



9 Tips for Gorgeous Fall Photography

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**HOW TO
CAPTURE BEAUTIFUL
FALL PHOTOGRAPHY**

I love fall photography; what could be more beautiful than golden leaves lying on lush green grass or waving against a deep blue sky?

Unfortunately, capturing autumn colors can be a bit tricky. For the best photos, you must carefully choose your gear, your lighting, and your settings – and if you're a beginner, it can all get pretty overwhelming.

But never fear! In this article, I share my top tips for stunning fall photography. I explain:

- How you can use a simple filter to bring out lovely autumn colors
- How you can adjust your white balance setting for gorgeous warm images
- How you can create amazing shots by chasing the right light
- Much more!

Ready to become an autumn photography master? Then let's dive right in!

1. Use a polarizing filter to enhance colors

First things first:

If you want to capture rich, *bold* fall colors, then you should start by purchasing a **polarizing filter**.

Polarizers go on the front of the lens and cut down on reflected light. Reflections on wet and/or waxy leaves reduce color intensity, so by blocking this unwanted light from reaching your camera sensor, your fall photos will get a saturation boost.



Make sure you purchase a high-quality filter, though; a cheap polarizer won't do its job effectively and can introduce annoying color casts. So pay for a well-made option, such as a [circular polarizer offered by Hoya](#).

Note: The polarizer's diameter must match the diameter of your lens. Pick the lens you plan to use most in the fall, figure out its diameter, then buy a corresponding polarizer.

Also, bear in mind that polarizers do reduce the total amount of light hitting the camera sensor. To compensate, your camera will be forced to lengthen its [shutter speed](#), which can introduce [camera shake](#). To prevent this, I recommend shooting with a good tripod!

2. Shoot during the golden hours

The hour or so after sunrise and the hour or so just before sunset are known as the [golden hours](#). If you've ever spent time observing the evening light, you'll know why: When the sun is

low in the sky, it casts beautiful, soft, golden light across the land – light that looks amazing when illuminating fall subjects.



Golden-hour light offers several major benefits. It's soft, so it helps you capture photos with lots of beautiful details. And it's warm, so your images will have a stunning golden color cast.

Personally, I'm a huge fan of how the low sun accentuates red and gold colors. You can capture breathtaking fall landscapes, close-up details, fall portraits, and so much more.



If you can get up early enough, morning can actually be a bit better than evening. For one, fewer people will be out, so you'll often get forest paths all to yourself. And morning tends to come with less wind, which is ideal if you want to combine stunning fall colors with pond reflections.

3. Don't ignore the overcast days



If you're after rich, warm colors, golden-hour lighting is great...

...but you can also capture unique images on overcast days. The clouds act as giant diffusers, creating a soft, even light that brings out detail, adds atmosphere, and even saturates colors.



For instance, fall forest scenes look amazing under overcast lighting. Little details – fallen leaves, September flowers, and wilting plants – also look gorgeous.

One tip: If the sky is cloudy, make sure that you go out to shoot during the *middle* of the day. As the sun sinks lower in the sky (i.e., behind the clouds), the world gets dimmer and dimmer. Late in the afternoon, you may struggle to capture sharp handheld images. (Though you do always have the option to use a tripod!)



4. Look for color contrast



Fall is full of all sorts of beautiful color contrasts: red leaves on green (grass) backgrounds, orange leaves on blue (sky) backgrounds, purple flowers on yellow (leaf) backgrounds.

And if you can incorporate those many contrasts into your images, you'll end up with some breathtaking results.



You see, color contrast adds three-dimensionality by creating a clear separation between the subject and the background. Plus, contrasting colors are just inherently striking!

If you're struggling to see color contrasts, consider printing and carrying a color wheel. Opposite colors contrast beautifully, though neighboring colors do blend very nicely (and create a more muted palette).

Once you start to see color contrast with regularity, try experimenting with different color balances. You might include a lot of red and a little green for a more restrained look – or an equal amount of both for an intense result.

5. Consider the position of the sun



Some fall photographers prefer to avoid including the sun in the frame. Why? If the sun hits the camera sensor, it can create **lens flare**, which will wash out the scene and reduce the impact of autumn colors.

