

**NEW**

TEACH YOURSELF

# URBAN

# PHOTOGRAPHY

CAPTURE STUNNING  
CITYSCAPES AND  
MUCH MORE

**162**

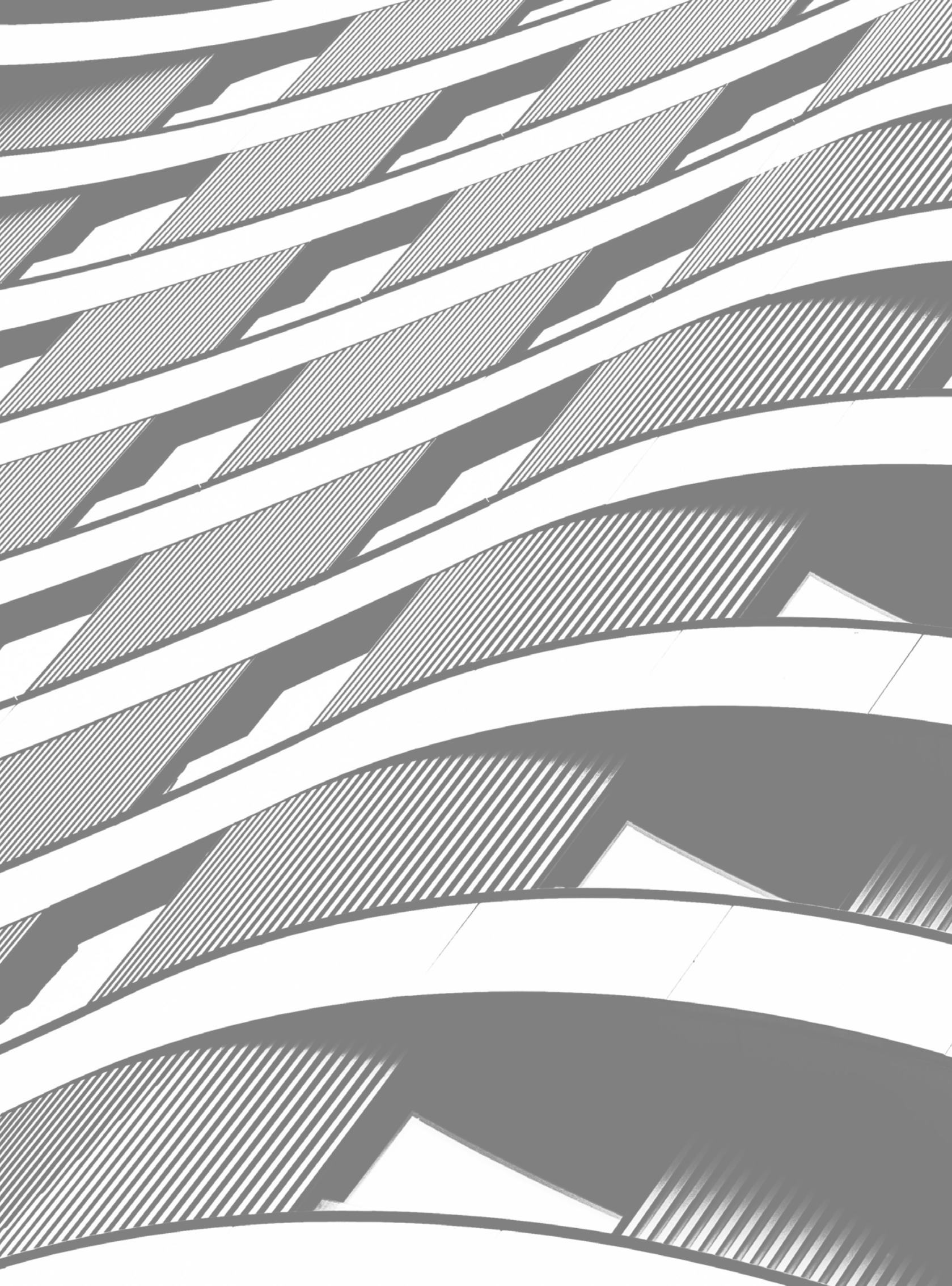
*pages of  
expert  
advice*

**Digital**  
Edition

FUTURE

SECOND  
EDITION

INSPIRATIONAL IMAGES | LOCATION GUIDES | EXPERT SHOOTING TUTORIALS



*Welcome to*

*TEACH YOURSELF*

# URBAN PHOTOGRAPHY

When it comes to taking pictures, few environments can be more creatively enticing than a new city. From the hustle and bustle of people going about their daily commutes, to the juxtaposition of buildings and architecture both old and new, visual delights are easy to come by. But whether you are new to photographing urban life or a keen enthusiast, it's not always easy to turn the energy of a city into an engaging image. Fortunately, we'll be sharing a wealth of advice for improving your shots in towns and cities, whether you've a penchant for photographing portraits or postcard scenes. To get started, our in-depth guides will tackle the essential camera techniques you need – take a masterclass in street photography, get to grips with perspective, capture dynamic results at night and so much more. We'll also be sharing the best urban shooting locations around the world, and asking seasoned professionals to give you their top tips. To round things off, the projects section will help you to turn techniques into real-life results, with tutorials to inspire and guide you throughout. Welcome to the exciting world of urban photography. Grab your camera, and let's get going!

# CONTENTS



© Alister Campbell

© Dave Fieldhouse

## TECHNIQUES

- 006 Urban landscapes**  
Explore how to capture scenic landscapes away from the countryside
- 018 Pro guide to cityscapes**  
Shooting and editing advice from the urban masters
- 030 Citybreak photography**  
Learn to capture images with intrigue and drama
- 042 10 steps for the street**  
Expert photographer Craig Reilly on shooting subtly
- 054 Work in towns and cities**  
Travel pro Jordan Banks shares tried and tested tips
- 066 Essential kit guide**  
Choose the best cameras, lenses and accessories



© Getty Images

# INSPIRATION

- 074 Best urban locations**  
Discover a selection of the top 20 shooting spots around the world
- 080 Pro analysis**  
We breakdown a futuristic composite to see why it works
- 082 Story behind the still**  
How one photographer stitched a stunning shot of New York city
- 084 Shoot like a pro**  
Go on a walking tour with landscape pro Verity Milligan
- 092 Shoot stock in London**  
Catch the winter light and city sights with pro Kav Dadfar
- 100 Brilliant buildings**  
Learn how to take better architectural photos
- 112 Night photography guide**  
Discover the joys of after-dark shooting in an urban environment

© Burnham Artidge



© Andy Hunt

# PROJECTS

- 124 Natural HDR photography**  
Learn how to capture and retouch HDR shots in Lightroom and Aurora HDR software
- 130 Shoot a vertorama**  
Avoid distorting tall buildings by stitching images on a vertical axis
- 136 Edgy flash fashion portraits**  
Create a fashion look with natural light and one off-camera speedlight
- 142 Blue hour cityscapes**  
Turn your dramatic twilight scenes into monochrome magic
- 148 Distraction-free city scenes**  
Remove tourists and moving vehicles from your cityscape images with these simple steps
- 150 Handheld nightscapes**  
Move freely through the city to capture intimate scenes
- 152 Composite street shots**  
Capture the hustle and bustle of city life with multiple exposures
- 156 Adventurous colour combos**  
Look for harmonious or contrasting colours in your urban photographs
- 157 Light trails**  
Use long exposures to capture traffic trails as leading lines
- 158 Shoot through windows**  
Why a nifty fifty is the perfect optic to photograph a high-rise view
- 160 Frame within a frame**  
Get in the right frame of mind to up your compositional game



© Kav Dadfar

**Sleeping giant**

Urban landscapes are full of opportunities for photographers, offering angles, lights, colours, contrast and reflections to get creative with

All feature images  
© Dave Fieldhouse

How to shoot

# urban

# landscapes

Dave Fieldhouse explores how to capture scenic landscapes away from the countryside



h



**HEADROOM**  
Leave a bit of a space around the frame, especially above the tallest building.

**LINE IT UP**  
Make sure that the horizon is straight, and the verticals are just that.

**GET SHARP**  
Using an aperture of f/8 ensures sharpness front to back.

# Shoot the city

## Struggling to find time for photography? Your fix may be closer than you think

Thanks to a combination of advanced building materials and imaginative architects, the modern built-up environment is every bit as beautiful as the hills, valleys and woodland we associate with a traditional landscape.

The basics for photographing them both are also very similar. The natural light is the same and should be treated so. The rules of composition work just as well here as they do in any given beauty spot or national park, and

even better, we don't need to splash out on any additional equipment.

Having worked in an industry associated with construction for over 25 years, it's hardly surprising that I was drawn to shooting in the city. With over 80 per cent of the UK population living in or near a town or city, it's also unsurprising that its popularity is rising.

The urban landscape on our doorstep is not only more accessible to most of us, but it also

presents opportunities that are not normally available. Suddenly we're not governed by the constraints that available ambient light dictates. We no longer need to pack up after the sunsets, and bad weather shouldn't stop play. Scenes personal to us that we pass on our daily commute, or more popular locations sourced from a travel guide, can all be used as subjects. It's not unusual for me to spend an hour or two wandering the streets virtually at

**MISSED A SPOT**  
 Check the sky carefully for dust/sensor spots. These annoying little things stand out more on a plain sky yet can be easily removed.



## Do I need permission?

The answer to this depends on the ground on which you stand: is it public or private property? If it's private then you should obtain permission, or you could be confronted by security who are within their rights to ask you to stop. Permission to shoot from a public right of way is not needed. The difference between private and public isn't always clear, so if in doubt, ask.



**The bus to Waterloo**  
 With over 146,000 kilometres of public footpath in England alone, we shouldn't run out of permission-free urban scenes any time soon.



**Birmingham Central Library**  
 Very few buildings have specific copyright conditions, but if you're in doubt check prior to using any of the images for commercial gain.



**Storm light**  
 You don't need permission to shoot from a public right of way, but try not to obstruct other pedestrians while you're getting set up and taking your shots.

home, using Google Street View for instance, in order to try and find something new in an unfamiliar place.

While our creative limits are almost always self-imposed, I am personally more inclined to experiment when in the city. By my own admission my country scenes are conventional in style and execution, but when surrounded by the bright neon lights and reflective surfaces of the city, something triggers my imagination and the creative juices begin to flow. Whether it be a simple light trail or a vivid abstract reflection in a puddle, everything's fair game downtown.

I ended up being drawn to shooting in the city

# What's in the bag?

Kit selection is even more important on the streets

The more you know about what you are going to shoot and in what style, the better. Preparation is paramount to any successful shoot in the city. While I'm not questioning your ability to carry a 30-kilogram rucksack with two DSLR bodies, six lenses and all the peripherals, the city is a busy place and you are going to get in a lot of people's way.

I generally decide beforehand if I'm going to be shooting the wider view or a more intimate scene. If you intend to shoot a building, landmark or street in its entirety, a wide-angle lens would be best. However, if you have set yourself the challenge to look for intimate intricacies or a specific architectural feature, then a telephoto lens would be a better choice. For a general day on the streets I tend to cover the focal ranges from 10-55mm (16-70mm on a full-frame camera), which gives me plenty of scope. Anything I see that requires a longer focal length will be noted down for a future trip.

It's rare that I take filters with me unless I'm planning to shoot long exposures in daytime. Graduated filters are a waste of time in most instances, so if I am struggling with the dynamic range of a scene I choose instead to bracket a series of exposures and blend frames together later when processing.

Probably the biggest decision before setting out is whether to tripod or not. For a night shoot it's almost an essential piece of kit, whereas if I'm planning to be home before sunset, I would leave it behind. A small, light travel tripod is great for most occasions, but you may find it frustratingly short in some instances where walls or railings spoil the view.

The usual accessories will come in handy, the same as when you're shooting other genres, so don't forget the lens cloth, jet blower, and of course, plenty of spare batteries.

*Above left*

## **Emirates Air Line**

A long exposure smooths the water and creates eye-catching light trails from the gondolas above

*Right*

## **Cheesegrater**

Shapes and vertical lines converge to illustrate perspective. With triangles like this, the only way is up

*Left*

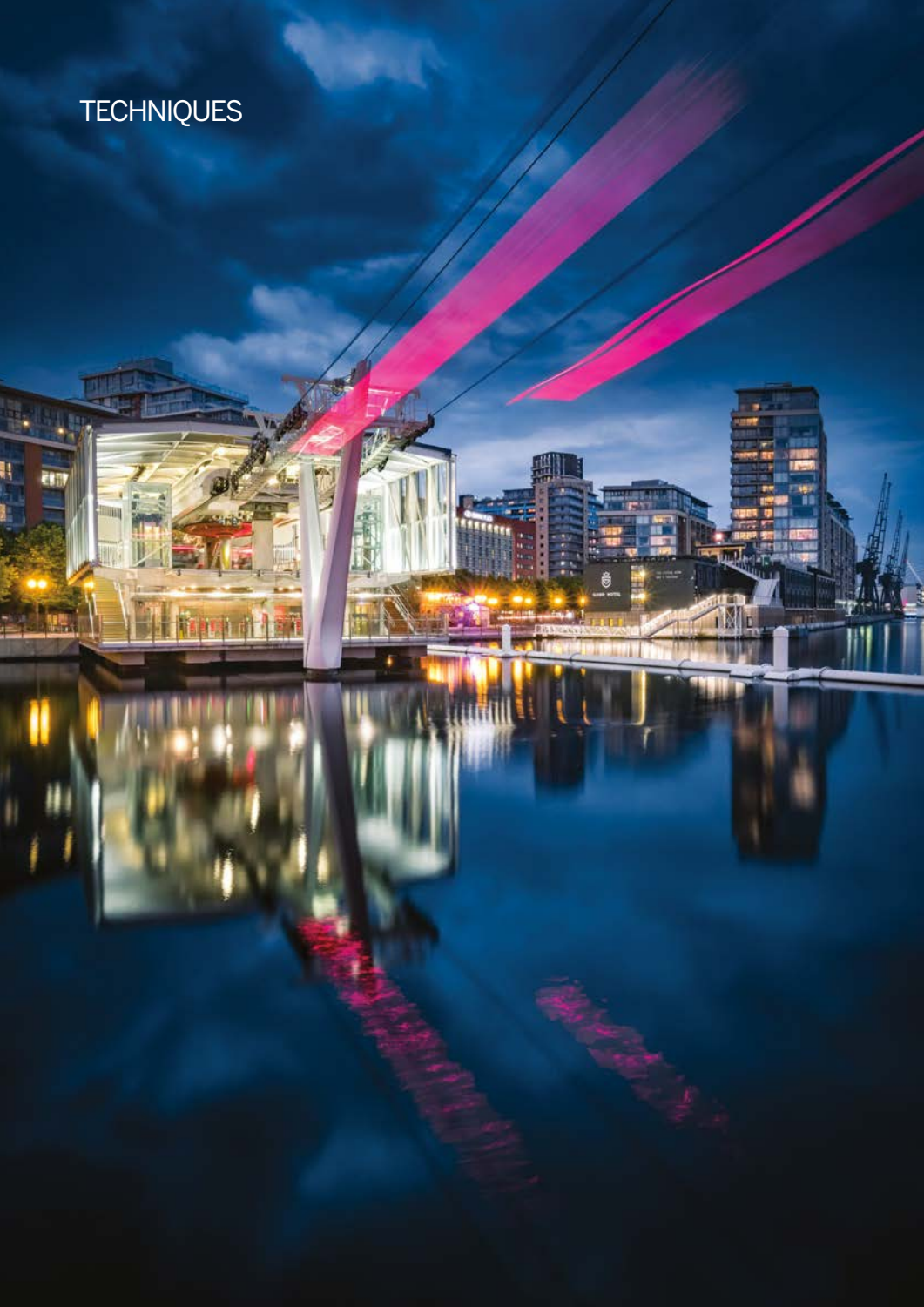
## **Changing skyline**

Here I took advantage of the perfect reflections while the fountains of the water feature took a rest

*Far left*

## **From Tate Modern**

Take care when framing your rooftop compositions. Keep an eye on the corners, and look out for quirky details



## What to wear

My city shoots tend to last longer as the weather doesn't have such a negative impact, and I have even been known to shoot right through from dusk till dawn. It's therefore not surprising that your feet take a battering. It's important to protect them, because if you are uncomfortable you will soon lose interest in taking photos.

### Travel smart

A huge rucksack full of gear is going to be a nuisance, so pack a kit bag and just take the essentials. I use a Lowepro Flipside that cannot be opened unless I take it off.



### Happy feet

You will often cover a lot of ground in the city, so wear whatever is most comfortable. Lightweight walking shoes are best, but trainers will also work well too.



### Layer up

Rather than wearing one bulky coat, layer up. I prefer a micro-fleece and showerproof jacket. Both can be rolled up and stored when not needed.



# Don't forget the basics

Utilise the basics – but don't be afraid to experiment

It is important not to forget the basics just because you have moved away from a rural landscape to an urban setting. The camera is fundamentally a tool for capturing light, and a basic understanding of the functions of aperture, shutter speed and ISO enables the photographer

to have total control of the image they are about to capture.

If the subject you are shooting is a wide city skyline in daylight and you want pin-sharp detail throughout, I would suggest that you shoot with a fast shutter speed, a medium aperture

(let's say something around  $f/8$ ) and as low an ISO as possible.

If you were shooting in lower light, it's impossible for the shutter speed to stay high without either opening the aperture – and reducing depth of field – or making a compromise on noise, increasing ISO. But it doesn't have to be that way. Fortunately, buildings don't move, only the things around them do, and we can use the motion of the surroundings to great effect if we desire.

## We can use the motion of the surroundings to great effect if we desire

### STAY STILL

When shooting a long exposure use a tripod to ensure the camera doesn't move.

### FILTER IT OUT

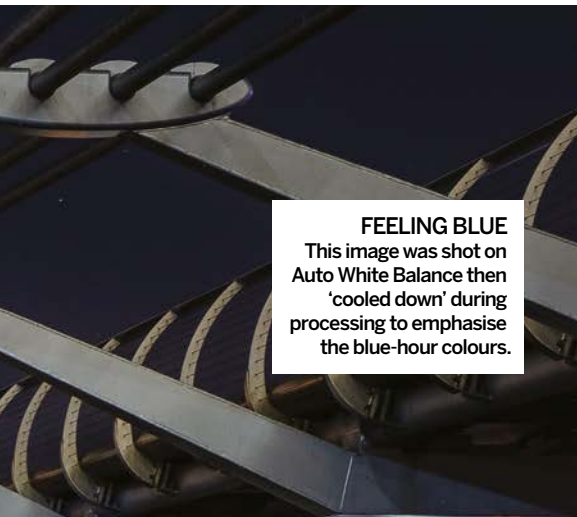
A special light pollution filter can be used to reduce the glare from streetlights, especially old sodium bulbs.



Rather than reducing ISO or depth of field, why not try shooting with a slower shutter speed on a tripod? This can add an extra dynamic by blurring the pedestrian traffic or creating light trails as vehicles rush past.

These examples assume that you want a sharp image from front to back, with low noise. In contrast, some photographers embrace noise and the grainy, gritty look it provides. Others use a wide-open aperture to draw the eye to a particular detail, distorting and blurring around the edge of the frame, so match settings to the shot you want to create.

As with any type of photography, the aim is to produce an image that's correctly exposed. Keep an eye on the camera's histogram and protect the highlights. If the histogram is clipped, reduce the shutter speed.



**FEELING BLUE**  
This image was shot on Auto White Balance then 'cooled down' during processing to emphasise the blue-hour colours.



**EYES FORWARD**  
A vignette has been used to draw the eye towards the centre of the frame.

## Use city lines for perspective

Straight, parallel, opposing and converging lines – they're all around, and when they're used properly they can help us with our compositions. It's often said that "There are no straight lines in nature," and this is largely true with traditional landscape photography. However, this is very different in the urban environment, and with just a little extra thought we can use perspective to frame a shot or lead the eye of the viewer to our desired destination.



**Old between new**  
Narrow streets and alleyways can be used to frame focal points. This works especially well on bright days.



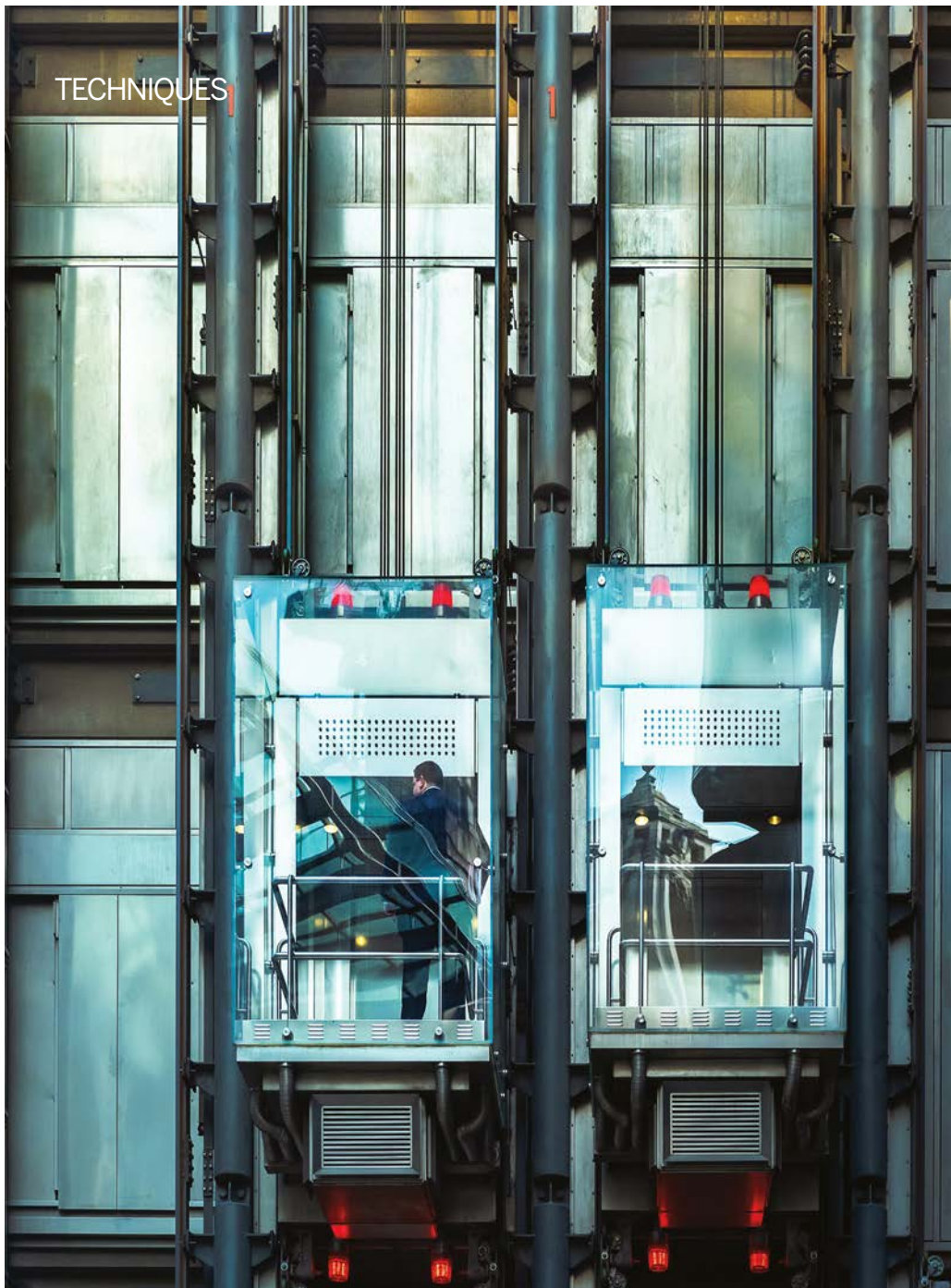
**A glimpse of the Shard**  
Despite its small size in the shot, there's no doubting the star of the show in this busy city scene.



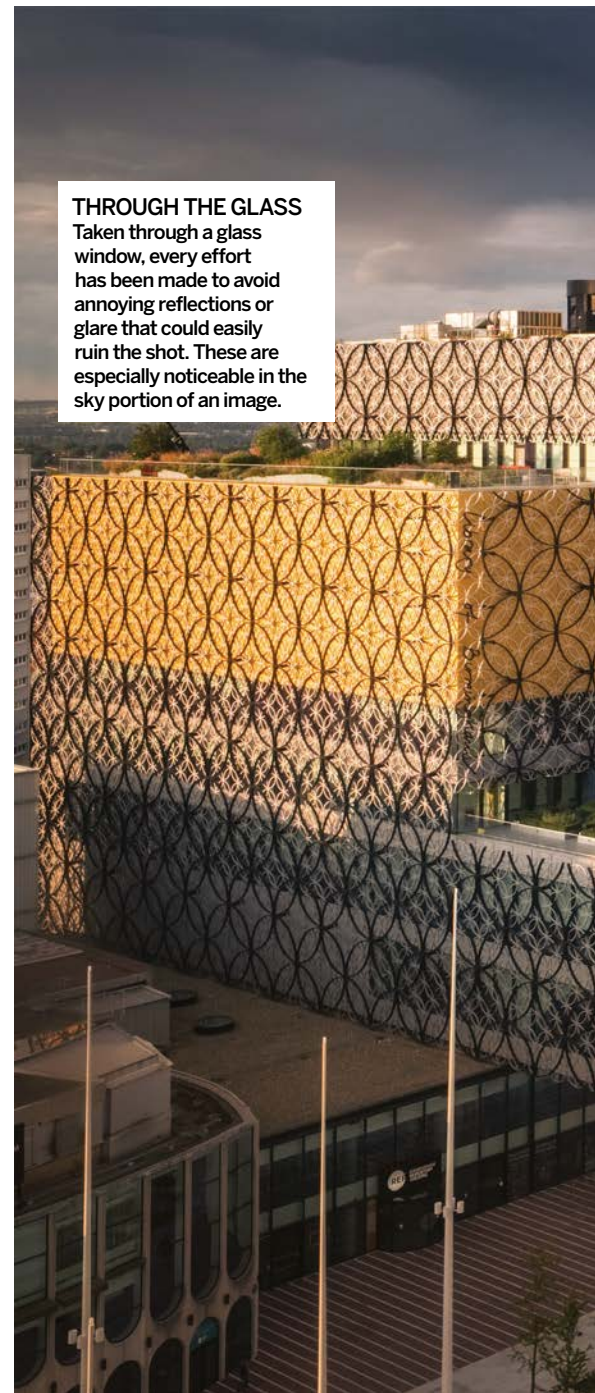
**Gas Street Basin**  
Use opposing diagonal lines to draw the viewer's eye into the image from four axes of the frame.



**Looking up**  
The straight, vertical lines on these tall buildings draw the viewer's eyes ever upward towards the sky.



**THROUGH THE GLASS**  
Taken through a glass window, every effort has been made to avoid annoying reflections or glare that could easily ruin the shot. These are especially noticeable in the sky portion of an image.



# The high life

An elevated viewpoint can help to reach that special shot

To gather a varied portfolio of landscape images, it's essential to shoot at different times of day, seasons, weathers and, critically, heights. The same can be said for cityscapes.

It may take a little more planning than usual, but to gain that different perspective the mountaintops are simply replaced by rooftops – which could be a bar or viewing platform. Although they're privately owned, some permit photography to a certain extent. You can usually find an attraction's photography permission policy online prior to visiting. Most will say 'no tripods', but others are more tolerant. One or two buildings I've visited are happy for you to shoot to your heart's content.

Shooting through glass is also an option where a rooftop vantage point might not

be available. You will need to be mindful of reflections and glare, but with care you can still get that crystal-clear shot. I use a circular polariser filter, then fabricate an extra-wide lens hood by wrapping a plain dark hoodie around the lens, shooting as close to the window as possible. It's tricky and almost impossible if shooting handheld, but it can be done – just have patience.

Certain rules of composition become even more important when shooting a busy city scene, especially from a height, where it is

easy to get carried away, cramming too much into the frame. While there is technically nothing wrong with this, it can create a confusing image, whereas focussing the attention on a certain building or landmark and placing this in a carefully considered area of the image can work much better.

Take your time to look around and see what elements or features catch your eye before getting the camera out, then work on a composition with that eye-catching feature as the anchor for the shot.

## Rules of composition become even more important when shooting a busy city scene

**A BROODING SKY**  
Great light, about half an hour before sunset, works well against the dark clouds, heavy with rain.

**FREEZE**  
A fast shutter speed has been used to freeze the movement of the people.



*Above left*  
**Elevate your shots**  
Conditions not working for you? Get up close to the subject, then it really doesn't matter what the sky is doing

*Far left*  
**Across the rooftops**  
Contrasting architectural styles make an interesting image, as modern glass and steel buildings tower above their stone neighbours

*Left*  
**Busy London**  
Using parallel layers that differ in brightness helps to establish order out of the chaotic building heights



**INTO THE LIGHT**

A chained-up bike initially caught my eye, and then I noticed the wonderful light leading me into the frame.

**SHAPING UP**

The sweeping bend is a satisfying shape that leads the eye through the image.

**STANDING OUT**

The bright red bus stands out like a beacon against the mostly neutral colours of the image.

**ALL TIED UP**

The corners of an image can make or break the shot. Finding something interesting to use as an anchor in these areas is always a good idea.

# Use the elements

The conditions, light and time of day can be used to great effect

One of the most commonly asked questions when announcing a workshop in the city is, "What happens if it rains?" Well, so long as we're not talking about precipitation on a biblical scale, all the better I say. Obviously, we need to take care of the equipment we are using, but wet surfaces, puddles and even something as simple as a colourful umbrella on a grey day can be used to great effect in the city.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, the same can be said for brighter days, where an abundance of contrast provides sumptuous shadows that can be used to lead a viewer's

eye into the frame. These conditions are particularly useful when shooting detailed architectural shots, where the variety of tones helps to reveal textures and shapes. Softer, longer shadows are really useful and associated with the months when the sun is lower in the sky or during the hours before sunset or after sunrise.

Sunrises and sunsets can be just as spectacular in the city as in a more natural landscape setting. If this is our aim, we should plan the shoot in exactly the same way – keeping an eye on the weather, looking for sunny intervals with just the right amount

of cloud. Knowing the time and the position of the setting sun is critical information that's necessary for a successful shoot. I use various apps on my phone to help with these. One called The Photographer's Ephemeris is particularly useful and provides vital information before I even get to the city.

Many of my favourite urban shots were taken after the sun had set, in the period of time known as 'the blue hour' when the sun is at a significant depth below the horizon and residual, indirect light takes on a mostly blue shade. This light works incredibly well with the electrical lights on and inside of buildings.

## My editing workflow

Careful, considered adjustments can make all the difference when processing the shot

Although every effort is made to get the image right in camera, it is almost inevitable that some processing adjustments will be necessary. As with traditional landscape images, I like to use a 'less is more' approach, concentrating on fixing errors that were unavoidable in the field (or in this case, city).



The sun sets on London Bridge and the Shard. A break in the clouds creates a dusky pink hue across parts of the sky, which works well with the materials on the buildings and bridge.



**1 Shadows and highlights** Protecting the highlights has resulted in an underexposed look that can be corrected in the basic Lightroom panel. I've used the tone curve to make final contrast adjustments (the Contrast slider has been left alone).



**2 Fix the colours** Here I have used the Luminance and Saturation sliders to fix some issues with the sky. Now the clouds stand out more, adding drama, and the blue sky has been slightly desaturated for a more natural look.



**3 Add a grad** Graduated adjustment filters have been used at the top and bottom of the frame. I find that reducing the brightness of these areas helps to draw the attention to the central area of the image.



**4 Get into shape** I chose to shoot at a wide angle to fit everything in, but this resulted in streetlights and buildings around the periphery sloping inwards. This is easily corrected using the Transform panel.



**5 Photoshop** For the last tweaks, I transferred to Photoshop and added a Curves Adjustment layer, which gave the final image some extra punch.



# PRO GUIDE TO CITYSCAPES

Shoot incredible images of urban landscapes with our essential advice from the masters

## Urban spirit

Pro cityscapes go beyond just capturing the physical buildings of a location; they explore the interaction of human life and the natural environment through beautiful light and colour

© Gettyimages



Cities represent some of the most energetic, exciting, dynamic and varied environments for photography. When captured well, cityscapes have a unique ability to hold our attention and spark an insatiable wanderlust. Whether it is brightly coloured buildings, stunning architectural feats, mesmerising neon signage, or the motion of traffic and the people who inhabit the city, urban images possess so much potential subject matter that it can be difficult to know where to begin.

It is this characteristic that actually forms the greatest challenge for the cityscape photographer. It is the job of image-makers to find the perfect subject in a chaotic world, reducing a scene down to its fundamental elements, and constructing a

narrative from those that remain. In a busy location it can be somewhat overwhelming, with hundreds of potential frames surrounding you in continuous flux. For beginners this is where most of the mistakes are made, and the resulting images feature too much information, with no real substance and focal point.

In order to capture your best shots you have to be able to simultaneously identify the dominant colour balance, exposure challenges and ideal framing approach. We spoke to two of the leading photographers in the industry to put together a guide to creative thinking in the cityscape arena. Ultra-popular online photographic educator Serge Ramelli and cityscape expert Anton Alymov team up to take you on a shoot and provide insider pro advice.

## Serge Ramelli



Serge Ramelli is a pro photographer and photographic educator with decades of experience in the industry. His YouTube channel has over 609,000 subscribers, and his workshops and online courses attract thousands of photographers.

 @photoserge Website: [www.photoserge.com](http://www.photoserge.com)

## Anton Alymov



Anton Alymov is an internationally published, award-winning cityscape photographer with a background in filmmaking. His shooting and processing style has garnered him a loyal following online, and he regularly writes tutorials on photographic techniques.

 @alymov\_art Website: [www.antonalymov.com](http://www.antonalymov.com)

# Select a location

Choose the best angle by planning the images you want to shoot before you go on location

Professional-level cityscape photography is about more than simply choosing a city in which to take pictures; it requires extensive planning and research to find the best possible image opportunities. In such a busy environment there are a few potential challenges, both practical and creative, that might disrupt the flow of your shoot. Start by spending time deciding which kind of images you want to take, and the style you would like to apply, before heading out on your shoot. This will allow you to mentally prepare your compositions and the gear required.

Understanding your intent and adhering to an ordered photographic process from start to finish is key to minimising the time spent setting up your shots when you arrive.

Due to the complex topography and environmental features of a city, giving consideration to the time you choose to shoot your images becomes even more important. Tall buildings can block out the sun a lot earlier than a flat landscape, so correctly positioning your camera at the optimal

© Serge Ramelli

time will help you to achieve the best shots. Aligning your camera at sunset, so that the light shines down a city street, for example, or through the railings of a bridge, can result in a highly attractive glow. This will add vibrancy and contrast to your images, which would otherwise be missing if the sun was completely hidden by a tall building.

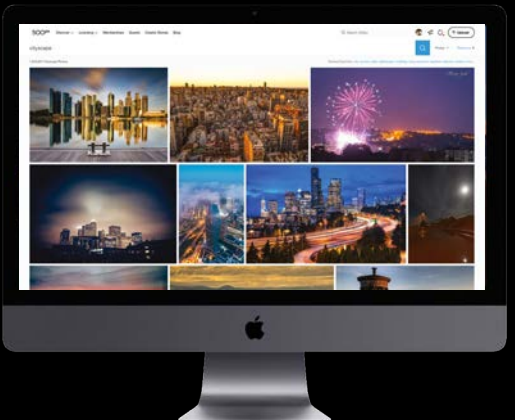
## Mentally prepare your compositions and the gear required

Practically speaking, it is also a good idea to check for human factors that may interrupt your shoot. Street or beauty spot closures at certain times of day have the potential to scupper plans to capture a view, so finding alternatives

ahead of time will give you a greater chance of coming away with successful compositions. Also, make yourself aware of surrounding land use. If you intend to shoot a landmark in the late afternoon, for example, a school immediately adjacent to your chosen position may become problematic if it produces an exodus of children at the end of the school day. The knowledge that this will happen may encourage you to rethink your approach and set up in an alternative spot.

## Use online resources

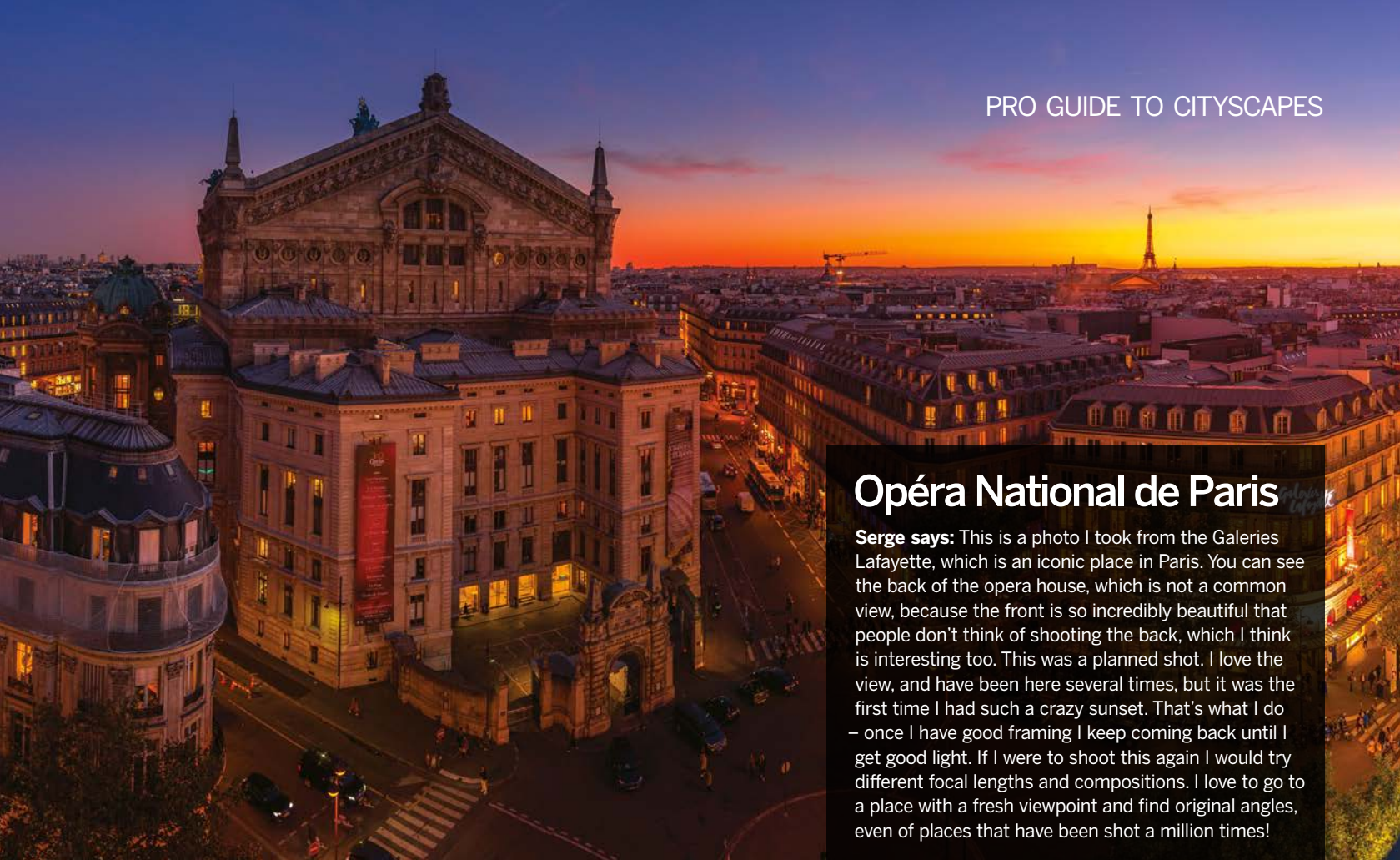
To ensure that you are prepared for a shoot in an unfamiliar city you can use online tools to search for locations, view the environment before you arrive, and select the best positions for desired lighting. 500px and Instagram both act as huge databases of reference images, while Google Street View allows interactive exploration of a neighbourhood. This reduces setup time when you arrive on location, as preselecting potential shots streamlines your workflow.



## Notre Dame at sunset

**Serge says:** I love this angle of Notre Dame, as it is the easiest spot to get the perfect photo. The Seine river is a great leading line. The thing that made this photo stand out is the time of day – it was sunset, so it produced great lighting and the long exposure. It was a spontaneous shot. I was driving around and then I saw this incredible sunset – I put an ND filter on and took the shot. Every time I see an incredible sunset my thought process is where I can find an interesting subject and start composing my photo once I find it.





