On Creativity

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Agenda

- Introduction
- What is Creativity?
- Concept
- Plan
- Execution
- Murphy's Law – "Whatever can go wrong, will go wrong"
- Completion
- Summary

Introduction

- ◈ About me
  - ◇ Formal photographic background – Algonquin College and SPAO
  - ◇ Professional Engineer
  - ◇ Chair of the RA Photo Club
  - ◇ CAPA Judge
- ◈ About my work
  - ◇ Primarily a travel photographer
    - ◈ Landscapes / Urban Landscapes
    - ◈ People
    - ◈ Events
  - ◇ Studio Photography
    - ◈ Location Photography

What is CREATIVITY?

◈ **Produce** an **Outcome** based on a set of **Requirements**.

◈ Requires:

  ◈ adequate resources;

    ◈ Time is a resource.

  ◈ appropriate tools; and

  ◈ competencies.

◈ Creativity is an intellectual process.

◈ Creativity is an iterative process.

◈ Creativity requires effort.

What is CREATIVITY?

- Creativity is rarely completely original.
  - Using existing elements or approaches and applying them in a different way.
- Requires a systematic approach.
- **Is learned skill**.
  - Not an innate talent!
  - Not spontaneous.
- In photography it includes developing the concept, planning the shoot, doing the shoot and preparing (post-processing) the images to create the final product.

Creativity – Measuring Success

◆ Success of the outcome is measured against how well the **solution complies** with the **requirements**.

◇ You can't determine if you have succeeded without having metrics and specific goals!

Three steps of Creativity

◈ Come up with the "Idea"

  ◇ **Concept development phase**

◈ How you are going to make it happen?

  ◇ **Planning phase**

◈ Get out there and do it!

  ◇ **Execution phase**

Concept Development - 1

- What am I planning to do?
  - Establish requirements / goals.
  - Try to write them down in approximate rank order.
    - ~ 3 – 15 depending on the size of the project
      - Can sub-divide once there are more than ~ 7 items.
        - Must do
        - Should do
        - Nice to have
  - Brief - Fit onto one side of a single page

Concept Development - 2

◈ This is the key creative phase

   ◇ Requires inspiration and research

      ◈ Test shoot(s)!

   ◇ Need to do this in relative isolation from other tasks; and

   ◇ Takes time.

      ◈ "Sleep on it"

      ◈ May need to iterate to get to an optimal solution

Inspiration & Research

- Art Galleries
  - National Gallery of Canada
  - Private galleries
- Photo sites
  - 500px, SmugMug, Behance; Flickr, etc.
- Other photographers
  - Classic masters – Edward Weston, Ansel Adams, Yousef Karsh & Henri Cartier-Bresson.
  - Modern Masters – Annie Leibowitz, Joey L, Joel Grimes, Elia Locardi, etc.
- Books & Magazines (online and physical)
  - YouTube and Vimeo
- Contacts
- Scout out the location
- Time to clear out the mind, reflect and think

