



TWOPEASINABUCKET.COM PHOTOGRAPHY COURSE: 12 WEEKS TO BETTER PHOTOS

By Mark & Joanna Bolick

LESSON TEN: Landscapes

By now at Week 10 we trust that most of you could probably write this article yourselves (or at least feel like you already have a good deal of knowledge under your belt.) So you tell us -- what should we concentrate on when shooting landscapes? Let's take a look at what we have learned so far and draw some conclusions...

First, let's look at the combination of **ISO, Shutter Speed and Aperture**. If we're shooting landscapes, we're obviously going to be outside, so you would be correct in choosing a lower ISO for more clarity in your picture. You're also going to want an f/stop around f/22 in order to have more of your beautiful landscape in focus. Shutter speed with landscapes is really not as important as the other two factors. You can have your shutter speed set on 60 or above for hand-held shots, or even lower if you choose to use a tripod for your landscapes. (Keep in mind, too, when choosing your lens that you're obviously going to want to capture as much of your field of view as possible.)

In regard to **Light** - use the available light to your advantage outdoors. Shadows and light can help create stark, rich landscape shots filled with depth and emotion. Pay attention to the location of the light and where the light creates the most impact and use it to your advantage.

Also important is your **Composition**. Landscapes are nice, but it's always good to have something in the image to grab your attention. Pay special attention to the horizon -- its position in your shot can give your photos a dramatic sense of isolation or openness. As far as inspiration, you might want to look up Ansel Adams online or flip through a photography book for ideas on how photographers compose their shots and draw you into their landscapes. *The most important thing to keep in mind when framing your landscape shots is to compose with the whole scene in mind.*

5 Basic Tips for Great Landscape Shots

This week Jamie & Chris Waters of {j a c} photography (www.jacshoot.com), located in Los Angeles, CA, have provided us with 5 great tips for landscape shots. The photos accompanying their five tips were taken in New Zealand in January of 2008.

tips & photos by Jamie & Chris Waters



#1

Use a wide angle lens --

you can include more of the setting with this type of lens. Keep in mind, too, that most point & shoot cameras provide you with a built-in wide angle lens and are particularly useful when you want to capture the entire scene in front of you.

#2

Find a bird's eye view --

position yourself so that you have an overall view of the landscape. Shoot from above, overlooking the scene from a higher vantage point so that everything in front of you is visible. Also make sure to use a small aperture so that everything is in focus.





#3

Locate a focal point -- a lighthouse, a statue, a barn, a tree... look for architectural objects or elements in nature that lead the eye and give the photo a sense of depth & perspective. Make sure to consider both the foreground and the background of your shot.



#4

Consider composition -- the rule of thirds can help you arrange the scenery into a nicely composed shot.

#5

Pay attention to the time of day -- sunsets are a great thing to capture (or you can do early morning, noon and dusk shots of the same location to view the differences in light and the features of the landscape that come into focus.)



Landscape photography is quite a bit different from portrait photography in that it can take as little or as much time as you wish to devote to it. Creatively, it is much more free form and less constricting. For the most part landscapes are rather solid and unchanging, and although the lighting (and weather) of the situation may change, landscape photography can give you the time you need to get more comfortable with your camera and your camera settings.

Here are a five more ideas to consider for creative landscape photos:

1. Play with Shadows, Silhouettes, & Reflections -- Play with the light as it hits the focal point of your photo.

Locate the shadows cast by elements in nature. Play with your camera settings to expose certain areas and then switch and expose different areas of your composition to create two completely different images of the same location. Be watchful for reflections -- trees or clouds reflecting on the surface of a still lake, for example.



2. Use lines to convey movement and pull the viewer's eye through the scene.



3. Consider Cityscapes

A nice change of scenery can be taking an overall view of your favorite city or hometown.



4. Don't forget Panoramic photography!

With some cameras (film, in particular) taking a panoramic photo is as easy as selecting the "panorama" option on your camera. With digital post-processing you can turn a standard 4x6 photo into a panoramic simply by cropping it at 4 x 10 or 4 x 9. Also consider taking a series of shots and stitching them together with digital software to give you a true panoramic shot -- one which encompasses a field of view greater than that of the human eye (a scene in which, in reality, you'd have to turn your neck back and forth in order to take it all in.)

5. Nightscapes

Don't let the setting sun get in your way! After all, we still have the light of the moon and stars to aid our way and enhance our photos. Nighttime landscapes can create some of the most dramatic visuals, but you will have to become familiar with a tripod and experiment with long shutter times. For example, you can stand on a bridge to shoot the busy traffic below you moving around the city and capture light trails to convey a sense of movement in your images. Or you can shoot the desert under a starry night and capture how the moon can light up a landscape like a foreign world. Just keep in mind that night landscape photography can be very gratifying and challenging all at the same time.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE: Landscapes

Here's the question we want to consider this week:
What does your view of the world look like?

Let's see some landscapes (frozen, tropical, or other!)

Share with us your view of the wide, wide world. Just remember to select an f/stop around f/22, compose your photo with the entire scene in mind, and apply any of the following 10 tips:

1. *Use a wide angle lens (if you have one)*
2. *Find a bird's eye view*
3. *Locate a focal point*
4. *Consider composition*
5. *Pay attention to the time of day*
6. *Play with shadows, silhouettes, and reflections*
7. *Use lines to lead the eye*
8. *Consider a city scene*
9. *Take a panoramic photo*
10. *Capture a nighttime scene*



Q & A: Tips from Bruce Dale

This week our featured photographer is Bruce Dale (brucedale.com). His work for National Geographic took him to over 75 countries and resulted in more than 2,000 published photographs. Bruce left National Geographic in 1994 to pursue a wider venue in photography. Since leaving, he has done a variety of commercial photography and still finds time to travel frequently. Although his cameras include medium, large, and panoramic formats most of his work today is done with a digital 35mm format camera.

In addition to his cameras, Bruce says, "Lenses, filters, and all the rest are tools. What's really important is to be open to the feeling of a place, to slow down and allow it in. Look at the scene from several angles, have the patience to wait for the right light, and if necessary return several times to find that magical moment that makes the scene extra special."

The following are Bruce's top 8 tips for landscape photography:

1. Simplify your gear—less is more. It's often faster to move closer or step back than to fumble with gear that is encumbering you.
2. A good tripod is important for landscapes. If you are waiting for the light to get just right, you can be all set up and ready if the camera is mounted on a tripod. However, don't let the tripod dictate where the camera position is. Choose the camera position very carefully – even an inch or two can make a difference – and then position the tripod at that spot.
3. Pay attention to the times when the sun is just at the edge of the clouds. It softens the foreground in an almost imperceptible way.
4. Watch for the shadows the clouds cast on the scene and include them to add depth to your image. They can add an extra dimension to your photo.
5. To check for the position of the sun and clouds, don't look directly at the sun, but carefully check the reflection of the sun and clouds in the lens of your sunglasses held in your hand.
6. Be careful of the placement of the line if you are using a graded filter. Hide it along a natural line in the scene. Tip it if necessary. Remember your lens will stop down when you shoot the image – the line will be a bit sharper than it looks through the viewfinder. Don't limit yourself to just using it on the sky—use it upside down if there is a lot of bright light, like snow, in the foreground.
7. Sunlight is nice, but give me fog or rain any day. Moody light can make for some dramatic images and greens take on a magical quality in rainy weather.
8. Wear good shoes. (I dislocated two shoulders and sprained 3 ankles before I learned this lesson.)