## Opéra National de Paris

**Serge says:** This is a photo I took from the Galeries Lafayette, which is an iconic place in Paris. You can see the back of the opera house, which is not a common view, because the front is so incredibly beautiful that people don't think of shooting the back, which I think is interesting too. This was a planned shot. I love the view, and have been here several times, but it was the first time I had such a crazy sunset. That's what I do – once I have good framing I keep coming back until I get good light. If I were to shoot this again I would try different focal lengths and compositions. I love to go to a place with a fresh viewpoint and find original angles, even of places that have been shot a million times!

x2 © Serge Ramelli



### LIGHT DIRECTION

Research how light will strike city features at different times of the day to select the ideal angle.

### ACCESSIBILITY

Be certain you can safely and quickly access the best shooting position before your photoshoot.

### PLACE TO STAND

Check ahead of time how much space you will have to work to minimise on-shoot stress.

# Refine composition

The right framing can make your images of landmarks and city life instantly more dynamic

As city environments are inherently busy, it can be tricky to compose images well. Firstly, it is a challenge to find subjects within the cacophony of activity on a city street and intelligently apply the photographic techniques that you have practised over the years. Secondly, once you've found a subject, you'll need to arrange a picture that is clean and unobstructed by extraneous detail.

Cranes, scaffolding, tarpaulins, traffic cones and road signs are all examples of objects that are common to urban scenes but only serve as distracting elements in a cityscape shot. Try to avoid them if you can, as they ruin the

dramatic theme of an image, mostly because viewers recognise these as temporary items that are not fixed aspects of the city scene, unlike a monument or building.

Always compose cityscapes so that they only include objects that complement fixed elements. Treat your scene as a film set and capture it in a way that conveys a story but presents it so that anybody might find it themselves. It's always better to attempt to capture something unique and surprising, but cut out non-critical, changeable features. Here, our two pros explain the rationale behind some of their composition choices.



## Choosing the right lens

### 24-70MM

While interiors benefit from use of an ultra-wide optic, exterior shots and street scenes can suffer from unsightly distortion and elements becoming too small in the frame. Instead, opt for a lens starting at around 24mm full-frame equivalent (16mm for APS-C, 12mm for Micro Four Thirds).



### 70-200MM

For skyline images it is helpful to compress perspective with a short to medium telephoto lens. 200mm is a great all-rounder for both full-frame cameras and those with a smaller sensor. Look for a model around 50-150mm and the equivalent range on APS-C.



### WIDE TILT/SHIFT

For external shots of buildings, a tilt/shift lens of 17-24mm is a great choice. This enables wide images to be created while correcting converging verticals when working at closer distances to the subject. Consider hiring a lens if you don't own one yourself.



### ROOM TO BREATHE

Provide some negative space to allow your subject building to stand out from its surroundings.

### LEVELS

Arrange your composition to emphasise the varying heights of objects, adding structure and depth.

### STATIC AND MOVING

Include contrasting elements – in this case the stationary buildings and traffic in motion.

### DIRECTION

Use leading lines to guide the viewer into the shot and give the scene a sense of direction.





## The Shard view

**Anton says:** This is the view from one of the best observation decks of London at The Shard. My main goal for this photo was to find a balance between Tower Bridge and Canary Wharf's skyscrapers. I was able to find it by letting The Thames "flow" from the lower left side of the frame towards the bridge and distant skyscrapers. This way, I got the balance and a perfect leading line. I dreamed of a dramatic yet colourful image with deep blue tones in the clouds that would not be too pale. I wanted to communicate the idea of distant thunder to get the desired cosy feel, which is why I shot it during 'blue hour'. To overcome window reflections I put the camera on the floor, laid down completely and wrapped the lens with a spare t-shirt.

x2 © Anton Alymov



## Montmartre view Paris

**Serge says:** I came 16 times to get this shot, because it has the perfect leading lines with the stairs, the perfect frame with the wall and the bushes, with a great house as the middleground, and these are the only stairs that go towards the west for the sunset. The first time it was spontaneous, but there were too many people to get the shot, so I had to come back several times during the week when there was a good sunset. I even had to stop people walking into my shot. This photo was taken nine years ago, and at that time I used a 5D Mark II with a 24-70mm f/2.8 canon lens. This shot was taken at 24mm, 1.3sec f/8, ISO 100. I love this lens for landscape, you can't go wrong unless you really need to zoom in. If I had to shoot this again I would try to move around and find another angle, maybe a wider angle, or use another lens.

© Serge Ramelli

# Work with lighting

Capture sharp and impactful city scenes at any time of day

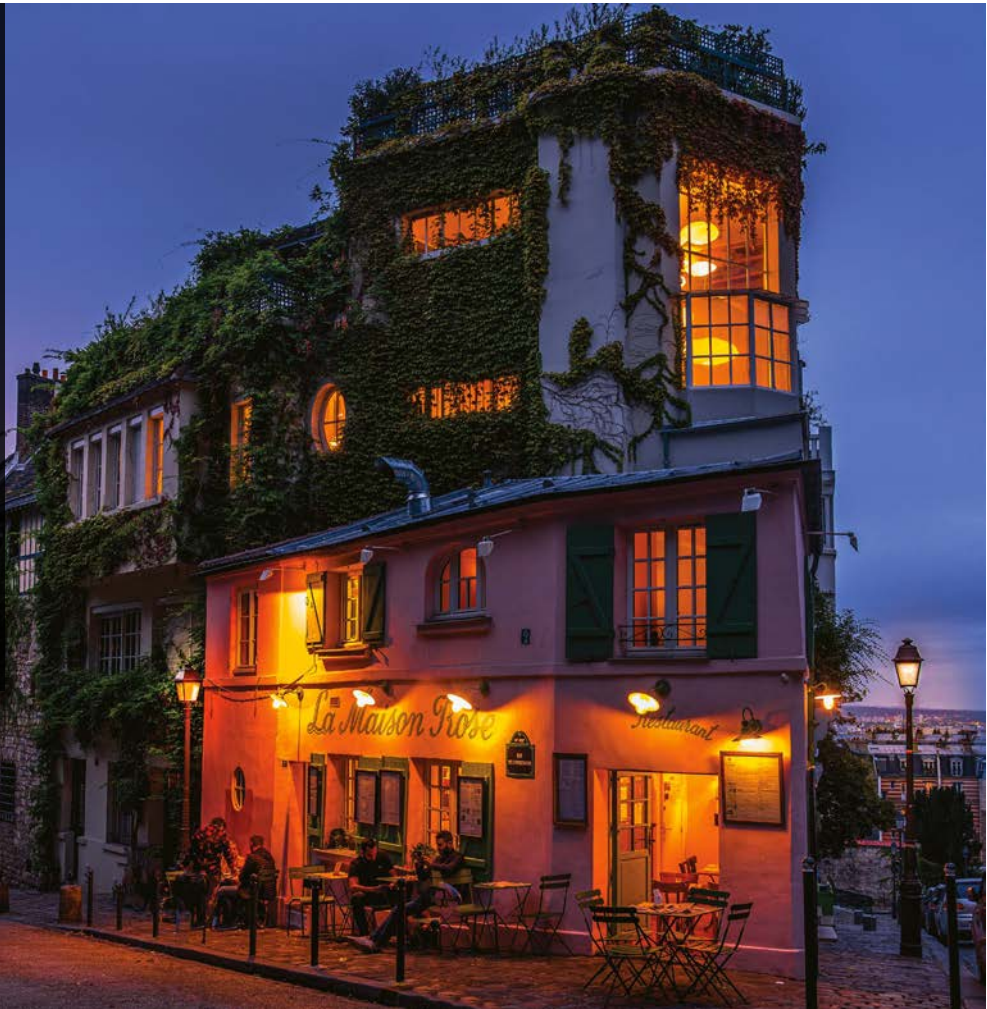
Timing is everything in outdoor-based photographic shoots. We are at the mercy of the elements for favourable lighting and

weather conditions, and it is extremely important to be able to adapt to any conditions that can change quickly and

unexpectedly. Just as with landscape imaging, sunrise and sunset are preferred times among cityscape photographers, as these provide

## La maison Rose, Paris

**Serge says:** I've shot this restaurant many times. It is a very famous place in Montmartre, and I've tried many compositions, although this is the one I like the most. You can see it on Instagram a lot – it is such a beautiful place that it's really hard not to take photos of! This photo was taken during blue hour. The trick is that as soon as the city lights turn on, you have 15 to 20 minutes to capture your subject with some details in the sky before you get too much contrast – that is the magic window. After that I don't even bother to take my camera out. The biggest challenge was to capture the right light at the right time.



© Serge Ramelli

© Anton Alymov

## Capture sharp cityscapes

Anton Alymov shares his steps for ensuring crisp final images



**1 Work on a tripod** It is important that you use a tripod for cityscape photography. If you are on a tripod it doesn't matter what shutter speed you use – you can go for several minutes of exposure if your scene requires it, and your photo will still be sharp.



**2 Set your ISO** Start by setting your camera's sensitivity. When it comes to ISO everything is simple – it should be the lowest possible. Depending on your camera model this could be 50, 100 or 200. Use Manual mode, and make sure you select RAW format.



**3 Choose your f-stop** If there are any objects in the composition that are closer to your lens than five metres, select f/14 – enough to have the entire scene in focus. If not, set f/7.1 – usually the sharpest f-stop and perfect for photographing large city vistas.

warmer, softer light with lower global contrast. This makes keeping tones within the dynamic range of your camera easier to achieve, and helps to prevent ugly bright spots and blocked-up shadow areas.

This does introduce some challenges particular to the genre, however. Lower

ambient light will require you to use longer exposures, which can be difficult when working on crowded street corners and busy pavements. If you are able to use a tripod, you need to work quickly to capture the images you want without creating an obstruction or a hazard to the many people around you.

Meanwhile, there will also likely be a contrast of colour temperatures to deal with, featuring cooler tones in the shadows and extreme warmth in the highlights. Always work in RAW, or consider taking a custom white balance reading, to give yourself the best chance to capture the best of both.



## The Grand Mosque sunset

**Anton says:** This spot in Abu Dhabi is famous among local photographers for its reflection. I decided to go for complete symmetry as it is what makes the photo look dynamic. I planned the entire trip to the UAE very carefully to cover most of the iconic locations in the shortest amount of time. Abu Dhabi welcomed me with a stunning sunset! I always seek cosiness, and this photograph communicates it in a very pleasant way. If I were to shoot this one again I would try it during blue hour. The lights in Abu Dhabi are very warm in terms of white balance, so that would create a perfect colour contrast. Then I would wait until there were stars in the sky and take a second shot to blend them in post-production.



**4 Experiment with shutter speed** Scroll the shutter control wheel until you get your desired exposure. Make sure you underexpose your images by approximately half a stop to hold detail in the highlights. The image can be brightened later in software.



**5 Use self-timer** Self-timer can be found on any camera and will prevent shake by creating a delay between squeezing the shutter button and the shot being taken. Most cameras offer two, five and ten seconds of delay, but usually two seconds is enough.



**6 Turn off lens stabilisation** Deactivate lens stabilisation. It is unnecessary when using a tripod but can make your photos blurry. Some lenses have a stabilisation switch – in this case you'll have to turn it off on your lens and in the menu of the camera.

# A complete post-processing workflow

Serge Ramelli guides us through his software steps to achieve punchy, dramatic cityscapes

While cityscapes contain endless potential subject matter, it might be easy to assume that the contrast, colour and layered compositions mean you don't need any advanced editing work at the computer. However, it is busy scenes that create the need for a thorough understanding of software techniques in order to balance colour

contrasts, manage extreme tonal differences between foreground and sky, and bring out texture and detail in the key areas. Here, Serge Ramelli gives us an insight into one of the most popular cityscape Lightroom and Photoshop processing techniques on Instagram and beyond.



## GET SERGE'S PRESETS

Apply Serge's processing presets to your images to achieve the look described here, and many others, instantly. Scan the QR code with your phone or visit [photoserge.com/newsletter-sign-up](https://photoserge.com/newsletter-sign-up) to hear more from Serge and download his Preset Toolkit.

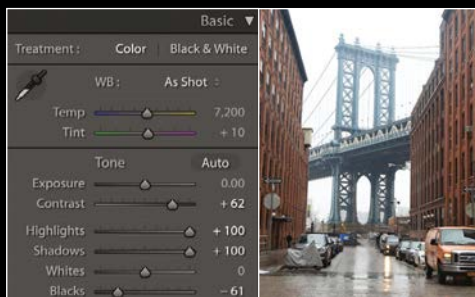


**Contemporary style**  
Not every city scene benefits from ultra-bold colour and glowing neon effects. This popular look is perfect for subtle, quieter scenes, especially in overcast conditions

All images © Serge Ramelli

## Capture sharp cityscapes

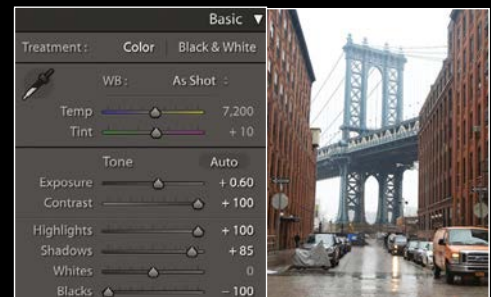
Serge Ramelli takes us step-by-step through his editing process



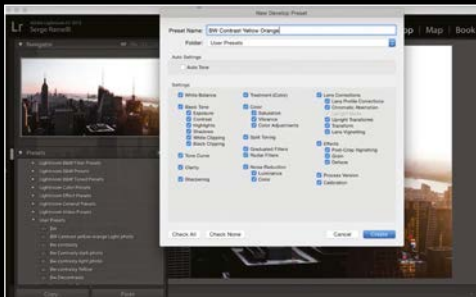
**1 Perform basic Lightroom retouch** Go into the Basic panel, open up the Shadows to +100, crash Blacks considerably to -61, and blow up Highlights to +100 as we want to leave no details in the sky. Then boost Contrast to +62.



**2 Choose selective saturation** Go to the HSL panel, and in Saturation desaturate all the colours you don't want. Reduce Green, Aqua and Blue to -76, Purple to -69, and Magenta to -67. For a warm undertone boost Yellow +31, Orange +32 and Red to +33.



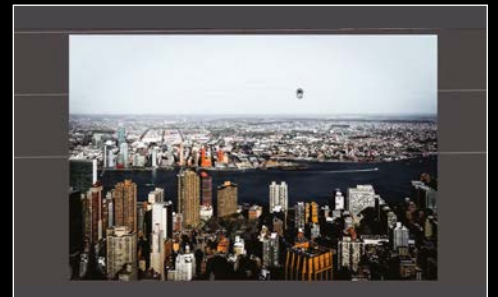
**3 Perform a second development** Enable Profile Correction, and click on Auto Upright. Reduce Blacks to -100, boost the Exposure to +0.60 and brighten the Shadows to +85. Next let's go crazy on the Contrast with +100, or until it looks right to you.



**4 Create a preset** When you like a look, I would advise you to save it into your Presets Library so that you can use it on another photo you like in a couple of clicks. I am going to name this one "BW contrast yellow orange".



**5 Use the preset** For this particular photograph it would look nicer if only the cab was in yellow. Since in the preset we boosted the yellow, lower the white balance and it will also lower the yellow. Set the Temp to 4299.



**6 Customise processing** A great trick if you want to remove any details in the sky is to draw a Gradient at the top of the image and boost the Exposure to 0.49. On this filter, we set the Dehaze to -68 and then set the Clarity levels to -52.

# Solve common urban problems

Identify the reasons many cityscapes fail to have impact, and learn how the pros overcome them

Many of the difficulties of cityscape photography are because of its variability. From one street to the next, or even from one frame to another, there can be significant shifts in exposure, colour balance and detail frequency. In older cities in particular, where there has been continuous development for centuries, you'll find buildings of many different styles next to each other on a street, from ancient textured stone structures to contemporary glass skyscrapers. This places a pressure on you to manage the extremes of reflectivity, colour temperature and physical height all at once. Meanwhile, you still have to find a successful composition, with an engaging narrative and clean alignment.

As our pros describe here, addressing these hurdles is based around choosing the right time to shoot, selecting your angle and exposure to compliment the subject, and shooting with processing in mind. Shooting

RAW enables you to blend exposures for a customised dynamic range, and to merge multiple white balance settings. Meanwhile, shooting in Burst mode will capture sequences of images that can be blended to remove distracting moving elements, such as other people.

A composition trick to remove people is to position the camera to exclude much of the foreground, creating the impression of shooting in an empty environment.

The second biggest difficulty is actually finding a unique angle. The world's most popular landmarks have been photographed countless times, so it can feel like an impossibility to devise new ways to study these iconic sights. However, sometimes this can be as simple as using a wider framing to place the subject in a larger context, or to explore other façades that may be studied less frequently.



© Serge Ramelli

## View of Paris by night

**Serge says:** I just love this view of Paris by night, with the city lights and some details in the sky. This view is priceless – the leading lines created by the streetlights that lead to the Eiffel Tower are beautiful. I travel a lot, and I can say this is one of my favourite views on the planet! This was shot with a Canon EOS 5D Mark II with a 24-70mm lens at 27mm. It was taken at 8secs f/7.1, ISO 100. Even in a low-light situation I try to be at ISO 100 because it is vital for me to get the best-quality file, and it helps tremendously during the editing stage. I try to zoom in on some part of the city to be able to get lots of different angles on some monuments, but from up there, there are not a lot of options besides a panorama, zooming in on different elements, or a cool overview on Paris.





## Madinat Jumeirah

**Anton says:** There is an ancient-looking area in Dubai called Madinat Jumeirah. Immediately I noticed this massive palace and started to have different ideas on how to shoot it. One of them was to position the construction to the left side of the frame to let the sunset shine and have some space. A big challenge I faced was the fact that tripods were not allowed in the entire Madinat Jumeirah area, so that is something you should keep in mind if you wish to travel to Dubai. I found a solution, however: as there were many restaurants around, I asked if I could borrow a chair. Then I just put the camera on it and used my Sony A7R11's built-in Smooth Reflection app. I might wish to try to photograph this area during the sunrise – the sun would be situated on the other side and might reveal some interesting textures that are not visible during sunset.

x2 © Anton Alymov



## Arc de Triomphe

**Anton says:** I selected this composition because I loved the perspective created by the road and moving cars. I walked around the Arc several times and found a little "safety island" in the middle of a busy road with a perfect view. What makes the photo feel dynamic is the fact that the Arc de Triomphe is facing the camera at a 45-degree angle. The biggest challenge was to find a balance between the moving cars that I wished to transform into light trails by using long exposure, and Arc de Triomphe itself. I had to watch out for the traffic lights to predict the exact moment when the cars would move, and it was getting dark very quickly. It would have been sunset if the day was clear and there were no clouds, but there was still a bit of warm colour coming through, which created fantastic contrast I did not expect to get that day. The outcome happened to be moody and full of atmosphere.



*Pictured*

**Familiar but different**

Wherever you are in the world your local city will have details that viewers elsewhere will find captivating. As a photographer it's your job to find and enhance these aspects

© TangMan Photography / Moment via Getty images



# CITY BREAK PHOTOGRAPHY

You don't have to travel great distances to capture urban images with drama and intrigue

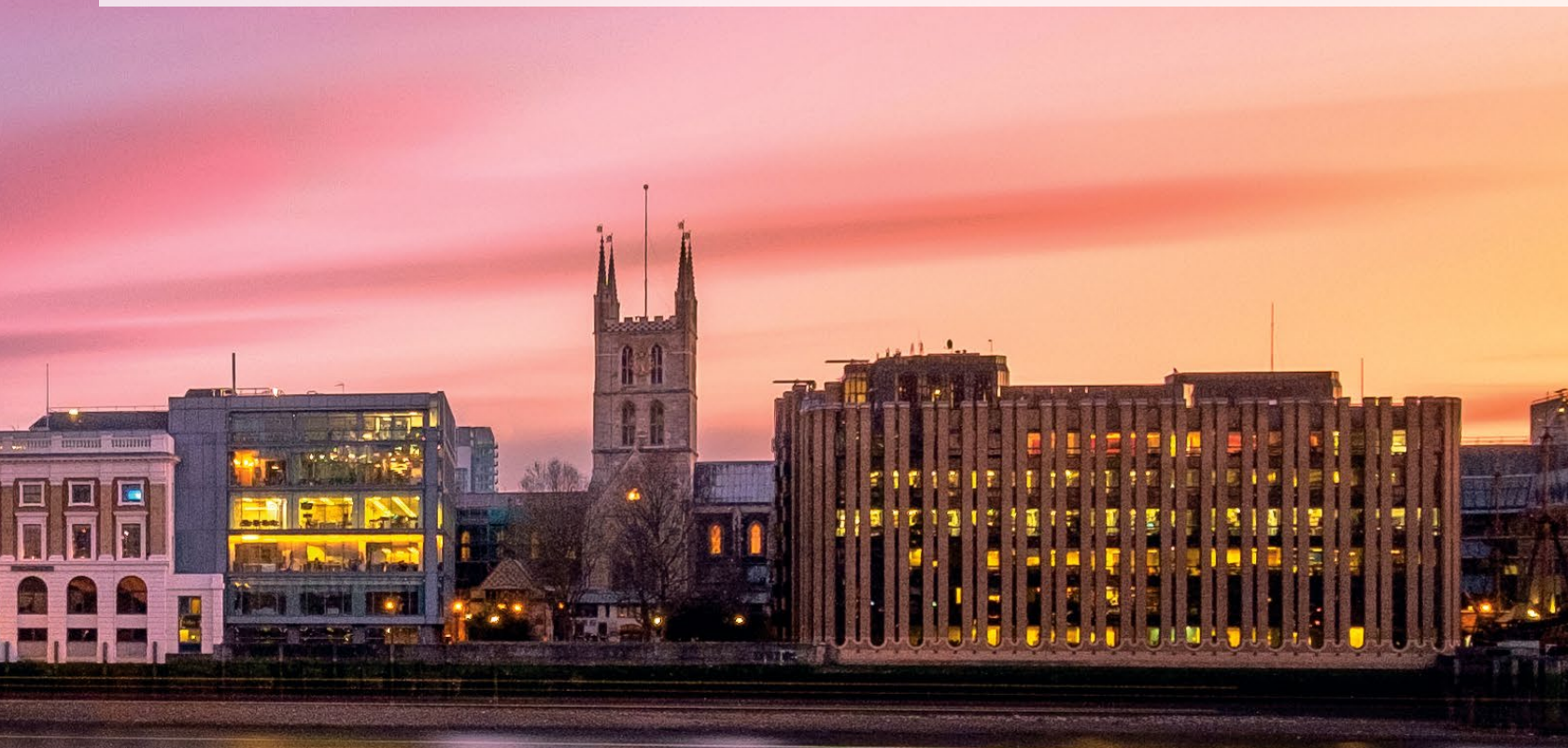
**C**ityscapes and travel photography go hand in hand. For photographers there is very little more enjoyable or creatively motivating than heading off to a new and exotic city, to explore the many and varied image opportunities. One of the biggest reasons for this enthusiasm is the unfamiliarity of a new setting. When faced with a scene or subject we have never seen or photographed before we are creatively challenged and forced to apply often rarely used skills and expertise. With any technical medium we can end up utilising the same workflow processes time and again, so it's always a welcome change when knowledge we have archived can be brought forward into use.

Unfortunately a little known virus called Covid-19 has caused some disruption to our lives of late, both personally and professionally, meaning international travel is not as easy

as it once was. For many photographers this has posed a significant artistic challenge. The motivation to head out and shoot places close to home is often not as strong and it can be surprisingly difficult to actually find and shoot creative images in cities we know well.

One contributing factor to this is a lack of inspiration, leading to us failing to be awake to photo opportunities unravelling before us. In many cases the architecture, culture and people in a familiar city are as photogenic as any overseas. The key to unlocking amazing images close to home is to view your region as a tourist might, seeking out details you might otherwise walk past without consideration.

Over the following pages we will explore the fundamentals of pro-level cityscape photography, with a focus on capturing surprising shots without having to board an aircraft.



# Plan your shoot

Be ready with an idea of which images you want to capture and where you need to be

When travelling to any unfamiliar location, planning is key to ensuring an efficient and productive shoot, which is also safe and enjoyable. Today there are a plethora of tools we can use to plan a city-based shoot down to the finest detail. Using online resources we can work out where to stay to gain access to the most landmarks with ease, how long we should spend at any spot, and can even pre-visualise our composition before we even leave the house. This level of organisational ability enables us to arrive on-location with a clear goal for each frame and a sense of purpose. It reminds us that our job as a photographer is to capture the essence of a city – the culture, architecture and atmosphere which make it unique from other places. This approach is just as important if you're shooting a familiar city, as it will enable you to look at it from a tourist's perspective.

The first stage in planning any shoot is to look online for similar shots to the ones you hope to take. A quick Google search of the

city will reveal the most popular views of the location and where you should set up your camera to take them. This helps in two ways. Firstly it tells you which shots are the 'must-haves' – the frames which people will expect you to capture and be disappointed if you don't – and secondly it gives you insight into the less-shot views, allowing you to plan to shoot something a bit different. This aspect is an even more important consideration if you are shooting commercially. 'Different' doesn't always sell well, so knowing what people want to see in images of a place is critical.

The next stage is to use a resource like Google Maps to examine the relative distances between places and ways to get around. This is especially important if you are carrying heavy camera gear – you need to minimise unnecessary movement as much as possible, in this case. Meanwhile Street View will allow you to actually see the buildings and street layout, making it possible to pick out potential subject matter ahead of your shoot.



## Create 'shoot routes'

Maximise the efficiency of your shoot and map your image sites

Without planning, a lot of time can be spent wandering the streets of a city looking for images. While this can be enjoyable, it can lead to wasted time. Before heading out on your shoot put together a route plan, which takes you through or past as many shooting sites in the least time. Alternatively, if you need to be in place at a specified time (like sunset) this can help get you where you need to be in the most efficient way.



© Peter Fenech

## Unmissable shots

Some key subjects to start the narrative of your location



© Asmuse

### THE TALLEST BUILDING

Not only is this likely to be the most noticeable but it can also put other landmarks in context. When shooting a skyline use this as a compositional 'full stop' and use it in the background of other images, to suggest the relative location.



© Jeremy Flint

### SKYLINE AT SUNSET

A 'touristy' shot maybe, but if done correctly it can capture the atmosphere of the city in a way a daytime shot cannot. Commuters and residents are more likely to see this view every day, so it can give the city a homely feel viewers can appreciate.



## Identify the sunlight direction

Maximise the efficiency of your shoots

Cities are highly vertical environments, meaning the horizon is rarely visible in all directions. This is why it pays to research lighting direction at different times of day, to enable you to photograph a building with light hitting a particular side, for example, or with the sun visible at the end of a desired street. Use resources like Google Maps or the Photographer's Ephemeris to identify the ideal times and shooting positions.



### REFLECTIONS

Whether these are captured in wet streets or rivers snaking through the city, reflections add a creative but natural component to urban scenes. Look for colourful walls and lights and then find a reflection of these to focus on for mesmerising results.



### CITY LIGHTS

Any large conurbation puts out a lot of light and this becomes a major feature of living and working in such an area. Capturing the shimmering, contrasting lights of office buildings and street lamps conveys the energy and life of the place.



## Get creative with your white balance

Make the most of light and colour with informed WB choice

Cities are highly colourful places, and although this does provide great contrast potential, strongly coloured buildings can confuse automatic WB systems. The aim of cityscape photography is to enhance the character of the location, so AWB often won't produce the most dramatic results. Instead start with the Daylight preset, which is a good universal setting, then use WB bracketing to capture reference images at the extremes of the Kelvin scale. These can act as an easier starting point for RAW processing later.

## Vary the light

Capture the many moods of a city by shooting in a range of times and conditions

If there is one aspect which sets apart professional photography from the tens of thousands of images visitors to a city create every day, it's lighting. Shooting during the middle of the day definitely has a place in our photo schedule, but there are creative reasons why capturing images early or late in the day is preferable. Firstly, sunrise, sunset and the blue hours of pre-dawn and twilight offer fantastic colour variance, which gives images depth and contrast. Beyond this however,

there are narrative benefits of shooting outside of regular business hours.

As we mentioned earlier, our aim is to introduce an emotional connection between the viewers of our image and the setting in which we created it. If our goal is to tell a story about life in a city then capturing it at a time of day when tourists are less likely to see it regularly is a great start to this process. The vast majority of tourist images are shot during the daylight hours, as this is when most

visitors are exploring. Conversely the natives of a city are probably locked away, at work, during these times! Early morning or late in the evening are times when the inhabitants interact with their surroundings the most, travelling to or from home, visiting shops and restaurants and going about their daily life. For this reason, capturing a full range of lighting conditions, through the whole day, offers a complete picture of the city and its many moods.

## Different lighting conditions

How to shoot at different times throughout the day



### GOLDEN HOURS

A favourite time for photographers, sunrise and sunset offer fantastic colour and softer-yet-directional lighting. This works well for images of both old and new buildings as they will glow with high Kelvin colours. Watch out for loss of detail in the Red channel and lack of colour contrast.



### BLUE HOUR

Available around 30 minutes before sunrise and up to an hour after sunset, this is the perfect time to shoot a skyline. The warm artificial lights will contrast with the cool natural tones, creating depth. This lighting is better for newer buildings, with plenty of windows. Daylight or Fluorescent white balance will preserve the cooler colours.



### HARSH LIGHT

What midday lacks in subtlety it gains in graphic potential. Try exploring alleyways and building atria when the sun is casting long, deep shadows from above. Capture stark contrasts of brightness and rough textures, enhanced by the light position. This is an excellent time to create monochrome images.

### FAMILIARITY ADVANTAGES

Knowing the city you are shooting well has many advantages, not least your ability to revisit many times, where it is local, and to know where it is safe to stay shooting after dark. Being able to predict the weather is also useful.

There are some big considerations though. Firstly be mindful of the style of architecture in the area you are shooting and how this will pick up the colour of light. Older stone structures absorb more light than modern glass buildings, changing the exposure balance and colour reflectivity. Next, consider the contrast of natural and artificial light, and how this will impact your white balance choice. Time of day, building style and how much light of each is present will dictate how cool or warm your image should be.

### Above Mixed lighting

Timing a shoot during the blue hour will enable you to capture a pleasing mix of artificial and natural light sources in your urban scenes

# Experiment with exposure

Work in challenging light while also using exposure for creative and practical applications

By their very nature cities are static features of a landscape, in that once a building is constructed, it rarely changes during its lifetime. For some buildings their design and position has remained the same for several hundred years. This makes capturing unique and surprising images of well-known city locations a challenge, since there are only so many angles a building, square, street or courtyard can be shot from. The instinctive thing to do for many photographers is to rethink focal length and attempt to find a detail in the scene which might be more often overlooked, by zooming in or capturing an ultra-wide view. This can work, but will often introduce further difficulties, such as unwanted edge detail. In many cases it also feels like a compromise, since it requires the context of the shot to be changed.

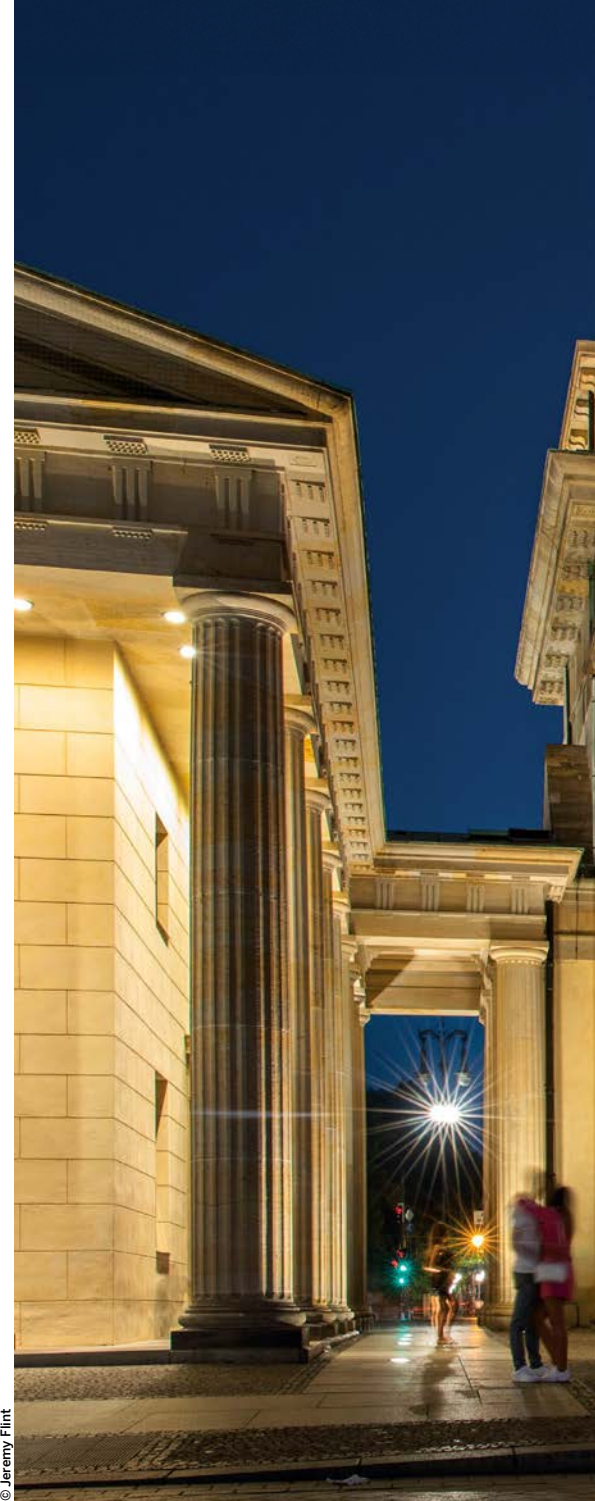
What we really need is a way to shoot a composition which is both familiar but which has a lesser-seen aspect or character. A great way to achieve this is by getting creative with exposure. Extended shutter speeds are regularly used to reduce traffic

trails to colourful streaks, but there are other benefits of slowing the exposure down to several seconds. Firstly it can introduce some movement into the sky, drawing patterns across the top of the frame, as clouds move through the scene. This adds energy to the cityscape and offers an ephemeral contrast to the static buildings. Secondly it softens the impact of distracting elements like cars and tourists.

*Right*  
**Keep it moving**  
 Using extended shutter speeds introduces movement to people and traffic, which creates energy within a scene, without removing these details altogether

Exposure can also be used to play with the balance of natural and artificial light. By underexposing you can create silhouetted shapes of recognisable landmarks, offering a more interpretive representation of a well-photographed subject. Conversely, overexposing can produce minimalist studies.

Whatever your aim, experimenting with exposure settings allows you to alter the tone of a scene, independently of composition and what is visible within the frame. Often we need to capture a scene as it appears naturally, however there are times when capturing something which the human eye can't see will inject intrigue to views our audience may think they know well.



© Jeremy Flint

## Capture daylight long exposures Create empty street scenes in the middle of the day



**1 Find your composition** Since we will be shooting extended exposures first find a good composition. Arrange the scene to emphasise movement once the shutter is opened (ensure objects are moving past the camera or away/towards the camera).



**2 Secure your camera** Ensure you are not blocking a pavement or placing yourself somewhere hazardous, then set up your tripod, using the top leg sections first. Or place the camera on top of your camera bag, on the pavement, for a dynamic angle.



**3 Set filter density** Attach an ND filter, stop down to around f/16 and check that ISO is at the lowest possible setting. A variable ND will allow you to control the length of your shutter speed to match the scene. Aim for an exposure of at least ten seconds.



**4 Prevent light contamination** As we are shooting in the day a DSLR is susceptible to exposure confusion, if light finds its way into the optical viewfinder. Many straps have an eyepiece cover to place over the VF, to ensure accurate exposure calculation.



## Work handheld

Keep on shooting even when camera support is unavailable

Viewpoints and city streets are rarely good places for tripods, making it a challenge to capture sharp images in low light. The first step towards a solution is to find an alternative surface to rest your camera. If this isn't possible, steady yourself by leaning against a solid wall, keep your arms tucked in and hold your breath as you shoot. Next, activate Burst Mode, ensure image stabilisation is in 'general' Mode and shoot a sequence of nine or ten frames, at approximately ISO 1,600. Activating auto ISO and a minimum shutter speed is also a good option on low-noise cameras.

## Metering matters

Make the most of light and colour with informed white balance choice



Evaluative metering will often fail to give you either accurate or dramatic exposures in many city scenes. Switching to Partial Mode in medium contrast settings or Spot Metering for high contrast, midday images will give you the option to choose a balanced or biased exposure.



# Pick out the details

Take a closer look at the small elements which create the atmosphere of a city

Having the ability to see the bigger picture is not always an advantage, not least when trying to convey to viewers of a two-dimensional photograph what it was like to visit a city they may never have seen before. Wide vistas or views of entire buildings certainly convey drama, but if we want to make viewing our images an immersive experience, which transports the audience into the scene, we need to appeal to more of their senses.

What many of us miss is that the essence of a place is often in the small details. As we explore a location we subconsciously recognise clues about the atmosphere it possesses and sum together lots of snippets of visual information to

form a wider impression. This is why sometimes a place can remind us of somewhere else and we're not sure why – it's because it shares a colour scheme, similar smells and textures and physical layout. If we focus on shooting a collage of smaller characteristic details, we can build up a more lifelike and emotive picture of a city.

This is yet another advantage of knowing the city you are shooting intimately – you already recognise its atmosphere and have an insight into the aspects which make it unique. Look for people doing business associated with the city, such as those working at a famous market, or serving people at a waterfront cafe. Focus on colourful buildings and interesting staircases.

If there are unique buildings, exaggerate their difference from structures you'd find elsewhere, using strong perspective, or by incorporating contrasting architecture in the frame.

The secret to successful citylife images does not relate so much to what you capture, rather it's how you capture it. The missing element in many less impactful photos is a lack of interaction between people and their environment. The images with the greatest story are those which depict the residents of the city living within it! Often this symbiosis is most visible when the photographer homes in on a simpler view and makes a feature of the individual elements which make the city alive.

**ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE**

What you might not think of as interesting photographically will be to someone who does not know a city as well as you do. Ask yourself how you would view it had you never seen it before and then try to find a subject.



© Jeremy Flint

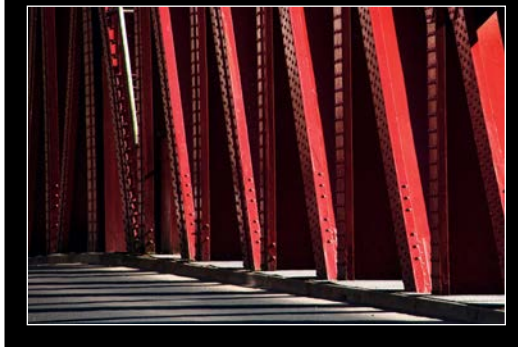


© Peter Fenech

**Focus on colour**

Make bright and contrasting areas of colour your main point of interest

Bright walls, painted plant pots, murals – these are all subjects which give an excellent impression of a city's personality and the people who live there. Make sure you are shooting RAW, change your white balance to a mid-range preset, like Daylight, and isolate areas of colour in your frame. Look for contrasts or actively create monochromatic images, which are fully dominated by a single colour. Play with compositions which are both abstract and which feature identifiable objects, and shoot at multiple focal lengths, to find the perfect balance of detail.



© Peter Fenech



© Peter Fenech

**Top left**  
**Wide but close**  
Details don't have to be shot with a long lens. A wide-angle image can be a detail shot when taken up close to an element, as it immerses the viewer in the scene

**Above**  
**People at work**  
Show people interacting with their surroundings for a strong narrative thread that creates an emotional anchor

**Left**  
**Textures**  
Capture the character of buildings, squares, and even people by focusing on texture – an extra sensory hit

# Perfect your composition

Learn to capture the cleanest, most dramatic perspectives in the busy city environment

By their very nature cities are hard things to photograph. The majority of scenes are built up along a vertical axis, since buildings are often taller than they are wide. Where they are short but wide you then have lots of negative space between them, which can leave photographic compositions feeling unbalanced. If you attempt to pitch the camera up or down you risk introducing converging verticals, while adjusting the yaw of the lens position will enhance lateral perspective. This creates strong leading lines which, without care, can drag the viewer's eye out of the shot prematurely.

