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Asian Photography

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Vol. 38 - No. 4

PRO-PROFILE

A GEOGRAPHER'S
LENS

- Trevor Cole

**THE
OTHER
SIDE OF
FEAR**

- Ashik Aseem

**MASTERING
AMBIENT
OCCLUSION**

- Krishna Pramod

REVIEW

THE XIAOMI
17 REVIEW

TIPS AND TECHS

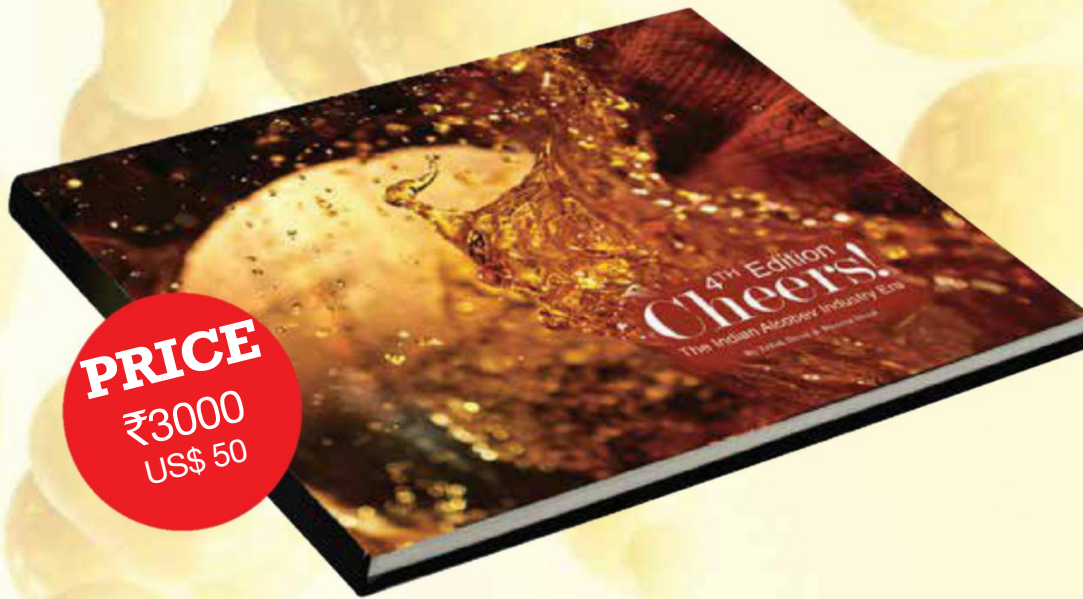
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Open Your Eyes and See, Don't Just Travel

Every year, our travel photography issue returns as both a ritual and a reminder—a reminder of why we started our photographing journeys in the first place. Not merely to document where we've been and mindlessly click away, but to interpret what we've see and feel. Travel photography, at its best, is less about movement and more about meaning.

And no one captures this better than the Profiles featured in this issue. Their work is anchored with this philosophy in practice. From the deep piercing work of Trevor Cole's human storytelling to Ashik Aseem's nuanced interplay of light and culture and Khrisna Pramod's sharp, contemporary eye for detail, all of them have provided a distinct perspective on travel imagery. Their work reinforces a simple truth: compelling photographs are not defined by location or equipment, but by the intent and sensitivity of the person behind the lens and how they choose to see the subject.

And most of our tips this month also align with this ethos. They bring together a set of ideas that challenge convention while sharpening craft. Whether it's focusing on authenticity over staged perfection, exploring the emotional depth of black and white travel portraits, embracing the patience of slow travel photography or pushing creative boundaries through the One Lens Challenge—each approach encourages photographers to see more consciously. Even something as accessible as using your smartphone's optical zoom effectively can elevate everyday travel frames into something far more deliberate and impactful.

On the technology front, we have reviewed the Xiaomi 17 phone this month which features the new flagship from their stable. With its Leica-tuned triple 50MP camera system does it stand our tests? Read to know more and if you like the visual medium then you can see the video review as well.

Ultimately, what ties this issue together is our Intention. In a world saturated with images, the real challenge is not capturing more—but seeing and capturing what's meaningful. As you turn these pages, consider not just where you want to go next—but how you want to see it.

Until Next Time...
Happy Reading!!

Bhavya Desai

bhavya_desai

Asian_photography_magazine

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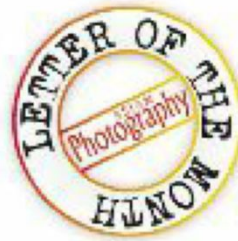
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LETTERS TO EDITOR

Readers' Comments and Suggestions...

Send your letters at apindia.feedback@gmail.com



Dear Sir,

I was looking at your Nikon D5 II review and liked it. However, you mentioned that the camera offers slow-motion video. If I'm not mistaken, this feature isn't available on the camera.

**Regards,
Radhe Krishna Studio**

Dear Radhe K

Thank you for your letter and also liking our Nikon review. The camera does offer slow-motion video at 1080p. Yes, if you're referring to shooting slow motion at 4K resolution, the camera allows 4K UHD recording at 60 fps, albeit with a crop.



LETTERS TO EDITOR

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Dear Sir,

I'm looking for a camera, and I shoot a lot outdoors and often have to change lenses. Does the Nikon Z6 III have a sensor protector?

**Regs,
Shubham**

Dear Shubham,

No. The Nikon Z6 III does not have a sense of protector since most of the cameras in this price bracket don't offer the same. But if you are choosing a camera with a protector since you need to change lenses often—then there are better ways of doing that without looking for a camera that offers a sensor protector.

It's true that the sensor protector will help in reducing the dust that goes inside the camera sensor. However, if the lenses are changed carefully than the chances of dust particles creeping into the sensor are fairly less.



Nikon opens Creator-Focused Experience Zone in Chennai

Nikon India Private Ltd. has launched a new Nikon Experience Zone at Kanchan Films Pvt. Ltd. in Chennai, expanding its engagement with the city's growing creator community. Located in Kodambakkam, a key media hub, the space offers a hands-on environment for photographers, filmmakers, and content creators.

The Experience Zone showcases Nikon's latest imaging lineup, including Z series mirrorless cameras, DSLRs, COOLPIX models, and NIKKOR lenses. It is designed as an interactive platform with live demonstrations, real-world usage scenarios, and expert guidance.

A major focus is on cinematic imaging, highlighted by the ZR camera and Nikon's expanding Z Cinema ecosystem. Backed by its partnership with RED Digital Cinema, Nikon aims to strengthen its position in filmmaking tools alongside photography.

According to Managing Director Sajjan Kumar, the initiative reflects Nikon India's commitment to building creator-first spaces that encourage learning, experimentation, and community building.



The launch aligns with Nikon's broader strategy to strengthen its presence in key Indian markets while supporting the next generation of visual storytellers.

Canon India Launches Deep Dive 2.0 Series of Masterclasses



Canon India has launched 'Deep Dive 2.0', the second edition of its experiential learning initiative, aimed at empowering photographers, filmmakers, and content creators across India. The programme debuted in Ahmedabad, offering hands-on training with real-world production and post-production workflows.

Built on Canon's "Learn to Earn" philosophy, the initiative addresses gaps in access to advanced technology, structured learning, and industry exposure—particularly beyond metro cities. It brings together industry experts to conduct live demonstrations on colour grading, LUTs, and filmmaking techniques, while also guiding participants on building sustainable creative careers.

The Ahmedabad session was led by Photriya Venky, who shared insights from over two decades of experience in wedding and commercial filmmaking. Participants engaged directly with Canon's imaging tools and practical workflows.

Following strong interest in 2025—with over 3,000 applications and 400 selected participants—Canon plans to expand the programme to more cities, including Tier 2 markets. Deep Dive 2.0 aims to democratise access to professional tools and knowledge, strengthening India's rapidly growing creator ecosystem.

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Nikon Issues Advisory for some Z6 III, Z5 II, and ZR Cameras

Nikon has issued a technical service advisory (TSA) for select Nikon Z6 III, Nikon Z5 II, and Nikon ZR units, citing a manufacturing defect that may cause the cameras to become inoperable.

The advisory, published on Nikon Japan and U.S. websites, states that only certain units within specific serial number ranges are affected. Nikon has not disclosed how many cameras are impacted but indicated the issue likely stems from a particular production batch.

Affected users can verify their camera's serial number—located behind the rear display—against the list on Nikon's service page. If a unit falls within the affected range, Nikon will repair it free of charge, including shipping, regardless of warranty status.

Such advisories are not uncommon for Nikon. In 2023, the company addressed issues with the Nikon Z8 related to lens mounting and strap lugs. Earlier, it issued a similar notice for the Nikon Z9 due to a faulty lens release button. In all cases, repairs were provided at no cost.



Apple Acquires MotionVFX

Apple has acquired MotionVFX, a developer of video editing plugins for Adobe Premiere Pro, DaVinci Resolve, and Final Cut Pro.

In an announcement on its website, MotionVFX confirmed it is joining Apple to continue developing tools for creators. The company highlighted its 15-year focus on high-quality, user-friendly visual effects and design, aligning with Apple's product philosophy. It also thanked its user community for supporting its growth.

MotionVFX is best known for its extensive plugin ecosystem, particularly for Final Cut Pro, where its tools are widely used across content creation, filmmaking, and broadcast editing.

Apple has not officially commented on the acquisition or outlined its plans. However, the move may strengthen its creative software ecosystem, including its Creator Studio subscription, which bundles apps like Final Cut Pro, Pixelmator Pro, and Logic Pro.

The acquisition could enhance Final Cut Pro's capabilities by integrating advanced plugins more directly into Apple's ecosystem. Similar to Apple's earlier acquisition of Pixelmator, further details on integration and product direction are expected over time.





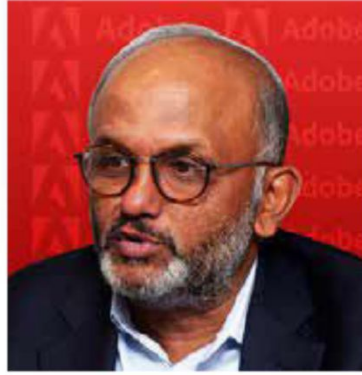
SIGMA

ART
35mm F1.4 DG II

Adobe CEO Steps Down

After 18 long years of being at the helm of the imaging industry's leading post production software company, Shantanu Narayan is stepping down as the CEO of Adobe. He'll still retain his position as Chair at the Board of Directors at the company.

During his tenure, Narayan executed one of the tech industry's most successful corporate pivots, shifting Adobe from selling physical boxed software to a highly lucrative cloud-based subscription model (Creative Cloud). Under his leadership, the software giant's annual revenue skyrocketed from under \$1 billion to over \$25 billion.



Satya Nadella

The leadership announcement coincided with Adobe's strong Q1 2026 earnings report, where the company posted a record \$6.4 billion in revenue and highlighted rapid growth in its AI-first products. Despite the strong financials, Adobe's stock dipped roughly 9.3% following the news, reflecting investor caution over leadership continuity and intensifying competition in the generative AI space.

Industry peers were quick to praise his legacy, with Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella congratulating Narayan on a "legendary run" that built one of the world's most important software companies.

DJI Sues Insta360 Over Multiple Drone-Related Patents

DJI has filed a lawsuit against Insta360, alleging patent infringement involving six technologies related to drone flight control, image processing, and hardware design. The case, filed in the Shenzhen Intermediate People's Court, also names Insta360's parent company, Arashi Vision.

DJI claims the patents should belong to it because they were developed by former DJI employees within one year of joining Insta360, which may fall under Chinese patent ownership rules if the work is related to prior employment.

Insta360 founder JK Liu denied the allegations, stating the patents were independently developed. He added that the only potentially relevant flight-control patent—related to an automated FPV-style "building dive"—was his idea and was never implemented. Liu also rejected claims of "hiding inventors", calling it a standard practice to prevent employee poaching.

Liu noted that many of the disputed patents were filed over four years ago and remain unused due to changes in product direction. He further alleged that DJI may have infringed on up to 28 Insta360 patents across hardware, software, and accessories but chose not to pursue legal action.

The dispute reflects intensifying competition between the two companies across drones, action cameras, and 360-degree imaging. Recent product launches, including DJI's Osmo 360 and Insta360's Antigravity A1 drone, have increased overlap in their offerings. The case now moves forward pending investigation and court review.



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ML100Bi Kit 2



Godox



ML60II Bi

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ML60II Bi Kit1



ML100R

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ML100R Kit



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ML-CS30 | 60cm Softbox
AD-S605 | Square Softbox
ML-SF3030 |
| | | |
| Lens Reflector
ML-L36 | Collapsible Fresnel Attachment
ML-CFL5 | Collapsible Diffusion Dome
ML-CD15 |
| | | |
| Collapsible Soft Tent
ML-CS1625 | Air Soft Tube
ML-SIA | V-mount Battery Accessory Kit
AK-B02 |
| | | |
| NPF Battery Accessory Kit
AK-B01 | Bowens Mount Adapter
ML-GB | |



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Sony India launches 400-800mm Super Telephoto Zoom Lens at ₹264,990

Sony India has recently announced the FE 400-800mm F6.3-8 G OSS, its first 800mm super-telephoto zoom G Lens. Designed for wildlife, sports, birding, and landscapes, this lens offers high-resolution performance, fast autofocus, and superior stability with an inner-zoom mechanism that maintains its center of gravity.

