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BEGINNER

One Shot: The Forest and the Tree

Photographing Fall Foliage



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D4, AF Zoom-NIKKOR 24-85mm f/2.8-4D IF lens, with the camera at f/9 and ISO 400; and set for manual exposure and Matrix metering. The only difference: the forest (right) was taken at 1/100 second, the tree (left) at 1/50.

The popularity of fall foliage photography is undeniable. Workshops and tours are regularly scheduled events in areas of the country lucky enough to feature these colorful and creative photo opportunities. Maps, calendars and schedules are a click or two away on the web, and stock-shooting pros and enthusiastic amateurs alike routinely plan travel to ideal locations so they can take a shot at taking their best shots.

I had an easier time of it. I needed only to visit a local park to take advantage of

what the season offered. It was autumn, the leaves had turned, and for a photographer, no other reason is necessary; you simply do not disregard the opportunity.

I knew I was going to get landscape shots—I go out knowing that, and I may have a typical or standard fall foliage shot in mind. We've all seen so many of them, it's impossible not to be thinking about them. But I don't shut down to everything or anything else—like emphasizing overall color or capturing details and textures in close-up or macro shots.

Texture can be a subject in itself. In fact, I was leaning a bit to the left, shooting the almost monochromatic color of the forest, when I spotted the subject of my next picture: the tree. It wasn't what you'd strictly consider fall foliage, but it worked well with the overall color scheme, and I knew I could emphasize the rough bark texture just by moving in closer. I ended up taking the shot maybe six inches from the trunk.

Actually, the image on the left was not my first close-up of the tree trunk. I have an earlier shot that's almost the same, but in that composition there's no orange leaf or little green leaves. I thought the picture needed that area of color and extra interest to interrupt the pattern and to suggest the surrounding forest.

Later, looking at the pictures side by side on my computer monitor, I saw how nicely the images worked together. They looked like companion pieces.

The specs: I shot both photographs with a D4 and an AF Zoom-NIKKOR 24-85mm f/2.8-4D IF lens, with the camera at f/9 and ISO 400 and set for manual exposure and Matrix metering. The only difference: the forest was taken at 1/100 second, the tree at 1/50.