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Asian Photography

AND IMAGING

Vol. 38 - No. 5

SPECIAL FEATURE

**A TRIBUTE
TO RAGHURAI
BY ARKO DATTA**

ON THE HORIZON

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CRICKET'S
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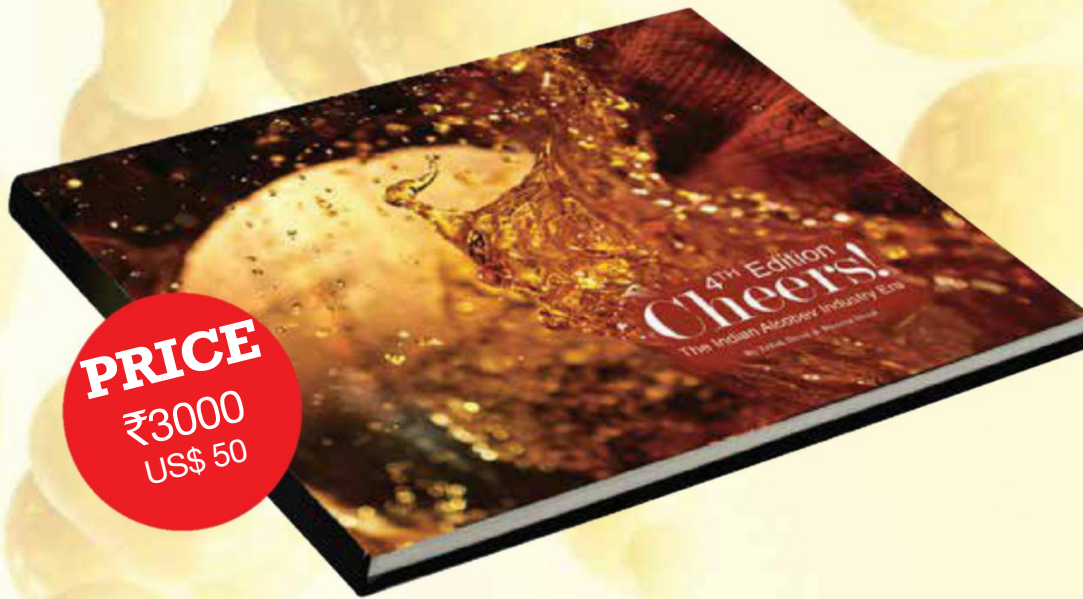
**HOW TO
TAKE GOOD
SOLO TRAVEL
PHOTOS ON
YOUR PHONE**

**THE ART OF POST-
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The Passing of a Legend: Raghu Rai

There are photographers whose work defines moments. Then there are photographers whose vision defines a nation's visual memory. Raghu Rai belonged to the latter category.

For generations of Indian photojournalists, he was not merely an icon, but a constant presence. A benchmark. A reminder that photography is not about equipment, access or spectacle alone, but about empathy, patience, instinct and the ability to see beyond the obvious. His frames carried chaos and calm in equal measure. India, in all its contradictions, flowed through his work effortlessly.

What made Raghu Rai truly extraordinary was his range. Few photographers could move from documenting conflict and political upheaval to capturing spirituality, street life, grief, humour, and beauty with the same authenticity. Whether it was the aftermath of the Bhopal disaster, the corridors of power in New Delhi or fleeting moments on Indian streets, his work had a rare emotional intelligence that transcended journalism.

In many ways, Raghu Rai became the visual conscience of modern India. At a time when photography today often risks becoming disposable, optimized for speed and algorithms, his images remind us of the value of observation and immersion. He photographed with patience. He waited for life to unfold naturally inside the frame instead of forcing moments into existence. That discipline, perhaps more than anything else, separated him from the crowd.

An era does not simply end with the loss of a photographer of his stature; a certain way of looking at the world disappears with him. Yet, legacies like his never truly fade. They survive in archives, books, exhibitions, and more importantly, in the minds of younger photographers who unknowingly carry fragments of his influence every time they step onto the street with a camera. His work taught generations that photography is not merely documentation. It is memory, testimony, and emotion frozen in time.

In this issue, we also present a special feature by Arko Datta, another photographer whose work has consistently pushed the boundaries of visual storytelling. Arko shares his thoughts on Raghu Rai whom he knew from childhood. As the industry evolves through AI tools, computational imaging and endlessly accelerating content cycles, the importance of photographers like Raghu Rai only grows stronger. They remind us that technology can assist vision, but never replace it.

The camera can record reality. Only the photographer can interpret it. And few interpreted India like Raghu Rai.

Bhavya Desai

bhavya_desai

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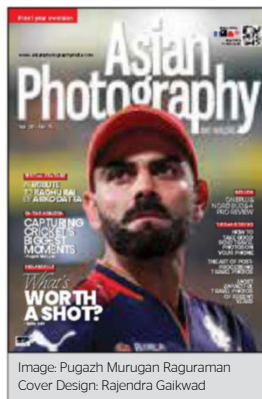


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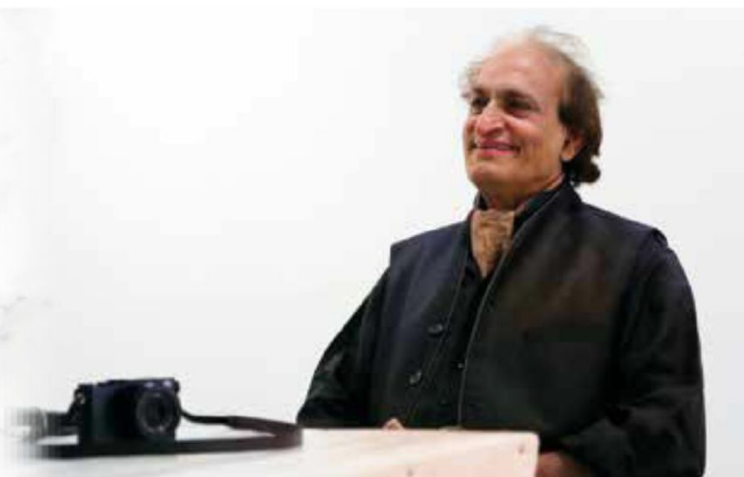
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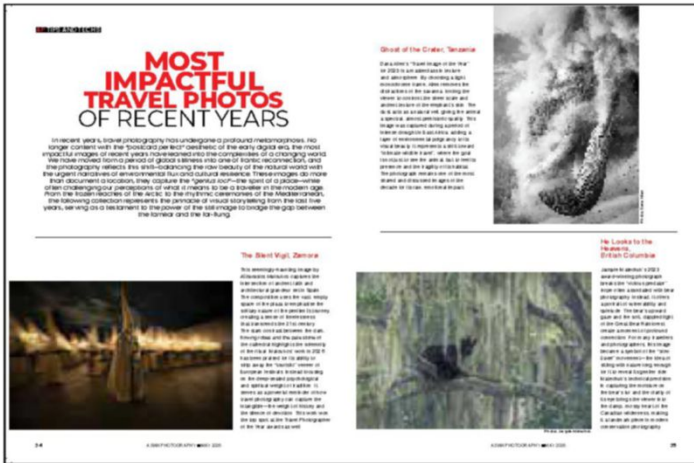
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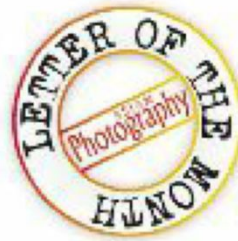


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LETTERS TO EDITOR

Readers' Comments and Suggestions...

Send your letters at apindia.feedback@gmail.com



Dear Sir,

Thank you for the review of the Xiaomi 17. I really liked it and also agree with all your points. Having used the phone for the last 1.5 months, I can confirm that I share your sentiments. Fortunately, I was able to take advantage of some great offers and got the phone for around 74k, which makes me very happy with this price. One thing to note is that the haptic feedback is excellent.

**Regs,
Zameer**

Dear Zameer,

Thanks a lot. Happy to know that you found our review useful and that you are enjoying the phone. And also getting good offers just makes the value for any device even more.



LETTERS TO EDITOR

Readers' Comments and Suggestions...

Send your letters at apindia.feedback@gmail.com



Dear Sir,

My question is regarding the Sigma 17-40mm F1.8 DC Lens. I read the review in the magazine and was wondering if it can also be used for the Canon RF mount?

**Regs,
Mohanta Bori**

Dear Mohanta,

Yes this lens is compatible with the Canon RF mount. Infact it is available for the Sony, Fuji and Canon mounts as well. But do keep in mind that it will have a crop factor of 1.6x while using it in such cases.



Villart Photography and V.V Ramana receives Honourable Mention at Dadasaheb Phalke Film Festival

Villart Photography and V. Venkata Ramana have received an Honourable Mention at the 2026 Dadasaheb Phalke Film Festival for their upcoming film *1000 Words*, a heartfelt cinematic story set in the tribal valley of Araku. The recognition marks an important milestone for the project, which has already begun drawing attention for its emotionally driven storytelling and visually poetic treatment.

Villart Photography and its Founder V. Venkata Ramana have earned an Honourable Mention at the 2026 Dadasaheb Phalke Film Festival for their film *1000 Words*. The accolade marks a significant achievement for the team and highlights the growing appreciation for intimate, independent cinema that focuses on authenticity and heartfelt narratives. More importantly it hits home since Ramana is a known photographer in the industry.

The film follows Ravi Varma, a travel photographer, and his unexpected bond with Noori, a 12-year-old tribal boy whose fascination with photography sparks a transformative journey. Built around themes of innocence, human connection,



dignity, and the power of art, *1000 Words* explores how “sometimes, one image can change a life.” Drawing comparisons to films such as *Minari*, *The Lunchbox*, *Lion*, and *Capernaum*, *1000 Words* has been positioned as a film capable of connecting across cultures through its themes of kindness, hope, and human dignity.

