

In The Frame

August 2026

Derryclare Lough

Refining compositions over time

Streets of Porto

Learning to photograph patterns

Sharpness

How to capture more detail

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Mobile Edition

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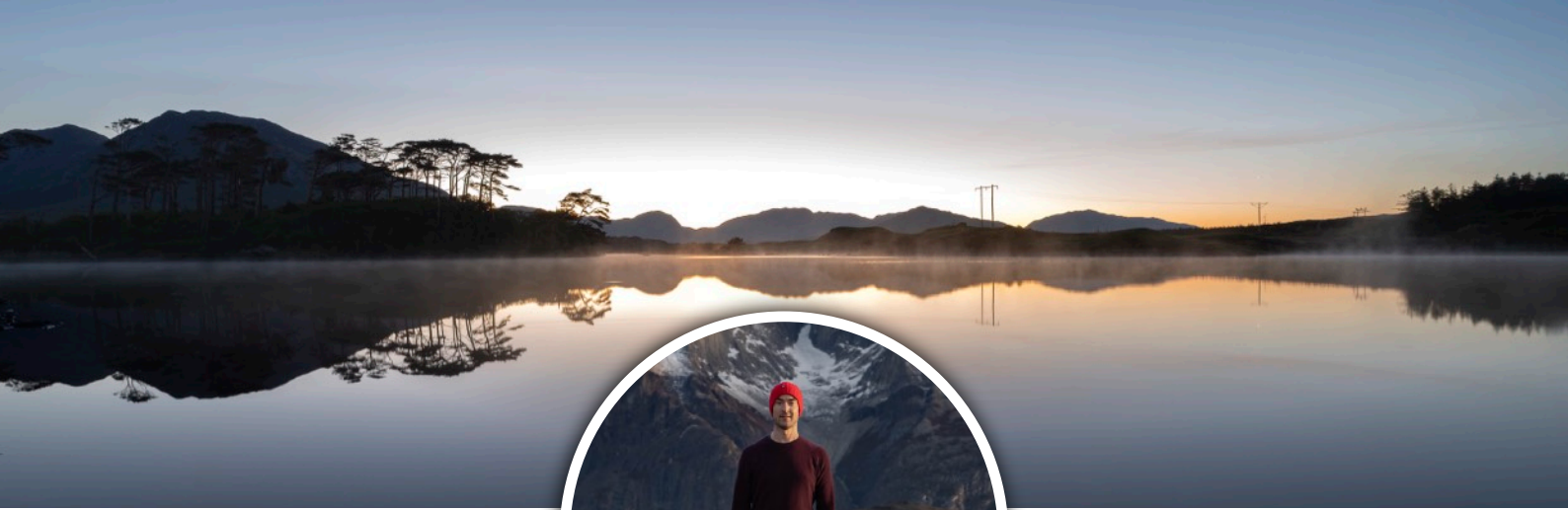
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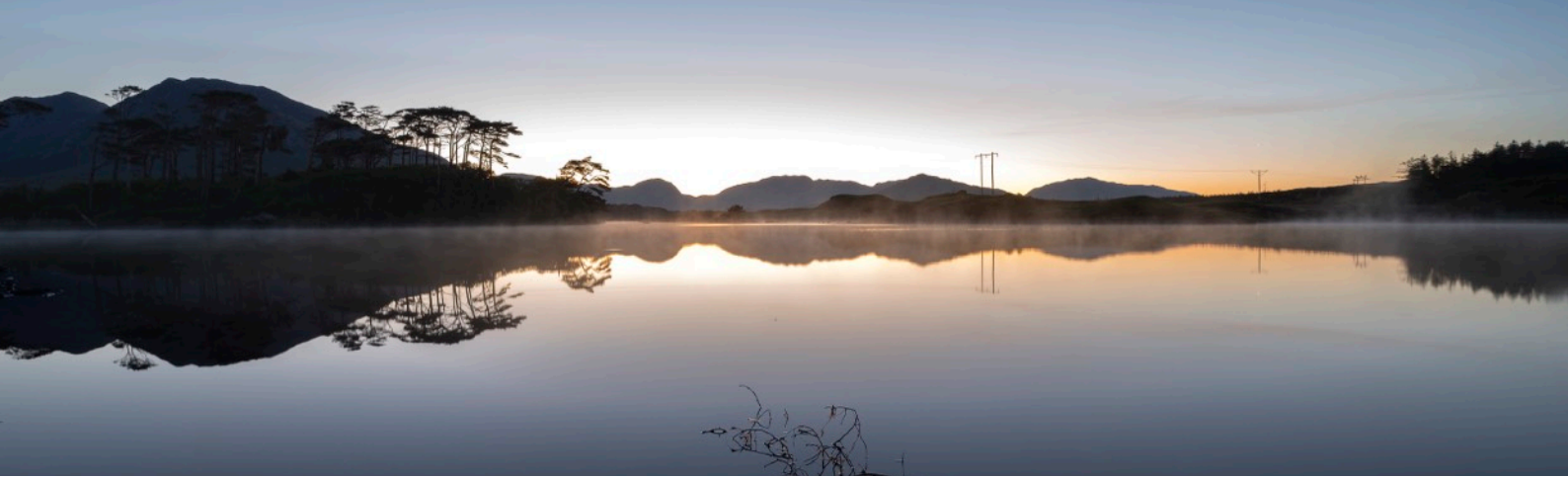
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Welcome

Welcome to the August edition of In The Frame.

Over the last month, I've noticed a lot more AI-generated photography products appearing in my online feeds and have found myself getting increasingly frustrated with them. The adverts are often easy to spot, combining cluttered text with collections of small icons beside every listed feature. Following the adverts usually leads to strange accounts with a handful of posts, all published fairly recently. There is never a face or real name behind the accounts or websites selling these products and, while I'd never give them money, I strongly suspect that anything you buy would be entirely generated by AI.



A few months ago, I encountered a more serious case involving a photographer who recognised his work on another feed. The images had been altered to include different skies or aurora displays over the original scenes. The photographs had been reposted by an account whose owner claimed to have created them, convincing many followers that the altered images were genuine.

