

# TRAVEL ✈️ SNAP CARDS

## ROAD TRIPS I



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Road trips are a lot of fun. Photography road trips can produce some extraordinary results for your portfolio. Follow these successful tips to make the most of your next photography road trip!

PRINT SIZE: A5  
14cm x 21cm /  
5.53" x 8.27"

- Carry plenty of drinks, snacks, and other food.



- Bring at least 2 methods of downloading and backup: drives, laptops, or memory sticks or cards. Download everyday. Have extra memory cards in case you lose one or one fails.

- Always carry **at least 2 cameras** in case one breaks.
- Take notes everywhere that you shoot. **Make sure that your EXIF data is turned on.**

Travel photography absolutely requires the identification of the exact location



- If electricity might be questionable, carry an inverter that works off of the 12-volt car battery. If your trip is really extended, you may want to also carry a small generator.



- Bring adequate maps both paper and electronic in your own language, a GPS (other than your smartphone), extra gasoline and a spare tire. Have your documents in order and easily accessible. If traveling abroad, you'll need an International Driver's license.

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## SAFARI PHOTOGRAPHY



Virtually, every photographer dreams of a safari photographic adventure and there is much to consider before making the large investment for this type of travel. In this card, we will outline some of the early considerations.

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### GET THE GEAR



- A-** If possible 3 camera bodies would be better. Two for constant use and one for backup.
- B-** At least 300mm. A zoom telephoto is perfect: 200-400mm zoom.
- C-** For sweeping vista shots. Work with both cameras at once. One with the zoom telephoto lens and the other with the wide-angle lens. You don't want the best action to occur while you're changing lenses.
- D-** Electronic flash for night photography. Also bring LOTS of memory cards (**E**).

### PRO TIP:

**ISO: AUTO** Use Auto ISO and set a maximum that works well with your camera model.

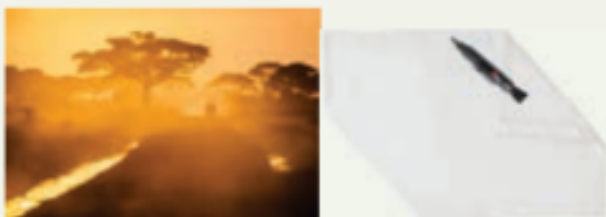
**A / Av** Use aperture priority and keep your lens set between wide open and f/11. Always note your shutter speed. For active wildlife you want that shutter speed fast enough to freeze the action.



Always focus on the eyes! For birds, using a single center spot for focusing works well. For larger animals use a center cluster of focus points.



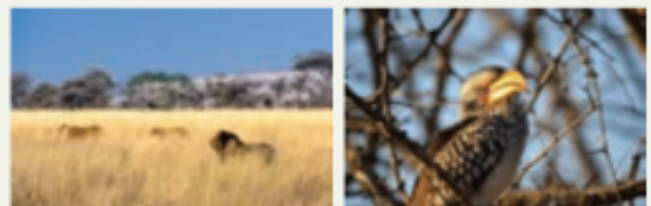
### DEALING WITH DUST



Dust is a major concern while on safari. **Don't** change lenses unless it is absolutely necessary. Bring some thick pillowcases and place gear that you're not actively using inside the pillowcase to protect it from dust.

**PRO TIP:** Carry a lens pen for quick and easy cleaning. Each evening conduct a more thorough cleaning of the entire exterior of the cameras and lenses. A dusty sensor can ruin your pictures.

### COMPOSING



The close up photograph is always dramatic, but as a travel photographer, make sure you take in the big picture as well. Show potential travelers the story of the surroundings!

Capture all of the wildlife from the birds to the smaller creatures on the ground. Your guide may know a lot about the wildlife and the location, but have little knowledge about photography. Provide suggestions to your tour guide

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**SEIZE THE MOMENT**



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Use this travel Snap Card to find inspiration and motivation to get out there, get going, and get your travel photography portfolio established!

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## DREAM AS IF YOU'LL LIVE FOREVER. LIVE AS IF YOU'LL DIE TODAY.

– James Dean (1931 – 1955. American actor)



**“REALIZE DEEPLY THAT THE PRESENT MOMENT IS ALL YOU EVER HAVE.”**

– Eckhart Tolle

(Born 1948. Spiritual teacher, author of *The Power of Now* and *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose*.)



**“CHANGE THE FUTURE BY CHANGING THE PRESENT. DON'T WAIT TO START. START NOW.”**

– Akiroq Brost

(1903 – 1995. German journalist and publisher.)



**“THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO SUCCESS – TO BE ABLE TO SPEND YOUR LIFE IN YOUR OWN WAY.”**

– Christopher Morley

(1890 - 1957. American journalist, novelist, essayist and poet.)



**“EVERYDAY IS A NEW OPPORTUNITY TO RAISE THE BAR. MAKE TODAY COUNT.”**

– Wesam Fawzi

(Entrepreneur, investor, and business strategist)

# TRAVEL → SNAP CARDS

## TRAVELING WITH A MODEL



With the right mix of personalities, traveling with a model while shooting travel photography has some significant advantages. Using a model can allow you to maximize your time and gather numerous salable images in multiple locations that illustrate different concepts.

