



Travel Photography

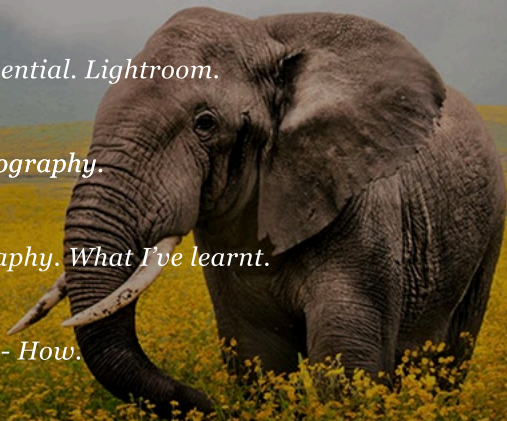
DANIEL JOHN BILSBOROUGH

PHOTOGRAPHS FEATURED ON



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Hi, I'm Daniel.

On the left. With my little brother and sister. 1990.



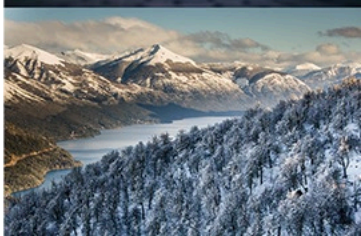
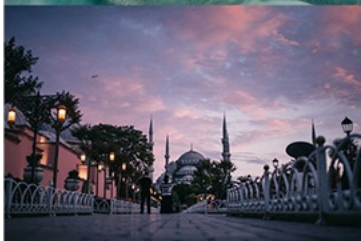
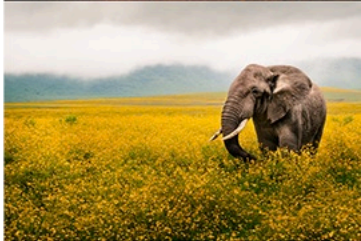
What Is Travel Photography?

Before I begin allow me to introduce myself. I'm Daniel, photographer and founder of the djb photography school. I bought my first camera in 2005, a Canon 350D. I've never studied photography in any formal manner and mostly learnt by practicing my craft and seeking inspiration and education from other photographers who I admire.

Today, I've explored 64 countries and I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to see the world.

"Travel photography is about using imagery to tell the story of our individual perspective and experience of the world. It is a blending of portraiture, landscape and street photography. It's about freely expressing our photographic vision through interaction with or observation of our environment and subjects."

This book teaches you what I've learnt after 10 years of creating imagery around the world.



MY SERIOUS FACE



MY SNEEZE FACE



Gear. Minimum Requirements.

I will start with this. My photograph which featured on the cover of National Geographic Traveller Magazine was created using a 12mpx Nikon D90 and an 18-200mm zoom lens. This is a 10 year old entry level digital camera! We don't need the latest and greatest gear in every situation! But there are a few minimum requirements to meet to allow us to learn, experiment and have fun. My advice is to keep it simple. Buy one or two lenses and master them.

Today, any entry level digital camera which allows you to change lenses will be suitable. For portrait and street photography I recommend the Sigma Art 30mm f/1.4. For landscape work, the Tokina 11-16mm f/2.8. If you would like to add a portrait specialist lens then check out the Nikon 85mm f/1.8 AF-D. These lenses are suitable for beginner and intermediate level "crop sensor" camera bodies.

In the future, consider upgrading your camera body for higher ISO handling, better low light and autofocus performance. Consider upgrading your lenses for a lower minimum F Stop, sharper images, better colour rendition, tonal detail and depth of colour. However, before spending more money on gear, focus on the following to improve your photography:

1. Understanding manual mode and controlling the light.
2. Artistic composition. How to create imagery that's pleasing to the eye.
3. Post production, developing your RAW files with authenticity.
4. Connection, expression and skill in capturing the moment.

PETRA.



Human Connection.

I took this photograph in Egypt during an 11 hour overnight train from Cairo to Luxor. I feel like this little girl was smiling at me with her eyes. There are two ways to capture imagery like this. One - be silent and sneaky, dont interfere with the moment, reduce the impact of your presence in the image, risk getting caught and yelled at. Two - make contact with your subject, smile, communicate, dont be a dick, ask for permission, curate an interaction and capture the outcome.

