



# 100

## Ways To Take Unique Travel Photos

BY  
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PHOTLER

World In My Lens.com

TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHY BY PIOTR KULCZYCKI

# Hello!

*My name is Piotr and I'm a keen travel photographer. I have visited almost 100 countries to date. To document my travels and showcase my photos over ten years ago I created [www.worldinmylens.com](http://www.worldinmylens.com). The website gathered considerable recognition both from travel enthusiasts and professionals due to its sleek design and rich content.*

*Many people regularly ask me what they can do to take better travel shots. This e-book is my answer. I selected a hundred tips, which will help you to become a better travel photographer. In this e-book you will also find some of my favourite pictures from all around the world.*

*Currently I am working very hard with my team on a new product - [Photler.com](http://Photler.com). Photler is going to be a place to browse hundreds of travel photos from the best photographers. This will also be a service that will allow you to create a beautiful photo website on your own - using easy WYSIWG editor. I'm sure you will love it!*

*Before Photler is ready please check out my travel photography tips on the following pages and if you are interested in early access to the site please drop me an email at [piotr@photler.com](mailto:piotr@photler.com). Thanks!*

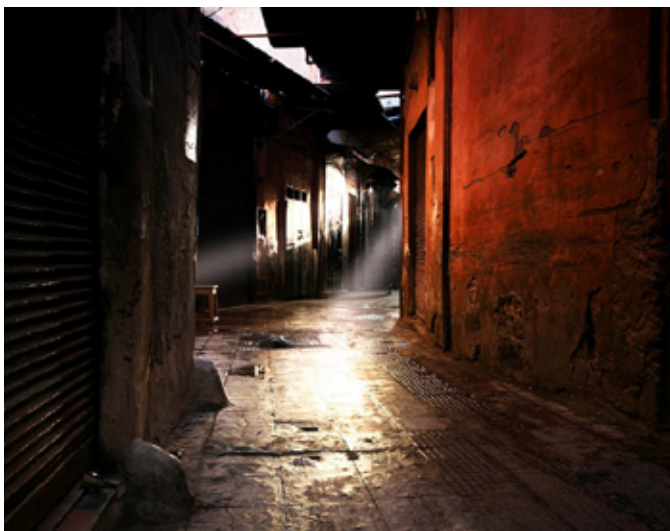
*P. Kuley*



# Before you go

## 01. ONLY TAKE NECESSARY KIT

As photographers, we enjoy buying new toys such as lenses and photo accessories. We often own more tools than we really need. In the past I owned seven different lenses and I only used two of them on a regular basis. It's OK if you keep all the kit in your bedroom. The problem is if you want to climb Machu Picchu with a 20kg backpack full of camera stuff! At some point I decided to get rid of most of my lenses and keep only the ones I travel with regularly. I ended up with one wide angle lens (17-40mm) and another telephoto zoom lens (70-200mm). Even if there is a gap between focal length between 40 and 70mm I feel that I can take any picture I want without feeling limited.



Marrakech, Morocco

## 02. RESEARCH THE LOCATION

It's important to know where you are going and what's important to see in that particular location. Often when you get to the destination you spontaneously decide what to visit. It's not

that good for your photography, because not all sights look good all day long. Some buildings look better illuminated in the morning or in the late afternoon shadow. It's worth knowing in advance and then plan your day accordingly.



Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam

## 03. BOOK HOTELS IN GOOD LOCATIONS

You don't need to book an expensive place to stay. What you really need is to be in a central (or convenient) location. This will allow you to spend more time shooting photos and less time in transit to locations. If your hotel is close to major sights it will be much easier to get there before sunrise, or just grab your tripod before a night-time photo shoot.

## 04. INTERNET RESOURCES

There are plenty of internet resources you should check before you go. I always use TripAdvisor to find out what people think is worth seeing. Kayak.com, Momondo or SkyScanner help me find the cheapest fares. 500px and Flickr are good places to see good photos people have taken at a destination. What I really miss is a website where

you've got an interactive map with all high quality photos pinned onto it. This would allow me to find photo inspiration from a particular region before I go there. My website WordInMyLens.com is a basic execution of that idea. But I would love to have all great photographers share their photos that way. This is why we are working now on a new service – Photler.com. Send me an email to learn more.

## **05. CHEAP FLIGHTS**

There are literally millions of interesting places to visit in the world. How do you choose where to go next? I make a list of a few countries I want to visit in the near future. Then I check where I can get the cheapest flights. To find an intercontinental flight I use Kayak or Momondo. SkyScanner is great for finding cheap low-cost airline tickets within Europe. It's always worth checking on in multiple search engines, because prices vary.

## **06. DON'T TAKE ORGANIZED TOURS. BE INDEPENDENT.**

If you want to take great travel pictures you have to be willing to spend quite some time in each location. Often you have to come back when the light is better. Many times you will walk around trying to find the best angle for your perfect photo. When you are on organized tours you basically don't have time for that. Also tours tend to visit more commercial tourist attractions and as you might know the best shoots are the ones where you can get away from hordes of tourists. Being an independent traveller means you can go wherever you want and spend as much time as needed to take good pictures.

## **07. GET TRAVEL INSURANCE**

Travel photography is not as risky as winter sports,

but you should still get insurance before your trip, especially when travelling to remote destinations like Nepal or Bangladesh. You want to be sure that if something was to go wrong you are covered. We all hope that insurance is a waste of money!

## **08. ALWAYS PACK CAMERAS AS CARRY-ON LUGGAGE**

Sometimes you don't feel like carrying all your heavy kit in the airports. Particularly when you have many short connections. But you need to remember that luggage gets lost more often than you might expect. In the United States, an average of 1 in 150 people have their checked baggage misdirected or left behind each year. When you go on a photo trip you don't want this to happen!

## **09. TAKE PHOTOS FROM THE AEROPLANE**

It's tempting to sit back and go to sleep before you land at a new destination. You also will feel exhausted after a few days of travelling when going back home. But trust me you can take some of the best photos from the entire trip during that flight. You should keep your camera handy especially during take off and landing early morning and late afternoon. These are the times you can get the best photos on an aeroplane.

## **10. PACKING AND TRAVELLING LIGHT**

This is advice you will hear from most independent travellers. The truth is that you need less than you think you need. When travelling for only a few days I try to pack everything in carry-on luggage. This allows me to avoid some queues and be one of the first out of the airport.

