

Inspiration Feed

Photographer's Essential Guide



by Alfonso Calero



PHOTOGRAPHY TRAVEL

UNLOCK YOUR CREATIVITY

As Seen in Australian Photography Magazine Website

Written & Photographed By Alfonso Calero

Edited by James Ostinga (Australian Photography Magazine Editor)

Introduction:

For the last the last 4 years I have been writing photography tutorials for Australian Photography magazine's website. The E-Book is packed full of useful info to inspire you on many levels creatively and technically. They are all project or genre specific and are guaranteed to feed your need to create and learn. Travel Photography is a mix of different genres. This e-book will guide you through many different scenarios during my travels. Spontaneity and serendipity is what has lead me and my travel photography customers to the stories you are about to read.

Born and raised in the Philippines, [Alfonso Calero](#) moved to Australia at the age of 15. He graduated from the Sydney Institute of Technology with an Associate Diploma in Photography in 2001 and has been professionally photographing food, portraits, landscapes and travel subjects ever since. He started a travel education and tours company four years ago delivering workshops every Saturday morning in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Fremantle. He also takes groups of four people to Japan, Philippines, Spain and Tasmania once a year for 5 – 10 day photography workshops.

The Technical Basics: Cheat Sheet

Basic Manual Settings

100 200 400 800 1600 3200 DAYLIGHT (WELL LIT) NIGHT (DARK) ← MORE CRISP PHOTOS HIGH POSSIBILITY OF NOISE →	ISO	P
f/2 f/2.8 f/4 f/5.6 f/8 f/11 f/16 ← BRIGHTER SHALLOW DEPTH OF FIELD → → DARKER SHARPER IMAGES ←	Aperture	A or AV
B 30" 15" 10" 2" 1" 1/25 1/30 1/50 1/100 1/125 1/250 1/320 ← BRIGHTER SLOWER → → DARKER FASTER ←	Shutter Speed	S or TV
-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 ← DARKER UNDEREXPOSED → → BRIGHTER OVEREXPOSED ←	Exposure	+/-

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Photography Essentials: The Language of Composition

Composition is the language of photography; it's how we communicate our ideas and feelings and control the way viewers' see and respond to our images. Alfonso Calero looks at ten compositional elements and how you can use them to create more powerful images.

01 DOMINANCE

In most successful images, one part of the design is more important than the rest. All other details are less important than the dominant part, but they also add to the composition. As a photographer you can make something stand out by its size, colour, brightness, texture, shape, position, or any combination of these elements. For instance, in a drawing of black shapes that are the same size, a smaller red shape would be dominant. Or a single triangle can be dominant over a group of triangles if it is away from the group. Your images will be stronger if there is a primary point of interest. One suggestion is to limit the number of important areas in a photo to three. Less is more. If your eye goes to more than three dominant points then it becomes confusing. Differing proportions within a composition can help establish visual weight and depth.

02 REPETITION

Repetition and rhythm are the repeating elements in an image, and can comprise shapes, colours, or lines. Repetition involves using similar things over and over again, while rhythm refers to using them in an order or pattern. Repetition and rhythm are just as important in photography as they are in music. In music, our ears pick out the rhythm. In art, our eyes pick out the patterns and follow them.



Spiral staircase inside the Maritime Museum in Santiago De Compostela, Spain. Repetition, line and shape lead the eye to the white circle of light in the top third of the image. Photo by Alfonso Calero.

03 LINE

Take a look at your favourite landscapes – chances are there will be some form of leading line that drags your eye into or around the photo. The type of lines you include also affect the mood of the image. A straight line will draw your eye quickly from one point to another, creating a sense of speed and dynamism. A curved line on the other hand tends to slow your eye down, creating a more peaceful feeling.



Lines are all important in the composition of this image of the Niemeyer Center in Aviles, Spain. The leading line in the top left draws our eye to the dominant disc-shaped building in the middle distance. Curved lines tend to slow things down, creating a more peaceful mood. Photo by Alfonso Calero.

04 SHAPE

When both ends of a line meet to surround space, the line forms a shape. Shape in images refers to elements that appear two-dimensional, such as squares, triangles, or circles. They can be made from curvy or straight lines. Shapes can also have bumpy or pointed edges as well. They can be things we do not recognise or they can be things we do recognise. It is easier to find shapes in man-made objects.



Mt. Fuji after sunrise has a cone shape with some texture highlighted in the dense clouds to draw the eye more precisely towards the peak.

05 FORM

Form is similar to shape, but it also describes the depth of an object. While shape refers to two-dimensions, form is three-dimensional. In photography, which is a two-dimensional medium revealing form can be difficult but it often comes down to the way the subject is illuminated and the how light and shadows describe the surface of the object.

06 TEXTURE

Texture refers to how the surface of something looks and feels. For example, the surface of a brick is hard and rough. Texture is simply the tactile quality of an object. Texture is an extremely good way to capture a viewer's interest, as it invokes more than simply their sense of sight but also their sense of touch. When taking photos

where texture is the main element, it is best to light it from the side or from the back as this will bring out more texture. It is best to avoid harsh and direct light.



The Basilica in Zaragoza, Spain, at sunset. The ripples on the river give the image a textural quality while the left hand bank joins nicely along the bottom left corner to lead the eye to the basilica. The stone bridge as well draws the eye to the most dominant part of the shot. Photo by Alfonso Calero.

07 TONE

Tone is a critical tool in composition. Our eyes are naturally drawn to brighter tones and this has a strong influence on the way we see images. A bright highlight near the edge of an image will draw our eyes away from the centre of the picture. Conversely, a dark area at the periphery of the photo will tend to keep our eyes locked in the brighter central part of the photo. All things being equal, the brightest part of the photo will be dominant.

08 CONTRAST

Contrast refers to having different things in the same design. Think of it as the Yin & Yang of an image, the balance of the opposites. Long and short, black and white, light and dark, big and small – opposites are everywhere. Proportion is closely associated to contrast. It is the relationship in scale between one element and the other, or between a whole object and one of its parts.

09 UNITY

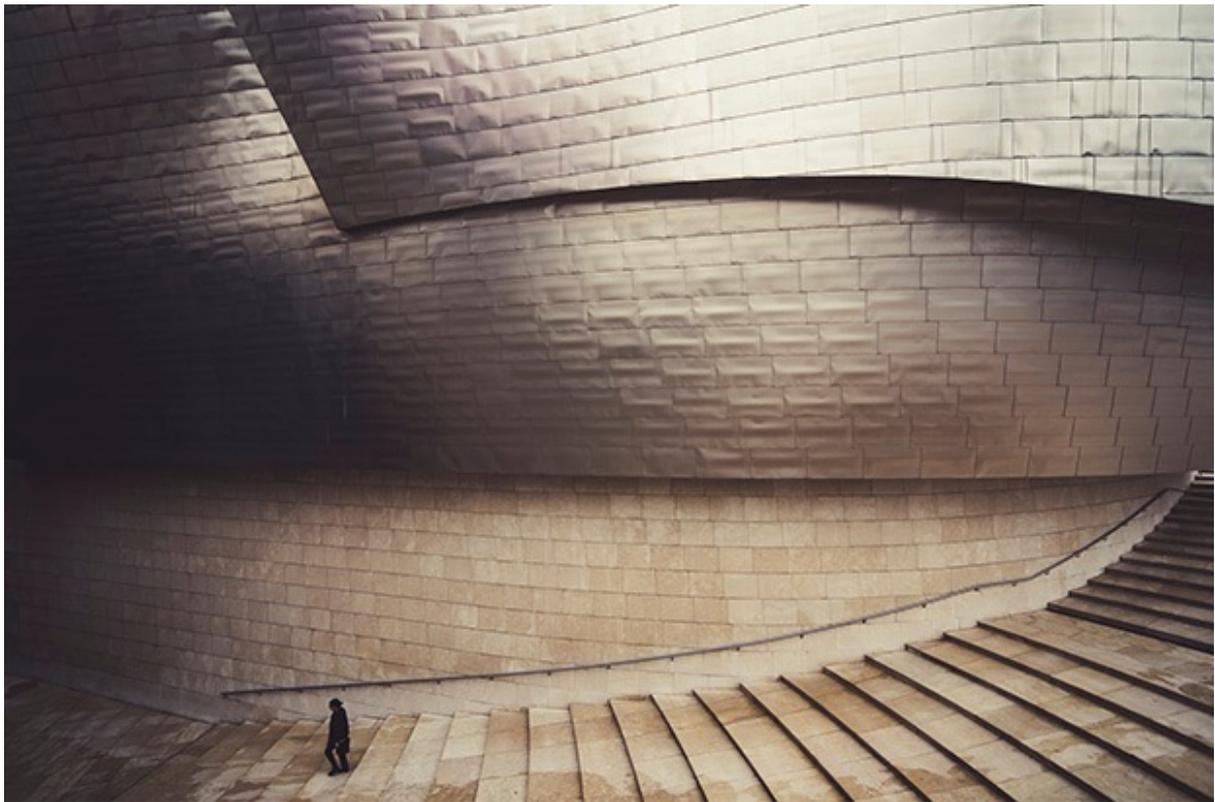
Unity, also known as harmony, pulls together all the elements of design into one pleasing whole. Each part of a design has to relate to other parts of the design. A single theme or idea may unify a design. When nothing distracts from the whole, you have unity. Unity is the relationship between the individual parts and the whole of a composition.



In this image what is the relationship between the man and the building, the sky and the ground? Do these elements work together as a unified whole? Photo by Alfonso Calero.

10 BALANCE

If a design or picture is unbalanced, you as the viewer will feel that something is wrong. Balance is an equilibrium that results from looking at an image and feeling that it is evenly 'weighted' from top to bottom and left to right. Balance usually comes in two forms – symmetrical and asymmetrical. Symmetrical balance occurs when the weights of a composition are evenly distributed around a central vertical or horizontal axis. Under normal circumstances it assumes identical forms on both sides. Asymmetrical balance occurs when the weight of a composition is not evenly distributed around a central axis, but there is still a pleasing balance of elements from top-to-bottom and left-to-right. The 'rule of thirds' is one example of a balanced yet asymmetrical compositional tool.



The Guggenheim Center in Bilbao, Spain, designed by Frank Gehry is massive. Using a person to add a sense of scale and placing them in the bottom left of the picture creates balance. Photo by Alfonso Calero.

Article Titles:

- 1. Shooting People With Slow Shutter Speeds**
- 2. How To Shoot Abstract Landscapes**
- 3. How To Shoot A Portrait Series**
- 4. Great Photo Locations: Tokyo Fish Market**
- 5. 7 Steps To Stunning Seascapes**
- 6. How To Paint With Light**
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1. Shooting People With Slow Shutter Speeds

There are a few subjects we commonly associate with slow shutter speeds – waterfalls, city lights and star trails are a few that come to mind. What we don't often see is people photographed at slow shutter speeds. 'Tokyo Ghosts' is an exploration of the busy lives of locals who work and play hard. Taken at busy intersections in the bustling inner Tokyo suburbs of Ueno, Shibuya and Ginza, the images capture the frenetic pace of the city and add an ethereal, ghostly feel. If you're interested in trying this technique, here are six tips to get you started.

01 LOCATION, LOCATION...

Half the challenge of getting shots like the ones here is finding a vantage point that has a steady and busy flow of people. Look for busy city corners with lots of passing pedestrians – ideally they should be busiest in the morning or late afternoon when the light is good.



02 POINT OF VIEW

Think about where your camera is placed to your subjects. A high vantage point, shooting from a hotel or office tower can be really effective, creating the impression that the people are like a flowing river. Most of the images here were captured at eye level, which I find creates a more personal and intimate feel.



03 CAMERA SUPPORT

It goes without saying that you need some kind of support to prevent camera shake. A tripod is the best option, but you can also use a flat surface if you can find one at the correct height. A cable or remote release will help minimise camera shake. If you don't have one, use your camera's self-timer function. Be aware that passing cars, trucks or trains can cause vibrations. Check for sharpness after you take your first few shots – zoom in to check that the small background details are in focus. If the background isn't sharp you may need to look for a better support or another location.



04 SHUTTER SPEED

Generally speaking you can use shutter speeds starting from around 1/15s of a second up to as high as 30 seconds. The actual setting you use will depend on the ambient light, whether or not you have access to neutral density filters (see step 05), how fast people are moving, whether they are walking past the camera, towards it or away from it, and how much blur you want. Experiment with different settings, check the results and keep experimenting.



05 FILTERS

Neutral density filters artificially darken the scene allowing you to access slower shutter speeds. ND filters come in varying strengths, darkening the image from one stop (ND2) up to around 11 stops (ND 2048). You can also buy variable neutral density filters which can be rotated to gradually increase or decrease the amount of light that is transmitted by the filter.



06 SHOOT IN RAW

Compared to JPEG, RAW gives you much more control in post-production to adjust variables such as white balance, exposure, contrast, noise and sharpness. The files will take up more space on your card, but if image quality is your priority it's well worth it.



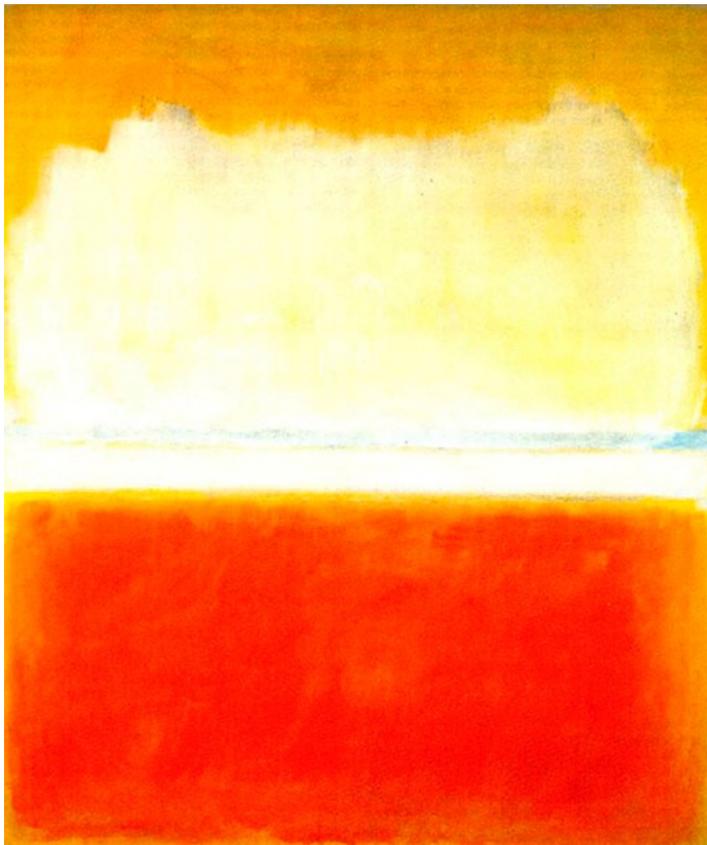
How to Shoot Abstract Landscapes

For this series of photos Alfonso Calero was inspired by Russian-American painter Mark Rothko. He shares the camera techniques he used to create an abstract look, and explains why libraries are such good places to search for inspiration.

The following photos take their inspiration from Russian painter Mark Rothko. Rather than capturing a literal view of a particular place, these images hint at a location and mood but are entirely open to interpretation.

Rothko always resisted explaining the meaning of his work. "Silence is so accurate," he once said. He felt that if he explained his art it would limit people's ability to interpret his work.

Here is my tribute to the artistry of Mark Rothko and some thoughts on how you can start creating your own abstract photos.



No.8. Mark Rothko, 1952.

01 SLOW SHUTTER SPEED

The blur effect in these images was created by setting a slow shutter speed and moving the camera. Experiment with different shutter speeds and try moving the camera at different rates. Generally speaking, blur will appear in your images at shutter speeds slower than 1/30 or 1/15s. The slower the shutter speed, the more blur you will get. In these pictures I set the camera's exposure mode to Shutter Priority (abbreviated as S or Tv on the top dial) and switched the shutter speed to 30 seconds.



