through a tight valley of steep mountains reaching 18,000 feet on each side of us. We are so close to the terrain, it's as if you could reach out and touch the trees. Pilots are specially trained to fly into this airport, and they fly manually via Visual Flight Rules. We float over the rice fields and skim the rooftops, landing smoothly at the airport in Paro.

Welcome to the Kingdom of Bhutan, Land of the Thunder Dragon.

Overview

Bhutan is a small, landlocked, Himalayan nation sandwiched between northeast India and southwest China. It has a history of self-imposed isolation to preserve its culture and independence. It is roughly 1.5 times the size of the state of Vermont, with a population of just over 786,000 (as of 2023). The Bhutanese government is sensitive to the impact that tourism can have on the land, cities, and its cultural heritage, and thus limits the number of visitors. This makes Bhutan one of the least-visited countries and a unique and special place.

Why Bhutan is Unique

Bhutan is famous for its unique cultural heritage, its stunning landscapes, and its focus on "Gross National Happiness" (GNH), a philosophy that prioritizes well-being over economic growth. More importantly, Bhutan embodies its spiritual heritage. From the old to the young, across all walks of life, the integration of their Buddhist beliefs is integral to every part of their daily lives. This is one of the many things that make Bhutan unique.

People

The people are incredibly friendly, usually smiling and waving, and always willing to pose for a photo. There is a sense of peace

and contentment. There is a deep religious commitment across all ages. Prayer flags and prayer wheels are everywhere, from hillsides to storefronts. Dzongs and stupas are centers of prayer and meditation for all ages. Most people wear traditional dress, with men donning the Gho, a knee-length robe usually made of red plaid with long sleeves and white cuffs. Women wear an elegant full-length wrap-around dress with a long-sleeve blouse and jacket, called a Kira. Kiras are often made with bright jewel colors.

The Land

The scenery as we traveled from Paro in the west to the Ura Valley in the east was heavily forested, with a steep mountainous terrain. Villages were tucked into small valleys, and mountain passes displayed a variety of stupas and prayer flags. Villages contained elaborate wooden houses that matched the style of the Dzongs. Elevations of the villages ranged from 4,500 in Punakha to 10,500 in the Ura Valley. People care about their land and maintain its natural beauty.

Yaks

The Yak plays a vital role in the culture and livelihoods of many Bhutanese communities. They are a source of food, fuel, transportation, and clothing. Yak herds, also called "cabinets", are tended to by a semi-nomadic people who guide their yaks seasonally in search of fresh pastures.

Yaks are built for the high altitudes. They thrive between 10,000 and 20,000 feet on the alpine tundra, grasslands, and cold desert regions of the Tibetan plateau.

The wool of the baby yak is finer and more durable than cashmere and softer than silk. Blankets and scarves, purchased at local stands, make for both beautiful and wonderful mementos.

Yak cheese is another popular local item available at many rural shops and roadside

Into Bhutan

by Kathryn Dannay



YAK CHARMER



UNDER MOTHER'S WATCHFUL EYE

Into Bhutan

by Kathryn Dannay



WHERE TRADITION MEETS TRAFFIC, THIMPHU

Into Bhutan

by Kathryn Dannay

stands. It is a mild cheese whose production and maturation at high altitudes result in a very hard product. It is sold "cubed" and strung on a string. To enjoy it, one must chew on a bite-sized piece until it softens, a process that may take hours or even days. It is a delicacy that I will pass over next time it is offered.

Dogs

Bhutanese are kind and respectful to all life. To this end, there are numerous dogs in every village that are cared for by the people. The dogs sleep during the day and orchestrate howling concerts at night. Tourist literature rightly recommends packing earplugs.

Dzongs

Dzongs are distinctive fortress-monastery structures that serve as both administrative centers and religious institutions. They are often strategically located on hilltops or on river confluences. Dzongs are known for their thick defensive walls, courtyards, temples, and living quarters, reflecting their dual purpose as both fortresses and monastic complexes.

Prayer Wheels

Prayer wheels are unique to Tibetan Buddhism and can be traced to 4th-century Tibet. There are several types of prayer wheels, and they come in all sizes. They are used by the young and the old.

Buddhist texts speak of "turning the wheel of dharma," which led to the concept of the prayer wheel, a mechanical device consisting of an embossed hollow cylinder and a rod that runs through its length. Inside the cylinder wrapped around the rod is a tightly rolled-up scroll of mantras. Mantras are short Buddhist invocations of several syllables. Spinning the prayer wheel is equivalent to reciting the mantras.

Prayer wheels can be found at the entrances to Dzongs, around temples, in city parks, in

the fields, and even in hotel lobbies. They are spun by hand, or they may be turned by the wind or even turned by the water from a stream.

Each spin of the wheel is as effective as reciting the mantras orally, multiplied by the number of times the mantra is printed on the scroll. It is also believed that the spinning of the prayer wheels releases these prayers and blessings into the universe. According to ancient Buddhist traditions, spinning the wheel brings you merit and purifies your soul. The more you spin, the more merits you gain.

Festivals, Costumes, and Dance

Bhutan is a Buddhist kingdom. Its culture is deeply rooted in Buddhist traditions, with numerous monasteries, temples, and vibrant festivals. Festivals reflect the spiritual essence of the community and showcase the deep-rooted traditions and beliefs of the people. Festivals often have processions, traditional dances, performances, and incorporate traditional religious rituals. The whole community comes out, and families gather and share meals. It is a festive atmosphere. The highlight for me was the dancing by the masked monks in elaborate, colorful costumes.

