

## THE PASSION AND THE PATIENCE

We asked a number of big-name outdoor shooters about how they got started, who and what inspires them, and where the art is headed

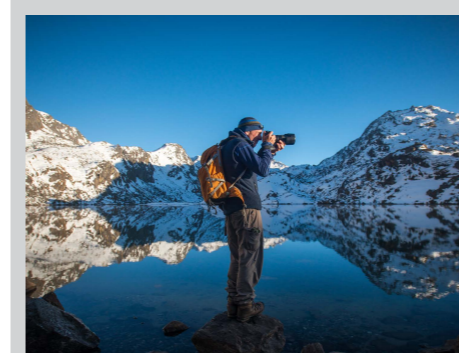


### BEGINNINGS

I was an outdoor person with a keen interest in photography. My first adventure with a camera was when I was 18: I found myself bouncing through the Sahara in a rented Fiat looking for ammonites with a mad fossil hunter. We got stuck in the desert many times. At one point every rock I picked up had a fossil in it. It was a real adventure and I was hooked on travel thereafter.

### INSPIRATION

As much as I aim to be my own photographer, I often find myself referencing Steve McCurry's work in my mind. I used to study his books in microscopic detail but I leave them alone now, and try to channel my own style. His classic work is so well composed and timed, it almost seems like he's painted it, placing all the elements exactly where he wants them rather than catching a moment in time with a camera. He often uses simple blocks of colour highlighted by a little flash of similar colour somewhere else. Like the iconic 'Afghan Girl', the green eyes perfectly matching



### Alex Treadway

A widely published travel photographer with bases in London and Kathmandu.

the green wall behind and the rips in her clothes revealing a green top underneath.

### HOW HAS TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHY CHANGED?

I think accessibility has made a significant difference. Travel was so much more complicated and far more expensive before. Now you can jet off to places like Madagascar or Brazil and it's affordable. Today the challenge is to travel further and to more extraordinary places than ever before and film them in more inventive ways. It's now possible to put the camera almost anywhere with tiny cameras and drones to carry them. I think it's an exciting time for photography.

### VIDEO VS STILLS

Telling a story on film is a different process and requires a different set of skills to then edit as well. The editing is as important as the shooting and I still see editing and filming as two very different skill sets.

### WORDS OF ADVICE

The challenge with travel photography is having the determination and patience to get into the situations that will give the best opportunities for photography. This rarely happens by just passing through a place. It's important to stop, look around, ask questions and make things happen. If the light isn't right, wait until it is. If the right face hasn't come along, be patient, and so on. It's important to be brave as a travel photographer: I mean in the interaction with people around you. You have to be your own little director and make things happen. These are not really skills you can learn at home either: you have to get out there and jump in. Never walk away thinking, 'I could have done more with that'. Go back, and do more.



### Simon Carter

Recognised as one of the world's leading rock climbing photographers.

other genres that might have been easier – and to me, that helped give the genre of climbing photography a real legitimacy.

### DRONES

I have not yet used drones, but have been watching the technology develop for years and find it interesting. For shooting rock climbing they certainly open up some spectacular angles that would otherwise be impossible, so it is tempting. But they are also potentially an incredibly intrusive and annoying contraption; you'd have to be very careful where and when they are used to ensure no conflicts with those of us just wanting to enjoy the outdoors. I think, because they are easy to use and people just can't help themselves, there will be conflicts over their usage in the future.

### BEGINNINGS

When I was 15 I got super keen on photography and decided I wanted to be a photographer. By then I was already very interested in the outdoors, and had been doing long bush walks, caving and back-country skiing with my friends and school. But it wasn't until I was 17 that I found my main passion of rock climbing. It took another 10 years before I started professional outdoors and climbing photography.

### INSPIRATION

American outdoors photographer Galen Rowell was very inspiring to me. It wasn't so much his imagery but the way in which he talked about his work in his magazine columns and books that really connected with me. Also, American climbing photographers Jim Thornburg and Greg Epperson did a lot more than just inspire me with their stunning images and tireless work ethic; they both had a real genuine dedication to the genre of climbing photography. They didn't just follow the money and 'move on' to

### WORDS OF ADVICE

Don't be in a rush. Take the time to develop your outdoor skills before trying to mix it with photography. I was rock climbing for 10 years and had reached a very proficient standard before I seriously mixed my climbing and photography. My experience has undoubtedly kept me alive and also enabled me to operate effectively as a photographer in the cliff environment.



