



## Money Bags

20

By Peter K. Burian

Although almost everyone with a camera already owns some type of bag or case, the market for this category is surprisingly robust. Aside from lenses, camera bags are among the best-selling accessories in the photo specialty sector. Since bags and cases tend to sell for the full MAP, they offer great opportunities for camera retailers.

In spite of the sluggish economy, this category is booming, partly because of the continuing popularity of interchangeable-lens cameras. But let's give credit to the manufacturers too. Perhaps it's due to greater competition among an increasing number of brands; but the fact is, we're seeing some innovative new designs and styling with great visual appeal.

### Compact System Bags

The arrival of compact mirrorless interchangeable-lens cameras has motivated the development of many new bags. These target owners of the Compact System Cameras: the Samsung NX, Sony NEX, Panasonic Lumix G and Olympus E-P series. Some are sized to accommodate larger models with a built-in electronic viewfinder, like Panasonic's Lumix GH series.

Featuring a carrying handle, belt loop, and adjustable, removable shoulder strap, the Tamrac Aero 36 is a perfect example of this type. It can accommodate a mirrorless camera with a kit zoom lens in a foam-padded compartment with internal dividers, while pockets hold accessories.

Lowepró's offerings in this category include three slim-profile shoulder bags: the Streamline 100 and the Compact Courier 70 (for NEX cameras) and Courier 80 (for other brands of cameras). All of these bags can hold a camera body with standard lens attached, a second

Lowepró's new Photo Sport 200AW backpack targets outdoor enthusiasts who want to carry personal gear as well as photo equipment. It's equipped with an Ultra-Cinch Camera Chamber that keeps photo gear from bouncing around, and has a hydration pocket for an optional two-litre reservoir.

lens and some accessories.

In addition to bags specifically targeting owners of Compact System Cameras, many suitable small bags of all types are available. Ron McKerron, Senior Vice President and General Manager at DayMen Canada, says Lowepró's product roadmap includes other types of bags for the mirrorless cameras. Naturally, other manufacturers are also likely to begin competing in this category.

### Slots for Electronic Devices

Slots for full-size laptop computers are common in large bags of most types; but as cameras and electronic devices become smaller, we're seeing a new trend. Bags with smaller padded slots for iPads, netbooks and e-readers are becoming more readily available. A bag like Tenba's Mini Messenger (from Gnigami) is designed to accommodate a device with a screen up to 13". This sleek lightweight, expandable satchel with a removable photo insert allows for a quick conversion to a general-purpose bag.

"There is definitely an emergent need for carrying an iPad or other tablet," says Hans Smarius, Vice President of Sales at Tamrac International. "Even some serious shooters now carry only a tablet. Some of these have become more of a tool than a toy with a lot of photographic apps; and they allow for disbursement of images via WiFi or 3G."

Note too that sleeves and cases for the iPad and similar devices are available from Acme Made (from DayMen) and Targus, for example. These can be used to update the functionality of any camera bag.

The slim new Tamrac Rally 7 series (from Gentec International) targets DSLR owners who want to carry a moderately large camera and lenses, plus a 10" notebook, e-reader or tablet. "The narrow profile makes the Rally more lifestyle-oriented, and they really do not look like a traditional camera bag," says Smarius. Tamrac's new Zuma series also provide a slot for an iPad or 10" notebook, in addition to a compartment for a camera and paraphernalia.

The designers at Lowepró have also recognized this change in consumer habits. "There was a time when bags that

carried laptops were immensely popular," McKerron says. "But today, the market is leaning toward the iPad and similar products." A few Lowepró bags include a suitable slot. The Optics Field Station hip pack is also equipped with a pullout shelf that tilts at a 45-degree angle for convenient viewing. This is ideal for the target market, birdwatchers, who need reference material at hand while in the field. "In our development of new products, for DSLR bags in particular, everything we do will accommodate a tablet," McKerron adds. "We see that as an automatic joint usage."

