

## **Alison Brooks**

Hi Padre Trails. I have been involved in photography for the last twenty-five years. As a primarily self-taught artist, I began in the black and white darkroom producing my first images using “old fashioned” wet techniques. I progressed through color processing and printing and on to digital darkroom methods. Despite the availability of current technology, I still prefer working in the traditional darkroom, especially for black and white images. For the last twelve years of my photography career, I have been the owner/operator of Negative Space Photography. During that time I produced countless images for customers and instructed hundreds in darkroom and general photography techniques. I have continually produced my own artistic images during this time, and plan to pursue fine art photography indefinitely. My “tools of the trade” include everything from 35mm to 4x5 field cameras. I have photographed with microscopes, telescopes, kaleidoscopes and pinhole cameras, and I have often said that if anyone can figure out how to attach a lens to a kitchen sink, I will doubtless try that also.

### **Group A**

1. Wild flowers In Glacial Moraine. Absolutely beautiful. I am enjoying this very much. Composition is just stunning. It is very sharp. You could brighten it up just a bit with curve and the image would just pop.
2. Beach Primrose. Again this image has great composition. It shows the environment well. The little spider is a great plus. The image needs to be brighter, however. A little work with curves in Photoshop would really improve this image.
3. Black Sage. This image is really more about the bumble bee than about the Black Sage and find the image too busy. I think if you had moved back a little it would have improved the composition.
4. California Poppy. This is a lovely image of a California Poppy blossom. I'm enjoying this very much. The dew drops add to this image and bring drama. The image could be improved significantly with the removal of the diagonal twig behind the poppy and the removal of the spent bud in the upper left hand corner before capturing the image.
5. California Poppy with Calyptra and Dew. Gorgeous image of the poppy bud. The dew at the tip makes this image work. I do wish you had a bit more depth of field so that the base of the bud was in focus but that dew drop is as sharp as a razor. The image tells us a nature story in a very artistic way.
6. California Poppies. Yes we have a sea of poppies. This appears to be the California Poppy reserve near Lancaster and Palmdale. I have to tell you something. I have been there on multiple occasions and have never been lucky enough to see this. I am very jealous. It is a beautiful image. My only criticism is that there is a very significant magenta color cast to the image. This can easily be removed in Photoshop.
7. Coastal Gum Plant. Very nice composition. It shows enough of the environment to tell a nature story. This is very sharp. My main issue with this image is that it is very flat. This can be significantly improved with the curves layer in

- Photoshop. I know I sound like a broken record here but trust me. Take this image into Photoshop and use the curves layer to just tweak it a bit. You will like it.
8. Desert Mariposa Lily. Well this one is certainly not flat. Great composition and impact. This just jumps out at you and it is very sharp. Very nicely done.
  9. Douglas Iris. This is only part of the Douglas Iris. For nature it is often better to see the entire flower if not the plant unless you have something going on inside the flower head itself. Nice exposure though.
  10. Douglas Iris. This image shows more of the plant. Your handling of the background with the depth of field is very nice. The Bokeh of your lens is excellent. This is a beautiful image.
  11. Erigeron glaucus Portrait. I enjoyed this image very much. It is just beautiful and extremely sharp with a three dimensional quality. This is a fantastic pictorial image. My only quibble is that the entire flower is not in the picture. This is just like the Douglas Iris that was only partly in the image. But oh my, the colors are to die for.
  12. Forget Me Not. The composition is handled very well. For a nature image you really want to see at least a little of the environment. The flowers appear soft and the image is slightly underexposed, unfortunately.
  13. Inyo Bush Lupin. This is a beautiful landscape image. I would like to see the lupin either closer up or further away so that the entire bush is in the image. You handled the exposure very well and it is very sharp.
  14. Iris douglasiana. Very nice image. I enjoyed this one very much. It shows the environment and the entire flower is very sharp. Beautifully handled.
  15. Morning Glory and Bumble Bee. I feel this image is more about the bumble bee than the Morning Glory. The image is very busy also. My eye darts all over the place looking for somewhere to settle.
  16. Morning Glory and Black Sage. This is a very nice image of a Morning Glory. The dew is a bonus. Exposure is handled very well and it is very sharp.
  17. Pacific Dogwood. You have terrific composition here. Dogwoods are just lovely flowers. This image is just way too flat. It really does need a healthy dose of curves to brighten it up.
  18. Portrait of Lupinus nanus. A lovely shot of Sky Lupin. Your soft lighting is beautiful and the dew just sets it off. The background is handled very well. A lovely shot.
  19. Sierra Lupine. This image tells a sad but beautiful nature story. The effects of a fire and renewal. Your image needs some work in Photoshop to lighten up the background. It would be a much more impressive image.
  20. Sierra Woolly Indian paint Brush. Beautifully handled. It looks like early morning and backlit. The exposure is nicely handled and the image is sharp. The environment is shown. I enjoyed this image very much.
  21. Snow Plant. This is a great composition. You can never go wrong with 3. I really do like this image. You need to take it back to Photoshop and remove the magenta color cast and brighten it up a bit. These are very lovely flowers and your composition deserves to have the color and brightness tweaked.

