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Fall offers great colours, patterns and light for you and your camera to explore

Fall is for photos

Autumn in Switzerland is a great time to get out with your camera and capture the landscapes, details and colours of fall. The season offers the drama of foggy mornings and warm afternoon light, as well as the challenges of overcast skies and rainy days. But don't let a little bad weather stop you from shooting.

By Kellie Nolan & Bryon McCartney | Look around and you'll find great opportunities for beautiful, atmospheric photos. With some useful advice and helpful tips, you'll get a good start on how to put your camera to use and make the most of the season.

Sunlight and shadows

Colourful leaves, dappled sunlight and the long shadows of warm afternoon light are typical of autumn days. Incorporating these features will add a strong sense of the season to your photos. Forests are a perfect location to capture fall in a photo: for example, when the sun pierces a canopy of leaves, creating long shafts of light that stream down

through the tall trees. Just looking at such a photo, you can almost hear the crunch of dried leaves underfoot.

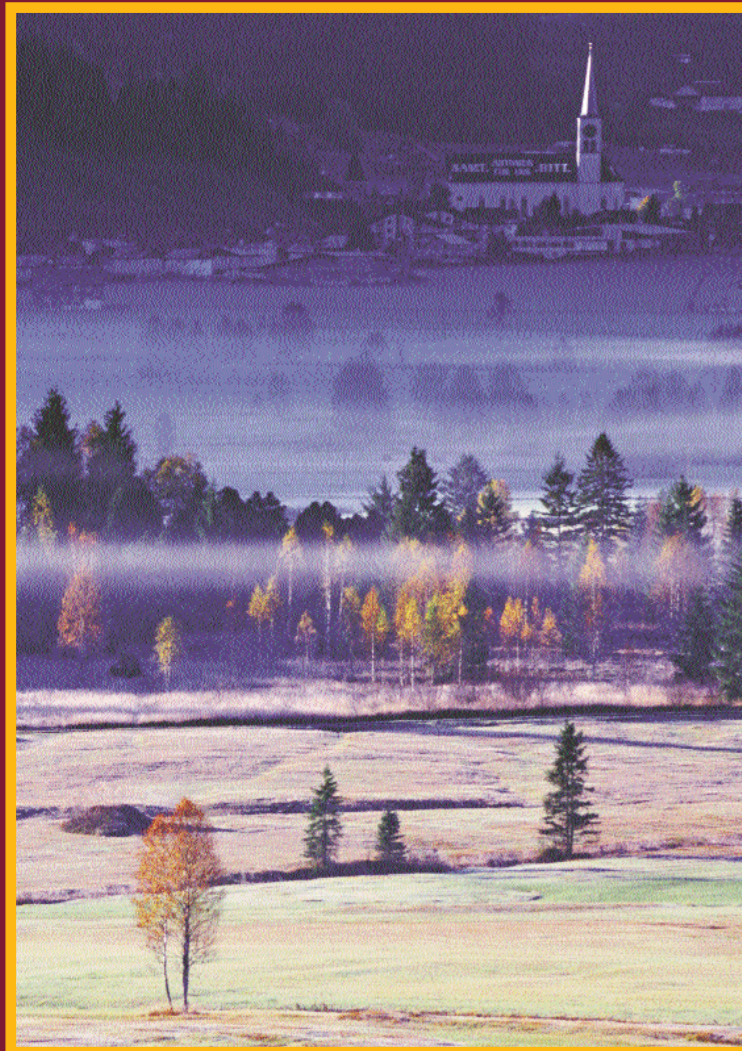
The challenge to shooting in these mixed light situations is getting the exposure right. Those bright shafts of light will trick your camera's automatic exposure features and give you photos that are underexposed (too dark). You can adjust for this by manually setting your shutter to a slower speed or opening your aperture to allow more light into the camera.

In a forest setting, it is especially important to find – and focus on – a point of interest for your composition. Maybe your eye is drawn to the bright red bench in the clearing ahead, the pattern

of tree trunks, or the fork in the road as it winds away from you. Carefully selecting your point of focus and composing your photo to emphasise that element will make for a more dynamic and memorable image. If you are photographing people in these settings, watch for odd shadows across their faces. While dappled sunlight makes for an interesting landscape, it is not the most flattering light for portraits.

Rain, rain, go away ...

Rain means different things to different people. When you take pictures in the rain, it helps to know how you feel about the rain so that you can capture that feeling in your photo. For example,



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Left: Wisps of fog settle over Rothenturm in Canton Schwyz, adding an ethereal quality to the scene; Middle: Including people in the photo adds

a dramatic sense of scale to this landscape near Riederalp in Canton Valais; Right: A water-soaked street makes for fun child's play

Discover your passion for photography

Photography is both a passion and a profession for Bryon McCartney and Kellie Nolan. With the ViewFinder Center for Photography (www.viewfindercenter.com), they offer classes, workshops and customised group events conducted in English that are designed to help beginner and intermediate photographers improve their skills and find more enjoyment in photography.

