

Scott Kelby's

PART 1

PART 2

PART 3

PART 4

Digital Photography

The step-by-step secrets for how to
make your photos look like the pros!

Boxed Set



Scott Kelby's Digital Photography Boxed Set, Parts 1-4

Table of Contents



THE DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY BOOK, PART 1	3
THE DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY BOOK, PART 2	244
THE DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY BOOK, PART 3	485
THE DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY BOOK, PART 4	750

THE BEST-SELLING DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY BOOK OF ALL TIME!

The Digital Photography

The step-by-step secrets for how to make your photos look like the pros! **Book**

**PART
1**



Scott Kelby

Author of *The Photoshop Book for Digital Photographers*



Great for point-and-shoot
digital camera owners, too!

The
**Digital
Photography**

The step-by-step secrets for how to
make your photos look like the pros!

Book

**PART
1**



Scott Kelby

The Digital Photography Book, part 1

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PUBLISHED BY
Peachpit Press

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FIRST EDITION: August 2006

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ISBN 10: 0-321-47404-X

ISBN 13: 978-0-321-47404-9

34 33 32 31 30 29 28 27

Printed and bound in the United States of America

www.peachpit.com
www.kelbytraining.com

*Dedicated to the amazing
Dr. Stephanie Van Zandt
for her excellent advice, for taking
such good care of my wife, and
for delivering the sweetest
little baby girl in the whole world.*

Acknowledgments

Although only one name appears on the spine of this book, it takes a team of dedicated and talented people to pull a project like this together. I'm not only delighted to be working with them, but I also get the honor and privilege of thanking them here.

This is my 37th book, and in each book I write, I always start by thanking my amazing, wonderful, beautiful, hilarious, and absolutely brilliant wife Kalebra. She probably stopped reading these acknowledgments 20 or more books ago because I keep gushing on and on about her, and despite how amazingly beautiful, charming, and captivating she is, she's a very humble person (which makes her even more beautiful). And even though I know she probably won't read this, I just have to thank her anyway because not only could I not do any of this without her, I simply wouldn't want to. She's just "it." It's her voice, her touch, her smile, her heart, her generosity, her compassion, her sense of humor, and the way she sneaks around behind the scenes trying to make sure my life is that much better, that much more fun, that much more fulfilling, and you just have to adore someone like that. She is the type of woman love songs are written for, and as any of my friends will gladly attest—I am, without a doubt, the luckiest man alive to have her as my wife. I love you madly, sweetheart!

I also want to thank my crazy, fun-filled, wonderful little eleven-year-old boy Jordan. He won't read this either, because as he says, "It embarrasses him." And since I know he won't read it (or even let me read it to him), I can safely gush about him, too. Dude, you rock! You are about the coolest little boy any dad could ask for—you love *Star Wars* (and our lightsaber battles in the kitchen), you dig Bon Jovi, you're always up for a game of golf, you love to go to the movies with me, and you get as excited about life as I do. You are nothing but a joy, I'm so thrilled to be your dad, and you're a great big brother to your little sister. I am very, very proud of you little buddy.

I also want to thank my beautiful daughter Kira, who is the best-natured, happiest little girl in the whole wide world. You're only three years old, but you're already reflecting your mom's sweet nature, her beautiful smile, and her loving heart. You're too young to know what an amazing mother you have, but before long, just like your brother, you'll realize that your mom is someone very special, and that thanks to her you're in for a really fun, exciting, hug-filled, and adventure-filled life. Also, thanks to my big brother Jeff. Brothers don't get much better than you, and that's why Dad was always so proud of you. You are truly one of the "good guys" and I'm very, very lucky to have you in my life.

Special thanks to my home team at Kelby Media Group. I love working with you guys and you make coming into work an awful lot of fun for me. I'm so proud of what you all do—how you come together to hit our sometimes impossible deadlines, and as always, you do it with class, poise, and a can-do attitude that is truly inspiring. I'm honored to be working with you all.

Thanks to my layout and production crew. In particular, I want to thank my friend and Creative Director Felix Nelson (creator of all things that look cool). Thanks to my in-house editors Kim Doty and Cindy Snyder, who put the techniques through rigorous testing and tried to stop me from slipping any of my famous typos past the goalie. Also, thanks to Dave Damstra and his amazing crew for giving the book such a tight, clean layout.

My personal thanks to my buddy and fellow photographer Brad Moore, who shot most of the product shots for this edition of the book. Also, thanks to my friend Dave Gales who shot the initial product shots for the original edition of the book.

Thanks to my best buddy Dave Moser, whose tireless dedication to creating a quality product makes every project we do better than the last. Thanks to Jean A. Kendra for her steadfast support, and an extra special thanks to my Executive Assistant Kathy Siler for keeping everything running smoothly while I'm out traveling and writing books. You are, without a doubt, the best!

Thanks to my publisher Nancy Aldrich-Ruenzel, marketing maverick Scott Cowlin, production hound Ted Waitt, and the incredibly dedicated team at Peachpit Press. It's a real honor to get to work with people who really just want to make great books. Also, my personal thanks to Patrick Lor at iStockphoto.com for enabling me to use some of their wonderful photography in this book.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to my good friend Bill Fortney for agreeing to give the book a good "once over" and it's infinitely better because of his comments, ideas, and input. Bill is just an amazing individual, a world-class photographer, a testament to how to live one's life, and I'm truly honored to have gotten the chance to work with someone of his caliber, integrity, and faith.

I want to thank all the talented and gifted photographers who've taught me so much over the years, including Moose Peterson, Vincent Versace, Bill Fortney, David Ziser, Jim DiVitali, Helene Glassman, George Lepp, and Eddie Tapp.

Thanks to my mentors whose wisdom and whip-cracking have helped me immeasurably, including John Graden, Jack Lee, Dave Gales, Judy Farmer, and Douglas Poole.

Most importantly, I want to thank God, and His son Jesus Christ, for leading me to the woman of my dreams, for blessing us with such a special little boy and an amazing little girl, for allowing me to make a living doing something I truly love, for always being there when I need Him, for blessing me with a wonderful, fulfilling, and happy life, and such a warm, loving family to share it with.

Other Books By Scott Kelby

The Photoshop CS4 Book for Digital Photographers

Photoshop Down & Dirty Tricks

Photoshop CS2 Killer Tips

The Photoshop Channels Book

Photoshop Classic Effects

The Digital Photography Book, volume 2

The iPhone Book

The iPod Book

The Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 2 Book for Digital Photographers

InDesign CS/CS2 Killer Tips

The Mac OS X Leopard Book

Mac OS X Leopard Killer Tips

Getting Started with Your Mac and Mac OS X Tiger

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Table of Contents



Chapter One	1
Pro Tips for Getting Really Sharp Photos	
<i>If Your Photos Aren't Sharp, the Rest Doesn't Matter</i>	
The Real Secret to Getting Sharp Photos	2
The Other Most Important Secret	3
Perhaps Even More Important Than That!	4
If You Skip This, Throw Away Your Camera	5
If You Do This Wrong, It Will Lock Up	6
It's Time to Get Serious	7
Getting "Tack Sharp" Starts with a Tripod	8
A Ballhead Will Make Your Life Easier	9
Don't Press the Shutter (Use a Cable Release)	10
Forgot Your Cable Release? Use a Self Timer	11
Getting Super Sharp: Locking the Mirror	12
Turn Off Vibration Reduction (or IS)	13
Shoot at Your Lens' Sharpest Aperture	14
Good Glass Makes a Big Difference	15
Avoid Increasing Your ISO, Even in Dim Light	16
Zoom In to Check Sharpness	17
Sharpening After the Fact in Photoshop	18
Pro Sharpening	19
Hand-Held Sharpness Trick	20
Getting Steadier Hand-Held Shots	21
Chapter Two	23
Shooting Flowers Like a Pro	
<i>There's More to It Than You'd Think</i>	
Don't Shoot Down on Flowers	24
Shooting Flowers with a Zoom Lens	25
Use a Macro Lens to Get Really Close	26
Can't Afford a Macro? How 'bout a Close-Up?	27
When to Shoot Flowers	28
Don't Wait for Rain—Fake it!	29
Flowers on a Black Background	30
Shooting on a White Background	31
The Perfect Light for Indoor Flower Shots	32
Where to Get Great Flowers to Shoot	33
Stopping the Wind	34

Table of Contents

Chapter Three 37

Shooting Weddings Like a Pro

There Is No Retaking Wedding Photos. It's Got to Be Right the First Time!

