

By Paul Jeurissen

Bicycle Touring

PHOTOGRAPHY

A quick guide to taking better pictures



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1/1600 sec. at f/10, ISO 640

North India



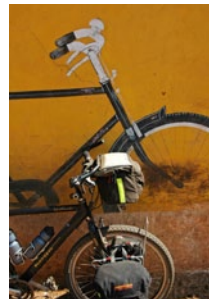
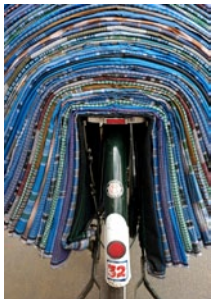
➤ Table of contents

➤ Introduction

How many times have you returned home from a bicycle tour with memories of amazing spectacles and awesome scenery only to share your photos and realize they are flat and boring?

It's a common problem, that's why I've written this guide to help you improve your images.

This book covers basic ideas and tips on how to improve your cycling pictures, plus provides links to a number of other inspirational photographers. Since you'll want to photograph more than just your bike, it also recommends various travel, landscape and portrait photo tip websites.



➤ Camera technique

This book assumes that you know the basic camera techniques of shutter speed, exposure, flash, ISO, etc. If you don't understand them, then check out:

[Digital Photography School](#)



1/500 sec. at f/11, ISO 320

North India

➤ Solo cyclists

Although this book is written from a couple's perspective a number of tips such as 'pictures of your bike' and 'depth of field' can be put into practice by solo cyclists.

For better composed solo riding photos, consider investing in a remote control. The image right was made by setting up the camera tripod, then deciding at which point I wanted to photograph us bicycling. I marked it with a small twig and we set off. Upon reaching the twig – I pressed the remote control button to get the shot.



1/1600 sec. at f/4.5, ISO 200

North India

➤ Diagonal lines

The diagonal line of this desert road helps draw the viewer's eye through the image. It also adds a sense of action and a dynamic look to the photo.

To take a slanted road shot, stop your partner and have them wait while you search for an interesting camera perspective. Once you have found it, just signal to your partner to start pedaling again so that you can take their picture.



1/400 sec. at f/10, ISO 200

American Southwest

➤ Humor

Keep an eye out for humorous situations. They might not seem funny at the time but afterwards these pictures usually turn out to be favorites.



1/125 sec. at f/2.8, ISO 100

America

➤ Get off your bike

When you come to a view with a high 'WoW!' factor, get off your bike and start searching for an even better standpoint. You can often find it in the form of an interesting foreground object, or unusual camera angle. The extra time spent usually translates into a great picture that you will want to hang on your wall when you get home.



1/200 sec. at f/7.1, ISO 200

American Southwest

➤ Meeting the locals

It's always fun to meet new people but how do you snap their picture without them looking stiff and awkward?

First of all, don't start immediately clicking away. Instead take the time to get to know them. Have your partner start a conversation with them. If you don't have a common language, show them where you are on your map. You can take their pictures once they are relaxed and paying more attention to your friend than the camera.



1/500 sec. at f/5.6, ISO 200

South India

➤ Switchbacks

Sure you want to take a picture of the entire downhill, but why not also zoom in on the switchbacks?

Before heading down, point out to your friend the spots where you want to photograph them. That way they will know which sections they should slow down in, or even head back to cycle a second time.



1/320 sec. at f/9, ISO 200

Morocco

► Pictures of your bike

A bike is more than just a metal frame with rubber tires – it's your travelling partner so of course you want to take photos of it. An easy way to do that is to look for buildings with colorful decorations. Place your bicycle near the decoration or painting, preferably against a section of plain colored wall, and snap away.



1/2500 sec. at f/2.8, ISO 200

Thailand

➤ Converging lines

Roads that start wide and end in a point (converging lines) give your image a three dimensional effect.

To emphasize the effect, try shooting with a wide angle lens.



1/2000 sec. at f/4.5, ISO 200

Morocco

➤ Keep it simple

Decide beforehand what the subject of your image is. In this photo, it's the cyclist talking with the kids. Once you know what the subject is, move around until all of the distracting objects such as signs and cars are out of the frame. That's because elements that don't contribute to the picture just make it worse. By keeping it simple, you make it clear to the viewer what the image is about.



