Photos from the ‘sacred’ mountains of Tibet, & Peru

Ron Anderson, April 12, 2011
My first memory, at age 3, was seeing giraffes and Mt. Kilimanjaro (Tanzania) from the back of a truck on route to Ethiopia in 1944.
Photo taken at age 9 in Ethiopian central plateau, about 8,000 feet.
With my family (like the Trapp family in Sound of Music) at Witterhorn Mountain in Switzerland, 1953
My favorite mountain in high school in Washington State, Mt. Rainier
My favorite mountain from travel to professional meetings, Mt. Fuji, Japan
Holy Cross Mountain as seen while skiing at Vail
My favorite mountain in Minnesota: Buck Hill, where I was on Ski patrol during the 1980s
Mountains treated as symbols of the sacred

- Physical links to the cosmos from earth
- Sources of power and protection from enemies
- Sources of beauty and majesty
- High mountains are cruel: lack of air, freezing, highly unpredictable weather
- Established traditions for pilgrimages, monasteries
- Revered as deities and as sites for human sacrifices
- They are “embodiments of humanity’s highest ideals and aspirations” (from Berbaum, *Sacred Mountains of the World*, 1998)
Tibet
Tibet

Travel from Kathmandu (Nepal), at 5,000 ft. to Lhasa, Tibet at almost 12,000
Mt. Everest lies on the Nepal—Tibet border. People from both countries refer to it as “Goddess”.
Mt. Kailash in northern Tibet is treated as sacred by four Religions. Climbing it is sacrilegious but walking it’s 32-mile base is believed to forgive a lifetime of sins.
Almost nothing but barley will grow in Tibet, but most Tibetans are farmers. They have planted
100s of thousands of willow trees in the valleys for erosion control and firewood. Unlike the
Rockies, the mountains have no trees.
Tibetans have dark reddish skin, burned by the cruel sun at 12,000+ feet altitude.
Cars are rare. Tiny tractors are common.
Ganden Monastery at 15,000 ft near the top of Ganden Mt., Tibet
Photos taken at 15,000 feet at the Ganden Monastery, 2,000 feet about village. A 2-mile path circles the mountain top. I took the pilgrimage and barely survived.
I thought this was my best shot from the mountain top, but it doesn’t get ah's. How could it have been improved?
Solar heating in the mountains was commonplace.
Outside the Ganden Monastery (at 14,500 feet) building for dinning & meditation. This is surprisingly flimsy footwear for night time temps below freezing in early summer.
Everything inside monasteries and shrines was always very dark; flash was a must.
Lighting Yak Butter Candles. Both pictures taken without flash in dark Monastery. I tried a lot of compositions until getting the close up with hand.
Monk meditating with aid of Yak butter candles
Representations of spirits, both good and evil, were everywhere inside religious rooms. Most were gold plated with many jewels. Glare is nearly impossible to avoid.
An exercise in propagation – which accounts for the huge number of gold covered statues.
Lhasa, Tibet, home of the Portola at 12,000 feet. Guess what happened to our bodies and our computers.
Photographing the Portola – how much difference an angle perspective
The Portola from the Jokhang Monastery and Square in Lhasa
Typical father and child strolling in Jokhang Square in Lhasa, Tibet
At gray dawn, Tibetans stoking fires with willow branches in front of Jokhang Monastery in Lhasa
Meditating with prayer wheel at dawn in Jokhang, Lhasa
This photo was selected for advertisements of the Colorado Mountain Center Tours.
ISO 1600, 1/16-th at F/6.3, 300mm
Man circulating Jokhang Monastery with prayer wheel
In Lhasa
Monks in debate ritual at Sera Monastery in Lhasa, Tibet
Boy monks playing gyalings at Mindroling Monastery in Tibet
100 meters away, other boy monks playing long bass horns at Mindroling Monastery in Tibet
Seventy-year old nun at Sang-ngag Zimche Nunnery in Tsedang, Tibet
Peru, Sacred Valley & Machu Picchu
Peru, Sacred Valley & Machu Picchu
Ron the photographer in Lima
Cusco, Peru (11,000 feet)
Former capitol of Inca Nation of some 13 million people in 16th century
Closer Up, Cusco Main Square

ISO 250, 1/250 at F9, 120 mm
Sacred Valley

So named for rich river soil, famous for 100s of varieties of corn and beans
Moray Agricultural Experiment Station with complex irrigation & terraces to take advantages of variations in humidity and temperature
Which do you like best?
Another Ag. Research Station at Moray

Note terraces are about 5 ft high.
Girl enjoying sun in Sacred Valley
I like to capture photographers in a composition to help tell a story about what a place means to people.
Machu Picchu

Hidden at the edge of the jungle at 10,000 feet from 1500s until 1910, it was a sacred city of about 3,000
Machu Picchu
The other side of the mountain
Machu Picchu

From the mountain top looking down to the Urabumba River

Clouds or river gorge? Which composition do you like the best?
More light, still mysterious

ISO400, 1/430 at F/9
Mysterious cloud but that’s all
Machu Picchu Peak

Which composition would you choose?
Long or wide?
Good Choice
Another view of the peak
And another with river
Artificial Reconstructions of Machu Picchu
Japanese Singing at Machu Picchu
Final shot atop Machu Picchu
Sacred Trail
To build Machu Picchu, laborers ran with sacks of rocks on their backs for as far as 25 miles.
Machu Picchu flowers & birds thrive from the jungle climate on one side of the mountain.
View of Pisac Valley in Southern Sacred Valley

Which composition do you like best, long or wide?
Remains of Sacred City in Pisac
Remains of Sacred City in Pisac --- less sky, more mountain
Sacred City ruins in Pisac
Mother & Child in Sacred City above Pisac
Mountains treated as symbols of the sacred

- Physical links to the cosmos from earth
- Sources of power and protection from enemies
- Sources of beauty and majesty
- High mountains are cruel: lack of air, freezing, highly unpredictable weather
- Established traditions for pilgrimages, monasteries
- Revered as deities and as sites for human sacrifices
- They are “embodiments of humanity’s highest ideals and aspirations” (from Berbaum, *Sacred Mountains of the World*, 1998)
A Mountain Feast -
Eastern Alaska Glaciers, April 2011
Eastern Alaska Mountains & Glaciers, April 2011
(taken with little Epson G11 on automatic)
For further information: Ron Anderson
(rea@umn.edu)
http://www.soc.umn.edu/~rea/