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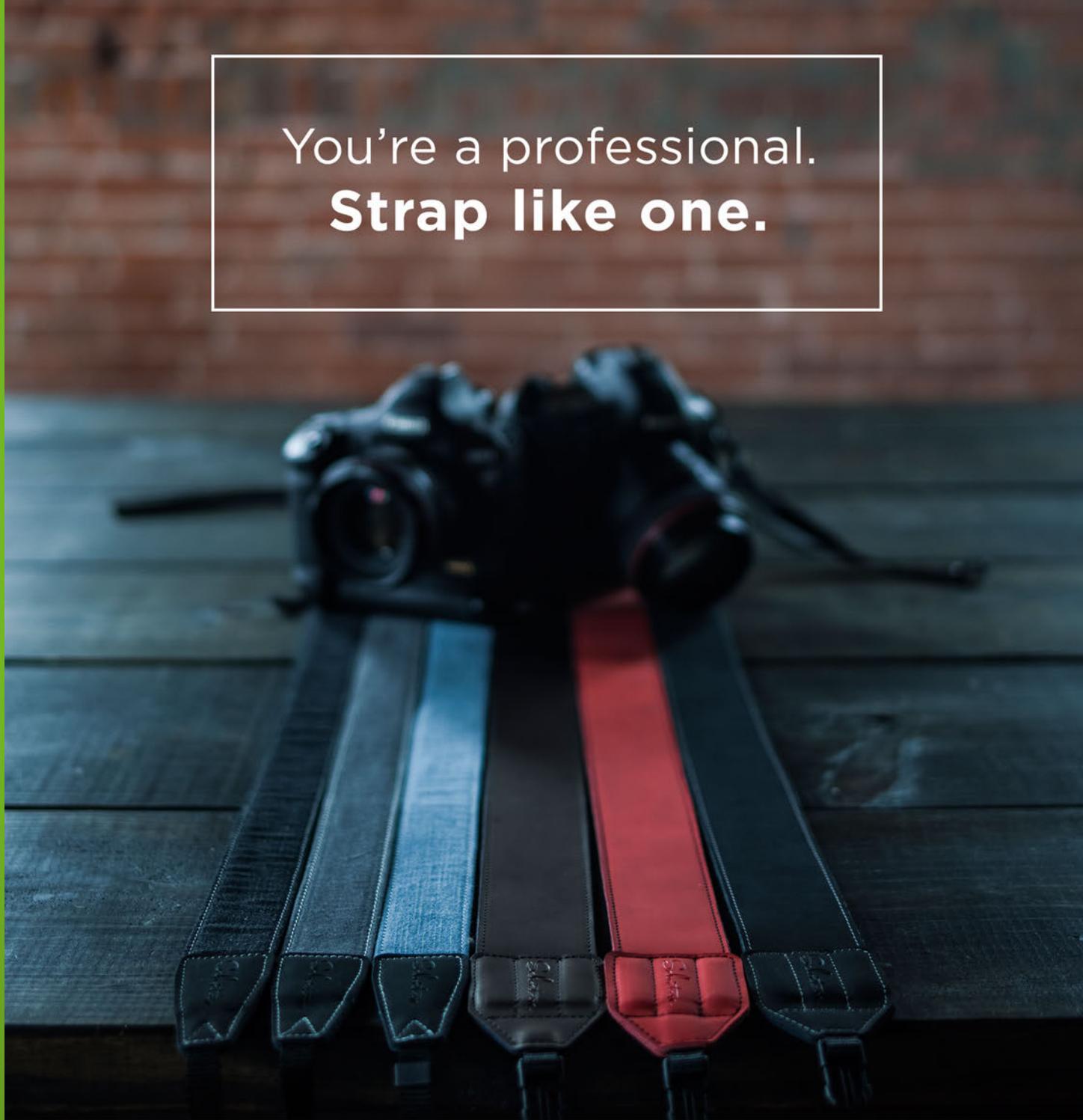
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Salvatore Cincotta
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Shutter Magazine is about photography education. Our goal is to provide current, insightful, and in-depth educational content for today's professional wedding and portrait photographer. Shutter Magazine uses the latest technologies to deliver information in a way that is relevant to our audience. Our experienced contributors help us create a sense of community and establish the magazine as one of the leading photography publications in the world.

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THE COVER

PHOTOGRAPHER: Sal Cincotta | salcincotta.com

CAMERA: Canon 1DX

LENS: Canon 70-200 2.8

EXPOSURE: 1/100th @ f4.5, ISO 50

LOCATION: Spring Mountain Ranch State Park,
Blue Diamond, Nevada

MAKE-UP ARTIST: Sabrina Bates-Whited

ABOUT THE IMAGE: This image was taken at Spring Mountain Ranch outside of Las Vegas, NV. Follow more behind the scenes in Sal's article this month!



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LAUNCH
POINT

A Message from the Editor-In-Chief

Travel is one of my passions. I love to experience the world and everything it has to offer.

I often find myself inspired by the differences in the world around us. This includes people, culture, architecture, landscapes, etc.

Wherever you go, make sure you have your camera in hand and are always looking for opportunities to create art. You never know when inspiration will strike.

SAL CINCOTTA

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**THE SIGNATURE
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BY *Salvatore Cincotta*



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SPEED LIGHTS

with
Craig LaMere



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by **Craig LaMere**

One of the main dilemmas faced by newer shooters is deciding which type of artificial light to invest in with a limited budget. The basic question is: What is the best bang for the buck that will help you grow the most? This month, I talk about the pros and cons about the two most common solutions to OCF shooting: speedlights versus mono strobe lights.

I had been shooting for a few months when I decided the pop-up flash on my Canon Rebel was not cutting it.

I knew I needed to step my game up a little to get the images I wanted. I decided to take the plunge into artificial light for my outside location shoots, so I saved my pennies and bought a Canon Speedlight. When I first got it, I did the only thing I knew how to do at the time, and that was to keep the flash in the hot shoe. I used it as fill, trying to bounce it off stuff to create different looks. Then I found off-camera flash (OCF), which was the game changer.

Once I took the flash off the camera, I discovered a new world. I had been shooting constant lights in my studio, but then when I got brave enough to start shooting strobes inside, I took it a step further and started shooting with my strobes outside.

Nowadays, I do not really shoot speedlights anymore, and primarily shoot strobes, but this month I will go over the strengths and weaknesses of both strobes and speedlights for location shooting.



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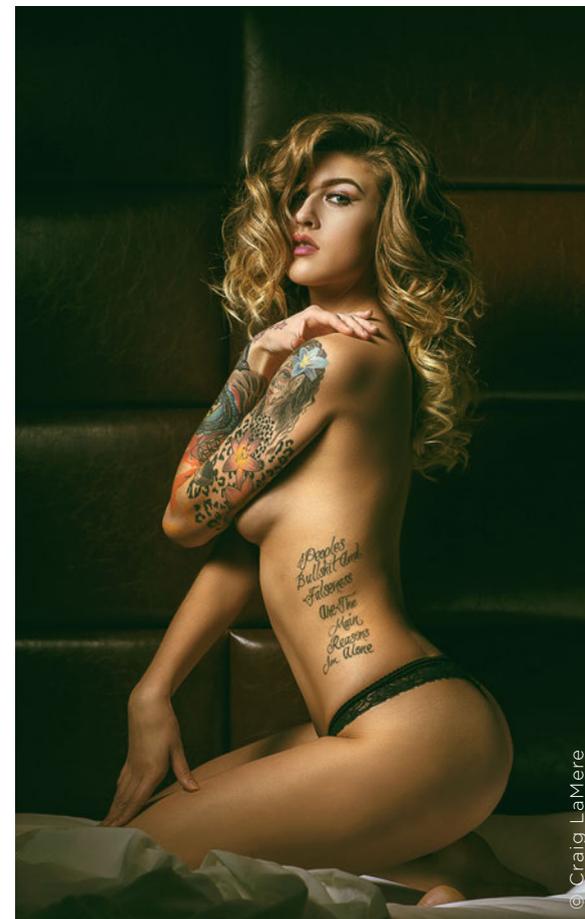
Portability

If you are a shooter on the go, portability may be a huge factor in deciding your lighting source. For me, the number-one pro to using speedlights over strobe lighting is portability. A speedlight is about the size of a water bottle and weighs a pound or so. You can easily pack one or two in your camera bag. Strobes are considerably larger. The smallest strobe head is about the size of a shoebox and weighs a few pounds. They really are not designed to toss into a camera bag and run.

Power

When you talk about the amount of power you have at your disposal to light your subjects, you will encounter

the term *watt seconds*. This refers to the power output of your light source. The more watt seconds your light source produces, the more light output you have. Speedlights produce somewhere between 60 and 100 watt seconds of power. Strobes produce 300 to 1,250 watt seconds of power. Even the smallest strobe head is significantly more powerful than your most powerful speedlight. In most cases, a strobe has at least five times more power. The difference in power may not be a huge thing if you are shooting inside or in a dim setting outside, but when you are trying to overpower the sun or when you are trying to use larger or gridded modifiers, power quickly becomes a very relevant concern. There are brackets you can buy to stack a number of speedlights together to solve the power issue, but for this comparison, I'm just basing my opinions on one head against one head. If power is one of your main needs, then strobes have the advantage over speedlights.



Power Source

Speedlights generally run on four AA batteries. There are also external battery pack options that allow you to add more power. These packs usually hold eight AA batteries and work in conjunction with the four batteries in the speedlight. They are right around 4 by 6 inches, so they are easy to travel with. External packs are a fantastic option if you are shooting a lot of images or shooting fast. They allow your speedlight to recycle more quickly, and give you the ability to shoot a lot longer before you have to change batteries. They are vital to me when I use speedlights to shoot weddings.

There are a number of options for portable battery power. Portable packs for strobes come in many sizes, from a small shoebox to as big as a block of ice. The battery pack I use is the size of a small shoebox and weighs a few pounds. One of the biggest differences in the power sources for speedlights versus strobes is the ability to replenish power. All you have to do when you run out of battery life in a speedlight is change the batteries in the unit. When you run out of juice in your portable battery pack for your strobe, you better either have another one on hand or have four to eight hours to recharge it. It's tricky to proclaim the superiority of either since there are tradeoffs for each.



Light Modifiers

To me, the ability to modify and manipulate light is the key to getting the images I want, and both speedlights and strobes have products available to get the job done. The three most common modifiers are softboxes, octaboxes and beauty dishes. Softboxes are rectangular or square fabric boxes you shoot light through to create soft, pretty light. They come in many sizes. Octaboxes are basically the same as a softbox, but circular. It's the choice between a catchlight that is square or round.

Beauty dishes are circular shallow metal discs that create a light that's not as hard as what's produced by the bare head from a speedlight or the bare bulb of a strobe. It's not as soft as the light from a softbox or octabox. It's pretty much in the middle. The most common size is the 22-inch.

Here is where your decision to choose speedlights or strobes can get tricky. As I said before, the greatest advantage to strobes over speedlights is pure power. The bigger the modifier, the softer the light and the more coverage you have at your disposal. This is where the lack of power in the speedlight head versus the strobe head becomes an issue. The speedlight does not have the power to run the bigger modifiers properly, and they do not have enough power to run modifiers in bright light at any real distance. This is why most of the light-modifying products on the market for speedlight use are small to medium in size. This is not as much of an issue in dim settings or indoor settings, but in the middle of the day, when you are trying to beat the sun, it will be a real concern.

Because of the variety of modifiers you can get and what you are able to do with them in any situation, the advantage has to go to strobes over speedlights. 

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OFF-CAMERA FLASH 101

with Michael Corsentino





© Michael Corsentino



OFF-CAMERA FLASH

© Michael Corsentino



by **Michael Corsentino**

Many of the ShutterFest faithful have been telling me loud and clear that they need help with the basics of off-camera lighting. I've spent years cultivating studio and location skills ranging from simple one-light setups to complex multiple-light, large-crew productions, so I often assume everyone understands the basics. Clearly this isn't the case. This month, let's dig into the foundations and some basic techniques.

At its core, lighting is really simple. We've all heard people describe themselves as available-light shooters. There's nothing wrong with that. I'm the first to admit that you can't beat Mother Nature. But it's important to remember that speedlights and strobes are available lights—ones that you can control, giving you much more freedom than natural light. With natural light alone, you're basically held hostage.



Three Basic Principles

With good off-camera lighting, the goal is to create the light you want rather than the light you're given. When natural light just won't do, you need the tools, techniques and vocabulary to use artificial lights.

Don't overcomplicate it. Off-camera lighting operates according to three basic principles: quantity, quality and direction of light. Let's look at each.

1. Quantity

How much light do you want? Speedlights and strobes allow you to control the amount of light they contribute to an exposure. Think of it like the volume control on your stereo. Speedlights work in TTL (covered later) and manual. The majority of strobes operate in manual mode (also covered later), although several recently released strobes include TTL as well. I'll cover how to control the output of each of these sources.

2. Quality

This is where modifiers or the lack thereof come into play. Each modifier creates a different quality of light, from soft to hard. Shoot-through/bounce-back umbrellas, grids, octabanks, beauty dishes and softboxes each create a different quality of light. Experimenting with each will help you develop a vocabulary and allow you to make informed decisions about when and where to use them. Soft light has gradual transitions from highlight to shadow, while hard light has rapid transitions with much crisper, harder definitions between shadows and highlights. When you diffuse the light, you soften it. When you don't, you get a harder, more contrasted quality of light. They can work great individually or even mixed. The addition of diffusion fabrics and the color of modifiers add various subtleties. Silver delivers a more specular (contrasty) light, while white provides a softer light. For example, if I use a bare flash, I get a more focused hard light source than that same light with a shoot-through umbrella attached. This creates a broad, diffused light source.

3. Direction

The flexibility to precisely control the amount and direction of shadows introduced by your lights, based on their position, is one of the big advantages of off-camera lighting. If you want minimal shadows, place your main light in front of and above your subject at the 12 o'clock position at an approximately 45-degree angle down toward your subject. The farther you move your light left or right of your subject, the more shadow that's introduced. (Refer back to last year's "Circle of Light" feature for more on this.)

Getting the flash off your camera

To do this, you'll need a way to communicate with your remote flashes. This is done with a device known as a trigger. There are dumb triggers that simply communicate on/off signals and smarter triggers that send TTL info. On speedlights, there are two methods of communication, depending on the brand of flash you're using: infrared sensor and radio frequency. These allow TTL and manual power setting information to be communicated between your camera and any remote flashes. I use and recommend radio-based systems for both speedlights and strobes due to their rock-solid reliability and range. That's going to be the Canon 600EX-RT and ST-E3 transmitter, or the PocketWizard FlexTT5 for Nikon shooters. Each allows both TTL and manual operation. Extra-long TTL cables are also an option, providing the same communication in a much less expensive wired one-light solution. For strobes, I use PocketWizard Plus III radio triggers, Profoto Air and Air TTL triggers, and Elinchrom's Skyport.

When to use TTL

TTL, or "through the lens" metering, does the heavy lifting for you, communicating subject-to-light distance, exposure calculations and other info between the camera and remote flashes. It's available on speedlights and select strobes in conjunction with their compatible triggers. TTL is great in fast-moving situations where subject-to-light source distances are changing on the fly. TTL gives you a good ballpark exposure. Then it's up to you to make the lighting your own using +/- exposure compensation values and shutter speed settings, both set on the camera. As I've explained in previous articles, flash exposure compensation controls the amount of flash contributed to the exposure, shutter speed controls the amount of ambient light contributed to the exposure and aperture brings both the amount of flash and ambient up or down.





When to use manual

For some reason, just the mention of manual flash sends people running for the door. But it couldn't be simpler. Remember, it's just quantity of light. Turn it down for less light, turn it up for more light. That's about as complicated as it gets. Manual is best in situations where distances between your lights and subject aren't changing. Keep in mind that you can mix and match TTL and manual.