The Trick for Low-Light Shooting in a Church	38
Getting Soft, Diffused Light with Flash, Part 1	39
Getting Soft, Diffused Light with Flash, Part 2	40
Use Your Flash at Outdoor Weddings	41
Keep Backup Memory Cards on You	42
Formals: Who to Shoot First	43
Formals: Where to Aim	44
The Trick to Keeping Them from Blinking	45
Reception Photos: Making Them Dance	46
Your Main Job: Follow the Bride	47
Formals: How High to Position Your Camera	48
Formals: Don't Cut Off Joints	49
Formals: Build Off the Bride and Groom	50
Formals: The Trick to Great Backgrounds	51
Shooting the Details (& Which Ones to Shoot)	52
Change Your Vantage Point to Add Interest	53
Finding That Perfect Bridal Light	54
How to Pose the Bride with Other People	55
What to Shoot with a Wide-Angle Lens	56
Back Up Your Photos Onsite	57
If Shooting JPEGs, Use a Preset White Balance	58

Chapter Four 61

Shooting Landscapes Like a Pro

Pro Tips for Capturing the Wonder of Nature

The Golden Rule of Landscape Photography	62
Become Married to Your Tripod	63
Shoot in Aperture Priority Mode	64
Composing Great Landscapes	65
The Trick to Shooting Waterfalls	66
A Tip for Shooting Forests	67
Where to Put the Horizon Line	68
Getting More Interesting Mountain Shots	69
The Trick for Warmer Sunrises and Sunsets	70



Table of Contents



Turn on “The Blinkies” to Keep More Detail	71
How to Avoid the Dreaded Blinkies	72
How to Show Size	73
Don’t Set Up Your Tripod. Not Yet	74
The Trick to Getting Richer Colors	75
What to Shoot in Bad Weather	76
Atmosphere Is Your Friend	77
Getting Rid of Lens Flare—The Manual Way	78
The Landscape Photographer’s Secret Weapon	79
Keeping Your Horizons Straight	80
Shooting on Cloudy Days	81
Tips for Shooting Panoramas, Part 1	82
Tips for Shooting Panoramas, Part 2	83
Tips for Shooting Panoramas, Part 3	84
Faking Panoramas	85
Why You Need a Wide-Angle Lens	86
Shooting Wildlife? Aim at Their Eyes	87
Don’t Crop Wildlife in Motion Too Close	88
Shooting Wildlife? Get in Really Tight	89
What to Shoot at Sunset	90

Chapter Five **93**

Shooting Sports Like a Pro

Better Bring Your Checkbook

Set Your White Balance for Indoor Sports	94
Shoot at a 1/640 Sec. Shutter Speed or Faster	95
Pro Sports Shooting Is Dang Expensive	96
Don’t Plan on Changing Lenses	97
Which Lenses to Use	98
Pre-Focus to Get the Shot	99
Raise Your ISO to Get the Speed You Need	100
The Pros Know the Game	101
Don’t Always Focus on the Winner	102
Shooting in Burst Mode	103
Stability for Shooting Sports	104
Shoot Vertically for More Impact	105
Pan to Show Motion	106
Shoot Wide Open	107
Go for the Face	108

Table of Contents

RAW or JPEG for Sports Shooters?	109
Composing for Sports	110

Chapter Six 113

Shooting People Like a Pro

Tips for Making People Look Their Very Best

The Best Lens for Portrait Photography	114
Which Aperture to Use	115
Using Seamless Backgrounds	116
Using Canvas or Muslin Backgrounds	117
The Right Background Outdoors	118
Where to Focus	119
Where to Position Your Camera	120
Positioning Your Subject in the Frame	121
Tip for Framing Portraits	122
Getting Great Light Outdoors	123
Getting Great Light Indoors	124
Taking Great Photos of Newborn Babies	125
Great Sunset Portraits	126
Better Natural-Light Portraits with Reflectors	127

Chapter Seven 129

Avoiding Problems Like a Pro

How to Avoid Digital Headaches

Pro Tips to Avoid White Balance Problems	130
Cold Weather Shooting Means Extra Batteries	131
Don't Change Lenses in Dusty Weather	132
Apply for Permits to Shoot with Your Tripod	133
Be Careful What You Shoot	134
A Tip for Shooting on an Incline	135
The Other Reason Pros Use a Lens Hood	136
Keeping Your Lens Out of Trouble	137
Back Up Your Photos in the Field	138
Limit Your LCD Time to Save Battery Life	139
Be Careful When Throwing Out CDs/DVDs	140
Bracket If You're Not Sure About Exposure	141
Avoid Red Eye	142
Remove Red Eye	143



Table of Contents



Chapter Eight	145
Taking Advantage of Digital Like a Pro	
<i>It's More Than Just a Replacement for Film</i>	
Level the Playing Field: Press That Button	146
Put the LCD Monitor to Work	147
Edit as You Shoot to Get More Keepers	148
Take Advantage of the Blinkies	149
Change Your ISO on the Fly	150
No Penalty Fee for Experimenting	151
Don't Cram Too Much on One Card	152
Take Advantage of Poster-Sized Printing	153
You Can Make One Film Fit All	154
Is It Better to Underexpose or Overexpose?	155
Keep from Accidentally Erasing Memory Cards	156
Chapter Nine	159
Taking Travel & City Life Shots Like a Pro	
<i>Tips for Urban Shooting</i>	
How to Be Ready for "The Shot"	160
Shoot Kids and Old People. It Can't Miss	161
Hire a Model (It's Cheaper Than You'd Think)	162
What Time to Shoot	163
Look for Bold, Vivid Colors	164
Shooting Travel? Visit WhereTheProsShoot.com First	165
Don't Try to Capture It All: Shoot the Details	166
The Best Shot May Be Just Three Feet Away	167
Shoot the Signs. You'll Thank Yourself Later	168
Showing Movement in the City	169
Use an Aperture That Takes It All In	170
For Maximum Impact, Look for Simplicity	171
The Monopod Scam	172
What to Do When It's Been "Shot to Death"	173
Including the Moon and Keeping Detail	174
Shooting Fireworks	175

Table of Contents

Chapter Ten	177
How to Print Like a Pro and Other Cool Stuff	
<i>After All, It's All About the Print!</i>	
The Advantages of Shooting in RAW	178
How to Process RAW Photos in Photoshop	179
Compare Your LCD to Your Computer Monitor	180
Organizing Your Photos with Lightroom	181
How Many More Megapixels Do You Need?	182
Printing Lab-Quality 8x10s	183
Printing Lab-Quality 13x19" Prints	184
Printing 17x22s—The Pros' Top Choice	185
Which Paper Should You Print On?	186
What Determines Which Paper You Use?	187
Getting Your Monitor to Match Your Printer	188
Download the Color Profiles for Your Paper	189
Selling Your Photos as "Stock" Online	190
A Quick Peek at My Gear	191
Some Books I Personally Recommend	192
Learn from Me on <i>Adobe® Photoshop® TV</i>	193
Chapter Eleven	195
Photo Recipes to Help You Get "The Shot"	
<i>The Simple Ingredients That Make It All Come Together</i>	
Index	210





SHUTTER SPEED: 1/2sec

F-STOP: F/22

ISO: 100

FOCAL LENGTH: 24mm

PHOTOGRAPHER: SCOTT KELBY

Chapter Four

Shooting Landscapes Like a Pro

Pro Tips for Capturing the Wonder of Nature



If you ever get to shoot in some truly amazing outdoor locations, like the Grand Canyon or Yosemite National Park, it's really a very humbling photographic experience. The reason why is you're looking at this amazing vista, at the sheer grandeur of it all, and it looks so awe inspiring you'd figure a chimp could even take a great photo of it. I mean, it's just so spectacular, how could you mess it up? Then you set up your tripod, look in your viewfinder, and it happens—you begin to silently sob. You're sobbing because you bought all this expensive camera gear, with multiple camera bodies and lenses that cost more than a Toyota Prius hybrid, you've got more filters than a Ritz Camera store, and your camera bag weighs approximately 54 lbs. You saved all year, took your two-week vacation from work, bought round-trip airfare, and rented a huge SUV big enough to haul you, your family, and all your expensive gear out into the sweltering summer heat of the canyon. Now you're looking through your viewfinder and what you see doesn't look half as good as the stinkin' postcards in the park's gift shop that sell for \$1.25 each. Tears begin to stream down your face as you realize that you're not going to get the shot you came for. And whose fault is all this? Ansel Adams—that's who. He screwed up the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, and a dozen other locations for us all. But even though we're not Ansel Adams, we can surely get better photos than the ones in the gift shop, right? Well, it starts with reading this chapter. Hey, it's a start.



The Golden Rule of Landscape Photography

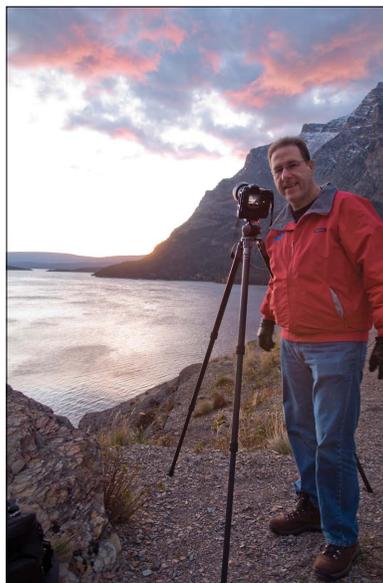


SCOTT KELBY

There's a golden rule of landscape photography, and you can follow every tip in this chapter, but without *strictly* following this rule, you'll never get the results the top pros do. As a landscape photographer, you can only shoot two times a day: (1) dawn. You can shoot about 15 to 30 minutes before sunrise, and then from 30 minutes to an hour (depending on how harsh the light becomes) afterward. The only other time you can shoot is: (2) dusk. You can shoot from 15 to 30 minutes before sunset, and up to 30 minutes afterward. Why only these two times? Because that's the rule. Okay, there's more to it than that. These are the only times of day when you get the soft, warm light and soft shadows that give professional quality lighting for landscapes. How stringent is this rule? I'll never forget the time I was doing a Q&A session for professional photographers. The other instructor was legendary *National Geographic* photographer Joe McNally. A man in the crowd asked Joe, "Can you really only shoot at dawn and dusk?" Joe quietly took his tripod and beat that man to death. Okay, that's an exaggeration, but what Joe said has always stuck with me. He said that today's photo editors (at the big magazines) feel so strongly about this that they won't even consider looking at any of his, or any other photographer's, landscape work if it's not shot at dawn or dusk. He also said that if he takes them a shot and says, "Look, it wasn't taken during those magic hours, but the shot is amazing," they'll still refuse to even look at it. The point is, professional landscape photographers shoot at those two times of day, and only those two times. If you want pro results, those are the only times you'll be shooting, too.



