

The Pop Culturocity™ Photography Guide



experience & capture culture in images

✧ Kate Berardo ✧
✧ presented by culturocity.com ✧

Cover photo: "Luang Prabang Textiles" Laos 2004 © Kate Berardo

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Culturocity.com PO Box 785 Tahoe City, CA 96145
United States of America www.culturocity.com

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The Pop Culturocity™ Guide to Photography



presented by culturocity.com

The Pop Culturocity™ Photography Guide is a compilation of short articles, ideas, and tip sheets on cultural photography that helps people explore and capture rich images of cultures with their cameras.

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1

Introduction

"Photography is a small voice, at best, but sometimes one photograph, or a group of them, can lure our sense of awareness."

- W. Eugene Smith

Welcome to the *Pop Culturocity™ Photography Guide*, a short booklet that will help you to capture great images as you travel and experience the cultures you travel to more deeply.

Cultural photography versus Travel photography

Many people take photos as they travel and experience environments different than their own. These people come back from their trips with wonderful photos of themselves and those they travel with in front of famous sites, enjoying meals, relaxing and generally having a good time. This is travel photography.

A smaller number of people decide to take cultural photographs as they travel. They shift their focus from their friends and family to the colorful backdrops behind them—to the culture of the places they travel to. Instead of concentrating on their own presence in these cultures, cultural photographers add a focus on the cultures where they are present. They end up with photos of a number of different things, from foods, clothing, and street scenes to colorful portrayals of new friends and people of other cultures in their daily lives or in special ceremonies. Their pictures create a colorful visual mosaic of the cultures they have been in and more completely document their experience traveling.

As their focus shifts, so too does their experience: people who take cultural photos often find themselves able to go much deeper in their travels and experience these places at a whole new level. They get beyond the surface and tourist culture and connect with the people around them. Ultimately, they have a more personal and memorable experience.

Interestingly, what makes a good cultural photographer has less to do with technical skills and more to do with approach—both to photography and to travels. Although a basic understanding of principles like composition, lighting, and contrast are helpful, the best way to learn to take great photos of other cultures is to build your *Culturocity™* and learn to shift your motivation and focus when snapping photos.

This guide introduces you to some of the principles and techniques that drive cultural photographers so that you can start taking great pictures of other cultures and learn to go deeper in your travels through photography.

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What's In Store with this Guide

With this guide, you will have the opportunity to:

- Gain tips and strategies for taking culture-rich photographs of other cultures
- Find out what skills and qualities create the best cultural photographer
- Learn the principles of responsible travel and explore the ethical issues of photography
- Discover more about yourself and people of cultures you interact with
- Gain more from your travels with photography

The first section of this guide provides a quick overview of the nature of cultural photography and the knowledge CPs (cultural photographers) bring with them as they shoot. We will consider the positive and negative power of photography, look closely at the dynamic relationship between photographer, camera, and subject, and finally explore the various motivations behind all photo taking.

From there, the guide delves into the techniques of cultural photography. We talk about how to shift your focus (literally and figuratively) as you take photos and then give you some insight and examples for choosing culture-rich subjects. You'll also find a collection of some of the little things cultural photographers do to get great shots and have a richer cultural experience in their travels.

In the heart of this guide, we look at the Culturocity™ traits that make cultural photographers so successful at recording amazing shots of other cultures—that is, the mindset and approach to photo-taking that puts these photographers seemingly always in the right place and at the right time to capture great shots of other cultures. This section ends with a look at four key skills that advanced cultural photographers build with time and experience.

In the final section of the guide we provide some great resources for continued exploration of this topic, including an article by guest writer Jim Kane as well as a list of the best internet resources on cultural photography—from taking great photos to printing them.

Why this guide?

Travel presents a great opportunity to explore other cultures, but too often we come back only having skimmed the true life there. Photography is a great way to go a little deeper in your travels and connect more with the cultures you visit. This guide will show you how to use your camera to build connections, see and seek out things you might otherwise miss, and document your travels more completely. ✧

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The Power of Photography

We photo enthusiasts can easily ramble off some of the benefits of photography—from capturing memories to giving us visual records of our travels. But we seldom think about the negative power of photography—from skewing reality to being invasive and offensive. When taking photos across cultures, cultural photographers keep in mind both the positive and negative powers of photography.

