



is a building where electricity is created from the river water passing underneath it. Shooting from a boat, I used the long horizontal lines and a wide depth of field to make the building seem to stretch out into the distance.

35, or any interesting color pattern on an insect's back. If the subject is a flower, you might choose to focus on one or two petals or the colorful center of the flower. If you are using a DSLR, you may find it easier to disable autofocus and take pictures manually. Then you can manually adjust the lens to its closest focusing distance. To simply move your body in and out to change the focus. Because the depth of field is so small, even the slightest forward or backward movement of your body will throw different parts of the subject into or out of focus. You can also use a tripod to keep everything steady, but you may find it quite challenging to maneuver a hand-mounted camera into the right position for macro work. Another way to increase your depth of field is to avoid getting in *too* close to your subject to work with.

Quick Tip: It's All in the Details

One thing that is fun to do (and makes great pictures) is to concentrate on taking pictures of smaller items around or in the building, in addition to trying to get the entire building or room in one shot. These detail shots are great storytellers and add an interesting and fresh perspective to your collection of architectural photos.



Architectural Photography

Taking pictures of buildings (both inside and out) can be difficult to do well. This is because as soon as you get close to a building, you have to zoom out or use a wide-angle lens to fit in the whole building. And once you do that, you risk distorting all the straight lines that make up the building. Wide-angle focal lengths make straight lines look bent and weird (especially near the edges of the photo). Outdoors, the problem can sometimes be fixed if you can get far enough away from the building to zoom in a bit and apply a short telephoto look to the picture. This takes away all the distortion. But this isn't so easy to do on interior shots. For those, you must concentrate on keeping straight lines (like corners) away from the extreme edges of the frame, if possible.

Professional architectural photographers solve all these problems by using large-format

film cameras, known as view cameras. View cameras are flexible and can be bent in all kinds of ways that small cameras can't, and this bending can eliminate the distortion effect.

People Portraits

Everyone likes to take pictures of people. Taking *good* pictures of people can be a challenge, although a fun one. Here are a few tips to keep in mind the next time you shoot people portraits.

"Back up, zoom in!"

This is the most important piece of advice I can give any portrait photographer. The worst thing you can do when photographing people is to use a wide-angle lens or to have your point-and-shoot camera zoomed out all the way. There are two reasons this is a bad idea. First, wide-angle lenses create a bit of distortion. While this effect might be



I was able to photograph the interior of this building with a very wide-angle lens and still avoid distortion because it was a rather round building. Notice how the windows are actually overexposed; I had to do that in order to make the main body of the image come out correctly.



This portrait was shot very close to the subjects using a wide-angle focal length. The problem with this technique is that there is not enough emphasis on the subjects, and the wide focal length creates some distortion on their faces.

unnoticeable in a landscape photo, it does awful things to people's faces, stretching cheeks and making heads, noses, and ears look too big. The ultimate example of this is when someone holds a point-and-shoot camera (or a cell phone) out at arm's length and points the lens backward at him or herself. Have a friend step back a few feet, zoom in, and take the picture for you.

Another reason that wide angles and people don't mix is that the wide view generally gives too much area around the subject(s). When taking pictures of people, always remember that the person is the subject, and be careful to eliminate as much of the background as possible. To achieve this, remember to "back up, zoom in." Stay at least six feet away from your subject and use a focal length of at least 80mm, if not longer. Work backward, so to speak, by setting your lens to the right focal length first and then moving yourself around into the right spot instead of

setting the focal length based on your position. This does a few things. It eliminates the distortion effect and makes people's features look closer to reality; it helps you achieve a more shallow depth of field, which always makes for a more pleasing portrait; and it helps you fill the frame with your subject's face and shoulders.

Shoot a lot of pictures

People blink. People make odd faces, even when they don't mean to. People look cranky, even when they're not. And the more people you have in a picture, the more chances there

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are for someone to have an odd expression at the moment a photo is snapped. Your best bet is simply to shoot a lot of pictures and fairly quickly.

Don't tell people to smile

Telling people to "Say cheese!" doesn't usually work. The subjects simply grin, and everybody looks unnatural. The smiles don't look real. Likewise, don't say things like, "I'm going to take a picture. Hold still!" This makes people look stiff and uncomfortable. People don't need to hold still; it's far better if they're relaxed. As I've explained, as long as you're shooting with a shutter speed of 1/125 or 1/250 or higher, virtually all subject movement is frozen. Let people just be themselves, and your photographs will take on a whole new feel. Then, once someone has a nice expression, don't say, "Hold it right there! That was perfect!" The minute someone



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tries to hold what had been a natural look, it looks fake and stiff. Just let the camera capture the perfect moment for you.

The Problem Is . . .

