FUJIFILM TIPS AND TRICKS

My 10 Favorite Settings for the X Series Cameras



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What is it About These Cameras?

I first shot with one of the Fujifilm X cameras back in late 2011, and was instantly hooked. It was the X10, and I fell in love with the form factor, the ergonomic design and the quality and look of the imagery.

At that time, I had been a Nikon shooter for over 20 years, but this little camera set me on a path that not only rekindled my love for photography, it ignited a whole new style of creativity. In more ways than one, moving to Fuji completely transformed my entire craft.

I now use Fujifilm X Series cameras full time in my photography. The irony with all of this is that my X-T2 looks and feels a whole lot more like my first Nikon than any of my Nikon DLSRs ever did. Also, before I switched to digital, I used Fuji slide film, so in more ways than one, I feel as if I've come full circle with my photography and started off in an exciting new direction.

I hear similar stories from Fujifilm shooters around the world. There's something about these little cameras that intrigues us and ignites our passion for photography in a way that no DSLR could. It's not just the size, the incredibly sharp lenses, the vintage-style bodies, or the gorgeous looking imagery, it's the whole package.

X Series cameras represent a perfect blend of engineering, design and color science. The beauty of this combination is that it makes us WANT to hold these cameras in our hands and take more pictures. What more could you ask?



Fun and Powerful

Not only are the Fuji X Series cameras extremely fun to use, they're amazingly capable tools that produce professional quality results. They're also very easy to operate, since many of the primary controls are easily accessible via top-deck dials, Fn buttons or Q Menu items.

While some of the main features are fairly straightforward, these cameras contain a number of extremely useful and powerful features that may not be apparent to you. Of course, you can find explanations for every single feature in your camera manual, but that's not exactly the most engaging read, now is it?

With that in mind, I've put together this mini-guide to help you get the most out of your Fuji X Series camera. With almost five years of use with Fujifim X cameras and extensive experience with a number of models, I've gotten to know the system quite well. During that time, I've figured out my favorite settings and modes that help me capture the best images possible for the style I'm shooting at any given time, and since I love helping other photographers succeed with their own image making, I'm happy to share them with you.

While the exact specifications vary between the particular models, most of these 10 tips apply to all of the current Fuji cameras, from the X-T2 and X-Pro 2, all the way down to the X70. Some of them apply to the X-A(x) models, and with firmware updates, some of these settings and modes are even found on older models, like the original X100.

Yet another great thing about the Fujis; the lower end models are not "dumbed down" like they are with many other camera systems. Sure, things like AF performance and buffer size might be different across the range, but with regards to how you shoot and how your images look, you can expect similar or the exact same results no matter which model you're using.

Again, these are just my own tips. You might have a comletely different shooting style. As you become more familiar with your camera, you'll come up with your own favorite settings and methods of configuring the Fn buttons and the Q Menu. I encourage that.

In the end, it's about how your photos look and whether they excite you and your viewers. Cameras are simply tools and these tips are ways to use those tools in order to get the best results. The more you know your gear, the better photographer you'll be.

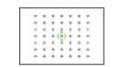
I hope these tips help you get there.

1. Autofocus

Utilizing a hybrid system that makes use of both contrast and phase detection sensors, as well as intelligent, predictive algorithms, Fuji's autofocus system is extremely capable. It's powerful enough to track moving subjects and shoot fast action, even at high frame rates. I'm utterly amazed at how fast and accurate the X-T2's autofocus is! That said, even the X-T1, X-Pro 2 and X-T10 will outperform many DSLRs in this area.

In addition to the standard AF-S and AF-C modes, the Fuji cameras have three focus modes: Single, Zone and Wide/Tracking.

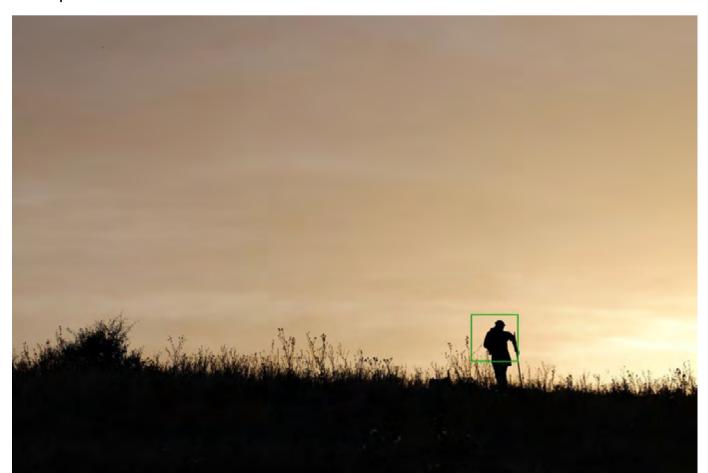
Single AF



Single AF is simple- it's one point that you select from any one of the AF points in your viewfinder, using the focus point selector on the back of the camera. Most models have a 77-AF point grid; with the X-T2 and X-Pro 2, you can choose 325 or 169 AF points.

