

Tips for Photographing Sunrises and Sunsets



Compiled by Bob Spalding



When photographing a Sunrise, stop shooting once you cannot look directly into the sun with your eyes. Whereas, with Sunsets, do not start shooting until you can look at the sun directly with your eyes. The bright sun will hurt your eyes and may hurt your camera.



Plan ahead; Research the area to want to photograph. Find the best place that will offer the best composition. Look for areas where you can track the sun all the way up, or all the way down. Do not hesitate to include something in the foreground to add extra interest to your photo. Be at the location at least ½ hour before the Sun rises or sets. There are several Apps that help – Golden Light, Sunset and Rise, Sun Seekers, etc.



Ideally, to get a tack sharp picture, you will need a tripod and a remote shutter release or cable release attached to your camera. If neither are available, use the Timer on your camera.



Shoot at the lowest ISO possible with your camera. Play around with your White Balance. Shooting Daylight or Shade will probably be your best bet. However, every camera is different. You want to be sure you get the reds and oranges. Shoot manual if you can. This will give you much more control of your camera setting. **Do NOT** shoot on Automatic or Program if possible. Especially when using Automatic, the Camera not the photographer will decide what is best.



Expose for the colored part of the sky. Shoot lots of pictures. Bracket your photos using different exposures. Keep in mind, that your auto focus (AF) may not work in the dark. You may have to focus manually.



If time permits, shoot at a variety of focal lengths, wide angle, zoom, etc. Look for reflections off water if available. Look for interesting silhouettes, trees, people or anything against the sky or sun.



Keep shooting after the sun comes up or goes down. The landscape surrounding the sun will be constantly changing over time (minutes), and can produce some spectacular colors. This is especially true with Sunsets.



If you want a star burst sun, then you need to shoot Aperture Priority at F16, F22 or higher. Some of your better Point & Shoot Cameras and some of the Phone Cameras have special mode for shooting sunrises or sunsets.