Let's say you wanted to use two lights to illuminate a wall or backdrop behind your subject, and another flash to light a subject that's moving. I'd set the two background lights to manual mode, dialing in the output I wanted. The wall is static, so manual is perfect. For my subject, TTL would be a good fit, allowing me to easily move around and maintain a solid exposure. Strobes and speedlights treat manual power settings a bit differently, but they're both dead simple. Speedlights use manual power settings from full power, or 1/1 all the way down to 1/128 power, while strobe power output operates based on settings from full stops and below in 1/10 stop increments.

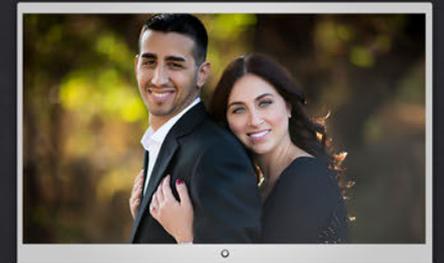
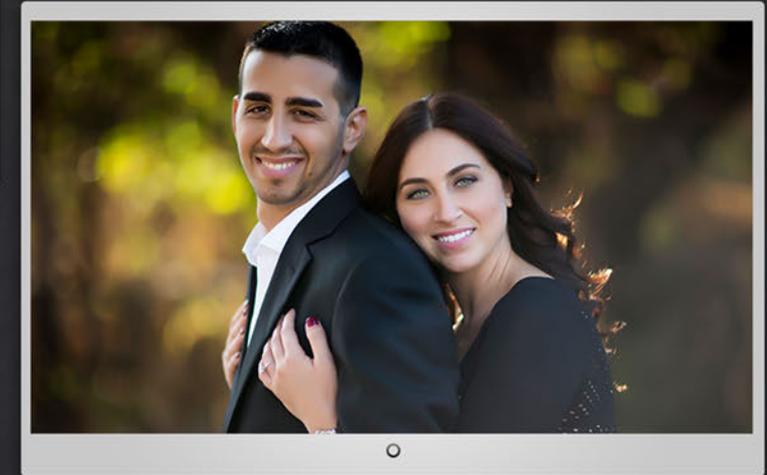
That's off-camera flash in a nutshell. The best advice I can give you is to just jump in. Start simply with one light, try manual, try TTL, experiment with different modifiers, and you'll get the hang of it. ■

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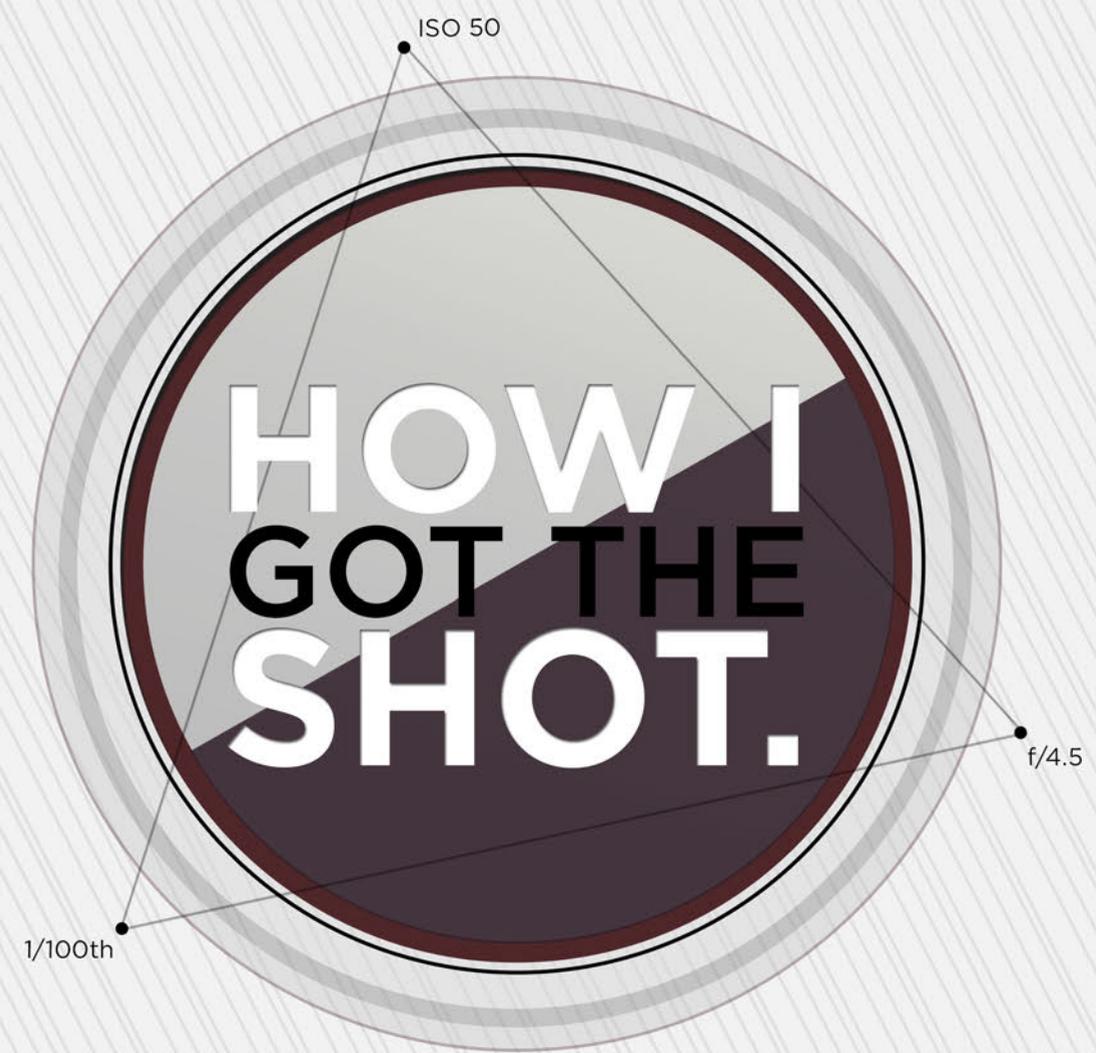
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HOW I
GOT THE
SHOT.

ISO 50

1/100th

f/4.5



by Sal Cincotta

It's travel month at *Shutter Magazine*. When most people think of travel, they think of sweeping landscapes or larger-than-life architecture. But travel photography can mean so much more to portrait shooters. Every time I travel, I have my gear and a shoot of some sort lined up.

Let's look at my most recent travel shoot.

CONCEPT

For this month's cover shoot, we were in Las Vegas at WPPI's wedding photography expo, and I was hell-bent on getting out to the desert. We had access to a gorgeous black dress we'd had custom-made, and had ordered a gorgeous decorative feather collar we found on Etsy. The minute I saw this piece, I knew we could do something cool with it.

LOCATION

The Vegas area has tons of unique shooting opportunities. We have shot at Valley of Fire, Red Rock Canyon, the Neon Museum Boneyard and many other spots. This time, we headed out to Spring Mountain Ranch State Park, a very cool spot about 30 miles off the Strip.

Be warned, you will need a permit to shoot there. The minute the park rangers sense a shoot of any kind is going on, they are on you like flies. If you are out there just taking landscape shots, you will be fine.

You can take a five-minute walk and be right in the middle of a cool riverbed, which is where we ended up. You can also drive two minutes and be at the foot of the gorgeous multicolored hills. On this particular day, there was a Civil War reenactment going on. We were asked to join in the training, but we had to get to work.





MAKEUP

Hair and makeup are always so important. I know I stress this every single month, but it amazes me how many shoots we see where hair and makeup made the difference. This day, we didn't have our go-to girl with us. We had to find one online. And let me tell you, we got lucky! We met Sabrina, who rocked it. Competent people make a huge difference. For this look, we wanted dark, dramatic eyes and lips. We really wanted to match the look and feel of the feather piece.

LIGHTING

On the day of the shoot, it was freezing, with the temperature dipping into the low 40s and insane wind chill. Best of all, we were getting ice from the rain clouds rolling in. So, with the sun popping in and out, I had to make some lighting decisions. In the riverbed, we could have shot either way, but in order to deal with the lighting situation, we placed our model with the sun behind her. This allowed me to achieve consistent exposure on her face. The quality of the sun added an edge light to provide some separation from the background. To light this shot, we used the Profoto bare bulb, no light modifier.



GEAR

Camera // Canon 1DX

Lens // Canon 70–200 2.8

Settings // 1/100th @ f4.5, ISO 50

Lights // Profoto B1

Modifiers // None

FUN FACTS

// Out in the desert, we were being hit with some light snow and ice.

// The feather piece is being supported with a tree branch because we could not figure out how to get it to stand straight up.

// Nina is our model from our China shoot (see last month's Great Wall article). She just happened to be in Vegas.

// Before this shot, Nina fell off the rocks because we had her standing in heels on them.



© Salvatore Cincotta Photography

CLOSING

Wherever you go, bring your camera. Use every opportunity you can to get out there and shoot. I refuse to put travel pictures up in my house that I have not personally shot. That should be enough to motivate all of us to get out there and make the most of our travel.

I love travel and I love photography. This is my heaven.

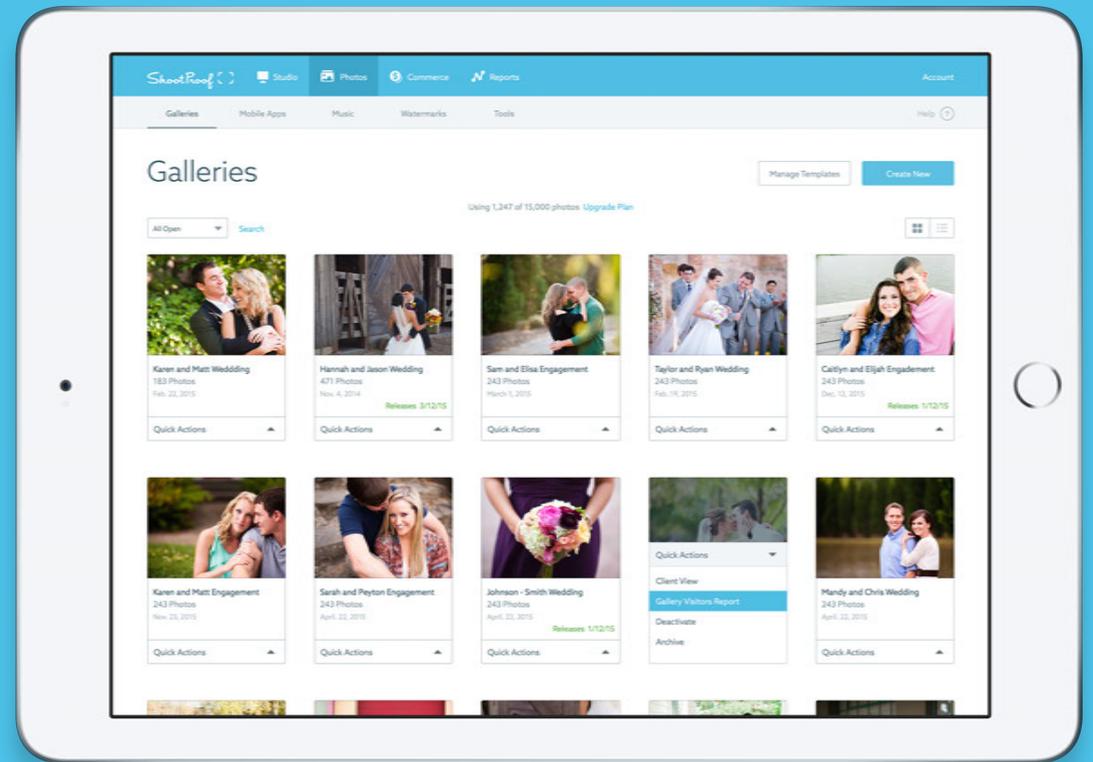
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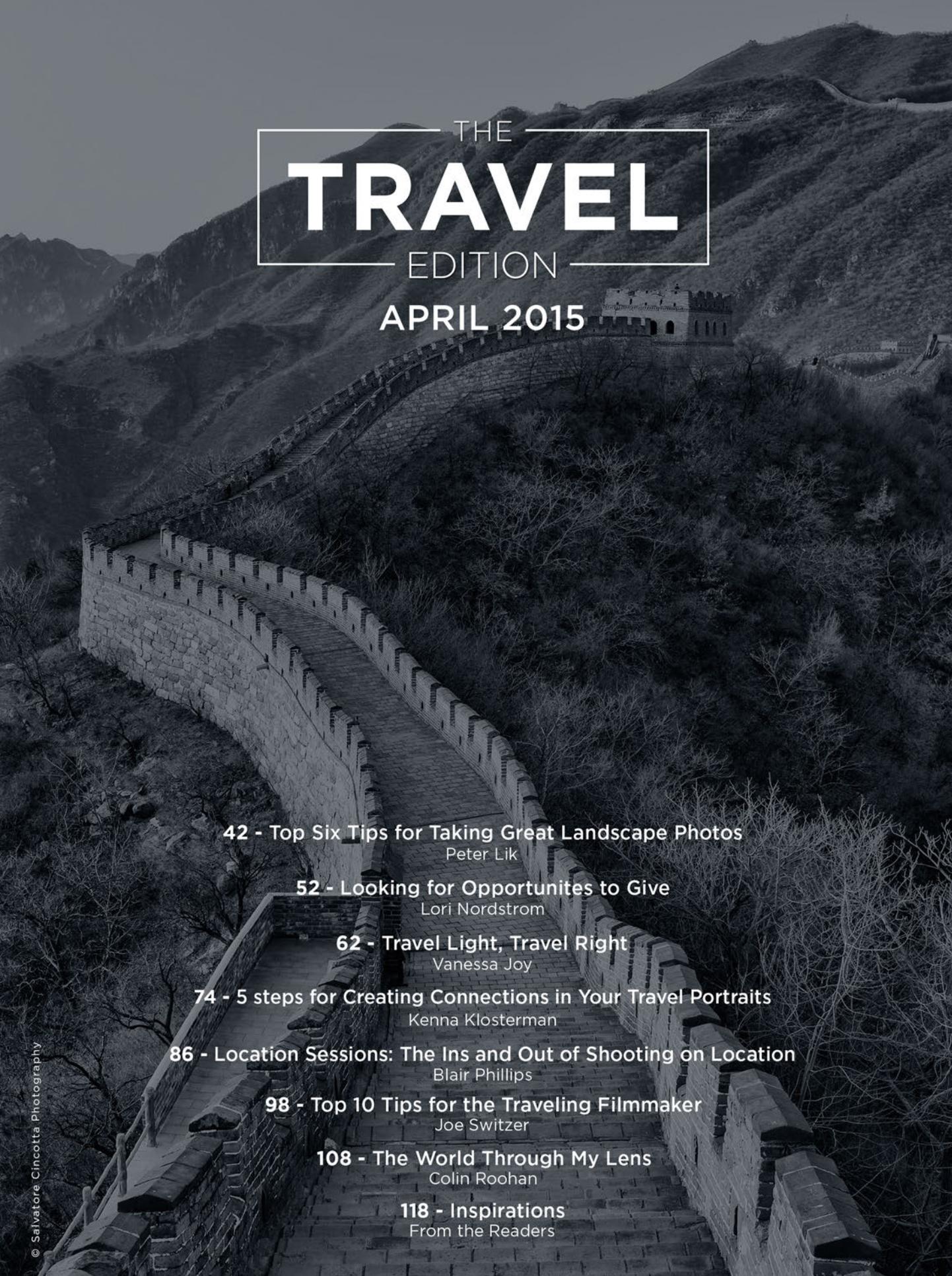
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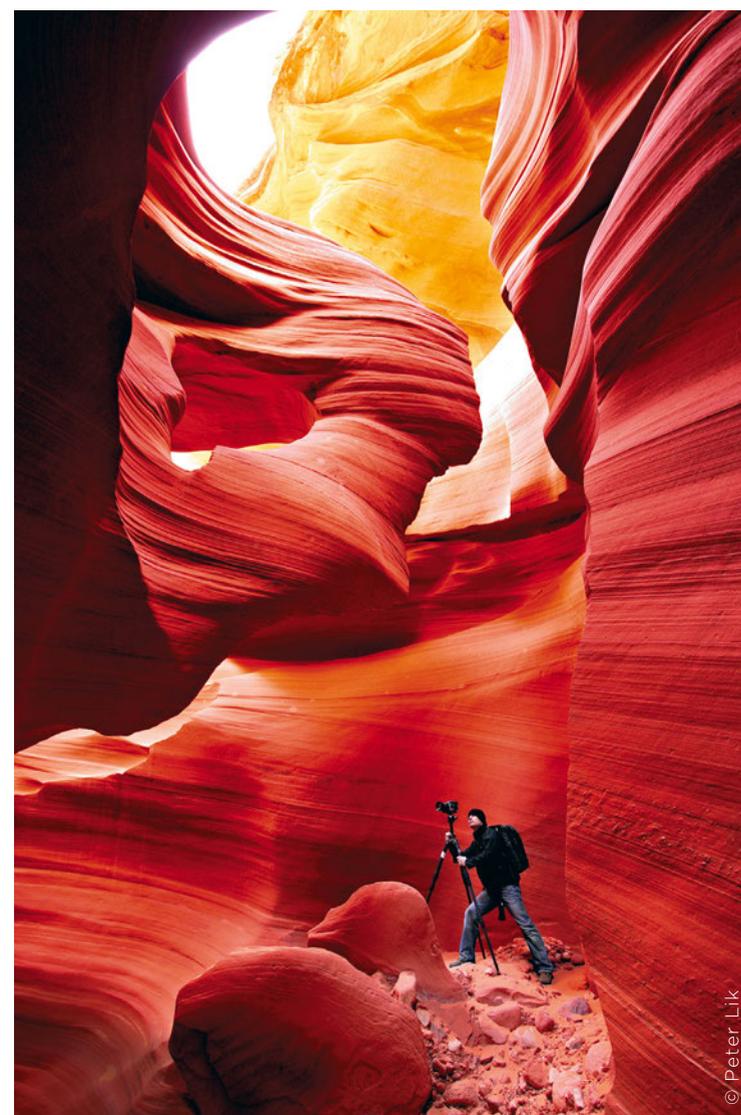
TOP
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TIPS FOR TAKING
GREAT LANDSCAPE PHOTOS

