Landscape Photography: The Definitive Guide

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Location is key.

How many times have you read this phrase in my articles?

Alright, alright... Don't answer, I'll do it: countless times.

I write it over and over again because once I find a location that I like, a corner that excites and thrills me, I become a compulsive photo hunter.

Because, if the scenario is ideal, why not push it in all possible ways?

Push it from the artistic point of view, of course.

That is why I love selecting a location, letting my imagination run wild and planning all kinds of photos.

Photos with different **natural light**. Photos that include elements such as the Sun during a **Sunrise** or a **Sunset**, the **Moon**, the **Milky Way**, **Meteor Showers**, **Star Trails**. Or take a **long**

exposure with **lens filters**, take advantage of the clouds in the sky and, why not, change the point of view and plan an **aerial photo for my drone**.

Thus, I can show the location in a thousand different ways and tell a thousand different stories.

And that is what I would love to achieve with this guide: help you to choose a location that you like and teach you how to take landscape photos that no one has ever taken before. A thousand different photos to show the location's beauty in a thousand different ways.

I would like you to use your planning, composition, technique and your own gear knowledge to get amazing photos.

You don't know how to do it?

Don't worry. That is why I'm here, writing these words. To solve all your doubts and remove all your fears.

So keep reading because I'm going to tell you what my method is, how I do it. And I'm going to explain it to you step by step so that you can learn everything you need to get the most out of any location in the world.

The road is long, but very entertaining.

Are you coming?

> *"I think landscape photography in general is somewhat undervalued." — **Galen Rowell***

Content

Section 1:

Get inspired by these 27 landscape photos

You'll allow me to repeat myself... ;)

Some locations inspire me. I feel its magic and I can't help but be carried away by it.

I start to imagine and my head won't stop spinning. Photos of Sunrises, Sunsets, blue hour, Moon, Milky Way... Suddenly I have a thousand photographic ideas!

That's where it all starts, with the idea.

"But where do you get so many ideas Toni?"

Well look, I could tell you that my imagination has no limits. But that would be too presumptuous.

The truth is that I look for a lot of sources of inspiration. And one of the things that helps me the most during the creative process is seeing photos of other photographers.

That's why I thought that my photos could inspire you and make your imagination take off.

I hope to succeed!

Natural landscape (1)

Fujifilm X-T2 | 200mm | f/4.8 | ISO 200 | 5500K

This photo was taken during the **expedition to Namibia**, where the desert landscapes are immense and the red rusty iron dunes of the Namib are unmistakable.

It was taken during the **golden hour**, when the light is perfect to capture the colors of the sand of this very particular desert.

I wanted to show the huge size of the dunes so I added an acacia to the composition at the bottom of the frame. And I thought it would be interesting to put the line of the dune in the upper right corner.

Urban landscape (2)

Nikon Z6 | 21mm | f/8 | 0.8s | ISO 100 | 7000K | Soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filter

This photo is very special and I got it thanks to a unique opportunity. I took it during the **PhotoPills Camp**, my favorite event of the year.

On that occasion, and to inaugurate the Camp, the owners of this beautiful house invited us there at the end of the afternoon. It's a well-known house in Ciudadela (Menorca) that had been abandoned for many years and was in very poor condition. They told us how they fell in love with it and did their best to restore it and build a garden around it.

That evening there was a fantastic light during the **blue hour** and I thought that the contrast between the red tone of the main building and the blue color of the sky and the water could be special. I set the tripod very low at the end of the pool and used the water as a mirror.

Conceptual (3)

Olympus OM-1 | 300mm | f/5.6 | 1/640s | ISO 400 | 5600K

I capture this photo as a consequence of the "total failure" of our **Iceland expedition**.

The whole expedition was organized around a very specific plan: photographing the **Moon** leaving behind Reynisdrangar, some large basalt columns located on the black beach of Reynisfjara in Vik. And that was supposed to happen on August 19, 2016.

And there we were all the PhotoPillers members of the expedition at the shooting spot on August 19, 2016. We waited patiently for the Moon to rise. But we encountered a fatal error 404 because the sky was completely covered with thick clouds that prevented us from capturing the photo.

So I decided to take an artistic photo of the landscape that was there at that time instead. I took advantage of some birds flying around and used the blurred columns as a background.

It's an original photo but I feel gutted about it. I'll have to go back to Iceland to take the photo we so thoroughly planned! Someday... ;)

Abstract (4)

Nikon D700 | 500mm | f/5.6 | 0.7s | ISO 200 | 5700K | ND 0.6 (2 stops) filter

Like the panning, this technique takes patience and practice. But it's not complicated at all. The best subjects to practice this type of photography are tall grasses, reeds or a reed bed.

I had my 500mm mounted on the gimbal head because I had in mind to photograph birds near the La Vall stream in Menorca. Because this type of ballhead moves smoothly and is very stable, I had the idea to move the camera vertically while framing the reed bed with a relatively slow shutter speed.

The result is surprising, don't you think?

Reflection (5)

Nikon D4s | 18mm | f/16 | 0.6s | ISO 100 | 7000K | Soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) and polarizer filters

The Favàritx lighthouse is a powerful magnet that I cannot resist. I can't help it and I always end up coming back again and again to photograph it.

In order to get this photo, I first had to wait until it had rained. The pool you see in the foreground is very far from the sea and the only way to see it full is after a heavy rain.

Then, I waited for the **golden hour** during Sunrise.

And finally, I also had to trust that the sky had the right clouds: not too high, not too low, not too dense, not too faint... I wanted the Sun to warm them up and cast a strong orange on them.

Long exposure (6)

Nikon D4s | 17mm | f/11 | 241s | ISO 100 | 6600K | ND 1.8 (6 stops) and soft GND 1.2 (4 stops) filters

I love photographing a Sunrise combined with water and rocks. I believe that Sunrises by the sea are a relaxing moment and a photographic inspiration.

That's why I'm extremely lucky to live where I live, on the incredible island of Menorca (Spain). Here I enjoy some wonderful seascapes that I can photograph at any time of the year. In addition to this, I can practice one of my favorite techniques: capturing **long exposures**.

Sunrise (7)

Nikon Z6 | 18mm | f/16 | 8s | ISO 100 | 7800K | Soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filter

I remember this Sunrise as if it were yesterday. It was one of the most powerful Sunrises I have ever witnessed and photographed.

Amazing. It left me speechless.

I was in Cala Presili, an ideal location for **Sunrises**, Moonrises and also for **Sunsets** and Moonsets. In the background you can see the Favàritx Lighthouse, which you can photograph next to the Sun, the **Moon**, or as in this photo during the **blue hour**, just before the Sun rises.

Blue hour (8)

Nikon D4s | 18mm | f/11 | 10s | ISO 100 | 8000K | ND 1.8 (6 stops) and soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filters

I had planned to capture the **Sunrise** at the Formentor lighthouse along with my friend Jaume Llinás.

But when we were halfway there, we had to change our mind. It was impossible to take pictures on the coast because of the gusts of wind and the heavy rain. So we had to seek shelter in the car and wait...

After a while, the rain stopped and we were able to reach the Mirador des Colomer. From there we captured this beautiful and well-known landscape of the Mallorcan coastline during the **blue hour**. This scene occurred minutes before the Sun rose behind the mountains.

Golden hour (9)

Nikon D4s | 14mm | f/11 | 0.4s | ISO 100 | 5250K | ND 0.9 (3 stops) and soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filters

This photo reflects a very special moment I shared with a group of PhotoPillers during our **expedition to Iceland**.

We were on the beach of the Stokksnes peninsula, enjoying a beautiful **Sunrise** and some spectacular views of the wonderful and imposing Vestrahorn mountain range.

I took this photo during the **golden hour**, just as the Sun was rising on one side of the mountains. The Sun was coming out strongly so I decided not to include it in the frame. The idea was to avoid problems with the **dynamic range** and use the lateral light to fill the foreground with golden tones.

Moreover, I used two elements to guide the eye towards the Vestrahorn and towards the light: the seashore and some bushes that create a contrast with the black and volcanic sand.

Sunset (10)

Nikon D4s | 14mm | f/13 | 20s | ISO 100 | 6500K | ND 1.8 (6 stops) and soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filters

Es Pont d'en Gil is a beautiful natural arch located in the island of Menorca. I know, I live in paradise... :P

Once I've found a good location, I use **PhotoPills** to plan the rest of the details: the shooting time to get a certain light, the shadows and even the date and time when the Sun will be where I want it to be in the frame.

In this case I wanted to photograph a **Sunset** with the Sun setting to the right of the arch, illuminating the scene and the cliffs from the side.

Moonrise (11)

Nikon Z6 | 210mm | f/5.6 | 0.8s | ISO 200 | 5950K | Soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filter

I took this photo during the **Faroe Islands expedition** in which I discovered that the seascapes are absolutely wonderful and breathtaking.

That afternoon the sky was overcast and I already knew that I would not be able to capture a colorful **Sunset**. So I thought it could be a good idea to wait for the **Moon** to rise... And this is the end result.

If you want to be a good landscape photographer, flexibility is essential.

Moonset (12)

Nikon D4s | 340mm | f/5.6 | 1/320s | ISO 3200 | 6000K

The impact that erosion can have on rocks is inevitable. And sometimes it sculpts them into the most unlikely shapes. Like the one you can see in this photo. The Menorcans call it "Sa punta de s'Elefant" ("The tip of the Elephant" in English).

I'd been thinking of a composition in which The tip of the Elephant, Rafa (we like to call him the Bard in the PhotoPills team) and the **Moon** would tell a special story.

Thanks to the **PhotoPills** app I planned this photo and when the shooting day arrived, I just had to wait and hope for a clear sky.

Or as PhotoPillers like to say, **plan and pray!**

Black and white (13)

Nikon D4s | 14mm | f/5.6 | 10s | ISO 200 | 7500K | ND 1.8 (6 stops) and soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filters | 4-photo panorama

The Favàritx lighthouse is fascinating.

It's the first lighthouse that was built in Menorca (Spain) between 1917 and 1922 to prevent shipwrecks from happening frequently. The tower with its black stripes is a landmark on the horizon.

But it's also located in a rocky environment strongly hit by the waves. They always threaten again and again to reach the lighthouse. It's as if they wanted to swallow it, even if they never manage to actually do it.

Sometimes the sea calms down, waiting for the next opportunity. This infinite cycle goes on and on.

And that's what I wanted to capture in this landscape photo. The black and white option makes it timeless, transforming it into a scene that endures in time and that could have happened yesterday or decades ago.

Detail (14)

Nikon Z6 | 210mm | f/5.6 | 0.8s | ISO 200 | 5950K | Soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filter

Many photographers think that you cannot capture landscapes with a telephoto lens. In other words, a telephoto lens is not suitable for landscape photography.

And the truth is that there is no good lens or not.

It all depends on your imagination!

In my opinion, a telephoto lens offers a lot of creative possibilities. It reduces the frame, allows me to focus on a more specific portion of the scene and gives me the possibility of capturing a huge Sun or **Moon**. And I love that!

Panorama (15)

Nikon D4s | 85mm | f/8 | 8s | ISO 400 | 6000K | 8-photo panorama

It's hard to put into words the feelings I experienced photographing the sunrises during the **expedition to Namibia**. That's why I wanted to show you this photo.

Namibia is crossed by the Tropic of Capricorn and has a desert and arid climate. One of the best times of the day to take photos is during the **golden hour** because its light enhances the reddish tones of the soil and rocks.

This panorama includes a lone tree that stands out against the mountain range in the background. And although the clouds didn't show up that morning, the mauve and pink tones of the sky produced a unique scene.

Milky Way (16)

Nikon Z6 | 14mm | f/2.8 | 15s | ISO 6400 | 3150K | 6-photo panorama

This photo tells a very powerful story.

And the story of how I took this photo is also worth telling.

The idea came from a photo of **Daniel Viñé**, a PhotoPiller who discovered **this cave** for me near one of my favorite locations in Menorca (Spain): the natural arch of Es Pont d'en Gil. Since I saw it, I knew that it could be used in many ways.

I thought that I could take a panorama from that cave on a night when the **Milky Way** would be completely vertical above the arch.

I called my friend **Enric Gener**, one of my favorite underwater photographers, to pose for me and help me complete the photo.

It was quite a challenge. But looking at the result, I think it was worth it.

Star Trails (17)

Nikon Z6 | 18mm | f/3.5 | 30s | ISO 800 | 3850K | 586 photos edited in **Lightroom** and stacked with **Star Trails for Mac**

Did you know that the stars are not white?

That's right. Although it may seem so at first glance, each one has a color.

So if at any time you thought that I went too far applying **Photoshop** effects in this **Star Trails** shot, you're wrong. Those are real colors!

The natural color of each star depends on the surface temperature of the star. Capturing it is easier when you're taking pictures in a location without light pollution, like this esplanade where a wonderful centenary oak stands out.

Meteor showers (18)

Nikon Z6 | 18mm | f/2.8 | 25s | ISO 6400 | 3150K | 1 base shot and 27 meteor shots

This photo is a clear example that you can reuse an interesting subject as many times as you want. The important thing is to keep telling stories.

If you look at it, this centenary oak is the same that you just saw in the previous photo. In fact, it's the same location and almost the same composition. But both photos are completely different.

On this particular occasion I went to photograph one of my favorite **Meteor Showers**: the Perseids. And the **shooting session** was a success.

Solar eclipse (19)

Nikon D4s | 18mm | f/16 | 10s | ISO 100 | 5850K

The first time I lived and photographed a **solar eclipse** was in 2017 when Rafa the Bard, Germán the Developer and I went to a vineyard near Salem in Oregon (USA).

The experience was epic and during the show I was able to take all kinds of photos: close-ups of the eclipse, a behind-the-scenes time lapse of the shooting session and pictures of the landscape as it was changing every second.

I'll never forget it and I'm already looking forward to traveling to capture the next solar eclipse... ;)

Lunar eclipse (20)

Nikon D500 | 500mm | f/5.6 | 1/10s | ISO 1250

Luckily for me, **lunar eclipses** are much more frequent than solar ones. So I have many more photographic opportunities to capture this amazing astronomical event.

Although they are more difficult photos because they require advanced planning and much more precision when shooting, I love to include the landscape next to the eclipse.

In this case, the image shows a *barraca* that is, due to its position and location, my favorite on the island.

Menorca is full of *barracas*. These are old stone constructions whose plant is circular. They serve as a shelter for cattle both from the rain in winter seasons and from high temperatures during the summer.

Winter (21)

Nikon D4s | 25mm | f/5.6 | 2s | ISO 100 | 5850K

Iceland is the land of fire... and ice.

That's why I wanted this imposing block of ice whose shape and texture stands out above all else to be the main character of this photo.

I wanted the photo to convey that image of the island that we all have. And cold. Freezing cold.

I could have taken the shot during the day. But I thought that taking it at night, with the **Moon** in the background reflecting in the water, would produce a much more powerful imagen, and above all it would represent the image of winter that I had in my head.

Spring (22)

Nikon D4s | 18mm | f/16 | 2min | ISO100 | 7500K | ND 1.8 (6 stops) and reverse GND 0.6 (2 stops) filters

Es Pont d'en Gil is a location in Menorca (Spain) to which I return over and over again. It's inevitable: it's given me so many special moments...

Such as, for example, this **Sunset** that I captured in spring.

It's the perfect time of year to get an interesting foreground thanks to those little white and yellow flowers. And it's also the right time for the Sun to be in that position, to the right of the arch laterally illuminating the scene and the cliffs.

Summer (23)

DJI Mavic Pro | 26mm | f/2.2 | 1/125s | ISO 200 | 6000K | ND 0.3 (1 stop) filter

Where would you say this photo is taken? On some island in the Caribbean? In a corner of the Indian Ocean?

No... In Menorca! ;)

On the island we are lucky to have one of the cleanest and most pristine coasts in the Mediterranean. And all this thanks to a marine plant called oceanic posidonia.

I don't want to get caught up in giving you too long an explanation. What basically happens is that posidonia meadows function as filtering elements for sea water, and they help in keeping the water clean and extremely transparent.

So during the summer I love to fly my **drone** and capture the waters of Menorca...

Fall (24)

Nikon D4s | 200mm | f/16 | 1/30s | ISO 100 | 5900K

On the southern coast of the Snæfellsnes peninsula, in **Iceland**, there is a town that only has a hotel and a small church called Búdakirkja (Búðakirkja in Icelandic).

This small and unique black wooden church with white doors and windows is located in a privileged place. From one side you can see the sea and from the other the entire mountain range of the peninsula.

The day we went to visit it the sky was completely covered and there was some fog surrounding the scene. That element together with the intense green moss of the rocks seemed perfect to convey a fall picture. You know, those scenes that reflect some melancholy and nostalgia for a lost time that doesn't seem to be coming back...

But I have something to confess to you. This photo has a catch: it was made in summer... :P

Interesting, huh?

Drone (25)

DJI Mavic Pro | 26mm | f/2.2 | 1/100s | ISO 100 | 6000K

According to Wikipedia, **Pareidolia** is a psychological phenomenon in which the mind responds to a stimulus, usually an image or a sound, by perceiving a familiar pattern where none exists.

Common examples are perceived images of animals, faces, or objects in the clouds, the landscape, the Moon and even in Mars (e.g. **Face on Mars**).

With the new **PhotoPills Drone tool**, it's super fun to look for the Pareidolia phonomena. This is how I found the crocodile rock above. Located in the beautiful beach of Cala Barril in Menorca.

As you can see, any camera is good to shoot a landscape picture that conveys something and surprises.

Light painting (26)

Nikon D4s | 18mm | f/5.6 | 3.8s | ISO 1600 | 4600K

Actually, yes... Even though it seems extravagant, dramatic images can be produced by combining landscape photography, the **blue hour** and light painting.

In this specific case, this photo shows one of the outdoor sessions we did during the 2019 **PhotoPills Camp**. Thanks to the elegance of our model **Kim Henry** and the expertise of the photographer **Eric Paré** I managed to get this hypnotic image.

Infrared (27)

Nikon D300iR modified | 17mm | f/8 | 1/30s | ISO 400 | 2100K

I've had a Nikon with an infrared filter on the sensor for many years. And it's a camera that I like to use in special moments like this.

If you take a look at some of the photos I took, you will see that **when I was in Iceland** there was no snow in this forest. Everything had actually a beautiful green cast.

Black and white HDR images look a lot like those you get with infrared photography. But you read correctly they only "look alike"...

That's why I love the magic that an infrared filter produces: it makes you see things as if they were real ;)

Photos by PhotoPillers (28) [bonus track]

PhotoPills Awards - Have a quick glance at our Instagram feed to see all the featured images.

PhotoPills Awards - If you're interested in a particular photo, tap it to see all the details.

My goal with this section was to inspire you.

To show you a lot of examples that you can use as a photographic idea.

Hopefully I did.

And if not, it's fine.

I have another suggestion: to inspire you by looking at the thousands of photos other PhotoPillers have imagined, planned and captured across the globe.

You'll see pictures of all types of landscapes. And also of **Sunrise**, **golden hour**, **blue hour**, **Sunset**, **Moon**, **Milky Way**, **Star Trails**, **Meteor Showers**, **drone**, **lunar eclipses**, **solar eclipses**...

You could spend hours and hours looking at mind-blowing images!

Would you like that?

Well, they are compiled in our **Instagram** account (follow us!) and in the PhotoPills application (Menu *My stuff* > **Awards**).

And if you want to inspire other PhotoPillers while participating in our contest, the **PhotoPills Awards**, send us your photo and you may win some cool prizes!

OK, let's keep going.

It's time to start making decisions. It's time to choose the type of landscape you want to photograph.

So go for it!

Section 2:

Choose the type of landscape you want to photograph

The choice of the location in which you're going to take photos will depend on the type of landscape you want to photograph.

That landscape will determine the setting in which your story will take place. That's why it's important to have a very clear idea of the photo you want to take. It'll help you make the best artistic decisions and choose the landscape that best suits what you want to capture.

Landscapes can be divided into two categories: natural and artificial.

Natural landscape

When you hear the word "landscape," images of lush valleys, rugged mountains, and majestic waterfalls surely come to mind. And that's for a reason: nature offers places of astonishing beauty.

What is a natural landscape?

A natural landscape is a photographic scene that is the direct result of nature and its processes. That is, it has not been affected by human activity.

These are the different types of natural scenery that you can photograph.

Mountain

Nikon D4s | 35mm | f/16 | 8s | ISO 200 | 7000K | ND 1.8 (6 stops) and soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filters

In general, mountains are a great place for landscape photography because they offer a lot of creative possibilities.

You don't have to go to high mountains or do mountaineering to get stunning images. Middle mountain areas or even a region of hills and valleys can be very photogenic.

Try to capture the vastness of the landscape, include a human element to convey a sense of scale, and work the composition carefully. I give you a lot of advice on the latter in **section 5**.

Perhaps the great downside of this type of landscape is how much and how quickly the weather conditions vary. Although, in reality, I see it as an opportunity to get powerful and dramatic images.

Of course, be careful with the weather. Sudden changes can put you in danger and, frankly, safety is always first regardless of the photo. Therefore, you should always go to the mountains with warm clothing (preferably different layers), never go alone and notify other people of your plans so that they know where to find you.

Coast (sea)

Nikon D4s | 18mm | f/16 | 1.8s | ISO 100 | 7000K | ND 1.8 (6 stops) and reverse GND 0.6 (2 stops) filters

Seascape photography is one of my favorite genres. I love capturing the endless battle between land and sea.

Get the most out of these two elements by playing with shutter speed.

On the one hand, by using fast speeds you can capture every drop of the water spray that a wave generates when it hits a cliff. You freeze it in the air.

On the other hand, thanks to the magic of **long exposure photography** you can use the mainland as a visual anchor capturing it sharp and in focus, while water and clouds, in optimal conditions, can create a fantastic sense of motion when out of focus.

The truth is that there are a thousand creative possibilities with which to tell your story. It all depends on you, your vision and the weather conditions.

If you want to become a master of seascape photography, you should study in depth the **Masterclass on this topic** that you can find on the **PhotoPills YouTube channel**.

River

Nikon D4s | 200mm | f/11 | 6s | ISO 200 | 9100K | 3-horizontal picture panorama | ND 1.8 (6 stops) and soft GND 0.9 (3 stops)

If you happen to wander in the middle of nature, you'll come across rivers or streams at some point.

These elements can boost your creativity when taking photos: the swirls between the rocks, the moss and vegetation (such as ferns, for example) that grow on the banks and the silk effect that you can create with a **long exposure**.

Photos from the riverside are a good starting point but don't be a chicken and get in the water!

It's the best way to achieve a unique and attractive composition. By doing this, the viewer will have the impression to enter the image and she will understand the story you want to tell her much better.

Make sure you wear the right footwear. River bottoms tend to have very slippery surfaces and can play tricks on you. Beware of sprained ankles or and make sure of safely placing the tripod so that your equipment doesn't fall into the water.

In any case, always be cautious and don't get into the water if you don't know whether the river is very deep or not, and if the current is strong or not.

Lake

Nikon D4s | 200mm | f/8 | 1/400s | ISO 500 | 5600K

Lakes are very interesting elements in landscape photography.

If they are completely wild they convey a peaceful and serene atmosphere, especially in the early morning or afternoon, when the surface of the water often creates a fine mist due to the low temperatures. Depending on the direction of the **Sunrise**, choose your shooting spot well and you'll be able to photograph a beautiful golden mist.

And if there are buildings or some kind of boat on the shores of the lake, incorporate these elements into your composition.

Also play with the reflections that you can find when the water is calm and there is no wind. You can use any of the elements I just mentioned or others like clouds, for example.

Finally, be careful if the lake is frozen. Don't walk on the surface if you're not completely sure that it's frozen. Look at the puddles, their shape and the reflections that you can get depending on the light.

Waterfall

Nikon D4s | 18mm | f/8 | 25s | ISO 100 | 9100K | ND 1.8 (6 stops) and soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filters

When you get to the location where the waterfall is located, don't plant your tripod in the first place that comes to mind. Scout the location first. Walk, crouch, seek different perspectives, change your point of view, etc.

Look for corners where you can take photos without taking risks and that offer interesting creative possibilities. Then, grab your camera and check the framing and composition.

I love getting in the water and looking for original compositions. Sometimes I use the river

itself as an element of interest that guides the gaze towards the waterfall. Or there may be a rock in the river that I can use in the foreground.

The truth is that there are many possibilities and I like to take advantage of all the elements that I have before me to tell a story. And I also love coming back at different times of the year, although my favorite is autumn.

Try to avoid the sky being in the frame. Generally, locations with waterfalls usually have little light. If the waterfall (and much of the landscape) is in the shadows and the sky is very bright, you may face a scene with a high **dynamic range** (**section 5**).

You can use a filter, but they are usually magnets that attract water spray. Put a microfiber cloth in the backpack... ;)

One last tip. Be careful when taking pictures of waterfalls.

This type of location is usually very humid. Rocks, mud, and moss can make the terrain very slippery. One misstep or a misplaced tripod leg and you may have an accident...

Wear appropriate footwear and protect your equipment from water spray.

Forest

There are several types of forests:

- Rainforests grow around the equator in South America, Africa, and Southeast Asia. They have the highest species diversity in the world, hosting millions of different species. I'll tell you more about them in the next section.
- Temperate forests are found at higher latitudes, in North America, Northeast Asia, and Europe. Deciduous trees make up a large proportion of the tree composition, in addition to some conifers such as pines and firs.
- The boreal forests or taiga, are found at latitudes between 50° and 60° in the subarctic zone. This area includes large coniferous forests located in Russia (Siberia), Alaska (USA), Scandinavia and Canada.

What excites me the most when I photograph a forest is that it can be very similar to solving a puzzle: you have to put elements where they are needed and remove the superficial ones.

If you've ever tried taking landscape photos in the forest, you may have realized that this type of photography is not exactly easy. The most common composition rules (**section 5**) that apply in landscape photography are not usually useful under the leafy canopies of trees. With so many elements that end up being part of the frame, it can be difficult to create a powerful image and that does justice to the landscape.

Many say that the biggest problem is contrast and that a day with strong sunlight is the worst possible option. However, in my experience you can get amazing photos of forests under (almost) any circumstance.

On a sunny day, go early in the morning or a couple of hours before **Sunset**, when the Sun is still near the horizon and you can play with its light.

The most interesting ones are misty or foggy days. Both phenomena hide part of the landscape that can be distracting and add a magical atmosphere to the scene.

You can take photos with fog on sunny days and on cloudy days. In the first scenario, make sure you're in the forest just after the **Sunrise** and you'll capture fantastic rays of light sneaking through the trees. In the second scenario, you'll have before you a mysterious and even disturbing scene.

If it's cloudy, the light will be soft and diffuse. The scene may be a bit flat and there's hardly any visual separation between the trees. It's a good opportunity to take photos of details.

And, of course, they are the perfect setting to return to again and again throughout the different seasons of the year. Seeing and photographing the changes in flora and light is wonderful.

Rainforest

The rainforest is a fascinating landscape full of life.

On the one hand, it's awesome because you have thousands of things to photograph: all kinds of plants and animals in their environment (if you manage to see them).

On the other hand, it's a real challenge because its density makes it difficult to isolate the subject in the composition. Play with the **depth of field**, use a large aperture (low f-number) to create a *bokeh* or blur in the background. Another option is to get as close to the subject as possible.

