

2 Destinations

A special section on travel and adventure by local people. ■ March 29, 2006

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When you travel...

take photos to hang on your wall,
not stuff in a shoebox.

When you return from your most memorable travels, what is it you cherish the most? The items you bought, the postcards, the tid-bits collected along the way? No. You are much more likely to cherish your photos, second only to your actual memories. And, it is the photos that evoke those memories that we laugh about, tell stories about, or dream over.

How can you take great pictures that are more than just throw-away or put-away items?

I can give you a few tips that have worked for me over the years.

The famed French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson gave us his view of how to capture a great photograph: "To me, photography is the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as of a precise organization of forms which give that event its proper expression."

Let's look at the steps to be able to apply this simple yet powerful advice.

Make friends with your camera

Get to know how your camera works. On this point, Ansel Adams said: "The next time you pick up a camera, think of it not as an inflexible automatic robot, but as a flexible instrument which you must understand to properly use."

I have begun my travels aboard a plane with camera and instruction book in my lap. No matter how familiar I am with my equipment, I always learn more, and this



This action shot of the famed French car — the Citroën 2CV — captures the spirit in Paris, says photographer Marc Silber.

By Marc Silber
Special to the Almanac



About the author: Marc Silber is a native of the Peninsula, lives in Atherton and has been a professional photographer for more than 40 years. He is an avid outdoorsman who enjoys mountaineering, surfing, skiing and snowboarding.

gets me wanting to use what I have learned.

There's nothing more frustrating than missing a great shot because you don't know how to shoot in dim light or fast action. My shot of the Eiffel tower required using the limits of my camera in this very low light. This practice of in-flight learning may sound dull, but it gets me "in the zone" to go out and find the great shots.

This brings me to my next tip.

Frame your shots

Get in the frame of mind to find your shots. Let's say you're in the right place to capture the shot — now, what's the right time?

Part of this process is learning to frame your shot, which means to fit what is



Cows in Ajoya, Mexico, serve as actors in Marc Silber's story.



In this Marc Silber photo of the clock at the D'Orsay Museum in Paris, you can see a small silhouette of his wife, Jan, who helped capture this memorable moment, says Mr. Silber.

happening out there into the frame of your camera so that you have "...a precise organization of forms which give that event its proper expression."

Ansel Adams taught his students to develop their eye by having them cut out a rectangle in a card the size of their camera's film. For example, take a file card and cut a rectangle roughly the size of a 35mm negative, then go around and practice finding and framing your shots. Do this exercise at home before your trip and you'll be surprised at how you can tune up your awareness.

Put people at ease

When you shoot pictures of people, put them at ease so you get more than stiff poses. The way I do this is to take that first posed shot but keep talking and taking shots. I will even hold the camera away from my eye and keep shooting to engage the real person rather than their pose. The shot of my wife at the D'Orsay clock with her at ease is an example.

■ TIPS FOR TRAVEL

- Get to know your camera and equipment before your vacation.
- Find your shots, don't just snap them.
- Put people at ease so you don't just get stiff poses.
- Look for action shots of people on your journeys.
- Make time to go off by yourself with the sole purpose of getting memorable shots.

Avoid distractions

In looking for action shots, fill the frame with the story you want to tell. "Every picture tells a story," but is the story clear or muddled?

Move in to get the story you want to tell. Move around or zoom in past the elements that distract. If you were trying to get a good sound recording, you would

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"Knowing my camera allowed me to take this hand-held shot of the Eiffel Tower with very little light," says Marc Silber.

Taking memorable photos

PICTURES

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be aware of distracting noises, such as cars and sirens. Use the same idea in shooting photographs. My shot of the cows is an example of this.

Go off by yourself

In addition to capturing your shots while traveling about with friends and family, make time to go off by yourself with the sole purpose of getting memorable shots. Not only will you get some great photos this way, but by practicing this method

of careful looking you will see many things that the hurried tourist misses.

These five points have worked for me and I invite you to try them on your next trip, or better yet before you leave, as a warm-up. Your family may laugh at your holding a 3x5 card to your eye, but when they see you have graduated up in your skills, they'll do the same!

My last point is: Don't be afraid to take pictures. Let yourself go. When you get home, take the time to edit them if you have a digital camera. Crop them, adjust the

brightness and contrast.

Then get prints made of the ones you really like. Oh sure, get small prints of them all, but splurge on some large prints -- 5x7 or 8x10 -- of the ones you're really proud of.

This extra step of selection and finishing moves you that much closer to being a pro. Finally, frame the ones you really like and hang them up.

I hope I have inspired you to take the next step on your journey as an artist-traveler. Here's to more photos on your wall and fewer in the shoebox! ■



"Walking with my family, I paused to capture this 'ordinary' sight in Paris," says photographer Marc Silber.

■ INFORMATION

You can contact Marc Silber at marc@silberstudios.com; by calling 323-9776; or on the Web at silberstudios.com. His work will be on exhibit from April 7 to April 30 at Vino Locale, 431 Kipling St. in Palo Alto; and the Great American Framing Co. & Gallery at 229 Hamilton Ave. in Palo Alto. You can meet Mr. Silber at receptions for these shows on the Palo Alto Art Walk on April 7 from 6 to 9 p.m. Vino Locale will hold a reception Sunday, April 23, from 2 to 5 p.m.

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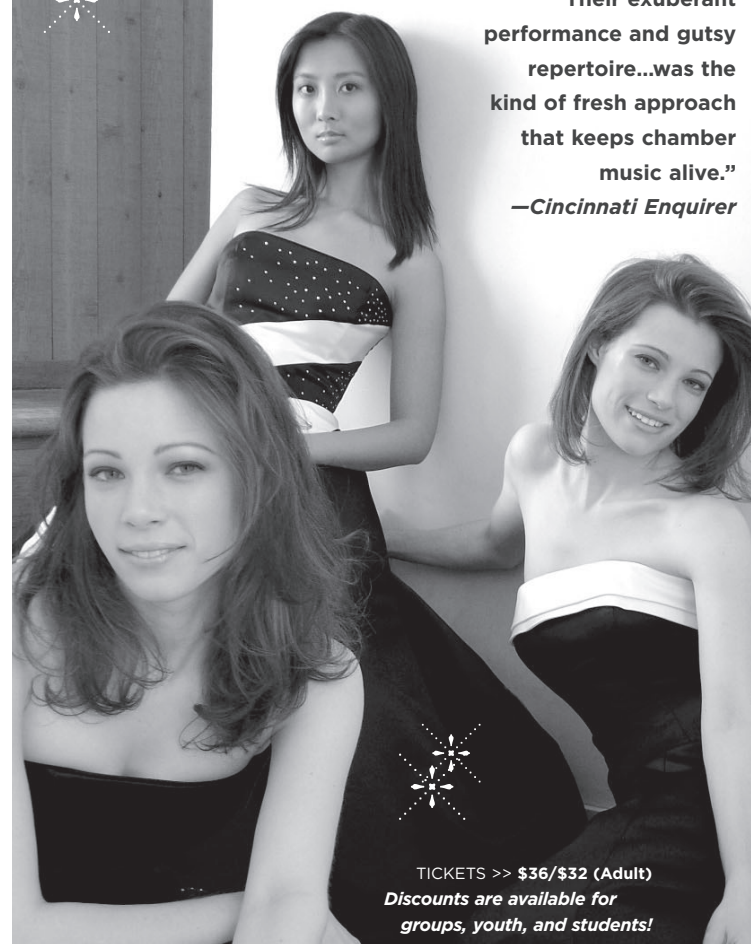
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