## 11. TRAVEL GUIDES ON A TABLET

Every traveller needs a travel book. The problem is that if you want to visit many countries on a single trip (which I always try to do) you have to carry a few kilos of books. The solution is simple. I load all travel guides I need in PDF format to my iPad. I recommend: <http://shop.lonelyplanet.com/>

## 12. TAKE AN UMBRELLA

Maybe it seems old-school to carry an umbrella. But this is the best way to protect your camera during the rain. I tried several camera rain covers. They are bulky, hard to use and expensive. The cheapest, very light and basic umbrella works the best for me. It's small and I don't worry if it gets lost. I agree that it's not the most comfortable to travel with an umbrella in one hand and camera in the other, but you can take some of your best photos during the heavy rain when the sky is so dramatic.

## 13. CHARGE YOUR BATTERIES

Maybe it's obvious. But you should take into account that over the time your batteries hold less power and require more frequent charging. It's a good idea to replace your batteries every few years. Also you have to consider that during the summer your batteries will last longer than in winter.

## 14. PREPARE PHOTOCOPIES OF EVERYTHING IMPORTANT

Being in a remote destination exposes you to all kinds of risks. If you take standard precautions and stay careful you will be fine even in the most dangerous cities in the world. But sometimes the inevitable happens without being able to

circumvent it. So be prepared for such a situation and have photocopies of your documents and reservations. Just leave a copy at home, on the internet (internet mail account or drop-box). Just in case.



*Baku, Azerbaijan*

## 15. KNOW WHAT TIMES SUNRISE AND SUNSET ARE

Before every trip I always check the sunrise and sunset calendar - <http://www.timeanddate.com/sun>. It's worth knowing how much daylight I'm getting on my photo trip. It allows me to plan my day accordingly. The best time of the day for a travel photographer is the so-called 'Golden Hour'. This is around sunset, when you can get the best photos. It's crucial to know exactly when it happens.



*Cairo, Egypt*

# On location

## 16. WAKE UP EARLY

The best times of the day to take great pictures are morning and late afternoon. Especially because morning light is very soft, there are not many people on the streets, and it is the coolest time of the day in the summer. It is highly advisable to wake up even before sunrise, so you can get to your location at dawn. From my experience I can tell that you shouldn't be discouraged even if you wake up early and see that it is raining. The weather could change just before the sunrise and you will take some amazing photos of the dramatic sky with the first rays of the sun. It's totally worth it.



*Siem Reap, Cambodia*

## 17. PLAN FOR THE 'GOLDEN HOUR'

In photography, the Golden Hour is a period shortly after sunrise or before sunset during which daylight is redder and softer compared to when the Sun is higher in the sky. It allows you to take the best photos. A few minutes after sunset is my favorite time of the day to take pictures. Also

because it's very challenging. Basically you've got just 10-20 minutes of the best light. In the city buildings are lit up. Cars are making light trails. Rivers and lakes look calm. You have to plan well in advance what you will be shooting within these few minutes. When I wander around the city during the day I visualize how the sight would look like after sunset and I plan what places I want to visit during the Golden Hour.

## 18. BROWSE POSTCARDS STANDS

Sometimes I don't have time to prepare for my photo trip in advance. I just arrive to a location with a vague idea of what I need to see. Then I stop at the newsstand and analyse all postcards available. You can see what sights you definitely need to visit. You can also see what the best viewpoints are for shooting monuments etc. I also recommend buying just one postcard from every city you are visiting. I have done this since I was a little kid. Now I've got literally hundreds of postcards in my collection.



*Belgrade, Serbia*

## 19. NEVER TAKE WORK WITH YOU ON A PHOTO TRIP

Photo trips should be a time for you to disconnect, to relax and forget about work. I know it's easier said than done. I also don't always follow that tip... But we should focus on our photos, enjoy every minute of taking them and appreciate being in a new place. Then even after a short weekend break you would feel energized and have motivation for work.

## 20. SUNSCREEN

This is another tip I also often don't follow... In the morning it's cloudy, so I don't use any sunscreen. Then it turns out it's another hot day. Everything is fine until the evening when my neck is all red and hurts. It's really an issue for a travel photographer, who has to wear a camera strap on a burned neck.



*Dublin, Ireland*

## 21. SHOES

Being in a new location you walk a lot taking hundreds of photos. At the end of the day you feel really tired. This could be mitigated if you have proper shoes. Don't get the cheapest, good

looking footwear. For travelling it's important to have shoes with a thick sole and Gore-Tex. When it's raining you should be able to walk comfortably and have dry feet.

## 22. BLEND IN AND DRESS LIKE THE LOCALS

During my travels I see many tourists, who look like they have been taken from another world. For instance, you shouldn't travel to India and take your favourite Louis Vuitton bag. First of all, you should wear comfortable clothes, this will help you focus better on your photography. For photographers who want to take some candid photos it's important not to stand out from the crowd. Also if travelling to 'not so safe countries' it's better to blend in – although to be honest your DSL camera would draw some attention anyway.

## 23. AVOID LOSING MEMORY CARDS

Always use a few smaller memory cards rather than one huge 256 GB card. There could be a technical issue with one of the cards, or your camera could be stolen with all of your photos in it. If you are using a few cards, then you will save at least some of the photos. For me four 16 GB memory cards are enough for a two-week photo trip. If you have a hard drive to backup your photos, then it's fine. If not, you should keep your cards organized. It's easy to lose a card full of wonderful pictures (it happened to me). Or you can accidentally format the card and lose all of your photos.

## 24. FOLLOW THE LIGHT

Landscape photography is all about making the most of the light. You need to shoot not only at the right time of day, but also at the right time of



year. If you go to Iceland in February, you should be aware that you will get only a few hours of daylight. This is why planning is so essential.

## 25. WALK

You have to get used to walking. I get up really early and just walk and walk. You don't take great photos from a sightseeing bus. You don't have to follow paths showed in your travel books. Try to explore some smaller, back streets. Go to less touristy neighbourhoods to capture how the locals live. Your photos will be more authentic and different from all photos you can find on Flickr.

## 26. DON'T SHOOT JUNK FIGURING YOU CAN DELETE IT

It's easy to think that having hundreds of gigabytes of space you can shoot whatever you want. Having that mind-set, you end up with thousands of photos from a two-day photo trip. Then you'll have to transfer all these photos to your computer, not to mention process them. I don't want to limit you, taking a few photos of the same thing as backup is fine. Looking for interesting subjects is also fine. Experimenting with your photography is more than perfect, but please don't go to extremes. Photography is not a quantity contest – it's all about the quality.

