Shares

You are here: Home / Book Reviews / The Best Street Photography Books to Inspire Yours

# THE BEST STREET PHOTOGRAPHY BOOKS TO INSPIRE YOURS

Stephen Shore Uncommon Places
MARTIN PARR THE LAST RESORT
The Suffering of Light
ALEX WEBB
William Eggleston's Guide
ELLIOTT ERWITT PERSONAL BEST
EXILES
KOUDELKA
Vivian Maier Street Photographer
THE AMERICANS
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT FRANK
INTRODUCTION BY JACK KEROUAC
MAGNUM CONTACT SHEETS
JEFF MERMELSTEIN SideWalk
AMERICA BY ZOE STRAUSS
RICHARD KALVAR EARTHLINGS
ON THE NIGHT BUS
A SUMMER'S DAY
Joel Meyerowitz

*This post contains affiliate links. At no additional cost to you, I will earn a commission if you click through and make a purchase.*

We can – and should – all look at street photography books from the likes of Alex Webb, Vivian Maier, and Martin Parr and admire the skill and effort that went into them.

But wouldn't you prefer to be amongst the creators and not merely the viewers? For it to be your name on the cover? For people to be looking at your street photography book?

Thanks to self-publishing and print-on-demand services, it's easier than ever to make that happen – if you put in that aforementioned effort.

This means looking at great photography books doesn't have to be a passive endeavour. Not when you can use what you see as a driver to create your own. To help you with this, I've put together a list of inspirational photography books.

Before we begin, a quick disclaimer. You may consider some of the entries to be more *documentary*

Hello there. I'm Lee, and I shoot travel and street photography with vintage lenses and film.

MFL is where I publish my work and help you create a place to do the same.

So whether you're here to read my photography blog or to build yours, go check out the latest posts and archives.

### RECENT POSTS

The Best Street Photography Books to Inspire Yours

The #leesixtyfive Project: Photographs 121 – 150

Using Colour in Your Street Photography

Minolta MC W.Rokkor-HG 35mm f2.8 Lens Review

Checking out Longhua Temple, Shanghai

### CAN'T FIND WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR?

Search this website …

Search

### COME SAY HELLO

photo books than *street*.

I wouldn't disagree, but I find the line between the two is often too blurred to separate them. It would also limit the potential to inspire you to eventually go make something of your own, and avoiding that is far more important than semantics.

So, split into colour and monochrome sections, here's the list of the best street photography books to inspire yours.

# COLOUR STREET PHOTOGRAPHY BOOKS

## UNCOMMON PLACES BY STEPHEN SHORE

Get Prices / Learn More

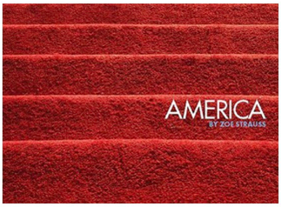
You can tell something about a photography book's greatness by the influence it has on other shooters. Uncommon Places, shot on large format film as Stephen Shore travelled 1970s America, certainly passes this arbitrary test.

The work broke new ground in colour photography; a genre that had previously been the domain of advertising and fashion work. Timeless urban and rural landscapes are presented from an objective viewpoint that has been aped – knowingly or otherwise – by photographers ever since; from Shore's 1970s contemporaries to today's social media crowd.

This makes Uncommon Places a classic example of how you can capture your own road trip memories, whether on film or to put through digital filters, and make your own book from them too.

Get it today on Amazon.

## AMERICA BY ZOE STRAUSS



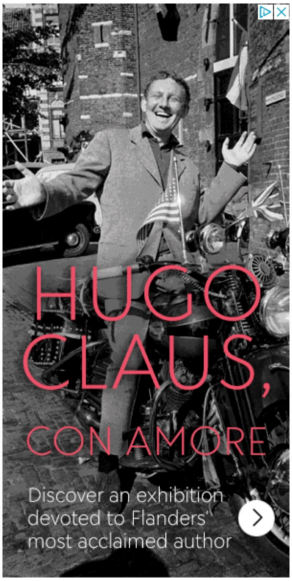
Get Prices / Learn More

To create your own great American photography book, you might need to get away from the typical tourist sights and endless highways; especially if you want it to be something original. That's what the highly talented Zoe Strauss did with America, presenting the country's neglected underbelly that lays a world away from the bright lights of New York and Los Angeles.