Although it's valid for any type of landscape, in the case of the rainforest the weather conditions are particularly important if you want to take pictures.

Many photographers mistakenly assume that it's better to photograph rainforests with sunny and clear skies.

Actually, it's much better to photograph a rainforest when it's cloudy or raining. The clouds act as a giant diffuser so they soften the light and avoid the strong shadows created by the treetops. If it rains, the humidity in the air can turn into mist, a perfect element to capture a dreamlike and enchanting atmosphere.

Two tips.

The first is that you be careful with the fauna. Mosquitoes, spiders, snakes, and other animals can be a serious danger. Bring repellent, fully closed shoes (such as hiking boots) to avoid bites and always watch where you step.

The second is that you be careful with your gear.

The rainforest is usually a very humid ecosystem where your lens can easily fog up. Bring a microfiber cloth to remove the mist.

Moisture can also enter inside the camera, especially if you go from a cold environment to a warm one (from your room or air-conditioned vehicle to the sticky atmosphere of the rainforest). When you change environments, let the camera adjust to the heat before getting it out from the backpack. And when you're not using it, put it in a resealable plastic bag along with a desiccant (like a packet with silica gel) to keep it safe and dry.

Scrubland (bush)

Olympus EM-1 | 300mm | f/5.6 | 1/25s | ISO 200 | 6500K | 4-photo panorama

Bush landscapes are very interesting from a photographic point of view.

They are areas of low vegetation, generally easily accessible and usually have a lot of fauna. Therefore, they are relatively clean landscapes visually speaking. At the same time, that homogeneity makes it sometimes difficult to find a clearly identifiable subject.

From a compositional point of view, you have several alternatives.

You can opt for a minimalist framing, focusing on patterns or lines for example. Another interesting option is to try to capture the immensity, they are usually almost infinite landscapes that seem to never end.

To give you some examples, these are some types of bush landscapes: maquis, heath, thicket, moorland.

Grassland

A prairie, steppe, tundra, or savanna are different types of grassland. That is, it's a relatively flat area in which most of the vegetation is tall grasses.

The classic example of a grassland is the African savanna.

In general they are extreme landscapes photographically speaking. They can be extremely easy to photograph or very complicated.

Actually, it will depend a lot on your composition. On the one hand, an interesting option is a simple, minimalist framing using negative space. On the other hand, it's a very monotone type of landscape in which finding a subject or an element that stands out can be almost mission impossible.

Be careful with the central hours of the day when the light is extremely harsh and doesn't add anything to the scene. On the contrary, it may be difficult to expose for the shot because of the creating strong contrasts.

Desert

Nikon D4s | 100mm | f/8 | 1/125s | ISO 100 | 6500K | Soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filter | 4-photo panorama

Surely the first thing that comes to mind is a sandy desert, with high dunes, right?

Well, there's also another type of much colder desert: the ice desert.

But not everything is sand and ice. Sometimes they are stony. Deserts are fascinating and diverse landscapes as a result of their climate.

At the same time, they're also a challenge from an artistic and photographic point of view.

When it comes to the artistic part, look for simplicity: patterns, abstract compositions, the effects of the wind...

As for the gear, and even yourself, be cautious. Deserts are landscapes with extreme weather conditions in which temperatures, sandstorms or snow blizzards and the wind can play tricks on you.

Protect yourself with the right clothing and make sure you always carry enough water to stay hydrated. Be careful with your equipment: sand can damage the lens or the sensor,

and low temperatures can quickly drain your batteries.

Hybrid

Any flooded ecosystem is known as a hybrid, also called a wetland, because it's a mix between a land and a water ecosystem.

The soils of this type of landscape are covered with fresh or saltwater, permanently or during most of the year. As a general rule, they are found in alluvial plains (flat terrain that contains a riverbed).

Some examples are the swamp or bog, the mangrove swamp, the marsh, the reed, the estuary and the peat bog.

They are fascinating and tremendously changing landscapes that are very interesting for photography. They are usually quite lush due to the abundance of water. The combination of a peculiar vegetation along with the magic of the water (transformed into mist or as a tool to create a reflection) usually give spectacular results.

Artificial landscape

Nikon Z6 | 550mm | f/11 | 1/500s | ISO 100 | 5600K | 2x teleconverter | Soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filter

When practicing artificial landscape photography try to capture the characteristics of the environment. Show what makes it special and try to show its features.

What is an artificial landscape?

An artificial landscape is a photographic setting in which there has been a direct human intervention.

These are the different types of artificial landscape that you can photograph.

Megacity

A megacity is a metropolitan area with more than 10 million inhabitants.

Although sometimes mistakenly used as a synonym for megacity, a megalopolis is a large city that, together with several large satellite cities, create a densely populated urban complex. A clear example is the area that goes from Boston to Washington DC in the USA.

From a photographic point of view, a megacity offers tons of possibilities. It's a type of landscape in which you can combine natural and artificial elements depending on the location or geographical environment in which the megacity is located.

In Hong Kong, for example, the views from Victoria Peak allow you to show the bay where the city is located and to highlight its skyscrapers. Another example is the desert surrounding Dubai that can create sci-fi movie foggy weather conditions.

You can use the human presence to convey a sense of scale or reflect overcrowding. Or you can focus on large structures such as highway junctions or buildings (a bridge or a skyscraper) to show the vastness of the area.

City

The city offers a type of landscape very similar to that of a megacity, although on a smaller scale.

It's usually a landscape highly modified by human presence that stands out for a specific type of architectural style (or for its absence) and/or for certain iconic buildings.

If I say "Eiffel Tower" what city comes to mind? What if I say "Empire State Building"? That's what I mean.

In addition to this, it can be a landscape in which a certain natural element such as a river, or artificial, simulating being natural, such as a lake or a set of channels give it a special aspect that is worth highlighting.

Sydney Harbor (Australia) along with the opera building is unmistakable. Or the views of Venice (Italy) that you can capture from the Ponte Rialto on the Canal Grande are legendary.

In this sense, the biggest challenge when photographing a cityscape is finding a unique point of view and capturing a photo that highlights the character and personality of the location.

Suburb

I know. I know what you're going to tell me, that a suburb is not an urban landscape worth photographing.

That there are no sidewalks. That all houses are the same. That everything there are shopping malls, cars and Starbucks.

I recently found out that an exhibition was held in 1975 entitled **"New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape"** that brought together the work of 8 young American photographers and a German one whose goal was to photograph US landscapes, especially in the suburbs.

This exhibition was a before and after in landscape photography. Traditional images of overwhelming natural landscapes gave way to unromantic views of bleak industrial landscapes, suburban sprawl, and everyday scenes that no one usually pays attention to.

If you think about it, the suburbs are a relatively recent and strange phenomenon. Where else do you have in front of you all these perfect houses, all identical, with huge SUVs parked at the door?

By photographing the urban landscape, you're documenting our society. You're capturing a moment of our time.

Forget all that and take it as a challenge. Create an interest in something seemingly bland.

Crop field

Yes, crop fields are great shooting areas.

I could give you a thousand examples, but these are the first that come to mind: rice field terraces, fields full of sunflowers, tulips or lavender, the hill slopes of a tea or coffee plantation...

It's obviously a type of landscape photography that depends a lot on the time of year. Make sure the crops are at their best! ;)

In terms of composition, you can choose from many creative options: isolate a flower or plant, zoom in to highlight the lines, photograph different sides and angles, use a low or high point of view, photograph a silhouette...

Breeding field

Although it may surprise you, sometimes agriculture allows certain ecosystems to survive that would otherwise not be sustainable or would have disappeared.

In Spain there is a great example: the **dehesa**.

It's a Mediterranean forest ecosystem in which species such as the cork oak and the holm oak stand out. The latter is essential since it serves as food for the Iberian pig. Delicious! ;)

As I was saying with the suburbs, this type of landscape without apparent photographic interest can be more interesting than it seems.

Focus on the role that the environment plays for the animals and how the two blend harmoniously. Look for the characteristics of that specific landscape and what the animals contribute in turn.

Mine

This type of landscape photography is controversial.

On the one hand, it can be a poetic license that reflects a surreal landscape, in which the hand of man reveals the bowels of the Earth. In Spain, for example, the Riotinto mines have left landscapes that almost seem from another planet.

On the other hand, it can be a way of expressing concern such as the Jharia coal mines (India) or the sulfur mines of the Kawah Ijen volcano (Indonesia), in which the working conditions and the environmental impact are devastating.

Focus on the different scenarios that may exist (quarries, salt flats, open pit mines), on the people who work and on the machinery they use to create a sense of scale, and on the transformation of the environment.

A mine is proof that human beings have an insatiable appetite for raw materials. It's an open wound almost impossible to close.

And this brings me to a very important topic that you should never forget in landscape photography: environmental conservation.

If you want to continue photographing it, don't participate in the destruction of our planet.

What's more, help to preserve it.

In the next section I'll give you some ideas of how you can do your bit.

Section 3:

Leave no trace, only footprints

I don't know of any landscape photographer who doesn't enjoy nature. After all, it's the main reason for photographing it, don't you think? ;)

Unfortunately, nature is in danger.

And it's our duty to preserve it.

What is conservation photography

In recent decades, man has indiscriminately deteriorated the environment and many ecosystems are at risk of disappearing. If nobody does anything about it, this destruction will become irreversible and the impact will be irreparable.

Conservation photography emerges as a movement to prevent this from happening.

Its final mission is to visually convey reality to make the viewer aware of what's happening.

They are images with which the photographer

- Promotes the conservation of natural environments.
- Condemns the fragility of ecosystems.

Know and respect nature

As I said at the beginning of this section, if you're a landscape photographer I assume that you like nature.

And to keep photographing it, it's essential that you know and respect it.

Some time ago I discovered **Leave No Trace**, an American organization that supports the environment protection by teaching and inspiring people to enjoy it responsibly.

The most interesting thing about Leave No Trace are its 7 principles:

- Plan and prepare your activity in nature in advance.
- Hike and camp on durable soils.
- Dispose of waste properly.
- Leave everything as you found it.
- Minimize the impact of campfires.

- Respect wildlife.
- Be considerate of other visitors.

But, in my opinion, this is not enough. You have to commit a little more.

Become a conservation photographer

There are many organizations that bring together conservation photographers.

The most popular one internationally is the **ILCP** (International League of Conservation Photographers). In Spain, **AEFONA** (Asociación Española de Fotógrafos de Naturaleza or Spanish Association of Nature Photographers), of which I have been a member for many years, is the biggest one.

I have included the links to inspire you. But the reality is that you don't need to be a professional photographer or undertake a project that millions of people join.

The most important thing is your attitude and your willingness to make things change so that the rest stops destroying the world. All you have to do is do your bit.

And the best way to do that is by starting a conservation photography project.

"Great Toni and where do I start? What can I photograph?"

Think of something in nature that you want to protect (an ecosystem or a plant, for example), try to attract the attention of the viewer with your photos and give them exposure among family and friends and through social media.

If you think about it, that's what I always recommend, tell a story with your images. The only difference is that this time there is an ethical reason behind it.

And remember...

Leave no trace, only footprints.

Section 4:

How to find and make the most out of a location

Nikon Z6 | 85mm | f/2.8 | 1s | ISO 1600 | 6500K

It's a constant in my life.

Every time I post a photo on my website or on my social networks, a follower asks me for the exact location. Inevitably, when I answer that, it leads to the next question: how I do find cool locations.

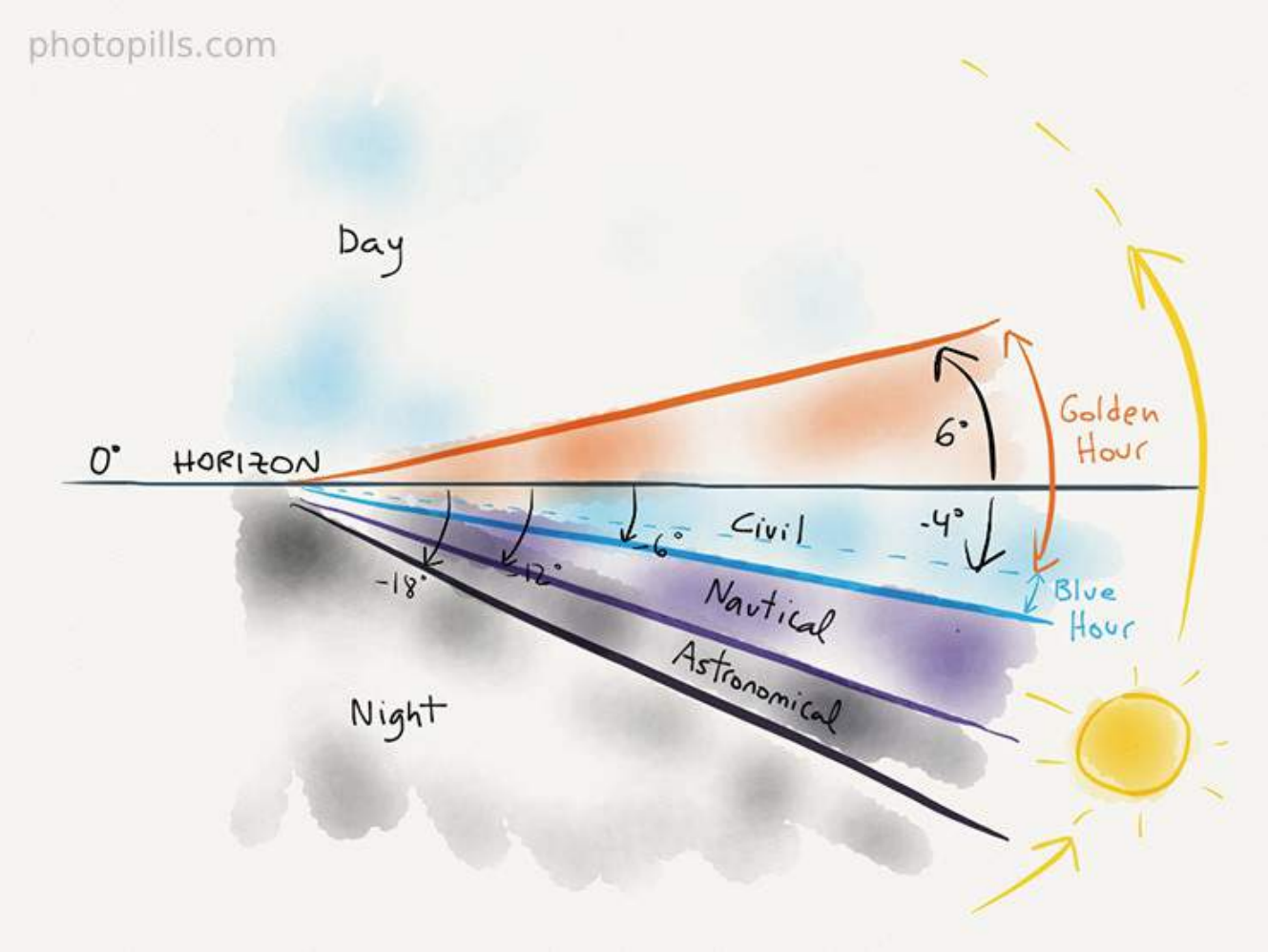
And the truth is that it's not some occult science or thanks to a magical power of fortune-telling.

If you want to find the best location for landscape photography, all you need is time.

That time will allow you to search what landscapes you're going to find, what the ideal location you want to capture must have and where it is.

This is my work methodology.

Determine the type of natural light you want in your photo



When choosing a location, I examine its **natural light** carefully. I analyze when the **golden hour** and the **blue hour** happens, and the **Sunrise** and **Sunset** directions. All this information allows me to determine the best time to photograph the location.

How to understand the natural light of a certain location?

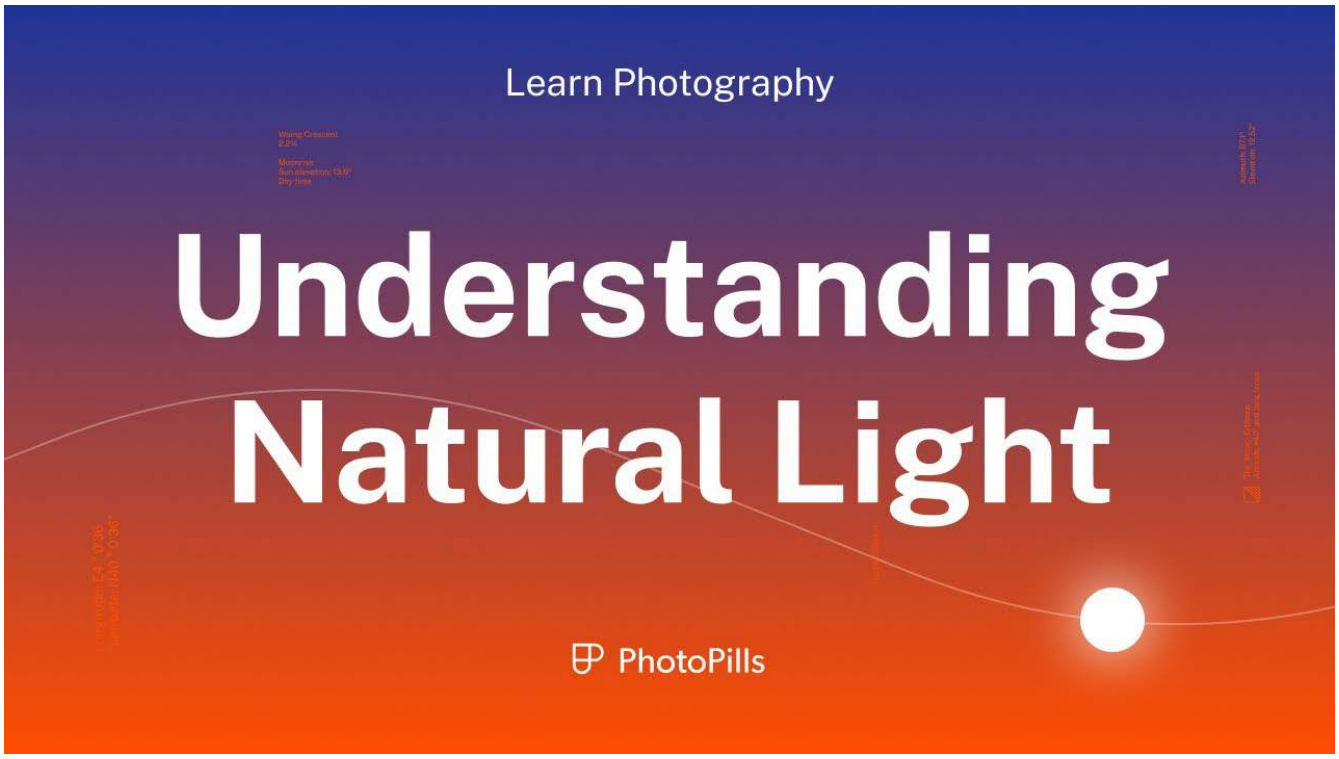
Well, natural light changes during the day according to the Sun elevation. In other words, natural light depends on how high the Sun is in the sky with respect to the horizon.

In the diagram above you can see the different types of natural light depending on the Sun elevation:

- **Day.** Elevation higher than 6°.
- **Golden hour.** Elevation between 6° and -4°.

- **Blue hour.** Elevation between -4° and -6°.
- **Civil twilight.** Elevation between 0° and -6°.
- **Nautical twilight.** Elevation between -6° and -12°.
- **Astronomical twilight and night.** Elevation between -12° and -18°.

In the following video Rafa explains in depth how natural light behaves and the type of photos you can take at each moment of the day:



You can delve into this matter by reading our **superguide on natural light**.

But best of all, PhotoPills helps you figure out in less than 30 seconds when each of these moments of light happens in a specific location on a certain date.

I'll explain to you how to do it right now!

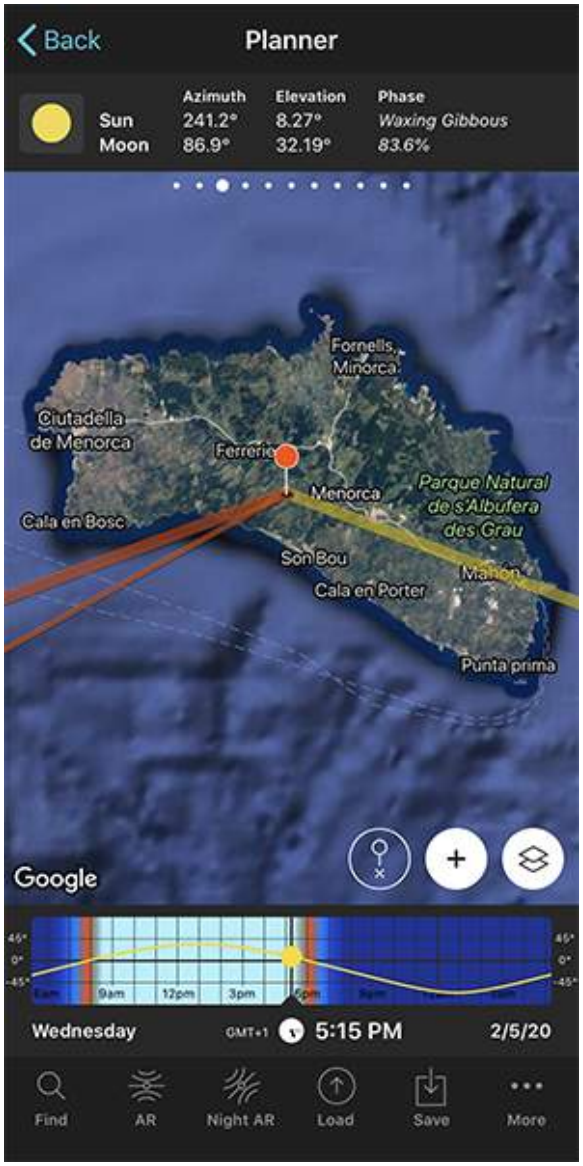
How to find out when the golden hour and blue hour happen with PhotoPills

Open **PhotoPills** and tap *Planner* (*Pills* Menu). Place the Red Pin on the potential location. And then swipe the top panels until you find **Panel 3**. There you can see the elevation of the Sun.

Remember that:

- The golden hour occurs when the Sun elevation is between 6° and -4°.
- The blue hour occurs when the Sun elevation is between -4° and -6°.

Now swipe the top panels to **Panel 6**. This panel tells you the exact start and end times of the golden hour and the blue hour for the selected date and the Red Pin position.



PhotoPills Planner - Panel 3 shows the Sun elevation for the selected date, time and Red Pin position.

PhotoPills Planner - Panel 6 indicates the start and end times of the golden hour and the blue hour for the selected date, time and Red Pin position.

How to find out when the twilights happen with PhotoPills

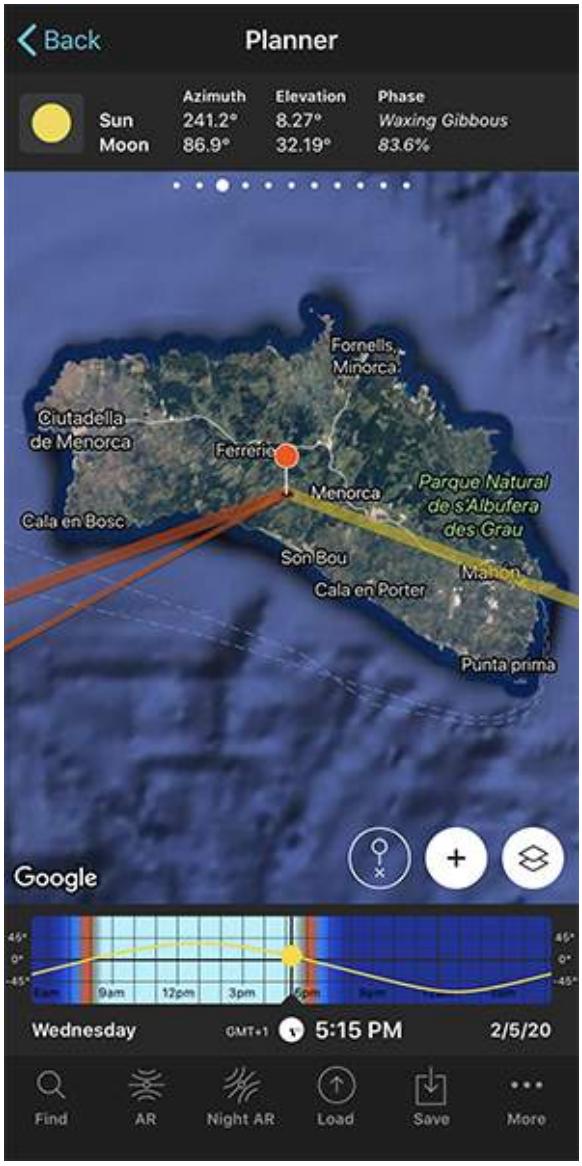
Open **PhotoPills** and tap *Planner* (*Pills* Menu). Place the Red Pin on the potential location. Swipe the top panels to **Panel 3** where you can see the elevation of the Sun.

Remember that:

- The civil twilight occurs when the Sun elevation is between 0° and -6°.
- The nautical twilight occurs when the Sun elevation is between -6° and -12°.

- The astronomical twilight occurs when the Sun elevation is between -12° and -18°.

Now, swipe the top panels until you get to **Panel 5**. This panel tells you precisely the start and end times of the twilights (civil, nautical and astronomical) according to the selected date and the Red Pin position.



PhotoPills Planner - Panel 3 shows the Sun elevation for the selected date, time and Red Pin position.

PhotoPills Planner - Panel 5 indicates the start and end times of civil, nautical and astronomical twilight for the selected date, time and Red Pin position.

You probably already have a specific idea of the time of day you want to take the photo. Here are the links to some specific photography guides:

- A **Sunrise**.
- A **Sunset**.

- During the **golden hour**.
- During the **blue hour**.

Choose the type of landscape (scene) you want to photograph

While you're researching to find the location, you should determine what landscape (or what part of the landscape) you want to photograph.

Keep in mind what's going to be in your frame. It's the setting in which your story will take place.

It's the place you want to show to the viewer. And she will surely freak out after seeing it!

Let's see what ingredients your location should have.

What type of landscape?

As I explained to you in **section 2**, you can choose between two large groups of landscapes: nature or urban.

Once you have determined the type of location, you should check that you'll have enough room in your frame to:

- Include the Sun, the light that comes from it, the **Moon**, the **Milky Way**, **Star Trails**...
- Show where that particular moment takes place. Is it a view of Mount Fuji with a pagoda? Have you gone to Hong Kong to photograph the bay or have you freaked out while capturing a view of Mount Cook?
- Include a powerful subject. I'll give you more details about this in the next section.

Check its orientation

Remember, it's important to include in the frame all the elements you have imagined.

It can be the Sun setting near some rocks in the sea, the Moon rising from behind a skyscraper or the Milky Way aligned with a tree in a mountain landscape...

And if you want that what you imagined happens exactly the way you want so you can photograph it, take into account:

- The position of some of these elements (the Sun, the rocks, the Moon, the skyscraper, the Milky Way, the tree).
- Your own position with respect to them. In other words, where you have to position yourself and where you have to point the camera to.

Try to make sure there's plenty of room to move around

As I just told you, it's important that you can freely move around the location.

On the one hand, the more space you have, the more compositions you can get. When moving around you can look for different points of view, check that you are in the position that you like the most and make sure that everything is under control (the tripod is stable, you don't risk falling or slipping, etc.).

