

PHOTO TRAVEL



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Definition

These notes are prepared as a guide for entrants in Photo Travel competitions that require images to comply with the Photographic Society of America (PSA) definition of Photo Travel which is:

A Photo Travel image expresses the characteristic features or culture of a land as they are found naturally. There are no geographic limitations.

Images from events or activities arranged specifically for photography, or of subjects directed or hired for photography are not permitted.

Close up pictures of people or objects must include features that provide information about the location.

Techniques that add, relocate, replace or remove any element of the original image, except by cropping, are not permitted. The only allowable adjustments are removal of dust or digital noise, restoration of the appearance of the original scene, and complete conversion to greyscale monochrome. Other derivations, including infrared, are not permitted. All images must look natural.

You will note that the final paragraph of this definition specifies restrictions on image editing that are similar to the restrictions that apply to Nature images and to Photojournalism images. The basic idea behind all the definitions for these reality-based categories of photographic competition is that the images presented to judges should be a true record of the scene that was photographed. Further, the things in the scene should not have been controlled or set up specifically for the purpose of photography. (Set up scenes and manipulated images can, of course, be entered in open competitions.)

The photographic Society of America has produced a guide for Photo Travel Judges and it can be downloaded here <https://psa-photo.org/index.php?divisions-photo-travel>. The following notes complement that guide and use different images to illustrate each point.

No Geographic Limitations

Images for Photo Travel competitions are NOT limited to things you have photographed in exotic places. It is quite legitimate to use images that were taken in your own country or locality.

Characteristic Features of a Culture of Land

The basic idea here is that your images should show either some characteristic feature of the country where the image was taken or illustrate something specific about the culture of that country. It is preferable that the feature or cultural aspect is unique to the country or region where you took the image - not

something that could have been photographed almost anywhere. It is not necessary for the judges to be able to identify exactly where you were when you took the image but your images should contain distinct and easily recognisable features so that someone visiting the place where the image was taken could recognise those features. Here are some examples:



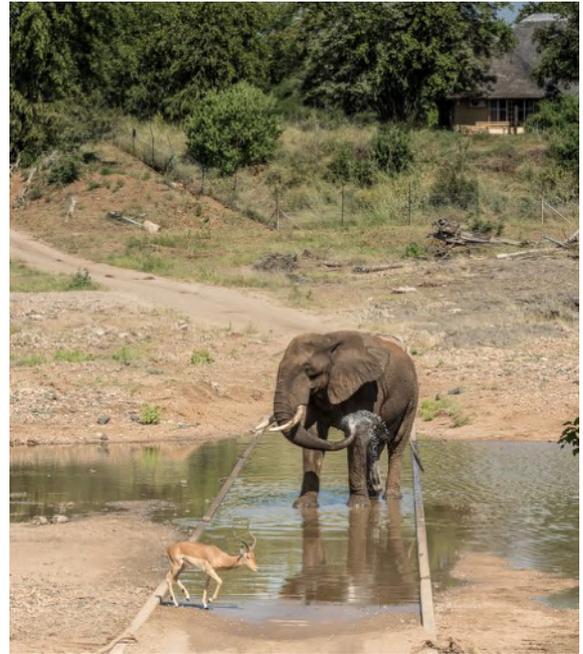
Uluru is a unique to Australia so the image certainly satisfied the “characteristic feature” requirement.



Although this image was taken near Uluru it does not show anything that is distinctive enough to satisfy the Photo Travel definition.



It is not necessary to know exactly where this image was taken in order to accept that the subject would be easily recognised.



The elephant on the left is obviously African (rather than Asian) but the image is not really showing and characteristic feature of Africa. The image on the right contains several elements (elephant, impala, house, typical river crossing) that collectively enable the image to show characteristic features of somewhere in Southern Africa).



This image depicts a typical North Vietnamese fishing boat and would satisfy the requirement for showing a characteristic aspects of the culture of that area.



Images such as this (and most surfing images) give no indication of the place where they were taken, so they are not suitable as Photo Travel images.

Arranged or Directed Images

Many legitimate Photo Travel images depict events at which there are many photographers and that's OK so long as the event was not staged specifically for the purpose of photography (a cultural festival for example). The same applies to images of individuals or small groups of people.

Photo Travel photography should concentrate on capturing events (or people doing things) that would happen even if there were no photographers present. For example, these Vietnamese shoe cleaners were going about their usual work, obviously not posing for a photograph, whereas these three Vietnamese women were obviously posing in hope of being paid by the photographer.



It may not always be easy to tell whether an image was 'candid' or whether it was 'arranged for photography'. Although the women in both the following images are trying to sell something to tourists (independently of the photographer being there) these images may give judges the impression that the subject was asked to pose for the photograph.



Close Up Images

Although portraits and other close up images might illustrate something unique about a country, they are unacceptable unless there is sufficient 'background' information to give a strong sense of the location in which the image was taken. Basically this is to exclude set up 'studio' type portraits.

Images such as this, for example, do not provide sufficient information about the location even though the head covering might be typical of a particular part of Vietnam.

The image on the following page shows Vietnamese women wearing similar head covering but it also places them in context.





Image Editing

Nothing can be removed (except by cropping), nothing can be added and nothing can be relocated in a Photo Travel image. For example, this image is OK:



It has some distracting elements so a crop might help:



That is still OK, but further removal of distractions by cloning or using a healing brush or any other technique is not acceptable:



Monochrome Images



Original colour image.



Greyscale monochrome is permitted in Photo Travel.



Toned monochrome is NOT permitted in Photo Travel.



Greyscale monochrome with spot colour is NOT permitted in Photo Travel.

Natural Appearance of Images

Whatever adjustments are made to Photo Travel images the end result must look natural.



Original



Over-saturated - not permitted.



Partially desaturated - not permitted.



Obvious vignette - not permitted.

Over-sharpened images, with obvious sharpening halos or too much harsh detail will not be considered to look 'natural'.

Conclusion

It can sometimes be difficult decide whether or not one of your images should be entered in a Photo Travel competition or an 'open' competition. To help make your decisions, ask yourself these questions:

- a) Does the main subject in the image show a building, geographic feature, event or something else that is characteristic of the location in which the image was taken?
- b) Does the main subject in the image illustrate a cultural activity or practice that is specific to the location in which the image was taken?
- c) Does the image show sufficient context to give meaning to the main subject?
- d) Have I limited my editing/processing of the image to techniques that are allowed by the Photo Travel definition?
- e) Would the subject of the image exist if I (or others) had not been there to photograph it?

If you cannot confidently answer YES to questions (a) or (b) and to (c) and (d) and NO to the last question then do NOT enter the image in a Photo Travel competition.

If you want to suggest any improvements to these notes please send me an email.

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