

## DISCUSSION GROUP

12.8.18

### LANDSCAPE

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This discussion group focused on Landscape Photography. This topic received top votes in the survey done at the initial meeting. Jay led the discussion.

These are some basic but important steps to consider when shooting landscape photographs. As this information was presented the group made comments based on their experiences and discussion followed.

1. Always have a tripod. It is important to have the flexibility to shoot at slower shutter speeds. You may not always use it but when you do need it, you'll be glad you have it. It's worth the trouble to carry it.
2. Bring and use a cable or a remote. This minimizes camera shake. You can also use time delay to achieve the same result.
3. Stabilize the camera. Make sure that the tripod is on solid ground or if you are holding the camera that you use the internal stabilizing features and brace the camera if possible.

NOTE: IF YOU HAVE STABILIZED THE CAMERA THROUGH ANY TOOL (TRIPOD/BEAN BAGS) , BE SURE TO TURN THE VIBRATION SETTING OFF. OTHERWISE THE CAMERA OR THE LENS WILL CONTINUOUSLY TRY TO ADJUST ITSELF. THE CAMERA/LENS GOES NUTS.!

- There are some other ways to steady your camera to minimize/avoid camera shake: set the camera on bean bags, hang bean bags from the center post on the tripod to help steady it. This is helpful if there is a strong wind or if you are in an area subject to vibration. It was mentioned that this can often happen on bridges.
4. Filters are important.
    - Neutral density filters are useful to blur motion. It allows you to shoot at a slower shutter speed. The ND filter reduces the amount of light getting to the camera, so you need to slow down the shutter speed to get the correct exposure (and this causes the moving object to be blurred)
    - Polarizing filters assist in removing glare. This is useful on sunny days. It particularly enhances the clouds and water.
      - Note that a polarizing filter must be adjusted in order to get the effect you want. It does not affect the entire frame equally. Polarizing filters all have

a moveable ring that changes the polarizing axis. When you move this ring, you will see different effects on the image you are viewing through the lens. You need to pick the best setting for the scene you are looking at.

- The effect of a polarizing lens changes across the field of view. For wide angle lenses this can lead to unwanted effects: the center of the image will have one polarizing effect and the edges will be different.

5. Lens : There are several very useful focal lengths that work well in Landscape photography. These examples are for crop sensor lenses.

- Wide Angle 10-22mm
- Mid-range 15-85mm
- Long range capability 18-400mm
- Fish eye 8mm
  - This is really a specialty lens. As a super wide angle, it pushes the subject back into the photo. You may want this effect without the distortion that you get with a fisheye lens. If so, you can crop the image down to a small section in the center which will reduce the distortion.
- Note that lenses come with various f stop ranges. For example, a wide angle may have a minimum f-stop of 3.5 while a telephoto like a 400 may have a minimum f stop of 6.3. The f-stop you use can have a big effect on the depth of field. Experiment with test shots to see how sharp the shot at various distances with different focal lengths and f-stops.
- Jay often uses a 15-85mm on his “crop sensor” camera. The smaller crop sensor makes the 15-85mm range equivalent to a 24-136mm lens on a full frame sensor camera.
- Think about the amount of gear you are taking and what you are shooting. Too many lenses make the trip longer and less enjoyable.

6. Exposure

- Shoot RAW. This gives you the most flexibility in post processing.
- “Expose to the right”. Always consider over exposing by a partial stop (increase the exposure). This will capture more detail in the raw file. You can then easily reduce the exposure in post processing without losing this extra detail This works in most instances but it is often very important in shots that have a lot of snow. Except snow. This is because the camera tries to get the average exposure of the image to correspond to neutral gray. This is not what you want with a snowy shot since it will reduce the detail in the white areas of the photo.

However, if you have a shot with a wide dynamic range you might not want to expose to the right if it will blow out the highlights. You can always take a test shot and check the histogram.

- When in doubt “bracket”. Shoot one or two stops on each side of the ideal setting. Again, this gives you the opportunity to “see” more of the scene and what you may like in it. It also gives you three images if it turns out an HDR merge will give you a better result.
- Some cameras have exposure compensation which can give you much the same effect.
- Settings are a matter of experimenting. A good starting point for landscape shots is using aperture priority, setting the ISO around 100 to 400 and putting the white balance on auto. Experiment with changing the shutter speed., the aperture and the ISO. All these setting will affect the depth of field which is often the thing you are trying to control.