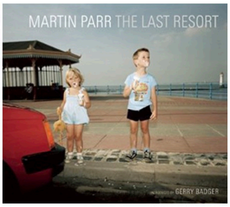
Philadelphia native Strauss took to the road to capture the people and places of the nation's forgotten communities. Shooting up-close and personal, the result is a sometimes witty, often moving, and always powerful documentary of the beauty and struggle of everyday life in today's America.

If you want to present a grittier photography book than most, America could be all the inspiration you need.

Order yours today from Amazon.



## THE LAST RESORT BY MARTIN PARR



Get Prices / Learn More

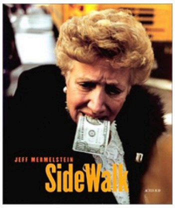
The Last Resort by British photographer Martin Parr shows that almost anywhere can make a good photography book subject when captured as a snapshot of a time and place. Shot in the mid-1980s in New Brighton, a coastal suburb of Liverpool, it presents the declining 'great' British seaside as seen through the eyes of local working-class families.

Shot on medium format film and using a daylight flash, The Last Resort is an evocative portrayal of northwest England at the time; 40 photographs showing crowded beaches, games arcades, and the ubiquitous fish and chips shops of a depressed Thatcher-era Britain in unexpectedly saturated colours.

Great photography books don't need a famous location or subject, and The Last Resort can inspire you to create a time capsule of wherever you happen to be in the world right now.

Find it on Amazon.

## SIDEWALK BY JEFF MERMELSTEIN



Get Prices / Learn More

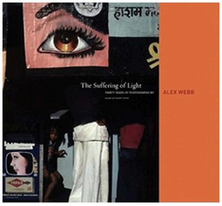
Finding original ways to shoot familiar subjects is a challenge for any photography book, but you will definitely find some inspiration in Jeff Mermelstein's Sidewalk. This award-winning collection looks at New York City anew, capturing all of its quirks and idiosyncrasies in a series of images that are as funny as they are surreal.

Despite the countless photographs shot in the place's history, you've probably never seen the Big Apple quite like this before – Mermelstein's vivid account of the streets and the eccentric characters who walk them is a great document of the oddball energy that exists in any big city.

If you're looking for a spark of leftfield originality to make your book stand out from the crowd then seeing New York from Mermelstein's off-kilter perspective is the perfect place to start, and probably end too.

Order today from Amazon.

## THE SUFFERING OF LIGHT BY ALEX WEBB



Get Prices / Learn More

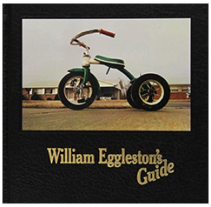
If you want colour, layers, and light to feature in your street photography book, there's nothing better than seeing the master of all these at work; that person is Alex Webb, and the recommended book is The Suffering of Light – regarded as one of the best photography books of all time.

This hefty tome presents a chronological survey of Webb's three-decade, globetrotting career, featuring some of his most iconic shots alongside previously unpublished images. Webb's distinctive style is evident throughout, using colour to communicate an emotional experience in complex, frame-filling images that reveal their depths with repeated viewing.

Every page of this comprehensive collection bursts with intensity and life, so if you want to understand the power that colour, as well as layers and light, can bring to your photography book, spending some time with one of the all-time greats can both inspire and show you how.

Find it on Amazon.

## WILLIAM EGGLESTON'S GUIDE



Get Prices / Learn More

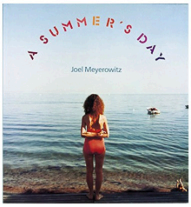
While books of colour photography can be found in museum gift shops all over the world today, that wasn't always the case. William Eggleston was one of those who blazed this particular trail.

Shot in and around Eggleston's home town of Memphis during the late 60s and early 70s, the 48 photographs found in Guide make a rich and varied collection, featuring landscapes and portraits that capture the distinctive atmosphere of everyday life in the Deep South.

If your idea for a photography book is to capture the essence of a place rather than random street snapshots, Eggleston can indeed by your guide. His confident use of colour as a key part of his compositions was revolutionary, and the legacy of his work can live on in yours if you let it.

Check the latest prices on Amazon.

