

## Landscape Photography Notes

### The Mechanics

- You'll need a tripod, preferably one with a ball head, to get razor sharp images. If you don't have time to set up the tripod try Burst Mode; one of the shots may be sharp.
- If you use a cable release, or the shorter time delay release on the camera, you can reduce the inevitable camera shake from pressing the shutter release.
- With the camera on the tripod turn off the image stabilization feature – it's not needed and in fact might add a slight blur to the picture.
- Don't use the Auto (snapshot) mode, use manual focus. Many cameras have a fast zoom feature to assist the photographer.
- Select Aperture Priority mode and use a sharp (small) aperture, f5.6 or a higher number.
- Set the camera to a low ISO value (80 or 100) to reduce noise.
- A Circular Polarizer filter is essential. Rotate the front ring clockwise (facing the lens) until you get the desired effect.
- The Neutral Density gradient filters (recommended in many photography books) are not essential; and in fact may be eliminated using Bracket Mode on the camera and combining parts of the picture by blending in Photoshop Elements.

### Shoot the picture

- Professional landscape photographers say that the most important single factor in getting a good landscape photograph is the quality of the light. Therefore follow the Golden Rule: Before and After Sunrise – Before and After Sunset.
- That's why you need a tripod. There isn't much light before sunrise and after sunset resulting in a long exposure time – longer than is possible hand-holding a camera.
- First find the “point of interest” (tree, mountain, mesa, flowers, etc.) then forget about it and consider the composition alone. The point of interest will be at one of the intersections of the “Rule-of-Thirds”. Your camera view-finder may have a graphical view grid showing this.
- Don't put the horizon at the center. (Rule-of-Thirds again). Keep the horizon straight Turn on the grid in the camera and line up with the horizon.
- Avoid the “Walk Up Shot”, the snapshot. Try different angles and compositions, Look for framing objects in the foreground.
- Avoid the “Blinkies” (highlight warning). If the camera's histogram is available don't let the right end “hit the wall”; reduce the exposure.
- For the sunset shot set the exposure (shutter release halfway down) above the sun, then move the camera.
- Cloudy skies add interest to the picture. On an overcast day minimize the sky by placing the horizon near the top of the picture.

## Some Digital Photography Terms

### **Aperture**

Size of variable opening in the lens diaphragm that admits light. Controls depth of field.

### **Bracketing**

Taking additional photos of the same scene at exposures half an f-stop or more over and under the first shot.

### **Contrast**

The difference between the brightest and darkest areas of a photograph.

### **Depth of Field**

The distance between the nearest and farthest objects that appear in sharp focus.

### **Digital Zoom**

Camera function that digitally magnifies the center of a frame.

### **Dynamic Range**

The range between the darkest parts of an image and the lightest ones. A wide range makes it difficult to expose for both dark and light areas.

### **F-Stop**

A measure of the camera's aperture. The higher the number, the smaller the aperture. Controls depth of field.

### **Histogram**

A bar graph showing relative number of pixels in different brightness ranges in a digital image.

### **ISO**

International Organization for Standardization. In digital photography, rating of light sensitivity of a camera's sensor, with higher numbers more sensitive.

### **JPEG**

Joint Photographic Experts Group. A format for storing images that uses algorithms to compress digital data.

### **Macro**

Camera mode for taking extreme close-ups of small objects.

### **Megapixel**

A million pixels. Used to describe the capacity of a camera's sensor. More megapixels equals more data.

### **Metadata**

Technical information automatically attached to each image by a digital camera.

### **Optical Zoom**

Camera lens function that optically magnifies the center of a frame.

### **Panorama**

A picture offering an exceptionally wide field of view.

### **Red-eye**

Light from a camera's flash reflected by the retinas in a person's eyes. Easily corrected by editing software.

### **Resolution**

A measure of an image such as 300 dots per inch, that determines the clarity and sharpness of a printed photograph.

### **Sensor**

An electronic chip containing pixels that are sensitive to light. The larger the sensor and the more pixels, the more information the sensor collects.

### **Shutter lag**

Delay between depressing the shutter button and exposing the image.

### **Shutter speed**

Speed of shutter as it opens and closes to allow light to hit the sensor. Expressed in fractions of a second, such as 1/60, 1/250.

### **SLR**

Single Lens Reflex camera, which has a mirror between the lens and the sensor to show through the viewfinder what the sensor will record.

### **Strobe**

Stroboscopic lamp. An electronic flash unit that produces an intense, short-duration burst of light.

### **White Balance**

A control used to balance the color of the image in the scene's color so that the picture looks natural.