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22 night photography tips for beginners



Peter Travers

Quick and easy digital photography tips for better photos in the dark. From night photography settings for your DSLR to ideas for creative low light pictures.

Find out how to take photos at night with these camera and photography tips for beginners. Whether you want to learn how to take photos of the night sky, find out how to paint with light or just want to know the right camera settings for high quality pictures, this guide will shed light on the common questions and popular techniques...

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15 White Balance settings at night

If you're using Auto White Balance, it's easy for your DSLR to get confused with what it thinks is the best White Balance (WB) setting when shooting under street lights at night. To ensure consistent results, manually set WB; try the Cloudy (6000K) setting to warm up your scenes (making them more orange) or Tungsten (3200K) to cool down the temperature (making them look more blue).

16 Switch IS off

Image Stabilisation (IS) on lenses is useful for reducing camera shake when you're shooting hand-held, but it can have the opposite effect when you're using a tripod and taking long exposures – the gyroscopic sensors inside most IS lenses actually creating unwanted movement. Switch IS off and you won't have to worry! Doing so will also increase battery life – helpful in cold conditions.

17 How to photograph star trails

While traffic light trails exposures are 30 seconds long, star trails can take over 30 minutes! There are two methods to shoot star trails, in one long exposure, or in a series of shorter exposures joined together. With the single exposure method it's best to use your camera's Long Exposure Noise Reduction function. The problem with one long exposure is the sky can become quite light by the end. Or you can take a series of exposures and mix them together using a piece of software called Startrails (www.startrails.de). Use an aperture of f/4 and an ISO of 400 to let plenty of light in. Take a series of 30-second exposures on Bulb (in Manual mode) and in continuous shooting mode (with Long Exposure Noise Reduction turned off). Sequences need to last an hour or more for a good visual effect.



18 Reflections at night

To give your night shots a boost, look out for water in front of buildings, rivers or lakes, for reflections that double the amount of lights and colour in your images. Even wonderful wet, wintry weather can help to turn drab pavements and courtyards into interesting reflective surfaces, which in turn creates some foreground interest.

19 Special effects

Try the zoom burst technique to capture artistic effects of night lights. For this you'll need a zoom lens, your 18-55mm or 17-85mm kit lens will do nicely, and a slow shutter speed – depending on available light, around 1/15-1/4 sec is a good start. Start with your lens at its wide-angle end, then zoom in as you press the shutter button. Alternatively, start zoomed in, then press the shutter button and zoom out. Experiment and you'll soon be capturing zoom-tastic results!

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s0ulsurfing

Most of my work to date has been using natural daylight, so this is a great article for night-time newbie like me, thanks for putting it together!

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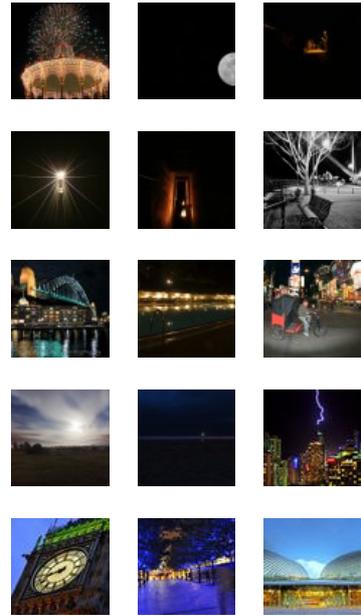
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