

Nikon AF-S 28mm f/1.8G Initial Impressions

by E.J. Peiker

After seeing some initial reviews I procured a Nikon 28mm f/1.8G lens. I have been looking for an affordable, fast wide angle prime for some time to use in my night photography. I have not purchased one until now since the 24mm f/1.4 and 35mm f/1.4 lenses are extremely expensive. They are also a bit heavy and slow to focus. The 24mm is slightly wide for my purposes and has some fairly severe distortion as you get to the faster apertures. The 35mm would probably be the perfect lens for me but for the amount of use that this lens will get, the \$1700 price tag is a too steep. On paper, the MTF curves for the \$700 28mm f/1.8G lens are identical to the 35mm f/1.4 while only giving up 2/3 of a stop. It is a professional grade lens and includes Nikon's high end nano-crystal coatings for flare control, a lens hood and pouch.

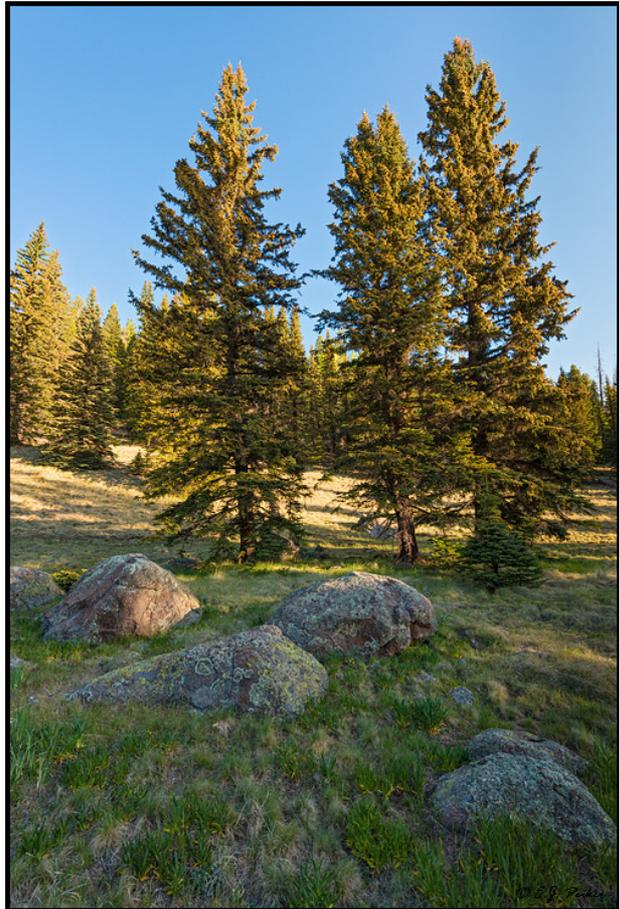


After unboxing the lens, my initial impressions were positive. The lens is relatively light weight and utilizes Nikon's top notch professional build quality. It has a 67mm filter thread and the front is non rotating as is customary for professional quality lenses and better consumer grade lenses

After receiving the lens, I put it through my standard test suite. Center sharpness is quite good throughout the aperture range. Even at f/1.8, coupled to a D800E, the lens approaches the point of outresolving the ISO 12233 test chart. By f/2.8 the lens easily outresolves this test chart. Peak resolution is seen between f/4 and f/8 before starting to see a slight reduction due to diffraction at even smaller apertures. Corner sharpness at f/1.8 is better than I expected and peaks at f/5.6. There is a drop off in contrast in the corners at f/1.8 that is better but still present at f/2 but is completely gone at f/2.8. Chromatic aberration is very well controlled throughout the aperture range. I would have no hesitation whatsoever using the lens at f/1.8 if necessary, especially in conjunction with 1.2x crop mode or 4:5 crop mode which eliminates the lower contrast corners. But

even in full frame FX mode, the lens is quite good. It is on par with the aforementioned 35mm f/1.4 lens.

How does this lens compare to the highly regarded Nikon 24-70mm f/2.8G lens. In short, it blows it away in every regard and at every aperture. This is true for resolution, chromatic aberration, and especially rectilinear distortion. At f/1.8, this lens is sharper and has fewer distortions and better contrast than the 28-70mm at f/4. There is no regime that I could find where the 24-70 at 28mm is better in any category of lens performance than the new 28mm f/1.8 lens. It has been a long time since I have done a zoom to prime comparison and as good as zooms have gotten, I was not expecting such a big difference. My primary reason for buying this lens was for low light photography but after these test results, I will likely use it much more often and in daylight situations. The convenience of a zoom lens is unparalleled with prime lenses but a kit containing a 24mm, 28mm, 35mm, 50mm and 85mm prime would yield significantly higher image quality. This is definitely something to contemplate for the future in the age of the ultra high resolution D800E.



Overall, especially at the \$700 price point for a professional grade 28mm f/1.8 prime lens, I am elated with this lens.

E.J. Peiker is a member of Nikon Professional Services and receives some services free of charge from Nikon Corporation.