kelbyonelive

THE ULTIMATE
PHOTOGRAPHY
CRASH COURSE
with Scott Kelby

SEMINAR
WORKBOOK

kelbyonelive

Table of Contents

We're starting the day off with our first class on the secrets to shooting great landscapes.
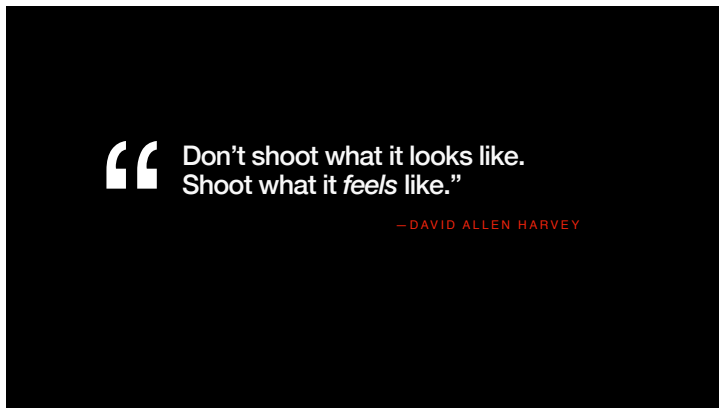
Such an amazing quote, and so right on the money.

I've had to learn this one the hard way over the years, but if you want to be successful at landscape photography, you've got to do your research up front. You're going to not only want to know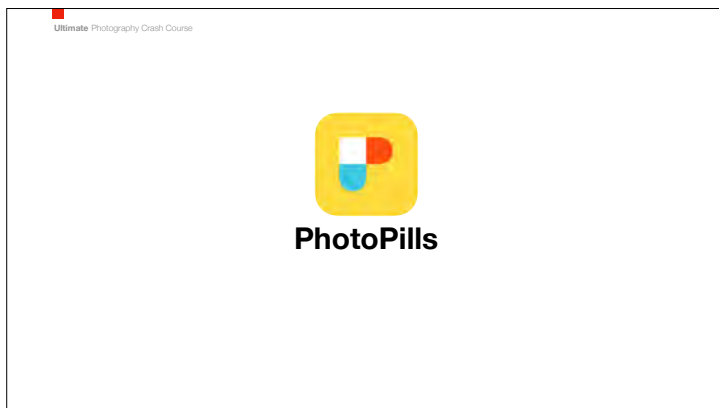 where to shoot (and what it takes to get there. Is there a hike involved? Steep climbs? Or is it easy where you can literally shoot from the side of the road?), but which locations are best for sunrise, sunset, or midday, which are temporarily closed, which way will the sun be rising/setting, and more.

PhotoPills

The PhotoPills app is probably the #1 app to have as a landscape photographer. It's like your guide in the field, and it's only $4.99 (and, as you'll learn, that's probably the cheapest thing you'll ever be able to buy for landscape photography).
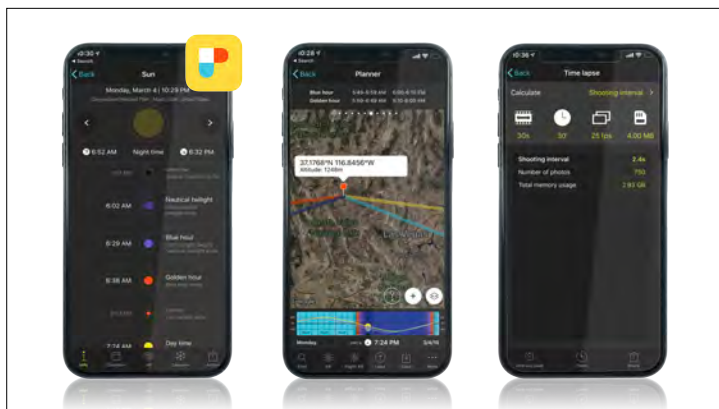
PhotoPills does everything from give you the exact times for sunrise, sunset, blue hour, etc., to showing you exactly where the sun will set and which exact direction it rises from at any given location. It can do all the calculations for long exposure photography using ND filters, and it also has a built-in time-lapse calculator, but that's just the beginning of all the useful things this app can do. You will love it!
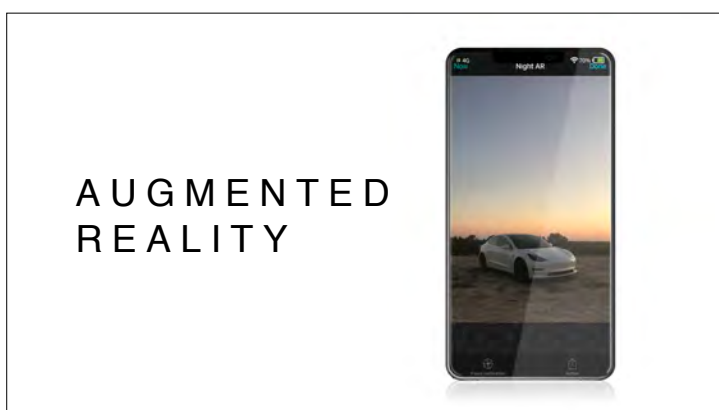
AUGMENTED
REALITY

If you're shooting the night sky or Milky Way, it will use its 3D Augmented Reality feature to show you your scene with where the Milky Way will appear in the sky (it's an amazing thing to see in use).

AUGMENTED REALITY

Here's what it looks like in action.

AUGMENTED REALITY

Here's my buddy's shot with his car repositioned in the exact right spot, thanks to this feature.

DO YOU NEED A NEW ONE?

CAMERA BODY

Whichever camera body you already own will take great photos, so I don't recommend rushing out and buying a new body. You're good to go if you bought your body in the last seven or so years.

WHAT TO USE WHEN

LENSES

Here's a look at the lenses I would tell a friend to use for shooting landscapes:

Wide to Super Wide!

16–35mm

Full Frame shooters: The 16–35mm is a nice choice, and in fact, it might be a better choice than the popular 24mm to 70. Here's why: (1) It's smaller, lighter, and about half the price. I use the 16–35mm f/4 (half the price and half the weight of the f/2.8 version). You don't need a heavy, expensive f/2.8 lens because you won't be shooting at f/2.8 for most landscape situations (more on this in a moment). (2) While you won't use the 16mm end all that often, you'll use it more than you would the 70mm end of a 24–70mm, so it's a more flexible usable range.

CROP SENSOR:

10–20mm

Crop Sensor Body Shooters: Something in the range of 10–20 mm or 10–22mm will do the trick (though you won't use the 10mm very often for landscape images).

HEADS UP!

There are two reasons we don't use super-wide-angle lenses for landscape photos all that often:

4

It's because super-wide-angle lenses push the scene away from you. So, mountains and things in the background appear much farther away, and therefore, a lot smaller, so you lose the epicness of large things that aren't right in the foreground.

The only time I would tell you to pull out a super-wide-angle lens (or even shoot at 16mm on a full frame, much less 14mm) is when you have an object right up close in the foreground and you want to emphasize that object. It makes things in the foreground really large and prominent, but of course the trade-off is, everything behind that foreground object moves farther way. So, think of a super-wide as a landscape specialty lens. Great when you use it right—to make a foreground object really stand out.

Here's what I'm talking about. The stairs and canoes are pretty small here in the foreground, but get down low in front of them with a super-wide, and they becomes the stars of the show. So, things that are right up close work well with super-wides, but again, you don't always have something right up close in your foreground. So, super-wides, while they can be great in the right situation, it takes the right situation. But there's also another issue with super-wides...
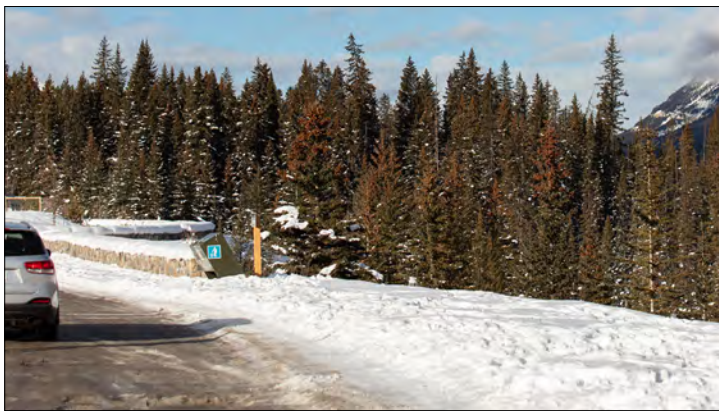

You might not think to carry a long telephoto zoom for landscapes, but I always do because it often opens up opportunities for shots you'd miss otherwise.

5

Like this shot of a mountain top up in the clouds.

I got that shot by literally just pulling off to the side of the road and shooting at 200mm to isolate just those areas up high. If the 24–70mm was my longest lens, and 70mm was as tight as I could go, I'd not only miss a lot of opportunities, but all my shots would be taken at nearly the same focal range, so they'd start to kind of look similar.

14-35mm   70-200m

1   **2**

If I had to pick just two lenses to go with me on a landscape photo shoot, it would be the 14–35mm (my go-to lens, or a 16–35mm would work, too) and the 70–200mm. That way, I can go super-wide (at 16mm), and I can also hit the landscape sweet spot in the 24mm to 35mm range. Then, I pick it up again at 70mm all the way to 200mm on the long end. I'm only missing that small range between 35mm and 70mm (basically a 50mm, which I wouldn't use for landscapes anyway), so with these two lenses, you cover an ideal range for landscape photographers. Just a reminder: I'd get the f/4 versions— half the price, less weight, and still super sharp.

You'd only be missing the range from 35-70mm

50mm
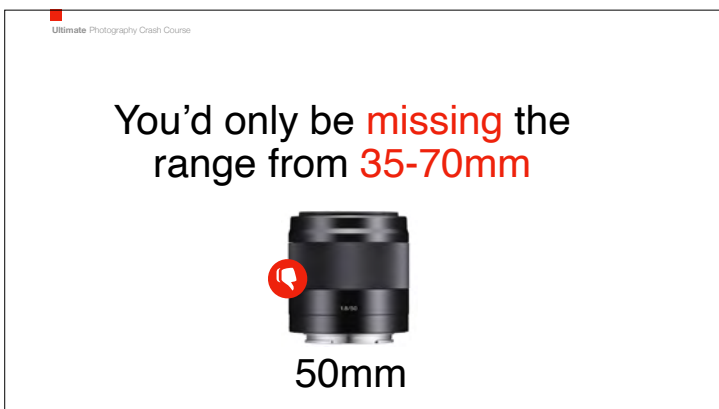
You'd have everything covered from a super-wide 16mm all the way out to 200mm, with only the range from 35–70mm missing in between. Nobody even makes a 35–70mm lens because that's a lame range for a lens. So that small missing range would essentially be covered with a 50mm lens, but I don't think you'll find a whole lot of people shooting landscapes with a 50mm, so you're really not missing out on any usable range for landscapes whatsoever. Those two lenses will cover it all!

10-20mm   70-200m

1

2

CROP
SENSOR

If you're shooting on a crop sensor body, the 70–200mm is still a good choice, but you'd want something more like that 10–20mm or 10–22mm I talked about earlier.

quick lens tip for sharper shots.

CLEAN YOUR REAR
ELEMENT

This seems kind of obvious, but (1) I can't tell you how many times I've been burned by not cleaning my lens before a shoot, and (2) how many times this has happened to friends and colleagues of mine. Keep a microfiber cleaning cloth with you, and before your shoot, clean the front element by moving in a circular pattern. That's just for the front glass of the lens. It's the rear element that is more likely to cause problems.

REAR
ELEMENT

Before you start cleaning it, take a look to see if it, in fact, does need cleaning. The rear element won't get as dirty as quickly as the front, so you won't have to clean it as often, and if you don't see anything that needs removing, don't just clean the rear element for good measure.

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Giottos Rocket Blaster Dust-Removal Tool (Large, Black)

In Stock

$16.99

If you determine it does need cleaning, first use a squeeze-powered air blower to blow away any surface dust. Then use a soft lens brush to brush away any remaining surface junk. Next, take a microfiber cleaning cloth, add two drops of lens cleaning fluid, and carefully clean the rear element in a circular pattern, starting in the center and moving outward.

CAMERA SETTINGS

Let's take a look at the settings I'd recommend to a friend:

SHOOTING MODE:

1
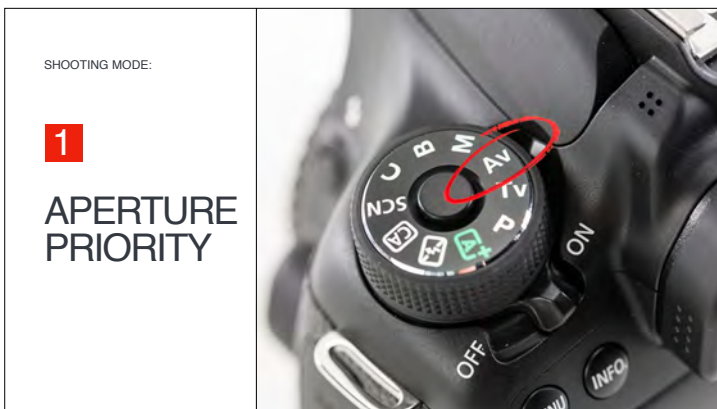
APERTURE PRIORITY

I set my camera to shoot in Aperture Priority mode (a very popular choice for landscape photographers) because you choose the f-stop, and then the camera will automatically choose the shutter speed it needs to give you a proper exposure.

Av   SHUTTER SPEED
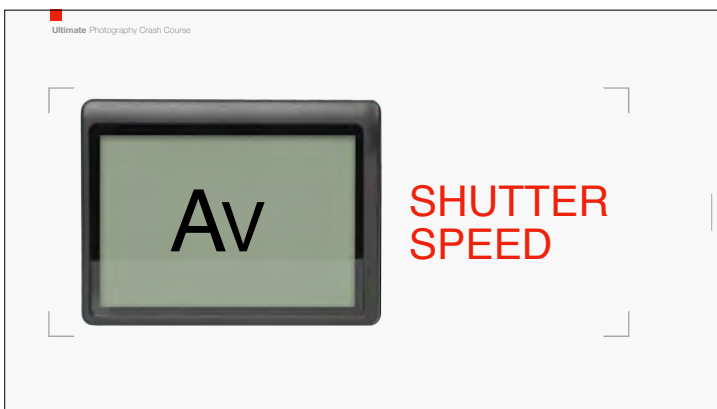
Why buy a camera that has automated features, like Aperture Priority but then you ignore all this cool tech and set your camera manually, when you don't have to? Let it do part of the work for you—especially for landscapes.

APERTURE:

2

APERTURE
f/11

This one's easy because I use the same f-stop pretty much all the time now when shooting landscapes. It's a very sharp f-stop on most lenses, and it keeps everything in focus from front to back.

Ultimate Photography Crash Course

f /11   APERTURE

An aperture of f/11 has a wide depth of field which is why it's so popular with landscape photographers. Some might argue that f/22 has more depth, which is true, but there's a downside to shooting at f/22 (and smaller openings, like f/32 or f/40), and that is you will experience some lens diffraction issues which can actually cause your images to be a little soft or even blurry at those very small opening f-stops like f/22 and higher (the higher you go, the worse it gets).

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H E A D S   U P !
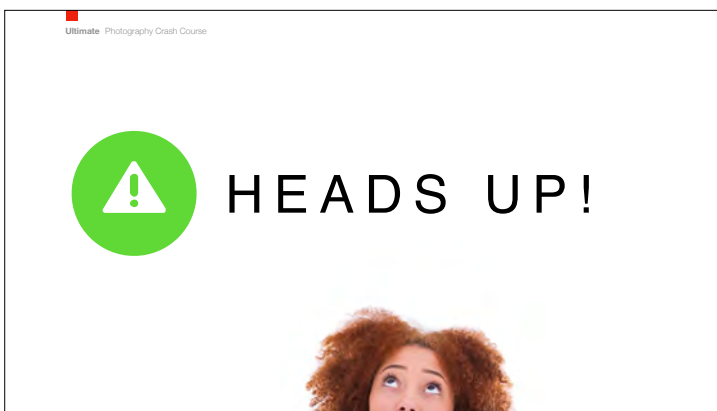
Since you'll pretty much always be shooting on a tripod, and at f-stops that put everything in your frame in focus...

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You don't need a fast lens.
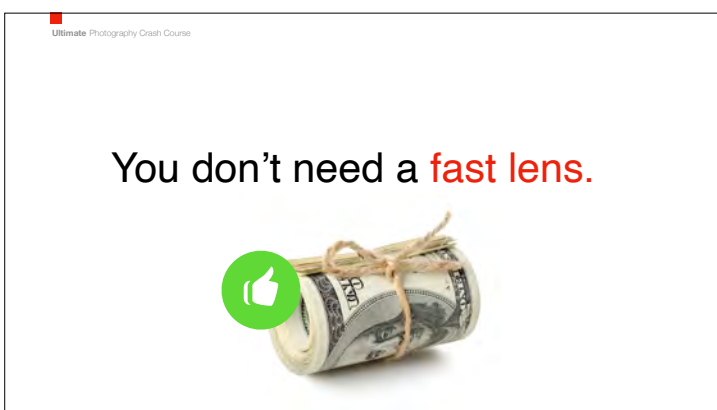
You won't need to buy a super-expensive "fast" lens, like an f/2.8 or an f/1.8, since you'll mostly be shooting landscapes at f-stops like f/11 (or somewhere around that range), so save yourself the money (and the extra weight) since every lens has f/ 11. Instead of looking for a fast lens, do a little research online and look for a sharp lens (they usually cost much less).

ISO SENSITIVITY:

3

ISO
100

THE LOWEST, CLEANEST ISO
YOUR CAMERA WILL ALLOW
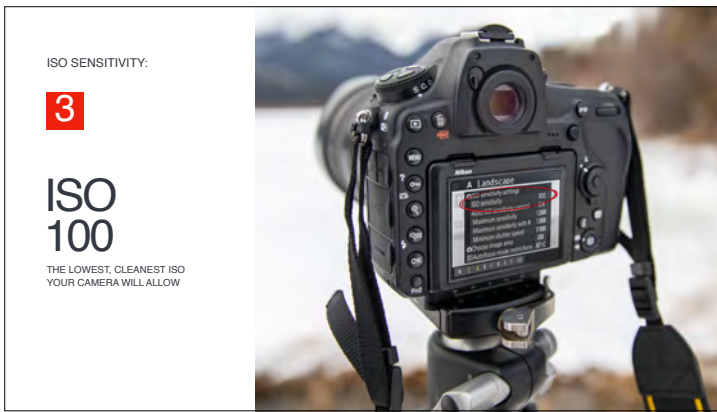
Because you're shooting on a tripod, you can shoot at your lowest, cleanest setting. For most cameras these days, the lowest, cleanest ISO is 100 ISO. You might find a particular make and model where 50 or 64 ISO is the lowest, cleanest ISO, and in that case, of course, go with that.

100 ISO

On some older Nikons, the lowest ISO is 200 ISO, and if that's the case, go with that because it's the cleanest for that particular make and model. If you're not sure, just lower your ISO to the lowest number your camera will allow (but make sure it's a number. If your camera has an ISO setting like L1 or L2, don't use that—use the lowest number instead).

**THE KEY
CAMERA
SETTINGS**

APERTURE   f/11

ISO   100

SHUTTER   Av
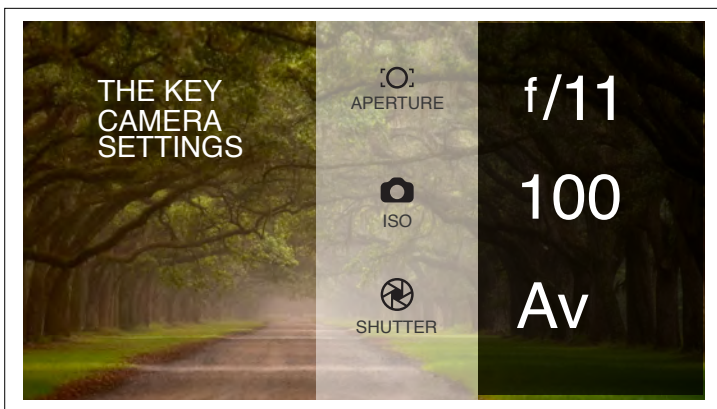
I'm not sure there's another genre of photography where the settings are this easy, and this consistent. I know before I leave my hotel room what my settings are going to be. In fact, I can pre-set them in my hotel room because they're pretty much always going to be the same: my aperture will be set at f/11, my ISO at 100 (the cleanest ISO for my make and model of camera), and I'm shooting in Av (Aperture Priority) mode, so my camera is taking care of the shutter speed for me automatically.
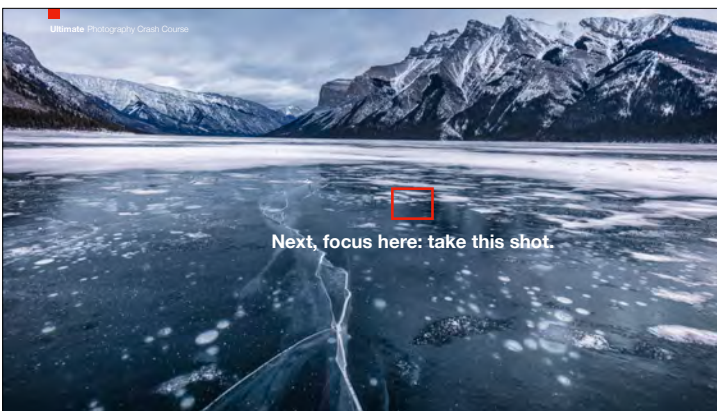
**FOCUS
STACKING**

We know that using an f-stop like f/11 will pretty much make the whole scene in focus, but if you have something up close in your foreground, and want deadly sharp focus from the foreground to the background, try focus stacking. It sounds complicated, but it's so simple (and this feature is built in to many cameras today). It's one part camera technique, one part Photoshop technique, but the good news is, Photoshop will do its part automatically—you just have to tell it to do its thing.

Take a look at this image where I used the focus stacking technique. Everything is absolutely spot-on sharp from the crack in the ice right in front of my camera to the mountains in the background. That's because there are multiple-levels of focus combined all into one—a level of sharpness far beyond what you could get from a single image.


Focus here: take this shot.
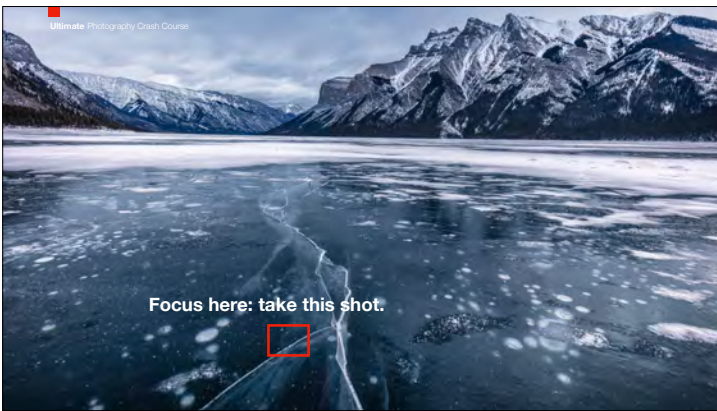
Start by moving your focus point (in your viewfinder—using the dial or knob that moves your focus point) to the foreground area directly in front of your camera. Hold the shutter halfway down to lock focus on that area and then take the shot.

Next, focus here: take this shot.

Now move that focus point (don't move the camera—just the focus point in your viewfinder) a little further into your image (as seen here) and take that shot.


Next, focus here: take this shot.
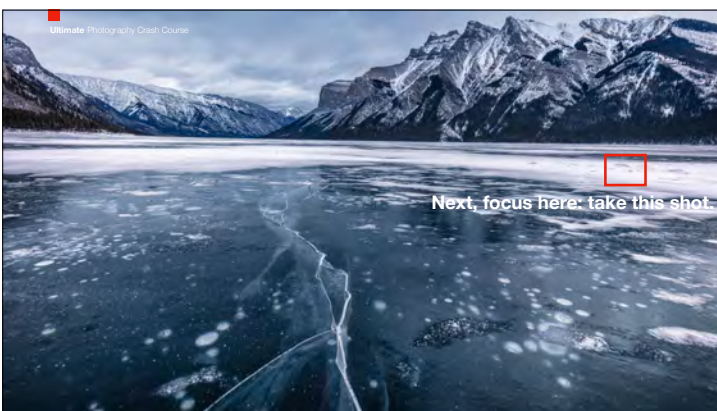
Move it a little farther into the image, focus, and take the shot (you may only need to do this two or three times, depending on the image. Or it might take six or eight frames to get it all in focus—again, it just depends on the image).

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Next, focus here: take this shot.
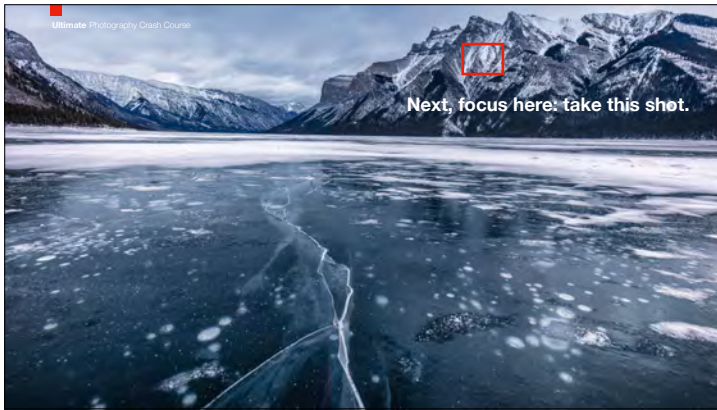
Lastly (well, in this case anyway), focus on the background and take your final shot, focusing on those mountains way in the back. Now they will be tack sharp in this image (notice the crack right in front isn't tack sharp because you're focused on the mountains).


When you're done, you'll have two, three, four (like in this case), or more images, depending on how many times you deduced to move, focusing on a new spot, and taking the shot.
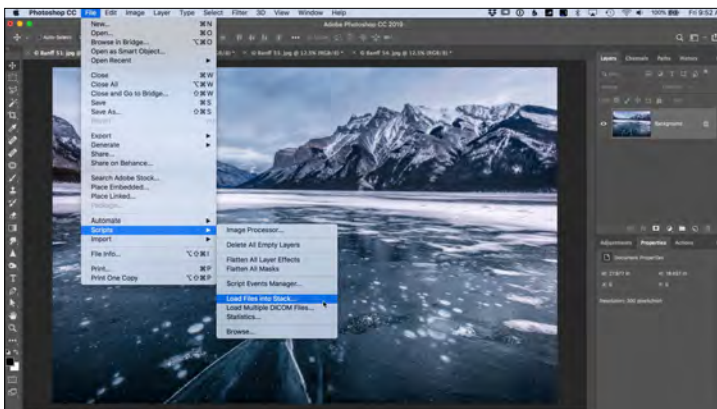
Open those four images inside of Photoshop, then go under the File menu, under Scripts, and choose Load Files into Stack (as shown here).
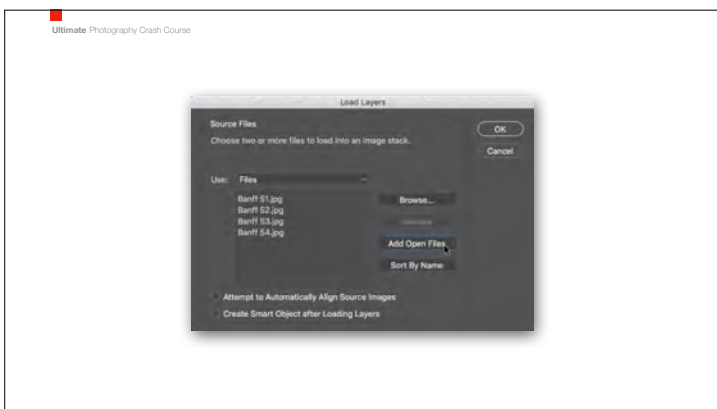
That will bring up the Load Layers dialog where you'll want to click the Add Open Files button (as shown here). This will take those four separate documents and put them all into a single document, with each image appearing on its own separate layer.
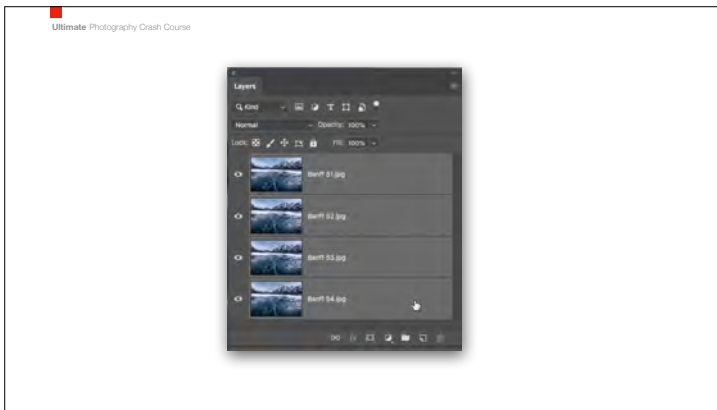
Here's what it will look like in the Layers panel when all four documents are now combined into one document and all four images are on their own separate layers. Press-and-hold the Command (PC: Ctrl) key and click on all four layers to select them (as shown here).

Now go under Photoshop's Edit menu and choose Auto-Blend Layers. When the Auto-Blend Layers dialog appears, click on the Stack Images radio button, and make sure the Seamless Tones and Colors checkbox and the Content Aware Fill Transparent Areas checkbox are turned on (as seen here). Now click OK, and Photoshop will automatically blend the images together based on sharpness, and it will create a new merged layer at the top of the layer stack made up of just the sharp areas from those four images (and it does a pretty great job most of the time).

VIDEO: How to have Photoshop merge your focused-stacked images

Don't worry—I made a video for you on how to do focus stacking in Photoshop.

THE ESSENTIAL STUFF

G E A R .

There are a few pieces of gear you're going to need to really do this right:

TRIPOD

For landscape photography, where you'll most often be shooting in low-light situations with your shutter open for anywhere from a second to 10 minutes, a tripod is an absolute must. Not just a tripod; a sturdy tripod. You're going to be shooting outdoors, sometimes in windy situations, and the last thing you need is for your entire rig to crash over, or as it happened to one poor gentleman on a landscape workshop where I was one of the teachers, his rig not only fell over, but continued down the mountain side. There is nothing sadder than the sound of gear bouncing off the rocks on its journey to the bottom.

H E A D S   U P !

If you want really stable shots…

AVOID EXTENDING CENTER COLUMN.

Avoid extending that center column.

Landscape photography tripods are strong and rugged, like this one on the left. Travel tripods are small, light, and convenient, and to achieve that small travel size, they have a center column that you have to fully extend upwards to get your camera to eye level for shooting. That's fine indoors in a cathedral. It's often not nearly enough outside at dawn in any kind of wind all, and that extended center column isn't nearly as sturdy as the rest. You can sometimes even see that center column swaying in the wind. Also, look at that tiny "chicken bone" of a bottom leg on this one on the right. Those are great for travel photography, but you're inviting death for landscape rigs. No skinny legs, no center columns, and everybody gets out alive.

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Buy a real landscape tripod that doesn't require you to extend a center column to get it up to eye level for shooting (like the one here). Lots of companies make serious tripods like this (you don't have to spend an arm and a leg, but this is an investment, and if you buy the right one the first time out, you'll have it for many years). The one shown here is from Really Right Stuff. I've had it for around 6 years already, and it's awesome. I've had my Gitzo Mountaineer for 14 years. Good tripods last. If you're not whining about what a pain it is to carry, you bought the wrong one.
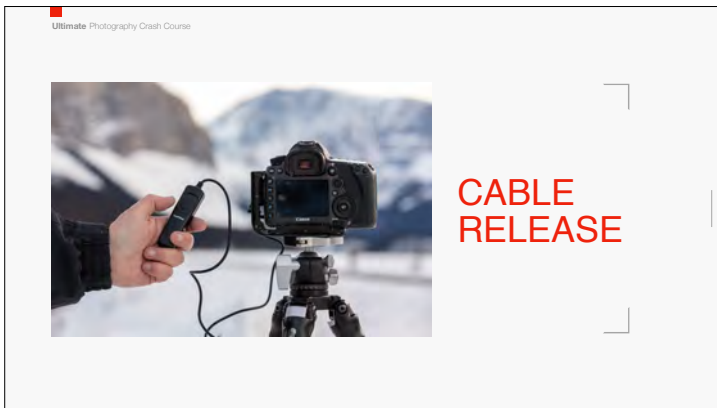
CABLE
RELEASE

Don't go through the trouble of putting your camera on a tripod, and then take your finger and press the shutter button on the camera because touching your camera causes movement. You'll need a cable release of some sort.
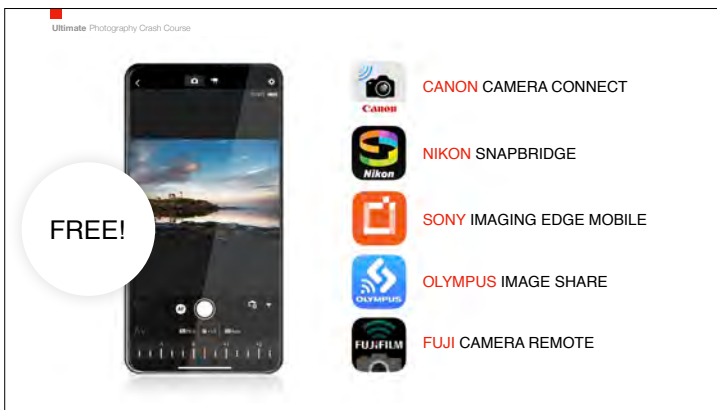
$21

This is the cheapest Canon brand shutter release I could find. It's a bare-bones model (which, honestly, is all you need), and it's around $21 at B&H Photo. It's just a button and a lock (to keep it locked in place, so you're not standing there holding it for 8 minutes during a long exposure).

$8

I found a Vello brand version for $8.

15

$25-ish

If you want to go wireless, you'll be spending around 25 bucks, but the good news is, there's no wire to connect (which means there's no wire to coil up, or end to accidentally break off, etc.). The Canon and Nikon ones just have one button. The Sony version has lots of buttons, so I imagine it will also work as a TV remote. JK.

FREE!

CANON CAMERA CONNECT

NIKON SNAPBRIDGE

SONY IMAGING EDGE MOBILE

OLYMPUS IMAGE SHARE

FUJI CAMERA REMOTE

You might prefer the free method, which is to download the free app for your camera (most cameras in the past few years have built-in wireless capabilities), and use the app to fire your camera touch-free (wirelessly). Download it from the App Store for IOS or Google Play for Android and connect it to your camera via wireless or Bluetooth.

Are these shutter releases really that necessary? Here's a quick story: this camera here is my old 5D Mark III. This is one of the product shots I took to put it up for sale on eBay (I wanted to buy a new Canon mirrorless with the proceeds). So, I set up a really sturdy tripod, put my camera on top, and took a test shot.

When I zoomed in tight on the back of the camera, I saw how blurry it was. Why, on a tripod, was this shot so blurry? Because I didn't use a cable release. Instead, I just used my index finger and pressed the shutter button on the camera and that causes the camera to move, which caused the image to be a little blurry at full size (as seen here). Yes, blurry like this, even on a tripod. So, I attached a cable release and took a second shot.

Here's the second shot using the cable release.
No movement whatsoever, and thus no blurring.

This is precisely why you need a cable release (and yes, this probably should've been in the class this afternoon on taking tack sharp images, but since we were talking about cable releases, I'm covering this now, and not later in that session, since you'll already know by then that you need to use a cable release or wireless remote to trigger your shutter when you're on a tripod).

TURN OFF
'IS' OR 'VR'
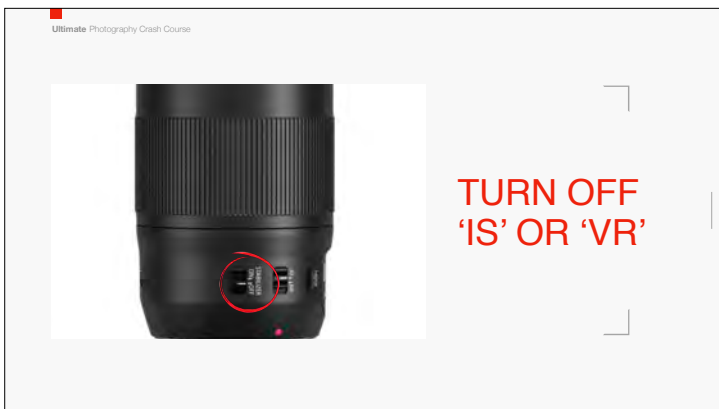
When you're handing-holding, and you have IS (Image Stabilization) or VR (Vibration Reduction) turned on, a little motor inside your lens searches for movement and tries to counteract that movement. It works amazingly well, too. However, when you put your camera on a tripod, that little motor doesn't know it's on a tripod and it keeps searching for movement, and having a little motor searching for movement when there is none (because you're on a tripod) causes movement. So, for the sharpest results, turn off IS or VR or VC or whatever they call it on your lens, when you're shooting on a tripod. :)


R U G G A R D
R C - P 1 8
R A I N
C O V E R

$3.00

Here's one accessory that every landscape photographer should own and keep somewhere in their camera bag: some rain gear. This Rugged one is nice, and a two-pack of them from B&H is only $6. I keep mine in the outer sleeve in my bag…just in case.

WHICH ONES
FILTERS
AND WHY?

You hardly need many these days, but you do need one for sure, maybe two.

FOR LONG
ND FILTER
EXPOSURES

NEUTRAL DENSITY FILTER

The main one I recommend (and the only one I really carry with me on a regular basis) is an ND (Neutral Density) filter. These dark filters screw onto the end of your lens and darken the scene to make your shutter stay open longer. This helps with two big things, landscape-wise:
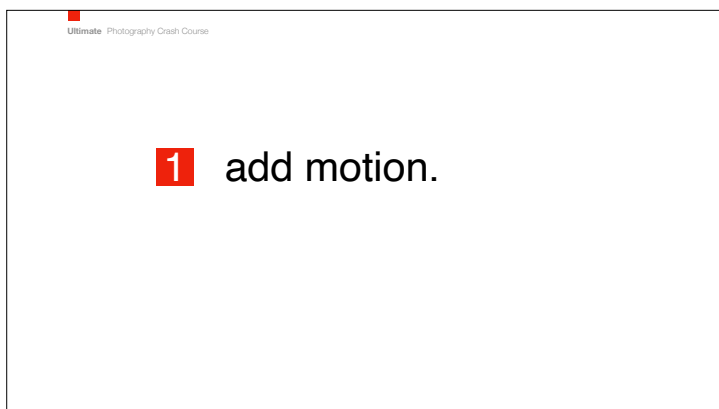
1 add motion.

(1) It lets you add motion to your landscape shots.
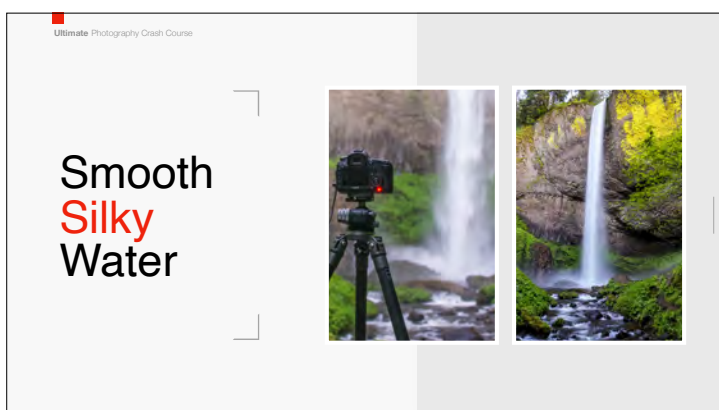
Smooth
Silky
Water

It's how you create that smooth, silky water effect (shown here in a waterfall, but it works the same way when capturing a stream).

1 add motion.

2 simplify scene.

(2) It helps you simplify the scene, which is great for simplifying the sky by creating smooth, streaking clouds (and there's another simplifying benefit you'll learn about later today).

ND
FILTER

NEUTRAL DENSITY FILTER AND BRACKET

This is one style of ND filter, which uses a bracket to hold a rectangular filter, but there are simple screw-on filters for most lenses, too. The one shown here is from Haida (a Chinese company that makes great quality real glass filters at a fraction of the price of some of the other popular brands). They maintain the color perfectly, whereas many ND filters (even expensive ones) can often add a weird color tint to your long exposure images. The round screw-on ones I use are from Breakthrough Photography. Not cheap, but really nicely made (probably the best).

ND
FILTER

CIRCULAR NEUTRAL DENSITY FILTER

You can also buy screw-on ND filters (this is the 10-stop screw-on ND from Haida). These are easier to use and more portable than the bracket system I just showed you (though I use this screw-on filter mostly for travel photography).

3-Stop   10-Stop

They measure the darkness amount of an ND filter using "stops," so a 3-stop filter is kind of dark, and a 10-stop filter is really dark (and what you'd normally need for shooting in direct sunlight). I have both a 3-stop and a 10-stop, and you can stack a 3-stop right on top of the 10-stop when you want an even longer exposure. So yes, I recommend getting both (there are lots of brands to choose from). Here's how to set up your camera to shoot long exposures:

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How to: mirrorless

If you shoot with a mirrorless camera, this process is easier and takes fewer steps than using a DSLR.

1

Put your ND filter on.

Start by putting your ND filter on in front of your lens.

2

switch to
BLUB MODE:
for exposures
lasting more than
30 seconds.

Most cameras are limited to an exposure of 30-seconds long maximum, so you have to switch to a special camera mode that lets you keep your shutter open as long as you want (with no maximum amount of time). It's called "Bulb mode," so switch your camera to Bulb mode now.

3

figure out how long to keep your shutter open.

If you have the PhotoPills app I mentioned earlier, it will calculate the amount of time you need to keep your shutter open for you. Or…

You can try a phone app I use just for timing long exposure shots. It's called "ND Timer" and you tell it what your shutter speed is BEFORE you put the filter on, and then what type of ND filter you're using (3-stop, 6-stop, 10-stop, or even stacking multiple filters) and it not only tells you the exact amount of time you'll need to keep your shutter open for a proper exposure, it's got a built-in timer, and alarm, to remind you when to close your shutter.

ND Timer costs 99¢. A similar app for Android phones, ND Filter Timer, is free. Sweet! :)
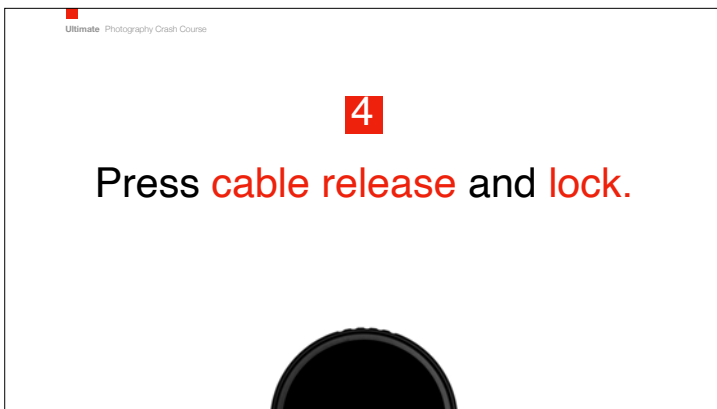
4

Press cable release and lock.

Now take the shot by pressing the shutter button on your cable release and switch the shutter button lock to the On position on your cable release, so it's locked into position (that's better than standing there holding down the button for 8 minutes or so).

5

Wait patiently.

Now you just kinda hang out and do nuthin' until the ND Timer app (or whatever you're using to time your long exposure) tells you it's time to release the shutter button lock, and when you do that, the shot is complete.

How to: DSLR

It's a few more steps to do a long exposure with a DSLR, mostly because of the optical viewfinder, which presents its own set of issues.

1

press your shutter button halfway to set your focus.

Start by setting your focus on the scene in front of you (press the shutter button halfway down).

2

switch lens to manual focus.

Once you have your focus set, on your lens, turn off your Auto focus button, so it's set to Manual focus. That way, your focus won't accidentally change when you go to take the shot.

3

now put your ND filter on.

Now, put your ND filter on in front of your lens. We do this in this order because on a DSLR, once you put a 10-stop ND filter on, it's so dark your camera can't focus, so we focus before we put the filter on. If you shoot a mirrorless camera, you don't have this issue, so you can put on the filter right from the start.

22

4

switch to
BLUB MODE:
for exposures
lasting more than
30 seconds.

Most cameras are limited to an exposure of 30-seconds long maximum, so you have to switch to a special camera mode that lets you keep your shutter open as long as you want (with no maximum amount of time). It's called "Bulb mode," so switch your camera to Bulb mode now.

5

cover your viewfinder.

With regular DSLR viewfinders, light can leak into your long exposure shot through your camera's viewfinder. Some higher-end cameras actually have a little switch that puts a small door over the opening for you, but few cameras have this mini-door feature, so you'll need to either put a piece of black gaffer's tape over your viewfinder, or if you're a Canon shooter…

TIP: There's a
viewfinder cover
on Canon
camera straps.

There's actually a small black rubber viewfinder holder right on your Canon camera strap! (You always wondered what that was for.) You slide the viewfinder cap off, and then slider this cover right over it.

VIDEO: Using the Canon camera strap viewfinder cover

I made a little video for you on how that works out in the field.

6

figure out how long to keep your shutter open.

If you have the PhotoPills app I mentioned earlier, it will calculate the amount of time you need to keep your shutter open for you. Or…

00:04:33

You can try an phone app I use just for timing long exposure shots. It's called "ND Timer" and you tell it what your shutter speed is BEFORE you put the filter on, and then what type of ND filter you're using (3-stop, 6-stop, 10-stop, or even stacking multiple filters) and it not only tells you the exact amount of time you'll need to keep your shutter open for a proper exposure, it's got a built-in timer, and alarm, to remind you when to close your shutter.

iOS
ND Timer
99¢ for iPhone

ND Filter Timer
Free for Android

ND Timer costs 99¢. A similar app for Android phones, ND Filter Timer, is free. Sweet! :)

7

Press cable release and lock.

Now take the shot by pressing the shutter button on your cable release and switch the shutter button lock to the On position on your cable release, so it's locked into position (that's better than standing there holding down the button for 8 minutes or so).

24

8

Wait patiently.

Now you just kinda hang out and do nuthin' until the ND Timer app (or whatever you're using to time your long exposure) tells you it's time to release the shutter button lock, and when you do that, the shot is complete.

BONUS VIDEOS

VIDEO: re-capping the steps for using an ND filter

I made a short video in the field recapping the steps for shooting a long exposure image.

why no ND graduated filter?

I don't use an ND graduated filter at all. I have them —a number of them—but they never see the light of day because this is one of those rare situations where you're better off doing what this filter does in Lightroom or Photoshop rather than using the real filter. You'll see why in a moment.

ND GRAD FILTER
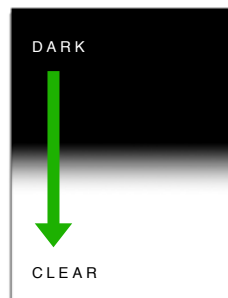
DARK

CLEAR

An ND grad filter is dark on the top, and it graduates down to clear, and that middle part is supposed to go on your horizon line. This helps keep your sky from getting way too bright when you focus your exposure on the foreground (which we generally do).

They basically look like this—with a bracket holding the ND grad filter in place in front of your lens.

The dark part at the top darkens the sky, but then as it gets near the horizon line, it's transparent.

Here's a better look at what this filter actually does to your image, but you can also see the problem it creates. In this case, it not only darkens the sky, it darkens the tiny island as well, which is not ideal.
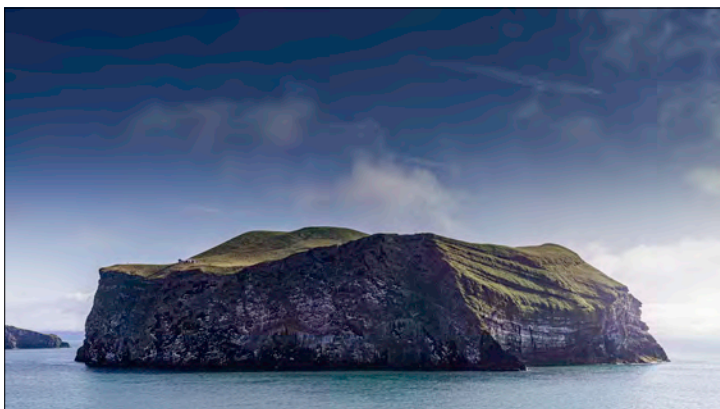
We just want the sky affected, and that's one reason it's better to do this in Lightroom or Photoshop because you can have it go behind the island (automatically masking away the island for you), so the effect only enhances the sky (something the real filter can't do). See how it goes right over the island, darkening it? (Compare this with the image above to see the difference.) I made a video to show you how this works (it's pretty cool tech).

26

do you need a **polarizer?**

Ummm, no. Well, probably not. At least not for why you think you need it.

CIRCULAR POLARIZING FILTER

Still a very popular filter for landscape photography, and I think most people think of it as a filter to make clouds look better (more contrast and detail), and the blues of the sky more vivid (which it can do both).

POLARIZING FILTER

A polarizing filter does a similar thing to what polarizing sunglasses do—they reduce glare and haze and make colors seem more vibrant and contrasty.

NORMAL   WITH POLARIZER

Here's the normal shot on the left, and here's that same scene on the right after adding a circular polarizer on the end of my lens. You're probably thinking, "Well, can't you pretty much get that same look in Photoshop or Lightroom?" Yes you can. So why do we still use polarizers out in the field? Well, it's for something Photoshop and Lightroom can't do.

27

The real magic of a polarizer (and the one thing that you can't replicate in Photoshop or Lightroom) is that they cut reflections. That's what it really does best (and it's a polarizer's main job). So, if you're shooting a stream, or leaves in the forest, or pretty much anything that reflects a lot of light, a polarizer will cut right through that stuff like magic.
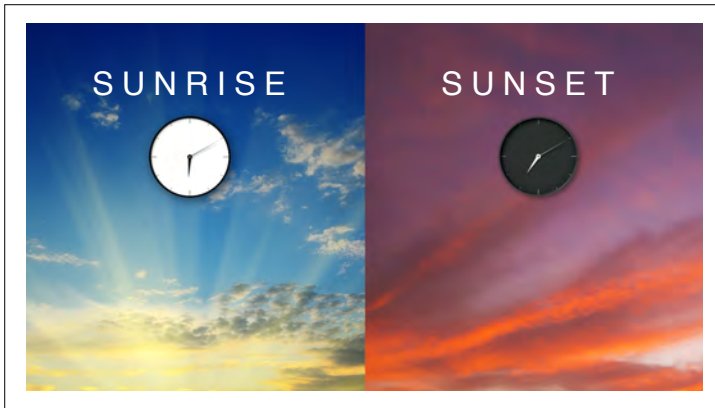
Suddenly, you can see the rocks in the stream just below the water and not just a reflection of the sky above. Just screw on the polarizer to the front of your lens and rotate the ring on the filter until those reflections disappear.

Here's another example.

NORMAL   WITH POLARIZER
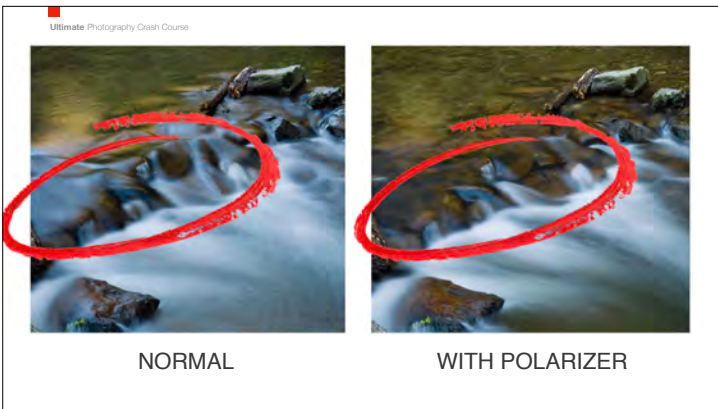
When you shoot is as important as where.