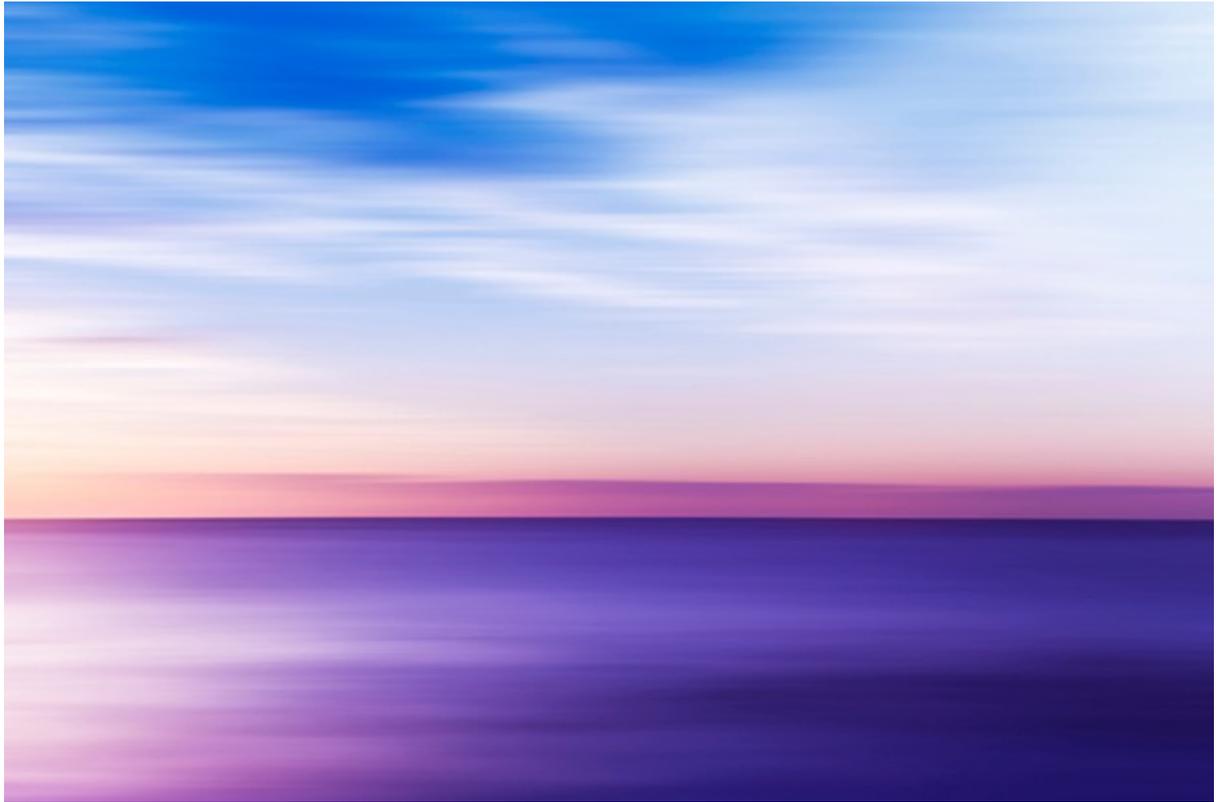
02 MINIMUM ISO

Use your camera's lowest ISO setting – usually 100 or 200 ISO. This will not only reduce the appearance of noise in your image, it will also allow you to choose a slower shutter speed.



03 NEUTRAL DENSITY FILTER

If you are shooting during the day you will probably find that it is too bright to select a really slow shutter speed. You can reduce the brightness of the scene, and access a slower shutter speed, by placing a neutral density (ND) filter in front of the lens. ND filters work a little like sunglasses, reducing the amount of light that enters the lens. By darkening the scene you can choose a slower shutter speeds and/or a wider aperture. ND filters come in different strengths (ND2 reduces light by 1 stop, ND4 by 2 stops, ND8 by three stops) and are available through most camera stores. (Near dawn and dusk it should be dark enough to use a slow shutter speed without having to use an ND filter.)



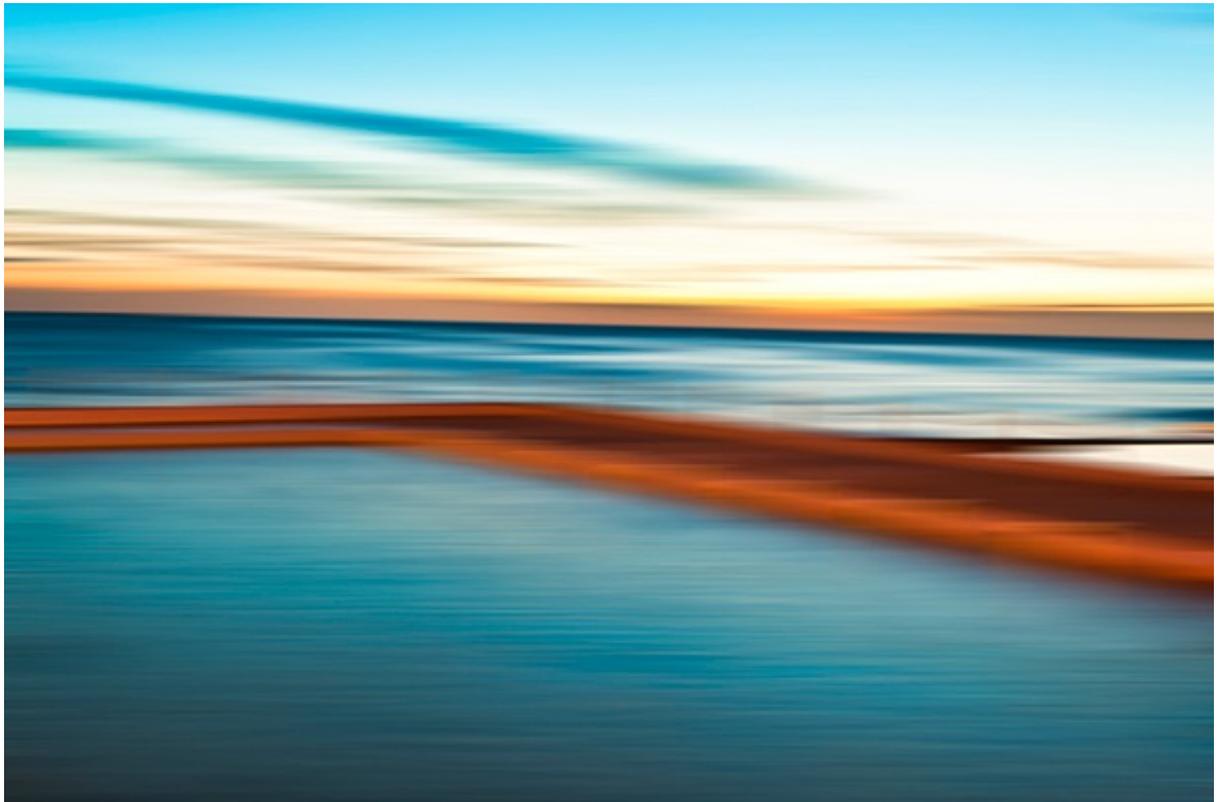
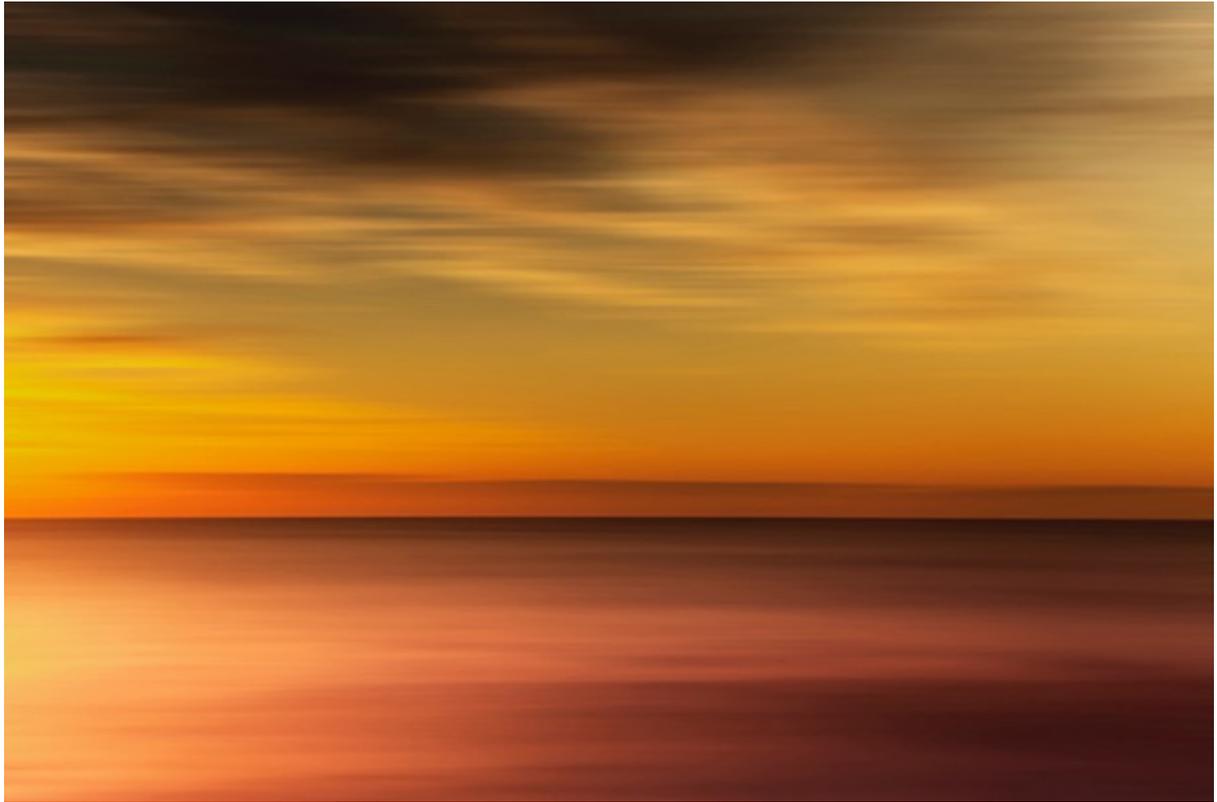
04 TRIPOD

It seems counterintuitive but a tripod can be useful when creating blurred images. In these pictures I mounted the camera on a tripod and slowly panned from left to right. I used a small spirit level to make sure the camera was perfectly level when I took these shots. Experiment with different variations of movement and see which one you like best. A fluid and steady movement will help you avoid jagged edges on the lines.



05 INSPIRATION

The options for abstract photography are almost endless and I encourage you to experiment with different camera settings, subjects and post production effects. This project began because I was interested in the abstract paintings of Mark Rothko. I often find myself in the local library reading about artists and art movements that interest me. Often we look to photographers for inspiration, but the wider art world can also be a rich source of creativity and ideas. Who and what inspires you?





How to Shoot a Portrait Series

Alfonso Calero photographed close to fifty head-and-shoulder portraits in this year's ANZAC day march. He shares five essential tips for anyone contemplating a similar project.

On Anzac Day this year I joined the morning service here in my local neighbourhood of Lane Cove. I brought my camera with the idea of doing some head shots of some of the local ex-servicemen. After gaffer taping a large black velvet background to a wall in the shade I began approaching potential subjects. After only seven portraits I decided to head into the city in search of more subjects. I arrived at Hyde Park as the Anzacs were finishing the march. In total I took close to fifty portraits, some of which you can see here. All of the Anzacs I photographed were given a free hard copy or emailed a copy of their photo.

Interestingly, of all the people I approached I only got three or four rejections. The portraits have since been commissioned and will be exhibited as a public art project in front of Gallery Lane Cove on Longueville Road, Lane Cove.

Here are some tips for anyone planning a similar project.

01 TEST SHOT

Make a test shot using the background you intend to use before you begin approaching subjects. If you have a friend or assistant with you get them to pose while you adjust lighting and camera settings.

02 SHOOT IN THE SHADE

Shoot in the shade with nice available light. It can be helpful to combine natural light with an artificial light source but it's certainly not essential. You should be able to get good results with a very simple setup.

03 WORK QUICKLY

Work quickly while engaging with your subject. In the Anzac day project I had about one minute with each subject. People have other things to do, and you'll lose their attention if you take too long.

04 TALK AND SHOOT

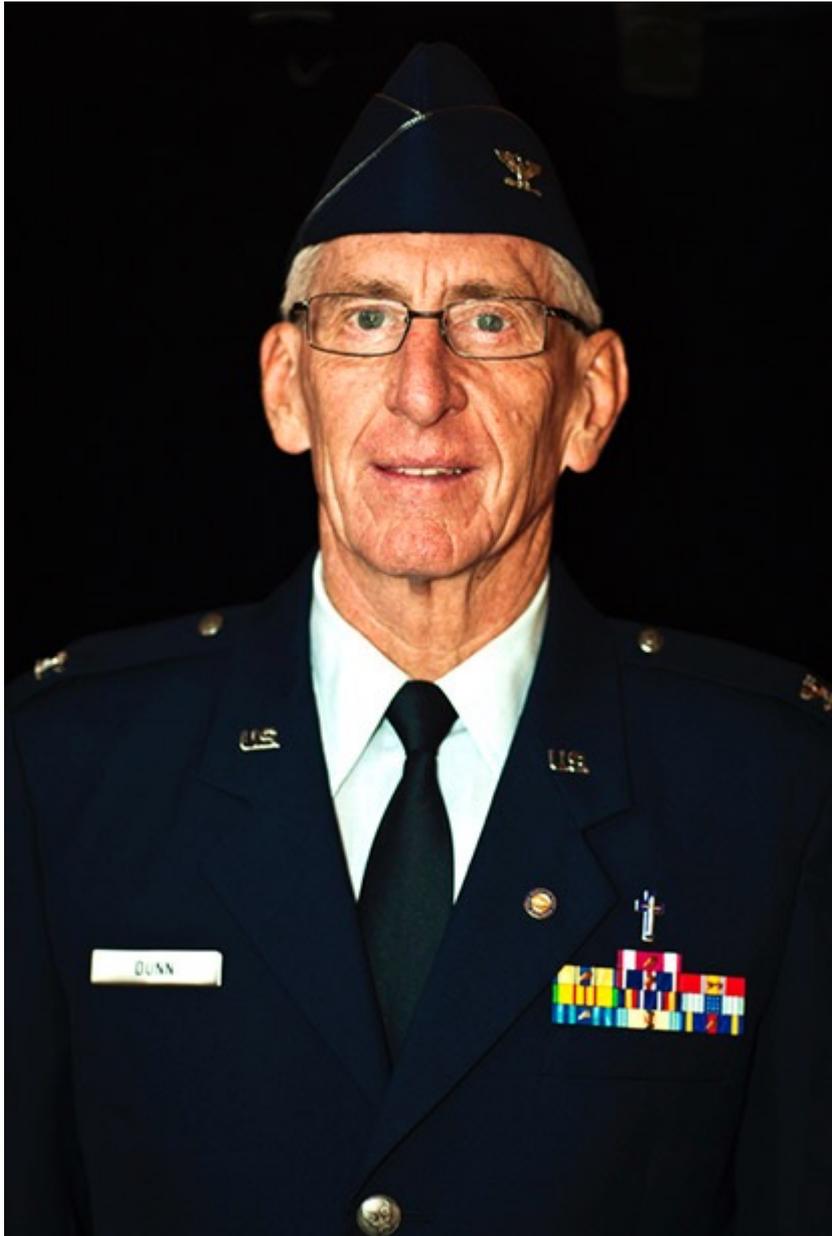
It's better to take photos while you are talking to the subject, rather than when they are talking to you. That way they won't have their mouth open at the wrong time.

05 SHARE YOUR WORK

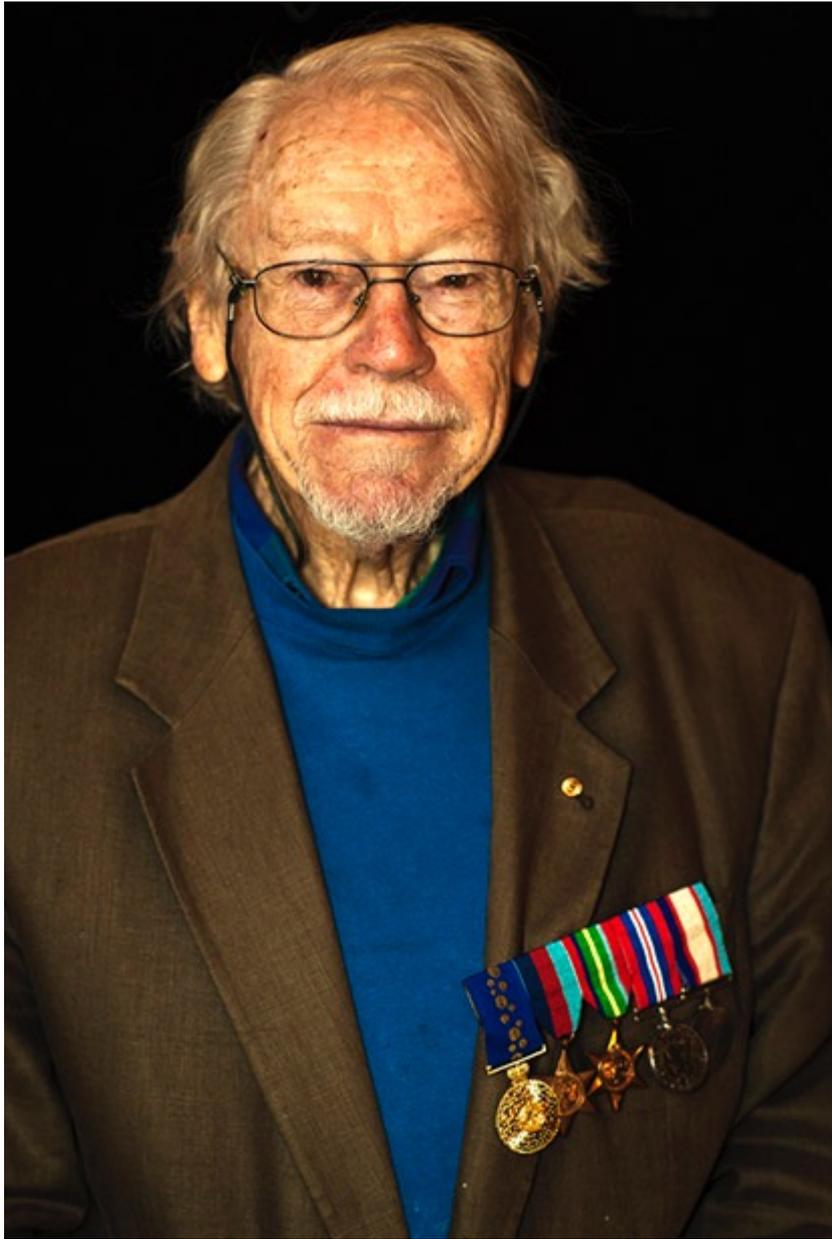
Always offer to send the sitter a free copy via email or post. On Anzac day I handed out my business card with the time their photo was taken so I could reference the images later for delivery.



