

For a fun and meaningful souvenir,
preserve your vacation memories with
a professional photography session.



PHOTO BY ALESSANDRO SIGSMONDI@SIGSIG.MONDIAI

A PHOTO FINISH

By Erica Bray

I'll never forget meandering ancient temples and villages in southern India with a professional photographer who lived there at the time. I was on an extended sabbatical to study yoga, and I wanted to document this meaningful part of my life journey for posterity. My photographer captured me backed by serene, tourist-free settings in various yoga positions in places that I would have never found on my own. I drew deep inspiration from the colorful, sensory-rich mosaic of my surroundings as he snapped away.

Fast-forward some 10 years later: I still seek out professional

photographers while traveling. Only now, I have a family that travels with me. To commemorate our first family beach vacation, I hired a photographer in South Carolina, who brought us to a nearly empty beach at sunset and happened to capture some of my daughter's first steps along a post-storm oceanfront scene filled with gorgeous light and vibrant rainbows.

In Yosemite National Park, we hired a photographer who invited us to play together in a golden meadow framed by lush forest and towering granite, another spectacular setting that we would have never thought to explore otherwise.

If you hope to celebrate your next vacation in photographs, here are some tips for hiring a local photographer.

Use the internet.

Start with some online sleuthing via Google and Instagram to find photographers based in the destination you'll be visiting. Begin a few months ahead of your travels, if possible, as some of the best photographers get booked early. Spend some time clicking through portfolios to see which photographers match the style you're hoping to achieve, whether that's posed shots or candid,

LEFT: Our writer participates in a yoga-inspired photography session while in India.

RIGHT: During a photo session at a South Carolina beach, our writer's daughter took some of her first steps.

documentary-style photos. Once you find a handful of photographer portfolios that jibe with your preferences, check review sites such as Yelp.

Ask your hotel for recommendations.

If you want a curated compilation of local photographers, contact the concierge desk at your hotel for a short list of photographers who have impressed past guests. Some resorts even have in-house photographers you can book. For instance, Walt Disney World Resorts offers private photo sessions in its theme parks and resorts.

Leverage social media.

Ask for photographer leads on sites such as TripAdvisor and Facebook. TripAdvisor has forums



PHOTO BY KARA STOWALL PHOTOGRAPHY

specific to destinations around the world, and Facebook has thousands of destination-specific groups you can join in which locals will be more than happy to share pros they recommend.

Prior to taking a road trip across Ireland with my now-husband, I asked a Facebook travel group for recommendations on a photographer in Cong, Ireland, where we were staying at Ashford Castle. I thought it would be fun to professionally document us enjoying this luxury stay. To my surprise, my husband proposed the night before our scheduled photo shoot, so the photographer wound up taking our engagement photos!

Understand what's included in the price—and what's not.

In your preliminary outreach to photographers, ask about their fee. I've encountered a wide range

of prices. It's not uncommon to be quoted anywhere from \$200 to \$1,200 for an hourlong photo shoot that includes digital copies of all edited photographs.

The cost depends on where you are in the world and how experienced the photographer is. Sometimes photos (either digital or print copies) are included in the cost; sometimes they come at an additional cost. Get clarity on that up front.

Most professional photographers will have a contract or waiver to sign, too, so be sure to read it thoroughly to understand where the photos can ultimately live. In nearly all of my experiences, I was purchasing the photographs for private use only, with the caveat that when posting to social media, I should credit the photographer accordingly. (I had to get special permission to publish them here.)

Hiring the right photographer on your vacation can turn your photos from ho-hum snapshots to keepsakes well worth the money and effort you spend.



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LEFT: A family photo session at sunrise in one of Yosemite National Park's meadows