McKerron provided a hint about a new Lowepró series to be available in three sizes by Q4. This will be a slimmer format that can handle multiple technologies.

"We'll allow for both a tablet and a PC, but will have functionality for either; this level of flexibility for multiple technologies will be a reality for some time," he predicts.

### Overview

- Photo bags generally sell for full MAP. Some retailers boast attachment rates as high as 60% with camera sales
- Manufacturers are developing new bags for mirrorless cameras from Olympus, Panasonic, Samsung and Sony
- An increasing number of camera bags can accommodate a tablet, which is an important tool for many photographers
- For style-conscious female buyers, camera bags with funky colours and attractive designs are available from brands like Jill-e, Golla and Kelly Moore
- At many photo specialists, the best sellers are sling bags that can be worn on the back, then rotated to the front of the body for equipment access
- Successful retailers and distributors stress the importance of helping customers select the right bag for the equipment they currently own, and the equipment they plan to buy in the future.



Featuring a carrying handle, belt loop and adjustable shoulder strap, the Tamrac Aero 36 can accommodate a mirrorless camera with a kit zoom lens in a foam-padded compartment with internal dividers, while pockets hold accessories



Lowepro's Streamline 100 shoulder bag can accommodate a Compact System Camera like an Olympus Digital PEN, Panasonic Lumix G, Samsung NX and Sony NEX, plus a second lens and accessories.



Distributed by Gnigami, Tenba's Mini Messenger bags have a dedicated sleeve that can accommodate a tablet or small notebook PC.

## Bags with Style

With a few exceptions, the vast majority of camera bags are unisex. They may be stylish, but they're not specifically designed to appeal to female buyers. One exception includes some products from Jill-e Designs (distributed in Canada by Fidelity Electronics). Robert Bagliolid, Owner of BellArte Camera in Hamilton, ON, decided on the Finnish brand Golla, also distributed by Fidelity Electronics. "They have a lot of interesting funky colours," he explains. "Some of the bags

look more like purses."

Vistek is carrying Kelly Moore bags, some in bright pop colours. "We decided to bring in a new line appealing to women," says Gary Goldberg, Product Manager, Professional Photo. "One of our female customers asked us to bring it in because she wanted to buy one, so we decided to give the Kelly bags a try. There might be a niche market there, in carrying bags that appeal to women. They look less conspicuous, more like a purse. But if they can grab their camera out of it, they may feel more comfortable about carrying it around."



Available in different sizes and configurations, Tamrac's new Zuma series provide a slot for an iPad or 10" netbook, in addition to a compartment for a camera and paraphernalia.

## Retro Style Bags

As discussed in our June issue, retro styling has become popular in some types of photo equipment. The retro trend extends to camera bags such as several of Domke's canvas soft-sided models and ThinkTank's Retrospective series (both distributed by Nadel Enterprises). "The soft-sided Retrospective bags naturally compress to protect your gear," says Bill Wood, Nadel's Vice President, Merchandise and Marketing. "They look like bags from 25 years ago, but with far more functional design on the inside. Unlike bags with stiff, foam-padded sides, they grow or shrink in size to match the gear you're putting inside." They're made of a soft poly-nylon weave, with a water-resistant coating, while those in the Pinestone colour are made of a soft but thick cotton-canvas.

More affluent customers might prefer the English-made Billingham line, with its classic styling and quality. Distributed by Kindermann Canada, Billingham bags offer features such as waterproof canvas with top-grain leather trim, solid brass buckles, zippers that should last a lifetime, and woven web strapping with a large shoulder pad. Some models include removable inserts with dividers.

To my eye, the Billingham bags, including the popular Hadley series, look old-fashioned. Not surprisingly, Kindermann's Boylan has a different perspective. "They're traditional; this has been their style for decades. It seems uniquely British. It sells especially to older customers with a refined sense of quality, including quite a few from the Leica crowd. And the bags are extremely rugged; I've never seen anyone actually wear one out."