With six ED glass elements, an 11-blade circular aperture for smooth bokeh, and advanced coatings to reduce flare, the lens ensures outstanding clarity. Two precision linear motors enable fast, silent autofocus, keeping up with the Alpha 9 III's 120 fps burst speed. A focus range switch and focus hold buttons enhance usability.

Optical image stabilization allows handheld shooting without blur, while a durable, dust and moisture-resistant



design ensures reliability. The tripod mount foot rotates easily for horizontal or vertical orientation. Compatible with 1.4x and 2x teleconverters, it extends up to 1600mm.

Available across Sony stores and dealers in India from March 17, 2025, for ₹264,990.

Canon India launches EOS R50V APS-C Body and RF 20 mm F/1.4 L VCM Lens

Canon has recently unveiled the EOS R50 V and RF-S 14-30mm F4-6.3 IS STM PZ, designed for next-gen content creators. The EOS R50 V, a video-centric camera without a viewfinder, features a lightweight design optimised for vertical shooting, enhanced ergonomics, and a dedicated button layout for seamless video creation. It supports Canon Log 3, oversampled 4K 30p, cropped 4K 60p, and Full HD 120p recording.

With features like Cinema View, Slow & Fast Motion mode, and professional tools like false colours and zebras, creators can achieve cinematic results. Dual Pixel CMOS AF II, Register People Priority, and Movie Digital IS enhance autofocus and stabilization. The camera also supports XF-HEVC S / XF-AVC S formats, Custom Pictures, LUTs, and 3-mic noise reduction for professional workflows.

For livestreaming, the EOS R50 V offers multiple connection methods, including USB-C and HDMI, with cropped 4K 60p streaming. The Smooth Skin Movie mode and Movie for Close-Up Demos AF further refine content.

The RF-S 14-30mm F4-6.3 IS STM PZ is Canon's first RF lens with built-in power zoom, offering smooth servo zooming via the lens, camera controls, or a smartphone app. Its lightweight design maintains balance on gimbals, while 5-axis image stabilization ensures steady shots. The lens' 22.4-48mm equivalent focal length makes it versatile for wide and close-up shooting, with a 0.15m close focus and 0.38x magnification for detailed content creation.

Canon EOS R50V + 14-30mm kit is priced at ₹79,995 and the RF-S 14-30mm lens is priced at ₹33,995





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A GEOGRAPHER'S LENS



Trevor Cole

There are travel photographers, and there is **Trevor Cole**, redefining what the genre means. From documenting Western Asian and African tribes to publishing stories in *National Geographic* and more, his accolades are more than just. We sat down with him, talking intricacies about photography, documentary, visual narratives, and holding onto your creative eye in the over-tourism era. We delve into his experiences across the Omo Valley, South Sudan, and Namibia, discussing how he navigates the delicate balance between being an observer and a guest, and what the future holds for photography as a tool for global education and environmental awareness. Excerpts:

When we asked him his background and the subsequent career in photography, Trevor Cole reflected on studying Geography and Environmental Science at the university level, followed by years of teaching the subject both in the United Kingdom and overseas. He noted that an inherent understanding of people, landscapes, and cultures allows a photographer to see through the lens in a distinct way, interpreting the world through the processes and patterns of a geographer's perspective. He operates under the belief that humans are inextricably connected to their environment, a philosophy that fuels his passion for shooting both people and landscapes in tandem. To him, people adapt to the climates and terrains they inhabit, becoming a direct reflection of their natural habitats. This relationship contributes to the immense diversity of humankind, though he observed with some sadness that globalisation is steadily reducing this diversity and homogenising culture. This concern drives his desire to travel to remote areas to document indigenous people within their true environmental contexts, communities like the people of the Omo Valley in Ethiopia, the Himba of Kaokoland in Namibia, the Wodaabe of Chad, or the Mundari of South Sudan. He emphasised that even in these far-flung reaches, change is perpetual, making it imperative to capture these lives before they are fully assimilated into a mainstream, globalised, and "cloned" culture.



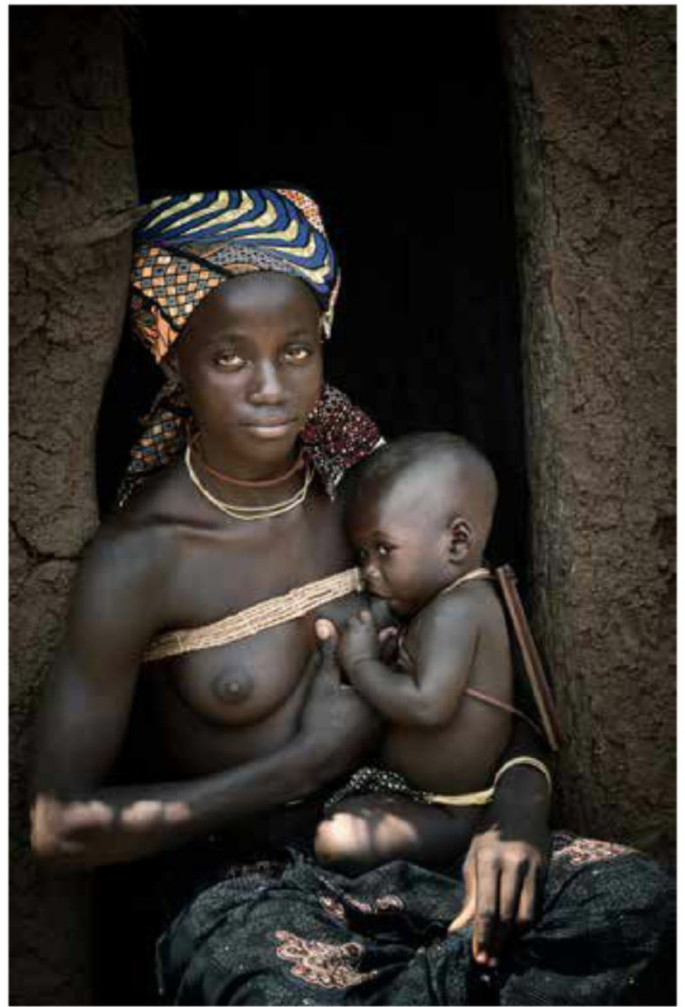


We shifted focus to the initial moments of arrival in remote locations, questioning what he seeks first to establish a visual narrative. Having returned to these locations many times, Trevor explained that he often arrives with a set of expectations for what he hopes to see, but the actual visual result is enhanced by the approach and the quality of interaction. When working with tribal peoples, he believes the nature of photography changes; a good guide becomes an imperative asset. His process involves a gesture of respect, such as bringing provisions to a village and presenting them to the headman, which he finds makes a significant difference in fostering a friendly atmosphere where the entire village is willing to partake. He remains acutely sensitive to the impacts of tourism and strives to ensure his visits are sustainable, consciously avoiding the promotion of what he terms “*zooification*”. This delicate balance is often struck with the help of a guide who decides the best strategy for engagement. In some instances, such as his time in Mundari villages, he has spent hours wandering without a camera simply to become a familiar, non-threatening sight. Ultimately, he believes it is interpersonal skills that

“In the right light, at the right time the ordinary becomes extraordinary and that is something to strive for.”

make a moment count, allowing him to capture light, colour, emotion, insight, character, and spirit. He prefers the “golden hours” or the reprieve of shade to escape the intense African sun, noting that in the right light, the ordinary becomes extraordinary. He often references a sentiment by Peter Damman, suggesting that to photograph stories about people, one must truly love people, as every photo of another person is essentially a self-portrait of the photographer’s own relationship and feelings toward them.

The conversation then moved toward the labels often placed on his profession, noting that while many use the term “Travel Photographer”, his work feels more like “Cultural Documentation”, and it was asked how he personally views or describes his output. Trevor agreed that this was a poignant distinction, noting that the world he saw 20 years ago is vastly different from the one he sees today. He anticipates that the pace of change will only accelerate, and he hopes his images will serve as historical records for future generations to reflect upon. He sees a clear divide between the urban dweller, comfortable in a concrete world, and the rural dweller, who remains inextricably connected to nature. His work is a



reflection of that connection, particularly among indigenous people who live in the closest harmony with their environment. He expressed a deep belief in the value of empowering these communities to determine their own futures without forced change. For Trevor, there is much to be learned from these cultures, and capturing them “*in situ*” creates an immense respect for their way of life. Using the tribes of the Omo Valley as an example, he described how they exist with a small ecological footprint and an intimate understanding of their livestock and surroundings. He argued that these ways of life are only disrupted when outside influences put pressure on their existence, and that modern society should look to these sustainable models to help shape a more viable future.

Looking back at his early work compared to his more recent expeditions, the question was raised about how his “eye” has evolved and whether there is a specific element he focuses on now that he might have ignored a decade ago. Trevor admitted this is a question he often asks himself. While he spends very little time on the editing process, he has cultivated a documentary yet artistic style that has evolved over the years. He currently feels comfortable with his style but maintains that experimentation is a healthy necessity for self-criticism. He noted that in the

“Humans are inextricably connected to their environment; they are a reflection of their natural habitats.”

past, he focused heavily on portraiture, drawn to the way every face tells its own unique story. While he still values the power of a portrait, he now finds himself trying to set those faces in a broader context. He strives to capture the “bigger picture”, whether that involves the expansive cattle camps of the Mundari, the villages of the Toposa or Jiye, or the bustling street scenes that exist behind the subject’s face. This

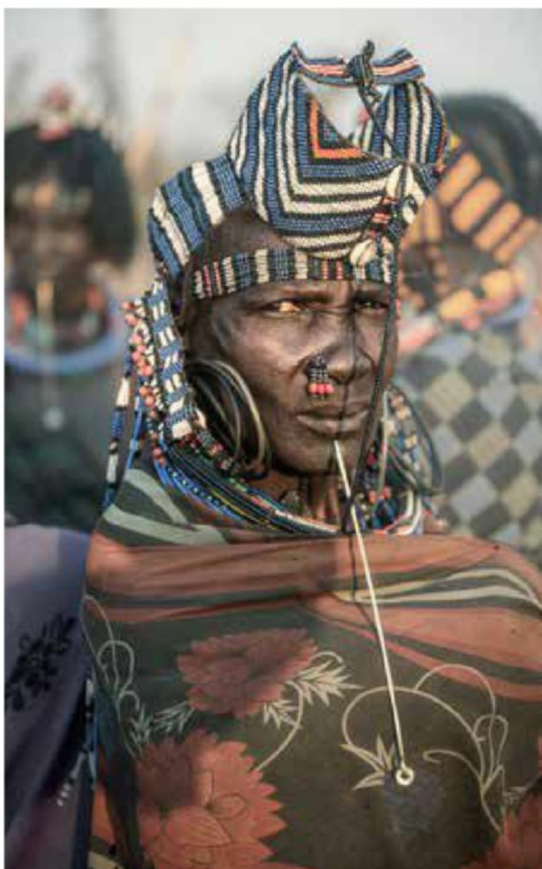
contextual approach, he believes, allows him to tell a more effective and complete story of the people he encounters.

In an era defined by Instagram and the pressures of over-tourism, Trevor was asked how he manages to find new perspectives on locations that have been photographed thousands of times. He reiterated his sensitivity toward the impacts of tourism and his commitment to sustainability over “the human zoo”. He admitted that he relies heavily on great guides to navigate these challenges

and find the right strategy for each location. He expressed a critical view of the “influencer” culture, which he believes has created significant pressure even in the world’s most remote corners. As a result, he has become less specific about where he goes, opting for anonymity over fame. Recently in Ethiopia, he took a small group to villages he had never visited before—places he believes very few, if any, other photographers







have documented. He found it inspirational and refreshing to visit a well-known tribe in a completely unknown location, proving that new perspectives are still possible with the right approach.

