



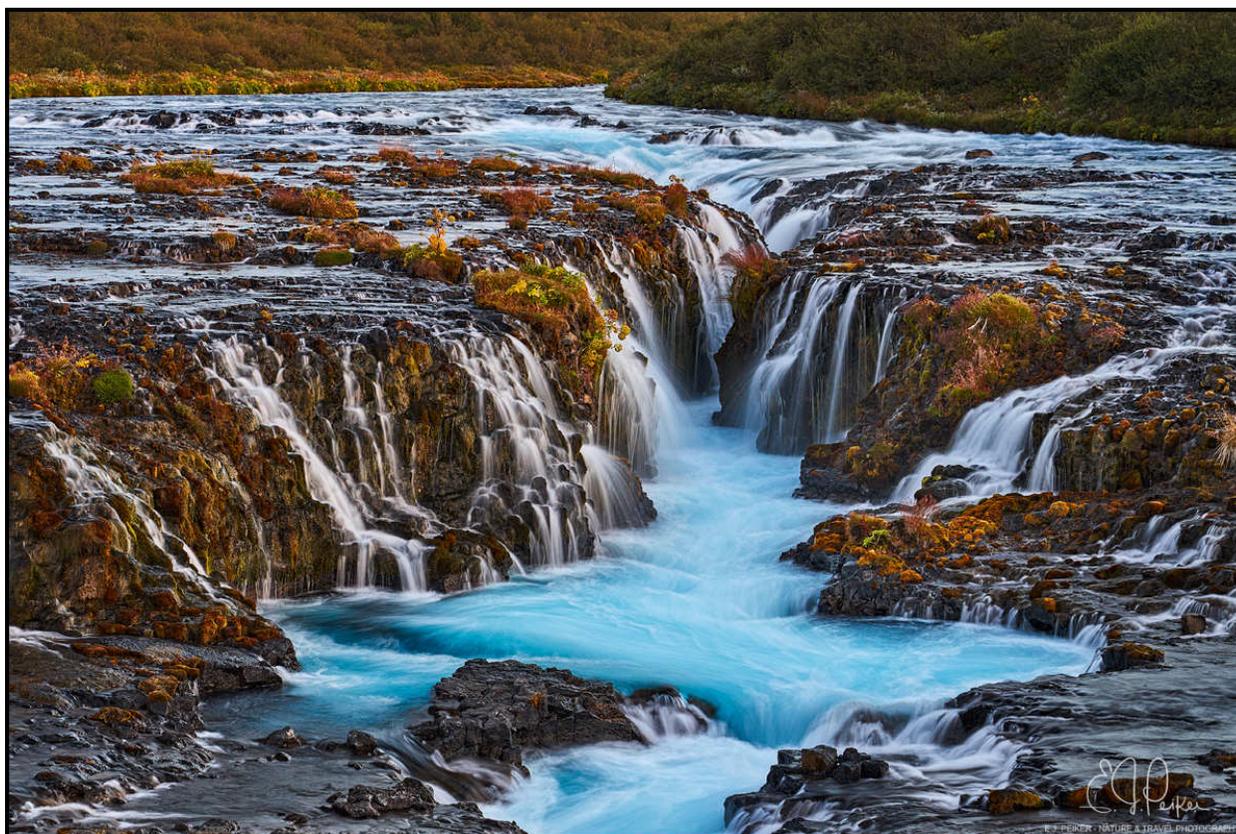
The Newsletter of E.J. Peiker - Nature and Travel Photography

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Fall Color at Bruarfoss - Iceland (a7R III, 24-70mm)

## Summer Photo Travels

Iceland and Greenland - At the end of August I departed for my first adventure into Greenland. Greenland has the distinction of being the world's largest island since Australia is considered a continent. This trip explored the Scoresby Sund (Sound) area of the east central coast of Greenland. To get there I had to first fly to Iceland, then take a private charter flight to Nerlerit Inaat or Constable Point, Greenland where I boarded the schooner Rembrandt van Rjin (pronounced like Rhine). Since I had to go to Iceland anyway, I went early and had the opportunity to explore for a few days prior to embarking on the Greenland expedition.

This was my 12<sup>th</sup> trip to Iceland but it was my first where I wasn't associated with a group, either as a participant or as a tour leader. For the first time I had an opportunity to explore areas that aren't conducive to tour groups either due to the physicality of getting to the location or the location not being able to handle a large group. I visited nine waterfalls that I had not previously seen; one coastal location and one highland location and put 1300 km on my rental car in just 4 days. In most locations I was the only person there. In just one place, there were a few other people but nothing like the hundreds of people and dozens of large tour busses at all of the common Iceland locations that most Iceland tours and workshops visit. In the middle elevations, fall color was already starting to set in. This was purely a landscape photo as the birdlife that is so abundant in May through July is virtually gone by the time late August rolls around due to migration. It was a very productive 4 days even though much of one of the days was completely washed out by bad weather.



Iceland Highlands (a7R III, 12mm)

On the 5<sup>th</sup> day I met the rest of the complement of 20 people (expedition leaders plus clients) at the Keflavik airport for a private charter flight on an Air Greenland Dash 8 – Q200 for a one hour and 40

minute flight to Nerlerit Inaat (Constable Point) on the East Central Greenland coast. Greenland has a coastline that is over 24000 miles long, about the same as the circumference of the earth and its area is about that of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California combined. It is, however, nowhere near as big as flat projection maps of the Earth make it look; for example, on a flat projection Greenland looks much larger than India but in reality, India is nearly 50% bigger than Greenland. It is about 1660 miles long from north to south and 650 miles wide from east to west. Flat Earth projections stretches things more and more as you get to the poles. At its closest point, it is only 16 miles from Canada's Ellesmere Island but my travels took me to the opposite side of Greenland, about 250 miles due north of the northwestern most tip of Iceland. The highest elevation of Greenland is 12,139 feet above sea level and the ice sheet covering much of the interior is as much as 9900 feet thick. It had been growing until recently when it started to reverse. Oodaq, at the northern tip of Greenland is the northernmost point of land on Earth. The East Greenland Current keeps eastern Greenland much colder and more arid than west Greenland resulting in the vast majority of the population living on the west side of Greenland. As the current drops south along the eastern shore it warms and then goes up the west side as the West Greenland Current making it much warmer in the west. The population of Greenland is about 60,000 people with about 88% being Inuit, the rest primarily European (Denmark); 25% live in the capital city of Nuuk in the west.

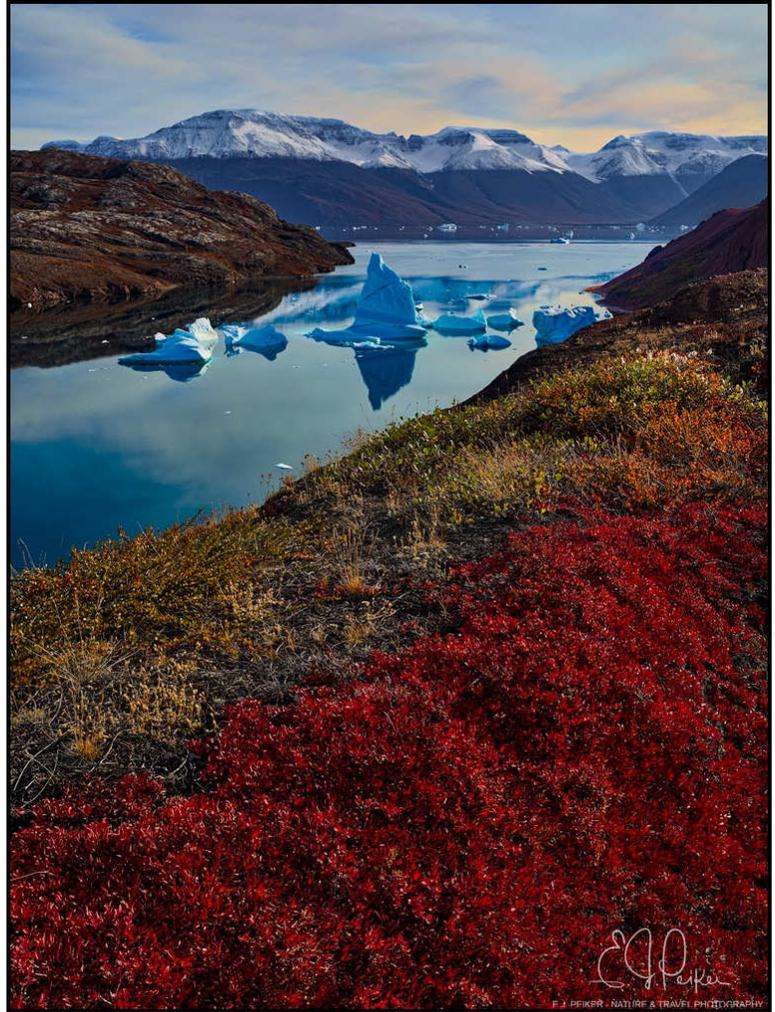


Rembrandt van Rijn – Hall Bredning, Greenland (a7R III, 24-70mm)

