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# PRODUCING TOP PHOTOGRAPHY IN BAD WEATHER

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Premium Photography Guide  
Written by Kent DuFault



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# INTRODUCTION

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Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 001


This has become a tradition for my wife and me. Memorial Day is a Federal holiday in the United States. It is always celebrated on the last Monday in the month of May. This results in a long three-day weekend for most workers. I use this opportunity to travel somewhere and take photographs.

Last year, for the Memorial Day holiday, we traveled to the Black Hills of South Dakota. Our hope was to get great shots of the Black Hills; the Badlands; and in particular, Mount Rushmore (all of which are located in this area).

The photo on the left was the best photograph that I took during the trip.

I guess it doesn't take a weatherman to tell you that we didn't have the best weather for our outdoor photography photo safari. In fact, at one point during the trip, we received an emergency text blast stating that we needed to get out of the area, as heavy flash floods were imminent.





Bad weather can provide  
wonderful photo  
opportunities

Photography aside, an interesting side note to this trip was my wife. She is from Argentina, and she had never been to Mount Rushmore. The first time we drove up the mountain, you couldn't see the statue at all. It was completely obscured by low clouds.

Her disappointment was obvious when the tears started flowing. I reassured her that we would go get some lunch, and when we returned, she would get a chance to see the presidents.

I started saying my prayers.

When we returned, they still weren't visible. However, the clouds were drifting by very quickly.

I said to her, "Let's wait for a while." We agreed to wait for one hour.

About half way into that hour the clouds parted and we got a partial view of the Presidential Monument for about five minutes. That was the only moment that day that anyone saw it.

My wife was satisfied, and I got a great shot of these tourists from India, who had been waiting for several hours for their moment of glory with the statue of our former presidents.

My first lesson to you in regard to "bad weather photography" is this: **be diligent and patient.** Bad weather can provide wonderful photo opportunities, if you're willing to spend some time at it.

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## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

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When you complete this premium guide, you should be able to do the following:

- You'll gain some knowledge on how to prepare for a photo excursion during inclement weather (excluding winter—that's an entirely different subject).
- You'll learn some valuable tips on keeping your gear (and yourself) dry and ready to take fabulous photographs.
- You'll learn some tips on how to adjust the camera's point of view to maximize the visual potential for a less than perfect photo situation.
- You'll gain some insight into what to shoot, when to shoot, and how to self-edit through the process.
- I'll show you how to take advantage of silhouettes, shape, and spot color when the available light is bad.
- I'm also going to give you some pointers on using repetition, muted tones, and the HDR technique to breathe some life into a bad weather day.
- You'll learn how to take advantage of natural weather breaks and how to use what the landscape presents to you, such as motion and natural contrast.
- I will talk about the importance of cropping and framing in this situation.
- I'll help open up your thought process to storytelling, close-up photography, black and white, and including people in your landscapes. Nothing tells a bad weather story better than someone fighting the wind or becoming drenched from the rain.
- We will cover some thoughts on changing your plan, being open to alternative ideas, and using the bad weather as "an excuse" to "play" with your creative vision.

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## THE BAD WEATHER BLUES

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Illustration by Kent DuFault - Image 002

This year, our Memorial Day story took us to the North Shore of Lake Superior. We were only one hundred or so miles from the border between Minnesota and Canada.

This area, while a popular tourist destination, is fairly remote, and it offers exquisite landscape photography opportunities.

Image 002 shows you our approximate location. We stayed in a tiny cabin just north of Castle Danger. During our photo safaris, we traveled as far south as Two Harbors and as far north as Tofte. The Canadian border is at Grand Portage.

Our original mission for this trip was to capture nighttime photographs of the Milky Way.





Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 003





Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 004

This is what we arrived to on Friday evening. Yes, it was raining—hard. It rained the entire weekend right up until a few minutes before we had to head back home. It appeared that Mother Nature had squashed the Milky Way objective. I will tell you that I never gave up hope, but it didn't look good for my plans.

However, being the anal retentive commercial photographer that I am, I had already contemplated a plan "B," and that plan was to document how to salvage photographic plans when the weather goes pffftttt. You have to consider this: my wife and I drove a total of almost 800 miles for this photo safari. We were committed to an almost \$400 cabin bill. I was not going to come away from this without the following:

1. Photographs that satisfied my personal need to enjoy myself and create images that I love.
2. Photographs that I could submit for stock photography that would be accepted, sell, and help pay for this trip.

I'm happy to tell you that I achieved those objectives.



Photograph by Kent DuFault – Image 005

This photograph was taken the first evening we arrived on our photo safari. It has already sold as a stock photo, for a one-time use, at a fee of \$85.00 USD.

So, let's talk about what it takes to get solid, professional, award-winning, profitable results in bad weather!



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**BEING PREPARED**

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Screenshot by Kent DuFault – Image 006

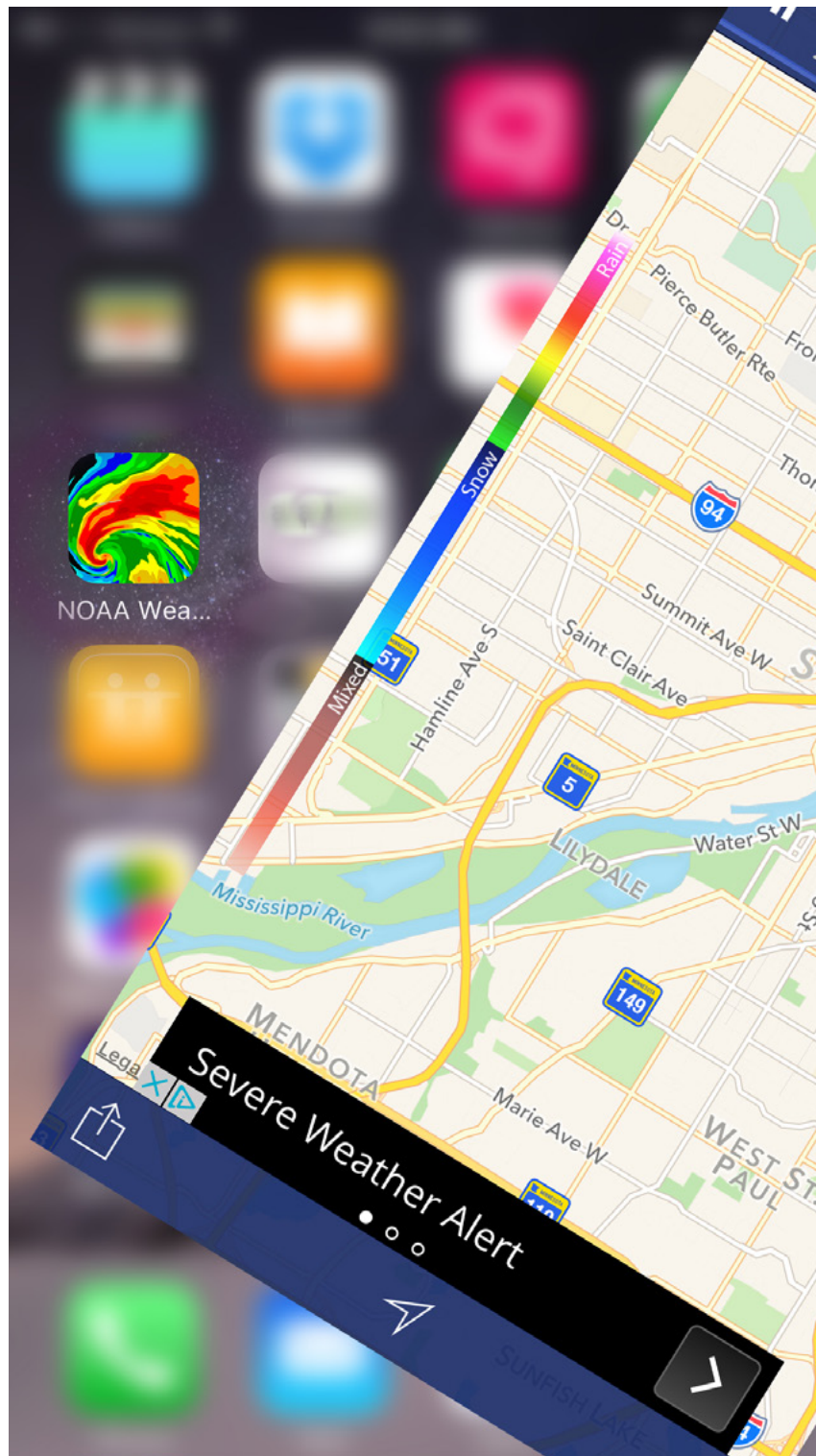
The first step in dealing with the weather when going on a photo safari is... What is the weather going to be like?