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### ADVANTAGES



- Working with a model helps the travel photographer to better choreograph images for a particular location.
- This pre-visualization of the model within a scene allows for the development of a theme and also the control over composition including colors.

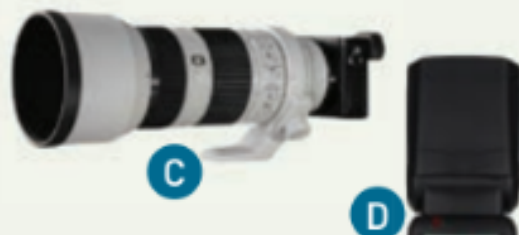
**PRO TIP:** Even if you have a personal relationship with the model, get a signed model release for every image. This maximizes the return on the images. Communicate this ahead of time. Be open and honest with your intent.

### BRING THE RIGHT GEAR

Having a model to work with is an exquisite opportunity. In order to maximize the potential, you will need a wide variety of lenses, but you also want to travel light. This is a case where a mirrorless camera system really makes sense.

You'll also want the following items:

- A-** When traveling with a model you will want at least two camera bodies.
- B-** 35mm, 50mm, 85mm (all prime lenses)
- C-** 70-200mm zoom (these are 35mm film equivalent focal lengths, convert the focal length for mirrorless).
- D-** At least one electronic flash and a collapsible reflector. -optional-



### BRING THE MOOD (BOARD)

- E-** Prepare a mood board before embarking on your shoot. A mood board is a visual representation of what you're looking to capture with your photograph. It can be an actual board or something on your laptop or tablet. The mood board can include color samples, clothing ideas, and other photographs that illustrate expressions or mood.



# TRAVEL → SNAP CARDS

## VILLAGES & SMALL TOWNS

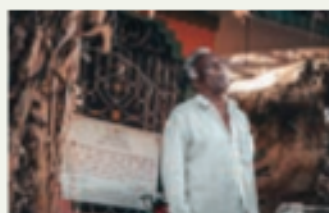


Villages & small towns are ripe with opportunity for the travel photographer. They often imbue the quaintness and calming personality that creates desire for travel in the first place. However, they are also challenging. These little communities are often tight knit and somewhat wary of strangers.

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### START RESEARCHING WITHOUT A CAMERA

- When including small town communities and villages in your portfolio, spend time searching the area for angles and landmarks that capture the essence of the community.
- Research the history of your subject. Identify key landmarks and include them in your visual story of the town's background and personality. These shots needn't be blatant. Let a viewer explore the scene.
- One of the largest hurdles is getting beyond the initial mistrust of local residents. One way to gain trust is to spend a day or two visiting various places around town without your camera. Introduce yourself. Be friendly. Establish a rapport, be interested in their lives, and then bring out your camera.



### CREATE INTIMACY



A



B



C

**A-** Once the local residents have accepted you, small towns and villages are a great source for intimate travel portraits. Keep your setup simple. Use natural light. Use minimal direction. Let them be as they wish, as natural as possible and capture those special moments. This is a talent that is shared by many of the world's best travel photographers.

**B & C-** Small towns and villages are often quiet places. They don't generate excitement, unless you create it. Work hard to establish a mood. Use light, shadow, the camera angle, and color to entice a viewer's interest in these simple places.

# TRAVEL SNAP CARDS

## FOGGY LANDSCAPE

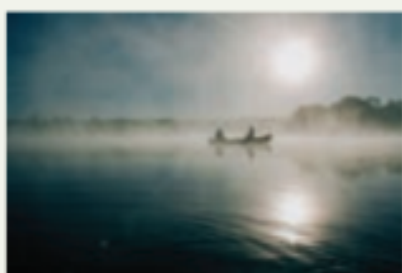


There is one very gigantic asset to creating a photograph in the fog, and that is that it instantly adds mood to your picture. However, knowing the limitations can help you succeed at creating better travel photography.

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### ALL ABOUT TIMING

Fog generally occurs first thing in the morning or right after sunset.



MORNING

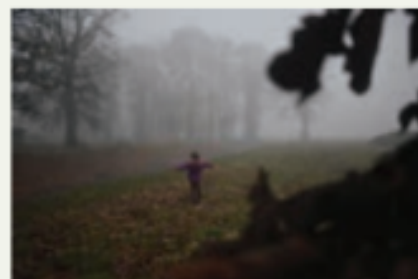


EARLY EVENING

**MORNING:** If you're close to bodies of water, fog will often occur in the early morning hours. Plan on this by incorporating strong storytelling shapes as points of interest.

**EARLY EVENING:** When fog occurs in the evening, it will often begin to form as the Sun sets. This can lead to a magical moment when you still have fog but you also have light.

### PLAY WITH IT



Place colorful objects close to the camera. Do this as a point of interest to combat the loss of color saturation in the distance. You can switch to monochrome in foggy conditions to help eliminate the loss of color saturation and contrast.

### POST PROCESSING TIPS!

- **Saturation:** Bump the saturation and contrast. Fog saps the color saturation out of any scene, and also lowers both tonal contrast and color contrast.
- **Dehaze:** Many post-production programs will offer this option.
- **Vibrance:** This tool increases the tonal intensity of the more muted colors, but it doesn't modify the already properly saturated colors within your image.
- **Sharpening:** Fog reduces the resolving power of the camera lens making an image appear soft or out of focus, especially in the distance. It also limits the field of view. Be very careful when using this option. Don't overdo it!



