

9 TIPS FOR BETTER TRAVEL PICS

by Erica Keel



Maybe you rarely take pictures at all. Maybe you're great at selfies but haven't had much use for taking pictures of landscapes – or people in a landscape setting. Well you're in luck! Landscape pics are my jam! Here are some tips and tricks, as well as some of my favorite things that make taking good pics easier. Now go get your Ansel Adams on! (do people still know who that is?)

The first thing I want to say is, don't be afraid to take the picture. And **DON'T FORGET** to take the picture. I completely agree that sometimes we can get caught up in pictures and not enjoying the moment, so you need to do both.

But sometimes people feel silly stopping to get a pic or are in a hurry or whatever. I always regret not stopping. It actually bugs me after-the-fact, so now, I make Jess stop the car so I can get the pic. I have to use this wisely because he only has so many, "Stop! I need a pic", in him before he gets annoyed. But just take the damn pic!



WHAT'S THE BEST EQUIPMENT?

DSLR and Phone Cameras and Making a Spectacle of Yourself

1. If you have a DSLR camera, bring it along. I know phones are our go-to but you want the better quality that a nice camera can capture if you have one. I actually use my iPhone and my DSLR both because I want to be able to review and upload some of my pics immediately, but I also want to have higher resolution pictures for blowing up and hanging on the wall.

I have a Nikon D3100 but now this [Nikon D3500](#) would be the closest option, and an upgrade. Mine was a hand-me-down from my mom and didn't come with all of the extras this one does, just the camera and two lenses. I got a bigger lens about a year ago so I don't have to change them out but it's not a must-have. It has one wide angle lens that takes amazing landscape pics and then a decent zoom lens.

DSLR or
Phone
Camera?

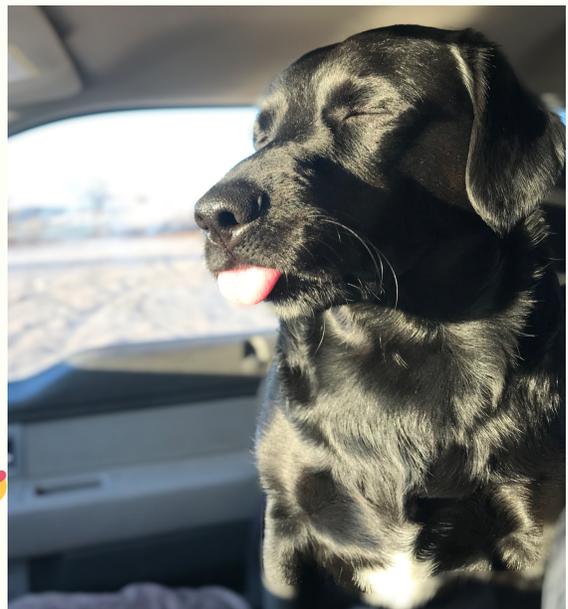
You'll also need a camera case, if you don't have one. [This](#) is very similar to mine. I like it because it has a larger compartment for my camera with a lens on it, that way it's ready to grab and shoot. And then a separate compartment for my other lens. [This](#) backpack-style bag would be really great if you like to take walks or hike with your gear.

Because I'm usually out hiking and walking around, I leave the camera bag behind and wear this [harness](#) because the camera bag can be bulky and having the camera hang around my neck was killing me. I also got the extra pouch to store my extra lens. It might look a little dorky but I'm old enough now that I choose comfort and convenience over cool, lol 😂

I carry multiple SD cards just in case. I rarely need more than one because I do download my pics to my computer at night so I don't risk losing them, but, if something happens to one or I want to keep my pics safe until I can download them, I have options. The kind of SD card you need depends on your camera, so check the manual or Google it.

2. As mentioned, iPhones, or any smart phone really, take amazing pictures. I recently upgraded to the iPhone 11 and am loving the zoom lens. Some features that help take amazing pictures include:

- Panorama feature. At the bottom of your phone, you'll see Photo, then to the right is Square and then Pano. Scroll through the options to see what all you have. Pano is so great for landscapes. You can scan left to right or right to left. Be sure to follow the line to keep it straight.
- The newer iPhones have the Portrait feature. This is awesome for when you want the subject of the photo to be in focus and what's left behind it to be kind of blurry. You can use this with people or plants or animals – whatever is the main subject. Here's a tip for you though, if you don't have this feature, you can download the app FabFocus. Before I upgraded my phone, I loved being able to have this app because I was feeling major FOMO. See adorable Bo 🥰



3. I am a firm believer in a selfie stick – they're pretty mainstream now so people don't feel as dumb using them. But honestly, I just want memories and I want the pictures I want, so I don't care what people think when I'm taking pics. I will never see these people again. [This](#) selfie stick is a selfie stick and a tripod in one. It's so handy for trips. You can set it up and use the blue tooth remote instead of a self-timer. No more running back and forth to the camera! This is one of my favorite pics I took with my selfie stick.



You also definitely want a tripod for your DSLR. The one I have is really simple and they don't seem to make it anymore, but [this](#) is a nice option. It has a lot of features of the selfie one I shared above, just not as compact and convenient but this one you can use for your DSLR and your phone, so that's pretty handy.

Be sure your camera has the mounting adapters to attach to the tripod. I buy extras and keep the in my bag because I seem to lose them frequently. [These](#) are the ones that worked for me.

SELFIE TIPS

Self-indulgent or Best Invention Ever? The World May Never Know...

