

# THE CAMERA CLUB OF CENTRAL MINNESOTA



## The Newsletter of the Camera Club of Central Minnesota

Volume 10, Issue 7

July 2018

### Club Meetings and Other Bits of Information

The Camera Club of Central Minnesota will be meeting on the first Monday of each month with the second Monday of the month as back up starting in January 2017. We will meet at the Public Library in St. Cloud from 6:45 to 8:45 pm.

The club has monthly photo topics, image sharing and critique, hands on demonstrations of photographic gear and software, member online gallery links, discussions about photography, and is open to all.

Remember, all your photo assignments and meeting dates are online at:

<http://cameraclubmn.com>

#### Assignments

**Monday July 2, 2018, Bremer Community Room 104, Flowers:** Formal gardens, wildflowers, close-ups, still life, etc.

**Monday August 6, 2018, Bremer Community Room 104, National, State, or Local Park** – spend a day or part of a day photographing. Select five photos.

**Monday September 3, 2018, Bremer Community Room 104, State,** county fair, local celebration or carnival.

**Monday October 1, 2018, Bremer Community Room 104, Wildlife:** This could be something as small as a dragonfly or much larger.



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### Notes from the June Meeting

Our June meeting was informative as we viewed several photos from each attendee. We also discussed plans for future meetings.

David presented interesting topics from the past. Some of the discussion was new material to a few of us.

### Buying a Tripod

What do you need to consider when buying a tripod

Here is some tripod wisdom to help you choose the best one for your photography - and use it to its full potential.

#### Buying a tripod

Buying a tripod is just as important as buying a new lens – you have to make sure you se-

lect the best option for you and your photography. Maximum and minimum height, head, weight, features and budget are all variables that you need to take into account. No two tripods are the same.

The best tripods have removable heads and the two are often purchased separately, although manufacturers do create leg and head kits. Then there are different materials. For



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## Buying a Tripod (continued)

example, carbon fibre weighs less but costs more than aluminium. As always, your budget is an important part of the purchasing decision, and with tripods the more you pay the better they are.

### Buying a full-size tripod

'Full-size tripod' is a rather loose term, but in this instance we are referring to tripods that are sturdy enough to support any camera, including pro-spec DSLRs, with a maximum payload of around 8kg, and which fully extend to approximately 170cm. Whether carbon fibre or aluminium, this is a sturdy option in any situation but much heavier than a travel tripod.

### Travel tripods

Small and light, at around 1.5kg or less, travel tripods are perfect when you need to keep things light. They come with a head and can often support a camera and lens up to 4kg. They will easily cover landscape, travel, macro and portrait photography. A pro-DSLR and 70-200mm f/2.8 lens, however, would be too heavy for this type of tripod.

### Mini Tripods

If you're out shooting and don't think you'll need a tripod, a mini tripod fits discreetly into your bag thanks to its small size and light weight of just a few hundred grams or less. These tripods are limited by maximum height and maximum payload, but you can set them up on a wall or table to get a higher viewpoint. Alternatively, position them on the ground for a creative low

### Buying a tripod head

There are tripod heads to suit every type of photography. Size, weight, functionality, features and cost are all important. Different heads will have different mounts but the two main ones you'll come across are Arca Swiss, not limited to this brand, and Manfrotto, which uses several mounts on different heads including Arca Swiss. Read on below to discover more about six types of tripod heads.

### Ball heads

Ball heads are compact ball-and-socket-type heads offering quick and easy adjustment and use a single lock to secure the camera. Often favored by landscape photographers, they are great for all types of photography, except on those occasions where a large and heavy telephoto lens is required.

### Three-way and geared heads

Featuring a three-twist-locking lever, you can pan and tilt the head vertically and horizontally. Geared heads are also three-way but you twist the levers to tilt the head on the horizontal or vertical axis.

### Gimbal heads

These are designed for wildlife, motorsport and airshow photographers using heavy telephoto lenses. A gimbal head lets you rotate a lens smoothly around its center of gravity, and tilt it up and down steadily with ease. These heads are bigger and heavier than most other types.

### Panoramic heads

These are specialist pieces of kit that are heavy and bulky as a result of their design. They allow you to rotate the camera around the nodal point of the lens, which simply results in a better panoramic than if you rotate the camera using a standard head.

