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Manhattanhenge Offers Photographers a Rare Photo Opportunity

Featuring **JAVAN NG**



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Sunbursts or flare may fill the frame since you're pointing the camera directly into the setting sun, adding to the photo. D750, AF-S NIKKOR 24-120mm f/4G ED VR, 1/125 second, f/16, ISO 200, Aperture priority, Matrix metering, focal length at 120mm.



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For the starburst effect on your Manhattanhenge photo, use a small aperture such as f/11 or smaller. D750, AF-S NIKKOR 24-120mm f/4G ED VR, 1/30 second, f/16, ISO 200, Aperture priority, Matrix metering, focal length at 24mm.

Updated with 2020 dates! Please be safe and practice social distancing if you venture out to see or photograph this year's Manhattanhenge.

Every photographer knows taking the perfect photo requires being in the right place at the right time. Nowhere is this truer than during the rare [sunset photography](#) opportunity of Manhattanhenge, the unique phenomenon that occurs twice a year around the summer solstice in NYC.

“It’s all about location,” says Singapore-based photographer Javan Ng, “for Manhattanhenge, you have to be on the city street grid.”

Specifically, during Manhattanhenge (a reference to Stonehenge in England) the setting sun is aligned perfectly with the east-west street grid of Manhattan.

Indeed, it is such a unique event that only certain cities throughout the world are fortunate enough to experience a henge like it.

Why does Manhattanhenge happen in NYC?

And why is that? The answer: City planning.

Specifically, when New York City was designed, the Commissioners Plan of 1811 called for the east-west streets to be 29 degrees off true east/west. As a result, the event does not happen on the exact solstice each year. Instead it usually occurs in May and July.

And, it makes NYC ideal for Manhattanhenge—a term coined by astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson.

When is Manhattanhenge 2019?

For 2020, Manhattanhenge will happen on **May 29**, 8:13pm (Half sun) and **May 30**, 8:14pm (Full sun) and **July 12**, 8:20pm (Full sun) and **July 13**, 8:21pm (Half sun).

During the half sun event, only the top half of the sun is seen while during the full sun the entire circle of the sun is seen between buildings.

The best way to stay up to date on future cityhengens, is to search the internet; meanwhile the American Museum of Natural History in New York lists the upcoming New York City ones, as it gets closer to the dates.



© Javan Ng

Gantry Plaza State Park in Long Island City is East of Manhattan. The view of Manhattanhenge from the park allows you to capture a wide-angle shot of Manhattan and the setting sun. D750, AF-S NIKKOR 24-120mm f/4G ED VR, 1/125 second, f/16, ISO 500, Aperture priority, Matrix metering, focal length at 95mm.

Manhattanhenge Photography Tips

How can photographers capture the best Manhattanhenge images?

The good news is any camera will do the trick—assuming you are in good position for the henge. Another suggestion is to use a tripod if you have one to steady the camera, especially because you might be [using long exposures](#). If you are shooting handheld, just [increase the ISO](#) for a fast enough shutter speed so it won't cause blur.

That said, while Manhattan is not the only city with its own henge, it is necessary to be in one with an **east to west street grid**.

Where else can I see a city henge?

Other major cities with a cityhenge include: Montreal, Toronto, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston and Washington DC.

Where is the best place to photograph Manhattanhenge?

For the clearest views, it's best to position yourself on the widest crosstown streets, like 14th, 23rd, 34th, 42nd, and 57th Streets. Remember to look around for famous New York City landmarks to enhance the sense of place in your images. For example you have the Empire State Building on 34th Street, or the Chrysler Building and Times Square on 42nd Street.

To that end, Javan offers: "Another one of my favorite venues to photograph Manhattanhenge is Gantry Plaza State Park in Long Island City. You get to see the sun setting behind 42nd street. You can shoot close up with a telephoto lens or include the Manhattan skyline in your shot with a wide-angle lens."

Overall, Javan—who first shot the unique event while based in New York City—encourages photographers to take advantage of the opportunity if they can.

"It's a rare sight to see the sun setting in perfect alignment with the city street grid. You don't get to see this very often." He continues: "I would love to be back in New York to capture it again if I have the opportunity. It's amazing and beautiful to see the sun momentarily float above the distant horizon, casting a golden glow on the New York City streets."

In fact, even for a world traveler such as Javan, the opportunity to find another cityhenge is very difficult.

"I'm always on the lookout for such unique occurrences when I travel to other cities or in my own country, but so far I have not found any quite the same as Manhattan [henge]," he concludes.

5 Tips for Photographing Manhattanhenge

1. Any camera will work for photographing Manhattanhenge.
2. Choose a wide crosstown (East/West) street to view the Manhattanhenge.
3. The further east you are, the more buildings will be visible in your photo.
4. Use a tripod to steady the camera if you want to utilize a slow shutter speed.
5. If you don't have a tripod, increase the ISO to allow you to increase the shutter speed so you can comfortably handhold the camera.

Featuring

JAVAN NG

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