The dialogue concluded by looking toward the future of cultural photography and what advice he would offer to aspiring photographers entering this space. Trevor observed that in a divided world, photography in the “majority world” creates stories that can send a powerful message to those in positions of privilege. He believes that documenting diverse cultures serves to educate and enlighten. Drawing on his background as a teacher, he explained how he uses his images to advocate for sustainability through ecotourism and to foster environmental awareness. He spoke of “ancient futures”, a concept focused on using traditional indigenous practices to aid in re-wilding and reducing the impacts of deforestation and wildlife depletion. For him, cultural photography has a vital role in planning effectively for future generations. His advice to those starting out is to remain original and avoid the mainstream. He maintains that the Earth still holds amazing people and places for those with a bit of research and enterprise. He left off with a final, stirring thought: *that if a photographer risks nothing, they ultimately risk everything.*

TEXT: ANIRUDH IYER



THE OTHER SIDE OF FEAR



Ashik Aseem

Ashik Aseem is a self-taught travel photographer and visual storyteller whose work is defined by its profound intimacy and human connection. Known for his evocative documentation of India’s most remote landscapes from the rugged terrains of Spiti to the quiet valleys of Kashmir—Aseem has carved a niche for himself through a philosophy of “slow travel”. His journey from a local market in Kerala to collaborating with major global smartphone and imaging brands serves as a testament to the power of persistence. With a portfolio built on the foundations of grit and gratitude, he continues to bridge the gap between high-end professional imaging and the accessibility of mobile photography. **Asian Photography** spoke to him about his upbringing, the philosophy of traveller vs photographer, fundamental skills that’ll never vanish and more. Excerpts:

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hen reflecting on how his upbringing shaped his current creative path, Ashik Aseem recalls

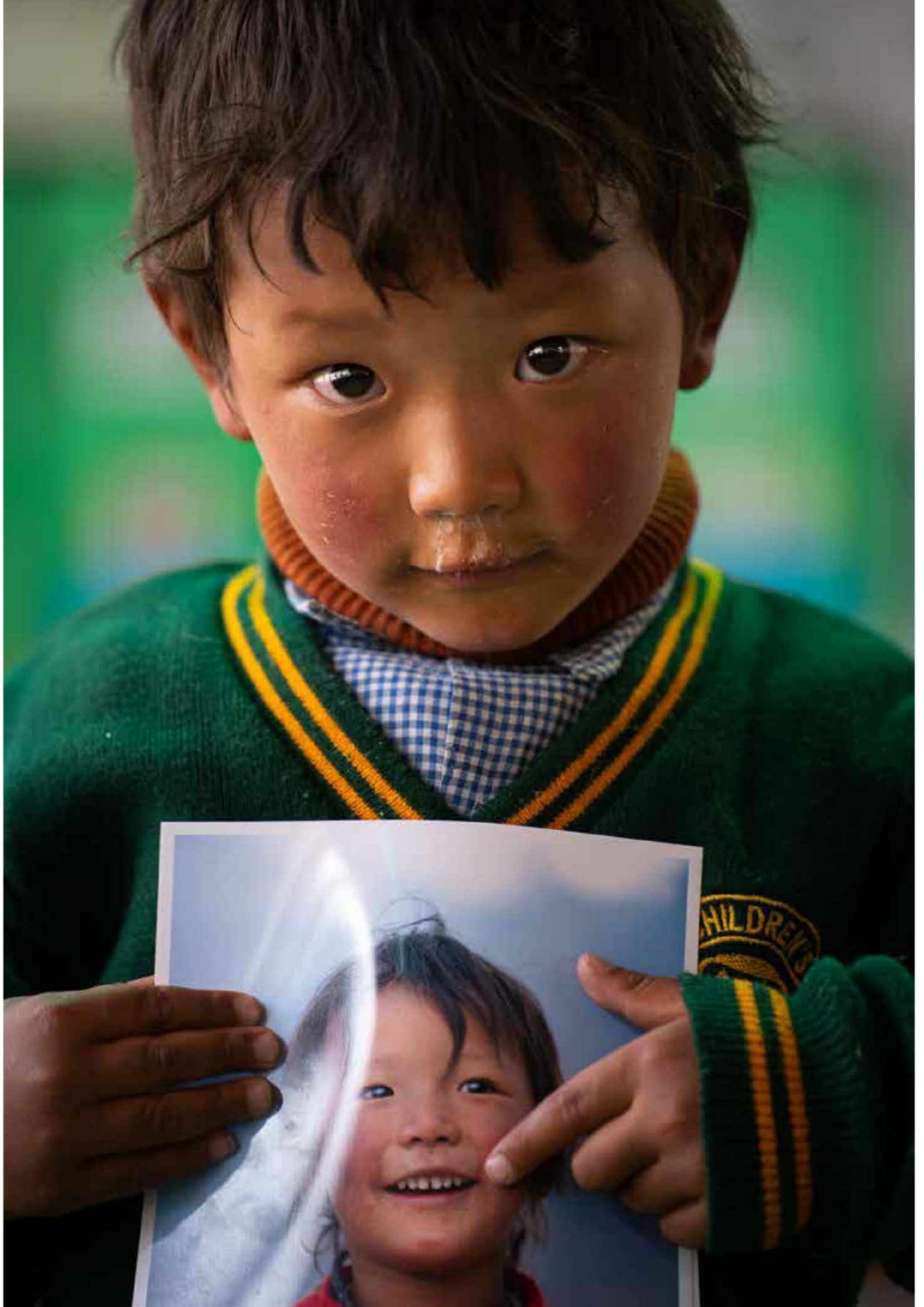
finding his passion for photography at the age of 23, a time marked by personal responsibility and uncertainty. Following his father’s illness, Aseem stepped into the role of the family provider, spending five years selling eggs in his local market to support his household. During this period of repetitive and stressful work, he found solace in capturing images on his phone, eventually saving enough over half a decade to purchase his first dedicated camera. A 2018 trip to Spiti Valley became pivotal when his work went viral on Instagram, leading to his first professional contract with a smartphone brand. Aseem notes that this difficult phase of his life deeply influenced his aesthetic, drawing him toward simple, real moments that evoke the same sense of “escape” he once sought in his own life.

In discussing the balance between being a guest and a photographer while living with local communities, such as the nomadic shepherds of Kashmir, Aseem emphasises the importance of a slow, non-intrusive approach. He views himself not as a tourist, but as a photographer whose work is contingent on a deep understanding of his subjects' lives. By travelling solo and spending extended periods within these communities, he finds that locals often perceive him as a non-threatening presence, which fosters a sense of warmth and mutual trust. He maintains that respecting the boundaries of his hosts as a guest is always the priority, which naturally earns him the consent and the "open doors" required to document their personal experiences meaningfully.

“The over-availability of gear can be overwhelming... Sometimes the best camera is the one you have with you, and today, the one in your pocket is truly one of the best.”





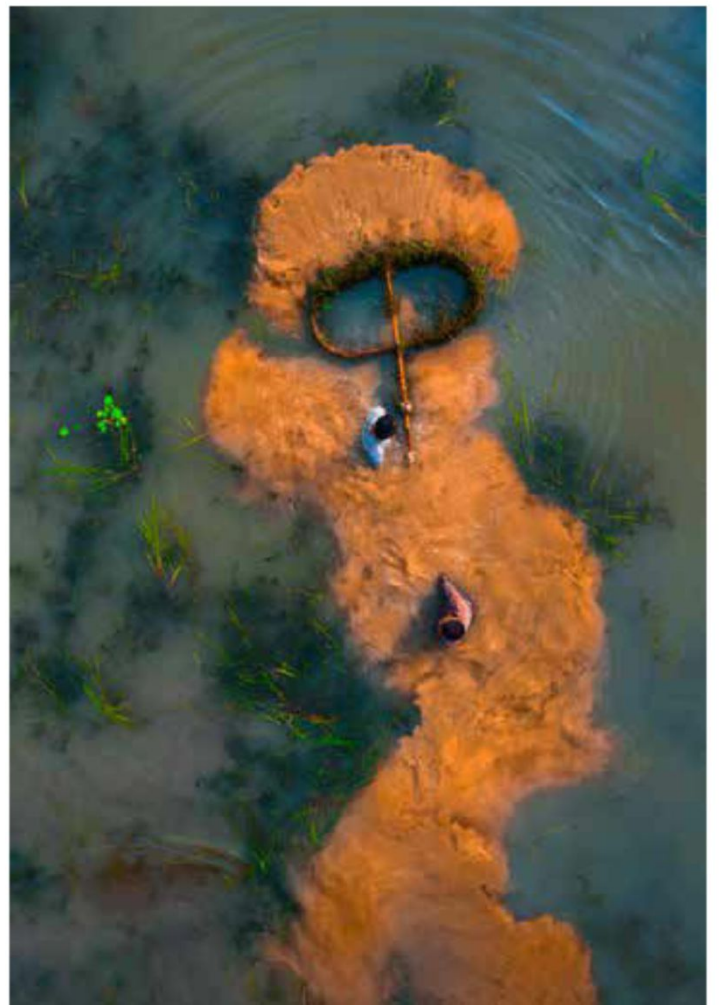




“You wouldn’t be reading this interview or seeing my photographs if I had stayed in my comfort zone.”

When asked to identify a single fundamental skill that would define his work if stripped of high-end technology, Aseem points to the discipline he gained from working with budget phones and basic gear. He explains that his early limitations forced him to master framing and composition, as he could not rely on expensive zoom lenses or high-resolution cropping to fix a shot. His learning process, entirely built on trial and error with manual prime lenses, provided a practical education in optics that he still carries today. Even now, despite having access to professional-grade equipment, he occasionally finds the abundance of gear overwhelming and advocates for the “bridge camera” approach—a simplified setup that allows a photographer to return to the pure pleasure of composition.

Aseem addresses how the common perception that a “big camera” is inherently better got broken by recounting his roots. Starting his career with a 2018-era smartphone meant navigating significant technical constraints, such





“Everything you ever wanted is on the other side of fear.”

as small sensors and the lack of optical zoom or multi-lens options. These challenges required him to physically move and adjust his position to achieve the perfect frame, a practice that refined his technical precision. He argues that modern smartphone technology has advanced to a point where the gap between mobile and professional cameras is nearly indistinguishable, concluding that the most effective tool is ultimately the one that is available in a photographer's pocket.

One of his key projects involve printing photographs of his subjects and giving it back to them, altering his perspective about the craft. About the origins of this practice, he recalls an interaction in Spiti Valley where he realised that despite being some of the most photographed people in India, many locals possessed no images of themselves. And since 2019, he has made it a lifelong mission to collect postal addresses or return in person to deliver physical prints to those he has photographed. For Aseem, seeing the emotional impact and the smiles these prints bring has transformed his photography from a creative pursuit into a life purpose rooted in giving back to the communities that sustain his work.



Regarding locations that can fundamentally change a person's outlook on life, Aseem identifies Spiti Valley as a place of profound personal significance. Having made many of his own life-altering decisions there, he believes the region's rugged beauty and the simplicity of its lifestyle encourage visitors to appreciate the smaller joys in life. He suggests that the valley offers a perspective shift that goes far beyond the visual, impacting how one views existence itself.

In offering advice to aspiring travellers and photographers, Aseem highlights the necessity of stepping outside one's comfort zone, citing the quote, "Everything you ever wanted is on the other side of fear." He acknowledges that leaving a stable life to pursue an uncertain creative path was met with skepticism from those around him, but maintains that growth was only possible through that risk. He advises newcomers to treat photography as a side hustle initially—securing financial stability through a traditional job while honing their craft—rather than expecting immediate financial returns. Finally, he stresses the importance of social media as a powerful tool for visibility, encouraging artists to share their work regardless of perceived imperfections, as the path forward is built on consistent action rather than waiting for the "perfect" moment.