Directed by Ramana Villart, the film blends minimalistic cinematic language with an emotionally intimate narrative style. The project aims to portray tribal life with authenticity and grace while celebrating small yet meaningful human moments. The pitch deck describes the film as “a tender story the world needs in a noisy time,” reflecting its focus on empathy, warmth, and emotional truth.

The film’s creative team includes cinematographer Shiva Ram Charan, editor Manoj Kumar B, music composer Shiva Krishna S, and background score

composer PVR Raja.

Receiving an Honourable Mention at the Dadasaheb Phalke Film Festival is expected to further strengthen the film’s visibility on the festival circuit and among independent cinema audiences.

ZEISS India Launches ZEISS Conquest Apia 65

ZEISS India has launched the ZEISS Conquest Apia 65 spotting scope in India, aimed at wildlife enthusiasts, birders, and conservation professionals.

The Conquest Apia 65 features ZEISS T* coating, 87% light transmission, and high edge sharpness, enabling visibility in low-light conditions such as early mornings and dense habitats. It offers a magnification range of 20x to 50x.

India hosts over 1,300 bird species, making optical equipment important for observation and documentation. According to Kunal Girotra, Regional Head, Photonics and Optics Division, ZEISS India, the product is intended to support this ecosystem by enabling more precise observation and field use.

The device measures 299 mm and weighs 1.3 kg. It uses an aluminum-magnesium construction for durability while remaining portable across different terrains.

It includes a focus and zoom system designed for ease of use. Accessories include a control lever, protective case, digiscoping adapter for smartphones, and tripod compatibility with Arca-Swiss systems.

The ZEISS Conquest Apia 65 is priced from ₹1,44,999 and will be available through retail and e-commerce platforms such as Amazon and Flipkart.





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Epson Invites Entries for 17th Epson International Pano Awards 2026

Epson has announced the call for entries for the 17th Epson International Pano Awards, the world's largest competition dedicated to panoramic photography. Supported by Epson Southeast Asia, the awards are open to both professional and amateur photographers globally.

Entries for the 2026 edition are now open, with early-bird submissions accepted until 22 June 2026 and final entries closing on 13 July 2026. Participants must submit images in a panoramic format with a minimum 2:1 aspect ratio.

This year introduces a new Aerial category across both Open and Amateur divisions, alongside existing categories

such as Nature and Landscape, Built Environment and Architecture, and VR/360. The total prize pool exceeds US\$50,000, including US\$15,000 in cash.

Established in 2010, the competition received over 3,000 entries from 95 countries in 2025, with growing participation from Asia. Curator David Evans highlighted the addition of the new category and early-bird benefits, while Hattori Tai emphasised the platform's role in elevating regional talent.

The 2026 jury includes industry professionals such as Bill Bailey, Aaron Spence, and Daniel Kordan, among others.

vivo India Announces 4th Edition of vivo Ignite

vivo India has announced the fourth edition of its education programme, vivo Ignite, open to students in grades 8 to 12 across India. The initiative aims to encourage students to develop solutions addressing real-world challenges.

Participants can submit individual or group entries (up to three members) under the Prototype category across themes such as community development, technology, agriculture, and climate change, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.

The competition will run in seven stages, culminating in a National Finale on October 11 in New Delhi, where the top 10 finalists will present their prototypes. The total reward pool is ₹40 lakh.

The previous edition received over 37,000 registrations from more than 9,000 schools across 660+ districts. The fourth edition introduces new elements, including additional focus on aspirational districts and government schools, a mid-stage "Achiever 30" cohort for mentorship, and a Teacher Innovation Grant of ₹50,000 for selected educators.

Knowledge partners include NCERT, IITM Pravartak Technologies Foundation, Science Olympiad Foundation, and UN Global Compact Network India. Applications are open from April 21 to June 30.

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- Lens Reflector ML-L36
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Canon India Partners with Wavesight to Distribute Bodycams in India

- Canon India partners with Wavesight to distribute HawkEye body-worn cameras in India
- Focus on real-time, secure surveillance for mission-critical operations
- Targets law enforcement, defence, enterprises, and emergency services

Canon India has announced an exclusive partnership with Wavesight to expand advanced surveillance solutions in India. Under this agreement, Canon India will distribute Wavesight's HawkEye body-worn cameras, offering a secure, real-time platform for video communication and digital evidence management across public safety and enterprise sectors. The partnership strengthens Canon India's focus on building a future-ready surveillance ecosystem. Its portfolio already includes network cameras, AI-driven analytics, and cloud-based video management systems, supporting monitoring, incident detection, and control-room operations.

President & CEO Toshiaki Nomura said the collaboration extends Canon's capabilities into mobile-first, AI-ready solutions for high-intensity environments. Wavesight

Managing Director David Saldanha added that HawkEye enables cost-effective live streaming, situation management, and secure evidence handling.

Growing Demand and Use Cases

The solution targets applications such as police patrols, paramilitary operations, emergency response, industrial safety, and critical infrastructure security. With rising demand for IP-based surveillance and initiatives like the Smart Cities Mission, the partnership aims to enhance transparency, safety, and response efficiency.

Advanced Features

HawkEye cameras offer HD recording, live streaming, push-to-talk communication, GPS tracking, emergency alerts, and AI-based event detection. The system includes end-to-end encryption, cloud-based evidence management, and seamless integration with command centres.

Canon India will support deployments through its nationwide infrastructure, covering integration, training, and maintenance, reinforcing its expansion into integrated safety and surveillance solutions.



Canon India launches “Canon Wizard” Programme

Canon India is strengthening its engagement with the wedding imaging community through ‘Canon Wizard’, an initiative that brings leading wedding studios onto a single platform, offering access to Canon’s imaging ecosystem along with dedicated support for creative and business growth. The programme responds to the expanding wedding industry’s need for collaboration, mentorship, and knowledge exchange, with participating studios guiding emerging talent and sharing practical expertise.

By onboarding established studios as Canon Wizards, the initiative creates a structured platform for collaboration and industry interaction through curated programmes and shared learning experiences. Canon aims to strengthen industry linkages and support long-term growth.

Canon India President & CEO Toshiaki Nomura stated that the initiative reflects Canon’s vision to empower creators and build ecosystems that foster collaboration, learning, and innovation. Vishesh Magoo, Assistant Director, Imaging Communication Business, added that the programme seeks to establish long-term partnerships while enabling visibility and growth for creators.

The programme includes studios such as Magic Motion Media, RVR Pro, VS Studio, Studio Memory Lane, Bala G Studio, Ramit Batra Photography, and Dipak Studios, known for large-format cinematic wedding films. Canon plans to expand the initiative, positioning it as a long-term effort to support the evolving wedding storytelling ecosystem.



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The 2026 jury includes industry professionals such as Bill Bailey, Aaron Spence, and Daniel Kordan, among others.

Icelandair Runs “World’s Worst Photographer” Campaign

Iceland's flag carrier Icelandair is running a campaign, searching for the “world's worst photographer”, taking social media by storm. The campaign underlines several requirements, chief of it being the applicant must NOT have any professional photography background. The pitch here is to showcase even the worst pictures of Iceland would look “unreal” because the landscapes are naturally picturesque. The airline is vying on authenticity in the age of digitally altered images (especially with AI) to drive up tourism numbers. The compensation for being a bad photographer includes a flat fee of \$50,000 USD for your content, time, and participation, a fully-funded 10-day expedition across Iceland with all



travel expenses, flights, accommodation, and transportation are covered by the airline, and participants' work will be featured in a global campaign, offering a unique type of “anti-influencer” recognition.

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Raghu Rai: The Father of Indian Photojournalism in the Modern Era

By Arko Datta

It feels surreal, disorienting, that Raghu Rai is no more.

He was a guiding light for many of us photojournalists in the country, not just through his work, but through his sheer presence. So much so, I always thought he would be among us forever.

An era ends, and it is difficult to come to terms with it. No one has come remotely close to the largeness of Raghu Rai and the impact of his work on photographers, and on the nation.

Today, there are millions of images of contemporary India. But 50 years ago, any striking image of India would most likely have been through the lens of Raghu Rai.

He literally recorded India's history, and perhaps even influenced it. He captured the essence of post-Independence India, immortalising it through timeless images. He extensively photographed India, documenting its cultures, people, places and monuments.

It was not just the enormous body of work that stood out, but the astonishing quality of Raghu Rai's photography—images that make you stop, think, and simply take your breath away.

Budding photographers today have easy access to the work of great photographers they can learn from. Generations of photographers have been inspired by, and learnt from, Raghu Rai. The legendary photographer, though, had no role models in India and had to carve his own path.

He came at a time when the concept of photojournalism barely existed in India. India lagged behind



Europe in photography, especially photojournalism. I believe that if anyone wanted to become a career photojournalist in the 1960s, they would have been frowned upon, possibly even ridiculed. Most took up news photography out of compulsion, not choice.

And in this landscape, Raghu Rai emerged.

Raghu Rai's consistent stream of both news photography and artistic documentary work—especially his countless larger-than-life coffee table books—captured the imagination of India. He combined hard-hitting news imagery with art, aesthetics and storytelling, a powerful mix rarely seen before him in India. His awe-inspiring photographs made him a household name.

Along with two other photographers—Kishor Parekh and Raghubir Singh—Raghu Rai transformed the landscape of Indian photography. The world began noticing Indian photography because of this legendary trio. Unfortunately, Kishor Parekh died prematurely. And it was Raghu Rai who carried the torch of Indian photojournalism forward.

In the course of his work, he captured some of India's most iconic news images—from the dark days of the Emergency to the horrors of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy.