You can use this mode in either AF-S, if your're shooting still subjects, or in AF-C, if you're tracking moving subjects. You can change the size of the selected point via the rear command dial. When using Single AF in AF-C mode in Continuous High, your grid is limited to the 3x5 area in the center of the frame, which correspond to the 15 Phase Detect AF points on the sensor. (Both the X-T2 and X-Pro 2, have a Phase Detect grid of 169 points in a 13x13 array that covers almost 40% of the frame.

I use Single AF mode when I need to be very precise and ensure that the camera is focusing on the right piece of subject matter. An example would be when focusing on something very small inside the viewfinder or something that lacks a significant amount of contrast compared to the rest of the scene.



Zone AF

Zone AF was added in the 4.0 firmware update and it greatly expanded the focusing capabilities of the X Series cameras. Instead of a single AF point, Zone AF gives you a group of points. You can change the size and shape of the group to fit your subject matter, your options being a 3x3, 3x5 or 5x5 grid. With the X-T2 and X-Pro 2, the options are a 3x3, 5x5 or 7x7 grid. The 7x7 grid covers nearly 40% of the frame, which helps it track moving subjects all the way across the frame.

Once you select the size of your focusing zone, you can move the entire grid around the frame via the focus point selector. The advantage of using Zone AF is that the camera will automatically choose which AF point or points to use when focusing on your subject, even if your subject is moving. It works in both AF-S mode, for still or slowly moving subjects, and AF-C mode for subjects that move more quickly.

Zone AF is my preferred setting and I keep my my cameras in this mode so that when I turn them on, I'm ready to shoot a wide variety of subject matter. Zone AF is the most versatile AF mode because you don't have to be as precise when you initially select your focus point, and it will continue to track subjects as they move across different AF points through the zone.

As with Single AF, when shooting in Continuous High, your zone is limited to the 3x5 Phase Detect pixel grid. With the X-T2 and X-Pro 2, you have either a 3x3, 5x5 or 7x7

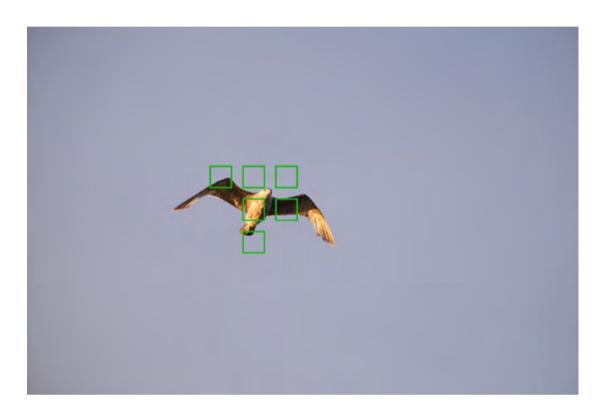
grid in Continuous High.



Wide/Tracking AF

This mode basically drops the AF system into Full Auto. It's great for complicated scenes, unpredictable subject matter or when you're shooting multiple moving subjects. If you're unsure about which focus point to set or if you'd rather not worry about AF and just shoot, Wide Tracking usually does a very good job.

Wide/Tracking works in both AF-S and AF-C mode. On Fuji cameras that have Full Auto mode, like the X-T10 and X70, when you flip that switch, the camera automatically defaults to Wide/Tracking.



Face Detection

Face Detection on the X Series cameras works extremely well and I just leave it on all the time, with the Eye Detection AF setting to Auto. Note, Face Detection doesn't work in Continuous High, and Eye Detection doesn't work in AF-C mode.



2. RAW + JPEG

We all know how awesome the straight Fuji JPEGs look, that's one of the main reasons we love these cameras so much, right? Shooting JPEGs cuts down on your workflow, produces much smaller files, and makes your shooting experience much more simple. With the impressive quality of the X-Trans sensor and Fuji's image processor, you can point, click, and pretty much be sure that you've captured a great image.

That said, there are some occasions when you want to shoot RAW. As good as these cameras are, some exposure situations simply have too much contrast for any camera to handle properly. For maximum control for capturing images in tricky light, you'll be able to preserve, rescue and adjust your tones much more effectively by shooting in RAW.

The X Series cameras produce incredible RAW files with a tremendous amount of tonal information. However, you should know that the unique color profile of your selected film simulations will disappear when you import your photos into Lightroom. By default, Adobe applies its own standard color profile, so if you were specifically going for the Velvia or Astia look, for example, you'll lose this look when you import the photo into your catalog.

The way to get around this is to shoot in RAW+JPEG and then set Lightroom to import these types of files as separate images. This is my preferred method. If I'm shooting in RAW with my Fuji cameras, I'm almost always shooting in RAW+JPEG so that I can preserve the look of my selected film simulation. Note, if you don't have Lightroom configured to treat RAW and JPEGs separately, Lightroom will merge your RAW+JPEG files together as one image and the JPEG will just disappear and be gone forever. It will still exist on your memory card, but not in your Lightroom catalog.

