

Why are Professional Photographers so expensive?

(This article has been very well received by the photography community, and is now referred to by countless Photography websites, blogs and forums (such as PPA, LDPT, ILP and DWF) around the world).

In this digital age where everyone has digital cameras, scanners and home "photo printers", when people upload their photos to a local drug store website and pick them up a few hours later, we hear this all the time - How in the world do Professional Photographers charge as much as \$55 for an 8x10 when they cost just \$1.50 at the drug store?

Here's why.

Simply put, you're not just paying for the actual photograph, you're paying for time and expertise. First, let's look at the actual time involved. If you don't read this entire page, at least read this first part.

For a two-hour portrait session consider the following:

- One hour of travel to and from the session
- Two hours of shooting
- 30 minutes of setup, preparation, talking to the client etc.
- 30 minutes to load the photos onto a computer (2 - 4 Gb of data)
- 30 minutes to back up the files on an external drive
- 3 - 4 hours of Photoshop time including cropping, contrast, color, sharpening, saving a copy for print and a copy for the internet and backing up the edited photographs
- 1 - 2 hours for posting of the images to personalized Web Page where the client can review, comment and select the images that they want
- 2 - 3 hours to talk to the client, answer questions, receive their order and payment, order their prints, receive and verify prints, package prints, schedule shipment and drop package off at Fed Ex.
- For local customers, we also print a set of all of their photos, and meet them at our studio to review the photos and place their order. Meeting and travel time averages 2 hours.

You can see how one two-hour session easily turns into more than ten hours of work from start to finish. So when you see a Photographer charging a \$200 session fee for a two hour photo shoot, you are not paying them \$100 / hour.

For an eight-hour wedding:

I won't bore you with the details, but an eight hour wedding typically amounts to at least:

- Two to three full 40 hour work week's worth of time. Again, if they are charging you \$4,000 for an eight hour wedding, you are not paying them \$500 / hour.

Now for the expertise.

Shooting professional photography is a skill, acquired through years of experience. Even though a quality camera now costs under \$2,000 taking professional portraits involves much more than a nice camera.

Most Professional Photographers take years to go from buying their first decent camera to making money with their photography. In addition to learning how to use the camera itself, there is a mountain of other equipment involved, as well as numerous software programs used to edit and print photographs, run a website etc. In addition, let's not forget that you actually have to have people skills, be able to communicate, make people comfortable in front of the camera - and posing people to make them look their best in a photograph is a skill all by itself.

Think of it this way - the next time you pay \$X to get your hair done, a pair of scissors only costs \$1.50. However, you gladly pay a lot more to hire a Professional.

What about the cheap studios at the mall or those "Big Box" stores?

Please don't compare us to the chain store studios. But if you must, consider all of the time and work that we put into our photographs, compared to what they do. Good luck getting a two hour photo shoot at a chain store. Not to mention they won't come to the beach! And of course, look at our work compared to theirs. You get what you pay for. The truth is, most of the mall and chain store studios lose money. In fact, in 2007 Wal-Mart closed 500 of their portrait studios because of the financial drain they were putting on the company. What the chain stores bet on is that you'll come in for some quick and cheap photos, and while you're there, you'll also spend \$200 on other things. They don't have to make money; they are just there to get you in the door.

Conclusion

We hope that those who have taken the time to read this page will have a better understanding of why professional photographs cost so much more than the ones that you get from your local drug store. Thank you for taking the time to read this.