

Photographer Ethics and Guidelines for Photographing the Palouse

Over the past few years, the Palouse has become one of the most popular photo destinations in the world. With this popularity comes inherent problems and the need for photographers to use good ethics and follow common sense guidelines when traveling the backroads of the Palouse in search of the iconic image (photograph). To avoid conflicts with landowners, farmers, and even other photographers, it is important to demonstrate good photographer ethics and follow the guidelines listed below.

Always remember, visit and photograph the Palouse region with respect for the local residents, farmers, and families who call the Palouse their home.

Do Not Trespass – One of the major complaints made by Palouse farmers and landowners about photographers is the growing number of individuals and photo tour groups trespassing on their fields and/or entering their buildings.

- Always ask permission from the landowner to photograph on private property. Do not assume because a field, barn, or building is not “posted” with a “no-trespassing” sign it is OK to venture onto the property, it is not OK. Landowners are not required to post their land with a sign in order to keep people from trespassing and going on to their land and into their buildings.
- Do not assume because another photographer or group has previously gained access to private property that you also have an “implied consent” to enter that property; you do not. If you have previously visited that area with someone who had permission, you still need to ask for permission from the landowner every time you want to go onto the property.
- Do not assume because a landmark barn, building, windmill, silo, or lone tree is shown on a map that it is OK to enter that property, it is not.
- Do not step into a planted field or a visible crop. All too often photographers think they need to walk into a planted field to get a better shot, unknowingly causing damage to the crop. Remember, you can always use a telephoto lens to get in close to your subject without stepping onto a farmer’s crop.
- Never enter a barn, building, dwelling, or other structure under the assumption it is “**abandoned**”. Abandoned property refers to the property to which the owner has relinquished all rights. An empty building, barn, or other structure found on a Palouse farm is not “abandoned”. **Do Not Enter**, unless you have permission from the landowner.
- If you are unable to contact the farmer or property owner to get permission to photograph on their land, do not go on the property!
- If another photographer shares with you the location(s) of a photo site and tells you it is OK to photograph on the property, it is not. **Always get permission** from the landowner every time you want to enter a field or a building.
- Do not post pictures on social media (FB), showing you or others standing in the middle of a farmer’s crop. Example; there are several pictures on FB showing photographers standing in the middle of a canola field, sunflower field, and tall wheat field. This only encourages others to assume it is OK to go into a farmer’s field, causing crop damage.

Don’t be offended if a farmer does not give you permission to enter their field or building. Remember there are thousands of photographers visiting the Palouse each year and a farmer or landowner can be overwhelmed by interruptions from photographers coming to their farm. Remember, it is their land and they have the right to say who can and cannot come onto their property.

Other ethical considerations when photographing the Palouse:

- Do not park on a county or state roadway. Parking on a public roadway can result in a citation.
- Do not park on the crest of a road or on a blind spot, as your vehicle may cause a serious traffic hazard.
- Be considerate of farmers doing their work. Do not block roads as farmers will frequently move large equipment from field to field and may need both sides of the road.
- If you see a large piece of farm equipment traveling on a road, find a wide spot and pull over to make room for the farmer to get past.
- Do not park your vehicle in a farmer's field. You may unknowingly damage a crop or block a farmer from accessing their field.
- Do not park on dry grass. During the summer months the grasses along the road and in stubble fields can easily ignite when a car is parked on top of it. This can and has started many field fires and if you are the cause, you will be held accountable. Suggestion: Always carry a fire extinguisher in your vehicle.
- All dirt roads are not public. Never drive on an **unmarked dirt road**, as this may be a farmer's private access road. If you do not see a marked sign at the beginning of the dirt road, it is probably a farmer's access road and not a public road.
- On dirt and gravel roads, slow down to 10 mile per hour when driving past a house or person standing near the road, it creates a lot of dust. It is also a safety concern for children and pets.
- Do not litter. Another common complaint about photographers by farmers, is the litter left behind in their field or road by photographers.
- Avoid parking under the path of a crop duster (airplane). If you park in the path of a crop duster, you prevent the pilot from completing their work not to mention it is unhealthy and dangerous to you.
- Stay off farm equipment, vintage vehicles, windmills, fences, and structures. Some photographers think it is OK to climb on equipment to get a better shot (photograph), it is not OK.
- Always ask permission to photograph a farmer and/or their family before pointing your camera at them; not everyone is fond of having their picture taken.

Because of the actions of a few unethical photographers, several prime photo sites are now off limits to everyone. All photographers are in jeopardy of losing out on being granted access to many other photo sites if there continues to be disrespectful individuals and photo tour leaders trespassing onto private fields and into buildings without the permission of the landowner. If you see another photographer or photo tour group trespassing, standing in a planted field, going into a farmer's barn or other building, blocking roads, or parking on public roadway, say something.

RCW 9A.52.070

Criminal trespass in the first degree

(1) A person is guilty of criminal trespass in the first degree if he or she knowingly enters or remains unlawfully in a **building**. Example: Barn, building, silo, house, shed, or other structure.

(2) Criminal trespass in the first degree is a gross misdemeanor,

RCW 9A.52.080

Criminal trespass in the second degree

(1) A person is guilty of criminal trespass in the second degree if he or she **knowingly enters or remains unlawfully in or upon premises of another** under circumstances not constituting criminal trespass in the first degree.

(2) Criminal trespass in the second degree is a misdemeanor,