
ADD A SHOT LIST TO YOUR CAMERA GEAR WHEN YOU TRAVEL

Quick Guide
Written by Diane Wehr



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Photograph by Diane Wehr

One reason I like to travel is to have novel experiences. Everything is different from my everyday life. The food, the accommodation, the architecture, the scenery, the people, the birds and animals, the transportation – it is all new to me.

There is interest in taking the kinds of photographs that I do not usually take, combined with opportunities I do not usually have. This should be easy, right?

And yet, there are some obstacles.

I am currently actively pursuing street photography.

Almost every single week, you will find me out shooting somewhere.

Plunk me down with a camera, and I reflexively start looking for street photography opportunities.

If your interest is architectural photography, you may not be able to see the people for the buildings. Landscape photographers may be counting the minutes until a sunset. We each have our

preferences and specialties. So how do we come home with a nice mix of travel pictures that might actually be interesting to other people?

Today, we are going to take a look at using a shot list.

For the first time ever, I took a shot list on a recent trip. Here is what was included on my list:

- Street scenes
- Minimalist street photography pictures
- Interesting light for street photography
- High ISO and negative exposure compensation for street photography
- Flash for street photography
- Straight-on street photography
- Architecture
- Architectural details
- Landscapes
- Bridges
- Transportation
- Water scenes
- People (vendors)
- Food/restaurants
- Action
- Panning
- Animals and birds
- Weddings
- Design
- Signs
- Airport
- Hotel
- Flags



Photograph by Diane Wehr


*A transportation, sign, design, and street shot mixed into one.
Perhaps I saw this opportunity because of my shot list.*

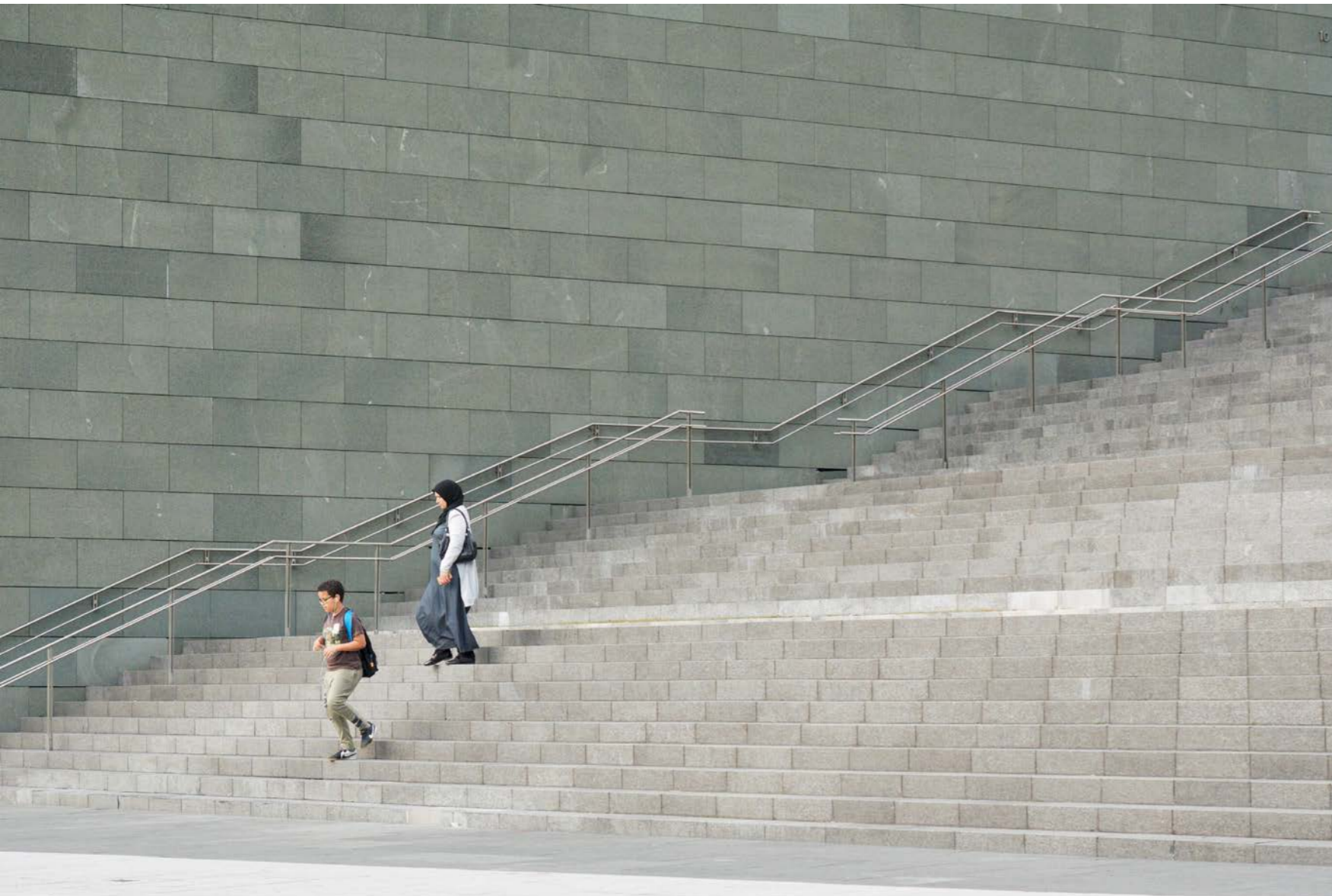
WHY CREATE A SHOT LIST

I created my shot list because I worried that I would focus on taking the kinds of pictures that are easy and familiar for me to take.