Arko Datta

The image of the dead child lying with eyes open continues to haunt us even today. Four decades later, it remains perhaps one of India's most important and emotive images. His books on Indira Gandhi, the Taj Mahal, Sikhs, Mother Teresa, Delhi and many more subjects are a masterclass in photography.

By the 1980s, he had almost single-handedly elevated the stature of photojournalism in India, earning for the profession the awe and respect of the nation. His work was recognised internationally as well, leading the legendary Henri Cartier-Bresson to invite Raghu Rai to join Magnum, perhaps the greatest photographers' collective in the world.

For an Indian, it was an unimaginable accomplishment at the time. Contemporary Indian photojournalists stand indebted to Raghu Rai. We can now take immense

pride in being called photojournalists in this country because of him. We can take immense pride in belonging to the same profession as Raghu Rai.

The quality and scale of his photography remain unmatched to this day. And that is hardly surprising, because he was not just a photographer, but also a storyteller, artist, historian and sociologist. Usually, there are news photographers, documentary photographers, and those who produce coffee table books.

Raghu Rai was all of the above rolled into one.

He most certainly was the father of Indian photojournalism—the founder of the craft and profession in India.

Those who knew him personally will admit that his persona was as impressive as his photography. He had a magnetic personality and a soothing, compelling voice. Perhaps that helped open doors for him, as people on the

streets—and politicians usually hidden behind closed doors—allowed Raghu Rai to train his lens on them, capturing unusual candid moments.

I knew him personally from the time I was a child, little realising the legendary photojournalist he was. At that age, I did not understand the good fortune I had in watching him shoot, or in accompanying him on inspiring visits to the India Today office, where he was Photo Editor. Back then, our focus—his children and mine—was simply the ice cream he would buy us at India Gate.

Later in life, every time I met him, he remained just as affectionate as he had been when I was a child. I can never forget the warm smile, the calm saint-like voice, and the affectionate hugs.

India has lost its greatest-ever photojournalist, and I have lost a part of my childhood.

It feels surreal.



Note from the Editor:

There are very few people who leave a lasting impact on you — even if you don't meet them often. Mr. Rai was one of them for me.

Over the years, I had the privilege of speaking with him and featuring him multiple times in *Asian Photography*. But one memory stands out.

In 2016, we showcased his work as part of *Artistique* — our initiative that brought together legends and emerging photographers on a common platform. From packed sessions at ICCR (Kolkata) to NCPA (Mumbai), the energy was electric. Crowds, questions, conversations—and through it all, Rai saab's sharp mind and unmatched attention to detail left me in awe, even as a moderator.

We also featured him in our January 2016 Anniversary issue, he agreed instantly—but added something more valuable than any interview. “Bhavya, rethink the design of AP. Less is More.”

That stayed.

What do you really say about someone who shaped the very language of Indian photojournalism? If you ever had the chance to hear him, speak to him, or simply observe him—you learned more than any classroom could offer. He wasn't just a photographer. He was The Institution.

Rest easy, Sir. The World will Miss You as one of Indian Photography's brightest stars shies away.



What's WORTH A SHOT?



Sunny Gala

Sunny Gala is a contemporary Indian travel photographer whose work revolves around people in different places more than the places themselves. Known for a distinct visual style that balances clean compositions with immersive storytelling, he has established a significant presence in the Indian travel photography circuit. His portfolio spans the diverse landscapes of the country over the years, and he has garnered recognition for his ability to blend multiple genres into a cohesive narrative, earning a reputation for technical precision and cultural sensitivity. **Asian Photography** spoke with him about his background, what makes a shot worth, the unmistakable contribution of mobiles towards photography, and more. Excerpts:



We began by talking about barriers faced when entering the industry from a non-traditional background, when Sunny explained that his journey started as a Sunday hobby while working a gruelling six-day-a-week job. His primary obstacle was familial, not technical; coming from a business-oriented family, he was the first to pursue an artistic career. It was only after the work began to generate consistent income and professional recognition that his father and family were fully convinced of the path's viability.

Subsequently, Sunny described his foray into travel photography as an accident rather than a calculated choice. After two years of shooting exclusively within Mumbai, a spontaneous trip to Rishikesh and Haridwar with a group of strangers acted as a catalyst. Capturing thousands of frames of the Ganga Aarti in the rain sparked a shift in perspective, leading to a pivotal year in 2016 where he began documenting locations like Ladakh and the Pushkar Camel Fair. He noted that travel photography is uniquely challenging because it requires mastery of five different genres simultaneously.

“When a frame can be conjured from a prompt and dressed up as lived experience, it cheapens the entire craft.”







As an ode to his online moniker, he defined what makes a location “worth a shot”, emphasizing that the subject and culture take precedence over the scenery itself. He illustrated this with examples like a quiet moment with a girl on a balcony in Malana or finding a unique reflection of camels in the Nubra Valley. To them, the location provides the raw material, but Sunny’s perspective is what creates the final frame, whether he are visiting a new festival or returning to a familiar city like Varanasi for the hundredth time.

The conversation then turned to the balance between aesthetics and storytelling for modern audiences— pointing to the importance and changing engagement dynamics presented by social media, especially Instagram. Sunny shared that he relies on a well-developed visual taste centered on clean, uncluttered compositions and geometric symmetry. To engage viewers with short attention spans, he utilizes the carousel format on social media, often pairing images with text to guide the audience through a journey. This approach intentionally asks for more time from the viewer but offers a deeper narrative experience in return.

Doubling down, regarding the impact of social media on the craft, Sunny acknowledged a profound shift in how images are composed. The prevalence of vertical screens has changed his natural instincts, making vertical frames as common in his work as landscapes. Furthermore, the rise of short-form video has turned photographers into hybrid creators who must capture moments for both still and motion formats simultaneously to satisfy platform algorithms.

The role of mobile phones was highlighted as a foundational element of his career. Having started with a basic phone during college, Sunny believes that developing an eye for composition is more important than





owning expensive gear. In his current professional kit, the phone serves as a primary tool for video content and remains a vital backup for capturing unexpected moments when a larger camera is not at hand.

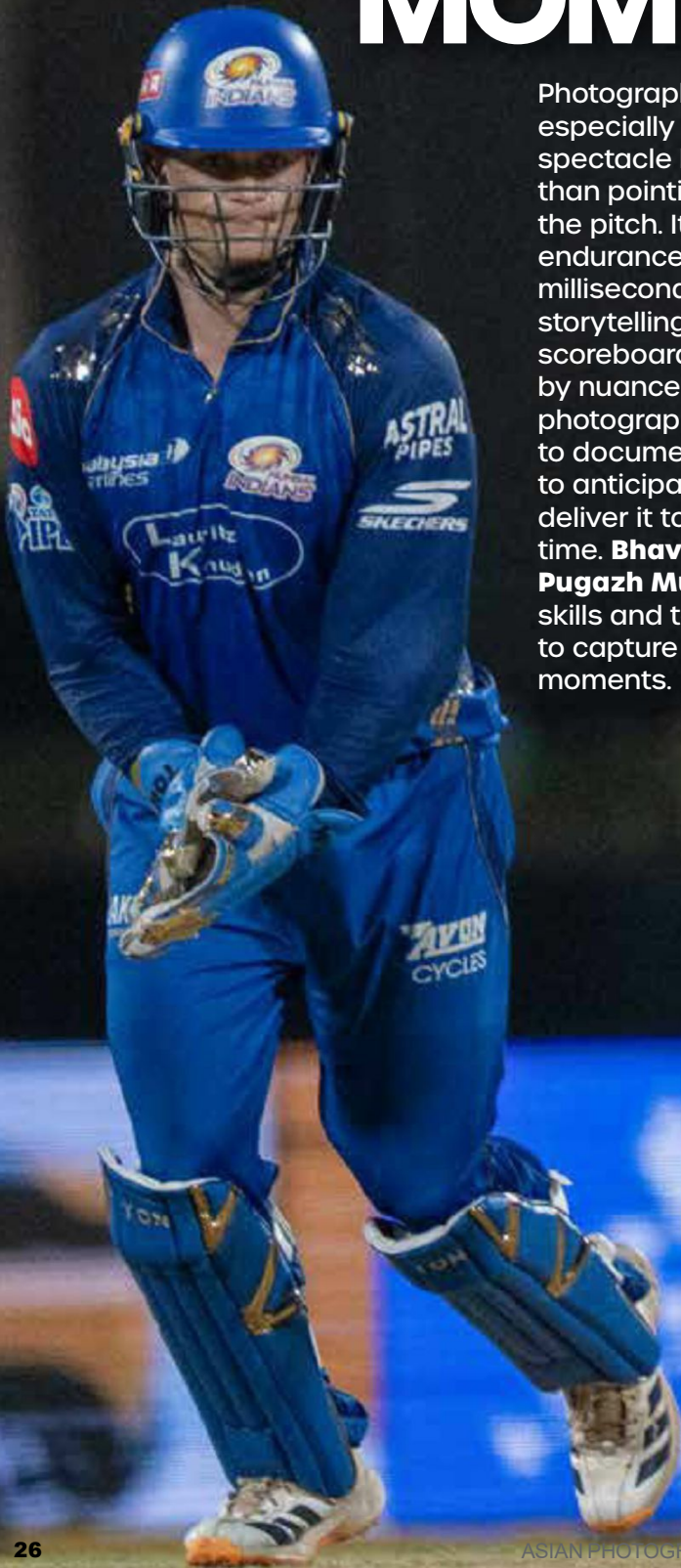
When asked about what is no longer worth a shot: AI-generated images passed off as authentic travel photography. While he admitted to utilising AI as a tool sometimes, in other contexts, he argued that the essence of travel photography lies in the physical effort of “being there”. The long drives, the high altitudes, and the wait for the perfect light all contributed to the value of a photograph made. He expressed that presenting a synthetic image as a lived experience cheapens the craft and called for greater honesty and labelling within the medium.