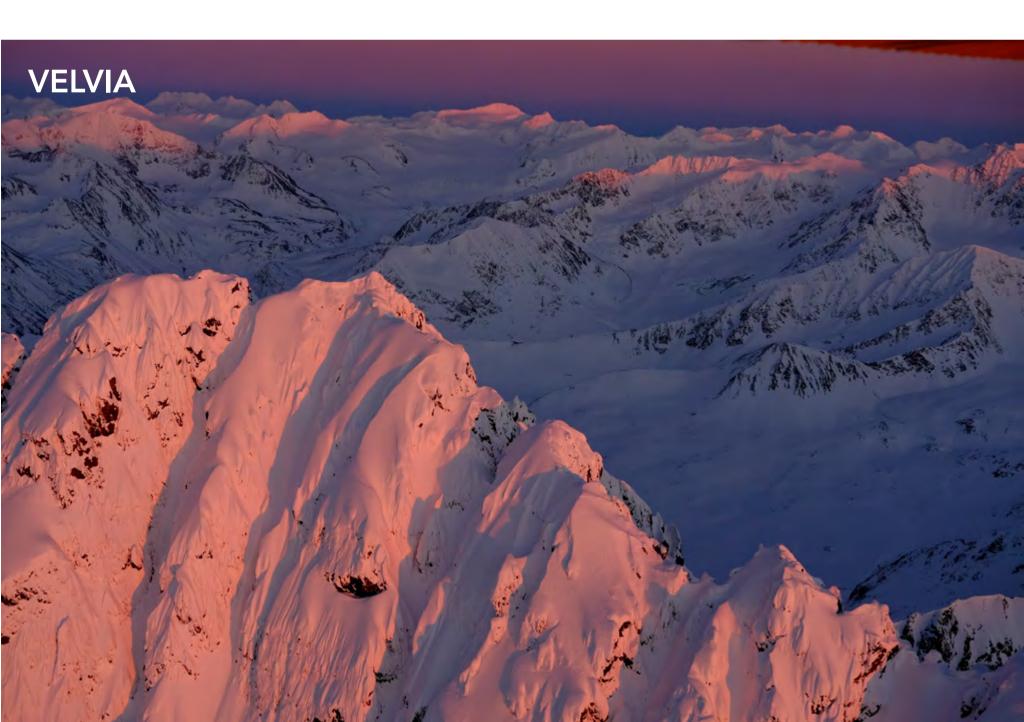
Even if the light was tricky on capture, the JPEG still might look acceptable, and I have the RAW for insurance, in case I need to make some more radical adjustments. I may not be able to perfectly replicate the exact look of the film sim, but at least I have that for reference. With some images, it doesn't really matter; I might not have been going for a specific film look on capture, I was just trying to shoot a photo with the most detail possible.

3. Film Simulations

The built-in film simulations are another thing I love about the Fuji X Series cameras. These special color profiles were engineered to replicate some of the classic Fuji films of the 80s and 90s. I started shooting back in the film days, and I actually used Velvia, Provia and Astia on a regular basis. In this way, I've come full circle with my photography, because I can now select these looks right in-camera.

Velvia was my number one favorite film and it's my number one favorite film sim. I love the rich color palette and powerful blacks that Velvia gives when shooting land-scapes, sunsets, and even broad scenes in midday light. I find that under great light, just about any kind of outdoor photography works great with Velvia.

I shoot all of my aerials many of my outdoor subjects as straight JPEGS in Velvia mode and I absolutely love how they look. If I get the exposure right, I rarely have to do any tweaking in Lightroom or Iridient- they're already vibrant and wonderfully bold. In this way, I feel like I'm back to shooting film again. By the way, the name Velvia was originally created as a shorted version of "Velvet Media."







I also love the slightly more subdued look of Astia, and it works much better than Velvia for shooting overcast scenes and when photographing portraits. I use Astia a lot in my photography.

ASTIA

ProNegStd looks great for portraits and I often use it to incorporate a softer color palette to my imagery.

