



Dream of Travel Writing

Creating a Shot List to Organize Your Trips Around Salable Photography

Today we're going to talk about organizing a shot list around salable photography. I had asked in the opening question, and a couple of you answered one way or the other, if you do currently have some sort of organizing mechanism for your trips before you head out.

We're going to talk today about a couple different ways of doing that. Because the thing is that with a shot list—when you hear me say “shot list,” you might imagine a very specific list of shots. You know, “I need to get a photo of this wine, both in the glass and the bottle. I need to get a picture of this person. I need to get a picture of this hotel room suite.”

But that's not exactly what I mean when I talk about shot lists. We're going to talk about right at the top of the call how can you know what shots you need with that level of specificity if you don't have your story assignments yet. This is a big thing that we talk about in these webinars: whether you should pitch your stories before you travel or after and how to find story ideas on the ground that you may or may not have known about before you set out for your destination.

We're going to talk about that chicken and egg problem and how it forms the work of creating your shot list. Then we're going to talk about an overall approach to the type of shots you need for any piece. Which means that if you are coming into a trip with either an assignment or an idea that you would like to pitch a certain piece, these are the type of shots you need to be looking at getting while you are there on the ground. You often can't get back and get them later.

Then I've got four different frameworks, because the thing is, the same thing is not going to work for each of you. The different frameworks we're going to talk about, some of them are more detailed, more general, more story oriented, more photography oriented, versus what you as the writer will need in terms of photos to support your piece.

I'm going to talk about four different frameworks for creating your shot list so each of you has something that's a good fit for you personally going forward.

One of the reasons I'm doing these webinars, we talked a bit about this last week – for those of you who joined this last week you already heard about this – but is that photos take a lot of time. I'm really big on maximizing your time so you can get the most stories, the most work done in the time that you have available for yourself, for your travel writing.



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How does photography really help us in this day and age? For a lot of publications, photography helps you because it allows you to sell more stories that you might not be able to sell otherwise. I found this myself quite early on in my career that I would often be working on a piece for a particular outlet, and if I wasn't able to provide photos of that piece, either they might not be able to run it or that would be a thousand dollars that would go to somebody else that wasn't me.

Being able to get these photos on the ground, when you are there, which, like I said, is often before you pitch the piece, is paramount for a successful freelance writing career today.

What I want to look at before we dive into the specifics of the shot list question is this chicken and the egg dilemma. What do I do if I don't have assignments? How do I create a shot list? Which comes first?

We're going to talk about the different types of shots that you need for any story. There are certain ones that are general. There are certain types of shots that you can do without knowing what stories you're going to do, that establish the destination, that establish its characteristics, that establish its atmosphere. Those sometimes can be the type of shots that, as we talked about last week, different magazines do or don't get photos from stock photography. This isn't commercial stock but editorial stock photography websites.

You might be working with a magazine that does have the opportunity to get those grounding location shots from stock photography websites, but you might not. Furthermore, the photos available in those stock websites that are more general destination shots might not fit the piece you are working on right now.

Specifically, I had one piece that I was working on, which was about California wine country. It was for an East Coast publication. I'm from California and a lot of people from the West can tell you that the changing of the leaves, or what in the Northeast we call leaf-peeping, is something that doesn't really happen out west. However, there are still areas where the trees do change color. However, they change color at a very different time.

I had provided some shots, which were taken in December—which was when this piece was going to come out—of these areas in wine country that we were talking about in the piece, but the editor said, “No, no, those aren't right because they had the leaves turning colors.” To her that was inherently a fall thing, but this was a December, a Christmas, a winter issue.



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So she said, “No, no, no, those aren’t right. We need seasonal shots.” And I said, “Well this is the season.” But you never know the kind of shots the editor has in mind for those atmosphere, setting, kind of beginning-of-the-piece-two-page-spread looks.

What I ended up giving her was obviously not going to be snow in California wine country, so I ended up giving her a shot that was from my wedding when I had gotten married there years before, which was actually in October when the leaves weren’t changing just so she could have something that looked to her estimation like winter.

You really never know what shots you’re going to need for those atmosphere setting shots. That’s why it’s good to get as many of these quote-unquote—and I say quote-unquote because we’re going to talk about what general means in different settings—but to get as many of these “general” destination shots for that type of atmosphere story setting as you can. They work no matter what type of story you’re working on and you might need something different than you originally imagined for your story because the editor has different ideas. The same way that happens with us with the text of the stories we’re working on.

I mentioned not every magazine uses stock or editorial stock photography websites, but one thing that you can always do is to get your own stock from the destination. When I say for a destination, I don’t necessarily mean from the tourism board. I had magazines I work for that pretty much get all of their magazine photos from the tourism boards, so I’ve spent years seeing the type of things tourism boards have available. It very much depends. There are some pieces where you need a shot of a particular town or particular area and that local tourism board doesn’t have it, but the statewide tourism board has it.

