

LANDSCAPE

By Kent DuFault

There are numerous ways one could tell a visual story with landscape photography. In this creativity prompt, I will challenge you with some thoughts that will address your future landscape photography as well as your existing landscape photos.

Here are some storytelling elements for landscape photography:

- A landscape photograph that is defined by a well-known public event
- A landscape story told through the weather
- A landscape with people
- A landscape with manmade objects
- The concept of isolation
- Creating a landscape story with the time of day and mood
- Altering a landscape story with post-processing



Image 001 – Photograph by Luca Bravo



Image 002 – Photograph by Daniela Cuevas

There are landscapes across the world that are identifiable primarily due to an annual public event. One such place would be Cappadocia, Turkey. This rugged landscape is home to the Cappadocia International Hot Air Balloon Festival.



Image 003 – Photograph by James Padolsey

Don't be concerned if you're not ready to jump on an airplane to Turkey.

In my neck of the woods, there is an annual dog sledding race that traverses all types of landscape terrain.

Virtually everywhere in the world holds annual events that encompass the local landscape.



Key Point:

Make sure you understand what your story is about. If the story is about the landscape, then the event must be visually secondary. Both Images 002 and 003 effectively show the scene as the point of interest (the subject), and the event is merely a storytelling element.



Image 004 – Photograph by Jeremy Stenuit

Image 004 is an example of letting the event override the landscape as the subject. The story here is strictly about the dogs and the dogsledding activity, and the scenery is merely providing background.



Assignment:

At your next opportunity, attend an outdoor event with a beautiful landscape as the setting. Photograph the event while keeping the landscape as the subject and the event as the backdrop storytelling interest. You accomplish this through your use of composition and camera position.

Here is one more dogsledding photo for inspiration:



[Image 005 – Photograph by Ali Nay](#)

A landscape story is often told by the weather.

