

Assignment

Travel Photography

Art

Some people out there are crazy about art and some couldn't care less about it. Architecture (another assignment) can often be the only connection to art that we photograph on our travels.

But art can be many things.... the high art (expensive stuff in museums) and the every day street performers, painters and sculptures. Art has a place in defining a city, region or neighbourhood even.

These photos are your story of your trip, so find a type of art that interests you and seek it out. Don't worry too much about what you 'should' be photographing. Let's say you end up in Paris but standing in lines and packed into crowds to view the Mona Lisa is really not how you want to spend an afternoon in the city. Fine. But what about the art in Paris or Montreal or Quebec City that interests you? A city like that is rife with art and something has to touch a chord with you.

When shooting in museums - but also in street markets - always check for rules first, whether they're enforced by a museum guard or the owner of the work. There is a wide range of practices across the globe, to say the least. Some don't permit any photos, others don't allow flash photography. Most won't be happy with a tripod being deployed (which can be annoying as lighting varies widely). Be respectful of the museum and the artists' wishes in regard to reproduction of their work and if in doubt, seek permission. A simple gesture towards your camera and pointing at the art you wish to photograph is about as simple as it gets and any curator or staff member will understand.

Also, be mindful that many street artists and performers would appreciate a spot of cash tossed their way if you appreciate their work enough to take it home in your camera.

Art is in the eye of the beholder. Or maybe that's beauty. Both are subjective and up to you to judge what works and what doesn't. Whatever you decide, bring back a few shots from the local art scene on your next journey.

Modern and Traditional

Old and new, rich and poor, the youth and the elderly. Look for it on your travels. It's more than simply highlighting new and old things. While this is a large part of it, it winds through travel more than most of us realize. Often when we think of far off lands, the image that comes to mind is the last known reference to it. This can be something we saw on TV or something we learned in a history class, long ago, in its own right.

That ideal in our mind is often based on the very human assumption that things don't change. When we look at our lives from day to day, we don't see a large change. But over the decades hair styles come and go, fashion changes and we look back on what we used to wear and often have a good laugh. So it is too with any given city or place. Many people

heading to Venice in Italy expect to see the canals clogged with wooden boats and while they are prevalent, there are also a number of outboard motors and newer hulls in the canals. Sometimes this even disturbs travellers who are accustomed to thinking of a certain land in a certain way.

The key to travel is to keep an open mind. Look for the classic scenes you might be fantasizing in your head, but also look for the new. How do the two abut each other? How do they blend? Why have they evolved so differently?

History

Every place you ever visit has a history before you got there. It's often easy to forget this concept when travelling. If travelling to a place for the first time, everything is new, even the old stuff.

When they travel, some people enjoy looking as far into an area's past as possible. The pyramids of Egypt are a prime example. Thousands of years old, they speak of the longevity of organized society on this planet. Even more recent history is also visible across this area as the Greeks then Romans then others marched through and left a small mark here and there. Some areas are rich in history, some need a harder scratch of the surface to find.

If you are of the curious nature, do just a bit of research before heading out on your next trip. Most guide books will deliver a morsel of history and that may lead to further investigation. Do a bit of research and see if there is a historical society in the location(s) you wish to visit. Making contacts with those deeply interested in history is a great way to get a 'new' perspective during your travels.

Photographically speaking, shooting history takes on many forms. It may be as simple as photographing statues representing rulers or important people of the past. It may be buildings that have stood the test of time, weather and war. A museum is an easy way to get a quick glimpse into history, both near and far - but as we mentioned earlier, they're often not the best place to be photographically.

Shooting history is slightly different than the previous topic of Modern Vs. Traditional in that history can stand by itself. Also, historical items or locations need not be considered traditional.

Views

Views represent a broad category but typically something specific. They differ from straight on shots of the Coliseum or the Eiffel Tower. Shots like those are of something and while almost anything you take a picture of can be considered a 'view', the idea here is to represent what it is like to be at a location, looking out. In this case, the view from the Eiffel Tower would be a better representation than the photo of it.

There are many famous "view-from"s in the world of travel. From the Empire State Building, Sears Tower, Petronas Towers. Any man-made tall building will do. We often think of views as being exclusively from tall structures or high places, like a hot air balloon or airplane. But other views can be captivating. The rim of the Grand Canyon or a hammock on the beach in the Caribbean or from the bottom of the locks in the Panama Canal. All of these are quintessential views many of us have seen in a photograph.

While travelling, look for the typical views, but also bring back something different. The view from your hotel/hostel/rental even if it is not some grand sweeping vista. The view

from the back of a taxi. The view looking up at all the tall buildings around you or down a crowded alley.

You may also want to run a theme through some of your travels, such as the view from the centre of each town you visit. Or the view from the highest hill. Or even the view from a bar stool at the local watering hole.

Whatever you decide as your view of choice, don't forget to bring back some good shots so others know what the views are like during your travels. Not every photo needs to be a shot of something, some times it is more important to see the view from something.

Weather

When you're travelling, the weather will always be there to greet you. Like food, it's another Travel Photography Subject that can't be avoided, unless you're on holiday in an underground tunnel the entire time.