Or you need a shot of a particular area and the local tourism board doesn’t have it but a local attraction does have it. Let’s use the fall leaves again, because it’s a great example.

It might be that you need the Blue Mountains of North Carolina with a fall foliage look. It just happens that you were there in the summer; you weren’t expecting this piece to come out in the fall. You weren’t expecting to need that kind of shot.

You go to the tourism boards; they don’t have anything. Your editor has gone to editorial stock websites and they don’t have anything. But then you go to the Biltmore, which is a major attraction right at the base of the Blue Mountains, and they happen to have it.



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If you don't get the shots that you need there, you can still fill them in, but it's much better to have a variety of options to present to your editor. Something that I did want to mention is this idea of what you are shooting in terms of what belongs to the magazine and what doesn't.

This was a question that I think I got over email between last week's webinar and this one. There are some magazines that will ask for all shots that you shot while you were out on assignment for that magazine. Just do be careful. Anytime you've signed a contract that looks like that, like I said, with my wedding photo of all things, you might need a photo from some other shoot to back up a certain story. So keep an eye on your contracts and try to avoid signing contracts like that if you can.

The short answer to this chicken and egg dilemma is to always try to make sure that you have enough shots for the pieces that you know you would like to write. Sometimes what that means is combining stories that you haven't pitched but would like to pitch, whether it's as soon as you get back from the trip or in four years, with the stories that you have assignments for and the stories that you know you would potentially like to pitch to create this shot list.

I do have further on down in the call when I talk about approaches to shot lists, I don't have the story-based approach because obviously all the photos we're shooting – unless we're art photographers – should be in service of a story.

What does that mean, though, when I say it should be “in service of a story?” If a picture is worth a thousand words, as the expression goes, what do we do when the photos are meant to be in service of the words rather than in place of them?

I remember I was in, this was actually the last time that TBEX was in Ireland, I was in a workshop at TBEX in Ireland maybe three, four years ago, and we were all reading pieces that we had written. I read a piece that had appeared in Dallas Morning News and I had also done the photos for it. I remember reading the piece and a gentleman who is now a friend of mine and thankfully doesn't remember this exchange, said, “OK, but I don't understand *blah*.”

I said, “Oh, that's because in the newspaper there's a big photo of *blah* right there next to the story.” He said, “I don't care; the words need to tell me that without the photo.”



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That was kind of the first time that I realized this thing that the photos and the words in a piece need to operate very separately, even though for the viewer they are there together. You have to remember that some people will look at all the photos and just the captions, some people will read the text and only go, “Oh yeah! That’s a photo of that thing.”

People will imbibe information in different ways. In magazines, particularly today and particularly in features, photos are an intrinsic part of the physical acreage of the piece. They take up a lot of space. You might even have a spread, so you have two pages next to each other and one of those pages might be entirely photos and the other page might be half or three-quarters photos.

It’s very common for there to be an overwhelmingly larger number or proportion of photos with a story than text, but that’s very important, and what’s the difference between a feature and just a story with photos versus a photo essay is what is doing the actual story-telling.

We looked last week at the difference between photojournalism, editorial stock, and photos that you’d shoot for travel pieces, and there is a difference. One of the things about photojournalism is that within the photo, similarly to a painting, and especially I like to think of those renaissance, not necessarily Gothic, but it’s easy on the eyes, but those renaissance paintings where they’re telling you a Biblical story or something.

Photojournalism has a whole story in that photo. There’s different actors, there’s interactions between those actors, there’s background and foreground and setting and motion. So with photojournalism, and likewise photo essays, your photos each need to tell a story. Then they would work together to tell a larger story, to paint a fuller picture of the subjects.

But when we have the words to do the storytelling, the photos need to be supporting rather than subsuming that storytelling.

What does that mean? One of the things that can really help to get an understanding of this—and you can do this with stories you’ve already written, it doesn’t have to be story you’re thinking about—is to storyboard your stories.

How many of you are familiar with the concept of storyboarding? I’m going to type this in the chat box as well.



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Storyboarding is particularly used in the context of filmmaking. A lot of the things that I want to talk about later when we get to the types of shot lists you can build, are from filmmaking as much as they are from still photography. Because today as we're talking about building your shot list, like I said, we're not just talking about an art series of photographs, we're talking about shots that are in service of a story.

What filmmakers do when they storyboard their films before they work on them, is they essentially, you could almost think of looking at it like a graphic novel. Think about a graphic novel or comic: There're different frames and each of those frames has something to do with what's happening. Some of them are more zoomed in, some are farther away, some move the action forward, some might be just on the character thinking, some are conversation.