Anzac Day 2012. Photo by Alfonso Calero. Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF85mm f/1.2L lens, f/2.8 @ 1/125s, ISO 200. Canon 580 EX II Speedlite with beauty dish.



Anzac Day 2012. Photo by Alfonso Calero. Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF85mm f/1.2L lens, f/2.8 @ 1/125s, ISO 200. Canon 580 EX II Speedlite with beauty dish.



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Great Photo Locations: Tokyo Fish Markets

In our continuing series on 'great photo locations' travel photographer and regular australianphotography.com contributor Alfonso Calero describes the delights (and demands) of photographing Tokyo's famous Tsukiji fish markets.

Tokyo's Tsukiji fish market has been my favourite spot for many years. The subtle differences between fish mongers is what adds vibrance to the colourful characters that make up this market. Most of them have been working here for generations. Located just two minutes walk from Tsukiji train station, it's a great place to spend the morning taking photos, followed by a very fresh sushi lunch. This has been my routine for the last seven years. The variety of closed and open spaces - from the auction houses to the narrow lane-ways - depict an ambience unlike any other fish market in the world. The bad smell of fish is not really apparent, which confirms the freshness of the product.

Creatively, the market has tons of opportunities to shoot a variety of genres like food, interiors, street portraits or a combination of all three. The style of shooting is fast and furious, with not a lot of time to think twice about your content. Food is best shot in natural light, but unfortunately the overhead tungsten lights often leave highlighted spots on the fish, so you need to pick your subjects and ambient lighting carefully. Flash photography isn't tolerated by any of the vendors. And you can't touch the product as some types of fish command a hefty price tag! I've been coming back for years so I've tried to find all of those of which I have taken a photo to give them a copy. It really helps to build the relationships if you can show your gratitude in some way.

www.alfonso.com.au







7 Steps To Stunning Seascapes

Want to shoot beautiful seascapes? Alfonso Calero has seven tips to help you on your way.

I've been shooting seascapes for over 10 years and I have always found it to be one of the most rewarding and challenging of photographic subjects. No two seascapes are the same and once you add variable weather and sea conditions to the mix there are endless opportunities for photographers willing to get their feet wet, so to speak!

01 USE A TRIPOD

It sounds obvious, but most beginners don't bother with tripods. They should. Apart from giving you the freedom to choose a slower shutter speed, a tripod forces you to slow down and think about the image-making process. Where should you position the horizon? Should that rock be in the frame or would it be better left out? Should you use a slow shutter speed to blur the water, or would it look better sharp? Look for a sturdy tripod that can collapse down to provide a low shooting angle. Shooting low can create great drama in your images.



A low shooting angle can add a sense of drama to your seascapes.

02 LOW ISO

Choose your camera's lowest ISO setting (normally 50, 100 or 200 ISO). This will not only minimise the appearance of noise in your image, but also allow you to use a slower shutter speed, which can be useful if you are trying to achieve the 'blurry water' effect you see in many seascapes.



Choose a low ISO to keep noise to a minimum.

03 SLOW SHUTTER SPEED

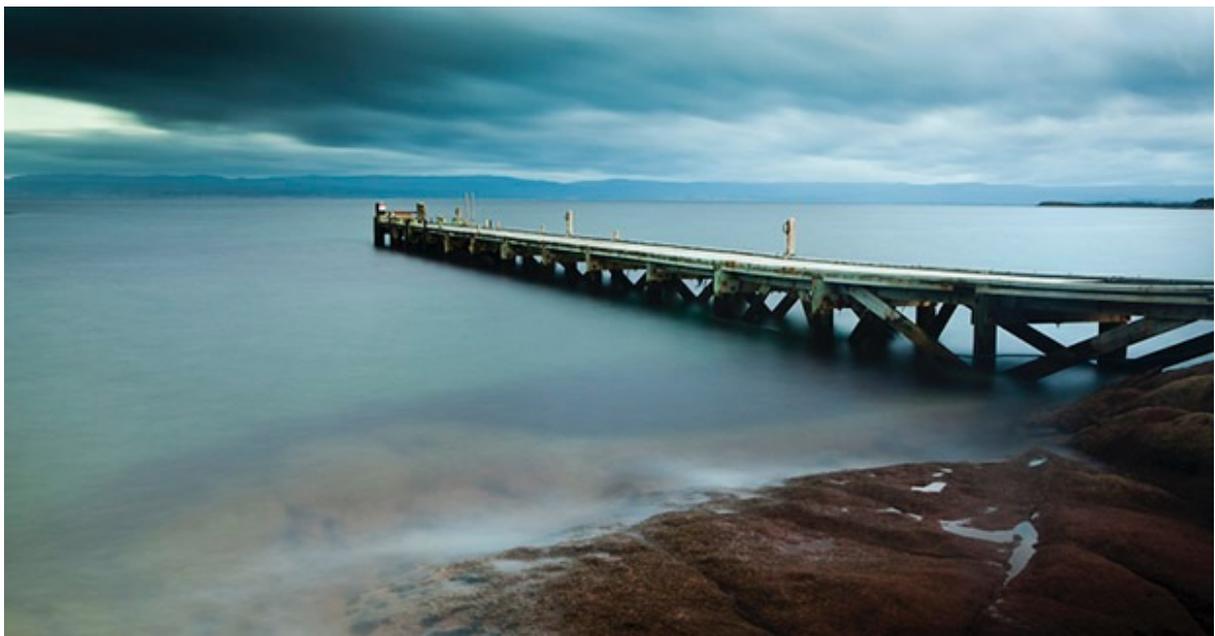
If you want to create the 'milky water' effect you'll need to use a slow shutter speed – slower than half a second. With your camera on a tripod, switch your camera to Shutter Priority (S or Tv) and choose a shutter speed between 1/2 and 10 seconds. If it is too bright you will get a warning message indicating that the image will be over-exposed at this shutter speed. At this point you have two options. First, wait until it gets darker. Second, and this is my preferred option, place a Neutral Density filter, which looks like a grey piece of glass, in front of the lens to artificially darken the scene. You can buy ND filters of varying densities, from light to dark grey. I use a +10 ND filter for most of my seascapes and find it works very well.



With a neutral density you can artificially darken the scene and use a slower shutter speed.

04 APERTURE

Even though you're shooting in Shutter Priority you still need to be conscious of the camera's aperture setting. Look for an aperture somewhere around $f/8$. While you'll get more depth of field as the aperture gets smaller (higher f-numbers) keep in mind that most lenses are sharpest at a setting of around $f/8$.



Don't forget about aperture. The smaller the aperture the deeper the depth of field.

05 REMOTE

If you're using long exposures a remote shutter release will help you keep camera shake to a minimum. You should be able to pick one up at your local camera store for around \$40 or \$50. Failing that, you can use your camera's self timer to fire the shutter 'hands free'.

06 GRADUATED FILTER

To add drama to your skies try using a graduated filter. Dark at the top and clear at the bottom, a graduated filter can be really useful for shooting high contrast landscape scenes where the sky is considerably brighter than the foreground.



A graduated filter can be used to add drama to a sky or balance out a high-contrast scene.

07 SAFETY

Be careful when photographing near the coast. Conditions can change quickly and it's easy to get caught out if you're not careful. Don't become so preoccupied with taking photos that you forget what's happening around you. Err on the side of safety – there are worse things in life than missing the shot!



The coast can be a dangerous place – for people and cameras.

How to Paint with Light

You can create all sorts of weird and wonderful images with a camera and a torch. Alfonso Calero shows you how to light up the night.

01 WHAT YOU NEED

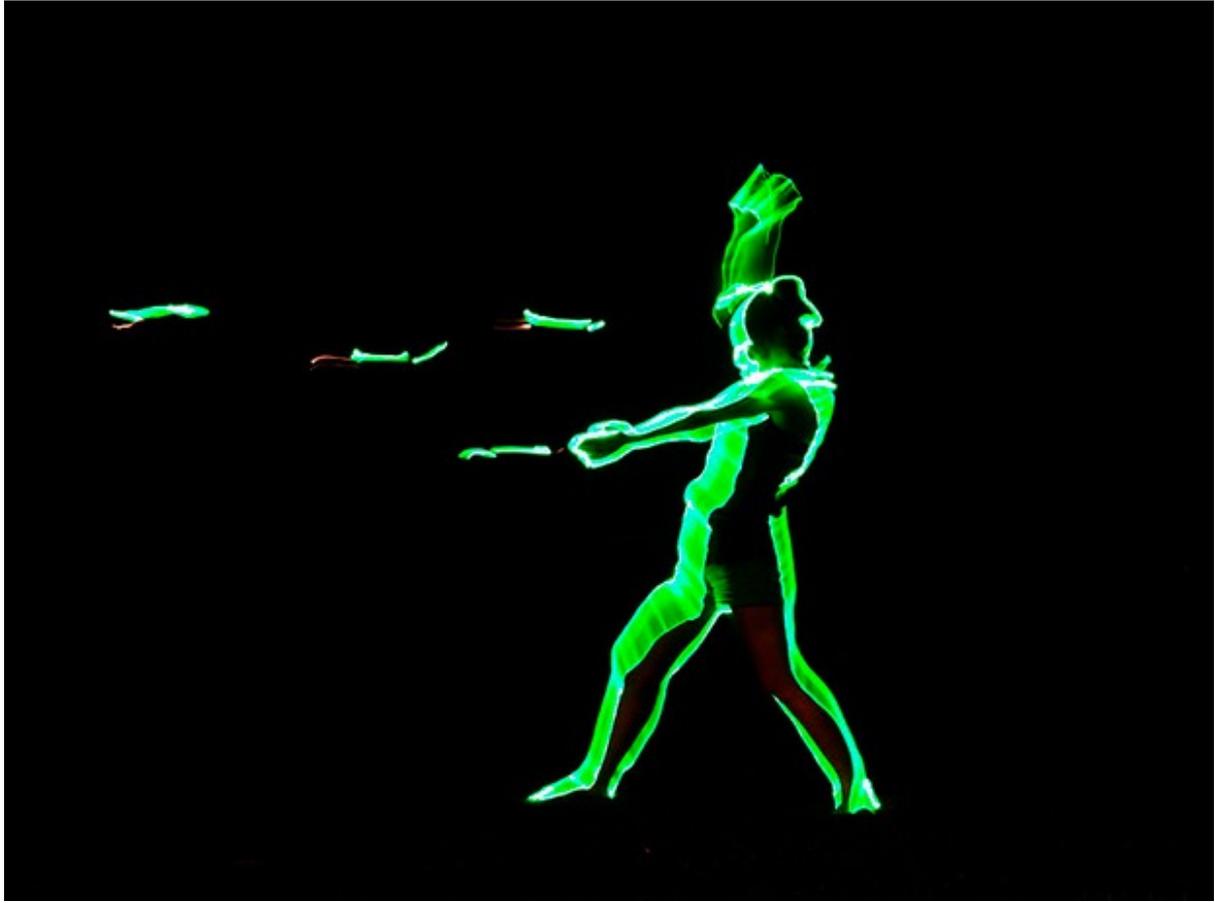
You don't need much gear to paint with light, but it certainly helps if you have a few staples. A tripod, a good torch and a camera that lets you set a nice slow shutter speed – at least 30 seconds – are the essentials. All DSLR and most mirrorless cameras should be up to the task. Some high-end compacts are okay too – if there is a Bulb (B) option in the shutter speed settings it will do the job. As for the light source, strong LED torches work really well for illuminating subjects in the dark. Equally, a good off-camera flash can be great for lighting up large areas of a scene. If you want to create your own illuminated illustrations, small coloured LEDs lights work really well. I use LED finger lights (attach them to your fingers with a rubber band) for my images. A remote shutter release is useful as you don't need to be next to the camera to fire the shutter.



02 SETTINGS

Here are the settings that I've tried and had some success with when light painting:

- Focal length: between 24 and 70mm (35mm equivalent).
- Aperture: between f8 and f11 for optimal lens sharpness and good depth of field.
- ISO: As low as possible to minimise grain. Usually 100 or 200 ISO.
- Shutter speed: from 10 to 60 seconds
- For a shutter speed longer than 30 seconds turn off the noise filter if you want to speed up the processing time.



03 CREATIVE SETUP

Depending on the effect you're after I find that locations in complete darkness work best. Avoid street lights, unless that's a specific look you're after. Wear black clothes to reduce the chance that you will appear in the shot. Plan what you are going to paint and how you are going to do it. The best time to do this is often in daylight when you can see what you are doing!



04 ILLUMINATED ILLUSTRATIONS

To create an illustration, point your torch at the camera and start drawing. If it helps, try tracing around an object or a person. Check the results on your LCD and try to improve your technique. Don't change your aperture and ISO, simply vary your shutter speeds. To make a ball of light, attempt to spin your led flashlight on a long rope in a circle by keeping your axis point always in the centre.



05 ILLUMINATING THE SCENE

If your goal is to illuminate details in the landscape you can do that with a torch or by repeatedly firing an off-camera flash. In these images you need to be careful not to point the light source at the camera – the goal is to illuminate the objects around you. Experiment with different shutter speeds (20 to 60 seconds) and painting techniques to get the effect you're after.



How To Shoot a Travel Assignment

Set yourself a specific photo assignment and your images will look less like snapshots and more like the work of a professional, writes Alfonso Calero.

What kind of travel photographer are you? For most people, travel photography is simply a way to capture a visual record of the places we've been and the people we've seen along the way. We wander around in search of new sights and experiences, and raise the camera to our eye when we see something that interests us: the church you discovered in a back streets of Barcelona, the old man selling soup on a street corner in Jogjakarta.

That's how 99 per cent of travellers approach photography. But there is another way. It relies on you approaching your photography more like a travel photographer, or an artist – with a specific pre-visualised plan. Rather than walking around aimlessly and photographing the things that catch your attention, this approach requires more planning and forethought. By setting yourself a defined photo assignment your images will look less like snapshots and more like professional travel shots. If you are putting together a portfolio for a photo competition this can be a very effective way to shoot.

So, what should you shoot and how should you do it? I can't tell you that (it's entirely up to you and your imagination) but I can share three ideas that I pursued on a recent photography tour of Japan.

CONCEPT 1

Location: Shibuya Crossing, Shibuya, Tokyo

The idea: People in Motion

How and why: Shibuya crossing in Tokyo is famous for it's crowds. To emphasise the hustle and bustle, I wanted to capture two static subjects against a blur of moving pedestrians. To contrast the stillness of the buildings and movement of the people, a thirds element was put in to create a dominant point of focus. Using two customers as willing models, I asked them to stand very still to avoid any movement. The images were shot with a shutter speed of 1-2 seconds. The face masks were added to make the subjects anonymous and show Japan's culture of not spreading or receiving germs when sick.



CONCEPT 2

Location: Kyoto, Japan

The idea: Taxi Signs

How and why: In Kyoto there are 40-plus taxi companies, each with their own logos and colour schemes. In this project, I set out to photograph a number of rooftop taxi lights as a unique visual symbol of the city. The bokke of lights in the background add to the ambience of the images. Shooting handheld was quite easy as most of the lights are quite bright.





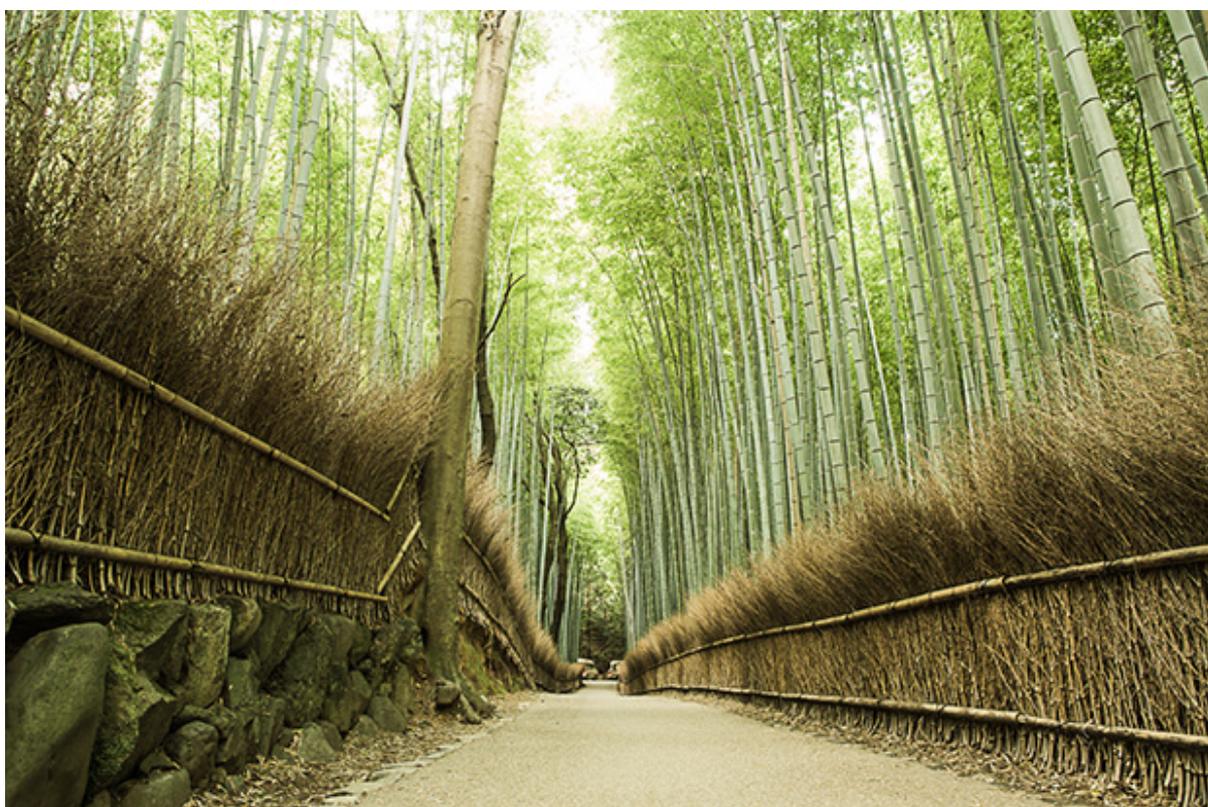
CONCEPT 3

Location: Bamboo Grove in Arashiyama, Kyoto

The idea: Group portrait and landscape

How and why: At most tourist haunts it's a challenge to find scenes that are uninhabited by other tourists. In this case I embraced the idea of using high school children in the scene to mimic the repetition of the bamboo.





