

# THROUGH THE LENS

*A guide to digital photography for computer enthusiasts. After the click of your camera, you're only half done!*

## Cell Phone Photography

*by Lynda Buske*

### What I like about my cell phone camera:

Like most of us, I seldom go anywhere without my cell phone. It is so nice to always have a slim, light, portable camera with me so that I never miss an unexpected rainbow, sun dog or dewy flower on my strolls through the neighbourhood.

Cell phone cameras are particularly well suited to indoor photography. Gone are the days of feeling self-conscious taking pics inside a restaurant with my large camera and perhaps even a bulky external flash. Now, everyone can take low light pics of food, friends, etc. No fellow diners would even notice as it has become so much the norm.

When travelling, I sometimes take interior or night time photos with both my DSLR and my cell phone, and as a rule, it is the cell phone ones that turn out the best. That's because cell phones provide a very wide aperture and hence lots of light, a fast speed and therefore less blurring due to motion from the excitable photographer.



Cell phone cameras do well in low light situations.

While the world currently has a proliferation of photos and some that are downright fabricated, no one can deny that our ability to take a quick video can change the course of justice and perhaps history (e.g., George Floyd).

With cell phone pictures, you can quickly store images to the cloud or share to Facebook or Instagram compared with a camera where photos are usually uploaded to a computer. While newer cameras do allow for Wifi or Bluetooth connections, it is still an extra step to get them first to your phone and then to the cloud.

Cell phones are a great way to capture something quickly that you may need to refer to later such as a wiring configuration, a mall or trail map, an error message on your computer, serial numbers, and for me, recording where I hang my pictures before I repaint the wall!

### **What I don't like about my cell phone camera:**

At this point in time, most average priced cell phone cameras come with a digital rather than optical zoom. This means when you zoom, you are not maintaining quality as you would be with a traditional camera, but in fact are simply cropping your image on the fly. I highly recommend you move as close to your subject as possible to minimize the amount of cropping you need and hence maintain maximum resolution. Remember how we used to do this with film cameras? Using a digital zoom and the typical 12 megapixels of averaged priced phones, it is not recommended you try to take distant objects like birds, animals or boats. So instead of zooming, use foreground to make a pleasant image including objects that are far away such as in the example below of Norwegian mountains taken from a ship.



Avoid zooming and build in foreground interest instead.

When zooming with an average digital camera (even a point and shoot), you maintain probably 12 megapixels (or more) even at the longest focal length. You can then crop to get closer to the subject of your photo. If I had to only rely on my cell phone, I would probably have no decent images of birds or animals.

You can easily switch from still photos to video on a phone but also, it is easy to block your lens with a finger or booble (technical terms) on the buttons and end up in selective focus or video or something else you did not intend. This is less likely to occur with a traditional camera where you probably have to physically move a mechanical dial.

While the ability to do simple editing right away (e.g., straightening, cropping) is handy, for most cell phones, editing capabilities are limited. I prefer to make adjustments to my photos on a larger screen with more sophisticated (but still free) software.

I know my phone camera has a few “pro” settings where I can adjust various things (e.g., aperture) but I find the numbers hard to read and I prefer the degree and ease of control I get with my camera with

regards to shutter speed, aperture, ISO, EV adjust, etc. Certain special effects that I create with long exposures and filters when shooting moving water or mist are exceedingly difficult or impossible with my current cell phone.

Funny thing but I have never once taken a selfie by mistake on my camera but that certainly has happened with my cell phone! I also have a few videos my cell phone captured that I never intended to take.

Taking a photo with a camera and transferring to a computer gives me time to think if I really should post that picture of my cousin acting like an idiot. Over-sharing is very easy with phones and do people really need to see another cat video?



A shot that can be handled by any DSLR with the right filter.  
Difficult or impossible with a cell phone.

## **Conclusion**

I think the main benefit of a cell phone camera is convenience whereas a traditional camera has greater facility especially for zoomed shots. Would I want to give up either my cellphone camera or my traditional ones at this point? Absolutely not but who knows what I may say five years from now?

Many thanks to Lawrence Patterson for his contribution to this article.