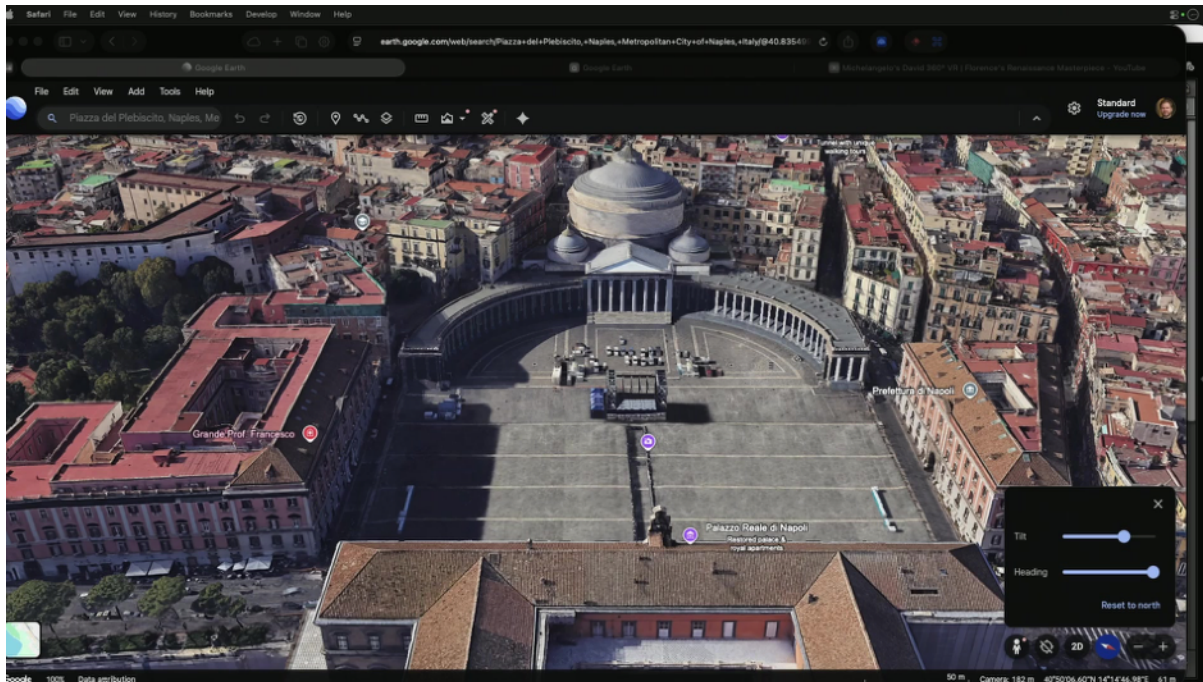




Capture to Complete: Naples & Florence

Naples: Establishing Shots and Framing

First, let's head to Naples. I'm using Google Earth for this. You can go to earth.google.com, type in "Naples, Italy," and if you know the name of the area, you can type that in too.



Once you're in an area, you can use the controls in the lower right to navigate. If you don't the tilt and heading choices, click on the compass needle icon. The heading shows your direction, and you can spin around. The tilt lets you look straight down or at an angle. You can click and drag to scroll around, and use two fingers on your trackpad or a mouse scroll wheel to zoom. On a Mac, holding the control key and clicking allows you to rotate and tilt if you have a one-button mouse.

Establishing Shot

This is what I call an establishing shot – it gives the big picture of the location.



Anchored to a Column and Horse Sculpture

I'm still working on optimizing this one. My attention is drawn to the sky, which is a bit too bright. I want it to pull the viewer down into the scene more. I do like the nice curvature of the building and how it continues to this horse.



View Between Two Columns

Then I captured another shot, which I have optimized. Notice how the central area with the columns is quite bright, which draws my attention here and away from the sky. There are two columns on the right and left to frame the scene.

If you look at these columns, I ended up shooting between two of them to use them as a frame for what was in the distance. I backed up as much as I could, my back almost against the wall.

What does moving further away do? The more I moved away from the columns, the less prominent they became, and the things in the background appeared larger relative to them. I stood as far back as I could and tried to frame this area.