Become Married to Your Tripod



BARNEY STREIT

Okay, so now you know that as a pro landscape shooter your life is going to be like this: you get up before dawn, and you miss dinner about every evening (remember, there's no shame in coming to dinner late). If you're okay with all that, then it's time to tell you the other harsh reality—since you'll be shooting in low light all the time, you'll be shooting on a tripod all the time. Every time. Always. There is no hand-holding in the professional landscape photography world. Now, I must warn you, you will sometimes find landscape photographers out there at dawn some mornings shooting the same thing you are, and they're hand-holding their cameras. They don't know it yet, but once they open their photos in Photoshop, they are going to have the blurriest, best-lit, out-of-focus shots you've ever seen. Now, what can you do to help these poor hapless souls? Quietly, take your tripod and beat them to death. Hey, it's what Joe McNally would do. (Kidding. Kind of.)

Tripods: The Carbon Fiber Advantage

The hottest thing right now in tripods is carbon fiber. Tripods made with carbon fiber have two distinct advantages: (1) they're much lighter in weight than conventional metal tripods without giving up any strength or stability, and (2) carbon fiber doesn't resonate like metal, so you have less chance of vibration. However, there's a downside: as you might expect, they're not cheap.



Shoot in Aperture Priority Mode



Nikon

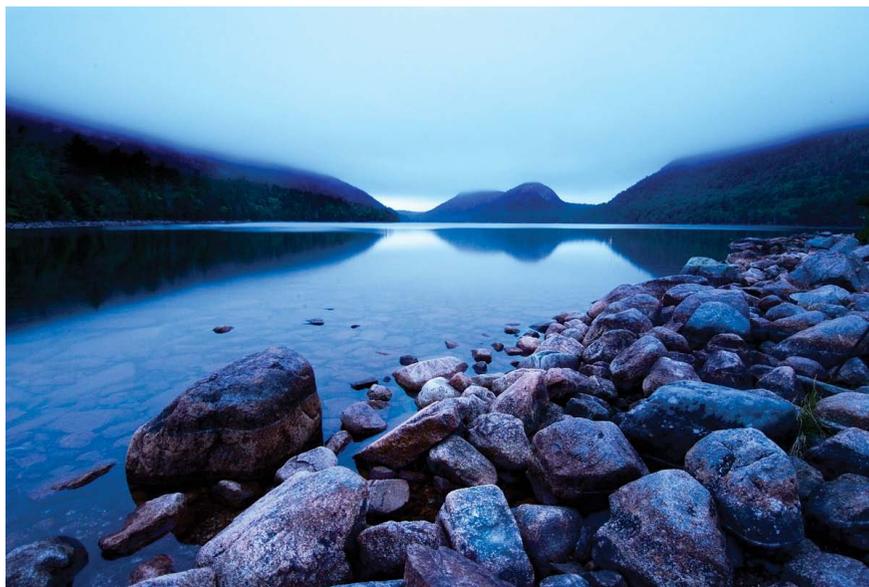


Canon

The shooting mode of pro outdoor photographers is aperture priority mode (that's the little A or Av on your digital camera's mode dial). The reason why this mode is so popular is that it lets you decide how to creatively present the photo. Here's what I mean: Let's say you're shooting a tiger with a telephoto zoom lens and you decide you want the tiger (who's in the foreground of the shot) to be in focus, but you want the background out of focus. With aperture priority mode, it's easy—set your aperture to the smallest number your lens will allow (for example, $f/2.8$, $f/4$, $f/5.6$, etc.) and then focus on the tiger. That's it. The camera (and the telephoto lens) does the rest—you get a sharp photo of the tiger and the background is totally out of focus. So, you just learned one of the three aperture tricks—low numbers (and a zoom lens) leave your subject in the foreground in focus, while the background goes out of focus. Now, what do you do if you want the tiger and the background to both be in focus (you want to see the tiger and his surroundings clearly)? You can move your aperture to either $f/8$ or $f/11$. These two settings work great when you just want to capture the scene as your eye sees it (without the creative touch of putting the background majorly out of focus). Far away backgrounds (way behind the tiger) will be a little bit out of focus, but not much. That's the second trick of aperture priority mode. The third trick is which aperture to use when you want as much as possible in focus (the foreground, the middle, the background—everything): just choose the highest number your lens will allow ($f/22$, $f/36$, etc.).



Composing Great Landscapes



SCOTT KELBY

The next time you pick up a great travel magazine that features landscape photography or look at some of the work from the masters in digital landscape photography, like David Muench, Moose Peterson, Stephen Johnson, and John Shaw, take a moment to study some of their wonderful, sweeping images. One thing you'll find that most have in common is that these landscape shots have three distinct things: (1) a foreground. If shooting a sunset, the shot doesn't start in the water—it starts on the beach. The beach is the foreground. (2) They have a middle ground. In the case of a sunset shot, this would be either the ocean reflecting the sun, or in some cases it can be the sun itself. And lastly, (3) it has a background. In the sunset case, the clouds and the sky. All three elements are there, and you need all three to make a really compelling landscape shot. The next time you're out shooting, ask yourself, "Where's my foreground?" (because that's the one most amateurs seem to forget—their shots are all middle and background). Keeping all three in mind when shooting will help you tell your story, lead the eye, and give your landscape shots more depth.

Another Advantage of Shooting at Dawn

Another advantage of shooting at dawn (rather than at sunset) is that water (in ponds, lakes, bays, etc.) is more still at dawn because there's usually less wind in the morning than in the late afternoon. So, if you're looking for that glassy mirror-like reflection in the lake, you've got a much better shot at getting that effect at dawn than you do at dusk.



The Trick to Shooting Waterfalls

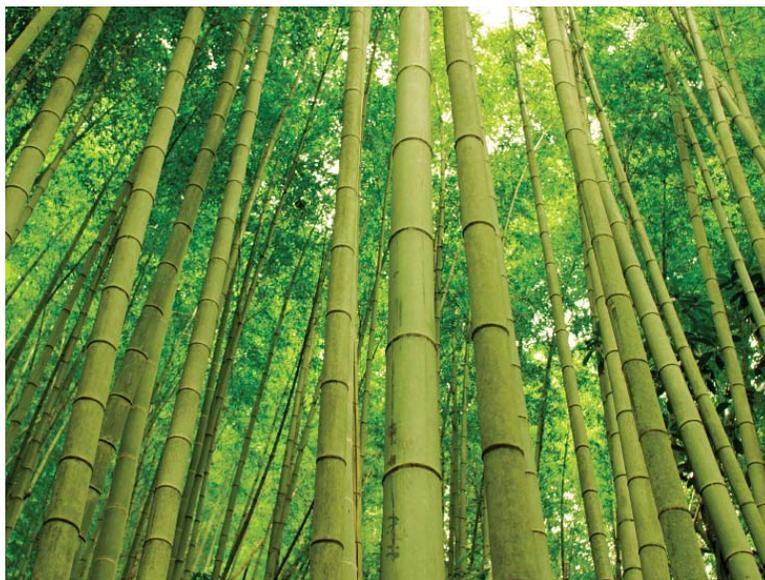


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Want to get that silky waterfall or that stream effect you see in those pro photos? The secret is leaving your shutter open (for at least a second or two), so the water moves while everything else (the rocks and trees around the waterfall or stream) remains still. Here's what you do: switch your digital camera to shutter priority mode (the S or Tv on your camera's mode dial), and set the shutter speed to 1 or 2 full seconds. Now, even if you're shooting this waterfall on a bit of an overcast day, leaving your shutter open for a few seconds will let way too much light in, and all you'll get is a solid white, completely blown-out photo. That's why the pros do one of two things: (1) they shoot these waterfalls at or before sunrise, or just after sunset, when there is much less light. Or they (2) use a stop-down filter. This is a special darkening filter that screws onto your lens that is so dark it shuts out most of the light coming into your camera. That way, you can leave the shutter open for a few seconds. Such little light comes in that it doesn't totally blow out your photo, and you wind up with a properly exposed photo with lots of glorious silky water. Now, if you don't have a stop-down filter and you run across a waterfall or stream that's deep in the woods (and deep in the shade), you can still get the effect by trying this: put your camera on a tripod, go to aperture priority mode, and set your aperture to the biggest number your lens will allow (probably either f/22 or f/36). This leaves your shutter open longer than usual (but that's okay, you're in deep shade, right?), and you'll get that same silky-looking water.



A Tip for Shooting Forests



©ISTOCKPHOTOSIMON OXLEY

Want a great tip for shooting forest scenes? Don't include the ground in your shots. That's right, the ground in the forest is often surprisingly messy (with dead branches, and leaves, and a real cluttered look) and that's why so many pro forest shots don't include the ground—it distracts from the beauty of the trees. So, easy enough—frame your shots so they don't include the ground, and you're shooting better forest shots right off the bat. Now, if the ground looks good, then by all means include it, but if it's a mess, you've got a way to save the shot. Here's another forest shooting tip: overcast days are great for shooting forests because it's difficult to get a decent forest shot in bright, harsh sun. However, there is one exception to this rule: if there's "atmosphere" (fog or mist) in the forest on bright days, the sun rays cutting through the fog or mist can be spectacular.

This Isn't a Forest Tip. It's for Waterfalls

So why is this tip here instead of on the waterfalls page? I ran out of room on that page. The tip is this: when shooting waterfalls, if you don't have a stop-down filter, then you can try putting your polarizing filter on instead. This serves two purposes: (1) it cuts the reflections in the waterfall and on the rocks, and (2) since it darkens, it can eat up about two stops of light for you, so you can shoot longer exposures with it than you could without it. Also, choosing slower shutter speeds exaggerates the silky water effect, so try a few different shutter speeds (4 seconds, 6 seconds, 10 seconds, etc.) and see which one gives you the best effect for what you're currently shooting.



Where to Put the Horizon Line



SCOTT KELBY

When it comes to the question of “Where do I place the horizon?” the answer is pretty easy. Don’t take the amateur route and always place the horizon in the dead center of the photo, or your landscape shots will always look like snapshots. Instead, decide which thing you want to emphasize—the sky or the ground. If you have a great-looking sky, then put your horizon at the bottom third of your photo (which will give you much more emphasis on the sky). If the ground looks interesting, then make that the star of your photo and place the horizon at the top third of your photo. This puts the emphasis on the ground, and most importantly, either one of these methods will keep your horizon out of the center, which will give your shots more depth and interest.

