



ON LOCATION KIRKJUFELL, ICELAND

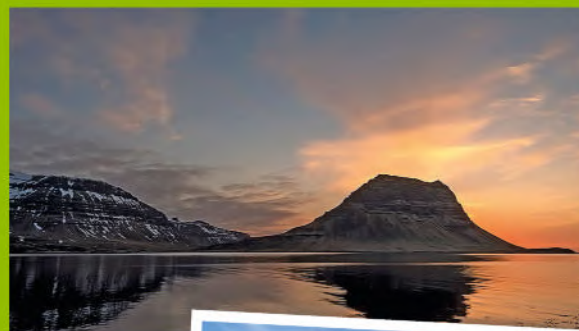
● This iconic mountain was on the top of our list of places to shoot in Iceland, and we had seen many images taken from the nearby waterfalls long before we went there. So this was the first place we headed to at sunrise – and we weren't disappointed. The waterfalls provided the perfect foreground interest for this image (top), and Kirkjufell is a perfect pointed mountain from this viewpoint. We spent an hour or two simply exploring these waterfalls, finding several different viewpoints.

We also wanted to shoot the mountain from different places, because it takes on a very different shape and character from the side. From these viewpoints, instead of

a pointed mountain, it becomes a softer, more rounded shape, while the water that surrounds it offers a different foreground to the waterfalls that are the more common viewpoint.

Because of the distances between these viewpoints, we couldn't capture them all in the dawn light. So after shooting at the waterfalls at sunrise, we spent a couple of hours exploring the area. This meant that we could come back to it at sunset – first shooting with the sun behind us lighting the mountain; then finally shooting it from the east, just as the sun set behind it.

Shooting from three widespread viewpoints has created very different images of this iconic mountain in Iceland



LAW 6

DON'T SHOOT FROM JUST ONE VIEWPOINT

Explore your location thoroughly and you might find the viewpoint everyone else wishes they'd shot from

After you've done your research and looked at previous images of the location, it's tempting to turn up and simply head straight for the viewpoint that has been shot many times before, or perhaps scout around but settle for the first viewpoint that you find that works. But there are usually many viewpoints that you can use, taking shots that

TOP TIP

If you're struggling for a new viewpoint, trying a different format like square or panoramic can help you get a new twist on a scene

offer a fresh take on a familiar subject. Finding the right spot may be simply a matter of spending a few minutes walking around the location, trying to assess all of the possible viewpoints, and using different elements in the foreground or background. It may also be a more time-consuming process where you have to travel around a broader area

and assess several different spots. This second approach is more common if you're shooting a large feature such as a mountain or a lake, where the possible viewpoints are some distance apart. Remember that this extra time and distance may also mean that you may get to all areas in a single visit, particularly if you want to capture sunrise or a sunset.

LAW 7

DON'T RELY ON THE RULE OF THIRDS

Steer clear of rigid guidelines and learn how the landscape and your creative choices can complement each other

The classic rules of image composition are staples of all photography genres. The rule of thirds (which suggests dividing your frame into a 3x3 grid, then placing your focal point where grid lines meet) is perhaps the one most commonly applied to landscape photography. But in the real world, guidelines like this are more like handy suggestions than hard and fast rules – and if you rigidly stick to one composition, your shots can end up

looking similar and slightly boring. The other big problem with rules is that nature doesn't always follow them. The landscape in front of you may not want to fit into a nice, regular rule-of-thirds composition. The key is to allow the subject to influence the composition, rather than trying to force the subject to conform to the rule.

GO FIFTY-FIFTY

We often find ourselves placing the

TOP TIP

With wide-angle lenses, you can get some distortion when placing the horizon close to the top or bottom of the frame. Use the lens correction tools in your raw-editing software

horizon in the middle of the image, for example. Sometimes it fits there much better than on one of the thirds, particularly when shooting reflections or other symmetrical subjects. We'll also use it if we want the image to appear calm and static, reinforcing the use of long exposures or shooting in misty conditions.

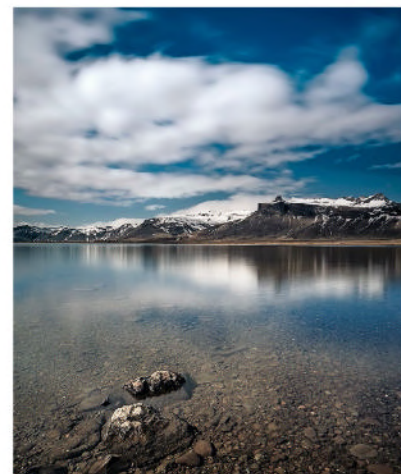
At other times, we'll place the horizon much higher or lower in the frame than the classic composition rules would suggest. The position isn't set in stone, but we find an 80:20 split often works. For example, if the sky is the most interesting part of the scene we'll place the horizon so the land takes around 20 per cent of the image, and the sky 80 per cent. Alternatively, if the sky isn't that dramatic, and the foreground is the main focal point in the shot, we'll reverse the proportions so the land occupies 80 per cent of the frame.

“Allow the subject to influence the composition, rather than trying to force the subject to conform to the rule”

ON LOCATION
ILE DE L'ABER,
BRITTANY

● For this sunset shoot we were hoping for some cloud to appear on the horizon, but the closer the sun got to the horizon, the clearer the sky became. Instead, to make the most of the textures and colours in the foreground rocks and water, we composed images where these took up most of the frame. On some images we included some more of the sky, but we knew that we would crop these later to a squarer format, and remove most of the sky.