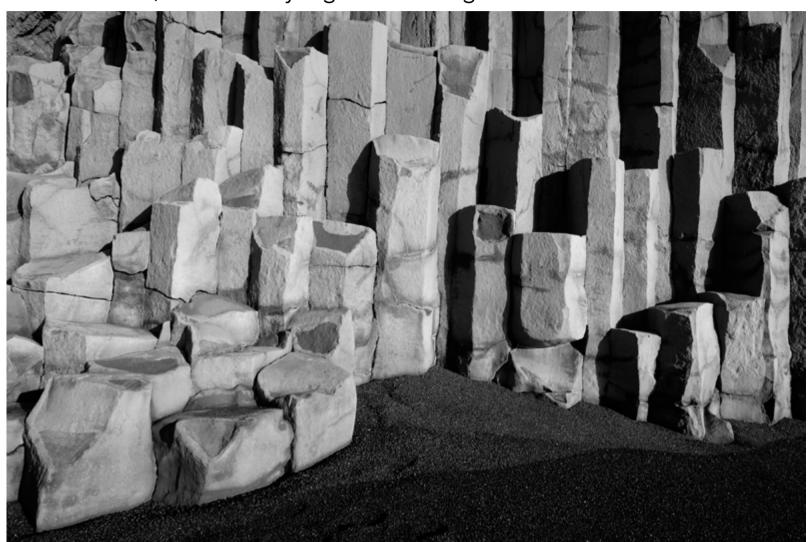


Classic Chrome, based on a famous non-Fuji film, does an amazing job under overcast skies and in the shade. I use it when I just want something simple and, well... "classic." Classic Chrome has a wonderful quality that blends a high degree of tonality in the shadows and lower contrast in the brighter end of the histogram.



I also use the various **Monochrome** simulations, especially when the available light isn't very dramatic or if the scene lacks color, like on overcast days or during the middle of the day. This gives me a better chance of walking away with a great image, even if the shooting conditions aren't ideal.

The X-T2 and X-Pro 2 both have a new **ACROS** black and white film sim, and it's simply gorgeous. ACROS features expanded tonal depth and a more complex grain structure that looks awesome, even at very high ISO settings.





4. Preview Picture Mode

This very useful setting showed up in a firmware update after the X-T1 had been out for awhile. Found in the **Screen Setup Menu**, Preview Picture Effect has two options, ON or OFF. The default setting is ON, which allows you to see the scene in your viewfinder with your currently selected film simulation applied.

OFF shows you your scene without the effect of the film sim. This gives you a much more accurate view of the world in front of your camera. With the film sim applied, you don't always expereince how good the EVF actually is. Looking through the electronic viewfinder with Preview Picture Effect OFF is almost like looking through an optical viewfinder.

This option is extremely useful for situations when you want the most realisim in your viewfinder, i.e., when photographing night skies or shooting in RAW. Check out this useful setting; it will give you new appreciation for the awesome technology built into these cameras.

5. Preview EXP/WB in manual mode

This preview option, found in the **Screen Setup** menu, lets you preview exposure and white balance changes in your viewfinder. This mode is ON by default, and I like to keep it that way.

One of the huge advantages of mirrorless cameras is that you're able to view real time changes to your exposure in the LCD and EVF, because you're drawing the view directly from the sensor. This means what you see on the LCD is EXACTLY what you'll get when you take the photo. In most situations, you'll WANT to see this stuff, because it removes the uncertainly, especially when shooting in tricky light.

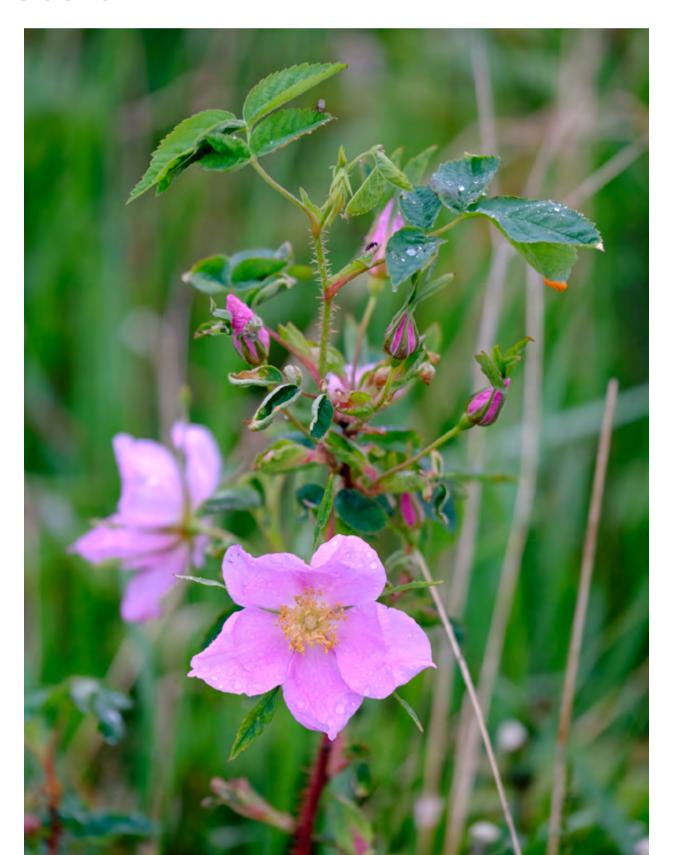
Turning this setting OFF essentially makes your Fuji act more like a DSLR, where what you see may NOT be what you get. Unless you like the mystery of tricky exposures, you should keep this set to EXP/WB ON.

