

Natural Landscape and Photography

Philippe Sainte-Laudy | Landscape Photographer



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Welcome Reader,

From time to time *NaturePhotographie* produces something really cool for the pleasure of Photographers. This electronic book or ebook is 44 pages long and will help you in a pleasant way to better understand Landscape Photography.

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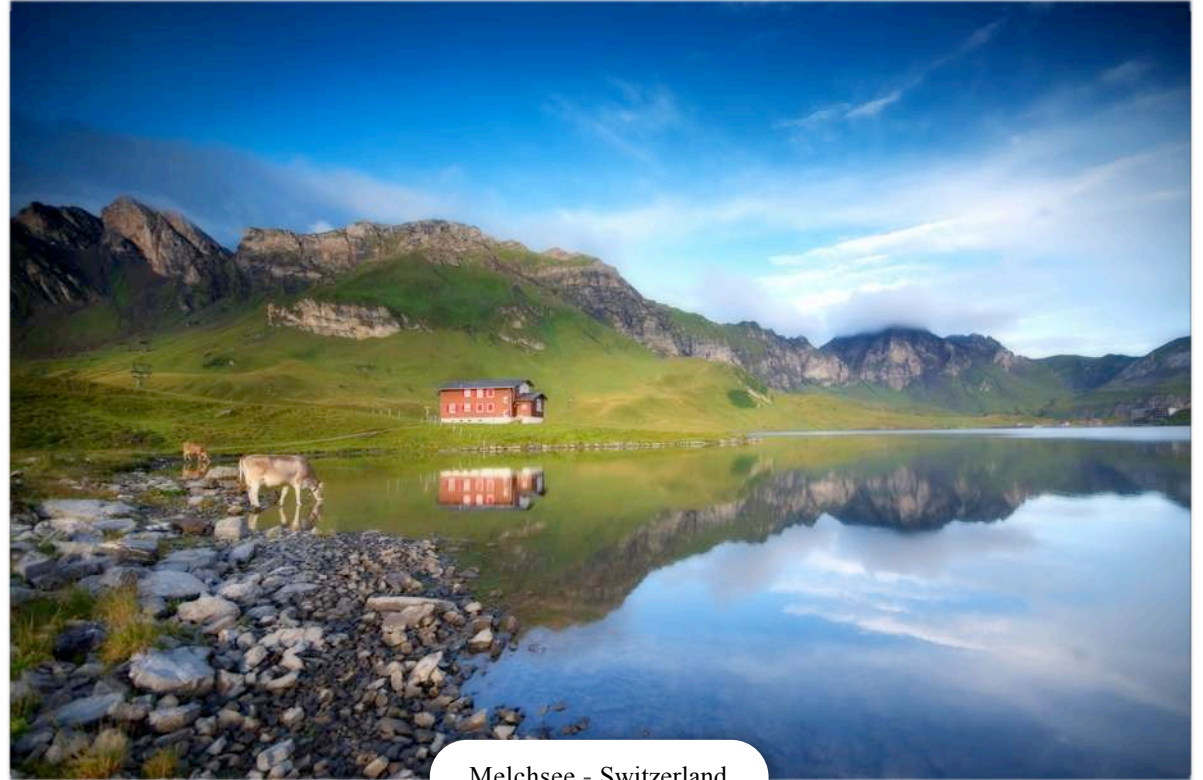
Landscape Photography is one of the classic themes of creative images. Landscapes have not only inspired great painters, but countless world-famous photographers have dealt with this fascinating subject.

EDITORIAL

In what way is this exciting ?

Surely the fact that the beauty of nature finds immortality in the image. Photography can set in a split second an absolutely realistic image, with all the details of the moment and ambient lighting. These will be quite different a few minutes later. A good landscape photograph is always unique and cannot be repeated. If it is really good we can never improve on it.

At first photographs of landscapes seem straightforward. These are static subjects that do not pressurise us to rush and that one can reproduce the photograph at any time. From the technical point of view, the subject seems undemanding and poses no problem. But when dealing with the natural landscapes intensely and with such beautiful images that can be admired in exhibitions, galleries or art books on this subject, there is a big difference between an instant shot done quickly and landscape photography performed with the eye of the master. A tremendous amount of skill, time and patience are needed to produce in the image the impressions we experience at a well prepared nature shoot.



Melchsee - Switzerland



The most famous photographers in history have always had a predilection for landscape photography. They have created magnificent works that are in no way inferior to comparative work in painting.

On the one hand, there is the documentary aspect,

and this takes precedence when it comes to presenting a landscape as it is in reality and making it accessible to the viewer. On the other hand, choosing an especially interesting point of view, one tries to give the image an appropriate arrangement of landmarks and textures, or with exceptional light, an artistic and personal note.

As is the case for most subjects, it is inherent in landscape photography, the shot has to be unique and therefore not able to be reproduced. Shortly after the shot, the scene is already quite different.

The wind-waving wheat fields. Animals and men in the image have moved, and the amazing cloud formation is already falling apart. Only the photograph is able to stop this moment forever and make the landscape as the photographer experienced it, fixed for eternity.

The fascination of landscape photography together with the ease of travel today has had the effect that nature has become one of the most appreciated subjects by both amateur and creative professional photographers. Whereas landscape photography for amateurs is essentially purely travel memories, many professional photographers focus their efforts, as part of specific reporting, documenting the best landscapes of areas visited in countries or regions.

Some photographers try to reproduce a landscape in such a perfect way that the result is a unique work of art that cannot be repeated. This is not like the images of landscapes made by chance, but intentional landscape photography, in which the point of view, the ideal moment and time must be exactly synchronised. There are photographers who have devoted themselves for years to a subject, returning to the region often, to achieve finally the perfect shot they always had in their mind.



Klingenthal - France

These days, millions of amateur photographers take photographs of tourist attractions in the countryside. The result often does not satisfy amateurs because every postcard is better and represents the subject in a professional manner. The images are also disappointing sometimes, even if we disregard the technical imperfections, because they do not have the strengths and characteristics. The image is not alive. The lighting is bad. And the atmosphere that contributes to good Landscape Photography is missing. These images are a mere transposition of the landscape and are not satisfying.



Como Lake - Italy

For many photographers, Landscape Photography is a solitary activity.

Since it is essentially a free subject, and only rarely an order, their focus can have a more artistic and creative drive. Unlike most of their other work, they are absolutely free in their design and interpretation. There are no “briefings” with binding conditions and no time limit, both of which put the photographer in a stressful situation.

By definition, nature is at the forefront. It offers the photographer more creative latitude than an order related to urban or industrial landscapes. In these, the documentation of factual statements or advertising messages take precedence, significantly limiting the creative activity of the photographer.

Urban landscapes generally are ruled by shooting views of groups or of details of building sites or at best, architecture presented in their natural surroundings. The rapport with nature plays a much lower role in this case.

This is accentuated even more in industrial landscape photography. Here the photography shows especially the general views of industrial complexes. These pictures end up mainly in society’s archives and are used as appropriate for diverse publications and presentations. In these cases, the documentary aspects must be respected above all.

Natural Landscapes, such as we conceive them here, have initially a close relationship with the beauty of nature, with oddly shaped stones, fauna or flora intact, amazing ambience of lighting and many other aspects. If man intervenes with this natural harmony, there are often traces of a civilisation’s destructive nature, which is inconceivable with the aim of photography of Natural Landscapes.

Natural Landscapes have had a particular attraction at the beginning of the history of photography.

This is because at that time exposure times were long, often several minutes, and photographers were necessarily limited to static subjects. The earliest images we are acquainted with were not so restricted due to two french inventors of photographic equipment, [Joseph Nicéphore Niépce](#) (1765 – 1833) and [Jacques Louis Mandé Daguerre](#) (1787 – 1851) and an Englishman, [William Henry Fox Talbot](#) (1800 – 1877). It was he who succeeded in 1835, four years before the publication of the first photographic process by Daguerre in Paris, to produce the first image on paper with silver nitrate. And his beautiful country house, “Lacock Abbey” near Birmingham in England, gave him plenty of landscapes for his first tests..

At the beginning of the photography era, Landscape Photography had relatively little importance. Public interest was focused more on portrait and group shots. Landscape images were essentially reliant on the personal interest of the photographers and gave little profit.

Interest in Landscape Photography became more pronounced in the second half of the 19th century due to the ever increasing popularity of travel to distant lands. Two Frenchmen, [Maxime Du Camp](#) (1822 – 1894) et [Gustave Le Gray](#) (1820 – 1884) are certainly among the pioneers of Landscape Photography. Their images brought back from their various expeditions created a real sensation in Paris.

The photograph, with its realistic representation, had a huge influence on painting and provoked a new direction of impressionism. In this style, it was not the landscape itself that was the centre of attention, but the atmosphere and lighting conditions in the landscape that the artist projected by his own skill and feeling on the canvas.

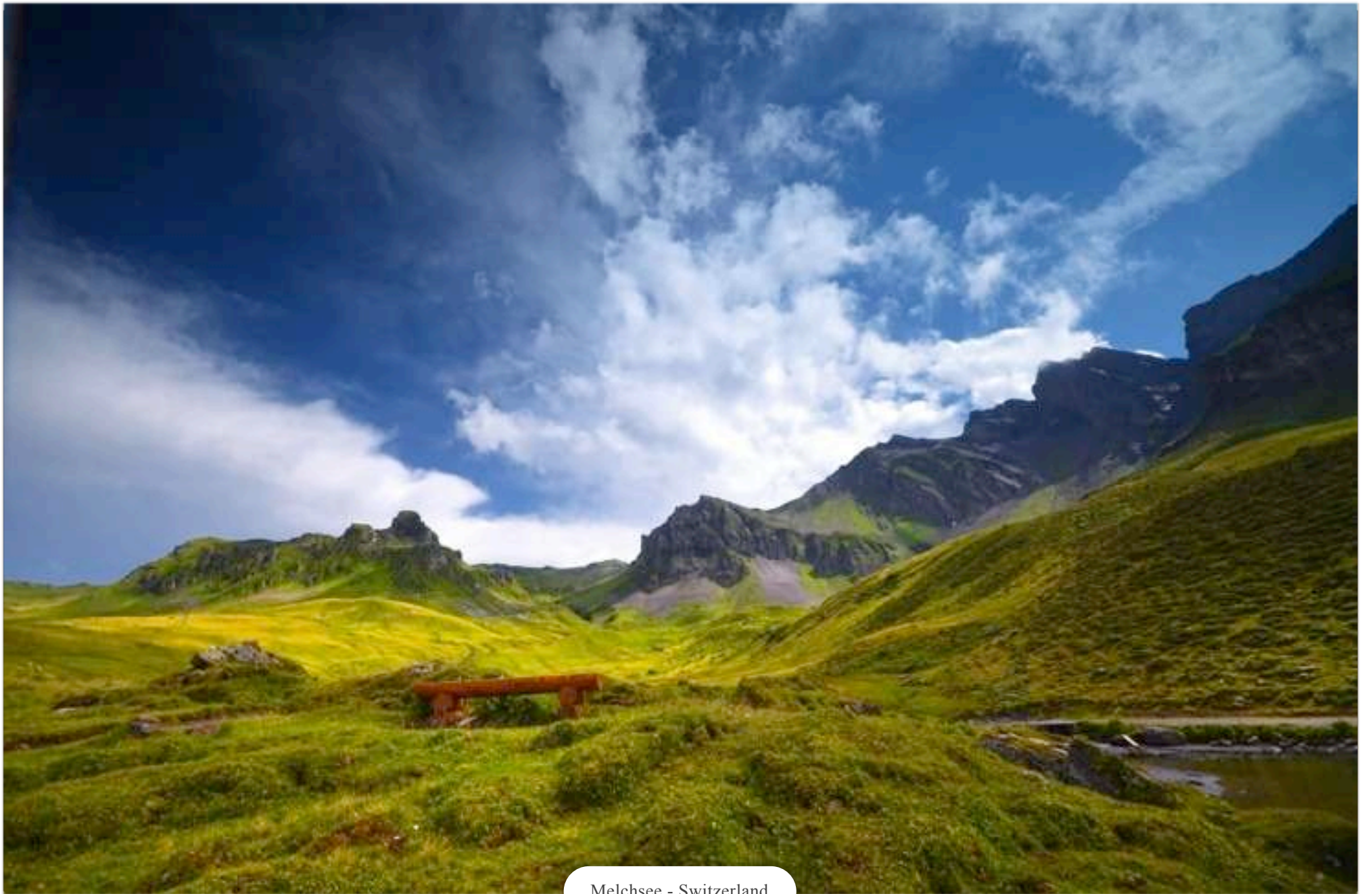
[Impressionism](#) in painting was also found among the stylish amateur photographers, which led to the era of artistic photography and resulted in a uniform creative style in all countries from 1887 until the beginning of the war in 1914.

The beginning of artistic photography dates back to 1887 with the founding of the Camera Club in Vienna by Heinrich Kühn, Hugo Henneberg and Hans Watzek, who devoted themselves essentially to impressionist representations and so their exhibitions contributed significantly to the spread of their style. This was the era of [Pictorialism](#).