On the other hand, perhaps the photo you imagined has only one possible composition. It's not frequent, but it can happen. So if you have more room you can make small corrections so that all the elements are in the frame exactly where you want.

Decide the point of interest (subject)

Look for a location that has one or more points of interest. That point of interest is the subject of your image, the main character of your story and the magnet to attract the viewer's eye.

And the more interaction there is between the location, the subject, the natural light (or the lack of it if you are doing astrophotography) and the rest of the elements of the frame, the greater visual impact the image will have.

Everything will depend on what you want to convey, the story you want to tell and how you want to surprise the viewer.

The point of interest is the main character of your story

With the constant influx of images that we get every day, it's becoming harder and harder to attract the viewer's eye. And holding their attention has become (almost) mission impossible.

If you want someone to notice your landscape photography, you'll have to go the extra mile to make your image stand out among hundreds, thousands, millions of photos!

You need to choose a character for your story that captivates at first sight and that conveys an irresistible strength.

The point of interest is the most important element of your composition.

"OK Toni and what can you use as a point of interest?"

Avoid elements that aren't original, that aren't strong, that don't convey anything.

Instead, look for items that stand out like an abandoned temple in the middle of the jungle, the top of a mountain lit by the Sun at Sunrise, or the silhouette of a person under the Milky Way.

Look for the extraordinary in the ordinary.

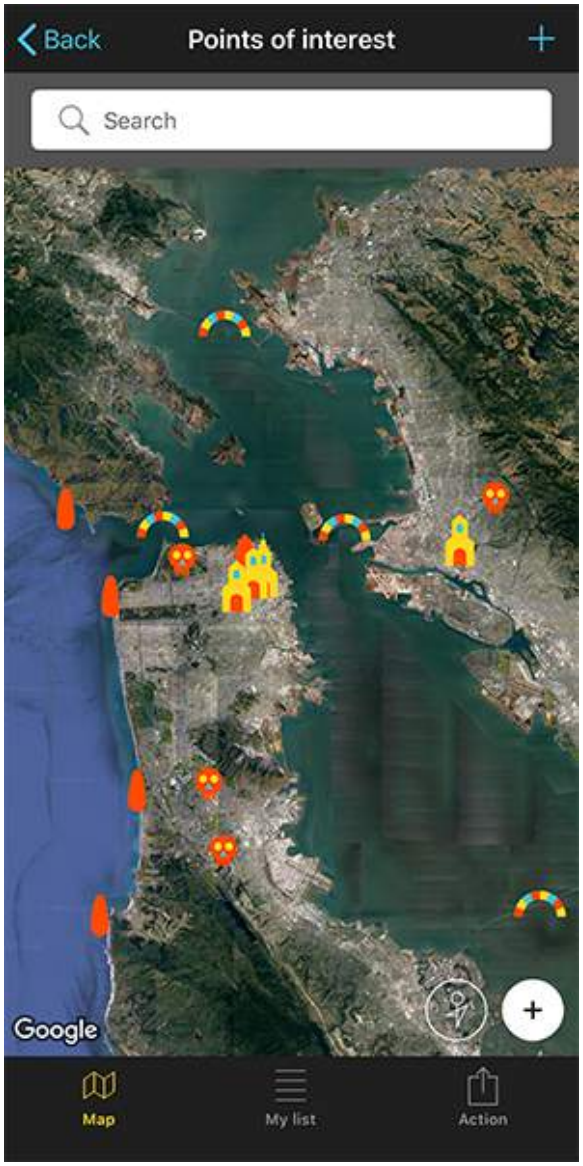
And if you're short on ideas, take a look at the PhotoPills POI database.

"Sorry Toni, but I don't understand you."

I mean the PhotoPills Points of Interest (POI) database :)

To find it, open **PhotoPills** and tap **Points of interest** (*My Stuff* Menu).

Tap *Map* (at the bottom of the screen) and move your fingers across the screen to navigate around the world. Thanks to the 10,000+ POIs included in our database, you'll be able to discover a lot of new locations.



PhotoPills POIs - General view of the Points of interest (POIs) in San Francisco (USA)

PhotoPills POIs - Detail of the Golden Gate Bridge, a Point of interest (POI) in San Francisco (USA).

Don't neglect the foreground

All areas of the composition are important, but the foreground is critical in landscape photography.

To begin with, for a technical reason.

Although some landscape photographers take pictures with a telephoto lens, the vast majority use a wide angle lens for almost all of their photos.

The optical effect that this type of lens produces when looking at the photo, is that all the

elements of the composition seem to be very far away. If you don't include an attractive foreground in your photo, the image will be flat and boring.

And also for an artistic reason.

The foreground is the entrance gate of the image. It's usually the first element the viewer looks at. From there, if the image she's just seen has caught her attention, she'll scan the image with her eyes to discover the story you want to tell.

A good foreground produces a deep photo. And if you can get the viewer to identify with what is happening, she may have the impression of actually being there.

Investigate from far away (on the internet and in real life)

When I write "from far away" I mean all the research tasks, including the planning (**section 6**) that you're going to carry out before actually being in the field.

It's an essential job because the amount of your time and effort will determine whether you'll be successful in exploring the real location and shooting the pictures.

Moreover, getting a photo or the destination or the evolution of a trip may depend on your research work. By getting familiar with the area, the points of interest and the features of the area, you'll be able thoroughly assess how the shooting will be (**section 9**) and what gear you will need (**section 8**).

It's crucial to be flexible when taking photos and the more risks you anticipate, the more relaxed your photo shooting will be.

Check tons of information sources

Once you decide where and at what time of year you're going to take photos, check all the sources of information that you can think of. Here are some ideas that can help you:

- Your main source of inspiration should be the photos of other photographers that draw your attention. Have a look at **Instagram**, **Flickr**, **500px**, **Unsplash**, **Getty Images**, **1x.com**, **Viewbug**, **Pexels**, **Youpic**, **Shutterstock**, **Adobe Stock** and **Google Images**.
- Learn from other photographers' discoveries and check the locations they have previously explored. Certain communities, such as **Locationscout** and **ShotHotspot**, offer this information.
- Analize publications like travel magazines (**National Geographic**, **Condé Nast Traveler**

and **Travel + Leisure**), travel curated content (**Exposure**), travel guides (**Lonely Planet**) and the photography section of newspapers such as **The Atlantic**, **The Guardian** and **The New York Times**.

- Revisit your favorite photographers' websites and pay attention to their galleries. Have you checked the PhotoPills Masters' websites participating in the **PhotoPills Camp**?
- Don't forget the Wikipedia! It has tons of lists of interesting places. Let's say you're looking for lighthouses... Type in Google **"lighthouse list Wikipedia"** and you'll be surprised.
- A reliable and full of surprises source of information are the locals. No one knows the area better and provides greater advice.
- How long since your last visit to a library or a bookstore? Yes, books will tell you more about the local history and natural biodiversity of an area or town.
- Try to visit the nearest Town Hall or tourist office and look for first hand information.
- Again, check the Points of interest (POIs) included in **PhotoPills**.
- And finally, scout the area. It's usually the most effective strategy :)

Take advantage of the potential of geolocated Instagram Location Tags

Instagram has a very powerful tool: geolocated tags calle "location tags".

The process is very simple.

When you see a photo on Instagram that you like, skim the tags to see if the author has included one with the location name. Tap the tag and Instagram will show you all the photos that have that same tag. That is, pictures taken in the same place.

Also, many users are likely to post their photos shortly after taking them. So you can see exactly the weather conditions of that spot and other inconveniences that may arise (a scaffold covering a building, for example).

It helps you find a location very precisely once you've selected a destination or a more generic area.

Instagram is not the only service that offers photos with geolocated tags. Others like **Flickr**, **500px**, **Locationscout** or **ShotHotspot** (I will tell you more about these last two in detail in **section 12**) also offer this tool.

Find out all the practical information about the location

Before leaving home, you should know the following information about the location:

- The address or GPS coordinates of the location. Is the location real or did someone take multiple composite shots?
- How to get to the location. For example, if it's a place that you're going to reach on foot after a walk, get information about the path, including the duration, the difficulty and any other information that can help you (where to park, for example).
- The best time of year to take photos.
- The best time of day to take photos.

Go on an adventure

There is another option to find locations: scout the field.

Choose an area and comb it to find and identify potentially interesting photographic locations.

If you like hiking, for example, this is a good way to discover locations that you can later exploit in your landscape photography.

By now you surely have noticed my passion for nature. I love spending as much time as possible in contact with her. So if I decide to go for a walk and breathe fresh air, I can also use that time and experience to enhance my landscape photography.

I always say it: location is key.

And the great advantage of this research method is that there are no last minute surprises. By being directly in the field, you can scout the location as it is, identify potential subjects, and notice any complications that may arise.

Basically you can find out everything that the computer screen prevents you from discovering while you're enjoying nature.

At the end of day, the aim is going to a certain area, scouting it with your own eyes and hoping to have a bit of luck... ;)

Walking around the island where I live (Menorca) I have discovered its most beautiful corners.

So get out there and scout! Let yourself go...

Scout the location thoroughly

I repeat it to my students over and over. And now I'm telling you.

Once you've decided on a location it's essential that you go there and scout it thoroughly.

You need to do it calmly and with enough time, so I suggest you do it at least one day in advance. Ideally you should go a few days before the shooting date.

This way, if you find something you didn't know or didn't find out during your research from home, you have more room to adjust.

These are the top two reasons why you should never underestimate the location' scouting.

To identify potential risks

Your safety is critical and it has to be above photography. Don't put yourself in danger just to get the photo. Honestly, it's not worth it.

Keep it in mind at any time of the day. But you should be extra careful if

- You plan to arrive at the location at night to take landscape photos at **Sunrise**.
- You plan to take photos at **Sunset** since it will be dark by the time you've finished the shooting.
- You want to do night photography or astrophotography (**Moon**, **Milky Way**, **Star Trails**, **Meteor Showers**, etc.).

The absence of **natural light** makes everything much more difficult.

When scouting the location with natural light, look for landmarks so you can easily navigate the area on the shooting day. So it will be easier for you to identify the access route and you'll be able to get to the shooting spot without any problem.

You can also identify potential hazards such as a ditch, a cliff, or a fence.

To find a unique and powerful composition

If you want to be a good landscape photographer, you should be able to find unique and powerful compositions. As you develop this skill, you'll create your own style.

I've spent years nurturing and honing my ability to find compositions almost anywhere. And I'm still working on it. I think it's something that you can never fully master and that you have to constantly work on.

The good news is that it's something that everyone can learn. You have that ability as well.

You just have to melt your curiosity, your creativity and your ambition. Sometimes you'll see it right away, other times it'll take you more time, but keep in mind that you can find a unique composition whenever you resolve.

And to achieve this, you should regularly train your photographic eye:

- Search for possible compositions all the time. When you're walking down the street or outdoors, from the train window or while driving. By having vision regardless of where you are, you'll be able to take good photos wherever you want.
- Find possible points of interest (subjects) even from a distance.
- When you've found a composition, don't stop and keep looking. The best is always yet to come.
- Use different composition rules, elements within the frame and some alternative tools to tell the story exactly how you want (**section 5**).
- Learn to evaluate and classify each composition that you've discovered in the location. This way you can decide the exact spot from which you'll capture the **Sunrise** or the **Sunset**, for example.

Section 5:

Work on the composition of your landscape photo

Nikon D4s | 14mm | f/16 | 25s | ISO 100 | 6500K

What should your picture have to attract the viewer's attention?

That is the key question you have to ask yourself before pressing the shutter.

This is where the magic of composition comes into play.

Photography is a visual language, a way of telling the stories you want how you want.

In order to do this you need to make artistic decisions using the technique so that your image is just as you've imagined it.

You're going to have to decide many things!

The location (**section 2**), the type of **natural light** (**section 4**), the planning (**section 6**), the gear you're going to use (**section 8**), the camera settings you need (**section 9**) and how

you're going to place the elements within the frame.

And the latter, dear PhotoPiller, is the basis of composition...

The perfect framing

Behind an impressive image, there's always the vision and emotions of the photographer.

Without vision or intention, there is little or nothing to say. And if you don't understand the creative process, your vision won't translate into a photo that best expresses that vision.

We all see the world in a different way. We have different opinions about what we see, and different tastes as to how we want to capture it in a photo. Ultimately, it comes down to two things: how you see the world and how you decide to show that world in your photos.

At the beginning of this section I asked you a question, but here are some more that you should ask yourself:

Why do I want to take this particular photograph? What story do I want to tell? What is the best way to do it? What are my tools (technical and artistic)?

And it can all be summed up in the following question: why?

The so-called composition rules

It may sound cliché, but the only rule in photography is that there are no rules.

However, there are established composition guidelines or rules that can be applied in almost any situation and which, if used skillfully, increase the visual impact of your scene.

Composition rules help your photos stand out. Thanks to them you can give them a natural balance, draw attention to what you consider important in the scene, or guide the viewer's eye through the image.

As you learn them, you'll be surprised how universal most of them are. You'll see them everywhere... And, above all, you'll understand why some photos work while others look like simple snapshots.

There are many composition rules and it would be impossible to include them all here, but here are some examples:

- **The rule of thirds.** Place your subject at the intersection of imaginary lines that divide a photo into three parts from top to bottom and from left to right.

- **The golden ratio.** Compose a photo following a spiral defined by this ratio.
- **Centered composition and symmetry.** Place your subject in the center of the frame and create a symmetry between the two halves.
- **Golden triangles.** Draw a diagonal line from the upper right corner to the lower left corner. Next, draw two more lines: one from the upper left corner until it touches your diagonal line, and another one from the opposite point, that is, from the lower right corner to your diagonal. You'll get an area divided into 4 triangles known as golden triangles.
- **Interesting foreground and depth.** Place elements in the foreground in a way that attracts the viewer's attention, and make sure that what's in the midground and the background also help to create depth.
- **Juxtaposition.** Combine 2 or 3 elements in the frame so that they convey something.
- **Frame within another frame.** Use the main framing and find another frame within the scene to highlight the subject.
- **Balance of the elements in the scene.** Make sure that the visual weights of the elements are not unbalanced.
- **Guiding lines.** Use elements of the composition to guide the viewer's eye where you want.
- **The left-to-right rule.** Most of us are used to reading from left to right so an image could be read that way too.
- **Diagonals and triangles.** Use diagonals and triangles, the vanishing point for example, to create tension in the scene.
- **The rule of space.** Be creative when using negative space, that part of the composition in which there is nothing.
- **Patterns and textures.** Patterns add visual harmony to an image while textures add depth.
- **Color theory.** Apply combinations of colors that fit well together, so that the result is harmonious.
- **Change your point of view.** Avoid shooting at eye level.
- **Odd rule.** If you repeat elements (trees, people) try to make their number odd.
- **Isolate the subject.** Make sure that the subject is tack sharp and leave the rest of the frame out of focus.
- **Fill the frame.** Don't leave any negative space inside the frame.

- **Simplicity and minimalism.** Generally a few elements are enough to tell a story. Avoid chaotic compositions.

Develop your own style by breaking the rules

Photography rules are made to be broken...

Becoming a rebel photographer will help you produce more impressive images.

As I explained in the previous section, composition rules are very useful to produce a balanced and attractive image.

But if you want to develop your own photography style, break them. You'll be more original by being creative.

Here are some ideas to inspire you...

- Forget the rule of thirds: place the horizon in the center to create symmetry or the subject near one of the edges to create tension.
- Break the pattern or symmetry you have created.
- Tilt the horizon... Although it's generally a very common mistake among beginning landscape photographers, a slight tilt (also called a Dutch angle) creates a diagonal that produces dynamism or tension in the composition.
- Put the subject in the center of the frame and don't use any other angle so it remains the main character.
- Place the vanishing point in the center.

Focus on what is important

Framing

The framing (or frame) is not just the continent of the image. It's made up of the four most important lines in the image, the edges, and it determines how you should read the photo.

Its orientation (horizontal or vertical) is important as it dictates the path that the viewer's eye will follow when viewing the photograph.

And you also have to take into account the proportion as it will reinforce or soften the visual flow of your photography.

Point of view

The point of view is the most powerful tool you have. When you move and you move the camera, everything changes.

When you vary your position, study which elements strengthen that change and which weaken it. And then see if it's worth changing your point of view.

In this sense, you should observe how the position of the subject varies in the frame and in the composition since it's the main character of your story. Be careful, as it may lose its main role in the image.

Depth

The camera sees in two dimensions, flattening the world in a picture. Your mission is to create depth in the image. In other words, create an illusion so that the photo seems to be 3-dimensional and reflects the scene as you see it with your own eyes.

Why is the sense of depth so important?

Because deep images are what make the viewer have the impression of being inside the scene. Obviously, that's what makes a photo more captivating or attractive.

Take care of the different shots (foreground, midground and background) and above all, look at what you include (or not) in each one of them.

Exclusion

The camera offers you a myriad of possibilities and, as I said before, you can tell it what you want to isolate in your scene. That is, you can put intention into your composition.

Thus, photography is an art of exclusion.

One of the skills of a great landscape photographer is to take care of the composition by identifying what elements are necessary to tell the story. Cut out and eliminate anything that is superfluous and doesn't add anything to the story.

Keep only with what really matters.

And in order to do this, use negative space: the space that remains between the different elements of a composition.

Relationship between elements

You may have noticed that I always attach great importance to the subject. And it makes sense because it's the main character of your story and the visual core of the photo.

However, the subject alone is not everything. An image works and has an impact when you manage to relate the subject to other elements in the frame.

That's why it's important for the viewer to easily and quickly recognize these relationships and understand what role each element plays, what links there are between them and how they affect the message you want to convey.

It's the key to visual language: that each ingredient you use in your photo fulfills its role and that it is recognizable.

Possible elements within the frame

All the elements that are in your composition have to be there for some reason. Don't leave anything to chance. Don't include superfluous elements or elements that don't add something to the story and that don't arouse an emotion in the viewer.

You should be concerned that they are a visual roadmap for the viewer to follow your steps while looking at the image.

And to help you with your compositions, here are some of the elements that you can play with.

- **Point.** It's a small element, separated from others, that conveys distance, order, balance, solitude.
- **Line.** The lines connect the different parts of the scene. A straight line provides rigidity and a dynamic curve. A horizontal line conveys stability and tranquility. A vertical line gives dynamism and movement. And a diagonal line breaks stability and brings perspective.
- **Shape.** These are a set of lines to form triangles, circles, etc. Thanks to the triangle you can emphasize its vertices. A circle isolates its content from the outside and translates totality, perfection and continuous movement.
- **Volume.** You need to use deception to show three-dimensionality (weight, volume) in the image and to convey volume you can use contrast, perspective and overlay.
- **Color.** A color is defined by its brightness (light intensity), its hue (tone) and its saturation (purity). They are usually divided into warm colors that are invigorating and cool that are intimate.

- **Black and white.** It's a picture without color or, rather, one that reflects a grayscale. Since there is an absence of color, the eye focuses on other aspects of the composition.
- **Lights and shadows.** A dark tonal range is synonymous with anguish, imbalance. A clear tonal range arouses interest and generates optimism and joy.
- **Contrasts.** It's an effect produced when one visual element stands out compared to another in the same image. There are several types of contrast: tonal and conceptual.
- **Texture.** A texture can be soft, rough, smooth, hard, rough and enhances the sense of sight and touch.
- **Scale.** It's the size relationship that you establish between the different elements present in the composition. Thanks to it, you can establish a hierarchy between them and highlight one or those that interest you the most.
- **Movement.** By changing the shutter speed you can convey movement and dynamism. You can do a **long exposure** or a panning.
- **Rhythm.** You produce rhythm through the regular repetition (or not) of lines or shapes. Or you can break it to create tension and get attention.
- **Positive and negative space.** Positive space can be considered to be the subject of the composition, while negative space is the backdrop. The use you make of each of these spaces determines the harmony, balance and tone of the image.
- **Balance.** To establish balance between the different elements of the composition, use visual weights. Thus, the larger the size of an element, the greater its visual weight. And light, warm, and saturated colors outweigh dark, cool, and low-saturated colors.
- **Symmetry.** Symmetry is a very powerful composition tool because it can create a serene and pleasant feeling.
- **Atmosphere.** It's the environment that your photo reflects. Thanks to it you can convey a wide array of sensations.

Some alternative tools

In the previous section I mentioned some elements to vary your compositions. But there are a lot of different creative resources.

Here are some ideas...

- Frame: what do you want to include and what do you want to leave out?

- Simplification: include only the necessary elements.
- Point of view: at eye level, from below, from above, looking up or down.
- Planes: be careful what you put in the foreground, in the midground and in the background.
- Format: you can choose between horizontal, vertical, panoramic or square format.
- Sharpness: determine where you want to focus.
- Focal length: remember that the wide angle distorts and a long focal distance compresses the scene.
- Subject size: You can modify the relative size of the subject according to how you display it compared to its surroundings.
- Exposure time: do you want to convey motion?
- Light: light is everything in landscape photography, it's your raw material and remember that it's neither good nor bad, it all depends on how you use it.
- Perspective: it's what gives the photo a real and three-dimensional look.
- Depth of field: its artistic possibilities are infinite as I explain in **this article**.
- Exposure: thanks to the **exposure triangle** you can give your scene the look you want.

What's important is to execute your idea and get the landscape picture that you have imagined.

Therefore, use everything you can think of, use all the tools you have at your fingertips and, above all, don't give up if you don't get it the first time!

And now, it's time to plan the photo :)

Section 6:

Plan your landscape photos in a few minutes

Planning is essential in landscape photography.

Planning your photo you'll find out:

- A shooting spot from where to take the photo,
- A shooting direction (the frame) and
- A shooting date and time...

Thanks to this information you'll know exactly where you have to go, what day you have to go and at what time you have to shoot.

Moreover, planning a photo is much easier and faster than it seems. With **PhotoPills** it's a matter of minutes.

In this video you'll learn how to plan any landscape photo you imagine:

Although if you want to learn a specific tool of the app, take a look at the **PhotoPills YouTube channel** where you will find dozens of tutorials ;)

And to make it easier for you, below you'll find real planning examples to get straight to the point...

Understand and plan the light: golden hour and blue hour

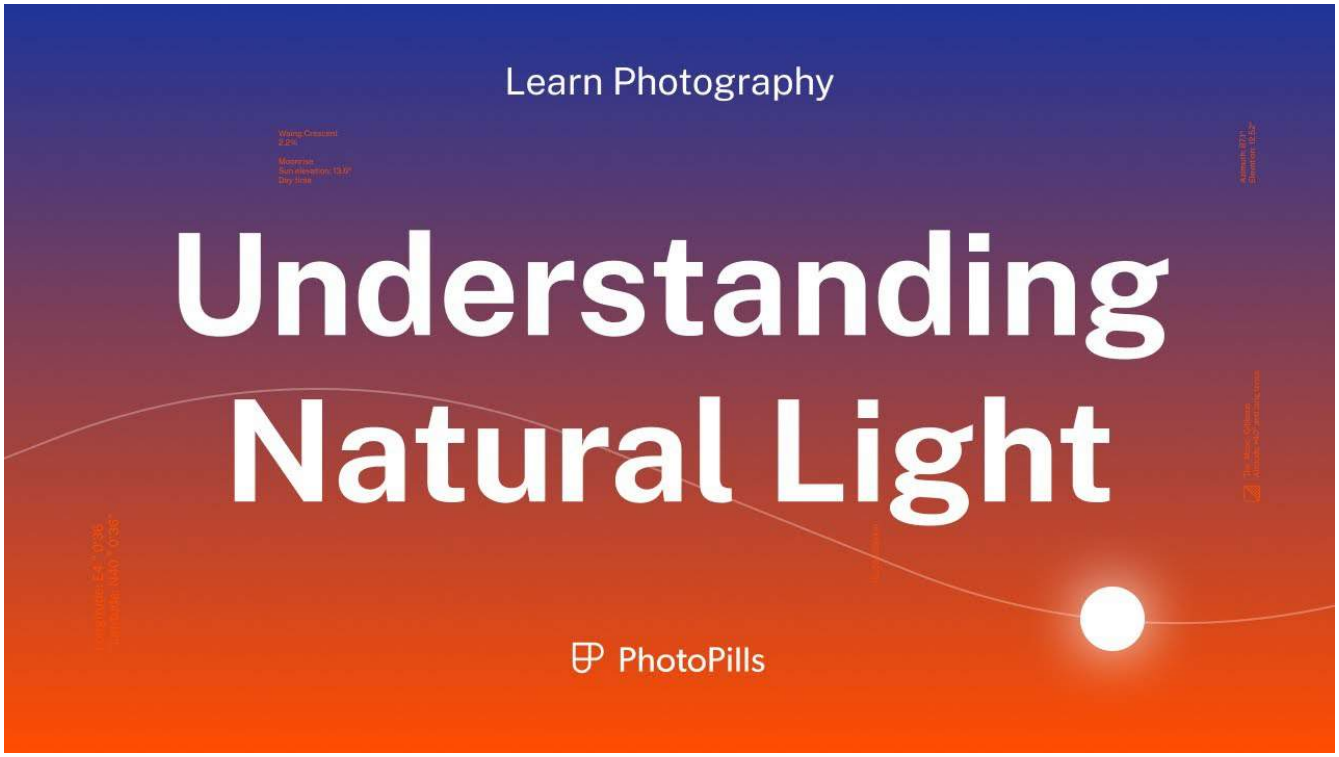
Why are all landscape photographers obsessed with the magic hours? What are they and when do they occur?

Magic hours include two times of the day:

- The **golden hour**. The light has reddish, orange, yellow tones or, as its name suggests, golden tones. It occurs when the Sun has an elevation between 6º and -4º.
- The **blue hour**. The light has a deep blue hue, with a cool color temperature and saturated colors. It occurs when the Sun has an elevation between -4º and -6º.

As I explained to you in **section 4**, both offer the best lighting conditions to take landscape pictures.

Here's a video in which Rafa explains everything you need to know about **natural light**.



Plan the golden hour

Planning a photo that happens during **golden hour** is very simple. You can do it in 7 steps:

1. Place the Red Pin on a potential location.
2. Select the date you want to photograph the golden hour.
3. Find out the Sunrise/Sunset direction. Check the thick yellow line (Sunrise) or the thick orange line (Sunset).
4. Find out the Sunrise/Sunset time on **Panel 4**.
5. Check different locations until you find a photo that you like.
6. Check at what time the golden hour starts on **Panel 6**.
7. Save the plan using the **Save** button.

You have a complete step by step guide in **section 4 of our golden hour photography guide**.

Plan the blue hour

Planning a photo that happens during **blue hour** is very simple. You can do it in 7 steps:

1. Place the Red Pin on a location that you like.
2. Select the date you want to shoot the blue hour.
3. Find out the Sunrise/Sunset direction. Check the thick yellow line (Sunrise) or the thick orange line (Sunset).
4. Find out the Sunrise/Sunset time on **Panel 4**.
5. Check different locations until you find a photo that you like.
6. Check at what time the golden hour starts on **Panel 6**.
7. Save the plan using the **Save** button.

You have a complete step by step guide in **section 4 of our blue hour photography guide**.

Plan a Sunrise or Sunset on a certain date

Imagine you want to photograph the next Sunrise or Sunset. You know the date of the photo, but... from where would it be better to take the photo? And at what time?

You'll get the answers to these questions using **PhotoPills** main tool: the Planner.

