

Jim Zuckerman's

# PHOTO INSIGHTS

June 2026



Capturing What We See, Or Not  
White on White  
Generative Fill  
Photo Tours  
Photography quiz  
Ask Jim  
Student Showcase  
The Story Behind the Picture  
Back issues



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*On the cover:* A Eurasian eagle owl in flight at a falconry center in Scotland. *On this page:* The pipe organ in St. Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh, Scotland.

You may download this issue [HERE](#).



Clients ask me all the time if I get permission from people in my travels to take their picture. The answer is yes, I do. If a subject is relatively far away and I'm using a long lens -- and they don't know I'm photographing them -- then I don't ask permission. Most of the time, though, I do because I think it's the respectful thing to do. If I don't speak the language, it's a simple matter of pointing to the camera and then pointing at them. Everyone understands what I'm asking.

It is true, however, there are two problems when I ask permission. First, the person might say no. If that's the case, there's nothing to be done. The second issue is that when I ask, the candidness, the spontaneity and the honest expression I was hoping for will most likely be gone.

So, I watch the person through my camera, waiting for a look, an expression, a mood which drew me to this particular subject in the first place. It usually takes some time, but eventually I'll get what I wanted. I have to get past the awkwardness the subject may feel, but even a few minutes of familiarity will make the subject become more relaxed. Sometimes just engaging them with a simple compliment, buying something their selling, showing them a picture on the LCD screen, or offering a friendly smile will be enough to break the ice. When that happens, the expressions and body language of the subject will appear more real.

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# CAPTURING WHAT WE SEE

## OR NOT

For the photographic purists among you who insist on using a camera to capture only what we see with our eyes -- as opposed to any kind of photographic manipulation -- I have bad news. Cameras and lenses do not capture what we see. In many instances they approximate what we see, but usually they change a subject or scene so it is completely different compared to what we see with our eyes.

For example, when was the last time you saw an out of focus background behind something? The

answer, of course, is never. Telephoto lenses characteristically blur elements behind subjects like the shot of the sunbittern in Brazil, below. We accept this as part of the photographic process, but it is not reality. It's completely a man-made construct.

When I photographed this bird, what I saw is shown on the next page.

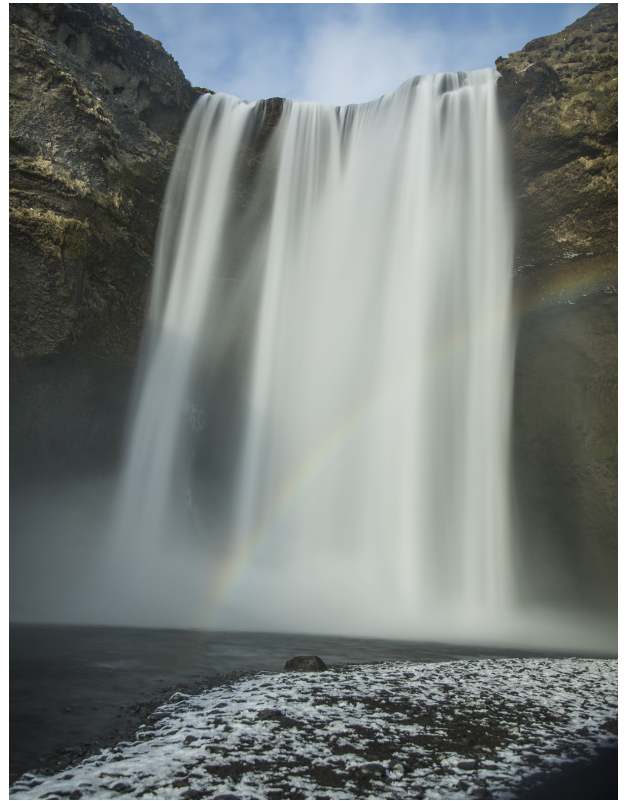
What about black and white? Do we see in tones of grays? No, we don't. So why don't



people object to black and white images as they do to replacing a sky? Or to cloning out a distracting element in the background?

And slow shutter speeds to blur water? Give me a break! This has nothing to do with what we see, nothing to do with what's real. It is, in essence, a creative technique we use to make an image we imagine. A fantasy, if you will. So, why do many photographers insist they can't manipulate their pictures with Photoshop, but it's perfectly fine to manipulate images using other means?

And then there are the exaggerated perspectives of wide angle and telephoto lenses. Wide angles elongate elements close to the shooting position and make the immediate foreground disproportionately large compared to the background. We never see this with our eyes.



Study the two bottom images on the next two pages. I photographed these 17th



century lime kilns on the east coast of Scotland. I took the photo below with a 24mm lens, and I was standing 3 feet from the stern of the rotting boat. This is a landscape technique I've used for decades -- a wide angle lens used close to the foreground with a small lens aperture for complete depth of field -- but it distorts the scene in a way that has nothing to do with what I saw. The boat is elongated, the stern is disproportionately large, and the kilns in the distance look too small, too far away, and too small compared to what was real.

Had I used a wider angle lens, such as a 16mm or 14mm, all of these distortions would be even more pronounced.

By contrast, for the picture on page 7, I used a 70mm medium telephoto. I moved back

about 40 feet and included a second boat, but here you can see the compression typical of telephoto lenses. The boats now look much closer to the kilns than they really are. In addition, the boat on the right now seems much shorter than it did in the wide angle version. When I looked at the scene, it didn't look like this at all.