6. AF+MF

Another addition that appeared in a recent firmware update, **AF+MF** is a very useful feature. By turning this setting ON, you gain a huge perk when focusing: If you keep the shutter pressed halfway down with your finger after autofocusing, you can then turn the focus ring on your lens and manually fine tune you focus.

As good as modern AF systems are, they can be fooled. Say you're trying to photograph a subject that's situated within dense foliage, like a bird or flower. The camera's AF might grab the branches in front of your subject, but that's not what you want. With the camera set to AF+MF, you can get 90% there with the AF, then go the last 10% by focusing manually.

There are numerous situations where this could come in handy. You should keep this mode ON all the time.



7. MF Assist

The Fuji X series cameras have that wonderfully classic old school vibe, with their retrostyled bodies and compact primes. This often inspires photographers to go out and shoot with a "traditional" mentality.

Translation: They're fun to shoot using manual exposure and manual focus. With their high resolution screens and electronic viewfinders, you get a pretty immersive view through the eyepiece, especially if you're using one of the EFV models.

Turn Preview Picture Mode OFF, and you might even forget that you're actually looking through a tiny TV screen, especially on the X-T1 and X-T2. The EVF on these models have a bigger viewfinder magnification ratio than just about any camera on the market, even most DSLRs.

Also, with the right adaptor, you can even use old manual focus lenses from other camera systems with excellent results. Even though I sold all of my Nikon DLSR gear, I kept my old manual 10mm f/2.5 and 50mm f/1.8 and bought a Nikon to Fuji adaptor.

A friend of mine has an old Canon FD 200mm f/4 he uses on his X-T1. Not only is it incredibly sharp, it's quite small for a 200mm lens. Effectively, this gives him a manual focus lens 300mm f/4 that's very compact and a lot of fun to use.

It can be hard to focus manually since we don't have the fresnel/split image focusing screens that were used in old SLR cameras. Thankfully, mirrorless technology allows for some very useful tools that help you in this area. The Fuji X Series cameras have three MF Assist options: Normal, Digital Split Image and Focus Peak Highlight, and the Focus Assist Button/Menu option.

Normal

This is the default mode. It's simply manual focus through the viewfinder, as if you were using a standard bright SLR screen. This is the most basic focusing mode, because what you see is what you get. If you need help focusing, you can always crank up the brightness level in your EVF or LCD, or turn Picture Preview Effect mode OFF.

Digital Split Image

With a nod back to the old split image screens found on most SLR cameras, this mode displays a small black and white split image over the phase detect array in the middle of your viewfinder. This makes it very easy to determine exactly when your subject is in focus. It even replicates the classic fresnel effect when you're getting close.

Focus Peak Highlight

Autofocus systems work by detecting edge contrast on your subject matter. When the greatest amount of contrast is detected, the camera determines that the subject is in focus. Focus Peak Highlight essentially does the same thing for manual focus. It creates a highlight of clearly visible pixels around your edges that adjust in intensity depending on how close you are to achieveing sharp focus. You can change the color of your peaking highlights, with your choices being white, red and blue

Being the most "digital" of the three modes, Focus Peak Highlight is an acquired taste with some photographers. While it may be a little distracting at first, once you get used to it, you'll see that Focus Peak Highlight works extremely well when you need to focus quickly, and it's very effective in low light situations. I often use this mode when trying to focus in dim conditions, and I find the colored modes tend to stand out a little better than white.

Focus Assist Button and Focus Check Menu Option

The **Focus Assist Button** is an essential tool. It is used to both confirm the sharpness of captured images during palybabck and assist when focusing manually by zooming in on a specific area in the frame.

By turning on the **Focus Check** Menu option, the camera automatically zooms in when you turn the focusing dial when the Focus Mode selector is set to MF. You can turn this option OFF, but I usually leave my cameras set to ON; I figure if I'm manually focusing, I need all the help I can get! For the most "traditional" experience, though, you may want to turn it OFF.

Note: The X-T1 is the only model with a dedicated "Focust Assist" button. To activate this option on all other X Series cameras, press the rear command dial. Again, use this to zoom in to 100% so you can check sharpness of images you just shot.

8. Fn Button Settings and Q Menu

All of the X series camera have 7 customizable Fn buttons. (The X70 has 8.) These can be set to control a wide range of parameters, including Focus area, AF mode, Film Simulation, White Balance, Face Detection, Self Timer, Movie, Wireless Communication, Image Size, RAW, Preview Picture Effect Mode, and ISO.

You can totally customize the operation of your camera according to your personal preference and shooting style. Same goes for the Q Menu, which gives you instant access to 16 additional options. This means you don't have to go digging in the menus when a quick shooting situation presents itself, you just hit the Q button to find your setting or click the corresponding Fn button.