## 27. BE PATIENT

You've got to be prepared to keep going back to scout out a subject or location. I often come back later that day, or a few days later when the light is better. The weather can change within minutes (especially in the mountains). This is why it is often worth waiting even a few minutes for the sun to appear again. The same is with subjects. Sometimes you've got a person standing in front

of the subject you want to take a photo of. Just wait a few seconds, so you will have a clear view.



*Wahiba Sands, Oman*

## 28. COMMUNICATE WITH PEOPLE

Even if you can't speak the language try to thank people for the photos you took of them. Show them shots on the LCD, do anything to get them on your side. It's quite likely that they will let you take some more photos, give some travel advice or even invite you to their place. Travel photography is also about the connections and experience you can have with local people.



*Bhaktapur, Nepal*

# Camera tips

## 29. USE APERTURE PRIORITY MODE

Aperture priority (abbreviated A or Av) is a setting on most cameras that allows the user to choose a specific aperture value while the camera selects a shutter speed to match, thereby ensuring proper exposure. In other words, you can choose if the background of the photo is sharp, or blurry. When I started with travel photography I wanted everything to be sharp. But while I discovered Aperture Priority mode I got much more creative.

## 30. SELECT RAW

If you have never used RAW format, then you don't know what you are missing. RAW is a file format that captures all image data recorded by the sensor when you take a photo. When shooting in a format like JPEG, image information is compressed and lost. Because no information is compressed with RAW you're able to produce higher quality images, as well as correct problem images that would be unrecoverable if shot in the JPEG format. Shooting JPGs is just losing the opportunity to get a great photo. Taking photos, you often over expose and under expose, your white balance will be wrong and quality might not be the best. This is why you should start using RAW format now!

## 31. HDR

HDR is short for High Dynamic Range. It is a post-processing task of taking either one image or a series of images, combining them, and adjusting the contrast ratios to do things that are virtually impossible with a single aperture and shutter

speed. I'm not that keen on HDR photography, but I think it's a good idea to try something new and experiment. On the Internet you can find many HDR photos which looks surreal. I'm not the biggest fan of that, but I think it's a great way to spice up your galleries. So just remember the next time you are on location to take three photos at different lighting levels. Set the bracketing to 2 EV increments so that the first photo you take will be too dark, the second photo will be correctly exposed, and the third photo will be too light, or, over exposed. Then have fun during post processing!



*New Zealand*

## 32. USE A LOW ISO SETTING

The lower the ISO number the less sensitive your camera is to light and the finer the grain. So keep your ISO as low as possible. The problem is that sometimes the light conditions are really bad and you have to increase ISO. But before you do, you should first lower your aperture as low as possible. If you are shooting handheld, then you should also lower the shutter speed up to 1/50 of a second (don't use slower speeds if you don't want to get a blurry photo). If your photos are still underexposed, then increase your ISO and then in

post processing try to remove noise – it will help to get clearer photos.

### **33. GET PERFECT COLOUR USING WHITE BALANCE**

Before DSLR arrived you had to set your white balance manually. Now if you are shooting in RAW you can set your white balance post-production. Every photo retouching tool allows users to set a proper white balance. For many years I had never used that feature in Adobe Lightroom. I really missed a lot. Playing with white balance you can really get perfect coloured photos.

### **34. MAXIMISE THE DEPTH OF FIELD**

Depth of field is the amount of distance between the nearest and farthest objects that appear in acceptably sharp focus in a photograph. It basically means that the higher depth of field the sharper the image is and more is in focus. When I take travel photos I never go below f/11. When it's a sunny day f/16 is perfect while shooting hand-held. If you want to use f/22 or higher I recommend to use a tripod and have a perfectly clean camera sensor.

### **35. MANUAL CONTROL**

When I got my first DSLR camera I used automatic setting and polarizing filter during my first trip. Most of the photos were under exposed. Since then I always use the manual settings on my camera. I have to say that initially it's quite tricky to get the settings right. But trust me, you will get more comfortable over time. For travel photos I usually use aperture to f/11 or f/16 – for panoramas. Then I set shutter speed at 1/60 of a second – if the subject is not moving. Then I set the appropriate ISO starting from 200. My camera (Canon 5D mark

III) does a great job in higher ISO values, but I still try not to exceed ISO:1600.

### **36. REVIEW YOUR SHOTS**

I usually take a test shot when I arrive to a new location, or I see that lighting conditions have changed. It's not advisable just to check how your picture looks on LCD. You should rather check the histogram. A 'perfect' histogram rises gently from the left, peaks in the middle and drops on the right, indicating a full range of tones but no loss of detail in shadows or highlights. If shots are too bright, the graph will look bunched up at the right, suggesting burnt-out highlights. However, if the shot is underexposed, the graph will look stacked to the left. In both cases, such patterns suggest exposure compensation might be necessary.



*Inle Lake, Myanmar*

# Composition

## 37. USE THE RULE OF THIRDS

The rule of thirds is a powerful compositional technique for making photos more interesting and dynamic. The rule of thirds states that an image is most pleasing when its subjects or regions are composed along imaginary lines which divide the image into thirds – both vertically and horizontally. Just google for examples of photos using the Rule of Thirds. You should always try taking your photos with this in mind. But if for some reason you don't, nothing is lost. I often crop my photos in Adobe Lightroom to achieve this effect.

## 38. BREAK THE RULES: SHOOT SYMMETRICALLY

Another very important rule in photography is to avoid putting your main subject just in the middle of the frame. But as people say rules are there to be broken. I recommend that you don't always blindly observe every rule you can get from a professional photographer. Just be creative. If another composition seems to work better for you, use it. Don't worry if you put your subject in the centre of the frame. If you can get an illusion of symmetry at the same time you might end up with a very interesting picture.

## 39. FOCUS ON THE MAIN SUBJECT

Every good picture should tell a story. A story about something, not about everything. This is why you should focus the attention of the viewer on a single main subject. For example, don't frame an interesting person, a building and some animals on the same photo. Rather, focus on a

woman and make your photo tell her story. You can do that by carefully cropping your photo, or lower the depth of field (use aperture f/4 or lower).

