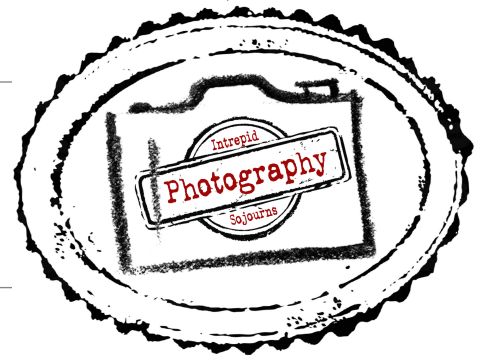

TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHY ESSENTIALS

Inspired by: Darrell Lew



Be in the Moment

No matter where you are, foreign or domestic, each place has a particular vibe and special character about itself. A large part of travel is experiential - be it the scenery, its gorgeous people or the local fare, you'd be hard pressed to remember every little detail along the way. Months if not years may pass and a certain "trigger" may put you right back at the time these long forgotten memories were first collected when viewing your images. When I moved to Shanghai a few years ago, I decided to document almost every aspect of daily life in a land that was so foreign yet in an odd way, so familiar. You see, my great-grandfather came over to America in the late 1800s from southern China. Fast forward a little more than three generations, I found myself right back where it all started for my family - in China. I just knew my experiences would be eye-opening. Not to squander the opportunity, I journaled almost everyday for 5 years during my stay there.

Long story short, as I digress, seeing as our journey together will take us on a brief yet, hopefully, meaningful sojourn that will excite your senses. I want you to fully embrace the local culture in real time. You may discover a great many things you never knew existed as the mainstream news conditions us all a certain way. I've carefully constructed each itinerary to help you see, sense and touch a part of the world you never knew existed. If you walk away with a renewed sense of humanity and a continued desire to explore more of the unknown, I have accomplished my objective of sharing this part of the world with you. The bonus from it all is I will also coach you on how to make compelling images during our brief time together to recount those



Sharing story, sipping the fruits of the ancient

precious moments through the lens of your camera. Even still, the narrative over time may be all but a distant memory, but I assure you that once you begin down the path of making meaningful images, the “trigger” I mentioned earlier will come automatically with such clarity and in vivid color that’ll surely put a smile on your face as you recount that very moment you decided to push your shutter button. You’ll remember where you were - surroundings and all, to include the aromas and company whom you shared this with. This is my hope for you.

There will be many opportunities during our time together with our cameras beside us, allowing you to fully embrace

“A photograph is neither taken or seized by force. It offers itself up. It is the photo that takes you. One must not take photos.”

~ Henri Cartier-Bresson

the moment of just being present. I have found many times while squatting on a hunk of wood

while we surround a smokey fire

inside the middle of a villagers dwelling sipping freshly brewed hand-picked tea discussing the virtues of life on the farm and how they miss their children who have left their small village for the modern cities searching for a better way of life - all the while having never raised the camera to your eye to make images! I hope to share this with you (and, yes, we do eventually get the images).



Be patient, allow the image to speak for itself when the time is right.

While out and about, don’t expect things to come to you or for things to be setup and planned for you all the time. Doing so may just disappoint you in the end. Often, our expectations taint our openness, blocking our adventure receptors and reducing the chance for us to recognize serendipitous moments. It is these moments that usually stick with you the longest ... why? Because you didn’t expect it! It just happened before your eyes, you went with it and simply related to the process in an open-hearted manner. That said, even though I have planned shooting opportunities along our journey together, please don’t forget to be flexible and willing to accept the unexpected as a golden opportunity!

It is important to open yourself up to uncomfortable situations (positive healthy ones of course).

Because without them, you'll never allow yourself to see the world with a fresh set of eyes.

Remember ... only YOU can make your experiences. I can't do this for you. My role is merely to give chance to present itself. What you do with it is entirely up to you! Get out there. Take a chance. Be comfortable being uncomfortable and discover the rhythm of life on the road in a place that not many get to witness in today's fast-paced forward movement society. Get lost in your thoughts, trust the process and fully enjoy the moment in the wondrous place you currently occupy. When you do, it's one of the most humbling and gratifying experiences you'll ever have.

If we're lucky, we'll be invited in (a village home) to feel the warmth of the fire on your face, take in a bit of smokey air from the burning hearth, experience the endearing hospitality of someone whom you've just met. Learn to accept these gracious moments and perhaps even have a renewed sense of humanity in the end of it all. Document in your mind, on paper and with camera. Be in the moment.

