

Spring Photography at Mono Lake



May 3–5, 2024 • Joe Decker

\$350 per person / \$330 for Mono Lake Committee members
enrollment limited to 12 participants

Spring in the Mono Basin offers brand new leaves emerging along the creeks and washes of color as wildflowers bloom in the sagebrush. Bright warm sunshine, late-season snowstorms, and gentle spring rainstorms are all possible, combined with a still snow-covered Sierra Nevada as the backdrop. Along with a moonless night and opportunities to photograph the stars, the photographic possibilities are endless.

This photography field seminar will be based in Lee Vining, near the shores of Mono Lake. Though primarily a field seminar, we will discuss composition and methods of proper exposure under the diverse variety of lighting conditions encountered in the Eastern Sierra—including nighttime photography—visualization, filtration, and developing a personal vision.

All ability levels are welcome. **A fully adjustable SLR camera (not a point-and-shoot camera) is strongly suggested** but not required, along with an extra battery or two and enough memory for 1,000+ images at your selected resolution. A tripod will be a necessity for our nighttime work. A working knowledge of your camera's controls and functions is very important: *DO NOT BRING A CAMERA YOU DON'T KNOW!*

Instructor Joe Decker is a longtime Mono Lake Committee supporter and photographer whose work has been widely exhibited across the United States, from the San Diego Museum of Natural History to the Smithsonian, as well as having been recognized with residencies as diverse as Arizona, Iceland and Antarctica. Joe's award-winning book on photographic composition, *The Tuesday Composition*, is published by Flatbooks Publishing. Joe has led numerous workshops in the

western US, and has studied with master nature photographers Galen Rowell and Frans Lanting.

ITINERARY (*subject to change based on weather and road conditions*)

Friday, May 3 at 2:00pm: Meet at the Lee Vining Community Center (296 Mattly Avenue) in Lee Vining. After brief introductions we will begin our dialogue on photography as a means of both documentation and personal statement, as well as discussing techniques for night photography. We'll break for an early dinner and then head to the field for sunset and night photography (*sunset–8:15pm*).

Saturday, May 4: We will photograph sunrise by the lake (*sunrise–5:47am*), breakfasting together afterwards, and then begin to share work at the Community Center. We will return to the field in the late morning, likely to areas along Lee Vining Creek and near Mono Lake where spring flowers have begun blooming. We'll have a long midday break for a rest and meals before our sunset location shoot (*sunset–8:15pm*).

Sunday, May 5: We will meet at sunrise at the lake to capture the dawn light (*sunrise–5:46am*). We will spend the rest of the morning photographing at locations to be determined by available conditions. A late morning adjournment will allow for the drive home in the afternoon, unless you wish to stay for another optional evening session (*sunset–8:16pm*).

ACTIVITY LEVEL: MODERATE

This seminar's activity level: *moderate*. We will be walking up to two miles a day at a leisurely pace, some of which will be over uneven terrain, off trail, and may include stepping up and over obstacles. Participants will need to carry their camera equipment from the cars to field locations and back. We will be standing for several hours at a time while out in the field; some of that time may be in the sun without much shade.

WEATHER & ALTITUDE

Weather conditions can include everything from warm days to rainstorms to late spring snow showers. Relatively warm and sunny days are most likely, but prepare for cold, wet weather with layered clothing and a waterproof jacket. Average temperatures in May in Lee Vining are 67°F (max) and 40°F (min).

This seminar will take place at elevations ranging from about 6,000 to 10,000 feet above sea level. It is a good idea to acclimate at the elevation of Lee Vining for at least 24 hours prior to the start of the seminar. Those with a history of heart, ear, or respiratory problems should consult their doctors before attending. Anyone restricted to lower elevations should not enroll.

Remember to bring (and drink!) lots of water because your body loses more water at the higher altitudes of the Mono Basin. Begin drinking extra water as you drive to higher elevation in order to prevent dehydration and headaches. Also, the sun is intense at high elevations, capable of burning even on cool and cloudy days, so be sure to protect yourself thoroughly using sunscreen, sunglasses, and hat.

FEES

The cost of the seminar covers tuition only. Participants are responsible for all other fees:

- **lodging accommodations:** visit *leevining.com* to make reservations
- **all meals:** breakfasts range in price from \$8–\$15, lunches \$8–\$15, dinners \$10–\$35
- **South Tufa fee:** the \$3-per-person entrance fee to South Tufa is good for a week; 80% of it stays at Mono Lake for improvements to interpretive/educational activities
- **Old Marina fee:** the \$3-per-car-per-day fee enables Mono Lake’s state park to stay open

TO BRING

- ___ five examples of your work (see below)
- ___ a USB thumb drive to enable sharing of the photos you take during the weekend
- ___ extra camera batteries to keep warm in your pocket
- ___ note-taking material or tape recorder
- ___ pocket-size flashlight, essential for finding that one button on your camera in the dark
- ___ travel alarm (some motels have no wake-up service)
- ___ cameras and lenses you normally use
- ___ memory cards/film
- ___ tripod
- ___ a watch or other device for timing long exposures
- ___ sun protection (sunscreen, sunglasses, hat)
- ___ warm layered clothing

Students are encouraged to bring at least five examples of their work. These can be in the form of snapshots, slides, or fine prints (color or black-and-white), or digital format. Digital format should be as .jpeg files, preferably on a USB thumb drive—no personal laptops for viewing. Students working in black-and-white might also benefit from bringing negatives and/or contact prints of the finished prints they present. We will also try to view the photos everyone takes during the weekend, and those should be in .jpeg format on a USB thumb drive.

For those of you who are new to night photography: A short introduction will be sent out by mid-February outlining some basic principles of photographing under a starry sky. Please give this introduction a read-through and a dry run before the workshop, the techniques, such as using the Bulb mode for very long exposures on your camera, are not difficult but can be quite challenging to do the first time in the dark.

A letter will be sent to all registrants with a more specific list and updated information approximately two weeks prior to the workshop. For more information, visit Joe Decker’s website at *joedecker.net*. Email questions to *joedecker@gmail.com*.



Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars

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