

## PPS Workshop Landscape Photography - Top Tips

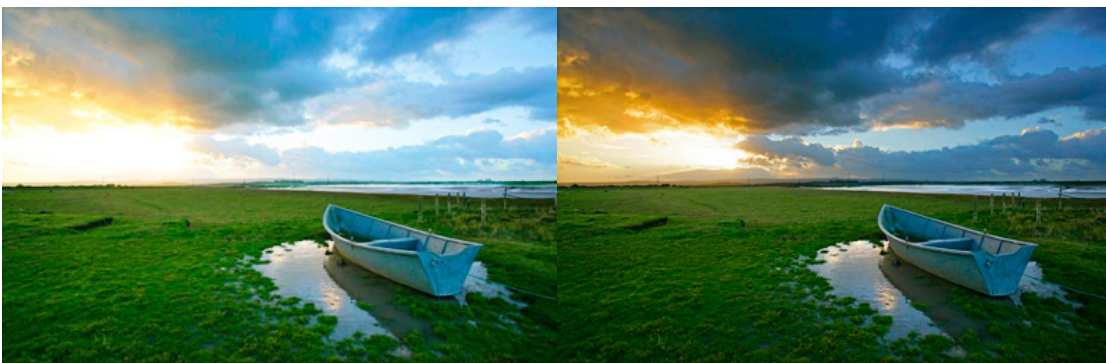
*A selection of "Top Tips" on Landscape Photography taken from the Internet*

1. **Golden Hour;** Early morning or late evening are the best times for shooting landscapes. This is because the low angle of the Sun picks out shadows and reveals textures. This is known as "The Golden Hour" because of the flattering nature of the warm soft lighting at these times. Check out [this website](#) for calculating the time of the Golden Hour at locations around the world.



2. **Wide angle lenses** are commonly used for landscapes because they will allow you to include more in the frame and open up perspective. A wide-angle zoom lens gives you more latitude in framing the scene and cropping out distracting features.
3. Whenever possible, place something of **interest in the foreground** of the shot to create a sense of depth. At the same time, ensure that you use a small aperture to keep everything in focus. A foreground object will help to frame the scene and add a look of three-dimensionality. Placing the center of interest off-center, in accordance with the [Rule of Thirds](#) will create a harmonious composition.

4. **Panorama format:** Look out for scenes that will let you crop the top and bottom of the image to produce a more dramatic "letterbox" panoramic composition. Take several overlapping shots of a landscape scene and merge these into a wide panorama in Photoshop. Click on this [Panorama Tutorial](#) to learn how it's done in PSE 8. If you are faced with a wide vista and your camera has a panorama mode, this is the time to select it. Cropping afterwards can also achieve a similar purpose.
5. **Filters;** Use a [polarizing filter](#) to darken the sky and saturate the colors in the landscape (this is the one must-have filter for landscape photographers). Use [graduated grey](#) or [neutral density filters](#) to darken the sky and reduce the contrast between the landscape and the sky. [Polarizing filters](#) aren't much use for bright cloudy skies but [graduated filters](#) are. Frequently, the sky looks burnt out in photos because digital sensors don't have the range to record the brightness differences between it and darker foreground scenery. The photo on the left has burnt out sky but using a Grad Filter on the right darkens the sky whilst retaining foreground detail.



6. Use color correction filters to change the color of light on a landscape. These filters can either warm up the landscape or cool it down, depending on the filter color used. In this image, a sepia [graduated filter](#) was used upside-down to color the foreground rocks only. An easy alternative is to add these later in Photoshop. Try using a soft focus filter to add an ethereal quality to the scene. These filters blur the bright areas of a scene into the shadows to give the image a glow.
7. **Focus;** Use the [Hyperfocal Distance](#) to obtain the fastest shutter speed with greatest [depth of field](#). [Hyperfocal focusing](#) allows you to get everything sharp, from things close up to the camera to those far away. It's more reliable than just setting the focus at infinity. You will need a camera that allows manual focusing though.
8. **Shoot RAW** images rather than JPGs. The RAWs will take up more room on your memory card but there's no in-camera processing done on the image (as there is for JPGs). RAW images will give you greater latitude for image manipulation later in the computer. It is particularly good at recovering detail in burnt out highlights in skies for example or for lightening deep shadow areas.
9. **Frame** the scene so that it contains a centre of interest - an object that draws the viewer's eye into the picture.
10. **Scale** can often be important to the understanding of a landscape, and can be achieved by including an object of a known size in the scene. People, animals or other recognizable objects that would naturally belong in the scene are suitable for showing scale.

