

iStockphoto

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Review By Steve Gibson

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[istock2013logo.png](#) [3]

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Our Review:

The first and at one time largest of the [microstock](#) [5] libraries. Now part of the [Getty images](#) [6] empire. Since 2003 we have watched the cost of photos steadily rise (good news for photographers), gone are the days when you could get a good usable image for \$1, they introduced XSmall images and in effect the cost of an image tripled overnight. In early 2010 exclusive images doubled in price making istockphoto very attractive to those who are willing to tie their images to just one agency. In 2014 Istock dropped selling smaller sized images at lower rates and introduced flat pricing per image no matter what the resolution; overnight the price of our 'standard sized 2mp' image shot up by 50%, but of course buyers get the full resolution for that price.

Overall the site is still popular among corporate/business buyers, in 2013 istock opened to doors to what a lot of photographers feel are inferior images, they (at time of writing) accept pretty much anything; regardless of bad keywording or image quality - istock is still however picky in terms of intellectual property. In doing this istock have been able to massively increase the size of their image collection in the last year, the downside being that long-tail searches often reveal lots of irrelevant, falsely titled/described cruft.

You should include iStockPhoto in your portfolio. Don't lose any sleep if as a non-exclusive you earn less on this site than on some of the other smaller sites.

The Killer Search

Clarify your search

By **lead** do you mean?

- ☒ Lead (Metal)
- ☐ Dog Lead (Pet Equipment)
- ☐ Leading (Moving Activity)
- ☐ Graphite (Material)

From all the work that goes into disambiguation of uploads istockphoto should have pretty much the best search technology ever seen at a microstock agency. Sadly the implementation leaves a lot to be desired and it's clear that some other financial or business concerns are seriously eroding the quality of search results. The search technology used makes it slightly more difficult to upload to as you have to clarify the meaning of your keywords. for example include a keyword 'orange' and you will be asked to tick one of two boxes Orange (Descriptive Colour) or Orange (Citrus Fruit), or perhaps you include the keyword 'lead' the response will be Lead (Metal), Dog Lead (Pet Equipment), Leading

(Moving Activity), Graphite (Material) etc. and the list goes on for 1000's of different ambiguous words in the English language. This really is cool stuff, as an image purchaser trying to clarify exactly what sort of image you want using words is a difficult business and this helps significantly.

Exclusive Photographer? 🏆

A big decision for any photographer to make. [Becoming exclusive](#) [7] with istock will mean that you cannot upload images to any other site. I can't comment on what it's like to be exclusive as I have no experience, many people swear by it. Exclusive photographers get a larger percentage per image purchase, and also receive 'care' from the site - istock will chase people who use your images in breach of the license on your behalf. You will also come across 'Exclusive+' which allows exclusive photographers to nominate a small amount of their images for sale at a higher price.

The top exclusive photographers also get to sell their images via getty's image network (including photodisk) increasing sales potential dramatically.

Audio, Video, Illustration, Music, Flash, Logos... 📺 📷 🎧 🎵

Along with several other agencies istockphoto also accept video, vector illustrations, and submissions to their audio library 'istockaudio'. Even if you only contribute photographs to istock it's important to consider that buyers may find istock a convenient one-stop-shop for all their media needs, and these buyers will be your potential customers.

It's true that at present many buyers are only in the market for images, but demand for video is growing fast and royalty rates are higher. I can see one recipe for success in this emerging market is having quality video with matching print resolution images, hence designers can create matching online video and web/print campaigns; perhaps even just the option to go back and download matching images if they become needed will be enough to make your video work stand out.

istock Tips 🛠️

Uploading

Istock is the only major microstock site that does not support [FTP](#) [8]/SFTP upload. There are a couple of work-arounds for this. Firstly there is the istock image manager available for download from their site ([istockphoto.com/ws_client_intro.php](https://www.istockphoto.com/ws_client_intro.php) [9]). The second option is to use [picworkflow](#) [10] or similar [upload assistant](#) [11] to submit images but make sure you log into istockphoto and set those categories and keywords once the upload is done. The third option is a simple time saver: bookmark the page that is shown when you have clicked "upload > image type" (the one with a browse button) put the bookmark in a shortcut bar in your browser, then once you have logged in you can click it and save yourself a couple of clicks and page loads for every image you want to upload i.e. just click that shortcut when you receive the upload confirmation page and you are ready for another image.

