



PHOTOGRAPHY

EFFORT EQUALS REWARD

GETTING THE PERFECT SHOT ISN'T ABOUT LUCK, IT'S ABOUT PUTTING IN THE TIME AND EFFORT TO MAKE THE CIRCUMSTANCES RIGHT

PHOTOGRAPHER: SIMON THOMAS

THE MONEY SHOT

Gary Player, the famous golfer, made the observation, "The harder I work, the luckier I get!"

Over the years we've heard this a thousand times, "What a shot, you're so lucky". Most of the time we just bite our tongues, nod in agreement, and accept the compliment, even though the truth of the matter is that the shot was captured because of hard work and effort, as opposed to dumb luck.

PHOTOGRAPHING MAGIC

This shot of my R1200GSA LC under the Aurora Borealis is a great example of planning and effort paying off. Since I was a kid, I've wanted to see the Aurora Borealis, or Northern Lights as they're commonly known. Looking up at the sky at 2:30am to see a light show of electrically charged sun particles skipping over the earth's atmosphere, well, it's enough to make you believe in magic.

So, what's the lesson I'm sharing in this masterclass? Some preparation and a little discipline and effort will always reward you with great images much more than relying upon luck alone.

CAPTURING THE AURORA

Here's what it took to get this shot. The Northern Lights are best seen from north of the Arctic Circle, so, a long ride north was in order. We were in Alaska and the Yukon in northern Canada in August with a sunset time of 11:30pm. We set the alarm for 1:30am as the darkest part of the night is between 1am and 3:30am. Sliding out of a warm sleeping bag and into the freezing air of the night takes a deep breath and some steely determination. We'd also clicked through to a website called Aurora-service.org, which provides info on the strength of the expected Aurora and times the phenomena is potentially the most visible. We also had to plan ahead to have internet access in order for the predictive website service to work.

TAKING THE SHOT

I made absolutely sure I was shooting in 'Camera RAW' mode and then, like most night-time shots, I set up my camera on a



Location: Dawson City, Yukon, Northern Canada.



WHO'S WRITING?

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.

tri-pod (essential). With the camera set up I used a flashlight to illuminate my bike so I could use my camera's 'automatic focus feature' to set the focal length and ensure that my bike was in focus. I then switched my lens to manual focus mode, effectively locking in the focal length. I used a wide-angle lens to capture as much of the sky as possible and set it wide open at f4. Trial and error taught me that 15 seconds was a great exposure length. I also turned on camera features that I rarely use. I turned on in-camera 'long exposure noise reduction' and 'high ISO noise reduction'. I used a remote trigger to minimize camera shake and delayed the shutter release by two seconds. To minimize the chance of light leaks (allowing excess light to reach the sensor) I also closed the eye optic at the rear of the camera.

Sounds like a lot of effort doesn't it? That's because it is, but I may never be in this situation in my life again, and I captured images that make me smile. So, plan, get prepared, make the effort and then let the magic begin. Oh yeah, and good luck! **ABR**

HERE'S THE INFO FROM MY R1200GSA LC AURORA BOREALIS PHOTO:

- 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: 15 seconds

EXPOSURE MODE: Manual

EXPOSURE COMP: 0

METERING: Matrix

ISO SENSITIVITY: ISO 1250

WHITE BALANCE: Auto

TEMPERATURE: 4950 k

ACTIVE D-LIGHTING: On.

LEVEL: Normal

PICTURE CONTROL: [NL] NEUTRAL

BASE: [NL] NEUTRAL

SHARPENING: 6

CONTRAST: 0

BRIGHTNESS: +1

SATURATION: +2

HUE: 0