When the sky is clear and lacking interest, it's best to allow the landscape to dominate the frame



Placing the horizon in the middle to divide the frame in half has emphasised the calmness present in this scene



Even with a central horizon to showcase the reflection, you can position foreground objects using the rule of thirds



ON LOCATION GRAAKULA, ICELAND

● The dark mound rising up was the obvious focal point for this scene. But when we tried a shot including some foreground interest and the surrounding landscape, there were far too many things distracting attention away from the hill. So we started the process of simplifying elements.

We went to the shoreline and used the lake in the foreground, still composing the image so that the hill was the only element on the horizon. This less crowded composition is much stronger than the initial image.



Relocating from a busy hillside full of distracting detail (above) to the simpler shoreline of the lake (left) has produced a much stronger image

LAW 8

DON'T INCLUDE TOO MUCH IN THE SHOT

Remember that less is more, and you'll draw attention towards what matters most in your shot

Creating a strong, striking landscape composition is often as much about what you leave out of the frame as what you include. When you're faced with a stunning landscape, it's often difficult to decide what to exclude, so use a simple procedure to help out.

First, decide which part of the scene is essential to the composition. This is often the feature or subject that first made you stop and consider taking a shot, such as a mountain

TOP TIP

We always recommend using a tripod, but it's usually best to do hand-held shots to decide on the initial framing. Use your tripod once you've decided on the basic viewpoint

peak, a tree or even the colours in the foreground.

Using this main subject, start to include other elements, usually one at a time, to see if they will fit into the composition without detracting from the main subject. With practice, you

can do this without taking any photos, but one of the benefits of digital cameras is that you can try out different compositions, then scroll through the images on your camera's rear display to decide which ones work.

Keep checking that all of the elements of the scene work together, and that the main element you identified at the start is still what your eye is drawn to.

“Creating a striking composition is often as much about what you leave out of the frame as what you include”



Graphic subjects and overcast skies are perfect for shooting in black and white

LAW 9

DON'T THINK ONLY IN COLOUR

Learn the landscape situations that lend themselves to monochrome, and add a new twist to a favourite spot

There are two distinct weather and lighting conditions that prompt us to think in black and white. The first is a heavy, cloudy sky, which tends to produce very monochromatic results anyway. The second is when there are fluffy clouds in a bright, blue sky.

SEE FROM BOTH SIDES

These two conditions produce very different results, and also need different approaches to produce the final image. The easier is when there's blue sky, cloud and a

landscape bathed in light. Here, all you need to do is make sure that you've captured the full range of tones, and the black-and-white conversion is easy. We use a preset red filter conversion, available in Lightroom or Photoshop, to darken the blues and increase the contrast.

When shooting in heavy cloud, things are trickier. We often use an ND grad filter to darken the sky. After converting the image to black and white, you have to do a lot of dodging and burning to lighten and darken specific areas.

"There are two distinct weather and lighting conditions that prompt us to think in black and white"

ON LOCATION SUMMER FIELD, SOMERSET

● Shooting a simple field of crops during the middle of a summer's day is the exact opposite of the type of landscape that we normally shoot. But it's good to give yourself a new challenge.

With the textures and shapes in the wind-blown crops and the bright white clouds against the blue sky, we immediately thought of a black-and-white image when we found the viewpoint for this shot. To maximise the contrast between cloud and sky, we used a polariser when we took the photo. The black-and-white conversion was very simple. We used a red-filter preset in Lightroom to add even more contrast to the sky, then used the Adjustment Brush to add contrast to the crops.



In colour, this midday scene lacked the drama and detail we were looking for



Converting to black and white has emphasised the texture and tones

TOP TIP

You don't use real coloured filters when shooting in monochrome, but you can get the same effects on many cameras by selecting the filter options in the Monochrome picture style

LAW 10

*DON'T BE AFRAID
TO REVISIT LOCATIONS*

To get the ultimate landscape shot, keep going back and use the knowledge you've earned from your previous visits

We're always looking for new places to find insight and inspiration, but landscape photography is about more than simply ticking boxes off a checklist of locations. The way that light, seasons and weather change a scene is one of the most fundamental aspects of landscape photography. It's almost impossible to capture many of these amazing sights if you only visit a location once, then move on to the next one on your list.

TOP TIP

Returning to a location isn't only useful for areas you visit regularly. Even when we're away, we often visit a location two or three times during the stay, to get the best shot we can

We often return to locations – both close to home and in areas that we visit regularly – to learn more about how the lighting and weather combine to lend a different look to the landscape.

SAVE TIME

Returning to a location means you can spend less time researching the area, although it's still good to look out for viewpoints, compositions and subjects you might have missed. 📷



On this visit to Snowdonia, the conditions were almost perfect, with the soft light of the rising sun and some mist hanging in the valley



We've visited this spot many times, but the changes in the weather and lighting mean that no two shots have turned out the same

ON LOCATION SNOWDONIA

● We've lost count of the number of times that we've walked the same paths in North Wales to areas that we've been shooting over many years. Each time we go there's something new to discover and try to capture. We first explored this viewpoint from Pen yr Ole Wen during the day, even though we knew that it would be at its best at sunrise. In typically changeable Welsh weather, we still managed to get a few shots with a stormy sky behind the mountains. Since then, we've tried to revisit the location as often as possible, usually to catch the dawn light, and have been rewarded with many different types of weather and lighting. It's a bit like visiting an old friend: you don't know what sort of mood they are going to be in, but it's always good to see them again.

