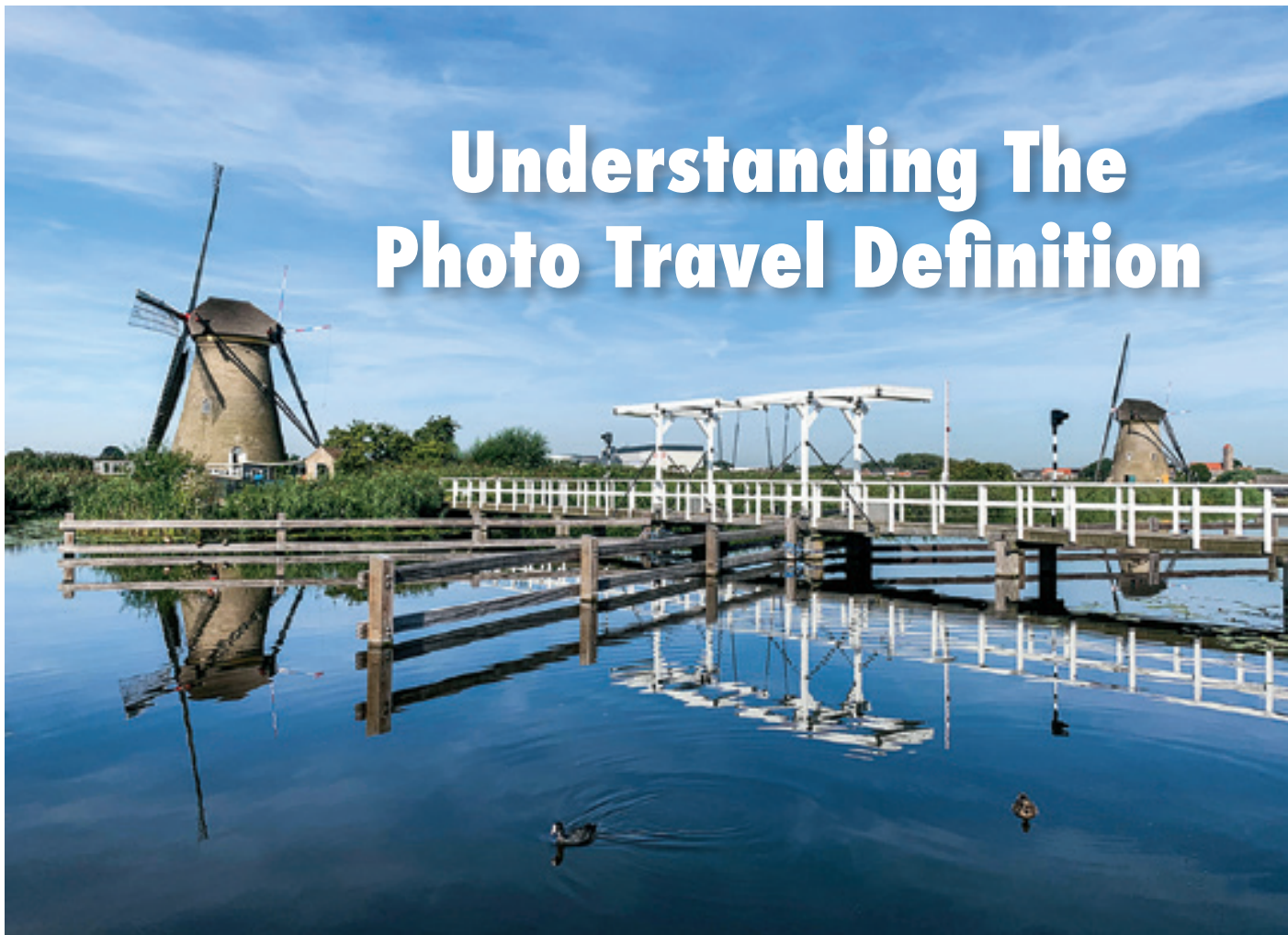


# Understanding The Photo Travel Definition



Foot Bridge © Jozef Aerts, HonPSA, GMPSA/S, Belgium

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The Photo Travel Division was founded in 1972. Its purpose was to have a reality division which would promote images of our world and of its people as they appear naturally. PT images should reflect what we find, as we find it. It is about showing images reflecting the wonders of human achievement and the beauty of people around the world.



