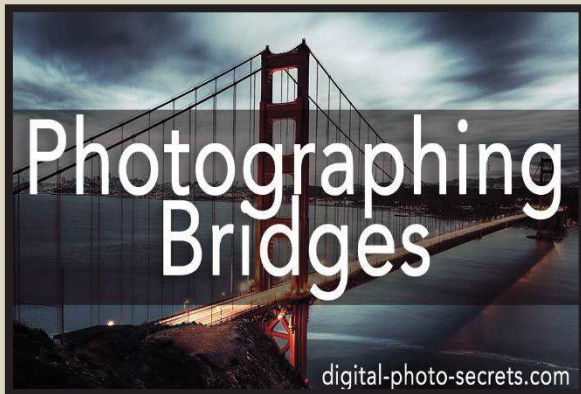


# PELICAN NOTES- TECHNIQUES

## How to Photograph Bridges

by David Peterson



From cat walks to the Golden Gate, bridges make great photographic subjects. So great, in fact, that many beginners make the mistake of believing that those bridges are just going to photograph themselves. And while it is true that bridges are often spectacular and beautiful, taking great pictures of them is not actually a

simple matter. Read on to see my tips and tricks for great bridge photography.

### Settings

Use a low ISO so that you can capture a complete range of tones and a noise free image, and use a small aperture (large f-number) so that you can get good depth of field from the beginning of the bridge to the end. And shoot in raw, if your camera gives you that option—very large bridges are almost always going to be set against the sky, and anytime you include the sky you are increasing the amount of contrast in your photographs. Shooting in raw gives you a much broader range of tones from black to white, which can prevent silhouetting and other problems that can occur when you try to shoot objects against a very bright sky.

You will also need a tripod, because low ISOs combined with small apertures often mean slow shutter speeds, and you may find that you can't hand-hold your camera. The tripod you choose needs to be a sturdy one—you're not always going to be able to place it on flat ground, so make sure that it is heavy enough to remain stable even if there is wind or irregular ground. Some tripods come with a hook suspended between the three legs where you can hang your camera

bag—this is a great way to make it even more stable. You could even hang a sandbag there if you need the extra weight.

Along with the tripod, you will also need a [remote release](#)—the reason why you need one of these is because the simple act of touching your shutter button to make the exposure can be enough to introduce [camera shake](#) during a longer [exposure](#). If you don't have a remote release don't worry, you don't need to run out and buy one. Instead, you can [use your camera's self timer](#) as a stand-in for a remote release. Set it to around five seconds and that should be enough time for the vibration to stop.

Another piece of equipment that's very nice to have is a [graduated neutral density filter](#). This is a filter that is dark on the top and clear on the bottom with a graduated transition in between (hence the name). Keep in mind that this filter



is only really useful in a scene where the bridge isn't directly over the sky, since you'll be using the dark part of the filter to darken the sky. If the bridge is there too then it's going to become much darker than it would've been without the filter, and that's probably not what you want.

[Into the Distance](#) by Flickr user jeffsmallwood

A ND filter without the graduated feature is also a good thing to have, because with one of these you can get that soft, misty appearance in the water. If you're shooting during the day, you will need an ND filter that blocks at about 10 stops of light—this will help you achieve a really long exposure that will make that water look really cool.

A [wide angle lens](#) is essential for bridge photography, because it will be very difficult for you to otherwise capture the entire bridge without standing at a pretty significant distance away from it. Another cool thing about those wide angle lenses is that they

can exaggerate those parts of the bridge in the foreground, which can make your subject look larger and more dramatic. Just take care that you're not including too much water or too much sky in those wide angle shots—if the bridge looks diminutive

compared to everything around it, you need to get closer and [fill more of the frame](#) with the bridge itself.

That doesn't mean you should leave your [telephoto lens](#) home, though—you can also get some great zoomed in shots of the structures of the bridge, and when get close you can make all of those structures



a look much more dense and complicated when you're using a telephoto lens.