### GET IN THE MOOD

Fog adds mood. Don't be afraid to let your image speak to the moment - dark and foggy! Let the muted tones make the moment and use it to convey a message.

# TRAVEL ↗ SNAP CARDS

## MIDDAY LIGHT I



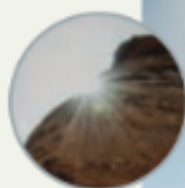
As a travel photographer, you often have limited time. This is why it is important to hone your skills for less than ideal conditions. Midday light is one of those situations. You don't want to have to put your camera away for hours waiting for the midday light to pass.

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### PRO TIPS!

#### ADD DRAMA

Use lens flare to add dramatic interest.



#### USE STRONG SHAPES

Look for strong shapes that you can use to create interest.



#### TRY SOME FILTERS

Try a neutral density filter to slow down the exposure.

Depending upon the angle of subject to the Sun- a polarizing filter may help put some color back into the sky.

### 4 TECHNIQUES FOR PHOTOGRAPHING IN MIDDAY LIGHT



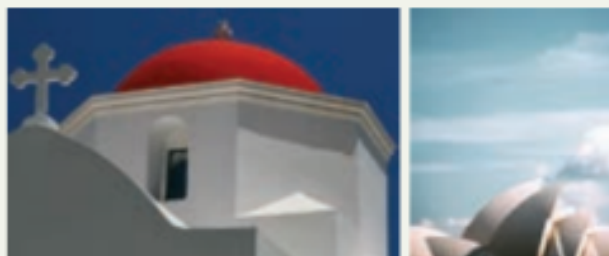
#### 1- TELEPHOTO LENS

The 1<sup>st</sup> tip is to use your longest telephoto lens. Extreme magnification helps to minimize the visual strength of poor lighting.



#### 2- MAKE IT ARTSY

The 2<sup>nd</sup> technique is to look for tunnels of light- where the midday light is funneled through and in-between tall buildings. This helps to create a directional light source.



#### 3- SHAPES LOVE CONTRAST

The 3<sup>rd</sup> technique is to look for details that make good use of the strong overhead lighting. This will be mostly limited to architecture.



#### 4- GO FULL PANORAMA

The 4<sup>th</sup> technique is to shoot panoramic images. Just like the first tip, this technique tends to minimize the visual strength of poor lighting.

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## MIDDAY LIGHT II



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Midday light is far less than ideal when photographing people for your travel photography. However, you're not likely enthusiastic about wasting 8 to 10 hours every day that you're traveling waiting for the light to change. You must seek a solution.

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### TECHNIQUES FOR PHOTOGRAPHING PEOPLE IN MIDDAY LIGHT



Midday light doesn't work well with travel shots of people (A). It creates stark, heavy, ugly shadows across the face. It also creates excessive contrast between the subject and the background.



- **TECHNIQUE 1:** Position your subject with their back to the Sun, and then shoot to the right (overexpose slightly). This will open up the shadows on the face and blow out the background for creative effect.



- **TECHNIQUE 2:** You can use an electronic flash to fill in the shadows on the face. Just make sure the flash isn't overpowered. You can also use a reflector to fill in the harsh shadows. On example B, the photographer positioned the woman with her back toward the Sun, and then creatively used the hat as a reflector for the shadow side of

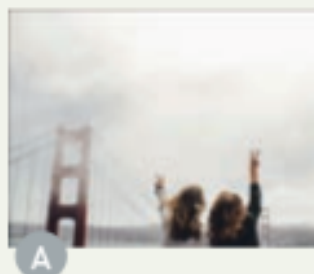
### USE SHADES CREATIVELY



During times of midday light look for areas of shade, or create shade. In example A, the photographer used the shade of a tree to help balance the contrast, as well as to add visual interest. In example B, shade was created by having the model hold up a colorful blanket.

**HINT:** In example B, the photographer also used a graduated filter to put some color into the sky.

### REDUCE CONTRAST



**Example A:** Many times during midday light there will be clouds moving across the sky. When a cloud covers the Sun your lighting will go from awful to excellent. It's worth the wait, although, it may only last from a few seconds to a minute or two.

In **example B** the travel photographer employed 'filtered light' (light that is filtering through buildings or trees) to reduce contrast.

# TRAVEL ✈️ SNAP CARDS

## RAIN PHOTOGRAPHY



At first glance, rain is the travel photographer's ultimate nemesis. However, rain does bring some interesting attributes to the table. Colors become more saturated and vivid. Reflections can also add beauty, mystery, and a sense of design to an otherwise mundane scene.

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### GET THE GEAR



Invest in some camera protection such as an umbrella bracket or a camera rain cover. These are readily available anywhere including Amazon.

### TELL A STORY

Rain creates drama by pushing your subjects to act in ways they wouldn't normally do. Capitalize on that. Look for locations with interesting activity such as outdoor markets, parks, and areas of business.

### LOCATION STORY



As creative as rain photography can be, don't go overboard. Great travel photography often gives some indication of where the picture was created. Look for, and include, these indicators. Was it raining in the city? In the country? In a small town?