## A SUMMER'S DAY BY JOEL MEYEROWITZ



Get Prices / Learn More

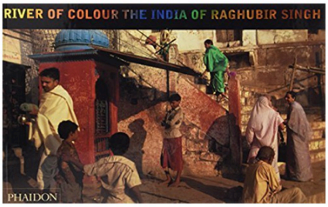
Great photography puts you in the moment, evoking a sense of time and place and atmosphere. If you're looking to achieve those kinds of effects in your own photography book, Joel Meyerowitz's A Summer's Day is a masterclass.

Shot in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, the 65 images in this collection are a first class ticket to the long, lazy and hazy hours of summer. Filled with sun-baked colour and the tranquil vibes of an endless holiday, Meyerowitz takes the familiar hues and textures of the sea, sand and sky and assembles them into a photo-essay that feels like a 24-hour daydream.

If you want to transform your holiday snapshots into something special and tell a story in the process – and who doesn't – then allow Meyerowitz to show you how.

Find it on Amazon today.

## RIVER OF COLOUR: THE INDIA OF RAGHUBIR SINGH



Get Prices / Learn More

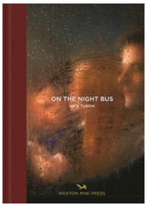
For your street photography book to really grab the essence of a place, you need to get under the skin of your location, capturing its textures, smells and sounds. Raghubir Singh's study of his native country does exactly that, and is sure to provide ideas and inspiration for your own work.

Split into sections arranged around themes, the 132 photographs in River of Colour paint a fascinating and varied portrait of day to day life throughout India, ranging from stark desert landscapes to busy city scenes.

Every picture bursts with emotion, and Singh's affinity for the complexities of his homeland shines throughout. An overlooked master of colour, Singh's book can teach you the value of getting to grips with a deeply personal subject in a sustained and studied manner, or simply show you what a great book from your trip to India could look like.

Get your copy from Amazon.

## ON THE NIGHT BUS BY NICK TURPIN



Get Prices / Learn More

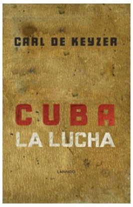
Street photography is not a new concept, but that doesn't mean new ideas can't emerge in the genre. Take On the Night Bus for example, where Nick Turpin presents an original vision of contemporary life via portraits of commuters shot through the condensation-fogged windows of London buses.

The atmosphere of a drizzly London night is palpable throughout the 49 shots in this collection, which almost resemble paintings in their impressionistic haze. There's a realism to Turpin's work too though, bringing the alienation of life in a big capital, and the themes of privacy and voyeurism which lurk in the corners of the city.

This original take on a London street photography book is proof that it's still possible to avoid cliches in your work, to find new ways to respond to the environment around you, and to produce an inspiring street photography book based on one single theme.

Check it out on Amazon today.

## CUBA LA LUCHA BY CARL DE KEYZER



Get Prices / Learn More

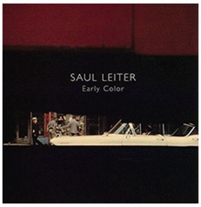
Photography is often poised between art and documentary, and Cuba La Lucha shows how you can combine the two in your own book. Using vibrant colour, the photographs depict contemporary Cuban society in transition, caught between the crumbling legacy of Communism and a new era of openness and improved relations with the West.

There's a power and directness to the images, which form an important document of a changing way of life, but Carl de Keyzer's work is anything but dry. Humour, irony and other poetic flourishes are all used to tell the story.

Finding your voice in a crucial step towards producing a powerful and cohesive collection of photographs, and Cuba La Lucha shows that great results can come from breaking free of the restrictions of expected genre and categorisation.

See for yourself on Amazon.

## EARLY COLOR BY SAUL LEITER



Get Prices / Learn More

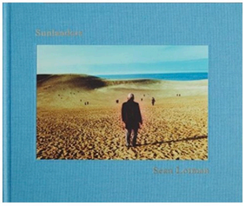
Street photography is often associated with documentary and reportage, but Saul Leiter's Early Colour shows you the possibilities of taking an entirely different approach.

This retrospective collects 175 images taken between 1948 and 1960 that showcase Leiter's unusual approach to the form. He was a successful painter, and these photographs show the influence of that background. They depict familiar scenes of the city, but use colour in a subtle and lyrical manner, combining it with elements such as soft focus and reflection to produce compositions that verge on abstraction. Their originality has a powerful impact, even 50 years on.

