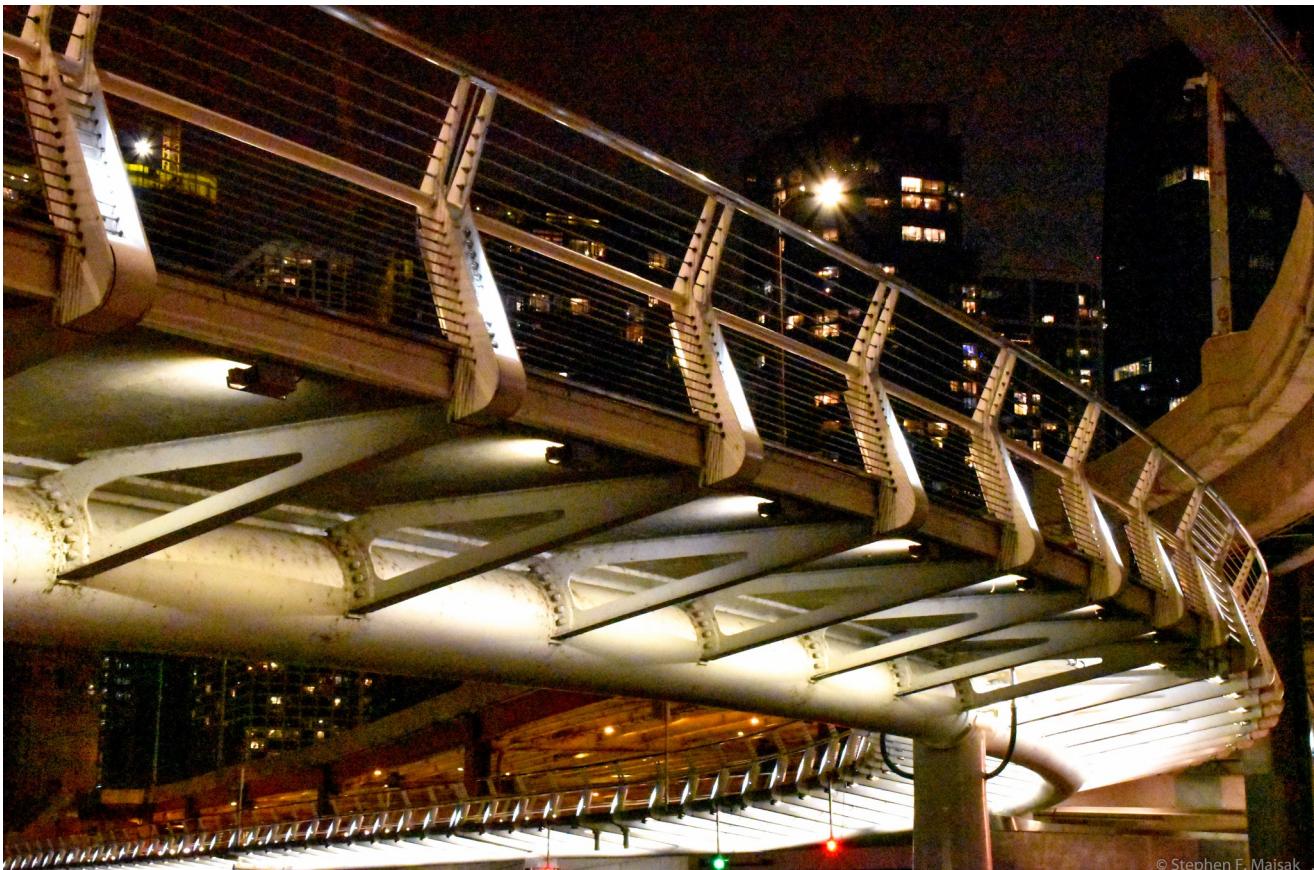


# How to Get the



*Revealing the Secrets  
Behind Unforgettable Photography*

## Blog #114: Dinosaur Spine?



What am I looking at? I know it's a bridge, but what does it resemble? What creative mind threw a curve into the mix and lit it like something out of a Ridley Scott futuristic movie adventure? There are times when engineering marvels and the creativity of the human spirit capture our imagination and resonate with our sense of wonder. Night lighting adds to the magic of the moment. These stunning opportunities are the stuff of unforgettable photographs.

This photo was the result of a happy accident. I was going down to Navy Pier in Chicago at dusk to get photos of the legendary pier at night with its iconic neon lettering, and wouldn't you know it? Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the pier was scheduled to be closed for the upcoming months, and they decided to turn off the lights!



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After a brief laugh, I turned around to see if I could take some other shots so the trip would not be a total disappointment. First, I got an amusing photo of the Lake Point Tower Condominium with its 3-sided curves. Shot on an angle with the blue night sky against the brown and gold windows, with a nearby tree poking in, it made a playful composition.