Greenland was first inhabited around 2000BC, a second wave arrived around 600BC, a third called the Dorset people arrived around 500BC, and the 4<sup>th</sup> group was the Thule people around 900AD which overran the Dorsets. Vikings were the first non-Inuit people - Gunnbjorn Ylfsson discovered Greenland but it was little more than folklore at the time until Erik Thorvaldsson or Eric the Red was exiled from Iceland and sailed to Greenland. He gave it its name – Greenland. In 986 the Viking migration to Greenland began and in 1001AD Leif Eriksson led an expedition to find trees to for much needed lumber landed to build with. He landed in Newfoundland, Canada in 1001AD. The Vikings slowly abandoned Greenland from the first part of the 1300's to the late 1400's, probably due to an extended cooling period.

By the 1500's whalers arrived in Greenland bringing Europeans back. The Polar Eskimos of the north were not discovered until 1818 by Capt. John Ross and today are the only Greenlanders that consistently do not have at least some European blood in them. Danish settlement started in 1721 and they claimed Greenland at this time. In 1776 Denmark took control of all trade in Greenland and it was closed to anyone but Inuit and Danes until 1950. In 2009, Greenland gained self-rule from Denmark. While it is still a territory of Denmark today, it is self ruling from its government seat in Nuuk.

My destination was the Ittoqqortoormiit Fjord system anchored by Scoresby Sund (Sound) which is the longest fjord in the world at 216 miles from east to west. Our ship, the Rembrandt van Rijn is a three mast schooner built in 1924 and completely remodeled and lengthened three times. It flies under the Vanuatu flag and has previously flown the Danish, German and Panamanian flags. Today it is 147 feet long, with the tallest mast rising 100 feet. In addition to 7 sails (3 jibs, 3 main sails and a top sail) it has two 740 horsepower diesel engines for propulsion. On both sail and engine power, her top speed is 9 knots, on engines alone it is about 7 knots. The Rembrandt has a crew of 10 and can accommodate up to 33 passengers although our expedition had only 20 including our expedition leaders which made life onboard a lot more comfortable than it would have been with a full complement.



Rather than rewrite everything, I have opted to share my daily diary in its entirety below. There may be a bit too much detail there but it might be interesting to some to read all of the happenings on a journey like this. I was 100% off the grid for 12 days – no news, no Internet, no cell phone service – nothing from the outside world – a bit liberating.

#### Day 1 (8/24)

- Met at airport, somebody had put up a Trump Shuttle sign over the Air Greenland sign as 16 of the 17 guests on our ship were from the US (all over ranging from CA to NY and one from the UK), it was great to see my old friends John Shaw and Joe VanOs again – John was my photographic mentor back in the 1980's and 1990s and I went to both Midway Atoll and Antarctica with Joe. John went to Antarctica on the same trip as well. I hadn't seen either in about 8 years but had occasional contact with John through that time. I also met Rinnie van Meurs, a Dutchman living in Poland, who was our expedition leader and someone that is extremely experienced in Arctic expeditions. Rinnie is an expert and author on the Arctic and has recently published an excellent and balance book on the future of Polar Bears. I will be getting an

autographed copy in the mail in a few weeks. (<https://www.aspeditions.be/en-gb/book/the-future-polar-bear/16554.htm>)

- Left 30 minutes late due to one missing bag and missing vegetables for our expedition but they were eventually found.
- Short and comfortable 1:40 flight on a chartered Air Greenland Dash 8-Q200 due north to Constable Point, landed on a compacted and hardened mud runway built by Arco (oil company), amazingly it was towered even though it gets no more than a couple of flights a day, max, most of which are helicopter to the nearby town of Ittoqqortoormiit. Saw our ship at anchor on the water off of the south end of the airport. Incredible colors from the entire spectrum in the landscape during approach – much different than the blue and white landscape I was expecting.
- Hiked a bit over a mile to a rocky zodiac landing site, boarded zodiac, and transferred a couple hundred meters to our ship, the Rembrandt van Rijn.
- Cabin 1, right at nose of boat, a bit noisy with bow wake noise and when anchor goes down or up, shower is the bathroom with a sink and toilet. Small but since I am a single person I can use the top bunk for luggage and camera stuff – I can't imagine two photographers sharing one of these cabins with all of their gear.
- Cruised for 2 hours down Hurry Inlet, almost got into Scoresby Sund and then had to turn around and go back because some important medications had mistakenly been loaded from the plane onto our ship meant as a delivery for someone else not associated with trip. In total lost 5 hours.
- Overnight at sea. Not much sleep, about 3.5 hours after finally resorting to ear plugs due to ship and water noises and getting used to sleeping in a port-hole free rolling cabin.



#### Day 2 (8/25)

- Jarred awake by 4:20 alarm that I had set to insure I catch any early morning light. Woke to some nice red glow on the horizon, got up and photographed it. We were way late to our destination due to the 5 hour delay.

- Started to see Icebergs after we turned the corner from Scoresby Sound into Hall Bredning at dawn and eventually ended up in a field of dense icebergs near the mouth of the northwest arm off of Hall Bredning and Nordvestfjord.
- Cruised among icebergs all day and it got progressively sunnier.
- Gorgeous evening, it was cool to juxtaposition icebergs in shade with those in sun – blue vs. yellow-white.
- Stood on deck of boat photographing from 4:30AM to 10:30PM breaking only to eat – a long but exhilarating day. Temps in the low 40's (F).
- Went to sleep around 11:15 only to be jarred awake by dropping anchor about 20 minutes later. My cabin was at waterline right in the very front of the ship so the anchor was very loud.
- Overnight at anchor in Hall Bredning near the Nordvestfjord entry.

### Day 3 (8/26)

- Woke up to anchor rising, looked at phone and it was only 3:00AM, this made me grouchy. Couldn't get back to sleep due to ship noises so got up showered, dressed and thought I'd go up into the dining area and organize the photos I took the day before – when I got to the dining area everyone was up. It turns out my phone had reset its clock when I turned on the GPS the day before and set it to Nuuk which is 2 hours different than ship time. Rather than 3:45 it was 5:45. Suddenly I felt like I had gotten enough sleep. Funny how the human psyche works, I went from being really tired to being perfectly fine from one second to the next when I figured out I had slept my normal 5.5 hours rather than just 3.5 hours.
- Cruised up the second arm from the north off of Hall Bredning called Oefjord (Islandfjord) photographing glaciers, many receding and some almost gone. A very gray day that really showed the impact of climate change and the loss of glaciers that recently (as little as a few years ago) made it all the way to the water level.
- In the afternoon we made a landing where there was some incredible fall color and also saw three Musk Oxen at a distance. Hiked around but the group seemed more interested in completing the hike that photographing the incredible colors and scenery. I was baffled as this is a photography tour... I got a couple of great shots (see above) but felt the area had much more to offer. I did talk to our expedition leader about this and mentioned that this is a trip for photographers, it isn't a hiking or adventure tour (subsequent landings were much much better in this regard so I'm glad I spoke up and I'm glad he took it as well meaning as it was intended.)



- Overnight at anchor in Rypefjord.

