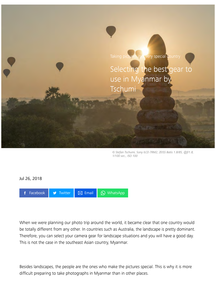

© Stefan Tschumi, Sony ILCE-7RM2, 2018 Aero 1.8/85, GM II, 1/80 sec., ISO 400

Jul 26, 2018

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When we were planning our photo trip around the world, it became clear that some country would be totally different from any other. In countries such as Australia, the landscape is pretty dominant. Therefore, you can select your gear according to your landscape situations and you will have a good day. This is not the case in the southeast Asian country, Myanmar.

Besides landscapes, the people are the ones who make the pictures special. This is why it is more difficult preparing to take photographs in Myanmar than in other places.

We were travelling for half a year, so it was not possible to take all our lenses. Nevertheless, we did not want any compromises regarding image quality. This meant that we needed to consider some prime lenses in addition to our zoom lenses. Finding lightweight equipment which delivers the best possible quality is not easy. Therefore, we decided to shoot all our Myanmar pictures with the Sony Alpha 7RII and the Sony Alpha 6500 mainly in combination with the ZEISS Batis 18/2.8 and the ZEISS Batis 85/1.8. Therefore, we had our lightweight go to setup. On our second camera we placed one zoom lens each day.

Lightweight and flexible for busy situations

We chose to take a full-frame camera as well as an APS-C because of the flexibility. Using the same lenses on the APS-C camera we get the little extra reach thanks to the crop factor, which came in handy from time to time.

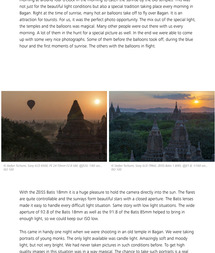
Having a fixed focal length helps you make decisions more quickly. In situations in which the action is moving fast, this is a huge benefit. Once we were photographing some monks in the area of Lashio, the old black area of Myanmar. It was a pretty busy shooting situation as the action was happening fast. About 300 monks were standing in a queue, getting ready to grab some food for lunch. We had to take our photographs pretty quickly, because there were photographic opportunities everywhere. It helped to have a fixed focal length, as we were forced to walk around instead of just zooming.

Because we had a very wide angle as well as a good tele, we were able to quickly switch between them and find a solution for every situation.

© Stephanie Bernhard, Sony ILCE-7RM2, 2018 Aero 1.8/85, GM II, 1/50 sec., ISO 400 © Stephanie Bernhard, Sony ILCE-7RM2, 2018 Batis 1.8/85, GM II, 1/80 sec., ISO 1600 © Stephanie Bernhard, Sony ILCE-7RM2, 2018 Batis 2.8/18, GM II, 1/100 sec., ISO 400

Overwhelming moments and overwhelming performance – controlling the light

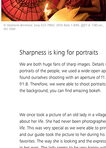
Another reason why we have chosen the Batis series of lenses is the performance in special light conditions. One of the biggest challenges is to take pictures while holding the camera directly against the sun. Most of the time you end up having annoying lens flare in the pictures. Sometimes you want them, sometimes not. Nevertheless both of us love to shoot directly against the sun and therefore end up doing this quite often.



© Stefan Tschumi, Sony ILCE-6500, 2018 Aero 2.8/18, GM II, 1/100 sec., ISO 400

Shooting at sunrise and sunset in Bagan

In Myanmar we were taking a lot of sunrise and sunset pictures. In Bagan, we got up each morning at around four o'clock in the morning to catch the sunrise by the old temples. This was a great time for beautiful light conditions but also a special tradition taking place every morning in Bagan. Right at the time of sunrise, many hot air balloons take off to fly over Bagan. It is an attraction for tourists. For us, it was the perfect photo opportunity. The mix out of the sunrise light, the temples and the balloons was magical. Many other people were out there with us every morning. A lot of them had to wait for their special picture as well. In the end we were able to come up with some very nice photographs. Some of them before the balloons took off, during the blue hour and the first moments of sunrise. The others with the balloons in flight.



