LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY
TECHNIQUES, COMPOSITION, AND PROCESSING

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LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY TIPS AND TRICKS

- Wide angle lens desirable
  - 16-18 mm good focal length for APC-C sensor
  - Telephoto also produce excellent opportunities
- Operate on tripod
- Lowest practical ISO
  - Lower ISO provides lowest noise
- Shoot in RAW
  - Make an effort to learn to process RAW files
  - Greater control
WHAT IS A LANDSCAPE IMAGE?

- Get out in nature and shoot
- Landscape can take many forms
  - Wide angle expanses – ‘Grand Landscape’
  - Closeup macro views of miniature landscapes
  - Telephoto slices of broader area
  - Urban areas
• Maintain focus from foreground to background
  • Shoot with maximum aperture of f/11 to f/13
  • Focus about 1/3 into frame to insure no depth of field issues
• Use tripod and remote
  • Insures sharpest possible image
• Lowest ISO
• Shoot RAW!!!
• Shoot ‘Golden Hours’ when possible
• Images not necessarily limited to these hours, just more constrained
• Exposure to the right gives the largest dynamic range in final image
  • Darken later in post
• Use long lenses as well as wide
  • Look for small vignettes within larger landscape
FARM YOUR LOCATION
ZOOM IN TO FIND NEW PERSPECTIVE
COMPOSITION

- Standard techniques of leading lines etc. always apply
- Look to place an object in the foreground to help lead the viewing into the image
  - Provides scale for the viewer
  - Perspective
- Try to keep sky at approximately 1/3 of the image
- Closeup view of foreground object with wide angle lens gives different perspective
- Use different positions
  - Try low to the ground
FOREGROUND OBJECT ADDS INTEREST, PERSPECTIVE, AND AN ANCHOR FOR THE IMAGE
WIDE ANGLE LENSES EXAGGERATE THE FOREGROUND AND PROVIDE NEW PERSPECTIVE
ENHANCEMENTS FOR LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY

- Add depth to images to provide 3D feel
- Decide on subject for the image and draw viewer to that story
- Insure viewer doesn’t stop on one part of the image
  - Control luminosity
  - Use contrast and not just brightness to draw the eye
  - Darker areas can also draw the eye when coupled with contrast
- Use local adjustments to enhance
  - The eye is drawn to contrast as well as bright areas
  - Darkening areas can also be used to draw the eye because of contrast
- Try not to overuse saturation
  - Darkening areas with some color tends to saturate the colors without adding saturation
  - Vibrance will enhance colors in the midtone range
HOW TO ENHANCE YOUR LANDSCAPE IMAGES

- People are drawn to certain aspects of an image
  - Brightness
  - Color
  - People
  - Contrast
- Depth
- Luminosity
- Contrast
- All these can be done globally but more importantly *locally*
- Localized corrections can significantly improve images
BRIGHTNESS DRAWS YOUR EYE
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PROCESSING

• Landscape processing can go from simple to complex
• Darkening an image will enhance saturation in colors
• Applying simple exposure gradients to the top and bottom can add depth and color
• Local adjustments can add contrast and interest while leading the eye through the image the way you want them to see
• HDR can further expand possibilities
  • Expands dynamic range
  • Enhances contrast
  • Color interest through tone mapping
  • HDR can also flatten an image because of too much contrast applied everywhere
GRADIENT EXPOSURE TO ADD DEPTH

- A simple trick that can improve your images a great deal and is very quick
  - Especially easy in Lightroom
- To bring out color and detail in the sky apply a gradient that is brighter towards the center of the image and darker at the top
  - Leads you out of the frame
- To add depth to the foreground apply a gradient that is brighter at the bottom and darker towards the center
  - Leads you into the frame
Rocks have the red granite colors and there is a variety of detail and color in the sky.

Not being rendered by the exposure.
LIGHTROOM SCREEN SHOT: SKY GRADIENT
ACADIA TOWARDS SUNSET*
ADDED SKY GRADIENT AND TEMPERATURE ADJUSTMENTS

- True color in the sky coming out along with the cloud detail
- Temperature adjustments bringing some of the true reds out of the granite
HANDLING LARGE DYNAMIC RANGES

• Many times photographer faced with too large a dynamic range in a shot
  • Especially true for landscapes
• Multiple techniques to handle this issue
  • Use Neutral Density (ND) gradient filter to darken sky
  • Shoot in raw and generate two exposures that can be blended in Photoshop
  • HDR
GRADIENT ND FILTER

- Filter can be positioned in front of lens to darken the brighter portions of an image
  - Helps see details that might be present rather than hoping in post
- Same effect can be obtained with either multiple exposure or two renderings of the same image
LOCALIZED ADJUSTMENTS

• Lightroom, Photoshop and other programs have the ability to perform local adjustments to an image.

• Many times an image is helped by making small changes in a local area.
  • Increase contrast
  • Decrease exposure

• This aids in controlling the emphasis and showing the viewer the image you see.
LOCAL ADJUSTMENTS TO BRING EMPHASIS*
HDR IN THE LANDSCAPE

• Allows the use of wider dynamic range by the tonemapping of multiple images
• Best for landscapes with Aperture Priority
  • Fixed f/# means only the shutter speed is changed by the camera
• Tonemapping gives creative control over the mood of the picture
• I try to maintain somewhat natural
  • I will use Painterly preset in Photomatix Pro and dial back somewhat
• I feel further processing required after tonemapping
  • HDR produces detailed, high contrast image over the full image
  • Post processing allows the control of the local contrast to emphasize only what is desired
Basic exposure with final crop
Detail in clouds along with boat colors interest me
• Basic mapping is good start
• Your eye stops at the bright blue boat in the foreground without continuing into the image
Contrast added to the buildings at the back and up into the clouds
LIGHTROOM EXAMPLE
SUMMARY

• Shoot RAW!!!
• Start with f/11 to f/13 (or smaller) to achieve focus throughout image
  • Smaller aperture will give softer image
• Don’t be afraid to process the RAW file
• Decide on your subject and/or the story you want to tell
• Look for color and details in the image that might be hidden by the exposure
• Depth adds interest
• Think about local adjustment to further draw the viewers eye