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10 tips for TAKING TOP PICS

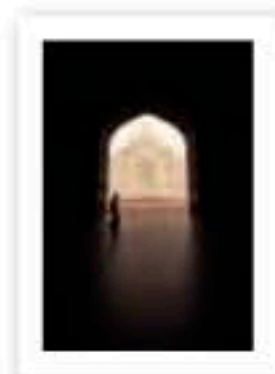


With the summer holidays just around the corner, now is the time to brush up your photography skills. Michael Chia shares ten simple tips for taking great snaps.



1. USE THE 1/3 RULE TO COMPOSE YOUR PHOTOGRAPH

Most people have a tendency to frame the subject right in the middle. This makes the image look too static and unpleasing to look at. Ever heard of the 1/3 rule? Imagine dividing the viewfinder into three equal areas. Composing a photo in this way often means moving your subject to the side. This rule usually works best with landscapes.



2. FRAME THE SUBJECT

Nothing makes an image more boring than shooting it straight. Adding a frame to the subject helps to make the subject stand out and appear different. Great 'frames' are windows, doors and gaps.



3. KEEP IT SIMPLE

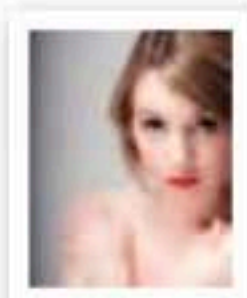
Many feel an overwhelming urge to pack everything into an image. Not only does this urge make for a crowded image, it

lacks a focus point to draw the viewer's attention. Less is more. By keeping it simple, more space is created for the photograph to breathe and the end result is more appealing to look at.



4. TELL A STORY

It is often said that a picture tells a thousand words. Telling a story is a simple yet effective way to add meaning to your photographs. Let your photographs do the talking. If you are doing the talking and not your photographs, it is about time you took a deeper look into the way you are capturing the image.



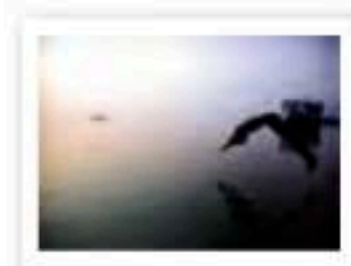
5. PORTRAITS - USE A LONGER FOCAL LENGTH

One of the best ways to make a person really look bad is using the wrong focal length when shooting a head shot portrait. Distortion of the lens can occur. The use of a 105mm focal length (about 80mm in cropped sensors DSLR cameras) and longer creates a good head shot while the use of a shorter focal length like 28mm (18mm in cropped DSLR sensors) results in unpleasing effects. Make the effort to extend your lens and physically move further away from your subject.



6. GET CLOSE TO YOUR SUBJECT AND INTERACT

Very often we use a very long telephoto lens to zoom in on the subject – either to steal a shot unexpectedly or we are too lazy to move closer to the subject. But long lenses make the subject look distant. It is a good idea to bring your viewer closer to what you are photographing, and this feeling can only be achieved by getting closer, not zooming in from a distant. You can only get closer if you interact with the people you are photographing. Think of some iconic war photography images. What made them stand out is that you could really feel you were close to the action.



7. FREEZE FRAME

To add some impact and excitement to your photography, you could try using a high shutter speed to freeze a moment. That moment is the decisive critical space in time that has the right impact to draw the viewer's attention.



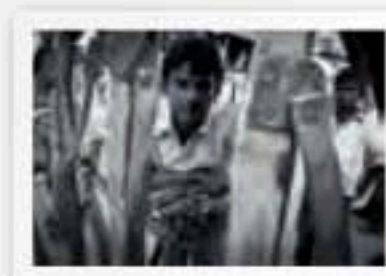
8. SHOOT EARLY IN THE MORNING FOR BETTER LIGHT AND LESS CROWD

Nobody wants to wake up early in the morning while on holidays, but the quality of light is at its best early morning or dusk. Moreover, at popular places most tourists are either still sleeping or having breakfast. Have you ever seen St Marco's square in Venice almost devoid of tourists? Yes, only in the early morning!



9. LOOK FOR PATTERNS

The eyes are very attracted to simple shapes, patterns and repetitions. Keeping an eye out for small details can help your images stand out among the crowd. We have this habit to shoot the 'overview' of what we see while missing out the little details that makes an image look different from others.



10. GO CLASSIC

You will be hard pressed to find someone who finds black-and-white photography boring. While monochrome images seemed to be facing certain death in the 80s when colour photography was becoming more affordable, nowadays it is chic to shoot in monochrome. But wait! The last thing you want to do is adjust your camera settings. While black and white looks great on your screen, the quality of the digital file is not so great because the camera software is simply converting the image to greyscale with no colour information (similar to the 'desaturation' function on Photoshop). You get better images and control by shooting in colour and converting it later to monochrome through software or instructing the lab that you want the colour image to be in black and white.

And some final advice: before embarking on your summer holiday, practice and read some tutorials about photography. The last thing you want to happen is miss a great photographic opportunity because you were fumbling around with your camera's setting!

MICHAEL CHIA

A Brussels-based freelance photographer, who organises photography workshops.
www.michaelchia.eu
www.creatifimage.be