[Holding it Up](#) by Flickr user Mark Seton

## Time of day

The best time of the day to shoot bridges is (I'm sure it won't surprise you to hear) during the [golden hour](#). The golden hour is that time of day about one hour after sunrise and about one hour before sunset when the light is soft and diffused, and you won't have any problems with blown out highlights or too-black shadows. I won't say that it isn't a little tricky to shoot bridges during this time of day, however, because when you include the sun in the frame you actually increase the dynamic range considerably, and you may end up with a beautiful sky and a [silhouetted bridge](#). This can look pretty cool, but it may not be exactly what you want for every shot. If you must include the sun, consider shooting a [series of images](#) and then [combining them later](#) on into a single file—you'll need at least one shot that's exposed for the bridge itself, and one that's exposed for the sky, but it's often a good idea to take between three and five images at various exposures to give you the best range of tones.

You'll have to work fast whenever you're shooting during those golden hours, because the light changes quickly and you aren't going to have a lot of time. Keep metering your scene and making adjustments as the sun rises and sets, and try not to spend

too much time wandering around and deciding where to stand—ideally you want to have all of that worked out before the golden hour begins, so you can spend the short period of time you have just taking photos.



[Alcantara Docks - Marina Golden Hour](#) by Flickr user Salvador Nobre da Veiga

## Bridges are landscapes

A bridge, especially a large one, does not exist in a vacuum. Bridges are a part of the [landscape](#) that they occupy, so you need to shoot them using some of the same rules that you would use for any landscape image. Try to [put something in the foreground](#) to give your photo a sense of scale—this could be part of the bridge itself or it could be some other element such as a tree or a pile of boulders.

Remember that [line](#) is extremely important in bridge photography—bridges are a great example of leading lines, and they can help draw your viewer's eye into the scene and give the entire shot a great sense of depth and dimension. Bridges also converge the way that roads and railroad tracks do, and [converging lines](#) also add to that sense of three dimensions. Make sure you think in terms of [diagonals](#)—if you orient your subject so that it creates a strong diagonal from foreground to background, you're going to have a much more compelling image than you would if you shot the bridge as a horizontal.

Don't forget to get closer and [shoot the details](#), too. Some large bridges (such as the Golden Gate) provide protected walkways for pedestrians, which will give you an

opportunity to [zoom in](#) on those cables and beams and other structures that add up to



make the bridge as a whole. And make sure you look up—those features that tower over your head when you're standing on that bridge are going to make for really interesting photos because most people never think to view the bridge from that particular perspective.

If you can do it without putting yourself in danger, bridges can be a great place to find [symmetrical compositions](#). This is where your telephoto lens is going to come in handy—find a feature of the bridge that is a mirror image on the right and left, and center it in the frame for a really interesting symmetrical composition.

[Brooklyn Bridge](#) by Flickr user [\\_Hadock\\_](#)

## Conclusion

Have fun and stay safe—remember that any time you are taking photos in potentially high-traffic areas it's a good idea to bring along a friend to watch your back. And please make especially sure to keep safety in mind anytime you get very close to a bridge. It may be tempting it to stand in the middle of the bridge to make that symmetrical composition, but that is also quite dangerous and I never advise it unless it's a foot bridge or a bridge that has very little traffic. Stay on the areas designated for pedestrians, or stay a safe distance away.

There are a million photo opportunities at every bridge, so don't just think in terms of that bridge as a whole—make sure you get close and shoot from every angle. The cool thing about bridges is that you could spend an afternoon photographing a single bridge and end up with a really varied series of images that almost don't look like they came from the same photo shoot. So be creative and try everything you think of—I can almost promise you'll end up with a big collection of amazing shots.

# Summary:

1. Settings and equipment
  - Select a low ISO
  - Shoot in raw
  - Use a tripod
  - Use a wide angle lens
  - Small aperture
2. Filters
  - Even out the light with a graduated ND
  - Use a regular ND to get the “misty water” effect
3. Shoot during the golden hour
4. Composition
  - Something in the foreground
  - Shoot the details
  - Look for symmetry