Really Boring Sky? Break the Rule

If you’re shooting a landscape shot with a sky where nothing’s really happening, you can break the 1/3 from the top horizon line rule and eliminate as much of the sky from view as possible. Make it 7/8 ground and 1/8 sky, so the attention is totally off the sky, and onto the more interesting foreground.



Getting More Interesting Mountain Shots

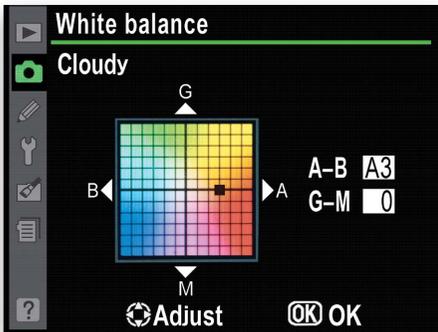


SCOTT KELBY

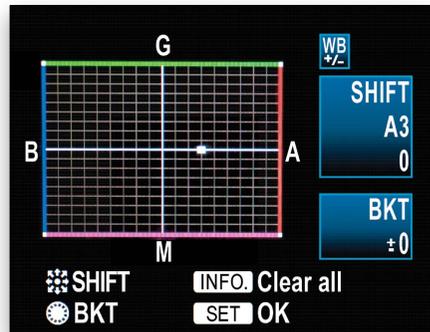
One theme you'll see again and again throughout this book is to shoot from angles we don't see every day. For example, if your subject is mountains, don't shoot them from the road at the bottom of the mountain. This is exactly how we see mountains every day when we drive by them on the interstate, so if you shoot them like that (from the ground looking up), you'll create shots that look very normal and average. If you want to create mountain shots that have real interest, give people a view they don't normally see—shoot from up high. Either drive up as high as you can on the mountain, or hike up as high as is safe, then set up your camera and shoot down on or across the mountains. (This is the same theory as not shooting down on flowers. We don't shoot down on flowers because that's the view we normally have of them. In turn, we don't shoot up at mountains, because we always see them from that same view. It's boring, regular, and doesn't show your viewer something they haven't seen a hundred times before.)



The Trick for Warmer Sunrises and Sunsets



Nikon

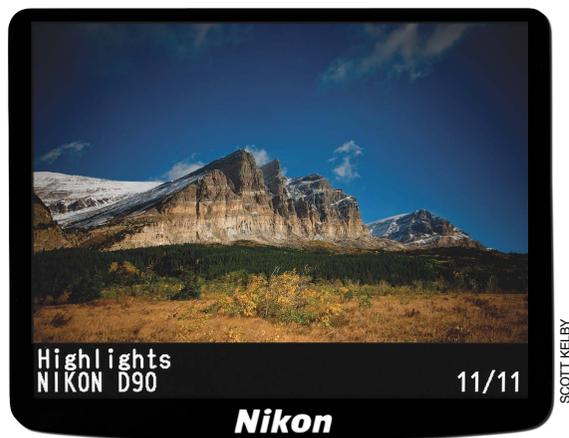


Canon

Here's a trick I picked up from Bill Fortney for getting even warmer sunrises and sunsets. For Nikon shooters, go to your camera's menu and choose Cloudy as your white balance. Press the right arrow button to get the White Balance Cloudy submenu, and move the dot in the middle of the grid to the right three spots (to A3), and then click OK. This does an amazing job of warming these types of photos. If you're a Canon shooter, go to your camera's menu and choose Cloudy as your white balance. Go back to the menu, select WB SHIFT/BKT, move the dot in the middle of the grid to the right three spots (to A3), and then press the Set button. *Note:* Don't forget to turn this setting off when you're not shooting sunrises or sunsets. Okay, it wouldn't be the worst thing in the world (it won't ruin all your subsequent shots), but your world will be a little warmer.



Turn on “The Blinkyies” to Keep More Detail



SCOTT KELBY

Okay, they’re technically not called “the blinkies” (that’s our nickname for them), they’re actually called highlight warnings (or highlight alerts) and having this turned on, and adjusting for it, is a critical part of getting properly exposed landscape shots. This warning shows exactly which parts of your photo have been overexposed to the point that there’s no detail in those areas at all. You’ll be amazed at how often this happens. For example, even on an overcast day, clouds can blow out (turn solid white with no detail) easily, so we keep our camera’s highlight warning turned on. Here’s how it works: When the highlight warning is turned on and you look at the shot in your LCD monitor, those blown out areas will start to blink like a slow strobe light. Now, these blinkies aren’t always bad—if you shoot a shot where the sun is clearly visible, it’s going to have the blinkies (I don’t mean sunlight, I mean the red ball of the sun). There’s not much detail on the surface of the sun, so I’d let that go. However, if your clouds have the blinkies, that’s a different story. Probably the quickest way to adjust for this is to use your camera’s exposure compensation control (covered on the next page). For now, let’s focus on making sure your highlight warning (blinkies) is turned on. If you have a Nikon camera, press the playback button so you can see the photos on your memory card. Now, push the down arrow button to see file information, then the right arrow button until the word Highlights appears below your photo on the LCD monitor. If you have a Canon camera (like a 40D, 50D, or a Rebel XTi), press the playback button to view your images and then press the Info button to see the blinkies.



How to Avoid the Dreaded Blinkies



If you look on your camera's LCD monitor and you see the blinkies appearing in an area that's important to you (like in the clouds, or in someone's white shirt, or in the snow, etc.), then you can use your digital camera's exposure compensation control. Basically, you're going to lower the exposure until the blinkies go away. It usually takes a few test shots (trial and error) to find out how much you have to back down, but normally this only takes a few seconds. Here's how it works:

Nikon: Press the exposure compensation button that appears just behind your shutter button (as shown above). Then move the command dial until your exposure compensation reads $-1/3$ (that's minus $1/3$ of a stop). Now take the same shot again and see if the blinkies are gone. If they're not, do the same thing, but lower the amount another $1/3$, so it reads $-2/3$ of a stop, and so on, until the blinkies are gone.

Canon: Turn the mode dial to any creative zone mode except manual, turn the power switch to the quick control dial setting, then set the exposure compensation by turning the quick control dial on the back of the camera and using the settings mentioned above.



How to Show Size



©ISTOCKPHOTO/JAN PAUL SCHRAGE

If you've ever had a chance to photograph something like the California redwood trees or a huge rock formation out in Utah's Monument Valley, you've probably been disappointed that when you looked at those photos later, you lost all sense of their size. In person, those redwoods were wider around than a truck. In your photos, they could've been the regular pines in your backyard, because they lost their sense of size. That's why, when trying to show the size of an object, you need something in that shot to give the object a sense of scale. That's why many photographers prefer to shoot mountains with people in the scene (hikers, climbers, etc.) because it instantly gives you a frame of reference—a sense of scale that lets the viewer immediately have a visual gauge as to how large a mountain, or a redwood, or the world's largest pine cone really is. So, the next time you want to show the sheer size of something, simply add a person to your shot and you've got an instant frame of reference everyone can identify with. It'll make your shots that much stronger. (*Note:* By the way, this also works for things that are very small. Put the object in someone's hands, and it instantly tells the story.)



Don't Set Up Your Tripod. Not Yet



SCOTT KELBY

Okay, so you walk up on a scene (a landscape, a mountain range, a waterfall, etc.) and you set up your tripod and start shooting. What are the chances that you just happened to walk up on the perfect angle to shoot your subject? Pretty slim. But that's what most people do—they walk up on a scene, set up their tripod right where they're standing, and they start shooting. It's no big surprise that they wind up with the same shot everybody else got—the “walk up” shot. Don't fall into this trap—before you set up your tripod, take a moment and simply walk around. View your subject from different angles, and chances are (in fact, it's almost guaranteed) that you'll find a more interesting perspective in just a minute or two. Also, hand-hold your camera and look through the viewfinder to test your angle out. Once you've found the perfect angle (and not just the most convenient one), you can then set up your tripod and start shooting. Now the odds are in your favor for getting a better than average take on your subject. This is one of the big secrets the pros use every day (legendary landscape photographer John Shaw has been teaching this concept for years)—they don't take the walk-up shot. They first survey the scene, look for the best angle, the best view, the interesting vantage point, and then (and only then) they set up their tripod. It sounds like a little thing (surveying the scene before you set up), but it's the little things that set the pros apart.



The Trick to Getting Richer Colors



One tool the pros use to get richer, more vivid colors is the polarizing filter. Of all the add-ons used by landscape pros, the polarizing filter is probably the most essential. This filter screws onto the end of your lens and it basically does two things: (1) it cuts the reflections in your photo big time (especially in water, on rocks, or on any reflective surface), and (2) it can often add more rich blues into your skies by darkening them and generally giving you more saturated colors throughout (and who doesn't want that?). Two tips: (1) polarizers have the most effect when you're shooting at a 90° angle from the sun, so if the sun is in front of you or behind you, they don't work all that well, and (2) you'll use the rotating ring on the filter to vary the amount (and angle) of polarization (it's also helpful so you can choose to remove reflections from either your sky or the ground). Once you see for yourself the difference a polarizing filter makes, you'll say something along the lines of, "Ahhhhh, so that's how they do it."

Polarizing Tip

If there's a lens the polarizing filter doesn't love, it's the super-wide-angle lens (like a 12mm or 10.5mm, etc.). Because the field of view is so wide, the sky winds up having uneven shades of blue, and because of that, many pros avoid using polarizers with super-wide-angle lenses. Also, when it comes to polarizers, it pays to buy a good one—that way it will be truly color balanced. It doesn't pay to scrimp here.