And then there's the contrast problem. Digital captures, and film in the past, cause an increase in contrast in which shadows go dark and highlights became too light. Before the advent of HDR, we could do very little to correct this issue. Now, with HDR, non-moving subjects can be exposed with multiple frames showing detail in both the highlights and the shadows. This technique brings the exposure back to what we see with our eyes, but it takes





manipulation of the tonal values.

The point I'm making is the photographic process often does not capture what we see. The closest we can come to reproducing reality is to 1) use a 50mm lens, 2) shoot with complete depth of field, f/16 or smaller, 3) use a fast shutter so nothing is blurred, 4) shoot in color, and 5) use HDR so none of the shadows go black and the highlights are not blown out.

Any other type of photograph involves some kind of manipulation: lens distortion, HDR, fast shutter so there's no blur, shallow depth of field, and so on. Club competitions, publishers, and photographers draw their line somewhere, accepting certain kinds of manipulations and denying others. For me, I love making images no matter how I get there. For you, it's your own personal choice. §



# White on White

Everyone loves color. So do I. But there are times when a visual surprise is very effective in photography. One such circumstance is when brilliant, complementary, and dynamic colors are completely absent.

With this in mind, one of my favorite color scenarios is white on white. It's elegant, compelling, and particularly beautiful.

I pursue white themes three ways. First, white or translucent subjects backlit by the sun, a white



sky, or any artificial light source will produce a white on white image. The barn owl in flight below is an example. In this case,





the backlighting came from a white, overcast sky. This is not something I planned; rather, it was a situation I recognized and then took advantage of it.

The second way I find white on white themes is in winter with snowy environments. Subjects like polar bears, arctic foxes, snowy owls, snow covered trees, and even white dogs look great with a pure white background.



The third way I make white on white images is to create still life images of various themes. For example, real or artificial flowers make great subjects, and with complementary vases and a simple white background, you can produce artistic arrangements in your own home. To make the image on the next page, I bought the various elements at Hobby Lobby.

### **Exposure**

Since all light meters are designed to produce accurate readings with middle toned subjects, you won't get an accurate exposure of white elements. The images will typically be too dark because the meter only understands middle gray. It looks at a white subject and gives you an exposure to make it gray, i.e., underexposed. There are two solutions for this problem, but I only use one of them. You can overexpose the

shot by approximately 2/3 f/stop and then finish tweaking the image in post-processing. Or, you can let the image go dark and simply work with the exposure slider in Lightroom or ACR. I do the latter. The relatively small amount of underexposure isn't enough to introduce too much noise.

### Blue tint

When white subjects are photographed in diffused light, such as an overcast sky like the cottonwood tree, right, the images tend to be imbued with a blue color tint. Sometimes this works and sometimes it doesn't. To mitigate the blue, go to **Edit > Hue/Saturation** in Photoshop, choose 'blue', and move the saturation slider to the left. This reduces or eliminates the unwanted blue color. §



# Unbelievable Generative Fill

Most of you probably already use Generative Fill in Photoshop, but for those of you who don't -- and for those of you who don't fully appreciate its remarkable capability -- I wanted to share a picture with you that most photographers would say is completely hopeless.

The image below is 12th century Jedburg Abbey, a beautiful ruin in Scotland. I was there last year and there was so much

scaffolding due to restoration repairs that I didn't even bother shooting. Last month when I returned, all of the ugly scaffolding was gone, but as you can see there was now some metal fencing that didn't exactly look like it was from the 12th century.

I took the shot I wanted, despite not knowing if I could get rid of it. I used a 16mm wide angle which exaggerated the perspective of the medieval structure. The width of the lens included the fencing; obviously the only way this image was going to work was to



# Iceland Drone Tour

August 24 - September 2, 2026



eliminate the fencing. So that evening on my laptop I gave it a try.

To use Generative Fill in Photoshop, first select the area that needs to be replaced. In this case, I had two major areas on either side of the frame that needed replacing. Not only that, but each area was quite large. I used the lasso tool to make the selection by encircling the two areas of metal fencing.

Next, I chose **Edit > Generative Fill** and hit 'generate' (you can also simply click the *return* key on a Mac or the *enter* key on a PC).

Miraculously, the fencing disappeared. Even more miraculous, though, were the new elements that were created and smoothly integrated into the scene to complete the stonework, the walkway, and the vegetation. Note that the fencing blocked large areas of the

abbey architecture, and those areas were replaced. The AI aspect of Generative Fill wasn't 100% accurate, but it's so close that as far as I'm concerned, it's perfect.

This technology allowed me to make a perfect picture under imperfect circumstances. Instead of being frustrated and disappointed because I wasn't able to get a good picture, I could now produce the ideal image.

To finish the picture, I added one of my skies using **Edit > Sky Replacement**. This type of cloudy sky produces soft light, and that's the type of lighting you see on the abbey. When adding a new sky, the lighting from the sky must match the light on the ground.