### Fluid heads

This type of head is ideal for video. They typically feature a long hand for panning, alongside a fluid chamber, tension control and sometimes a counterweight to help create smoother pans. Paired with a video tripod you can achieve smooth pans.

### Buying tripod accessories

The humble L-bracket is a gift from the gods for landscape photographers. This incredible accessory is an L-shaped bracket that attaches to the bottom of your camera, effectively creating a tripod plate running along the bottom of the camera and up one side. This means you can switch from landscape to portrait format in an instant, all while maintaining full use of the tripod head. Shooting with the camera in portrait format without an L-bracket reduces maneuverability compared with shooting in landscape format. L-brackets are available in a universal fit or for specific cameras, although it's worth noting the latter are often more expensive.



THE HUMBLE L-BRACKET IS A GIFT FROM THE GODS FOR LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHERS.



## Special feet for different situations

Every tripod will come with a standard set of rubber feet, but some feature runner feet that twist to reveal small spikes for added grip in certain situations. You can also get feet designed for use on snow and sand, and spikes of varying lengths to make sure your tripod is as stable as possible on softer ground.

## Plamp for holding subjects or a reflector

The Wimberley Plamp may have a strange name but this accessory is extremely useful, especially for macro and close-up photographers. The

Plamp attaches at one end to a tripod, and the clip at the other can be used to hold a subject (such as a flower) still when shooting. Alternatively, the Plamp can be used to hold up small backgrounds or reflectors to even-out lighting.

## Macro focusing plate

If you're a macro and close-up photography enthusiast, a macro focusing plate is an essential piece of kit. The plate attaches to the tripod head as your camera normally would, and the camera then goes on the plate. Now, when you set your macro lens to its minimum focusing distance for a 1:1 ratio, you can focus with ultimate precision

by turning a knob on the plate that moves the camera backwards and forwards to bring the subject into sharp focus.

## Tripod bags

Most camera bags are designed to carry a tripod but if you're using one that doesn't, or using a camera insert in an everyday bag, a tripod bag may be useful. These bags are generally designed for specific models, and some tripods are sold with bags included. If your tripod didn't come with a bag, check the manufacturer's website to see if one that fits is available.



## Booking a Photography Tour

Attending a photography tour is a great way to develop your photography by learning from a professional photographer in a destination you've dreamed of visiting. Not only that, it's also a great opportunity to connect with other like-minded people and perhaps even make friends for life.

But in order for it to be a positive (maybe even life-changing) experience, **you need to investigate a little before booking.** With the influx of photographers and tour operators offering photography-related tours, the line between a good and bad experience can be thin.

While most leave with positive memories, I've heard several horror stories of photographers who've attended workshops both by big operators as well as famous photographers.

What follows are eight tips

to consider before booking.

### #1. Workshop vs Photo Tours

The very first thing you should know is whether you're booking a workshop or a photography tour. You might think that they are the same, and some operators might treat them similarly, but the difference can be significant.

A photography workshop is a more hands-on experience where the guide is primarily there to teach you how to capture better images. Workshops typically include both in-field and post-processing lessons.

A photography tour is often less hands-on and the guide's main task is to make sure you're at the right place at the right time. While you'll still get photography instructions, you're more on your own when it comes to capturing the images and you're more like-

ly to see the guide using their own camera as well.

Many operators run a mix of the two but I recommend asking how they run the tours before booking. If you want more photographic instructions along with a more hands-on experience, make sure that you're booking a photography workshop.

### #2. Does the Operator Have Local Knowledge?

There's no doubt that booking with a local operator, or one who uses local guiding services, comes with big benefits.

Local operators have local knowledge and often know about secret spots where few others come. They're also better prepared in case something unexpected happens and they're more likely to arrange a unique and authentic experience.

This usually leads to a

ATTENDING A PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR IS A GREAT WAY TO DEVELOP YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEARNING FROM A PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER IN A DESTINATION YOU'LL LOVE.



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## Booking a Photography Tour (continued)



smoother, better-organized experience for you and the other participants.

### #3. Watch the Price

With photography tours, the price isn't an indicator of how good the tour is. As expected when there's a huge influx of providers, you can find tours in all price ranges. But what are the differences? Are the most expensive the best?