Meanwhile, simply rotating the orientation of the camera into portrait format, for tall subjects, can remove any sense of height or direction, producing a flat shot with no identifiable starting or ending point.

It's apparent that, with cityscapes and city life studies, it's important to adjust the composition on a scene-by-scene basis. No two urban environments are the same, even though the architecture may appear similar. The layout of the street impacts how many obstructions there are between the camera and the subject, so this must be assessed before shooting begins. Then it is a matter of exploring the scene fully, to examine how all of the components work together.

This may sound like a simple process, but it is more than a case of shooting many images from different angles. As the photographer you have to understand what you are looking for, being able to identify when a composition is working well and when the frame is too busy, or has a detail imbalance. If you are being experimental with exposure, creating silhouettes for example, you have to be aware of overlaps between building structures, which will distort the outline. In such cases a change in focal length would be required to create separation.

The technical considerations can be intimidating, even for experienced photographers, but sometimes cityscape composition can benefit from simpler adjustment. The key to the perfect frame might be a slightly wider focal length, to incorporate some foreground vegetation, or to use another building as a natural frame. Just remember that 'different' will always hold the viewer's gaze for longer.

*Right*  
**Frames and foregrounds**

Take a wider view and capture city landmarks in the context of their surroundings. Offer the viewer a glimpse of what it is like to approach a structure or famous spot



All images © Peter Fenech

## Use extreme angles

Avoid 'average' perspectives at all costs

It's a challenge to get across the energy of a city location in a single 2D image so anything we can do to exaggerate the character of the place is of benefit. Shoot from a low angle with an ultra-wide lens to stretch the height of buildings, creating a towering effect. This is also a perfect technique for capturing impressive ceilings – just be sure to shoot up at exactly 90°. The reverse is also effective (shooting down), as is moving in close to an object with a lens of 16mm or wider.

## Find an elevated perspective

Make bright, contrasting areas of colour your subject

Look for a position higher than street level to capture a view across the city. Use your knowledge of an urban setting to locate places which offer interesting lines of sight and which align with sunset or sunrise. This gives a unique perspective and allows easily overlooked details higher up the buildings to be studied.



## Follow a composition workflow

Work through these steps to find the frame you thought you saw



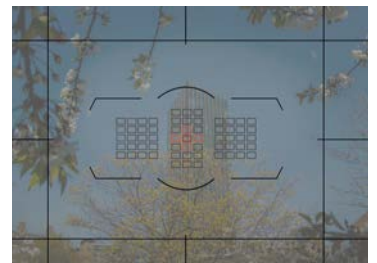
**1 Start mid-range** A trick to prevent 'setting bias' – getting carried away with one setting choice and forgetting to try others – is to zoom to the median focal length of the lens. For a 24-70mm this is around 50mm. Capture images on either side of this.



**2 Check the mirror image** Try capturing a building from the opposite perspective. If shooting east, walk along the street and capture it looking west. This can alter the apparent shape of the building and control background detail or sky alignment.



**3 Alter distance** Move closer to and further from your subject. This will introduce some distortion but when used carefully can exaggerate height or physical separation. At each shooting position try a range of focal lengths to maximise coverage.



**4 Vary the context** Try capturing the subject close-up, with minimal detail around it in the frame, then zoom out to capture more of the environment. Where there is relevant detail closer to the camera, try using this as a frame or as a leading line.



**Brighten the street**

Deliberately overexposing the image by taking an exposure reading from a darker area allows bolder colours to pop in a bright scene

All images © Craig Reilly

**Craig Reilly**



Craig Reilly is a London-based street photographer and workshop leader. He started shooting on the streets in 2015 and has honed his skills by covering many hundreds of kilometres across London and other European cities.

Craig co-founded the Street Photography International Collective (SPI) and curates its Instagram account (streetphotographyinternational), which has 1 million followers and over 6 million images in its pool of work.

[www.craigreillyphotography.com](http://www.craigreillyphotography.com)

# 10

steps for

# STREET photography

**Craig Reilly** shares his advice from the streets to help you sharpen your skills

**S**treet photography right now seems to be the in-vogue genre for newcomers and experienced photographers around the world. People of all ages are posting their work on social media, entering competitions, attending workshops, festivals and exhibitions, and the sheer volume of photos I see just in Street Photography International's #SPICollective pool of images (4.5 million) reiterates its enormous popularity.

Some of the reasons for this are because of its accessibility (you don't need an invite or backstage pass to attend), the lack of

equipment required (any one camera is enough), lack of expense (walk to your nearest town), and it's a great way to keep your eye in if you work in other genres.

Even though it's called street photography, it doesn't have to be taken on a street – it can be a photo of anything happening in a public place. There are also so many definitions of street photography; each one unique to the photographer shooting. I see it as trying to capture or create art from an everyday, mundane and candid moment. Hopefully, using the tips in this feature will help you to increase your success rate in catching them.

# 1 The right gear

## What is the perfect lens or camera for the street?

First and foremost, in terms of camera equipment, the right gear can only be chosen by you, the photographer. There are many websites, magazine articles and chapters in books telling you what the perfect camera, lens and settings are for a particular genre, and street photography seems to be one of the most featured right now. There is no such thing as the 'perfect' model or technique.

If you're able to capture the type of photo you're aiming for, stick with your current kit. Only look to change when you want to try a different approach or create a new style.

I use the Olympus Micro Four Thirds system on the OM-D range of cameras, and I chose that system by doing research and deciding what was best for me. Being able to customise certain buttons, and the size and weight of the camera body combined with a quality, weather-sealed lens, makes it easier for me to work without any worries of getting fatigued and achy, damaging my camera in bad weather, and not having to second-guess how to use it when I need to react quickly.

I prefer to use a prime lens (the Olympus 17mm f/1.8 is my most-used lens). This forces me to move and change my position when I'm trying to get the best composition in a particular scene, as opposed to just zooming in and out. It also encouraged me to get closer to my subjects when I first started shooting street shots.

*Right*  
**Utilise reflections**  
Using reflections and light creates a symmetrical image and strong leading lines

## My kit And why I use it

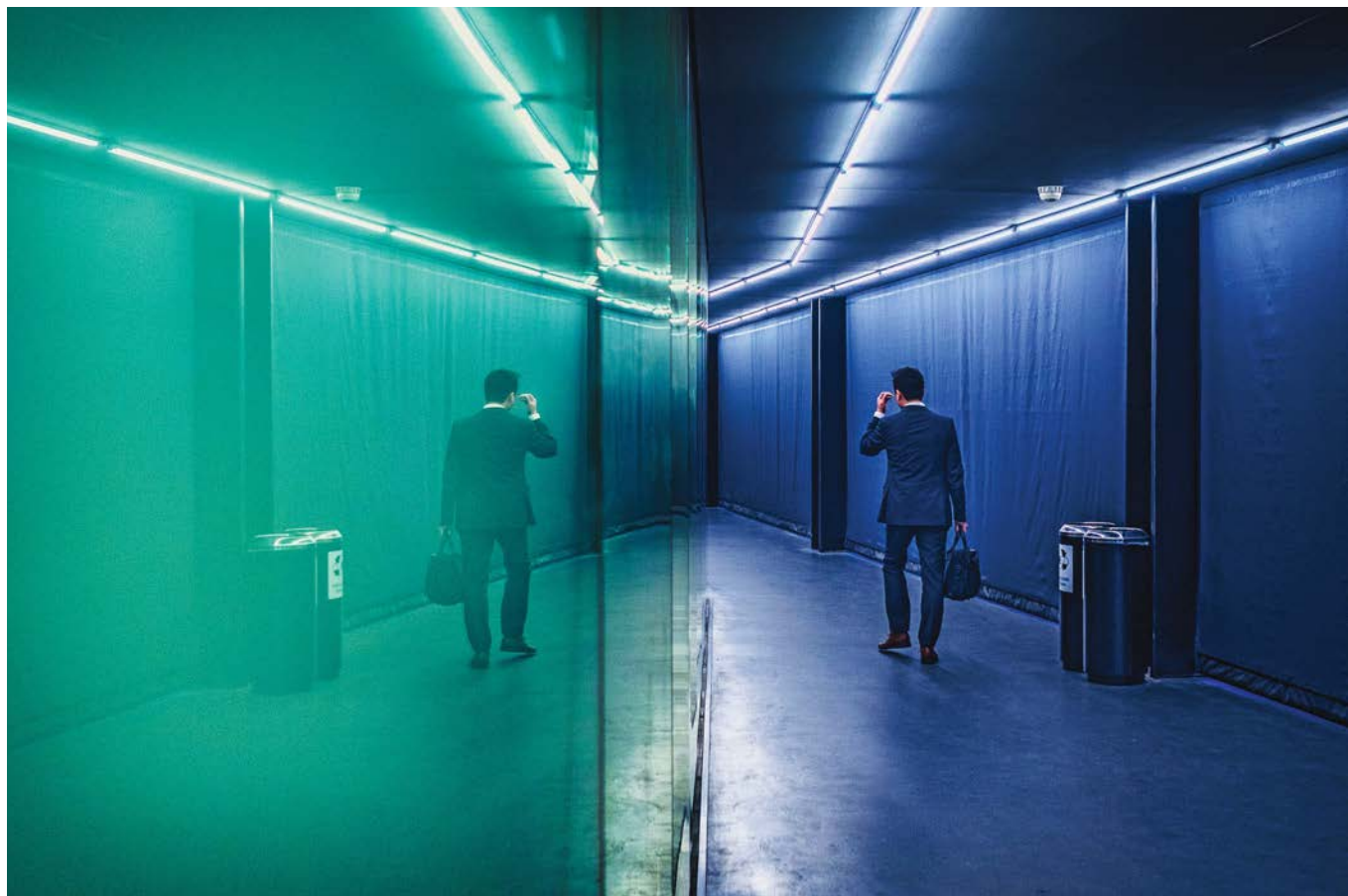
**OLYMPUS OM-D E-M1 MARK I**  
I use this camera due to its customisation options, how quickly I can access or change the settings when needed, and of course, its image quality.

**TENBA COOPER 15 SLIM**  
This bag is large enough to fit both bodies, my three lenses, MacBook Pro and a drink, and yet still be comfortable. The quick-access top zip and the signature Whisper Hook (silent Velcro) system are brilliant added benefits.

**OLYMPUS OM-D E-M1 MARK II**  
It's set-up exactly how I have the Mark I, but this has a rotating screen instead of a tilt screen, which gives me other options in certain situations and locations.

**OLYMPUS M.ZUIKO 17MM F/1.8**  
This is my most-used lens. It's lightweight, small, and absolutely fantastic to use. I especially like the pull-back focus ring to switch between auto and manual focus.

**OLYMPUS M.ZUIKO 12-40MM F/2.8 PRO**  
This lens is heavier than the two prime lenses, but it covers an excellent range of focal lengths, with the bonus of being weatherproof. I use this in all weathers and for workshops.



**Wait for it**

This was taken after a five-minute wait while leaning over a parapet wall in Newport Street Gallery, London

## 2 Don't be in such a rush

Wait for the final element to arrive

When we first start out in street photography – and most new genres, in fact – our initial instinct and excitement tells us to capture pretty much everything we see moving (or sitting still). But in doing so, we have hundreds or possibly thousands of photos to trawl through when we get home, with huge disappointment due to the lack of even a half-decent result.

I strongly recommend studying and waiting at a location if the light, subject matter or location make it worthwhile to stick around. Street photography isn't always about seeing the exact moment and capturing it – sometimes it's a case of predicting when something is going to happen and then capturing what you foresaw.

If you are going to wait, it's a good idea to gauge how busy that location is. Ask yourself how long you may have to wait for someone of interest to walk into this scene, or if it's too busy, would it be better to make a mental note of the day, time and available light, and return when it could be quieter?



**Fast framing**

With a bit of practice you'll be able to compose the shot as you're approaching a subject

# 3 Check the whole frame

Remove any distractions in the shot in situ

When a location has most of the elements to make a great image and just needs the final factor (a subject) to enter the scene, my preparation and process is to get as much as I can correct in camera rather than having to spend unnecessary time looking for something on a computer screen that I didn't see initially. That's not photography to me.

Firstly, I get my exposure correct. Once that's locked in, my next process is to decide on how best to compose the frame. All the time I'm looking through my viewfinder, I'm

looking in all the corners and edges for any distractions and making minor adjustments to remove them – whether that's changing my location or adjusting the position of my camera. The things I want to eliminate can include minor spots of light, other people, signs with text or symbols, or just busy environments in general.

While eliminating the distractions, I'll use the straight edges within that location to align with my frame, and also utilise any leading lines from a particular corner to the subject.



### Background thoughts

The right side of my frame is aligned with the vertical wall, but a slight wrong movement has allowed a touch of white to show beside the last red stripe

## 4 Think about the background

Get into position to isolate your subject

It's easy to be so focused on our subject that we forget about the background. This is apparent when looking at the photos we've taken that day, and we either find the subject has been lost among a bush behind them, has a lamppost or sign coming out of their head,

or there's someone else in the background doing something much more interesting.

To eliminate these errors or use them to your advantage, your next thought, once you've spotted a subject, should be about the background and what position you need to be

in to isolate them or use something behind them as a juxtaposition or aid.

The more you do this, the more you'll recognise an opportunity and get into the correct position quicker, saving you seconds on the street and many minutes editing at home.

### New look

By looking at things from above you can see moments in a totally unique way

## 5

## Change your perspective

Look from above or below, inwards or outwards

When you're out walking the streets, visiting a gallery or museum, or travelling by bus or the Underground, it's always good practice to take the opportunity to look at things from a totally different perspective.

It's very easy to take a photo at eye level, which of course will be needed on a lot of occasions. But if it's an option, take the time to look at your location from the ground, from above or at an odd angle. It will open you up

to so many new ways of being creative. Can you look inside a window of a shop, a passing car or bus? Can you look outwards from a stationary vehicle? Can you raise your camera way above your head or lay it on the ground?

When I'm shooting I look around the whole scene from different angles. Just because you've seen something that's caught your eye in one spot doesn't necessarily mean you have to be rooted to that position.



*Left*

**Contrast**

By using spot metering and taking an exposure reading from the brightest point, you can get a high contrast

*Above*

**Perspective**

By holding the camera above my head to take the shot, I was able to give the impression the couple are sitting on the railing

*Below*

**Be ready**

Having your settings, such as shutter speed and aperture prepared, allows you to react quickly when you need to

## 6 Be prepared Charged up, enough memory, settings set?

Making sure you have charged your batteries and have enough free memory on your memory cards is the first step to being prepared for a day's shoot. I transfer all my photos to an external hard drive at the end of the day, and clear my memory card the morning before going out.

When out, I make sure to have my settings prepared depending on my location and the amount of light available. A good habit to get into is to check your shutter speed and depth

of field every so often or when you're entering a location where the light differs greatly.

If I'm waiting at a point of interest, the first thing I do after studying the scene is to get my exposure correct. I do this using spot metering. This allows me to be very selective with the available light, and a little creative too.

If it's a dark shadow/high-contrast shot, I'll expose from the brightest point. If it's a bright, clean location, I will take a meter reading from a darker spot to overexpose the white walls.

That way, anyone with a bright item of clothing or accessory will pop out and give the image a minimalistic feel if composed correctly. I do all this visually, rather than using the in-camera histogram. Once I'm happy with that, I'll lock it in by pressing the AEL button. This allows me to compose the scene exactly how I wish.

Not having to worry about my exposure changing if the light remains the same is one less thing to think about when the time comes to get the shot.



# 7 Be confident in your approach

Avoid sticking out like a sore thumb as you shoot

The biggest fear or hurdle the majority of people have when first getting into street photography (myself included) is being able to get close to strangers. One of the best tips I can give you to help you blend in is to be confident with your approach. This is easier said than done of course, but if you're hesitant, looking at and then away from your subject, wondering whether to commit, you're going to stand out, possibly look quite suspicious and more than likely miss the shot.

A tip to help build that confidence is a technique I have used many times. If I've spotted an interesting moment or person, I don't want to make eye contact with them

until I'm in my desired position. I'll look beyond them and then bring the camera to my eye, frame them how I want to frame them and wait for eye contact. Upon getting the eye contact I'll press the shutter button. After getting their photo, I take the camera away from my eye and look at the spot I was looking at before. Most of the time the subject will turn around to look at what you were fascinated with.

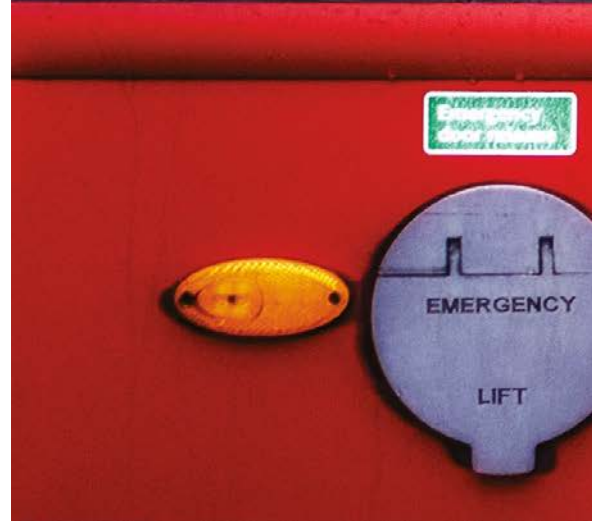
When you're more confident and the quality of your images improves, you'll happily wave or even speak to and show your subject their candid portrait, and they'll probably ask you to send them a copy.

# 8 Stick to the same route

The same location can look very different

This may seem an odd tip to give, but it's something many popular street photographers do. The reason I give this tip is because, by sticking to a particular route for at least a year and a half on and off, you'll see how the same locations change dramatically due to the amount of light at certain times of the day, at different times of the year and in different types of weather.

Not only will you see how the light affects the same location, you'll also see how much an area's landscape can change from one month to the next. This is one of the reasons why I love street photography. Not only are we creating art from everyday moments, we're also capturing the history of people's lives, fashion, habits and surroundings in cities, towns and districts all over the world.





**Don't hesitate**  
 Seeing an opportunity  
 and committing to it will  
 bring you more success  
 than being hesitant



*Far left*  
**Same route**  
 A shot on the stairs  
 leading to Waterloo  
 Bridge, London, taken  
 on 24/02/2019

*Middle left*  
**Lifting the mundane**  
 This was taken in front  
 of the stairs leading  
 to Waterloo Bridge on  
 13/08/2016

*Left*  
**Different day**  
 Another shot on  
 the stairs leading  
 to Waterloo Bridge, London,  
 taken exactly a year  
 earlier (than the far left):  
 24/02/2018

# 9 Post-process your images

AFTER

## Craig's subtle boosts in software

When post-processing my images, there's not anything specific I'm looking to do, and it's all done aesthetically for each image. This is because the locations will be different from one day to the next.

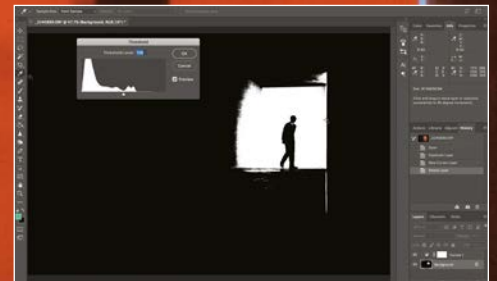
Learning how to post-process your work is really important in creating your own style. There was a time I watched a YouTube video on post-processing and put all that person's process into my own photos for a while. They look terrible when I go back and view them now. It's nothing to do with his tips, it's because I was using a technique that worked for someone else's photos, not mine.



My favourite tool in Lightroom is the White Balance eye dropper. Move your cursor around the photo to see the thumbnail image in the Navigator section (top left) change with each movement. Select a neutral point on something such as a concrete paving slab to give your photo a more natural-looking colour palette.



This is the original image: 4x3 with no crop. Getting as much correct in-camera means that less editing is needed. Adjustments in Adobe Lightroom are made with a 3x2 crop. Increasing the shadows brings out the left wall's texture, and using a cooler white balance brings out the whites of the entrance.



To use curves in Photoshop as a colour-correcting tool, click on the Add Adjustment Layer icon and select Curves. To adjust the colour balance, in the Properties panel choose the channel you want to adjust. Summarising this process, you can drag the curve and add points to make tonal alterations.

## Do not delete How much can you learn from your poor photos?

This is one of the greatest learning tools we can have in photography, and one of the fastest ways to train your eye to seek out opportunities. When you are looking at your photos on a computer or camera's LCD screen, it's a natural reaction to delete photos you think are useless. But don't be so hasty. I strongly recommend you study the photos you consider a poor standard.

Rather than using a ratio such as rule of thirds or the golden spiral, using your eyes is the best way to analyse your own work, as you know what's aesthetically pleasing to you and your creative style. Ask yourself what makes them bad. Could you have positioned yourself in a different location? Should you have waited until your subject was in 'x' position? What if you had used a

faster shutter speed or a shallower depth of field? Continuously asking yourself these types of questions will teach you to have the answers before you press the shutter.

Another good reason not to delete your photos is because your eye will likely change over time, and you may notice some decent photos that you overlooked many months or even years before.

## 10 Dress up

Comfortable gear and clothing is essential

It cannot be stressed enough how important it is to feel comfortable with what you're wearing for a full day of photographing on the streets. Obviously, shoes will be one of the most essential items on that list. Walking up to 21 kilometres during a single day's workshop is common practice. It's made very clear to workshop attendees that they make sure they're wearing comfortable shoes for the day's activity upon signing up.

In terms of clothing, again it's important to be comfortable and warm, but I believe it's also important to blend in with the people around you. I'm not suggesting you go head to toe in camouflage, but wearing something you're likely to wear to your local supermarket – instead of wearing your full kit on a photographer's vest – will not be screaming, "Look at me, I'm going to take your photo!"

I mentioned my bag in the kit section, and some people may not pay too much attention to their bag, but there's nothing more frustrating than something that continuously slips off your shoulder, or that you have to adjust the position of every ten strides. If your mind is being distracted by any of these factors, there's a good chance you're going to miss a number of photo opportunities because of it, so dress smartly.

### Have fun

During the Easter weekend in 2016 I took this selfie using my reflection and a papier-mâché pig head for a bit of fun



# How to *shoot cities*

Award-winning travel photographer **Jordan Banks** shares his tried-and-tested tips and tricks for shooting stunning shots of towns and cities



Cities are energetic, vibrant and ever-changing places that can provide photographers with a seemingly endless list of photo opportunities. From amazing skylines and unique architecture to the hustle and bustle of the streets, most cities provide enough opportunity to inspire any willing photographer.

While I love working in the wild, the majority of my assignments are actually undertaken in the fascinating concrete

jungles that so many of us now call home. I have learnt to love the energy of a city and I believe that some of my strongest images have been taken in urban areas.

At first, cities can be a little intimidating and tough to shoot for even the most experienced photographers. Being thrown into a congested city, full of life with distractions at every corner, can be overwhelming and it's often hard to know where to start. Through my many years spent shooting cities across the globe, I have

found that, when I approach my shots with a clear strategy, I am then better prepared to take full advantage of the countless photo opportunities that present themselves. This allows me to capture the true essence of any location that I happen to find myself in.

In this article, I will take you through some tried-and-tested methods to guarantee that you get the most of your time on location and help you produce a portfolio of photographs that, I hope, you will be proud to show off to anyone.





*Right*  
**Speeding sights**  
 Entrance to the Guggenheim museum in NYC. It was shot on a tripod to allow for the slow shutter speed

### GET INTO GEAR

The gear you choose is vital to the outcome of your shoot but sacrifices will often need to be made as it isn't always feasible to carry *everything*. Let's take a look at some essential items that will allow you to shoot great images all day long.

#### The marvel of mirrorless

The advancement of professional mirrorless cameras has made photographing cities easier and enables you to produce a high standard of images quickly when compared with a DSLR. But the main reasons for this aren't what you might think...

While the weight of camera bodies has decreased in mirrorless cameras, this doesn't actually make a big difference to the overall

weight I have to carry on a shoot. This is because the S-line of lenses are roughly the same size and weight as their F-mount equivalents. The smaller nature of the Z camera does, however, make them more subtle, and when combined with the silent shutter option allows you to be less conspicuous.

More importantly, the introduction of an electronic viewfinder has made shooting decisive moments more efficient. Street scenes can have awkward lighting conditions that produce very high contrast, so being able to judge the correct exposure quickly via the viewfinder means coming away with more evenly exposed images every time.

This doesn't mean that DSLRs are any less capable of capturing incredible photographs

of cities though. After all, I managed pretty well with them for years!

#### Luggable lenses

There is quite literally a place in the kit bag for any number of lenses, but who wants to be lugging around heavy glassware all day if you don't need it?

In general, I pack my 14-30mm f/4, 24-70mm f/2.8, and 70-200mm f/2.8, otherwise known as the holy trinity of lenses. Not only are the optics fantastic in all these lenses, but they also have me covered for my most frequently used focal lengths in just three lenses, which I know I can easily carry around all day.

On occasions when I may need that extra bit of reach I'll take a longer lens, or if I want to keep my kit bag particularly light I'll pack my

The gear you choose is vital to the outcome of your shoot but sacrifices will often need to be made



*This page*

**Range of optics**

The 'holy trinity' of zoom lenses is ideal for city photography. In these shots of Seattle: the city centre (above) was shot with a 16-35mm f/4 wide-angle zoom at 16mm; Pike Place Market (left) with a 24-70mm f/2.8 standard zoom at 38mm; and the Space Needle (far left) with a 70-200mm f/2.8 telephoto zoom at 200mm.

**Get comfy**

If you are going to be out pounding the pavement all day it's important to have comfortable clothing and suitable shoes for the climate and the city you're shooting in. The last thing you want is to be cold and have aching feet when you are waiting on that killer sunset shot. I also make sure I have plenty of water and some fruit or energy bars to keep me going throughout the day.

35mm and 85mm lenses. It's really a matter of weighing up what you will be shooting on the day and only carrying what's necessary, so that you won't be restricted by the weight or size of your kit.

**Bags of choice**

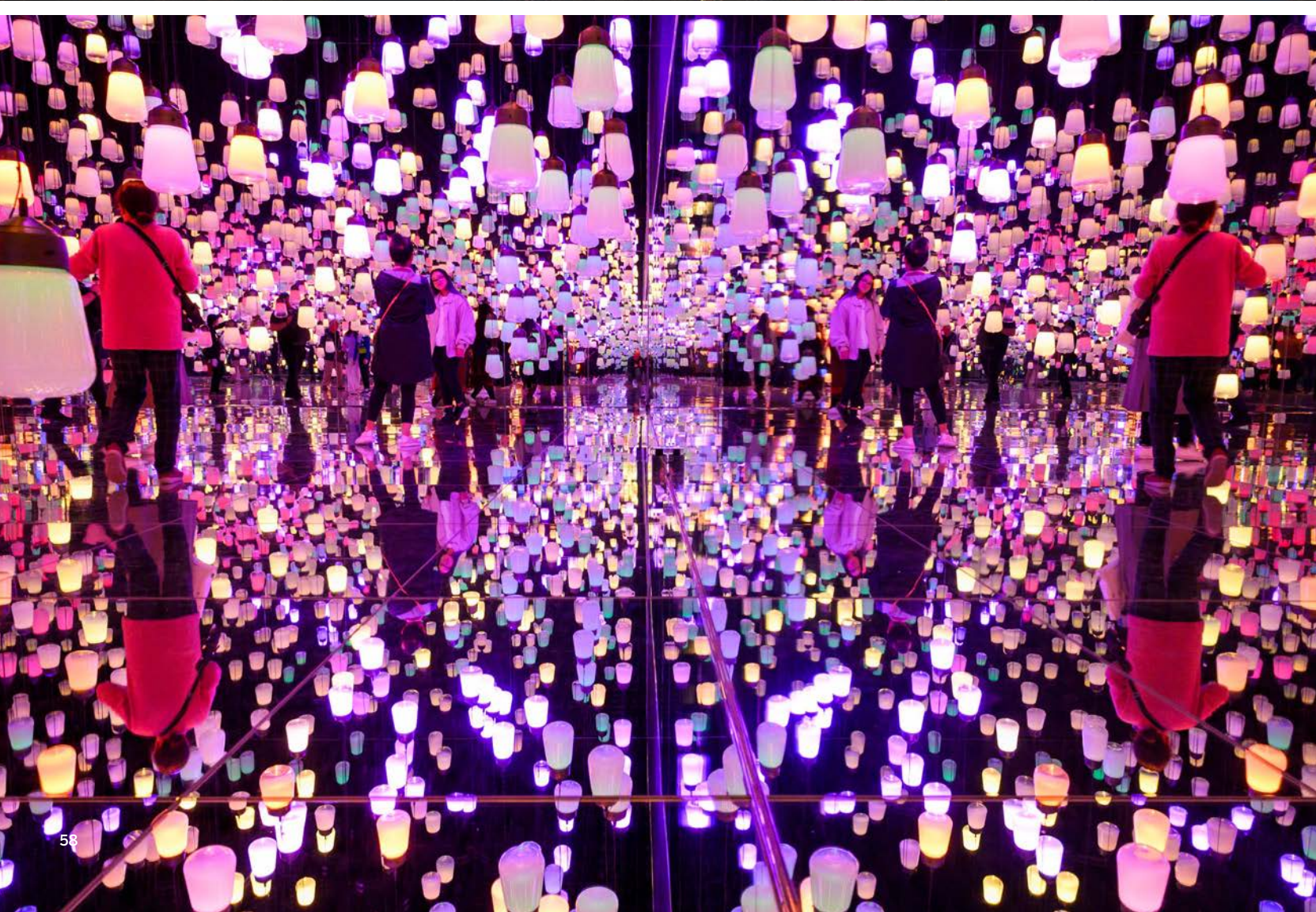
A comfortable bag is essential for keeping you mobile. There are loads of good brands out there, so have a good look around to find the one that's right for you. I really like the F-Stop gear bags for their high-quality construction and comfort. I also like the fact that they don't look like your typical camera bag, which is useful when you want to avoid

any unwanted attention from tourists, potential subjects or security personnel.

**Travel tripod**

This is going to polarise opinion, but I feel a tripod is as essential to shooting in cities as it is for landscapes. Yes, it's more weight and yes, you may not use your tripod for every shot, but it can really make the difference to those shots where you require a slower shutter speed or wish to add some motion to your urban imagery.

If you can afford to invest in a carbon fibre travel tripod, this will offer you a lightweight yet suitably sturdy support.



## PLANNING YOUR SHOOT

In order to really get the most out of your time photographing in a city, it is imperative that you have a good plan in place for your shoot. I will often start researching a city months before I am due to arrive, meaning that my research will have actually started before I even book anything.

Before anything else, I will be looking at the best time of year to visit. I could settle on a time based on many factors, such as weather, festivals or crowds. For example, I may choose to visit New York in the autumn to capture the fall colours, or Tokyo during the annual Cherry Blossom festival.

### Unique views

I spend a lot of time looking for unique ways to shoot a city, so that I avoid having a load of cliché images that have been seen a thousand times over. This may include looking for new rooftop bars or viewing platforms, art installations, buildings or museums that will allow me to get a fresh and current take on the location that I'm in.

Cities are constantly changing environments, so there is always going to be something fresh to shoot and it pays to take the time to find out what's new.

### Route planning

Cities are big places and it can take longer than you think to get around, so I usually put a shoot plan together for each day I am in the city. This means that I waste as little time as possible travelling from one side of the city to the other. I will have my predetermined sunrise and sunset locations and, once I have these, I will look to group other sites close by that can make the most of the soft morning light or the late-afternoon sun.

When planning your route, be realistic. Don't cram in so many locations into one period that you only have a few minutes to shoot; it's better to shoot one place really well than lots of places averagely, so give yourself enough time to explore the light, angles and compositions at your chosen locations.

### Rainy day plan

It's not often in the photography world that you will hear the words 'rain' and 'good' in the same sentence. With cities, however, there are still plenty of good shooting locations for those rainy days, such as markets, local attractions and indoor galleries or museums.

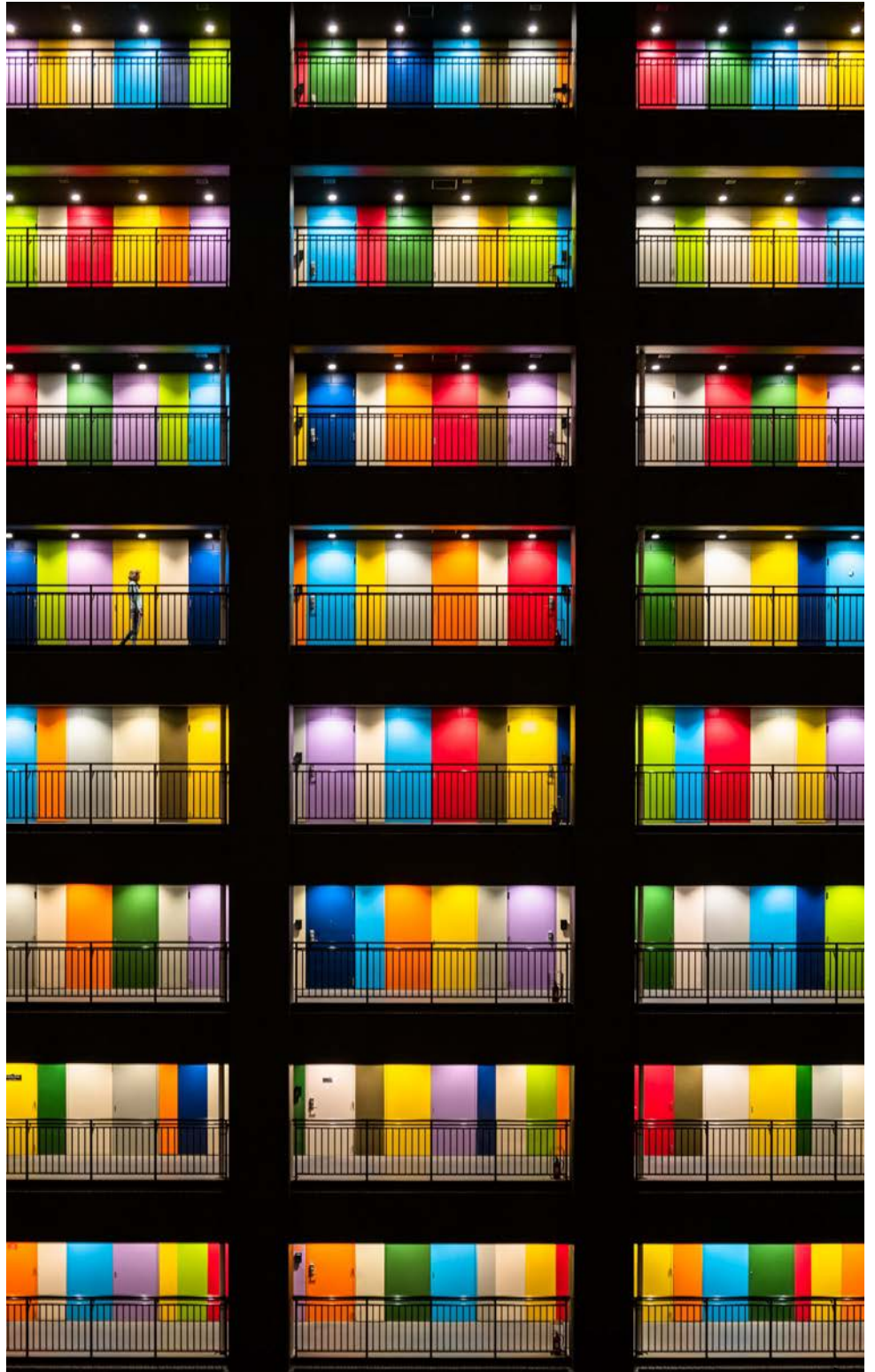
If you are prepared to get a little wet then you can make some really powerful images when it's raining, especially at night with the city lights reflecting in the rainwater. This can make striking shots with a dreamy, mysterious feel.

### Useful tools

I will use a range of outlets to research and plan a shoot. In recent years, Google Earth has been

## Armchair exploration

A good example of planning and preparation was the image that won the Cities category of *National Geographic Traveller Photography Competition 2020* (below). I'd been searching Instagram to see what was out there that I may have missed, so I put a post out asking for recommendations on unique locations in Japan. An old school friend, who lives in Tokyo, told me about a multicoloured building interior that could be cool: it was very cool and I got some really great images, proving that taking a few minutes to ask for suggestions can really pay off.





my greatest tool in planning any city trip.

You can 'virtually' fly around the city looking for rooftop views or even eye up the hotel or Airbnb with the best views. The great thing about Google Earth is that you can, to some degree, compose your shot before you even arrive on location.

### **TELL A STORY**

A photo essay, or photo story, is common practice in travel photography and you will no doubt have seen some great features in glossy magazines where the images of a location can really get under your skin. The aim of the photographer is to produce a single or set of images that connects the viewer to a certain place in time. Setting yourself the goal of shooting a photo essay is great practice for achieving a set of strong, well-thought-out and cohesive pictures.

### **Be original**

When planning your photo story try to be as original as possible. The aim is to produce fresh content that attracts and will engage viewers. This is easier said than done, but that's the challenge; to create something unique that stands alone from the millions of other photos of the location that can be seen anywhere at any time.

### **Have a narrative**

Stories need to have a clearly defined beginning, middle and end, and this is true for photo essays, too. If your aim is to produce a chronological series of images, it is much easier to define these junctures.

If you want to tell a more personal or compact story, you have some wiggle room to experiment with, but it is still good practice to have a narrative structure to lead your viewers

in and out of the story. Whichever option you choose, a clear and decisive conclusion is important to the impact the story has. Have a loose idea of this narrative before you travel, but be ready to adapt when you get there, too.

### **Variety is the spice**

You don't want people to get bored, so you need to try and include a variety of different subjects to keep viewers' imagination going. A set of very similar images won't achieve this.

You need to pay attention to the details that will provide not just the variety, but the emotion in your images as well. Be sure to experiment with shooting landscapes, portraits, action, detail and even abstract images to avoid the danger of repetition. Coming up with a range of focal lengths and compositions can also help, but remember; you still want a cohesive set of images overall.



*Left*  
**Quiet moments**  
View of Manhattan from New Jersey. Jordan explains that he included the lady on her phone to give some perspective to the image

*Right top*  
**Dive right in**  
Boys playing in Panama City. Keeping your camera to hand at all times on a shoot can help you capture unique fleeting moments like this

*Right below*  
**Suggestive stories**  
A woman walks through the Empty Skies Memorial in New Jersey. Jordan uses the negative space here to tell a story but still leave room for the viewer to fill in the blanks



## Be ever-ready

Always have your camera to hand; you never know when something is going to happen, so I always like to have mine close-by and ready to shoot. This is especially true when you are shooting a story, as it is often those fleeting moments that will complete your photo essay in a well-rounded fashion. The last thing you want is to see a great image that you could have captured. Adjust your camera to your 'go to' settings when you arrive at a new location and keep the lens cap off as you walk around!



### Layout

The layout of the images that make up your story is an important factor in good photo storytelling. When you are shooting, try and think where a certain image might fit in the context of the story and what might be missing from other areas that you will need to concentrate on.

Planning a final layout is often one of the most difficult factors of a good photo essay, as it means you can't just take nice, pretty pictures. Instead, they will need some context to your overall story. A good layout allows the viewer to process each image on its independent merits then connect them into a clear and precise storyline. The first and last images in any series are the most important as they have to be strong enough to attract the viewer and leave them with a clear memory of your photo essay.

### Add emotion

All great stories contain a sense of emotion and your photo essay is no different. No matter how technically strong each image is alone, this isn't always enough, as they must also have a clear direction.

Another good tip for adding emotion and flow to your story is colour management. When editing your images try to keep the same tones, saturation and general edit throughout. If you can incorporate similar tones when shooting even better, but this just isn't always possible in an uncontrolled environment.

### GET CREATIVE

Cities offer a multitude of ways a photographer can be creative, so don't be afraid to experiment to find what works; it's not as though you can't just delete anything that really didn't pay off...

Adding that spark of creativity to your work is a great way to make your images stand out. We have all seen the classic view of the Eiffel Tower or Brooklyn Bridge, so adding a fresh take to these – and other landmarks – will draw people's interest.

### Play with angles

Most people snap images at eye-level without a second thought, so make sure that you try to experiment with angles. This could mean getting down on the ground or jumping on a bench or small wall to get a slightly different perspective. It could be looking up at those skyscrapers or tilting your camera to add another dynamic to an image (tilting LCD screens can help with composition here).