How To Shoot a Photo Essay

If a picture is worth a thousand words then a well conceived photo essay is worth millions. Alfonso Calero and James Ostinga share five tips to help you start shooting engaging photo essays.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a photo essay as: “a group of photographs...arranged to explore a theme or tell a story”. One of the most exciting things about a photo essay is its potential to convey a message that is far greater than the sum of its parts. While each image in a series may have some small story to tell, together the images can create something bigger and more meaningful. Shooting a photo essay can be a challenging and highly rewarding exercise. It can also be a great way to improve your photography. Here are five simple steps to help you get started.

01 SUBJECT

Half the challenge of shooting a photo essay is finding an interesting subject to shoot. Look for something simple to start out – something that interests you and also offers relatively easy access. The images in this article were taken at St John's Boys Orphanage in Goulburn, New South Wales. The building was abandoned in 1978, and while it was once home to children of all ages, it is now a place of illegal dumping, graffiti and parties. Photographers struggle to make sense of this eerie backdrop; morbid messages in a blood-like substance and dried pigeon faeces showcase the visits of its present unofficial keepers.



St John's Boys Orphanage, Goulburn, NSW. Canon EOS 5D Mark III, 24-70 mm f2.8 @ 50mm, f8, ISO 100, flash and tripod.

02 THEME

When you're shooting a photo essay it's important that your images are related by a consistent idea or theme. Each image should help convey the theme and push the story forward. If a photo doesn't add to the story, get rid of it. One of the advantages of shooting a photo essay, rather than a single image, is that you can tell a bigger, and hopefully more compelling story. By shooting multiple images you can cover the subject from a range of viewpoints and record the story over a longer period of time.



St John's Boys Orphanage, Goulburn, NSW. Canon EOS 5D Mark III, 24-70 mm f2.8 @ 50mm, f8, ISO 100, flash and tripod.

03 VISUAL STYLE

Use a consistent visual style to help tie your images together. It may help to shoot some test shots and think about the way the photos work together visually. Your style may be as simple as using the same lens focal length for every photo or cropping each image to the same format, say square or panorama. Post-production can also be used to create a consistent aesthetic – some of the options include converting colour images to black and white, reducing or increasing colour saturation, or adding a subtle vignette.



St John's Boys Orphanage, Goulburn, NSW. Canon EOS 5D Mark III, 24-70 mm f2.8 @ 50mm, f8, ISO 100, flash and tripod.

04 SHOT LIST

Creating a shot list is a good way to help you plan your photo essay. What images would you like to capture and what do you need to do to get them? You may not be able to get all the shots on your list, but if you have a plan it will increase your chances of capturing the key moments when they arise.



St John's Boys Orphanage, Goulburn, NSW. Canon EOS 5D Mark III, 24-70 mm f2.8 @ 50mm, f8, ISO 100, flash and tripod.

05 INFLUENCES

You can learn plenty by studying the work of other photographers. Analyse the photo essays that resonate with you and ask yourself what makes them successful. Try to isolate the elements that work so you can apply them to your own images. Just as there are rules of grammar in written language, visual storytelling has its own conventions. The more you study the work of other photographers, the better your visual literacy will be. Following is a 'reading list' of sorts, with links to just some of Australia's multi-talented photo 'essayists'. It's not a comprehensive list by any means (so apologies in advance to the many great photographers who are not listed), just a stepping off point!

[Narelle Autio](#)
[Brian Cassey](#)
[Michael Coyne](#)
[Stephen Dupont](#)
[Kate Geraghty](#)
[Ed Giles](#)
[Natalie Grono](#)
[Megan Lewis](#)
[Justin McManus](#)
[Trent Parke](#)
[Jack Picone](#)



St John's Boys Orphanage, Goulburn, NSW. Canon EOS 5D Mark III, 24-70 mm f2.8 @ 50mm, f8, ISO 100, flash and tripod.



St John's Boys Orphanage, Goulburn, NSW. Canon EOS 5D Mark III, 24-70 mm f2.8 @ 50mm, f8, ISO 100, flash

and tripod.



St John's Boys Orphanage, Goulburn, NSW. Canon EOS 5D Mark III, 24-70 mm f2.8 @ 50mm, f8, ISO 100.



St John's Boys Orphanage, Goulburn, NSW. Canon EOS 5D Mark III, 24-70 mm f2.8 @ 50mm, f8, ISO 100, flash and tripod.

6 Hot Tips to Spark Your Creativity

Looking for a pick-me-up for your photography? Alfonso Calero shares six inspiring tips to add a healthy burst of creativity to the way you go about making images.

01 TRUST

The only person you need to please is yourself. Don't let anyone tell you how or what to shoot. Once you have an idea follow it through to its conclusion. Trust your vision!



All images shot on a misty foggy morning in July in the lower mangrove creek area of the Hawkesbury River, one hour's drive from Sydney .

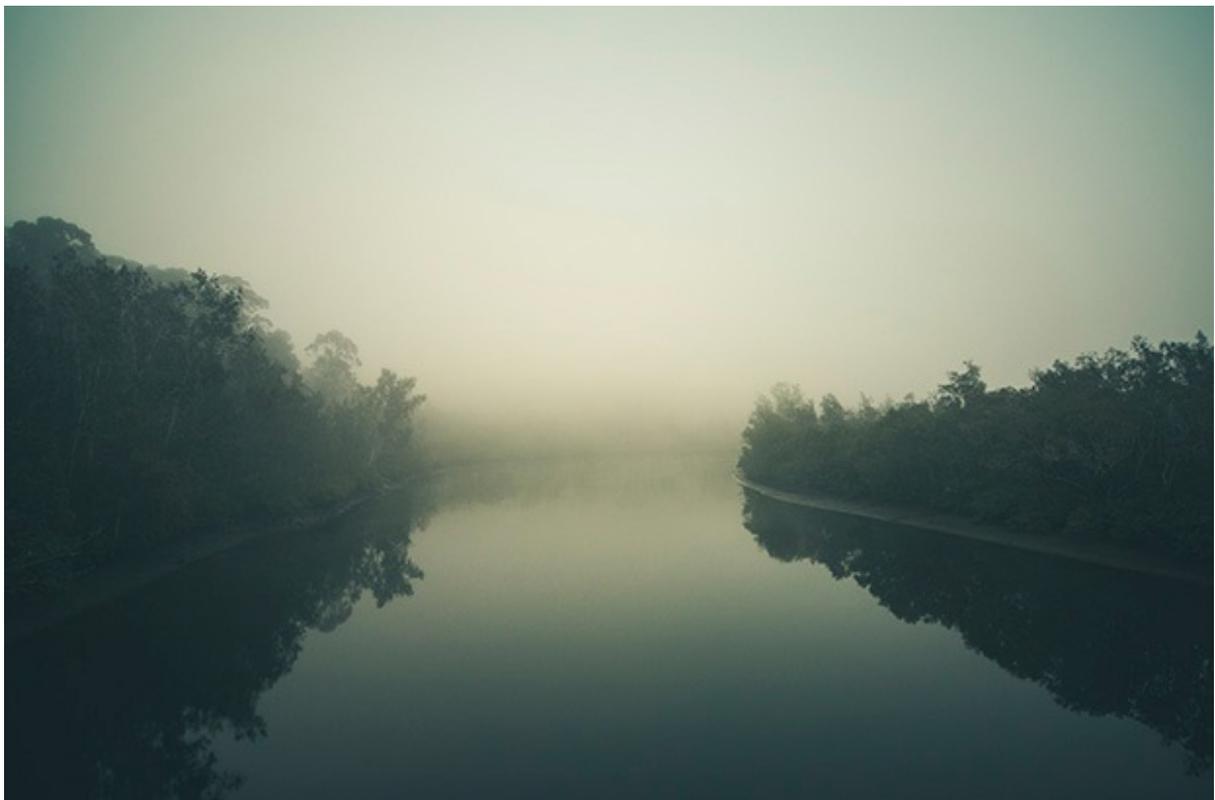
02 SHOOT LESS, SHOOT BETTER

Shoot without looking at the preview. This will force you to be in the moment. This will also force you to concentrate more on your idea not on technical data. Also, try to imagine that each shot is precious. If you slow down and think about what you're doing, the number of images you shoot might go down, but the quality of your images will almost certainly go up.



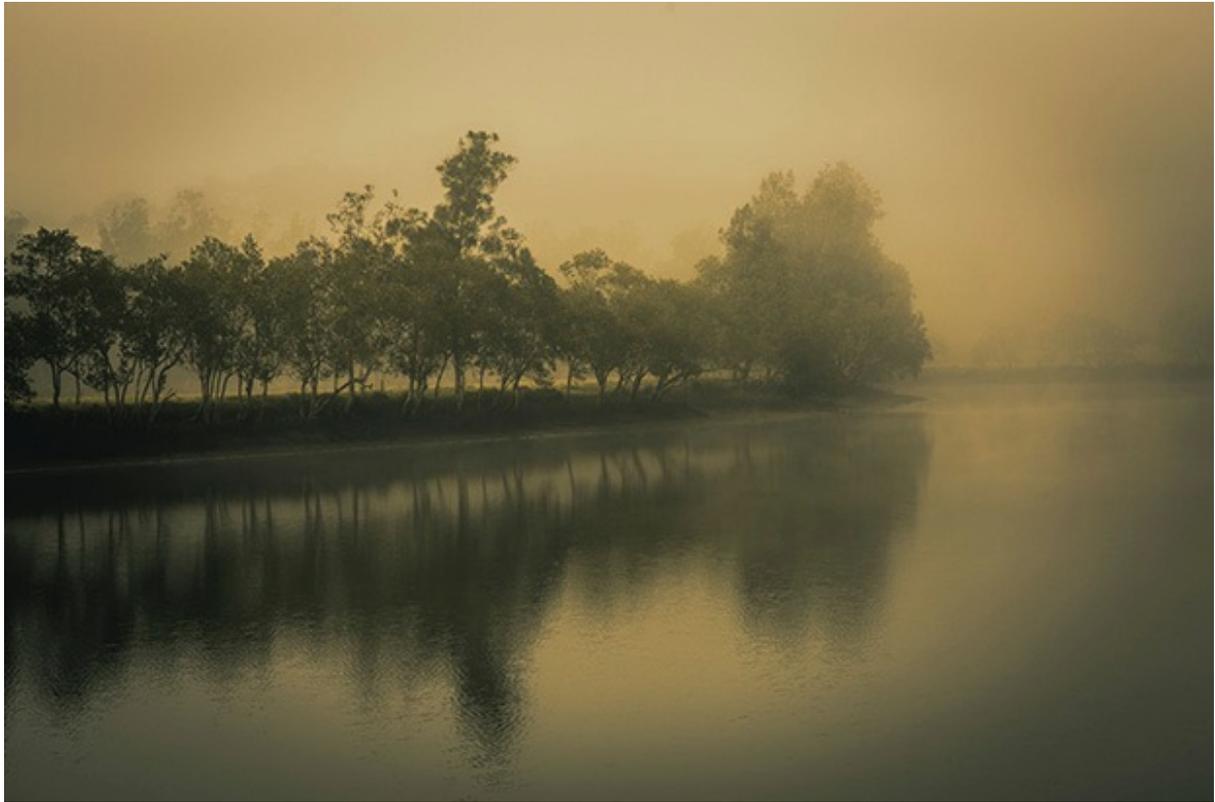
03 CHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE

Before you take a shot, walk around the subject looking at it from different angles. Bend down, lie down, climb up, tilt your head. The shot will appear if you look for different angles. Watch how the light and background change as you move around.



04 PRE-VISUALISE

Seeing a photo in your mind's eye, long before you raise a camera to your eye, is known as previsualisation and it can be an incredibly powerful tool. Keep a notebook handy and sketch your ideas when you have them. What do you have to do to turn your idea into reality? What are the challenges and how can you solve them?



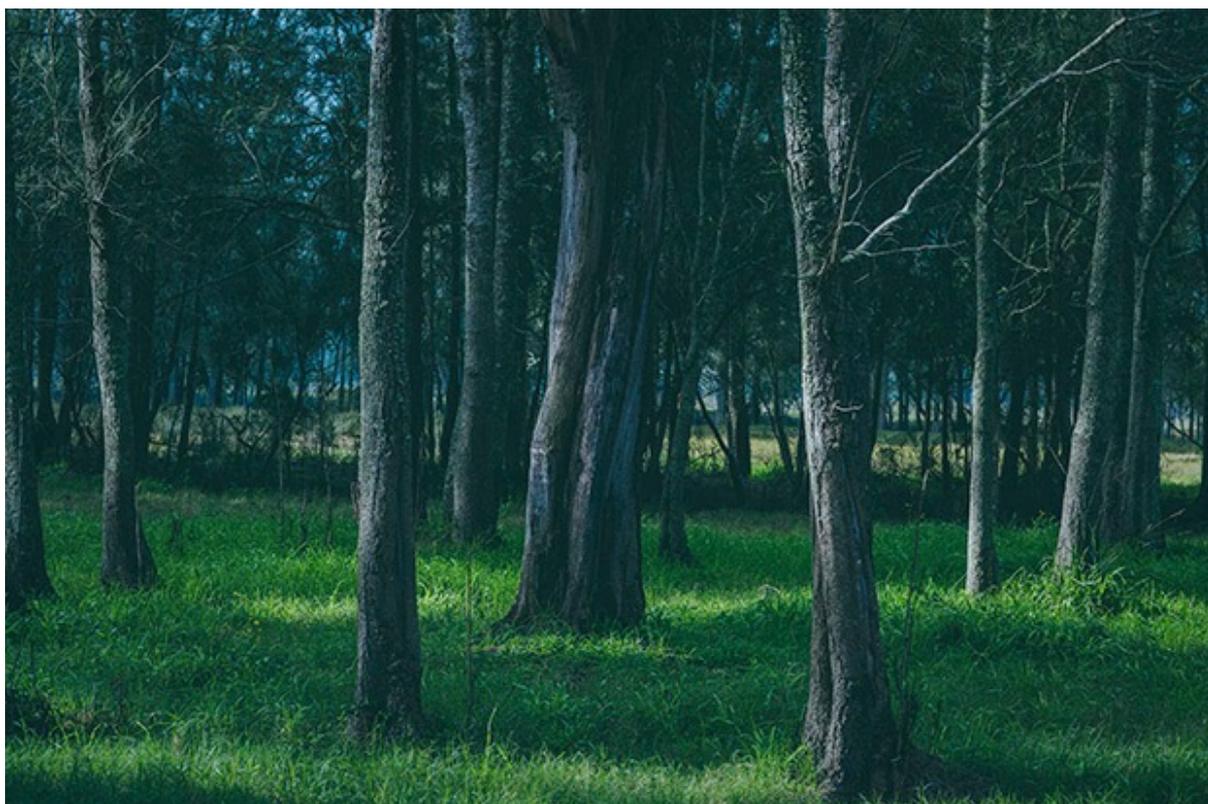
05 BE READY

While pre-visualisation can be a useful tool, sometimes the best images are completely spontaneous. Of course, half the skill is recognising the special moments when they arise, but it also helps if you have a camera with you when you do! Carry a camera with you at all times and be on the lookout for photo opportunities. Even if you don't see anything that particularly inspires you, try to get in the habit of shooting every day. Regular practise will improve your creative and technical skills.



06 START A PROJECT

Create projects for yourself and work until a series or cohesive body of work emerges. For example you could pick a series of similar objects and photograph it once a day for ten days. Surf the internet for ideas or visit your local bookstore. Merge your hobbies with your photography. Google and the local library are great sources of inspiration and research.



How to Shoot a 'Day in the Life' Project

Following a string of Skype conversations and numerous emails, Alfonso Calero hatched a plan to document a day in the life of the world-famous Tsukiji Fish market in Tokyo, Japan. He shot hundreds of images over three mornings and collaborated with a writer to produce a self-published pictorial book which is now sold to English-speaking tourists visiting the world-famous markets. He shares his top five tips for anyone planning their own 'day in the life' project.