1/160 sec. at f/6.3, ISO 200

South India

➤ Scanning the road

When you come across a beautiful stretch of road, first scan it to find the point where you want to photograph the bicyclist. Next, look past the camera to see if your partner is approaching that point. You are now prepared and can push the shutter button at the right moment.



1/640 sec. at f/6.3, ISO 200

Scotland

➤ Depth of field

The subject of this photo is the bike leaning against the road sign. Unfortunately, not all of the plants in the background were green and thriving – brown and dead was more like it. By setting the camera to a small depth of field it blurred the ugly background, thus placing even more attention on the foreground subject.

Shooting with a small depth of field is also helpful when taking portraits of fellow cyclists who are standing in front of busy, distracting backgrounds.



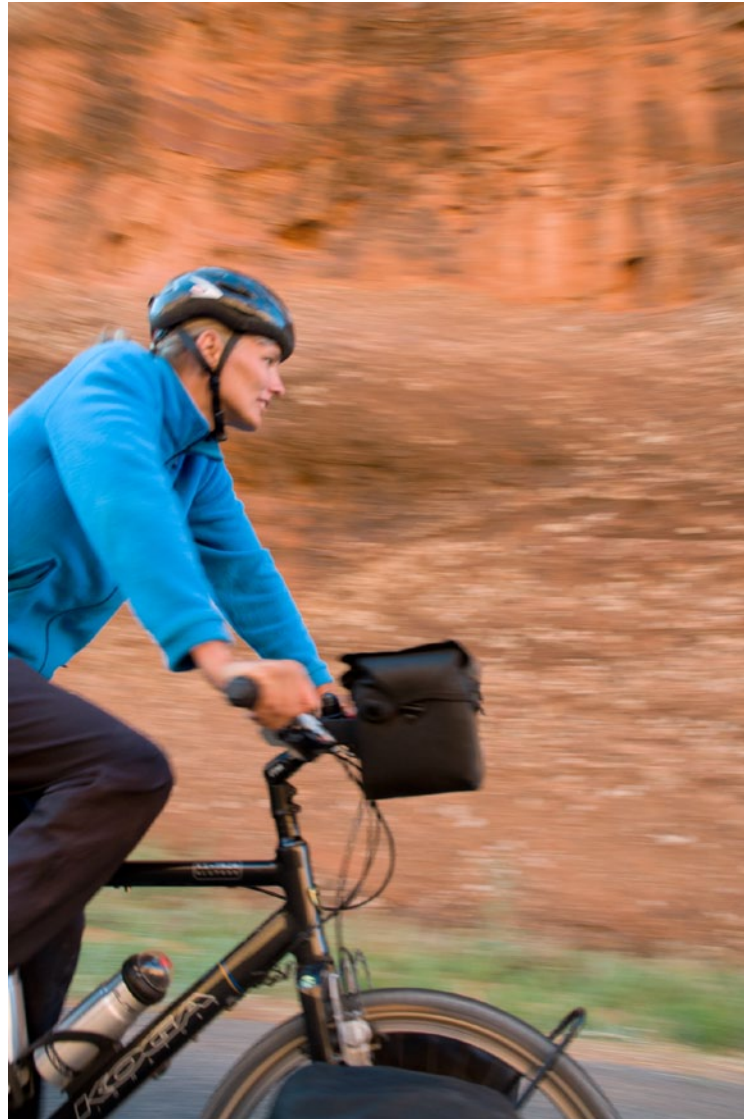
1/800 sec. at f/1.8, ISO 3200

Laos

➤ Panning

Try shooting with a slow shutter speed and moving the camera with the subject. This technique is called 'panning'. It helps if you start panning before you click the shutter and continue panning after you have taken the picture.

Via panning, the cyclist is in focus yet the background is blurred. This creates a feeling of speed and motion. Note: This is a fun effect to shoot but it does take quite a bit of time and practice to get the desired photo.



1/60 sec. at f/7.1, ISO 400

American Southwest

➤ Continuous mode

Use the camera in continuous mode when you want to capture someone speeding past, as this increases your chances of getting a well composed shot.

For example in this photo I was able to capture the cyclist just entering the photo frame since continuous mode was already running.



1/320 sec. at f/9, ISO 200

American Southwest

➤ Sense of scale

Mountains are huge and deserts vast, so how do you bring the enormity of the landscape to your photo? By stepping way back and zooming in on a subject of known size - the biker. As you can see in the picture the cyclist gives a sense of scale to the landscape.



