



PHOTOGRAPHY: USING FILL FLASH

Thought your camera's flash was for use only in dark conditions? Think again.

Words and images: Simon Thomas

Your camera's flash is only for shooting in dark conditions, right? Wrong!

So many people miss the opportunity to capture stunning images because of difficult lighting situations, like shooting in the direction of the sun or towards very strong backlighting. Both of these conditions can ruin a potentially powerful image.

But here's the 'heads-up', most cameras provide you the tools to combat tough lighting conditions, it's just many users don't know how to use them.

Using your camera's detachable or built-in flash can greatly improve your chances of snagging that once in a lifetime shot, in spite of that awful sun glare or overpoweringly bright backlight.

BY THE BOOK

If you read any fancy photographic book or magazine you'll come across 'fill light'. "What's fill light?" Well, I'm glad you asked. It's just photo speak for using your camera's flash to brighten a foreground element of your photo that would normally be dark or even silhouetted because of bright backlight conditions.

If you've ever seen a photographer using his or her flash in the daytime (you'll see this a lot at weddings) or in a bright situation, well, now you know why.

FLOGGING A DEADHORSE

The photo in this masterclass was shot directly into the sun, with my bike parked up on the Dalton Highway in

Alaska, as we rode south from Deadhorse. I wanted a shot that showed my bike and my bags and gear from a different angle and totally covered in the mud, crap and grime of the Haul Road (Dalton Highway).

YOU'RE RIGHT, YOUR CAMERA'S WRONG

The reason the photo works is really only because I set up my flash (or speedlight as Nikon calls it) to trigger when I shot the image. On many cameras this is called 'force flash', because your forcing the flash to fire even when your camera thinks it isn't needed.

In my camera's menu I selected a profile that offered my low contrast settings and I bumped up the saturation. Again, it'll take a you a few minutes, but hunt around in your camera's settings and you'll probably find these options are available to you. Worst case scenario, go and find a tutorial on your camera's settings on YouTube.

GET FLASHY

The flash though is the key. It allowed me to manually expose the shot in order to capture some of the details in the clouds and landscape in the very bright background but, crucially, also the detail and texture of my bike in the foreground.

Try this for yourself. This technique works equally as well for shooting portraits or any other scene where you're forced to shoot in the direction of bright light. **ABR**



SIMON THOMAS

Simon and Lisa Thomas have ridden their way into a life that most of us can only imagine. This year is their 13th year on the road and in those years the duo has amassed an insane 420,000 miles on their ride through 78 countries and six continents. Along the way they've traversed 27 deserts, survived a broken neck in the Amazon Jungle, cheated death and become professional photographers, writers and public speakers. www.2ridetheworld.com.

WHO'S WRITING

HERE'S THE INFO FROM MY TOP OF THE WORLD HIGHWAY IMAGE (DALTON HIGHWAY):

CAMERA BODY: Nikon D3
LENS: VR 16-35mm f/4G
FOCAL LENGTH: 16mm
FOCUS MODE: Manual
AF-AREA MODE: Single
VR: OFF
APERTURE: f/4

SHUTTER SPEED: 1/8000
EXPOSURE MODE: Manual
EXPOSURE COMP.: -2.0EV
METERING: Matrix
ISO SENSITIVITY: ISO 100
PICTURE CONTROL: [NL] NEUTRAL
BASE: [NL] NEUTRAL

SHARPENING: 6
CONTRAST: -1
BRIGHTNESS: 0
SATURATION: +2
HUE: 0
LOCATION: Dalton Highway, South of Deadhorse, Alaska, USA