#### Day 4 (8/27)

- A gray wet and cold day in the AM, cruised up the Harefjord as weather began to clear. We made it all the way to the main feeder glacier and spent a couple of hours doing some mild ice breaking and photographing the incredible ice coming off the glacier. In the afternoon we motored back out to the mouth of the Harefjord and made a landing where we photographed panoramic and did some minor zodiac cruising and also hiked to a top of a hill for more fall color shots. We were treated to some Ringed Seals on glacier ice which was unexpected. I am shocked and pleasantly surprised that Sony's animal eye-detect autofocus worked on Ring Seals at 100 yards!
- Overnight in Harefjord at anchor on the south side of the fjord



#### Day 5 (8/28)

- On Wednesday Aug 28 we sailed up the Rodefjord (Red Fjord) and photographed the beautiful red stone fjord and then went close to one of the largest glaciers, the parent of the many really large icebergs in the area. We ended the day in Snesund for evening light. A warm midday followed by a brutally cold evening.
- Overnight in Rodefjord near the island of Sarteoe at anchor

#### Day 6 (8/29)

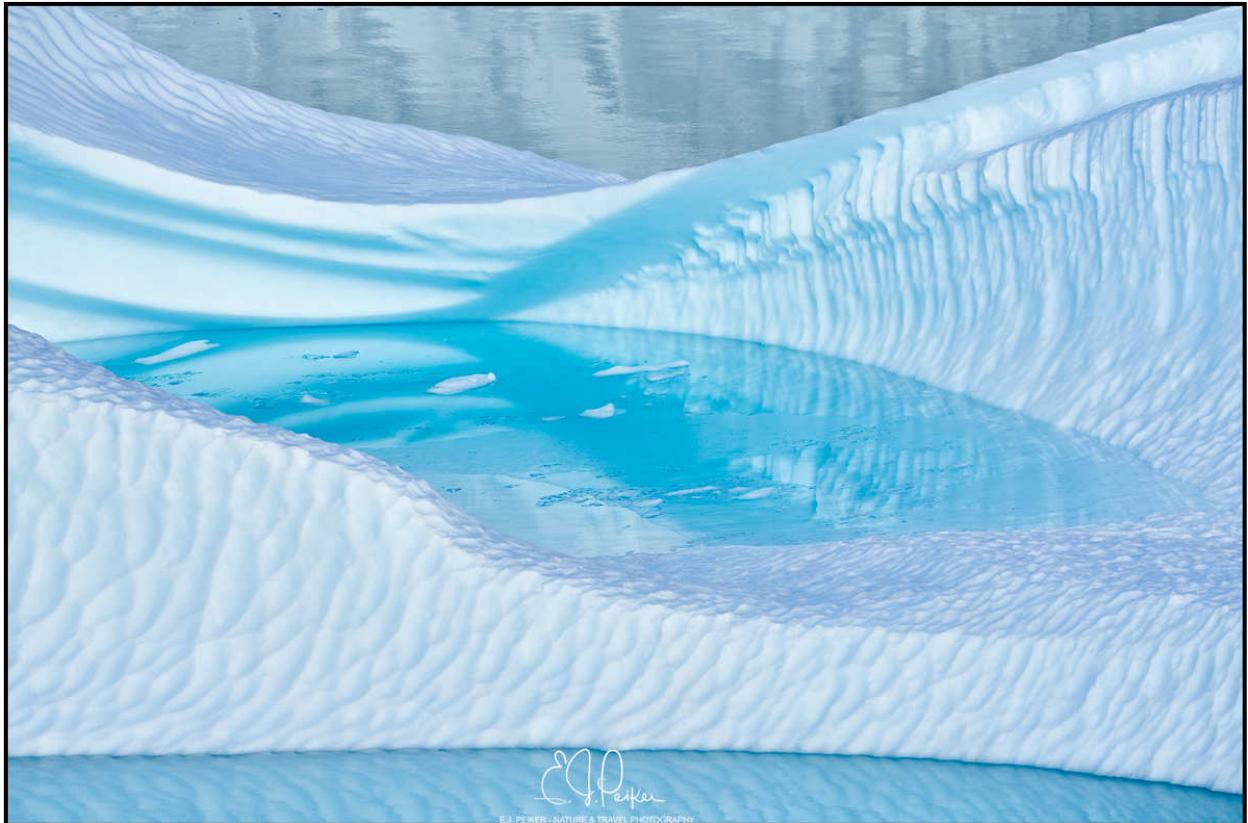
- We continued up Rodefjord photographing some interesting icebergs along the way including one with a tunnel that had a very thin top of its arch. We rammed one chunk of ice hard going around it that resulted in a full stop and having to back up a bit.

- In the afternoon we made it to Rode Oe or Red Island where we made a landing and climbed to the top of the island looking back down with icebergs in a small passage on the cliff side of the island in calm waters with beautiful fall vegetation in the foreground. This was a true highlight – the weather was perfect, it was calm, not too cold (about 45F) and sunny making it feel warmer. There was spectacular fall color ground cover all around and a ton of pristine icebergs below in the calm mirror like water.
- After dinner we did some extensive zodiac cruising in the iceberg “graveyard” field where this island creates a sort of dead zone for currents and wind causing them to pile up there.
- Overnight at Rode Oe.



Day 7 (8/30)

- Woke up to a nice ridge line looking across the end of Rodefjord into Foenfjord with a bit of Alpenglow
- We spent a lot of the day cruising back down Rodefjord stopping at one point to photograph a particularly interesting iceberg against the red fjord mountains. In the afternoon we made it to Harefjord where we anchored for the night and then made a landing where a few of us hiked up to a twin waterfall in red rocks. Some were complaining that there was no vegetation and just rock, including one person that was uncharacteristically negative on this landing. For an Arizona boy, a waterfall coming out of red rock is great!
- Anchored again near Harefjord on the north side of the fjord.



#### Day 8 (8/31)

- Days are getting noticeably shorter as daylight is 9 minutes shorter each day so on Day 8 we have already lost well over an hour of daylight compared to the first day. At the beginning of the trip the sun was rising at 4:40 AM, now it is still largely dark and it doesn't rise until almost an hour later with peak color happening as much as 45 minutes after sunrise. The sun is rising in a very shallow plane with it only reaching 28 degrees above the horizon at solar noon which happens around 1:30PM.
- We spent much of the day cruising back down Oefjord towards Scoresby Sund in somewhat rougher seas on a blustery day. There were some low clouds that at times made for interesting framing with mountain bases below and mountain tops above. Late afternoon we found a cove called Jyttes Havn in a set of islands (Bjoerne Oer or Bear Islands) at the western edge of Scoresby Sund to drop anchor.
- Except for the low clouds in front of some fjord mountains and a few shots after sunrise and sunset, today was by far the least prolific photography day of the trip. Low clouds and light rain with wind prevailed through the evening but for a brief time the sun found a hole in the west resulting in some nice underside lighting of the clouds around the Cathedral Mountains at the northwestern edge of Hall Bredning in the Bear Islands or Bjoerne Oer. Fortunately I was still up for this but many had retired to their cabins (this was a bit of a theme for the trip – if you get up early and stay up late, even on mostly cloudy days, you get the best clouds and unfortunately many in the group missed that experience).
- Overnight in a calm inlet at Bjoerne Oe at anchor. Our captain knows these waters well and no matter what the conditions are on open water, he always finds a really calm cove or bay to anchor.

### Day 9 (9/1)

- September came in with low clouds and no light at all for the planned morning shoot of the Cathedral Range. Unfortunately this shoot was a total loss but all things considered, the weather so far has been dramatically better than I expected.
- Cruised to the opposite side of the northern portion of Hall Bredning to a place called Sydkap (Southcape) where there are 2000 year old foundational remains of the Dorset people's living quarters. Climbed on top of an elevated area for some nice fall color with the iceberg filled Hall Bredning behind.
- After dinner we raised anchor and started motoring south among the giant icebergs of Hall Bredning towards a bay called Charcot Havn where we anchored for the night at 11:30PM.



