

General guidelines for a photo workshop with Vittorio Sciosia

1 First of first. Quality of the light is paramount. This concept is what drive us during a photo trip. The all time. The two keys moments of the day are “early morning” from right before the sunrise to 2 hours after the sunrise and “late afternoon” from 2 hours before to 1 hour after the sunset. All the trip has to bend to those rules. So, if for example, we stay at an hotel 1 hour away from our point of interest, that means we’ll be ready to go 1 hour and half, minimum, to get there well ahead of sunrise or sunset. One immediate consequence is that we, generally speaking, won’t have breakfast as first thing in the morning but, if fits our schedule, after returning from the early morning excursion. If it’s not possible, we’ll have breakfast as soon as possible along the way where it better fits.

2 Another key concept is that “we are not average tourists”. That means that we want to have time to spend around a location, talking and interacting with local people, either in a village or a local market or sitting staring at a beautiful landscape waiting for the right moment or the right light (Check point 1). Consequently, a trip where we keep moving every single day from one spot to another, it doesn’t work for us. When we arrive in a location we want to stay there on average a couple of nights, maybe more. Occasionally one night and two days, late afternoon and early morning, are just enough

3 We need a talkative guide, somebody able to be at ease with local farmers or peasants as well as with a dignitary or with a wise man of a tribe. Somebody that makes easy, for us, to be accepted as photographers wanting to collect images only, without disrespecting anybody with our behavior. Somebody that can negotiate on our behalf if we need to pay to get pictures, as we know it is the case in the Omo Valley. Being a pro photographer myself and collaborating with Discovery Channel, Conde Nast Traveller and, in the past, with National Geographic, I know that the key of success in an expedition in a foreign country is 70% a matter of having a great guide who knows all about the location and can relate to everybody. But even when, in some place, it’s not that the case, he/she knows how to deal with the unexpected circumstances. Of course the other 30% is up to the photographer’ skill.

4 We definitely know that such a trip has to be organized well in advance and must follow a scheduled roadmap and timeframe. Nonetheless the bottom line of such kind of trip is the “freedom” to stop along the road if we came across a colorful local market, a wedding along the road or a ceremony in a village not in our itinerary. In other words we need a certain level of flexibility during the trip. Of course our interest is to keep the key points in the planned itinerary. But, again, we could find more cool “photos” in an occasional local wedding in a village along the road rather than a scheduled visit to a museum or a church.

5 Points of interest. Just a quick note about what we are interested in, as photographic subjects. Basically we want take picture of people. Local people, a culture so far from our way of life. People doing something, people, working or living the normal life as we weren't there. Candid shots, even though it could be likely that, just few times, we will ask to arrange some shots, maybe creating a sort of photographic set, with flashes. Any action where people are involved is of high interest to us. For example a school, with kids in the classroom with teachers or a local embarcadero on a river' shore where local boats let passengers embark or disembark or a bus or train station with lot of action going on among travelers. Of course local markets, trading animals, fruits, vegetables or food in general are a great occasion of photos. Ceremonies like religious venue or a wedding. Besides of the people, we like architecture if of any relevance as well as landscape, of course. We are neither very interested in museum (unless we come across some of importance) nor wild animals since we'd need time and specific knowledge to get good shots of wildlife.

6 The last point is... back the Number 1. Just to underline how important is the search of good light in such kind of a trip. Pictures taken during the moments of perfect quality of light is what we aim for. All the rest comes after. Way after. Remember that we can learn about the story of a museum or of a city when we go back home, Google searching like crazy. But the pictures we need we can only take while we are there. And we must get the best out of our time in your country following those photographic rules

These are the main guidelines. If something more come to my mind, and eventually it will, I'm sure, I will add to this note. But this is a good starting point with all the key elements you need to know.