

In The Field

I know there are questions about what to do in the field for saving your images and freeing up valuable space on your SD and CF cards for further use. I will try to explain the options.

In places like Tanzania, Peru and others where take-along equipment is limited, this is important. I carry a small laptop, 10.6" MacBook Air to be exact. I bought the bottom end version mainly because I don't need a load of hard drive space on board nor a lot of RAM. The



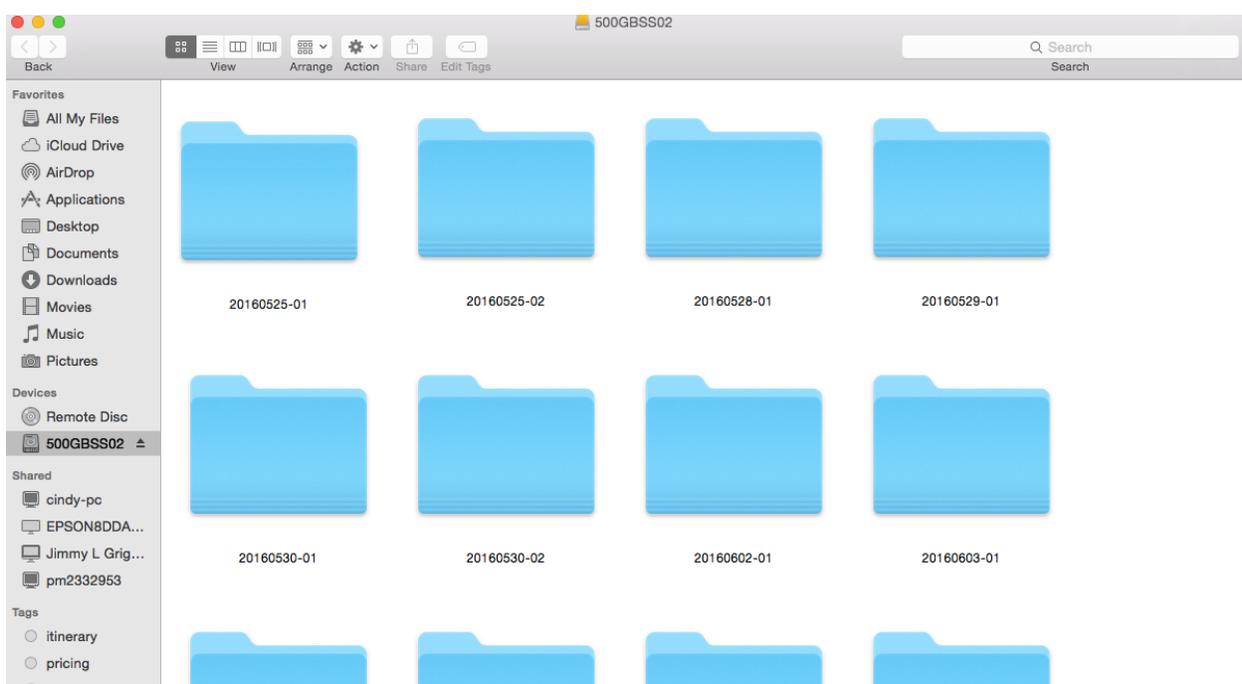
laptop serves only as a conduit to allow transfer of images from cards to external hard drives (plural on purpose). I also carry two different card readers (in case one fails or gets damaged) and two external

hard drives, either a pair of traditional 1 TB spinning disc hard drives or a pair of 500 GB SSD drives with no moving parts. I also have a USB 3.0 portable hub that allows me to hook up both hard drives and one card reader at the same time. Shown in the photo are all the items I described. The hub doesn't show so well but it is directly in front of the computer.

The computer is not so important here. More than likely I don't plan on doing any editing in the field so even a simple Chromebook will work, as long as it has USB connectivity.

I use two hard drives, one is designated as a primary and the other is the back up. I insert a card into the USB 3.0 card reader then copy all the images from the card onto the primary external hard drive. I generally create a folder with the days shooting date as the name of the folder. I add a dash (-1) and number just in case I download during a lunch break and plan to shoot more that same date. Once the images are downloaded, I just copy the folders to the backup drive, remove the drives and shut everything down.

I ALWAYS format the cards in the camera, never delete them from the cards using the computer.



The reason for making a back up in the field should be obvious but let me explain via an incident from 2015 in Tanzania. One participant didn't bring a computer but did have hard drives. I told him he could use my computer to download with if he needed to. He had planned on just filling up most of his CF cards but shot MANY more images than anticipated (Hey! It is Africa). He came to my room with his CF cards and his two hard drives. We downloaded to one HD and he said that was good enough. I disagreed and made him copy the files to a second drive. When he got home the first drive would not work. Had we not made two copies he would have lost all his images from the first week of the trip.

Just remember, there are two kinds of hard drives, those that have failed and those that are going to fail. Plan for adversity. Even though SSD's (Solid State Drives) have no moving parts, they can fail, too!

Every day when we leave camp/lodge to go out shooting, the back up drive goes with me. I never leave both drives away from where I am going to be. I wear a shooting vest in Tanzania and the back up drive is usually in one pocket unless I am using it at the computer.

What happens if the computer fails? That would be sad but not a total disaster. I shoot RAW files which are basically a lot larger than JPG files. If I needed to I could switch to JPG format and just use the available cards I have with me. My Canon 7DII and 5DIII will write to both CF cards and SD cards. I bought a bunch of SD cards at 32 gigs capacity off Amazon and these are with me just in case. They are reasonably cheap. They read and write slower than CF cards but sure beat the heck out of not getting to shoot! Read speed is only a drawback for downloading (it takes a little longer) and write speed means the buffer fills more quickly and you can't shoot as many images in a row at fast speed, BUT, remember, I will have likely switched to JPG from Raw and this might not be a big issue.

I use the folders named with shooting dates not because I am fond of dates but the computer arranges them in order for me as long as I stick

to my way of doing it, YYYYMMDD. In the example, the first folder is named 20160525-01. These are the first images shot on May 25, 2016. The second folder contains the second batch of images I downloaded on that same day. The reason for doing this is it allows me to see that yes indeed, I did copy all the folders over to the back up drive in case I get interrupted during the process.

I am quite certain there are many other ways to do this in the field but this is what works for me and I stick with it. I am not a well organized person so I have to have some way of forcing myself to be complete.