with **Peter Lik**



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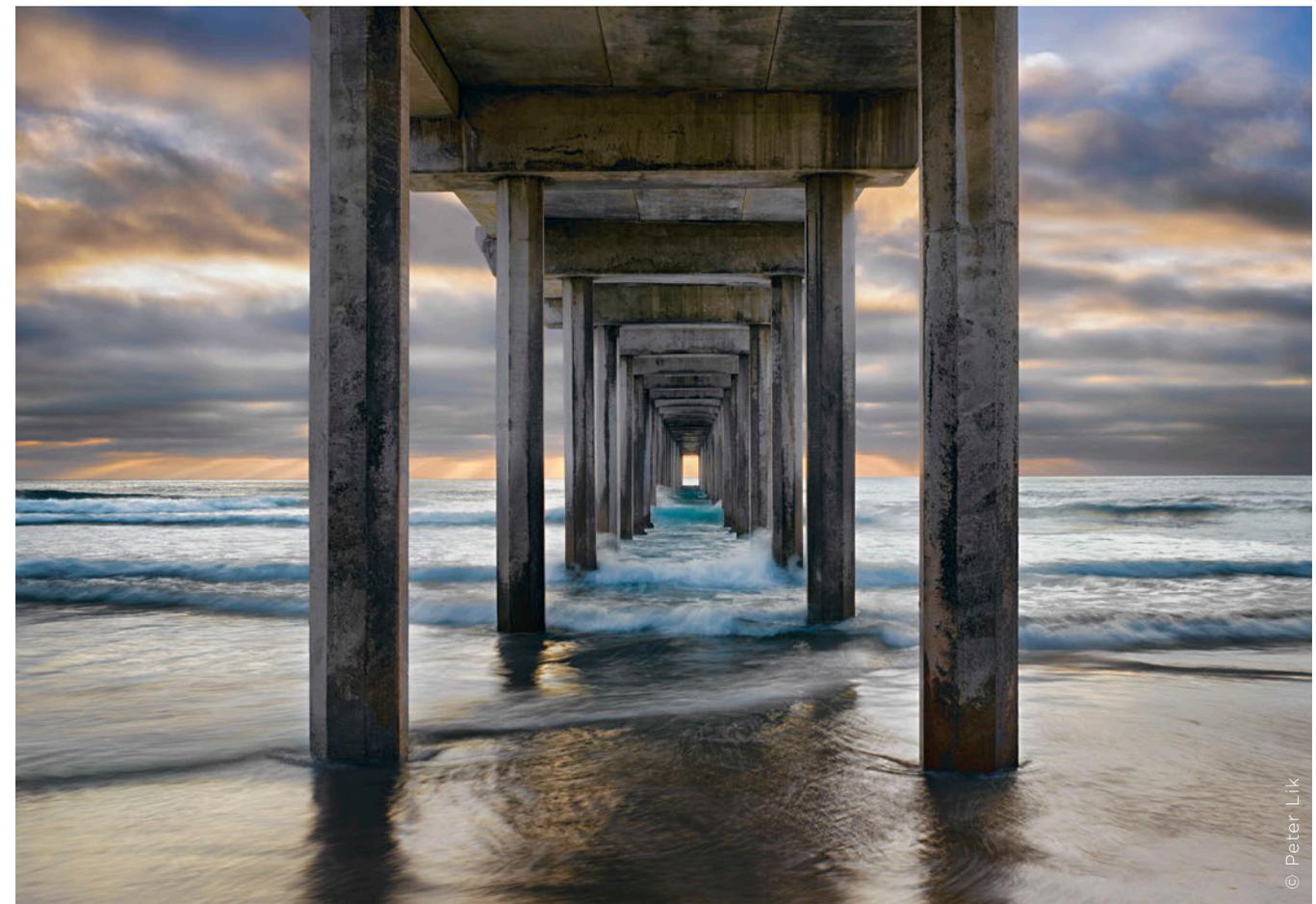


© Peter Lik

by **Peter Lik**

1. Use quality equipment.

Use a quality tripod. Nothing can ruin the perfect shot like a weak tripod or, even worse, no tripod at all. This is one of the most important pieces of equipment in your gear bag. Just as important as a steady set of legs is the head you put on it. Especially when you start shooting with a longer, heavier lens. Nobody wants to be in the middle of a long exposure only to have the ball head fail. I use Really Right Stuff carbon-fiber tripods. They're incredibly sturdy, unbelievably light and easy to use. Cared for properly, they will last you a lifetime.



2. Embrace the weather.

What makes a great day for a family picnic can also make for a wretched day of shooting. There is nothing I hate more than clear blue skies. Clouds provide great diffused light, showing Mother Nature's mood and beauty, something I am constantly chasing. On a recent shoot in Oregon, I waited out seven days of rain to capture a two-minute window to get the critical shot.

3. Capture the data in RAW format.

This is the only way to shoot! RAW gives you the biggest, fattest file possible. You spend all this time and money getting the shot—don't walk away without the best-quality file possible. Shooting RAW gives you the greatest control over the color gamut and the highest level of detail, and is vital for workflow when you get back to the studio. Remember, the files will be much larger, so spend the money on fast, quality cards.



© Peter Lik



© Peter Lik

4. Plan and research.

Proper planning and research are both key, but don't guarantee you will get the shot. Proper planning is no joke. I spend countless hours mapping exact locations, researching weather, making travel arrangements and learning the terrain. Weeks of time prepping gear, contacting locals for insight to seasonal changes, road closures and any other tips that may assist me for the shoot. And after all of this, Mother Nature still may not cooperate and give you the shot you set out for.





© Peter Lik

5. Come prepared.

Nothing burns me more than missing the shot. Imagine hiking out to a location only to find you have a loose baseplate, a failed memory card or even an undercharged battery, and no way to fix it. It has happened to all of us, and it is a nightmare. Make a checklist. Don't overcomplicate things with gear you don't need. Always pack Allen keys, batteries and chargers (solar chargers are very handy), plenty of water, GPS and a headlamp (keeps your hands free). Invest in a satellite phone if you plan to travel to areas where you know you will have no cell coverage.

6. Be prepared to get up early and go to bed late.

Some of my greatest shots have been captured as the sun rises each day and just as it sets. It's this magical window of time that creates the perfect mood that I am constantly chasing in my photographs. And the time between sunrise and sunset is the perfect time to scout the next day's shoot. All these things combined make for a ripper of a long day. 🌄



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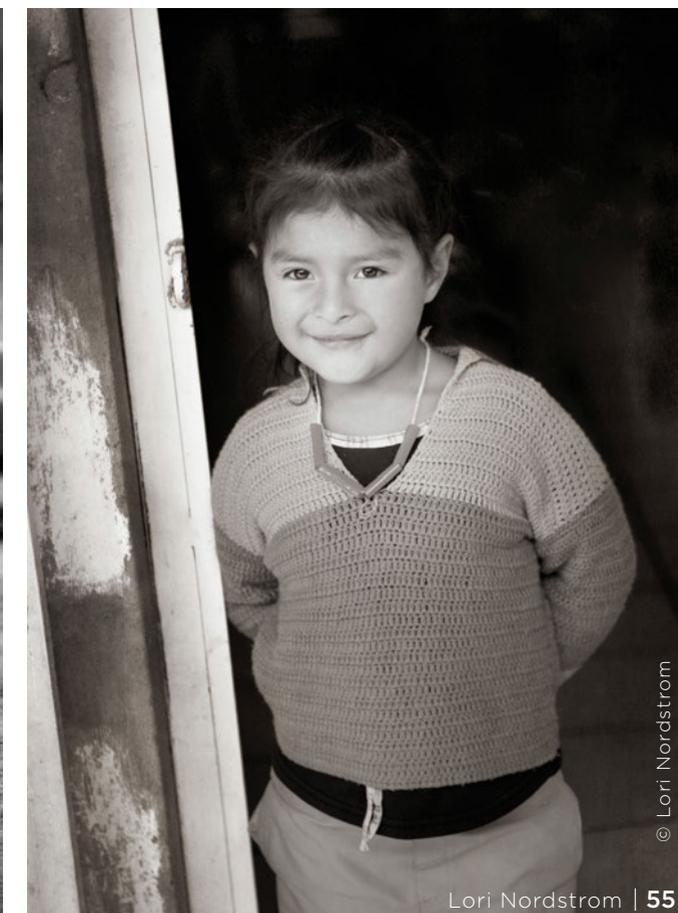
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It is when you give of yourself
that you truly give.*

-Kahlil Gibran



by **Lori Nordstrom**

When our businesses are run well, we have the ability to give of our time and even our money to people and causes that are important to us. If you’ve never gotten involved with a charitable organization, I challenge you to seek out something that speaks to you. There are so many different causes to get involved in, and I promise that you will be blessed through your giving. If you aren’t financially able to give money, give of your time, talent and service.

Over the years, I’ve been involved with many local organizations and even individual families that need help. My studio does many fundraisers throughout the year, and I believe that by giving in these ways, my reputation in my community has been elevated. I’ve had many clients who have come to me over the years just because I had donated, raised money for or served in an organization that was special to them.

© Lori Nordstrom



In 2009, I visited orphanages in Ecuador with a group of photographers, and after just a few days there, I knew I had to go back. By the end of the trip, photographer Travis Gugelman, his wife, Jennie, and I had decided that we wanted to make things legal, so we started a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Thus was Dando Amor (“Giving Love”) born.

Dando Amor now works with orphaned children in Ecuador, Africa and Haiti. In 2013, we started our own orphanage in Ecuador that now houses teenage boys. Boys of this age were immediately in our hearts from the first trip to Ecuador. In traditional orphanages there, boys get “kicked out” as soon as they reach 13 or 14 because it’s felt that smaller children aren’t safe around teenage boys. They have the choice of going back to the streets or to a men’s rehabilitation center. There was really no appropriate place for boys of this age in the areas we visited. Taking on something like this involves many new costs and responsibilities, including forming a legal nonprofit in Ecuador. We’ve faced many challenges, but believe it’s what we are supposed to be doing, and we are seeing lives changed.

I’m reminded of the story of the starfish. A man was walking on a beach and saw a young boy tossing starfish into the ocean. He asked the little boy what he was doing, and the boy told him that the tide had brought in the starfish and that if they didn’t go back into the water, they would die. The man laughed and said, “You can’t make a difference. There are miles of beach and thousands of starfish!” The boy picked up another and, as he threw it back into the water, he smiled and said to the man, “I made a difference for that one!” I love this story. This is something we should practice as often as possible. No, we may not be able to help hundreds, but we can all surely help at least one.





Look for moments of random acts of kindness. Sometimes just a smile or a few minutes of time to really listen can make the difference in someone's day. One thing I learned from the children in Ecuador was that people love having their photograph taken. On the first trip, just seeing their image on the back of the camera made them smile and want another and another. On the next trip, we took along a small printer and gave the children photos of themselves. These kids giggled and smiled and clung to the photos. For most, it was their first photo of themselves.

I decided to do this at home or when I'm traveling other places as well. To just stop someone on the street and ask them if I can photograph them. People are always taken aback, and a little surprised, but it almost always ends up in a smile and a new friend. We have the ability to create memories with our cameras. Even if you don't hand that person a print, just showing what you saw in them can change their perspective. I had a man tell me one day that I was the only person who had talked to him that entire day. He said most people pass by and look in the other direction, hoping not to make eye contact. He told me that I made him feel human again. And guess whose day that made? I think we will always both remember that day. When we give, it always comes back around.



© Lori Nordstrom

Here are some ideas for giving through your business that I promise will reward you both emotionally and financially:

- Donate all fees from an event, session or certain time frame to a charity.
- Be a drop-off location for toys (<http://toysfortots.org>) or shoes (check out www.shoes4love.com).
- Give donors a gift card to use during their next session with you.
- Host an open house or girls' night out, and photograph headshots or new profile photos in exchange for a \$25 donation.
- Photograph kids on Halloween night (you can even do this in your front yard, or partner with another business). Offer a 5x7 or even a digital file for a \$15 donation to a local charity. Have packages available for further purchase.