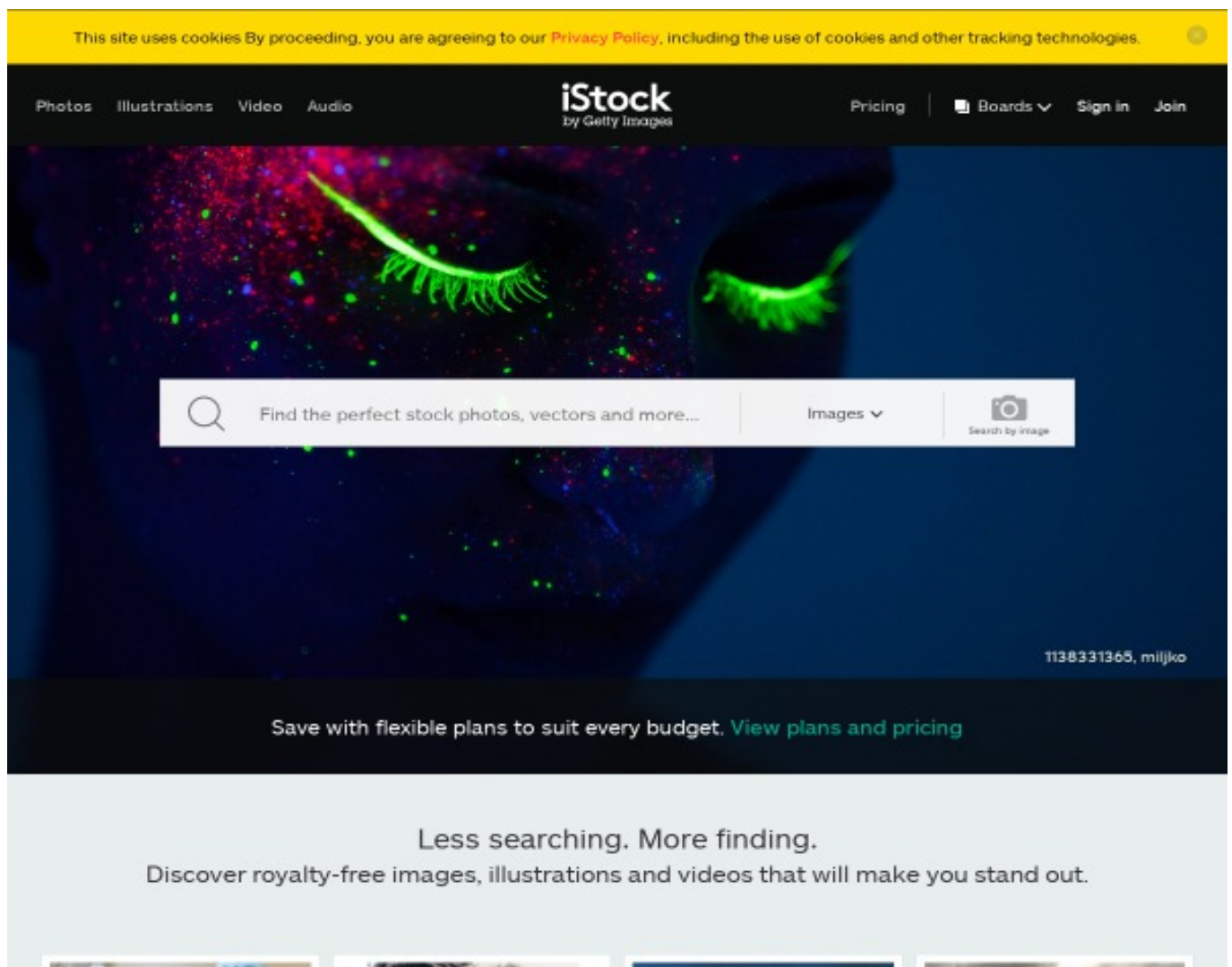
Promotion

Public Lightboxes are a great way of showcasing a range of at least 20 of your images that feature related subjects or styles. These are a great targeted landing page for you to link to from somewhere else online (twitter, blog, website etc.). External Resource: [Impact of using lightboxes](#) [12] (via microstocks.wordpress.com)

Number of images estimate: Getty/istock are tight lipped about the number of images in the istock collection.

