

Why Travel is the Most Important Thing a Photographer Can Do to Improve

Traveling is one of those things that completely transformed my life. If you've never left your hometown, your state, or your country, you have a limited perception of reality. When you travel to a new place, not only do you have the opportunity to experience something novel, but you also have the ability to adapt, to grow, to change, and ultimately to make new work through your photographs.

The countless experiences I've had from traveling have been the most fulfilling aspects of my journey as a photographer. There's no amount of physical things or possessions you can purchase to improve, but the one thing you *can* do is buy plane tickets, train tickets, and explore the open world.

If there's one thing about photography that keeps me excited about life, it's the excuse and ability to go out into the world and explore endlessly. I know there is so much to do, to see, to explore, and to photograph in my lifetime. You could live until you're 120 years old and still not see every corner of this earth. Is that not exciting? The mystery of the unknown is where we thrive as photographers. To embrace it openly, to throw yourself into the chaos, is where the trial by fire begins.

Trial by Fire in Jerusalem

When I first arrived in Jerusalem, in the Old City back in 2017, I began to take my photography more seriously through traveling. I had to adapt and learn how to engage with new cultures through language barriers. I carried around an Instax camera and gifted strangers prints on the streets.

I started to explore unfamiliar territory—traveling from Jerusalem to the West Bank, throughout Ramallah, Jericho, Nablus, Qalandia, Jenin, Hebron, Bethlehem, and more. Through those trips, I learned how to engage in places unknown to me.

One day in Jericho, fires were rising and conflict was breaking out near the checkpoint. I couldn't make it past the border, so I asked a Palestinian man to drive me as close as possible. I sprinted through the desert and made it to the frontlines of the conflict. At that moment, I made one of my strongest photos. But that image only came because I took a risk—embracing danger and the unknown openly.

Courage Through Travel

The best photos come through exploring the unknown, embracing danger, and following through with courage. Traveling will test your courage and strengthen you as an artist. The more you go out there, practice courage, and follow your curiosity, the better your photographs will become.

This is why traveling is the most important thing a photographer can do. It teaches you how to exude courage and overcome anything that comes your way. If you can learn how to photograph in an unfamiliar place that challenges you, eventually you'll be able to photograph in any situation you find yourself in.

A Call to Action

If you're still early in your journey—or even late in the game—and you haven't yet explored the world, this is your call to take action. The sooner you do it, the better, and the faster your photography will improve.