There are many ideas that will reward you and your business. If you do choose to travel, take advantage of new situations and opportunities. Look for those little moments. If nothing else, you'll have a new story to tell or to blog about. ■

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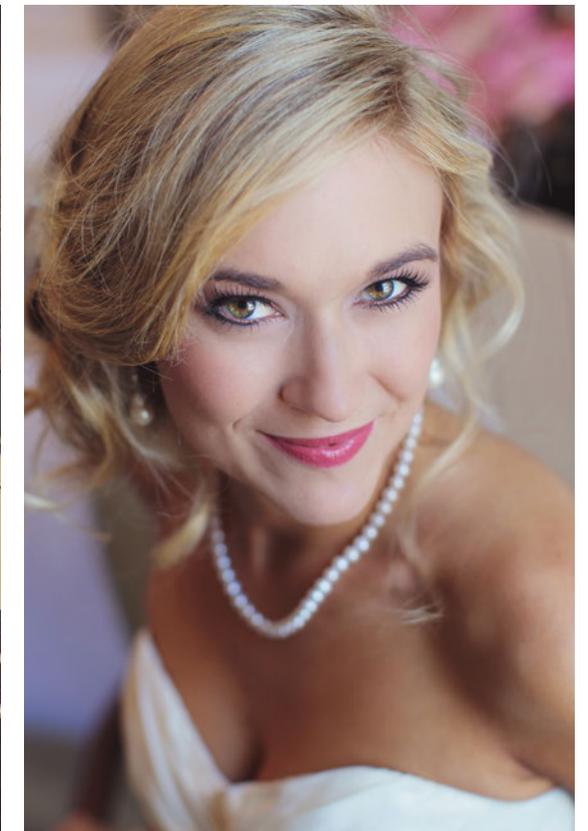
TRAVEL LIGHT
TRAVEL **RIGHT**

with Vanessa Joy





© Vanessa Joy



BY VANESSA JOY

I used to think of a day when I was taking a flight as a day off. I couldn't plan anything that day because I was flying. Traveling would take all the energy out of me, and being midair meant I was free from contact with the outside world. Not anymore.

Now, I plan meetings hours before and hours after I fly. I can get through security with no problems and faster than most by cutting the line in more ways than one. TSA and all the people behind me in line love me because I'm ready to go at security screening and don't hold anyone up.

But most importantly, traveling is no longer a headache or an event that I have to plan my day around. With a few tips and tricks, you'll be able to travel anywhere without adding any extra stress or time constraints.

CUT THE LINE

Sign up for TSA Precheck and Global Entry, both of which let you cut long lines and enjoy an easier screening process. If you sign up for Global Entry first, you'll automatically be enrolled in Precheck. You don't have to be special to be a part of the club here. You just have to not be a criminal and pay them \$100 for the five-year privilege. It's the best \$100 I've ever spent.

(Visit <http://www.cbp.gov/global-entry/how-to-apply>.)



© Vanessa Joy



—| CHOOSE AN AIRLINE

Being part of an airline's frequent-flyer program is a great money saver. All airlines have different systems of giving back to their customers, so it can be hard to choose which one is right for you. Some things to consider when you're deciding on going steady with an airline:

1. Does the airline have a hub at your nearest airport? This allows you to get the best and most direct flights from your area.
2. Is the airfare reasonable for the quality you receive? United Airlines, for example, can have a higher airfare but is known for a better boarding process and overall experience. Southwest Airlines, on the other hand, tends to be less expensive but you potentially have to scramble for seating as you board the plane.
3. Do you like the airline loyalty program benefits? As I mentioned, they're all different, so you have to find what works for you. Southwest has a great "travel partner flies free" program, but if you mostly travel alone, that's not going to help you. United has a credit card that earns you status and miles, but if you're not into using credit cards, then you won't get all that membership has to offer.

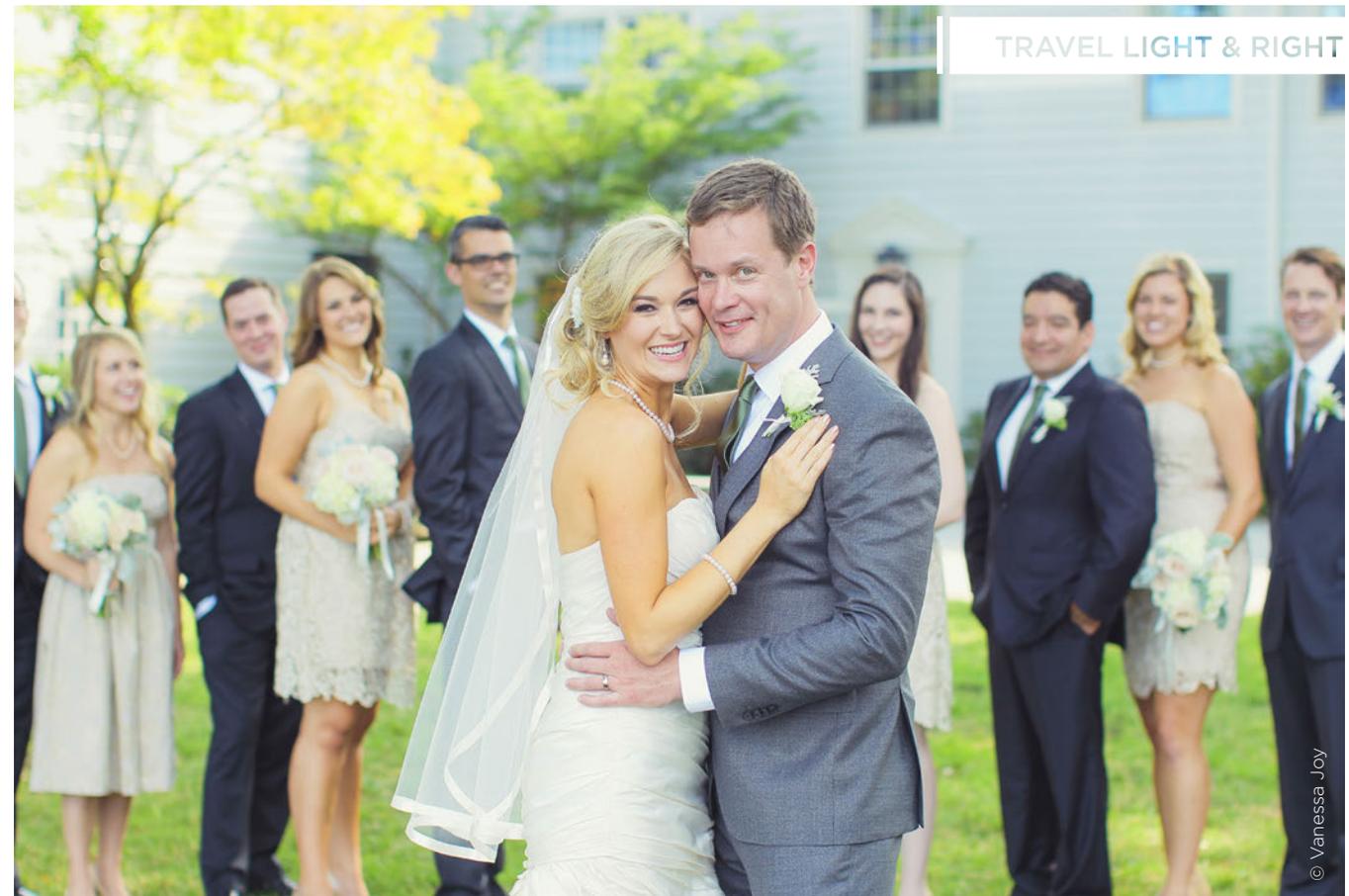
—| A FEW MUST-HAVE ACCESSORIES

I can imagine a few of you gear-heads getting giddy as you're reading this, ready to head to Amazon and grab some more goodies. Here's my list of life-easing accessories when traveling:

- A. Multi-USB charger
- B. Extra battery pack for laptop/cellphone
- C. Suitcase scale
- D. Water filtration bottle
- E. Travel-size toiletries

—| CARRY ON IF YOU CAN

I think we can all remember the famous scene from *Meet the Parents* where Ben Stiller attempts to carry on luggage containing his girlfriend's engagement ring, and doesn't make it past security. Always avoid that conundrum. Carrying on or even gate-checking your bag is a huge time saver. It forces you to pack lighter than you normally would, especially if you need to walk any substantial distance. It also completely eliminates two annoying waiting times at the airport: You don't have to wait to check or to pick it up at baggage claim.



© Vanessa Joy

© Vanessa Joy

KNOW TSA RULES

Take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with TSA's long list of rules at <http://www.tsa.gov/traveler-information>. Believer it or not, they want you to get through the security line faster too. In addition to knowing the rules, make your life easier in line by not wearing clothes or bringing items that you have to take off or declare. For example, if you know TSA will make you strip to your base layer of clothes (no jacket, thick sweater, etc.), then have those layers already off by the time you go through security or don't wear them at all. You know you'll have to go through a metal detector, so maybe now isn't the time to put on every piece of jewelry you own. Other rules like how many batteries (just four) are allowed in your carry-on and being proactive about the liquid 3-1-1 rule will also help you be completely prepared once your turn comes at the security checkpoint.



KNOW FOREIGN COUNTRY RULES

Here's the real kicker. Just because you easily brought that carry-on with you into the country doesn't mean they'll let you carry it on the way home. Most countries weigh your carry-on before allowing you to board the plane with it. So now, in addition to the dimension restrictions with carry-on luggage, you have a weight allowance to contend with. Take the time to look up all foreign travel rules. There's nothing more stressful, and outright annoying, than having to check your bag full of camera gear when you carried it on so easily on the way there.





PACK LIGHT

I think this one is a no-brainer, but a lot of people have a hard time packing light. Sometimes, it's not even the fact that people bring too many clothes—you could wear every outfit you brought but still have packed too much. Here are a few last tips that'll help you bring down the load in your suitcase.

1. Bring rewearables – Sure, we want to make sure that we pack seven pairs of underclothes if we're going to be away for seven days—unless you're Tim Ferris, and you pack quick-dry garments that you can wash and dry quickly (<http://www.exofficio.com/brand/tim/packing-list>). But you don't need to bring seven pairs of pants too. Bring items that you can wear two or three times, and that will quickly drop the weight of your suitcase.

2. Stick to a color scheme – Sometimes we overpack because we're thinking of different outfits every day. A better idea is to stick to a color scheme that you'll wear, even as little as deciding to wear more warm colors than cool colors, and that will eliminate the need to bring as many shoes and accessories as you

normally do. One or two pairs of shoes, one jacket/sweater and one necklace will match every outfit you're bringing.

3. Travel size it – This doesn't mean you need to buy a whole new set of travel toiletries every time you travel. Just snag a set of travel containers that you can refill whenever you travel. Full-size shampoos and such will weigh you down, and they also aren't allowed in your carry-on, so you'll have to check your bag.

4. Eliminate the what-ifs – “I need to bring an umbrella, because what if it rains?” or “I'm packing my beach towel, because what if the resort doesn't supply them?” are ways of thinking that aren't worth the \$3 investment at your destination if the what-if actually happens. Don't pack anything that you aren't positive you will need.

Check out the video below to see my final tip on traveling. It's a biggie, and one that'll enable you to travel whenever you want without missing a beat. ■

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5 steps for

CREATING CONNECTIONS
IN YOUR TRAVEL **PORTRAITS**

with **Kenna Klosterman**





by **Kenna Klosterman**

Why are millions of people mesmerized by the Humans of New York project? For me, it's the connection photographer Brandon Stanton quickly makes with his subjects to enable a life story to be told in a single portrait. Photographer and subject are both participants, resulting in a different kind of "decisive moment" than the classic street photography of a photographer like Henri Cartier-Bresson, whose subjects often aren't aware that their moment has been captured. Viewed together, the HONY portraits tell the story of a city, revealing a true sense of place through its inhabitants. Street portraits are my favorite type of travel photographs, my favorite way to tell the story of the places I visit. They are also the most challenging for me to capture.

Landscapes, architecture, details, abstracts, crowded street scenes—creating these types of travel photographs requires attention to light and composition, creativity and technical craft. Making authentic travel portraits of people in their environment means you have to tap into an additional, more abstract craft: human connection.

Do you fear asking strangers for their portrait? I do. I still get the jitters and take a few deep breaths every time I approach someone, especially when I don't speak the same language. If you go through your travels standing back using your 70–200mm zoom lens to "capture" someone doing something interesting without them knowing, you may never get the travel portraits you envisioned.

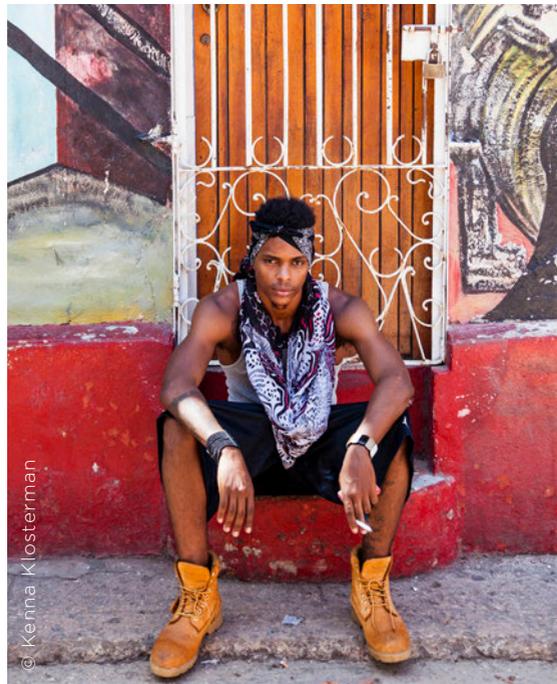
Throughout my travels to over 40 countries, I have used photography as an excuse to connect with people along the way. It's how I learn about a culture, by having intimate experiences that I may not have had otherwise. I've led groups of photographers through the streets and alleyways of Cuba and Morocco, where language barriers can scare people from interacting with locals. I know how hard it can be, and I know what a rush it can be as well.



This collection of travel portraits was created in Cuba. While I studied Spanish in school way back when, I'm by no means fluent. I know enough to pretend that I know more. So how did I communicate one-on-one with people to create these images? With these five steps.

Step 1 - Make eye contact

As you're walking along streets, through a market, in a local shop or a park, go where the locals are gathered. Look for places where people are used to interacting with other people, and then scope out the scene. Before you approach someone, get his or her attention by making eye contact. Give a soft smile, then a nod. It's kind of like making eye contact with someone across the room at a party or a bar that you want to meet. If someone looks you back in the eye, smile or nod back—you have your first green light. (If they don't, take that as a polite no-thank-you.) Try to hold the gaze as long as you can. You're beginning to show your own vulnerability before asking for theirs.



Step 2 - Own your body language

Body language makes or breaks a first impression of you, so be mindful of it. In fact, be more than just mindful of it, own it. Exude a gentle confidence, as your own nervous energy will make another person nervous. Would you rather talk with someone who is grimacing with arms crossed walking toward you at full steam, or someone with an open stance, a confident, solid stride and a calm smile? Whatever feels natural to you, own your attitude and stick with it. At this point, words matter much less than you think. What matters are the intention, tone and underlying emotion you both are bouncing back and forth. People mirror each other's body language and emotions. Approach calmly and offer a hand, a bow, a hands-together *namaste*—whatever the welcome gesture is in that culture. It's an energetic exchange; what you project, they will reflect.

If you're approaching a child, crouch down so that you are less intimidating and can engage at their level. More about that in a bit.





Step 3 - Pay a compliment

A sincere and genuine compliment often results in a smile. Some go-to compliment topics include what someone is wearing, selling, making or doing. Pay a compliment followed by a leading question about that thing you complimented. Be in control of the interaction. Guide it.

The goal is to quickly get the other person talking so you can stop talking—it's not about you. Introduce yourself with your name and where you're from, and offer a bit of context for why you're there. Imagine they are clients you're meeting for the first time. Use the tools you have from all of those exchanges. Find something you have in common as a point of discussion. Sometimes it's fun to turn the tables on what a stranger might expect. One of the first things local people might ask is where you're from. An easy way to get a laugh is to ask where they're from, when the answer is obvious. Use humor. Laughter is a brilliant icebreaker.