What to Shoot in Bad Weather



©ISTOCKPHOTO/DUNCAN WALKER

Okay, so you're thinking that it's an overcast or drizzly day, and you're going to spend the day inside working on your photos in Photoshop. That's not the worst idea in the world, but you'll miss some great shooting opportunities, like:

(1) Right after a rain, while it's still cloudy and dark, is the perfect time to shoot foliage, forests (the green leaves look more saturated and alive, even leaves on the ground look good, plus the water droplets on the leaves and flowers add interest), mossy rivers, and waterfalls (you can use slower shutter speeds while the sun is buried behind the overcast rain clouds).

(2) If it's storming, there's a good chance that right after the rain stops, and the clouds break, and the sun peeks through, there's a very dramatic shot coming. It may only last a couple of minutes, and it will either start storming again or clear up and just get really sunny (an outdoor photographer's enemy), so be ready for those few magical moments between storms. They're worth waiting for.

(3) Before the storm "lets loose," you can get some really amazing skies, with angry clouds and sometimes colorful light or strong light beams. Most people miss these shots, so be ready (just don't shoot in the rain, to protect you and your gear).



Atmosphere Is Your Friend



©ISTOCKPHOTO/FRED DE GROOT

Besides just keeping us here on earth, the atmosphere (low-hanging clouds or fog) can make for some really interesting landscape photos (we're talking soft, diffused light heaven). In fact, some of my personal favorite shots are taken when the fog rolls in between mountains (but of course, you need to shoot this from above the fog on a higher mountaintop). I've shot horses on the beach with the fog rolling in and it creates almost a Hollywood fantasy effect that looks great on film (digital film, anyway). Also, beams of light in the forest, beaming through moisture in the air, or through thick fog, can be just amazing. Get up early (or miss dinner) to make the most of these atmospheric effects.

Protect Your Gear Tip

Fog and moisture are fancy names for water, and digital cameras flat out do not like water, so make sure your gear is not getting silently soaked. You can buy rain gear for your camera from B&H, but in a pinch, use the shower cap from your hotel room and put it around your camera—it's not pretty, but it works.



Getting Rid of Lens Flare—The Manual Way



MATT KLOSOWSKI

Another great reason to wear a baseball cap when you shoot (besides the two obvious reasons: [1] it protects you from the harmful rays of the sun, and [2] it looks cool) is to help eliminate (or at the very least, reduce) lens flare. If you're using a lens hood on your camera, that can certainly help, but I've found that often it alone is not enough. That's where your ballcap comes in—just take it off and position it above the right or left top side of your lens (depending on where the sun is positioned). Then look through your camera's viewfinder to see (1) right where to position your ballcap so it blocks the lens flare from the sun (it's easier than you think), and (2) to make sure your ballcap doesn't show up in your photo (I've had more than one photo with the edge of a ballcap in the frame. I guess that's why they make Photoshop—to remove silly stuff like that). I'm still surprised how well this totally manual technique for removing lens flare works.



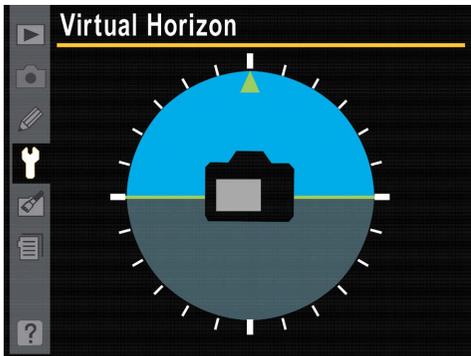
The Landscape Photographer's Secret Weapon



So, earlier you learned about the polarizer and how essential that filter is. This filter, the neutral density gradient filter, isn't necessarily essential but it is the secret weapon of professional landscape photographers. It lets them balance the exposure between the ground and the sky to capture a range of exposure which, without it, their camera could never pull off (it's either going to expose for the ground or for the sky, but not both at the same time). For example, let's say you're shooting a landscape at sunset. If you expose for the sky, the sky will look great but the ground will be way too dark. If you expose for the ground, then the sky will be way too light. So, how do you get both the sky and the ground to look right? With a neutral density gradient filter (a filter that's dark at the top and smoothly graduates down to transparent at the bottom). What this essentially does is darken the sky (which would have been overexposed), while leaving the ground untouched, but the brilliance of it is the gradient—it moves from darkening (at the top of the filter) and then graduates smoothly down to transparent (on the ground). That way it only darkens the sky, but it does so in a way that makes the top of the sky darker, and then your sky gradually becomes lighter until the filter has no effect at all by the time it reaches the ground. The result is a photo where both the sky and ground look properly exposed.



Keeping Your Horizons Straight



Nikon

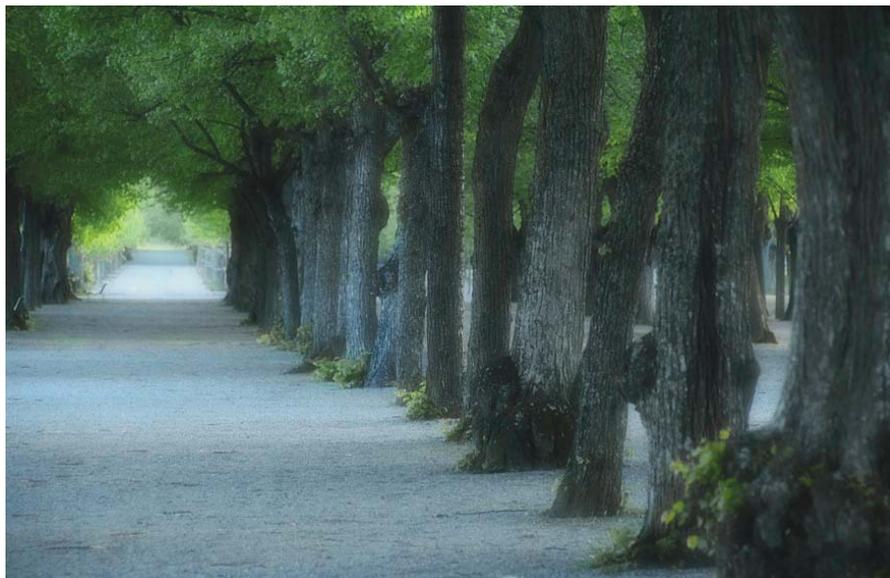


Canon

There is nothing that looks worse than a crooked horizon line. It's like when you don't get the fleshtone color right in a photo—it just jumps out at people (and people can't resist pointing this out. It doesn't matter if you've taken a photo with composition that would make Ansel Adams proud, they'll immediately say, "Your photo's crooked"). A great way to avoid this is by using the Virtual Horizon feature on your camera (if your camera has this feature, like the Nikon D3 shown above on the left) or with a double level—a simple little gizmo that slides into your flash hot shoe (that little bracket on the top of your camera where you'd attach an external flash). This double level gizmo has a mini-version of the bubble level you'd find at Home Depot and it lets you clearly see, in an instant, if your camera is level (and thus, your horizon line). The double level version works whether your camera is shooting in portrait or landscape orientation and is worth its weight in gold (of course, that's not saying very much, because I doubt the thing weighs even one ounce, but you get my drift). As luck would have it, they're more expensive than they should be—between \$25 and \$50—but still very worth it.



Shooting on Cloudy Days



SCOTT KELBY

This is another one of those things that may initially elicit a “Duh” response, but I’ve been out shooting with more photographers than I can think of who didn’t think of this simple concept when shooting on gray, overcast days—shoot to avoid the sky. I know, it sounds silly when you’re reading it here, but I’ve heard it time and time again, “Ah, the sky is so gray today, I’m not going to shoot.” Baloney. Just take shots that limit the amount of visible sky. That way, if you make a tonal adjustment later in Photoshop (that’s a fancy way of saying, “I’m going to make the sky look bluer than it really was on that gray, overcast day”), you won’t have to work very hard. This just happened on my last shoot, where we’d have 20 minutes of blue sky and then an hour and a half of gray, overcast sky. I just really limited the amount of sky in my photos (I was shooting urban city photos), and then it took just seconds to fix in Photoshop. Here’s what I did:

Step One: I opened one of the photos where the sky looked nice and blue, then took the Eyedropper tool (I), and clicked on the blue sky to make that my Foreground color.

Step Two: I then opened a photo with small amounts of gray, overcast sky and with the Magic Wand tool (W) clicked in the sky to select it (which took all of two seconds).

Step Three: I added a new blank layer above my Background layer and filled the selection with my Foreground color. That’s it—my gray sky was blue.



Tips for Shooting Panoramas, Part 1



RANDY HUFFORD

There is something so fascinating about what happens when you stitch together five or six (or more) landscape photos into one long, single image. It's as close as you can get (with a photograph anyway) to recreating the experience of being there. Now, although this will take more than one page to describe, shooting panos right is easy, so if you're serious about panos, follow these rules. However, if you have Photoshop CS4, Photomerge is so vastly improved, you can simply just overlap each shot by 20% when you shoot your pano.

- (1) Shoot your pano on a tripod.
- (2) Shoot vertically (in portrait orientation) rather than horizontally (in landscape orientation). It'll take more shots to cover the same area, but you'll have less edge distortion and a better looking pano for your extra effort.
- (3) Switch your camera's white balance to Cloudy. If you leave it set to Auto, your white balance may (will) change between segments, which is bad, bad, bad.
- (4) There's more—go to the next page...