To customize the Fn buttons on most X Series cameras you, simply press and hold each button until it brings up the settings box. You can choose whatever setting you want for that particular Fn button. To customize the Fn buttons on the X-T2 and X-Pro2, you'll need to go into the **Button/Dial Setting** in the **Set Up** (Wrench) menu and select the **Fn/AE-L/AF-L Button Settings** option.

To customize the Q Menu, press and hold the button, then scroll to any slot and click to choose the function for that slot. Again, you'll set these based on your own style, and you'll probably find yourself tweaking them from time to time. Here's how I have mine set.

Fn Buttons

With most of my Fujis, I always set the 4 Thumb Pad Fn Buttons to **AF Area** Selection. This gives me the most control for choosing which AF point(s) I'll use when I'm shooting.

That leaves me with at least 3 Fn buttons left. This is where it gets a little tricky, because each camera has a different set of controls on the top deck. For example, the X-T1 and X-Pro 2 have dedicated ISO dials so with those cameras, I don't need to use up a Fn button for ISO.

With this in mind, I always set one Fn button to select Film Simulation, and for my non-ISO dial bodies, I set one for ISO. For the remaining two or three, I'll mix it up. Depending on what I'm shooting, my favorite options are AF Mode, RAW (to select RAW+JPEG), Preview Picture Effect and Wireless Communication.

X-T2 and X-Pro 2 both have the new AF joystick, which opens up those four thumb pad buttons to other settings, although I leave these on the default settings with my X-T2. You can change them out, but I recommend leaving one set to Drive, (**DRV**) as it has multiple fuctions, depending on your current Drive Dial settings.



9. Shutter Type

The **Electronic Shutter** (ES) option allows for ultra hight shutter speeds that far exceed what the camera's mechanical shutter is capable of. Another feature that was added in a firmware update, the ES option lets you shoot at speeds up to 1/32,000 sec. This greatly expands the versatility of the X Series cameras. With the X-T2 and the Boost Grip, you can shoot at 14fps in ES mode.

Also, since the electronic shutter has no moving parts, it's completely silent. You can change the sound of the electronic shutter in the Sound Set-up menu, and you can even turn it off, which allows you to shoot freely in situations where shutter noise might be a problem. This can be a huge benefit when photographing wildlife, during events or when shooting alongside a film crew.

Another benefit of the ES is that it doesn't cause any vibrations in the camera. Even though mirrorless cameras don't have mirrors that move up and down, the shutter can still cause slight vibration. This can be critical when shooting macro or when using low shutter speeds.



Also, since the AF points on mirrorless cameras are positioned right on the sensor, using the ES can theoretically give you slight improvement in AF performance when tracking moving subjects, because the sensor is not temporarily blacked when the shutter fires. However, I haven't tested this, nor have I seen any tests done with Fuji cameras to confirm, so I don't know how much AF performance, if any, is gained by using the ES.

For all it's benefits, the ES comes with some important limitations you should be aware of. Number one, **setting the camera to ES automatically disables the hot shoe**. This means no flash, even if you attach a sync cord or try to use any kind of radio trigger. This can be very frustrating if you don't know what's going on.

Believe me, the first time this happened, I was trying to do some flash photography and I simply could not get any of my lights to fire, no matter how I configured them. It took me quite awile to finally trace the problem back to my camera being set to MS+ES. If you shoot flash with your Fujis on a regular basis, you'll probably want to keep your cameras set to MS, depending on your shooting situation.

The other main issue is that electronic shutters currently operate as "Rolling Shutters," which means they scan the scene from top to bottom instead of capturing the entire scene at once. This can produce distortion when trying to photograph subjects that are moving extremely fast. If you've ever tried to shoot a propellor with your iPhone, you know what I mean. The same thing happens when your Fuji is set to ES.



"Global" electronic shutters operate by scanning the entire scene, which prevents these kinds of artifacts and distortion. They're drastically more expensive, which is why these types of shutters are currently not used in mass produced cameras. As technology comes down in price, perhaps we'll see them incorporated into cameras like the X Series model in the future.

10. T Mode

This is one of the hidden gems in the Fuji cameras. All of the X Series models have a "T" setting on the shutter speed dial, located between "1" and "B." By setting the shutter dial to T, you gain full control of all shutter speeds via the front or rear command dial depending on which dial you have set to control shutter speed.

With the first generation of X Series, T Mode only allowed you to set speeds between 2-30 seconds. The firmware 4.0 update changed this so that in T mode, you can now use the command dial to set any shutter speed. Combine this with Electronic Shutter (ES) menu option and you can use the dial to select any exposure time between 1/32,000 sec and 30 seconds.

T Mode is AWESOME, because it speeds things up dramatically. You can shoot in Manual or Shutter Priority mode without having to mess with the shutter speed dial. With the lens set to "A," you're in Shutter Priority; when you're manually selecting aperture on the lens, you're in Manual.