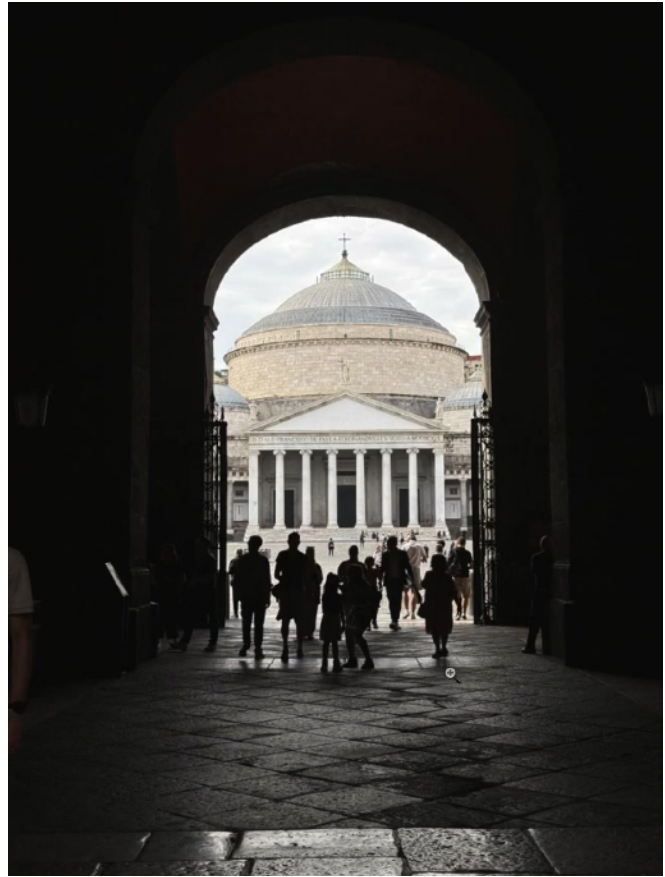
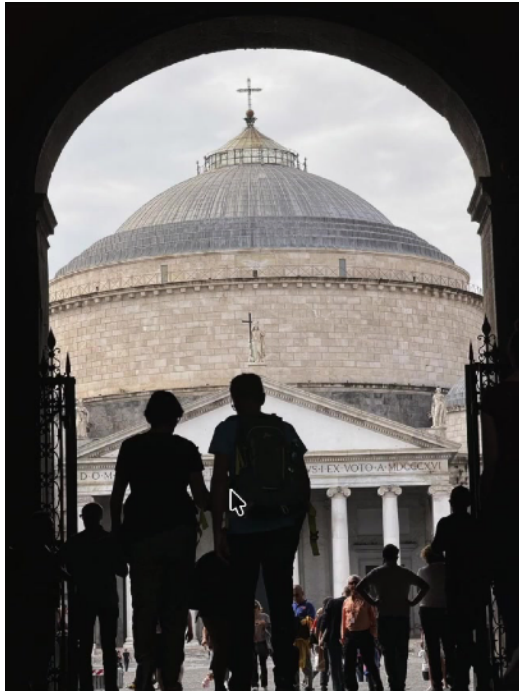
Naples: Framing with a Doorway

After shooting around here a bit, I walked inside that doorway, and there's a courtyard. I could shoot from this doorway either right at it or back as far as I wanted into the building. This is the shot I got from inside the doorway. Notice how the building in the distance is nicely framed within the doorway, filling it completely. To achieve this, I had to be careful about where I stood. If I stood where everyone else was taking pictures, there would be a huge amount of space between this arch and the distant building.

To make the distant building fill the arch, I backed up. As I backed up, the distant building started to look larger, mainly because the arch itself began to appear smaller as I moved further away. The distant building's size didn't change much; it was the arch that was shrinking relative to it. I walked far enough back so that the building filled the arch, and it looked more like this.



No one else was taking pictures from this vantage point; they were all standing closer, getting a lot of empty space around the building instead of a nice frame. I then zoomed in with my phone's lens – switching from the 1X to the 2X lens – to crop in and get this framing.