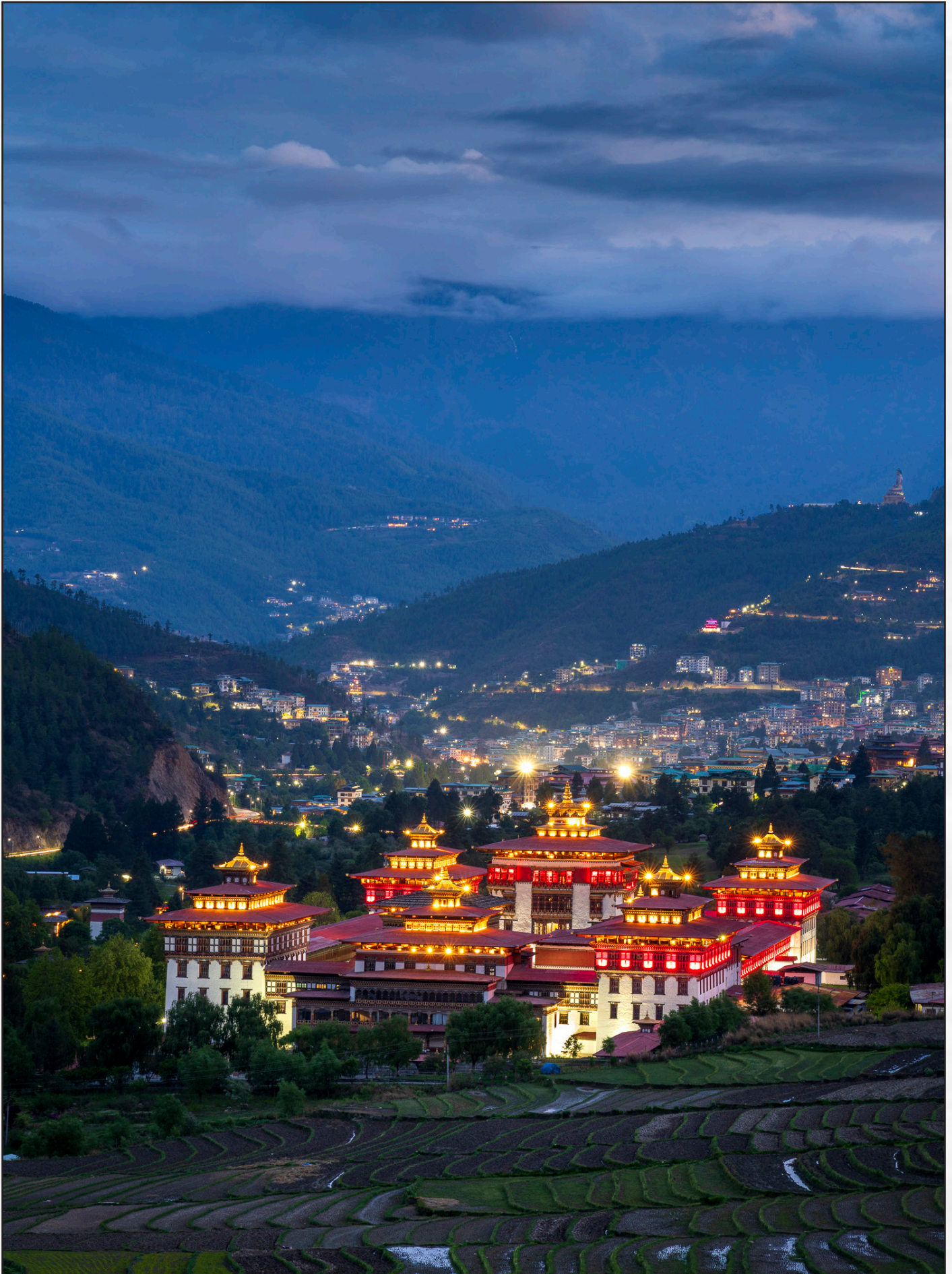
Bhutan's festivals offer a window into the soul of this extraordinary country, where spirituality, tradition, and natural beauty converge to create an unforgettable experience.

Traffic

One of the many unique features of Bhutan is that there are no traffic lights anywhere. The capital city of Thimphu has an intersection that does get busy enough late in the day to warrant a single traffic director. From the confines of an ornate box, he guides traffic into and around the intersection. To watch him is like watching a ballet of hand movements. Elegant.

Into Bhutan

by Kathryn Dannay



TWILIGHT OVER THIMPHU

Into Bhutan

by Kathryn Dannay



THE 108 CHORTENS OF DOCHULA PASS



WHERE SHOES WAIT

Into Bhutan

by Kathryn Dannay



THE SOUNDS OF DEVOTION

Into Bhutan

by Kathryn Dannay

Tigers Nest

No visit to Bhutan is complete without a trek to their most famous Dzong, Tiger's Nest. Swathed in a mystical legend, where the Guru Rinpoche (the father of Buddhism in Bhutan) was said to have flown up to a cave on the mountainside on the back of his consort, who had become a tigress. The cave is where he is said to have meditated for 3 years, 3 months, 3 weeks, 3 days, and 3 hours. The monastery has been built around this cave.

Tiger's Nest monastery, also known as Paro Taktsang, is spectacularly situated on the side of a cliff at over 10,000 feet. The monastery is only accessible on foot. The journey to the Dzong is both a spiritual one and a physically demanding one. It is the highest elevation that I have hiked in close to 20 years. The trail starts at 8,500 feet and climbs another 1,700 feet in a little over 2 miles. It is a steep ascent,

but not unreasonably so. It is a hike that most people can do if they go slowly and at their own pace. It is a beautiful walk through pine forests with viewpoints along the way. The last viewpoint is the most spectacular and offers the best angle for photos of the monastery.

After such a hike, the day is completed with a traditional hot stone bath. This is where hot stones are placed in a wooden bathtub filled with water and herbs. It was a unique experience. The soaking did the trick, and I was free of aching muscles the next day. I even contemplated redoing the hike to re-experience the magic and to capture one more photo. But, alas, it was time to return home.

Bhutan is a truly special place. If you have the opportunity to visit this country, seize it.