There is no other time in history where a photographer has more tools available to them to predict the weather in virtually any location. Can you thank smartphones and the Internet for these awesome photographic tools? I do!

Here are the apps I use on a regular basis:

### **The Weather Channel**

There are many good weather apps out there. I've tried a number of them. I prefer "The Weather Channel." It gives a 10-day forecast, and you can assign a number of locations. It also gives an hour-by-hour update for the current 24-hour period. This type of weather app is good to give you an overall view of what to expect.

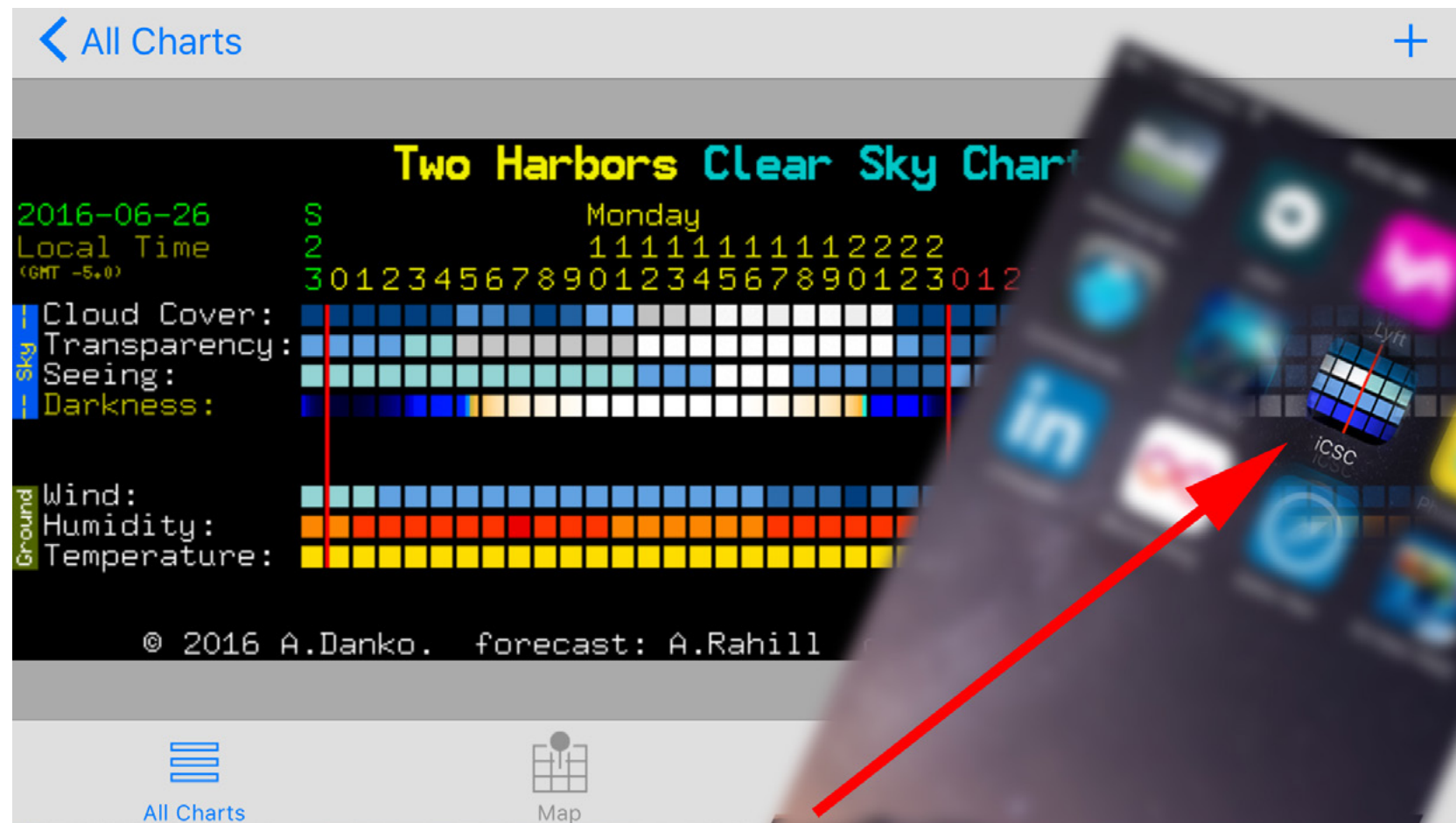


Screenshot by Kent DuFault – Image 007

## NOAA Weather Radar

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This app is the NOAA Weather Radar. I use the free version of this app. The free version shows you rain and radar in your location. It also gives you movement data for the last 40-minute window. Once you're in your location, this app is super valuable to help you plan where to go and when. You can predict where the available light is likely to change, or where a storm will worsen. The Pro version allows you to save different locations around the world. For those of you outside of North America, you may have your own version of this app. I would check it out. For an outdoor photographer, this app is a must-have!