Step 4 - Establish trust & be present

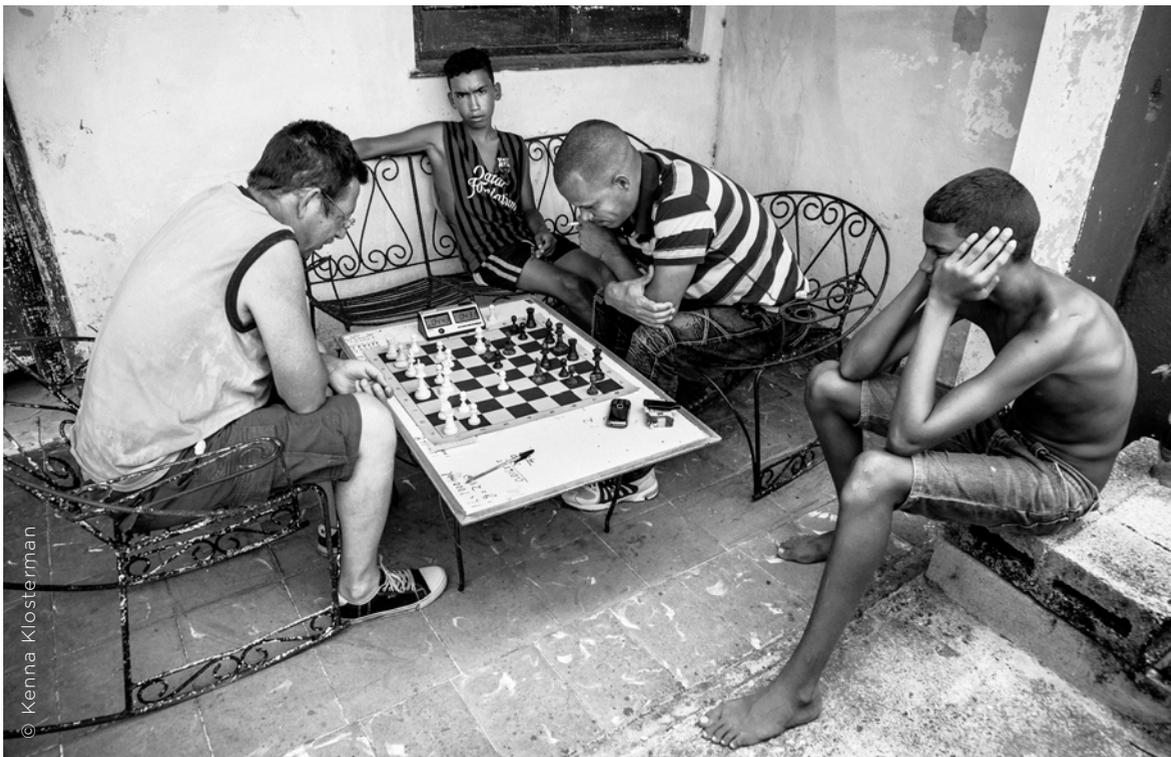
You must be your authentic self if you're asking people to do the same. We all recognize fake immediately, and turn away from it. One way to establish trust quickly is to be vulnerable. You're already taking a risk by approaching the person, so acknowledge that. You can say, for example, "I'm a little nervous to come up and talk with you." (This of course can be said with confidence in step 2.)

Be at ease and talk with your subject as if you're already friends. Act as if they have already said yes to you creating their portrait. Act as if they want to talk with you. Act as if they are just as interested in you as you are in them. Ask questions about their life, and really listen to people as they answer your questions. Don't be looking around for the next person you want to photograph. Maintain eye contact and open body language.



Bonus tip

To engage with children, start playing sports or a game with them. Embrace your silliness. Kids connect to adults via smiles, laughter and by your showing genuine interest in what they are doing. Jump into their game of soccer in the streets, and you may just catch them off guard and endear yourself to them.



Step 5 - Embrace your craft

At this point, you're ready to go in for the ask, whether that's a verbal "May I?" or a gesture of lifting up your camera and nodding. You want to maintain that energetic connection you just established when you raised your camera to your face. Don't go silent on them or lose control of the situation. Just like with your clients at home, guide the person into the position that gives you the best light and composition. Find the catchlights and focus on the eyes. Create a composition that establishes the story you want to tell about this person.

If you've made a connection and don't have the right light, you probably won't end up with the portrait you were hoping for. You have technical skills, so use them. This is where all your hard-won knowledge comes in. The best portrait photographers are fully present and connected in the moment, instinctively embracing their craft.

When your exchange is over, show gratitude and say thank you. If someone asks for you to send their portrait, get their contact information and do it.

Additional considerations

Another great way to engage with people is to have an instant camera that allows you to give them a portrait right then and there. I love to travel with my Fuji Instax Mini. I've encountered several people who at first gestured that they didn't want me to photograph them, but changed their mind once I showed them a sample tiny print (especially kids). In these scenarios, I snap a shot of the person holding up the instant print as a memory of the moment. This is a great time for selfies with the person too.

In the end, if someone doesn't want you to make his or her portrait, don't then try to get it on the sly. There isn't going to be a real connection in your image. Respect a no. You aren't entitled to take someone's photograph. Say thank you, no problem, and move on. Don't take it personally or get discouraged. Keep trying.

Before your next adventure, test-drive these five steps. Get out of your comfort zone now. Approach people who seem unapproachable. You just might be pleasantly surprised. ■





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LOCATION SESSIONS

The Ins and Outs
of Shooting on Location
with **Blair Phillips**



by Blair Phillips

There are several factors that play a part in creating a great image. Location is often one of the most important. Location sessions have become very popular. Being able to travel to tropical locations to photograph weddings sounds like a dream job. While it can be both fun and rewarding, it can bring a ton of liabilities that most photographers overlook. Locations have helped keep my interest in my portrait business. If you shoot in the same camera room day after day, you are sure to become bored at some point. But there is more to finding a location than just riding around and hopping out and shooting.

Get Permission

I prefer to do my location scouting during a time I have marked off on the calendar. I have found that having plenty of time to drive around allows me to be very selective and focus on color harmonies and the sun's position throughout the day. Have you ever photographed somewhere without permission? We all have, but we should not. We should do our homework and find the landowner. Set up a time to meet with the owner. There is nothing more embarrassing than getting kicked off a property with your client. Not everyone is going to be open to granting permission for you to use their location. For every one person who gives you permission, there are generally eight others who will tell you to get lost. The way you approach the owner is key. You often have just one chance to plead your case. I bring an iPad with tons of examples of my work to show. Validation that you are not a fly-by-night photographer may gain you some respect. If you feel like they are going to say no, offer your services so they may better understand what you will be doing. Offer to photograph their family, children or neighbor. You never know until you ask, so put on some charm and get out there. They are either going to be willing or not. There is nothing worse than never asking and not knowing what could have been.

Liability

Liability is something that we are all exposed to by owning a business and working with the public, and an umbrella policy is a cost you cannot afford to operate without. Insurance seems like such a rip-off until you actually need it. In most cases, the insurance you have at your studio may not cover you while on location. We have an umbrella policy that gives us over a million dollars of coverage while working away from the studio. Most of the time, we are so focused on getting the image that we overlook the hidden dangers. One of the things my insurance agent advised me against was to never let clients ride with me to locations. Have them follow you in their own car. That is something I never thought about until it was brought to my attention. I also always personally examine places where I want clients to pose so that I (not my client) can discover any potential dangers. It's easy to forget about the liabilities we face around each and every corner. You don't have to live in constant fear of all the things that can go wrong, but do live in caution.

Be Prepared

Traveling to a remote location only to find that you forgot to pack an important piece of gear can quickly deflate your motivation. Several years ago, I traveled to a location for a senior session and forgot to bring a media card. That was the first and last time I have forgotten something. When I was finally done with the session, I sat down and wrote down everything I needed. This became my checklist for any location session. I have a separate checklist for destination weddings. I also make sure I have a backup camera. We rarely think about what we would do if our camera suddenly stopped working. If you are traveling to locations, you really need to make sure you have all of the extra effort and time built into your pricing. Make sure it is worth it to you. If you have certain locations that do not produce good sales, take them off your list. When I use multiple locations for senior sessions, I have my locations mapped out in a way that creates a circle. This eliminates a lot of unnecessary travel.

Outfit Changes

Outfit changes can sometimes make things uncomfortable on location. I always require that a parent accompany seniors on their session, and I bring along a changing tent that collapses like a sunshade for your car. This pop-up tent is basically a room in a bag. I have also seen people modify a hula-hoop with a bedsheet. You lower the hoop, the client steps inside the hoop and you raise the hoop to neck level. The sheet provides them cover while they change. Seniors often prefer to change in their car. When they do, I walk away a good distance to give them privacy.



© Blair Phillips



Flying

Weddings are hard enough when they are in town. When a client asks you to fly with all your equipment, it adds another level of stress. I use an abundance of off-camera lighting, so I do not travel light. The airlines have done a great job reducing our confidence in their baggage handling skills. There is nothing like landing in Jamaica and hoping that your gear made it along with you. I have two backpack-style camera bags that my lenses and cameras go into. These go on the plane with me. The bags should be small enough that if the overhead bins are full, you can stuff them under your seats. I bring two sets of lights in two separate checked bags. The chances of at least one of the bags making it are pretty good. I know it adds extra cost, but it is built into my travel fee. Batteries make TSA nervous. Pack only sealed lead-acid batteries. Call your airline for guidelines prior to flying. If you are flying out of the country, consult with your insurance agent to ensure proper coverage of your equipment. When I pack equipment that will be checked luggage, I put it in a hard case and then put the case in an unassuming duffel bag. This makes it a little less tempting for someone to tamper with.

Make Friends

Once you reach your destination, scout the facility. I like to consult with a manager if possible. I always take a few minutes to ask if there are any rules that might affect me, behaviors they might frown upon. I don't want them to see us as a nuisance. They will appreciate your willingness to ask for rules. This also puts you in a favorable position should you have any special requests, or find yourself in need of something. Making friends with the staff makes everyone's time much more enjoyable. You always get farther with people showing up with honey instead of lemons.





© Blair Phillips

Surprises

For every game-changing variable you think of, there are 10 more that may never cross your mind. When pricing yourself for locations, analyze and factor in all of your costs. Anytime the wheels are turning, it is certainly costing you money. You want to have a couple of backup plans in place in case things don't go as planned. Sit your clients down prior to setting out for a destination and make them aware of Mother Nature's power. Remind them that you have no control of what she may dish out. That takes a little stress off me if something does happen that is out of my hands. You are not the only one taking a risk in the deal.

Get out there, scout some new locations and let the sky be the limit. ■

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TOP 10
TIPS
FOR THE
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4 CAMERA AND LENS SIZE

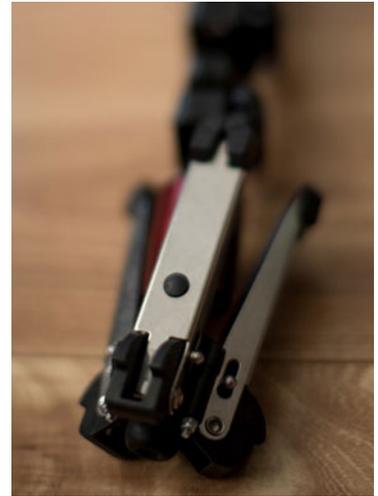
In the past, traveling with larger cameras has cost me time and money. Overweight and oversize cameras slow you down. Filming with small cameras is faster and allows you to cover more territory quickly. We currently use the Sony A7s, and are transitioning to lighter Sony lenses instead of Canon. This will also allow us to get rid of the unpredictable Metabones adapters. You need to be able to turn your camera on and adjust the ISO, aperture and shutter speed quickly. What I've found over the years is that you miss out on valuable shots if you have a bulky camera that doesn't quickly respond to setting changes. All camera manufacturers have a camera that will work for you. Attend a trade show and try them out. Maybe rent gear until you find something you're comfortable with. Last year, we went from using Canon 5D Mark IIIs to Canon C100s. A few months later, we decided to try out the Sony A7s. Today, the only video camera we use is the A7s because it's the smallest camera with the fastest setting adjustments, and it works in all conditions.

5 CASH

When you're traveling by yourself, get help from others when you can. Having at least \$500 will help you get that extra hand with luggage whenever you need it. Another reason to have cash is that you never know what places accept only cash. Don't forget that a credit card may or may not work out of the country, so call ahead to let your financial institution know you will be making transactions out of the country. Cash always helps when you're splitting bills or buying last-minute services. Don't run out of money on a shoot. It's embarrassing and causes problems. Get your cash ahead of time, and make sure you have plenty of it in \$5 and \$1 bills.

6 ARRIVE EARLY

Arrive to shoots at least 30 minutes early, and get to the airport at least two hours early. I've missed about 10 flights over the years, and it's always caused me unnecessary drama. Missing your flight can ruin the entire shoot. People are relying on you. They have times set aside for the video production. In most cases, the most valuable asset to them is their time. When you have to start rescheduling before the shoot starts, you have made the situation more difficult and annoying for the client. Executives don't want to hear your excuses about missing flights. You might not be able to reschedule that interview again. Arriving at least 30 minutes early sets you up for success. This gives you plenty of time to get those camera cards formatted, lights set up and audio tested. My favorite thing about showing up early is you have time to build some rapport with the company or your subject.



7 OVERCHARGE

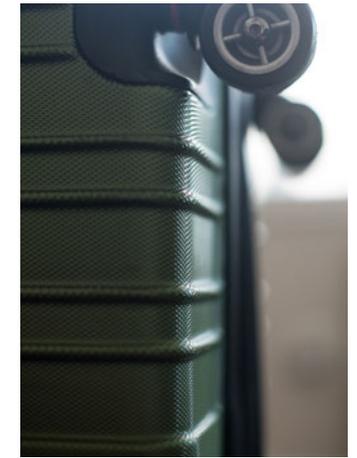
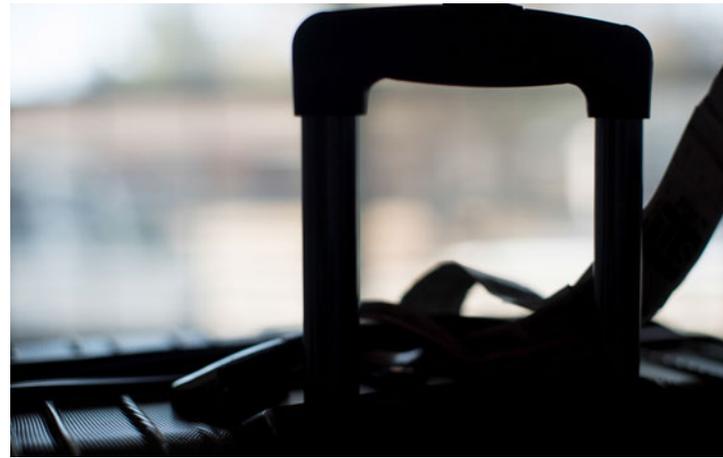
We learned this the expensive way. When you travel, you have to think about the particulars of where you're going and what costs you could incur under the worst of circumstances. Working in the Bahamas versus working in the Midwest is huge. We work our travel expenses into the overall fee. Our most recent trip to the Bahamas cost us thousands for the hotel, food, drink and transportation. Traveling alone or traveling with four people makes a big difference. Taking care of yourself and your crew and taking clients out in the evenings is not cheap. Even though we overcharge for our travel fees, we usually spend it all. I usually spend a couple hundred dollars a day on food, drinks and convenience. Do plenty of research on the destination, and don't undercharge. Resort fees, taxes, tips, food, drinks, shipping costs and client dinners add up.

8 ROCK-THE-DRESS POST-DAY SHOOT FOR ALL WEDDINGS

If you are taking the time to film a wedding, spending ample energy planning, packing and traveling, you need to strongly encourage your clients to do a post-day shoot. This is in the best interest of you and your client. Your customer has done all this planning and preparation, and spent all kinds of money. A post-wedding shoot allows your company and your clients to make the most of the situation. This is the time you have been waiting for to show off your creative chops. Your social media and marketing will be impacted positively. Take advantage of the opportunity to show your followers that they can hire you for any location. We usually tell the brides to take the day after the wedding off as a recovery day. Most of our post-wedding shoots are the second day after their wedding. This gives your team and the bride and groom time to rest and recover from all the fun.