A note on authenticity. When you step into any populated environment your presence alone is changing it. You are affecting it intentionally and unconsciously. Therefore some degree of manipulation is present in every single photograph. You can choose to balance observation and interaction in any way you please to create your artistic vision. I simply ask you to be respectful and show gratitude.



*“When your subject allows you to take their
photograph **they** are giving **you** a gift.
Be grateful, show gratitude.”*



GUANAJUATO

Guanajuato.

This photograph was taken in the city of Guanajuato in Mexico. This whole place is a Unesco World Heritage city and dates back to 1559. Travelling there now it feels like you're stepping back in time. When I visit a new city I look to create imagery that feels soulful. To do this I simply wander the streets, by myself, following my intuition about where to turn next. I always keep it low key, my camera remains hidden until I need it.

I walk around and observe what's happening around me without disturbing it. One thing you'll hear me say often about my work is that it's important for me to hide the presence of the photographer in my imagery. Especially when photographing people. What do I mean by this? I rarely ask people to smile for the camera. I prefer to distract them or use distractions to my advantage. During that fleeting moment when the person has forgotten about the camera in front of them - I capture them.

Don't underestimate the degree to which a person's state of being changes for that particular fleeting moment. The difference is huge. In this photograph I remember seeing this scene as I walked by this little laneway. I continued walking but I knew straight away I was coming back. This is the part where I sneak back to the spot where I wanted to take the photograph from. I sat down, pretended to drink my coffee and take a rest. Then I waited. These three people noticed me then realised I was just another guy on the street and resumed their previous activities.

That's when I took the photograph. While nobody noticed me.



Lorraine

Empathy.

This is my best friend Alex and his 98 year old grandma Lorraine :) On this day we drove from Sacramento to San Francisco to take grams to her first baseball game at At&t park! She LOVED IT. I'm sharing this photograph with you because it perfectly illustrates the point Im about to make.

The beauty in a photograph isn't always about technical and compositional perfection. Emotion plays a very important role also. i.e. this photograph isn't technically perfect. There are distracting elements scattered throughout the background, hats, trees, colors and people. As a viewer all of these things take your attention away from the subject and it's a challenge to lock on without your eyes wandering all over the place.

However. When you study Lorraine's expression this photograph evokes a feeling in you. As a viewer you experience a similar feeling to what you'd expect Lorraine to be feeling in this moment. Empathy is established between you and Lorraine. Viewer and subject. This is what connection is about in photography. And this is one of the most challenging things to create because it has barely anything to do with your camera and lens.

“Develop your ability to reduce your presence around your subject. Allow them to express themselves without judgment.”



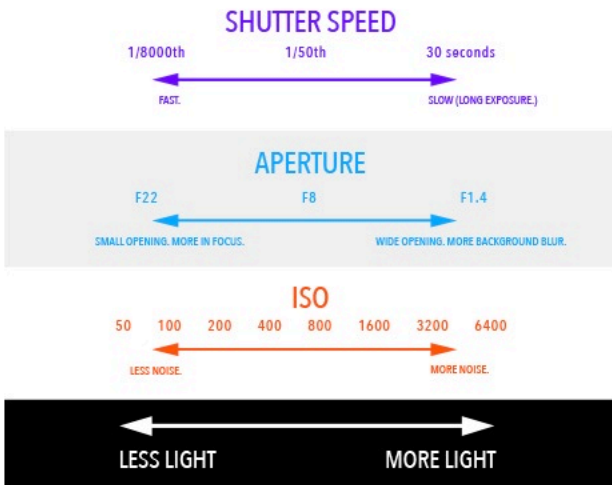
HANOI

Technical Photography Skills.

Manual mode. This is one of the first things to learn when you start your photography journey. Quick question, would you buy the latest Macbook Pro and only use the calculator app? Is this much different from spending \$2000 on a digital camera and using it in automatic mode? You may as well be using your phone camera. In order for you to make informed decisions about how to control the light you need to understand the balancing act between shutter speed, aperture and ISO. The best way to master manual mode is to practice it over and over again! Force yourself not to use automatic mode ever again. The more “mistakes” you make in manual mode, the faster you’ll learn how to perfect it.



Manual Mode Cheat Card.



TOKYO



Artistic Composition.

