



The Photographer's Resource Guide

Introduction

Thanks for subscribing to Outdoor Photo Academy!

One of the ways I want to make it worthwhile for you to join me at Outdoor Photo Academy is by providing additional Guides to improve different aspects of your photography. These will have a lot of information not available to the casual reader.

The first of these guides is the one you are reading: the Photographer's Resource Guide.

Why does anybody need such a guide? Because, let's face it, there's more to photography than just buying a camera and walking around with it. First of all, you need to know where is the best place to go buy that camera you are going to be walking around with. Then there is other gear to consider. And the software choices are endless.

Knowing about this stuff will change your photography. For example, if you learn about and subsequently use noise-reduction software, you might be less worried about a lowlight situation and may be able

to increase your ISO a little more freely to get the shot you are after.

Part of the idea is to give you a set of confidence that you are going to the right place. This is confidence that most of us don't have. For example, I lacked this confidence in having prints made, which is why I conducted the print test associated with this Guide.

And while I would love it if you were to stick around Outdoor Photo Academy and learn from its tutorials, there are a lot of other free photography resources out there. I want to point you to the best of those.

So I hope you enjoy this Guide. It may not be something you want to sit down and read from cover to cover, but flip through it. Keep it handy for next time you want to know where to go for something photography related. I think you will find it really comes in handy on occasion.



Best Places to Buy Cameras and Photo Gear

These are, without a doubt, the best places to buy cameras and photo gear. The prices will generally be very close. In fact, you should be dubious if you see prices lower than these places. All three of these are all reputable and have been around for a while.



Amazon

www.amazon.com

I know you are already familiar with Amazon. The prices are always competitive. It is an established, reliable service. That makes it about all you can ask for.

And if you are a Prime member, it may be a no-brainer.



B&H Foto & Electronics

www.bhphotovideo.com

If you want to shop at a camera store, this is the one. Unless it is a Saturday, of course, when they are closed.

If you are ever in New York City, it is worth visiting. I guarantee it is unlike any store you have ever been to. In fact, it might be worth a trip to NYC just to go here.

420 9th Ave., at 34th Street
New York, NY 10001
800/606-6969



Adorama

www.adorama.com

If B&H is Home Depo, then this place is Lowes.

They have a physical store in New York City, and are a huge online presense with good prices. Do not hesitate to buy from here.

42 West 18th Street
New York, NY 10011
800/223-2500

What to buy from these places

These are the best places to buy things. I'm not talking about *what* to buy here. But I have covered that extensively at Outdoor Photo Academy. Check that out if you need a [new camera](#), or specifically a [DSLR](#) or [Mirrorless](#) camera, or you are in the market for a [lens](#).

Best Places to have Prints made

I have printed from several different labs over the last several years, and thought I had a good idea of the quality and value of them. For purposes of this guide, however, I decided to conduct a test. What I decided to do was have three 8x10s of the exact same pictures made from every major online photo lab. I would then compare the quality of the pictures I received and the costs for the labs and declare a winner.

I did it, and the results surprised me. First of all, in the world of printing you definitely do not get what you pay for. If anything, there was actually an *inverse* correlation between cost and quality. Secondly, some of the labs I thought highly of, including the lab I have used the most over the years, fared poorly.

My winners are below. I have additional detail on quality and pricing on the next page. But you don't have to accept my conclusions I've got additional links if you want to check out scans of the pictures.

The Top Tier

I *really* wanted to declare a clear-cut winner. What kind of contest doesn't have a clear-cut winner? But I just couldn't do it. Among the best labs, the quality is just too close. And all the labs have little quirks that might be important to some people, but not others. So I declared a "top tier" of the three best labs. Here they are:



Of the top labs, Bay Photo was actually the cheapest. All the prices were low and they have free shipping.

The quality was consistently very, very high. I think the differences among the top labs is virtually indistinguishable. To tell any difference between the photos from the top labs, you have to stick your face right up to the picture or use a magnifying glass (yes, I did both). So, while I ended up ranking it third, the differences were minute and the quality here was top notch.