As an award-winning fine art and commercial photographer, Bryon specialises in photography, video and visual media consulting for business and industry (www.image-engineers.com).

if rain makes you happy, try photographing children or animals splashing in a puddle or brightly coloured flowers kissed by fresh raindrops. Maybe you would rather show the frustration rain causes at a washed-out open-air market, or the calm quiet of a street cafe with empty rain-drenched tables, abandoned to the elements.

A few technical tips can help you get the photo as you see it in your head. Do you want to show the rain pouring down, or stop the action? At slow shutter speeds of 1/60 and lower, rain will photograph as streaks. These streaks will appear longer at slower shutter speeds than at faster speeds. At 1/30 or less, hand shake can cause blurring.

To stop the raindrops without streaking, select a faster shutter speed (1/125 or higher) and rain will appear as droplets frozen in mid-air.

In either case, raindrops will show up best against a dark background. If that is not possible, try including another feature that more clearly shows it is raining: water running off a store-front awning, a swarm of umbrellas, people huddled in a sidewalk doorway, or puddles filling up with rain drops.

Rain also makes for great photo possibilities after it has stopped. Look for street lights glistening on rain-soaked pavement, puddles reflecting shop windows or clouds, or dark green foliage sparkling as the sun comes out.

Mist and fog

Settled between mountaintops or draped over a lake, fog can be the stuff of dramatic and evocative photos. Foggy and heavily cloudy skies also make for soft, even lighting. While this kind of light does not work for high contrast photos, it can give you photos with great atmosphere and subtle mood, such as soft portraits, quiet street scenes and dreamy landscapes.

From a misty, white whisper to a heavy grey blanket, fog presents some challenges for getting results that look as good as you remember it. Getting great results requires close attention to your exposure. Fog, just like rain, will bounce any flash back at you, so avoid

using flash especially when you are standing in the fog or mist yourself. Your camera's flash will not help illuminate the scene, as the flash will not penetrate the fog to spread light.

Instead, carefully adjust your shutter speed or aperture to expose for the available light. Slowing the shutter speed or opening the aperture will allow the camera to take in as much natural light as possible. If you know how, start by taking an exposure reading off your subject or a grey card. Try a few test shots at different settings until you see the results you want. A tripod and remote cable release are always helpful for shooting landscapes, especially in the low light of thick cloud cover be-

cause they allow you to use longer exposure times (slower shutter speeds) without shaking the camera and blurring your shot.

A dry camera is a happy camera

Another difficulty of shooting in rain or fog is keeping your camera dry. It is not always easy or practical to shoot with your camera in one hand and an umbrella in the other, and you don't want to rush getting the shot just right. Look for shelter that keeps you dry and still affords a good angle for shooting. Remember that fog is also water, so you will need to protect your camera and keep moisture from accumulating on the lens. Be careful to use a proper lens



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You can use your manual settings to try different apertures and shutter speeds until you see results you like

cleaning cloth (not the corner of your jacket or a tissue) to wipe away raindrops or moisture.

As you move from the cold air outside to warm temperatures inside, condensation can form inside your lens and camera. If you notice this, be patient and wait a few minutes. The condensation will clear up on its own.

Just shoot

No excuses now: Grab your camera, get out there and shoot.

Photography is about the moment and the mood. Explore a rainy day or a sun-streaked forest and you are sure to discover a scene you want to share or a mood you want to remember with a photo.

More helpful hints:

What to shoot: Fall is perfect for casual outdoor family portraits you can use with your annual holiday greetings. The gentle light of cloud cover on a fall day provides soft, even lighting that is flattering.

Where to go: Canton Zurich's fall colours are usually at their best from early October to late November. Pack your camera gear and head to the nearest forest, or take the short train ride up to the Üetliberg. Switzerland's lakes present a variety of great photo subjects, from plants to people, as well as water and landscapes. Even a walk through your local community garden yields interesting photographic potential.

The Rhine Falls near Schaffhausen are another good choice for fall scenes. Also, remember that fall colour starts later and lasts longer in forests at higher altitudes, so even as the colour fades in the valley, it may just be starting at the crest of the surrounding hills.

And if colour has peaked in your area, consider heading farther south to Ticino where milder temperatures mean colour starts later, though it may not be as intense.

Shoot, look, learn: To get familiar with how weather conditions and the changing light from one season to another can alter the mood of your photographs, chose something near your home and shoot it in all different weather and at various times of the day. Compare the results and you'll develop an understanding of how to use time of day and weather to your advantage.