When filmmakers do storyboarding, *(there's some interesting chats going on in the chat box here, feel free to chime in)*. When filmmakers do storyboarding, what they are doing is much more granular. They are imagining every single shot from the angle to the focus, they'll even write the text in the script that it goes to, but they're really marking out in advance what each visual of the film is going to look like.

What you can do with your stories, and that's why I said it's great to do this with a story you've already written because it helps you get a sense of this, is that you can think through, "OK, here's the story that I want to tell about this place."

During our Freelance Travel Writing Bootcamp last week, we didn't know it was going to be such a divisive experience, but we went on an excursion to a very important modern art institution. A lot of the people in the group hate modern art, don't understand modern art, or are frequently very bored with modern art, but that created some really powerful stories because part of what this institution does is to really force you to experience the art and form your own relationship and conversation with it.

That opened up somebody who wrote an entire – I don't remember how long it was, a 1,500 or 2,000-word essay – just there in the museum. When you have a piece like that that just comes to you like Athena out of Zeus' thigh, quite fully formed, that's another avenue where you can do this sort of storyboarding. But you can certainly also do it with pieces you haven't written yet.

Another thing we talked about doing with the Freelance Travel Writing Bootcamp last week was to outline your stories in the same sort of storyboarding way, but with words.



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Say, “Ok I’m going to start with a quote, then I’m going to zoom out and do the background of this area and then I’m going to let that lead into talking to the curator of this significant historical institution, then I’m going to do a snapshot of what it looks like in this basement in this 1703 home where the slaves lived, then I’m going to talk about this project they did where they had the children of the slave owners and the children of the former slaves and slave peoples sleeping together in this sleepover in these quarters. Then I’m going to zoom back out and talk about how you can get involved in this program and have service information and then I’m going to leave with a message.”

We talk about outlining our stories in that way with words, but then you can do the same thing with photos. You can say, “OK, if I were to think about the photos that would go along with these sections of the piece when I start with the call, that can be a photo of the guide, and action when I talk about the history, that could be a from above or far out shot of the entire site. When I talk about the person who runs this historic institution, that could be a shot of her, that could be a shot of the visitor center. That could be a detailed shot of something in the institution.

The same way that you can outline your pieces you can outline the photos that can go with your pieces in that same way. What does that look like in terms of best practices? The basic shots that you’re going to need for any print piece are the following.

(Again, I keep referencing last week because we covered the entire history and future of travel writing in that one week, but something that we talked a lot about was this concept of accordioning things. Take an accordion, make it a verb, and allow that to operate on your stories. What we talked about was how you could take one story in 150 words, 1,500 words, 15,000 words, 150,000 words, how you can tell the same story with the same story arc with the same message over different lengths just by adding more scenes.)

When I give you these three basic shots that you need for any print piece, these can be just three, they can be 30. They can be 13, they can be 7, but these are the types of shots that are involved in print storytelling of text pieces.

One of them is the intro scene-setting shot. Like I said, we’re going to talk later about different angles and things like that, so I’ll give you some different ways to fill this in a few minutes, but one shot that you always need is the shot that sets the scene.



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What if you're doing a very short piece that has just one photograph? You might have one photo that satisfies all of these things. These, like I said, are the three basic boxes in terms of visual storytelling that you need to check.

You have the scene-setting piece, which is often either a full page or a partial page or a two full page, so a spread shot, which gives an overview and an entire into what you're talking about.

Then you have shots that are illustrative on what you're talking about in the piece. These are the shots for the people who are more visual than they are textual, to see the people that you're describing in your piece, to see the historic dwellings that you're describing in your piece. Then you have detail shots that support the atmosphere.

Notice that I said they're details that support the atmosphere as opposed to in pretty much all magazines you're going to see some aspects of the front of book section that might be called "buying guides" or something of the sort, and those are going to be detail shots of products, often on a white background or the background has been stripped out all together in service of the layout of the page. Those are going to be detail shots that aren't about supporting atmosphere but detail shots that are about putting that object in very, very good lighting and playing background to allow the object to speak for itself so you can ignore the text that goes with it. Or so the text can be simply service information (where to buy it, what is the price).

Detail shots that support the atmosphere of the piece are the type of things we looked at on last week's call. If you weren't with us I chose a story that was on pastries in Paris. The opening spread for that was one entire page of croissants. But they were croissants in that way where they're croissants on a baking sheet where they're all lined up in exactly the same orientation. But the photo was taken on a 45-degree slant.

It was a slanted shot of a tray of croissants taken exactly from overhead. It was almost like a wallpaper of croissants. That is a detail shot that could have been done from many different vantage points. It could have taken something that wasn't on a tilt, that wasn't overhead, and incorporated different types of pastries rather than just the croissant.