### Chris McLennan

Reknowned photographer who was one of the first in NZ to shoot adventure commercially.

#### BEGINNINGS

I grew up at the bottom of the South Island so was into the outdoors from a young age, from diving and spearfishing to scuba and skiing etc. When I got my first camera, of course I wanted to take photos of the activities that interested me.

#### INSPIRATION

My father's work ethic probably played a greater part in the "work hard and stick at it" department, though I was impressed with the work of underwater photographer Andy Belcher. When I moved to Auckland I met with Steven Roke, an Auckland commercial photographer who offered a lot of advice that helped with setting up my business and establishing myself as a professional. The rest of it was just a desire to capture something different, which definitely meant getting your feet dirty and going the extra mile on every shoot...

#### VIDEO VS STILLS

There has been a growth in photographers switching across to moving pictures. But the demand for quality still photos is still there, and for me it's still my preference. Still photography is less forgiving, you have to tell the story in only one image. The GoPro era has certainly pushed the boundaries in the ways we can look at things but the quality is not there for stills.

#### DRONES

I do use drones, but only for still photography at this stage. It's been extremely popular [with clients] and I love the process, and the different creative options it brings to my shoots. Just like when underwater photography became achievable through quality camera housings, capturing aerials by drone adds a different creative element to the photographic process.

#### WORDS OF ADVICE

Stay passionate, work hard, and find ways to differentiate what you do. I do think that the only way modern photographers will be able to stay successful in business is to make sure their work

stands out and retains its commercial value by being unique and something their clients can't get elsewhere for free.



#### INSPIRATION

I look to a range of photographers. Guys like Corey Rich and Jimmy Chin in the outdoors arena are some of the hardest workers out there – I know I need to be pushing myself further to catch up with them. I really appreciate the work of Sebastião Salgado and Aaron Huey too. Particularly Sebastião as I hope to have a similar level of patience to create a body of work that spans decades.

#### HOW HAS DIGITAL CHANGED THINGS?

I believe it has changed. No doubt digital has altered the course. No longer is technically great going to be enough, the digital arena has levelled the playing field and in order to stand out, I feel that one has to really go above and beyond. I am seeing incredible work by other photographers in the outdoors arena who are really thinking outside the box. I am a big believer in going the extra mile and going to places where few go to if I want my imagery to stand out from the others.

#### GETTING OFF THE GRID

It's getting harder to find places where there is no one else to be seen and also finding ways of disconnecting. I love being forced offline and having no way to connect for a while as it helps

remove distractions and gives a chance to be present in the moment. It's sad to see those who do not know how to appreciate nature around them. I'm horrified when I see even just the suggestion of building a gondola into the main confluence of the Grand Canyon. I don't think everything needs to be easy access. There's something to be said when you've worked hard and gotten off the beaten path to reward yourself in discovering a piece of nature rather than sitting in a crammed gondola looking over and watching from a distance.

#### VIDEO VS STILLS

Video is a whole different process in seeing the world. I still very much prefer to press the shutter and take a still image. Grabbing a still from a video is not the same no matter how good the quality is. When I shoot video, I enter into a whole different frame of mind and I like the idea of the two mediums being different yet also inspiring each other.

#### DRONES

I'm tempted . . . but it's also a huge investment of time and money if I want to pursue that path. There're only so many hours in the day and it's tough to be a master of all trades. I'd rather focus on just a few things and if I need a drone angle, then I can hire a pilot who specialises in that.



### Krystle Wright

A globe-trotting photographer who's at home on a trail (below), under a wing or in a river.

I am a bit horrified at the narcissist stick – the selfie stick. Don't get me wrong, I've certainly taken one or two selfies but I do see people getting caught up in the movement and all they seem to do is take selfies and obsess over certain public figures.

#### WORDS OF ADVICE

Just remember to keep it simple and have fun. It's so easy to feel overwhelmed in this modern day but strip away the distractions, be present in the moment and enjoy the journey. **AA**