June 2019 Assignment - Bridges

◈ June –Bridges

◈ For the meeting on June 7th

◈ Submit by noon on May 31st

◈ Photographs of bridges, whether large or small, that include leading lines and perspective. Examples include the Portage Bridge, the Wakefield covered bridge, the Minto bridges, foot bridges, rope bridges, homemade bridges at the cottage
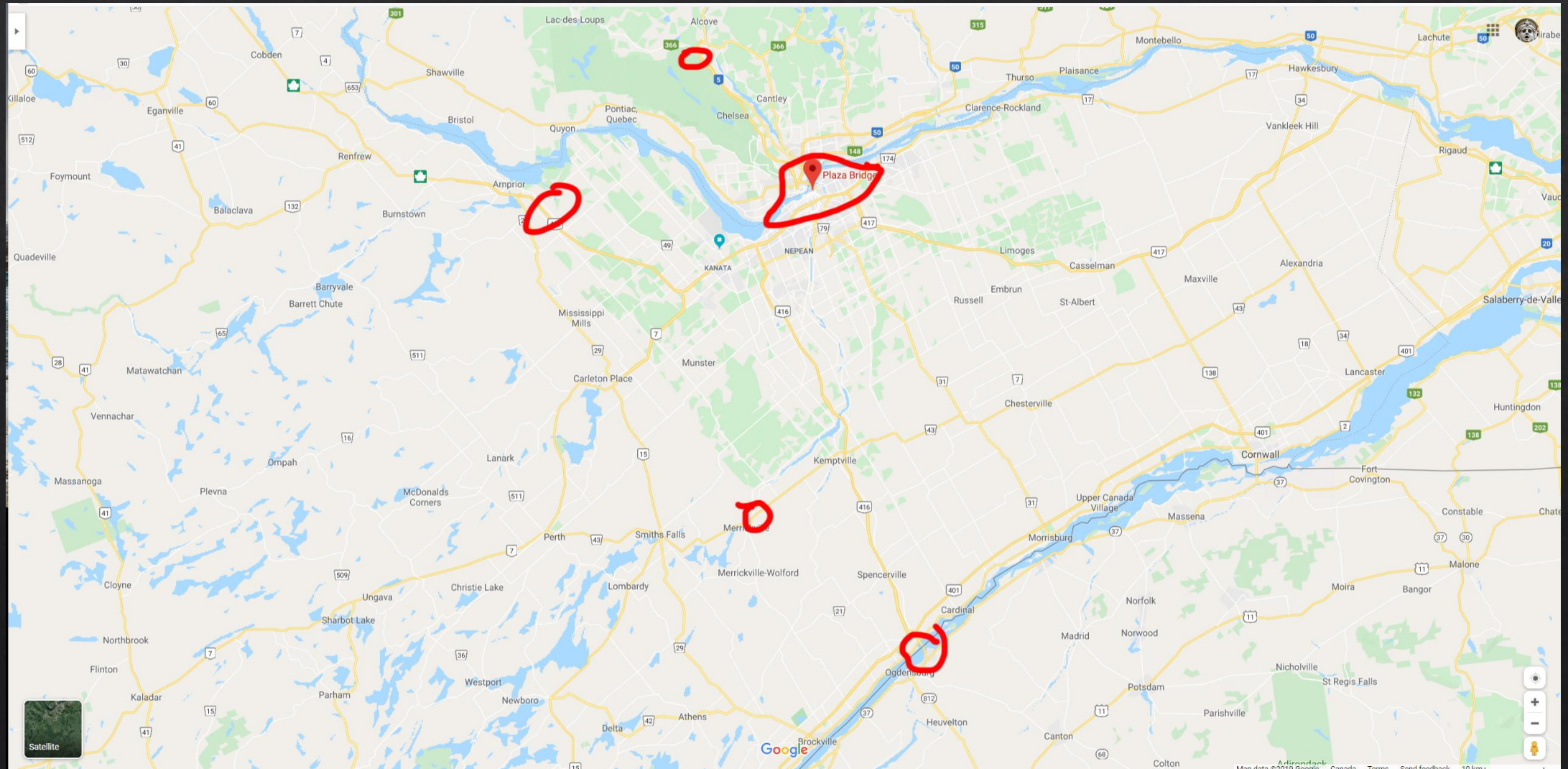
Concept Development – Example 1

