

# How to take Landscape Photographs

## 21 Landscape Photography Tips



Landscapes are a popular subject for many photographers but there's a bit more to it than just clicking away with your camera at a scene in front of you. Here is my 'How to take Landscape Photographs - 21 Landscape Photography Tips'. These tips will help you take better landscape photographs.

I'll cover;

- Basic Landscape Photography Camera Settings
- Thought
- Composition
- Time of Day
- Foreground Interest
- Time of Year
- Lens Choice
- Equipment
- Planning your Photo
- Patience
- Depth of Field
- RAW Format
- Check behind
- Water
- Trees
- Open Skies
- SeaScapes
- Sunsets
- ISO Settings
- Scale
- Breaking the Rules
- Learn from the Masters

A word before we start on the basic landscape photography camera settings. Set your camera settings to;

## **Aperture Priority and f16**

Usually, a wide-angle lens and a small aperture say, f16 is a good starting point. Set your camera to aperture priority, that way you can choose your depth of field. Using f16 as an aperture for landscape photography or depending on your lens, higher. This will let you get the maximum amount of the scene in focus.

1.

### **Thought.**

It's not just a case of rocking up and taking a photo a few minutes thought and a bit of time walking around the scene can help you take a better photograph. Think about different angles to take your photograph from and think about height and vantage points. Take as many landscape photos as you want to.

It's not like an old film camera, digital cameras let you take many photographs for free and you can immediately see the results. So keep checking the back of your camera and see how your landscape photos are coming out. Some of the most impressive Landscape photographs are taken from advantage points and angles you've never seen before. The photographer has added something new. To try to find an interesting and new vantage point to take the photograph from. Of course, make sure you're safe!

2.

### **Composition.**

Whether it be the rule of thirds, a leading line or an interesting pattern include compositional elements in your photo to make it stand out. Chances are if you find something interesting in your photo, so will other people.

Try to do as much of the composition work as you can out in the field. Yes, you can crop your photo in postproduction, but it's almost impossible to add additional features to the picture!

Click here for more about [composition](#) and train yourself to analyse the scene with the composition in mind. Click here for more ideas about composition.

3.

### **Time-of-day.**

Time-of-day can make a huge difference to your photograph. Whether bright morning light, harsh midday sun, golden afternoon sunlight or the muted colours of Twilight, it can make a real difference to your picture. Also, overcast days can soften harsh edges in a photo.

Of course, bear in mind your geographical location, you are never going to get a great sunset facing east and conversely you never get a great sunrise facing west. Adjust the time you take the photograph accordingly.

Also, you may have to wait until the light changes. Try to allow as much time as you can because maybe the sun will poke through the clouds and illuminate the scene. For my money, early mornings and late afternoons offer the best light for landscape photography. However, that doesn't mean midday is totally wasted. Harsh midday light, when the sun is directly overhead can add something to a photo too.

Also, an overcast day is not necessarily bad for landscape. If there is some detail in the clouds they are dark and brooding it can inject a touch of drama into your photograph.

Click here for more about [time-of-day](#)

4.

## Foreground Interest

Number 4 on my 21 Landscape Photography Tips is foreground interest. In landscape photos, foreground interest is often overlooked. You can make your photo more interesting by adding something in the foreground whether it be tree stump rock or even a person adding a bit of foreground interest can pep up your landscape photo.

5.

## Time of year.

Earlier we mentioned time-of-day, but the time of year also has a great impact on the photo. Obviously, you never capture a snow scene in Midsummer but, with the photograph look better in the autumn with some amazing tree colour?

The difference between Autumn and Winter in the same location - How to take Landscape Photographs.

Make a note for yourself, if you go to a great location and think it might be good at another time of year jot it down and add it to you to do list. As can be seen above, the Autumn Winter picture is part of a landscape photography project I'm working on, taking pictures from the same viewpoint in different seasons and weathers.

6.

## Lens Choice

For most landscape photographs you'll put on a wide-angle lens on the front of the camera and click away. My own personal choice for landscape photography is a [Sigma 10-20mm lens](#). I use that 95% of the time. I love the way it fills the frame from edge to edge. But occasionally I'll stop and think;

'What if I put on a zoom lens?' My zoom lens of choice for landscape photography is the [Tamron 70-300mm](#). Being predominantly a landscape photographer, I don't use it very often, but when I do use this lens for landscape photography, I love it!

