

TRANSPORTATION

By Kent DuFault

I personally love taking photographs of transportation. Who among us hasn't fantasized about the open road?

There are many possible stories to tell with transportation photography. First, you have the vehicle itself; Image 001 is an excellent example of this type of storytelling transportation picture.

You also have the people that operate the vehicle being photographed. That's an entirely different story.

How about the location that is being depicted? What about the weather?

I have a friend who loves to photograph trains. He has several locations where he can acquire an interesting angle on trains as they regularly pass by.

He goes back to these same locations over and over again. He's taken hundreds of train photos from these same spots, and oddly enough, each one is entirely different! Each one tells a different story.



Image 001 – Photograph by Jp Valery



Image 002 – Photograph by Jack Anstey



Key Point:

Telling a photo story on transportation relies heavily on your choice of the camera position. Can you get a high vantage point? Or do you need to get low and close? What vantage point conveys the story best?



Image 003 – Photograph by Balazs Busnyak



Key Point:

The story of transportation can change, not only with the weather but also with the time of year. The season is a consideration, as is the direction of light, which will change as the sun moves across the sky during the year. Or, how about capturing a full autumn moon rising in the background that would be impossible in the spring of the year?



Image 004 – Photograph by Mado El Khoully



Key Point:

Location will undoubtedly alter the story. Another critical element is your chosen photographic technique. Do you freeze the action? Perhaps you let a portion of your subject go blurry, such as in Image 004. Maybe the story is to make the entire subject go blurry?



Assignment:

Pick a mode of transportation that you have easy access to. If you can use trains, that would be awesome. But if not, you can use any mode of transportation, even the family car. This creativity prompt has three levels. For the first level, I want you to photograph your chosen subject in the same location but with varying camera positions and different lenses (if possible). Make careful choices to tell a transportation story for each picture. For the second level, I want you to photograph your subject completely sharp. Then, shoot it partially blurred, and then finally shoot it completely blurred. Tailor the effect on your intended story. For example, the utterly blurred version might tell the story of speed. The third level will take you some time. If you accomplish it, it will be worth the effort. Photograph your subject at the same location, from the same camera position, varying only the weather and the time of year.



Image 005 – Photograph (T) by [David Murray Chambers](#) and
Photograph (B) by [Neora Aylon](#)



Key Point:

One of the easiest ways to add a story to any photo, but especially transportation pictures, is to include a human element. Think outside the box. The human element doesn't need to be blatant. Both photographs in Image 005 are fine. However, the lower photo tells a more complete story because of the human element.



Image 006 – Photograph (L) by [Dan Russo](#) and Photograph (R) by [Murillo de Paula](#)



Remember:

Capturing only a portion of the human body can really ramp up the storytelling drama of your photograph. But you must make sure to include enough details to clue in a viewer who wasn't there.

- From visual clues, we can tell that the cyclist in the left portion of Image 006 is an adult male. He is athletic and perhaps even a competitive biker.

- From visual clues, we can tell that the cyclist in the right portion of Image 006 is female. She is of school age and wears a uniform to school.



Assignment:

Create a total of five outstanding pictures of transportation. Let your imagination fly by including a human body part in each shot. Don't show the entire body; only show a body part. Use the technique to ramp up the drama of your visual story, but be careful not to get so esoteric that a viewer doesn't understand your intended message.



Image 007 – Photograph (T) by [Filip Mroz](#) and Photograph (B) by [Harley Davidson](#)

Transportation is fun to photograph. It's also challenging. Often times, you won't have a choice as to picking a location or controlling the weather.

It's an essential skill in storytelling to develop an open and versatile mindset.

Things that the photographer can control are their technique and their evaluation of light.

The quality of the lighting in a photograph most definitely changes the story, so make use of that.

Image 007 contains two professionally produced storytelling photographs. Each has made use of many of the techniques discussed in this creativity prompt.

Hold up your hand and view them separately. It's remarkable how different the 'feel' of each photo is based just upon the lighting.



Assignment:

Develop a portfolio of transportation photographs that rely on the lighting to solidify the story. I would love to see you acquire at least 20 photos that you're genuinely proud of. It will take some time and effort to complete this assignment. The good news is that you can go out at any time and work on it. No matter what the weather is like or what time of year it is, transportation never stops.

You will find the rewards well worth it!