AI is changing photography and the internet in lots of different ways, but the uses that bother me most all have this element of dishonesty. Generating words or images and then presenting them as your own original work often feels like an attempt to deceive the audience, and it's telling how many of the AI-generated photography courses try to give the impression that the teaching comes from a real photographer, who is always mysteriously absent and unnamed.



That said, AI can be very useful for some tasks. It helps me test ideas, catch grammar errors and identify poor phrasing, although the experiences and original writing always come from me. I use AI tools to reduce noise and remove small distractions from photographs, but not to add things that weren't really there. Many people have chosen to avoid generative AI wherever possible, and I can see the appeal of that position. For those of us who do use it, the challenge is finding a line that feels comfortable and honest.

It's disappointing to see so much shallow photography material being churned out with AI when so much good teaching and so many useful ideas already exist, shared by photographers whose knowledge comes from years of experience. I hope that the positive result will be that more people want to engage directly with real photographers, and I always appreciate it when people take the time to read *In The Frame*, which is my way of getting around all the algorithms and computer-generated material.



This month, we start on location at Derryclare Lough in Ireland, famous for its beautiful pine-covered island just off the shore. We explore the development of a street scene in Porto, returning to an image from the archives to discover what I could learn from an earlier period in my photography. Finally, we discuss sharpness in photography and the techniques you can use to capture more detail in your images.

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

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Exploring Ireland in changing light and weather



Introduction

Derryclare Lough is an open lake in Connemara, in the west of Ireland, with many of the qualities that make this part of the country so distinctive. Tree-covered islands break up the surface of the water, and the shoreline emerges gradually into low-lying terrain of grasses and bogs. Around the lake and in the distance lie the rounded, rocky peaks that make up the beautiful landscape found throughout western Ireland.

At the southern tip of Derryclare Lough is a small island covered in tall pine trees, with a narrow causeway reaching towards it when the water level is low enough. It is the kind of scene that looks perfectly made for photography, but finding the right position can be surprisingly difficult. You can walk around the shore for different angles on the island, or look across the lake towards the mountains on the horizon, but every combination seems to come with compromises.

Much of the landscape around Derryclare Lough is only accessible on hiking routes leading into the mountains, but you can reach the southern shore near Pine Island with a short walk from the main road. This makes it easy to reach for sunrise, without a long hike in the dark beforehand.

I spent several mornings and evenings around Pine Island during my time in Connemara, and it became my favourite place to photograph sunrise during my stay. It's the ideal spot to challenge your photography; each part of the scene is beautiful, but pulling it together requires just the right conditions and composition. This article is about my experience photographing the island, from the sessions when I just couldn't make it work to the morning when the light and mist finally came together.



On Location

The easiest access to Derryclare Lough starts from a parking area just off the main road south of Connemara National Park, slightly uphill from the lake. A few trails lead towards the water and along the shore, but the curve of the lake and surrounding farmland limit how far you can move from this position.

There's an obvious viewpoint on a rise near the water's edge, at the perfect height to take in all the features of the scene. From this angle, the island fits naturally with the lake and a range of mountains in the distance. Much of the terrain around Derryclare Lough is low and open, but the pines form a distinctive feature against the lake and mountains.

Yet the location feels like it should offer much more than a single wide view. The pines often glow in the sunlight, and the causeway can work as a leading line. There are rocks just offshore, reeds growing from the water's edge, and small details around the island that you can pick out with a long lens. From the shore near Pine Island, anyone stopping for a quick photograph can capture the postcard view of Derryclare Lough, but there is more to find for a photographer willing to spend time here.

Getting the most from Derryclare Lough is not easy, with flat terrain, restricted movement and features that can be difficult to separate in the wrong conditions. However, that sense of unfinished potential kept drawing me back to check the light and look harder for anything I might have missed.



The Challenges of Pine Island

I arrived late in Connemara on the first night of my trip. Derryclare Lough had stood out most in my research and was close enough for a sunset shoot, so I checked into my hotel and went straight there as the sun was low in the sky. I was hoping this would be a relatively easy first shoot and provide a good start to the rest of my photography trip.

The wide view of the lake felt immediately challenging, and I realised this wasn't going to be a simple composition to warm me up for more difficult photography later in the trip. The scene was beautiful enough that I knew a great shot should be possible, but finding it would need more time and consideration than I had expected. Rather than push for a great image on the first night, I walked the scene and thought about the problems to solve.

The island is distinctive in person, but it's also relatively small in a big open landscape. The pines merge with the dark hills behind, and finding a composition that allows the island to stand out and attract just the right amount of attention was going to be tricky. The landscape of Ireland has real character, but the flat terrain means that you have to work for a good angle, and the shore felt too low.

Finally, there are a few practical frustrations. There are wires running across the lake and through the island, creating a distraction. The edge of the water merges with the grass in places, leaving few obvious foregrounds next to the lake. All of these issues would be interesting to solve, but I'd need to try different angles and light to find the right shot.



Light and Separation

I think that finding separation for your subjects is one of the most interesting and important aspects of photography, and I love the challenge of making things stand out in the frame. In person, the features we notice can seem so obvious that we expect them to grab the attention of anyone looking at our photograph. However, without good separation from the rest of the scene, they can blend into the background more than we realise.

That makes separation an act of communication. We have to be able to detach from our own response, and find deliberate ways to make someone else notice the same subject in the context of a photograph. The island of pine trees in Derryclare Lough is a great example: very obvious in person, but easy to lose in a complex image of the wider scene.

There were several potential ways to separate the island of trees, and it was the first thing I considered whenever I returned to this location. Light on the pines but not the hills behind would make them glow against a darker background. From some angles, the trees stood out in silhouette against the sky. Mostly, I hoped for mist of the lake to separate all the elements and isolate the trees from any position along the shore.



Finding Variety

I had more than a week to explore Connemara, which gave me plenty of mornings to visit Derryclare Lough in different conditions. However, it also became my favourite place to photograph, and I wanted to vary my compositions rather than rely only on changes in the weather. By looking around the lake and finding different views, I hoped to solve some of the other challenges of this location.