Reflecting on his greatest learning experiences, Sunny offered three key pieces of advice for fellow travellers: prioritise conversations with locals to find hidden stories, travel with a light gear setup to remain mobile and approachable, and always practice responsible tourism. He recounted a recent experience in Ladakh where a simple invitation for tea provided more meaningful content than a full day of scouting.

TEXT: ANIRUDH IYER

CAPTURING CRICKET'S BIGGEST MOMENTS

Photographing cricket—especially a high-octane spectacle like the IPL—is far more than pointing a long lens at the pitch. It is a test of instinct, endurance and precision, where milliseconds define success and storytelling goes beyond the scoreboard. In a sport driven by nuance and emotion, the photographer's role is not just to document the action, but to anticipate it, interpret it and deliver it to the world in real time. **Bhavya Desai** spoke to **Pugazh Murugan** about the skills and techniques needed to capture crickets' biggest moments.





To shoot cricket at the highest level, particularly a tournament as expansive as the IPL, requires a combination of passion, access, anticipation and sheer physical stamina. Accreditation is the first gatekeeper and Pugazh says that without it, you simply don't have a seat at the table. But access alone isn't enough. The real challenge begins with understanding the game at a granular level: reading pitch behaviour, tracking player form, and interpreting the flow of a match as it unfolds.

Every game carries its own rhythm, and a photographer who fails to anticipate it will always find themselves a fraction too late. Add to that the physical demands—long hours on your feet, heavy gear slung across your shoulders, and an unbroken focus that stretches across innings—and it becomes clear that this is as much endurance sport as it is creative pursuit.

The IPL, however, is not just cricket—it is truly a theatre and cinema. The job extends beyond capturing boundaries and wickets. It involves documenting the charged atmosphere of the crowd, the quiet tension in a player's expression, the frenzy of celebrations, and even the presence of celebrities

that elevate the spectacle. In such an environment, standing out becomes a challenge in itself. Most photographers, restricted by similar positions and predictable angles, end up producing nearly identical frames.

The key to differentiation lies in thinking beyond the obvious. Rather than chasing only the ball, the focus shifts to building layers within an image—foreground, background and context working together. Light becomes a deliberate tool, not an afterthought. Shooting wide when others are tight, and more importantly, shifting attention from pure action to raw emotion, can transform an image from routine to remarkable. It is in moments of tension, disappointment, relief, and unguarded reactions that audiences find a deeper connection.

Of course, none of this is possible without the right tools. In fast-paced sports photography, there is no room for compromise. A minimum setup includes two reliable camera bodies, a 70–200mm f/2.8 for versatility, and a 400mm or 600mm lens—non-negotiable for cricket. Add to that fast memory cards and backup batteries, because missing a moment due to technical limitations is simply unacceptable. This is where the often-repeated phrase—“it's the photographer, not the gear”—falls short.







In sports, gear and skill are inseparable. High-end equipment provides the capability to capture critical moments, but without experience and timing, even the best gear is ineffective. Conversely, skill without the right equipment will still leave gaps. The reality is simple: gear enables, skill delivers.

A single match can generate anywhere between 2,000 to 5,000 images, yet only a fraction—perhaps 50 to 100—are truly usable. This highlights a fundamental truth: volume does not equal quality. What matters is efficiency, particularly in post-production. In sports photography, speed is everything. Relevance is measured in seconds, not hours.

Tools like Photo Mechanic have become industry staples because they allow photographers to handle high volumes of images with precision and speed. During intense phases of play, photographers may shoot up to 150–200 frames in a single over. In the brief window that follows—perhaps during a bowler change—they immediately begin culling, selecting the strongest 15–20 frames, applying minimal edits, adding accurate captions, and transmitting them via FTP. These

“Distribution is everything. If your images don’t reach global platforms, you stay stuck locally no matter how good you are.”

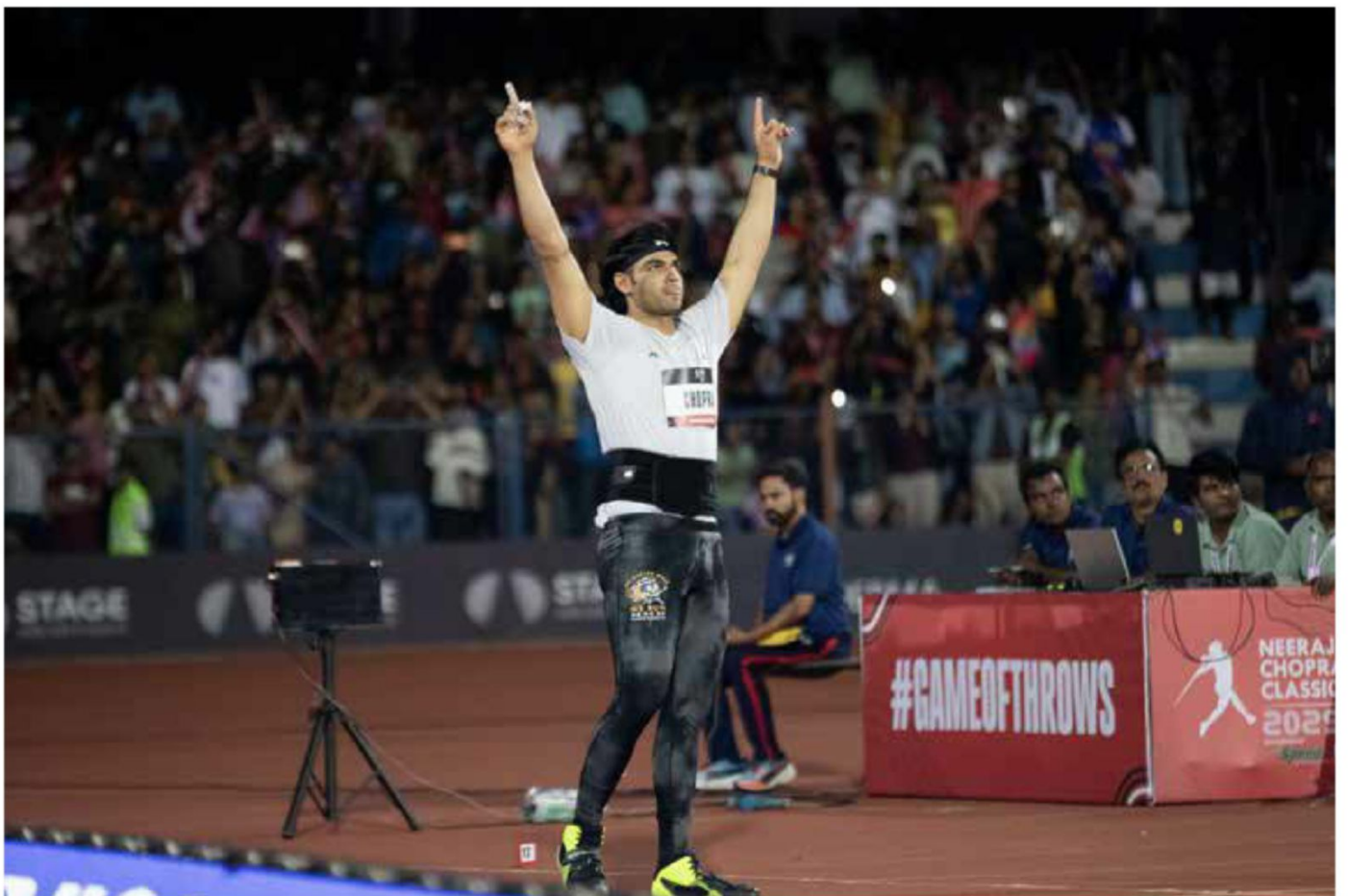
images often go live while the match is still in progress, underscoring the importance of real-time storytelling. Over-editing or delays are luxuries that the format does not permit.

The difference between an average sports photographer and an exceptional one often lies in the ability to anticipate rather than react. Beginners tend to operate reactively, responding to moments after they occur, which inevitably leads to missed opportunities. With experience, this evolves into a predictive instinct. Photographers begin to read body language, sense pressure points in the game, and understand when a pivotal moment is about to unfold.

The best images are rarely a product of luck; they are the result of informed anticipation.

Supporting this is a mental checklist that guides coverage throughout the match—wickets, celebrations, player reactions, moments of pressure, crowd dynamics, and, where possible, glimpses from the dressing room. Without this framework, it becomes easy to miss the broader narrative of the game.







For many, the journey into sports photography begins with a simple fascination. A love for sport—whether playing it or consuming it—often lays the foundation. Early exposure to powerful sports imagery, whether through newspapers or global events like the Olympics, can ignite a deeper interest in visual storytelling. Over time, this evolves into a professional pursuit, shaped by discipline and experience.

Certain athletes, too, leave a lasting impression through the lens. Players like MS Dhoni embody composure, where even stillness carries narrative weight. Virat Kohli brings an unmatched intensity; his expressions and movements charged with energy in every frame. Meanwhile, Rohit Sharma offers a visual elegance—his technique translating into balanced, aesthetically pleasing compositions. What sets them apart is not just their performance, but their ability to communicate emotion and character through body language—an invaluable quality for any photographer.

From a commercial standpoint, sports photography is not a shortcut to quick earnings. It is a demanding field where revenue streams are diverse but competitive. Income typically comes from agencies, editorial assignments, brand collaborations, and image licensing. However, one of the

biggest misconceptions is that shooting high-profile matches alone is enough. In reality, growth depends on volume and visibility.