## 40. GET IN CLOSE

To take great photos you don't need a telephoto lens with a focal length higher than 200mm. In fact, I would say that in most cases if you are too far away, you won't get any good photos. You should get as close to your subject as possible and shoot wide angle, or with standard 50mm lens. Also, if you have a zoom lens it's better to just walk closer to your subject rather than use maximum focal length. You need to know that using the highest focal length results in reducing the quality of a photo (especially in cheaper lenses). So next time you are taking pictures walk closer to your subject!

## 41. THINK ABOUT PERSPECTIVE

By developing a sense of scale and depth in your images you bring perspective into play, and this creates a really stunning image. Photos are two dimensional and by adding depth and perspective you bring a third dimension into play. Use of a wide angle lens is very effective when creating perspective in an image. Subjects in the foreground appear much larger than those in the background. It helps emphasize depth. This is why my favourite lens is wide angle 17-40mm from Canon.



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Mallorca, Spain



# Get creative taking photos

## 42. GRAB CANDID PICTURES WHEN THE SUBJECT IS UNAWARE

I always take portrait pictures without asking for permission. It allows me to capture the moment, while a person is natural. This is crucial for great candid photos. Some photography experts tell you to always ask for permission. I don't agree. Most of the time you don't want your subject to strike an unnatural pose, or have a fake smile on their face. 9 out of 10 people will be OK with you taking pictures of them. Just remember to smile and thank them after you take a snapshot.



*Havana, Cuba*

## 43. INCLUDE A PERSON ON YOUR PANORAMA PHOTOS

Show off a beautiful location by having a person actively doing something within the scene, such as walking along a beach. It gives an impression of the scale, and humanizes your photo. At the beginning of my photography journey I tried to

keep all my shots clear of people. The thing is that many times I missed something. A small person on a panorama could draw attention and make the photo much more appealing.



*Luxembourg*

## 44. LOOK FOR PATTERNS

Patterns are basically just repeated shapes, objects or colours either ordered in precise formations or just random designs scattered across a scene. The important thing about patterns is that they create images that are very pleasing to the eye and add a new dimension to your photos. While taking photos you should look for regular patterns (they make really outstanding images especially when there is a lot of colour involved), irregular patterns (objects that are randomly placed in a scene but fairly close together still reveal a sense of repetition) and multiple patterns (this is an interesting one and you'll often see it in a wall of say an ancient building where different additions have been made).

## 45. HUNT OUT INTERESTING SUBJECTS TO SHOOT

When I started with travel photography I focused

exclusively on taking wide angle photos of buildings and vistas. But often a single detail tells more about the location than a 360° aerial panorama. Your photo gallery should be as diversified as possible. Always include at least a few pics of the detail. It could be a signpost, a fruit in the local market, or a fragment of a building. Be creative. When walking around the city always look for small, interesting details.

## **46. SHOOT INTO THE SUN**

Taking good photos is about capturing the light. In general, the subject of the photo should be well lit. But if you really want to get creative and you want your photo to stand out try to shoot into the sun. Shooting into the sun produces lens flare which, instead of damaging your photos, can be used creatively for spectacular results. You should observe a few rules to get great photos:

1. Avoid silhouettes - To really make the most out of a situation, you want to try to shy away from capturing these, focusing instead on more evenly exposing the skin tones of your subject.
2. Focus - When shooting into the sun, your camera will struggle to focus on the subject, even when you manually select the focal points inside the camera.
3. Use low depth of field (f/2,8 or lower).

## **47. AVOID MID DAY SUN**

The best time of the day to take great photos is early morning and late afternoon. Around mid day the sun is very harsh, you get blown out highlights, squinty subjects... If you have a choice go shooting later or earlier. If you have limited time on location, then try to schedule indoor shooting for that time of the day (museum or park visit will be fine). I also try to have lunch, get some rest or travel to another destination at this time. But if you really have to be on location around noon then I suggest

you get lens filters – polarized, neutral density (ND). Also shooting close up scenes allow you to remove the large amount of contrast evident in the broad scenic shots. So try to find some interesting details, patterns and shoot them.

## **48. IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE PERFECT**

Travel photography is all about showing the vibe of a location. Not all your photos have to be perfect. I often include in the final gallery pictures, which are a bit out of focus, over exposed or not perfectly framed. That's acceptable as long as your photo conveys emotions and is very unique. Look at photos which have won awards in many international press photography contests. Not all of them are perfect from a technical point of view. Keep that in mind and don't get deluded by technical aspects of photography.

## **49. SIMPLIFY THE COMPOSITION**

When you look at a scene with the naked eye, your brain quickly picks out subjects of interest. But the camera doesn't discriminate – it captures everything in front of it, which can lead to a cluttered, messy picture with no clear focal point. What you need to do is choose your subject, then select a focal length or camera viewpoint that makes it the centre of attention in the frame. You can't always keep other objects out of the picture, so try to keep them in the background or make them part of the story. Silhouettes, textures and patterns are all devices that work quite well in simple compositions.

## **50. DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE RAIN**

Many tourists, after arriving at a destination to discover that it is raining, decide to go to their

hotel, or a bar. That's not what good travel photographers do. Quite often you will get better photos during the downpour than during the day with perfectly blue skies. Rain creates dramatic skies, cobblestone in old cities looks shiny, there are less people on the streets, you can capture reflections in puddles. Also most photographers tend to take photos during nice weather. Shooting during the rain allows your photo to stand out.

## 51. CLOSE-UPS OF NATURE

It's important to have your gallery form a location as diversified as possible. Even if you are not into macro photography, you should consider trying it. Your macro close-ups could show a leaf with rain drops, tree bark, or a pattern on a stone. You can actually take these kind of photos with a basic zoom lens. If you invest in extensions tubes for your lens you could achieve even more spectacular effects.

## 52. USE GRAD ND FILTERS

When the sky is cloudy I always use a graduated neutral density filter. Most of the time I prefer to use the hard version of the filter, rather than the soft. A neutral density .6-to-clear, with a two stop differential, will generally compensate the average bright sky-to-foreground situation and is also the most popular density of the series. So if the sky is entirely cloudy using that filter you can get more dramatic effect and balance the brightness of the sky – sky and foreground are evenly exposed.

## 53. DON'T SHOOT EVERYTHING FROM EYE-LEVEL

Taking photos, we want to show the location as interesting as possible. If you take photos from eye-level, then you show your subject the same

as anybody else would see it. If you don't have a drone you can't shoot from above. But you can still go really low. I often crouch and take photos from as low as I can. This perspective looks really interesting especially if you are using wide angle lens.



