

Great Ideas for Summer Photography

by Brian Loflin

As of last week Summer is officially here! And many are preparing for vacations, family, and friends. But some are increasingly concerned about the heat here in central Texas. So, what do you do to escape? Go North? That's not always an option.

But we want to continue our photography. Right? Sure. Here are some ideas to beat the heat and make good photos as well. Just to have fun or to improve our skills, exercise creativity, or try new tools or techniques. Whatever the case, it's definitely one of the best times to take out your camera.



Still Life Photography

Still life is a great way to capture a vast assortment of images with little specialized equipment.

For example, here's a great idea for a summer photography project: Gather objects that remind you of the family trips you did in your childhood and use them to create some nostalgic pictures.

Or, you could create a composition with everything you're packing for your summer vacation to incorporate into a still life photoshoot.

The great thing about still life is that you can do it indoors if the weather is keeping you at home or shoot outside and take advantage of the many hours of sun during those long summer days.

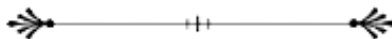
All you need is a suitable surface and window light to capture very impressive images. Add electronic flash and the possibilities are endless.



Food Photography

Like still life photography, capturing food is a great summer photography idea that you can do at home. Find produce and dishes from the summer season and start creating.

This is also a great way for photography enthusiasts to practice their skills and work on composition. You can use natural window light – especially during the golden hour – to create a warm, summery atmosphere.



Experiment with Dramatic Lighting

While soft light is flattering for most subjects, it can become a bit boring after a while. If you're looking for some summer photography ideas that challenge your photography skills, how about using direct sunshine to light your images?

During a sunny day, the light is direct and hard, which creates dark and well-defined shadows. Try taking photos with this dramatic light and see how creative you can get.

To capture this type of lighting, it's better if you use your camera in manual mode to really maximize the contrast.



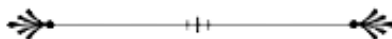
Long Exposure Photography

You can create some fun images by shooting outdoors with a slow shutter speed. Summer months are great for some astrophotography at night when it's cool for example.

In the city you can do some street photography with this technique for some stunning images.

Remember to use a tripod and a remote trigger to avoid camera shake during long exposure photography.

Also, if you want to take long-exposure shots during the day, it's a good idea to use a neutral density filter.





Pet Photography

The summer season is perfect for going out and exploring outdoor locations with your faithful companions – your pet and your camera.

Try using burst mode to do some action shots if you want to freeze your subject.

If you want to do some panning photography, use a slower shutter speed and follow your pet's movements. Remember to use an ND filter if it's a sunny day.

If you prefer to do some classic portraiture of your pet, the golden hour is a perfect time and usually not too hot for animals to be running around.

Golden hour softens harsh shadows which are more typical under the midday sun, and can help make your pets look much more relaxed and happier!

Splash Photography

Splash photography is a really fun summer photography idea because you can capture so many things. Ice splashing on a fresh cocktail is one example.

Capturing splashes during the summer has another advantage – you don't necessarily need a flash.

Normally, to freeze a splash, you would use a strobe or an on-camera flash. However, in the summertime, the sun is so strong that you can use very fast shutter speeds and freeze the splash, even when photographing with natural light.



Edit your Photos

After all your photography, it is very important to spend time to edit your images. And the practice of editing give you more skills and confidence as you move along.

It's important that you shoot your images in raw format. This way, you'll have much more information when you're editing them, and you'll be able to maintain the quality.

Most cameras allow you to do this. While it's not so common on smartphones, you can always download a third-party camera app to add this feature.

Photographing Fireworks – Brian Loflin

Summer is upon us all. It's the first season for viewing and photographing fireworks. The photography of fireworks is fun for all, even your non-photography partners. It's even easy, but there are some tips that will make the activity much more rewarding.

The first step is thoughtful planning. You should know in advance where the display will be held. As there are several in a community, you should consider the one that has the best aerial display, lasts longer, and has an adequate point of view. Consider the lay of the land and find the spot from which the pyrotechnics will be fired. Then find a position that provides an unobstructed view, preferably from higher ground. As you consider your position, you should consider the background as well and be able to avoid obstacles such as power poles, antennas, and overhead wires.

Once determined, arrive at your selected spot early- very early as others may have the same idea and you want to secure your position. Once there, be sure you can be comfortable for the duration. Bring a lawn chair or blanket and refreshments. Make a picnic out of the event. Your companions will enjoy the evening much more.



The first piece of equipment to set up is a sturdy tripod with a good variable head. Assure you are on solid ground and the leg extensions are suitable for the camera eye level you wish. Stability is essential as some exposures may be several seconds long. Then mount your camera to the tripod. Today, DSLRs and Mirrorless versions are the best choice. Attach an electronic cable release to assure making exposures without holding the camera which can cause unwanted vibrations.