On the other hand, by incorporating the sun into the frame, you can create interesting sunstar effects that enhance rather than detract from your fall landscapes and portraits. (Stop down your **aperture** to around f/8 to get a nice sunstar!)



So I'd encourage you to experiment with both methods. Spend some time shooting away from the sun (so that you capture beautiful front-lit and side-lit subjects). Then turn around and shoot *at* the sun. See if you can deliberately create lens flare.

6. Play with your white balance settings



White balancing is the process of handling color casts in your images. Some light sources – such as the low sun – produce very warm, orangish light, while other light sources – such as artificial flash – produce very cold, bluish light. But when you dial in the correct white balance, you *neutralize* (i.e., remove) this warm or cold result. Successful neutralization helps the underlying colors shine through and ensures the photo more accurately represents its subject.

Generally speaking, it's a good idea to neutralize color casts, so it can be helpful to work with your camera's white balance presets or even to **set the white balance using a gray card**. If you're **shooting in RAW**, you can always adjust the white balance during post-processing without issue, but it saves time to get it right from the beginning.



Also, note that you don't always need to use the white balance to *correct* image color. You can actually use a warm or a cool white balance setting to add mood to your fall files. For instance, if you want to enhance reds and oranges, you can use a high-temperature white balance preset to warm up the image!

7. Aim to portray the chaos

Fall scenes tend to be pretty chaotic. They often feature waving branches, fallen leaves, colorful shrubs...the list goes on.

And in photography, chaos is generally a bad thing. Many photographers spend long minutes working each scene so they can *reduce* the chaos. After all, chaos distracts the viewer and prevents them from looking toward the main subject, right?

Not always! If you can *embrace* the chaos, you can capture unique images that go beyond the standard fall shots. Try to carefully compose your shots so that all the elements fit together like

a puzzle. And see if you can intersperse different colors throughout the frame – some reds here, some greens there.

In “chaos” shots, the goal is to think in terms of abstract geometry. Make sure that you carefully balance different colors and textures throughout the scene. And test out different apertures to see whether the images look good as deep **depth of field** shots or **shallow depth of field** files.



8. Bring out fall colors in post-processing

Most of the best fall photo effects are done in-camera, and you shouldn't see editing software as a way to "fix" or "create" amazing images.



However, you *can* enhance your autumn photography by bringing out colors, boosting depth, and increasing detail. It doesn't require specialized knowledge, either; you can handle all your fall photo editing in an intuitive program such as Lightroom.

I'd recommend first adjusting the exposure to make sure you capture the level of detail you're after. If you notice any detailless shadows or highlights, use the tonal sliders (i.e., the highlights, shadows, blacks, and whites sliders) to recover the missing data.

Then make some contrast changes. This will often look nice and add plenty of punch, but don't go overboard. Too much contrast will start to create unrealistic effects, which is absolutely *not* what you want.

Finally, experiment with different color intensity sliders. The Saturation slider, for instance, can boost the overall color intensity. The Vibrance slider, on the other hand, enhances cooler

colors. And if you're feeling especially adventurous, you might even try tweaking individual colors (using [Lightroom's HSL panel](#) or [Photoshop's Hue/Saturation adjustment layer](#)).