Finally, this lab, unlike our other top tiered labs, is basically "quirk free." So if you just want to order a few prints quickly, this is probably your choice.



The pictures from Pro DPI were actually #1 in quality. Again, the differences among the top tier were miniscule, but these were judged the best. All three pictures were spot on in terms of color. They also just seemed a tiny, tiny bit sharper than the others.

The prices were competitive, just slightly more than Bay, and also with free shipping. You have to download and use their ROES system to order.

One thing to look out for (and it got me) is the \$12 minimum order. What would have been a \$6.60 order for me turned into \$12 because of this minimum. So, if I used actual costs, Pro DPI would have been among the most expensive.



Technically, my order from White House Custom Color was free.

WHCC requires you to get three test prints from them to make sure your equipment is calibrated properly. This is either a wonderful focus on quality, or a complete pain (you decide). So technically the prints I got from them were just test prints.

These test prints from WHCC were among the best in terms of quality. And their pricing is among the lowest - virtually identical to Pro DPI. So it deserves a place among the top tier.

Use this lab if you have the time to go through their test print process.

It is important to point out that the three winners were the top 3 in terms of quality, and at the same time they were the 3 absolute cheapest.

Prints: Quality and Pricing

In my book, there are only two factors that matter: Quality and Cost. So that's what I measured. Here's how the labs measured on those fronts:

Price

Measuring the price of prints is tricky. It partially depends on the size. One place might be the cheapest for 8x10s while another is the cheapest for 16x20s. It also depends on shipping costs. Some places charge for shipping, and some don't.

So that you can make sense of it, here is a chart showing the prices of the major labs

| | 5x7 | 8x10 | 11x14 | 16x20 | 20x30 | Shipping | My Price |
|-------------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|----------|----------|
| AdoramaPix | \$0.69 | \$1.49 | \$ 3.99 | \$ 9.60 | \$18.00 | \$ 4 | \$ 8.47 |
| Bay Photo | \$1.15 | \$1.79 | \$ 3.99 | \$13.50 | \$24.95 | \$ - | \$ 5.37 |
| Mpix | \$1.09 | \$2.09 | \$ 7.49 | \$16.99 | \$26.99 | \$ 4 | \$10.22 |
| Nations | \$0.70 | \$1.80 | \$ 3.85 | \$ 6.75 | \$12.00 | \$ 4 | \$ 9.35 |
| Pro DPI | \$1.15 | \$2.20 | \$ 4.40 | \$14.50 | \$27.50 | \$ - | \$ 6.60 |
| Snapfish | \$0.79 | \$2.99 | \$ 6.99 | \$14.99 | \$19.99 | \$ 1 | \$10.78 |
| Shutterfly | \$0.99 | \$3.99 | \$ 7.99 | \$17.99 | \$22.99 | \$ 1 | \$16.19 |
| WHCC | \$1.15 | \$2.20 | \$ 4.40 | \$14.50 | \$27.50 | \$ - | \$ 6.60 |

Keep in mind that the prices do not include shipping charges. So, for example, 11x14 prints appear cheapest at Nations Photo Lab, but once you factor in shipping that is no longer the case. The shipping charges are in a column off to the right.

The final column is the price I paid to have the three 8x10s printed and shipped to me.

Overall Quality + Price Rankings

Tier 1 - Awesome

Bay - Reputable company, very reasonable prices, and great print quality. A top choice.

Pro DPI - Great print quality, perhaps the best, with great prices.

WHCC - Top notch print quality, with great prices.

Tier 2 - Acceptable

Mpix - Great quality, but generally too expensive. Could be a great choice when they are running a sale.

Nations - Good quality, and reasonable costs. I would not steer you away from them.

Tier 3 - Avoid

AdoramaPix - Ok prices, but bad quality. This is now my former printer.

Shutterfly - Terrible quality, very expensive. Out.

Snapfish - Terrible quality, expensive. Dont use.

