

INSIGHTS

IN PHOTOGRAPHY

LEARN TO SEE | LEARN TO THINK | LEARN TO CREATE

BY
JACK GRAHAM
WINTER 2013



Contents

- 4 Greetings
- 5 2014 International Jack Graham Photography Workshops
- 6 Want a photographic challenge?
- 14 The 2014 USA Workshop Schedule
- 16 Preparing for nature photography in cold weather
- 26 The Story Behind the Picture: Hunt's Mesa, Arizona
- 28 Featured sponsor: Outdoor Photo Gear
- 29 ULTIMATE ICELAND™ 2014-2015 Workshops
- 30 Puffin Pad Pro – Delivers as Promised

Locations Featured in this Issue

- Cover: Zabriskie Point, Death Valley, California
- Above: The Palouse, Washington
- 6-13: Death Valley National Park, California and the Palouse region of Eastern Washington
- 16-24: Grand Tetons, Wyoming; Iceland glaciers; Hood River Valley, Oregon
- 25: Sunset on the Oregon Coast
- 26: Hunt's Mesa, Arizona
- Back: Blooming cactus, Sonoran Desert, Arizona



Greetings



Jack Graham

For workshops as well as speaking engagements, I can be contacted via email at jack@jackgrahamphoto.com

Yes, it's that time again ... time to remind everyone how fast the year has gone and how great it was. Well, it has and it was!

This is the second issue of my magazine, "Insights in Photography." We plan on publishing one per season. If you haven't read the last issue, just click [HERE](#) to give it a read.

For the many who came along with me on my workshops this year, I thank you. Like the airlines say, you have many choices. I appreciate your interest and consideration in choosing a Jack Graham Photography Workshop.

In this issue you'll find lots of information on my 2014 workshop schedule. New and exciting locations for the coming year include Ireland, China, Acadia National Park (Maine), the Nevada Desert (close to Las Vegas) and several others that are sure to make 2014 a banner year.

In 2013 I invited my great friend of over 20 years, [Bill Fortney](#), to co-lead a few workshops with me. We received such positive feedback and inspiration from the attendees that we are expanding our locations for 2014. Bill and I will co-lead workshops in the Columbia River Gorge, the Palouse region of Eastern Washington, Acadia National Park in Maine and a very special "Ghost Towns and Americana" workshop in the Nevada desert.

In addition to our 5th year doing the Eastern Sierra workshop together (and my 21st October there!), [Guy Tal](#) and I have added a 3 day intense master class right on the heels of our field workshop in this beautiful locale. This workshop will cover image production methods we have developed over years of experience – both in the field and in studio processing, and preparing files for printing. This is a hands-on, in-depth learning experience for photographers looking to extend their creative processing techniques.

In May I'll be visiting the unspoiled villages, rugged ancient abbeys and the dramatic coastline of Western Ireland with Strabo Tours. Next, on to the "photographer's paradise" that is Whidbey Island with the Pacific Northwest Art School in June. In September, we'll travel to Southwestern China for a truly once in a lifetime, 15 day photographic experience. And, of course, winter and summer 2014 we'll be in Iceland, the land of fire and ice.

I am often asked by my friends and attendees, "How do I manage to do all this traveling?" The answer ... I simply love what I do! Seeing folks grow as photographers is very rewarding and makes it all worthwhile.

In early 2014 I'll have a few personal announcements to make. They are all good! Just to whet your appetite ... one has to do with adding new equipment to my camera bag (hint—the bag might get a bit lighter!) Stay tuned.

I wish you all a very happy and healthy 2014.

Sincerely,

Jack



www.jackgrahamphoto.com | jackgrahamphoto.wordpress.com
ultimateiceland.com | www.photographthepacificnorthwest.com

2014 International Jack Graham Photo Workshops

WWW.JACKGRAHAMPHOTO.COM

LEARN TO SEE :: LEARN TO THINK :: LEARN TO CREATE

Ultimate Iceland™ July 11-20, 2014



"The Light of Ireland" April 30 - May 10, 2014



For more information or to register contact the Strabo Photo Tour Collection: 607-756-8676 or visit www.phototc.com
Photo by Ron Rosenstock

China Adventure September 4-16, 2014



Photo by Su Zhou



Want a photographic challenge?

Head to the wide open spaces of Death Valley National Park in Southeastern California or the Palouse Region of Eastern Washington

Death Valley National Park and the Palouse region of Eastern Washington are both great areas to work on improving your photographic skills. One must take light and patterns into consideration more than anywhere else. Images that portray depth, surprise and drama, while using leading lines, foregrounds and other graphic elements, will produce some great images. I will warn you, photography in either of these great expansive landscapes isn't as easy as you may think!

The Palouse is an area most people have never been to. Many locations in the Palouse are unrecognizable unless you have visited the region previously. Therefore, emphasizing vision and creativity during your time in the Palouse is primary. Almost without exception, each location you visit will be entirely different from the prior one.

