



# C H A R L I E   W A I T E

## CLOUDS

Any landscape photographer who takes their photography seriously has to consider the sky. If the sky seems to be lacking in interest and appears to have little character then it may be better to wait until it does or possibly leave the sky out of the image altogether. The sky should be in keeping with the photographers objective and should be integral to the overall composition. It is a mistake to simply accept the prevailing sky as it is found; no painter would, so why would a landscape photographer?

I have often found that it is of benefit to establish the wind direction before setting up the tripod and beginning the whole business of making an image. There have been many an occasion when the sky on offer is dull and having no relationship with the land beneath and yet a glance over my shoulder reveals that in perhaps in as little as thirty minutes, there will be ravishing sky on offer; waiting is often the key and if you are serious, it matters not how long you have to wait.

How is a 'good sky' defined? Puffy white continents of cumulous clouds, or the high cirrus that I particularly favour . One thing is sure, the sky will never be the same twice unless it is the monotonous blue that is as uninteresting, at least to landscape photographers as a low pressure 'grey duvet' sky.

Many years ago, I remember finding some cylindrical bales, which then were still an unusual sight. They had taken over from the rectangular blocks that one rarely sees these days. I had seen a collection of building cumulous cloud across to the west, which was uncannily similar in shape to the bales in front of me.

Within fifteen minutes and barely changing shape, they had miraculously arrived and placed themselves directly above the bales echoing them so precisely that I could have wept with joy.

If clouds are your thing which if you are reading this, then they definitely are then perhaps the following thoughts about ways in which to make the most of them in a landscape photograph may help.

1: The polarising filter is mandatory for pronouncing clouds against a background sky but have a look through the filter first to see the effect that it may have on the sky prior to fitting it to the camera. Depending on the angle of reflection, the polarising filter removes some 'white light reflection' from surfaces and is not advised if the sky is plain blue with no clouds, as the blue sky may appear too violet or indigo. People who like to fish may often use polarising sunglasses as they remove reflection from the surface of the water. Reflections of sky and clouds should always be darker than the sky itself.

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2: If the sky appears too bright, consider acquiring a neutral density graduated filter, which will reduce exposure in the sky area. They can be used in conjunction with a polarizer. Beware using a graduated filter in a mountain scene as the peaks of the mountains may receive underexposure and this will be noticeable.

3: Remember clouds have characters. See them as living things and think carefully about where you crop them in your frame and if clouds are reflected in water, try and include them in their entirety.

4: Have a look at the landscape beneath and see if there is a possibility of a link between the shape of the clouds and the land beneath. A beach is good for this where you may find some patterns presented in the sand by a retreating tide and possibly cirrus cloud making a good relationship between the above and the below.

5: Always look up to see what the clouds are doing and make decisions as to what clouds you would like in your photograph.

END

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