

# Red

**By Jessica Lia**

As a stock photographer, it's a ritual for me to shoot something for Christmas and Valentine's Day every year because these types of images tend to be great sellers. Stock photo buyers are always looking for shots depicting these holidays, so you really can't go wrong shooting and uploading them to your stock sites well in advance.

It probably goes without saying that the color red is strongly associated with both of these holidays. Keeping that in mind, let's look at how we can use the color red most effectively in our stock photos.

As a viewer, and as a photographer, I am fascinated by colors. When you are trying to make a statement or express an emotion in a photo, the color palette you choose can be a powerful tool to convey a feeling or idea to your viewer.

The human eye is always going to be drawn to bright and saturated colors, and red is especially powerful. As a photographer, you can use the color red to make your image pop and grab the viewer's attention.

In the two photos on the right, see how the color red is giving a feeling of warmth.



Red is often used to express energy, optimism, passion, love, happiness, danger, power, and celebration. So we have endless opportunities to make use of red in our stock photography.

In truth, if you look around you may be surprised to notice how much red is used to draw our attention in every aspect of our daily life.

## Red Images as Stock



Here are two of my own stock photos highlighting the color red:

I really love this photo and the use of red here. The Christmas hat instantly makes the viewer aware of the theme of the photo, and the bright red color helps to draw the viewer's eye. Although the amount of red in this photo is not too much, it is still dominating the image. I have kept the other colors very subtle so that the composition looks clean and simple.

The second photo is also a very simple scene — roses in a vase.

I shot wide-open (using a small f/stop number) with my 50mm lens to get this dreamy effect. The simplicity and bold red color make it very romantic, in my opinion. This shot can be used in reference to Valentine's Day, or any other romantic concept. The blank space around the roses can also be used for words. This is called copy space in the design world.

Remember, since red is such a strong and visually impactful color, it's important to be very intentional as you work with it. Here are a few points to keep in mind as you use the color red in your compositions:



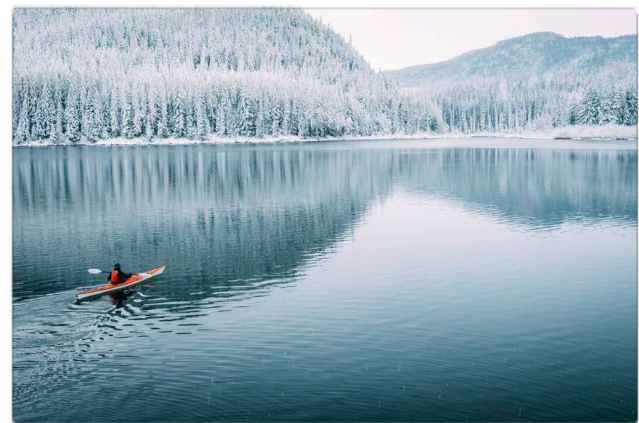


## Think Like a Painter:

A photographer friend once told me that a great way to improve anyone's sense of color and composition is to take an art class. To make the colors of the scene work in your favor, look at the overall palette of your composition.

Pay attention to color contrast and details. Try to create harmony between red and the other colors in your frame. Red can be used against a neutral background to make a bold composition, or try using a color contrast.

As red is a warm color, sometimes using a cool color like blue can create a beautiful contrast that really pops. Colors opposite each other on the color wheel often complement



each other nicely while creating visual separation and depth.

The reason for this is because to the human eye opposite colors naturally separate from each other, creating almost a three-dimensional effect.

### **Express Emotion:**

Colors can create subtle but definite emotional responses in your viewer. The reaction can vary in different people and cultures, but that's why it is so interesting. As an example, in Chinese culture, red is an auspicious color; it is connected to good fortune.

If you want to challenge yourself, find out what the color red means to you. What does it make you feel? It can be a celebration or it can be a passion. It can be happy or it can be a warning of danger. So while thinking about stock photography and the impact of the color red, I recommend bringing your personal experience to create authentic images that viewers can connect with.

### **Attract Attention:**

Sometimes you can use red to highlight the subject, helping it stand out from a busy background. Think of a street scene — if there are many things happening in the background with no clear subject, the viewer can lose interest. In the case of a portrait, if your subject is wearing a red coat, red hat, or red umbrella the viewer will be drawn to the subject instantly. Play with shooting angles and perspective.

For example, try both wide and close-up shots to see what will work best to keep your viewer engaged.



Although Christmas and Valentine's Day are notable holidays that feature the color red, you are certainly not limited to these holidays when it comes to choosing a subject. To help get some ideas flowing, let's look at the use of red in a wide variety of subject matter.



### **Fashion:**

Red is often used in fashion shoots. This photo on the right features a simple composition while making a bold statement. The bright pop of red in contrast with blue hues creates a dynamic, painterly image with high energy and a sense of vibrancy.

As mentioned earlier, notice how the photographer's choice to use opposite colors creates depth and causes the model to really stand out and separate from the background.

### **Nature:**

If you spend some time in nature, you can find many flowers, vines, and leaves that carry different shades of red. Try to photograph them at different times of the day. You will see how light and colors mingle. The golden hour of sunset or the open shade under a tree are two types of light you should definitely try with this subject.