BHUTAN'S TIGER'S NEST MONASTERY

Into Bhutan

by Kathryn Dannay



BHUTAN PARO-DANCERS



My passion for photography spans over 15 years. I am happiest when I am out on an adventure with my camera in hand. I am first and foremost a landscape photographer. I love being out before sunrise, in the quiet of the morning, and watching the light paint its beauty across the landscape.

My second passion is traveling. I enjoy seeing and experiencing new places and cultures around the world. I am blessed to share my passion for photography and travel with my best friend and husband, Jeff. Our different perspectives provide new insights on each photo shoot, and our competitive natures provide an inherent motivation for continued improvement.

Our travel and photography blog provides a window into our different approaches and our ongoing adventures. I invite you to visit us at www.sweetlightphotos.com/blog.

Kathryn and her husband Jeff are active in the photography community both locally and abroad. They provide frequent "behind-the-lens presentations" to camera clubs and photography presentations to art organizations and the larger community. They also host travel and photography-sharing events at their home in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Kathryn is the president of the Arizona Camera Club Council. She is also an active member of the Arizona Chapter of PSA and the Digital Imaging Group.

Image Discussion Groups

by Isaac Vaisman APSA, PPSA



One of the main purposes of the Photo Travel Division is to attract and encourage PSA members to join one of the PTD Image Discussion Groups. At present, we have 7 groups, each with a maximum of 7 members. Unfortunately, interest and participation among some current members are declining, and not all groups have 7 participants.

This year, a new path in the Photo Travel Division was created to enable participation in both the PSA and FIAP Salons. FIAP had created a Photo Travel program called World in Focus, in which PSA restrictions did not apply. The explanations of both categories are printed in this Photo Traveler Newsletter on page 5.

Historically, the PTD IDG only accepted images that matched the PSA definition, but now both PTDD and PTDW images can be submitted for discussion, and the maker will decide whether to participate in the exhibitions with their images.

*If you are interested in participating in any of the discussion groups, please contact **Isaac Vaisman, APSA, PPSA**, First Vice-Chair of the PTD Board, PTD-IDG Director, at isy@vaisman.us.*

*If you are curious about the discussion groups, please visit here and have a look!
<https://psa-programs.com/ptd-idg/about/>*



HAVANA STREET BOOKSTORE BY ISAAC VAISMAN

Kyrgyzstan

by Roberto De Leonardis GMPSA, EFIAP/D3

After our trip to Uzbekistan, it became clear that all the “Stans” could have some nice surprises, so my wife Monica and I got curious to see them all and to experience whatever we could find there.

First choice was **Kyrgyzstan**; it seemed the easiest to visit because of the many roads, good flight connections, and the fact that no visa was needed. We decided to go there in May, when the weather is still cool, the passes are clear, and there are only a few tourists.

Again, we asked Kristina (krissilkroad88@gmail.com) to help us find a driver with a car to take us to explore this unknown country. She did, affordable as always, she and a local Kyrgyz partner found for us, good, cheap accommodations and transfers to and from the airport.

We found astonishing, unspoiled landscapes, freedom, huge lakes, amazing canyons, welcoming people, nice, charming, fair, and cheap accommodations, and delicious food. But Kyrgyzstan is much more...

The flight from Italy to **Bishkek**, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, arrived in the early evening. We found a money changer open, and our young, smiling local driver was ready to take us to our centrally located hotel. After a good sleep, a walk around the town on foot, alone as usual, ready to stop and shoot: a big town, Soviet style, with enormous squares and parks, a Mosque, an Orthodox Church, and some colorful markets. While walking, we had some tasty strawberries to enjoy between photos.

We were drawn to a kiosk selling a particular drink, but what was it? Is it alcoholic or not? We asked and tried “**Kymys**,” fermented mare’s milk: unusual! At the hotel, we met our perfect English-speaking driver, Jaylin, with whom we discussed the last details of our trip.

Our early-morning departure for our adventure began with a visit to the **Burana Tower**, about 80 km southeast of the Capital. We did not expect much from this restored XI-century tower, but we found a lovely small museum with ancient artifacts from the area, and a group of local students stopped us for a talk to practice their English.

Driving east to **Issyk Kul Lake**, we stopped at **Kok Moynok**, an amazing, red-colored canyon, for a walk. Then through **Ak-Say Canyon** to the lake: a huge mass of salt water with long untouched beaches, silence, and fine air. Then we arrived at the small town of Bokonbaevo at our B&B, where we had a nice supper in the red, fascinating dining yurt. This is the land of nomads. During the Soviet period, many of them were asked to stay in new houses, and roads were built, but you can still feel the nomadic spirit, especially far from town.

Nomads move by horseback, with their round red tents: **Yurts**. We found many yurt camps during our trip. This is also the land of eagle hunting, so in the morning, we went to experience it. They explained how they collect birds and train them to hunt. They showed us the training, not using live animals, but only how they train using fur.

After saying goodbye to this man and his young brothers, we drove east along the south shore of the lake and stopped at **Skazka Canyon**, with its shades of red. After a good walk, we drove back to the shore and turned south toward the town of **Naryn**. The landscape changed many times; we kept stopping to grab some shots: mountains, valleys, herds and flocks, men riding horses in a regal way.

During our trip, we found many tourists who came here to ride this particular kind of horse, called a Kyrgyz Horse. It is a very ancient, small mountain breed, originally from Central Asia. Horseback trips are available and

Kyrgyzstan

by Roberto De Leonardis GMPSA, EFIAP/D3



BOORTSOK



SONG KUL LAKE

Kyrgyzstan

by Roberto De Leonardis GMPSA, EFIAP/D3



KYMYS

Kyrgyzstan

by Roberto De Leonardis GMPSA, EFIAP/D3

very popular. Naryn hotel offered us cozy accommodation, and at the restaurant we celebrated with a delicious meal with yak meat and more.