What does it mean when we talk about composition in a photograph? Firstly, take any image and break it down into it's fundamental elements. Sky, water, sand, person, sun. Now look at where those elements are placed and how much space they each occupy in your frame. Think about the basic shapes and lines created by those elements and how they divide up your image and interact with each other. This underlying geometry of your photograph is a huge part of what makes it pleasing to the eye. Is it cluttered or simple? Are the elements too dominant, distracting or do they compliment each other?

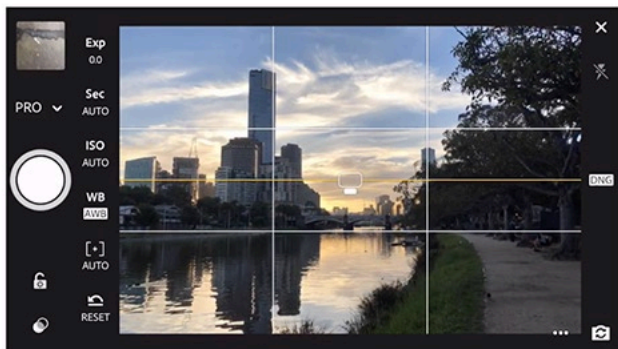
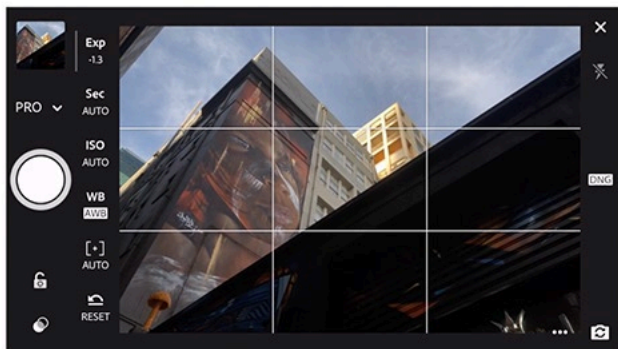
The best way to learn about beautiful composition is to find inspiring photographers then study their imagery. Stare at their work. Break it down. Ask yourself **why** you like it. Sometimes the reason is not immediately clear. We must take the time to question our subconscious mind so that we can apply these ideas in our own work. Here are a few concepts that I think about when I'm taking photographs:

1. Simplicity, eliminating distractions.
2. Geometry, lines, negative space.
3. Visual weight, balance and symmetry.

When you're starting out the rule of thirds is a great way to immediately improve the composition of your work. Divide your image into a tic tac toe like grid. Place your points of interest on those lines or where they intersect.

Check out the next page.

Rule Of Thirds.



An aerial photograph of a tropical coastline. The image shows a series of white sand beaches curving along the edge of turquoise, shallow water. The water has a distinct ripple pattern. To the left of the beaches are dark, lush green islands and peninsulas. The sky is a pale, hazy blue. The overall scene is serene and idyllic.

WHITSUNDAY ISLANDS, AUSTRALIA

Post Production. Don't Avoid it.

When I first started digital photography I was under the impression that once I'd pressed that shutter button, my photograph was instantly complete. The biggest selling point with digital photography was just that. No more messing around with chemicals and development work in the dark room. No more waiting. Instant gratification. And while this is somewhat true, we still need to develop our digital photographs, albeit with far less physical labour. If you want to take your photography to the next level, you have to start shooting in RAW and you have to start learning about developing your RAW files in Adobe Lightroom.

Unless you're a professional film photographer, your knowledge of the darkroom is probably rather limited. As is mine. There's a perception that film photographers simply capture the image, develop it without thinking and sha-bam - we have a brilliant photograph straight "out of camera." The truth is, great film photographers were MASTERS in the darkroom. Capturing the image on film is merely the first step. Today in Lightroom we have access to the same tools these masters would use in the darkroom. But they're accessible to all of us.

For example, the Lightroom library module was a contact sheet where you would study the thumbnails to work out which ones were worth enlarging and developing. The Lightroom adjustment brush was a piece of wire with tape on the end.

The problem with digital photographic development today is that it's often over done and produces an in-authentic result. "Photoshopping" is setting a bad example for beginners. Develop your work with authenticity as your first priority.

BEFORE LIGHTROOM



AFTER LIGHTROOM.



BEFORE LIGHTROOM



AFTER LIGHTROOM



Fear And People Photography.

Photographing people can sometimes be scary. How are they going to react? Will they yell at me? Will I be embarrassed? These are the questions we ask ourselves when fear manifests itself with travel photography. I still battle with this today! But the more you approach people and perfect your human communication skills, the easier it will become. The secret is to detach from the outcome of your approach. Accept it either way and learn from the experience.

