



PHOTOGRAPHY

## Travel photography tips for near or far.

Get travel photography tips from professional photographers so you can capture new landscapes, cityscapes, and portraits of people you meet on your journeys.

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### A 10,000-foot view of travel photography

- Travel photography can be pictures of landscapes, cities, architecture, or people on the street.
- You don't have to go far to start practicing — photograph interesting places close to where you live.
- To make a career of it, build an online portfolio of your best work.

## Types of travel photography.

Travel photography can stretch across genres because you can take any type of photo when you travel. Depending on where you go and what you do, you can touch on everything from [astrophotography](#) to [wildlife photography](#). As you travel, consider which aspects of your journey you want to focus on.

### Landscape photography.

The world is dotted with picturesque, compelling, and breathtaking sights. When you're on a walk and you want to capture the feeling of the scenery you find, you can focus on [landscape](#) photography. Make sure to do your research before you go, be intentional about the time of day you want to shoot, and be sure to bring gear to protect yourself from the elements.



### City photography.

Capture the [cityscape](#). From vast skylines to everyday life on the street, cities present wonderful subjects for experiments with perspective, texture, light, and color. Play with framing and vantage points, from the tops of buildings down to street level and below.

### Architecture photography.

With [architecture photography](#), you can explore the universal features and specific quirks of human-made structures wherever you go. Study a still subject like a building or a bridge to highlight the effects of weather or time of day, or to play with different vantage points.



### Street photography.

Once you're on the street, you can focus less on the architecture and more on the people moving through the city. Capturing life on the ground is the goal of [street photography](#)— a style of visual storytelling that shows off and communicates the experience of everyday life. It's vibrant and spontaneous, and you have to work with whatever light is available. Catch people as they move about their day to immerse yourself in the experience of a new city.

### Top tips for travel photography.

Finding your way in the world of travel photography doesn't have to be overwhelming or onerous. Discover how you can get started with these tips.







### 1. Follow your wanderlust.

No matter where your interest lies, if you travel for the shoot, it counts as travel photography. Like [documentary photography](#), travel photography expresses some truth about the particular scene it captures. "For me, it's just one way to share my perspective on the world," says professional travel photographer Tiffany Nguyen. "I travel to different places, see the world through my lens, and tell stories through photography."

### 2. Start where you are.

You don't need to quit your day job and sell all your possessions to make travel photography. "I would just start in your own backyard," Nguyen says. "I started small, doing short, weekend trips, and then when I got more comfortable traveling and better at photography, I wanted to take it to the next level and do more international locations." Begin with a list of places nearby that might be interesting to shoot. Find locations you can get to in an afternoon.

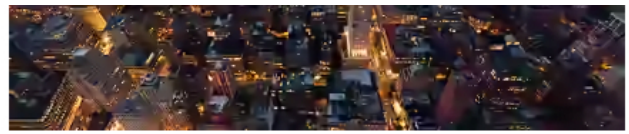
### 3. Research the location.

You can save yourself time and effort, and get better pictures, if you plan ahead. "Having the right inspiration before you get there is really key," says travel photographer Forrest Smith. "Before I go, I like to build a moodboard to try to find the exact shot that I want."

Nguyen does a lot of internet research, looking at blogs, Google Earth, and Google images. She scouts Instagram for different angles and perspectives. "I also find that social media is a huge resource, especially using hashtags on Instagram," she says. "They're really helpful for finding live conditions at a certain location. For example, if I go to a waterfall, I don't really want to waste my time trying to get [water photos](#) if the waterfall is dry. So I'll search the hashtag of the waterfall name to get an idea of the water level."

In addition to weather conditions, your internet research can tell you how popular the location is, how to get there, and what times might be the least crowded. "I'm looking for the length of the hike, the elevation gain, any obstacles or challenges that are going to come my way," says Nguyen.





