Using Leading Lines in your Compositions

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• When you're framing a photograph, a sure-fire way to ensure the eye is drawn into the image and towards a subject is to utilise a leading line. The great thing about them is that they're everywhere once you get used to looking for them; and with care and thought they can even become the focus of your photograph in their own right.

• Leading lines can be straight or wavy, diagonal or curved, natural – such as hedgerows, lines of trees, a river or stream, hills, shorelines, rocks, even the sun's rays – or man-made, including roads, power lines, paths, walls and fences, railway lines, staircases, boardwalks, rows of lamp-posts, buildings.

• The position of leading lines can create different effects. A leading line originating at the base of the frame, often to one side, directs attention up and into the image from foreground to the centre or background. Lines leading across an image can be used to connect one part of it to another; while lines that converge at the main subject are a powerful visual draw towards it.

• Circular lines pull the eye into the image in an almost hypnotic fashion, while multiple or diagonal lines can create a dynamic effect that really emphasises depth in the shot. On the other hand, horizontal leading lines can highlight a lack of depth, as well as creating a calming effect, while vertical leading lines can generate a compelling tension. You can also make use of implicit lines – following patterns, fine changes in light and shadow, even the eye-line of a person or animal looking deeper into the frame.

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