Leiter's embrace of his artistic contemporaries will provide some great inspiration if you're trying to find a style of your own that breaks free from street photography clichés.

Go find it on Amazon.

## SUNLANDERS BY SEAN LOTMAN



Get Prices / Learn More

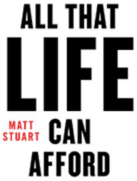
Published in 2016, Sean Lotman's Sunlanders collects 48 images of his adopted homeland of Japan, and provides a masterclass in the unusual use of colour to create atmosphere and drama.

Lotman brings a distinctive outsider's eye to his subjects, capturing the wonder and fascination of life in a foreign land. His images are imbued with mystery; using tints, blurs and over-saturations created during the printing process to create a warped and almost psychedelic effect. Presented without explanations, the photographs imprint the dreamlike experience of exploring unfamiliar surroundings onto the page.

If you're interested in using colour in subjective and personal ways in your own photography book, then Lotman's collection is sure to get your juices flowing.

See for yourself on Amazon.

## ALL THAT LIFE CAN AFFORD BY MATT STUART



Get Prices / Learn More

All That Life Can Afford is Matt Stuart's first book, collecting 80 images shot on the streets of London between 2002 and 2015. His busy compositions are evocative snapshots of life in a modern city that show the importance of sifting through the clutter to capture great, meaningful moments in your own street photography.

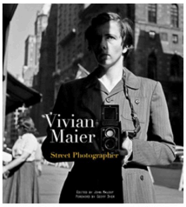
Stuart's photographs are dynamic and multilayered, and frequently feature multiple subjects within the same image. They seem to stop time, containing visual rhymes, puns and odd conjunctions, freezing fleeting moments full of wit, grit and tenderness.

If you're creating your own street photography book, then Stuart's work is a great lesson in appreciating what's in front of you, and cutting through the hubbub of the modern life to find the moments that really matter.

Get yours from Amazon.

# BLACK AND WHITE STREET PHOTOGRAPHY BOOKS

## STREET PHOTOGRAPHER BY VIVIAN MAIER



Get Prices / Learn More

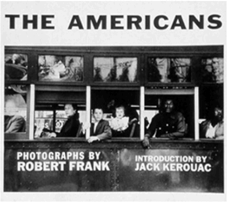
Finding the time to focus on your work is a challenge for any aspiring photographer, and Vivian Maier's Street Photography is an inspiring example of just how much you can achieve in spite of the demands of everyday life.

An amateur who worked full time as a nanny, Maier was overlooked during her lifetime, but her work was rediscovered in recent years and Street Photographer is now justly recognised as a classic. Shot mostly in Chicago, this book collects her striking monochrome images of American street life from the 1950s to the 1990s, showcasing her roving eye and human touch.

Maier was as prolific as she was talented, leaving behind thousands of images, and Street Photographer proves that you can produce an outstanding body of work even when other responsibilities compete for your attention.

Check it out for yourself on Amazon.

## THE AMERICANS BY ROBERT FRANK



Get Prices / Learn More

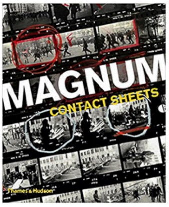
Great photography can be food for thought as well as a feast for the eyes, and there are few better examples of this than The Americans. Now thought of as one of the best photography books ever, it initially made Frank a controversial figure, with his critique of the dark side of the 1950s American Dream seeing him being branded unpatriotic.

His photos defied convention just as much as his politics did, using focus and cropping in deliberately strange and unsettling ways to explore the racial and economic tensions that lay just beneath the surface of US society.

Rejected by the mainstream but embraced by literary radicals such as Jack Kerouac and John Steinbeck, The Americans shows that a photography book can be used to tell uncomfortable truths – an important reminder in these turbulent times.

Find it on Amazon today.

## MAGNUM CONTACT SHEETS BY KRISTEN LUBBEN



Get Prices / Learn More

With most photography books, we're used to seeing a perfect selection of immaculate images – the finished product of hours of work, or even an entire career. Glimpses behind the scenes are rare, but that's exactly what the groundbreaking Magnum Contact Sheets provides.