The shot list helped me to remember that my goal was to shift toward travel photography and not just shoot street photography.

The intent of this guide is to discuss how a shot list might be constructed, how well this strategy worked out for me, and what I learned by using a shot list.

 **Recommended Reading:** If you'd like to learn how to create amazing portraits, grab a copy of Photzy's [Art of Portrait Photography](#) premium guide.



Photograph by Diane Wehr

An example of my minimalist street photography efforts.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

The first six shots on my shot list were specific to street photography. You will likely have an expanded list for your particular interests.

These six shots were reminders to myself to look for opportunities in street photography that have not been my strength.

I tend to miss the forest for the trees. For example, I will go to an event and take many pictures of individual transactions, but come home with no contextual street scenes.

I love minimalist street photography, but I am not good at finding it.



Photograph by Diane Wehr

I have also developed a new interest in using “patches of light” to spotlight people, but looking for that light is not yet second nature for me.

I might have missed my favorite street photography shots from this trip had I not been so keenly reminded (by my shot list) to look for this kind of special lighting.

Using a high ISO setting, and negative exposure compensation, is flat out experimental to me. You may be wondering exactly what that is.

I had read about how to use this combination of settings to get interesting street pictures.

In truth, this reminder on my shot list was not enough.

I now know that I must bookmark articles about using techniques that are new to me so that I can review them while traveling.

Two of the shots on my list – flash street photography and street photography taken from a straight-on shooting angle – **were courage reminders.**

These kinds of shots increase the likelihood that your subject will realize that you are taking their picture.

As I gain more experience as a street photographer, this has become less of a worry for me, but I am definitely not out my comfort zone yet. The shot list reminds me to push myself out of that comfort zone.



Photograph by Diane Wehr

IMPROVING ON YOUR FAVORITE GENRE

In order to have a **reminder** list of shots for your favored genre of photography, you have to have a sense of **how you want to grow in your discipline**.

As a landscape photographer, are you using foreground effectively? Is your placement and leveling of the horizon consistently good? Are you getting optimal depth of field? Are there scenes that you do not usually take, but would like to? If you are taking literal landscapes, photos that document the geography, can you take landscapes that document how you feel about the scene?

Tips and tutorials on the Internet can guide you about good practices and be anecdotes on your shot list.

Pictures from other photographers can open your mind to new possibilities. Wherever there are opportunities for improvement, add them to your shot list, and keep them in the forefront of your mind.

STANDARD TRAVEL SHOTS

The next eight categories on my shot list (from architecture to food) are standard travel categories.

You might wonder why you would even need to bother to put them in a list.

The problem is that whatever kind of photography is easiest and most interesting to you will always command the lion's share of your time and attention.

Landscape photography is not my forte. I need a reminder to take the time to look for those opportunities and then make use of them.

Otherwise, instead of looking out at and shooting a beautiful panoramic landscape, my back is turned to it, so that I can see what the people around me are doing.



Photograph by Diane Wehr

This image is from my collection of food and restaurant shots.

You may be an architectural photographer or a landscape photographer, and perhaps you are laughing at me or even feeling a bit of disdain about my apparent disregard for the beauty of a landscape.

However, your challenge to create people photographs might just be even greater than my challenge to get photos of landscapes or buildings!

Putting 'people' on your shot list might be your courage shot.

I added the suggestion of photographing vendors on my list because it can be the easiest place to start photographing people, and it counts toward my success!

TECHNICAL ACHIEVEMENT SHOTS

Action photography, and the camera panning technique, are to some degree technical achievements.

The mistake that I made was not doing a little research on how one actually gets these kinds of photos. Make a shot list, but don't forget to learn how to accomplish those shots before you leave!

Nevertheless, my day of panning photography was nothing short of photographic fun. (Yes, I spent an entire day doing nothing but panning shots!)

I was having coffee sitting in a Paris street cafe, awkwardly by myself, and the world was whizzing by, and I thought, why not?

I had created some camera panning shots years ago on a photo walk, but I could not remember anything about shutter speed or the focusing technique.

No matter, it was on my shot list and now was the time. I got one of my favorite shots from that trip using camera panning, but it was serendipity and not any particular skill.

I have been practicing camera panning at home, since that trip. I have studied the technique so on my next trip, **I will not** be depending as much on serendipity.



Photograph by Diane Wehr



Photograph by Diane Wehr

GEAR LIMITATIONS

Animals and birds are problematic for my photographic efforts because they can require a long lens to get the shot.

It is generally not worth it to me to carry a specialty lens, unless I am going to a place like Africa or the Amazon rainforest, where that kind of photography is going to be predominating.

