

Washington Photo Safari™

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“FACES, PLACES, AND MORE!” TEN STEPS FOR CAPTURING FRIENDSHIP FORCE PHOTOS! © E. David Luria (www.edavidluriaphotography.com)

After a 34-year career in non-profit citizen exchange and international development programs, (including 3 years as a senior staff officer at the Friendship Force), E. David Luria became a professional photographer in Washington DC, specializing in events, architectural and restaurant photography. His work has appeared in over 100 publications, and he is a member of the American Society of Media Photographers. Trained in Paris by a protégé of Henri Cartier-Bresson, David is also founder and director of the popular “Washington Photo Safari” (www.WashingtonPhotoSafari.com) which since 1999 has helped over 20,000 amateur photographers improve their picture-taking skills.

Introduction: *The Friendship Force citizen exchange experience is fun, dramatic, and life-changing. It erases long-held stereotypes, and its stated missions to **Explore, Serve, and Understand**, help FFI participants realize that people are just people, the world over.*

Therefore, it is very important that the images you bring back in your camera should be as good as the Friendship Force experience itself! Good images not only bring joy to your new friends and family, they also make you proud of yourself for having taken them! And they make the FFI staff VERY happy when they get strong, publication-quality images for the magazine, website, and the annual photo contest!

*Listed below are ten steps to help you capture **Explore, Serve, and Understand** in pictures!*

Step 1: Pause, Why Are You Doing This?:

Before you raise the camera to your eye, pause and ask yourself: “Why am I taking this picture? “What am I trying to show?” and “For whom am I taking this picture?” It is very important to THINK about the reason for the picture BEFORE you take it. Is it for yourself? Your hosts? Your club? The magazine, or the contest? All of the above? How can my picture tell the story I want to tell? Am I trying to show an example of Exploring, Serving, or Understanding?

Step 2: Planning: How to Get The Story-Telling Picture That You Want:

The next step is to figure out HOW to get what you want. First of all, for a picture to tell a story, do NOT have people looking at the camera! Let me repeat: **do NOT have people looking at the camera!** Posed pictures in which people are looking into the camera are very nice souvenirs of your visit, and you should take many of these, but they do NOT tell a story.

To dramatize the concept “**Explore,**” for example, get in close on the face of an FFI guest tentatively sampling, for the first time in her life, an exotic dish in her host’s home. Snails? Snakes? Sushi.? Her mouth is slightly twisted, her eyebrows raised. Does she like it? Slightly blurred in the background are the faces of her bemused hosts, watching this dramatic moment. A “**Serve**” picture could be taken from a low angle behind an FFI volunteer teaching a class in his host country school, with fascinated, curious(or perhaps skeptical!) children looking up at him.

Step 3: Hold The Camera Correctly:

For sharper pictures, place your left hand under the camera, palm up. Rest the bottom of the camera on your left palm, cradle your left hand fingers around the lens for focusing and zooming, tuck your elbows into your chest, hold the camera tight, push down on the shutter gently while pushing up with your left hand to steady the camera. For vertical images, place the shutter on top of the camera, elbow against chest, camera against nose, and press gently.

Step 4: For people you know: pose your subjects correctly, and get CLOSE:_

Turn your portrait subjects so that their legs face sideways and then have them turn their faces to the camera. Get close to portrait subjects, 3-4 feet away, and only shoot head and upper torso. Clean up any distracting background. Avoid placing portrait subjects in direct sunlight. Place subject's back to the sun to get nice backlighting effect on the hair, use fill-flash or a reflector to light up the shadowed face. Get down LOW and look UP at your subject. (Looking UP is a sign of respect, looking DOWN is not.) **Look at the Picture Again Before Pushing the Shutter Button! Then, get CLOSER**

Step 5: Adjust your aperture or shutter speed to get the effect you want:

Adjust your "A" or "Av" lens aperture setting (F stops) to either blur or sharpen the background.(Remember: at F2 you get 2 people in focus, at F22 you get 22 people in focus!). Adjust your "S" or "Tv" shutter speed setting to either stop action or to blur moving objects

Step 6: For people you do NOT know:

Be VERY careful and considerate in photographing people you do not know. It is best to ask for their permission first. If this is not possible, use a LONG telephoto from a great distance and shoot quietly and quickly. Use a traveling companion as a blind, hiding behind that person and pretending to shoot him, then while your companion steps aside for an instant, you take the picture of your intended subject, then your companion quickly moves back to block your subject's view of your camera.

Another technique, helpful in marketplaces and bazaars, is to use a wide angle lens, hold your camera at waist level and shoot blindly from the waist while looking in the other direction or talking to your traveling companion, or use a camera with a twist/tilt screen.

Step 7: Use the flash when necessary:

Take the camera off of the little green or red "auto" setting and use the intelligent side of the dial, called "A" or "Av" for aperture-priority, "S" or "Tv" for shutter priority, or "P" for Programmed Auto. These allow you to turn the flash on or off and to adjust the white balance for good skin tones,("Auto" does not allow you to do that.) Use "Force Flash" or "Fill flash" to fill in the dark shadows on peoples faces, especially outdoors! For best results, use an auxiliary shoe-mounted flash that you can bounce off the ceiling or walls.

Step 8: Adjust the White Balance to get good color:

The White Balance menu allows you to set the color filtration in the camera, to Sunny, Cloudy, Shade, Flash, Flourescent, or Tungsten/Incandescant light, depending upon the light you are in. Take a picture and check the skin tones. In my experience, Cloudy works well most of the time, even with flash.

Step 9: Use the Rapid Shooting Feature of Your Camera:

The human face while talking or eating CAN be quite ugly! Also, people blink. Shoot a burst of 3-4 pictures to get one good one. Auxiliary flashes can handle the burst.

Step 10: Avoid "Faith-Based Photography!" If you go on a trip saying that you will take 500 pictures, praying that ONE comes out, that is what will happen! Plan your pictures, read the camera's hateful manual, and shoot carefully, so that they ALL come out! Good luck!