



Travel Shooting Techniques II

In this lesson, you will learn various techniques for improving your travel photography, including creating silhouettes, manipulating exposure, utilizing distance and zoom effectively, simplifying compositions, creating depth with foreground elements, capturing repetition, finding the decisive moment, and mastering panorama shots and white balance.

Creating Silhouettes and High Contrast

This section focuses on using extreme exposure adjustments to create silhouettes or to make subjects pop against a contrasting background.

Silhouetting Subjects

One technique involves making a subject so dark that it becomes a silhouette, allowing a brighter background to stand out.

1. **On a Phone:** Tap on the subject (e.g., a person) to set focus and exposure. Then, drag your finger down to darken the exposure until the subject appears black.



2. **In Lightroom (if needed):** If you can't achieve complete blackness in-camera, use Lightroom's Black slider, dragging it to the left until no detail remains in the dark areas. You can also adjust the Shadows slider similarly.

Creating High Contrast with Shady Backgrounds

The opposite approach is to find a shaded background and a sunlit subject.

1. **Identify the Setup:** Look for a subject in shade with a bright background.
2. **On a Phone:** Tap on your subject to set focus and exposure. Drag your finger down to darken the overall scene until the subject is well-exposed and the background is dark.
3. **On a Big Camera:** Focus on the subject and use exposure compensation, setting it to a negative value to darken the scene until the subject is correctly exposed and the background is rendered dark.

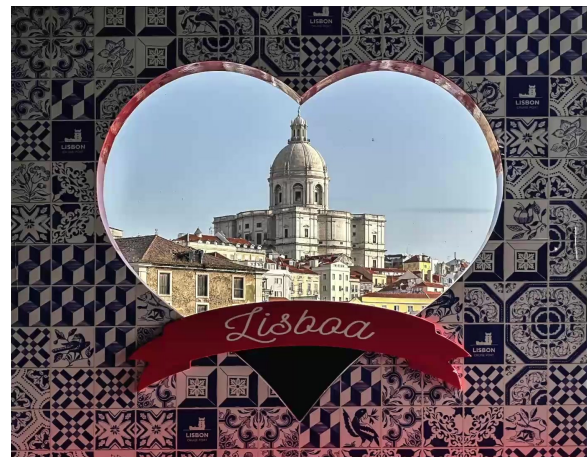
Manipulating Depth with Distance and Zoom

This technique involves strategically using your distance from a subject and your lens's zoom to control the perceived size of elements in the frame, particularly making distant objects appear larger.

The Principle of Relative Distance

When you are close to a nearby object, it appears large, and distant objects appear small in comparison. As you move further away from the nearby object, it appears smaller. Crucially, the distance to the background object changes very little.

1. **Starting Close:** If you stand close to a sign, the sign will dominate your frame. A distant building will appear tiny in comparison.
2. **Moving Away:** As you walk further away from the sign, the sign appears smaller. The distance to the background building remains relatively the same.
3. **Using Zoom:** To compensate for the shrinking nearby object and make the distant object more prominent, zoom your lens. This effectively enlarges the distant object within the frame.
4. **Repeating the Process:** Continue moving further away and zooming in to make the distant object appear larger and more dominant in the composition.



- By standing far away from the person and zooming in, the person will appear smaller, and the distant building will appear larger and more prominent.

Compositional Simplification and Grounding

This section covers techniques to simplify your images by cleaning up distracting elements and creating a sense of stability.

Cleaning Up Busy Bases

Often, the base of a subject can be cluttered with distracting elements like tourists or uneven ground.

1. **Identify the Problem:** Observe if the bottom of your subject is visually busy or unappealing.
2. **Find a Clean Surface:** Look for an elevated surface, like a sidewalk or ledge, that can be positioned in the foreground.



3. **Get Close and Low:** Move very close to this surface and lower your camera lens so that the surface covers the distracting elements at the base of your main subject.
4. **Result:** This creates a clean visual line at the bottom of your image, simplifying the composition.

Creating Depth with Foreground Elements

Adding elements at different distances can significantly enhance the depth and impact of your photographs.

The Near, Mid, Far Approach

Aim to include subjects at varying distances to create a layered composition.

1. **Identify Your Subject:** Determine the main subject of your photograph, which is often the furthest element.
2. **Find Foreground and Mid-ground Elements:** Actively search for objects or features that can serve as foreground and mid-ground elements. This could be an archway, a sign, or any other distinct shape.
3. **Compose with Layers:** Arrange your shot to include these elements, creating distinct layers. For example, an arch in the foreground, a tower in the mid-ground, and the Eiffel Tower in the background.
4. **Fill the Frame:** Consider using elements like greenery or parts of trees to fill in boring skies, adding visual interest.
5. **Foreground Focus Caution:** Be mindful that when you have a very close foreground element, your camera (especially a phone) will likely focus on it. If your distant subject is more important, tap on it to set focus or lock focus on your big camera before composing.



Mastering Sun Rendering and Lens Flare

This section covers how to control the appearance of the sun in your images and manage unwanted flare.

Rendering the Sun

The appearance of the sun can be controlled by adjusting your camera's aperture.