TEXT: ANIRUDH IYER



MASTERING AMBIENT OCCLUSION



Krishna Pramod

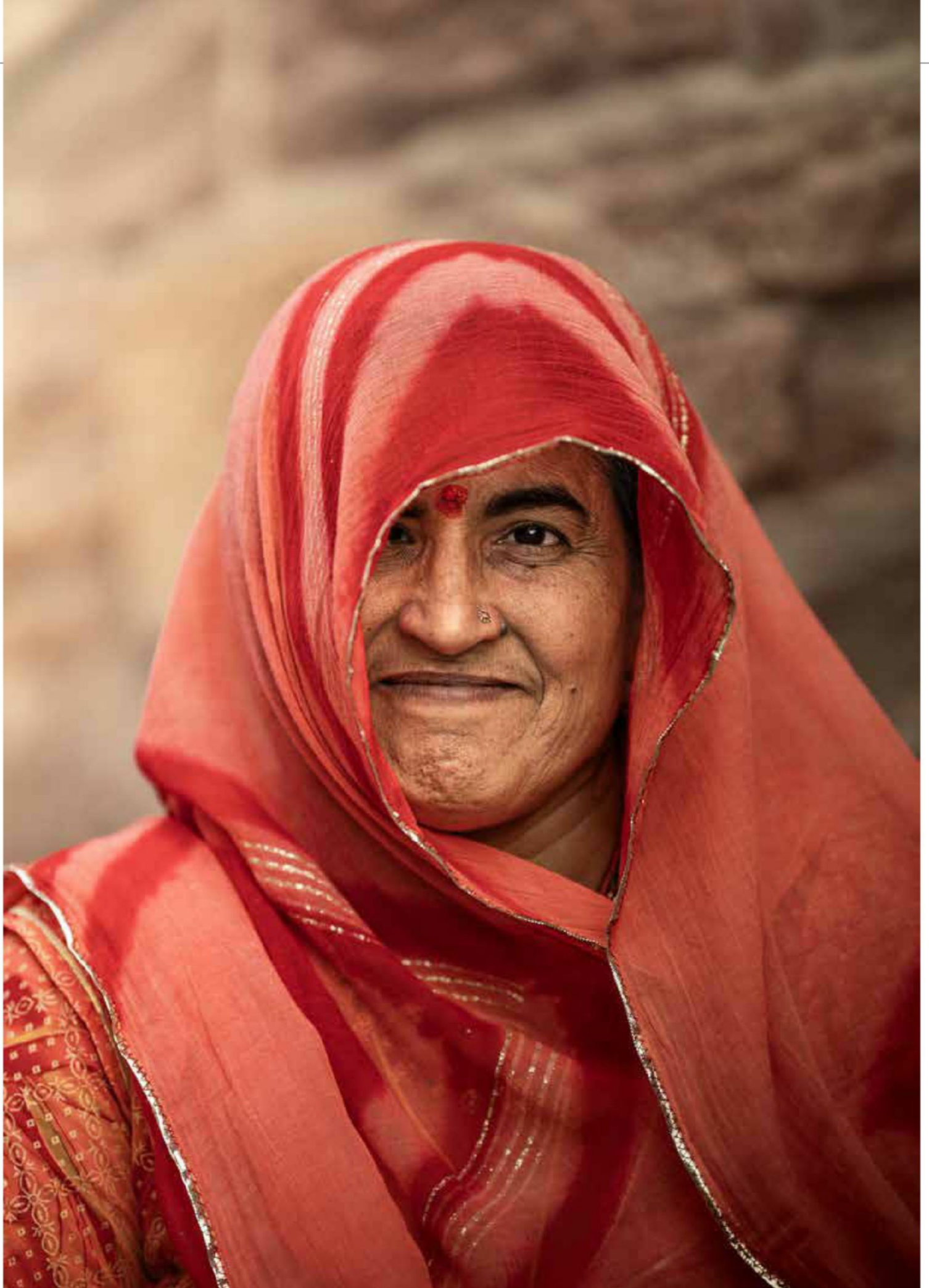
Krishna Pramod is a distinctive voice in contemporary Indian travel photography, recognized for a portfolio that leans into the ethereal and the unhurried. Professionally a designer and digital imaging artist, he occupies a unique intersection where raw, authentic moments meet technical mastery. His ability to capture the atmospheric essence of the Indian subcontinent has earned him a dedicated following, establishing him as a photographer who prioritizes the “feeling” of a place over mere documentation. Grounded in a “slow travel” philosophy, Krishna’s work is characterized by a commitment to experiencing and capturing the quiet, often overlooked rhythms of the world. **Asian Photography** caught up with him, discussing intricacies of his shooting & processing style, and how being a digital artist gives him an edge over emergent technologies and more. Excerpts:

When reflecting on the pivotal moments that shaped his trajectory as a travel photographer, *Krishna* points to a transformative journey to the Himalayas several years ago. Driven by a desire to experience the region through the lens of slow travel philosophy that prioritises depth and unhurried exploration over checking off tourist landmarks, he ventured toward Spiti Valley with two close friends. The group travelled without a rigid itinerary, allowing the natural rhythm of the terrain to dictate their pace. This two-week pilgrimage culminated in a trek to a mountain peak situated directly opposite the iconic Key Monastery. The objective was specific: to witness the monastery at night, observing the warm glow of its windows against the stark, snow-dusted Himalayan backdrop, all while the sky transitioned through a spectrum of colours under the luminous band of the Milky Way.



That specific evening in Spiti became a defining chapter in his professional and personal life. As the harsh daylight gave way to the golden hour and then deepened into the violet hour, *Krishna* observed the shifting atmosphere with a profound sense of connection. The final transition into the night sky, adorned with the vast and colourful Milky Way, provided a visual spectacle that deeply influenced his creative philosophy. He notes that the photographs captured during this vigil remain among his most cherished works, not merely for their technical success, but because of the internal shift they represented. It was a moment where the synergy between patience, environment, and timing solidified his identity as a visual storyteller who prioritises the emotional weight of a scene over mere documentation.

Regarding his method for styling visuals and maintaining a signature focus on atmosphere, *Krishna* explains that the atmosphere is always the primary subject of his frames. His





process begins with identifying a compelling atmosphere and then determining how a human subject can be integrated to reflect the emotions inherent in that space. He avoids staged or forced compositions, preferring instead to capture subjects behaving naturally within their surroundings. This approach is intended to create a palpable emotional bridge between the individual in the frame and the environment they inhabit. Whether it is a figure standing before a massive waterfall or a person navigating the regal, shadowed interiors of an ancient palace, the goal is to use the subject as an artistic response to the character of the location.

This atmospheric focus extends into his post-processing workflow, where his background as a digital imaging artist informs his technical decisions. While the capture phase is about blending the subject into the environment, his post-production phase is focused on differentiation. He carefully manipulates light, colour, and shadow to ensure that there is a clear sense of depth, effectively separating the subject from both the foreground and the background. This meticulous control over visual layers allows him to maintain the integrity of the original atmosphere while ensuring the narrative centre of the image (the subject) is clearly defined and impactful.

When addressed with the concept of having a “signature style,” *Krishna* offers a humble perspective, suggesting that he views himself more as a traveller who happens to carry a camera and doesn’t have a “signature photographic style”. An introvert by nature, he credits the camera with providing him the confidence to interact with the world and its people, acting as a bridge that allows him to request a smile from a stranger. His photographic style, he contends, is simply a reflection of how a place treats him or how he feels while being there. He expresses a wariness toward the modern trend of chasing “Instagrammable” content, noting that the pursuit of viral imagery often results in technically superior versions of the same repetitive scenes, which lack individual soul. For Krishna, the joy of photography lies in the process rather than the output; he finds fulfillment in chasing the people and places that genuinely excite him, viewing the final frame as a bonus to the experience itself.

**“I chase the things,
places, and people that
excite me; the frames
are just my bonus.”**







In terms of the impact his work has on his audience, *Krishna* finds the greatest satisfaction when viewers feel as though they have personally visited the locations he depicts. He shares that many people have described his travel photographs as immersive, allowing them to experience a place through his eyes. This resonance is his ultimate goal as a photographer. He finds fulfillment when an audience can sense the wilderness of a forest, the freshness of the air, or the stillness of a mountain sunset. By creating a bridge between his personal experience and the viewer's perception, he ensures that every frame carries a distinct story and a specific emotional temperature, making the distant feel tangible and the foreign feel familiar.

When asked about his professional “bucket list” and the one shot he still yearns to capture, *Krishna* reveals a surprising and specific ambition: *Kolkata in the heart of the monsoon*. While he has travelled extensively, the rustic architecture, wet roads, and shadowed figures of Kolkata during the rains hold a particular fascination for him. He envisions capturing the mixture of colonial and Bengali cultures, early morning walks through drenched streets, and the sight of trams and rickshaws bathed in warm, artificial light. Despite having planned the trip several times, he has consistently cancelled them out of a stubborn desire to wait for the perfect moment when the city is ready to welcome him on its own terms. To *Krishna*, Kolkata in the rain is a dream informed by years of reading books and watching films, and he is committed to exploring it at an unhurried pace when the time is right.

Addressing the rise of emerging technologies (Gen AI), *Krishna* draws on his professional background as a digital imaging artist to offer a balanced view. Being comfortable with image manipulation, he views AI as an essential evolution in the creative world, capable of enhancing efficiency and expanding the possibilities of post-production. However, he maintains a sharp distinction between the creation of an

“Photography is about creating a bridge between my experience and the viewer.”



image through technology and the capture of a live, authentic moment. He believes that the two should not be compared, as photography is rooted in the unpredictability and authenticity of reality. While he acknowledges that AI will have the upper hand in the realm of pure imagination, he remains confident that it will never replace the art of photography, which is defined by a unique, lived story that is impossible to replicate artificially.

Finally, in offering advice to emerging photographers navigating an increasingly crowded digital space, *Krishna* emphasises the importance of balancing the technical with the creative. He acknowledges that while the basics like rules of composition are universal, the creative application of these rules is what makes a photographer's work unique. He encourages newcomers to travel extensively and click frequently as a means of self-discovery, suggesting that the journey itself will eventually reveal whether one is destined for street, wildlife, travel, or another niche of photography. He urges them to ignore common anxieties regarding gear, money, or the best mobile camera, and instead focus on what excites them personally. To him, authenticity is not found in following trends, but in the passion and creativity one brings to the act of seeing the world.

TEXT: ANIRUDH IYER

MASTERING BLACK & WHITE TRAVEL PORTRAITS

Photography has always been driven by vibrant colours, dramatic sunsets and hyper-saturated edits. But during these times Black and White photography stands apart as a quiet, timeless and a powerful medium. It strips photography down to its essence, removing the distraction of colour and placing emphasis where it truly belongs—like emotion, texture, light and story.



Nowhere is this more evident than in travel portraiture. When you photograph people across cultures, geographies and experiences, colour can sometimes overwhelm the narrative. Black and white, on the other hand, distils the frame into something far more intimate. It allows the viewer to connect, not with the environment—but with the human being within it.

Mastering black and white travel portraits is not just about removing colour. It is about seeing differently. It is about understanding light, recognising emotion and capturing the depth of a moment in its purest form.

Why Black & White Portraits?

Black and white portraiture has endured for decades—not out of nostalgia, but because of its unmatched ability to convey depth and honesty.

When colour is removed, distractions disappear. The viewer is no longer influenced by bright clothing, vibrant backgrounds, or environmental noise. Instead, attention is drawn directly to the subject—their eyes, their expression, their wrinkles, their silence.

This makes black and white particularly powerful in travel photography. You are often working in unfamiliar, visually





chaotic environments. Markets, streets, festivals—these are rich in colour, but also cluttered. By choosing black and white, you simplify complexity. You isolate meaning.

More importantly, black and white portraits feel universal. They transcend geography and time. A portrait taken in a remote village or a bustling city can evoke the same emotional response. That universality is what makes black and white portraits not just visually appealing, but deeply human.

Get Closer: Eliminate the Distance

One of the most effective ways to create compelling black and white portraits is to get physically and emotionally closer to your subject.

Wide shots often rely on colour and environment to tell the story. But in black and white, the power lies in detail—lines on a face, intensity in the eyes, subtle expressions that might otherwise go unnoticed.

By moving closer, you eliminate unnecessary elements and allow the subject to dominate the frame. Tight compositions create intimacy. They make the viewer feel as though they are part of the moment, not just observing it.

Close proximity also forces you to engage more deeply with your subject, which in turn reflects in the photograph.

Speak to Your Subject: Unlock Real Emotion

A great portrait is rarely just about technique—it is about connection.

When traveling, it can be tempting to capture candid moments quickly and move on. But some of the most powerful portraits come from interaction. A simple conversation, a smile, or even a shared moment of curiosity can break barriers.

When your subject feels seen and respected, they open up. Their expressions become more natural, more layered, more real. These are the moments that translate beautifully into black and white.

Emotion is the cornerstone of monochrome photography. Without colour, expression becomes everything. And often, the only way to capture genuine emotion is to earn it.

Capture the Story: Every Face Has One

Every person you photograph carries a story—of their life, their struggles, their joys, and their journey.

Black and white photography has a unique ability to amplify that narrative. Wrinkles become lines of experience. Shadows add mystery. Highlights draw attention to character.

When composing your shot, think beyond aesthetics. Ask yourself what this person's story might be and what you are trying to convey through the image.

A technically perfect image without a story will always feel empty. But a slightly imperfect image with a strong narrative can be unforgettable.

Black and white encourages you to look deeper—to see beyond the obvious and capture something meaningful.

Embrace High Contrast: Let Light Do the Work

Light is the foundation of all photography, but in black and white, it becomes even more critical.

High-contrast scenes work exceptionally well because they create separation, depth, and drama. Bright highlights against deep shadows can sculpt a face, emphasise textures, and add a three-dimensional quality to your images.

Look for directional light—window light, harsh sunlight, or even artificial sources. Observe how light falls on your subject's face and how shadows form. These elements can be used creatively to add intensity and mood.

Flat lighting often results in flat images, but strong contrast brings life and structure to black and white portraits.

Minimise Distractions: Let the Subject Speak

In colour photography, backgrounds can sometimes complement the subject. In black and white, they can easily become distractions if not controlled.



Simplify your frame. Remove unnecessary elements. Use shallow depth of field or thoughtful composition to isolate your subject.

The goal is to ensure that nothing competes with the subject's presence. When distractions are minimised, the viewer's attention is naturally drawn to the most important element—the person.