But First,
Let Me
Take a
Selfie



4. Maybe you think you could never take a selfie. That they're so self-indulgent. You feel silly. I will tell you that it does take a little getting used to, but it's so fun to have pics of myself with the places I want to remember. See, me at Mount Rushmore. Love it!

Hold the camera out in front of you, turn the camera around so you can see yourself, lift it slightly up from your face and angled down a bit towards your face. Now, lighting is super important. How do you find the best light? Indirect light is best, in front of a window or under a structure that blocks the sun from hitting you directly.

Now face the light source/sun/window. Hold the phone out in front of you like you're taking a pic, keep it there and turn your entire body around until you find the best light. Again, it might feel silly at first, but it's worth it to get a great pic instead of one with shadows where your skin looks sallow and uneven.

Besides selfies, candid shots are really fun and we forget to take them. Be sure to snap some candid shots too of people you're with. It's nice to mix it up and not just do posed pics; and take them when they don't even know they're being taken – from a flattering angle that is, haha!

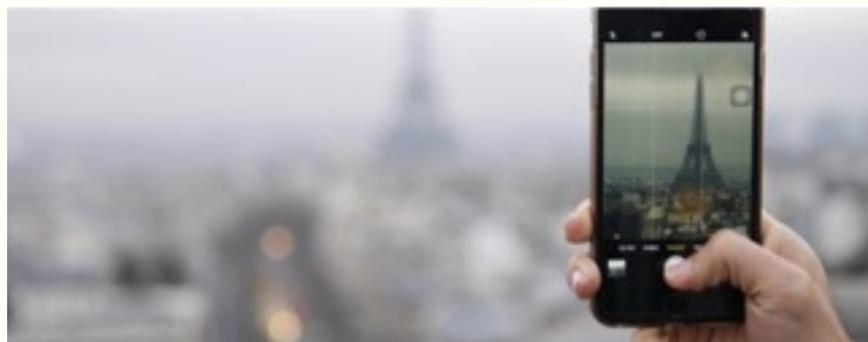


TECHNICALITIES

*Composition, Lighting
and Filters, Oh My!*

The Icing on
the Cake

5. Composition of the photo. There's a handy little feature on your iPhone that lets you add the grid. It's under Settings -> Camera -> Grid. Turn it on and pull up your camera. You'll see a grid with 9 squares. Photos look best when you line up the horizon of your photo with either the bottom third or top third. And then the subject of your photo is not directly in the center, but off to one side or the other. Either lined up with the left- or right-hand grid, like the Eiffel Tower, below. In the pic above, I lined up the ground with the top 2/3 line. The elk's antler on the left is pretty close to the left grid line so he's slightly off center the way he should be.



6. The light outside is really important, for more reasons than the obvious . An overcast day actually makes for the best pictures because you don't get all the shadows from the sun. Obviously, sunrise and sunset make for incredible photos. If you're out and about during mid-day, just be aware of the shadows, you might have to line things up differently or position yourself in a different way to get a good shot.

7. The best part – presets/filters! There are so many options – both for before you take the pic and editing after. Your phone has some filters of its own now that you can use, both before and after you take the pic.

I like the Snapchat video filters that let you use slow motion, especially if it's snowing. I take the video, add the filter, and then save it to my phone for sharing on other mediums later. Instagram has awesome "effects" that you can save and use for your stories. Again, I pull up the Instagram Stories camera, add the filter, take the picture or video and then save it to my phone. I rarely upload in real time.

I have also purchased a lot of presets (filters) for the Adobe Lightroom app. There is a free version and some presets don't require the paid subscription. I do have the paid subscription and use it on my phone and computer. At the time I'm writing this, it's \$9.99/mo.

I purchased a huge pack of filters from [The Luxe Lens](#). If you sign up for their emails, they'll notify you when they have massive 90% off sales. It's a great deal. You take pics, open the app, determine which pics you want to edit and then you can apply the preset. It makes editing pics so freakin' easy and they're absolutely beautiful. I try to use the same presets as much as possible so the pictures have a similar look and feel and it's not crazy obvious they're edited. I just want the natural beauty to pop.

Unedited



Edited/Filtered



8. Storing pictures after you take them can be a challenge. You can use Google Drive, or if you have an Amazon Prime account, you get free photo storage there. Another option is to create a private album on Facebook – or a public one if you want to share them with everyone-, you can use an external hard disk like [this](#) one, or you can use Dropbox - a cloud storage option. There are free and paid options. I use a combo of all of these.

I use two external hard drives and back everything up on both, that way if one fails, I have a back-up. You can't get those pictures back. I keep the extra drive in the fire [safe](#). I also use Dropbox so everything is in one spot and I can access it from my computer or phone. I do pay for my Dropbox because I use a lot of storage. Again, there are free options, but this is the system that I've found works best for me.

9. Sharing pics is the best part. I love taking people with me virtually on my travels and letting them experience places they may not have been. I like to edit my pics before I share them if I can. Sometimes there are just too many so I pick my favorites and edit those and then just upload the rest as they are. You can share pics on Facebook, Instagram (although limited to 10 at a time) or via an email link through Shutterfly, Snapfish and Google Drive, for those not on social media or pics you don't want to share with the world. There are other options but these are the ones I've used.

DID YOU LEARN SOMETHING?

I hope you learned something new here and are inspired to take more pics on your travels. Or even in your everyday life. It's just as fun to grab pics when you're roaming around on the weekends, those are the little moments in between your trips that make up most of your life. You want to remember those days too. Now get out there and get snappin!



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