**Once I know that I'm likely going to be dealing with inclement weather, these are the extra items that will go into my kit.**

1. A rain poncho, raincoat, or rain suit—whichever you prefer. I prefer the rain poncho. My reason for that is this: I get hot very easily. The poncho that I use is the "[Frogg Toggs Ultralight Poncho](#)." It is lightweight and made of a highly breathable material. It cuts my sweat factor by at least 50%.
2. I never forget to bring a dozen garbage bags of varying sizes. I can't tell you how many times a kitchen garbage bag has saved my gear in a sudden downpour.
3. Large rubber bands. If you have high winds, those garbage bags only work if they stay put. Large rubber bands are a very quick and easy way to secure the bags and get them off once the weather subsides.
4. A decent sized thermal cooler. This item is dependent on the situation. It's used to prevent fogging on the camera lenses and inside the camera. Whenever you transfer camera gear from cold to warm and dry to moist, you're likely to get condensation inside your camera gear. Use the thermal container to balance out the situation. When it's hot and humid outside and you're coming from an air-conditioned building or car, place the gear inside the cooler and away from the AC vents. If you have time, before taking off, it's also helpful to let the gear sit outside with the cooler lid open for 30 minutes or so.
5. I always carry a handful of towels and a can of air. The towels are helpful for drying off large areas of gear and whatnot that get wet. The canned air will quickly eliminate the water droplets that can accumulate in the nooks and crannies of the camera exterior.

Let's get into some key objectives and observations for creating **great photography** during inclement weather!



Photograph by Kent DuFault – Image 009

You may be asking yourself, “How do I know if a wide-angle shot will work or not?” This is my answer: If you’re unsure, go ahead and shoot it anyway. That is what I did in this photo. I was unsure, so I shot it anyway.

💎 **KEY LESSON:** Unless you’re going for some type of special effect, during inclement weather you’ll get better results if you avoid super wide-angle views. Inclement weather creates a lot of haze, which in turn lowers contrast and obscures the view. Sometimes that can work in a photographer’s favor, especially if the clouds break and the sunlight pops through the clouds. So, don’t leave the wide-angle lenses at home, but, in general, you’ll get better shots if you avoid wide-angle views.

💎 **KEY LESSON:** If you’re unsure, go ahead and shoot the best image that you can. Plant this firmly in your mind: Composition is ALWAYS important. During inclement weather with poor light, composition is critical. You must train yourself to be a **ruthless editor**! Sure, I could have done some post-production work on Image 009 to make it better. However, it was never going to meet my standards or my objectives for the photo safari. Set your standards high. This was a beautiful location, and I did get several images from this spot that met my goals listed earlier. Remember... be a ruthless editor.

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## **SILHOUETTES AND SHAPES: YOUR BEST FRIENDS**

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Photograph by Kent DuFault – Image 010

In photography, we've always been trained to look for the light. GOOD LIGHT—that's what it's all about. This thought can be so ingrained that when the weather turns bad and the light is horrible, we might not even try, and we will miss great shots!

When the light is poor, plant this in your mind: look for silhouettes and shapes.

Inclement weather brings a lack of directional light. There might also be a great deal of haze or fog obscuring distant views. The end result is an image which is flat in contrast and can lack the visual "oomph" that we all expect to see these days. Now, I'm not saying that all images that are flat in contrast are bad. What I am saying is that it takes an exceptional situation for a flat, low contrast, non-directional light photograph to be an award-winner or a salable image. The use of the silhouette is easy to see and use in this situation. It brings the deep blacks back into the game. This shot has had very little post-production work done to it. It's a pleasing image to look at, which offers a definite mood, which in turn means it can sell and make me money. Look for silhouettes.





Photograph by Kent DuFault – Image 011

Image 011 is an artistic example of shape and silhouette. Now, I'll be the first to admit that this image may not appeal to everyone. It would not sell as a stock photo; however, it does satisfy something on my artistic side. Keep in mind that your photography should be about you. Yes, we want others to like what we create, but your images should satisfy you first and foremost!

**💎 KEY LESSON:** Create images that satisfy your own needs. If you are true to your own vision, you will find a following. Don't expect every image to receive a hundred likes on Flickr. I stand by my advice. I love this photograph; I love the sense of height and distance. It's simple, and yet it speaks to me. Don't be afraid to step outside what you consider normal. Growth comes from experimenting, and inclement weather is a perfect situation to allow you the freedom to "play."

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## THE JOY OF SPOT COLOR AND HDR

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We've already established that inclement weather can turn our photographic efforts blasé due to a lack of contrast.

The second major issue is a lack of color saturation.

The physics behind visible color are all about light. Take away light and you can't see the color. Are the physical properties that create the color still there? Yes! You just can't see them very well, and the camera can't record them very well, because of the lack of light.

There are two techniques that can put the color back into your inclement weather photographs: the composition technique called "spot color" and the post-production technique called HDR.



### **Recommended Reading:**

- If you didn't really understand the connection between light and color: [Understanding Light: Book 1](#)
- If the concept of "spot color" is unfamiliar: [Advanced Composition](#)
- If you know nothing about HDR: [Short Guide to HDR](#)

Spot color is pretty straightforward, and we'll discuss that in a moment.

Let's concentrate on HDR for a second.

In this guide, I'm not going to explain how to do HDR imaging. The guide that I listed above is free, and there are tons of tutorials on the subject.

What I am going to tell you is that HDR has come to the point where it is pretty darn simple. In the beginning, it was somewhat daunting and required a number of steps. You can still go about it that way; however, you can also get great results with one exposure and the simple click of a button.

Let's just see what the HDR technique can do for us on a rotten weather photo shoot.



Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 012

Image 012 is a straight photograph that was taken with my iPhone 6+. It's easy to see that the weather conditions were not helping me out. Still, it was a beautiful scene. I took this shot, and then I processed it in the Snapseed app using the HDRscape filter.





Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 013

Image 013 gives you a half-and-half view of the HDRscape filter application. The difference is quite dramatic.

The photo on the next page (Image 014) shows you the entire image after applying the HDRscape filter in Snapseed. This process is as simple as pressing a button. It's not bad when you consider what the software had to work with! By the way, if you're into mobile photography, I have four favorite editing apps. They are (in the order that I will typically use them): Snapseed, Polarr, Priime, and PhotoToaster.

The HDR desktop processing programs that I like to use are Photomatix Pro 5.0 and Aurora HDR Pro.





Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 014





Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 015

Without getting into the nitty-gritty of HDR processing, I did want to make this point to you. In the beginning you needed multiple frames for HDR processing. You would vary the exposure of those frames, and you had to make sure the camera was steady so that the frames would line up. Today, you can process HDR with just one image, and more often than not, it will vastly improve a bad weather photograph. Image 015 is a single frame being processed in Photomatix Pro. Of course, you can still shoot multiple bracketed frames. Using that method, there is more opportunity for adjustment. However, as you can see in Image 015, the single frame method can yield some pretty awesome results. It's better than not shooting the scene at all because you have a bad weather day.

Let's look at the before and after one more time. (I'm really trying to hammer home the point that this technology can save your photo shoot when the light is bad!)





Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 016





Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 017

## **Let's go back to the tool of composition called "spot color."**

Spot color used in conjunction with HDR can be really effective. However, if you don't like HDR or you don't currently have the capability, then spot color can still save the day when the weather is bad and the light is dull..

The photograph in Image 017 received standard exposure and post-processing. While it doesn't quite have the pizzazz of the HDR version, it's still much better than the original wider version. Finding "spot color" and placing it close the camera provides the visual interest that will likely be lacking under dull light.