Here's a video in which Rafa explains in great detail how to plan spectacular Sunrise and Sunset photos.

To plan a Sunrise/Sunset photo for a certain date you have to follow 6 steps:

1. Place the Red Pin on a location that you like.
2. Select the date you want to photograph the Sunrise/Sunset.
3. Find out the Sunrise/Sunset direction. Check the thick yellow line (Sunrise) or the thick orange line (Sunset).
4. Find out the Sunrise/Sunset time on **Panel 4**.
5. Check different locations until you find a photo that you like.
6. Save the plan using the **Save** button.

You have a complete step by step guide in

- **Section 4 of our Sunrise photography guide**.
- **Section 4 of our Sunset photography guide**.

Plan a Sunrise or Sunset on a certain position

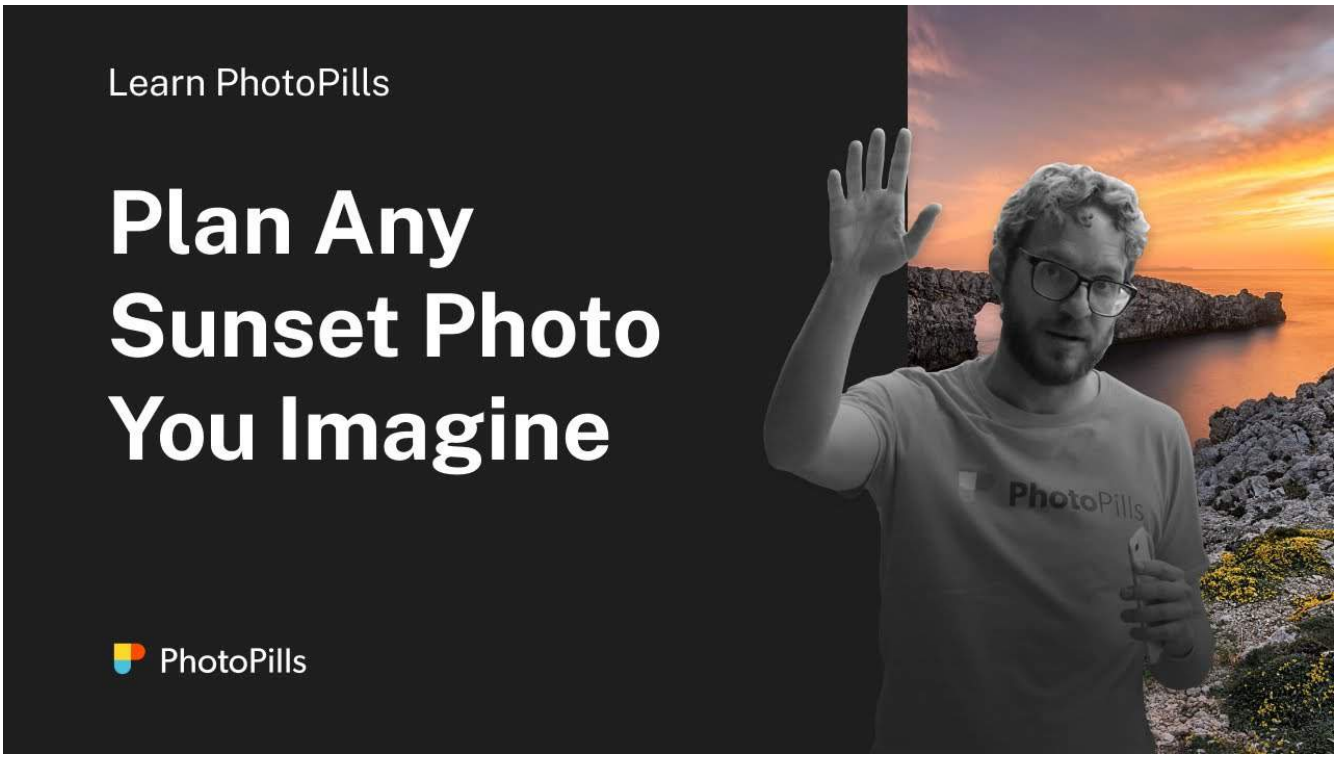
Imagine that you want the Sun rising or setting in a certain position in the photo but you don't know the shooting date ;)

In other words, you need to find out:

- If that specific photo is possible.
- And if it is, when exactly does it happen.

And for this, the best tool is the **PhotoPills** Planner.

In the following video Rafa explains in great detail how to find a powerful Sunset photo without knowing the exact date in which you want to take the photo.



To plan a Sunrise/Sunset photo when you don't know the date of the photo you have to follow 9 steps:

1. Place the Red Pin on the shooting spot.

2. Place the Black Pin where you want the Sun.
3. Find the dates on which the photo is possible with the **Search** option.
4. Enter the date range.
5. Set the azimuth of the Sun.
6. Set the elevation of the Sun.
7. Get the results table with the days when the photo is possible.
8. Choose the date that best suits what you need.
9. Save the plan using the **Save** button.

You have a complete step by step guide in

- **Section 4 of our Sunrise photography guide**.
- **Section 4 of our Sunset photography guide**.

Plan a Moon shot

Planning a **Moon** shot requires more work and accuracy than a Sunrise or a Sunset shot.

The two most common cases are:

- A plan for a certain date, as for example, when you want to plan the next Full Moon.
- A plan with the Moon in a certain position. In this case, you know the shooting spot and the photo you want, and you want to find out when it happens.

Plan the next Full Moon

In this case, you want to capture the Moon on a specific day.

That is, you know the date you want to take the photo but you need to find out:

- The exact shooting spot from which you'll be shooting.
- The exact time the Moon will be where you want it to be.

Here is a video in which Rafa explains step by step how to plan this type of landscape photography.

To plan this type of Moon shot you have to follow 8 steps:

1. Place the Red Pin close to the subject.
2. Select the date of the Moon you want.
3. Place the Black Pin where you want the Moon.
4. Understand the Moonrise and Moonset directions. Check the thick light blue line (Moonrise) or the thick dark blue line (Moonset).
5. Move the Red Pin. Choose the shooting spot, find the time of the photo and determine the size of the Moon. **Panel 2** helps you find out if the Moon is at the height you want and the size you need.
6. Check the **natural light** on **Panel 3**. The Sun elevation tells you the type of natural light.
7. Plan the **field of view** and the **depth of field** with the map tools.
8. Save the plan using the **Save** button.

You have a step by step guide in **section 5 of our Moon photography guide**.

Plan the Moon in a certain position

You know exactly the photo you want: you know the exact shooting spot from which you'll be taking pictures, the frame and the Moon position with respect to the subject you want.

Now you just need to find out:

- If that specific photo is possible.
- And if it is, when exactly does it happen.

Here is a video in which Rafa explains how to use **PhotoPills** to plan a photo in which the Moon rises in a certain position in the frame.

To plan a Moon shot when you don't know the date of the photo you have to follow 10 steps:

1. Place the Red Pin on the shooting spot.
2. Place the Black Pin where you want the Moon.
3. Find out the elevation of the Moon you need.
4. Find the dates in which the photo is possible with the **Search** option.
5. Enter the date range.

6. Enter the azimuth of the Moon.
7. Enter the elevation of the Moon.
8. Get the results table with the days when the photo is possible.
9. Choose the date that best suits what you need.
10. Save the plan using the **Save** button.

You have a step by step guide in **section 5 of our Moon photography guide**.

Plan the Milky Way

I suggest you try using **PhotoPills** to plan any photo of the **Milky Way** that you imagine. It's a very powerful app!

With the following video you'll learn

- How to easily plan the best possible Milky Way photo for a given date with PhotoPills.
- And if you know the photo you want to take but don't know when it happens, you'll learn to determine the exact date and time that the Milky Way will be exactly where you want it to be.

To plan a photo of the Milky Way you have to follow 6 steps:

1. Place the Red Pin on a potential location.
2. Set the date of the photo.
3. Activate the Milky Way layer.
4. Change the time with the **Time bar** until the Milky Way is in the position you want.
5. Move the Red Pin to adjust the shooting spot.
6. Save the plan using the **Save** button.

You have a step by step guide in **section 7 of our Milky Way photography guide**.

Plan Star Trails

What Star Trails pattern can I capture? Will I have moonlight on the scene? Where will the Polaris be? Where will the celestial equator be? What time do I have to start taking photos?

You'll need to answer these questions (and much more) during the planning.

Luckily, **PhotoPills** has all the answers.

And if you don't believe me, check out this video where Rafa teaches you how to plan a Star Trails photo from start to finish.

To plan a Star Trails photo you have to follow 3 steps:

1. Go to the location and stand in front of the subject.
2. In PhotoPills, tap **Night RA** from the *Pills* menu.
3. Use the Night Augmented Reality (AR) to find the Polaris, the celestial equator, and every possible star trail pattern. Look at the blue circles.

You have a step by step guide in **section 5 of our Star Trails photography guide**.

Plan a Meteor Shower

The key to successfully photographing a Meteor Shower is knowing the position of the radiant at all times.

What is the radiant?

It's the point in the sky from which meteors converge.

How can you locate it?

Easy...

Find it out with the help of **PhotoPills**.

In this video Rafa shows you how to plan any Meteor Shower photo.

To plan a photo of Meteor Showers you have to follow 3 steps:

1. Select the Meteor Shower.
2. Find out the key meteor shower information.
3. Find your shooting spot and framing (locate the radiant in the sky).

You have a step by step guide in **section 12 of our Meteor Shower photography guide**.

Plan a solar eclipse

This type of planning lets you know where to go, and when to go, to capture every phase of the eclipse. And also how to find the right shooting spot to capture the eclipse aligned with your favorite subject.

In this video Rafa teaches you to plan a total solar eclipse. Although his explanations will help you plan any solar eclipse, whether it's partial, annular or total.

To plan a photo of a solar eclipse you have to follow 8 steps:

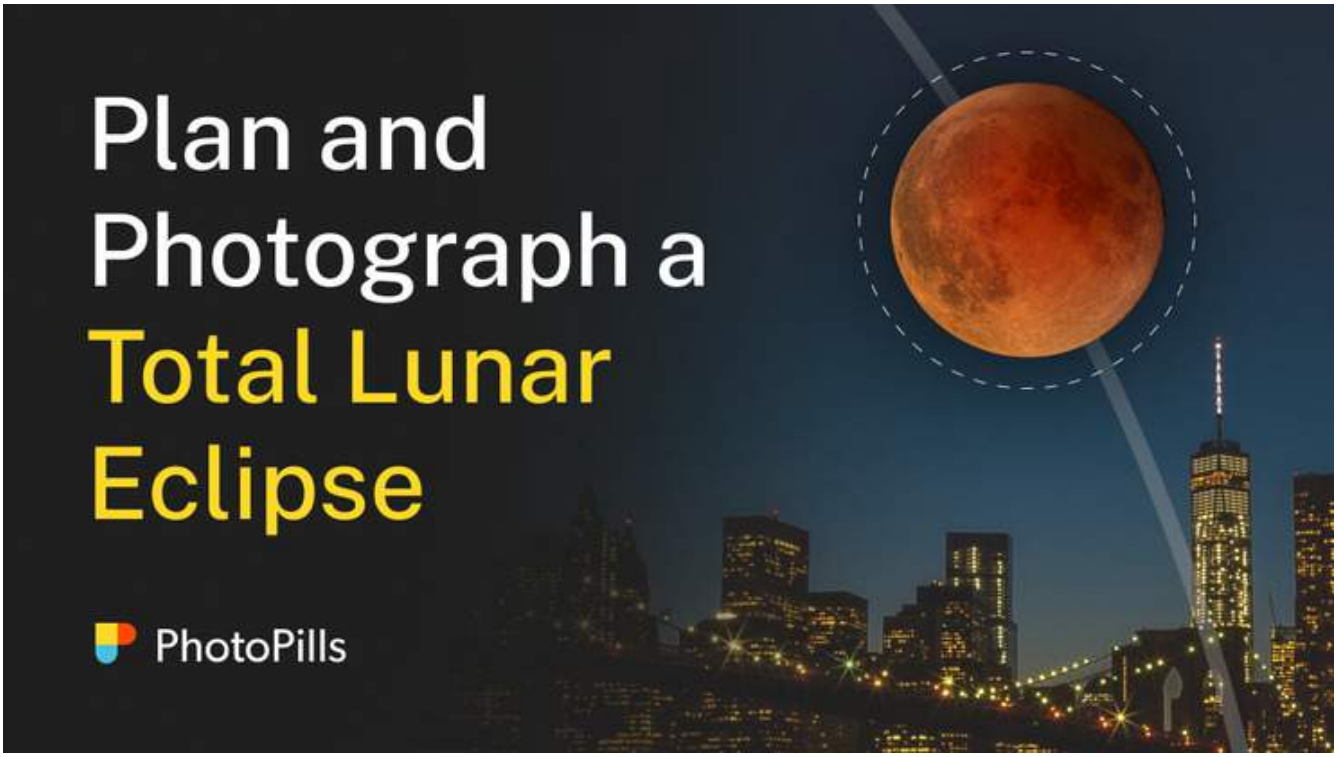
1. Select the eclipse you want to plan.
2. Place the Red Pin in a location within the path of totality.
3. Find out when the eclipse phases occur on **Panel 10**.
4. Find out where in the sky the eclipse will occur.
5. Place the Black Pin on your subject.
6. Find the shooting spot.
7. Check the size of the eclipse on **Panel 2**.
8. Plan the **field of view** and the **depth of field** with the map tools.

You have a step by step guide in **section 5 of our solar eclipse photographic guide**.

Plan a lunar eclipse

Imagine a photo of a total lunar eclipse with the ancient ruins of Stonehenge... Is such a photo possible? When will it happen?

In this video Rafa describes a methodology that includes everything you need to use **PhotoPills** and plan any lunar eclipse picture.



To plan a photo of a lunar eclipse you have to follow 8 steps:

1. Select the eclipse you want to plan.
2. Place the Red Pin on a potential location.
3. Find out when the eclipse phases occur on **Panel 10**.
4. Find out where in the sky the eclipse will occur.
5. Place the Black Pin on your subject.
6. Find the shooting spot.
7. Check the size of the eclipse on **Panel 2**.
8. Plan the **field of view** and the **depth of field** with the map tools.

You have a step by step guide in **section 5 of our lunar eclipse photography guide**.

Plan a seascape

I love **seascape photography**. Although it is something that shouldn't surprise you... Remember that I live on an island! ;)

In this video, Rafa and **Francesco Gola** sat hand in hand in a Masterclass on Seascape Photography where you can learn how he plans an amazing photo.

Section 7:

Landscape photography depends on natural factors

Nikon D4s | 35mm | f/5.6 | 1/50s | ISO 400 | 6500K | Soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) without filter holder

Landscape photography is about understanding how the elements interact with that landscape in such a way that you can capture a scene with a certain light.

When I write "elements" I don't mean only what your eyes see (the subject or what's in the foreground, for example). You also have to take the weather into account.

In both cases (light and climate) work with them, not against them.

Don't fight the elements, learn to make the most of them whatever they are. Study them in depth and learn how they behave to be in the right place at the right time.

Natural light

Natural light is a key element in landscape photography.

From a technical point of view, without it there's no photo.

From an artistic point of view, it's the ingredient that marks the picture's emotional impact. That is, the feeling that the photo conveys to the viewer (strength, fear, calm, silence, speed, etc.).

In **section 4** I explain in detail how natural light behaves and what the different phases are

depending on the Sun elevation:

- **Day.** Elevation higher than 6°.
- **Golden hour.** Elevation between 6° and -4°.
- **Blue hour.** Elevation between -4° and -6°.
- **Civil twilight.** Elevation between 0° and -6°.
- **Nautical twilight.** Elevation between -6° and -12°.
- **Astronomical twilight and night.** Elevation between -12° and -18°.

If you want more details on the subject, take a look at our **superguide on natural light**.

Seasons

From a landscape photography point of view, there's no perfect season throughout the year. A place that seems warm and magical in the spring can seem threatening and spooky in the winter...

Each season has its own peculiarities and each one is special. It can offer you wonderful compositions and unique perspectives.

But bear in mind that you don't have to choose a station. There's nothing funnier than taking the same photo at different times of the year to immortalize the beauty of the location in each season.

Winter

Nikon Z50 | 200mm | f/2.8 | 1/500s | ISO 100 | 6000K

I'm going to be honest with you, taking landscape photos during winter is more difficult than at other times of the year.

There is hardly any vegetation and the trees are generally bare (unless they are evergreens). Play with the branches and roots looking for interesting shapes and shadows.

The days are much shorter so you have to carefully plan the location and the day and time of the capture. You have a smaller margin of error if you need to vary your position on the fly.

Weather changes are hardly noticeable and days can be very repetitive. Therefore, you may have to wait days and days for the right light and weather conditions.

However, one of the things to take advantage of in winter is that **natural light** is much softer than at other times of the year.

If you plan to photograph a scene with water (river, waterfall, stream) use the soft light filtering through the treetops. At the same time, since the thaw hasn't yet occurred, take a look at the flow: since there should be less water, it could offer interesting opportunities

(reflections, long exposures).

Moreover, low temperatures are great for capturing fog and low clouds during **Sunrise**.

Spring

Nikon D4s | 14mm | f/16 | 1/10s | ISO 400 | 6700K

Whenever I think of spring the word that comes to mind is "revival".

Plants recover their leaves and their flowers, flooding the scene with vivid and saturated colors. On the mountain, the snow begins to melt, filling the rivers and waterfalls with water again.

The days get longer and you have more hours of light.

However, it's a period of the year when the weather changes often. The same location can

offer you very different scenes in a matter of minutes. You can start the shooting session with a sky full of clouds and heavy rain to end up photographing a magical and colorful **Sunset**.

I love spring, because it's when the **Milky Way** photography season starts.

Summer

Nikon D4s | 102mm | f/5.6 | 1.3s | ISO 100 | 5600K | ND 1.8 (6 stops) filter

In my opinion, summer is the time of year when I find it harder to capture the landscape photos that I like.

Well, don't get me wrong. Summer is a wonderful season when the **Sunrise**, the **blue hour**, the **golden hour** and the **Sunset** are longer than at any other time of the year.

And, of course, it's the most comfortable season to photograph the **Milky Way**, since the

nights are longer and hotter.

But during the day, it will be difficult to find cloudy skies so your photos won't be particularly dramatic. Unless there's a storm.

Fall

Nikon Z6 | 16mm | f/5.6 | 1/50s | ISO 100 | 6500K

Fall is my favorite time of year to take landscape photos.

Obviously, one of the most interesting landscapes in this season is the deciduous forests (**section 2**) whose warm and vivid colors make any scene worth photographing. They go through a range of greens to reds, oranges, and yellows.

Another interesting aspect is that the climatic conditions are relatively variable during the fall. Although they don't change as drastically as in spring. In fact, oftentimes you'll find that the clouds and the relative strength of the Sun create a natural filter that softens and filters the light.

If you photograph early in the morning, you may find banks of fog or low mist that create a

fantastic, almost fairytale atmosphere. And if you wait for the Sun to come out, you can get some really cool effects from the Sun's rays when they bounce off the water.

Clouds

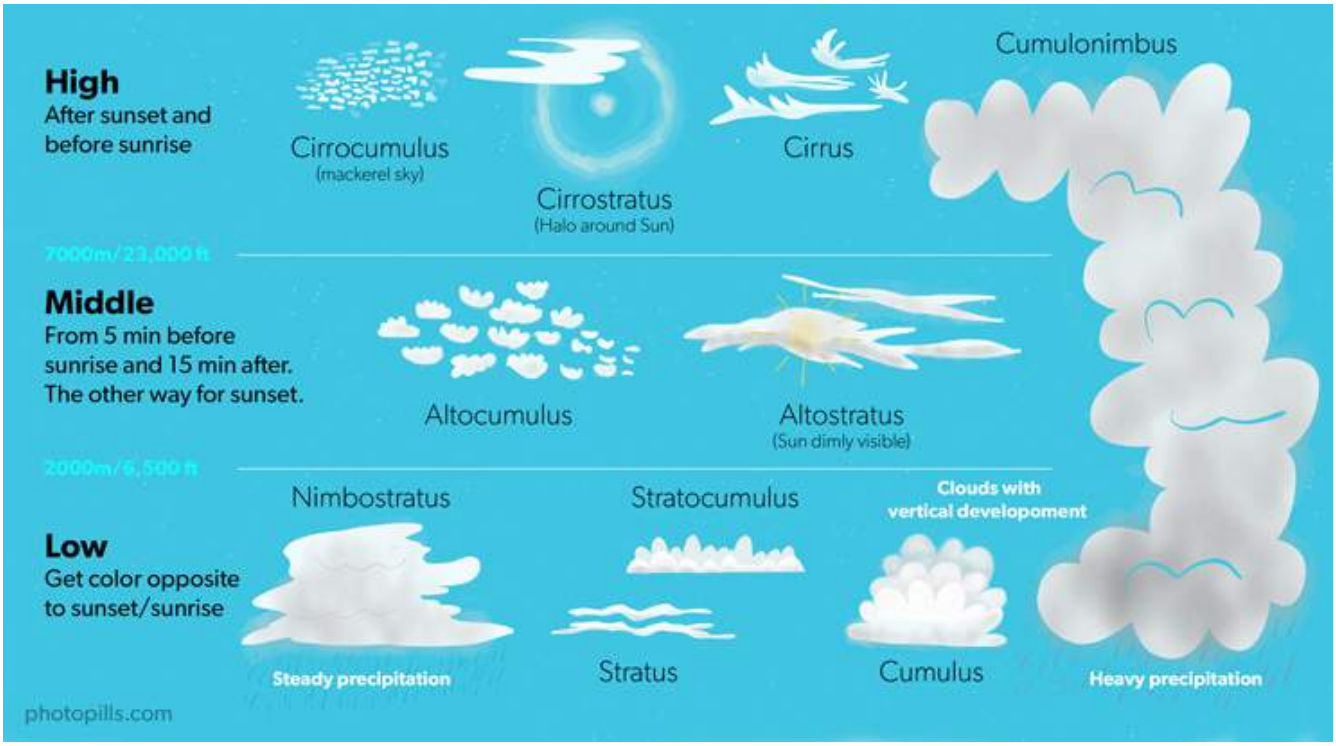
Nikon D4s | 18mm | f/11 | 1/20s | ISO 100 | 5650K | Soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filter | 6-photo panorama

If you like landscape photography, you'll quickly realize that clear blue skies are the most boring thing in the world visually speaking.

Therefore, try to have clouds in your skies.

There are many different types of clouds: cumulus, strata, stratocumulus, cumulonimbus... They all have a different look and can be tinted during the **Sunrise** and the **Sunset**.

Here's a summary of the types of clouds you can find and when the Sun can color them.



That is why it's convenient that you know what type of clouds you can find, where, when and under what circumstances. This way you'll be able to plan (**section 6**) your photo more exactly and that the clouds turn it into a spectacular image.

Rain

Rain is a tremendously artistic and creative ingredient in landscape photography.

On a cloudy day, many scenes look flat and lifeless. However, thanks to the rain, the colors become more intense and saturated. In addition to this, humidity gives a special shine to the scene, increasing the depth and volume to the elements of the composition.

Keep in mind that water is an element that offers an infinite range of creative possibilities. You can take advantage of new streams, the drops sliding down any surface, a small waterfall gaining strength...

And also take advantage of the depth that you can create by playing with the planes that form the different curtains of water as they wet the landscape.

After the rain, try to photograph reflections in any puddle or place where water has accumulated. The results are fantastic.

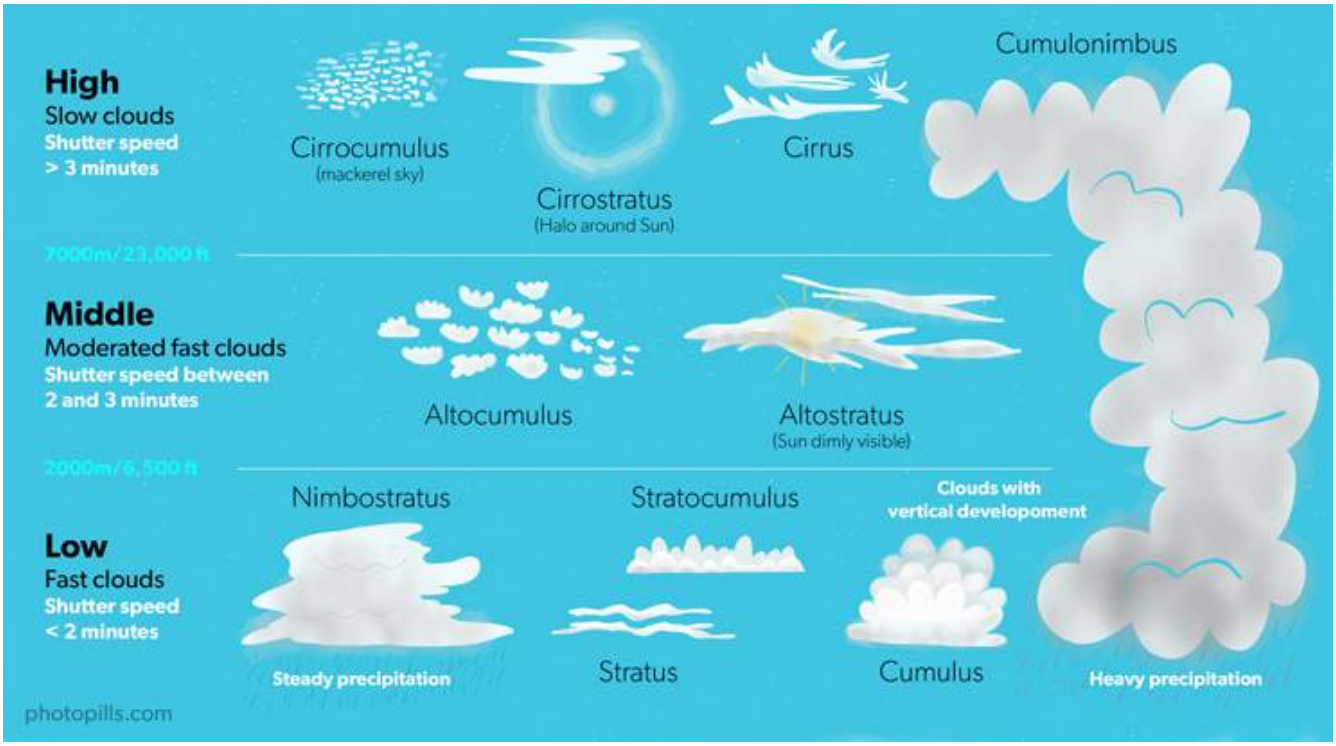
Wind

Nikon D4s | 19mm | f/16 | 199s | ISO 100 | 5600K

Windy days are a great opportunity to play with motion and make **long exposures**.

In the right environment (**section 2**) the tall grasses sway like waves, the trees dance with passion and the silky water becomes magical in a seascape.

And don't forget about the clouds moving across the sky.



Use a **neutral density filter (ND)** and a tripod to increase the exposure time and capture the motion created by the wind.

But be careful because if the wind gusts are too strong or your camera is too heavy and the tripod is not strong enough (**section 8**), the photo may be blurred or the gear may fall.

When you're at the shooting spot that you have planned (**section 6**) make sure that you place the tripod firmly on the ground and that it's perfectly stable. And, if you can, try to protect it against the wind gusts with your own body.