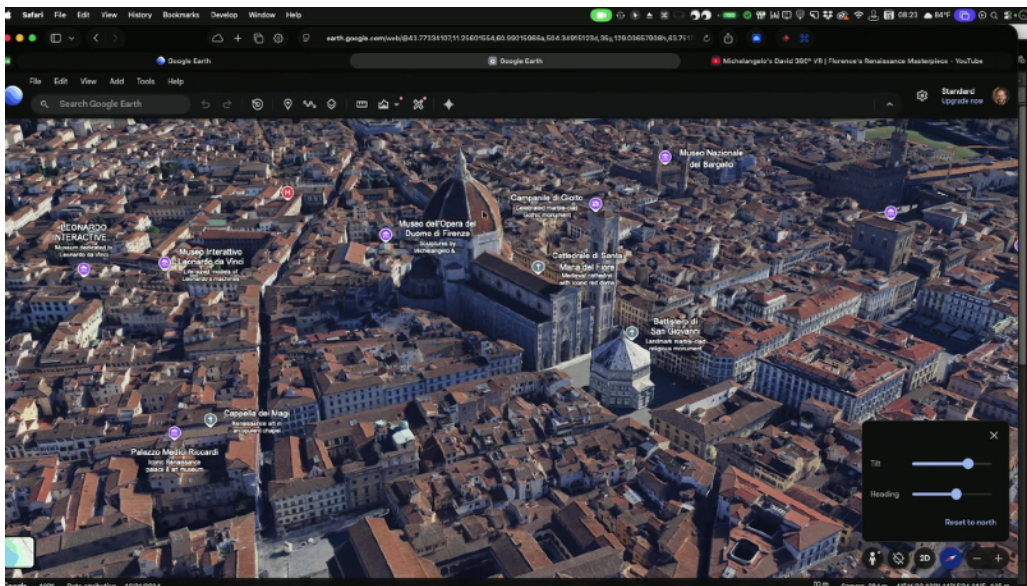


This is what it looked like after I zoomed in. However, I couldn't just take the shot because people were walking in and out. I had to time it perfectly. After people took the typical shot from the front, they would go inside to see the courtyard behind me. So, often, it looked like this, with people close to me, appearing very large. I had to wait for waves of people to pass, ideally getting a shot where only people closer to the entrance were present.

You might think it would be better without people, but I find they add scale and a human element. What I did on my iPhone was set it to a Live Photo. This allows me to select "Long Exposure" afterward, which would turn any moving people into a nice blur.

Florence: Capturing the Cathedral

Now let's move to a cathedral in Florence. We approached it from this street. The challenge here is that the surrounding buildings are very close, making it difficult to back up far enough without other buildings obstructing the view. Let's see what I did.



Here's my first shot. When I got to the front of the building, tilted my camera up, and captured this. My main goal was to create a clean shot, excluding people by shooting over their heads. You can see the doorway here, and it's a very tall door, so I only captured the very top part, shooting above people's heads and excluding the buildings on the sides.