## Convenient Sling Packs

Providing some of the comfort of a backpack with more convenient access to equipment, the sling-type pack has a great deal of appeal. "It's definitely becoming the most popular option because of ease of use," says Vistek's Goldberg. "It's basically like a messenger style bag, but more like a backpack with a single strap. It goes over one shoulder and you swing it around to the front for easy access to gear through a door. After grabbing your gear, you just swing it back."

BellArte's Bagliolid is a strong proponent of the sling. "In the past, serious shooters with DSLR cameras might have used another type of case, but today,

CONTOUR



5.2 OUNCES OF OMG

When was the last time you were **totally excited selling digital imaging?**

We thought so and **that's about to change!**

**Contour GPS** The world's first hands-free video camera to shoot HD 1080p video while tracking location, speed, and elevation with an integrated GPS receiver. POV action sport cameras are one of the fastest growth categories in all of digital imaging. Contour offers a full line of accessories to complement the sale, with great margins, and is the only POV brand that hosts a video-sharing social media community.

For an introduction to the world of Contour "point of view" camcorders contact Erik Davis at 905-602-9988 ext 226 or e-mail edavis@ryekasport.com



Distributed in Canada by  
**Ryeka Sport**  
[www.ryekasport.com](http://www.ryekasport.com)





Designed for birdwatchers and other nature hobbyists, Lowepro's Optic Field Station has a pullout shelf that can accommodate a tablet, providing ready access to reference material in the field.



Distributed by Fidelity Electronics, the Finnish brand Golla targets style-conscious photographers, with a large variety of configurations and funky colours.

many are switching to a sling. Some weeks, they make up 80% of our bag sales," he estimates. "They don't look like camera bags, so they're less conspicuous. Some are quite large, so they're attractive to DSLR buyers who own multiple lenses and accessories."

Vistek has been doing well with Tenba's

Shootout Sling series, which provides quick access to the camera compartment. Features include durable, water-resistant nylon instead of the more common polyester for the exterior, weather-sealed YKK zippers, and a WeatherWrap rain cover. Some retailers carry Tamrac's Velocity Sling series instead, with a comfortable padded



Notebook and iPad sleeves like this model from Acme Made can be used to update the functionality of many full-size camera bags.



Kelly Moore camera bags, some of which come in bright pop colours, look like purses. They have internal dividers, and are available in different styles and configurations.

strap and a Tuck-A-Way waist belt, plus Quick Flip top door that flips away from the user's body for convenience.

Popular in many other countries but less well known in Canada are Vanguard's UP-Rise bags, distributed in Canada by Digitec Trading. Vanguard's UP-Rise 43 DSLR Sling received an international award from TIPA as Best Photo Bag 2010. The panel praised the series' innovative ability to expand in size and its versatility in use. This full-featured case has an ergonomic sling-adjustment system, quick-zip access via openings in the front and back, and a removable rain cover. It expands when necessary with one easy zipper motion, and can shrink back down when less equipment is being carried.

For maximum versatility, it's tough to beat the ThinkTank Sling-O-Matic series. This one can be easily switched from one shoulder to the other. The fully padded shoulder strap slides along a set of rails, making it easy to change its location. Access to equipment via the top door is

convenient in either orientation.

Lowepro was the first major camera bag manufacturer to introduce a sling in 2005, and its Slingshot is still a worldwide best seller. The newer Classified Sling AW is slimmer and highly suited to urban environments, while the latest Photo Sport Sling 100AW would be ideal for trail runners, cyclists, snowboarders and other active people. This dual-compartment case provides ample space for personal gear, while the Ultra-Cinch Camera Chamber holds equipment securely to help prevent bouncing while in motion. Features include easy rotation to the front, front and top access doors, multiple accessory attachment points and a built-in All Weather Cover.