22. Thistle. This is a cute image. Your exposure is good. However, I feel there is way too much empty space above the bee and this should be cropped. I wish we could see more of the bud on the bottom. I think you were probably going after the bee as it is dead center. Your depth of field is really shallow.
23. Tidestrom's Lupin. Lovely composition and just enough of the environment to give it place. Your exposure is good but this image needs to be taken back to Photoshop and brightened up with a curves layer. It would have significantly more impact. As it is it is beautiful but if you just massaged it a little it would really pop.
24. Yucca. Your exposure is right on the button. The color of the Yucca is nicely offset by the beautiful blue water behind. It appears very sharp. I just feel it is a little crowded. I would have backed off just a bit.

It was difficult to place the images. So many were so good. I enjoyed them very much.

HM Iris douglasiana  
 HM Beach Primrose  
 HM Portrait of Lupinus nanus  
 3rd Douglas Iris. Iris douglasiana  
 2nd Desert Mariposa, Calochortus kennedyi  
 1st Wildflowers In Glacial Moraine

## Group AA

1. Blue Eyed Grass. I don't think this is blue eyed grass. The image is a bit soft as well. Your composition is good.
2. Iris douglasiana at Virginia Lakes Road. The entire flower is shown which is nice. The lighting on the flower is very good but I wish the background had a bit more light on it. I think your depth of field is too shallow.
3. Beargrass. This is a hard image to capture. A white flower in daylight is difficult to capture. Sometimes if a diffuser is used the exposure is easier as it reduces the contrast.
4. Bluff Lettuce. It looks like the flowers have seen better days. The leaves have a beautiful color to them.
5. Poppy Ready to Open. I like your composition very much. The dew is a nice treat. Nicely captured.
6. California Poppies by the Sea. Just lovely. Exposure is great. The environment is well captured and the many stages of blooming are present. Good nature story. I enjoyed this image very much. Very well done.
7. California Poppy with Honey Bee. Now here is a flower, a bee with bulging pollen sacks and a great nature story. You can see the pollen in the flower and on the legs of the bee. Very well captured. Now if you could have just had him turn around so we could see his little face. Your composition is terrific. Nice job.
8. California Blackberry. This is an interesting image of the various stages of a blackberry flower. Nicely captured.

9. California Cobra Lily. This is a very interesting flower. It looks like it had been raining. Good job getting out there when the weather is bad. I wish that this was more of a vertical image as I would like to see the base of the flower stalk. Your exposure is good but I think the flower is a tiny bit soft.
10. Fairy Lantern. This is a great image of a Fairy Lantern showing the hairs on the petals and even pollen grains in side the petals. The image is very sharp and the exposure is good. I do like your composition and your depth of field is handled well.
11. Field Mustard. Actually this is an invasive species from Europe and not a native wild flower. I think this image is very flat and needs some brightening up.
12. Fushia Flowered Gooseberry. A very lovely image. The exposure is good. I do wish that the depth of field was deep enough to have all the blooms in focus.
13. Lupine. This is a difficult exposure to handle. If you had used a diffuser the bee would have taken off but the light would have been softened. I do find the bright areas behind the Lupine stalk distracting and I wish you had included the top of the stalk.
14. Paintbrush. This is a great pictorial image. The worm adds interest. I feel your depth of field is a bit too shallow for a nature image but the background is great. Your light is great.
15. Peavine. This is difficult image. the flowers are slightly underexposed but the background is very bright distracting, the viewer. This can be corrected in Photoshop but it is tricky. Remember the background is critical and often should be selected first before your main subject.
16. Peavine. This is a lovely image and I enjoyed it very much. You do have a couple of hot spots, one in the center behind the bud and the in the lower right. These can be toned down and I think this would improve your image. But it is very nice as it is.
17. Seaside Daisy. Another lovely image. It shows the different stages of the flower, the environment, and is beautiful to boot. It makes me want to go there and have a picnic.
18. Showy Milkweed. This is a very interesting image. You have the flowers and the fruit. The hot spots bother me as my eyes tend to go to them and these can be dealt with in Photoshop.
19. Sky Lupine in Yosemite Meadow. Lovely. Your light is great, your show the environment. We see the nature story. Very well done.
20. Wood Mint Hedge Nettle. This tells a lovely nature story. The butterfly is feeding from the flower. However, the right side of your image is unnecessary. I would crop it into a vertical and at the same time clone out or darken the dead leaf in the upper left of the image.
21. Limekiln Clover. This is a very nice image. Three is always nice. You handled the exposure very well. A diffuser would have helped. But overall very nice.

Hm Lupine In Yosemite Meadow  
Hm Fuschia Flowered Gooseberry  
Hm Fairy Lantern

3rd California Poppies By The Sea  
2nd Seaside Daisy  
1st Poppy With Honey Bee