



Shoot for the Moon

Monthly news and tips from Landscape Photographer
Gill Moon

February 2020 Vol 2 - Seascapes

Hello

and welcome to the second edition of 'Shoot for the Moon'

This month I will be talking about seascapes.

Winter is the perfect season for capturing moody images on the coast. The ever changing weather, from winter storms to calm foggy days, offer endless possibilities for photography. In this edition I offer some tips on taking images by the coast and I share some work from other photographers who have inspired me with their seascape images.

I hope you will find this interesting and informative. I am always keen to receive feedback so please get in touch if you have anything you would like to share.

Remember to aim high, be inspired and shoot for the moon! Thank you and happy photographing

Gill

If you would like to get in touch please email me at gill@gillmoon.com

Capturing winter seascapes

Winter offers a fantastic opportunity to capture moody and atmospheric seascape photographs. The success of these images often depends on matching the weather with the right location. Even on flat grey days it is possible to come away with compelling photographs if you select the most appropriate place to shoot.

Rocky coastlines are great on windy days when the waves are crashing and the atmosphere is moody while the shingle coastlines of the East Coast may suit calmer days when the shape and form of the coastline can be better emphasised.

Piers, groynes and other coastal structures are fantastic for adding additional interest to a seascape shot. These features can be enhanced by the use of long exposures or by slowing the shutter speed just long enough to introduce some texture into the water. Lighthouses or breakwaters work well for freezing motion on rough days when the waves come crashing ashore.

When shooting winter seascapes there are a number of considerations to take into account.

Choose your location

Select your location with the weather and tides in mind. Some locations will suit rough weather while others will be more suitable to calm conditions. Think about the type of image you would like to make given the weather and tidal conditions and plan your trip accordingly.

Check Tide Tables

Make sure you are aware of what the tides are doing at all times. It is very easy to misjudge situations or get so engrossed in what you are doing that you don't notice the state of the sea. There are numerous tide table apps available. I use 'My tide times' which is a free app. It gives you the tidal information for your nearest locations along with the sunrise and

sunset times, the moon phases and times of the moon rise and set.

Use a Tripod

Invest in a sturdy tripod and make sure to push it well into the sand if you are using it in the sea. Remember to wash your tripod well in fresh water after a shoot as salt water is very damaging to equipment.

Composition

Think about your composition and look for elements that guide the viewers eye through the frame. Isolating subjects in part of the frame also works well with seascapes and can be combined with a slow shutter speed to create a minimalist effect.

Sometimes the shape of the coastline can be just as compelling as the features within it. The image below was taken at Shingle Street and is all about shape and form. I used a slow shutter speed to blur the water and then converted the image to black and white in post processing to accentuate the shape of the beach.



Shingle Street - 4.1 second exposure at F16, ISO 100, 0.6 ND grad and 6 stop ND filter.

This is a similar shot taken at the same location where I have used the exposed shingle on the tide line to guide the viewers eye through the frame towards the cottage on the far right.



Shingle Street - 1/320 second exposure, F14, ISO 400, handheld.

Look for different viewpoints

Southwold Pier must be one of the most photographed locations on the Suffolk Coast and images are often captured using the groynes on either side as foreground interest. The image below was taken from a high vantage point and shows the granite groynes amid much swirling water. This image really focuses on the pier and doesn't give much of an impression of what the rocks are like.



Southwold Pier - 8 seconds at F16, ISO 100, manual, 0.6 grad ND filter and 6 stop ND filter.

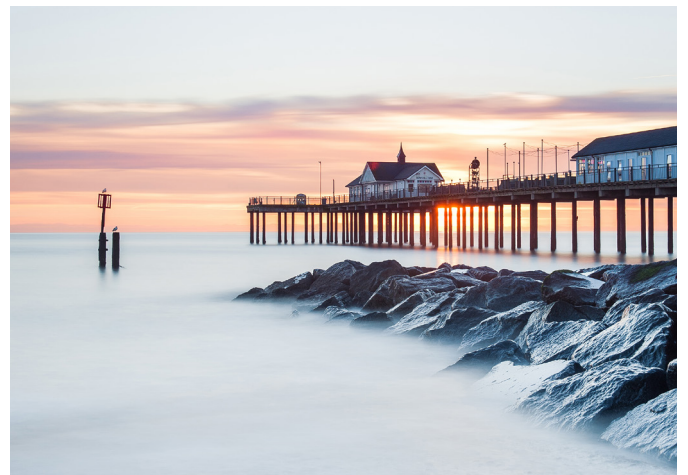


Southwold Pier - 6 seconds at F16, ISO 100, manual mode. 0.6 ND grad and 6 stop ND filter.