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## REPETITION AND MUTED TONES

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Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 018

I wonder if you're beginning to see a pattern here. During inclement weather, when the light is dull, the tools of composition become even more important. These tools can create interest when the light just isn't doing it for you.

Learning to effectively use these tools, especially during inclement weather, requires practice and pre-visualization. You will often have to pre-visualize the shot and then use post-production to bring that pre-visualized image to life.

### **Recommended Reading:**

Earlier, I mentioned the [Advanced Composition](#) eBook. If the concept of pre-visualization is new to you, then you should consider checking out that book. It takes an in-depth look at pre-visualization and what it takes to develop that skill.

Repetition occurs everywhere around us, both in nature and in man-made objects. It is one of the simplest tools of composition to use. It's generally easy to spot. I often talk about "rhythm" in photography.

### **Recommended Reading:**

I believe there is a difference between rhythm and repetition. If you're interested in reading my thoughts about the difference, check out this blog post over at [Lightstalking.com](#): "[Why Rhythm Makes This Photo Rock!](#)"






Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 019



Image 019 displays a man-made version of repetition. It also makes use of “muted tones.” It’s important that you realize that a great photograph isn’t always about high color saturation. That seems to be a trend lately. Photographers will super-saturate their images until the color really becomes the image. Sometimes super saturation works pretty well. In Image 018, I increased the saturation quite a bit. However, in Image 019, the entire mood relies on the building looking like an inclement weather day. Repetition is what makes this image work. I would also make the case that this image portrays a better sense of rhythm than the image of the leaves. Why do I say that? The windows, while repetitive, are varied in size, and the window on the far right introduces different muted colors. The far right window creates a focal point – a stopping spot or a crescendo if you will!

 **KEY LESSON:** Develop your skill of always being aware. I know that probably sounds pretty simplistic, but it’s not. A photographer with a highly-developed skill of awareness is always going to achieve more award-winning photographs than one that isn’t. You never know where a photograph will present itself. For example, the photograph of the green house (and I’m not saying this is an award-winning example) was spotted while getting out of the car in the parking lot at a Goodwill Store. (My wife needed a raincoat.) The point is, “awareness” is a developed skill, and it’s one that you can totally develop, but it does take time.



Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 020

## A Fun Idea Because I Love Photography and So Do You

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I can't attest this fact, but I believe most of us don't do much with our photography other than post the images online. I recently discovered a super cool resource to print my images on t-shirts. The t-shirts are super high quality, and the printing of the photographs is really good! I'm sure there are resources that do this everywhere. The one that I'm using is called "[Printful](#)." I know this is a little off topic; however, I think inclement weather is a great time to experiment, not only in how we visualize a shot or how we execute it, but perhaps even in how we use it. I love my t-shirt, and I've had a number of people tell me, "Cool shirt," and suggest I should be selling it!




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## USE OF MOTION

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Just because it's raining or severely overcast, doesn't mean the world stops moving. Plus, nature is providing you with an opportunity to do those long exposure images that everybody loves these days.

If you're going to slow that shutter speed down for blurred motion, remember you must stabilize that camera. That likely means you must bring a tripod. Although, depending on the shutter speed and lens, you might get away with simply bracing your camera against a sturdy object.

 **KEY LESSON:** At what shutter speed should you consider bracing the camera, or putting it on a tripod? This is a piece of advice that is as old as the hills. However, maybe you haven't heard about it. **To successfully handhold your camera for a photograph, the shutter speed should equal the focal length of the lens, or faster.** For example, if you have a 50-200mm zoom lens on your camera, at the 50mm setting your shutter speed could be as slow as 1/50th of second or faster. If the zoom lens is set to 200mm, your shutter speed should be 1/200th of a second or faster. Which is the fastest shutter speed of these three: 1/200th, 1/250th, or 1/125th?

Don't know the answer to that? You need to watch this:  [Shutter Speeds Explained](#).

Please be aware that this is not a mandate. Some people are steadier and can hold a camera steady at slower shutter speeds than others. Some cameras or lenses have an image stabilization system built into them that allow the photographer to handhold a camera at slightly slower shutter speeds. The point is to know your limits, and you should be prepared to stabilize the camera if you need to! In poor weather, in poor light, it's more likely than not that a tripod will come in handy!

**Why is motion a great tool to spice up our images in inclement weather? It can provide a rhythm throughout a photograph when light and shadow are missing.**





Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 021

There is no denying that this is a beautiful location, and quite interesting even with the lack of available light. I used a slower shutter speed to create some drama in the flowing water. With that simple step, you can almost hear the rush of the water passing by in the river, can't you?

💎 **KEY LESSON:** I'm not going to delve deeply into the use of shutter speeds because that isn't what this guide is about. However, I do want you to keep this in mind. **As you slow the shutter down, the effect will vary widely.** This shot was taken at 1/15th of a second. If it had been taken at 1 second, it would look completely different. Don't be afraid to experiment and take an exposure at every shutter speed from 1/30th all the way to several seconds. It will be a great learning experience and you may get some unexpected results. For those of you that like smartphone photography, you should check out these two apps: [ProCamera](#) and [Slow Shutter Cam](#). The ProCamera app allows you to control the shutter speed on your mobile phone from 1/2 second to 1/40,000th of a second. Slow Shutter Cam allows you to set the mobile phone shutter speed to anything from 1/4 of a second to 60 seconds and Bulb. Don't forget! The same rules of stabilization apply to a mobile phone as they would to a DSLR.





Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 022

Image 022 shows the use of motion to create interest, but in a very different way. A faster shutter speed stopped the flow of the water. A different technique of composition was used to direct the viewer in combination with the motion. That different technique is contrast. We are going to discuss the use of natural contrast next.

**💎 KEY LESSON:** Rarely does one single element create a noteworthy image. It usually requires a combination of thought on the part of the photographer. That combination might include point of view, composition, exposure (use of motion), and post-production. Take a moment and study Image 022. What do you think I saw when I came upon this scene?

What compelled me to take the picture? The light was flatter than a pancake; I'm not kidding. So, what was in this image that made me think, "I can get a great shot of this?" (By the way, this image has sold twice as a stock photograph.) Take a look at the original image.





Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 023

Place yourself at this spot. You've been waiting for months to come here and shoot. This is what Mother Nature has presented you. What do you do? What do you look for to help your situation out? Go back and look at Image 022. What do you think I saw? We can all accept that this is a beautiful location. What decisions do we use to turn it into a memorable photograph? I obviously wanted to use the motion because that's the section we are discussing. Here is what caught my eye (besides the motion): natural contrast! The rapids in the foreground created a bright spot in an otherwise pretty bleak landscape. I immediately envisioned the landscape being subdued, forcing a viewer's eyes to the river, and down the river into a foggy mystical background. I also pre-visualized the image as black and white. I shot this with my iPhone 6+ camera. I processed it using the app Snapseed. The first filter that I used was the "Drama" filter. It increased contrast and clarity. Then I used the B&W filter for my conversion to monochrome. Then, I used the "Tune" function to adjust my brightness, contrast, black point, and white point settings. Finally, I used the "Vintage" filter to give the monochrome a slight tone and blur vignette to help force the viewer's eyes inward. **Remember, a viewer's eyes will gravitate toward points of contrast and a sharp area over an area that is out of focus.**

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## NATURAL CONTRAST

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Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 024

When you are shooting in bad weather, contrast is almost always a necessity for a successful photograph. Depending on what kind of photography that you're doing, contrast can be added with an electronic flash. However, a more basic and more usable tool is to be aware of natural contrast. Even in the gloomiest of conditions, natural contrast will exist somewhere in your situation. You just need to find it. Go back to Image 023. Take a piece of printer paper and block off the rapids at the bottom third of the image. Even before the shot is processed, it really loses something. Now block the left two thirds of Image 023 with your paper. If I had focused more on the trees along the side of the river, my image would have turned out pretty blasé.