I did find some foreground options near the river flowing out of the lake to the south. There were some rocks in the water near the causeway, which gives access to the island when the water is low enough. From this angle, you can position the trees against the sky and use the causeway as a leading line, or search for other foreground options near the ground. However, the curve of the shore meant I was constantly balancing on rocks to reach the right angle.

On some mornings, mist on the water separated parts of the scene that I hadn't even noticed on other visits. The rocks and foliage at the edge of the island looked beautiful against a reflective lake, with fog isolating them, and I tried zooming in closer for more detail in the pines. There was a lot to explore with a long lens, even if the scene instinctively felt like a wide vista.

The one issue I couldn't solve was the set of wires running through the scene and across the island. I hope one day there's a better route across this landscape for those cables, but for now I concluded that the only option was to remove them in editing if they were too distracting.



The Ideal Morning

Several days into my visit, the conditions finally came together at Derryclare Lough. I was there close to the summer solstice, and getting on location required an incredibly early start, but the forecast was so good that I arrived during the earlier stages of twilight to watch the light develop.

It started with some mist on the lake, which I captured both from above and at the water's edge, working with a long lens to pick out features as it flowed across different parts of the shoreline. Gradually, the sky changed colour and the mountains became clearer, so I switched to a wider lens and looked for a more open shot of the scene.

I had visited several times already, so had a good sense of my options and how to find them in near darkness. I captured the island from the highest lookout, and then explored the causeway to watch how the mist flowed around the rocks and over the surface of the lake. There's a real pressure when you arrive at a location in great conditions, but having some ideas ready can help the shoot feel focused and organised, rather than turning into a chaotic rush to find something in an unfamiliar place.

There were still some compromises in the images I made that morning. I found some interesting foregrounds, but none that I felt particularly excited about. The trees looked beautiful in the light, but the mist was just a bit too thin to separate them fully from the background. However, good light at sunrise is never guaranteed in this part of the world, and I was lucky to see the location with both light and mist.



The only way to capture this composition was balancing over the water while lining up the foreground and island



Facing away from the centre of the lake revealed other opportunities like this subtle landscape across the water



Sunset light was ideal for adding texture and colour to the row of trees, making them stand out against the sky



Conclusion

In last month's magazine, I wrote about staying on the shore of Lake Bled for ten days in the summer of 2022, and I only noticed the connection between the two experiences when I'd finished writing this article. Lake Bled had one obvious composition that was easy to find, and all the variety and excitement came from discovering what the weather would deliver each morning. Derryclare Lough had several possible compositions, but none of them was straightforward. Every visit involved trying to understand the landscape while also wondering whether the light would cooperate.

The comparison made me realise that repeated visits can have different purposes. Sometimes, we come back to a location to see what else we can discover, and the familiarity we develop helps us to spot things that might not be obvious on the first or second attempts. At other times, repeated visits can show us another side to the same location, and the varying conditions reveal new opportunities and ideas as the same features look different each time.

Derryclare Lough was the ideal location for revisiting because there were lots of elements to explore in each session, and the light and weather changed how they appeared from one visit to the next. Making the most of good light was easier because I had become familiar with some of the terrain, and the experience made me wonder whether I might be underestimating places closer to home, where I could return more easily in different conditions to watch the changes.

I left Connemara with a pretty collection of images from Pine Island, but not a single definitive view. I would have loved to see this scene in thicker mist or as the colours changed for autumn, but the unfinished potential will give me a reason to go back at another time of year. It wasn't the easy first shoot I had expected, but that difficulty made it one of the more interesting challenges of the trip.

Behind the Scene

Porto | Portugal



Exploring the patterns and colours in the streets



Introduction

This month I wanted to study an older image from my collection, and deliberately searched through my back catalogue for something to write about. There's often more to say when I break down an image from a recent shoot because, with more experience, the decisions I make while creating it are generally more considered. However, it's easy to fall into repeated patterns of thinking, and I hoped that looking further back through my collection would remind me of ideas I had forgotten.

I went to Porto in 2016, and the trip was much more focussed on tasting port than photographing the city. However, I brought my camera with me and found as many opportunities as possible to photograph the streets as I walked from one part of the city to another.

I hadn't planned to turn that visit into a study of doorways and window displays, but the colours and textures of Porto make the small details of the streets hard to ignore. A lot of my images from that trip are either wide perspectives from a viewing platform or close-up studies of facades around the city.

Seeing them again reminded me of how much I was thinking about shapes and patterns at the time. They also brought back an experiment that developed as my collection of images grew. My approach to photographing patterns is still informed by what I learned in Porto, so this article looks at a few of those images and the ideas that developed as I worked.



Texture and Colour

There are so many beautiful facades in Porto, and the streets are full of colours and textures that have developed through the years. Some of the most interesting scenes are not planned or designed. They appear where an electricity box has been bolted onto the front of a house or a doorway has rusted and changed colour over time. These changes create strange contrasts and new connections, and the images often worked best when they combined different elements of the city and its history.

I took dozens of shots like this, picking out doorways, windows and small parts of building facades. The images seemed to work best when photographed face-on, from a perspective that flattened the features into a single plane. This made it easier to concentrate on the colours and shapes in the scene and compare how the compositions worked, even though every photograph contained a new set of features.



Using Light

Early in the trip, I began looking for small patches of light catching the buildings, changing the textures or highlighting small areas of colour. The best effects appeared when the light was indirect, and I particularly liked scenes where sunlight reflected from windows behind me and formed patterns across the buildings in front.

Buildings like this were ideal for the mini project that was developing. The colours and shapes looked beautiful in a flat view, but the reflected light added a sense of depth and contrast to the image. A patch of light made the colours richer, especially when reflections around the street had softened it.



Working with Patterns

As I made more images of Porto, I started to notice how difficult it was to find the edges of my frame. Close-up views of doorways have a simple, defined boundary that helps you to stay consistent, but the more interesting features in these buildings often sat between the windows or emerged from combinations in several parts of the facade.

