

Landscape Photography

Here are some points to consider when making landscape photographs. The list is a personal view and not exhaustive, and not all points are applicable to all circumstances, but hopefully they'll help.

Light

This is the most important thing in any photography, but also the one least under our control.

- 1 Patience! If you have the time to wait, or can revisit the location, you will get the best photos.
- 2 If you don't have that much time (or patience!), adapt the type of photograph to suit the conditions and make best use of the light you have. This may not be ideal, but is often the most practical thing.
- 3 Preparation. If you have a choice of when to go, work out in advance where the light will be.

Subject

Interesting and exotic places help, but don't in themselves make for good photos.

- 1 Finding interest in the ordinary is a worthwhile challenge in itself.
- 2 Try different angles of view: high, low, up, down, wide, telephoto, close, far away.
- 3 Your own response or attitude to the place make a difference to how you photograph it.
- 4 Look for details within the landscape; or people, or animals.

Composition

The design of the photo, the way the various elements are arranged in the frame.

Here are some pointers (not rules!) in no particular order...

- 1 *Foreground, midground, background*
Using all three gives depth to the photo, wide-angle shots in particular often need a strong foreground to give scale and interest. Many photos don't need all three though, so make a choice or try different variations on a composition.
- 2 *Horizon*
Make a choice about where the horizon should be, and keep it level.
- 3 *Sky*
'Use it or lose it'. A great sky can really add to a photograph, so you might want to make it a prominent feature. A bland one can be cropped out completely or kept minimal.
- 4 *Landscapes can be portrait*
I prefer the terms 'horizontal' and 'vertical' as they don't prejudge the type of photo you're doing. Be prepared to tip the camera on it's side if it helps.
- 5 *Lines*
Curved or straight, lines can help lead the viewer through the photograph.
Horizontal lines can lend a calm mood, diagonals can be more dynamic or give perspective.
- 6 *'Thirds' and balance*
The so-called 'rule of thirds' can be a brilliant device or a constraint, use it deliberately but don't become a slave to it.
Decide whether elements within the photo should be in balance or more discordant.

Timing

Not just the time of year or time of day, but also when to press the shutter.

- 1 The weather will determine to a large extent the type of photograph you might get, as it determines the amount and quality of light available to you.
- 2 If the light is changing, wait a while until it is best. Try different light in the same photo.
- 3 People, animals, vehicles and clouds all move; wait until they're in a good position.

Camera and Equipment

Choice of lens, exposure and camera settings make a big difference to the look of a photograph. Other accessories, such as a tripod or filters can also help with certain photos.

Having said that, using a single camera or lens can give a good discipline in making you search out interesting photos with limited options. I tend to carry less and less...

1 *Lens*

Wide-angle lenses do so much more than just 'get lots in', which can make dull photos if you're not careful.

Telephoto lenses are likewise more than just a way to avoid walking closer!

Both can have dramatic effects on the perspective of a photo and the relationship between foreground and background, as well as determining how much actually fits into the frame.

2 *Aperture, shutter and camera settings*

These are all choices to make and can affect the photo greatly. Some cameras give more options than others, and the better you understand what your available settings can do for a photo, the more you can take charge of the results.

3 *Exposure*

Recording the correct amount of light is one of the main quality factors affecting a photo.

Virtually all cameras give some degree of control over exposure, and if in doubt about what's best make a few different exposures of the same image.

If your camera shows the histogram for an image, this is a better way of assessing exposure than looking at the LCD, which will look very different in different light.

4 *Tripod*

Essential for some photos, such as long exposures.

Some people carry one everywhere, others prefer to travel light. Whichever you do, make it a deliberate choice and accept that the photos you can get (and the experience of getting them!) might be different depending on that choice.

5 *Filters, lens hoods and other accessories*

These can help with certain photographs if they can be fitted to your camera.

With these or any other accessories, including lenses, only rush out and buy them if you know you'll get good use from them, and get the best you can reasonably afford.

Post Production

A camera is a mechanical device, and no matter how well you use it, or how long you wait for perfect light, it cannot record the world in the way you experience it. We have an emotional or subjective response to what we photograph - a camera does not - and so sometimes we have to use some post production software to 'restore' the photograph to how we actually saw and felt it at the time of shooting.

Also, we often have to make our photographs in less than perfect conditions, which might give results that look a little flat or contrasty, or the colours might not be ideal for the subject.

The extent to which people are willing to undertake post production adjustment is a very personal thing. At one end of the scale, some consider any adjustments to be cheating, or at best a way of making up for imperfect technique or lighting.

At the other end, some like to manufacture an essentially new image from the one they start with, or combine several into a more idealised composite.

At the end of the day it's your photograph and you must treat it as you see fit! There are no rights or wrongs, only choices. The more experienced and practiced you become with both camera and post production, the more choices you are able to give yourself...