1/500 sec. at f/9, ISO 200

American Southwest

➤ Rest stops

Why not take extra rest stops in characteristic / beautiful places? They sure make great photo opportunities.



1/500 sec. at f/11, ISO 200

South India

➤ Camping

When taking camping photos, spend some extra time studying how your friend looks through the camera viewfinder. Are they kneeling down to adjust a tent zipper or just bending over with their butt in the air? Give directions such as “don’t lean over, bend at your knees” or “turn around a bit so that I can see your face” so that you get better pictures.

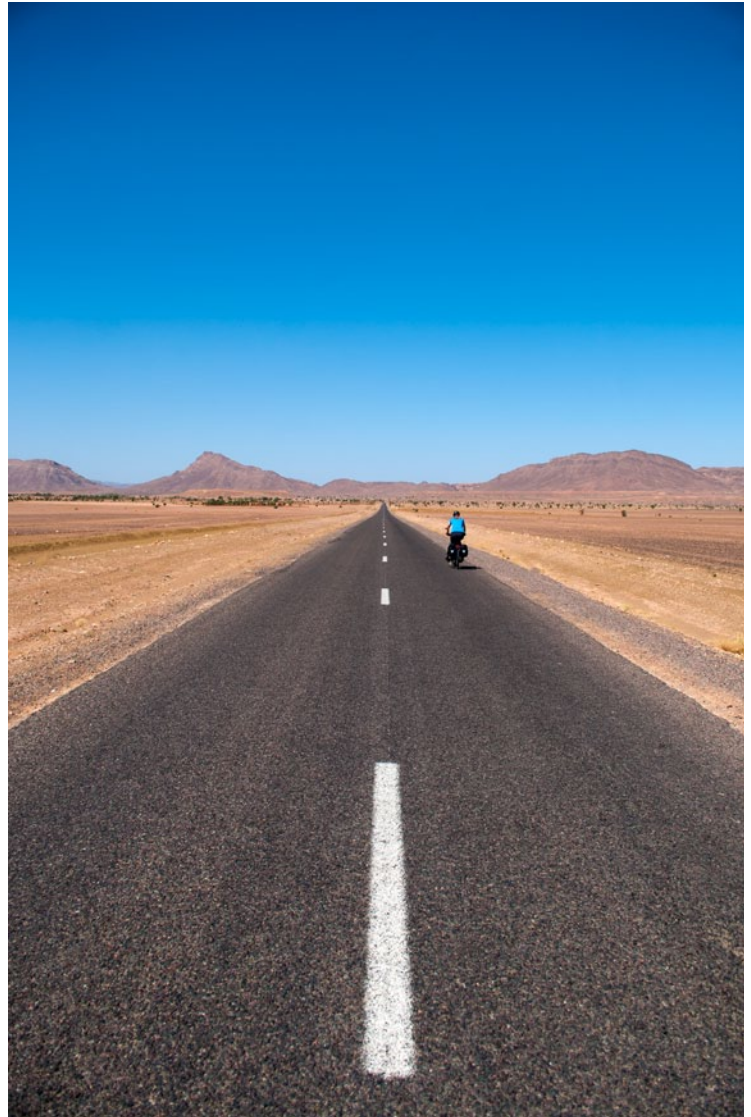


1/1600 sec. at f/5, ISO 200

Kyrgyzstan

➤ Camera standpoint

Instead of just shooting from eye height, try taking a picture while holding the camera above your head, or while lying down on the road. Changing the camera standpoint makes a big difference to how the photo finally turns out.



1/1000 sec. at f/5.6, ISO 200

Morocco

➤ Leading line

With a leading line you bring the viewer's eye to the point of interest. In this image the white line brings your eye up to the cyclist.



1/400 sec. at f/10, ISO 200

Scotland

➤ Keep your camera nearby

While cycling, good photo opportunities can happen within seconds. You'll see colorful locals cycling the opposite way, kids running towards you and even elephants lumbering by. Keep your camera close at hand so you won't miss these shots by having to spend extra time searching through a pannier for it.



1/250 sec. at f/8, ISO 200

South India

➤ Bright colors

Many bikers wear dark colored clothing since it's great for hiding dirt yet it also hides them when they are photographed from a distance.