Similarly, while Death Valley offers a variety of areas to photograph, there aren't many "icons." Monument Valley has its familiar monoliths; Yosemite has its well-known majestic mountains, etc. But in Death Valley, few recognizable icons exist. You are there in the vastness – looking for patterns, textures and color. This is a challenge for even the seasoned photographer.

Trying to photograph either of these locations without proper preparation can literally "eat you up" – which is why I suggest doing one of my workshops there! Based on several years of photographing and leading workshops in both locales, I am familiar with hundreds of sites – some not on the visitor's guides – while also being in the right area during the prime time for best light. As a rule, bad weather can create good light, so I always hope for some degree of bad weather!

What makes photographing in Death Valley or the Palouse different from other landscapes? To say that both of these areas are spacious is an understatement. Their vastness is unlike anywhere else in the United States and can be intimidating. In addition, there are multitudes of textures, colors and patterns creating endless photographic opportunities.

*Below: Canola fields in the Palouse, Washington
Opposite: Zabriskie Point, Death Valley*



During all of my workshops, we typically practice the obvious techniques that go into making quality photographs. But for these two workshops the primary focus is on learning to see and slowing down to make the most of our time; to take in the landscape while resisting the impulse to be overwhelmed with its inert beauty. These two great locations offer so many photographic opportunities, one must be very selective:

1. Always try to find a foreground – mainly because of the vastness.
2. Look for depth in an image and use a wide angle lens. Work on hyper focal length, which is absolutely necessary to get the depth of field you want. Often times you will need to get low to the ground to get the correct depth and angle needed for a dramatic image.



3. PRS – look for Patterns, Repetition and Simplicity.
4. Again, because of the expanse, pay close attention to the background and make sure it doesn't take away from the scene.
5. Exposures can be tricky because of the dramatic and sometimes contrasting light. Learning to meter using your spot meter is very important. Also, the use of Graduated Neutral Density filters can compensate for quite common lighting difficulties.

Unless you're lucky enough to just get out of your vehicle and hit on some really dramatic light, you will need to take some time and bond with the surroundings. Rushing to make photographs will result in mediocre results. Decide what strikes your eye or what is perhaps creating dramatic detail. Understand where you are, appreciate the unique landscape and slow down ... take it all in ... and I guarantee that you'll come away with some great images.

Left: Mesquite Flats
Top right: Badwater Playa
Bottom right: The Palette

Death Valley National Park

Far from any large urban areas – the closest major city is Las Vegas, Nevada at 125 miles away – lies Death Valley National Park. With an expansive terrain that spans over 3.3 million miles, it is the largest national park in the lower 48 states. Death Valley offers some of the most unique and inspiring landscapes in the world with near endless photographic opportunities.

I choose to conduct my workshops in Death Valley National Park during the fall and late winter. The obvious reason for this is to take advantage of the friendlier temperatures. But just as importantly is to make use of the low angle of light, allowing for many hours of quality photography. Determining lighting – side lighting, backlighting, the use of HDR – are all important considerations in order to capture quality images. The months of February, March and November commonly offer the best dramatic light in Death Valley.

Typically, in late February and early March, it's possible to venture out onto the flooded playas at Badwater and Cottonball Basin for dramatic sunrise images. In the fall, we are able to get out to the Racetrack Playa (a dried up lakebed), which





Top: Mesquite Flats Dunes
Bottom: Zabriskie Point
Right: The Palouse

Photo Tip: Be sure to pack window cleaner and paper towels to clean your windshield ... Removing dust and bugs will help you see better as you drive.

The Palouse region of Eastern Washington State

The rolling hills of wheat, barley, lentils and canola with the addition of spring wildflowers and country roads punctuated with 100+ year old barns lends itself to a photographer's paradise. The subject matter is endless.

The "Palouse" area is located in Southeastern Washington and is accessed by flying into Spokane (1 ½ hours to the north) or driving a few hours from Seattle or Portland, Oregon. The major towns in the area are Pullman, home of Washington State University and Moscow, Idaho, home of the University of Idaho. The Palouse is fairly remote. It's not a tourist destination, but during the spring and summer there are usually many photographers.

A few interesting facts about the Palouse:

- The area averages 100-200 bushels of wheat per year
- The Palouse is the largest producer of lentils in the world
- Because of the geography, the crops of the Palouse region require no irrigation
- The Palouse covers over 4,000 sq. miles
- The name "Palouse" is thought to have originated by French Canadian fur traders, based on the indigenous people living in the area called "Palus."

is usually flooded in the early winter causing the roads to close. "The Racetrack" is a place of stunning beauty and mystery, best known for its strange moving rocks (probably caused by wind!). Although no one has actually seen the rocks move, the long meandering tracks left behind in the mud surface of the playa attest to their activity.

