



Shoot for the Moon

Monthly news and tips from Landscape Photographer
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Beyond Suffolk - how to get the best from new locations.

Hello

Welcome to February's edition of my landscape photography journal
'Shoot for the Moon'

With spring just round the corner I am beginning to think about booking a holiday and exploring new places with my camera. This is always enjoyable but sometimes doesn't yield the best photographs. So I thought I would explore why this might be and devote this edition of Shoot for the Moon to getting the best from new locations.

If you have any comments or thoughts on any aspect of photography I am always keen to receive your emails 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

Planning your visits

As many of you will know Suffolk is my home county, it is the place I am most familiar with and the one that I have photographed the most. As a result I feel I have come a long way in understanding the environment that I work in.

Understanding the landscape

I believe that connecting with and understanding the landscape is key if you want to create compelling images. When you photograph a landscape regularly you get to know how the light affects the scene, how the landscape looks in certain weathers and at different times of the day. You get to know what a coastline or estuary might look like at low tide, how much access you have to certain locations at high water and when the weather conditions are right for each location. Most importantly you understand the landscape and you know what you want your images to say.

This is all valuable knowledge and plays a fundamental part in the success of your photography.

However when you travel to new locations that you aren't familiar with all this knowledge is missing and I believe it has an impact on your photography.

I have travelled to Scotland many times and it is a landscape I am beginning to understand much better, but over the years I have never really been satisfied with the images I have made on my travels. I am beginning to realise that this is probably because I don't know the landscape as well as I should and as a result I haven't understood what I have wanted my images to say.

So how do you get around this?

There is no substitute for knowledge and the simple answer is to do some research.

Plan before you visit.

When you are visiting new locations time is usually short so it is always good to do some planning and research before you go.

500px - is a fantastic resource for getting to know an area. You don't need an account, simply search your chosen location and you will find a huge range of images that have been taken previously. www.500px.com

Google Earth is another great planning resource and is a good tool when little other information is available. It enables you to explore an area from the air or down at street level.

<https://earth.google.com/>

Photographers Ephemeris allows you to see the direction of the rising or setting sun and is an essential tool in planning any photography trip.

Books and printed resources.

There are many good books out there about locations around Britain. Examples are: Fotovue www.fotovue.com or The Photographer's Guide series <https://longvalleybooks.com> Or look for local photographers that can help with information, either through a workshop or printed material.

When you arrive

Time is usually limited on any photography trip so my best advice is to visit your chosen locations, make lots of images and take some notes about which locations and compositions would work best in different conditions. That way if you ever return you will be better prepared.

Very few photographers take portfolio images on their first visit to a location. What separates good photographers from others is persistence. Get to know your landscapes and good photos will follow.

Beyond Suffolk

Photographing the Norfolk Coast

The Norfolk Coast is one of my favourite areas of Britain. It is different enough from my home county of Suffolk to make it interesting and it is somewhere I have been visiting since I was a child.

Blakeney was a favourite family holiday destination for many years as I was growing up. It is somewhere we visited every year and somewhere I have come to know really well. I have wallowed in its muddy creeks and watched birds upon its shores, wandered its paths in the rain and sunshine and enjoyed every moment.

Photographically it is great for sunrises, for sailing boats, muddy creeks and wide open skies.



Blakeney harbour



Sailing boats in the creek

Morston is a lovely little village with a small harbour and plenty of activity along the little creek that separates the village from the sea. This is a good sunset location and a great place to explore. It is also the departure point for many of the seal watching trips around Blakeney Point.



Moorings on the creek at Morston, looking towards Blakeney at sunset.



Boats on the saltmarsh at Morston

Stiffkey pronounced 'Stew-key' is a small village on the edge of the saltmarsh just along the coast from Blakeney and Morston. There are some fantastic walks here along the marsh to the beach with a number of well photographed wooden bridges crossing the tiny creeks that make up the saltmarsh.



The saltmarsh at Stiffkey with its many creeks and wooden bridges.

Thornham has a tiny harbour which is photogenic at both high and low water. It sits at the end of a small creek and has an isolated building (old coal store) which features in many images of this area. A half mile walk takes you to the coast and gives you access to a wide expanse of sand backed by some lovely dunes. The beach is great for photography at low tide.



Images of Thornham harbour, creek and beach.



Cley next the Sea is a traditional Norfolk village situated just to the east of Blakeney. Its pronunciation is open to some debate - some locals pronounce Cley to rhyme with day and some to rhyme with sky. The village sits on the edge of a creek in amongst the reeds and is overlooked by a windmill which is currently a bed and breakfast.

The windmill is one of the main photographic attractions and can make a lovely backdrop to the expansive reedbeds.



Cley windmill and the reedbeds using long exposure photography.

Old Hunstanton is one of my favourite places to photograph in this part of Norfolk. The beach is backed by tricoloured cliffs which offer endless photographic opportunities. Just off the cliffs lies the wreck of the Steam Trawler Sheraton which can be accessed at low tide and the beach is covered in cushion shaped rock formations which make great subjects for long exposure shots. Away from the cliffs the beach huts in the dunes are also worth a visit. Both the cliffs and the beach huts work well at sunset.



Old Hunstanton cliffs, boat wreck and beach huts.



North Norfolk Coast - 3 day workshop

If you would like to explore Norfolk but don't really know where to go to get the best shots then I am running a 2 night photo workshop on the Norfolk Coast in May.

