

A Scape Is A Scape

By Grant Gillespie

Landscapes and scape photography in general began in the mid 1800s when cameras and camera equipment became portable enough to take out into the field/street.

Scape photography is applying the principles of landscape photography to other environments. Urban or city scapes for example, treat buildings and other man-made features as graphical elements of composition in the same way a landscape photographer would treat mountains and trees. Fields, gardens, streams, waterfalls, coasts, beaches, architecture, streets, rainforests, rural are all subjects suitable for scapes.

As with landscapes, the truly captivating moments, with just the right light/shapes/colours are a product of the environment (natural or not) and are rare and fleeting. Patience and planning are required to deliver that special image that grabs the viewer, so here are some ideas.

Composition

All the normal rules of composition apply. You'll still need a point of focus, leading lines, items of interest placed on the thirds instead of centre, "horizon" should be level, buildings vertical, and in general the "sky" will take up no more than a third of the image. Rules may be broken under the right circumstances... perhaps. If you have a particularly interesting "sky", giving it more than a third may create a more pleasing image, but as you've heard many a Judge say, "Does this foreground or sky really add that much to the image?" Best seek experienced advice on these matters. Ask an A-Grader if you can.

It's good to research classic shots of places you're visiting, not only to see how others approach the subject, but to give you ideas for doing things differently—thinking outside the box to produce that special image. Instead of shooting from the lookout, try a different spot, explore paths and different angles—get down low or up high.

Depth

Foreground, middle ground and background add depth to an image. Aperture Priority and F16 or F22 may be needed to keep the whole image in focus. Start with F16, check your image foreground and background, to see if everything is in focus. If not, try F22. Depending on lighting conditions, this may mean long exposures so be aware of camera shake. A tripod will help, and even using a self-timer or remote release/cable will reduce movement when pressing the shutter button.

Width

To get the feeling of a sweeping vista, it's common to shoot with wide angle lenses, which give greater depth of field and allow faster shutter speeds because they gather more light. Using a long lens to zoom-in to single-out one aspect of a scape is another option—sheer mountain cliffs, reflections in skyscraper or a lake, as examples.

Light

If the sun or bright city lights are an issue, use a **lens hood** to prevent unwanted flare. Applied correctly,

flare, can create interesting effects. **Weather** can add mood to your image. Rain or mist brings softness and peacefulness to a scene. If it's overcast, seek out colours to balance the subdued light. Storms, wind, dramatic clouds, sun shining through clouds/buildings, rainbows, sunsets and sunrises—all create mood and add interest to your image.

Make use of the quality and angle of light during the **Golden Hours**—the hour before sunset and the hour after sunrise. At these times, the light is golden and the angle of the light creates shadows adding dimension, patterns and textures to a scene.

Patience and persistence will pay off, waiting for just the right time and just the right light. Many photographers return to favourite locations year after year to get their image and lighting just-right.

Infrared photography can be effective in black & white landscape and even urban, with trees against buildings. You don't necessarily need to modify your camera, an R72 filter and black & white mode will do. See links in Further Reading if you want to head down the infrared path.

Filters

On the subject of Filters, two handy filters for scapes are Polarising and Neutral Density. Polarising filters darken the sky to increase contrast with clouds, and Neutral Density filters reduce brighter areas for longer exposures capturing movement in the sky or water. If you don't want haze, a Haze filter can get it right in-camera. And if you want to go all 'Ansel Adams' black & white, you can experiment with yellow, orange and red filters to darken skies.

Night photography opens up further possibilities if you experiment with longer exposures, 2 seconds and more will get light trails from vehicles, or use a torch and paint-with-light to highlight trees etc. Try 100 ISO, Shutter Priority, shutter speed of 10 seconds or longer with self-timer to remove camera shake. Check your histogram and overexposure warnings to see if highlights are blown out. Use Exposure Compensation to reduce exposure if necessary. Try different shutter speeds to see what effect they have.

Movement

Longer shutter speeds can be used to capture movement—wind in the trees, waves on a beach, water flowing over a waterfall, birds flying, clouds moving or even people moving through a scene. Use Shutter Priority and exposure of 2 seconds or more, or Aperture Priority and f/32. If it's bright daylight you may need a Neutral Density filter. Always use a tripod for long exposures.

Mirror Images

In subdued light (golden hours), water can create interesting reflective effects. Use a tripod, Shutter Priority, experiment with slow shutter speeds and increase ISO if necessary. Remember you can get reflections from ponds, windows and even glass skyscrapers.

Distractions

Be on the lookout for distractions—people in the background, poles, overhead wires, rubbish bins, cars in the foreground. Change position to eliminate



Impressionistic Landscape

Photo by Grant Gillespie

these if possible, before you take the shot.

Added Interest

Conversely, an empty scape may be enhanced by including a tree, fence, a person in a field or on a city street.

Extra Homework

If you'd like to delve into some theory, there's three recognised landscape styles you can apply to all scapes—representational, impressionistic and abstract. Representational is straightforward 'what you see is what you get' relying on composition and detail for the 'great' shot. Impressionistic is referred to as vague or elusive delivering the impression of the landscape rather than a straight representation. Abstract presents the scape in a graphical style—the waves in sand dunes, for example. For more on this, see <http://www.photographytips.com/page.cfm/77>

Pre-visualisation—Ansel Adams Style

Great photography is about visualising the final shot when you see the scape. Legendary landscape photographer Ansel Adams is known for his prowess in the darkroom, but he emphasised pre-visualisation "knowing what dark tones in his final print would represent the dark areas in the scene before him" and modifying his darkroom process to produce the print as he visualised it, before he made the exposure. ■

Further Reading:

<http://landscape-photograph.com>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landscape_photography

http://www.dsrltrips.com/workshops/How_to_take_landscape_s_with_lots_in_focus/landscape_large_depth_of_field.shtml

<http://www.nyip.edu/photo-articles/archive/how-to-photograph-landscapes>

<http://www.exposureguide.com/photographing-landscapes.htm>

<http://www.photographytips.com/page.cfm/77>

<http://digital-photography-school.com/11-surefire-tips-for-improving-your-landscape-photography/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ansel_Adams

Infrared

<http://www.davidsummerhayes.com/Digital%20Infra%20Red%20Photography.pdf>

http://www.ayton.id.au/gary/photo/photo_infrared.htm

<http://neilvn.com/tangents/infra-red-black-white-photography-urban-landscapes/>

Night Photography

<http://digital-photography-school.com/night-photography/>

<http://photo.net/travel/night-photography-tips>