



# Travel Photography Equipment & Tips

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# *Harry Potter Places*

## Potterite UK Travel Supplementum

### UK Photography Tips & Issues

[Please Note: Most of these photography tips and issues apply to traveling anywhere! Which is why we included them in the **A Novel Holiday Blog**. I've added, and **yellow-highlighted**, a few US-travel-related comments here and there.]

#### Travel Photography

By Rick Steves

[http://www.ricksteves.com/plan/tips/photography\\_etbd.htm](http://www.ricksteves.com/plan/tips/photography_etbd.htm)

As usual, Steves provides terrific travel tips related to photography equipment, as well as techniques for snapping the most interesting pix.

#### A Great Picture is Worth a Thousand Travel Miles

By Reid Bramblett

[http://www.reidsguides.com/t\\_ss/t\\_ss\\_photo.html](http://www.reidsguides.com/t_ss/t_ss_photo.html)

Bramblett also provides insightful photography equipment and technique tips, along with his trademark sense of humor: "*It's called a postcard!*"

For Bramblett's Excellent Video Tips, go to:

[http://www.reidsguides.com/t\\_ss/t\\_ss\\_videos.html](http://www.reidsguides.com/t_ss/t_ss_videos.html)

### Extra Tips for Potterites

Here's our collection of tips and suggestions. Some are derived from the sources above, while others are ideas that occurred to us while writing *Harry Potter Places*, and are specific to assisting Potterites who are snapping screenshot reproduction pix.

#### What Kind of Camera Should I Carry?

That question's answer will significantly vary depending on how camera-savvy any particular Potterite is. Both Bramblett and Steves provide great suggestions. Basically, you want to use a small **digital camera** that you're completely familiar with, and ensure that it's programmed with a reasonably high resolution setting — at least **three megapixels**.

#### Bring a Cheap Extra Camera

In the entry for **Site #5, Gringotts Bank** (*Harry Potter Places* Book One), we suggested:

**TIP: Bring a disposable camera with you on your Harry Potter Holiday.** Whenever you need to ask a stranger to take a photo for you from a distance, giving her or him a disposable camera minimizes the risk that she/he will abscond with your camera. Remember to ask the photographer to take at least three shots, so that you'll be sure to get at least one good shot.

### Since then, we've decided that Bramblett's idea is better:

"Invest in ... a low-end pocket camera; **don't bother with a disposable camera**, which take, at best, passable pictures and even then only under full, bright sunlight."

Because your Pottering party will only need **one** cheap camera to pass to a stranger for obtaining group photos, the cost of a cheap digital camera can be shared between you.

One kind of disposable camera that still deserves consideration is a digital **panoramic camera**—one with a very wide-angle lens that takes 180-degree shots. Especially when visiting places with amazing vistas like Malham Cove (Site #48, HPP Book Four) or the highlands of Scotland (HPP Book Five), panoramic pix can be gorgeous.

#### DC Carson tip:

"Potterites without a panoramic camera can use panoramic features in their photo editing programs to create panoramas, if you remember to take photos across a wide vista that can be stitched together."

## Pack Plenty of Power and Memory

It is far cheaper to buy camera accessories in the US, especially items like batteries and memory chips. If something untoward happens and you *need* to purchase camera (or computer) supplies while in the UK, go to a department store—such as **TESCO** or **ASDA**—or a camera shop. Supplies sold at souvenir stands may be of questionable quality, and may cost far more than they're worth.

### Batteries

**Yes, it is ecologically evil to use disposable batteries.** But, to use rechargeable batteries during your holiday you'll need to ensure that your battery charger has an input voltage range that includes 220 volts, and you'll need an *extra* UK electrical socket adapter. We travel with 2 UK adapters: one for charging the phone, one for charging the laptop—both of which are in use every night. Vow to redouble your recycling habits when you return home, then pack disposable camera batteries for your vacation.

**Double-A batteries can cost as much as 95 cents apiece in the UK**, even when purchased in a multi-pack at an **ASDA** store, the UK's equivalent of **Walmart**—in fact, ASDA is *owned* by **Wal-Mart Stores Inc.** In the US, AA batteries cost approximately 35 cents each when purchased in a 38-battery multi-pack. So, buy a bunch of whatever batteries your camera uses and bring them with you. The weight they add to your luggage will diminish as time goes by. **[When traveling in the US, packing plenty of batteries will save you from spending holiday time finding a discount supermarket.]**

For additional convenience, buy some tiny zipper bags—available at any craft or hobby store for less than \$5 per package of 100 bags. The 2"x3" zipper bags are perfect for two AA batteries. Even smaller craft bags are available for triple-A batteries or the like.

**Please Note:** The rest of our battery tips are based on your camera using two AA batteries. If it uses something different, adjust our tips to meet your spare battery needs.

Open the multi-pack you bought and put two batteries into each tiny zipper bag. Then, put all your tiny-bagged sets of spare batteries into one Quart-sized zip bag and **pack it in your carry-on bag.**

**According to the Transportation Security Administration (TSA):**

“Keep batteries and equipment with you, or in carry-on baggage - not in your checked baggage! In the cabin, flight crew can better monitor conditions, and have access to the batteries or device if a fire does occur.”

