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## Mother Nature's Magnificence

**Rick Sheremeta uses the Tamron's All-In-One and Wide Zoom lenses to capture fall foliage in all its chromatic glory.**

by Jennifer Gidman

Images by Rick Sheremeta

Autumn is perhaps the most inspiring photographic season of the year. The spectacular colors and cooler weather draw people out in droves to leaf-watching locales to capture Mother Nature's fashion show at its peak.

When summertime comes to its inevitable conclusion, photographer Rick Sheremeta heads out into the Montana mountains with his Tamron 28-300mm and 17-35mm lenses to harness the breathtaking hues before winter sets in. "I love using the 28-300 and having the availability of such a wide focal range with just one lens when I'm hiking on the trails," he explains. "The 17-35 lens is also versatile if I need to get in close to something, and I have the availability of that wide angle." (note: Rick uses an old favorite, the full-frame model A05 discontinued two years ago; users of APS-C DSLRs get an equivalent angle of view—16mm to 37mm—with the new 10-24mm Di II released last year).

A sweeping mountainside replete with vibrant colors can be stunning—if done in moderation. "Image after image after image of mountains, hills, and trees can be pretty boring after awhile," says Sheremeta. Resist the temptation to center all of your fall-foliage photos around entire forests or other panoramic vistas. "Add other elements for context," he continues. "Incorporate something like a lake to break it up, or put a tree, rock, or some form of wildlife in the foreground to provide the image with some scale and depth."



“I try to look for balance in my compositions,” Sheremeta continues. “I’ll take three or four shots of the same scene from slightly different angles or vantage points. One of the critical aspects in landscape shots is what you’re focusing on. If you can, try to get a foreground element that’s crystal-clear; otherwise, get it out of there and just concentrate on the background. In general, though, I like to get foreground, midground, and background in my images.”



Using selective focus allows you to add a creative touch to your autumn images. Use a larger aperture to concentrate on your foreground element and blur out the colored leaves in the background, or go for smaller apertures to sharpen the background.

Taking advantage of the ambiance of the surrounding atmosphere is another tip for highlighting the hues. "I always try to get the sky in there and maybe use the mountainside of trees, for example, to accentuate the sky more," says Sheremeta. "I love throwing those big, billowy clouds up there to add a little more interest."



Sheremeta uses polarizing filters as much as he can when trolling the autumn landscape. “I try to keep a polarizer on all my lenses at all times,” he explains. “I use them to get those deep saturated colors and those dark skies, and to bring out the details in the clouds. Plus the filters cut down on reflections and glare when you’ve got a lake or stream in your image.”

### **Branching Out**

The autumnal color array is stunning no matter what time of day you view it, but try to optimize the time of day to put Mother Nature in her best light. “It’s usually not hazy here in the morning—it’s crystal-clear,” says Sheremeta. “Though if I see it is going to be foggy first thing in the morning, I head out the door. The best fall images are with a lifting fog. You get a beautiful saturation of color and a nice, ethereal effect. Plus, if there’s any forest-fire activity in the Northwest, it can make for some really spectacular sunset and sunrise shots when you get that smoke in the sky. In general, though, there’s good light longer during the day, since the days are getting shorter and the good light sticks around longer.”

When he’s shooting scenics, Sheremeta uses evaluative metering to make sure his fall-foliage exposures are spot-on—especially since he does like to incorporate so much of the sky and clouds into his shots. “I’ll meter for the sky and let that dictate everything else,” he explains.

To enhance the colors in front of his lens, Sheremeta often lets the sun shine right through the leaves and toward his camera, which produces a more saturated look than if the light were to simply reflect off of the

leaf's surface. "I love to backlight the leaves," he says. "It's a really great technique that makes for a beautiful image." To get rid of glare that might result from taking pictures this way, move your camera so other leaves can block the rays of light from bombarding your lens.



Sheremeta likes to incorporate bodies of water into his fall foliage shots for context—especially moving water. "I'll shoot waterfalls and streams blurred, and then I'll freeze the action," he says. "Invariably, I'll always go for the creamy-looking water. To get this beautiful, blurred effect, using a tripod and a slow shutter speed is key. You can overdo it, but I'd recommend doing a whole series with different shutter speeds and experiment until you find the effect you're looking for. You need to keep the f-stop constant and vary the shutter speed and ISO to correspond with it. I find that you can start to blur the water at anything less than 1/60th of a second. I generally shoot at 1/8 to 1/4 of a second to get the effect I'm trying to achieve."





For more of Rick Sheremeta's work, go to [www.alpenglowproductions.com](http://www.alpenglowproductions.com).