Have a play around and you might be surprised at what you can achieve once you go further than shooting just around eye level.



## Abstract patterns and reflections

Cities are full of glass and other reflective materials which, when utilised correctly, can really add to the composition and impact of your photographs. And, of course, the same is true of patterns; there are so many unique patterns in the urban landscape that it can be hard to choose a single element to focus on, so try and hone in on your surroundings. If you know there is a shot there but it's not quite what you had hoped for, then take some time to look around and let your surroundings immerse you. You will, more often than not, find a unique angle, reflection – or maybe both – to add that finishing touch to your imagery. You just need to focus and look around, up and down...



**Find the fun**

Cities are full of quirky elements, from performance art to murals. We all like a laugh, so try to include funny interactions in your images. This could be a crowd reaction to an event or the clever placement of features that capture unexpected results.

These scenes can be easily overlooked and you may even have walked past them many times before. Make sure you don't miss these by always looking around – be aware of your surroundings and be prepared for the unexpected to appear.

**Negative space**

Playing with negative space when shooting in cities can inject a really effective and creative angle into your images and is easily achieved. Think of your main subject as positive space, while negative space is the area around your subject. The negative space should generally

add context to the subject without detracting attention from it.

If the negative area is too busy then the image tends to lose its impact, with too many areas of the frame competing for the viewers' attention. Having a generous area of negative space can add mystique and allows the viewer to make up the story.

**Shoot at night**

Don't make the mistake of calling it a day after sunset, as this can be when the cities truly erupt with life and vibrance. Lights come on and people are on the street, making it a great time to shoot.

You can easily visit the same street in the day and night and find a completely different scene. Tokyo is a good example of this. In the daytime the busy and fairly monotone streets come alive with colour after dark, when the thousands of neon lights come out to play.

**STREET PHOTOGRAPHY**

Any photographic trip to a city is almost certainly going to contain some elements of street photography. It is a common misconception that street photography is easy and it's enough to simply capture a few fleeting street life images to have it classed as street photography. This just isn't true.

Good street photography is often incredibly well thought out and perfectly executed by the photographer who approaches the scene in a very unique manner. You need to be present, obviously, but at the same time you need to be invisible to not interfere with the scene in any way. On top of this, photographers must learn to use their surroundings to shoot everyday activities in a profound way. Both of these

factors coming together is hard enough before you even consider all the unknown factors that could come in to play.

**Time it right**

No one can predict the future but it's helpful to at least try, especially when it comes to street photography... This is where timing comes in to play. I can often find a really fantastic backdrop, but all the elements required to make a *nice* image a *great* image just haven't arrived on the scene.

I may spend anywhere from a few minutes to an hour – possibly more – at a spot waiting and trying to tie in all the elements I require for exactly the right areas of the frame.

Sometimes this can be just one person or action, but at other times it may be a combination of two or more factors, making the timing of my shot even more crucial.

Often this doesn't pay off for me, but if I can I may return a second – or third – time to try again. However, even then there are no guarantees; that's just the nature of photography and it's especially the nature of street photography. What matters is that you try and that you're patient.

**Get closer**

There is a tendency when you start shooting street photography to stand back and zoom in, but this technique very seldom works as there is usually a clear separation between the viewer and the action, which can detach the viewer from the scene.

It's important to get close and bring the action to the forefront of your image. Some of the best street photographs ever taken were only a matter of feet from the action or subject.





The aim of good street photography is to have the viewer transported into the frame with the feeling of being surrounded by the scene, and this is only really achieved by getting in close and getting the shot.

**Don't be shy**

Street photography requires a certain level of confidence... The first time you stick a camera in a stranger's face can be more than a little unnerving. There is a perceived risk of people being angry or even aggressive towards you – despite this very rarely being the case. But there are a couple of techniques that can ease you into things.

The first is to 'shoot from the hip', and the flip-up screens that the many cameras now have makes shooting from the hip a lot easier than in the past. However it's still not the ideal method, as it's hard to compose and focus. Providing you feel comfortable, you should always raise the camera to your eye.

The second method is to simply travel light. The reason so many street photographers prefer to use more compact gear – such as a 35mm lens – is the lack of attention they attract, which allows them to be less conspicuous and appear less threatening.

*Above*  
**Off-the-cuff**  
 Timing was crucial for this shot in Valparaíso, Chile, and Jordan was in the right place at the right time

*Opposite*  
**Lifestyle subjects**  
 A young lady on a BMX takes in the Manhattan skyline from Brooklyn

*Right*  
**Pick your timing**  
 In order to create a compelling photograph, Jordan waited patiently for the right subject to pass beneath the mural



## Enjoy yourself

Like any photography it's important to enjoy what you are shooting, so don't push yourself too hard. Street photography isn't necessarily for everyone and if you don't have a passion for what you are shooting your interest and creativity can dry up.



*Right*  
**Portable and powerful**  
When shooting in urban locations you need to pick a camera which will take great images without weighing you down  
All Images © Matheus Bertelli

# ESSENTIAL **KIT** FOR URBAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Choose the best cameras, lenses and accessories for pro-level shots in the city

**U**ban locations provide some particularly unique challenges as far as camera gear is concerned. Whether you are travelling to the other side of the world or a location a short distance from your home, urban locations are not the easiest places to take photos, and you need to think carefully about the equipment you choose. Some of the difficulties are practical ones, while others are more to do with your safety and security, and that of your gear.

Important features to think about are the size and shape of your camera itself. The bigger the camera, the heavier it is likely to be and the more space it will take up in your camera bag. A huge camera and lens is also going to be highly visible and will draw quite a bit of attention while you're out shooting on the street! Meanwhile, smaller cameras are often easier to support without a large, heavy tripod and you can shoot images on the sly, capturing interesting street scenes without anyone noticing you. Due to the

nature of the lighting in many parts of urban environments it's helpful to have a camera that is capable of shooting quality images in low light, while lenses featuring an optical stabiliser will allow you to shoot handheld with greater ease.

All-in-all, when choosing your kit for urban shooting, you must balance the technical requirements with the need for items which are easy to carry and shoot discreetly. Let's take a look at some of the best options for cameras, lenses and other essential accessories.



# DSLRs

The DSLR used to be the only pro option, so you can be guaranteed high quality

Digital SLR (Single Lens Reflex) cameras were the type of choice for professional photographers for many years thanks to their accuracy, speed and build quality. Travel back ten years and if you wanted to be taken seriously as a photographer, you needed a DSLR. Things have changed since the advent of the mirrorless camera (see overleaf) and production of the type is slowing, but you can still be absolutely confident you're getting a quality camera if you choose one.

The big advantage of the SLR design is that the scene you observe through the optical viewfinder (OVF) is the exact image the lens taking the picture sees, meaning there is no shift in composition between this and the final photo. Autofocus is usually very fast too – handy for urban images – and the larger design allows for bigger sensors than compact cameras or smartphones. The bigger form factor might be a disadvantage for some users, but others will enjoy

the reassuring grip, handling and weight that a DSLR offers.

It's still possible to find DSLR models which cater for all user levels, with some incredible deals to be had on entry-level, mid-range and even professional-grade cameras. Arguably, now is the best time to consider one thanks to the shift towards mirrorless causing price drops, so here are some of the best options to consider as your next camera.

## Canon EOS 6D Mark II

Take your first steps into full-frame photography with this high-spec, yet affordable enthusiast-level camera

Big sensors mean big quality. The greater chip area means the parts of the sensor which capture light are physically larger, allowing more light to be harnessed. While at one time full-frame cameras were out of the budgets of all but the top professionals, the Canon EOS 6D Mark II is aimed at enthusiasts and is an entry point to full-frame photography. The 26.2MP resolution allows big prints and the freedom to

crop images later, while the top ISO of 40,000 allows extreme low-light shooting. The camera's 45-point autofocus system is ideal for tracking subjects on the street and the vari-angle screen helps with tricky composition. Meanwhile, the polycarbonate body keeps weight down. You'll also find a built-in GPS function so you can geotag your images, which is ideal for retracing your steps when location scouting.

### Below Big heart

The EOS 6D Mark II is ideal as a first full-frame camera and is a step up from entry level



### Summary

A high-end yet compact full frame DSLR which blends high resolution with portability. Versatile but with a manageable price tag, allowing urban photographers to explore unrestricted by weight or image noise.

### Canon EOS 6D Mark II

<b>Price</b>	£1,349/\$1,399
<b>Web:</b>	<a href="http://www.canon.co.uk">www.canon.co.uk</a>
<b>Megapixels (effective):</b>	26.2MP
<b>Max resolution (pixels):</b>	6240 x 4160
<b>Sensor information:</b>	Full-frame CMOS
<b>Shutter speed:</b>	30 - 1/4000, Bulb
<b>ISO sensitivity:</b>	100 - 40,000 (Ext 50 - 102,400)
<b>Lens data/Zoom:</b>	N/A
<b>Exposure modes:</b>	P, A, S, M, A+, CA, SCN, C1-2
<b>Metering options:</b>	Evaluative, Spot, Partial, Centre Weighted
<b>Flash modes:</b>	N/A (External)
<b>Connectivity:</b>	Wifi, USB Mini-B, HDMI C (Mini), Canon N3, 3.5mm Headphone
<b>Weight:</b>	765g (body only)
<b>Dimensions:</b>	144x110.5x74.8 mm (WxHxD)
<b>Batteries:</b>	Rechargeable Lithium-Ion (LP-E6) 1865 mAh
<b>Storage:</b>	1x SD, SDHC, SDXC (UHS-I)
<b>LCD:</b>	3" 1,040,000 Dot Vari-angle, Touch-sensitive
<b>Viewfinder:</b>	Optical, 98% coverage with 100%

## Choose your DSLR lens

We round up the best optics for DSLR photography around the city



### SIGMA 24-70MM F/2.8 DG OS HSM ART (£1,149/\$1,099)

A standard lens covers the 50mm range, which on full-frame is similar to vision. A 24-70mm allows wide-angle and short telephoto perspectives too, while a constant aperture is good in low light. This Sigma lens is great value, offering sharpness and solid build.



### TAMRON 35MM F/1.4 SP DI USD (£749/\$899)

The 35mm focal length has been a firm favourite of street photographers for decades. This wide aperture prime will allow you to shoot handheld at night and capture dark interiors. The field of view is also great for buildings, as it won't stretch them excessively.



### ROKINON 24MM F3.5 TILT SHIFT (£824/\$799)

This is a highly niche lens, but for architectural images a tilt/shift optic is the ticket to building studies without distorted lines. Converging verticals are a phenomenon where buildings seem to lean inwards. This third party lens will allow you to correct the aberration.

# Nikon D500

Nikon's pro-quality DX format DSLR is a real class act, with a fast, effective autofocus system



**Small but powerful**  
Above  
The DX-format sensor allows greater magnification from smaller lenses, making this camera useful for candid photography in urban settings

Cropped-frame DSLRs, also referred to as APS-C, feature a smaller sensor than full-frame models, which can sometimes be seen as a disadvantage. Smaller pixels mean less light gathering and lower performance in low light. However quality is all relative and cameras like the Nikon D500 have a unique benefit. There are huge size and weight savings to be had by choosing this DSLR and others like it, which is ideal for urban

photography. Featuring 20.9MP, the D500 can still shoot large-format images, but can do so at 10 frames per second, meaning you can shoot a burst of images close together to capture fast action, such as street scenes or traffic. Meanwhile the D500 benefits from 4K video shooting at 24, 25 and 30fps, pro-style handling and advanced AF, featuring Nikon's Multi-CAM 20K Autofocus sensor, with 153 AF points. Dual card slots round off the spec.

### Summary

Fast and flexible, this DSLR balances pro handling with the portability expectations set by the latest high-end mirrorless cameras. Some may find the lower resolution limiting but for most it is suitable.

### Nikon D500

<b>Price</b>	£1,445/ \$1,597
<b>Web:</b>	<a href="http://www.nikon.com">www.nikon.com</a>
<b>Megapixels (effective):</b>	20.9MP
<b>Max resolution (pixels):</b>	5568 x 3712 pixels
<b>Sensor information:</b>	APS-C (DX) CMOS
<b>Shutter speed:</b>	30 - 1/8000, Bulb
<b>ISO sensitivity:</b>	100-51,200, (Ext 50 - 1,640,000)
<b>Lens data/Zoom:</b>	N/A
<b>Exposure modes:</b>	P, A, S, M
<b>Metering options:</b>	Matrix, Centre-weighted, Spot, Highlight-weighted
<b>Flash modes:</b>	N/A (external)
<b>Connectivity:</b>	Wifi, Bluetooth, HDMI Type-C (Mini), USB 3.0 Micro-B, 10 pin, 3.5mm Headphone
<b>Weight:</b>	760g (Body only)
<b>Dimensions:</b>	147x115x81mm (WxHxD)
<b>Batteries:</b>	Rechargeable Lithium-Ion (EN-EL15)
<b>Storage:</b>	SDXC/XQD
<b>LCD:</b>	3.2", Vari-angle, Touch-sensitive, 2,359,000 Dots
<b>Viewfinder:</b>	Pentaprism, 100% Coverage

# MIRRORLESS CAMERAS

When you want to travel light a mirrorless model might be just what you need

A mirrorless camera dispenses with the reflex mirror found in DSLR cameras. While this technically incorporates compact cameras, the modern definition refers to interchangeable lens cameras featuring a Micro 4/3, APS-C, full-frame or medium-format sensor. This type of camera is the natural evolution of the DSLR, made possible by developments in autofocus technology and electronic viewfinders. The main advantage is in the size and weight of mirrorless cameras. The

removal of the mirror allows them to be shallower, while the reduced distance from the sensor to the rear element of a mounted lens allows mirrorless optics to be designed smaller and lighter.

Beyond this, however, with the creation of their mirrorless systems, camera brands have been able to introduce new lens mounts featuring more electronic contacts. This enables faster communication and, in turn, speedier AF, better image stabilisation and superior performance.

For photographers who are used to DSLRs there can be some necessary adjustment from the optical viewfinder to EVFs. However electronic types are versatile, providing more digital information and accurate previews of captured images. Main features to look out for when choosing a mirrorless camera are viewfinder refresh rates, mechanical and electronic shutter speeds and availability and diversity of compatible lenses, which can be limited.

## Sony Alpha 7 IV

High resolution and high speed, this might be the perfect blend of features for urban photography

As a recent update to the popular A7 III, this fourth-generation camera brings with it a step up in pixel count to 33MP, while the Exmor R processor has been improved for better colour gradation. The back-illuminated sensor makes it great in low ambient lighting, while the 5-axis IBIS system should help when your shutter speed starts to drop. The A7 IV is designed to integrate stills and video, so for image makers who shoot both, there should be enough to satisfy these requirements. The camera can shoot at 10fps in continuous mode and 60p 4K movies. The built-in WiFi and FTP file transfer allow you to quickly backup and share your images, which is perfect if you need to quickly have your photos ready for social media. You also have dual card slots at your disposal, supporting both SDXC and CFexpress, in a dust and moisture-resistant magnesium alloy body.



**Above**  
**Technology powerhouse**  
Sharing much design and technology with Sony's professional cameras, the A7 IV is one of the newest models available

### Summary

A great introduction to the Sony system at a palatable cost. The A7 IV is a well rounded interchangeable lens camera for urban content creators, working with both stills and video.

### Sony Alpha 7 IV

<b>Price</b>	£2,399/ \$2,498
<b>Web:</b>	<a href="http://www.sony.co.uk">www.sony.co.uk</a>
<b>Megapixels (effective):</b>	33.0MP
<b>Max resolution (pixels):</b>	7008x4672
<b>Sensor information:</b>	Full-frame (35.9x23.9mm) Exmor R CMOS
<b>Shutter speed:</b>	30-1/8000sec
<b>ISO sensitivity:</b>	100-51200 (Ext: 50 to 204,800)
<b>Lens data/Zoom:</b>	N/A
<b>Metering options:</b>	Multi-segment, Center-weighted, Spot, Entire Screen Avg., Highlight
<b>Flash modes:</b>	Auto, Slow, Fill, Rear, Red-eye reduction, High speed, Wireless, Off
<b>Connectivity:</b>	Micro USB 3.2 Gen 2, HDMI, Mic/Headphone, Wifi, Bluetooth
<b>Weight:</b>	658g (inc batteries/card)
<b>Dimensions:</b>	144.0 x 110.5 x 74.8
<b>Batteries:</b>	Rechargeable lithium-ion (NP-FZ100)
<b>Storage:</b>	1x SDXC, 1x CFexpress Type A
<b>LCD:</b>	3" (1,036,800 dots) Touch, Vari-angle
<b>Viewfinder:</b>	1.3 cm Quad-VGA OLED, 100%

## Choose your lenses

Regardless of your camera system you need lenses to cover all eventualities



**CANON RF 24-240MM F4-6.3 IS USM**  
**(£960/\$900)**

Superzooms cover almost any subject you might encounter. Lenses such as this allow you to capture wide-angle shots, as well as those far away. The variable aperture allows size and weight to be minimised.



**NIKKOR Z 20MM F/1.8 S**  
**(£1,049/\$950)**

If you choose a Nikon Z series camera, this lens offers a great combination of wide focal length and bright aperture, in a truly portable package. The S designation indicates this is a premium model. Ideal for handheld interior shots and Urbex imaging.



**SONY FE 24-105MM F4 G OSS**  
**(£999/\$1,398)**

A 24-105mm lens is a long established choice for full-frame cameras. Most camera brands offer one and this Sony example has a constant f4 aperture, which is good for video. The OSS offers blur-free shots.

## Fujifilm X-T30 II

<b>Price</b>	£769/ \$900
<b>Web:</b>	<a href="http://www.fujifilm-x.com">www.fujifilm-x.com</a>
<b>Megapixels (effective):</b>	26.1MP
<b>Max resolution (pixels):</b>	6240 x 4160 pixels
<b>Sensor information:</b>	APS-C (23.5mm x 15.6mm) X-Trans CMOS 4
<b>Shutter speed:</b>	30-1/4000sec
<b>ISO sensitivity:</b>	160-12,800 (Ext: 80-51,200)
<b>Lens data/Zoom:</b>	N/A
<b>Exposure modes:</b>	P, A, S, M
<b>Metering options:</b>	Multi, Spot, Average, Center Weighted
<b>Flash modes:</b>	Manual pop-up (Gn7) Auto, Slow, Manual, Commander, Off
<b>Connectivity:</b>	USB3.2 (Type-C), HDMI (Type D), 2.5mm stereo mini connector, Wifi, Bluetooth
<b>Weight:</b>	329g (body only)
<b>Dimensions:</b>	118.4x82.8x46.8mm
<b>Batteries:</b>	Rechargeable Li-ion (NP-W126S)
<b>Storage:</b>	SDXC
<b>LCD:</b>	3.0", 1.62 million dots, Touch, Vari-angle
<b>Viewfinder:</b>	0.39 inch OLED, 2.36 million dots

# Fujifilm X-T30 II

Combining advanced digital features with retro styling, this is a great option for candid urban photography

Fujifilm is a camera brand with a difference. While others focus on creating ever more contemporary designs, Fuji is best known for its X-Series of retro-styled APS-C format models. The X-T30 II is a mid-range, enthusiast level camera, which is incredibly compact and weighs only 378g. Without a lens mounted, the body can be fitted in a coat pocket, which makes it ideal for travelling on budget airlines, for example. This diminutive form factor is made possible by the 26.1MP X-Trans APS-C CMOS 4 sensor, which also allows Full HD video shooting at 240p, translating to a 10x slow-motion effect after processing. The new camera has some of



Above

### Art of discretion

The classic design and small size of the X-T30 II makes it easier to shoot unnoticed by your subjects

the best AF performance in its class, enabling tracking of fast-moving subjects and up to 20fps burst capture with the electronic shutter. Just watch out for distortion effects caused by the rolling readout of the electronic shutter function.

### Summary

Small and stylish, this camera feels at home shooting discreetly in the urban environment. Perfect for content creators shooting both stills and video.

# Canon EOS R6

This camera sets new standards for both stills and video

When Canon released the EOS R back in 2018 it marked a new direction for the manufacturer and highlighted their commitment to high-end mirrorless. It was viewed as a somewhat conservative camera, however, and was lacking several key features that, even by 2018 standards, were seen as standard expectations. The EOS R has gained a greater appreciation today as the price has fallen, but its successor, the EOS R6, is arguably a better equipped option if you can stretch to the higher cost.

The EOS R6 is a powerhouse of modern technology, exhibiting market-leading features in multiple areas. Lining up the R range with the parallel DSLR line is not always easy as, despite what might seem logical, this camera is not a mirrorless replacement for the EOS 6D Mark II. In fact the R6 borrows much of its feature specification from Canon's flagship professional DSLR, the EOS 1DX Mark III, featuring the same sensor and processor. This means you can expect phenomenal speed and low-light performance, both areas in which the 1DX line has become legendary.

The 20.1MP full-frame sensor may raise some eyebrows in today's world of ultra-high resolutions, but this allows for superior high ISO

performance and the R6 can shoot low-noise files as high as ISO 102,400. When combined with the incredible 8-stop effective in-body image stabiliser (IBIS), the user can shoot handheld in near darkness. This makes it ideal when exploring a city at night, for example. You'll also find an astonishing 20fps burst shooting rate when using the silent electronic shutter, or 12fps with the mechanical shutter option.

The AF system is also industry-leading, sharing the Dual Pixel CMOS AF II system with the EOS R5. This makes subject tracking a breeze and is also sensitive in complex lighting, such as backlit building details. Overall the EOS R6 represents the best of Canon in a highly compact package.



## Canon EOS R6

<b>Price</b>	£2,399/ \$2,499
<b>Web:</b>	<a href="http://www.canon.co.uk">www.canon.co.uk</a>
<b>Megapixels (effective):</b>	20.1MP
<b>Max resolution (pixels):</b>	5472 x 3648
<b>Sensor information:</b>	Full-frame (35.9 x 23.9 mm) CMOS
<b>Shutter speed:</b>	30-1/8000, Bulb
<b>ISO sensitivity:</b>	100-102400 (Ext: 50-204,800)
<b>Lens data/Zoom:</b>	N/A
<b>Exposure modes:</b>	A+, P, Av, Tv, M, B, Fv, Video, C1-C3
<b>Metering options:</b>	Evaluative, Partial, Centre-weighted, Spot
<b>Flash modes:</b>	N/A (External)
<b>Connectivity:</b>	USB 3.1 (Gen 2 USB C), HDMI (Type D), Microphone, Headphone, E3 terminal, Wifi, Bluetooth
<b>Weight:</b>	598g (body only)
<b>Dimensions:</b>	138.4x97.5x88.4 mm
<b>Batteries:</b>	Rechargeable Li-ion (LP-E6NH)
<b>Storage:</b>	2x SDXC
<b>LCD:</b>	3", 1.62 million dots, Touch, Vari-angle
<b>Viewfinder:</b>	0.5-inch OLED EVF3.69 Million dots, 100%

### Summary

Fast, low noise and user friendly, the Canon EOS R6 is a super option for handheld shooting. Meanwhile the dual card slots mean easy backup in-the-field.

# URBAN ACCESSORIES

Select your photography peripherals for safer, sharper images and special effects

As an art form, photography is one of those with the greatest availability of accessories and add-on products. From the weird and the wonderful to the genuinely confusing, the choice can be a little overwhelming at first. It is true that some accessories you might find when browsing the discount shelves at your local camera store or the Amazon sales might be questionably necessary or valuable, however some are essential items, which no pro would be without.

Tripods are amongst the most common photo accessories, and for urban photography these camera supports can mean the difference between getting the shot and missing it. The best urban images show movement and

the energy of cities, which require creative use of exposure – impossible to achieve handheld. Choosing the right one is important though, since many urban venues may preclude the use of tripods under certain conditions.

Meanwhile selecting the right camera bag is critical to protect your gear. Your bag must offer enough space and cushioning to keep your gear safe, while not attracting the wrong kind of attention from savvy thieves. It must not inhibit your movement as you explore unique angles in the urban landscape.

Let's take a look at some of the photo accessories you should consider adding to your kitbag to raise the bar in your image hit rate.

## Accessory wish list

Don't be without these essentials of high-end professional urban photography



### CARBON FIBRE TRIPOD

While we've discussed that a tripod is a must-have, a carbon fibre model is the best choice as these are strong but lightweight. Look for one with twist-grip leg locks and one with a built-in monopod will help where tripods are prohibited.



### L-BRACKET

An L-bracket allows you to quickly rotate your camera from landscape to portrait orientation, without flipping the tripod head, when the camera is fixed in place. Doing the latter shifts the centre of gravity and can make your setup unstable, while the bracket is balanced.



### MESSENGER BAG

The last thing you want when exploring a city is to be weighed down by a massive rucksack of gear. A messenger bag can be placed across your body or one shoulder and allows instant top-down access to kit. These are popular with photojournalists.

From the weird and the wonderful to the genuinely confusing, the choice can be a little overwhelming



## CIRCULAR POLARISER

These filters are perfect for cutting reflections out of the glass exteriors of modern buildings and deepening colour saturation. A firm favourite of landscape photographers, these filters are like putting sunglasses over your lens. If you buy one filter, buy this one.



## ND FILTER

An issue with shooting in a big city is the crowds of people. An ND filter will block out light and allow you to set a long exposure, even during the day, thereby making streets appear empty. These also enable wide apertures in bright light.

## Download essential apps

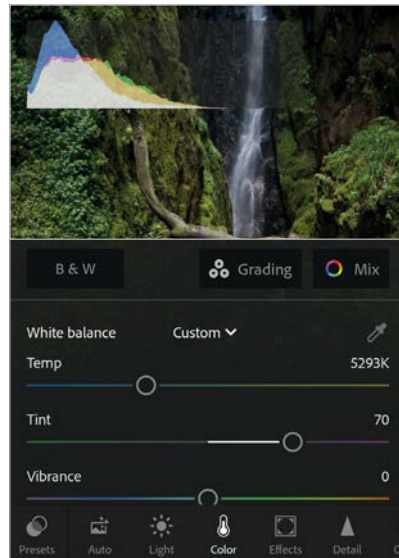
Enhance your urban photography prospects by using these essential smartphone tools



### CITYMAPPER



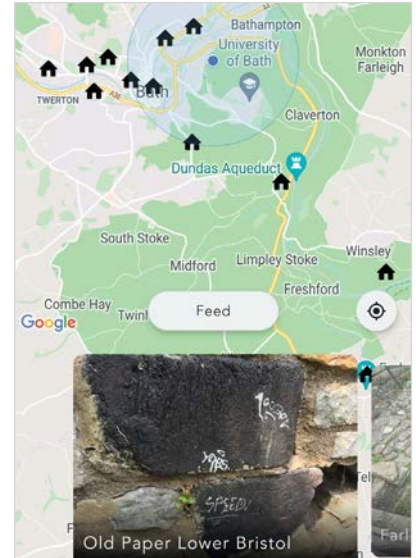
Google Maps is an obvious tool for finding your way around a new city. For a more personalised experience try using Citymapper, an app which collates information on public transport systems in many cities around the world, allowing you to accurately plan your arrival and departure times at specific locations. This is especially useful when you want to be at a vantage point for sunrise or sunset.



### LIGHTROOM MOBILE



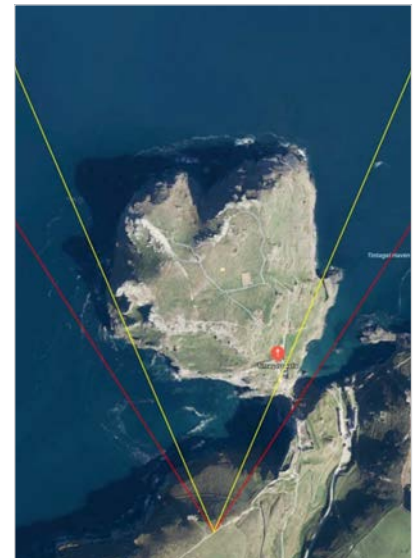
Adobe Lightroom is a well-established software for pro photographers and retouchers, and this mobile version has most of the features of the larger desktop suite. We recommend this for editing your images on the go, ready for sharing to social media. Handily you can save presets, allowing you to quickly enhance images taken in similar lighting. A great introduction to high-end image processing.



### ABANDONED WORLD - URBEX



Urban Exploration (Urbex) is a popular branch of urban photography and this app can help you find great spots to take images in unfamiliar cities. Not only does it support Google Maps integration, making location finding easy, but you can also browse user images and upload your own. A unique app for urban photographers, which is both functional and social.



### LENS PLANNER



If you are new to photography urban environments can be quite intimidating. There is so much to shoot and it's easy to fill the frame with too much information. Lens Planner is a useful app for working out which lens to use by overlaying a guide to field-of-view over a map. This is especially useful when you will be travelling with minimal gear and are unsure which lenses to take.

# BEST URBAN LOCATIONS IN THE WORLD

Discover our selection of the best spots  
around the world for urban images with  
depth and character

*Above*

**Plan ahead**

Before visiting a location you've never been to before, check what other shooting opportunities might be in the area and how best to get to them. Don't miss an image!

© Kiran Reddy



Since urban photography covers such a wide range of image styles, as a photographer you can find incredible image opportunities in the most unlikely of places. From an empty storm drain, to a winding back street and colourful doorways with peeling paint, it's possible to shoot both detailed studies of smaller aspects or frame wider for classic skyline shots. If you're feeling creative you can even forego making

an urban location the main subject altogether and instead use it as a backdrop to a portrait.

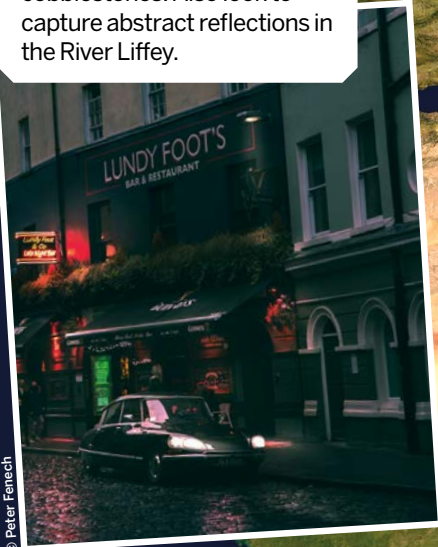
Whatever image you hope to create you need to look beyond the obvious and find unique views of well-shot locations. Here we have rounded up some of the best locations for urban photography of all types from around the globe. Some of these are specific monuments or features, while others are whole regions. While by no means

an exhaustive list, we've picked based on the variety of possible images available at these photo hotspots, as well as some lesser known jewels you might not have thought to explore.

To get the best images, try using these locations in unconventional ways, framing unexpectedly to capture photographs which tell a story. Use these suggestions as a basis for developing your own unique style of urban imagery.

**1 DUBLIN OLD TOWN**  
**WHERE IN THE WORLD:**

Republic of Ireland  
**WEBSITE:** [visitdublin.com](http://visitdublin.com)  
**STATUS:** If you want images with a classic Old World feel, there are plenty of places in Dublin to find interesting buildings and street scenes. After dark the city comes to life, as the lights from the many bars and cafes reflect on the often wet cobblestones. Also look to capture abstract reflections in the River Liffey.



© Peter Fenech

**2 DUBAI SKYLINE**  
**WHERE IN THE WORLD:**

United Arab Emirates  
**WEBSITE:** [visitdubai.com](http://visitdubai.com)  
**STATUS:** Once a sleepy fishing village, Dubai has grown into one of the world's major hub cities, and this wealth is proudly displayed in the city's modern architecture. The classic shot of the skyline shrouded in fog has become a must-see for cityscape photographers, while the historic town offers a stark contrast to the glittering spires of downtown.



© Peter Fenech

**4 FRANKFURT ARCHITECTURE**  
**WHERE IN THE WORLD:**

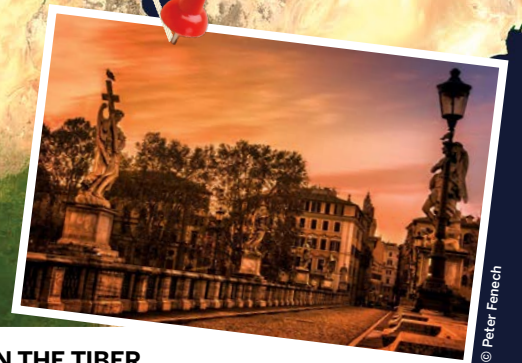
Frankfurt, Germany  
**WEBSITE:** [frankfurt-tourismus.de](http://frankfurt-tourismus.de)  
**STATUS:** Another location often wrongly seen as an airport with a city attached, Frankfurt has much to offer the urban photographer. It too has stark contrasts of architecture, having a rustic old town (Altstadt) and modern financial centre. Areas like Paulsplatz, which hosts the famous Christmas markets, display classic German buildings, while the Main River is a strong feature for photography.



© Kieran Reddy

**5 BRIDGES ON THE TIBER**  
**WHERE IN THE WORLD:**

Rome, Italy  
**WEBSITE:** [rome.net](http://rome.net)  
**STATUS:** When in Rome it can be hard to know what to shoot first. Besides exploring the colourful streets and energetic piazzas (we recommend Piazza Navona and Piazza del Popolo in particular, as they offer multiple image types), the bridges on the Tiber are a stunning feature. For both wider cityscapes and atmospheric texture studies, cinematic shots of Ponte Sant'Angelo are essential.



© Peter Fenech

**6 MDINA**  
**WHERE IN THE WORLD:**

Malta  
**WEBSITE:** [visitmalta.com](http://visitmalta.com)  
**STATUS:** Mdina, affectionately known as the Silent City, is the walled ex-capital of the Mediterranean island of Malta. Even at peak tourist times it's possible to find an empty street and the surprising quiet for which the place is named. Look for detail shots of peeling paint on the many interesting doorways and strong shadows cast by the blazing sun.



© Peter Fenech



### 3 STOCKHOLM METRO

**WHERE IN THE WORLD:** Sweden

**WEBSITE:** [visitsweden.com](http://visitsweden.com)

**STATUS:** Many cities have recognisable metro systems, but Stockholm's subterranean public transport network is home to some incredible architectural wonders. Each station has a unique design and colour theme, making it popular with photographers. Rådhuset, Solna Centrum, T-Centralen and Kungsträdgården Stations – amongst others – all offer art worthy of study through a lens. Above ground check out Prästgatan and other streets too.

### 7 FLAME TOWERS

**WHERE IN THE WORLD:**

Baku, Azerbaijan

**WEBSITE:** [azerbaijan.travel/trip-to-baku](http://azerbaijan.travel/trip-to-baku)

**STATUS:** The capital of Azerbaijan seems not to get the attention it deserves and the Flame Towers are a standout treat in more ways than one. Not only are they architecturally interesting, they also contrast greatly with the surrounding older city, making for great image opportunities. The waterfront should also be on your list.



### 9 DOWNTOWN SHANGHAI

**WHERE IN THE WORLD:** China

**WEBSITE:** [meet-in-shanghai.net](http://meet-in-shanghai.net)

**STATUS:** A sprawling metropolis, Shanghai is one of the biggest cities in China and has become a popular filmmaking destination. Therefore you're in good company shooting urban stills here. The Shanghai Observatory offers panoramic views, while the Jin Mao Tower and World Financial Center are architectural wonders. Furthermore, capture details of the market stalls at the Old City God Temple.



10

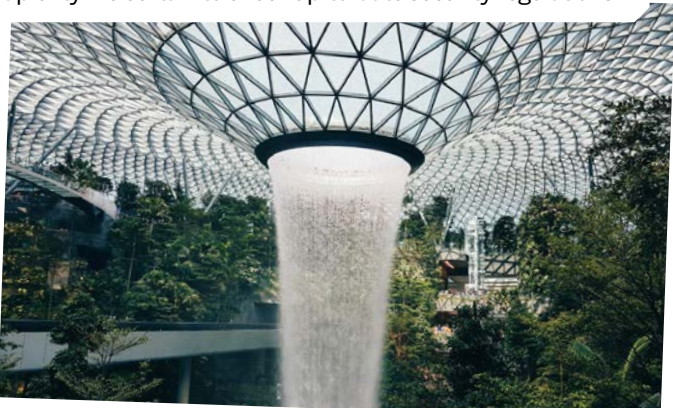
8

### 8 CHANGI AIRPORT

**WHERE IN THE WORLD:** Singapore

**WEBSITE:** [jewelchangiairport.com](http://jewelchangiairport.com)

**STATUS:** An airport might not be the first place you think of for urban exploration, but the unique architecture at the Jewel – an indoor entertainment complex – is well worth a shot for Instagram. Featuring the world largest indoor waterfall, the Jewel, located landside and accessible from all terminals, offers architecture and candid portraiture images aplenty. Be certain to check up-to-date security regulations.



### 10 YIK CHEONG BUILDING

**WHERE IN THE WORLD:** Hong Kong

**WEBSITE:**

[thetowerinfo.com/monster-building-hong-kong](http://thetowerinfo.com/monster-building-hong-kong)

**STATUS:** Another cityscape haven, Hong Kong is defined by its tall buildings and densely populated apartment blocks. The 'Monster Building', otherwise known as the Yik Cheong Building, and its neighbours have become hotspots for urban architectural and cultural imagery. Shoot with ultra-wide or fish-eye lenses to exaggerate the seemingly endless stack of flats, in both daylight and night, for different looks.



© Phyo Hein-Kyaw

© Aleksandar Pasarić

**11 JACKSON STREET BRIDGE**

**WHERE IN THE WORLD:** Atlanta, USA  
**WEBSITE:** discoveratlanta.com  
**STATUS:** Atlanta is largely known internationally for its airport – the home to Delta Airlines and the busiest in the world – however the city itself has much to offer photographers. The iconic image is found on Jackson Street Bridge, looking towards the city centre. The diverging roads allow energetic light trail exposures at night. The surrounding neighbourhoods' craftsman bungalows also deserve attention.



© Nate Hovee

**12 TORONTO**  
**WHERE IN THE WORLD:** CANADA

**WEBSITE:** destinationtoronto.com  
**STATUS:** If you're after unique urban images then Toronto is a great place to explore. While harsh, the bitter Canadian winters produce fantastic cityscape scenes, with flurries of snow illuminated by the bright lights of the tall buildings. Check out the famous Gooderham Building for a blend of old and new, captured in all its winter glory.



© Lianhao Qu

**14 LOS ANGELES**

**WHERE IN THE WORLD:** California, USA  
**WEBSITE:** lacity.org  
**STATUS:** An Instagram influencer's paradise, LA is known for its palm-lined boulevards and hazy sunsets. The city offers many true urban opportunities, with classic images consisting of evening skies through chain link fences and light filtering down the iconic creeks. There are plenty of detail shots and wider vistas available. The night skyline is truly cinematic too.



© Anas Hirde

**15 BOURBON STREET**  
**WHERE IN THE WORLD:**

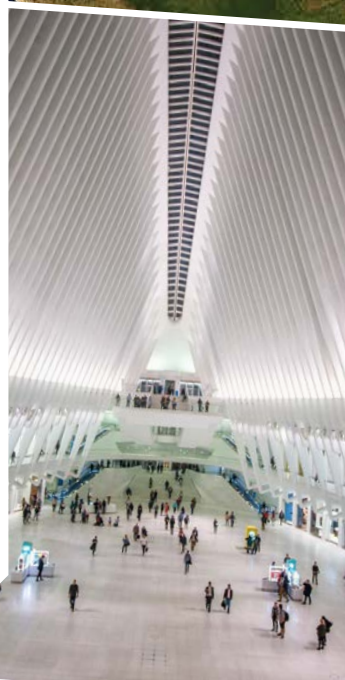
New Orleans, USA  
**WEBSITE:** neworleans.com  
**STATUS:** The 'Big Easy' is well known for its vibrant culture and this makes it a fantastic location for urban imagery. Bourbon St is as ornate as it is colourful and the surrounding downtown area is incredibly atmospheric. Pick out details in the iconic balconies and then explore the French Quarter for a stunning contrast to the city.



© Rosie Kerr

**16 WORLD TRADE CENTRE MALL**  
**WHERE IN THE WORLD:** NEW YORK, USA  
**WEBSITE:**

wtc.com, westfield.com/westfieldworldtradecenter  
**STATUS:** There are countless spots in New York for great urban images. Start with the architecture of the WTC Mall, which has become a must-have shooting location. Use a wide-angle lens to make the modern space feel cavernous. Also explore the famous Brooklyn spot at Water Street and Washington Street for the iconic image of the Washington Bridge and surrounding alleys.



