

Synergistic Visions Ouray Photo Workshop

In conjunction with the Weehawken Creative Arts & Ouray Chalet Inn

Dick Colby & Lora Slaw, Assistants

Summer Wildflower Edition, July 22-25, 2009

To Register for the Workshop, visit: www.weehawkenarts.org

To reserve a Room, call the Ouray Chalet Inn at: 800-924-2538

Whether you are considering registering or have already done so, please read this document thoroughly as it contains a lot of info about the workshop.

Do the San Juan Mountains sound familiar? How about Yankee Boy Basin? Red Mountain? Sneffels? They should because the San Juan Mountains contain some of the best wildflower basins in the west, set amid spectacular landscapes.

This workshop is geared for most anyone. Intermediate to advanced photographers are welcome and will gain much from these classes. However, beginners with a working knowledge of their camera will also gain a lot of experience and instruction. Each participant is assisted at their level. We focus on creating the most appealing compositions of each location plus helping with technical details as needed. The emphasis of this workshop is wildflowers and landscapes. There is also likely to be waterfall photography and some animals too like marmots and pikas.

General Itinerary Outline (subject to change)

Thursday, July 22: 6:30 PM.

6:30pm Workshop Begins. We meet for socializing and some initial instruction.

Friday, July 23:

6:45 Load up at Chalet Inn with a 7:00 departure for first Field Session. This will be a shake-down session, allowing us to get to know each student better and their specific needs

We'll return late morning for lunch and meet at the classroom. We'll download images and review those. Steve will present some instructional programs as well. We will play the rest of the day by ear.

Saturday, July 24:

6:45 Load up at Chalet Inn for a 7:00 departure. Please be on time.

We will travel to previously scouted areas that offer a variety of subject matter.

We will return to town for lunch and downloading. We will probably go out again for an afternoon field session.

We will have a group supper and review our day's efforts while making plans for the next day.

Sunday, July 25:

6:45 AM. Load up at Chalet Inn with 7:00 AM departure for final field session.

Our destination will depend on weather and class interest.

We will return to Ouray about 11 AM with the Workshop concluding about noon.

More Information...

Payments and cancellations... Applications are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Full payment is required to reserve a space. Payments can be made with your credit card through the Weehawken Creative Arts website: www.weehawkenarts.org

Disclaimer... We do not guarantee the weather or that every location we visit will be at peak during our visit. Some of the best photographs are made in bad weather! There is no refund for weather related problems. In the event of really horrible weather, Steve can present extra programs in the classroom. This workshop does involve some hiking and elevation gain. The elevation range of our shooting locations ranges from 9,000 to 13,000 ft. Please consult with your doctor before attending our workshop. We require a liability waiver be signed before going into the field; this will be done on the first evening or in advance of the workshop.

Application forms... Both an application form and a questionnaire are available on this website, and can be printed out and mailed to us.

Lodging: There are many great lodging choices in Ouray. Our partner is the Ouray Chalet Inn. They are a great place to stay and are rated by AAA as 2 Diamonds. Special room rates are available from the Ouray Chalet Inn. If they are full when you call, they can assist you in finding other lodging in Ouray. Be aware that July is a very popular time in Ouray. Reserve your room early!

Transportation: Most people flying to Colorado for this workshop will find probably want to fly into Grand Junction. Ouray is about a 2 hour drive from Grand Junction. Other possibilities include Montrose, Denver or Durango.

Field Trip Transportation: I and Lora will each be taking 3 persons in our 4x4 vehicles. I need 2 other volunteers to drive and take some "students". You will receive a \$25 class discount from Weehawken. Although we will be driving relatively easy roads, there is always the chance for vehicle damage, especially from rocks. You should have experience driving this type of road. If you elect to take your own vehicle, neither Synergistic Visions, nor the

Ouray Chalet Inn nor Weehawken Creative Arts is responsible for any damage you may incur. Please let us know on the registration form if you are willing to be a driver. We do not want more than 4 vehicles total traveling in our group. Please be respectful of the vehicles. Spilled coffee and tripod dents are not nice!