### SUGGESTED CAMERA SETTINGS

Every situation will be different, but generally, rainy days tend to lack ambient light. So you'll need to set your camera settings accordingly.



Try to use a wide aperture to allow as much light in as possible.

**ISO**

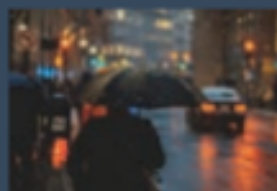
You will probably need to shoot at a higher ISO. Don't go too high or the noise will create a lot of interference with the texture of the rain.



To capture the falling drops, think of a shutter speed of at least 1/250.



### CREATIVE TIPS!



**ADD CLUES:** Add umbrellas, reflections on puddles, etc. Rain doesn't always show in a dramatic way, or show at all, it can look more like haze. Give visual clues that add drama and interest to the scene.

### POST-PROCESSING ADDED VALUE:

- Increase clarity
- Increase vibrance
- Increase saturation when needed
- Watch the histogram for clipping!

# TRAVEL → SNAP CARDS

## SMOG & PHOTOGRAPHY

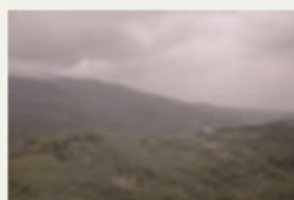


Smog is a recurring issue in many of the world's most sought after travel destinations, especially in the larger cities. It has all of the issues of fog. However, it brings an even bigger problem: color. Also, smog settles in and doesn't 'lift' throughout the day, as fog often will.

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### COME CLOSER

Smog saps the natural color saturation out of a scene, but it also changes the color of a scene. This color shift is generally toward the green/magenta spectrum, both of which are not always pleasant colors, and are difficult to correct in post-production. Smog lowers both tonal contrast and color contrast of distant objects. It helps significantly to get as close to your subject as possible.



Smog will shift the color balance of distant objects in the direction of magenta/green. If you place your subject(s) close to the camera, don't change the color balance too much in post-production, or your subjects will take on an odd appearance in color.



You can place your subject nearer to the camera and avoid distant background areas - drawing attention away from the smog.



### HOW TO DEAL WITH SMOG IN POST-PROCESSING

One way to control the color problems with smog is to spend the day shooting in black and white. If you try to color correct for smog, the resulting photograph will often have a high contrast and unappealing color scheme. You're better off going to alternative methods.



RAW



B&W



OVER  
PROCESSED

# TRAVEL ↗ SNAP CARDS

## SNOW



When you encounter snow during travel photography it will be one of two situations. It will be a location that always has snow, or it will be a location that just happened to have snow while you are there. Your approach to these two situations will be different.

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### WARM THE IMAGE



If your destination has snow year round, adjust the color balance on your camera to a slightly warmer setting. Add warm colors to the foreground to create interest and add color contrast to the preponderance of blue.

#### WHITE BALANCE SETTINGS THAT ADD WARM TONES

COLOR  
TEMPERATURE  
APPROX.  
KELVINS



CLOUDY  
6000 K



DAYLIGHT  
5200 K



SHADE  
7000 K



CUSTOM  
2000-10000 K

### DESTINATION SNOW

#### WHAT YOU NEED TO BRING

If traveling to a snowy destination, research what activities you may be able to capture during your visit.



- Carry extra batteries for your camera and accessories, as they will not last as long in the cold.



- It's a good idea to keep your batteries in a sock or mitten along with a chemical hand warmer.



- Graduated filters and lens hood



Look for interesting angles and points of view. Avoid the 'dead on' shot.



Graduated filters are an excellent way to add some color contrast to what might be a very white and bland scene. Keep it looking natural if you intend to market your travel photography.

### UNPLANNED SNOW



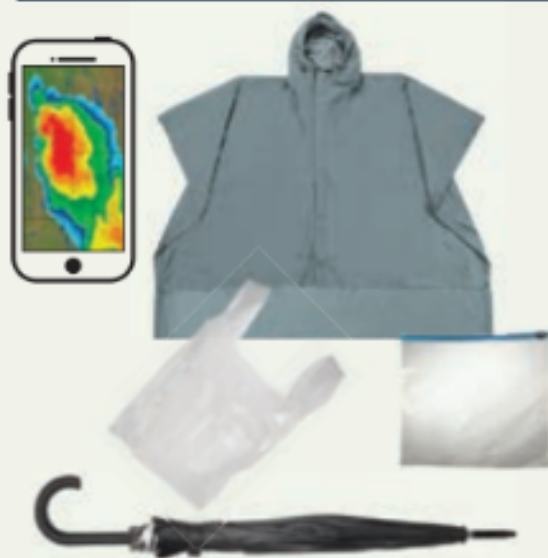
Don't let a good snowstorm slow you down. Use foreground interest, and if possible, background interest as well. Tell the story of where you are.

Snow creates interesting human interaction with the environment. It can be candid or you can set it up. Look for interesting lighting, colors, and shapes to add vibrancy to the scene.

Let's face it. There will come a time that you will face bad weather while out creating your travel photography. How you handle that situation will determine if you come home with some great pictures or not. We are all so accustomed to hearing about the wonders of the Golden Hour. Poor weather can give you that same level of drama at any point during the day!

