Photo Travel Division **Effective January 2026**

GUIDE FOR JUDGES AND CHAIRS OF PSA-RECOGNIZED EXHIBITIONS WITH PHOTO TRAVEL SECTIONS.

a) **Photo Travel Division Documentary PTDD**
b) **Photo Travel Division World in Focus PTDW** **see page 14**

This guide should be studied by the exhibition chair, the PT section chair and the PT judges before any judging and should be closely adhered to. This update will be in effect for PT exhibitions with closing dates in 2026.

Section a) Photo Travel Definition Documentary PTDD:

A Photo Travel image is a portrayal of the real world we live in, as it is found naturally. There are no geographic limitations.

Content guidance

1. Images that predominantly or exclusively depict **people** and their activities must illustrate a distinctive culture of a country, region, or continent.
2. If the image predominantly or exclusively depicts a **place**, such as land-, sea- or cityscape, or a physical structure such as a building or monument, it must include characteristic and distinctive physical features. It is not necessary that the image identify the exact location.
3. Images that predominately or exclusively depict **animal** populations are allowed, if the animals are in their native environment and are characteristic of that country, region, or continent.
4. **Portraits** or other close-ups of people or objects, in addition to meeting the above paragraphs as applicable, must include elements depicting some of the surrounding environment to make it obvious that the image was not taken in a studio setting.
5. Images from **events or activities** arranged exclusively for photography, or of subjects directed or hired for photography, are **NOT** allowed**.** Images from public events such as festivals or historic re-enactments are allowed.
6. **Long exposures** are allowed if the image looks natural. If the long exposure produces a dominating and unnatural special effect on the image, then it is NOT allowed (examples are star trails and long light trails).
7. **Highly distorted images** such as those produced by fisheye lenses are **NOT** allowed.

Editing guidance:

Processing or editing must be limited to making the image look as close to the original scene as possible, except that conversion to grayscale monochrome is allowed.

Allowed editing techniques:

- Cropping, straightening and perspective correction.
- Removal or correction of elements added by the camera or lens, such as dust spots, noise, chromatic aberration and lens distortion.
- Global and selective adjustments such as brightness, hue, saturation and contrast to restore the appearance of the original scene.
- Complete conversion of color images to grayscale monochrome.
- Blending of multiple images of the same subject and combining them in camera or with software (exposure blending or focus stacking).
- Image stitching – combining multiple images with overlapping fields of view that are taken consecutively (panoramas).

Editing techniques that are not allowed:

- Removing, adding to, moving or changing any part of an image, except for cropping and straightening.
- Adding a vignette during processing.

- Blurring parts of the image during processing to hide elements in the original scene.
- Darkening parts of the image during processing to hide elements in the original scene.
- All conversions other than to complete grayscale monochrome.
- Conversion of parts of an image to monochrome, or partial toning, desaturation or over-saturation of colour.

Purpose of the Photo Travel Documentary Definition:
The PSA Photo Travel Division Documentary (PTDD) is ***reality-based,*** like the PSA Photojournalism and Nature Divisions. The objective of PSA Photo Travel Division Documentary (PTDD) is to show the world ***as it is found naturally.*** The purpose of the Photo Travel Definition is to guide Photo Travel photographers towards making images that show ***how our world really is,*** rather than to arrange it and manipulate images to obtain the "best" photographs.

Photo Travel Documentary images should be a true record of that scene. The Photo Travel Documentary Definition is also a guide for exhibition judges to ensure that images that violate the definition are not accepted.

Below are the individual statements of the PT Documentary Definition *in blue,* illustrated examples and comments:

A Photo Travel image is a portrayal of the real world we live in, as it is found naturally.
A Photo Travel Documentary image must be a faithful record of what is found naturally and of what happens naturally, not a scene that is manipulated or arranged for photography.

There are no geographic limitations.
Photo Travel Documentary images do not have to be taken in exotic places because there are no restrictions regarding location. A Photo Travel Documentary image can be captured in your own city or on the other side of the world.

Images that predominantly or exclusively depict **people** and their activities must illustrate a distinctive culture of a country, region, or continent**.**
The culture illustrated should identify a people of a country, region, or continent. In a Photo Travel Documentary image, the culture portrayed should not be found around the globe but must be distinctive.

The following images are examples that illustrate a distinctive culture of a country, region, or continent.

The activities portrayed in the following images **do not** illustrate a distinctive culture of a country, region, or continent. None of the images are suitable for entry into Photo Travel Documentary.

If the image predominantly or exclusively depicts a **place**, such as a land-, sea- or cityscape, or a physical structure such as a building or monument, it must include characteristic and distinctive physical features. It is not necessary that the image identify the exact location.

Some examples of 'scapes' might include distinctive geological features or a city skyline. The judges do not need to know the geographical location, nor does the site have to be famous.

Manmade structures should be characteristic and distinctive.

