In The Frame

November 2025

Storsandnes Beach

Capturing the coast in Lofoten

Editing Experiments

Finding your editing style

White Balance

Colour accuracy and creativity

In The Frame

November 2025

Issue 18

Mobile Edition

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First digital edition published November 2025.

Cover art, layout and photography by Kevin Read

Thanks to Rob Hadley for images of the author

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Welcome

Hi, the weather has turned colder in the UK over the past few weeks, and the clocks going back have made the evenings feel much darker again. I've started seeing aurora videos and beautiful woodland images from photographers across the northern hemisphere. One of my favourite people on social media is Cecilia Blomdahl, who lives in Svalbard and captures the unusual seasonal changes in her remote town. This week marked the start of polar night, and they won't see the sun in Svalbard for another 111 days.

Over the last month, I've turned more to reading and learning from other authors. I saw an interview with Samantha Harvey, who wrote an amazing book last year set on an orbiting space station, somehow capturing the feeling of being in space and spinning around the Earth. She absorbed the atmosphere through live video feeds from the International Space Station; what a brilliant way to find a new angle on the world.

It's made me appreciate how lucky we are to explore distant places from home, through the experiences of others. I love exploring for photography, but we all have different commitments and can't be everywhere at once. Lately, my mornings have been spent virtually in Chile as I rewrite my Patagonia guidebook, while my evenings are spent following Nigel Danson's project to photograph every county in England.

This month's author photo was taken at the Astrophotographer of the Year exhibition, where one of my images was shortlisted and is now on display. If you are anywhere near the National Maritime Museum in London over the next few months, my aurora/volcano photograph appears in the Skyscapes category.

I've also set up my first-ever winter sale on the site, and you can get an exclusive early preview at the link below. I've now finished translating all the back issues of In The Frame, along with my two books on landscape photography and planning a photography trip, all included in the winter sale.

This month in the magazine, we visit Storsandnes Beach in Lofoten: a beautiful, compact stretch of coast where you can explore a huge variety of detail in a tiny area. Behind The Scene discusses how to explore your editing options by taking the same image and processing it in a variety of ways. The technique article explores the slightly mysterious setting of white balance, and how it can be used creatively.

Thanks for reading, and I hope you like this issue.

Kevin

www.shuttersafari.com/winter-sale

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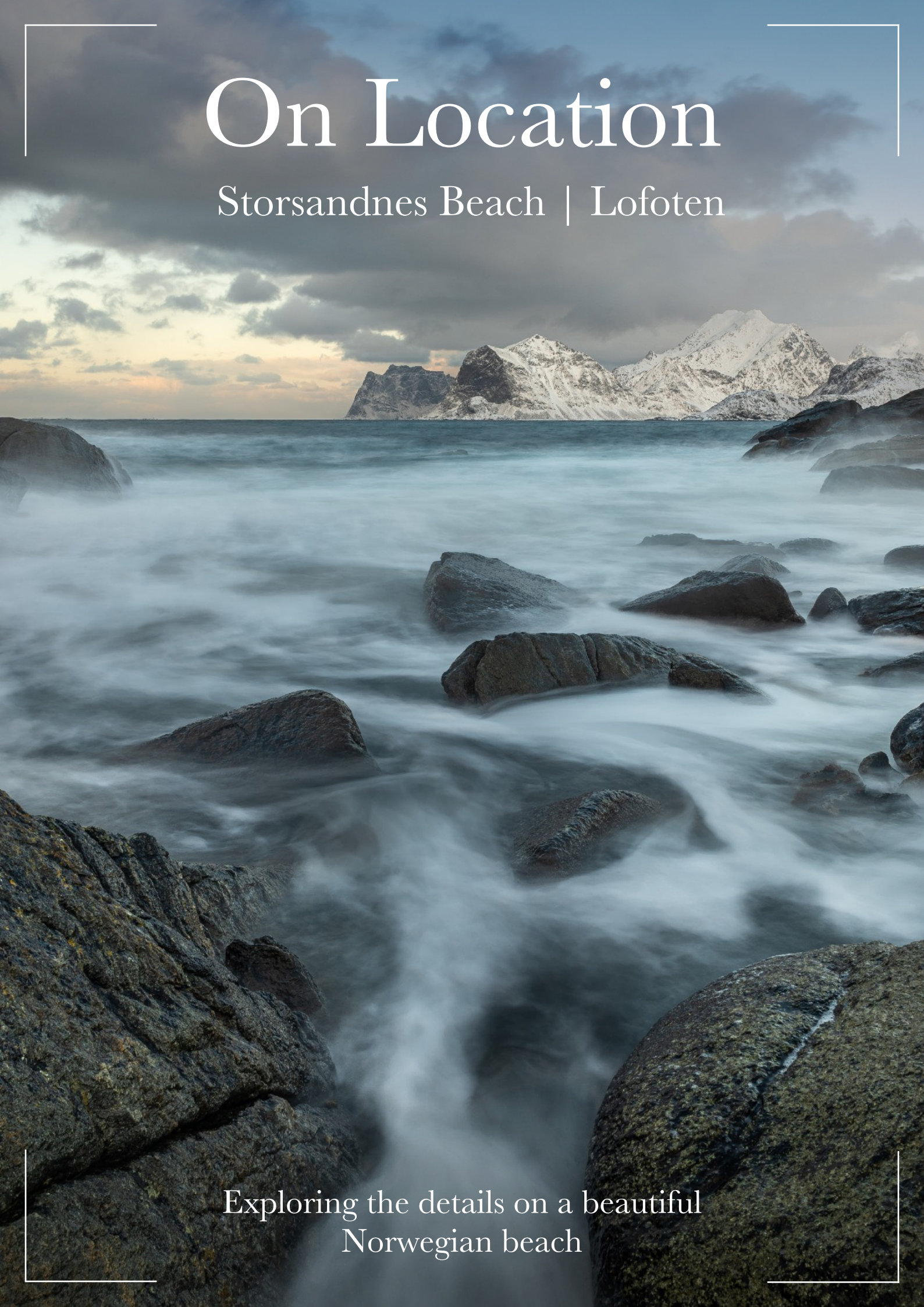
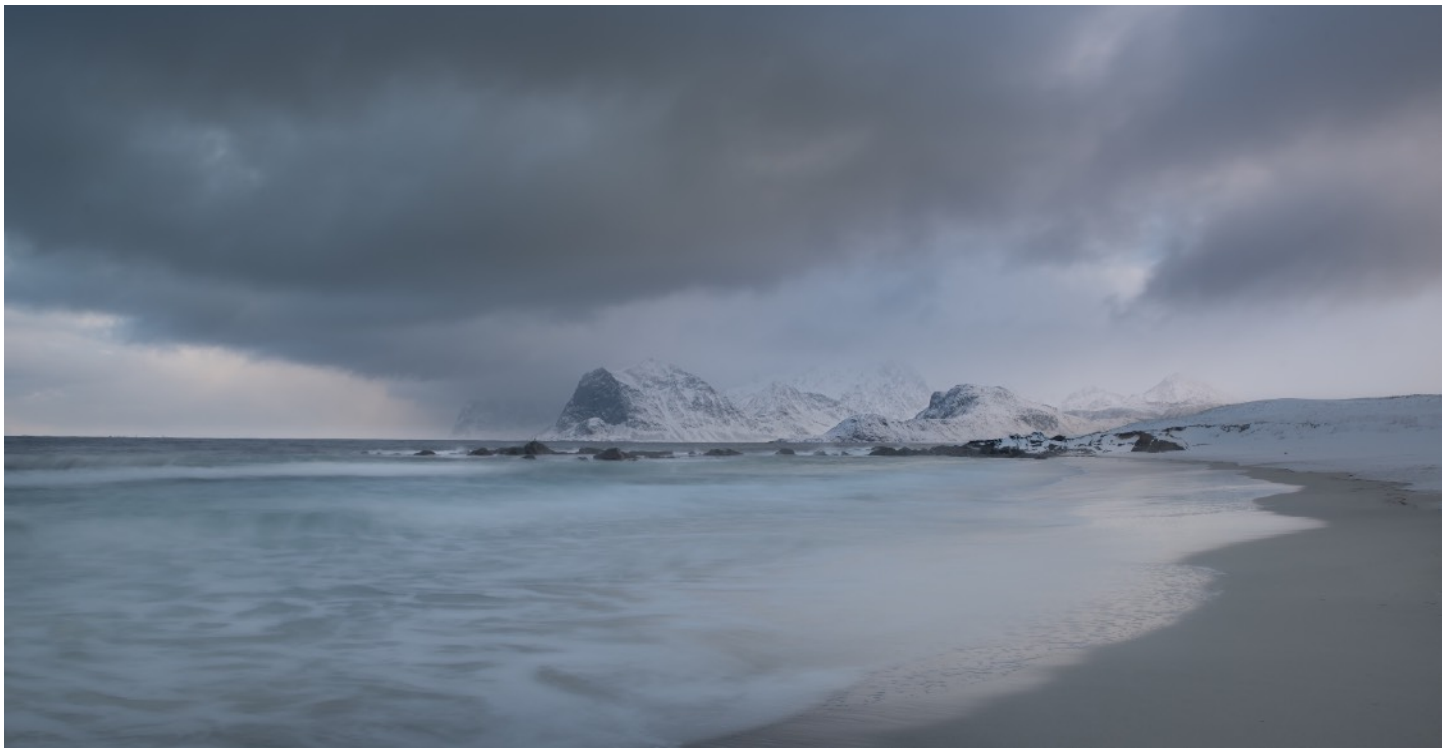


