

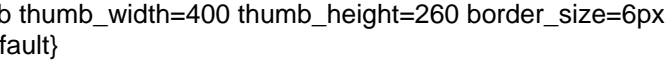
Fall Foliage, 2007

Monday, 12 November 2007

For years now, I've been trying to catch the fall foliage in and around New York. This includes Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and New Jersey.

But just about every year, something happens and I miss going out, or the weather doesn't cooperate, or the foliage isn't spectacular. Well, this year was different. Perhaps because I asked for something on my birthday.

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November 10th was mon anniversaire, as the French say, and aside from the regular presents I get from my wife, and the ritual celebrations my parents shower upon me, I got a great birthday gift.

I woke up around 10am on Saturday (I got to sleep late, woohoo!), and on a whim, said to my wife, "I want to do something for my birthday. I want to go shoot some pictures." Now you would think that that's what a photographer does, goes out and takes pictures. But with my current job, and the ins- and outs- of life, I rarely have time to do my own work anymore. So it really was a great present.

So in the early afternoon, after we ran a few errands, I dragged the whole family out to Rockefeller State Park and Preserve, just a stone's throw from Sleepy Hollow up in Hudson County, NY. Though it was cold, we all bundled up, took the Hutch to the Thruway, and took the last exit before the Tappan Zee Bridge. When we arrived, the girls picked leaves, and my wife laid down on the trail taking in the fresh, cold air, while I took pictures.

After a while, I needed to use the bathroom, and thought I'd take a quick jog back to the Visitor's station. But my 2 year old started complaining that she wanted milk, to which my 5 year old answered, "I'm tired." So we all went back to the visitor's station. After all was said and done, the girls all decided that the visitor's station was more comfortable to sit inside, instead of walking around in the cold. So I went off by myself again to shoot some more.

Images from Rockefeller State Park and Preserve

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At some point, I encountered a friendly but inquisitive woman named Janice who wanted to know what camera I was using, and asked a dozen questions about what camera she ought to get for herself, and that she took some pictures but they didn't turn out like she'd hoped, and if she had a camera like mine she was sure she could take better pictures. I couldn't help but to explain to her that, though I'm sure she didn't mean it, saying that the camera is the thing that makes great pictures just says that the photographer really doesn't matter, and that it doesn't really take skill, just a good camera. She understood my point quickly, and I explained to her how if you give me a camera, any camera, I can take a good picture; you just have to know how to use your tools.

The day was darkening quickly, so while I liked chatting with new folks, she was nonetheless using up my daylight! I was acutely aware of this, even as i chatted, but I did little to stop her from talking, because she was just so innocent and unassuming. In the end, she went on her way, twilight had almost fallen, and I lost most of the golden light, so I started back toward the visitor's center.

But along the way, I found a number of images that would have been unseen in golden light, and I had to stop to take these shots. The purplish light, combined with the intensity of the leaves' color did something to the presentation that I had not experienced before. Funny how things worked out. Call it divine intervention, karma, whatever. If I had not been talking to Janice, I would have taken a bunch of pictures staying at that one spot until it got good and dark. Because she used up my "good light" I was forced to head back while there was still some light, though normally I might have considered it unusable.

So what you see here is my birthday gift, to myself. Finally, after years of failing to "show up," I got to do some real fall foliage images. These are keepers, and perhaps more keepers will show up if I keep looking through the rest of the images.