By changing my viewpoint and setting my tripod up on the rocks I was able to create an image that focused much more on the rocks highlighting their texture. The pier really became the background to this shot.

Use shutter speed creatively

Select a fast shutter speed to freeze movement. Crashing waves and turbulent seas work well with a shutter speed that is fast enough to render the action crisply without any blurring. Use a slow shutter speed to create minimalist images or an ethereal effect. If I am looking to achieve a milky effect with the water I will probably choose a 10 stop ND filter to try and achieve an exposure of 1 - 2 minutes. Bulb mode will allow you to use shutter speeds longer than 30 seconds.



Southwold Pier - 50 second exposure at F8 ISO 200, matrix metering. 44mm focal length. 0.6 ND hard grad and 10 stop ND filter.

Add texture

Add streaks to the foreground of a shot by capturing the movement of the retreating waves. Select a shutter speed of around 0.5 - 5 seconds depending upon the force of the wave and fire the shutter just as the wave is on the turn. This is really a process of trial and error but it can produce some really investing shots creating lines to lead the viewers eye into the image.



Bawdsey Coast - 1.6 second exposure at F16, ISO 100, aperture priority, 0.6 ND hard grad

Time of day

Shoot at sunrise or sunset for the best colours. A set of ND graduated filters are invaluable and will really improve your image making.

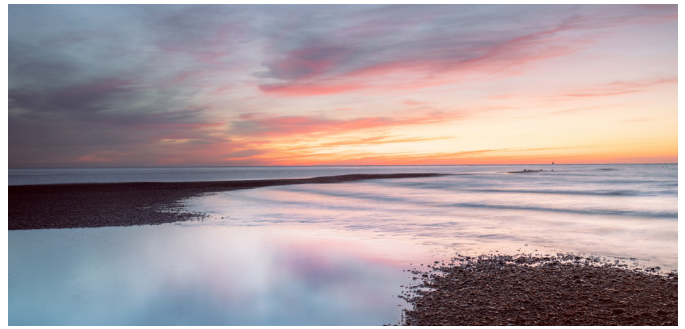
ND grads come in very hard, hard, medium and soft forms which refers to the transition between the dark and light parts of the filter. They also come in different intensities (light stops) including 0.3 (1 stop), 0.6 (2 stops), 0.9 (3 stops), and 1.2 (4 stops).

I use Lee filters but there are lots of different makes on the market. When buying a filter set remember that you get what you pay for and expensive lenses with high quality glass deserve equally high quality filters to avoid compromising the colour and quality of the final image.

Lee Filters leefilters.com

Kase Filters kasefilters.com

Nisi Filters en.nisioptics.com



Creative Techniques

Coastal locations work very well with creative techniques such as ICM (Intentional Camera Movement) and multiple exposure.

ICM can be used to create dreamy looking images with a painterly feel. Slight horizontal movements with the camera whilst the shutter is open will blur the landscape features slightly whilst still retaining some of the forms and shapes. The more movement applied to the camera the more abstract the image will be. You will usually need to use a filter to slow the shutter speed enough to allow for the camera to be moved with the shutter open. Anything over 0.5 second will create some blur.

In camera multiple exposures can be used to incorporate texture into an image and can be used instead of slow shutter speeds to blur the water and give a sense of movement. To achieve this effect you will need to take 3 or more images using a tripod to ensure that any permanent features such as rocks or groynes remain sharp.



Bawdsey Beach - a combination of multiple exposure and ICM with the aim of trying to produce a ghostly image with just enough blurring to retain some detail in the main elements.

Look for details

Whatever coastline you are standing on it will have some amazing details which can be used to add interest to the foreground of your images or can form the main focus of your photograph.

It was the light falling on the ripples in the sand that caught my eye in the image below. I tried to arrange these so that they lead the eye into the image towards the sea and the sunrise.



Bawdsey Beach 3 second exposure at F16, ISO 100, 0.9 ND grad and 6 stop ND filter.