Then the shot that was adjacent to it, it was a two-page spread that began this piece, that was this illustrating shot of venues or people. In fact it was both: it was the exterior of a patisserie and it had a woman coming out. It was a black painted doorframe and very simply said patisserie at the top and it was that quintessential Parisian street scene with bicycles going by.



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This is the kind of case where you have these two photos operating as that scene-setting piece while still being an illustrating shot of people or a detail shot that supports the atmosphere.

This is the kind of example of how these three things can play together, but you need to have all of those accounted for in the visuals of your story.

How is this process that I just talked to you about different for online pieces? In the blog post and the email that preceded today's call I talked about particularly in the framework of setting something up for your own blog, how you can often go out and do a shoot and know before you've even looked at the photos on your laptop only after only seeing them on the tiny screen of your camera or your phone if you're shooting on your phone, that these pieces are just gold, that you love them. That they tell a story you want to tell, that they showcase the destination you want to showcase.

But then when you get to actually choosing the photos you actually want, editing them, then dropping them in that photo essay blog post you've planned, they somehow don't tell the story you're looking to tell.

That's why it's so important, even beyond different approaches to shot lists that I'm going to talk to you about, that you check these boxes that you have scene-setting, illustration, then you have details that support the atmosphere. So I just want to hone in on this one about where you can go wrong.

At the Food Blogging Conference there is a part of the conference that is called "Live Blogging." I've attended this conference in the past several years ago and what they do is they have a food truck come up that has a wood-fired pizza oven in the food truck and they have the guy there making pizzas and they're there for you to try, for you to photograph, for you to write a blog post about right there on the spot.

One of the things I noticed, especially in the food world, is that these detail shots become detail shots in service of themselves, in service of getting that leaf of basil just perfectly on the pizza so that you can imagine how scrumptious the pizza is. Or that you get that shot of the glass of wine from just the right angle with the sunset casting that rose-amber colored glow across it in just this way or it just looks like you can't wait to stop and have that glass of wine.



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But like I said, we're not most of us shooting for our pieces; we're shooting for photos that will enliven our stories. So what purpose does that wine glass on its own with no people involved in it, with no bottle, with no plate next to it, with no view of Lagarde, Italy in the background from the terrace you're shooting on.

What does that shot serve? What does it do? That's why the importance of those three things that I talked about—the scene-setting, the illustrating and the details that support the atmosphere—that also carries on to online pieces. But fewer people are doing it.

When I look at a lot of blogs, and especially blogs that are photo-heavy (and I also advise that if you are planning to do primarily stories in other magazines about your trips that you keep your blog posts to be sort of an overview photo essay), in those cases what I'm often seeing is that there's a lack of story, there's a lack of what you're trying to show through that photo essay or through that assemblage of photos, that causes it to fall flat in a certain way.

One of the things that I mentioned in the blog post and the newsletter leading into today's call was why that happens. Our brains psychologically are tuned to ignore the same thing. It's part of why people don't like their jobs when they're doing the same thing at work everyday. It's part of why we get sick of our blogs when we're feeling like all we're doing is the same old maintenance. It's part of why we get sick of our clients when we don't have any new types of writing for them.

Our brains are trained to not even record memories of doing the exact same thing. This is why you can never remember if you have your keys with you or not because putting your keys in your bag or your pocket is something you do every day and your brain doesn't record that. It's designed to record new information.

When you have too many photos that are the same, whether they're the same in terms of just looking like a lovely photo or they're the same in terms of the angle that you've shot them from, the depth of field or the things that you've shot, people's brains are tuned to tune out.

That's something that we want to avoid with all the photos that we shoot, but particularly when you're doing an online piece that has a lot of photos or a photo essay. In those cases it's even more important to make sure that your shots are setting the scene for a story, illustrating the things that you're saying in that story, and supporting the point that you're illustrating.



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How do we get into doing that? I'm going to go through and tell you these four different approaches that I recommend to composing a shot list. But also in the background I'm going to go through and find those questions from earlier.

Somebody said, "Can you tell us what is the minimum resolution/pixel size that is salable?"

I had a similar question about this last week, and in terms of what's salable, it depends on whether you're shooting for web, for online or for editorial stock. If it's for editorial stock it's whatever the stock company tells you they need.

If you're shooting for online, it's very, very different. You can have something 1024 pixel wide that's totally fine in terms of the high end of what you would need for online.

If you're shooting for print, I usually recommend trying to get those 10 megabyte photos. The reason that I recommend for print having photos of that size, and shooting in RAW or not is a whole other can of worms, the reason I recommend for print shooting such large photos is you never know what they're going to crop.

Cropping is not a negative thing. In fact, I went to a session that was on video and he was talking about video and he was talking about cropping your video and he took a bunch of stock, but shots for the tourism board stock, video that different tourism boards had and cut together for a short film with music and some overlay text in the workshop for these tourism boards. One of the big things that he did was he even cropped the video.