Zurich, Switzerland

## 54. MAKE A PICTURESQUE PANORAMIC

360-degree panoramas are a unique and exciting way to let your viewers explore your pictures. While handheld 360s are possible, using a panohead on a tripod or monopod makes assembling your panorama a lot easier. The easiest way to shoot a 360 pano with a DSLR is to use a 10-12mm fisheye on a full-frame camera. The angle of view of these fisheye lenses is so wide that you can capture a 360-degree sphere in four shots around. Once you have finished shooting, process all of your RAW files with the same settings. Then you'll need panorama software to stitch them together. The two best stitching programs are PTGui and Autopano. Stitching 360s is also possible in Photoshop.

## 55. SHOOT CITIES AT NIGHT

Night photography is one of my favourite ways to shoot during my travels, which you have probably already gathered when browsing my photo galleries. Even the least interesting town looks good in night pictures with buildings illuminated and light trails made by cars. Before you set off on a night shoot in the city you can pre-set many of the settings on your camera. The best is to set your camera to manual exposure mode, as the automatic modes will struggle to get the correct exposure. You can set the shutter speed to around 30 seconds, the aperture to f/11, and the ISO to 400. You might need to change these once you're on location and can see exactly what light is available, but they are a good starting point for many night shots.



*Ulcinj, Montenegro*

## 56. REMOVE ALL CLUTTER

It's important to remove all the distractions from the frame to focus the attention of a person who views your photo on a single subject. You might do that by carefully framing your photo before taking it. But I'm sure you won't always get it right. So during the processing of your photos you

should crop your photo removing all unnecessary objects. Remove all other distractions (i.e garbage, electrical wiring, dirt).

## 57. GET GREAT SILHOUETTES

Make sure your background is brighter than your foreground and model. Sunrises and sunsets work perfectly for this. Make sure your subjects are interesting shapes. Look for props with eye-catching shapes where they are very easy to identify, for example, bicycles. If you photograph people, pay attention to clothing (shape and color) – it will help you achieve better results.

## 58. USE A WIDE APERTURE

Many inexperienced travel photographers think that they can only shoot with a narrow aperture (for instance f/22). The truth is that you can get some really creative photos using small aperture (below f/4) – even shooting panoramas. Reduce depth of field to focus attention on your subject while keeping the background nicely blurred. Be creative and try to focus on the background, while the foreground is out of focus. This way you can get some really interesting results.

## 59. MAKE SURE PEOPLE AREN'T SMILING

When we take photos of friends and family we often ask for a smile. But if you are looking for some good travel portrait photos, you should never ask your subjects to smile. A fake smile is easy to recognize. Additionally to that, if you ask for a smile and a pose, most people start to feel uncomfortable, which is easy to spot on a photo. So never ask for a smile! Otherwise you end up with a snapshot.

## 60. HAVE A CAMERA WITH YOU AT ALL TIMES

You never know when something is going to happen. This is why when I travel I always have my camera to hand. Even when I travel between locations. This doesn't necessarily mean that you should always keep it hanging around your neck. You could keep it in your bag with quick access. If you are buying a new camera bag, or backpack this should be a major factor when choosing one. Never buy a bag where your camera is in the lower compartment and difficult to access, otherwise you will miss plenty of photo opportunities.

## 61. DON'T FORGET TO SMILE AT PEOPLE WHEN YOU'RE PHOTOGRAPHING THEM

A friendly smile makes you less threatening. Always have a calm and friendly attitude. If you know the language you can have a short chat after you have taken a photo of them.



*Nuwara Eliya, Sri Lanka*

## 62. TAKE OFF THE UV FILTER

When travelling, it may be sensible to protect your lens with a UV or skylight filter. Be sure to unscrew

it when shooting long exposures. Especially while taking night shots of cityscapes as the extra layer of glass can cause unsightly ghost images of the bright lights.



*Cyprus*

## 63. SHOOTING VIDEO ON YOUR DSLR

Nowadays most of the DSLR cameras allow you to take HD videos. If you know how to take photos you won't have any problems with capturing videos as well. You don't have to have to prepare a full length video from every trip. What I would suggest is to start with a few clips from every trip. Something like a 'Live Photos' – just to diversify your gallery from a location.

## 64. PHOTOGRAPHING KIDS

It's known that photographing natives is the most challenging part of travel photography. Trying to capture their children in a memorable travel photograph can be the most difficult of all. Even the most outgoing kids get intimidated when cornered by an adult. So if possible you should photograph a group of kids. Shifting focus away from one child to many can improve

the atmosphere of your travel portrait. Also when shooting kids try to entertain them. Kids are naturally intimidated by large, overbearing shadows. Kneeling, sitting, or playing closer to their line of vision instantly relaxes them. Keep in mind that sometimes you just can't photograph children. In regions where sex trafficking and child abuse are being fought on a national level, natives are particularly sensitive to strangers hanging around their children.

## **65. CHECK WHAT'S BEHIND YOUR SUBJECT**

You need to pay attention to what's behind your subject and make sure what's there doesn't detract from the image. Background of the picture should be clean, uncluttered and ideally less saturated than the main subject. You can achieve the desired effect by carefully framing and cropping your picture.

## **66. LONG EXPOSURES DURING THE DAY**

Use ND filters for daytime long exposures. With long exposed photos, water becomes more like a fog, clouds are blurry, slow-moving people look like ghosts and fast-moving objects become invisible. You will need different exposure lengths depending on what you want to achieve in your final image. A simple motion blur that still keeps objects visible may only require a 10 second exposure. To get that misty look in water or to make clouds lose their definition, you will need a shutter speed of at least 1 minute. At longer exposures, moving objects will vanish entirely. You can use long exposures such as this to create the illusion of empty streets in tourist-popular areas. For daytime long exposure photography, you will need a sturdy tripod and neutral density (ND) filter

with at least six stops of light reduction.

## **67. PARKS LOOK GOOD IN OVERCAST LIGHT**

If you arrive in a city which hasn't got many attractions and the sky is also cloudy, you may think that you won't get any good photos. Don't give up. Head to the nearest park or garden. Look for natural patterns, try some macro photography, you might encounter some animals living there, try to capture reflections on the pond or lake.

## **68. SHOOT THE FOOD**

The local food can say as much about a country or city as its architecture. When eating out, take time to take pictures of the dishes or drinks on the menu. Select the ones that will make the best shots, and shoot them against a plain backdrop. This can also be an opportunity to try macro photography. Using your macro lens you can get some interesting frames.