Take some time to look up, down and all around for the weather. You may be cursing it at the moment; blowing winds and rain in Ireland (or Washington state for that matter!), subzero temperatures in the Northern latitudes, or baking in the hot sun of the Caribbean. Or you may be enjoying it. The weather may even be the reason for your holiday. Don't forget to give those back home, who will view your photos, a true feeling for how the weather is shaping your trip.

Food

Ahhh, food. Wonderful, new, possibly exciting, tasty food. Or, if you're not familiar with the local cuisine, maybe it's more like odd, greasy and down right horrid. No matter your experience, food will be another integral part of your travels and a strong hallmark of a given location.

It's certainly part of the travel experience. Seek out back alley, hole-in-the-wall restaurants just for the thrill of new food.

Ask taxi drivers or the hostels where they'd eat instead of asking for a more Western restaurant. Countries where restaurants (and their kitchens) are outdoors are great.

Downtown

There usually is a variety of action and characters weaving through the fabric that makes up downtown.

When visiting a downtown of any major city you will likely see some common themes. Crowds, shops, skyscrapers, garbage, commerce and a liveliness that sets the tone for the rest of the city. Or maybe the downtown area is depressed, abandoned, clean or well organized. No two cities will be the same, despite the efforts of Starbucks, McDonald's and all those other Best Buy etc.

If you're just passing through, chances are great you will be staying in the tourist area of a downtown. Hotels are often crowded together, usually close to a variety of restaurants or other popular attractions. What's not so obvious for the casual tourist are the other areas of downtown that give it its lifeblood. International districts, financial districts, art districts, city parks, poor areas, rich areas; the list is large when breaking down a city into

its elements. While taking in the typical sites and sights, don't forget to wander a little.

Some good ways to do this are with a taxi, rickshaw, bus or other local transport. Many tour companies can present a wide swath of the city in a small amount of time and impart valuable insight while on the road. A cabbie in a taxi can often do the same. Just agree to a price before getting in for a one hour tour around the less popular areas of town. Explain you want to stop often to take photos and be sure to tell the cabbie if you have any particular interests (art, history, architecture, etc...).

Even if you will only be in town for just a day, on your way to some other exotic region of the country you are visiting, try to spend an hour wandering the city's downtown area to get a feel for 'local life'. It may not be as grand as the tourist traps nearby, but it will let you in on a bit of the city's secrets if you listen and watch.

Some other views.....

Each place that you visit has its own peculiar ambiance. If you want your travel photographs to look exceptionally good, you should try to capture the unique character and features of that place. The snapshots should not only trigger your memories, but should also easily communicate to others the captivating excitement of the location.

With respect to travel photography, here are 8 important tips that will help you to capture outstanding digital photos.

1. Learn the basics of photography

A good quality digital camera will certainly help you to take better pictures, whether it's a DSLR or a point and shoot. In addition to the photographic equipment, your bag should have memory cards, filters, external flash units, lens hood, cleaning gear, power adaptor and tripod or mono pod. If the batteries are rechargeable, then you would need a re-charger. Otherwise, you should keep a set of batteries as well.

To make good pictures, you don't require any kind of special training in travel photography. You just have to know the basics like how to set the shutter speed or how to alter the aperture size. You should also learn about different camera modes, ISO, Depth of Field and Aperture, silhouettes, filter usage, and so on.

2. Gather as much information about the destination as possible

If photography is the main purpose of your trip, then before getting to the destination, gather as much information as possible. You should know about the best time to travel, chief modes of transportation, main attractions, events that shouldn't be missed, and areas that should be avoided. Once you have completed your research, you should prepare a list of photographic opportunities available in the place.

3. Look beyond the main tourist attraction

Often, travel photographers become so obsessed with the main tourist attraction that they

fail to notice other photo-worthy subjects. While travelling, keep your eyes wide open. At times, objects near the main attraction are more interesting and photogenic.

4. Natural light vs. artificial light

Usage of artificial light sources usually makes the photographs look unreal. For stupendous shots always rely upon natural light. Make the most of sunlight, and don't hesitate to use filters, reflectors, lens hoods, and fill flash technique whenever the sun becomes too overbearing. If the subject is not well-lit, then freely use flash. By utilizing flash diffusers, night mode, and fine-tuning the exposure settings of the camera, you can easily prevent instances of flash blow-outs.

5. Frame composition is crucial

Each frame that you capture should be top-class. So, before you press the shutter button, meticulously examine and evaluate the scene. Apart from the subject, take a look at the background. Make sure that secondary focal points do not overshadow the subject. Everything you wish to include in the frame should be distinctly visible.

6. Try to interact with people

For capturing candid portraits, you should openly interact with the people. Close interaction will help to generate trust, and it will become relatively easy for you to convince them to gaze through your lens.

7. Don't count the pictures

Experienced travel photographers shoot the subject from all possible perspectives before moving to the next photographic opportunity. Hence, for shooting great travel photos, explore the scene from all angles, and take snapshots liberally.

8. Avoid travelling with a group

If you travel with a group, your creative freedom would be drastically curtailed. You won't get a chance to pause, look around, and assess the different perspectives of the subject. Moreover, your pictures won't be exclusive as all the members will be shooting the same buildings and people. On a recent cruise, my first, I made the mistake of opting to go on the 'photographic tours' of two island locations.... both turned out to be a bumpy bus ride through nothing very interesting and suddenly a "Stop, everybody out, here's a picture!" It doesn't work!