With your left hand on the aperture ring and your right finger on the command dial, T mode makes shooting in Manual mode a breeze. It's even fast enough to shoot action and fast breaking scenes in tricky light.

Add the Histogram to your viewfinder, turn Preview Manual Exposure/WB ON in the Screen Setup menu, and you speed things up even more, because you'll be able to see the effects of your exposure adjustments in real time. And since we're talking about the Screen Set-up menu, I like to add the Virtual Horizon Level to my viewfinder as well. It looks a bit intrusive at first, but it's an easy way to make sure your pictures come out straight.



Bonus Tip

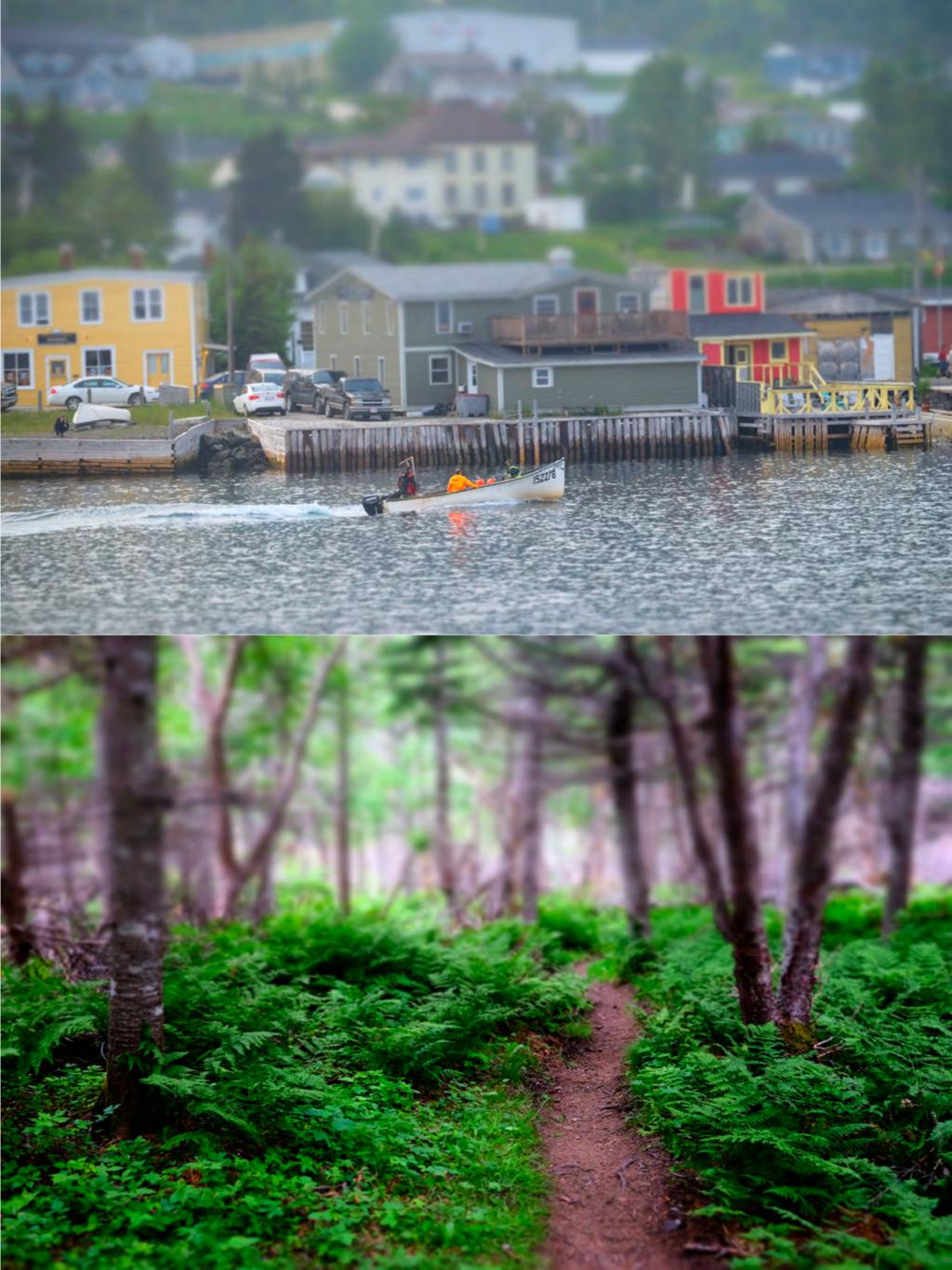
Perhaps what I love most about the Fuji X Series cameras is that they have such a high "fun factor." They add tremendous joy to both the physical aspect and technical craft of photography. In my view, photography is a form of personal creative expression, so it should be fun. To me, there's nothing more fulfilling than being outside and exploring the world with my camera, and nothing is going to help drive my creativity further than having equipment I truly enjoy using.

