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10 holidays that will make you a better photographer



Joining a photography tour can help upgrade your holiday photos from commonplace to conversation pieces. CREDIT: ROBERT HARDING



The best attractions in the Ziller Valley

Discover five of the best visitors attractions in the Ziller Valley, whether you love animals, music or nature. [Read more](#)

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By **Emma Thomson**

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As noon approached and we jiggled across the grasslands back to camp, we crossed paths with a fleet of Jeeps lined-up in military fashion. Bursting from their rooftops were travellers all fixated on a hyena some way off. And it struck me how special it was, just the four of us, having those early, quiet hours to ourselves watching the sky warm from cold purple to fiery orange.

Without a strict sightseeing schedule, there's time to dawdle, dally and wait as long as need be for that rhino to reveal anything other than its immense leathery rump. Time to see small-yet-significant events: a dung beetle rolling his poo boulder homeward bound; the electric-blue flash of a lilac-breasted roller's wingtip flitting through the thorny acacia trees; and the curve of snake tracks in the sand. You see a place more deeply.

This ability to notice the small details is one of the skills I honed on a photography tour. Tired of taking mediocre travel photographs and determined to master the basics, I booked a course based in Tanzania's Serengeti National Park.

I couldn't have asked for a more creative classroom. Of course, there were nerves at first. Revealing your first tentative attempts is akin to showing your primary school teacher your first finger painting; you're eager for praise. But our tutor cut through our shyness by getting us to focus (pardon the pun) on jazzing up our composition, not just positioning the animal in the middle of the frame; playing with scanning the camera to create movement; and showing us how details, just a zebra's stripes for instance, can have more impact than capturing the whole beast.

Granted, a handful of opportunities were missed on the first few days, as we adapted to selecting the correct aperture and shutter speed. But then, a few days in, we encountered a lioness basking in the long grass. We waited: cameras poised, breath baited. Suddenly, she turned and stared straight down the barrel of our lenses. And then she was gone: loping off to towards the rest of the pride. Thrilling sightings of giraffe and buffalo followed that might have eclipsed my memory of the encounter, but thanks to a little training I'd clicked my camera at exactly the right moment, with the right settings, so I'd forever be able to stare into those burning amber eyes.

As we celebrate World Photo Day (worldphotoday.com) this month (August 19) – a worldwide event that promotes photography and its ability to inspire communities – there's never been a better time to acquire a few photography skills. Here's a selection of the most exciting photographic tours to help upgrade your holiday photos from commonplace to conversation pieces.

8. Big Apple

Learning to find new ways of portraying something familiar is a key skill for photographers. Nowhere will test your ability to find fresh perspectives more than New York – one of the most photographed places in the world. From the iconic architecture such as the Statue of Liberty and sleek needle-like skyscrapers clustered around the Empire State Building, to the canary-yellow taxicabs and neon lights of Times Square. The challenge is to pick out new or unusual details: perhaps the street art, a fresh vista from a rooftop bar, or a gaggle of Chinese men gambling in Columbus Park.

Light and Land (01747 824 727; lightandland.co.uk) offers a five-night New York City trip departing October 14 tutored by Reuters news photographer Paul Sanders. It costs from £999, including accommodation and tuition. Flights, meals and transfers not included.



The Empire State Building towers over Manhattan CREDIT: ALAMY