

7 Tips for Tripod Selection

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1) Forget the cheap stuff.

Buy a cheap, big-box retail store tripod & you'll regret it almost immediately. You'll then move up to a \$100 tripod only to find it doesn't really work for you, either. Cry once & start with a high quality tripod to begin with. Yes, you'll spend \$500 or more, but it will last forever.

2) Go with carbon fiber.

Wood—*nature's version of carbon fiber*— works well, but is heavy & awkward. Aluminum is light, but conducts cold & does not dampen vibrations as well as carbon fiber. (*See tip #1.*)

3) Get one tall enough.

I learned this the hard way & spent years shooting hunched over when photographing from a standing position. Really, you should look for a tripod that goes a bit taller than you need so you have some room to adjust for slopes.

4) Get one low enough.

At the other extreme, look for a tripod that goes all the way to the ground. Sometimes you need to do so for the shot you're after. A center post prevents you from doing so, therefore I prefer no center post at all. To me, a center post turns your tripod into a monopod sitting on top of a tripod.

5) Consider the weight of your camera/lens combo.

If you have a 500mm or 600mm lens (*or think you might ever rent one or buy one in the future*) make sure the tripod you get can support such weight.

6) Lock it your way.

Some people prefer lever locks, others twist grip. The twist grips on my Induro are easier to use than my Gitzo, but that also means it's easier for them to unlock inadvertently. If you can try out a few different styles you'll discover which one you favor most in certain situations.

7) Accessorize.

You need a way to attach your camera/lens to the tripod. Pan/tilt heads mean you have two controls to deal with when you want to adjust the camera position. A ball head does it with one knob. However, a ball head flops over if left unattended. A gimbal head is a joy to use with a big lens, but unlike a ball head can't move in any direction. Determine which suits you best. I use a ball head for landscapes and a gimbal with my big wildlife lenses.

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