Print Quality

Without regard to cost, the top quality labs per my test were: **Bay Photo** -- **Mpix** -- **Pro DPI** -- **WHCC**. The differences between them in print quality were minute.

Nations had good, but not great, print quality per my test. The remainder (AdoramaPix, Shutterfly, and Snapfish) demonstrated generally poor print quality.

Those are my rankings, but would you rate them the same way? I think so, but we cannot be sure. And unless you want to come over to my house and look at the actual prints, it is difficult for me to show them to you.

So what I have done is scanned the prints and made webpages that contain the scanned versions and the originals. Click on any of the pictures if you want to see the scans for yourself.



[Print Test 1 Results](#)



[Print Test 2 Results](#)



[Print Test 3 Results](#)

Where to have Canvas Gallery-Wraps Made

You are probably already familiar with gallery wraps. They are typically printed on a canvas material and the picture is wrapped around a frame. They add a bit of a contemporary edge to your photos.

Gallery wraps cost a lot more than ordinary prints, but you don't have to buy a matte or a frame. In the end, the cost is about the same.

Pricing

Rather than say "here's who is the cheapest" or "these guys have reasonable prices," I thought I would just set forth the pricing for several different sizes of gallery wrap so you can see for yourself

| | 24x36 | 20x30 | 16x20 | 11x14 | 8x8 | Shipping |
|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------|----------|
| AdoramaPix | \$ 180 | \$ 128 | \$ 72 | \$ 39 | \$ 21 | \$ 7.00 |
| Bay Photo | \$ 133 | \$ 85 | \$ 55 | \$ 39 | \$ 34 | \$ 1.50 |
| Mpix | \$ 170 | \$ 130 | \$ 90 | \$ 70 | n/a | \$ 7.95 |
| Nations Photo | \$ 170 | \$ 130 | \$ 86 | \$ 63 | \$ 50 | \$ 0 |
| Pro DPI | \$ 171 | \$ 135 | \$ 93 | \$ 64 | \$ 52 | \$ 0 |
| Shutterfly | \$ 150 | \$ 130 | \$ 90 | n/a | n/a | \$20 |
| White House | \$136 | \$ 106 | \$ 72 | \$ 50 | \$ 36 | \$ 0 |

I went through each to make sure that the prices you see above include any mandatory hardware and sales tax. The price does not include shipping charges, but I have listed those to the far right.

Finally, I want to point out that a few of these had .75" thick wraps and some only had 1.5" thick wraps. The size difference accounts for some of the price differences.

My Recommendation



Bay Photo

www.bayphoto.com

This is a respected, high-quality lab. I have never heard anything bad about them. I have used them on occasion and been favorably impressed. It also fared well in my print test.

I have been a SmugMug customer for years, and this is who they use. I put a little stock in that as well.

So when this lab has the best prices on almost every size gallery wrap, it makes it sort of a no-brainer for me.

A Wildcard



Easy Canvas Prints

www.easycanvasprints.com

I don't know who these guys are, but their prices are cheap as hell. They seem to have a perpetual 65% off deal going on.

Out of curiosity, I ordered a 24x36 canvas gallery wrap for some friends who wanted one. My friends say it looks great. I've only seen a picture of it, and it looks nice in the picture but you really cannot tell much.

Depending on the size, this option might be less than half off what the next cheapest option is. You can get a 24x36 for around \$50! You almost cannot afford to not give them a try.

Where to Have Metal-Prints Made

If you are not already familiar with metal prints, the whole concept of printing on metal may sound odd to you. But you should consider one of these for your next print project. The colors of metal prints are much more vibrant than those on photo paper. Plus printing on metal is still a bit of a novelty. Metal prints are more expensive than photo paper, but it ends up about the same once you consider you do not need matting or a frame. I have had a number of them made, and they are awesome.

I was recently making some prints for a local office. Most were large standard large prints to be matted and framed, but we decided to include a few metal prints. We ordered a few items to test things out, including one metal print. When the clients saw the metal print, they changed the remainder of the order to be mostly metal prints.