On Location

Storsandnes Beach | Lofoten

Exploring the details on a beautiful Norwegian beach



Introduction

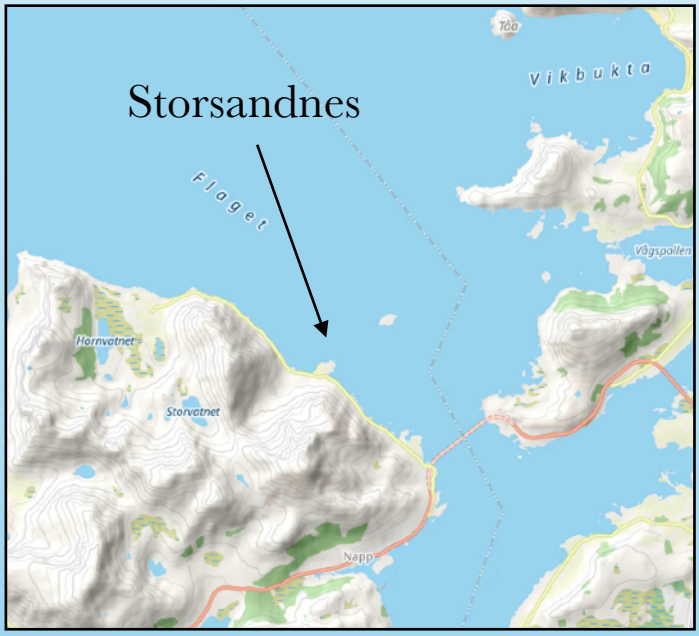
Lofoten is a beautiful island chain that begins on the coast of northern Norway and stretches into the Atlantic Ocean, a line of dramatic peaks rising directly from the water. Bridges and tunnels connect the islands, making it an incredible place to explore, with a dense collection of sandy beaches and rocky mountains dotted with traditional and cosy fishing villages.

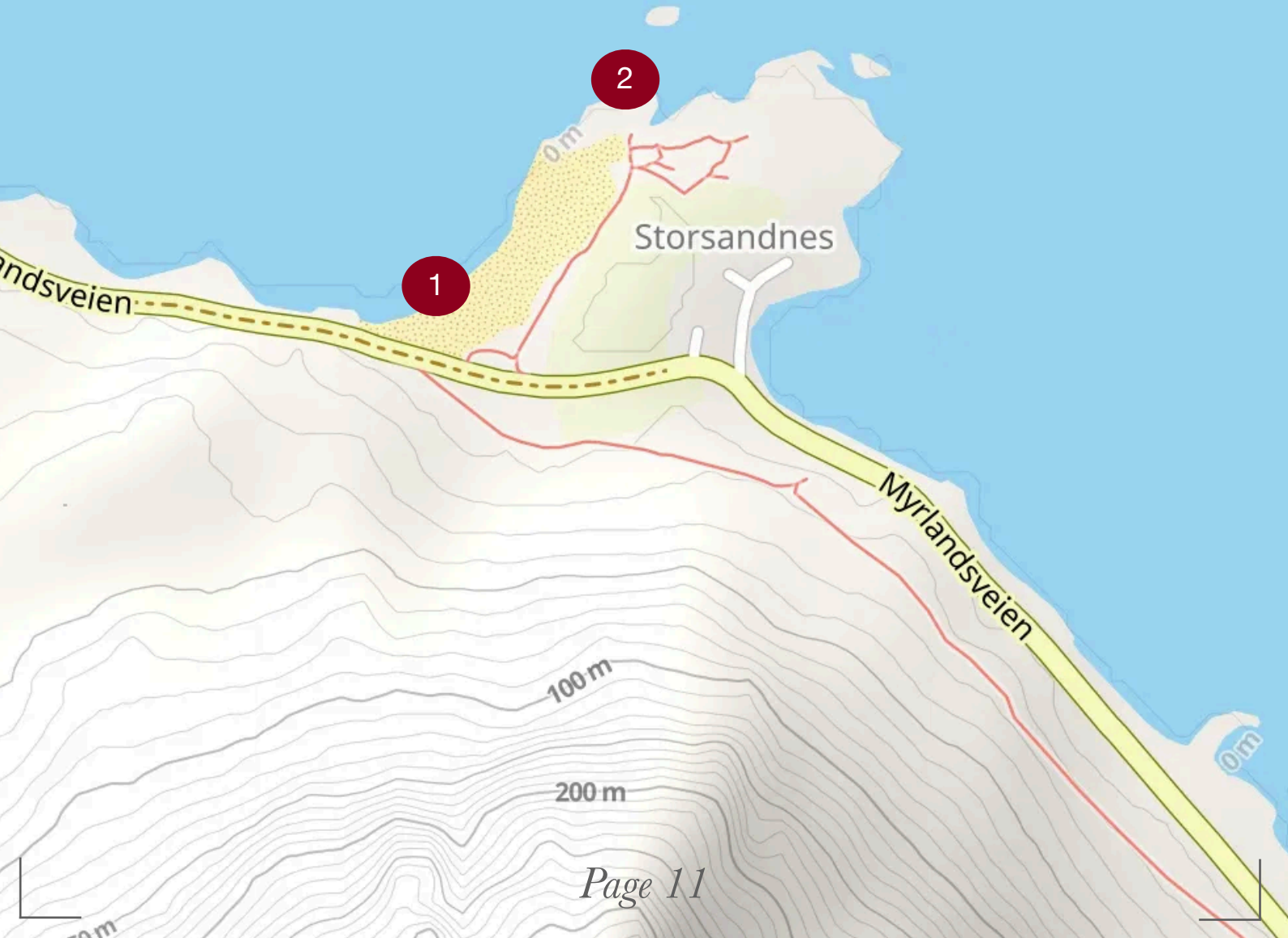
My favourite piece of coastline in Lofoten is a short stretch of sand hidden down a gravel road, called Storsandnes Beach. It's not as large or as striking as some of the better-known locations in Lofoten, but it combines an ideal mix of features and it's easy to lose yourself in photography here for hours.