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## PROTECT YOUR GEAR AND YOURSELF



- Keep abreast of the weather using mobile apps. Use both a forecast app and weather radar app. Dramatic photography almost always presents itself at the start of stormy weather and at the end of the stormy weather.
- You'll feel motivated if you feel safe and secure. Bring a lightweight rain suit or poncho. Pack garbage bags and zip lock bags to keep your gear dry. If you have a helper, bring an oversized umbrella.
- Invest in a rain sleeve for your camera and lens.
- If the weather is really harsh such as a blizzard, tornado, or hurricane make sure to broadcast your intent to others so they know where you are. Always note your location and have an escape route planned. Your safety should be a prime consideration.

## PRO TIPS!



Try photojournalism:  
When bad weather hits- find the story!



If the area is lacking color, switch to black and white.



Wind and rain combined is one of the greatest challenges that you will face as a travel photographer. Set your ISO to auto. Shoot with the shutter priority mode or manual mode.

ISO Auto



Manual or Shutter Priority Mode

Bad weather catches people off-guard and can lead you to some very interesting travel photography opportunities. Use these settings, stroll around your location and watch for opportunities to develop. Practice using FEA!



ISO

Auto



Telephoto lens  
in the range of  
28-135mm



Use aperture  
priority



Aperture: f/8

# TRAVEL ✈️ SNAP CARDS

## WINDY PHOTOGRAPHS



Travel photography is extremely unpredictable. You generally have a limited timeframe in a particular location. Windy conditions are one of the most challenging both creatively and technically.

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### SUGGESTED CAMERA SETTINGS

Keeping your image sharp and in focus can be challenging when the wind is affecting your subjects and the stability of your own camera.



You'll need to shoot with a higher shutter speed in order to freeze movement.



Use a wider aperture, to allow more light in, which will help counteract the fast shutter speed. **But don't use the widest aperture that your lens can offer.** Doing so will decrease the depth of field; in combination with movement caused by the wind, this can add to the lack of apparent sharpness.

**ISO** You will probably need to increase your ISO setting to allow for faster shutter speeds and a narrower aperture setting. In windy situations, faster shutter speeds are better, even at the expense of increased noise. Some denoising in post-processing might be needed.

### WHAT YOU NEED TO BRING



- ZOOM LENS
- WEIGHT
- TRIPOD
- PLASTIC BAGS

Blowing sand and debris can be a camera killer. Keep your gear in sealed Ziploc style plastic bags and only pull it out when executing a shot. Avoid changing lenses. A zoom lens is a great choice in windy conditions.

It's a good idea to weigh down your tripod to reduce wind-induced camera shake.

### WORK WITH IT



Some travel destinations such as coastal areas will almost always have wind. First key lesson is to work with it and not against it. Study the scene, in particular your lighting, and then compose a travel shot where the wind helps your composition.



If you're working with models, find ways to block the wind, or use it in your composition. Keep the hair out of the face. Place the model within a scene that shows where your travel destination is located.



Use windy conditions to demonstrate local customs. A flag blowing in the wind is somewhat cliché, and yet it's a favored image by travel photography editors. Be sure to find at least one.

techniques. Yet, it isn't a good "Urban Energy" travel photograph. Image D is a fabulous "Urban Energy" travel photograph. What's the difference? Never forget your endgame! A travel photograph must indicate the location. Image C could have been taken almost anywhere. Image D has a recognizable skyline.

4. Urban travel destinations always take on an increased energy, and visual beauty, at night. (E vs F)



**Plan accordingly.**

- Practice creating sharp pictures in low light.
- Pick up a small monopod that can fit into a purse or a small camera bag.
- Look for solid objects on which to brace your camera, such as a wall.



C ✘

D ✔



E ✘

F ✔

## DAILY LIFE & STREET - URBAN ENERGY

110



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lead away from  
2- The leading

FESTIVAL

# ACTION CARDS (COMPOSITION SET)

Total time:  
3-8 hours



# LEADING LINES THAT WORK



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## Skill Points:

- Identifying leading lines within a scene
- Using a leading line that is created by light and shadow
- Creating a leading line using a color
- Using leading lines in a composition that run horizontally or diagonally instead of 'into' the photo

Leading lines are a typical, 'first try', for many photographers when they attempt to compose a photograph, since they can be pretty easily spotted in a scene. Leading lines can be comprised of physical objects, colors, and/or areas of contrast.

**KEY LESSON:** There are two common mistakes when it comes to the use of leading lines. The mistakes: 1- The leading lines *lead away* from the subject of the photo instead of toward the subject. 2- The leading lines *lead to nowhere specific* (i.e. a subject), and are not strong enough to be the subject themselves.



### Lines to nowhere:

**Road & Landscape:** This use of a leading line doesn't work properly. The line leads to nowhere significant enough to be the subject, and the line itself is not strong enough to be the subject. Leading lines should lead somewhere.

**Curvy Road:** An ill-devised leading line creates composition confusion. If the car is the subject, then the leading line carries all of the visual weight reducing the car to a focal point. The road in the foreground is so visually dominate that the mountains almost become non-existent.



