

What I Saw vs Captured #2

In this lesson I'll take you along on a recent trip to the Mediterranean, with stops in Croatia, Menton, France and Venice, Italy. For each scene you'll see what it looked like when I walked up to it, often cluttered and full of tourists, and then what I actually captured, so you get a sense of how I think when I run into a scene and want to make a compelling photograph.

Key Concepts

1. **Croatia: Statue and Dome** (01:00)
2. **Recessed Windows and Yoga** (04:56)
3. **Casino Shadow in Menton** (07:24)
4. **Venice: Framing the Rialto** (09:48)
5. **Arch Shadow with Karen** (11:20)
6. **Long Shadows on a Street** (12:58)
7. **Light Post, Dome and Tower** (14:20)
8. **Gondolas in a Row** (18:45)
9. **St. Mark's Square Statues** (20:09)
10. **Framing Through Archways** (24:30)
11. **Gondola Panorama** (27:30)
12. **A Failed Attempt** (30:08)
13. **Looking Up in a Courtyard** (31:22)

Croatia: Statue and Dome (01:00)

This square in Croatia was jam-packed with tourists, which tells me I won't be shooting much near ground level. Whenever I'm in a situation like this, I inventory the scene: what are the good parts I can incorporate into a photo, and what do I want to avoid? Most of the bottom half of this scene is stuff I'd like to avoid. Near the rooftops I liked the windows and the dome, and in the middle there's a statue. Instead of just pointing my camera at one of those, I tried to combine several strong elements while avoiding the weak ones.



What I saw



What I captured

As I got closer to the statue, it started looking large and the dome looked small. When you have one object near and one far, walking away makes the nearby object shrink quickly (you might end up five or six times as far from it), while your distance to the faraway object barely changes (maybe

1.3 times as far). So I walked as far to the right as I could, lined the two up, and zoomed in to frame them tightly. That's what brings the statue and the dome to a similar scale.



Straight out of the camera



After optimizing using Lightroom Classic

Recessed Windows and Yoga (04:56)

From here I could see my cruise ship in the distance, but what I noticed was the doorway and windows. They're recessed quite a bit into the wall, so once you look at them at enough of an angle you can no longer see the glass or the metal grates. Shooting at an angle simplifies the wall into graphic shapes and removes the details. I zoomed in to crop to the repeating rectangles, which get larger as they come closer and are interrupted by the curve of the doorway.



What I saw



Looking at an angle



What I captured



With Karen in a yoga pose

That was really preparation for the next shot. I travel with a portable voice-command yogi (my wife, Karen), and I asked her to pick a yoga pose with a somewhat triangular shape to echo the architecture.

Casino Shadow in Menton (07:24)

Walking past the casino in Menton, France, I got blinded by the sun. Looking up, I saw the word Casino with the sun directly behind it and a little glow around the edges of the letters. That means the sign must be casting a shadow. If you draw a straight line from the sun through the sign and keep extending it, you find where the shadow lands. When I turned around, the word Casino was projected on the ground, and most people walking by didn't notice it.



What I saw



The shadow on the ground

To simplify, I kept just the text and the repeating white lines of the crosswalk. The shadow is backward, so in Lightroom Classic I chose **Photo > Flip Horizontal** to make it readable, then processed for high contrast. (If you can't find a command on a Mac, go to the **Help** menu and type its name.)



What I captured (flipped horizontally)

Venice: Framing the Rialto (09:48)

The rest of the images are from Venice. On the Rialto Bridge, instead of walking up to the edge and taking the usual picture of the view (which I also did), I noticed a small opening between the balusters. Moving closer and framing the distant view through two of those verticals created a framed view of the Grand Canal. Processing also played a big part here.



What I saw



Straight out of the camera



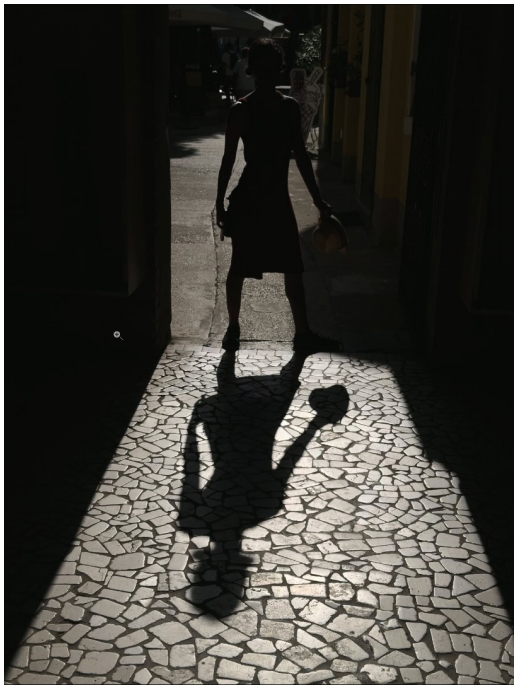
What I captured

Arch Shadow with Karen (11:20)

