

Maroon Bells, CO

By
Tibor Vari
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During the last week of September through the first week in October is typically the peak fall foliage for colors in Colorado. So on September 29th, I headed out with fellow TCC members (Fred H., Jeff N., and Dave M.), to Aspen CO which would be our base of operations for the next two days out of a 9 day trip throughout the state.

Surrounding Aspen are wonderful mountains with lots of Aspen groves and it's easy to see how the town got its name. The first morning we headed west out of town on Route 82 to the first circle where we picked up Route 13 (Maroon Creek Rd). After a short 20 minute ride you reach the end of the road where there is a large parking lot. A very short walk (about 150 yards), and you reach the shoreline of Maroon Lake (altitude 9,580 feet). Towering above us at 14,014 feet is Maroon Bells and one heck of a fantastic view! Since this is a popular location, there must have been another 30-40 photographers all setup along the lake shore.



At this point, we picked out spots along the shoreline and waited for the sunrise to hit the top of the mountains to signal the beginning of the shooting frenzy. The beautiful red glow on the top of Maroon Bells did not last long but it did bring warm light down on the mountain slopes. After taking the classic shot, I began to move around looking for foreground objects that I can line the mountain up with. Fortunately, there were plenty of rocks and debris from trees to provide a multitude of different shots.

One challenge was to use graduated neutral density filters since the brightest part of the image was typically 3 or more stops brighter than the darkest portion (the dark trees on the left). On a digital camera this is easily seen on the histogram (pixels pinned to the right of the chart), or you can use the "blinkies" screen and see if parts of the image are flashing. If this happens, the range from dark to bright is too much for the digital sensor (or film), to handle so you have to make adjustments. I ended up metering the scene in Manual mode and then using either a 2 or

3 stop ND filter. The other option was to take two images, one metering for the highlights and the second metered for the shadows. You then merge the two images in Photoshop. I prefer using the filters to minimize my time at the computer.

Before the sun light came down to the shore line we left to go to the abandoned town of Ashcroft while the light was still warm. We did return the next morning and stayed this time waiting for the light to reach the shoreline. We of course took the obligatory group photo! All in all, a great photo location!