Photography Can...	But It Can Also...
Delight people	Offend people
Capture the essence and character of different cultures.	Capture only the exotic in different cultures.
Help us to see elements of a culture that we might otherwise miss.	Confirm our biases about cultures by capturing elements that fits our stereotypes and assumptions
Be a communication tool between people of different cultures	Be an invasive instrument that cuts short the possibility of connecting with people from other cultures
Create entry points into different cultures—allowing you to experience the culture more richly and deeply	Create an unsurpassable barrier between you and the culture you are experiencing—if inappropriately used
Honor other culture's values and practices when we portray photos and describe their contents in a respectful, culturally sensitive fashion	Debase other culture's values or practices if we portray photos in a way that disrespects or looks down on the traditions and customs of other cultures

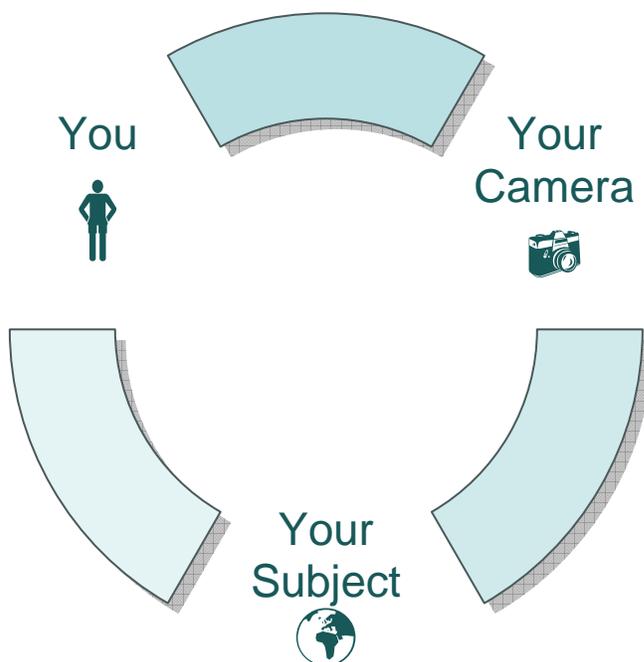
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Know You, Your Camera, Your Subject

Before people even take their first shot, their camera has already made an impression—for better or worse—on the people around them. As they survey their surroundings, certain things—things that appeal to their interests or that seem exotic or colorful or new—influence them. These subjects call out for these people's attention and beg for the cameras' focus—and sometimes, they leave potentially fascinating cultural insight in their shadows—escaping both their camera's lenses and eventually, their memory. We tend to think of photography as sequential—(1) you take a picture (2) through your camera (3) of a subject.



When the relationship between photographer, camera, and subject is much more interrelated.



Cultural Photographers understand the intricate relationship between themselves, their cameras, and their subjects. Consider the following:

<p style="text-align: center;">You  ↔  Your Camera</p>	<p>You control the camera and what pictures you take.</p> <p>At the same time, your camera controls your image. It tells people you are a tourist and often suggests you have money.</p> <p>If you are not careful, your camera can also control your experience. It is easy to consume yourself with trying to get great shots with your camera. In the meantime, however, you can forget to live in the moment and experience cultures first-hand.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">You  ↔  Your Subject</p>	<p>You choose your subject—what you want to take pictures of.</p> <p>And yet your subjects in many ways choose you. People tend to take pictures of the things that interest them.</p> <p>Photos dictate much of what we recall from the past, so these subjects ultimately shape your memory of the travels.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"> Your Camera ↔  Your Subject</p>	<p>Photography gives you a chance to make human connections with people from other cultures and capture their human expressions through your camera.</p> <p>Your camera can, however, threaten, offend, and make other people feel nervous.</p>

When taking photos in different cultural settings, remember these dynamics. Keep in mind your camera says certain things about you to those around you. Make sure photo-taking does not take priority over the first-hand experience and be sensitive to the impact your camera may be having on your subjects. If there is a chance the photography won't be well-received, don't shoot. Take a mental picture instead. ✧

