

The Making of the Ancient Lands and Lives- Above the Grand Canyon Music Video-

2024 Interview with Carol J. Amore

Award-Winning Wildlife Filmmaker/Photographer

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1. What is a Grand Canyon Docu-Music video?

A Docu-music video elevates the story to a new level of experience through a series of visual sequences or film chapters that weave the film's story together. It integrates all the story's visual assets with world class inspiring music that motivates domestic and international audiences.

2. What visitor points of the Grand Canyon's South Rim had the most magnetic draw for you in the making of this Docu-music video?

For me, sunsets seem to be the best time of the day for film/photo making. I was drawn to the **Desert View Watchtower site** to film the wide vistas revealing the burnt golden red/brown canyon walls as they sweep down to meet the winding Colorado river. The Desert Tower exterior local rock stone foundation/walls and uniquely designed tower construction has special meaning for many of the Grand Canyon's tribal cultures.

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Lipan Point and **Navajo Point** were close to the Desert View Watchtower site so it was easy to plan for late afternoon filming to capture all three views with great golden light. The afternoon monsoon thunderstorm clouds were expansive over the Grand Canyon skies. Mountain lions in this area would hunt at night and avoid visitors during the day. **Grandview Point** on Desert View Drive was another favorite film site yet it was often too busy with visitors.

Pima Point, west of the Grand Canyon Village, had excellent sunsets as well as **Hopi Point** offering different perspectives of the Grand Canyon geological formations. For the best film/photos, look for the **Grand Canyon juniper-pinyon pine trees and canyon rim vegetation** to frame the Grand Canyon's foreground and give dimension through the canyon's colorful background layers.



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3. How did you prepare for this Grand Canyon Film Expedition?

First, it was important to gain a Grand Canyon National Park Service commercial film permit to take photographs and film on-location to use for media publications. No drones allowed unless specific commercial film permission granted. Drones can fall on visitors below on canyon trails.

Professional respect to the Grand Canyon National Park's wildlife, its scenic locations and its visitors are critical to anticipate and be sensitive to while filming.

I advance booked my Grand Canyon lodging with Xanterra to ensure I had access to good food and a good night's sleep without bears at my door. Their lodges are close to the South Rim sites which saves time for morning sunrise filming.

I also contacted Arizona Game and Fish Department leaders in Flagstaff, Arizona to identify some known locations of mountain lions, Bighorn sheep and other wildlife that I could further scout and film. They were exceptionally helpful!

Gaining access to South Rim locations with my film permit and a sturdy SUV car was important to carry both a 4K film camera and photography equipment with a full range of wide and telephoto lenses. I marked each camera case and tripods with the new iPhone Air Tag trackers.

I had the back of the car set-up so the tripods were ready to quickly remove and the cameras were set with freshly charged batteries each day.

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4. What wildlife did you first see at the Grand Canyon South Rim?

The California condors with an average 9.5 ft. wingspan gliding with the thermal winds close to the South Rims' Lookout Studio were memorizing.

It reminded me that dedicated wildlife conservationists, National Park Service wildlife biologists, helped save this bird species from extinction and that the Grand Canyon was a perfect habitat for them to thrive. Golden eagles that were sited there were half the condors' size and had the predatory stealth to capture prey.

While filming on the South Rim's Maricopa Point I was standing close to my film tripod and concentrating on filming the Grand Canyon's unique rock formations in front of me. I looked down at my steel-toed hiking boots and was surprised to see a beautiful Grand Canyon rattlesnake with all the true canyon colors gliding across them while it was hunting. I stood absolutely still and it continued down the path. I didn't expect rattlesnakes at the 7500 ft. elevation and thought rattlesnakes were mostly in the lower canyon areas near the Colorado river area.

This experience reinforced in me to be super prepared for the unexpected. I forgot to wear my snake guards that fit over my boots and lower legs. Going forward in filming I had a heightened awareness that anything is possible with wildlife when one is in their territory especially with wild mountain lions in the Grand Canyon area.