The next morning, we left Naryn town to immerse ourselves in nature: a dirty road took us to **Song Kul Lake** through mountains, amazing landscapes, nobody was around, only some shy whistles, we felt free as never before. The air was cool and fine. The lake, at an altitude of 3,000 m, was still partially icy, our yurt accommodation was ready, and a cup of hot tea with boortsok (fried, leavened dough) was offered to us: delicious!

During the wintertime here, temperatures fall to -20 -30°C, nobody around, sometimes a few ice fishermen, no houses, no comfort, only nature. In spring, they built yurt camps that they dismantle at the end of the season. I could see that while they built some more yurts, they could do it in 3 hours!

After dinner in the main yurt, they started a fire in our yurt stove, and we experienced a deafening silence. In the morning, we descended from Song Kul Lake through the partially forested **Moldo-Ashu Pass** to the valley of **Kazarman**. Again, beautiful landscapes, more red mountains. A small cozy guesthouse, a homemade supper. Suddenly, some news: tomorrow we need to change the plan a little bit because it snowed and the pass is closed! Everything changed overnight: the accommodations for the next two days were changed, etc.

The day after, we had a very long drive back north to rejoin our itinerary. It was amazing! Our driver knew all kinds of main and graveled roads. We saw so many things! In a small village, we visited a small school; landscapes, herds, flocks, yaks. We drove and stopped on the **Alabel Ashuusu Pass**, stopped at some glaciers, stopped at yurt camp to meet local people, stopped to buy freshly-packed honey, stopped to eat great

dumpling soup. We arrived at **Toktogul**, at an old, a bit shabby, post-Soviet hotel, with an amazing sunset on the lake.

After a good sleep, we took the road to **Arslanbob**: a welcoming market, a huge walnut forest noted in Alexander the Great's diary, a waterfall, good meals, and a good stay for a couple of nights.

The next step led to **Sary-Chelek National Park**. On the way, we visited **Burana Canyon**, a surprise from our driver. We walked around, and we met a family of shepherds. They asked me to get inside their refuge, offered me to have lunch with them, and I accepted some kefir: delicious! This is Kyrgyz hospitality; if you enter a yurt or a house, they immediately invite you to sit and offer some food or tea.

Arrived in **Saray Chelek Park** at midday: a walk, a couple taking pictures for their wedding. After a visit, we overnighted at the park accommodations, amazing fresh trout for supper, and a nice, silent room. On the last day of the tour, there were other beautiful landscapes, but we were now close to **Ala Archa National Park**, where many locals used to go; the magic of silence was slowly fading.

We bought some dry cheese balls on the way back to town, to take home for friends and for us. Shepherds produce small cheese balls that are tasty and easy to transport and store. During our trip, we saw many white jars, and we wondered what they were. We couldn't know for sure what was inside. Finally, we learned it was white honey from sainfoin. We bought a small one, just to try it. It was delicious! **Sainfoin** (*Onobrychis viciifolia*) is a wild plant with beautiful pink flowers. It grows in the fields. It's called white Kyrgyzstan gold.

One day more to rest in Bishkek to visit **Osh Bazaar** again, buy a perfumed peony from an old woman, and fly back home.

Kyrgyzstan

by Roberto De Leonardis GMPA, EFIAP/D3



BISHKEK OSH MARKET

Kyrgyzstan

by Roberto De Leonardis GMPSA, EFIAP/D3



BURANA CANYON



STUDENTS AROUND BURANA TOWER

Kyrgyzstan

by Roberto De Leonardis GMPSA, EFIAP/D3



SONG KUL LAKE - YURT CONSTRUCTION

Roberto De Leonardis began to take pictures in 1981. He has been photo club vice-president, teacher of "photography basic course" at a local school for 5 years, production of AV beginning in 1988 using analog projectors then digital, many public and photo club projections and a few projections as volunteer for elder groups.

His works are published in many books by the Italian Federation of Photographers and some North American magazines for Nikon advertising in 2004, after having been awarded an HM in a Nikon photo contest in 2000-2001. He has participated in collective expositions like Arkema World Photo Contest in Paris and he was invited to "Montier Photo Festival" in 2015.

Roberto has world-wide recognition GMPSA, EFIAP/d3, VIP5, and an Italian distinction: AFI, which is a recognition of the life work of the photographer. He attended many PSA International online meetings for judge formation in PJD, PTD, ND, and earned PSA certificates in Advanced Photo Travel, Advanced PJ, Street Photography, Image Evaluation, Image Critique. He has experience as an International PSA and FIAP judge with more than 50 judgments.



Our Favorite Images | Photo Travel Division Members

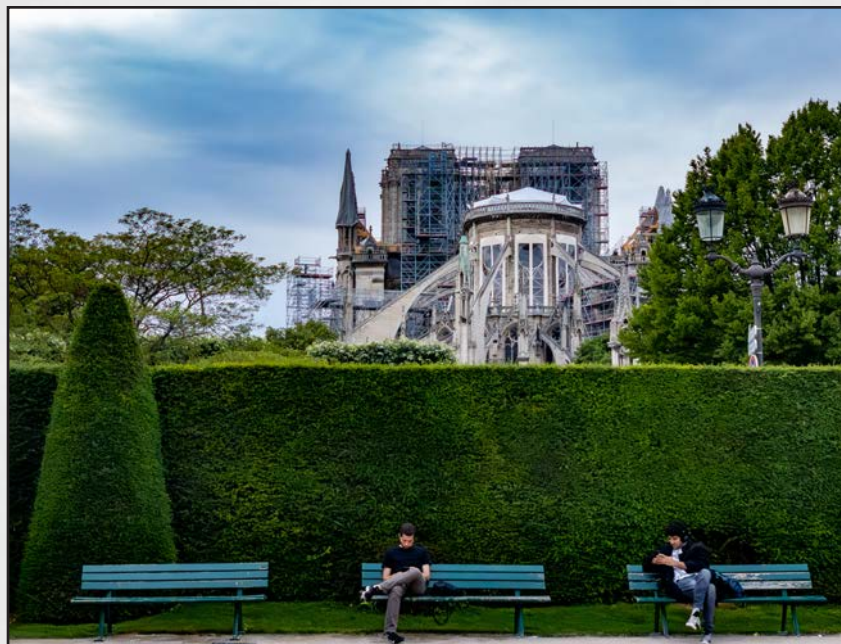
Tom Tauber APSA, MPSA "Diwali in Amritsar"



Many of my favorite images are the result of accidents, coincidences or surprise discoveries. My wife and I were on our way to join a tour in Eastern India and decided to visit Amritsar, the holy city of the Sikhs, on our own before the start of the tour. On our flight from the US, we stopped in Dubai for a few days and continued to Amritsar on Emirates Airways.

