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How to blur your background for eye-catching portraits

**SET THE APERTURE**

An out-of-focus background will really help your subject to stand out. Working in aperture-priority mode (A or Av), choose your lens’ widest aperture, which is usually around f/1.8. If you own a prime lens, such as a 50mm f/1.8, the aperture will open much wider for even blurrier results.

**SHOOT AT 50MM**

For head and shoulders portraits on APS-C cameras (such as Nikon’s D3400 or Canon’s 80D), 50mm is the most flattering focal length. On full-frame cameras stick to 85mm. If you’re photographing children, experiment with wider focal lengths for fun, quirky results.

**FOCUS THE SHOT**

Single-point autofocus is the best option for portraiture, as it allows you to focus very precisely on your subject’s leading eye. Just remember that as you’re using a wide aperture, the area of perceived sharpness is extremely shallow, so you’ll need to focus as accurately as possible.

**GEAR ESSENTIALS**

All DSLR and CSC manufacturers make at least one budget portrait lens with a wide aperture. For APS-C DSLR users, a 50mm f/1.8 is a perfect option, usually costing around £100.

How to choose the best kit for travelling light

**TRAVEL LIGHT**

Whether you’re off backpacking around the world or heading on a short family break, you’re likely to have to travel light. Try to stick to one camera, one or two lenses, some spare batteries and lots of SD cards. Pancake lenses and superzooms are popular for travel – see page 138 for our group test.

**PROTECT YOUR GEAR**

Unfortunately thieves are at work in most tourist destinations, and expensive camera gear is a prime target. Wear your bag on your front at all times, and never let it out of your sight. Consider taking a bag with anti-slash straps, or even one where you can padlock the zips together.

**GET INSURED**

Proper insurance is a must if you’re taking your kit on holiday, especially if going abroad, as loss, damage or theft are much more likely. You can take out insurance for just a week or two, though pro rata it’s more expensive than for a full year. Be sure to check the excess before taking out a policy.

**GEAR ESSENTIALS**

If you want to use your kit in or around water, try a waterproof softcase such as this one from Aquapac. They cost around £100 (depending on camera size), and can be submerged to 10m.

How to find emotion for striking street photography

**KNOW YOUR SETTINGS**

Street photography is about capturing fleeting moments, so you won’t have time to play with settings as you shoot. Working in aperture-priority mode, set a mid-range aperture of around f/8 and increase the ISO until you have a shutter speed of at least 1/500sec.

**SHOOT FROM THE HIP**

You’ll get the most natural results when your subject doesn’t know they’re being photographed, so try to avoid holding your camera to your eye. Instead keep it between hip and chest height, guessing at the composition. If you have a flip-out screen, you can use this to help you compose.

**USE AUTO-AREA AF**

Focusing is tricky when your camera isn’t to the eye, so it’s best to use auto-area AF. This will simply focus on the nearest object to the camera, choosing the appropriate focus point. As you’re using a mid-range aperture, the subject should be sharp even if focus is slightly off.

**LOOK FOR EMOTION**

The most interesting street images are those that capture the essence of the people and places you visit. Try to capture emotion, and expression, and if possible document interactions between people. This will inject energy and character into your shots and help you tell a story.

**GEAR ESSENTIALS**

A mirrorless camera with a tiltable screen is perfect for street photography. Panasonic’s GX800 is ideal — it’s small, light and the kit lens offers a zoom range of 12-32mm.

How to take a fresh look for more creative shots

**VARY YOUR ANGLE**

The vast majority of shots are taken at eyelevel, so by changing your angle you can give your images a unique look. In particular, rest your camera on the floor for a very different perspective. If your model has a flip-out or tilting screen, use this to help your composition.

**MAKE A PHOTO STORY**

If you have an interesting trip planned, why not document the whole thing from the second you leave your front door to the second you get home. This will allow you to create a complete narrative that will help you remember every part of your holiday exactly as it happened.

**CREATE A QUADTYCH**

Presenting four related images together as a quadtych can be extremely effective, with the final becoming much more than a sum of its parts. Choose four shots with lots of colour, and ensure each has a very simple composition. You might also try a triptych, with just three images.

**BREAK THE MOLD**

If you’re heading to a well-shot location, such as the Eiffel Tower, avoid the usual tourist snapshots and look for some new angles. Try ignoring the main attraction and see what else the area has to offer — there could be some photographic gems that everyone else has missed.

**GEAR ESSENTIALS**

Why not have your best travel shots printed out? For top-quality printing at a reasonable price, we recommend Cewe, which prints on a wide range of paper, canvases and boards.