### **Food:**

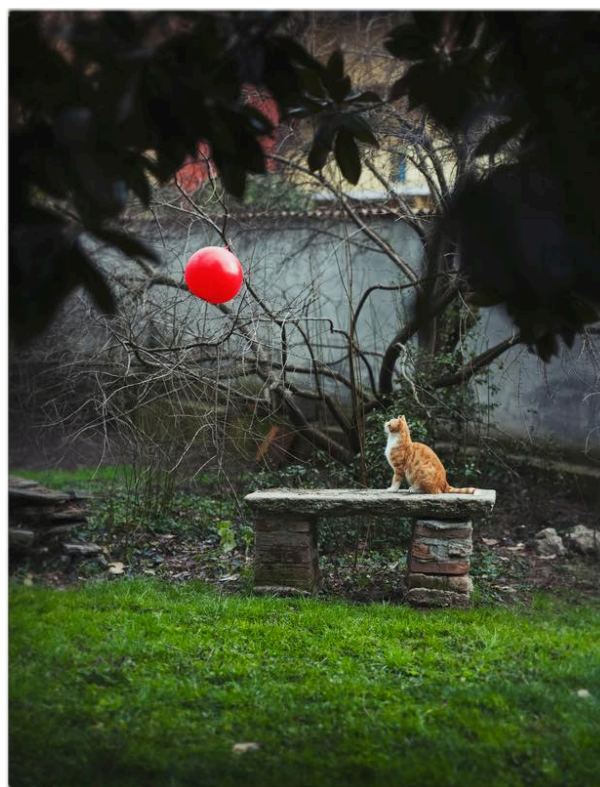
Food stylists spend hours mastering colors to present food in the best way possible. I love how the vintage teal backdrop gives this shot a very retro feel. If you love taking food photos, try decorating your food with the red color theme.

## **Pets:**

Shoot your pet in a different manner and use the color red to make it fun. Photos that are unique and unpredictable usually become bestsellers. The first thing I see in this image is the balloon and it's amazing how the cat is mesmerized by the red balloon as well. This is a creative, fun, and unique shot that features the color red.

## **Celebration and Joy:**

I love how the path through the tulips below creates a leading line to the subject. Notice how the red of the flowers complements the top the model is wearing and supports the joyous moment she is experiencing. The tulips are very bright, but because of the neutral background, it doesn't feel



overwhelming. All the details in this shot come together nicely, connecting the viewers to the action of the photo.

## **Valentine's Day:**

Stock libraries are filled with overdone and cheesy Valentine's Day photos, so I recommend taking a more subtle approach when it comes to shooting this holiday concept.





## Christmas:

I enjoy the warmth and the theme of this photo.

The red objects are spread throughout the scene, helping tell the story of the shot. The red hues are also really balanced and complementing each other nicely here.



## Further Inspiration:

To see more “red” stock images, have a look at this “Red” gallery, with the photos I loved while browsing Stocksy. I hope this gives you more ideas to play around with.

<https://www.stocksy.com/user/consumergallery?id=133016>

## Shooting Tips

### Experiment with Light:

Light can completely change the intensity and saturation of the colors in your photo and it can also change the point of interest and concept of your photo.

For example, if you want to get a more dramatic shot, try using low light and an indoor setting with deep shadows. If you want a brighter and more upbeat interpretation of red, try using daylight. Another thing to keep in mind while shooting red is controlling the hue and saturation. If the red is too intense it can overwhelm the composition and become a distraction. Keeping your compositions simple can help alleviate this problem when dealing with extremely vibrant red hues. It's usually best to

avoid harsh light and on-camera (pop-up) flash. Make use of your reflector and diffuser to get a better quality of light.

### Work the Shot:

Take this Challenge as a chance to practice awareness of the colors around you and the way they can draw your eye. Try experimenting with different setups, models, lighting, and techniques. Be especially aware of where you place the color red within your frame. Try different angles and lenses as well.

Once you start looking, I think you'll be amazed at how many ways the color red influences our visual world. While shooting red, be open to experiment and most importantly, have fun. Be

curious about your outcome and keep exploring until you get a result you love.

### Use a Polarizer:

A circular polarizer is a round filter that screws onto the front of your lens and

rotates to cut glare and help colors look more vibrant (like adding polarizing sunglasses to your lens). It's especially great when you're photographing architecture or nature subjects (or anything else that's reflective).

## Keywording Tips for *The Color Red*

When it comes to keywording, first include the subject, location, details, and theme of the photo. Also consider expression, light, colors, and overall mood.

As an example, here are some keywords that would work well for this photo:



wall  
red  
background  
nature  
texture  
leaf  
natural

plant  
climbing  
garden  
ivy  
pattern  
old  
flora

foliage  
outdoor  
gray  
botanical  
vine  
detail  
decorative

autumn  
grunge  
seasonal  
plants  
growing

I hope you will enjoy this Challenge and playing with colors. Red is such a happy and vibrant color that I hope it will boost your mood while you are being creative. Have fun and happy shooting!