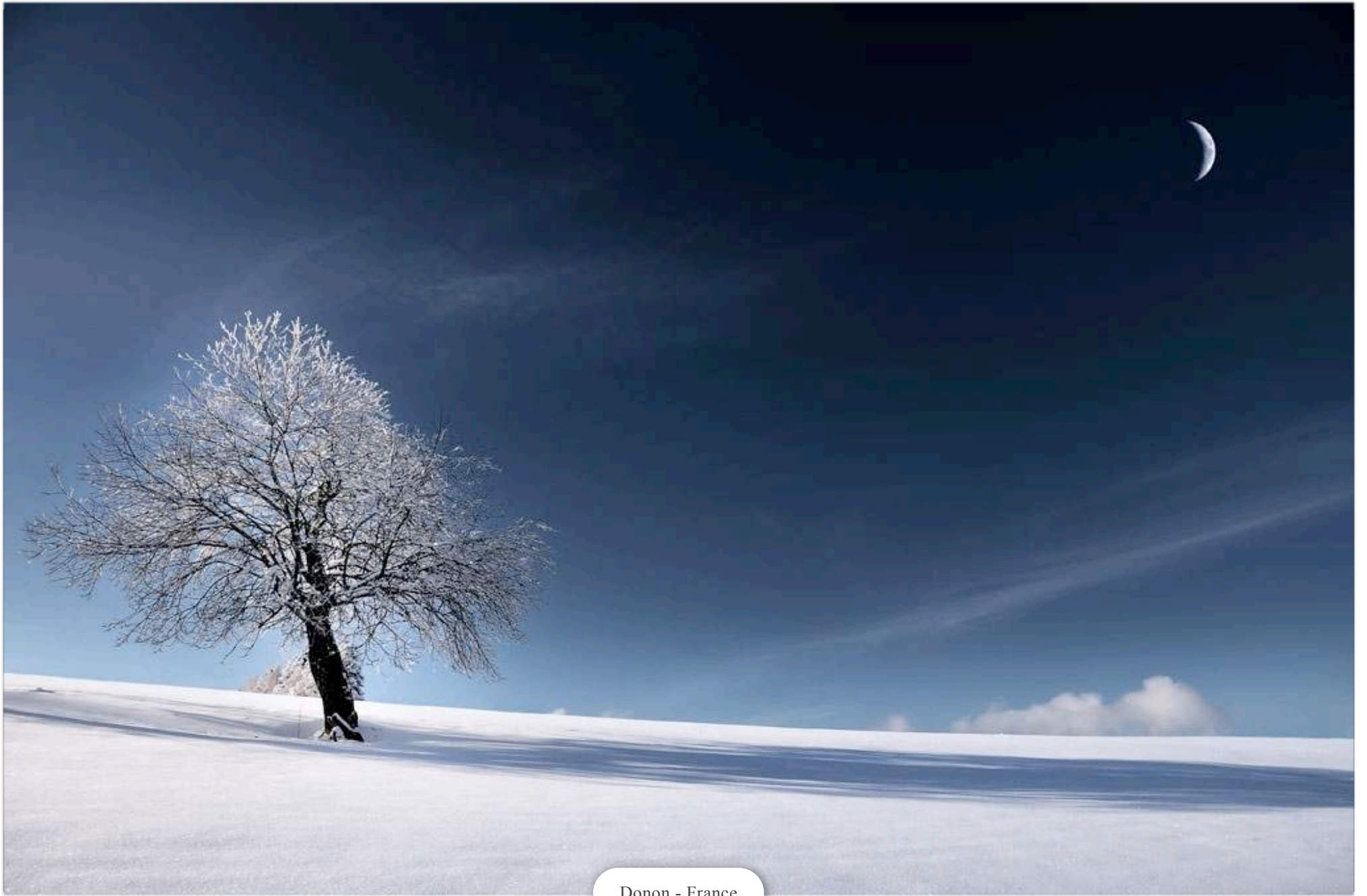
The postwar period was marked by an opposing style. Realistic representations were again in demand and caused the creation of objective work.

This began with the “new realism” created by Alfred Renger-Patzsch, or the new style proposed by others Willard van Dyke and [Ansel Adams](#) (*one of my masters*) in 1932 in San Francisco, the [Group f/64](#). The purpose of the latter body was to use large format bellows cameras and to aim for apertures up to 64 (hence the name), to produce clear photographs, thus representing the subjects and scenes as accurately and realistically as possible.

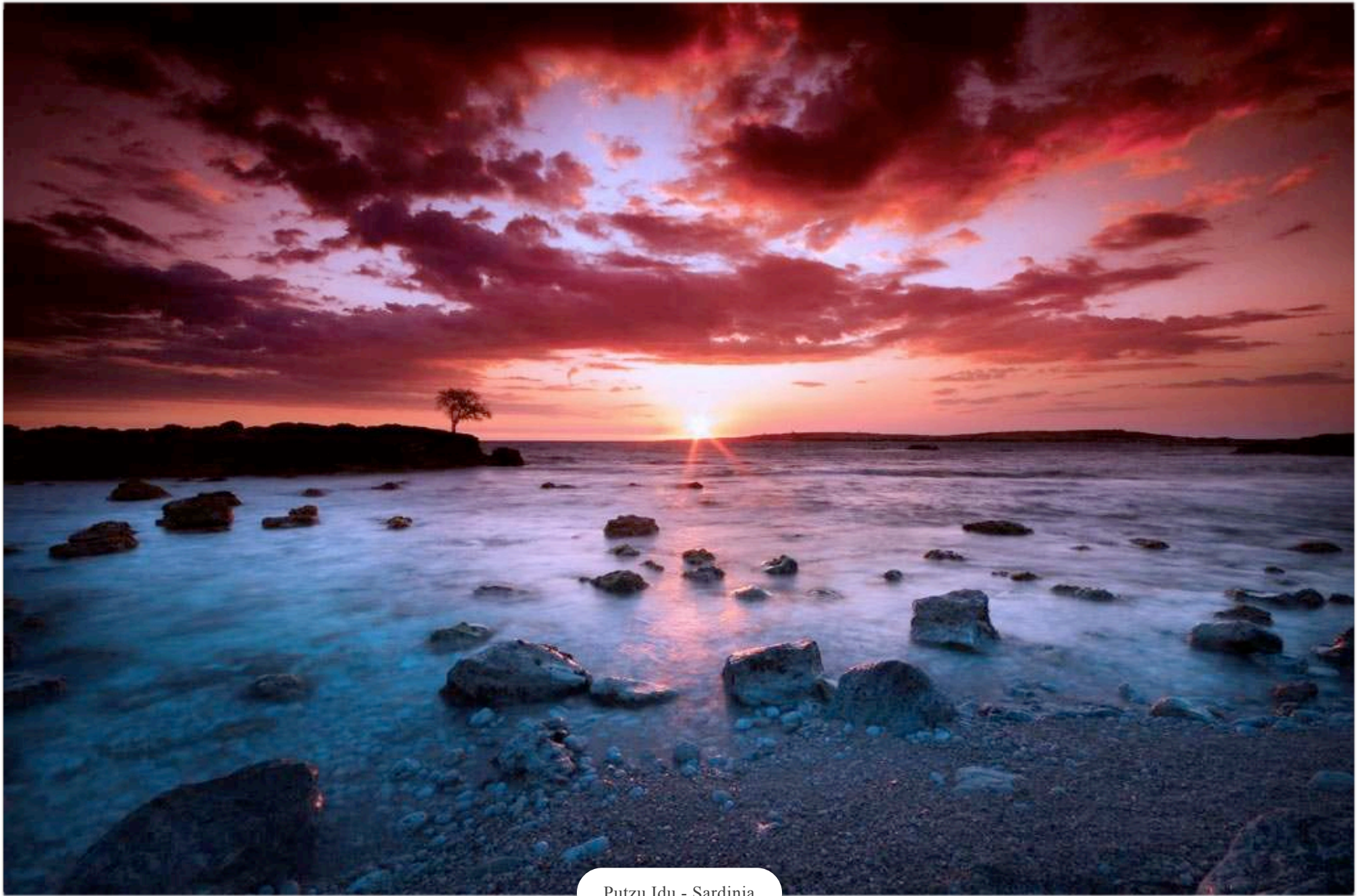




Melchsee - Switzerland



Donon - France



Putzu Idu - Sardinia



Putzu Idu - Sardinia

Why should we photograph the countryside ?

For the most part, photographs of the countryside are free and outside a client's control. Hence there is a minimal profit. Photographers who earn their living solely from Landscape Photography are very rare. Photographers are generally people who live for the view and who particularly appreciate natural beauty. On the other hand they are fascinated by the lighting – another prerequisite for the profession – not so much by the creative possibilities of studio lighting as by the beauty of environments with natural ambient lighting. Here then is already one explanation why natural landscapes always excite photographers, even if there are other kinds of topics, including photographs that sell more easily and are more financially attractive.

Another reason we can add : Many photographers travel in their profession and, while travelling, come across the most fascinating natural landscapes. What could be simpler than to replicate these experiences – professional – stunning and demonstrating photographic expertise. This is also part of the fascination of natural landscapes.



Switzerland

Landscape interpreted artistically.

One might think that natural landscapes are hardly subjects for creative photography.

The landscape is there, the lighting is given, and anyone can take a photo. But one realizes how landscape photography can be creative when one examines the astonishing works of great landscape photographers, and when one compares their results to the natural scene.

The lighting is optimal and gives the image an amazing atmosphere. Every detail plays as if the “master” has ordered the cows in the pasture, through a megaphone, to put themselves in the correct place. A branch skillfully hides an annoying detail – we would not have even noticed. But this detail would have bothered us in years to come.

It is not only the time of day, but also the season is perfectly chosen. If the photographer had made his shot only one week later, the time of blossom would have passed and the fruit trees would become almost indistinguishable from the forest in the background. And look at the cloud formation. It is amazing what drama it gives the image. Coincidence ? Monitor the weather situation for days ? What filter was used ? So many questions arise. The more we get involved with this sort of example, the more we recognize that artistic and creative landscape photography and the images produced are unique and impossible to repeat.

But where can one find landscapes that can be transferred to creative images that speak for themselves ? “Why, you can find one on your doorstep.” says a proverb. The landscapes we see every day in our immediate environment seem of little interest and without attraction photographically speaking.

Yet it is in these landscapes we should be interested, since we have the advantage of geographic proximity and the possibility of realizing quickly a quality image when the lighting is especially evocative. We can also repeat this sort of shot in different lighting conditions, which can give us a very interesting portfolio in the future.



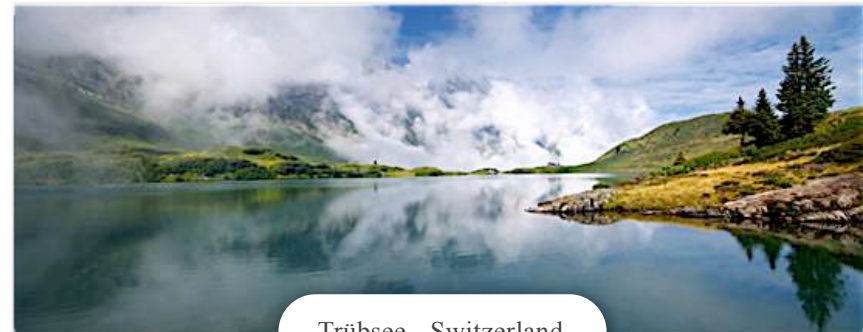


Putzu Idu - Sardinia

The current trend is evident. Advertising is requiring more and more landscape shots.

This is especially true for products close to nature in the most diverse branches such as detergents, cosmetics, fashion, drinks, food, furniture, agricultural products, as well as cars and machinery, for which advertising agencies and direct clients need good landscape photographs. This is to show, in pictures, “a healthy world” to sell the products according to an ecological aspect or to simply improve the position in the market. It is therefore in the photographer’s interests to have, for these occasions, a reserve of such photographs and to work with one or several photographic agencies.

Apart from the purely documentary shots, many pictures of natural landscapes appear in a wide range of magazines. They are used for travel brochures, to illustrate an article about a distant or particularly interesting country. There is a wide need for good photos of landscapes for other purposes. The tourist industries also, do not underestimate the turnover, is always looking for postcard photos and photos for a wide range of souvenirs. And the more people travel, the more important this demand becomes.



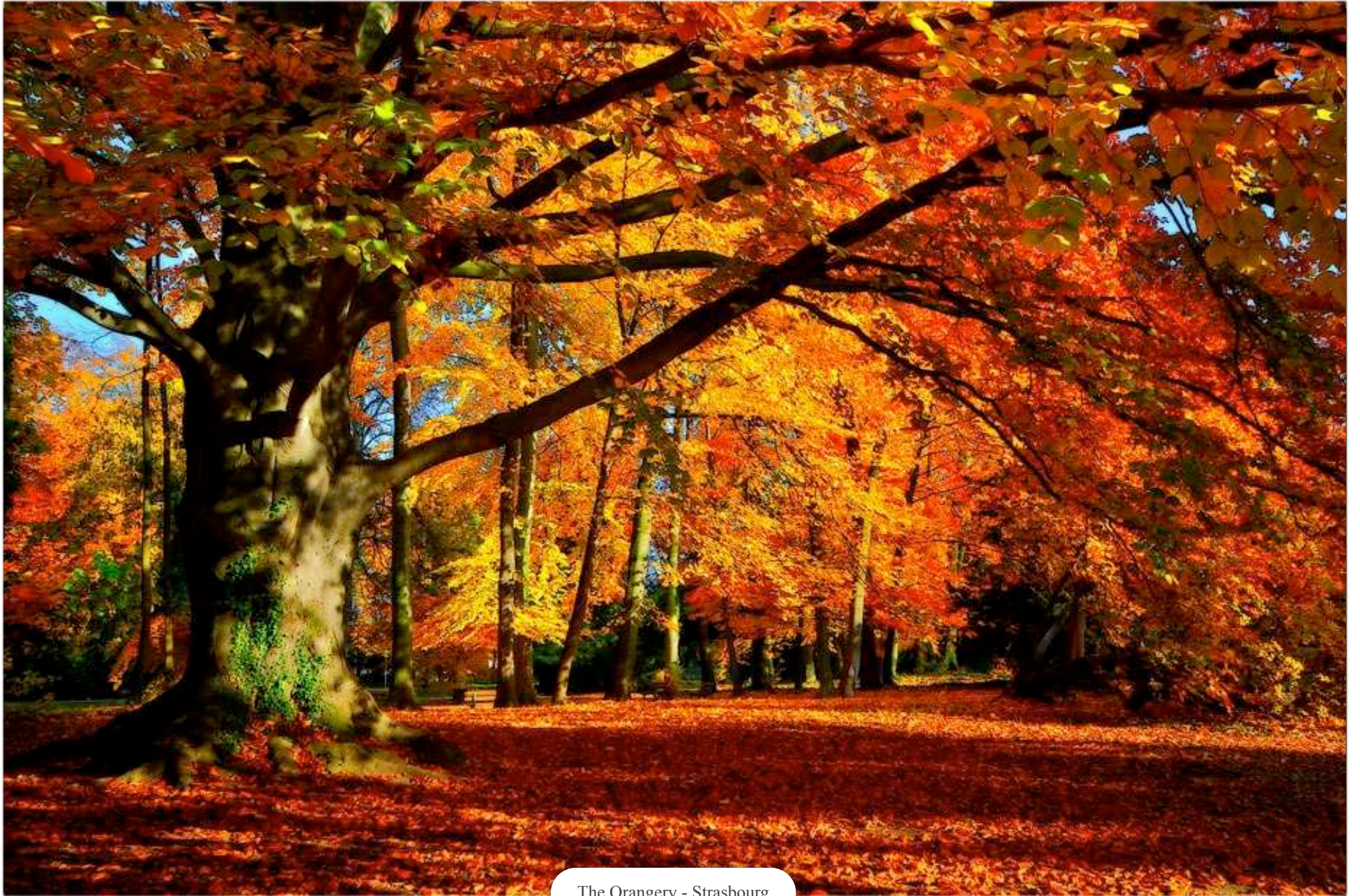
Trübsee - Switzerland



Putzu Idu - Sardinia



Putzu Idu - Sardinia



The Orangery - Strasbourg

When you wish to do outstanding work in landscape photography, there must be, as in most creative tasks, a clear idea and concept. Photography is ten percent inspiration and ninety percent perspiration. This also applies to landscape photography.

