

Beginners' Guide to

digital photography



[Part 8: Travel Photography]

Preparing for the Journey

Helpful tips for travel photography

Capture Beautiful
Architecture

How to get that perfect shot

part eight



Part 8: Travel Photography

Preparations:

Everybody has different priorities when travelling. For photography enthusiasts the main objective will be to return home with a collection of beautiful images, for others the priority may be to return home with a suitcase full of new clothes or a lovely golden sun tan. Regardless of where your priorities lay, it's likely you'll carry your camera with you and snap a few photos for memory's sake. Whatever your agenda, these basic tips aim to help you to improve your travel pics.

Spend a bit of time doing research before you book your trip in order to learn what photographic opportunities there are, how to get to certain places, what the best vantage points are and what times attractions are open. Read lots of brochures and travel books, talk to people who have been there and study the area on the internet.

Gain an understanding of the local culture in order to avoid offending people and study a phrase book and learn a few words such as please and thank you. The better prepared you can be before you set off, the less frustrating the holiday will be - but

ensure your itinerary allows you plenty of free time to explore the area for yourself, to stumble upon places and scenes far away from the tourist track.

Make sure you have all the equipment you are likely to need including several large memory cards, filters and light weight tripod as well as camera and lens cleaning products, but don't over pack as you'll find that lugging bulky equipment around will quickly destroy your enthusiasm and zap much needed energy levels. Take care when choosing a camera bag. You'll want something with a couple of compartments that isn't bulky and cumbersome that you can carry easily for long periods of time. Don't make it too obvious that you are carrying a lot of expensive equipment as you may find yourself a target for thieves.

When you arrive at a destination, ask the locals for advice as no one will know the area better than they do and they may be able to guide you to vantage points away from crowds and tour groups. The staff at your hotel will likely speak English if language is a barrier.



Aerials:

When booking your flights, ask for a window seat as your holiday begins long before you touch-down at your destination and, if you are lucky enough, you'll have some terrific aerial opportunities - especially the first few minutes after takeoff and before landing.

Generally speaking you'll be asked to store your carry-on luggage in the overhead compartment until the seatbelt sign is off but you'll rarely have any problems if you have a smallish camera. If your camera is larger with a bulky lens, ask permission before takeoff as you don't want to put your safety nor that of other passengers at risk.

Have your camera ready whilst the plane is gaining or losing altitude, set exposure and bracketing options and look around to see what opportunities you may be afforded. Vibrations and jolts from the plane will prove a challenge especially as using the window sill

to brace your camera will generally just make things worse. Instead select a fast, continuous shutter. Some of your images may be affected by camera shake but you'll be bound to get one or two sharp ones.

Should your holiday include a scenic flight you'll likely be cruising at altitudes and speeds that favour photography. Choose a company that has a single-engine, overhead-winged plane as they are able to fly slower. Look for interesting colours and patterns in the landscape and objects that convey a sense of place.

Polarising filters are useless because they react with the several layers of glass and plastic on the windows, but a UV filter can come in handy to cut through unwanted atmospheric elements such as pollution and haze.





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Architecture:

One of the most interesting elements of a foreign land is its architecture: beautiful ancient temples, churches, castles and chateaus full of intricate detail and weathered facades. Look for unusual viewpoints and elements in the surrounding scene to help capture a sense of place and spirit. The isolation or juxtaposition of an old building in modern day surroundings. Winding driveway to lead the eye, intricate wrought iron archways to frame your subject or even pedestrians to portray a sense of scale or activity. Capture the building's many angles and include patterns and detail in the workmanship.

Don't restrict your photography to the exterior if you are permitted to photograph

inside. The interior of a building can be just as informative and interesting as the exterior, however you may find that it lacks the necessary light for good photographs. If you won't be disrupting others and you have the necessary camera functions, you could try a technique known as 'painting with light'. Mount your camera on a tripod and compose your shot, then set the shutter to 'B', which allows your shutter to remain open whilst you move around the scene firing bursts of light using a portable flash unit. You'll need strong batteries to ensure quick recharge as you don't want to remain too long in one place or you'll be captured in the image as a ghostly figure. Lighting can be kept even by avoiding overlaps in the flash bursts.



Carnivals and parades:

Carnivals and parades are quite often on the agenda for an overseas trip and can afford some wonderfully colourful and dramatic images.

A bit of pre-planning can result in rich rewards for a photographer, but be aware that festivals can also afford rich rewards for thieves. Plan not to carry too much equipment and keep personal possessions

and money secured under your clothing inside a money belt.

Try finding out the route or schedule for the event beforehand so you can scope out the best viewpoints. Look for high positions or locations that will get you away from the hustle and bustle of the moving crowd and select a lens that allows you the flexibility to capture the whole scene as well as to zoom

in close to the action. Use a mix of fast and slow shutter speeds for more interesting effects and don't limit your photography to the festival participants.

Search the crowd for subjects as well. People will be so absorbed in the festivities that they are unaware of the camera, resulting in some wonderfully candid people pics.





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The Locals:

For a photographer, the most rewarding images can be those of the local people. People that appear quite ordinary in their own environment seem extraordinary to us. Each culture has their own style of dress, sense of adornment and way of life and it's these differences between us that can lead to interesting, compelling, and thought provoking images.

Adopt a gradual and friendly approach to your portrait taking. By being polite and speaking a few words of the local language can help you to develop a relationship with people which is essential to their cooperation. Sometimes you may prefer to photograph from afar without the subjects knowledge, such as when composing an environmental portrait but often eye contact produces eminently more powerful images. Having the permission and cooperation of the sitter also allows you the ability to capture small details such as intricate henna work, bejeweled hands, richly decorated clothing and unusual body adornment. Using a zoom lens will allow you to photograph people without encroaching on their personal space and will result in a more relaxed situation. Should someone not want their photo taken, be polite and move on.



Put Your Best Image Forward

Email us the best travel photo you've taken. Files should be approx 1MB and received before deadline of 5pm Thursday.

Entries can be emailed to photo@dailyexaminer.com.au.

The best images will appear in the next installment of *Beginners' Guide to Digital Photography*, published on Monday 11th April.

Prize for the best image each week will be a 7" Digital Photo Frame.

All photographs appearing in the paper will win the photographer 50 free 6x4 prints in store at Harvey Norman Grafton.

At the end of the course, the best image will win the photographer a Panasonic Digital SLR twin lens camera Kit (DMC-G10KTWIN)

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