

Lecture Notes: "Tucson and the Southwest"

This lecture was produced for the 2006 Photographic Society of America's Conference (PSA) in Baltimore to introduce the attendees of the photographic opportunities available to them at the 2007 PSA Int'l Conference to be held 2-8 September in Tucson. Past Tucson conferences have set attendance records.

The new J W Marriott Resort and Spa at Starr Pass will be conference headquarters. All rooms will be \$89 per night for any number of persons therein which is a fraction of the usual rate. The hotel images attest to the opulence of the facilities. The hotel is near the desert museum. The Arizona Sonora Desert Museum near-by is a Mecca for photographers as demonstrated by these images. The Saguaro National Park (West) is but 5 miles to the north. The best images here are at sunrise and sunset but scout out the area in advance. In downtown Tucson are to be found the colorful buildings of La Placita and the adjacent barrio. San Xavier del Bac Mission is 9 miles south at exit 92 off I-19. The Pima Air and Space Museum is near the Valencia Rd exit off I-10 eastbound. The Titan ICBM Museum off I-19 at exit 69 was an operational facility during the "cold war." This is the only preserved site in the US weapons system. It even has a Titan 2 missile! The well preserved Tumacacori Mission is south of Tucson off I-19 and 19 miles north of Nogales. The Kitt Peak observatory complex built atop Kitt Peak is near Sells and is a few miles west of Tucson. The world's largest solar telescope is here along with over 20 other telescopes. Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument is a few miles west. The best time for photography is dawn or sunset. The park is over 500 square miles in size and borders on Mexico.

The Phoenix area offers photogenic areas as well. The Desert Botanical Gardens is the place to go for wildflowers, cactus specimens in bloom, other succulents and butterflies. The butterfly pavilion is a spring-fall event. Many of the paths are paved. The plants are well cared for. Close-up equipment is recommended. Near by is the Phoenix Zoo. Here, large telephoto lenses are helpful. Mud Mania is held every July in Scottsdale. Mud Mania pictures are like no other photojournalistic images. Also of note is Lost Dutchman State Park near Apache Junction. The best images here are in late day with partial fluffy clouds. This is a few miles east of Phoenix off US 60 and SR 88. Two hours north of Phoenix just off I-17 is Sedona with Oak Creek Canyon. Here try sunset, fall or early evening with a full moon. A light dusting of snow is very photogenic. East of Sedona along I-40 is Meteor Crater National Monument, Painted Desert and Petrified Forrest National Parks.

Northern Arizona has Grand Canyon. Again, here, the combination of fluffy clouds at dawn or sunset make for excellent images. East of the canyon is Wupatki or "long-cut house" in the Hopi language. It has over 100 rooms. Further north and east is Canyon de Chelly. Here guides are required and fall is best for image creation. Since light can't get into the canyon at dawn or sunset, don't try to shoot then. The canyon is in the heart of Navaho country. Near Page is Horseshoe Bend, upper and lower Antelope canyons, Lake Powell, the Wave, Bryce Canyon and Zion National Park. Horseshoe Bend is deep and is best imaged around mid-day with a very wide angle lens. The Wave requires reservations as it sits in an eco-sensitive area.

Northwest of Arizona is Las Vegas and Death Valley. Las Vegas can be quite a photogenic place after dark. Death Valley is an incredible and photogenic place at sunset and sunrise. Avoid times of crowds as they put deep footprints on the dunes. Also outside of Arizona is VLA or Very Large Array and near-by Bosque del Apache Nature Preserve. These are in west central New Mexico. The nature preserve is best around Thanksgiving. Large telephoto lenses are a must but standard but fast lenses are needed for the early morning fly-aways. These frequently occur around dawn. One more thing. Bring coverings for camera, lens and head during overhead fly-aways. Bird excrement is a hazard!

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