Storms and lightnings

The most dramatic sky you can photograph is during a storm.

When you include large clouds in the frame, balance their visual weight with the rest of the elements. Compose your shot so that the clouds add contrast to both the foreground and the background.

Shoot with a wide angle lens. The shorter the focal length, the bigger the storm will look and the smaller the viewer will feel when looking at your photo.

And if it's a thunderstorm, the lightning will make it look even more threatening.

Lightning bolts are possibly the most impressive weather phenomenon in nature and the

images you can get if you're skilled at capturing them can be truly impressive.

To successfully photograph lightning:

- Start composing your image, regardless of the rays.
- Select the shutter speed priority shooting mode (S or Tv).
- Focus at the **hyperfocal distance** and switch to manual focus.
- Select a relatively slow shutter speed (between 2 and 15 seconds depending on the **natural light** available).
- Select the lowest ISO possible and crank it up if necessary.

And of course, in stormy conditions protect yourself and your equipment.

Rainbow

Rainbows are very rare and difficult to see and photograph. For this beautiful phenomenon to occur, a series of circumstances have to happen at the same time.

First, there has to be moisture or rain in the sky. Second, the elevation of the Sun must be relatively low (between 30° and 40°). Third, the area of the sky where the Sun has to be clear, while the area of the sky where the rainbow can show up must have constant rain or humidity.

The rainbow intensity can also vary depending on the humidity or the quantity of light in the scene: the more humidity and/or more light there is, the more intense the rainbow will be.

If you want to capture a rainbow, point your camera in the opposite direction from the Sun's position.

And if you want the rainbow to be a bit more saturated, use a **circular polarizing filter (CPL)**. But be careful when turning it because you could cause the opposite effect and make the rainbow disappear completely.

Dew and frost

After a freezing night, it's very likely that you'll find dew or frost on the landscape. They are two elements that transform nature into works of art creating perfect geometric shapes and mesmerizing patterns.

In both cases, the type of landscape photography you can do is somewhat different from what you can achieve with other weather phenomena. To get the most out of the dew and frost, the best thing you can do is focus on the details, use close-ups and play with the **depth of field** to create a nice *bokeh* (blur).

Take close-ups of frost or dewdrops. Actually any surface is valid: leaves, branches, cobwebs, windows...

Although you can take general shots of a landscape covered with frost or dew to show a certain atmosphere.

Fog

Nikon D700 | 200mm | f/8 | 1/500s | ISO 200 | 5600K | 7-photo panorama without tripod

In general terms, fog is an accumulation of water particles that forms an extensive layer in contact with the earth's surface and that reduces visibility. It usually forms in the middle of the afternoon, and often lasts until the next morning. You'll usually find it near the surface of the water because it's slightly warmer than the surrounding air.

Depending on its intensity it can become mist, brune or haze, the latter being a very thin mist.

Fog allows you to create images with a bucolic, mysterious and silent atmosphere. But they can also be haunting and challenging photos.

However, being in constant motion, it can disappear in an instant, and its fleeting quality can result in faded, flat, and dull images.

On the one hand, as objects progressively move away from the camera, they not only appear smaller, but also lose contrast. You should take care of your foreground and include an interesting element that helps you create depth.

On the other hand, the water particles that form the fog scatter the light more than usual. Obviously, the light softens, but it also makes the light rays more intense. The trick to making light rays stand out in your photo is to carefully plan your shooting spot.

Lastly, the two big challenges when shooting fog are focus and exposure.

To focus, set the manual focus on your camera or on your lens.

Activate the Live View function on your camera's LCD screen. It's perfect for focusing with precision.

Also, if your camera has the Focus Peaking and/or the Focus Magnifier functions, turn them on as well. They will help you to be even more precise.

Regarding the **exposure**, a scene with fog has a general whitish tone that **confuses the light meter**. It tries to reduce the amount of light entering the camera and underexposes the shot.

To avoid this problem, **compensate for the exposure** using the exposure compensation tool or shooting in Manual mode (M). In this case, it compensates the exposure between ±1/2EV and ±1EV.

Snow

Snow landscapes aren't easy to photograph due to the extreme weather conditions they imply and due to the technical challenges that you'll have to face.

However, they have a visual appeal hard to beat.

As a general rule, the best time to take photos is early in the morning. Make sure you go to the location (**section 4**) before the wind blows the snow off trees and rooftops, and before the Sun melts the frost.

At that time, the elevation of the Sun is low. Bouncing off the snow, the soft light of dawn gives a soft bluish glow during the bluehoures. and orange during the **golden hour**.

Another interesting option is to take photos after a snow storm, when the snow is virgin and everything is magically covered.

And finally, three tips.

First, take care of your gear, especially the batteries. If it's very cold, they drain quickly (**section 10**).

Second, watch out the **exposure**.

In a snow landscape in which all or a large part of the frame is covered in white, **the light meter of any camera thinks that the scene is brighter than it actually is**. You'd better use one of the semi-automatic (A/Av or S/Tv) or manual (M) shooting modes. This will prevent the photo from being underexposed (too dark).

Take several test shots and use the **histogram** to adjust accordingly. Another option is to do a **bracketing**.

Third, adjust the white balance.

You can do it in the field using one of the default modes (usually the "cloudy" mode works) or manually. Although if you shoot in RAW, you can easily correct it in post-processing.

Section 8:

What equipment do you need to photograph a landscape

Not sure what equipment you need to be a master in landscape photography?

Well, you're in the right place.

In this section I'm going to give me a list with a lot of options to choose the equipment that best suits your needs. And best of all, it doesn't matter what type of photographer you are (beginner, advanced or professional).

There are options for everyone!

Camera

Today's cameras are so powerful and offer so many features that even a smartphone camera is great for landscape photography...

Obviously, not all cameras are made equal. Depending on its features (and the price tag that goes with them), the quality of your photos will vary: as a general rule, the higher the price, the higher the quality of the camera. And you'll also see this quality in the photo.

However, don't use the limitations of your camera as an excuse: use your creativity and your imagination and you'll get many of the photos you have in mind.

Smartphones

It seems incredible but right now the only thing that differentiates one mobile phone from another is the quality of its camera. Look at the marketing campaign of any manufacturer and you'll see it for yourself.

Smartphones have transitioned from being telephones to being cameras.

And even though engineers develop software that includes more and more functionalities, the camera of any smartphone still has limitations. I'll give you two examples.

The first is that in most models, the camera has a short focal length (wide angle). This means that most of the elements will look very small in the photo and you'll have fewer options to compose.

The second is that they all have a very small sensor and most of them don't let you change the aperture. When you take photos in low-light scenes, the smartphone will crank the ISO up without telling you and **the photo will have a lot of noise**.

Despite all this, a smartphone is a fantastic tool for taking great landscape photos.

Compact cameras

The truth is that I hardly see people who keep using a compact camera. Today everyone takes photos with their smartphone camera.

Compact cameras are extinct. Almost.

On the one hand, taking photos with your smartphone is extremely comfortable: you always carry it in your pocket. On the other hand, if you want a camera with more features than that of your smartphone, you'll end up buying a DSLR or a mirrorless camera.

That doesn't mean that you can't shoot a landscape with a compact camera. It's just that you'll probably be the only one doing it in the location you go to :)

Low-end cameras

Although they are basic cameras, all of them are great if you want to start practicing with the **Manual shooting mode (M)** because they allow good control of the exposure.

You'll surely get great landscape photos with them:

- Cameras with an **APS-C** sensor: Nikon **Z30**; Canon **4000D**, **250D** and **M5**; Sony **a6600**.
- Cameras with a **Micro 4/3** sensor: Olympus **OM-D E-M10 Mark IV** and Panasonic **G95**.

- Compact camera (1" sensor): Sony **RX100 VII**.

Mid-range cameras

These cameras have an intermediate performance and quality, so they are good value for money. In general, they produce little noise in low light conditions.

- Cameras with an APS-C sensor: Nikon **Z50**, **Zfc** and **D7500**; Canon **R10**, **R7**, **850D**, **90D** and **6D Mark II**; Fuji **X-S20** and **X-T30 II**; Pentax **KF**; Sony **a6700**.
- Cameras with a Micro 4/3 sensor: Olympus **OM-D E-M5 Mark III** and Panasonic **G9 II**.
- Full Frame cameras: Nikon **Z5** and **D750**; Canon **RP**; Sony **a7C II**.

High-end cameras

These professional cameras offer an amazing performance and quality:

- Cameras with an APS-C sensor: Nikon **D500**; Fuji **XH-2S**, **XT-5** and **X-Pro3**.
- Cameras with a Micro 4/3 sensor: Olympus **OM-1** and Panasonic **GH6**.
- Full Frame cameras: Nikon **Zf**, **Z6 II**, **Z7 II**, **Z8**, **Z9**, **D780**, **D850** and **D6**; Canon **R8**, **R6 Mark II**, **R5**, **R3**, **5D Mark IV**, and **1D X Mark III**; Panasonic **S5 II**, **S5 II X**, **S1R** and **S1H**; Pentax **K-1 Mark II**; Sony **a7 IV**, **a7 CR**, **a7R V**, **a9 III** and **a1**.

Lens

The lens choice depends on the photo you have in mind.

Your idea is to include part of the landscape and you don't mind if some elements look very small in the frame...

I recommend using a wide angle lens like the **Nikon 14-24mm f/2.8** or the **Zeiss Milvus 18mm f/2.8**, for example. They're my favorite wide angle lenses.

Your idea is to include part of the landscape and that some elements look bigger in the frame...

I recommend using a standard telephoto lens like the **Nikon 70-200mm f/2.8** or the **Canon 70-200mm f/2.8**, for example.

Your idea is to capture a huge subject.

I recommend using a super telephoto lens. There are many good ones on the market.

Here are some recommendations: the **Nikon 200-500mm f/5.6**, the **Canon 100-400mm f/3.5-5.6**, the **Fujifilm 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6**, the **Olympus Zuiko 300mm f/4 PRO**, the **Sony 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6**, the **Sony 400mm f/2.8**, the Sigma 120-300mm f/2.8 for **Nikon** and **Canon** or the Sigma 150-600mm f/5-6.3 for **Nikon** and **Canon**.

To shoot from even further away, use a teleconverter (1.4x or 2x) as well.

If you have a camera with a Micro 4/3 or APS-C sensor, use the cropping factor to your advantage. The Sun will be huge in the photo.

Filters

Depending on the **natural light** conditions in which you're taking photos, you may face a scene with a high **dynamic range** (**section 4**).

To get the right **exposure**, you have two options:

- Make a **bracketing**.
- Use a **graduated neutral density filter (GND)** to darken the sky, for example, and avoid getting an overexposed photo.

If you want to make a **long exposure**, you'll need a **neutral density filter (ND)**. You can use it to convey motion through clouds or water (in a seascape or with a waterfall, for example).

Another important filter is the **circular polarizing filter (CPL)** that you can use to remove reflections from glass and water surfaces. Use it to produce more volume and color in the clouds and in the sky as well.

I never go out on a photo shoot without carrying the filter bag in my backpack. In that bag I carry:

- Depending on the lens, I have a 100mm and a 165mm **Lucroit** filter holders.
- A long list of ND and GND filters from **Lucroit**.
- The **B+W Kaesemann Circular MRC 77mm** polarizing filter. I also have the **112mm Slim circular polarizer from Lucroit** and the **165x165mm square polarizer from Lucroit**.

If you want to become a filter master, I suggest you read our **guide on lens filters**.

Tripod and head

In landscape photography, you should use a tripod and a good ballhead. You'll probably need to use a relatively slow shutter speed (**section 9**) and if you don't have a good tripod, your photo will be blurred.

Make sure your tripod is sturdy and solid. Don't buy a cheap tripod: shortly after using it, you'll realize that it's not the right one for the photos you want to take and you'll end up spending more money on a better one.

"You're right Toni, I'll listen to you. Can you think of a tripod that you could recommend?"

The **Manfrotto 055XPRO3** is a sturdy and stable tripod.

Another suggestion that I usually make to the students of my workshops is the **Travel** line by **Benro**.

If you have a higher budget, I recommend you to invest in a carbon fiber tripod. They weigh less than the aluminium ones and they bear weights between 5 and 25 kg (11-56 lb) depending on the model.

My favorite brands are **Gitzo**, **Benro**, **Manfrotto**, **Induro** or **Really Right Stuff** because they make high quality tripods in both carbon and aluminium.

"And what ballhead do you suggest I buy?"

Well, in the market you will find different types of tripod heads.

But from my point of view the best one is the ballhead: it's the most versatile, precise and easy to use. Make sure that bears at least 5-7 kg (11-16 lb) of weight and that it includes a removable plate.

I've been using a **Really Right Stuff BH-55** for many years now. I work with it comfortably and with great precision. But it has a downside – it's a very expensive ballhead.

If you're not convinced or it's not what you need, here are some very interesting alternatives: the **Gitzo GH1382QD**, the **Kirk Enterprises BH-1** and the **Arca Swiss Monoball Z1 SP**, all of which are very sturdy and resistant (holding 13.5+ kg or 30+ lb).

And if you're looking for a good gimbal, try the **Benro GH2**.

LED panels and other light sources (optional)

Depending on the **natural light** you have in the scene, you may need some artificial light source to illuminate your frame.

If you want to take a portrait during the **blue hour** for example, you'll have to illuminate the person you're photographing. A good option may be to use LED panels or flashlights. They are very useful active elements (they produce light).

Another option is a flash, although it produces a hard light so you'll need one or more passive elements (diffusers, filters, reflectors) that modify its light.

Therefore, depending on the type of photo you've imagined, it may be important to control the lighting conditions of the scene.

Intervalometer

If you're considering capturing a **long exposure**, you are going to need an intervalometer.

You should avoid touching the shutter, so that there is no vibration and the picture doesn't end up blurred.

I usually recommend the following intervalometers:

- Pro intervalometer: **SMDV**.
- For cheap intervalometers check the brands Neewer, Phottix and Vello.

A great alternative is a device called **CamRanger**. Right now it's available for Nikon, Canon, Fuji and Sony cameras.

It's a stand-alone device that you connect to your DSLR or mirrorless camera with a USB cable. It creates an ad hoc WiFi network to which you can connect your smartphone or tablet (iOS, Android and Windows). Thanks to the CamRanger application you can control your camera without a computer or an Internet connection.

Best of all, this device is independent. Therefore, if your mobile device loses its connection, the CamRanger has an internal memory to keep shooting. Imagine that you are making a timelapse, your sequence would be cut if the camera stops taking pictures in the time frame you've set...

So the CamRanger is great for many types of photos: timelapses (of the **Milky Way**, of **Star Trails**, of **solar eclipses** or **lunar eclipses**...), **bracketing**, focus stacking for macro and landscapes... and many more!

Memory cards

I recommend you to buy the highest quality **SD Cards** (Secure Digital) possible and with the maximum transfer speed. It's been a long time since I've been using **SanDisk** and **ProGrade** memory cards.

Nowadays, the price of memory cards from these brands is incredibly low, even those of the highest capacity cards (64GB, 128GB or even 256GB). So it's not worth skimping and risking losing your photos buying cards from unknown brands.

Although there are still cameras that use **CompactFlash** (CF) cards, it's a system that is gradually disappearing.

And to replace it, SanDisk, Nikon and Sony launched a new card format called **XQD** currently available for several Full Frame (Nikon D4, D4s, D5 and D850; Panasonic S1 and S1R), APS-C (Nikon D500) and mirrorless (Nikon Z6, Z6 II, Z7 and Z7 II) models. These cards have

- Have a very high storage capacity (from 32GB to 256GB).
- Have a super fast reading and recording speed (400MB/s compared to 160MB/s for a CF card or 250MB/s for an SD card).
- Are very secure, resistant and with an incredible durability.

Later on, in 2017, CFexpress launched the latest standard memory card from the Compact-Flash Association with 2 new form factors, Type A and Type C were announced, with the existing XQD form factor becoming Type B.

- Type A has, so far, only been adopted by Sony in all of its newest models.
- Type B is a far more common format offering a lower price. It has been widely adopted by Nikon in its Z series, Canon in some EOS R bodies, and Panasonic in the S1/S1R and GH6.
- Type C is not being produced yet.

And finally, the icing on the cake...

The PhotoPills Imagine.Plan.Shoot. T-shirt!

It's our battle cry.

The battle cry of the PhotoPillers.

Why don't you join the tribe?

Do you accept the challenge to imagine, plan and shoot legendary landscape photos? ;)

Get your t-shirt here!

Section 9:

How to photograph a landscape (27 examples explained step by step)

Nikon Z6 | 18mm | f/8 | 54s | ISO 200 | 6500K | Soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filter

Every scene is different.

And it's almost impossible to summarize in a series of steps a method that serves to successfully capture all of them.

The theory is fine, but the best way to learn is by looking at examples and practicing while replicating them.

That's why I thought that I could help you by showing you a lot of examples, real photos that I've shot myself.

The idea is that you learn the logic and decision workflow that led me to capture the landscape I wanted. So there will be no impossible scene.

Are you in?

Natural landscape (1)

Nikon D4s | 100mm | f/8 | 1/125s | ISO 100 | 6700K

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: Camera (regardless of its sensor size). A wide angle lens if you want a broad landscape or a telephoto lens if you want to capture a portion of it. An intervalometer. A sturdy tripod and a ballhead. Sometimes, depending on the terrain you can use a bean bag that gives a lot of stability.

- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW. Turn off the image stabilization function if your lens has it. Sometimes and depending on the camera and lens you use, it may be useful to lock up the mirror as I did in the photo above. However, you don't need to do it if you're using a shutter speed slower than 1s.

- Focal length: It depends on the type of landscape you want to do. You can use from a small focal length (10mm, 14mm, 24mm) to cover as much of the landscape and sky as possible to a telephoto lens (85mm, 200mm, 300mm) or a super telephoto lens (500mm, 600mm).
- Exposure mode: Manual (M).
- Metering mode: Spot metering mode. Meter the brightest area of the scene you want in detail and overexpose by 1 or 2 stops (+1EV or +2EV). Then recompose, focus, and shoot.
- Aperture: From f/4 to f/16. Be careful not to use from f/16 onwards to avoid **diffraction** because it ruins the sharpness and quality of the image.
- Shutter speed: Since you're shooting in Manual mode (M), the shutter speed is determined by the aperture-ISO combination you select. Here, your personal style comes into play depending on how much **depth of field**, motion or light (brightness) you want in the photo.
- ISO: In landscape photography you usually use a tripod, although you may not need it if you have other intentions. Therefore, use the minimum ISO you can.
- White balance: Manual. It depends on the time of day and the quality of **natural light**. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing.
- Where to focus: Focus at the **hyperfocal distance** to maximize the **depth of field**.
- Take the picture and check that everything is in focus. Make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**). Otherwise, adjust the **exposure triangle**.

Urban landscape (2)

Nikon Z6 | 21mm | f/8 | 0.8s | ISO 100 | 7000K | Soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filter

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: Camera (regardless of its sensor size). A wide angle lens if you want a broad landscape or a telephoto lens if you want to capture a portion of it. An intervalometer. A sturdy tripod and a ballhead. Sometimes, depending on the terrain you can use a bean bag that gives a lot of stability.
- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW.
- Focal length: Any focal length works, it depends on the idea you have.
- Exposure mode: Manual (M).
- Metering mode: Spot metering mode. Meter the brightest area of the scene you want with detail and overexpose it by 1 or 2 stops (+1EV or +2EV). In this particular case, I metered in one of the Red House windows.
- Aperture: Narrow enough to get a good **depth of field** and the starburst effect of the lights. I recommend using an aperture from f/8 onwards.
- Shutter speed: The shutter speed should be long enough so your scene is properly exposed. In this case, the metering indicates that 1s is enough but you can go up to 8s.

A tripod, a shutter release and, if you have a DSLR, the mirror lock up (from 1/15s to 1s) are essential.

- ISO: When working with a tripod, use the lowest ISO possible.
- White balance: Depends on the time of day and the quality of the **natural light**. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing. In this photo I set 7000K to balance the pinks and yellows in the scene and keep the water and sky blue.
- Where to focus: Focus at the **hyperfocal distance** to maximize the **depth of field**. In this case, I focused at about 2 m (the hyperfocal was at 1.86 m). So I could have everything focused from about 3.65 m to infinity. I also managed to capture the rest of the house and the garden background perfectly sharp.
- Take the photo and check that everything is in focus. Make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**). Otherwise, adjust the **exposure triangle**.

Conceptual (3)

Olympus OM-1 | 300mm | f/5.6 | 1/640s | ISO 400 | 5600K

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: Camera (regardless of its sensor size). A telephoto lens or a super telephoto lens.
- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW. Activate the image stabilization function if your lens has it.
- Focal length: A long focal length, from 200mm onwards. Image stabilization function is advised.
- Exposure mode: Aperture priority mode (A or Av).
- Metering mode: Use the spot metering mode to meter light on the bird and then re-compose. In any case, evaluate the light and select the settings taking into account the background of the image. If the bird is against the sky compensate the exposure by 1 stop (+1EV) to ensure a good exposure. It will always depend on the color of the bird. If it's white, the correction factor has to be higher. If it's black, you barely have to compensate for the exposure.
- Focus Mode: For birds in flight, use the continuous focus mode (AF-C), with shooting

priority. This way you can have the bird focused at all times. Everything is easier if you start focusing when the birds are still far away.

- Aperture: A large aperture to use a fast shutter speed.
- Shutter speed: 1/640s or more if you want to freeze the bird's flight. If, on the other hand, you want to add motion, reduce it to 1/500s or so to capture the wings moving and conveying a feeling of speed in the subject.
- ISO: Start with a low ISO and crank it up according to the light conditions you are in. I wasn't worried about noise here.
- White balance: Manual. It depends on the time of day and the quality of **natural light**. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing.
- Where to focus: Focus on the birds. Note that the basalt columns will be out of focus when using a large aperture.
- In this type of photography (and in all, honestly) it's great to use back button focus. Thus, you focus with the exposure lock back button (AEL or AE-L) and you only use the shutter button to take the photo.
- Take the picture, check that everything is focused and with the lighting you want. Otherwise, and if you can take the picture again, compensate for the exposure and make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**).
- As you may have guessed, shooting in burst mode is crucial in this type of photography. Activate the burst shooting mode (and if you can choose the burst speed, set it on *High*).

Abstract (4)

Nikon D700 | 500mm | f/5.6 | 0.7s | ISO 200 | 5700K | ND 0.6 (2 stops) filter

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: Camera (regardless of its sensor size). A wide angle lens if you want a broad landscape or a telephoto lens if you want to capture a portion of it.
- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW.
- Focal length: It depends on the type of landscape you want to do. You can use from a small focal length (10mm, 14mm, 24mm) to cover as much of the landscape and sky as possible to a telephoto lens (85mm, 200mm, 300mm) or a super telephoto lens, as I used here (500mm) to flatten the perspective and isolate the area that I liked the most.
- Exposure mode: Manual (M).
- Metering mode: Spot metering mode. Meter the brightest area of the scene you want with detail and overexpose it by 1 or 2 stops (+1EV or +2EV). Then recompose, focus, and shoot. However, here I used the center-weighted metering mode as there is not much variation in light.

- Aperture: It depends on the **depth of field** that you want. Since I didn't want it to be too deep, I used an aperture of f/5.6. Thus, distant areas look a bit vague because of the blur.
- Shutter speed: Relatively long, use 0.5s as a reference and then "try and fail". In this case I used 0.7s. With such a slow shutter speed I had enough time to press the shutter and make the movement from the bottom to the top that I wanted.
- ISO: Use the minimum ISO you can.
- White balance: Manual. It depends on the time of day and the quality of **natural light**. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing.
- Where to focus: Focus on the elements closest to your lens. Here, in the first branches.
- Take the picture and check that everything is the way you like because depending on how blurred the elements are or how you moved the camera the motion will be visible or not. Make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the histogram). Otherwise, adjust the **exposure triangle**.

I don't recommend shooting (that starts the exposure) and doing the movement simultaneously. Shoot first and then start making the movement.

Hold on for a moment so the details look better. For example, if you want to take a picture of 1s, wait 1/4s and then start the movement from the bottom to the top.

Reflection (5)

Nikon D4s | 18mm | f/16 | 0.6s | ISO 100 | 7000K | Soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) and polarizer filters

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

To sum up, the steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: Camera (the type of sensor doesn't really matter). A wide angle lens if you want a broad landscape. An intervalometer. A sturdy tripod and a ballhead.
- GND filter: Soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filter to reduce the **dynamic range** between the sky and the foreground and capture the scene in a single shot. Check **section 8 of our lens filters photography guide** to learn how to choose the GND filter you need and how to expose with it.
- Polarizer: Polarizing filter to eliminate the reflections of the rocks and to increase

depth. Review **section 5 of our lens filters photography guide** to learn how to use a polarizer.

- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW. Turn on the image stabilization function if your lens has it.
- Focal length: It depends on the type of landscape you want to do. You can use from a small focal length (10mm, 14mm, 24mm) to cover as much of the landscape and sky as possible to a telephoto lens (85mm, 200mm, 300mm) or a super telephoto lens (500mm, 600mm).
- Exposure mode: Manual (M).
- Metering mode: Spot metering mode. If you're going to use it, meter with the **circular polarizing filter (CPL)** mounted and once you've rotated it to get the effect you want. Meter the brightest area of the scene you want in detail and overexpose by 1 or 2 stops (+1EV or +2EV). If you have doubts on how to expose, follow the steps indicated in **section 10 of our lens filters photography guide**.
- Aperture: A small aperture (between f/8 and f/16, although it could be larger if you focus at the **hyperfocal distance**) to get a deeper **depth of field**. Don't go over f/16 to avoid **diffraction**. Because I was hand holding the camera I set a wide aperture as the light was fading away.
- ISO: You'll always use a tripod to shoot long exposure landscapes. Use the lowest possible ISO.
- Shutter speed: Since you're shooting in Manual mode (M), the shutter speed is determined by the aperture, ISO and filters combination you select. Here, your personal style comes into play depending on how much **depth of field**, motion or light (brightness) you want in the photo. Although, in general, I recommend you to use slow shutter speeds.
- White Balance: Manual. It depends on the time of day and the quality of **natural light**. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing.
- Where to focus: Focus at the **hyperfocal distance** to maximize the **depth of field**.
- Take the picture and check that everything is in focus. Make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**). Otherwise, adjust the **exposure triangle**.

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Long exposure (6)

Nikon D4s | 17mm | f/11 | 241s | ISO 100 | 6600K | ND 1.8 (6 stops) and soft GND 1.2 (4 stops) filters

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: Camera (the type of sensor doesn't really matter). A wide angle lens if you want a broad landscape. An intervalometer. A sturdy tripod and a ballhead.
- ND filter: ND 1.8 (6 stops) filter to increase the exposure and get a silky sea and a slight movement in the low clouds. Take a look at **section 7 of our lens filters photography guide** to learn how to choose the ND filter you need and how to expose with it.
- GND filter: Soft GND 1.2 (4 stops) filter to reduce the **dynamic range** between the sky and the foreground and capture the scene in a single shot. Check **section 8 of our lens filters photography guide** to learn how to choose the GND filter you need and how to expose with it.
- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW. Turn on the image stabilization function if your lens has it.
- Focal length: It depends on the type of landscape you want to do. You can use from a small focal length (10mm, 14mm, 24mm) to cover as much of the landscape and sky as possible to a telephoto lens (85mm, 200mm, 300mm) or a super telephoto lens (500mm, 600mm). Here I chose a wide angle lens in a low position.