☀

WHAT TIMES
W H E N .
TO SHOOT

There are two great times to shoot landscapes: before sunrise until a little after and around sunset to around 1 hour after. The sun is either very low in the sky, casting soft beautiful shadows and beautiful light, or there's no sun at all, so the light is beautiful, and with any luck at all, so is the sky with clouds holding all the color of the rising or setting sun.
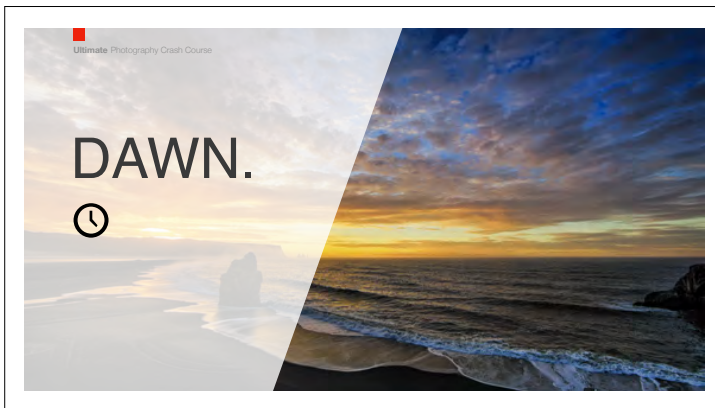
Dawn is one of the two awesome times to shoot landscapes. There are some advantages, and disadvantages to shooting at dawn vs. shooting at sunset. Let's take a quick look at each:
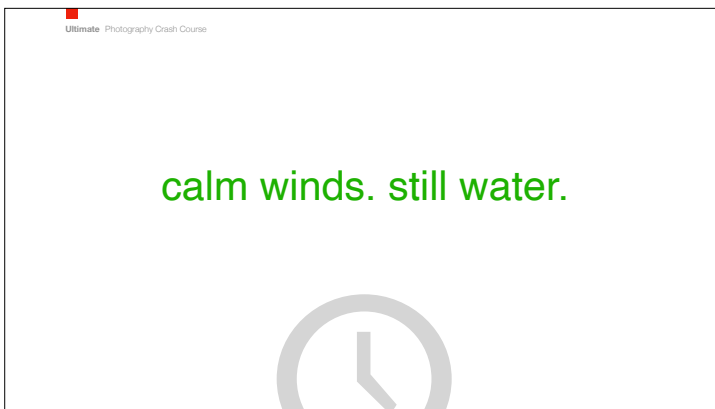
Early in the morning, around dawn, is your best chance to get smooth, glassy water, which creates wonderful reflections that look awesome in landscape photos (provided, of course, you have water in your frame). So, if you're shooting a location without a lake or pond, this one isn't an advantage.
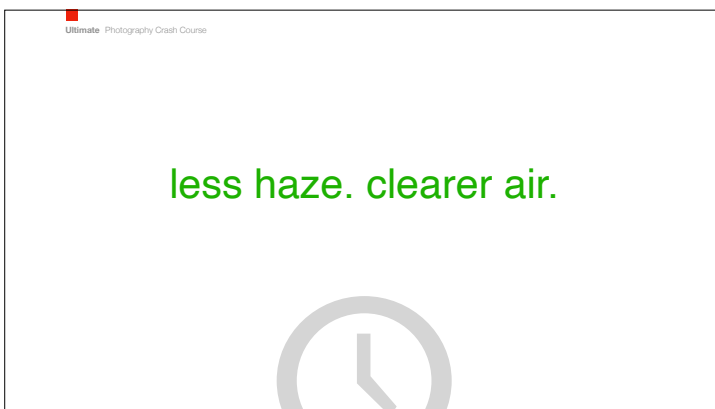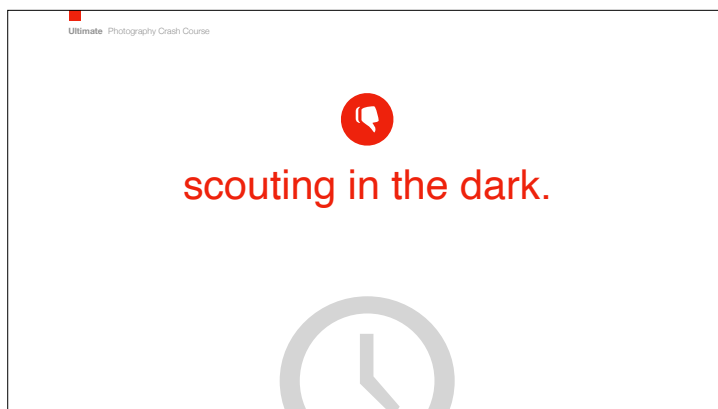

Earlier in the day, before the heat arrives, the clear air gives you sharper shots at distance.

next stop: breakfast!

Right after your shoot, it's pancake time!
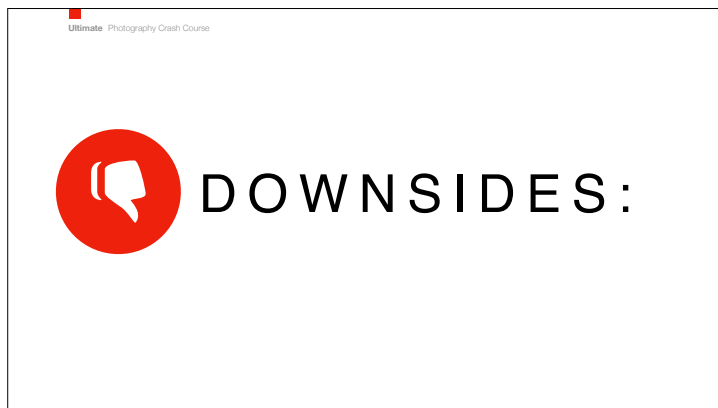
DOWNSIDES:

There are some serious downsides to shooting at dawn, versus shooting at sunset:

scouting in the dark.

A lot of times you'll be getting into position to shoot in complete darkness. You'll be using flashlights to unpack your gear, and even to find your way sometimes. The chances for tripping, or stepping on a snake, or falling into a giant snake pit go up exponentially.

light gets worse and worse.
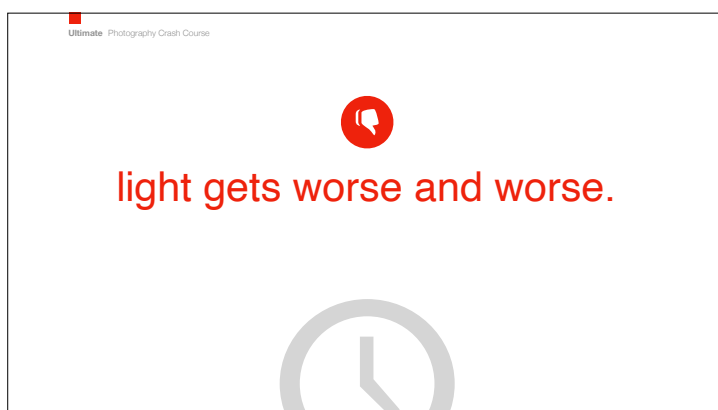
As the sun comes up, the light quickly gets bad. In fact, the light is only good until about 5 minutes after the sun comes up. Once the sun rises, the light gets progressively worse and worse, but it's already bad 5 or 10 minutes tops after sunrise.

you might get fogged in.
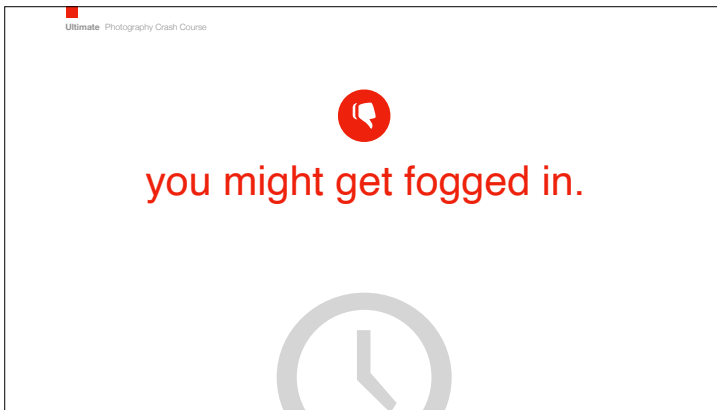
If you're going to get fogged in, it's going to happen around dawn. Of course, you won't know that yet in many cases. By the time the sun burns off the fog, the light is usually pretty harsh, so you missed the good light. Every once in a while, the fog shows up just in the right places and it makes for a cool atmospheric shot, but usually…not.

you won't know
if it's a bad sunrise yet.
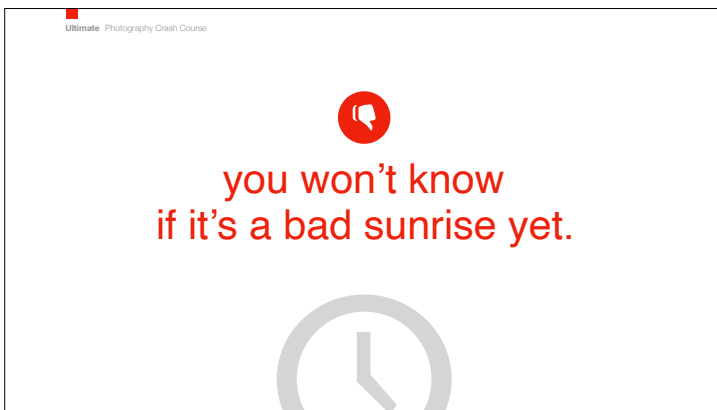
When it's really dark outside and you're getting set up, the sky is black and you don't really know what you're going to get, so you wait it out. I've sat there freezing, wondering if some clouds might show up once the sun comes up, only to find out 20 minutes later that there's no real sunrise—it just gets brighter and the shoot is a bust. At sunset, you know well in advance if it's worth sticking around for.
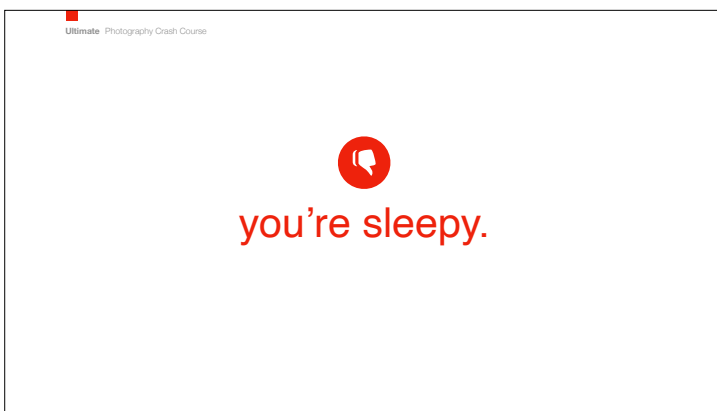
you're sleepy.

If you're getting up early enough to drive to a location, get out, get set up and in place, you're probably at least somewhat sleepy. There may not be easy access to that all-important second or third cup of coffee where you're shooting. You're not 100%. That's a downside. Now, you might be that super-early riser person who is at their best at 4:15 am, in which case, this is not an issue for you, but I'm just puttin' in out there—having to get up this early keeps a lot a folks completely out of the landscape game.

DUSK.

This is the other most-awesome time to shoot, filled with possibilities and not much downside (unless you're shooting a with a body of water, like a lake, which is likely not still and glassy around sunset like it was at dawn). So, there's that, but the rest is all pretty good.

easier scouting locations.

Scouting locations is easy, because it's broad daylight. No falling into a snake pit. Well, not usually.

longer time to shoot.

You can start shooting from about an hour before sunset, to around an hour afterward. It's a much longer shooting window than sunrise.

light gets better and better.

As the sun goes down, the light gets better (not worse like at dawn), and some of the best light will happen well after the sun has set.
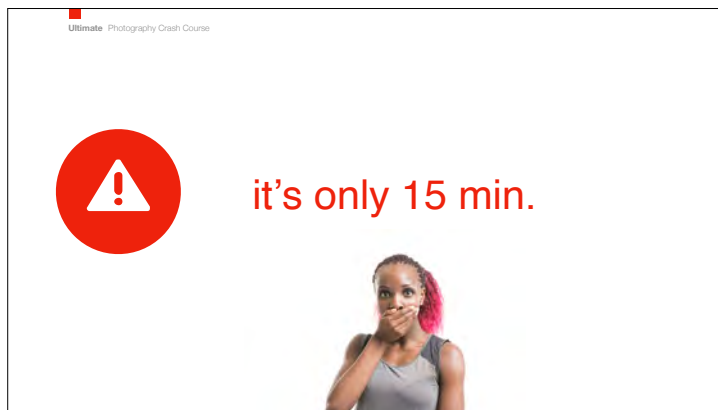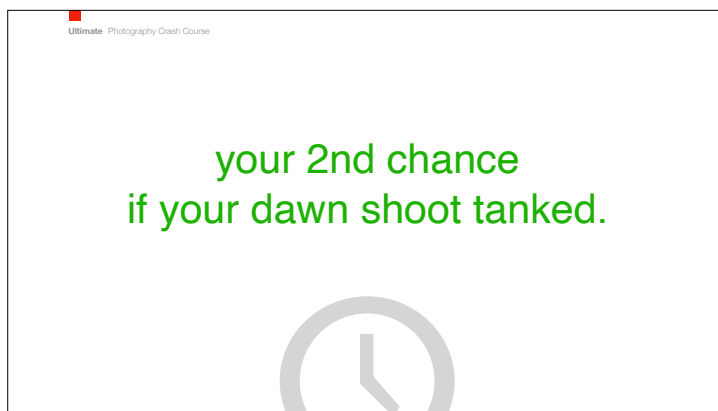
you get "blue hour."

There's a phenomenon called "blue hour" when the sky turns this rich blue color right before it turns black for the night, and it's the sunset shooter's bonus time.

It shouldn't be named "blue hour" at all, because…

it's only 15 min.

It really only lasts 15 minutes—18 minutes if you're lucky. An hour? No way.

your 2nd chance
if your dawn shoot tanked.

If your dawn shoot got totally trashed (no clouds, fogged in, just blah, etc.), this is your second chance to make a beautiful shot, so all is not lost.

you're having a late dinner.

Probably the only downside is that you're going to be late for dinner in the winter, and in the summer, you might have to go to Waffle House (highly under-rated diner), or maybe Denny's (not over-rated), or at the very least Steak n' Shake (actually, really good).

PANOS

THE WORLD WIDE.

Just think about the name "panoramic." It like this technique was born for landscape photographers. You take multiple shots and stitch them together into one wide panoramic image. Here are some tips for making successful panoramas:

1

use the right lens.

Ideally, you'll want to stay away from wide-angle lenses when you're shooting panos, so you don't get distortion between frames. This is when you're shooting at 70mm on your 24–70mm lens. At the very least, as a general rule, try and stay at 50mm or higher.

2

shoot tall for less distortion.

You can absolutely shoot panos with your camera horizontal (wide), but you'll get less distortion between frames, and better results if you shoot with your camera in a vertical (tall) orientation.

3

mark your start/stop frames

To make panos easier to spot later when you're sorting your images, just hold your index finger up in front of your lens before you start to shoot your pano. After the last frame, hold up two fingers and take one more shot. You'll see the advantage next.
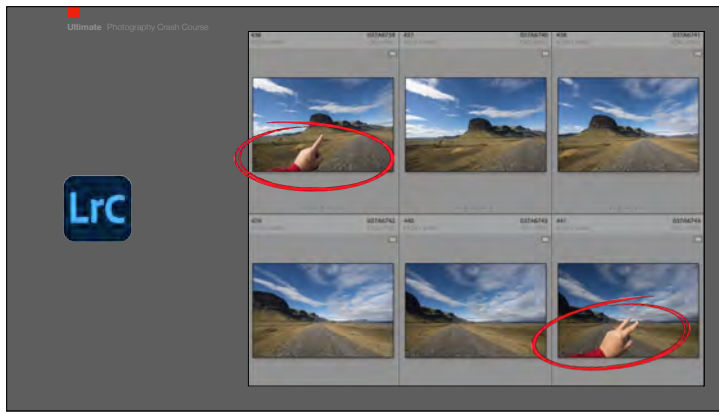
See those finger in the frames? You know that everything between that index finger shot and the two-finger shot is a pano.
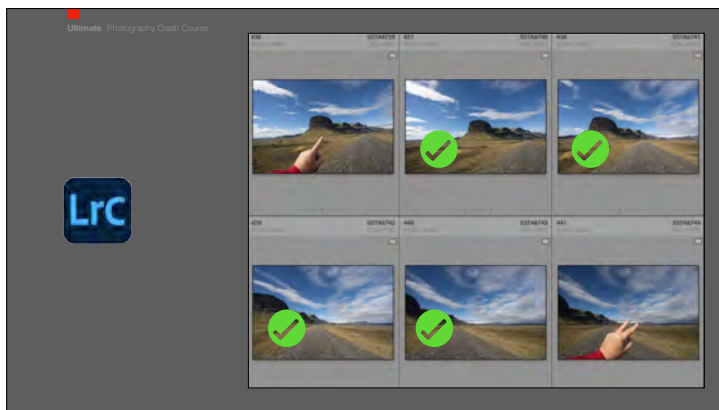
Now it's easy to see that (a) you shot a pano, (b) where it starts and ends, and (c) which images are in that pano.

4

overlap each frame by 20/30%
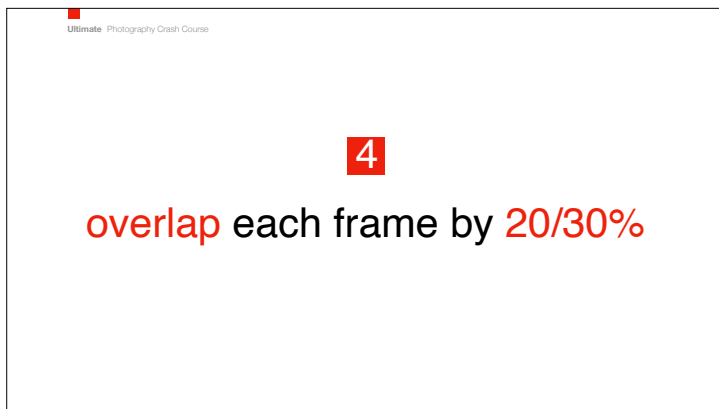
Perhaps the most important technique is to make sure you overlap each frame a bit while you're shooting, so part of the previous image appears in the next image. That way, Lightroom or Photoshop will "see" the same object in two frames and instantly know that those get stitched together.
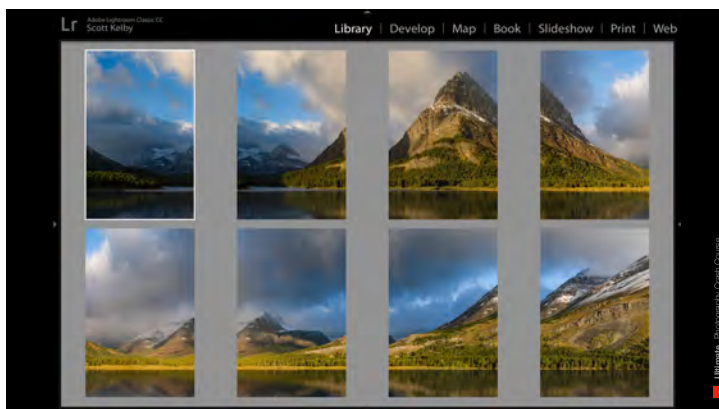

You don't have to go crazy and shoot 1/2 and 1/2. Just 20% or 30% overlap is plenty. You can see here how the left side of second frame (top row) is the right side of the first frame. There's clear overlap. Same for all the other frames. It doesn't have to be exactly precise, so don't overthink it—just overlap it a bit and you'll make Lightroom (or Photoshop's) job quick and easy.

VIDEO: How to Stitch Together a Pano in Lightroom or Photoshop

I made a video for you showing how to stitch together a pano using Lightroom (Photoshop works the same way, right from within Photoshop's Camera Raw plug in: just select all the images you want in your pano from the filmstrip in Camera Raw, and then Right-click on an image thumbnail and choose Merge to Pano from the pop-out menu).
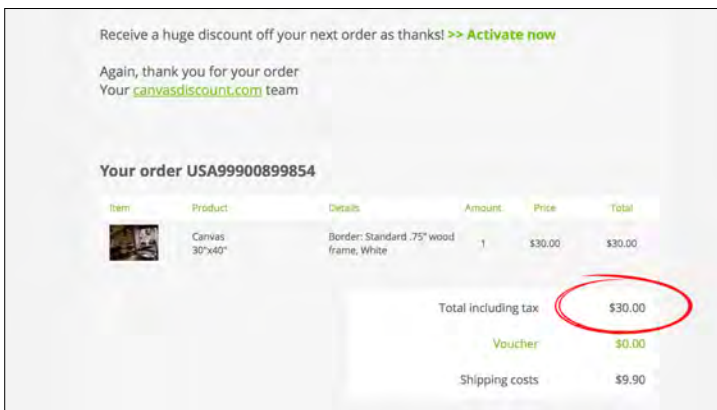

printing your panos.

Here we go!
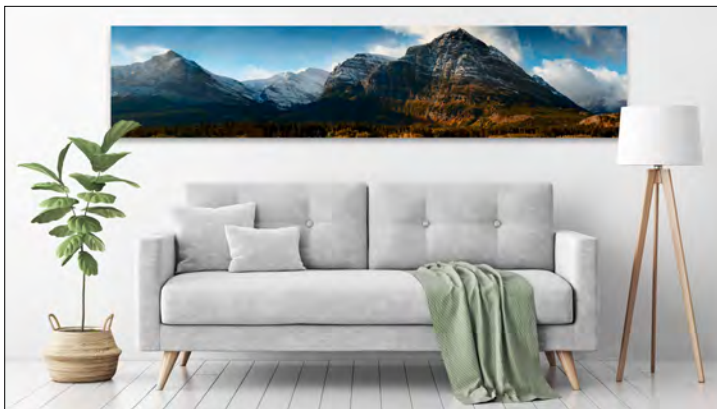
That's why I recommend printing on canvas. Most canvas print labs have very wide sizes and pretty reasonable prices and they're already stretched and mounted, ready to hang on the wall.

artisticphotocanvas.com

☆☆☆☆☆

There are two places I use: If I'm selling the print, then I go to Artistic Photo Canvas. They are top-notch—from their service to the quality of the print—just can't be beat. This is where you go when it has to look amazing. Reasonably priced for the high quality.

canvasdiscount .com
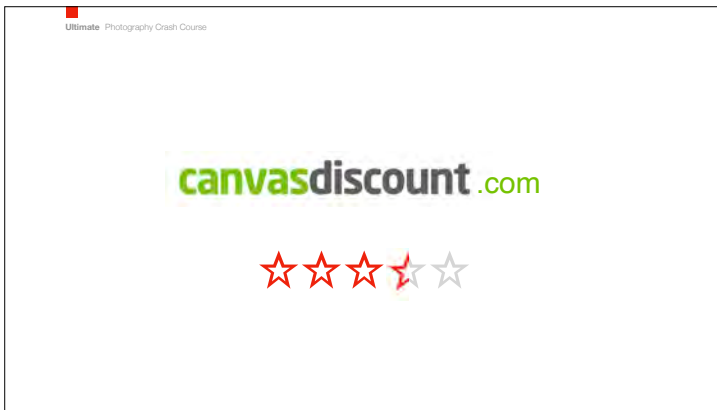
This is the other place I use, and I have to say, their prices are just insanely low. Crazy low. Mindboggingly low. Sign up for their email newsletter and you'll get deals emailed to you, for very specific-sized canvases (mounted and all that stuff) that you will have to think are a typo because they're so low. Their quality I would say is "good." Not killer, not amazing like APC I mentioned previously, but "good." Great for giving as gifts or decorating your home or office (I have a number of them at our offices). Their service is fast, and their customer service is pretty good, too.

Receive a huge discount off your next order as thanks! >> **Activate now**

Again, thank you for your order
Your canvasdiscount.com team

Your order USA99900899854

Item	Product	Details	Amount	Price	Total
	Canvas 30"x40"	Border: Standard .75" wood frame, White	1	$30.00	$30.00

Total including tax	$30.00
Voucher	$0.00
Shipping costs	$9.90

But the deals…oh, the deals.

GETTING IT IN
C O M P O S I T I O N
THE FRAME.

It really all comes down to this: it's how you frame up the shot—what you choose to leave in, leave out, and the angle for the story you want to tell.

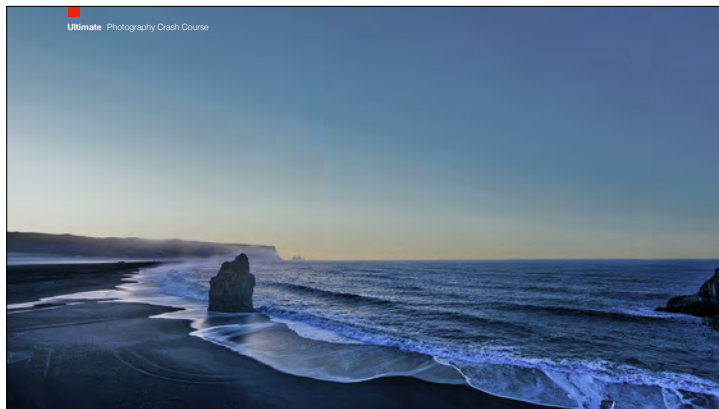Here are five of my favorite composition tips for landscape shooters:

This is an unfortunate truth, but for most landscape scenes, if you don't have beautiful clouds, you don't have a beautiful shot. Bald skies usually (not always) make for a boring shot. The clouds hold the color; they're varied and never look the same; they are "the icing on the cake."
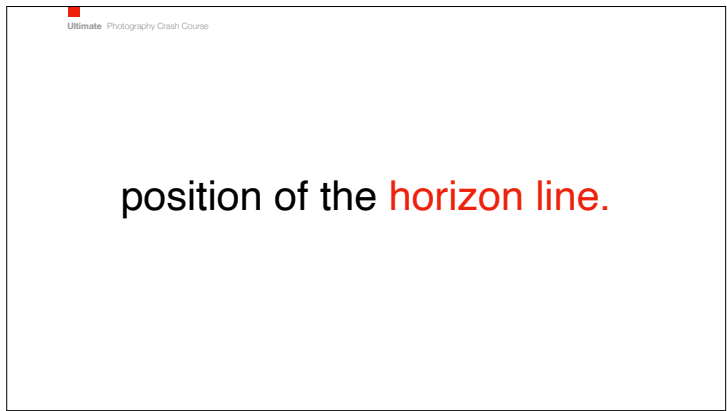

Take a look at this shot with a bald, cloudless sky. It's "okay."

Here's the exact same scene, but with the real clouds that were there that day (I removed the clouds in the previous shot, so you could see the difference). The clouds hold the color and give the image its wow factor.
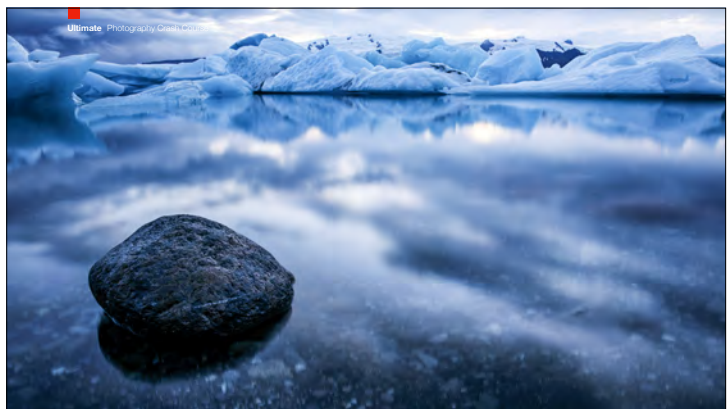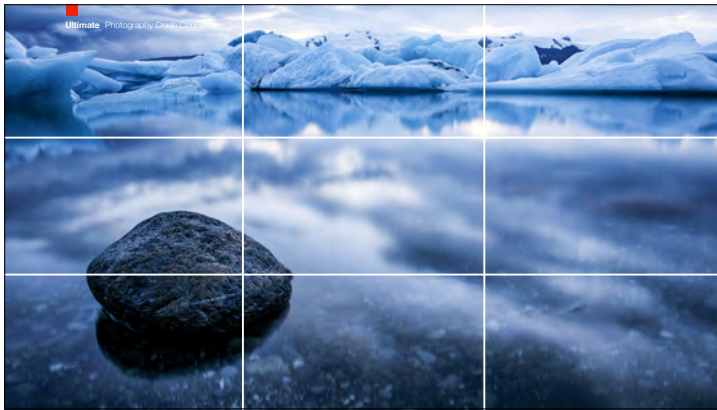
He's right, ya know.

There is a methodology just for horizon lines in landscape images, and when you hear it, it'll make total sense.
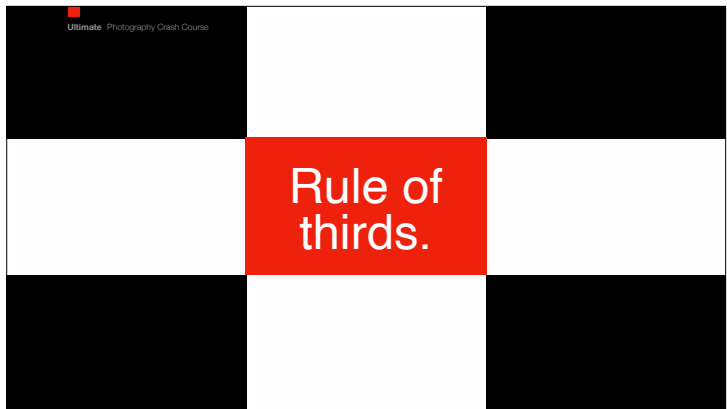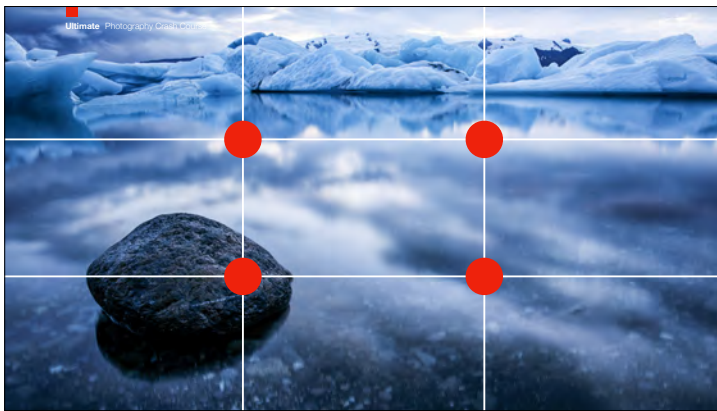

This methodology is based on one of the core "rules of composition"—the rule of thirds.

The idea is that you mentally divide your image into thirds.

Some cameras even let you turn on a "rule of thirds" grid right within the viewfinder to help you compose using the rule of thirds.

The basic rule is to place things of interest around where those lines intersect, as shown here with those circles.
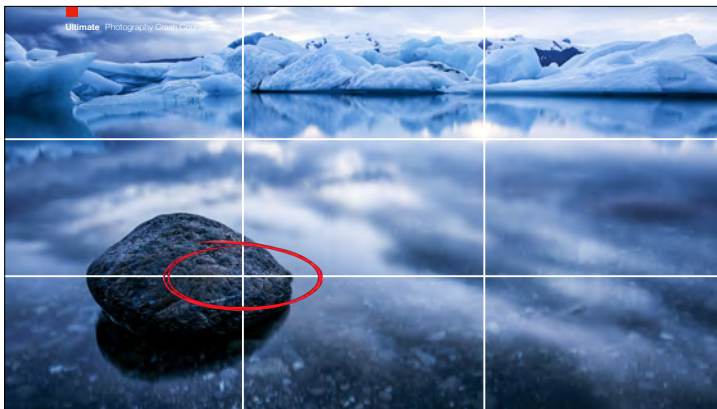

See how the rock is positioned so it appears where the lower third lines intersect? That's a classic use of the rule of thirds.

so what about the horizon line?
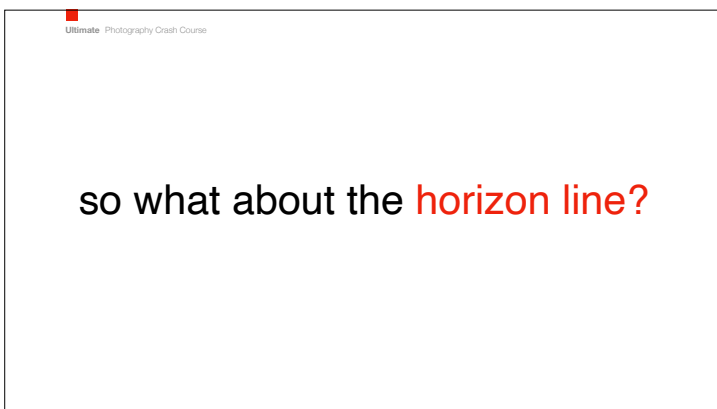
So where does it go? There's a very specific place for it in landscape photography (and it's not the center or middle of the screen).

It's based on the image. If the image has a boring sky, we know right off the bat we compose the image to hide the boring parts, so the horizon line goes up in the top third of the frame, like you see here.
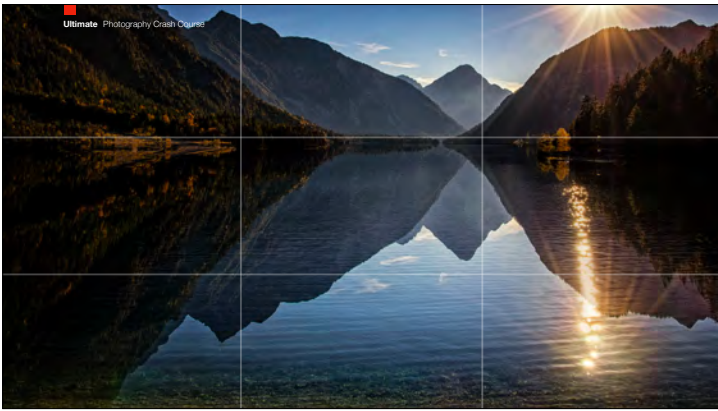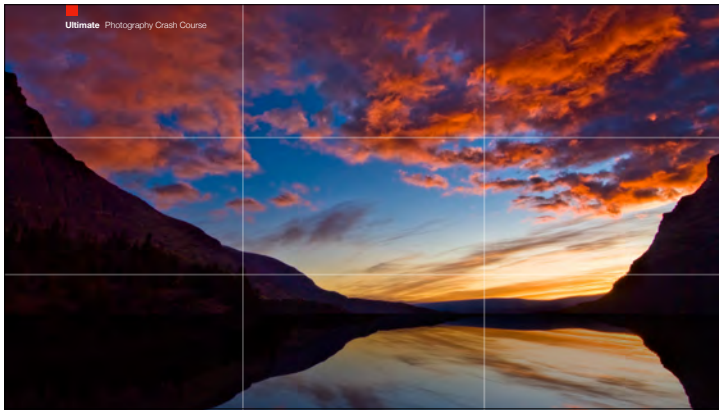

If I brought up a rule of thirds grid here, you can see the horizon line is nearly right along the top third.
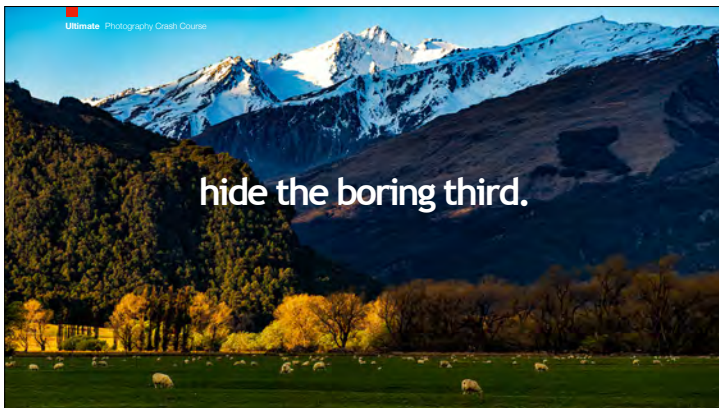

Placing the horizon line up there when you shoot it, hides most of the bald sky.

If you have an amazing sky, and it's more interesting than the foreground, you want to emphasize that part when you frame up the shot.
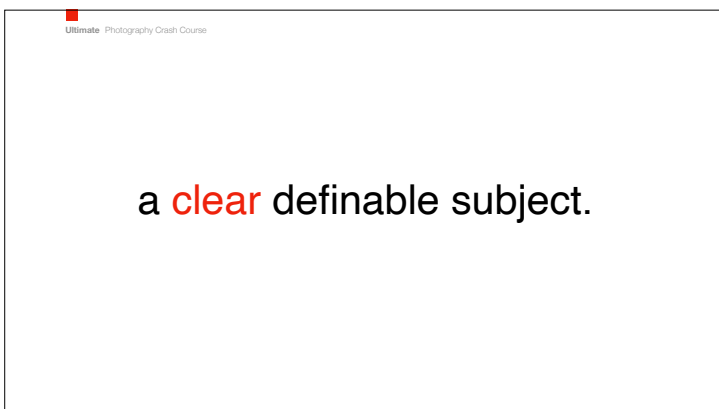
Here you can see I framed the shot so the horizon line is down low, so more of the sky is showing.

hide the boring third.

So, in short, we hide the more boring part of the image (in this case, the bald sky)...

show more of
the better third.
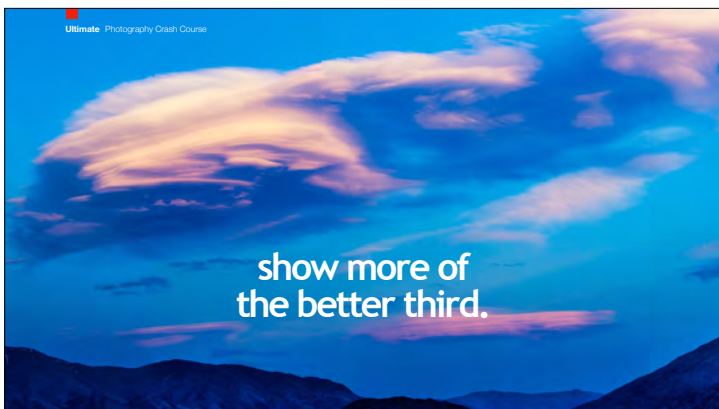
...and show more of the interesting part (in this case, the sky).

a clear definable subject.

When someone views your image, they immediately need to know what the subject of the shot is. It can't just be: "It's the whole scene."

A clear, definable subject.

use negative space.

One popular technique that helps draw the viewer's eye is to use empty areas of the frame—called "negative space"—to drawing the viewer right to the subject.

In this example, all the empty space in the center and right of the chapel draws your eye back to the chapel. There's nothing to see in those other parts, so that negative space pulls the eye to our subject.
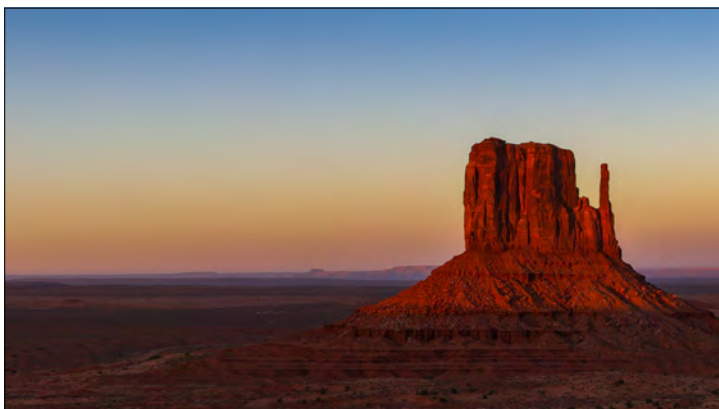

All the negative space on the left draws you directly to the rock formation.

The negative space in this shot leads you directly to the shack. It's an effective and easy way to pull off compositional technique.


The negative space in this shot leads you directly to the sea stack (or mountain, or whatever that thing is sticking out of the clouds).

Ultimate *Photography Crash Course*

create layers. start with a foreground element.
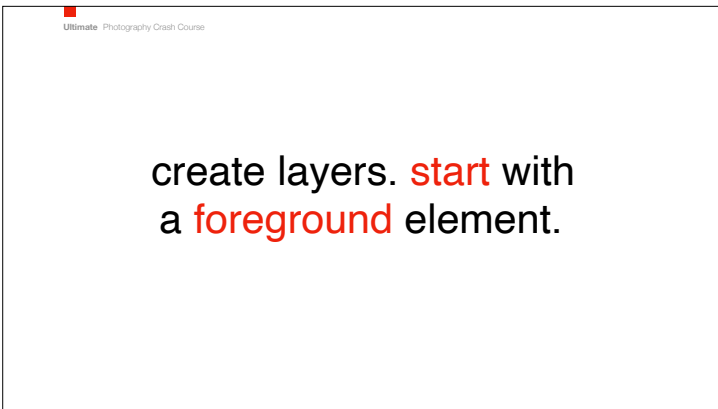
To create landscape images with depth, compose your image so there are layers of depth to your image. Start by putting something in your immediate foreground.


1 Foreground

In this image, we have a small stream right in the foreground, and that's the first layer in our image —making sure you have a strong foreground. If you've got rocks, a tree, or some object right in the foreground, it helps lead the viewer into the image.
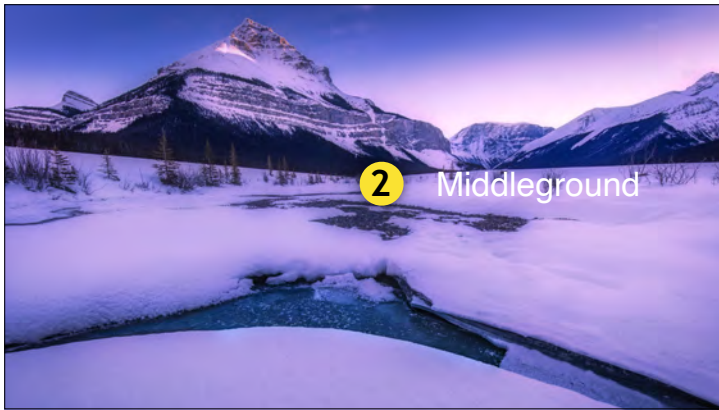
The middle ground is the area behind the foreground (and the next layer back) that helps continue the viewer's journey into your image.
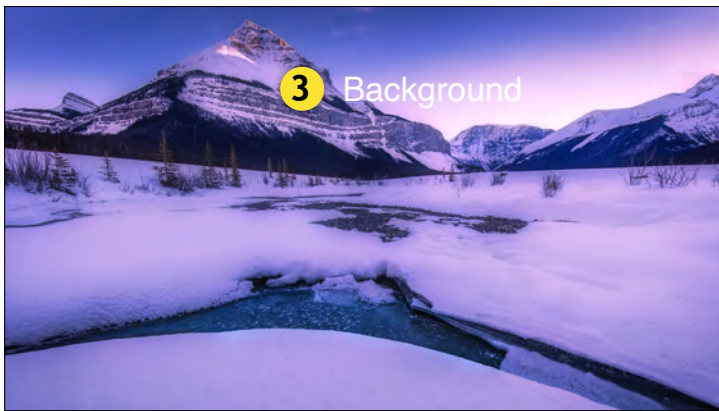
The background is the final layer and, in this case, what we're leading the viewer to—the mountain the background.
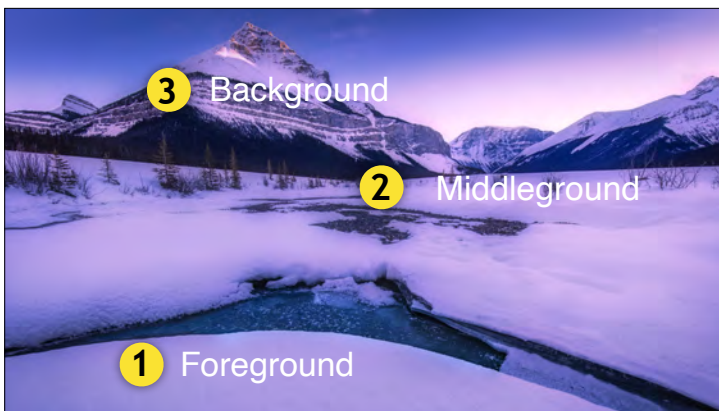
These layers help create depth to your image.
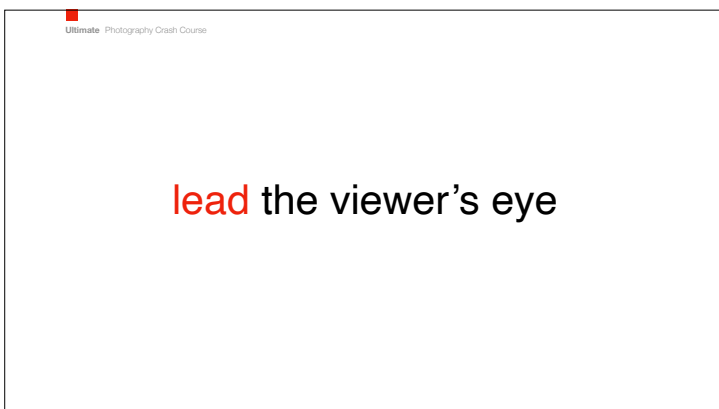
The most common method of leading the viewer's eye is the use of "leading lines." These are parts of the landscape we can use to lead the viewer into the image. They literally point the way to where we want them to look.

You saw this shot earlier, and I positioned my camera so these cracks would lead the viewer's eye into the image. There were cracks going in every direction, but I kept walking around the ice until I could find cracks going in the direction of the mountains.

Here's another one where the road helps draw you into the image.

This is a super-obvious leading line because it has lines. This road leads you right in the image—your eye can't help but go there.

Here's another one where the lines help lead you to the rock formations.

custom shooting modes.

If you want to stop worrying about settings and start focusing on composition and creativity, start using the custom shooting modes on your camera, and worrying about settings goes away. This way, you put in your most-used settings and save them to custom modes 1, 2, and 3, and then you can choose one of these from your mode dial, and you'll know that it's the exact right settings for the situation you're shooting at that time (this will all make more sense in a moment).

On my camera, I have three custom modes (pretty typical) and I access these from the mode dial right on top of the camera.

The mode dial is this thing right here.

MODE DIAL

They use C1, C2, etc., for their ustom mode names (on Canon and Sony). Nikon calls the "Custom User Settings," and they call them U1, U2, U3, etc.

47

MODE DIAL

It's these three right here. I can switch to any one of these and know that my settings are right on the money. No more accidentally leaving my ISO at 1,600 from a shoot the night before (which happened to me at Monument Valley), or I forget where the exposure bracketing setup is located in my menus—everything is set for me before I even leave my hotel room.

C1: standard landscape

AV MODE I F/11 I ISO 100 I 2-SECOND TIMER

I set up C1 (Custom Setting 1) with my standard landscape settings for images shot on a tripod. If you have in-body lens stabilization, you can have this custom setting turned off, so it's not searching for movement while you're already on a tripod.

C2: HDR bracketing

AV MODE I F/11 I ISO 100 I 2-SECOND TIMER
HIGH SPEED CONTINUOUS I 2-STOP EXPOSURE BRACKETING

I set up C2 for exposure bracketing, so I can use that to create an HDR image (so it will take 3-shots: one normal, one two stops underexposed, and one two stops overexposed). I turn on high-speed continuous and the 2-second timer, so I just press the shutter button once and it takes all three shots for me. Otherwise, I would have to press the shutter three separate times to complete the 3-shot bracket.

C3: long exposure
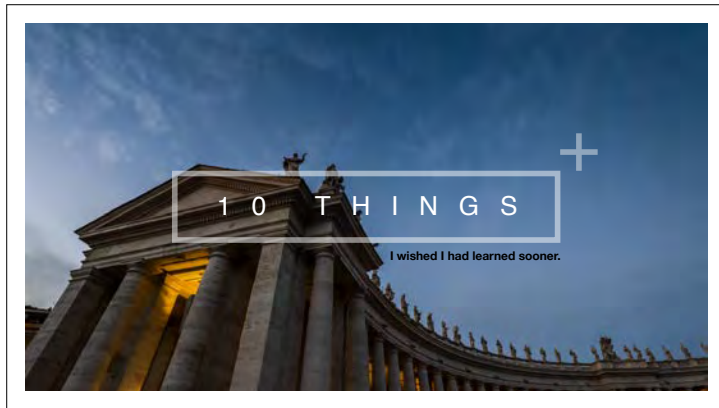
BULB MODE I F/11 I ISO 100 I 2-SECOND TIMER

My last mode (my camera only allows three custom modes—some do only two, some do four; just depends on the camera make and model) for C3 is I set it up for long exposures using the settings here.
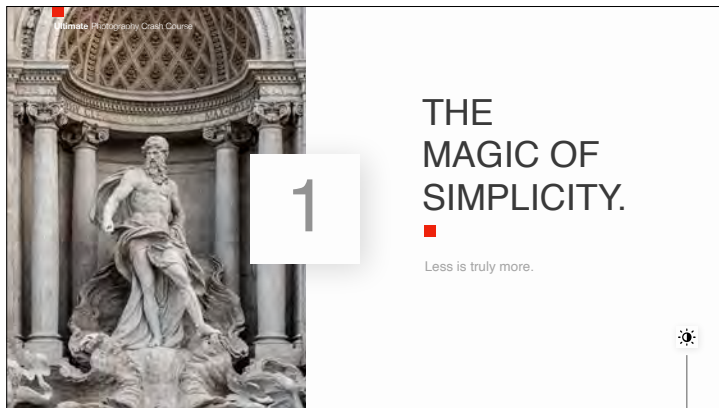
⏰

END OF FIRST SESSION.

Okay, that wraps up our Landscapes session. Stretch your arms and legs, grab a coffee, and we'll dig into the next session.

This session is called "10 Things I Wished I Had Learned Sooner."

THE MAGIC OF SIMPLICITY.

1

Less is truly more.

One thing a lot of the greatest photographs have is that they're simple in nature. They're clear. To the point. There's no question what the subject is. They don't leave it up to the viewer to figure out where to look, or what's going on. Think of shots like Steve McCurry's "Afghan girl" or "VJ Day in Times Square." Even in Times Square, Eisenstaedt's framing brought it all down to just those two. These photographers were masters at taking away distractions, proving it's not what you add, it's what you leave out, that make the picture.


This is my "most-liked" image ever on Instagram, and it's an incredibly simple shot. A street car climbing a small hill in Lisbon. I removed a couple of things that would distract the viewer from the simple scene I wanted to convey. I removed some graffiti (that would have taken away some of the timelessness of the image), and the electric cables running overhead, which takes the image down to its bare essentials, but that's what makes such a simple image so appealing.

The negative space we learned about in landscape photography works equally well for travel photography. So does the rule of thirds. A simple scene. Clean. An obvious subject. No distractions.

Just two people at a small crepe stand. A simple scene, charming, quaint. It makes you want to be there (by the way, the crepes were delicious. Sad story: this very stand, in Paris' Luxembourg Gardens, burned down to the ground several years ago. Thankfully it now has been rebuilt).
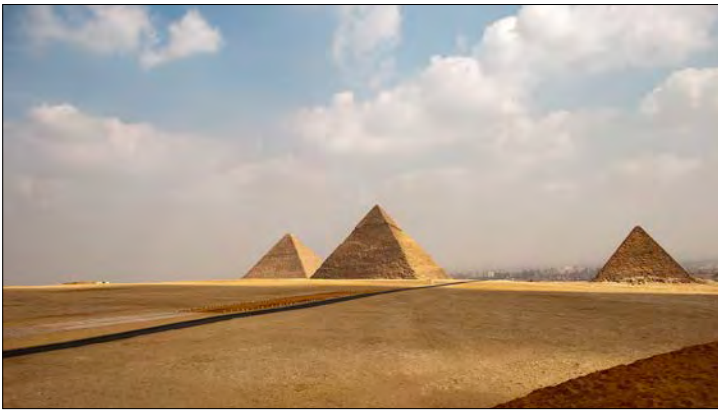
The pyramids of Giza. By carefully framing the shot, I avoid the tour buses, and vendors, and crowds of tourists standing on all sides of me to create a simple scene.


Same thing with people. Why are so many portraits taken on solid white, solid black, or a simple muted painted backdrop. Because we want to limit distractions and focus on our subject.

That one person, with a red umbrella (total luck by the way) made this street scene in London work. It gave the scene a simple subject. Even though there are buildings and lamp posts and trees and taxis and buses, you instantly know this is about the woman with the red umbrella.

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Simple. Serene.
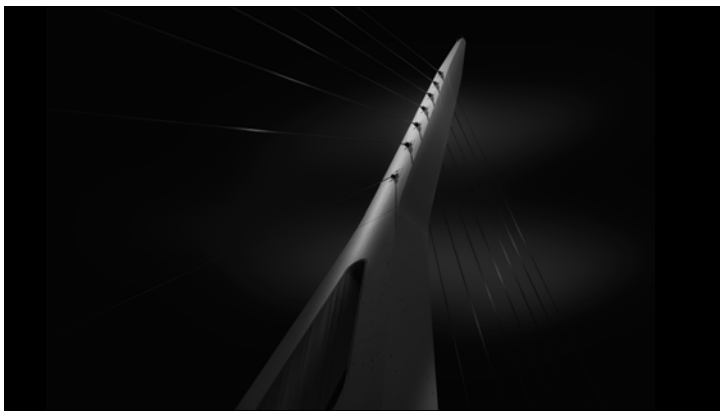
The post-processing on this one obscures a lot of distractions.

Another example.

There are over 100 people holding this flag up during a pre-game ceremony at a football game. You don't have to show all that chaos.
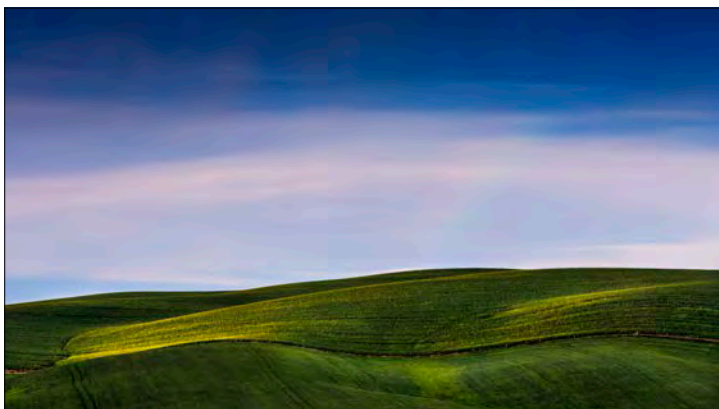
Less is more. Any idea who this guy is? ;-)

Less is more.