By the way, Kaibab squirrels will bite you if you offer them food which is illegal to do anywhere at the National Grand Canyon Park.



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5. How did you plan for your high resolution image capture and protection for your valuable images from damage?

I secured several ProGrade CF Express Type B Memory cards to ensure I could capture many high resolution videos and images on separate CF Express cards (165 GB per card). I placed all CF Cards in hard waterproof cases to protect original images when in camera backpacks and in the car. B&H Photo in NYC had great coaching on the professional grade digital media and pricing on these CF Express Cards as well as the transfer device to my dedicated Apple Mac Pro computer.



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6. How did you anticipate for the Grand Canyon's high winds and extreme heat?

Preparing for high wind conditions on the Canyon rims, extreme heat and heavy rains were an important part of the camera and tripod protection plan. I packed carbineers, light ropes and strong bungee cords to anchor down camera rain cover and even heat resistant mylar covers to protect the camera equipment from extreme weather conditions.

Dust protection was also a non-stop concern to care for the camera lens and even its compact high density disks.

Remember a heavier SUV type vehicle works better to manage high winds on the Grand Canyon roads and scenic road pull-out stops.

Always carry extra water and a first-aid kit on you and in the car to help yourself or others in need.

7. How did you prepare both the video camera lens and the 35mm camera lens to address a range of extreme lighting conditions from intense early morning light to cool canyon sunset light?

Since dust was an ever-present issue at the Grand Canyon National Park it was vital to ensure each lens had the right kind of filter on it before going on location. Dust could find its way on the camera lens if it was placed on the camera in an outdoor open area even with light wind.

I would recommend placing a warming filter(B12) on each lens since the Grand Canyon light can be intense in the morning and afternoon.

The sunset time often makes the canyon interior space cool and bluish so this warming filter really helps.



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8. How did you decide on your film capture process to ensure the best composition and highest resolution of film/photo images for this Docu-music film production?

Following the Grand Canyon South Rim viewpoints, landscape and sky lighting patterns and cloud formations would guide my visual decisions to stop to make an image composition with both my 4K film camera and 35 mm Canon R5 camera wide angle lens(16-35mm).

I often used the R5 Macro lens to gain close-ups of plants and unique rock formations.

In addition, I always took the first image with my iPhone to immediately see the film/photo composition and then make any tripod location adjustments to gain the best light and landscape to showcase the story of this special site. Sometimes, I also did a quick video pan using the iPhone to assess where I wanted to begin and end the film pan movements.

The wildlife was mostly present at dusk and at nighttime since they want to avoid Grand Canyon visitors. Nighttime remote triggered cameras best captured the wildlife's movements in the region.



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9. What tripods did you bring for the 4K video camera and 35mm camera?

Tripods provide a steady and sharp image offering a high broadcast value. I used a travelling tripod case to secure both film and photography tripods. The tripod hard case prevents the tripod head and legs from being damaged. It is a commitment to carry two specialized tripods for the camera for heavy telephoto lens and a film tripod that moves to pan for the sweeping landscapes.



10. What were some of your biggest challenges to get the right image at the best time of the day?

Any kind of weather can offer unique opportunities to film and photograph. The summer monsoon thunderstorms with unique cumulonimbus clouds offer some of the most dramatic landscape film images. Each afternoon I looked forward to the magnificent storms and clouds. The fascinating and dangerous lightning that travels across the sky hitting the Grand Canyon's North Rim at an 8,000 ft. elevation is an epic film/photo image.

Prepare to get wet from the thunderstorm rains and avoid the risk of a lightning strike on the film equipment was like a dance between the danger of the situation and judging when to seek shelter.

Gortex rain proof cover material fitted for video equipment cameras, camera bodies with long lenses are vital protection needed to secure one's video camera equipment for the continuation of a rough film expedition. Rain, dust and heavy winds can deliver unexpected equipment disaster.

Be attentive to watching for low-flying bats at dusk so you and your equipment are not an accidental target.

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11. What kinds of Grand Canyon film location dangers surprised you?