© Mikl Czatti



© Peter Fenech



### 13 CITY OF LONDON

**WHERE IN THE WORLD:** England, UK

**WEBSITE:** [cityoflondon.gov.uk](http://cityoflondon.gov.uk)

**STATUS:** The financial district of London is one of the busiest and most important in the world and as such the architecture is impressively soaring. Due to the historic need to preserve a panoramic view of St Paul's Cathedral, the newer buildings have some unique designs. At weekends the city is almost deserted, opening up plenty of architecture and street picture opportunities.

13

19 20

### 17 BARRI GÒTIC

**WHERE IN THE WORLD:**

Barcelona, Spain

**WEBSITE:** [barcelona-tourist-guide.com](http://barcelona-tourist-guide.com)

**STATUS:** The Gothic quarter of Barcelona is a paradise for travel and urban photographers. The historic buildings shout to be photographed, while the cafes and restaurants draw tourists and locals alike, providing opportunities for candid and reportage imagery. Watch for pools of light in quiet backstreets and colour contrasts in the quaint structures.

17



© Peter Fenech

### 19 MONTMARTRE STEPS

**WHERE IN THE WORLD:**

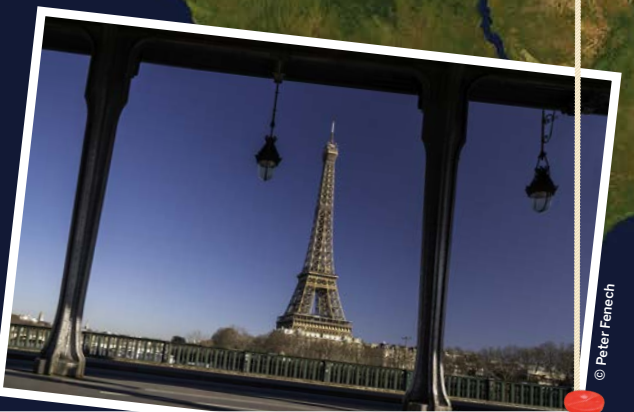
Paris, France

**WEBSITE:** [parisinfo.com](http://parisinfo.com)

**STATUS:** Montmartre, the artists' quarter of Paris, is defined by its cobbled streets and ornate lamps, creating a fairytale-like atmosphere. The buildings themselves deserve attention, but also look out for street artists and the market stalls in the Place du Tertre. Pay a visit to the famous steps at Lamarck-Caulaincourt Station and Le Consulat – one of the most recognisable street corners in Paris.



© Peter Fenech



© Peter Fenech

### 18 HAVANA STREET LIFE

**WHERE IN THE WORLD:** Cuba

**WEBSITE:** [cubatravel.cu/en](http://cubatravel.cu/en)

**STATUS:** Shots of Havana have become synonymous with travel photography. For the purposes of urban shooting, however, thinking like a local is the best approach. Concentrate on colour depth and shoot the famous classic cars, balconies and leafy street scenes. A 35mm or 50mm lens will likely come in handy for most images.

© Martin Große



### 20 BIR-HAKEIM BRIDGE

**WHERE IN THE WORLD:** Paris, France

**WEBSITE:** [parisinfo.com](http://parisinfo.com)

**STATUS:** Another iconic location in downtown Paris is the Pont de Bir-Hakeim – a bridge over the Seine offering tremendous views of the Eiffel Tower and providing many opportunities for study in its own right. The steps down from the Metro station of the same name is architecturally interesting and it's a great people-watching spot, too.

# WHY SHOTS WORK

**NAME:** Bladerunner Hong Kong

**DATE:** March 2013 (Helipad),  
July 2012 (City)

**KIT:**

- 📷 Nikon D800
- 📷 Nikkor 14-24mm f/2.8 (Helipad)
- 📷 Nikkor 70-200mm f/2.8 VR II (City)
- 📷 Tripod

**WEBSITE:** [danielcheongphotography.com](http://danielcheongphotography.com)

**HELIPAD:**



**CITY:**



“In my opinion, Hong Kong is closest in looks to the Los Angeles depicted in *Bladerunner*, but I felt it needed an interesting foreground”

**MATCHING PERSPECTIVE**

With any composite image, it is critical to ensure that all of the component features share the same perspective. While it is easier to shoot all images at the same focal length, this may not always be possible if collecting separately shot assets, so use scaling to size each object accordingly. “The most tedious task was to cut out the helipad in the original shot, particularly on the edge of the helipad where you have all the openings,” says Daniel Cheong.

## The Pro: Daniel Cheong



Born in Mauritius, originally of Chinese descent, and a French national, Daniel is an award-winning photographer and expert in digital blending techniques. His job in telecoms requires him to travel extensively and allows him to explore many cities. He runs regular photo workshops, online and overseas.



© Daniel Cheong

**COLOUR GRADING**

“Being a big fan of the Cyberpunk movie genre, especially the *Bladerunner* movie (1984), I wanted to create a tribute image,” says Daniel. “I like the sci-fi mood of this image, but I needed to give it a cyberpunk colour grading.” With many nighttime cityscapes, especially cinematic images for movie posters and advertising, a warm cast to the highlights and cool blues in the shadows is a common choice. First, set the style of the base image, then adapt all elements to this, for continuity.



### **WIDE DYNAMIC RANGE**

Shooting night cityscapes is a challenge for auto-exposure systems, due to the extreme contrast between bright artificial light and the deep shadows and dark sky. Bracketing and blending exposures is an essential technique for this kind of image. "In general, for my cityscapes, I always shoot multiple exposures at different shutter speeds, which I combine in Photoshop using Digital Blending. This allows me to create an image with a high dynamic range," Daniel says. Work on each element individually, then apply a global process on the final composite.

### **CONTRASTING TEXTURE (MOVEMENT)**

With any stationary subjects, a city being the embodiment of permanence, adding in a sense of movement creates a pleasing contrast. Here, the moving clouds add to the cinematic narrative Daniel was creating. He added a blur to the sky to simulate a long exposure and introduced a fog effect to increase the dramatic, science-fiction effect, also a contrast of hard and soft textures.



# STORY BEHIND THE STILL



**Photographer's name:** Melanie Viola  
**Website:** [www.melanieviola-fotodesign.de](http://www.melanieviola-fotodesign.de)  
**Image location:** New York City, Brooklyn, USA  
**Type of commission:** Commercial  
**Shot details:** Canon EOS 5D Mark III, 70-200mm,  
5 x 75s, f/16, ISO 100

*Above*

## **Dark city**

Melanie stitched five vertically shot segments to create this panorama. With such a time-consuming shot it is important to plan your composition well in advance of starting the shoot to maximise your efficiency



All images © Melanie Viola

**About the shot:** I am a full-time-artist (digital art and photography) and always plan my travelling to shoot for my commercial portfolio weeks and months beforehand. This helps me to get the most out of them.

It's been five years since I visited NYC, so it was time to go there again and take new pictures. It's such a fast-paced city, there's always something new to see – especially the Lower Manhattan skyline with the new World Trade Center building. For this shot I wanted to show the urban beauty and quietness in the

evening of this otherwise-bustling city. This waterfront promenade in Brooklyn Bridge Park is very large, and from many spots there are spectacular views of the Manhattan skyline.

There are challenges, though. Unfortunately, people often take a picture with the flash of their cell phone or compact camera on, right next to me. This is quite annoying, especially when taking long-exposure panoramic pictures, because of the time-consuming shots. However, with a bulb picture like this, flashlights rarely harm the final result.

This impression is stitched together from five vertical images. They were taken about one and a half hours after sunset, so it was getting quite dark at that time. The lights of Lower Manhattan's skyline are reflecting on the East River. I raised the Exposure and adjusted the Highlights and Shadows. Then a bit more Clarity and Vibrance were added. To get a special look into the night scene I added some colour gradients, selectively removed with a Quick Mask and a Brush tool. Finally, a vignette was created.

## Verity Milligan



Verity is a pro landscape and commercial photographer based near the city of Birmingham, UK. She currently shoots with Canon kit and is an ambassador for Zeiss lenses and LEE Filters. Verity also leads workshops with Light and Land.

[www.veritymilliganphotography.com](http://www.veritymilliganphotography.com)  
@veritymilligan

# Seeing the city

Words by: Lauren Scott

Join **Verity Milligan** on a walking tour of Birmingham, in search of abstract urban frames and inspiration from her favourite locations



To say it is hot when I meet Verity for our shoot in the city of Birmingham, UK is an understatement. You'll often hear pro photographers say that the middle of a sunny day is a difficult time in which to shoot – it can lead to unwanted contrast, blown-out highlights and saturation – but on the flip side of that, real creativity can come out of a lighting challenge.

As a regular columnist, Verity's writing often focuses on subverting the 'rules' of photography and capturing something that's enjoyable and

creative, rather than necessarily classic. I'm confident then, that we can capture an array of images despite the heat and the direct sunlight that we find ourselves in, as we recreate a walking route that Verity uses for some of her popular workshops.

On the way to our first location, I start the conversation by asking – although perhaps I no longer should – how the last year or so has been for Verity, and how she dealt with lockdown as a pro landscape photographer confined to home. Thankfully, her shoots have picked up now that lockdown is over, with

Verity having spent the previous morning capturing a series of black and white architecture shots for a client.

Commercial shoots make up a large part of Verity's work, but she's more well known (on Instagram at least) for her landscape scenes. "I'm not a natural city dweller, but Birmingham has been really good to me," she says. "That's the pull. The people have been good at giving me work. It has mostly come through social media; I built up a nice audience around 2014-15, and that has stuck with me. I am quite lucky

in the sense that I haven't had to pitch yet, but I know that it's coming. I'm terrified of that."

Some photographers are purely creatives, while others achieve success thanks to a strong head for business. Pros have to be good at the technical side of taking pictures, but they also have to be adept at marketing themselves and their work too. This isn't something that comes naturally to Verity. She describes herself as 'unbusinesslike', which comes from feeling uncomfortable at pushing her work on anyone. "I'm not a good salesman. I



LIBRARY REFLECTIONS

© Verity Milligan

## Shooting with aperture priority

With her Canon EOS R5 set to Av mode and a narrow aperture, Verity is free to compose creatively

Adjusting the aperture of your lens is one of the key ways to influence how an image turns out. Verity prefers shooting in Aperture Priority exposure mode, where she will predetermine the desired aperture and let the camera control the shutter speed. “Most of the time, I’ll control the settings through Exposure Compensation anyway. A lot of people love to shoot Manual, which is fine, but for me, it’s a bit unnecessary for stuff like this. It takes your mind out of the composition and into the technical. I just fell into this way of exposing really early.”



Verity favours the use of a mid-range aperture setting and a low ISO sensitivity. “Depending on where I am, the aperture is set at f/9-f/11,” she shares

can’t even get my head around selling calendars. I used to do one, but I didn’t want to push it on people.”

Early on, I’m surprised to find out that the pandemic of 2020 was destined to be Verity’s first full year as a freelancer – not least because of the unfortunate timing, but it’s also surprising because Verity has been sharing her work for many years and creating images for the best part of a decade.

“It was just the first year that I was fully freelance without having anything else alongside,” she says. “I used to lecture in fiction narratives and filmmaking. That was where I started, basically.”

Verity has also been teaching photography since the mid-2010s, and currently leads workshops for Light and Land ([www.lightandland.co.uk](http://www.lightandland.co.uk)), the UK’s premier tour company set up by the renowned Charlie Waite and Sue Bishop. “They have a nice clientele, so sessions get booked up really quickly,” she explains.

Our first shooting location features on Verity’s city workshops. Gas Street Basin canal is one of her favourites,

thanks to the juxtaposition of old and new buildings in the frame.

She tries several setups here. The first involves her Gitzo tripod, a 21mm lens, and a 0.9 graduated neutral density filter to balance the exposure between the sky and the canal. Verity also works handheld with the Canon 70-200mm telephoto lens, looking for abstract patterns in the water or honed in compositions at a compressed perspective.

Although Verity has shot at Gas Street Basin hundreds of times before, she’s a firm believer in returning to locations at different times of the year or the day. A change in weather conditions, such as fog, can create a whole new atmosphere, as can a change in lens. This approach is particularly helpful if you can’t fit travel into your everyday life. Look for locations closer to home, visit often, and look for a new element to shoot every time you visit.

After exhausting image possibilities at stop one, next, we head to Centenary Square, a public area that features the Library of Birmingham, tram lines and a pool of fountains – plenty of visual treats and lines for the eye.



LIBRARY OF BIRMINGHAM

© Verity Willigan



## The shooting gear that Verity uses

### 1 Canon EOS R5

Verity recently traded in her 30.1-megapixel full-frame Canon EOS 5D Mark IV for the mirrorless R5. She does also have the Canon 5DSR, but will only carry them both about if she's on a commercial shoot, for peace of mind.

### 2 Canon TS-E 17mm f/4L lens

An uncommon optic, this ultra-wide tilt-shift can be used to correct the converging lines in cities or interiors for a more pleasing perspective. Verity uses it for her shots of architecture.

### 3 Canon EF70-200mm f/2.8L IS III USM lens

Fond of an abstract image, Verity will use a telephoto lens at around 150mm focal length to compress elements in the scene, such as reflections.

### 4 Zeiss 21mm f/2.8 lens

Verity is an ambassador for Zeiss, and also has the Zeiss Milvus 1.4/25 ZE in her arsenal. Although both lenses offer a wide maximum aperture, Verity often chooses to shoot at around f/10 for maximum detail.

**5 Gitzo tripod** Although this model is heavy (and was an investment at the time), Verity favours the stability that her solid carbon fibre tripod and head allow her for landscapes. It's a boon when shooting in windy conditions.

**6 LEE Filters** Verity likes to capture the majority of her effects in-camera, leaning on the use of LEE Filters' polariser and Big Stopper neutral density filter. She also has an adapter ring.

## Wide angles are so hard for viewers to look at if there's nothing to lead them into the image

"Here, in terms of compositional elements, there are loads of things to hone in on", says Verity, as we stand in front of the water pool. "The biggest thing for me is the reflections, but the number of poles can be frustrating. The challenge for people is always 'how are you going to compose, taking into account that you can't get rid of the poles?' A lot of city photography – wherever you are shooting – is about looking how the architecture fits into the surrounding landscape."

This particular urban square features a War Memorial, plus attractions such as the ICC, Birmingham Rep and the Symphony Hall. But it's the library (and reflections of the library) that Verity focuses on today.

"There's a lot of life happening. Here, again, you can capture abstracts in the water as well. There are always lots of kids running through it, where you get some ripples appearing. Obviously, cities aren't just about the buildings."

With a 145mm focal length, Verity points her camera towards the water, isolating the circles on the library's outer shell in the water below (see *top of p16*) while a Canon EF24-70mm f/2.8L USM takes a profile shot of the library from a side-on view.

"I do a lot of lens switching, which can be helped by having two camera bodies. I have the

Canon 5DSR but don't always want to carry them both about. If I'm on a commercial shoot, I'll take both, though," she says. Verity uses Canon kit but has tried out Nikon, Fujifilm and Olympus systems in the past. "I love the Fuji glass, but I'm so small, I can't exactly carry every system around with me."

On a workshop, she doesn't dictate what people should shoot but lets her attendees roam. "A lot of the time, I keep my camera in my bag, as I'm conscious that it can take the focus away from them," she explains.

Just as she is keen to experiment in her own work, Verity is keen to encourage thinking in portrait mode when people have their heads stuck in landscape. "A lot of people come on landscape workshops with a wide-angle and think they're going to shoot like that the whole time. In terms of composition advice, I start with 'it's what you leave out that's more important'. Which sounds like a gimmick, but it works. Pare down the frame and think about what to leave in or out. That's why I like the 21mm focal length – it's not ultra-wide, and it gives me the option of tightening the frame up."

To get around the tendency to shoot everything wide, Verity also suggests bringing along an alternative lens. "A lot of the time, I'm shooting my own images



GAS STREET BASIN



## Shoot through the seasons

Verity returns to her favourite urban locations throughout the year to find new ways of capturing them



Fresh snow  
December 2020



Sunrise  
January 2020



Blue Hour  
March 2019



BIRMINGHAM CATHEDRAL

## Verity's shifty steps for this straight-up cathedral scene



**1 Set the tripod at the right level**  
A tripod is helpful to set a sturdy base, from which you can set up a firm composition and tweak manual focus. First, choose a height to shoot at.



**2 Mount a tilt-shift lens** This optic ensures the verticals of the cathedral are straight at a wide angle. Shift the lens up to counter distortion, using Live View to check the result.



**3 Add a filter** Verity uses a circular polariser to darken the sky and bring out greens on sunny days. A LEE Filters adapter ring enables her to get over the dome shape of the lens.



© Verity Milligan



### Finding her framing

Verity used these overhanging trees to frame the cathedral and cover some of the bright sky overhead. Turn to our composition feature on p36 for more framing advice

at 50-70mm. Wide angles are so hard for viewers to look at if there's nothing to lead them into the image."

We carry on our journey through a new development called Paradise Birmingham and take in Chamberlain Square, a quintessential example of a place where old architecture sits with new. Juxtaposition – including a contrast of old and modern buildings in your frame – is a fantastic tool to use when photographing in a city, as it helps to accentuate its unique character and tell a story or history.

While Verity would use a tighter crop in areas such as this, our last stop in Birmingham, the 18th-century St Philip's Cathedral, requires an extra-wide approach and a tilt-shift technique to correct converging lines (below).

Verity describes herself as "the latest in a long line of conduits for the natural world." But it's clear that the urban world can be a special place for playing with light.

Her latest post is an ode to the city in the early morning sunshine. While one user complained that Verity's photos of Birmingham were "too pretty", her caption at least encapsulates her approach to picture-making, and perhaps why her images are so popular.

"Every city has its problems," she says. "I'm a photographer, I see light and I like to capture it... that's the extent of it. So here's a shot of some lovely light, Birmingham — despite the grumbles, you were darn lovely in the early summer light."

Lovely, too, was the shoot, so look out for more of Verity's work and workshops in the next year.



**4 Focus and compose** Verity uses Live View to compose her scene. The tilt-shift lens requires manual focus, so once the framing is set, she zooms in to 100% on the screen to fine-tune the focus point.



**5 Camera settings** Using an Aperture Priority Exposure mode, Verity sets an aperture of f/11 and an ISO of 100. She also uses a two-second timer delay to avoid movement while pressing the shutter.



**6 Keep editing simple** Once your parameters are set, take several images and check the results. A polarising filter can reduce light, so you may need to add a few stops of positive exposure compensation.

INSPIRATION

# London in lockdown

Lauren Scott and Kav Dadfar catch the winter light and city sights on a stock shoot in London. Here's what happened on the day





## Kav Dadfar



UK-based travel and landscape pro Kav shoots on assignment for editorial and commercial clients, and stock for high-end agencies. He has written over 400 articles on photography, judges a major travel photo contest, and leads tours and workshops worldwide with the company That Wild Idea.

@dadfar\_photography  
www.dadfarphotography.com



Before we delve into this article, I just want to reassure our readers that every step has been taken to ensure COVID safety. Our shoot has been planned to be outside at all times during the day, as we take in the familiar sights of London's riverbanks, without its usual throng of tourists, traffic and madness.

Now that caveat is aside, let's start by saying how glorious – and eerie – London is in lockdown for photography. Our shoot is taking place in early January, and I'm going to meet travel pro Kav Dadfar to capture stock images of the city. It might sound like a paradox to say that London comes alive when you take out its pace and noise, but the peace brings out elements, views and even buildings you might never have noticed before – which is ideal, as I'm told that the

success to stock photography is to keep showing new things.

Kav Dadfar is not only an accomplished photographer and workshop leader (see [www.thatwildidea.co.uk](http://www.thatwildidea.co.uk)) but, as I find out when we meet at Paddington Station, an incredibly busy writer.

We start with a walk along to Little Venice, and while chat first turns to the freezing temperature – we agree that “it's always better to be warmer rather than colder” when it comes to outdoor shoots – Kav then tells me how he's been writing more this year, as his travel work has been put on hold.

“I always feel a bit guilty when I talk about this, but I actually had a really good year, financially. I write about 10-15 articles a month for various clients and websites, so I just spent more time on that side of things. I ended up having my best year, but most of that was from writing. Obviously with our workshops – we had seven or eight booked around the world – we just had to cancel them. But at least I had the writing to fall back on.”

I ask Kav if he sends article ideas to clients, or do they come to him? “Most of the time I do have to pitch ideas to clients, which takes a considerable amount of time. I tend to write a lot for company blogs, though, and once you know what they want, it becomes a lot easier.

“People think that when you're a professional photographer, most

© Kav Dadfar





## Make sure you keep a shotlist

Kav reveals what images he shoots for libraries, and how he comes up with fresh ideas and material

Stock photography is a much more saturated market than it used to be (turn to our career advice on p72), but there are always subjects that need covering. Kav finds it important to keep a specific shot list for his stock photography, as this helps him to make the most of each shoot.

He shows me a 'wants' list from one of the image libraries that he works with. "They've sent me this with specific places that they need. So what I'll tend to do is go through this list and make ideas around it. For an iconic shop, for example, one shot would be the front, but then you also want the interiors. Obviously it's not something I can cover at the moment, but if it was, I'd want to make sure that I was allowed to shoot by prior arrangement."



Kav shoots events and ceremonies for stock, as well as specific locations. He makes sure to cover them from a range of focal lengths and perspectives

of the time you're taking pictures. But actually you're not. Most of your time is spent running a business – when you're doing the admin stuff and sending out invoices to people, pitching ideas and researching locations."

The word 'successful' can have many different meanings, but perhaps the most resilient photographers are those who have several strings to their bow, something that Kav is definitely an example of. By offering a full package to clients, he's been able to enjoy a successful career. "It's coming up to around 15 years that I've been shooting, but I'd say about 10 of those have been as a full-time photographer."

Kav is originally from London, where he also went to art college and then worked as an art director in advertising after university. "I left advertising to go travelling around the world, and that restarted my passion for photography. When I came back I had a few contacts from my advertising days, luckily, but it was a mix of doing photography that would pay the bills, and what I wanted to shoot, which was travel photography."

Take one glance at Instagram, and it feels like travel photography

is a very saturated market now. "One thing that has happened in the last 10 years is that there are a lot more, better photographers. There's so much more inspiration out there for people to aspire to."

For those just starting out in the industry and feeling swamped by the competition, Kav encourages people not to price themselves too low – at first, anyway: "I would never recommend that people give their work away for free regularly, but if you're trying to build that relationship it might be worth it the first time. It can be difficult for a client who doesn't know you, your work, and doesn't trust you, to commission you on something. Whereas you could say to them that you're willing to do it on a reduced fee or one-off freebie. I think everyone has to start out somewhere, and judging where something is worth doing for a reduced fee can lead to more work in the long run."

"Personally I don't think anyone can survive just relying purely on taking pictures," he adds, and suggests that this is why so many photographers offer workshops, tuition, prints, and calendars.

Kav now lives outside the capital in Surrey, and he'd been up to London the day before we



f/8 ISO 800 1/320 sec

ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL



STOCK SHOTS IN LONDON

f/10 ISO 320 1/250 sec

TOWER BRIDGE



f/8 ISO 500 1/320 sec

MILLENNIUM FOOTBRIDGE

## INSPIRATION



## The gear in Kav's camera backpack

### 1 Canon 5D Mark IV

"When the Mark III came out, I debated whether to upgrade from the Mark II. By the time I'd debated, they released this! Image quality is superb at high ISOs – better than the Mark II, which I now use as a backup camera."

### 2 Lowepro ProTactic 450

"I can fit all my camera gear, a 15-inch MacBook and an iPad, and the bag is accepted as carry-on, which is ideal when travelling. On location, it can hold my tripod with quick and easy release. I also use the bag as a stand to rest my camera on."

### 3 Canon EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS II USM

"If I could use one lens for the rest of my life it would be this. I use it for travel portraits, but also landscape photography, as I like the compressed perspective that it gives."

### 4 Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8L II USM

"I'd say 95 per cent of the travel images I take are with my Mark IV and this versatile lens. The wide maximum aperture is super-helpful in low light."

### 5 LEE 100 filter system

"It is rare for me to take a landscape shot without a filter attached. I use a LEE square-filter system, but I also do have a few K&F screw-in neutral density filters as backup. I use LEE's Little Stopper and Big Stopper ND filters for long exposures, and also have some graduated ND filters to tone down bright skies."

### 6 Manfrotto 055CXP03

"I've had this for over 10 years now, and it's indestructible. I have dropped this so many times, and have even hit it with my car. The ball head is welded shut to the tripod now."

meet. His plan is to spend several days capturing and ticking off things on his stock photography list, which is something he uses to plan routes and maximise his time on a shooting location.

Moving on from Little Venice – which is a little too quiet for what Kav needs – we spend the rest of our day carrying out a loop of London's riverbank, starting at Waterloo Station and The Southbank Centre, followed by Borough Market, St Paul's Cathedral, Tower Bridge, and Millennium Footbridge.

Kav is dressed in multiple layers to keep out the British winter, but he knows how to dress up or down to avoid being stopped by security staff. "Sometimes you do have to look the part as well. So, for example, if I was going to shoot in a famous shop, I would probably take just my camera, no backpack, and take the lens hood off so that my kit becomes smaller and I look like a tourist."

While taking photos in a public place isn't against the law, you'd be surprised how many areas in a city are privately owned – think parks outside offices, and tourist spots such as the Millennium Wheel and Tower Bridge.

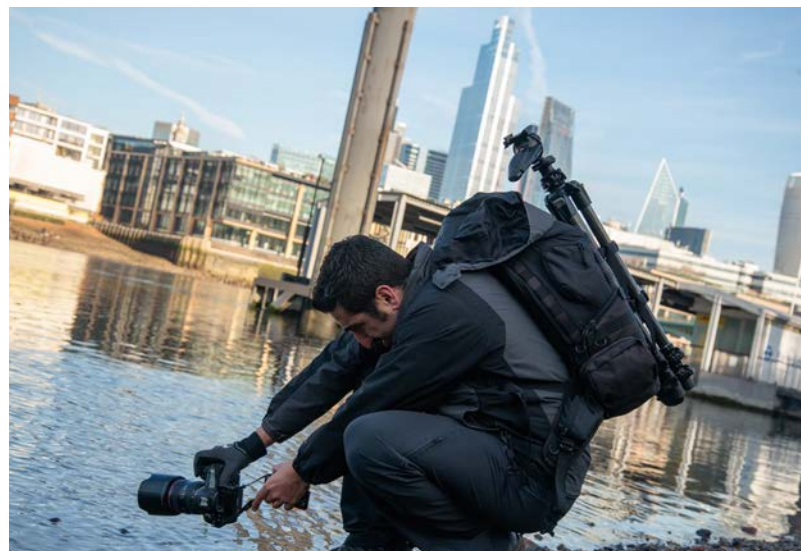
"Obviously with a lot of places in London, you're not allowed tripods," Kav reminds me, as we capture St Paul's Cathedral from the mirrored view of a shopping centre. He uses his bag as a tripod instead, resting the camera on top to avoid camera shake.

"For stock photography, the first thing I'll do is look and get the composition, whether it's going to be portrait or landscape, low or high to the ground." In terms of camera settings, Kav generally



shoots in Aperture Priority mode, only switching to Manual exposure when a tripod and filters become involved.

What about focus? "For anything moving, I'll set the camera to AI Servo, Continuous Focusing mode, and use One Shot





MILLENNIUM FOOTBRIDGE

## Kav's five tips for stock shots

- 📸 **Shoot everything** "From statues to hotel fronts to food, try to capture as many things as possible. You never know when someone will be looking for a very specific photo."
- 📸 **Look beyond the obvious** "Don't be afraid to try something different. Lower angles or new vantage points might give you a more unique photo."
- 📸 **Keep costs low** "Often, photographing places near you will earn you more money in the long run."
- 📸 **Capture different versions** "Frame your shot in both horizontal and vertical versions, with your point of interest on the left, the right, in the centre. Shoot versions with more sky or more foreground."
- 📸 **Captions and keywords are vital** "Even the best photos will not sell if they can't be found by picture buyers. So don't be lazy, and keyword every photo correctly."



x2 © Kav Dardar

INSPIRATION



**ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL**

© Kav Dadfar



**New perspective**  
Kav explores different angles of London's skyline by stepping down to river level

Focus when I'm on a tripod."

Kav's key piece of advice for stock photographers is to shoot a subject – even a tourist spot as famous as Tower Bridge – from as many different angles, heights, lights, and using as many techniques as possible. "The time of year, day and atmosphere can all come together to create something new."

As we travel along the banks of the River Thames, Kav takes us down some steps so that we're at river level, presenting a whole new view of the skyline to me, and to his camera, in order to capture new stock photos of the Millennium Footbridge.

We've been blessed with a day of crisp, clear light, which is fading into a gentle sunset as we get ready to pack up. At this point, Kav sets up his tripod at the riverbank and takes advantage of the calmer waters of the Thames without tourist boats.

With his DSLR mounted on a tripod, Kav uses a neutral density filter to balance the brighter

sky, and relies on the camera's Evaluative Metering system. It takes a series of readings across the whole frame to come up with an average exposure value, and is reliable in most landscape scenes.

"I'm using a timer delay to avoid camera shake, and checking the histogram as I go to avoid clipping any highlights in the sky. I generally don't look at the photo; I look at the histogram instead.

"For stock, I'm really looking for vibrant colours and contrast, and I can perhaps get away with boosting the colours more than I would for an editorial piece, which I want to be more truthful."

Although the stock photography market is now a saturated one, Kav remains optimistic that he'll always find fresh images to shoot. "Clients are always looking for new things, new shots of the same places... and I always keep my eye out for new locations. The way I see it, you just need to shoot as many different things as possible."

## Kav's considerations when shooting this scene



**1 Planning** "Previsualise the shot in your mind, and think about your goal. Knowing what shot you want to take will help you to pick the best settings and compositions for the right result."



**2 Composition** "With stock photography you want to try different angles and change your height. I tend to hold the camera up first, and then use Live View when I'm low to the ground."



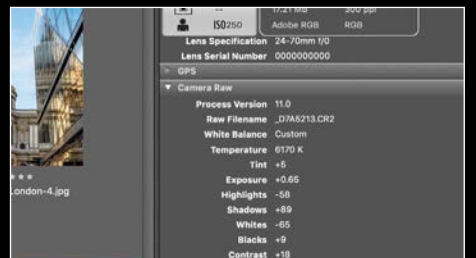
**3 Perspective** "I go through a range of focal lengths at every location if I can. Here, I'm zooming into 30mm using a Canon EF24-70mm f/2.8L USM lens, using a wider view for a symmetrical shot."



**4 Exposure** "I'm using Aperture Priority mode, with a mid aperture of f/7.1 and ISO 160, to give a shutter speed of 1/200sec. The metering mode is Evaluative, and I'll check the histogram for any clipped tones."



**5 Stability** "I'll sometimes use my bag – rather than a tripod – to provide some stability from camera shake. This is helpful for shooting at low angles or in locations where tripods aren't strictly allowed to be set up."



**6 White balance** "I'm using Auto White Balance, and only change to Manual if I'm on a tripod. By shooting images in RAW, it's easy to edit the white balance in Camera Raw later. The edited image is around 6170K."

## CANON PRO David Clapp



Architectural, landscape and travel photographer David, 50, is based in South Devon, but spends much of his time travelling the world with his Canon cameras. As a regular contributor to magazines, he also runs seminars for Canon and his own photography workshops. As such he was the perfect pro to show Linda how to capture great architectural and city photos in Bristol, UK. For more of David's work, and for info about his upcoming workshops, visit:

[www.davidclapp.co.uk](http://www.davidclapp.co.uk)  
[www.patreon.com/davidclapp](http://www.patreon.com/davidclapp)

## APPRENTICE Linda Meaton



Linda is a 70-year-old retired computer-aided design and visualization lecturer, formerly from Bristol and now living in Portishead. She's been an active amateur photographer since 2014 and with her designer background, she has an eye for capturing a great shot. Linda enjoys getting out and photographing architecture with her Canon camera, and asked for our help to improve her photo skills while shooting in her local area.



# BRILLIANT BRISTOL BUILDINGS

Learn how to take better architectural photos as an apprentice spends a day with pro **David Clapp** photographing some of Bristol's hot spots

# TECHNIQUE ASSESSMENT

While on location, David started by showing Linda how to set up her DSLR for sharper shots of buildings



**APERTURE PRIORITY**

"I helped Linda get her Canon EOS 80D set in Aperture Priority (Av) mode. This helped ensure that her aperture was always around f/8 to f/11 for good depth of field, getting us sharp scenes and buildings in Bristol," explained David. "In Av mode, you set the aperture, and ISO (100-200) and your camera sets the shutter speed for what it thinks will be a standard exposure."



**FOCUS TO INFINITY AND BEYOND!**

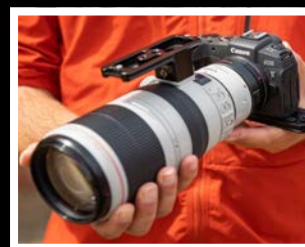
David explains why he focuses with the infinity marker for sharp shots, and also why the infinity focus marker on lenses is L-shaped: "Due to the complexity of lenses, temperature can cause the shifting of the infinity focusing point, by the expansion and retraction of metal components. The L-shaped zone at the end of the focusing range is there for exactly that purpose – to allow infinity focus at all times, should heat or cold cause the infinity point to drift."



## TOP GEAR #1

### Canon EOS mirrorless camera

David's a big Canon advocate and uses Canon EOS DSLRs, and both EOS R and EOS M mirrorless cameras! "To lighten my load when we're walking around on location, I bring along my faithful EOS RP mirrorless. It's small and compact, but packs a punch and delivers sharp shots with its 26-megapixel full-frame sensor. I still mostly use Canon EF lenses, so I just use the EF-EOS R mount adapter to use them on my RP," smiles David.



## DAVID'S COMMENT



"We started off photographing Bristol's colourful terraced houses, which is best to shoot from the other side of the river, at Bristol Marina near the SS Great Britain. Although it's tempting to shoot horizontally with a very wide-angle lens to include the entire rows of houses, I prefer to focus on certain elements of a city scene. As such, I zoomed to around 50mm and shot vertically instead to focus on the most colourful houses behind. The foreground felt empty, so I positioned myself to include the colourful bow of a canal boat for a more balanced composition. An aperture of f/8 has ensured that the whole scene is sharp."

## PRO TIP

### AEB SETUP

"Bracketing your exposures (also known as AEB – Auto Exposure Bracketting) is a great tool, especially if shooting on a sunny high-contrast day, as you can take a series of shots to expose for the highlights, mid-tones and shadows, and then pick the best exposure, or you have the option to combine them to create a high dynamic range (HDR) image," explains David. "Depending on your camera, you'll be able to shoot up to -/+5-stops, but usually around -/+2-stops when bracketing will capture enough detail in shadows and highlight areas."





## TOP GEAR #2

### Telephoto zoom lens

David likes to use his Canon EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS II USM telephoto zoom lens for closer compositions of interesting parts of buildings or buildings in the distance. "It's super sharp and reliable, and I can confidently shoot at 400mm handheld at an aperture of around f/11 and always get sharp shots thanks to the Image Stabilization," explains David.



### EXPERT INSIGHT

## Cropping aspect ratio

"When teaching amateur photographers on my workshops, I encourage them to experiment with different techniques with their cameras, like trying different aspect ratios, as sometimes a shot will work better as a square or panoramic format, rather than standard 3:2 photo format," explains David. "On my EOS RP I can set the Cropping/Aspect ratio in the menu from Full to 1:1, 4:3 or 16:9, which then shows crop marks on the screen when it comes to reviewing images."





## TOP GEAR #3

### 1.4x teleconverter

David also uses a Canon EF Extender 1.4x III to multiply the focal length of his Canon EF 100-400mm telephoto zoom to become a massive 560mm at the long end when full zoomed in. "With the addition of the Extender, it means I have more photographic options to focus on distant objects and buildings. It's also a tiny bit of kit that's no bother to stash in my bag," says David. He also uses the EF-EOS R mount adapter so he can use the Extender and/or EF 100-400mm on his EOS RP camera.



## LINDA'S COMMENT



"Following David's lead I framed up on parts of the rows of colourful houses in Bristol's marina. Shooting at 55mm on my crop-sensor Canon EOS 90D with the EF-S 55-250mm lens created an effective focal length of 88mm, which was enough reach to compose for the two rows of houses across the river. I was having trouble getting sharp shots, and David worked out my budget polarizer lens was causing my lens to focus inaccurately. We took the filter off, and sharpness instantly improved! I could then concentrate on making sure the verticals were straight."

## David's top tips for better building shots

- 1 Shoot handheld first** Do not tether yourself to the tripod before you know what you want to shoot. Walk around with your camera and make your compositional decisions before attaching it to the tripod.

---

- 2 Sharp shots** Use a sturdy tripod, as this will help make sure your shots are pin-sharp. Also, ensure that each of your shots for panoramas, or bracketed exposures, are taken from exact the same spot.

---

- 3 Use different lenses** Of course, try a wide-angle lens to capture as much of the city scene as possible, but also zoom in to 50mm, 100mm or 400mm to focus on the more interesting details and quirks of the buildings.

---

- 4 Shoot in Raw** For architectural photography, shoot in Raw image quality, as you need the highest quality images possible to reveal the most amount of detail in every tone possible.

---

- 5 Control your apertures** Shoot in Aperture Priority or Manual mode and set a narrow and optimum aperture, such as f/11 or f/8 to ensure your whole scene is in focus from foreground-to-background.

---

- 6 Colour temperature** Set your White Balance (Sunny, Cloudy, depending on conditions) so that your photograph's colour temperatures are consistent.

---

- 7 Self-timer or remote control** When on a tripod, use self-timer (or a cable release) to ensure that you don't touch your camera at the start of the exposures (which could mean blurred results).

---

- 8 Man in the mirror** Again, when on a tripod, and if you're using an EOS DSLR, enable 'Mirror Lockup' in your EOS camera's menu to make doubly sure all your shots are pin-sharp and don't fall victim to miniature movements.

---

- 9 Work the angles** Don't shoot everything face on; choose a 45 degree angle, as this will lend a 3D-feel to your subject and create greater appeal. Remember that each side of the building could show something different.

---

- 10 Learn to use light** Try not to shoot directly into the light, as the buildings will look flat and one-dimensional. If possible, wait for the right time of day for side-lighting, or for the light to highlight the buildings at their best.

### EXPERT INSIGHT

## CROPPING ASPECT RATIO

"When teaching amateur photographers on my workshops, I encourage them to experiment with different techniques with their cameras, like trying different aspect ratios, as sometimes a shot will work better as a square or panoramic format, rather than standard 3:2 photo format," explains David. "On my EOS RP I can set the Cropping/Aspect ratio in the menu from Full to 1:1, 4:3 or 16:9, which then shows crop marks on the screen when it comes to reviewing images."



PRO TIP

## LEVEL TRIPOD LEGS!

For this technique you'll need a spirit level bubble on the top of your tripod legs. Extend all three legs, look at the bubble and shorten one of the legs to position the bubble, so it points at just one leg. Then shorten that leg and the bubble will glide into the centre. The tripod is now level. You'll know it's right as when you turn the head left to right, the bubble stays in place! With your camera mounted, engage the digital spirit level on your camera's screen and check your accuracy.

## TOP GEAR #4

### Infrared-converted camera

"I'm a huge fan of infrared photography. I think it's a beautifully unique way to capture a city scene, and it's a photographic style you just can't replicate in Photoshop," says David. "Most digital cameras contain IR blocking filters, but my infrared-converted EOS 6D camera has this filter removed and another filter installed," explains David.





## DAVID'S COMMENT



"From Bristol Marina we spotted Cabot Tower high up on horizon on Brandon Hill. It was a long way away, but I used my EF 100-400mm lens with EF 1.4x Converter for a 560mm focal length to create a great close-up composition from an unlikely location. Using a narrow aperture of f/11 at a long focal length ensures good depth of field for this distant building. I also used my infrared-converted EOS 6D – while black and white can hide bland skies and lift scenic shots in flat light, IR takes it further to make a seemingly boring scene look brilliant! When the convertor is attached, my minimum aperture is reduced to f/8, but as my 6D's old AF won't focus, I just focused to infinity manually instead."

# HOW TO USE A CANON TS-E TILT-SHIFT LENS

David explains how to use his Canon TS-E 24mm f/4L lens

"I use a Canon TS-E 24mm f/3.5L II tilt-shift lens, which is an amazing optic. With my camera first levelled, the composition 'shifted' around in the viewfinder to keep building verticals straight, just as the eye sees them, which is an essential look for professional architecture photography," says David.



