

TIPS FOR SHOOTING IN COLD WEATHER

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**BEST GEAR
OF THE
YEAR**

2019 EDITORS'
CHOICE
AWARDS

COMPOSING

Great Photos Of People

BEST LIGHTING

For Portraits

SHOOTING FAMILY PHOTOS

On The Road

/// EDITOR'S NOTE ///



AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO DIGITAL PHOTO SUBSCRIBERS

I joined the team at *Digital Photo* (then *PCPhoto*) not long after its first issue in 1997. Digital cameras were a brand-new technology that, along with the evolving sophistication of the personal computer and relatively new software like Adobe Photoshop, sparked a revolution in imaging that ignited creative possibilities for photographers as never before. Suddenly, we could make fine art prints at home without a chemical darkroom, perfect our images down to the pixel and share our photos around the globe in an instant.

Much has changed in the more than two decades since that first issue. We now take for granted the capabilities that digital technology introduced, and our smartphone cameras have greater resolution than the early professional DSLRs. The world of photography has forever advanced, and we're proud to have been a leading

publication throughout that evolution.

So it's not without some reflection and sentiment that we announce this will be the last published issue of *Digital Photo*. For our subscribers, we're pleased to offer you a replacement subscription to our sister publication, *Outdoor Photographer*. Within its pages you'll find:

- Inspirational portfolios from leading professional photographers.
- Expert advice to take your photography to a new level.
- How-to instruction on new technology and photographic techniques.
- Information on top destinations for nature photography.
- Reviews of the latest cameras and gear.
- Insights into the arts and ethics of wildlife photography.

To begin receiving *Outdoor*

Photographer, you don't need to do anything. Your first issue will be April 2020, coming out in early March. If you're already a subscriber to *Outdoor Photographer*, your subscription will be extended by the number of issues you had remaining on your *Digital Photo* subscription. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call us at (877) 252-8141 or email us at customerservice@digital-photo.us. Please include your name and address from your subscription label with all email correspondence.

For *Outdoor Photographer's* Plus & VIP Members, please go to your Account Dashboard regarding your *Digital Photo* subscription at www.outdoorphotographer.com/my-account. Please make sure you're logged in using your membership credentials.

To first-time and longstanding readers, thank you for being part of the journey, and we look forward to welcoming you to the family at *Outdoor Photographer*.

—Wes Pitts, Editorial Director

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/// **FEATURE** ///

TIPS FOR SHOOTING PHOTOS IN COLD WEATHER

LEARN TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGES OF WINTER SUBJECTS

TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN MATIASH

Snow is a challenging element to include in a composition. It can wreak havoc with exposure and make it difficult to direct your viewers. However, when you get a lock on proper exposure settings and add more prominent colors, it can be magical.



To avoid damaging my cameras and lenses, I follow rather strict routines whenever I shoot in cold conditions.

Shooting photos in snowy conditions brings with it a number of technical and compositional challenges that we'll address in this article, including things to consider in order to keep your camera and lenses operating properly, since extreme weather—especially cold conditions—can affect your camera gear. But, in addition to this, you'll also want to take extra care of yourself. Always be sure to say safe and comfortable when shooting in cold conditions.

Of course, I'll present various tips on capturing great shots, too, when you're working with gray skies and lots of white snow. So bundle up, and let's begin!

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

I'll never forget the sensation of leaning at almost a 45-degree angle into the howling wind as it blew at me with amazing speed while standing on the frozen surface of Abraham Lake in Canada. It'd be laughable if I wasn't terrified about having my camera and tripod get blown away, which is not an exaggeration.

At one point, I was able to let go of my tripod and have the wind carry it across the ice to my friend who was standing 30 feet away. Fortunately, because I was properly outfitted, neither the wind nor the cold affected me much.

You've probably heard about the importance of wearing appropriate layers when heading out in extremely cold conditions. It's true, and I cannot stress enough how critical this is. I follow a pretty straightforward layering strategy, and it has served me well in some of the most frigid conditions.

I start with upper and lower base layers made of merino wool, which keeps me warm and "wicks away" perspiration, which is also critical. ("Wicks away" means that, in this case, merino wool draws perspiration away from the skin and draws it up closer to the clothing surface in order to quickly dry, just like wax being drawn up toward the flame in a candle.)

Next, I'll wear a thermal vest and insulated snow pants. Then, I put on a down jacket, which provides the bulk of the warmth for my upper body. Finally, I wear a thin outer shell, which provides wind and water resistance.

When it comes to your extremities—your head, hands and feet—wearing layers is equally as important as your core. For my head and face, I wear a balaclava that keeps my skin toasty but allows the condensation from my exhalations to wick away. I also wear a wool hat that keeps my head warm while allowing sweat to wick away. My hands are kept warm by layering a thin glove with a thicker, heavier mitten that folds back.

