

ULTIMATE GUIDE TO PHOTOGRAPHY

Digital Photo[®]

BEST EDITORS' CHOICE GEAR OF THE YEAR

35 MUST-HAVE PRODUCTS
PICKED BY OUR EDITORS

PORTRAITS

CAPTURE UNIQUE IMAGES
THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

TRAVEL

THINK LIKE AN ARTIST
NOT LIKE A TOURIST

LANDSCAPE

APPRECIATING
NATURE'S MAJESTY

SPORTS


MASTER THESE SKILLS
AND WIN THE GOLD

MACRO

BIG TRICKS FOR
LITTLE SUBJECTS

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WINTER 2017



LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY

WITH THESE TECHNIQUES AND GEAR, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO CAPTURE ANYTHING,
FROM A LOCAL PARK TO A MAJESTIC MOUNTAIN RANGE, JUST LIKE THE PROS

TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN MATIASH

It may look like this sort of scene would be hidden deep in a forest in some faraway land. In truth, the Boardman Tree Farm is located right off a major highway in Oregon. Or, rather, it was located there. Sadly, it has been slated to be cleared and cut down to make room for a dairy farm.

LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY

Can you imagine all of the jaw-dropping photos you've seen in magazines and online of this planet? Think about it for a minute. The diversity in ecology and landscape that our planet offers is so magnificent and varied, it's stupefying. And how lucky are we as photographers to have opportunities in travel and technology—unlike any time in history—to access even the most remote locations and photograph them using devices that can literally fit in your pocket?

Fortunately, there are plenty of readily accessible natural areas for landscape photographers to visit and, in many

cases, capture stunning photos of, if you're prepared and have a little bit of luck on your side. In other words, if you're not prepared, you're simply increasing your chances of missing a great shot. The good news is that there are plenty of things you can do to maximize your chances of nailing that beautiful sunset...or waterfall...or deer-in-the-meadows photo.

DUE DILIGENCE AND ONLINE RECONNAISSANCE

Dr. Louis Pasteur, inventor of pasteurization, has a very meaningful quote attributed to him: "Fortune favors the prepared

mind." Now, while Dr. Pasteur may have been referring to the field of scientific observation, you can easily apply it to landscape photography. Before setting out on a nature shoot—especially if it's at an unfamiliar location—I always take time for some "online reconnaissance."

In the intro of this story, I referred to our luck for having access to amazing technologies that can make our jobs as landscape photographers easier. One such piece of technology is the mobile phone and its use of GPS. Let's say I'm planning to photograph the sunset at a specific location, like Death Valley National Park's Racetrack Playa,

for example. To help me prepare for the shoot, I'll research some of the more obvious things, like weather forecasts and driving routes, along with any potential hazard warnings in the region. But then I can take it a step further by using apps like PhotoPills (photopills.com) and The Photographer's Ephemeris (photoephemeris.com) not only to predict but also visualize the path of the sun (and moon) and plot its intended location at anytime of day. With this information readily available, I can reliably position myself in an ideal location in anticipation of the sunset.

Another favorite online reconnaissance

tool is Google Maps (maps.google.com). The sheer amount of geographic and topological information available on Google Maps is staggering. On a recent trip to Iceland, I wanted a stronger grasp of the area I intended to photograph at sunset. It was important to know whether there would be any mountains or other obstacles that could impede how much time I'd have before the sun would become obstructed. By putting in a bit of time exploring with

Google Maps, I had a much better understanding of the area and had a much more precise idea of where I would want to go.

PROTECTING YOUR GEAR

If there's one variable that will change things up on you no matter how much due diligence you put in, it's the weather. While weather forecasts are worth spending time researching, they're not an excuse for being caught off-guard. If the

GEAR

With all the natural beauty out there for photographers to capture, the last thing you want is to get to a location and realize that you don't have the right gear necessary to get the best photo possible. And while the camera and lens you bring plays a huge role in that endeavor, it's also important to factor in other variables, like weather and the hiking that's often necessary to get to a particular spot. Fortunately, there's no shortage of gear that can help make your next landscape shoot a successful one.