This anthology pulls back the curtain by reproducing the contact sheets used by photographers who worked for the Magnum agency, giving you a fascinating insight into the creative process that produced their iconic images. This alone makes it one of the best photography books for beginners to learn from.

If every picture tells a story, Contact Sheets tells the story behind the story. It's guaranteed to make you think about how you shoot your own images, and how you can then edit them to produce your own photography book. After all, the process is just as important as the outcome.

Check the latest prices on Amazon.

## THE WORLD THROUGH MY EYES BY DAIDO MORIYAMA

Daido Moriyama
The World through My Eyes
SKIRA

Get Prices / Learn More

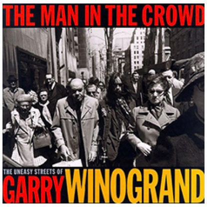
Some people believe great photography should be technically perfect; beautifully lit, flawlessly focused, and shot with crystal clarity. Daido Moriyama's The World Through My Eyes shows these people are not always right.

His highly personal, decade-spanning vision of Japanese life is anything but perfect – his photos are grimy, blurry, overexposed, scratched, and yet are all the more vivid and powerful as a result. Comprising a 'greatest hits' culled from Moriyama's other books, most of the images date from the 50s to the 70s, but their provocative potency remains undiminished.

The perfect introduction to Moriyama's work, The World Through My Eyes is both evidence that breaking the rules could lead to something special in your own work, and your original guide to the high-contrast Asian street photography genre we still being shot today.

Get it today from Amazon.

## THE MAN IN THE CROWD BY GARRY WINOGRAND



Get Prices / Learn More

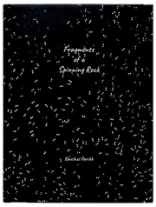
There's "no such thing as street photography", said Garry Winogrand. It's a provocative statement, but an explanation for what he meant can be found in The Man in the Crowd. These photos were taken on the streets, but their subjects are unmistakably people, rather than tarmac or buildings.

Winogrand was a master at capturing the human moments, behaviours and gestures that made modern American society, and this career retrospective of over 100 images (more than half previously unpublished) bubbles with energy and dynamism.

The Man in the Crowd shows the importance of sifting through the hustle and bustle of the city to find the instances that can make a personal connection, and it will help to you identify those moments for your photography too, be it when shooting, editing, or putting together your own street photography book.

Take a look on Amazon.

## FRAGMENTS OF A SPINNING ROCK BY KAUSHAL PARIKH



Get Prices / Learn More

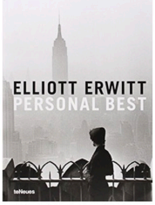
It’s always important to look back to influential predecessors, but for your work to really flourish it’s useful to learn from contemporaries as well, and Kaushal Parikh is an inspiring example of what a modern photographer can accomplish.

Fragments of a Spinning Rock comprises 65 photos drawn from a decade of work shot in Parikh’s native India. It was self-published and is lovingly presented, interspersed with short pieces of poetry that provide a wonderful foil to his black and white images

More of a photo-essay than a conventional collection, the book presents a personal vision of street photography that touches on his family as well broader scenes of life in Mumbai. It’s a stirring demonstration of how an ambitious and original approach could produce something fresh and exciting for your own photography book.

Find it on Kaushal’s own site here.

## PERSONAL BEST BY ELLIOTT ERWITT



Get Prices / Learn More

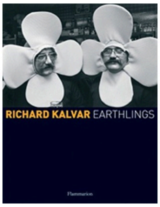
A crucial part of creating a compelling photography book is finding a voice that unites your images, helping you to present a coherent body of work rather than just a scattergun selection. Personal Best is a great example of that principle in action.

As the title suggests, it’s a personally chosen collection of images from Erwitt’s legendary catalogue. His trademark style shines through on every page, despite the images being selected from a career that spans decades, countries and a variety of subjects, from street photography to more traditional photojournalism.

Printed in a luxurious coffee-table format befitting such a great figure, Personal Best shows Erwitt’s candour and wit throughout. This makes it great inspiration to think about the signature qualities you’d like to display in your own work, if you’re to create one the best photography books ever too.

Get it from Amazon today.

## EARTHLINGS BY RICHARD KALVAR



Get Prices / Learn More

Earthlings is a globetrotting collection of eye-catching black and white images from Magnum photographer Richard Kalvar. As the title suggests, this book looks inquiringly at our odd little species, capturing unusual scenes of human life from diverse locations including Rome, Warsaw, New York and Tokyo.