As a final touch, and to make the stonework look more dynamic, I added clarity and contrast in post-processing. §



# Frog and Reptile Workshop

June 13 - 14, 2026



# Exotic Birds of Colombia

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Sept. 23 to Oct. 3, 2026



# The Pantanal, Brazil

Nov. 11 - 19, 2027



# Photography Quiz

1. What is a photogram?
  - a. An email with a photo attached
  - b. Light passing through a translucent object onto photographic paper
  - c. A photo on Instagram
  - d. A photographic logo
2. The Inverse Square Law states that when the distance light travels is doubled, the intensity reduction of the light is also doubled.
  - a. True
  - b. False
3. How to increase depth of field in macro photography:
  - a. Use a small lens aperture
  - b. Make the back of the camera parallel with the plane of the subject
  - c. Increase the subject-to-camera distance
  - d. All of the above
4. Which exposure is correct when you want to photograph the moon at night showing lunar detail?
  - a. 1/400, f/8, and 200 ISO
  - b. 1/30, f/5.6, and 400 ISO
5. When an airline weighs your camera backpack at checkin and says it's over the weight limit to carry it on, your best solution to deal with this is:
  - a. Plead
  - b. Crack a joke
  - c. Get indignant
  - d. Wear a photo vest and stuff the pockets with lenses, making the backpack lighter
6. Theoretically, when using P, Av, and Tv exposure modes, photographing a solid white wall and a solid black wall will give you identical exposure settings.
  - a. True
  - b. False
7. Which is the sharpest aperture on any lens?
  - a. F/22
  - b. One or two stops down from wide open
8. If you have a cheap, flimsy tripod, you can take sharp pictures if:
  - a. There is no wind
  - b. You use the 10-second self-timer
  - c. You are not using a telephoto lens
  - d. All of the above
9. When you use the articulating LCD screen, you lose 1/3 f/stop of light.
  - a. True
  - b. False
10. When Jim first got involved in photography in the late 60's, there were many film camera manufacturers. Which of the following camera models did *not* exist back then?
  - a. Kowa
  - b. Miranda
  - c. Topcon
  - d. Norco

Answers on page 51

# UPCOMING PHOTO WORKSHOPS



## FROG & REPTILE WORKSHOP in Kansas City

This is an exciting macro workshop in which you will be able to photograph about 40 species of colorful dart frogs and exotic reptiles. Held in a hotel conference room, Jim sets up natural backgrounds for outstanding photos. The photo at left shows a Jackson chameleon with the background replaced in Photoshop.

June 13 - 14, 2026



## GREAT GRAY OWLS, CANADA

Get up close and personal with these spectacular birds flying with their magnificent wing spans. The slow flying owls are easy to photograph, even for beginners, and you will absolutely love your pictures!

February 13 - 18, 2027



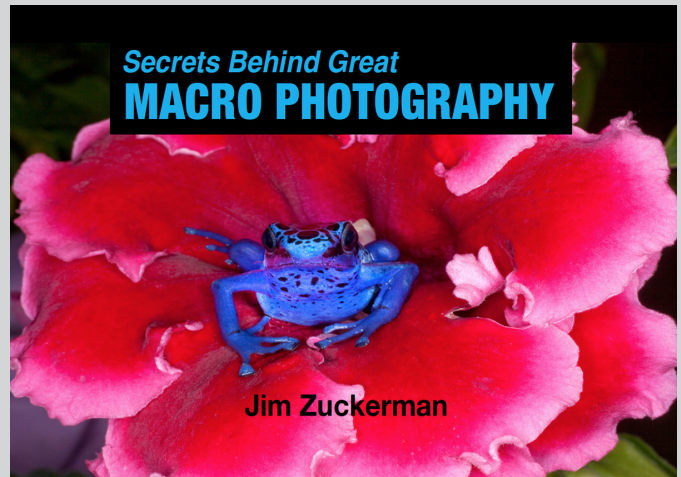
## TEXAS BIRDS

Get up close and personal to many species of exotic and colorful birds. We shoot from a blind and get frame-filling shots of cardinals, green jays, crested caracaras, painted buntings, and more. Based in McAllen, Texas.

May 12 -15, 2027

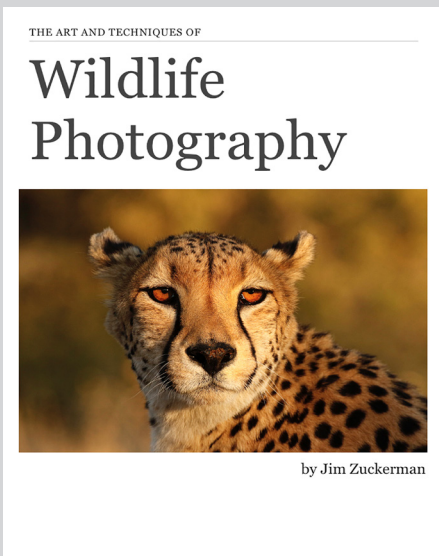
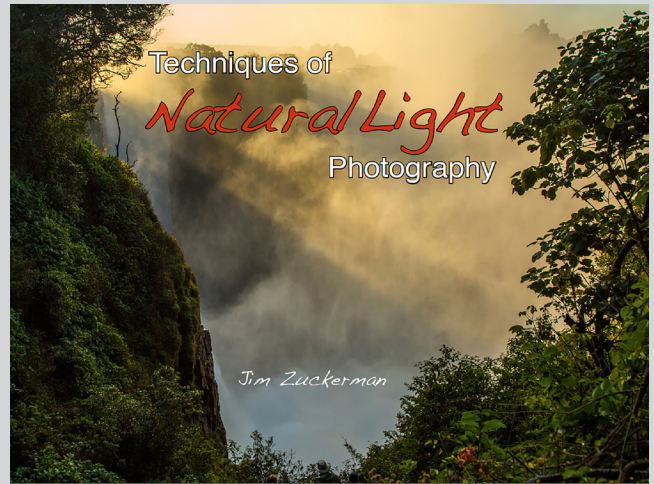
# Expand your photographic artistry with *eBooks*

