

A Few More Tips on Landscape Photography

Research

There are thousands of locations you can go and take photographs and even more places you can get inspiration from on what to photograph when you're there. A good read of the various Outdoor Photographer and similar magazines, and maybe the various Canadian Landscape Groups on Flickr, will give many clues and will mean you don't have to waste precious hours walking for miles until you find a perfect photographic location. Places where you have good foreground and background interest are great for sunsets. I've mentioned elsewhere the benefits of a small, free computer program called '[The Photographers' Ephemeris](#)' which will show you angles of the sun and moon on any location, all through the day - very useful.

Planning

Once you've decided on a location, map out a route you're going to drive/walk and if you're planning on venturing to a remote area make sure you pack a map, food, waterproof clothing and a mobile phone. If you're visiting a new location don't stray off the footpaths unless you know where you're going.

Make sure you check the weather forecast before you plan on taking your trips as it can change regularly. Don't assume that a sunny day is best, as the time of day and area you're visiting can mean that early-morning mist works well while in other locations you need the long shadows created in the afternoon. Avoid plain, boring, overcast grey days as there will be no detail in the sky, and the land won't look very interesting. If it's sunrises you're off to photograph, check the sky on the night before - if it's clear you'll have a good sunrise that potentially will be bursting with colour but a sky with a bit of cloud cover's even better as the morning light will be more diffused.



Time

Light becomes flat and less interesting after lunch so set the alarm clock to go off early. A blue, clear sky in the middle of the day should be avoided. However, if there's a little bit of cloud they can create shadows to add interest to the flat light.

For sunrise, you need to be facing east at your chosen location at least twenty to thirty minutes before the sun rises so you have time to set your gear up.

With Sunrise in the bag, consider where the light will be for sunset and give that a go. Just remember to shoot quickly as the sun moves down the sky rapidly and the mood and light in the scene can change extremely quickly.



Depth of field

With most landscapes you'll want everything to be sharp and a smaller (but usually not *the* smallest) aperture setting is the simplest way to do this. This does mean less light will be able to reach your camera's sensor so you'll need to either increase the ISO (not good unless you use a full-frame sensor at least, because of added noise), or use a slower shutter speed.

Tripod

A tripod is an essential piece of kit for any landscape photographer. More than that... a **sturdy** tripod is an essential piece of kit. We've just seen that, to get a good (large) Depth of Field, you'll need a smaller aperture. This, in turn, means a slow shutter speed which

makes the Tripod vital.

Carrying a tripod with you also means you can blur the cascades of a waterfall or stream and capture sunrises and sunsets without the risk of camera shake ruining your shot. Then there's the extra ability to shoot panoramas or HDR that having a Tripod allows. Even a tripod's not much use if you have to handle the camera to shoot - so get a remote shutter release. Then set your shooting mode to Self-Timer... sound weird? Well this is for SLR/DSLRs - with the mirror inside. If you fire the shutter release with a short delay time (3 to 5 seconds is usual) you'll hear the mirror lift, causing some vibration in the camera for a moment. Your short Self-Timer delay, though, will allow this to happen in good time to allow the camera to stop vibrating before the shutter itself is open. One other thing - switch off any in-camera or in-lens Vibration Reduction when using your camera on a tripod. The VR works by setting up a counter-shake to combat the shake in the hands - and if there's no shake for it to combat, it just works like an extra shaking!



Lenses

If you want to shoot sweeping, majestic landscapes you'll need a wide-angle but for shots with interesting foregrounds that are surrounded by distant mountains/hills take your longer lens out of the bag. With Landscape photography, you don't really need the fastest, most expensive kind of lens - because you will very rarely need it to be used with the aperture 'wide-open'..... f/16 is much more normal. You could, therefore, find used lenses around that are perfectly suitable for the job and save lots of cash.

Accessories

A waterproof bag, warm clothing and a flask of tea/coffee should be on the check-list. Pack a few filters while you're getting ready too. A Polariser will saturate colours, enhance the sky and help cut down on reflections when you're working near water. While a graduated ND filter's handy for when the sky is a lot lighter than the ground. If you want to add a touch of warmth to a sunrise try fitting a warm-up filter to your lens.

Check your shot

Before you sit your tripod down in the same place a thousand other photographers have stop a minute to think if you can photograph the over-done scene in a different way. Will spending a minute or two moving your feet slightly to the left or right or getting lower down give you a fresh perspective?

Make sure there's nothing in frame that would spoil a perfectly good shot, check that your horizon's straight and take a look at the floor to see if your shadow's trying to take centre stage.



Photo by [David Clapp](#).

Foreground interest

If the shapes of the distant mountains catch your eye you don't have to shoot them with a vast empty field in front of you. You can use the pulling power of a longer lens to fill the frame with the mountains but don't overlook filling the foreground with interest. Paths and fences which begin at the front of the frame and lead the eye through the shot can act as guides to the detail which sits at the back while barns, single trees and rocks/boulders help give your composition a three dimensional feel. Try using foreground detail such as over-hanging trees and arches as frames. If you find them to be too distracting soften them to create an out of focus frame.

Lead in lines

As mentioned above, paths and fences are a great way to lead the eye through a photograph and so are rivers, canals etc. If you're on a riverbank find a position on a curve or just below and you'll have a leading line that starts in one corner and meanders through to the back of the shot. While a line of lock gates on a canal will not only guide the eye up the canal but they also add symmetry to your shot. On the Rideau, of course, you only get two or three canal locks in a row..... check this one out (Caen Hill, on the Kennet and Avon Canal, Wiltshire, England).