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Motivation

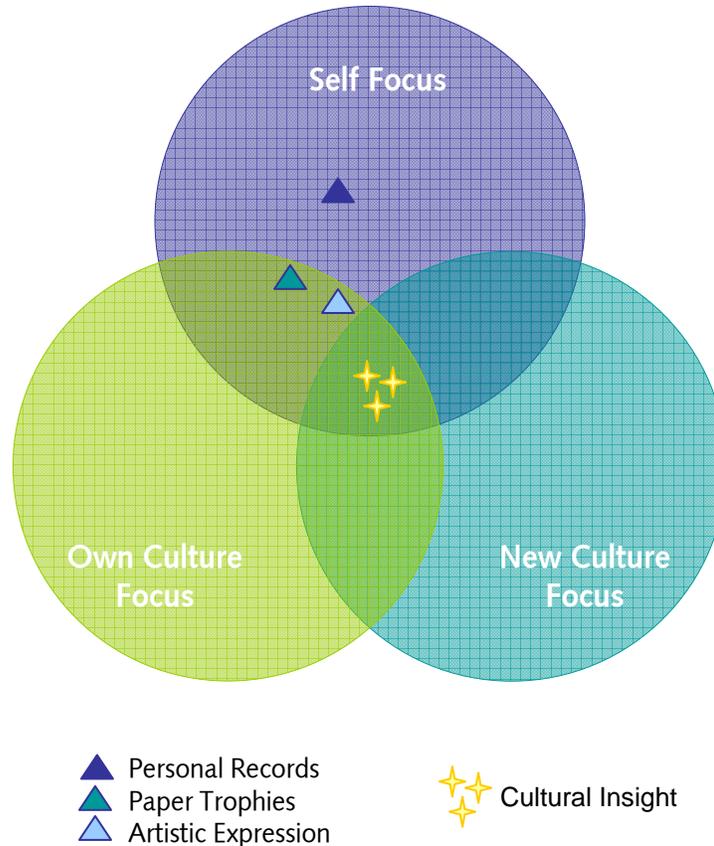
People take photos as they travel for a variety of reasons. We consider these to be the top four motivations:

- 1 **Personal records.** Taking photos compliments our own memories of our travels. They allow us to go back and experience our travels more richly through our photos and create a visual diary of our experiences.
- 2 **Paper trophies.** Paper trophy photos focus on the traveler standing in front of a prominent landmark or famous sight. While they document our presence at key places, they generally tell us little else about the places we've traveled to.
- 3 **Artistic Expression.** The creative process of seeking out interesting subjects, documenting them, and choosing what to capture on film drives many photographers. With artistic expression, photography is a means of enjoyment in and of itself.
- 4 **Cultural Insight.** Cultural photographers seek to learn about other cultures through their photos and hope to connect the surface culture that they see with the deeper pulse of values and beliefs that drive every culture. With cultural insight, photography is a means for understanding human nature and learning about different ways of life by capturing different lifestyles on film.

Cultural insight is different than the preceding three motivations in a not-so-obvious way. The first three all experience the situation through a lens of either their own self or through the lens of their own culture. Only cultural insight moves the focus to the culture of the environment and shifts the lens through which a situation is understood to the culture of the other.

Professional photographers use camera filters to accentuate or cut out certain colors and elements of a scene. Our motivations for photo-taking work the same way. We may have three different filters at play when taking photos: The Self Focus Filter, the Own Culture Filter, and the New Culture Filter. Each colors the environment and makes certain things stick out.

The Motivations of Photography



In the figure above you can see where each motivation falls and which filter "colors" different kinds of photos. Personal records are most influenced, not surprisingly, by the self. Paper trophies are influenced both by the individual and his or her culture since the individual's culture has dictated their ideas of what the key landmarks and famous sights are.

Artistic expression is ultimately the creative output of an individual, and is controlled by that individual's interests as well as their own culture, which can influence their style and dictate what is aesthetically pleasing and beautiful. Artistic photos that capture only the exotic of the culture are influenced mostly by their own culture, which creates the notion of what is foreign and mysterious. When taking artistic photos that fit only with a person's assumptions and stereotypes of the culture, again, it is the individual that is influencing the environment more than the new culture.

It is only when moving to Cultural Insight that the new culture tend to play an influential role. When we seek out cultural insight in our photography, we have to let go a bit and let the situation dictate what happens rather than letting our own interests and our own culture control the process.

With the advent and popularity of digital photography, cultural insight is now a possibility for the average traveler and photographer. Since only the camera's memory limits the number of photos we can take, people now have the freedom and power to experiment with their photography and take shots of things they might not if they were limited on film and the money to develop their photos. You can always use cultural insight photos for your digital diary and cultural knowledge bank and "showcase" your best shots for family and friends. ✦

6

Focus

The first step in capturing culture in photos is moving away from the paper trophy type photo, those where people play the starring role in their own vacations. *Joel in front of the Eiffel Tower. Marcia in front of the Louvre. Yukiko and Tom sitting at a café on a sidestreet in Paris.*

Cultural photographers often take just one more shot at each of these locations: two school kids running around in the grass next to the Eiffel Tower; two elderly people feeding birds and chatting in the park next to the Louvre; a street shot of people dodging traffic at the street corner that you can see from the café.

Or perhaps, a close-up of the bakery where you picked up bread for your picnic by the Eiffel tower, a shot of the Arte Nouveau metro sign that dropped them off near the Louvre, a close-up of some of the hanging art in that street corner café.



photo by Kate Berardo

This sign holds clues to Paris' past with the Art Nouveau movement through the last 1800s and early 1900s.

the educational system in France, but you've captured more of the essence of the culture and planted in you memory and photo album these elements that will provide a more accurate picture of the culture you're experiencing.