Your mission, should you choose to accept it (when shooting in inclement weather), is to find the natural contrast and use it creatively to form an interesting photograph. First find it, and then use it.

Image 024 is an image that isn't as dramatic as the Baptism River example. However, it illustrates something that I want you to think about. When there is a lack of natural light, natural contrast can "become" the light. Think about that for a second. These trees are so bright against the darker foliage of the background that they appear to be lit. The light was the same across the entire scene. Natural contrast created the "visual effect" of light.

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## **CROP, FRAMING, AND POV**

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We have looked at several options for creating “drama” when the available light isn’t providing it for us.

Three more options that can be really fun to play with are cropping, framing, and point of view (POV). I said this earlier, and I’ll say it again: “There is no better opportunity to try something different than when your original plan has

been thrown into the wind.” (Remember, my original plan was to shoot the Milky Way.)

Using an unusual crop, or an unusual frame of a normal subject, or an unusual point of view of whatever subject, are some of the simplest steps that you can take to save your photo shoot.



Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 025

*Playing with crop, framing, and POV can be as simple as creating a panoramic frame and centering your subject! (That is, if you wouldn't normally do this.) And yes, the sun is shining here. I took this image minutes before we climbed into the car to drive home!*





Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 026

Let's look at some other, more creative ways that I used crop, frame, and POV during this photo shoot.

Image 026 is a shining example of me going wild with my mobile camera and the app Snapseed. You may like the photo, or you may not... try to look past that. I often talk about the use of "story" in my books and tutorials. To me, the concept of story is one of the most critical elements of a photograph. Let's dissect this photo. What can we discern was happening? It looks like a cabin. The goofy rabbit ears indicate possibly a celebration or a special event. There is a meal being served. The cup in my wife's hands, and her body language, indicate that she was cold. It's daylight, and not nighttime. This would indicate that the moment is likely breakfast. That's a pretty good story being told from beginning to end in this picture. The use of an unusual crop and frame solidifies this story by pulling attention away from my wife and into the area of the bunny ears and the table. An unusual crop and frame can redirect the viewer's eyes. When you haven't got much else to work with, this technique can save the day! (I know someone out there is going to email Photzy and say, "But isn't that a frame break??!" Inclement weather... the perfect reason to break some rules!)





Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 027

Image 027 gives you a completely different viewpoint on the subject of framing and POV. This rock was the size of a large beach ball. Through the choice of framing and camera POV, it looks like a boulder. This is a technique often referred to as forced perspective.

### **Recommended Reading:**

If you would like to learn more about forced perspective, check out this guide: [Trick Photography Guide](#)

Often, POV is used to refer to where we put the camera in relation to the subject. POV literally means “point of view.” If you look at it from that perspective, it might open your mind to images that you wouldn’t normally think about. Image 028 is a perfect example. Not long after we arrived at our destination, we were sitting in our cabin and it was pouring rain outside. I was feeling a little bit down; my photo safari had been ruined (altered... right? That’s how we should look at it). I noticed the refrigerator, stove, beer, and food as well as the games, and it suddenly occurred to me what a perfect image this was to illustrate our trip. My POV changed. I suddenly had this idea to create an entire photojournalistic story around the lousy weather this weekend had dealt us.





Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 028

◆ **KEY LESSON:** There are many types of photographers. However, most of us simply go around trying to capture unique images of our world as we live it. When things aren't going the way you want them to, it can be difficult to work around that. Here is a trick that works really well for me. This technique is often quoted in books on developing creativity and combatting artistic block. It's called "Freeform Thinking." It's very simple. Find a place where you can be alone and quiet. Bring a pad of paper and a pencil or a pen with you. Sit for several minutes doing nothing. No phone, TV, music, or any other distraction. After five minutes, begin to write down everything that pops into your head – and I mean everything. Do this for another five minutes. Try to fill up as much paper as you can. When you're done, circle the thoughts that you find most interesting. Try to find connections between your circled thoughts. I guarantee that somewhere on that page will be a great idea for you to explore with your camera. This is an excellent inclement weather tip because bad weather can bring us down, shutting down our desire to be creative. Try it! You'll enjoy doing this!





Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 029

Image 029 is one of my favorite images from my inclement weather photo shoot. It combines much of what we have talked about in this guide: unusual crop, frame, and POV; silhouette; natural contrast; repetition and shape; as well as a tight angle of view. I wanted to close this section of the book with this image to reinforce the idea that there are good photographs surrounding you at all times – in good weather or in bad. Just below the line of site in Image 029 you would see a parking lot for a grocery store. Remember, look up, look down, and look all around. You might think I'm crazy, but when I'm out looking for pictures, I sometimes chant this to myself!

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**CLOSE UP: DETAILS AND MACRO**

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This probably sounds pretty easy – if it comes easy to you. It doesn't come easy to me, at least part of it.

I've never been one to participate much in macro photography. I do like interesting images that depict details of an object. However, even those types of images don't jump at me. I have to work to find them.

However, when you're dealing with poor weather and bad lighting, macro and close-up work gives you more control over the situation.

It's possible that you might be able to create some lighting with a portable electronic flash or the use of a simple bounce card or two.

 **KEY LESSON:** A bounce card requires some light to bounce. If you have an overcast day, there isn't likely a lot of light to work with. Introducing an electronic flash is a possible answer. But, perhaps you don't have one, or you haven't mastered the techniques of using an electronic flash to create natural lighting. There is an additional trick. Make use of a bounce card that gathers light and focuses it more directly. This could be done in a number of ways. I have two ways that I use that are pretty sweet. The first is a small, portable, lightweight, makeup mirror with a built-in LED lighting system. I bought mine on [Amazon](#) for less than \$40.00 USD. It's a great little light source for macro work (even when the weather isn't bad). The LED light provides some illumination, and the magnifying mirror gathers what light is available and focuses it on a small area.

The second tool I use are small bounce cards that are white on one side, and on the other side I've glued tinfoil to the card so that the highly-reflective side is visible. This creates a focused controllable bounce source much like the mirror, but with less intensity.



*Close-up and macro photography can reveal hidden gems of photography when you take the time to look closely. This photograph was “lit up” by my portable makeup mirror. Pretty nice lighting, huh?*



Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 030



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**FEELING FRUSTRATED? TRY THINKING B&W  
AND THROW SOME PEOPLE INTO THE MIX!**

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When all else fails – and believe me, there will be moments when all else fails – it's time to dig deep and really stretch your mind as an artist.