### Lines and a central subject:

**Blizzard:** The subject is placed in the Rule of Thirds. The lightpoles frame the subject. The headlights are a focal point, and the road is a leading line. Notice that it leads directly to the subject, not past it. At times, it's okay for a leading line to extend beyond the subject. It depends on the overall composition.

**Man in Forest:** Leading lines depend on balance. The intent here was for the trees to lead *down* to the man, but the opposite happens due to the strong spot color. The eyes move from the man, to the top of the frame.



### Natural lines and contrast:

**The Door:** Our eyes tends to follow lines of contrast. These lines can be used as leading lines. The doorway is the subject. The red arrows show the leading lines 'of contrast' that push the eyes toward the door.

**Basketball:** A very simple use of a leading line. The white line separates the upper and lower halves of the image in perfect symmetry. Because the white line is so bright- it attracts the eyes immediately, and then moves them to the center of the image- to the ball and shadow. A properly used leading line can lead from anywhere in the image.



## ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

- 1- Shoot a naturally found leading line of a physical object. Make sure that it leads to the subject and not past it.
- 2- Find a leading line that leads nowhere, then insert your chosen subject at the appropriate point along the leading line for a great composition.
- 3- Use a leading line, or lines, to create a composition that are composed of light and shadow.
- 4- Create a picture with a leading line that enters the shot anywhere other than the foreground.

## HOW DID YOU DO?

- Do your leading lines direct the eyes toward the subject?
- Do your leading lines lead to the subject without overwhelming it?
- Are your leading lines easily noticeable?

Total time:  
2-3 hours



Difficulty Level: Very easy

Skill Points:

- Discovering how dividing the frame creates interest
- Learning how to apply this concept to different subjects

## 2/3 – 1/3 AN OFFSHOOT OF THE RULE OF THIRDS



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We call this the 2/3–1/3 concept, because it is not established as a separate rule; it is more of an offshoot of the Rule of Thirds. This concept is often applied in landscape photography. However, it can work in other genres as well. Simplified, the 2/3–1/3 concept simply states that you divide your image frame into two parts: one containing 2/3 and the other containing 1/3.

**KEY LESSON:** The idea behind the 2/3 and 1/3 concept is that you create an asymmetrical division of the frame. This division creates an imbalance that attracts and maintains viewer interest. The division of the frame does not need to be horizontal. It can also be vertical, or even diagonal.



1



2



3

1- In this photograph, the image has been divided using the 2/3–1/3 concept (vertically and horizontally). Look familiar? The cross point is the sweet spot on the Rule of Thirds grid.

2- Do not blindly follow a rule or concept without thinking through the entire composition. The composition of



4



5

this photo is weakened due to another rule of composition called "Line of Sight". All of your composition elements need to work together harmoniously.

3- The 2/3–1/3 concept works equally well with angled compositions. A straight horizon line is not required.

4- The 2/3–1/3 concept can help you to establish what is the subject of your photo. The visual weight between the woman and the landscape would be quite equal without the concept being applied here. Giving the woman only 1/3 of the frame diminishes her visual weight, and thus sets up the landscape as the subject.

5- By imagining the division of lines in your mind as you take a photograph- you will create better-composed shots.



### ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

- 1- Organize a landscape photo shoot where you will apply the 2/3–1/3 concept. Shoot horizontally and vertically. Change the placement of the division, and make sure to try an angular division.
- 2- Organize a photo shoot with a friend. Create at least 6 different photographs where the frame is divided into the 2/3–1/3 concept. Place your friend into these 6 scenes as the subject. Remember! The most successful compositions use at least three rules, or tools, of composition.

### HOW DID YOU DO?

- Were you able to apply the concept while placing your friend as the subject? What three tools or rules of composition did you use in addition to the 2/3 – 1/3 concept to establish your friend as the subject?

Total time:  
5-7 hours



### Skill Points:

- Learning about the color wheel
- Identifying color contrast (contrasting colors)
- Composing with color contrast

# UNDERSTANDING COLOR CONTRAST



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The word *contrast* is defined as the state of being strikingly different from something else, typically something in juxtaposition or in close association. To understand this, you must be familiar with the color wheel.

**KEY LESSON:** Color contrast has nothing to do with light to dark; that's tone contrast. Color contrast has nothing to do with saturation; that's color saturation contrast. There is a lot of confusion regarding color contrast and defining it. To help you, let's change around the terminology to "Contrasting Color".



### RGB Color Wheel

There are numerous color wheels in existence. As a photographer, and to keep things simple, use the RGB color wheel.



### RGB

Red, Green, Blue.  
Used on screens  
and the Internet.



### CMYK

Used for printing  
presses.



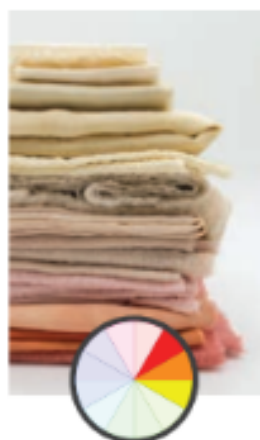
### RYB

Red, Yellow, Blue.  
Additively used in  
pigment paints.