1. Need to create up to **three** images of bridges for a KSCCC monthly assignment.

2. Must use images taken within the past six months

3. Would like to show images other members are unlikely to use.

4. High quality images for digital projection.

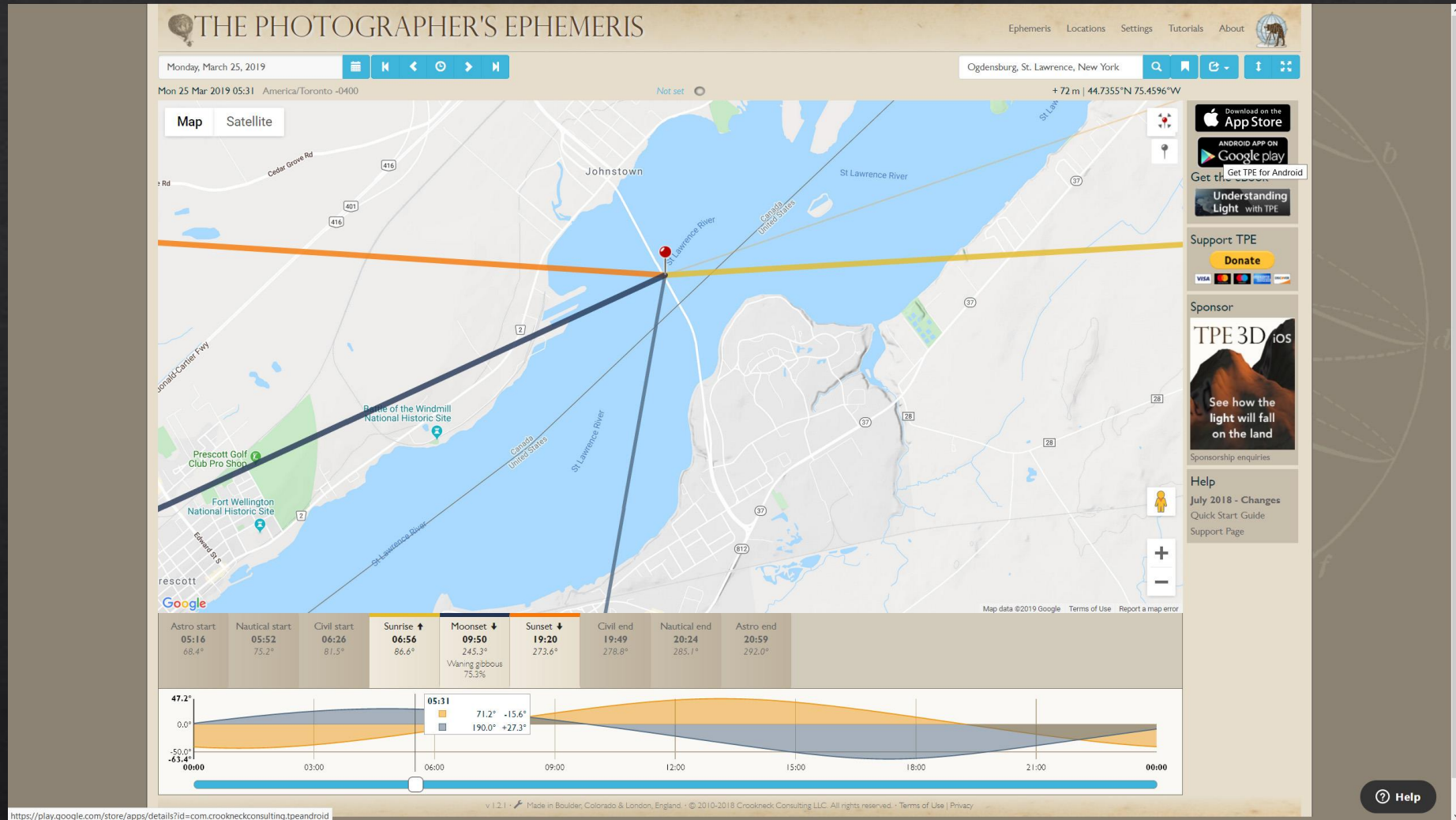◈ If I get three images that do all these things, I will have been successful.