If your camera is focused on just the major sights, so are you. If you're taking the time to look around and soak up the culture around you, you're positioning yourself for a rich, meaningful interaction with the culture you are visiting. ✧

Suddenly, you've captured a little bit of the essence of Paris—those parts of the culture that create some of the atmosphere and energy you can feel in your travels, but which don't get captured in the classic "Me in front of the [famous sight]" type picture.

A photo of the Eiffel Tower, while part of most trips to Paris, tells you little about daily life in Paris.

This is culture on film.

Sure, without more knowledge about the history and culture of Paris, you won't be able to give details about the Arte Nouveau movement or



photo by Kate Berardo

Remember that pace of life in Paris, the café culture, how well people dress (even to feed birds)? ... This picture captures many elements of Parisian culture.

7

Subjects

"You can find pictures anywhere. It's simply a matter of noticing things and organizing them. You just have to care about what's around you and have a concern with humanity and the human comedy."

- Elliott Erwitt

Cultural photographers use their cameras to get beyond the cultural face that most tourists see. There are many ways to do this and many subjects to choose from. Look for subjects that tell you about the daily life, the voices of the people, recent changes and struggles in the culture. A few examples include:

- ◉ **Graffiti.** Street art can tell you a lot about local undercurrents in the culture. It often reveals counter-movements, youth culture, and the pulse of street life. In some cultures, graffiti is a true art; in others, little more than scribbles and tags. The very amount of graffiti is also telling—and often speaks to notions of public and private space, cleanliness, and attitudes toward authority.
- ◉ **Daily markets.** Go to where the locals go to get their food and supplies and you can learn a lot more about their daily life than just their cuisine. Markets often speak to the speed of life and value of relationships in a culture. In some markets, you'll find shopkeepers moving quickly from client to client and the exchange of goods is almost too fast to track. Others may seem to move in slow motion in comparison, with people interacting socially, having conversations with shopkeepers and strolling casually from stall to stall. All markets tend to offer a colorful scene for the camera's eye and the chance to interact with locals out and about in their daily lives. For the best scene and experience, look for more remote markets to avoid tourists, plan to spend half a day or more there, and let those around you get comfortable with your camera.
- ◉ **Festival life.** For both the experience and the chance to capture it on film, a festival of some sort should be part of every trip. While traditions and celebrations are universal, how cultures celebrate and what they do to create traditions varies widely. Local papers and locals themselves know best when and where to find festivals of various sizes. Spend a while at these festivals without shooting, until you get a vibe for the energy and elements that you want to capture on film.
- ◉ **Houses.** Few people live like people in the US (or Europe for that matter) do, both in terms of space, amenities, and ease of living. People's homes speak to a standard of living in a culture, the division between public and private space and how the culture interacts with the environment. Clues to the history of a culture and its rate of change are also often held in the walls of buildings.
- ◉ **Local products.** The French bread in Luang Prabang speaks to the French colonial history of the nation. The colorful and intricately designed Moroccan rugs employ a color palette and design that imitates surrounding architecture. The slowly-cured Jamón Serrano that hangs from store windows in Spain gives clues to the speed of life there. Cultural products often serve as rich resources to learn about the history and values of a culture. Surround yourself with photos that feature the local products of a culture and you can re-create the ambiance and energy that the culture holds and relive your travels every time you open your box or album of photos.

- **New angles.** How-to guides on photography often spend a good deal of time talking about angles and the perspective from which you shoot photos. The power of perspective is often quite amazing in how it can shift your understanding and interpretation of a culture. Climb high to get your bearings on a new location. Zoom in to focus on details. Take macro shots of single items to focus on elements like color, texture, and light. As you take these different shots, consider how these perspectives influence you. If all you took were panoramic shots of a place, you would be hard-pressed to describe its colors, vibe, people, and sounds in great detail. At the same time, if all you took were close-up shots of products and people, you'd similarly be at a loss to understand the overall organization, architecture, and size of the place. Balancing close-ups, macro-type shots with panoramic, overview type shots promises the greatest yield of cultural insight.
- **Expressions.** There is nothing that joins people more easily than shared emotions. When you capture a revealing expression on film, whether sadness, joy, frustration or elation, it is something people can relate to. Expressions help us see people as exactly who they are: people and human beings with more similarities and shared interests than we might first think. Getting great people shots is about respecting your subjects, making them feel comfortable, and spending the time to get to know them a bit so you can capture their true character on film.

