

16 Simple Landscape Photography Tips

Here you'll find a number of simple landscape photography tips. Great landscape photographs capture the spirit of a place, and the techniques used support that purpose. Wide-angle lenses and settings can include more of the scene, but must be used with care to prevent everything looking too distant. There are times when nature needs a helping hand and filters can come to the rescue for some shots. The landscape photography tips below will help you make more of the photo opportunities that you'll come across.

You don't take a photograph, you make it. - Ansel Adams

1. High vantage points that give you a commanding view of the scene are ideal - and if you have a camera that gives you control (e.g. an SLR) over the exposure settings, a small aperture of f/11 or f/16 will let you keep everything in focus.
2. Early morning and late evening are the best times for shooting landscapes. This is because the low angle of the Sun picks out shadows and reveals textures. (Go to www.sunrisesunset.com to create a monthly calendar of sunrise, sunset and twilight times.)
3. The best landscapes are rarely found at the side of the road. So be prepared to go for a trek with a map or a GPS Unit in an effort to seek out the most interesting locations.
4. Wide angle lenses are commonly used for landscapes because they will allow you to include more in the frame and open up perspective. A wide-angle zoom lens gives you more latitude in framing the scene and cropping out distracting features.
5. Whenever possible, place something of interest in the foreground of the shot to create a sense of depth. At the same time, ensure that you use a small aperture to keep everything in focus.
6. Another great but simple landscape photography tip is to anchor your camera to a tripod to slow down your pace of working when shooting landscapes - this means you'll take fewer but better pictures. Get a light model to cut down on weight if you do a lot of walking to your locations.
7. Look out for scenes that will let you crop the top and bottom of the image to produce a more dramatic "letterbox" panoramic composition.
8. Use a polarizing filter to darken the sky and saturate the colors in the landscape (this is the one must-have filter for landscape photographers).
9. Use graduated grey or neutral density filters to darken the sky and reduce the contrast between the landscape and the sky. Polarizing filters aren't much use for bright cloudy skies but graduated filters are. Frequently, the sky looks burned out in photos because the films or digital sensors don't have the range to record the brightness differences between it and darker foreground scenery. (Films and sensors still aren't as good as the human eye!)
10. Use color correction filters to change the color of light on a landscape. These filters can either warm up the landscape or cool it down, depending on the filter color used. In this image, a sepia graduated filter was used upside-down to color the foreground rocks only.
11. Try using a soft focus filter to add an ethereal quality to the scene. These filters blur the bright areas of a scene into the shadows to give the image a glow.
12. If you're an experimenter, try making your own filters. There's no guarantee you'll get good results, but your photos will certainly look different. You can make a filter out of anything that's at least partially transparent - a bit of old stocking, colored sweet wrappers, vaseline rubbed on an old filter (don't ever rub vaseline



directly onto a lens - you'll ruin it permanently!) Or you could try breathing gently on your lens (in cool conditions) to get a soft-focus effect.

- 13.** Use the Hyperfocal Distance to obtain the fastest shutter speed with greatest depth of field. Hyperfocal focusing allows you to get everything sharp, from things close up to the camera to those far away. It's more reliable than just setting the focus at infinity. You will need a camera that allows manual focusing though.
- 14.** If you use a digital camera, and your camera is capable of it, shoot RAW images rather than JPGs. The RAWs will take up more room on your memory card but there's no in-camera processing done on the image (as there is for JPGs). RAW images will give you greater latitude for image manipulation (using Adobe PhotoShop, PhotoShop Elements, Paint Shop Pro or some other image manipulation package).
- 15.** Be original! Develop your own style and unique vision. Any competent photographer can duplicate others' work. Truly great photographers produce unique images. Avoid cliché photography. Go for non-standard viewpoints, say from ground-level rather than eye-level. Imagine the world as seen from an animal's viewpoint rather than a human's!
- 16.** Tell a Story! Why tell stories with your camera? Well, for one thing, people who look at pictures will enjoy looking at a story over a snapshot any day. Telling stories with your camera forces you to slow down and think about what you are doing. What is it about this scene that makes you want to make a photograph? What moves you or attracts your eye? Is there a theme, a phrase or a point of view that you want to capture and preserve?

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