

THROUGH THE LENS OF **LUCAS GILMAN**

Outdoor photography tips



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As one of the world's top adventure sports and travel photographers, Lucas Gilman captures powerful, incisive images that have wowed some of the most discriminating brands and media outlets worldwide, including National Geographic, Sports Illustrated, The New York Times, ESPN, the TODAY Show, CNN, Red Bull, Apple, SanDisk, Nikon, Patagonia and K2 Skis.

His lifelong love of adventure — and a serious addiction to color — drive his exciting style of photography. If it's extreme, he's shot it: the radical kayak descent over Abiqua Falls. Backcountry skiing throughout the Americas. Expeditions in India, Brazil and Costa Rica as well as sporting events including the Tour de France, X-Games, NFL playoffs and Ironman competitions.

In this guide, Lucas shares some of his favorite tips for capturing the beauty that sports and outdoors has to offer.

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FOR CONSISTENT COLORS AND EXPOSURES, USE A NARROW TONAL RANGE.

When photographing a scene that has bright and dark things together (sunlight on water and shadows in trees) the camera will lose much of the detail and you'll end up with an overexposed white and an underexposed black. Instead, look for mid-tones with little difference between the brightest highlights and darkest shadow. Flowers and trees, for example, are often best photographed on overcast, drizzly days. Your eye can handle a difference in brightness (a "dynamic range") of about 2,000:1 (11 camera "stops"), while some digital cameras can only handle a range of 8:1 (three stops). Ansel Adams' "Zone System" divided light levels into 11 zones and advised using a narrow zone (or tonal) range.



SHOOT DURING THE GOLDEN HOUR.

My favorite time to shoot is the hour right after sunrise or the hour just before sunset — known commonly as the golden hour when the sun is low in the sky. At this angle, the sun provides much more interesting and dramatic lighting. Plan your shoots around these hours and you will be amazed at the great images you'll produce.



WORKING THE SUBJECT.

Once you've found your spot and the light is right: shoot, shoot, shoot and shoot some more. Work with the subject/athlete and take different shots from different angles. The more you take, the more likely you'll succeed with your photographic vision. Don't be afraid to take 10 shots and edit out nine later. CompactFlash & SD cards are super affordable these days, and it took a lot of time and effort to get to into that perfect position. Find different, unusual viewpoints. Shoot from high and from low. National Geographic magazine uses only one out of every 1,000 shots taken, on average.





SHOOTING LANDSCAPES.

Try to have something dynamic in the foreground. This gives depth and scale — using a person/athlete also adds human interest. Look for a high vantage point such as a hotel balcony, rooftop restaurant, or wall. Late afternoon or sunrise is usually best. You can use a polarizer or graduated neutral density filter to enhance the sky. Really study the light, especially when shooting from a high angle. Shadows can be your best friend, and make for very interesting photos.

SHOOTING WATER/SNOW

SHUTTER SPEEDS: NOTHING IN THE MIDDLE—VERY SLOW OR VERY FAST.

Experiment with slow shutter speeds, perhaps $1/30$ to $1/4s$, so that the rushing water creates a soft, romantic blur, or shoot at a shutter speed above 2500/per second to freeze every drop of water. A polarizer can cut glare but may also reduce cool reflections on the water. Backlit water can really add depth to an image, as can water that is frozen by a fast shutter speed on a dark background — the same goes for snow.





SUNSETS.

The best time is just before the sun hits horizon, and the afterglow 10-30 minutes after the sun has set. Meter off the brightest part of the sky. Try adding a person or athlete in the foreground (they'll appear as a silhouette) for human interest, depth and character. Make sure the background area behind the subject is free of clutter.

DUSK AND NIGHT SHOTS.

Dusk shots are best about 15-30 minutes after sunset, when there is still some color in the sky and the color temperature is changing. To add depth, shoot from one end of a bridge or find some other feature coming toward you. A tripod is a necessity — I like a light, well-built, carbon-fiber tripod. Auto exposure usually works fine, but also try manual exposure using a cable release and the "B" (bulb — open) setting. Take several shots with 2, 4, 8, 12 and 16 seconds. Check your white balance on your camera to compensate for the tungsten and fluorescent lights that will be coming on, using the fluorescent white balance setting will add pink to the sky.





BAD WEATHER SHOOTING.

Dress warm and cover up your extremities. As Lefty Kreh, the famous fly fishing guide, said, "It's always going to be colder and wetter than you expect." Dress in layers and wear a waterproof jacket and pants. The more you can focus on your photography rather than your discomfort, the more successful you will be. Bad weather doesn't mean bad photographs; it just changes your options. Overcast skies reduce contrast and are preferred for trees and foliage. Colors may appear cool and bluish so add an 81A, B, or C filter to warm up the image or use the built-in white balance in your camera. If the sky is lifeless, disguise it with an overhanging tree, or exclude it completely by raising the horizon in your frame. When low clouds or rain reduce color saturation, try thinking in terms of black and white (you can shoot in color and convert later in post production with your photo editing software) to emphasize the range of gray tones. You may need a faster ISO: 200 or 400 since there's less light. Don't worry about noise at a higher ISO. Modern DSLR cameras like the Nikon D7100, D600, D800 and D4 handle high ISOs beautifully. Storms and heavy rain add drama and power to images, and you may even want to try a timelapse. Dusk shots are improved with reflections of neon lights in puddles. Clouds create moving patterns of interesting highlights, particularly when a storm is clearing. Fog makes rivers and valleys look mystical and primordial. If you are worried about the safety of your DSLR in the elements, buy a rain cover. Or you can turn a standard shower cap into a cost-effective cover. When the weather is bad, look for subjects wearing colorful clothing. In snow, give a slight overexposure (slower shutter speed or +1) to keep the whites from appearing gray.

SHOOT IMAGES IN THE
MOMENT AND NEVER
PUT ANYTHING OFF
UNTIL TOMORROW.
YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT
WILL COME TOMORROW.

The weather could change, the leaves on the trees could blow away, your model/athlete may have to leave unexpectedly – anything that can happen, will happen.



SELECT ONLY THE BEST GEAR AND YOU'LL BE READY FOR ANYTHING.

While I've been lucky enough to earn some deep experience through my travels, I still listen to other professionals to learn about the techniques and gear that work for them. And that's the real reason I only work with G-Technology drives – beyond their well-deserved reputation for performance and reliability, a lot of other professionals rely on them too. So I hope you'll use what I've gained from my experiences to fuel your own successful explorations.

NOW, GET OUT THERE AND START SHOOTING.





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