

Not Every Sunrise

Ariella Nardizzi



the magic issue 37

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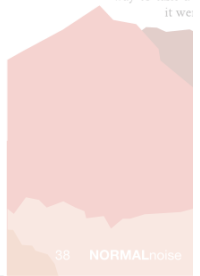
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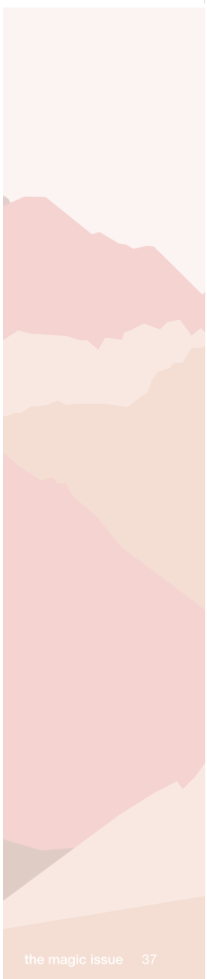
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6:32 a.m. I sat with my face to the sky, the colors changing right before my eyes. As the grainy-black night disappeared from sight with every passing moment, the sun's warm rays pushed past the far-away horizon. The sky blushed a vibrant pink mixed with every shade of orange your mind could imagine. The mountains before me illuminated, the snow-capped peaks dotting the sky as they, too, reflected back a violet hue.

The waves of Lake Pleasant lapped softly at the shore as the wind nipped at my exposed skin, my cheeks flushed a rosy pink. All was silent except for the rustling of the reeds behind me. The rest of the world had not yet stirred.

As the sun began to glisten over the mountains and my eyes encountered the first sign of a new day, I instinctively reached into my pocket for my phone. Vaguely aware that my battery was at 1 percent, I pulled it out and unlocked the screen. As I readied my phone for a beautiful shot of the rising sun, my phone suddenly went black.

"No!" I froze, hitting the power button frantically as I prayed for my phone to turn back on.

My thoughts now distracted from the beautiful rising sun, I cursed the device under my breath, annoyed that it had survived the whole night, only to die in a split second.

There would be no captured photos of the stunning sunrise. No documentation to prove I had actually woken up at 6 a.m. to witness the morning's beauty. No way to Instagram this moment. No way to take a photo, even if it were to never be

posted anywhere. No way to capture the moment, except through my own eyes.

I looked up from my phone and was immediately reminded why I was awake. The sky was painted a million different colors as the sun shone brightly through the wispy clouds. The pink mountains reflecting off the pure-blue lake seemed too beautiful to be real.

Instead of worrying about capturing a photo or charging my phone, I decided to let go.

Not every sunrise needs to be captured. Not every moment needs to be documented.

Sometimes, it's best to just let it wash over you. I closed my eyes and felt the warmth of the rays hit my face as the sun crept higher and higher from the horizon, slowly lighting up parts of the earth in front of me.

Sitting in the sand, shivering from the cold while wrapped in a blanket, I watched the sky turn from a star-speckled black to baby pink to a powdery blue.

There are no pictures from this moment.

The excursion that posed the biggest challenge for me as a photographer occurred in March 2018 over spring break when I trekked 10 miles down into the Grand Canyon to explore the majestic Havasupai Indian Reservation. The desert oasis is known for its pristine aquamarine waters and towering waterfalls, all hidden miles from the rest of civilization in a remote location.

In short, this place looks like heaven on earth.

To reach the Supai village, one must backpack to the

campsite. It's strenuous, yet humbling, to physically carry everything one may need for survival on their own back.

This Havasupai trip was my first time backpacking. I was thrown into the midst of it all, praying I wouldn't be squashed under the crippling weight of my thirty-pound backpack, which I'd be carrying over rugged terrain for three days. Packing light, with only the necessities, is quintessential for a trip like this. Along with my food, water, and first aid kit, I completed my pack, stuffed full to the brim, with my camera, like the cherry on top of an ice cream sundae.

Throughout my weekend in this "Garden of Eden," I felt like I was constantly playing catch-up as we adventured through the brush at the bottom of the canyon. As everyone ooh-ed and aah-ed at the deafening Mooney Falls, the grandest waterfall in the canyon, I fiddled with my camera and attempted to protect it from the excess spray of water. While everyone walked briskly to reach as many falls as possible before dusk, I sacrificed many water breaks to snap a photo or capture my friends boldly cliff-jumping into the idyllic, azure pools below.

This destination had been on my bucket list for almost six years, yet I felt like I was spending my precious time trying to preserve it, rather than enjoying it in the moment. After one day of this, I decided living took precedence over capturing. I wanted to have photos to remember this place by, but pictures are nothing without the memories attached to them.



Off-the-grid: my favorite nature.

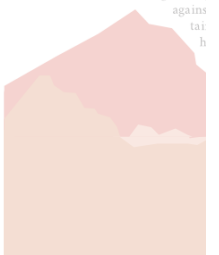
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It's strenuous, yet humbling, to carry everything one may rival on their own back.

My first time on a backpacking trip was my first time. I was thrown into the world, praying I wouldn't be hindered by the crippling weight of my sound backpack, which I'd be carrying over rugged terrain for three days, with only the necessities for a trip like this: my food, water, and first aid kit. I led my pack, stuffed full of gear, like the chert of an ice cream sundae.