In fact, in that same order I had already made a paper print that we decided to change to metal, so when I got the metal print I was able to compare the two side-by-side. These were 24x36 prints of the exact same picture by the exact same lab, but one in metal and one on photo paper. There was no comparison. The metal was a world better. I'm not talking "noticeable" like I was standing next to the print with a magnifying glass. I'm talking like standing across the room and it is clear as day.

Try one of these labs:

WHCC

www.whcc.com

I have not seen a stand-out in terms of quality, so you might as well get the best price. The best price is clearly WHCC for each size. The free shipping really helps.

Beware the ordering process though, which actually takes a few days the first time you use it.

Nations Photo Lab

www.nationsphotolab.com

These guys have good prices for metal prints at every level. Their ordering process is still little bit of a pain, but much easier than WHCC. I would not hesitate to give them a try.

Adoramapix

www.adoramapix.com

The prices are reasonable, and the ordering is the easiest. Although they did not fare well in my print test, I have bought several metal prints from these guys and they have all been very nice.

Below are the prices for metal prints for each of the large online printers. These prices include any hardware charges and tax, but not shipping (which is to the right):

| | 24x36 | 20x30 | 16x24 | 11x14 | 8x10 | Shipping |
|----------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| Adoramapix | \$ 190 | \$ 135 | \$ 80 | \$ 40 | \$ 25 | \$ 7.00 |
| Bay Photo | \$ 210 | \$ 120 | \$ 85 | \$ 42 | \$ 20 | \$ 1.50 |
| Mpix | n/a | \$ 155 | \$ 116 | \$ 50 | \$ 34 | \$ 8.00 |
| Nations Photo | \$ 190 | \$ 115 | \$ 82 | \$ 31 | \$ 18 | \$ 7.00 |
| Pro DPI | \$ 190 | \$ 120 | \$ 87 | \$ 35 | \$ 23 | \$ 0.00 |
| Shutterfly | \$169 | \$ 148 | n/a | n/a | \$ 66 | \$ 20.00 |
| WHCC | \$185 | \$ 115 | \$ 82 | \$ 30 | \$ 18 | \$ 0.00 |

Where to Rent Photo Gear

Many people do not even think of this as a possibility so I wanted to be sure to bring it up here. You can “try out” a lens for about \$50 before you pull the trigger on one. Or you can rent an expensive lens or two to take along on a big trip you have planned. In fact, you can rent the camera and lenses. I have routinely done this for my last several photo trips. It is always great. Sometimes I get to use an awesome piece of equipment, and sometimes the item isn't so awesome so it cures me of my gear-lust as to that item.

There are more than a few places to rent from online, but I recommend LensRentals and BorrowLenses. I have used both, and they both have easy to use websites, the service is great on both, and the prices are about the same.



BorrowLenses

www.borrowlenses.com

A really wide selection of Canon and Nikon gear, with other brands available as well. The website is easy to navigate and the process is simple.

This one will usually be a buck cheaper.



LensRentals

www.lensrentals.com

A great selection of many different brands of camera gear. The website is easy to use and you can reserve your gear way in advance.

I have even had these guys ship me items early at no charge if there was nobody using the item in the days prior to my reservation.

Prices

The prices of BorrowLenses and LensRentals are about the same. To give you an idea what to expect, here are the prices for some typical items:

| | BorrowLenses | LensRentals |
|------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Canon 5D mark iii | \$ 102 | \$ 103 |
| Canon 16-35 f/2.8 | \$ 36 | \$ 43 |
| Canon 24-70 f/2.8 | \$ 58 | \$ 59 |
| Canon 70-200 f/2.8 | \$ 58 | \$ 59 |
| Nikon D810 | \$ 115 | \$ 116 |
| Nikon 14-24 f//2.8 | \$ 80 | \$ 81 |
| Nikon 24-70 f/2.8 | \$ 55 | \$ 57 |
| Nikon 18-300 f/3.5-5.6 | \$ 34 | \$ 35 |
| Sony A7R | \$ 94 | \$ 95 |
| Sony FE 24-70-f/4 | \$ 51 | \$ 53 |

Shipping will be \$25 if you get one item, \$30 if you get two.