There's no single composition to chase or crowded viewpoint where you need to wait for your turn. Instead, you can wander the shore as the light shifts, discovering ways to photograph this small corner of the islands as the tide reshapes the sand and reveals new patterns and ideas.

I've spent hours at Storsandnes Beach, and visited at all times of day and night. The weather in Lofoten changes constantly, so it never looks the same twice, and it's the kind of familiar location that always reveals something different. This article explores some of the photographs I've captured at Storsandnes, along with reflections on what it's like to shoot there.

1. Beach
2. Rocks and waves





On Location

Storsandnes Beach is relatively small, and you can walk from one end to the other in little more than ten minutes. However, the shore feels like a miniature version of Lofoten, full of features and details that can hold your attention for hours. It's a place to slow down, reflect on your practice, and study details closely; the more time you spend, the more you notice.

The beach begins with a gentle curve of sand near the parking area, where most visitors stop to watch the waves and take a quick photo from the car. It's a great spot for a sweeping view of Storsandnes, which looks across to a line of mountains on the far side of the bay, and the curve of the shore can act as a leading line that shifts with the tide.

Farther along, the sand gives way to rock, and on windy days the waves crash against the shore, sending up spray and bursts of water. When the weather is calm, the ocean weaves through the rocks, forming shapes and contrasting textures. This area looks toward the open ocean and the western edge of the islands, where peninsulas and peaks rise in the distance.

The simple layout makes Storsandnes a short stop for most visitors, but that simplicity is also what makes it so rewarding for photographers. There are many spectacular viewpoints across Lofoten, and it's easy to be drawn to the famous ones where you can take a stunning photo as soon as you arrive. However, if you spend any time in Lofoten, you'll also want to slow down, explore more deeply, and create something that feels your own; Storsandnes is the perfect place to do it.

Light and Weather

You can visit Storsandnes Beach at any time of year, and it's usually accessible even in winter unless there's been very heavy snow. The scene shifts with Lofoten's changing character, from shades of green in summer to the monochrome of a snowy landscape in winter.

Storsandnes Beach usually gets light in the mornings and shade from the mountains to the west in the afternoons. However, the sun's position changes dramatically over the year in Lofoten, and the light picks out different details in the landscape as it moves.

One of the most interesting things about photographing Lofoten is how much the days vary, from midnight sun in summer to weeks of darkness in winter. The direction of sunrise and sunset can change during one visit if you spend long enough in the islands.

Discussion of the direction of light in Lofoten is always a little optimistic. These islands reach far out into the ocean and catch every weather front that flows in off the Atlantic. Much of the time, this is heavy cloud, and it's not unusual for visitors to spend two weeks in Lofoten and never see a clear sky.

However, it's the changing and challenging weather that makes Lofoten such a great destination for photography. The shifting conditions push us to experiment, and compositions that work one day might be completely gone by the next. While it's worth planning for sunrise or sunset, the fast changes that happen at coastal locations force us to just work with what we have, and learn to adapt our photography rather than try to control the landscape.

Light breaking over the mountains, taken from the shore near the parking area using the waves as leading lines

Facing along the coast where the road follows the shore. Storsandnes has good views in every direction, making it ideal for chasing the aurora

Scattered clouds on a beautiful blue afternoon, with a long exposure to soften the water

Northern Lights

The first time I visited Storsandnes Beach was on a scouting trip, looking for places to photograph the northern lights. It's always helpful to have a few options for aurora photography, so you can adapt to the conditions and stay flexible with your compositions, and I anticipated that this area might make a good aurora location.

Storsandnes has open views of the sky in several directions, letting you adjust your composition to include the aurora wherever it appears. The simple structure of the beach and mountains on the horizon make it easy to build a wide composition with plenty of sky in the frame, ideal for both weak and strong displays.

When I returned after dark, the lights from the nearby town of Leknes were brighter than I'd expected, reflecting off the low clouds above the scene. It's easy to forget about light pollution in the remote islands of Lofoten, but low cloud can diffuse the glow, and the effect was a strange white mist clinging to the mountain range across the bay.

As I'd hoped, the aurora appeared and drifted across the sky, and Storsandnes was flexible enough to frame it from several angles. Above the mountains, the light turned into almost an abstract pattern of colour and light, and I still return to the images I made of this unusual scene.

Favourite Spot

During the day, my favourite part of Storsandnes Beach is the rocky shoreline at the far end, where waves flow over the pebbles and create new compositions as they move. A dynamic shoreline lets you explore even the smallest area in surprising detail, and even a small patch of rocks can reveal different shapes and patterns as the shifting ocean constantly reshapes the scene.

Photographing water among rocks is an absorbing process; as you watch the waves roll in, you start to notice patterns in where they break and how far they reach. Although each moment on the rocks is different, there's a consistency to how the sea moves, and the regular beat of the ocean allows you to build images out of the places where the water breaks on the shore.

This part of the beach faces the mountains, giving you a natural anchor for your composition. A constantly changing scene can be too chaotic for easy composition, but using a fixed peak in the top of the frame makes this a search for foregrounds, and you can set up your tripod and wait for the perfect wave to arrive.

During one sunset at Storsandnes Beach, bands of colour stretched across the horizon, and I used the rocks to build different foregrounds for the mountains and sky. I always enjoy this process of gradual refinement, searching for a spot where the waves make interesting patterns, then making small adjustments to separate the rocks and guide the eye towards the distant peaks.

Reflections

Visiting a well-known location like Lofoten often brings out the competing priorities we face as photographers. We want to create a great portfolio of images, and the most straightforward way to do that is by visiting established spots where we know there's something incredible to photograph. We want to be original, and find scenes that feel more personal and aligned with our style. We also want to learn, and invest some of our time experimenting with new ideas, even if we're less likely to emerge with our best work.