First we need to identify appropriate subjects when out walking or traveling by car. We must make a note of where we saw worthwhile scenes, what time of day would probably be most favourable, what we must be sure of in particular and add if possible a snapshot or a copy of these notes in small format. It is important to become familiar with the landscape to be photographed.

You should know which route to get there and know the point of view from which you want to take the shot, this will save you a tedious search later for the ideal spot when you are weighed down with all your heavy photographic equipment. Also inquire whether the chosen location is on public or private land. All these preliminary preparations are time consuming and can be made before the day that will produce ideal weather conditions. Another issue is the right season for the shot. Each season has its charm, and it is part of your design to choose spring, summer, autumn or winter to realize your idea.

You can also ask whether you want to repeat the shot in other seasons or at regular intervals, which would result in an interesting portfolio.

- Spring presents us with nature waking up, with flowering and colourful trees. The delicate green shows a range of intermediate tones. Flowering fields are an ideal foreground.
- Summer is full of sunny days with a light that is often flat. The daylight to make good shots is longer lasting. The hours of morning and evening offer interesting light. Many hot summer days form cumulus clouds in the sky. But beware of using long lenses in high temperatures, the air creates a shimmering blur.
- Autumn delights us with the magical colours of hardwood forests, but that lasts only a few days. Then the colours change to a dull brown colour. On the other hand there are clear autumn days for long distance shooting, but also the atmosphere of fog with sunrays passing through it.
- Winter often gives a feeling of desolation, and it takes a great deal of care to photograph in winter to realize a planned concept. Snow covered surfaces, without footprints, from animals or skis are boring. Frosted trees backlit against the light are the subject of dreams. To accentuate the blue sky you can use a polarizing filter.



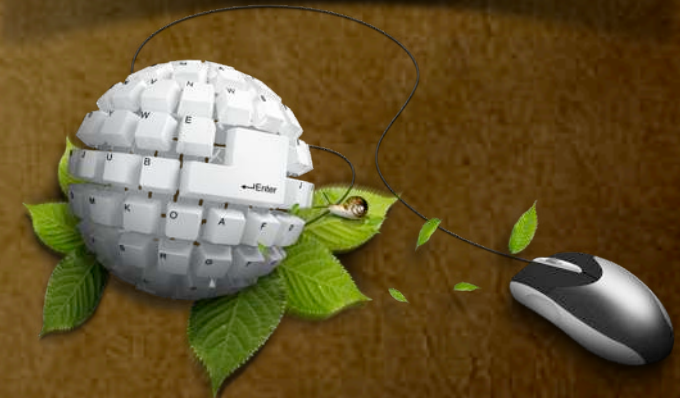
From idea to image...

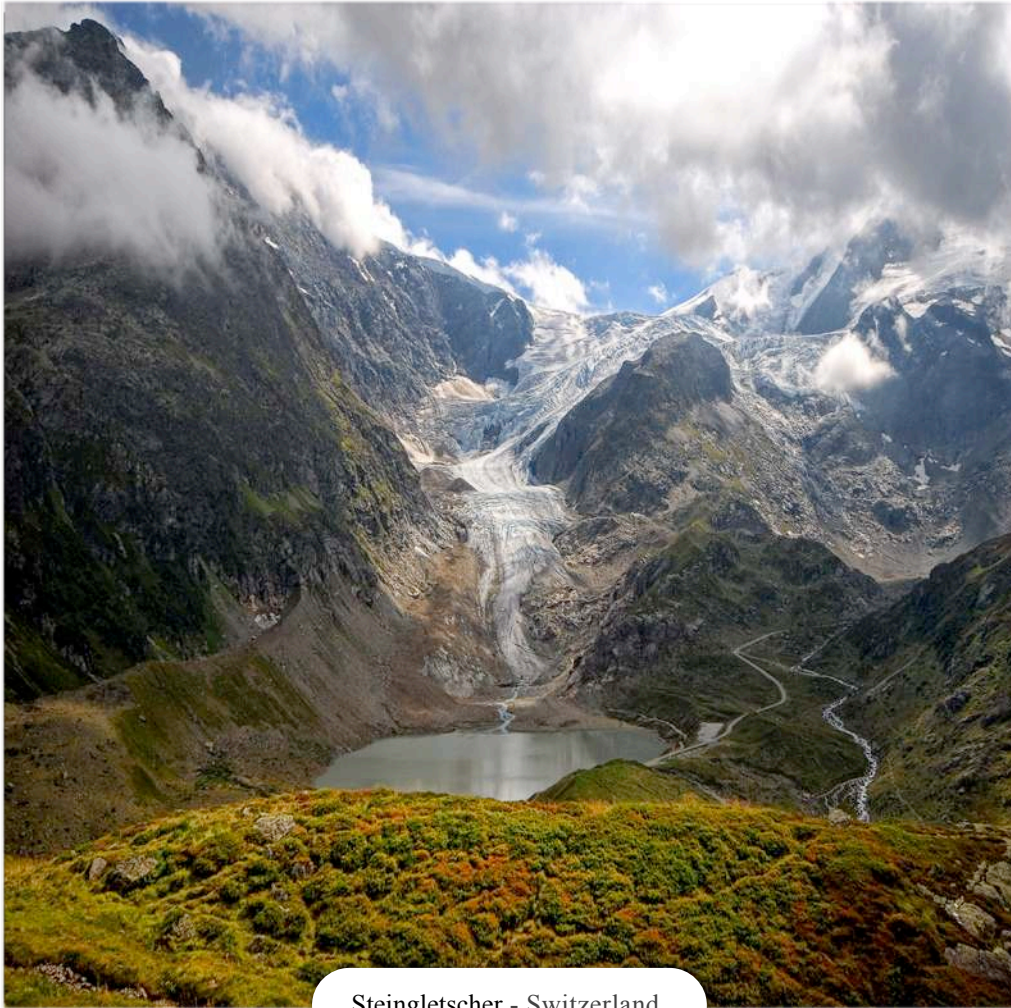
Landscape photography is not just a simple photograph of nature. A photo of landscape conveys a message in which the central subject, which acts as a point of attraction for the spectator, plays a crucial role.

The other elements of the composition must clearly submit to it. The principal subject may be a mountain, a river, a hedge jutting into the picture, a tree or any other subject. Nature is full. But be demanding when making your choice of subject and opt for the one that presents captivating forms and lines and fits well with its environment. Precise framing is one of the important elements of creativity. Landscape photography comes to life from the framing. A photograph made with a general wide-angle lens is most often nothing more than a simple reproduction of a landscape, but in all cases falls short of a picture that has been planned of a landscape. Be critical and accept no compromise. If the chosen subject and the possible framing is not very convincing, forget this scene and find another one. Often it happens that in research, a subject promises more than it delivers later in the image. When considering a subject, I always take five points into consideration :

- What impression does the space give me ? In what depth can it be divided (foreground, midplane, background) ? Which is the interesting part ? Is it advisable to have a high viewpoint to get more depth, or should we instead choose a low viewpoint to reduce the impression of depth ?
- How does the light adapt to this landscape ? Should the land be enhanced by a hard backlight, or side light, or even front light, which would be better ? Or would the autumnal diffuse lighting be best ? It is the type of lighting that will decide the best time to shoot.
- Are the land formations interesting ? Should we show a lot (with a high horizon) or less (with a low horizon) ? Are there details to hide, because they interfere with the composition of the image ?
- Should we consider particular natural events in the image (the sun...) that can give the shot additional tension ? What time do they occur ? An unusual light in the landscape always creates additional voltage.
- What is the subject of the shot ? Is it obvious enough, or visible ? How could we accentuate the effect or the expression ?

I have deliberately raised the question of the subject at the end. If I arrive at the conclusion that the scene does not in fact represent a worthy subject and the message is missing in this picture, I do not bother to put up my tripod and I leave...





Steingletscher - Switzerland

Perspective is what we call the plane representing the relationship of objects in space.

With the help of photography we can translate a scene in three dimensions into a reproduction in two dimensions. But the impression of depth, the distribution of objects in space must be preserved if not accentuated. This is one of the essential elements of Landscape Photography.

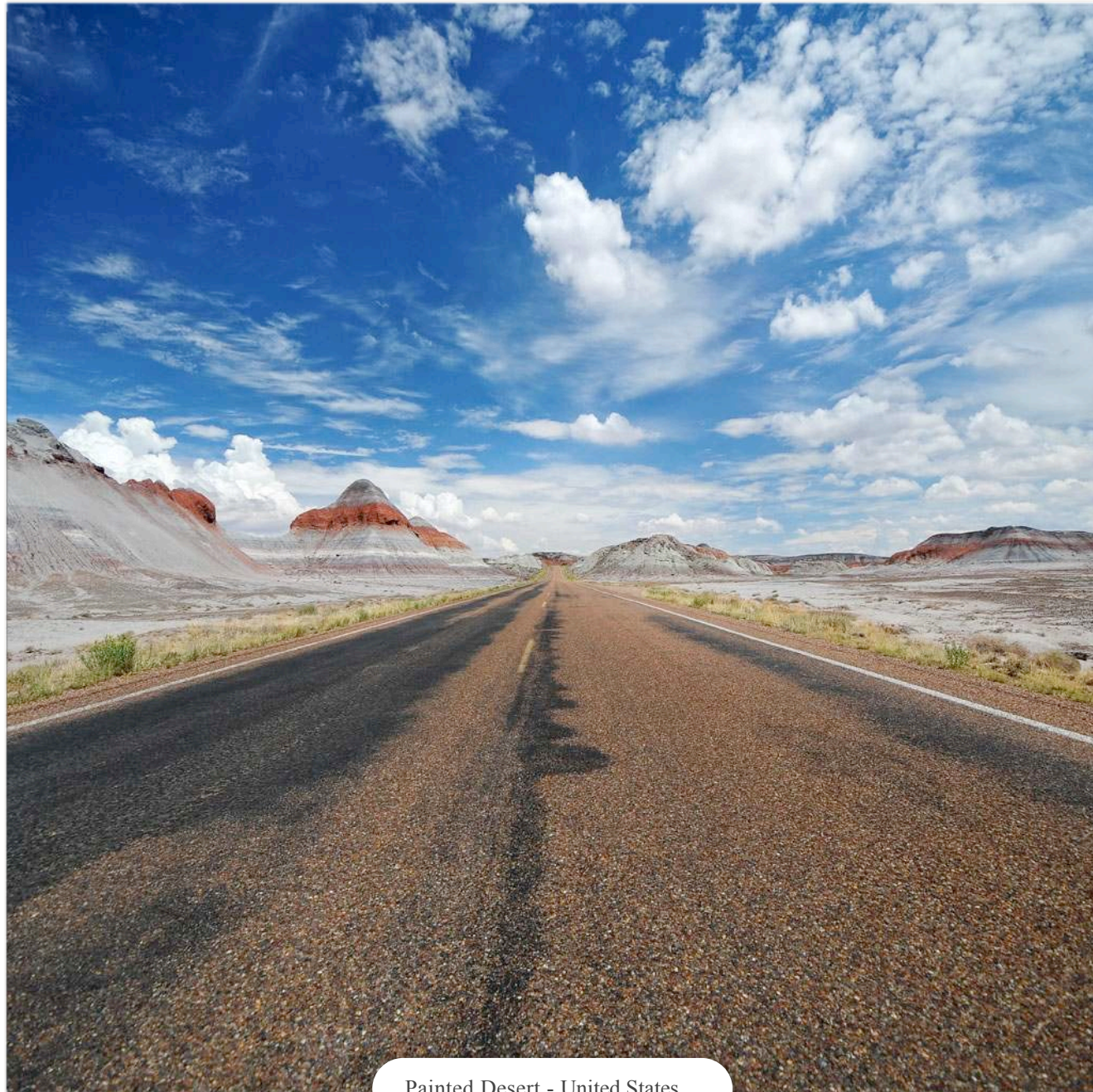
Let's be clear : The lens length does not influence perspective, but only and uniquely by the viewpoint of the photographer. The lens length determines the width of the image and the size of the subject in the image, without affecting perspective. The key in choosing perspective is the viewpoint of the photographer.

Often it is not at all easy to position oneself in the desired location. Some shots require a very low tripod that allows you to work close to the ground, which is possible with some professional tripods. Similarly, viewpoints in very high places can be difficult to achieve. Hunters' guides are often helpful.