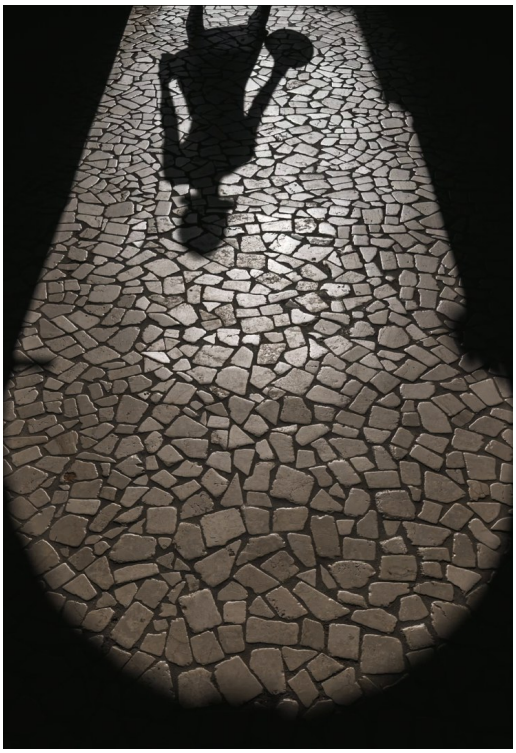
Karen was about to walk through this passage when I noticed the shadow of the arched opening on the ground. I asked her to stand right at the edge of the opening, then backed up and zoomed out a little so I'd get the full top of the arch. When she stands there, her head is at the bottom of the shadow.



What I saw



Karen at the edge of the opening



As captured



What I captured, rotated

I processed it so the dark areas went black, then rotated it so her head is at the top, which makes people wonder what's going on. To rotate an image in Lightroom Classic, hold **Command** (**Ctrl** in Windows) and press the square bracket keys.

Long Shadows on a Street (12:58)

This looks like a bunch of tourists walking down the street, but I always inventory what's in front of me. Late in the day the sun was low in the sky, and a low sun creates really long shadows. I isolated the area with the shadows and used negative exposure compensation (underexposing the image) until the shadows were close to black, then processed a little more in Lightroom so the people become graphic shapes rather than recognizable people.



What I saw



What I captured

Light Post, Dome and Tower (14:20)

In another Venice square, the good parts were the cistern in the middle, the dome, and the tower. The bad parts were the tourists, construction scaffolding and big yellow letters in the windows. I liked the light posts, so I looked for a spot where one sits between the dome and the tower, then varied my distance: move closer and the light post dominates; back up and the dome and tower become more prominent.



What I saw



Sneaking a shot of Karen's phone

My first attempts used a light post where the dome barely showed and the tower was almost hidden. I moved to a different post and made sure nothing merged: the top of the post isn't

touching the dome, and the tower isn't touching anything. I came back a little later when the sun was lower and the light was warmer for the final shot.



An early attempt



What I captured

Gondolas in a Row (18:45)

You can get all sorts of shots of the gondoliers, but here they merge with the busy boats behind them. From higher up on this side of the water, a gondolier would cover water instead of boats, which would simplify things a lot. What I did notice was the row of gondolas lined up along the far side. Shooting from near the base of a bridge on the other side, I lined them all up so you see just their fronts and can explore how each one is different.



What I saw



What I captured

St. Mark's Square Statues (20:09)

In St. Mark's Square there's a lot going on, but most of the clutter is near the ground. For a clean shot of the square itself, go just after sunrise; on a cruise ship you don't get sunrise or sunset, so you take what you can. I liked the statues along the top of one building, the lamps, the dome in the sun and three red poles near the tower. I ignored the far side, which was in the shade and looked dull, letting the sun dictate where I went.



What I saw

To make the statues look similar in size, shoot from far away; if you're close to one, it looks much larger than the others. I stood as far away as was practical, then moved closer to and farther from the building until the gaps between the statues looked right. I may still darken the sculptures, but the small braces holding them up make masking complex.



What I captured

I also used two of the red poles as bookends for the tower (there's a sliver of the moon up there too) and isolated small details in the buildings.



The tower with red poles



A building detail

Framing Through Archways (24:30)

Rather than take a picture of just the domes, which were catching the light, I backed into an archway on the side of the square that was in shade and framed the domes through it.



What I saw



What I captured

Turning 90 degrees from that arch, the building I was standing in cast a shadow onto the tower, including the statues I'd photographed earlier. I don't need to show that it's a tower; it's about the graphic quality of the shadow, framed by the arch.



Karen shooting the same scene



What I captured

Gondola Panorama (27:30)

I don't always exclude the tourists. I noticed people sitting at the edge of the water where gondolas go by, so I walked up behind them to shoot over their shoulders, using them as spectators. The gondola was right in front of me when I got there, so I had to grab the shot quickly, and the top of the building got cut off. Afterward I tilted up to capture the top of the buildings and the sky.



What I saw



The quick shot



Tilted up

When Lightroom merged them as a panorama, it duplicated the people. So I sent both images to Photoshop, deleted the bottom portion of the tilted-up frame so it couldn't reuse the people, and then stitched them into a panorama.



The stitched panorama

A Failed Attempt (30:08)

I'm not always successful. Here I liked the triangular grouping of the lights, which repeats the triangle at the top of the arch. To make the distant lights larger, I needed to back away as far as I could, but any farther and a column would block the view. I waited for the people to get out of the way, but they never left, so I gave up.



The idea



Still waiting

Looking Up in a Courtyard (31:22)

I don't have a "what I saw" image for this one, but any time buildings are really close together, I think about looking up, especially in a courtyard.



What I captured

Many of the captures in this lesson started out looking just okay and only became refined during processing. Let me know if you'd like a lesson that goes through how these images were optimized.

This is the second installment of What I Saw vs Captured. For the first one, check out What I Saw vs Captured, where I explored Malta and Palma de Mallorca.