

Winter along the New England Coast

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"The grass is greener on the other side!" There probably isn't a photographer around that hasn't heard that expression. As a travel photographer, when someone mentions a travel destination, what comes to mind? The vast Southwest? Florida birds? A national park someplace? A trip to Europe? Yes I am setting you up! So often we have the tendency to overlook travel destinations closer to home. Take the New England Coast in winter for example. I'm no different than you, and after the start to this winter, I'm having visions of 75 degree temperatures, palm trees and a nice cool drink.

When cold winter temperatures set in, we have a natural tendency to want to hibernate, and I'm no different. One of my most popular lectures is entitled; "Getting the Most Out of Your Photography." In the lecture, I mention a word that is so vital to the success of a photographer and to his or her images, and that's *effort*. No, not luck as you might think, although that plays a part. To me, effort is the acting upon that luck, and knowing what to do with it.

Putting forth the effort to explore the beautiful New England coastline, especially during the winter months, can be a very rewarding and worthwhile trip. I'm fortunate in that I live along the New England coastline and have photographic opportunities more often than most. So let's take advantage of my experience living here year round, letting me share with you some tips on making the New England coast a travel destination, yes, even in winter.

Details Come First: If you happen to live within a few hours of the New England coast, it is always helpful to keep a watchful eye on the weather. Most of my winter images are from coastal Maine and Massachusetts. While we can get some nasty weather, we generally stay five to ten degrees warmer than just ten miles inland. So if you're looking to photograph a lighthouse with snow on the ground, you're going to have to watch weather conditions quite closely.

Let's say I want to do some shooting in Acadia National Park up in Maine. It's a great place to shoot winter photography, but snow on the Island doesn't come as frequently as it does inland, so when I see the potential for snow there, I'll reserve a room at a Bar Harbor hotel and head up north. If you don't live in New England and want to make the trip here successful, I recommend coming up in February or March to increase the odds of there being snow. As I say that of course, this year so far has been the exception with heavy snows and cold weather in early December and January.

If your schedule is flexible and you can catch a flight out with minimal effort, watch the extended weather forecast on the weather channel, or go on-line to the National Park site to see what Acadia is getting for weather. www.acadia.national-park.com/weather.htm

Dress Warm: If you take care to dress warm and in layers, you'll be able to photograph quite comfortably here in winter. It's usually the dampness and the wind that will get to you before the actual temperature will. While the past few weeks have been brutal here in terms of sheer cold temperatures (-10 degrees), this is in no way meant to scare you away from a trip along the New England coast. I have been more than rewarded for my efforts, having been able to photograph *sea smoke* here in Massachusetts, something you rarely see this far down the coast. Don't worry though, if you are not as hearty as some when photographing in winter, I have a secret weapon against the cold!

Special Secret Equipment: Don't overlook one other very important tool for successful winter photography: your car! Or more precisely your car's heater. If you are not equipped for an arctic expedition, why not find locations that allow easy access from your car? Most of the photos in this article were taken within ten minutes or less from the car.

Camera Care Tips: Most cameras made today are well equipped to handle the kind of winter shooting that I am talking about here, and they don't need to be winterized the way the old cameras did. However, a fresh set of batteries in a warm pocket is definitely a good idea.

Remember this: "You can take a warm camera out in cold weather, but you can't take a cold camera suddenly into a warm environment." The other great thing about using your car as your home base is that your camera has time to warm up gradually using a car's heater, and the car will have cooled down



during the time you spent outside shooting, so condensation is not an issue. Condensation will become an issue if you go from the outside cold into a warm house or hotel, for example. Then it would be a good idea to put your camera into a large gallon-size zip-lock plastic bag sealing it so that when you do bring the camera in the house, condensation will form on the bag and not the camera.

Metering Snow: Here are some metering suggestions should you encounter snow. If your subject is snow or contains a lot of snow, you may have to compensate for your meter's suggested setting as it will be fooled by the bright snow. If you meter and expose for snow at the camera's suggested setting, chances are your snow will be underexposed and look very gray. If you want white snow to appear that way on film, you must add light to that subject. I use my camera's spot or center metering selection to meter the snow in bright sunlight and add about one and a half to one and two-thirds more stops of exposure than the camera's suggested meter reading. This will help to maintain some detail in the snow. Two stops will usually be too much. On overcast days, I only open up about one stop to a stop and a third. Don't plan on seeing too much shadow detail because there won't be any.

The Reward: As with most any *effort* related to photography, I am rarely disappointed with the end results, even when shooting in the cold. If you're willing to put up with a little cold weather, dress for it, and do a little homework, you'll find that the New England coast can be one of your most memorable shooting destinations.

About the photos - The images to the right are thumbnail links to larger images with descriptions, which are presented in a slide show format.

About the Author

Gary W. Stanley is a nationally known professional nature and landscape photographer based in New England. Gary leads popular photo tours and seminars throughout North America. He is a contributing editor for [Nature Photographers Online Magazine](#), and a popular speaker at the annual New England Camera Club Council conference held each year at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. Gary is a skilled photographer with unique artistic vision, and his ability to teach his skills is equally impressive.



Gary has numerous photo and writing credits including national magazine articles and covers. Gary recently concluded a photo assignment shooting an icing research project on Mt. Washington for NASA. Much of Gary's landscape and nature photography can be seen in New England calendars and post cards. Gary's work has been featured in *Outdoor Photographer*, *Popular Photography*, and *American Photography* magazines.

Gary is also part of the well-known Fuji Professional Talent team of speakers who lecture on behalf of Fuji Professional films at various seminars around the country.

Visit Gary's web site at www.light-chasers.com.

Comments on this article? Please feel free to send them to editor@travelphotographers.net. We would be pleased to hear from you!