Sometimes a scene can work well with a telephoto lens. The [telephoto lens](#) will compress perspective making it good for a line of hills and other such subjects. It can give unique and unexpected photos. Everyone expects Landscape photographs to be wide angle, right? No, dare to be different!

7.

## Equipment

**You don't really need any special equipment to take great landscape photos.**

That being said, however, a tripod is a really useful thing to have. I have a lightweight travel tripod which I use and it was a reasonable price. Remember, hiking all over the landscape, weight soon becomes an issue!

Of course, make sure it's sturdy too. If you need to make your tripod more stable you can always hang your camera bag between the legs of it to add extra stability. Click here to see [What's in my camera bag](#), and what

I use. As can be seen below, with me looking like ten types of twat on the beach, is my [Ranger travel tripod](#). It only weighs 1.3kg so it is only just over a bag of sugar in weight! Also, it closes down to only 36cm or just about 14 inches.

## **Nikon D7200**

My landscape photography camera is a [Nikon D7200](#). I have found it to be a great camera for outdoor photography at the right price! Because, and let us not be coy about this, very few of us have an unlimited budget. I feel that the Nikon D7200 gives me the 'maximum bang for my buck'.

You may want to invest in some filters too. I can't stress strongly enough that a UV filter or skylight filter over your lens at all times will stop your lens becoming damaged by scratches and knocks. It's much cheaper to replace the filter than the lens.

Neutral density filters which can help balance the brightness of the sky with the comparative darkness of the scene. This can also be done in postproduction so bear in mind whether it's worth it for you.

A polarising filter can reduce glare and reflections while also enhance colours. For best results with a polarising filter position yourself between 45 and 90° from the sun. Click here for more on [Using polarising filters](#).

8.

## **Planning your photo.**

If you're going to a new area, get on [Google Maps](#) and check it out you go. It can really make a difference! You may be able to get a Street view of your proposed location so you'll be able to start planning your photos before you go.

Another useful tip is to check out [Trover](#), it's a photographic website that you can search for by location pictures. It can give you a good idea if there is anything interesting that your proposed location. By doing this planning ahead of time can maximise the time spent taking photos at the location.

Also, as common sense dictates, it's worth checking the weather forecast just before you go. Click here for more ideas on [planning your photos](#).

9.

## **Patience.**

Number 9 on my 21 Landscape Photography Tips is Patience. Yes, it's a virtue. But patience in landscape photography is a must. Maybe the clouds don't look right, then you need to wait for the Sun to breakthrough. Or there are unwanted people in the scene, give them time to wander off. Actually, it's amazing how many times I've rocked up to the location and people are getting in the way, it's all part and parcel of taking photographs of landscapes.

10.

## **Depth of field.**

Depth of field or DOF is an essential part of landscape photography. As I mentioned before, start with your camera on a small aperture. However, if you are using a zoom lens will probably get best results from your lens somewhere between F8 and F-16. If your camera has a live view feature check it to see what's in focus and what's not.

Failing that, take the photograph, look on the back of the screen, and see what is in focus. You may have to go up to f22 to get the required amount of the picture in focus. But an F-22 you will get more vignetting than you would at f16. Play around, they cause many photos as you like at these different settings to see what looks best. Each lens is different and only you can determine what is best for your lens and camera combination. Click here for a more in-depth explanation about [depth of field](#).

11.

## **RAW**

Number 11 on my list of how to take landscape photographs is to do with how you save the pictures the camera takes. Always shoot in raw format if you can, your camera manual will tell you how to set this. In a Nikon camera that will be the Nef file type.

The reason being is that raw files contain much more detail and information because they are a larger file size and raw files give much more opportunity to correct errors in postproduction without sacrificing quality.

12.

## **Look behind you**

A tip often overlooked when taking landscape photography is to look behind you. This goes hand-in-hand with tip one, 'thought'. When you're taking your photographs, stop and look behind you to see what the scene looks like. This can often send your thought processes down another creative path and you can come up with a really cracking shot.

13.

## **Just add water**

Water can add an extra dimension to your landscape photography whether it be a small stream, a big river, or a lake. Reflections in water are a great way to add a new dimension to the photograph. Also, a slow shutter speed when photographing the water will blur it and give a very pleasing image. Click here for more information about [how to blur water for creative effect](#).

