



The Underrated 18-55mm Kit Lens

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knowledge!*

A friend once asked me “Should I replace my 18-55 mm with a 50mm prime?” I politely asked him (while internally screaming) “Will you even consider replacing your thumb with your index finger?”

The 18-55mm kit lens is the most underrated, unappreciated lens. This is because it comes free as a kit lens along with the purchase of a DSLR. Of course it doesn't have a huge aperture like a prime lens. Even the images are not rich in DOF like a big aperture tele-photo lens, but it sure helps you get what you need in a hurry, especially when you already have it strapped on and you are stuck in a dilemma of whether to swap the lens or miss the shot.

Landscape Photography

18-55mm will easily fill in as your very own fairly wide angle lens. At 18mm focal length, the angle of view is pretty wide. This will help you nail some very beautiful landscape shots. Even in low light situations, this will help you get a good shot with a deep depth of field because you need not reduce your aperture any more than f/3.5. If you are doing landscaping at night, then you might want to use a tripod.



A temple beside a river in Srirangapatna, Karnataka, India. I used the topaz adjust plugin in photoshop to recover those details on the sky and water

Portrait

Though not as close to perfection as a prime lens, 18-55mm will help you take fairly good portraits. To get good portrait shots

with 18-55mm lens, you need to:

- 1 Keep a good distance between your subject and the background. This is important because only then you will be able to get a nice shallow DOF in the background.
- 2 Maximise the focal length to 55mm and zoom in on the face of your subject.
- 3 Compose your shot and click your picture



That's my son and my wife. I shot this on the 18-55mm lens. We were on two different boats and as we were nearing each other, I did not have the time to switch lenses and just took the shot.

Just remember that since you set the focal length to 55mm, the maximum aperture reduces to f/5.6. That means if you are trying to shoot in the dark, you will get dark images. To combat this scenario, you can try the following steps:

- Using a tripod to avoid motion blur while shooting hand held
- Using a hot shoe flash
- Cranking up the ISO. But remember, the more the ISO, the more the noise in your images.

In some instances, you might want to add the background as well in some portraits. When that's the case, all you need to do is reduce the focal length back to 18mm and you will be able to take stunning shots with the background included.

Macro

Yes, it can do macro too. If not the close-up shots of tiny insects, you will most definitely be able to take excellent macro shots of still objects.

- 1 Maximize the focal length to 55mm.
- 2 Get close to the object that you want to shoot. You will notice that the autofocus will fail at this close a distance.
- 3 Switch to manual focus mode on your lens.
- 4 Adjust the focus using the focus ring until you see the light indicating focus in the view finder. Once you are sure of the focus, click your picture.



I did not have my macro lens when I spotted this. So I just went in for the shot with my 18-55mm, switched to manual focus, and got this shot.

So you see, an 18-55mm lens is not as bad as you think. It's actually a very versatile lens and helps you out in different situations.

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