11. The **quality of lighting** is perhaps the most influential attribute of a successful landscape. Waiting for interesting lighting that is moody, dramatic or diffused usually pays off in a memorable photograph. Ensure that your camera's flash is turned off when shooting landscapes, unless you require it to brighten a foreground object. Flash in a dusty, misty or foggy scene may cause flare by reflecting off the droplets of moisture or dust particles. In very low light, be sure to select a fast ISO setting that will permit proper exposure and good depth of field .
12. Watch for **unsightly or unnatural elements** such as overhead wires, hydrants, poles and garbage cans, especially in the foreground. If you cannot easily move them, reposition yourself to a camera angle that eliminates them from the frame.
13. When the wind is blowing or water is moving - waves, waterfalls, a tumbling brook - capturing that movement by using a **slow shutter speed to create blur** can add great interest to a landscape. When selecting a slow shutter speed, be sure you retain proper exposure by also appropriately adjusting your camera's aperture. Many cameras will do this automatically for you in Shutter Priority mode.
14. **Think Foregrounds:** One element that can set apart your landscape shots is to think carefully about the foreground of your shots and by placing points of interest in them. When you do this you give those viewing the shot a way into the image as well as creating a sense of depth in your shot.
15. **Consider the Sky :** Another element to consider is the sky in your landscape. Most landscapes will either have a dominant foreground or sky – unless you have one or the other your shot can end up being fairly boring. If you have a bland, boring sky – don't let it dominate your shot and place the horizon in the upper third of your shot (however you'll want to make sure your foreground is interesting). However if the sky is filled with drama and interesting cloud formations and colors – let it shine by placing the horizon lower. Consider enhancing skies either in post production or with the use of filters (for example a polarizing filter can add color and contrast).
16. **Lines :** One of the questions to ask yourself as you take Landscape shots is 'how am I leading the eye of those viewing this shot'? There are a number of ways of doing this (foregrounds is one) but one of the best ways into a shot is to provide viewers with lines that lead them into an image. Lines give an image depth, scale and can be a point of interest in and of themselves by creating patterns in your shot.



17. **Work with the Weather:** A scene can change dramatically depending upon the weather at any given moment. As a result, choosing the right time to shoot is of real importance. Many beginner photographers see a sunny day and think that it's the best time to go out with their camera – however an overcast day that is threatening to rain might present you with a much better opportunity to create an image with real mood and ominous overtones. Look for storms, wind, mist, dramatic clouds, sun shining through dark skies, rainbows, sunsets and sunrises etc and work with these variations in the weather rather than just waiting for the next sunny blue sky day. Don't let the weather stop you from capturing an attractive landscape. Rain can add a degree of softness and peacefulness to a scene. On an overcast day, be sure your scene has an area of color in it to counteract the overall dull lighting.

18. **Work the Golden Hours:** I chatted with one photographer recently who told me that he never shoots during the day – his only shooting times are around dawn and dusk – because that's when the light is best and he finds that landscapes come alive. These 'golden' hours are great for landscapes for a number of reasons – none the least of which is the 'golden' light that it often presents us with. The other reason that I love these times is the angle of the light and how it can impact a scene – creating interesting patterns, dimensions and textures.

19. **Think about Horizons:** It's an old tip but a good one – before you take a landscape shot always consider the horizon on two fronts. Is it straight? – while you can always straighten images later in post production it's easier if you get it right in camera. Where is it compositionally? - a compositionally natural spot for a horizon is on one of the thirds lines in an image (either the top third or the bottom one) rather than completely in the middle. Of course rules are meant to be broken – but I find that unless it's a very striking image that the [rule of thirds](#) usually works here.

20. **Change your Point of View:** You drive up to the scenic lookout, get out of the car, grab your camera, turn it on, walk up to the barrier, raise the camera to your eye, rotate left and right a little, zoom a little and take your shot before getting back in the car to go to the next scenic lookout. We've all done it – however this process doesn't generally lead to the 'wow' shot that many of us are looking for. Take a little more time with your shots – particularly in finding a more interesting point of view to shoot from. This might start with finding a different spot to shoot from than the scenic look out (wander down paths, look for new angles etc), could mean getting down onto the ground to shoot from down low or finding a higher up vantage point to shoot from. Explore the environment and experiment with different view points and you could find something truly unique.



21. **Use a Tripod:** As a result of the longer shutter speed that you may need to select to compensate for a small aperture you will need to find a way of ensuring your camera is completely still during the exposure. In fact even if you're able to shoot at a fast shutter speed the practice of using a tripod can be beneficial to you. Also consider a cable or wireless shutter release mechanism for extra camera stillness.



22. **Look through your camera's viewfinder and peruse the edges.** You don't want an out of place tree branch sitting in the top corner of your photograph. Does the scene look simple or cluttered? For instance, often a photograph of one lonely tree can have a bigger impact than a whole forest.

23. **Composition** plays a major part in landscape photography. Just because you're taking an image of a landscape, doesn't mean the digital photograph needs to be shot in landscape formation. Don't be afraid to experiment. For example sometimes taking an image of a landscape in portrait format can result in a nicer composition than one taken horizontally.



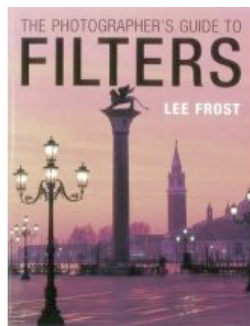
24. Try shooting in **black and white**. This gives variety to your photos and a different feel to a shot. Black and white can produce some dramatic landscape photography shots. There is no reason why you cannot take a picture in colour and then try out a B&W adjustment in your image software at a later stage.

# Tutorials and other resources

**[The Art of Composition](#) by Lee Frost** - offers essential guidance on landscape composition

**[This pdf tutorial](#)** from our own PPS website

**Other Reading:** Mike Thomas recommends “**Working the Light: A Landscape Photography Masterclass**” by Joe Cornish, Charlie Waite, David Ward & Eddie Ephraums. It's full of expert tips as well as lots of truly stunning photographs.



He also recommends “The Photographer’s Guide to Filters” by Lee Frost as ‘the best book on filters I have ever read’.

**How to take good photographs:** check out this **[BBC website](#)** where Tom Ang gives tips on landscape photography

The Journal Newspaper frequently publishes reader’s photos of local scenes. Check out their **[Flickr website here](#)** to see readers landscape images of Northumberland

**Three weblinks for master landscape photography:** *(just click on the name below)*

**[Joe Cornish](#)**

**[Charlie Waite](#)**

**[Ansel Adams](#)**