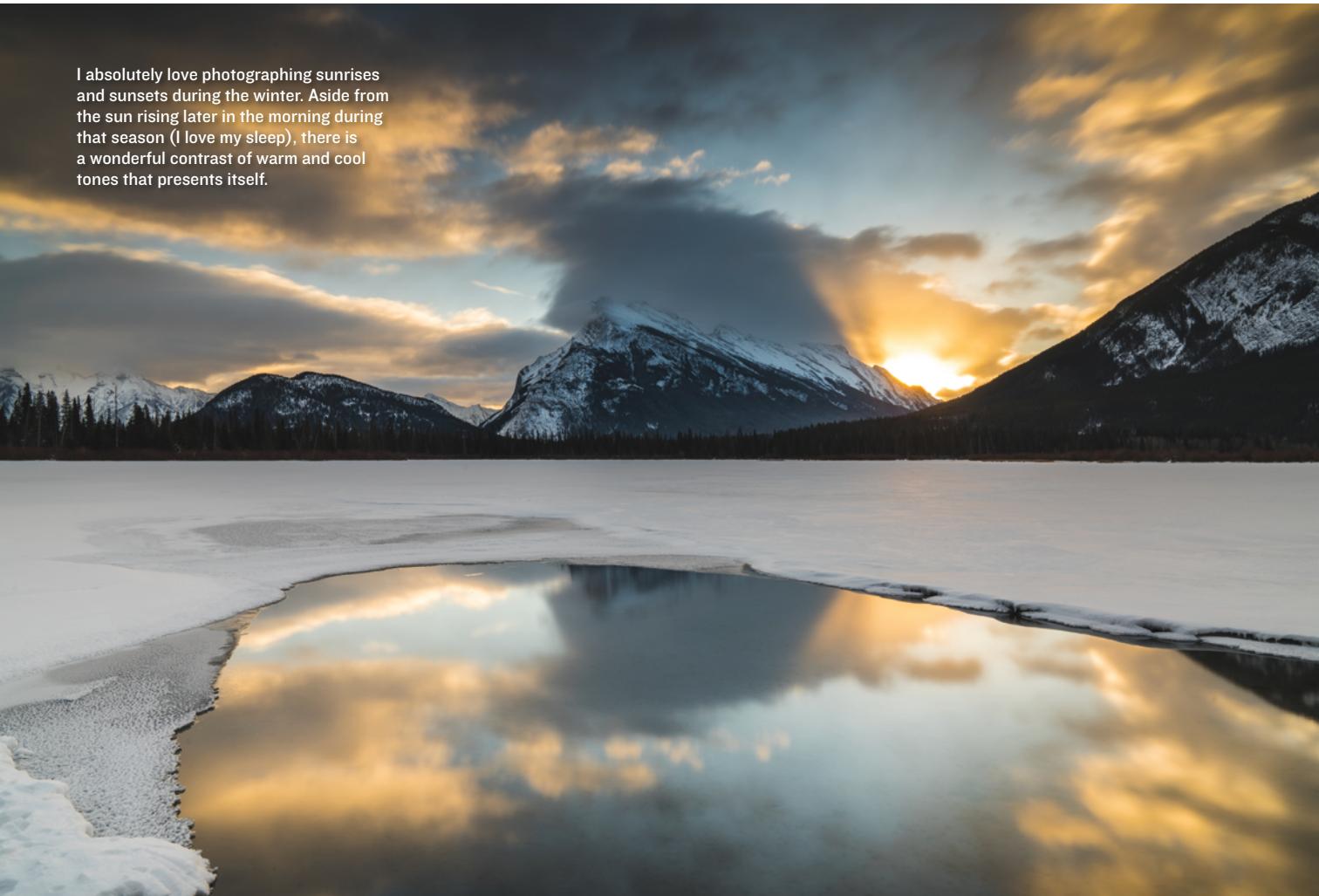


When you are properly prepared, shooting in extremely cold conditions doesn't have to be uncomfortable. Just remember your own body is as important as your camera body: You want to outfit yourself with appropriate clothing.

Snowy scenes can affect exposure and white balance. So, look for ways to add high-contrast elements for more striking compositions.



I absolutely love photographing sunrises and sunsets during the winter. Aside from the sun rising later in the morning during that season (I love my sleep), there is a wonderful contrast of warm and cool tones that presents itself.



This allows me to use my fingers whenever I need to work with camera dials and buttons. I'll also keep a few hand warmers stuffed in my gloves and jacket pockets, which not only keeps my hands warm but also keep my batteries toasty (more on that in a minute).

For my feet, I invest in high-quality wool socks that do a great job of keeping my toes warm while wicking away any sweat. My boots are also insulated and waterproof, which is really important if you're going to be hiking in snow. Speaking of which, I suggest buying a pair of gaiters to keep snow out of your boots and micro spikes to give you traction when walking on ice.