One of the key benefits of photography for cultural study is that it freezes time. There are fascinating nuggets of cultural insight in most photos, if you look close enough and long enough. As you build your cultural knowledge about a place, look back at your photos and see how your photos support or contradict your ideas about the way of life in the places you've traveled to.

8

The Small Secrets of Cultural Photography

C.Tip!

Besides the big elements of cultural photography, such as approach, focus, and motivation, there are a number of small things cultural photographers do that helps them capture cultures on film. Below we highlight small ways to help ensure you get great shots of other cultures.

1 Scouting trips

To get your bearings when you first arrive to a new spot, explore the area you're in to get a feel for where you want to invest the rest of your time and energy. Leave your camera behind. *Look around you.* Find the points of interest, the scenes, that you want to later come back to, to experience, and capture on film. Without your camera at hand, you're mind will work harder to remember details of your environment, and you'll already be enriching the memory of your travels.



2 Documentation

Keep a small memo pad with your camera and write down details of the pictures you take. Include:



- Name and description of the subject
- Place and time
- Your thoughts, feelings, reactions to the subject

Incorporate this information into photo titles and captions of your photos. A few good words create great descriptions. A caption can fill in missing details, give the photo a setting and significance, and create a story. These details also help you keep vivid memories alive and make for more interesting stories when you share your photos.

3 Connections

Use technology to build connections and give thanks. If you have a camera with a LCD viewer in the back (common with most digital cameras these days) you can share your images with those around you. Do they think it represents their culture? What do they think you should be taking pictures of? Use your camera as a conversation starter.

If someone lends their face or takes the time to get to know you, you can show your appreciation by sharing your pictures with them in return. If they have a mailing address, write it down and send them a photo afterwards. You may not even need to wait that long—a quick turnaround is easy with both digital and film photography these days. In Japan, you can find kiosks where you can immediately print any of your photos using your memory

card. One hour and overnight developing is standard in many places you can travel today. You can easily have a few or all of your photos printed so you can share your pictures almost immediately with those who have shared their time and traditions with you.

4 Leaving the Camera out of the picture

"True possession of a scene is a matter of making a conscious effort to notice elements and understand their construction. We can see beauty well enough just by opening our eyes, but how long this beauty will survive in memory depends on how intentionally we have apprehended it. The camera blurs the distinction between looking and noticing, between seeing and possessing; it may give us the option of true knowledge, but it may also unwittingly make the effort of acquiring that knowledge seem superfluous."

- Alain de Botton, in *The Art of Travel*

Photos document experiences so you can continue to enjoy the experience afterwards, but they don't substitute for the real thing. To really see and experience what is before your eyes as you travel, you sometimes need to leave the camera out of the picture. When you're not focused on capturing an experience visually, you'll find your other senses kicking in and wonderful smells and sounds complimenting your visual picture.

Then, next time you bring out your camera, you'll be awakened to a richer, more complex environment of sights, smells, and sounds, that you can now better capture on film.

5 Overshooting

In my recent year living in Japan I took over 1500 photos—everything for close up pictures of flowers, kimono fabric, rice crackers, and geta to still shots of storefronts, street scenes, landmarks and portraits of friends, students, and strangers. What I ended up with is a rich composite of cultural gems that told the story both of Japanese culture and of my year in Japan. I created three different albums from the experience: a short nature album on the seasons in Japan, a culture album featuring a wide collection of cultural products in Japan, as well as a themed album of my year in Japan with sections on work, friends, hiking, skiing, and traveling through the country. Each stands alone but in combination they tell a rich and robust tale of Japanese life and my interaction with it.

Digital photography removes many of the traditional limits to taking photos. There is little cost to take photos so take pictures often and of many different things. Even if you don't ultimately feature these photos in your album or online, you still have them both for your memory and your cultural knowledge bank.

C.Tip!

Ways to Tell a Visual Story of your Travels...



- Make a scrapbook of your travels
- Create a Photo Card for the Holidays using a favorite shot and writing a caption for it on the back or inside
- Create Postcards with your pictures and send them after you return with a list of your top memories.
- Create a screensaver to keep you virtually in your travels
- Set one of your pictures as a background on your computer
- Email pictures of your travels to family and friends as you travel to keep them in the loop
- Frame pictures and present them as gifts to family, friends, and travel companions

⑥ Remembering it's a Story

Whether we are conscious of it or not, we are essentially crafting a story of our travels through the photos we take. Well-crafted stories portray both the good and the bad and the exotic and the everyday. When you think of your photography as a story, then, you must ask yourself questions like:

- What do I want these pictures to show? *What should I be taking pictures of?*
- Who is the main character? *Is it me or the culture I am in?*
- How do I accurately portray that character? *How can I develop a well-rounded character that is realistic, accurate, and interesting?*
- How do I want to tell my story? *In other words, how will I present this cultural story (album, online photo gallery, a stack of pictures)? Will the story be chronological or a presentation of little vignettes? Besides the pictures, what information do I need to fill in the missing information and amplify the meaning of the photos?*

How you ultimately choose to present your story can dictate much of what pictures you take. If you have plans to put your photos in an album or scrapbook, think about how you can group pictures. Take pictures in series that can be presented side by side in a scrapbook or album.