Bridge Images - Research
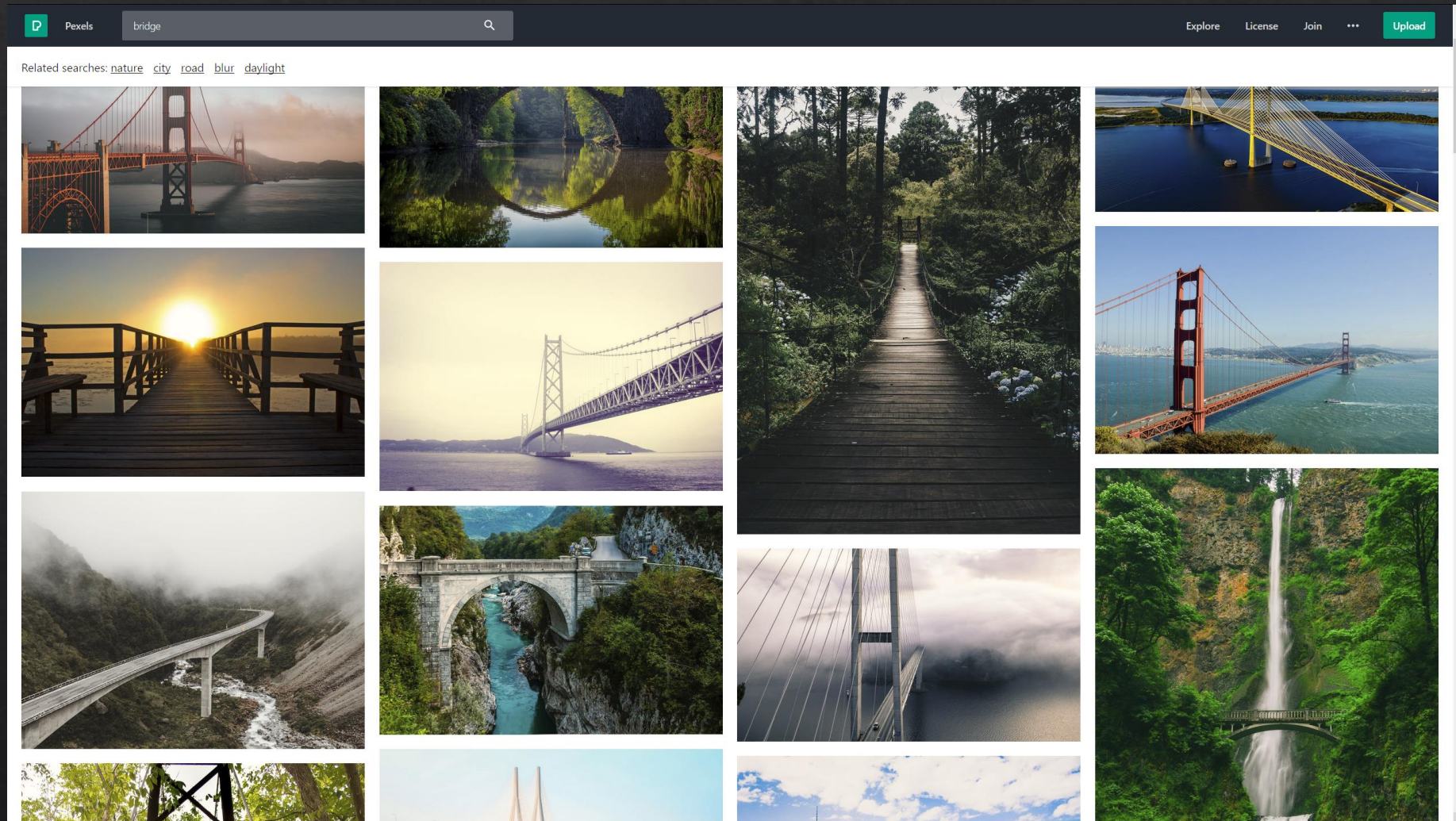
Potential Locations

The Photographer's Ephemeris

Odgensburg – Prescott International Bridge – March 25, 2019

Johnstown Marina Docks – March 25, 2019

Plaza Bridge Detail – April 20, 2019

Concept Development – Example 2

1. Want to explore lighting a portrait with a scrim (diffuser) and studio light.

2. Use goggles as a prop with a model.

3. Plain (neutral) background in a studio-like setting.

4. B&W final image.

5. Large format print.

◈ If I get an image that does all these things, I will have been successful.

Iteration 1

- Goggles on the forehead.

Iteration 2

- Goggles worn over eyes.

Iteration 3

- Add a hat.

- Bring up white reflector to boost fill light under the hat.

Final Version

- Add old Harley-Davidson jacket to give the whole scene more character.

- Concentrate on seeing only one eye.

- Polish the image in post and clean up skin, shadow detail and sculpt face by dodging and burning.

Was I successful?