### Day 10 (9/2)

- Like most days, the day started a bit gray but it got a bit nicer yet overcast for a rough zodiac landing in Charcot Havn. While this location doesn't look like much if you hike about 1.5 miles over several ridges you arrive at a spot about 1500 above sea level with a nice view of a very large but heavily receding glacier.
- After lunch we steamed for open waters in search of a bit of wind with a nice mountain background to put the ship at full sail with all 7 sails on 3 masts flying. We found enough wind to do this and took the zodiacs out to photograph the beautiful Rembrandt van Rijn in its full glory in what had become incredible clear and sunny conditions. This was a super fun shoot as the crew sailed around near icebergs and mountains and we got lots of really great shots of this beautiful sailing ship against the even more beautiful Greenland background.
- As we were returning we did see a crew member fall off of the ship into a zodiac, about a 10 foot drop but fortunately he was OK. One person in our group has a medical background and thoroughly checked him out.

- After dinner we started our trip back to the only settlement in the area and the first leg of the journey back. By morning we should be at Ittoqqortoormiit where we will walk around this small settlement.
- Overnight at sea, some rough waters between 2:00 and 3:00AM woke me for that period but I got back to sleep when it calmed a bit.



#### Day 11 (9/3)

- A couple of rough patches at sea overnight interrupted my sleep for about an hour but I am fortunate that even in a cabin with no porthole I have not become motion sick. As I wake at 5:00AM, we are still at sea with about two and a half hours to go to the settlement.
- Around 7:30AM we dropped anchor just 30 meters from the dock at Ittoqqortoormiit. As we were approaching it sounded like a thousand dogs started barking in this little settlement of 320 people. It also looked very colorful with numerous houses of all different colors. After breakfast we went ashore and walked around for a few hours photographing the village. I also visited the museum and the Police station to get my passport stamped as the police doubles as immigration and customs in this tiny village. It's unnecessary to get a passport stamp since I entered Europe in Iceland but if you would like they will still give you one. The town itself is typical Arctic Inuit – meaning that a lot of refuse just gets thrown on the ground. In every Inuit Arctic village I have ever been to, whether in Alaska, Canada, or Greenland, they seem to not yet have grasped that today's garbage is not biodegradable like their refuse was for the past 4000 years. They have always taken what they need from the land and then thrown what's left back to the land, it is innate in the culture as if it were coded in their DNA. Unfortunately, today they use lots of things with plastic and other materials that take a long time to break down but have retained

their habits of throwing stuff on the ground when they are done with it. So what is a beautiful little town as seen from a few hundred meters offshore as you approach becomes a bit of a disappointment onshore. Regardless, I am still glad we made the landing and there were lots of photos to be taken of the colorful houses.

- We re-boarded the ship and got underway back to our point of origin at Constable Bay and even went to full sail for a while. In the evening we celebrated our expedition leader Rinnie van Meurs birthday and started the process of getting ourselves packed for tomorrow's disembarkation.
- Overnight at Anchor at Constable Point near the airport.



#### Day 12 (9/4)

- This morning we got all our luggage ready and then went for one more landing. We walked up a slope in Hurry Inlet near the airport that had lots of nice fall color and some of the greenest mosses I have ever seen. The boat could be seen on silky smooth water with a mountain backdrop
- Back to our ship for lunch and then we disembarked around 3:15PM, walked from the zodiac landing back to the airport (a bit over a mile) while all of our luggage and gear was transported to the airport. After a bit of a delay departing due to our Dash 8 chartered aircraft being late, we were off to Keflavik. On the way back, the pilot came out and since I was the only one in the first row and had talked to him a bit on the ground earlier, we had a great conversation about flying in a place like Greenland and about our very bizarre approach when we first landed at the beginning of the trip. As fellow pilots we hit it off and he actually has significant time in the aircraft that I have owned in the past. Eventually he invited me up into the cockpit of this Air Greenland airplane while in flight. This was one very well equipped glass cockpit Dash 8. There's something about flying private charters that just makes the experience so much better over

commercial airline service... We had only 20 people, the 17 clients that were on the ship, the expedition leader and two guides, on an aircraft that seats 40. There was no security to go through, bags arrive almost instantly, etc. Overall the aviation part of the journey was very enjoyable not to mention the phenomenal service from the 10 crew members aboard the Rembrandt van Rijn.

- Overnight at the Keflavik airport hotel – a very large and nice top story room, much better than I was expecting, followed by a late morning flight to Dallas and an evening flight back to Phoenix.

Overall, the Greenland trip was a wonderful experience. It is a massive island of complementary colors at this time of year. The land is largely Red, yellow, orange and brown while the waters and icebergs are crystal clear blue and turquoise. The sunrises and sunsets last seemingly forever due to the 71 degree north latitude and during the time of year I was there, at its peak, the sun is only 28 degrees above the horizon which extends the time that one can photograph well beyond what is typical in the non polar regions of our planet. Much like Antarctica, the land and water is unspoiled with little trace of humanity. Life on a schooner like the Rembrandt van Rijn is easy to settle into. Like Antarctica, it is a very expensive place to visit but an experience of a lifetime making it well worth it. All of the images from this adventure can be viewed here:

[https://ejphoto.com/greenland\\_page.htm](https://ejphoto.com/greenland_page.htm)

New Mexico – Earlier in the summer I returned to my former home state of New Mexico (1984-1994) where I stayed in a cabin in the Santa Fe National Forest and visited the Rio Grande Gorge and Bandelier National Monument. Despite living in New Mexico for a decade in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, I had never actually photographed the Rio Grande Gorge near Taos. It was difficult getting there due to forest fires that closed the highway between Santa Fe and Taos but after taking some Forest Service road in my rented Subaru Outback to get there, I had an excellent evening shoot of this deep cut into the landscape by the northernmost parts of the Rio Grande River. Bandelier National Monument is a place I visited in the 1980's with my parents and even though I took some photos during that visit, it wasn't a dedicated photo shoot. Visiting just after a rainstorm made it possible to get many shots of the old Indian dwellings without the throngs of people that are usually present in this excellent National Monument.



Rio Grande Gorge - New Mexico

## New Cameras

It has been a surprisingly good summer for new camera introductions although most of them are a bit disappointing making it clear that the strong downturn in the photo industry over the last few years has really taken its toll on innovation. Here's a short summary of the new cameras in chronological order based on introduction date. I have hands on experience with the first two:

**Fujifilm GFX-100:** The Fuji GFX-100 is the new top of the line cropped medium format camera based on Sony's 101 megapixel state of the art 44mm by 33mm sensor. This sensor brings the technology that smaller sensor formats have been enjoying for the last few years to medium format including things like Back-side Illumination (BSI), on sensor phase detect autofocus (PDAF) and in-body stabilization (IBIS). A novel new shutter mechanism has been employed which isolates it from the camera body and photo sensor via a shock absorbing system, in other words there is no solid connection to the camera. This goes a long way in reducing shutter shock which can reduce sharpness significantly on a super high resolution camera like the GFX-100. The electronic viewfinder uses the latest technology and the image view is huge making it a pleasure to frame shots precisely. I originally fully intended to purchase this camera and make it my primary medium format landscape photography body. This would have gotten me back up to the 100 megapixel level that I had when using the Phase One system which I found too heavy over time. Unfortunately Fuji decided to massively upsize this camera so that it could accommodate two batteries and the IBIS unit and at the same time turning it into a button pushing, menu driven camera instead of the more tactile traditional controls of the previous Fuji products. Fuji now has three different medium format cameras, all with completely different physical interfaces, something that most would consider a poor decision and the sign of a camera manufacturer that may have lost its way and is throwing things at a wall to see what sticks. Fuji has been lauded over the years for their excellent, tactile user interface, which is gone with the GFX-100 and to a lesser degree with the GFX-50R. Despite being such a big body, the buttons are tiny and the autofocus point selection joystick is impossible to use with anything but the lightest of gloves. It is clear that nobody that designed this camera has ever used it outside of a lab at room temperature. If Fuji were to introduce a GFX-50S style body with the 100 megapixel sensor, I would pre-order it! The GFX-100 feels very much like working with a Phase One system and to a lesser extent a Canon system with its over reliance on button pushes and it has a much more convoluted menu system than either of them. The large size is exactly why I went away from the Phase One gear. As such, I did not opt to purchase this camera and for now am staying with the 50 megapixel GFX-50S as my primary medium format camera and hoping for a smaller GFX-100 in the future – personally I have no need for IBIS and can, therefore, also dispense with the second battery. Although I sound negative based on the size and interface, one thing is certain, the image quality is absolutely the best in the industry with only the 5 times as expensive Phase One system being in the same league and the lenses for this system continue to blow my mind – even the two zooms. I also prefer the 4:3 aspect ratio over the 3:2 aspect ratio used by most smaller format cameras.