Remember, the key to being safe and comfortable is to wear layers.

TAKING CARE OF YOUR GEAR

Any kind of extreme weather warrants

Without proper care and preparation, not only can your shooting time be cut short, but you can also negatively impact the life of your gear.

extra care when it comes to camera gear, but cold weather is particularly gnarly. Without proper care and preparation, not only can your shooting time be cut short, but you can also negatively impact the life of your gear. Fortunately, there are

some pretty simple and inexpensive ways to keep your camera gear going for the long haul in cold conditions.

To start, let's take a look at your batteries. Just about every camera battery on the market today uses lithium-ion

technology, which is wonderful overall but doesn't hold up so well in cold conditions. Even with a full charge, you will probably experience shorter shoot times in cold temperatures, especially when using lithium-ion batteries.

That's why I always carry at least two fully charged spare batteries. Not only that, but I also keep those batteries in my pocket with a hand warmer. You'll be surprised at how much more shooting time you'll get if you take care to keep your batteries from freezing conditions. If I notice my battery charge dropping quickly in my camera, I'll swap it out with a warm one in my pocket, allowing it to benefit from the hand warmer.

Another piece of camera gear that isn't given much thought is the tripod. Odds are that your tripod is made of either aluminum or carbon fiber, which both get exceptionally cold in freezing

conditions. And that can make things uncomfortable, *especially* if you're holding it barehanded (something I wholeheartedly *do not* recommend doing). So, instead, buy foam-insulated wraps that cover each of your tripod legs. Not only does it make it more comfortable to rest on your shoulder while traipsing around, but also it'll make holding it far more forgiving in freezing temps. It's one of the best investments I've ever made as a photographer.

Finally, let's talk about post-shooting gear protection. After spending hours photographing in frigid weather, you'll probably be yearning to cozy up to a warm fire with a gigantic mug of hot cocoa, and no one would blame you for it.

However, before you settle in—whether in a cabin or in your car with the heat blasting—be sure to prep your camera gear to adjust to the sudden

change in temperature:

First, you'll want to review the photos you just took, so remember to remove and secure any media cards from your camera before heading in. Next, when you bring your camera and lenses from one extreme condition, like the freezing cold, into another, like a warm cabin, condensation will likely form almost immediately, and you don't want to fumble around with media cards when that happens.

As you can imagine, any form of moisture doesn't play well with lens optics or camera electronics and should be mitigated. That's why I recommend sealing each camera and lens in its own airtight plastic bags, like Ziploc bags, before heading into a warm environment. Doing so will cause any condensation to form on the bag instead of on the camera gear. You'll want to keep your gear sealed in these bags for a few hours,



I always shoot in Manual mode for snowy conditions since I want to be sure my exposure reflects the snow's color and not what my camera thinks it should be.



Shooting in RAW allows me to fine tune their white balance, even after I've taken the shot.

until they reach room temperature. I also recommend tossing a few silica gel packs in each Ziploc bag AND your camera bag, to further absorb any moisture from melting snow or condensation.

TAKING CARE OF YOUR PHOTOS

Snow and cold weather bring a certain aesthetic to outdoor photos that is undeniably beautiful: For instance, it's one thing to stand near a large body of water with a mountain in the background. But it's an entirely different experience when everything is covered in a fresh coat of snow with big, fluffy clouds in the sky. In fact, some of my favorite photos were taken surrounded by snow in freezing conditions. However, with all of this beauty comes challenges.

The first has to do with metering your exposure: Snow is a notorious element for cameras to properly meter off of. Because

it's mostly bright white, your camera may sometimes struggle determining an appropriate exposure. In many cases, it'll try to meter for middle gray, which will skew your overall exposure.

Odds are that the snow in your shot wasn't gray, but your camera will act as if it was to get a proper exposure. That's why I recommend familiarizing yourself with shooting in Manual mode if your camera supports it. Doing so will allow you to dial in exposure values that best represent the scene.

Another setting to watch out for when photographing in snowy conditions is white balance.

Similar to exposure, it can be very tricky for your camera to determine what the appropriate white balance should be. Depending on which setting you use, your images could veer toward cooler, blue tones as a result.

To keep this from happening, I strongly recommend shooting in your camera's native RAW format. The benefit to shooting in RAW is that you can customize your photo's White Balance during post-processing even if you shot using Auto White Balance (AWB) or another preset. With RAW, you can use a White Balance selector (or dropper) and click on the snow. Depending on the lighting conditions, you should be left with proper color balance as a result.

BUNDLING IT ALL UP

Shooting in snowy, wintry conditions can be tons of fun and yield some truly stunning photos. However, it is not without its challenges to consider. And remember to take proper care of yourself and your camera gear so that you can make the most out of your cold-weather outings. DP