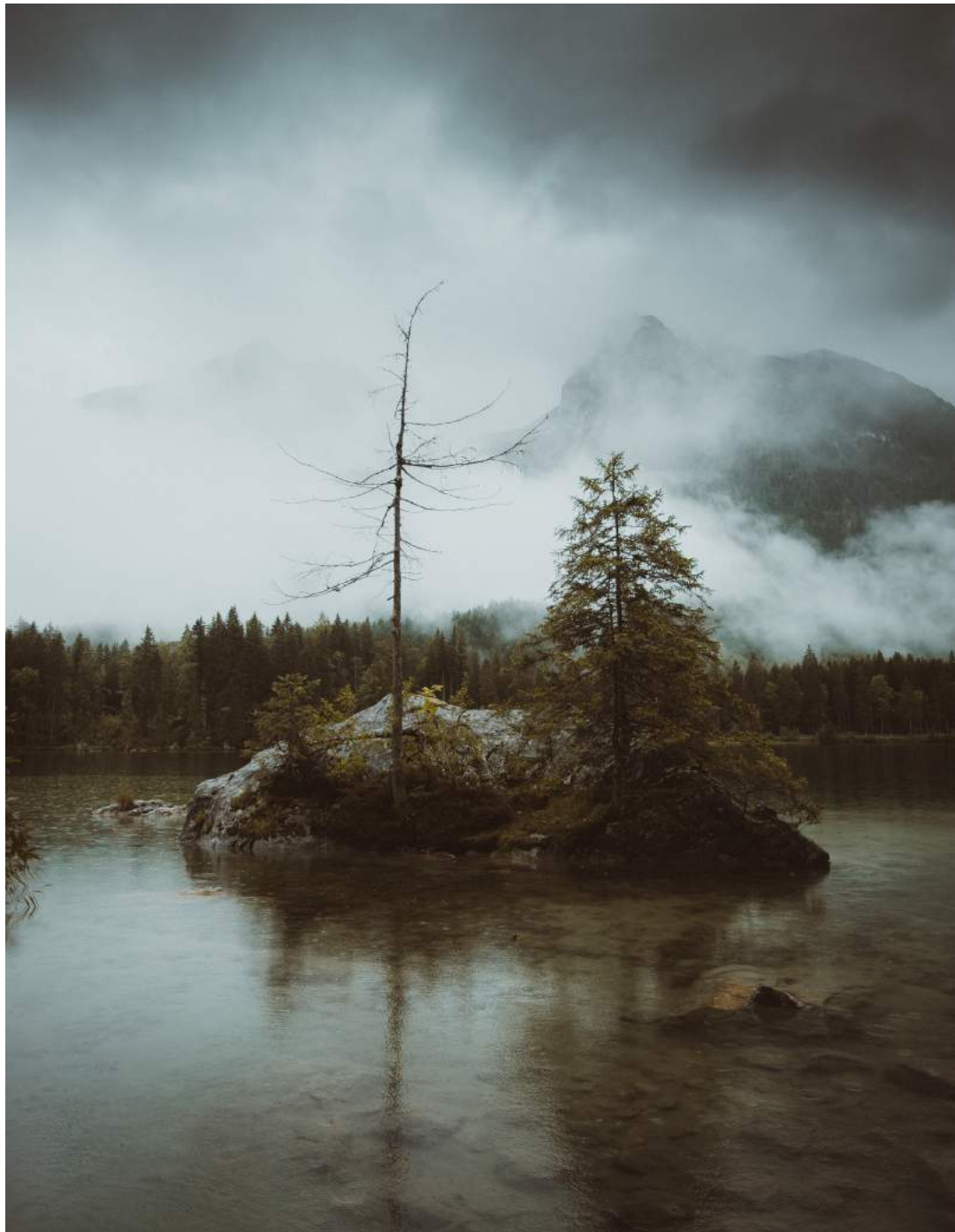


Image 006 – Photograph by Chris Henry

When you observe Image 006, you can feel the cold damp weather settling right into your bones. The reason for this is that we all relate to personal experience when viewing photography.

This is particularly true with landscape photography.

If someone has never experienced a cold, wet landscape such as in Image 006, perhaps they have spent their entire life living in the desert of central Australia – they may have no experience to recall! An interesting fact, though, is that their mind will create the feeling.



Image 007 – Photograph by Tim Foster

When observing Image 007, you can feel the warm setting sun against your face and the salty taste of ocean spray on your lips.



Key Point:

Weather is a fun, unpredictable story element for landscape photography. Most old-school, lifelong landscape photographers will tell you that once they've found a fantastic camera angle on a beautiful landscape scene, they will return to it many times. Why? They seek to change their story through varying weather and light.



Assignment:

Find a landscape scene near your home that you can quickly and frequently visit. Pick a camera position that you particularly like and can easily find. Return to this spot many times under varying weather conditions and at different times of the year. Build a collection of photographs of this spot. You'll be amazed at how fun this creativity prompt is once you get started.



Image 008 – Photograph (L) by [Devin Dau](#) and Photograph (R) by [Mark Boss](#)

Many genres of photography tell a better, more succinct story when a human element is included. In landscape photography, it helps to establish the depth and size of a sweeping vista.



Image 009 – Photograph (L) by [Kevin Bosc](#) and Photograph (R) by [Jared Rice](#)

The human element can also add a sense of height!



Assignment:

Take a friend or family member with you and go photograph some landscape scenes. Put the human element into the scene. Try to establish depth and, if possible, height.



Image 010 – Photograph by Jane Palash



Remember:

Don't commit the classic mistake of turning your landscape story into a portrait story. Compare the woman in Image 009 to the woman in Image 010. In the waterfall photo, the waterfall is the subject, and the woman is a focal point. The story is about the waterfall. For Image 010, the woman is visually dominant and takes over as the story and subject, and the landscape is visually 'pushed back' into the role of the background.