Starting with local matches, school tournaments, or even niche sports builds both experience and a body of work. Consistent uploading, smart use of platforms like Instagram, and effective tagging and distribution are essential. In today's landscape, creating strong images is only half the battle—the other half is ensuring they are seen. Without global reach, even the best work risks remaining unnoticed.

Ultimately, sports photography is a discipline that rewards preparation, instinct and relentless effort. It demands not just technical proficiency, but an understanding of the game, an eye for emotion, and the ability to deliver under pressure. In a world where every moment is fleeting, the photographer's job is to ensure that the ones that matter are never missed.

MOST IMPACTFUL TRAVEL PHOTOS OF RECENT YEARS

In recent years, travel photography has undergone a profound metamorphosis. No longer content with the “postcard perfect” aesthetic of the early digital era, the most impactful images of recent years have leaned into the complexities of a changing world. We have moved from a period of global stillness into one of frantic reconnection, and the photography reflects this shift—balancing the raw beauty of the natural world with the urgent narratives of environmental flux and cultural resilience. These images do more than document a location; they capture the *“genius loci”*—the spirit of a place—while often challenging our perceptions of what it means to be a traveller in the modern age. From the frozen reaches of the Arctic to the rhythmic ceremonies of the Mediterranean, the following collection represents the pinnacle of visual storytelling from the last five years, serving as a testament to the power of the still image to bridge the gap between the familiar and the far-flung.

The Silent Vigil, Zamora

This seemingly-haunting image by Athanasios Maloukos captures the intersection of ancient faith and architectural grandeur set in Spain. The composition uses the vast, empty space of the plaza to emphasise the solitary nature of the penitent’s journey, creating a sense of timelessness that transcends the 21st century. The stark contrast between the dark, flowing robes and the pale stone of the cathedral highlights the solemnity of the ritual. Maloukos’ work in 2026 has been praised for its ability to strip away the “touristic” veneer of European festivals, instead focusing on the deep-seated psychological and spiritual weight of tradition. It serves as a powerful reminder of how travel photography can capture the intangible—the weight of history and the silence of devotion. This work won the top spot at the Travel Photographer of the Year awards as well.



Photo: Athanasios Maloukos

Ghost of the Crater, Tanzania

Dana Allen's "Travel Image of the Year" for 2025 is a masterclass in texture and atmosphere. By choosing a tight, monochrome frame, Allen removes the distractions of the savanna, forcing the viewer to confront the sheer scale and ancient texture of the elephant's skin. The dust acts as a natural veil, giving the animal a spectral, almost prehistoric quality. This image was captured during a period of intense drought in East Africa, adding a layer of environmental poignancy to its visual beauty. It represents a shift toward "intimate wildlife travel", where the goal is not just to see the animal, but to feel its presence and the fragility of its habitat. The photograph remains one of the most shared and discussed images of the decade for its raw, emotional impact.



Photo: Dana Allen

He Looks to the Heavens, British Columbia

Jacque Matechuk's 2023 award-winning photograph breaks the "vicious predator" trope often associated with bear photography. Instead, it offers a portrait of vulnerability and quietude. The bear's upward gaze and the soft, dappled light of the Great Bear Rainforest create a moment of profound connection. For many travellers and photographers, this image became a symbol of the "slow travel" movement—the idea of sitting with nature long enough for it to reveal its gentler side. Matechuk's technical precision in capturing the moisture on the bear's fur and the clarity of its eye brings the viewer into the damp, mossy heart of the Canadian wilderness, making it a landmark piece in modern conservation photography.



Photo: Jacque Matechuk

The Anthropocene Illusion, Various Locations

Zed Nelson's "Photographer of the Year" series for 2025, *The Anthropocene Illusion*, is perhaps the most critical travel series of recent years. It documents our increasingly simulated relationship with the natural world. One standout image depicts tourists in a temperature-controlled indoor dome, viewing a "waterfall" that is entirely mechanical. Nelson's work is a stark departure from traditional travel photography; it asks the viewer to question the authenticity of their own experiences. By documenting the "theatre" of modern tourism, Nelson highlights how we often destroy the very things we travel to see, replacing them with sanitised versions. It is an uncomfortable, essential collection that has sparked nationwide debates on the ethics of the travel industry in the mid-2020s.



Photo: Zed Nelson



Photo: Olivier Unia

Tbourida La Chute, Morocco

While many photographers focus on the synchronised firing of rifles during Morocco's Tbourida, Olivier Unia chose to capture the danger and chaos that lies beneath the spectacle. This 2025 image is a visceral explosion of energy. The rider is frozen mid-air, a moment of extreme physical vulnerability amidst a celebration of strength and heritage. The image captures the grit of the Moroccan desert and the intensity of a tradition that refuses to be tamed for the sake of tourism. Unia's ability to find clarity in the midst of such high-speed movement makes this one of the most technically impressive travel photos of recent years, emphasising that travel is often as much about risk as it is about relaxation.

The Red Dunes of Ahaggar, Algeria

Marsel van Oosten is known for his impeccable sense of scale, and this 2025 National Geographic feature image is no exception. The Ahaggar Mountains and the surrounding Saharan dunes are among the most remote places on Earth, and Van Oosten captures their alien beauty with clinical precision. The lone human figure provides the necessary scale to understand the immense power of the desert landscape. The play of light and shadow on the dune's edge creates a geometric abstraction that borders on fine art. This photograph has been instrumental in putting Algeria back on the map for adventurous travellers, showcasing a region that remains one of the world's last great wildernesses.



Photo: Marsel Van Oosten



Photo: Justin Foulkes

Twin Peaks of Uummannaq, Greenland

Justin Foulkes' 2025 image from Greenland captures the stark, beautiful reality of life in the high Arctic. The composition is classic yet powerful, using the sled dogs—an essential part of Inuit culture—to ground the dramatic geological features of the background. The cool, monochromatic palette of blues and whites emphasises the frigid environment. As the Arctic changes rapidly due to climate shift, images like this serve as vital records of a way of life that is inextricably linked to the ice. Foulkes avoids the “doom-and-gloom” narrative, choosing instead to highlight the enduring dignity and aesthetic harmony of the Greenlandic landscape.



Photo: Karolina Wiercigroch

The Road to Laya, Bhutan

Karolina Wiercigroch's 2025 photograph captures the literal and metaphorical "ascent" that defines the Bhutanese travel experience. Laya is a place of myth and isolation, and Wiercigroch uses the fog to create a sense of mystery and transition. The image focuses on the journey rather than the destination, a theme that has resonated deeply with a post-pandemic audience seeking meaningful, difficult-to-reach experiences. The soft lighting and the vibrant colours of the traditional Bhutanese dress against the muted tones of the mountainside create a painterly effect. It is an image that celebrates the physical effort of travel and the reward of reaching the world's "hidden" corners.

The Mushroom Isles of Wayag, Indonesia

Reference: A high-altitude aerial shot of the Wayag Islands in Raja Ampat, showing the distinctive mushroom-shaped limestone karsts scattered across vibrant turquoise water.

Simon Urwin's aerial photography of Raja Ampat in 2025 redefined how we view Indonesia's vast archipelago. Wayag is often cited as the "Holy Grail" of tropical landscapes, and Urwin's perspective highlights the incredible biodiversity and geological uniqueness of the region. The clarity of the water allows the viewer to see the coral reefs surrounding the islands, underscoring the importance of marine conservation. The image is a celebration of colour and form, using the "birds-eye" view to turn a landscape into a vibrant mosaic. It remains a quintessential travel image of the decade, representing the peak of the "blue mind" travel trend where travellers seek out the restorative power of pristine water.



Photo: Simon Urwin



Photo: Frederico Figueiredo Cerdeira

The Quiet Below the Storm, Fiji

Frederico Figueiredo Cerdeira's 2026 image is a masterclass in perspective. While most surf photography focuses on the athlete on top of the wave, Cerdeira takes us into the "impact zone" below. The image is a study in monochromatic blues and the chaotic beauty of water under pressure. The surfer, silhouetted against the frothing surface, appears small and graceful against the raw power of the ocean. This image represents the "adventure-documentary" style that has become popular in the last few years, where the photographer is just as much of an athlete as the subject. It captures the hidden, silent side of one of the world's most famous surf breaks, offering a moment of zen amidst the violence of the sea.



The Patagonian Pursuit, Chile

Kevin Yu Shi's 2025 action shot is a rare look at the apex predator of the Andes in motion. Captured after days of tracking in the harsh Patagonian wind, the photograph shows the raw mechanics of survival. The tension in the puma's body and the panicked flight of the guanaco create a cinematic narrative. Shi's work is emblematic of the "patience-driven" wildlife photography that has flourished as travel to Patagonia has increased. It reminds the traveller that these landscapes are not just scenery, but active, high-stakes arenas of life and death. The golden "hour" light typical of the region adds a warm, dramatic glow to a scene of intense natural drama.

Photo: Kevin Yu Shi

The Eye of Iceland, Snæfellsnes

Sebastián Tan's "Your Shot" winner from 2026 is a clever reimagining of one of the most photographed locations on Earth. By finding a unique "cave" perspective through a narrow basalt opening, Tan managed to make a familiar landmark feel entirely new. The juxtaposition of the waterfall's motion and the ancient, static mountain provides a sense of geological time. This image has been widely discussed for its "illusion" of a cave, proving that even in the age of over-tourism, a creative eye can still find a fresh story to tell. It serves as an inspiration for travel photographers to look beyond the established tripod holes and seek out their own unique frame.



Photo: Sebastián Tan



Photo: Mohammed Murad

The Urban Fox, Kuwait City

Mohammed Murad's work on urban wildlife in the Middle East has been a revelation in recent years. This 2025 image perfectly encapsulates the "collision" of worlds—the ancient inhabitant of the desert meeting the encroaching modern city. The contrast between the fox's sharp silhouette and the glittering, artificial lights of the metropolis is a poignant metaphor for the loss of wild spaces. Murad's photography often explores these "fringe" areas where nature and city life overlap, a theme that has become increasingly relevant to travel photographers as urban centres expand. It is a quiet, thoughtful image that demands the viewer consider the future of the landscapes they visit.

