

# A Short Guide to Black & White Landscape Photography

---

When it comes to landscapes most people don't expect to take great pictures in black and white. Large areas of plain blue sky, grass, or other such elements, can look brilliant in color, but can fall flat when converted to B&W. But B&W landscapes can be extremely beautiful, with a nice mood and that unique quality that can't be described. Here's a short guide to help you create beautiful B&W landscape photos:

## Camera and equipment

In the olden days before the digital revolution hit, B&W film was used to create B&W photos. Of course, for enthusiasts and pros who prefer it, film is still a great option. If you choose to use it however, try out different filters to help enhance your B&W photos, such as a graduating filter to retain details in a bright sky, or colored filters to darken or enhance different areas of the photograph.

If you're more into digital though, a work of advice is to shoot in RAW. What this does is take the picture in its original form, and give you the option of turning in B&W later in post-processing, which gives a higher quality image than the camera's internal monochrome settings. This is the method the pros use for B&W photos today.

Whichever medium you're using though, try to get your hands on a wide angle lens. This lens is ideal for stuff like landscape and architecture, as it allows you to get a lot more into the frame, and provides an interesting elongated perspective that pulls you into the photograph.

## Choosing the right composition

Composition is always important, but in B&W landscapes it is key. A lot of pictures fall flat and look just plain boring because there is no point of interest. In colored images, the colors help create interest to a degree and differentiate between objects, but a lot of landscapes end up becoming the same dull shade of gray in B&W. You need to find a point of focus in the foreground that guides the eye across the photograph, and a scene that has a lot of tones to work with.

## Train your eyes to see B&W

Lines, shadows and shapes are the key elements of a B&W photograph, as there are no colors here. You need to look at angles and shapes, and learn to translate the tones of colors into what they would be on the grayscale. Since you cannot see the end result in your camera – unless you turn on the monochrome mode – you have to train your eye to pick out the right compositions for B&W. This will surely take time and practice, but it's worth it to get even one beautiful and perfect shot that was made for B&W photography.

## **Light and contrast**

Another thing that determines the quality of your B&W landscapes is the amount of light and contrast you have. Very dark and dull monochrome images can become very boring, and contrast is what brings interest to monochrome, since there is no color. Try to shoot when the sun is out, and look for a scene with a lot of variations in light, such as patterns, textures, and lots of light and shadows. Another tip is to lightly underexpose so that highlights don't blow out and become white patches.

## **Post-processing**

Any image needs a bit of tweaking to push it that extra mile, but make sure this is actually just tweaking. You can enhance the contrast in post-processing and apply certain filters that do the same job as real lens filters, enhancing and darkening certain colors to bring out the tones and details.

The main ingredient however is practice. You do need a few tips and tricks and that special eye to capture the best photos, but through practice you can always hone your skills and become better, especially when it comes to B&W photography.

SAMPLE