The *Little Red Cyclist* pedaling through monumental scenery is a theme that I began shooting in the 1990's. Other bikers have since emulated this style, but why not try taking the idea further.

Gold and orange shirts also show up well against dark landscapes. These colors are better than red when taking close-up pictures of your cycling partner since too much red can overpower your image.



1/1000 sec. at f/6,3, ISO 200

American Southwest

➤ Hotel rooms

In hotel rooms, try taking pictures of daily routines such as route planning, reading a book and washing clothes. Also be on the lookout for original camera standpoints such as reflections in a mirror, shooting between ceiling fan blades or even using your bicycle as the foreground object.



1/13 sec. at f/3.8, ISO 800

South India

➤ Kids

When photographing kids, you have to work quickly. Children have a short attention span and after a couple of minutes they will lose interest and start looking around for other things to do. Try holding their attention by asking questions, making funny faces or even pointing at one of them while stating the name of the local sports hero. In India, the kids love cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar. They instantly smile when you imply that one of their friends will be the next 'Sachin'



1/60 sec. at f/4.5, ISO 200

South India

➤ Self portraits

Two things are important when taking self portraits: a small camera tripod and extra time. The tripod ensures that the camera remains level. Extra time is needed since you usually need to take a number of pictures using your camera timer before you have one where both of you are smiling.

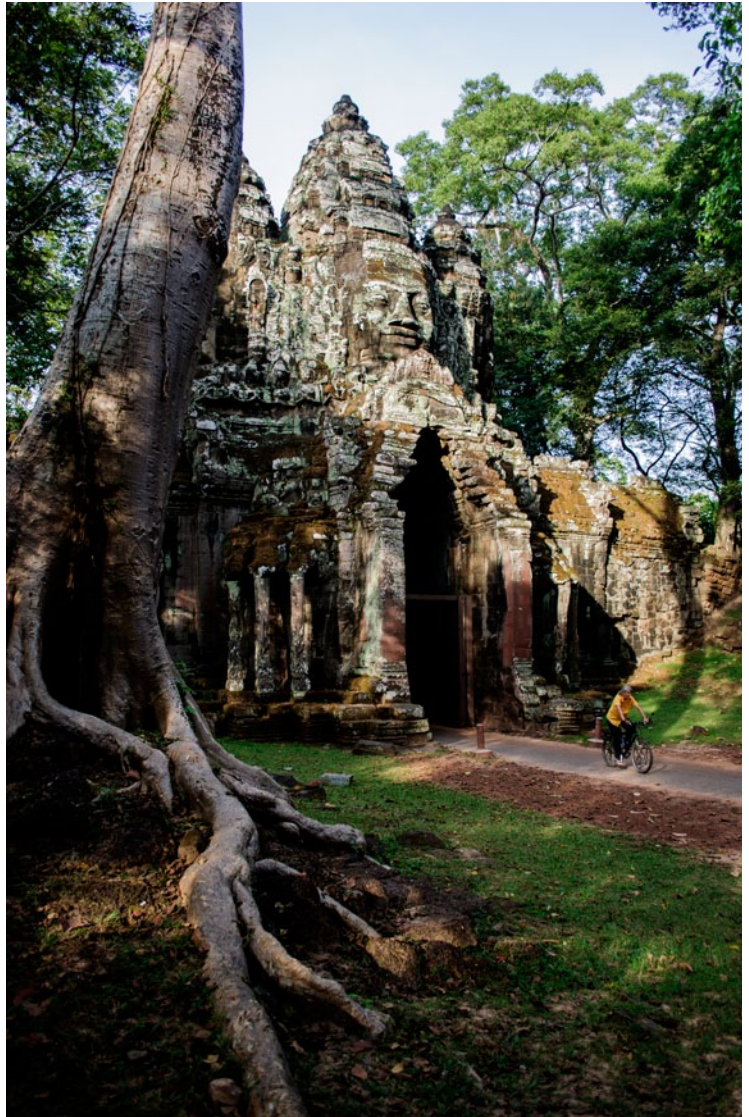


1/250 sec. at f/8, ISO 200

China

➤ Sense of place

Cycle touring isn't just about racing over mountain passes. Experiencing new cultures is another important aspect and shooting images of your partner pedalling past medieval churches, temples, and through ancient archways is a good way to remember that experience.