Some of the other areas we may visit and photograph include Zabriskie Point, Mesquite Sand Dunes, Mosaic Canyon, Golden Canyon, Dante's View, Devil's Golf Course and Artist's Palate. Within the park are some old mines and wooden structures to photograph as well. We usually visit a ghost town which features a three-story bank, a jailhouse and train depot – all now in ruins. I usually custom tailor the agenda based on weather and light conditions while also allowing sufficient time for image reviews and photographic presentations.

We may consider doing some night photography if the weather is good and the moon isn't too bright. I prefer a quarter to a half moon in order to have just enough light to illuminate the foreground, but also allow for a good exposure in the night sky to show stars. During one of my Death Valley photography workshops, we often venture out onto the sand dunes or up to Zabriskie Point to capture some amazing nighttime images.

Each season brings different photographic opportunities. Most photographers visit the Palouse from mid-May through September. In the springtime, endless, rolling fields of different shades of green abound. In early to late June, the patterns of the green fields dotted with red barns make for a truly remarkable photographic experience. By August the harvest is in full force – late afternoon is the best time to capture the clouds of dust created by the combines in the fields and for using the setting sun to provide a warm glow over the vastness of the fields. The clouds over the Palouse can be amazing in any season – billowing white clouds often appear indicating summer thunderstorms. Sunsets and sunrises can be spectacular during these times. By fall, many of the fields turn into different shades of brown with patterns inscribed in the earth by tractors from both during and after the harvest.



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Photography
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JG
The Palouse
Death Valley

Top & left: The Palouse
Bottom: Badwater Playa, Death Valley

For best results, plan on spending at least 4 or 5 days in the area. The best time for photography, like in many other areas, is during the golden hours of sunrise and sunset. The very best light is usually 30 minutes before sunrise and 30-45 minutes after sunset. Keep in mind you will need to be at your location and ready to shoot at least 40 minutes prior to this. You can check the angle of the sun by using the Photographers Ephemeris. During the middle of the day, you could review your images, scout locations for sunrise and sunset photography or wander through some of the small towns like Ridgefield, Garfield and Palouse in search of the often overlooked or neglected photos. Summer days are long ones – be sure to get plenty of rest!

The obvious grand farmland landscape with colorful old barns is the most common image made in the Palouse. However, there are other photographic opportunities to consider such as the many little towns that appear to be stuck in the 1950s, the countryside dotted with old barns, disheveled homes and many old rusting cars and farm machinery. This is all great subject matter. Remember – be careful on private property. I suggest asking before you trespass.

To get around in the Palouse area, you'll need a good map. Highways 26 and 12 are the major East-West roads; Highways 27 and 195 are the major North-South roads, all with many off shoots on each and all containing lots of subject matter to photograph.

There are four kinds of roads in the Palouse:

1. Paved roads. Though easier to drive, most of the really good locations are on unpaved roads.
2. Gravel Roads. Usable, but slow down and proceed with caution. These roads are often used for the movement of heavy farm equipment.
3. Primitive Roads. These are marked as such. Be very careful ... I would stay off these when wet – the mud is as slippery as ice. Sinking into and getting stuck in the mud is common.
4. Summer Roads. The same as Primitive roads but worse!



I have found Colfax to be a good centrally located town to stay in, with a lot of scenery to photograph within a 45 minute radius. There are a few hotels in town, but I stay at the Siesta Inn ... good rates, clean, and friendly. (Phone: 509-397-3417). Additionally, the towns of Steptoe, Palouse, Pullman, Oakesdale and Ridgefield are only a short drive away.

Final thoughts ...

I hope this information will serve as a general guide to help you capture some amazing images of these two remarkable places. Over the years I have photographed too many locations in both sites to list here. I welcome you to join me on one of the several photographic workshops conducted every year in the Palouse and in Death Valley, where I share the “secret” places and some of the iconic locales. Meanwhile, I suggest subscribing to the PHOTOGRAPH AMERICA NEWSLETTER to read about these and many other interesting sites in the U.S.

I am a great believer in preparation, understanding where I am photographing and becoming part of the land and environment. Nowhere is this more important than in these two awe-inspiring locations: Death Valley and the Palouse. JG-

Recommended Photographic Equipment

1. I carry two camera bodies, just in case.
2. TRIPOD: in the words of my dear friend Bill Fortney: *“There are two kinds of tripods, ones that are easy to carry, and good ones”* ... Bill Fortney, Nikon USA. For those often times in the great outdoors when it is windy, a sturdy tripod and head are a necessary addition to your equipment arsenal.
3. LENSES: I use lenses from 17mm to 300mm. A 300mm comes in handy where you want to fill the frame and can't get in close. A teleconverter can be useful as well.