Some images seemed to work best if I cropped very close and only included part of a doorway or window, but others needed a wider frame with more features to feel like a complete photograph.

In this frame, the interest comes from a single open door, and we need to see the others for the contrast between open and closed to stand out. I could have added more doors by zooming out, but a wider frame began to include other buildings with different designs, and the open door became less noticeable.

Much of the time there wasn't a clear way to decide between including more or less in the scene. I would get closer and find that the shapes and patterns weren't interesting enough to hold attention.

However, zooming out meant that the larger patterns across the buildings distracted from the finer details.

As I searched for the boundaries of each photograph, I began to wonder if there was an ideal amount of a pattern to include.



By the River

Thinking about how to find the boundaries of a pattern became more important near the river. Porto has a beautiful riverfront along the Douro, and you can walk along promenades on either side, looking across at the streets across the water. The city rises in layers from the riverbanks, with historic buildings appearing to pile up on both sides.

Many of the doorways and windows I captured were on narrow and busy streets, so my choice of position was often limited by the surroundings. By the river, I could shoot across the wide open space and choose how much of the opposite bank to include, from a single doorway to an entire street of buildings, full of colour and life.

It was the perfect opportunity to test my ideas and frame everything from a few doors and windows to an entire city street. I set up my camera on the opposite bank and zoomed in and out across the river, trying to decide what level of detail worked best.



Closer View

Unfortunately, I didn't photograph all of my experiments that day, so I've had to recreate some of the comparisons by cropping the original frame. I had no idea that one day I'd become a photography writer, and wasn't in the habit of capturing the tests before the final image.

I could have used a long lens to zoom in until a single doorway or window filled the frame. However, that felt like a missed opportunity with such an interesting row of riverfront buildings, which was one of the few places in the city where it was possible to capture a whole street in one scene.

This view of about 40 doors and windows feels like a close-up compared with the wider options, and small details like clothes on a line or flowers in a box take up more of the frame and draw our attention. I think there's a real advantage to showing so many small parts, and I liked this section of the riverfront.

However, the scene feels a little dull, like a compromise between two versions that might have worked better. Something closer might have brought more attention to one part of the scene and told the story of a particular house. A wider view could have conveyed the idea of a busy community, with lots of separate lives intertwined. This middle option shows the windows neatly, but focuses more on the geometric pattern than the individual details.



Wider Perspective

One of the best features of this open view was the option to expand the frame horizontally for a panorama. There are very few spots around the city where you can capture so much of a single street in one frame, and this wider view allowed me to test how the individual details interacted with the overall pattern.

Since the buildings were all different, the uniformity of the pattern broke down the more I included in the frame. New textures and shapes appear across the street, from decorations on the balconies to the changing colours of each building. There's a sense of community in this image, and I think it comes from the differences within the pattern rather than its consistency.

Although this framing contains more features, it encourages us to explore the details more closely. In the previous version, the pattern was a distraction. Here, it provides a more subtle structure for a whole collection of interesting smaller scenes.

For this scene to work properly, I'd need to print it at a large scale so that each part of the row had enough detail for a viewer to study it closely. One of the disadvantages of exploring older images is that this seems clearer to me now than it did at the time, so I didn't capture enough detail on location for this to work as a large print. Still, understanding why this image could work will help me make better decisions the next time I encounter a similar scene.



Final View

I liked the panorama in the previous section, but it evolved out of testing the impact of patterns at different scales in my images. As a photograph, it still felt slightly over-cropped. I originally removed the rooftops from the frame to maintain consistency in the pattern, but this uniformity was already lost as I widened the view beyond just a few windows. Once I accepted more flexibility in how much of the pattern I could include, I added the roofs back in.

This is my favourite version of the scene, and it feels like the best balance between the patterns in the facade, the small details that add interest, and the general atmosphere of a riverfront community. The rooftops complete that sense of place, and the cost to the overall pattern was smaller than I expected.

As with most image breakdowns, the real advantage is not just in finding my favourite version of one scene. Exploring patterns in Porto made me much more aware of the boundaries of my frame, and helped me notice the balance between the overall pattern and finer detail.

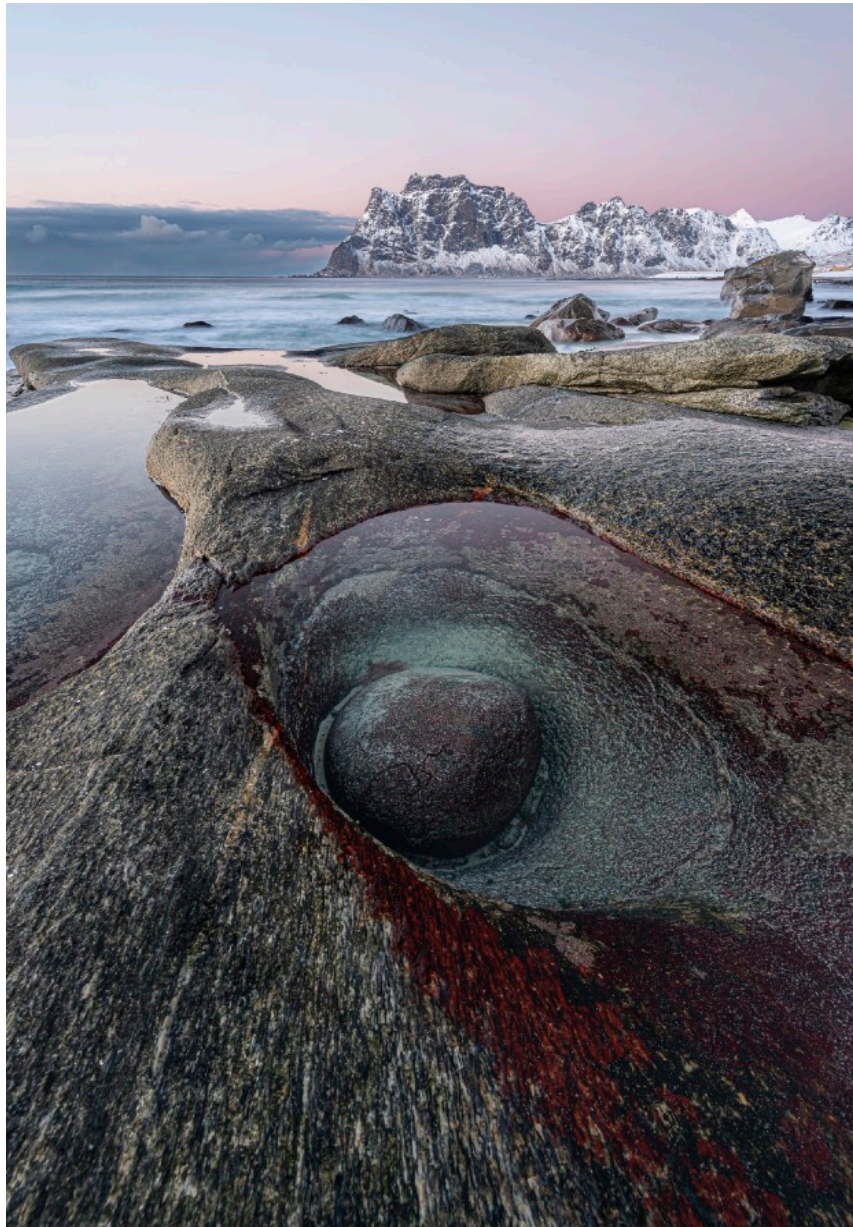
I didn't conclude that there was one ideal amount of a pattern to include in a photograph. Some street scenes worked best as close-ups of individual details. Others needed just enough points of comparison to notice a difference, like the single open door in a group, while some looked best when the pattern became large enough for its consistency to break down.