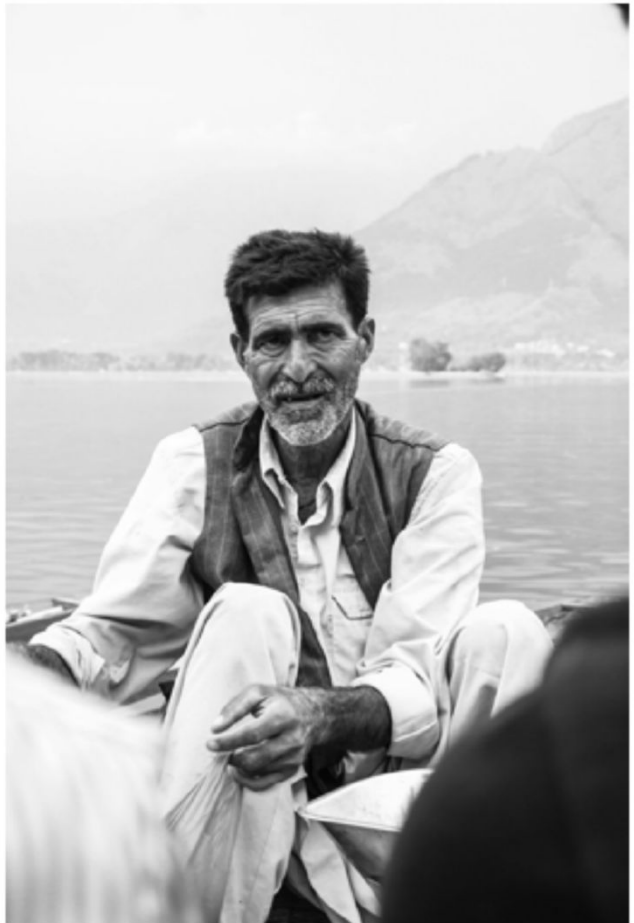
This simplicity is what gives black and white portraits their clarity and impact.

Shoot in Black & White (But Think in RAW)

One of the most overlooked aspects of black and white photography is visualisation.

If your camera allows it, try shooting in black and white mode. This helps you see in monochrome while composing your shot, allowing you to better understand contrast, light, and tonal balance in real time.







However, always shoot in RAW format. This ensures that all the original data is preserved, giving you flexibility during post-processing. You can refine tones, adjust contrast, and fine-tune the image without losing quality.

The key is to combine both approaches: visualise in black and white while retaining the flexibility of RAW.

Focus on Texture and Detail

Without colour, texture becomes a powerful storytelling tool. Skin, fabric, hair, and even environmental elements gain prominence in black and white.

Pay attention to details that might otherwise go unnoticed. The roughness of a worker's hands, the intricacy of traditional attire, or the subtle play of light on a face can add depth and richness to your image.

Texture adds realism. It grounds the image and makes the viewer feel more connected to the subject.

Finally

Mastering black and white travel portraits is not about abandoning colour, it is about understanding when colour is unnecessary. It is about recognising that most powerful stories are sometimes told through simplicity.

When done right, it creates images that are not just visually striking, but emotionally enduring. Because in the absence of colour, what remains is truth.

TEXT: BHAVYA DESAI

USING YOUR PHONE OPTICAL ZOOM FOR TRAVEL PICS

Travel photography has evolved dramatically over the years. What once required heavy DSLRs and multiple lenses can now be achieved with a device that fits in your pocket—albeit with limitations. Modern smartphones are no longer just convenient—they are incredibly capable, especially when it comes to zoom capabilities.



Yet, despite having access to powerful multi-lens systems, many photographers don't fully understand how to use optical zoom effectively. The result? Images that look soft, over-processed or artificially zoomed.

If used correctly, your phone's optical zoom can elevate your travel photography—allowing you to capture distant subjects, isolate details, and compose more thoughtfully without compromising image quality.

The key lies in understanding the difference between optical and digital zoom—and learning how to use it intentionally.

Why Use Optical Zoom?

Optical zoom uses a dedicated lens to magnify your subject without losing image quality. Unlike digital zoom—which simply crops into the image and often reduces sharpness—optical zoom retains detail, clarity and dynamic range.

In travel photography, this becomes especially important. You're often shooting in unpredictable environments like crowded streets, distant landscapes, architectural marvels, or fleeting moments. Optical zoom allows you to get closer *without physically intruding* or compromising the integrity of your shot.

It also opens up creative possibilities. You can compress perspectives, isolate subjects, highlight textures and capture details that would otherwise go unnoticed.



Simply put, optical zoom doesn't just bring your subject closer—it helps you see differently.

Avoid Using 2x (When It's Not True Optical)

One of the most common misconceptions is assuming that every zoom level on your phone is optical. On many smartphones, the 2x zoom is not a dedicated optical lens—it often crops into the main sensor. While newer devices are improving in this area, it's important to know whether your phone truly has a 2x optical lens or if it's simply using digital zoom.

Why does this matter? Because digital zoom reduces image quality. You lose sharpness, detail, and dynamic range—especially in challenging lighting conditions.





detail—especially important when you’re capturing distant

subjects or intricate textures. It also gives you more flexibility in cropping later without losing quality.

Yes, the file sizes will be larger. But when it comes to travel photography—where moments are often once-in-a-lifetime—it’s a trade-off worth making.

Know Your Phone’s Optical Limits

Just because your phone advertises “100x zoom” doesn’t mean it’s all optical. In fact, most of it is digital or hybrid zoom.

Understanding your device is crucial.

Take the time to learn:

- What focal lengths are truly optical
- When your phone switches between lenses
- How image quality changes at different zoom levels

For example, a phone may have excellent clarity at 3x and 5x, but anything beyond that may degrade rapidly.

Once you know these limits, you can make smarter decisions in the field—choosing quality over gimmicks.

Use Grid Lines for Better Framing

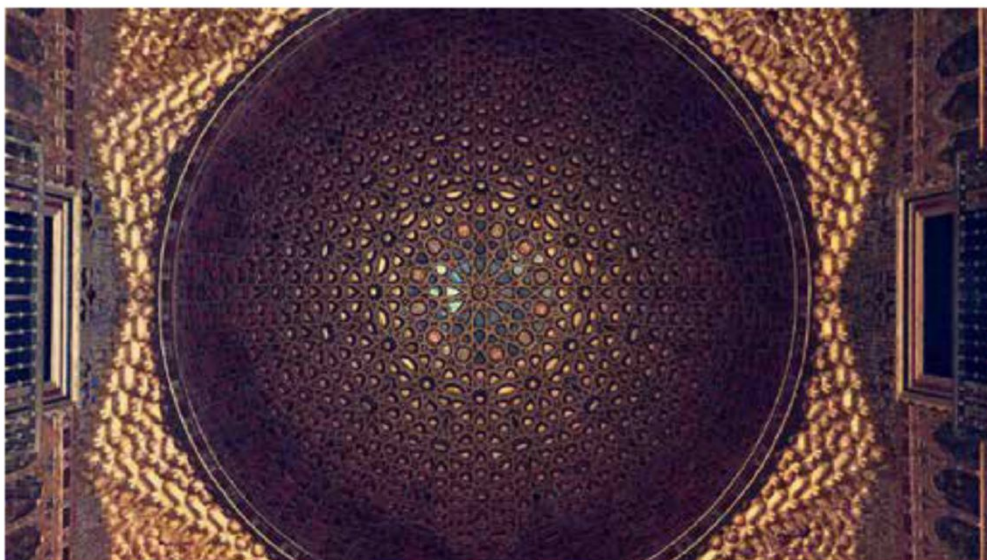
Zoomed-in compositions can be tricky. When you’re using a telephoto lens, your field of view is narrower, and even small movements can drastically change your framing.

Instead, identify your phone’s actual optical zoom levels (for example, 3x or 5x telephoto) and prioritise using those. This ensures your images retain clarity and depth.

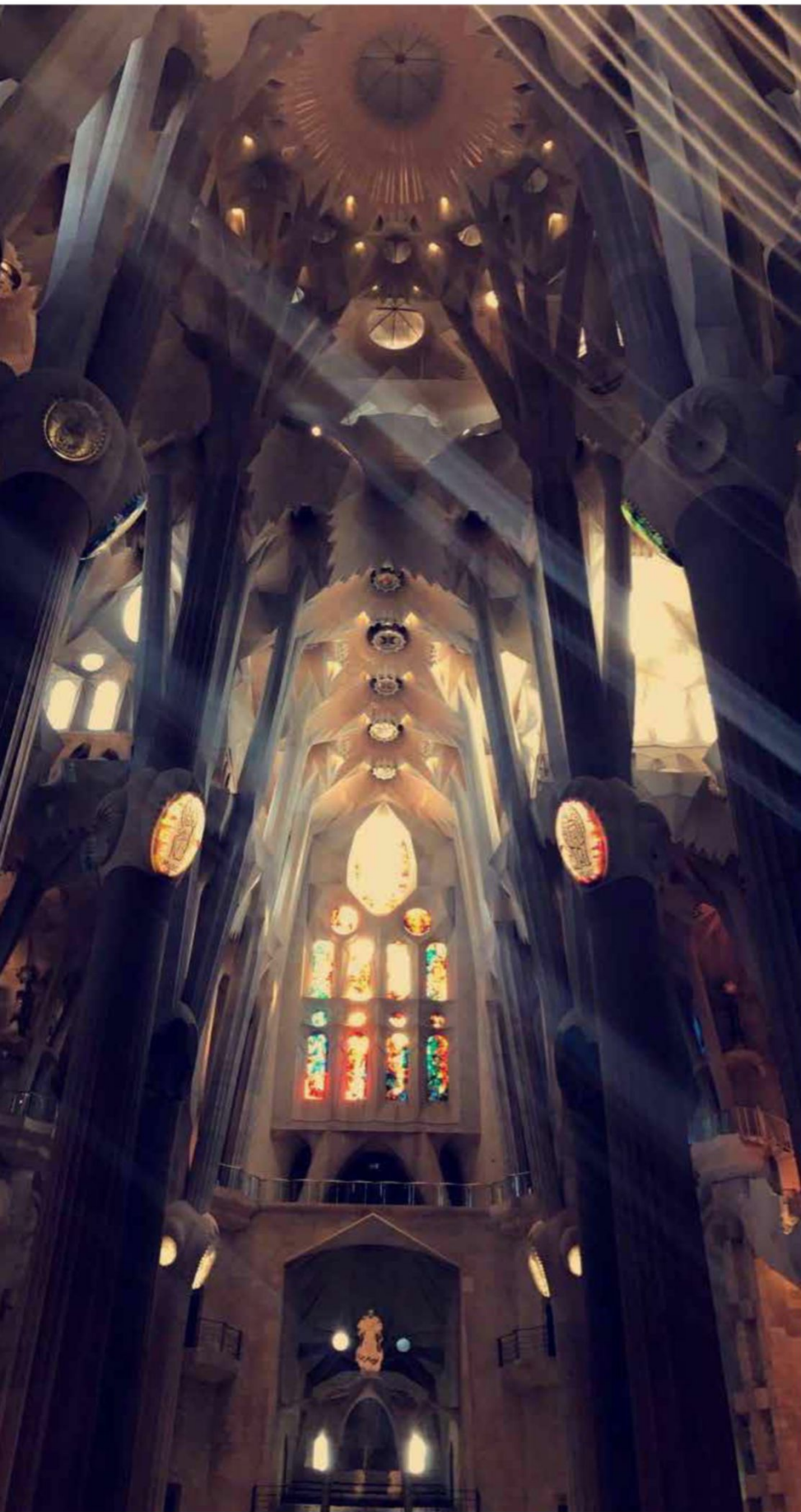
Shoot at Full Resolution for Maximum Detail

Most smartphones, by default, do not shoot at their maximum resolution. They often use pixel-binning techniques to produce smaller, more manageable files. While this works well in many situations, switching to full-resolution mode can make a noticeable difference when using zoom.

Higher resolution means more







This is where grid lines become invaluable. By enabling grid lines in your camera settings, you can:

- Maintain balance using the rule of thirds
- Align architectural elements
- Keep horizons straight
- Compose more intentionally, even at tighter focal lengths

At higher zoom levels, precision matters more. Grid lines give you that control.

Use Your Feet, Not Just Your Fingers

Zoom should not replace movement—it should complement it.

One of the biggest mistakes photographers make is relying entirely on zoom instead of adjusting their position. While optical zoom helps you get closer, physically moving still gives you better control over perspective and composition.

If you're too far, move closer to create a stronger connection with your subject. If you're too close, step back to allow breathing space in your frame.

Think of zoom as a tool for refinement—not a substitute for engagement.

The best images often come from a combination of both, thoughtful positioning and intentional zooming.

Use Portrait Mode with Optical Zoom

Portrait mode isn't just for people—it can be a powerful tool in travel photography when combined with optical zoom. Using a telephoto lens with portrait mode allows you to:

- Isolate subjects against blurred backgrounds
- Create depth and separation
- Emphasise textures and details

This works beautifully for street portraits, food photography, and even small elements like souvenirs or crafts. However, be mindful of edge detection and artificial blur. Use portrait mode selectively, and always check how your phone is processing the image.

Capture Architectural Details

One of the biggest advantages of optical zoom is the ability to capture details that are often overlooked. When travelling, it's easy to focus on wide shots of landmarks. But the real character of a place often lies in its details—patterns, textures, carvings, windows and design elements.

Use your zoom to isolate these features. Frame tightly. Look for symmetry, repetition,



and contrast. Architectural details not only add variety to your portfolio, but also help tell a richer story of the place you're exploring.

Stabilise Your Shot

As you zoom in, even the smallest movement can result in blur, especially in lowlight and at higher zoom levels.