**Sony Alpha 7R IV:** Sony surprised the industry by introducing the 61 megapixel a7R IV when everyone thought they were finally going to introduce the long overdue a7S III (a more video oriented camera). This brings all of Sony's latest technologies to a very high resolution camera along with some significant ergonomic improvements that make the camera easier to use with gloves - something I struggled with a

bit early in my Greenland trip on the a7R III until I got used to it. The grip is slightly deeper and recontoured – while on paper the differences seem minor, in the hand the a7R4 is dramatically easier to hand-hold, at least with my hands. As the a7R3 before it, the sensor is image stabilized bringing stabilization to any lens, even adapted old lenses from other manufacturers. The autofocus incorporates the latest version of real time tracking with both human and mammal eye detection. Both SD card slots are now UHS-II so the camera is no longer hampered by the slower slot when using two memory cards. I have opted to buy this camera which will result in the sale of my a7R II (my current backup to the a7R III is listed for sale here -



[https://ejphoto.com/gear\\_for\\_sale\\_page.htm](https://ejphoto.com/gear_for_sale_page.htm)) and will relegate my a7R III to backup status. My a7R4 arrived just a few days before the publication of this newsletter. Like previous a7 models, Sony left us wanting some basic things that virtually every other manufacturer has, most notably, focus stacking. Sony is now the only camera manufacturer that does not offer focus stacking which is very annoying after using the excellent focus stacking in Phase One, Fuji, Nikon, and Olympus cameras. Even the budget oriented Canon EOS RP has focus stacking. The new a7R IV continues to not offer a lossless compressed file format so you have to choose from an uncompressed RAW with gargantuan file sizes or a much smaller file size compressed RAW that throws away recorded information especially along extremely high contrast edges. A 61 megapixel camera, especially one with no lossless compressed RAW mode really needs a small RAW and medium RAW format like most other manufacturers offer but not Sony. Additionally, the same old disaster of a menu system lives in this new camera and even though the camera has a touchscreen, it offers no useful functionality in navigating the complex menu structure – it is basically only useful to tap to focus, something I don't use due to its lack of precision. One thing I have been screaming for in all Sony cameras is a way to backup the entire state of the camera onto an SD card so when you need major service or the camera gets reset for whatever reason, you can quickly get all of your customization back. Sony finally implemented this feature... well sort of... You can now write your camera settings out to an SD card and then load them back or onto another a7R4 but for a completely inexplicable reason, it does not save you're My Menu customizations – yet another Sony firmware oversight that will probably not get fixed until a Sony a7R5. If you are a Sony shooter, you should be very familiar with “Sony giveth and Sony taketh away” – the single most frustrating part of being a Sony shooter. On the bright side though, this is a single camera for all missions with incredible detail recording capability. It is a very high resolution full frame 61 megapixel camera that is excellent for landscape photography and is also a very good action camera that clocks in at 10 frames per second (8FPS for real time EVF display). In APS-C or Super 35 mode, it still has 26 megapixels. The EVF is the best currently available and the same as what is used in the newest Leica cameras, the Panasonic S1R and the Fujifilm GFX-100. It gets us ever closer to an optical viewfinder experience with all of the information that makes EVFs so great. It is not yet on the level with an optical viewfinder on the dynamic range front but a vast improvement over previous EVFs. Unfortunately, as with previous incarnations of the a7R, the buffer takes a relatively long time to clear and many functions are locked out during this buffering. It seems that despite the file sizes growing by 50%, Sony did not speed up the buffer clearing rate enough to offset what was already the slowest buffer clearing speed in the photo industry. A new pixel shift mode is also included which can record 240 megapixel images but only in a studio setting with absolutely no movement with the camera on a sturdy tripod on top of concrete. Sony makes some of the highest resolution and best image quality cameras in the world but they continue to lag significantly on the firmware development side (especially when compared with Fuji or Olympus), which are the cause, or at least a significant contributor to every single one of the shortcomings listed above.

Canon had long been rumored to finally replace the now positively ancient EOS 7D Mark II and to integrate the EOS 80D with it into a single model to streamline their offerings. Unfortunately what we got is not such a pro-grade body but rather what is essentially an 80D with a higher frame rate (10 FPS) and a new 32 megapixel APS-C sensor. We will have to see what image quality this camera can deliver as it uses the smallest pixels of any APS-C or larger format camera in the world. They also introduced a



Mirrorless APS-C M6 Mark II using the same sensor which consolidates the M5 and M6 lines into a single range-finder style camera but by doing that, the camera loses a built-in EVF which now must be bought as a separate accessory which then makes it impossible to use flash since it plugs into the hotshoe. Only limited early testing has been done on these cameras at the time of publication so it's difficult to say anything about image quality at this point but some sources are pointing out that Canon's budget oriented EF-S and EF-M lens lines are not up to the resolution standards of the new sensor. Canon 7D Mark II shooters are going to be disappointed as this is most definitely not a camera in that league and Canon EOS 80D shooters will have to decide if getting what is essentially the same camera but with 33% more pixels, which is only a 15.5% increase in linear resolution, is worth it.

Next up on the camera introduction bandwagon was Sony again with two new cameras, an a6100 which is their new entry level APS-C camera and the a6600 which is their new "flagship" APS-C camera. On paper the a6600 camera is an epic fail. It does not address the problems of the a6500 and their APS-C line. It continues to use the tiny body with tiny buttons and no front dial along with the same old worn out 24 megapixel sensor. The only thing it has over the a6500 is a more developed eye detect



AF system, already available in the much cheaper a6400, and a larger battery. This is not at all what photographers demanded and I'm afraid this will not be a well selling camera especially given that the a6400 has the same AF system. The a7R IV in APS-C mode (called Super 35 by Sony) is actually a true pro-grade APS-C body and despite the much higher cost, is the real pro APS-C choice offering 26 megapixels at the same frame rate in a dramatically better camera body.

At the very end of the season, Nikon announced the development of the new flagship sports/action DSLR, the D6 but gave no details at all about this upcoming camera. I expect a similar announcement from Canon and Sony with deliveries before the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

## New Workstation

Since retirement from Intel at the end of 2009 I have slowed my pace of computer upgrades. Before retirement I could very cheaply upgrade systems almost every generation because I could build the systems myself and I could get the very latest CPU and SSD, the most expensive parts of a computer back then, for free. Right before I left I built what was then the absolutely fastest PC you could build. Five years later in 2014 I worked with the incredible folks at Puget Systems to spec out a new top of the

line system. I have been using that computer for the last 5 years and gave it a mid cycle memory and graphics card update to keep the system working well and performing at a level that I needed, especially given my moving to medium format for my landscape photography with its inherent depth of field losses with and the resulting need for much more focus stacking. Five years later, in 2019, computer technology has moved sufficiently to build a new workstation that will hopefully last another 5 years with another likely mid-cycle update. The specs of the new system are as follows:

Case: Fractal Design Define R6 USB-C Blackout

Motherboard: Gigabyte X299 Designare EX

CPU: Intel Core i9 9920X 3.5GHz Twelve Core w/ 4.5GHz Turbo mode

Ram: Crucial 64GB DDR4-2666 (4x16GB)

Video Card: NVIDIA Quadro RTX 4000 PCI-E 8GB

Storage: Samsung 970 EVO Plus 1TB M.2 SSD (Primary System Drive), Samsung 970 EVO Plus 1TB M.2 SSD (Internally mirrored backup System Drive and swapdisk), WD Gold 12TB Enterprise Class Hard Disk Drive - 7200 RPM Class SATA 6 Gb/s (Primary data Drive) mounted in a iStarUSA 1-Hard Drive Hot Swap Rack (my data is backed up to existing online external RAID stations and two Synology NAS RAID servers)

