

# TAKE BETTER TRAVEL PHOTOS



Winner of the  
Travel Photo of  
the Year 2015

Portfolio category,  
**Christopher Roche**  
tells us how to capture  
shots of religious events

**D**evotion, faith traditions and belief systems—the thirst for spiritual fulfilment fascinates me. Two of these images [pictured, main and bottom-right] show predominantly women devotees arriving before dawn along the banks of the Ganges, India, to make their offerings to the rising sun. This ancient ritual, known as Usha Arghya, takes place on the final day of Chhath Puja, a festival dedicated to Surya, the Hindu sun god. The women in yellow stands out [bottom-right image], calm and almost Madonna-like among the jostling crowds. I do find that the imagery of my photographs often appears to transcend the different faiths.

To capture this scene, I've been there since 4:30am waiting for the right moment, and that is key. The time of day is crucial. If there are other travellers at the event, they tend to only stay for the highlights, but there is much magic to be found even after they've all disappeared. **W**

You can see Christopher Roche's Travel Photo of the Year 2015-winning portfolio images here. See more of his work at [chrisrochephotographer.co.uk](http://chrisrochephotographer.co.uk)



## 1 Settle in

I spend as much time as possible at the event before touching my camera—sometimes days. That way I get accustomed to the place, the pace and the energy, while the locals can become accustomed to me too. I observe, just waiting for the right opportunity or for the photograph to present itself.

## 4 Consider making a donation

There is no general rule about paying for a photograph. I've never been asked to by a pilgrim. If a priest or a monk has opened up his church or monastery especially for me, I will leave a donation.



**2 Dress appropriately**  
You don't want to stand out as a tourist, so dress appropriately. I am as sensitive and as invisible as possible.

**3 Always ask first**  
I will always request a subject's permission first by gently raising my camera with a questioning expression. Sometimes I get a nod, sometimes I am ignored and sometimes I get a shake of the head. If someone doesn't want to be photographed, I completely respect that.

**5 Do your research**  
It pays off. Study the place, the rituals, the geography, the direction of the sun and what other photographs have been taken of this event before.