One solution is to look for big animals or birds, or take pictures of domestic animals.

I admit that I inordinately enjoy animal pictures, but it is likely that your audience will as well. I often find that at the end of the day, the shot I like the best is the one of the local cat or dog, just like this shy vineyard dog.



Photograph by Diane Wehr

SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY SHOTS

Weddings, examples of design, and signage are special opportunity shots.

Based on my experience, you have a 100% chance of encountering a wedding or engagement shoot when you are traveling. They are always in a nice location. Your subjects will be posed. The only downside is that you will not be popular with the professional photographer who is doing the shoot!

This wedding shot, which was my preferred shot from my trip, included some of the street decorations that were up because a flower festival was happening in Burgos that day. You might say, "I got a twofer."

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Referring back to my shot list, I needed some photographs depicting design.

Design is an area of photography that seems to be gaining traction, at least on social media. I regard it as composition training, so it is always a worthwhile endeavor.

Signage is the humor opportunity in travel photography. You may or may not find one, but the odds are greatly increased if you are actually looking. (Thank you, shot list!)

OTHER TRAVEL INTERESTS

The last three categories on my shot list included airport, hotel, and flags. These are more informational categories of photography, or what I refer to as the 'doing something to amuse myself' category.

Airport photography, in particular, is a great way to pass the time while waiting.

I used to be quite diligent at getting a shot at each airport that I passed through, but lately I have been coming home without a shot. (This is all the more reason to put it on my shot list!)

A country's flag can add interest to any architectural shot. The shot list helps you to remember to look for one. You can make it a personal challenge to capture it perfectly unfurled.

The last category on my list is the hotel, and it is my personal weak point.

In general, it is a very helpful data point to have a shot of the hotel, because my friends will occasionally ask for hotel recommendations.

I did have it on my shot list during my last trip. Once again, I failed to take a single picture of the hotel. Next trip, I plan to be diligent on this. Who knows, maybe it will turn out to be one of my best architectural shots!



Photograph by Diane Wehr

FINAL

A fair question: did the shot list influence my behavior in taking a variety of travel photos?

The answer is a qualified yes.

For example, this architectural photograph of the Guggenheim in Bilbao, Spain was nothing short of personal discipline.

It was at the end of the day, I was tired, but that shot list was staring me down. A little rain and a nice sunset helped me get the best photo possible.

The shot list gave me the necessary motivation to try.

I was reasonably successful in acquiring photos from all but three of the categories on my shot list.

Two of them were street categories (normally my strength). I now know that using a flash will never be in my street photography toolbox.

A flash is more “in your face” than I can ever comfortably be.


That bit of insight is helpful, and the shot list forced me to face this fact.

I should have studied up on how and when to take the shot, which I called experimental, because the settings and outcome are non-traditional.

It did not help to be on the trip, and then find out that I had no idea how to execute the technique! When does it make sense to take a high ISO and negative exposure compensation shot? Create your shot list, but also research it before heading out.

The failure to take the hotel shots just irritates me. Even with the help of a shot list, we are all human.

Will I use a shot list on my next trip? The answer is an unqualified yes! I will change it. I have found that I need to be even more aware of the shots I want to take but tend to not take.

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Self Check Quiz

1. What opportunities are there in your favored genre of photography that would make it onto your shot list?
2. In the list of seven standard travel photo categories, which ones are the hardest for you to take?
3. Is there any addition that you would make to the standard travel photo categories? If so, what are they?
4. Have you ever taken a panning or action travel photo? If you want to take one, do you know how?



Hey there!

Let's get real for a minute... Learning photography can be super challenging! But we're here to help you every step of the way! Here are 3 of our most useful (*and FREE!*) photography resources:



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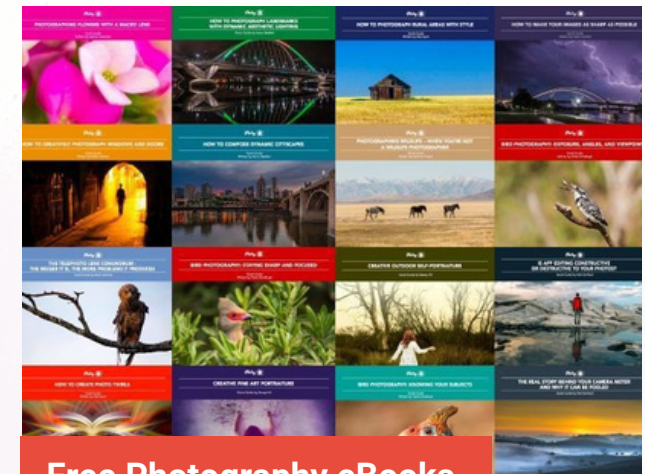
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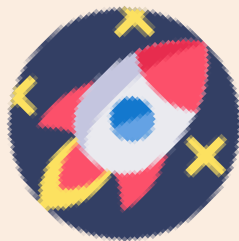
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About the Author



Diane Wehr is an amateur photographer and author with a particular interest in street and travel photography. She travels far and wide with her Olympus Mirrorless camera.

Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/albirder/>

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