

# Tips for Fireworks Photography

## Compiled by Bob Spalding



Fireworks displays are a sign of celebrations of important events the world over. For brief moments in time we are fascinated with their brilliance before they fade away forever. When photographing fireworks you need to consider it like night photography. Have all your equipment ready before the show begins (while there is still daylight).



The first thing to do if possible is to scout the location. Find the best place to set up your equipment. This can be done an hour or so before the fireworks begin.



**Equipment Needed:** Camera with a medium wide angle lens, a cable release (do not touch the camera during long exposures), a tripod, a flash light or head lamp, a chair or something to sit on (before the show begins).



**Camera Settings:** Set your camera to Aperture Priority or Manual. Set your ISO to 100-200 and your aperture to F8-F16 (I use F13). Shoot Automatic White Balance (can be adjusted in post if need be). Let the camera adjust for Shutter Speed (which will be low (10-30 seconds)). If your camera has a built in flash – turn it off. Shoot vertical most of the time.

You can use Bulb as your camera settings, however, as a Rule of Thumb; as soon as the fireworks start (rocket type), press the shutter button. After it explodes and the star trails start to fade, press the shutter button again to close it. (Personally I have found just using the cable release and pressing it as soon as the fireworks start, using a slow shutter speed the camera will take care of itself),



Use manual focus. Focus to infinity and bring the focus ring back one click and leave it there. When time permits, you Live View to check for focusing.

Other areas to watch out for; your horizon (of course you want it straight), setting up the camera before it gets dark will be a big help. Watch for wind; you will want to shoot up wind so the smoke will clear before the fireworks go off.

Take off any and all filters. Take extra memory cards and batteries. I can emphasize the importance of having everything ready before it gets dark. If your camera does not have a button to light up all the controls, then a flashlight (headlamp is a must).

Consider the foreground (Composition) to add to your photo. Such things as people, buildings, or even silhouettes

