

DESERT INSTITUTE

at Joshua Tree National Park

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Fall Session

2022

Mastering Landscape Photography

Information

Date/Time: Friday, September 30, 7 pm - 9 pm

Saturday, October 1, 5 am - 8 pm

Sunday, October 2, 5 am - 3 pm

Meet at: Park Headquarters, 74485 National Park Drive, Twentynine Palms

Instructor: Ralph Nordstrom, photography workshop leader & fine art landscape photographer

Overview

What goes into making a great landscape photograph? You can find scores of articles that promise that with a few easy steps you will master landscape photography or take your photography to the next level or shoot like a pro. These articles are common and offer useful tips. But there's more to it than that.

I can't promise that you will be a master landscape photographer at the end of this course. What I can promise is you will have a much deeper understanding of what is involved in creating expressive photographs.

The class is based on the idea that landscape photographs can be a means of communicating with our viewers. When well done, we can share our experiences with them.

What can you gain from this class? Natural light is incredibly important in landscape photography. We will explore the different kinds of light that are found throughout the day and in various kinds of weather, and how to make the most of each. But color is also important, and we will explore the psychological responses we have to various colors.

Composition is incredibly important in creating a photograph with impact. It is also a very complex subject, and we will take a deep dive into it. What's important is not only understanding the Rule of Thirds and many other compositional 'rules,' but how we can use them to communicate the experiences we have with our viewers.

However, as I like to say, "When you press the shutter, the work has just begun." We will also investigate the role of the digital darkroom in creating great photographs.

These are all skills that are essential in creating expressive and impactful landscape photographs. My hope for you is that you will gain some ideas and insights that you can apply to advance your photography.

We will also touch on the gear that is in common use in landscape photography and methods and sources for planning a photographic outing.

This class is intensive and comprehensive and will give you plenty to think about and incorporate into your photography.

This class also offers an optional but exciting camping experience in the pristine Lost Horse campground.

Note: arrangements will be made for those preferring to sleep with something more substantial over their heads than rip-stop nylon. Plan to make accommodations in Twentynine Palms. Maps will be provided to guide you to the shooting locations.

Itinerary

Friday, September 30	
7:00 pm – 9:00 pm	Meet and greet, orientation
9:00 pm	Set up camp
Saturday, October 1	
5:00 am	Sunrise and morning shoot
11:00 Lunch	Oasis Visitor Center
12:00 noon	Mastering Landscape Photography– Part 1
4:00	Afternoon and sunset shoot followed by dinner at a local restaurant. COVID protocols may apply.
Sunday, October 2	
5:00 am	Sunrise and morning shoot
10:00	Break camp
11:00	Lunch – Oasis Visitor Center
12:00	Mastering Landscape Photography – Part 2

3:00	Wrap-up and departure

What to Bring to the Course

Required Class Materials

- Digital camera (DSLR or mirrorless)
- Lenses: wide angle, normal, telephoto
- Tripod
- Camera bag
- Extra camera batteries
- Camera battery recharger
- Memory cards
- Filter – circular polarizer (optional)
- Remote shutter release (optional)
- Headlamp / flashlight

Optional Class Materials

- Laptop computer with image processing software; e.g., Lightroom Classic
- Thumb drive
- Trekking Poles (optional)

Camping Materials

- Tent or sleep in your vehicle
- Sleeping bag
- Pad or cot
- Water (we're in the desert – always have water)
- Food (Note: there won't be time for any cooking in camp)
 - Sack breakfasts for Saturday and Sunday
 - Lunches Saturday and Sunday will be at the Oasis Visitor Center. Several options for purchasing lunch are available in Twentynine Palms
 - Saturday night those who are camping will have dinner in camp. Come prepared to prepare your meal. And if weather permits, we may have a campfire.

Those who are staying in town will be directed to some fine restaurants in 29.
- Lantern
- Flashlight (your headlamp will do just fine)
- Trash bags

Personal

- Sturdy hiking boots (strongly recommended – tennis shoes strongly discouraged)
- Socks
- Light colored long sleeve shirt
- Long pants
- Sweatshirt
- Warm jacket
- Warm gloves
- Broad brim hat
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Toiletries
- Rain gear (you never know)

Fitness Requirements

Participants must be in good physical condition for courses/activities in a desert that may be hot, dry, windy, and sometimes surprisingly cold.

Hike Level

Easy to moderate

Guidelines

- You are responsible for your safety.
- Park your car in designated areas only. Parking along the side of the road is dangerous to you and the environment.
- Rattlesnakes are present in the park. Avoid contact with wildlife. Put your hands and feet only where you can see.
- Stay with the group. If you get lost, stay put.
- Drink plenty of water. If you run out, notify the instructor or the Desert Institute Representative.
- Before leaving the class, check out with the Desert Institute Representative.

Instructor Biography

Ralph Nordstrom: Nature has always been a source of inspiration, adventure and rejuvenation for me. Leaving the city and venturing into the wilderness always fills me with anticipation and excitement. The wilderness is fulfilling in and of itself. Adding photography to the experience, especially when approaching photography with the eye of an artist, makes the encounter even richer. Because, in art we attune ourselves to our personal response to the beauty we see and

attempt to communicate our unique vision through our works. The journey into fine art photography is a venture into a heightened awareness of our surroundings and can also be an odyssey of self-discovery. It is this journey that thrills me as much as my best photographs.

Suggested Reading

These two blog posts sum up the spirit of this course.

Making a Photograph – The Four Pillars

<http://ralphnordstromphotography.com/wordpress/articles/making-photograph-pillars/>

Taking Your Photography to the Next Level

<http://ralphnordstromphotography.com/wordpress/journal/photography-level-2/>

* The Desert Institute staff/instructors will attempt to accommodate participant's needs. However, we reserve the right to deny a student participation in the course due to concerns regarding health and safety issues.