

A Few Night Photo Tips

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Moonlit landscapes in snowy rural areas, brilliant lights of the city and urban landscape, the beauty of a lighthouse and the sea bathed in moonlight are just a few of the wonderful images that we can capture at night. Our modern digital cameras afford us a degree of control that was never available to us using film. This is not to say that digital is perfect but is an exciting leap forward in our ability to create great images at night.

If your camera has a “Night” setting then that is clearly the best method to use with your camera. This feature takes care of all of the difficult calculations that beset many users of film who wanted to take night photographs. Be sure to turn off your flash when using this mode else you will over illuminate the foreground unless you wanted to create a scene with a fully detailed subject in the foreground with the lights of the city in the background.

Please remember that it is light that makes your night photography a success. Using a high quality camera with higher resolution will result in better detail in your night image without excessive “noise”. Although it is not the same as grain with a high speed film emulsion it is seen as such by many photographers. The higher the resolution the lower the incidence of noise making for a much better image.

Some of the best lighting happens just after sunset while there is still light in the sky. This helps to bring out details of buildings against the sky that would otherwise be lost when it is really dark. It adds that something extra to our photography at night.

One of the major considerations we need to take regarding night photography is camera shake. Here is where Image Stabilization comes into play to minimize any camera movement, especially when we handhold our cameras. If your camera is not equipped with the IS technology then you need to use a tripod or other firm support for your camera. Some of the support I have used in the past includes placing the camera on the roof of a car, holding it against the side of a building, holding it on top of a park bench, and any other inanimate object. One caution, however, is that when you are on a bridge that any support is going to be subject to movement due to traffic on the bridge so rely on high ISO settings to compensate.

Last, but not least, is to take multiple shots at varying exposures and angles and pick the best for display. You can also take multiple shots of neon signs and then, using photo software, overlay the images to create a unique multiple exposure.