Power Supply: EVGA SuperNOVA 1000W P2 Power Supply

CPU Cooling: Corsair Hydro Series H60 CPU Cooler (Rev. 3)

Additional Cooling: Arctic Cooling MX-2 Thermal Compound

OS: Windows 10 Pro 64-bit



The Windows Experience score on this system is 9.9 - the max number measurable. Disk reads and writes are 7x using the M2 SSDs compared to the old style SSD in my previous system. CPU video rendering is 2.7x, GPU video rendering is 2x (and that is using 10 bit per color on the new system compared to 8 bit on the old), Open GL is 2.3x as fast. Easy mid-cycle upgrade options for the future on this system include a higher core count CPU, doubling of the system RAM, faster data storage should it become available, and a graphics card upgrade. Overall this is a very significant upgrade in performance especially after disabling all of the Windows 10 Pro overhead that I don't need. The site [blackviper.com](http://blackviper.com) can help anyone streamline their Windows experience by showing you which services can be turned off for your type of usage.

As with everything, a big change like this also comes with some downsides...

- A tongue in cheek or be careful what you ask for item - I truly enjoyed watching Helicon Focus render a focus stack. The program is very fast to begin with but with my old system I could physically see it build up a depth map and watch it render – for some reason this never got old. On my new system, the rendering is so fast it basically goes from un-stacked to stacked in the blink of an eye. I ran a quick comparison of a 6 image stack with a 50 megapixel Fuji Medium Format stack. The old system took about 7 seconds to complete the task. The new system does it in about 0.75 seconds – there's some magic sauce in that new GPU...

- My very old web publishing program does not fully work in Win 10 Professional, even in Compatibility mode. Web design works as it should but it will not FTP upload. I have a workaround for now where I can still design pages in the old software and use FileZilla to upload to my site but FileZilla isn't smart enough to keep track of files that have changed since last upload so for now I have to keep track of that manually. I have looked at a couple of other packages but none of them can handle the program specific templates and formatting that I use so I see some serious work in the future to bring my web publishing software and website into this decade...

- The only other issue I encountered is that Dropbox changed its terms to a maximum of just 3 connected devices from a much higher number previously. Apparently I was grandfathered on my old system but to link up my new system I had to unlink others that I really want to be linked. The only way to change this is

to buy a relatively expensive subscription plan that gives me WAY more space than I could ever want and more connected computers. I abhor subscription models...

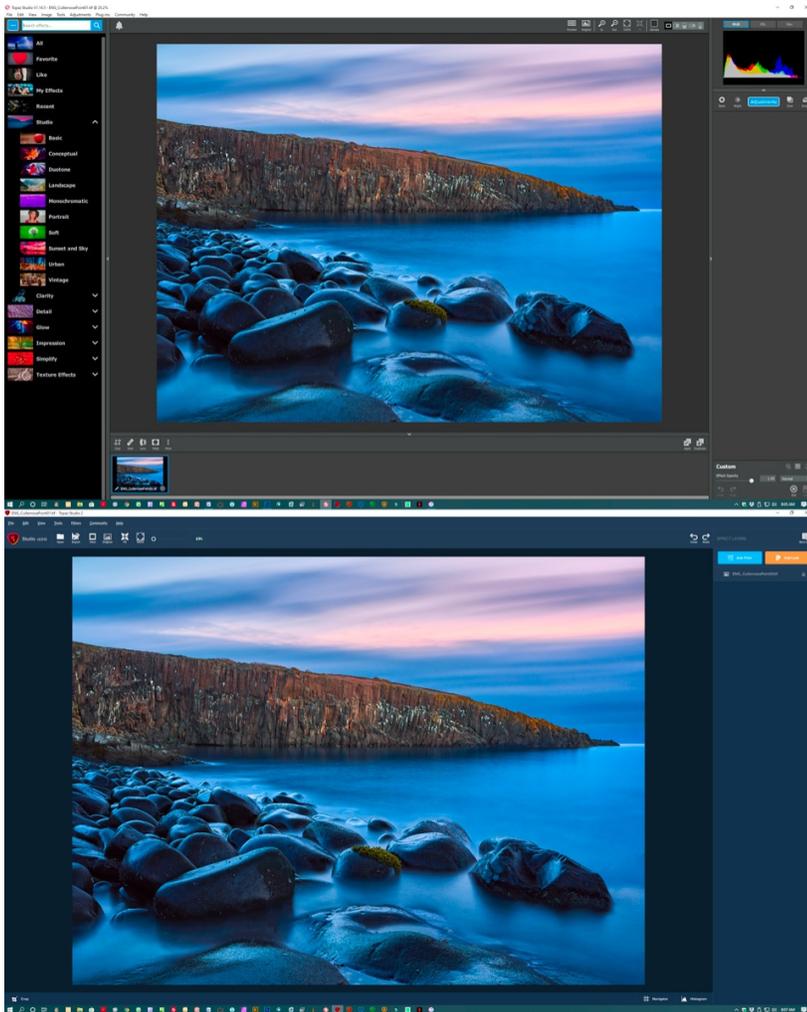


On the bright side, I had feared that I would not be able to activate Photoshop CS6 anymore or that my older version of Microsoft Office would not activate but those were no problem at all.

At this point, the new system has been in production for almost three months and has performed flawlessly. I often get asked how the new Mac Pro compares. After careful study and analysis I have concluded that the Mac Pro with the 12 core processor would give approximately the same performance and that going beyond that specification would do little to speed up still photography work. The 12 core Mac Pro has a slightly slower processor but uses slightly faster Ram which will largely offset each other. It uses equivalent speed m.2 SSD storage. The base graphics card is slower than the one I have chosen and the upgraded cards are marginally faster for still photo work. Given that the 8 core model is more expensive than this system was, the cost of the Mac Pro would be much higher for an equivalent level of performance.

## **Topaz Studio II**

Right after I published the Summer 2019 Newsletter with a complete run-down of the new Topaz AI products and Topaz Studio, Topaz Labs surprisingly announced Topaz Studio II. Topaz Studio is a relatively full featured image editing package that includes virtually everything that most photographers, especially those not into massive amounts of editing ever need and for those intimidated by Photoshop but want to take things a bit farther than what Lightroom or Capture One can do, it is a good option. The original Topaz Studio was free and then you could buy add-on modules which could bring the price of the full suite to several hundred dollars. Topaz Studio II is no longer free but its \$100 price includes all of the add-on modules that used to cost hundreds of dollars.



I would characterize Topaz Studio II under the heading of “upgrades aren’t always better than the original”. The roll-out of Studio II was a complete mess. Never have I seen a buggier piece of software brought to market in a non Beta state – I have seen many Alpha level packages that were less buggy. It got to the point for a period of a couple of weeks where Topaz Labs was issuing a software update once a day to deal with bugs, missing features, crashes and several problems of functionality when run as a plug-in. The worst of this, ironically, was when one ran AI Clear, something that is supposed to clear up images, sharpen them and at the same time reduce noise, the image that resulted in Photoshop was a blurry, decidedly not clear, mess. Now, after a couple of months, the bugs have largely been worked out and it seems to work fairly well with the exception of AI Clear slightly changing the color and contrast of the image as if it were changing color space when it runs. The change is small but enough to sometimes be a bother.

Topaz decided to completely revamp the interface as illustrated above with the old version on top and the new version on bottom. They also dropped the crowd sourced adjustment recipes that were so popular in the original Studio (see the left margin of the old interface). The new programs performance is significantly slower than the old one. I set up identical recipes using 7 modules in Studio and Studio II and the original is more than 2 times as fast at rendering the image and going back to Photoshop. Virtually every mouse click results in a new complete rendering that takes time on Studio 2. Studio was just a lot more responsive. Another downgrade from Studio occurs when running Studio II as a Photoshop plug-in. The original Studio would retain the last used settings so when you sent another photo to Studio from Photoshop, the previous adjustments were pre-applied. This is often what one wants when working on several images from the same shoot. In Studio 2, you have to reapply your recipe every time which takes several mouse clicks. These recipes are now called Looks. One annoyance that remains from the first version is that you have to create your own separate layer prior to launching Studio. Topaz should automatically create a new duplicate layer when launching like the Nik Plug-ins do (now from DXO).