Kalvar's images are unusual and absurd, and his unique take on the human condition finds surprising comedy and darkness in the most mundane of moments. Presented without titles, his photographs are like puzzles, or scenes from a film without an ending, posing questions without answers.

If you want to inject some humour and absurdity into your street photography book, then Earthlings is an essential starting point, showing just what can be achieved if you look closely at the strangeness lurking all around us.

Find it on Amazon.

## THE DECISIVE MOMENT BY HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON

The decisive Moment
Photographs by Henri Cartier-Bresson

Get Prices / Learn More

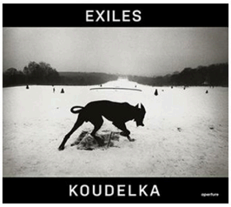
Perhaps the most famous street photography book of all time, or at least the one that has its title most used in conversation, The Decisive Moment set a template that continues to exert influence to this day.

Called Images à la Sauvette in Cartier-Bresson's native French, the English title refers to the crucial second that captures the spontaneous essence and balance of a scene, and the pursuit of that elusive instant is still the goal of urban shooters everywhere.

Originally published in 1952, this groundbreaking collection of Cartier-Bresson's early work still influences street photographers today. While that has led to a few clichés developing in the genre, learning from The Decisive Moment can only improve your own work.

Get it from Amazon.

## EXILES BY JOSEF KOUDELKA



Get Prices / Learn More

This classic 1988 book collects the striking monochrome photography of Josef Koudelka, shot on his travels throughout Europe and America whilst in exile from his native Czechoslovakia following the Soviet invasion of Prague.

Exiles is an inspiring example of a photographer working in a deeply personal and philosophical mode. His images are wrought with a sense of dislocation, speaking of the alienation that comes with enforced migration or being part of a minority group away from your homeland – concerns that are as relevant now as ever.

If you're interested in photography as a cathartic form of expression, or the ways that your work can combine personal and political themes, then the stark and moving images in Exiles are sure to resonate.

Go take a look on Amazon.

## ONE, TWO, THREE, MORE BY HELEN LEVITT

Helen Levitt
One, Two, Three, More
Introduction by Geoff Dyer

Get Prices / Learn More

An early landmark of street photography, Helen Levitt's One, Two, Three, More is an unforgettable document of life in New York City during the 1930s and 40s.

Shot amidst the working class immigrant neighbourhoods of the city, Levitt's beautiful black and white images burst with the humanity of the Big Apple's melting pot. From children playing on the sidewalk to the elderly gossiping on their stoops, Levitt's work is a moving and evocative time capsule of the full range of a vanished way of life, with an honesty and purity that makes a lasting impression.

Levitt's work is a great inspiration to get out and document the everyday life all around you, and to record the slices of life today that will fascinate future audiences.

Find yours on Amazon.

## THE BEST STREET PHOTOGRAPHY BOOKS TO INSPIRE YOURS?

While every title here is an inspirational photography book, the best one for you personally depends on what you want to take from it.

It may be guidance on a specific shooting style, or it may be an idea for a theme. It could be direction on a narrative to include throughout your book, or it could be help in editing work you've already shot.

Whichever it is, it still won't be the most important thing in making your own photography book. You're still going to have to get out there and start creating.

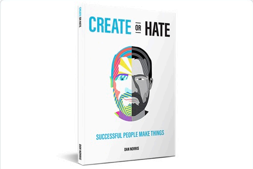
Don't just be a consumer of famous photography books. Use them as inspiration, get what you need from them, and then get out there and make your own.

One day it could be your name appearing on these kind of lists.

———

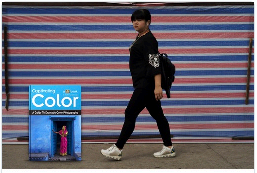
*And one more thing… if you've found this list of the best street photography books inspirational and want to help others discover it too, why not share or pin it?*

## RELATED POSTS



Create or Hate by Dan Norris – a Book Review

Transcending Travel – a Photography eBook Review



Captivating Color – a Photography eBook Review

## THERE ARE 2 COMMENTS

## JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Comment with social or use your email below:

Comment

Name *

Email *

Post Comment

Copyright © 2018 My Favourite Lens