

Shoot for the Moon

Monthly news and tips from
Landscape Photographer
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Hello

Welcome to the June edition of 'Shoot for the Moon'

This month I will be looking at landscape photography in the summer months. This can often be a challenging time for landscape photography with early sunrises, blue skies and crowded locations. But early summer is one of my favourite times to get out with the camera so here are a few hints and tips to inspire your photography this month.

In July I will be running a Photography Project Masterclass which will be full of useful advice that I have picked up during my three recent projects.

I hope this volume of Shoot for the Moon gives you some inspiration to undertake your own project or join my masterclass!

Gill

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

Shooting Summer Landscapes



This month's shoot for the moon is all about summer landscape photography.

You may often hear landscape photographers complaining about photography in the summer months as the long days and harsh light can often prove challenging. However if you are prepared to search for the best light and be creative with your thinking then landscape photography during the summer can be really enjoyable and rewarding.

So if you are determined not to hang up your camera for the next few months these are my tips for shooting during the summer. Work with the best available light.

This may sound really obvious but good light will really make your pictures stand out. Atmospheric haze during summer days can be a real problem. It can leave the landscape looking washed out with very little contrast.

Summer days are long and by 7 or 8am the sun has lost most of the soft glow of dawn and has a much harsher affect on the landscape with dark shadows and bright highlights creating tricky shooting conditions.

Shooting at Sunrise

This is my favourite time to head out for photography. The light is soft and has a beautiful affect on the landscape and there is generally no one else around. Admittedly you have to get up pretty early for sunrise in the summer and in June this means being out at your chosen location by 4am at the latest. However it is definitely worth it.

On still mornings if you choose the right location you may also have the added bonus of some mist to add a bit of atmosphere to your images.

The following image was shot at Shingle Street along the Suffolk Coast Path. It is one of those locations that will always get mist on a still morning and in the summer this can combine with the summer flowers to give a very atmospheric image.



Shooting at Sunset

I don't shoot at sunset as much as I do sunrise as I prefer the quality of light at the beginning of the day, but sunset can still be a rewarding time of day even in the summer. The trick is to watch the weather and learn what conditions might give you the best results. Usually if you have a band of cloud sitting on the horizon, even if its blue above the colours will be disappointing.

For vibrant sunset colour you will need some cloud in the sky, ideally at various levels in the atmosphere. I use the Clear Outside App which gives you a prediction of the amount of cloud cover at low, medium and high levels. It also predicts fog. It is not always accurate but its a good place to start. Use this in conjunction with the Photographers Ephermis App to help plan your shoots and work out where the sun will set in relation to the features in the landscape.

Choose your weather conditions carefully. Clear skies often don't give that much colour but can create very tranquil scenes. Stormy weather where rain may be imminent can

produce some striking results.

Sometimes the hour before sunset can produce some of the best light but don't be tempted to pack away too early as the blue hour after the sun has gone down can also yield some lovely images.

This image of Shingle Street was shot at sunset but I used a composition that was about 45 degrees to the setting sun. This allowed me to retain the colour in the sky but I didn't have the harsh light of the setting sun to contend with when making my image. This made exposure easier and has made the picture more about the flowers and the location rather than just about the sunset.



If you compare the two images of Shingle Street, one taken at sunset and the other at sunrise, you will see the very different qualities of the light that you get at either end of the day.

Sunrise is a much softer light and allows all the details of the landscape to really shine through. Sunset masks a lot of the landscape detail. As the sun begins to approach the horizon the land can start to look very flat as it loses its light. This is why sunset over water works much better because the water retains that reflective quality and will add some light to the bottom part of your image.

Shoot in flat light

I love to make the most of grey days - I find them preferable to bright blue skies. They also yield some lovely conditions for shooting in.



This image of a rare Black Poplar was shot on a drizzly day which isn't always considered good for landscape photography. There is no lovely light in this shot, but I actually quite like the contrast between the spring greens and the grey sky. To me the conditions felt appropriate to tell the story of a lovely old tree that as a species is endangered in the UK.

Similarly the next shot below was taken on a bright but overcast day. Despite the lack of direct sunlight I liked the contrast between the bright and cheerful flowers and the darker more moody sky.

For me these overcast conditions are much more appealing to shoot in than bright blue skies which can be very flat and uninteresting.



The next shot was taken on Aldeburgh beach and again was shot on an overcast day. The light is fairly flat and there are no harsh shadows on the beach which could have been distracting. I love the neutral pallet of this image and the contrast that the white boat and the yellow poppies makes with the neutrality of the rest of the image.



