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Images: Tell a Story

Jack and Sue Drafahl

Individual photos are okay, but a photo diary of your entire trip is more fun for your friends and a much better way to preserve your memories.

It was incredible. You should have seen it! How many times have you heard this from divers expounding on the exploits of their last dive trip? They had some great pictures to show, but they really didn't tell the whole story. Sure, there were some fantastic underwater pictures of a cuttlefish, but when you asked about the resort, they didn't have a single picture.

It's really too bad when these dive travelers spend thousands of dollars on a trip and then don't keep more of a visual record. They were having so much fun they thought they would never forget. Yet, with time their memories slowly fade.

Easy Equipment

Cameras today are compact and their versatility makes them easy to take everywhere. Film, too, has been improved, offering higher ISO speeds that provide excellent results in most any lighting. You can get great quality images from point-and-shoot cameras small enough to fit in the palm of your hand.

In fact, you can often find professional photographers taking along a compact point-and-shoot camera so they can capture fun photos for their personal scrapbook in-between their work assignments. There are even one-time-use cameras that are waterproof, which makes them great on the dive boat or on the beach.

Digital cameras are quickly becoming very popular. You can take a picture and it instantly appears on the screen for you to view. You can be assured that the visual story you are telling has no missing chapters. Best of all, if you don't like a picture, simply press a button and it's gone.

So now there is no excuse for not taking a camera with you wherever you go. You don't have to make a professional production of visual story telling, just grab shots when you can. If you can't capture everything, don't worry about it. No one is going to grade you afterwards. The idea is to have fun, and let your photo collection reinforce all your incredible moments.

Now you just need to start thinking like a storyteller. Remember film is the cheapest part of a dive vacation, so go for it. Take a picture at the airport, maybe one while on the plane, another shot of your dive buddy struggling with the luggage and, of course, one where you all are collapsed after a hard day. You get the idea, right? Don't be afraid to take more than one photo of a situation. Try different angles; wide angle, distance shots and close-ups. Include funny signs, flowers, unique foods, crazy people, your room, parties and scenes aboard the dive boat. All these photos will later help remind you of all the fun.

Extend this storytelling attitude into your underwater pictures. Don't take all close-up animal

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pictures or all wide-angle reef pictures. People want to see how the underwater world looks and live your whole dive experience. Show giant stride entries, shooting from the boat and from the water. Get your dive group and your animal encounter. And save a few frames for the safety stop. This is frequently where the funniest moments happen.

There is a wide assortment of different point-and-shoot cameras that enable you to capture something to please every viewer.

Ikelite has a great selection of small housings that will fit a variety of these small cameras. Sea & Sea offers the MX-5 for those just starting out and the MX-10, which allows you to change lenses underwater. This is an ideal camera for storytelling, as you can take a wide-angle shot of the reef, switch lenses and then document a fish, nudibranch or starfish.

Making It Make Sense

Now you have returned from your trip and need to organize your photos. Be selective; you don't have to include every photo you took. You need to view it as a visual diary. That said, you should also be flexible. Some pictures won't conform to a strict chronological format. That's okay. Use them where they make the most sense to you, or where they are the funniest. You may even want to create a photo scrapbook of all your out-takes - nothing but goofiness!

If you have prints, put them in a scrapbook in the order of your travels. As your friends thumb through your scrapbook, they will feel like they took the trip with you. If you took slides, place them in a tray and show them in chronological order. Digital cameras can output directly to a television screen or transfer your images to VHS tape.

By taking a bit more time to document your vacation of a lifetime, you will now have mementos. No longer will you will have to say, I guess you had to be there. Now you can say, Let me show you!

For more information about taking a course in underwater photography, click on the home page below.

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