Staying at the Manor Hotel in Blakeney we will be visiting all these locations and will hopefully have the opportunity to sample some beautiful Norfolk landscape and get some great shots.

To find out more please visit www.landscapephotographytuition.co.uk/product/north-norfolk-coast

Beyond East Anglia - Somerset and Exmoor

This may seem like a trek across the country but I can assure you that Somerset and the edge of Exmoor has a lot to offer.

I have been fortunate enough to live in Somerset for 14 years of my life. My children were born there and I have a special affinity for the place. It is also somewhere that seems overlooked photographically.

North Somerset has a beautiful coastline, some fascinating history and sits between the Quantocks, Exmoor and the sea.

Kilve is a tiny village sitting on the edge of the sea. Its beach is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and is famed as the Jurassic Coast of the Bristol Channel. The beach is a mix of limestone and shingle with interesting rock formations sweeping the shoreline. It is well known for its fossils and ammonites are common.



Kilve beach with its limestone rock formations. Perfect on a falling tide at sunset.

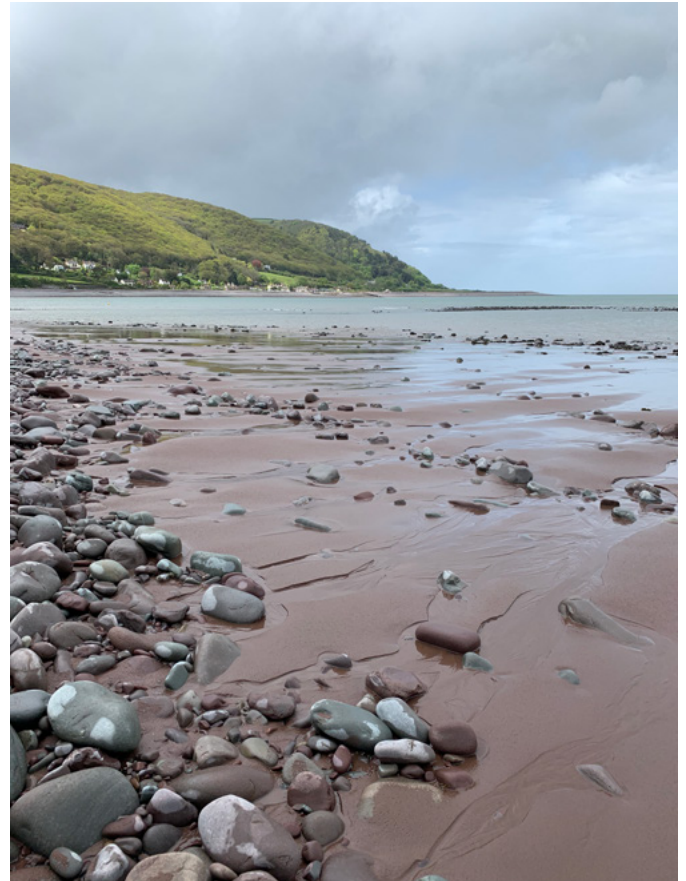
Holford Woods are a fantastic area of mixed native woodland that contain some beautiful areas of beech. These huge trees are growing at the edges of sunken paths with their roots wrapped over the earth banks. They are at their most vibrant in spring and colourful in autumn. There are also some quirky sisal oaks making this a diverse area for woodland photography.



The woods at Holford contain some beautiful beech trees and are great for woodland photography.



Porlock Weir lies just west of its larger neighbour Porlock. It is a picturesque location with fantastic views and plenty of history. With its attractive harbour, multicoloured pebble beach and salt marsh there is plenty to explore. This is a great sunrise location and works well at high tide especially around the old wooden groynes on the beach. At the back of the beach is an area of saltmarsh with some dead trees. These were killed when the sea wall breached and flooded the area with salt water.



The tiny harbour at Porlock Weir looks out over the Bristol Channel and is backed by the Exmoor hills.



The Valley of the Rocks lies just north of Lynton & Lynmouth. It is a stunning location perfect for sunset photography with sweeping views along the North Devon Coast. The area is renowned for its geology, its breathtaking vistas and also for its feral goats which wander around the rock faces.



The Valley of the Rocks - great for sunsets, stunning views and feral goats.



On the edge of Exmoor - 4 day workshop. If the idea of exploring Somerset and the edge of the Exmoor national park sounds appealing but you don't know the area then I am running a 4 day workshop in May. Staying at the beautiful Porlock Weir Hotel overlooking the picturesque harbour we will be photographing all these places and others.

To find out more please visit www.landscapephotographytuition.co.uk/product/on-the-edge-of-exmoor4-day-photography-workshop

Visiting new locations - In summery

Don't expect to get portfolio shots from a first visit. Great photos take patience and planning and you need to visit when the conditions suit the landscape you are shooting.

Do your planning before you visit. Use the resources mentioned at the start of this edition as well as the OS map for the area you are visiting.

If you still feel unprepared consider using a local photographer as a guide. Join a workshop and get taken to the best locations where you can discuss possible compositions. There is no substitute for good local knowledge.

Maximise your time with the light. Shoot wider scenes at either end of the day and focus on more intimate landscapes when the light is harsh.

Take notes when you visit a location for the first time. That way when you visit again you will have a reference source and can plan with greater knowledge.

Don't put too much pressure on yourself to get an amazing shot. Visit and enjoy the experience and make the most of your time in a new location.