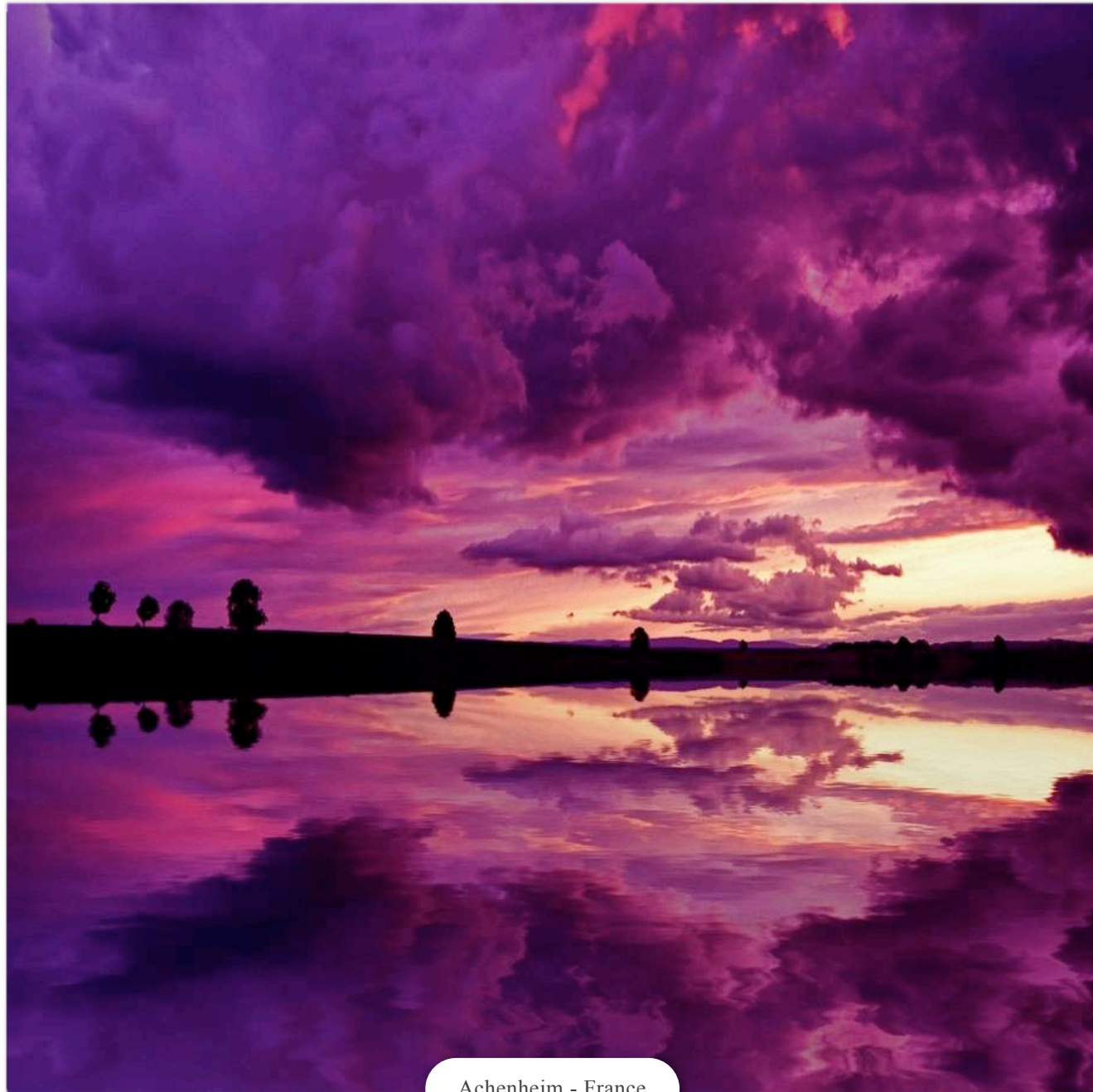
We should also mention the aerial perspective, on which we have no influence, but which can create the mood. This originates from the atmospheric haze in outer space. It presents us with different planes of intensity diminishing colours and tones. The more distant subjects are, the less colourful and distinct they will be. This effect is strongest on foggy days, giving subjects in space interesting staging especially noticeable against the light.



Heiligenberg - France



Painted Desert - United States



Achenheim - France

Our concern for the lighting in Landscape Photography rules us completely !

And what is more, being involved in Landscape Photography, we learn more and more to evaluate the ideal position of the sun and the most suitable time of day. A useful gadget in these cases is a compass, which allows one to determine the approximate path of the sun.

You can achieve the same – an old scouting trick – with your watch. Point the small hand towards the sun, half the angle between the sun and noon and you get the direction South.

The next question concerns the ideal lighting for shooting. For a desert landscape, taking shots towards the sun is appropriate, making perfectly formed sand dunes. A landscape in the mountains is more effective with side lighting. The setting sun, very low in the sky, with long shadows, accentuates the plasticity and depth. The autumn forest on the other hand, reddish-brown, does not come alive in the light, but the colour contrasts will be best illuminated by a front light or even diffuse lighting from a slightly overcast sky.

So much for light. But where there is light, there are also shadows. We photographers do not think enough about shadows. In many cases, we are more successful if we concentrate on the effect of shadows rather than the light itself. Should we choose a preference for hard or soft shadows ? What direction should these shadows take ? Towards the camera ? Should they be sideways or going from the camera towards the background ?

Try then, just once, to judge the situation of the subject based on the shadows, and you will be surprised how quickly you can resolve the problems of ideal lighting. On the other hand we must distance ourselves from the perfectly timed shot with the sun and small white clouds. This is not creative landscape photography, but rather suitable for postcards. Landscape photography lives with the ambience of lighting, and for the life to be present you have to go into nature. In the morning at daybreak, in the evening at dusk, just after a storm or during a cool autumn day.

This is when we will meet the unique lighting conditions that will encourage us to act quickly. These moments often do not last long, from a quarter of an hour to perhaps two hours maximum. To best use this time, we must know exactly what we want to photograph and where.

The viewpoint must be clearly defined and the access known, in short, everything we described in the Chapter about the Idea and Realisation.

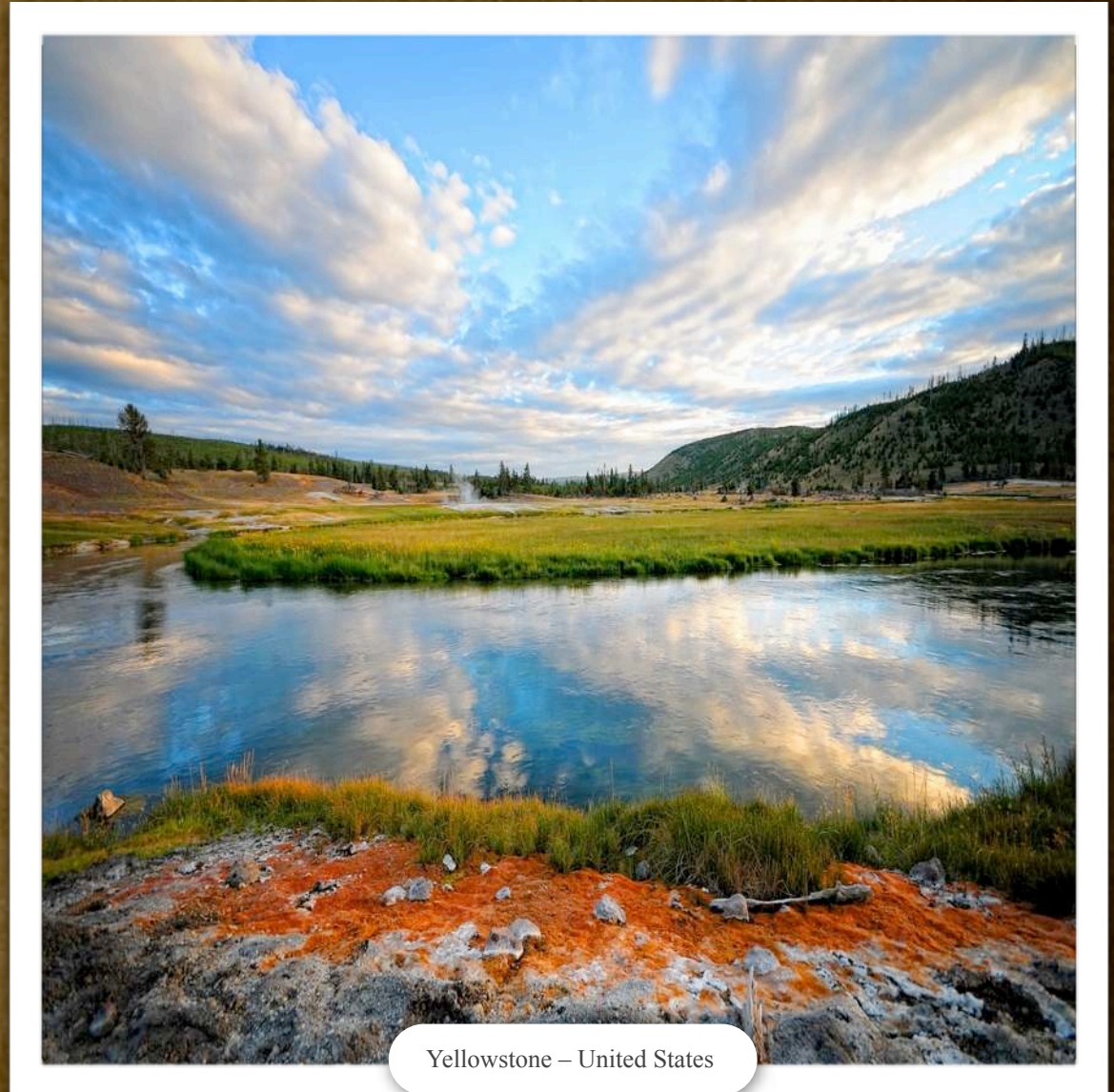
The lens as a means of creating a style

It is not the lens that determines the viewpoint and the perspective. The perspective depends solely on the viewpoint of the photographer.

The lens has two critical functions. On the one hand it is the width of the image depending on the lens length that determines what portion of the subject area will be in the shot. With a short lens there will be more subject area or width, with a long lens there will be less. But it is also responsible for the distance ratio between the subject planes. A short lens presents the distance relationship between the objects in the shot as being smaller than a longer lens.

With a wider subject area the objects in it are made to appear smaller, than with a longer lens, giving a smaller concentration between the planes of even distant subjects creating a flat impression with little depth. Finally, a wide-angle lens gives us the opportunity to include the foreground, which accentuates the differentiated dimensions of depth.

From the practical point of view, lenses with a short focal length give a more interesting impression of landscape photography than long lenses. But the short focal lengths tend to distort the edges of the subject that can only be compensated for by viewing the shot at a distance proportional to the distance that the shot was taken. From all this, we may conclude, that in landscape photography the desired pronounced perspective can only be achieved with a wide-angle lens. This is, of course, not the case, because the narrowed areas of the subject taken with a long lens are, in many cases, much more impressive than a wide overview.



Yellowstone – United States

Colour as a means of creating a style

In landscape photography we generally try to stay true to the colours.

Bright colours from foreign objects can be annoying and should be avoided. This also applies to the use of colour filters and special effect filters that change part of the image. There are situations in which such a filter helps to create a certain mood, but generally these should be used sparingly. It is also true that one can quickly tire of these effects in the image.

Useful filters in landscape photography are those that can render a warmer (more red) or cooler (more blue) tone. A very important filter in landscape photography is the polarizing filter. It is used to reduce or eliminate reflections on water, on wet tarmac or on the leaves in certain conditions, as well making the blue sky darker. A rotation of the filter increases or decreases the effect of the polarization. It is recommended for almost every shot, take a look through the viewfinder and rotate the filter to appreciate visually if its use is desirable.

Gradient filters are also valuable in landscape photography. Their density increases in one direction to make, for example, a sky appear darker while the image is perfectly balanced with respect to the light. Each photographer must decide for himself how the effect of different filters should be used in photographs of natural landscapes. It is primarily a matter of personal taste. But it is a fact that such standard effects become boring in the long term, when used too often.

In the creation of landscape images it is not the colour that is of the utmost importance, but the textures and lines of the subject. The colour should be loyal and discreet and create a natural harmony. Pastel shades are preferable to garish colours to create a good atmosphere. Monochrome images also have some appeal. They are obtained either with a strong colour filter or by changing the photo into black and white..

Black and white as a means of creating a style

Black and white photography is always fashionable.

Especially in landscape photography the implementation of colourful scenery into corresponding grey values is a creative subject that is very much appreciated.

The neutral image in terms of colour concentrates the subject represented, in values from delicate white through to dark grey in the shadows, with a special appeal. Black and white photography also offers the opportunity to enhance or reduce certain colours of the subject by using colour filters.

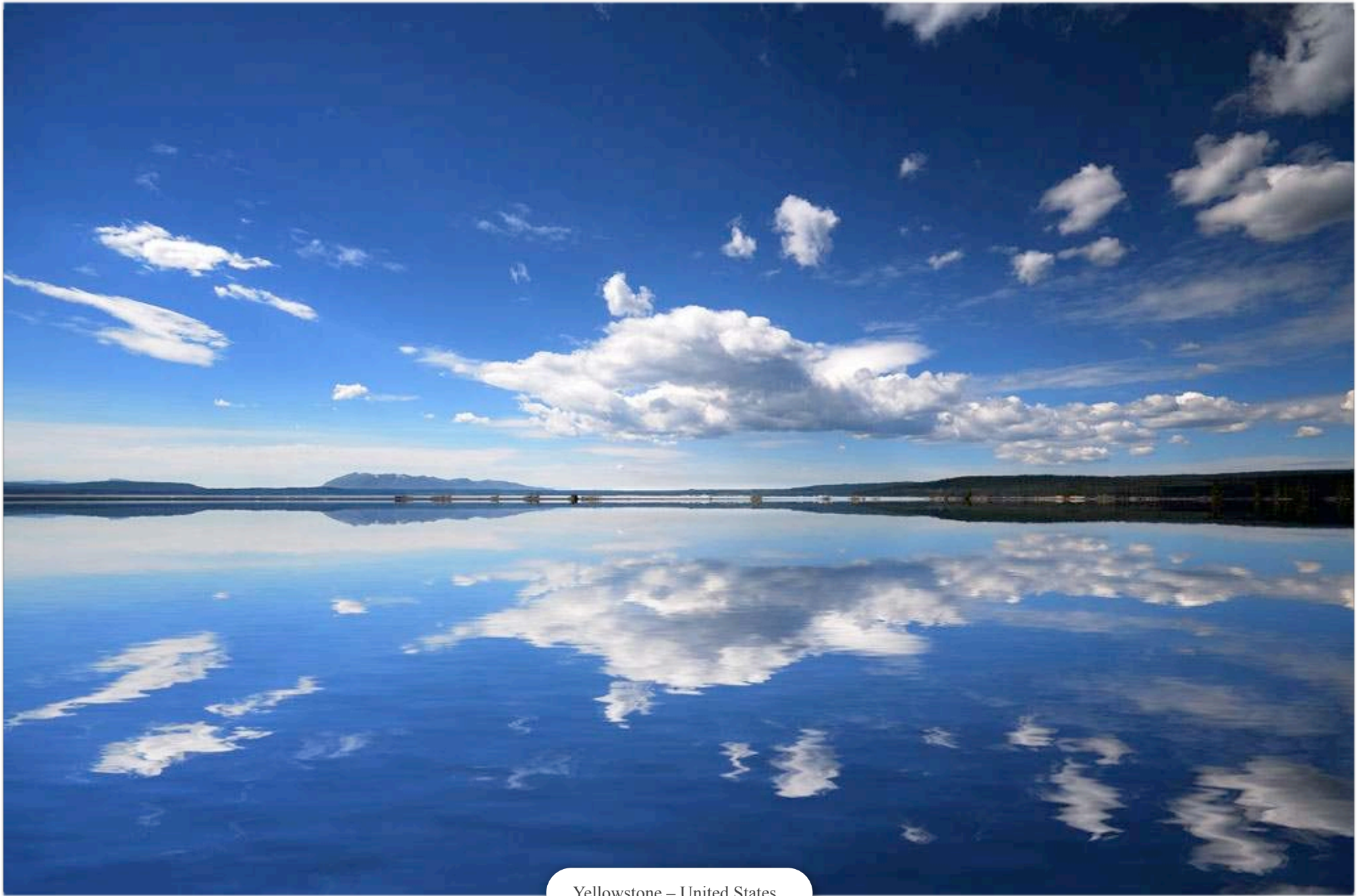
Yellow, orange and red filters are used mostly in landscape photography, to darken the sky and make it better reflect the cloud formations. The basic rule is that a filter of its own colour will make a colour clearer, and a filter of the complimentary colour will darken it.