4. FILTERS. I recommend a Polarizer as well as Graduated Neutral Density filters. I use GRADUATED ND filters made by Singh-Ray, the ones most professionals use. Unlike some of the other competitors, Singh-Ray filters have no color shift. You'll also need a filter holder for them (Singh Ray, as well as most camera stores, sell holders made by Cokin. I recommend the larger X-Pro size). To purchase, call Singh Ray at 800-486-5501 or 863-993-4100, during business hours, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern U.S. time, Monday-Friday.

5. Cable release & lens hoods

6. DUST: Dust on the many unpaved roads can be a real problem. A hand held blower is useful. I also use a good VERY soft cloth to keep my lenses dry. I do not use micro-fiber cloths – they tend to only move water around, not absorb it. I use PERFECT-IT cloths by 3M. They are made for auto detailing but are really amazing and work well on any glass. You can wash them (no soap) and they stay like new.

JACK GRAHAM ~ ~ USA LOCATIONS

2014 PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

Visit JackGrahamPhoto.com for more information on all 2014 Photo Workshops



Pacific Northwest

(Oregon & Washington)

Landscape (2) & Nik Software
Winter Wings Festival; Klamath Falls, Ore.
 To register visit WinterWingsFest.org
 February 13-15, 2014 | \$Varies

Olympic National Park
 May 15-18, 2014 | \$795

Oregon Coast - North
Cannon Beach to Bandon Beach
 May 29 - June 2, 2014 | \$895

Columbia River Gorge/Hood River Valley
With co-leader Bill Fortney
 June 12-15, 2014 | \$995

Spring in the "The Palouse," Washington
With co-leader Bill Fortney
 June 19-22, 2014 | \$995

Whidbey Island, Washington
Presented by the Pacific Northwest Art School
 To register: 360-678-3396 or www.pacificnorthwestartschool.org
 June 26-29, 2014 | \$395

Oregon Coast - South
Bandon Beach south to California border
 August 14-18, 2014 | \$995

The Gardens of Portland (2 days)
Swan Island Dahlias Farm; Japanese Garden
 August 30 & 31, 2014 | \$350

Fall Color in Columbia River Gorge
Oregon wine country and Hood River Valley
 October 30 - November 2, 2014 | \$795

Maine
Fall Color in Acadia Nat'l Park
With co-leader Bill Fortney
 October 23-26, 2014
 \$995



Southwest (Arizona & Wyoming)

Sonoran Desert
Landscapes & Wildflowers
 March 27-30, 2014 | \$795

Southwest/Navajo Country
Slot Canyons, Monument Valley and more ...
 April 3-6, 2014 | \$995

Monument Valley
Hunts Mesa, Mystery Valley & Canyon de Chelley
 April 10-14, 2014 | \$1295

Fall in Grand Teton National Park
Jackson Hole, Wyoming
 September 25-28, 2014 | \$995

Winter in Grand Teton National Park
Jackson Hole, Wyoming
 December 4-7, 2014 | \$995



California & Nevada

Death Valley National Park
 March 7-11, 2014 | \$895

20th Annual Eastern Sierra
With photographer extraordinaire Guy Tal
 October 9-12, 2014 | \$995

Eastern Sierra Processing Master Class
With co-leader Guy Tal; 25% Discount when grouped with prior Eastern Sierra Workshop
 October 13-15, 2014 | \$995

Ghost Towns, Americana & Landscapes
Red Rock country of Nevada Desert (near Las Vegas) with co-leader Bill Fortney
 November 6-9, 2014 | \$995

Death Valley National Park
Special price \$830 when combined w/Ghost Towns
 November 13-17, 2014 | \$895

Preparing for nature photography *in cold weather*

In preparing for my photography workshops in Grand Teton National Park in December as well as Iceland in January, there are many things to consider. Winter conditions present challenges that we don't face during other seasons. In this article I'll discuss these challenges and how I deal with them, breaking this topic into two main areas: Clothing and Equipment.

All Text and Photos ©Jack Graham

Keeping warm – Clothing

There's nothing worse than being in a beautiful location, with some great low-angle light that we love to have during winter, looking at a perfect landscape and there you are freezing cold because you were not prepared. Choosing the correct clothing can really make a difference. Just like in basic photography, keeping it simple is the best way to deal with dressing for the cold.

Throughout this article, you'll see references to the use of wool. I prefer wool over synthetic products, but others may not. Here is a [great article comparing wool vs. synthetic](#) (base layers):

NOTE: Some people cannot wear even the softest wool fabrics without breaking out in a rash, others cannot tolerate the stench of wearing a synthetic garment for a week (sometimes necessary when in the field), and still others hate the clammy feel of synthetics.