If there's one lesson to learn from this exercise, it's to photograph more variations on location so that, when you return years later with more experience, you have more material to work with.

Sharpness

Getting more detail from your equipment





Introduction

I often talk about my habit of choosing one element of photography to work on whenever I travel with the camera, which helps me practise deliberately without becoming overwhelmed by everything I want to improve. A few years ago, one of those topics was how to make my images sharper. My photography and travel partner always seemed to capture beautifully sharp images, and I wanted to understand exactly how he did it.

In photography, obsessing over the sharpness of your images is often called 'pixel-peeping' and is not always seen as a good thing. Sharpness can be a very technical subject, and photographers sometimes worry that pursuing technical perfection will come at the expense of artistic expression. We shouldn't become so distracted by creating a perfectly sharp image that we lose sight of more important features like light and composition.

However, knowing how to create a sharp image is important. We can use it deliberately to create an atmosphere or draw attention to a subject. It can determine how heavily we can crop an image or how large we can print it. We don't need to make every photograph as sharp as possible, but understanding exactly how to get maximum sharpness from your equipment will give you more options to apply creatively.

In this article, I'm using sharpness to mean how crisp and clearly defined an image appears, rather than the total resolution or detail the camera records. I'll explain the different causes of softness in an image and how changes in our settings or practice can give us a better chance of creating a sharper result. These are the most useful ways to capture more detail in your photography without needing to buy any new equipment.



Focus and Depth of Field

The most common cause of softness on a main subject comes from a combination of our focal point and depth of field. Sometimes we are not focussed exactly on the subject of our composition, or we are using such a large aperture that our depth of field is too narrow. When I started looking into sharpness in my own images, I often found that parts of the scene were very detailed, but they weren't always the areas where I had intended to focus.

The most important change I made was to take more control of my camera's focus. Sometimes, this meant selecting a single focus point and maintaining awareness of where in my composition I was aiming to focus. Sometimes it meant using a magnified live view on the camera and carefully focussing by hand.

Whenever the scene allows, I now use live view on my camera, zoom in on the display, and focus manually.

I talked about the importance of depth of field in a recent article, and it is a very important factor of sharpness. Only the focal plane is in exact focus, while depth of field describes the area in front of and behind it that appears acceptably sharp. This can be very narrow, which is why portrait and wildlife photographers often focus on the eye of their subject and accept some softness in their subjects. Avoiding very small f-numbers (large apertures) can give you some tolerance around your focal point and more of a scene in focus if your goal is as much sharpness as possible.

A carefully chosen focal point and large depth of field can provide enough sharpness for many scenes, but sometimes we need special techniques to capture more of the frame in focus. Taking a series of images while you move the focal point through the scene can give you a set of frames to blend into a focus stack, extending apparent sharpness across more of the image. I usually reserve this time-consuming technique for compositions that need the extra depth of field and matter enough to justify the work, but it can be the most practical way to make a scene appear sharp from foreground to background.



Aperture and Lens Performance

Some lenses are sharper than others, and more expensive ones generally perform better than cheaper ones in similar situations. However, every lens performs differently at different apertures and focal lengths, and there's a lot you can do to get the most from the equipment you have.

Most lenses are less sharp when used closer to their widest aperture, and the effect is strongest near the edges and corners of the frame. Stopping down increases depth of field, so more of the scene may appear sharp, and it often improves optical performance across the frame when a lens is used near its widest aperture. As a result, a cheaper lens at a suitable aperture can sometimes produce a sharper image than a more expensive lens used wide open.

Another phenomenon, diffraction, starts to have an impact at smaller apertures. This effect gradually begins to soften fine detail, becoming more noticeable at smaller apertures. Choosing an aperture involves a trade-off: wider apertures reduce depth of field and can soften the edges and corners, while very small apertures extend depth of field but may reduce fine detail across the frame.

On a zoom lens, performance can also change with focal length, although there is no single part of the range that will be best for every lens.

Photography is full of compromises and each lens performs differently. However, if you want to understand how your lens performs, photograph the same detailed subject across its aperture range, then repeat the test at several focal lengths. Changing one variable at a time will show where the differences come from, and you may find that performance varies considerably within a single lens.



Movement During the Exposure

We tend to think of sharpness as a technical subject which is most affected by our equipment and settings. However, I discovered that many of my older images were not sharp because I was moving the camera too much while shooting.