## **69. BE PLAYFUL - TRY TO BE LIKE A CHILD AGAIN**

Try new ways of shooting and grow through your mistakes. We're no longer constrained by 36 exposures - take lots of different pictures. Try new techniques, experiment with light. It's very refreshing if you regularly try new kit. You don't have to buy lenses or accessories regularly. You can rent a new toy for a few days for a relatively small price.



*Bergamo, Italy*

## 70. KNOW YOUR CAMERA

It's important that you know how to operate your DSLR camera. You need to know all settings and functions of each button. You have to be able to adjust settings quickly without thinking about it too much. When you arrive on location you just want to make most of the time and use every second to take photos, not fiddling with your camera. Some of the cameras (like my Canon 5D Mark III) allows you to define a few custom shooting modes. This might be very helpful.

## 71. USE A TELEPHOTO LENS

When I started with travel photography I just loved my wide angle lenses. I thought that I would need a zoom only if I was to go to mountains to get some close-ups. I was completely wrong. When I tried a 70-200mm lens I found out how much I was missing. Such a focal length makes this lens very versatile and must have for any travel photographer. At the 70mm end, it's wide enough to take in a broad landscape or take a good portrait photo. At the 200mm end, it's telephotographic enough to get in fairly tight on an animal or to create a foreshortened perspective on a landscape.

## 72. USE FILL-FLASH IN BRIGHT, SUNNY CONDITIONS TO FILL THE SHADOWS

Using a flash in the middle of the day may seem very strange and unintuitive, but this is a really good technique to get the most out of that time of the day. The midday sun is harsh. It not only illuminates subjects very strongly, it can also

create some very dark shadows. If the subject you want to portray is wearing a hat or is facing away from the sun, you will definitely want to use a fill flash to light up some of the darker spots. In most cases, your built in flash will do. You simply need to change the settings to fill flash mode so you don't use too much flash when only a small amount is needed.



*Annapurna, Nepal*

## 73. POLARIZING FILTER

This is the most often used filter by all travel photographers. Polarising filters change the way that your camera sees and treats light. When using one you'll notice a change in how your camera sees reflections and glare. As a result it also has the ability to change the vibrancy of some colors in shots. Another benefit of fitting a polarising filter to your camera is that you put an extra level of protection between your expensive lens's glass and anything that might scratch or damage it. One factor to consider with polarising filters is that they change the exposure needed for a shot. So I recommend that you rather shoot in manual mode using 'polarizer'.



## 74. KEEP YOUR KIT CLEAN

You should constantly check if your lens is clean and doesn't have any dust on it. This is crucial when you take panorama pictures with narrow aperture (for instance  $f/22$  or higher). In this case every speck of dust on a lens, or camera mirror will be visible on the photo. I always carry a microfiber cloth in my pocket and constantly wipe my lenses. Also when I change lenses I try to avoid any dust getting inside the camera. To do this I turn my camera off before changing my lenses. I hold the camera upside down and I have my lens at the ready. These all reduce the risk of getting the sensor dirty, but cannot prevent it. You can't really prevent that from happening, so be careful.



Copenhagen

## 75. A LIGHTWEIGHT, STURDY TRIPOD

The general rule for choosing a tripod is: the heavier, the better. But I don't observe this rule. I usually leave my hotel early morning and come back in the evening. There is nothing worse for me than carrying 10 kg tripod all day long. This is why I got a 1,5 kg aluminium tripod, which may not be the sturdiest on the market, but it works perfectly

to hold my DSLR with lens. Using such a tripod you obviously need to use a remote trigger shutter release to avoid camera shakes. Keep in mind that during stormy weather you won't be able to take photos. But I think it's still better than the heavy one.

## 76. USE A TELE-EXTENDER TO GET IN CLOSE

Sometimes you feel like you really need to get a super long telephoto zoom lens. The problem is that these toys are extremely expensive. A good alternative is to get a dedicated tele-extender. You can get them with 1.4 or 2.0x magnification factor. Using teleconverters means less light gets in which means your maximum aperture will be decreased. When using a 1.4x converter this means you'll lose one stop and when using a 2x converter you'll lose two stops. But I think it's still worth considering.

## 77. A GOOD WIDE-ANGLE LENS FOR SHOOTING LANDSCAPES AND INTERIORS

If you are into a journey and you can only get one good lens, then I recommend you get something like 17-40mm or 16-35mm from Canon. These lenses are superb in photo quality and build. They will serve you for many years to come, so it's a worthy investment.

## 78. FISH EYE LENS

This is definitely not a must-have lens, but it's a really great addition to your kit if you are a serious travel photographer. I love to add a few fisheye photos to every gallery. The problem is that fish eye lenses from Canon are very expensive and not worth investing in if you want to take a few shoots

a year using them. But there is a good alternative; recently I bought a 12mm f/2.8 lens from Samyang, which is dedicated to full frame cameras. The build quality is great, photo quality is perfect and the price very reasonable.

## 79. TILT-SHIFT LENS

Tilt-shift photography allows you to combine the sharpness of large lens apertures with the extensive depth of field you normally associate with small apertures. This is achieved by using a tilt-shift lens, which can be both tilted (to control the plane of focus) and shifted (to correct any converging verticals). By tilting the lens to give an ultra-shallow plane of focus and, you can make landscapes look like miniature models. The most convincing tilt-shift landscapes combine an element of hardware (trains, boats, cars) and a raised shooting position to mimic the view of looking down at toys on a bedroom floor.

## 80. USE A REMOTE TRIGGER

A remote shutter release is a remote way to trigger your camera shutter without having to touch the camera. It benefits me greatly while doing night photography. Using it I avoid camera shakes while pressing the shutter button. This also allows you take up to 30 second long-time exposures. If you want to take even longer exposed photos, then you should use Bulb mode and have your remote trigger ready. The trigger is also useful while doing HDR photography, using macro and telephoto lenses.