#### 4. Bring the right equipment.

Make a checklist so you don't forget anything as you pack your camera bag. Include things like extra batteries, an extra memory card, a headlamp, emergency snacks, rain gear, protective cover for your photographic equipment, and [extra lenses](#). (If you know you'll do a lot of walking, make sure you really want that [telephoto lens](#) before you bring it.)

"For me it's important to have compact, lightweight equipment," says Nguyen, who uses a mirrorless Sony camera. Unlike [DSLR cameras](#), mirrorless cameras have no mirror to reflect the image to the optical viewfinder. "Their bodies and lenses are much smaller than the DSLR cameras, but they're still super-high quality, super-high resolution," Nguyen says. She uses several lenses, including a 24–70mm f/2.8 lens and a 16–35mm f/2.8 lens for wide-angle shots. She'll bring a prime lens (a lens of fixed [focal length](#)) for astrophotography or low-light photography, and a lightweight carbon-fiber tripod. If she's going to be close to her car, she'll bring a 70–200mm f/2.8 telephoto lens.

Both Nguyen and Smith will bring drones for [aerial shots](#) if they know they're going somewhere drones are allowed to fly. (Drones are not allowed in US national parks.) The best camera for his work, Smith says, is a Canon 5D Mark IV DSLR. Like Nguyen, he uses a 24–70mm f/2.8 lens. "If I'm going out for the day, I like to have something wide and something more cropped, so I'll bring my 24mm prime or my 100mm prime," Smith says. He'll also bring [neutral density filters](#). "They're really great to have if you're photographing water."





## 5. Get the timing right.

Part of your research should include finding the best times of day to shoot and factoring in travel time. "I like to take advantage of the light, so I like to shoot at [golden hour](#) or sunset," Nguyen says. "I try to avoid shooting at midday because the harsh lighting doesn't look good for photos and there are more people out." If you want to shoot an empty landscape in a typically busy place like a national park, you may want to get to the location before sunrise.

Always be on the lookout for great shots that you haven't planned. "You have to be in the right place at the right time with the right attitude," says Smith. "Keep an eye out because there are always stories to be told. Whether you're in the heart of New York City or the middle of nowhere in Utah, there are always things happening that, if you're attentive to them, you can use to tell an incredible story."

Smith recommends keeping a camera with you at all times, even if it's just a Polaroid or the camera on your smartphone, and using it to develop your creative eye. "Whether you're at an iconic location or you're just walking around your neighborhood, look for compositions and good lighting. Those off-the-hip, spur-of-the-moment photographs often tell a more incredible narrative than the super-planned shots do," he says.

## 6. Accept uncertainty.

Travel is all about unpredictability. You might stumble upon a once-in-a-lifetime shot, or you might get fogged in and rained on. Try to roll with the punches when you encounter frustrating weather, find a road closed, or miss a train.

It helps to have backup plans and even backup plans for your backup plans. That way, you're never at a complete loss for what to do if things go wrong. "Be realistic with your expectations and with things that you can't control; it's just a lot easier to be flexible and try to find a different plan," Nguyen says.



## 7. Focus on telling stories.

Every travel photograph has a story to tell about a time and place. "Being able to bring people along for your journey through your images is the most important part of travel photography for me," says Smith. "You want to be able to not just show the location but breathe life into it and find those authentic moments."

Don't be afraid to tread the beaten path. Even if you travel to places that have been photographed by hundreds or thousands of people, your photos and your stories will be unique. "You can have ten different photographers go to the same location, but you'll come back with ten completely different images, ten different edits, and ten different stories, because everyone sees the locations differently," says Nguyen.



## 8. International travel photography tips.

International travel involves a lot of planning because you want to make the most of your time. But it's also important to accept that you can't plan every moment. "Part of the experience that's so fun and rewarding is how spontaneous it can be," says Nguyen. "You never know where you'll run into things you just can't plan out or predict, so you just have to just go with the flow and work with what you find around you."

