

October 8-10, 2021: Fall Colors Photo Workshop Recap

written by Chris Guibert | October 19, 2021

"Bad weather makes good photography"

...is one of Ansel Adam's more memorable quotes and one of the guidelines that we followed for the Keweenaw Mountain Lodge's first annual Fall Color Photo Workshop.

The idea for the workshop came together in September after the August Night Sky Photography workshop. The vision was for a team of photographers associated with the Keweenaw Mountain Lodge (KML) to put together a multi day photography workshop centered around the color season in late September – early October – a time of year that the Keweenaw is well-known to exhibit its beauty.

Tom Oliver, a nature and wildlife photographer; Nate Bett the instructor for the night sky workshops who is a broad, multifaceted photographer and me – Chris Guibert a commercial photographer with an emphasis in outdoor recreation. We agreed to each instruct a learning session at night and then lead the group to different daytime photo locations. I quickly created an itinerary that would hit some of the Keweenaw's most iconic and picturesque locations. I knew that we were late to the start to properly promote the workshop, however, we did not want to miss the opportunity this year to try it (the color season only comes around once a year). In addition, it follows our philosophy at the Lodge of performing small experiments until we find what works – a constant learning process by doing (not just talking about doing it). We had three of us that were willing to do it, and that is the first step of action that we want to be known

for at the Lodge.

No Sign-Ups

The day before the workshop (Oct 8th) we checked the registration list. Nobody had signed up. With no one signed up we could have scratched the workshop. However, that is not in our DNA at the Lodge. The number of people attending is not one of our success metrics. Our success metrics revolve around providing a WOW experience for guests one by one. Thus, it was an easy decision to continue forward with the itinerary. It would provide us the ability to test the schedule and do walkthroughs of the presentations, take photos using the Keweenaw wilderness as the subject matter. This time of year is a time of rapid change in the Keweenaw. The leaves are changing color, Lake Superior is cooling creating a dense fog in the mornings and storm systems can roll in without notice. This is a photographer's dream – to have varying weather patterns change throughout the day.

[See the itinerary]

Here is a recap of our escapades as part of the workshop – giving you a glimpse into how we operate a workshop at the Lodge.

Day 1: October 9th



Nate, Tom, and I met at 8:00 am at the trailhead and started the hike up Bare Bluffs. This short hike leads to a spectacular view of Lake Superior and the tip of the Keweenaw. As we approached the summit the fog was swirling all around us. Occasionally the sun would peek through the clouds creating some dramatic moments.



We took photos in all directions waiting for the fog to lift to capture the idyllic views. The fog never lifted. We threw in the towel and headed down the bluff back to the vehicles. We drove to the Bear Belly Pit Stop on Lac La Belle, refueled the vehicles and stomachs, and explored the Lac La Belle shoreline with our cameras.





After lunch (12:00 pm) we headed up to the Delaware Mine to document the stone ruins and machinery from the old mine that was built in the 1800's. The crumbling stone architecture which is being taken over by the forest is a photographer's dream. The light was changing by the minute, and the bright yellows of the birch trees created a beautiful canvas to create images from.



At this point we made an audible call and steered slightly away from the planned itinerary. Tom broke away from the group to head back to his responsibilities at the Keweenaw Mountain Lodge, and Nate and I ventured over to Mount Bohemia to scout the location as an option for next year's workshop. We hiked the Cliff Trail to a scenic lookout overlooking Lac La Belle and Lake Superior. Even though the sun was directly overhead we were able to grab a few pics that showed off the fall colors across the Keweenaw Peninsula and added this to the list of potential spots for next year.




Photo: Chris Guibert



A final afternoon (4:00pm) stop at Haven Falls allowed for a contrast in perspectives. Nate worked on some detail shots while I climbed into the falls for a self portrait.



After a much needed dinner break, the three photo musketeers reconvened for Tom's presentation on wildlife photography in the Lodge's conference center (7:00pm). His informative discussion provided tips on equipment, techniques, and had an emphasis on ethics. 

Day 2: October 10th

On Sunday morning, Nate and Tom met at Hunter's Point in Copper Harbor. The dynamic sky and oncoming rain provided an opportunity for some moody morning shots of Lake Superior.



Tom, Nate and I regrouped at the Lodge and the two of them warmed up with some coffees from the Little Cabin Cafe (10 am). The rain continued but Nate and I decided to head out to our last destination, a new, hand-hewn cedar bridge off of Mandan Road.

[11am] The Fall Colors were peaking along the road and we quickly climbed out of our vehicles and started shooting between passing rain clouds. Walls of orange, yellow, and browns lined this sleepy dirt road.



We drove a little farther and found the unmarked trail head. I rode my bike to the bridge while Nate hiked in with the photo gear. We worked on photoing action shots of me riding across the bridge and marveled at the beauty of this handcrafted work of functional art made by local trail builders Rock Solid Contracting. With the changing color of the leaves, the pictures had a vibrant backdrop to them.



This was the last location for the workshop. As we packed up our gear and headed back towards the cars we reflected on how many places we visited in the last 72 hours and how quickly the

weather changes in the Fall on the Keweenaw. We visited various designated locales in the Keweenaw during this multi-day workshop. We all grew as photographers, instructors and friends. We had a chance to work the kinks out of the itinerary and practice our presentations. And we crafted some unique images that will forever capture the fall colors on the Keweenaw in 2021.



We welcome anyone to join us next year for the Fall Color Photo Workshop or for one of the other workshops we will be offering throughout 2022.