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## TOOLS IN CAMERA RAW

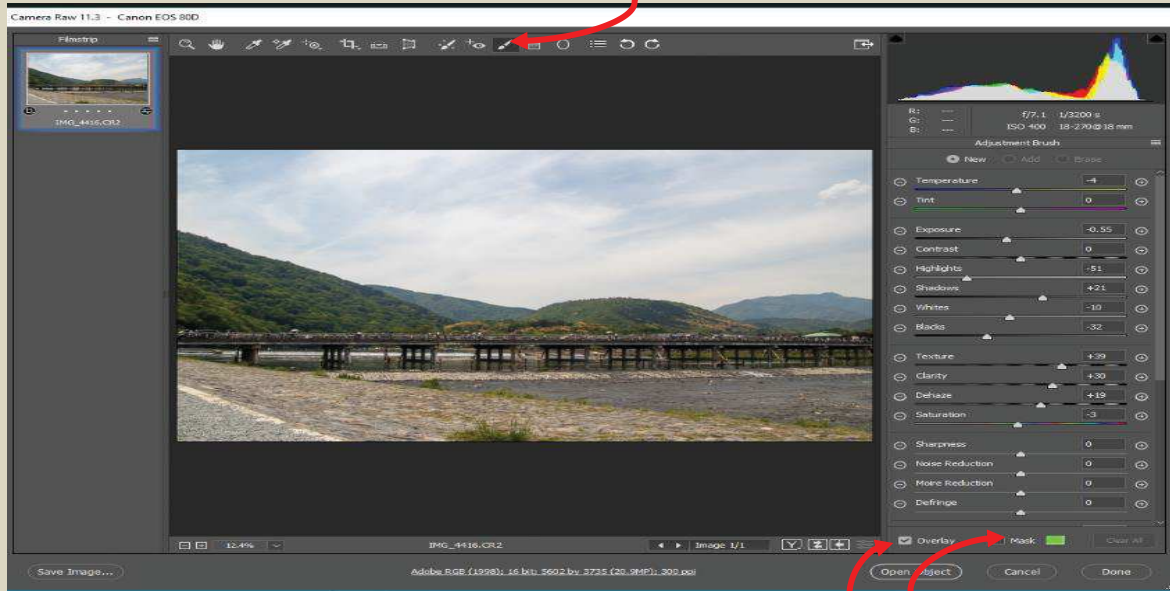
**Just a couple of notes on some tools in Camera Raw.**

- 1) There is a new tool in the recent update**
- 2) Masking in Camera Raw – Yes it can be done!**
  - a. If you click on the brush tool on the top panel of Camera Raw – 11<sup>th</sup> tool along or next to red eye correction – a panel will come up on the right side of Camera Raw.
  - b. Down the bottom are two boxes – Overlay and Mask
  - c. Overlay shows on your picture where the points are that you select-click on the box next to overlay to choose this option and show points on picture and click again to hide these.
  - d. Mask – shows the areas of the picture that you mask – by clicking on the box to left of “Mask” the masking areas will show, untick to hide.

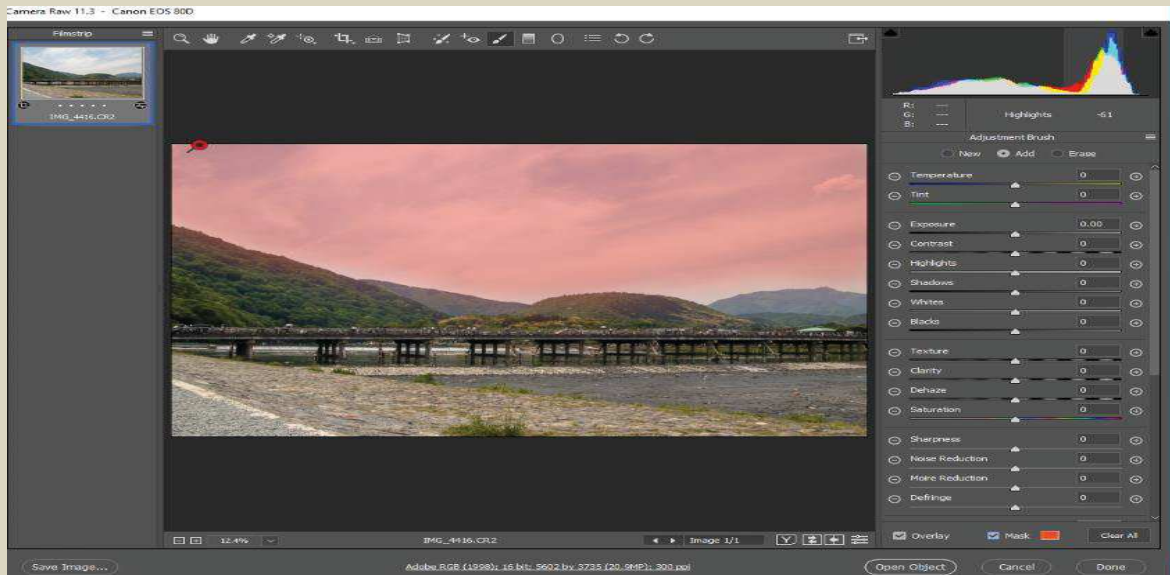
- e. The colour of the “mask” can be changed by clicking on the box to the right of the work “mask”.