Equipment Recommendations: Bring all of your camera equipment including the **camera manual**. I don't want you to think you have to go out and buy a bunch of new equipment. In fact, after you take this class, you may realize that you bought the "wrong" lens or accessory. It is often better to buy new equipment, AFTER the workshop as then you really understand what works well and what doesn't.

We do recommend that you have a polarizing filter to use with your main lens (or lenses). The lenses you have already are probably just fine. You'll certainly want wide-angle capability. And some telephoto is nice too. Some sort of close-up capability is great too, such as a macro lens or some screw-in close-up filters. You should shoot with a sturdy outdoor tripod that can adjust from your standing height without cranking up a center post, to very close to the ground. The best type of tripod has legs that can move independently. Please use a cable release or know how to work your camera's timer delay to avoid camera shake. If you have a separate, external flash, bring it along. You should also get the "off-camera" flash cord for best results.

If you have a "point & shoot" compact camera instead of an SLR, that is fine too. Be sure to bring along the manual.

Clothing... Even during late July, days can be cool, especially if it is cloudy or rainy so bring layers of clothes such as jackets, sweatshirts, sweaters, etc. The temperature varies quite a bit as we move up and down in elevation. Also bring a rain poncho and some large baggies or trash bags to cover equipment in the rain. Tennis shoes are suitable much of the time although you may want a heavier shoe or boot for the field trips. Make sure hiking boots are already broken in!! The terrain on the field trips is rocky and sometimes slippery and muddy. Shorts are fine in town but long pants are more comfortable on the field trips. Evenings are generally pleasantly cool. The restaurants range from casual to elegant; however, casual clothes are just fine in even the elegant places. Don't over pack.

Also bring a hat and a long sleeve shirt for sun protection. You can burn very quickly at this high elevation. Apply sunscreen before we leave in the morning. Some years bug repellent comes in handy.

Be prepared for possible temperature extremes and sudden changes in weather. It could rain, hail or snow on us in July! Hey, it's outdoor photography!

More on Altitude... Ouray is at 7,800 feet elevation; the field trips are even higher, ranging up to 12,000 feet. Three significant problems occur at high altitude: you sunburn much easier, you dehydrate quicker and you run out of breath much quicker! Altitude sickness is not generally a problem but you need to understand it. I often have a headache my first day in Ouray; after that, I am fine. The best advice is to go slowly! Drink lots of water. Proper hydration is a must at higher elevations. Without it you will lose strength, energy and may develop a severe headache. To avoid dehydration you **MUST** drink beyond your thirst; drink even though you are not thirsty. Bring water along. If you run out, we'll have some extra; just ask. Alcoholic drinks also dehydrate you more. Altitude problems usually disappear after the first day as you acclimate. You won't do any long walking; the 4x4s take us pretty much right to the various areas. If you arrive in Ouray a day or two early, your body will be acclimated.

Jeeps/Environment/Safety...The 4x4 vehicles we're using are private vehicles; please treat them kindly. Be especially gentle when moving your tripods around. During field trips, we will be in a variety of alpine settings. The environment is very sensitive in these places. You'll see many other jeeps and people and may not think much about your own impact. I ask you to be conscious of where you are walking. Respect this incredible environment!! Every wildflower you spare today will be there for someone else tomorrow. A single footprint takes years to regenerate. Never *groom* your photograph by picking wildflowers. **We as photographers must set an example for others.**

A solar rest room has been built at Yankee Boy. At all locations you'll need to find a bush or tree! If you tend to get *car-sick*, you might want to take some Dramamine or Meclizine 30 minutes before getting in the vehicle. We limit our travel to *class 3* or lower jeep roads; even these can take your breath away!

