

Gosh, I Hate Hard Decisions

By Susan E L Lake
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Decisions. Decisions. Culling photographs can be tedious. I had a friend ask me how much time I spent doing this task once a trip is over. I replied that much of the early work is done while I'm still traveling. It's such a great way to fill those airport waiting times that are either too short (Am I going to make my connection?) or way too long (Will we ever see our plane?). That's why I download my images to my iPad (although a computer serves the same purpose). I could do it directly on whatever camera I have used, but the screen is so small that it's very easy to miss a great detail so unless the image is an obvious "loser" meaning it's blurry or clearly a mistake, I don't like to use that option.

I have to admit that during my travel it's tempting to procrastinate with the promise that I'll have more time when I get home. I've done that and lived to regret it. Travel means that someone else is cooking and cleaning so I do have some free time that I wouldn't at home. An hour in the afternoon while I'm resting in preparation for the next event is well spent time. I never regret using it in this way. I've also done it while watching TV or even sitting by the pool. I've also found I can carry my iPad with me to speaker events and do some deleting there. Since these decisions aren't challenging ones, it's easy to multitask.

My goal is to get my image selections down to a group of photos that I like. Then when I do get home, I move my images to my computer (leaving them sorted into the folders from my iPad). Personally, I use Lightroom to do the next hard step, but any application you have that lets you choose the best will work. Lightroom has options that let me assign "ratings" to an image. I use stars, but others assign colors. The point, of course, is to designate your response to an image. In Lightroom I can also adjust details such as cropping and exposure although at this stage, I don't do any adjustments more serious than that. I have a bias that makes me want to leave images as close to what I actually shot as I can. I want to share my experiences – not my Photoshop skills.

So now we come to the hard part. How to choose one photograph over another that I also like? My decisions won't be yours just as my memories from the same trip won't be the same as yours. But these are my guidelines (often ignored I will confess): is it interesting, does it convey the moment, and does it tell my story? Of course, the most important question is related to audience: do I like it followed by do I think others will? There are some who would argue that I shouldn't consider any audience but myself. But when it finally comes to the question of a keeper or not, my viewpoint has already been in frequent play. After all, the images that are left were selected by me. So thinking about others gives me one more perspective. Unfortunately, I'm not a mind reader so I may guess wrong. So be it.



For those who have followed my Facebook postings, here's the answer to my decision of which one to choose. All the details in this image make it a winner.



This pretty in pink house won't make the cut up against the yellow one.

So which of the choices did I make when faced with the three sets below? I think the yellow mask is cleaner and more likely to tell my story of the Carnival masks. I picked the red Carnival costume. The tall red plume adds so much to the image while the photo of the beige one is distracted by the second visible costume. And while I like the "bragging" seal, the mom's attention to the baby makes me warm and fuzzy. Will I discard the first seal? Nope, but it won't make it into my "show and tell" collection.

I'm curious if other minds would have made different choices. Let me know.

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This Carnival mask is engaging.



I like this pale colored costume which is unexpected.



Wonder what this seal is telling the world?



This image still isn't as story telling as the yellow Carnival mask although it is more engaging.



While I like the pale color in the first image, the vibrancy of this costume REALLY appeals to me.



Can't you just hear mom talking to the baby seal?