During the flight, I picked up the Emirates magazine and read that India was celebrating Diwali, the Festival of Lights, on the day after our arrival! It was an unforgettable experience. Thousands of pilgrims surrounded the basin surrounding the Golden Temple, lit their candles and listened to broadcast prayers through the late evening. I snapped this photograph during a fortunate moment when the man looked at me.

Lisa Marie Cirincione PPSA, AFIAP "Notre Dame's Backside"



From my trip in 2019, just a few months after Notre Dame had fire damage to its roof. This is taken from the garden behind the cathedral, and I liked the juxtaposition of 3 benches and 2 persons. Also, the people are just enjoying their reading, while a cultural icon looms behind them.

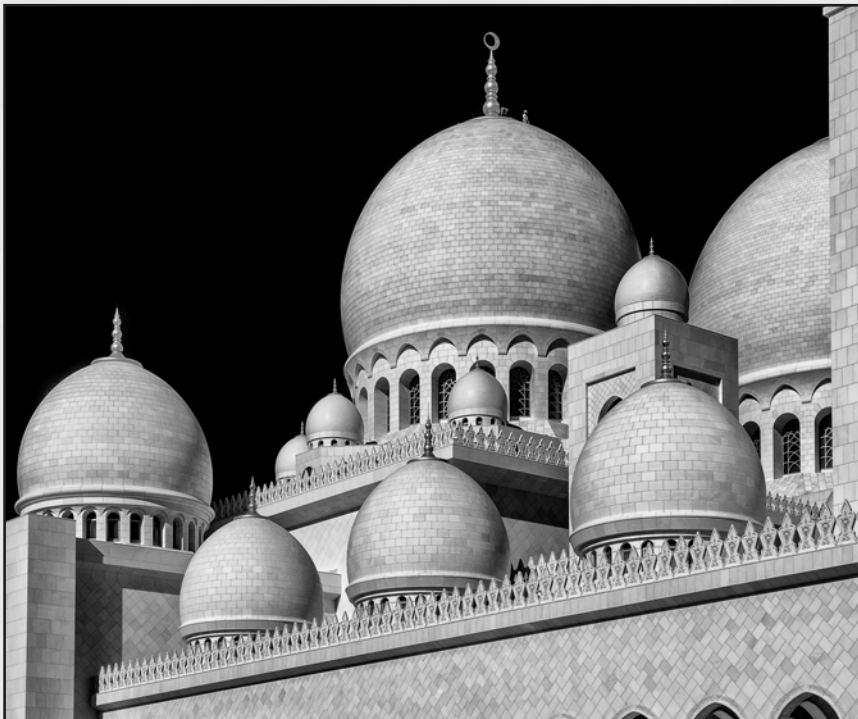
Our Favorite Images | Photo Travel Division Members

Nancy Wolejsza APSA, QPSA "Penguin Watching Ship"



This is my favorite image because it was totally spontaneous. We were in a Zodiac ride in the Antarctic in 2012 on a National Geographic trip. We rounded an ice floe and I saw the Gentoo penguin and the ship in the background. I quickly took a shot, which is all I got before the scene changed. To me, it is an example of how vigilant we have to be in finding and capturing images.

Stan Bormann FPSA, MPSA "Domes of Sheikh Zayed"



This image of "Domes of Sheikh Zayed" is my favorite because I love monochrome and this was so fun to capture and create.

This mosque provides many great shots. All the detail of the Carrara Marble was captured, and there is a workman on top of the main dome to give it a sense of scale. This is my banner image on my Facebook page.

Antarctica

by Alan Lichtenstein QPSA

Everybody goes to Antarctica. At least they do today. But that wasn't the case in 2007, when my wife and I visited the continent. Thanks to the marvels of capitalism and competition, the cost of going to Antarctica today is just a tad lower than it was when my wife and I visited in 2007. In the 18 or so years since we visited, inflation and rising incomes have made Antarctica far more accessible than it was.

When we visited, we could count the number of potential boats that took tourists to Antarctica on the fingers of both hands; now, even my fingers and toes, combined with those of my wife (and those of a friend or two), can't count the number of potential boats on which one can book passage to Antarctica. So yes, Antarctica today is far more accessible to a greater number of potential travelers.

Those trips range from expedition ships to luxury cruise ships (but those ships can't land passengers on the continent), as well as small ships replete with gyms and swimming pools just like the large cruise ships, except passengers on those ships get to land and set foot on Antarctica. So today, one can go to Antarctica in style, as the trip is far from the demanding trip we took in 2007.

When we visited, we were advised to try to visit during the fledgling period of the penguin chicks, as they were still in the nests where they were born. The fledge time was from just before Christmas to mid-January, and given the few tours available when we went, required us to book our tour to visit for that time almost two years in advance. But it was well worth it, and we would offer the same advice to others.

Antarctica, also referred to as the White Continent, is the fifth-largest continent and is mostly covered by a vast ice sheet. Antarctica, at roughly 5.5 million square miles, is also the world's highest, driest, windiest, and coldest

continent. Its name means 'opposite the Arctic' because it is geographically opposite the Arctic. We visited in January, which is summer in the Southern Hemisphere, when Antarctica is warmest. Warm, however, is relative. The average temperature when we visited ranged from the low 30s to the low 40s, but it was warmer in Antarctica in January than it was in New York (25°F) when we left for our trip.