Cropping is really important and we're going to get into why in the different storytelling aspects it has in a little bit, but part of the reason you want those very, very large shots – at least ten megabytes when you're shooting for print – is not just because you can do a two-page spread at 300 dpi, which is digital pixel per inch, which is what people print in, but also so they can crop your shot and still get something in 300 dpi.

We'll get moving through these different approaches to composing a shot list. Like I said, they're going to be different for everybody, which one works for you. I talked about how this storytelling approach, it should be involved in all of the shot lists that all of you guys are doing, but it's a bit—high-level isn't quite the word—but it's a bit more for people who are quite experienced at composing stories.



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If you aren't so quick on the draw with that story-text, as in the words of your story, structure and arc that I walked through for this made-up story that I did earlier, having a storytelling approach to how you get your shots might not be as easy. Might not be the fit or you, but it's something still that you want to be considering.

The storytelling approach is establishing shots, supporting shots, showcasing shots. I want to get more in depth into these other three approaches. These are approaching composing your shot list through views, approaching through angles and approaching through subjects.

I'm going to give you a bit of a laundry list for each one and going to go through and explain. Let's dive in with view.

Views. This is the part that really comes a lot of it from filmmaking, and will be very familiar to you if you have any background in that, but you've probably heard a lot of these things in the photo context.

There are essentially three types of shots: there're wide shots, medium shots and close-up shots. I assume that you guys all have a sense of what I mean when I say wide, medium and close. If you don't, I've got a little bit of qualification here, but drop in the chat box if those words are completely foreign to you.

I want to tell you, though, what each of these shots mean and how they help you tell your stories and why you want to make sure you have a balanced set of each of these. Extreme long, or also known as wide shots, establish. This goes to that establishing scene-setting thing I was talking about that is really important for storytelling. These shots can establish an entire geographic area, they can establish one winery, they can establish place in which one person who is the subject of your profile lives, but these are shots that have a very long distance between you and the focal point of the shot in order to include quite a bit of area in your shot.

Sometimes that area can be quite sparse. Sometimes that area can have a lot going on. I don't know about you guys, but I do a lot of kind of urban pieces and I really love, well now I have a new camera so I don't have to do it as much, but I really loved with my old camera, which had a bit of a tilt on the screen, I loved to just stick my arm up in the air as high as I could and get a shot over the crowd as this kind of wide-angle long shot.



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These can also be shots that you might climb up to a very tall building or on a cliff if it's a natural setting, and you get a shot of the greater area. Last week when we were at the Freelance Travel Writing Bootcamp I took everybody up on this hike with a ranger of this ridge, which is very popular with rock-climbers, but it also has a lot to tell about the history of the area from a tourism as well as conservation standpoint. But also, you get the whole valley. In fact, you get two different valleys. When you're up there you just get these great shots of this ridge and the forest and the rocks, all of the things that really make the Catskills what they are.

Height is one of the big things that allows you to get these shots, but if you're going to do it from a more ground level, it's best if there's not a lot of things in the way or the shot won't be as wide or long as you want it to be.

What is the difference between an extreme wide or long shot and a normal wide or long shot? A normal wide or long shot is going to be something that's going to include a person or people from head to toe but also have some other things going on around them.

These kinds of shots can be great if you are doing a profile or something else that's about a certain person as an avatar or certain group of people because you're showing the character in their context. You're showing the person that you're writing about, but also the things around them that make them who they are; that support what you're going to say about them in your story.

I want to point this out because it's important: the difference between a regular long or wide shot with a person in it and a full shot, which is essentially just the person head to toe, is that once that person begins to fill your frame, then the shot should become more about action. Then it's not so much about just putting the person in their context to tell that story, it's more about the person doing something.

This is the kind of thing that can be a showcasing shot, particularly if the person is involved in something physical in your story. This can be chefs, it can be gondoliers, it can be rodeo handlers, it can be people who are at their work, which you are covering in your piece.

You can also do this with a medium shot. With a medium shot you can still showcase the character in their surroundings, but in a way where there's much more of a focus on the character than the surroundings.



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People often call, in film especially, these types of shots, I believe it's "cowboy shots," which is where you're showing the cowboy from the bottom of the gun to the top of his hat. That's a shot which is really about the character: Showing and contextualizing the character, but not so much in the terms of their grander surrounds—whether that gunslinger is in a small town versus out in the prairie on his horse—but more about that character in terms of his own physical context.

People shots are one of the things that I see really separate the "great photographers" and the people who on their blogs are known as photographers, versus people, especially with blogs, who are out there shooting a lot of things. It's getting people, and not just getting people, but getting people in a way where they are filling your screen, where they are filling that shot and you are using the shot to tell something about them.

