

## THE *BEFORE WE BEGIN* GUIDE TO GREAT LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY

Before we begin I'm going to assume that you have a few things, namely a camera, a tripod and an idea of what you want to achieve.

Before we begin there are a few things you need to remember. Landscape Photographers are the pinnacle of the photography world; they are actively involved in saving the planet and have been known to camp in one place for years living on lichen and rabbit droppings in the quest for the perfect photo.

Before we begin I am also going to assume that your camera has a bulb setting and is capable of a four hour exposure.

Before we begin, you will also need to understand that you have to be capable and willing to walk at least a quarter of a mile to your location.

Before we begin I am going to presuppose that you have in your head the list of hallowed locations. If you don't know them then you are not ready to take your first steps as a serious landscape photographer. If you do not know them then you will need to use the definitive work, 'Google Images' and spend many minutes memorizing their names. As a guide – most of them are North of Birmingham and West of Bristol.

Before we begin I will take it as read that you have a set of Lee Graduated Neutral Density Filters and if yours are not made by Lee you are able to disguise them in your camera bag or never discuss the subject in company.

Before we begin you will need to super glue a wide angle lens to your camera. This will prevent lens changing accidents should you forget that you are a landscape photographer.

Before we begin you need to know that the word Photoshop is banned and that anybody claiming knowledge of how it works will be shot at dawn....unless it's a decent sunrise, then you will shot after breakfast.

Are you ready – then we'll begin.

You are about to embark on the mystical art of landscape photography. A craft so complicated and involved that you will become the most spiritual of beings and yet look like you are the most innocent of ramblers. You will evolve mathematical equations for solving exposure problems so complex that only your brain alone will be capable of achieving them. You will learn to say ND Grad so that it slips from your lips like the most beautiful of prose and you will learn to gaze upon a new ND Grad as though Michelangelo himself had crafted it from the fossilised sweat of a Unicorn for surely it will have cost the same.

You will curse the central horizon, you will laugh at wedding photographers and you will wet your pants when snow is forecast and laugh at anybody unlucky enough to live in Milton Keynes, Northampton or Essex for surely no landscape photographer would ever admit to enduring such places.

You will lust after a Land Rover in the sure knowledge that it would cut down the quarter mile walk to a few yards.

You will encounter HDR (High Dynamic Range) Photography. You will agonise for hours about whether you dare use it or not when the answer is simple. Check your MP3 player. If it is full of Pink Floyd, Clannad and Jethro Tull, then HDR is not for you. If you not know what an MP3 player is then HDR will never be for you.

You will at some point claim to have 1 – Met Joe Cornish 2 – Know Joe Cornish 3 – Have seen Joe Cornish in one of the Hallowed Locations. (if you a reading this and saying ‘Who is Joe Cornish?’, then it is time to take up wedding photography.). You will in due course come to refer to Joe Cornish as Joe or JC and at least once in your life make the pilgrimage to Northallerton.

You will fondly remember Velvia, even though you are unsure exactly what it is or was. Do not worry – Velvia is part of the Landscape Photography Collective Memory. Dropping ‘Wow, that looks so like Velvia’ into the appraisal of an image now and then will be just fine.

And finally – you will follow the code of the Landscape Photographer – ‘Take nothing but photographs, leave nothing but footprints and a small pile of cigarette butts.