This is a Key Lesson, and I'm not even going to put it in bold: so much of becoming a great photographer or a great artist is your attitude.

**Keep your attitude positive, alert, open, and ready to create at all times.**

That bold type-faced line might seem easy, or corny, to you. It's not. If you learn that one line and apply it to your photography for the rest of your life, that alone was worth the cost of this mini-premium guide.

Many artists, like Picasso, spent their entire lives living the advice that you read in that bold-faced line.

Take a moment to consider these quotes by Picasso:


*"Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up."*

*"Everything you can imagine is real."*

When bad weather ruins your plans, this is a moment when it is especially important to bring your imagination to reality!

**When I'm feeling creatively blocked, during a bad weather photo shoot, I often look to two things: black and white photography and incorporating people into the shot (no matter what the situation is).**

Why do I look to black and white photography? Inclement weather generally brings low light, and low light generally brings a lack of color; it's as simple as that. Instead of beating my head against a brick wall trying to bring out color, I go the opposite way and look toward black and white.

 **Key Lesson:** I don't shoot black and white images in-camera (unless I'm shooting film). I shoot with the idea of black and white conversion in my mind. Make no mistake, this is a skill. The reason I don't shoot the black and white image in-camera (digital) is because you then lose all control over the final outcome. The camera is making the decisions for you. Now, black and white film is a different story, and we're not going to get into that here.

 **Recommended Reading:**

If you're unsure of black and white conversion, check out the Photzy publication: [Better Black & White](#).





Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 031

Image 031 was such a gorgeous scene, but the light was almost non-existent. The rocks in the foreground would typically have a lot of red and yellow algae. The leaves of the tree would normally be light green. The water would typically have a pale blue-green hue. On this day, everything was dark as mud. Rather than turning away without any shot, I pre-visualized a black and white image. In my mind, I saw the focus being on the tree, along with a few highlights in the clouds and puddles used to “frame” the tree. I also employed a vignette of darkness and blur to force the viewer’s eyes inward. Do you catch my meaning now? About opening the mind to the possibilities? I worked with what was given to me rather than turning away with nothing. I rather like this image. It’s bleak and beautiful at the same time. In a couple of chapters, I’m going to show you what I did with these photographs and perhaps it will spark some ideas of your own!





Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 032

I titled this section 'use black and white and people.' I did that because they often work well together. Adding a human into almost any shot creates interest and drama. We are always interested in what's going on with other people. That's why rumors start and "People" magazine is so popular. I was searching for close-up or macro possibilities when I saw my wife walking along the rocks and looking at the water. I raised my camera (almost without thinking) and took this shot (Image 032). I knew, even before the shutter closed, that I had a shot that would look great in my final project (which I will show you soon), and it would earn me money as a stock photograph. You may be looking at this and thinking, "Doesn't seem like much to me." You're not entirely wrong. The light is terrible. The color is almost non-existent. I already knew what it would look like, and how I would use elements of this shot in another image. Let me show you.





Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 033

Converting this image file to black and white allowed me to remove what little distracting color was in the shot and bump up contrast. What was the result? My wife stands out clearly as the main subject in a dramatic landscape. The image now has mood and stopping power. Then, I took it a step further...



Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 034

In Image 034, I brightened up the image. I also added a warm tint and brought up the exposure levels of the mid-tones and highlights. Same photograph, but we now have a more upbeat mood. The stock agency accepted both. They see the value in the slightly different treatment and the mood it created. At the end of this guide, I'll show you how this photograph helped me to create an even more amazing shot!


💎 **KEY LESSON:** If you're trying to create a noteworthy photograph in the worst weather imaginable, stick a person in there!



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## EXPERIMENT WITH NEW TECHNIQUES IN POST-PROCESSING

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Use a bad weather situation  
as an excuse to experiment

Many of us (myself included) are hesitant to try some wild and crazy post-processing techniques. We're afraid that we will "mess up" our photograph, or we will show them to the world and nobody will like them.

Take a bad weather situation and use it as an "excuse" to experiment. You may discover the next great look!

What do I mean by experimenting in post-production?

Most of us have various photo apps on our phone and plugins on our computers. If you don't, you're really kind of missing out, especially on the phone apps as many of them are free.

Here is a list of the photo editing apps that I currently have on my iPhone 6+: Snapseed, Priime, PhotoToaster, Polarr, Touch Retouch, Filterstorm, Enlight, Image Blender, Juxtaposer, Noise Reducer, Laminar Pro, and LunaPic.

I can seriously spend an entire afternoon doing nothing but playing with photos and these apps. Many of them are free, and none of them cost more than \$3.99 USD.

On my Apple computer I regularly use the following plugins: Macphun Creative Kit, the entire suite of Topaz plugins, the Nik Collection, and Anthropic Portrait Pro.

For reasons that I shared earlier, I don't often publically display my whacky images.

Today, you will be the one of the first to see a few of them. If you have any comments, you can find me on Facebook.





Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 035

Image 035 was taken in a driving rain. I created it with my iPhone 6+. I then processed it in Snapseed using the following filters in the following order: Drama, Vintage, HDR Scape, and Frames. In my mind, I can almost see forest fairies flying between the branches.