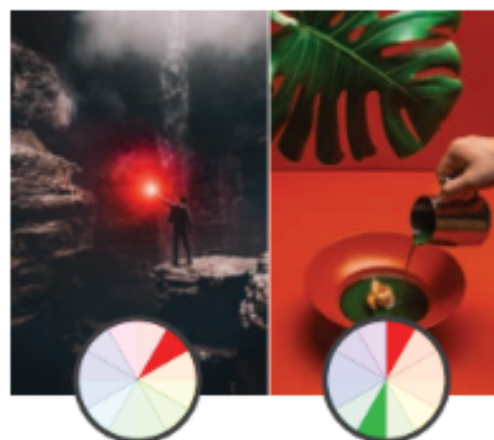
### Red/Orange and Teal - High color contrast:

**Left:** This is a carefully crafted use of color contrast. The two primary colors are a teal blue and red/orange. Those three colors are polar opposites on the RGB color wheel. **Right:** A teal window frame and an orange/red table. This shot has high color contrast. At first glance, it's not a likely conclusion. Remember, it's not tone contrast, or saturation, or brightness. It's where the colors fall on the color wheel.



### Low color contrast:

Ignore tone contrast, brightness, and saturation. These colors are yellow through an orange/red. They are next to each other on the RGB color wheel. This creates low color contrast.



### Crafted color contrast:

**Left:** We have red and black, or almost black...which isn't on the color wheel! Black, and white, are the extremes when judging any color contrast. Any color on the color wheel would be a high color contrast opposite to the colors black or white. **Right:** These two colors are not on opposite sides of the RGB color wheel. Yet, they are polar opposites on the RYB color wheel. Color is a complex subject.



### ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

- 1- Shoot some nature photography with high color contrast on the RGB color wheel. See how many you can find in an afternoon.
- 2- Organize a photo shoot where you photograph a model utilizing low color contrast. Accomplish this by planning out your props, clothing, background, and even less obvious details like make-up, eye color, and hair color. Share your results with your model.
- 3- Organize a still life photo shoot where you incorporate first high color contrast, and then low color contrast using the same subject.

### HOW DID YOU DO?

- How many high color contrast nature photos did you find?
- Did you set up your low color contrast model shoot? Did you have any trouble with exposure?
- Did one color contrast scheme work better for your chosen subjects than the other?

Total time:  
3-8 hours



Difficulty Level:  
Easy to challenging

**Skill Points:**

- Identifying the depth of field window – shallow and deep
- Using DOF to indicate the primary subject – using shallow DOF
- Recognizing an improper use of DOF

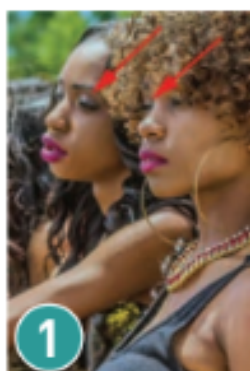
## USING DEPTH OF FIELD



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Depth of Field (DOF) is the 'window' of apparent sharpness in a photograph. It is affected by three photographic elements: aperture ( $f$ /stop), lens focal length, and camera to subject distance. Here, we will focus on the aesthetic use of depth of field versus the technical considerations.

**KEY LESSON:** DOF can guide the viewer into and through the image. It can also indicate the stopping point within the composition. A narrow window of focus is properly referred to as "Shallow DOF", and a large window of focus is properly referred to as "Deep DOF".



**Window of focus is TOO narrow:**

- 1- Here, the DOF window did NOT cover both women. This could be a positive, or a negative. If the intention was a portrait- this DOF placement would be a mistake.
- 2- This beach image could be improved with a deeper DOF: Close down the aperture, widen the focal length of the lens, or move the camera further away from the subject to increase DOF.



**The importance of settings and equipment:**

- 1- Minimal DOF, (a shallow window), was achieved by using a telephoto lens. The longer the focal length of the lens- the shallower the DOF window will be from a given camera to subject distance.
- 2- DOF is a huge consideration in macro photography, because the camera to subject distance is minimal. Macro photography is shot at smaller apertures: usually  $f/16$  –  $f/32$ , depending on the lens.



**Focusing on the important details:**

DOF increases as the lens focal length becomes shorter, the camera-to-subject distance increases, or the aperture becomes smaller. Shallow DOF can be used to isolate a subject from a busy background or to focus on a specific message. A viewer's eyes will migrate toward the sharpest part of an image: The puppy nose is the main subject and there is a minimal DOF window. The head of the dog is a frame to the subject.



**ACTION ASSIGNMENT!**

- 1- Shoot a shallow DOF photograph where the technique improves the image by separating the subject from a distracting background.
- 2- Choose a subject, and change the DOF window: 1- Change the aperture, (adjust the exposure via the ISO and/or shutter speed), 2- Change the lens focal length, 3- Finally change the camera to subject distance.
- 3- Photograph a location where a deep DOF improves the photograph.
- 4- Create a close-up or macro photograph where you carefully place the DOF window.

**HOW DID YOU DO?**

- Did you use DOF to separate a subject from its background?
- Were you able to create a deep DOF picture with a successful composition?
- Did you fully understand how to use DOF to point a viewer toward your subject?

