



David Liscio

Tricks of the Trade for Amateur Shutterbugs at Sea

Here are a few tips for shooting at sea from professional marine photographer and *PS* contributor David Liscio.

- Salt hates your camera gear, so keep it dry and protected. A soft-sided dry bag with a folding mouth, plastic-snap closure buckle, and space enough for two camera bodies with lenses attached is a good starting point. These run less than \$30. A heavy-duty Zip-Loc bag is better than no protection at all.
- A boat is an unstable, vibrating platform, so use a fast shutter speed to keep the image sharp: 1/500th of a second is about the slowest, unless you want to show blur.
- Don't hang on to the mast or lifelines while shooting; they are moving and vibrating with the boat. Kneel or sit, and try to stabilize yourself while hand-holding the camera.

- Use the spot meter when panning a moving boat. Always bracket your F-stops one to two stops because the water's surface can fool your light meter. A circular polarizer screwed onto your lens will reduce glare and allow you to dial in the sky and clouds for a more dramatic image. Using fill-flash can bring out the facial details of your subject, particularly when they are shaded by a hat or bimini. Look for unusual or interesting angles. Go aloft in a bosun's chair. Eliminate visual clutter, such as drink cans, sunscreen, random bags, or towels.
 - Lastly, be patient. In photography, light is everything. Wait for it to perform its magic, and on the water, like everywhere else, that usually happens an hour before sundown.
- *David Liscio* (www.davidliscio.com) is a photojournalist whose credits include *Practical Sailor*, *National Geographic*, *Sailing*, *Sail*, and *Cruising World* magazines.