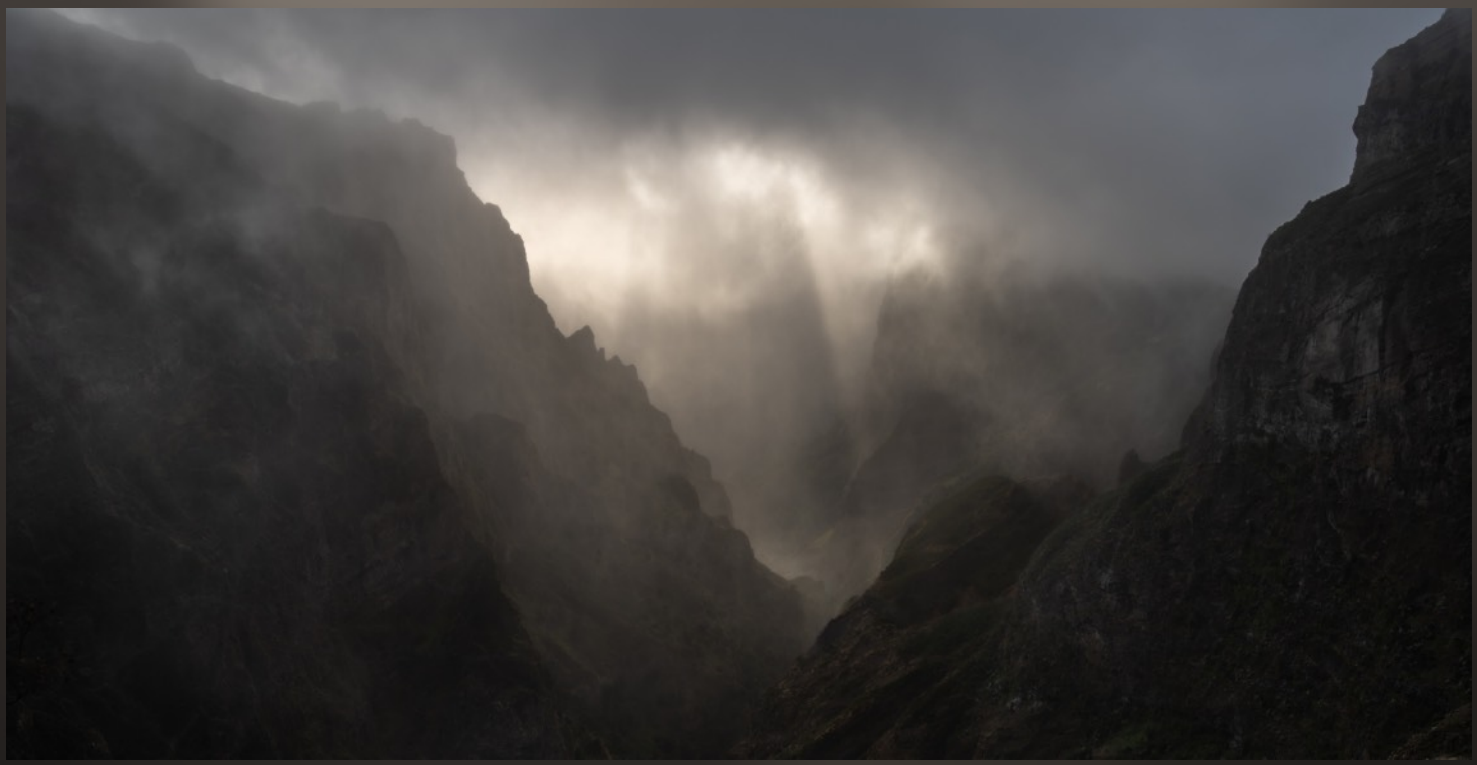
I've sometimes stopped only briefly at Storsandnes beach, just to capture the curve of the sand and the cloud formations over the distant mountains. However, I've also spent hours walking among the rocks, practising separation and connection between different elements in the foreground. This is a great place to practice composition, but there are simple and obvious arrangements here that make it a reliable place to shoot.

Storsandnes beach is quieter than many parts of Lofoten, and a good place to reflect on your photography and study a scene in depth, yet accessible enough that you can revisit to observe how the scene changes with new light and weather. I prefer it in winter, when the islands are quieter and it's sometimes possible to be alone in the landscape. That's not always viable, but it can happen in Lofoten if you allow enough time to focus and wait.

I'm planning my next visit to Lofoten in February 2026, and this spot will be high on my list of places to revisit to see how it has changed since the last time I was in the islands. I hope to focus that journey on lesser-known spots and areas I haven't yet given enough time and attention, and to slow down and explore a few more quiet beaches in depth.

Behind the Scene

Pico do Arieiro | Madeira



Exploring our editing process through experimentation

On Location

Pico do Arieiro is a spectacular mountain peak in Madeira, with a trail that leads across the mountains to Pico Ruivo, 11 km to the north. It's one of the island's best places to watch sunrise or sunset, with views from the trail that encompass Madeira's most dramatic mountain scenery.

During the day, the mountains often catch the weather drifting over the island, and the light shifts moment by moment as the sun disappears and reappears through gaps in the cloud cover. At this altitude, clouds become dense mist that clings to the landscape, and Pico do Arieiro is an excellent place to explore with the camera during the day, when the light on the coast can be more direct and harsh.

This article looks at one image I captured on a cloudy day in Madeira's mountains, but it's mostly a story about how we make choices when we edit and finish a photograph. Last month, a reader wrote to me about their approach to editing and how easy it can be to over-process a scene and lose its natural appearance. I think most of us struggle with this at times, so I wanted to take one image in different directions and explore the results.

I chose this scene for its unusual atmosphere. The elements are all familiar, but the diffused light turns them into a set of shapes, making the image feel ethereal and slightly abstract. That ambiguity gives us flexibility in editing, less anchored to reality, with more freedom to make adjustments that might feel excessive in another photograph.

Composition

The advantage of shooting among flowing clouds is that the light and landscape constantly change. A gap may appear in the sky, casting light on a rock that was hidden a moment before, or a strand of mist can detach and float down into a valley, separating features and highlighting small elements.

The disadvantage is that everything moves so quickly that it's impossible to know where to point the camera. The Pico do Arieiro trail has views in every direction, so a tripod only slows you down as you turn and search for fleeting moments of light. Instead, I held my camera and tried to monitor the light in every direction as I gradually learned the patterns of movement in the clouds.

Much of the time, the mountains around me were completely obscured by the clouds. Then, suddenly, the mist would lift, and rocky outcrops and sharp ridges would appear among the soft textures. Occasionally, a shaft of light would burst through and catch some features in the valley below, before the clouds rolled in again and covered the scene.

I wasn't looking for a specific mountain or feature to photograph; whatever light or pattern in the clouds emerged became my subject. However, I noticed the clouds breaking most often over one set of ridges that met in a distant valley, and I kept returning there, waiting for the light to fall in just the right place.

Capture

A gap opened in the clouds, and a sudden shaft of light illuminated the mountain opposite my position on the ridge. The moment lasted only a few seconds, and in the image you can see the intruding foreground rocks from where I lined up the shot too quickly, without time to compose or zoom into the brightest part of the scene.

When reacting quickly to changing light, it helps to shoot in manual mode with settings that let you capture the moment without needing to think. There was no time to adjust ISO, aperture, or shutter speed, and I had to anticipate what might happen and rely on settings that would effectively capture whatever light appeared.

For this shot, I was worried about losing detail in the bright patches around the sun, and about shaking the camera while shooting handheld. I had hoped for more time, but the light was so fast that I had to rely on the settings I'd already chosen while anticipating the scene.

I'd taken a few practice shots during earlier bursts of light, and chosen my settings for a slightly lower exposure that would keep the bright areas within range. Using f/8 for sharpness and a shutter speed of 1/160 for handheld use, I was able to preserve detail in the highlights, even though the darker edges of the frame were almost black and would need to be corrected in editing.