Taking a little time to reflect on these questions will help guide your photo taking and help ensure you get great shots of the things you want to capture digitally or on film. ✧

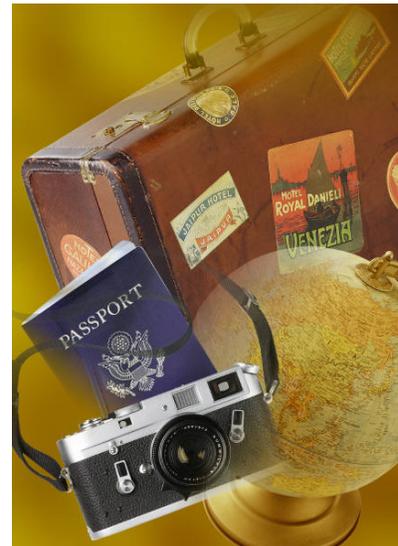
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Got Culturocity™? Cultural Photographers Do

Culturocity™ helps you experience and capture culture on film

What makes a good CP (cultural photographer)? Culturocity™ is the ongoing interest in other cultures that helps people develop skills to interact effectively across cultures. Culturocity™ helps photographers see beyond the surface culture and capture a deeper, richer culture on film. CPs go into other cultures with their camera and the following qualities:

- **Awareness** CPs are aware of their own cultural influences and the cultures of others. They are highly perceptive of the similarities and differences found in other individuals and groups.
- **Curiosity** CPs have a curiosity about themselves and others. This curiosity comes through in their photographs, allowing viewers of their work to appreciate interesting aspects of other cultures.
- **Flexibility/Openness** Cultural photographers demonstrate an openness to new experiences as well as a flexibility to the unexpected changes that are typical of cross-cultural experiences. They enjoy partaking in different ways of thinking and behaving that exist in different cultures. When a unique opportunity for cultural exploration arises, a CP is there and up for the challenge, with camera in hand.
- **Global Mindset** Even when zoomed in on intricate details with their cameras, CPs generally demonstrate a global mindset. They appreciate the interconnectedness of the world and see the links between different systems, groups, people, ideas, and global and local movements. They can therefore see the cultural complexity of a new environment and pick up on energies and opportunities for unique photography that others may miss.
- **Open Attitude** CPs show an open attitude to other cultures. They often think outside of the box and challenge their assumptions and stereotypes about the cultures they are photographing. This allows them to develop a rich, well-rounded appreciation for cultures that shows through in their photography.
- **Ownership** CPs take responsibility for their actions. They don't hide behind their cameras and they act appropriately when they do make cultural mistakes. They manage the sometimes difficult and often uncertain dynamics of cross-cultural situations with integrity and responsibility.
- **Respect** CPs don't judge with their camera, they observe and respect other cultures with their photography. Their subjects are guides for cultural understanding who they hope to learn about and from through their photography. Photographers choose who and what they portray and how they do so. When CPs respect their subjects, so too, do the viewers of their photographs.



10

Cultural Photographers At Their Best

Four Key Skills of Advanced Cultural Photographers

Experienced cultural photographers can go deep into cultures in a relatively short period of time. They do this with the following four skills:

1 Switching Skills CPs adapt their behavior to better meet the expectations of locals. Just like people wear a number of 'hats' (mother, manager, friend, spouse) in their daily lives and act according to the needs of each role, style-switching is about adjusting your behavior to fit the needs of different cultural contexts. A CP can be quiet and reserved at a religious ceremony, gregarious and outgoing at a festival. She can be direct and punctual in some settings and indirect and time flexible in others. He carries himself loosely and openly in some settings and is able to adapt his body language to a more formal and reserved style in others. Even when they don't speak much of the language, CPs can harmonize with the speech patterns and mannerisms of those around them, and in doing so, may seem to blend in with the local population more than those that don't.



2 Cultural Knowledge Banks CPs build extensive cultural knowledge banks over time that are filled with tidbits of cultural insight. They call on their past experiences to guide them through future interactions and help them to build trust and strong relationships across cultures. Cultural knowledge banks include information gained not only through first hand experience such as traveling and living abroad, but also from a host of second hand sources: conversations with locals, television, books, the Internet, movies, and music. Moreover, CPs generally create some kind of strategy for continually building these knowledge banks. They actively seek out information from a variety of sources—including movies, conversations, first-hand experiences, books and more—and constantly integrate this new information into their knowledge banks.