The next image was taken in Anglesey looking down on the beach from the adjacent hillside. The patterns in the sand are formed as the tide retreats and are only really visible from above. I included a couple of people on the beach for a sense of scale.



Llanddona Beach 1/2500 second at F13, ISO 1600 handheld on 300mm.

Focus in on smaller elements

Shooting at the coast is not always about the wide view. Try using a zoom lens and focus in on the waves or a small area of the beach. Look for sand patterns, pebbles or colourful rocks. Focus on seashells, limpets, marram grass or seaweed. Small details are fascinating and shouldn't be overlooked.



Sand Patterns - 1/250 exposure, F14, ISO 400, handheld



Edge of a wave - 1/320 second at F14, ISO 400, handheld



The late evening sun catching the marram grass on the dunes at Walberswick beach 1/4 second exposure at F16, ISO 100

Techniques

Long Exposure

Long exposures are ideal for coastal environments. Here is my quick guide to getting started with long exposure photography.

1. Find a suitable location. Look for elements in the water or shapes that can be enhanced by blurring the movement of the water.
2. Set up a tripod and frame your composition.
3. Attach your cable release and filter holder to the camera. Add a ND grad filter if using.
4. In Aperture priority select your aperture, focus on the scene, lock your focus by switching from auto focus to manual and take a test shot. Check your histogram Note the exposure time.

Post Processing



When composing your shot think about the kind of image you want to make and what type of post processing may be required. Will the shot work better in a horizontal or portrait orientation or will it be better as a square or a panorama? Will it be more atmospheric in black and white or colour and are there areas that will benefit from individual post processing attention.

I took this image at Shingle Street and really wanted to focus on the curved shapes of the

5. Add a ND filter - this will either be a 6 stop, 10 stop or 15 stop depending upon the length of exposure and amount of blurring that you want to achieve.

6. Switch the camera to Manual and select bulb in the shutter speed, don't change any of the other settings.

7. Using an app or the card that comes with your filters calculate the exposure time you will need for the ND filter you have selected. Do this using the original exposure time from your test shot as a starting point. I use the Lee Stopper app to calculate my exposure times.

8. Using the cable release take your long exposure shot. Check your histogram to make sure you have the correct exposure.



beach. Whilst I liked the colour version of the image I felt that converting it to black and white would really help to emphasise the shape of the beach. I did the conversion in Lightroom then opened the image in Photoshop. I did a little dodging and burning around the right edge of the image to emphasise the shadow on the water which I felt mirrored the shape the the beach. I liked the combination of dark shingle, pale water then darker shadow at the edge which I felt drew the eye into the picture.

Coastal Inspiration

There are a number of seascape photographers that I really admire and their work is definitely worth checking out.

Theo Bosboom is a Dutch landscape and nature photographer who has produced some really stunning photography. His seascape works includes 'Shaped by the Sea' a project which covers several areas of the Atlantic Coast including Norway, Iceland, Scotland, Ireland and Portugal. Theo has produced a book from this project which is available from his website.

The 'Life of Limpets' is another of Theo's projects which shows these creatures as part of the landscape they inhabit.

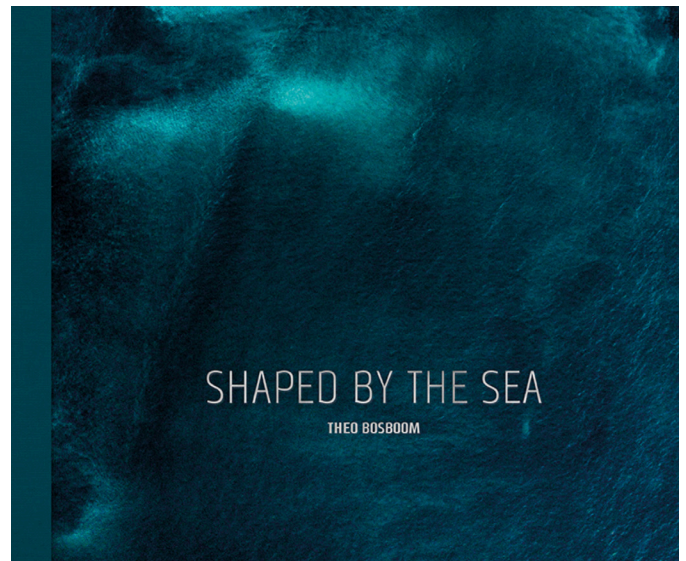
Rachael Talibart is a well known Outdoor photographer based on the South Coast. She has produced some really stunning coastal work, particularly her Sirens project. Her images are full of drama, texture and emotion. www.rachaeltalibart.com