There's a lot we can do to improve the stability of our camera and capture sharper images. In your hand, stability is affected by your posture and the way you hold the camera. On a tripod, it can be affected by wind, ground stability, or simply knocking the camera or pressing the physical shutter button. If you notice that some of your images aren't sharp, look for details that appear smeared consistently in one direction, which can indicate that the camera moved during the exposure.

To avoid softness from motion blur, we also have to think about the movement of the scene in front of us. Grass and leaves blow in the wind, animals and people move a little even if they seem to be completely still. No matter how much we stabilise our cameras, movement within the scene can still soften any elements that change position while the shutter is open.

The easiest fix for motion blur is to use a faster shutter speed, while adjusting your ISO to compensate for the reduced light. However, it's worth investigating if this is a problem in your photography before changing your habits. Look for situations where you have taken several frames in a row at the same settings and check whether some are sharper than others. If sharpness varies between consecutive frames, camera or subject movement is more likely than a problem with focus or lens performance. I discovered this problem in my own images where sometimes I had accidentally used slower shutter speeds.



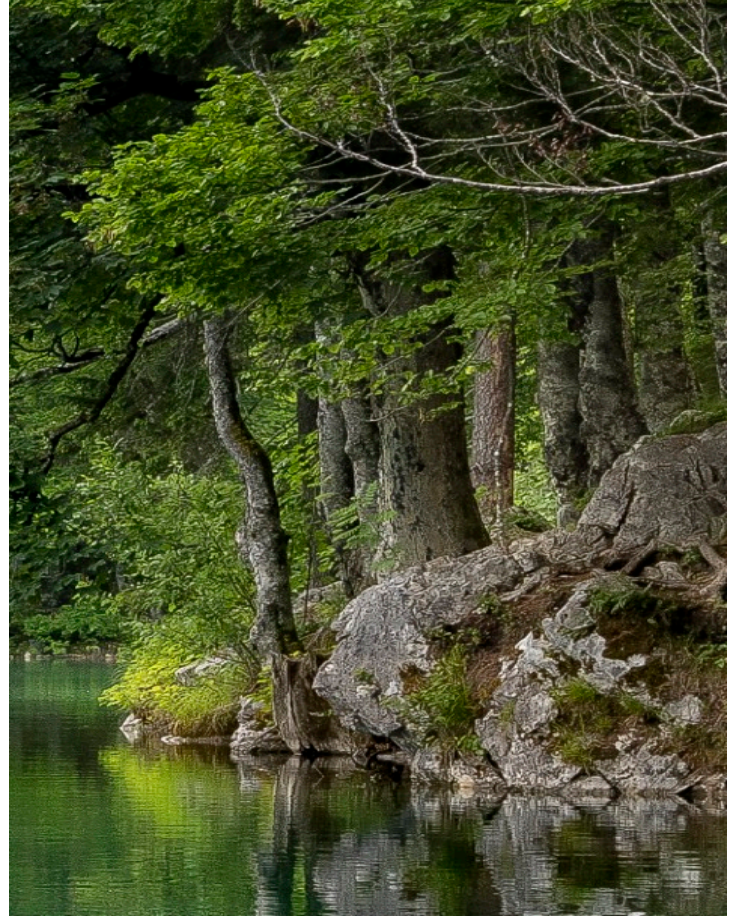
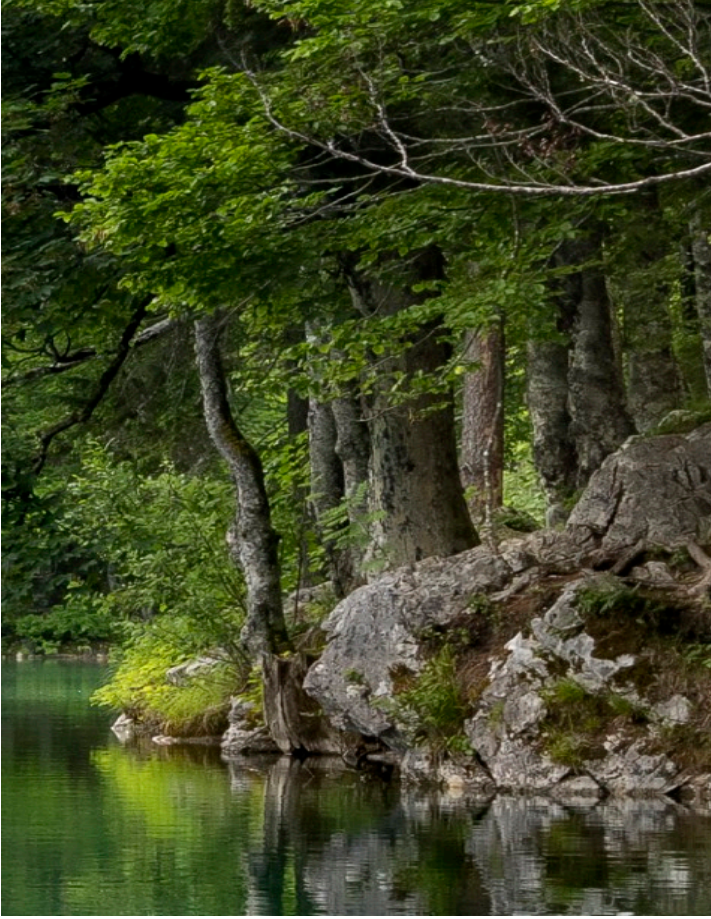
Weather Conditions

Not all scenes are sharp to the eye, and sometimes it's not possible to capture all the detail of your subjects in an image. Atmospheric conditions can scatter or distort light before it reaches your eye or camera, making distant objects appear softer because of temperature differences, mist or haze.

Heat haze is a common cause of softness in warm conditions, and it can cause visible distortion as layers of air at different temperatures move between you and your subject. If your subject is far away on a hot day, especially when your line of sight passes over sun-warmed surfaces such as roads or rocks, the effects of heat haze can be easily visible in the final image. I noticed this most acutely when photographing active volcanoes in Iceland, where the heat haze made the volcano appear almost completely out of focus.