Tips for Shooting Panoramas, Part 2

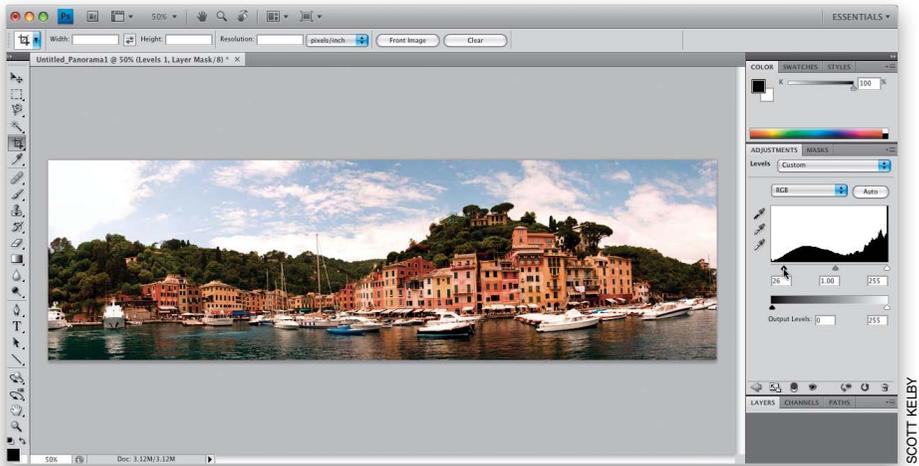


RANDY HUFFORD

- (5) Press your shutter button halfway down to set your exposure, then look in your viewfinder and make note of the f-stop and shutter speed. Now switch your camera to manual mode and dial in that f-stop and shutter speed. If you don't, and you shoot in an auto exposure mode of any kind, your exposure may (will) change for one or more of the segments.
- (6) Once you focus on the first segment, turn off auto focus for your lens. That way, your camera doesn't refocus as you shoot the different segments.
- (7) Before you shoot your first segment, shoot one shot with your finger in front of the lens—that way you'll know where your pano starts. Do it again after the last shot.
- (8) Overlap each segment by 20–25%. That's right, make sure that about 1/4 of your first shot appears in the second shot. Each segment needs to overlap by at least 20% so Photoshop's stitching software can match things up. This is very important.
- (9) Shoot fairly quickly—especially if clouds are moving behind your landscape. Don't be lollygagging for two minutes between each shot. Git'er done, or something could change (lighting, clouds, etc.) in your pano, which will really mess things up.
- (10) Use a shutter release, or at the very least a self timer, so you don't have any camera movement as you're shooting each segment. Nothing's worse than one segment that is blurry.



Tips for Shooting Panoramas, Part 3



Now, if you followed the rules set out on the previous two pages, the rest is easy:

Step One: Open Photoshop and then open all the photo segments (so all the photo segments are open at the same time).

Step Two: Go under Photoshop's File menu, under Automate, and choose Photomerge.

Step Three: In the resulting dialog, from the Use pop-up menu, choose Files, then click the Add Open Files button. Make sure the Blend Images Together checkbox is turned on, and then click OK.

Step Four: Photoshop will then stitch the photos together into one seamless panorama (you may need to crop off any transparent areas). If you see a small seam at the top, between two segments, use the Clone Stamp tool (S) to cover it by pressing-and-holding the Option key (PC: Alt key) and clicking nearby in an area of sky that looks similar to sample that area. Then, choose a soft-edged brush from the Brush Picker and clone (paint) over the little seam to hide it.



Faking Panoramas



If you have Photoshop or Photoshop Elements, there's a great way to create a fake panorama—crop the photo so it becomes a panorama. Just get the Crop tool (C) and click-and-drag so it selects just the center of your photo (as shown above), cropping off the top and bottom. Then press Return (PC: Enter) and the top and bottom are cropped away, leaving you with a wide panoramic crop of your original photo. Hey, don't knock it until you've tried it.



Why You Need a Wide-Angle Lens



If you're shooting landscapes, you've probably come back from a shoot more than once and been disappointed that the incredible vista you saw in person didn't transfer to your photos. It's really tough to create a 2D photo (which is what still photos are—two-dimensional) that has the depth and feeling of being there. That's why I recommend one of two things:

(1) Don't try to capture it all. That's right, use a zoom lens and deliberately capture just a portion of the scene that suggests the whole. These can often be much more powerful than trying to fit everything into one photo, which often can lead to a photo without a clear subject, and with distracting images and backgrounds. This is why I often shoot with a 70–200mm lens—to get in tight on a portion of the scene.

(2) Buy a super-wide-angle lens. Not a fish-eye lens—a super-wide-angle lens (like a 12mm). If you're trying to capture it all, a super-wide-angle (sometimes called ultra-wide-angle) lens is often just the trick you need to take in the big picture. My favorite outdoor lens is my 14–24mm zoom lens (which is also a good sports shooting lens by the way). I must admit, I rarely use the 24mm end, because I use this lens when I'm trying to get "the big picture," so I use the 14mm end most of the time. You'll love what it does to clouds, almost giving them a sense of movement along the edges.



Shooting Wildlife? Aim at Their Eyes



Okay, that headline doesn't sound great when you say it out loud (it sounds like we're actually shooting wildlife with a gun, rather than taking photos), but it's right on the money. When you're shooting wildlife photography, your point of focus needs to be the animal's eyes. If they're not in focus, it doesn't matter what else is. Oftentimes you'll be capturing wildlife in motion (or in flight, as the case may be), and that's where it's especially important to make certain the eyes are in focus. If you're using a panning technique (where you follow the moving animal with your lens), make sure your focal point is the eyes. Everything else can be blurred, but keep those eyes tack sharp and you'll have a winner.



Don't Crop Wildlife in Motion Too Close



PEGGY GUENZEL

If you're shooting wildlife, when you're composing the image, don't frame it so close that the animal has nowhere to go. In other words, give the animal some space in front of the direction it's going for a much stronger composition—one that tells a story. If you crop in too tight and don't leave room for the animal to exit the frame, it's almost like trapping them in your shot, and the photo will look uncomfortable to the viewer. When you're composing in the viewfinder, leave some extra space to "run" in front of your subject, and your photo will be that much stronger for it.



Shooting Wildlife? Get in Really Tight



There is a phenomenon that happens when shooting wildlife that doesn't seem to happen when shooting anything else. However close your subject looks in your viewfinder, when you see the actual photo it seems only half as close as you remember. It's crazy, but it's consistent—it always looks much farther away than you hoped. So, when it comes to shooting wildlife, you want to get in incredibly tight. That's why the pros shoot with those giant 400mm and larger lenses. But if your budget doesn't allow for that (I know mine doesn't), you can cheat and use a teleconverter (also sometimes called a tele-extender). These basically extend the reach of your current telephoto (or zoom) lens by magnifying them. So if you have a 200mm telephoto (or zoom) lens (which is already equivalent to around a 300mm thanks to digital), and add a 1.4x or 2x teleconverter, you instantly have the equivalent of a 450mm or 600mm traditional telephoto lens. A Canon 1.4x teleconverter runs around \$290, and a Nikon 2x teleconverter runs around \$400 (make sure you check to see that the teleconverter you buy works with your current lens—get it to match your make and model).



What to Shoot at Sunset



©ISTOCKPHOTO/ANDRZEJ BURAK

Besides just shooting the sunset itself, another great subject to shoot at sunset is silhouettes. There are two basic rules to shooting silhouettes: (1) make sure the subject (or the object) you're silhouetting is easily recognizable. I see lots of silhouette snapshots where my first thought is, "What is that thing?" Keep the object simple, and it will work much better. (2) Position your subject directly in front of the setting sun, so the sun is covered and helps outline your silhouette, then expose for the sky (this will pretty much make certain that your subject will appear in a black silhouette).

Silhouette Tip

Keep an eye on lens flare when you're shooting silhouettes because you're basically shooting into the sun. You'll see a lot of classic silhouettes where the sun is peeking around the subject just a tiny bit, and that's okay if you like that effect, but make sure it doesn't reveal too much detail in your subject—they should remain black.

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Index

A

accessories, 3
Adams, Ansel, 61, 80
Adobe Camera Raw. *See* Camera Raw
Adobe Lightroom. *See* Lightroom
Adobe Photoshop. *See* Photoshop
Adobe Photoshop CS4 Book for Digital Photographers, The (Kelby), 179
animal photography, 87–89
aperture priority mode, 25, 64, 66
aperture setting, 14, 115
archival-quality inks, 184
athletes, 105, 108, 110
 See also sports photography
atmospheric effects, 77
auto focus, 99
Auto White Balance, 58, 130, 154

B

B&H Photo, 5, 77
baby portraits, 125
backgrounds
 blurred, 106, 107
 canvas or muslin, 117
 for flowers, 30, 31
 lighting for, 118
 outdoor, 51, 118
 out-of-focus, 25, 118
 for portraits, 51, 116–118
 seamless paper, 116
 shower curtain, 31, 32
 tip on varying, 51
backing up photos, 57, 138
backup batteries, 131
ballheads, 9
baseball caps, 78
batteries, 131, 139
black backgrounds, 30, 116, 197
black-and-white prints, 184, 187
blinkies, 71, 72, 149
blinking subjects, 45
“blue morning” effect, 196
blurred images
 dancing people and, 46
 low-light situations and, 38
 sharpening, 18–19

 sports and, 106, 107
 wind and, 34
boat-on-the-water shot, 198
books on photography, 192
borderless prints, 183
bracketing, exposure, 141
bridal shots, 47, 54, 55
 See also wedding photos
Brush Picker (Photoshop), 84
budget considerations, 4
bulb mode, 175
burst mode, 20, 103, 106

C

cable release, 10, 11, 175
calibrating your monitor, 188
camera gear
 author’s, 191
 budget considerations, 4
 protecting, 77, 132
 recommended source for, 5
 sports photography and, 96–98
Camera Raw, 130, 155, 179
 See also RAW format
camera shake
 cable release and, 10, 11
 hand-held cameras and, 20–21
 mirror lock-up and, 12
 self timer and, 11
 shutter speed and, 16
cameras
 digital vs. film, 145, 146, 150, 151, 154
 hand-holding, 20–21
 See also digital cameras
candid shots, 113, 121
Canon cameras, 6
 bulb mode on, 175
 burst mode on, 103
 exposure bracketing on, 141
 exposure compensation on, 72, 149
 highlight warnings on, 71
 Image Stabilization lens, 13, 98
 lenses made for, 13, 15
 Mirror Lockup feature, 12
 portrait photography and, 114
 sports photography and, 96