## 81. MACRO PHOTO WITHOUT A NEW LENS

I'm sure most of you think about taking macro photos. These kind of pictures could greatly

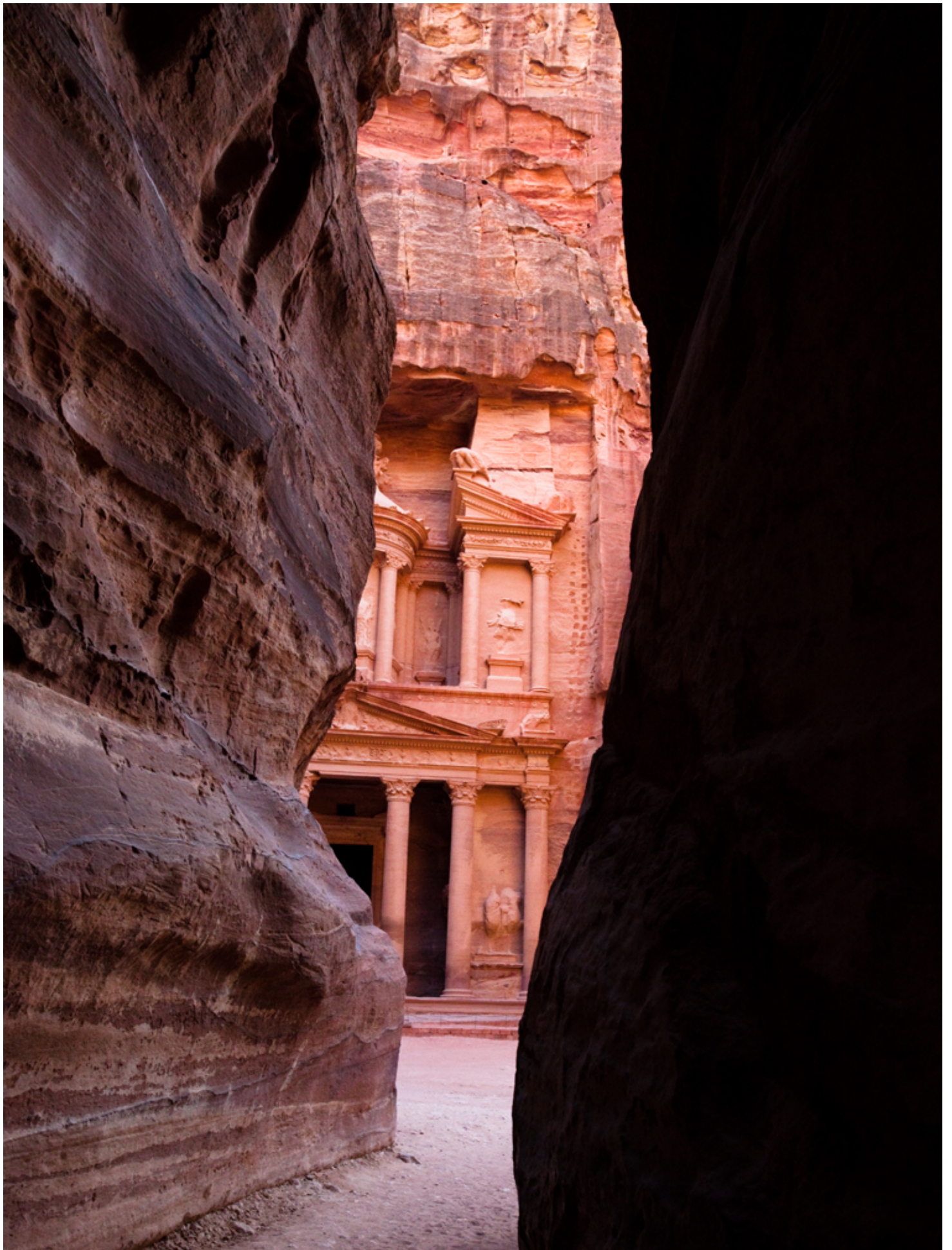
diversify your travel gallery. The problem is that good macro lenses are really expensive and you have to carry the lens all day long just to take a few shots. The solution I use is an extension tube. An extension tube is simply a hollow cylinder that fits in between your camera and lens, causing the lens to move farther from the sensor. This additional distance allows your lens to focus more closely, which in turn provides more magnification capability. You can get a set of extension tubes for as low as 30 USD. It's definitely worth a try.



Dubai, UAE

## 82. FAST LENSES

Shoot a lot in low light? Consider using fixed fast lenses rather than cheaper zoom lenses. If you are just starting with photography I'm sure you have bought a cheap zoom lens. This is where all of us have started. If you shoot a lot indoors in low light condition you should definitely get a prime, fast lens. Standard 50mm fast lens could be as cheap as basic zoom, but it will give you much better quality photos. I recommend a new Canon EF 50mm f/1.8 STM, which only cost 125USD.



Petra, Jordan

# Processing your photos

## 83. CHOOSE THE RIGHT SOFTWARE FOR YOU

Initially I processed all my photos in Apple Aperture. The problem was that this software was discontinued. However, after learning all the basics it wasn't difficult for me to move to Adobe Lightroom. This is a piece of software used by most professional photographers. It's getting even more powerful with each release, so you don't need Photoshop anymore. But if you are new to travel photography you will be fine using Apple Photos, Google Picasa, Adobe Photoshop Elements, or Corel Paintshop Pro.

## 84. PROCESS YOUR PICTURES FROM THE LAST PHOTO TAKEN

Most of us take a few photos of the same subject. We try different settings, angles etc. So in general, every additional photo taken is improvising. This is why it's wise to start processing your photos from the last photo taken and work on them in reverse. This helps to speed up the entire procedure..

## 85. BOOST GREENS AND BLUES

The majority of landscapes contain lots of green and blue so it makes sense to give these colours a little extra boost. The landscape option of the scene modes usually cranks up the saturation of greens and blues. It also attempts to set a low sensitivity setting and narrow aperture so that shots have a lot of sharp detail. But I never use predefined camera picture styles. I do all my processing in Adobe Lightroom, which makes

it easy to increase the saturation of individual colours, so you can make greens and blues more vivid.



Havana, Cuba

## 86. TAKE YOUR TIME WHEN PROCESSING YOUR PHOTOS

When you come back from a trip with hundreds of photos don't try to process all of them within a few days. It's not fun to do so for hours without a break. Retouching should give you as much enjoyment as taking the actual photos. It should bring back memories of the trip. So take it easy. Also another good piece of advice is to invest in a comfortable chair if you are spending a lot of time processing your photos.