The Yamal Crossing, Siberia

Sara Bardotti's documentation of the Nenets' migration across the Yamal Peninsula is a masterclass in adventure photography. Captured during the brutal Siberian winter, this image captures the sheer scale of a reindeer herd as it moves across the frozen tundra. The composition emphasises the symbiotic relationship between the nomadic people and their animals, set against an unforgiving, white-out horizon. Bardotti's work in 2025 was celebrated for its ability to convey the physical sensory experience of the cold—the frost on the reindeer's breath and the muffled silence of the snow—making it a definitive record of one of the world's most extreme human journeys. It stands as a testament to the endurance of indigenous cultures in an increasingly modern world.



Photo: Sara Bardotti



Photo: Rahsan Firtina

Ordinary Moments, Hanoi

Rahsan Firtina's 2025 photograph from Hanoi serves as a powerful reminder that travel photography is often most impactful when it looks at the mundane. By capturing a group of retired colonels engaged in a spirited game of table tennis at a local veterans club, Firtina strips away the exoticism often associated with Southeast Asian travel. The image is full of movement and genuine human emotion, documenting a slice of life that remains largely invisible to the average tourist. It argues that the "extraordinary" isn't always found in a landscape or a monument, but in the enduring spirit and community of the people who call a place home long after the history books have moved on.

The Blue Ice, Iceland

Paul Sansome's "The Blue Ice" is a stark, monochromatic study of the Icelandic coast that rejects the saturated "fire and ice" tropes common in modern travel media. Captured in the remote Norðurfjörður region, the image focuses on the raw, jagged textures of the shoreline and the deep, visceral blues of the Arctic water. Sansome's 2025 Landscape Portfolio win was predicated on this ability to find beauty in the desolate and the cold. There are no dramatic sunsets or Northern Lights here; instead, the image relies on pure form and atmosphere to convey the lonely, majestic power of the North Atlantic, cementing its place as one of the most technically refined and honest landscapes of recent years.



Photo: Paul Sansome

Framing the Future

As we look back at these, a clear pattern emerges: the "impact" of a photo is no longer measured solely by its beauty, but by its ability to provoke thought and foster empathy. These 16 images, and the photographers behind them, have navigated a world in flux, capturing moments of profound stillness, extreme danger, and enduring tradition. They remind us that the role of the travel photographer is not just to observe, but to translate the world for those who cannot see it for themselves. As technology continues to evolve—with AI and digital manipulation becoming more prevalent—these grounded, authentic moments of human and natural truth become even more valuable. They are the anchors of our collective memory, ensuring that even as the world changes, the spirit of discovery remains captured in the frame.

TEXT: ANIRUDH IYER





HOW TO TAKE GOOD SOLO TRAVEL PHOTOS ON YOUR PHONE

Travel photography has changed. You no longer need a DSLR, a tripod bag the size of a suitcase, or a stranger yelling “*One more!*” while you awkwardly pose in front of a monument. Today, some of the best travel photographs are quietly self-shot on phones—natural, cinematic, and almost impossible to tell were taken solo.

The secret isn't expensive gear. It's understanding angles, timing, framing, and how to make the camera disappear from the process altogether.

Here's how to take better travel photos alone using just your smartphone—without making them look staged.

Stop Posing for the Camera

The biggest giveaway in self-shot travel photos is stiffness. Most people freeze the moment the timer starts counting down.

Instead of posing, give yourself movement.

Walk slowly through the frame. Adjust your backpack. Look at a storefront. Tie your shoelace. Sip coffee. Turn around naturally. Motion creates realism, and realism always photographs better than forced smiles.

The goal is to make the image feel observed rather than captured.

A simple trick: never look directly at the camera unless the frame is intentionally portrait-focused. Looking away instantly makes the image feel more editorial and less touristy.

Use Your Phone Like a Hidden Camera

Modern smartphones are built for this style of

photography. Wide lenses, stabilisation, portrait modes, and computational photography make solo shooting far easier than it used to be.

The best setup is often the simplest:

1. Your phone
2. A stable surface
3. A timer
4. Burst mode or video capture

Forget giant tripods unless you're shooting long exposures. A tiny pocket tripod or even everyday objects work better for natural-looking photos. Lean your phone against a water bottle, a café cup, a rock, etc.

Some of the strongest travel images come from improvised setups because they place the camera at believable eye-level angles instead of awkward "tripod height".

The Angle Matters More Than the Location

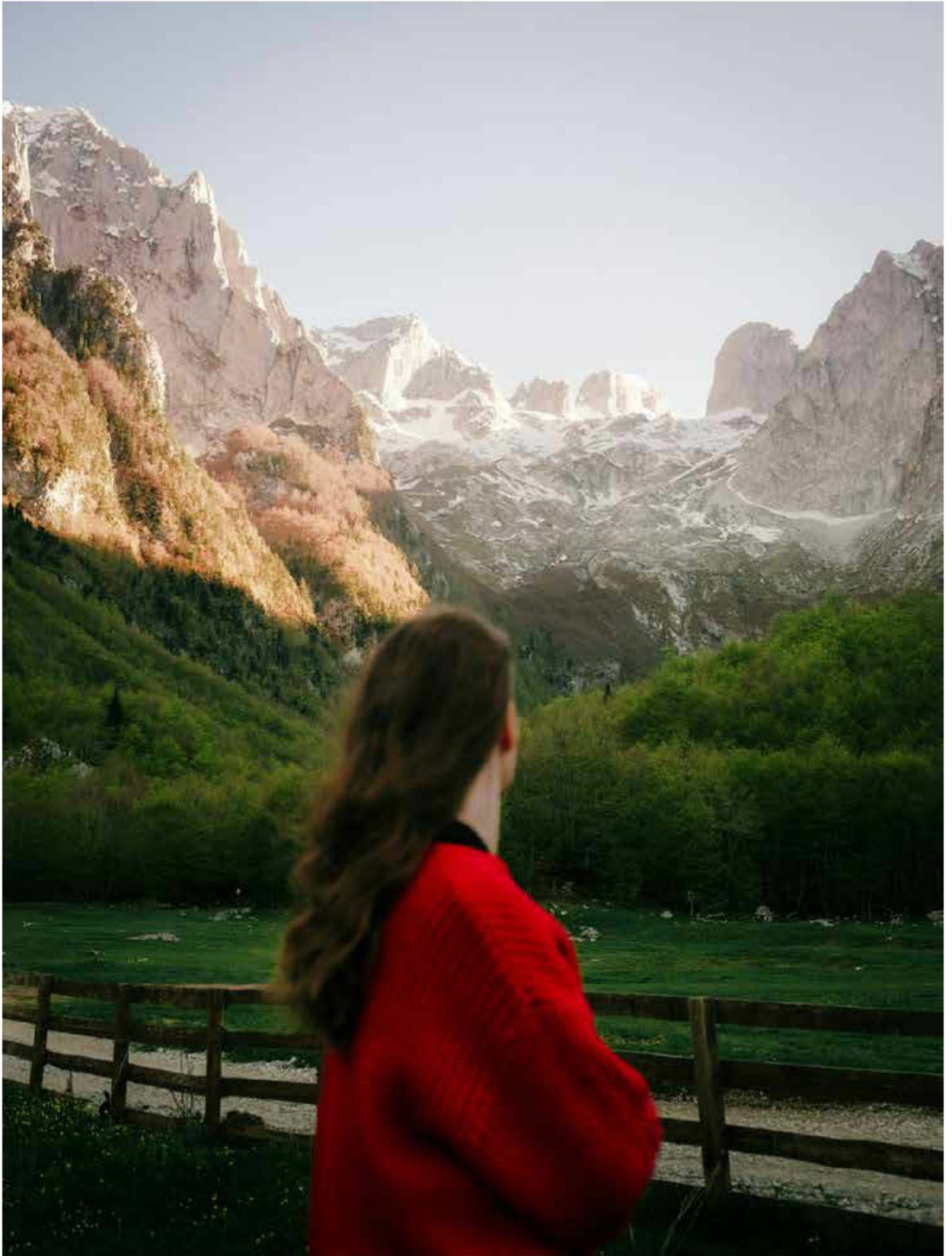
Most travel photos fail because the angle is boring, not because the location is.

Before taking the shot, ask:

1. What happens in the foreground?
2. Is there depth?
3. Can layers tell the story better?

Instead of standing directly in front of landmarks, try shooting through doorways, from inside cafés, between plants





or market stalls, using reflections in mirrors or puddles, or with moving crowds in the foreground. These layers create immersion. They make viewers feel present in the scene rather than just looking at a postcard. Low angles also work surprisingly well for solo travel shots because they make environments feel larger and more cinematic. Place the phone lower than chest level and let architecture or landscapes dominate the frame. When creating for yourself, don't worry about trends, or copying an idea you saw online, just do you.

Master the 3-Second Rule

Most people hit the timer and panic.

Don't. Use a 3-second timer for casual movement shots and a 10-second timer only when you need distance. The shorter timer keeps energy natural because you're not overthinking the pose.

An even better hack: shoot video instead of photos. Record a 10–15 second clip while casually moving through the scene, then extract frames later. Modern phones shoot high-resolution video sharp enough for social media and even magazine-style layouts. This method changes everything because movement looks infinitely more authentic than frozen poses.

You stop "taking photos" and start behaving naturally in front of the camera.

Early Morning Beats Golden Hour Sometimes

Everyone talks about golden hour, but solo travellers often benefit more from early mornings.