Most people are used to standing rigidly, smiling stiffly when having their picture taken. They expect you (the photographer) to want that, and it can be very hard to explain what you *do* want. My best advice here is to go ahead and take the picture a few times while they stand there rigidly and grin. These are digital pictures, after all, and they don't cost anything to take. As you've made these first images, start trying to help your subject relax. Take the camera away from your face and ask a question or two. Fiddle with some dial on your camera as if you're getting ready to try something else. Doing these things takes the pressure of being photographed off of your subject, and as soon as the pressure is off, people



After a few minutes of formal portraits, I asked her to talk to her horse instead of smiling at the camera. This gave me a different look. Now the girl is laughing with her horse, and his attention (notice his ear) is focused on her. Both portraits are nice, but I prefer this one.



Portrait was shot very close to the subjects using a wide-angle focal length. The problem with this technique is that it does not give enough emphasis on the subjects, and the wide focal length creates some distortion on their faces.

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After a few minutes of formal portraits, I asked the girl to try talking to her horse instead of smiling at the camera. This gave me a different look. Now the girl is laughing with her horse, and his attention (notice his ear position) is focused on her. Both portraits are nice, but I prefer this one.

Take pictures while your subject talks and while they laugh. Tell them to look out the window (people sometimes relax more if they aren't staring into a lens), ask them about their hobbies, or their dog, or favorite books. After a short time, your subject will most likely be comfortable with you and the camera, and you'll start to get really good images.

start to relax and look more natural. While still maintaining the conversation (although it can be tough to shoot and talk at the same time!), bring the camera back to your eye and continue taking pictures. Just keep talking, shooting, talking, shooting, and occasionally adjusting the camera. Take pictures while your subject talks and while they laugh. Tell them to look out the window (people sometimes relax more if they aren't staring into a lens), ask them about their hobbies, or their dog, or favorite books. After a short time, your subject will most likely be comfortable with you and the camera, and you'll start to get really good images.

Lighting

Good portraits require good lighting. One of the best things you can do is to turn off your camera's flash (or only use its fill-flash mode). This eliminates any red-eye problems and keeps your portraits looking natural instead of "flashed." Portraits shot in natural light tend to have a pleasing look. Indoors, try using window light, particularly on windows facing away from the sun, so your subject is lit with soft, reflected light. Outdoors, cloudy days are wonderful for people. "Golden hour"

light is pretty, but it can be difficult to use with people because they have to squint when facing the light. To beat this, try having your subject face slightly away from the sun so his or her face is illuminated with side lighting. Sunny middays should be avoided if possible, but one great trick is to have your subject face completely away from the sun (so the subject's face is shaded by his or her own head), and then shoot a tight face portrait.

The Best Way of All

Formal portraits are fine, when you have the opportunity to set up your subject in a nice location, but I find the pictures can sometimes turn out dull and lifeless. My favorite way of taking people pictures is with a semi-candid approach. To work like this, you simply have your camera around but don't make a big deal over the fact that you have it. Don't say to everyone, "I'm going to be taking pictures!" Just take your camera out of the bag and casually start shooting, but don't try to disguise the fact either. What ends up happening is that people are aware you have the camera but aren't particularly thinking about themselves being photographed. The results are great-looking *natural* portraits of people doing what they really do, not just standing with a frozen grin gazing at the camera. Photograph the kids playing with the dog; photograph the dads standing around the car and whatever else is happening.

Animal Photography

Taking good pictures of animals requires patience and a good sense of humor. If you are trying to get pictures of wild animals (like deer, birds, squirrels, bears, etc.), the best thing to do is work slowly and quietly and use the longest focal length you have available. Some wild animals are most likely to be seen right around dusk, so you might try raising



Always be ready to capture the quiet moments, when people aren't concerned with the process of being photographed. Natural moments in between formal shots can be very nice. I used a fill flash here to eliminate some of the midday shadows.



It was late autumn, just before winter, when this chipmunk decided to brave the heights of a crabapple tree to collect some of the fruit. He was about ten feet off the ground and seemed to take no notice of me as I captured shot after shot.

your ISO considerably if you're going to shoot at that time. It's better to have little noise in your photo because of a low ISO number than to risk having the animal appear blurry because your shutter speed is too slow. If you set up a feeder at a location not far from your house, it can work well for attracting wildlife to come within range of your camera. If you hang a bird feeder outside a window, you might not even need to leave the house. Just keep a camera ready for action whenever it appears.

Pet photography is something else entirely. We don't have any trouble getting close to pets; they're often *too* close. For animals like dogs, cats, rabbits, and so on, you want to get down low so that your camera are at eye level. Like people portraits, animal portraits look best when shot with a focal length of around 80mm to 150mm. For action pictures and candid pet shots, just follow the animal around and be ready