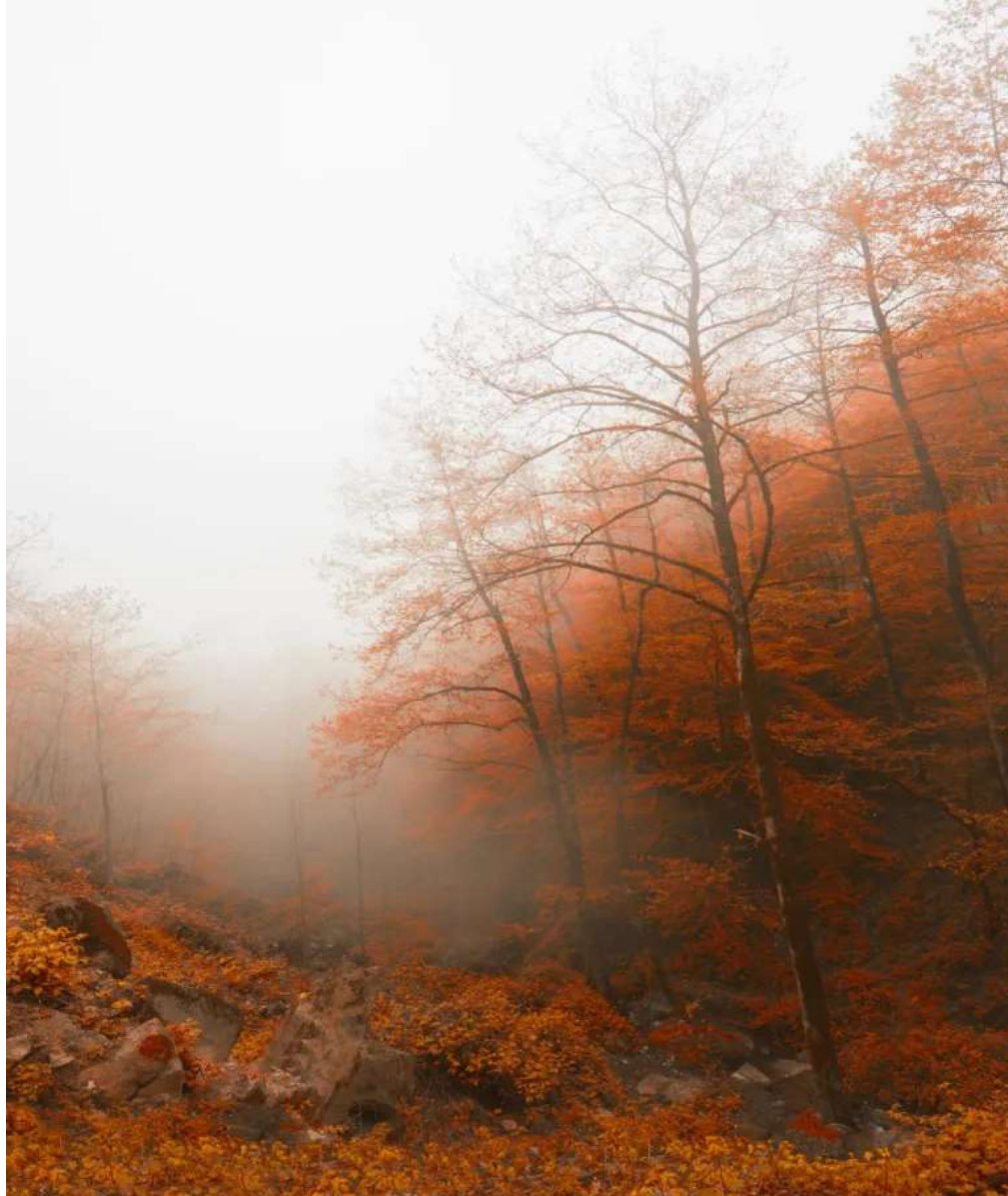


9. Go out when the weather is bad

I know, I know:

Bad-weather days make you want to stay inside, *not* venture out with your camera.

But if you take the plunge, you'll quickly see that fall colors combined with foggy, rainy, or even (if you're lucky!) snowy afternoons can look incredible.



For one, bad weather can add lots of atmosphere. Rain is a great way to add a melancholy mood, while snow can create uplifting vibes or a sadder, lonelier look (depending on how you approach and edit your photos). And fog pretty much always looks great, though if you want *really* powerful images, try to combine fog with repetition (such as lines of trees in a forest).

You do have to be careful, though. It's easy to get lost in heavy fog or snow, so always carry a phone and tell someone where you're going in advance. And bad weather can damage your camera, so make sure you carry a rain cover at all times. (I'd also encourage you to carry a second cover that wraps around your camera bag and keeps it dry).

Fall photography tips: final words



Now that you've finished this article, you're ready to capture some beautiful autumn images.

So have plenty of fun photographing the fall colors. And make sure you shoot whenever you can. In many areas, peak autumn scenes only last for a few weeks. You don't want to miss out!

Which of these tips do you plan to try first? What kind of fall photography do you plan to create? Share your thoughts in the comments below!



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