What's the risk you're taking if you *dont* approach the people you'd like to photograph? You could miss out on a once in a lifetime image. What's the worst thing that can happen if you approach? You are rejected. The risk for you to not even try is extremely high! I have at times been so hesitant that I've 'hung around' a certain area for 40 minutes trying to build myself up to approach someone for their photograph. At least I didn't miss the opportunity entirely :)



THE SERENGETI



Learnings. 10 Years of Photography.

1. Photography is incredibly personal. Don't ignore what you love because it doesn't fit in with what others are doing.
2. Learn only from people who inspire you and seek advice from a select few. Incorporate pieces from those few and construct a personal style that you love.
3. Everyone has an opinion about photography. Would you learn how to cook from someone who's food you don't enjoy?
4. We are vulnerable when we're starting out. Kind words from good friends are extremely encouraging and often undervalued. The opposite is also true. Ignore people who bring you down. Friends and family included.
5. I've yet to meet a single photographer who picked up a camera for the first time and created a masterpiece. Take more photographs, practice your craft.
6. When looking at a professional's portfolio you're only seeing their best work. You're not seeing the thousands of rejected images that are also part of the journey.
7. Direct imitation of other photographers is not fulfilling.
8. Authenticity is subjective. Be authentic to your own vision.

HOI AN, VIETNAM.



National Geographic. How?

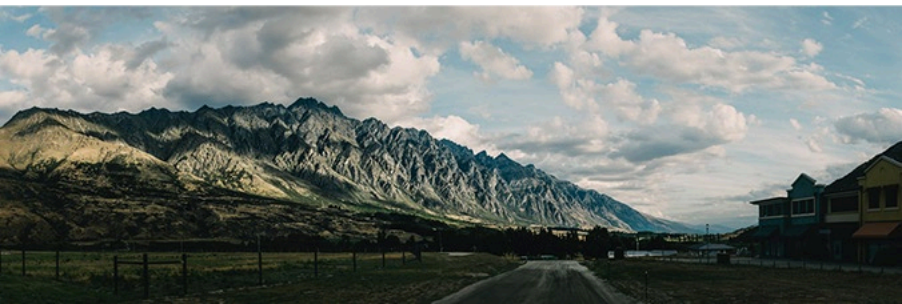
A few years ago I spent 3.5 months travelling around Africa. I started in Morocco and Egypt, then travelled to South Africa and made my way north through 12 countries in an overland truck. I ended my trip with the mountain gorillas at the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park near the borders of Uganda, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. One of the most beautiful places we visited during this time was the Ngorongoro crater, this is where my elephant image was created. By no means am I an expert wildlife photographer. I was shooting with a ten year old 12mpx Nikon D90 and an 18-200mm zoom lens.

Your iPhone 6 would produce similar quality imagery.



So how did this photograph end up on the cover of National Geographic Traveller? Let me back track just a little. When I bought my first digital camera I would spend countless hours on the streets of Melbourne taking photographs. Parks, beaches, cityscapes, people photography. I'd also blog about my "photography walks" and showcase the images I'd taken online. Years later I had a huge collection of work on my blog from around Melbourne. It so happened that National Geographic were writing an article about Melbourne and during their google image searches they stumbled on my work. This lead them to my portfolio website where they noticed my imagery from around the world. When they contacted me to ask if they could use my photograph on the cover of their magazine my answer was an immediate yes. Take it. Have my left kidney as well. During this time I had a few people "advise" me to ask for payment from them. I told them in the most strategically loving way possible that they are deluded. Here's why. It's not about the money.

The value of having my photograph printed on the cover of National Geographic cannot be measured in dollars. I consider this to be a once in a lifetime opportunity and I'm blessed to be in this position. I wanted to make it as easy as possible for them. I responded to their emails within 30 minutes even while I was travelling around Bali. They ended up featuring 9 more of my photographs on their website. Why? Because I wasn't playing hard ball trying to negotiate fees and rights.





So yes, they found me. I never approached them. I was “lucky.” But I believe we all create our own luck. As Steve Jobs famously put it: “You can’t connect the dots looking forward, you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future.”

The lesson here? Start creating and sharing your work with the world! Follow your intuition and do what feels good in order to uncover what you love.

Daniel John Gilson