Click on any ebook to see inside



# eBooks continued

Click on any ebook to see inside



# Carnival in Venice

January 30 - February 5, 2027



# What's Wrong with this Picture?



Photographed these windows in 12th century Dryburgh Abbey in Scotland with early morning light. There was a tree casting a shadow on the ruins, and to my eyes at the time, the contrast wasn't bad. I could see full detail in both the highlights and the shadows.

One of the challenges in photography is that photographic images, whether film or digital, gain contrast. It's innate to the medium. So, while the scene didn't seem to have harsh contrast at the time, in the picture the shadows have gone almost black with little detail. This isn't ideal. I could have used HDR at the time, but I didn't. I felt this image didn't warrant the effort . . . and I wanted to see if I could use post-processing techniques to make the image successful.



In the final version, the shadows look very much like I saw them without the terrible contrast. To achieve this in ACR, I moved the *shadows slider* all the way to the right and the *highlights slider* all the way to the left. I then moved the *exposure slider* to the right until I liked the overall exposure.

This was done in Adobe Camera Raw (Lightroom has the same sliders). When I opened the image in Photoshop, I used the dodge tool to do a little touch-up; meaning, I lightened a few more shadow areas to further reduce the overall contrasty look.

Had I used HDR, the result would have been almost identical. Not all situations can be dealt with using ACR and Lightroom, though. The greater the contrast, the more HDR would be needed. §

# Indonesia Wildlife

October 29 - November 8, 2027



# SHORT AND SWEET

1. Photographing from a drone gives the most unique perspective we've never had before. Notwithstanding helicopters, which are super expensive and not available most places, drones have opened the door to incredible image making. This is the ruins of Dalquharran Castle in Scotland showing the decay of a once great home.



2. Most cities illuminate great architecture, monuments, and tourist attractions at night. This is especially true in Europe. This is the Falkirk Wheel in Falkirk, Scotland. It is striking in the day, but at night it's magical and very alien-like. The lights on the underside of the structure embellish the scene; at twilight it's particularly photogenic.



3. Coming up with cute and funny ideas to photograph puppies is one of my favorite things to do. Here, inspired by the movie, E.T., where the little alien hid in a closet and blended with stuffed animals, I surrounded a cocker spaniel puppy with lots of toy animals. This makes me smile every time I see it.



4. Photographing lightning during summer months is easy at night. Focus on a distant street lamp or flashlight, use manual exposure mode and a 30 second exposure at f/8 or f/11. When the 30 second exposure time has elapsed, press the shutter again. When lightning occurs, it will be captured during the interval. §



# Ethiopia photo tour

Go back in time 20,000 years

January 5 - 18, 2027



Surma tribe



Dallol Depression

# ASK JIM

Every month, Jim answers a question from his online students, from people who participate in his tours and workshops, or from subscribers to this magazine. If you have a question you'd like Jim to answer, please drop him a note at [photos@jimzuckerman.com](mailto:photos@jimzuckerman.com).

**Q:** Jim . . . Can I do a pano of the Milky Way? If so, how do I do it?  
Robert Nance, Rochester, New York

**A:** Yes, you can. The image below is a 7-frame pano of the Milky Way over the Palouse in Washington State. Each panel was exposed at 20 seconds, f/2.8, ISO 3200 and I overlapped each section of the sky by about 50%. Plus, I painted the farm house with light. In Photoshop, I stitched the frames together from Bridge with the following command: Tools > Photoshop > Photomerge.



# Partial List of Photography Tours 2026 - 2027

EXOTIC COLOMBIA BIRDS  
Sept/Oct 2026



ASIA for BEGINNERS  
Oct 2026



DUBAI & ABU DHABI  
Nov 2026



WINTER WILDLIFE WORKSHOP  
Dec 2026



ETHIOPIA  
Jan 2027



CARNIVAL in VENICE  
Jan/Feb 2027



GREAT GRAY OWLS  
Feb 2027



TEXAS BIRDS WORKSHOP  
May 2027



CHILE: THE DESERT to the SEA  
Sep 2027



VIETNAM  
Oct 2027



INDONESIA WILDLIFE  
Oct/Nov 2027



THE PANTANAL, BRAZIL  
Nov 2027



# WINTER WILDLIFE WORKSHOP

December 16 - 20, 2026



Mountain lion



Arctic fox

# STUDENT SHOWCASE

Each month, Jim features one student who took beautiful and inspiring images on one or more of his photography tours or workshops. It's really fascinating how photographers see and compose such different images even though we may go to the same places. Everyone takes great photographs on Jim's trips.

Julia Sanderson, Tallahassee, Florida [Pantanal photo tour](#), [Polar Bears photo tour](#), [New Mexico photo tour](#).