Before we booked our trip, we discovered the website of the [**"International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators,"**](#) where we learned about the history of the Antarctic Treaty and the agreement that requires IAATO members never to land more than 100 people per day at a site. So, we looked for the boat that carried the fewest people because that meant more shore time, and we were glad we did. Once a company's boat was at a site, it closed off the site to others.

We spent several nights on the bridge and heard all the boats communicating with one another and coordinating itineraries to avoid any conflicts. That's why, even today, you won't get specific itineraries for each day, but a range of sites you may visit during your time in Antarctica. Most tours visit the peninsula, which we did, but others visit other areas.

We had dreaded the **Drake Passage**, having heard stories about its winds, unholy surf, and massive waves, but the three-day voyage there was more like the "Drake Lake." Nothing like the dreaded experience we anticipated. We took all the conventional precautions. We had patches we put on our necks with anti-sickness medication, and sea bands we put on our wrists that were supposed to help with seasickness. But going there, we didn't need any of that. A bit windy, but nothing more.

Finally, after 2½ days, whatever waves there were subsided, and we arrived at Antarctica. Our first stop was **South Shetland Island**, where we were greeted by massive numbers

Antarctica

by Alan Lichtenstein QPSA



ABANDONED WHALING OUTPOST



ARLENE AND THE PENGUINS UP-CLOSE

Antarctica

by Alan Lichtenstein QPSA

of gentoo and chinstrap penguins. Most penguins during our entire visit paid us no mind, and if we sat down, they would come over and give us a curious look. Being a canoeist, I booked a kayaking experience in Antarctica and did some of that on our first stop. Getting from the ship to shore is via zodiac and wet landings. We had waterproof pants we brought, and the company provided boots, so we slid off the zodiac into water up to our shins and walked to shore nice and dry.

The next day, we stopped at **Paulet Island**, where we saw massive ice sheets, and at **Brown's Bluff**, lots of Adelie penguins. We saw one lone emperor penguin on an ice floe.

Half-Moon Island was truly Antarctica as many people envision it. It was snowing, sleeting in very foul weather, but that didn't deter us. We made a landing anyway, seeing chinstrap penguins, and were supposed to walk over to the other side of the island to see macaroni penguins, but the weather was too severe for walking, and we didn't get to see the macaronis.

It cleared up in the afternoon for our visit to **Deception Island**. Whalers once visited this island that lies in the caldera of a volcano. The earth was so warm that we could actually go swimming there, which I did. Unlike the "polar plunge," popular on ships visiting the Arctic, here, due to the volcanic activity, the water closest to the ocean was around 70°F, a lot warmer. Unfortunately, I have been told that swimming is no longer allowed. Remnants of the whaling trade could be explored, and a grave of an unfortunate whaler, still well-kept, was there to be seen. My wife was annoyed because the swimmers were warmed up with a shot of brandy, which she didn't get because she didn't go in.

The next morning, we got up at 4:00 AM to watch the whales, but unfortunately, we didn't see any. But we did make another landing at 6:00 AM on **Cuvernville Island** to

see lots of gentoo penguins, many on their nests with chicks, which was why we took the trip at this time. Penguins build nests made of stones, with males bringing stones to females to cement their relationship for breeding.

The scenery contained many seals on icebergs, with the water and icebergs casting a blue hue. Here, we got to see the "Penguin Highway." Packed snow turns into ice, and continued trodding by penguins from their nests to the sea along the same path creates troughs that are used repeatedly, resembling roads and forming what is called the "penguin highway."

Another stop was at **Port Lockroy**, not really a port but an abandoned English military outpost from World War II. The British stationed some men here with no military purpose save to pose an intelligence quandary for the Germans about what they were doing there. After the war, the post was abandoned and later given to a British Historical Society that operates the outpost for historical purposes, sells souvenirs, and serves as a real British post office.

We mailed postcards stamped with Antarctica. Mail is collected periodically and taken to the Falkland Islands, where it is added to the British mail stream for delivery. There is no source of fresh water and no plumbing in the outpost, so the volunteers who man the outpost come aboard every ship that visits for a shower and a good, hot meal. Since ships visit every day, the volunteers don't go hungry or unkempt very long.

We ended this day by camping out on **Dorian Bay**. Not being experienced campers, we needed assistance in setting up our tent. We were comfortable on our air mattresses. Our tour group had a limited opportunity for passengers to participate in this activity, so we got to go because we had signed up

Antarctica

by Alan Lichtenstein QPSA



GAZING AT THE ICEBERG



PORT LOCKROY AND RESIDENT PENGUINS

Antarctica

by Alan Lichtenstein QPSA

for this experience well in advance. Many people who didn't do this were disappointed because there were few tents available.

The next day, it was the **Lemaire Channel**. We saw a leopard seal and crabeater seals. During that day, our ship received a distress call from a beached Australian sailboat stuck in the weather. All boats in Antarctica answer distress calls immediately, but we got there first. Most of us didn't care about not making a landing, as the weather was severe, and we watched our crew pull the sailboat off the beach and let them get on their way.

Now it was time to say goodbye to Antarctica, and we sailed back to Ushuaia through the Drake Passage, but this time we got the real Drake. Far from being the "Drake Lake" that we experienced on our outbound trip, the return trip was like "Victory at Sea." Looking out the porthole in our room (I hesitate to call it a stateroom), I came to realize what it must feel like to be inside a washing machine, as the boat continuously rolled at almost 30°.

Here, our preparations for seasickness came in handy, as we were among the few passengers who didn't get seasick. One night at dinner, only 16 of the 49 passengers showed up. We were rocking and rolling like a swing. Dishes slid off the table and crashed onto the floor, and I was amazed at how the staff was able to continue serving us. We also had a prescription for Antivert, which may have also helped.