Select your lens based on the angle of view of the image you previsualize. In my opinion, a good medium zoom provides optimum flexibility in composition. If you are at a greater distance, a longer zoom may be the best selection. Consider the need to cover the foreground and a good part of the sky to cover the broadest and highest

aerial bursts. Some photographers prefer vertical camera orientation, others, horizontal. This is a purely compositional decision. If you would like a wider panorama such as a cityscape, horizontal is the choice. But if you really want the bursts in greater detail, then vertical may be the best choice.



The camera exposure settings are relatively simple as the firework burst creates its own exposure time. Set your ISO to your low standard setting such as ISO 200. Don't be lured into high ISOs just because it is night and dark. White Balance of daylight is fine. Shooting in RAW format will allow color balance changes in post processing. Fireworks are very bright. An aperture of F8 or F11 is perfect for exposure and provides enough depth of field to cover the scene. The shutter speed should be set on "Bulb" or "Time" so you can start and stop the exposure at will.

Autofocus should be OFF. Having arrived early allows you to prefocus on the spot where the firing of the bursts occurs. Focus well on that spot and turn autofocus OFF.

In the daylight adjust your composition to include that firing point and the sky that you wish to cover. Only just now you are set for the show! Now wait for dark and the show to start confident that you are set up properly.

Once the show begins, plan each shot. Watch the device climb into the sky and make the first burst. If your composition is off, fix it now through small adjustments in direction and elevation.

Now for the first exposure. As the firework climbs trigger the shutter and hold it open until the burst fizzles. You can make good exposures of one burst or several in the same manner.

Leave the shutter open for two or three for added variety. The rest is up to you!

My favorite setup is as follows.

Full frame DSLR or Mirrorless

Heavy tripod and ball head.

And be there!

Electronic cable release

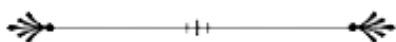
24-70 mm zoom lens

RAW, ISO 200

White Balance: daylight

F8

And be there!



Assignment Topics for 2025 - 2026

January 2025

Evaluation and review

Doors and Windows - An image where the primary subject is a door(s) and/or window(s) of a building or structure. Composition is the key. Any process. Color or monochrome.

March 2025

Tryptic - **Tryptic**. A group of three images side by side in one frame that tells a story or sequence. Color.

May 2025

Motion - the passage of time. Long or short. Color or monochrome.

July 2025

Unusual Vantage Point - An unusual perspective of your subject. Monochrome.

September 2025

Significant Detail - An in-focus image that reveals not just detail, but significant detail within the whole. Color.

November 2025

Insect in Flight - Simply that. Color.

January 2026

An Iconic Austin Mural - Must include the architecture that supports the painting. Color.



Look and think before opening the shutter. The heart and mind are the true lens of the camera.

- Yousuf Karsh -

Austin Shutterbug Club Northwest Recreation Center

Meeting Minutes for June 5, 2025

The meeting was called to order by Brian Loflin at 7:00 pm.

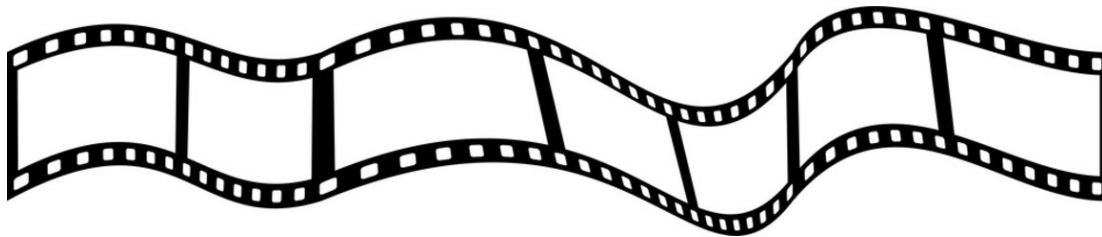
Brian introduced our guest speaker, Egidio Leitao a former student of his. Mr. Leitao is a nature photographer and has traveled to many Texas parks and preserves taking pictures of the beauty that lies hidden and he brings it to life. He relives his adventures through his many pictures and travels and shares them with others.

Mr. Leitao had a beautiful slide show prepared for our club members and it was enjoyed by everyone in attendance.

Brian reminded everyone that our July meeting would be one day before July 4th.

He also reminded everyone that July would be Critique & Evaluation. With no other comments or questions, Brian adjourned the meeting at 8:35 pm.

Barbara Hunley
Acting Secretary



NEXT MEETING DATE!

Thursday, July 3, 2025

7:00pm

Northwest Recreation Center

2913 Northland Dr, Austin, TX 78757

Visitors welcome!



We are on Facebook!