### 3. What to do!!

- a. Now you have selected the brush tool

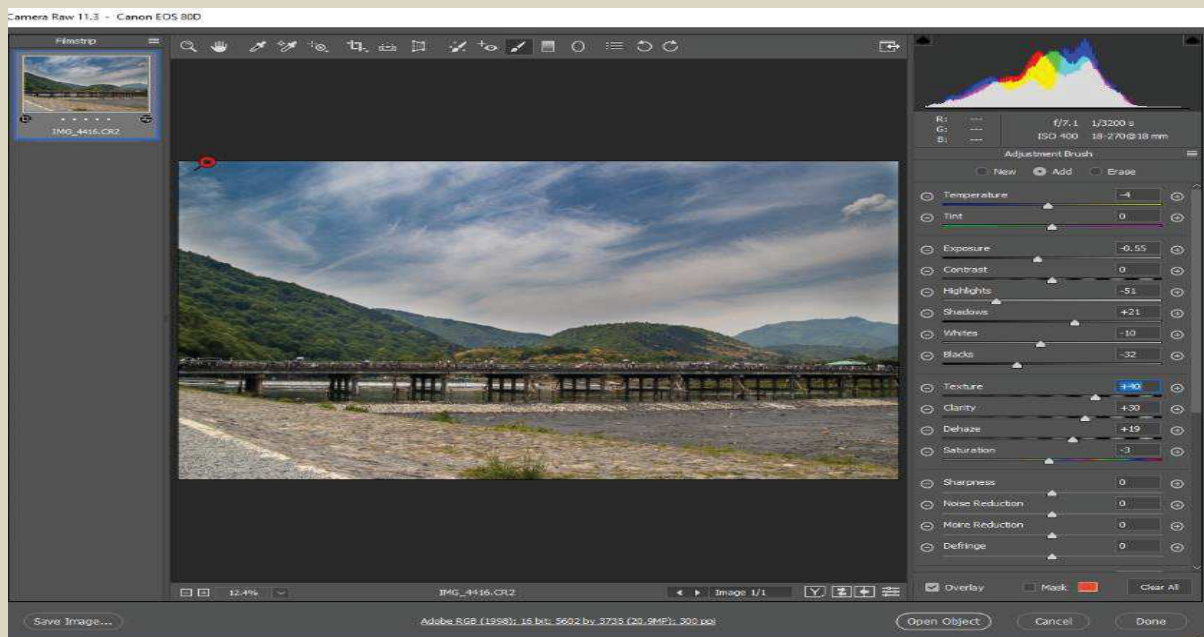


- b. you have ticked the Overlay and Mask box



- c. now just paint over where you want to adjust
  - ie: In picture above the sky was blown out, so I painted over sky(you can see it is a pink mask).

- d. untick the mask box so it hides the mask (but it is still there)
- e. do what ever adjustments that you want to do.



## New Texture Slider

There is a new Texture slider (which is in the new version of Camera Raw)

If you play with it in your pictures it adds more texture or less. ie: in picture above the texture slider has been moved to right to add more texture into the clouds. If moved to the left it smooths the clouds out.

Give it a go and see what you can do 😊