3 Resiliency Cultural photographers recognize the challenges of interacting across cultures, but their Culturocity™ helps them stay positive and motivated. They rebound from and react positively to the experiences they face, and understand that setbacks, confusion, and obstacles are often part of the learning process. Their patience and openness allows them to show flexibility in the difficult situations that are breaking points for others.

4 Cultural Decision Making Armed with an extensive knowledge bank, emotional resilience, and style-switching skills, CPs accurately perceive various aspects of the cultures they are in. They apply their cultural knowledge and are able to make decisions quickly and accurately that are appropriate given the cultural context. In doing so, they demonstrate creative thinking, high levels of tolerance for uncertainty, and flexibility.

Cultural photographers are human. They've pulled out their camera at the wrong time, misinterpreted a situation, acted inappropriately, and committed cultural taboos. What distinguishes them from the average photographer is that they learn from these experiences and use them to build their cultural knowledge bank and help guide their subsequent actions. CPs realize that taking good photos in different cultures has as much to do with how they connect with and interact with the local culture as it does with their technical skills. ✧

Culturally Sensitive Photography

Like Travel Itself, Photography Builds Bridges

by Jim Kane

When I think of travel and photography it's difficult to separate the two. For me photography helps to capture and transmit the sense of place that makes the destination special. Through the personalities of its people, a country comes alive, both in person and through photography.

Inevitably, the question arises "How do you know when it's alright to take photos of people in other countries?" After all, there are major cultural differences in how being photographed is perceived and often an economic disparity between photographer and potential subject.

The answer is that responsible photography is very much like responsible travel. With a thorough knowledge of the place you're visiting, a genuine interest in sharing and not just taking, an alert intuition, an open mind, enough time, and a little luck, photography abroad—just like travel itself—can be a vehicle to build bridges.

By following these eight guidelines while abroad your photographic efforts will become more rewarding for photographer and subject alike:



A dignified member of the Good Death Sisterhood marches during the organization's annual celebration in Cachoeira, Brazil.

Photo: Jim Kane

8 Photography Guidelines

1 Be informed. Invest time before traveling to research the customs and photography mores of the place you will visit. Customs vary not only by country but by region and religion as well.

2 Get comfortable with yourself. Self confidence, an open attitude, and a genuine smile are important wherever you travel. People will generally respond to you with the same attitude that you exude. Conversely, if you are nervous and "sneak around" with your camera because of shyness or insecurity, they will feel this and, worse, feel they are being used.

3 Communicate. It only takes a simple gesture and a smile for a subject in a foreign land to understand your interest in taking a photograph. You'll immediately get a clear indication of whether they are a consenting subject. Not understanding the language should never be an excuse to photograph an unwilling person.

Learning some simple phrases related to photography in the language of the country in which you are traveling not only allows you to communicate more directly with your subject, explaining why you want to take a photograph, it shows your interest in learning at least some of the local language.

4 Take the at home test. You should treat people abroad with the same respect and courtesy as you would at home. If you find yourself questioning the appropriateness of a certain shot, ask yourself if you'd take the same picture in your home country without feeling awkward.

5 **Spend time without shooting.** Once while riding through rural Thailand on a moped, I stumbled across some kids playing ping-pong behind a temple. Wanting to capture this wonderful scene, I just stood there and watched the kids at play without touching the camera. After a few minutes I asked (through gestures) if I could play. This was met with smiles and a paddle was immediately thrust at me. Five minutes later I returned the paddle, smiled, and thanked them. Only then did the camera come out. Not only did I feel at ease taking the pictures, the kids were also much more relaxed with my presence.

6 **Use an ice-breaker.** Instantly showing people the photos you've taken of them can be a wonderful ice-breaker. The photography becomes less intimidating and more fun for kids and adults alike. They may even want to turn the tables and photograph you!

7 **Give and take?** One of the most controversial situations while abroad is the question of giving money to people you photograph. We've all been in situations where a once un-touched indigenous community becomes popular with camera-toting tourists. Soon, there is a bustling business in "authentic" photos for a dollar each and mobs of children running up to visitors shouting, "photo, Mister?" On the other hand, isn't a person you've photographed entitled to some form of compensation? After all, you're benefiting from their presence, personality, customs, clothing, etc.

Engaging people openly and sharing time, a story, or a drink together is often the greatest gift for both sides. However, if it is made clear that someone expects money for a photograph, the decision becomes not whether to pay, but whether to take the photo. That must remain a judgment call that each of us needs to make on a case-by-case basis.

