



How to Photograph Intimate Landscapes

Adapted from an article by
Anne McKinnell



- As landscape photographers, we tend to become engrossed in the grand vistas, the vast expanses that make up scenes with great depth.

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- But small scenes can have a large impact too.
- Photographs of intimate landscapes can make extraordinary images on their own, or they can be used to complement the grand vistas that usually capture our attention.

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- The term “intimate landscape” can be attributed to the American photographer Eliot Porter.
- Eliot held the first exhibition of colour photography in 1979, at the **Metropolitan Museum of Art**, titled [Intimate Landscapes](#).



Intimate Landscape

What is it ?

Intimate Landscape What is it ?

An intimate landscape is simply one small part of the scene extracted from the overall picture and put in a frame of its own.

It's all about the smaller details.



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Think of landscape images in three categories:

1. The Big Picture
2. The extreme close-up
3. Whatever falls in between is an **intimate landscape**.

While things like textures, lines, shapes and patterns are critical components in the composition of an intimate landscape, it's more than just filling the frame with something.

It's also telling a part of the story.

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For instance :

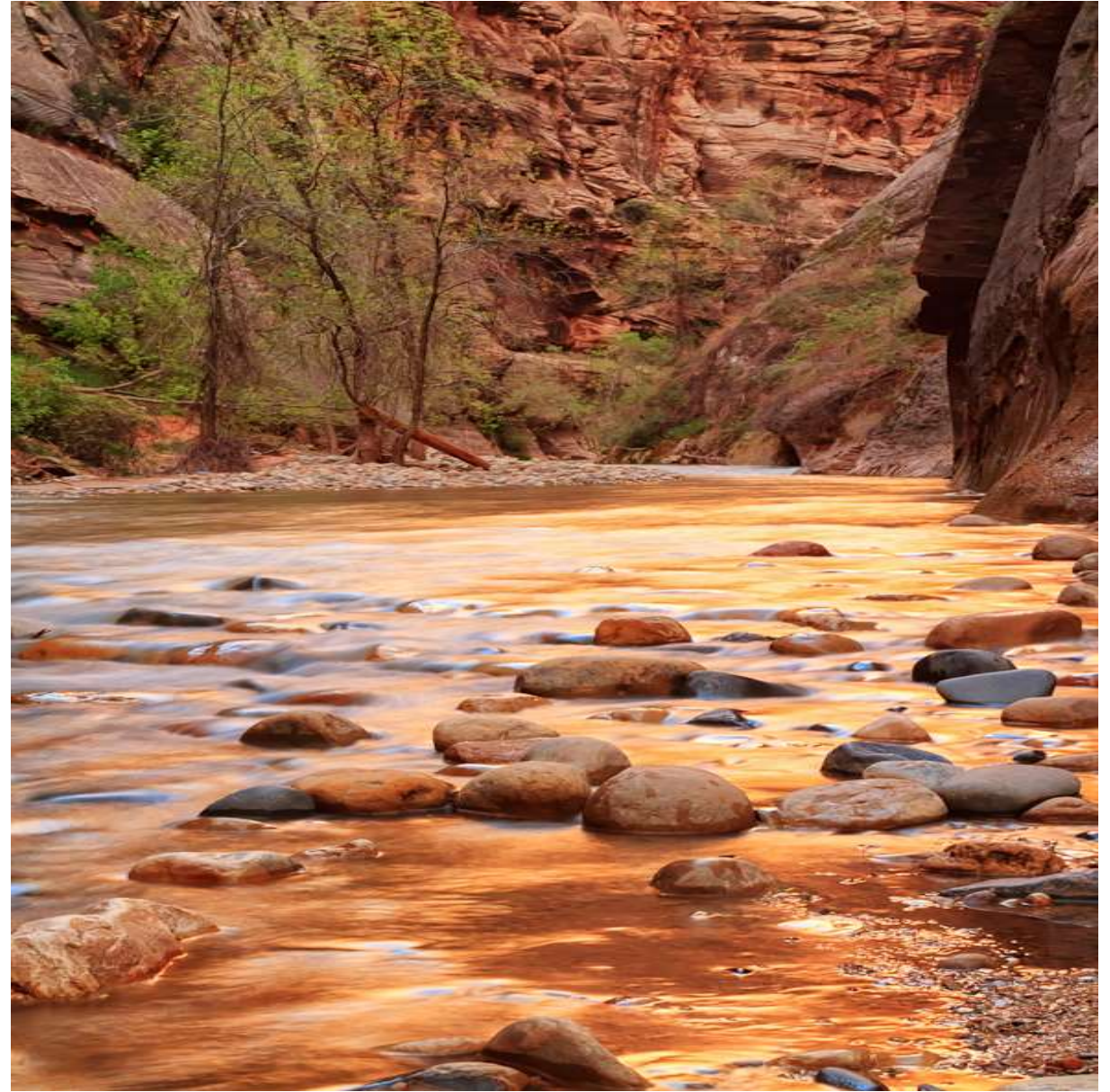
While everyone, who looks for the big picture of a beautiful mountain, will end up standing shoulder-to-shoulder with a line up of happy snappers, all taking the same view . . .

