

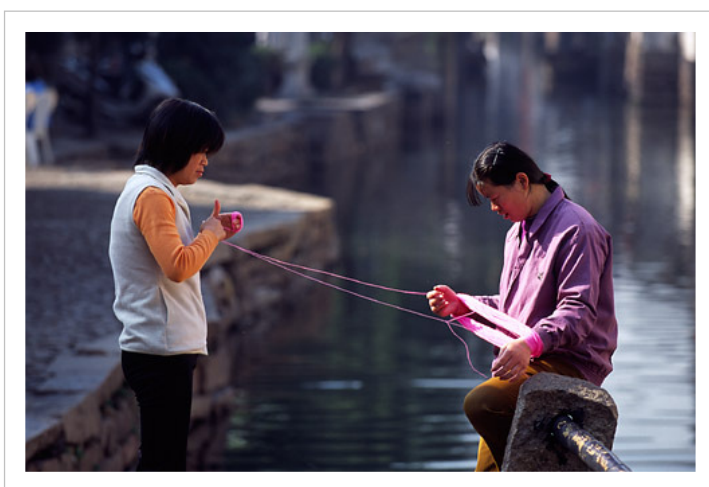
Alternative approaches in photography—Zhouzhuang (周庄), take two

There are all kinds of photographic subjects and one normally chooses the tools suitable for photographing particular themes. If your subject strictly imposes what equipment can be used (e.g., photographing birds—pun unintended but noticed) or if you have pre-visualised what exact effect you want to produce and can manipulate your subject as needed (e.g., studio photography), then you should choose your gear accordingly. In some instances, however, choosing unorthodox (relatively to your subject) equipment or even intentionally limiting your set of tools might greatly help to see things differently and result in better or unconventional outcome. For one thing, I believe this to be true in case of travel photography when you visit the same place more than once.

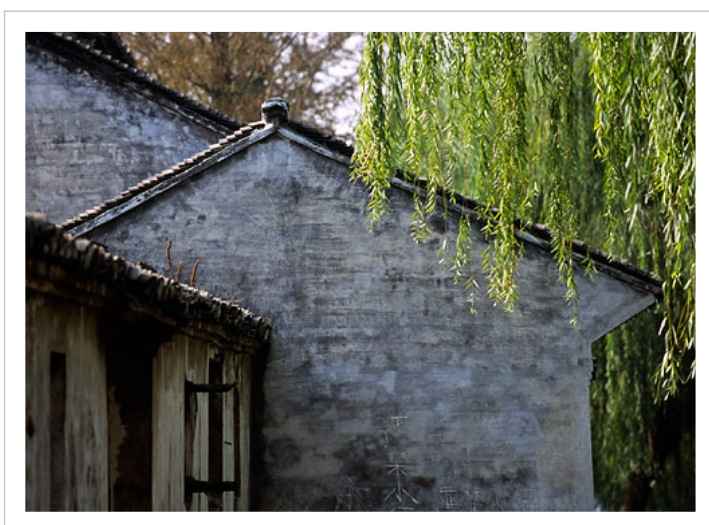
Anyone going to Zhouzhuang, Jiangsu Province, China (中国江苏省周庄), which is also known as "Venice of the Orient", is advised to bring a super wide-angle lens. True enough—the streets and the channels are very narrow and one might find it very difficult to do without one. This was exactly what I thought when I went to Zhouzhuang for the first time in June 2004. At that time most of the photographs were taken with the [Nikkor 17–35mm](#) wide-angle zoom and my telephoto lens stayed in the camera bag most of the time. This time around, though, I decided to use a completely different approach and try photographing with my [telephoto lens](#) only. As far as this cramped gear place is concerned, this, indeed, was quite an unorthodox decision; due to this approach, I naturally concentrated on photographing people and details—all kinds of details, from architecture to life-style.

I find it fascinating that it is possible to intentionally put your mind into a certain perceptive mode depending on what tools you have at hand and then see the world as the tools dictate. Quite interestingly, this applies to almost any 'vs.' pair—film vs. digital, black-and-white vs. colour, prime vs. zoom and, as my experience shows, even wide-angle vs. telephoto lens. I also find it remarkable that being in a certain perceptive mode is absolutely tense-free—having resolved to only use a telephoto lens my mind did not seem to be aware of the fact that the world could also be seen from a wide-angle perspective, and my hand never reached out for a wide-angle lens even though I had one in my camera bag.

I shot four rolls of film in about four hours. Looking back at it now, on the average that is one shot every two minutes for four hours, which is not your regular leisurely session. And the resulting gallery (below) depicts Zhouzhuang very differently.



Quiet waters. Quiet afternoon. Quiet life.



Shacks. Willows. Autumn.





Grief? Poverty? Reminiscence?



People. Boats. Lifestyle.





Hat. Hands. Knitting.



Shapes and forms. Focused and subdued.





97. Years. Old.



Peapods. Beans. Seeds.





Simple. Meal. Life.