## 7. Depth of Field

- Look at “live” view on the LCD to see the shot as the camera sees it. You will see the “actual” depth of field.
- Histogram readings can be useful to better gauge the exposure of the subject as well as other parts of the image. These are part of the experimentation. The fun can be in the trial and error.
- Live view also allows you to see what’s in focus and what is not in focus. You can expand the live view image to get a better look at the focus and details
- Set the focus point and recompose to get the composition you want (you may want to focus off center of the image to get the effect you want). Using “back button” focus allows you to set the focus with a button on camera back so you don’t have to keep your finger on the shutter to maintain the focus. See your camera manual for how to set the focus control to a button on the back instead of the shutter button.
- The higher aperture number (f-stop) the more in focus. The lower the number the more compressed the depth of field. (shorter)
- “Hyperfocal distance”: The hyperfocal distance is the closest distance at which a lens can be focused while keeping objects at infinity acceptably sharp. When the lens is focused at this distance, all objects at distances from half of the hyperfocal distance out to infinity will be acceptably sharp. The hyperfocal distance of a lens changes when you change the f-stop being used: smaller f-stops have longer hyperfocal distances.
- Usually in landscape photography you want the background in focus but there are times when out of focus or a soft background can be used for effect.

Jay then presented photographs from various photography books. (listing at end of this document). These books all have illustrations of the point made.

There are some elements of composition that can be helpful to keep in mind as we shoot.

- Landscapes are three dimensional. Look at the foreground and try to show some aspect of the shot to show dimensionality.
- Cropping can greatly change the composition of the shot. The entire perspective can be changed particularly if you have used a wide-angle lens. There can be several potential photographs in one shot when cropped. Remember in post processing cropping does sacrifice some resolution. Test this out for yourself.
- Perspective: Keys to consider when taking your photo:

A landscape photograph can be seen in six zones.

- Allow  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the frame for the sky.
- Look for the S curve in the photo to bring the viewer into the shot. For example, a river or the line of a field, hill or water.
- Wide angle lenses will make distant objects appear more distant from each other. Telephoto lenses will bring distant objects closer together. You should decide which effect works best for the image you are trying to create.
- Include overlapping terrain and other elements in the subject.
- Center on features of interest throughout the planes of the subject.
  - Background
  - Middle ground
  - Foreground
  - Cloud plane
  - Blue Sky plane

Look at the totality of what you see before you. Think about the composition. Take a quick shot to capture the subject. Then think about these elements and experiment with different vantage points, points of interest and camera setting options.

- Always...
  - Have a foreground feature. This gives perspective, especially in a wide angle shot. It gives perspective to the size and distance captured. It can also be a point to draw the viewer into the shot.

- Take two shots: Wide aperture and narrow aperture. This can create an entirely different photograph. Then take a shot with the aperture between these two. It can change the whole focus of the photograph.
- A comment was made that it is wise to “test” your lenses to find the “sweet spot”. The clarity of lenses varies at various F Stops and at various focal lengths.

The participants brought photographs to share and discuss. The point was made that when photographing a landscape (and probably most other types of subjects) take a shot to capture the subject and then ...TAKE MORE AND MORE.

Spend a lot of time looking at good photographs. This helps one see what elements are in those photographs. It helps as you look at a shot and think about some of the elements that you have seen in other photographs that made them appealing.

Take a shot and...then turn around and look behind you. There often is another shot in your sights.

When starting out, there are a lot of things to consider between setting the camera and setting the scene. Over time, key “composition elements” will be embedded in your mind. You may still take your time to get the most out of the shot.

## RESOURCES

Photographer’s Eye by Michael Freeman was recommended as a good book on composition and design.

Landscape Photography from Snapshots to Great Shots, by Rob Sheppard. This book illustrates a number of the topics presented early in our discussions.

Audubon Society guide to Landscape Photography, by Tim Fitzharris Look for the picture with the 6 zones of a landscape shot with deep perspective. Good illustration of the concept.