© Julia Sanderson

# Student Showcase, continued



# Student Showcase, continued



© Julia Sanderson



© Julia Sanderson

# DUBAI & ABU DHABI TOUR

**November 14 - 22, 2026**



# Great Gray Owls workshop

February 13 - 18, 2027

spectacular action shots



# The Story Behi



# nd the Picture



There is a facility in Namibia called Na'ankuse. It consists of 65,000 acres, and the couple who owns the property have devoted their lives to saving and rescuing animals. In Namibia, if a big cat kills a cow or sheep, the farmer will track the cat and kill it. The people at Na'ankuse intervene and will tranquilize the cat and bring it back to their property so it can live out its life.

This photograph shows Marlice, the owner of the property along with her husband, having a sweet moment with a cheetah she raised in her home. She finally had to put Kiki out with the other cheetahs when she saw it stalking her four year old son.

Better safe than sorry!

I asked Marlice if we could take a shot like this in silhouette, and she -- and Kiki -- agreed. I used a 70-200mm lens, and the settings were 1/800, f/7.1, and 200 ISO.

After the photo session, my photo tour group and I were allowed to pet Kiki. She purred, just like a house cat. It was a very special moment. §

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Nov. '12



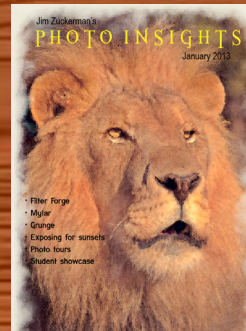
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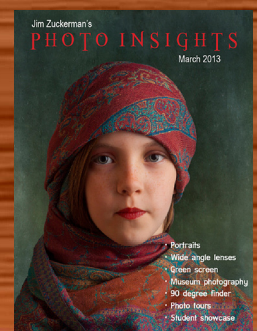
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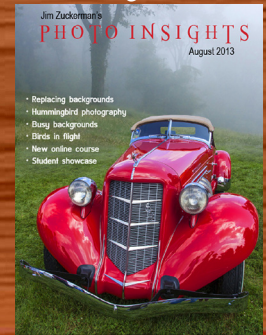
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Jul. 13



Aug. '13



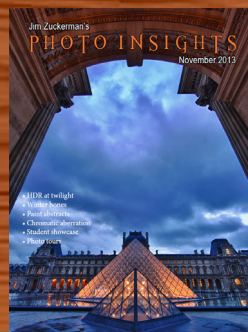
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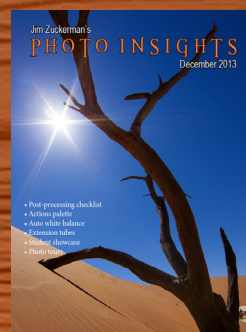
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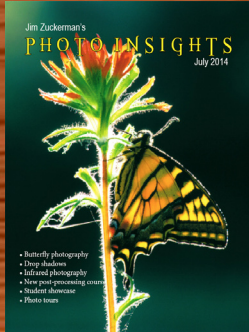


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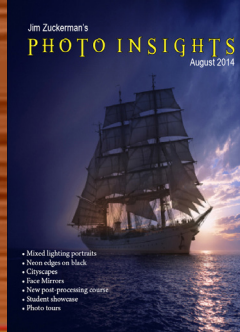


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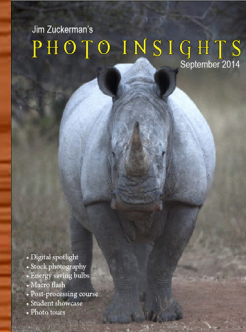
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Mar. '15



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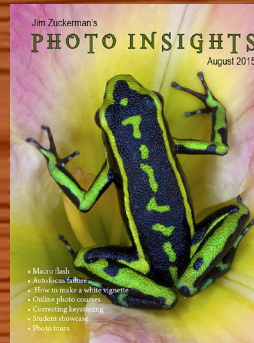
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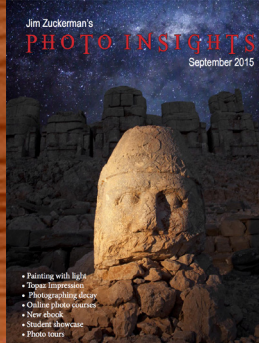
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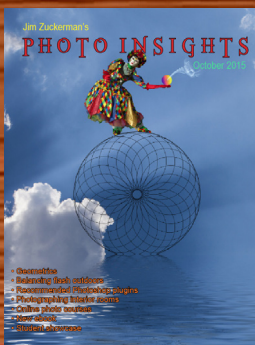
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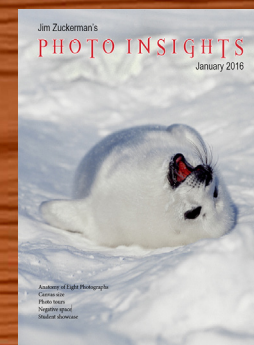
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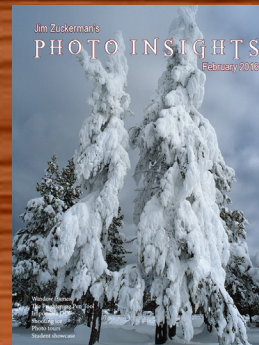
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Apr. '16