9 SCOUTING

Arrive a day or two early for weddings. This gives you and your team a chance to unwind, rest and, most importantly, scout the area. Scout for places to take creative photo and video shots. If you have planned a post-wedding rock-the-dress shoot, scout the day after the wedding. Try to get permission to shoot at those amazing spots, and know your locations. Your success is often determined by how well you scout.



10 EXTRA BATTERIES AND CARDS.

Do you think you'll have time to charge batteries? Think again. Everything that can go wrong on a shoot will go wrong. In Europe, I've had international chargers blow up and catch fire. Bring your chargers as backup, but invest in extra batteries. With extra cards and batteries, you won't have to worry about downloading and finding power outlets. Having enough batteries and cards to film for days will give you peace of mind when you're ready to rest after a long day of filmmaking.

BONUS TIP | REWARDS CARDS

Get a good credit card that gives you points and rewards for your flights and transactions. Our Southwest Airlines card is our company credit card that we use to run the business. If you start traveling frequently, this card can really pay off with the benefit of a companion pass. Once you reach a certain points level, you get to select a person to fly with you for free. This saves our company thousands of dollars a year, and we also get points on the card that we can cash in on all sorts of products and services.





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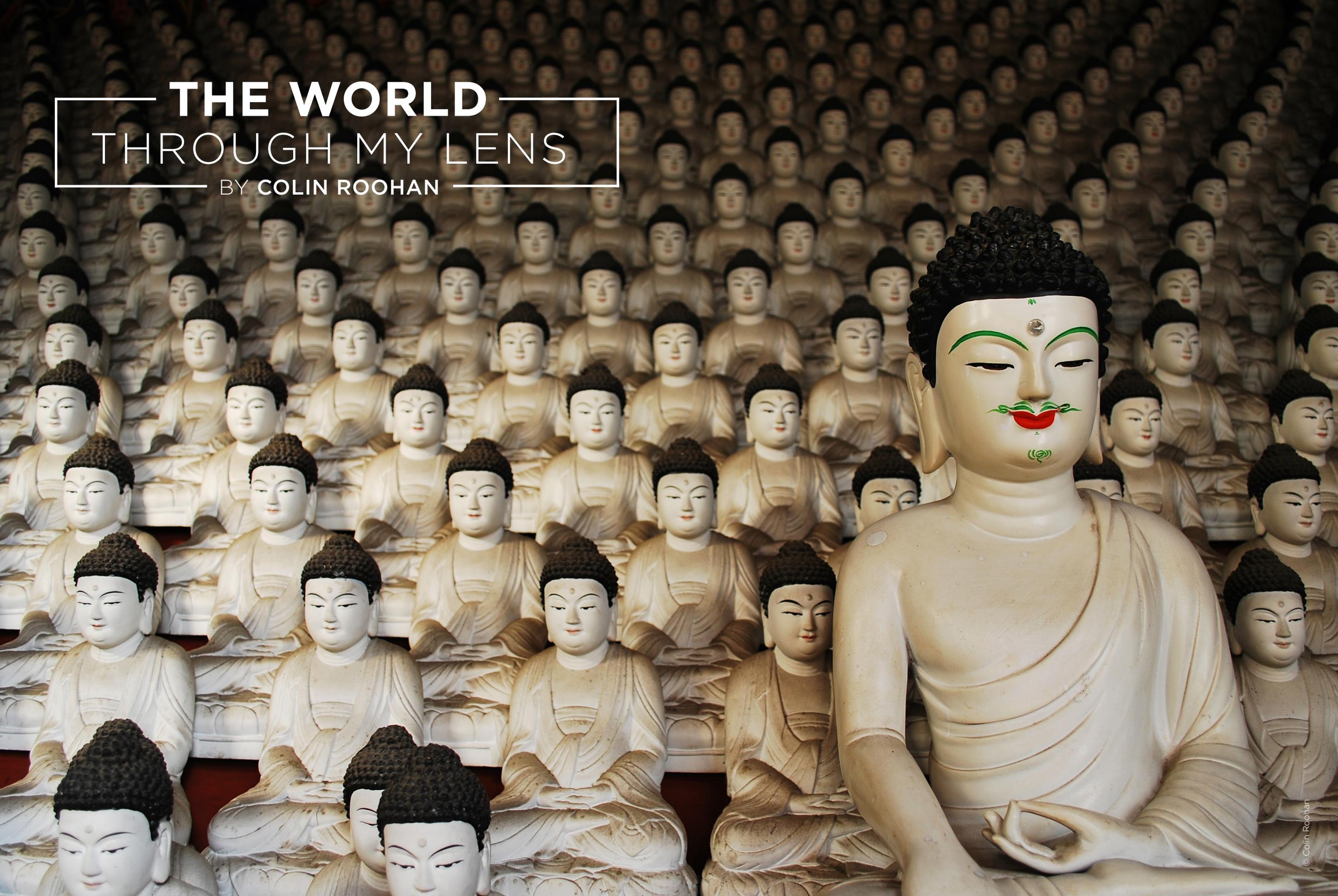
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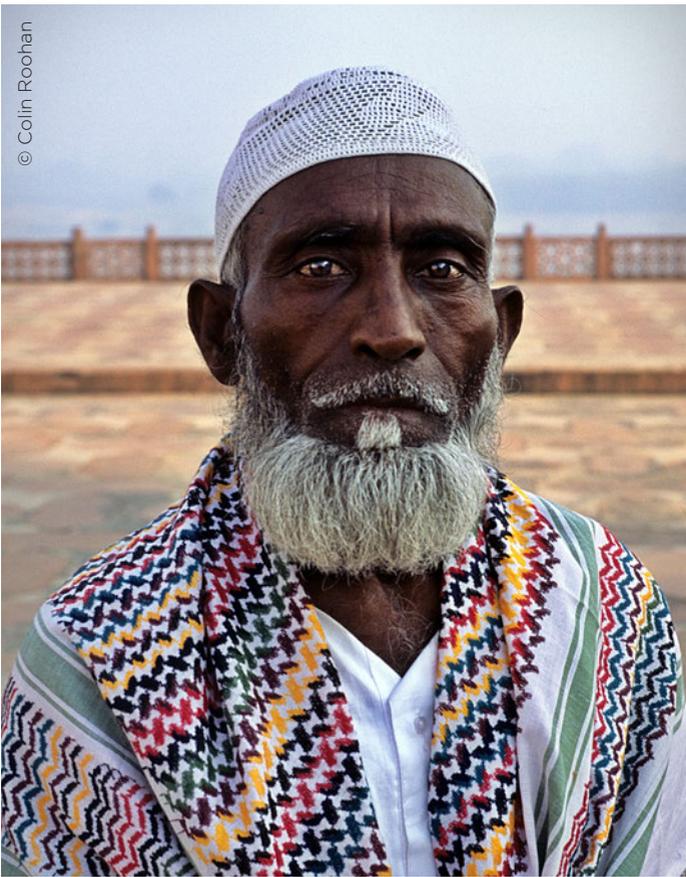
I'd like to share a few experiences that I believe helped me become a stronger travel photographer. I hope that by the end of this piece, you'll be searching online for plane tickets for a trip you've been putting off. But first, allow me to tell you a little about myself in my first-ever contribution to *Shutter*. I am a freelance photographer and writer based in Huntington Beach, CA, specializing in international travel photography. An adventurer at heart, I have had the pleasure of visiting many incredible places on this globe, camera in tow.

What drew me to travel photography was living and working abroad for a couple of years in Seoul, South Korea—a drastic change from the way of life in Tulsa, OK, where I am originally from. I like to compare my experience living abroad to being a child—seeing things for the first time, hearing a new language for the first time and starting to learn a whole new set of cultural norms. The smallest of tasks becomes a new experience, and every experience demands your undivided attention. Having always had an interest in photography, I decided the best way to document all of these new sensory experiences was through a lens.

MY OWN ARTISTIC SPIN

I have always been artistically inclined, but until I discovered photography, I had struggled to feel a true connection with my art. With other art media, mainly painting and drawing, I found it was easy to conceptualize an art piece, but executing it often ended less than satisfactorily. With photography, I finally gained the ability to turn an idea into a final product that I was happy with. I'm a hyperactive person, so the physical aspects of photography—walking around exploring, changing the camera's settings, focusing the lens and actuating the shutter—further connected me to the art, allowing me to stay extremely focused on my work. Some photographers feel more comfortable in a controlled environment, but for me, the thrill of the unknown out in the field motivates me to create more frames.





While learning more about my craft, I continued traveling to new places. The trips taught me how to be fully present in the moment, enabling me to put my own artistic spin on objects most people wouldn't give a second look. I also found through traveling that photography is a type of universal communication (except for those rare instances when others have never seen a photo of themselves!) and generally evokes comradery or nostalgia, which has helped enhance my experiences with locals, ultimately allowing me to break down most cultural barriers and form a stronger bond when taking portraits.

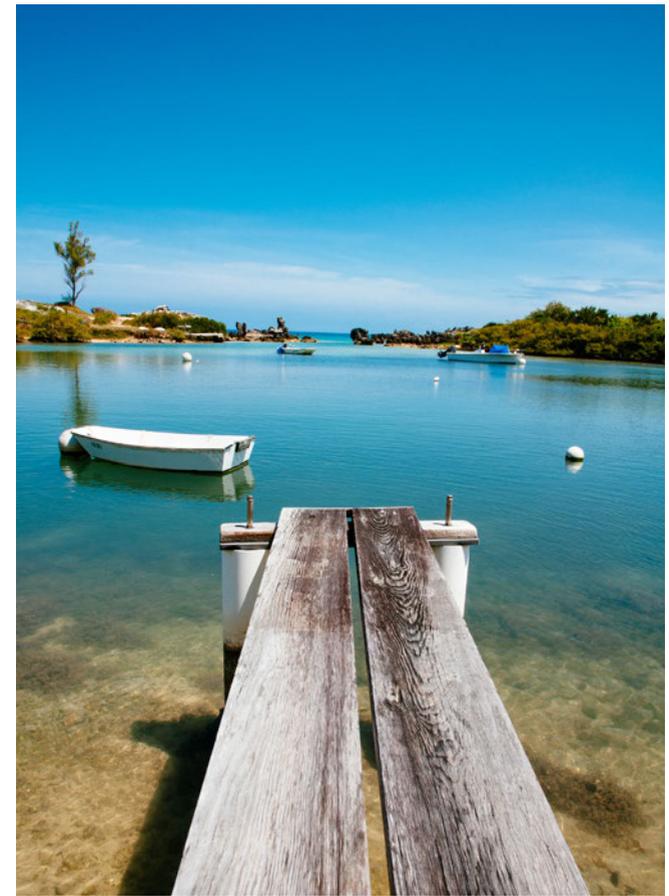
SHARING MY WORK

One thing that helped me introduce my work to a broader audience was sharing my images with different magazines' online communities. I gained exposure to a larger group of like-minded professionals, photographers and travelers. Community members offered advice and provided constructive criticism of my work, which gave me invaluable guidance from industry veterans. After I learned how to apply the criticism to my photos, I started to create more cohesive frames, which was when my work started to gain more attention. In 2013, I had the honor of being included on *Complex* magazine's "The 25 Greatest Travel Photographers Right Now" list, and I owe a great deal of my company's continued growth to it. Larger agencies started noticing my work, and since then, I have been asked to work on projects for tourism departments, tour operators and nonprofits on travel-related assignments.

I've learned that most photo editors usually prefer working with one artist to provide all the content for a particular article since the overall message or story comes across more cohesively. Therefore, in addition to photos, a large portion of my assignments include a writing aspect, something I have grown to enjoy. I started writing for the same reason I started photographing: to document my travels. Although it didn't come as comfortably as photography for me, I think each article I compose is a little stronger than the last. I like to set the scene with my images and use my words to further express details that my photos cannot.

TIPS ON BECOMING A STRONGER PHOTOGRAPHER

The number-one thing I stress to those interested in travel photography is to take a trip somewhere. This seems obvious, right? Unfortunately, most people often prioritize marginally better lenses or waste money on gear they don't really need as opposed to purchasing a plane ticket. Both may allow you to ultimately see your craft in a new light, but a trip will actually change you for the better. New gear is always exciting, but I've had photos held in the same regard that were produced on my \$100 Nikon FE as those taken from my much more expensive digital bodies. On the topic of unnecessary gear, my next tip is to pack light. I take two or three camera bodies and just a few lenses, typically one or two prime lenses, from 24mm to 50mm, and a medium-length zoom lens. Often, one body with one lens is all I carry while out on photo walks. When you're lugging around your gear all day, even 1 pound makes a difference, and I'm often walking more than 10 miles a day when on an assignment. Having a lot of gear hanging from your body also makes you an easy target for pickpockets and the like; luckily, I've only been robbed by a monkey, and it wasn't interested in my cameras!



The most important thing is to *get lost!* Take a wrong turn, walk a few extra miles, explore more than just the “highlights” section of your guidebook. I cannot count how many times I have been lost in other countries, killing time, playing charades to converse with locals, walking through markets, joking with vendors. It allows you to feel the true character of a place, which is especially crucial when putting your travels on paper. When you’re an outsider in a foreign country and you ask questions, show even a slight interest and make yourself vulnerable, it allows the locals to see you in a different light, which can lead to some amazing experiences.

Travel photography shouldn’t be intimidating. You have to approach the art with an open mind and a laid-back demeanor. The days can be long and the hours inconsistent, but getting to see and experience so many incredible things shatters any potential difficulties. When I get messages of encouragement from fans telling me my work has inspired them to travel, or has inspired them to create, it is the most satisfying feeling. ■

the list | april 2015

Looking for new products to enhance your wedding business?
We have a few for you to try...

1



Your life is wild. To capture it, and the content you create in it, you have to go to extremes. This lightweight family of rugged products are designed to go there with you. Protecting your data, no matter the terrain. Find out more about G-Technology's Rugged Family at:

G-TECHNOLOGY.COM/RUGGED

2



Spider Camera Holster, makers of unique, ergonomic camera-carrying solutions for photographers, announced the launch of the Spider Monkey Rain Cover and Water Bottle Holder. The newest additions to Spider Holster's professional line of photography accessories, the Spider Monkey Rain Cover and Water Bottle Holder provide a level of protection, reliability and convenience that Spider Holster users have come to know and trust. Both accessories are available immediately at select retailers and online.

SPIDERHOLSTER.COM

3



Let go of expectations and capture the moment. Our Composer Pro with Sweet 50 Optic lens helps you frame subjects and freeze time. Using it to play with light-bending blur at a versatile 50mm focal length, you can set ordinary images into motion while fluidly shooting a spot of sharp focus surrounded by blur.

LENSBABY.COM/LENSES-COMPOSER-PRO-SW50

4



Off-Camera flashes are not speedlights and they are not monolights. They are a new kind of flash, combining the best of both worlds. Profoto's Off-Camera Flashes are distinguished by their portability, ease of use, revolutionizing TTL technology and powerful light. Put together, these features bring a whole new way of shooting.

