

Winter Photography Tips

Living in Bear Lake gives us the opportunity to take amazing winter photos – nearly any time of year! This lesson will touch on personal comfort, taking care of your camera gear, and how to get good photos.

- Personal comfort

We live in snow country, so by now we should all know how important it is to stay warm and dry and we should all have our favorite boots, hats, gloves, and winter coats. But you need to be able to use your camera while avoiding frost-bitten hands. Gloves with mitten ends that fold open let you uncover your fingers briefly to use your camera controls or take a photo. Google “glomitts” to see an endless variety of them.

Standing on snow for a long time can be more comfortable if you take something to stand on, like a doormat. Snowshoes can make walking a lot easier with practice. Bright snow can damage eyes and skin. Take sunglasses and put sunscreen on your face.

- Gear considerations

Learn your camera’s controls, especially to add or subtract exposure, display the histogram, and use the spot meter.

Battery life is greatly reduced in cold weather. Take extra batteries and keep one in an inside pocket to stay warm from body heat.

A weather sealed camera and lens helps when it snows, but if your camera isn’t sealed, cover it with a rain cover such as a Storm Jacket or LensCoat.

When it is snowing, try to keep snow off the glass by keeping your lens hood on and tilting the lens down when not in use. If it gets wet, do not blow the snow off, which will fog the lens. Use a lens brush or a microfiber cloth.

Keep the heat low in your car. Bringing a cold camera into a hot car can cause condensation to form on and inside the camera. Moisture on the electronics is not a good thing. Avoid changing lenses as much as possible to keep moisture out of the camera.

When entering a warm house, keep the camera in your cold camera bag until everything warms up. Even a cold ziplock bag will help.

- Get the shot

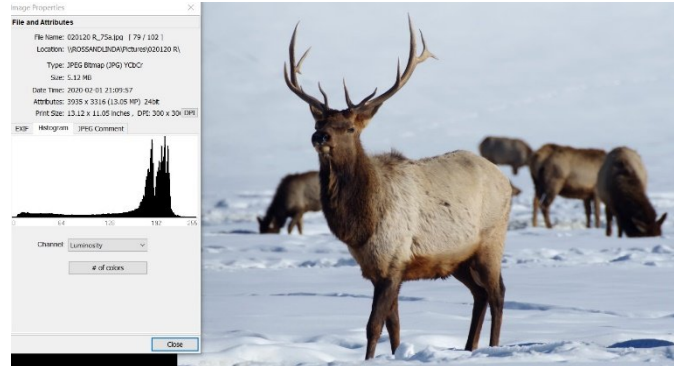
Exposure is a problem in snow. Despite what you have probably heard, snow isn’t always white. Depending on lighting conditions it could be gray, blue, or golden. Snow on a blue-sky day reflects blue and snow on an overcast day could be gray. Snow in deep shadow may be dark blue. When facing north away from the sun snow could be gray, and facing south into the sun it will be very white. Early or late in the day it might be golden. All these conditions can



cause different exposure problems. In general, you usually can't expect all the snow in your photo to be equally white, but try for nice bright snow in the lightest areas.

Camera meters do a pretty good job providing the correct exposure in most circumstances, but in general it is better to add a little exposure in bright snow conditions because the meter will try to average the exposure to middle tones. In other words, the camera will try to make a white scene gray.

Check your histogram. The graph should be completely within the borders of the display, but if there is a lot of white snow it should be weighted toward the right of the display. Remember, the left end represents dark and the right end is light.



The Metering Basics lesson available on the club website discusses in detail various ways to adjust your exposure, including exposure compensation, spot meter, and HDR.

Autofocus may not work with a white-on-white scene or it might focus on falling snow instead of your subject. Try manual focus if there is a problem.

A fast shutter speed will “freeze” the movement of falling snow. A slow shutter speed might record streaks of moving snow.

A polarizer filter sometimes will reduce glare off bright snow and increase detail.

Using a spot meter on wildlife could help eliminate exposure problems caused by bright snow.

- Post-processing in your favorite photo editing software will help fine-tune your image. For example, use Levels in Photoshop to correct exposure, and use Remove Color Cast to eliminate some of the blue tones.



Consider converting snow photos to black and white, especially if the tones are difficult to work with.

- Subject Matter
Landscapes and wildlife are obvious subjects, but don't ignore the small details like ice patterns, snow drift curves and shadows, and frost.

Shoot in unusual light, such as fog or storms, for dramatic effects.