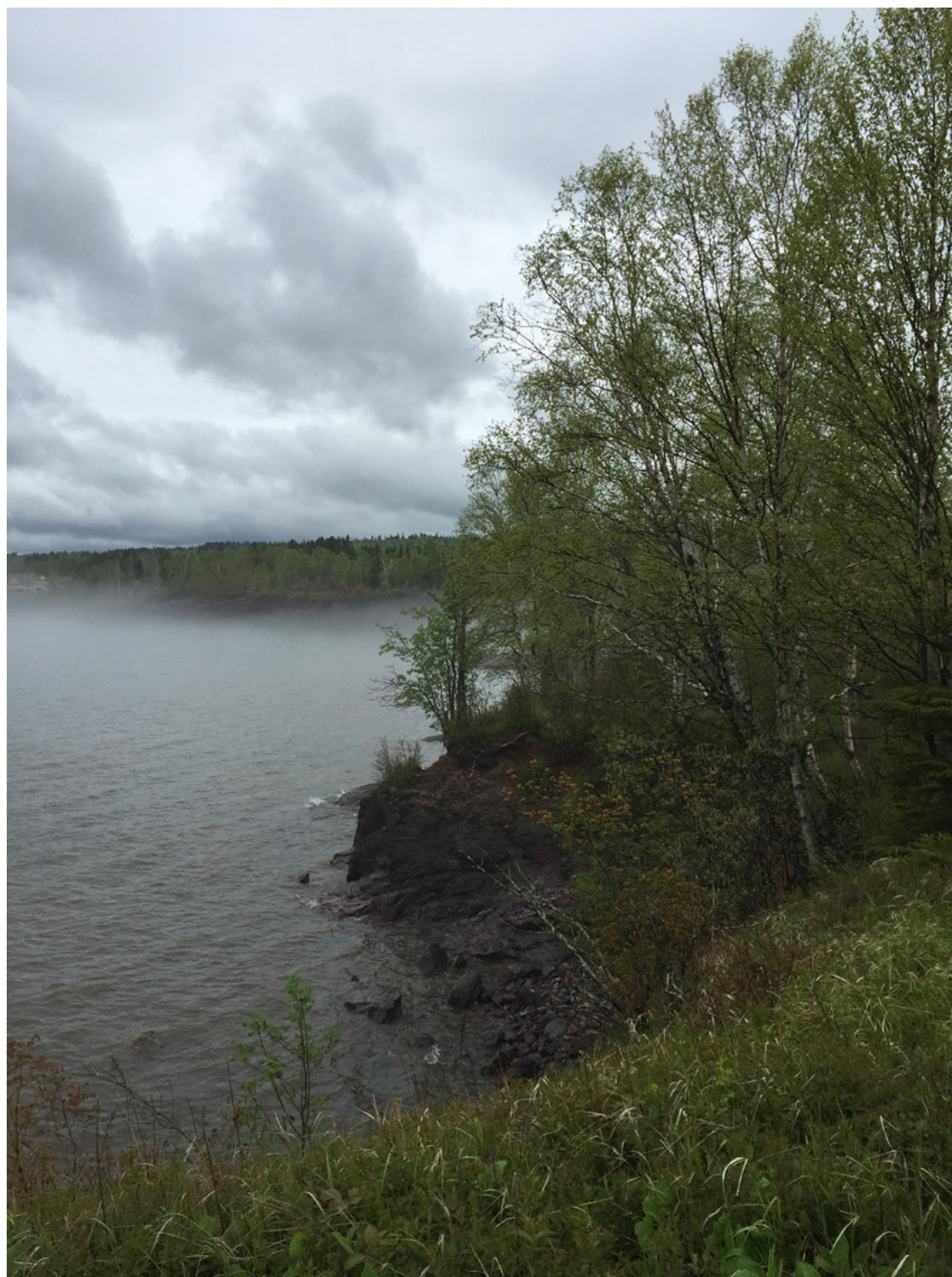




Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 036

For Image 036, I was interested in creating a look that was reminiscent of a painting. The photograph was created with the iPhone 6+. Snapseed was used for the editing in the following order: Crop, Healing, HDR Scape, Grainy Film, Vignette, Frames, and Details. Let me show you what the original photograph looked like, and it may inspire you to playfully create with your images.





Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 037

Image 037 is the original file. As you can see, it was pretty dull and lackluster.

**KEY LESSON:** You may, or may not, like my two images that I went “crazy” in post-production on. It doesn’t matter. What matters is that you can see the potential. Being a professional-level photographer requires you to have a “vision” no matter what the circumstances are. The bones for an interesting photograph are there in Image 037. But the situation didn’t provide the best outcome. Post-production helped me take those “bones” and form them into something productive.

### **Recommended Reading:**

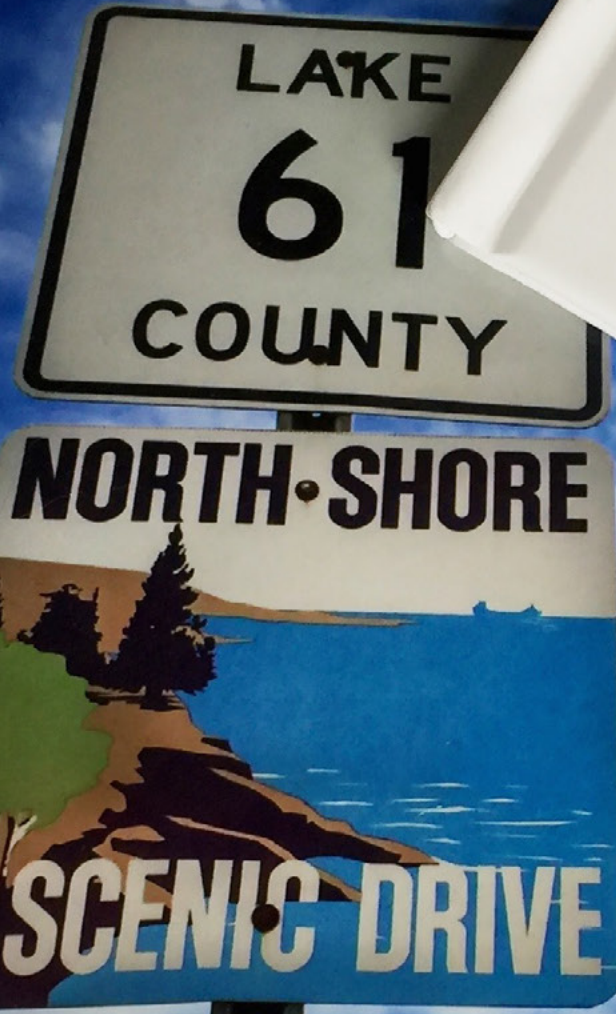
If you’re new to photography, perhaps you’re a little intimidated by the idea of post-production. I would invite you to take a look at another Photzy publication titled, “The Ultimate Guide to Fundamental Editing.” That guide is about basic post-processing techniques of your digital files (on your computer). If you would like a little primer on how to post-process an image on your smartphone, check out this Photzy guide: “Landscape Photography with Your Smartphone.”

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**TELL A VISUAL STORY**

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Memorial Day Weekend  
2016




Using photography to tell a visual story is your greatest achievement. If someone can view your photograph, or photographs, and come away from the experience with an emotional connection, well, you've done your job.

I had a three-part goal in writing this guide for you.

1. I wanted to give you practical advice for shooting great photographs in inclement weather.
2. I wanted to inspire you to go out and seek those amazing photographs no matter what the environmental conditions are.
3. I want you to do something with those photographs, so that your efforts don't simply sit on a hard drive.

Printing your images, framing them, and putting them up on the wall is an awesome idea. I'm always totally in favor of that. But let's face it, that can be expensive. I'd like you to consider printed photo books!

The print quality of digital photo books has come a long way in the past 10–15 years. The image quality is right up there with digital photo prints, and they are so cost-effective. In Image 038, the larger book was produced for less than \$25.00 USD, and the smaller book was produced for less than \$8.00 USD!

 **KEY LESSON:** If you hunt around, you can find great deals on photo books. The large book in Image 038 displays 23 photos (including the cover) for \$25.00 USD. Properly stored, a photo book such as this will last as long as your digital prints. I'm going to tell you where I made mine. This is available to USA Photzy members only; although, I'm sure all of you international Photzy members probably have something similar in your area. The service that I use for the photo books is an app called "Free Photo Books." This is an app for your smartphone (and yes... there is a free component to their business). Check it out. I don't think you'll be disappointed. Also, you can check out their other business "FreePrints," which is also an app. At FreePrints, you can order up to 85 4x6 prints per month and only pay for the shipping. It's a pretty sweet deal!





Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 039

*With a photo book, not only do you have the fun of shooting your images and doing your creative post-processing, it is equally fun putting your book together and deciding how you're going to tell your story.*

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**DON'T FORGET ABOUT YOUR FAMILY**

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*My wife is a bit of a free spirit (as you can probably tell). This picture captures her personality perfectly. If I hadn't been pushing myself to photograph family members, I likely would have missed this shot.*



Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 040

If you happen to be on vacation (like I was) when the inclement weather problem hits, think about the family members that you have with you. One of my favorite shots from the Memorial Day weekend trip is of my wife just being herself.