**1** A straight composition of taller structures can often only be taken by pointing the camera up with a wide-angle lens, but this converges the verticals, so the building look like it's leaning back, as the top of the building appears smaller as it's further from the lens. This can be counteracted using the 'shift' function on a tilt-shift lens.



**2** First you need to compose with your camera's spirit level so your camera is straight on and your sensor is parallel to the structure. The camera is now levelled but the building won't fit comfortably in the frame.



**3** You can now shift the lens upwards with the dial on the side of the TS-E lens so the top of the building isn't chopped off at the top, or awkwardly at the top of the frame. For this shot I used 7mm of shift on the lens. Sorted!

## DAVID'S COMMENT



"We headed to Clifton village, and the picturesque Royal York Crescent, most of which are grade II listed buildings. The light had sadly become very flat at this point of the day, but undeterred, I showed Linda how a more abstract approach can work well in these situations. Shooting at 400mm has compressed the perspective to pull the curved, crescent-shaped terraces together. I was careful to keep the verticals straight. Shooting in Av mode at f/11, I used +1-stop of exposure comp to keep the light building colours bright."

## PRO TIP

### COMPOSITION IS KING

"I'd put composition as the most important part of photos, ahead of lighting," says David. "Having an eye for good composition takes practice, but it's fun getting creative. For this shot of Clifton Suspension Bridge, avoiding the obvious wide shot, I shot at 100mm on my IR-converted 6D, and composed vertically to focus on one tower for a cleaner shot."





## TOP GEAR #5

### Pro tripod legs and head

A solid tripod is essential for sharp shots, and for panoramas and bracketing images, as it keeps your camera totally still. "My beefy Gitzo 4542LS offers a good compromise of weight and strength. It has a levelling base with bubble level, perfect for accurate setup using tilt-shift lenses and when stitching panoramas. I use it with a fantastic and versatile Really Right Stuff BH-55 ball head," says David.



## DAVID'S PORTFOLIO IMAGES

Building shots from overseas...



**LISBON ORIENTE, LISBON, PORTUGAL**

This was originally intended to be a super wide-angle shot of the entrance, but this dynamic composition presented itself after leaving a left exit of a shopping mall, the footbridge adding something extra.



**CHICAGO IBM CHICAGO, USA**

Architect Frank Gehry called its \$300m price tag 'budget engineering' – a longer lens composition at 110mm using a big DoF (at f/11) ensures sharpness of the overlapping buildings.



**CHICAGO IBM CHICAGO, USA**

Using a small EOS M3, the upward viewpoint converges all the tower blocks around the IBM tower. Critical alignment is essential, by positioning the camera along the very centre from the pavement below.

### EXPERT INSIGHT

## PANOVISION!

The key to better panoramics is to shoot vertically, so when your sequence of images are merged, you end up with a taller panorama. As explained above, a level tripod

base is also crucial. Then it's about using the 3:2 grid display in Live View to line up for each overlapped image, turning the tripod from left to right to move two-thirds to the next frame as you shoot. For this panoramic shot of Clifton Suspension Bridge, Linda took 10 images, then combined them using Photomerge in Lightroom.





## LINDA'S COMMENT



It was lovely to meet up in the city of Bristol with David for this day of tuition. It was definitely a very fun

day out. I learned a lot about composition and David's lesson on the tripod and how to capture perfect panoramas was especially useful. For this shot, with a little local knowledge, we reached this great view looking up to the wonderfully photographic Clifton Suspension Bridge. I look forward to getting out again soon in some new cities to put my new architectural photography skills into greater practice.

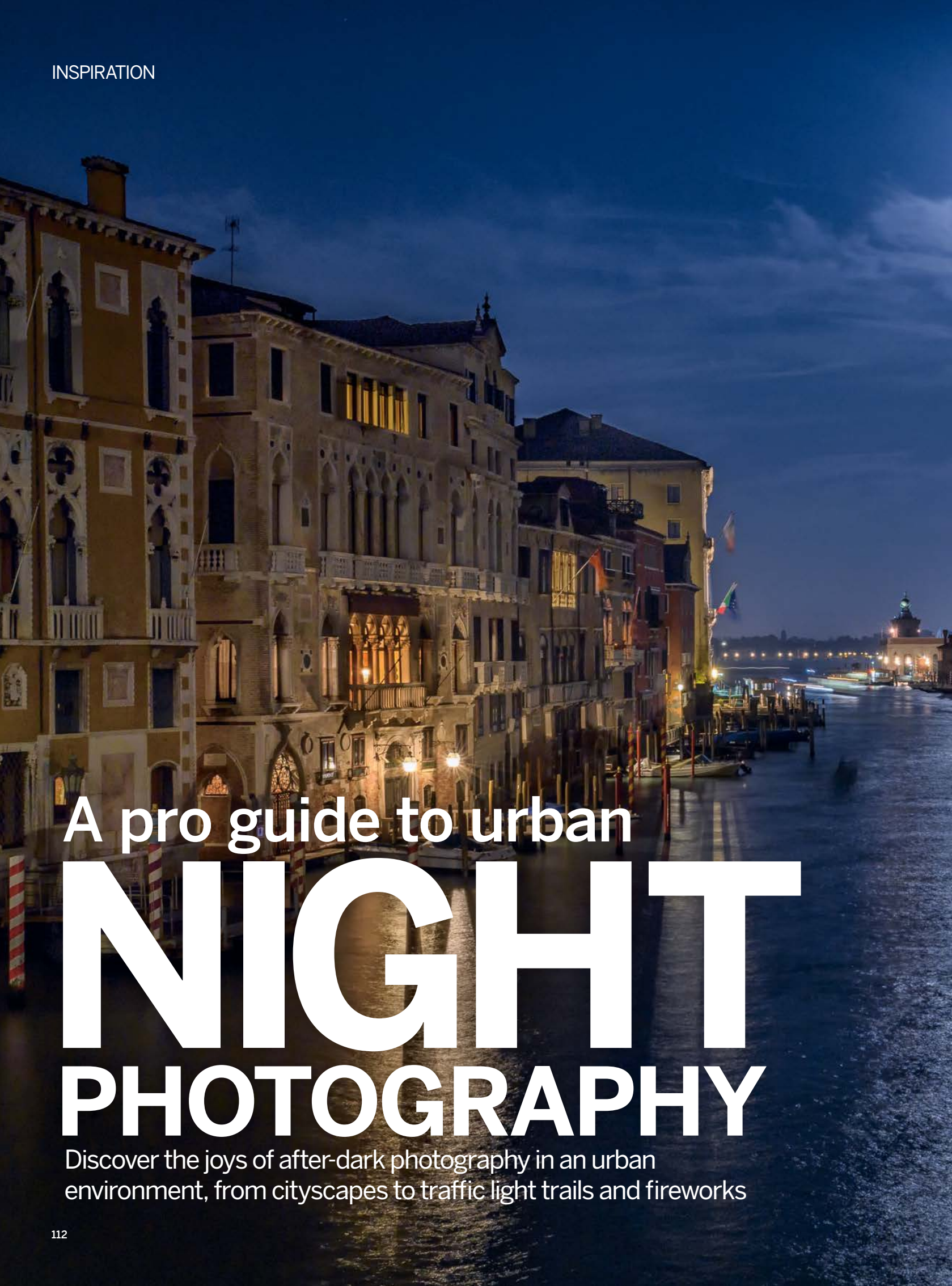
## DAVID'S VERDICT



Linda was a great sport and her designer background means she is blessed with a keen eye for a good photo. Although already an accomplished amateur

photographer, I could see a stronger understanding of key techniques throughout the day. Although we weren't able to shoot at high tide, I was able to use my IR-converted EOS 6D for this shot of Brunel's iconic bridge. IR scenes work best when you have plenty of green foliage which will appear magically white and contrast with darker buildings and skies. By shooting at 50mm with an aperture of f/11, a good depth of field was created, and by focusing a third into the scene, the foreground grass to the distance houses and great bridge are sharp.



A night photograph of a Venetian canal. The buildings on the left are illuminated from within, showing warm yellow light. The water in the canal is dark, reflecting the lights from the buildings and the sky. In the distance, a boat is visible on the water, and a building with a dome is lit up. The sky is a deep blue with some clouds.

A pro guide to urban  
**NIGHT**  
**PHOTOGRAPHY**

Discover the joys of after-dark photography in an urban environment, from cityscapes to traffic light trails and fireworks



**N**ight life is so much more exciting when you have your camera. When the skies darken, the lights come on, and new faces come out to play, cities and skies transform to become photogenic magic and full of opportunities.

Towns and cities arguably look their best at night. It's perfectly possible to capture stunning cityscapes during the day, too, but unless the light is just right, and from just the right

direction, it's often hard to do it all justice. The advantage of shooting at night is that you don't have to worry as much about the light, or indeed the weather. The sort of deep, dusky blue skies you get up to an hour after sunset on clear evenings are probably the ideal for night scenes and skies, but you can still get amazing results even if it's completely overcast.

By shooting at night and thinking creatively, it's possible to capture something more exciting

and original. All it needs is some creative vision and inspiration, and the right camera techniques.

In this section, we present some key topics for great night photos, teaching you how to use aperture and shutter speed, plus focusing skills, to shoot classic nocturnal cityscapes and capturing mesmerizing traffic light trails. We also explain how to add a creative twist to take your night scenes to the next level, with fantastic fireworks, and mastering the art of light painting amongst traffic.



Using a wide-angle lens and narrow aperture at night means longer exposures for bright city lights and milky smooth water under the bridge

# City lights at night

Get started at night by learning how to capture great city scenes

## Like a bridge...

Bridges make ideal subjects for cityscapes at night when they're lit up, as they usually create great reflections in the water below. By including the moon, as in our example, it can light up the sky and scene more, too. You need a tripod for all your night shots, as you'll be taking long exposures. Start off setting a narrow aperture of around f/16 for good depth of field, so your whole city night scene appears sharp. One bonus of a narrow aperture is that it turns bright lights into star bursts. Use a wide-angle lens to capture as much of the bridge and city beyond as possible. However, by shooting very wide, you're likely to end up with lots of empty space in the foreground. If you don't like this, the solution is to crop the shot at a 16:9 ratio for a more panoramic

image, which includes all of the bridge, but eliminates the dead space at the bottom.

## Stormy vs sunset

The weather and cloud cover will affect your city shots at night. Following a sunset, you'll capture more colour in the sky, while a cloudy, stormy night means a moody, less colourful and darker image (see right). Each image has its own merits, but which do you prefer? The best night-time images often

combine perfectly still elements with moving components. Bodies of water are a reliable moving feature around rock-solid buildings. Long exposures have a wonderful effect on water, transforming the surface into a smooth, milky, reflective sheet.

By using a narrow aperture and low ISO of 100 at night, you'll need a shutter speed of 20-30 secs; perfect for blurring moving water. Even at ISO100, noise will creep into long exposures including dark skies. You can reduce this by going to your camera's menu and enabling Long Exposure Noise Reduction. This takes one long exposure and a 'dark frame', then combines them in-camera for a noise-free image. So, a 20-sec shot will take 40 secs for both shots, and you can't shoot while your camera processes them.

Start off by setting a narrow aperture of around f/16 for good depth of field, so that the whole of your scene is sharp



Getting a high vantage point with a long telephoto lens offers better compositions

## EARLY EVENING



## THE BLUE HOUR



## PITCH BLACK



### Early evening to night

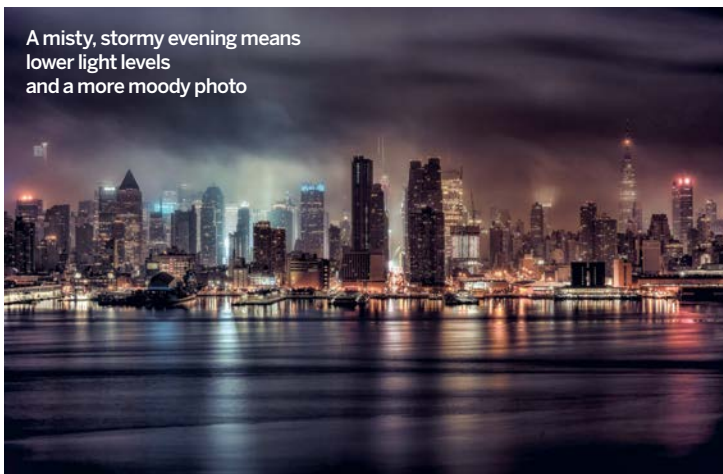
How much light there is in the sky creates different looks for night shots; from early evening, through when a seemingly dark sky looks blue when captured on camera, to black night skies.

### Telephoto compositions of cities at night

A high viewing point and a telephoto zoom lens will help capture more condensed compositions for a more densely packed city night scene. Better still, get really high in a helicopter ride over a city. It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and an opportunity to capture some amazing images. As you'll be shooting handheld and moving fast, this is

when to use your camera's high ISO power. Don't be afraid to shoot at ISO3200; this, coupled with a wide aperture of f/2.8 on a fast 24-70mm or 70-200mm lens (depending on how close to the ground you are), will achieve shutter speeds of around 1/50 to 1/100 sec – fast enough for sharp shots. Zoom in and focus on groups of buildings for creative angles and compositions.

A misty, stormy evening means lower light levels and a more moody photo



A clear sky and residue from a colourful sunset has created a brighter, more vibrant photo



# Pro advice for night shots



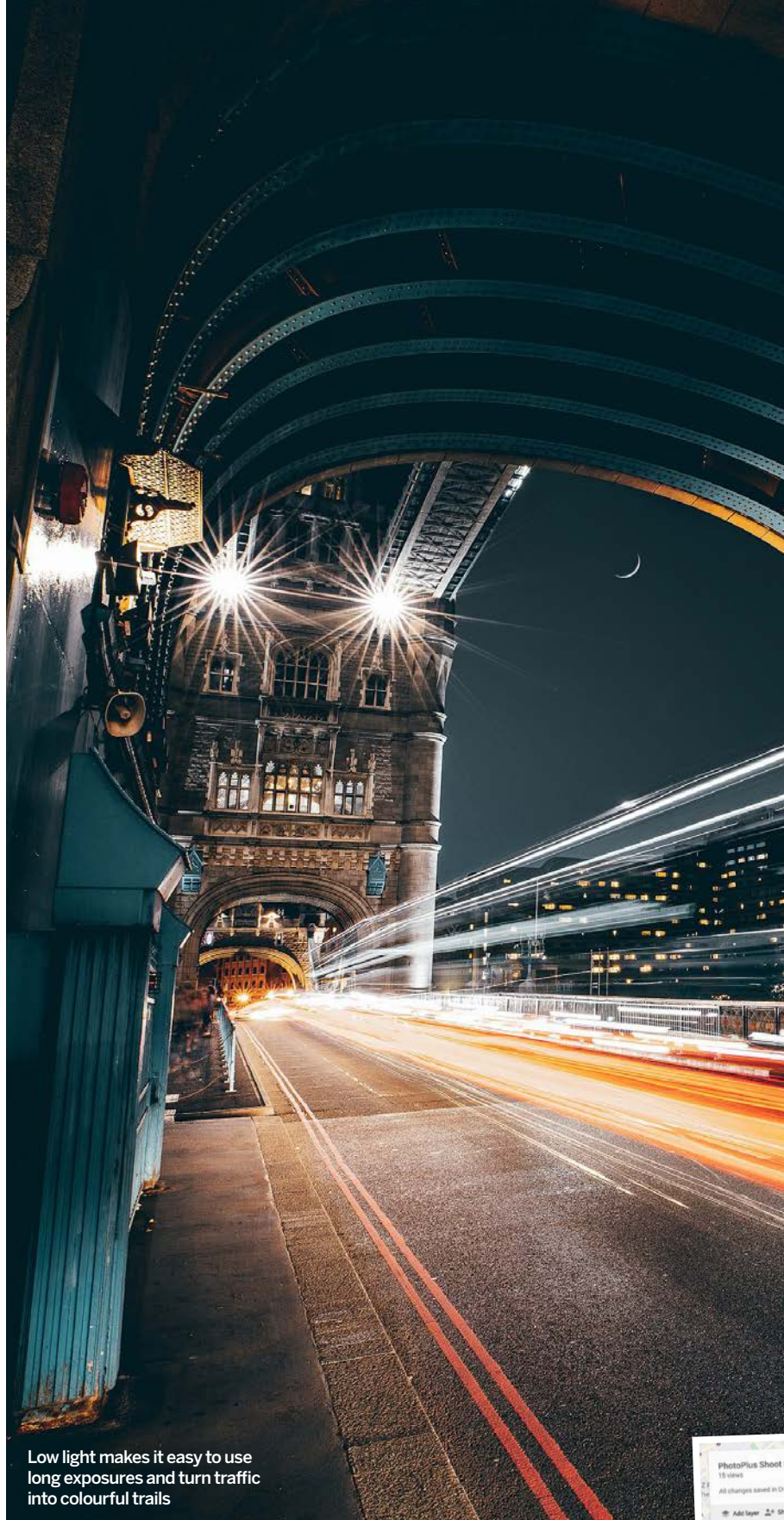
**Andy Hunt** brings the city to life with striking night photography

## Lens choice

I typically shoot with a Canon EF 16-35mm f/2.8L USM lens at night. The wide angle lets me squeeze in loads of the scene to add more context to the frame. It also has a constant maximum aperture of f/2.8 at both ends of the zoom, this is quite a wide aperture that helps suck in loads of light, meaning I don't have to push my ISO up too much, which can degrade image quality and introduce noise in older cameras.



A wide-angle lens like a 16-35mm lets you squeeze in lots of city details



Low light makes it easy to use long exposures and turn traffic into colourful trails

## Try a traffic trail

The lights from car headlamps and brake lights can really help bring a city scene to life and the warm red tones of brake lights compliment the cool blue hues at night, giving pictures an almost Blade Runner aesthetic. I love shooting when it's been raining earlier in the day too, as the reflections mean you can get

twice as many traffic trails in the shot and the road will have a slick shine to it as well. A tripod is crucial for traffic trails as you need the camera to be totally locked off and use a shutter speed of around 10-15 secs. You can always take multiple images and build the effect up in Photoshop by blending several images together.





Props are a fun way to get creative with your photos

## Have fun!

My top tip is to have fun and be creative with your photography. For this Back to the Future inspired photo I placed a DeLorean scale model car on the ground to have London Bridge and the Shard building in the background. I then used Photoshop to add in some fire and light painting effects to make it look like the car is about to hit 88mph for a fun and quirky city shot at night.

## Keep on the hunt for new locations and perspectives

I got into photography by starting city tours and showing other photographers my favourite sports around London, which everyone I spoke to seemed to love. Ever since then I've been actively looking for new locations of the capital that provide new photo opportunities. Sometimes I'm lucky enough to get invited into new buildings and skyscrapers that can provide amazing vistas allowing me to shoot the capital from a fresh high-angle perspective. I tend to always make a note of the GPS coordinates of any new interesting locations, so that I can easily revisit them later.

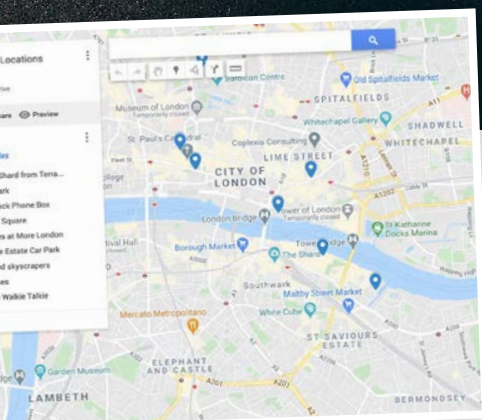
*Right*  
A high perspective from a skyscraper or tall tower can offer a brilliant viewpoint



Fast shutter speeds and image stabilisation will help you banish blur

## Get sharp handheld shots in the dark

I takes the majority of my pictures at night, handheld, unless I'm capturing a long exposure for traffic trails and suchlike. To make sure I get pin-sharp shots free from camera-shake he shoots in Manual mode and doubles the value of his focal length to give him the reciprocal shutter speed value he needs. So for example with a 50mm lens I shoot at 1/100 sec or faster, and adjusts the ISO and aperture until the exposure looks good to me.



Google's MyMaps is a great way to save locations you want to revisit



All images © Andy Hunt



# Night manoeuvres

Learn how to capture creative traffic light trails and trains at night with the right camera settings and processing

## Traffic light trail shots

For classic shots of blurry traffic light trails at night, set up your tripod in a safe position, where you can stand for half an hour without being in the way on the pavement, and as close to the road as possible, for the most dynamic composition. Using a wide-angle lens up close to the traffic will emphasize light trails and streaks more vividly. Pre-focus on a point around a third into your scene – using Live View and the x10 zoomed-in view is the easiest way to do this – then lock the focus on your lens to MF (Manual Focus), so it doesn't try to re-focus when you press the shutter

button. In Manual mode on your DSLR, use a narrow aperture of around  $f/16$ , so your whole scene is sharp. Now you can experiment with a shutter speed of around 20-40 secs, depending on the light levels in the city, for a good exposure with no blown highlights. You might need to combine multiple exposures – you can do this easily in Photoshop by using layers and the Lighten blending mode to instantly reveal the brighter traffic light trails on top of one another for a fuller result. The blue hour (when there's still colour to capture in the sky) is often during rush hour – which equals more traffic lights to blur nicely (right).





Compose close to a busy road for a dynamic composition – buses and lorries create light trails, both high and low, to help fill your frame with colour



**Extra-long exposures**

If you can't extend the shutter speed beyond 30 secs without overexposing very bright city lights at the narrowest aperture (f/22, for example) and ISO100, use a neutral

density (ND) filter on your lens to restrict the amount of light reaching the sensor. Use a 1-, 2- or 3-stop ND filter – each stop doubles the shutter speed, so 30 secs becomes a 60-sec exposure, and so on.



© Peter Travers

**Trainspotting at night**

It's not only road traffic that's photogenic at night; long trains are even better for smoother motion-blur night shots. Shoot from a safe place near a train platform – and avoid

blocking walkways – just after dark, so the train's internal lights show up. We shot at f/11 and ISO200, as we found shutter speeds around 8-10 seconds were long enough to blur trains slowly pulling in and out of the station.

# Pro advice for architecture

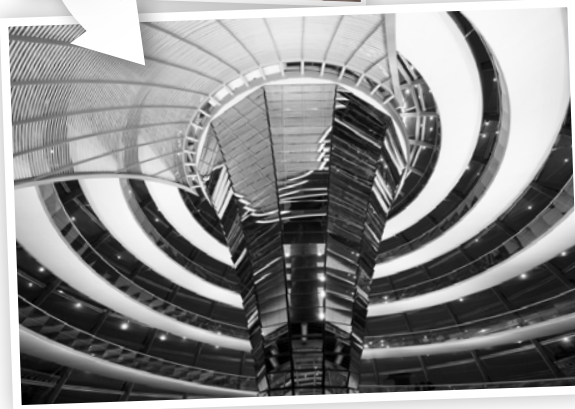


**David Clapp** captures buildings and abstract architecture after dark

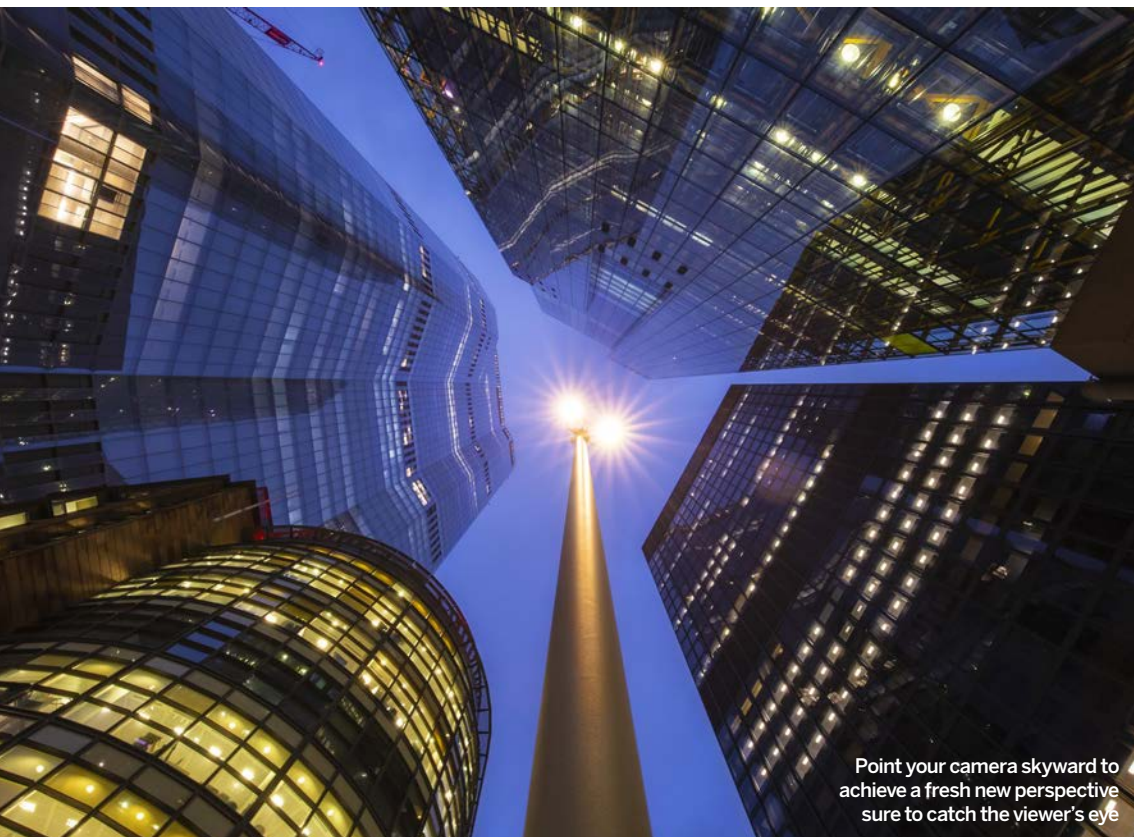


## Black and White

One of the easiest ways to learn black-and-white architecture is to set your camera to the monochrome Picture Style. The wonderful thing about mirrorless cameras is that once set, it allows you to see the world in B&W. You will soon learn to see and spot subjects without the camera. Concrete and other building materials can be uncomplimentary to each other, so by removing their colour the picture becomes more satisfactory. Infrared monochromatic architecture is also exciting and worth exploring for a different portfolio.



David's skyline of Chicago comes to life at night with the lights from the skyscrapers



Point your camera skyward to achieve a fresh new perspective sure to catch the viewer's eye

## Look up!

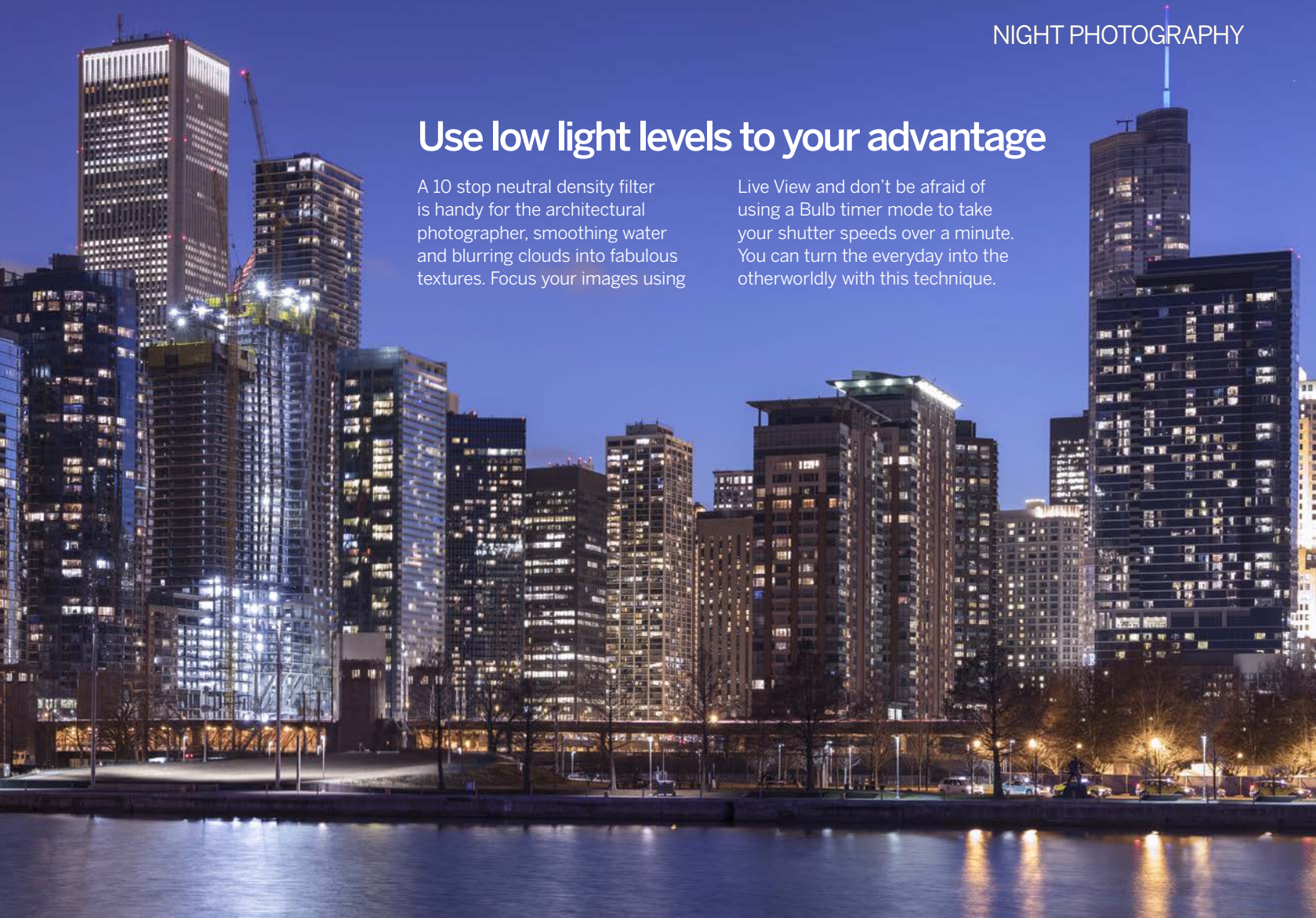
Find dense areas of big buildings, lift your camera with wide-angle lens skywards and stretch those tower blocks into wonderful leading lines. You can place the vanishing point of the image in the centre, on the rule of thirds, or anywhere that feels right. Make sure those corners are sharp, choose f/8 or higher. Pay attention to details in the frame and subtly play with the zoom for the neatest of compositions. It's a great way to be playful and dynamic with your abstract architecture imagery.

Lift your camera skywards and stretch tower blocks into leading lines

## Use low light levels to your advantage

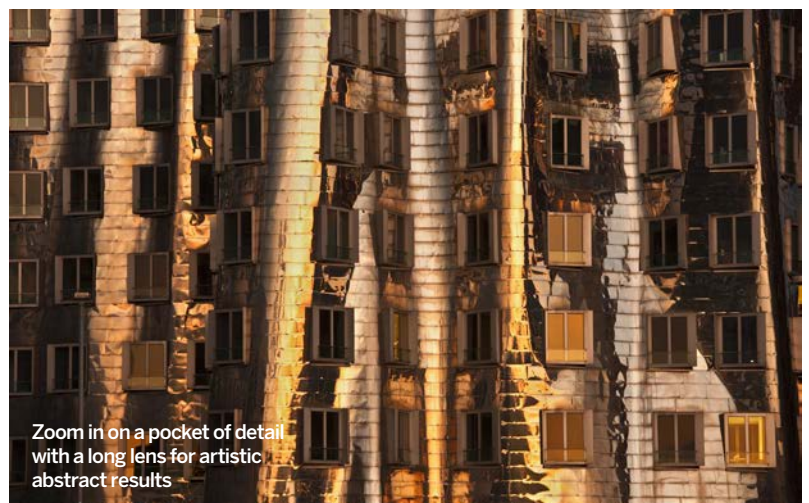
A 10 stop neutral density filter is handy for the architectural photographer, smoothing water and blurring clouds into fabulous textures. Focus your images using

Live View and don't be afraid of using a Bulb timer mode to take your shutter speeds over a minute. You can turn the everyday into the otherworldly with this technique.



## Experiment with aperture

One of the common mistakes with architecture and landscape photography is failing to use depth of field effectively. We become obsessed with front to back sharpness when in reality this can be limiting. Experiment with wide apertures and explore details with separation from their backgrounds. A lens you can use with great effect is the Canon EF 50mm f/1.4. Spot interesting architectural details like door knockers, handles and features – isolate them from their surroundings with shallow depth of field. It provides a completely different look and makes a collection far more visually interesting.



Zoom in on a pocket of detail with a long lens for artistic abstract results

All images © David Clapp

## Get sharp shots at all focal lengths

Increase the intensity of your architecture images by compressing distance with a long lens. Whether it's from the high viewpoint across the city, or at street level along a busy road, a long lens can create intensity by compressing buildings of varying distances. Remember that long lenses can require higher ISOs when shooting handheld, or a tripod to ensure the image is sharp. Don't be afraid of using higher ISO when necessary.





Including iconic buildings in your fireworks shots helps to add context and fill foregrounds

# Light painting and fireworks

Light up your night images with these top tips...

## **Baby, you're a firework**

Instead of a 30-second exposure, for fireworks you need to shoot between one and 15 secs to capture the explosions, and therefore, instead of a really narrow aperture, you need to shoot at around f/5.6 to f/8 and ISO100-200 for a good result.

While you're capturing the fireworks during a display, it's always worth checking the image histogram after taking each shot. A few blown-out highlights are inevitable (and recoverable in Photoshop), but try not to overexpose the

highlights too much, otherwise you'll lose vital detail in the fireworks. Check that the peak on the right of the histogram isn't 'clipped' by the end of the graph. If clipped, try shooting at f/11 to darken the shots and retain more of the brighter tones. As with the traffic light trail images, you may need to merge multiple shots to fill each part of the sky with firework colour.

When it comes to composition, use a flexible telephoto lens such as a 70-200mm and focus tightly on where the fireworks are exploding for night shots with added impact.





Finding a good location for the surroundings is key for light painting

**Sparks fly**

Light painting is great fun. This shot is created by putting some fine-gauge wire wool inside a small metal cage made of thick wire, setting the wool on fire, then swinging the cage around on a chain for the sparks to fly. A 30-sec exposure at f/5.6 and ISO100 is a good starting point for this shot.



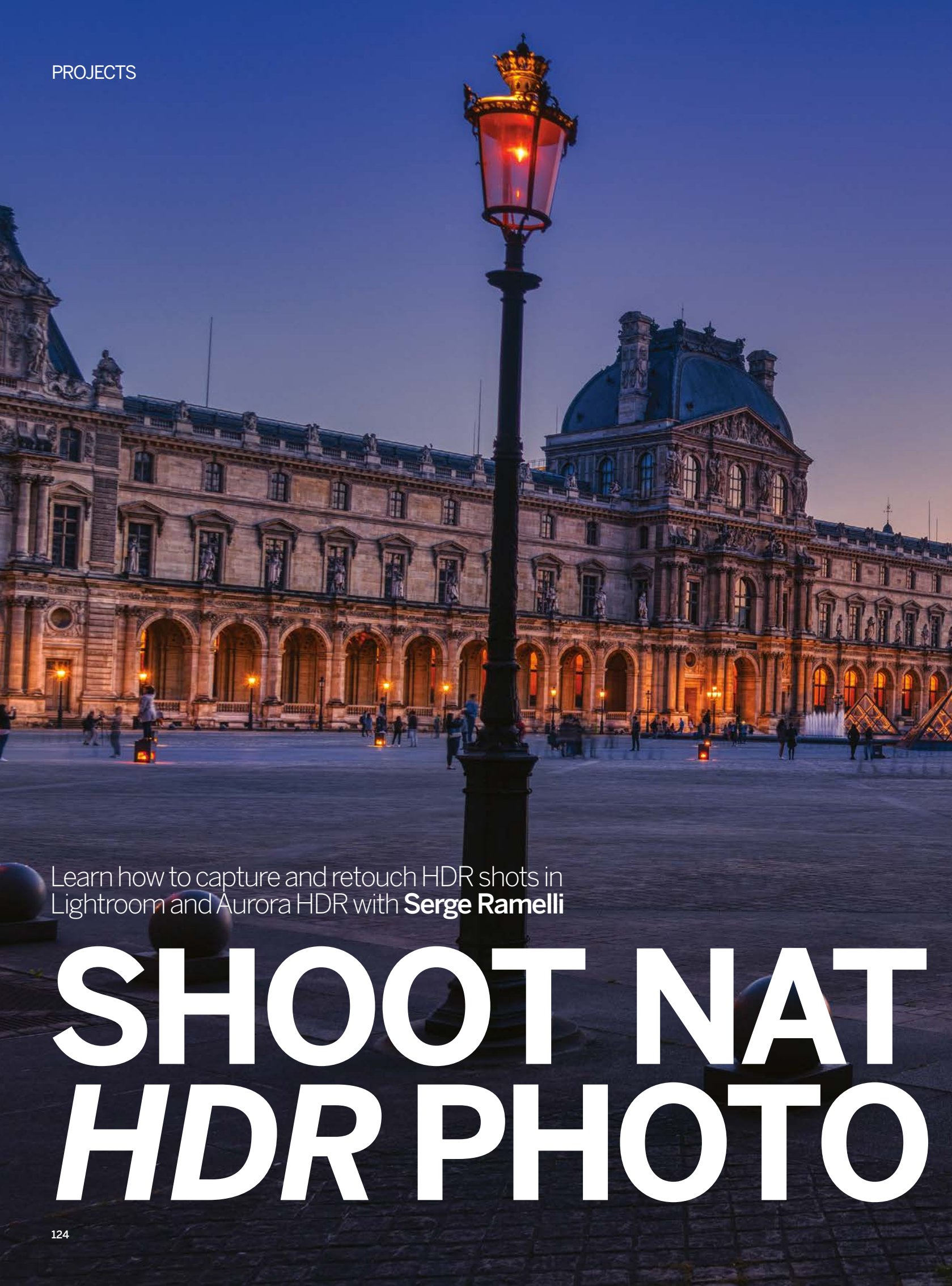
The darker the location, the longer you can paint with light without overexposing your images



**Spin me right round**

For these artistic shots, in Manual mode, choose a narrow aperture, such as f/16, for maximum depth of field, use ISO100 for maximum quality, then set the shutter speed past 30 secs to Bulb. This means the shutter stays open as long as the shutter button is activated. You don't want to touch the camera with a Bulb exposure, as this could blur the image, so use a remote control. For these swirling light painting shots, use a coloured light wand, or attach fairy lights to a stick and use Hue/Saturation in Photoshop!





Learn how to capture and retouch HDR shots in Lightroom and Aurora HDR with **Serge Ramelli**

# SHOOT NAT HDR PHOTO



Creating a natural high-dynamic-range (HDR) scene is an art in itself, because it is exceptionally easy to go overboard and make the image look unnatural. In this project, I am taking you to Paris to show you how to correctly compose and expose your scenes.

Here, I want to show you my way of creating merged HDR images, to make them a pleasant and realistic experience for your viewers – just with that ‘pop’ that makes them stand out. I will show you my common HDR settings, explain why you need a tripod and reveal all my tips and tricks for how to capture the image and retouch it naturally in Lightroom and

Aurora HDR. I will share with you the key points so that you can implement these techniques in your everyday workflow. It is a simple process, and you just have to understand how to refine your approach.

One of my golden rules is that whenever you are shooting an HDR landscape or a cityscape, don’t forget your standard shooting techniques; long exposure, compositional experimentation and the rule of thirds.

The same applies for the retouching element. Be sure to consider multiple processing styles, including black and white or desaturated, because you might be surprised with the variety of results you get at the end.

**The Louvre in Paris**  
Here is the final photo, shot in Paris, retouched in Lightroom then in Aurora HDR. You can see that it has a natural look, but it is still very colourful, with beautiful tonality  
All images © Serge Ramelli



# URAL GRAPHY

**Difficulty level:** Intermediate  
**Time taken:** 2 hours

## What you'll need

- DSLR or mirrorless camera
- Tripod
- Wide-angle lens
- Lightroom
- Aurora HDR

# Shooting steps

**1 Compose the photo** To have a successful composition you must have a simple visual message – a strong foreground, middleground and background element. Omit anything distracting like cables, rubbish or anything that does not add to your message. Employ leading lines to guide the eyes of your viewer, and use the rule of thirds.