Both offer insurance plans, which cost extra.

Brand-Specific Resources

Several manufacturers have online resources devoted to photography with their specific brand of camera gear. In the case of Canon and Nikon, there are even independent magazines devoted exclusively to that brand. They are all hopelessly biased, of course, but they also contain a lot of useful information tailored to the specific brand of camera you are using.



Canon Digital Learning Ctr.

This is the official Canon resource. There are tutorials, videos, and updates on Canon products.

PhotoPlus

This is an independent photo magazine with tips, tutorials, and reviews - all for Canon gear of course.

On the plus side, this magazine has some really good tutorials. In addition, they often include a disk with the magazine with additional video tutorials.

On the minus side, it is from the UK, so it is expensive.



Nikon Digitutor

This is the official Nikon resource. It has a lot of information about Nikon products, and also some tutorials on using them.

N Photo

This is the independent magazine devoted entirely to photography with Nikon cameras.

It has tutorials and inspiration for using your Nikon gear.

It is also from the UK, so it is expensive.



Pentax User Magazine

This is the independent magazine for those using Pentax cameras. It has articles on photographic techniques, plus articles the Pentax news and product information. There is also a forum,

Like the others, it is published in the UK, so it is expensive.

Best Non-Adobe Software

Everybody knows you start out with Lightroom and Photoshop. But are there programs you need beyond that? Well, actually, no. Photoshop can do anything. There is almost nothing that program cannot do to pixels in the hands of a skilled user.

Still, there are some programs that just do certain things better. Or sometimes they do the same thing in a more intuitive way. Here's the best ones:

My Overall Recommendation



If you are ever going to think about other photo software, this is the first one to consider. You are essentially getting 7 top-of-the-line plugins here. You are getting the pre-eminent black and white conversion software, arguably the best HDR software, and several other useful programs covering color effects, noise reduction, and sharpening. You get all this for \$149.

If that price doesn't strike you as awesome, consider this: As of a couple of years ago, each of these Nik applications was \$100. The whole thing would cost you \$500. People paid it. I bought a few of them myself. But then Google bought Nik and priced the whole package at \$149.

Here is what each of the various plugins do:

Analog Efex Pro - if you are into the look of old film cameras, you can use this plugin to add those sort of effects to your pictures.

Silver Efex Pro - this is the the most prevalent and arguably the best black and white conversion software available. Rarely does someone mention a black and white conversion technique that does not involve this plugin.

Color Efex Pro - this is a set of "filters" that apply a look or effect to your picture. You apply the effect and then you can tweak from there. My fav is "tonal contrast."

HDR Efex Pro - probably the best software for processing high dynamic range images and the one I find myself using more and more.

Viveza - designed for making adjustments to color and tonality.

Sharpener Pro - image sharpening, obviously.

Define - noise reduction.

One of the great things about Nik software is that you don't have to mess with the selection tools of Photoshop. Nik uses what it calls "control points," which you just add to the picture and identify the changes you want to make. Nik will apply the effect to the area in your control point and smartly feather it out. If you find selections in Photoshop to be confusing or tedious, you will like this method.

Best Specific Use Software

Like I said, Photoshop will do anything, so you don't necessarily need anything beyond that. But certain other software will do a specific function really well or in a more intuitive way, so you might want to consider it. Most of these applications will work within with universe of Photoshop or Lightroom, so everything works well together. Nearly all of these programs have free trials, so give them a try and see what you like.

HDR

The Contenders:

- Photomatix by HDR Soft (\$90)
- HDR Efex Pro by Nik (in \$149 Nik Collection)

The Winner



The Basis

This choice is based entirely on my own use.

Both of these programs are great. For a few years I used only Photomatix. A year or two ago I started using both. Then I started making a version of my photo with each and blending them in Photoshop. Over time, however, I realized I was using less and less of the Photomatix versions. Eventually, I all but stopped using Photomatix because I just always liked what I was seeing from HDR Efex Pro better.