1/320 sec. at f/3.5, ISO 200

Cambodia

➤ Rule of thirds

Photos often look better when the cyclist isn't centered. Try imagining your picture with four evenly spaced lines on it, then place the bicyclist on one of the lines.

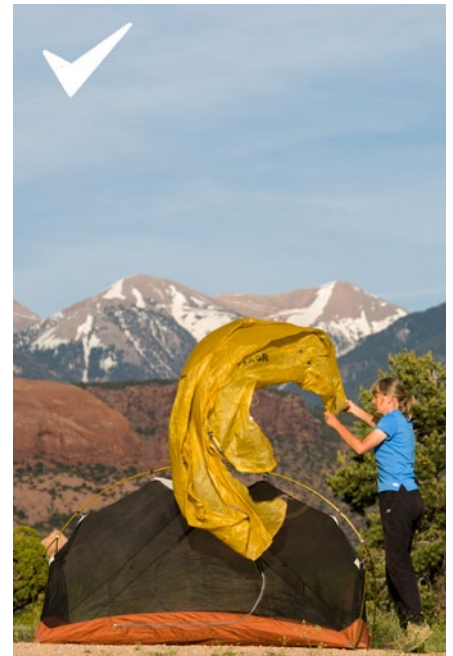


1/500 sec. at f/11, ISO 320

North India

➤ Edit

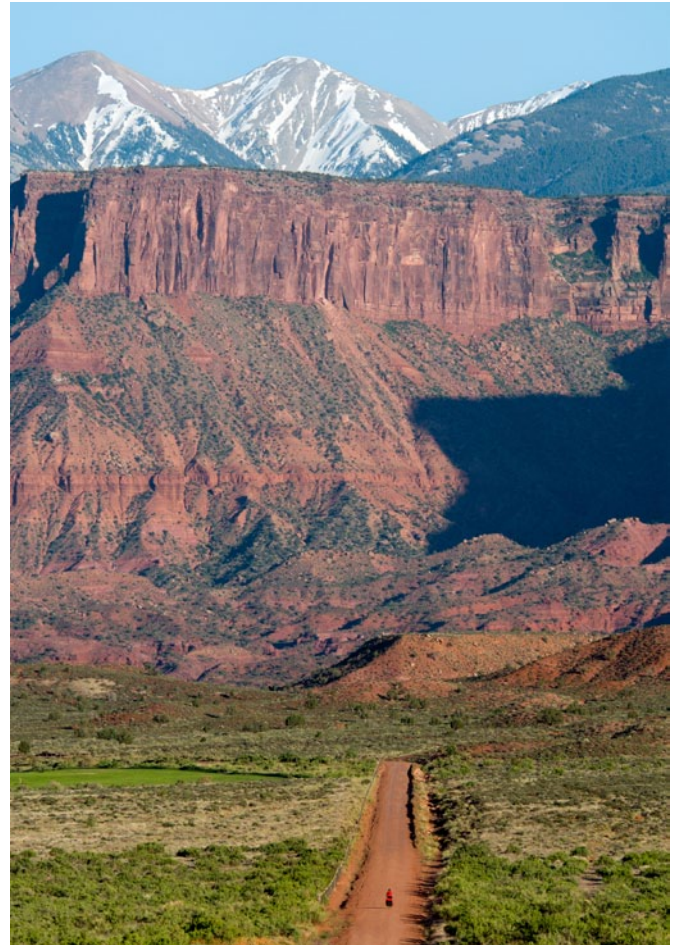
To end up with great pictures, shoot from many different perspectives, camera standpoints and even try completely new shots. Once you are finished, ruthlessly edit and delete photos until you have one that best captures the scene. In other words, an important part of being a good photographer is to only show your best images.



American Southwest

➤ Varied shots

Try varying your lenses to capture different styles of pictures. Standing in the same place I first shot the image left with a wide angle lens then waited until the cyclist was nearing the canyon wall before photographing them with a tele lens.