8 **No means no.** When someone objects to your taking a photograph you must respect them, even if you don't agree with or understand their reasons. You are a guest and you must respect their decision.

One recent experience comes to mind. There's a church in San Juan Chamula in Chiapas, the interior of which is nearly indescribable, because of the blend of customs the people have adopted. There are no pews, only two long rows of saints bordering a wide, straw-covered floor where scores of people sit in individual prayer areas and surround themselves with incense and colored candles.

As a passionate photographer, it killed me not to be able to capture and transmit this unique display of spirituality. However, there was no misunderstanding the stern and repeated prohibition of photography inside the church. For the people of San Juan Chamula photographing this scene and the people inside would have shown a terrible lack of respect.

So the interior remains unphotographed. And perhaps that's not so bad. Now, in order to understand this wonderful and mysterious place, one must travel there, step inside, live and breathe it. Sometimes there's just no replacing the real experience. ✧



Photo: Jim Kane



Jim Kane is the President and co-founder of Culture Xplorers. Having lived in 6 countries and traveled through 40 more, Jim now creates immersive trips to Latin America with a focus on people. Through festivals, home-stay opportunities, living traditions and positive impact projects, Culture Xplorers promotes genuine interaction between travelers and locals. Visit Jim & Culture Xplorers at www.culturexplorers.com.

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Only the Best Internet Resources

Here we highlight what we consider to be the best internet resources on cultural photography.

- **Kodak "Taking Great Pictures"** (<http://www.kodak.com>) Kodak's Taking Great Pictures section covers the gamut in terms of photography basics. Learn how to take great photos of different subjects, store your photos, and even enhance and restore old photos.
- **Culturally Speaking, by National Geographic** (<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/insights>) Local knowledge provides a foundation for global understanding. These National Geographic photographers capture local color to help paint a clearer picture of cultures around the world. The site shows you colorful portrayals of the cultures of India, Greece, Mexico, and New York. Great examples of cultural photography at its finest.
- **About.com Photographer Directory** (http://photography.about.com/library/dop/bldop_menu.htm). Learn from the pros. About.com offers a directory of notable photographers so you can learn about and often see the work of prominent photographers.
- **Ofoto.com** (<http://www.ofoto.com>) This is, in our opinion, the best online printer for digital images in the US and Europe. Ofoto offers a number of printing and editing options, as well as great Photo Books. Ofoto also has sites in Germany (www.ofoto.de), France (www.ofoto.fr), and the UK (www.ofoto.co.uk) as well as a general European site (www.ofoto.eu.com)



For a Professional Look: Try your hand at publishing with your own Photo Book, a hardcover photo book that you create online with your digital photos and captions. We recommend Ofoto www.ofoto.com for their quality and ease of use. *Pictured here: an Ofoto Photo Book.*

By now, you should have all you need to explore cultures through photography. Have a good time, build relationships, and learn more about the world around you in the process. ✧



The Culturocity™ Philosophy

At Culturocity.com, we believe you've got to have a little fun and mix things up a bit to really get learning. That's why we believe in the power of pop culture products like music, movies, and media to expand your mind and learn about the world around you.

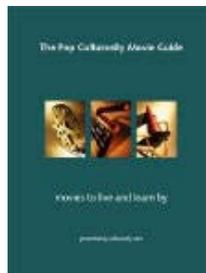
We show people how to build an awareness of other cultures by making small, comfortable changes in their everyday lives. We focus on the activities that people already enjoying doing, whether that is listening to music, reading, watching TV, cooking, traveling, or playing sports.

For some, we plant the seeds of cultural interest. For others, we simply reconnect them to it. This curiosity toward other cultures, or Culturocity™, is fundamental to developing global awareness and cross-cultural competencies—the increasingly vital skills of today's world. ✧

Culturocity.com helps people to:

- Learn about other cultures
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- Make global awareness a natural part of their daily lives

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About the Author

Intercultural specialist **Kate Berardo** is the co-author of *Putting Diversity to Work* and the founder of **Culturocity.com**. Kate helps people build their intercultural awareness and function effectively in a variety of life and work environments. She is the US Guide for doing business with Americans for Executive Planet and a member of SIETAR Europa (Society for Intercultural Education, Training, and Research). A summa cum laude graduate of Northwestern University in Communications and Hispanic Studies, Kate is a certified GlobeMark® Globalist with over thirty additional Brainbench® certifications. At 25, she has lived on three continents and traveled to over 25 countries. Most recently, Kate was living and working in Sapporo, Japan as a language instructor and the South of France as a cross-cultural trainer. She currently resides between the US and the UK.



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