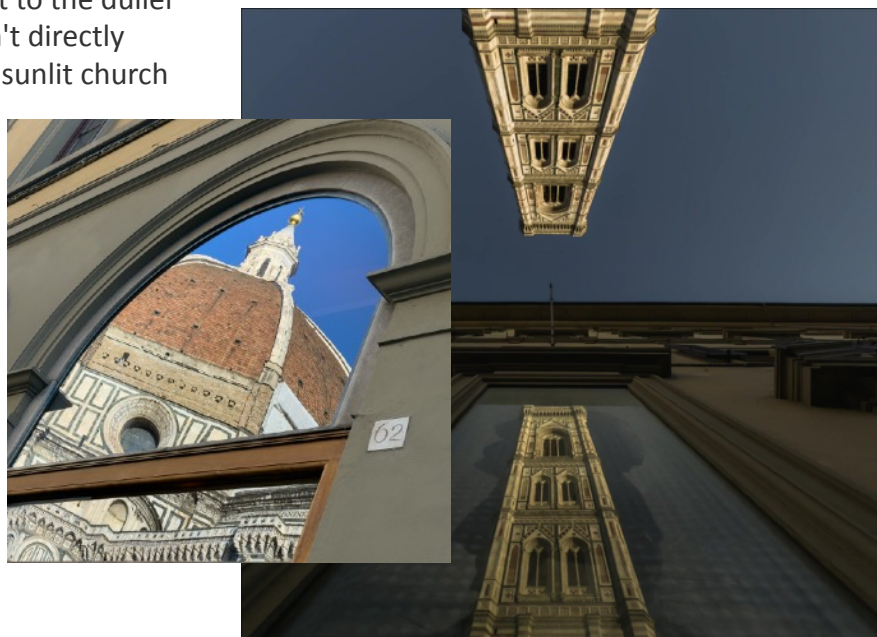


Framed in Window

Then I decided to create something different. This shot is directly across the street, in a shop window, using a reflection. I'm using this archway here to frame the cathedral. I did this more than once. In this particular case, I found a window aligned with the tower, framing it nicely.

The key was to be on the sunlit side of the church, which would be very bright, and look across the street to the duller side, where the sun wasn't directly shining. This allowed the sunlit church to reflect onto a dull window and really stand out. I was shooting almost straight up for this.

After that, I wanted different-looking shots, not just the church with nothing else. I wanted to incorporate more of the environment. So I started looking at the streets.



Integrating Streets and Architecture

I began looking at the streets and how they lined up with the cathedral. If I backed up down this road, I'd get the right side fill with one building and the left would be filled by another building. Both of those buildings are in the shade. So, I could have a shot with shaded buildings framing a lit cathedral.



I just cruised around these various streets to see what I could get.

Here we have a shaded building on the right and left, and the dome of the church. I really wanted contrast, not just a bright church against a blue sky, which can be boring. I wanted deep contrast, a difference between shade and light. I later darkened the buildings in LRC.



Postcards

Then there was this little souvenir shop. My thought was that they must be selling postcards with pictures of the cathedral. So, why not get a shot that shows a postcard of the cathedral, alongside the actual cathedral, combining the two? That was my idea. However, I wasn't able to get it clean of people in a way that I liked.

If I were to do it properly, I would take two shots: one with this in focus and one with that in focus, to combine them and get both in focus. Or, I would shoot with this nearby in focus and open my aperture wide enough to get this out of focus, so it's not crisp detail but more basic shapes. I gave up before I got something I liked there.



Reflections and Experimentation

Another idea I had involved the some shiny tables. I thought about shooting the reflection on the table where you can see the reflection of the dome.

I wanted to find people sitting down, perhaps with glasses of wine, and create a simple shot of two people enjoying food or a beverage, with a reflection of the structure in the table. But there was no one sitting down at the time, and it was a bit too crowded. It was a thought, though, and I think it could have been successful. If I had done it, I would have exposed a little darker so the reflection would have more density and the lighter areas would be toned down.



Moving to the David Sculpture

Alright, now let's go to our last area. Here we have the statue of David. The problem here is it's always jam-packed with tourists. They're moving all over, taking pictures, and don't care if they're in your way. So, the challenge is how to capture this without including people and get a clean shot where the background belongs with the subject.

Let's see what I ended up getting. First, I'm shooting from further away, just above people's heads. I framed it with the arches, getting one, two, three arches to kind of double or triple frame it.



There's a skylight above, which is causing this area to be bright, and that's why the top of the sculpture is also a bit bright.

Here's another one, I moved a little closer and tilted up. You can see the skylight lighting a good portion of the room. Again, I'm shooting above everyone's heads.

In this shot, I made sure it wasn't intersecting with any dark elements. I tried to keep the edge of the frame clean, with no random pieces sticking in. It feels like it has room to move, with space here and there, not about to bump into anything.



Here's yet another one, again shooting above people's heads, capturing the skylight. I wanted to show a bit more of the room and get more of the graphic elements. And then a closer shot, and one more from behind.



Optimizing in Lightroom Classic

It's impractical to describe every single adjustment step that was applied to these images. Here I'm just going to show a before-and-after image so you can see the difference between the straight-out-of-camera capture and the end result. Each of these images is included as a downloadable practice image. Therefore you can investigate which adjustments were applied and you can dissect each masked adjustment to see how it contributes to the end result. In the lesson I did not describe the changes that were made to some of the images of the cathedral in Florence but I will show the before and after here so you can get a sense for how much of a change was made.