CAMERAS



SONY A7R II

If there's one thing that landscape photographers love to ogle over with regard to cameras, it's resolution. The more megapixels, the better. In some cases, that's very true, especially if you need to apply heavy cropping to your photo or intend on printing it on a gigantic billboard. So, if resolution is a priority, you should take a close look at the Sony a7R II full-frame mirrorless camera. In fact, the "R" in the model name stands for Resolution. It packs a 42.4-megapixel sensor with 5-axis in-body image stabilization and is capable of producing some truly stunning results.

Price: \$2,899. **Website:** sony.com



NIKON D850

The D850 is one of the camera manufacturer's newest additions to its DSLR lineup, and it looks like it was built to handle some serious outdoor conditions. Boasting a giant 45.7-megapixel sensor with a 153-point AF system, this camera offers the robustness that any outdoor photographer would be looking for. And, should you be the sort of photographer who also enjoys dabbling in video, you can record in 4K UHD, as well.

Price: \$3,296. **Website:** nikonusa.com

LENSES



SONY FE 12-24MM F/4 G

Landscape photography is a genre where you typically can't go wrong with using an ultra-wide-angle lens. With a max wide focal length of 12mm for this lens, there's a good chance that you'll be able to fit just about anything that's standing in front of you within your frame. It also affords some truly unique compositional opportunities, especially if you choose to fill the frame with your primary subject.

Price: \$1,699. **Website:** sony.com



CANON EF 70-200MM F/2.8L IS II USM

Coming in at the other end of the focal-length spectrum is Canon's 70-200mm telephoto zoom lens. The reason why this particular lens is found in so many landscape photographers' bags is partly because of the extended reach that you can get and because of the beautiful compression that you can get, especially at 200mm. This helps provide a sense of scale and depth, which can be critical in certain types of landscape scenery.

Price: \$1,949. **Website:** usa.canon.com

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LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY

forecasts call for mild temps with scattered clouds, you should still be prepared for the chance of heavy showers. Fortunately, as someone who has spent years photographing in the Pacific Northwest, I've found dealing with condensation has become second nature. It was almost a given that rain would be an element I'd have to factor in when on a shoot.

If you find yourself in a situation where you're combating water—be it from rain or from the spray of a waterfall—your focus should be on locking in your composition and focus. When I'm in this type of

situation, I'm not really concerned about the spray collecting on my lens. I'm using the time to get everything dialed in. Once I have everything set, I use a clean microfiber cloth to dry the surface of the lens and fire away. I can't stress enough the importance of using clean microfiber cloths, as dirty ones will only end up blending oily residue and smudges in with the water.

One tip that I recommend is to set your camera on a tripod and use a 2-second delay. After you've composed and obtained focus, clean the front of your

lens with a microfiber cloth and keep it covering the lens until you're ready to shoot. Once you're ready, press the shutter button and remove the cloth after a second. This helps reduce the amount of time that the lens is exposed to spray or rain.

USE OBSTACLES TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

I'm sure it goes without saying that most photographers strive for a clean photo, right? If you're photographing a mountainous vista, you'd likely prefer not to

have a gigantic tree trunk cutting through a portion of the frame. Whether we're contorting in some undiscovered yoga position or have our tripods defying gravity with the way they're balanced, we go to great lengths to remove obstacles. In some cases, it's completely warranted, but I'd also argue that there's something to keeping obstacles in your frame.

If we use my experiences photographing in the Pacific Northwest again, dealing with obstacles becomes as second nature as dealing with the rain. I can't begin to count the number of instances where

my composition was impacted because of some fallen trees or a group of gigantic boulders. The way I saw it, I could either abandon the shot altogether or get creative with incorporating those elements into the overall composition. In almost every case, I went with the latter option. In some cases, I've gone from doing whatever I could to avoid an obstacle to using it as my primary focal point. In those situations, I find that filling the frame with that obstacle and getting lower to the ground helps create a more unique composition. That's why I tend to gravitate to ultra-wide-angle lenses for landscape photography.

PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR FOREGROUND

Let's say you're on a landscape shoot and your intent is to photograph the sunset. You know where you're going, you have the right gear with you, and the weather is all but guaranteed to be great for the setting sun. So how are you going to capture it? Sure, you could just fill the frame with the sun and call it a day, but you're here to convey the beauty of the landscape in front of you, right? You also want to give your viewer a sense of place and depth. One of the best ways to do so is to find some strong foreground elements. That's not to say that you need to be right next to whatever is in your foreground. Rather, it's important to pay attention to what you'll use to accompany the actual sunrise or sunset.