In comparison testing it was found:

- Wool is significantly better at resisting buildup of body odors than most synthetics - even the improved ones.
- Wool feels warmer and less clammy on the skin when damp.
- Wool takes approximately 50 percent longer to dry than synthetics (range 40 to 60 percent). This was consistent across the board under a large range of conditions - in lab tests of fabric swatches, whole shirts on hangers, shirts on warm bodies, and actual in-field performance of shirts wet with sweat and shirts intentionally saturated with water.
- In a soak test, the difference in water absorption (x increase over dry weight) between wool and synthetics was less than initially believed. Approximately 3x dry weight for synthetics versus 4x dry weight for wool.
- Synthetic fabrics wick moisture out faster over a larger surface area. This may in part contribute to their faster drying times but also to a chilling effect in cool and especially windy conditions.
- Synthetic fabrics are lighter than wool for comparable warmth.
- Many synthetic garments are significantly less expensive than wool.

Different parts of the body require different cold weather strategies. We need to think in terms of three basic areas: head, body and feet.

HEAD:

When in a cold environment, you lose a lot of heat through your head. So common sense is to protect your head from the elements. Because of needing to look through the camera's viewfinder, I tend to look for head protection that does not have a bill. In other words, in winter I avoid baseball caps – they are not warm enough and the bill gets in the way. I like to use skullcaps and face coverings.

Here in America you might know of REI (www.rei.com), just one of many outdoor clothing retailers. In Iceland and Europe, the company 66NORTH (www.66north.com) designs some amazing products not commonly found here in America (you can buy online – products ship from a U.S. warehouse). One of the skullcaps they sell is the [Baser Cap](#), made of 100% merino wool. Most of the ones I see here in America are not 100% wool. Why a wool skull cap?

NOTE: Some products listed in this article may not be currently available. Items listed here are my personal choices – there are comparable products to everything presented in this article. You may find other products that you prefer and consider more useful.

- Wool has super wicking properties to keep you warm and dry
- It is itch free

I also use a face cover, known as a balaclava. [Outdoor Research Option's balaclava](#) is a great, lightweight layer for any cold-weather excursion.

- Thermodynamic™ fabric features a durable nylon outer face and a moisture-wicking, looped polypropylene inner face
- Contoured shape with light stretch and flat seam construction offers a trim fit
- Can be rolled up to wear as a beanie when weather permits

Don't forget your ears. I recommend the [180s Tec Fleece ear-warmers](#) from REI. Soft polyester fleece lining adds warmth and feels great next to skin.

- Polyester insulation keeps your ears warm during cold winter days

- Adjustable, click-to-fit design accommodates most head sizes; 180s Tec Fleece ear-warmers collapse down small for simple storage
- Behind-the-head design allows ear-warmers to be worn while wearing a hat, helmet or eyeglasses

Also, why not cover your neck as well? I suggest something like [SmartWool PhD HyFi Training headband](#) before heading out the door for cold-weather runs and hikes.

- Nylon face is backed by soft merino wool for great comfort next to skin; fabric provides warmth and helps block wind
- Contoured design ensures your ears are covered

UPPER BODY:

There are two ways to make sure you keep your body warm. One is the obvious down jacket; the other is a layering system. I prefer the layering system as it takes up much less space and weight in my suitcase or duffel

bag – an important consideration if you are travelling, especially flying. If you do decide on the jacket method, remember: there are different grades of down, so pay close attention to the specifications. Also, the quality of the jacket is what makes some more expensive than others – look for the quality of the zipper, fabric, manufacturing, etc.

Here are two jackets to consider if you want to go this route. These are only my suggestions – there are many other manufacturers that make good wool and shell components.

BEST: [Mountain Hardware Downtown coat](#)

- Durable Ascent Micro Herringbone™ nylon shell resists abrasion and features Dry.Q Core waterproof, breathable laminate to protect you from wind and wet weather
- 650-fill down provides a high warmth-to-weight ratio; down is the lightest, warmest and most compressible insulation known
- Nylon taffeta lining wicks moisture, dries quickly and glides easily over layers
- Zip-off hood adjusts with a single-pull drawcord; laminated brim increases foul-weather protection; Micro-Chamois™-lined chin guard protects sensitive skin
- Rib-knit collar and cuffs snug up the fit and create a cozy feel against your skin
- Stormflap sandwiches front zipper and restricts cold-air entry; waist drawcord seals out snow and cold
- Fleece-lined hand warmer pockets warm chilly digits; zip chest pocket and interior security pocket stow small essentials
- Mountain Hardware Downtown Coat also features an internal media pocket with earbud cord exit

Or.....