B&W Conversion

The Contenders

- Silver Efex Pro by Nik (in \$149 Nik Collection)
- B&White Effects by Topaz (\$59)

The Winner



The Basis

Nik Silver Efex Pro is simply the state of the art at this point. It is what everybody uses.

Keep in mind that Photoshop, Lightroom, and Elements all do very good jobs at black and white conversions. Separate B&W conversion software is hardly a necessity. Basically, my recommendation is to give the Silver Efex Pro a shot if you are getting the Nik Collection anyway. Otherwise, use what you already have.

Sharpening

The Contenders

- Focus Magic (\$65)
- InFocus by Topaz (\$70)
- Sharpener Pro (part of \$149 Nik Collection)

The Winner

None

The Basis

Sharpening, if you don't know what you are doing, is a recipe for disaster.

I recommend you use the sharpening in Lightroom, Photoshop, or Elements. I am just not sure any of the plugins are worth using.

Noise Reduction

The Contenders

- Noiseware by Imagenomic (\$80)
- Noise Ninja by Picture Code (\$129)
- DeNoise by Topaz (\$80)
- Dfine by Nik (part of \$149 Nik Collection)

The Winner

Noiseware

The Basis

This recommendation is based on some side-by-side comparisons I have seen online. Based on what I have seen there, any one of these programs will give excellent results. While it is a little subjective, to me the best results came from Noise Ninja and Noiseware. Frankly, Noise Ninja looked a hair better to me, but it loses out because it costs 50% more.

I have used Noiseware for years and it does a very good job.

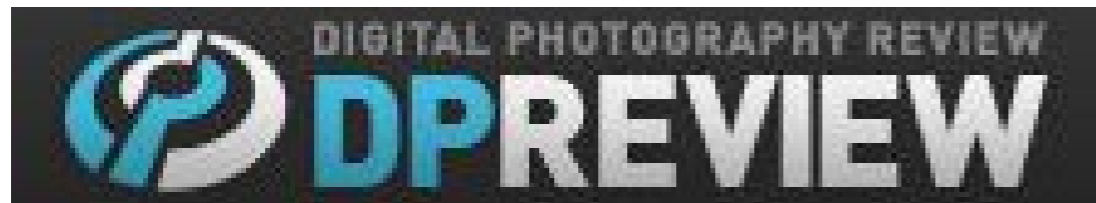
Best Online Camera and Lens Reviews

Whether you enjoy geeking out on gear specs or not, you will want to take advantage of the work done by those who are into this stuff. Here are the best places to check out reviews of photo gear:



If you are a Canon shooter, this is a no-brainer. This site has in-depth reviews of all Canon cameras and lenses. It will have examples, comparisons to other cameras and lenses, and loads of detail about performance. The information will probably be more detailed and technical than you will even want. I personally check with this resource before buying any camera or lens.

This is the pre-eminant resource for Canon gear. Recently, the scope of the site has been increased to add Nikon and other brand lenses. That project is just in its infancy, however, so you will likely have to look elsewhere for non-Canon gear.



This website has reviews and information on all brands of camera and lens. Whereas The-Digital-Picture mostly covers Canon gear, this site covers them all.

Frankly I find the website overly busy and confusing, but the information is detailed and reliable.

Best Online Tutorials

Free Tutorials

Best HDR tutorial: [Stuck in Customs](#). If you have any interest in HDR (high dynamic range) photography, start with this tutorial by Trey Radcliff, who is perhaps the most well-known HDR photographer.

Best Flash Photography tutorial: [The Strobist Lighting 101 series](#). Even if you don't plan on using a flash unit very much, this series by David Hobby will show you how to get set up with a flash unit and use it simply and cheaply.

Paid Tutorials

Here the best options for paid online photography training. The costs of both are reasonable (about \$25 a month) and both offer a free trial period.

The logo for Lynda.com, featuring the text "lynda.com" in white lowercase letters on a black rectangular background.