Mist and haze can also reduce apparent sharpness. Even when a scene does not look foggy, tiny droplets and particles in the air can scatter light, reducing contrast and detail over long distances. This is often a problem in mountain scenes or near the ocean, where there might be more humidity than you realise and your subjects can be far away.

Softness caused by atmospheric conditions is difficult to avoid, but it can help you understand those situations where you just can't seem to capture a sharp image. Shooting early in the day avoids some heat haze. Changing composition to something closer to the lens can reduce the effect. Often, however, the best approach is to embrace the situation and design images that work with a softer finish.



Processing, Display and the Final Image

Choosing the right settings, stabilising your camera and allowing for atmospheric conditions give you the best chance of a sharp image, but there are some adjustments that can be made after you've captured the photograph. Raw files generally require some sharpening, and adding some sharpness in software is a common part of the editing process.

Sharpening in software increases contrast along edges, making existing detail appear more defined, but it cannot restore information that was never captured. However, AI-powered tools go a step further and try to predict the details that belong in areas of softness. We all have to decide how comfortable we feel about creating new parts of a photograph, but even small adjustments can make a huge difference to the appearance of your final image.

Excessive sharpness creates halos, noise and unnatural textures around subjects in your photograph. Choosing the right amount to apply is something that requires some judgement and experimentation, and it's easy to add too much and then notice the effect later. Adding a little and then returning later is usually the best approach to managing sharpness in editing.

We also have to consider sharpness when exporting images from our editing tool, and photographers often add an extra level of 'output sharpening' at this stage. In Adobe Lightroom, this function is part of the export tool, and you can choose the type and level of sharpening to match the purpose of the image, such as screen display or print. I haven't tested these settings enough to recommend a particular amount, but output sharpening is worth experimenting with when preparing an image for a specific use.



Conclusion

Photographs do not have to be perfectly sharp, and it's easy to become distracted by technical image quality at the expense of light, composition and other important factors. However, it does sometimes matter, and it's useful to learn how to create sharp images for those times when you need it. If you spend some time focussed on sharpness techniques, you might also develop a better sense of when a scene works with softer detail.

The importance of sharpness often depends on what we want to do with the photograph. Images for online publication and sharing don't always require fine detail as viewers will be looking at them in lower resolution on a small screen. Large prints are more likely to be studied in depth and softer details are easier to notice as people spend more time exploring sections of the scene. Photographs are rarely fully lost if they are not sharp, but there might be limits to how we can publish them.

The good news is that most photographers can improve the sharpness of their images without needing to buy more equipment. Experimenting with your lenses at different settings can reveal huge differences in how they perform, and optimising your camera for sharpness can have more impact than a new lens. Learning to hold your camera more firmly and paying attention to the stability of your tripod can also make a visible difference to the finer detail.

I used to attribute any softness in my photographs to the unavoidable limitations of my equipment, and believed that obsessing over sharpness was something to avoid because it would only tempt me into spending more money. However, it didn't take long to test a few settings and start paying more attention to my shutter speed, and my photographs have been a lot sharper ever since. I hope some of these ideas can work in your images, even if it means you have fewer good reasons to shop for new gear.



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: You can support the project with a one-off payment at the link below and gain access to the Supporter Library.

www.shuttersafari.com/in-the-frame/support

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

In The Frame

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Shutter Safari

Photography Travel Guides



Planning a photography trip can take a lot of research, and the information you need is often scattered across countless blogs and websites.

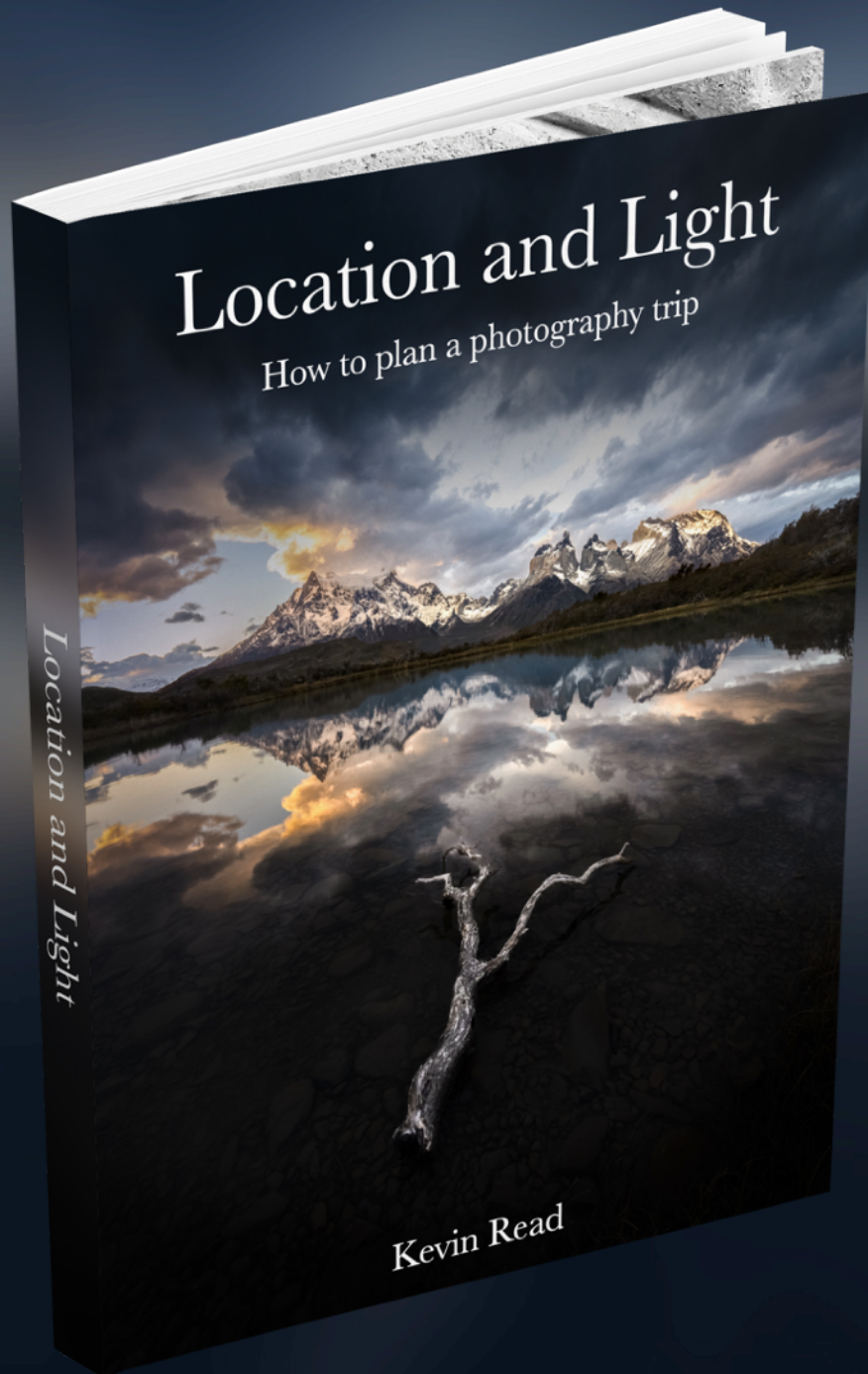
Photography Travel Guides put everything in one place, with structured information to help you plan both your journey and your photography.