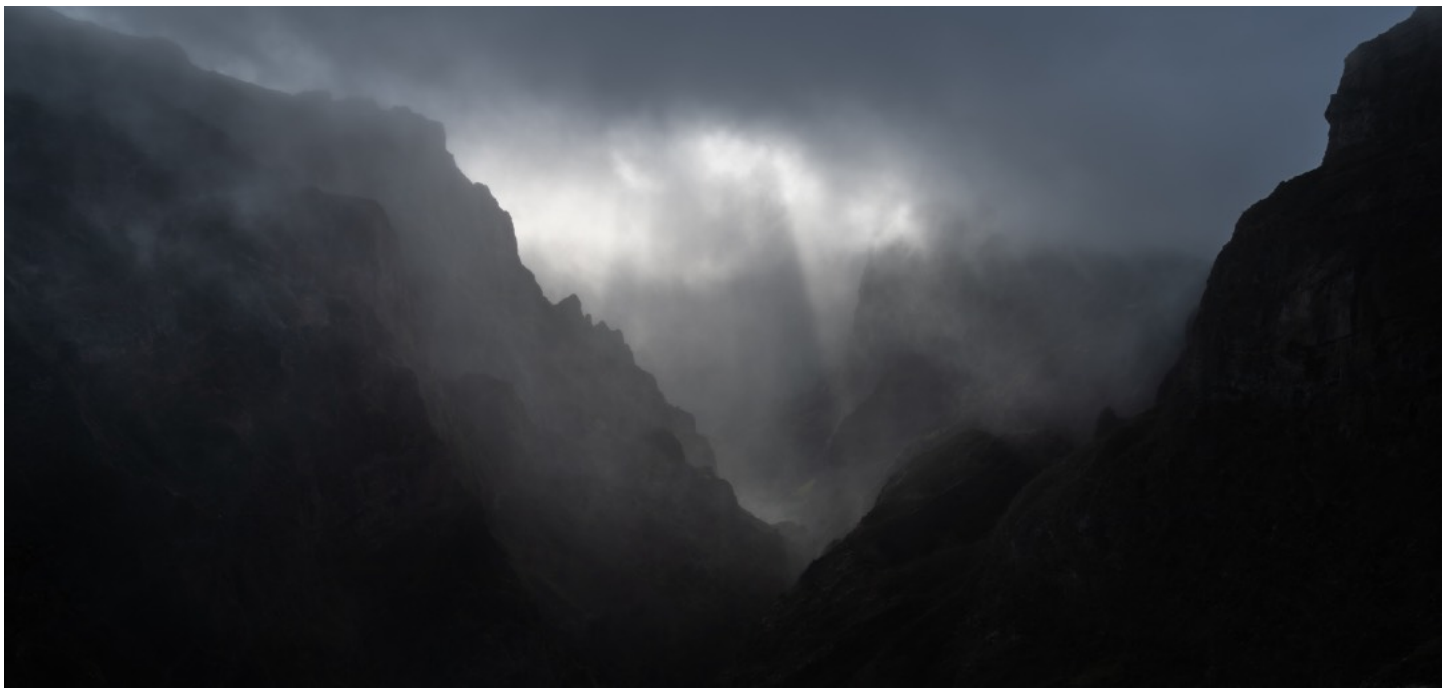
Edit

I've been practising photography for many years, and occasionally re-edit older images to see how my approach and techniques have evolved. However, my editing isn't consistent, even across recent sessions. Sometimes an image that I edit on the road is very different from my next attempt when I get home. The choices I make in editing one day aren't always the same as they might be a month later.

I find it helpful to revisit an edit after a few days, and I try not to publish a photograph immediately after working on it. I've also become an advocate for re-editing images multiple times, starting fresh for each attempt. It helps reveal where you're consistent and where your perception shifts between sessions.

For this image, I made a few basic adjustments to prepare the raw file. I cropped the top and bottom to remove the accidental foreground and a little too much sky, reduced noise and clarity to emphasise the soft textures, and lowered highlights to recover detail where the light shaft emerges from the clouds.

The next set of changes focuses on creating different interpretations of the same scene, exploring how I feel about each version. There's never a single right way to edit a photograph, and each person would take a different approach. However, I've come to realise that even my own approach can vary, and this atmospheric scene is perfect for an experiment in creating different versions through editing.



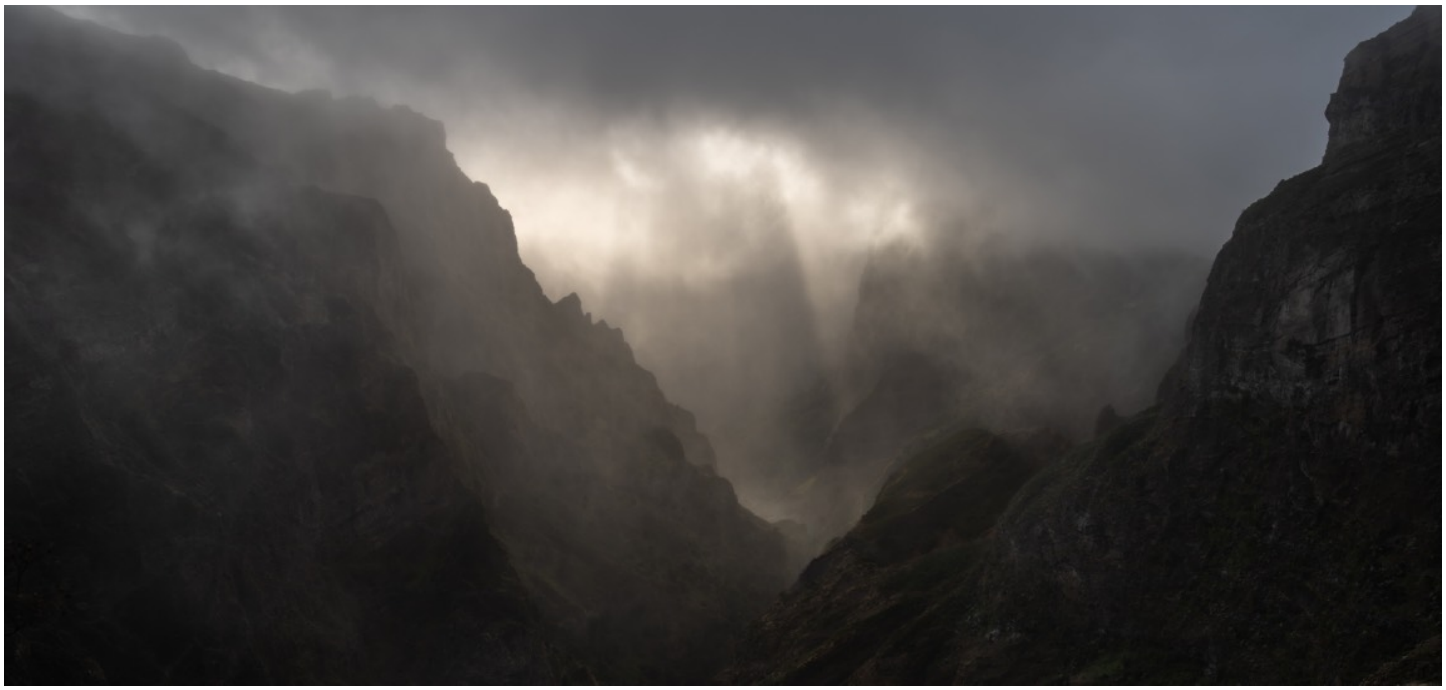
Variation One

Changing white balance is one of the simplest and most effective ways to alter the atmosphere of a scene. These two frames are identical except for a slight increase in temperature, which shifts the image from cool blue tones to warm yellow ones.

