

Beginners' Guide to

digital photography



[Part 5: The Natural Environment]

Capturing a
Breathtaking View

The Challenges
of Seascapes

part five



part five: the natural environment

Landscapes

Landscapes are one of the most popular subjects to photograph. A breathtaking view has the ability to move and inspire us in ways few other subjects can, however it's often quite difficult to do justice to it photographically. The feeling of majesty you get when you viewed the scene is lost in the two dimensional image.

When you look at a landscape, your field of vision encompasses a large area and when your eyes travel over it they focus only upon the elements that you find alluring, ignoring all other less appealing elements.

Applying some of the knowledge gained from the composition lesson (part 4) when photographing landscapes will improve your landscapes greatly. Look around for different prospects, find a focal point, a main point of interest, and

select items to include in the scene that enhance it. Use lines in the scene to draw the eye to the subject. Include something in the foreground, middle distance and background to give the image an element of depth.

The right lighting is essential to producing beautiful landscape images. Generally speaking the most captivating element in stunning landscape images are the vivid colours so you'd do well to avoid the harsh midday light that can bleach the scene of colour. Photographing in the early morning or late afternoon will not only improve the richness of colour, but cast long soft shadows that serve to further portray depth. When photographing mountains or large structures, it's a good idea to include an object of known size in the picture in order to emphasize the structure or object's height for the viewer.



If you can, try returning to your scene at different times of the day to get a sense of how the changes in light affect the landscape. If you are not able to return, use a polarizing filter to help darken the sky and improve colour saturation. You'll notice also that atmospheric elements such as a dusty afternoon haze, a morning fog, or storm clouds, can alter the mood of your scene. These elements can produce a strong emotional response to your image. Still cold mornings can give a sense of quiet calm, or perhaps solitary eeriness, whilst a stormy sky will conjure feelings of foreboding and concern.

Use a graduated filter to reduce contrast in scenes that have more than a couple of stops of exposure between the highlights and shadows and remember that your camera's exposure meter can become fooled when photographing very bright surfaces such as snow fields. Expose for the most important elements in the scene and crop out any very dark shadows as these are likely to be reproduced as ugly black blotches.

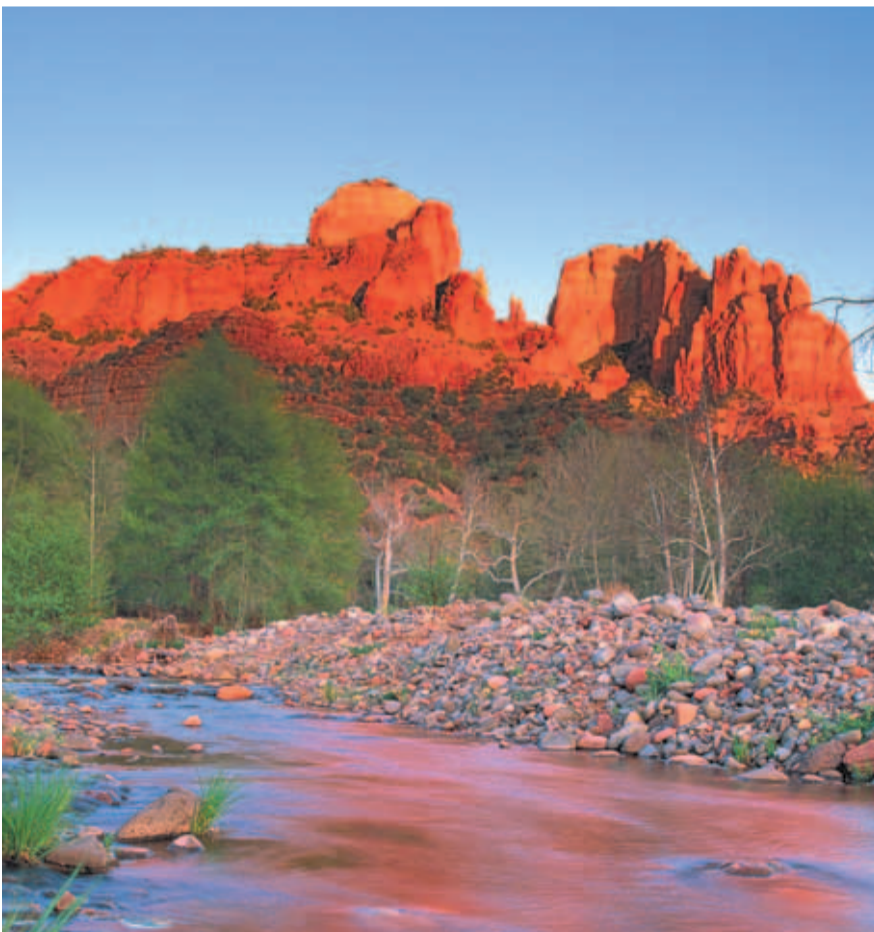
When photographing a landscape you'll usually select a small aperture (i.e. f16) in order to capture your scene in sharp detail. This will generally mean a slower