This is what attracted me to the X Series cameras in the first place, and it's one of the main reasons I switched from using DSLRs. It wasn't entirely about not wanting to carry heavy cameras anymore. Fuji cameras rekindled my love for photography. After almost five years, that feeling is still going strong. I hope it's that way with you.

So in the spirit of fun, here's my bonus tip: **Miniature Mode**. In case you haven't found this setting yet, it's the second option in the Advanced Filter menu. Just below "Toy Camera," which is another good one, Miniature Mode breaks the frame up into three sections horizontally, and whatever part of the frame you focus on stays sharp while the other two thirds of the frame get blurred out. Basically, it recreates the look of a tilt lens.

I love shooting in Miniature Mode and I've used it for a variety of subject matter. I especially love it for photographing dreamy landscapes and forest scenes. Sometimes when I'm struggling with how to shoot a particular scene, I'll switch to this mode and see what happens. More often than not, the results are pretty....I'll say it again... pretty fun.





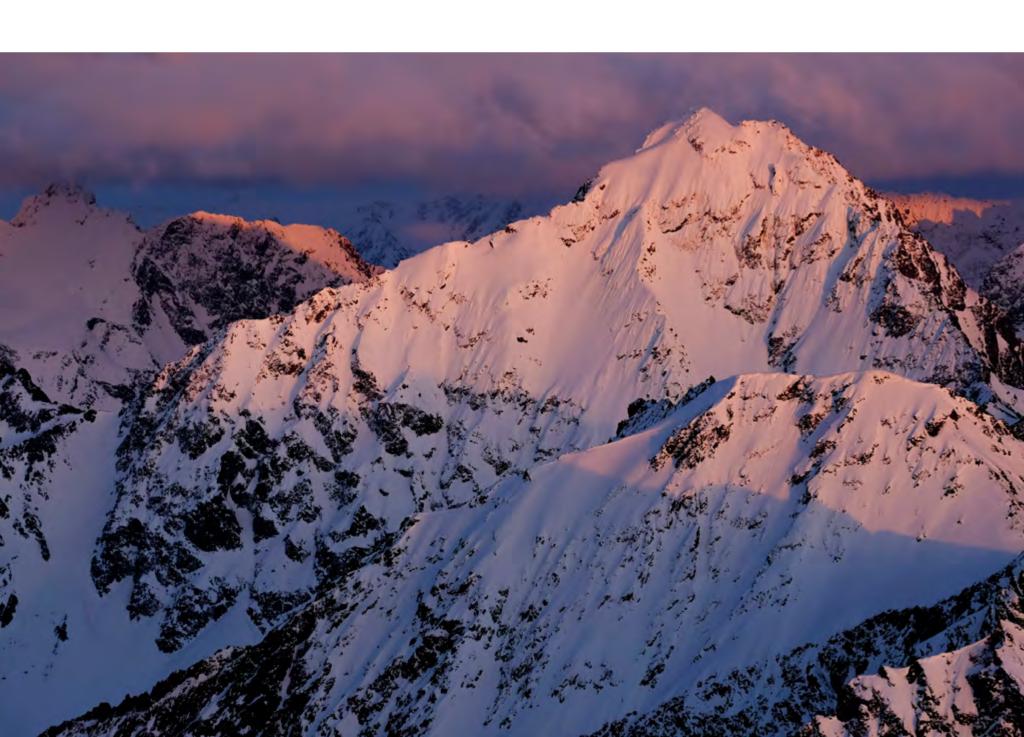
Final Thoughts

I hope this mini-guide encourages you to explore all the features the X Series cameras have to offer. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions about shooting with these cameras, or if you have any questions about photography in general. I'm always happy to connect with other photographers and give recommendations about gear or shooting methods.

Email through my website is fine, but you might get a quicker response from me on Instagram, Twitter or Facebook.

Thank for reading and thanks for singing up for my newsletter. I hope the content I share each month helps you in your photographic journey.

-Dan Bailey



About The Author

Dan Bailey has been a full time adventure, outdoor and travel photographer since 1996. His immersive, first person style of shooting often places him right alongside his subjects as he documents the unfolding scene and searches for the perfect convergence of light, background and moment.

He has written six eBooks and two print books: Outdoor Action and Adventure Photography, published by Focal Press, and Adventure Photography, a Falcon Guides title co-published by Backpacker Magazine. His blog was recently rated as one of the Top 100 Photography Blogs on the Planet.

An official Fujifilm X-Photographer, Dan's client list includes Outdoor Photographer Magazine, Alaska Airlines, Salsa Cycles, National Geographic Adventure, Outside, Patagonia, Outdoor Research, Backpacker Magazine and Coleman. He regularly gives photo presentations and leads photography workshops throughout the year.

Dan currently lives in Anchorage, Alaska, where he spends his free time exploring gravel bars in his little yellow Cessna, hiking and skiing in the mountains and touring on his mountain bike.

Visit his website at danbaileyphoto.com