© Stefan Tschumi, Sony ILCE-6500, 18 Zeiss Touit 2.8/18, GM II, 1/60 sec., ISO 1250

© Stefan Tschumi, Sony ILCE-7RM2, 2018 Aero 1.8/85, GM II, 1/160 sec., ISO 1250

With the ZEISS Batis 18mm it is a huge pleasure to hold the camera directly into the sun. The flares are quite controllable and the sunsets form beautiful stars with a closed aperture. The Batis lenses made it easy to handle every difficult light situation. Same story with low light situations. The wide aperture of f/2.8 of the Batis 18mm as well as the f/1.8 of the Batis 85mm helped to bring in enough light, so we could keep our ISO low.

This came in handy one night when we were shooting in an old temple in Bagan. We were taking portraits of young monks. The only light available was candle light. Amazingly soft and moody light, but very dangerous light. We had never taken pictures in such conditions before. To get high quality images in this situation was in a way magical. The chance to take such portraits is a real dream come true. The shoot left us speechless and every time we look at the pictures, we have a smile on our faces.

© Stephanie Bernhard, Sony ILCE-7RM2, 2018 Aero 1.8/85, GM II, 1/40 sec., ISO 3200

© Stefan Tschumi, Sony ILCE-7RM2, 2018 Aero 1.8/85, GM II, 1/160 sec., ISO 1600

Sharpness is king for portraits

We are both huge fans of sharp images. Sharpness is important, especially in photography. While shooting in Myanmar, we were able to use the wide open aperture on the Batis 85mm. Most of the time we found ourselves shooting with an aperture of f/1.8. This lens is a unbelievable sharp, even while using f/1.8. Therefore, we were able to shoot portraits in which the people's eyes are quite sharp and in the background, you can find amazing bokeh.

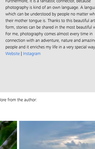
© Stephanie Bernhard, Sony ILCE-7RM2, 2018 Aero 1.8/85, GM II, 1/160 sec., ISO 1600

We once took a picture of an old lady in a village. She had a lot of wrinkles, all of them tell stories about her life. She had never been photographed before so we actually took the first picture of her life. This was very special as it was were disturbing somebody with our gear. We were able to dive deep into the life of the people and share some unforgettable moments. For us, the cameras were more than just a tool to take photographs. Many times they were door openers and sometimes they even opened the heart. Thanks to our cameras we came in contact with many people we otherwise would have never talked to. We truly enjoyed every moment in this beautiful country where you can take pictures of amazing landscapes, unbelievable buildings and of the lovely people.

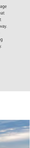
Sometimes we were shooting in situations which were challenging, emotionally and as well for the equipment, such as sandy environments. Due to the great fit of the Zeiss lenses, we never had to worry about dust finding its way into the camera. We both fell in love, not just with the Zeiss lenses, but also with Myanmar and especially, with its people.

© Stefan Tschumi, Sony ILCE-7RM2, 2018 Batis 1.8/85, GM II, 1/250 sec., ISO 100

© Stefan Tschumi, SONY ILCE-7RM2, 2018 Batis 1.8/85, GM II, 1/200 sec., ISO 100



© Stefan Tschumi, SONY ILCE-7RM2, FE 16-35mm F2.8 GM II, 1/125 sec., ISO 100



© Stefan Tschumi, ZEISS Batis 2.8/18, GM II, 1/250 sec., ISO 100

Batis 1.8/85 Batis 2.8/135 Landscape ZEISS Batis

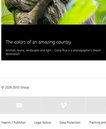
The author

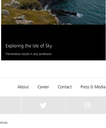
Stefan Tschumi and Stephanie Bernhard

Stefan Tschumi
I look at photography as something that is bigger than the photographer itself. Therefore, I love to be out in nature with my camera, always in the hunt for the perfect light situation with the goal, to combine them with remarkable landscapes. Out of this mix I want to create something that I call poetry in pixels. My photographs are not snapshots. There are most of the time planned and shot as a glimpse of a story, a little piece of art.
For me, the camera is a door opener. Sometimes literally spoken, sometimes just to the hearts of the people. It is incredible what can happen, if I just take my camera and go out.
Website | Instagram

Stephanie Bernhard
Photography is a great tool to show and share what I see while being out in nature. It is like cutting out a small little piece of the world and show to beauty. Furthermore, it is a fantastic connector, because photography is kind of an own language. A language which can be understood by people no matter what their mother tongue is. Thanks to this beautiful art form, stories can be shared in the most beautiful way. Photography helps me to establish a deeper connection with an adventure in nature and amazing people and it enriches my life in a very special way.
Website | Instagram

More from the author:





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