Conclusion

Despite my criticisms of this site, the low royalty level (a low 15% for non exclusives, compared to previous levels of about 28%, no way to sugar-coat subscription rates for non-exclusive, they are disgraceful), the fact that it has fallen from the #1 spot, tedious keywording process etc, I still recommend istockphoto as one of the top three earning microstock agencies. The microstock market moves and changes all the time, although slipping they still hold 3rd place



[4]

[Visit istockphoto](#) [4]

Site Details **Media Types (in addition to RF Images):** This site accepts editorial images

This site accepts video footage

This site accepts vector illustrations

([sort by agency](#) [13])

Real US\$ Cost of 1 Standard Image: 10 ([compare prices](#) [14])

Referral Scheme: YES : Moving Goal Posts, previously only paid for recruiting a new photographer who earns at least \$100, now one off \$20, 20 credits or 20% of first purchase for recruiting a new buyer who purchases a minimum package in 30 days. (this offer replaces a dreadful \$10 flat referral fee offered before Nov 2011) ([compare rates](#) [15])

Exclusivity Options Available: Exclusive Contributor ([compare](#) [16])

Cost of a standard image (1600x1200) 2MP approx: 1 Credit

Royalty Rate: 15% for non exclusive images (video 20%). Exclusive members (25% to 45%) and double image sale price. Subscription downloads for non-exclusive images earn a disgraceful 10c. ([compare](#) [17])

Cost of 1 Credit (basic): \$ 10

FTP Upload: Not Available

Subscriptions:

Multiple Combinations of Downloads (10-750 month), Length of Subscription (1month or 1 year), photos, illustrations and vectors included, no video, option to access signature images at a premium.

1 Month: 10 images \$40 (essentials)

1 Month: 10 images \$100 (signature)

Annual: 50 images/month \$1000 (essentials)

Annual: 750 images/month \$3800 (signature)

(corporate accounts have separate price structure)

([compare subscriptions](#) [18])

API: Search: XML (Details: [istockphoto.com/webservices/xmlrpc_doc](https://www.istockphoto.com/webservices/xmlrpc_doc)) ([list all](#) [19])

Site Statistics **Approx. size of photo collection (0 = no current estimate):** 30000000

Images ([compare](#) [20])

Alexa Traffic Rank: 603 (a measure of the site popularity, lower number is better)

Alexa 3 Month Change: -42% (measurement of the increase of site popularity compared with three months ago, negative is a decrease)

Community **Facebook:** [fan page link](#) [21] ([list all](#) [22])

Twitter: [@istock](#) [23] ([list all](#) [22])

Photographers: 160000

(may 2020)

[istockphoto.com/au/plans-and-pricingsource:marketingmag.com.au/hubs-c/evolution-of-stock-photography-in-marketing/](https://www.istockphoto.com/au/plans-and-pricingsource:marketingmag.com.au/hubs-c/evolution-of-stock-photography-in-marketing/)

Overall Rating: **8/10** ([compare sites](#) [24])

<p>istock API stuff

http://www.istockphoto.com/forum_messages.php?threadid=46006&page=1 </p> <p>number of images for stockcharts</p>

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[4] <https://www.microstockinsider.com/redirect/istockphoto.com>

[5] <https://www.microstockinsider.com/glossary/term/14>

[6] <https://www.microstockinsider.com/guides/stock-industry-big-hitters-getty>

[7] <https://www.microstockinsider.com/guides/exclusive-or-non-exclusive-a-microstock-dilemma>

[8] <https://www.microstockinsider.com/glossary/term/29>

[9] http://www.istockphoto.com/ws_client_intro.php

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- [10] <http://microstockinsider.com/guides/picworkflow-microstock-workflow-and-analysis-tool>
 - [11] <http://microstockinsider.com/guides/uploading-microstock-images>
 - [12] <http://microstocks.wordpress.com/2009/12/25/the-impact-of-using-lightboxes/>
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