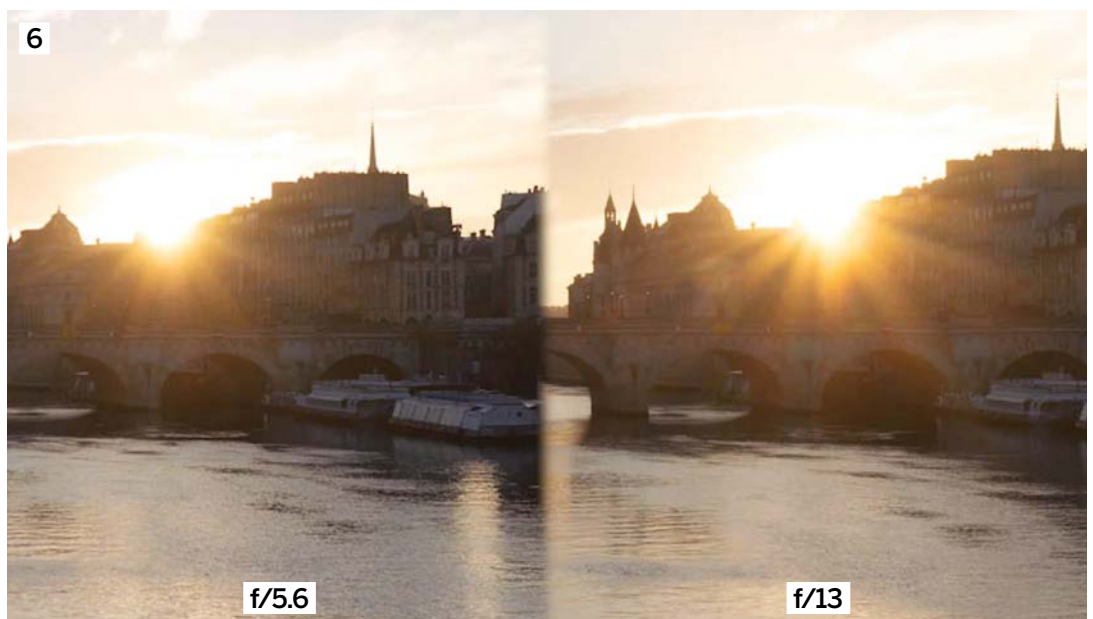
**2 Tripod or no tripod** To shoot HDR it is vital to have a stable tripod, as you don't want to introduce body motion in between frames. If you are in a situation where you can't use a tripod, such as on a rooftop, find an alternative stable surface that will ensure you can create sharp photos.

**3 Select the settings** For HDR you need to shoot several exposures of the same image with exactly the same framing. Usually three is enough – an overexposed, underexposed and a 'correctly' exposed photo. You can set this up in your settings by adding +2 and -2 exposure in the bracketing menu.

**4 Use a self-timer** Utilising the tripod will improve sharpness, but using the self-timer for two seconds will ensure that you don't blur your images through body motion. This is valuable for bracketing, even more so for a long exposure or low-light situation.

**5 Shoot at the right time** For a great HDR you should shoot during sunrise or sunset. Regardless of how beautiful a landscape or cityscape is, it will always be better in soft light – at sunset, during the golden hour or blue hour – so capturing the right light is key to a natural blend.

**6 Sunset tip for HDR** When shooting a sunset, you can choose to include or exclude the sun itself. It is an artistic decision, but at narrow apertures the starburst effect can be distracting. To introduce less flaring, set your aperture at f/5.6 – if you want more, set up at f/13.



# The setup



## Tripod

You'll need a steady tripod to mount your camera on, which will ensure it does not move between bracketed frames

## 24-70mm lens

A wide-angle lens is the best choice for capturing expansive cityscapes, and you may favour one with a wide maximum aperture

## Manual camera

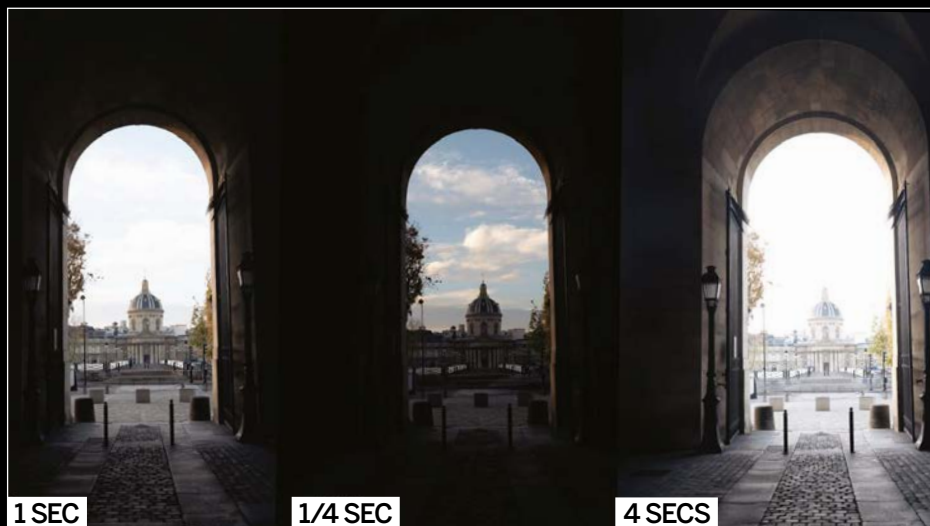
This image was created with the Sony A7RIII, but any camera with manual bracketing can be used

## The secret to HDR

All the key elements you need to get a spectacular HDR photo

With HDR you get a lot of digital information in your photo – the goal is to make your image pop with detail. HDR photos always seem to be more popular with non-photographers than regular exposure. I used to go crazy with HDR and overprocess images, but over the years I've found the right balance to make my HDR impressive but realistic.

For an amazing HDR photo, the most important element is a great composition – leading lines, space around your main subject to allow it to breathe, not to crop any element at the frame borders, use the rule of thirds in a clever way and to have beautiful light. If you have all of those elements it is just a matter of retouching it properly, since there is more to the image than the HDR process itself.



# Edit the shot

*Inset*  
**Normal exposure**  
 The image is somewhat cold and muted, while the iconic buildings fail to stand out or draw the viewer's attention



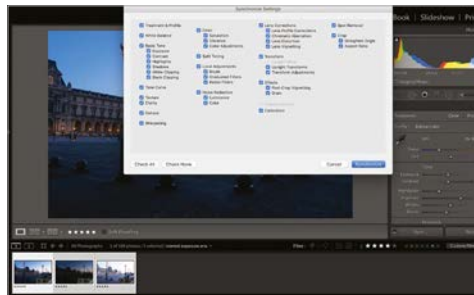
**BEFORE**



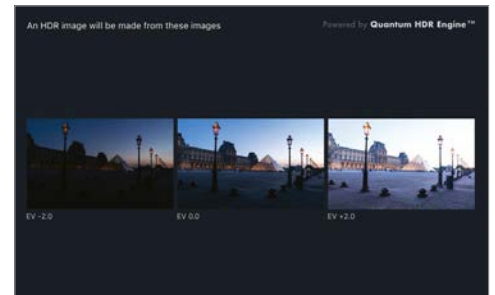
## Make your building stand out and create that natural HDR look



**1 The basic retouch** Take the 'correctly' exposed photo into Lightroom, and do a light development; shadows +53, highlights -38, white points +11, black points -7. Remove chromatic aberration and crop as a panorama.



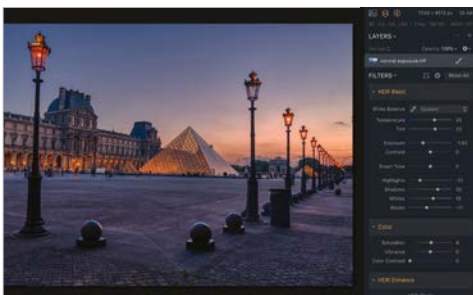
**2 Synchronise the retouch** Now that you are pleased with the retouch on your normal exposure you can sync your edits onto the two other exposure files. Select all, click on Sync and tick all the boxes to synchronise.



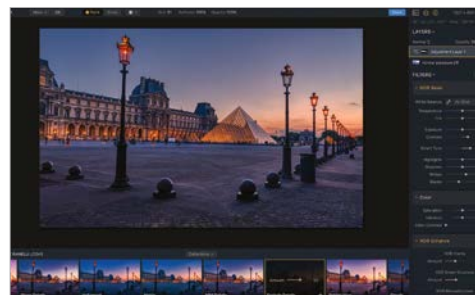
**3 Create the HDR** Select your three photos, go to File>Export with preset>Edit a copy with Lightroom adjustments. In Aurora HDR select Auto Alignment – it will create the HDR and lead you to the photo retouching stage.

**AFTER**

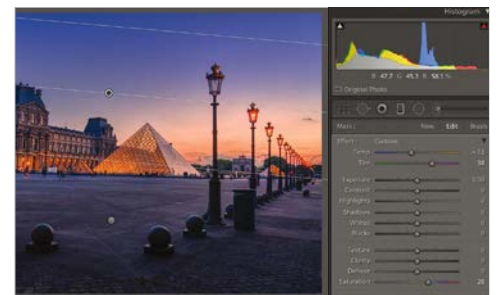
**Touched up**  
The colours and tones in this image really pop, but have a realistic warmth and subtlety



**4 Retouch the file** Now you can either use presets or the sliders to create your own HDR look. Here I opened up the shadows, brought down the highlights and boosted the tint and temperature for a warmer look.



**5 Use brushes** Click on Add adjustment layer, use the preset Explode Details and use a brush to paint that effect only on the monument – it will make your building stand out and create that natural HDR look.



**6 Add further adjustments** Back in Lightroom, set a radial filter over the sun to add some pop, close the photo with graduated filters, and finish with warm Temperature and Tint brushing over the buildings.

# Shoot a vertorama

Capture tall subjects with lower distortion by stitching images on a vertical axis

**Difficulty level:** Intermediate

Time taken: 2 hours



Today it is easier than ever to capture ultra-wide panoramic images by stitching multiple photo segments in software, which is ideal when photographing expansive vistas. However, there are other uses for photo-merging that fewer people ever explore.

A vertorama follows a similar principle to a panorama – it involves shooting a series of image segments and then using software to blend these into one. However, it enables a taller image rather than a wider frame.

There are several reasons why you might want to try shooting a vertorama. Firstly, it might not be possible to capture a tall subject such as a building in its entirety in a single frame, because of the subject's height,

distance from the camera, or your widest focal length. By capturing several frames, while pitching the camera up, you can cover the entire scene in the final blended image.

The use of a vertorama goes beyond just capturing more in the composition, however. The use of an ultra-wide lens to capture a tall structure severely exaggerates perspective distortion or converging verticals. A blended shot still exhibits a degree of this due to the camera height relative to the top of the subject structure, but by using a longer lens to capture each image segment, the perspective will be stretched to a lesser degree.

Here, we'll take you through the process of creating a vertorama image.

## What you'll need

- DSLR or mirrorless camera
- Short telephoto lens
- Tripod with pan/tilt or ball head
- Photo-merging software

All images © Peter Fenech

## Tall tales

Most of the narrative in this scene was consigned to the natural frame of the trees and the Sagrada Familia beyond, so a stitched, tall shot was the best match



# Shooting steps

**1 Find the best angle** Spend some time finding the best composition, bearing in mind that most of the attention in the image will be on detail falling on the Y axis. Find a frame that has interest low to the ground as well as higher up, while giving an unobstructed view of the subject.

**2 Calculate exposure** Find the best settings for the subject. Bear in mind that there is a chance more of the sky will be included in the composition. Consider bracketing each frame to merge exposures later. Switch to Manual mode to lock settings, as this will prevent them from changing between each segment.

**3 Manual focus** Once you have found focus, use an f-stop that will incorporate both the ground and top of a tall structure – between f/11 and f/14. Switch to Manual focus, again preventing parameters from shifting between shots and affecting the blend later.

**4 Lock pan movement** Whether you are using a pan/tilt head or a ball head, once you have aligned your shot, lock the pan movement to prevent unwanted side-to-side shifts as you pitch your lens up and down to capture the vertorama. Set a pitch friction to enable smooth motion.

**5 Shoot segments** Take the first image, check the settings are correct and to your taste, and then pitch the camera up to shoot the next. Continue from bottom to top until you've covered the whole subject, overlapping each segment by 20-30 per cent to enable an easier software blend.

**6 Vary focal length** Try different variations of subject distance and focal length to see which gives you the best perspective compression, and to give you multiple options when attempting to stitch the images later. Sometimes converging verticals and parallax can confuse stitching, so this also offers backup sequences.



## Select shooting orientation

Does landscape or portrait orientation work best?

While shooting in portrait format will reduce the number of frames you'll need to shoot to cover the entire height of the subject, it can introduce increased edge distortion along the seam overlaps of images. Keeping your sensor so that it's longer on the horizontal axis can make image-stitching easier, and helps to produce a more balanced composition. By the time you blend three or four images in landscape format you can end up with a roughly 5x4 aspect ratio, while shooting in portrait may produce an unnaturally tall, thin composition.



### SUBJECT DISTANCE

Position yourself as far from the subject as possible, and zoom in to compress the perspective.



### CAMERA HEIGHT

A low angle can provide an intriguing perspective but will exaggerate distortion. Waist height is ideal.

### CONTROLLABLE HEAD

A pan/tilt head is best, but a ball head with friction control on both axes enables free movement.

### STURDY TRIPOD

While a tripod is not essential, using support will increase the chances of perfect alignment and a better blend.

# The setup

# Edit the shot

**1 Sync processing** Open all the segments in a RAW processor – we're using Lightroom. Highlight each thumbnail and move into the Develop module. Click Sync, and select parameters. Click Synchronize.

**2 Lens correction** Apply basic processing steps, which will be added to all of the synced images. Next, apply lens correction to reduce any lens distortions. Select the correct camera/lens pairing, and allow the software to apply automatic corrections.

**3 Photo Merge** From the Photo menu select Photo Merge, and choose Panorama. Select Perspective as the Projection option, and use the Boundary Warp slider to reduce empty edge space.

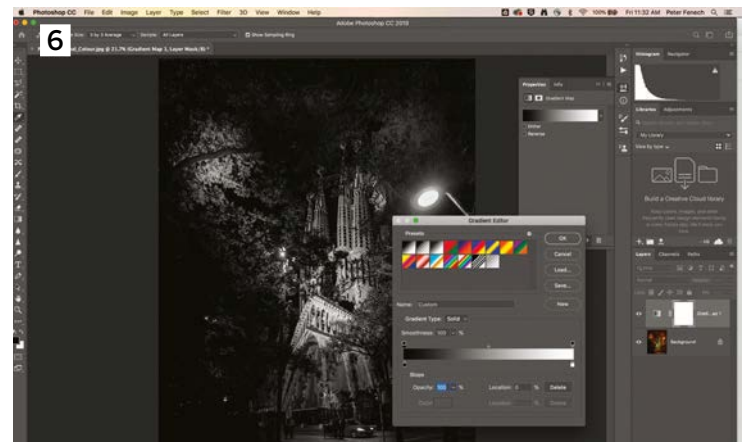
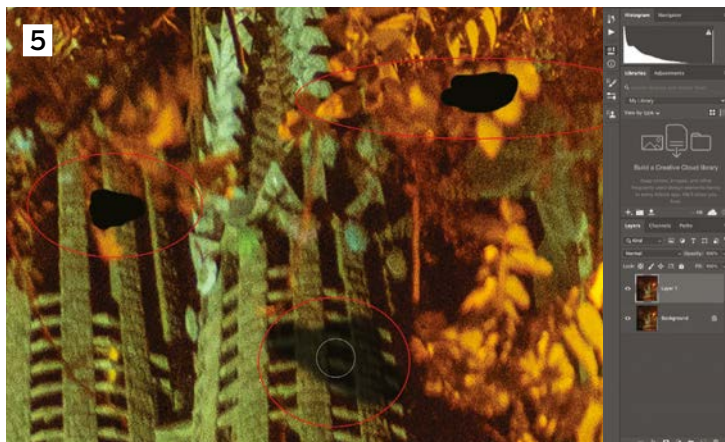
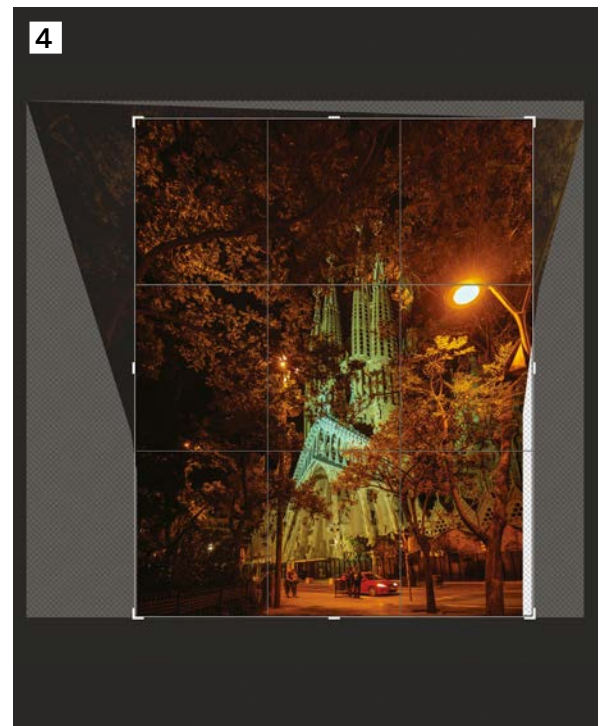
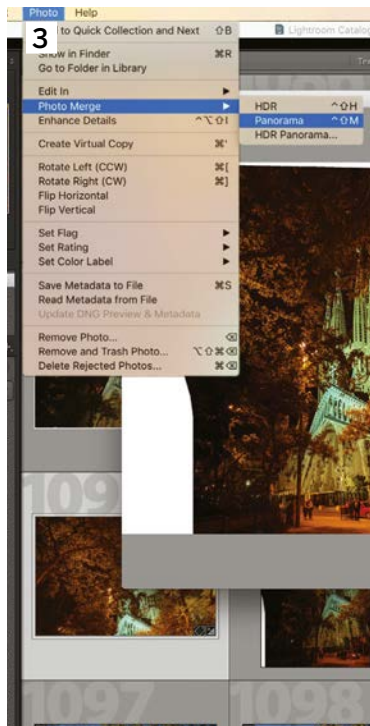
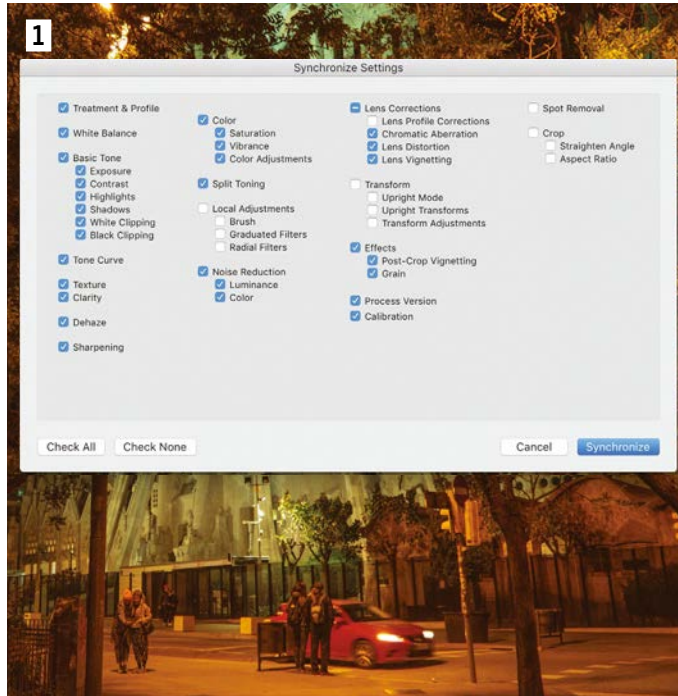
**4 Crop, scale and fill** Open the merged image in Photoshop, and crop. Here a 5x4 aspect is being used. Duplicate the background, and use the Magic Wand (W) to select a gap. Use Edit > Fill, and select Content Aware to patch empty space.

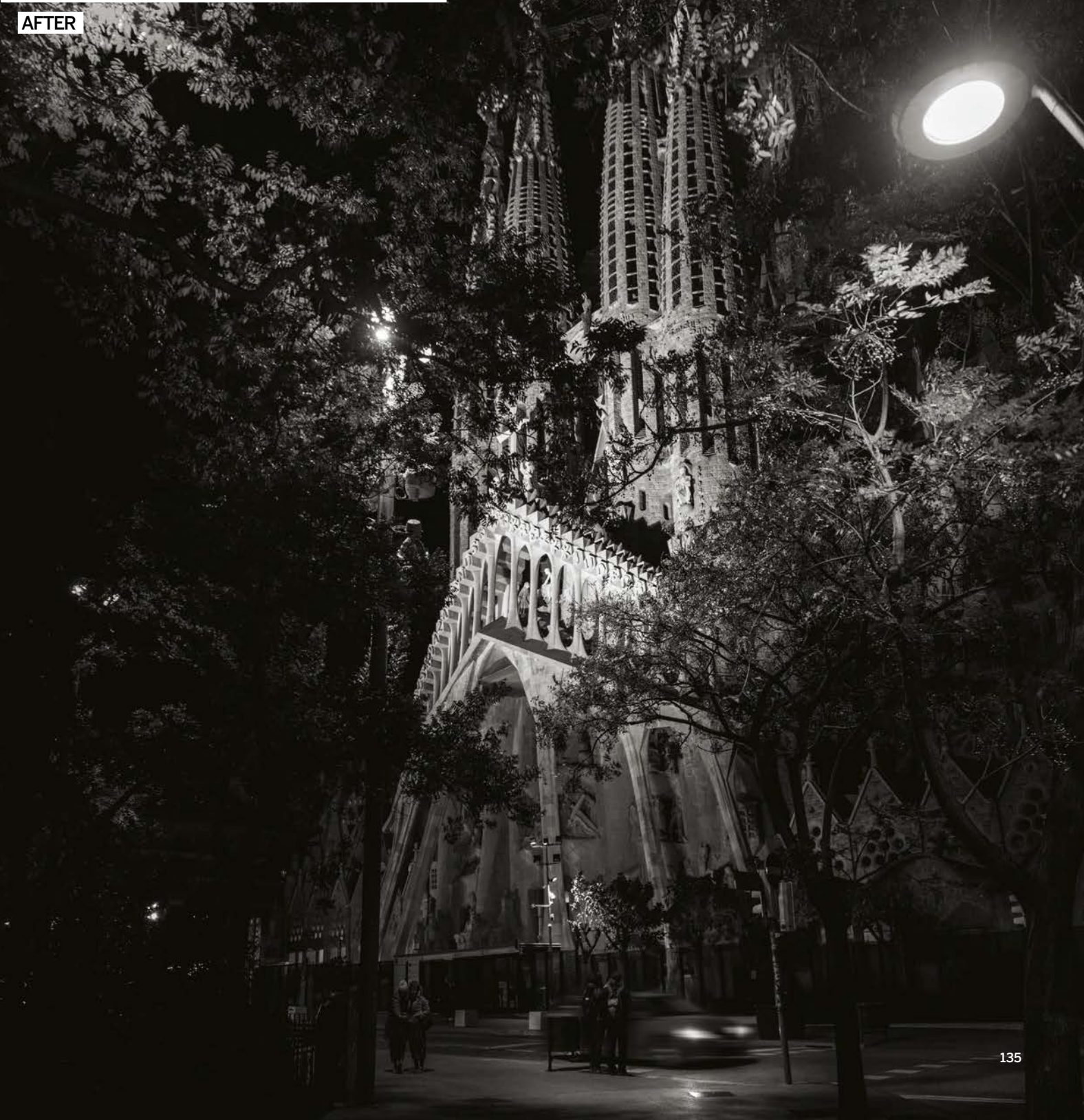
**5 Retouch seams** Use the Spot Healing Brush Tool to remove any noticeable gaps or seams that remain in the image. These are most common close to the overlap points of the image segments. For larger areas, try using the Patch Tool or Clone Stamp for greater interactive control.

**6 Global adjustments** Once the final image is assembled, adjust the lighting based on the composition. For this image a slight vignette has been added to draw attention to the centre of the frame, local dodging applied, and a monochrome conversion conducted.

*Right*  
**Stitched vectorama**

The blended image has a more compressed arrangement of objects due to the use of a longer focal length to capture each frame, which also allows peripheral detail to be controlled






# Edgy flash fashion portraits

Photographer **Alistair Campbell** shows you how to create a fashion look with natural light and one off-camera flash for images with impact

Difficulty level: Intermediate  
Time taken: 1 hour

 For quite some time after I picked up my first DSLR (a Canon EOS 5D Mark II) I saw some great images knocking around, and remember thinking to myself “do these people just have a better camera than me, or what?!”

In the end, the penny dropped and I began to understand that their success came down to the lighting setups. I now shoot images with a combination of natural light and off-camera flash. While neither style is better than the other, introducing artificial light if you haven't done so before can add another arrow to your photography arsenal. I have two

lights in my kit bag, but will very rarely use them both. Using just a single light with a mixture of available natural light can create a blend of contrast, tone and shape for a portrait that packs just a little more punch.

Even if you have a basic knowledge of studio lighting, you can easily bring that onto location to start shooting images with interesting backgrounds and the helpful use of the sun to enhance the rest of the frame. Or, by using the sun to backlight and your off-camera flash as a fill light for your subject. Let's have a look at a simple single light setup to get some easy but effective fashion shots in the can.

*Pictured*  
**Mixed sources**

Harnessing the power of daylight in combination with one off-camera flash can yield dramatic and effective results

All images © Alistair Campbell



## What you'll need

- DSLR or mirrorless camera
- Strobe light or constant light
- Off-camera flash trigger
- Portrait lens – any will work, but around the 24-70mm range is great
- Adobe Lightroom

# Shooting steps

## 1 Find location and prep model

I like to find gritty locations which work well with a clean outfit and will often bring a lot of texture to your shots. I showed model Rhiane a few previous shoots, as it always helps if you can show your subjects moodboards or example images.

**2 Position the light** It doesn't matter if you place your light to the left or right, but off to around 45° to the side, and at a 45° angle facing down to your subject is a good place to start. Of course, the further round you move, the more dramatic the shadows will become.

**3 Turn exposure simulation off** Unlike DSLRs, mirrorless cameras have real-time exposure changes as you tweak the settings. Your camera can't predict what it will look like when the flash fires, so you'll need to turn this setting off. If not, your EVF may be too dark to see what's going on.

**4 Camera and flash settings** I always set my flash to Manual. Around 1/32 is again a good place to start. I'll keep my ISO low for a cleaner shot, and use whichever shutter speed is flash synced to the camera. In the case of the Fujifilm GFX 100s it's 1/125th and a nice mid aperture around f/8 is great.

**5 Place model for test shots and tweak settings** I'll fire off a shot just to make sure everything is synced up. Then I tend to ask the model to jump in for a few more. It's impossible to see what your shot will look like without seeing how your light falls onto the face. Rhiane was wearing a hat, so I lowered the light a little to avoid shadow on the eyes.

**6 Play with poses and props** I'll typically start off with something quite conventional. But once you've got a few good shots in the bag you can take this opportunity to find a new space, shoot some interesting angles, change up the clothing a little or try out a different lens. If you have a great model they'll only be too happy to try things out.



## EDGY FASHION PORTRAITS

### LIGHTING PLACEMENT

Off to one side at around 45° is a good place to start, about six feet from your model. Make sure it's at least head height or above to retain a more flattering light. When shooting on location I'll remove the honeycomb to allow a little light to spill onto the background (but not too much).

### CAMERA AND LENS CHOICE

I was shooting on the Fujifilm GFX 100s as the main camera. For me, the colour that comes out of the Fuji system is just perfect. I used the GF 63mm F2.8 R WR which is one of the smaller lenses – I find the less bulk the better.

### MODEL DIRECTION

Fashion can be relaxed, and often less is more. I find when I'm talking to models is a good time to shoot as they are often engaged with the camera. Try not to guide people into positions that feel difficult to hold as it will show through. After a couple of good images are shot, show them.

### SHOOTING HANDHELD

I don't even own a tripod, I shot with one once and I felt it completely hindered me. Shooting handheld will allow you to be far more spontaneous and enable you to use smaller adjustments to find just the right angle for the shot. Plus, there's less to carry, which I'm all in favour of.

# The setup

## Adding an ND filter

Try adding an ND filter to open up the aperture for a shallower DoF

I switched to my backup camera, the Fujifilm X-T3 as I had a few more lens options there. The XF 16-55mm f2.8 is an absolute workhorse, and I have an adjustable ND filter that fits. I originally bought it to shoot video (as you are limited with shutter speeds), but it also works perfectly well for photography. Being able to make the lens a little darker meant I could open up the aperture all the way to its maximum f2.8 and still keep my shutter synced at 1/125 for the lights. Even close to the background this will create a nice separation for your subject. If you do invest in a filter, make sure they don't have any colour cast issues noted in the reviews.



# Edit the shot

**1 Open up Lightroom** I do 99% of my editing directly in Lightroom. First I'll select the appropriate colour profile. For this edit I'll be using Fujifilm's built-in 'Classic Chrome'. It's one of my favourites so I often start here.

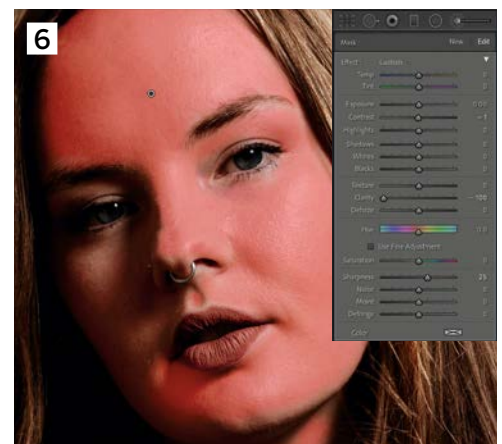
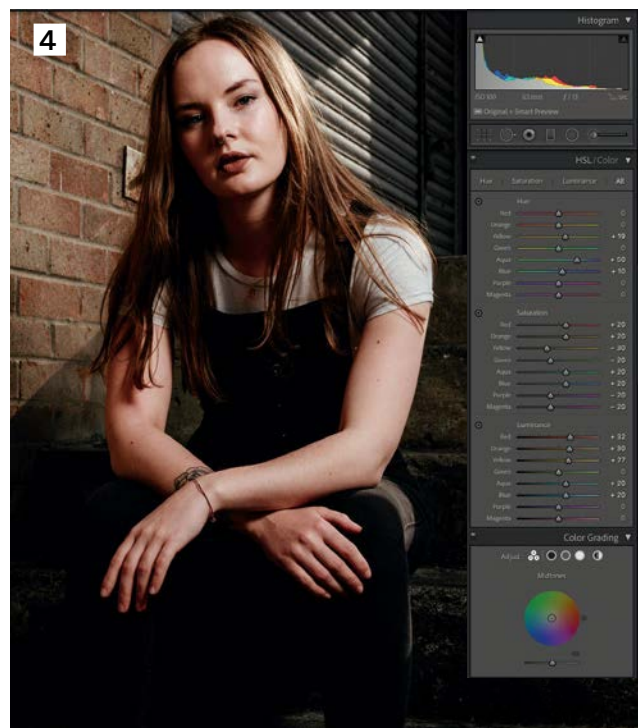
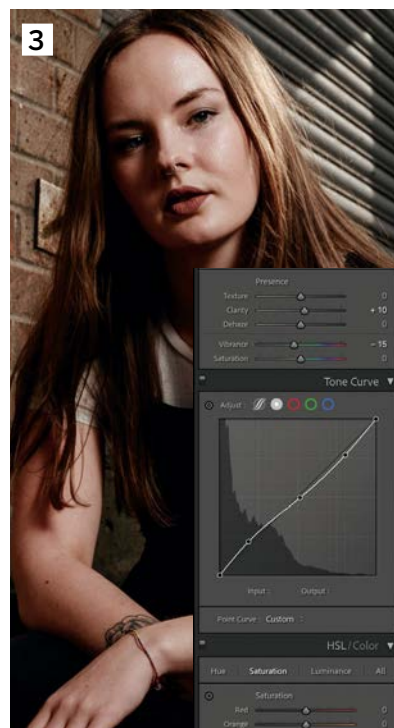
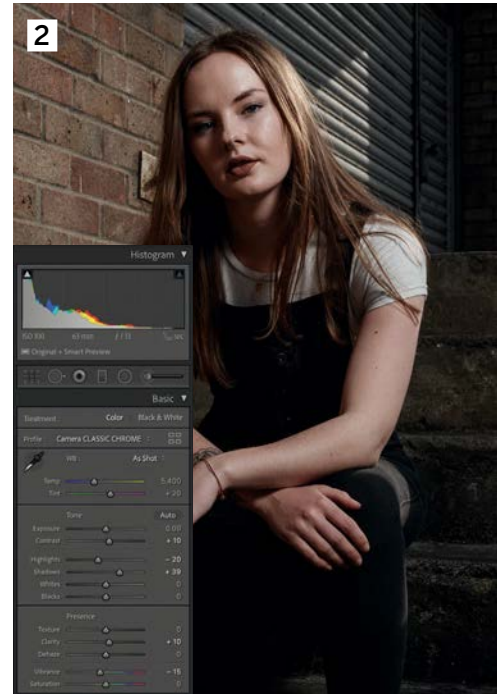
**2 Get the overall base look** Next make adjustments in the 'Basic' panel. Start by adding a contrast +10, pulling back highlights -20, and lifting shadows +40. Finally a small clarity boost +10 and reduce vibrance -15.

**3 Experiment with the tonal curve** Every image is different, and so is each personal preference, but here I will experiment by pushing and pulling the RGB and overall levels of the image. You'll often find a nice 'S' works well.

**4 Manipulating your colours** Again I experiment here with the colours in the scene. This image is mainly made up of red, orange and yellow. So I've used these to boost the brightness of those areas further, along with some small Hue tweaks to bring it all together.

**5 Local adjustments to bring out detail** We've done a dramatic edit and some areas are a little dark. So now I'm going to use one of the default local adjustment brushes, 'Shadows', to rub over these areas. In this case, the adjustment is mainly on Rhiane's black dungarees to bring back some of the detail hidden in there.

**6 Skin retouching** And just as in step 5, I'm going to get a new default adjustment brush, 'Soften Skin', and work on the face area to smooth everything out. By default the brush is set to Clarity -100 but you may want to pull it back to -50 if this looks unnatural. Press 'O' to see where your mask is.



*Right*  
**Darks and lights**  
 The image out of the camera is only ever half of journey for me. I usually work with RAF (Fuji Raw Image) files which are flat in nature, but allow for this style of dramatic editing – pulling and pushing the darks and highlights through the process

AFTER



BEFORE



# *Blue hour to black and white*

Difficulty level: Easy  
Time taken: 90 mins



## What you'll need

- DSLR or mirrorless camera
- Wide-angle lens
- Lightweight but sturdy tripod
- Glass grad & ND filters
- Lightroom & Photoshop or alternative software

## Helen Trust shows you how to shoot dramatic cityscapes and then turn them into monochrome magic with a simple black and white conversion



Growing up in the countryside I've always enjoyed finding escapism in the hustle and bustle of the city. The shapes and patterns of building facades both old and new fascinate me. I also feel the city has a surreal side and finding a good location to step back and take in the vast space of the skyline can be therapeutic. Most city skylines are accessible from various vantage points and often involve water, either on a river bank, canal, lake front or ocean view. Add a big sky and transform it with long exposure

techniques for drama and atmosphere with light and shadow and you can turn a simple city skyline into fine art photography.

Adding a monochrome conversion can transform that image to the next level. Plan your location ahead of time and confirm accessibility and transport routes both early in the morning and late into the evening so you can experience a full range of light and shadows. Grab your camera, a sturdy tripod and a good glass filter kit and capture that city magic.



# Shooting steps

**1 Location preparation** Whether it's Paris, Venice or New York, plan in advance using the multitude of apps available. Know your transport links and accessibility (Citymapper and Google Maps), weather forecast, sunrise/sunset timings and positioning (TPE and PhotoPills).

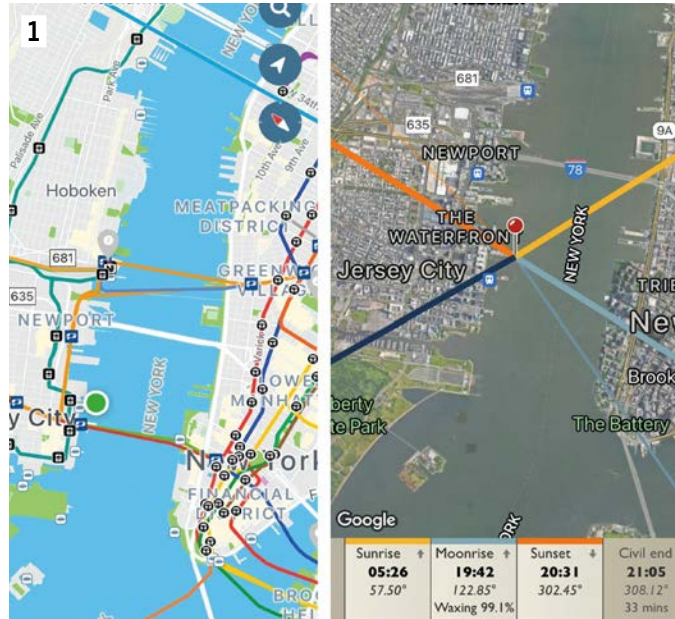
**2 Find some stability** I chose to shoot this cityscape just minutes after sunset at blue hour, so due to low light levels and the lengthy long exposure using a sturdy tripod was essential. But we don't always want to carry heavy tripods around a city with us so choose your kit wisely.

**3 Prepare your composition** Use a wide-angle lens to ensure a mix of negative space and skyline coverage. 16mm to 35mm range is ideal but be aware of lens distortion at the wider end – switch to live view and ensure there is enough sky to capture long exposure cloud movement, and check the horizon.

**4 Exposure readings** Capture maximum contrast from the highlights and lowlights in the scene. Attach your filter holder to your chosen lens. Select your focus point and take your exposure readings. I use Aperture Priority, f/11 and the lowest ISO possible to maintain sharpness throughout the scene and meter from the mid-tones. Finally, lock the focus point.

**5 Take your long exposure** Move quickly – the light is changing all the time. Attach a cable release, and calculate your exposure time using an exposure chart or app from your filter manufacturer (I use Formatt Hitech Glass). Insert your grad (3-stop) and ND (10-stop) filters. Switch to Bulb and take the shot.

**6 Check your histogram** Always review the histogram before and after taking the shot to ensure you haven't blown the highlights. Readjust and reshoot if necessary and if time and light allows. I often underexpose the shot to ensure maximum drama but be careful you don't lose details.



# The setup

BLUE HOUR TO B&W

## NEUTRAL DENSITY FILTERS

For perfect long exposures you need some high-quality glass filters. I've trialled a few brands but now only use Formatt Hitech due to their extreme clarity and zero colour cast. The filter holder is also perfect for minimising light leakage.

## LOTS OF DRAMATIC SKY

I know you can't physically set this one up but great city skylines are widely accessible and easy to photograph but the right weather and directional cloud movement can give the image the edge so be patient with the light and the weather.

## TRAVEL TRIPOD

It's tough these days to balance stability with having lightweight gear and being inconspicuous. Do your research and find a tripod to meet your needs and budget for city and travel photography. I also use a lightweight ball head for ease and flexibility.

## WIDE-ANGLE LENS

Use your best wide-angle lens. Opt for around 20mm to minimise lens distortion, ensuring plenty of sky and foreground space around your skyline.



## Aim for maximum contrast in the shot

Look for contrasting light to get the best black and white conversion

As we all know, sunrise and sunset is the best time for fabulous light. When taking cityscape shots look for the most dramatic light on the most prominent buildings, and if you are lucky enough to have all the elements of light, shadow and moving clouds in one place at the right time then use your long exposure techniques to really dramatise the image. Smoothing any water in the foreground and/or capturing directional movement in the sky adds drama and atmosphere which will all lead to a more exciting black and white image in post-production.



