



Interview with landscape photographer Rafn Sigurbjörnsson

[Jennifer Venter](#)

Rafn Sigurbjörnsson (Rafn Sig – for short) is a [landscape](#) and [nature](#) documentary photographer based in Iceland.

Rafn Sigurbjörnsson

Tell us about your background?

My name is Rafn Sigurbjörnsson (Rafn Sig). I'm a self-taught Icelandic Landscape and Nature Documentary Photographer living outside the Capital of Reykjavík.

Thirty years ago, I was standing outside painting our Reykjavík Mountain (“Esja”) onto my canvas. Whilst painting my fingers were turning blue, so I realized that if I took a photo, I could then paint at home. Thereafter I bought myself a Pentax [film camera](#) and took my first photo of Esja. It was a terrible shot, but I finished the painting in my warm home, so the photo served its purpose. Through my paintings, I have found my style.

In the beginning, I had to learn my photography skills via books and then the internet. Ultimately photography is something which is learnt over a lifetime.

My education and background is in electronics. As part of my job, I would travel extensively to repair electronic equipment in ships. I started taking my photography gear along so I could stop and take photos.

Today I run my own [stock photography](#) store “Icelandic Stock Photos Store”. I work on various photography projects, offer photo tours and workshops in Iceland. There is more information under “[Discover Wild Iceland](#)” and “[Íslandsmyndir](#)”

I have published 8 [books](#) called “Wild Iceland – the untouched nature”. Each book focuses on the sensational nature of the individual parts of Iceland.

What is your goal as a photographer?

My goal and responsibility is to document how Iceland looks before it’s too late. Iceland is changing rapidly due to climate changes as well as external factors (e.g. tourism and large companies).

[Ansel Adams](#) and [Eliot Porter](#) were central figures in influencing American attitudes toward wilderness and conservation and others have followed. I will continue to do my best to influence others to care about the beauty of Iceland.

I have started a campaign called “Photographic Documentation of the Raw Nature of Iceland”. There is more information on my [campaign](#) page

What changes in the past 30 years have you seen in the landscape?

Global warming is an important issue which has, in turn, affected the glaciers. There are also many active volcanoes which are constantly changing the landscape for better or worse.

Why don't you enter competitions?

Photography isn't a contest; it's about showing your emotional feelings in your work and what story your shot is whispering to you.

I agree with "[Eric Kim](#) – Street photographer" about his opinion on the subject. "If the judge is looking at thousands of entries to a photo contest, he eventually will be exhausted. In the end, he is zipping through the photos a lot quicker than photos in the beginning." So how can he evaluate them in the same manner?"

What gear must you pack for a shoot?

Photography is all about the art of creating photographic emotions. Without the right gear you might miss that phenomenal moment or fail to capture it at all as the light or the moment is gone.

My gear is ever-evolving as each year I upgrade or change certain pieces. I have three [camera bags](#) for different purposes.

Rafn's camera gear for daily use

The bag I use is a [Lowepro ProTactic 350 AW](#) and contains the below :

- Main camera body: [Canon EOS 5D MK IV](#)
- Backup camera body: [Canon EOS 5D MK III](#) and/or [7D](#)
- [Canon EF 16-35mm f/2.8L II USM](#)
- [Tamron SP 24-70mm F/2.8 Di VC USD](#)
- [Canon EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS II USM](#)
- [Canon EF 100mm f/2.8 USM Macro Lens](#)
- [Lee filters](#) – Graduated Neutral Density Soft Filters 0,3 – 0,6 – 0,9 – 1,2
- Stop filters 0,3 – 0,6 – 0,9.
- Reverse grad 0,9 and some coloured Graduated filters
- [Manfrotto BeFree Compact Travel Carbon Fiber](#)
- [Datacolor SpyderCHECKR](#) – Color Chart and Calibration Tool
- UDMA 7 Compact Flash Memory cards
- Batteries and charger
- [Hahnel Combi TF wireless remote shutter](#)
- [Go Pro Hero 3](#)
- [MagicFiber cleaning cloth](#) (for lenses)
- Rocktrail multitool

In my car I always have other things available like:

- [Canon EF 100 – 400 1:4.5 – 5.6 L IS](#)
- Heavier tripods: [Manfrotto 190](#) and [Manfrotto 055 PROB](#) tripods
- Laptop
- Gear depending on location
- Walking stick with camera fittings on top

I drink a lot of water from the clean Icelandic rivers and prefer this to any other refreshment. In terms of food, I choose simple food such as banana, yoghurt, biscuits, chocolate or homemade sandwiches.

What do you love most about being a photographer?

I love the freedom of being out in nature and the beauty that surrounds me. I choose locations that speak to me and are not necessarily photogenic. Some locations I visit on multiple occasions as the mood always changes and thus the picture changes each time.

What is your editing process?

I'm using Luminar 2018, Lightroom and Photoshop to process my photos with a basic process.

I use Luminar or Lightroom for the base editing for exposure, [white balance](#), highlights, shadows, levels and sharpening. I place all the keywords and tags into the shot as well. After these changes, I export them to Photoshop for the final touches. Thereafter I export them in full resolution for the [IceStockPhotos.com](#) photo store and the internet.

Do you have any new projects planned?

I don't have any new projects planned but I shall continue with workshops, photo tours as well as my campaign project. More travel within Iceland is definitely on my list.

What advice can you give those who are new to the industry?

My advice – “It's all about loving it”

If you would like to follow more of Rafn's work, you can find more on [Facebook](#)