- Exposure mode: Manual (M).
- Metering mode: Spot metering mode. If you're going to use it, meter with the **circular polarizing filter (CPL)** mounted and once you've rotated it to get the effect you want. Meter the brightest area of the scene you want in detail and overexpose by 1 or 2 stops (+1EV or +2EV). If you have doubts on how to expose, follow the steps indicated in **section 10 of our lens filters photography guide**.
- Aperture: Use a small aperture to get a deep **depth of field**. Don't go over f/16 to avoid **diffraction**. Here I set f/11 because I was close to the foreground.
- ISO: You'll always use a tripod to shoot long exposure landscapes. Use the lowest possible ISO.
- Shutter speed: Since you're shooting in Manual mode (M), the shutter speed is determined by the aperture, ISO and filters combination you select. Here, your personal style comes into play depending on how much **depth of field**, motion or light (brightness) you want in the photo. Although, in general, I recommend you to use slow shutter speeds. When using an ND filter, first take a test shot without the filter to get the exposure you want. Then, calculate the equivalent shutter speed you need when using the filter with the **PhotoPills long exposure calculator**.
- White Balance: Manual. It depends on the time of day and the quality of **natural light**. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing.
- Where to focus: Focus at the **hyperfocal distance** to maximize the **depth of field**.
- Take the picture and check that everything is in focus. Make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**). Otherwise, adjust the **exposure triangle**.

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Sunrise (7)

Nikon Z6 | 18mm | f/16 | 8s | ISO 100 | 7800K | Soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filter

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: Camera (the type of sensor doesn't really matter). A wide angle lens if you want a broad landscape. An intervalometer. A sturdy tripod and a ballhead.
- GND filter: Soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filter to reduce the **dynamic range** between the sky and the foreground and capture the scene in a single shot. Check **section 8 of our lens filters photography guide** to learn how to choose the GND filter you need and how to expose with it.
- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW. Turn on the image stabilization function if your lens has it.
- Focal length: It depends on the type of landscape you want to do. You can use from a small focal length (10mm, 14mm, 24mm) to cover as much of the landscape and sky as possible to a telephoto lens (85mm, 200mm, 300mm) or a super telephoto lens (500mm, 600mm). Here I chose a wide angle lens in a low position.
- Exposure mode: Manual (M).
- Metering mode: Spot metering mode. If you're going to use it, meter with the **circular polarizing filter (CPL)** mounted and once you've rotated it to get the effect you want.

Meter the brightest area of the scene you want in detail and overexpose by 1 or 2 stops (+1EV or +2EV). If you have doubts on how to expose, follow the steps indicated in **section 10 of our lens filters photography guide**.

- Aperture: Use a small aperture to get a deep **depth of field**. Don't go over f/16 to avoid **diffraction**. Here I set f/16 because I was close to the foreground.
- ISO: You'll always use a tripod to shoot long exposure landscapes. Use the lowest possible ISO.
- Shutter speed: Since you're shooting in Manual mode (M), the shutter speed is determined by the aperture, ISO and filters combination you select. Here, your personal style comes into play depending on how much **depth of field**, motion or light (brightness) you want in the photo. Although, in general, I recommend you to use slow shutter speeds.
- White Balance: Manual. It depends on the time of day and the quality of **natural light**. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing.
- Where to focus: Focus at the **hyperfocal distance** to maximize the **depth of field**. At f/16 I made sure I had the whole scene in focus, from the hyperfocal near limit that is at 0.69 m to infinity.
- Take the picture and check that everything is in focus. Make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**). Otherwise, adjust the **exposure triangle**.

If you want to learn how to photograph a unique Sunrise, check out our **Sunrise photography guide**.

Blue hour (8)

Nikon D4s | 18mm | f/11 | 10s | ISO 100 | 8000K | ND 1.8 (6 stops) and soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filters

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: Camera (the type of sensor doesn't really matter). A wide angle lens if you want a broad landscape. An intervalometer. A sturdy tripod and a ballhead.
- ND filter: ND 1.8 (6 stops) filter to increase the exposure and get a silky sea and a slight movement in the low clouds. Take a look at **section 7 of our lens filters photography guide** to learn how to choose the ND filter you need and how to expose with it.
- GND filter: Soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filter to reduce the **dynamic range** between the sky and the foreground and capture the scene in a single shot. Check **section 8 of our lens filters photography guide** to learn how to choose the GND filter you need and how to expose with it.
- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW. Turn on the image stabilization function if your lens has it.
- Focal length: It depends on the type of landscape you want to do. You can use from a small focal length (10mm, 14mm, 24mm) to cover as much of the landscape and sky as possible to a telephoto lens (85mm, 200mm, 300mm) or a super telephoto lens (500mm, 600mm). Here I chose a wide angle lens.

- Exposure mode: Manual (M).
- Metering mode: Spot metering mode. If you're going to use it, meter with the **circular polarizing filter (CPL)** mounted and once you've rotated it to get the effect you want. Meter the brightest area of the scene you want in detail and overexpose by 1 or 2 stops (+1EV or +2EV). If you have doubts on how to expose, follow the steps indicated in **section 10 of our lens filters photography guide**.
- Aperture: Use a small aperture to get a deep **depth of field**. Don't go over f/16 to avoid **diffraction**. Here I set f/11.
- ISO: You'll always use a tripod to shoot long exposure landscapes. Use the lowest possible ISO.
- Shutter speed: Since you're shooting in Manual mode (M), the shutter speed is determined by the aperture, ISO and filters combination you select. Here, your personal style comes into play depending on how much **depth of field**, motion or light (brightness) you want in the photo. Although, in general, I recommend you to use slow shutter speeds. When using an ND filter, first take a test shot without the filter to get the exposure you want. Then, calculate the equivalent shutter speed you need when using the filter with the **PhotoPills long exposure calculator**.
- White Balance: Manual. You can cool down the scene to add drama to the blue hour. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing.
- Where to focus: Focus at the **hyperfocal distance** to maximize the **depth of field**. At f/11 I made sure I had the whole scene in focus, from the hyperfocal near limit that is at 0.50 m to infinity.
- Take the picture and check that everything is in focus. Make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**). Otherwise, adjust the **exposure triangle**.

As soon as you read our **blue hour photography guide** you'll be able to capture nature and urban landscapes during blue hour and get amazing photos.

Golden hour (9)

Nikon D4s | 14mm | f/11 | 0.4s | ISO 100 | 5250K | ND 0.9 (3 stops) and soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filters

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: Camera (the type of sensor doesn't really matter). A wide angle lens if you want a broad landscape. An intervalometer. A sturdy tripod and a ballhead.
- ND filter: ND 0.9 (3 stops) filter to increase the exposure and get a silky sea and a slight movement in the low clouds. Take a look at **section 7 of our lens filters photography guide** to learn how to choose the ND filter you need and how to expose with it.
- GND filter: Soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filter to reduce the **dynamic range** between the sky and the foreground and capture the scene in a single shot. Check **section 8 of our lens filters photography guide** to learn how to choose the GND filter you need and how to expose with it.
- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW. Turn on the image stabilization function if your lens has it.
- Focal length: It depends on the type of landscape you want to do. You can use from a small focal length (10mm, 14mm, 24mm) to cover as much of the landscape and sky as possible to a telephoto lens (85mm, 200mm, 300mm) or a super telephoto lens (500mm, 600mm). Here I chose a wide angle lens in a low position.

- Exposure mode: Manual (M).
- Metering mode: Spot metering mode. If you're going to use it, meter with the **circular polarizing filter (CPL)** mounted and once you've rotated it to get the effect you want. Meter the brightest area of the scene you want in detail and overexpose by 1 or 2 stops (+1EV or +2EV). If you have doubts on how to expose, follow the steps indicated in **section 10 of our lens filters photography guide**.
- Aperture: Use a small aperture to get a deep **depth of field**. Don't go over f/16 to avoid **diffraction**. Here I set f/11 because I was close to the foreground.
- ISO: You'll always use a tripod to shoot long exposure landscapes. Use the lowest possible ISO.
- Shutter speed: Since you're shooting in Manual mode (M), the shutter speed is determined by the aperture, ISO and filters combination you select. Here, your personal style comes into play depending on how much **depth of field**, motion or light (brightness) you want in the photo. Although, in general, I recommend you to use slow shutter speeds. When using an ND filter, first take a test shot without the filter to get the exposure you want. Then, calculate the equivalent shutter speed you need when using the filter with the **PhotoPills long exposure calculator**.
- White Balance: Manual. It depends on the time of day and the quality of **natural light**. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing.
- Where to focus: Focus at the **hyperfocal distance** to maximize the **depth of field**. At f/11 I made sure I had the whole scene in focus, from the hyperfocal near limit that is at 0.50 m to infinity.
- Take the picture and check that everything is in focus. Make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**). Otherwise, adjust the **exposure triangle**.

As soon as you study our **golden hour photography guide** your photos of landscapes and cities during the golden hour will become amazing images.

Sunset (10)

Nikon D4s | 14mm | f/13 | 20s | ISO 100 | 6500K | ND 1.8 (6 stops) and soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filters

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: Camera (the type of sensor doesn't really matter). A wide angle lens if you want a broad landscape. An intervalometer. A sturdy tripod and a ballhead.
- ND filter: ND 1.8 (6 stops) filter to increase the exposure and get a silky sea and a slight movement in the low clouds. Take a look at **section 7 of our lens filters photography guide** to learn how to choose the ND filter you need and how to expose with it.
- GND filter: Soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filter to reduce the **dynamic range** between the sky and the foreground and capture the scene in a single shot. Check **section 8 of our lens filters photography guide** to learn how to choose the GND filter you need and how to expose with it.
- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW. Turn on the image stabilization function if your lens has it.
- Focal length: It depends on the type of landscape you want to do. You can use from a

small focal length (10mm, 14mm, 24mm) to cover as much of the landscape and sky as possible to a telephoto lens (85mm, 200mm, 300mm) or a super telephoto lens (500mm, 600mm). Here I chose a wide angle lens in a low position.

- Exposure mode: Manual (M).
- Metering mode: Spot metering mode. If you're going to use it, meter with the **circular polarizing filter (CPL)** mounted and once you've rotated it to get the effect you want. Meter the brightest area of the scene you want in detail and overexpose by 1 or 2 stops (+1EV or +2EV). If you have doubts on how to expose, follow the steps indicated in **section 10 of our lens filters photography guide**.
- Aperture: Use a small aperture to get a deep **depth of field**. Don't go over f/16 to avoid **diffraction**. Here I set f/13 because I was close to the foreground.
- ISO: You'll always use a tripod to shoot long exposure landscapes. Use the lowest possible ISO.
- Shutter speed: Since you're shooting in Manual mode (M), the shutter speed is determined by the aperture, ISO and filters combination you select. Here, your personal style comes into play depending on how much **depth of field**, motion or light (brightness) you want in the photo. Although, in general, I recommend you to use slow shutter speeds. When using an ND filter, first take a test shot without the filter to get the exposure you want. Then, calculate the equivalent shutter speed you need when using the filter with the **PhotoPills long exposure calculator**.
- White Balance: Manual. It depends on the time of day and the quality of **natural light**. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing.
- Where to focus: Focus at the **hyperfocal distance** to maximize the **depth of field**. At f/13 I made sure I had the whole scene in focus, from the hyperfocal near limit that is at 0.87 m to infinity.
- Take the picture and check that everything is in focus. Make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**). Otherwise, adjust the **exposure triangle**.

Thanks to our **Sunset photography guide** you'll take photos of amazing Sunsets. I promise!

Moonrise (11)

Nikon Z6 | 210mm | f/5.6 | 0.8s | ISO 200 | 5950K | Soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filter

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: I recommend an APS-C or Micro 4/3 camera to take advantage of the cropping factor. A telephoto lens (85mm, 200mm, 300mm) or super telephoto lens (500mm, 600mm). An intervalometer. A sturdy tripod and a ballhead.
- GND filter: Soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filter to reduce the **dynamic range** between the sky and the foreground and capture the scene in a single shot. Check **section 8 of our lens filters photography guide** to learn how to choose the GND filter you need and how to expose with it.
- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW. Turn on the image stabilization function if your lens has it.
- Focal length: A long focal length, from 200mm onwards. Image stabilization function is advised.
- Exposure mode: Manual (M).
- Metering mode: Spot metering mode.

- Aperture: f/5.6 and f/8 to close the diaphragm towards the lens sweet spot and get a sharp image. The sweet spot of your lens is the f number at which the lens offers maximum sharpness while reducing distortion and chromatic aberration. You'll find this spot by closing the maximum aperture 1 or 2 stops.
- Shutter speed: Adapt to the existing light, taking into account that you can use a shutter speed of up to 2s before the Moon is blurred.
- ISO: The minimum possible, taking into account that the maximum shutter speed you can use is 2s before the Moon is blurred. If the light meter isn't centered at zero, crank up the ISO gradually, always within the noise limits of your camera.
- White Balance: Manual. It depends on the time of day and the quality of **natural light**. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing.
- Where to focus: It depends entirely on the focal length you've determined.
  - **Wide angle lens.** Focus at the **hyperfocal distance**. Or even better, at a slightly longer distance (1 m, for example) to make sure everything is correctly focused from the foreground to the Moon.
  - **Intermediate/long focal lengths with foreground.**
    - Focus on the subject as long as the hyperfocal distance is shorter than the distance to the subject. That way, you also make sure that the Moon is also in focus.
    - When the hyperfocal distance is greater than the distance to your subject, there are two alternatives.
      - Look for an element to focus on that is further away than the hyperfocal distance. To look for this element use the Planner and the **Depth of Field (DoF) tool**.
      - Focus directly on your subject and leave the Moon slightly out of focus.
  - **Long focal lengths without foreground.** Focus directly on the Moon.
- In this type of photography stabilizing your equipment is essential. Use a tripod and a bean bag depending on the surface and the wind. You need a shutter release or an intervalometer to shoot successfully. Avoid vibrations at all costs!
- Take the photo, check that everything is focused and with the lighting and contrast you are looking for. If not, compensate for the exposure and make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**). The Full Moon only comes out once a month, check the results by enlarging the resulting image.
- An interesting trick in this type of photography is locking up the mirror. Although the camera is on a tripod the weight of the body plus the lens can play a dirty trick on you. Have a look at your camera's instruction manual to learn how to lock up the mirror and

see the option is within the menus. This trick, of course, is useless on a mirrorless camera... :P

After reading our **Moon photography guide** you'll be able to take truly legendary Moon shots. You'll see for yourself!

Moonset (12)

Nikon D4s | 340mm | f/5.6 | 1/320s | ISO 3200 | 6000K

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: I recommend an APS-C or Micro 4/3 camera to take advantage of the cropping factor. A telephoto lens (85mm, 200mm, 300mm) or super telephoto lens (500mm, 600mm). An intervalometer. A sturdy tripod and a ballhead.
- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW. Turn on the image stabilization function if your lens has it.
- Focal length: A long focal length, from 200mm onwards. Image stabilization function is advised.
- Exposure mode: Manual (M).
- Metering mode: Spot metering mode.
- Aperture: f/5.6 and f/8 to close the diaphragm towards the lens sweet spot and get a sharp image. The sweet spot of your lens is the f number at which the lens offers max-

imum sharpness while reducing distortion and chromatic aberration. You'll find this spot by closing the maximum aperture 1 or 2 stops.

- Shutter speed: Adapt to the existing light, taking into account that you can use a shutter speed of up to 2s before the Moon is blurred.
- ISO: The minimum possible, taking into account that the maximum shutter speed you can use is 2s before the Moon is blurred. If the light meter isn't centered at zero, crank up the ISO gradually, always within the noise limits of your camera.
- White Balance: Manual. It depends on the time of day and the quality of **natural light**. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing.
- Where to focus: It depends entirely on the focal length you've determined.
  - **Wide angle lens.** Focus at the **hyperfocal distance**. Or even better, at a slightly longer distance (1 m, for example) to make sure everything is correctly focused from the foreground to the Moon.
  - **Intermediate/long focal lengths with foreground.**
    - Focus on the subject as long as the hyperfocal distance is shorter than the distance to the subject. That way, you also make sure that the Moon is also in focus.
    - When the hyperfocal distance is greater than the distance to your subject, there are two alternatives.
      - Look for an element to focus on that is further away than the hyperfocal distance. To look for this element use the Planner and the **Depth of Field (DoF) tool**.
      - Focus directly on your subject and leave the Moon slightly out of focus.
  - **Long focal lengths without foreground.** Focus directly on the Moon.
- In this type of photography stabilizing your equipment is essential. Use a tripod and a bean bag depending on the surface and the wind. You need a shutter release or an intervalometer to shoot successfully. Avoid vibrations at all costs!
- Take the photo, check that everything is focused and with the lighting and contrast you are looking for. If not, compensate for the exposure and make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**). The Full Moon only comes out once a month, check the results by enlarging the resulting image.
- An interesting trick in this type of photography is locking up the mirror. Although the camera is on a tripod the weight of the body plus the lens can play a dirty trick on you. Have a look at your camera's instruction manual to learn how to lock up the mirror and see the option is within the menus. This trick, of course, is useless on a mirrorless camera... :P

If you want to take spectacular photos like this one, you will find all the secrets in our **Moon photography guide**.

Black and white (13)

Nikon D4s | 14mm | f/5.6 | 10s | ISO 200 | 7500K | ND 1.8 (6 stops) and soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filters | 4-photo panorama

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: Camera (regardless of its sensor size). A wide angle lens if you want a broad landscape or a telephoto lens if you want to capture a portion of it. An intervalometer. A sturdy tripod and a ballhead. Sometimes, depending on the terrain you can use a bean bag that gives a lot of stability.
- ND filter: ND 1.8 (6 stops) filter to increase the exposure and get a silky sea and a slight movement in the low clouds. Take a look at **section 7 of our lens filters photography guide** to learn how to choose the ND filter you need and how to expose with it.
- GND filter: Soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filter to reduce the **dynamic range** between the sky and the foreground and capture the scene in a single shot. Check **section 8 of our lens filters photography guide** to learn how to choose the GND filter you need and how to expose with it.
- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW.
- Focal length: It depends on the type of landscape you want to do. You can use from a small focal length (10mm, 14mm, 24mm) to cover as much of the landscape and sky

as possible to a telephoto lens (85mm, 200mm, 300mm) or a super telephoto lens (500mm, 600mm). Here I chose a wide angle lens in a low position.

- Exposure mode: Manual (M).
- Metering mode: Spot metering mode. Meter the brightest area of the scene you want in detail and overexpose by 1 or 2 stops (+1EV or +2EV). Then recompose, focus, and shoot.
- Aperture: From f/4 to f/16. Be careful not to use from f/16 onwards to avoid **diffraction** because it ruins the sharpness and quality of the image.
- Shutter speed: Since you're shooting in Manual mode (M), the shutter speed is determined by the aperture-ISO combination you select. Here, your personal style comes into play depending on how much **depth of field**, motion or light (brightness) you want in the photo.
- ISO: In landscape photography you usually use a tripod, although you may not need it if you have other intentions. Therefore, use the minimum ISO you can.
- White balance: Manual. It depends on the time of day and the quality of **natural light**. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing. Since the day was completely covered, I set 7500K (although you can also use the "Cloudy" option).
- Where to focus: Focus at the **hyperfocal distance** to maximize the **depth of field**.
- Take the picture and check that everything is in focus. Make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**). Otherwise, adjust the **exposure triangle**.

Detail (14)

Nikon Z6 | 210mm | f/5.6 | 0.8s | ISO 200 | 5950K | Soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filter

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: I recommend an APS-C or Micro 4/3 camera to take advantage of the cropping factor. A telephoto lens (85mm, 200mm, 300mm) or super telephoto lens (500mm, 600mm). An intervalometer. A sturdy tripod and a ballhead.
- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW. Turn on the image stabilization function if your lens has it.
- Focal length: A long focal length, from 200mm onwards. Image stabilization function is advised.
- Exposure mode: Manual (M).

- Metering mode: Spot metering mode.
- Aperture: f/5.6 and f/8 to close the diaphragm towards the lens sweet spot and get a sharp image. The sweet spot of your lens is the f number at which the lens offers maximum sharpness while reducing distortion and chromatic aberration. You'll find this spot by closing the maximum aperture 1 or 2 stops.
- Shutter speed: Since you're shooting in Manual mode (M), the shutter speed is determined by the aperture-ISO combination you select. Here, your personal style comes into play depending on how much **depth of field**, motion or light (brightness) you want in the photo.
- ISO: In landscape photography you usually use a tripod, although you may not need it if you have other intentions. Therefore, use the minimum ISO you can.
- White Balance: Manual. It depends on the time of day and the quality of **natural light**. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing.
- Where to focus: It depends entirely on the focal length you've determined.
  - **Wide angle lens.** Focus at the **hyperfocal distance**. Or even better, at a slightly longer distance (1 m, for example) to make sure everything is correctly focused from the foreground to the Sun.
  - **Intermediate/long focal lengths with foreground.**
    - Focus on the subject as long as the hyperfocal distance is shorter than the distance to the subject. That way, you also make sure that the Sun is also in focus.
    - When the hyperfocal distance is greater than the distance to your subject, there are two alternatives.
      - Look for an element to focus on that is further away than the hyperfocal distance. To look for this element use the Planner and the **Depth of Field (DoF) tool**.
      - Focus directly on your subject and leave the Sun slightly out of focus.
  - **Long focal lengths without foreground.** Focus directly on the Sun.
- In this type of photography stabilizing your equipment is essential. Use a tripod and a bean bag depending on the surface and the wind. You need a shutter release or an intervalometer to shoot successfully. Avoid vibrations at all costs!
- Take the photo, check that everything is focused and with the lighting and contrast you are looking for. If not, compensate for the exposure and make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**).
- An interesting trick in this type of photography is locking up the mirror. Although the camera is on a tripod the weight of the body plus the lens can play a dirty trick on you. Have a look at your camera's instruction manual to learn how to lock up the mirror and

see the option is within the menus. This trick, of course, is useless on a mirrorless camera... :P

Panorama (15)

Nikon D4s | 85mm | f/8 | 8s | ISO 400 | 6000K | 8-photo panorama

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: Camera (regardless of its sensor size). A wide angle lens if you want a broad landscape or a telephoto lens if you want to capture a portion of it. An intervalometer. A sturdy tripod and a ballhead. Sometimes, depending on the terrain you can use a bean bag that gives a lot of stability.
- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW.
- Focal length: It depends on the type of landscape you want to do. You can use from a small focal length (10mm, 14mm, 24mm) to cover as much of the landscape and sky as possible to a telephoto lens (85mm, 200mm, 300mm) like I did here or a super telephoto lens (500mm, 600mm).
- Exposure mode: Manual (M).
- Metering mode: Spot metering mode. Meter the brightest area of the scene you want in detail and overexpose by 1 or 2 stops (+1EV or +2EV). Then recompose, focus, and shoot.
- Aperture: From f/4 to f/16. Be careful not to use from f/16 onwards to avoid **diffraction** because it ruins the sharpness and quality of the image.
- Shutter speed: Since you're shooting in Manual mode (M), the shutter speed is determined by the aperture-ISO combination you select. Here, your personal style comes into play depending on how much **depth of field**, motion or light (brightness) you want in the photo.

- ISO: In landscape photography you usually use a tripod, although you may not need it if you have other intentions. Therefore, use the minimum ISO you can.
- White balance: Manual. It depends on the time of day and the quality of **natural light**. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing.
- Where to focus: Focus at the **hyperfocal distance** to maximize the **depth of field**.
- Take the picture and check that everything is in focus. Make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**). Otherwise, adjust the **exposure triangle**.

Milky Way (16)

Nikon Z6 | 14mm | f/2.8 | 15s | ISO 6400 | 3150K | 6-photo panorama

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: Camera (full frame is best). A wide angle lens. An intervalometer. A sturdy tripod and a ballhead. Flashlights, LEDs and anti-moisture systems (take a look at the **gear to photograph the Milky Way**).
- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW. Turn on the image stabilization function if your lens has it.
- Focal length: Short focal length (10mm, 14mm, 24mm, etc.) to cover as much landscape and sky as possible.
- Exposure mode: Manual (M).
- Metering mode: You can't meter the light because there is none. Determine the exposure by taking test pictures and checking the **histogram** to see if it's correct.
- Aperture: The widest that your lens allows you (f/2.8 is great). You need to capture as much light as possible during the exposure. Remember that a large aperture allows you to capture more stars, and that they are larger and brighter.

- Shutter speed: The maximum possible but avoiding Star Trails. Calculate it with **PhotoPills** applying the **NPF rule**. Usually below 30-35s.
- ISO: Use the highest ISO possible (1600, 3200, 6400) at which your camera doesn't produce too much noise. As for the aperture, you need a high ISO to capture more light.
- White balance: Manual. Start with 3900K if there is no light pollution or with 3400K if there is, and then adjust according to the result. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing.
- Where to focus: Focus at the **hyperfocal distance** to maximize the **depth of field**.
- Illumination: Illuminate the foreground if necessary. If you dare, you can use the light of the Moon as a lighting system. Plan your shooting session so that the Moon has a little elevation and brings light to the scene from the side.
- Take the picture, check that everything is focused and with the lighting you want. Otherwise, refocus at the **hyperfocal distance** and/or correct the illumination.
- Make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**). Otherwise, adjust the ISO accordingly.

If you want to learn how to capture amazing photos of the Milky Way, study our **Milky Way photography guide**.

Star Trails (17)

Nikon Z6 | 18mm | f/3.5 | 30s | ISO 800 | 3850K | 586 photos edited in **Lightroom** and stacked with **Star Trails for Mac**

As I explain in the **Star Trails photography guide**, you have two ways to take this photo:

- **Shooting a single exposure**.
- **Shooting multiple exposures to then stack the photos**.

I captured the above image using the second technique.

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: Camera (regardless of its sensor size). A wide angle lens. An intervalometer. A sturdy tripod and a ballhead. Flashlights, LEDs and anti-moisture systems (take a look at the **gear to photograph Star Trails**).
- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW. Turn off the image stabilization function if your lens has it.

- Focal length: Short focal length (10mm, 14mm, 24mm, etc.) to cover as much landscape and sky as possible. Also, turn off the long exposure noise reduction, if your camera has this function. The reduction is applied while you're taking the picture, so in a 20s image, on most cameras you will have to wait another 20s for the camera to process the image trying to eliminate noise.
- Exposure mode: Manual (M).
- Metering mode: You can't meter the light because there is none. Determine the exposure by taking test pictures and checking the **histogram** to see if it's correct. You can do reciprocity calculations with the **PhotoPills exposure calculator**.
- Aperture: If you use the widest aperture (for example f/2.8), you can capture many stars.
- Shutter speed: It depends on how you want the final photograph to look like. You can take pictures using the **NPF rule** to have the stars as big bright spots or use a slower shutter speed if you don't mind minor Star Trails. After all, you'll use a **software** to stack the photos and get the final Star Trails image. You can use the **PhotoPills Star Trails calculator** to calculate the total shutter speed you need to get a certain Star Trails length.
- ISO: If you take multiple exposures to obtain Star Trails long enough, both the shutter speed and noise set the aperture and ISO settings you can use. The biggest problem you have is noise. So, keep the ISO between 400 and 1600, depending on how much light you work with. If you want to capture the color of the stars, don't go over ISO 1600. By doing so you'll preserve the colors of the stars. If you crank up the ISO too much you'll overexpose them and you'll have white trails.
- White balance: Manual. Start with 3900K if there is no light pollution or with 3400K if there is, and then adjust according to the result. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing.
- Where to focus: Focus at the **hyperfocal distance** to maximize the **depth of field**.
- Illumination: Illuminate the foreground if necessary. If you dare, you can use the **Moon** to illuminate the scene. Plan your shooting session so that the Moon has a little elevation and brings light to the scene from the side. In this type of photography you just need to illuminate, if necessary, the first and last image. Then, decide which one you like best and use it as the base shot.
- Take the picture, check that everything is focused and with the lighting you want. Otherwise, refocus at the **hyperfocal distance** and/or correct the illumination.
- Check that everything is focused on the first photo. Do all the tests at the beginning because, once you start the shooting, you can't change anything. Make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**). Otherwise, adjust the ISO accordingly.

