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LEFF. The Sierra Crest makes a great backdrop to drainages filled with dramatic aspen. While some vistas are obvious, scouting locations when the light is dull allows you to maximize your options when the light is good.

BELOW: Finding soft, intimate scenes like this meadow and aspen can help to tell a deeper story and halance with the more dramatic "hero"-type shots of towering peaks at sunrise.

just coming into condition. Photographers just start working their way down slope as the leaves change. As the lower-elevation aspen groves start to pass their prime in mid-to-late October, the cottonwoods and oaks in the Owens Valley start to change, making it possible some years to photograph fall colors all the way into November.

While there is no substitute for actually being on the ground and seeing conditions with your own eyes, there are several online resources that post current color conditions in the Eastern Sierra. For the past few years, the Sacramento Bee newspaper has maintained a webpage that not only includes a map of many of the best locations but also marks the locations with the current leaf conditions. This helps photographers who are new to the area discover the good spots, and it also saves driving time by knowing which groves will be the most productive.

WHERE TO GO

While fall colors run the entire length of U.S Route 395 along the eastern side of the Sierra from Lake Tahoe to Lone Pine, the epicenter for fall photography on the eastside is between the towns of Lee Vining and Bishop. Lee Vining is on the east end of Tioga Pass, so many photographers also make it part of a trip through Yosemite if the pass is still open. Lee Vining Canyon offers intimate images of fall leaves, and you can't miss

shooting a sunrise at Mono Lake before heading up to Lundy Canyon to look for beavers among the flooded colorful aspen groves. Conway Summit just north of Lee Vining offers pastoral scenes with rolling aspen-covered hills and grazing sheep.

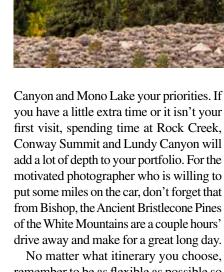
Between Lee Vining and Bishop along U.S. Route 395, several roads climb west into the Sierra, offering photography at a range of elevations. While both Bishop and Lee Vining are great bases of operation, Lee Vining is smaller and has fewer lodging and resupply options.

Most photographers will spend only a night or two in Lee Vining and spend the

majority of their time based in Bishop. This allows time to explore up and down the popular Bishop Creek Road (State Route 168). At the end of Bishop Creek Road, try popular North Lake in early fall or, later in the season, explore many of the lesser-visited groves lining both sides of the creek near South Lake or Lake Sabrina. You can also hike into the backcountry for unique angles of the towering peaks at sunrise.

Having shot many times on all the roads of the eastside, I would say they all have a very different feel and are worth exploring, but if your time is limited, make Bishop Creek, June Lake Loop, Lee Vining





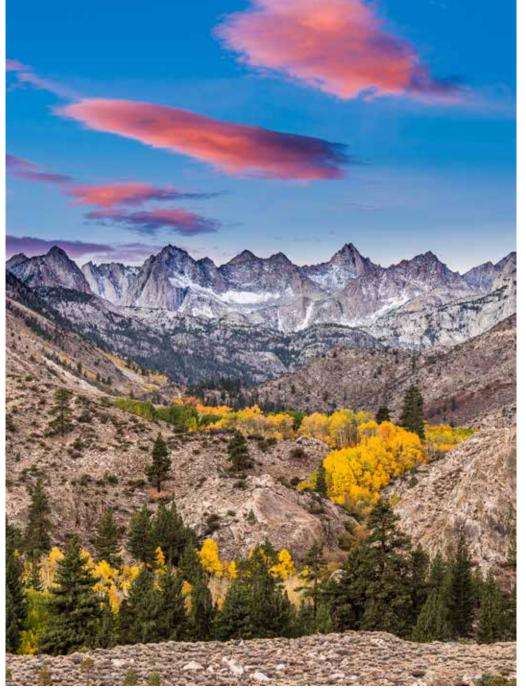
No matter what itinerary you choose, remember to be as flexible as possible so you can adjust your plans to take advantage of the weather. Also remember the Sierras aren't called the "range of light"

for nothing—set that alarm early for a chance at sunrise alpenglow on the high peaks. If you still have energy after being up before sunrise and shooting all day, a sunset shoot along the Owens River near Bishop can be a great way to end the day.

WHAT TO PACK

The weather in the fall along the eastern front of the Sierra can be warm and pleasant or stormy and very cold. In the space of a single trip, I have shot wearing nothing but shorts and a T-shirt, then a couple of days later I was wearing a down parka and the temperatures were in the teens at sunrise. Make sure you plan for changing winter weather and pack accordingly. Remember, the best photos are the ones that happen during bad weather or right after the first dusting of snow—don't forget the chains, and don't run for cover when the weather hits. OP

Josh Miller's images have been featured in Outdoor Photographer and in publications throughout the world. To see more of his work, and for info on his workshops, visit joshmillerphotography.com. You can also find him on Instagram @joshmillerphotography.



Explore the mountains above the Eastern Sierra town of Bishop for endless opportunities to line up the towering peaks of the Sierra Crest with groves of aspens at sunrise.

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