Why? Fewer crowds, cleaner backgrounds, easier phone placement, less pressure and lastly, softer directional light. A quiet street at 7 AM often looks more cinematic than a crowded sunset location filled with people taking identical photographs. Cities feel calmer, and your photos instantly look more intentional.

Use Props That Belong in the Scene

Props only work when they feel natural to the environment.

Good travel props:

- Coffee cups
- Maps
- Books
- Umbrellas
- Jackets
- Scooters or bicycles
- Shopping bags
- Flowers from local markets

Bad travel props:

- Anything obviously carried only for Instagram
- Oversized accessories unrelated to the location
- Random aesthetic objects with no story value





Props should support the image, not become the image. The best self-shot travel photos usually capture someone interacting with a place rather than performing for the camera.

Portrait Mode Isn't Always Your Friend

Smartphone portrait modes can look incredible—until the software aggressively blurs half your hair or mistakes a building edge for your shoulder. For travel photography, standard wide-angle shots often feel more immersive because they preserve the environment.

Use portrait mode selectively:

- Café portraits
- Close-ups
- Night shots with lights
- Street portraits

But for storytelling travel frames, keep the surroundings visible. The place matters as much as the person.

Remote Shutter Are Underrated

A tiny Bluetooth shutter can completely change solo photography. It lets you trigger photos discreetly, avoid running into frame, shoot naturally while walking, and take multiple frames quickly. The biggest advantage is psychological. You stop worrying about the timer and start focusing on the moment. Many creators hide the remote in their palm or pocket while shooting.

Edit for Mood, Not Perfection

Travel photos become memorable because of atmosphere, not flawless skin or oversaturated colours. When editing on mobile:

- Lower highlights slightly
- Add mild contrast
- Keep skin tones natural
- Avoid excessive sharpening
- Don't overuse HDR
- Maintain consistent tones across images

Apps like Snapseed, Lightroom Mobile, VSCO are more than enough for professional-looking edits. The goal is enhancement, not transformation.

The Best Travel Photos Feel Lived-In

Perfect photos are forgettable. Personal photos stay with people, so leave small imperfections in like wind-blown hair, motion blur, crooked streets, passing strangers, rain, shadows, and grain. Those details make the image believable. At its best, travel photography isn't about proving you went somewhere. It's about making someone feel like they were there with you. And sometimes, the most natural-looking travel photos happen when nobody else is holding the camera at all.

A photograph of a Venetian canal with historic buildings and a boat. The buildings are multi-story, with ornate facades and red-tiled roofs. The water is calm, reflecting the buildings and the sky. A boat is visible in the foreground, and other boats are in the distance. The sky is a clear, light blue.

THE ART OF POST-PROCESSING TRAVEL PHOTOS

The digital darkroom is no longer just a space for correction; it is an arena for reimagination. In the modern landscape of photography, the "SOOC" (Straight Out Of Camera) purist movement has evolved into a more nuanced understanding of post-processing as the essential second half of the creative act. Travel photography is now less about documenting a location and more about communicating the atmosphere of the journey. Whether capturing the hazy nostalgia of a Mediterranean summer or the stark, moody silence of a Nordic winter, the way an image is processed defines the narrative.



1. The Cinematic Teal & Orange Evolution

Originally popularised by Hollywood, this style remains a definitive pillar in travel photography. By shifting blues toward cyan and warm tones toward orange, photographers create a colour contrast that makes skin tones stand out and landscapes feel polished. Current trends have moved away from heavy saturation toward a “washed cinematic” look—lowering the blacks and adding subtle grain to mimic 35mm film stock.

Key Adjustments: HSL slider shifts (Blues to -20 Hue), Split Toning (Warm highlights, Cool shadows), and a slight lift in the Blacks on the Tone Curve.

2. Dark & Moody (The Low-Key Narrative)

This style thrives in adverse weather conditions. Instead of fighting fog or rain, post-processing is used to emphasise these elements. This approach is not simply about making a photo dark; it is about selective lighting. By crushing the shadows and utilising “Dodge and Burn” techniques, the viewer’s eye is led to a single point of interest—a lone hiker, a glowing window, or a misty mountain peak. Orange & teal became a worldwide sensation after photographer Sam Kolder popularised the look through his pictures and storytelling.

Key Adjustments: Global Exposure decrease, Radial Filters to highlight subjects, and desaturating greens and yellows to emphasise a somber mood.

3. The Minimalist Pastel (High-Key Mastery)

On the opposite end of the spectrum is the “Light and Airy” minimalist style, often utilised in coastal or architectural travel photography. This style relies on intentional overexposure and “blowing out” the whites to create a dreamlike, ethereal quality. It is particularly effective for destinations with naturally bright elements, such as the white-washed buildings of the Mediterranean or the turquoise waters of the tropics.

Key Adjustments: Increased Exposure, decreased Clarity (to soften textures), and Whites pushed toward the upper limit of the histogram.

4. Analogue Nostalgia (The Film Simulation Trend)

With the resurgence of film-inspired aesthetics, post-processing often involves “degrading” the digital perfection of modern sensors. This involves adding artificial grain, green-tinted shadows (typical of vintage Fujifilm stocks), and “halation”—the soft red glow around bright edges. This technique makes travel photos feel like a memory rather than a high-definition recording.

Key Adjustments: Grain amount 25+, Green tint in the shadow tint slider, and softening the Sharpening tool.

5. Vibrant Realism (The New Standard)

For travel journalism, “Vibrant Realism” is the industry







standard. The goal is to make the photograph reflect how the human eye remembers the scene, rather than how the camera sensor flatly recorded it. Since sensors often flatten the dynamic range, this style uses advanced HDR-like techniques to bring back detail in the sky while keeping the foreground lush and saturated.

Key Adjustments: Highlights -100, Shadows +50, Vibrance +15. The “Dehaze” tool is used sparingly to restore sky detail without introducing heavy artifacts.

The Ethics of the Edit

As these styles are mastered, a question of ethics arises regarding the extent of manipulation. The industry currently leans toward a “Spatial Integrity” rule: colours and light are subject to the artist’s whim, but the physical reality of the landscape should remain intact. While AI tools allow for sky replacement or the removal of entire structures with a single click, a travel photo must remain grounded in the reality of the location to retain its soul. The art of post-processing is found in the balance between internal vision and external truth.



Final Thoughts

Post-processing is the final brushstroke on your canvas. It is the bridge between a raw file and a photograph, which is an emotion. Whether you choose the cinematic drama of a city at night or the soft, pastel hues of a morning at the beach, remember that your edit should serve the story. A great travel photo doesn't just show us where you went; it tells us how it felt to be there. As you sit down at your workstation after your next trip, don't just move sliders; ask yourself: What is the story I want to tell?

OnePlus Nord Buds 4 Pro Review

OnePlus' Nord brand Identity became popular by delivering a "flagship killer" in the midrange smartphone category-which they're replicating in the True Wireless Earbuds space now. Meet the Nord Buds 4 Pro - a pair of TWS earbuds coming at ₹4K, continuing to innovate in this competitive space. Let's put this to the test and see how much they've improved upon the previous ones.



What's in the Box

- Case & earphones
- USB-C cable
- Extra eartips
- Paperwork & Sticker

Look Body & Feel

The Nord Buds 4 Pro refines the design from the 3 Pro. The build is matte plastic, with identical stems and eartips, and the case is slightly pebble shaped, also made out of matte plastic. The earbuds weigh 4.4 grams each, disappearing in your ears once

you wear them. The fit is comfortable, although some users may feel them to be a little bit looser than the last version-regardless, they're snug and feel firmer than the Nord Buds 3 Pros.

User Experience

The Nord Buds 4 Pro will feel right

at home if you've used the previous ones. They pair with ease and connect to devices almost instantly (within 1 second)-thanks to BT 6.0 protocol. One major difference due to the new touch interface is that you slide up and down either earbud to change the volume, but tap functionalities still remain - and can

be customized through the Hey Melody app. On OnePlus and Oppo phones, most of these are available inside the phone's bluetooth settings.

One small quirk is that engaging the ANC by long-pressing the touchpad takes a smidge longer as compared to the previous model-something you may get used to with ease. Overall, the improvements to the UX make the earbuds more "invisible"- which is a positive development.

Sound Quality and Noise Cancellation

Audio tuning is where the philosophy changes the most from the Nord Buds 3 Pro-which leaned heavily into boosted bass - the 4 Pro retains the bass emphasis but cleans up the mids and upper frequencies noticeably, giving instruments and vocals more separation. Community feedback repeatedly describes the 4 Pro as sounding clearer and less muddy.