To counter this:

- Hold your phone with both hands
- Use physical support like walls or railings, if needed
- Enable stabilisation features, if available
- Consider using a small tripod if possible

Sharpness becomes more critical when shooting zoomed-in images. Stability ensures your shots retain the detail that optical zoom is designed to preserve.

Pay Attention to Light

Zoom lenses on smartphones often have smaller apertures compared to the main camera. This means they may struggle in low-light conditions.

Whenever possible, use optical zoom in good lighting. Daylight, golden hour, or well-lit environments will give you the best results. If you must shoot in low light, be extra cautious about stability and noise. Sometimes, it may be better to switch back to the main lens and physically move closer instead.

Understanding how light interacts with your zoom lens can significantly improve your results.

Finally

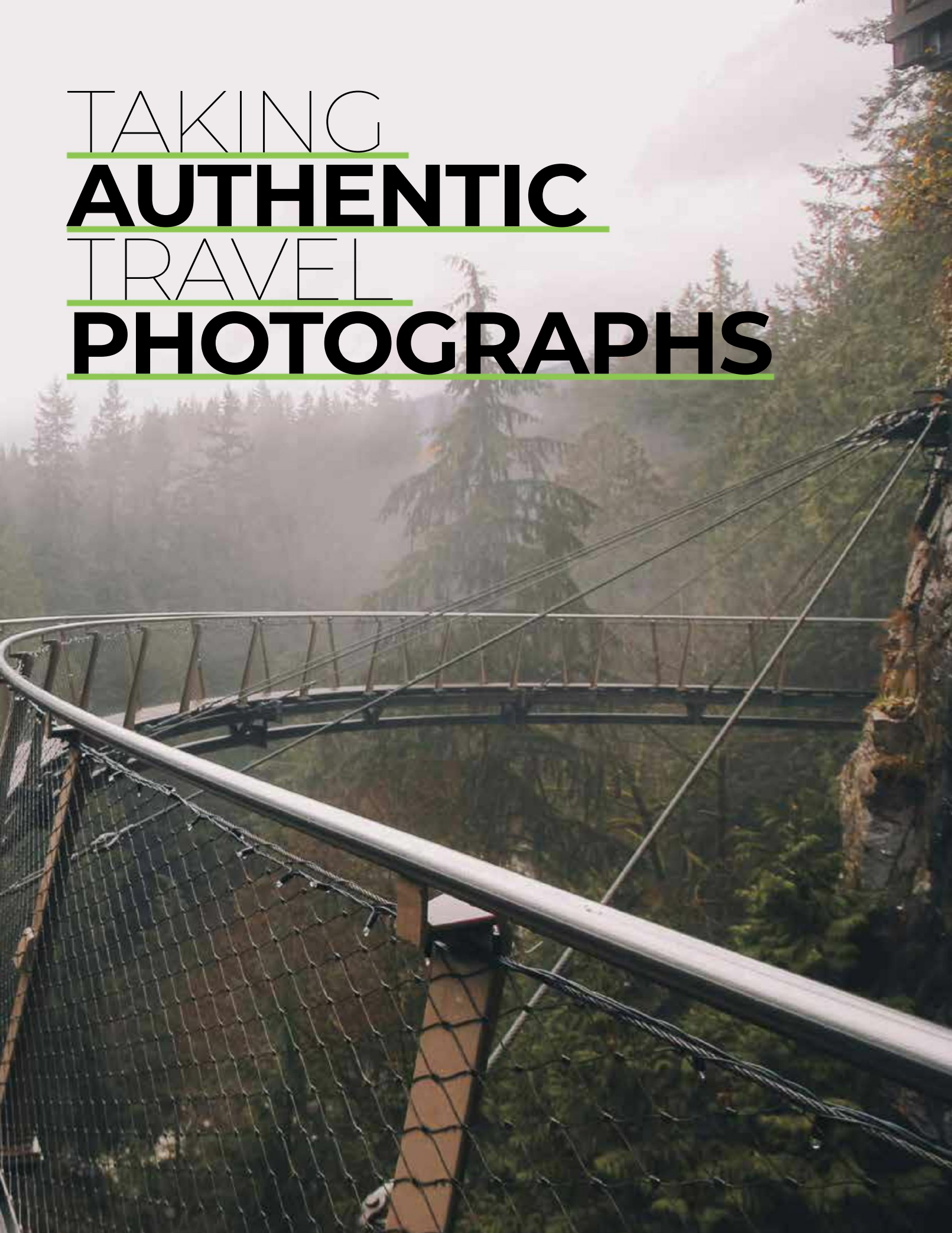
Using your phone's optical zoom effectively is not about pushing it to its limits—it's always about understanding where it performs best and using it with intention. It allows you to see beyond the obvious.

But like any tool, its true power lies in how you use it. So, the next time you travel, don't just zoom in—think about why you're zooming in. Combine it with movement, composition, and observation and I bet you'll find some great pics like I have.

TEXT AND IMAGES: BHAVYA DESAI



TAKING **AUTHENTIC** TRAVEL **PHOTOGRAPHS**



In a world where staging, artificial intelligence, and hyper-edited visuals increasingly dominate photography, the idea of “authenticity” feels almost rebellious. Perfect skies are manufactured, smiles are rehearsed, and even spontaneity is often carefully orchestrated.

But travel photography—at its very core—is not about perfection. It is about truth.

This summer, as you pack your bags and head out on your next journey, consider shifting your focus. Instead of chasing postcard-perfect frames, aim to capture something far more valuable: authenticity. Because the most powerful travel images are not always the most polished—they are the most honest.

And here’s the interesting part: when you start shooting authentically, your images don’t just become more “real”—they become more yours. They carry your perspective, your experience, and your connection to the moment.

What is Authentic Photography?

Before we explore how to capture authenticity, it’s important to understand what it actually means.

Authenticity is subjective. For some photographers, it means zero intervention—no posing, no editing, no interference. For others, it’s about emotional truth, even if some level of composition or processing is involved.

Personally, authentic photography lies at the intersection

of *untouched* and *real*. It is about capturing moments as they unfold—without forcing them. It’s about observing rather than directing. It’s about preserving the integrity of a scene, the emotion of a subject, and the atmosphere of a place.

Authentic photography doesn’t mean you avoid skill or intent—it means you use them without distorting reality. The goal is not to create a scene, but to *witness* one.

Why Authenticity Matters More in Travel

Travel photography is uniquely positioned to benefit from authenticity. When you travel, you’re stepping into unfamiliar environments, cultures, and rhythms. Every street, every face, every interaction holds a story waiting to be told.

But when you impose staging or over-editing, you risk diluting that story. You replace discovery with control.

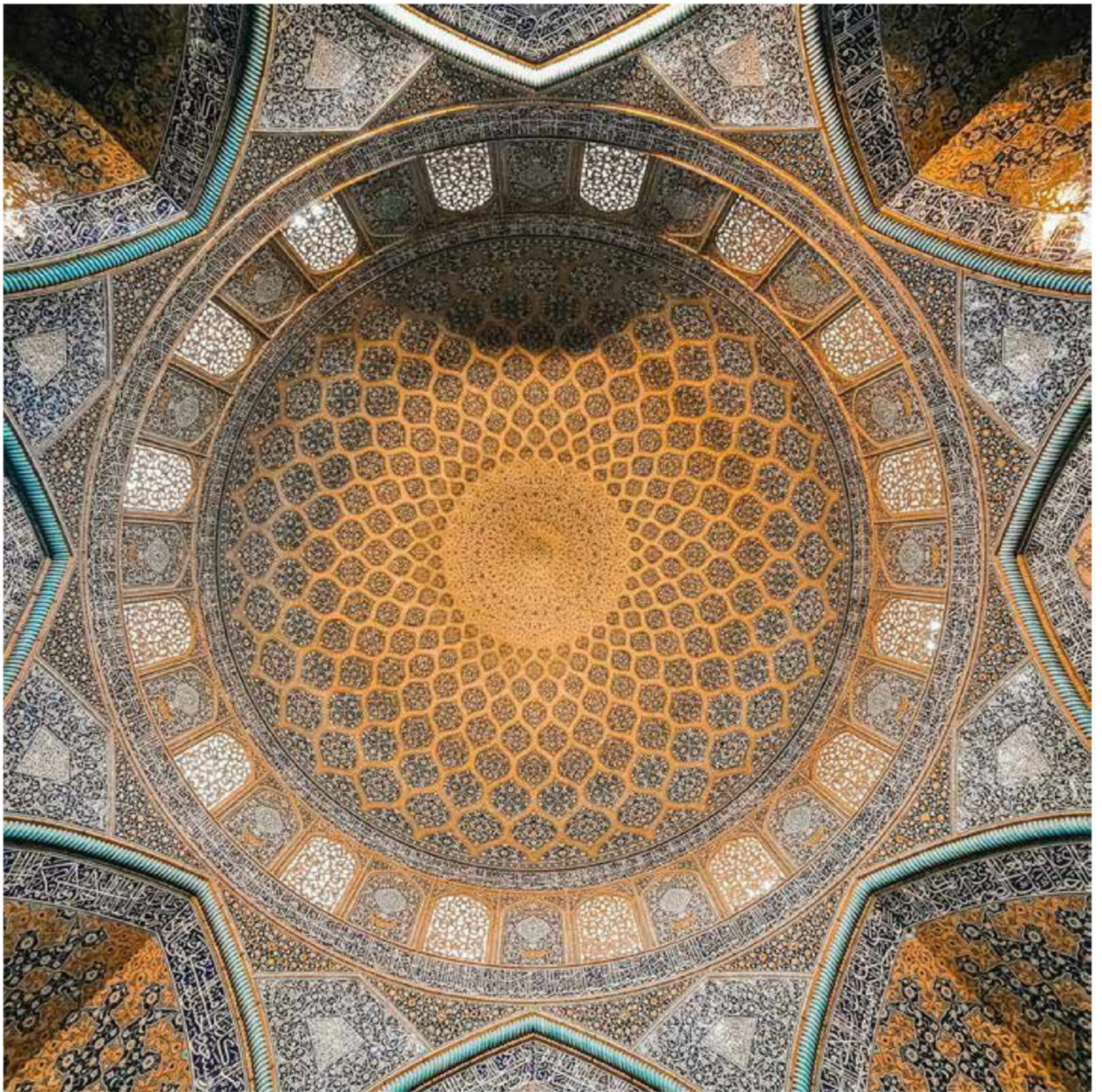
Authentic travel photography, on the other hand, allows viewers to experience a place as it *felt*, not just how it looked. It builds trust. It creates emotional resonance. And most importantly, it preserves the essence of a moment that will never happen again in the same way.

1. Patience: Let Moments Come to You

Authenticity cannot be rushed. It unfolds in its own time.

The best travel photographs often come from waiting—observing a street corner, watching how light changes, noticing how people interact with their environment. Instead of constantly moving, try staying still. Let the scene evolve. When you stop chasing moments, they begin to find you.





Patience transforms photography from an act of capturing into an act of understanding.

2. Keep It Real: Avoid Staging the Story

It's tempting to "improve" a scene—ask someone to repeat an action, adjust their position, or recreate a moment.

But every time you do that, you move one step away from authenticity. Real moments are imperfect. They are unpredictable. And that's exactly what makes them compelling. A fleeting glance, a spontaneous laugh, a quiet pause—these cannot be staged convincingly.

Trust the moment as it is. Even if it feels less dramatic, it will almost always feel more genuine.

3. Respect the Culture and the Subject

Authenticity is not just about how you shoot—it's about how you engage.

When photographing people, especially in unfamiliar cultures, respect is everything. Take the time to observe, interact, and understand. Sometimes, the best photograph comes after a conversation, not before it.

Being mindful of cultural sensitivities not only makes you a better photographer, but also opens doors to deeper, more



meaningful perspectives. When your subject feels comfortable and respected, their authenticity naturally comes through in the image.

4. Go Beyond the Obvious: Explore the Local

Tourist landmarks are often over-photographed—and over-interpreted. If you want authentic images, step away from the checklist. Wander into local markets, residential streets, small cafés, or lesser-known neighbourhoods.

This is where real life unfolds.

Of course, exploration should always be balanced with awareness and safety. But when done thoughtfully, going local gives you access to stories that are untouched by mass tourism—and therefore far more authentic.

5. Rethink Post-Processing

In today's digital ecosystem, avoiding post-processing entirely may not always be practical. However, the key lies in restraint.

Instead of transforming your image, focus on enhancing what's already there. Preserve natural colours, avoid excessive sharpening or HDR effects, and resist the urge to “perfect” every detail.

Authenticity thrives in imperfection. Slight shadows, uneven lighting, or grain can often add character rather than detract from it. Think of editing as a tool to support reality—not replace it.





6. Be Present: Experience Before You Shoot

One of the biggest ironies of photography is that in trying to capture a moment, we sometimes miss experiencing it.

Authentic images come from genuine engagement. When you're fully present—absorbing the sights, sounds, and emotions of a place—your photography naturally reflects that connection.

So sometimes, put the camera down. Experience first. Shoot later.

You'll find that your images carry more depth when they come from lived moments rather than observed ones.

7. Don't Chase Validation

In the age of social media, it's easy to measure success through likes, shares, and engagement.