- white balance and, 70
- zoom button on, 17
- Canon Close-Up Lens, 27
- canvas backgrounds, 116
- car shots, 199, 206, 207
- carbon fiber monopods, 104
- carbon fiber tripods, 63, 168
- CDs, shredding, 140
- children, 120, 125, 161
- churches, 38
- cities
 - aperture setting in, 170
 - concerns about shooting in, 134
 - showing movement in, 169
 - times for shooting in, 163
 - See also* urban photography
- Clone Stamp tool (Photoshop), 84
- close-up lens, 26, 27, 197
- cloudy days, 28, 81
- cold weather shooting, 131
- collapsible reflectors, 127
- color balance filters, 94
- color cast, 130
- color management, 188, 189
- color profiles, 189
- colors
 - capturing richness of, 75
 - contrasting, 198, 199, 207
 - looking for vivid, 164
- combining photos, 174
- CompactFlash cards, 57
- composing
 - flower shots, 25, 197, 200, 204
 - formal shots, 48, 49, 202
 - landscapes, 65, 196, 201, 203, 209
 - portraits, 121, 122
 - silhouettes, 90
 - sports shots, 105, 110
 - sunset shots, 206, 209
 - urban shots, 205, 207, 208
 - water shots, 196, 198, 199, 203
 - wildlife shots, 88–89
- Condé Nast Traveler*, 159
- continuous shooting mode, 20, 103
- contrasting colors, 198, 199, 207
- Crop tool (Photoshop), 85
- Cross, Dave, 193
- crowd shots, 161

D

- darkening filters, 66, 67
- dawn, shooting at, 62, 65, 163
- Death Grip, 21
- deleting photos, 148
- depth of field, 26
- details, shooting, 52, 166
- Dfine plug-in, 38
- diffused lighting, 39–40
- digital cameras
 - batteries for, 131, 139
 - cable release for, 10
 - deleting photos on, 148
 - experimenting with, 151
 - film cameras vs., 145, 146, 150, 151, 154
 - hand-holding, 20–21
 - ISO setting on, 150
 - LCD monitors on, 139, 147
 - megapixels in, 182
 - mirror lock-up on, 12
 - most popular, 6
 - pop-up flash on, 142
 - program mode on, 160, 199, 208
 - quick zoom settings on, 17
 - rain gear for, 77, 132
 - red-eye reduction mode on, 142
 - white balance settings on, 154
 - zoom button on, 17
- digital photos
 - backing up, 57, 138
 - combining, 174
 - deleting, 148
 - film photos vs., 146
 - organizing, 181
 - poster-sized prints of, 153
 - printing, 183–189
 - recipes for shooting, 195–209
 - selling, 190
 - sharpening, 18–19
 - underexposed vs. overexposed, 155
- directional lighting, 40
- double exposures, 174
- double level, 80
- dusk, shooting at, 62, 163
- dusty weather, 132
- DVDs, shredding, 140

E

edit-as-you-go method, 148
electronic cable release, 11
Epson
 hard drives, 57, 138
 paper, 186–187
 printers, 183–185
Eraser tool (Photoshop), 46
EXIF data, 14
experimenting, 151
exposure bracketing, 141
exposure compensation control, 41, 72, 149
external flash unit, 40, 142
external hard drives, 57, 138
Eyedropper tool (Photoshop), 81
eyes
 blinking of, 45
 focusing on, 119, 202
 positioning in frame, 121
 of wildlife, 87

F

facial expressions, 108
Fellows shredder, 140
fill flash, 41
film cameras, 145, 146, 150, 151, 154
film speed, 16, 150
 See also ISO setting
filters
 color balance, 94
 neutral density gradient, 79
 polarizing, 67, 75, 196, 208
 stop-down, 66
 Unsharp Mask, 18, 19
 UV, 137
fireworks, 175
flash
 diffused light with, 39–40
 exposure compensation for, 41
 external flash units, 40, 142
 outdoor shots with, 41
 red eye and, 142
flash diffusers, 39
Flexible Program Mode, 160
florists, 33
flower photography, 23–34
 best times for, 28
 black background for, 30, 197
 composing shots in, 25, 197, 200, 204

fake rain for, 29
getting flowers for, 33
lighting for, 32, 197
macro lenses and, 26
non-typical angles for, 24
printer paper for, 187
white background for, 31
wind and, 34
zoom lenses and, 25, 200
flowing water, 66
fluorescent lights, 94, 130, 154
focal length, 114
focus
 for city shots, 170
 for flowers, 25
 for portraits, 44, 119
 for sports photos, 99
 for wildlife shots, 87
fog, shooting in, 77
forest scenes, 67
formal portraits, 43–51
 avoiding blinking in, 45
 backgrounds for, 51
 bridal shots and, 47, 54, 55
 composing, 48, 49, 202
 framing, 49
 popular format for, 50
 posing people for, 55
 positioning camera for, 48
 shooting sequence for, 43
 where to focus for, 44
Fortney, Bill, 70, 105, 132, 167, 168
frosted shower curtain, 32, 124
f-stop, 14, 38, 115, 170

G

gear. *See* camera gear
getting “the shot”, 160, 195–209
Getty Images, 190
glass. *See* lenses
government buildings, 133, 134
gray backgrounds, 116

H

hand-held shots, 13, 20–21, 38
hard drives, 57, 138
highlight warnings, 71, 72, 149
horizon line, 68, 80

I

Image Stabilization (IS) lenses, 13, 98
incandescent lights, 58, 94, 130
inclines, shooting on, 135
indoor lighting
 for portraits, 124
 for sports photography, 94
 for weddings, 38–40
instant feedback, 147
Internet resources. *See* Web resources
ISO setting, 16, 38, 100, 150
iStockphoto.com website, 190

J

Johnson, Stephen, 65
JPEG format, 58, 109, 178

K

Kloskowski, Matt, 193
knee pads, 25
Knoll, Thomas, 179

L

landmarks, 173
landscape photography, 61–90
 aperture priority mode and, 64, 66
 atmospheric effects and, 77
 color richness in, 75
 composing shots in, 65, 196, 201, 203, 209
 exposure compensation and, 72
 forest scenes in, 67
 golden rule of, 62
 highlight warnings and, 71, 72
 horizon line in, 68, 80
 lens flare and, 78
 lighting for, 62, 66
 masters in, 65
 mountain shots in, 69
 neutral density gradient filter and, 79
 non-typical angles for, 69, 74
 panoramas in, 82–85
 polarizing filters and, 67, 75
 printer paper for, 187
 showing size in, 73
 silky water effect in, 66, 67
 skies in, 68

 sunrises and sunsets in, 70, 90, 209
 tripods and, 63, 66, 74
 weather considerations, 76, 81
 wide-angle lenses and, 86
 wildlife and, 87–89
large-format printing, 185
Lastolite reflectors, 127
LCD monitor
 blinkies in, 71, 72, 149
 camera battery life and, 139
 comparing with computer monitor, 180
 viewing shots in, 17, 41, 147
lens flare, 78, 90, 136
lens hood, 136
lenses
 close-up, 26, 27
 dusty weather and, 132
 Image Stabilization, 13, 98
 macro, 26
 portrait photography, 114
 protecting, 77, 132, 136, 137
 quality considerations, 15
 sports photography, 96, 97–98
 sweet spot for, 14
 telephoto, 15, 89, 96, 98, 114
 Vibration Reduction, 13, 98
 wide-angle, 75, 86, 98
 See also zoom lenses
light
 diffused, 39–40
 directional, 40
 natural, 31, 32, 54, 124, 127
lighting
 for backgrounds, 118
 for flowers, 32
 for indoor sports, 94
 for landscapes, 62, 66
 for portraits, 123–124, 142
 for wedding photos, 38–41
Lightroom, 180, 181
Lipovetsky, Joel, 21
long exposure noise reduction, 203
low-light photography
 hand-held shots and, 38
 ISO setting and, 16, 38
 VR or IS lenses and, 13, 98
luminosity sharpening, 19
LumiQuest Soft Screen Diffuser, 39

M

macro lenses, 26, 197
Magic Wand tool (Photoshop), 81
Maisel, Jay, 3
Mastering Camera Raw DVD, 179
McNally, Joe, 62
megapixels, 182
memory cards

- accidental erasure of, 156
- backing up, 57, 138
- deleting photos from, 148
- holder used for, 156
- RAW format and, 152
- size considerations for, 152
- sports photos and, 96, 98
- wedding photos and, 42, 57, 152

Micro Apollo Softbox, 39
mirror lock-up, 12
models, hiring, 162
monitor calibration, 188
monopods, 96, 104, 172
moon shots, 174
Moore, Brad, 165
Motion Blur filter (Photoshop), 46
motion shots, 46, 106, 199, 205
motion trails, 169
mountain shots, 69
mounting board, 31
Mpix.com photo lab, 153
Muench, David, 65
museum photography, 133
muslin backgrounds, 116

N

National Geographic Traveler, 159
natural light

- for flowers, 31, 32, 197, 204
- for portraits, 124, 127, 202
- for wedding photos, 54

neutral density gradient filter, 79
neutral gray card, 130
newborn babies, 125
Nikon cameras, 6

- bulb mode on, 175
- burst mode on, 103
- Canon Close-Up Lens and, 27
- exposure bracketing on, 141
- exposure compensation on, 72, 149
- Exposure Delay mode, 12
- highlight warnings on, 71

portrait photography and, 114
program mode on, 160
sports photography and, 96
Vibration Reduction lens, 13, 98
Virtual Horizon feature, 80
white balance and, 70
zoom button, 17