For a fairly good value – [The REI Antifreeze down jacket](#)

- Durable, down-proof double ripstop polyester shell surrounds lightweight, toasty warm, highly compressible 700-fill-power goose down insulation



- Shoulders, upper back and outer sleeves feature a fabric selected to enhance abrasion resistance; Antifreeze features a Durable Water Repellent treatment to shed rain and snow
- Windproof to 50 mph
- Horizontal baffled construction keeps down from shifting and maximizes warmth-generating loft; reduced fill on sides cuts down on bulkiness
- 2-way front zipper features an internal stormflap to thwart the wind coming through
- Zip-off, down-insulated hood wraps around the lower face for extra warmth; side and back adjusters provide a close fit and good peripheral visibility
- Hem drawcord and inner fleece cuffs seal in warmth
- Includes 2 zippered hand pockets and 1 interior pocket with a cord port
- Stuff sack included

If you want to go the layering route, here is what I recommend (in 4 layers):

1) When it gets really cold, I'll be wearing the [SmartWool Microweight Crew shirt](#)

- Fine merino wool helps maintain a comfortable temperature whether the day is hot, cold or in between
- Chafe-free flatlock seams enhance comfort
- Fabric protects skin from harsh UV light with a UPF rating of 25
- Shaped bottom hem enhances fit
- Unlike traditional wool, SmartWool items do not itch and can be repeatedly washed and dried without shrinking
- The formfitting SmartWool Microweight long-sleeve crew for men offers a minimalist fit

2) On top of that will go the [Smartwool Next to Skin Base Layer](#)

- The SmartWool Midweight Funnel zip top is made of super-fine merino wool to help maintain comfort whether the climate is warm, cold or in-between
- With a UPF 50+ rating, fabric provides excellent protection against harmful ultraviolet rays
- 14.5 in. front zipper ventilates on demand; raised collar helps keep your neck warm in cold conditions
- Flatlock stitching eliminates abrasion, increases comfort and enhances fit by reducing bulky seams
- Shoulder panels eliminate top shoulder seams, reduce chafing and offer comfort under pack straps
- Thumbholes secure sleeves over hands for warmth
- The formfitting SmartWool Midweight Funnel zip top is machine washable

3) The [Marmot Elementalist jacket](#)

- WindStopper® soft-shell fabric is windproof, highly water resistant and breathable; bonded fleece backing wicks moisture and adds thermal warmth
- Weather-exposed areas feature a heavy-duty WindStopper fabric, while lightweight WindStopper underarm panels offer enhanced breathability
- Hood with laminated brim and peripheral draw cord is constructed for true mountain performance
- Marmot Elementalist jacket features rip-and-stick adjustable cuffs and draw cord hem
- Hand pockets are placed for easy access while wearing a pack or harness; includes exterior angled zip chest pocket and an interior zip pocket
- Angel-Wing Movement™ sleeves allow full range of arm motion and prevent jacket from rising up when arms are raised



4) [MARMONT "Oracle" waterproof breathable jacket](#)

Marmot Oracle offers great coverage and a comfortable fit with durable stretch fabric in key movement areas; it works best when light weight is more important than durability

- MemBrain® Strata™ 2.5 waterproof, breathable laminate reduces internal condensation to effectively increase your comfort range without weighing you down
- Durable and fully protective, the Oracle jacket features micro stitched and seam-taped seams
- Stiff-brimmed storm hood with Cranium Cord adjustment provides unhindered peripheral vision; hood zips off or can be rolled away into collar
- Soft DriClimate® lines the collar, cuffs and chin guard
- PitZips™ allow excellent ventilation control
- Battening down the hatches is easy with the elastic draw cord hem and rip-and-stick adjustable cuffs
- Features Mesh Pack Pockets™ and zip chest pocket
- Stretch anatomic articulation and Angel-wing Movement® sleeves allow comfortable, unrestricted range of motion
- Marmot Oracle is designed to fit over fleece or soft shells

LOWER BODY:

For below the waist, in thermal underwear I recommend [Smartwool Micro weight long underwear bottoms](#)

- Fine merino wool helps maintain a comfortable temperature whether the day is hot, cold or in between
- Chafe-free flatlock seams enhance comfort
- Fabric protects skin from harsh UV light with a UPF rating of 30
- Wide waistband enhances fit
- Functional fly
- Unlike traditional wool, SmartWool items do not itch and can be repeatedly washed and dried without shrinking
- The formfitting SmartWool Microweight long underwear bottoms for men offer a minimalist fit and a natural rise

For pants, I wear the [Mountain Hardware Dry.Q Elite](#)

- The fabric's air-permeable membrane allows air – not just moisture – to pass outward through the fabric, so you stay dry on the inside as well as the outside
- The always-on airflow doesn't wait for you to heat up before beginning to breathe; breathability and comfort start the minute you put on the jacket
- Dry.Q fabric prevents clamminess and helps keep you cool and dry
- Full-length side zippers offer great venting adjustability and easy on and off even with your boots on
- Removable suspenders provide drop-seat functionality; adjustable waste with an integrated belt allows a personalized fit
- Articulated knees ensure unhindered range of motion
- Lower leg scuff guards protect pants from abrasion; internal snow gaiters keep spindrift out
- Mountain Hardware Hestia pants feature 2 zip hand pockets

FEET:

Don't forget boots! For normal conditions there are many great brands of hiking boots. However, if you are going to be out in very cold conditions (below zero) you will need something more substantial. I recommend [Keen Summit County II winter boots](#).

