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INFO 282

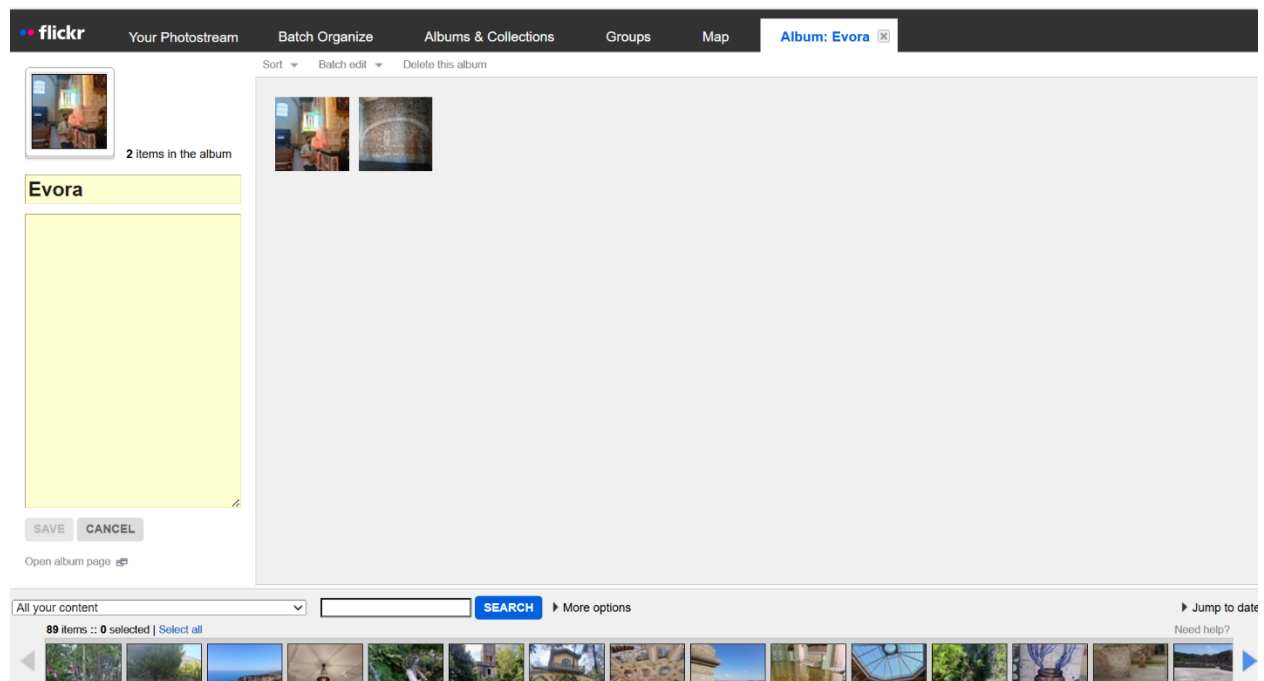
March 6, 2026

Project #1

Link to collection: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/204250165@N03/collections/72157724731973866/>