Besides the possibility of rendering tonal values with filters, there is another issue of weight in black and white photography. If one desires the values of light and contrast to be reproduced as faithfully as possible, every photographer will eventually become interested in the zone system of Ansel Adams. Aside from the fact that Ansel Adams worked in large format, he created in the thirties the foundation for a system to reproduce the contrast of a subject by exposure and development, with all its correct values, on average photographic paper.

For metering the system zone's exposure, only a selective measure of the subject is recommended. In this case it must already be decided before the shot which parts of the inherent grey scale should be exposed. Are the shadows required to submit details or the sections clear? Unfortunately it is very difficult to render the entire contrast, so it is often necessary to make compromises.



Yellowstone – United States



Yellowstone – United States



Yellowstone – United States

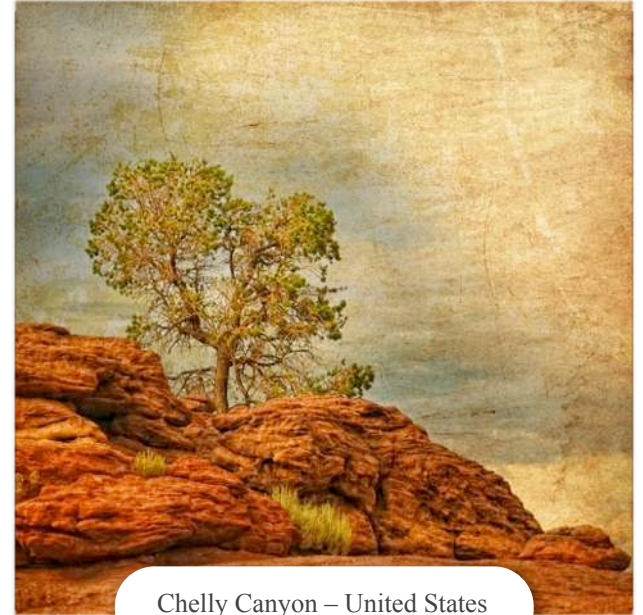
Spontaneous and planned landscape

Landscape photography is 90% planning and 10% chance.

Famous landscape photographers have devoted more time than necessary researching a favourable scene, the best viewpoint and the ideal conditions of light, before beginning to shoot. If we start blindly to begin our landscape photography, with the photographic equipment in the car, and without preparation, the results are more often disappointing instead of giving us valuable shots.

We come across interesting subjects here and there, but only rarely do we see them in ideal conditions. If we photograph them anyway, we will not be completely satisfied, but if we do nothing at all, the day is lost. Sometimes it is chance that produces good results in landscape photography.

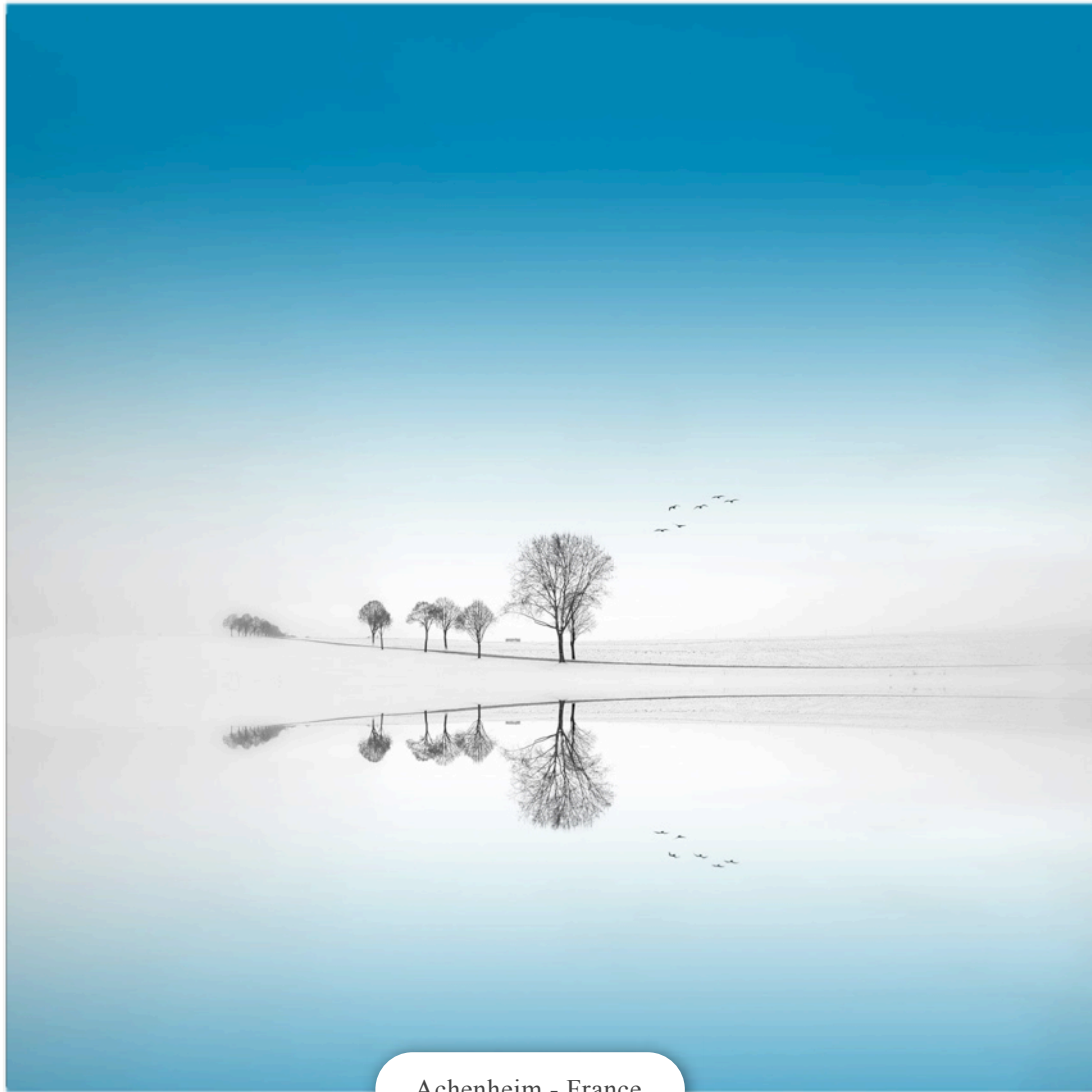
When a beautiful scene presents itself before us like a picture in a book in perfect lighting with a few desirable clouds. And if, perchance, one has exactly the right equipment in the car, several factors together contribute to the success of good luck in photography. But do not rely on this sort of chance because it will never happen.



Chelly Canyon – United States



Trübsee - Switzerland



Achenheim - France

It is very difficult to learn how to compose an image.

A gift and sensitivity to harmony of lines and surfaces are essential for the photographer who wants to be creative and become successful.

But there are people who do not know how to see the ideal frame and who do not allow in the image the necessary free space, which the image exactly needs. They pass over important details, or they do not notice when shooting that the horizon of the sea is not perfectly horizontal. In addition this horizon is exactly in the middle of the image and divides it into two perfectly boring halves.

It is exactly to do with composition that images taken in advance have their full value. The examination of them later, the study or even analysis of photographs of the great masters is probably of more value than all the work in long, boring courses in this area. The composition of the image begins with a vision; I am talking about creative vision.

The creative and expert photographer does not see just any landscape, but he has a complete mental image, with a perfect frame, lines and a clear division of surfaces. Before preparing his camera equipment he already knows where the best viewpoint will be and in which parts he should or could sacrifice the details, because the difference in subject contrast is too great.

Artistry and experience in landscape photography carry even more weight than perfect mastery of photographic technique.

The composition of the image starts with a frame. First we ask the principle questions : orientation of the image. Horizontal has a quiet and calming effect, vertical is active, even aggressive. The wider an image is, the more it conveys depth and gives the viewer a sense of calmness.

Vertical format is rather rare in landscape photography. It only exists in about 10% of these shots. The explanation is simply found in a part of our own vision, which focuses on a wide field of view. So we want to reproduce with most of our countryside subjects this impression of width (and scope) in our photographs and transmit this to the viewers. Vertical images are generally successful when they accentuate the foreground and thus create a great depth. As we find in other areas, the composition of the image in landscape photography is also composed of surfaces and lines. The subject itself presents this purely geometric distribution as a lesser interest, and the rules concerning the composition of the image are thus more or less applicable to each type of subject.

For us, the surfaces are shown in landscape photography from the sky, mountains, hills, rocks, clumps of trees, fields, meadows and so on. And lines are on the horizon, roads, rivers, hedges and much more. Surfaces are operating primarily by their size, brightness and colour, while the lines pose emphasis and direct the eye in a given direction.

In accord with our reading habits, we have a sense of scope, freedom and extroversion when the subject or direction of it goes to the left, while going to the right corresponds to proximity, or returning and is introverted. We can prove this very easily by a moving object in the image. The movement from right to left is seen as departing, distant, while that orientation going towards the right signifies returning and nearness.

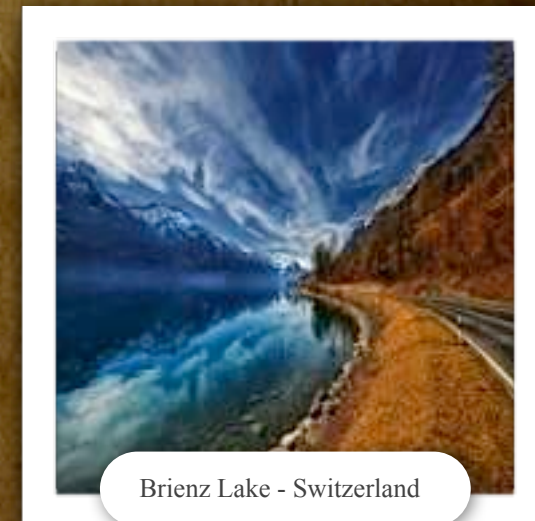
In landscape photography, direction from left to right is also essential. A tree that dominates the left side of the image is heavy and cumbersome. We consider this picture not as good as the one with the tree in the right half of the image.. If we put the tree in the centre, we have theoretically committed a mortal sin from the point of view of the composition.

If on the other hand we retake the same scene placing the tree on the right, the image will have an entirely new expression (*still with the same main subject*). The audience focuses more on the landscape itself. The tree becomes a secondary indispensable subject.

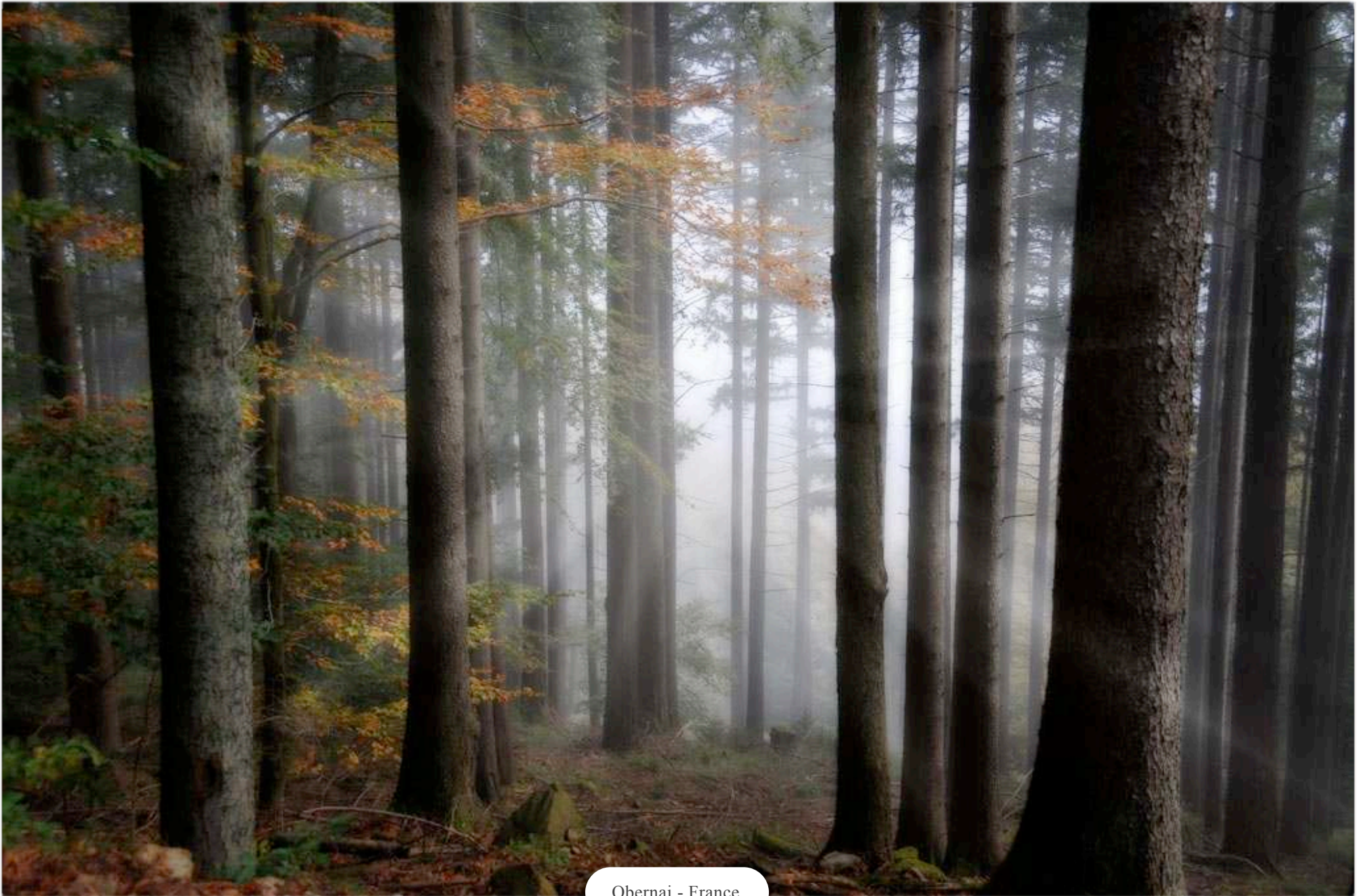
For the composition of the image, the distribution of these surfaces is essential. As is usual in our reading and writing, we look at a picture from the top left to the right and down. If the distribution of the light is in the same direction, the bright parts of the subject go to the top left towards the centre of the image, then we are facilitating the spectator who is viewing this image. However, if the distribution of light goes in the other direction, we will immediately feel an attraction to the image. We need to force ourselves to consider this carefully. It is easy to prove this by extending a mirror image in the left-right plane.