14.

## **Trees**

Trees and forests can offer a whole new set of technical challenges in your landscape. How does the forest make you feel? Then, try to convey that on the picture. Is it dark and brooding or is it light and airy? You can adjust the exposure on your photograph to convey a sense of mood.

Also, when in a forest try looking straight up! It is often a very different vantage point that people don't normally see and can make your photo stand out from the crowd.

Whether you are shooting from inside the forest or toward it look at the compositional aspect and see what works best. An extreme wide-angle lens will converge the verticals making all the trees come together at the top of the photo.

Conversely, a telephoto lens will compress all the trunks together when looking through the forest. Try a variety of photos and see what works for you.

15.

## **Open Skies**

Wide open landscapes can often be the most difficult to photograph because they lack a certain something, call it a point of interest. Sometimes though that can work to your advantage.

With an ultra wide angle lens, you can fill the frame with miles and miles of open landscape. Sometimes, with a cloudy sky and using the rule of thirds, include two-thirds sky and one-third land. Depending on just how it looks it can make for a great photograph.

16.

## **Seascapes**

Seascapes offer their own set of technical challenges. I have written a separate blog post all about [Seascapes and how to photograph them](#). They are full of reflections and light and can fool the camera's metre.

Bear this in mind as you take the photos and always check your work on the back of the camera and compensate accordingly.

Ultimately, work with the shoreline you have. Adding some palm trees will definitely give the sense of the tropical beach but so can a lone coconut shell in the sand. (Even if you have to put it there yourself!) Work with what you've got to tell the story of the location.

17.

## **Sunsets**

Landscape sunset photography is once again full of its own challenges. It is too much to cover in this short paragraph so I have written a separate blog on [How to photograph sunsets and sunrises](#). The one thing I will say is that a tripod is a must! For the long exposures involved with sunset photography, you cannot hold the camera still enough.

And hand in hand with the tripod is shutter speed. Shutter speed for Landscape Photography sunsets changes things enormously! As can be seen, below in the short video. I have used a smartphone as it illustrates better the major difference shutter speed makes!

The same thing happens with your DSLR if you underexpose or overexpose the picture the colours alter radically. As I mentioned, check out my [How to photograph sunsets](#) for full details!

18.

## **ISO Settings**

Another How to take Landscape Photographs tip is the ISO setting. ISO settings for landscape photography are typically ISO 100. This gives you the cleanest image with less noise and grain. Using this iso setting will give you the best and sharpest image possible.

However, there are always exceptions to the rule. With the forests mentioned earlier, for example, a dark and brooding forest can sometimes benefit from a higher iso setting to add more grain to the photograph. Experiment and see what works for you!

19.

## **A Sense of Scale**

Showing scale in a landscape photograph can work wonders sometimes. Adding something recognisable in the frame can give scale and a sense of grandness to the landscape. Sometimes just adding a person to your photo will do the trick. If there is nobody about try putting yourself in the photo!

You can either do this through the self-timer feature on your camera or with a remote release. I mentioned earlier about waiting for people to leave the shot but sometimes a human being in the photo can work really well.

Of course, if the said person is wearing a giant chicken costume, I can think of no way to make that photo work!

20.

## **Break the Rules**

Now you've read through all the How to take Landscape Photographs - 21 landscape photography tips and rules, learn how to break them! Experiment with your photos, after all, digital photography doesn't cost film. Take as many photos as you can breaking the rules and who knows, you might see something that really works for you.

21.

## **Bonus Tip!**

This tip is one you can do at home. Type into Google fantastic landscape photographs and then click on images. It will show a whole page of great landscape photographs can look at and learn from. Look through the images angling tips from them, you'll be able to see the tips I've mentioned above in other people's work as well as my own.

Also, Youtube is a great source of inspiration and a lot can be learned watching other photographers and how they take landscape photographs. Type into Youtube how to take landscape photographs and look at the results.

## **How to take Landscape Photographs - (21 Landscape Photography Tips) - Conclusions**

Ok, it's a lot to take in. But practice makes perfect and nobody gets it right all the time. But I have made this handy PDF, a sort of 'cutout and keep' guide.

[The Eccentric Englishman](#)