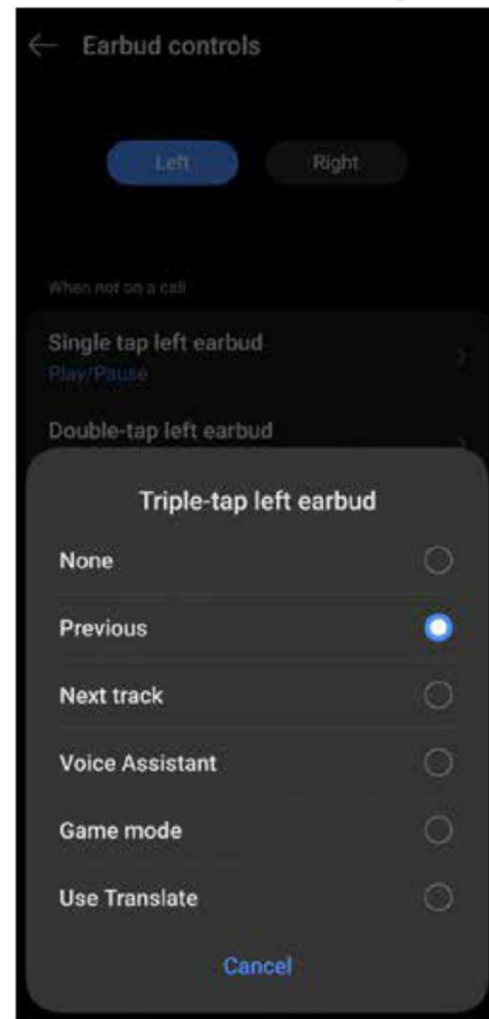
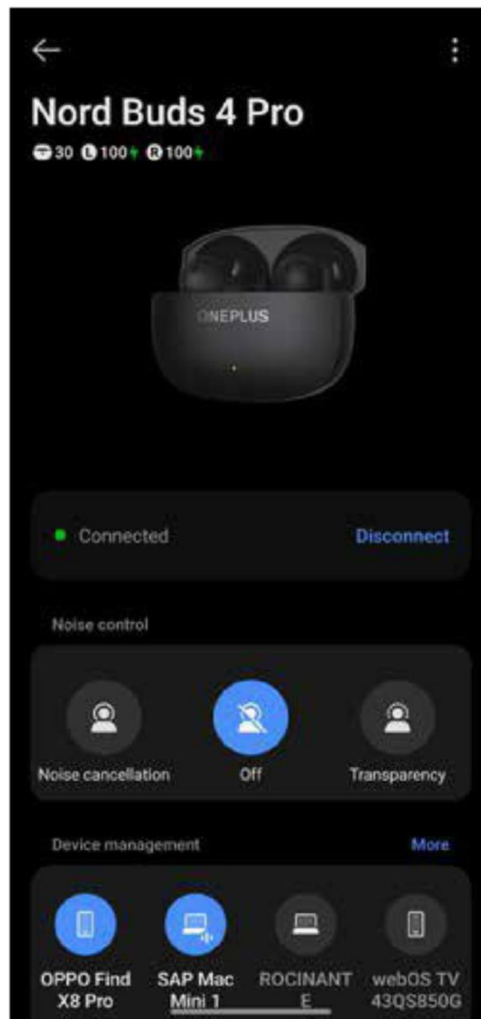
ANC performance also sees a measurable upgrade. The 4 Pro steps up to roughly 55 dB from 49dB in the previous ones with improved adaptive behaviour and better transparency clarity. Wind handling during calls is reportedly improved too. On the flip side, transparency mode sounds more natural this time, making conversations and traffic awareness less artificial.

With a combination of these many features, battery life is an area where the Nord Buds 4 Pro pulls ahead, stretching closer to 54 hours, comfortably lasting through multiple days of continuous use (six hours at a time).

One caveat we'd like to highlight right now is that there are issues with signal dropouts even through pant pockets-something the previous versions didn't have - but can be fixed through a simple software update.

Other Features

The refining continues to the software layer as it is also more mature here. The 4 Pro introduces more adaptive ANC behaviour, better transparency tuning, and higher-quality audio codec support through LHDC 5.0. That means if you use a compatible



OnePlus/Oppo phone, the newer buds can stream at significantly higher bitrate audio.

The software features separate the Nord Buds 4 Pro from other earphones in this space – introducing features like real-time AI language translation using these earbuds-something once-limited to true flagship experiences. However, your experience may vary depending on the brand of phone you use.

Conclusion

The Nord Buds 4 Pro offers a compelling proposition – a mix of semi-premium build quality with some premium features like refined & flatter sound signature and real-time language translation to a pair of TWS earphones priced at ₹4K.

If you're upgrading from your Nord Buds 3 Pro to the 4, you might not be completely enticed due to the

significant change in sound signature - which isn't necessarily a bad thing, but sound preferences are definitely the most subjective of them all.

In everyday use, the Nord Buds 4 Pro feels like a cleaner, more polished version aimed at users who care more about comfort, call quality, and refinement than sheer bass impact, coupled with better ANC and battery life which are outright bonuses. So for a consumer looking towards purchasing a pair without stretching their budget, we'd definitely recommend this pair.

TEXT: ANIRUDH IYER

PHOTO SCAPE

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Name: Ameya Sanjay Punalekar
Camera: Canon 5D Mark IV
Lens: Samyang 14mm f/2.8
Focal Length: 14mm
Shutter Speed: 1/200s
Aperture: f/2.8
ISO: 1600
Instagram ID: ek_sarfira_musafir



Name: Mrinmoy Saha
Camera: Realme P3x 5G
Focal Length: 4 mm
Shutter Speed: 1/1000 sec.
Aperture: f/1.8
ISO: 100
Instagram ID: @shear.frames



Name: Harshal Ram Yojana Surve
Camera: iPhone 13
Focal length: 1.54mm
Aperture: f/2.4
ISO: Auto
Instagram: @harshalsurve



Name: Pankaj Gajwani
Camera: Nikon D750
Lens: 24-120
Focal Length: 40mm
ISO: 400
Aperture: F8
Shutter Speed: 1/250
Instagram ID: @pankajgajwani



Name: Priya Jaganna
Camera: Canon R5 MK 2
Lens: RF 100 500
Focal Length: 151mm
Shutter Speed: 1/3200
Aperture: f 6.3
ISO: 800
Instagram ID: @priya.jaganna



Name: Rajdeep Mehra
Camera & Lens: Nikon Z6II, Nikon NIKKOR Z 24-70mm f/4 S Lens
Focal length: 26mm
Shutter Speed: 1/50
Aperture: f/16
ISO: 160
Instagram ID: rajdeepmehraphotography



Name: Satyam Chaudhary
Camera & Lens: Iphone 15
Focal length: 26mm
Shutter Speed: 1/60
Aperture: f1.6
ISO: 50
Instagram ID: @satyamkasansaar



Name: Sayak Bhattacharjee
Camera & Lens: Nikon Coolpix P950
& 83x Optical Zoom Nikkor Lens.
Focal Length: 4 mm.
Shutter Speed: 1/1250 Sec.
Aperture: 2.8
ISO: 100.
Instagram id: nat.pixs



Name: Shuvajit Chakraborty
Camera & Lens: Lumix S5 Mark
& 50mm prime
Shutter Speed: 1/1250 sec
Aperture: f/2.8
ISO: 100
Instagram ID: @imagistik



Name: Sundar Ganesh
Camera: Zf (Nikon)
Lens: 70 200 MM 2.8 Z mount
Focal length: 200 mm
F number: F/11
Exposure: 1/320
Exposure program: Manual
Exposure bias: 0
ISO: 100
Insta id: sundarfotography

PHOTO MONTAGE

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I'm Shubhodeep Roy, a Kolkata-based documentary photographer whose work explores faith, labour, migration, and human vulnerability through long-term visual storytelling. Photography, for me, has become a way of understanding people and documenting the fragile spaces where identity begins to shift.

The Second Skin is a psychological study of the Gajon festival in Murshidabad, West Bengal. Rooted in Shaivite traditions and associated with devotion, sacrifice, and renewal, the festival transforms the human body into a site of ritual and transcendence. What interested me was not the spectacle of Gajon, but the quieter process of transformation taking place within it.

As the rituals unfold, paint, costume, movement, and performance slowly alter the body and erase familiar identity. Faces fracture into colour and abstraction, while gestures become symbolic. Participants move beyond their everyday selves to inhabit something suspended between the human and the divine.

This series does not attempt to document the festival in its entirety. Instead, it focuses on the psychological threshold where the self begins to dissolve. I was drawn to moments where identity felt unstable—continuously shed, reconstructed, and absorbed into collective belief and ritual.

At the edge of these ceremonies, I remained an observer, witnessing a world that resists easy explanation or visibility. For me, The Second Skin is not simply about ritual performance, but about transformation, disappearance, and the enduring presence of traditions that continue to survive beyond the frame.

Instagram: [@shubhodeeproyn](https://www.instagram.com/shubhodeeproyn)



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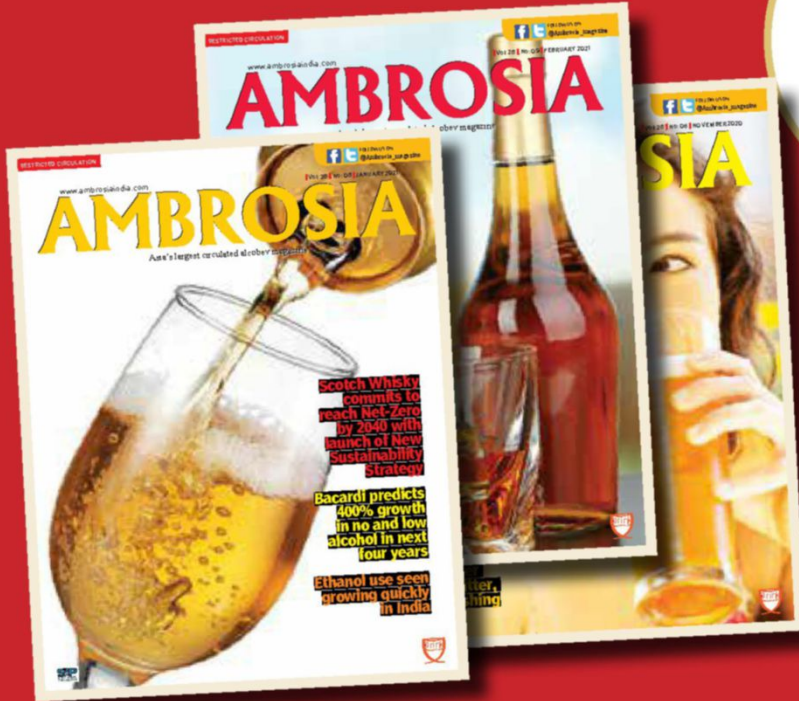
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