Overall Studio II is getting better but if you run it as a Photoshop Plug-in rather than stand-alone, the original Studio is faster. Unfortunately the original program is no longer being upgraded and feature refinements and new modules are no longer being added. At this point I use Studio II more than I use the original despite the performance hit but for quick and dirty adjustments, and just using AI Clear, the original Studio is still my go-to plug in. Note that both can exist side by side, Studio II does not overwrite or “break” Studio I.

## The Story Behind The Photo

This photo of Bruarfoss in Iceland is perhaps my most successful social media photo since I started posting images on sites like Facebook and Instagram. I took this photograph on my recent trip to Iceland. In all my previous visits to Iceland, I had always been either a tour participant or a tour leader. To get to this waterfall, one must make about a 5 mile round-trip hike through varying terrain including some narrow muddy track. It isn't a place you would take a group of 8-12 tour participants of unknown physical condition. Additionally, once you get there, a lot of the shooting is off of a footbridge which would simply not be still enough for the longer exposures typically used in waterfall photography with a dozen people moving around. The cover photo of this newsletter was taken from the footbridge. I have seen a number of photographs of this waterfall over the last few years as it has gained popularity and definitely wanted to go there. At times in the past, I understand one could drive fairly close to Bruarfoss but this became problematic for a small community near there and that access was cut-off. One must now one must take this 5 mile round-trip trail. With my trip to Greenland starting with a private charter flight from Keflavik, Iceland, I decided to go to Iceland several days early and explore on my own for the first time in my many visits. A check of sunrise times showed sunrise occurring at 5:40 AM, Civil Twilight occurring at 4:45 and a 2.5 mile hike in the dark on a trail in unknown condition, I left my hotel in Reykjavik at 2:20AM and I arrived at the trailhead at 3:45AM. It does get relatively dark at night this time of year, unlike in June and July where it never gets totally dark. I strapped on my NEOS overshoes since the track is often very muddy, attached my headlamp to my Tilley hat and embarked on the trail. It got progressively lighter and by the time I got to the more messy part of the hike, I could see relatively well and could keep up a very brisk pace completing the 2.5 miles in just 40 minutes. As I was hoping I was the only person there and remained the only person there for the entire 3 hours I spent photographing this beautiful waterfall complex. I started photographing from the bridge and while heavy into extended blue hour lighting so I did not even realize all of the fall colors in the vegetation until being there for over an hour. Locals say that the water coming down Bruarfoss is the bluest glacial water in all of Iceland and except for one spot in New Zealand; it is the bluest water I have ever seen. The blue color in the photo has not been enhanced. After shooting from the bridge for a while I decided to see if I could get down to water level and found a place where I could go down a steep bank. Once down I waded into the outflow in an area where the water was less than a foot deep and flowing at a manageable pace. My NEOS overshoes could easily handle this level of water and keep my feet nice and dry. I took several shots from this lower vantage point and then decided to see if I could photograph into the slot that was forming the waterfall. I used my Sony 100-400GM lens at



2.5 miles in just 40 minutes. As I was hoping I was the only person there and remained the only person there for the entire 3 hours I spent photographing this beautiful waterfall complex. I started photographing from the bridge and while heavy into extended blue hour lighting so I did not even realize all of the fall colors in the vegetation until being there for over an hour. Locals say that the water coming down Bruarfoss is the bluest glacial water in all of Iceland and except for one spot in New Zealand; it is the bluest water I have ever seen. The blue color in the photo has not been enhanced. After shooting from the bridge for a while I decided to see if I could get down to water level and found a place where I could go down a steep bank. Once down I waded into the outflow in an area where the water was less than a foot deep and flowing at a manageable pace. My NEOS overshoes could easily handle this level of water and keep my feet nice and dry. I took several shots from this lower vantage point and then decided to see if I could photograph into the slot that was forming the waterfall. I used my Sony 100-400GM lens at

177mm, focus stacked the exposure utilizing ISO 200 at f/5.6 and an exposure time of 2.5 seconds. I didn't realize at the time of taking it that this was going to be one of my favorite shots of the trip but once I started processing the image a couple of weeks later when I got home, I realized I had a relatively unique shot on my hands.

### Social Media Reminder

In the last newsletter I laid out my Social Media presence and strategy. Since then my Instagram footprint has increased substantially but also not by as much as I had hoped. It is relatively easy to get thousands of followers if you pay Instagram to promote your photos but like my following on Facebook, I have decided to let it grow organically. My Facebook subscriber list continues to grow as well. Just a small reminder to please subscribe to my Instagram page if you would like to see some of my best landscape photography: <https://www.instagram.com/ejpeiker/>



Musk Oxen - Greenland

### Garage Sale Goes Continuous

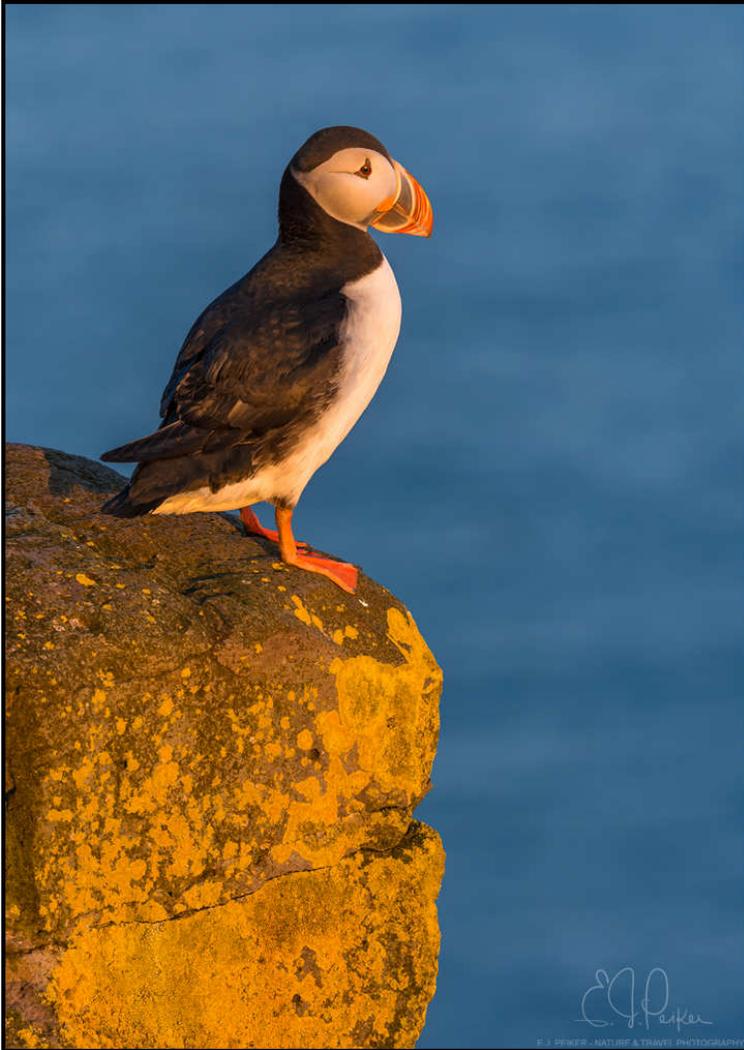
I have decided to move my bi-annual garage sale of quality used photographic products to a continuous sale. All items that are currently available are now listed on my website. If there is something that you think I might have that isn't listed. Don't hesitate to drop me an email. I have added three notable items to the large list of sale items – two infrared cameras and the excellent Irix 11mm rectilinear lens for Nikon. Here's the direct link to all of the gear I am currently actively trying to sell:

[https://ejphoto.com/gear\\_for\\_sale\\_page.htm](https://ejphoto.com/gear_for_sale_page.htm)

## The Best Lenses For Your Nikon DSLR, Canon DSLR, and Sony (FE) Cameras

The table of best lenses for your camera is a living document that gets updated every quarter. Changes from previous tables can be seen in bold. Once the ecosystem for the Canon RF and Nikon Z mount matures, I may include or switch over to those mounts. For now, all of the lenses below work well with the proper adapter to Canon and Nikon full frame mirrorless cameras.

