



Vacation / Travel Photography

By Maureen Breininger Hlavacek

What could be more important than photos from your trip/vacation that help you capture those wonderful experiences permanently! I have a terrible memory and relive my trips through my photographs and scrapbook pages so they are very valuable to me.

Small, lightweight, high quality camera

There are many different opinions on equipment. When driving or on a photography trip I'll take my SLR, tripod, etc. but if I'm flying, sightseeing or traveling with a group I want a small high quality camera that will fit easily in my purse. There are so many shots I just wouldn't have otherwise.

Keep camera setting on high resolution

I'm sad to hear someone say they have their camera setting on the lowest resolution so they can get more photos on the card. These are your heirloom photos and you should get as high a resolution as your camera will allow. The cost of memory cards is coming down all the time and well worth getting some extra cards in order to take high quality photos.

Wide angle lens & image stabilization or vibration reduction

If you have a wide angle lens on your camera you will be much more able to get group shots, more of the landscape and the tops of buildings, like church steeples. For a compact/point & shoot camera, that means an SLR equivalent of less than 35mm. Without a wide angle you may get photos like this one without the church steeple. Image stabilization or vibration reduction is also extremely valuable because you will be handholding most shots. For example, Canon's small Elph Powershot SD 870 has a 28-105 mm lens equivalent, is image stabilized and 8 megapixels.

Landscape Mode



Because most of my vacation photos are about taking photos quickly, whether through the window of a bus, stopping quickly, or seeing a moment that won't last, I keep the camera in landscape mode and crop later if need be (e.g. for an SLR that would be a small aperture opening like f18 or f22).

Use Flash

I use flash quite a bit outdoors so it is important to have a travel camera where you have the option of turning the flash off or on. A flash would have made a significantly better photo in this first example where the bright background gave an inaccurate exposure reading to the camera.



The first photo was without flash and the second photo, just moments later, I set the flash to fire. These are outdoor photos, but it makes quite a difference.



Capture informal moments

The posed group photos are great because it shows you all together in a special place but the informal, at the moment, shots capture the emotion of the trip.



Find props to help set up interesting group shots

Posed group photos show you all together in a special place but lots of photos of your group lined up in a row in front of some scene or other are not very interesting. It's tough to quickly come up with interesting poses of large groups, but I find that if I look for something interesting for us to use as a prop it helps a lot. Even a bright red sofa in a hotel lobby provided some interest. You could also try photographing at a higher or lower angle.



You Don't Always Need the Feet

As humans we are drawn to the face and eyes of others. Eliminating the lower body in photos lets you focus on the faces.



Keep People away from the buildings

People always seem to want to go stand by an interesting building but by the time the photographer gets back far enough to get the building in the photo, the people are little specks. A more interesting photo is to have the people move away from the building as in the second photo. The photographer was in the same spot in both these photos.



Take photos of everything



Fortunately digital photography makes taking the photos inexpensive, so take lots of them. You never know which ones you will treasure. We took photos of us sitting around in bed at night and we spread our trip souvenirs out on the bed and photographed those. Don't forget a nice photo of the group at the beginning and end of the trip too.



Get people, including yourself in the photos

A couple years ago we were moving and going through my husband's photography from about 35 years ago and found that the photos we were keeping were those with people in them, not the gorgeous scenery. It's likely that the photos with people will be the ones that are treasured by descendants, not that great shot of the Eiffel Tower or Yellowstone, where you could get a post card that would look the same.

Ask a Stranger

Most of our group trip photos are taken by strangers. We set up the shot and then wait for a pleasant looking bystander, but there are a couple other ways to get group photos when the stranger isn't available.

Take two photos of the same scene, with part of the group in each, like this first example of having dinner out, so that you, the photographer, are included in one.



Or you can also **take multiple photos and put them together later** in your photo editing program. For this layout I took the photo without me in it and then told everyone not to move and handed the camera to another person to take another photo with me in it, merging the two photos together later in Photoshop to show all of us together.



You could also **hold the camera at arm's length or use a reflection** to get yourself in it, like this layout where I am both in the photo and taking it.



Vacation Scrapbook thoughts

Fill in with post cards or photos from the internet. If you didn't get the photo that would finish off your scrapbook page, then get one from the Internet. We weren't allowed to take photos in the Catacombs in Rome, so I added a few Internet photos. In the second layout example we stayed in an Inn from the area of one of our ancestors from Scotland so I got the clan plaid from the Internet to use as background. In the third example, I couldn't get far enough away to take a photo of the entire Trevi fountain in Italy, so used a postcard along with the photo to tell the story.



Use a photo as background. This is a fun way to use more of your photos and show a larger view. Two examples:



If you'd like a Word document of this article, send me a pm with your email address. Hope you have a lot of fun and take great photos on your trip!

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Aka MaureenH (used to be bentdr) September 2007, Photos © Maureen

