

7. Great Landscape Photography

Buyers and collectors have accepted photography as art for some time, but only if it's of significant artistic merit.

Great landscape photography sells because the buyer is searching for escapism and the need to dream. As a species, we have always been linked to and drawn to the landscape. Do you have a love for the countryside and an understanding of the landscape?

When you're out in the great outdoors, away from the bustle, what do you see...

- Sunlight filtering through trees and dancing on the landscape?
- Snow on the mountains and a gushing river in full flow?
- Coastal cliffs with the shimmering sea lapping onto the shore?
- A brooding sky casting a spell over the windswept moors.
- The warm glow of the sun sets at the close of day.
- Or mists and changing patterns of wind, clouds, and magical light?

Do you see the beauty and feel the connection?

<aside> **☐ To produce a great photo landscape, you need to understand the countryside and how light affects it. You need to have a passion for the land and experience an intimate connection with nature.**

The best way of doing this is to explore an area on foot and become part of the landscape before taking any photos.

On your walk look for:

- Light (shadows and highlights)
- Shapes (round and angular)
- Color (harmony and discord)
- Texture (rough and smooth)
- Composition (strong and weak)
- Tones (light and dark)
- Patterns (even and odd)
- Mystery (? and ?) </aside>

So, the next time you're out with your camera looking for that open vista of rolling hills and mountains, also observe the intimate details in the landscape and maybe just photograph a small section of the bigger picture. Your personality and your vision must come through in every photo you take; it's up to you to capture the essence of the landscape in front of you.

If your photograph works, the person viewing your image will feel they can step into your picture and experience the emotion of being there. A great landscape photograph is a great escape.

Great Portraits In The Great Outdoors

If you have ever photographed your weekend outing, family reunion, or a special vacation getaway with your friends or family, you know that outdoor photography can present some very special challenges. This is true even for the most seasoned photographer. Direct sunlight can be harsh.

Unwanted objects can interfere with your composition. Proper color rendering can be problematic. And many times, good old Mother Nature is just not feeling cooperative. Perhaps, there's not much that can be done about Mother Nature, but with some practice and patience, you can overcome any of the other challenges you face as an outdoor portrait photographer. Along my journey as a photographer I've learned some outdoor techniques that may benefit those who choose to follow:

Keep It Simple

The subtle pattern and color of an adobe wall, the simple repeating pattern and muted tones of planks on a fishing pier, or the uniform color of a patch of bluebonnets, snapdragons, or yellow primrose can serve as wonderful backdrops for your outdoor portraits.

When you are composing your portrait, you want your subject to be the focal point that all eyes are drawn to.

Busy patterns, large areas of excessively vibrant colors (especially a mixture of different colors), or over imposing forms in your foreground or background that are not treated properly, can really distract from her if you are not careful.

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Control The Light Is Generally Undesirable

Due to the shadow patterns it creates, it can bring out the worst in your subject ... can anyone say, "Raccoon eyes"? "Lateral light" (e.g. early morning and late afternoon light) is much more desirable.

Lateral light can be controlled and directed to create beautiful shadow patterns across the face of your subject. There is a saying with many photographers who shoot outdoors, "the first tree in the forest is best" for a background.

The reason is, the canopy of the first tree controls the harsh downlight, but being on the edge of the forest, you still have lateral light to work with.

The same idea holds true for porches or the edge of any other type of overhang. Professional photographers sometimes use shade cloth and reflectors to block downlight while directing available lateral light to enhance their subject and achieve their desired effect.

Control The Depth Of Field

The edge of a forest or mountains in the distance may render beautifully as a backdrop for your subject with proper control over the depth of field. If you have an SLR camera, you can adjust your depth of field to bring the background more or less out of focus relative to your subject.

This serves as eye control for the observer of your portrait. The eye is naturally drawn to what is brightest and most sharply focused. If your subject is sharply focused relative to the background, she will be accentuated as the focal point of your portrait. Controlling the depth of field is accomplished by adjusting your aperture setting (the size of your lens opening, expressed in f-stops).

The smaller the f-stop the larger the opening of your lens, and the smaller the depth of field will be. For instance, when you see a photograph in a nature magazine of a beautiful butterfly in a patch of flowers, and the butterfly is in razor sharp focus but the flowers are gently blurred; this was accomplished by the photographer using a narrow depth of field (small f-stop setting).

For bright light situations, this may be difficult to achieve. For any given intensity of light, as you open up the aperture (lower the f-stop) you must increase the shutter speed (thereby decreasing exposure time) to avoid over exposure. Increasing the shutter speed generally reduces resolution in the image. Experiment to find the combination of aperture setting and shutter speed that gives the result you desire.

Be Mindful Of Distracting Objects Behind Your Subject

What is plainly a bush, a mailbox, or a birdhouse to your eye, can appear like an extra appendage growing out of the top of your subject's head in your two-dimensional portrait.

You may get some interesting effects this way, but generally, they will not make a good impression on your subject. Take the time to find an interesting angle that eliminates distracting objects from the background.

Correct The Color

Before the digital age, corrective filters or special films were mostly used for color correction in outdoor portraits. With digital cameras, the color can be corrected using your white balance setting (expressed as the color temperature in degrees Kelvin). Most digital cameras today do a pretty good job of automatically adjusting the white balance for outdoor exposures.

Keeping your composition simple, controlling the depth of field, and eliminating objects that may distract from your subject, all help to accentuate your subject as the focal point of your portrait. Controlling the available natural light and correcting the white balance of your photographs can reveal and enhance the true beauty of your subject. Beyond this, make it your aim each day to unleash your creativity that you may see the world around you in fresh and unique ways.

Never be content with seeing the ordinary as ordinary. Just stop and think for a moment, everything there is, is ordinary to someone. Art is created by those with the ability to see beyond the ordinary, to interpret their world in an exceptional way, and to reflect their interpretation for others to see. So, experiment and don't be afraid to try something new. The world is abundant in forms, textures, colors, and patterns of light... all the handy work of God. Grand landscapes and magnificent manmade structures are not required for great photos in the great outdoors.

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