Neil Burnell an award winning photographer from Devon has some wonderful use of texture and simplicity in his seascape images. Take a look at his Deep Blue gallery. www.neilburnell.com

Margaret Soraya is a Scottish based landscape photographer working in nature's quiet places. She has some beautiful seascapes on show on her website. www.margaretsoraya.com

If you are looking for a range of articles and features about all aspects of Landscape Photography then I recommend having a look at 'On Landscape' the online magazine for landscape photographers. You have to subscribe to access most of the articles but there is a lot of really interesting and inspiring work on there including a talk by Theo Bosboom about his Shaped by the Sea photography project. www.onlandscape.co.uk

See more at theobosboom.nl

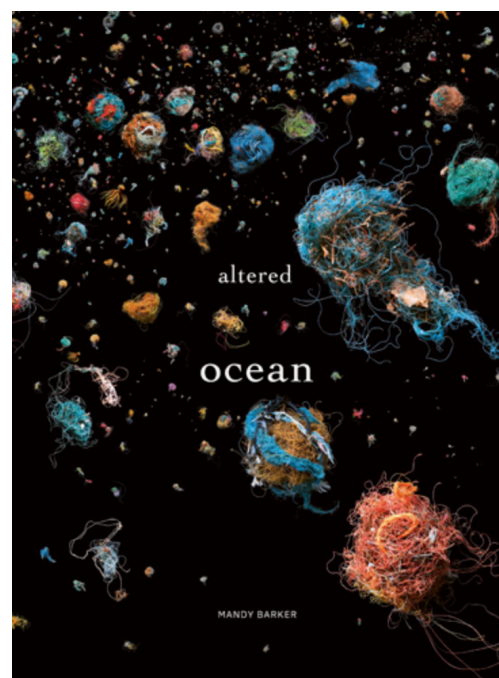


Interesting coastal / marine projects

Mandy Barker

I have read numerous articles recently about Mandy's photography which is based around marine plastics. Working alongside scientists she has been trying to raise awareness of plastic pollution in the world's oceans and the harmful affect that it has on marine life and ultimately ourselves.

Her work is now published in a book - Altered Ocean and you can find out more about her at www.mandy-barker.com



Wolf Silveri - We'll Sea

An interesting project that explores the plastic in our oceans. In a few decades, the plastic waste that floats in the oceans will exceed the fish stock in terms of weight. In his project Wolf explores the idea that the oceans find a way to integrate human-produced waste into their habitat.

www.silveri.eu/we-ll-sea

David Baker - Milouvision

David won Outdoor Photographer of the Year in 2012 and has gone on to produce a vast array of beautiful work.

For his Sea Fever project he introduces his work with the following words

'Coastal landscapes may often offer a simple geography of a beach, the sea and a cloudscape and as such there is a challenge to construct new and inventive photographic interpretations. Sea Fever is my interpretation of those seascapes and of the close affinity between sea and sky.'

His images from this project can be found at www.milouvision.com/category/seafever

Meghann Riepenhoff

Meghann is a US based artist who uses the photographic process of Cyanotypes in her work. She is fascinated by the nature of our relationship with the coast (an impermanent landscape) and has produced a series of seascape images entitled 'Littoral Drift' made without the camera.

meghannriepenhoff.com/project/littoral-drift

Paul Thompson - Navigate

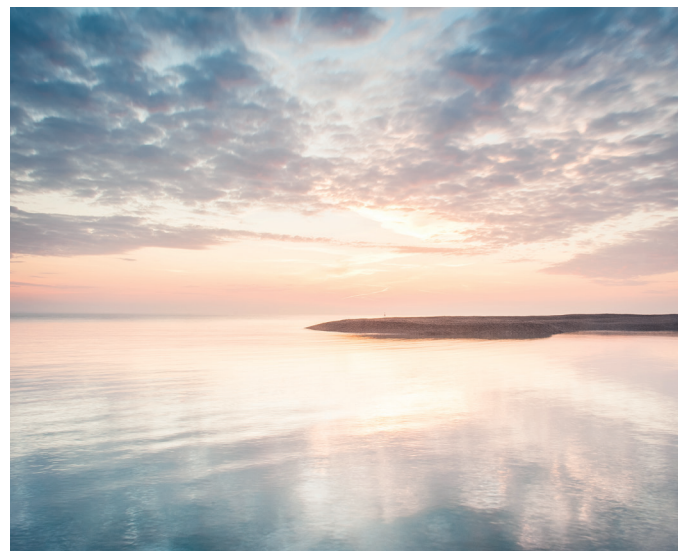
This series of images depicts navigation markers around the British coast. Shot at sunset using a large format camera and exposure times ranging between 1 and 8 seconds the images are minimalist in style with simple compositions and delicate colour pallets.

