# **Field Checklist**

## Initial Camera Checks

I learned all of these the hard way. Do these checks to avoid discovering problems later.

* Check Image Quality - ensure you are capturing RAW files
* Check Image Stabilization/Vibration Reduction - turn this off when using a tripod
* Check Lens – ensure there are no dust or water droplets on the front of your lens
* Check Memory Card – if you have multiple slots, make sure you are writing to the right card
* Check Battery Level – duh, but we’ve all messed this one up, and it ruins your whole day

## Compositions

When possible, take test shots first while hand holding, then take final shots on a tripod.

* Define the subject
* Fill the frame with your subject
* Consider the foreground
* Try getting low
* Try framing your subject
* Put your subject off center
* Find a leading line
* Find an interesting shape
* Do a final check for any distractions
* Check for Balance

## Shooting

Now it is time to take the shot. Make sure your focus and exposure are correct.

* Mode – Stick with Manual or Aperture Priority
* Focus Mode – stay in AF-S or One-Shot unless you have a fast-moving subject
* Focus Point – generally use the middle focus point
* Set ISO – that high ISOs increase the exposure but can lead to more digital noise
* Set Aperture – a smaller aperture provides more depth of field, but costs you light
* Set Shutter Speed – faster speeds promote sharpness but cost you light

## Add-Ons

Don’t just take the shot and move on. Consider how you can improve elements of it.

* Bracket your photo: if there is a wide disparity in tones
* Create a panorama: if it is a wide scene or you might want higher resolution later
* Use a Neutral Density filter: if there are moving elements such as water or clouds
* Use a Polarizing filter: if you are shooting near the middle of the day.

## Improvement Items

Before you go home, take your time and make sure you have the shot.

* Wait – the light might improve, or if you’re lucky there just might be a decisive moment
* Repeat – remember that digital photography is free. Forget about your “hit rate.” Take lots of exposures and make sure you have what you want.