Two acceptable images are below. Each image provides characteristic and distinctive physical features

The features in the following images are not suitable content for Photo Travel images. The physical features are not characteristic and distinctive. None of the images are suitable for entry into Photo Travel Documentary.

Images that predominately or exclusively depict **animal** populations are allowed if the animals are in their native environment and are characteristic of that country, region, or continent.

Images depicting animals that are found through-out the world are not suitable for entry into Photo Travel Documentary

The following images show animals that are characteristic of a country, region, or continent.

The following image is not suitable for entry into Photo Travel because the animals are not characteristic of the country, region or continent.

Portraits or other close-ups of people or objects must include elements depicting some of the surrounding environment to make it obvious that the image was not taken in a studio setting.

Note that a subject/s can be asked to look into the camera as long as the person/s being photographed continue on with their normal behaviour. The person being photographed should not have their dress or posture specifically managed for the purpose of obtaining a better photograph.

In the two images below, the scene does include elements depicting some of the surrounding environment to make it obvious that the image was not taken in a studio setting.

It is not necessary that the surrounding elements be so specific that we know where the image was taken. It is only necessary that there are such surrounding elements in the photograph to show it was not taken in a studio setting.

The following two images do not meet the requirement: Although the people portrayed in each image wear clothing that identifies them as being members of a distinctive culture, the images do not include elements depicting some of the surrounding environment to make it obvious that the image was not taken in a studio setting.

Images from **events or activities** arranged exclusively for photography, or of subjects directed or hired for photography, are **NOT** allowed**.** Images from public events such as festivals or historic re-enactments are allowed.

A Photo Travel Documentary image is a portrayal of the real world we live in, as it is found naturally. Images from situations specifically arranged for photography (also known as "staged" or "set-ups") cannot be entered into Photo Travel Documentary. Judges should do their best to keep known set-ups out of Photo Travel Documentary.

Set-ups can often be identified when many images of the same or similar scenes are submitted to exhibitions, or when they depict unnatural actions or behavior by the people shown in the photo. However, images from festivals and performances, unless arranged specifically for photography, are allowed.

The photo below confirms that the picture of the boys throwing water is arranged for photography and is 'setup'.

Determining whether a suspect image is arranged for photography is difficult. If you, as a judge, do not have proof that the image is arranged for photography you should score the image on the side of leniency. Images which are strongly suspected of having been arranged for photography should be kept out of the Awards.

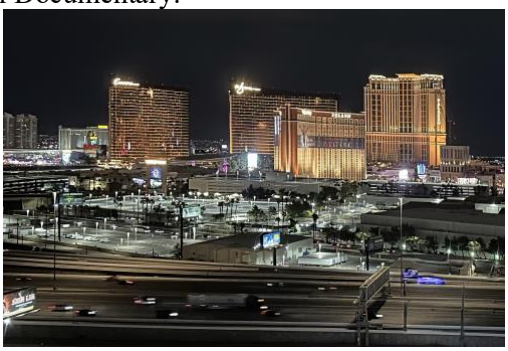
The Photo Travel Division has a gallery of 'Staged Images'. Scenes represented in the 'Staged Images' gallery are known set-ups, and such images can be disqualified.

Judges and chairmen should review the 'Staged Images' gallery before scoring images:
https://psa-photo.org/page/mo-ptd-staged-images

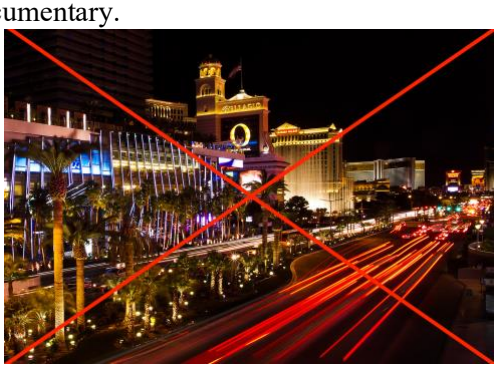
The images in the following articles should be reviewed:
https://petapixel.com/library-of-fake-travel-photos/
https://petapixel.com/2021/06/30/this-popular-chinese-photo-tourist-spot-is-entirely-fake/

Long exposures are allowed if the image looks natural. If the long exposure produces a dominating and unnatural special effect on the image, then that effect is NOT allowed (examples are star trails and long light trails).

The following time exposure images do not include any special effects that are dominating. The images are suitable for entry into Photo Travel Documentary.