This close-up image of a person includes details about her environment/location and as such, adheres to the PT definition. Photo © Nadia Filiaggi, EPSA.

The PSA Board approved two small adjustments to the Photo Travel Definition in April of this year. These clarifications help reinforce and strengthen the original meaning of the Photo Travel Definition. I have indicated them below:

*A Photo Travel image expresses the characteristic features or culture of a land as they are found naturally. There are no geographic limitations. Images from events or activities arranged specifically for photography, or of subjects directed or hired for photography are not **permitted**. Close up pictures of people or objects must include features that provide information about the **location**.*

*Techniques that add, relocate, replace or remove any element of the original image, except by cropping, are not permitted. The only allowable adjustments are removal of dust or digital noise, restoration of the appearance of the original scene and complete conversion to greyscale monochrome. Other derivations, including infrared, are not permitted. All images must look natural.*

The word “**appropriate**” was replaced with “**permitted**” and “**environment**” was replaced with “**location**.” The intention is not really different from before.



The above image portrays the culture of a land. There does not need to be any identifiable features in the image. The scene is exactly as the maker saw it and is a true depiction of a culture, a way of life, in this land.  
Photo © **Nadia Filiaggi, EPSA.**

The above image was taken at a Photography Festival and this scene was arranged just for the photographers. Images taken at events specifically arranged for photographers are not permitted in PT.  
Photo © **Nadia Filiaggi, EPSA.**

The wording of the definition was carefully chosen to help entrants and judges choose and evaluate images appropriate for Photo Travel, yet it can still be very confusing.

To help understand the PT Definition, let's break it down and look at each sentence:

**A Photo Travel image expresses the characteristic features or culture of a land as they are found naturally.**

This first sentence encapsulates what a Photo Travel image is all about. It is asking for images of the real world as we find it. You have a whole world to discover and photograph. It states that there are two types of images you can submit. Either an image will be of some characteristic feature of a land (landscapes or manmade structures) or an image will showcase a culture.

If the image is of a landscape, the image must have some identifiable feature for a person to recognize i.e. **characteristic features**. A judge does not need to know where the location is, however, the image should have features that are unique and recognizable if the site were to be visited. Generic images of lakes, forests, sides of buildings or beaches that do not provide some identifiable feature or are not unique to a part of the world would score low.

We can also submit images that portray a **culture of a land**. A culture is the way of life of groups of people. It is the heart of humankind and describes how we live. It is something that is normally handed down generation to generation. It can be represented by people's religion, work, music, clothes, cooking, pastimes and how we celebrate life.

The last phrase "**found naturally**" explains that Photo Travel is essentially a documentary medium,

the goal is to portray the truth of a situation.

When we change or arrange elements in a scene for photography, our photograph becomes untrue. Photo Travel images must portray what we find naturally. If we change anything in the scene, we would betray the truth.

**There are no geographic limitations.**

This means that you do not need to travel overseas to enter images into Photo Travel. You can submit images taken close to home. Remember that no matter where you take your images, they must still portray either characteristic features or a culture of a land.

**Images from events or activities arranged specifically for photography, or of subjects directed or hired for photography are not permitted.**

Entrants can get a bit confused by the restrictions in the above sentence. The easiest way to decide if an image would be permitted into Photo Travel is to ask yourself would the scene in front of you be happening if the photographers were not there? i.e.: Did you or a workshop leader organize the event? If you or the workshop leader are directing someone on how to pose for you or have organized the models, camels, props, then those images cannot be entered into Photo Travel.

