

Tetons Photo Guide

As with all landscape photography, the best time of day for taking photos will be early morning and late evening. The 60 minutes after sunrise and 60 minutes before sunset are known as the “golden hour” or “magic hour,” and they got those names for a reason. Photographs taken in these windows will have richer colors, deeper and more pleasing shadows/textures, and will result in a much more dynamic and engaging image. Because of this, this guide will be written through the lens of sunrise and sunset, and all suggestions will be given assuming you’re willing to wake up early and stay up late. As an added bonus, the parks are *much* less crowded during these times, which makes for an overall better travel experience, also!

Since the Tetons run North-South, at sunrise the sun will be directly behind you. This means you’ll get a beautiful pink alpenglow with the first light of day that quickly gets harsh and overly-direct. In the evening the sun will set directly behind the mountains, meaning you’ll be in shade much sooner than the official “sunset” time. Both can be beautiful, but these are important considerations as you plan your day.

1. Schwabacher Landing



24mm | f/3.2 | ISO 250 | 1/250 second shutter speed

Perhaps the single most iconic photo location in the Tetons, Schwabacher landing has been the cover of myriad books and countless magazines over the years. While there is almost zero

chance you'll have a peaceful morning to yourself here, it's still absolutely worth a visit as you're nearly guaranteed to go home with a postcard-worthy photo.

As you pull in you'll notice that there are two parking areas. The "classic" shot (pictured above) is from the northern parking area. You can get right down on the water for a perfectly symmetrical photograph, or stay on the upper trail to include some vegetation in the foreground to give your image more depth. Be warned, however that if you stay up top it is very likely that someone will walk into your frame!



40mm | f/2.8 | ISO 100 | 1/200 second shutter speed

The southern parking area for Schwabacher Landing is much less visited, but no less spectacular. Here you'll find a smaller creek with more foreground options, and a slightly different angle to the peaks.



24mm | f/4.5 | ISO 100 | 1/160 second shutter speed

Walking the trail all the way to the end of the line here yields fantastic compositions with much smaller crowds.



41mm | f/2.8 | ISO 160 | 1/160 second shutter speed

While at Schwabacher Landing, it's easy to get overwhelmed by the beauty of the mountains directly ahead, but don't forget to look around because there are incredible scenes to be found in all directions!



200mm | f/4.5 | ISO 100 | 1/640 second shutter speed



14mm | f/3.5 | ISO 160 | 1/125 second shutter speed

Pro tip: Consider using a tripod and doing a long exposure to help smooth out the water and get better reflections!

2. Oxbow Bend



70mm | f/4.0 | ISO 160 | 1/250 second shutter speed

Another classic sunrise location in Grand Teton National Park, but I've had great success here at all times of day.



80mm | f/5.6 | ISO 100 | 1/2000 second

As with Schwabacher Landing above I'd recommend approaching this location with an open mind as you'll find beautiful compositions at all focal lengths and pointing in any direction. You're much farther from the mountains here, so I'd recommend starting with a lens like the 24-70mm, but bring a 70-200mm as well.

Late afternoon into evening also photographs really well at this location:



70mm | f/2.8 | ISO 100 | 1/1600 second

I would *highly* suggest bringing a telephoto lens (like the 70-200 or the 100-400) for Oxbow Bend as wildlife sightings are extremely common. Keep your eyes peeled for elk, moose, muskrat, bald eagles, and even bears!

3. Elk Ranch Flats Pullout



165mm | f/4 | ISO 160 | 1/640 second



190mm | f/5 | ISO 100 | 1/1600 second

Easily one of my favorite places in the park to photograph the Grand Teton. Not only does it have a spectacular shape from this angle, but the Elk Ranch Flats almost always have wildlife (or horses) that you can use as a compositional element in your photo. I recommend a telephoto lens here (>100mm) as it will make the mountain loom large in the background and create for a more dramatic impression.



135mm | f/2.8 | ISO 100 | 1/2000 second

4. Willow Flats and Jackson Lake Dam



24mm | f/2.8 | ISO 400 | 1/500 second

This is the spot to go if you're in the mood to explore and work a little bit to find the right composition. If the weather cooperates you can get incredible shots (like the one above) just from the dam itself, but there's a lot of options for exploration nearby as well. The willow flats area is a very common location to find elk, moose, and bears, or you can explore down below the dam along the river for all sorts of birds!



400mm | f/2.8 | ISO 3200 | 1/60 second



200mm | f/4.0 | ISO 100 | 1/320 second

Pro tip: A polarizer is great here for reducing atmospheric haze and bringing more contrast back into your images!

5. Teton Point Turnout



24mm | f/4.0 | ISO 200 | 1/125 second - multi-shot panorama

This is likely the easiest location on this list, both in terms of accessibility and composition. The Teton Point Turnout is just a pulloff on the side of Highway 89, and the view is so accessible you barely even need shoes. This is very close to the Teton River Overlook, the location where Ansel Adams took perhaps the single most famous landscape photo ever, but overtime the trees have grown such that the view at Teton River Overlook is fairly obscured now so I find the Teton Point Turnout to be much better.



12mm | f/4.0 | ISO 100 | 1/400 second

This is a fantastic option if the weather is questionable and you don't want to risk traveling somewhere further into the park. I've had wonderful luck here photographing storm clouds, low-hanging fog, and fresh snow.



12mm | f/4.0 | ISO 100 | 1/400 second

Sunset from Teton Point Pullout can be tough if the conditions aren't right, because the sun sets directly behind the mountains which will make photography difficult. However, if there are a few clouds in the sky you will be treated to quite the fantastic treat!

Pro tip: consider underexposing your image by up to a full stop to preserve the details in the bright clouds, and then raise the exposure on the foreground while editing later.

6. String Lake/Jenny Lake



12mm | f/4.0 | ISO 2500 | 15 seconds



12mm | f/4.0 | ISO 640 | 1/4000

This is one of the only places in the park that faces the right direction to get the milky way in frame. The less moon the better, but as seen above you can get nice shots even if the moon is in the sky. Anything less than a quarter moon should work fine.

Pro tip: You'll want to bring the widest lens you have, both focal length and aperture. My personal favorite is the Sony 14mm f/1.8 GM.

6. Mormon Row



47mm | f/4.5 | ISO 100 | 1/400 second



24mm | f/5.6 | ISO 100 | 1/640 second



91mm | f/4.5 | ISO 200 | 1/2500 second

Perhaps the single most famous photo in Grand Teton National Park: the barns at Mormon Row. There are two barns, and both are equally photogenic, and as with most other locations in the park, these can be good either for sunrise or sunset. Sunrise will have fewer people (since most people don't want to wake up at 5am), and the people who are there will likely be photographers so there's less likelihood of having unwanted tourists walking into your shot. Sunset will be equally gorgeous, but expect these areas to be very crowded as they are immensely popular.

Pro tip: Wide lenses work great here for showcasing fine details (like the ground squirrel in the second image, but long telephoto lenses do better for making the mountains behind the barn appear much larger and more impressive (like in the first and third images).