Develop your own Themes & Style

When traveling on a photography tour, it's often easy to get distracted with the beautiful surroundings, new cultures and just being 'in the moment'. There's nothing wrong with this. In fact, as mentioned in the previous section, I highly encourage you to get lost in your thoughts and self-being - it's often that the transformative process of obtaining such experiential revelations is what keeps you coming back for more. If at all possible, have at the very least, a pre-planned goal in mind ... the pursuit of a central idea. I'm talking about a photographic theme. Even though we will be attempting to capture many different things along the way, have a theme in mind to shoot towards. I'm not saying to shoot exclusively this way (you might miss things in front of you if you're only searching for one thing), but have your central idea in mind to draw from when the opportunity presents itself. For example, I've taken a liking to doors and street manhole covers. You'd be surprised to learn that doors are quite interesting. Whenever I happen across an interesting one, I'll shoot it and move on.

**"First you imitate,
then you
innovate."**

~ Miles Davis

Shoot with intention, but live in the now. If I were pressed to label the genres we'll be covering during our adventure, I'd have to say Environmental Portraiture, Landscape and Street Photography. Each style requires its own care and technique. It is my intent to help you along the way with this varied styles so don't freak out. If you're wondering what the heck are these styles, let me briefly explain.

Environmental Portraiture.

This genre could mean a couple of things to different people. My definition is simply make portraits of people in their own environment. We could be in a rice field, a rustic encampment, a charming ancient hut or somewhere in a village outdoors making images of farmers and villagers. Depending on what the scene gives us, we will make use of natural lighting of the day at all cost. And, where this isn't enough or we need to overpower the sun, I'll employ artificial light or make use of reflectors. For some, working with



Tired and weary from an early morning call, you're sometimes rewarded handsomely.

"It is more important to click with people than to click the shutter."

~ Alfred Eisenstaedt

people
(on the other side of the camera)

is stressful and often

freeze up or just snap away indiscriminately. This is not the goal here. Remember what I mentioned earlier about being in the moment?

This is one of these times where we want to truly 'be present' - it'll make for image that will draw you into the human element of the environment. During our adventure, we'll have plenty of opportunities to work on this genre. I love shooting this genre in a certain way ... more on that when we have our first group meeting.

Landscape.

Usually portrait photographers stay clear of landscape photography for some odd reason. I fell in love with this genre because it's what most of us are (usually) drawn to when we view photographs -



Often waiting a couple of hours for a 5 minute event.

it's the most relatable of all the genres in my opinion. After all ... who doesn't get inspired by a beautiful sunrise or sunset scene over a lush green valley or sun reflected water as it skates across the surface? Shooting landscapes affords me to be in the middle of the outdoors to take in the rejuvenating fresh air, listen to the sounds of nature around me and often experience the dawning of a new day or witness an awe-inspiring ending of

another day. There's a certain amount of solitude and quiet in shooting within the landscape.

Landscape photographers are nocturnal beasts. We awake at o'dark thirty to wrestle ourselves to an opportune spot to capture the beginnings of the a new day long before sunrise. We also wait patiently well before the setting of the sun as well. And, where applicable, stay up well into the night to capture the stars and constellations in the midnight sky. To really capture these scenes appropriately, you will need to understand a few key camera settings not to mention indispensable accessory tools like Neutral Density (ND), Graduated ND, Polarizer filters, not to mention a sturdy tripod. I will provide you, in a separate document, the necessary, recommended and optional accessories to get before your trip, so be on the look out for it soon.

"When words become unclear, I shall focus with photographs. When images become inadequate, I shall be content with silence."

~ Ansel Adams

Street Photography.

Sometimes called candid photography as the main goal with this genre is to capture life in the streets. In the west, we're typically rushing around in our cars and scurrying about on foot to get to a place without really noticing the sublime living life around you. We've largely become jaded in what we (choose to) see as we hurry from point A to point B - especially on foot. We ignore those who aren't moving at the same pace and steer clear of the unfamiliar. This arms length view of the street blinds us to a often under appreciated sub-culture in our society today. It doesn't help that people in western society are paranoid of others and their intentions when it comes to being photographed. We've become, albeit likely because of basic survival motives in the concrete jungle, an overprotective society. That said, the thought of taking out your camera and photographing people in the streets is, for most, a daunting and intimidating exercise.

"Photography is an art of observation. It has little to do with the things you see and everything to do with the way you see them."

~ Elliott Erwitt

photography endeavors. From the three genres we'll be putting into realtime practice, we aren't constrained by each, but to utilize the best in all of them during our day as we make best of the day's light that's given to us.



Overcoming the fear of getting close, really close is the key to a successful image.

Once you get past this anxiety, you'll learn to see in a whole different way. You'll begin to ignore what you only paid attention to and your once background becomes your foreground. You'll discover that people watch other people in often comical ways. My hope is help guide you through this self-discovery visual art.

So, to circle back around, choosing a good theme is one that rings with you - it can't be forced. Pick a theme that interests or challenges you beyond your comfort zone; learn from the experience and grow as a person and a photographer. I will introduce you to the concept of documentary style photography along the way in hopes that you will see the world differently, be more assertive you your travel and