01 GET PERMISSION

Whatever your project, it obviously helps if you can arrange unrestricted access to the places and people you want to shoot. With the help of the book author Ken who is also a tuna-fish broker, I was able to get full media access to all areas during the early-morning fish auctions. These areas are not normally fully accessible to the general public so with a media pass nobody told me to "GET OUT" as the locals have learnt to say to disobedient tourists over the years.



02 COLOUR BALANCE

The Tsukiji project was shot under a range of light sources including tungsten, fluorescent and daylight. This creates some issues with white balance as flouro creates a green colour cast and tungsten red. Shooting in RAW allowed me to very easily adjust the colour temperature in post-production. I also used a grey card, photographing it from time to time as the lighting conditions changed. This made it very easy to accurately correct the white balance later on.



03 WORKING WITH PEOPLE

When shooting portraits engage with your subject and work as quickly as possible. Most people don't like having their portrait taken so get in and out as quickly as you can. Always ask the subject's permission and explain what you are doing. I came back six months later to give the people I photographed a copy of their portrait.

Fortunately, I speak Japanese so that helped in this case. If you don't know the local language or customs, hire a translator or a fixer – you'll find you get access to places and people that are not open to the average tourist. For large group photos like the auction I tried to be as unobtrusive as possible and position myself away from the traffic streaming past to get the best vantage point to tell my story.



04 PLANNING

Planning is important in any large-scale photography project. Before the three-day shoot I visited the markets to take some test shots and make a list of photos I would like to get for the book. Ken the writer also had a clear idea on the style of photography we needed to achieve in the short time allocated. His vast knowledge of fish and the market was very useful in deciding what to shoot.



05 MAKING THE BOOK

After a whirlwind of very fast editing in Lightroom I put together my own custom design using Blurb books as a test platform before handing over the images, text and a copy of the dummy book to a graphic designer. Researching a good and reliable printer in Japan helped to keep our costs down to allow for a decent profit margin based on printing at least 1000 books and allowing for commission to book stores. The books are currently selling very well at a book store in Tsukiji Fish Market. Printing in Japan at a low cost and good quality was important to avoid paying very expensive freight costs. We also did a print run of 200 books beforehand to test if the book would sell well. Overall it has been a huge learning curve but we are now looking to produce other books for tourists visiting Japan.



Want to buy the book? www.alfonso.com.au

How to Plan a Successful Landscape Shoot

Landscape photography is all about patience, preparation and planning. James Ostinga and Alfonso Calero share five simple tips to help make sure your next landscape outing is a success.

01 READ THE WEATHER

A good weather forecast is important when you're trying to work out if it's worth dragging yourself out of bed at five in the morning in search of the perfect landscape. Sometimes you get the best shots when a big storm is coming or just as the sky is clearing after a storm has passed. And while you will probably won't be hugely motivated to get out there when the weather is bad, sometimes that's the best time to go. As far as weather reports go, many photographers use the Bureau of Meteorology website – bom.gov.au – which offers a wealth of data covering most places around the country. A useful app for iPhone and Android is Weather Zone, which uses info from the Australian Bureau of Meteorology and presents it in an easy-to-use format. Among other things it includes the latest radar maps and 7-day forecasts. It also offers sunrise and sunset times. It costs \$1.99.



Screenshots from Weatherzone app for iOS and Android.

02 LIGHT

Usually, the best light for landscape photography occurs during the golden hours around sunrise and sunset. Knowing the exact time and place that the sun will rise and set can be really helpful when you're planning your shoot. There are plenty of places where you can find out when and where the sun will rise and set, but the "Sun Surveyor" app for iOS and Android phones and tablets is particularly useful for photographers. You can check the angle of the sun at a particular time and date, or see the sun and moon positions, sunrise and sunset times, moonrise and moonset times, solar noon, golden hour, blue hour (before sunrise and after sunset), moon phases, shadow ratios and much more. A 3D compass, augmented reality view and interactive map offer many practical uses for photographers and filmmakers. Sun Surveyor costs \$6.49 or there's a free "lite" version with

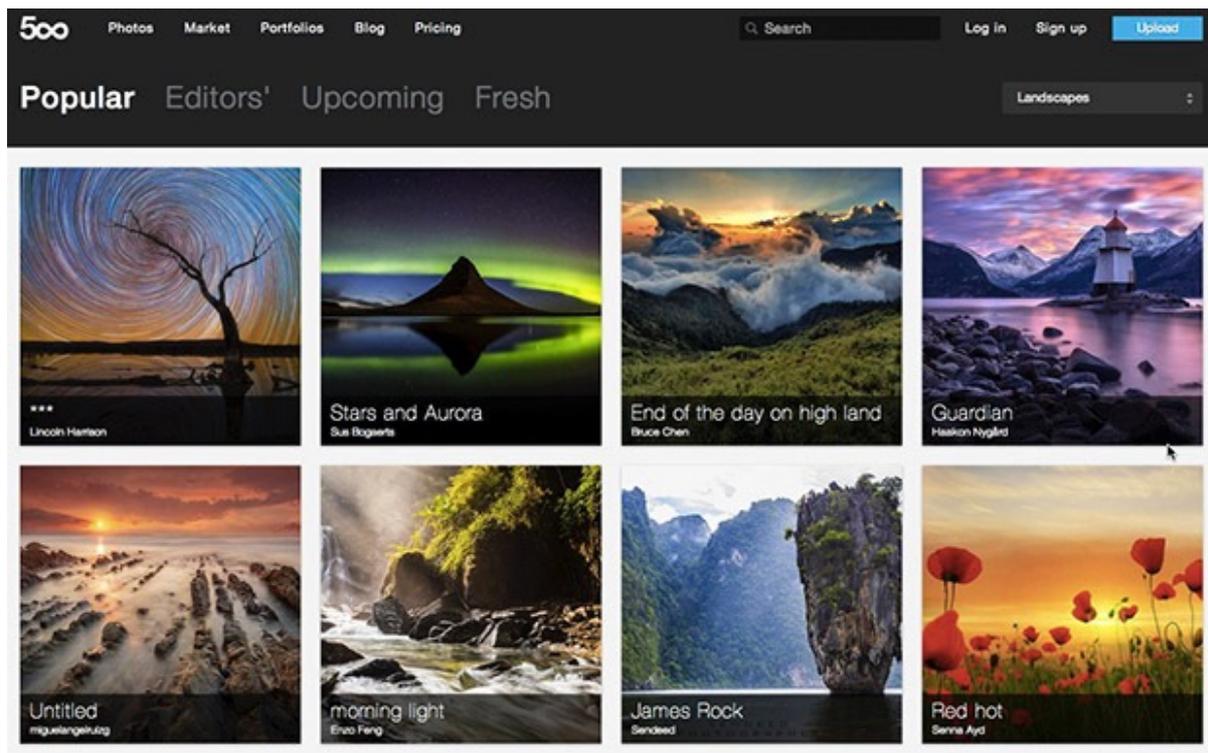
fewer features.



Find out when and where the sun will rise and set with Sun Surveyor.

03 PHOTO RESEARCH

If you're envisioning a location for the first time, you can save yourself hours of mucking around by researching the places where other photographers have taken great photos. Google the location and look for images that you like. If you can, find out when and where they were shot. A useful site is www.500px.com which showcases photographer's landscape photos from all over the world. Some photographers note the GPS coordinates of the location, and when the image was photographed. Some images also include metadata info about the photograph including details like aperture, shutter speed, ISO, lens and camera model.



Research landscapes taken at the location you're visiting at www.500px.com.

04 WHAT TO PACK?

Once you know when and where you're going, what the weather will be like when you get there and what type of shots you are hoping to capture, you can start organising a gear list. Apart from your camera, think about the lenses you will need. If you are travelling to a location for a few days it may help to carry two camera bags: one to carry all your gear, and another smaller bag for just gear you will need on a particular outing. Most people have one or two favourite lenses for landscape photography and a couple of others that are "nice to have" in certain circumstances. If you have planned well you should be able to leave at least some of your gear behind at base camp. A lighter pack will mean you can cover more territory faster – and with less discomfort.

In most cases you'll at least need a solid tripod and a remote release to fire the shutter. A remote release reduces the chance of camera shake during long exposures.

If there's a chance of rain take a raincoat for yourself and a plastic or vinyl rain cover for your camera and lens. You can buy purpose-built weather protectors for most camera and lens combinations or, if you're on a budget, try to fashion something out of a (make sure you leave an opening for the lens). A camera bag with a "pull out" rain cover will keep your gear dry when you're trekking.

A good torch is a must for landscape photographers and will help you light the way when you're getting to a location before sunrise, or walking out after sunset. There are some great LED torches around these days that produce minimal colour casts and are great for "painting with light" in near dark conditions. LED Lenser and Maglite both make durable torches that are well suited to photography. Don't forget to take plenty of water and let someone know where you're going and when you expect to return. A dedicated hand-held GPS (not a smartphone that relies on having mobile reception to give you a position) can be a life saver.



DSLR rain cover for a medium-sized DSLR and 200mm lens.



LED Lenser P7 and P3 torches.

05 BE FLEXIBLE

It goes without saying that no matter how much planning you do, sometimes things won't turn out the way you expect. Try to see that as an opportunity to try some images you wouldn't normally attempt. If you get to a location after sunset try painting with light – <http://www.australianphotography.com/news/peter-solness-shooting-in-the-dark>). If the weather is no good for landscapes, look for subjects you can shoot, like wildlife or close ups of foliage or – <http://www.australianphotography.com/news/photo-tip-of-the-week-macro-photography-in-the-rainforest>? Keep your eyes open and be flexible. Photography is a great learning experience, and you learn the most when you get out there and shoot plenty of images.

How To Shoot Street Photography: Essentials

Alfonso Calero shares five essential photo tips for anyone looking to improve their street photography skills.

01 WHEN, WHERE, HOW?

My 85mm lens sometimes allows me to shoot at a far enough distance not to be noticed when shooting a street scene. I like to spend about two to three hours wondering in the late afternoon when shadows are longer and the light is softer. Look for interesting backgrounds and wait for a person to walk past. If you work like this the person will feel more like they have entered your space rather than you entering theirs. It's a subtle but important point, and it will help you get better photos.



02 PERMISSION

Sometimes I ask permission, sometimes I don't. If I feel the person is already seated or standing in the best spot for a shot I usually ask if they mind if I take a quick shot. Sometimes it helps if you offer to share the photo via email, Facebook, etc. I often go back to the same place and try to build a relationship with individuals and shoot another street portrait. Keep the space around them simple and not distracting. Remember to focus on their eyes. If you are in a public place you do not need to get the subjects' permission. If you feel a street scene frames better at a distance then that can be a good approach too. It's really up to you.



03 BODY LANGUAGE

Most people don't mind you taking photos, but take the time to read the situation, particularly if you are travelling or in an unfamiliar culture. Be friendly and only bring the camera up to your eye when you are taking the shot. Explain yourself if asked and be genuine about your intentions.



04 CAMERA SETTINGS

If you want your images to be sharp, make sure you choose a sufficiently fast shutter speed. The general rule is your shutter speed should be faster than your equivalent focal length. For example, for an 80mm (equivalent) lens, the shutter speed should be 1/80s or faster. Take into account this rule applies to stationary objects. If you're photographing someone riding through the frame on a bike, you'll need a faster shutter speed again if you want to freeze the action. When it comes to aperture I prefer to shoot with a shallow depth of field, in most cases around f/2.8.



05 BLENDING IN

Try to blend into the crowd as much as possible. Darker clothing works well. Bright jackets and white runners don't! Avoid wearing jewellery or anything too flashy or showy. Finally, observe, relax and be very patient. You will be amazed what might reveal itself.

How To Shoot for the Stars

Want to capture beautiful images of the night sky? Alfonso Calero has six great tips to help you shoot for the stars.

01 WHEN TO SHOOT

While you may be tempted to start shooting as soon as the sun goes down it's best to wait until the warm glow of twilight has completely faded. Generally speaking, you'll get the best clarity and contrast if you wait at least two hours after sunset and stop shooting two hours before dawn.

Winter is the best time to shoot the night sky in the Southern Hemisphere, as the air is cleaner and clearer and the stars appear brighter. Shooting while there is a quarter, half or full moon will introduce unwanted light to your images and make the stars appear fainter. Aim for a clear moonless night.

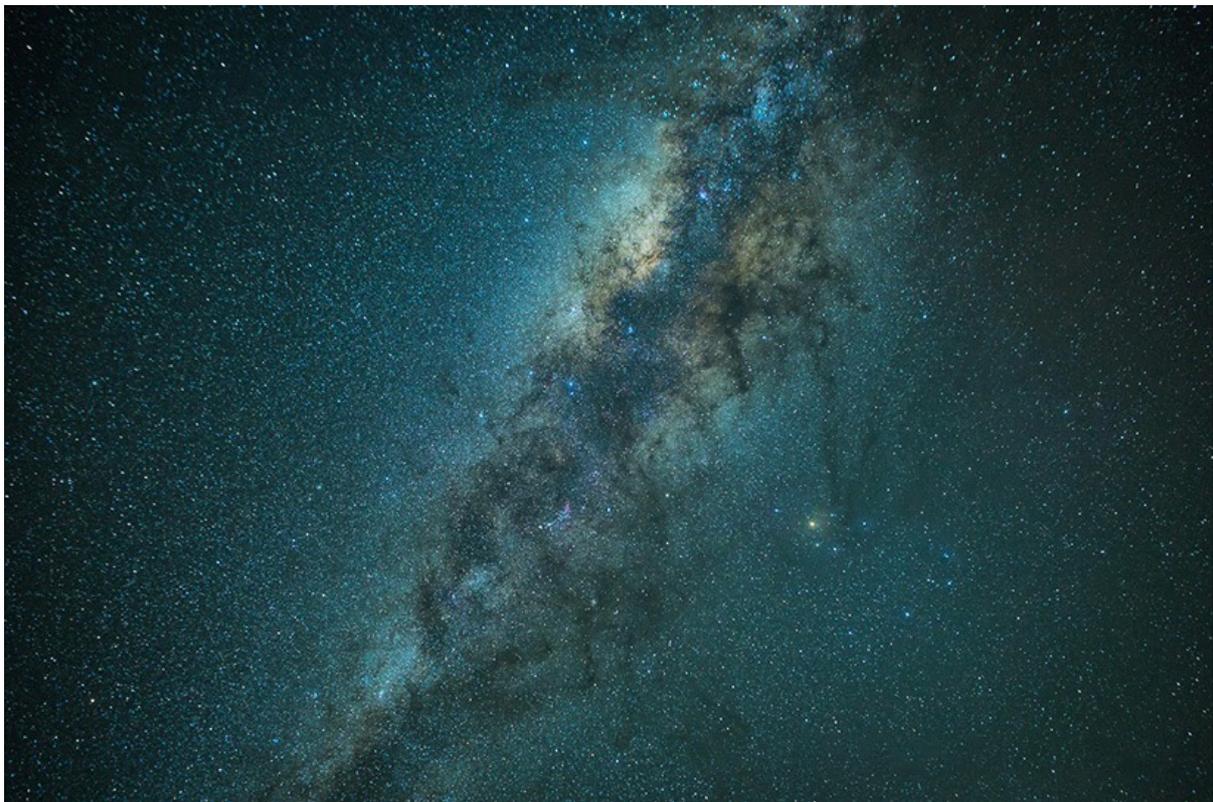


Image taken at Lake Bathurst, NSW. Canon EOS 5D Mark III, 70mm lens, 30s @ f/2.8, ISO 3200.

02 WHERE TO SHOOT

Light pollution is the number one enemy of star gazing, so seek out a location well away from cities and towns.

There are a number of tools you can use to work out where the stars will be at a certain location and time. Stellarium (available for iOS and Android devices) shows an accurate 3D map of the night sky, based on the time you set, your GPS location and the orientation of the phone. To find a specific star or constellation it's simply a matter of setting the date and time and panning the camera around until you see the stars you want to shoot.

03 COMPOSITION

You'll find it helps to plan your composition before the sun goes down so can see what's happening around you. Try to include a foreground element in the shot such as a tree, mountain, historic home or bush track. Shots of stars by themselves can be interesting but if you can include other elements it's likely you will hold people's

interest for longer. To add a dynamic feel to your photos, it's generally a good idea to avoid putting the horizon in the middle of the frame. Most images work better with the horizon placed on a third or quarter line.



Lake Bathurst, NSW. Canon EOS 5D Mark III, 24mm lens, 30s @ f/2.8, ISO 3200.

04 GEAR

You don't need a lot of expensive gear to photograph stars but there are a few essentials. First up, you'll need a camera that allows you to shoot at slow shutter speeds – at least 30 seconds and preferably longer. Most DSLRs and high-end compact cameras offer good shutter-speed control with a 'Bulb' (B) mode that basically keeps the shutter open for as long as the shutter button is pressed. A bulb mode is required to capture star trails, which are commonly photographed over several hours.

To keep your shots steady, you'll need a sturdy tripod and a remote release. Better than a simple cable or remote release, a programmable intervalometer allows you to shoot time-lapse sequences and program exposures longer than 30 seconds in Bulb (B) mode.

If you're using a DSLR, check to see if your camera has a mirror lock-up option. This prevents the small vibrations that reverberate through the camera when the mirror slaps up and down.

You can use any lens for night photography but fast, wide angle lenses (16-24mm, 35mm equivalent) are the most popular.