Key Point:

When including the human element for storytelling purposes, it isn't always about the size of the individual. The key to story placement is how you compose the landscape image.

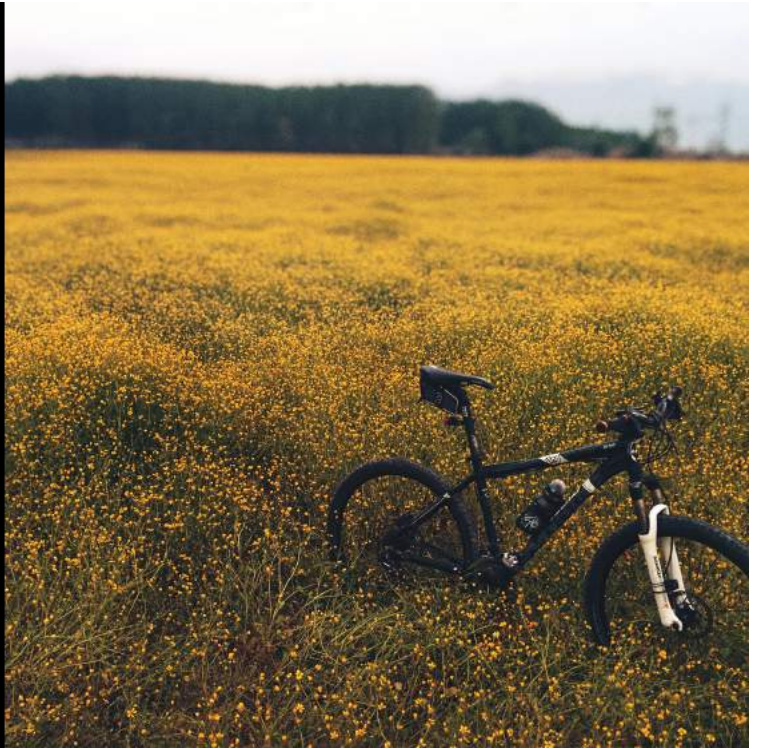


Image 011 – Photograph (L) by [Justin Kauffman](#) and Photograph (R) by [Semih Aydin](#)

Manmade objects are excellent storytelling elements for landscape photography as well. Just make sure that they are purposeful and relevant. For example, a trashcan along the trail doesn't work.



Assignment:

Create some landscape photography where you include a manmade object to set the story.



Image 012 – Photograph by Patrick Hendry

A typical and easy story to tell with landscape photography is the sense of isolation. All of the ideas discussed in this creativity prompt

will help you tell the story of isolation. Image 012 is an excellent example of the isolation story working correctly.