The same thing concerns the diagonal of the image that represents a very important part of the composition. If one follows the diagonal direction from the top left to the bottom right, it helps us to understand the image. If it leads from the top right to the bottom left, an examination of the image is made more difficult, the image has less impact.

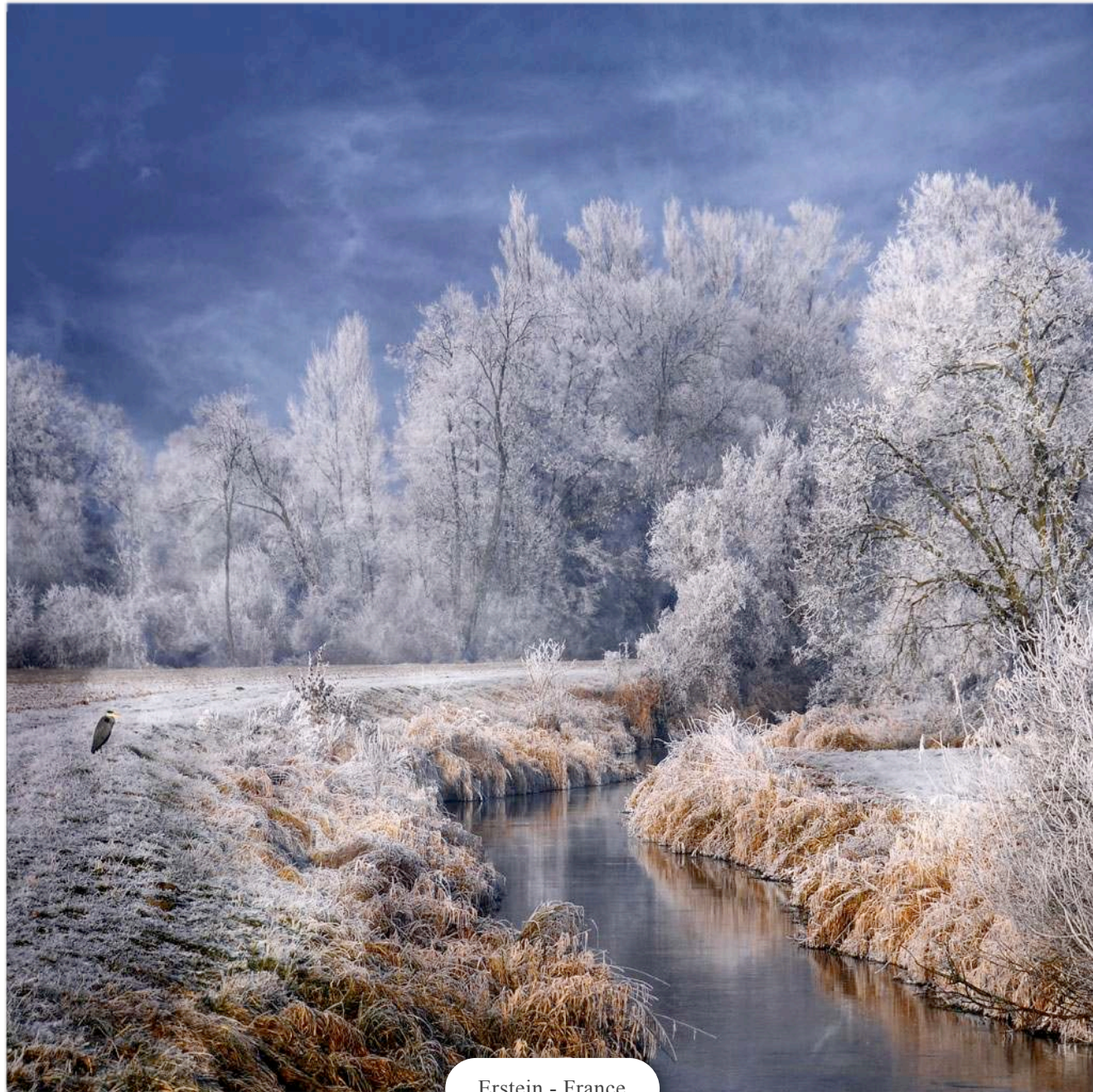
The distribution of bright areas in the picture is of specific interest. In general we consider that an image looks good when the clear parts are located in the upper half. Sunny skies gives us proof of this, while storm clouds, black, create a dramatic sensation. This is not just up/down orientation, but also from left to right.



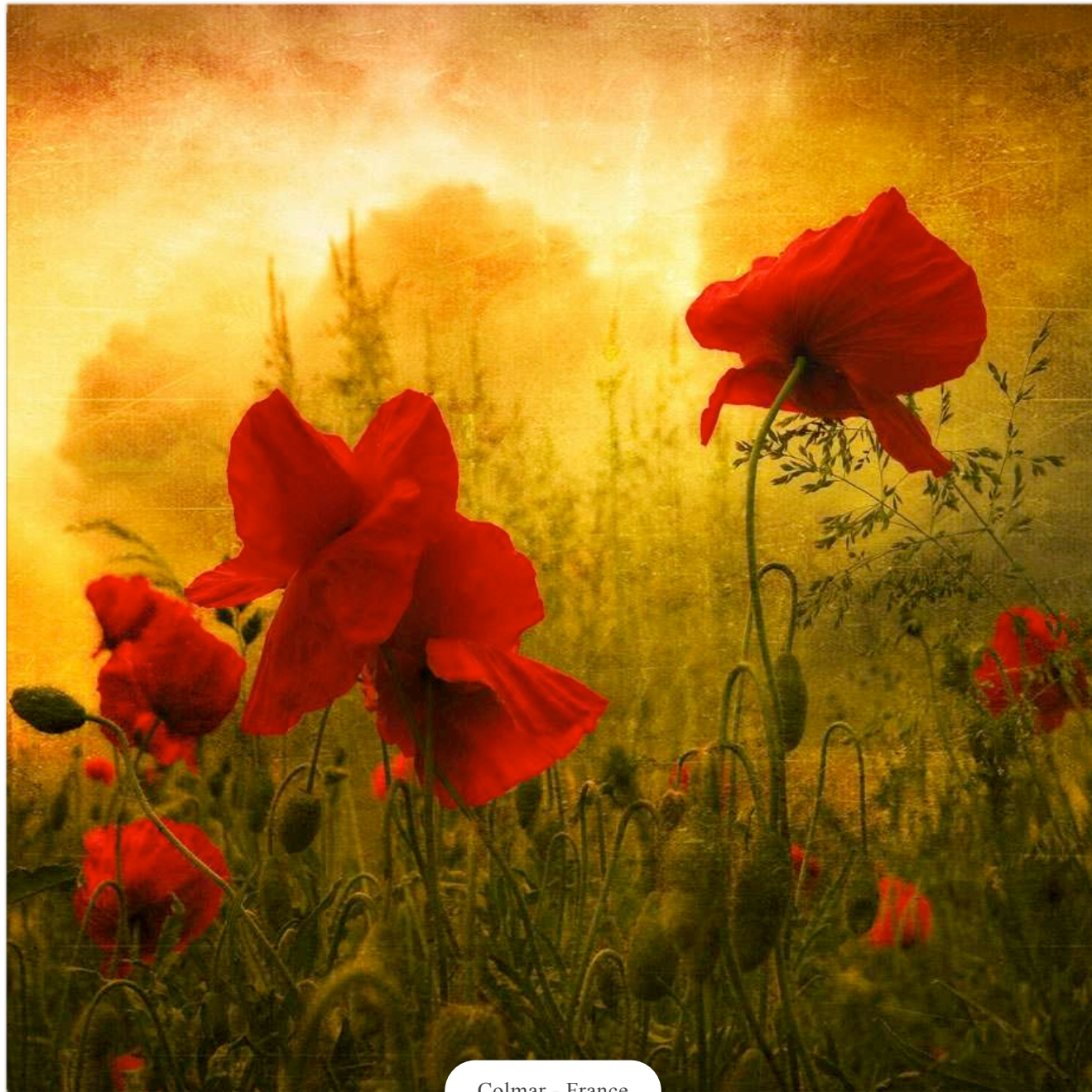
Brienz Lake - Switzerland



Obernai - France



Erstein - France



Colmar - France

The horizon is a key element in the composition of an image.

In principle we do not have the horizon in the middle of the image.

Symmetry is boring, asymmetry increases tension. We can generally divide a landscape into thirds. If the sky takes up two thirds, we feel the sensation of infinite space. If the sky is limited to only a third, it will be the landscape and the foreground that will be emphasised.

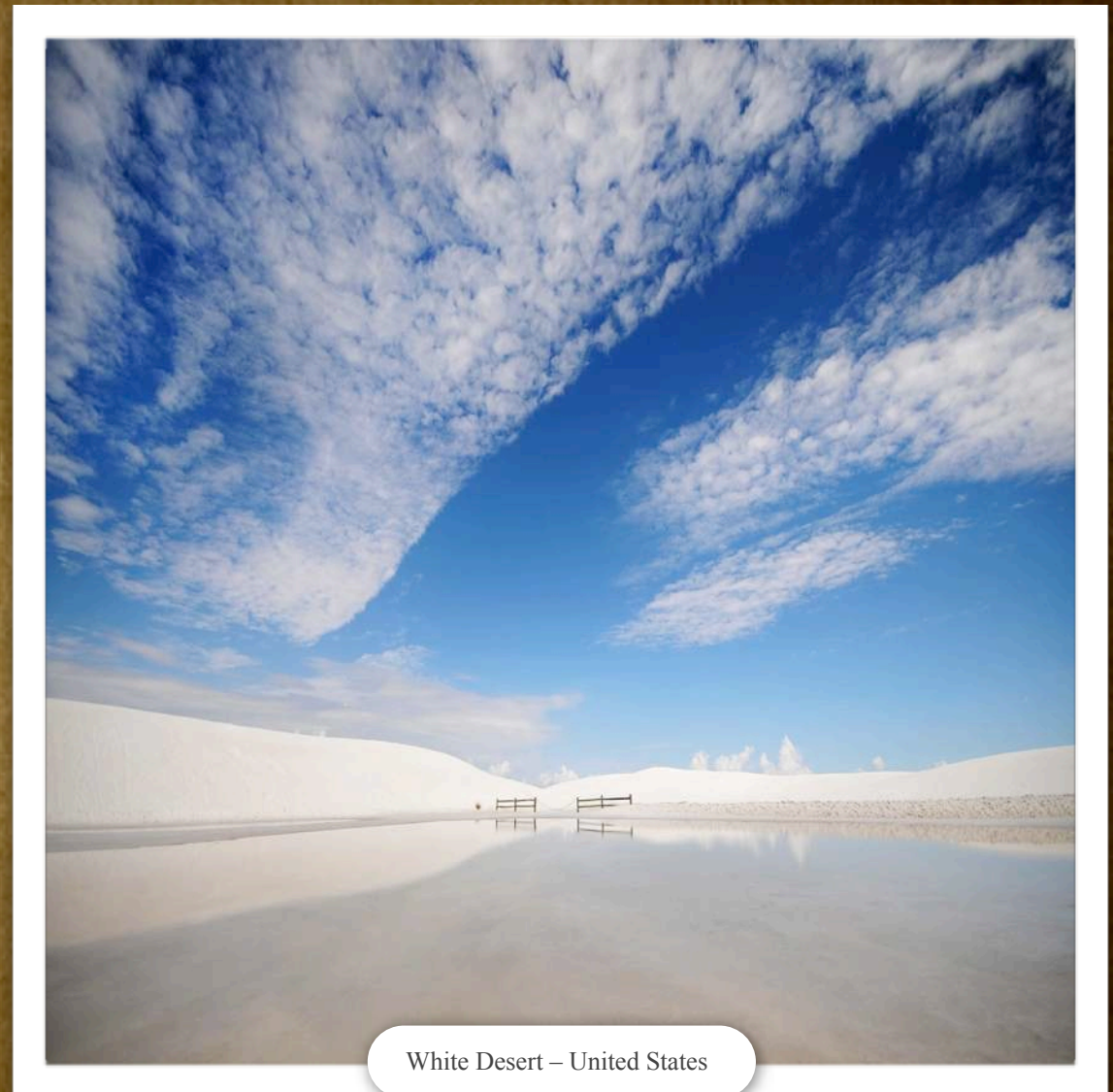
Foreground, middle-level, background :

Landscape is defined in the broadest sense by a scene that includes at least three levels of depth, which are divided into front, middle and background.

The main subject of the image is usually in the centre. It is not alone but the environment does not influence it (in the ideal situation) nor does it have an annoying effect on the main subject, thus it supports the image.

