

## Street Photography at the Beach

Street photography at the beach isn't talked about enough. Yet over the past three years—traveling from **Coney Island**, to **Ostia in Rome**, to **Ocean City and Wildwood, New Jersey**—I've discovered infinite potential in these places. The beach is the ultimate photographer's playground: full of life, full of families playing, kids running, people tanning, swimming, lounging, or just enjoying themselves.

Every step is a new scene, an endless expanse of activity.

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### The Photographer's Playground

Walking on the sand with the sun on your skin is an experience that translates directly into your photographs. The wide-open spaces and the way sunlight casts across surfaces lend themselves perfectly to **high-contrast black-and-white** photography.

*"You can walk for miles and encounter an endless stream of new people and moments. Life unfolds openly and freely."*

At the beach, you'll find juxtapositions everywhere: a child looking up at the sun while an old woman crawls out of the water, or a man feeding seagulls with the backdrop of a carnival ride. It's a place where layers of age, movement, and energy collide in fascinating ways.

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### Shooting Candidly

The **Ricoh GR III** is my go-to camera for the beach. Its compact, quiet design makes candid photography effortless. You blend into the environment, appear like a tourist, and capture moments without disrupting them.

Tips for blending in:

- Dress like you belong (no shoes, no shirt, just immerse yourself).
- Use shorts with zipper pockets to keep batteries and gear safe.
- Protect your camera from sand, water, and sudden gusts.

Sometimes I'll stay hidden in plain sight, other times I'll interact playfully—like approaching a man buried in sand on the 4th of July at Coney Island, snapping a photo, and making him laugh. The beach atmosphere invites this kind of playful, light-hearted approach.

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## The Dual Worlds: Beach and Boardwalk

One of the best aspects of beach photography is its duality:

- **The Boardwalk** feels like a city street, full of signs, shops, and endless characters.
- **The Beach** itself is a wide, off-the-grid expanse full of spontaneity and movement.

I personally find myself more often on the sand, but moving between both worlds gives you two completely different photographic environments.

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## Emotion and Photography

When I'm at the beach, I feel joy, bliss, and power. That energy feeds into my photography. The better you feel, the better your images will reflect it. Following your bliss is one of my mottos. A positive, playful energy translates into more impactful, emotionally charged photographs.

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## Simplicity and Composition

The beach is perfect for minimalism. With a clean horizon line, you can build simple yet strong compositions:

- Foreground (sand)
- Middle ground (water)
- Background (sky)

These three elements form a natural stage for subjects—whether it's a child with a watermelon cooling in the sand, or the simple gesture of a man's elbow resting on a railing.

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## The Best Times to Shoot

The **golden hour**—early morning or late evening—is unbeatable.

- Warm light and long shadows add depth and drama.
- Crowds in the evening create a tapestry of interactions.
- Silhouettes and shadows become your tools for dynamic compositions.

But don't limit yourself to golden hour. Midday light can be harsh, but it's also full of chaotic energy and contrast worth exploring. Personally, I spend the entire day at the beach—sunrise to sunset—photographing, relaxing, and enjoying time with family.

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## Engaging with Humanity

Photography isn't just about photography—it's about how you engage with humanity.

- Compliment strangers.
- Ask questions.
- Loosen up and connect.

This approach creates more genuine interactions and, in turn, more powerful images. When I photographed in **Ostia, Rome**, being an outsider didn't matter. By engaging openly, I found myself welcomed and able to make stronger photographs.

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## Beach Culture: Local vs. Global

- **Coney Island:** Street photography paradise, especially on the 4th of July. It's chaotic, packed, and brimming with energy.
- **American Beaches:** Sometimes sparse or party-driven, but still rewarding.
- **Abroad:** Beaches like Ostia are dense, vibrant, and layered with diverse personalities.

*“Beach culture abroad is vibrant and full of life. The density of people and the variety of personalities make it a goldmine for street photography.”*

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## Practical Challenges & Tips

- Protect your gear from sand and water.
- Use zipper shorts for carrying extras.

- Immerse yourself—dress down, enjoy the beach, blend in.

Avoid looking like the stereotypical photographer with vests, shoes, and multiple cameras dangling from your neck. The beach is about **freedom**. Match that energy.

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## Endless Variety

On the beach, you can shoot:

- Decisive action (soccer, basketball, surfing, skimboarding).
- Quieter moments (loungers, small gestures, horizon scenes).
- Textures, details, and infrastructure (wooden beams, rocks, sand patterns).

It's an environment that offers everything, from chaotic interactions to minimalist frames.

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## Closing Thoughts

The beach is one of the most beautiful, rewarding environments for street photography. From **Coney Island on the 4th of July** to quiet evening walks on the boardwalk, it's full of energy, humanity, and inspiration.

As summer fades into winter here in Philadelphia, I wanted to share this lecture to inspire others to head back to the beach next summer with fresh eyes and a camera ready to work.

*“If you go to Coney Island on the 4th of July, you’ll find yourself in street photography paradise.”*

So grab your camera, head to the shore, and let life unfold before you. The beach is waiting.

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