I don't know about you, but strangely, even though I'm an avid photographer, I often forget to take pictures of my family.

When we travel, I'm always looking for that great travel shot. When we're at home, just living a day, I'm more likely to take a shot of a grasshopper in the backyard than my own family.

I've really been trying to overcome this, and you should too. I think, subconsciously, I was worried that the pictures wouldn't be good enough, or my family wouldn't approve of my efforts.

As it turns out, most of them really like the photographs that I take of them. Keep your eye towards your family. They are likely providing you with golden opportunities that you might be missing.


**The photo on the left is my favorite photograph from the weekend.**

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**LOOK AROUND – BE SURPRISED –  
AWAKEN YOUR INNER-CHILD**

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Develop your artistic side  
by following all the rules  
then breaking them later


Ask yourself, “Are you a photographer, an artist, or both?”

Just being a “photographer” requires very little of us, and looking at your pursuit of photography with that mindset isn’t likely to allow you to grow beyond a certain point.

For example, many photographers learn early on that a horizon line should NOT be angled in the final image. There is some truth to that statement. However, an artist feels compelled to go beyond what’s considered the accepted norm; they push the envelope.

As an artist develops their skills, they begin to realize when the horizon line should be straight, and conversely, they see potential when it’s not straight.

If all of that seems a bit confusing to you, you’re not alone. This is what I would like you to learn:

 **KEY LESSON:** We are all programmed to believe certain facts about photography: horizon lines should be straight, midday light is horrible, our subject should be in the Rule of Thirds, etc. When you’re out shooting, it’s okay. I want you to follow all those rules and considerations that you know so well. Then, when you’re done, take a few moments – 10 to 15 minutes is usually enough – and wipe your mind clean. Do whatever comes to your mind: fast shutter speed, slow shutter speed, out of focus, weird juxtaposition; break some rules – try looking at your scene through squinted eyes. Do shapes jump out at you? Or color? Push yourself to find the unusual! Develop your artistic side.



Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 041

I was using the squinted eyes technique when I spotted Image 041. Without the extra effort, I would have missed what caught my eye. Can you guess what caught my eye? Yes, it's a beautiful place. It wasn't at its best in this light. Under normal circumstances, I wouldn't have taken a shot. Here is what I saw with the squinted eyes technique.





Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 042

With my eyes squinted, I noticed these three shadowed rocks sitting in a row and leading the eyes to the point near the lake. I then envisioned my post-processing. I would darken the left corner (which wasn't dark at all by the way) to create the triangular composition that is common throughout much of my work. I would then use other post-processing techniques to force a viewer's eyes down the row of rocks and right to that point. Now I have a dramatic photograph, and I didn't need any light to help me with it!



Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 43


When a photographer combines their skills with an artistic mind, anything becomes possible. That's right! Using all of my skills as a photographer, artist, editor, and retoucher, I took my wife out of [Image 034](#) and placed her into Image 42. What have I got? This is a fantastic stock photograph that is going to earn me money, guaranteed!

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**BE WILLING TO CHANGE YOUR PLAN**

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Your willingness to change  
your plan can result in better  
images

I've sort of "made this case" throughout the book. I just want to touch on this one more time because, quite frankly, I am very guilty of this! I set up a plan, and if the plan doesn't execute properly I get frustrated, and I want to toss the entire project out the window and go see a movie.

Experiencing what happened to me on Memorial Day weekend and forcing myself to find an alternate plan really taught me something, and I'm trying to impart that message to you.

I came away from this trip with a really wonderful body of work. It's really better than I could have hoped for. It's visually interesting; it's out of the norm; it's already made me some cash.

Being willing to change the plan was the best thing that could have happened to me.

I want you to be willing to change your plan.

**Now, I have to share with you a funny aspect of this story.**

The image on the next page (Image 044) shows you how Murphy's Law came into existence. Yes. The weather turned beautiful just moments before we had to leave.

That's how life goes sometimes.

I'm happy about how my trip went. I ended up with images that I couldn't even have dreamed up in my imagination.



Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 044

*I took this photograph just minutes before we climbed into the car to drive home. That's right. On the last day, the weather turned and became the weather that I had hoped for!*



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## THE SUMMARY

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- Be diligent and patient
- Preparation is key
- Use technology to help accurately predict the weather
- Pack plastic bags, rubber bands, towels, canned air, and rain gear
- Avoid wide-angled views
- Be a ruthless editor
- Use silhouettes and shape to help create contrast and depth
- Satisfy yourself first, and then worry about your audience
- Watch for spot color
- Use HDR as necessary
- Mobile photo editing apps rock! Use them
- Pre-visualize on location. Use post-production to bring it to life
- Look for repetition. Think rhythm
- Bad weather brings muted color – use it to your advantage
- Always be aware (you may find an award-winning shot in the grocery store parking lot)
- Consider alternative uses for your photos (t-shirts)
- Use motion
- Definitely look for natural contrast
- Tell a story – think past the obvious
- Use free-form thinking
- Look up, look down, look all around
- Macro gives you better control over the lighting
- Think black and white – throw some people in there
- Experiment with new techniques in post-production
- Tell your story with a photo book (it's so MUCH fun)
- Don't forget to include your family
- Develop your artistic mindset



## Self-Check Quiz

1. You should be \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ when faced with a bad weather photo opportunity.
2. Name one smartphone app that can help you predict the weather forecast.
3. When shooting in inclement weather, it's generally best to avoid the use of \_\_\_\_\_ lenses.
4. In order to present your best work and advance your reputation as a photographer, you must be a \_\_\_\_\_ editor.
5. Why does the use of silhouettes and shapes help in your bad weather photography efforts?
6. What is "spot color," and why will it help you?
7. True or False: You can't use the HDR technique when you have just one frame of the scene.
8. True or False: Over-saturating an image, which was shot during inclement weather, is always a good idea because the lack of lighting makes colors dull.
9. If you are shooting with a 200mm lens, your shutter speed should be \_\_\_\_\_ or faster if you want to handhold your camera and keep the image super sharp.
10. Even in the worst bad weather, \_\_\_\_\_ contrast is everywhere.
11. True or False: Changing the crop or framing of an image really doesn't change it all.
12. Forced perspective can make a small object appear \_\_\_\_\_.
13. Name two tools that you can use to light up a macro shot.
14. True or False: A professional-quality conversion from my digital color file to a black and white photograph is easy, especially when the image was shot under poor light.
15. True or False: When developing my "artist side," I should never break the rules of composition, except the crooked horizon rule.
16. True or False: Pre-visualization isn't important because I like to just take pictures of what I see in front of me.
17. I can have a plan; however I should be willing to \_\_\_\_\_.

## About the Author



Kent DuFault is a professional photographer and author.

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**IF YOU'D LIKE TO CONTINUE  
LEARNING AND IMPROVING  
YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY PLEASE  
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