

PCQC Video Presentation

Fundamentals of Travel Photography by Bob Krist—National Geographic

Lesson 9: Five Obstacles to a Great Photo

This lesson will not focus on technical issues. It will focus on the art of photography and the five obstacles that prevent you from making that great shot. The lesson will show how photographers overcame these obstacles on assignment.

• Overfamiliarity

- Just about everyone has been everywhere so the usual generic photo of a couple walking on a beach at sundown doesn't cut it. You must dig deeper. Setting the place may be difficult in the tropics. You could hire a plane or choose a more economical approach of using a drone. The example is the drone photo of the Tobago Cays in the Grenadines. If you are in the tropics, shoot the tropical water at midday rather than twilight to get the rich color and clarity of the water. Filters can be used to cut glare. Another way to avoid generic photos is to track down special events. An example was that of a Hindu wedding in Trinidad. Some striking photos can be obtained by shooting wildlife in swamps, forests, marshes and savannas. An example is the flock of flamingos shot with an 800 mm lens in the salt flats of the Bahamian island of Great Inagua.

• Time, Access, and Weather

- A photographer was asked to fly to England and send back film in five days for a photo essay about the Cotswolds. This assignment presented 3 of the 5 non-technical problems: **Time**, **No Special Access**, and **Weather**.
- The photographer took a redeye flight to England and drove straight to his hotel. He couldn't depend on the weather for landscape shots, so he decided to focus on people. It was early winter when people hunted foxes and birds. So, he called hunting clubs and got invited to ride along on a fox hunt: the **Access** hurdle was removed. It was a drizzly day but he got an atmospheric shot of the hunting brigade by eliminating the sky, solving the **Weather** problem. He continually talked to people for tips on other events, leading him to shoots of bird hunting, a brew master, a dining hall, and a pub. He also hired a helicopter and took an aerial shot of Oxford. His mission was completed **On Time** through a lot of planning, diligence, conversation, and hard work.

• Language/Logistics

- Language barriers pose special problems in foreign countries. Hiring professional tour guides may help, but these guides may not be adept at talking their way in and out of various situations. Professional photographers call people with these special skills "fixers." Professional photographers have a stable of fixers around the world; if they are your friend, they may share with you the contact information of their favorite fixer. **Photo tours can serve in lieu of fixers.** Some striking pictures of fishermen in Myanmar wouldn't have been possible without a fixer.

• Exercise

- Try to overcome bad weather by making a compelling landscape picture.
- What are some non-photo obstacles that stand in your way while on the road? Try to plan your sightseeing to allow both photography and relaxation.