

Winter Landscape Photography

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1. Snow falling

- Capture a magical, dynamic winter scene by photographing in Shutter Priority (Tv) mode, which lets you control how snowfall appears in your photos.
- Depending on the snow conditions, using a slow shutter speed (1/15 sec.) can blur a blizzard or eliminate slow-falling snowflakes.
- Choosing a fast shutter speed (1/250 sec.) will freeze snowflakes in mid-air.

2. Proper exposure

- Experiment with exposure compensation settings by accessing P, Tv and Av modes. Adding +1 or +2 stop of exposure compensation brings more light into your scene, preventing underexposure and keeping the snow white without washing out your photo.
- Save some time out in the cold by shooting with Auto Exposure Bracketing (AEB), available on most cameras. With AEB activated, you can take three consecutive shots in sequence of standard exposure, decreased exposure and increased exposure without manually adjusting the settings. Similar to AEB, the High Dynamic Range (HDR) setting captures three consecutive images in different exposures and automatically merges them into one JPG image.
- Do not overexpose the highlight areas of a scene. Look at the camera's histogram and maybe turn on the overexposure blink warning. You will not be able to recover overexposure when doing post-processing. You want detail and texture in the highlighted areas.
- You can sometimes lighten a winter landscape even further to create a bright-white effect, as a fine art result.

3. White balance

- Auto White Balance (AWB) automatically detects and adjusts the color tint of a scene to capture the most accurate image possible. Sparkling white snow set against clear blue skies can often appear blue in photos. If your snowy scenes are looking blue, switching your White Balance setting from AWB to Shade or Cloudy will neutralize the bluish tint with warmer tones. A well-balanced, natural-looking image will have a slight blue cast with neutral highlights.
- If you shoot in RAW you can leave the white balance on automatic and use the temperature slider in Lightroom or Photoshop to move back and forth between warm and cool effects to your liking.

4. Nighttime snow scenes

- Fresh snow on the ground reflects the ambient glow from streetlights, making it easier to take vibrant winter photos at night. Use available light during the night and low-light conditions without the use of flash. Take advantage of your camera's

extended ISO range to increase light sensitivity and reduce the appearance of camera shake blur, that results in natural-looking photos.

5. Polarizer

- Use a polarizer in daytime: It's most effectively used at right angles to the light source.
- A polarizing filter helps to dampen reflections on snow or thawing water. It also makes for more intense colors, such as in the sky, if it is blue.

6. Equipment

- Cold makes things more brittle; example a shutter release cable and carbon fiber legged tripods may break. Do not squeeze cable tightly. Do not put a lot of pressure on tripod legs when adjusting them.
- Moisture can cause tripod legs to stick or freeze when outside. Sometimes a gentle tug on the leg can free it up, however it may need to be brought into a warm place to thaw and then try to eliminate all moisture.
- Having spikes on the bottom tips of your tripod legs is helpful to maintain its position.
- Lithium-ion batteries handle cold better than other types. Bring extra batteries. Put extra batteries inside your warm clothing to keep from deteriorating its charge.
- Bringing equipment from inside to outside or visa versa will cause condensation and fogging. Put your gear into a plastic bag to let the condensation occur on the outside of the bag. Keep your equipment in your camera bag which has a bit of insulating effect, and let it slowly adjust to the cold outside or warmth inside.
- Keep a lens cap on the lens for a time, when bringing a cold lens into a warm area.
- Use a rain proof cover to put over your camera and lens to protect from freezing snow that can condense on it.
- Don't change lenses in snowy conditions.
- Keep a towel and rocket blower handy to wipe the snow off your camera and lens.

7. Reflected light

- Snow and ice reflect about 90% of the occurring light, so snow and ice take on the color characteristic of the sky

8. Light

- The best light will be from clear sky non-overcast or cloudy sky. You should wait for strong directional light such as side lighting or back lighting. It is very important to get an early sunrise or sunset lighting for the best landscape images.
- A juxtaposition of light and shadow areas will add to the interest in a scene. When you capture an image with the warm light from the sky hitting non-shadow areas, along with shadow areas which will have a blue cool cast to it, this combination is very pleasing. It is a complementary color scheme of warm versus cool light.
- Blowing snow in a scene, along with flat light may work OK, but not just snow with flat light. Blowing snow can create an ethereal appearance for elements in the scene.
- Sometimes fog occurs when there is a sudden inversion of temperature. This fog can also make a winter scene become magical. It would be best to try to get that

fog backlight from a rising sun. Inversions occur mainly in the morning. This fog will also create hoar frost which is extremely photogenic when backlit.