Not always...

I recommend looking at several providers and comparing what's included in the price. What lodging will you use and is it part of the package? Are meals included? Transportation? Entrance fees?

Don't be surprised when you see providers with similar itineraries and inclusions have a price difference of \$1000 or even more. Paying more doesn't mean you'll get a better experience.

### #4. How Big is the Group?

Another important factor to keep in mind before booking a photography tour is the group size.

Bigger groups typically mean more generic experiences. Even if there are several guides and a good guide-to-participant ratio, a large group size might be problematic in certain locations.

Just imagine standing on a small Arctic beach with 25 other photographers? It goes without saying that it

can be quite chaotic and you're more than likely to have a tripod or two in your frame.

In my opinion, the ideal group size is up to 6 or 8 participants. More than this and it starts getting crowded in certain places.

### #5. Who Are You Booking With?

Booking a tour with your favorite photographer doesn't necessarily mean that he's the guide. I've heard several stories of people booking an international photography workshop with a photographer they admire but when they arrive, they learn that someone else is actually guiding the trip.

Even if the designated guide is just as talented (and perhaps even a better teacher), it's quite disappointing when the photographer you wanted to meet isn't even there.

To avoid this unpleasant surprise, make sure you read the sales page and other documents carefully. You might even want to ask the photographer point-blank if he's guiding that particular trip.

Remember, even if you're booking via a photographer's personal website, the tip above still stands. Make sure they're the ones guiding the tour.

### #6. Read Testimonials

Testimonials are always a great indicator whether a tour is a good match for you or not; they're a good way to hear about previous clients' experiences and they

give you an indication of how the tour is run.

Keep in mind that most operators only share the best reviews on their websites – do a quick Google Search as well. *Tripadvisor*, *Google Reviews*, and *Facebook Page Reviews* are good places to look.

### #7. Is the Trip Legit?

Reading reviews and testimonials should give you an idea if the operator is serious or not. This is typically not an issue with larger tour operators but rather one with individual photographers trying to make some extra money.

You'd be surprised how often I've heard of clients being told, "if we're stopped by the police, tell them we're just a group of friends." That's not what you want to hear on Day #1, is it?

It's hard to find out whether the operator has all the necessary paperwork (such as permits and insurances) and you might not get an honest reply if you ask. Still, if you find anything related to this in a review, it's a big red flag.

### #8. Have Realistic Expectations

What expectations do you have before booking a tour? Most likely, you've seen the images on the sales page and you wish to come back with beautiful photos from the same places but is that realistic?

Not always...

The images used to market the tours are often the result of several years' work. In fact, it's rare (though it happens) that all images on a sales

READING REVIEWS  
AND TESTIMONIALS  
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page are from only one previous trip.

Weather is hard to predict, especially long in advance, and there's no guarantee that you'll have great conditions for your entire stay. I'd say the chances are rather low for you to get 7 out of 7 days with amazing sunrises and sunsets.

The blossom in this Belgian forest only lasts for a week or two in spring.

Also, pay attention to what time of year the images were taken. If you're going to Northern Norway in summer,

you're not going to see snow and the Northern Lights. If you're going to Iceland in winter, you're not going to see the lupines.

Make sure that the images used in the marketing of a tour are taken during the same time of year as you're planning to visit. Also, don't expect to come home with great images from every single location. Rather let it be a positive surprise if you happen to.

### **Don't Worry. Have Fun!**

My intention with this article has not been to scare you

away from attending a photography tour or workshop: quite the opposite. I hope that you take these tips and use them to find the photographer or company that will give you the best possible experience.

We all have different expectations and doing a little research beforehand increases the likelihood of you having a good experience.

Once you've found the right match there are only two things left to do: have fun and take great pictures!



## Lightroom Sharpening Panel

Sharpening photos is one of the most important steps in any photographers post-processing workflow. No matter how good you are at getting a shot right in camera, odds are you're always going to want to apply some sharpness to your images. This isn't a particularly difficult or labor-intensive task.

The main problem with sharpening is that it's easy to go too far with it. Obviously, no one wants soft images, which is why you increase sharpness — you want your photos to be crisp and clear.