Passengers were told to always keep one hand on the railings in all passageways. The crew said to follow the saying 'one hand for the ship' when walking. That was meant to tell us to always hold on. And it was needed, as the rolling was so bad that it would have been very easy to lose one's balance.

Despite that, there were daily programs and lectures of interest in the ship's main room, which was on the very lowest deck, and hence, the rolling was not so bad. Everyone showed up, and a few passengers wanted to sleep in the lecture room, but unfortunately, the ship wasn't set up for that. But we ended our trip and were glad for the experience.

I'll finish this as I began: everyone goes to Antarctica, and the experience today is virtually the same as it was for us due to the IAATO compact. The environment is still pristine, and the human impact is negligible, if at all. Huge cruise ships now travel to Antarctica, but they don't stop and offload passengers fundamentally because there are no suitable harbor facilities, and they don't have proper craft to make landings, to say nothing about passengers not being properly outfitted to make those wet landings. Also, there are simply too many passengers to offload them. People traveling to Antarctica now say they see cruise ships, but when we went, there weren't any.

In short, if you haven't been there, put this on your travel calendar. It's one place in the world you shouldn't miss.



CHINSTRAP PENGUIN TRIO

Antarctica

by Alan Lichtenstein QPSA



LEOPARD SEAL



TRANSPORTATION ANTARCTICA STYLE

Antarctica

by Alan Lichtenstein QPSA



FAREWELL CUP OF CHAMPAGNE - ARLENE & ALAN LICHTENSTEIN

I was born in Brooklyn, trained as a chemist, and retired as an assistant principal. I bought my first digital camera in 2006, primarily to take pictures of our retirement trips, and used it in automatic mode for three years until I decided to learn what all those features on the menu icons were all about.

I used to be an avid surf fisherman and got into photography when I started to have double vision and could no longer fish at night. I'm not disappointed, being able to focus full-time on my new hobby.

I'm a SOOC amateur and do no editing, except for occasional cropping and resizing as needed, such as for PSA submissions. I believe that if you couldn't do it in the days of film, you shouldn't be able to do it now. My photographic interests are sunrises, sunsets, and the blue hour. I had been an unreconstructed Olympus user until I tired of the 2.0 crop and traded in my Olympus equipment for the full-frame Sony A7 IV.

I've given presentations on white balance, photographing the Northern Lights, sunrises and sunsets, and travel photography at my local photo club. My wife and I travel extensively, having visited every continent and every time zone, and are still going strong.

PTD Interclub Round 3 | by Venkatesh BS, GMPSA/G, EFIAP/G



PTD Interclub Round 3 images for the 2025-26 competition season have been judged. Winners of all 3 rounds will be entered into an End-of-Year competition.

To view current and past competitions season slideshows or standings, use this link: psaphotoworldwide.org/general/custom.asp?page=interclub-overview

This digital competition is open to PSA member clubs. A club must register by September 15 to participate in Round 1. Enter your club now!

Judging is the heart of this program, and we all appreciate the time and expertise they shared with PSA Interclub Travel.

Thanks to **Hastings Photography Club, Australia**, for being the Host Club for Group A, with the club rep being Lindie Kolver & the judges being Frank Kolver, John Smith, and Susie Smith.

Thanks to **Wangi Workers Camera Club, Australia**, for being the Host Club for Group B, with the club rep being **Ian English, GMPSA, BPSA, EFIAP/d1**, and judges being Neville Thorogood, Colleen Price, and Brian Halse.

Thanks to **Jiahua Elite Photography Association, Canada**, for being the Host Club for Group C, with the club rep being Ying Shi & judges being **Jie Fischer, GMPSA/B, BPSA**, Louie Luo and Zhiwen Li.

Group A had 5 photos tied with a score of 27, Group B's highest score was 25, and Group C had 2 members at the top with scores of 22.

The First Place Clubs are: Group A: **Youth Photographic Society (India)**, Group B: **Contra Costa Camera Club (USA)**, and Group C: **Lavender Club Photography (Vietnam)**.

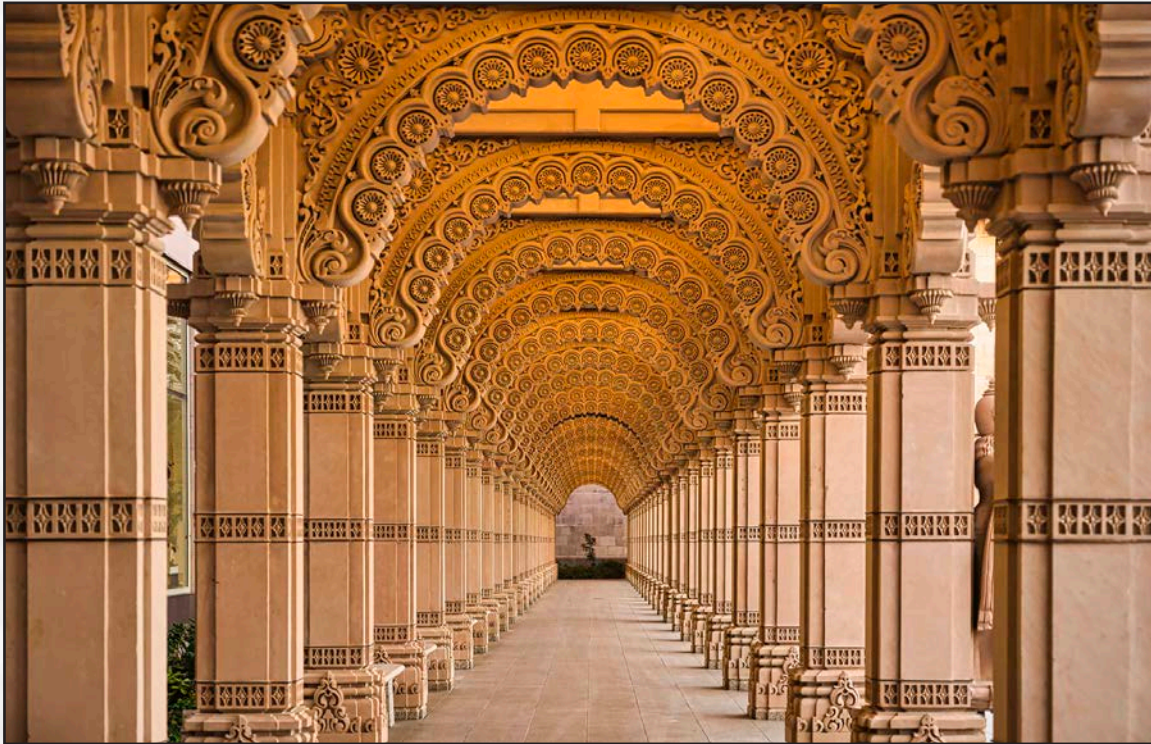
Remember, Interclub is an educational competition, and clubs are encouraged to share these results with their members and invite them to visit the PSA website to view the winning images.