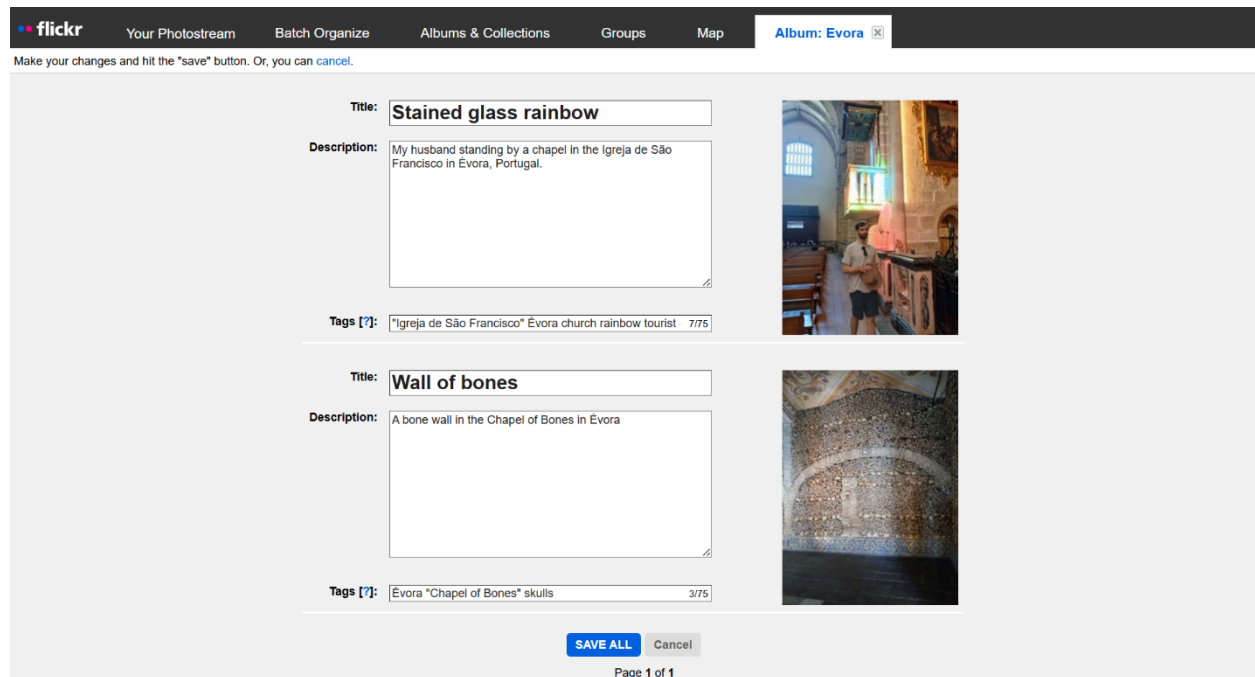
For this Flickr project, I decided to create a collection from photographs I took during a trip to Portugal in May 2025. My husband and I traveled across the country from south to north, so I have photographs from several different cities and locations. For this reason, I decided that my sub-level of organization would be the specific city or town where the photo was taken. However, I immediately ran into some annoying issues. Initially, I uploaded all my photos from my computer to Flickr, a total of 87, and then created an album named “Portugal, May 2025” with my twenty favorite photos from within what Flickr calls the photostream. But I quickly realized that I could not create subcategories within this album, so instead I had to create several individual albums and combine them in what Flickr calls a collection. When you are in Flickr’s Organizr interface, you can add photos from your photostream or from other albums into the album currently being worked on. It is a bit confusing to reach this interface, which is accessible at flickr.com/photos/organize. I stumbled onto it accidentally when first trying to create a collection, but it is not linked directly from the homepage as far as I can tell.

Figure 1.



You have the option to batch edit titles, descriptions, keyword tags, dates, permissions, and other metadata fields. This can be done from the album view, as in the screenshot below, or you can select images from multiple albums or from the photostream.

Figure 2.



The batch organize tab allows you to add tags simultaneously to images from different albums or from the photostream, as shown in Figure 3, but you cannot see what tags are already assigned without first clicking on each individual image. Overall, I think the batch editing features are useful, but I don't know why Flickr makes it difficult for users to find them.

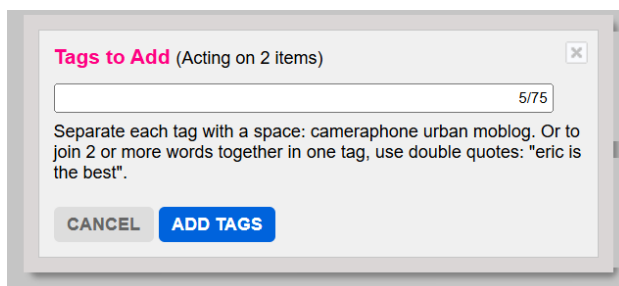


Figure 3.

