

Traveling with Digital Cameras

Putting together a safe plan for getting all your gear from point A to B

BY JACK AND SUE DRAFAHL

Diving and traveling go hand in hand. As more divers choose digital cameras for their underwater adventures, a safe plan is necessary, especially when traveling by air. Here are a couple of ideas we have used to solve problems when traveling with digital cameras and safe storage of digital images.

1 First, the good news is that you no longer need to worry about X-ray machines ruining your images, since digital camera files are unaffected by these necessary security precautions.

2 Digital cameras are more fragile than their film counterparts, so divers must rethink how to transport these new technology marvels. If at all possible, you should pack your digital camera in your carry-on luggage. The

camera housing should also go inside your carry-on if you have room, but don't transport the camera inside the housing.

3 If you plan to use your laptop computer to store your images, you will need to carry it on board as well since it is just as fragile as your digital camera. If you bring a portable CD burner, or if you have one in your computer, then you can safely store your images on CD. Be sure to put

together a checklist to ensure that you arrive with all the necessary cords and adapters to make your system work properly. Since you are restricted to one piece of carry-on luggage, you might look for a compact wheeled case that could hold your laptop, digital camera and housing.

4 The easiest way to shoot plenty of images and guarantee their safe travel is to buy additional memory cards and change the card every dive. We recommend the 128-megabyte cards, as it is tough to shoot more than 128 images per dive. Once you have images on the card, store it away safely until you return home.

5 When weight and space are at a premium, you might consider leaving your laptop at home and take portable hard disks for storing your underwater digital camera files. These units allow you to transfer files



LAPTOP-LESS Portable hard disks download images straight from memory cards.

from your memory cards directly to compact portable hard disks. These devices look like Palm Pilots and range from 10-60 gigabytes for around \$250-\$500. Again, you should carry them with you on board. If you are paranoid about having all your dive trip images on one small device, you can buy two units and download all your images to both units.

6A final option for image storage was recently announced by Nixvue and is marketed by Jobo. The Vizor (\$299.95) is a compact product that accepts your memory cards and burns the data directly to a CD, without the aid of a computer. The device has a small LCD viewer at the top for easy black-and-white image viewing, or you can view your images through an external TV connection. An optional enlarged color-viewing attachment is also available for \$99.

Before you go on your next trip, you need to analyze your specific photo needs and find a solution that best fits your travel plans. Maybe if you buy enough compact memory cards, then you can cover the entire trip without reusing them. If you plan to take your laptop on your dive trip, then you can easily burn your images to CD. You might even consider the stand-alone CD

burner as a backup system, or a combination of these ideas. No matter which method you choose, just make sure that you safeguard your underwater images so your vacation has a happy ending.

Send your digital camera questions to digital duo@jackandsuedrafahl.com. For further information you can purchase their book, Digital Imaging for the Underwater Photographer directly from their Web site: www.jackandsuedrafahl.com.

Digital Connection

Check out these Web sites for further information on their products:

Delkin Devices www.delkin.com

Iomega www.iomega.com

Jobo www.jobo.com

Nixvue Systems www.nixvue.com

Sima Products www.simacorp.com

X'S-Drive www.xs-drive.com

Continue the Adventure

Get your PADI specialty as an Underwater Photographer. For more info, go to www.padi.com.

VIDEO

HID Lighting: The Magic of Soft Underwater Video Lighting

BY CLAY WISEMAN

When we are making movies underwater, we must be mindful that the colors of the reef diminish as we pass below 15 feet. Adding a warm color-correcting filter such as the UR Pro Filter will put some of the color back, but when we are shooting subjects deeper than 60 feet or when we are shooting in darkness, we need to use video lights to paint the beautiful colors muted by darkness. This month in Video 101 we explore the softest daylight-use corrected light source ever taken beneath the waves: high-intensity discharge (H.I.D.) video lights. Join us at Sportdiver.com, where we will discuss this amazing technology and the products currently offered that allow you to bring all the colors of the reef home in video. During your visit, you'll see Web video that makes a super-strong case for this magical light source. 