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Tips for Better Vacation Photos

By Valerie Goettsch

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Photos are a great way to share your travel experiences with family and friends. Here are a few suggestions to help you capture vacation memories you will treasure for years to come.

PLAN AHEAD

Make sure your digital camera is in good working order before you go, and keep it in a water- and shock-resistant case. Bring two sets of rechargeable batteries and don't forget the charger and relevant cords. Make sure your camera has enough memory. Packing an extra memory card is wise, as there is nothing worse than running out of room for pictures halfway down the Grand Canyon. It may be tempting to lower the resolution so you can store more pictures, but you will regret this later as it may result in poorer quality prints, or you will be limited to smaller size prints. Set your camera at its highest quality JPEG setting and get more memory if you have to. You will appreciate this when you're viewing and printing your photos after your trip.

TAKE LOTS AND LOTS OF PICTURES.

With a digital camera you can always erase the photos you don't want. Take pictures of anything you find interesting and try to focus on some of the details such as an attractive doorway or a colorful market, not just panoramic scenes or major landmarks. Let your pictures tell a story by creating a visual diary of your trip. Include street scenes, interesting signs, people you see along the way. For variety take both vertical and horizontal pictures.

READY FOR YOUR CLOSE-UP?

When taking people shots, don't make the mistake of standing too far away. You want to be able to recognize the people in your photos. Get close enough so you can see the expressions on your subjects faces. Zoom in on individuals or capture them from the waist up. Pictures are often more

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interesting when you can catch people at candid, un-posed moments. In posed photos, try to incorporate some of the background into your shot. Try snapping from interesting angles rather than simply head-on.

USE YOUR FLASH

When photographing in bright sunlight, setting your camera's "fill" or "forced" flash is very helpful, particularly when photographing people. Brilliant sunlight often makes people's faces look harsh, casting dark shadows under the eyes and accentuating wrinkles. The daytime fill-in flash will soften the lighting and make the images more flattering. Your family and friends in the photos will thank you!

EDIT AND ENHANCE YOUR FAVORITE SHOTS

When you get home you can edit, crop and enhance your favorites using photo editing software such

as Foto Finish, Ulead or Photoshop Elements. Consider adding drama to your images by turning some of your color photos into black and white or sepia tones and then upload all your images to an online photo printing service like Ofoto or Shutterfly for fast and convenient prints. You can take your best snaps and use your photo editing software to create a photo calendar or make photo cards for personal notes, or to email your favorites to family and friends.

Most of all have fun with your camera!

Valerie Goettsch publishes the digital photography website

featuring

reviews of photo editing and album software and digital photo printing services.

How to take Great Photos of Your Pet

By Kelly Paal

We all love our animals. They do such funny, adorable, and cute things. But somehow when that camera comes out they run and hide or they just seem to always be pointed away from the camera when you push the button. Well here are some tips to help you have a better chance at getting great photos of your pet.

1. Don't wake your pet out of deep sleep and attempt to coerce him into performing for the camera. It won't happen. Try to take photos of your pet during their routine playtime.
2. If there is enough daylight to take photos then turn the flash off. My cat has learned to close his eyes just before the flash goes off. He learned that little trick quick too! Many times a camera flash is just too bright for them, that's why they point away from you when they know that you're taking photos.

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3. Don't try to get them looking into the camera. If there is someone around who can play with your pet just get a shot of them playing with someone else. You can have the photo with the person and the pet or get close to crop the person out of the shot.

4. If your pet always runs away from you every time you pull the camera out try leaving the camera sit out where it can be seen. Take photos of other things in the home and try turning the flash off.

5. Be prepared to grab your camera and take photos when your pet is ready, read "doing something cute." I've been able to get some of the best photos of my cat when he's just doing something on his own.

Remember don't put pressure on your animal to perform for the camera. Think more on the lines of catch them in their natural habitat. Our pets want to make us happy and you can easily confuse them by pressuring them to look good for the camera. Also be prepared to take a whole lot of bad photos for that one really good one.

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Kelly Paal is a Freelance Nature and Landscape Photographer, exhibiting nationally and internationally. Recently she started her own business Kelly Paal Photography (

). She has an educational background in photography, business, and

commercial art. She enjoys applying graphic design and photography principles to her web design.

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