

Capture stunning Manhattanhenge sunset photos like a pro with these expert tips

By [Ashley Williams](#), AccuWeather staff writer



Swath of tornado damage seen from the sky and ground

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As thousands prepare to descend upon New York City's streets to view the famous Manhattanhenge sunset, social media will likely be flooded with photos from residents and tourists who captured their best images of the celestial sunset, which happens four times annually.

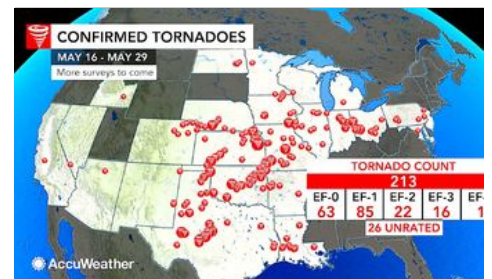
Spectators who miss the two Manhattanhenge occurrences in May can wait until July to catch the year's final showings of the unique event in which the sunset beams down the Manhattan street grid's east- and westward roads in perfect alignment. That is, of course, if clouds don't threaten to thwart views of the spectacular display, which has occasionally occurred in previous years.

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Tornadoes have touched down across the United States for 13-straight days. A radar-confirmed tornado threatened the northern suburbs of Dallas on Wednesday afternoon.



13 straight days of tornadoes shatter US twister record, leave heartland storm-weary

A look at this map that is littered with tornado reports shows that the last two weeks have been so bad a new record has been set.

Onlookers will want to capture the most stunning photos of the gorgeous sunset. Professional photographers shared their tips with AccuWeather for snapping great sunset images just in time for Manhattanhenge.

Use helpful apps

While many people attempting to capture the Manhattanhenge sunset on their phones will be hoping that the image looks just as amazing as it does when viewing the event with their own eyes, Philadelphia-based **photographer** Josh Pellegrini warns that it can be tricky to get a great sunset shot this way.



A woman uses her smartphone to take a photo of the Manhattanhenge sunset in New York City. (AP Photo/Dennis Van Tine/STAR MAX/IPx)

“This is mainly due to the fact that there is such a variation in light. The shadows are very dark, yet the sun still has some highlights,” Pellegrini told AccuWeather. He recommends installing a basic software editing program on your phone to enhance the image.

Another way to enhance your phone’s images, recommends professional photographer Mark Condon, is to download an app that lets you individually control all elements of **the exposure triangle** – shutter speed, ISO and aperture. It’s important to balance **all three**



Tornado that obliterated Linwood, Kansas, was mile-wide EF4 twister with top winds of 170 mph

Linwood was one of the latest communities to be hit hard by a tornado onslaught that has lasted for nearly two weeks across the country.

elements in order to get the desired result on your image, according to FStoppers.com.

If using an iPhone, Condon added, it could be helpful to drag your finger down on the screen in the camera app to reduce the exposure and to preserve detail and color in the sunset.

Bring a tripod

“Get a smartphone tripod to allow you to get a stable shot,” suggested Condon, who runs a photography and camera gear-based site, **ShotKit.com**. The photographer experienced Manhattanhenge firsthand a few years ago, he told AccuWeather. Unfortunately, all images were lost when he misplaced his phone during his trip to the Big Apple.

The unlucky incident led him to offer this tip: “Back up your photo as soon as you’ve taken it!”

Create a silhouette

To really enhance the sunset, photographers also recommend including something in the foreground of the image. This helps to create a silhouette, which adds interest to the sunset photo. “When shooting Manhattanhenge, don’t just shoot the same shot as everyone else facing down the street,” Pellegrini said. “Find a subject; maybe the silhouette of some onlookers, a reflection off a car, a biker in traffic. It really can be anything.”

If you’re using a **tripod**, you can set the timer on your camera and step into the shot yourself to form the silhouette, Condon said.

Another way to create a cool sunset image is to frame your shot, according to Pellegrini. “Have subjects other than the sunset to create a natural frame, like a window or archway,” he said.

Get the lighting right

“The fact is, each sunset is different, and lighting is way more complicated than we want to make it,” Pellegrini said. “To enhance the color of the sky, if there is a bright blue, I like to ever-so-slightly underexpose [on my camera].” This helps him to draw out the color prior to editing.

Condon offered these additional tips for those using cameras to shoot the sunset:

- Shoot in RAW format if your camera allows you to. This will give you the most latitude [to post-process](#) the photo afterwards.
- Use manual mode so you can expose for the sunset, rather than having the camera automatically try and expose for something else in the scene.
- Set your aperture to a high setting, like f/16, then set your ISO to the lowest number on your camera.
- Experiment with your shutter speed to get the closure you want. You may need to use a tripod for best results.
- If the camera allows, shoot a bracketed exposure to ensure you have a few exposures from which to choose.

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Linger after sunset

After the sun has dipped below the horizon, don't leave just yet, photographers suggested. "This is the golden hour, and yields a great opportunity for flattering photos due to the beautiful light," Condon said.

"Many times, the best color comes within a 30-minute period after the sun sets," Pellegrini added.

View the sunset safely

When taking photos of Manhattanhenge, keep eye safety in mind, as viewing the event does involve looking toward the sun.

"As the sun reaches the horizon, the light has to travel through many more layers of atmosphere than it is overhead," said Dr. Ming Wang, an [ophthalmologist](#) based in Memphis, Tennessee. "As the light travels through the atmosphere, it scatters, diffusing its intensity."

This scattering is partly responsible for the red appearance of the sun at sunset and sunrise, and because of this light scattering, Wang said it is safe to view the sun at sunrise and sunset for short periods of time, as long as continuous exposure—looking directly at the same spot on the sun—is avoided.

He added that during this period, it's not exactly necessary to view the sunset (or sunrise) through additional filters, or indirectly through a digital screen. "These techniques can be employed during a solar eclipse, however, when the sun is overhead — a time when it is *not*

safe to use your naked eye," Wang told AccuWeather. Wang noted that during sunrise and sunset, it's also safe to view the sun through your camera's viewfinder.

"This is in direct contrast to viewing the sun at any other time," Wang said. "When the sun is overhead, if you stare at the sun without protection, even for a few short seconds, you may experience damage to your retina (the tissue at the back of your eye) called **solar retinopathy**."

It's possible that staring directly at the same spot on the sun for several continuous minutes during a sunset could cause a mild case of the eye condition. "For this reason, it is best to look away from the actual sun and look instead at the surrounding atmosphere, clouds and light rather than directly at the sun for the entire viewing time," he said.

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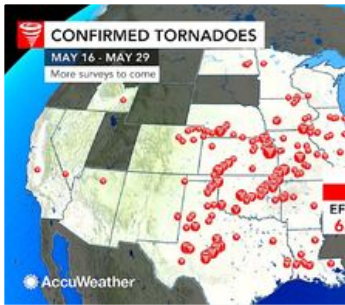
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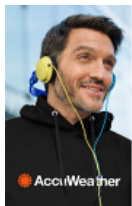
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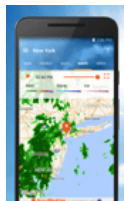
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