If you want to take jaw-dropping photos like this one, you'll find all the secrets in our **Star Trails photography guide**.

Meteor showers (18)

Nikon Z6 | 18mm | f/2.8 | 25s | ISO 6400 | 3150K | 1 base shot and 27 meteor shots

You should use the **PhotoPills Augmented Reality view included in the Meteor Showers pill** whenever you're going to capture this kind of shot.

This tool is very useful and allows you to visualize **the meteor shower radiant position** at the beginning and at the end of the shooting session.

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: Camera (regardless of its sensor size). A wide angle lens. An intervalometer. A sturdy tripod and a ballhead. Flashlights, LEDs and anti-moisture systems (take a look at the **gear to photograph Star Trails**).
- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW. Turn off the image stabilization function if your lens has it.
- Focal length: Short focal length (10mm, 14mm, 24mm, etc.) to cover as much landscape and sky as possible. Also, turn off the long exposure noise reduction, if your camera has this function. The reduction is applied while you're taking the picture, so

in a 20s image, on most cameras you will have to wait another 20s for the camera to process the image trying to eliminate noise.

- Exposure mode: Manual (M).
- Metering mode: You can't meter the light because there is none. Determine the exposure by taking test pictures and checking the **histogram** to see if it's correct. You can do reciprocity calculations with the **PhotoPills exposure calculator**.
- Aperture: If you use the widest aperture (for example f/2.8), you can capture many stars.
- Shutter speed: It depends on how you want the final photograph to look like. You can take pictures using the **NPF rule** to have the stars as big bright spots or use a slower shutter speed if you don't mind minor Star Trails. After all, you'll use a **software** to stack the photos and get the final Star Trails image. You can use the **PhotoPills Star Trails calculator** to calculate the total shutter speed you need to get a certain Star Trails length.
- ISO: If you take multiple exposures to obtain Star Trails long enough, both the shutter speed and noise set the aperture and ISO settings you can use. The biggest problem you have is noise. So, keep the ISO between 400 and 1600, depending on how much light you work with. If you want to capture the color of the stars, don't go over ISO 1600. By doing so you'll preserve the colors of the stars. If you crank up the ISO too much you'll overexpose them and you'll have white trails.
- White balance: Manual. Start with 3900K if there is no light pollution or with 3400K if there is, and then adjust according to the result. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing.
- Where to focus: Focus at the **hyperfocal distance** to maximize the **depth of field**.
- Illumination: Illuminate the foreground if necessary. If you dare, you can use the **Moon** to illuminate the scene. Plan your shooting session so that the Moon has a little elevation and brings light to the scene from the side. In this type of photography you just need to illuminate, if necessary, the first and last image. Then, decide which one you like best and use it as the base shot.
- Take the picture, check that everything is focused and with the lighting you want. Otherwise, refocus at the **hyperfocal distance** and/or correct the illumination.
- Check that everything is focused on the first photo. Do all the tests at the beginning because, once you start the shooting, you can't change anything. Make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**). Otherwise, adjust the ISO accordingly.

In our **Meteor Shower photography guide** you'll find all the information you need to learn how to capture this type of shots.

Solar eclipse (19)

Nikon D4s | 18mm | f/16 | 10s | ISO 100 | 5850K

When planning a solar eclipse shot, keep in mind that the light won't change drastically until the eclipse approaches totality. Therefore, you can easily determine the **exposure** and then keep the same settings for almost the whole event.

But when the eclipse reaches its apogee (totality), the light will change very quickly... You'll have to quickly change your camera settings.

Although you'll have to check it on the spot, here are some tips. In my experience, during totality the settings of a correctly exposed image are the same as what you need at the beginning of the astronomical twilight. The sky is dark blue, but not completely black as it is at night.

Oh, and don't forget to remove the **solar filter** during totality!

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: Camera (regardless of its sensor size). A wide angle lens. An intervalometer. A sturdy tripod and a ballhead. A solar filter.
- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW. Turn off the image stabilization function if your lens has it.
- Focal length: Your composition will determine the focal length you need. If you want to capture as much landscape as possible, despite the Sun looking super small, choose a short focal length (10mm, 14mm, 24mm). If you have an interesting subject in the foreground, get close to it.
- Metering mode: Spot metering mode. To photograph the partial eclipse, put the solar filter on before the eclipse begins and meter on the Sun. To photograph the phases during totality, remove the filter, meter on the brightest spot of the scene and overexpose by 1 or 2 stops (+1EV o +2EV). Be careful not to move the camera when changing the settings so that you can then blend all the photos seamlessly.
- Aperture: Use a small aperture to increase **depth of field** (f/8, f/11) and get a better quality image.
- Shutter speed: Keep the shutter speed between 1/125s y 1/4000s during the partial eclipse. It will depend on the solar filter you use and the weather conditions. Use a slower shutter speed during totality (probably about 1-2 seconds, but make sure the shot isn't under or overexposed).
- ISO: Keep the ISO as low as possible (nominal, that is 100 or 200).
- White balance: Manual. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing. But if you want to capture the true colors of the Sun and the scene in camera, you should start with a white balance of 5200K, and adjust accordingly.
- Where to focus: Since you're using a short focal length, focus at the **hyperfocal distance**.
- Take the picture and check that everything is in focus. Otherwise, refocus at the **hyperfocal distance**.
- Make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**). Otherwise, adjust the **exposure triangle**.

If you need more details, check our **photography guide on solar eclipses**.

Lunar eclipse (20)

Nikon D500 | 500mm | f/5.6 | 1/10s | ISO 1250

If you want to include the landscape while capturing the lunar eclipse using a super telephoto lens, you'll need to be a little more skilled than usual.

These are photos that require going a little further: you have to know the location very well, do some advanced planning and, above all, not fail when deciding the shooting settings.

A challenge that I'm sure you're eager to face!

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: I recommend an APS-C or Micro 4/3 camera to take advantage of the cropping factor. A telephoto lens (85mm, 200mm, 300mm) or super telephoto lens (500mm, 600mm). An intervalometer. A sturdy tripod and a ballhead.

- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW. Turn on the image stabilization function if your lens has it.
- Focal length: A long focal length, from 200mm onwards. Image stabilization function is advised.
- Metering mode: Spot metering mode. Meter on the Moon's surface before the eclipse begins. To make sure you're getting at least one photo correctly exposed, you should use a 1-stop **bracketing** between each shot.
- Aperture: Use the maximum aperture that your lens allows. This way you can use faster shutter speeds to avoid the movement of the Moon and any trepidation, getting a sharper picture. If the shutter speed and ISO allow you so, close the aperture by one stop to avoid vignetting and optical aberrations.
- Shutter speed: Use 1/125s as a base, taking into account that using slower shutter speeds (no more than 1s) and with your camera well stabilized, you can capture the brightest part of the Moon correctly exposed. However, as the eclipse progresses, you'll have to change the exposure to get more detail in the shadows (assuming the risk of overexposing the brightest part). So you should use slower speeds (1/2s for example).
- ISO: The minimum possible to get a correct exposure, always taking care not to blow out the brightest part. The shutter speed is limited to a maximum to avoid a blurred Moon (because of the trepidation that you may have and by the motion of the Moon itself). You already set the maximum possible aperture, so the only parameter that you can change is the ISO. It will be between 800 and 1600.
- White balance: Manual. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing.
- Where to focus: If the landscape covers a large area of the frame, focus the lens on the lower third of the scene (starting from bottom to top of the frame). But if the frame is mostly covered by the Moon and the subject, then, focus on the subject. The key is having the subject perfectly in focus.
- Take the picture and check that everything is in focus. Otherwise, refocus.
- Make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**). Otherwise, adjust the **exposure triangle**.

I suggest you take a look at our **photography guide on lunar eclipses** to become an expert.

Winter (21)

Nikon D4s | 25mm | f/5.6 | 2s | ISO 100 | 5850K

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: Camera (regardless of its sensor size). A wide angle lens if you want a broad landscape or a telephoto lens if you want to capture a portion of it. An intervalometer. A sturdy tripod and a ballhead. Sometimes, depending on the terrain you can use a bean bag that gives a lot of stability.
- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW. Turn off the image stabilization function if your lens has it. Sometimes and depending on the camera and lens you use, it may be useful to lock up the mirror as I did in the photo above. However, you don't need to do it if you're using a shutter speed slower than 1s.
- Focal length: It depends on the type of landscape you want to do. You can use from a

small focal length (10mm, 14mm, 24mm) to cover as much of the landscape and sky as possible to a telephoto lens (85mm, 200mm, 300mm) or a super telephoto lens (500mm, 600mm).

- Exposure mode: Manual (M).
- Metering mode: Spot metering mode. Meter the brightest area of the scene you want in detail and overexpose by 1 or 2 stops (+1EV or +2EV). Then recompose, focus, and shoot.
- Aperture: From f/4 to f/16. Be careful not to use from f/16 onwards to avoid **diffraction** because it ruins the sharpness and quality of the image.
- Shutter speed: Since you're shooting in Manual mode (M), the shutter speed is determined by the aperture-ISO combination you select. Here, your personal style comes into play depending on how much **depth of field**, motion or light (brightness) you want in the photo.
- ISO: In landscape photography you usually use a tripod, although you may not need it if you have other intentions. Therefore, use the minimum ISO you can.
- White balance: Manual. It depends on the time of day and the quality of **natural light**. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing.
- Where to focus: Focus at the **hyperfocal distance** to maximize the **depth of field**.
- Take the picture and check that everything is in focus. Make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**). Otherwise, adjust the **exposure triangle**.

Spring (22)

Nikon D4s | 18mm | f/16 | 2min | ISO100 | 7500K | ND 1.8 (6 stops) and reverse GND 0.6 (2 stops) filters

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: Camera (regardless of its sensor size). A wide angle lens if you want a broad landscape or a telephoto lens if you want to capture a portion of it. An intervalometer. A sturdy tripod and a ballhead. Sometimes, depending on the terrain you can use a bean bag that gives a lot of stability.
- ND filter: ND 1.8 (6 stops) filter to increase the exposure and get a silky sea and a slight movement in the low clouds. Take a look at **section 7 of our lens filters photography guide** to learn how to choose the ND filter you need and how to expose with it.
- GND filter: Reverse GND 0.9 (3 stops) filter to reduce the **dynamic range** between the sky towards the horizon and the foreground and capture the scene in a single shot. Check **section 8 of our lens filters photography guide** to learn how to choose the reverse GND filter you need and how to expose with it.
- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW. Turn off the image stabilization function if your lens has it. Sometimes and depending on the camera and lens you use, it may be useful to

lock up the mirror as I did in the photo above. However, you don't need to do it if you're using a shutter speed slower than 1s.

- Focal length: It depends on the type of landscape you want to do. You can use from a small focal length (10mm, 14mm, 24mm) to cover as much of the landscape and sky as possible to a telephoto lens (85mm, 200mm, 300mm) or a super telephoto lens (500mm, 600mm).
- Exposure mode: Manual (M).
- Metering mode: Spot metering mode. Meter the brightest area of the scene you want in detail and overexpose by 1 or 2 stops (+1EV or +2EV). Then recompose, focus, and shoot.
- Aperture: From f/4 to f/16. Be careful not to use from f/16 onwards to avoid **diffraction** because it ruins the sharpness and quality of the image.
- Shutter speed: Since you're shooting in Manual mode (M), the shutter speed is determined by the aperture-ISO combination you select. Here, your personal style comes into play depending on how much **depth of field**, motion or light (brightness) you want in the photo.
- ISO: In landscape photography you usually use a tripod, although you may not need it if you have other intentions. Therefore, use the minimum ISO you can.
- White balance: Manual. It depends on the time of day and the quality of **natural light**. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing.
- Where to focus: Focus at the **hyperfocal distance** to maximize the **depth of field**.
- Take the picture and check that everything is in focus. Make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**). Otherwise, adjust the **exposure triangle**.

Summer (23)

DJI Mavic Pro | 26mm | f/2.2 | 1/125s | ISO 200 | 6000K | ND 0.3 (1 stop) filter

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: A drone.
- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW.
- Focal length: In this case, the focal length is fixed (26mm). Therefore, the framing depends on the height at which the drone is.
- Exposure mode: Manual (M).
- Metering mode: In aerial photography with a drone, the matrix metering mode is generally used, and sometimes the spot metering mode. In this photo, I used the spot metering mode on the boat and I overexposed by +2EV.

- Aperture: In this case, the aperture is fixed (f/2.2).
- Shutter speed: Since you're shooting in Manual mode (M), the shutter speed is determined by the aperture-ISO combination you select. Here, your personal style comes into play depending on how much **depth of field**, motion or light (brightness) you want in the photo.
- ISO: Use the minimum ISO you can.
- White balance: Manual. It depends on the time of day and the quality of **natural light**. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing.
- Where to focus: I focused on the boat to maximize the **depth of field**.
- Take the picture and check that everything is in focus. Make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**). Otherwise, adjust the **exposure triangle**.

Take a look at our **drone photography guide** to learn everything you need to know about aerial photography and make the most of your drone to capture landscapes from another point of view.

Fall (24)

Nikon D4s | 200mm | f/16 | 1/30s | ISO 100 | 5900K

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: Camera (regardless of its sensor size). A wide angle lens if you want a broad landscape or a telephoto lens if you want to capture a portion of it. An intervalometer. A sturdy tripod and a ballhead. Sometimes, depending on the terrain you can use a bean bag that gives a lot of stability.
- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW. Turn off the image stabilization function if your lens has it. Sometimes and depending on the camera and lens you use, it may be useful to lock up the mirror as I did in the photo above. However, you don't need to do it if you're using a shutter speed slower than 1s.
- Focal length: It depends on the type of landscape you want to do. You can use from a small focal length (10mm, 14mm, 24mm) to cover as much of the landscape and sky as possible to a telephoto lens (85mm, 200mm, 300mm) or a super telephoto lens (500mm, 600mm).
- Exposure mode: Manual (M).
- Metering mode: Spot metering mode. Meter the brightest area of the scene you want in detail and overexpose by 1 or 2 stops (+1EV or +2EV). Then recompose, focus, and shoot.
- Aperture: From f/4 to f/16. Be careful not to use from f/16 onwards to avoid **diffraction** because it ruins the sharpness and quality of the image.

- Shutter speed: Since you're shooting in Manual mode (M), the shutter speed is determined by the aperture-ISO combination you select. Here, your personal style comes into play depending on how much **depth of field**, motion or light (brightness) you want in the photo.
- ISO: In landscape photography you usually use a tripod, although you may not need it if you have other intentions. Therefore, use the minimum ISO you can.
- White balance: Manual. It depends on the time of day and the quality of **natural light**. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing.
- Where to focus: Focus at the **hyperfocal distance** to maximize the **depth of field**.
- Take the picture and check that everything is in focus. Make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**). Otherwise, adjust the **exposure triangle**.

Drone (25)

DJI Mavic Pro | 26mm | f/2.2 | 1/100s | ISO 100 | 6000K

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: A drone.
- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW.
- Focal length: In this case, the focal length is fixed (26mm). Therefore, the framing depends on the height at which the drone is.
- Exposure mode: Manual (M).
- Metering mode: In aerial photography with a drone, the matrix metering mode is generally used, and sometimes the spot metering mode. In this photo, I used the matrix metering mode.
- Aperture: In this case, the aperture is fixed (f/2.2).

- Shutter speed: Since you're shooting in Manual mode (M), the shutter speed is determined by the aperture-ISO combination you select. Here, your personal style comes into play depending on how much **depth of field**, motion or light (brightness) you want in the photo.
- ISO: Use the minimum ISO you can.
- White balance: Manual. It depends on the time of day and the quality of **natural light**. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing.
- Where to focus: I focused on the rock to maximize the **depth of field**.
- Take the picture and check that everything is in focus. Make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**). Otherwise, adjust the **exposure triangle**.

Thanks to our **drone photography guide**, you'll learn everything you need to know about aerial photography and how to get the most out of your drone to capture the planet in a unique way.

Light painting (26)

Nikon D4s | 18mm | f/5.6 | 3.8s | ISO 1600 | 4600K

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: Camera (regardless of its sensor size). A wide angle lens or a medium angle lens if you want to include in the light painting scene the landscape and the human figure. An intervalometer. A sturdy tripod and a ballhead.
- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW. Turn off the image stabilization function if your lens has it. Sometimes and depending on the camera and lens you use, it may be useful to lock up the mirror as I did in the photo above. However, you don't need to do it if you're using a shutter speed slower than 1s.
- Focal length: It depends on the type of light painting you want to do. You can use from a small focal length (10mm, 14mm, 24mm) to cover as much of the landscape and sky as possible to a medium angle lens (35mm, 50mm).
- Exposure mode: Manual (M).
- Metering mode: Spot metering mode. Then recompose, focus, and shoot.

- Aperture: Between f/4 and f/5.6 depending on the **natural light**. The final aperture will be determined by the metering you've made in the background of the scene.
- ISO: In these scenes during the **blue hour** in which the light changes very fast it is very important that you adjust the ISO according to the **exposure triangle**.
- Shutter speed: Since you're shooting in Manual mode (M), the shutter speed is determined by the aperture-ISO combination you select. Here, your personal style comes into play depending on how much **depth of field**, motion or light (brightness) you want in the photo.
- White balance: Manual. Nevertheless, you can always correct it in post-processing.
- Where to focus: Focus at the **hyperfocal distance** to maximize the **depth of field**.
- Take the picture and check that everything is in focus. Make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**). Otherwise, adjust the **exposure triangle**.

Infrared (27)

Nikon D300iR modified | 17mm | f/8 | 1/30s | ISO 400 | 2100K

The steps you should follow to take the photo are:

- Gear: Camera converted to infrared in which you changed the low-pass filter to an infrared one of 720nm. A wide angle lens if you want a general scene or a telephoto if you want to capture a close-up or a detail.
- Camera settings: Shoot in RAW.
- Focal length: It depends on the type of landscape you want to do. You can use from a small focal length (10mm, 14mm, 24mm) to cover as much of the landscape and sky as possible to a telephoto lens (85mm, 200mm, 300mm) or a super telephoto lens (500mm, 600mm).
- Exposure mode: Aperture Priority mode (A or Av).
- Metering mode: In infrared photography, the metering mode is the same as in other genres. But in this case, you get a resulting red image on the LCD and you're not able to evaluate the scene well, so meter and take a 3-shot **bracketing**.

- Aperture: From f/4 to f/16. Be careful to use from f/16 onwards to avoid **diffraction** because it ruins the sharpness and quality of the image. Here f/8 gave me enough **depth of field** and a very good sharpness, since I took advantage of the lens' sweet spot.
- Shutter speed: Since you're shooting in Aperture Priority mode (A or Av), the shutter speed is determined by the aperture you select.
- ISO: Use the minimum ISO you can.
- White balance: The resulting picture on the LCD is a completely red image. Calibrate the white balance to reduce that red and to see on the screen some more brownish tones, allowing you to better assess the final result.
- Where to focus: Focus at the **hyperfocal distance** to maximize the **depth of field**.
- Take the picture and check that everything is in focus. Make sure the photo is correctly exposed (check the **histogram**). Otherwise, adjust the **exposure triangle**.

Section 10:

10 more tips to improve your landscape photography

Nikon Z7 | 102mm | f/11 | 3s | ISO 64 | 7600K | Soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filter

Landscape photography is a fascinating genre that can give you great joys and great disappointments.

As I've explained to you throughout this article, the weather plays a fundamental role. And part of the success of your photo shooting will depend on it.

Therefore, once you've finished planning (**section 6**) and you know the day you're going to go to the location (**section 5**) you'll have to trust that the stars align and everything goes as planned. Or as PhotoPillers say, it's time to **"Plan & Pray"**.

And in the hope of being lucky, here are some more landscape photography tips.

Plan down to the last detail

There's only one way to successfully capture a photo that you've been dreaming of for a long time: planning it down to the last detail.

And the best tool to plan any photo is **PhotoPills**.

You have all the information you need to learn how to use it easily and quickly in **section 6**. There you have 2 real cases in which I explain step by step and with some videos the logical workflow that you should follow to plan your photo.

So don't underestimate the power of planning.

It's the best way to get a supershot!

Don't be lazy

Getting a spectacular landscape photo requires effort, dedication and time.

There are no shortcuts.

As I said in my previous tip, spend all the necessary time planning. It'll help you to have as much information as possible to successfully capture the photo and to adapt in case something doesn't go as you expected. It's important to have a plan B.

When scouting in the field, be thorough. Walk through the land, look at every corner and every element. Analyze potential dangers and visualize possible compositions by taking test photos with your smartphone.

Get up early on the shooting day to get to the location in advance, spend some time to calmly assemble the equipment and prepare everything until the perfect light arrives. When you see that supershot on your screen you'll be glad you did all these things.

Put all your efforts to achieve your goal, to get that photo you've been dreaming of for so long.

If you're lazy, how do you think the shooting session will turn out? :P

Create depth and perspective

Landscape photographers have the same dilemma that painters have faced for centuries: how to convey a three-dimensional scene on a two-dimensional support.

By creating depth, you help the viewer have a clear concept of the scene in front of her and attract her attention. The idea is that you capture a more interesting and intriguing photo that invites the viewer to explore the scene instead of looking at it sideways and ignoring the story it tells.

There are many rules, elements and tools that you can use to give more depth to your photos (**section 5**).

As I was saying before, this is a problem that artists have been trying to solve for a long time. So these resources have been developed and refined over time. Most of these techniques come from the art of painting but they work perfectly fine in photography.

Oftentimes, a small change in the point of view or the composition can completely change the image. With a little practice, you'll be able to create depth in your photos almost unconsciously.

Don't neglect the foreground

When you photograph a subject that is at a medium or far distance from the camera (shooting spot), it can often look flat. This problem is even more exaggerated if you zoom in so that the subject fills a larger portion of the frame, for example.

To avoid this, increase the feeling of depth as I suggested in the previous tip.

You can do this by including a point of interest in the foreground. By doing this you'll guide the viewer to visually go through the scene from the foreground to the furthest plane in which the subject is.

You can also use elements in the foreground to create a natural frame around your subject and give it more prominence.

It's important that before taking the photo you check that there is nothing in the foreground that could distract the viewer. This hurts the impact of your composition and story.

While you're working on the composition (**section 5**) make sure to visually go through the entire frame, including the edges, to remove anything superfluous that doesn't add anything.

Don't be stubborn with the shooting spot. If you see that it doesn't work at all, find another

one. Sometimes a step to the left or right can be enough to find a powerful foreground.

Experiment

Experiment as if there's no tomorrow.

Don't be afraid to screw up. Don't waste energy asking others, "What would happen if I used a larger aperture?". Do it and learn.

While experimenting with your landscape photography you'll get immediate feedback (through the LCD screen and the **histogram**) and you'll learn by realizing what is happening. "When I do A, B happens."

Here are some ideas you can start having fun with.

Play with depth of field

Mastering **depth of field** will give you creative control over what appears in focus and out of focus in your images. Thus, you can draw the viewer's attention to certain elements, while others go unnoticed.

It's a creative resource that will help you tell your stories the way you want.

Depending on what you want to highlight in your image you can use several techniques:

- Using selective focus, you can separate the background from the subject. You can blur the foreground and background elements to get the **depth of field** that suits you.
- Focus on the **hyperfocal distance** allows you to maximize the **depth of field** and have almost every element of your frame in focus.
- And if you need a fully sharp image, make a focus stacking. That is, take a series of photographs with the same composition, each one focused on a plane of different depth along the body of the subject or the different planes of the scene. Then, merge the shots in post-processing highlighting in each layer the area in focus that you want.

Take photos from different points of view

It always surprises me how shifting a bit the point of view can turn a flat and dull image into something much more dramatic.

When you're in front of the scene you want to photograph, analyze the different points of view from which you can capture it.

Consider taking the photo from a high vantage point, putting your camera at ground level, or finding somewhere in between. And avoid photographing at eye level, which is how we all see the world.

Another thing... Don't forget to turn around!

You never know what the light may be creating behind your back. The scene behind you may be spectacular and you risk missing it if you're focused on the Sun only.

So, when you get to the location, take a good look at the scene where you're going to work your composition:

- In the Sun's direction.
- In the Sun's opposite direction.

Thanks to **PhotoPills** it's very easy to check the Sunrise/Sunset direction. You have all the information in the Planner.

Make sure you've activated the **Sun layer** in the map tools. The thick yellow line indicates the Sunrise direction for the location and date you've set. And the thick orange line is the Sunset direction.

Capture motion

To convey a sense of motion to the viewer, the best you can do is use one or more filters.

There are many types of filters but the ones you will normally use in your landscape photography are the **circular polarizing filter (CPL)**, the **graduated neutral density filter (GND)** and the **neutral density filter (ND)**.

With the polarizer you eliminate reflections in the water and show the bottom in more detail. You can also increase the saturation of a specific area of the frame.

With a GND filter you subtract more (or less) light in a specific portion of your composition. You'll generally use it to balance the strong luminosity of the sky and prevent highlights from being blown out.

With the ND filter you increase the exposure time. You'll generally use it to convey motion in the clouds or to produce a silk water effect.

If you want to become a filters' expert, you should read our **lens filters photography guide**.

Take a panorama

A panorama is a type of photo that requires you to think about it before pressing the shutter. You need to make several decisions based on the visual impact you want your image to have.

Start with the composition

Make sure that no moving objects enter the frame as they will be distorted in the final image.

Decide how much of the landscape you want the photo to show. This helps you determine whether it's better to take your photos vertically (if you need more sky, for example) or horizontally.

I generally try to avoid horizontal shots because I lose too much resolution. When I put all the shots together so that the program stitches the panorama, it usually crops parts of the image and ends up losing resolution.

Different types of panoramas

There are two types of panoramas:

1. A single-row panorama of overlapping images.

This configuration requires the pan axis to remain perfectly leveled (perpendicular to the ground) throughout the panning. Since this setup only requires one axis to remain perpendicular to the ground (let's say the "x-axis"), you don't need any specific gear other than your camera and tripod.

2. A multiple-row panorama of overlapping images or a mosaic.

Start with the camera pointing down, rotate the camera from left to right, and shoot a row of overlapping images. Then go back to the start (to the left side of your frame), point the camera up and make another row of overlapping images. This row overlaps from left to right and top to bottom with the previous one.