# Edit the shot

**1 Lightroom lens corrections** Open your RAW file in Lightroom and select Lens Corrections. To minimise the impact of using a wide-angle lens, check the 'Remove Chromatic Aberration' and 'Enable Profile Corrections' tick boxes.

**2 Transform function** Use the Transform tool in Lightroom to straighten horizons and any remaining wide-angle distortion. Use the Guided feature and place your guidelines on the distorted buildings. Use the content aware fill to sort out the adjustment areas or simply crop.

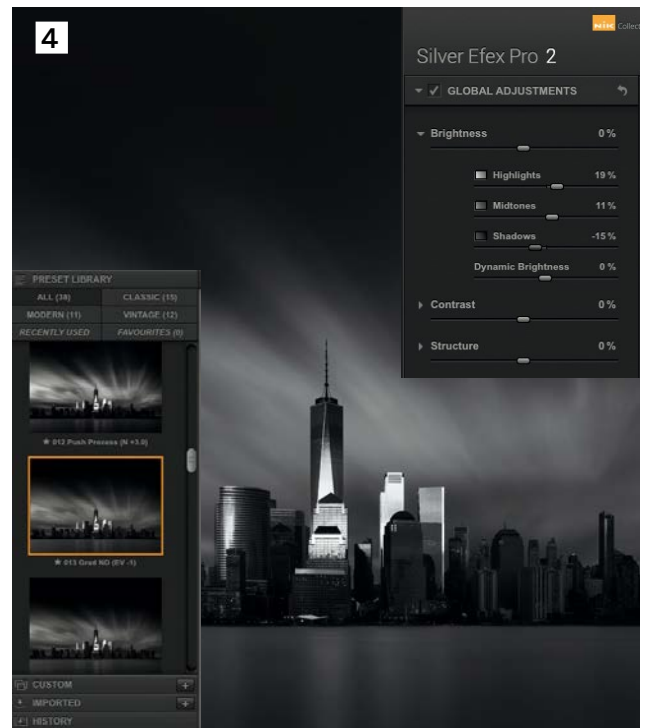
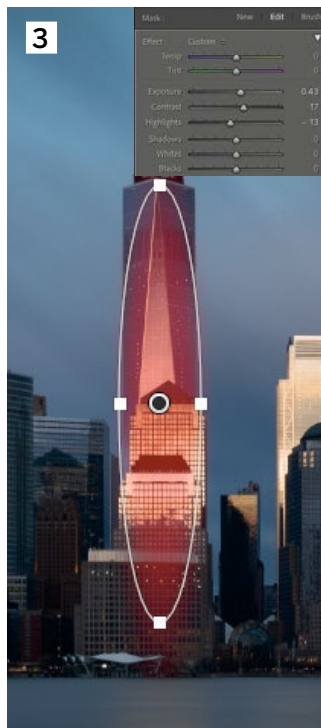
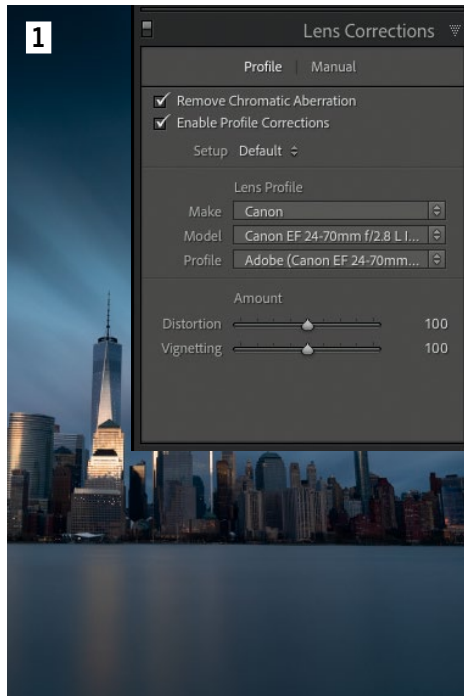
**3 Check the highlights and lowlights** With high-contrast shots it's easy to clip the highlights and shadows, but using the 'Basic' sliders and some selective radial filters on specific areas of the buildings you can correct this easily.

**4 Black & White conversion** Turn blue hour into black and white using the profile browser in the 'Basic' tools of Lightroom. I will often use Silver Efex Pro if I can't find a preferred Lightroom profile as this offers a more dynamic choice.

**5 Spot removal** I know it's incredibly dull, but lengthy long exposures can show spots or missing pixels on the image so in Photoshop I always zoom into at least 100% and scan the image for spots. Or, use the Camera Raw Filter tool to scan and remove.

**6 Crop or not to crop** I love a square crop in all aspects of my photography and to get a real sense of fine art in this shot I felt a square crop on the buildings with a hint of sky movement remaining works really well.

I always zoom in and scan for spots



BEFORE



*Left*  
**Manhattan blue hour**  
The unedited RAW file of this classic New York city skyline


*Below*  
**Final edit**  
The final edit and black and white conversion

AFTER



# Capture DISTRACTION-FREE cityscape scenes

Remove tourists and moving vehicles from your cityscape images with these simple techniques

 It's one of the biggest frustrations a photographer can experience when shooting in a city. You've found a fantastic view of a great subject, you get your camera set up, you frame your composition, and then a load of tourists stroll into your frame. Equally aggravating is passing traffic – we often forget that the city we're shooting is a living, working urban environment, home to thousands of people going about their business. These elements work together to make capturing an unobstructed shot a challenge, especially when making images close to famous landmarks.

In these circumstances you might try to repair the image using the Clone Stamp tool or a similar feature in Photoshop, but this will almost certainly be a lengthy process, and the results will be variable. You will likely spend hours removing each obstacle and then patching the gaps created using background textures, which, if done incorrectly, will look obvious and unsightly.

Luckily there are two methods that can save bags of time. Firstly, you can use a long exposure to reduce moving objects to an indistinct blur, or, when using a tripod is not an

option, you can blend images for a tourist-free final composition. Let's take a closer look at these quick and easy methods for distraction-free cityscapes and travel images.

*Inset*

### Tourist trap

Taken at a popular spot in Paris, this image suffers from a crowded foreground, thanks to tourists on the steps. Complicated detail makes software cloning a challenge



All images © Peter Fenech



**1 Find your composition** Since we'll be shooting multiple frames, it's important to find the ideal composition first. Explore the scene to find the best angle. Select a view that people are constantly moving through.



**2 Keep it still** The following process requires long exposures, so use a tripod to keep the camera in one position. This will also help later image blending to be conducted more smoothly, and with reliable results.



**3 Attach ND filter** To lengthen the exposure, add a neutral density filter. A 10-stop ND is a great tool for this, but a variable ND or 3 or 4-stop filter is still beneficial, when combined with the next step.





## AFTER

### Undisrupted view

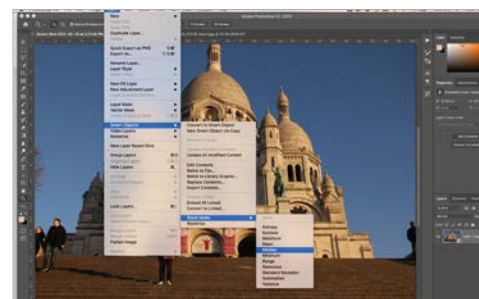
By shooting a long exposure or blending multiple frames, moving tourists can be eliminated from the shot. Here it looks like we had Sacré-Coeur all to ourselves



**4 Use Aperture Priority** Although we're controlling shutter speed, we still need to watch our depth of field. Use A mode to stop down the aperture and lengthen the exposure. Aim for a shutter speed of around five seconds.




**5 Take multiple frames** With your camera locked in place, switch to Manual, and shoot a series of identically framed images over several seconds. This will capture moving elements in multiple positions.



**6 Blend images** In Photoshop, open all your images as a Layer Stack, compress them into a Smart Object, then go to Layer > Smart Objects > Stack Mode > Median. This will remove any moving objects between frames.

# How to shoot handheld nightscapes

Move freely through the city shooting handheld to capture wide and intimate city scenes that are pin-sharp and perfectly exposed

 Night photography has the ability to make the mundane look magnificent, and going out carrying little more than a camera and single lens makes for a liberating shooting experience. Shooting urban night photography handheld allows you to move quickly and easily from one shot to the next; exposure times are short, so no waiting for long exposures to finish and no messing around with a tripod; you can just keep your camera in hand, shoot as soon as you see something of interest and then move on.

The camera settings you'll need to use are extreme, but modern cameras are capable of exceptional image quality at higher ISO settings, so you can still achieve great results above and beyond ISO 1,600. Fast primes such as a 35mm f/1.8 or 50mm f/1.8 will be a huge help because they're fast and don't require an exceptionally fast shutter speed to avoid camera shake – sharp shots come down to the combination of exposure settings.

Handheld shooting at night is incredibly easy and the images can look infinitely more

interesting than those taken in daylight. So, cast off the shackles of a heavy kit bag and tripod, and enjoy the freedom of shooting illuminated city scenes at night.

*Insert*

### Bright and shaky

Shooting with a low ISO and f/8 with no exposure compensation results in an overexposed image

*Right*

### A perfect exposure

Pushing the camera with Auto ISO at 800, an aperture of f/2 and a stop of underexposure gave a better result



**1 Set Auto ISO** With Auto ISO, ISO is constantly adjusted to the lowest possible setting to maintain a fast enough shutter speed to avoid camera shake. Set Auto ISO to a maximum of ISO 6,400 with a minimum shutter speed of 1/60 sec. Set ISO to Auto.



**2 Select shooting mode** Set your camera to shoot in aperture priority with the aperture at f/2 if shooting APS-C and f/2.8 if full-frame. Depth of field will be shallow, so for intimate scenes focus on the point of interest and for wider shots focus deep into the scene.



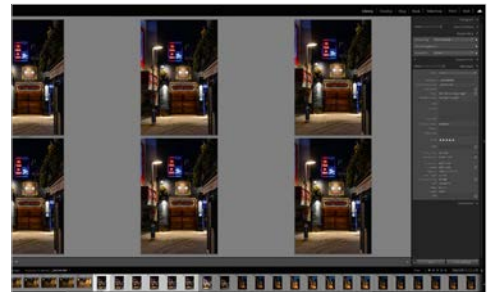
**3 Control exposure** The camera's metering system will typically overexpose night shots. Dial in one stop of negative exposure compensation – this should ensure correct exposure, but adjust while shooting if needed and set metering mode to Evaluative.



**4 Night Filter** Several filter companies produce Natural Night/Neutral Night filters that neutralise the orange glow of street lights. It's not essential as you can fix colour casts with white balance during editing, but is ideal if you like to get shots perfect in-camera.



**5 Image stabilisation** If your camera has in-body stabilisation or your lens has optical stabilisation, turn it on. Shooting at 1/60 sec with a fast prime lens such as 35mm or 50mm should be fine, but you could try 1/30 sec with image stabilisation.



**6 Shoot multiple images** When shooting at extreme settings like these it pays to take several shots of the same scene to account for autofocus errors and camera shake. Check images on the camera LCD to ensure one is sharp before moving on.

AFTER




BEFORE



# Searching the streets for single moments

**Burnham Arlidge** creates distinctive images that capture the hustle and bustle of modern life by manipulating space and time

 For Burnham Arlidge, photography is not about capturing scenes, but instead moments and feelings. In the same way that only certain things stand out in our memories, Burnham likes to play around with the architecture of a scene to give it an almost dream-like quality. The single eye contact in a sea of faces is always used to striking effect by Burnham, who calls these intricate and vibrant images “memoryscapes”.

The idea for the style sprang to life in Bangkok, where Burnham struggled to capture the liveliness of the city streets in a single shot. The images don't come easily, however, and are the product of hours of meticulous editing in Photoshop. Born in Australia, Burnham now lives in Bristol where he continues to wander the streets and hone his style. Let's see how you can capture a simialar effect in your urban environment.

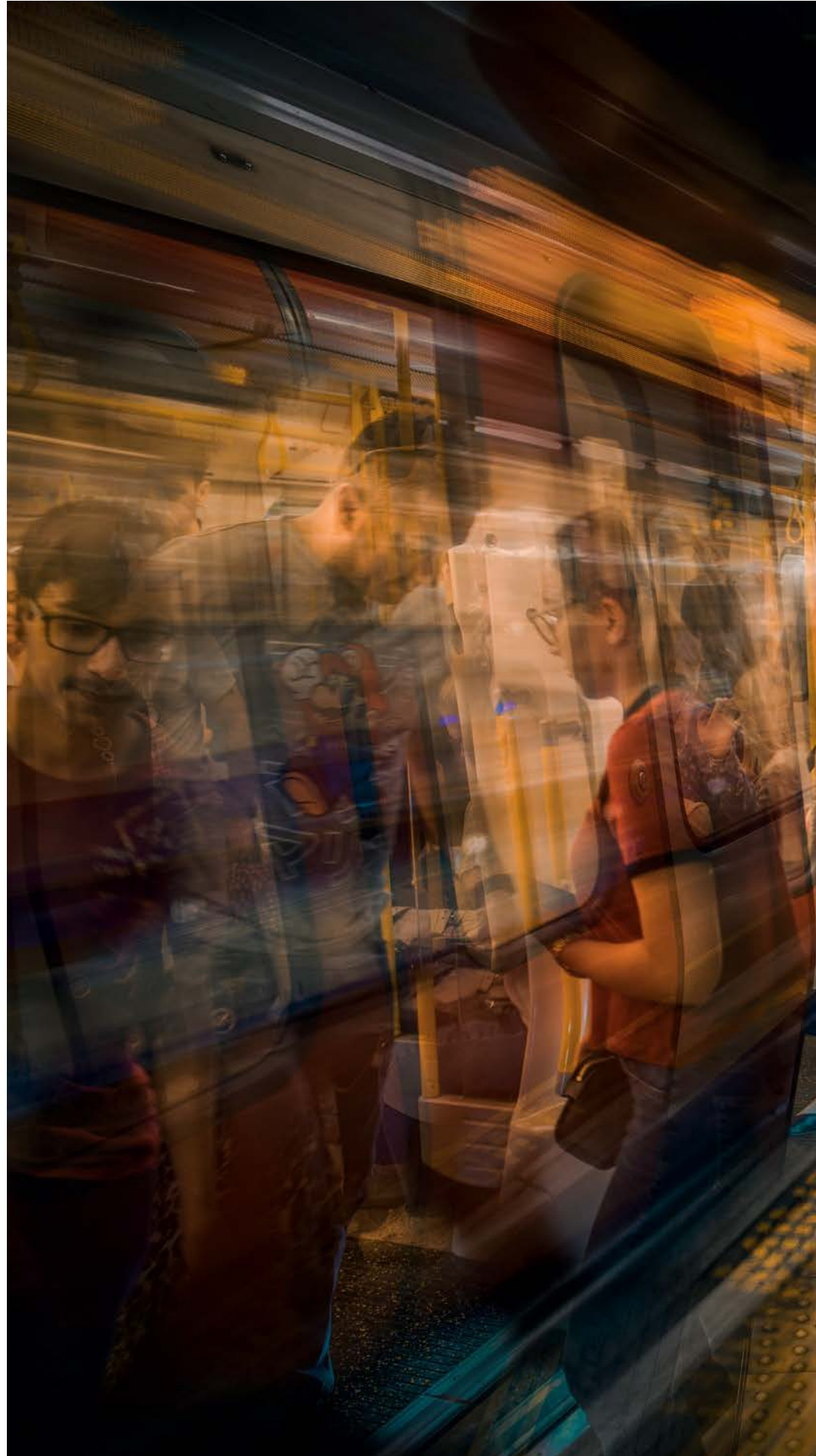
[www.burnhamarlidge.com](http://www.burnhamarlidge.com)

*Right*

## **Composite chaos**

Burnham Arlidge creates composite shots by blending together dozens of images taken at the same location, or nearby. Careful placement of figures looking straight into the camera helps the viewer navigate the space

© Burnham Arlidge





# Five steps for creating a composite shot

## Start with the right shots

I usually take 200-300 shots per photo. First, I always try and get a landscape shot without any people in the scene, to create my background layer. I then make sure I get a portrait shot of someone looking at the camera, before I start taking the hundreds of photos required for the final image.



## Be free

Once I have taken several hundred photos in one place, I wander around the near vicinity and see what other things I could add to my composition. My Extinction Rebellion photo here barely has any actual landscape structure; instead I chose to give viewers a sense of Trafalgar Square, where the demonstration was.



## Composition choices

When I shoot memoryscape photos, I look for strong building shapes, such as the dome of St Paul's Cathedral seen in this photo. Strong building outlines retain their shape well in post-production, when I come to create the blurred landscape. I also try to avoid natural objects like trees and bushes because they generally look messy.

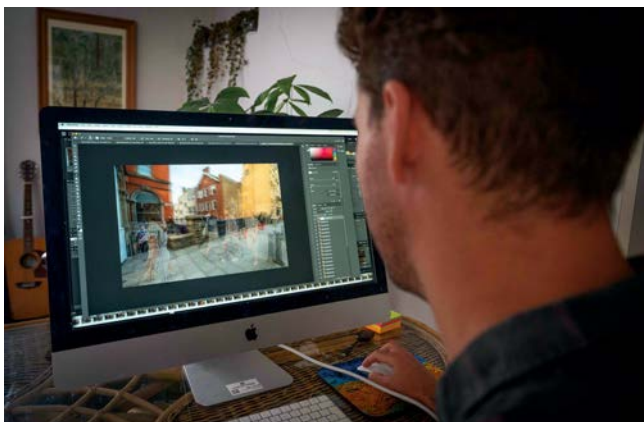
## Camera settings

Most people think I use relatively slow shutter speeds, but it's not always true. I often go as fast as I can to capture any great looks I get to the camera. The lower opacity just makes it seem slower. I also mix between focal lengths to get people bigger or smaller in shot. This gives me more options.



## Edit slow

I often take a long time to just sit and think about what will look best. The same goes for adding people. I often will edit my images two or three times to find the right balance. I also spend a lot of time on the colour grading. With so many people and colours in the final shot, finding the right colour balance can be tricky.



## Burnham's top editing tips

### 1 Be selective

Out of the 200-300 photos you take, choose your best 50-60 to edit as a layer stack in Photoshop. Make sure the exposure levels are equal across all your photos in Lightroom before you move your images into Photoshop. This will create fewer headaches later on.

### 2 Building blocks first

Start by creating the 'memoryscape' or architectural scene before you start adding people. I use the photos with the fewest people in the shot, and mess around with their size, shape and angle before combining them into a dreamy but still recognisable image.

### 3 Add people

When I begin blending in people to the image, I

always work from back to front. I start with people in the far background who are smallest, and finish with the people in the near foreground. This generally makes the photos seem more realistic.

### 4 Use masking

I always use a Layer Mask and paint in the image below using the Brush Tool. Except for the main focal figure, I will always try and keep the Opacity below 23% while I paint. This, for me, seems to be the sweet spot in which nothing is blended in too harshly.

### 5 Have fun with it

I keep the brush size quite large, and rarely zoom in to blend in someone. This can take away from the dreamy effect and start to look unnatural.

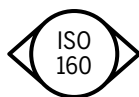
# What you stairing at?

**Alistair Campbell** finds adventurous colour combos in the mundane

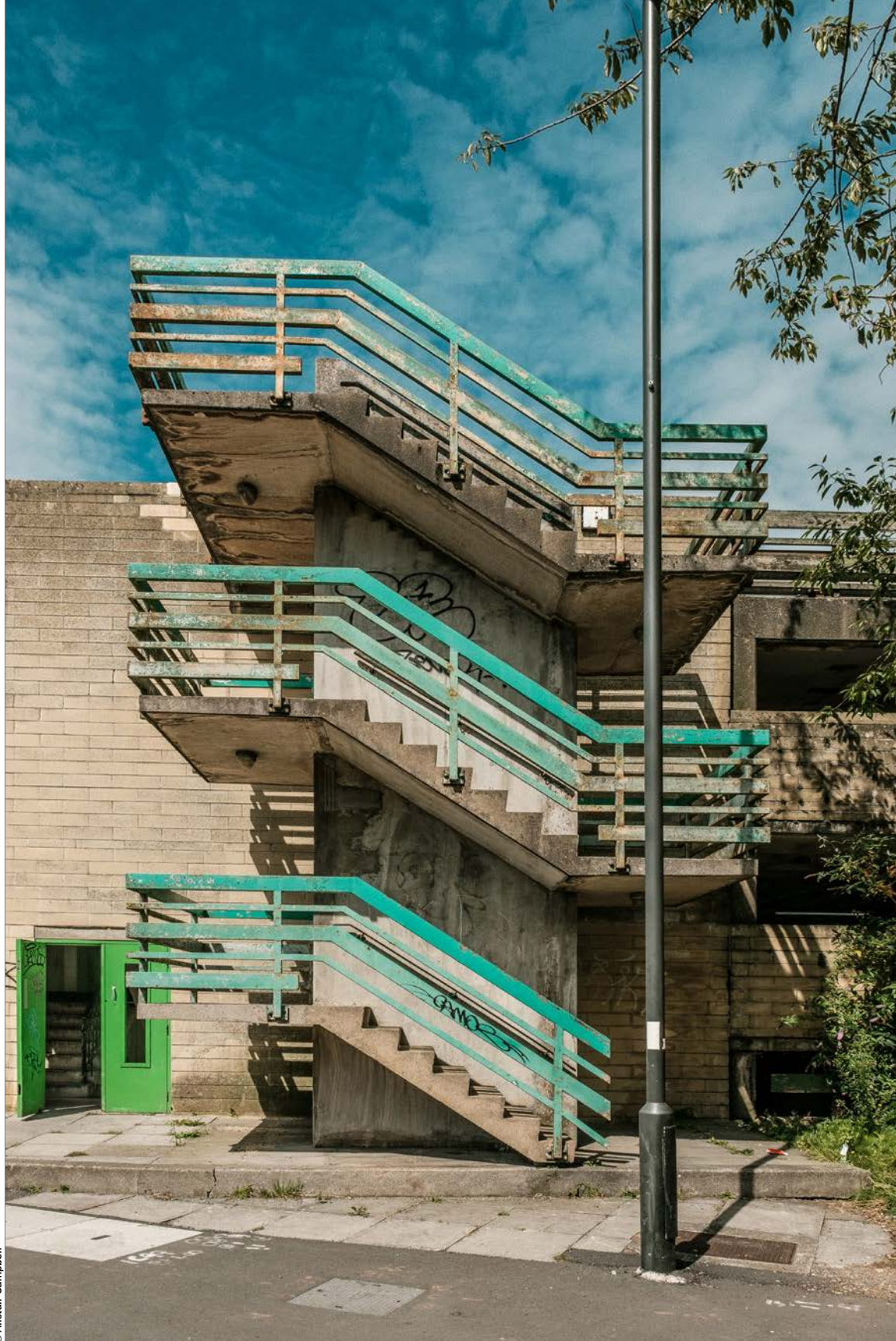
 Unless you live in a mouth-watering metropolis like New York or Bangkok, or in a creative city such as Copenhagen and Havana, chances are you might find your local streets feel full to the brim with grey concrete or beige bricks. You could be right, but even within these surroundings, you can challenge yourself to find colours and beauty even in the mundane.

Once you start to seek out specific colours or combinations of colours, they will appear everywhere. Doors, windows, security shutters, fences and railings all tend to be hand-painted to a specific colour. The trick is not to go out searching for the perfect composition using Fibonacci's golden ratio, but to see only colour, and free yourself from other rules or constraints.

The stairs to the top of this car park will not win me first prize at the next photo competition ceremony, but what I did see was a pleasing combination of blue and green hues.



© Alistair Campbell



## Forget the rules

We're all guilty of learning so many rules within photography and sticking to them so rigorously that it can actually spoil our photos. Look at the lamppost in this shot: it's not even straight. But this is not an exercise in whether you can hold a camera straight or not: we all know we can do that if required. Free yourself up instead.

## Colour harmonies

Opposite colours on the colour wheel usually work perfectly together, but occasionally others will mix well, too. If you ignore the beige of the bricks, all you are left with here are hues of green, blue and aqua. I wouldn't necessarily suggest wearing green trousers with a blue top, but here they sit well together.


## Lens choice

Nine times out of ten, when I'm heading out to shoot some street photography I'll take a lens that gives me a little wiggle room. I usually take a 16-55mm f/2.8, but rarely use it much past 35mm. This was wide as possible at 16mm, but it was great to have different options.



# Leading lights

**Wayne Ridley** adds light trails to his roster of photo skills

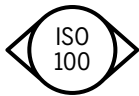
 It was only last year that I started photography, but I've learnt so much since.

It has been a great way to escape and distract myself after being diagnosed with two life-changing health conditions. Making connections with local amateur photographers has been inspiring, and has encouraged me to try many different genres of photography.

I like to try my hand at most styles. I haven't found a specific niche yet, but light trails and long exposures are something I particularly enjoy. I think the appeal is the waiting game and experimentation with the camera. You set it off for a 30-second exposure, but then you wait, never really knowing how it will turn out until it shows.

I would encourage anyone who feels they might enjoy this to at least give it a try. I was hugely intimidated by the settings on a DSLR – but hey, nothing ventured, nothing gained.

📷 @wayne\_ridley\_photography



© Wayne Ridley



## Leading lines

Initially I look for a line that will potentially direct the viewer's eye into the image. These yellow road lines were absolutely perfect: not only do they flow right into the centre of the shot, but the light trails created flowed along with them, making a ripple effect to the centre and allowing the eye to scan through the entire scene easily. Leading lines are everywhere.

## Shooting in low light

Prepare for failure. This shot took 30 minutes to get, with at least 20 exposures – and even then I wasn't 100% happy with it. I wanted cars coming both ways, but it didn't happen. Keep your ISO low and your shutter slow. Whatever light enters the frame while the shutter is open will be captured in the final exposure.


## Know your light trails

Position the camera on the side of the road where traffic is moving away from you. If you shoot from the oncoming side, the headlights will nullify the red glow of tail lights on the other side. A tripod is an absolute must, but try angles other than head height for different perspectives. Above all, stay safe while roadside.



# THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

**Mike Harris** uses a nifty fifty to shoot a sprawling cityscape through a window in a high-rise building

 Big cities look fantastic when captured from high vantage points because they allow you to get above the majority of buildings and capture a sprawling urban vista. The challenge is finding a suitable vantage point, but you don't necessarily need to be a seasoned pro photographer to gain top-tier access.

Not all tall buildings are out of bounds and with a little research you should be able to find plenty of hotels, high-up restaurants and tourist attractions, such as London's Sky Garden at 20 Fenchurch Street (AKA the Walkie Talkie). As long as photography is permitted, these towering locations can provide the perfect opportunity to capture photogenic city views.

However, safety restrictions mean you'll

almost always have to shoot through glass – even on balconies and roof terraces – and more often than not you won't be permitted to use a tripod. But neither of these limitations need to pose too much of a problem. As we'll show you in this tutorial, glassy reflections and grubby panes can be mitigated with a few simple tips and tricks, and in late afternoon cloud our shutter speed never dipped below 1/125 sec at ISO200, leaving plenty of room to boost the camera's sensitivity in darker conditions.

We struggled to balance the sky and city below, but even without a tripod you can still shoot and blend a bracket, thanks to Adobe CC's effective auto-alignment function. You don't need any specialist kit either; a standard prime or zoom, such as a kit lens, will do!

## KEY TIP EXPERIMENT WITH LIGHT

Shooting through glass can sometimes confuse your camera's autofocus system. If your camera keeps hunting or focusing on the glass itself, we'd recommend switching to manual focus and doing it the old-fashioned way.

*Right*

### Clean shot

While high-rise glass buildings can provide decent views over a city, you'll need to avoid reflections and marks on the glass when shooting for a clear picture.

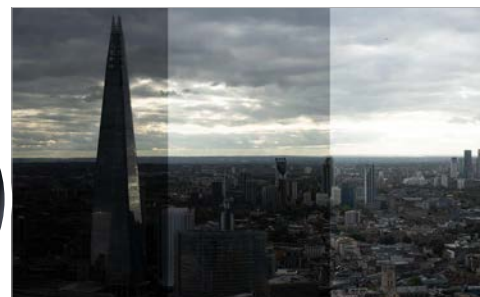
All images © Mike Harris



**1 Find your composition** Since we'll be shooting multiple frames, it's important to find the ideal composition first. Explore the scene to find the best angle. Select a view that people are constantly moving through.



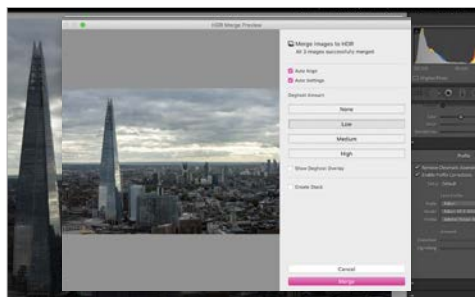
**2 Keep it still** The following process requires long exposures, so use a tripod to keep the camera in one position. This will also help later image blending to be conducted more smoothly, and with reliable results.



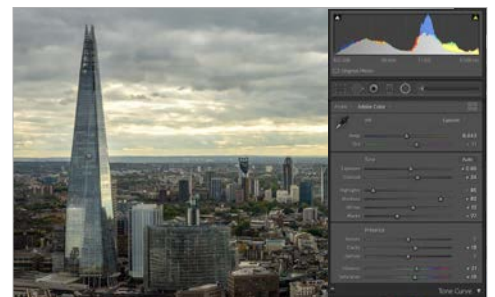
**3 Attach ND filter** To lengthen the exposure, add a neutral density filter. A 10-stop ND is a great tool for this, but a variable ND or 3 or 4-stop filter is still beneficial, when combined with the next step.



**4 Use Aperture Priority** Although we're controlling shutter speed, we still need to watch our depth of field. Use A mode to stop down the aperture and lengthen the exposure. Aim for a shutter speed of around five seconds.




**5 Take multiple frames** With your camera locked in place, switch to Manual, and shoot a series of identically framed images over several seconds. This will capture moving elements in multiple positions.



**6 Blend images** In Photoshop, open all your images as a Layer Stack, compress them into a Smart Object, then go to Layer > Smart Objects > Stack Mode > Median. This will remove any moving objects between frames.

# FRAME WITHIN A FRAME

**Mike Harris** shows you how to get into the right frame of mind to up your compositional game

 A frame within a frame is a popular compositional technique used to frame the subject of a photograph with a natural or man-made object. This could be anything from a window or doorway, to an avenue of trees or a row of bushes.

The frame doesn't need to completely surround your subject, but it should be prominent enough to guide the viewer's eye straight to the focal point. Frames are a great way to simplify overly busy scenes or obscure unattractive or boring areas of your images. Our photograph of Bath Abbey is a good example. The grand building is a beautiful architectural subject, but its size cuts a lonely figure as it protrudes high above everything

else in the city, which makes it difficult to compose. Thankfully a nearby archway allowed us to frame the magnificent structure, and create a much more balanced and interesting composition. The hard part is inevitably finding a suitable frame, particularly if you already have a subject in mind. However, you can search for frames whenever you're out and about, even if you don't have your camera on you.

Just like other compositional techniques, such as leading lines and the rule of thirds, if you practise long enough, you'll start to notice frames within frames everywhere. Hopefully the steps on the facing page will help it to become second nature!

*Right*

## Compositional tool

Sub-framing is a brilliant way to add interest and direct the viewer towards your main subject. Here, an archway frames the abbey from above

## KEY TIP KEEP A RECORD

Once you're aware of frames you'll start to see them all over the place. We'd recommend keeping a notebook or using your phone to jot down the location of any frames you happen upon when you're out and about, but don't have access to your camera.

All images © Mike Harris



**1 Find your frame** When you're actively looking for frames you'll start to see them all over the place. However, if you have a specific subject in mind, it can be challenging to find a suitable frame. We walked in a circuit around our subject and found an archway that lined up with the building perfectly.



**2 Think frames** Man-made and natural objects can work as a frame and it's important to note that they don't necessarily have to surround your whole subject. Bushes, tree branches, plants, windows, doorways, arches, pillars, mirrors and even orbs of bokeh can all be used to frame your focal point.



**3 Tripod vs handheld** Tripods allow you to compose a scene using your LCD and the grid overlay for ultimate precision. However, when working in a town or city with ample light, it's best to work handheld. Tripods are a trip hazard on busy streets and are often not permitted on privately owned public spaces.



**4 Where to focus** A frame within a frame is used to funnel the viewer's gaze towards the focal point of the image, so we used single-point AF and single-servo AF to focus on the abbey. The advantage of using the latter is that you can lock focus on your subject and refine your composition before firing the shutter.

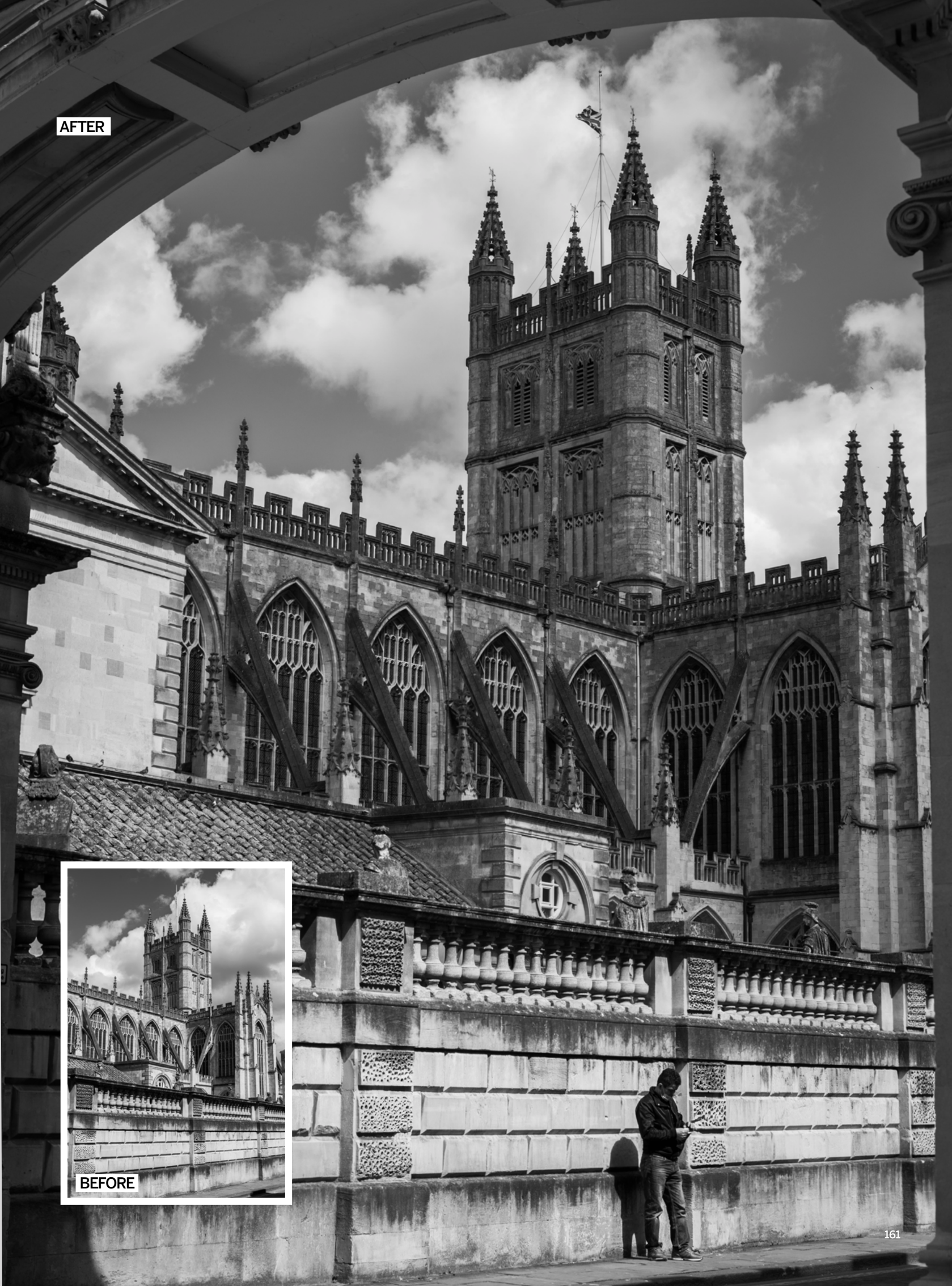


**5 Camera settings** We kept our ISO low and used a shutter speed of 1/320 sec to mitigate camera shake. An aperture of f/8 to f/11 is effective, but you may wish to use a wide aperture and get close to your frame if you want to blur out the foreground. This works well when using a colourful frame.



**6 Make your own** If you can't find a suitable frame you can create your own using items such as fallen branches found in your environment. You can also gently guide flowers or branches in front of your lens to create a frame – but take care that they aren't damaged in the process.

AFTER



BEFORE

# TEACH YOURSELF

# URBAN

# PHOTOGRAPHY

Future PLC, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA

#### Editorial

Editor **Lauren Scott**  
Designer **Neo Phoenix**  
Compiled by **Zara Gaspar & Phil Martin**  
Senior Art Editor **Andy Downes**  
Head of Art & Design **Greg Whitaker**  
Editorial Director **Jon White**

#### Contributors

Peter Fenech, Jordan Banks, Alistair Campbell, Dave Fieldhouse, Serge Ramelli, Craig Reilly, Mike Harris, Anton Alymov, Helen Trust

#### Cover images

SHansche / iStock via Gettyimages

All copyrights and trademarks are recognised and respected

#### Advertising

Media packs are available on request  
Commercial Director **Clare Dove**

#### International

Head of Print Licensing **Rachel Shaw**  
licensing@futurenet.com  
www.futurecontenthub.com

#### Circulation

Head of Newstrade **Tim Mathers**

#### Production

Head of Production **Mark Constance**  
Production Project Manager **Matthew Eglinton**  
Advertising Production Manager **Joanne Crosby**  
Digital Editions Controller **Jason Hudson**  
Production Managers **Keely Miller, Nola Cokely,**  
**Vivienne Calvert, Fran Twentyman**

Printed in the UK

**Distributed by** Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU  
www.marketforce.co.uk Tel: 0203 787 9001

**Teach Yourself Urban Photography Second Edition (5048)**

© 2023 Future Publishing Limited

We are committed to only using magazine paper which is derived from responsibly managed, certified forestry and chlorine-free manufacture. The paper in this bookazine was sourced and produced from sustainable managed forests, conforming to strict environmental and socioeconomic standards.

All contents © 2023 Future Publishing Limited or published under licence. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used, stored, transmitted or reproduced in any way without the prior written permission of the publisher. Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. Registered office: Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA. All information contained in this publication is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. You are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of products/services referred to in this publication. Apps and websites mentioned in this publication are not under our control. We are not responsible for their contents or any other changes or updates to them. This magazine is fully independent and not affiliated in any way with the companies mentioned herein.



Future plc is a public  
company quoted on the  
London Stock Exchange  
(symbol: FUTR)  
www.futureplc.com

Chief executive **Zillah Byng-Thorne**  
Non-executive chairman **Richard Huntingford**  
Chief Financial and Strategy Officer **Penny Ladkin-Brand**

Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244

Part of the  
**Digital**  
**Photographer**  
bookazine series





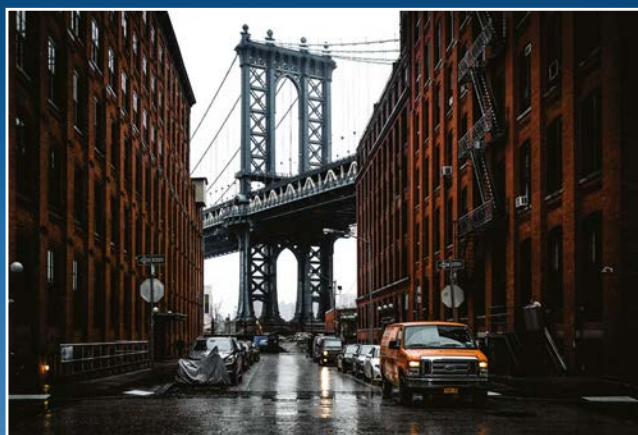
TEACH YOURSELF

# URBAN PHOTOGRAPHY



## PRO ADVICE

Gain insight from the professional photographers who are experts in their field



## TIPS & TECHNIQUES

Learn the camera settings and gear you need to create amazing cityscapes



## PROJECT IDEAS

Inspiring tutorials to help you practise and apply your urban photography skills



## LOCATION GUIDES

From skylines to street life, discover the very best urban places to visit around the world