The next article will explore white balance in detail, and how we might think about what's 'correct' and how colour can be used as a creative tool.

Whatever your approach, white balance is one of the main reasons our images can look different each time we edit them. It's also one of the ways photographers develop a personal style, as many of us naturally lean toward certain tones and introduce them across different edits.

Creating several versions of the same image with different white balance settings can help you decide which atmosphere feels right for the scene.



Variation Two

In this version, I focused on the darker areas of the image and brightened the edges to recover more features in the mountains. You can now see more texture along the ridge to the right, and the mist on the left appears clearer and more detailed.

When I first edited this photograph almost two years ago, my final version looked more like the bottom image, with even greater brightness and detail in the mountains. My recent edit is much darker and draws the eye to the light shaft and ridges in the background.

Neither image is more ‘correct’ or closer to the original scene, because our eyes perceive contrast very differently from a camera. Our eyes can only focus on a small area at once, so we build our view of the world by combining many smaller impressions.

Our visual system continually adjusts to bright and dark areas, helping us see detail across a wide range of tones, while a camera records all areas equally and presents a broader span of light and shadow. These two edits show different interpretations of the same scene: one emphasising contrast, the other revealing more detail.

Variation Three

When editing this image for the third time, I went back to the beginning and reconsidered my frame.

Removing the top and bottom of the image was an easy decision because there were distracting rocks in the foreground and too much empty sky above. However, including the sides of the frame was a more difficult decision.

I like how mountains create layers that draw us into an image, and the ridges on each side of this valley provide a gradual introduction to the main feature in the centre. However, this closer view allows us to concentrate on the valley and notice more separation and subtle detail around the light shaft, without the distraction of dark edges on either side.

This became a useful reminder of how restarting an edit can reveal new ideas. I'd spent so long trying to bring out shadow detail on the left and right that I couldn't imagine cropping them out of the frame.

By starting again and rethinking how to present the scene, the idea of a tighter crop felt more natural, and it helped me take the image in a completely new direction.

Variation Four

With this new crop, I revisited one of my earlier ideas: testing how white balance adjustments would affect the scene.

In this smaller frame, the lighter areas take up more space, making the effect of white balance shifts more noticeable. The cooler version on the left has a strong atmosphere of bright light contrasted against dark surroundings, with the feeling of a cold environment high in the mountains.

The warmer version on the right feels softer and more welcoming, and I get the sense of an inviting valley opening up beneath the cloud.

Although the white balance settings are identical to the wider version, the effect feels stronger and more distinctive in this tighter crop. It shows how interconnected our edits can be, and why finishing an image in one pass is so difficult.

Conclusion

I often say that photography is more about creative choices than about getting things right, and those choices, repeated over time, form our personal style. It would be impossible to recreate this scene as I experienced it, as my eyes would have interpreted the contrast in a different way to my camera. That made it a great scene for experimentation to explore what choices were available.

Last month, I watched a great video by Thomas Heaton, who was responding to comments about over-processing by revisiting images from a previous project. Thomas Heaton is one of the best photographers in the world, and even he found that revisiting older edits can bring a clearer perspective, and help us recognise where an edit might have gone too far.

Going back to a scene after a break can be a good way to see the image differently, but it's also helpful to edit the same photograph more than once. I often create 'virtual copies' in Lightroom, editing each one separately to explore new directions without being influenced by earlier versions.

This practice can help you understand how unpredictable your editing might be, what details you notice after a fresh start, and where you might want more consistency when processing a photograph. It's a time-consuming process, and not something to try with every image, but it's a valuable practice for getting the most out of those great photographs that you're determined to finish well.

White Balance

Controlling the colour and atmosphere of your image

Introduction

White balance is an image setting that controls the colour temperature of a photograph, and it's one of the most useful yet often misunderstood adjustments we can make. In the last article, I used white balance adjustments in editing to change the atmosphere of the photograph, but you can also adjust it in-camera and influence the colours directly when shooting.

Much of the discussion around white balance focuses on accuracy, and the presets on our cameras encourage us to think that way. We can set the white balance to 'daylight', 'cloudy', 'shade', and 'fluorescent', suggesting that we need to choose the correct white balance to match the conditions around us.

However, deciding how to use white balance can be more nuanced than that, and outside a studio setting, accuracy isn't always as straightforward as we might think. For example, if we see an old orange street light shining above a bank of snow, should the snow appear white (its 'correct' colour) or orange (as it looks to us in person)? Our choices may vary, and there's no single right answer.

It becomes even more interesting when we realise that, in many scenes, white balance is a creative tool we can use to shape mood and atmosphere. If the purpose of our snow image is to express the cosiness of a winter village, we might want to use a warmer white balance to communicate the feeling to a viewer. If we aren't even aiming for accuracy, how should we approach this setting to make the best choices for our image?

This article explores white balance in more depth, sharing examples of how I've used it deliberately in my own photographs.

A warmer white balance creates a completely different mood to this image of sunrise over Lake Bled

Understanding White Balance

In many situations, white balance is about correcting colour rather than changing it. If you are photographing a product and its colour in your image must match reality, you'll need to adjust white balance to get rid of any colour cast from the lighting in your shoot. This is the main purpose of a 'grey card', a small sample of a well-established neutral colour that you can use in editing. Photo editing software can use that grey card reference to detect any unwanted colour from the lighting and adjust white balance to remove it.

In the field, things are more difficult. Landscape and nature photographers spend days hoping for great light at sunrise or sunset, and part of the quality of the light is the colour. If we 'correct' the colour of a scene taken during golden hour, those warm tones we saw in person will disappear, leaving an image that could have been taken at any time of day. The colour of the light is often part of what makes the image, and it's rarely something we want to correct away.

This is where accurate and creative white balance begin to overlap. If we are shooting a product for an advertisement, accuracy might relate to the real colour of the product. If we are shooting a beautiful sunset, accuracy might refer to the scene as we experienced it. Choosing the right white balance usually depends on our intentions and the conditions we get.

Getting white balance right in-camera can be tricky, because we can't check our results while still immersed in the same light in which we took the photograph. I think this is the most compelling reason to shoot in RAW, because a RAW image file captures the original colour data from your sensor and allows you to fully adjust white balance later in editing. JPEG files, on the other hand, bake the camera's white balance into the image, so later adjustments can degrade quality.




Finding the white balance for this image of street art in Bulgaria was about finding the most realistic and accurate colour

How White Balance Works

White balance consists of two controls: temperature and tint. Photographers mostly talk about temperature, describing colours as ‘warm’ or ‘cool’ along a spectrum that runs from blue to yellow. Temperature is measured in Kelvin, with lower values appearing bluer and higher values appearing more yellow.

Tint is more subtle, adjusting colours along a green-to-magenta axis. Green and magenta colour casts are harder to spot in an image, but they're important for correcting unnatural light, such as that from older fluorescent bulbs.

We often aim to get everything right in-camera, making sure each setting suits the scene. Most cameras provide several white balance presets to match lighting conditions, such as daylight, cloudy and shade. Some cameras even allow you to define your own white balance settings and save them as custom presets.