McKerron explains the design philosophy for the Photo Sport Sling 100AW. "It's geared more to outdoor enthusiasts who carry a camera in addition to a lot of other gear, and want to be active while carrying it. We've accommodated their needs in every way. It's lightweight, comfortable to



ThinkTank's soft-sided Retrospective bags, distributed in Canada by Nadel Enterprises, compress naturally to fit the gear they contain.

Great shot huh?  
We're proud to say  
we had a hand in it.

© TODD KOROL

Ok, we can't really take all of the credit... it is Todd's hard work after all. But some of the great products DayMen distributes were along for the ride. See more great shots we've had a hand in at [toddkorol.com](http://toddkorol.com).



Todd Korol travels the world shooting assignments for the world's leading magazines which include Sports Illustrated, Time, Canadian Geographic, National Post, Globe & Mail and Reuters. He works on personal projects and has had his work published in over 150 books to date, one of which was his own, "Harvest". He is a member of Aurora Photos, and is a founding member of Aurora Select in New York City.

 **DAYMEN**  
Outfitting pros since 1981

DayMen Canada  
55 Valleywood Drive  
Markham ON L3R 5L9

Phone: 905.944.9400  
Fax: 905.944.9401  
Web: [daymen.com](http://daymen.com)  
Email: [info@daymen.com](mailto:info@daymen.com)





Distributed in Canada by Digitec Trading, Vanguard's UP-Rise 43 DSLR Sling expands when necessary with one easy zipper motion, and can shrink back down when less equipment is being carried.



Providing quick access to camera and accessories, Tenba's Shootout Sling bags are made of water-resistant nylon and feature weather-sealed zippers and a WeatherWrap rain cover.



Tamrac Evolution Sling Backpacks can be worn as a backpack, or as a sling pack over either shoulder.



British-made Billingham bags, distributed by Kindermann Canada, feature waterproof canvas, leather trim, brass buckles, woven web strapping, and large shoulder pads.

wear and makes it easy to get at your gear; the Ultra-Cinch Camera Chamber holds equipment snugly so it does not bounce around while in motion."

Featuring distinctive new styling, the Photo Sport Slight 100AW is available in black with grey accents and also in orange. "The latter especially is getting away from the traditional black box that photographers tend to carry," McKerron observes.

## Versatile Backpacks

Slings may be bestsellers, but many serious outdoor photographers still want a photo backpack. "The primary benefit is an adjustable harness system for comfort when carrying heavy equipment, since the weight is distributed over two shoulders and the hips," says Vistek's Goldberg. Available in sizes from very small to very large, photo backpacks are more suitable for adventure than a sling, which is mostly for urban use. "You'll even see people buying them to use once or twice a year for canoe trips to Algonquin Park, for example," Goldberg notes.

Most of the latest backpacks in larger sizes provide a padded slot for a full-size laptop computer; and some of the packs are primarily for urban use. The Roots Leather Digital Camera Backpack (from Gentec) and the Lowepro CompuDay 250 (a multi-purpose daypack) qualify in this respect. Some Targus cases, like the

16" CityGear Chicago model, are primarily intended for business travel. This one will hold a 16" laptop computer, but provides space for various other equipment and accessories as well.

In addition to these familiar names, there are other brands such as Klik Elite (from Digitec Trading). Some of their backpacks are quite impressive, with a high-quality harness, padded camera bay with cradle dividers, a hydration sleeve for a reservoir, hide-away rain cover, and rugged construction.

Lowepro's Photo Sport 200AW backpack targets outdoor enthusiasts who want to carry personal gear as well as photo equipment. This contoured adventure-pack with dual-compartment design features resilient, high-performance technical fabrics for great durability during extreme activity. It's also equipped with the Ultra-Cinch Camera Chamber and All Weather cover, and gains a hydration pocket for an optional two-litre reservoir. In addition to black, it's also available in orange.

Bird watchers should love the new Lowepro Optics series of backpacks, with a unique attachment system for connecting a full-size tripod with spotting scope to the case. This series features a superb harness system, loops for attaching accessories, a built-in All Weather cover and all of the benefits of a high-grade photo backpack.