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shutter speed so you'll need to brace your camera in order to avoid camera shake. Bring along a light weight tripod if you are planning on travelling any distance on foot. Be warned though that even a light tripod can become heavy and cumbersome after only a short time if you are carrying it in your hand. If you plan on doing a lot of landscape photography, you should think about investing in a good, sturdy backpack that can house not only your camera, but also your tripod and other equipment. Good shoes with plenty of grip are also a must.

If you have an SLR you will want to consider lens choice. 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 options in framing the scene and cropping out distracting features. Experimenting with your different lenses will give you a better understanding of their different capabilities and the effect on your subjects.



Seascapes

Unlike most landscapes where light is the variable, the sea is in constant movement, so even in the same light you can capture a variety of different images.

Next time you are at the beach, have a good look around and pay particular attention to all the movement and drama playing out around you. Waves crashing on jagged rocks, wind blowing through the grass and shrubs, sea gulls swooping for food, sailing boats and tankers, clouds rolling in, people surfing and fishermen on the rocks. Capturing movement in a seascape

can add interest to an otherwise static image.

Try getting down low for a different perspective or turning your camera for a different angle, just remember to keep your horizons straight as nothing ruins a good image quicker than a sloping horizon. Reflections and silhouettes can also add an interesting element to your water shots.

There are a couple of very useful filters you can use to improve conditions when shooting seascapes that will assist you in achieving pleasing results. In strong lighting conditions, use a >



Seascapes (cont.)

neutral density filter. This will enable you to lengthen exposure times and give your waves a soft, smoky look. A graduated filter will help to reduce the contrast between the landscape and the sky and a polarising filter will darken skies and reduce haze.

Be prepared to get wet when photographing seascapes. Wear water shoes with plenty of grip to prevent slipping and risking not only your safety but that of your camera and equipment. Use a skylight or UV filter to protect your lens from abrasions caused by particles of sand and always pack a lens cleaning kit and towel. Some photographers will also wrap their camera body in a plastic bag to protect the camera from sea spray and

erosion caused by the salt.

You'll save yourself a lot of time if you do a bit of homework before you set out. Tide times and angles of the sun at sunrise and sunset can be extremely useful information when planning a visit to a site you've never been to before. There is a very handy (and free), piece of software available on the internet called "The Photographer's Ephemeris" that uses Google Earth to show exactly where the sun and moon rise and set in any location on the planet, on any given day. There is even a version for iPhone. Apart from the software itself you'll also need to download Adobe Air but both are available to download from www.photoephemeris.com.



Put Your Best Image Forward

Send us a photograph that you've taken of a land or seascape. Please only send 1 image (approx 1MB) to photo@dailyexaminer.com.au. Deadline for entries is 5pm Thursday. The best images will appear in the next instalment of Beginners' Guide to Digital Photography, published on Monday 21st March.

Prize for the best image each week will be a 7" Digital Photo Frame. All photographs appearing in the paper will win the photographer 50 free 6x4 prints in store at Harvey Norman Grafton.

At the end of the course, the best image will win the photographer a Panasonic Digital SLR twin lens camera Kit (DMC-G10KTWIN) VALUED AT \$900.00. **ALL PRIZES COURTESY OF HARVEY NORMAN.**



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