www.paulthompsonstudio.com/work/navigate

February Seascape Challenge

Visit a coastal location and take the following shots:

1. A coastal view which incorporates some foreground detail and elements that lead the eye through the image.
2. A simplified or minimalist scene using long exposure.
3. A shot incorporating texture which is created by movement.
- 4 A shot that focuses on close up details.



Photography Project 2020

I am looking for photographers who have been on any of my workshops to join me in a photography project covering the Suffolk Coast. I am looking for about 10 different photographers who would like to take part and exhibit some of their images in an exhibition to be held in autumn/winter 2020.

Please email me at gill@gillmoon.com if you are interested.

How I got the shot



Cobbold Point Felixstowe.

3 minute 22 second exposure at F16, ISO 100, manual mode, 0.6 ND grad and 10 stop filter, cable release and tripod.

The breakwater at Cobbold Point in Felixstowe is a favourite place for photographers looking for an interesting seascape. Each of the individual concrete structures are over a meter tall so this location only really works at high tide if you are looking for a similar effect to the one I have created.

To get the angle looking down onto the structure you will need to climb onto the granite sea wall, so take care as these rocks can be slippery when wet. This image was shot in November as the sun was setting over to the right and out of the picture. The sky was clear but slightly misty which added to the ethereal effect.

Thinking about my composition I set up my camera so that the horizon was in the top third of my image. I wanted the rocks at the front of the image to be come into the frame from both corners and I wanted them to be sharp. I chose an aperture of F16 and selected a focus point about a third of the way into the scene. I used a 0.6 ND graduated filter to balance the brightness of the sky with the water then took a trial shot to gauge my exposure and shutter speed and to check my composition. I then inserted my 10 stop filter and using the Lee Filters app on my phone I calculated the shutter speed require for the correct exposure. Using my cable release and remote timer I took a shot with an exposure time of 3 minutes and 22 seconds.

Coastal Workshops

Southwold & Walberswick Workshop

Join me for a days photography tuition exploring the beautiful coastal locations of Southwold and Walberswick.

The workshop will start at Southwold and take in the pier, beach with its colourful beach huts, gun hill and the lighthouse. After a break for lunch in a local pub we will head to Walberswick where we will have the opportunity to photograph the River Blyth and the beach and old pier hopefully finishing with a sunset (weather permitting).

During the workshop we will explore the art of making a photograph and will cover technical aspects (shooting mode, choice of aperture, focusing, exposure) as well as composition (identifying a subject, finding a viewpoint, working with supporting elements and using lines, shapes, patterns and textures to create depth and interest).

We will look at composition in the wider landscape and also in more detailed scenes. There will also be the opportunity to try long exposure photography for those wishing to master this creative technique.

This 7 hour workshop costs £110 and includes a one course lunch and transport between locations if required. More details at www.landscapephotographytuition.co.uk



Seascapes of the Suffolk Coast

Join me for a days photography tuition exploring some of the most interesting places along the Suffolk Coast for Seascape photography.

The workshop will start at Bawdsey where we will explore the exposed mudstone beach at the end of East Lane. We will work on coastal compositions, constructing an image, and working with slow shutter speeds to incorporate texture and movement into our images.

From Bawdsey we will move on to Shingle Street where we will look at using shape and form to construct simplified images using the shapes of the exposed shingle at low tide.

In the afternoon we will explore the coast around Felixstowe finishing off at Cobbold Point for a sunset. Here we will have the opportunity to practice long exposures at high tide using the distinctive breakwater.

This 7 hour workshop costs £110 and includes a one course lunch and transport between locations if required. More details at www.landscapephotographytuition.co.uk