Shoot on bright days

In the summer these conditions can be very challenging. On a bright day the dynamic range can be huge and the camera will always see the contrast between lights and darks / shadows and highlights much more markedly than the human eye. This dynamic range can be a difficult thing to deal with in camera. To get the best results choose your compositions carefully and think about your viewpoint and the direction of the light.

This shot was taken at Pin Mill on a bright, blue sky day. Because of the composition I was looking for the shot was taken with the sun behind me which I don't usually like doing. This gives the image some vibrant colours but it makes the picture feel very flat because the shadows aren't visible. When you shoot with the sun behind you your shadows are short and usually disappear which has the effect of flattening your image.



The next shot was taken at Southwold but this time I composed with the sun at 90 degrees to the composition. The direction of the light revealed all the shadows on the beach helping to emphasise the texture in the sand and adding depth to the composition.



In really bright conditions the processing techniques you use can really make a difference. Using a black and white conversion can

make the most of high contrast scenes and in woodland or areas of greenery this can be particularly effective if you process using an infrared mono conversion as your base.

The following two images both started as infrared mono conversions in Lightroom. I used the infrared preset as a base point for my conversion and then adjusted the colour sliders to suit the mono effect I was looking for.



Focusing on Detail

Sometimes when the light is not good enough to capture far reaching views it is better to use a longer lens, cut out the sky and pick out some of the detail in the landscape. For this exercise I often choose flowers to focus on because I enjoy photographing them, but there

is a lot of alternative detail to focus on if you look around you.

The image below was made in Wales on a very bright day. It is a section of old wall in a slate quarry. I loved all the different colours and textures and the way the plant mirrored the knot in the wood. It is a very simple, abstract composition but I was quite pleased with the result.



Flowers are still my favourite subjects for intimate compositions. They are best shot with a telephoto or macro lens and my favourite method is to get down low and shoot into the light.

Here are a few tips for shooting flowers or vegetation in detail:

1. use a telephoto lens and focus in tightly.
2. use a shallow depth of field to blur the background.
3. Use surrounding foliage to create blocks of

colour in the foreground of your shot by physically getting really close to some elements which will then be rendered soft.

4. Shoot into the sun for a soft hazy effect.



Suffolk's Floral Coast Workshop



DISCOVER SESSION

Suffolk's Floral Coast
Tuesday June 7th 8am – 1pm

Join me for a 5 hour photography workshop exploring some of the Suffolk Coast's most beautiful locations.

The workshop will begin at Shingle Street. This is a fantastic location to explore photographically especially in early summer when the floral display on the beach is at its best. Shingle Street is one of the best examples of vegetated shingle found along the Suffolk Coast and in June the beach blooms with the colourful displays of sea kale, sea pea, red valerian, vipers bugloss and sea campion. These plants make wonderful images in their own right as well as colourful additions to a wider landscape shot.

From Shingle Street we will head along the coast a little to Hollesley Marshes. Here we will

work around Barthorpes Creek at low tide and explore some of the salt marsh with its shallow lagoons.

The workshop will finish at Ramsholt Church which has a beautiful natural churchyard full of flowers.

During the workshop we will have time to look at the wider landscape and practice identifying subjects, finding viewpoints, working with supporting elements and incorporating lines, shapes, patterns and textures. We will also look at close up shots of the various flowers on the beach and practice using apertures, depth of field and lighting to take gorgeous floral images.

Photography Project Masterclass



DISCOVER MORE

Photography Project masterclass **Saturday 30th July 8am – 4pm**

Photography projects are a great way to take your image making to the next level. On this workshop we will look at what is involved in tackling a photography project from single day projects to longer term collections which could be used for a book or an exhibition.

The day will be split in two halves. The morning will take place on the beach at Sizewell where you will be challenged to come up with an idea for a short project which will involve 3 – 9 images which you will shoot during the morning.

The afternoon session will take place in my studio at Hollesley where we will look at choosing and sequencing images for a panel. I will show you how to layout a panel or triptych in Photoshop and we will discuss how to

process and select our images so that they form a cohesive body of work.

The procedures we cover in the afternoon will be applied to producing a small panel or triptych but can also be applied to bigger projects such as books or an exhibition.

The workshop is suitable for 4 people with 2 Mac's available for your use in the afternoon on a shared basis. Alternatively you are welcome to bring a laptop with you if you would prefer to work on your own.

This is a creative workshop and is suitable for all levels but some experience of Lightroom and Photoshop would be useful.