



As an old-time travel photographer who used to lug around all the heavy equipment, I envy senior wanderers today who can get the same or better results with just one little digital still or video camera.

You also see immediate proofs of your shots, and no longer need to take your film in for processing. Instead of hours in a smelly darkroom, you just look at the little images on your computer screen, scan, edit and let your desktop printer do the job in minutes.

Doggone it! I was born 60 years too soon. However, in spite of all the modern doohickeys that help make photos and videos easier, the same basic rules apply on how to get good, better and great pictures. Let's list a few.

1. Keep the source of light behind you when pointing the camera at your subject. It bugs me when I see photos where the smiling family is just a bunch of silhouettes while the sun or bright lights glare from behind them. Of course, there are occasions when you feel artistic, and you deliberately want your subjects to be just blacked-out images against a sunrise or sunset. Just don't let it happen accidentally. 2. Shoot close, or if you can't move in, use your telephoto lens. So many times I see that family in front of something important, such as Mount Rushmore, and although Abe Lincoln looks imposing, your gang is just a row of teeny dolls in the bottom of the photo.

You can still get a great shot of Abe, but move in close to your gang, get way down low and

shoot upwards to get a much more dramatic shot that includes everything you want within your frame. Study the image in your rangefinder. What you see is what you get.

3. Maybe the worst crime in tourist photography is the useless shot. You point your camera out the bus window to get blurry pictures of who-cares street scenes. Or you take a photo at the Grand Canyon exactly like the one you can see on a postcard. In the old days, I'd accuse you of wasting film, but since digital cameras have no film and offer almost endless shooting, all I can say is that you're wasting your time and potential creative talent.

4. Asking for creative approaches to vacation photography could be expecting a bit too much from those who never studied Art Composition 101. But it will add to your pleasure to consider the artistic potential of scenes happening in front of you. Even setting up your family for a photo can be part of your creative effort.

For instance, kids sitting on a chair staring at the camera was OK in 1863 when exposures were minutes long. Today, family members, kids with adults, kids with animals, kids with other kids and hundreds of other situations make very creative scenes. Not only kids, but when Grandpa hauls in that big fish, or Grandma offers you that steaming apple pie, let your creative genes go wild.

The same rule applies to every phase of travel photography. Get in close, compose your subjects, keep the source of light behind you and snap or whirl away.