You can do the same with close-up shots. As I was doing some extra research for this call, I was reading a lot about close-up shots of the eyes, but that's not the kind of thing we would have so often in our travel pieces. The types of things that come up more often in travel pieces are close-up shots of the hands.

Somebody I don't think is with us today, Toni Riley from Kentucky, does a lot of writing around agro tourism and agriculture, and she was saying she really likes to get shots of people's hands, of people who do their work – whether it's sanding and a shot of them doing the sanding. But the thing about these types of close-ups is that you show emotion through the closeness of the shot.

This is the difference between extreme close-ups and a close-up: a close-up where you might be getting somebody's face or their hands, there's enough size in the frame to show emotion, to show movement, but when you have an extreme close-up—like when I got married in India when we took a lot of photos of the henna on my hands—I can take a picture of my whole hand and that can show emotion, or I can take an extreme close-up just of a little elephant that they did on my palm and that is going to make you focus further on one element.

Even when you're doing a close-up of somebody's face or hands, there's still a lot of different things that the viewer can focus on. This is something you can do and crop, it's also something you can do when you're shooting, but aim to get those close-ups that are hyper specific.



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Anybody who does wedding photography knows you get so many different shots of the rings. You never know which ones are going to come out or which ones you're going to use, but people often do a mix of close-ups and extreme close-ups of the wedding rings because some people might want to see just the ring or the engraving of the ring or the detail of the ring versus rings that are in the champagne glasses or that are tied with ribbons onto the bride's shoes or something like that.

These are the different views or shot types that you can endeavor to organize your shot list around. Like I said, with these shots, they really lead you without necessarily realizing it, to be setting up establishing shots and detail shots that support the atmosphere versus shots that showcase.

This is a framework that can help lead you into that type of storytelling approach if you're not yet accustomed to it. Something similar but different, and I want to make sure to draw a line in the sand about the difference between the two things, is the shots that we were talking about before in terms of the view versus angle.

These angles can work at all sorts of these different views, but they have a different flavor. This might be an approach that for some of you is easier to get your hands on because the angle is immediately in sight and you as the photographer and as the viewer, these different emotions in the way where these views that I was talking about, they kind of sneak up on you, the wide shots establish the area.

Let's take a look at these different angles.

An angle that a lot of people shoot at a lot of the time because it makes physical sense is eye-level. I may have mentioned this last week, but there was a piece in Bon Appetite around January or February of 2016 that was quite short, I think it was towards the back of the book and it was essentially: "People: we're all sharing our food on Instagram, let's try to do it in a way that's nice to look at."

He had ten rules for shooting better photos on your phone of your food. One of the things he said was that you need to either shoot parallel or perpendicular to your food. The reason he said that is that there's a lot of distortion that happens when you're shooting, whether it's at eye level or high angle or low angle, but in ways that are not parallel to what you're shooting.



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You might be shooting at eye-level, but you're shooting something that's on the ground and without realizing it, you've actually put an angle on your piece, which influences how the viewer interprets that subject.

Like I said, eye-level physically makes sense, but if you're shooting something which is below or above you, without realizing it, you're putting an angle on your piece. It's really important, these three things at the beginning here, which are basic angles: eye-level, high-angle and low-level. It's really important to grasp.

I come from a theatre background and in theatre we talk about these things a lot because there's often something called a rake to theatre stages. You may or may not have seen it before, but some stages are actually built so that the back of the stage is higher than the front of the stage. This was very common in renaissance times especially.

Part of the reason that they did that is that naturally the things at the back of the stage, to your eye, they look lower. It's the way perspective works. There's this concept of upstaging that has made its way into everyday language. You're "upstaging" somebody if they're talking and you interrupt and try to play off of their story to tell your own story and get attention, but the reason we say that is that upstaging happens when you're up or closer to the audience than somebody else and make them look small. It's not even just that you're standing in front of them, but you look bigger than they are.

What this high-angle and low-angle does is it means if you as the photographer are getting close to the ground and shooting up to take a picture or a portrait of your tour guide, you're creating a very different photo than if you as the food photographer, say, climbed up on a ladder to shoot down at a table and get a shot of the entire table and the people there.

When you are shooting upward at something, you're creating this air of openness, of possibility, but when you're shooting down, you're creating this sense that the things are smaller, you're making them not necessarily miniature or toy-like, but it's important to remember that's something you're creating.

Even though when I say "eye-level," it's important that the thing that you're shooting is actually at eye-level or not. It's important here. There's a difference between high-angle or low-angle verses getting high or getting low to take your shots.



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I often will be out and I will be somewhere and I will immediately drop down to a crouch because I want to get something, maybe from that low angle looking up. Like I want to get all of the door of the cathedral or all of its façade or something. Or it might just be that what I want to take a picture of is very low. It might be a bird or a child playing or it might be something low versus, I said that this happens a lot with food, but to get that high angle on something, which is similar to getting that table shot of the thing that you're eating, but it can also be that crowd shot that you want to get while you're out at a festival. You're doing that crowd shot, you're shooting from above, both to get a wide establishing shot where you're taking photos of a lot of things, but also it's a way to contain the size of that crowd.

