



PHOTOGRAPHY: EXPOSURE COMPENSATION

ABR's photography expert, **Simon Thomas** gives a masterclass on how to correctly use exposure compensation when shooting in contrasting environments

Ask yourself this question: 'am I getting the best shots from my camera?' Hang on, hang on, before you yell 'yes' there are some rules. You only get to answer yes if you understand what every button and function on your camera does. Let's face it, most of us don't.

There's no point beating yourself up. Instruction manuals just aren't sexy and it's far too easy to pull out your shiny new photographic box of magic and start snapping images.

Am I compensating?

One of the most under utilised features on all cameras is exposure compensation (EV feature). Weird, as it's also potentially one of the most powerful features at your finger tips.

Size doesn't matter

Want more convincing that you should carry on reading? Well, this feature is so important that almost every camera sold today, whether it's a giant DSLR or a pocket-sized automatic offers exposure compensation as a user controlled feature.

Lighten up

Simply put, the exposure compensation feature lets you overexpose (lighten) or underexpose (darken) your shots. Yeah, I know that you thought your expensive camera was meant to do all the work but guess what? It's never going to 'guess' how to produce every shot

as well as you can, once you've taken control of your camera's features.



You've probably seen the exposure compensation button on your camera a thousand times. On most cameras the feature can be found with this symbol.

The good news is you can use the EV feature in almost every camera mode, **S**, sometimes known as **Tv** (shutter priority), **A** (aperture priority) modes or **P** (Auto).

How and when to use EV

So, the big question is how or when to use exposure compensation. I'll give you a few examples. I often use the EV button to control blown highlights (areas of pure white in your images). I often shoot portraits in bright sunshine. When my subject takes up the majority of my frame, my camera will take a general metering (assessment of the light) and adjust the exposure. If my subject is sweating, wet or has a darker skin tone it's easy to get 'blown highlights' (areas of pure white where no detail exists), which appear on the forehead, cheeks and chin. In these cases, I'll dial in some negative EV control usually -0.3 to -0.7. This will ensure the highlights are still in my cameras colour range and I can easily brighten the image in post processing if I want the darker areas of the image a little lighter.

If I'm shooting Lisa in an expansive landscape it's tough to make sure that



Camera: D3
ISO: 400
Lens: Nikkor 70-200mm
White Balance: Daylight
Speed: 1/3200
Image Profile: Vivid
Exposure compensation: -4 EV

WHO'S WRITING?



Simon and Lisa Thomas have ridden their way into a life that most of us can only imagine. This year is the start of their 12th 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

both her and her bike are correctly exposed. If the landscape makes up 60% plus of the shot and is dark (i.e. a forest of trees), the camera will expose the shot based on the general tone of the shot (the darker majority) and often Lisa and her bike (which are brighter) will appear overexposed. The more overexposed parts of an image are, the less detail those parts of the image have. In these cases I'll tap the EV button and bring down the EV (exposure compensation) by as much as -1 (1 stop). This will ensure that Lisa and her bike are full of detail and looking great.

Lisa and I are often in stunning landscapes which we want to photograph and share. In the early years of my photographic career, I'd produce so many images where the sky was overexposed (blown out) and only the landscape was correctly exposed.

The problem here is that any great image is about how all the parts of the image work with one another. What's a landscape shot without that deep and dark blue sky, where dramatic clouds play across the mountaintops. Nowadays I'll dial in some EV -2 or sometimes more. In Photoshop, or your software

of choice, it's a five-second job to adjust that darker landscape and, dramatically and quickly, you've got that magic shot: you've recreated what you saw and importantly, what you wanted to share.

Conversely, there are shots that need to be brighter or lightened to create a breezy or romantic image. Yep, you guessed it, dial in some EV, but this time we're going 'positive' so go ahead and dial in +0.3, +0.7 or even higher. The point here is that it's up to you, because you now understand what's going on and how to control it. Remember it's fine to play around, deleting is free. **ABR**