In the Vatican museum, from the bottom of the museum's famous staircase, looking back up to its seldom-seen glass rooftop. The concentric circles and geometric shapes keep the scene simple because it's shot straight up. It would be easy to make this is a busy scene, without a clear simple point for the viewer to latch on to by just shooting a bit to the side. I tried that, and it looks too busy—you're not sure what you're looking at, and where you're supposed to be looking.
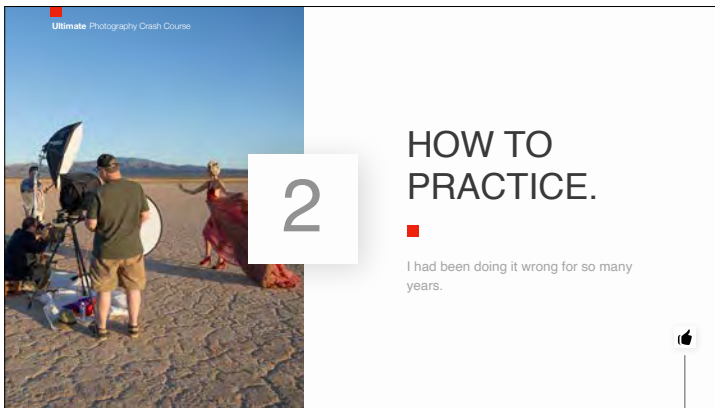

It's not what you add, it's what you take away.

Great quote from Matisse! He's essentially saying if something in your photo isn't helping the story, then it's hurting it.

> "Everything that is not useful in the picture is, it follows, harmful. Any superfluous detail would replace some other essential detail in the mind of the spectator."
>
> —HENRI MATISSE

Ultimate Photography Crash Course

2 HOW TO PRACTICE.

I had been doing it wrong for so many years.

If you're not making the amount of progress in your photography that you thought you should, if you're not markedly better this year than you were last year, maybe it's because you're not really practicing your craft.
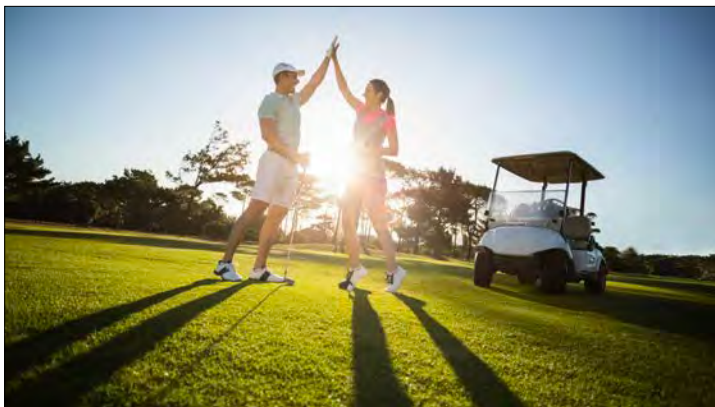
See these folks playing golf? They're high-fiving. Looks like fun, right? That's because they're "PLAYING" golf. It's a game, and you're really enjoying yourself (unless you're having a lousy round, of course). This is NOT practice. This is play. You don't get better "playing a round."
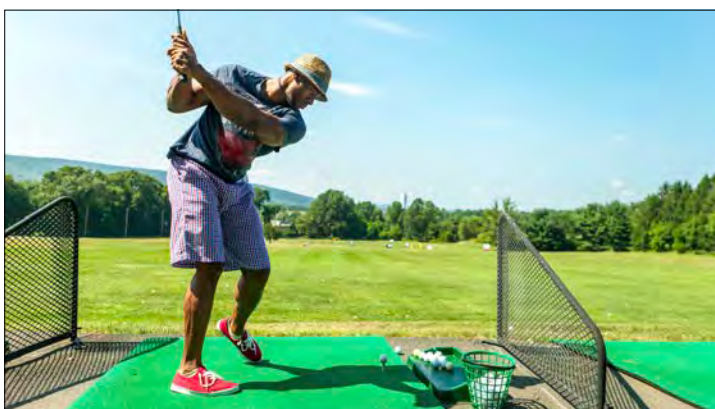
This is practice. This isn't fun. You're alone, there's no score, there's no way to "win," and the scene never changes. You're doing the same thing over and over. It's repetition. Maybe you're working on your short game, and you're hitting your wedge over and over so you can get consistent with it. Maybe you're working on your drive. Hitting drive after drive. Some of them are shanking. Some never take flight and scoot along the ground. This is no fun. But you're actually practicing and you're doing the thing that actually makes you a better golfer. Practice is what makes you good, not playing.

It's the same thing in photography. Shooting high shutter speeds to freeze water drops is a lot of fun. It takes a little experimenting, but you get it before long. Now what? Is the phone going to ring from a big corporate client because they saw your water drop shot?

Steel wool projects. Very fun. First time you see it live, you'll really be impressed—even more so when you see the images on your camera. Tons of fun. However, there is virtually no commercial call for a steel wool photographer (especially since this is a project every local photo club does once or twice a year).

Here's another popular project that also doesn't make you better—shooting through glass with water drops. It's like playing golf. It's fun. But you're never going to get a call from a client asking you to do this technique for their campaign. You're not going to sell prints of this, or even print it and hang it on your own wall. It's a fun exercise, but it doesn't make you a lick better.

This is practice. You're by yourself. You have a very set thing you're practicing this morning, and you knew what you were going to work on before you got there. The goal here isn't to make a good picture. It's to get better at a particular technique. Maybe you're practicing long exposures, or maybe this whole shoot you're working on your composition, or maybe you're trying to really get your head around HDR or panos. The fun comes from success in getting better at the thing you're practicing, and knowing that you got better today. That way, when you're in position to make a killer pano or HDR, you nail it. Be honest with yourself—are you practicing or playing?

3 HOW TO MAKE MONEY AT PHOTOGRAPHY

The playing field has been leveled
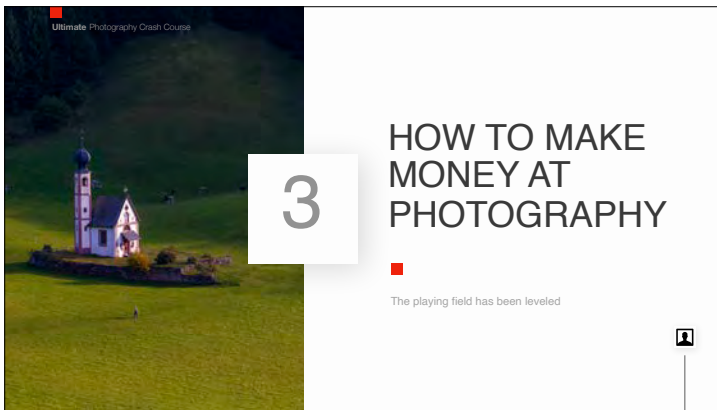
You don't need an agent, or have your work hanging in a gallery, or travel to craft shows to sell your work or get work. The playing field has been leveled, primarily by one thing:

HOW WILL PEOPLE FIND YOU TO HIRE YOU OR BUY YOUR PRINTS?

We're not talking about quitting your day job here, but picking up some money on the side from your photography, either by taking on some shooting gigs (maybe headshots, a wedding here and there, family portraits, real estate photography, architectural photography, etc.), or maybe just selling your prints online. Let's assume you either already have the skills to do one or more of these photography gigs, or you feel like you'll have those skills soon. How will people looking for a photographer find you?
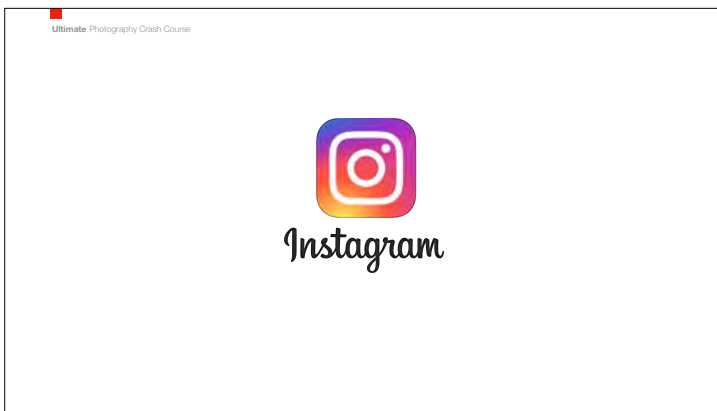
Instagram. This is where all the interest is for photography. It's where all the art-buyers are, where all the photo editors are, it's where all the brides-to-be are, and it's where all the work seems to be coming from. Think of it this way: it's the only social media platform that is actually based on photography.

It's the only form of social media the photography market cares about these days. Nobody will be asking you to post about their company on Facebook, or tweet about them. As far as photography goes, it's like the other social media platforms don't exist.

> **"** You're much more likely to have your work discovered on Instgram, than to have somebody stumble onto your portfolio."
>
> —DAN RUBIN
> From the article: "The new face of social media" from Digital Photo Pro

As I'm writing this, a buddy whom I'm going to visit next week, sends me a text asking what time my flight gets in (he's picking me up from the airport). I head over to Delta's site and look at their home page image. It's not only a shot from Instagram, but Delta included the Instagram account name of the photographer they licensed the shot from right on their home page. This type of thing isn't really happening on any other platform. You have to be on Instagram, and you have to have a strategy for success.

Saw this on the video screen on the seat in front of me on a flight. Another Instagrammer…getting paid (or at least getting some free flights). :)

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BUILDING AN INSTAGRAM STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS.

A strategy for success on Instagram means two things: (1) getting your images seen by as many people as possible, and (2) getting more followers, because the more followers you have, the more people will see your images, and the more doors will open and more opportunities will have a chance of coming your way. But this doesn't happen by just randomly posting images. You need a solid strategy.

PICK ONE
PHOTOGRAPHIC
TOPIC.

INSTAGRAM
STRATEGY

People follow photographers who share the type of photography they're interested in. If they followed you because you posted a great landscape photo, then a week later you share a photo of your dog, or your breakfast, or even a portrait, they unfollow you. They are expecting landscapes from you, and when you post something else, it stands out in their stream. Whose dog is this? I don't know this woman.

Ooohhhh, I love to travel. I'll follow this guy (said a person following you).

Yay—it's another travel photo. This is why I followed this guy. I love seeing travel locations!

Wait. What? Why am I seeing this? A bird? I follow bird photographers?

58

There's a bird in my feed from my favorite travel photographer. Unfollow. Boom. Gone. Because you didn't stay on topic.

What's this? A selfie shot?

Why am I seeing a group selfie shot? This isn't a travel photo. Unfollow!

This is straight from the folks at Instagram themselves, who will give you tips on how to build your following, and they'll tell you straight up—just post one photo per day for the best opportunity to grow your audience.

Keywords are search terms people search through on Instagram, and when you include a particular keyword, for example, #beautyheadshots, your image will appear (even if only for a moment) in Instagram's Beauty Headshots feed. I say "only for a moment" because depending on the popularity of the hashtag (what Instagram calls these keywords), thousands of images could be pouring into that feed every hour, so yours will only be onscreen for a few seconds. It has to stand out at a very small size.
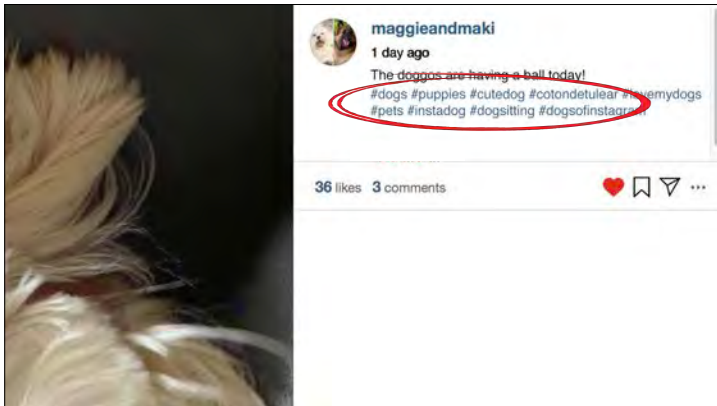
Here's an example of the hashtags (search terms) my wife used on her page about our doggos.


Images that look good at really small sizes are the most-likely images to get viewed. I'm not talking the standard size you see images on Instagram. That's "big size" or "full size." I'm talking about the tiny thumbnails.


Here's why your image has to stand out at a small size. Let's say that you searched for "Travel." The results (photos tagged with #travel) appear in a grid of tiny thumbnails.

2.

SEARCH #TRAVEL
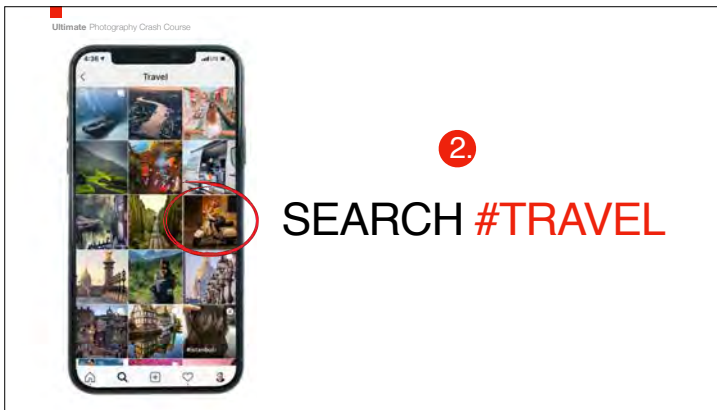
Let's say one of your shots appears in this endless feed of images (I've circled one of mine here). If you have any hope of someone seeing just your shot (and seeing it quite a bit larger), they have to want to tap on your photo to see it larger. If your image doesn't look "tap worthy," they just move right past it because there are thousands of other new photos appearing in #travel today (which is why some folks find it beneficial not to use hugely popular hashtags like #travel—they prefer hashtags with less photos, so they have a better chance of standing out and being seen). So, if you want to get tapped on (and seen), the image has to look interesting even at a small size.



3.

THEY
SEE
JUST
YOUR
IMAGE.
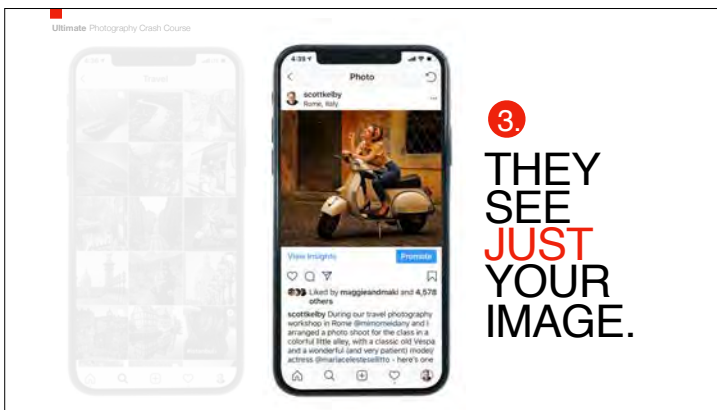
When they do tap on your image, they see a much larger one (seen here), which sadly, is still very small when you think about it—but, of course, it can't fill more of your smart phone's screen, right? However, at least they can now see the whole image, read your comments about it, see where it was taken (Rome, Italy, in this case), and they can see if other people like this photo by how many likes it has (people feel more comfortable liking images other people already like).


4.

THEY
DECIDE
TO FOLLOW
YOU…OR NOT.
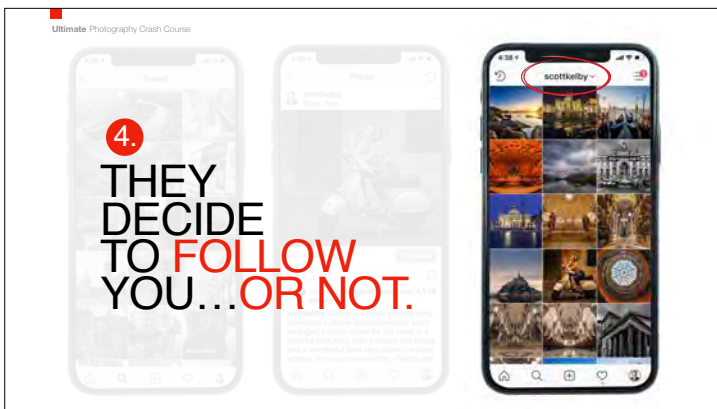
Here's where the rubber meets the road: if they look at your larger picture and want to see more from you, they tap on your name and it takes them to your profile page and shows a grid of just your images. It's more of those very tiny squares, but they're all your images now. People can pretty much tell in two or three seconds if this is a feed that looks interesting enough for them to follow. They won't need two minutes to evaluate your grid of images—just two seconds (and they might even scroll down a bit if they're on the fence).

5.
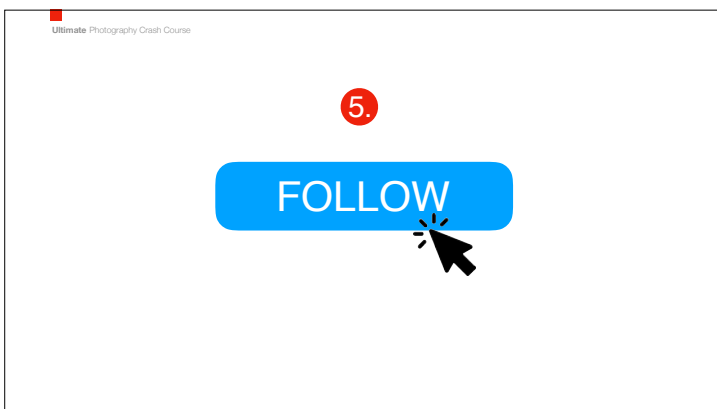
FOLLOW

After they quickly scroll through your grid of images, if you had a consistent group of nice images, all on one topic, they could click the blue "Follow" button, and you've gained a follower, and the amount of followers you have matters (well, it matters to people who might hire you, or advertise with you, or buy your work).
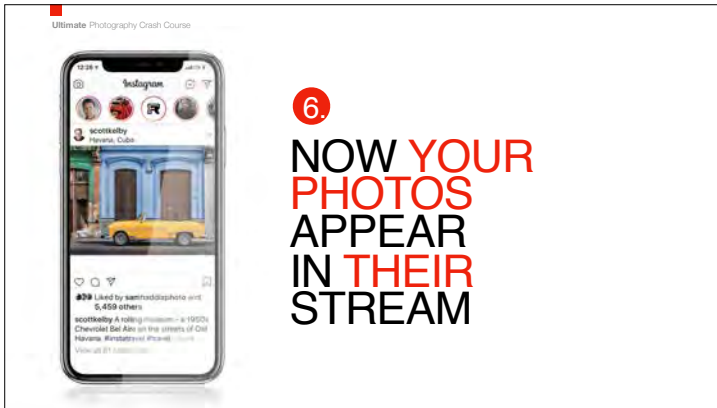
This is why you want people to follow you. Now, the images you post appear in their stream. Your images are delivered directly to their screen.
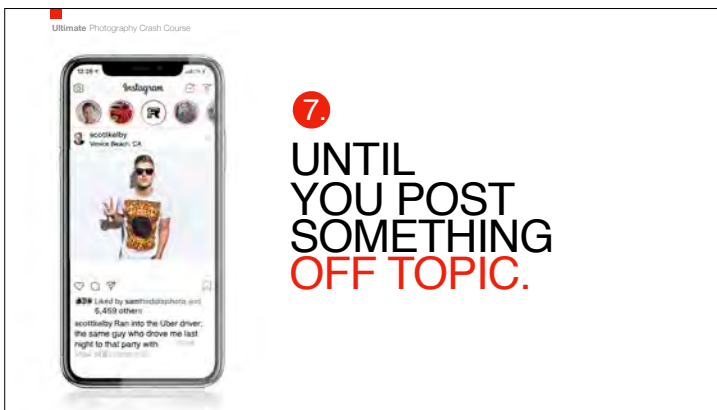
That is, until you stray off topic, like posting a selfie or a shot of your friend making a peace sign.
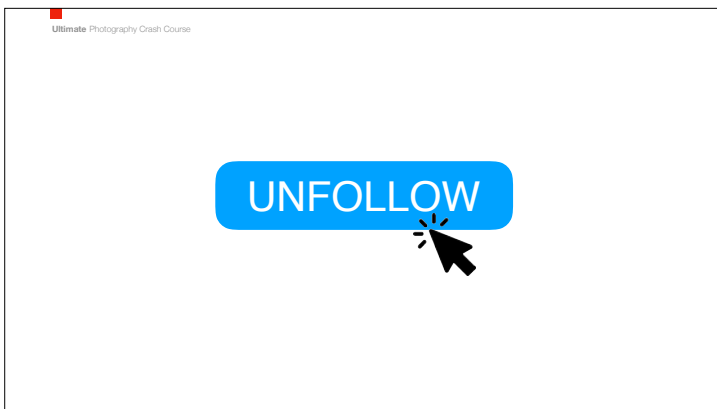
Say goodbye to that follower. They followed you for travel photos, but you're posting off-topic stuff, so they're gone. There are too many other people out there posting just travel photos—they can follow them instead.

If you want to start selling prints, which ones of yours will you choose. Which ones do people like? Well, Instagram will tell you which ones people like by (wait for it, wait for it…) the number of likes it gets. Through Instagram "likes" you'll see exactly which images resonate with people, and those would be your first choices when you're picking which ones to sell as prints online.

SELLING YOUR IMAGES ONLINE

Limit the number of prints you sell at first to just six or eight images maximum. It's new "releases," one a month after that, which will garner you a "bump" in sales.

SmugMug

Once you know which images you want to sell in print, now it's time to find an online storefront to sell through, and one that I would recommend is SmugMug.com. It's a pretty turn-key operation. You upload your photos, choose from one of four different online print labs to do the fulfillment (I use BayPhoto Labs and love them!), and when someone buys one of your prints, they take care of everything —the printing, the framing (if chosen), and shipping the final product to the client. SmugMug takes a cut of every sale, but thankfully, it's really fair with an 85/15 percent split on the profits (with you getting the 85%). Their 15% includes credit card fees, and such, too, which is nice. So, they tell you the cost of the print (at different sizes), and then you add your markup from there. You get immediate reports when an image is sold. A LOT of photographers use SmugMug for fulfilling their print sales and you can lead people to your SmugMug portfolio for buying prints from your Instagram page.

zenfolio

Yet another popular service is Zenfolio, and its advantage, like SmugMug's is its built-in integration with a photo lab. If a customer decides to buy a print, Zenfolio handles the entire process from collecting the money, to delivering the final print to the customer. You can even choose which lab you want to use (from their list), including two labs I also use: MPIX.com and Miller's Imaging (top-quality labs, renown customer service). Their Pro plan runs around $20 a month.

SQUARESPACE

Squarespace.com is another popular choice for photographers, and they have beautiful, professionally designed templates for showing your work, and an integrated cart and credit card options, so it's easy to get your store up and running fast. The only downside is, they have no integration with a printing lab, so while they can take your customer's order, charge their credit card, and send you the purchase info, at that point, you'd have to take over the rest and send the print to a lab, have it printed to your customer's specs, then have it shipped to your client (where services like SmugMug or Zenfolio have that all built in, start to finish fulfillment, so all that is taken care for you—you don't do anything but wait for the profits to clear your account).

RUNNING YOUR OWN PRINT GALLERY.

If this is going to be a full-time business for you, you might want to run your own online gallery, and there's a service called ArtStoreFronts.com, which is a platform to help you get a gallery store up and running, and their area of expertise is helping you market your store and get sales. They are all about sales, but there's an upfront cost, and it takes some time and effort to get your store up and running, and to be a success. Here you are running a business—it's not passive sales like SmugMug—this is your new job. Selling prints.

MARKETPLACE OPTIONS:

There are also marketplace sites, like eBay, Esty and so on, that will also let you sell your art, but in many cases, selling your prints is way down the list of the things they sell, so don't always expect things like marketing help, or print fulfillment, or having a site that is designed for selling wall prints (which is essentially what you're selling).
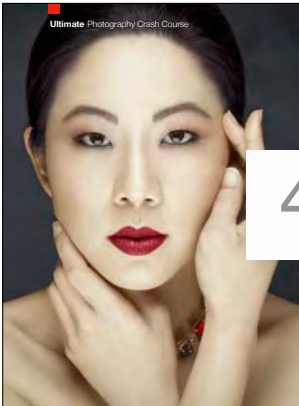
EVALUATING YOUR OWN WORK.

It's an acquired skill, but one you have to master.

This is a skill you're going to need to develop.

You have to get really good at looking at a take from your shoot and finding the best shot. This is a skill you need to develop. It can make or break your success.

Maybe just find the best two or three shots, but this is a critical skill you're going to have to develop to move forward. One thing that will help this is to start eliminating all the technical problems in shots right off the bat. Take them out of the running. If the shot's not sharp, it's out. If the expression isn't there, it's out. Is the lighting right? Cut the photos that have technical issues, so you can focus on the ones that might be "the one." The "one" has a certain quality to it. It has something the other shots don't have. You're going to have to develop this skill, this "taste in photography." It's part of the job.

WHY
'THE PRINT'
MATTERS.

5

Never more than it does today.

Here's why "the print" is so important today, maybe more than ever.

❶
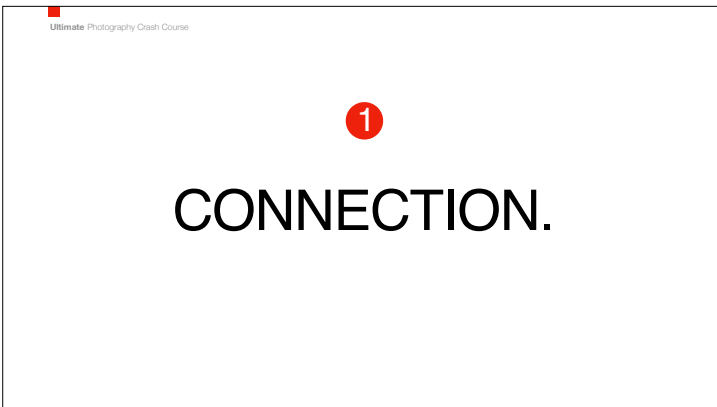
CONNECTION.

The first reason is that you get a totally different level of connection with a print.
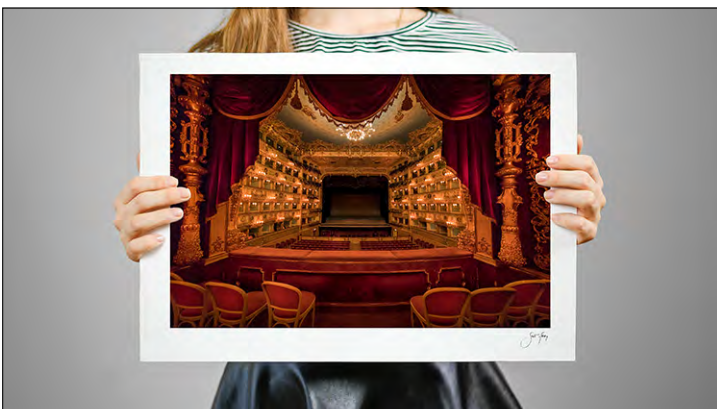
The reaction you get when you hand someone a print is entirely different than showing someone that same print on an iPad. When you hold a print, there's a connection—a connection through touch that you can't get any other way.

❷

YOU STAND OUT.

Since so much of what we do today is all digital, when you make a print, when you give someone a print, it makes you stand out. It sets you apart from everyone who doesn't make prints. This is something I do for clients, and also as a thank you, and they love it.


A few years ago I was in Sydney, Australia and I got permission to shoot inside the famous Sydney Opera House.
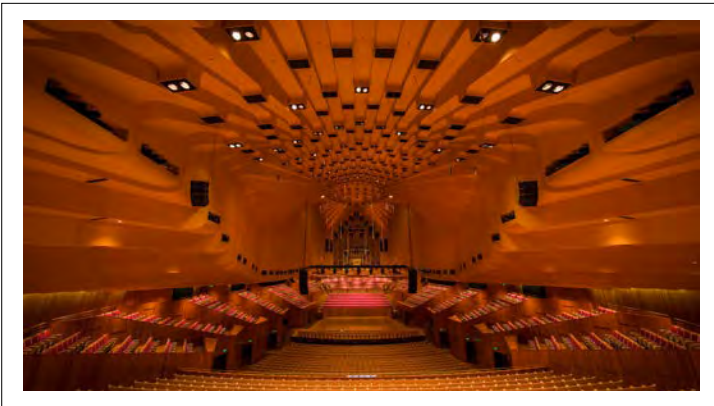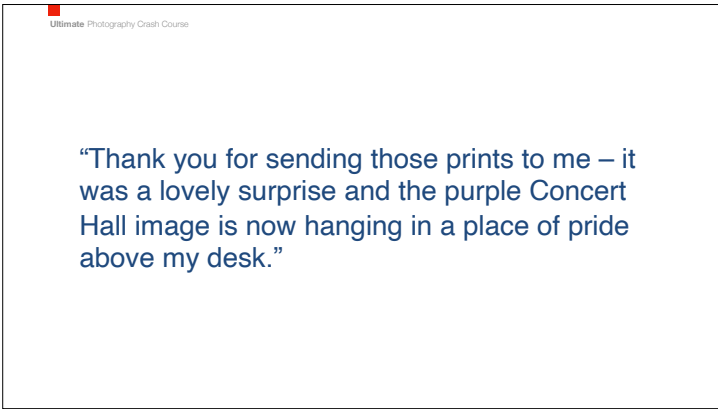

I had to arrange this shoot through the PR department for the Opera House and since they don't allow any photographs inside, even when you're on a tour, it took a bit of doing to get permission.
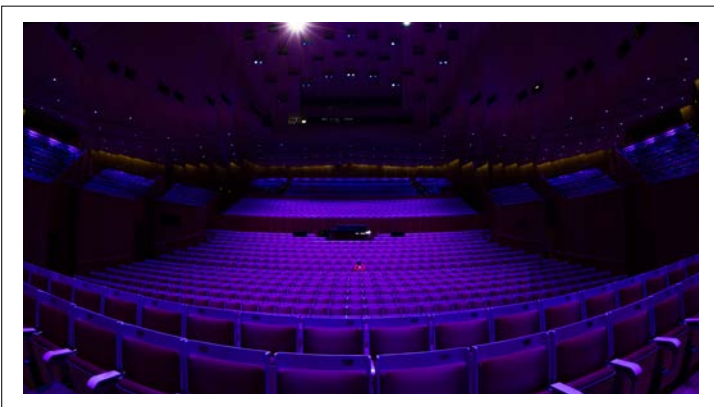
Once we got there, they could not have been more accommodating. They brought they lighting crew out (great crew) and they said they could flick a switch and change the interior to any color we wanted. They ran through a bunch of colors, and I particularly liked the purple color scheme, especially after one person from the guided tour stayed behind and their red sweater stood out so perfectly.
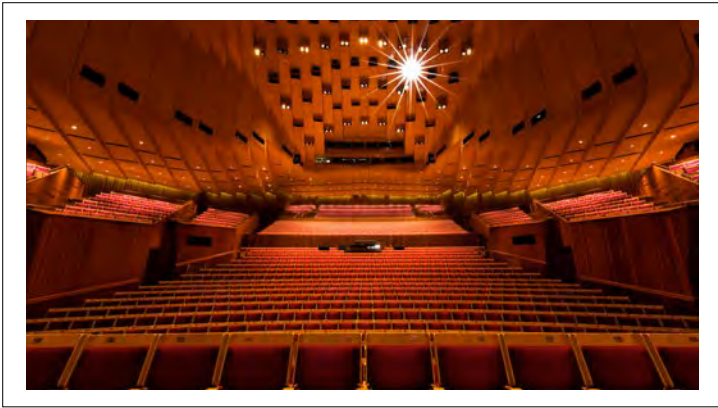
They said we'd have 30 minutes but once there, they gave us as much time as we wanted. I shot from the back, from the stage back toward the house, from the balcony, pretty much wherever. It was a thrill. I had promised to give them images for their social media use and sent those right away, but when I got home I made some large prints and sent them to my PR contact at the Opera House. I got this email after the prints arrived.

"Thank you for sending those prints to me – it was a lovely surprise and the purple Concert Hall image is now hanging in a place of pride above my desk."

How tickled was I to hear that my print is hanging in a place of pride, at her desk, inside the Opera House itself. Stuff like that doesn't happen without the print.

❸

THE IMPACT OF SCALE.

When it comes to photography, size matters.
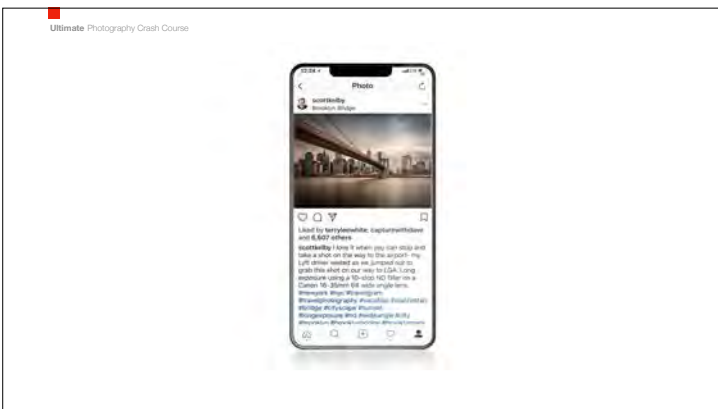
Here's the size most people see your photography at. Now that seems like a decent size, because you're seeing it today on a 14 foot screen.

ACTUAL SIZE

Here's actual size. Well, actual size of your phone on a 14 foot screen.

Here's the size we wish people would see our photography. When it's big, it has impact. Even marginal shots look much better at larger sizes.

MELANIE
KERN
FAVILLA

This is Melanie Kern Favilla, and her day job is as an engineer on the Long Island Railroad in New York. What a cool job—she drives trains! She won a contest run by my company, KelbyOne, where she submitted her close-up floral photographer and we flew her and husband Dave to our headquarters in Florida for her own solo gallery showing, followed by a live interview with her about her work.

MELANIE
KERN
FAVILLA
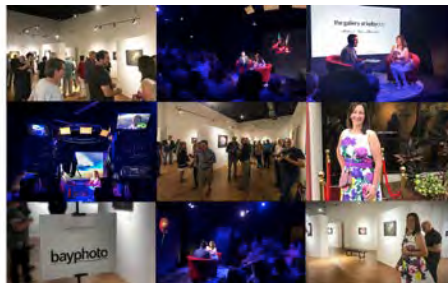
When Melanie walked into the gallery for the first time, and saw her work up on the walls, she burst into tears, which of course, had all of us in tears. Through the tears she told us "She had never seen one of her images printed." She was overwhelmed, but I get it. She has seen her images, tiny, through a sheet of glass on her computer screen. Now, here they were, printed large (and beautifully I might add—shout out to Bay Photo Labs), and it really made an impression on her. A few months ago she sent me one of her prints as a thank you, and I teared up as well. It's a big beautiful print, and now it's hanging in my home. BTW: Melanie is now a KelbyOne instructor, and Photoshop World conference speaker.

④

IT HAS
VALUE.

People share photos online all day, every day. We email them, we share them, we don't think two seconds about the process. But a print. A print has real value.

Here's an example. Let say you stopped by a gallery and you saw a beautiful print hanging on the wall. The price was $1,250, and you decide you really want this print, so you tell the manager of the gallery you want to buy it. When you go to make your purchase instead of handing you the print, she hands you…

France HD-Format
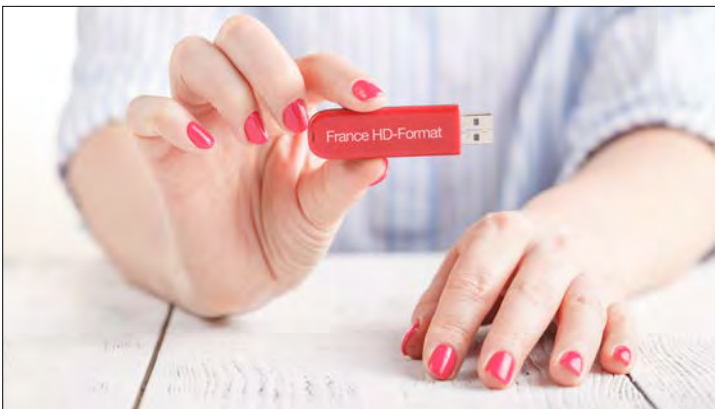
…a USB flash drive, and she tells you: "Here you go. This is a high-resolution copy of the image, ready for you to enjoy on your computer or TV screen," and she asks for your credit card. Are you still willing to pay $1,250 for that image? Of course not. But what would you pay then? $800? No? $600? Still no? Why? Because a print has real value, and digital copies…well…it's different. The print is real. Even though the actual printing of that large-sized print only cost the gallery around $60, you were willing to pay $1,250 (though photographic prints sell everyday for much more than that, at much smaller physical sizes). A print has real value. It has intrinsic value far beyond the $60 it cost to print. It has value.

⑤

PROTECTS YOUR
VISUAL HISTORY

Today's prints will last a lifetime.

No matter which brand of backup hard drive you use, or which type of medium you store you most-precious, most-valuable images on, one day it's going to die.

Technology hasn't created a storage medium that lasts 100% reliably for more than 5 years. Cloud storage company BackBlaze buys thousands of hard drives each year, and they report that about 13% of the drives they buy die within the first year. That's a staggeringly high number, and if your images were on one of those drives, those images are likely lost forever.

Say what you want about that old shoe box our parents used to save their photos. At least it worked—50, 60, or more years later, we still have those images.

The only reason I have shots of me as a little boy is because my parents made prints and stored them in an old shoe box (by the way, this was taken on Christmas morning, and I loved that training set on a level that can't be measured. I still remember it so well, partially thanks to this photo).

MAKE
PRINTS.

If you want your images to last beyond you and your lifetime, if you want a chance of your images still being around 50 or 100 years from now, make prints.

1. Connect with the viewer.
2. Helps you stand out.
3. Adds impact.
4. It has real value.
5. Protects your visual history.

There are so many awesome reasons to be printing, and it's never been easier with online labs, and better quality, easy-to-use home and office printers. It's time to make prints.


HOW TO FIND THE RIGHT CAMERA.

6

You might be using the wrong one for you.

Your camera is the tool you use to create your art. This is the tool you practice your craft with. This is your creative tool and it has to feel right to you. Here are a few things that will help you find the right one:

The first thing is to realize that no one will be able to look at your final image and tell you which camera it was taken with. There really isn't a difference in the final print—they're all going to look great, thanks to how far technology has come, so you can take the final image issue off the table. One of these was taken with a Sony, one with a Nikon, one with a Canon camera. Can you tell which is which?

Nikon   Canon   Sony
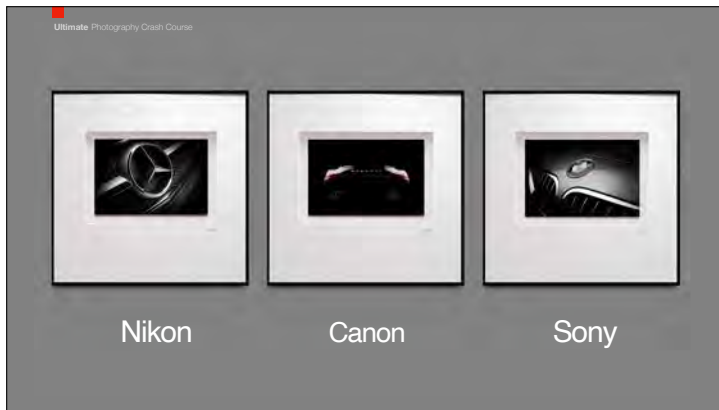
Were you able to determine which is which? If you're looking at these here and thinking, "I knew it. I nailed each one," it's important to note that I never said these were taken with the cameras listed below them. I just put the three names of cameras there.

Sony   Nikon   Canon
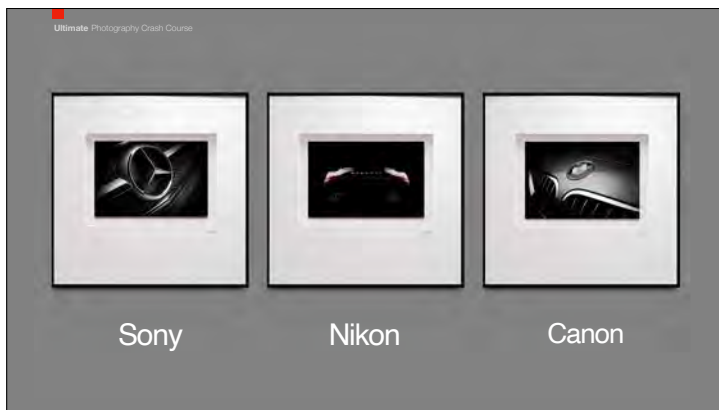
Here are the actual camera brands that were used to take each shot.

However you wound up on the camera platform you're currently on, is it the right one for you? One great way to know is to go to your local camera store and literally hold the cameras in your hand. Take a few random shots in the store. See how the shutter button feels. Pay attention to how it feels in your hand. Does one of them just feel "right" to you. You have to connect with your creative tool, and once you hold a few different brands, most folks will feel drawn to one or another. Since they're all going to look similar in the end, finding the one that just feels right is of paramount importance. Another factor to consider is, what do your friends use? Choosing that brand means you'll have someone that can answer questions, show you new features, and maybe borrow lenses from. It's worth considering.

7

THE VALUE OF SLOWING DOWN.

Spoiler Alert: slower is better.
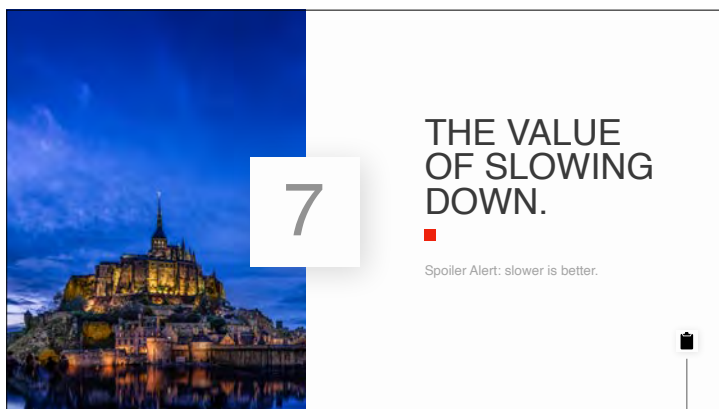
This was inspired by a living legend of photography, the wonderful Jay Maisel, who talks often about how we're racing through our photography, moving quickly to the next shot instead of slowing down and letting the shot come to us.

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A DAY WITH
JAY MAISEL

BONUS
VIDEOS

In class, I showed an excerpt from a course we did with Jay called, "A Day with Jay Maisel" where, while walking the streets of New York, he tells a story about the value of slowing down, and once you hear Jay tell it, you realize how important this really is, and how it can change your photography forever.

ULTIMATE PHOTOGRAPHY CRASH COURSE

BONUS
VIDEOS

VIDEO: Jay Maisel on the value of slowing down

I included the video with Jay on our bonus videos site—Jay is a treasure. Give it another watch. :)

CAPTURING
A MOMENT.

8

It doesn't matter what you're shooting
(well, unless you're shooting products).

It almost doesn't matter which genre of photography you do, it's almost always about capturing a moment.

BUT WHAT IS
'A MOMENT?'

At a concert, it's not when the guitar player goes up to the mic to sing. That happens all concert long. It's when the guitar player does a backflip off the drum riser. That's "a moment." It's not when the bride is texting on her phone. It's when she reaches out to her ring bearer and you get that truly genuine smile—the two of them sharing a moment. It's not when an eagle flies by—it's that moment when the eagle snatches its dinner from the lake and you can see the fish struggling to get away, and you're either happy for the eagle or sad for the fish. It's a moment. Something unique. Are your pictures capturing "a moment" or is it just an eagle flying by. That "moment" is what makes the magic. What type of images are you trying to make and for which audience? Other photographers? Men and women are drawn to different types of photos. Who are you trying to appeal to? Figure this out, and then you can tailor your images to that group.

Whether it's capturing a moment at a sporting event.

Here's that same shot on the Tennessee Vols football training room wall. I stood in the doorway for scale (see that smile on my face—it rocks seeing one of your images really big like this).
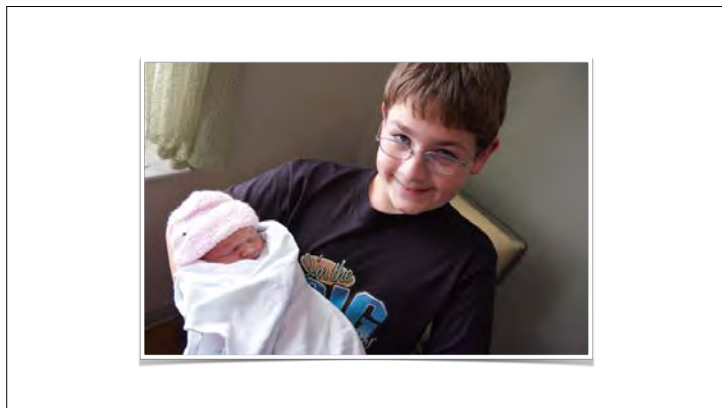

Or a concert…
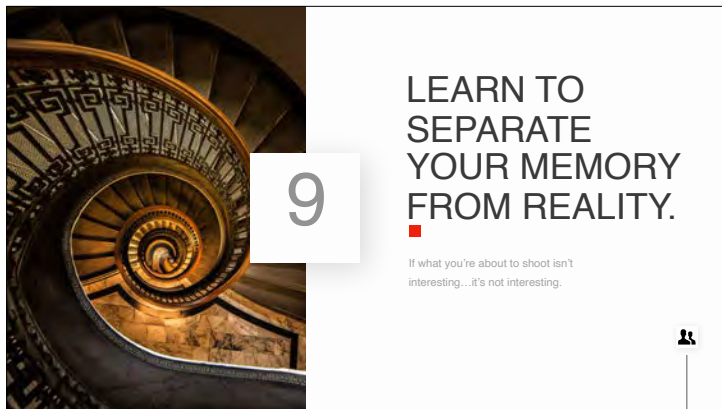

Or a wedding…

Or with shot of a friend shooting…

Or the first time my son held his baby sister in his arms… (BTW: she's 13 now, and he's 22 and just graduating from college. Man, it goes by fast!)

LEARN TO SEPARATE YOUR MEMORY FROM REALITY.

9

If what you're about to shoot isn't interesting…it's not interesting.

There might be a reason why you see something in a particular image that the rest of us just don't see. Finding out why that is, is important. Of course, one reason might be that you might have an emotional attachment to the place, or who you were with when you took the shot. Maybe you were just having a particularly fun day, and when you look at the image it's a reminder of the fun, and that clouds your ability to evaluate the image like you would someone else's image, where there's no emotional attachment. But here we're going to look at something—separating your memory from reality.

Let's say that at some point you saw a really cool image of a dead tree somewhere online. Maybe something like this dead tree, and in your mind you added the mental note to yourself *"Dead trees can be cool. Keep an eye out for dead trees."*

75

But this is the shot you take. What's happening here is you're remembering that dead trees can be cool, and that image of a really cool dead tree shot you saw is still somewhere in the back of your mind, but you're seeing that memory, not the reality of what you're standing in front of—a really ugly dead tree, amidst other ugly dead trees. There isn't great light. It' doesn't have a great sky, or layers of sand dunes behind it. There are not all the complimentary colors and great patterns that made the other image—the one taken by someone else, so awesome. By the way, this is a stock photo. Yes, someone is selling it, and worse yet, somebody bought it (me).

You remember seeing a shot of a curvy bridge shot late in the day, and in the back of your mind is *"You can make a cool shot of a highway bridge"* and it's true, you can.

But that's not what you're standing in front of. Your reality isn't that cool bridge shot from Norway shot in beautiful light. It's this. But how you feel about the shot is affected by the memory of someone else's shot. Somebody else got a cool shot of a bridge. You got this. Don't shoot your memory—shoot your reality. So, if you want a really cool shot of a dead tree, you need to go someplace where there's a really cool dead tree, then you need to shoot it in great light, or from a really interesting composition, or ideally, both. Then you're taking that memory and making it a reality.
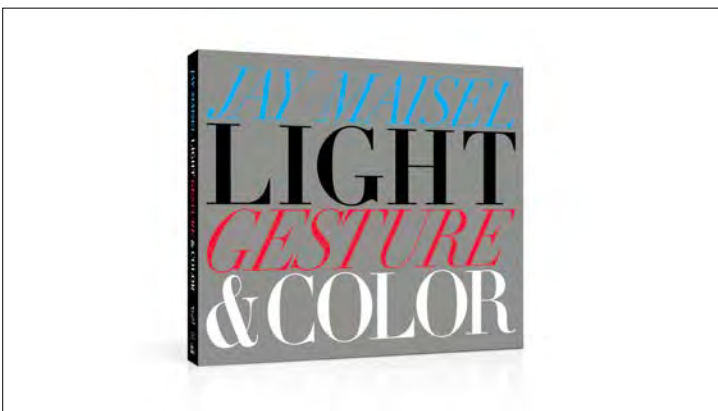
In Jay Maisel's seminal work *Light, Gesture & Color*, Jay notes that for an image to be special, it needs to at least have one of those. Is the shot taken in great light? Is the person in the shot making an interesting or unusual gesture? Are there colors juxtaposed with in the image that make the color of the image the subject? Better yet, does your image have two of these? Great light and amazing color? Or a fascinating gesture captured in great light? Or something really special: an image that has all three. A guy walking down a city street, like a million other people walking down a city street isn't a "special image." It's just a another guy, walking down the street, and converting it to black and white doesn't suddenly give it great light or an interesting gesture. To succeed, your shots need something more.

I see a lot of this. A picture that has neither great light nor an interesting gesture or interesting color. It's an old guy reading the paper in the park. Snore.

And making it black and white doesn't suddenly make it a great photo. It doesn't make it more artistic or interesting. It's still a snooze, just in black and white.

10

PHOTOGRAPHY REALLY COMES DOWN TO JUST TWO THINGS

This is deeper than it sounds.

If I had to boil the process of photography down to its core, it's just two things. They're really simple concepts, but they're harder to do than they sound.

❶

WHAT YOU'RE STANDING IN FRONT OF

A lot of it, what kind of photo you're going to get, has to do with what you're standing in front of. Are you standing in front of something amazing, beautiful, fascinating, spectacular? Or are you standing in front of this…

If this is what you're standing in front of, this is the picture you're going to get. Changing your f-stop or ISO isn't going to turn this into a killer image. Neither is moving or changing your perspective. It is what it is.

However, if you're standing in front of this, this is the photo you're going to make. You don't need a fancy f-stop or some crazy gear. Just pick up your camera, aim toward that, and you'll have an amazing shot (thanks to my friend Karen Hutton who let me share this wonderful shot with you. Karen did the hard part—she took the trip, did the travel, and invested the time and money to stand in front of this, and look how it paid off).

But if this is what you're standing in front of, this is what you'll get.

If this is your scene, this is your shot.

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It's the same with people. Here's a head shot I took late in the day. Nice light. The location is nice, but the background is blurred so you can't really tell where it's at, but if you were standing beside me, this is the shot you'd get. Now, let's not change anything —no camera changes, no settings changed, no light or position, everything is the same, but I had my assistant step into the same frame to see how it would look if nothing changed but who I was standing in front of.

It looks…different. Everything single aspect is the same. I know, I know what you're thinking—it's not a fair comparison, because she has long long flowing blonde hair.

Trust me, it's not the hair.

Hi. I'm Melvin.
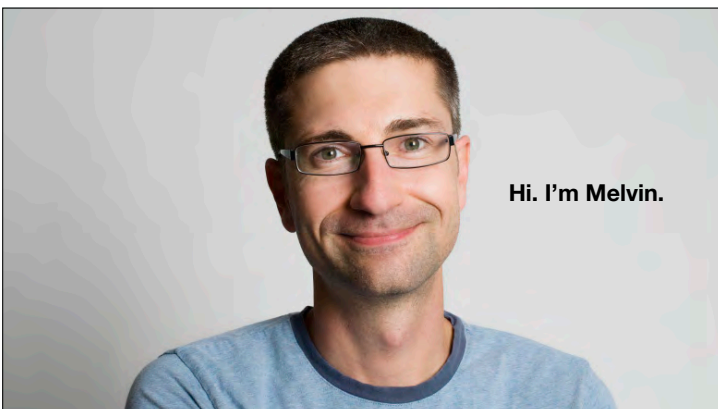
If you're standing in front of Melvin, this is the shot you're going to get.
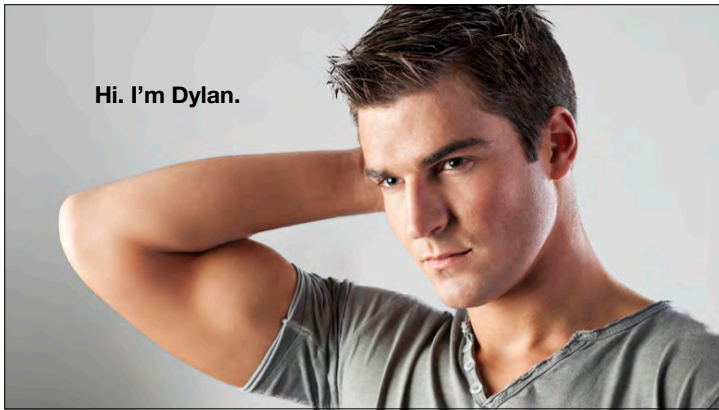
It's not going to look like your shot of Dylan. Everything's the same, but what you're standing in front of has everything to do with how the image is going to look.

"…how about showing how you would shoot "not attractive" people. You know, the above average number of people getting married? Shooting pretty people is…easier."
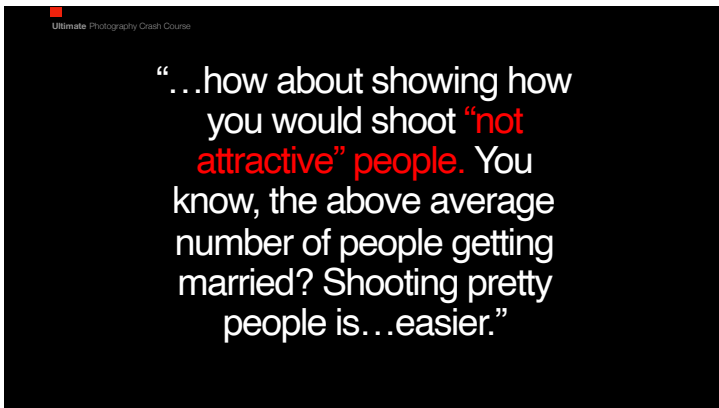
A gentleman that attended this seminar a few years ago wrote me this note on his evaluation form. First off, how are these non-attractives even finding a mate? (Just kidding). But is it really harder to shoot these "not attractive" married folks?