We had 3 wonderful rounds of PTD Interclub this season. Thank you for your entries. Looking forward to all your club's wonderful pictures in next season!

PTD Interclub Round 3 | by Venkatesh BS, GMPSA/G, EFIAP/G

The PTD Interclub participants with the highest scores in their respective groups are:

Group A: **Mark Lieberman** from **Delaware Photographic Society (USA)**



ARCHES WALKWAY

Group A: **Susan Peter** from **Delaware Photographic Society (USA)**



SUNSET MADAGASCAR

PTD Interclub Round 3 | by Venkatesh BS, GMPSA/G, EFIAP/G

The PTD Interclub participants with the highest scores in their respective groups are:

Group B: **Jens Jakobsson, EFIAP/S** from **Stella Polaris Photo Group (Denmark)**



WALKING ON THE TRACKS

Group C: **Michael Hrankowski** from **Puget Sound Camera Club (USA)**



UNNAMED

PTD Interclub End-of-Year | by Venkatesh BS, GMPSA/G, EFIAP/G



The End-of-Year (EOY) and Best of the Best Awards selection meeting for the 2025-26 Photo Travel Interclub Competition was held at the beginning of June.

Thanks to the international panel of judges **Philip Kwan, GMPSA/P, GPSA, EFIAP/D1** (Asst. Director, ROPA) from Canada, **Subrata Bysack, FPSA, GMPSA/P, EFIAP/D3** (VP of PSA ES) from India & **Stefan Stuppig, GMPSA/S, SPSA, EFIAP/P** (Director, PSA ES) from Austria. Judging is the heart of this program and we all appreciate the time and expertise they shared with PSA Interclub Travel.

Individual Gold Medal winners are: Best of the Best/Gold Medal, from Group A, **Anitha Mysore (Youth Photographic Society, India)** with her photo, *"A Sea of Nagas."* Gold Medal, from Group B, **Alan Esplin (Naples Camera Club, USA)** with his photo, *"Roman Forum."* Gold Medal, from Group C, **Thach Hoang Ngoc (Lavender Club Photography, Vietnam)** with his photo *"Myanmar Ancient Tower."*

The Top 3 Clubs in the Final Standings with the highest accumulated points for the 2025-26 competition season are: from Group A, **Youth Photographic Society (India)** with 364 points; from Group C, **Lavender Club Photography (Vietnam)**, with a total of 360 points; from Group B, The **Contra Costa Camera Club (USA)**, with a total of 328 points.

Congratulations to the award-winning clubs and their individual members. The full results, standings, and all the winning images can be found on the PSA website at www.psa-programs.org/competitions/resultshome.php?cr

This digital competition is open to PSA member clubs. Following each round, the club standings are sent to participating clubs, and the winning images are shown on the PSA website. Digital certificates will be available to all award winners. Gold Medal awardees will receive physical medals, which will be sent to the primary Club Representative.

PSA member clubs must register by September 15 to participate in round one. Clubs may join any time during the competition season, but after October 15, some division competitions may be closed due to the limit of 25 clubs per group. This competition is held three times each competition year, beginning in the fall. The deadline for each round is November 15, February 15, and April 15.

For new registrations, visit psaphotoworldwide.org/page/interclub-overview

PTD Interclub End-of-Year

Group A Results



Best of Show & Gold Medal "A Sea of Nagas"
Anitha Mysore, Youth Photographic Society, India



Silver Medal

"Beautiful Sakrisoy Norway"

Megan Willis

**Wangi Workers Camera Club,
Australia**



Bronze Medal

"St. George Church in Ethiopia"

Jill Lam, GMPSA

**The CCPST,
Canada**

PTD Interclub End-of-Year

Group B Results



Gold Medal "Roman Forum"
Alan Esplin, Naples Camera Club, USA



Silver Medal

"Manarola"

Alan Esplin
Naples Camera Club,
USA



Bronze Medal

"Zaragoza"

Jeffrey Huo
Norths Photographic Society,
Australia

PTD Interclub End-of-Year

Group C Results



Gold Medal "Myanmar Ancient Tower"
Thach Hoang Ngoc, Lavender Club Photography, Vietnam



Silver Medal
"Dawn in Turkey"
Phan Tuan
 Lavender Club Photography,
 Vietnam



Bronze Medal
"Alandi Vari Festival"
Sudhir Nazare
 The Photographic Society of India



***The Photo Traveler Newsletter
Summer/July 2026 * Volume 14, Issue 3***

PSA Website: psaphotoworldwide.org

PTD Newsletters and Index of Articles:
psaphotoworldwide.org/page/mo-ptd-newsletter

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***Look for our next issue:
Fall/October 2026 * Volume 14, Issue 4***



The Photo Traveler
Quarterly Newsletter of the PSA Photo Travel Division

