

Inclement Weather Photography

By Chuck Palmer

Standing under the Cocoa Beach pier dodging the rain that temporarily put a hold on our Camera Club Photo Walk, I remembered I had not yet written an article for our monthly newsletter. “Hey John, what article should I write this month?” I shouted to our club president over the high winds. “How about inclement weather photography?” Even in the worst weather, there are so many opportunities for great photographs.” came his reply as he surveyed the skies. The rain soon let up, and we finished our photo shoot in what turned out to be beautiful overcast light.

When I arrived home, I took a quick look inside my digital photo library. I was really surprised how many favorite photos were tagged with rain, fog, or weather. Turns out I have taken many photos in inclement weather. I was especially impressed with how many favorite sunrise shots were taken in stormy conditions, providing added mood and drama to the photograph. So, a little bad weather can indeed make for good photography! Let’s look at a few inclement weather photography opportunities, and why they just might make one of your favorite images!

Rain – Rainy weather brings out the colorful umbrellas, and kids splashing in the puddles. Great opportunities for colorful action images. Sheets of water lying on the pavement everywhere act as mirrors, reflecting available light, providing a unique view of the world your viewers will most certainly find interesting. Look for rain drops on flowers and leaves. Rain drops add texture that are perfect for those close-up shots. Of course, you must keep your gear dry and protected in inclement weather. A poncho, or an extra-large Ziploc bag works well in light rain. You can keep the front of your lens dry with a microfiber lens cloth. And one of my favorite things to do rainy days (and stay dry) is to shoot images from inside through windows painted with raindrops and splashes of water.



Fog – Foggy conditions adds mood and an ethereal atmosphere to your images. Your main subject tends to be well seen, while background distractions disappear. Fog can also give your viewer a sense depth due to the atmospheric perspective as the background transitions to pure white or gray. Always embrace gray, cold, or misty conditions. Venture out with determination to capture a memorable image! But again, be sure to protect your gear from the damp conditions.



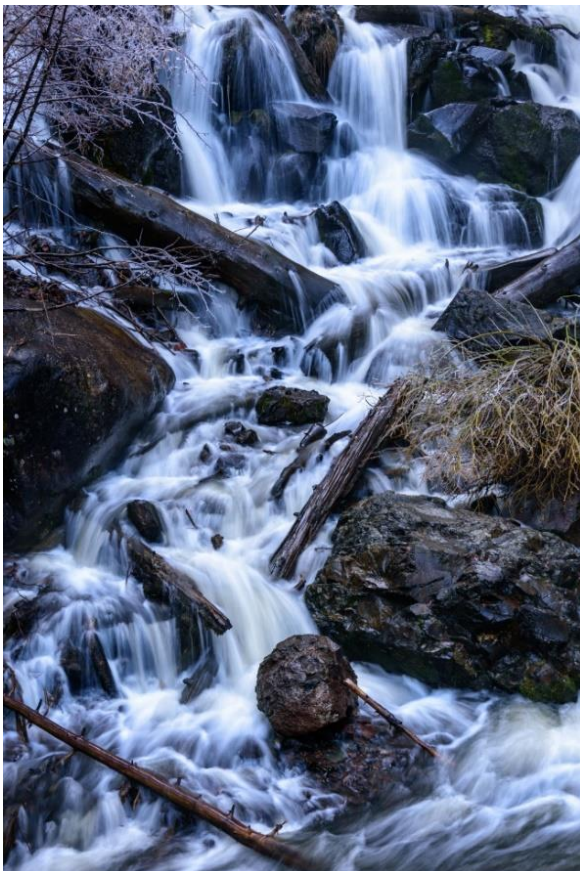
Clouds and Overcast Days – Gloomy overcast skies won't exactly complement that unbelievable landscape image but overcast daylight can make for some marvelous images. The soft even light is perfect for portraits, and natural colors become vibrant and clear. Take a nature hike on an overcast day. Compose your photos to eliminate that white dull sky, while capturing the bright saturated natural colors. Bright overcast days provide a free large soft box that turns direct sun into beautiful soft light for portraits. Many professional portrait photographers love to shoot in cloudy conditions.



Wait for it... Wait for it – Even on the worst bad weather days, you will often get short periods of clearing weather that make memorable dramatic landscape photos, especially when shooting sunrises or sunsets. The key to capturing these remarkable images is to be there and wait for the weather to let up a little. When chasing sunrises on bad weather days, I will always get to the location no matter what the weather looks like at home. You never know when the weather will break for just a few minutes. You only need a moment to capture a remarkable photo.



Convert to Black and White – Inclement weather can sometimes make for disappointing color images. In heavy tonality photographs, stormy conditions can make the mid-tones a little dingy and gray. So, consider converting your image to Black and White, adding contrast, drama, and interest to an otherwise dull image.



Conclusion

Some of our best photos often happen in inclement weather. So, next time bad weather threatens to spoil your photo shoot, don't despair. Instead, use some of the tips above and make the most of it.

Keep shooting and may only the remarkable photos always be yours.

Chuck