Actually…it's not!
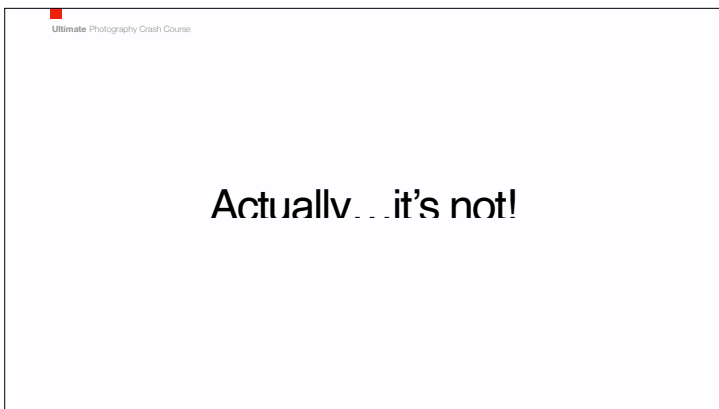
Not really. It's just the results are much better. Now, I don't want you to leave this day thinking, "Scott says I can only shoot beautiful people." Nope. I never said. You can shoot interesting people, too. Interesting people make awesome images (examples to follow).
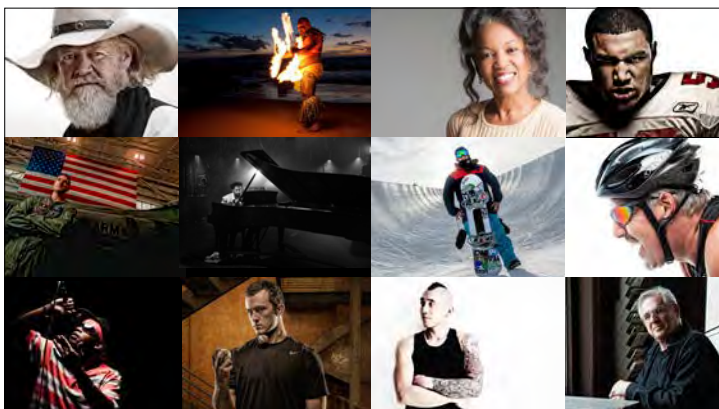
In this class I'm going to share my most effective, time-tested, road proven tools to make your presentations rock.

How it looks matters.

how it looks matters.

⏰

END OF SECOND SESSION.

HOW TO
SHOOT
PEOPLE
LIKE A PRO
YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.

Ultimate Photography Crash Course

Ultimate Photography Crash Course

NATURAL
LIGHT

We'll cover both shooting in natural light and with flash.

Ultimate Photography Crash Course

CAMERA
SETTINGS
MY GO-TO PORTRAIT SETTINGS
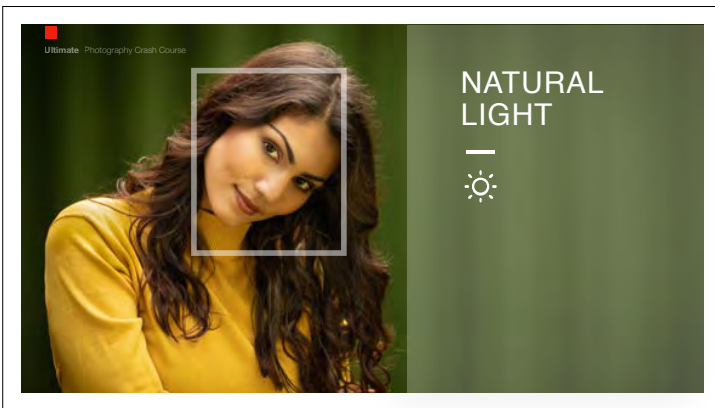
We'll start with my go-to settings and techniques for shooting natural light portraits.

Ultimate Photography Crash Course

APERTURE
PRIORITY

Av
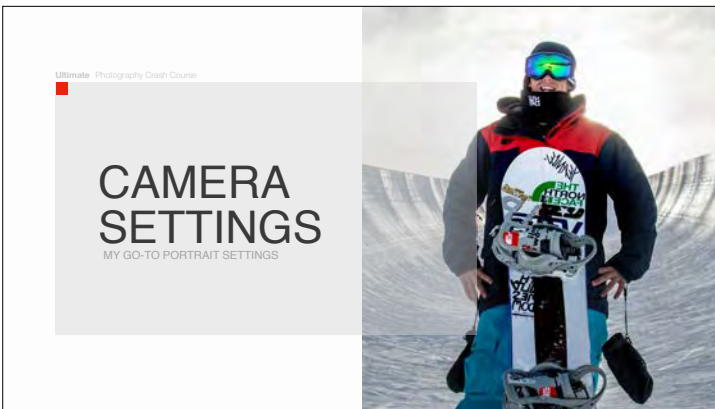
I shoot my natural light portraits in Aperture Priority mode (Av mode on most cameras) because I think it's the easiest way to go. I choose the f-stop (which I already know in advance what I'm going to use) and my camera takes care of the shutter speed for me automatically. Couldn't be easier.

ISO: 100
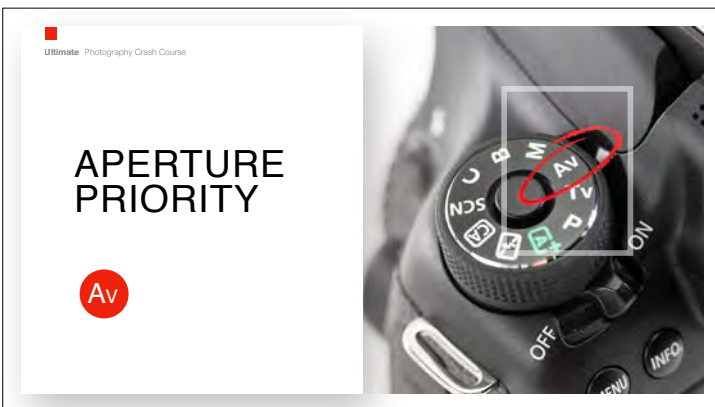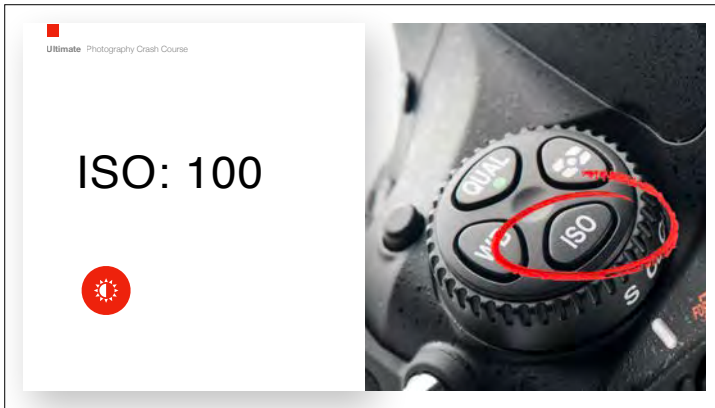
This one depends on the lighting situation, but usually when I'm shooting in natural light, I can keep my ISO set around 100 (my cleanest ISO) or 200 (almost as clean). That's because the f-stop I use for natural light portraits is so low, so wide open (like f/2.8 or lower) that it's letting enough light into my camera that my shutter speed will be at least 1/125 of a second or likely higher. I only raise my ISO up over 100 ISO if I can't hit at least 1/125 of a second shutter speed (though I can often hand-hold and get a sharp shot at 1/60 or even 1/30 of a second on a good day). So, if I look and my shutter speed is below 1/125 of a second, I raise my ISO until I see that it is. It's as easy as that.

f/4
OR LOWER
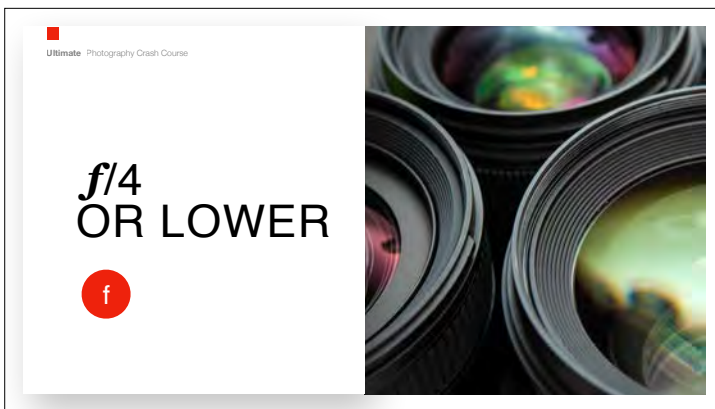
To help separate my subject from the background, I use the lowest f-stop my lens will allow (it's the lens that determines how low you can go—not the camera). More on this in a minute, but for now know, I use the lowest number my lens will allow when shooting in natural light.


MY NATURAL LIGHT CAMERA SETTINGS

APERTURE — *f*/4

ISO — 100

SHUTTER — Av
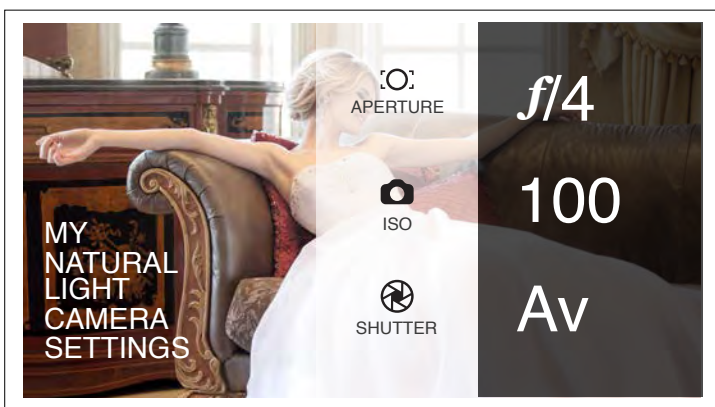
Here's a quick recap of those natural light camera settings.

SINGLE POINT FOCUS
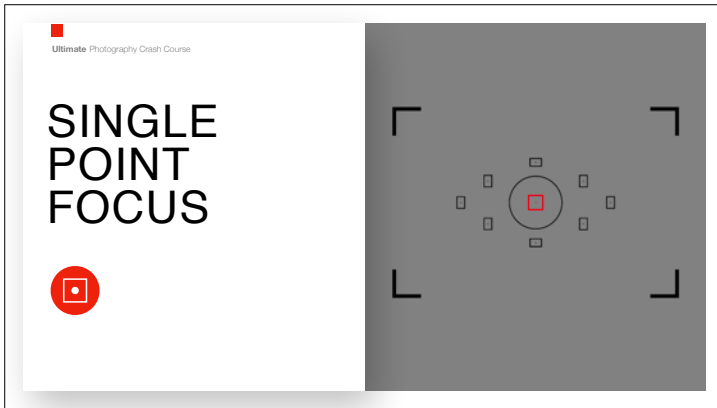
I use a single area AF focus point setup for super-sharp focus in portraits.

LOCK FOCUS ON THE EYE
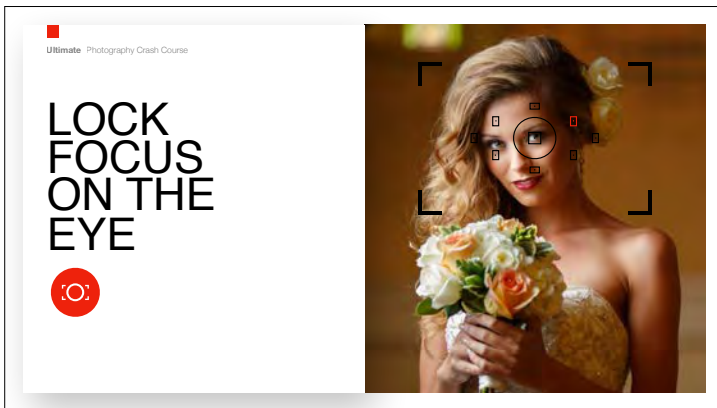
Then, I put that single focus point right over my subject's eye—whichever one is closest to the camera. Then, I hold the shutter button halfway down to lock my exposure and focus.
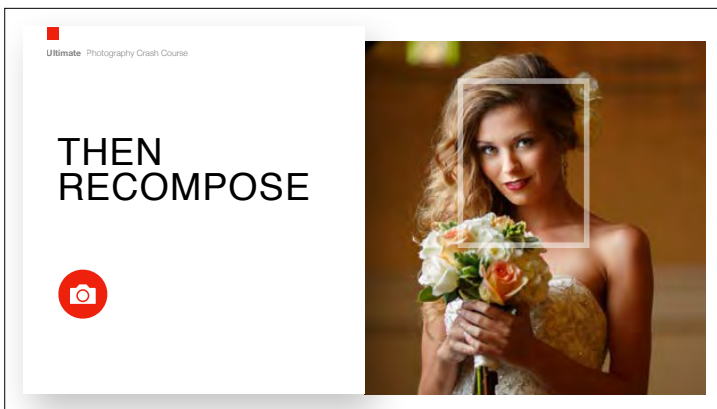

THEN RECOMPOSE

Now that those are locked down, I recompose the shot (I generally don't put my subject in the center of the image, so they're usually off to one side or the other), and then I take the shot (pressing the shutter button the rest of the way down), knowing that I've already nailed my focus and exposure.
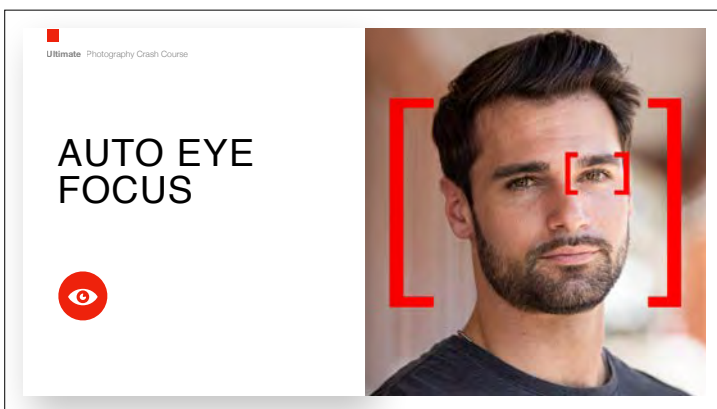
AUTO EYE FOCUS

Most new cameras these days have this auto-eye focus feature built-in, and it is awesome!!! It uses facial recognition to lock onto your subject's eye for you for super-sharp portraits—all you have to do is turn this feature on (if it's not already on by default).

There are focal ranges and qualities that make a lens perfect for portraits. When I'm looking for a portrait lens, I'm looking for one with a focal range that not only flatters the subject (which is key) but one creates a soft, creamy, out-of-focus background. That separation of your subject from the background is so important when it comes to portraits, and that separation comes from two things:
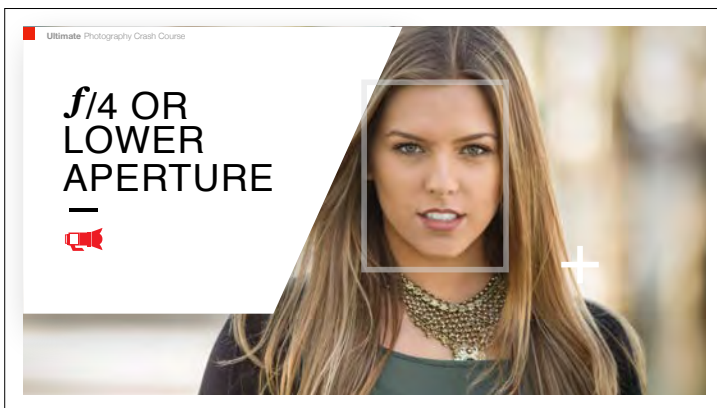
(1) Using a very low-numbered f-stop. Use the lowest numbered f-stop your lens will allow, ideally f/4 or below (so, f/3.5, or f/2.8, f/2, f/1.8, f/1.4, even f/1.2). As long as you're around f/4 or lower, you'll be in good shape (the shot shown here was taken at f/2.8). But, there's another part to this technique.
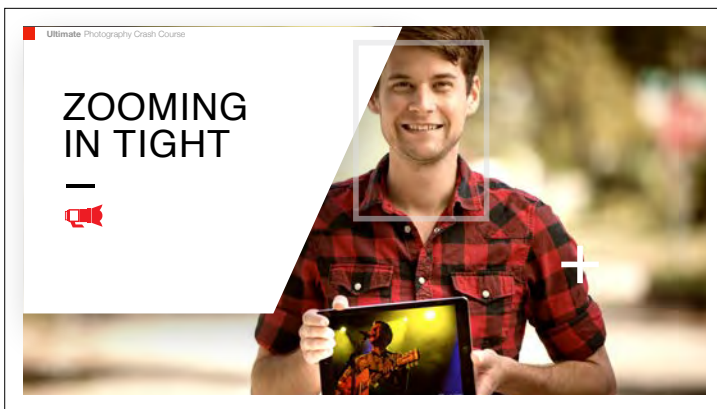
(2) Zooming in tight. In fact, if you use a long zoom, like a 150mm or 200mm and zoom in really tight on your subject, you can get away using larger f-stops like f/5.6 or f/6.3. Don't underestimate what a difference zooming in tight makes on your background—it's a key part of making it happen (perhaps even more than the f-stop itself). You'll see why a little later.

Here's the behind-the-scenes shot from a bridal shoot I did a while back. Notice how messy the background is behind her? That's why I we choose to blur the background—to create that awesome separation so she doesn't blend in with the background. It also gives the portrait more of an epic look. This behind-the-scene shot looks kind of "meh" because that's what the actual scene looks like when you're standing there, shot at something like f/8 (the "meh" f-stop of all time), but we can use our long zoom lens and some settings to make a much more beautiful images.

I chose to make the background blurry like this because the background behind her was busy, with lots of threes and bushes behind her.


One of the most popular portrait lenses out there, because it has such a shallow depth-of-field (almost guaranteeing soft beautifully out-of-focus backgrounds) is an 85mm f/1.4 lens.

Here's a portrait taken with an 85mm f/1.4 and the background is so blurry behind her, you can't really even tell what that background behind her even is. There are other advantages to having such a "fast" lens ("fast" meaning a really low-numbered f-stop), such as being able to shoot in lower-light situations without having to crank up your ISO, but as portrait photographers, we choose this lens for its blurry backgrounds.
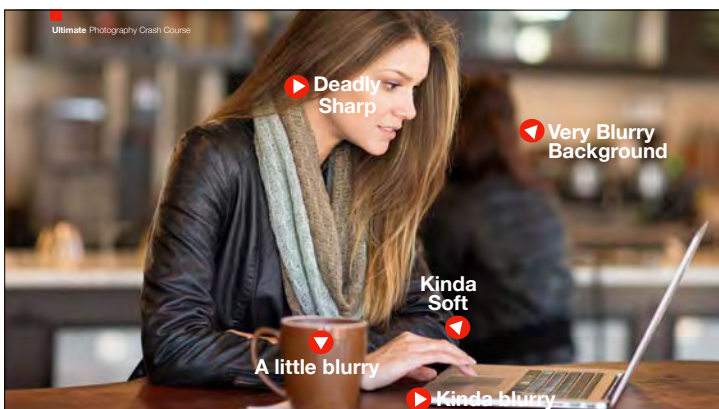
Here's another shot take with an 85mm f/1.4 lens. The foreground of your shot winds up blurry (note the coffee cup, and the side of the laptop facing the camera), then your subject is deadly sharp, but a few inches behind your subject's face, and it's already getting blurry again (like on her arm farthest from the camera), and of course the background is totally out of focus, the trademark of this type of lens. However, while these f/1.4 or f/1.2 lenses are kinda heavy and very expensive, I have some good news for you:

86
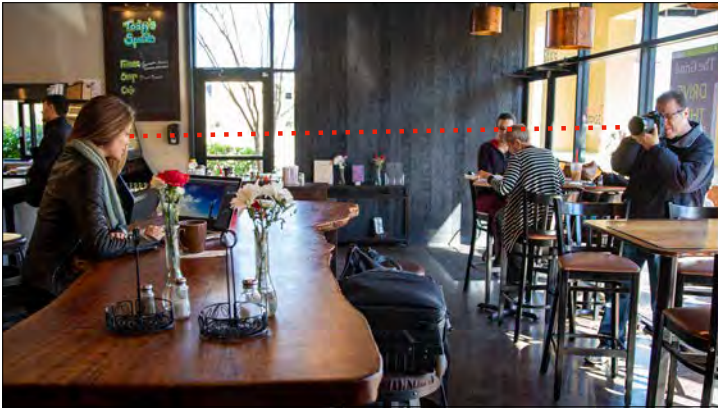
Here's a behind-the-scenes photo of that last shot, taken in a local coffee shop.

Lighter, and vastly less expensive is the 85mm f/1.8 (rather than an f/1.4). It's about half the weight and 1/3 of the price, and honestly I doubt you can even see a difference between the f/1.4 and f/1.8 in the quality of the background.

My workhorse portrait lens is my 70-200mm f/2.8, and if I could have just one lens for portraits this would be it. Between zooming in tight and shooting at f/2.8, you can get really creamy backgrounds and lots of flexibility with that range.

If I had to go with just one lens for portraits, for me it would be the 70-200mm. If I could have a second lens, it would be the 85mm. But Scott, why can't I just buy the 70-200mm and zoom it to 85mm? Won't that look the same? No. The 85mm has its own signature look that looks different than the 70-200mm at 85mm (plus, the 85mm has a lower f-stop and better soft creamy background).

two lens tips for portraits:

Here's a couple of lens tips for ya.

01 avoid wide-angle lenses.

THEY ARE THE LEAST FLATTERING FOR PORTRAITS

In general, wide-angle lenses create distortion, and that's why they're among the least-flattering portrait lens choices out there. If your subject is dead centered (which compositionally speaking is not usually an awesome place), you'll have the least distortion there in the middle, but the farther they move away from the dead center, the more distortion occurs, and it makes people look, well…stretched and distorted.

You can shoot portraits with a wide-angle, and people do, but it's tricky, and you really have to be aware of potential distortion. Because of that possibility of distortion, it lowers your composition choices quite a bit. For example, this location portrait taken with a wide lens is…well…it's not very flattering at all, and he's just a little off center. Look at the distortion on his foot closet to the camera. It's stretched to twice the size of his other foot, and he looks much wider in this shot than he is in person (making people look wider isn't a great portrait photography career move). So, while it can be done, and done successfully, I'd tell a friend simply to stay away from wide-angle lenses for portraits.
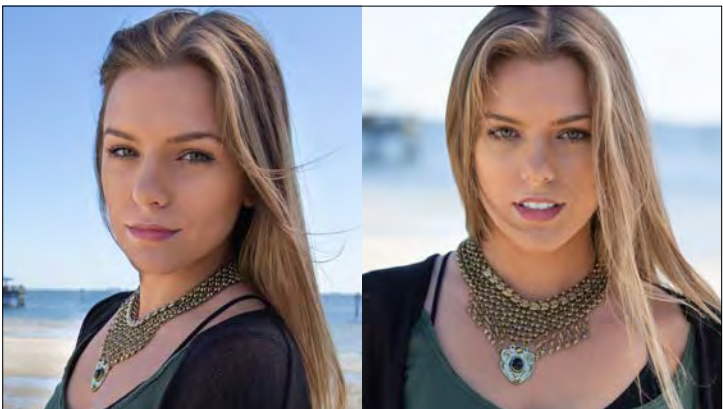
Here's the same subject, but shot with the 70-200mm. Look how much more flattering the lens compression of that long lens is.

Here's another example—shot with a wide-angle lens.

Here's the same subject, but shot with the 70-200mm. Look how much more flattering the lens compression of that long lens is.


Here's a side by side. Crazy, right?

02 Another wide-angle "gotcha"

ANOTHER REASON WHY WIDE ANGLES ARE NOT AWESOME FOR PORTRAITS

Another "gotcha" when it comes to wide-angle lenses and portraits is that they have such a wide depth of field that creating a portrait with an out-of-focus background is really tough. You would have to be right up on your subject (being almost "medically" close) to get any soft bokeh in that background at all. Here's an example.

This shot was taken with a 16mm wide-angle lens at f/2.8, and the entire image is in focus from front to back. There's no soft areas, no soft background. Your subject would be have to be a few inches in front of you to have any hope of an out-of-focus background with a wide-angle lens. Just giving you a heads-up, because I see a lot of people struggling with this when shooting portraits with a wide-angle lens—they set their f-stop to f/2.8, but everything's still in focus. Like I said before, shallow depth of fields comes from two things: the f-stop and zooming in tight. A wide lens isn't going to let you zoom in tight.

GREAT PORTRAITS COME FROM:
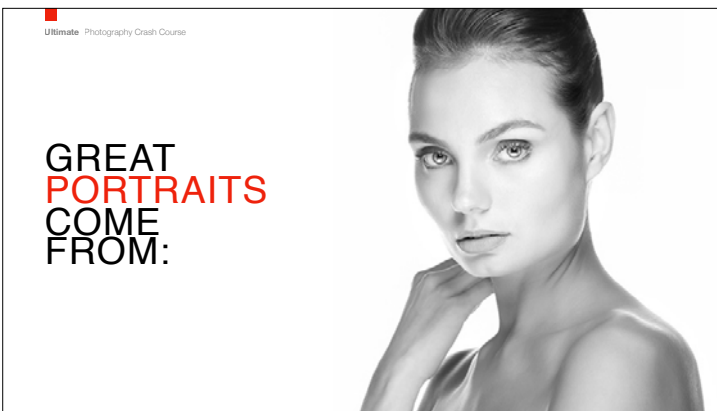
So, where do great portraits come from? Lighting? The Pose? The Background?

CONNECTION AND EXPRESSION

IF YOU DON'T HAVE THESE, YOU GOT NUTHIN'
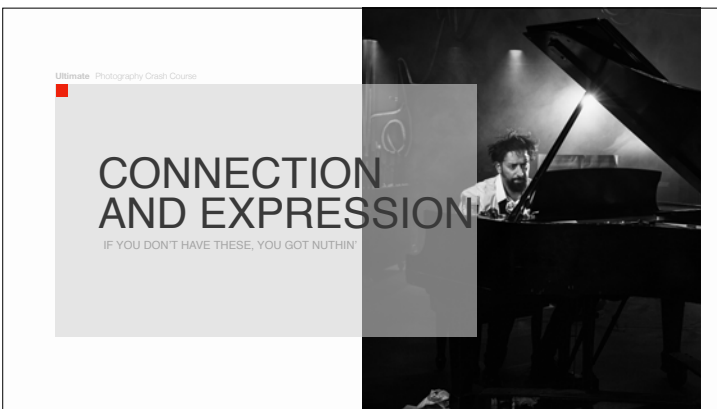
This is the really important stuff.

GENUINE EXPRESSIONS.

They come from great expressions. Great connection and expression will override everything else. The viewer will forgive everything—noise, harsh lighting, bad composition, you name it (and some of the greatest photos of all time, suffer from all of that). All the other stuff, yes it's important, but if you get all the other stuff wrong, and you get the expression right, the shot will still be a success.

Look at these iconic magazine covers. Their expressions give you such a window into their personality. The little smile/smirk of Michael Jordan, or the grin that looks like he's holding in a lie for Bill Clinton. Look at J-Lo. You look at that portrait of her and her personality comes right through with it. So does Adele's and Angelina Jolie's and Eminem's and Leo's—it echoes their personality. Same with Jay-Z. You look at them and you instantly connect with them. If you didn't know them, it makes you want to know them and more about them.

Brilliant quote.

> "It's one thing to make a picture of what a person looks like. It's another thing to make a portrait of who they are."
> —PAUL CAPONEGRO

BUILDING RAPPORT.

The best time for building rapport and connection is before you actually start shooting, and I recommend doing this without a camera in your hand. Just get them talking about themselves, their likes, their background. You have to build rapport before you pull out your camera.
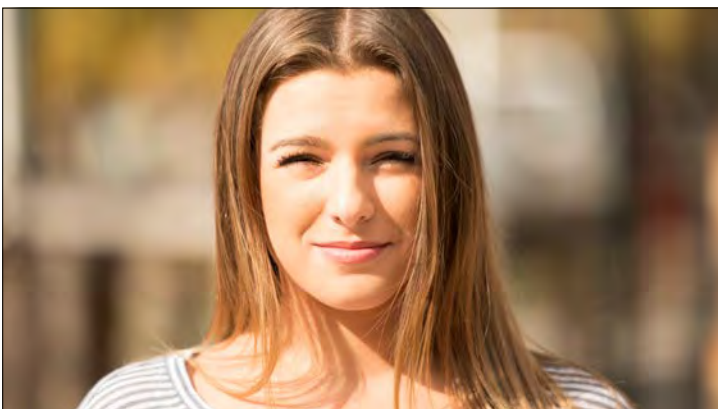
Find out what they're passionate about, and then you'll ask them about that topic during the shoot to bring about genuine expressions, but if they haven't connected with you, the photographer, they're not going to have a connection with your audience. So, it all starts with you.


After expression and connection, lighting comes next. You add great light on top of a great expression, and you're setting yourself up for a meaningful portrait.
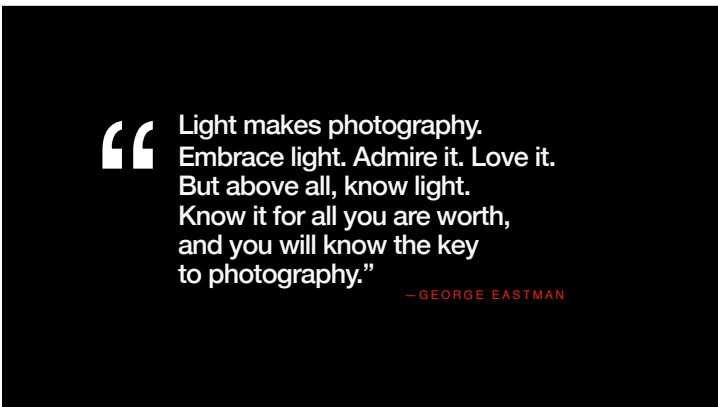
What a great quote from the founder of Kodak.

> "Light makes photography.
> Embrace light. Admire it. Love it.
> But above all, know light.
> Know it for all you are worth,
> and you will know the key
> to photography."
> —GEORGE EASTMAN

Here's a portrait taken out in the middle of the day. The sun is in my subject's eyes, so she's squinting a bit, but beyond that, the shadows are hard and not flattering at all. Take the same exact shot, with all the camera settings, but do something to tame that harsh light and look at the difference.

92
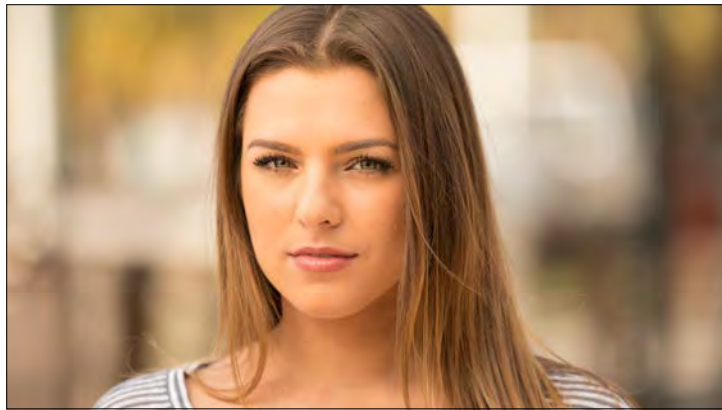
Notice the soft shadows and the overall flattering light?

Without Diffuser   **With 1-Stop Diffuser**

Here's a side by side, taken just seconds apart. What does it take to get from the shot on the left to the shot on the right?

Ultimate Photography Crash Course

A ONE-STOP DIFFUSER

You need something to tame that harsh direct sunlight, and that thing is a…1-stop diffuser. You put it between the sun and your subject and you instantly have soft, beautiful light. Have a friend or an assistant hold it a foot or so over your subject's head and position it so you don't see any direct light hitting your subject. That's all there is to using one.

Ultimate Photography Crash Course

$9 bucks.

I've seen them for sale online for around $9. Seriously, $9!

That's $1.59 cheaper than the chicken wings appetizer at Applebee's. The diffuser I use most is a 40" Westcott 5-in-1 Reflector/Diffuser set (it comes with different color reflectors—gold, silver, white, and platinum), and you zip off the cover and inside is a 1-stop diffuser, so it's way more than just a diffuser. It sells for around $40. That's around the price of dinner at Applebee's if all you got was their wings appetizer, Classic Chicken Parm as your entree, a side of broccoli, and a glass of iced tea, plus the tip. Don't get a dessert, or it's now more than the 5-in-1 reflector.

This would have been a shot taken in harsh, direct sunlight, which is not going to yield flattering results in most cases, right?

You simply put the diffuser between the sun and your subject, and you've got soft, beautiful light. Pretty amazing for $9 (which is the least amount you'll probably spend for anything in photography).

You're in charge of making sure the light that hits your subject is soft and beautiful and flattering, and this is now soft, pleasing light even though it's taken in the worst lighting conditions (thanks to that diffuser). We'll look at some strategies for doing just that, but first, let's look a little more at "quality of light."

It can't get much worse than this—we're shooting inside a metal storage container with a rusted-out roof and the floor is so rusted that the plants are coming through. But, a 1-stop diffuser can make all the difference.

Here's the shot made in that harsh environment.

95

This whole "beautiful light" thing isn't just for portraits. Beautiful light is beautiful light. For example, take a look at Jordan Pond in Bar Harbor, Maine, Acadia National Park. This is what it looks like in the middle of the day in direct light.
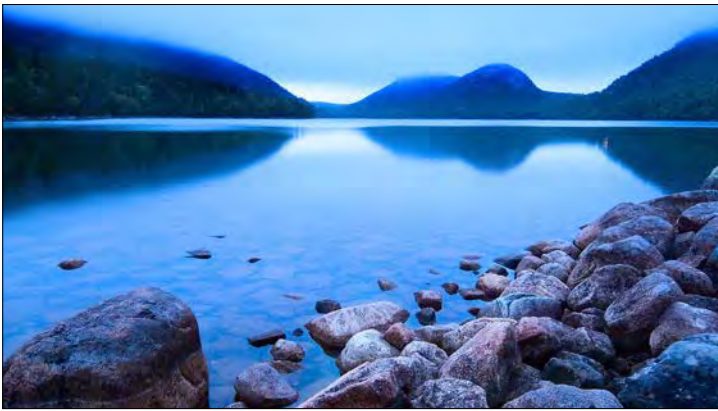
This is what Jordan Pond looks like in beautiful light at dawn (when beautiful light happens).

Here's Mesa Arch in the middle of the day in direct light. The shadows are harsh, the color is washed out. It's not flattering to the scene.

Here it is in good light, just after dawn. Everything looks better in good light.

WINDOW LIGHT

WINDOW LIGHT AND AVAILABLE LIGHT
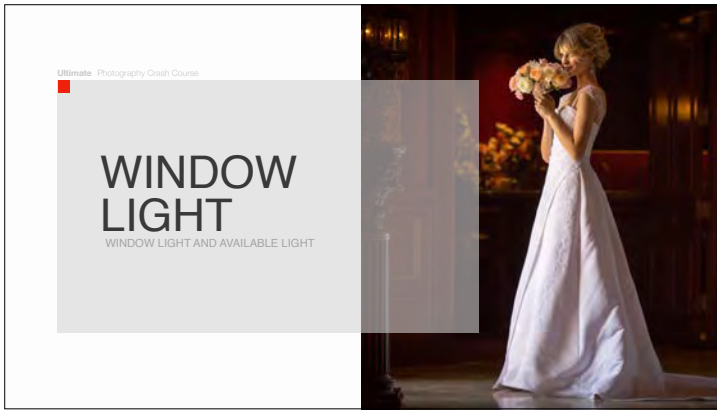
Window light can create some of the most beautiful, flattering light for your subject. I say it can create, but it doesn't do it automatically. It's up to you to make that light beautiful.

Let's start with this shot, taken with window light. The glass on the windows is clear, so that harsh light comes right through it no problem, it's like there's not a window there at all—it's harsh-light city. Window light absolutely does not mean beautiful light. The only time it does if you're lucky enough to find a nice north-facing window, because they don't get direct sunlight, which is awesome…if you happen to have one. Usually, we have to use the window light we have, and it's usually not north-facing, so it's our job to make that window light beautiful. Here's how this shot was taken:

DON'T FACE THE WINDOW

You'll notice that she's not facing directly into the window. That would create really flat lighting. By having her turn sideways (which is normally how I position my subject's for window light—parallel to the window, but then turned to make the most of the shadows), you get more depth and dimension thanks to the soft, flattering shadows on her face.
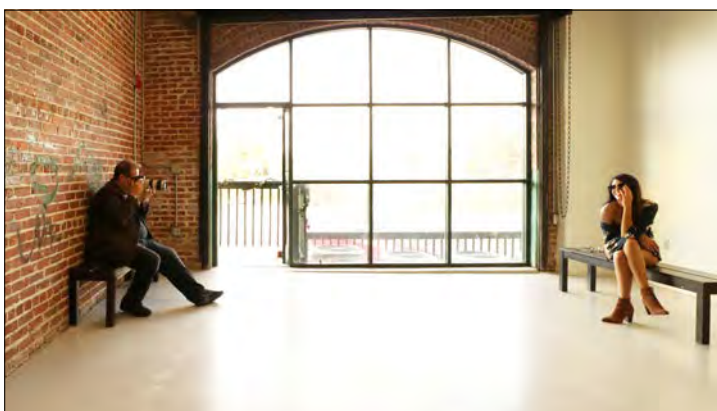
It's all about positioning your subject so they're not directly in the harsh window light. First, our subject is positioned far from the window.

Shoot parallel to the window.

You want the light to come from the side.

The light is softer as you move farther away from the window, so just moving her away from the window itself, provides softer better light.

She's also not directly in front of the window, but a few feet behind it. There's better, softer light at the edges of the window light. If you can't get back far enough from the window (due to room size), position your subject just behind it. If you can do both (back and behind), you get bonus points.
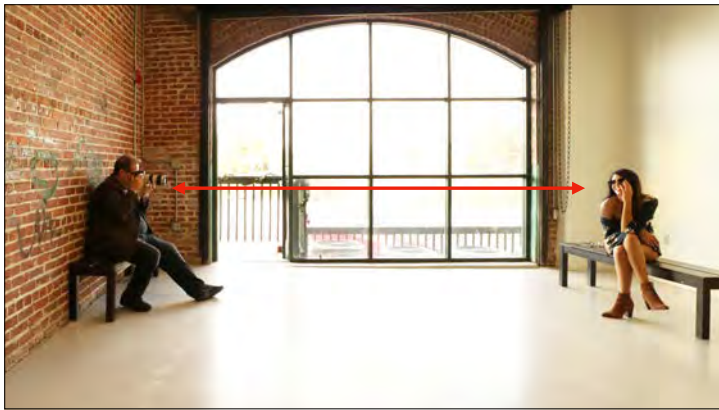
Notice here I'm shooting with a 70-200mm, far back, and zooming in tight.

SHOWER CURTAIN LINER

Another technique I use for making harsh window light soft, is to place a shower curtain liner over the window. Not a shower curtain. A shower curtain liner. They range in price from around $1.99 (at Walmart) to $5 bucks (at Target). Put it over the window (I use gaffer's tape to hold it up) and it turns any harsh direct window light into a huge beautiful softbox.

Remember this shot from earlier today? Here's how we got great window light.

That's right, shower curtain liner. It lets plenty of light in, but the light that comes in is beautiful. :)

Portraits have their own composition techniques.

SHOOT FROM HIGHER ANGLE
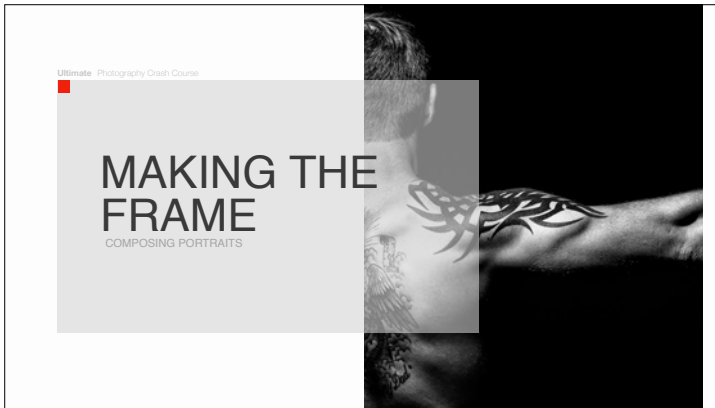
As a general rule, it's more flattering to shoot from a slightly higher angle down at your subject. That's why you always see people who are really good at selfies holding their phones up high when they shoot those selfies—it's because that higher view is more flattering. In the studio, if my subject is as tall as I am, or taller, I stand on a Matthews "Apple Crate Box" (yes, they sell these at B&H for just this very reason).

DON'T LEAVE TOO MUCH HEADROOM

One of the biggest mistakes I see new portrait photographers make is to leave too much room above their subject's head. Unless your image is going on the front cover of a magazine, when you compose your shot, there shouldn't be a lot of room above your subject's head.
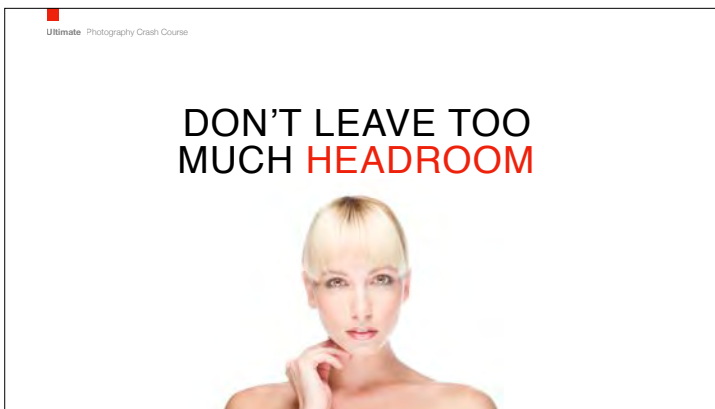
Here's an example. There's two much empty space above our subject's head.
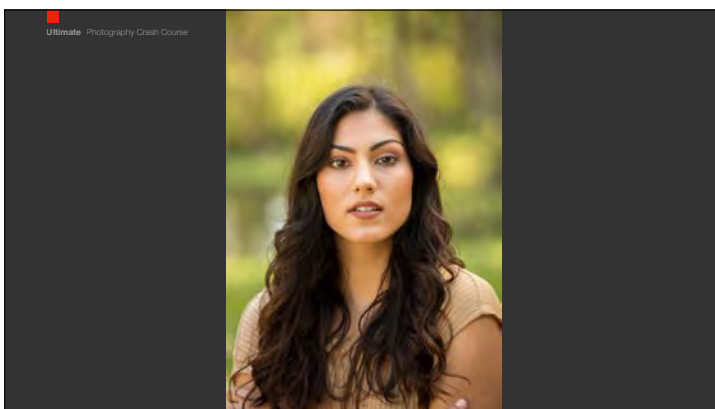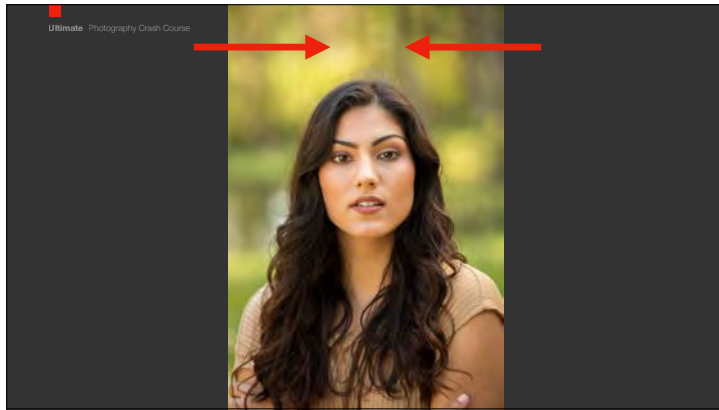
That empty space—that's the "headroom."
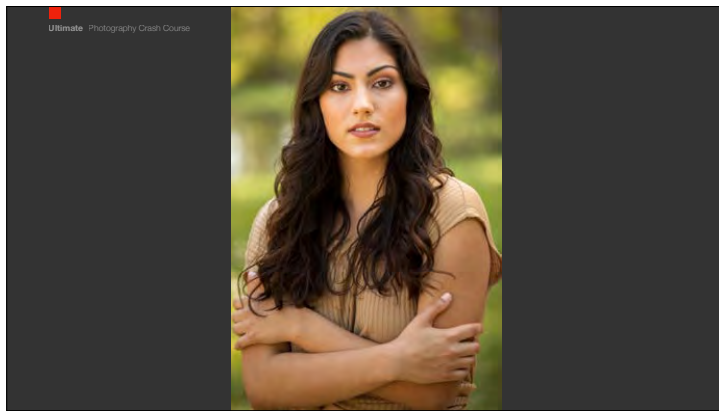
A better composition would put our subject's eye in the upper third (not near the center, like the previous shot). The extra headroom is gone.
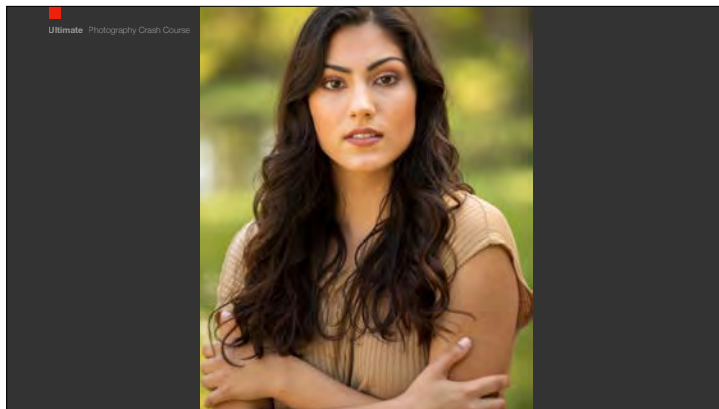

This would be an even more modern composition for the portrait, with the top of her head cut off, bringing the subject closer, and larger in the frame for a more intimate portrait.

KEEP YOUR
BACKGROUNDS
SIMPLE
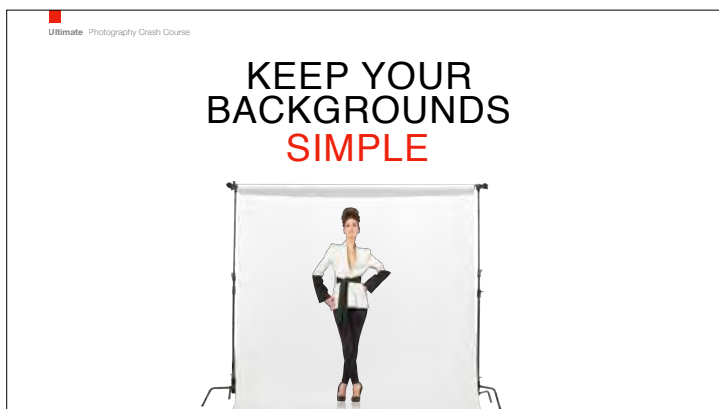
When it comes to backgrounds, keep them as simple as possible. It's why we like blurring backgrounds outside—it removes distractions in the background and puts the focus on the subject. When picking a background, indoors or out, keep it as simple as possible. A solid-colored wall, a roll of seamless paper, something clean and uncluttered.

Remember these from earlier? Look at the clean, simple backgrounds from some of the greatest magazine covers of all time. Looks like they're all just shot on seamless paper. That simplicity lets the subject really stand out with zero distractions.

SHOOTING OUTDOORS

HOW TO GET THE BEST RESULTS
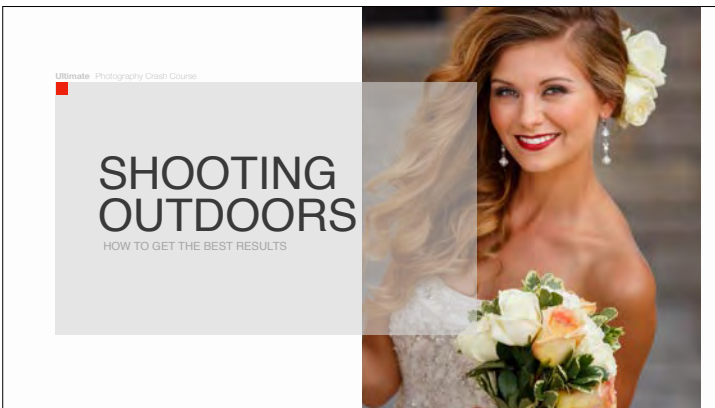
Our goal—avoiding direct sunlight on our subject. The shot above was taken just outside the reception hall, in the middle of the day, but in the shade of the building.

TURN THEIR BACK TOWARD THE SUN

But what if you don't have a convenient building providing shade? Then you use this trick for shooting right out in the direct sunlight. Start by turning their back toward the sun.
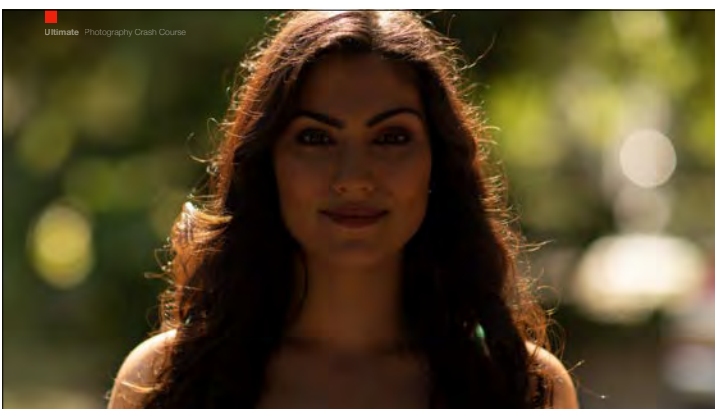
You'll get some nice back lighting, but their face is going to be mostly in shadows. That's okay—at least they're not out in the harsh, direct sun, squinting, while their face is filled with harsh shadows.

Now, overexpose your shot by at least 1 to 1-1/2 stops (I use my camera's Exposure Compensation dial to do this, since I'm shooting in Aperture Priority mode, and simple "make it brighter or darker" changes using exposure compensation is one of the things I love about shooting in Aperture Priority mode). When you overexpose by a stop or a stop-and-a-half, it's going to make the background a lot brighter, so I generally try to make sure there's not already something really bright behind my subject (trees and gardens and buildings generally work great).

Here's the result.

The lighting on her face isn't harsh because the sun is behind her. It is kind of flat lighting, because you don't have the dimension you'd get with shadows on her face from being lit at a 45° angle, but it's still a flattering shot taken outdoors in direct light under no cover, and that's saying something. You'll notice the background is quite a brighter, but who cares—it's just a blurry, out-of-focus background—our subject is well lit, and we didn't have to pull out any flashes to do it.

You mostly get spackled bits of light on your subject when you're shooting under a tree. Little distracting bits of light fall all over your subject, often in the most inconvenient spots.

Here's an example. This should be smooth, soft, even light (it's why you wanted to shoot under the tree in the first place, right? To get out from the harsh sun, but yet you're letting little bits of harsh light through). This is the easiest thing in the world to fix.

Just have your subject move 6" one way or the other (it might take 15 or 20 seconds to find out a spot without dapples of light), but it's totally worth it.

Here's a side by side. Look at the quality of light between the two. The difference is the look between a pro-shot and an amateur one. Once you get your subject out of the dapples, now you can work on expression and connection.

Here's another side by side. Look at the dappled light on his shirt and on his face in the shot on the left. Literally just move a few inches to get rid of the spackled light and now you've got a great foundation to build upon.

POSING TIPS
ANGLES AND POSITIONS THAT FLATTER

If I could give you a few tips on posing that would really make a difference, it would be these.

TURN THE SHOULDERS

For a more flattering look, turn your subject's shoulders. For most people, the straight-on look isn't very flattering because it makes them look wide. This sideways turn makes your subject's waist look thinner, which is important because as they say, "The camera adds ten pounds." This can help take it back off quick.