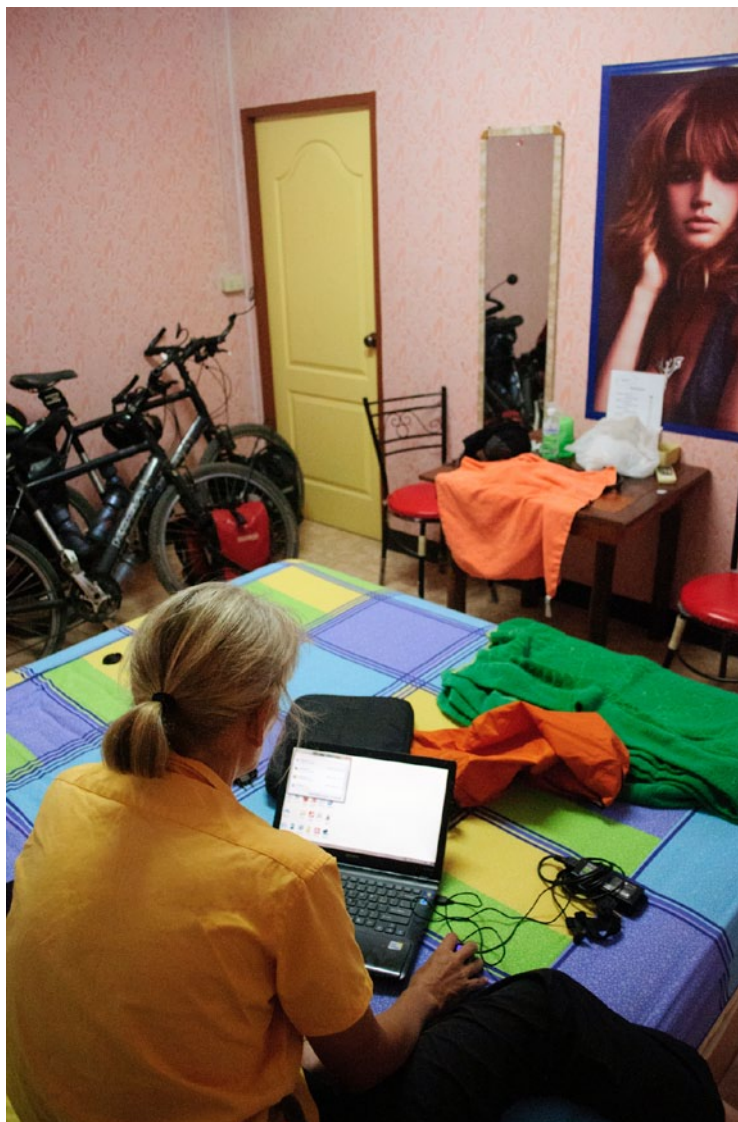


American Southwest

➤ Photo backup

A backup isn't just having all of your trip pictures on one external hard drive. You need to store multiple copies of your photos in at least two different places in case one of your electronic devices fails.

Also consider uploading your favorite pictures to an online storage site. That way if all of your gear is stolen you will still have a copy of your best images.