Lynda.com - Online training in a variety of areas, including photography. There are tutorials on pretty much anything computer related. The best choice if you want to learn other things as well as photography. The photography tutorials are really good. If you are just starting out with photography, I recommend any of the classes offered by Ben Long. Cost: \$25 a month for as much as you want.



Kelby One- Online photography training. The best choice if you just want to learn photography and nothing else. The instructors are more well-known names than the Lynda instructors. Cost: \$25 a month for as much as you want, or you can rent a training video for \$7 for a few days.

Photo Magazines

Cambridge in Color - photography tutorials and a forum.

Digital Camera World - news, reviews, and tutorials on all types of photography.

Digital Photography School - tutorials from a number of photographers. Try the weekly newsletter.

F-Stoppers - photography news and tutorials.

LensWork - portfolios of great black and white photography. Or check out [LensWork Online](#) for additional materials and resources.

Lightstalking - lots of photography tutorials

Luminous Landscape - photography articles, technical discussions, product reviews, and a forum

Nature Photographers - online magazine devoted to wildlife and nature photography

Outdoor Photographer - print magazine and online presence with articles and reviews

Peta Pixel - news and reviews

Photo.net - primarily a forum, also has reviews

Photo Argus - photography inspiration, with tutorials as well

Popular Photography - print magazine on general photography

SLR Lounge - online photography magazine with articles, reviews, tutorials, and a forum.

Best Photography Podcasts

There are a lot of podcasts about photography to sort through on iTunes, and iTunes is something of a jumbled mess. Of the top 20 photography podcasts in iTunes, 9 of them are no longer even publishing new episodes (and several of these have been inactive for years). So you cannot just type in “photography” into iTunes and come away with the best photography podcasts. In addition, several of them are aimed at professional photographers. So this post is designed to save you some trouble going through the various podcasts and to introduce you to some of the better ones.

I’ve listed them in alphabetical order. These podcasts are all so different that I’m making no attempt to compare or rank them. The only thing they have in common is that they are about photography and they are available in iTunes.



The Art of Photography

This is a weekly video podcast where the host, Ted Forbes, introduces you to a really diverse range of photography topics. In one episode he may be explaining the optics of a lens, in the next one he may be talking about digital time-lapse photography, and the next one covering a Holga (a super-cheap medium format film camera). The earliest episodes cover a lot of topics designed to get you started with photography, so those are of particular note. Lately, Ted has devoted a lot of podcasts to introducing different famous photographers and their work. The episodes are usually about 15 minutes in length. Sometimes they are how-to’s and sometimes screencasts. A lot of them are just Ted talking. Of all the podcasts listed here, this is the one I think would most benefit you if you are just starting out in photography.



The Candid Frame

This is a series of thoughtful 1-hour interviews conducted by photographer Ibarionex Perello. It is a one-on-one interview format, and he interviews most of the top names in the field of photography. The host has a very low-key, almost sedate, vibe to him. I have heard people say that his voice will put you to sleep. Still, this is the best interview podcast going.



Improve Photography

Jim Harmer, a photographer based on Boise Idaho, mostly does this audio podcast in a Q&A format. The podcast covers “photography” in general. If you are a generalist, you will probably really like that. Otherwise, I suspect that sometimes you will like this show, and sometimes you will not, depending on the topic. He may cover landscapes one day and pet photography the next (not made up). Pick out a few episodes that look interesting and give it a listen.



LensWork

Brooks Jenson is a photographer that started and runs a great magazine called LensWork that showcases the top black and white photography around. The podcast of the same name is a 5-minute discussion by Brooks of whatever is on his mind. There are no tutorials or interviews. LensWork (the magazine) is geared mostly toward serious black-and-white photographers, and so is the podcast. This is a great podcast, but I’m worried that beginners may not enjoy it as much. This is talk for serious artists, but without the art-speak.