- -40°F comfort rating, waterproof protection and sturdy support for your wintry adventures
- Tough waterproofed nubuck leather offers lasting comfort, flexibility and style; high rubber shells and toe caps help protect from the elements
- KEEN.DRY™ waterproof, breathable membranes keep feet dry and allow perspiration to dissipate before it saturates the inside of the shoe
- 400g KEEN.WARM™ bamboo fiber/polyester insulation offers warmth and comfort down to -40°F during active use
- Thermal heat shield footbeds feature a 3-layer design that helps prevent heat from escaping and helps keep the cold out



- Compression-molded EVA midsoles topped with removable EVA footbeds offer shock absorption and padding for all-day comfort
 - Thermoplastic urethane shanks enhance support and stability for handling changing terrain
 - The Keen Summit County II boots sport nonmarking, dual-climate rubber outsoles with temperature-sensitive lugs that harden in cold weather to supply better traction on ice
- For boots made for water, I recently discovered these [NEOS Adventurer Overshoes](#). They fit right over your regular hiking boots and are really easy to take on and off. I used them for the first time on my recent trip to Iceland and they are terrific – you might want to consider them as well. Here is a [great video](#) on how these boots function and the benefits of owning them. My friends at [OUTDOORPHOTOGEAR.COM](#) stock the entire line.

I also recommend socks made by Smartwool.

EQUIPMENT

BATTERIES

At very low temperatures all batteries lose power and are not as efficient as in warm weather. This is a bigger problem with digital cameras which are very dependent on battery power. Keep your camera and flash batteries as warm as you can. Carry them close to your body or under your coat. Also, by keeping your camera protected and warm, you will not take the chance your manual shutter might stick if the lubricant freezes. Always carry spare batteries with you and keep them close to your body as well.



Misc. Equipment

When photographing in the rain, sleet or snow, keep these things in mind:

1. There are many rain/snow covers available to protect your camera. I recommend the ones by [THINK TANK](#). (Use this CODE when purchasing – AP351 – and get a free gift on purchases over \$50)
2. In addition, I actually use [Hefty bags](#) to cover my gear when not in use. You can buy them at Target or Walmart.
3. Carry lint free cloths to wipe moisture off your equipment. I use [3M Perfect-It III Auto Detailing Cloths](#), they are absolutely the best!!! They are soft, and remove finger prints and smudges from lenses without scratching. Your best value, if you have the time, is to order a pack from Amazon ... about \$25 for 6 cloths!!!
4. You may want to carry hand and feet warmers.
5. You may want to consider using [The Hoodman Loupe](#). The loupe isolates the camera's LCD display from ambient light which eliminates glare when viewing your LCD screen outdoors. This makes it easier to view image details quickly to confirm focus and sharpness. You can purchase this through Outdoorphotogear as well. Click on this link to view [all the Hoodman products](#).



6. When you are out in bad weather try using the [STORM JACKET](#) to protect your gear!



One last thought ... DEALING WITH CONDENSATION

When it's time to come in from the cold, you will have to deal with condensation brought on by the warm air hitting your gear after being out in the frigid temperatures. Your lens and the electronics inside the camera are now chilled; moving indoors to the warm air will cause the moisture to condense on the cold surfaces of both the inside and outside parts of your camera as well as your lenses. Moisture in cameras and lenses can ruin the internal electronics as that moisture attaches itself to the circuitry. NOTE: Do NOT attempt to wipe the moisture off your lens – let it dry, then clean the glass with the proper cleaner and cloth.

Here is how to avoid what can be costly problems (these methods are necessary for point and shoot cameras, video cameras and also DSLRs):

1. Take steps to allow your gear to warm up slowly. If you can, leave it in your garage or a semi-cool place for a few hours so the temperature of your gear can rise slowly to room temperature.
2. A better solution is to wrap your gear in a plastic bag (yes, the same Hefty bags you may have used to keep it dry in the field!). These bags are zip-topped and totally sealable. The water vapor will form on the outside of the bag instead of the inside of your gear. I suggest placing a bag on your camera while you're still out in the cold, before bringing your gear inside. This also applies when going inside a warm vehicle.
3. If you have a weatherproof camera bag or backpack, you can leave your camera in it for a few hours.
4. If you do see a condensation problem, open up your camera back, empty the battery compartment and open any other covered plug-in areas. Then let the camera dry. Remove the lens from your camera body and cover the opening so dust cannot get in.