Heat Exhaustion (100 degree Fahrenheit and above temperatures) and the altitude at 7500 ft. were both challenging so I had to be very attentive to drinking electrolytes each morning and throughout the day to stay hydrated. The heat and high elevation both added to the rapid loss of water for myself and visitors. I had a broad-brimmed mylar sun hat with a chin drawstring to reduce heat and sometimes used a second mylar hat with the drawstring tightened over my camera to reduce heat.

I did bring a professional quality oxygen-pulse finger meter to test my levels of oxygen to assess my health when I was having some difficulty with the Grand Canyon's altitude. The Grand Canyon's North Rim is about 8,000 ft. and can present other health and fitness challenges for a filmmaker-photographer carrying heavy equipment. High altitudes can also impact one's sleep and physical fatigue during the day. Take lots of breaks in the shade of a tree and drink plenty of electrolytes.

Sunscreens with Zinc sunblock often worked best. I also used sunproof half sleeves to wear over my existing sun proof shirt as well as sun-proof gloves. Take several pairs of polarized sunglasses with secure straps as back-ups in case of sunglass lens damage from impact while on-location.

It was very difficult to recover from heat exhaustion so prevention was the best remedy. Heat Exhaustion can happen to Grand Canyon visitors at any age, even experienced hikers especially when traveling deeper into the canyon where it is hotter. Ensure team and/or family members have had a health check-up before going on a Grand Canyon journey.

Always know how to reach Grand Canyon Emergency Rescue in case you or anyone in your family/team are hurt. They are highly experienced and know how to save your life. They frequently train for difficult Grand Canyon Rim rescues which I witnessed. Park Rangers are also exceptionally trained and helpful in cases of emergencies on National Park trails.



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12. How did lightning strikes in the Grand Canyon impact you?

Lightning Strikes during the afternoon thunderstorms were also a daily concern. Pre-planning a place for shelter from the lightning was critical. Never shelter under a tree especially with a camera tripod. I sometimes would see the lightning hitting the North Rim and then I would count until I heard the thunder which could tell me generally how far away it was.

One time I had four lightning strikes hit the ground on my way driving outside the Grand Canyon's East entrance towards Cameron's Trading Post. It was intensely scary since the lightning strikes were close. Satellite weather radio transmissions can be good to have access to when traveling throughout the Grand Canyon.



13. What captured your attention about the current and ancient Grand Canyon's Night Skies?

The Grand Canyon's Night Skies are dark and offer outstanding star-sighting opportunities. The National Park Service has Astronomer's in Residence each month that has evening programs for visitors.

My video editor and I decided to include the Ancient Grand Canyon Night Skies to represent film transitions which would have been seen by indigenous tribes like the Hopi, Navajo and others over time.

Michael West, Astronomer at Lowell's Observatory in Flagstaff, generously offered his insights and feedback about images for the Grand Canyon's night sky for this Docu-music video.

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15. How did your visit to the Hopi Reservation provide a unique opportunity to film ancient petroglyphs?

I have great respect for the Hopi tribe and their ancient rituals over thousands of years in the Grand Canyon area. A Hopi guide took me to the ancient Hopi petroglyphs that tell several visual stories of wildlife and the people who lived there. I was able to film and photograph the petroglyphs at several angles in golden light.

These Hopi images have been incorporated within the Docu-Music-video at the beginning and end of the film.

Hopi wildlife Kachina doll images were used in this Docu-musi-video to portray their tribal representation of the Mountain Lion, American Badger, Mexican Wolf(wolves were historically in the Grand Canyon Region), Black Bear, Great Horned Owl, American Eagle and the Snake Dancer. Hopi Kachina dolls are an important teaching experience for children to learn the Hopi culture and ancient traditions.



16. What did Lidar laser 3D mapping technology reveal about the Grand Canyon's ancient geology formations?

As part of this ***Ancient Lands and Lives-Above the Grand Canyon Rims'*** Docu-music video my video editor and I wanted to develop a unique set of ground penetrating Lidar laser video images from the inner gorge of Grand Canyon that the U.S. Geology team had produced.