But authenticity and virality don't always go hand in hand. If you start shooting for approval, you'll

subconsciously gravitate toward trends, clichés, and familiar compositions. Over time, your work may become polished—but less personal.

Instead, focus on creating images that mean something to you. Ironically, these are often the ones that resonate most deeply with others.

8. Growth Beyond the Frame

Ultimately, authentic travel photography is not just about better pictures—it's about becoming a better observer, storyteller, and human being.

It teaches you patience, empathy, curiosity, and humility. It encourages you to look beyond surfaces and connect with people and places on a deeper level. And that growth reflects in your work.

Because at the end of the day, the most authentic photograph is not defined by its technical perfection—but by the honesty of the person behind the camera.

Finally

Authenticity for me isn't a technique—it's a mindset. It's about choosing truth over perfection, presence over performance and connection over control. I know it is easier said than done. But you won't know unless you try.

So, the next time you travel, don't just look for beautiful places. Look for real moments. Because those are the ones that stay—with you and with everyone who sees your work.

TEXT: BHAVYA DESAI

HAVE YOU TRIED SLOW TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHY?

Undoubtedly, we are living in a social media world where news, images, content breaks at a lightning pace. And surely photography has also quietly become that. A race to capture more, post faster, and move on. Destinations are reduced to checklists, moments to thumbnails and experiences to algorithms and metrics.







But much like the rise of slow journalism—where stories are told with depth, patience and context—there is a growing need for a similar approach in photography. One that values observation over speed, connection over coverage and meaning over volume.

This is where slo'w travel photography comes in.

It's not about how many places you shoot—it's about how deeply you experience the ones you do. And more often than not, it transforms not just your images, but your entire relationship with travel.

What is Slow Travel Photography?

Slow travel photography is a mindset. It is the conscious decision to spend more time in fewer places, to observe rather than rush, and to create images that reflect understanding rather than mere presence.

Instead of chasing landmarks, you follow light. Instead of collecting frames, you build stories.

It is about revisiting the same street, noticing how it changes through the day, recognising familiar faces, and gradually becoming part of the rhythm of a place.

And honestly, I experienced this personally in one of my

recent family vacations to Seoul, I found myself unintentionally embracing this approach. Instead of trying to cover the city in a few packed days, I spent nearly a week exploring it at a slower pace.

And it was the best decision I took. I've been there many times—but I truly enjoyed it for the first time.

I revisited the same neighbourhoods, walked the same streets at different times, and spent hours simply observing. A café in the morning felt entirely different by evening. A bustling market transformed as the light faded. Even the people I saw began to feel familiar.

I wasn't just documenting Seoul; I was experiencing it.

And that, ultimately, is the essence of slow travel photography.

Understanding Before Shooting

The first—and perhaps most important—rule is simple: slow down.

When you arrive at a location, resist the urge to immediately start shooting. Take time to observe. Watch how people move, how light behaves, how interactions unfold.

The more time you spend, the more patterns you begin to notice. And those patterns often lead to stronger, more intentional photographs. Great images are rarely accidental. They are usually the result of patience and understanding.

Soak in the Culture and Environment

Photography is not just visual—it is experiential.

To truly capture a place, you need to immerse yourself in it. Engage with locals, try the food, understand the customs, listen to the language, and absorb the atmosphere.

When you connect with a place beyond the surface, your photography naturally reflects that depth. Your images begin to carry context, not just composition.

Slow travel allows you to move from being an outsider looking in, to a participant quietly observing from within.

Revisit the Same Location

One of the most underrated techniques in travel photography is repetition. Instead of constantly moving to new spots, return to the same location multiple times. Visit it in the morning, afternoon, and night. Observe how light, mood, and activity change.

A street that feels calm at sunrise may become chaotic by noon and poetic by dusk. Each version tells a different story. By revisiting locations, you don't just capture variety—you capture depth.

Shoot Across Different Light Conditions

Light is one of the most powerful storytelling tools in photography.

Slow travel gives you the luxury of waiting for the *right* light rather than settling for whatever is available. Golden hour, harsh midday sun, soft overcast light, artificial night lighting—each brings its own character.

Experiment with how the same subject looks under different lighting conditions. You'll begin to understand how light shapes emotion, texture, and narrative. This is something fast-paced travel rarely allows.

Embrace Fewer Frames, Better Frames

In fast travel, the tendency is to shoot excessively—hoping that quantity will compensate for lack of time.

Slow travel flips this approach. You shoot less, but think more. Each frame becomes deliberate. Each composition is considered.

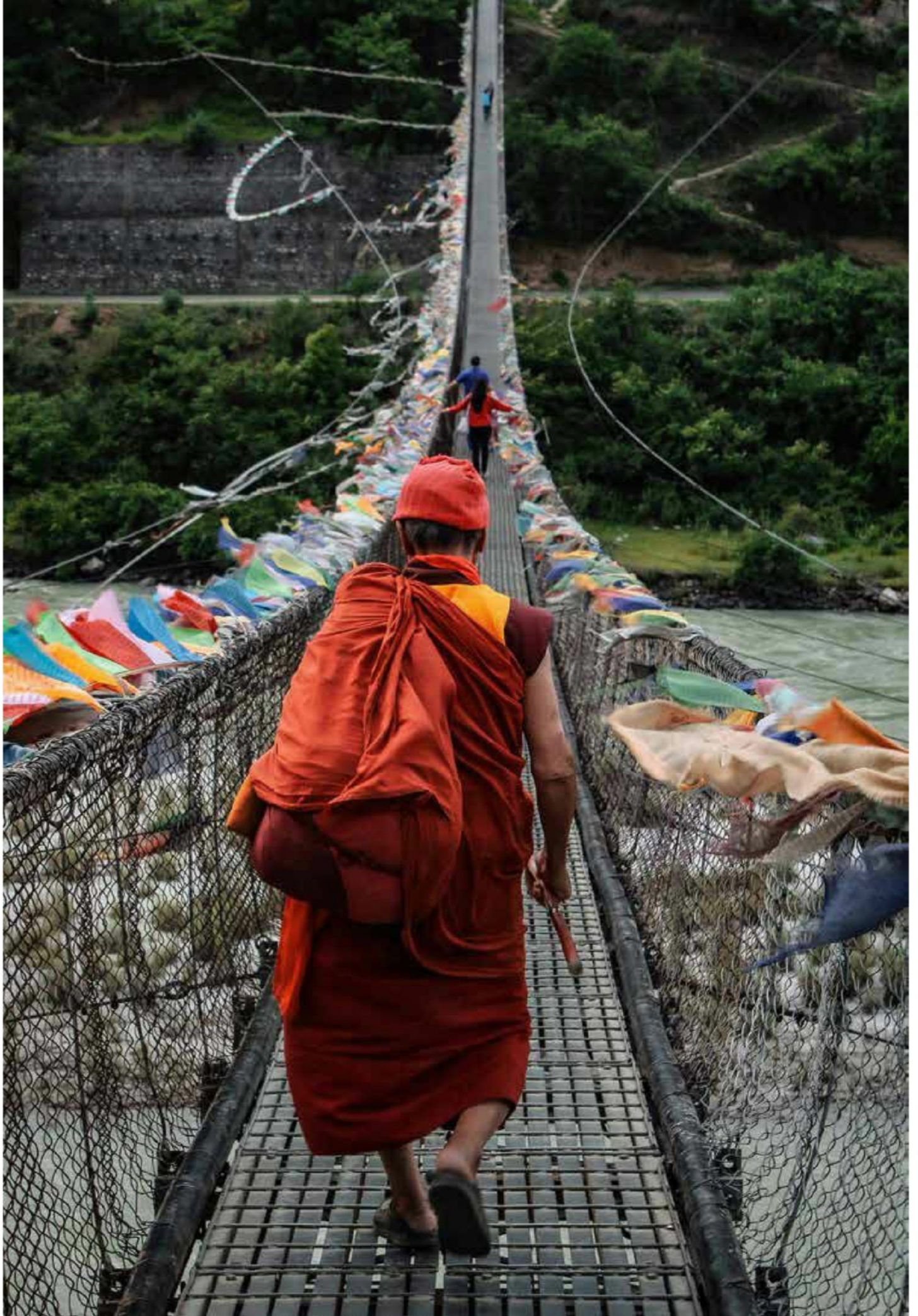
This not only improves the quality of your work, but also changes how you engage with photography. You become more mindful, more intentional, and more connected to what you are capturing.

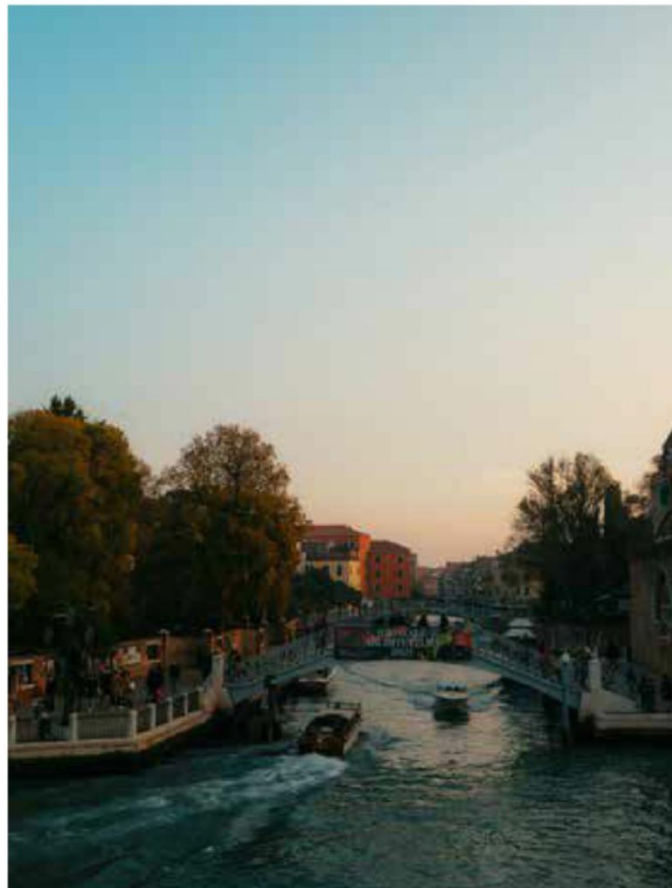
Build Familiarity with Your Subjects

When you spend more time in one place, you begin to see the same people repeatedly—vendors, street performers, café owners, daily commuters.

This familiarity creates opportunities. Over time, people







become more comfortable with your presence. Interactions become more natural.

And that's when authentic moments emerge.

Instead of quick, transactional portraits, you begin to capture genuine expressions and stories.

Let Go of the Checklist Mentality

One of the biggest barriers to slow travel photography is the pressure to “cover everything”.

But trying to see everything often results in experiencing nothing deeply. Let go of the idea that you need to visit every landmark or capture every iconic shot. Instead, focus on what resonates with you.

A single street explored deeply can offer more meaningful images than ten landmarks rushed through.

Be Present: Experience First, Photograph Second

Slow travel photography is as much about living the moment as it is

about capturing it. When you are fully present—observing, listening, and feeling—you become more attuned to meaningful moments. And those are the moments worth photographing.

Sometimes, the best decision is to not take a picture at all. To simply experience. Because that experience will shape how you see—and what you choose to capture—later.

Tell Stories, Not Just Scenes

Ultimately, slow travel photography is about storytelling.

Instead of isolated images, aim to create a series that reflects the essence of a place. Capture details, people, transitions, and moments that together form a narrative.

Think like a storyteller, not just a photographer. When your images are connected by a deeper understanding of the place, they become more than just visuals—they become experiences.

Finally

Slow travel photography is not about doing less—it's about doing things differently.

It asks you to trade speed for depth, quantity for quality and immediacy for meaning.

In return, it offers something far more valuable: images that are not just seen, but felt.

So, the next time you travel, consider slowing down. Stay a little longer. Observe a little deeper.

Because sometimes, the best photographs come not from where you go—but from how long you choose to stay.

TEXT: BHAVYA DESAI

The Xiaomi 17 Review: Compact Flagship King?

Xiaomi's flagship devices have made significant waves over the past few years, steadily pushing the boundaries of mobile technology—and their price brackets. With the launch of the new series, that price point has been bumped further up. After a month of rigorous testing, we examine whether the Xiaomi 17's triple-camera setup can manage to impress and justify its jump to ₹89,990.



PRICE
₹89,990

Camera & Specs

- Triple 50MP setup in the rear
- 50MP camera upfront
- Video Capability of 8K at 30fps, 4K at 60fps
- 6330 mAh Si-C battery with 100W wired & 50W wireless charging capability
- Powered by Snapdragon 8 Elite Gen 5 processor & Xiaomi HyperOS 3

Look, Body & Feel

The Xiaomi 17 feels solid in the hand. It boasts a familiar, flat design that pairs nicely with its 6.3-inch 120Hz LTPO AMOLED display. The metal construction is robust yet surprisingly lightweight at just 191 grams. Aesthetically, the clean and premium design is anchored by a prominent camera cutout featuring the Leica branding right in the middle.

