



The World Is Our Clan by Sean Marais

The Photographers Guide to AfrikaBurn

Words and images by Reza Assar

AfrikaBurn is more than an event - it's a vibrant celebration of creativity, community, and radical self-expression. With its stunning colours, unique moments, and electrifying energy, it's a photographer's paradise. This detailed guide is designed to help you make the most of your time capturing this incredible experience.

*A note on this document ... it's been written for all types of photographers, professional ones as well as aspiring ones. Accordingly, some of this information might be obvious if you've already spent years behind a lens, but please take the time to read through it properly, even if we're telling you things you already know.



1. Prepare by doing your research

AfrikaBurn is not just a visual spectacle, it's a cultural movement grounded in values and principles. Understanding its essence is essential for any photographer.

Know the Principles: Familiarise yourself with the event's ethos, including principles like participation, self-reliance, and consent.

Explore Social Media: Search hashtags like **#AfrikaBurn**, **#AfrikaBurn2023**, and **#AfrikaBurn2024** to study past events. This will help you identify trends, uncover untapped perspectives, and hopefully find some inspiration.

Plan Your Shots: Decide in advance what you want to focus on, whether it's the Burns, Mutant Vehicles, Art, or the colourful community interactions.



2. Respect and ethics: Photograph with integrity

AfrikaBurn thrives on trust and mutual respect. As a photographer, it's your duty to honour these values.

Always Ask for Consent: Consent is sacred. Never photograph someone without their permission, especially if they're wearing a **pink wristband** (indicating "NO PHOTO / NO VIDEO"). If you capture such a photo unintentionally, please delete it immediately.

Approach Candid Moments Thoughtfully: If you capture a candid moment, take a moment to connect with your subject afterwards. Show them the photo, ask for their feedback, and share contact details if they'd like a copy. This builds trust and fosters friendly relationships.

Be Discreet: Avoid disrupting events or obstructing views to get your shot. Your goal is to enhance the experience, not overshadow it.

Document Sacred Spaces with Care: Be mindful around sacred rituals or personal moments. Observe from a distance unless explicitly invited to participate.



3. Explore the art of storytelling

AfrikaBurn is a tapestry of stories waiting to be told. Use your photography to weave a narrative that captures the heart of the event.

Think in Sequences: Document the journey ... from arrival to departure. Capture wide-angle shots for context, medium frames to tell stories, and close-ups to highlight emotion and detail.

Be Dynamic: Experiment with angles, compositions, and techniques. Play with light during the golden hour, silhouettes at sunset, and night shots of glowing installations.

Capture the Everyday Magic: Beyond the major burns and parties, don't miss the smaller, quieter moments—conversations, shared meals, and spontaneous acts of creativity.

Play: AfrikaBurn is not like working in the default world and should not be treated as such. Try the things that you're scared of, experiment with your imagery and above all, try to have fun while doing it.



4. Assignments and collaborations

AfrikaBurn is a communal experience, and as a photographer, you'll have opportunities to collaborate and contribute meaningfully.

Event Assignments: Some camps or organisers may request coverage of specific events—such as Burns, weddings, performances, or intimate gatherings like campfire parties. While these assignments are voluntary, they allow you to engage deeply with the community and capture unique, meaningful moments.

Collaborate with Creators: Work alongside artists, performers, and fellow photographers to document their creations. Building rapport with the creators can lead to fresh perspectives and access to exclusive shots.

Be a Team Player: If you're a registered member of the media at AfrikaBurn, check in regularly with the organisation to see if any key events need coverage. Staying organised and available helps ensure that no moment goes undocumented and might give you access to rarely seen sights.

Exchange Ideas: Share tips and techniques with other photographers and collaborate on creative projects. This spirit of collaboration embodies the essence of AfrikaBurn.



Mutant: Tulpa

5. Post-Event Magic: Processing Your Work

AfrikaBurn doesn't end when the event is over. Your photos are a bridge between memory and storytelling. All your images get added to the AfrikaBurn Art Archive and form a legacy of events and stories through the years.

Edit Thoughtfully: Take a bit of time to enhance your photos while preserving their authenticity. A well-edited image speaks volumes. Quality over speed.

Organise for Impact: If you can, please sort your photos into themes—portraits, landscapes, burns, etc. Folders and dates if possible. This makes it easier to create cohesive stories, and a lot easier to properly save and backup your photos.

Save the High-Res For Later: AfrikaBurn has to process thousands of images into the archive, and doing so to RAW file formats is very impractical. Rather share your photos as medium-sized Jpegs, ± 2000 pixels along the longest edge, and about 2MB in filesize. If larger sizes are required at a later date, the org will ask for them.

Share the Love: Share your work with the AfrikaBurn community, your photos contribute to the shared memories of the event.

Credit Creatives: When sharing your photos on your own channels or on any public platform, please credit any artwork or creative projects appropriately. It's important to acknowledge the people who create the amazing art that you have photographed.



Sandfish by Chip Snaddon

6. Stay Safe

AfrikaBurn's desert conditions can be challenging. Protecting yourself and your equipment is vitally important.

Guard Your Gear: Use weatherproof bags and lens covers to shield your equipment from dust and sandstorms. Be wary of any moving camera parts getting dust inside.

Bring Enough Power: While the organisers will always try to help with charging your batteries, it's important that you're radically self-reliant and have enough power to get you through the day. Don't forget to switch your camera off and try to conserve battery power.

Stay Hydrated: Carry plenty of water and protect yourself from the harsh sun.

Watch Your Step: Be mindful of tripping hazards, especially at night when exploring crowded or dimly lit areas.



The Junkanooos by M. Fagan

7. Embrace the Spirit of AfrikaBurn

Ultimately, AfrikaBurn is about more than photography—it's about being present, building connections, and contributing to the collective experience.

Engage with the AfrikaBurn Community: Put your camera down from time to time and immerse yourself in the moment. Dance, collaborate, and connect with your fellow Burners.

Create with Intention: Let your photos be a celebration of the people and moments that make AfrikaBurn unlike any other event in the world. With these tips, you're hopefully ready to capture the heart, soul, and magic of AfrikaBurn.

Enjoy the experience, happy shooting, and welcome home.