

THE BETTERPHOTO GUIDE TO DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Getting away also helps by minimizing distractions. Especially when taking a long trip, you quickly forget about the laundry, your duties at work, sifting through e-mail, or answering the phone. You leave the “To Do” behind, which allows you to think only about taking great photos. However, it is important that your mission is *to get great photos*, rather than to get away from it all. Going on a vacation on which you do nothing but relax on the beach or by the pool and take the occasional picture does not qualify. You have to be a bit dedicated to photography.

It’s important to fully understand that such trips are work. In order to get the great pictures, you’ll need to be “on” all the time, constantly thinking about what you can photograph and how you can make it look interesting. You’ll often be required to wake up early, and skip breakfast (and sometimes dinner, too), settling for the occasional snack instead. That doesn’t mean you can’t have fun, though. After all, photography is fun! When the photography gets especially laborious, I remind myself that you can’t have play without work.

You can’t have one without the other. And I know of no work more fun than photography.

### Keeping a Visual Notebook

One excellent way to define your goals is to keep a collection of images that inspire you. You could simply write down a list of photo ideas, but as photographers are generally visual people, it’s usually more effective to collect pictures.

Subscribe to magazines or visit the library. Look through catalogs, books, and Web sites like BetterPhoto.com—anything with the kind of photographs you enjoy. Examine these photos and pay attention to how they make you feel. Whenever an image causes an emotional response in you, make a note to remind you of that photo. Better yet, print the photo off the Web site, make a copy, or cut it out so that you can place it into a protective sleeve and keep it in a binder. This will provide you with a running book of photo ideas to which you can turn whenever you need inspiration.

*Although it takes time and effort to plan ahead in this way, making a photo idea binder is fun to do, and it plays a powerful part in helping you make great photos. It helps you clarify in your mind’s eye the subjects you most love.*



FIGURING OUT WHAT TO SHOOT

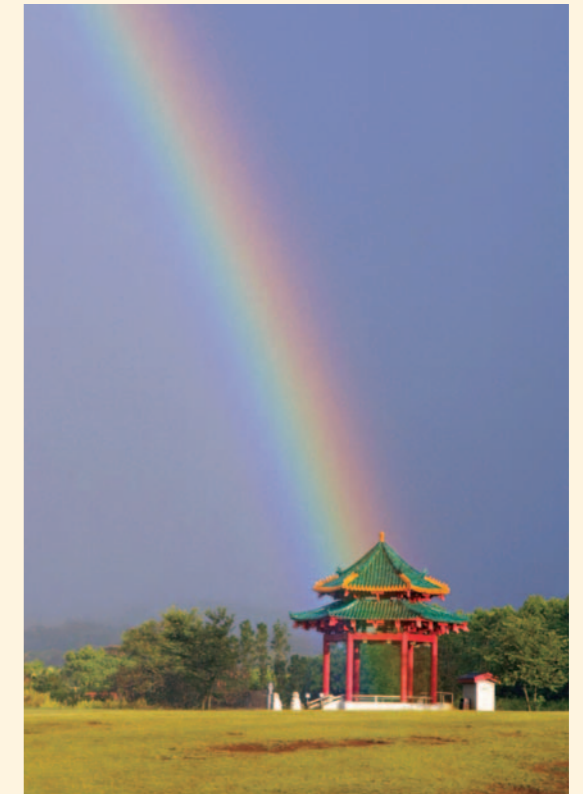
**TIP: PLAN—BUT BE FLEXIBLE**

*As I’ve just explained, planning is good—and necessary to the photographic process. But having said that, don’t be so inflexible that you overlook and miss unplanned photographic opportunities. Sometimes, what you’ve planned doesn’t materialize, but that doesn’t mean other—possibly better—subjects won’t present themselves. You need to be ready for, and open to, anything.*

*On a recent trip to Kauai, the smallest Hawaiian island, I woke up one morning before dawn and drove down to scuba diving. I was specifically interested in photographing the beautiful underwater sea turtles. On the way down, I passed the community college and noticed a rainbow near an outdoor gazebo and set against a complementary dark sky. I immediately pulled the car over and ran back to the exact spot at which the lower end of the rainbow appeared to touch the gazebo. I mounted my camera securely on a tripod and made several exposures, experimenting with both horizontal and vertical compositions.*

*Once I felt satisfied that I had indeed gotten the shot, I got back into my car and continued to the scuba diving site. The actual dive turned out to be a photographic disaster: after only one underwater exposure, my camera malfunctioned, and I was forced to drag along a nonworking camera for the remainder of the dive. What’s more, I encountered many sea turtles and I couldn’t make a single picture of them! However, the trip was not a total loss, because although I didn’t get the shot that I was specifically seeking, I did come home with a beautiful image of this rainbow and gazebo.*

1/250 SEC. AT #/6.7, ISO 100, 28–105MM LENS AT 105MM



### ASSIGNMENT Begin Gathering Ideas

This assignment has two parts:

- 1** First, start a visual idea file or notebook. Spend at least an hour going through your favorite magazines and cutting out pictures that you love. If you don’t want to ruin the magazines, use Post-It notes to mark the pages to which you want to refer back.
- 2** Then, think of something or somebody you love, and make a weekend project out of photographing them. If possible, include objects that have sentimental value to give the photo extra meaning. Photograph your subject in as many unusual and creative ways as you can imagine.