The foreground gives the viewer the impression of depth in space due to the incorporation of a size comparison. It plays a primary role in the composition, because it seems to be closer to the observer and it is large in the picture (*although in general it is of secondary importance*).

Whenever possible, one should incorporate an interesting foreground into the composition. The background gives the image its atmosphere as well as the impression of distance and infinity.. Images without background such as a forest of mostly grey trunks, especially photographed with a long lens that narrows the width of the planes, has an oppressive impact on us and makes us feel cramped. When examining photographs of landscapes we often see three critical errors that must be avoided at all costs :



White Desert – United States

Just by following these three rules consistently will result in significantly improved landscape photographs.

And if you look at your old landscape photographs after a few years, from the point of view of these three errors, you will have confirmation of the correctness of these rules.

The sky in the landscape. The sky is a major component of almost all landscape shots, and it often dominates and fills more than half the image. The sky can be a cloudless pure blue surface or it can have bizarre cloud formations, the repercussions on the message of the image are undeniable..

As a monochrome surface, it has a tranquilizing effect, or, with thunderclouds, expresses the calm before the storm. When there are clouds in the sky, it is often worthwhile including them in the landscape shot.

We can even enhance the effect with a polarizing filter and in black and white with yellow, orange or red filters. Interesting cloud formations suddenly take on a creative significance, and where appropriate even an important integration of the sky in the shot may be desired. It is not unusual to find landscape photographs where the sky covers two-thirds to three-quarters of the image. In picture composition the sky is always a counterbalance to the landscape, which is the reason why the position of the horizon is important.

On the one hand, the horizon must always be straight, which means that the camera must be set level with the vertical. Also the horizon must not pass through the

middle of the image, dividing in into half each for heaven and countryside. The effect is annoying and for this rule (for once) there is no exception. The clouds move faster than one thinks. Often you need to hurry, because the most beautiful cumulus can turn into indistinct clouds in a few short minutes.

In other cases, it is better to wait for a more interesting cloud formation. If the atmosphere created by the clouds counts so much, one can take several shots at certain intervals, and later choose the most evocative picture.

Air pollution causing fog does not help us in our job as a landscape photographer. In some regions near industrial areas, the clear days during which we can take landscape shots have become scarce. The mist is formed mainly during the day and forces us to interrupt our plans after a few hours. The fog does not only interfere with visibility at a distance, but also with the blue sky. To some extent one can solve this problem with a polarizing filter, but often the layer of fog is so thick that everything fails. Except, of course, further processing of the image using a computer.

The effect of the blue sky depends essentially on the direction of the light. Against the light, the blue sky is a stage there for the wishes of the photographer; because the atmospheric haze and dust particles are so enlightened by the sun they cause a grey sky. If we turn 180 degrees, everything changes : The sky is steely blue, because we are looking in the direction of the light itself and the refraction of light on the mist and dust particles no longer plays a role for us.



Trees are not only important components, but also often a photographic theme.

It is good when one concentrates on trees during examination of the environment. The landscape does not include just one main subject, but also the environment nearby or further away.

A tree alone in the landscape can be quite dominant in the centre of a vertical format. But we can also place it in a third of the image in horizontal format, to transmit some of its dominating position to its equally photogenic surroundings. The direction of the light is of primary importance for photographing trees.

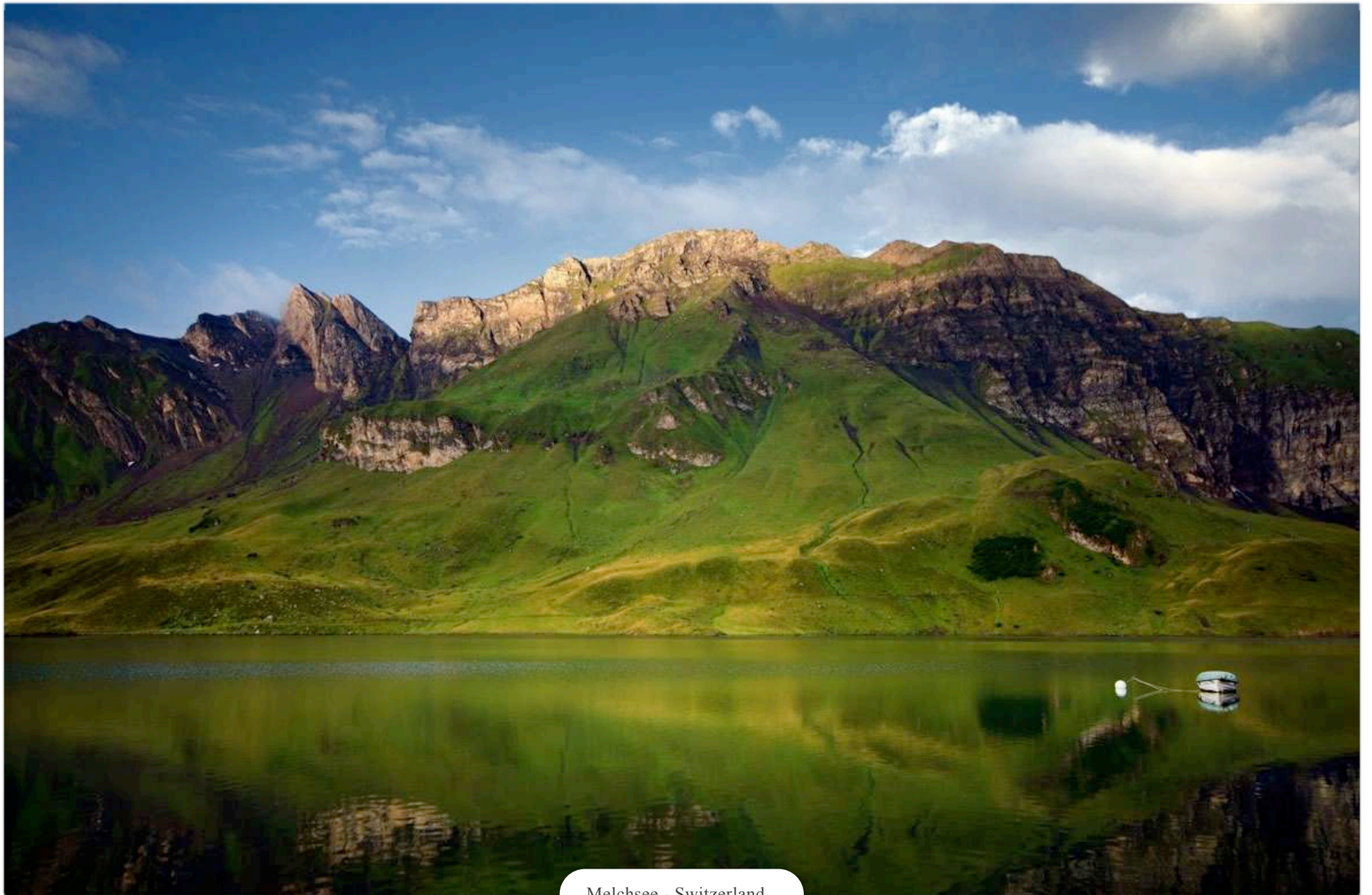
The best lighting for leaves to be seen is usually from the side at an angle of 60 degrees, while a 90 degree side light can be a bit boring because the light is distributed too regularly. Front light is not exciting, but on the other hand, the tree will reveal a mystical shape against the light.

A single tree in the countryside is one thing, lots of trees is another. The forest is a surprisingly difficult theme. An image with lots of straight trunks is not attractive and offers the viewer – except perhaps for some colours – nothing sensational. Here are some important details.

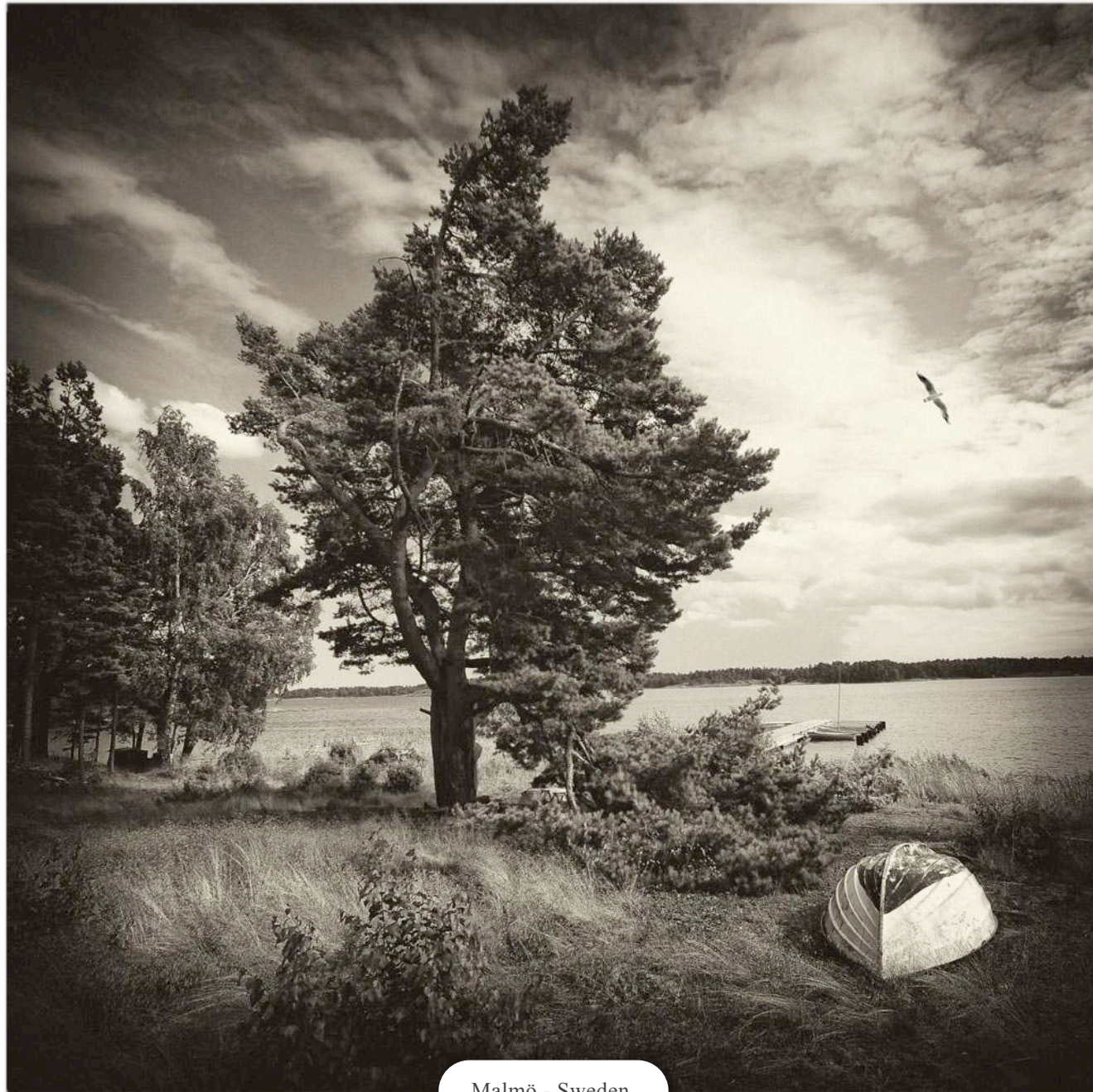
It is in the forest floor covering and the crowns of the trees that an image of the forest is enriched by elements of interest. We always underestimate the lighting conditions in a forest. Trees literally swallow the light and we often need to shoot in the forest using long exposure times.

Consider too that a view through the trees to a clearing or towards the sky through the tree tops leads to very large differences in contrast, which require an accurate measurement of the light.