TEACH THEM "PETER'S JAWLINE" TRICK
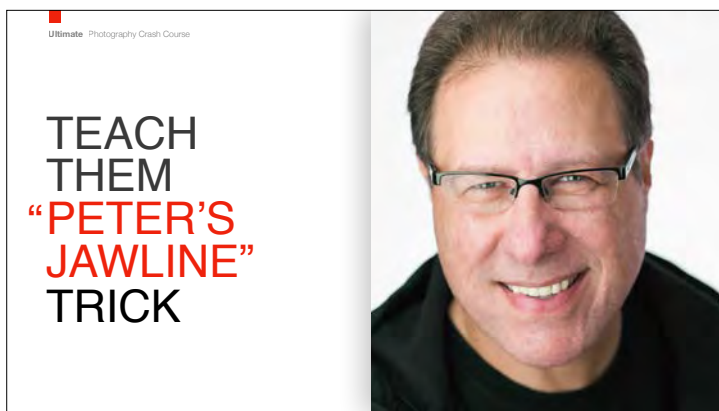
Headshot photographer (and KelbyOne Instructor) Peter Hurley is the master of the headshot, and two of his trademark posing techniques that really flatter your subjects are to "squinch" your eyes together a little bit (like you see me doing here, in this headshot taken by Peter). Don't squint, just a little squinch. Also, push your head out forward and down a bit—this really strengthens your jaw line, helps remove any double-chin effect, and it gives a better overall look. This one thing will make a difference in your portraits from here on out.
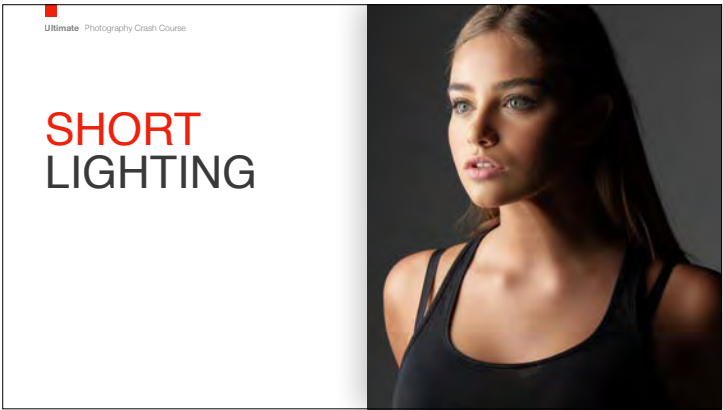
SHORT LIGHTING

This is going to sound like a lighting technique, but it's not because you don't move the light. You position your subject to make the light more flattering for their facial structure. We use Short Lighting to make our subject's face look more slender, so if you notice they have a roundish looking face, you'd use the Short Lighting style.

TURN THEIR BODY TOWARD THE LIGHT

SHADOW SIDE

To get this style, you'd have your subject turn their body toward the light, then have then turn and face the camera. You're going to shoot into the side of the face that's away from the light, the shadowy side.
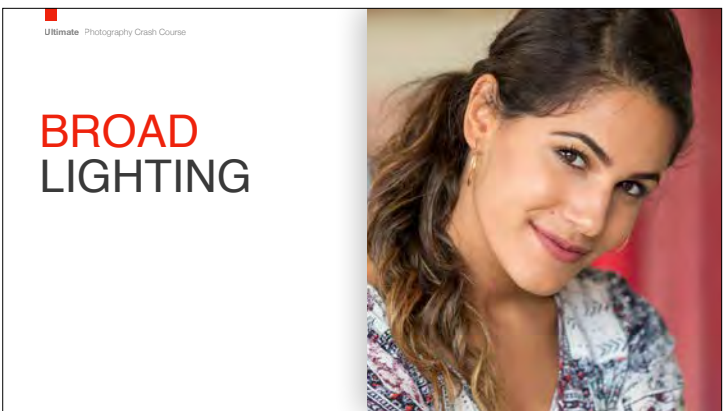
BROAD LIGHTING

If your subject has a slim face, and you want to make it fuller and more rounded, you'd use the Broad Lighting style. You'd have them turn their body away from the light, and then turn their head back toward the camera.

TURN THEIR BODY AWAY FROM THE LIGHT

LIT SIDE

SHADOW SIDE
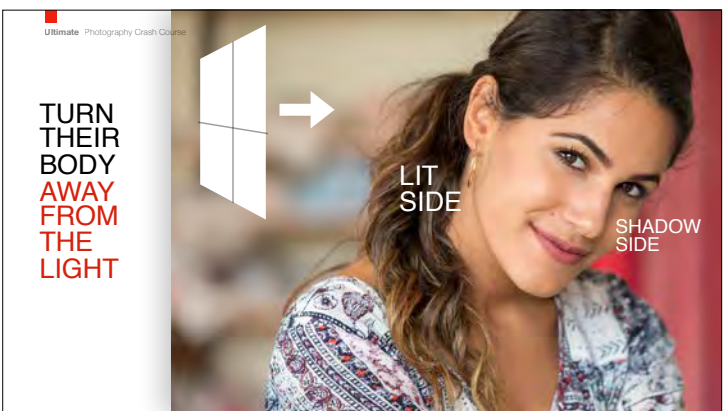
Now, you're shooting into the lit side of their face (as seen here).

WARDROBE: GO WITH SOLID COLORS

If you can request your subject's wardrobe, go with solid colors, and not prints. Keeping the wardrobe with simple solid makes sure the clothes don't stand out too much, or draw the eye, or create a distraction. Portraits are about the people. Fashion is about the clothing. Keep it simple solid colors for portraits.

5 MIN. INTO THE SHOOT STOP AND REVIEW

When you're about five minutes into the shoot with your subject, take a break and start reviewing the shots right now, right up front. What you're looking out for is a pattern of unflattering facial expression—something the subject is doing they don't realize they're doing, but they won't like it the final images. For example, if you notice that when you subject does a big smile, it shows too much of their gums, now that you know that you can direct them away form that, and tell them, "just give me a little smile." Or if they have a smirk, or maybe they scrunch up their nose when they smile too big, or maybe when they try to look sexy (for both men and women), they just look mad, or awkward. Now that you see that, early on, you can save tons of shots that would go in the trash by asking them to change their expression when you see, before you take the shot.

Here, her smile is a little gummy. Not terrible, but if you're making the portrait for her (rather than a client), she might not be thrilled with it. Five minutes in, you can see that when she does a really big grin is the only time you see gumminess (if that's even a word).

Once you recognize that, you can adjust her smile so you don't see the gumminess. I would start by having her not smile at all, then have her smile a little, then a little bigger until you find that sweet spot where you see a nice smile (like you see here) without going too far. Also, I would absolutely not tell your subject their smile looks gummy—they already know, but if you point it out, they might not smile again. Ever.

USING
FLASH
YOU ONLY NEED ONE

You only need one.

FLASH:
THE SIX
DEADLY
SINS
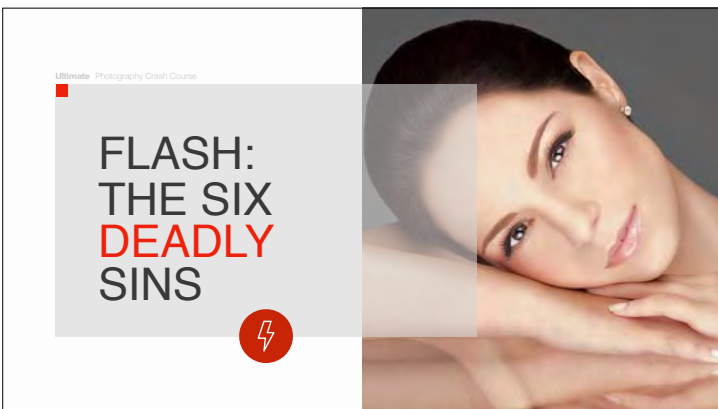
Most of my work is done with just one light, because one light is so powerful. It's the shadows that often make the shot, and having one light usually brings them in a glorious way (and plus, everybody needs to at least learn how to use just one light). But, just be sure to avoid these six things:

1

YOUR FLASH IS ON TOP
OF YOUR CAMERA

The very last place you want your flash when shooting portraits is on top of your camera. If you're about to shoot a portrait and you notice your flash is on top of your camera, know right then—this is going to go very badly. Think of it this way: you know the pop-up flash on the top of your camera gives awful results. Putting a bigger, nastier, brighter flash on top is more of a bad thing.

Is there ever a situation where you would put your flash on top of your camera. The only one I can think of is if you're shooting an event, where the quality of the light doesn't matter whatsoever—you're just documenting who was there. You'll also occasionally see a wedding photographer in the bride's "make ready" room shooting like this, but they also hopefully take some steps to make it less awful, but that's the most you can hope for.

Here's what it looks like when you shoot a portrait with on-camera flash. This is something you would do to get back at someone who's "done you wrong," and you want to quickly even the score.

GET YOUR FLASH OFF YOUR CAMERA

If you have any hope of making a portrait that will not physically anger your subject get your flash off your camera and onto a light stand, so you can position it properly (more on that in a moment). Yes, you will need a wireless trigger to do this, but luckily now they are now dirt cheap, so there's no reason not to. So, what goes on top of your camera? That wireless trigger. It fits right into the hot shoe on top of your camera. This is the only thing that should ever appear on top of your camera.

2

YOU'RE USING TTL.

TTL, heavily marketed by the flash makers, is supposed to do all the math for you by metering the scene through the lens (that's what TTL stands for "Through The Lens" metering) and adjusting the power of the flash for you. The only problem is: it only works sometimes, and I've found it (a) tremendously inconsistent—it'll work while you're aiming at once scene; turn and shoot something else, and suddenly what looked great a moment ago now looks terrible and you're not sure how to fix it, since you didn't' change anything—and (2) when it does work, it doesn't look great. It looks "okay," and if I were an event photographer shooting with my flash on top of my camera it would be fine, but I think it stinks for portraits for the most part.

[?]
MERRIAM-WEBSTER DEFINITION:

" **T**   **T**   **L**   "

So, they say TTL stands for "Through The Lens" metering (you might also hear it referred to as iTTL or eTTL), but either way, I think it's mis-named altogether. More accurately it should stand for…

[?]
MERRIAM-WEBSTER DEFINITION:

" **T**ruly **T**errible **L**ight."

….cause that's mostly what you'll get using it. In fact, if I had to point to the single thing that has made more photographers buy a flash and then wind up not using it, it's the frustration and inconsistency of TTL, which is on by default. But, luckily there's a better, easier, way more consistent option.

FLASH
TO
MANUAL
MODE

Turn off TTL on your camera, and instead, switch to Manual Mode. This alone will help you fall in love with your flash. Again, TTL should stand for "Truly, Terrible Light." It's great in marketing materials—awful most of the time when you actually try it. So, you'll turn up/down the power of the flash manually. Where do you set the power (brightness of the flash) to start?

3

YOUR FLASH IS
TOO BRIGHT.

This is one of the most common problems I see in portraits shot with flash. Simply, the power of the flash is turned up too bright.

This washes out your subject's skin, it can make the shadows harsher, it can create "hot spots" that make parts of your subject's skin look sweaty, and it's generally not awesome.

The fix for this is so simple—just turn the power of your flash down. Way down! Get it to where it doesn't look flashy. It's not supposed to scream "I used flash!" It's supposed to flatter your subject, and making it way too bright doesn't do that.

Here's a side by side of setting the power too high on your flash, versus setting it at the right power, which is a way lower power setting than you might think.

111

SET THE POWER AT 1/4

Start at 1/4 power for shooting indoors. So, here's what happens from here on out: You take your first test shot of your subject, and then you look at the shot on the back of your camera. If the light is too dark, you'll turn the power up a little and take another test shot. If it's too bright, you'll turn down the power a little. That's it. By the way, don't let it get too bright —it shouldn't look flashy (indoors, I rarely go much above 1/4 power).

4

IT'S NOT SOFT AND FLATTERING.

Just like with the sun, which creates harsh, nasty light by nature, your flash is pretty much the same. That's why you'll absolutely, positively need to put something in front of your flash to change it from harsh, nasty light to soft, beautiful light.

This is pretty harsh. Hard shadows. It's definitely not flattering.

It has all the qualities of a driver's license photo. Ugh.
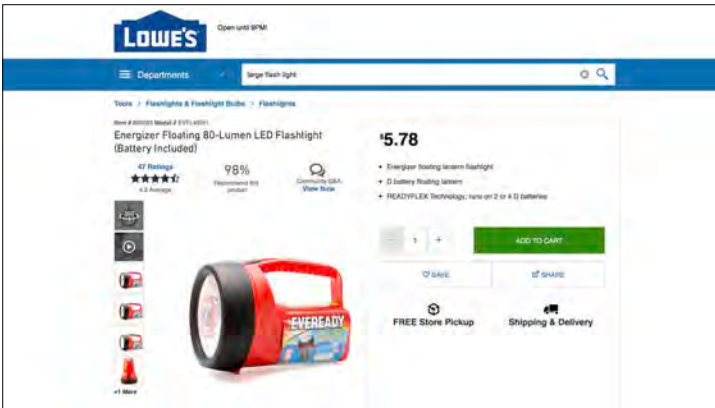
How would it look any different if you went to Lowe's and bought a big ugly flash light? They have the same amount of diffusion—none. So, how do you get the light looking soft and beautiful?

We're not changing anything but putting a 1-stop diffuser in front of the flash. Same subject, same flash, same location, taken just a few seconds after the first shot, and look at the difference.

BARE FLASH WITH DIFFUSION

Here's a side by side comparing bare flash with simply putting a diffuser in front of it. The quality of the light, the shadows are now soft and flattering, and the photo looks much more professional and certainly more flattering.

A ONE-STOP DIFFUSER

That's right, use a 1-stop diffuser—the same one you used for shooting in natural light works perfectly with a flash. Here's how:

You just put the 1-stop diffuser between the flash and your subject. About a foot or so in front of it is fine.

The light hits that diffuser and it takes that small, harsh beam and spreads it out, softening and diffusing the light.

If you don't have a second light stand and a clamp to hold the diffuser (they sell 'em at B&H Photo, like the Impact Telescopic Collapsible Reflector Holder for around $48), you can have a friend or assistant hold it in front of the flash, as seen here.

The next level up from a hand-held diffuser is what I use: it's a very small, very portable pop-up softbox from Westcott that is designed to work with flash called a Rapid Box Octa (seen here). It collapses like an umbrella, so it's very compact when you're not using it. It has a diffuser in the front, and a special mount and tilt bracket for your flash, and it attaches to any regular ol' light stand. It takes about 90 seconds to get it set up and ready to shoot, if that.
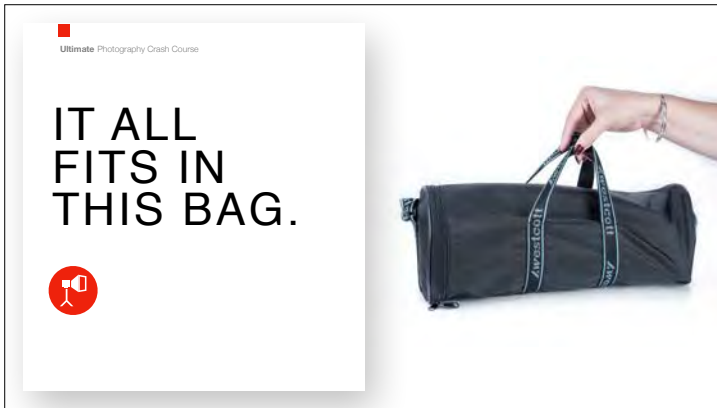
By the way, this rig packs up really small. That entire softbox diffuser and flash holder all fit inside this tiny travel bag. It's a miracle of physics.

5

IT'S IN THE WRONG POSITION.

If you don't put the light in the right position…it's in the wrong position. Where you place it matters, but finding the right spot is easy.

WHERE TO PLACE IT.
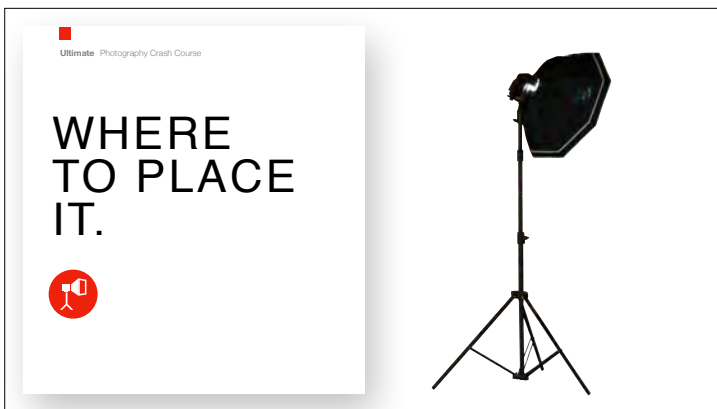
Where do we place the softbox, and how high up, and do we tilt it or not (and if so, why)? Here goes: (1) We place the softbox about 1' or so above the subject's head. (2) We tilt the light down at our subject. We're imitating the light from the sun, which is above or heads and aiming down at us, so place your light up a little higher than your subject, tilting back down at them.

The most popular position: at a 45°Angle.

The most popular position for placing the softbox (because it's so flattering for portraits) is at a 45° angle to the left or right of your subject, which creates what's called a "loop" lighting pattern. Most portraits are taken using this lighting pattern and position.

Also place it about six or so feet in front of them for starters. If you want the light softer, move it closer in to them, as seen here (the closer you get it, the softer the light will be). The second most popular position is directly in front of your subject, still up high, still tilted downward. And yes, you'll have to duck and shoot under the light.

6

YOU'RE NOT USING REAL RF WIRELESS

This one burns a lot of people, and it has definitely burned me on location with the client standing right there watching me struggle to get my flash to fire because I was using line-of-sight triggering (having the pop-up flash on top of my camera trigger my off-camera flash).

While this method does work, it doesn't work reliably, and you'll have a lot of times where you miss the shot because, for whatever reason, it didn't see the beam of light from your pop-up flash. Plus, it makes your shoot harder because you have the added concern of which side the flash sensor is on, making everything a bit more complicated and unpredictable.

YOU NEED A WIRELESS TRANSMITTER

This is why you need to use a real RF (Radio Frequency) wireless transmitter to fire your flash. It's much more reliable and hassle-free, and you can easily control multiple flashes from right on top of your camera, adjust their power, and turn them on/off —they truly are a headache remover when using flash. Use it once, and you'll always do it this way.

MY FLASH SETTINGS: INDOORS

We'll start with shooting indoors with one flash. By the way, it doesn't really matter which brand you have, they pretty much all work exactly the same way—they just put the buttons and menus in different locations.

MANUAL MODE

M

When you're using flash, you will need to shoot in Manual mode, but even if you've never shot in Manual before, this is going to be so easy, because we're going to get our camera settings in place, and then pretty much leave the settings alone for the entire shoot. Crazy, I know, but it works like a charm.

f /5.6

f

Next, my starting point (and usually my finishing point) for my f-stop with flash indoors is f/5.6, so just dial in f/5.6.

1/125
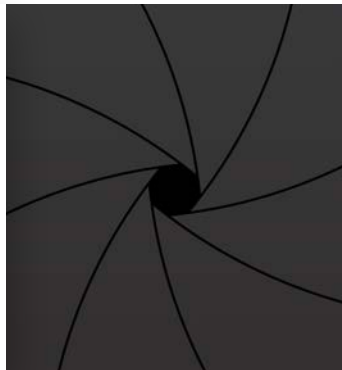
We're going to use 1/125 of a second as our shutter speed. This is that safe, wonderful, happy medium shutter speed that works perfectly with about every flash on earth. Set it at 1/125 and you'll sidestep any sync problems (where your camera's shutter and the flash get out of sync, and things look funky). Set those three settings, and they're not going to change at all during your shoot (unless you want them to).

ISO 100
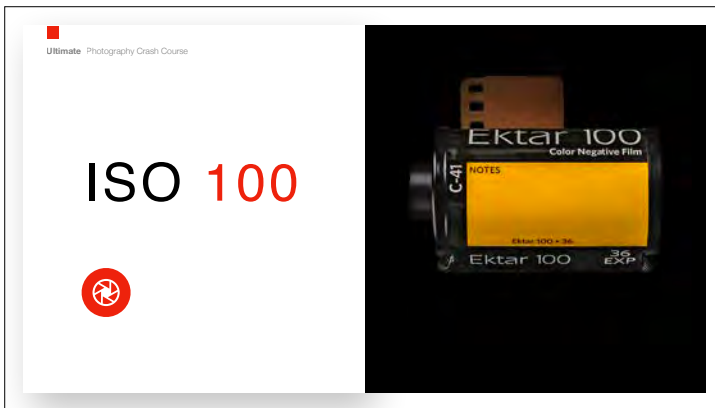
I use 100 ISO for as clean a shot as possible. I don't have to worry about using a really fast shutter speed because my flash will freeze any movement (and the lower the power on the your flash, the faster the flash duration). Set those three settings, and they're not going to change at all during your shoot (unless you want them to).

INDOOR FLASH CAMERA SETTINGS

APERTURE f/5.6
ISO 100
SHUTTER 1/125
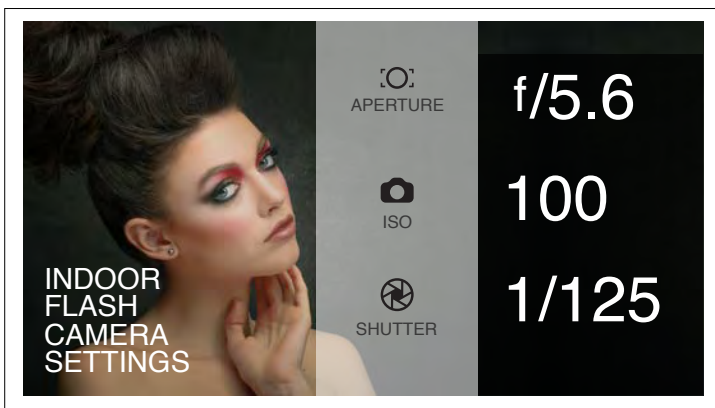
Here's a recap of my indoor flash settings. I don't have to change them at all. If my flash is too bright, I turn down the flash. If the flash isn't bright enough (rarely the case), then I turn it up.

MY FLASH SETTINGS:
OUTDOORS

The settings are a little different for using your flash outdoors. It's more a process. Not hard, just different (and a couple of extra steps).

STILL IN MANUAL MODE

1
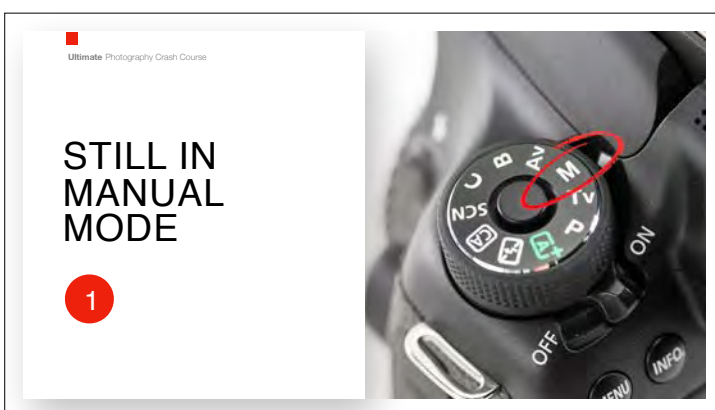
Still in Manual mode on your camera.
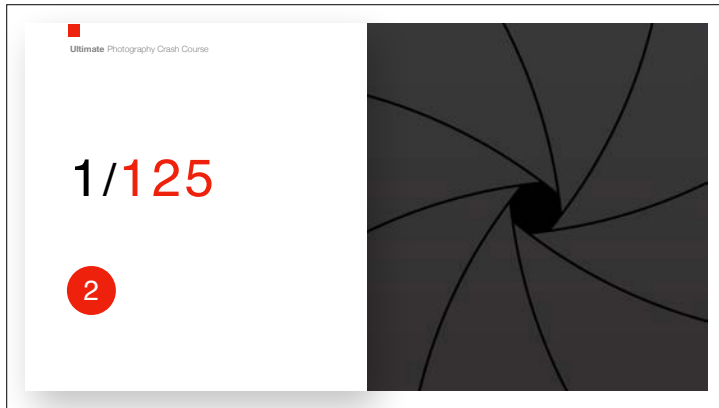
We're going to use the same shutter speed for starters—1/125 of a second.
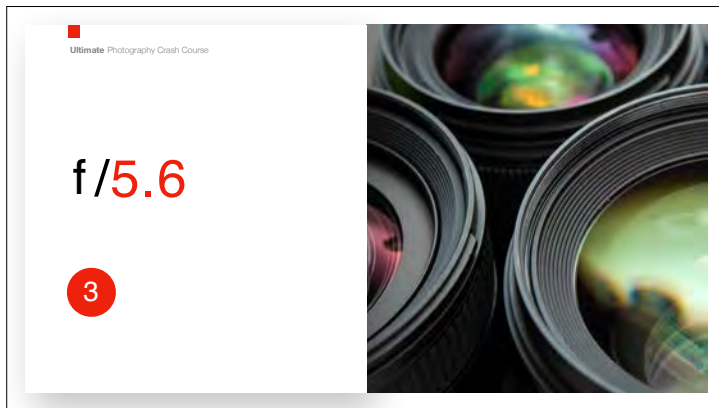
We're still at f/5.6 but we will probably wind up changing it, but we have to start somewhere, so this is where I start outdoors.
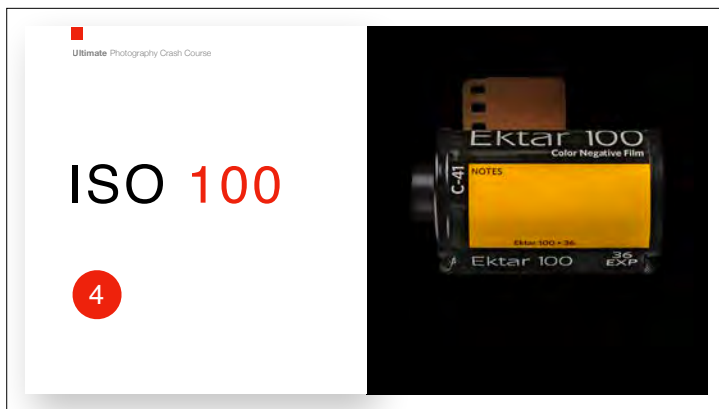
Still 100 ISO. Geesh, these settings are pretty easy. I know. That's what I love about it.
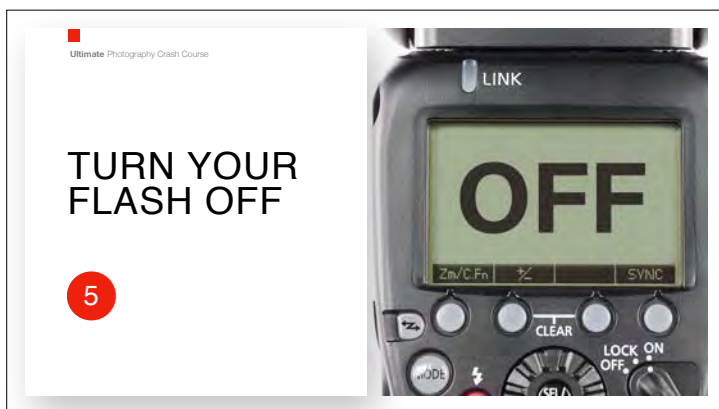
We're going to do this next part as if we're not using flash at all, just shooting a natural light shot, so go ahead and turn off your flash now.

PUT THEIR BACK TOWARD THE SUN

6
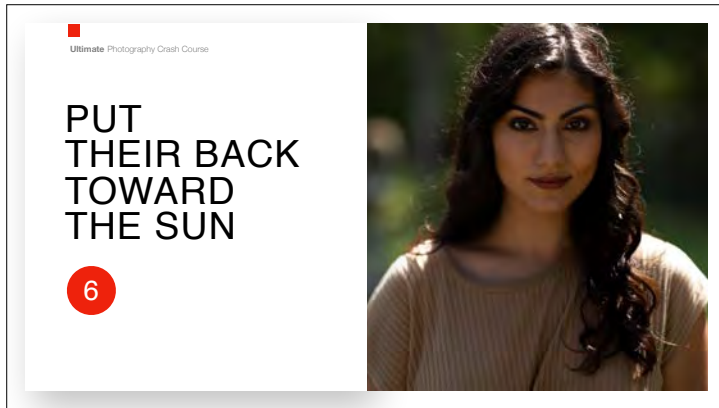
First step—turn your subject's back toward the sun.

USE YOUR IN-CAMERA METER

7
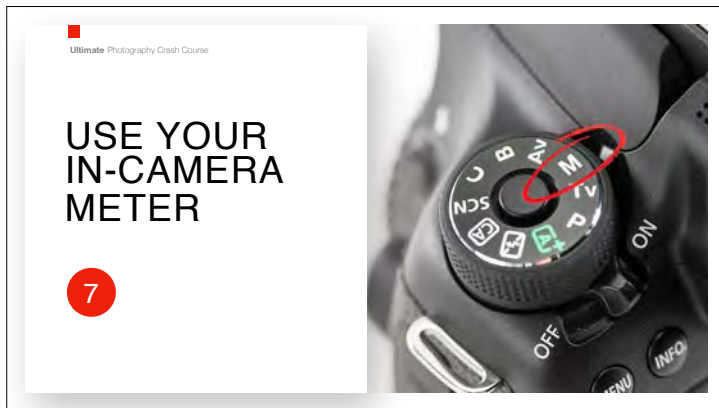
While you're still in Manual mode on your camera, you're going to look through your viewfinder and you're going use the little meter inside to get a proper exposure, but you're going to do this by only changing the aperture (f-stop).
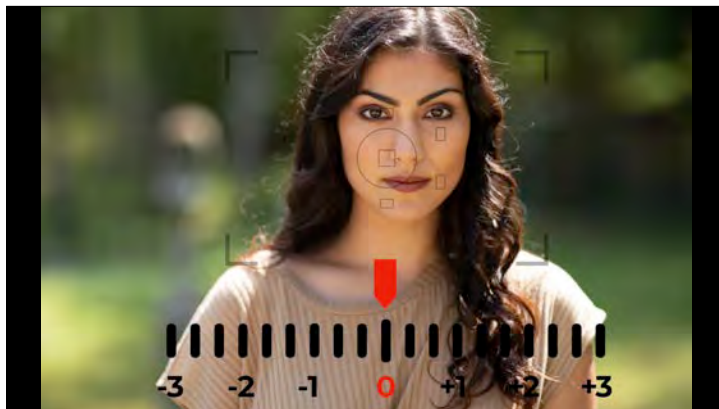
This is kind of what it will look like using the meter inside your viewfinder. (Note: This graph may be on the right side of your screen, instead of the bottom— it just depends on your camera's make and model.)

OUR GOAL IS TO DARKEN THE SCENE
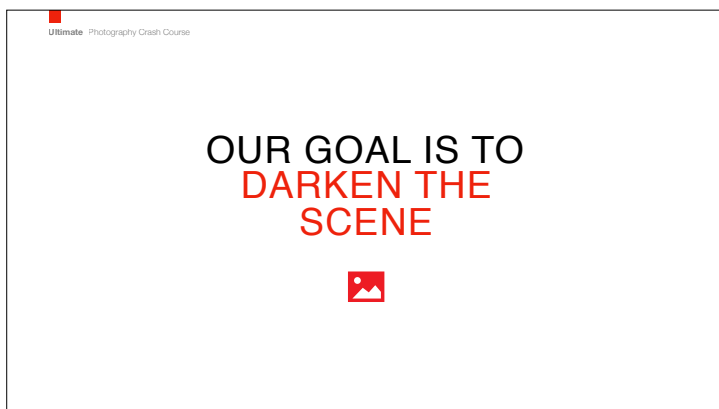
That's right—you've got the proper exposure for the scene, but now you're going to underexpose the scene by two stops or so.

SO, UNDEREXPOSE BY 2-STOPS

-3   -2   -1   0   +   +2   +3
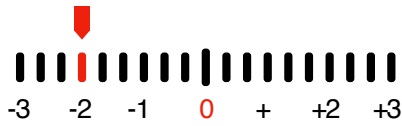
It should look something like this in your meter. It darkens the entire scene (which you want whether it's the middle of the day, or near sunset). Your subject should look pretty close to a silhouette at this point.

FOR A MORE NATURAL-LOOK OUTDOORS…

As I mentioned in the "Six Deadly Sins of Flash," when you're shooting outdoors, the light from the flash is supposed to mimic the sun, so you shouldn't see white light. It should have an orange tint to the light, and the later in the day you're shooting, the more orange the light should be.

ADD AN ORANGE GEL

8

To make your light look more natural, you need to use a thin sheet of orange gel (this gel is called "CTO" for "Color Temperature Orange."). You tape it right over the front of your flash using, ideally, gaffer's tape because it comes off really easily.

no gel

with gel
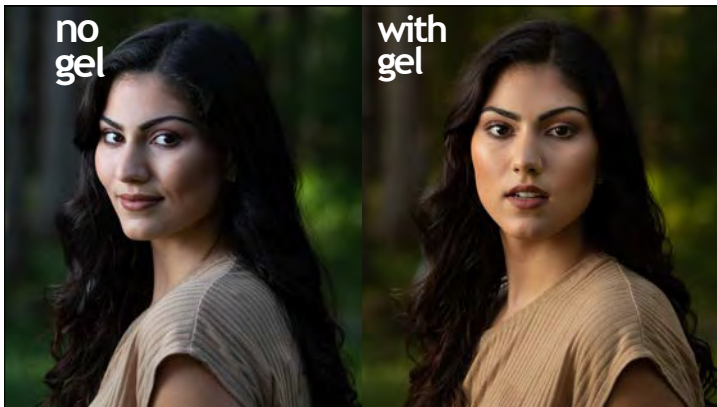
Here's a side by side of what it looks like when you shoot outdoors without a gel (on the left) and with a gel (on the right).

1/4 CT ORANGE
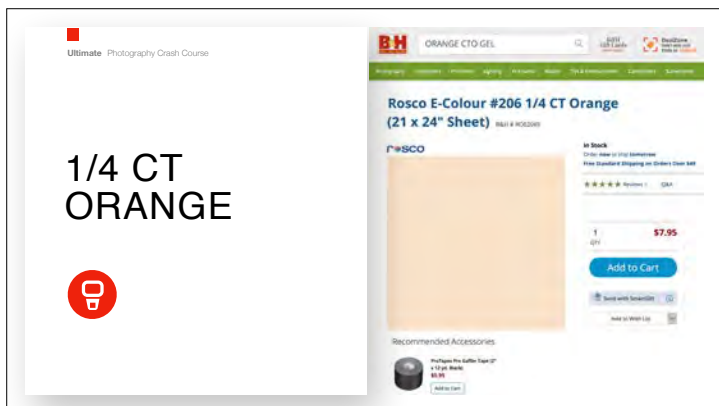
You can pick up this orange gel (called CT gel or CTO for "Color Temperature Orange") at B&H Photo for around $8 a sheet, which is actually a whole lotta gel (it's a 21x 24" sheet, and if you take a pair of scissors and cut that up it makes around 1,100 flash-head size rectangles of gel. Okay, it's not 1,100, but it feels like it when they're strewn all over your table).

TURN ON FLASH: POWER AT 1/4

9

Now you can finally (finally!) turn on your flash at (you guessed it) 1/4 power. Take a test shot and see what it looks like. If the flash is too bright, lower the power of the flash. If it's not bright enough, raise the power of the flash. The goal is to balance the light from the flash with the natural light. If there's not enough natural light, you can increase the amount of natural light by lowering the shutter speed from 1/125 down to 1/60 of a second. If that's not bright enough existing light to balance with your flash, take it down to 1/30 of a second. Conquering this dance of balancing the light from the flash with the natural existing light is what makes it fun, and when it you get it right (it's easier than you'd think), it looks awesome, and real, and awesome. I know, I said that twice.

AND TAKE THE SHOT
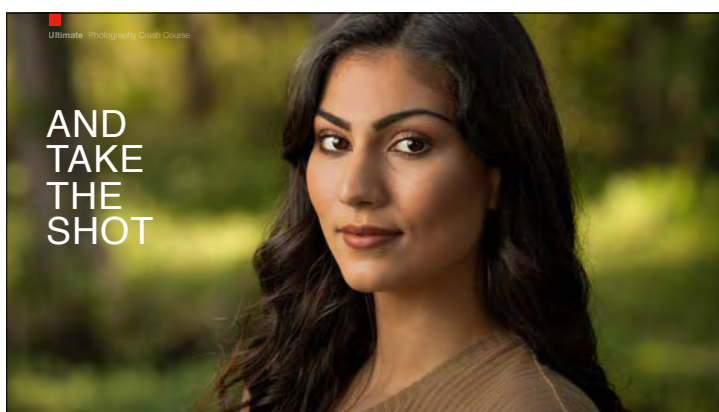
Here's an example, shot on-location with a flash and a Rapid Box softbox, and you can see here that the flash is not too bright and it doesn't look "flashy." You don't want it to look like you used flash—you want the light to look natural and real. Also note how adding that orange gel makes the light warmer and her skin look more natural. To make the light balanced with the surroundings, remember you might have to slow the shutter speed down a bit, too (I didn't in this case; it was 1/125 of a second), but I was prepare too if the background got too dark. The 70-200mm lens zoomed in tight gave us the soft out-of-focus background.

Here's the behind-the-scenes shot. Pretty simple setup, right? Just the Rapid Box, a flash, and a light stand. Also, notice the position of the flash. It's not in the usual 45° angle—it's directly beside her. Well, actually it's about 1 foot in front of her, aiming right past her. The reason I'm doing that is to get the softest possible light. The center of the softbox produces kind of a "hot spot" in the center, and by positioning the softbox so she's at the back edge of the softbox, she's getting the light from the edge of the softbox (rather than the center), so it's the softest, most beautiful light. This technique is called "Feathering." I made a video for you that shows the whole setup and how to use it.

⏰

END OF THIRD SESSION.

The Lightroom and Photoshop techniques every photographer needs to know.

1

Fixing Composition Using Generative Fill

This is Adobe's AI-powered magic fill. It's incredible and truly a game changer.
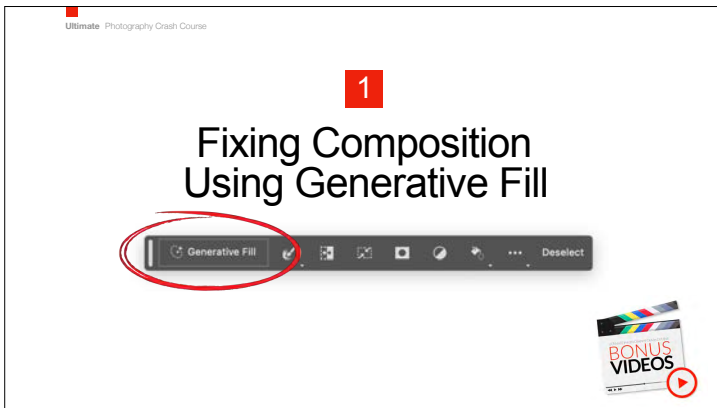
You have to be connected to the Internet to use it, because your requests are sent to Adobe's cloud for processing.

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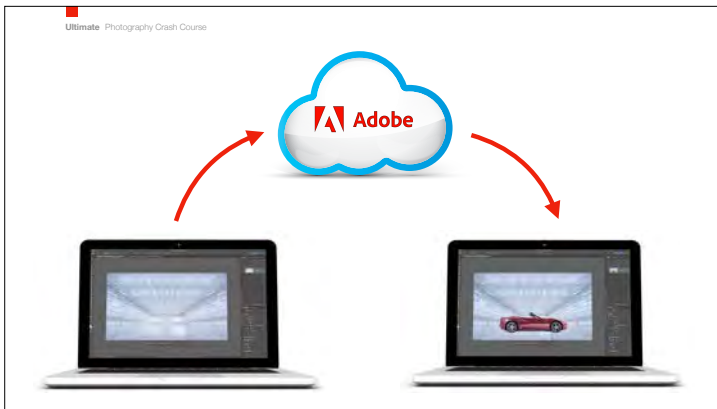
It's takes about 12 seconds for the process to complete (unless you have really show Internet, in which case it'll take a few seconds longer).

At this point, this feature is in its testing stage, but Adobe allows you to download a Public Beta (testing) version of Photoshop, which you can run right alongside your regular Photoshop, and it has all the features of regular Photoshop but with this added Generative Fill feature.
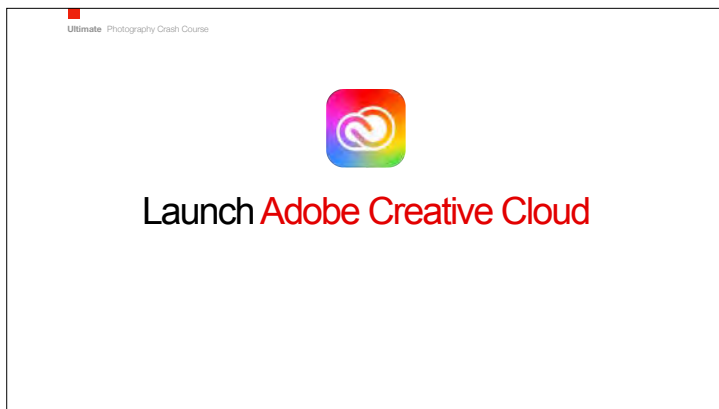
To download this Public Beta version, start by launching your Adobe Creative Cloud app.
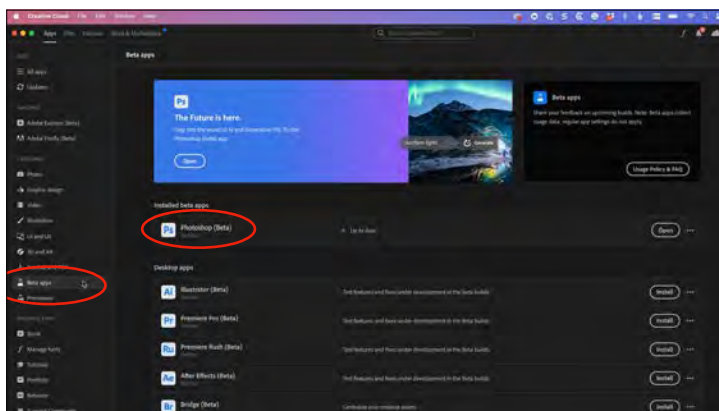
In the list of items on the left side, click on Beta Apps (as circled in red here on the left left), then choose "Photoshop Beta" from the list in the center (as shown here) and click the Install button (you see Open here instead because I've already installed it).
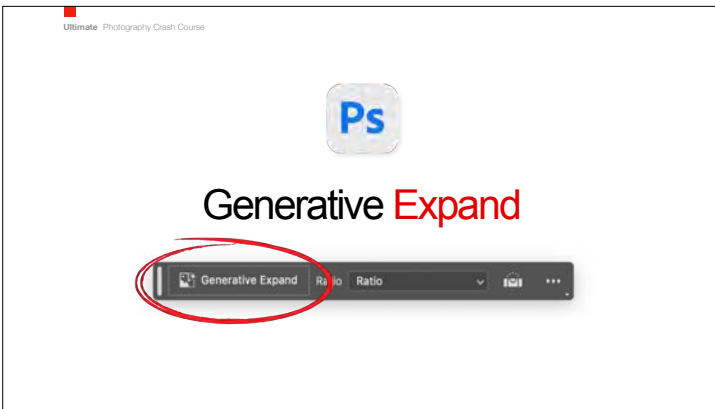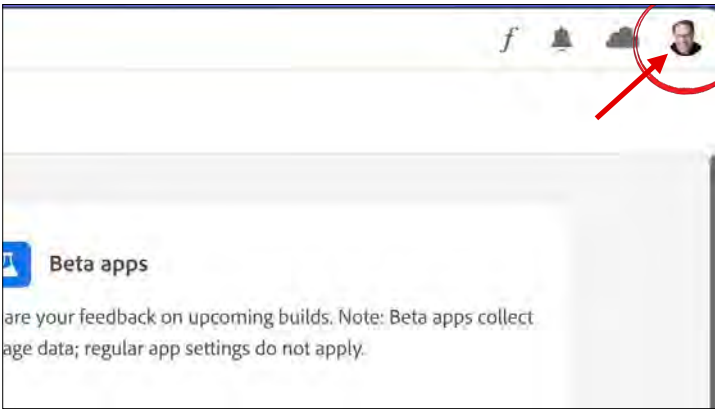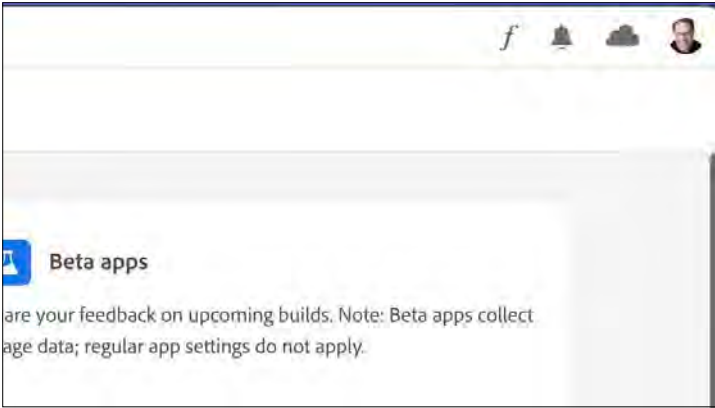
Generative Expand

The part of this feature I find myself using the most is called "Generative Expand," which is awesome for fixing small compositional mistakes. All you do is get the Crop tool and drag it outside your image to have it add in missing areas.

In class, I showed a portrait where my subject's head was cut off, and it added in the missing hair on top and bottom. You don't have to type in anything—just expand the cropping border out into the canvas area and hit Return (Enter). I showed a number of other examples (I made you a video), but it all works the same way. I have videos for you on all these Generative Fill things.

This process takes around 12 seconds.

Here I use Generative Expand to add back in the railing and statue on the right side that's cut off.

Here I use Generative Expand to add more room at the bottom as I framed this shot way too tight.

This image was crooked, and when I straightened it, it cropped off the legs of the little couch (loveseat?). So, I use Generative Expand to add the legs and floor back in.
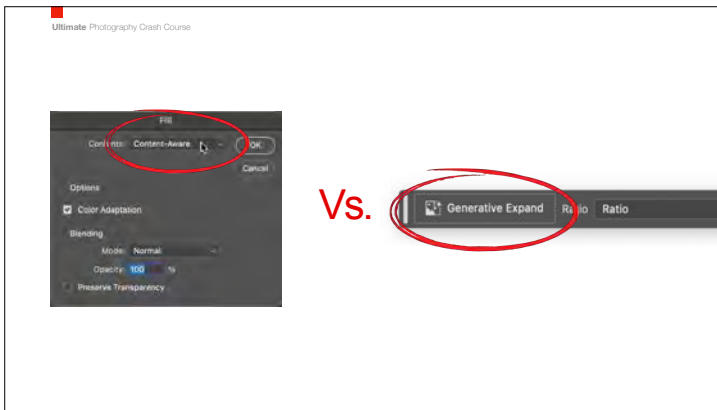
The difference between Content-Aware Fill and Generative Fill is that Content-Aware pulls its fill from pixels already in the image. It takes part of the image, samples it, and uses that. Generative Fill, on the other hand, generates its fill from scratch—it generates it on the spot from the millions of images it has learned on. So, each time it generates, it's unique and from scratch, not using any part of the existing image.

This is an old photo where about 1/4 of Pappy is cut off on the left, and junior's foot is cut off on the right. Easy to fix with Generative Expand.

The other feature (or probably what most folks would call the main feature) is called "Generative Fill" and it's found in the Contextual Taskbar (shown here).

Generative Fill is available to use once you make a selection of any kind (Marquee tool, Lasso tool, Magic Wand, etc.), so step one is always to start with a selection.

When it comes to things like removing reflections from glasses, you'll use the Lasso Tool to make a LOOSE selection around the areas where the reflection appears and then click Generate (don't type anything in—it knows you want to remove the reflections).

CHANGING CLOTHES ③

Here's we're using it to change his clothes, but we have to write in the text field "Clothes" or otherwise it will think you want to remove his clothes, which it won't let you do (you'll get a pop-up warning telling you that what you're doing is outside what it allows you to do).

Adobe Generative AI Beta User Guidelines

These Generative AI Beta User Guidelines ("Guidelines") govern your use of Adobe's generative AI features. If you are
Adobe Creative Cloud Generative AI Beta Additional Terms located at https://www.adobe.com/go/adobe-cc-beta-ge

These Guidelines have two goals: to maintain the high quality of creative content generated using Adobe's suite of p
way that fosters creativity.

1. Be Respectful and Safe

Do not use Adobe's generative AI features to attempt to create, upload, or share abusive, illegal, or confidential cont
- Pornographic material or explicit nudity
- Hateful or highly offensive content that attacks or dehumanizes a group based on race, ethnicity, national or
- Graphic violence or gore
- The promotion, glorification, or threats of violence
- Illegal activities or goods

If you get that warning, there's a link in the warning box that will take you to a list of what Adobe considers inappropriate (shown here).
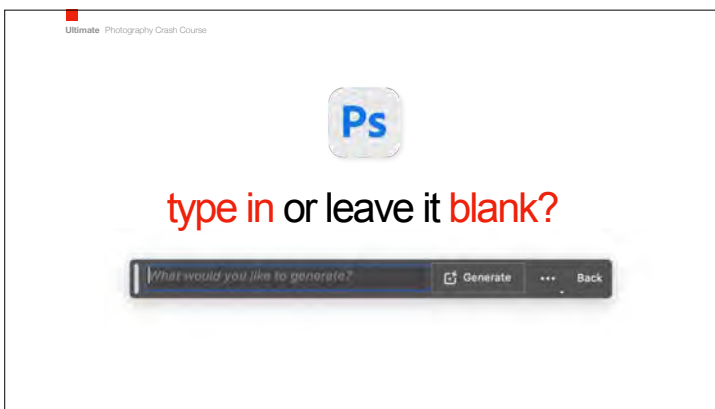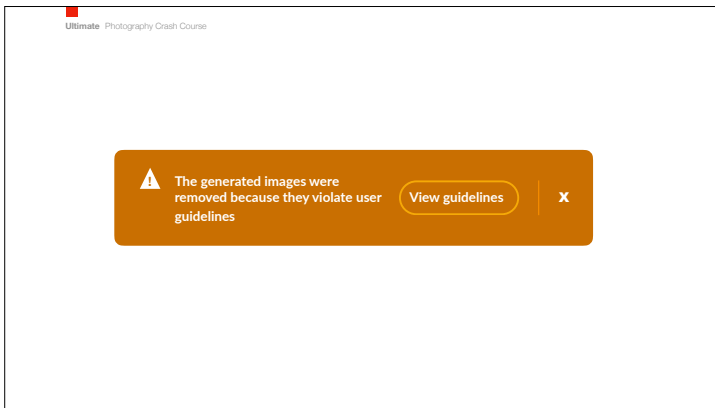
Once you make a selection, when do you leave it blank and when do you need to type in a text prompt to let it know what you want to do? Let's took at those:

LEAVE IT BLANK:

What would you like to generate? | Generate | ... | Back

LEAVE IT BLANK:

What would you like to generate? | Generate | ... | Back

1. You want to **REMOVE** something.
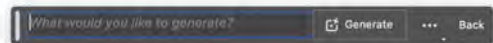
You want to remove something.

LEAVE IT BLANK:

What would you like to generate? | Generate | ... | Back
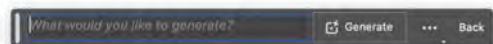
1. You want to remove something.

2. You want to **EXPAND** your canvas.

You want to expand your canvas.

TYPE A PROMPT:

What would you like to generate? | Generate | ... | Back

1. You want to **ADD** something.

You want to add something.

TYPE A PROMPT:

1. You want to ADD something.

2. You want to CHANGE something

You want to change something.

Ultimate Photography Crash Course

How to control the size
of what it creates.

It's based on how big you make your selection. It fills the size of your selection. Want what it creates to be smaller? Make a smaller selection.

Ultimate Photography Crash Course

2

Dealing with glows.

BONUS
VIDEOS

If you see a white or black glow appearing along your edge areas within your images (this happens sometimes when you apply a lot of post-processing moves), you'll need to deal with these in post.

Ultimate Photography Crash Course
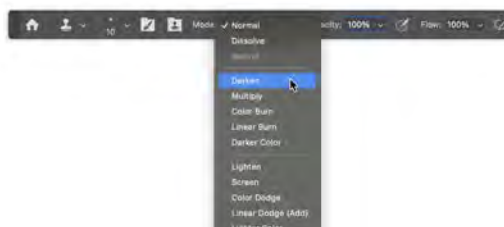
The technique is to use the Clone Stamp tool, then go up to the Options Bar up top and change its Blend Mode from Normal to Darken (as shown here). That way, it only affects pixels that are brighter than the area you Option-click (PC: Alt-click) on right nearby the area with the glow. When you start painting over the edge with the glow, it only clones over the glow —not the edge—removing it completely as you clone. It works like a charm.

3

Sky replacement.

If you wind up shooting a bald sky (hey, it happens), you can have Photoshop recognize where the sky is and replace it for you.