This setup is more complex because the vertical axis (let's say the "y-axis") must remain perpendicular to the x-axis throughout the shot. You may need a leveling base or a panoramic head with rail.

Be careful with the exposure

Taking into account that a panorama captures a very wide area, be careful when metering the scene with the light meter so that the highlights aren't blown out.

Meter the **key tone** and then lock that exposure. If you're shooting in Manual (M), for example, adjust the settings to get the **exposure** you want and then don't change anything else.

Remember that if you can't get the correct exposure in one shot, you can use filters or do a **bracketing**.

Capturing the panorama

The easiest way to capture it is by following a sequence from left to right.

Frame taking into account the left edge of your panorama and take the first shot. When you pan the camera clockwise, make sure that the center of the lens stays on the same plane and that the horizon is leveled.

When you're shooting, overlap at least 33% of each shot as you pan the camera. This way you make sure that the post-processing software has enough information (enough pixels) to stitch each shot until you get a realistic final image.

Repeat this process as many times as necessary until the right edge of the last shot matches that of your panorama.

Stitching the panorama

There are many softwares to stitch panoramas. My favorites, depending on how complicated is the final image, are **Lightroom**, **Photoshop** and **PTGui**.

Be minimalist, pay attention to details

The idea is that you remove as many elements from the frame as possible, play with negative space and make the photo as simple as possible.

There are many ways to take minimalist landscape photos: using a wide angle, using a long focal length, or changing your point of view (from below, for example).

But there's a technique that many photographers ignore and that is to photograph from above. With a drone.

Far are those limitations of having to take photos from the window of an airplane or, more difficult still, from a helicopter. Now drones offer you a unique point of view and are a great resource for any landscape photographer.

Look for elements that may work like a road winding through a forest or a seascape where you can show the contrast between land and sea.

If you want to become a master of this genre, take a look at our **drone photography guide**.

Return to a location in different seasons

Over time, as I've gained more experience in my landscape photography, I've noticed that I return to my favorite locations. And I do it over and over again because I like to see how they change at different times of the day and throughout the seasons of the year (**section 7**).

The area you live in may not inspire you when taking photos. After all, you see the same corners every day. Your photographic eye is now used to them, and it doesn't see anything that catches its attention.

That's why I suggest you start to see the world and your home surroundings in a different way.

Look everywhere for compositions and you'll have plenty of photo ideas. You'll have tons of locations that you'll want to return to again and again.

You'll be surprised how those places never look the same.

Always keep an eye on the histogram

Depending on the location you are in (**section 2**) and the lighting conditions you have (**section 4**) you may face a scene with a high **dynamic range**. Suppose, for example, that the sky is much brighter than the foreground.

Take the necessary test photos and use the **histogram** to calculate the **exposure**.

And don't forget that the image you see on your LCD is a JPEG processed file of the original RAW file. In other words, the histogram that you're seeing on the camera is not exactly that of the RAW file, although it's still the best reference to evaluate the exposure.

To get the correct exposure, you can use several techniques.

Use filters

The best way to counteract strong light from the sky (blown out highlights) is to use a **graduated neutral density filter (GND)**. You do this by subtracting more (or less) light in a specific portion of the frame.

Although you can also use other filters like **circular polarizing filter (CPL)** or the **neutral density filter (ND)** depending on the type of effect you want to produce.

If you want to become an expert in the use of filters, study our **lens filters photography guide**.

Do a bracketing

Even if you use filters, the camera may not be able to capture the scene in a single exposure.

If that's the case, the solution is to do a **bracketing**.

In **section 23 of the exposure photography guide** I explain how to successfully capture high contrast images with bracketing.

Take advantage of bad weather

Weather conditions define a landscape (**section 7**). They define its two main characteristics: lighting and mood.

Surely more than once you got upset and frustrated while taking photos in bad weather. The rain may wet the lens, the wind may blow too hard, the sky may not have clouds, it may be bitterly cold, it may be just hot...

If the weather conditions aren't optimal, landscape photography can be a real nightmare. We've all been there.

But, oddly enough, it can also be very rewarding!

"Bad" weather is not bad weather as such, it's amazing. I love it for several reasons.

One of them is that I can take photos all day. I don't need to wait for a **natural light** magical moment, like the **Sunrise** or the **Sunset**.

Although the main reason I really enjoy taking photos in bad weather is that it allows me to create images with a unique and dramatic atmosphere.

So don't be intimidated by the weather. As I always say, be flexible and make the most of the circumstances you find yourself in.

Take care of your equipment

If it's raining, do your best to keep your camera dry. Today many camera bodies are waterproof, but there's no harm in protecting it and avoiding a potential failure later on.

I'm not a big fan of specific rain covers — they tend to be expensive, they don't generally allow me to get to the camera controls comfortably, and I also need a model for each camera. So I'd rather use a simple plastic bag or even a shower cap from the hotel room.

I also like to always carry several microfiber cloths in my backpack. I use them to clean the front lens glass, LCD screen, and filter, if I'm using one during shooting. The gear will inevitably get wet if it's raining or I'm taking photos near water (on the coast, near a waterfall, etc.).

Another frequent problem that you can find is that the batteries drain quickly if it's very cold. Therefore, you should always have some spare batteries and take them with you on the day of the shooting session.

To keep the spare batteries more or less warm, I put them inside the pockets of my second layer (down jacket or fleece) so that they are as close to my body as possible. Another option that I use in case of extremely low temperatures such as during the PhotoPills **expedition to Iceland**, is to put a heat bag in the same pocket.

If you're going to spend several days taking photos at low temperatures, don't wait until the batteries are completely exhausted. Charge the batteries as soon as you're back at your accommodation to make sure all your gear is ready for the next shooting session.

Finally, be careful when changing the lens to prevent dust from entering the sensor, especially if it's very windy and you're in a location where there is sand.

First, turn off the camera. This limits the amount of static charge on the sensor, and this in turn prevents it from attracting dust.

Then, never leave the camera with the lens mount open. Every time you remove a lens, put another one on immediately or put a cap on your camera body.

Finally, hold the camera so that the lens mount is pointing downward and away from the direction of the wind, to reduce the risk of dust falling or flying into the hole and onto your sensor.

Keep trying

There's nothing more satisfying than getting that photo you've been dreaming of for so long and in which you have put a lot of tiempo and effort.

Unfortunately, the truth is that in landscape photography, no matter how much you have planned the shooting session (**section 6**) and you think you've everything under control, sometimes unexpected events happen and prevent you from capturing the photo.

So you have to learn to manage your frustration and remember that persistence will pay off at some point.

I have to admit that I'm the first to embark on a **photographic expedition**, traveling for hours and doing my best to reach landscapes that I've never photographed to get there only to find that the light is not the right one or that any other problem arises. It's something that I believe has happened to all of us.

And of course, once I'm there, I try to make the most out of the circumstances and get the best possible shot. I improvise and capture a different image.

But in the end the only thing I've done is face a situation that was not ideal. I haven't taken the photo I wanted to take and sometimes I feel a little frustration.

Over time, I've come to realize that it's not worth getting frustrated. The important thing is to enjoy and have fun taking photos.

Because nature is out of control (**section 7**) and you cannot fight against it.

So don't give up. Keep trying again and again. Go back to the location whenever you can until you get what you're looking for.

A PhotoPiller never gives up!

Work on the post-processing

Surely you've considered often how far you can (or should) go when post-processing your landscape photography.

What settings are essential? Have you pushed the RAW file to its limits? Or have you gone too far?

It's a regular question in my workshops and I always answer the same thing.

It's up to you.

You have to decide how and how much you want to post-process your shot. But the most important thing is that you determine why you do this or that adjustment. Is it going to make the scene look the way you saw it? Will you improve it?

As you can see, there's no single solution and no single answer.

Also note that there's no one-size-fits-all solution. You'll have to take into account your tastes and your personal style.

And to find it, you should learn several post-processing techniques until you find what you like.

You have a lot of courses and tutorials to practice, but I recommend that you start by taking a look at these two recommendations.

On the one hand, go to **Nigel Danson's YouTube channel**. Nigel is a landscape photographer who puts a lot of effort into teaching everything he knows and from which you can learn a lot. You have dozens of videos about post-processing using **Lightroom**.

On the other hand, don't miss **Sean Bargshaw's YouTube channel**, a great resource to learn tons of **Photoshop** tricks and techniques.

Section 11:

17 landscape photographers to learn from

Nikon Z6 | 18mm | f/16 | 8s | ISO 100 | 7800K | Soft GND 0.9 (3 stops) filter

One of the best ways to learn photography is by viewing (and analyzing) the photos of great photographers.

Their images are a constant source of inspiration and allow you to see a lot of compositions. And the best of it is that it's free!

And why do I recommend seeing photos from other photographers?

Well, because it's something that I myself do often: I regularly see the work of my favorite photographers and also discover new exciting photographers. Despite the number of years that I've been photographing landscapes, I still have so much to learn!

And I thought it would be cool to share with you my top 10 landscape photographers. I've been lucky enough to take photos with some of them during my favorite photographic event, the **PhotoPills Camp**.

It's a very personal list but I would love to add your recommendations. Just leave a comment at the end of this guide.

Daniel Kordan

Daniel Korzhonov, better known as **Daniel Kordan**, is a Russian landscape photographer with a special interest in mountainscapes and seascapes. He's passionate about travel and likes to explore the world capturing truly mind-blowing moments.

Sarah Hatton

Sarah Hatton is an Australian landscape and adventure photographer. She loves long exposures that she captures not only in Australia but also in Canada, New Zealand, the US west coast, the Chilean Patagonia... It all started as a hobby, and she became a professional in 2012. Since then, Sarah has constantly stood out and shown extraordinary qualities.

Albert Dros

Albert Dros lives and breathes landscape photography and thinks only of capturing the beauty of the world. Actually, it's almost an obsession. The time and effort he invests into planning translates into breathtaking images.

Erin Babnik

Erin Babnik is currently one of the greatest landscape photographers that you can learn from. Erin is an immensely talented artist who, in addition to taking fabulous images, is a photography educator, writer and speaker. One of her best virtues is its persistence, and she never gives up in difficult conditions when the location is worth it.

Francesco Gola

Italian photographer **Francesco Gola** is passionate about the sea. When he started taking photos he discovered that what he likes the most is taking long exposures. He spends his free time devoted to his passion, capturing seascapes along with beautiful Sunrises and Sunsets in some of the most beautiful places on the planet.

Rachel Jones Ross

Rachel Jones Ross discovered her passion for photography after capturing the Milky Way for the first time. Her life changed forever and she decided to quit the psychology industry to become a professional photographer. She decided to lean towards landscape photography and astrophotography, two genres in which she stands out for her talent.

Elia Locardi

Elia Locardi looks for the most extraordinary places in the world and does everything possible to capture them in the best light. For him it's more than a mission, it's a lifestyle that he has developed around his passion for travel and photography. Since he began traveling the world almost full time in 2009 he's been to more than 60 countries.

Catherine Simard

Catherine Simard began her professional career as a model, a profession to which she dedicated 10 years of her life. However, in her spare time she discovered that hiking and photography is what really makes her happy. She has a special talent for capturing jaw-dropping landscapes. You should have a look at her images.

Marco Grassi

The love story between **Marco Grassi** and photography started in the best way possible: traveling for a year around New Zealand. Since then, he's been traveling around the planet and capturing with his camera the wonderful landscapes that he's encountered along the way.

Rannvá Joensen

Rannvá Joensen loves to show other traveling photographers her homeland – the Faroe Islands. Through her eyes and her camera you'll see why this place is unique. Her images show the wildest side of this corner of the Earth, especially in winter, when the colors and the weather are most impressive.

Michael Shainblum

Michael Shainblum has been working professionally as a photographer and filmmaker since he was 16 years old. His endless creativity is the source of his unique style. His way of telling stories through amazing photographs and timelapses has earned him international prestige and fame.

Sarah Lyndsay

Sarah Lyndsay is a photographer with extraordinary talent. Because she lives in Canada she embarks in a lot of adventures that turn into fantastic photo opportunities. I'm always fascinated by her work and the dream landscapes that she captures with her camera.

Ian Norman

He's the creator and editor of one of the largest astrophotography blogs on the internet, **LonelySpeck**. Despite his education as an engineer, he left everything to pursue his great passion: astrophotography. His night landscape photos, tutorials, and videos have been an inspiration to many photographers around the world, including myself.

Rach Stewart

Rach Stewart started in photography by taking photos of the Sunset with his iPhone while walking on the beach every day. Well, she's from New Zealand so you can imagine how amazing the Sunsets are there! From there on, she began to develop her own photographic style focusing on the wonderful landscapes of her country and, later on, traveling the world.

Chris Burckard

Chris Burkard is a photographer and self-taught artist whose audiovisual content revolves around surfing, mountain sports and travel. His constant search for wild and remote locations and unconventional landscapes help him capture the fragility of the human compared to the strength of nature. Using the ocean as his main inspiration and thanks to an innate intuition to work with light, Chris is able to achieve truly mind-blowing images.

Claire Droppert

The photography of **Claire Droppert** focuses on simplicity and serenity. Her favorite genres are nature and travel. Thanks to her images, she seeks to evoke a sense of silence through isolated and remote landscapes.

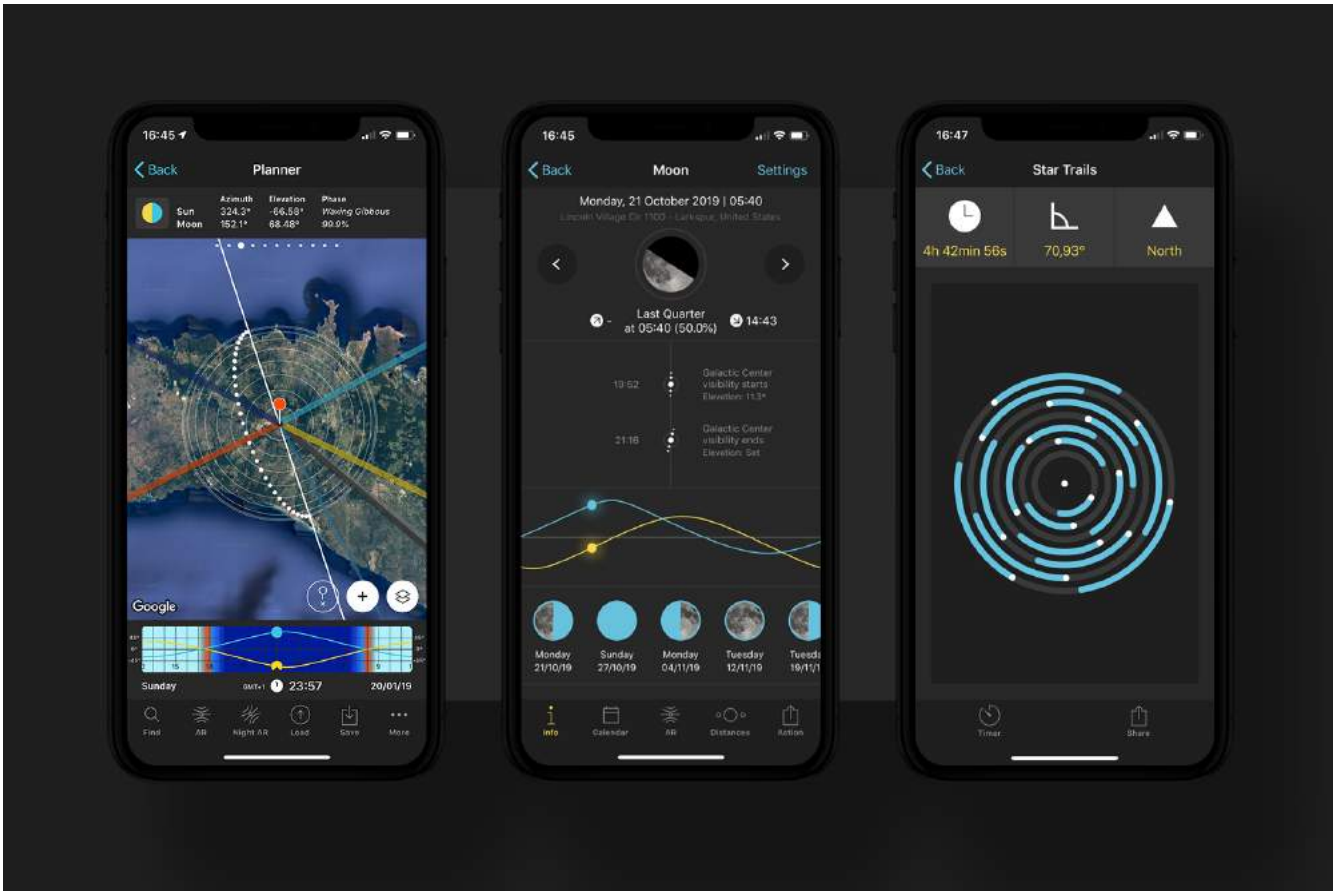
Claire's success is due in part to her ability to harness the beauty of simplicity and minimalism, a virtue many landscape photographers find difficult to achieve.

Joshua Cripps

Joshua Cripps grew up in the Sierra Nevada mountains (California, USA) and always felt very close to nature. His ability and ingenuity when photographing landscapes results in incredible images whose colors and composition stand out from the rest. He believes that photography is about enjoying while taking photos and you can clearly see this in his images.

Section 12:

14 apps and websites to help you take landscape photos



Throughout the article, I've mentioned some of my favorite apps and websites that I regularly use when photographing landscapes.

For me they are essential tools because it's easier for me to plan the photo, search for locations and check the weather.

Would you like to know which are the most useful applications to nail your landscape images?

You don't need to do anything. I've been testing a ton of tools for years! And now I know which ones are the best.

In this section, I'm going to share with you a list of apps and web pages that will help you take great landscape photos.

PhotoPills (1)

I cannot start my list with any other application. My landscape photography has completely changed since using PhotoPills.

It's a photography application that serves many purposes and that has a lot of tools. My friend **Francesco Gola** called it the **"Swiss Army Knife for Photographers"**. And I think he hit the spot... ;)

PhotoPills is your Sunrise app (and also your Sunset app, your Milky Way app, night photography app, Moon app, Meteor Showers app, depth of field app, time lapse app...).

Well, all that and many more tools...

As soon as you start using PhotoPills, you'll stop blindly searching for locations and doing mental math! And you can spend much more time outdoors taking photos :P

Download it and start planning your landscape photo ideas.

PhotoPills is available on **iOS** and **Android**.

Google Maps (2)

One of my favorite planning tools is Google Maps.

As soon as I have a photographic idea, I open Google Maps and start exploring possible photographic locations in the world.

In addition to giving me a lot of practical information about a specific area, it also gives me several ways to visualize it. Maps have multiple layers (default satellite, hybrid and terrain) so you can explore the area in detail, zooming in to the finest detail.

Whenever you can, check out Google Street View. Depending on the environment you are in, it may not be very useful since it works especially in urban locations (**section 2**).

Once you're in the correct area of the map, drag and drop the little man to the place you want to explore. Once the view has been generated, zoom in or out and virtually pan around the area. It's very useful.

You can download Google Maps on your smartphone and your tablet or use it with your favorite browser on your laptop or desktop computer.

Google Maps is available on **iOS** and **Android**.

Google Earth (3)

I love using Google Earth to complement the information I get with Google Maps. Instead of having an aerial or satellite view (that is, flat and two-dimensional as displayed on a map), you have a three-dimensional and topographic view.

Google Earth is very easy to use. Place a pin anywhere on Earth and the program will allow you to virtually see the features and surroundings (the topography, for example) of that location. It's incredible.

When you've selected a location, scout it thoroughly to have as much information as possible before going on the field. You can change your point of view, move your position, zoom in and out. So you can choose several shooting spots, search for compositions and even find your way to get there... :)

You can download Google Earth on your smartphone, your tablet, your laptop and your desktop computer.

Google Earth is available on **iOS** and **Android**.

Location Scout (4)

Location Scout is a website where you can find a lot of cool photo locations. You can consult a file for each location that includes all the practical information you need.

It's very useful to prepare your shooting session and has photos that you use as an inspiration.

All the information is first-hand information shared by users of this page, photographers and passionate travelers like you. And best of all, over time users add tips, photos and ratings. So the information is always up to date.

It's a great tool that I use, especially during my travels.

ShotHotSpot (5)

ShotHotSpot is a database similar to the one I just recommended that is used to find photographic locations.

All you have to do is type a location in the search bar and the results will appear on a map. Each result is a point of interest that is part of a classification and includes photos that have been captured at the location.

Shothotspot uses various sources of information.

On the one hand, it uses the location data of the images of services such as **Flickr**. That's how it automatically calculates the most popular locations.

On the other hand, any user can contribute by adding new locations, or additional information and comments to the existing ones.

It's the perfect complement.

Windy (6)

There are so many weather applications, websites and services that it's almost impossible to decide which is the best or the most reliable.

You cannot imagine the amount of applications and web pages that I have used over the years... I have lost count, really.

So after much searching and testing, I've come to the conclusion that Windy is my favorite app.

For starters, I love the reliability of its information: it's rarely wrong, although no meteorology service is infallible. In addition to this, its interface allows me to check a lot of information and a lot of options.

The application gives you the following data, depending on the location you determine: wind (direction and speed), rain, snow, temperatures, clouds (at different altitudes) and waves direction, force and water temperature). And you still have many more options, data and forecasts.

And best of all, it's free...

You can download the Windy application on your smartphone and on your tablet. But you can also use it through the website on your laptop and desktop computer.

Windy is available on **iOS** and **Android**.

Ventusky (7)

As I just told you, no weather application or service is infallible. That's why I always like to check several sources of information. Therefore, I can get a more realistic idea of what can happen on the shooting day.

And my second favorite option is Ventusky, an app that uses multiple maps to give you tons of weather information.

By default, the main interface is a map of your local area that allows you to see, at a glance, what the weather is like in your location. Thanks to a color code you can see the temperature and the wind direction lines that move over the earth. Of course, you can change the units in the configuration settings.

To see the weather nationwide, zoom out the map. To see it internationally, zoom out even further.

You can also see an animated weather forecast on the screen. Tap the *Play* button (lower left corner) and you'll see the weather evolution in the next hours or days. You can see a 7-day forecast or go back in time.

You can download the Ventusky application on your smartphone and on your tablet. But you can also use it through the website on your laptop and desktop computer.

Ventusky is available on **iOS** and **Android**.

Local weather services (8)

And since good things come in threes, I always check one last source of information to try to get the most accurate and reliable forecast possible.

I believe it's essential to check the official meteorology service of the location where I plan to take photos. This service is usually owned by the local government and the accuracy of its data is far greater than that of any other source.

Neither is 100% infallible, but they help me verify the information Windy and Ventusky give me.

Here are some examples: the US **National Weather Service**, the German **Deutscher Wetterdienst**, the Australian **Bureau of Meteorology**, the British **Met Office**, and the Spanish **Aemet**.

SunsetWx (9)

Even though the **SunsetWx** website has a 90s interface, it's the best free tool for predicting the Sunrise and Sunset quality.

And this type of information is essential in landscape photography.

It works in a very simple way. On the home page there is a satellite image of the USA (although, if you prefer, you can change it to a satellite image of Europe or the World with the options on the top menu). And on it, you can see a heat map overlay.

The heat map represents the probability of a good Sunrise:

- The warmer (closer to red or a higher percentage) the image, the higher the probability that the Sunrise will be amazing.
- The colder (closer to blue or a lower percentage), the greater the probability of a poor Sunrise.

The first maps you see are the Sunset one's.

Scroll down the screen or use the options in the top menu to see the Sunrise maps.

Nautide (10)

If you intend to photograph a seascape, it's essential that you know what time the tide rises or falls in the location.

My favorite tidal app is Nautide.

I like it because it gives a lot of very detailed information: high and low tides times, the water level (how much the water will rise or fall), daily tide charts, the tidal coefficient and the marine life activity among others.

Nautide relies on the data provided by the **National Ocean Service of the American NOAA** buoys, so you can choose from more than 10,000 buoys...

The downside is that if you want to plan weeks or months in advance, you'll need to purchase an annual data package.

The good news is that their website **tides4fishing** is completely free ;)

Nautide is available on **iOS** and **Android**.

Tide Charts Near Me (11)

What I like most about Tide Charts Near Me is that it offers tidal information with no time limitation. There's no need to buy a data package or pay for a premium version.

Its main graph shows the information very clearly and how the tide is going to rise and fall throughout the day and night.

You can also see the current tide level (meters and centimeters or feet and inches, depending on the system you prefer). And to make the information more visual, a small arrow points up or down as the tide rises or falls.

Tide Charts Near Me is available on **iOS** and **Android**.

My Lightning Tracker (12)

My Lightning Tracker is a fantastic application for monitoring lightning around the world in near real time. With a sleek, modern design, you can watch any electrical storm as it happens.

Its great advantage is that it shows storms and lightning all over the world, so there is no geographical limitation. In addition to this, you can follow all the storm information on the map to see where exactly it's happening. It also has a history of hot spots where lightning strikes most frequently.

And my favorite feature are the notifications that show up when there's a storm nearby so I can follow it live and photograph it.

My Lightning Tracker is available on **iOS** and **Android**.

My Aurora Forecast (13)

My Aurora Forecast is a very good application about Northern Lights.

Thanks to this application you can:

- Find out the current KP index and the probability of seeing an aurora borealis.
- View a list of the best locations to see a Northern Lights.
- View a map showing the intensity of aurora around the world, based on the auroras forecast from the US Space Weather Prediction Center (SWPC).
- Receive notifications when geomagnetic activity is expected to be high.

- Observe forecasts to be able to plan the capture of an aurora borealis (depending on weather conditions, of course).

My Aurora Forecast is available on **iOS** and **Android**.

PeakFinder (14)

PeakFinder is an application that helps you identify peaks, hiking trails and record your hikes or walks and create plans.

It runs a location option in the background (can be turned off) that automatically updates the peaks of a certain area so you can check an offline map at any time.

The background monitor also checks the peaks of the summits on a regular basis (more often when you're in the mountains), so that you can check the peaks that you have around you.

You can download the PeakFinder application on your mobile. But you can also use it through the website on your laptop and desktop computer.

Peak Finder is available on **iOS** and **Android**.

Section 13:

Don't waste another minute!

Wow...

I never thought I would write such a long guide to landscape photography.

But it's a subject that I'm passionate about and I wanted to share with you everything I've learned over the years.

I want you to become a great landscape photographer!

I'm convinced that with a little time and effort you'll go far.

And when you have a photo that you're proud of, don't leave it there, abandoned in a hard drive: share it with the rest of PhotoPillers!

Send it to the **PhotoPills Awards**, a contest that we organize at PhotoPills to reward the creativity of PhotoPillers like you and me.

It's a great source of inspiration and you can also win prizes if we select your photo.

And remember that if you have any questions or problems, you're not alone. I'm here to help you!

Leave your question or your suggestion in the comments section that you'll find at the end of this article and I'll answer you as soon as possible.

The most important thing for me is that you learn everything you need to get the landscape photography you have in mind.

And I'm sure you will get it much sooner than you think.

So let's get to it! Don't waste another minute!

Antoni Cladera is a landscape photographer with commitment to the environment. Artist of the Spanish Confederation of Photography and member of the Spanish Association of Nature Photographers (**AEFONA**). He's part of the PhotoPills Team.

Special thanks to **Sandra Vallaure**, a great photographer and friend, for her tremendous help in making this article possible.

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