

PSA Travel Aide in Action

Being at the right place, at the right time with the right equipment is everything in travel photography

George Garbeck
Township of
Washington,
New Jersey



George Garbeck

Under threatening skies, 14 avid photographers from the Ridgewood Camera Club in New Jersey went on a weekend excursion to Washington DC to shoot the annual Cherry Blossom Festival. Each ardent image-hunter had specific and different ideas of what to capture—each hoping to fulfill individual goals. For a short trip with no time to waste, this would be a daunting assignment. But the group leader was prepared for it in large part because of the discovery of a wonderful service called the **Photographic Society of America (PSA) Travel Aides**, which made the task much easier and ensured success.

It is well known that successful travel images are contingent upon having advance knowledge of the destination. One needs to know the obvious, like what to photograph, how to get there and what time of day the lighting best compliments the subject. But also required is knowledge about tripod usage, venue accessibility, weather, governmental restrictions, permits and releases. For some locations it's helpful to know customs regarding how local people feel about having a picture taken, how best to approach the subject,

and if remuneration will be expected. Details about these factors can make or break a trip. Yet not all this information can be found in standard travel guides.

Many beginning photographers rely on asking the native folk at each destination for input. People are very enthusiastic in talking about the best spot for a sunset, but a serious lensman soon realizes that the average person has some unusual ideas as to what makes a great photo opportunity; to say it is a hit-or-miss technique is being kind. A photographer soon learns to gather research from books, pamphlets, the Internet, and to network with other cameramen. But, none of these options compare with having access to the experience and knowledge of a serious photographer living in the destination area. This is what the PSA Travel Aide Service provides for its members.

The Ridgewood Camera Club leader researched and made the necessary hotel accommodations and restaurant reservations. But, that extra insight that only someone familiar with the area possesses was still needed. A few months before the trip, the director of the Travel Aide Service, **Ellie Webster, FPSA**, was contacted at elliewebster2@sbcglobal.net. The trip leader explained that the group would be going to Washington DC in April and could Ellie recommend anyone from the area to advise them. The director promptly responded with the contact information for long-time DC resident and PSA member, **Tom Hady, APSA, PPSA**.

The planned excursion was outlined to Tom in an e-mail. Over the next few weeks, right up until departure, Tom graciously volunteered a wealth of inside information about the photographic venues in the area. He also kept the group updated on the blooming schedule of cherry blossoms and the weather forecast. In addition Tom provided valuable travel tips for getting around the city and suggested side excursions should time permit. Within a large group there are various places that different people want to experience and Tom patiently provided information for any and all of them.

The trip went smoothly and the organizer wasn't concerned about the bad weather forecast; thanks to Tom alternative indoor photo opportunities had been planned. Fortunately the weather turned out to be fine, just threatening



*The well-equipped
photographer*



Cherry blossoms

enough to provide some interesting skies. The happy group scoured the city for images from dawn until after dusk, staying together and at times splitting up into smaller groups, confidently knowing the best places to be and the times to be there. Sunday morning, tired, with fond memories and full memory cards, they started back home after a fulfilling weekend.

Of all the complimentary e-mails received from group members the day after returning home, the one from **Joan Egan** stands out: "I realize that the first and second go-rounds of viewing "just taken pictures" can be misleading, but as a whole I have never come back from a trip in which I had as many good pictures as I did this time. ... I'm so pleased." Evidence of the group's success can be seen at www.ridgewoodcameraclub.org on the Photo Galleries / Field Trips 2007 page.

Thank you, PSA Travel Aide and thank you, Tom Hady.



Boy at the wall



Vietnam Memorial

Photos © George Garbeck

The Photo Travel Division is very active and members are invited to participate in the division. See the *Service & Activities* section in this issue for offerings.