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INSPIRATIONS

— best travel image —

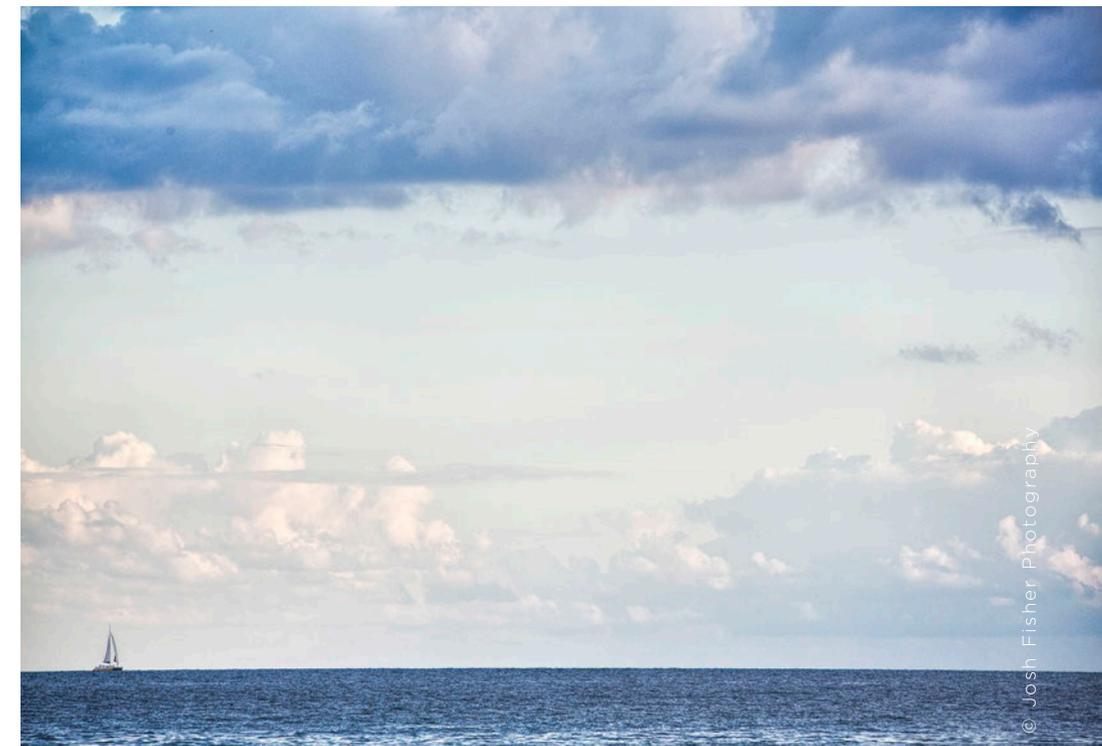
Put 10 photographers in a room and ask them to shoot a paperclip, and there's no telling what will happen. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is why I love being a photographer. We all see the world in our own special way. Ultimately, though, nothing is truly new or unique. Everything is inspired by something that came before. In that spirit, this month we asked you, our readers, to submit some work you thought would inspire your peers. What you gave us was inspiring for sure. Enjoy.



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© Josh Fisher Photography



© Nicole Keintz Photography



© Sam Swartz



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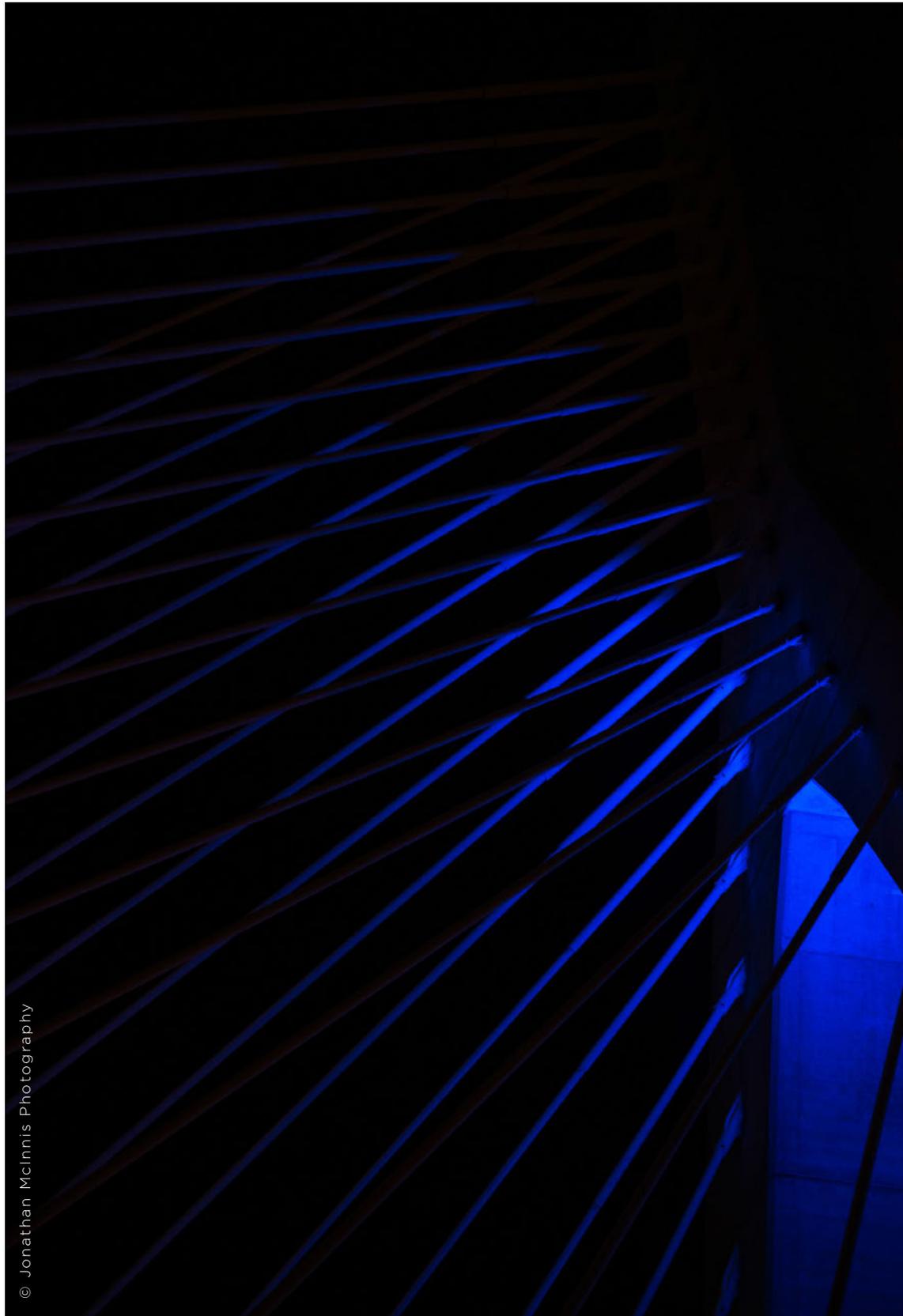
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Perspectives of power



Focal length: 15mm Exposure: F/11 0.6 sec ISO400 © Ian Plant

new

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WITH

Salvatore Cincotta

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- + How to push past a creative block.
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- + Incorporating a partner into your business.
- + Managing your expenses.
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NEXT MONTH | MAY 2015

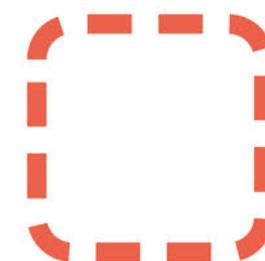
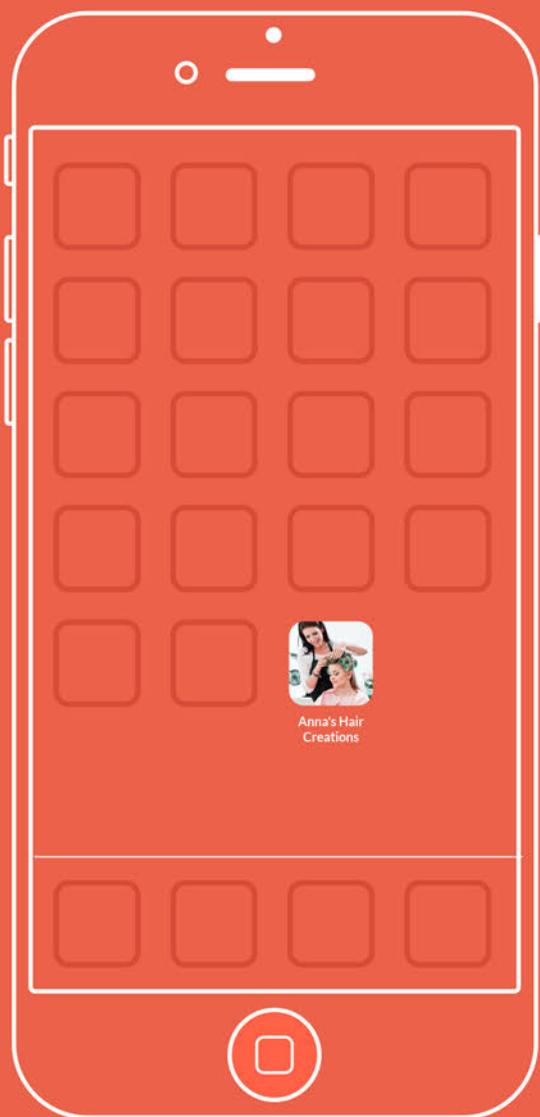
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by **Justen Hong**

I've had a bunch of people ask me how to get their business to appear on Google Maps in SERPs (search engine results pages). The map results still use Google's algorithm to determine ranking here, but with more emphasis on certain factors. Here are some of those factors.

Physical Address

This is your physical address in the city of the search. If you do not have a physical location in the city, do not try to fool Google by getting a P.O. box or using a fake address. You can still rank organically in the search, but without a legitimate physical location in the actual city of search, or if you are in a suburb or a short distance away from the targeted city, you will most likely not show up on the top of the map results.

The distance from your location to Google's determined "centroid" (or geometric center) is also an important factor. Google determines where a centroid is located by the type of businesses/market/industry you are in, meaning the centroid is not the actual center of the city. For instance, if there is a part of town that has 15 car dealerships and there are a couple other dealerships sprinkled throughout the city, Google will most likely determine the centroid for the search "car dealerships" to be the center of where those 15 dealerships are located. Google Mobile results are different than desktop results, but Google is getting even better at knowing where desktop users are located. So the proximity of the searcher's location to your business is also factored in.

Citation Categories

A citation is a business listing on websites like Google+ Your Business, Bing Places for Business, Yahoo Small Business (Localworks), LinkedIn, Yelp, Citysearch and Best of the Web. Almost all these services allow you to select categories for your business. This is one of the most important ranking factors, so make sure they are the best categories for your company.

Consistent Citation

Having consistent listing information is critical. You must use the exact same name and spelling for your company on each and every listing. Not doing so could cause duplicate listings and confuse search engines. All your company information needs to be consistent too, such as phone, address, website, etc.

It is also very important that all your profiles are 100 percent complete. This includes filling out everything from the citation's profile form, from company description to loading photos.

Tip

Moz.com has an awesome tool called Moz Local (moz.com/local) that helps you check, fix and add citations. It's one of the best and least expensive services of its kind. It is currently \$84 a year, as opposed to \$499 a year for similar services like Yext. It will tell you if you have duplicate listings or an incomplete profile, and automatically submits your company information to a bunch of trusted citation sites.

Citation's Domain Authority

Domain authority is a measure of the results power of a domain name. Having a complete, consistent profile on sites like Google+, Yahoo, Bing and Yelp holds more weight than on smaller directory sites that have less domain authority. This metric is used by search engines to measure the trustworthiness of a website.

Tip

Along with all the typical listing/directory sites, the Better Business Bureau (BBB) is a great place to have a listing if you can afford it. If you have the budget and you are in a very competitive market, this is a solid link to acquire. It is local and highly trusted. You have to pay monthly or yearly dues, so companies that are out of business lose their listing. This means the BBB's listings are accurate and trusted by major search engines. It categorizes businesses by market, so a link from the BBB is powerful because it is both location-specific and topic-related. The cost of membership varies from location to location.

NAP: Name, Address, Phone Number ■■■

Having your NAP on every page of your website that is consistent with the NAP on all your other listings/citations is crucial.

Advanced Tip

Adding schema, also called structured data, can help with ranking. Learn more at Schema.org/localbusiness. Google Webmaster Tools offers a resource called Structured Data Markup Helper (Google.com/webmasters/markup-helper) that produces the code to add to your website.

Note

If you have an 800 number, switch it to a local phone number. Google hates toll-free numbers for local search results.

Postive Reviews ■■■

Having positive reviews across the Internet is an import factor with local SEO and map results. The most important place to have them is on your Google+ business page because those show up in the map results, but having them in multiple places like Yelp and wedding sites like The Knot and Wedding Wire, is also important. Having your keywords used in the reviews helps too, but this should happen organically. Do not coach your reviewers on what to say. Also, try not to get a bunch of reviews all at once. Google may consider this suspect and not display some of the reviews.

Note

In a past article, I provided some faulty advice. I wrote about possibly incentivizing your clients into leaving reviews by providing them with a free print or something. Since I wrote that, I've discovered that it is against Google's guidelines to offer incentives for reviews. You can ask clients to write a review, but it's against Google's guidelines to offer something of value for it.

Standard Ranking Factors ■■■

All the other standard ranking elements are factored into the pack results, including business signals, on-page SEO, linking signals, social signals, user behavior (bounce and click-through rates, mobile clicks to call), site speed, etc.

Important SEO News

Google has announced that on April 21, 2015, there will be an algorithm update that factors in whether or not your website is mobile friendly. This means you really need a responsive website or, at minimum, a mobile-friendly version, or your ranking could start to fall. Google currently already has a mobile-friendly label on mobile search results, and its results from mobile devices are already different from desktop searches. I am guessing that non-mobile-friendly sites that are still ranking pretty well on mobile devices won't starting April 21.

Tip

If you are not sure if you have a mobile-friendly site, test it with Google's Mobile-Friendly Test, at Google.com/webmasters/tools/mobile-friendly. ■



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YOUR BLOG
PART II





BY SKIP COHEN

We started out talking about your website, then your blog, last month. Well, the next big building block for your brand awareness is figuring out how to use your blog. That means filling it with useful content.

I always hear photographers whining that “there’s nothing to write about!” The truth is, there’s always something to write about, but most of you take so much for granted in terms of your expertise and being helpful to your readers.

Let’s come up with a series of topics you can expand on so you’ve got a nonstop flow of content.

Picture-taking Tips

If you’re a professional photographer, then you’re already loaded with tips to help your target audience raise the bar on their own images. Every consumer would love to get better images, even if they’re only shooting with their cellphone.

Posing

Do a piece on posing in triangles, and let’s get people away from the firing-squad lineups they insist on doing when the family is together. Talk about sitting Grandma in the middle and then building out the family around her. Give them ideas you use every day.

Lighting

You don’t need to teach a program as if you were speaking in the Profoto booth at a convention. All you need to do is get them to start to see the light. Talk about natural light. Show examples of backlighting challenges and why they might need to turn on the flash of their point-and-shoot or phone. Share ideas on sweet light, and show examples.

Composition

This has to be the easiest, because consumers are always too far away from their subject. Help them to understand that “what they see is what they get,” and show them examples of the benefit of moving a little closer. Think about the way you photograph a bride and groom, especially when you’re moving in for tight face shots and emotion.

Storytelling

You’re the ultimate storyteller. It’s your job, but the average consumer sees one shot and then typically moves on to something else. Show them how their images tell a story, the same way your wedding albums share scene-setters and other details.

Here’s a perfect example. Tell the story of Thanksgiving dinner with some scene-setter shots and details of Mom and Grandma working in the kitchen. Help them understand timing and the importance of getting a great table shot before everybody is eating. Think about it: Within 10 minutes, the Thanksgiving table looks like a war zone. Teach them to get the shot before the turkey is carved.

Things to do with images

All it takes is a trip to Shutterfly to get acquainted with some of the consumer products out there. Over the years, I’ve had a ball with coffee mugs, barbecue aprons, mouse pads, puzzles and even pillowcases. Help them understand some of the novelty things they can do with their images. At the same time, show some of your professional presentations of prints on metal, wood and canvas.