Like I said, these high shots are making things look smaller or flatter or perhaps a little bit toy-like. It's a way when you do a high angle to take something that's large and make it look containable.

This Dutch angle or a tilt—and it's important here when I say tilt it means if you were to put your hand flat in front of you like you're going to bop yourself in the face, it means that you tilt your hand at 3:00 on the clock rather than you put your hand flat so it's parallel with the ground.

If you're doing a Dutch angle or a tilt, this goes back to that shot that I mentioned that I used last week: the shot of all of those croissants laid out on the table. The Dutch angle or tilt allows you to take something, which is a bit repetitive or bland in some way, and give it sort of sense of spice, a sense of adventure.

However, this works best with things that in and of themselves don't have so much going on. If you put this tilt on a regular, everyday scene of people in Times Square, it's going to have a very different sense than if you put that on the Plaza Mayor in Madrid in the middle of the night when the square is empty to add more excitement to that shot.

A couple of these other shots are shots, and the tilt is also like this as well, are shots that you don't see as much in your own photography or that perhaps of that of your peers, but now that I mention it to you, you're going to start noticing that you see them a lot more in film. They also can add a lot of spice to your photography, to your shot list, that you were doing out in your own destination.

One of these is the over-the-shoulder shot. And no I don't mean putting your own camera on your shoulder and shooting behind you or something like that. This is when you're taking a



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shot of a person and you intentionally incorporate another person who is upstaging that person in your shot, who is between you and the person you're photographing, but you shoot them in a way that you only get their shoulder or some portion of them that doesn't distract from the main event, from the main person or item in your shot.

Part of the point of that is that it grounds the subject of your shot. It gives a sense of background and foreground to your shot.

Another one here is the bird's eye view. I talked about something sort of similar to this where I kind of stick my arm up and get the crowd shot, but you can essentially put the high angle on steroids to get the birds eye view with drone photography of course. You can also do it by climbing the 571-odd steps to the top of the tower at the Piazza in Italy and getting the shot down, but these are the equivalent of that food table shot. This is making everything below you look 100 percent flat, essentially making your camera parallel to the ground.

These shots can be incredibly powerful from a storyteller perspective because of what I said earlier. They make everything look a bit small and toy-like. It's very different than just doing a wide angle shot that you might do with an eye-level angle where you establish the sweeping plain or the crowd of people.

This next one is actually two shots, but I included it in here because from a travel perspective it is very, very cool. The reverse angle or 180 is when you shoot, for instance, the Statue of Liberty looking towards the ocean and then you shoot the Statue of Liberty looking toward Brooklyn and Redhook and all the things that are going on there, and then you put those two shots next to each other.

You can do this same thing, for instance, if there is somebody giving a speech or perhaps your tour guide, and I'm just using NY references because they're present at mind at the moment, but say your tour guide is talking at the top of the reservoir in Central park. You might get a shot of that tour guide with the reservoir and with the New York city skyline behind them, but then you might get another shot of the back of that guide rather than the front, towards the park. You essentially have the statue of Rio de Janeiro; you have the guy gesturing with their arms out to the gardens in front of you. Those are two different shots you can juxtapose next to each other.

For the next fun selective focus I actually just pulled a picture somewhere for you for this. Selective focus isn't just the same as the macro that we often think about. I know people,



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whether it's with food or flowers, get very into taking these macro shots, but selective focus is something different and it can be really useful for a lot of situations that we as travel writers find ourselves in, whether we are on a bus or a boat or any other mode of transportation.

I also included this shot in here to reference somebody who has put together something, which if you are interested in this next type of photo organization, that you should check out. So only if you have an apple device – unfortunately it's not available for anybody else – there is an app called My Shot List or My Travel Shot List, something like that, that a photographer in the travel community who also leads tours, has put together.

It's really built around this subject organization of your shot list. I wanted to give you some other ways of organizing your shots before I mentioned this. His app essentially allows you to say, "For this destination I want to make sure I get this, this, and this thing," and then you can check it off as you get it throughout your photo expedition.

You can organize your shot list around these different things whether it's storytelling, making sure you get enough views, whether it's close-up, medium or long, or different angles. But the subject organization, this is like the best entry-level way into making a shot list.

I'm giving you quite a few different things here and I'm not going to go through all of them because they're pretty self explanatory, but for those of you who might be listening in by phone I'm just going to read through them quickly.

Some different things that you can employ to make sure you get at least one or at least one good shot when you're out shooting—this is especially a good tactic for when you don't know what stories you're going to do or when you're in the frame where you are researching first and pitching stories later.