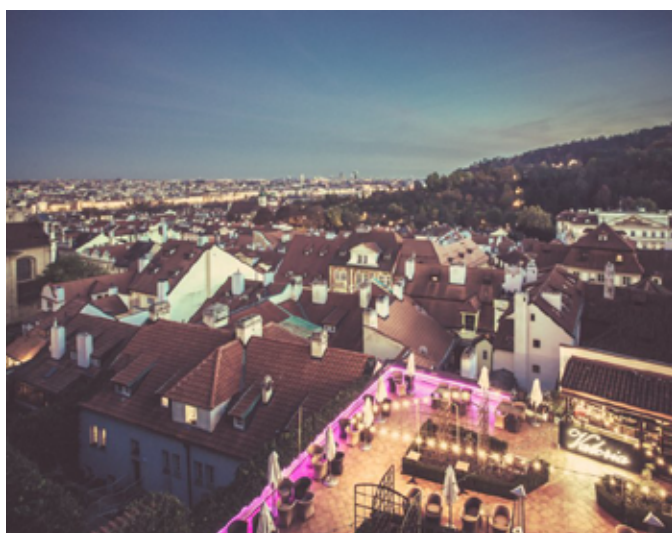
## 87. CROP YOUR PICTURES

Processing your photos is not all about changing colours, retouching, adjusting aperture etc. While working on a photo you should always ask yourself if there is anything I can remove? If so, then crop your photo accordingly. Don't worry about the default aspect ratio of the photo. Your final photo could be a bit more vertical, or even square. Keep

cropping until you have a frame that you really like. Pay attention to what falls on the four edges of the frame. Make sure you're not including (or excluding) anything you didn't pay attention to before you clicked the shutter while taking that photo.

## 88. PRESETS IN LIGHTROOM

This is another great way to speed up the process of developing your photos. You can find literally thousands of great Lightroom presets on the Internet. But I suggest you create your own. Once you get the look & feel of a photo you really like, save it for later as a preset. Then you can replicate it on all other photos taken in the same lighting conditions, achieving the same result.



Prague, Czech Republic

## 89. GET IT STRAIGHT

While taking photos without a tripod it could be quite tricky to get the horizon perfectly even. Also ultra wide angle lenses don't get the perspective right and all buildings look like they bend. Don't worry you can easily fix that in Photoshop or Lightroom. Just don't forget to do that. It was one of the mistakes I did when I was starting out.

## 90. CONVERT TO BLACK AND WHITE

Your camera probably allows you to shoot black and white photos. Please don't! Just shoot in RAW format and then convert to b&w in your photo editing software. Most applications are non-destructive, so you still have an access to original photo.

## 91. DON'T OVER-PROCESS YOUR PICTURES

Many inexperienced users of photo editing software make this mistake. It's easy to get carried away applying effects to photos in Lightroom because they are readily available. You need to remember that a particular effect usually works with appropriate frame and lighting. Also, unless there is a reason, don't apply too many effects to a photo to make it look surreal. Natural photos are timeless.

## 92. ADD SOME VIGNETTING

Vignetting means darkening of image corners when compared to the center. Vignetting is either caused by optics, or is purposefully added in post-processing in order to draw the viewer's eye away from the distractions in the corner, towards the center of the image. In many cases adding the vignette effect helps draw attention to the subject of the photo and creates an old-fashioned look. Be careful how you use this effect - especially in colour photos, as it can be overbearing.



Paris, France

# When you return from your trip

## 93. GET A PROPER WEBSITE TO SHOWCASE YOUR PHOTOS

It's fine to show pictures to friends and family. They usually love your work. But over time photographers need a place to publish photos to the broad public. There are many social media sites, but these platforms come and go. For me it's very important to have my own custom website. I started WorldInMyLens.com back in 2005 (initially as pkulczycki.com) and it gained a lot of attention. This year I have decided to build a service, which allows users to build their own photo website.

Photler will be a place to browse hundreds of travel photos and create beautiful photo websites. If you want to get an early access to Photler please email me at: [info@phtoler.com](mailto:info@phtoler.com).



Oslo, Norway

## 94. CLEAN YOUR CAMERA SENSOR

When you change your lenses in a dusty environment you will inevitably get some dust on your sensor. It's annoying when a photo is covered with spots and smudges. This is why after each trip you need to clean your sensor using a dedicated air blower to remove any dust from the sensor before your next trip.

## 95. BACK-UP YOUR PHOTOS

For every travel photographer the most valuable asset is a database of all photos taken so far. You don't want to lose your pictures because of an accident, which can happen when you least expect it. So always backup all of your photos. I keep backups on three different hard drives in different locations. Ideally you should upload all your high resolution photos to a cloud - Dropbox, Google Drive etc.

## 96. THINKING OF BECOMING A PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER?

Many people ask me what they can do to travel a lot and take photos. They want to live the dream life of a travel photographer and earn good money. The thing is that only a handful of people could earn just from travelling and taking photos. I'm not one of them. Most of the travel photographers I know have a normal job and travel during the holiday season, as I do. But if you are really determined I suggest you find a career that gets you outdoors a lot. Shoot a lot. Then gradually move towards that full time photography career.

## 97. BE BUSINESS-LIKE

If you want to make a career out of travel photography, or at least get some attention, you need to have a marketing strategy. It's important if you have your own style – your photos need to



*Dhaka, Bangladesh*

somehow be distinguished from all other pics on Flickr. Then you need to use the power of social media: be active, comment and help others, publish a lot of photos, go to forums. Just work hard. This is the only way to gain success as travel photographer.

## 98. SHOOT WHAT YOU REALLY LIKE

Are you really passionate about travel photography? Do you like to spend sleepless nights on a bus full of locals? Or maybe you feel more comfortable doing macro photography? How would you feel being in the middle of nowhere without access to running water? Or maybe you most enjoy taking photos from an airplane like an aerial photographer? Whatever the case, shoot what you really enjoy, your passion and character will shine through.

## 99. CHOOSE WHAT PICTURES TO SHOW

We all come back from every trip with hundreds of pictures. Even if they are all amazing, nobody would have the time to browse all of them. So we need to carefully choose what to show to others. Usually I come back from a one week trip with 500-1000 photos. I select around 20% of them and process them in Lightroom. Then from these selected photos I choose about 30-40 to publish on my website. Also, you should only show others a few photos from each trip that you are most proud of. Don't bore people with your photos.

## 100. ENJOY TAKING PICTURES

The process of taking photos is more important than the outcome. Keep shooting, even if you are not happy with your final photos. Take photos, even if nobody publishes your work. Keep shooting, even if you are getting bad comments on social media. You eventually get there. What's important, is that you enjoy the process.



*Kulusuk, Greenland*





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**Thank You**

**[piotr@photler.com](mailto:piotr@photler.com)**



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