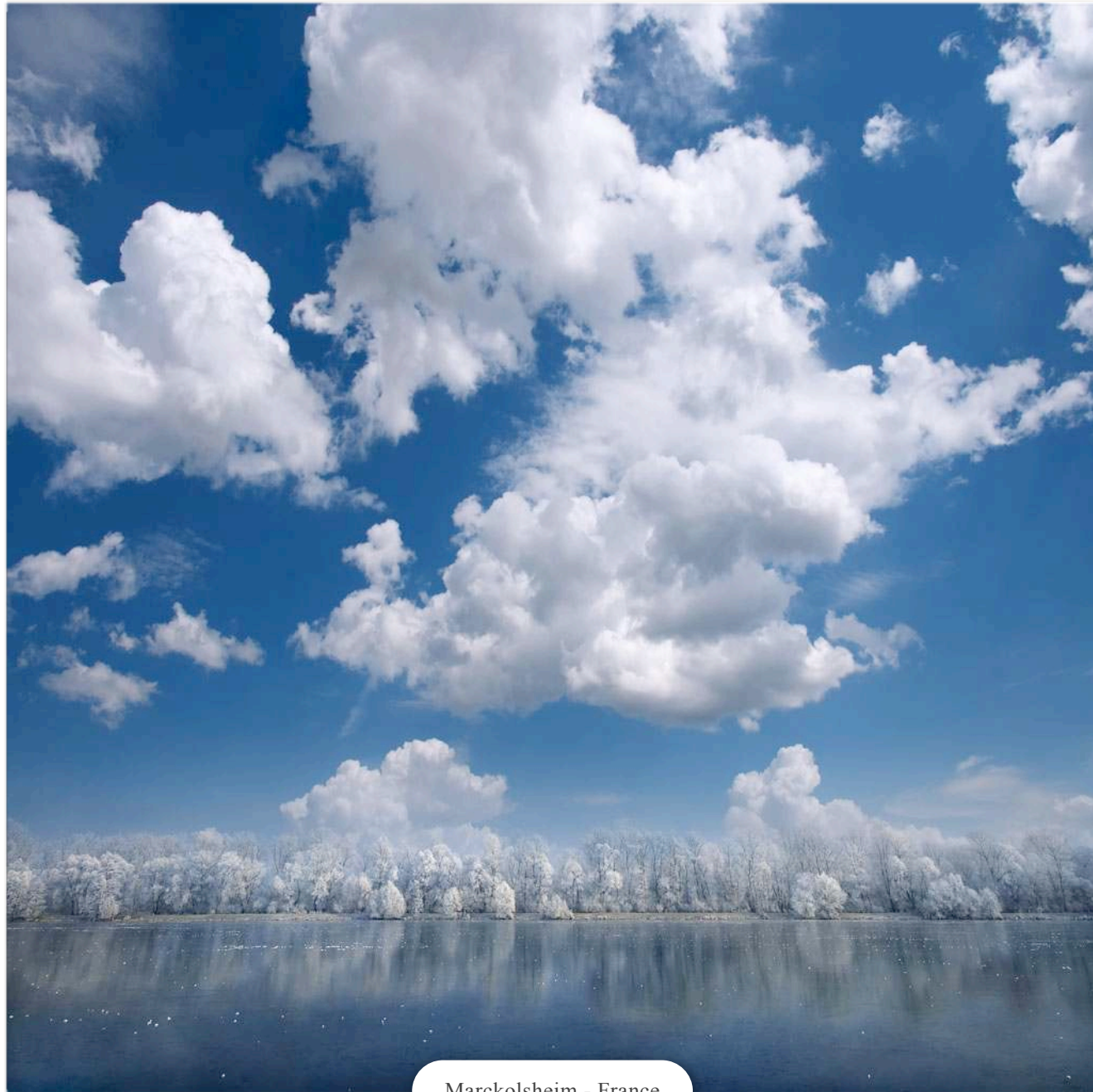




Melchsee - Switzerland



Malmö - Sweden

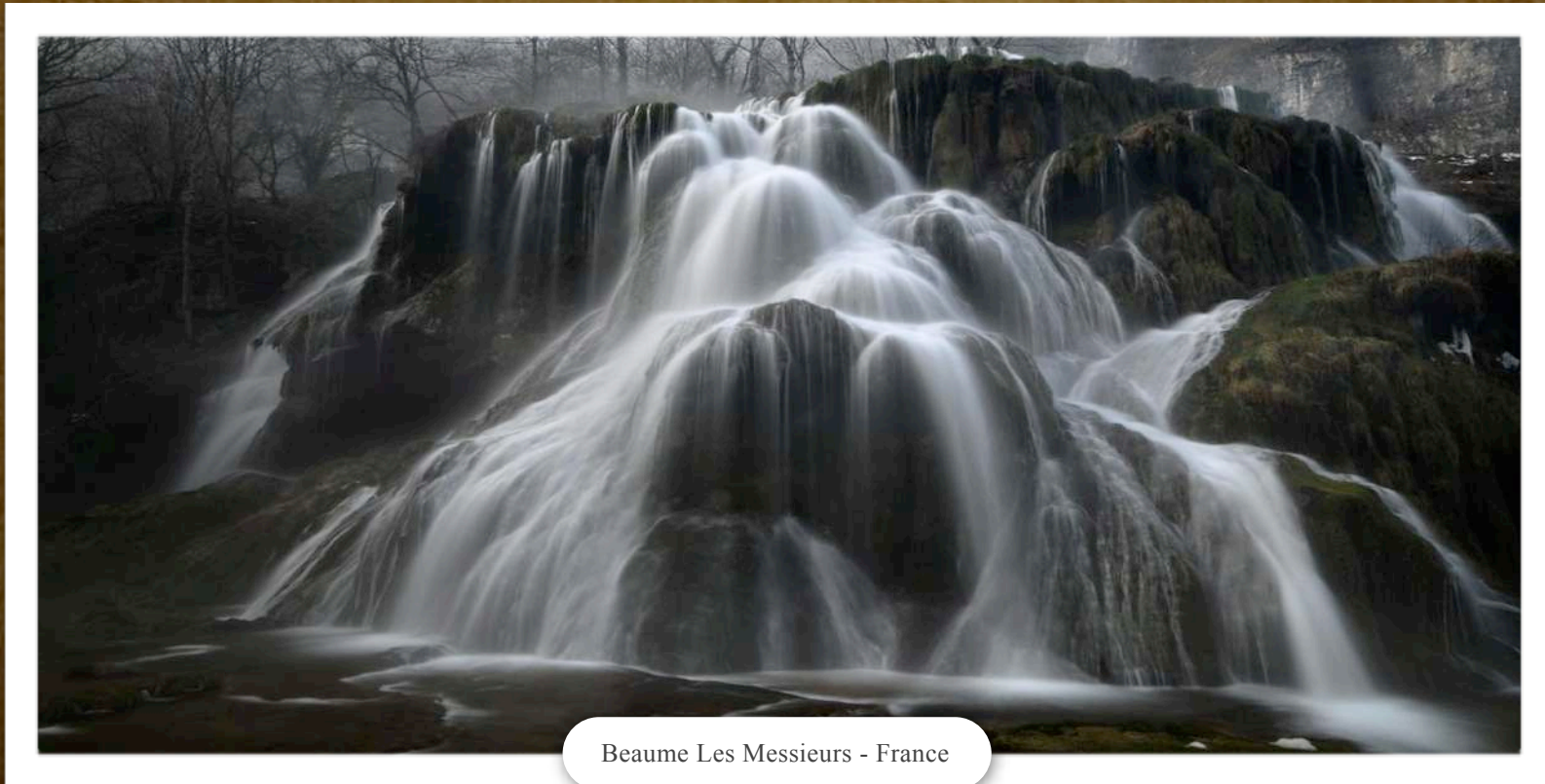


Marckolsheim - France

Water in the countryside is always a very well appreciated and agreeable subject

It may be a small river flowing through a landscape of forest, or a lake in which snowy peaks shimmer. Water is present in the most diverse colours. It can reflect the red of the sunset, the blue sky, it can be transparent, slightly turquoise, or it may be a brown soup loaded with stones. Fountains lit up are especially attractive. The light can be reflected in the water by small bright points and enrich the picture. But it can also be distracting and interfere with the main subject.. Such reflections often require us to change our viewpoint because the reflections are too strong or because the contrast becomes too strong. There is also the risk of staining or secondary images due to reflection, we can avoid these in most cases however by using a lens hood.

Rivers have a very suggestive effect when exposed for a long time (1/8 to 1 second). Some variants of exposure are recommended in this case to document once and for all the effect of long exposure times. Under normal daylight conditions we need to use Neutral Density filters. Large surfaces such as lakes and the sea, have a tranquilizing effect and do not seem monotonous, even a very large area. They usually contain coloured streaks or reflections, which enrich the image by providing an interesting element.



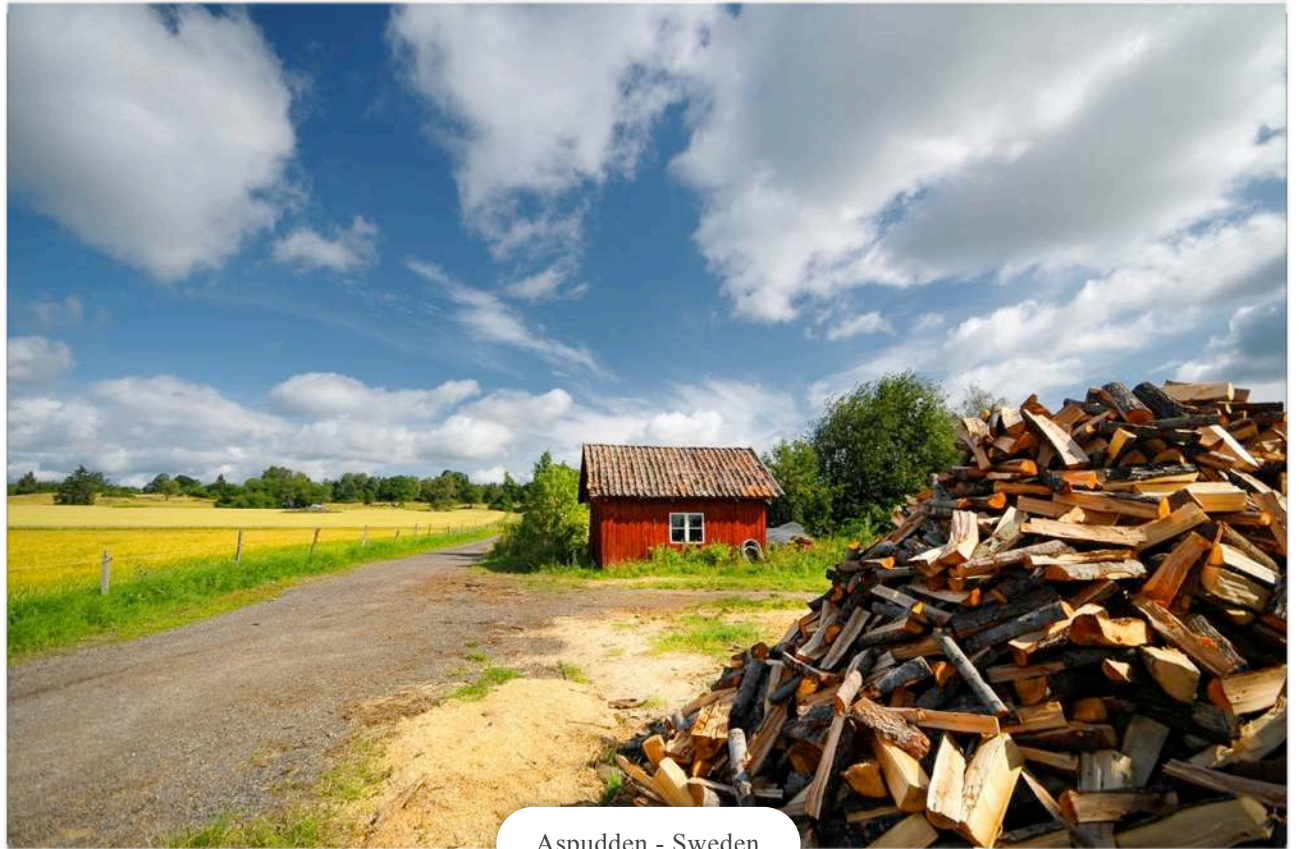
Beaume Les Messieurs - France

Strange objects in the countryside

Painters of the countryside have it easier than photographers, since they can simply leave out any troublesome components of a scene.

As photographers, we are tied to a realistic representation. Often ugly industrial buildings, electric pylons, advertising posters or any other sort of “waste from modern civilisation” prevent us from shooting a beautiful natural landscape. Cars are also included in this category, especially as they are objects that are dependant on a time and a shot of this kind seems outdated after only a few years. Although the photograph was taken in the state of the art and it is perhaps one of our best landscapes, nobody wants it any more. Often it is enough to just change the view point a little to remove the foreign object. A tree or a branch, or other component of the image can hide it so that the foreign object has no more weight and is no longer seen by the observer.

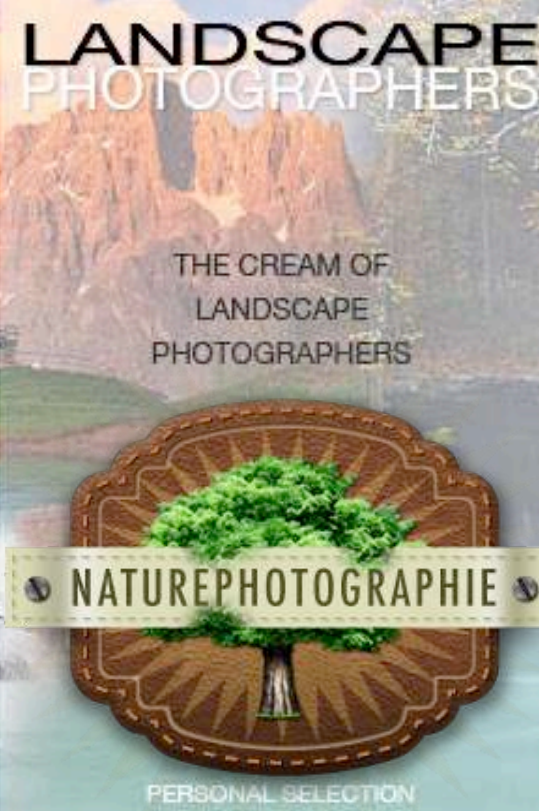
I am quite strict with myself on this subject, and even use the utilities of Photoshop in post production to “eliminate” the annoying objects.



Aspudden - Sweden



Stay Inspired

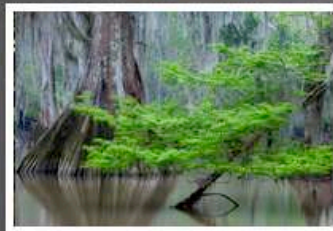


"The Cream of Landscape Photographers"

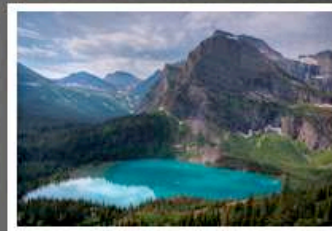
A bunch of photographers chosen for their expertise in landscape photography. *Meet the Gang !*



Kirk Cantrell



David Chauvin



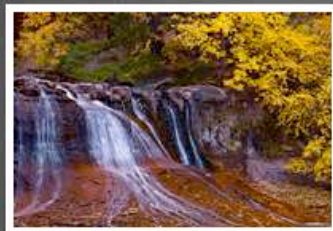
Brett Deacon



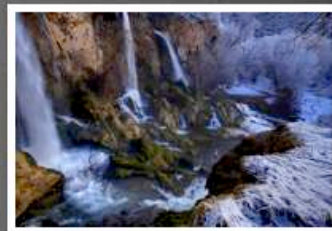
Leanne Doroszuk



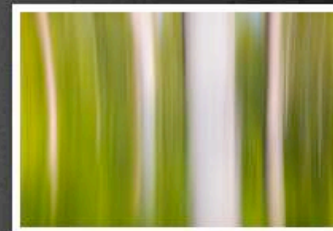
Marc Adamus



Jimmy Gekas



Kane Engelbert



Ryan Dyar



Philippe Sainte-Laudy is based mainly in Strasbourg - France. As professional photographer, he loves the land and has specialized in landscape photography, travel, environment, nature for use in advertising and editorial. Philippe produces quality photographs for commercial clients and fine art photography collectors. Photographs by Philippe Sainte-Laudy have been presented in various publications worldwide, including : The Environmentalist, Computer Art, Geo Magazine, Outdoor Photographer and others.

*Thank you very much for downloading this book on Landscape Photography.
I hope you will make progress and find new inspiration.
As always, I appreciate your comments and am extremely grateful for your support !*

contact@naturephotographie.com

Best regards from France

Philippe Sainte-Laudy

naturephotographie.com

All images were taken with a Nikon D300 – D200 – D5100 and Sigma 10/20mm.

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