1. **Starburst Effect:** To achieve a starburst effect, close down your camera's aperture to the highest f-number (e.g., f/16, f/22).
2. **Soft Ball Effect:** To make the sun appear as a soft, round shape, open up your aperture to a low f-number (e.g., f/2.8).



3. **Partial Sun:** Placing the sun partially behind an object can create interesting visual effects where it peeks out.

Preventing Lens Flare on Phones

When shooting towards the sun with a phone, direct sunlight entering the lens can cause a loss of contrast and flare.

1. **The Problem:** Sunlight entering the lens can bounce around internally, reducing image contrast.
2. **The Solution:** Cast a shadow over the lens using your hand. Position your hand slightly above the lens so it blocks the direct sunlight without appearing in the frame.
3. **Compare:** This simple technique significantly improves contrast compared to allowing direct sunlight into the lens.



Utilizing Shadows and Angles

This part of the guide explores how shadows and shooting angles can add drama and interest to your photographs.

Embracing Shadows

Shadows can be powerful graphic elements in an image.

1. **Look for Shadow Patterns:** Pay attention to how light and shadow play on surfaces, especially from architectural elements or people.
2. **Incorporate Long Shadows:** When the sun is low in the sky, long shadows can create dynamic lines and shapes.

Changing Your Perspective

The angle from which you shoot can dramatically alter the feel of a subject.

1. **Straight On vs. Angle:** For subjects with many rectangular elements, like architecture, shooting straight on can be effective. However, for subjects without strong rectangular lines, or to add dynamism, consider shooting at an angle, typically around 45 degrees.
2. **Adding Dimension:** Shooting at an angle introduces diagonals, which make the image feel more dynamic and less static.



Repetition and the Decisive Moment

This section discusses how repeating elements and capturing fleeting moments can elevate your photography.

The Power of Repetition

Repeating patterns or similar objects can create strong visual interest.

1. **Find Repeating Elements:** Look for groups of similar objects, such as chairs, smokestacks, planters, or windows.
2. **Odd Numbers:** While repetition itself is effective, an odd number of elements (e.g., three or five) is often perceived as more visually pleasing than an even number.
3. **Clean Compositions:** Even simple repetitions, like multiple chairs or windows, can make compelling subjects when isolated and well-composed.

Capturing the Decisive Moment

This involves anticipating and capturing a brief, meaningful action or interaction.

1. **Observe Human Activity:** In markets or street scenes, look for moments of exchange, such as money changing hands, or people engaged in specific tasks.
2. **Focus on Engagement:** Moments where people are engrossed in an activity, like taking selfies or looking at their phones, can be great opportunities as they are less likely to notice you.
3. **Patience is Key:** Be prepared to wait for these moments to unfold.

Advanced Panorama Techniques

This section provides guidance on creating high-quality panorama images. When shooting a series of photos for a panorama, it's crucial to maintain consistent exposure and focus.

1. **Lock Exposure:** On your camera's back, find and hold down the Auto Exposure Lock (AEL) button, often marked with an asterisk symbol.
2. **Lock Focus:** Simultaneously, lock the focus. On some cameras, this is a button on the lens; on others, it might be a dedicated focus lock button.
3. **Hold Both Buttons:** Keep both the exposure lock and focus lock buttons held down as you take each individual shot for the panorama.
4. **Release After Shooting:** Only release the buttons after you have captured all the necessary shots for your panorama. This ensures a seamless stitch.

Using Panoramas Beyond Wide Scenes

Panoramas are not just for expansive landscapes.

- **Wider Views:** Use panoramas anytime you cannot back up far enough to fit everything into a single frame with your current lens.
- **Vertical Panoramas:** For vertical panoramas with an iPhone, rotate your phone to a horizontal position, then start at the bottom and tilt upwards, slowly bending as you go to capture the full height.
- **Utilize All Lenses:** Don't hesitate to use different lenses on your phone (wide-angle, telephoto) when creating panoramas for varied perspectives.



Shooting in the Rain

Don't let rain stop you from shooting; instead, find ways to protect your gear and find unique vantage points.

1. **Seek Cover:** Shoot from under awnings or other sheltered areas to prevent rain from hitting your camera's front element.
2. **Use Existing Shelter:** Look for small openings or windows in structures that can provide cover while allowing you to shoot.
3. **Protect Your Lens:** Be aware of your surroundings and ensure your lens doesn't get wet, which can ruin a shot.



Setting Accurate White Balance

Using a white balance reference card is key to achieving accurate colors in various lighting conditions.

1. **Use a Reference Card:** Carry a white balance reference card (gray card) and place it in the same light as your subject.
2. **Photograph the Card:** Take a quick shot of the reference card.
3. **Apply in Lightroom:** In Lightroom, use the white balance eyedropper tool and click on the gray card in your reference photo. This will set the correct white balance for that image and any others taken in the same light.
4. **No Color Cast:** A true gray card is neutral and has no inherent color cast, making it ideal for measuring the color of the light.



In conclusion, this guide has explored a range of practical techniques for travel photography, from creatively manipulating light and exposure to strategically using composition, distance, and perspective. By understanding and applying these methods, you can significantly enhance the visual appeal and storytelling power of your travel images, whether you're dealing with challenging light, busy scenes, or aiming for a specific artistic effect.