However, because white balance is easy to adjust later and hard to perfect in the field, it's one of the few settings I recommend leaving on Auto. If you choose a specific white balance in-camera, the RAW file still stores all the same image data, but the metadata tells your editing software where to start with the white balance sliders. Auto mode simply makes the camera's best guess at the scene's overall colour temperature, giving you a sensible starting point for colour in your edit.

Editing white balance

Whatever approach we take to white balance in-camera, we still need to decide on our colour adjustments during editing. When we want colours to accurately reflect the subject, using a grey card is a reliable way to correct for any colour cast from the lighting. You capture one master frame without the grey card, another with it, then use editing software to identify the correct white balance for the master image (Lightroom has a dropper tool for this).

However, this can be impractical in the field, where we might not be able to include a grey card in our compositions. If your image includes a neutral tone such as snow or a grey road, it can serve as a good reference point for the scene's overall colour. The white balance dropper often works on these areas, and it's usually possible to fine-tune the balance manually by focusing on a part of the image with a familiar colour.

However, finding the 'true' colour is always subjective, and we can only ever aim for our memory or impression of the scene when we captured it. There's a well-known optical illusion of a black and white pixelated image containing a Coca-Cola can, which most people perceive as red. Our eyes are easily fooled, and because the world is filled with reflected and diffused light, white balance is more an instrument of creativity than it is accuracy, unless you're using precise calibration tools.

However, it's still important to correct any obvious colour casts in your images. Photographs can sometimes look a little muddy, or have a subtle blue tone that you don't notice until it's gone. I usually begin edits by adjusting temperature to correct any blue or yellow shifts, and over time you start to recognise when the colour looks slightly off in a RAW file.

The snow was a good reference point for white in the daytime image of Vestrahorn, but this gets more difficult during the rich colours of blue hour

Case Study

The image above was taken under moonlight, and the RAW file looks fairly realistic for a mountain scene. However, there's a slightly muddy appearance, as if the colours don't quite shine the way we'd expect from a vivid scene lit by the moon.

The snow offers a clue, and a closer look shows it isn't as brilliant white as we'd expect. By cooling the temperature (adding more blue), we can recover the natural vibrancy of the scene, using the snow as our white reference.

In reality, the scene may have looked closer to the warmer tones of the RAW file, especially with so much of the landscape illuminated by orange street lights scattered through the villages and roads around these mountains. I used auto white balance in-camera, but there's no way to perfectly reproduce the colour of the light as it was on location.

However, the adjusted version looks perfectly realistic, and you could even argue it better reflects my perception of the scene, closer to how my visual system would have interpreted white snow on the mountains.

Local White Balance

To make things more confusing, different parts of an image can have their own colour casts that need local correction. This often happens when parts of a scene are in warm light while others are in shade. Street scenes at night are often illuminated by a mix of light sources, and lights from inside a shop might have different colours to those outside.

Our unreliable eyes often correct these colour differences as they scan the environment and build up our impression of the scene. We know that a tree in sunlight and another in shade are the same colour, and we don't perceive them as completely different. In a photograph, though, the shaded tree can appear much more blue than the one in light.

If adjusting the overall white balance still doesn't make the image look as we intend, it's easy to get caught in a loop of small tweaks to temperature and tint, chasing the 'right' colour. The solution can be to use masks and make local adjustments, applying different white balance settings to different areas of the image.

There are no strict rules for when to use local white balance adjustments, but there are signs they might help. Try warming areas of the landscape that are in shadow, especially during the golden light of sunrise or sunset. Watch for tint shifts if your image includes lots of trees, or if artificial lights mix with natural light.

Creative White Balance

Achieving accurate colour in the field can be difficult, and it's not always clear whether realism means correcting for the colour of the light or deliberately keeping it. However, we might take a purely creative approach to white balance, and use it to represent our feelings about a scene, even if that departs from the reality. Filmmakers use colour palettes to create a consistent atmosphere across scenes, and we can use colour as a powerful tool of expression in our photography.

Many photographers choose a consistent set of colours and apply them using a preset, which is a simple way to start building a recognisable style. We might still adjust white balance for each image, but prioritise atmosphere and mood over colour accuracy. I like my photographs to look realistic, but I often treat white balance as a way to add feeling to the final image.

Finding a creative white balance that still feels believable can take several attempts and adjustments. It can help to create several virtual copies of an image and compare different white balance settings side by side. It's also worth returning to your image a few days later to make sure you haven't pushed the colour too far.

Local white balance can be used creatively too, and it's an effective way to warm or cool parts of a scene to guide the viewer's attention. You might warm the main subject slightly to make it more inviting, or cool the surroundings to reduce their impact.

Conclusion

For studio and commercial photographers with a detailed understanding of lighting, white balance is a technical subject with layers of detail beyond my understanding, but all photographers have to consider this setting when creating an image. The effect of colour is so strong that white balance adjustments can make our images look more vivid and realistic, shape mood, or have a significant impact on our photographic style.

It's best to think of white balance as an interpretive setting, one that helps you recreate the colours you experienced on location, even if you can't match them exactly. Most cameras can automatically estimate colour settings, or you can choose from preset options based on lighting conditions, but the most meaningful adjustments happen in editing.

To start exploring white balance creatively in your photography, try working with a simple, abstract scene. Create several versions and choose slightly different white balance settings for each to compare the results. Next, experiment with local edits. Try warming the darker areas of a sunrise or sunset scene to see how shade affects colour.

At first, the best way to explore white balance is through experimentation. You probably already have a sense of the colours you're drawn to in photography, and you may spot patterns in the white balance settings you've instinctively used before. I like blues and purples, so my images are often a little cool. Over time, and with deliberate testing, you'll start to recognise colour casts in RAW files and develop a more reliable approach to white balance: something that can make your portfolio feel more consistent and recognisable.

Thanks for Reading

I hope you liked this issue of In The Frame, and I'd love to hear any feedback or ideas for what the magazine might cover in the future. If you'd like to support this project and help me continue to write about travel and photography, there are a few ways you can contribute.

Share: Help me grow an audience for In The Frame by sharing the magazine with other photographers.

Support: I don't want to fill the magazine with adverts and distractions, so donations help me to cover production costs and keep the content honest and useful.

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Shop: Check out my website for my guidebooks on photography and travel.

In The Frame

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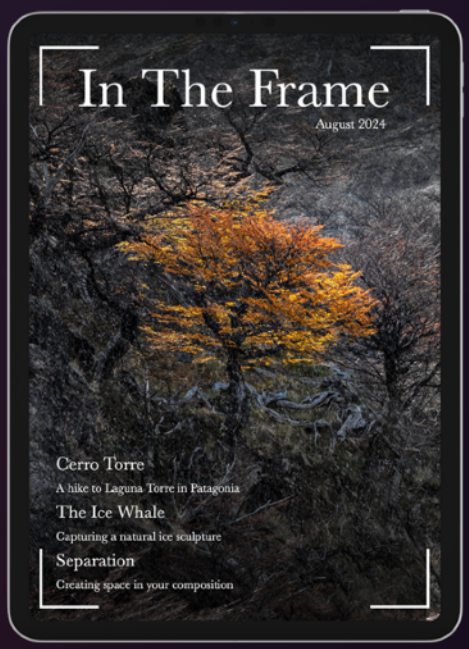