- White frost on objects that are back lighted will produce a great image.
- Midday sun: try converting your image to Black & White.
- Low sun produces long shadows; use Black & White to produce interesting lines and shapes.
- Including lights from a building when capturing a night type of scene will make a great image.

9. Snow

- Try to capture fresh and lots of snow, not snow that has been packed down. Old snow may look dirty.
- Winter forest scenes will look best with lots of heavy snow on the trees and shrubs.
- Look for interesting features in the snow as a foreground. Flat uninteresting snow for the foreground will not work well. Maybe find windblown features as well as low angled sun at sunrise or sunset, or ice sticking up out of the snow, small trees, fence posts, humped snow on top of a rock or object. Look for items that are not snowed over such as open water, moving water, or clear ice that has reflections. You are trying to get a 3-dimensional appearance and something that leads the eye into the scene.

10. Scale

- Include people in the scene to give a sense of scale. Does the person add value or detract from the wintry scene? Does it give the viewer an idea of how large your mountains or trees are? If they don't improve your overall composition, forget about it.

11. Negative space

- With an abundance of monochrome weather in the wintertime, using negative or empty space can often be striking. So, use the available white space to your advantage.

12. ISO

- Use a low ISO so you do not introduce noise

13. Focus

- Winter landscapes can be intensely white – and when you're dealing with monochromatic scenes, your camera will often struggle to lock focus, so use manual focus.

14. Sun in the scene

- The sun makes a wonderful primary subject when you shoot into it and include it in the frame. Sunrise and sunset when the sun is low in the sky will result in a good composition. Watch out for sun flare. You need to stop down your lens to a very small aperture such as f/11 or f/16 to get starburst.
- Remove sun flare by capturing two images; one normal one and the second with your finger or thumb where the sun is; then post-process the two images into one in Photoshop to remove the glare area.

15. Contrast

- In white winter landscapes, any little bit of color can stand out and make a photo remarkable. Consider using a colorful jacket or umbrella in a snowstorm to add contrast to an otherwise overcast photo.
- Look for contrast. This can be color contrast, where you find a splash of red, blue, or green against the white background. But it can also be tonal contrast, such as a splash of darkness against the bright snow like a darker tree against a white backdrop. So, look for something that is standing out from the white blanket. Red color contrast is particularly pleasing in winter landscape scenes, but you can really search for any dominant color or tonal variation.

16. Ice cave

- Shooting from inside an ice cave or area that has overhanging ice is best because of the back lighting on the ice which enhances the color and texture.
- Beware of open areas of ice that let the outside light become overexposed when you are capturing images from within a cave. It may be better to not have excessively bright light areas for your capture; concentrate on the colors and textures as well as maybe the rocks within the cave. If you include the bright outside lighted areas, you will need to do an HDR.

17. Getting there

- Snowshoes or skis or ice spikes on shoes may be required. Getting there via snowmobile is a possibility. It can be difficult to find to park your car; be aware that your car may be snow plowed in by snow.

18. Car

- It may be wise to carry in your car, a jump-start lithium battery in case your car battery dies.

19. Safety

- A long-handled ice axe should be carried when working on ice over water. Use it to probe the ice for its condition such as weak ice. Use the axe part to help you get up a steep slope.
- The best safety is to have somebody come with you.
- Let somebody know where you are going and when you expect to get back.

20. Clothing

- Use multiple layers of high-quality clothing. Merino wool-based layers can provide the necessary warmth – make sure that the base layers are close to your skin.
- Use warm waterproof shoes. If the snow is deep, you might want to use gaiters.
- Have two pairs of gloves – one thick hard shell for those waiting moments and the other should be thinner gloves to be able to manipulate your camera.
- Wear long johns for really low temperatures. Sometimes several layers might be necessary. Again, Merino wool can be very useful as a base layer.
- Have a thick and warm head cap, perhaps even two layers.
- Hand and toe warmers can be lifesavers in very cold conditions, so if you know that it will be freezing cold, you should equip your hands and feet with those.