

Photography tips for travelers

By Rick Steves

If my hotel was burning down and I could grab just one thing, it would be my digital camera with its memory card filled with photos.

Every year I ask myself whether it's worth the worry and expense of mixing photography with my travels. Then, after I see my images and relive my trip through them, the answer is always "Yes!" Here are some tips and lessons that I've learned from the photographic school of hard knocks.

Most people are limited by their skills, not their camera. It helps to understand your equipment before you travel, but ultimately your most valuable tool is a sharp eye connected to a basic understanding of how your camera works. Work through the manual. Then make a point to be creative in your photo safari: Capture striking light, contrasting shades, repeating patterns, interesting textures, bold colors, and intimate close-ups.

Look for a new slant on an old sight. Postcard-type shots are hard to resist, but boring. Everyone knows what the Eiffel Tower or Big Ben looks like. Find a different approach to sights that everyone has seen. Instead of showing the Leaning Tower lean, climb to its top and try a shot of the piazza below you. Shoot up at the snowy face of the Matterhorn...through the hind legs of a cow.

Capture the personal and intimate details of your trip. Show how you lived, who you met, and what made each day an adventure (a close-up of a picnic, your favorite taxi driver, the character you befriended at the launderette). Those moments – your moments – are the ones you'll want to remember.

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