We converged these Lidar images with the canyon's inner gorge rock walls to showcase the beginnings of the Grand Canyon even including ancient volcanic lava flow to simulate the Grand Canyon's beginnings about two to five billion years ago. The Grand Canyon's geological research by dedicated professionals continues to uncover the past through lidar images as well as through their experienced observations.

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17. Were there any film expedition hardship parallels you could make between filming in India's jungles and the Grand Canyon's high altitude location?

Whether in the India jungle or in the Grand Canyon National Park both had daily extreme heat situations over 100 Fahrenheit situations that could cause life-threatening heat exhaustion as well as heat stroke.

Dust was a critical issue for the cameras in both the Indian jungle and the Grand Canyon. Asian elephants were the best way to travel through the dense Indian jungle areas and not scare the wild Bengal tigers.

At the Grand Canyon South Rim riding to visitor locations and walking with film equipment into the pine forests were the best ways to get access to the animal trails.

Prepare to develop your own photo fitness routines in advance of going on-location to practice carrying the expected camera weight over rough terrain at high altitudes.

The wild Bengal tigers were mostly hunting during dusk, at night and at dawn depending on their level of hunger. Both wild Bengal tigers and mountain lions are skilled solitary hunters. Female tigers can weigh about 350 pounds whereas female mountain lions might weigh about 130 pounds.

The Grand Canyon mountain lions seem to have learned to stay clear of visitor areas during the day and hunt mostly at night. Mountain lions exist in North and South America. Wild tigers only live in Asia. **(See www.tigerstracking.com)**

For Interview arrangements or questions please contact

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Additional information can be found at www.ancientlandsandlives.com



Ancient Lands & Lives - Above The Grand Canyon Rims

is a high impact and fast-paced short Docu-music video that embraces Arizona's Grand Canyon wildlife experience through versatile animal habitats and its resilient pinyon-juniper evergreen trees on the Canyon's Rims. Its vast colorful canyon rock formations reveal layers in geological time, dramatic thunderstorms with rising cloud formations, dark night skies (Milky Way Galaxy visible) and sacred tribal lands.

The Emmy-award-winning composer-electric violin performer for this music video, Mark Wood, original member of the Trans-Siberian Orchestra, played his unique seven-stringed viper electric violin like a series of high-powered symphonic movements interpreting the Grand Canyon, portraying wildlife behaviors and reaching up into its ever-changing skies. His music inspires one's spirit.

Elusive Grand Canyon predator families includes mountain lions, bobcats, wolves, coyotes, gray foxes and even birds of prey (American eagle, Golden eagles, Red-tailed hawks, Peregrine falcons). Resident desert Bighorn sheep, mule deer and other wildlife are also part of the Canyon's eco-system. These wildlife are often portrayed in Hopi stone wall petroglyphs thousands of years old.

In the Hopi culture, the animal Kachinas (Ka means "respect", china means "spirit") have been used as the introduction to Film Chapters within this Docu-music video to create an interpretative window into their world.

The Hopi craftsman carves each animal to represent its unique physical characteristics. Just like a compass each animal is viewed as a guardian to the North, South, East and West.

Mountain Lions- Guardians of the North

(intuitive, resourcefulness, fearless protector)

American Badgers- Guardians of the South

(fierce, tenacious, tough to fight off larger predators)

Wolves- Guardians of the East

(cunning protectors and alpha leaders in a social pack)

Black Bears-Guardians of the West

(strength, power and wisdom).

Sky Bird Kachinas of the American Eagle and Great-Horned Owl are also present.

Filming the Grand Canyon from space, high resolution drones, 4K video cameras, special time-lapse dramatic night sky filming over the Canyon Rims and even advanced earth-penetrating Lidar technologies were used to create original high resolution images within this Docu-music video. New James Webb telescope discoveries were also integrated within this production. These inspiring views add significant visual excitement and intrigue for audiences.

The collaborative work of many talented professional experts in this Docu-music-video gave tremendous innovative efforts to inspire visitors in the current and future preservation of the Grand Canyon and its wildlife.