

Taking Interesting “I Was Here!” Shots

Let's spice things up a bit! Not every photo of you during a trip needs to be taken while holding the camera at arms length with various national monuments in the upper right corner of the screen. Here are some options for spicing things up a little.

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Extend Your Reach

You might have seen them around. They go by different names but all accomplish the same task. They are those, how do I describe them...”arm extenders”. The telescoping poles with a camera mount, perfect for point and shoot units, that allow for a better composed picture. Placing the camera further away from your body allows more of the background to show up. Instead of your head being half of the screen and the Eiffel Tower taking up 1/12th, you can create a more fun, exciting composition showing more of the city. The bonus is you don't have to check your teeth for food either as the camera is not right in front of your face. Xshot and Quickpod are two of the more popular brands.

Set the Camera Down

Not every shot has to be held so close! It's ok to put the camera down (if you're not worried about someone swiping it) on just about anything. It often helps to place a coat, soft bag or something squishy under the camera so you can reposition it as needed. Use the live view feature on the LCD to make sure everyone is in the shot (as a tall person, I have been chopped off more than once in these scenarios). Use the self timer, they've been standard on most cameras for decades. Newer cameras also have the possibility of using a remote control which gives you ultimate control if the crowd you're with gets unruly.

Be Goofy, Pose!

Have fun! Well, that is, if you're having fun. Chances are you want to memorialize your location, and the fact that you were there, because it's something you enjoy. Show that! Pose. Show off. Grab a stranger and bring them into the shot (as long as they're friendly!). Liven it up!

Grab a prop if something is near by. Anything will do. A wig, a dog, previous vice-presidential candidates. Anything to cause confusion for your viewing audience back home. It's a digital camera after all, if you don't like the shot just delete it and shoot another. Speaking of which....

Multiple Shots

One popular application for the iPhone is called Photobooth. It works like the classic photobooths still around in many malls, arcades and carnivals. Drop you coins in the slot, step inside and Poof! Poof! Poof! Poof! Four shots in rapid succession. The iPhone app does the same thing and can be a lot of fun.

And most people don't know their regular digital camera can do the same! A number of newer cameras have this feature built into the auto-timer setting. Scroll through the menus and the camera will allow you to choose the number of photos you wish to take on self-timer mode, sometimes as many as ten. Some cameras even have the option to start taking the photo when they detect your face is in the picture, making the mad sprint from camera to pose a thing of the past. Check your manual, you might have this feature and not even know it!



Climb On Stuff

There's an illustrious tradition in rock and mountain climbing of being the first person up a peak. Or the first person to rock climb a particular route to the top. I was paging through the photos of my fellow rock climber, Bill Urbanski, that he took on a recent roadtrip and began to notice a theme; at every state border sign he not only stopped for the photo, but he also decided to climb to the top. Now, mind you, Bill is an experienced rock climber, so I wouldn't suggest attempting this dangerous sport unless you have some type of coordination, or you're crazy like Bill. But coupling this technique with the face recognition self timer makes for some fun photos of his "first ascents". He hopes to have all 50 done soon but I'm not so sure there is a tall sign for Hawaii. Don't tell him that.

"I was here!" doesn't have to be boring and repetitive. It can be lively and fun, especially for those back home who will be paging through your 400 images of Rome when you return. Give them something to remember!

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