

SOLAR POSITION CALCULATION HINTS FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS

Software

www.srrb.noaa.gov/highlights/sunrise/azel.html

The NOAA Solar Position Calculator gives precise solar positions for about 30 cities in the USA and about 30 other spots on earth. It also has provisions for entering the longitude and latitude of any place on earth. Adjustments for time zones and daylight savings time are available. This is a fast and easy to use calculator, provided you know the exact time and date. Free for use on line.

www.photo-software.com/sun&moon

Here is a program produced for photographers. The final product is a detailed schedule for the suns position every 10 minutes in a given day. A demo is available. Cost: \$39.

www.wide-screen.com/sunPATH/aboutsunPATH.shtml

SunPath was designed for photographers and an on-line demo is available. It produces both a solar schedule and graph for a specific date and time. Latitude and longitude data is built-in for about 35,000 places on earth. There is also a provision for entering exact location data or for giving location in terms of an offset from a location supplied by the program. If you have the money and need precise data for a given date, this is the one to buy. Cost: \$99.

<http://zipinfo.com/search/zipcode.htm>

If a USGS quad sheet is not handy, here is a fast way to find local longitude and latitude. All you need input is the local zip code.

www.thecompassstore.com

Here is a site that will give you both longitude and latitude as well as magnetic declination based on zip code. Scroll down to the map for a quick approximation of declination.

Hardware

To establish solar position, both a compass and inclinometer are necessary. Compasses are easy to find. It is the inclinometer that takes a little searching. www.summitsource.com has an inclinometer for just \$6.95 that will do the job for most amateurs photographers.

The most convenient and accurate tool is the The “Suunto Tandem” which combines these two functions in a single compact tool. It has an MSRP of \$279 but is often found at a discount on *e-bay* or on the web. These are recommended for commercial photographers where accuracy and ease of use is more of an issue

www.knowareland.com

Another tool that combines these two functions is a device called “The Easy Site” which is used by satellite installers but can also be used by photographers for solar positioning. While less expensive than the Suunto Tandem, it is considerably larger in size. The MSRP is \$85.

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