May '16



Jun '16



Jul. '16



Aug. '16



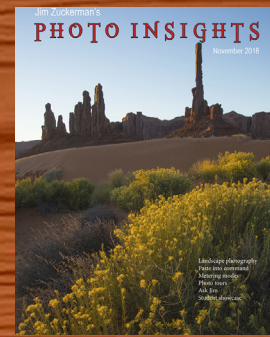
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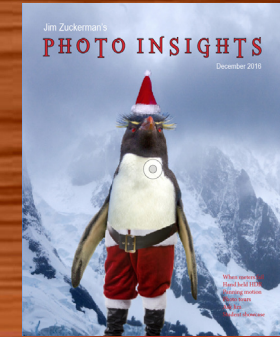
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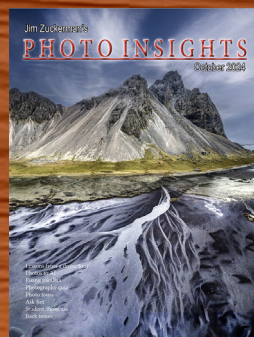
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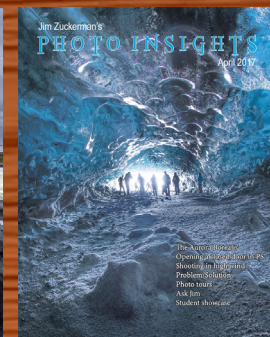
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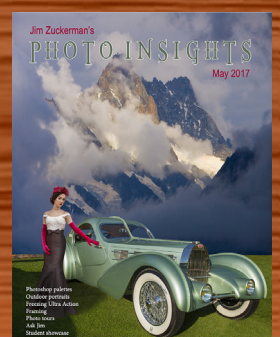
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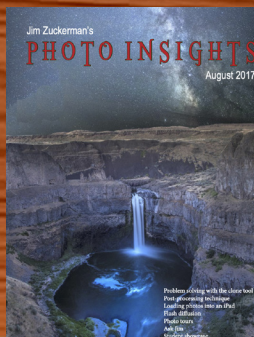
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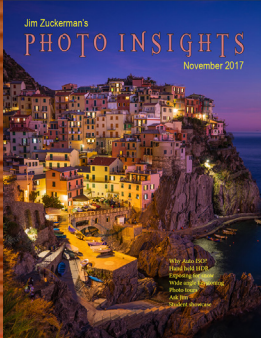


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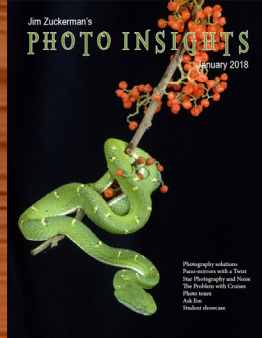
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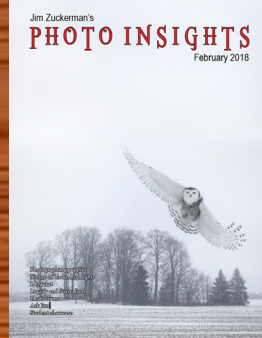
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Feb. '18



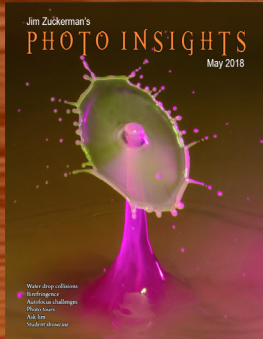
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Apr. '18



