

PCQC Video Presentation

Fundamentals of Travel Photography by Bob Krist—National Geographic

Lesson 12: Using Flash on the Road

A shoe-mounted flash allows the travel photographer to obtain photos that otherwise would not be possible. However, many experienced photographers caution against using the shoe mounted flash because the likelihood of a spoiled photo is high. This lesson will mitigate some of the issues with shoe mounted flash

• Basics of Flash

- The on-camera flash will light things in front of it; the optimal distance is 12-15 feet. It will not light up an auditorium or stadium
- The light from the flash falls off quickly
- The amount of flash that hits the sensor is determined by the aperture. Use a shutter speed that is at or below the camera's maximum sync speed otherwise the shutter will close, cutting off some of the light
- Think of the flash as the second source in a two-source set up. The primary light source is the ambient light
- The key to successful flash photography is the blending of the flash with the ambient light source. In high contrast settings, such as midday, use the flash to lighten, but not eliminate, the shadows. Most cameras will do this automatically if it is placed in the "Always on" or "Flash on settings"

• Examples

- An outdoor shot of a couple at noon: The first photo is without flash and the second photo is with the flash. Notice how the flash softens the harsh shadows and brings out some of the hidden details.
- The second example is that of an Iguana in the Cayman Islands: The effect is similar to the first example.
- The third example has three shots of a jewelry merchant: The first is in full sunlight without a flash, the second has too much flash, and the third has just enough flash. It is possible to use your exposure compensation dial to help with the correct amount of flash

• Shutter Speeds and Flash

- The sync speed is the fastest shutter speed that allows the flash to fire with the shutter curtains wide open, typically 1/180 or 1/250 second. In bright light you will want to use the fastest shutter speed; in low light use a slower speed

• Exercise

- Shoot some slow-sync environmental portraits with various shutter speeds. Which one is the most pleasing?
- Practice dragging the shutter by shooting someone riding a bike or jogging across your field of vision