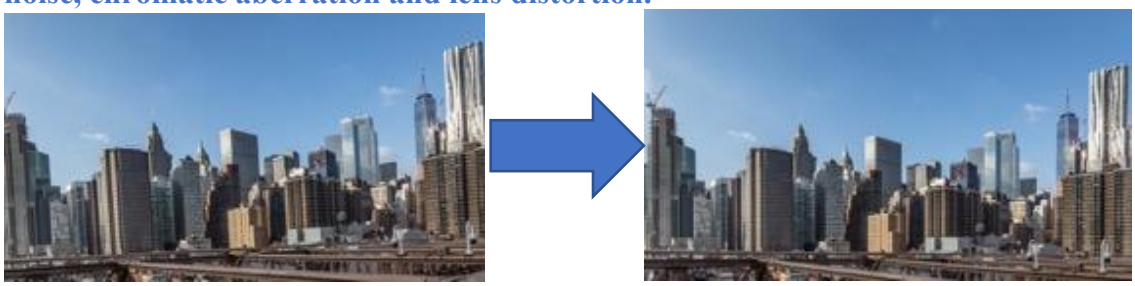
The following time exposure images show special effects which dominate each image. These images are not suitable for entry into Photo Travel Documentary.



Highly distorted images such as those produced by fisheye lenses are **NOT** allowed.

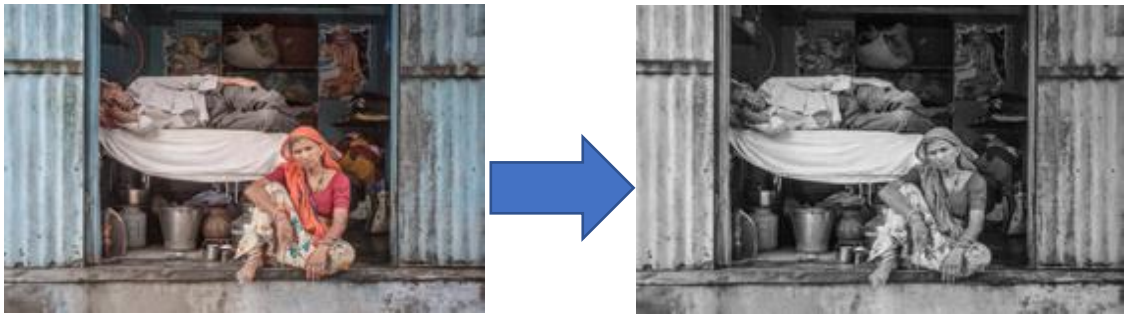
Allowed editing techniques:

Cropping, straightening and perspective correction.
Removal or correction of elements added by the camera or lens, such as dust spots, noise, chromatic aberration and lens distortion.



Global and selective adjustments such as brightness, hue, saturation and contrast to restore the appearance of the original scene.
The author is only allowed to use these adjustments to show what was seen when he/she took the shot.

Complete conversion of color images to grayscale monochrome.
Entries can be entered in Photo Travel in color or converted to complete greyscale monochrome.



Blending of multiple images of the same subject and combining them in camera or with software (exposure blending or focus stacking);

Image stitching – combining multiple images with overlapping fields of view that are taken consecutively (panoramas)

The stitching that is permitted in reality division images involves combining two or more images that were taken consecutively and have overlapping content – as in this example:

The final image is a faithful reproduction of the scene in front of the photographer. It is equivalent to the scene that could have been captured with a wider-angle lens.

Editing techniques that are not allowed:

Removing, adding to, moving or changing any part of an image, except for cropping and straightening.

Removing elements is not allowed

Note: Flipping an image (reversing left to right) is also not allowed.

Adding elements is not allowed

Relocating elements is not allowed

Replacing a sky is not allowed:

Adding a vignette during processing.

Vignettes are not allowed.

Blurring parts of the image during processing to hide elements in the original scene

An author must present the scene as faithfully as possible.

Darkening parts of the image during processing to hide elements in the original scene.

An author must present the scene as faithfully as possible.

All conversions other than to complete grayscale monochrome.

Entries cannot be converted to tones.

Note: Infrared and solarization are not allowed.

Conversion of parts of an image to monochrome, or partial toning, desaturation or over-saturation of colour.

Only complete conversion to greyscale monochrome is allowed. Desaturation and over-saturation of color is not allowed.

Section b: Photo Travel Division World in Focus PTDW:

Definition of “World in focus”

Just as travel and tourism pictures, this section englobes the full range of photographic genres from architecture, culture, events, food, landscape, portraits, etc.

A "WORLD IN FOCUS" image expresses the spirit of an era, the essence of a place or of a culture whether it is shown in an authentic scene or whether it is arranged. Digital manipulation to optimise an image in terms of finetuning of levels and colors is allowed as long as the image is looking natural. The same counts for removal of dust or digital noise. Techniques that add, relocate, replace, or remove any element of the original image, except by cropping, are not permitted.

PT Guide Translations.
This PT guide is available in several languages from the PT Division page: https://psa-photo.org/page/photo-travel

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For more information about this guide or about the judging of Photo Travel competitions please contact PSA's Photo Travel Exhibition Standards Director ptd-esd@psa-photo.org