This Week in Photo

This is a one-hour weekly audio podcast run by Frederick Van Johnson with two changing co-hosts that covers mostly news about photography. Because a lot of photography news is about new gear that is coming out, the show gravitates toward gear-talk. Usually, Frederick will have a separate interview related to photography at the end as well. Therefore, this show can run really long. If you are looking for a lot of tips, tutorials, or how-to’s, this is not your place. This is a show about current events and new gear. But what it does, it does well.

Publishing Your Work Online

The ability to post your work online is one of the joys of modern photography. It is cheap, easy, and your pictures are available for friends and family, or even the whole world, to see. But there are different ways to go about doing it. Some are easier than others. Some cost more than others. And the choice affects who will see your creations.

The first thing you need to decide is what sort of site you want. Typically, people want one of two things. The first is a portfolio site. This is where you post your pictures using a template or design of your choice and then tweak it to show off your pictures in as flattering a manner as possible. The second is a part of an online community. This is where you post your pictures to a site with little control over how the picture is displayed, but in a place where others are trolling around looking at pictures such that they may look at yours.

The upside of the portfolio site is complete control, but the downside is that nobody will see the pictures except people you refer to the site. The upside of the online community is the potential for others, and perhaps many others, to see your work, but the downside is that the pictures are never displayed in a particularly handsome manner and in any case it is not a suitable “home base.”

Most people eventually opt for both. They will set up a portfolio site and then join a community or two.

Top Online Communities

First, we will cover online communities. Here are the top three. I recommend you start with Flickr. As you build up some great pictures, start with 500px. At some point you might want to consider 1x.



Flickr - If you are just starting out, Flickr is a good option. It is free. You get a terabyte of storage. There are still a lot of people on Flickr. There are a variety of groups you can join. It has been the least attractive option in the way it displays your photos, but it seems to be improving. (www.flickr.com. Cost: free)



500px - Once you have some quality pictures, try 500px. Check out the site first to make sure the quality of your photos is up to snuff. There are some incredible photos on this website. You post your pictures and they get a score from 0-100 based on the number of people that “like” or “favorite” your photo. It can be a humbling experience, but it is a good way to see how your pictures measure up. (www.500px.com. Cost: Free for basic plan; \$25 a year for Plus membership; and \$75 a year for Awesome membership)



1x - This is a curated community for advanced photographers. You can post your pictures, but they will not be part of the pool that people see unless they are selected by a committee. (www.1x.com. Cost: Free for limited usage; \$49 a year for intermediate usage; and \$99 a year for the unlimited level).

Best Portfolio Websites

There are many places that will help you build a portfolio website. These are the four best. Of these, I recommend SmugMug, but any of them will be fine.



PhotoShelter - This is the most expensive of the recommendations. You will likely want the Standard plan because the Basic plan does not get you your own domain. These build very nice websites and are a good choice if e-commerce is a high priority for you. (Costs: Basic \$110/yr.; Standard \$330/yr.; Pro \$550/yr.)



SmugMug - After a recent refresh of their designs, this is now likely the best option. It is very reasonably priced, and you can build a beautiful website. You will want the Power level to get your own domain, and Portfolio if you want to try to sell prints. (Costs: Basic \$40/yr.; Power \$60/yr.; Portfolio \$150/yr.; Business \$300/yr.)



SquareSpace - These guys burst on the scene a few years ago with very nice, highly customizable websites. The Personal plan is limited to 20 pages or 500GB, so you may want the Professional plan. (Costs: Personal \$96/yr.; Professional \$192/yr.; Business \$288/yr.)



Zenfolio - A very similar pricing structure to SmugMug. The basic plan is very limited and does not get you your own domain, so you will likely want the Unlimited Plan. (Costs: Basic: \$30/yr.; Unlimited \$60/yr.; Premium \$140/yr.; Business \$300/yr.)

Conclusion

So there you have it . . . basically everywhere I know to go for photography stuff and information.

I hope this Guide has been useful and pointed you in the right direction on a few things. Keep it handy so you can use it next time you are wondering where to go for something related to photography.

I will continue to rack my brain and poke around the web for additional resources, so that I have more stuff to offer in future versions of this Guide.