Import
Your
own
skies
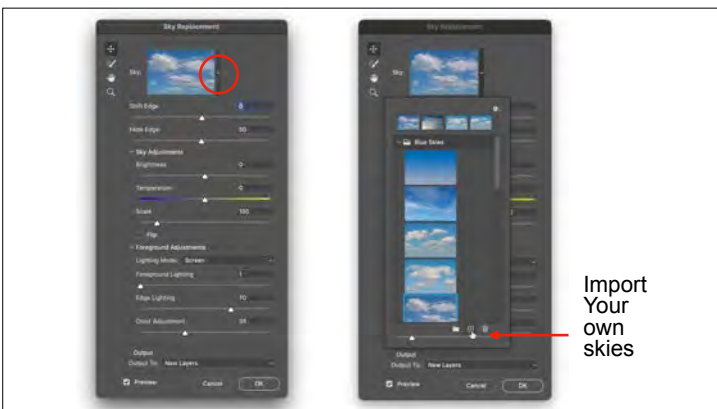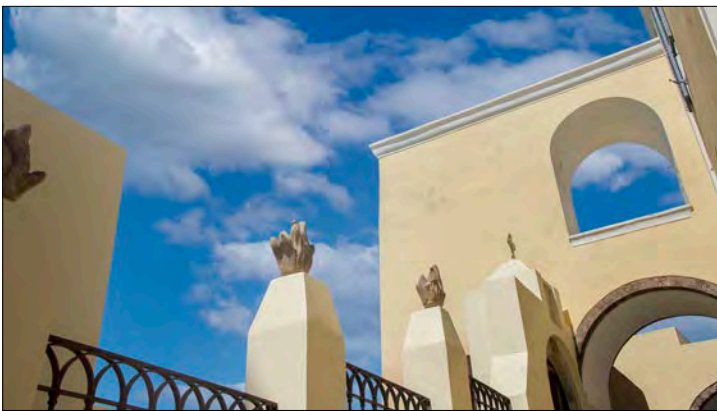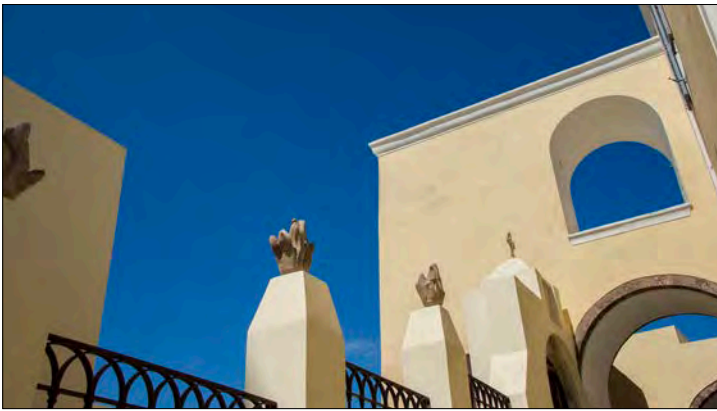
Go under the Edit menu and choose Sky Replacement. When the floating window appears, it automatically inserts one of the sample clouds (or whichever cloud you chose last). To choose a different sky, click the down-facing arrow to the right of the cloud thumbnail (shown circled here in red on the left). To add your own clouds (which you should do), click the + icon at the bottom of the list of clouds (as shown on the right) to import your own clouds. You can separate your clouds into a folder of their own by clicking the Folder icon to add a folder.

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"
**All photos are accurate.
None of them is the truth.**"

—RICHARD AVEDON

4

Reflections.

BONUS
VIDEOS

This creates the glassy, mirror-like reflections you see in landscape images. I made a short video for you on how to create reflections in Photoshop.

5

Masking.

BONUS
VIDEOS
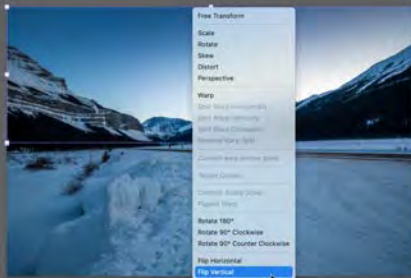
When it comes to editing parts of your photo, this is a huge game-changer, too. AI-powered and pretty amazing. I did a video for you on how to use the Masking tools to edit any part of your photos.
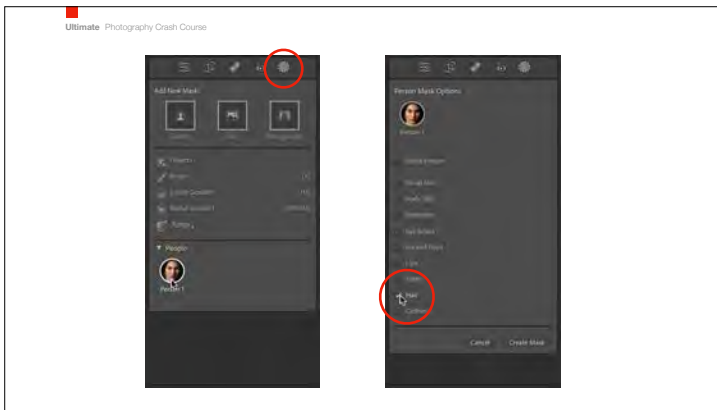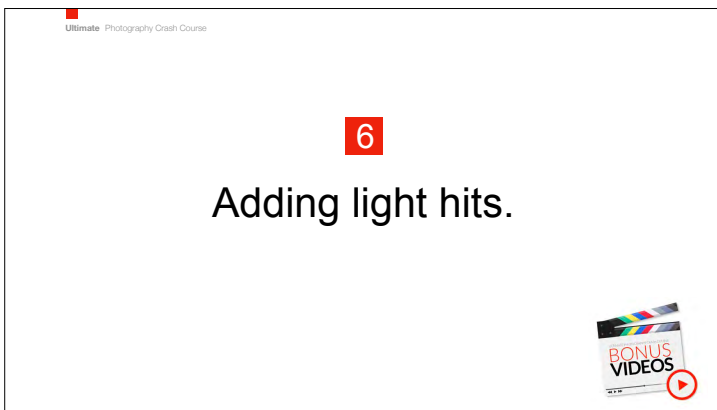
When you click on the Mask button, a list of masking tools pops down, with the three most popular up top with their own button. If your image has a person in it (like our example), after a few seconds, it recognizes your subject, and a round thumbnail of your subject appears at the bottom of the pane (as shown on the left). If you click on that icon, it uses facial recognition to identify individual parts of your subject, from their facial skin to hair, teeth, etc. If you move your cursor over any one of them, you get an onscreen preview of the area it would mask. Click the checkbox (as shown on the right), then click Create Mask to mask that area.

6

Adding light hits.

This is a very popular technique in landscape and travel photos for making the light in an area more interesting by adding little pools of light.
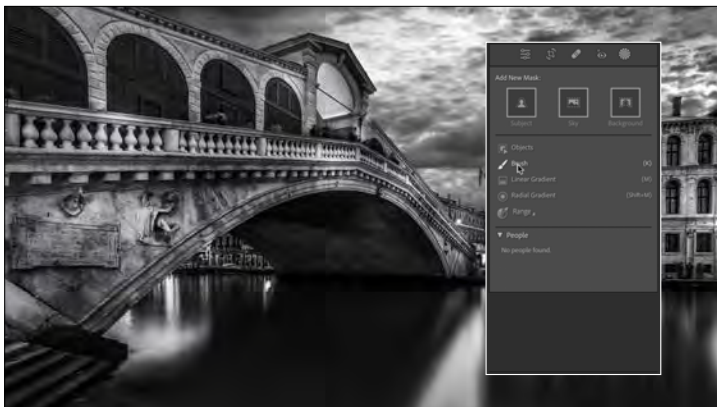

Click on the Masking button and choose Brush from the list of masking tools (as shown here). Increase the Exposure amount to +2.00, make your brush size large by using the right-bracket key on your keyboard and just click once anywhere you want to add a pool of light. Once you've got the pools of light added, lower the Exposure amount so they blend in with the photo.

7

Creating fall color.
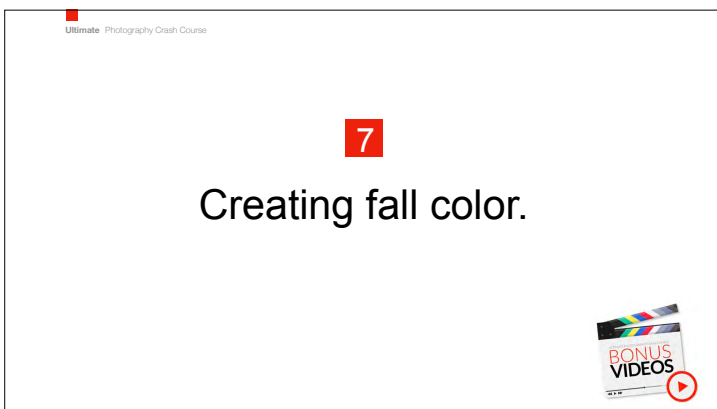
This is a simple trick, but it works wonders for images with trees (provided, of course, that they have leaves). I didn't have to say that last part, right?
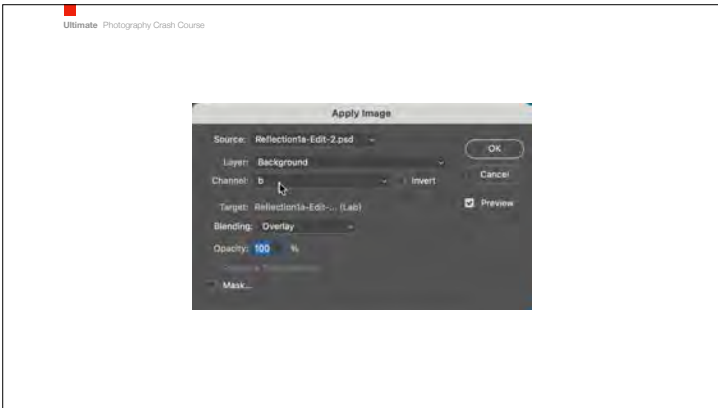
In Photoshop, you start by going under the Image menu, under Mode, and choosing "Lab color." Then go under the Image menu again, but this time choose Apply Image. When the dialog appears (shown here), you only have two changes to make: From the Blending pop-up menu, choose 'Overlay' (as seen here), and then under the Channel menu, choose the 'b' channel (as shown here), and that's it—it's fall. If the colors seem too intense, you can lower the Opacity of the effect by typing in a lower Opacity amount than the default 100%. When you're done, click OK, and the go back up under the Image, under Mode, and choose RGB color.

8

Sharpening.

out of camera   sharpened
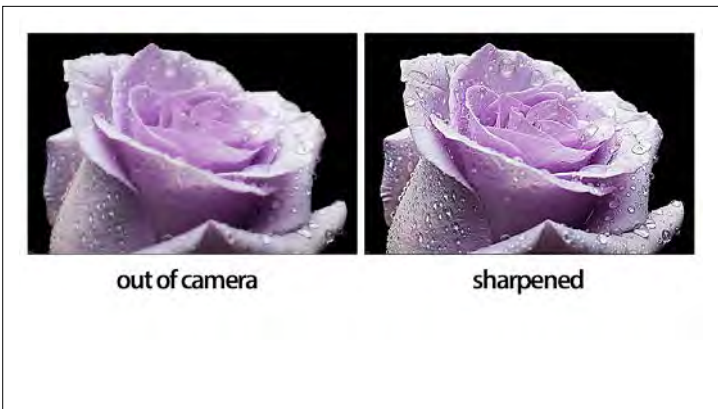
This is why we sharpen. The image on the left was taken with a $6,000+ body with a $2,400 lens, shot on a tripod. The image on the right is how that same image looks once sharpened.

un-sharpened   sharpened
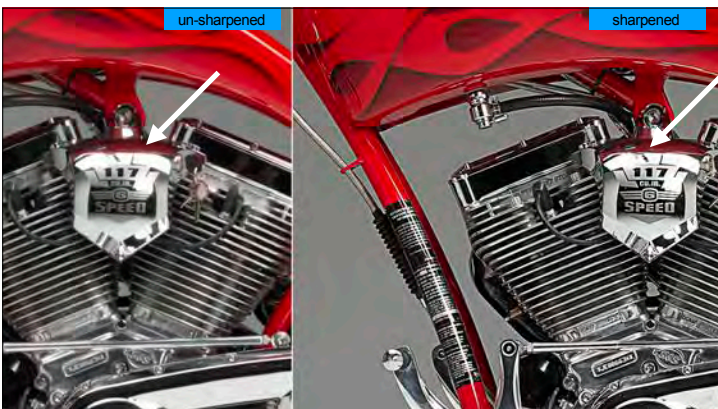
Here's another example: Look at the text on the engine and look how much sharper it is after sharpening.
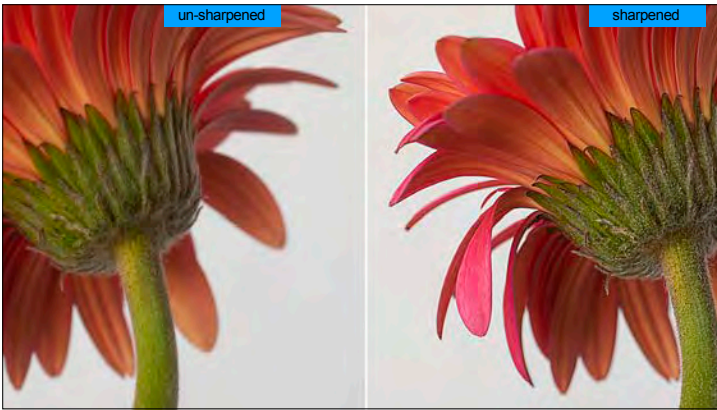
Another example: unsharpened on the left—
sharpened on the right.

JPEG vs. RAW sharpening

▶ RAW PHOTOS REQUIRE "CAPTURE SHARPENING"

Your camera automatically applies sharpening when you shoot in JPEG. It's just part of the process, and this is referred to as "capture sharpening" (sharpening applied to the image when you first captured it). However, if you switch your camera to shoot in RAW, it turns off that capture sharpening, so it has to be added back in just to look as sharp as a JPEG does out of the camera.

RAW PHOTOS REQUIRE

CAPTURE
SHARPENING
TO REPLACE SHARPNESS LOST
FROM SHOOTING IN RAW

Capture Sharpening is applied in Lightroom's (or Camera Raw's if you're only using Photoshop) Detail panel, but it's important to know how much and why.
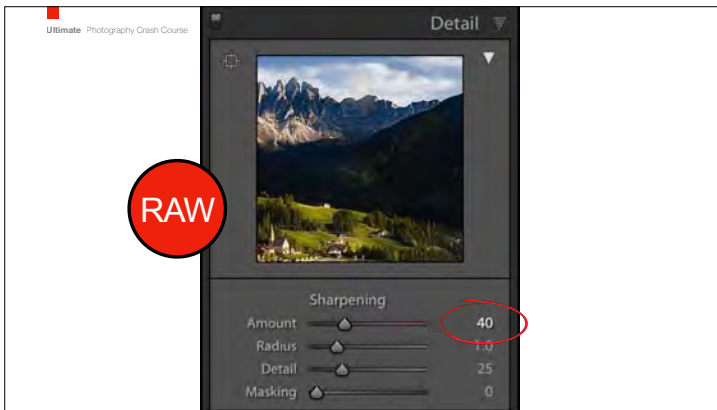

Default Amount For JPEGs

If you shoot in JPEG and go to the Detail panel, you'll see that the Amount slider for sharpening is set to zero. Why is no sharpening added by default? It's because your JPEG was already sharpened in your camera, so Lightroom doesn't double-sharpen it.

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RAW

I use more like 50 to 60

However, if you took your shot in RAW, you'll notice that the Amount setting is set to 40 by default because there was no sharpening added in the camera. This is the only slider in all of Lightroom (or Camera Raw) that is not set to zero, and it's up at 40 to bring back the capture sharpening that was turned off in your camera because you shot in RAW.
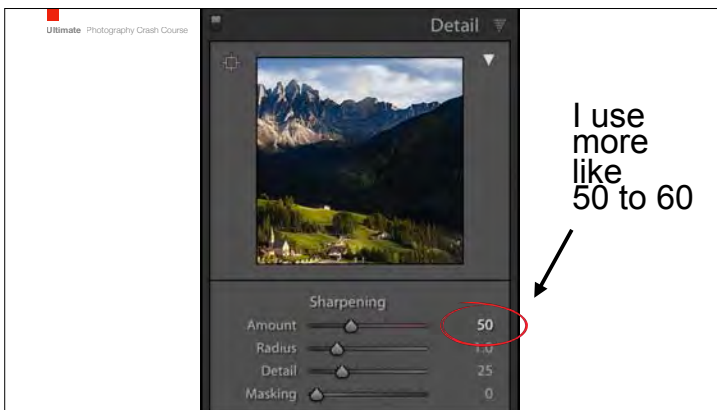
It's great that it's already applied some sharpening by default, but my problem with that is: I don't think it's nearly enough. I get it—Adobe wants to apply a conservative amount, but I always crank this up to at least 50, if not more like 60 because it's just too subtle and I want to start with a nice sharp original file. If the image is a person or something of a softer nature, I'll just go to 50. If it's a landscape or something with lots of detail, I'll go to 60 or even 70.

OUTPUT
SHARPENING
SHARPENING BASED ON WHERE YOU'RE GOING TO SHARE IT.
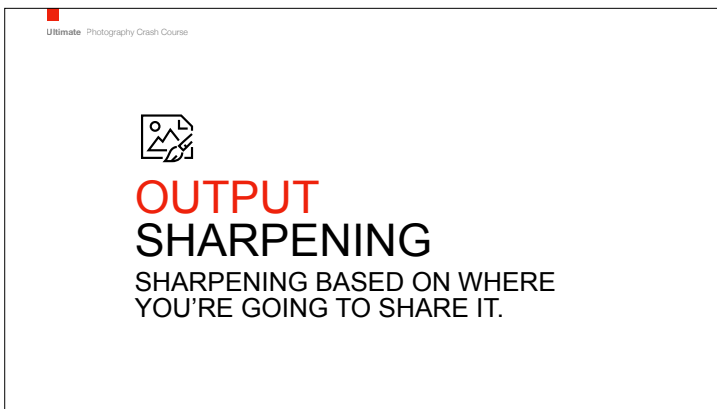
Output Sharpening is sharpening you apply if you're going to print your image, export it to share via email, or post it online. This is added in either the Print module or in the Export module (it's the same sharpening no matter where you apply it and they both work nearly the same way).

when printing   when exporting
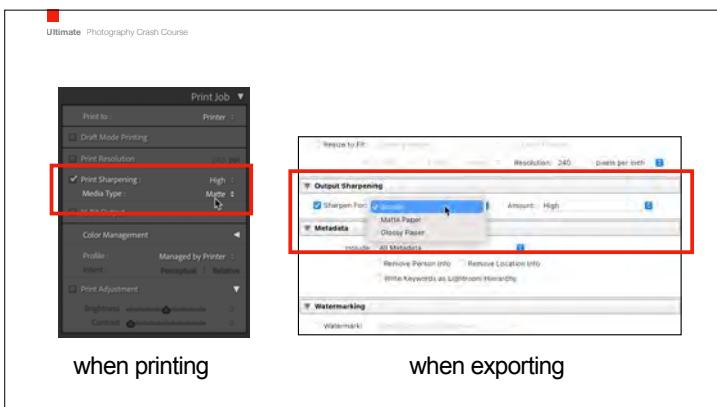
If you're printing, the Output Sharpening is found in the Print Job module (shown left). You turn on the checkbox to apply the sharpening, then you choose how much sharpening you want, Low, Standard, or High (I never use Low, and mostly use High). Then you choose which type of paper you'll be printing on, Glossy or Matte. There is no preview, and this sharpening is only applied when you make a print (it doesn't apply it to the original image—just the copy that goes to the printer. If you're exporting instead, this same thing is found in the Output Sharpening section, but there's an additional option: sharpening for viewing on "Screen."

Those methods are built into Lightroom, and they're free (well, they're part of your subscription), but I have pretty much given up on those because I've found something vastly better than any of the sharpening in Lightroom or Photoshop. It's a plug-in for Lightroom and Photoshop called Topaz Sharpen AI, and it is amazing and does all the work for you. It uses AI to recognize the type of sharpening your image needs and the proper amount and applies it for you, and the results are stunning. You can download a trial copy and try it yourself at TopazLabs.com/sharpen-ai (it's $79.99 but worth every penny).

Look at these results on this blurry shot of a jet.
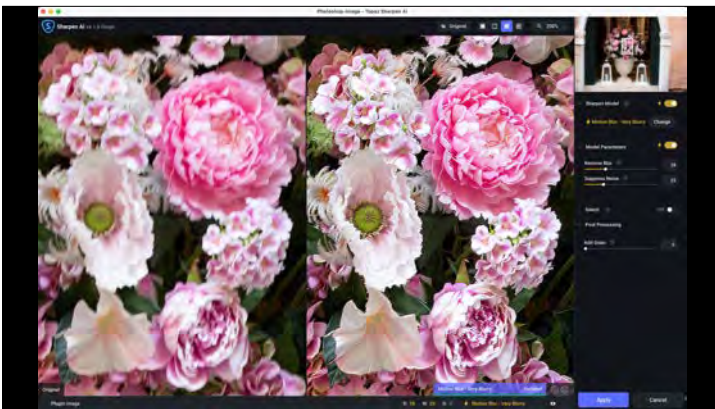
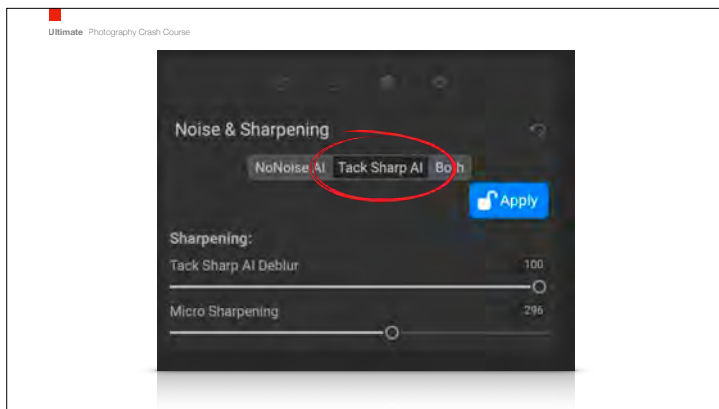Or these flowers I shot hand-held in lower light.
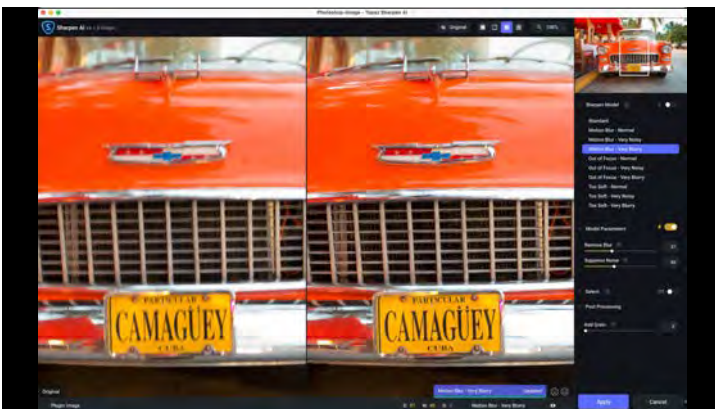
I hand-held this one, late in the day, and it was always so soft I would never show it, but look at it now. Look at the license plate and the Chevy badge above the grill. Come on, that is crazy!

139

topaz sharpen AI

topazlabs.com/sharpen-ai

Here's where you get it (By the way: I have no affiliation with Topaz—I don't get a kickback or commission or anything, but I'm telling you about them because I don't think it's right for me to teach you how to sharpen in Lightroom and Camera Raw, but then when you're not around, I'm using a plug-in to get the results I'm getting).

On1 NoNoise AI

on1.com
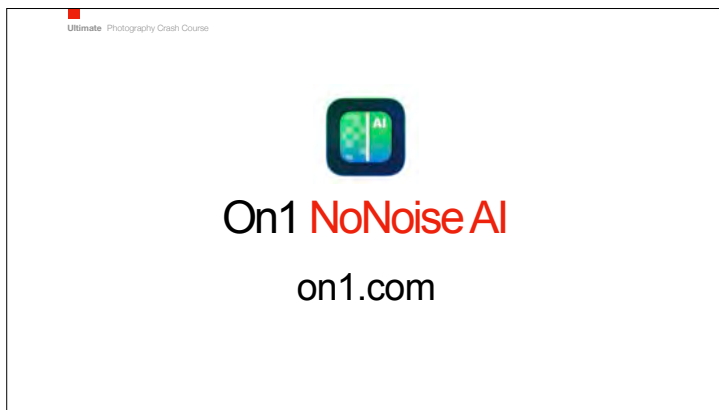
Another really good alternative, and I know it's a plug-in many of you already have, is the Tack Sharp section of On1 Software's NoNoise AI. It's actually really good, and it uses AI like Topaz does to sharpen your image.

Noise & Sharpening

NoNoise AI   Tack Sharp AI   Both

Apply

Sharpening:

Tack Sharp AI Deblur   100

Micro Sharpening   296

All you have to do is turn it on in the app (I don't know why they hid this sharpening in their NoNoise app, but that's where it lives). Disclaimer: On1 sponsors my webcast "The Grid", but I don't get a kickback or commission from you buying this plug-in either.

9

Neural Filters depth blur

BONUS
VIDEOS
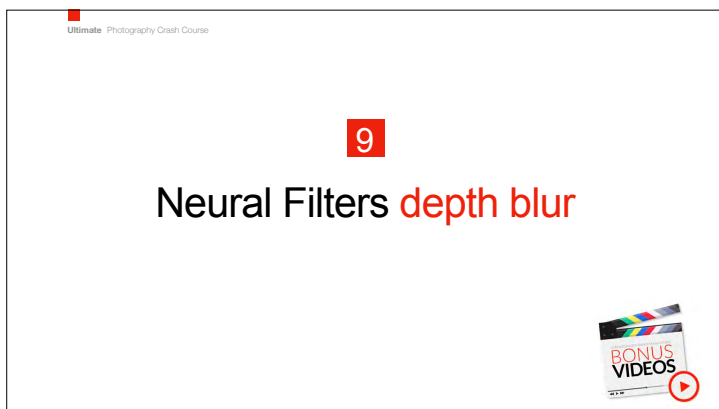
This is another AI-powered filter (it's part of a collection of filters called the "Neural Filters" that Adobe is letting us try and send feedback on how they work). You just download the filter (it's small) and then you use it.
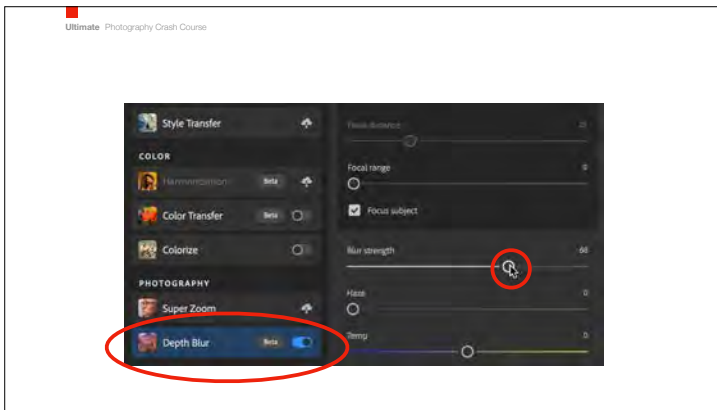
The filter is called "Depth Blur" (notice the word "Beta" to the right of it—it lets you know they're still testing this one (but it's in the regular version of Photoshop), and it does the best job so far of blurring the background behind your subject. You just turn on the toggle switch, it recognizes your subject and blurs in the foreground at the edge of the fame (like a real lens), and then behind your subject (just make sure the Focus subject checkbox is turned on. The Blur Strength (shown circled here) controls how blurry the background will be. The focal range moves where the blurring starts (I rarely have to touch this slider).

10

Removing distracting stuff.
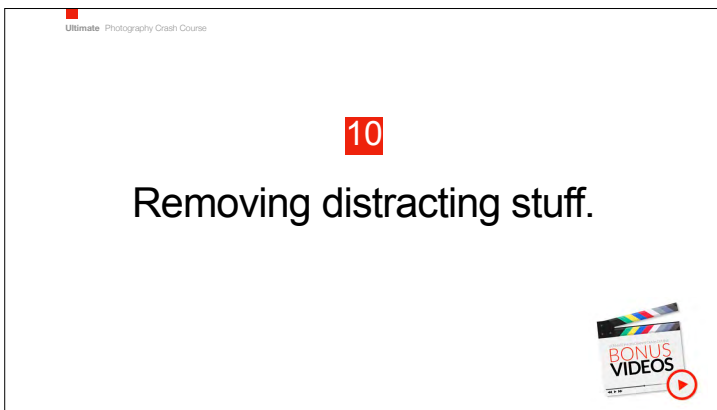
There are a number of different tools for removing distracting stuff. The Healing Brushes, the Patch Tool, the new "Remove Tool" (slower but more accurate because it's AI-powered), and of course, Generative Fill, which is absolutely amazing at removing stuff you don't want in the photo. It's one of the things it does best. I made a video for you on all of these.

Healing Brushes   Patch Tool   Remove tool

Clone Stamp   Content Aware Fill   Generative Fill

The Healing brushes are great for spots, specks, power lines, etc. The Patch tool is for removing bigger things (you use it like a lasso where you draw a loose selection around the thing you want to remove, then click inside that selection and drag it to a clean area, and it snaps back into place and removes whatever was inside that selection). The Remove tool is probably the best of the tools because it uses AI, but it takes a few seconds after each stroke. The Clone Stamp lets you Option-click (Alt-click) on an area, and it clones that area over what you want to remove. The last two have you making a selection first, then they work their magic.

11

Portrait finishing moves.

There are some moves I do to every portrait right at the end of the process.
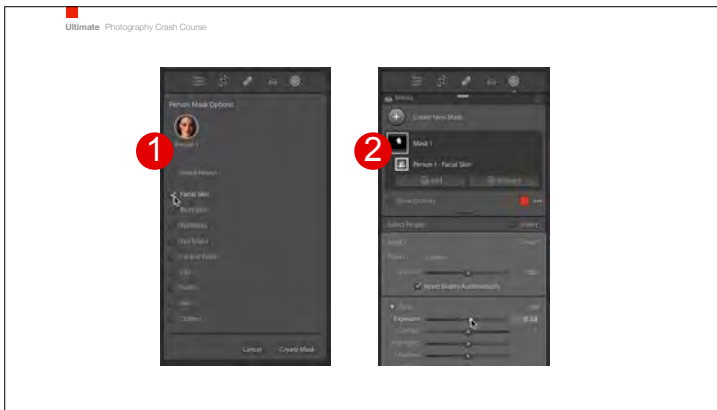
It's a simple move but very effective for bringing attention to your subject's face. Start by clicking on the Mask button, give it a second to locate your subject, and then click on the round thumbnail of your subject and when the list of facial features it can mask for you appears, click the checkbox next to Facial Skin (as shown in #1 left) and click the Create Mask button at the bottom of the panel. Then scroll down to the Exposure slider and increase the Exposure amount to either +0.25 or, at the highest +0.35. That'll do the trick of lightening the face without it looking too light. It's a little finishing move that makes a big difference.

12

Cinematic color grading.

BONUS
VIDEOS
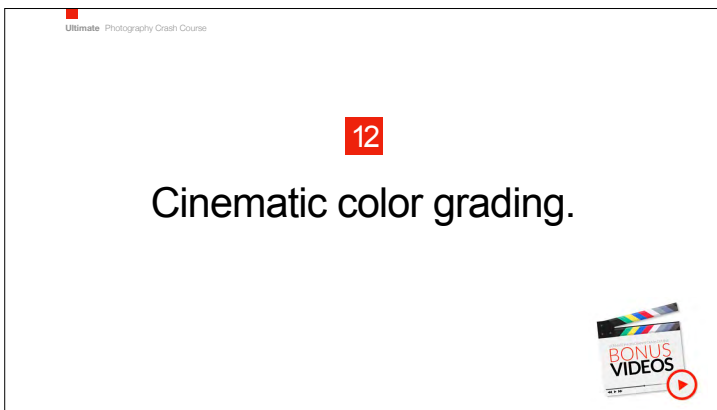
Color grading adds a subtle tint over your image to give it a color tone. It's called "cinematic" because that's where it's used, and now it's made its way to TV and photos. Color grading (adding an overall multi-color tint over your entire image) is huge right now.

This color grading is sometimes referred to as "Cinematic Color Grading" because the process started in movies, but now it's spilled over to portraits and fashion (it's hugely popular in fashion), and you can do the whole thing right thing Lightroom (or Camera Raw).
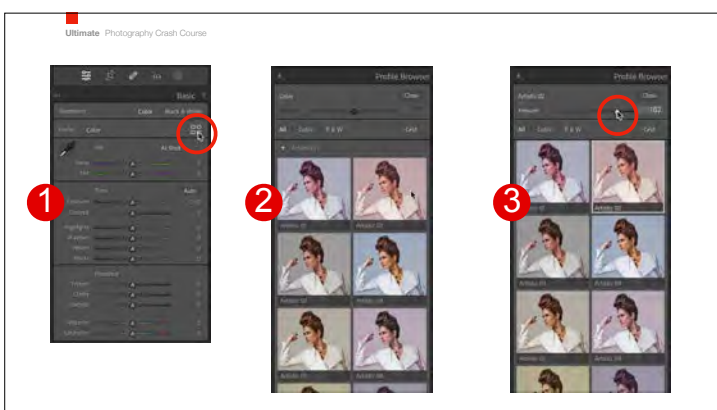
Applying a Creative Profile is one way to add a simple color grade to your image. Start in the Basic panel and click the button with four rectangles (as shown in #1) to brings up a collection of different profiles (as seen in #2). Hover your cursor over any of the thumbnails and it shows an onscreen preview of how your image would look with that profile applied. There are two sets of color profiles and one B&W white set. If you see one you like, just click on it. This doesn't move any of your sliders; it just applies the look. Also, when you click a thumbnail, you get an Amount slider (as seen in #3) to control the intensity of the profile.

13

Retouching faces

There are lots of tools you can use for retouching in Photoshop, but the Liquify tool in Photoshop uses facial recognition, so you can sculpt everything from the width of your subject's face to the height of their eyes, to the amount of the smile, to the height of their jawline, to the size of their nose, all by just dragging sliders.


You can also use a brush (called the "Forward Warp Tool," shown left in #1) to nudge any part of your subject in/out. The secret to using this brush is to make the brush around the size of the area you want to move, and then just nudge it. Just gently nudge the area into place. Again, it will make more sense when you watch my video, but Liquify is an amazing tool, and if you can only learn one retouching tool in Photoshop, this should be the one. The Face-Aware part (shown in #2) assigns all the facial areas to sliders you can move to make adjustments; the most commonly used being Jawline and Face Width.

14

Setting Your Overall Exposure

I start by setting my white and black points, and this is a technique where the worse the original image looks, the more dramatic the results.
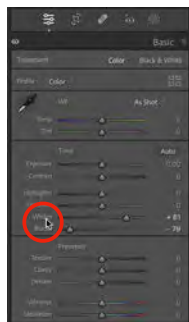

There are three simple things to do and Lightroom or Camera Raw will do almost all the work. The secret to this is holding the Shift key. You do this in the Basic panel—hold the Shift key and double-click on the word "Whites" to set the white point and then double-click on the word "Blacks" to set the black point. Now that your tonal range is expanded, look at the image and see if you think it should be a little brighter or darker, and if you think it is (one or the other), you'll just need to drag the Exposure slider just a little bit to make it look right. It's really two double-clicks and a drag, but I think you'll get much better results with it.

15

Fine Art Architectural B&W

There's a fine art architectural look that's been taking off the past few years, and while all the articles and tutorials I've seen are really in-depth and actually quite complicated, the method I'm going to show in class is super simple and you can do an entire image in 3 minutes or less.
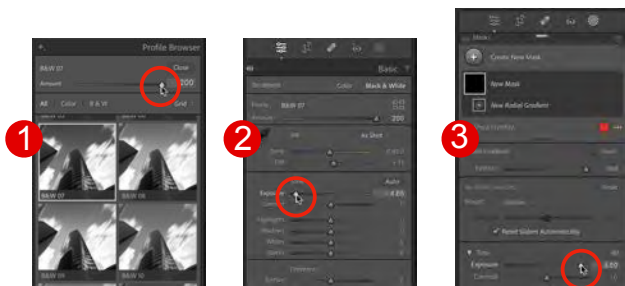
I've got this technique down to just three steps: (1) In the Basic panel, click the button with four rectangles to bring up the Profile Browser. Scroll to the B&W Profiles, and find one that makes the sky a bit darker, click on it, then drag the Amount slider to 200 (as shown in #1). Then click Close and in the Basic panel, lower the Exposure amount until the photo is nearly black (as shown in #2). Lastly, click the Masking button and choose the Radial Gradient, increase the Exposure to +3.50 (as shown in #3) and drag out ovals where you want your beams of light. Make sure your Feather amount is set to 100 (as seen in #3). That's it—3 steps.

Photoshop's Select Subject is pretty good, but you can make it even better with one small change.

16

Better Select Subject

You can choose Select Subject from the Select menu, but for better results, click on one of the Selection tools in the Toolbar (as shown in #1, where I'm choosing the Quick Selection tool). This adds a Select Subject button to the Options Bar (as seen in #2), but if you click to the right of the Select Subject button, you can send this selection to the Cloud for better results. It takes a second or two longer, but the results are usually much better. If you want this better Cloud selection to be your new default, go to the Preferences window, click on Image Processing, and where it says "Select Subject Processing," choose Cloud (as shown in #3).

This is one of the most incredible selection tools ever, and it's super easy to use. It's one of the most under-rated tools in all of Photoshop.

### 17
Object Select Tool

You start by getting the Object Selection Tool from the Toolbar (if you don't see it, it's probably down at the bottom of the Toolbar under the three dots. Click on that, and you'll find it in the list of extra tools. If you want to make it a permanent part of your Toolbar, go under the Edit menu up top and choose "Toolbar," and then find in the right column and drag it where you want it on the left column). Once you choose this tool, take a look at the double-arrow-up in the Toolbar (you'll see it rotating for a couple of seconds), and then you can just click on anything in your photo to select it. Yes, it's that easy.

18
Better Composites

If you need to put your subject on a different background and have the two images match tonally, color-wise, and with attention to the edges blending nicely, there's a Neural Filter for that.
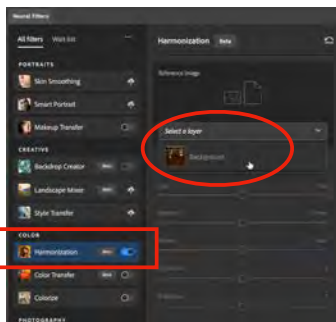
Go under the Filter menu and choose Neural Filters (it's right near the top). When its window opens, go down to the COLOR area in this list of filters on the left and turn on the toggle switch for Harmonization (as shown here). If the filter shows a cloud icon to the right of it, it just means you need to click on that icon to download the filter to your computer first before you can use it. Once you turn it on, you'll need to let it know which layer has the background behind your subject because that's what it will use to blend your subject in with it (that's what I'm doing here—you have to select a layer, but then it does the rest for you.

There are a number of problems that are caused by the lens, and if you see one (from barrel distortion with something bowing in or out), this is one of those things that is so simple, but yet so many people skip this step, but it makes a huge difference.
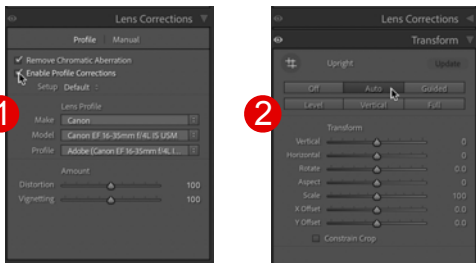
Go to the Develop module, and open up the Lens Correction panel. Then turn on the checkbox for Enable Profile Corrections to have it detect the lens you used and apply a profile fix automatically. If it doesn't find your lens, just choose your Make and Model from the list. Then go to the Transform panel and click on Auto (as shown in #2) to apply a balanced correction, and that usually does the trick. If not, you can use the Guided Upright correction and just drag out lines over things that should be horizontal or vertical and that will do it.

Lightroom (and Camera Raw's) HDR has a secret that is really useful.

In Lightroom and Photoshop's Camera Raw, when you create an HDR image the big secret is: you can crank up the exposure and the shadows and you'll see very little noise. Where normally, it would be a shower of noise, with an HDR image created this way, you can bring out shadow detail like never before, without the downside of noise.

Here's an HDR (three exposures blended into one).
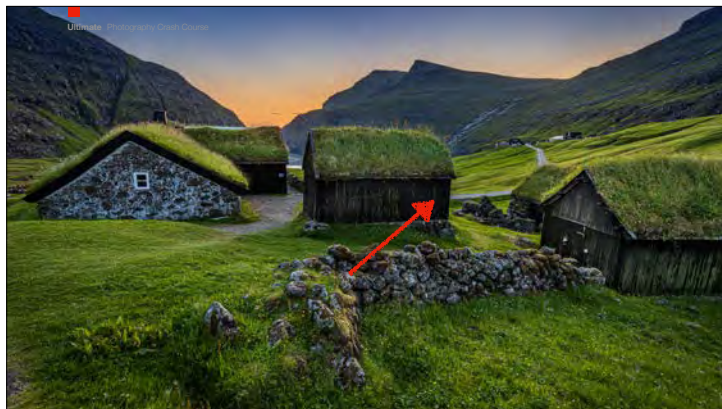
We're going to zoom on in this area of the shack.
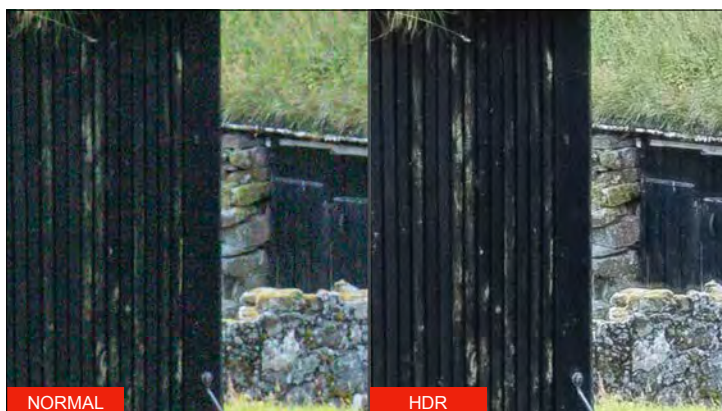
Here's a side-by-side so you can see the difference.

NORMAL   HDR

Let's zoom in even tighter. Crazy, right? Here's how to create one in camera, and then we'll look at processing it in Lightroom (or Camera Raw, which is pretty much the same thing when it comes to the processing controls).

First, turn on exposure bracketing to capture multiple images, each with a different exposure: (1) The normal exposure. (2) one 2 stops underexposed (darker). And (3) one 2 stops overexposed. I set my exposure bracketing to "2 stops." On some cameras, you can only do 1-stop intervals, so you have to set it for 5 shots total: a 2 stops underexposed shot, a 1 stop underexposed shot, the normal exposure, a 1 stop overexposed shot, and a 2 stop overexposed). You only need the 2 stops under, normal, and 2 stops over (you can ignore the other two, even though your camera winds up having to make them).
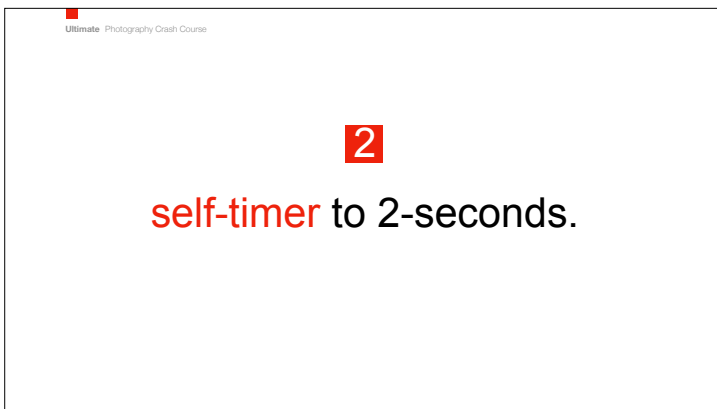
This is the key: turn on your self-timer. That way, when you press the shutter button, since you're in high-speed continuous mode, it automatically takes all three of the bracketed shots for you (so you're not having to press the shutter button three or five times). That's all there is to it. For those of you who are a little more advanced, you can set up a custom setting for shooting HDR, so from here out, all you'd have to do is choose that custom setup and press the shutter button, and it would already be in exposure bracketing mode, in high-speed continuous shooting mode, with a self-timer ready to go.

I made a very short video of what it looks like (well, more like what it "sounds like") when you take an exposure bracketed shot with those features turned on.
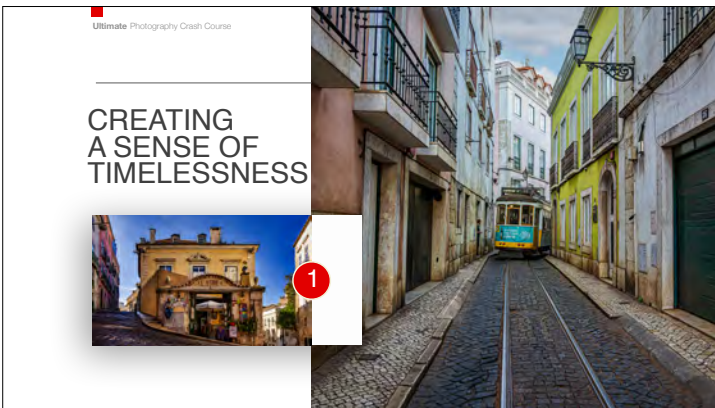
VIDEO: How to combine your bracketed images into an HDR image

I also made a short video for you of how to combine those bracketed shot into a single HDR image in Lightroom or Camera Raw.

⏰

END OF FOURTH SESSION.

HOW TO CREATE YOUR BEST TRAVEL PHOTOS EVER

Ultimate Photography Crash Course

CREATING A SENSE OF TIMELESSNESS

①

I'm starting with this because I think it's one of the most important aspects of creating truly memorable travel images. You travel to these amazing, old-world countries, and the buildings and monuments, and points of interest are surrounded by billboards, power lines, satellite dishes, and so many things that take us away from the romance of the scene. This is done either in camera, in Lightroom and Photoshop, or both, but it makes a huge difference.

Here's an example of what I'm talking about. Where's the old-world charm in this shot? You might as well have time-stamped the shot. That big Evinrude engine doesn't evoke much romance (unless you're in love with modern outboard motors).
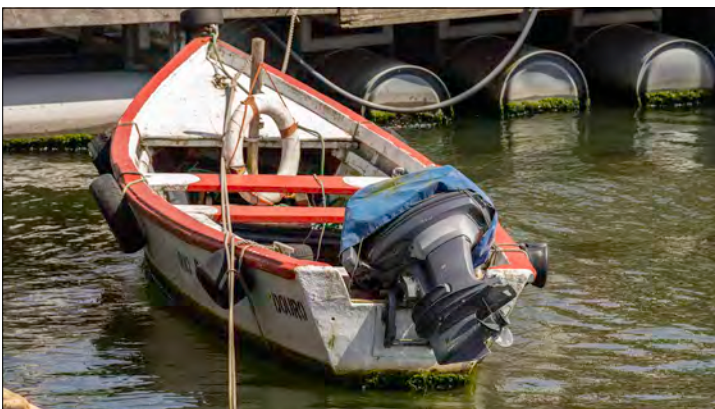
Same thing here. Take off the motor and it takes off the time stamp and the shot has a chance (not a big chance, mind you—it's not a great shot—but it didn't have a hope either way).

150
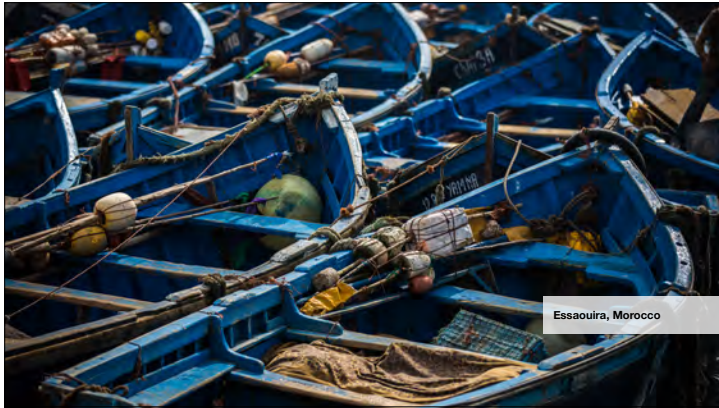
This is better. Timeless.

Essaouira, Morocco
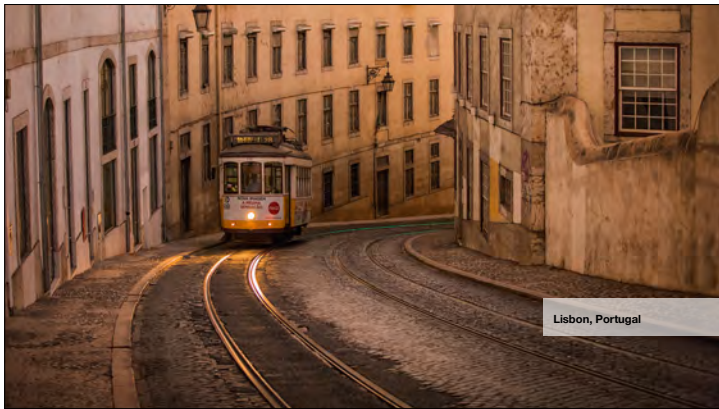
Here, I had to remove some signs and graffiti from the walls, and some minor stuff here and there in Photoshop, but for the most part, this retains that certain romance and timelessness I was after. Weird fact: this is my most-liked image ever on Instagram.

Lisbon, Portugal

Here's one of those same trolley cars, but by seeing the modern cars, and the very modern ad on the front of the trolley, it breaks the spell.


That new Mercedes right behind the trolley (taken on the same street as that original shot; I just turned around and shot behind me when I heard the trolley coming) doesn't have the same feel at all. Of course, the light isn't as flattering because now the sun is up, but also the modern liquor ads on the side of the trolley aren't helping us either.
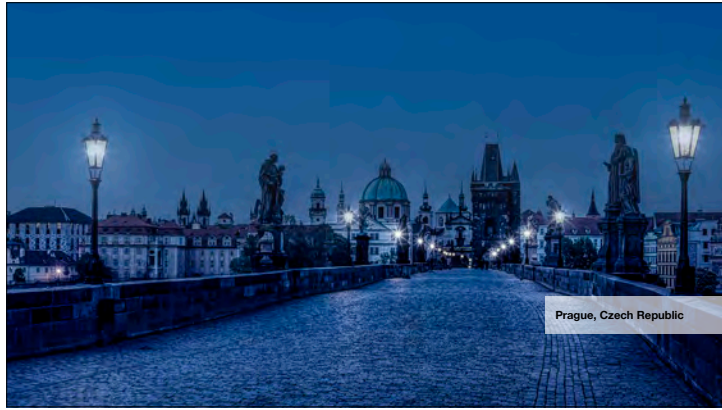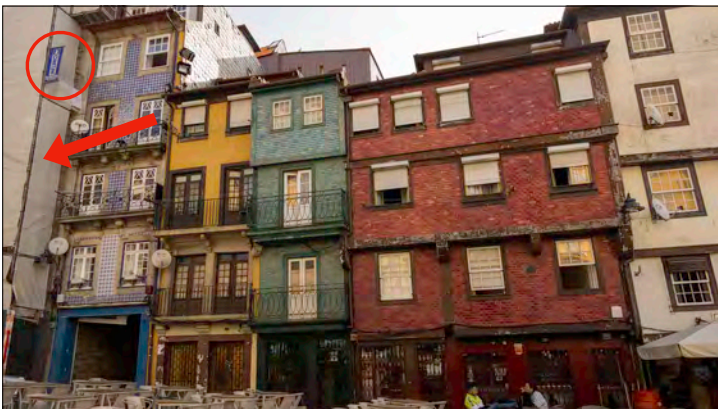
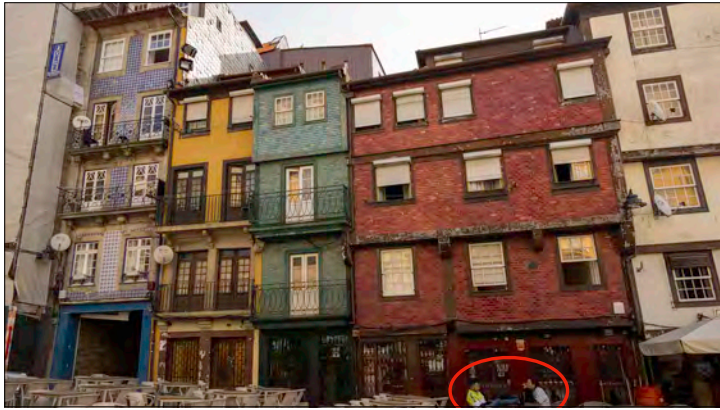Not a hint of when this was taken. It's timeless.

Prague, Czech Republic
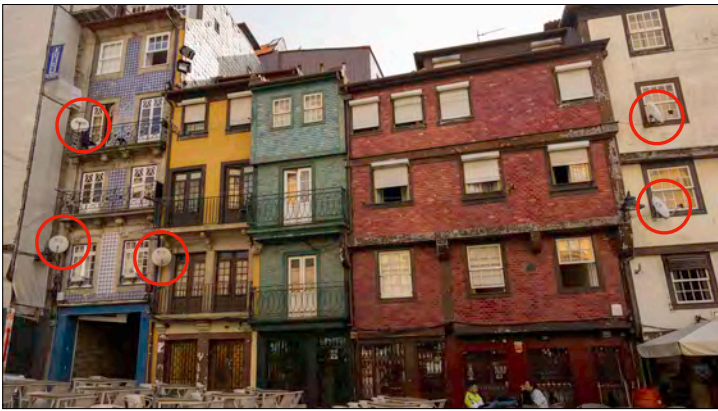
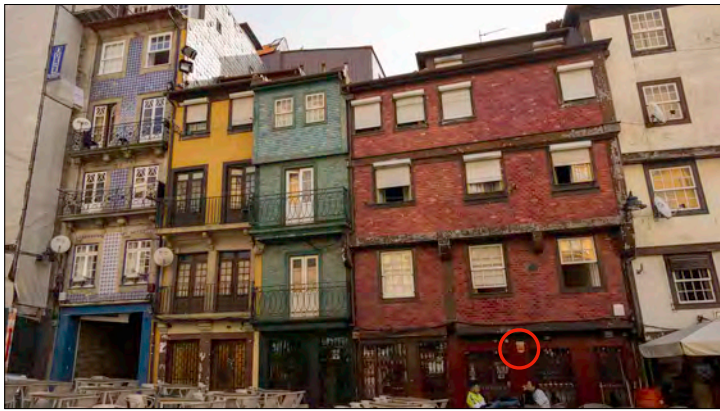Here are typical things that kill the romance—look at all those satellite dishes.
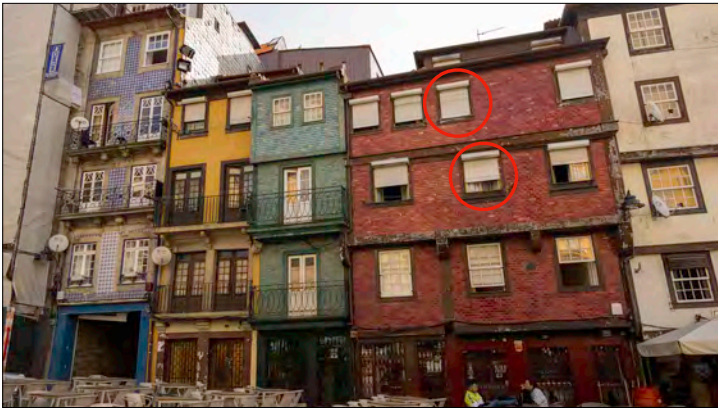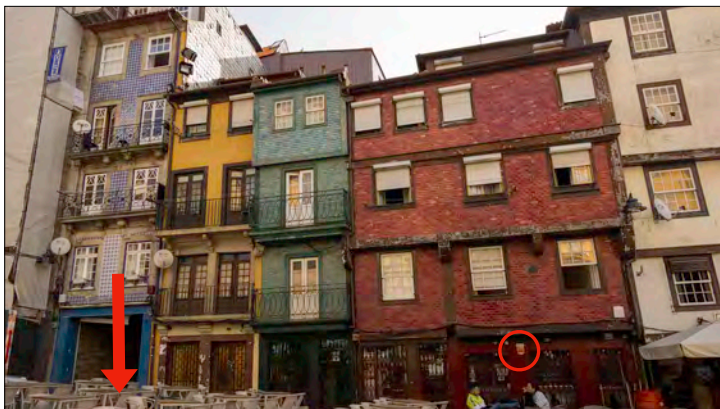

Or the modern storm shutters…

Or the scaffolding, and the construction sign on the scaffolding isn't helping.