We may be near old mines, open mine shafts, mills and other structures. I can not over-emphasize the need to be **CAREFUL!** Although these structures may look stable, they are often 100 years old! Timber becomes rotten and brittle. To enter such buildings is usually trespassing and potentially dangerous. If you should require medical care, we'll often be an hour or more just to a telephone (no, cell phones won't work here!) and 2-3 hours from the Montrose hospital. Just use **common sense!** A first-aid kit is available. Be sure to bring along sufficient prescription medications. The nearest small pharmacy is 10 miles away.

Checklist

- Tripod
- Spare Camera Battery
- Camera Manual
- Extra memory card?
- Cable Release
- Filter: Polarizer
- Optional: Electronic flash
- Close-up items
- Optional: Translucent Diffuser, such as made by Litedisc. 42" is good.
- Optional: Litedisc reflector. Silver/gold reversible. 32".
- Snacks/lunch/water For field trips
- Sturdy Shoes or hiking boots
- Rain poncho and/or umbrella
- Trash bags/baggies to cover camera if it rains
- Oh Yes! Don't Forget Your Camera and lenses

Tour Cancellations... I will try very hard to run a tour if at all possible and, as a rule, the tour will run if I have at least six clients. If the required number of participants has not been met a month prior to the departure date the trip could be cancelled. However, as clients often make their decision less than a month prior to the trip, I will stay in touch with interested participants and we'll just play it by ear. Note that Synergistic Visions and the Ouray Chalet Inn are not responsible for any airline cancellation penalties or other trip expenses you may incur if the class is cancelled. Consider the purchase of trip cancellation insurance.

How large are the groups? Group size will generally not exceed ten photographers. In addition to Steve, there is an assistant so the instructor/student ratio is very good. We reserve the right to take an 11th person. This is done as a form of “over-booking” protection or if a couple wants to register and in doing so, they would put us over 10 people.

Liability release... My goal is to provide each client with personal attention and uncrowded shooting opportunities. Thus each trip is limited to a small number of photographers. However, with such small groups the expense of liability insurance would mean that I couldn't run the trips. Thus each client is required to sign a release of liability prior to the beginning of the trip.

Necessary Photographic Experience? While I work with everyone in understanding the basic principles of photography and the use of their camera, I ask that each participant be familiar with their camera prior to the trip. Don't buy a new camera a week before the class and expect to learn it on the field trips. The functioning of today's cameras may vary greatly from model to model and the days flow much more smoothly if everyone is familiar with the basics of their equipment. Our time can then be spent on topics such as composition, exposure, choice of lenses and filters, using shutter speed and depth-of-field correctly and creatively, and in visualizing the image you want and using these tools to create that image.

Computer... While not an absolute requirement, we strongly encourage you to bring your laptop computer. Also be sure to bring your card reader (unless it is built into the computer) and AC adapter. An extension cord or power strip would be useful too. If you want to try HDR photography, be sure you have Photomatix Pro on your computer. Free trial download at: www.hdrsoft.com

Guests/Spouses... Some of you may come to Ouray with a non-workshop spouse or friend, which is fine. Of course, only workshop participants are allowed on the field trips. Guests are welcome to attend our classroom sessions. But please remember that non-photographers seldom have the energy or patience that photographers do! They need to know how emotionally and physically drained you are likely to be at the end of the day. Your *significant other* will view your time in Ouray as a *vacation* when, in fact, it will be a wonderful, but possibly exhausting experience. Remember, it is a **WORKshop**. If it were anything less, we would have cheated you.

Other Resources... Be sure to download any other PDF documents I may post on my website. They will offer additional pre-trip info.

The Ole' Bottom Line... You will be exploring and photographing in some truly wonderful country. Lora and I have organized this workshop to combine our love of the San Juans with our love of photography. We will do all we can for you to have a positive experience. By the same token, YOU have a responsibility to let us know if there are problems or concerns. We will do what we can to correct them. You will not hurt our feelings if you bring a problem to our attention. This is your workshop. *Don't Worry, Be Happy! It will be a great workshop!*

Questions?... You may always email me or call me with questions or concerns. I will do my best to help you.