NikSoftware.com website, 38

noise, 38, 155, 203

O

old people, 161
online resources. *See* Web resources
open shade, 200
organizing photos, 181
Outdoor Photographer, 195
outdoor shots

- backgrounds for, 51, 118
- flash used for, 41
- portraits as, 118, 123
- weather and, 76
- weddings and, 41
- wide-angle lenses for, 86
- windy days and, 34

out-of-focus backgrounds, 25, 118
overcast days, 28
overexposed photos, 155

P

panning, 46, 87, 106
panoramas

- creating fake, 85
- Photomerge feature and, 82, 84
- tips for shooting, 82–83

paper

- background, 116
- printer, 186–187, 189

people, shooting. *See* portraits
permits, tripod, 133
Peterson, Moose, 27, 65
photo labs, 153
photo shoots, 2
photo vest, 98
photography

- flower, 23–34
- landscape, 61–90
- low-light, 13, 16
- portrait, 113–127
- recommended books on, 192

- sports, 93–110
- travel, 159–175
- urban, 159–175
- wedding, 37–58
- wildlife, 87–89
- See also* digital photos
- photojournalism, 52
- Photomerge feature (Photoshop), 82, 84
- Photoshop
 - Camera Raw and, 130, 155
 - cloning images in, 84
 - color management system in, 189
 - combining photos in, 174
 - cropping photos in, 85
 - EXIF data viewed in, 14
 - motion blur added in, 46
 - Photomerge feature in, 82, 84
 - processing RAW photos in, 179
 - removing red eye in, 143
 - sharpening photos in, 18–19
 - tonal adjustments in, 81
 - wedding photo plug-in, 38
- Photoshop Elements, 18–19, 85, 143
- Photoshop User TV*, 193
- polarizing filters, 67, 75, 196, 208
- pop-up flash, 142
- portraits, 113–127
 - aperture setting for, 115
 - backgrounds for, 51, 116–118
 - camera position for, 120
 - composing, 121, 122
 - focal length for, 114
 - framing shots for, 122
 - lenses recommended for, 114
 - lighting for, 123–124, 127, 142
 - of newborn babies, 125
 - outdoor, 118, 123
 - positioning subjects for, 121
 - printer paper for, 187
 - red eye in, 142–143
 - reflectors for, 127
 - sunsets and, 126
 - wedding, 43–51
 - where to focus for, 119
 - See also* formal portraits
- poster-sized prints, 153
- pre-focusing action shots, 99
- preset white balance, 58
- printers
 - color management system of, 189
 - recommendations for, 183–185

- printing, 183–189
 - borderless, 183
 - color profiles for, 189
 - lab-quality, 184
 - large-format, 185
 - megapixels and, 182
 - monitor calibration for, 188
 - paper recommended for, 186–187
 - poster-sized, 153
- professional photographers, 3, 65, 93, 96, 159, 162
- Professional Photographers of America (PPA), 162
- program mode, 160, 199, 208

Q

- quick zoom settings, 17

R

- rain
 - flower shots after, 28
 - landscape shots and, 76
 - protecting gear from, 77
 - simulating, 29
- RAW format
 - exposure bracketing and, 141
 - JPEG format vs., 109
 - memory cards and, 152
 - Photoshop and, 130, 155, 179
 - pros and cons of shooting in, 178
 - resources for learning about, 179
 - sports photography and, 109
 - white balance and, 58, 94, 130
- reception, wedding, 46
- recipes, photo, 195–209
- red eye
 - avoiding, 142
 - removing, 143
- Red Eye tool (Photoshop), 143
- reflectors, 40, 127
- release forms, 162
- resources
 - Camera Raw training, 179
 - photography books, 192
 - Photoshop User TV*, 193
 - See also* Web resources

S

scottkelbybooks.com website, 4, 174
seamless backgrounds, 116
seeing-the-wind trick, 34
self timer, 11
shadows, 39, 40, 41, 123
sharp photos, 8–12

- aperture setting and, 14
- cable release and, 10, 11
- hand-held cameras and, 20–21
- importance of, 1
- IS lenses and, 13
- ISO setting and, 16
- lens quality and, 15
- mirror lock-up and, 12
- Photoshop tips for, 18–19
- self timers and, 11
- tripods and, 8
- VR lenses and, 13
- zooming to check for, 17

Shaw, John, 65, 74
sheer curtains, 124
shower curtains, 31, 32, 124
shredding CDs/DVDs, 140
shutter priority mode, 16, 34, 66, 95, 169
shutter speed, 16, 34, 67, 95, 169
Shutterbug, 195
signs, shooting, 168
silhouettes, 90
silky water effect, 66, 67, 203
simplicity, 171
size, showing, 73
skies

- exposure issues, 79
- horizon line and, 68
- Photoshop adjustments, 81
- pre-storm, 76
- sunset portraits and, 126

SLR cameras, 6
Soft Screen Diffuser, 39
sports photography, 93–110

- aperture setting for, 107
- blurring backgrounds in, 106, 107
- burst mode for, 103, 106
- camera gear for, 96–98
- composing shots in, 105, 110
- facial expressions in, 108
- indoor, 94
- ISO setting for, 100
- learning the game for, 101
- lenses for, 96, 97–98

panning motion in, 106
pre-focusing shots in, 99
professional, 93
RAW vs. JPEG format for, 109
shutter speed for, 95, 106
story-telling with, 102
tripods and, 104
vertical vs. horizontal, 105
white balance for, 94
spray bottles, 29
stock photos, 190
stop-down filter, 66
story-telling angle, 102
studio lighting, 124
sunny days, 28
sunrises, 70
sunsets, 70, 90, 126, 206, 209
super-wide-angle lenses, 75, 86

T

tack sharp photos, 1, 8
teleconverters, 89, 98
telephoto lenses

- macro lenses from, 27
- moon shots using, 174
- portrait photography and, 114
- quality considerations, 15
- sports photography and, 96, 98
- wildlife photography and, 89

textured paper, 187
TFP (Time for Prints), 162
timer, self, 11
tonal adjustments, 81
touristy landmarks, 173
Travel & Leisure, 159
travel photography, 159–175

- aperture setting for, 170
- capturing details in, 166
- fireworks in, 175
- getting “the shot” in, 160
- hiring models for, 162
- importance of color in, 164
- including the moon in, 174
- main themes used in, 161
- monopods and, 172
- presenting different views in, 167, 173
- printer paper for, 187
- showing movement in, 169
- sign shots in, 168
- simplicity in, 171

- times for shooting, 163
- touristy landmarks and, 173
- Web resource on, 165
- tripods
 - alternatives to, 16, 21
 - ballheads for, 9
 - carbon fiber, 63
 - cost considerations, 8
 - fireworks shots and, 175
 - inclines and, 135
 - landscape photography and, 63, 66, 74
 - macro lenses and, 26
 - monopods vs., 172
 - motion trails and, 169
 - panoramas and, 82–83
 - permits for using, 133
 - portraits and, 120
 - sports photography and, 104
 - stable shooting with, 135
 - substitutes for, 21
 - tack sharp photos and, 8
 - weight and quality of, 168
- two-element close-up diopters, 26

U

- ultra-wide-angle lenses, 86
- underexposed photos, 155
- Unsharp Mask filter (Photoshop), 18, 19
- urban photography, 159–175
 - aperture setting for, 170
 - capturing details in, 166
 - composing shots in, 205, 207, 208
 - getting “the shot” in, 160
 - importance of color in, 164
 - including the moon in, 174
 - monopods and, 172
 - presenting different views in, 167
 - printer paper for, 187
 - showing movement in, 169
 - sign shots in, 168
 - simplicity in, 171
 - times for shooting, 163
 - touristy landmarks and, 173
 - Web resource on, 165
- UV filters, 137

V

- Versace, Vincent, 30, 146
- Vibration Reduction (VR) lenses and, 13, 98
- Virtual Horizon feature, 80

W

- water shots
 - composing, 196, 198, 199, 203
 - shooting at dawn, 65, 196
 - silky effect in, 66, 67, 203
- waterfalls, 66, 67
- weather considerations, 76, 81, 131
- Web resources
 - Camera Raw training, 179
 - online photo labs, 153
 - Photoshop User TV*, 193
 - stock photography, 190
 - travel photography, 165
- wedding photos, 37–58
 - backgrounds for, 51
 - backing up, 57
 - bouquet/garter toss, 56
 - bridal shots, 47, 54, 55
 - church interior, 38, 56
 - details in, 52
 - flash used for, 39–41
 - formal portraits, 43–51, 202
 - high vantage point for, 53
 - lighting conditions for, 38–41, 54
 - memory cards for, 42, 57, 152
 - number of shots for, 42
 - outdoor shots, 41
 - popular format for, 50
 - posing people for, 55
 - reception, 46
 - white balance for, 58
 - wide-angle lens for, 56
- Westcott Micro Apollo Softbox, 39
- WhereTheProsShoot.com website, 165
- white backgrounds, 31, 116
- white balance
 - Auto White Balance, 58, 154
 - avoiding problems with, 130
 - indoor sports and, 94
 - panoramas and, 82
 - RAW format and, 58, 94, 130
 - sunrises/sunsets and, 70
 - wedding photos and, 58
- wide-angle lenses, 56, 75, 86, 98, 174
- wildlife photography, 87–89
- wind, shooting flowers in, 34
- window light, 54, 124
- Woods, Tiger, 3

X

X-Rite i1 Display 2 calibrator, 188

Z

Ziser, David, 125

zoom button, 17

zoom lenses

- close-up lens added to, 26, 27

- fireworks shots and, 175

- flower photography and, 25, 200, 204

- landscape photography and, 86

- moon shots using, 174

- portrait photography and, 114

- quality considerations, 15

- wildlife photography and, 89