Metadata Fields

Flickr's capacity for adding metadata fields is limited. The following item-level fields were either edited by me or automatically created by Flickr, either from the EXIF metadata embedded in the photos or from assumptions it made during the upload process.

Descriptive Metadata:

Creator: This is autogenerated by Flickr, which assumes the person who uploaded the photo is the person who took it. There doesn't seem to be a way to credit another person, as far as I can tell. You could provide this information in the description.

Title: I gave each photograph a title, changing the titles from the default timestamp assigned by my phone camera, like “20250529_151608.” Since I was also providing a description and keyword tags, I didn’t make these too detailed.

Description: This was a free-text field provided by Flickr. I briefly described the contents of each photo in a phrase or sentence, but some of this content was replicated in the tags. Compared to tags, it is easier to provide context for the creation of a photo in a longer description.

Tags: Flickr allows you to add up to 75 keyword tags. You can batch edit tags within an album, as mentioned, and copy tags from one individual photo to another, which was helpful when I was tagging multiple images from the same location. The tags were probably the metadata I put the most thought into. I used the tags “Portugal” for each photo, as well as the name of the city, the name of the place being photographed, and other features of the image like specific objects or style of architecture. I used the tag “pansies” for an image of a garden, and “Art Nouveau,” “tilework,” and “glass pavilion” in a photo of the winter pavilion at the Casa São Roque. Rather than list every single identifiable object in a photo, I focused on “aboutness” and what a user might expect to find when searching for photos of tilework, for instance. In some cases, I clicked on a tag I had just applied to see if other users’ photos that used the same tag were capturing similar things to mine. I also decided to use both Portuguese and English names for places when I knew both were in common use. If I were using a controlled vocabulary, I would need to choose one, but I am not sure if the Flickr search function automatically includes broader, narrower, and related terms for search terms, so I erred on the side of greater recall.

Map/Geotagging: Flickr offers the option of geotagging each photo on a map, but I did not choose to use this feature. When searching known locations within Flickr’s map, I couldn’t always find the ones I wanted, and since my photos’ EXIF data does not include GPS data, I cannot locate all my photos with precision, even if I know the general areas where they were taken. If the map had been easier to work with, I would have used this field, which seems useful for designating spatial coverage.

Albums: This field shows what albums your photo has been included in.

Galleries: This field displays what galleries your photo has been included in. Galleries are curated by other Flickr users. Both the Albums and Galleries fields are similar to isPartOf in Dublin Core (Dublin Core Metadata Initiative, n.d.-b).

Content type: You can set the content type to be photo, which is the default, screenshot, “Other – art, illustration, CGI, etc.”, or Virtual Photography. I am not sure how often people use Flickr for non-photographic images, but it must be frequent enough that this tag was necessary to clarify ambiguous images.

Technical Metadata:

Camera and EXIF data: When uploading a photo taken with a digital camera or other device like a smartphone or tablet, Flickr automatically includes metadata about the type of camera in used, a Samsung Galaxy A15 in my case. If you click “show settings” in this section, it displays an additional page of camera settings derived from EXIF data, including the aperture, focal length, exposure time, ISO, flash on or off, and, if you click “Show EXIF,” additional fields like Image Width and Height, Compression, Make (of camera), Orientation, X-Resolution and Y-Resolution in dpi, Software, Color Space, White Balance, Date and Time (Modified), Date and Time (Original), Date and Time (Digitized), and several other

technical fields. It does not appear that you can prevent Flickr from including or displaying this information; presumably you could strip the EXIF data from your photos with an external tool before uploading them. Out of curiosity, I checked some other users' photos that were taken with film cameras, and many of these also had information on the make of camera used, even though film cameras cannot embed this information. I assume that during the process of scanning or editing the image, the user manually entered this information. Flickr has a camera finder function that allows you to view photos taken with a particular camera and the average monthly uploads from these cameras across several different timespans; you can even choose two different cameras to compare on these metrics. I thought this was a cool value-added feature for camera nerds. Flickr does not include technical metadata fields like the original file size or file format, which would be helpful for digital preservation purposes.

