



Drive Out PHOTO MECHANIC

BY VILLIERS STEYN

Get down and dirty

The most striking nature photographs require a little more effort than standing in one spot and shooting everything from the same angle – even if it means you have to pack a few extra T-shirts.



Banish the blues

Chris van der Merwe

Canon 450D camera and Sigma 10–22 mm lens
(settings: F11, 1/200 sec, ISO 100)

“I took this photograph in December 2009 at Victoria Bay, near George.

“I wanted to capture the agapanthus flowers against the bright blue sky, and for that I had



Photograph of the month

to lie down on my stomach,” Chris says.

“To me, the flowers create a feeling of beauty, the blue sky a feeling of space and the clouds a feeling of freedom.”

Villiers says:

We’ve featured one of Chris’s photographs before – in the very first Photo Mechanic column, published in April last year. It was a photo of a herd of elephants drinking at a waterhole in Chobe National Park.

It’s great to see Chris is still regularly uploading beautiful pictures on the Campfire forum. This one caught my attention.

Most people who encounter this scene will probably point the camera down to take a picture of the agapanthus flowers and then up to take one of the blue sky and the clouds, while standing in

the same place. There’s nothing wrong with this, but if, like Chris, you make a little extra effort and lie down on your stomach, you can capture all these elements in one picture. Of course, it helps to have a wide-angle lens like Chris does, because it allows you to get that bit of extra sky in the frame.

When I take travel pictures, I regularly get T-shirts dirty, because a lower angle often gives you a more striking image. Sometimes it’s to get the foreground *and* the background in one shot, as in Chris’s case, and at other times it’s to ensure the

background is far behind the subject so you can blur it with a long lens and a low F-stop.



Where to put the horizon

Chris framed his image so the horizon is a third from the bottom. This lends a good balance between the foreground (on which one should always focus) and the background (which may be slightly out of focus).

Look at the example below of two red-billed spurfowls next to our campsite in Mabuasehube.



I lay down on my stomach with my camera and wide-angle lens, made sure I was focusing on the birds, and then framed the picture so the horizon was a third from the bottom.

With the A-frame shelter and the clouds in the background, the picture tells a story about our camping experience in the park.

Tip: Take one of those fold-up car sun reflectors to lie on if you want to keep your clothes clean and prevent bruises caused by sharp stones.

Upload your photographs at www.driveout.co.za/forum – scroll down to the heading *Let’s drive!* and click on *Show & tell*. Villiers will consider all uploaded photos for discussion in this column.