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www.synvis.com

What Is So Great About A Workshop Anyway?

In the past 20 years, I've been a participant in 6 or 7 workshops and have conducted dozens myself. In all cases, the workshops have been truly amazing events. It is difficult to describe them without using cliché terms such as *special, unique, or magical*, and yet, those words really do apply.

At first glance, a workshop may not seem remarkable. Indeed, many participants are a bit nervous, afraid they won't be at the level of the others or fearful they will make mistakes. Sometimes the age spread can surprise people; a 50 or 60 year spread is not unusual. Since photography is often a solitary pursuit, the idea of group review sessions might be intimidating.

Be assured these fears are natural and I understand the group dynamics involved. Although I should not admit this, I'm actually an introvert, except when I have a camera and am teaching! So I'll make sure you have a non-threatening experience.

Most importantly, come to a workshop with an **open** mind. Don't have preconceived ideas of what you'll be photographing. Maybe the wildflowers won't be good this summer (blasphemy, I know). No problem, the Ouray area is so incredible you'll hardly notice. A workshop is a place to try new stuff. A workshop is a catalyst for change. If you don't make **lots** of mistakes, you're not stretching yourself enough.

Often the experience you have at a workshop is different from what you expect. Don't be content to make images like you normally make; experiment! I'm not interested in what you already know but rather, how far can you push yourself? If you're willing to let yourself fail, you'll create some magnificent images. Read that again. A workshop is **risk**. Ah, but risk yields **reward**!

My workshops are **safe**. You can not make a bad photograph during this workshop; some images may work better than others, but they'll all have value.

Sometimes, when you get a group of folks together, emotions and egos get involved. However, competition is the last effect we want. No one is rated; ribbons are not given.

The whole idea is to learn. And the beauty of a workshop is that **every** participant is also a **teacher!!** Think about that. That makes my job pretty easy. Instead of one teacher and a bunch of students, each of us becomes **both** teacher and student. I'm reminded of my first workshop many years ago. During the first field trip, a woman exposed an entire roll of film *deliberately out of focus!* I was stunned. I'd probably gone my whole life and never wondered how an image looks out of focus. To this day, I think about her images. It must have taken courage to show those slides to the group; I'm sure glad she did.

Thus, to answer my question, a workshop is great because of **YOU**. I mostly bring together people with a common love. I stir the kettle a bit, providing insight, encouragement and enthusiasm. I invite each of you to come to Ouray, to be surprised; to be challenged and to be excited at your own abilities. You can't lose. The time will fly by. You'll be exhausted, mentally and physically. But the energy inside you will be spiraling ever higher. By the last day, you'll be getting a glimmer of what it is I'm trying to say here. You'll be sorry our time together is ending. But you'll leave with new skills and ideas. One asset in particular you'll gain is so essential, and yet seemingly so hard to gain in our every-day lives. That asset is **Confidence**. See you soon

Steve.

A Credo

For Mountain Photographers

The mountain photographer is interpreting the face of nature--that mysterious infinity, eternally a refuge, a reservoir, an amplifier of spirit; a mother of dreams; a positive though elusive voice in whose depth lies its subtlety. They will interpret best who are never so content as when under the influence of situations where silence is rich in the mute assurance and beauty of mountain surroundings. The quality of emotional knowing has a finer integration with our spirit than anything that comes from barren intellectual processes. This point of view only accumulates slowly, out of long experience and contact with wordless influences. Under the spell of solitude and of natural beauty the root system of this kind of awareness establishes itself.

Great art is usually created under some such saturation of awareness. The work is then permeated with an inner perception of beauty and an inner personal philosophy. The hope for our photography is that it shall retain these high lights of more than beauty, that through it symbols shall be preserved of response to our mountains, keeping them to a flow, a golden thread, in our experience.

Cedric Wright, 1941