Over the weekend in this "Garden," I felt like I was constantly catching up as we adventured through the brush at the bottom of the canyon: everyone ooh-ed and aah-leaved at Mooney Falls, the waterfall in the canyon. I hid my camera and attempted to avoid the excess spray of water. I walked briskly to reach the falls as possible before dusk. I had many water breaks to snap and capture my friends boldering into the idyllic, azure view.

My vacation had been on my bucket list for six years, yet I felt like I was spending my precious time trying to do more than enjoying it in the latter one day of this. I decided to prioritize capturing the moment over having photos to remember by, but pictures are nothing without the memories attached to them.



Off-the-grid: my favorite way to be in nature.

Most of the time I don't even have service, which is what I take as nature's way of forcing me to disconnect with the rest of the world for a little bit. But, personally, not spending time on my phone isn't difficult. I don't feel a constant need to scroll, Snapchat or send messages when I'm surrounded by nature.

One thing that I often do use my phone for, however, is photos. As a photographer who especially enjoys landscape photography, I'm always hoping to capture the beauty I'm observing. Yet, it always seems impossible to do — the camera can't quite capture real life.

There's something magical, almost hypnotizing, about the stark Southwest landscape that draws me in. Perhaps I'm enamored by the desert because I grew up in a small seaside town — the feeling of sand beneath my toes, the salty sea air constantly permeating the neighborhood, and the blue. Oh, so much blue. Where the baby blue sky met the deep blue ocean on the far-off horizon was always mesmerizing to stare at.

But coming to the desert, where everything was brown, was a whole new ballgame in terms of photography. It was vast, much like the ocean which seemed to go on forever, but in a more humbling kind of way. In the desert, the barren landscape made the image all the more striking. The challenge then became: how do I convey all this space in a single, wide-shot photograph?

What enraptures me about shooting the Southwest is how well it photographs; the gleaming of the sun against the mountains at golden hour or the crisp

contrast between a cloudless sky and the vermilion dirt is an image that never gets old.

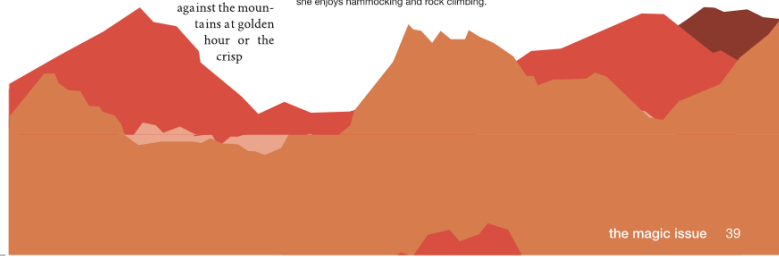
There's nothing better than hearing the click of a camera shutter, notifying me that the moment is forever preserved by a million pixels that I'll be able to look back at and fondly remember. I love the rewarding feeling of capturing that perfect moment — the mid-laugh, so candidly perfect and real, or the blending of a myriad of colors in a fading sunset, each shade beautiful in its own way.

Lately, though, I've been conflicted between capturing the moment and just being present.

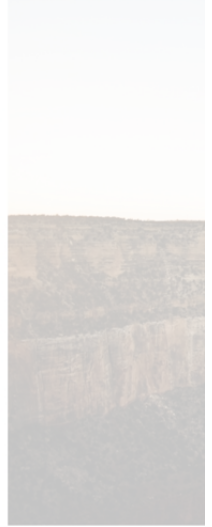
Photography is an art. It takes skills and practice. At the same time, landscape photography is so rewarding because — really — it's hard to take a bad photograph.

When shooting nature, the logistics don't matter as much. Capturing the setting sun with the perfect level of brightness or the crashing waves along the seashore with the right shutter speed is what sets apart the hobbyist from the perfectionist, but it isn't everything. In a world so beautiful, any physical documentation of it, though it may not be done justice, will be beautiful.

Ariella Nardizzi is a sophomore studying journalism and global studies. She loves anything outdoors, constantly craves Mexican food, and aspires to travel the world with her camera in hand. When she's not off exploring, she enjoys hammocking and rock climbing.



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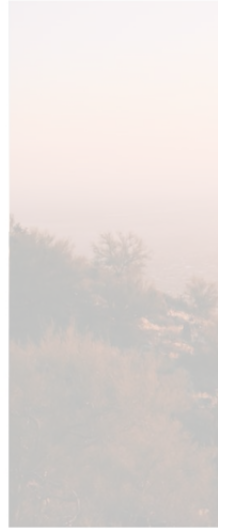
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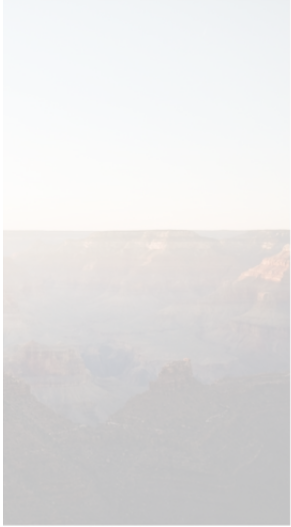


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"Golden Hour at the Grand Canyon" by Ariella
Nardizzi, 2019. 18mm digital photography.





"Southwestern Tones" by Ariella Nardizzi, 2018.
40mm digital photography.