Photographers who want the benefits

of a sling and a backpack will appreciate the Tamrac Evolution Sling Backpack series. It can be carried as a backpack, or as a sling pack over either shoulder. (The extra strap can be neatly tucked away.) Gear can be accessed in any of three ways: through the front panel or through either of two side doors when the Evolution pack is used as a sling.

Tenba's new Discovery series includes the Mini Photo/Tablet Daypack (backpack with a comfortable harness) with a padded rear pocket for a notebook or the 11" MacBook Air, in addition to a DSLR with two to four lenses. Gnigami will offer this case in Canada before December. Features include lightweight (0.9kg), self-healing zippers, rugged weather-repellent nylon construction, a waterproof bottom panel and a rain cover.

Note: When selecting a bag, customers who travel should be aware of airline restrictions on the size and weight of carry-on luggage. While regulations differ, all carriers should accept a case that's no larger than 55 x 35 x 22cm. The weight limit varies from 10 to 18kg, depending on the carrier. Some countries, including China, India and Japan, allow only a single, small carry-on such as a purse or laptop computer. While that restriction may not always be enforced, travellers should check their airline Website for specifics.

## Stock, Display & Sell

There's definitely an opportunity for greater profitability by increasing the attachment rate of bags to new cameras. Some photo specialty retailers already boast impressive numbers. At BellArte Camera, it's roughly 60%. In spite of having relatively small premises, BellArte devotes a 30x10-foot wall to bags. But it's really customer service that has been responsible for steady sales.



The CityGear Chicago backpack from Targus can hold a 16" laptop, but also provides lots of space for other equipment, including cameras and accessories.



ThinkTank's Sling-O-Matic series can be switched from one shoulder to the other. The fully padded shoulder strap slides along a set of rails, making it easy to change its location.



Most of the latest backpacks in larger sizes provide a padded slot for a full-size laptop computer; and some of the packs are primarily for urban use. The Roots Leather Digital Camera Backpack qualifies in this respect.

look at something with space for their future investment."

Goldberg says Vistek is very successful in this category. Sales staff is highly experienced and the stores devote considerable space to camera bags, with impressive displays.

"Typically, we put out the best sellers from each brand," Goldberg says. "But we can pull other products from the warehouse. Some bags sell themselves by being on display with good branding and signage. Of course there's also variety. You can walk into our stores and we have almost every major manufacturer represented. Ultimately, we have what the customer wants."

## Distributors' Recommendations

Since Tamrac and Lowepro have achieved great international success with their wide range of products, I asked them to relate successful retail strategies. In addition to a professional display and POP materials, both emphasized the value of staff training. This is a key factor to success in the photo specialty channel.

"Make sure you understand a customer's needs, his carrying style, the kind of equipment he owns, whether he wants to take a laptop or an iPad, and whether he usually carries a tripod," Tamrac's Smarius recommends. That will determine the most important features and hence, the most suitable bag. "Of

course, that calls for understanding all of the specific features and benefits and illustrating them to a customer. That's why we spend a great deal of time training retail staff about innovative features and how they relate to consumers in a certain purchasing situation."

In a recent training session in Asia, an attendee provided an interesting comment during the break after two hours, Smarius recalls. "He said he had no idea that a bag is so complex. Especially with a brand like Tamrac that's very feature-rich, training is essential."

Hang tags can provide some of the information a customer requires, and Smarius agrees that is useful for less complex products. "But many of our bags have an incredible number of features, so a video is better; and you'll find them on our Website. They illustrate how a specific bag is best used, its features, advantages, and when this is the right product or when another one would be a better option."

Daymen's McKerron agrees. "We're using demo videos on the Lowepro Website and they're available to retailers for use in their own online selling. Some of the big photo specialty accounts have 10-12 screens around their location constantly running videos with product information for their customers. Consumers can also access a Bag Finder at lowepro.com; they can input their equipment and their specific needs and the system will automatically find suitable bags. Before too long, that may be adapted for use in retail locations as well."

