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Shopping for Digital Cameras and Personal Computers

My Favorite Places to Shop...

For Photography: B&H and Adorama. Always check the B&H (www.bhphotovideo.com) and Adorama (www.adorama.com) for pricing and additional technical information on all hardware & software items. I have used mostly B&H for many years and have been extremely pleased with their service and pricing. They are well-stocked and ship fast and inexpensively.

For Windows-based Personal Computers: I have ordered several desktop systems from Dell (www.dell.com) over the years and have been consistently satisfied with the quality and service. You can go online to configure and order your PC, or call them directly. For laptop computers, Toshiba makes excellent ones (www.toshiba.com).

For Apple Macintosh Computers: Apple sells its computers exclusively either through company stores or online at www.apple.com. Both are recommended, but you can test drive the computers by visiting an Apple Store. There is a new Apple Store at Christiana Mall. CompUSA also sells Macintosh, but I find the store personnel not very knowledgeable in this area.

What I Look For in a Point-and-Shoot Digital Camera

Major Brand (*Nikon, Canon, etc.*)

5 Megapixel minimum

Overrides for exposure, focus, etc. (as a photographer, stay away from "auto-everything" cameras)

Traditional exposure controls: exposure compensation, exposure lock, bracketing

Flash overrides - especially slow-synch

Minimal shutter lag

Self-timer (I use in lieu of shutter release for long exposures)

Must take CF Memory cards (for compatibility with my other equipment)

Large 2.5" LCD screen (for my failing eyes!)

On-board histogram display

What I Look For in a Digital SLR Camera

This one is simple --- my sole criteria is compatibility with my inventory of Nikon lenses and accessories. This limits my choice to the Nikon dSLR line (D70, D100, D2X, etc).

Minimum Computer Specifications for the Serious Digital Photographer

Windows-based Personal Computers

Processor: 2.5 GHz Intel Pentium 4 (Pentium M for laptops)

RAM memory: 1 Gb DDR SDRAM (not "shared" with graphics)

Hard Disk Drive: 80 GB @ 7200 RPM

Optical Drive: 48x CD Burner/DVD Burner Combo Drive

Graphics Card: Mid-range ATI or nVidia (high-end more useful for games and video)

Operating System: Windows XP Home

19" LCD Flat Panel Monitor (15" for Laptop)

Apple Macintosh - all models run Mac OS X System Software

Desktop: 20" iMac G5 with 1GB RAM option. Includes an 80GB hard disk drive, CD/DVD burning "SuperDrive", lots of very good bundled software for photo & video.

Laptop: 15" PowerBook G4 with 1.25 GB RAM option. Includes an 80 GB hard disk drive, CD/DVD burning "SuperDrive", lots of very good bundled software for photo & video.

Other Must-Have Hardware

Card Readers - connect to your Computer. Opt for FireWire model if your computer supports it (eg; Macintosh or FireWire interface card for PC).

Extra Camera Memory Cards. Minimum Capacity; 512MB! For data safety limit your capacity to multiple 1GB cards.

Lexar www.lexarmedia.com
Sandisk www.sandisk.com

Monitor Color Profiling and Calibration System. A must-have for serious photographers who want consistent color screen color to match print output.

Spyder2-Plus – www.colorvision.com
Gretag MacBeth Eye-One Display 2 – www.gretamacbeth.com

Graphics Tablets - a must for the Photoshop user. The mouse just does not cut it!

Wacom – www.wacom.com – I recommend the 6"x8" Graphire model.

Digital Photography Image-editing Software - Minimum Requirements
Evaluation Copies Available from the Websites

Adobe Photoshop Elements 3 www.adobe.com
(Windows & Mac)

Digital Asset Management Software - Optional - for Advanced Applications -
Evaluation Copies Available from the Websites

Extensis Portfolio 7 (Win & Mac) www.extensis.com
iView MediaPro 2.6 (Win & Mac) www.iView-multimedia.com
ACDSee 7 (Windows only) www.acdsystems.com

On-line (Internet) Printing Services

I recommend www.mpix.com. I use it for my personal and commercial work.

On-line (Internet) Photo Sharing (and Printing Services)

These sites let you upload, store and show your images with printing available:

www.shutterfly.com, www.dotphoto.com, www.smugmug.com, www.ofoto.com

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES - My Recommendations

Websites

www.dpreview.com -- a great resource for all things digital - education, extensive camera reviews
www.imaging-resource.com -- Comprehensive and informative digital camera reviews
www.robgalbraith.com -- Digital Photography insights and news
www.nikonians.org -- a community for Nikon owners

Books

Real-World Digital Photography by Katrin Eismann, Sean Duggan, Tim Grey
Digital Photography for Dummies, also Dummies books for PCs, Mac and Windows XP

Magazines/Journals

These are the digital photography magazines that I subscribe to and read religiously:

PCPhoto – www.pcphotomag.com – dedicated to digital photography and computers
Digital Photo PRO – www.digitalphotopro.com – aimed at the “prosumer” and pro markets
Popular Photography & Imaging – www.poppphoto.com – an old friend goes digital
Petersen’s Photographic – www.photographic.com – also covering digital
Shutterbug – www.shutterbug.net – most editorial content is digital
e-Digital Photo – www.edigitalphoto.com – by the publishers of Shutterbug. All digital.
Photoshop User – www.photoshopper.com – (by National Association of Photoshop Professionals) Free with \$99/yr membership, but you can find the magazine at Borders.
PCWorld – www.pcworld.com – a great magazine for PC/Windows users
MacWorld – www.macworld.com – the longest-running and still the best Macintosh resource

Seminars/Workshops

Nikon School -- A roadshow of traditional and digital photography training by working pros. These are excellent day-long seminars that visit the Philadelphia area once a year - usually in late winter. Courses include an introduction to Photography, Digital Photography 101 (for rank beginners), and Digital 201 “Workflow Techniques” (for intermediate and advanced digital photographers. Visit www.nikonschool.com for more information and to register.

The Santa Fe Workshops -- I have attended two workshops here in Santa Fe, NM and can’t recommend it enough. They have many offerings for new and experienced traditional and digital photography as well as Photoshop training. These workshops last one week from Spring to Fall. This is a perfect way to get away from it all and focus on your passion! Visit www.santafeworkshops.com

Digital Days -- New! August 27 & 28, 2005 in Philadelphia. This is a new program, but it should be of value to new and intermediate digital photographers. Sponsored by many big names in the digital photography industry. Visit www.digitaldays.com