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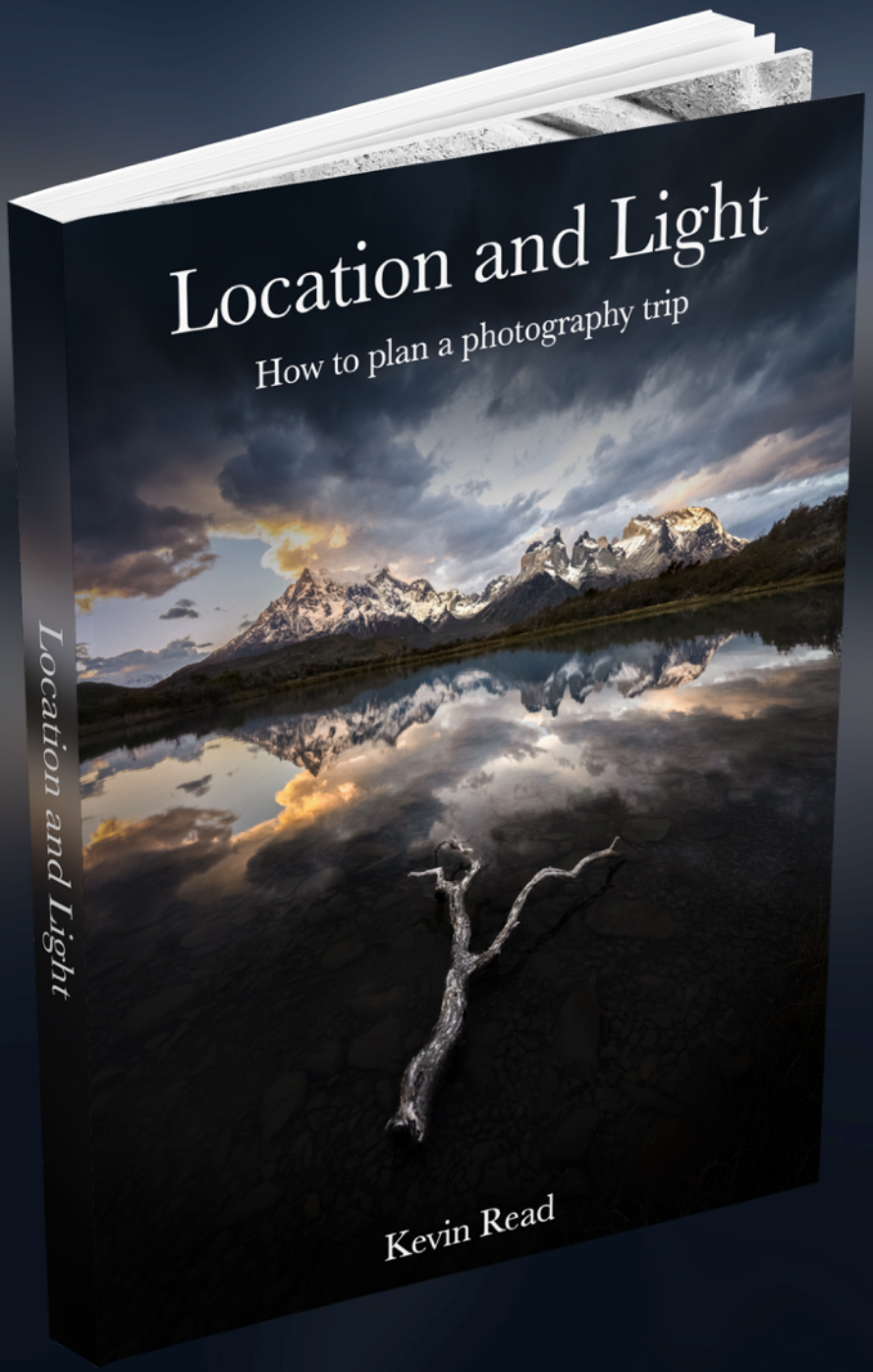

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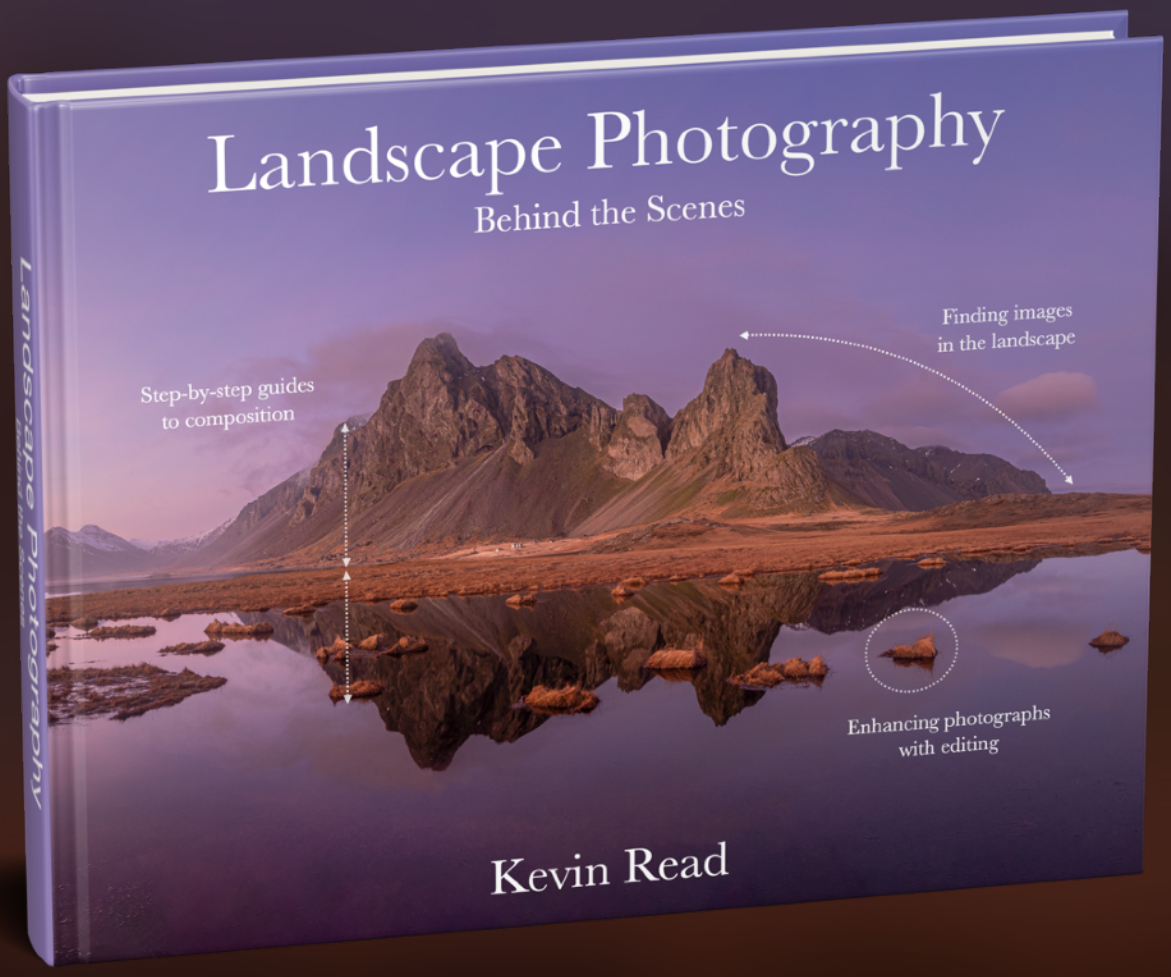

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