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the small scene that happens nearby will change with every season, with every day, and never be the same.
The resulting photographs are more personal, and more emotional.

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One reason for pursuing the intimate landscape is that you'll create images that are uniquely your own.

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How to find an intimate landscape

How to find an intimate landscape

- It's easy to see the big picture.
- When you have something interesting in the foreground, a river in the middle ground, and big fluffy clouds in the background, it's hard to miss the composition.
- Now stop and think about how it makes you feel, and what details are there that help to embody that feeling.

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- You'll be pleasantly surprised at the detail you hadn't seen before, as it starts to grab your attention.
- And once you've taken your shot, spend some time there, you may even discover more, detailed, compositions ready to be taken.

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- Photographing intimate landscapes requires lots of patience.
- You need to give yourself time to appreciate a scene and take in all the many details.
- Rush and you'll miss it.
- ***It's time to slow down !***



- Spend some time simply observing things and looking for subjects that will give the viewer more information or tell a story about where you are.

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- These “small scenes” contain the kind of details that may well be overlooked if you are only focusing on creating the grand landscape.

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Things to consider

- What else is there that is interesting?
- Consider the textures, patterns, shapes and lines around you.
- What grabs your attention?
- What shows the character of the place?
- Once you've found a subject, get a little closer to it.
- And then closer again.
- Think about how you can lead the viewer's eye to it.
- Are there any leading lines you can make use of?
- What kinds of foreground elements could you use?





- The best thing about this type of photography is that it can be done anywhere, in any season, in any climate, under any conditions.
- No matter where you are, there will always be some small part of the landscape that contains a key feature that tells a story about the place.

**What makes a
Compelling
Intimate Landscape?**

What makes a Compelling Intimate Landscape?

- At any location, think about what “small scenes” exist that tell a story about a place.
- Look for elements of design to include in the frame such as lines, textures, patterns, colours, and shapes (especially repeating shapes).
- Create a composition that contains an interesting graphic design.



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- When I was visiting a historical settlement in New Brunswick, I came upon an old woodshed.
 - In it were all sorts of treasures!
 - I was attracted to these three barrels because they told a story about the place and there was a repeating graphic element.

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- At the beach, the combination of rocks, kelp and a seagull feather tell a story.
 - Within this small scene, you get a feeling for the nature of the place.
 - I positioned myself so that the feather would create a diagonal line through the frame.

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- This is Palm Canyon, a beautiful location with palm trees, springs and all sorts of plants in amongst the rocky gorges.
 - But what was more interesting, were the dried-up palm leaves that littered the ground.
 - These leaves told a story about the place without the viewer having to see the grand vista.

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- I made this photo in historic old town in Seattle, Washington.
 - But this one street sign captured my attention both for the statement on it and the shape of it against the ornate buildings behind it.
 - By only seeing a little bit of the place, you get a piece of the story being told.

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- You can't see the swamp, but you know it's there.
 - In this photo of an alligator at Everglades National Park in Florida, I focused on the S shape made by its arm and the textures of its skin.

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😊 That's it for now 😊

In Conclusion

- When all is said and done, what if intimate landscape photography is not just about landscape.
- But a very personal translation of the relationship a photographer has with the subject in his or her viewfinder?
- Intimacy as part of the creative process.
- Intimacy as the last resort before pressing the shutter button.



Maybe, we're already there !



How To Photograph Intimate Landscapes . Original Article

annemckinnell.com/2016/04/06/intimate-landscapes



A misty landscape with a large tree and deer. The scene is bathed in a soft, golden light, likely from a low sun. A large, dark tree stands prominently in the center, its branches silhouetted against the light. In the foreground, several deer are visible, their forms softened by the mist. The overall mood is serene and intimate.

Facebook page with some very good examples of intimate landscape photos.

[Jamie Smith | Facebook](#)