I created these books from first-hand experience travelling with my camera to over fifty countries. Each guide combines travel and photography advice, so you can spend less time planning and more time shooting.

www.shuttersafari.com/photography-travel-guides

Location and Light

How to plan a photography trip

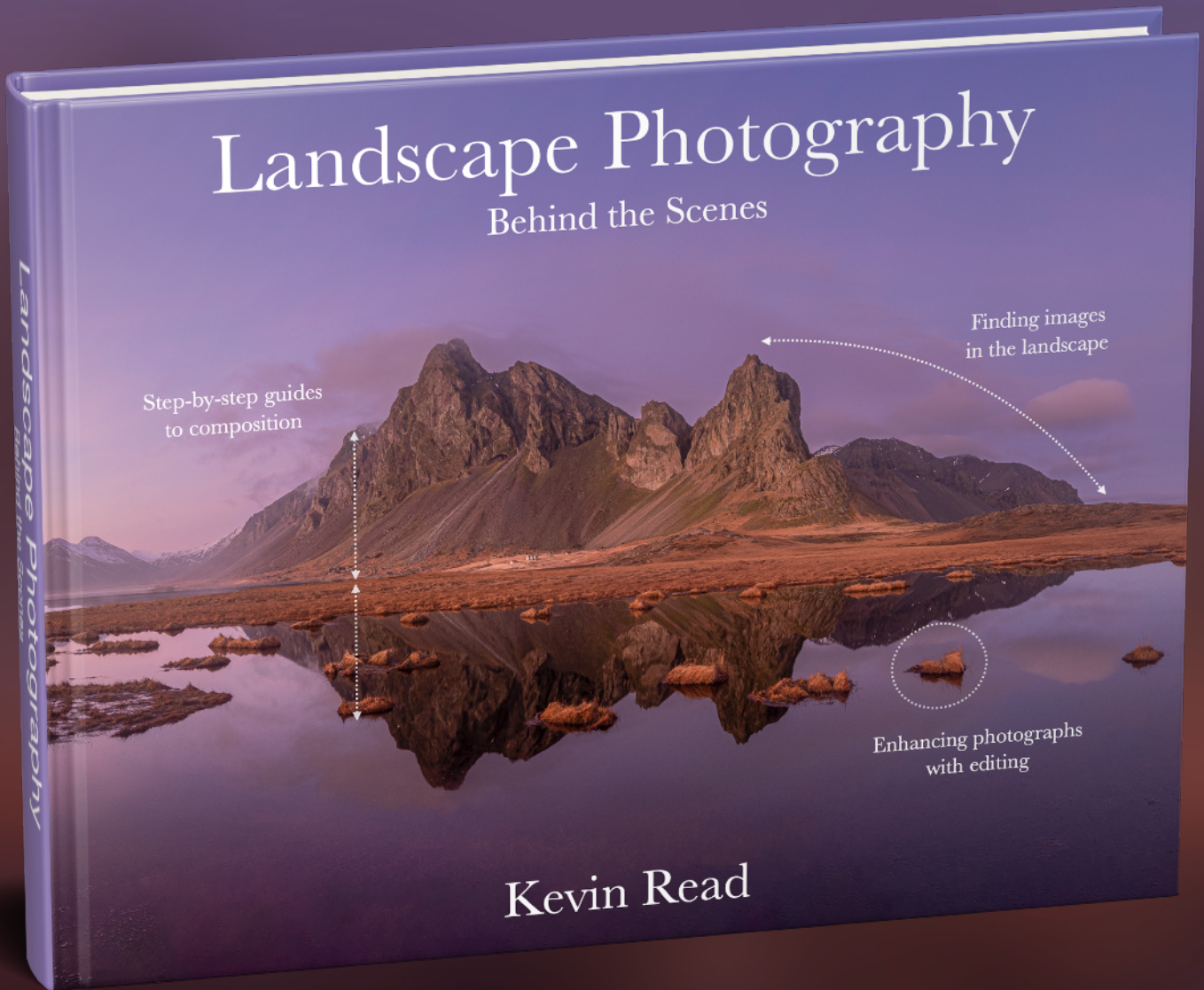


The ultimate guide to finding locations, predicting the light and getting the most from your photography adventures

www.shuttersafari.com/location-and-light

Landscape Photography

Behind the Scenes



My ebook on landscape photography takes a new approach to teaching the skills needed to compose, edit, and develop your own photographic style.

It follows the stories of twenty images from location to final edit, exploring how each was created and what they reveal about building an image.

It's a practical, behind-the-scenes look at landscape photography, built around real examples, mistakes, and decisions made in the field.

www.shuttersafari.com/behind-the-scenes