In some cases, I like to use the natural surroundings to frame the sun, as I've done when photographing Mesa Arch in Canyonlands National Park. This is also an opportune time to capture a sunburst. To get a sunburst, you'll want to close your aperture to $f/16$ or smaller. The actual presence and quality of the burst depends on the lens that you're using and how many blades make up its aperture. Fortunately, there are plenty of online resources to help you visualize a lens' capabilities for creating a sunburst effect. DP

BRIAN MATIASH is a photographer, author and educator, and an ambassador for a number of companies including Sony and Zeiss. You can find more of his work at brianmatiash.com and on Instagram @brianmatiash.

GEAR

ACCESSORIES



WINE COUNTRY CAMERA 100MM FILTER HOLDER KIT WITH CIRCULAR POLARIZER

Next to the camera and lens, one of the most important accessories a landscape photographer needs is a solid filter kit. I've often said that I never leave the house without at least a circular polarizer. Fortunately, Wine Country Camera took a look at the existing options on the market and decided to reimagine how a filter system should work for photographers. With an integrated circular polarizer and beautifully ornate rotation dial, you no longer have to worry about reaching in front of your lens to rotate the filter. It also smartly includes a recess for the neutral-density filter vaults, creating a light-tight environment that eliminates light leak between filters.

Price: \$449. **Website:** winecountrycamera.com/shop/holder-kit



REALLY RIGHT STUFF TVC-34L TRIPOD WITH BH-55 LR BALLHEAD

If there's one thing that I'm quite certain about of my Really Right Stuff tripod system, it's that it will outlast me. The TVC-34L Tripod with BH-55 LR Ballhead strikes a balance between lightness—thanks to its carbon-fiber design—and performance. It's not uncommon for landscape photographers to use massive lenses—in focal length and weight—and this tripod can handle just about anything you mount on it. More importantly, its maximum height of 68.8 inches when fully extended allows you to position your camera in ways that most tripods simply couldn't support.

Price: \$1,587. **Website:** reallyrightstuff.com



MINDSHIFT GEAR ROTATION180° PROFESSIONAL 38L

It's not simply the capacity of the MindShift Gear Rotation180° Professional that impresses me. It's about how it's designed for you to access your gear. Thanks to its unique rotating backpack, you can easily access spare lenses, camera bodies or other accessories without having to take the bag off your shoulders. This is supremely useful if you're standing in the middle of a creek or balancing along the side of a hill. And with a total capacity of 38 liters, it has plenty of space to store all the gear you'd need for an outdoor shoot.

Price: \$389. **Website:** mindshiftgear.com



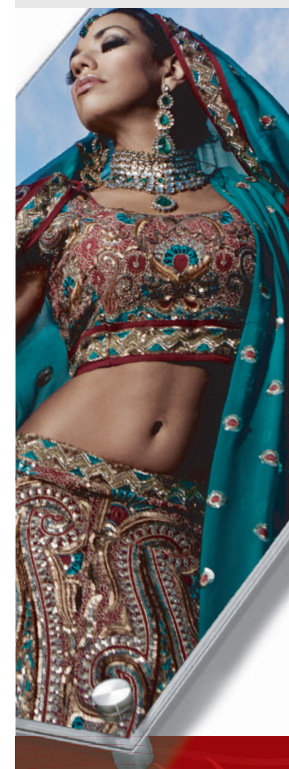
THINK TANK HYDROPHOBIA RAIN COVERS

While today's cameras and lenses are generally built with some weather resistance, very few are robust enough to be totally waterproof. The last thing you want is to damage or destroy your gear due to a lack of weather protection while on a shoot. That's where Think Tank Photo's Hydrophobia Rain Covers come into play. They're designed to wrap around your camera and lens, protecting them from condensation, while also providing openings for your hands to reach in. Given the amount spent on cameras and lenses, adding this to your accessory kit should be a no-brainer.

Price: Starts at \$149.75
Website: thinktankphoto.com

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