But over-sharpening can be as (or more) detrimental to the look of an image as no sharpening. Too much sharpening can introduce noise and a variety of other unwanted visual imperfections.

While every current photo editing application out there is capable of competently sharpening a photo, I want to take a look at the image

sharpening options that are present in Adobe Lightroom. Lightroom actually sports quite a powerful set of sharpening tools, but exactly how to apply them has mystified some users.

Follow along as we cover the basics of sharpening photos in Lightroom.

### **Overview Of The Detail Panel**

Lightroom's Detail Panel will appear to the right of your screen when you navigate to the Develop module. The Detail Panel is divided into three sections — one that shows a magnified preview, one for sharpening and one for noise reduction. The sharpening section consists of four separate sliders — Amount, Radius, Detail, Masking.

**Amount:** The Amount slider controls how much you want to sharpen an image, from 0 (no sharpening) to 150 (max sharpening). There's no magic

number that works for every photo. I've never encountered a situation that called for the Amount slider to be set to 150; I don't typically go higher than 50.

**Radius:** Radius controls how far beyond the original pixel boundary the sharpening is allowed to extend. A value of 1 means that the sharpening amount will extend out to 1 pixel around the edge of the original boundary. As you increase the Radius you will eventually begin to see the edges of various elements in your image thicken, so it's wise to keep the Radius below 2.

**Detail:** The Detail slider enhances the finer details within an image. Pushing the Detail slider will amplify the textures in items like strands of hair, feathers, any details that exist in the high frequency areas of an image. The slider rang-

**OBVIOUSLY, NO ONE WANTS SOFT IMAGES, WHICH IS WHY YOU INCREASE SHARPNESS — YOU WANT YOUR PHOTOS TO BE CRISP AND CLEAR.**





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Membership is \$25 per year. Members should provide: Email Address, Mailing Address, and Phone Number.

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The Camera Club of Central Minnesota publishes a monthly newsletter which is distributed via e-mail. The newsletter will contain information about up-coming meetings, summaries of previous meeting, recommendations for photographers, announcements of photographic workshops, and other material that seems appropriate.

If you would like to send suggestions, comments, or other communications concerning the club or newsletter, please send your e-mail to [rheath@tds.net](mailto:rheath@tds.net).

## Lightroom Sharpening Panel (continued)

es from 0 to 100 where, again, 50 is a setting that will work best in most cases.

**Masking:** This slider allows you to control how much of the overall image will be affected by the three sharpening settings discussed above. When set to 0, sharpening settings apply universally to an image — every pixel is affected the same. As the Masking slider is increased, larger areas of similar pixels are masked out to achieve more refined, selective results (for instance, setting the Masking slider to 75 might sharpen only the eyes/face of a portrait while leaving the background untouched).

### Look To The Alt/Option Key For Guidance

The changes that you make when sharpening your images can be difficult to visualize, especially once you start playing around with the Radius, Detail and Masking sliders. One way to better see the effects of sharpening is to view your photo at 100%. But sometimes the adjustments are so subtle that even zooming in doesn't help as much as you'd like.

Say hello to the Alt (Win) or Option (Mac) key. Holding the Alt/Option key while moving any of the Sharpening sliders will display a grey representation of your image which allows you to see what changes are being applied at the pixel level. Without invoking the Alt/Option key, many of the adjustments you make in sharpening are immediately perceptible. The Alt/Option key helps eliminate the guesswork.

The Alt/Option + Masking slider combo functions a bit differently. Instead of a grey

screen, you'll see an empty white screen, meaning all sharpness settings are applied evenly throughout the photo. As you move the Masking slider to the right, you will see areas of black begin to appear in the image. These are areas that are being masked out and are unaffected by the sharpening adjustments.

This selective sharpening process is perhaps the most important aspect of all Lightroom's sharpening features, as it approximates what can be done in Photoshop while remaining easy to use.

### Final Thoughts On Using Lightroom To Sharpen Images

If image sharpening has always been a matter of trial and error for you, knowing what each of the sliders in Lightroom's Detail panel is designed to do and how each one affects an image should help remove some of the mystique surrounding this issue. Image sharpening is still largely a matter of taste and how much is needed can depend on a variety of factors (lens, subject matter, desired aesthetic), but knowing where to start will better help you achieve satisfying results.