Total time:  
3-5 hours



### Skill Points:

- Looking for diagonal lines in a scene
- Creating motion and direction with diagonal lines
- Using camera angle to create a dynamic diagonal line
- Setting a mood with diagonal lines

## THE DYNAMICS OF DIAGONAL LINES



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Diagonal lines suggest a feeling of movement or direction.

Objects presented in a diagonal line (visually) suggest an instability in relationship to gravity. Since, they are neither vertical nor horizontal - the visual, mental, picture is that something is moving or about to fall. This creates tension and drama in a viewer.

**KEY LESSON:** Diagonal lines can be a huge benefit to your composition toolbox. You can look for diagonal lines in a scene, or you can create them by tipping your camera. The key to successful diagonal line use is to learn when the effect is appropriate to your mood or message.



### Athlete:

This is a classic example of a diagonal line creating the visual effect of motion and direction in a still photograph.



### Flag:

You can add drama to a photograph by choosing a camera point-of-view that 'creates' diagonal lines. You can tip the camera to create the effect.



### Man & Staircase:

This is an example of a 'found' scene that makes use of two diagonal lines. The lines complete three tasks. They move the eyes toward the man. They help to create a direction in the photo from left to right. Finally, they create a visual tension that manifests itself at the point of the subject.



### Woman:

Diagonal lines do not have to be physical objects. They can be created through light, shadow, or color. This photographer placed his subject near some diagonal lines to help set a mood for the resulting photograph.



### ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

- 1- Organize a photo shoot using a model. Scout out locations where you can use diagonal lines to set a variety of moods – peaceful, angry, excited, unhappy, busy.
- 2- Go on a photo shoot where you seek diagonal lines existing in scenes, and then use them in a composition. Try twisting the camera POV to create diagonal lines.
- 3- Print out your photos and study your results

### HOW DID YOU DO?

- Were you able to create different moods with your model and diagonal lines? What moods did you capture? Share your results with others for opinions.
- Did you locate existing diagonal lines in a scene and use them?
- Did you create diagonal lines by tilting your camera?

Total time:  
4-6 hours



## THE INTENSITY OF THE DYNAMIC ANGLE



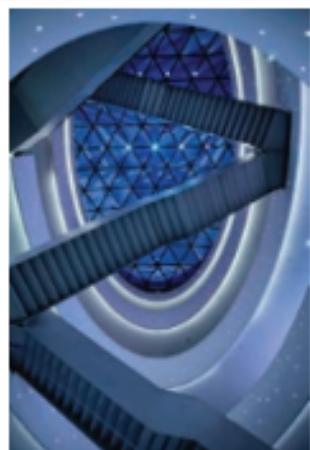
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### Skill Points:

- Exploring dynamic angles
- Learning when to use a dynamic angle versus a static angle
- Developing an eye for dynamic angle compositions

*Dynamic Angle* is achieved by selecting a camera POV that depicts the subject, from an angle, that a viewer wouldn't normally see. The *Dutch Angle* is a shot that occurs when the camera is set so that the vertical lines angle toward the side of the frame, and the horizon line, is not parallel with the bottom of the frame. This creates a feeling of uneasiness or tension.

**KEY LESSON:** The reverse of a dynamic angle is known as a "static angle". In the latter, everything is lined up perpendicular and from a "normal" camera POV. A dynamic angle catches a viewer's eye, because it catches them off-guard. It's like a tiny little "visual" slap to the face.



**Building:** This is a classic use of "The Dutch Angle", as a Dynamic Angle, to create visual interest. In reality (a static angle), the building would be vertical, and the grassy hill would be at an angle. By reversing this, the photograph creates a visual tension that is undeniable.

**Mall Ceiling:** A dynamic angle can be created by "tilting" the camera or through an unusual camera point of view (POV). Here, pointing the camera upward, created a dynamic angle of this mall interior. Take note, the architect carefully planned a view such as this. Architecture is a great subject to begin trying out dynamic angles.

**Surfer:** Any subject can be photographed using dynamic angles. The key is to make it work artistically and on a communication level with your viewers. Notice of the dynamic angle to the head, shoulders, and horizon line.

**Basketball:** The elements that you include in your photograph, or those that you don't, can create a dynamic angle. In this example, concentrating on the graphic elements of the court and shadow, while cutting off the man at his shoulders, creates a dynamic angle with high tension and a mysterious story.

**Reflections:** Do you feel like you're going to fall or slip? Does this shot look odd to you? Dynamic angles can be created in post-production, by flipping an image from its original perspective. This shot has been flipped vertically.

**Golden Gate Bridge:** You can also add tension to a dynamic angle by going more abstract. The dynamic angle is a favored tool of abstract photographers.



### ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

### HOW DID YOU DO?

- 1- Organize two photo shoots. **First photo shoot:** photograph an interesting building with lots of access. Big shopping malls work well for this exercise. Explore the building for dynamic angles created by the architect. In some shots use only architecture, in other shots include people. **Second photo shoot:** spend an afternoon shooting, where in every shot, you angle the camera- no static compositions. Shoot some without people and some with people.
- 2- Select five existing photos, and using post-production software, flip their perspective. Look for ways to use dynamic angles to make them more interesting (think of the reflections picture).

- Did you find and photograph some of the architect's intentional dynamic angles?
- Were you able to increase the visual value of one or more of your shots by changing the perspective in post-production?