With festivals, dancing, re-enactments, etc. as long as they are not set up for the photographers, and they would happen whether or not people are taking pictures, then those images can be entered into Photo Travel. You are still out of luck if the judges think it looks posed. Judges will score suspected staged/fake images low as they are not permitted in Photo Travel. Remember Photo Travel is about the truth.

**Close up pictures of people or objects must include features that provide information about the location.**

If you have an image of a person or of an object that more or less is filling the frame, then the person or object should not be just shown on their own. This is contrary to normal portraits in photography where we are only interested in the subject's face. In Photo Travel the image must tell the travel story. The image must have some information which tells the judge something about the environment or the location. This information is not required to be specific or recognizable. The purpose behind this rule is to eliminate photographs that could have been taken in a studio instead of the natural environment of the person(s) shown in the photograph.

**Techniques that add, relocate, replace or remove any element of the original image, except by cropping, are not permitted.**

**The only allowable adjustments are removal of dust or digital noise, restoration of the appearance of the original scene, and complete conversion to greyscale monochrome. Other derivations, including infrared, are not permitted.**

Now we get down to the nitty gritty. What post processing is allowed and what is not allowed in Photo Travel?

- Dodge and Burn. This is allowed but let me explain. Digital cameras have a lower dynamic range than the eye. As a result, the shadows may be deeper and/or the highlights brighter than the eye perceived in the original scene. Dodging and burning are techniques we then use to change the brightness of selected areas of an image. For example, when shadows are blocked but the eye could perceive detail in the original scene, dodging can bring out the details in the shadows as the eye perceived them. The image may have bright details that the eye was unaware of. It's OK to dodge those areas. However, these adjustments



The above image clearly shows characteristic features which would be identifiable if one were to visit this scene. This image adheres to the PT definition. Photo © **Nadia Filiaggi, EPSA.**

must look natural and they are allowed because the PT definition states: restoration of the appearance of the original scene.

- The use of heavy burning to hide elements in the image is not permitted.
- Sharpening. Some lenses are soft when used at low aperture values, or the maker might not have used correct focusing. Image manipulation in post-processing can lead to soft edges—one has to make sure the image looks natural. Sharpening the image slightly is OK if it brings the scene back to what the maker saw. Over sharpening to the point where artifacts such as high-contrast edges show up does not look natural. The key here is “restoration of the appearance of the original scene”
- White Balance/ Colour Correction is allowed
- You can use HDR as long as the image looks natural.
- A stitched image is allowed as long as you present what you saw.
- Cropping, straightening and resizing is allowed.
- A vignette is allowed but must not be noticeable.
- Conversion to complete greyscale is allowed. No colour must be left in the image.
- Blurring is not allowed.
- Cloning is not allowed.
- Partial desaturation of all or parts of the image is not allowed.

The key here is “restoration of the appearance of the original scene.”

**All images must look natural.**

This is by far one of the most important sentences in the PT Definition. Always ask yourself does the image look natural. It should not be over saturated nor over sharpened. Likewise, images taken with extreme wide-angle lens or fish-eye lens do not look natural and are not permitted in Photo Travel sections.

The Photo Travel Division has released *The Guide for Judges and Chairs* and is available for download from the PSA Website. It is available in several languages. <https://psa-photo.org/index.php?divisions-photo-travel>

If you are uncertain if an image adheres to the PT Definition, please make use of the PT Evaluation Service which members can access after login. <https://psa-photo.org/index.php?divisions-photo-travel>

Finally, I wish to emphasise that we cannot expect the images in Photo Travel to be of the same standard as we find in PID or PPD. Photo Travel is not about images taken in the best light, perfect composition or models being directed—such images belong in PID or PPD. Photo Travel is about reality, the PTD was founded specifically for this kind of image, to show things as they really are and not like we wish they were. ■