1/60 sec. at f/4, ISO 3200

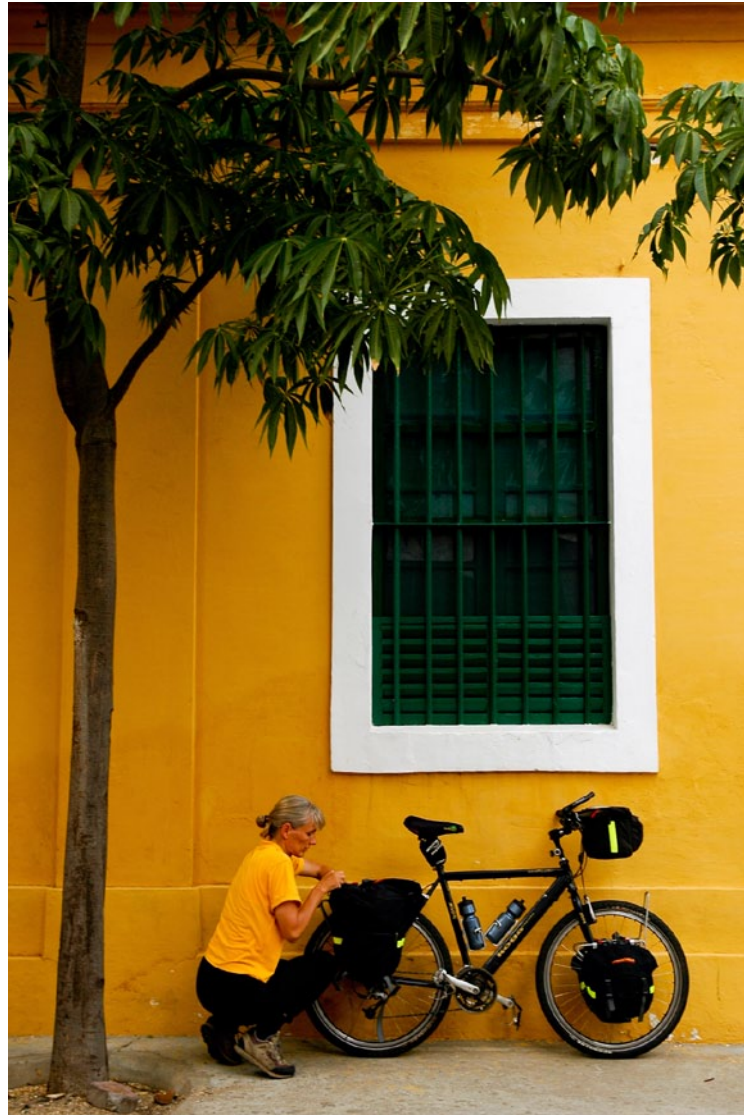
Thailand

➤ Camera equipment

"There are as many different ways of making an enjoyable bicycle journey as there are stars in the sky. I've yet to meet two cyclists who could agree on what equipment to carry." ~ Nicholas Crane

The same holds true for bicycle photographers. The amount and weight of camera equipment that you want to carry is dependent on a number of factors such as how much you plan on using your camera and what type of photos you want to take.

A good starting point in deciding which gear to bring is to visit the websites of [Cass Gilbert](#) and [Russ Roca](#). They both review different types of cameras, lenses and how they have performed on tour.



1/80 sec. at f/4.2, ISO 200

South India

➤ Equipment tips

A few tips for on the road:

1. When cycling through deserts it's important to regularly check that your digital camera sensor is free of dust. This can be done by photographing a clear sky and inspecting the picture afterwards. Dust spots can easily be removed from the sensor with an [arctic butterfly](#).

2. Wrap pieces of brightly coloured tape around your camera's electrical cables. This way it's easier to differentiate them from your hotel's electrical cords and you are less likely to leave them behind.



1/80 sec. at f/4.5, ISO 1600

Malawi

➤ Photographic inspiration

Check out the following photographer's websites for inspiration and ideas on how to improve your own cycling images:

[Aaron Teasdale](#)

[Adam Coppola](#)

[Cass Gilbert](#)

[Glenn Charles](#)

[Kees Swart](#)

[Mark Watson](#)

[Nicolás Marino](#)

[Russ Roca](#)



1/800 sec. at f/5.6, ISO 200

American Southwest

➤ Travel photography tips

To tell the complete story of your travels, you will want to take pictures of more than just your bike. Before the trip, make a shot list of the different subjects you want to photograph such as food, small shops and sunsets. Check the items off once you have photographed them.

The following websites contain travel, portrait and architecture photo tips:

[National Geographic](#)

[Digital Photography School](#)



North India



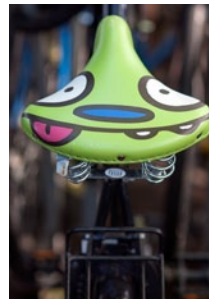
➤ About Paul Jeurissen

Paul Jeurissen is a Dutch freelance photographer specialized in bicycle and travel photography.

In 1981 he cycled the Trans America trail. During this trip he not only met his future wife Grace Johnson, but also fell in love with photographing the American landscapes, people and the bicycle journey itself. Back in Amsterdam he studied photography at the Fotovakschool.

Since 1981, Paul and Grace have taken numerous cycle / photography trips, totaling more than 4 years over 4 continents.

In 2010 they set out on a multi-year trip titled “Bicycling around the world in search of inspiring cycle images.” The challenge will be to photograph the diverse bicycle cultures around the world and capture the experience of traveling by bike. You can follow their journey at: www.bicyclingaroundtheworld.nl.



➤ Thanks!

Amaya Williams: www.worldbiking.info

Friedel Grant: www.travellingtwo.com

Gene Bisbee: www.bikingbis.com

for your contributions and help with editing.



1/4000 sec. at f/8, ISO 1600

Malawi

A free e-book from Paul Jeurissen
www.pauljeurissen.nl

