

PCQC Video Presentation

Fundamentals of Travel Photography by Bob Krist—National Geographic

Lesson 10: Capturing the Spirit of People

Taking photos of people is a challenge for many photographers. This lesson will instruct on how to break the ice and inform on several different styles.

- **Breaking the ice: The Toughest Part of People Photography**
 - Talk to your proposed subject. Tell them a why you want to take their picture and share something of yourself. Professional photographers have a built-in reason: their assignment. You can have a similar mission: on assignment as a member of PCQC. Always offer to send them a digital photograph. If you are in a foreign country and can't speak the language, memorize a couple phrases in the native language such as who you are and why you want their picture. There are some good handheld translators and you can always hire a tour guide or fixer.
- **The Candid Approach**
 - Use a long lens and shoot without the subject's knowledge...but don't become too dependent on it. Or, hang around long enough to blend with the locals.
 - Shoot from the hip...but you will need to practice this technique. It is explained in the video. An example of shooting from the hip is the street scene in Stonetown, Zanzibar.
- **Up Close and Personal Approach**
 - For this technique you should have a wide angle or normal lens and requires that you get within the 3-foot comfort zone you are accustomed to. The results can be striking and much more intimate.
- **The Environmental Portrait**
 - Show how and where the subject lives. Put the subject in his own environment. This is the staple type of photograph for magazines. Examples are provided in the video.
- **Mistakes to Avoid**
 - Don't fumble endlessly with your gear. Don't take a new camera that you are not familiar with.
 - Don't fall silent. Keep your subjects engaged.
 - If the subject freezes, offer them suggestions for props to help them relax. Example: if you are shooting a blacksmith go to his shop and have him hold an anvil, or, have him shape a piece of red-hot steel
 - Avoid having the subject stand with their weight equally distributed on both feet. When they are relaxed, they will assume the contrapposto positions shifting weight from one foot to the other. An example shown is the statue of David. Or they might lean on a chair or against a doorway.
 - Don't forget the moment part of the light, composition, and moment combination. Even with portraits, there is a precise moment or two that will make the photograph stand out. Take multiple pictures to improve your chance of capturing the moment.
- **Exercises**
 - Approach a stranger on the street. Break the ice and try to get permission to take a photograph.
 - Shoot several different portrait styles of the same person. For example, start with an environmental shot and then work your way to a head and shoulders portrait.