How about the two guys wearing modern clothes?


Or the modern alarm company sign…

Or the modern tables and chairs. You can compose the shot to avoid most of that or remove some of it in Photoshop or both. Though this is a pretty lame shot, and removing all that stuff still wouldn't make it have that missing romance, at least you have a few common things to keep an eye out to avoid.

Portofino, Italy

Find that boat—without the big outboard motor, or other giveaways help the viewer connect.

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Prague, Czech Republic

Here's another example of creating old world charm through composition.

Prague, Czech Republic
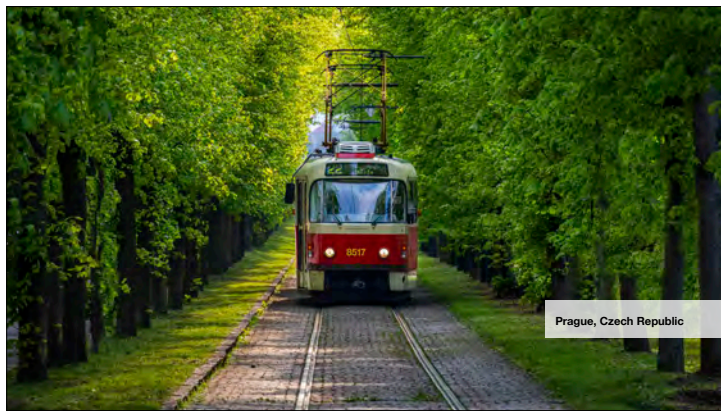
I had to wait a while for this older train to come by because most of the trains were very modern, and they lacked that old-world charm that this older tram brings.

Rome, Italy

By excluding new things, and ads, and posters, and modern era things, you're not distracted and can get lost in the romance and timelessness of the shot.

St. Marks Square
Venice, Italy

Timeless.

View from Academia Bridge
Venice, Italy

This canal has looked like this for hundreds of years. Maybe more. But if you saw the garbage barge with the crane hanging off the back, and the workers in modern clothes, and the water taxis full or tourist, it breaks the connection.

Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Water and bikes. Nothing to give away the time frame. If you had a sign or poster or a Toyota Camry visible in the shot, it would lose that special something.

Rome, Italy

Another timeless Rome shot.

Paris, France

Another example, on a rainy day in Paris, with some help from Photoshop.

Sometimes you can create the timelessness you're looking for through framing. Without the right framing, this quiet, solemn moment is seen in an entirely different light.

Like seeing that she's looking at an iPhone. It really loses something.

TRAVEL REALLY LIGHT
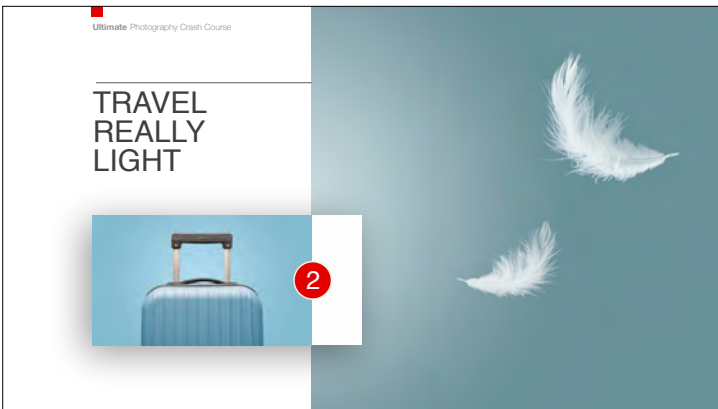
This is the secret to still enjoying your vacation while taking your photos. If you take too much gear, you'll regret it.

just one or two lenses.

If you can get away with just one lens, I promise your trip will much better, and so will your photos because you'll always have the right lens on your camera. If you take two lenses, you'll only have the right lens on about 50% of the time, and you'll always be switching lenses. It's a fact.

Canon: 24-240mm f/4-6.3

This is my go-to lens for travel, and often it is the only lens I take for the entire trip.

Sony: 24-240mm

If you're got a Sony full frame, check out their 24-240mm, which I actually think is a better range than 28-300mm because it's wider on the wide end, and on the long end, you can crop to 300mm or more easily, but you can't make a 28mm wider than it is, which is why the 24mm end is an advantage.

Nikon: 24-200mm f/4-f/6.3

If you're got a Nikon Z mirrorless, check out their 24-200mm, which is as wide as Canon's and Sony's, but not quite as long on the long end, since it's only 200mm, but again, you can crop it in to get more length—you can't make a wide-angle shot longer than it already is.

Canon: 14-35mm f/4

If you're going to shoot a lot inside palaces and cathedrals and such, and you feel like you absolutely must bring a second lens, I would go with a 16-35mm lens (which is very popular), or one of the new ultra wides, like the Canon 14-35mm f/4 for Canon RF mirrorless.

14-35mm   24-240mm

If I was going to take just two lenses with me, it would be the 14-35mm and the 24-240mm. That way I can go super-wide (at 14mm) and I can also hit the landscape sweet spot in the 24mm to 35mm range. Then, I pick it up again at 70mm all the way to 200mm on the long end. I'm only missing that small range between 35mm and 70mm (basically a 50mm, which I wouldn't use for travel photography anyway), so with these two lenses, you cover an ideal range. Just a reminder: I'd get the f/4 versions—half the price, less weight, and still super-sharp.

You'd only be missing the range from 35-70mm

50mm

You're missing such a small range—one that would be covered by a 50mm, but I couldn't tell you should use a 50mm for travel, so you're covering a great range with just those two lenses.

Black Rapid RS-4 Classic Strap

I use a Black Rapid strap for travel because the strap goes across my chest making it a very hard "snatch and grab" for a thief on the street. Plus, I can pull the camera up to my eye so quickly (I don't have to take it off my shoulder like with a normal camera) that I don't miss the shot.

Think Tank Photo **Turnstyle 10 V2.0** Sling Bag

I'm done carrying huge backpacks, which is why I love this sling bag from Think Tank Photo. It's my go-to bag on every vacation and shooting adventure I go on.

It holds a surprisingly large amount of stuff for as small and lightweight as it is. It's just a little larger than a lens bag, and in mine I I keep my second travel lens, a Platypod (more on it later in the class), a ballhead, my ND filter, cleaning cloth, and extra batteries. Pretty much everything I need.

You can sling it over your back, or you can do like I do and keep it on your side.

Think Tank Photo
Turnstyle
10 V2.0
Sling Bag

When you need to get into the bag, it swivels right around front, so you have easy access to everything, and all it's pockets. This is an awesome bag (and thanks to my buddy Jeff Leimbach who turned me onto it a couple of years ago).

GETTING
SHARPER
SHOTS
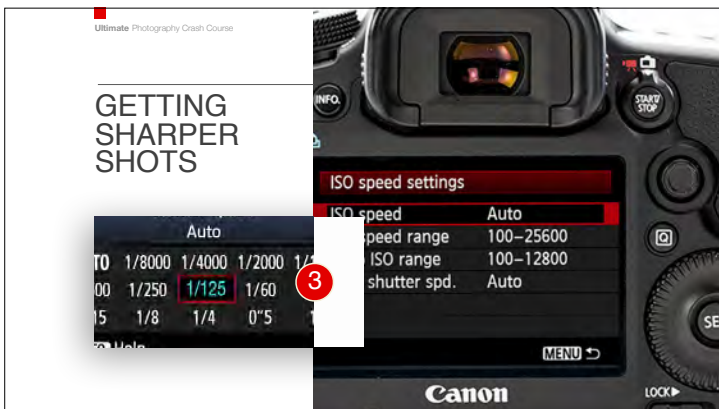
Don't return from your trip with blurry shots.

turn on auto ISO

If you're tired of getting blurry shots because your shutter speed fell too low (very common in travel photos), you can turn on Auto ISO and have that problem go away fast. It's one less thing to worry about on your camera, so you can focus (no pun intended) on what really matters. However, you can't just turn it on—you want to set a Minimum Shutter Speed that it will never go under.

1/125 of a second.

That shutter speed would be 1/125 of a second. That's a great shutter speed because most folks can effortlessly hold their camera still enough at least 1/125 of a second and get really sharp shots, no matter what the lighting condition. In fact, you won't have to worry about the lighting conditions anymore. This is a game-changer for travel photography.

DO SOME SCOUTING FIRST
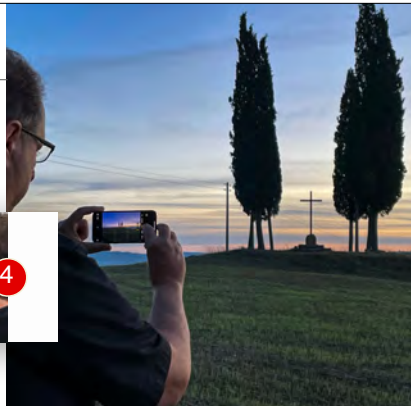
This can make a bigger difference than you'd think.

I start any visit to a new city by taking one of those double-decker bus 2-hour tours. You'll learn an amazing amount on this short tour, but you have to think about this very touristy tour differently.

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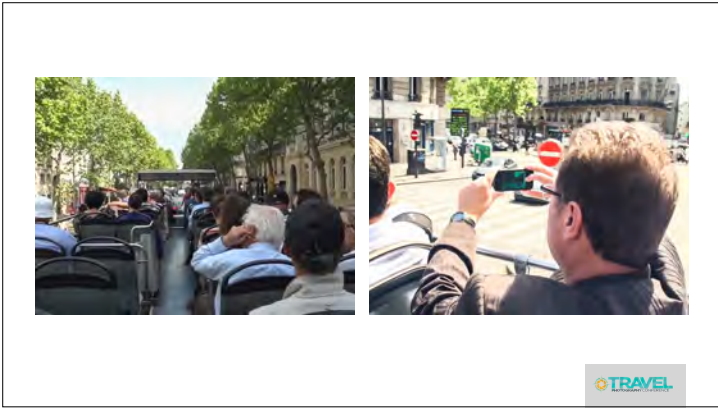
Don't take your big regular camera, or you'll turn it into a photo shoot. This is to find out which places are covered in scaffolding, so you can skip them, which places to go back to that you never knew about, and a chance to enjoy the city without just seeing it through your viewfinder like usual. Take your cell phone to take location scouting photos and names of places, buildings, and streets you want to go back to.
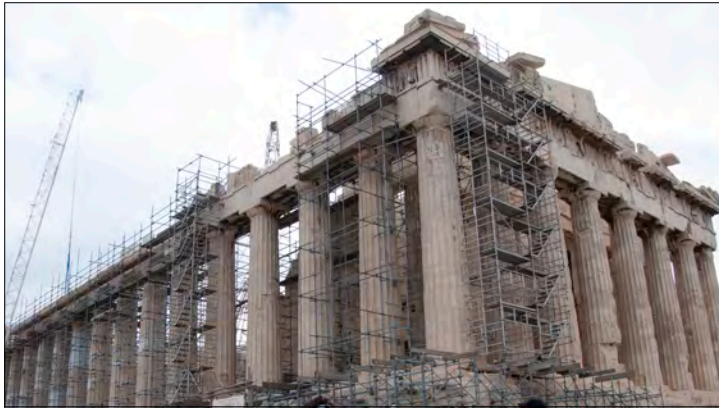

Here's what I found on my scouting trip on my first day in Rome. I found that, like most of anywhere these days, they are restoring the thing I most wanted to shoot at dawn the next day. At least I knew, so I could shoot at dawn somewhere else.

Here was the scene at the Trocadero in Paris. Ugh.
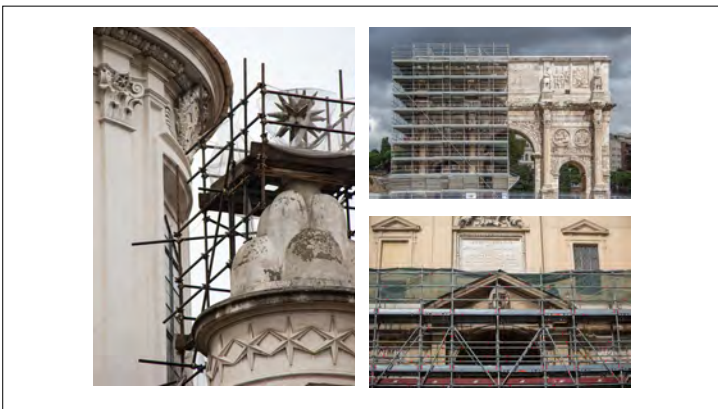
Yeah, the scaffolding is pretty much everywhere.

Here too, in Greece. The crane is a nice touch.

Or here in Florence, where at least they covered up the restoration, but still.

SHOOT
THE CLICHÉ
CLASSICS

When you visit some of the most popular cities and you ask people to close their eyes and picture that city, what comes to mind? For Paris? The Eiffel Tower. For London? Big Ben. For Italy? For some reason, it's the Leaning Tower of Pisa (that's why it's on so many pizza boxes). People are expecting to see these from you.

Don't disappoint them—shoot these early in your trip so you absolutely get them. Get them out of the way now, and then spend the rest of the time trying to create the type of shots the photographer in you wants to take.

When you get back home, and you're sharing the images from your trip with family and friends, or online, be sure to show these classic shots right up front, so they can relax knowing they've seen the classic shots they were waiting for and now they can actually enjoy the rest of your images without any anxiety.

Don't go to Rome without bringing home a shot of the Colosseum.

Here's what the Trocadero looks like when it's not covered by construction walls, or filled with tourists.

You gotta get that straight-on shot of the Taj Mahal.

I told a story in class about how my wife kept telling me to shoot the famous barber poles the gondolas tied up to them in Venice, and how I didn't want to do it because it was so cliché, and then went I got home, sure enough, people were asking, "Do you have any shots of those barber poles?" Imagine the look on my wife's face. Lesson learned.
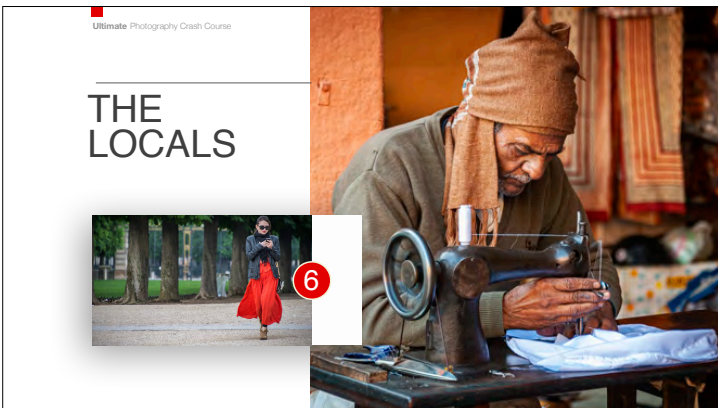
Why it's important to include shots of the locals.

Without shots of the locals, you'll come home with lots of shots of buildings. Do people even live there? Was it an abandoned city? Including shots of the locals is what helps to bring the culture and community to the image.

The locals in Jaipur, India.

A famous artist invited us into his home in Lisbon for a portrait session. Friend of a friend.

People love fashion and want to see what the local fashion is, and what the locals are wearing, so keep an eye out for a fashionable-looking man or woman (or a couple) and capture them in their environment.

I took this selfie one day when I was out looking over the Grand Canal in Venice. Stop snickering.

This was my kid's archery instructor at a hotel in Ireland.

I did the smile, shoot, and share thing with him. I could tell from this facial expression that this was a one-shot type of arrangement, so I took my one shot and moved on. Had I gone over and bought some fruit, I probably could have shot ten more because I went from stranger to customer.

A financial transaction at the Giza Pyramids.

There are two ways to go about getting photos of the locals. One is to taken candid shots like this.

You can also take photos where your subject isn't posing, and often times these make the best images, because when people pose for you, usually they give you a big "posed-looking" grin. Just kind of blend in with scenery; just stand there and see what walks by. Patience and staying in one place can really pay off here.

This is another friend-of-a-friend shot at his winery in Tuscany.

This is a method I call "Smile, Shoot, and Share." I don't speak Indian, so I smiled, help up my camera to these young ladies, and I took the photo. Once you take the photo, turn the back of the camera toward them so they can see the shot and walk slowly closer so they can see it.

Another candid shot, taken from across a canal on the island of Burano. I waited until someone walked by wearing contrasting clothing.

Another candid shot at the Giza Pyramids. I'm far back with a 70-200mm.

I generally don't take photos of children without their parents permission, but in this case, the little boy was up high in a second story window.

Another candid in Venice.

Walking on a side street in Havana, Cuba—the contrast in colors made me want to take the shot.

This is another one where I held up the camera, smiled, and took the shot.

In Jaipur, India.

I did get his father's permission for this shot.

Another method is to have your tour guide ask a local to let you take a portrait, like I did here. I've never had anyone turn down a tour guide's request to let me take their photo. They're locals, too. They speak the language, and they're asking nicely. It's always worked out. I wish I thought to do it more often.

Candid shot in a market in Jaipur India.

In the Vatican in Rome. She sensed I was trying to take her photo, but I was as stealthy as I could be. It took a lot of patience (probably 20 minutes worth) to get her without people around her, and in the right light.

Another candid in Venice. Taken from a small footbridge.

Not my most excited subjects.
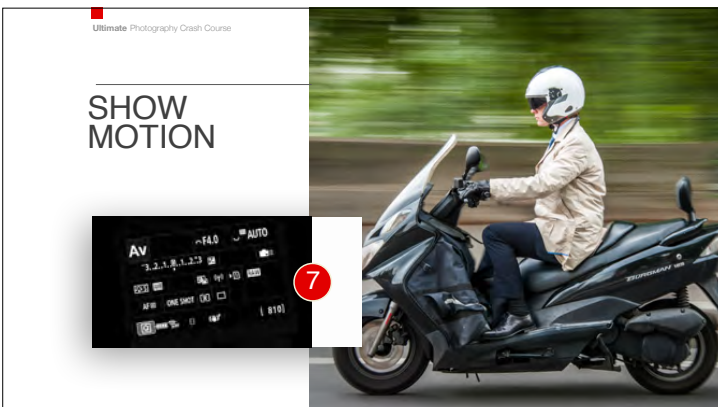
Adding a sense of motion to your images can bring life and movement to your images.

The key is to use a slightly slow shutter speed (hand-held) to a long shutter speed (on a tripod).

This is a panning technique. You can shoot in Shutter Priority mode and set your shutter speed to between 1/125 of a second to 1/250 of a second (your camera will pick the f-stop for you in Shutter Priority mode), and track along with the moving object as it passes. Set your shutter to high speed continuous and fire the whole time you're panning with the moving object. Expect that there will be a bunch of frames that are totally out of focus, but remember—you're only going to show one shot of this scene, so you only need one in focus.

This is a slower moving vehicle, so you can use a slower shutter speed, hand-hold, and pan along with it, firing the whole time.

This is a hand-held, slow shutter speed shot and I'm panning with the man as he walks.

SHOOT
THE
DETAILS

8
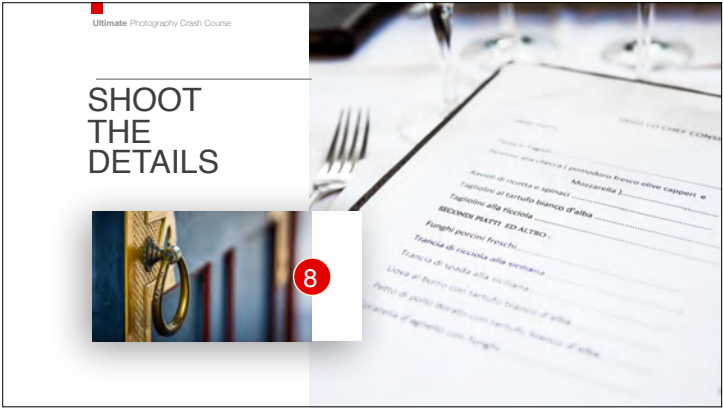
When you come back from your trip, you'll need more than just "hero shots" to tell the story of your trip, which is why I also shoot plenty of detail shots that help tell the story. Things like this door knob at the entrance to a temple (left) or the menu at a wonderful restaurant in Rome.


The typical shot of a guard at the entrance to the palace would be from a distance, but a close-up shot like this shows details you wouldn't normally see in a photo, and it helps tell the story. Again, it's not a hero shot—it's a supporting shot.

But pair it with some other shots from that area, and it helps tell the story. Not every shot can be a hero shot, and they don't need to be. Capture the details, group these shots together, and let them help tell the story of your trip.

This is a Russian Orthodox Church in Havana Cuba—you don't need to show the whole church to get the idea. Just showing details like this avoid showing the messy scene at street level, and shows a view you wouldn't normally see.

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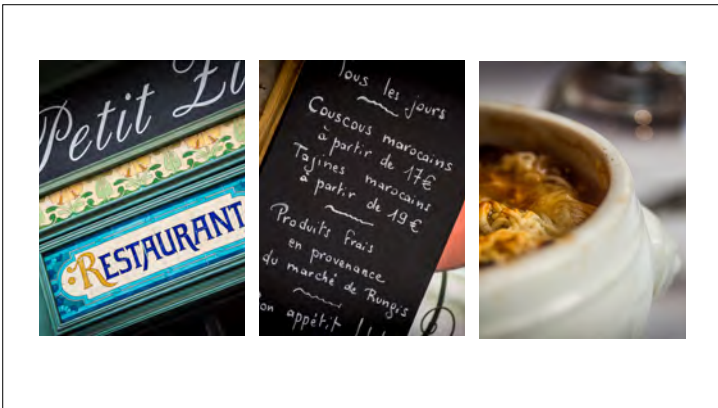
Here are three totally unremarkable shots, but they really work well when you place them together. I remember that restaurant, I remember shooting that menu, and I absolutely remember how amazing that French Onion Soup was (of course, in Paris they don't call it French Onion Soup. It's just Onion Soup. If you ask for "French Onion Soup," it's like going to McDonald's in New Jersey and asking for "An American Big Mac").

Here's a good example. This is a totally "meh" shot taken on the side of a temple in Tokyo. It's kind of a busy, messy shot. Now let's zoom in tight.

To me, this is a much more interesting shot. Even though I wouldn't share this photo on its own, it works great as a supporting piece. By the way, where was this taken?
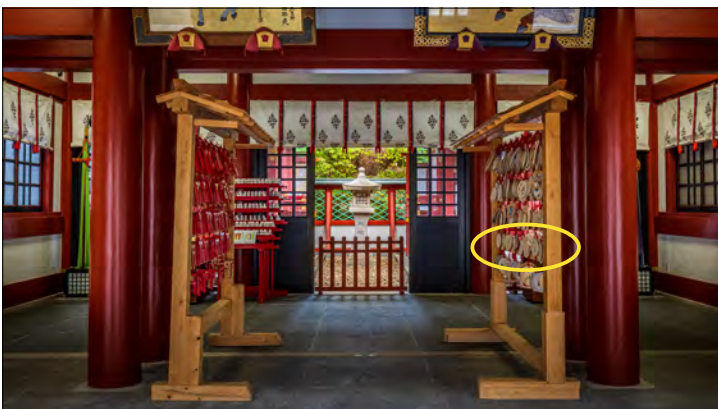
Within that same "meh" shot, hanging on the right side (shown circled here in yellow).

Here's zooming in close on an area.

Here's that same area even closer. Having a flexible zoom lens (like the 24-240mm) really gives you lots of options when shooting details like these.

You don't have to show the whole building—it's messy with tourists roaming everywhere and billboards and signs and modern stuff everywhere. Zoom in tight and show the details of part of the building. This is a small part of a tall tower in Marrakesh, Morocco, and it's something you can't clearly see like this from the ground, but your zoom lens can see it.
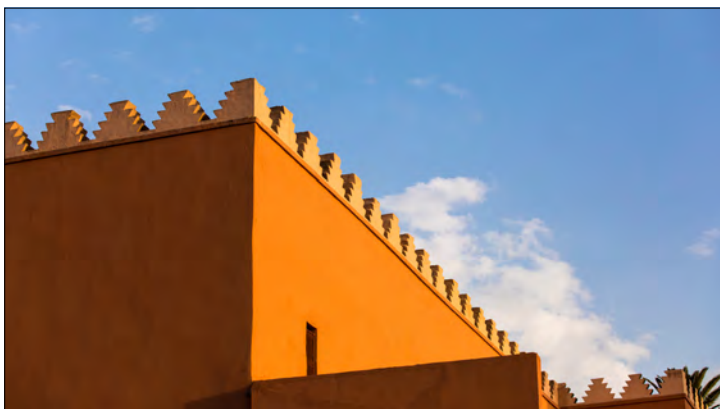
A different side of that same building.

These shots were taken inside a small inn in the South of France. Each one of these on their own is a boring shot, but together they help give you a feel for what it was like at the inn.

This is a closeup of a fisherman's hands in a rural part of China.

These small bowls were on a shelf in a store in Morocco. Not a hero shot, but it would work great in a series of shots.

Take a look at this shot for example. Hmmmmm. It's an old tin box with some wire sitting on what looks to be a trash can. Not exactly captivating on its own…

…but pair it with some other shots from that area, and it helps tell the story. Not every shot can be a hero shot, and they don't need to be. Capture the details, group these shots together, and let them help tell the story of your trip.
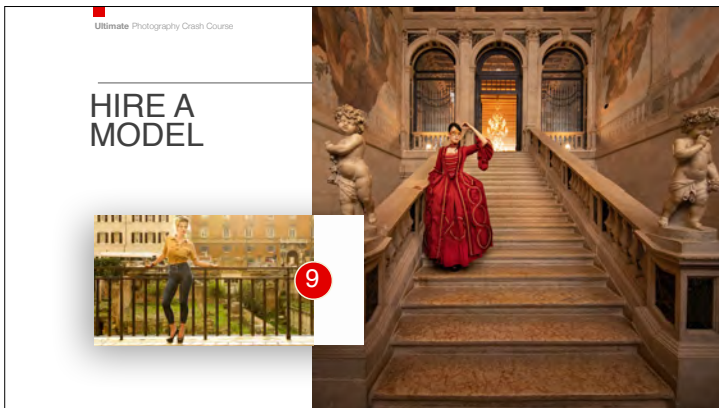
If you're not comfortable with shooting candid shots or approaching strangers to pose, you can always hire a model (it's easier, and often less expensive than you'd think).

This is a wonderful actress in Rome we found from searching on Facebook. We rented an old Vespa (for around $60 for two hours), and used it as a prop for our model (we never drove it—we did the whole shoot within walking distance of the Vespa rental agency). We sent the model photos of what we were looking to do (an old 1950s-60s look) and she came in costume.

Here's our model and Vespa in an alley just outside the rental agency.

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This is an actress we hired in Paris. A friend knew her and arranged a two-hour shoot with her.

We also hired a French actor, so we could do a "young and in love in Paris" type of shoot. We borrowed the red umbrella from our hotel (I had to remove their logo from the umbrella in Photoshop).

We found our model, a ballerina with the Czech National Ballet, on Instagram. It took all of 20 minutes to find her, and we posed her in a terraced garden in Prague. She charged $30 for an hour.

In this case, I rented a ballroom for two hours in a hotel and found a local model. I also rented her Carnival outfit and mask. She didn't really speak English's but she was great!

A friend of mine knew a fire dancer in Maui, and he offered to come out and pose as long as we would share the photos with me. No charge (and he was great).

We found a model through a friend who lives in Paris, and did this shoot in the rooftop bar of our hotel while it was closed.

I was told that if you go behind the Taj Mahal, on the other side of the wall, you'll find locals who will arrange to have other locals, like this woman with the jar on her head, pose for you in their small village for a very small fee. Totally worth it.

We found this wonderful Brazilian model who plays violin professionally on Instagram.

Our fixers in China found a model in traditional outfits to pose for us and arranged with a local museum to let us shoot there while it was closed.

Here she is doing a window light portrait

A traditional Hulu dancer by a friend in Maui.
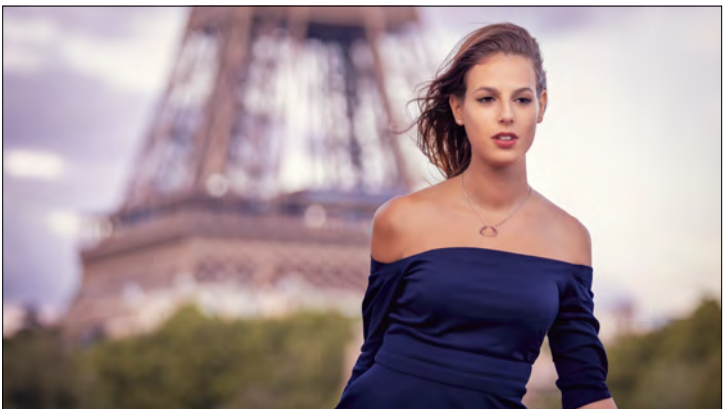
Called a friend who helped us find our model in Paris.

Rented this old 1950s Citroen from an ad in the local tourist magazine. It's normally a tour you pay for with a driver, but in this case, I was able to rent it for an hour, and they drove it to our location.

Another one where we asked our tour guide to ask this gentlemen if he would allow us to make a quick photo.

This man asks you to photograph him for a $1 tip. It doesn't get much easier than that.

Same thing here—she shows up in costume and poses for a tip (Havana, Cuba).

SHOOT
THE FOOD

Surveys show that sampling the food in different countries is one of the main things we love about travel. That's why you see food photos in almost every travel magazine article.

Cafes, markets, bars, and those charming places where we stop to eat, drink, and relax make for wonderful photos, so put a few of these on your list. You don't have to do anything more than to shoot the places you're already going to be eating at. As a customer, they'll pretty much let you shoot to your heart's content.

Having my lunch outside under an overhang. This appetizer is begging to be photographed.
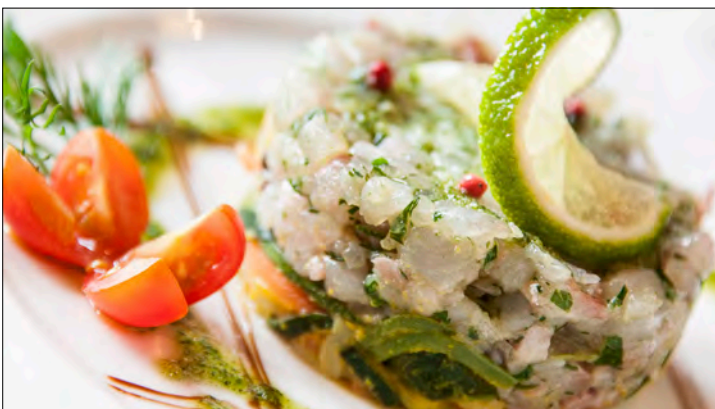
Zoom in tight, tilt the camera, shoot wide open at your lowest-number f-stop, and you're there!

As far as camera technique goes, use a zoom lens and zoom-in really tight to only show part of the dish. Also, use a wide-open f-stop (like f/2.8, f/3.5, etc.) and sometimes try tilting the the camera (as I'm doing here) to add some energy to the shot.

Here's the shot I was taking in the previous shot (thanks to my wife Kalebra for taking the shot of me shooting).

Here's the technique in use again—sitting by an open window or outside under an umbrella, and zooming in tight.

Overhead shots are one I always take with my iPhone because it has a feature that kicks in when you hold the phone flat—it brings up two crosshairs, and when you line the two up on the screen, you know your phone's camera is perfectly flat, so you don't have any perspective issues. Works like a charm.

This is another iPhone overhead shot.

Here's the technique in use again at Gourmet Burger Kitchen, Oxford, England.

Same technique in a courtyard in Morocco during breakfast.

Sitting by a window in a cafe, these were all taken during the same meal. Lovely little dishes in great light.

This is that technique of not showing the whole plate, zooming in tight, and shooting with a little tilt.

You'll see this quite often anywhere in Spain, right out in front of the restaurant in many cases, in decent light.

Sitting at the window to get light on the food (at Gourmet Burger Kitchen, Oxford, England).
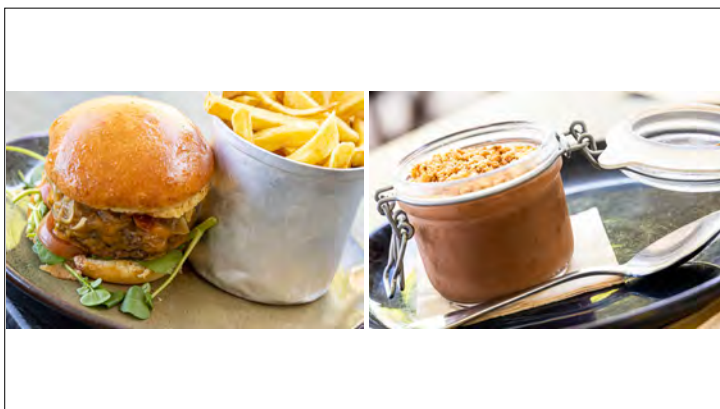
Mmmmmm. Burger. Sitting outside under an umbrella in Lisbon, Portugal.

None of these shots are good enough to carry a page in your photo book or slide show as a "hero shot," but as "story telling" shots together in a group like this, they work really well. All taken during the same meal, and yes, we asked to sit near the window. That is key—either by a window or outside under an umbrella (so the light is soft).

This one is in really tight, but without the tilt. Still works. And yes, this simple looking sandwich was delicious. So were the fries behind it. Mmmmm. Fries.

Another shot you'll see a lot in magazines is someone serving you (bartender, food server, etc.), as you see here. We just asked our server if it was okay to take a photo when she set down our food, and of course, she was happy to oblige. However, it wasn't until we got back home that we noticed that there was a bite taken out of my brother's dessert. #yikes!

Another one of those "server serving" shots that are so popular.

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And another.

That doesn't look like any Budweiser I've ever seen. LOL!

And don't forget the drinks.
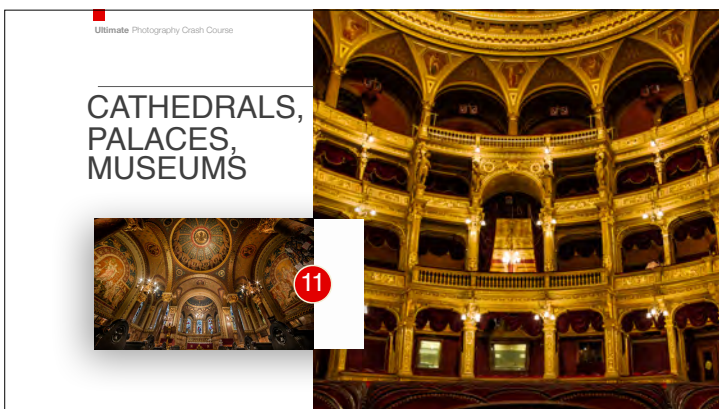
This is what you shoot on a rainy day. I save these interior shots for when there's bad weather.

The tripod police!

The first obstacle you have to get past is the tripod police. It is rare that you can set up a tripod in any interior location of any kind these days. Security will step in and stop you immediately, which is why I had to come up with an alternative.

platypod ultra

This is my secret weapon for shooting indoors. It's a small, lightweight camera base called a "Platypod Ultra," which is super-small (it can fit in your shirt pocket), really lightweight (it's made of aircraft grade aluminum), and I can pretty much shoot anywhere using it without being stopped by security.

Attach a ballhead.

You screw on your ballhead right to plate, and then your camera goes on top of that. This is your indoor shooting rig.

There's my secret weapon, the Platypod Ultra, taking a shot in St. Peter's Basilica—a place where tripods are forbidden and security is everywhere. In fact, they saw me placing my camera on a railing like this with my 14mm super-wide-angle and they didn't say a word. I put it on railings like this, on barricades, and even on the floor, and I was able to get sharp, crisp shots in low lighting that would have been way too hard to hold still hand-holding. I set my f-stop to f/11 so everything would be in focus, and I even shot bracketed shots. It was a mirrorless camera, so I set the shutter to silent.

187
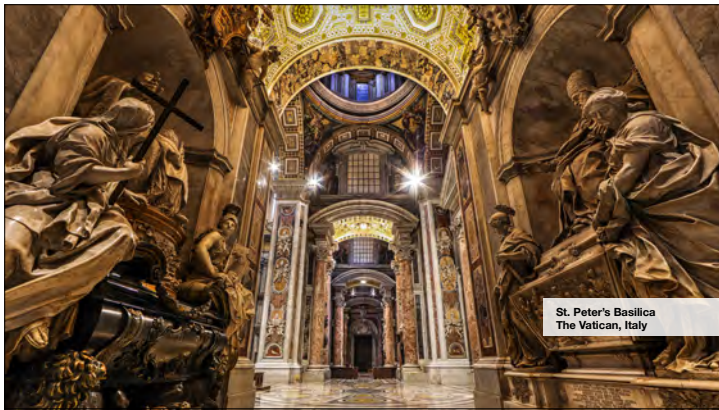
Here's the final image, taken from a barrier to keep you from walking through this area.

St. Peter's Basilica
The Vatican, Italy

This library was packed, but once everybody had cleared out, we had nearly 20 minutes by ourselves without any tourists whatsoever. I setup my Platypod with a 15-30mm Tamron super-wide-angle lens, placed it on the floor, and aimed upward quite a bit (the ceiling it pretty awesome, but I also wanted to get some of this tile floor as well, so I shot it at 15mm). I took a series of bracketed exposures to get the shot below.

Here's the final shot.

Admont Sift Monastery Library
Admont, Austria
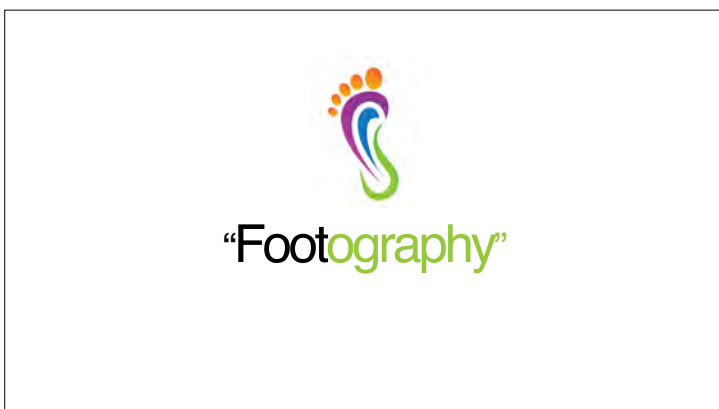
"Footography"

I want to introduce you to a new type of photography, one you can do with your Platypod, that will make this whole process a lot easier. I call it "Footography."

Use the app.
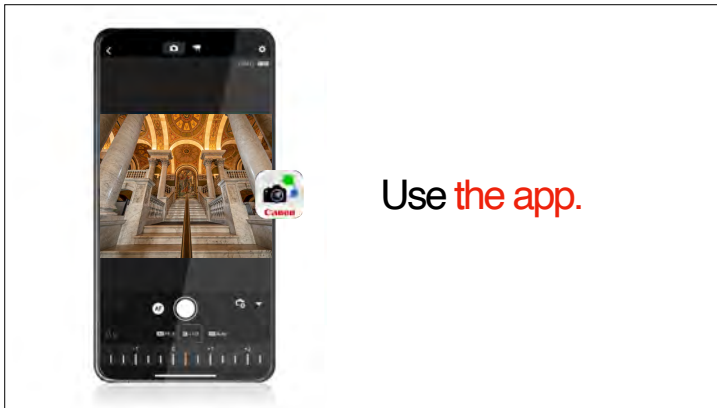
You start by connecting your camera to your free camera control app (here I'm using Canon's Camera Control app). Then…..

You look through the app, and you position the camera with your foot, as shown here. Stop snickering—it beats the heck out of getting down on your knees.

Venice Opera House, Italy

This one is one of those rare hand-held ones I got away with. In low-light situations like this, I take a bunch of shots from the same position as one or two of them will wind up being in sharp focus even though the rest will be a bit soft.

Hand-holding: burst mode trick
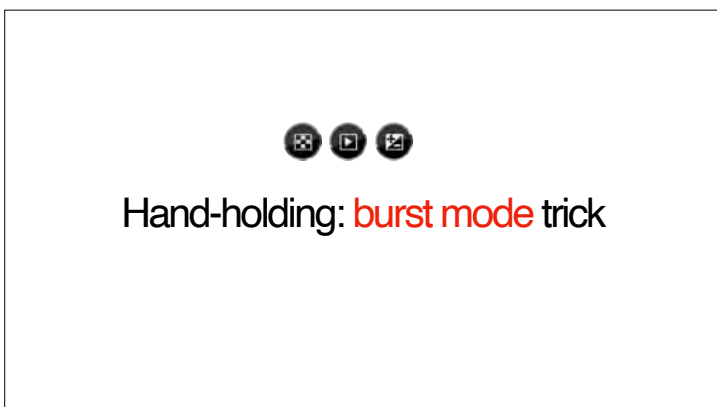
Set your camera to continuous (burst) mode and fire a bunch of shots without letting the camera leave your eye. As I mentioned a moment ago, a lot of your shots will be blurry, but at least one or two will be tack sharp. Don't take just four or five shots. If it's something you really want to have a sharp shot of, do a burst of 20 or 30.

Here's an example. I'm on a ferry moving in one direction in Hong Kong Harbor—this is a ferry moving in the other direction. I'm hand-holding, and you can see by the waves, the boat is literally bobbing up and down in the waves. A lot of the shots were super blurry….but not this one. There's always one (or two).

Hall of Mirrors
Palace of Versailles, France
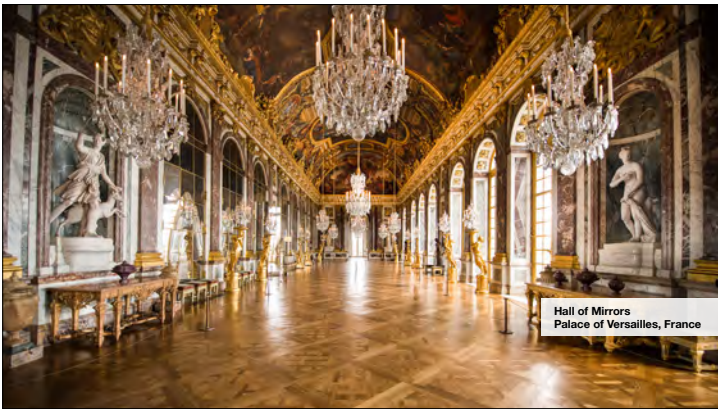
You can also hand-hold using a technique that is half camera technique, half Photoshop. This hall was packed with tourists, so I took a shot every 15 seconds (keeping the camera to my eye the whole time), and then opened all the shots in Photoshop. I went under the Scripts menu and choose Statistics. When it comes up, choose Median from the pop-up menu at the top, hit Add Open Files, click OK, and it will remove anyone who moved during those 15 pictures. You can clean up the rest using the Healing Brush, Content-Aware Fill, or Generative Fill.

Library of Congress
Washington, DC, USA
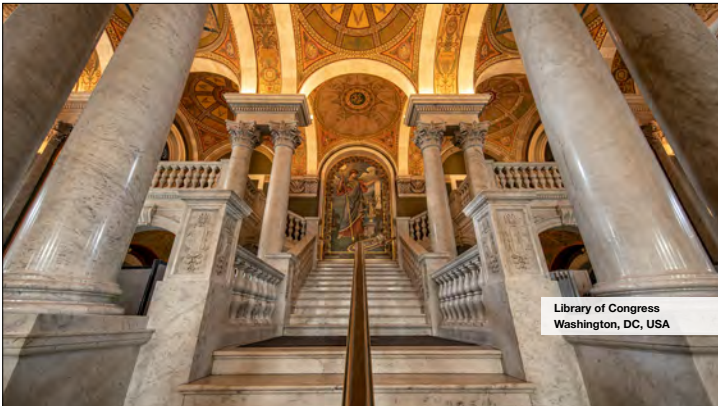
Using the railing to keep everything symmetrical.

St. Nicholas Ukrainian
Catholic Cathedral, Chicago, USA
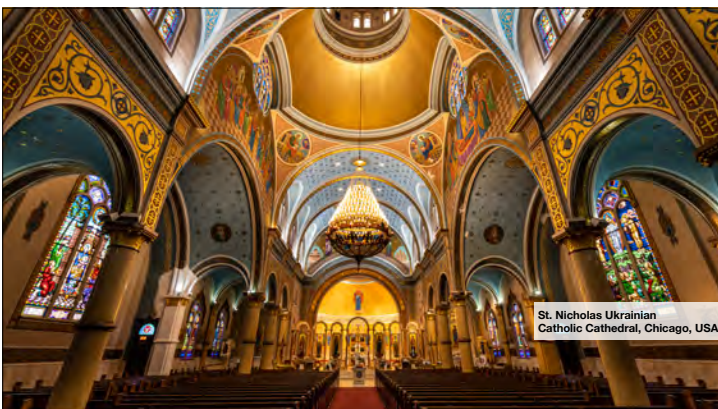
As is the light. The light in these cathedrals can be so dramatic and stunning. Make sure you take a tripod or something to keep your camera steady (if they don't allow tripods, use a Platypod, or just steady your camera on whatever you can—a railing, a pew, a chair, whatever will keep your camera still for a few seconds). Also, this is a perfect place to shoot HDR to capture the detail inside the cathedral and the detail and dimension in the stained glass.
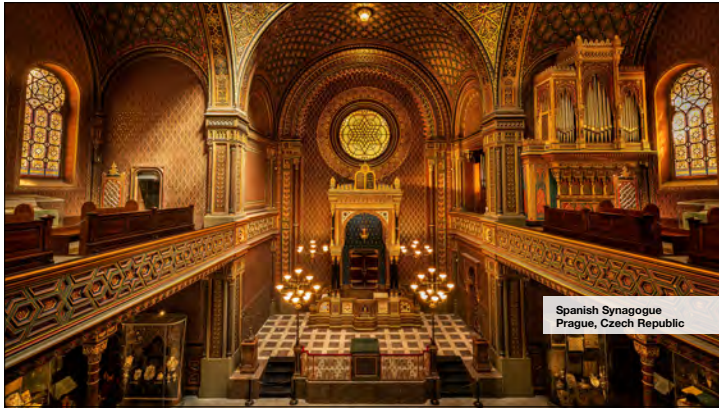
Spanish Synagogue
Prague, Czech Republic

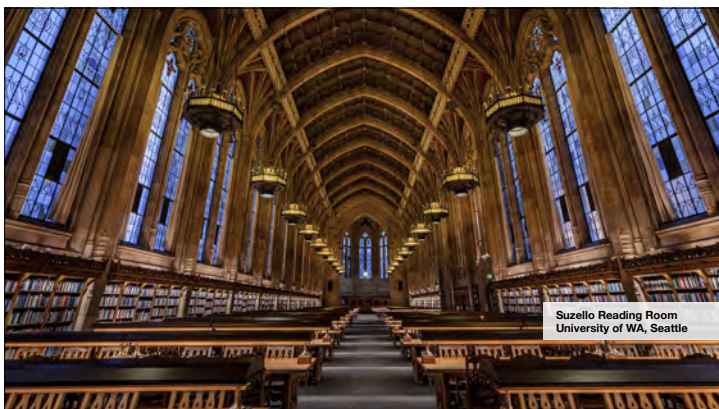Here, I leaned my camera, on a Platypod, on a display cabinet.

Opera House
Budapest, Hungary

I pulled the "last one out" trick here. I went on the last guided tour of the day, and as we moved from room to room, I was the last one in the group to leave so I could get a shot without tourists in the frame.
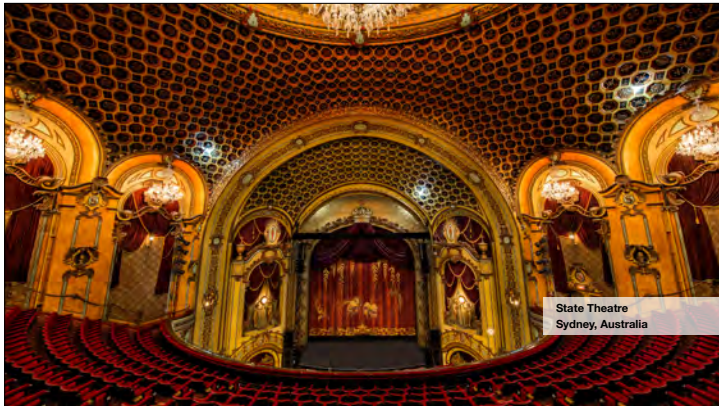
State Theatre
Sydney, Australia

Sitting my camera on a railing.
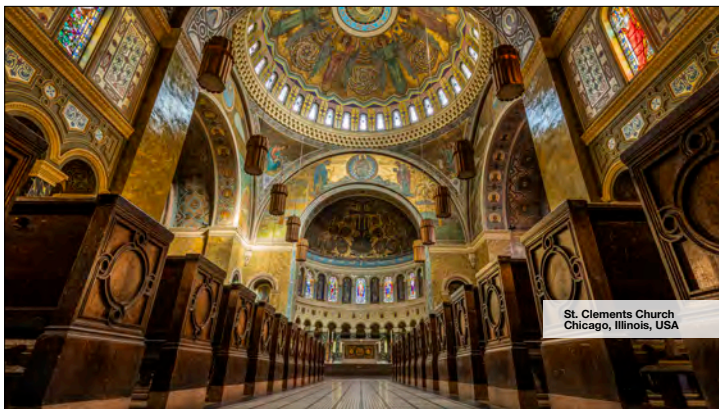

Suzello Reading Room
University of WA, Seattle

Sitting my camera on a Platypod on a table in the back of the room.

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Klementium Library
Prague, Czech Republic

Platypod time—balancing it on top of a rope and stanchion post.

Strahov Monastery Library
Prague, Czech Republic

Leaning my Platypod on the railing.

St. Clements Church
Chicago, Illinois, USA

Taken with my Platypod on the floor.

National Museum
Prague, Czech Republic
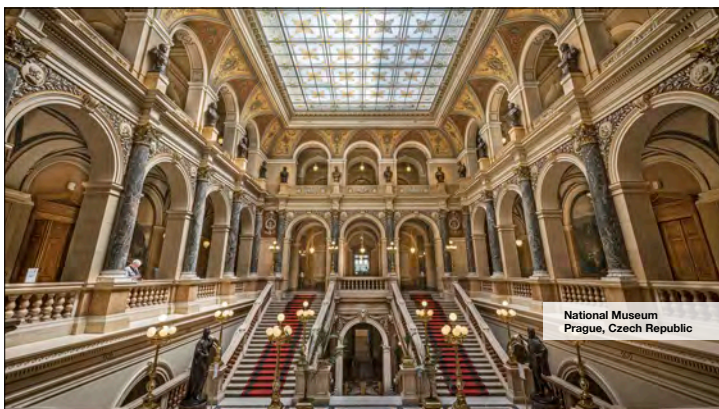
Leaning my camera on a railing.

Standing in the center of that last shot, aiming straight up with the camera resting against my face.

St. Christopher's Chapel
London
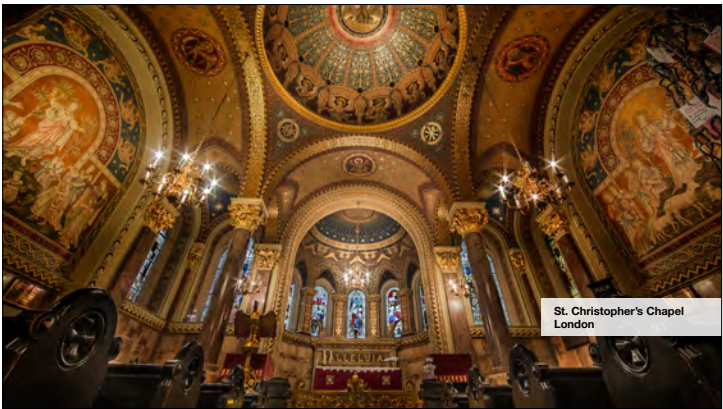
St. Christopher's Chapel, London. (Note: Only four pews. It's probably the smallest chapel I've ever been in, but the super-wide-angle lens makes it look epic.)