A good headlamp will keep you from tripping over in the dark and help you see what you're doing while keeping both your hands free to operate the camera. I also recommend a strong LED torch to 'paint in' foreground details like trees and rocks. (For some great examples of what you can do with 'torch painting', take a look at Sydney-based photographer [Peter Solness' work](#).)

05 TECHNIQUE

Set your camera to manual exposure and take your time working through the settings. If you are photographing the Milky Way, start with a shutter speed of 30 seconds, aperture of f/2.8 and ISO of 3200. Check the results on the camera's LCD – zoom in to check sharpness and noise – and adjust the settings as required. If there is any evidence of star trails you will need to choose a faster shutter speed to obtain a sharper image.

You'll probably find that autofocus is a lost cause at night so switch to manual focus and take your time. I find that Live View offers the most accurate focussing, especially if you can zoom in on the LCD to fine-tune your setting. If you are focussing on a subject in the foreground, use your torch to light up the point you want to focus on. Shoot a test shot and check the focus in review before you proceed.

Finally, if your camera allows it, shoot in RAW mode. RAW files contain more data than JPEG files and thus allow more flexibility when it comes to adjust white balance, exposure, contrast, noise and sharpness.

06 POST PRODUCTION

If your images are well exposed and focused, you shouldn't have to do too much in post production. If you are using a program like Lightroom, you'll find that small changes to contrast and white balance can make a big difference to the overall impact of the photo. Noise is an issue with night photography as most shots are taken at high ISOs. Zoom in on the image and use the Noise Reduction sliders to clean up the image.

One of the challenges with night photography is creating images where both the sky and foreground are well exposed. One option that can be useful is to shoot two images; one exposed for the sky the other for the foreground. As long as the camera doesn't move between shots, it is a relatively easy task to merge the images together in a program like Photoshop Elements or PaintShop Pro.

How to Create a Video Slideshow in Lightroom

After shooting a series of images from your travels, using Lightroom its quick and simple to turn a selection of them into a slideshow, complete with music.

In Lightroom there's a quick way to show off your images. Alfonso Calero explains how to turn your collections into slideshows in three easy steps.

One the great advantages of the digital revolution in photography is that you can quickly and easily present your images in a variety of formats. Adobe Lightroom is especially effective in this respect. One of its really useful options in the 'Slideshow' module, one of several located at the top right of Lightroom's opening panel. When you have arranged a collection of images you'd like to see as a slideshow, click on this tab.

01 SMART COLLECTION

When editing in Lightroom's Develop module make sure to click and drag on your best edited photos to place them into your own smart collection. On the bottom left of your page you will find a drop down option for collections. Simply add (+) a new collection and name it accordingly. This is where you can gradually add a bunch of photos that you would like to show as a collection (ie; an overseas trip). Try to limit the number of images to around 100 images as a maximum number.



When you're shooting overseas travel images, keep in mind how you might use your images in a slide presentation. This image was used in the Philippines slideshow seen below.



A mix of interiors and exterior images can help break up the flow of a slideshow. Another image from the Philippines slideshow.

02 SLIDESHOW EDIT

The next step is to click on the smart collection folder to reveal all your images as thumbnails on the bottom of your monitor. Once you have highlighted all the images to show, you can then click for a slideshow preview using the 'Preview' button located at the lower right side of the Lightroom screen. Next to the 'Preview' button is a 'Play' button which will show the slideshow in full screen mode. The preview may take a few seconds or minutes to preview or process properly. The thumbnails can be rearranged in which ever order you would like to show the images.



Landscapes and seascapes are great for adding variety to your presentation.

03 SAVING YOUR SLIDESHOW

The last part of the process is to add some music to bring your images to life. Choose some music that suits your images and story from the panel on the right-hand side, which has a check box for sound tracks under the 'Playback' tab. Above are some samples to give you some ideas. As you match the images to fit the music you'll soon know if you have to add or remove images (more images for a given piece of music will show for a shorter period of time, while less images for the same music will obviously show for longer) or choose a different piece of music. It's a personal choice, but I usually prefer to use classical music. I usually opt to show images for 2-4 seconds per interval. Videos can then be saved as MP4s or PDFs by hitting the 'Create Saved Slideshow' button at the top right of the central image panel, then the 'Export PDF' button or the adjacent 'Export Video' button at the bottom left of the Lightroom panel. Depending on the length of the show, this can take some time. Slideshow created in Adobe Lightroom. (Click the HD logo at the bottom right of the screen to see the slideshow at its highest resolution).

How To Mix and Match Your Photos

Sometimes it's just not possible to capture everything you want in a single shot. The solution is simple – shoot two photos and display them side-by-side. Alfonso Calero explains.

Lately I've been experimenting with the idea of mixing and matching my photos. I find that displaying two images side-by-side is a great way to tell a story photographically, and to create ideas that are not necessarily evident when one or the other image is displayed by itself. If you're interested in trying this technique with your own images, here are some of the tricks I've picked up along the way.

01 TRAVEL SHOTS

When you're travelling it can be difficult to capture the true sense of a place with just one photo. Often, a travel experience is about the people, the food, the architecture, and the quirky things you just don't see at home. And while you may be able to capture some of those things in a single shot, they're often easier to convey in a series of images. For that reason, combining images can be a very useful technique in travel photography. Using two different genres such as a portrait and a still life can help you tell a bigger story with your images.



02 PORTRAIT AND OBJECT

You can add more interest to a portrait by including an object that belongs to the sitter. In this case, combining a photo of a chef with one of his signature dishes allowed me to tell a more compelling story than if I had displayed either image on its own.



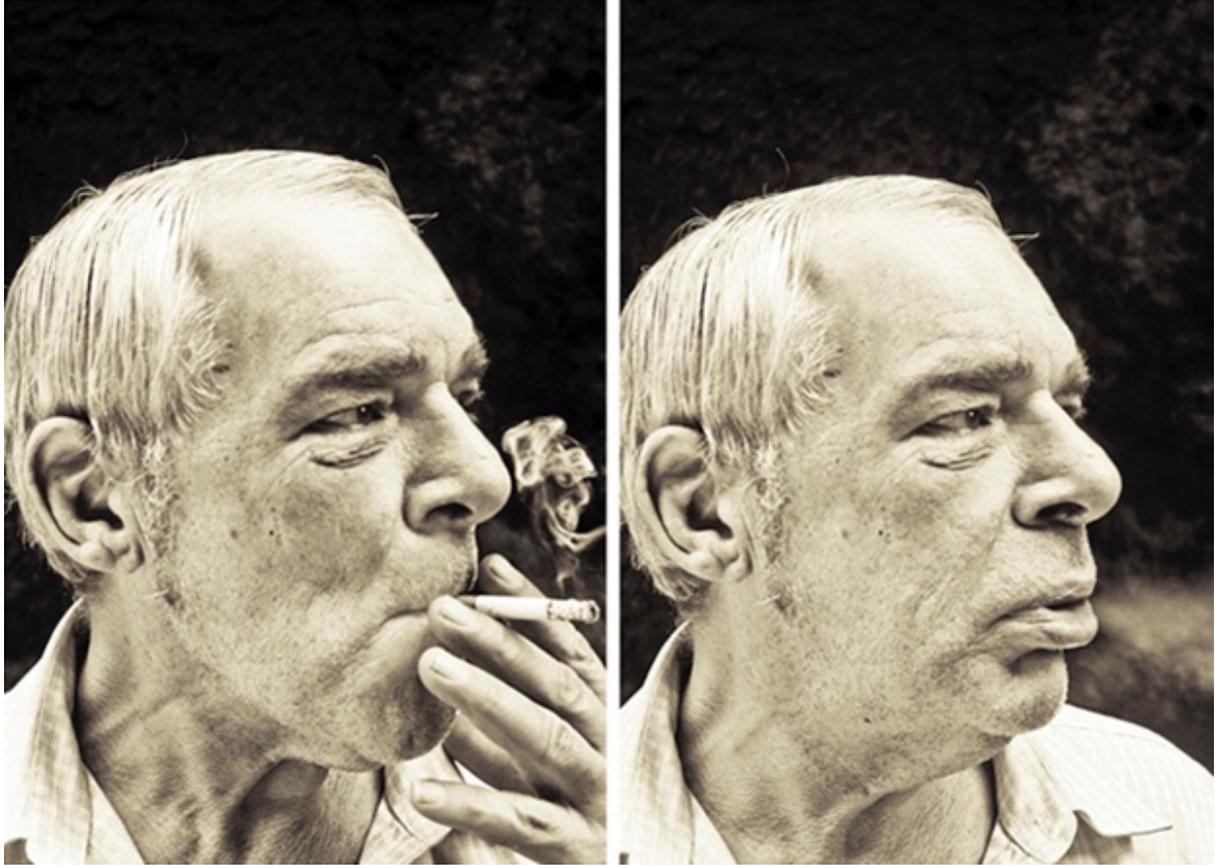
03 WIDE AND CLOSE-UP

A great way to show a sense of place is to match a wide-angle photo with a detail shot. In the image below, the building gives us an overview, while the lantern fills in some of the architectural details.



04 SAME SCENE DIFFERENT SHOT

A repetition of a similar photo can add interest to a series of photos. I like to call it the “Spot the Difference” approach. When people see two similar images they can’t help looking for differences, and that’s usually enough to spark some interest in your photo.



05 LEADING LINES

You can use leading lines to visually connect one photo to another. In the photo below, the leading lines converge nicely in the centre to move our eyes left and right between the photos. Repetition of colours, lines, textures, shapes and angles of view can be used to create a close relationship or a juxtaposition between photos.



How To Shoot Colourful Abstracts

You can create all sorts of weird and wonderful abstract photos if you have access to an unused fish tank and a few coloured inks. Alfonso Calero, who has been experimenting with different techniques for the past few months, shares his best tips.

A few months ago I began photographing coloured ink in water. What started out as a small, weekend project soon became something of an obsession as I started experimenting with different types of ink, lighting, backgrounds, lenses and post-production techniques. No two photos are the same and once you get started you realise that the options are almost endless. Here are some tips to help you get started.

01 THE TANK

Before you start there are a few things you'll need and obviously a small or medium sized fish tank is pretty useful (preferably one that isn't being used by any fish!). Smaller fish tanks are better as they don't take as long to empty and refill after each shot. I use a tank that's divided into three segments (gives me three shots before I have to change the water), but any flat-sided, clear tank will do the job.



02 CAMERA AND ACCESSORIES

A macro lens is useful, though not essential. Many compact cameras have great macro capabilities so don't be put off if you don't have access to an interchangeable-lens camera. I used a 50mm f/1.4 and a 100mm macro to take the shots you see here and both have their advantages. You'll also need a tripod and, ideally, a remote or cable release to minimise camera shake. I'd recommend a piece of black cardboard, behind the fish tank, as a simple background.



03 FOCUS

To set the camera's focus point, position your camera and tripod directly in front of your tank at a distance/zoom setting that best fills the frame. Place an object inside the tank where the ink will be later on. Half press the camera's shutter button to activate autofocus and then, when the subject is perfectly focused, switch back to manual focus. That way you won't have to worry about focusing when it comes to adding the inks to the water.



04 LIGHTING AND CAMERA SETTINGS

For my lighting setup I used two lights, one to the left of the tank and one to the right, directly aimed close and towards the side glass. Soft boxes were used to diffuse the lights. Some photographers use light triggers to synchronise the shots properly for high-speed photography. I find the best shutter speed is 1/200s to freeze the movement of the ink, with an aperture between f/8 and f/11 to provide a good depth-of-field. Also, choose a low ISO (50 or 100) and shoot in RAW for optimum image quality. Note, if you don't have access to artificial lights, try setting your fish tank up near a window with lots of natural light. You can diffuse the light using curtains or light fabrics or use white cardboard or foam core to reflect the light into the subject areas.

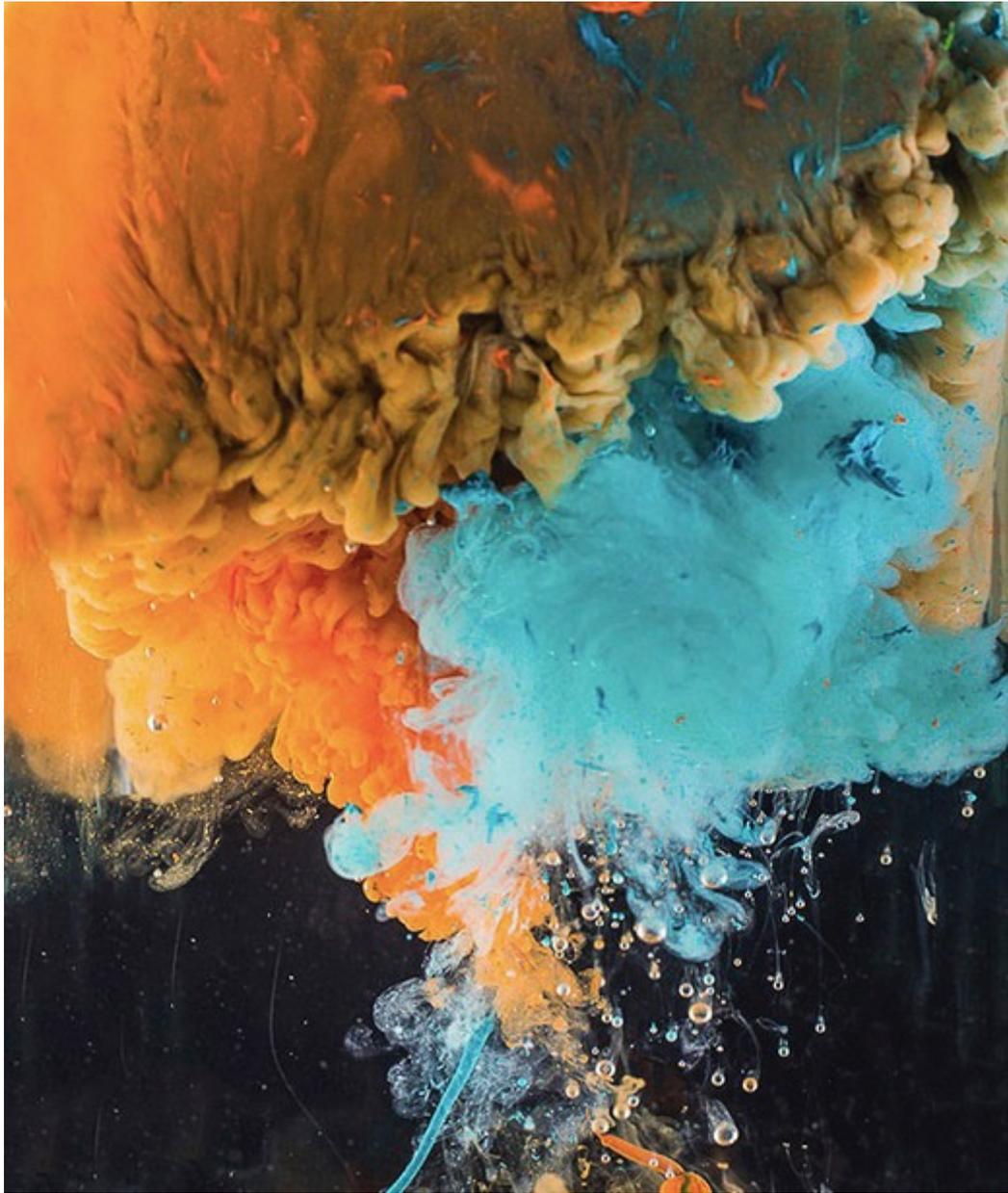


05 INK IN WATER

Now for the fun part. If needed, wipe down any bubbles that may have formed on the inside of the glass tank. Take two syringes and fill each of them with a mixture of acrylic paint and full-cream milk (the milk reduces the thickness of the paint and helps its spread through the water). I find it works well to inject two different colours at the same time but there are no hard and fast rules – experiment, have fun and shoot plenty of exposures.









How to Shoot a Video With Your DSLR



Want to start shooting videos without breaking the bank? Alfonso Calero has some useful tips to help you on your way.

Lately, I have been making videos using my DSLR, an EOS 5D Mark III. While I strive for the best results, I didn't want to spend thousands of dollars on new gear. In this article I look at a simple kit you can use to get started shooting and editing your first videos and a few tips to help you shoot better videos. And if you scroll down to the bottom of the page you'll see a couple of the videos that I've shot recently.

01 VIDEO HEAD MOUNT

A tripod is one tool you shouldn't be without when shooting videos. A tripod head like the one pictured below offers fluid control of shots. I usually screw off my photography head and replace it with a video head when I'm making videos.



Video head mount for tripods.

02 MICROPHONE

Separating the sound from the video offers higher sound quality. You need a mic for a hot-shoe mount or a mike recorder if you choose an "off hot-shoe" mount. But if you are looking to save a few dollars, having a mike directly attached with a pin to your camera is the cheaper option.



Handheld mic recorder.



Hot-shoe mounted mic.