Administrative Metadata:

Date Taken: This field, which is automatically generated by Flickr from metadata embedded in each photo, in the form of month-day-year hour:minute:second. For my photos, it was extracted from EXIF data so I left it as is, but it can be edited, and Flickr also provides options like "Circa" or "Some time in," which can only accompany a year. I assume "some time in" is supposed to express more certainty than "circa," but it doesn't seem like Flickr provides guidelines for applying this. I consider this equivalent to something like Date Created in Dublin Core (Dublin Core Metadata Initiative, n.d.-a).

Date Uploaded: This field is also automatically generated by Flickr and interestingly can be edited, but within limits—you cannot change the upload date to a date before you joined Flickr, or one in the future. I assume Flickr must keep the true upload dates on their own servers, in case legal issues arise. I am not sure why they added this functionality. Perhaps allowing users to alter the publicly visible upload date substitutes for a publication date field, even though like most social media platforms Flickr allows you to upload content without automatically making it publicly viewable, so the two dates are not synonymous. I understand why people might want to keep a record of when they first shared a photo online, and they might have migrated images from another platform to Flickr. But strictly speaking, this is not what "date uploaded" implies to me. I think keeping the date uploaded immutable and allowing a user-editable publication date would make more sense.

License: Rights metadata is important to include on a site where fellow users might want to reuse photographs. By default, Flickr assigns All Rights Reserved when you upload a photo, but users can also choose from among various Creative Commons 4.0 licenses or a public domain option. I decided to maintain All Rights Reserved, as there are strangers in a few of the photographs and it seemed risky to allow others to share or remix the photos when it would be impossible to ask permission.

Viewing privacy: This field controls who can view photos and is also chosen upon upload but can be modified later. The options are Public, Private, Friends, Family, and Friends & Family. Photos are set to Public by default, but I chose to make mine Private until I was finished editing my collection, when I set it as Public. When you add people as contacts on Flickr, you can designate them as Friend, Family, or both.

Allow commenting: Users can restrict comments to "Only you," "Friends & Family," "People you follow," and "Any Flickr member." I chose to allow all users to comment. Maybe someone will have interesting information to add on the places I photographed.

Allow tags, notes, and people tags: Tags, notes, and people tags can be restricted to the same groups as comments. I chose to allow tags only from people I follow. I don't know enough about the Flickr community to know whether opening tags to all users would be helpful or create chaos.

Safety level: This field is designed to classify images based on their appropriateness for different audiences and has three options, safe, moderate, and restricted. Although I have a few photos that should probably be designated moderate, annoyingly I could not actually assign this safety level without a paid Flickr account.

There are also a few options for album-level and collection-level metadata. For an album, you can add a title, description, and select a cover photo from among the photos in the album. For a collection, you can edit the title and description as well as the "collection mosaic," a mosaic of images taken from across the collections, which can be randomly selected if desired.

As far as licensing and legal issues, I mentioned that some of my photos feature strangers, who would be difficult or impossible to contact for permission, which is why I did not choose a Creative Commons license that allows reuse. I believe Portugal is covered by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which requires balancing people's right to privacy with your legitimate interest to processing what amounts to their personal data; the "processing of personal data carried out solely for journalistic purposes or the purpose of artistic or literary expression" is protected under Article 85 of the GDPR (European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2016, Art. 85). These photos were all taken in public places, for artistic expression, and will not be used commercially. I would take them down if someone featured in the images asked me to. The other person who features regularly is my husband Mike, but I got his permission to upload the photos to Flickr as part of a school project.

References

Dublin Core Metadata Initiative. (n.d.-a). *Dublin Core metadata terms: Created*.

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Dublin Core Metadata Initiative. (n.d.-b). *Dublin Core metadata terms: isPartOf*.

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European Parliament & Council of the European Union. (2016). *Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (General Data Protection Regulation)*, Article 85. Official Journal of the European Union, L 119, 1-88.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/679/oj>