Post-Processing

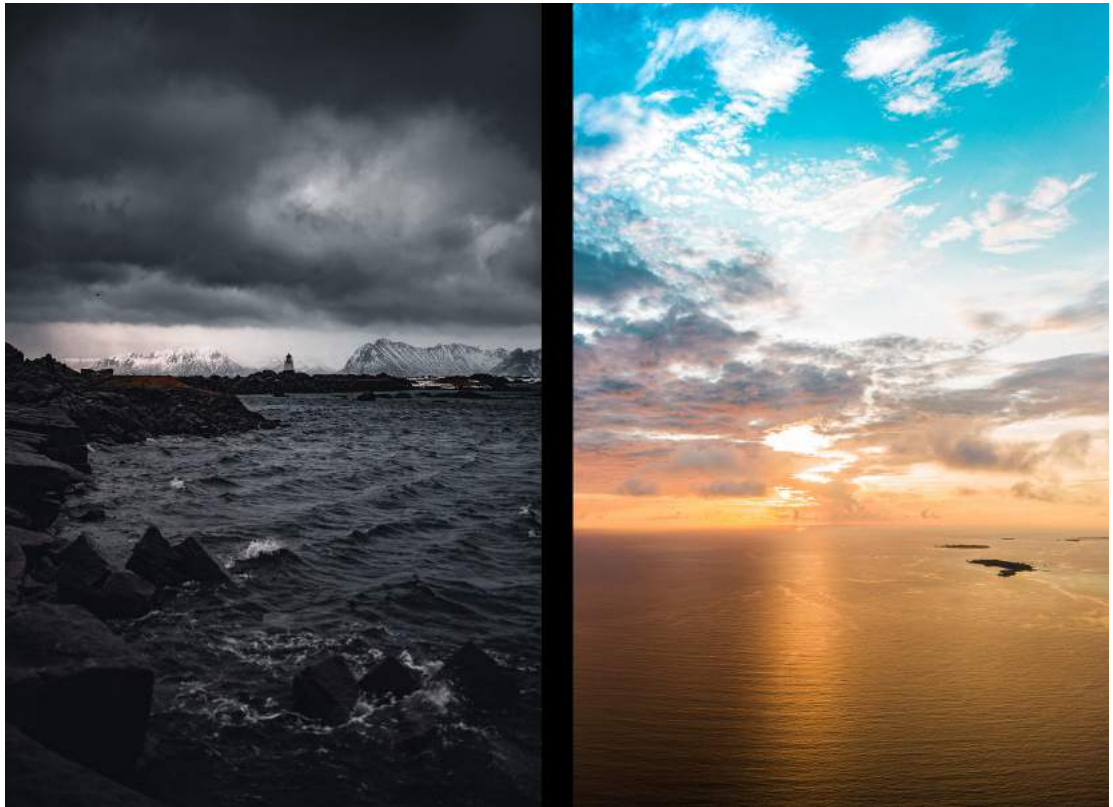


Image 013 – Photograph (L) by [Vadim Sadovski](#) and Photograph (R) by [Shaah Shahidh](#)

You can drastically change the story element of a landscape photograph using post-production. The changes that are most often used are contrast, brightness, white balance, color balance, and color saturation. Some landscape images benefit from split-toning.

**Key Point:**

In post-processing, a global change is one that affects the entire picture. A local adjustment is one that affects only a portion of the photograph that the photographer specifies. If you haven't played with localized editing, it's time to do so. How you do that will depend on your particular editing program.

- Photoshop – use the Adjustment Brush in the ACR camera raw window
- Lightroom Classic – use the Adjustment Brush found in the Develop Module
- Lightroom CC – choose the Brush tool found on the far right of the workspace

Bonus Idea

If you do not own a large-scale editing program but would like to try localized editing on your storytelling landscape photographs, I recommend that you put the app 'Snapseed' on your smartphone.

Snapseed is free. You can transfer photographs from your computer to your smartphone for editing.

Here's how it works:

- 1 Open a photo in Snapseed.
- 2 Make a storytelling change. For this example, let's say we change the white balance to a warm orange for a sunset story. But we only want the effect to appear around the setting sun. The change is first accomplished globally.
- 3 After making the change, we hit the 'edits' icon at the top of the screen.
- 4 We select 'View Edits.'
- 5 All the changes to the photo are listed in the lower right. We select the edit that we want to turn into a local edit versus a global edit.
- 6 A new box pops up. Select the center icon, which is a paintbrush over a canvas.

- 7 In the next window, the default setting is a 'hide all' mask, so you don't see your edit.
- 8 Take your finger and drag it across the preview picture where you want your edit to show.
- 9 When you are happy with your localized edit, hit the checkmark icon in the lower right. This takes you back to the previous window.
- 10 If you're happy with your edit, click the 'exit' arrow in the upper right.

Snapseed is a potent editing tool. It does take some practice and getting used to it because you're using your finger and a small screen.



Assignment:

Change the story of your existing landscape photographs by manipulating contrast, brightness, white balance, color balance, and color saturation. First, practice making these changes globally and then dive into localized editing. Once you've mastered localized editing, your storytelling landscape photography efforts will explode!