03 LIGHTING

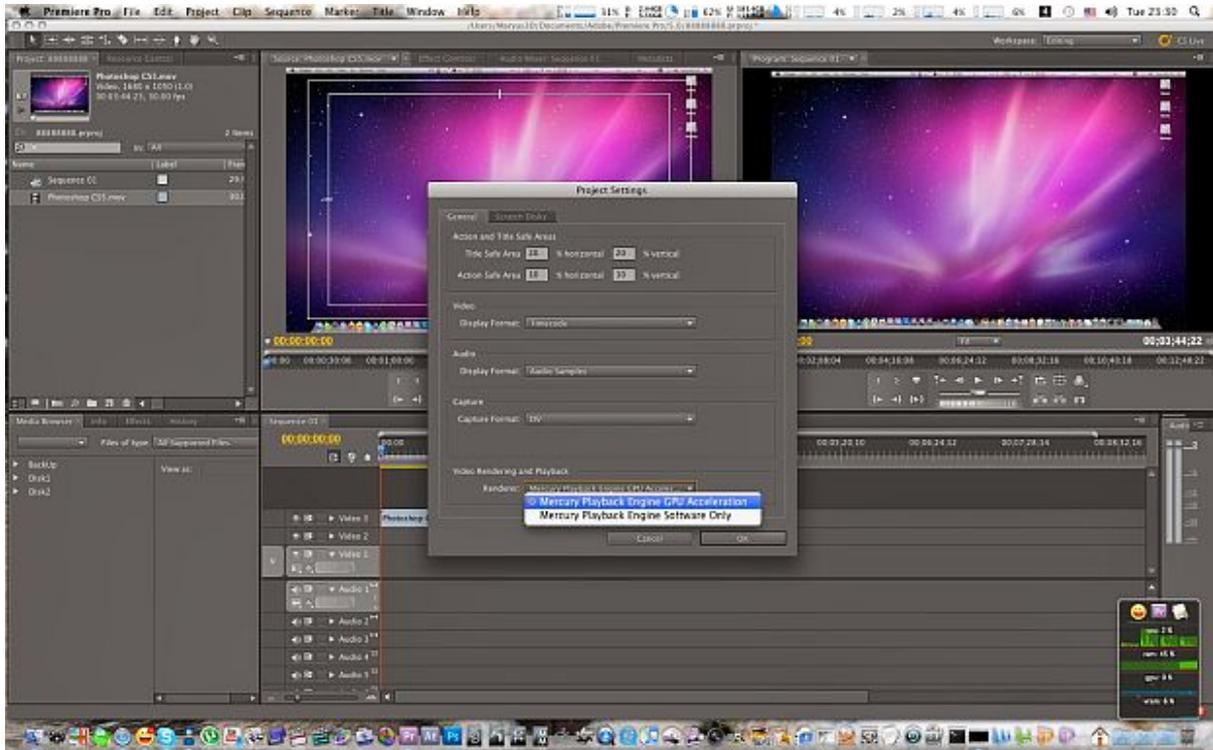
If you can't afford lights to use on location such as these battery operated LED lights, the next best option is a simple reflector to hold and bounce back natural light. Make sure when you have tungsten/incandescent lights you do a white or grey card reading to render the video properly for colour grading later.



LED lights.

04 EDITING SOFTWARE

I use Adobe Premier but any video editing software you have on your computer will be good to start with. There are usually three main components when editing a video which are best to separate and splice together: the video itself with or without sound; the sound separated from the video; and music to overlay between the video and sound.



Adobe Premier video editing software.

05 STORYBOARDING

I usually have a brief and a shot list when I'm shooting stills. For video, I produce a storyboard which is a kind of cartoon strip of all the shots I want and how I want them to flow together. If you don't plan a rough or clear schedule, the editing may lack certain elements to bring the story together.

06 SHOOTING AND EDITING SCHEDULE

Most of my videos are up to four minutes long but take about half a day to shoot and plan. The more you know about your location the easier it is to organise your subject and manage their time effectively. Sound and lighting can be a problem in some locations but the basic kit listed above should get you out of trouble in most situations.

How to Shoot a 'Ring of Fire'

Want to add another dimension to your photography portfolio? Alfonso Calero show you how to set-up and shoot a 'burning ring of fire'.

01 WHAT YOU NEED

You won't require a lot of expensive gear to photograph this spectacular light show. Everything you require is pretty much in or around your home. You will need a metal whisk, steel wool (zero grade), a dog leash or similar (preferably about one metre long) and a 9-volt battery or gas lighter.



02 CAMERA GEAR

Grab your DSLR camera and preferably a fast wideangle lens (somewhere between 16 and 24mm works well). To keep your shots steady, use a sturdy tripod and a remote shutter release. Since you are photographing at night you'll need a torch. A headlamp is ideal as it keeps your hands free to operate the camera.



03 LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION!

A beach is a good location for this kind of shoot as it's normally quite easy to find a place on the sand or rocks that's well away from anything flammable.



04 SAFETY

Before you do anything, talk to your local council and fire brigade and let them know what you are doing, when and where. They may be able to offer guidance on the best time and place to shoot and additional safety precautions. Safety is paramount. Wear protective clothing and find a location that's well away from other people, animals and potential fire hazards (eg. shrubs, trees, grass, leaves, etc...). Do not shoot in windy conditions and do not shoot if there are local fire warnings in place.



05 CAMERA SETTINGS

Set your camera to manual mode and take a few shots to establish how bright any ambient light in the sky might be. Typically I set my camera to an ISO of 100 or 200, with an aperture of f/8 to f/11, and a shutter speed between 20 and 30 seconds. In the menu settings on your camera there should be an option to turn noise reduction (NR) off. You're much better off shooting in RAW mode and applying noise reduction in post-production. Shooting RAW will also help you capture more detail and give you more flexibility to adjust variables such as white balance, exposure and contrast later on.



06 START SHOOTING

Place the steel wool inside the metal whisk and gently spread it out. (By pulling the steel wool apart you maximize airflow and ensure a longer lasting effect.) Attach the whisk securely onto the long dog leash and hand it over to your trusty assistant. Remember, the person spinning the whisk must be wearing protective clothing. Dark colours are ideal as they will conceal the person spinning the whisk. Make sure that your subject is standing in a clear space and when you're ready have them light the steel wool, with the lighter or the 9-volt battery (rub the battery's contact points on the steel wool). Experiment with different spinning the whisk speeds, patterns and camera settings to get the effect you're looking for. In no time you will be capturing amazing light shows of your own.

The Five-Day Photo Challenge

Alfonso Calero shares a simple 30-minute-a-day exercise to help you improve your photo skills.

01 PRACTISE MAKES PERFECT

Try to produce a minimum number of photos each time you head out, at least five or ten a day. Some days will be better than others but the main value of this exercise is to get you in the habit of taking photos every day. Like anything, photography is a pursuit that rewards practise.



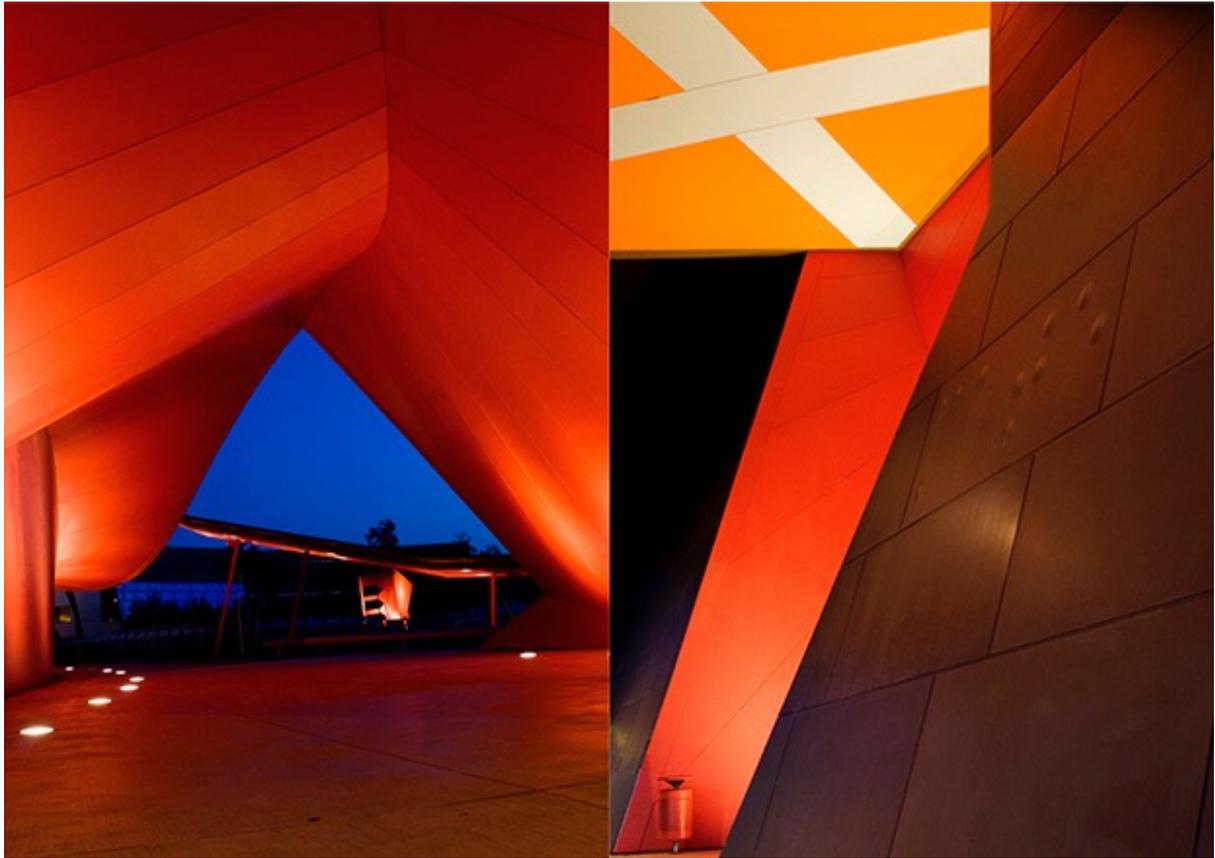
02 PICK A THEME

No matter where you live, if you walk for fifteen or thirty minutes each morning you're bound to find something worth photographing. Pick a theme – landscape, cityscape, people, architecture, etc, and try to stick it over the week. Revisit the same subjects and try to find new angles and ways to capture them. Look for ways to incorporate story elements into your photos. Ask yourself, 'How can I capture something that hasn't been said about this subject before?' Keep your eyes open and keep looking for fresh perspectives



03 WATCH THE LIGHT

Heading out at the same time every day will help you get familiar with the quality, quantity and direction of the light at that time. If you're lucky enough to experience some different weather conditions along the way you'll also get to see how that can have a huge effect on the tonal makeup of your photos. Experiment with shooting into the light, across the light and with the sun at your back.



04 TECHNICAL CHALLENGES

If you are new to photography and still getting used to your camera, set yourself the challenge of using a different exposure mode each day. Start with program mode, then switch to Aperture Priority and Shutter Priority.

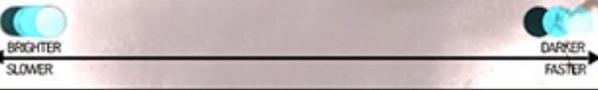
In Program mode, the camera automatically controls Aperture and Shutter Speed. You can adjust the ISO to control the sensitivity of the sensor. At high ISO settings the sensor is more sensitive to light and produces more image noise. At low ISO settings the sensor is less sensitive to light and produces less image noise.

In Aperture Priority (A or Av) mode you set the aperture, while the camera sets the shutter speed. Experiment with different apertures to see how the depth of field changes.

In Shutter Priority (S or Tv) mode you set the shutter speed, while the camera sets the aperture. With your camera trained on a moving object try using a range of slow and fast shutter speeds.

Another useful control is exposure compensation. This allows you to override the camera's metering to over- or underexpose the image by a set amount, usually in increments of 1/3 stop up to ± 2 stops. Experiment with the control to give priority to the shadow areas of your image and then the highlights.

Basic Manual Settings

100 200 400 800 1600 3200 ← DAYLIGHT (WELL LIT) MORE CRISP PHOTOS NIGHT (DARK) HIGH POSSIBILITY OF NOISE →	ISO	P
	Aperture	A or AV
B 30" 15" 10" 2" 1" 1/25 1/30 1/50 1/100 1/125 1/250 1/320 ← BRIGHTER SHALLOW DEPTH OF FIELD DARKER SHARPER IMAGES →	Shutter Speed	S or TV
	Exposure	+/-
		

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05 RATE YOUR SHOTS

At the end of the week, sit down with your shots and give them a score for composition, lighting and emotion.

Some images may rate highly in one or two criteria, the best will rate highly in all three. Were the better images taken at the beginning of the week or later on, after you'd visited the location several times? How did the lighting change over the week and which angles and weather conditions produced the best results?

If you are serious about improving your photography, seek out a more experienced photographer and get them to critique your photos. Encourage them to be honest and try to put their feedback into practice next time you head out with your camera.



How to Shoot Delicious Food Photos



Whether you're photographing a restaurant dish or a delicious home-cooked meal, there are some simple tricks of the trade you can use to produce professional looking images, says Alfonso Calero.

01 LIGHTING

While professional food photography is often done in studios with elaborate lighting set-ups, you can get some amazing results using diffuse natural daylight. Avoid direct sunlight and use a reflector to bounce light into the shadow areas of your dish. Pay close attention to detail especially in the shadow areas and be careful not to blow out your highlights – especially in the food itself. A simple piece of white paper can make for an inconspicuous reflector in a restaurant environment. If you have to shoot at night, try to avoid using on-camera flash if at all possible. Switch the flash off and try increasing the ISO. A pocket-sized tripod can be used to keep the camera stable.



02 WHICH LENS?

If you're after an affordable and effective lens for food photography it's hard to go past the 50mm f1.4. Most manufacturers have one in their line up, and they're usually priced around \$500. The wide f1.4 aperture lets in plenty of light and also offers plenty of control over depth of field. The focal length (around 75-80mm with a 1.5x crop factor, or 50mm with a full-frame camera) is great for a tightly framed shot that adds impact.



03 COMPOSITION

The expression 'keep it simple' is worth keeping in mind when it comes to composition. Try to avoid putting anything in the frame that distracts from the main subject. Move the camera angle up and down to find the perspective that makes the food look the most delicious. A top-down view can look great but a 45-degree angle tends to add a more dynamic feel.



04 DEPTH OF FIELD

Using a wide aperture to produce a narrow depth of field can be a useful way to minimise background clutter and put the emphasis on the food. Be careful though to make sure that there is plenty of detail in the areas that matter.



05 BACKGROUNDS

Clean white plates on clean white backgrounds have been popular in food photography for a while. It's a style I like, as you can see from the images that accompany this story, but it's not the only option. If you are going to include a background with some more detail try to include elements that expand on the story of the food. You could consider including some of the raw ingredients or an element that alludes to the food's cultural origins.



06 FOOD STYLING

This is a complete subject in its own right and the people who are good at it have been doing it for years. If you are arranging the food yourself make sure everything on the plate looks fresh and delicious. A chef mate once told me that placing all the food elements on a plate should not take more than five movements. The less you move the elements around, the more naturally they will fall into place. Try to include a mix of shapes, sizes, colours and textures on the plate.

07 SHOOT RAW

Raw images contain more detail than JPEGs. They also allow more control over variables such as exposure, contrast, colour, noise and sharpness. And, best of all, if you're shooting under artificial lights in a restaurant it can be particularly useful to be able to adjust white balance in post-production.

How to Shoot Effective Photo Essays

Professional travel photographer Alfonso Calero recently found himself on a five-day, fifteen-location winery shoot for a Japanese lifestyle magazine. He uses the experience to share five tips on how to shoot effective photo essays.

01 CHOOSE A TOPIC

The first step in creating a photo essay is to choose a subject. Find something you're interested in, research it and commit to covering it carefully and with enthusiasm. It might be a short event like a birthday party or a record of a person's life over several weeks, months or even years. Pick a subject, define what you want to achieve and go and do it.

02 MAKE A SHOT LIST

Make a shot list. This is simply a list of the images you want to capture, with some consideration of how you are going to get the shots and how you are going to manage your time and resources to make everything work. I'd advise using a shot list whether you're shooting professionally or just for fun. Having a plan will help you make the most of the location and get you thinking about the images you want to make before you press the shutter – and that usually results in better pictures. On a recent five-day, 15-location wine shoot for a Japanese magazine, I found it a challenge to make sure I covered all images on my shot list. With minutes to spare in some locations and some pretty poor weather I needed the list to keep me on track.



03 BE FLEXIBLE

While it's great to have a shot list, you also need to be adaptable and take advantage of unplanned opportunities when they arise. The weather was mostly terrible for the five days of my winery shoot but I was lucky enough to get a few minutes of glorious weather when the clouds parted and the sun appeared. When that happened I dropped everything to get the landscapes I wanted. There were some locations that had dark grey clouds, which contrasted nicely with the yellow autumn leaves from the vineyards.

I also found the gradient tool in Lightroom very handy to bring out the clouds and add mood to a brewing storm. Technically, for most of my landscapes I was shooting with f8 at ISO 100 using a tripod and cable release. Sometimes I also used my ND 10 variable filter to create longer or slower exposures to create movement in the clouds.



04 SHOOTING PORTRAITS

Portraits – candid and posed – are usually an important part of any photo essay. Talk to your subjects and try to keep things relaxed and friendly. Most people don't like to have their photo taken and it's your job to make the experience as painless as possible. For the photo below, taken at Port Phillip Estate, the winemaker only had five minutes to spare. Before asking him to sit I had previously already done a test shot to check the light and look of the shot. Once he was seated it was a matter of simply chatting with him while I was shooting with the continuous shutter on. Technically, I made sure I had a minimum shutter speed of around 1/125s, anticipating some movement from the people involved.