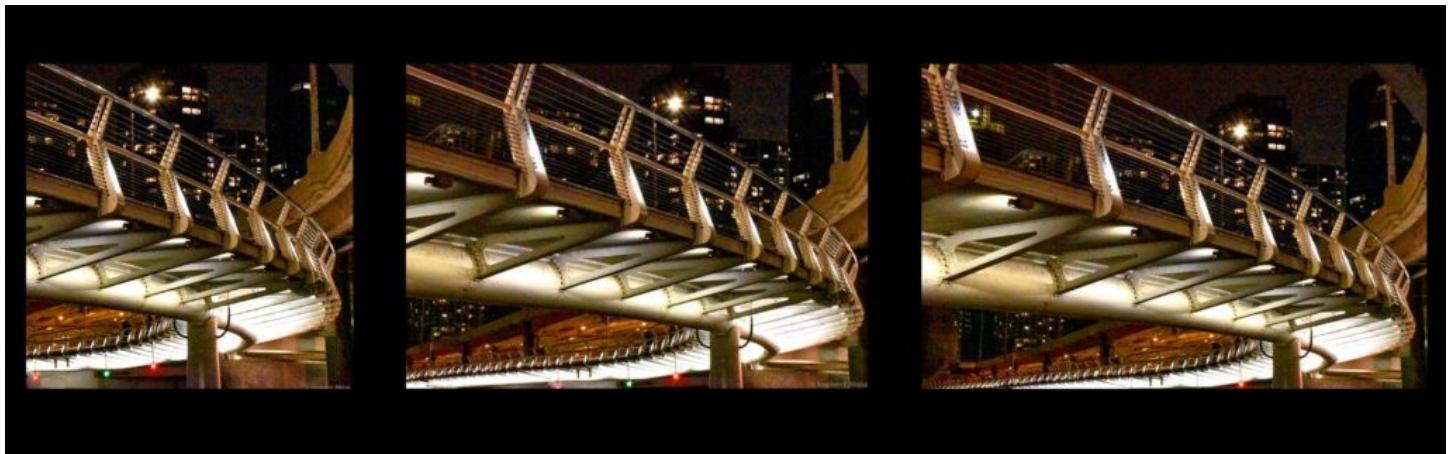
Walking under the bridge from Navy Pier to return to my car, I was almost bowled over by the “Navy Pier Flyover”, a pedestrian pathway, cantilevered above. Framed against the concrete jungle of the city, the stark illumination made this especially eye-catching. I had never looked up at the flyover before from below. White lights showcased the modern design of the walkway. It was like the spine of a dinosaur, craning its head to the side to cast its glaze on mortals below.



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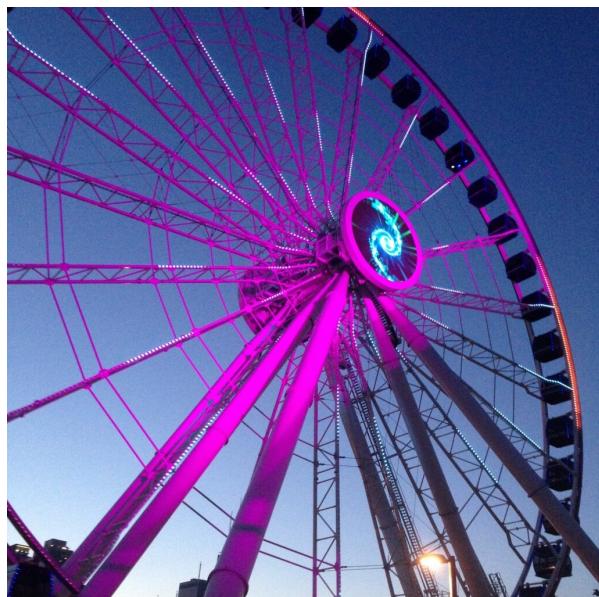
HNTB, the project’s designer, utilized a “biomimicry-type” design for the raised skyway, consisting of a single steel “spine” with attached “ribs” to support the 16-foot-wide path above. This structural system allows for three degrees of freedom for the path to turn and change elevation as it spans through an irregular terrain. No wonder I thought it resembled a dinosaur spine.

The massive curve of the path made for some great cropping choices. I could crop to a square photo, which had some symmetrical benefits; by going to a broader angle, I was able to include the long tail of the lit bridge as it trailed off to infinity to the south. I could then crop the upper right of the bridge to end on a clean line of the upper railing.



Cropping Choices: Square, Railing Fading Into in Upper Left Corner; Highlighting Engineering Hardware in Upper Left Corner

or I could use the upper left corner to emphasize the walkway's engineering brackets and mechanical elements. No one decision on how to crop a photo is "right" or "wrong". Part of the creative decision is to determine what element you want to be brought out in the final image. The ribbed arm rails above the walkway aligned with the triangular braces below, and the steel-strung railings added another texture to the final image, so I settled on the third option. This is the one I think makes the engineering design the focus of the image.



### Navy Pier Flyover Photo Stats

<b>Dimensions:</b>	5821 x 3861
<b>Exposure:</b>	1/25 sec at f/4
<b>Focal Length:</b>	46 mm
<b>ISO:</b>	25600
<b>Camera:</b>	Nikon D3500
<b>Lens:</b>	18.0-300.0mm f 3.5

## TAKEAWAYS

1. When your plans for photography get thrown off, look for the new opportunities created. You may not get a shot you can use, but you can use the time and experience to try new skills or play with exposures.
2. Take time to scope out the ways different cropping shift the attention of the viewer. What do you want to be the focus of the image?