Lens Category	Canon EF Mount	Nikon F Mount	Sony (F)E Mount
Full-frame Fisheye	Canon 8-15mm f/4L Sigma 15mm f/2.8	Nikon 8-15mm f/3.5E Sigma 15mm f/2.8	Sony 28mm f/2 + 16mm Fisheye Conversion Lens
Hyper Wide Prime	Sigma 14mm f/1.8 Art Irix 11mm f/4	Sigma 14mm f/1.8 Art Irix 11mm f/4	Sigma 14mm f/1.8 Art Voigtländer 12mm f/5.6
Ultra Wide Prime	Zeiss Milvus 15mm f/2.8 Canon TS-E 17mm f/4	Zeiss Milvus 15mm f/2.8 Nikon 19mm f/4 PC	Zeiss Batis 18mm f/2.8 Voigtländer 15mm f/4.5
Extra Wide Prime	Zeiss Milvus 21mm f/2.8 Sigma 20mm f/1.4 Art	Zeiss Milvus 21mm f/2.8 Sigma 20mm f/1.4 Art	Zeiss Loxia 21mm f/2.8 Tokina Firin 20mm f/2 AF
Standard Wide Prime	Zeiss Otus 28mm f/1.4 Zeiss Milvus 25mm f/1.4 Sigma 24mm f/1.4 Art	Zeiss Otus 28mm f/1.4 Zeiss Milvus 25mm f/1.4 Sigma 24mm f/1.4 Art	Sony 24mm f/1.4 GM Sigma 24mm f/1.4 Art
Moderate Wide Prime	Sigma 35mm f/1.4 Canon 35mm f/1.4L II	Sigma 35mm f/1.4 Zeiss Milvus 35mm f/2	<b>Sigma 35mm f/1.2 Art</b> Sony-Zeiss 35mm f/1.4
Standard Prime	Zeiss 55mm f/1.4 Otus Sigma 50mm f/1.4 DG Art	Zeiss 55mm f/1.4 Otus Sigma 50mm f/1.4 DG Art	Sony-Zeiss 55mm f/1.8 Zeiss Loxia 2/50
Portrait Prime (short telephoto)	Zeiss 85mm f/1.4 Otus Canon 85mm f/1.2L II Sigma 105mm f/1.4 Art	Zeiss 85mm f/1.4 Otus Sigma 105mm f/1.4 Art Nikon 105mm f/1.4E	Sigma 105mm f/1.4 Art Sony 85mm f/1.4 GM Zeiss Batis 1.8/85
Medium Telephoto Prime	Canon 135mm f/2L Sigma 135mm f/1.8 Art	Sigma 135mm f/1.8 Art	Sigma 135mm f/1.8 Art Sony 135mm f/1.8 GM Zeiss Batis 135mm f/2.8
200mm Prime	Canon 200mm f/2L Canon 200mm f/2.8L II	Nikon 200mm f/2G Nikon Micro Nikkor 200mm f/4ED	N/A
300mm Prime	Canon 300mm f/2.8L IS II	Nikon 300mm f/2.8G VR Nikon 300mm f/4 PF	N/A
400mm Prime	Canon 400mm f/2.8L IS II Canon 400mm f/4 DO II	Nikon 400mm f/2.8E VR	Sony 400mm f/2.8 GM
500mm Prime	Canon 500mm f/4L IS II Sigma 500mm f/4 DG OS HSM	Nikon 500mm f/4E VR Sigma 500mm f/4 DG OS HSM Nikon 500mm f/5.6 PF	N/A
600mm Prime	Canon 600mm f/4L IS III	Nikon 600mm f/4E VR	N/A
800mm Prime	Canon 800mm f/5.6L IS Sigma 800mm f/5.6APO DG	Nikon 800mm f/5.6E VR Sigma 800mm f/5.6APO DG	N/A
Wide Angle Zoom	Sigma 14-24 f/2.8 Art Canon 11-24mm f/4L Canon 16-35mm f/2.8L III	Sigma 14-24mm f/2.8 Art Nikon 14-24mm f/2.8G Sigma 12-24mm f/4 Art	Sony 16-35mm f/2.8 GM Sony 12-24mm f/4 G <b>Tamron 17-28 f/2.8 Di</b>
Standard Zoom	Canon 24-70mm f/2.8L II Tamron 24-70mm f/2.8 G2 Di VC	Nikon 24-70mm f/2.8E ED VR Tamron 24-70mm f/2.8 G2 Di VC	Sony 24-70 f/2.8 GM Sony 24-105 f/4G Tamron 25-75mm f/2.8
Telephoto Zoom	Canon 70-200mm f/2.8L IS II Tamron 70-200mm f/2.8 G2	Nikon 70-200mm f/2.8E FL VR Tamron 70-200mm f/2.8 G2	Sony 70-200 f/2.8 GM Sony 70-200 f/4G
Super Telephoto Zoom	Canon 200-400mm f/4L 1.4x Canon 100-400 f/4.5-5.6 II	Nikon 180-400 f/4E 1.4x Sigma 150-600 f/4.5-6.3 Sport	Sony 100-400 f/4.5-5.6 GM <b>Sony 200-600 f/5.6-6.3 G</b>
Macro	Sigma 150mm f/2.8 Macro OS Irix 150mm f/2.8 Macro	Sigma 150mm f/2.8 Macro OS Irix 150mm f/2.8 Macro	Sony 90mm f/2.8 Macro Tokina Firin 100mm f/2.8 Voigtlander 110mm f/2.5 Macro



Atlantic Puffin - Iceland

## Workshops

All of my group workshops are run through NatureScapes Certified Workshops. Please check out all of the great offerings from NSN here:

<https://www.naturescapes.net/workshops/>

Private instruction in camera operation, landscape and wildlife photography is also available as well as image processing training. Photo workstation consulting services are also available. To learn more click here:

[http://www.ejphoto.com/duckshop\\_private.htm](http://www.ejphoto.com/duckshop_private.htm)

## Facebook and Instagram Pages

I routinely post new photos, articles, etc on my Professional Facebook Page and my Instagram Business Page as well as links to my latest articles. If interested, please click below and then click on the Like button.

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/EJ-Peiker-Nature-Photographer/>

<https://www.instagram.com/ejpeiker/>

## Newsletter Info

This is the 18th year of my quarterly Newsletter. I try to cover the wide array of digital imaging and products from mirrorless to medium format and everything in between. Throughout the years, the information contained herein has always been free and will continue to be free despite the many hours it takes to put it together and significant equipment and travel expenses. Most of the products that I have tested and reviewed, I have purchased myself. A small minority have been made available to me for review and evaluation by loyal readers and a by the manufacturers themselves. While the newsletter is free either via eMail subscription or via accessing it on my website at

<http://www.ejphoto.com/newsletter.htm>, if you find the information useful to you and you do wish to donate for my continuing efforts, you may do so via PayPal and sending the funds to [ejpeiker@cox.net](mailto:ejpeiker@cox.net).

## Disclaimers

E.J. Peiker conducts consulting services and product design services for a number of photographic product companies. Those that know me know that I would not endorse a product, even for compensation, if I did not feel it were a superior product.

E.J. Peiker is a co-founder of [www.Naturescapes.net](http://www.Naturescapes.net) and leads photographic workshops under the NatureScapes Certified Workshops banner.

E.J. Peiker is a member of Nikon Professional Services and receives some services at a substantial discount or free of charge from Nikon USA [www.nikonpro.com](http://www.nikonpro.com)

E.J. Peiker is a Sony Digital Imaging Pro and receives some services at a reduced cost or free of charge from Sony USA <https://esupport.sony.com/info/1523/US/EN>

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