05 LOOK FOR THE DETAILS

Depending on what your photo essay is about, it may help to capture the details that make the subject different or interesting. For a photo essay about wineries, wine and food obviously play an important role. I negotiated with restaurants to use a spare table with natural light to photograph food, bottles and glasses of wine. A tripod, cable release and a test shot before hand were also important to see if I needed to move away from any harsh overhead lights that leave ugly hotspots on the food. Using live view on the back screen to focus manually at 100% was also critical when dealing with close up images. The placement of the plate, glass and food at the correct tripod height and angle helped create a sense of balance. For this project it was important to make sure that the bottles of wine I was photographing were available for sale in Japan.



06 DO SOMETHING WITH YOUR PHOTOS

While there's nothing wrong with "shooting for the sake of it" I find it helps my photography if I know how my photos will be used. What do you want to do with your photo essay? An exhibition? What about a photo book or a website? Is there a magazine or newspaper that would be interested in publishing the images? Knowing how your images will be used can motivate you and guide your approach to the subject.



How To Shoot an Outdoor Still Life Series

Most still life images are photographed inside, under artificial lights. As Alfonso Calero explains, it doesn't have to be that way.

Markets can be a great place to search for photographic inspiration. You'll often meet great characters and there are always wonderful still life subjects waiting to be photographed amongst the bric-a-brac. Recently I visited Evandale Market, Tasmania, where I shot this series of pots, pans, teacups and baking trays. The midday sun made it tough to shoot portraits but it seemed to add a new dimension to the still life images, with the crisp shadows as prominent in the pictures as the objects themselves. If you are visiting a market in the future here are some tricks I've learned over the years.

01 OFF TO MARKET

Always ask permission from stall holders before you start shooting and make sure you don't block any potential customers. Be quick, polite and thankful.

02 PICK A THEME

After a few minutes walking around the markets I noticed the display of pots, pans and baking trays you see here. From tea cups to baking trays it was easy to create a narrative of kitchen objects and shoot a series of five images. I usually aim for 3-6 images as a minimum when shooting a mini series.

03 USE THE LIGHT

While most professional photographers try to avoid shooting in the middle of the day, sometimes you just have to work with the light you have. Midday light is terrible for portraits but it can be interesting with still life subjects. In these images the crisp shadows add a graphic quality to the simple geometric shapes, and are as much a part of the picture as the objects themselves. Occasionally you can use that high-contrast lighting to your advantage.

04 INTERESTING ANGLES

It seemed most logical to choose an angle from above looking down because of the harshness of the sun. It was also important to frame my subject matter to have all objects in the same intensity of light. Be careful not to cast your own shadow when shooting from above.

05 USE ONE FOCAL LENGTH

If you are shooting a series of images on a theme it can help to choose a single focal length and stick to it. In this case, I used a 35mm lens for all of these shots. This tends to create a consistent feel from shot to shot so the images are better perceived as a series.

06 APERTURE

To keep the images nice and sharp I used an aperture range between f/5.6 and f/8. Most lenses are sharpest closed down two or three stops from the maximum aperture setting, which for my 24-70mm lens is f/2.8. At an aperture of f/8 there is also plenty of depth of field to keep the scene sharp from front to back.

07 POST PRODUCTION

During post production it's important to make sure any changes you make are applied consistently to all images in the series. Working with one image in Lightroom 4, I experimented with saturation, colour, contrast, clarity, vibrancy, noise reduction, sharpness and vignette. When I was happy with the result I applied a synchronised batch action to the other images. Since they were all shot under the same lighting conditions this approach worked very well.







Improve Your Composition

While most of us recognise good composition when we see it, good composition is not something that comes naturally to many people. Like anything in photography, it is a skill that needs to be practised and learned. On a recent trip to Jigokudani Yaenkoen National Park, Japan, where he photographed the remarkable hot-spring loving snow monkeys (Japanese Macaque), Alfonso Calero outlined his approach to composition, and set out five valuable tips for anyone looking to improve their own composition skills.

01 LOOK FOR JUXTAPOSITION

Finding different camera angles to convey your message visually can help clarify what you are trying to communicate. In the case of this lady squatting on the rock with her designer bag and point-and-shoot camera, I was intrigued by her boldness in getting so close to the wild monkeys. This is not a zoo, these monkeys are in a national park. The constant invasion of their private space and the photographer's determination to document her interpretation of her experience became part of the focus of my time at Jigokudani Yaenkoen National Park, Japan.



02 THE ART OF SUBTRACTION

Photography is the art of subtraction. Countless photography books on composition refer to this in different ways. What it means is that photography is as much about what you leave out as what you leave in. Personally, I try to limit the number of elements in a photo to three. The first element is generally your subject – the point you want viewers to look at first. The second and third elements are often also referred to as the space around, above, below or behind our main subject. Try not to exceed three points. When you do exceed three points be sure to subtract points or areas that are not needed by simply changing your camera angle or getting in closer. Another way to balance your photo is to place your main subject in the middle (symmetrical) or off centre (asymmetrical), as in the rule of thirds. Always look at the space behind. Consider the distance from subject to background to choose a depth of field that suits your message best. In this case I used a shallow depth of field with an aperture of around f/2.8.



03 EXPOSURE

After you have worked out your composition and are happy with the position of your main subject in the frame, the next thing to consider is exposure. Try to avoid overexposed highlights and underexposed shadows. Most cameras can be set up to show a warning if there are any underexposed or overexposed areas of the image. Use the exposure compensation control (most conventional cameras can go +/- 2 stops either way) to compensate as required. If the light is bright and there are plenty of hard shadows, you may need to return to the area when the light is more favourable – early morning and later afternoon provide the softest lighting conditions. If you shoot in Raw mode you will have more options to manage tone and colour in post-production.



04 LIGHT AND DARK

Be aware that our eyes tend to gravitate towards the brightest area of an image. Generally speaking it's a good idea to avoid bright tones near the edge of the frame as they will distract from the subject and lead people's eyes out of the picture. Be aware of the tonal range on your three key compositional elements. Does the light detract from the subject or draw our eyes towards it? Darker tones near the border of the image will help draw the viewers eyes to the main subject and keep our eyes from venturing out of the frame.



05 CHECK THE EDGES

Finally, it's a good idea to scan the edges of your photos before you press the shutter. Putting the subject too close to an edge, and not creating enough space, can sometimes create a feeling of being cluttered. If there are distracting elements in the background or foreground consider using a shallow depth of field to blur the offending elements. A shallow depth of field might be an aperture setting of $f/2.8$, $f/4$, or even $f/5.6$, whilst an extended depth of field could be $f/11$, $f/16$ or $f/22$. Remember we are making not taking photos!



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Shoot Great Street Portraits

Photographer Alfonso Calero shares five simple tips to help you capture memorable street portraits.

01 LENS CHOICE

While a long lens may seem a logical choice for street photography, you will attract much less attention with a small lens such as a 35mm or 50mm. The great French street photographer, Henri Cartier-Bresson used one lens, a 50mm, for almost all of his images. No one likes to have a long zoom directed at their face, but with a wider lens it's not so obvious who you're photographing. If people start to notice you too much then it will be difficult to capture something spontaneous.

02 BACKGROUND

Look for neutral, simple backgrounds that add contrast and put the emphasis on your subject. Busy backgrounds distract from the main game, and unless they really add something to the story you should try to avoid them.

Remember, photography is the art of subtraction.

03 LIGHTING

Lighting can make or break a portrait. Be aware of where the sun is and what the shadows are doing. Nice soft (diffuse) light is the easiest to work with – cloudy days and morning and afternoon light often produce good results. Avoid shooting in direct sunlight in the middle of the day.

04 SHUTTER SPEED AND MOVEMENT

If you are shooting people moving down the street you need to be aware of shutter speed. Set your camera to shutter priority (you control shutter speed and the camera controls aperture) and choose a setting that best suits the effect you're after. To freeze the action go for 1/250s. You could also consider experimenting with slower shutter speeds to capture a sense of movement. Put the camera on a tripod and choose a shutter speed of 0.5s or slower (a neutral density filter will help you get a slower speed while balancing the exposure). You could also try panning with a shutter speed of 1/30s or 1/60s for a fast paced walk to create a blurry background.

05 SHOOT RAW

I always advise people to shoot in Raw mode. The downside is larger image files and less space on your card, but it gives you more control over variables such as tone, sharpness, noise, colour and white balance. Programs like Aperture, Lightroom, Photoshop and Capture One offer great Raw processing tools – and they're all relatively easy to use. As well as basic image editing, I also use the post-production process to consider which images work well side-by-side and to convert some images to black-and-white.







Don't Delete!

Should you delete your worst photos or hang onto them? Alfonso Calero puts the case for keeping every photo you shoot – even the ones you hate.

01 TECHNOLOGY GETS BETTER

I am amazed at the speed that imaging technology is changing and how much easier it is to manipulate images than it was even a few years ago. Programs like Lightroom, Aperture and Capture One Pro make it easy to tweak white balance, push and pull exposure, make local tonal changes and dramatically reduce image noise. An image that would have been unusable a few years ago can now be significantly improved with a few clicks of a mouse. It was only recently that I went back to my old external drives and discovered a series of photos I'd forgotten about from a shoot in Japan. I didn't do anything with them at the time but I'm glad I kept them – and because I shot them in RAW I was able to enhance them in Lightroom, reducing some of the noise that came from using an older small-sensor digital camera in low light. Who knows what technological improvements are coming next? A new tool in the next version of Adobe Photoshop is designed to correct image blur caused by camera shake. That might save a few pictures from the digital trash can!



Several years ago, in the town of Yokote, Japan, Alfonso Calero was invited to visit a local school. He spoke to the Japanese English teacher and offered her a free 15 minute English lesson in exchange for a portrait shoot with her students. He recently came across the Raw files and used the latest version of Lightroom to reduce some of the noise that had arisen from using an older small-sensor digital camera in low light.

02 YOU GET BETTER

Just as technology gets better over time, so do you. With time and experience your eye and your editing skills will improve and you will be able to do more with your photos. A small crop can be enough to turn an uninspiring image into something special. You may not have the skill or experience to see that now, but you may have a different perspective (and new skills) in a few years time. As time passes and your perspective changes, you may find that you have a new appreciation for work you'd previously dismissed.

With time and experience your eye and your editing skills will improve and you will be able to do more with your photos.

03 PHOTOS IMPROVE WITH AGE

You can't underestimate the power of photographs to become more interesting with time. A street scene photographed now may seem mundane, but in twenty years time you will inevitably marvel at the strange clothes, unfamiliar hairstyles, classic cars and old buildings. Nostalgia is a powerful emotion and your photos will have more of it the longer they are around. If the photo albums of our childhoods are anything to go by, even the blurry, under-exposed, strangely coloured photos are worth holding onto. Most images become more interesting with time.

04 MEMORY IS CHEAP

The number one reason for deleting images is to free up space. That might have made sense a few years ago but not now when memory is so cheap. These days, a high-quality 'brand name' 16GB memory card goes for around \$30 while a 1TB (that's 1,000 Gigabytes!) hard drive costs less than \$100. At those prices, why would you bother throwing an image out? Unless the photo is of the back of a lens cap, hang onto it!



This Western Digital Elements 1TB Portable Hard Drive retails for \$75 at Harvey Norman. Do you really need to delete photos to free up space? Just get another drive.

How To Take Control Of Texture

While photography is a two-dimensional art form, texture can be used to create the illusion of depth and tactility. Highlighting texture is an effective way to tap the third dimension, and set your pictures apart from the 2D norm. In a recent project I set out with the express objective of capturing interesting textures. It's an exercise I can recommend to anyone interested in improving their photography as it gets you thinking not only about the surface you're photographing, but also the way lighting, colour contrast and angles all change the way the camera sees and records textures. In this article I've included some examples from my texture project along with some tips to help you accentuate texture in your own images.

01 LOOKING FOR TEXTURE

You may be surprised at how many textures there are around you when you start looking for them. Peeling paint, grainy timber, rusty metal, weathered rocks are a few surfaces that are rich hunting grounds for texture seekers. Surfaces that are rough, smooth, hard, soft, wet or dry can all add a tactile dimension to your images.



02 LIGHTING FOR TEXTURE

The angle and intensity of the light has a huge affect on texture. Look at the angle of the light and how it bounces off the surface. Move around the subject and the light source and watch how the texture appears to change. Side and back lighting enhances texture. Hard light creates stronger shadows and a stronger sense of texture, but might also produce too much contrast, leading to blown highlights or blocked shadows. Soft, diffuse light is easier to control and may make it easier to reveal every bit of detail in a decaying piece of wood. When it comes to texture, the devil is in the detail.



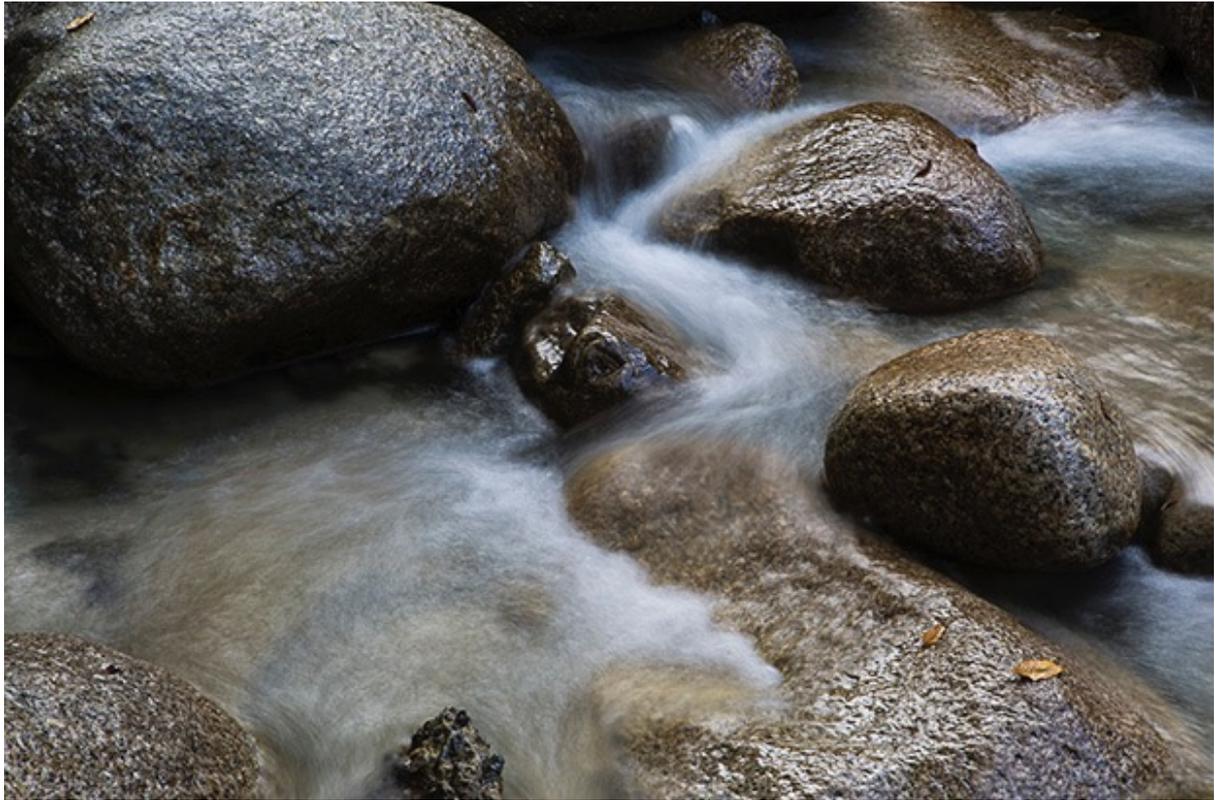
03 CLOSE UP

If you are photographing a surface that is less than a metre away, a steady tripod will let you use a slower shutter speed, lower ISO and narrower aperture. All that adds up to more detail in your photos. Use a cable release or a remote control to reduce the chance of camera shake even further.



04 BEST SETTINGS

It goes without saying that if your priority is detail – and it should be if you are shooting texture – you need to shoot RAW rather than JPEG. Shooting in RAW will help you capture a wider tonal range and makes it easier to adjust the colour temperature in post. A little sharpening will also boost detail and depth. When shooting for texture, use a low ISO (to reduce noise) and an aperture of $f/8$, $f/11$ or $f/16$ where possible. While you will get more depth of field at, say $f/22$, most lenses produce their peak sharpness at $f/8$ or $f/11$. Experiment with different settings to see what works best for your camera/lens combination.



05 GENRES FOR TEXTURE

While texture is a natural consideration in macro and close-up photography, there are other genres where texture can also play an important role. Aerial landscape is one that springs to mind, and the best images in this genre often have a strong textural element. Even conventional landscapes can benefit from a good understanding of texture, as different textural elements are complemented and juxtaposed to lead the eye and create movement and drama.



About Alfonso Calero

Born and raised in the Philippines, [Alfonso Calero](#) moved to Australia at the age of 15. He graduated from the Sydney Institute of Technology with an Associate Diploma in Photography in 2001 and has been professionally photographing food, portraits, landscapes and travel subjects ever since. He started a travel education and tours company four years ago delivering workshops every Saturday morning in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Fremantle. He also takes groups of four people to Japan, Philippines, Spain and Tasmania once a year for 5 – 10 day photography workshops

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