You can do single-object shots. This is a type of detail shot. You can do macro. That's again a type of extreme close-up. You can do a table shot, which I talked about when we were talking about angles. So a table shot of food or the mess after the food, whatever it is. You can do the working or hand shots. These can be shots of people cooking, making things, even driving, rowing a boat, tying their shoes. You can do portraits. You can do interior, you can do fashion or style shots.



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This one I want to point out because I think that clothing in different destinations really speaks a lot to that place. It always strikes me every time I fly to India, we usually fly through a different middle-eastern airport, we're always trying different airlines. And in each country is somewhat what you would expect, but a little different. Those are the types of scene settings, or depending on your story, detail or showcasing shots that can really help make your piece in a supportive way of your photos going to help your larger story. Taking pictures of the type of clothing people are wearing in different destinations is very important.

Then there are street scenes. These are the kind of thing that can be India, the crazy hustle and bustle of everybody streaming down the street, bicycles here and there, people selling things by the side of the road, flower garlands outside the temples, the street scenes in the quiet mountain town of Italy where there's nobody around but that perfect bright red bike against the cream-colored building.

But also the night scenes. Night scenes are something I often see neglected unless someone's doing a piece about that specifically, but it's a great thing to grab as part of your shot list. You never know when that's going to be just the thing to enhance your story.

Souvenirs and crafts, these you can do as detail shots or medium shots. You can even do them as the working hands kind of shots as well. But they are likewise something that adds flavor to your piece. This is one that Ralph includes: Customs, which I think is interesting and important to think about, but it can be very different in different places. This can be people going about their daily life. I mentioned in India we have these places where they sell garlands beside all the temples. This might be someone picking up a garland before they go inside the temple.

Agriculture is another one and there are certain places where you'll see it a lot. For instance in Bali lots of people take pictures of rice paddies out in the countryside, but I don't see a lot of pictures of the rice paddies that are there in every single city in Bali. Or in Japan we see amazing little gardens just beside every person's house, not in Tokyo-sized cities, but in smaller cities.

Industry. This is another one that you'll probably get when you're on your tours, but it's important to think of not just taking pictures of the wine maker or the wine bottle, but of the barrels where things are aging or of the bottling machine or of the place where they crush the grapes. And motion, this can fall under a lot of different ones here, but it's the kind of thing where as just as I mentioned earlier with those paintings from the renaissance, they have the entire scene going on in them, they have emotions between characters and people moving in



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the scenery, a sense of movement being created. Motion is something that isn't necessarily going to be needed in every piece, but there's some pieces that will need it to show the pace of a place. So if you're doing a very basic shot list, that can be a great thing to include.

Relating to this but different is transportation. Modes of transportation. Again to draw on India we have, I call them school bus rickshaws: they're a totally normal rickshaw that would take you from point A to point B during the day, but they've essentially been scheduled by various parents to pick up their students at school. But you'll have like 12 kids in these school bus rickshaws and they're basically sitting in people's laps and backpacks are stuffed all over the place and they have kids falling out all over the place. They're like the Indian clown car of school buses.

These are they types of things, again, that you can look to capture to create that sense of place if you don't yet know what you're going to need. Relatedly, children and elderly people often show so much about a destination, as does its markets or its food vendors. What if you're in a place that doesn't have markets? Could you take a shot in the grocery store in Sweden showing the super Scandinavian items or how incredibly clean it is? These are things to think about that can enhance your pieces, especially if you don't know what those pieces are going to be.

Architecture, natural wonders, these are things we all look to take pictures of naturally, but it's important, like I said earlier when we were talking about storytelling, to make sure that you're taking pictures of these things in a way that supports the sense of the place that you want to be discussing.

How do you take all these things I just said and organize your shot list for a trip? You think about what stories you're after, even if you haven't pitched them yet. You think about what experience about the destination you're looking to showcase, which can be related to the stories you're after but can also be something that you've picked up after a couple days or even just a couple hours of walking around your destination. Think about what organizing approach fits you as a person, whether it's the storytelling, the view, the angle or the subjects.

Then given the things that I listed here in the call, you just make yourself a very handy little document on your phone or a piece of paper. Extreme-wide, wide, medium, close, extreme-close. Oh, and full shots. You have those six things on the list and as you're walking around you say, "Do I have enough of these? Do I have any of these yet? I haven't gotten any full shots of people. I hate photographing people. Let me make sure in the next half hour I'm photographing people."



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Having this list is a mechanism essentially to keep you from missing something when it's too late to go back and get that shot.

Thank you guys so much for joining us and I look forward to joining you guys next week to talk either about plating and food photography, which probably makes sense since I'm speaking at the International Food Blogging Conference this week.

Thank you guys so much and I'll chat with you again soon!