Enjoy the beautiful winter landscape, but be prepared! JG-



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[*the story behind the picture*]



After Sunrise, Hunt's Mesa, Arizona

Getting up to Hunt's Mesa is half the fun · It's a long, bumpy and sometimes treacherous ride over red rock, through washes and deep sand · A good Navajo Guide is important ·

Both sunrise and sunset can offer some breathtaking views of Monument Valley that many photographers overlook ·

This morning we had some interesting cloud patterns caused by the high winds · A building sandstorm in the distance added to the drama · Luckily, we returned to the valley just before the sandstorm began ·

Equipment & Processing:

Nikon D700

Nikon 17+-35mm

F 2·8 at 35mm

·6 sec at F16

ISO 200

Matrix Metering

Gitzo 3541 Tripod

Really Right Stuff BH55 Ball head

[featured sponsor]

Jack Graham and Bill Fortney's recent visit to Outdoor Photo Gear in Louisville, Kentucky appreciated by all



Above (l-r) Bill Fortney, Chris Klapheke and Jack Graham

My good friends at [OUTDOOR PHOTO GEAR](#) are the best. They carry just about every photographic accessory available, all under one roof, all at the best prices. I cannot recommend better people to do business with.

Last October [Bill Fortney](#) and I did a 4 hour seminar in their meeting room at their Louisville, KY facility. We had a great crowd and really enjoyed our time there. Be sure to visit their website for other programs and special events they will be offering in 2014.

Please consider choosing OUTDOOR PHOTO GEAR for your holiday purchases and beyond. The coupon code below will get you a 10% discount through the end of 2013. They are offering free shipping through the holidays as well!

Thanks,
Jack

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THE PUFFIN PAD

I've been really busy lately and haven't had time to test this product myself ... so I gave it to my good friend and wonderful photographer [John Pedersen](#) (check out his work!) to try it out. Here is his review. You can buy this product at [AMAZON](#).

Puffin Pad Pro – Delivers as Promised

©John Pederson

At first glance, the Puffin Pad Pro seems like a very simple product designed to help when shooting from a vehicle. But don't be fooled by first appearances, a lot of thought has gone into the design of the Pad.

Built from a combination of two different foams, the pad measures 5.5"W x 7"L x 5"H and weighs just 4.6 ounces. The main shape is formed from closed-cell automotive foam that is rugged and durable. On the top of the pad there is ½" of open-cell memory foam. This little bit of foam turned out to be quite the surprise and really made me look at the Puffin Pad as more than just a "mere block of foam." There really is some thoughtful design in this product!

I took the pad with me on recent visit to the [Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge](#) located in SW Washington. The River S unit of the refuge has a driving loop and the majority of shooting is done from the vehicle. For this visit I brought along my Canon 7D and 500mm lens to give it the heaviest workout I could.

The pad is designed to either cradle the top of the door (with the window all the way down) or there is a slot in the pad to slide onto the window if you prefer shooting with the window partly raised. At first I tried with the window all the way down and found that the door was slightly



Pros

- **Simple & effective**
- **Easy to use**
- **Light weight**
- **No filler to mess with**

Cons

- **Size/Packability**

wider than the pad opening, which caused it to not seat as snugly as I would have wanted (your results will vary depending on your vehicle), but it still performed well and provided stable support for me to get sharp shots. Raising the window a few inches, I slid the pad over the window and was rewarded with a snug and stable fit. Because the shape of my windows slopes forward pretty dramatically, the pad did sit at a slight forward angle, but it was no problem to compensate with the camera/lens back to level. It took no time at all to "adjust" to using the pad. In fact, after just a couple shots I didn't even notice the pad any longer. It was simple, intuitive, effective and performed as I expected it to.

Now, back to that ½" of memory foam on top of the pad that I mentioned earlier. I found that this foam contoured to the shape of the lens and provided a subtle "cradle" for the lens, stabilizing it just a little bit more from side to side movements. It didn't restrict my ability to pan the lens at all, but when I settled into one location, the foam conformed to the body of the lens nicely. Much nicer than just shooting on a rigid block of foam!!!

One other little feature I noticed and appreciated was a small circular cut out at the top of the window mount location. This allowed the pad to slightly rotate.

Compared to similar products on the market, like bean bag rests or window mounts, the Puffin Pad holds its own. It is not as tall as a bean bag when resting on a door sill, but it is lighter and easier to position and can be height adjusted using the window. When hooking to a window, the Puffin Pad can't be leveled like a window mount if your windows slope down, but it takes just seconds to install in order to capture the quick shot before the animal moves on. And, like a bean bag, it can be used just about anywhere there is a solid surface to rest it on.

Now, on to the price/value relationship ... compared to bean bags and window mounts, it is at the lower end of the price spectrum for products in its category. I'll leave it up to you to judge for yourself if the price is worth it or not. For me, I know using the Pad helped me capture more keepers and was easier to use than balancing on a bare window edge ... how much is that worth to you?

