

Larry Lindahl Photography

Information about photographing Horseshoe Bend, Antelope Canyon, and Monument Valley.

Horseshoe Bend: Photography Tips

Be careful when near the edge of the overlook.

—The unique view of the Colorado River at Horseshoe Bend requires that you get very close to the edge of the cliff. Do not walk up to or stand near the edge, a sudden gust of wind could knock you off balance, and it's a long way down. Instead, approach the last few steps to the cliff edge on your hands and knees and then find a seated position when you begin to photograph.

Use your tripod without extending the legs.

—Since you will be sitting on the ground do not extend the legs of your tripod. You will only need the tripod tall enough to use your camera a few feet off the ground.

Use Live View to avoid vertigo.

—Rather than look through your viewfinder, instead, turn on your Live View function. Learn ahead of time how to focus and make other adjustments when this function is activated.

Use a wide-angle lens.

—Bring your wide-angle lens to capture the entire scene. Consider creating a panoramic image to stitch together using Photoshop or Lightroom in post-production. For this, shoot a series of images with each image repeating one-third of the previous composition to get full coverage of the scene. Then, in Lightroom the program can stitch together the series of overlapping images into a single image.

HDR bracketing.

—The sky and the canyon floor will be an extreme range of exposure. Create a series of three identical compositions with the first image one stop under-exposed, the next image normal exposure, and the last image one-stop over exposed. This function can be set up in your Menu, so that the camera shutter will shoot the three images rapidly one after another. Even if you have never created an HDR image this process will give you the set of images you'll need for making one in the future. Then, in Lightroom you can command the program to combine the three images, and Lightroom will render the image revealing hidden details in the bright and dark areas of the photo.

Antelope Canyon: Photography Tips

You will be guided through the slot canyon as a tight group.

—After you enter the canyon, expect to be shoulder to shoulder with the others in your group while shooting. Often the group is divided into one row of shooters down low on their knees, with the other half of the group set up to shoot over the heads of the people in the front row. Tripod legs can bump into other people and/or their tripods. Cooperate with others, be careful, and set up with awareness of where your body and tripod are positioned.

Don't bring a daypack, extra lenses, or a hat on the tour.

—Bring your camera with a wide-angle zoom lens already mounted on your tripod. Use a plastic bag to protect your camera when you are on the shuttle vehicle going to and from the slot canyon. You can also use the bag between locations inside the canyon. A daypack will get in the way, and a hat with a brim will also get in your way, so leave these in your car at the parking lot. Bring a water bottle, but leave it on the shuttle vehicle during the tour.

—The guides will frequently be tossing sand into the air to showcase the light beams. Don't allow the possibility of getting sand or dust inside your camera by trying to change lenses.

Be familiar with your tripod and camera settings.

—Know how to change your settings in a dark environment. You should be ready to reset ISO, aperture, or shutter speed while looking through your viewfinder or by using the LCD screen on the back of your camera. Time is of the essence, so any delays you cause yourself will result in missed opportunities as the guide will only stay at each location for a fairly short time.

Use a shutter release cable to get sharp photos.

— Pressing the shutter button with your finger will cause vibration, and give you a blurred photo, when making a long exposure. A cable release will allow you to capture the best moment of a sunbeam as the guide tosses sand into the air. The powdery sand will fall quickly out of the light beam, so don't depend on using the camera's shutter delay, as even a two second delay can mean missing the shot.

Depth of field is important in making quality images.

—It's difficult to focus in the slot canyon when the cliffs are in dim light. Use a high f-stop number, such as f/16 or f/18, to get all parts of the photo in focus. Remember, if part of the scene is too close to the camera it may not be in focus in your final capture. Chose a focal point that is roughly one-third the distance from the nearest object in the scene to the most distant object. Focusing on the distant object could cause the foreground to have soft focus, and be distracting in your final image.

Use the Shade setting for your White Balance.

—The slot canyon is mostly all in shadow so the light will appear cool or slightly blueish. You can use the Auto White Balance (AWB) and adjust later if shooting in RAW. If you are shooting in JPG, use the Shade setting for a warmer, more appealing image.

Monument Valley: Photography Tips

Find a foreground element.

—Look for interesting elements to include in the first ten feet of your composition to create a sense of depth or dimension in your landscape photos. Use a high f-stop such as f/18 to achieve a long range of focus where your foreground and horizon are both in focus. Your focal point, the part of the scene that you make the sharpest, should be one-third the distance from the foreground to the horizon to achieve maximum depth of field.

Using a Circular Polarizer Filter.

—This filter will cut the glare and haze from your landscape photos and give you richer color in the sky and sandstone formations. Even though post-production has become very advanced with functions like Lightroom's Dehaze adjustment, it is always best to capture the highest quality image when at the location. The Polarizer Filter is most effective when your composition faces the scene at 90 degrees to the sun. The polarizing effect will not be noticeable when the sun is directly in front or behind you. Turn the filter until the desired effect is achieved. The filter can sometimes make the sky nearly black so use it in moderation to create the most realistic result.

Watch the sky.

—If the sky has clouds then include them in your composition to compliment the landscape below them. If the sky has no clouds, frame your composition to exclude a big section of solid blue. Put the top of the rock formations near the top of your frame. A blank, blue sky will overwhelm the landscape with the mass of blue, and won't be interesting to the eye.

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