1. Explore lighting a portrait with a scrim and studio light - **YES**
2. Use goggles as a prop with a model - **YES**
3. Plain (neutral) background in a studio-like setting - **YES**
4. B&W final image - **YES**
5. Large format print - **YES**

What is a PLAN?

- **How to turn the concept into reality!**
- End-to-end view from concept development to final product.
  - Includes any tools or equipment
  - Timing – when will I do this
  - What conditions can I do this under?
  - Shot list
- **Break the work into manageable pieces**
- Includes **contingencies** to handle issues that might go "off plan".
  - Includes a timetable for the end-to-end process.
  - "Slack" to handle unexpected delays.

Developing a PLAN

◈ Project – **Photograph the people, temples and the landscape in the Himalaya Mountains in the <u>winter</u>**.

◈ Need to travel to South Asia – Ladakh, India for about 10 days.

   ◇ Will be working in extreme cold (-30° C), windy (30 - 50 km/ hr) at altitudes up to 5400m / 17,700 ft.

   ◇ Need both summer and winter clothing.

   ◇ 23kg weight limit for International leg of journey and 15 kg for internal air travel in India. Camera gear travels in carry-on luggage.

   ◇ Due to border tensions, the entire region is under military control.

   ◇ Road access is impossible because mountain passes are closed by snow.

   ◇ Low air density means flights can only arrive and depart when the air is cold and dense

      ◇ Weather and the military can shut air travel at any time.

Carry out the PLAN

◈ Made arrangements to meet up with a small group of Indian photographers.

◈ Made arrangements to visit some of the Tibetan Monasteries and scenic areas.

◈ Photograph monks and ordinary people.

◈ Bad weather caused us to rework plans (no snow tires and some very dangerous mountain roads).

◈ Internet was shut down by the Indian military for most of our stay.

◈ Were lucky to arrive and leave as scheduled

   ◈ Weather conditions – planned to arrive early and leave later than planned

Whatever can go wrong, will go wrong…

Going off PLAN
(a.k.a. Murphy's Law)

- How do we determine that we are off plan?
  - Work no longer reflects our plan.
  - Critical equipment fails
  - Work back to the point where activities went "off plan" and work to keep "on plan".

- Circumstances change and it makes sense to change the plan.
  - It would be dangerous or too difficult to continue with the original plan.
  - The results are not meeting expectations.
  - Allow "off-ramps" and "return loops" to get the project back on track.

Going off PLAN - Example

◈ Plan to shoot the buildings at the Ghost Town of Val Jalbert, Quebec

   ◇ Colour shoot

   ◇ Interior and exterior shots

   ◇ Include the period costumed interpreters in the images

   ◇ Only at the location on one specific day and impossible to change the date

◈ Reality on the day of the shoot

   ◇ Heavy rains – dark and boring sky.

   ◇ Too dark for high quality interior shots.

   ◇ Minimal costumed interpreters who were inside the buildings.

◈ Time to revisit and revise the plan!

Off-Plan Shoot

- Get out the rain gear!
  - Had brought rain covers for the cameras
- Shoot B&W – works better with dull skies
- Work with outdoor shots only
- Forget about shooting people and work with what was there

Take Advantage of Going Off Plan

- Sometimes opportunities present themselves when things go off plan

  - Recognize and take advantage of these opportunities.

- Personal examples

  - Doing a standard maternity shoot when the subject's toddler "photobombed" the shoot.

  - Last minute opportunity to visit a local festival in a remote Bolivian village.

Completion

⬥ When is the work completed?

    ◇ **When you have met the requirements you set out for your project**

    ◇ When you find additional work is not resulting in any more useable material.

    ◇ When you get too tired to continue.

    ◇ When you run out of time.

Summary

1. Define what you are trying to accomplish.

   ◇ Research your topic. Get inspired!

   ◇ Break your project into manageable pieces

2. Set up a plan as to how you are going to accomplish your goals.

   ◇ Include contingencies for those things that could go wrong.

      ◇ Risk Management

         ◇ Carry spares!

         ◇ Slack in your schedule

3. Carry out the plan.

4. Know when you are done.