May '18



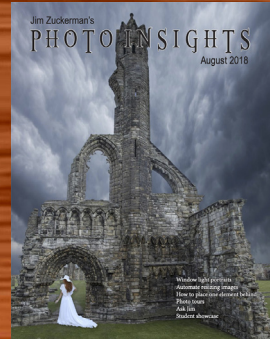
Jun '18



Jul '18



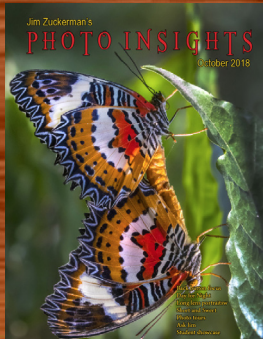
Aug '18



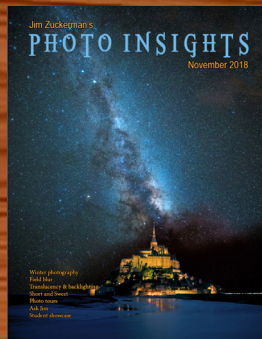
Sept. '18



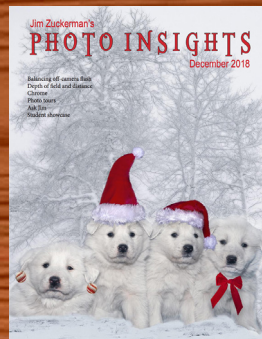
Oct. '18



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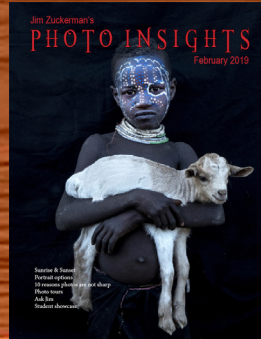
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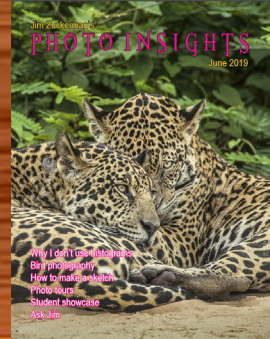
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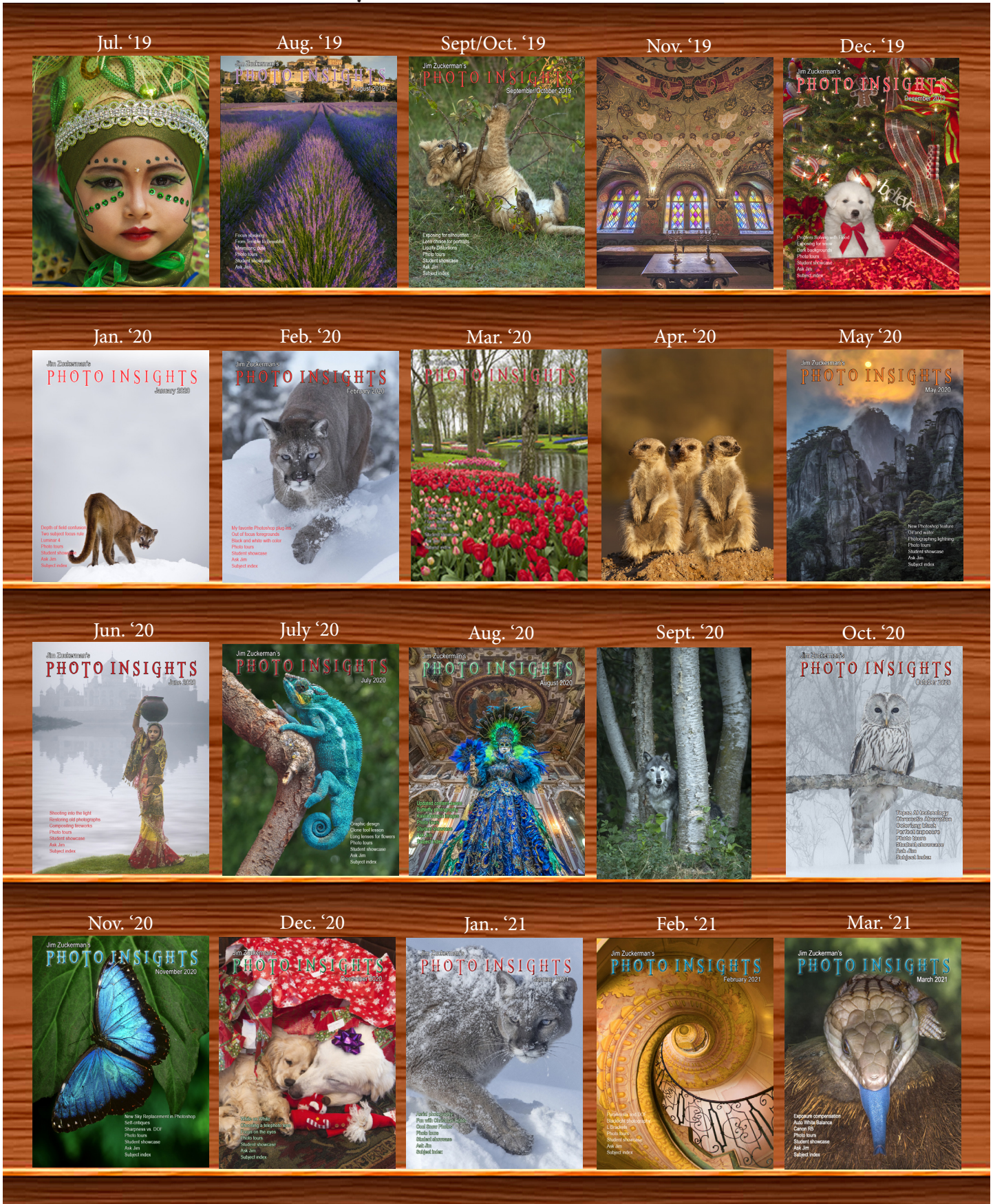
May '19



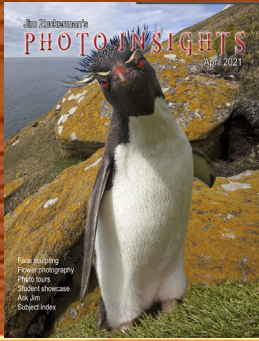
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Apr. '21