Community Profiles

This is one of my most favorite projects because it pulls the whole community into your blog. Do a blog post once a week about somebody special, like the cook at your favorite restaurant, the pharmacist who’s always so helpful, your dry-cleaner, vet, dentist or doctor. The list goes on and on. Even the produce manager at your supermarket has a job that’s perfect for an environmental portrait.

One profile a week is a perfect feature. The best thing about this is being able to go out for the day and build a stash of profile posts, so you get ahead of schedule. Then, when you post the image, let the subject know about it. Every subject becomes an ambassador for your blog.

Buy a few of those inexpensive free-standing Lucite frames. Print a copy of your blog page on it. At the top, add a little copy, something like “As seen on YourBlog.com.” Just about every person or business you profile will put your blog post out on their counter for the public to see.

Profiles don’t have to be just adults in the community. Think about pets, kids and families. They’re all prime subjects—just make sure you’ve got the appropriate model releases, especially when working with children.

Community Calendar

Every community has events going on all year long that have something to do with imaging. Share those events on your blog, and share picture-taking tips for events. Again, this is about being helpful to your reader.

My Favorite Places

Where do you like to shoot and why? Share those locations with your readers. When I moved back to Ohio for a couple of years in 2009, I really thought there was absolutely no place decent to do a portrait session in all of Cleveland. Hey, I'd lived on the West Coast near Malibu for seven years. Lake Erie doesn't exactly match the California coastline.

Well, I couldn't have been more stupid. A buddy of mine took me on a ride around some neighborhoods on the west side of Cleveland. I was blown away by walls of old brick, coastline spots on Lake Erie and downtown areas with lots of texture and stunning light.

Share those locations and images with your readers. Here's a chance for you to show off your artistic skills and plant a seed.

Showing Your Work

I'm a huge fan of using your blog to show your work, but don't be excessive. For example, many of you are caught in what I call "riptide marketing." You started showing images from every family or engagement shoot, and now everybody expects you to share their images on your site. When you don't, you're afraid of hurt feelings and a negative impact on your business.

So, let's deal with the challenge. First, don't show more than one or two images from any shoot. You don't need to show every image you captured. Second, use the images to make a point about lighting, posing, composition or the location. Your images will become more educational, and gradually you'll be able to reduce the number of images you're sharing.

Issues and Things You Believe In

As I've written before, your website is about what you sell, while your blog lets you show your heart. Remember your readership and don't be afraid to get a little sappy now and then. Share ideas about family, children, grandparents, love, etc.



*Remember, you're a magician
who's **built a business**
around capturing memories
and turning them into photographs
to last a lifetime.*



If you're a parent, it's the perfect venue to talk about the importance of capturing images of your kids as they grow up. This is like "Subliminal Man" from *SNL* years ago—you're planting the seed for your readership to not only take more pictures, but think about hiring you for some quality family heirloom images.

Remember, you're a magician who's built a business around capturing memories and turning intangible moments into photographs to last a lifetime. Use your blog to talk about some of the images you've captured of your own family. Talk about how fast kids grow up. Puppies become dogs...moments pass that will never come back again.

Contests

Use your blog to establish a few fun contests centered around picture-taking by consumers. Have some fun with a few different themes, which can be as simple as a winter day and kids playing in the snow. Give them themes to think about: family, pets, a rainy day, a day at home...there's nothing you can't build a contest around. For prizes, as your readership grows, work with local companies to provide some fun and unique items. Again, this is about turning your blog into an event center all about photography and your role in the community.

Don't forget hybrid technology!

Most of you have started to incorporate video into your presentations, especially if you're shooting with products like Lumix with 4K video. This is about education again, but a lot more fun than just trying to teach. Use your blog to show your storytelling ability, combining still imaging and video.

Ed Foreman, a terrific marketing consultant, spoke to us many years ago at a Polaroid meeting. He said something that I've never forgotten (and which you have seen if you follow my articles): "If I can see the world through my client's eyes, then I can sell my client what my client buys!"

This is far bigger than just putting yourself in their shoes. You have to think like they do and understand what's important to them. You have to see the world their way and pay attention to their priorities, issues of trust, the importance of memories, family, friendships, love.

Creating a strong blog can be one of the most strategic and powerful building blocks for your business. Be consistent, listen to your audience and, most importantly, open your heart. ■



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TRY FOCUS STACKING

FOR GREATER DEPTH
**IN LANDSCAPE
PHOTOGRAPHY**

with Dustin Lucas



by **Dustin Lucas**

It never fails when I read about new ways to better my photography: There’s usually an equipment pitch. It’s all about having the best lenses and cameras. Or on the flip side, I find large-format film photographers preaching lessons in the landscape. Hauling my 4x5 view camera everywhere was great when I was shooting for 40-by-50-inch prints and I had grant money to blow on art projects. But technique is often more important than equipment. One technique, “focus stacking,” can lend greater depth to your landscape imagery.

We’ve all shot a landscape or two. I don’t need to go into great detail about what makes a landscape, or how to shoot one with a great depth of field. Wide or telephoto lens—does it matter? It seems simple enough: You can just stop down to f22, and everything will magically be in focus.... That depends on how you define *focus* versus *sharpness*. Also, where in the landscape are you choosing your focal point? Focus stacking allows you to precisely shoot a landscape with a sharp foreground, middle ground and background.

Before we go any further into focus stacking, let’s look at some essential components: focal lengths, apertures and where to focus.

There is a great deal of debate about lenses and focal lengths when photographing landscapes. With this shoot, I used my kit zoom lens, a Nikon 24–120 f4 VR, to experiment with wide, normal and slight telephoto focal lengths. I like wide to tele-zoom lenses because, for landscape photography, I am usually shooting at f8 on a tripod (and if you care about depth of field, you don’t care about fast, expensive lenses—just putting that out there). I will stick with a focal length of 24mm for the widest perspective of the scene and the greatest depth of field. Greater depth in a landscape is composed with a defined foreground, middle ground and background.

OK, lets just take a photo already. What did you focus on in the scene?

The rule of thumb when focusing is to choose a spot one-third into the scene. This is easier if you have a row of trees or telephone poles: Just divide them by three and shoot away. By following this strategy, naturally the best thing to do is stop down to f22 or f32. Everything will be in focus near to far—right? Well, not exactly. Small apertures introduce an issue known as “diffraction.” Basically, diffraction spreads the sharpness from the near point in focus to the far, usually infinity. This introduces a softening into the image that you do not want. Lenses have a peak focus based on apertures, which is where the conversation gets very technical. Try to keep your lens between f5.6 and f11 when you don’t know specifically.

So far, we have introduced how to focus the scene and what apertures to use, but f8 isn’t going to accurately cover a landscape extending to the horizon. What now? A technique to calculate the hyperfocal distance is a great solution to focusing a single image with tack-sharp details. Focusing at the hyperfocal distance can be figured out with a depth-of-field calculator. I downloaded DOFMaster from the Apple App Store on my phone (Figure 1). It allows me to plug in all my shooting data, giving me a distance to focus. You can also figure this out if you know your “near limit” of acceptable focus. Your near limit is the distance from your camera to the beginning of what is in focus. If you double that distance, you get the approximate hyperfocal distance. (That’s great if you didn’t forget your 100-foot tape measure!)

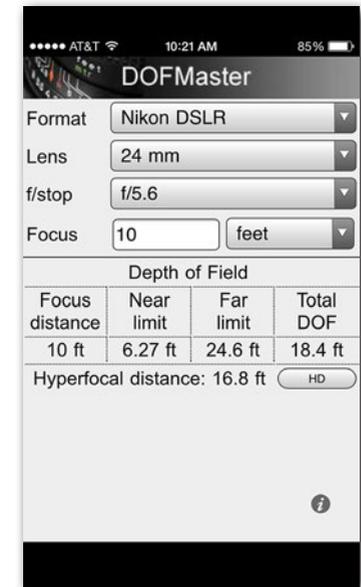


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 2a



Figure 2b

So, what now?

Finally, we are getting into the process of focus stacking. For this shoot, I kept my aperture set to f8, set up my tripod and fired two images. For the first image, I focused on a point in the foreground (Figure 2ab). For the second, I focused almost at the horizon line (Figure 4ab). If you're able to focus on a point in the middle ground, go for it (Figure 3ab). Usually the wiggle room between foreground and background is tiny, and, when shooting at f8, the coverage is sharp near to far once you stack the images together.



Figure 4



Figure 4a



Figure 4b



Figure 3



Figure 3a



Figure 3b

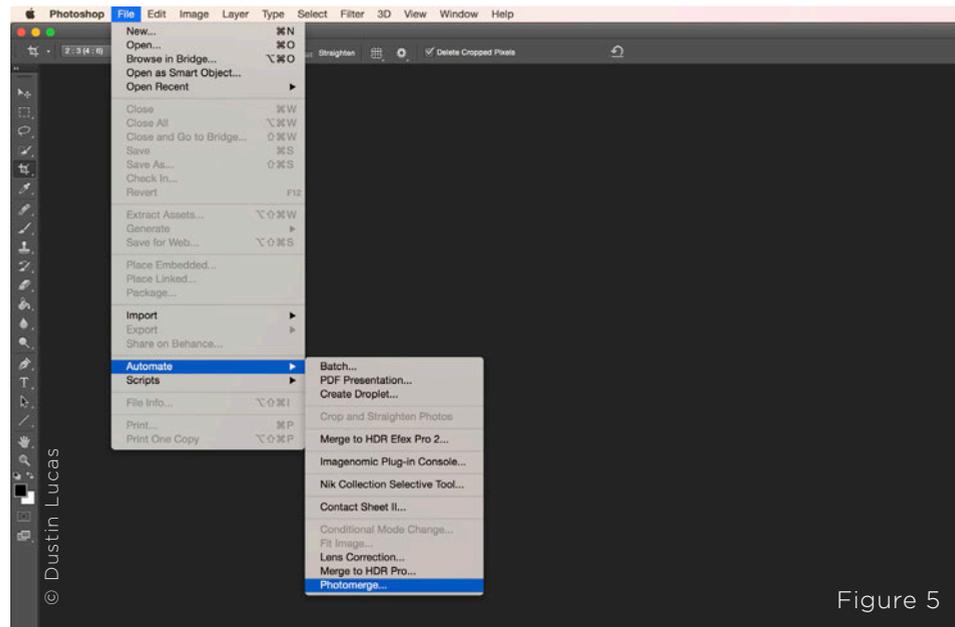


Figure 5

Now let's move into Photoshop and stitch these images together.

In the menu bar, click File > Automate > Photomerge (Figure 5). A dialog box opens with a few options. Under the Layout settings, choose Auto or Collage. Either of these is fine, so Collage it is. In this window, it is important that you uncheck Blend Images Together (Figure 6). Photoshop opens a single document with all the images as layers. Select all the layers, and then in the menu bar, click Edit > Auto-Blend Layers (Figure 7). Once the dialog box appears, select Stack Images and keep Seamless Tones and Colors selected (Figure 8). Select OK. The image will be Blending the Layers Based on Content and Creating Layer Masks for blending. Once its completes the process, you will have a well-blended image (Figure 9).

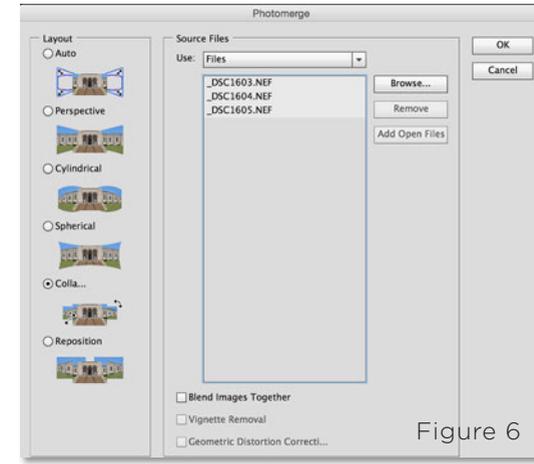


Figure 6

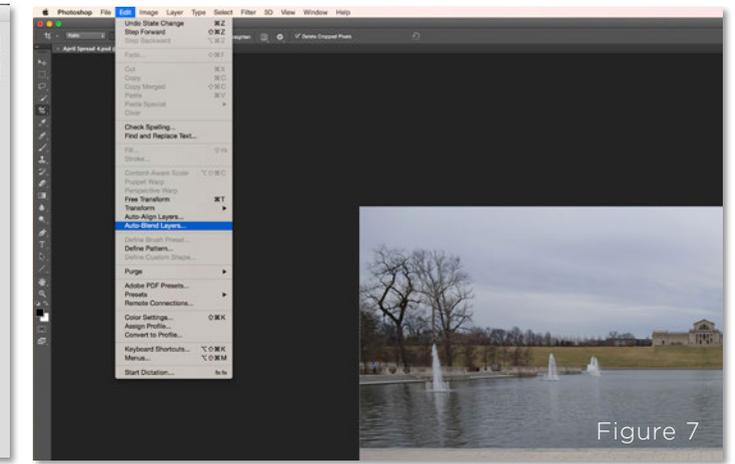


Figure 7

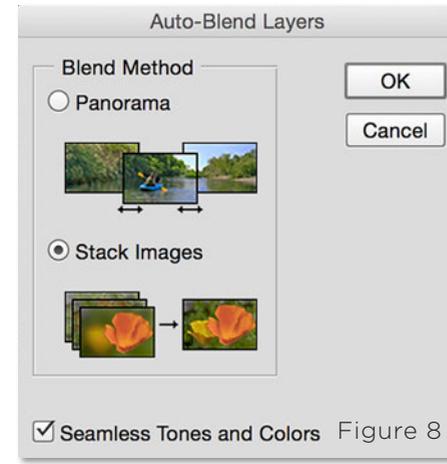


Figure 8

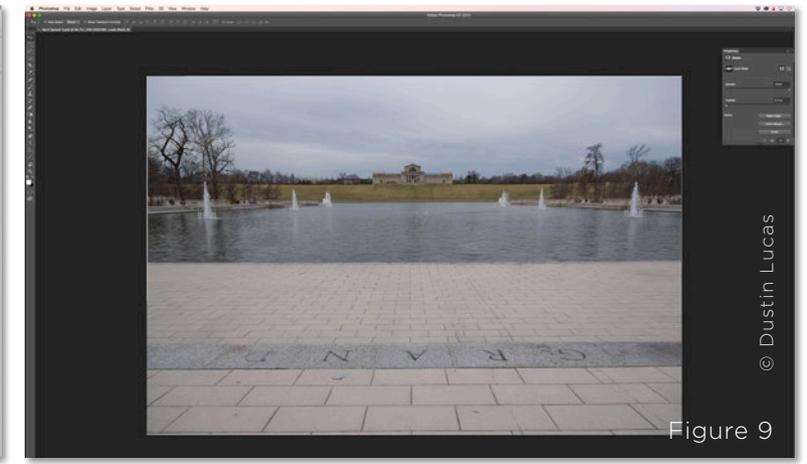


Figure 9



© Dustin Luces

Figure 10

Remember to flatten the layers after you have checked the blended seams. Movement in the image can be problematic during this stage. Simply mask out those areas and clean up any issues, as I have. You're done (Figure 10). This technique of focus stacking allows me to then push the image further in post-production, as I have for the opening image in this article.

When using this technique for landscapes, you need to remember to use a tripod, shoot between f5.6 and f11, use a remote trigger to reduce vibration and choose a less windy scene, because motion in the images can greatly affect the blending. A vacant landscape is easier to blend together than a busy roadway. (It's funny that I chose a difficult scene to capture, because now my post-production abilities have to save the image.)

Try this technique next time you go out shooting, and let me know how it works for you. ■

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