Approach local people and their customs with an open mind and heart, and try to participate in their culture instead of just observing it from outside. "The people make the big difference. They have their own stories to tell, and you can learn a lot from them," says Nguyen.

Remember to always be respectful. If you want to take a photo of someone, talk to them. Get to know them a bit, and then ask for permission. "A majority of the time, they're more than happy for you to take their photo and maybe talk, too," Nguyen says. "People think it's fun because it's not something that happens every day."

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## 9. Family travel photography tips.

You can apply all the tips above to the [family photos](#) you take on your travels. Just remember to be patient, do your best to cultivate patience in your family members, and be sure to pack a tripod and remote so you can capture the whole group at once.

If you have specific staged shots in mind, communicate your ideas ahead of time. It might help to share some inspirational photos from Pinterest or Instagram to get buy-in from every member of the family. If you have young children (or teenagers) be prepared to bribe them to cooperate.

Otherwise, focus on taking [candid shots](#) of your family members. Like people, candid photography can be unpredictable. You have to read the room, adapt, and give up control, but you might perfectly capture the experience of family travel with a mix of shots that cover everything from excitement to exhaustion, unfettered joy to unequivocal irritation.

## 10. Practice.

The best way to get better at travel photography is to keep going places and taking photos. "Put in the time and effort, show up and shoot as much as you can," Nguyen says. Keep building your portfolio, and when you're ready to look for work in the photography business, be selective about the photos you share. Be sure that you know why you're including each photo and what skills you want to showcase with it.



## 11. Make the right moves in post-processing.

With [Adobe Photoshop Lightroom](#) photo editing software, you can take your photos from good to great. If a photo just needs a nudge toward the [rule of thirds](#), or your horizon needs leveling, you can easily make those changes in Lightroom. You can also apply [presets](#) for fast fixes to urban photos and nature photos or follow [step-by-step](#) tutorials to learn how to do everything from image sharpening to removing unwanted objects.

Wherever you go with your camera, remember to embrace the adventure and the uncertainty that



goes along with it. Be patient with yourself and your surroundings. With every photo you take, you're practicing your photography skills and adding to your story.

## Turn travel photography into a career.

To turn your passion for travel photos into a career, start by taking a lot of photos and collecting your best work. If you're committed and willing to think outside the box, you can start your own [photography business](#).

- **Pay attention to costs.**

You may already have camera gear and a computer, but you'll also have to spend money on photo editing software and travel.

- **Create a portfolio.**

Clients have to see your work before booking, so create a portfolio specific to your audience and your niche.

- **Market yourself.**

One key part of turning your photography into a business is paying attention to [marketing and branding](#). Establish an aesthetic and a point of view, so potential clients can have a sense of what they're getting when they work with you.

- **Think unconventionally.**

Many tropical paradises are oversaturated with people who want to travel and take photos of picturesque landscapes. A great place to start is by contacting bed and breakfasts, smaller hotels, and other businesses trying to attract visitors. Link them to your portfolio and see if they're interested in providing lodging or a small per diem to photograph their resort.

- **Treat every trip as an opportunity.**

If you're interested in travel photography, you've likely already been bitten by the travel bug. Whenever you take a trip, take some time to build your portfolio. Professional photography can be a nomadic lifestyle with inconsistent income, so embrace a mindset of working wherever you are and being open to new opportunities.

Finally, remember that careers are not made overnight, and every small step you take as a travel photographer is moving you closer to the goal of adopting it as your career. Good luck, and happy trails.

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### Contributors

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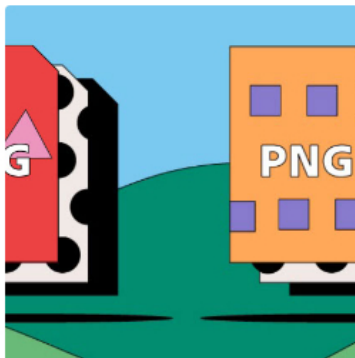


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