Platypod on the floor. Another advantage of this low angle is that it makes whatever the flooring is appear more reflective.

Sometimes you have a structure where outside there isn't a bunch of distracting stuff. These are easy—just hand-hold 'em.

Again, all by itself—not in the middle of a busy city.

There's a particular angle where every scene looks its best. It's your job to find that angle.

Daxu, China
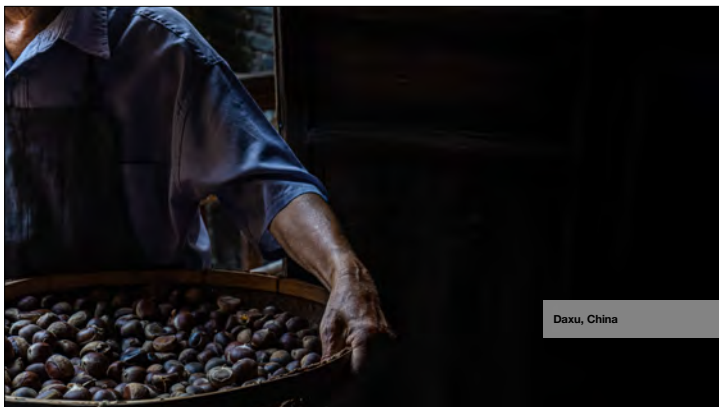
A standard composition would show the entire person standing there and look…well…standard. Only showing part of him and focusing on what he's carrying changes the focus and impact of the shot. Plus, this shot has a lot of negative space (empty space) on the right side, drawing you visually to the subject.

Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque
Abu Dhabi, UAE

This is one of those shots where the graphic shapes and the leading lines are what make the composition interesting. It leads the viewers from left to right through the scene. Also, being shot late in the day, the shadows are starting to soften on the minarets, which is a nice bonus.

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Venice, Italy
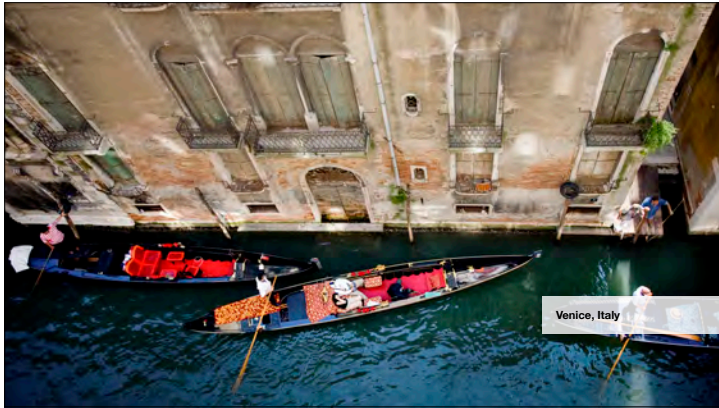
Just changing your perspective makes a world of difference. Shooting from high up or down low makes for a more interesting view.

Havana, Cuba
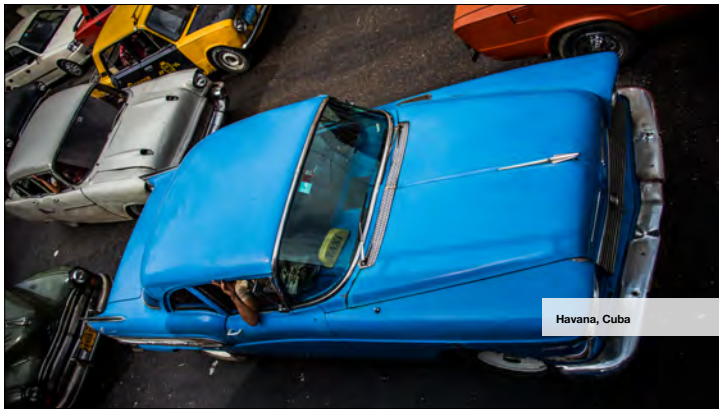
This is another example of a perspective you don't often see of traffic .

Venice, Italy

Another perspective you don't see everyday.

Guilin, China

Here's another compositional rule in play. The pattern is interesting, but the three women walking within the pattern, in contrasting colors, breaks the pattern. It's like Jay Maisel says when he talks about a pattern being interesting, but a pattern interrupted is even better.

This spiral scene leads the viewer right down the stairs.

Vatican Museum Gift Shop
Vatican City, Italy

The concentric circles lead the viewer's eye right to center of the image.

Library of Congress
Washington, DC, USA

This is another one where the round shapes work together to lead the viewer's eye to the stage.

Palais Garnier Opera House
Paris, France
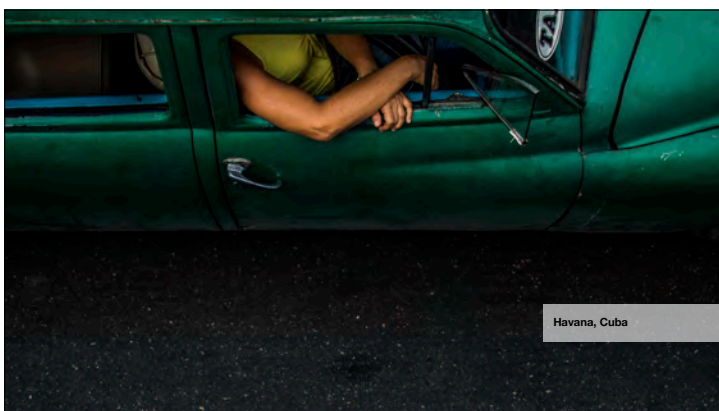
By not revealing the entire subject, it adds a sense of mystery to the composition.

Havana, Cuba

Stockholm, Sweden

This is one of those shots where the composition makes you want to know the rest of the story. Who is driving this car? Why are they waving a flag? Where are they going in this classic car? It makes the viewer want to know more, which gives it a storytelling quality.

The Vatican
Vatican City, Italy

This composition, with its sweeping line, leads the viewer's eye from left to right and draws them into the scene.

Guilin, China

When you can show a scene from a high perspective, once again, you're showing the viewer an angle of these mountains we don't normally see since we usually see mountains from the ground looking up at them instead of from a higher viewpoint looking down on them.

Marrakesh, Morocco

Shooting down low like this gives another perspective—one that gives a feeling of size and epicness—which makes the space look larger than it is in real life.

Venice, Italy

Compositionally, adding a foreground element, like the tip of this gondola, helps add layers and depth to the image.

Havana, Cuba

This shot uses the compositional technique of layering as well, with a strong foreground element that adds depth and heads you into the shot.
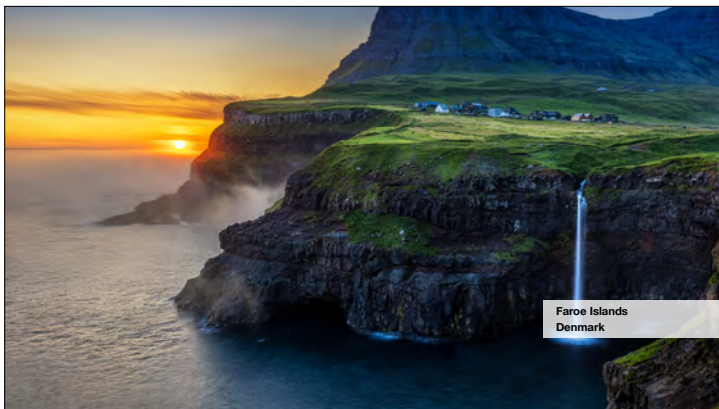
Faroe Islands
Denmark

This is an example of the rule of thirds, where the object of interest isn't centered, but off to the side—in this case, in the right third.
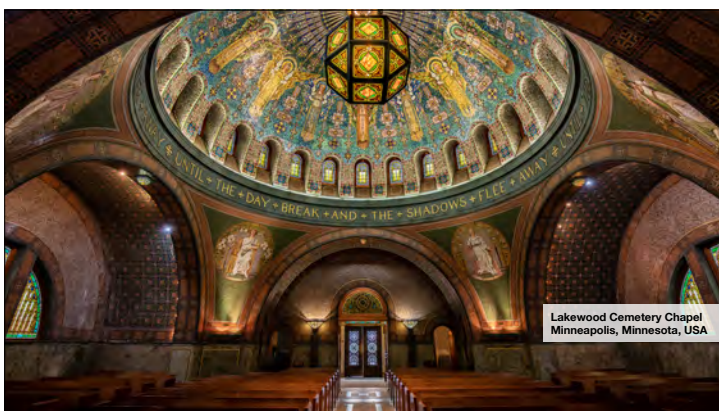

Lakewood Cemetery Chapel
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Here's that same idea—the ceiling is more interesting than the pews, so we compose the shot to show more of the interesting part.

This uses the classic leading lines compositional technique where the road leads the viewer into the shot.

Daxu Ancient Town
China

Same thing here—the tile pattern leads you right to our subject.
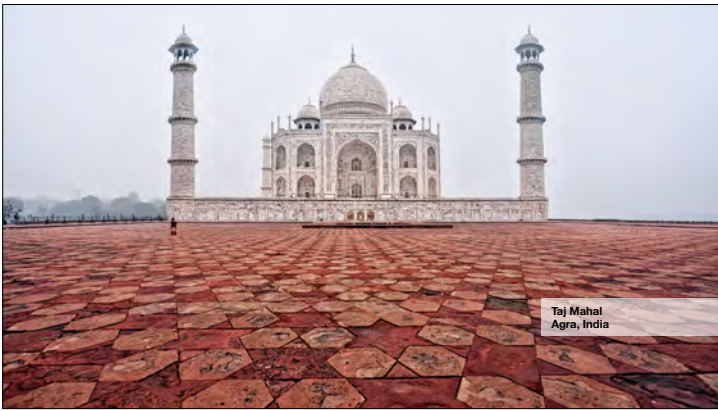
Taj Mahal
Agra, India
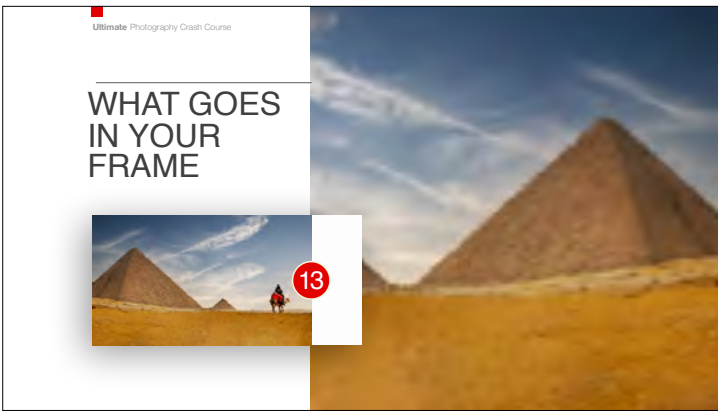
You don't have to show the whole scene. Decide what you want to the viewer to see.

Ultimate Photography Crash Course

WHAT GOES
IN YOUR
FRAME

13

I'm looking at the scene. There's all this busy junk in a gift shop, but it's my job to pull out of the scene what I see. Something in there looks interesting to me, and it's not all the clutter.

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We don't have to show the whole scene—we can pull out the interesting parts and ignore the rest. That's what we're doing when we're framing—we're deciding what we want the viewer to see.
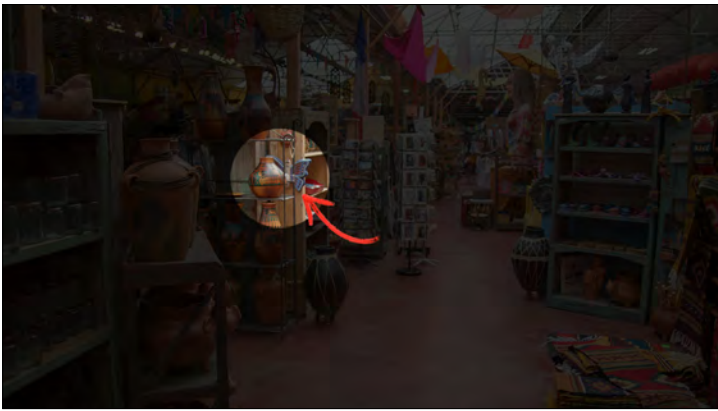
Here's the pot on that shelf. When I stood there looking at this scene, that's the one thing that stood out to me, so I zoomed in to tell the story of just that beautiful light hitting a colorful pot.

In this picture of the bass on the cobblestone street, I fell in love with the bass lying on the ground, but there's so many other distracting things in the scene (like the shopping bag and blue case, and the backpack and the coffee cup in his hand, etc.). But I had to find the right angle to put in the frame what I wanted to show, and to not show the distracting parts I did not want seen in the image.
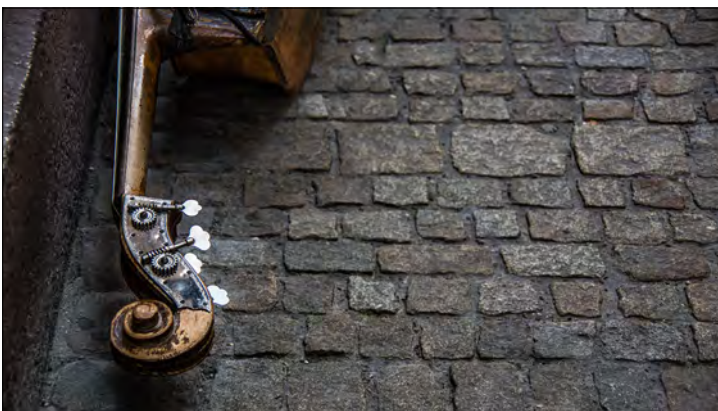
By walking around and looking at the scene until I could find a view that hid the distractions, I came up with the shot you see here. It's only a small part of the scene, but it suggests the whole, and the story I wanted to tell, which was, "Look at this cool old bass just lying there on a cobblestone street." It has a timelessness to it that it would have lost with the blue case and the modern shopping bag in the scene.

It's a busy restaurant in Budapest, and I see a man playing violin. You know I'm going to be drawn to this since I'm a musician, and I think it's a romantic scene —violin music at an outdoor cafe. There's a story here. There's also a lot of tourists, who are killing the scene. So I just stand there, out of view, waiting for the right moment when I can capture just him, without the distractions.

It took a while, and I had to move a few times to get the right angle, but I finally got the shot I was looking for, and this shot tells a much more romantic story than the other. I chose what to show in the scene and what to ignore to give my view, and tell my story, of this scene.

Ultimate Photography Crash Course

GETTING RID OF TOURISTS

14

Nothing ruins a shot like them.

There are five strategies for getting mostly tourist-free shots.

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1 get there super early

Tourists do NOT like to get up early. Get there about 30 minutes before sunrise, and you'll have empty streets, not a tourist (or other photographer) in sight, and great light to boot!

St. Mark's Square in Venice at dawn. Not a soul in sight.

The Taj Mahal. The day before—thousands of people. Thousands! Dawn the next day—there were about eight of us total.
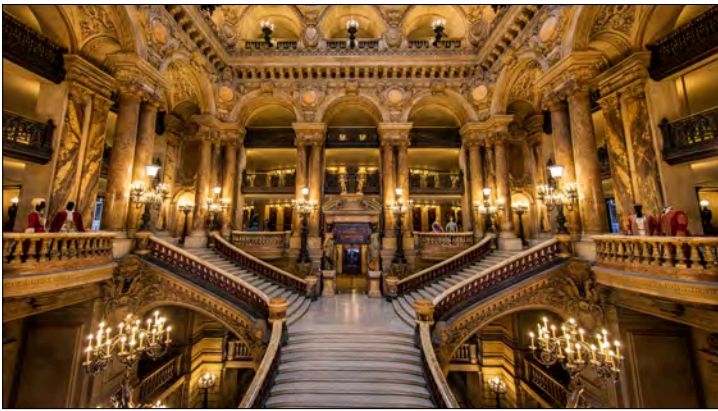
1 get there super early

2 pull the 'last one out' trick

We talked about this earlier—take the last tour of the day and be the last one to leave the room you're in when the group moves on to the next room.
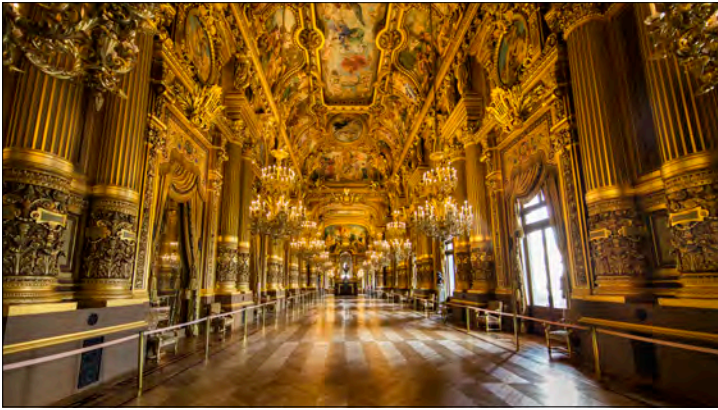
In the Paris Opera House, the normally packed hallway outside the main theatre, except on the last tour before closing, and being the last one out. Yes, the tour guide came back and got me and made me move along, but at least I go the shot.

As I left (last one out), and they pulled the rope and stanchion behind me, I turned around and got this shot.

Here's what the stairs normally look like.
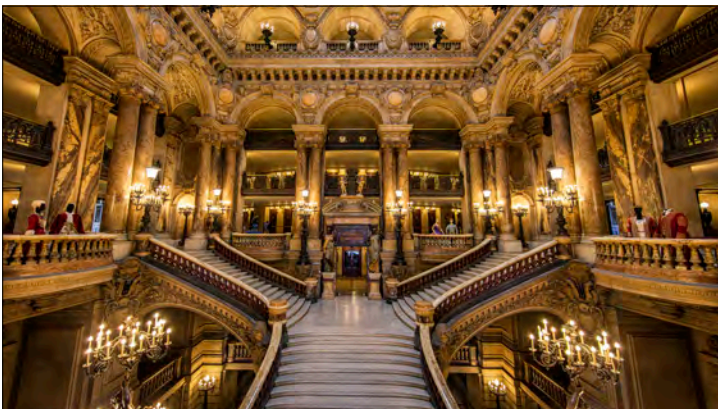
But not after the last tour.

Use your ND filter to do a really long exposure. As long as everybody keeps moving, they won't appear in the shot. If someone stands there and doesn't move, you'll still see them and you'll have to Photoshop them out.

Here's St. Mark's Square again, during mid-day.

To pull off these miracles of motion you need a Neutral Density filter (called ND filters, for short). These are simply very dark filters that force your shutter to stay open for long amounts of time during daylight hours (like up to 10 or 12 minutes long), when you'd normally have a very short shutter speed in daylight (like 1/1000 of a second or faster. Probably faster).

Here's the shot we we're taking. Notice everybody's gone from the shot? There's a little blur of people down off in the distance, but all the people casually strolling by our foreground are all gone, which is awesome, and that is courtesy of an 11 minute-long exposure in the middle of the day. That tiny little puddle created a really nice reflection.

You could do the Script for Statistics I talked about earlier, but honestly, today I'd use the faster, easier, and more accurate Generative Fill feature in the Public Beta. It's magic.

1. get there super early
2. pull the 'last one out' trick
3. do a super long exposure shot
4. **let Photoshop remove them**

If you've got the time, simply wait the crowds out. You don't need the area empty for five minutes. You just need it empty for around 1/60 of a second. Just be patient; you'll get your shot.

1. get there super early
2. pull the 'last one out' trick
3. do a super long exposure shot
4. let Photoshop remove them
5. **wait them out.**

This is a tour group moving through the room I wanted to shoot in Morocco. They were there for probably 20 minutes, as the guide droned on, and they milled about.
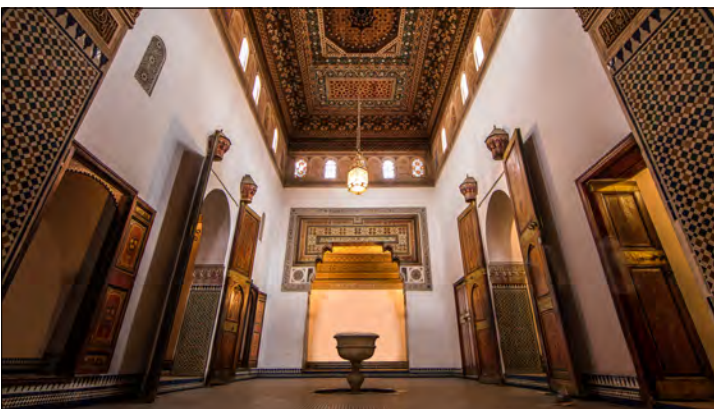
But eventually, I got a break and everybody left for about a minute before another group of people poured in.

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COLOR AS SUBJECT

15
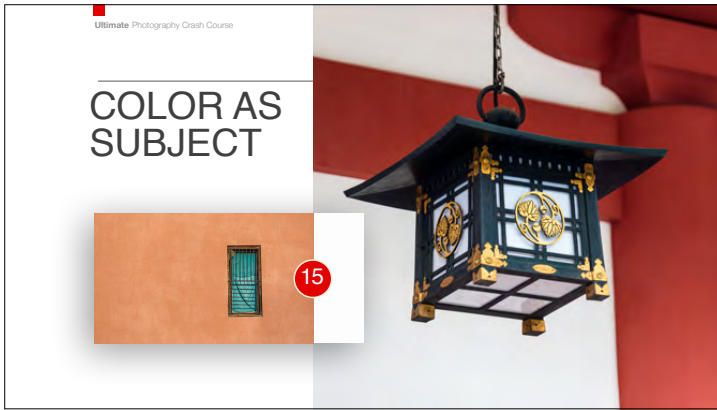
People love color and when you can find contrasting colors and interesting shapes, you've got a compelling travel photo.

Malmo, Sweden

What great contrasting colors in these rooftops.

The Island of Crete

My wife said, "Look honey—it's like they set it up for photographers."

Stockholm, Sweden

It's just two colors, but it works.

Tokyo, Japan

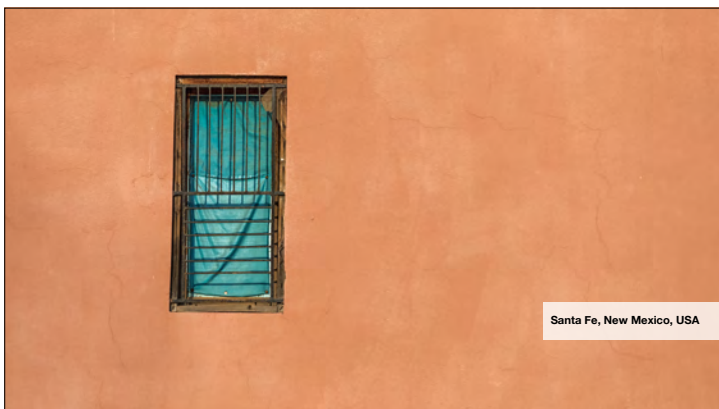White, black, gold, and red—in Tokyo. A combination of graphic shapes and color.

Lisbon, Portugal

It's like they put this here for photographers.
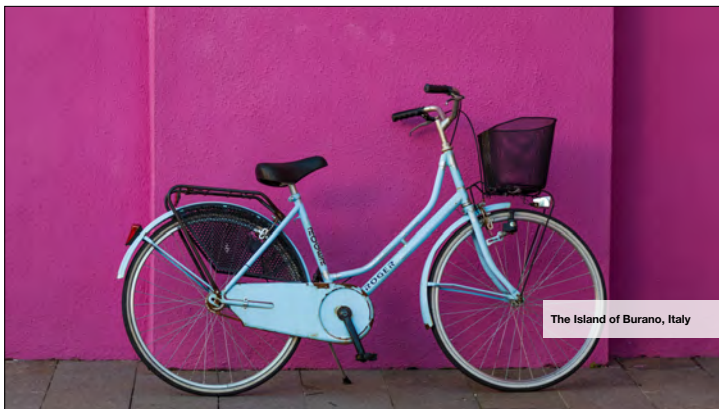
The Island of Burano, Italy

This is on the island of Burano, about 40 minutes from Venice. The whole island is painted with bright, vibrant colors—it's a photographer's paradise.

Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA

The muted colors in this photo help convey a sense of place, taken while walking around downtown Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Lisbon, Portugal
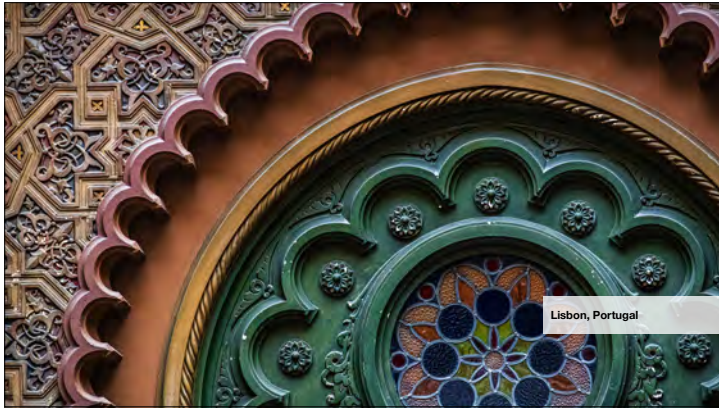
This graphic ornament on the wall of a Mexican restaurant does all the color work for you.

Tokyo, Japan
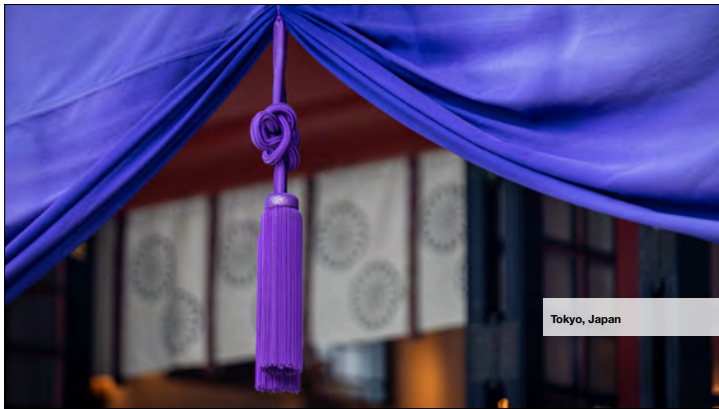
It's a tassel hanging from a drape, which sounds like a boring subject, but it's the color that makes it work.

Santorini, Greece

It's a bowl. On a table. With great color. :)

Oslo, Norway

Nice muted colors in nice light.

Montepulciano, Italy

A bunch of handbags hanging in a store in Tuscany. Not a hero shot, but a great colorful shot on a page or slide with shopping shots.

Tokyo, Japan

It's the color.

The Island of Burano, Italy

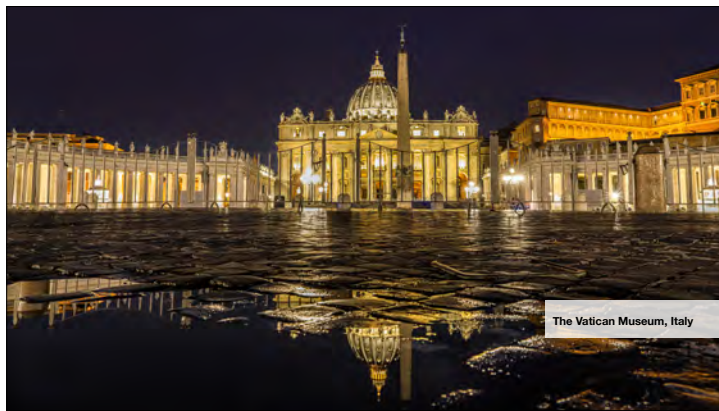Another one from the island of Burano. They set this up for tourists (and photographers)
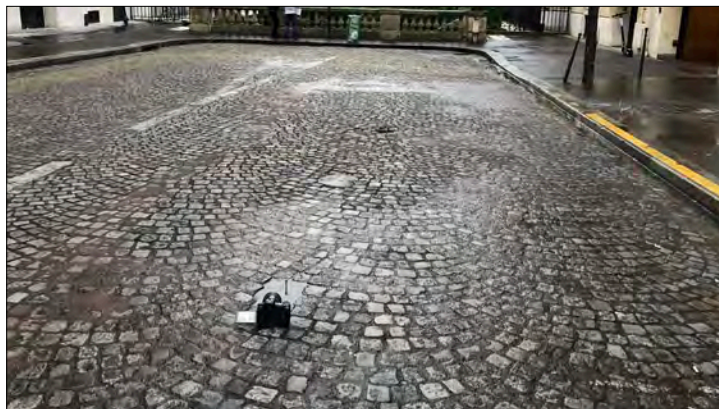

Havana, Cuba

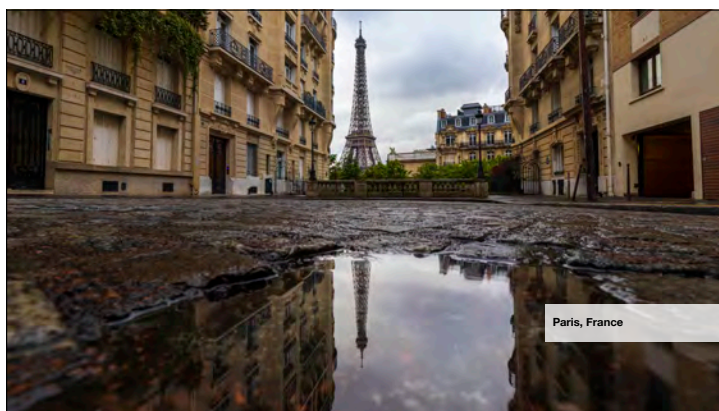Such a colorful place, and lots of opportunity when color is the subject.

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ADDING
REFLECTIONS

16
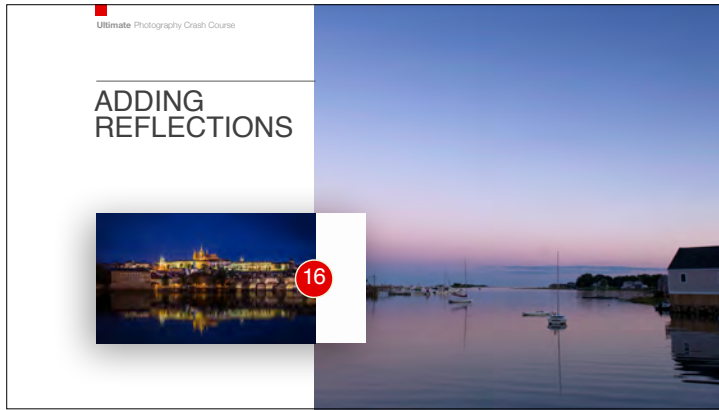
People love reflections. Here's how to make yours (without using Photoshop).

The Vatican Museum, Italy

This is about getting down really low with a Platypod, and getting there when there's not a ton of tourists.

Look how small that puddle is! That's all you need. :)

Paris, France

All you need is a small puddle. In this case, we even added a little of our own water (bought from a nearby market).

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This one is done in my friend (and KelbyOne Instructor) Mimo Meidany's classic black-and-white style.
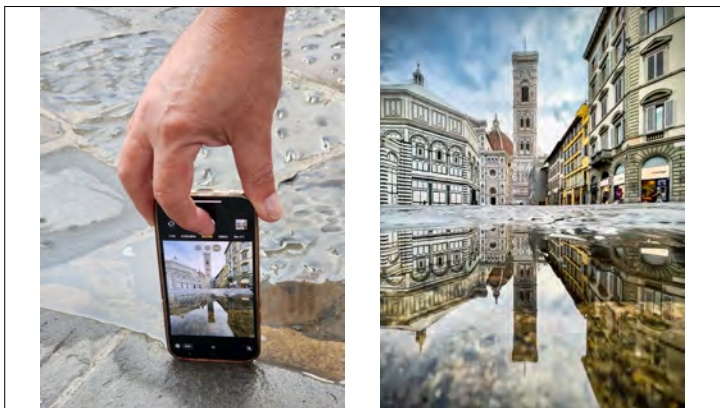

This small puddle in Venice…..

Made a big reflection (an 11-minute exposure here with an ND filter).


Shooting with some friends in front of a small puddle at the Arc de Triomphe in Paris.

A long exposure (note the streaky clouds), and a water reflection.

If you don't have a Platypod, you can use your iPhone—turn it upside down with the lens just above water level, and the camera app automatically rotates so the shutter button is up by your finger (as seen here). This is taken in Florence, Italy.
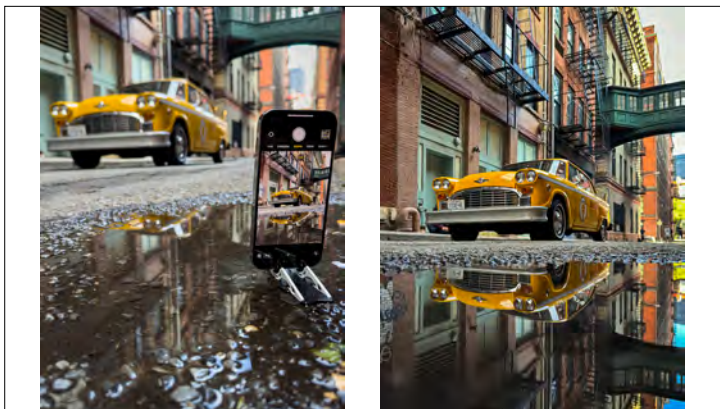
Same technique but using a pocket tripod called the "Pocket Tripod Pro." I'm shooting wirelessly from my Apple Watch. Note the little pool of water, and the big reflection.
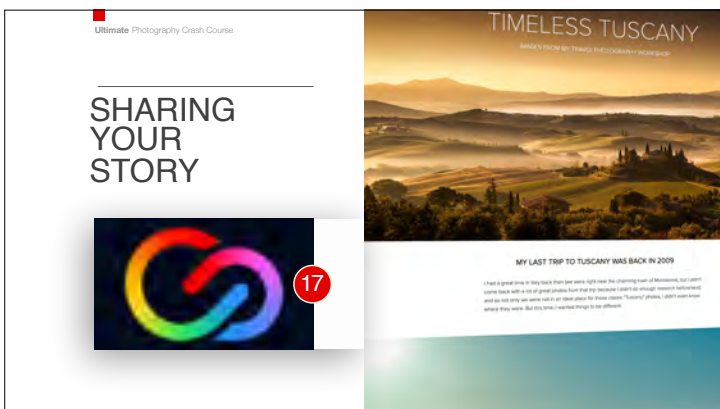
This is the best way to share your trip online I've ever seen. It's that good.

It's called Adobe Express (formerly Adobe Spark Page) and it's a free service you get as part of your Adobe Creative Cloud plan, and I've found it is hands-down the best way to share, not only your images online, but the story behind them as well. And it's so easy to create your visual story because it's all pretty much drag and drop.

adobe.com/express

Here's where you get started. You're already paying for it (as part of your Adobe subscription), so start using it today. You will love it!
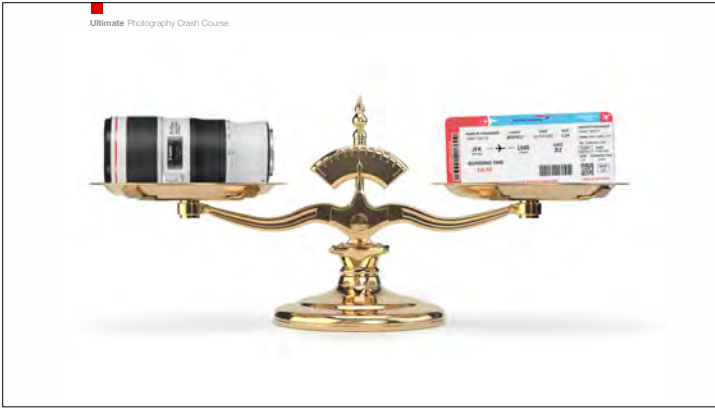
INVEST IN
MAKING
GREAT
IMAGES

18
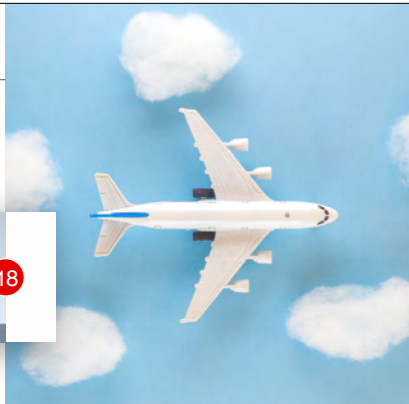
Here's what to invest in next.

Which is more likely to get you a great image?

The world is closer than you think.

Let's do this!

what to skip:

Don't waste your time shooting these things that make you think….

Travel Photography
vs.
Vacation Photos

There are two types of travel photos: (1) The ones that we take as photographers. We are aiming to create captivating, beautiful, stunning images that tell the story of your trips. You're looking for great light, special moments, great composition, and stuff like we've been learning. Then there's (2) vacation photos. These are ones for you to remember that weird truck that drove by, and the crazy waiter at that one restaurant, and the photo of how long the line was to get on the water taxi. These are just for memories and will probably be messy, in bad light, without much artistic thought, but they're still important. Take both, but there are some things you can skip.
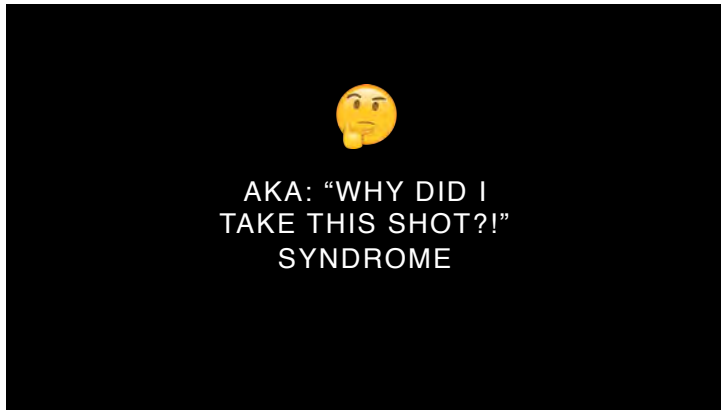
Don't waste your time shooting these things that make you think…."Why did I even take this shot?"

You'll think, "Why did I take this shot?"

Two waiters on break between shifts. Yawn.
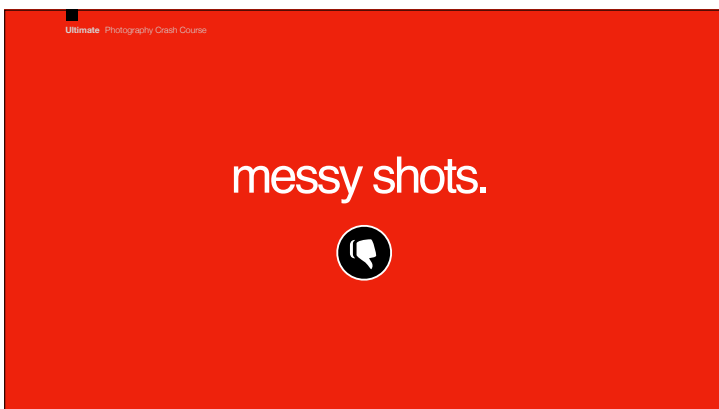

Two guys talking. Snore.

A guy smoking. Hard to find that in Europe.

A mother and daughter sitting on the steps. Zzzzzzz.

A lady sitting at the table after her meal. Why did you take that? Exactly.

messy shots.

These are scenes with a lot going on, and none of it relevant.

Like this shot. It's just messy. Where am I supposed to look.

Yup, messy. What's the subject? The back of that truck? The guy walking. The signs? It's a mess.

Hey, it's the back of three people all looking away from the camera. Delete.

Do I even have to say it?

These are vacation photos (and probably not ones you'll even like).

Why not just a shot of the pyramids?
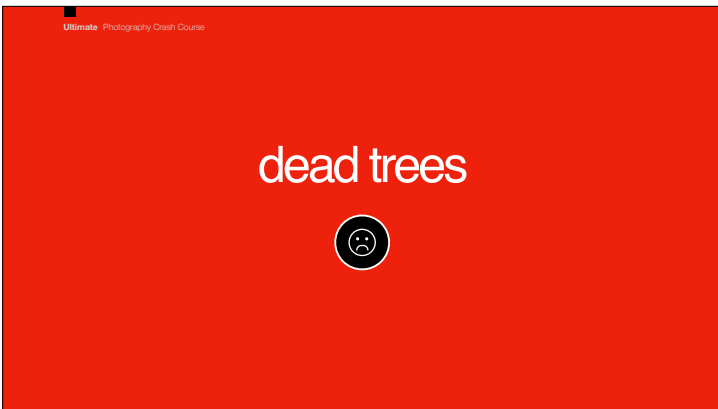

Yup, that's a tour guide with a bunch of other tourists.

Ugh.

Oh this is nice. Oy.

The busses add a nice touch. LOL!

Ultimate Photography Crash Course

dead trees

I have no idea why so many people shoot these…but they do.

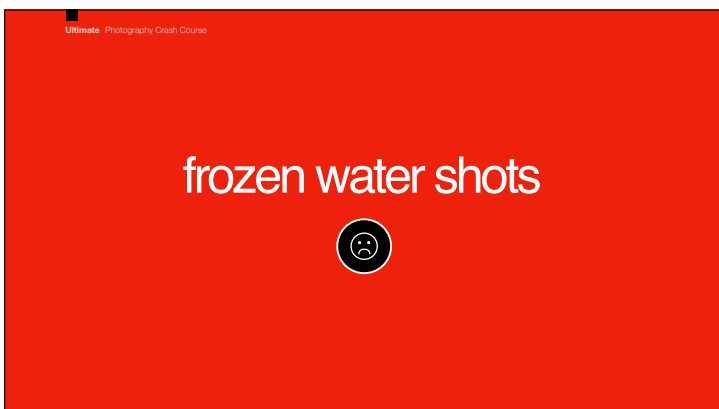I took this shot. Not my finest moment.

Nice dead tree.

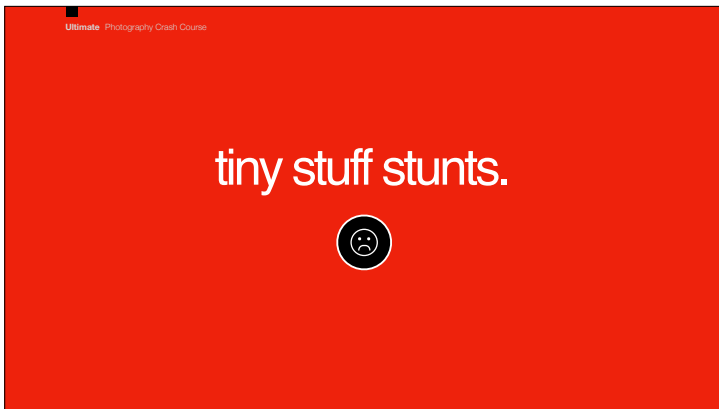What was I thinking?

Ooooohhh, dead plants, too.

Moving water is nice. Showing that movement is nice. Freezing water in photos is the work of the devil (well, as far as I can tell).

Freeze that fountain.

Is it a fountain or a statue?

tiny stuff stunts.

These. Are. The. Worst.

Why did I do this stupid stunt? Because a solider with a machine told me I should do it, and then tip his friend, the other guy with the machine gun, for taking the photo. When I tipped him, the guard with the machine gun told me it wasn't enough, so he finally got $20 for taking this shot. It was totally worth it, because I think the alternative was me being arrested or shot, so yeah.

other people's art.

Taking a photo of someone's art doesn't make it your art. It makes it a photo of someone else's art.

If I made this statue, this would be a really special photo. However, I did not. It's somebody else's art. It's fine for a vacation photo to show a friend who is into sculpture this one, but outside of that, well…

This is an amazing sculpture. I can't believe people can actually make stuff like this; I can't. So that's somebody's else's talent on display.

Same here. It's cool though.

random animals

My friend Rick Sammon has this amazing photo of wild horses galloping full speed through a small pond with water kicking water up everywhere and their manes blowing in the wind. We're not talking about a photo like that. We're talking about the animals you see on vacation.

Like these goats. Delete.

Oh, that donkey you rode to take up the mountain. Great vacation shot. Horrible travel photography shot.

Naaaaaah. (Get it?)

Why? Why?

Please. I'm begging you.

Yes, those are shutters.

Want to photograph a collection of bored people? Here's where to find them.

See what I mean?

Bored.

Super bored.

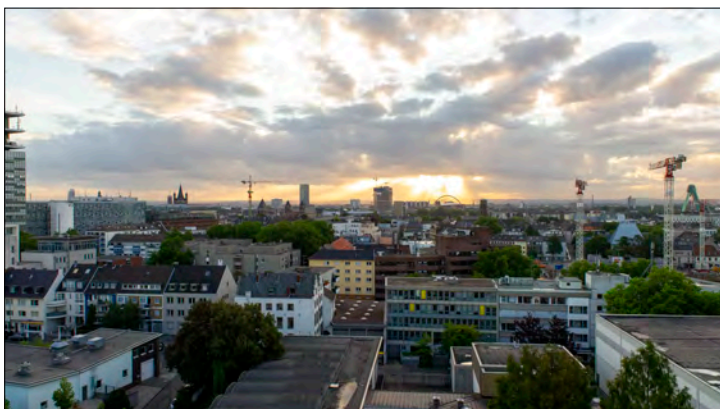She's on the phone. She's "phoning it in."

At least she looks pleasantly bored.

I see a lot of these. I wish I hadn't. LOL!

What is this? What am I looking at? The subject is…nothing.
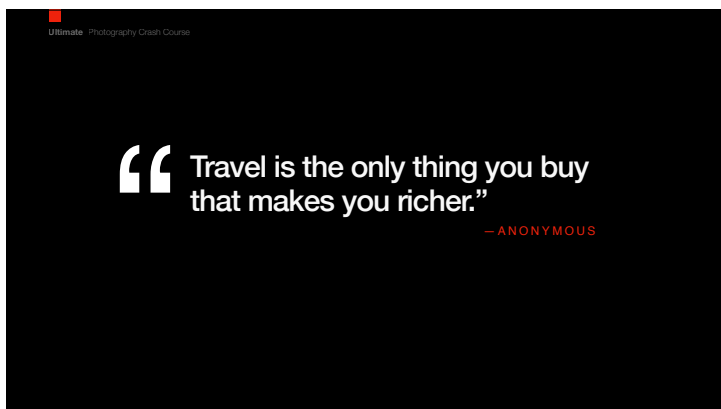

Where am I supposed to look?

You took a photo of a traffic sign. Really?

Where did I leave my cigarettes. Oh, there they are. Snore. The ashtray is a nice touch.

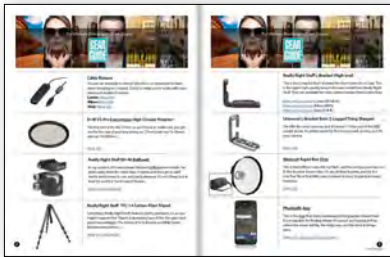Nice shot of the entrance to a parking garage. You might want to get this printed large on canvas. ;-)

One of my favorite quotes ever.

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kelbyonelive.com/seminar-replay

Where all the Bonus video clips are. :)

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bit.ly/sk-gearguide

There's a Gear Guide there, too for all the things I mentioned during the class.

IT'S AFTER 5:00 PM

Time to wrap things up.

5 quick things I leave you with...

1

GOOD LIGHT
MATTERS.

No matter what genre of photography you're shooting, having quality light matters. A lot. Whether it's street photography or landscapes or travel or aviation—great light makes great pictures. Once you realize how important light is, you'll go searching for great light. You'll get up early, stay up late, and look for it indoors and out, knowing that light is so important that it can be its own subject.

2

SIMPLICITY
IS A BIG THING.

Making great shots often comes down to what you take away from the frame. What you remove from the shot. How you simplify your story and your message. It's not what you add…it's what you take away. Less is more.

3

LIGHTROOM IS
FOR EDITING

Lightroom is awesome for making your images brighter or darker, for fixing your color, for adding a tint or fixing a lens problem. It's great for organizing your images, or printing them, and getting your exposure spot on. I use Lightroom 80% of the time, and I love it for those very reasons I just mentioned.

Ps

BUT PHOTOSHOP IS
WHERE YOU MAKE
MAGIC!

But Photoshop is where the magic happens. Post-production is the great equalizer for so many things. It makes up for things like not having really sharp lenses, and it gives you a creative freedom and artistic license to make images look the way they feel to you. Learning Photoshop has never been easier, and you learned some important stuff today. There's no excuse to not be at least "good" at it. It's too important. We all need to know how to make our images shine.

4

IT COMES DOWN TO
TWO THINGS:

Outside of what we just talked about (or rather, including what we just talked about), at the end of the day, it all still pretty much comes down to two things:

A

WHAT YOU'RE STANDING IN FRONT OF.

Does what, or who, you're standing in front of have a chance of making people who see your image say, "Wow!" If it doesn't, you're probably standing in front of the wrong thing. I remember a great quote Joe McNally shared—something he learned from one of his editors at *Life* magazine. His editor told him: "If you want to make more interesting photos, stand in front of more interesting things." That's way deeper than it sounds. Let that one sink in.

B

AND HOW YOUR AIM YOUR CAMERA.

If you learn composition, the rest is easy. If you develop your eye, and can take a decent looking scene and make that scene way more interesting by how you composed the shot, that's a real gift. A leg up on everybody. You can learn great composition. You learned some today. Keep on that journey of learning composition.

5

INVEST IN YOURSELF
(NOT JUST IN MORE GEAR).

Fly to an amazing location. Hire an fantastic model. Rent a classic old car. Go to wherever you need to go to make the type of shots you've always dreamed of. The camera you already own, the lenses you have, and the accessories—they're all WAY better than what Joe McNally used to make that issue of *National Geographic*. Way better. You've got the gear, you just learned a bunch—it's time to take this puppy for a spin. Here's wishing you a lifetime of wonderful images and the best on your photographic journey.

> **The only photographer you should compare yourself to, is the one you used to be."**
>
> — UNKNOWN

Thanks for spending the day with me today. I'm really glad you were here.

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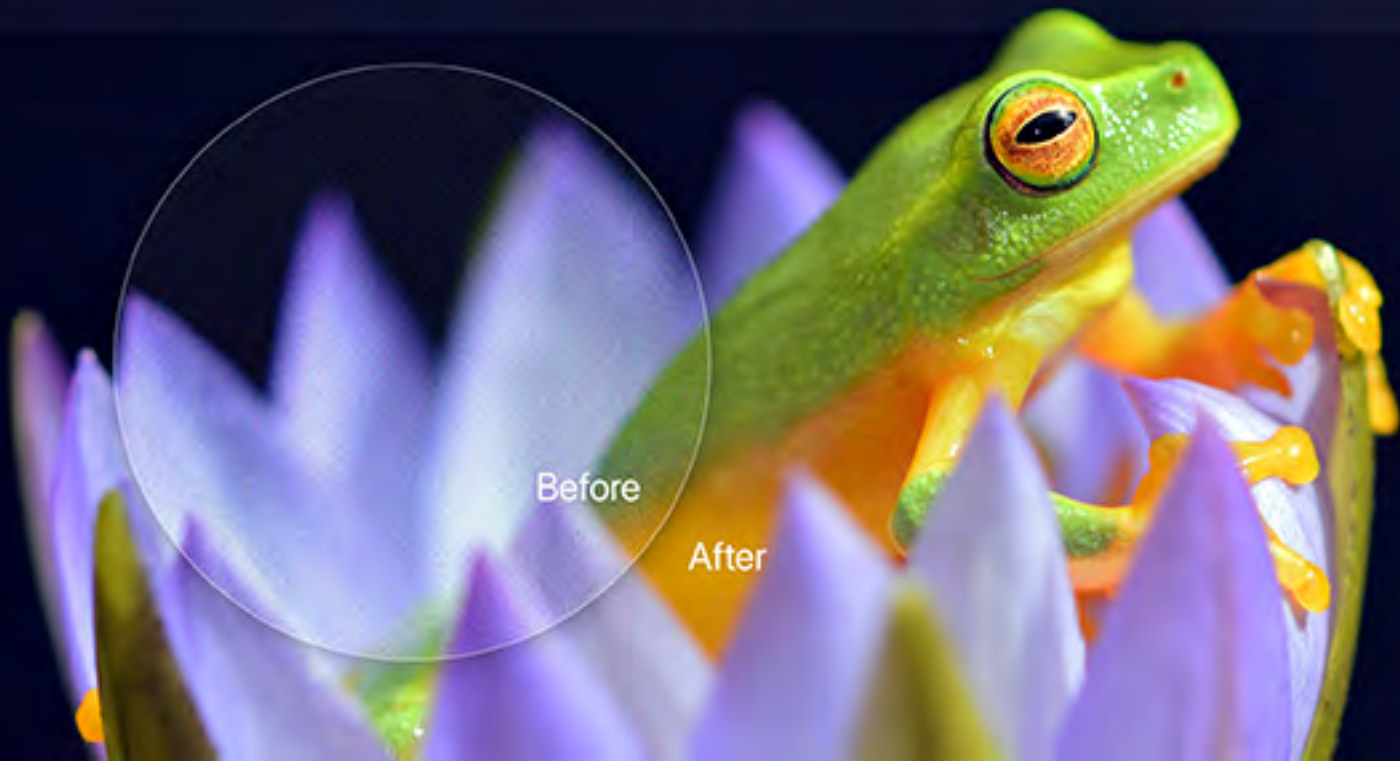
Combine and Mask
Easily combine multiple renditions of a photo or even multiple photos as layers. This allows you to keep the noise where you want it in your photo and remove it elsewhere.

Before

After