May '21



Jun. '21



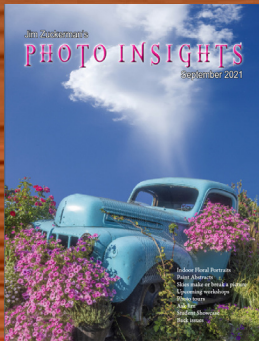
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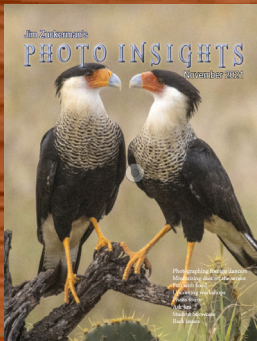
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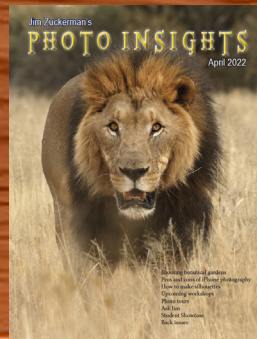
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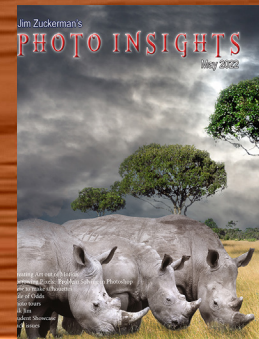
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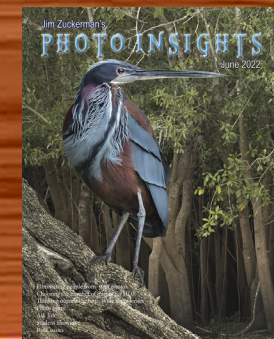
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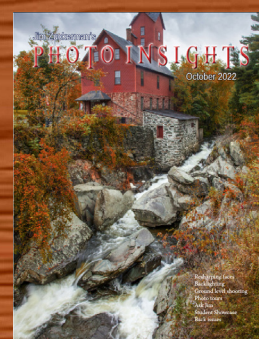
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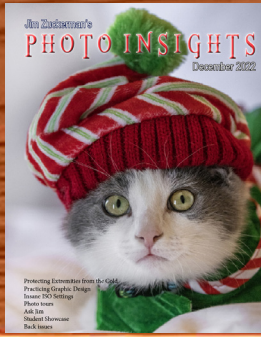
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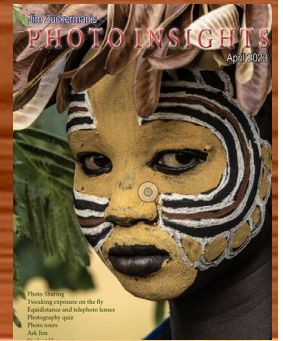
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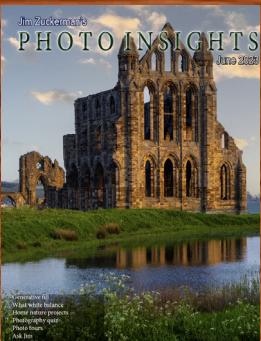
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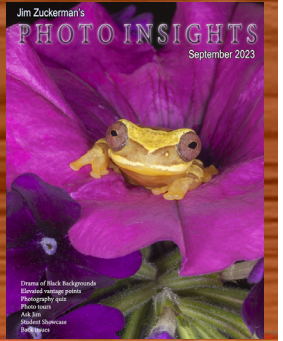
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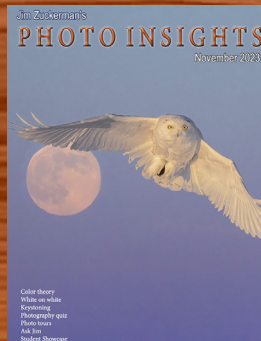
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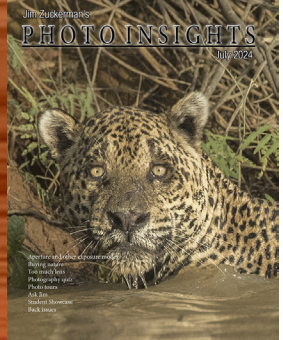
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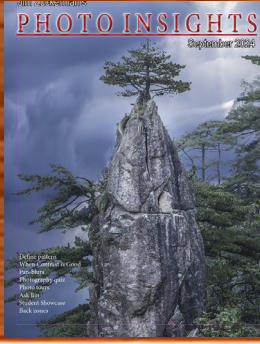
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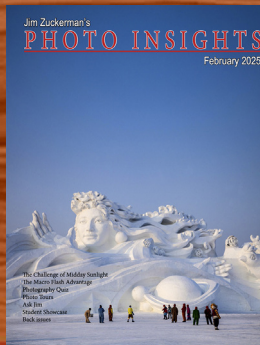
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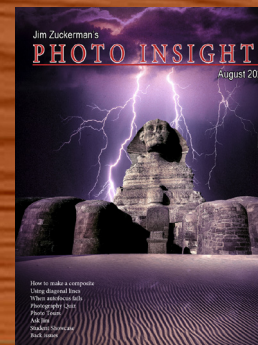
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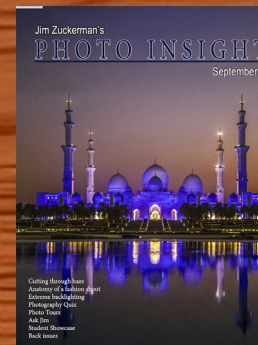
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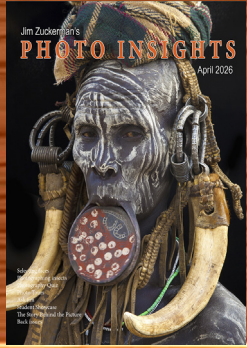
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## Quiz answers

1. b
2. b
3. d
4. a
5. d
6. a
7. b
8. d
9. b
10. d

### Your score

90% - 100%: You could have been a pro

80% - 89%: Your glasses probably need a new prescription

70% - 79%: Just don't quit your day job

< 70%: You should really be using an iPhone

# CHILE: THE DESERT to the SEA

The Atacama and Beyond

SEPTEMBER 14 -24, 2027



Atacama Desert



Marble Caves



**PHOTO INSIGHTS**

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Lennox Castle, Scotland, from a DJI Air 3S drone