When you arrive in the UK, the large bag o’ battery sets can be left in your lodgings.

Always carry at least one bag of backup batteries with you while Pottering. When you use the backup set—after properly disposing of the old batteries—put the empty zipper bag in your pocket to remind you to stock your Pottering bag with a new set of backups at the end of the day.

As it happens, the practice of individually bagging backup batteries meets with the TSA safety suggestion that all spare batteries should be packed so as to:

“effectively insulate battery terminals by isolating the batteries from contact with other batteries and metal. Do not permit a loose battery to come in contact with metal objects, such as coins, keys, or jewelry. Place each battery in its own protective case, plastic bag, or package, or place tape across the battery's contacts to isolate terminals. Isolating terminals prevents short-circuiting.”

**Speaking of TSA Rules Regarding Batteries and Battery-Powered Devices**

Please visit the TSA’s **Safe Travel with Batteries and Devices** webpage. There you’ll find important battery purchase tips, as well as rules for safely traveling with spare batteries and battery-powered devices.

<http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/assistant/batteries.shtm>

**Silly – but important – Side Bar:**

If you travel with an electronic or battery-powered tooth brush, be sure to *disassemble it* before stowing it in your carry-on. CD Miller once accidentally activated her toothbrush when shoving her carry-on bag under the seat in front of her. The sound was significantly embarrassing. In fact, it was so embarrassing that she felt compelled to stand and announce, *“It’s a TOOTHBRUSH!”*

**Memory Cards**

Because the price of memory cards has dropped so much, pack extra camera memory cards in case a card becomes corrupted or gets lost. Additionally, you’ll need several of them if you cannot upload photos from the card to a laptop or the Internet each evening (see Reid Bramblett’s photography link on page one). You can also purchase a small memory card wallet that will hold up to 8 cards.

Alternatively, Rick Steves suggests:

“**Empty your memory card as you go.** Many European photo stores and Internet cafés can now burn your images to a CD, allowing you to free up space on your camera's memory card. This costs only about \$5-10 per CD, and it's well worth the expense to allow you to keep snapping away. A backup CD can also provide peace of mind; if anything happens to your camera, your images are safe on a CD in your suitcase.”

If you’re bringing along a laptop, bring some CDs as well. Empty your camera cards onto your desktop each evening, and burn them onto a CD. A small CD wallet doesn’t take up much room in your luggage, and there’s peace of mind knowing your vacation photos are protected from digital mischief (like accidental erasure or strong magnetic signals) once burned to a CD.

## Potterly Important Photography Tips

### Photography in UK Railway and Underground Stations

National Rail and the London Underground have recently relaxed their ban on photography within stations. However, the **!!!Flash OFF!!!** rule remains in effect.

“Flash photography on platforms is not allowed as it may distract the attention of train drivers and train dispatch staff and is therefore a potential safety hazard. You are also not allowed to take photographs of security related equipment such as CCTV cameras.”

[http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/passenger\\_services/guidelines\\_for\\_rail\\_enthusiasts.html](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/passenger_services/guidelines_for_rail_enthusiasts.html)

Even with your flash off, if station personnel feel that you're obstructing the flow of passenger traffic, you may be asked to stop snapping. Be as polite as Potterly possible and move along without argument. Return when traffic is lighter.

### Avoid Shooting Muggles [aka, People You Don't Know]

Some people are offended by strangers taking photos while they're in range. Their concerns may be cultural or personal. Do your best to avoid shots that include the faces of people you don't know—especially children. If Muggle faces appear in your photos, blur the facial features before sharing your pix with friends, especially if you'll be posting them on the Internet.

If you happen upon a Harry Potter character look-alike, **ask permission** before snapping her/his photo. Who knows? The look-alike may enjoy the attention and even be willing to pose with you.

### Participate with Other Potterites [Twilighters, or the Like]

Many screenshots include **the Trio**: Harry, Hermione, and Ron [Bella, Edward, and Jacob]. If you're traveling with less than four people, don't be squeamish about approaching other small parties of Potterites and inviting them to join you so that all can accomplish the best possible pix. It's easy to recognize other Potterites because they'll be taking the same kinds of photographs. Furthermore, Potterites from all over the world tend to be friendly people—even **Slytherins**. Consider carrying cards with your name and Email address so you can exchange contact info with those you meet.

### Rotate Photographers

Become familiar with the cameras carried by your companions so that **all cameras** can be operated by each person. If everyone takes a turn being the photographer, each Potterite will be featured in pix on their own camera. Additionally, it will rarely take more than **two** sessions at each site to capture screenshot reproduction pix that include **everyone**. Send your companions ahead to pose while you snap shots with all the cameras. Then switch, so that you can pose while another Potterite snaps shots with everyone's cameras.

### The Rule of Three

The likelihood of getting at least **one** great shot is vastly improved if you make it a habit to take at least **three** shots of every site, or scene, or subject you wish to capture. Thanks to digital photography, this practice is no longer expensive! While it may make each photo session slightly longer, taking three shots with each person's camera *guarantees* that you'll get plenty of great pix.