## Opportunities for Other Channels

CE retailers and mass merchandisers sell a lot of camera bags too, typically smaller products, employing a different strategy. "They're not as engaged with the customer as the photo specialty retailer, so merchandising has much greater importance," McKerron says. "Forward-thinking people do in-store promotions with coupons and flyers to get consumers to think of accessories when thinking of cameras."

Many retailers target pouches for point-and-shoots, with 10-20 different SKUs in various sizes and colours, near an end cap or other high-traffic area. "In some channels, we provide Lowepro or Acme Made displays, especially during the fourth quarter," McKerron says. "The POP materials that are there to support good bags can make a difference. Even if they're not shopping for a camera, many consumers will buy a small bag or pouch because it's right there."

Bundling is also a valuable tool, McKerron adds. "The CE channel especially has been doing well with accessory kits provided by the camera manufacturers. If you buy this camera, you'll get the extras at a reduced price as an incentive to buy both. All of the hardware vendors are getting into this in one form or another, and we have a co-op agreement with some of them."

Regardless of the branding on the bag, McKerron is bullish on the concept.

"Whether it's a hard bundle or a soft bundle, that can have a profound effect on the attachment rate." He relates a recent experience with a retail chain that consumers do not usually associate with cameras. "Their flyer listed a

bundle offer: one of our best pouches free with a specific point-and-shoot camera. The increase we saw in a two-week period was massive. There's good profitability for the retailer in getting that high attachment rate."

Granted, the retailer wasn't getting the pouch for free. "They reduced the price of the camera and the bag so it would fit their bundled price and amortized it as such," McKerron relates. "And it worked, selling about 4,000 units. Retailers need to think about margin dollars, as opposed to margin percentages. Even if there's fewer dollars or a smaller margin with the hardware, an accessory becomes an important focus. You know the old line, 'You can't take percentages to the bank'. Savvy retailers recognize that volume adds more money to the bottom line than just pure percentage margin." **MN**



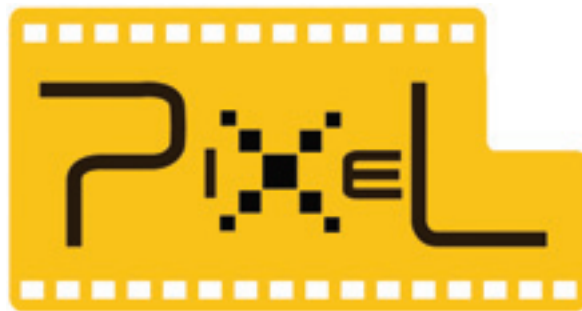
Vanguard's Skyborne 53 photo backpack can accommodate two DSLR bodies, plus seven (or more) lenses, and a couple of flash units; plus zippered pockets for memory cards and other small items, and a separate section for a 17" notebook. A rain cover protects contents from the elements, while air-infused padding helps prevent damage from bumps. Interestingly, the \$330 backpack also has a tripod holder on the outside.

## INTRODUCING...



### KING

- Full TTL wireless control
- Pass through TTL transmitter
- Full TTL receivers
- 200m range
- Grouping and ratio functions
- High speed sync up to 1/8000sec



### PIXEL ENTERPRISE LIMITED

is a professional photographic accessories manufacturer, with a focus on flash control and shutter release control of SLR cameras. Pixel offers top quality, high performance products and backs them up with superior service and technical support.

**We invite you to learn more about Pixel today.**



### EXPERT

- Live View
- 200m range
- Built-in CCD camera
- Audio capabilities
- One receiver can control up to 4 transmitters



**DIGITEC**  
TRADING INC.

85 Royal Crest Ct. Unit # 7  
Markham, ON L3R 9X5  
905-415-3566

[www.digitectrading.com](http://www.digitectrading.com)