Daylight Performance: Main Camera

The main camera features a 50MP Light Fusion 950 sensor, based on the Leica Summilux System. This co-engineered optical stack prioritizes light intake and high dynamic range.

Shooting at a 12.5 MP output, the images are vibrant, detailed, and well-saturated, displaying good shadow and highlight performance. However, there is aggressive processing visible when zooming in. Despite this, the

images remain very pleasing to the eye.

Daylight Performance: Wide

The wide lens utilizes a 50MP Omnivision OV50M sensor—a welcome return for a company that was highly popular for its telephoto sensors a few years ago. Shooting at 17mm, it also delivers a 12.5 MP output.

The results here are decent. They are slightly desaturated compared to the main camera but feel much



xiaomi 17

2026.03.29 12:21



23mm f/1.67 1/1693s ISO64

19°7'35"N 72°49'37"E

Daylight Main

more natural and true to what you see with the naked eye. The sharpness, detailing, and dynamic range are well-handled, and surprisingly, it avoids the heavy processing seen on the main sensor.

Daylight Performance: Telephoto

For the telephoto, the 17 uses a Samsung JN5 sensor. With an optical 2.6x zoom, it allows for a maximum digital zoom of 60x. At 2.6x, the 12.5 MP output is incredibly detailed and sharp, though admittedly contrast-heavy and slightly processed.

As you move up the zoom range, this contrast and processing become highly apparent. At 5x, the phone occasionally produces noticeably



xiaomi 17

2026.03.22 18:14



17mm f/2.4 1/214s ISO50

19°1'31"N 73°0'36"E

Daylight Wide



Front

processed pictures. Pushing further into the zoom range results in a visible loss of detail, with colour fringing creeping in at 60x. There is also visible colour shifting, though not quite as pronounced as the shift between the wide and main cameras.

Lowlight Performance

In controlled lowlight environments, the images are pleasing. They remain sharp and detailed, although occasionally slightly underexposed and contrast-heavy. Colour reproduction holds up well, with only occasional lens flaring on the wide angle. At

2.6x, images stay sharp but naturally begin to deteriorate as you push the magnification. Overall, it delivers a solid lowlight performance.

Front Camera

The front-facing camera mirrors the wide-angle hardware, utilising the 50MP Omnivision OVM50M for a 12.5 MP output. Daylight selfies are excellent—vibrant, sharp, saturated, and highly detailed. Interestingly, there is very little aggressive skin smoothening applied in both daylight and lowlight conditions. Edge detection is decent, and the depth performance is satisfactory.

Portraits

Xiaomi has introduced a new Master Portrait Mode, accessible directly in the shooting app, engineered to deliver natural skin tones. It largely delivers on that promise.

Historically, Xiaomi is known for its strong portrait capabilities, but the 17 yields somewhat mixed results. When it hits the mark, the images are fantastic: well-lit, nicely saturated, and rich in detail. However, it occasionally throws out overly high-contrast images—an issue that will hopefully be addressed in future software updates.

That being said, the Xiaomi 17 produces some of the best bokeh we've seen in recent times. It is well-rounded, aesthetically pleasing, and highly reminiscent of a professional camera.

Video

The device shoots 8K up to 30 fps and 4K up to 60 fps, yielding stable, high-quality footage with reliable tracking. Utilising steady mode drops the resolution to 2.8K. The daylight output is impressively natural; however, shooting in lowlight reveals visible colour shifting when switching to higher zoom cameras, accompanied by a slight loss in detail.

Things We Liked:

- **OS and UI:** Xiaomi HyperOS 3 is incredibly smooth. The overall usability is fluid right from the initial boot.
- **Camera UI:** Refreshed from last year, the camera interface



Lowlight Main



xiaomi 17
2026.05.22 18:41



17mm f/2.4 1/108s ISO50
19°0'57"N 73°0'26"E

Lowlight Wide



xiaomi 17
2026.05.29 22:07



23mm f/1.67 1/25s ISO800
19°8'16"N 72°49'25"E

Portrait

is minimalistic and highly customisable, elevating the overall shooting experience.

- **Battery Life:** While a 6330 mAh silicone-carbon battery might seem slightly smaller on paper compared to some rivals, it is more than capable of powering through a full day of heavy tasks. Also a small plus is we didn't notice any heating during any of our testing scenarios.

Things We Didn't Like:

- **Colour Shifting:** There is an absurd amount of colour shifting across the images at all zoom ranges.
- **Photo App UI:** While the Camera app UI earns top marks, the native Photos app UI is frustrating enough that we have to deduct those points right back.

The Verdict

The Xiaomi 17 is undeniably a formidable smartphone. It offers a great display, reliable battery, smooth OS, and a premium feel. It also brings some genuinely good camera hardware to the table, highlighted by excellent portraits, a natural-looking wide lens, and strong front-camera performance.

But is it a formidable camera at the ₹90,000 price point? We are on the fence. The persistent colour shifting, occasional high-contrast portrait misfires, and aggressive processing hold it back from true greatness. Many of these issues are easily fixable via software updates, and once addressed, this will be an incredibly compelling package. Until then, the camera performance remains a mixed bag.

TEXT AND IMAGES: BHAVYA DESAI

PHOTO SCAPPE

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Name: Jazper Jack
Camera & Lens: Canon & EF 75-300
Shutter speed: 1/640
Aperture: f/5.0
ISO: 1600
Instagram ID: @Jazperjack



Name: Arpan Sharma
Camera & Lens: Canon EOS 800D
+ Canon EF-S 18-55mm f/4-5.6 IS
STM
Focal length: 18 mm
Shutter Speed: 1/1000 sec
Aperture: f/8.0
ISO: 100
Instagram ID: @arpansharma_01



Name: Neeraj Das
Camera & Lens: iPhone 17 Pro
Focal length: 200mm
Shutter Speed: 1/2800
Aperture: f/2.8
ISO: 80
Instagram ID: @studionrz



Name: Souvik Malik
Camera & Lens: Apple iPhone 13
Focal length: 26mm
Shutter Speed: 1/4000s
Aperture: f/1.6
ISO: 50
Instagram ID: @outdoorwithsm



Name: Jayesh Bhatt
Camera & Lens: Nikon Z8 & 100-400 Z Lens
Focal length: 120mm
Shutter Speed: 1/640S
Aperture: f/4.5
ISO: 900
Instagram ID: jayeshbhatt.photography



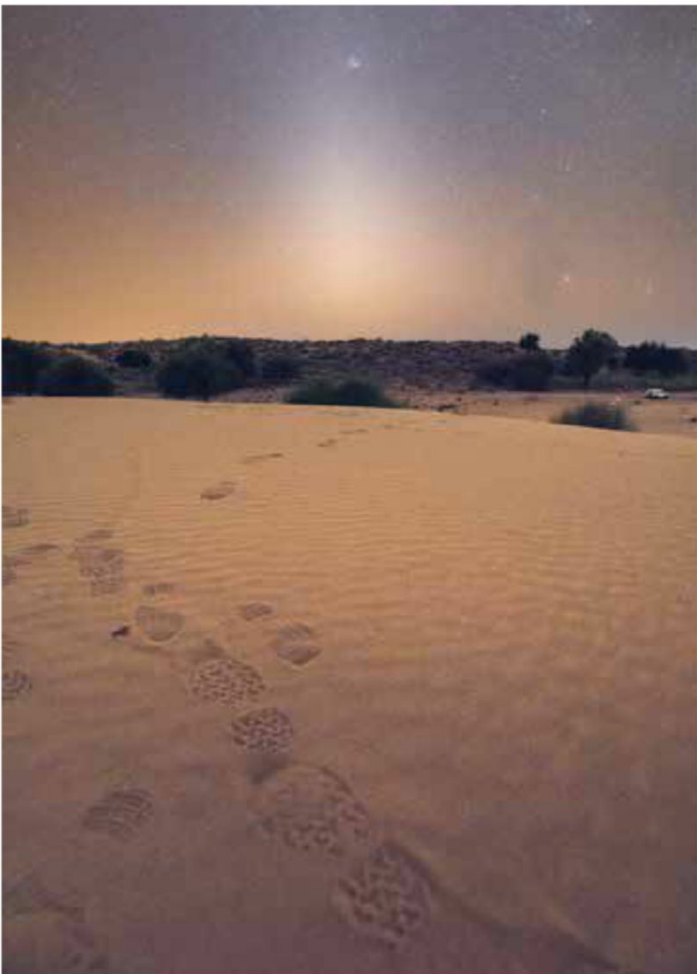
Name: Pemba Tshering Tamang
Camera & Lens: Canon 1300D & 50 mm f/1.4
Focal length: 50 mm
Shutter Speed: 30 secs
Aperture: f/22
ISO: 100
Instagram ID: moktanography



Name: Shubhadeep Das
Camera & Lens: Nikon Z7ii with Z 14-30mm f/4
Focal Length: 30mm
Shutter Speed: 0.5s
Aperture: f/16
ISO: 40



Name: Soumyojit Sinha
Camera & Lens: SONY ILCE-6100 & 30mm F1.4 DC DN Contemporary lens
Focal length: 30 mm
Shutter Speed: 1/3200 sec
Aperture: f/3.5
ISO: 100
Instagram ID: theblack_hood



Name: Soumyadeep Mukherjee
Camera & Lens: Nikon Z6ii, Tamron 15-30mm f/2.8
Focal length: 15mm
Shutter Speed: 20 seconds, stack of 15 images (for sky), 120 seconds, stack of 5 images (for foreground)
Aperture: f/2.8 (for sky), f/4 (for foreground)
ISO: ISO 5000 (for sky), ISO 3200 (for foreground)
Instagram ID: @soumyadeepmukherjeephotos



Name: Sukalyan Naskar
Camera & Lens: Sony a7iv + Tamron 28-75 f2.8 G2
Focal length: 75mm
Shutter Speed: 1/3200sec
Aperture: f/2.8
ISO: 400
Instagram ID: sukalyan_naskar

PHOTO MONTAGE

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Based in Gurugram, I am a finance professional with a background in law and an MBA. While my corporate role at a multinational company involves financial jargons, I find my creative balance through the lens of a Canon mirrorless camera while travelling places.

This duality—the analytical and the artistic—defines my approach to photography. I often view the world through a lens of discipline, seeking out order, symmetry, and perspective, yet I am constantly drawn to the raw, unpredictable narratives of cultural travel. My work is an attempt to bridge these two worlds: capturing the structured beauty of the environment while honouring the spontaneous human stories within it.

This collection, captured during a recent trip to Egypt, documents the contrast between the ancient geometry of the Pyramids and the vibrant soul of Cairo's streets.

In the shadow of the Giza Pyramids, I focused on the timeless, mathematical perfection of the ancient structures, often framing them against the weathered, candid presence of local camel drivers. The series then transitions into the heart of Cairo, where the energy is electric and the streets are a labyrinth of history.

From hot air balloons over Luxor to candid moments in local bazaars, these images represent a blend of analytical clarity and cultural storytelling. For me, photography is the essential counterweight to a life in finance—a way to capture the stories that numbers alone cannot tell.

Koustav Debnath
Instagram: [@untamed_explorer](https://www.instagram.com/untamed_explorer)



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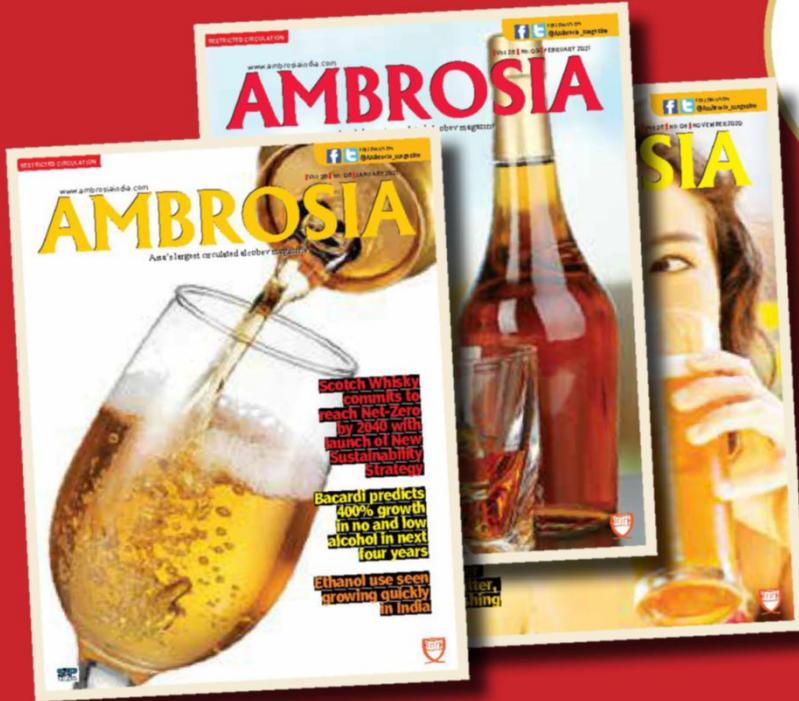
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