

On the road with Nikon

> Photography brings people together and helps forge ties

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In May 2003, Simon and Lisa Thomas left their UK home on their motorcycles to embark on a journey around the globe. Their aim was to circumnavigate the planet, cover all seven continents, set four Guinness Endurance world records, raise money for three charities, and fulfil a lifelong dream.

To date, the husband and wife team have set new standards in the world of extreme motorcycle endurance travel. They have ridden 350,209km through 73 countries of their planned 122, from the most northerly point to the most southerly—wherever possible by motorcycle.

They have also navigated their way through some of the world's most inhospitable regions whilst coping with the diversity of extreme weather climates. Experiencing subzero temperatures when they reached Nordkapp, Norway within the Arctic Circle, and 160,000km later when they reached Ushuaia on the southerly tip of South America.

When Simon and Lisa, who are both in their 40s, set out on their journey, photography was a means of recording their whereabouts and sharing it with their family and friends. Today after eight years, photography has turned from passion to obsession.

Their first Nikon digital single lens reflex (DSLR) was a Nikon D70s which was bought in Argentina five years ago. What drew them to Nikon then?

"It was because the lens and the body looked sexier," says Simon. "The Nikon body was more intuitive and has the easy feel. Also, the manual was so easy to understand that I sorted it in two minutes."

Today, Simon and Lisa own five Nikon cameras, namely the D70s, D300, D90, D3,



In the process of photographing the world, Simon and Lisa have set new standards in extreme motorcycle endurance travel.

Picturesque Golden Temple in Amritsar, India.

and Coolpix P300. The lenses, on the other hand, were picked up secondhand along their journey.

Simon says he once bought two lenses for US\$350, with one bearing big scratches. He also made an impulsive buy with the Nikkor 80:400mm VR lens which was huge but impressive-looking.

Although not suitable for their biking journey, it was that particular lens that got them into places they otherwise wouldn't have access to. One experience was in Nepal where they got to photograph the worship of a deity because they were thought to be press photographers and were ushered to where the media were seated. And all because of the lens Simon was carrying!

The inseparable twosome understandably believe that photography brings people together; they have forged many friendships and connections along the way, they say. "It grabs attention when you have a DSLR around your neck," Lisa says.

"We have encountered easy passage through borders with our camera where some of the officers would voluntarily pose for a photograph. It creates a bond."

However there is also a downside like when some people were not too receptive to being photographed. "As a photographer, we always ask permission to take a photograph, and in Bolivia, the people immediately say no to our request. This is where a compact camera comes in handy. Our Nikon Coolpix P300 has helped us land spontaneous shots at places that aren't receptive," says Lisa.

The husband and wife were in Malaysia recently and gained exclusive support from Nikon Malaysia.

Lisa says Simon was extremely excited over the SP900 Speedlight and even sleeps with it!

"When a choice comes between lenses and Speedlight, lenses always come first because an investment in a Speedlight is equivalent to fuel and visas into a country. Therefore with this support, we get access to countries and record it faithfully. We want to share the moment with our family and friends, and those who we have not met," says Simon.

He adds that as their journey takes them to less humanised areas, the Nikon battery is fantastic as they can use rechargeable batteries

in the battery grip by recharging them using their motorbikes.

"Our impression of Nikon is that they produce cameras that are designed for photographers. They look at the problems photographers face and solve it," says Simon.

The couple's journey is far from over but many exciting things are in the pipeline for them, it seems. For instance, they hope to hold a photography exhibition of their own someday.

"With our lifestyle, we often see our shots on screen and we have never seen them printed, so it would be nice to have them that way. We'd want to see people's expression when they see our photographs. It would be very rewarding to see their expression," says Lisa.

To get more details of Simon and Lisa's adventures, visit their website at www.2ridetheworld.com, and for information on Nikon log on to www.nikon.com.my



Amendment may backfire

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Although to date, no such claims have surfaced at the tribunal, this is a bad time bomb that is ticking away.

Even before the amendment, "park at your own risk" wasn't an absolute protection for building owners and car park operators.

If there's a case of neglect or wrongdoing by the building owner or car park operator, customers can still take legal action against them.

While the amendment is aimed at "protecting" consumers, it may backfire, for instance, how does a person who claims to have lost his valuables from his car prove the goods were in the vehicle in the first place?

Some building owners and car park operators try to resolve this by getting an insurance policy to cover such eventuality and the result is an increase in parking cost. I was informed that the added cost to providing such insurance is at RM3 to RM4 per car. Is the customer prepared to pay the additional charges?

Building owners and car park operators are only providing a service to customers and patrons, therefore they should not be held responsible as car owners do have their own responsibility.

This should be equated to parking on the roadside where the local council charges for the service.

Richard Chan is a member of the national committee of Fiabci-Malaysia



A picture taken by Simon of a watersport stunt team in action in Mexico.

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