In The Frame

Vareid | Discovering Goče | Stay or Go



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In The Frame

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Issue 30

Mobile Edition

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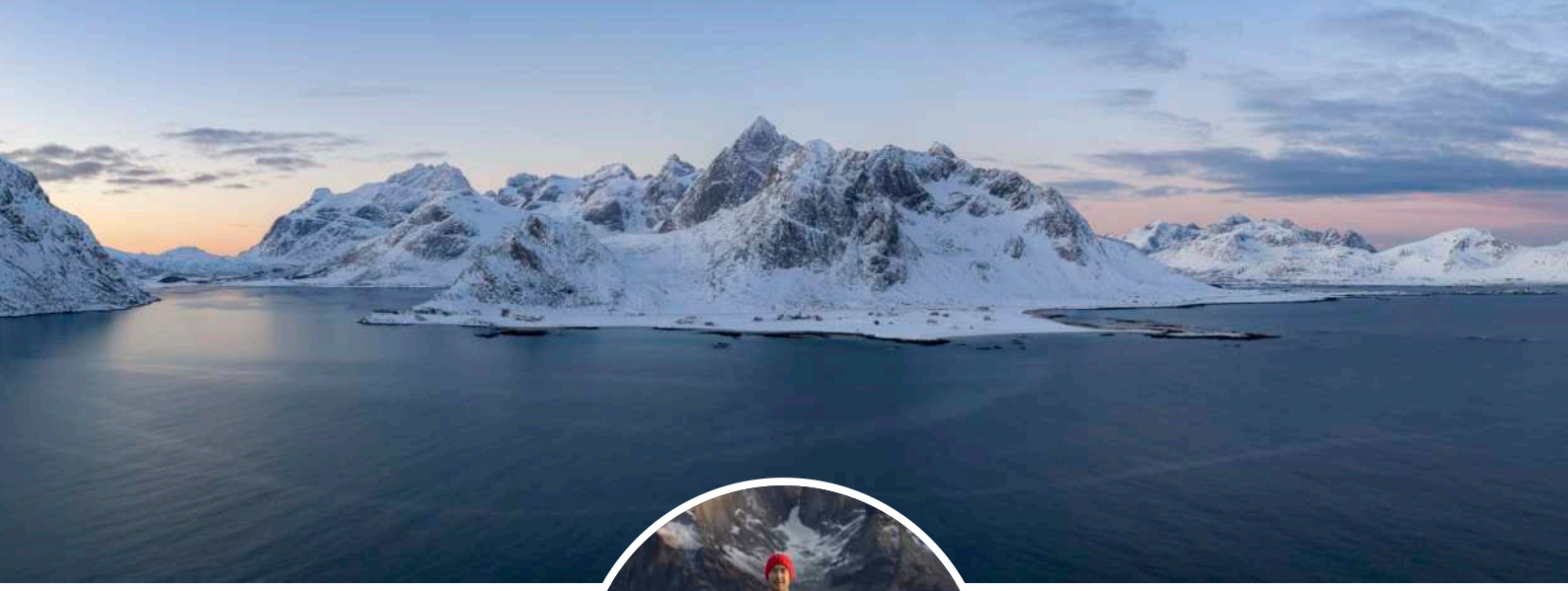


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Hi,

A few weeks ago I was sitting in a tiny coffee shop in Ljubljana, reading the introductions to a stack of coffee magazines, looking for inspiration. I must have appeared a little strange, picking up each issue only to read the first two pages before moving on to the next. I was also determined to find some clues about how other writers begin each issue.

Most of the introductions told small and specific stories, which felt appropriate as I wandered around the city remembering moments from my own travels. Ljubljana reminded me of how I used to feel when I first started travelling, when every experience felt like a new adventure or a story to tell. I felt very worldly visiting Paris or Florence, imagining a time when I might become a travel writer and share those experiences with other people.

Now I actually do write about the places I visit, and feel very fortunate that people take the time to read my articles and look through the photographs from those journeys. The reality of travel writing is very different to my early expectations of it. I'm constantly making notes and adjusting plans, backing up images in the evenings and trying to write down my thoughts before I forget them. It's a great experience, and the discipline of really studying a place can make you appreciate the fine detail. The idea I had in my twenties of wandering around a city and then seamlessly writing up the perfect article over a coffee at the end of the day was hopelessly optimistic.

I hope to share more about my trip to Slovenia in the coming months, and came home with plenty of photographs and some new ideas about photography and travel. During the trip, I found myself returning to my own advice from last month's issue of the magazine, about taking fewer and more deliberate photographs. I often needed to slow down, and noticed that sometimes I rush through choosing my camera settings and then hope for the best. While I'm less naive now about what it takes to balance travel, writing and photography, I'm happy that I'm still learning new things.

This month in the magazine we go on location in Lofoten, as the weather starts to turn colder in the north. I visited Vareid in February this year, and had an incredible time looking for compositions on this unusual stretch of coastline. Behind The Scenes follows the story behind an image from Slovenia, including the discovery of an unusual spot in a vineyard above a beautiful mountain village. Finally, I revisit the question of when to stay or move on, and how my experience in Slovenia made me question a photographic habit I thought was serving me well.

Thanks for reading, and I hope you enjoy this issue.

Kevin

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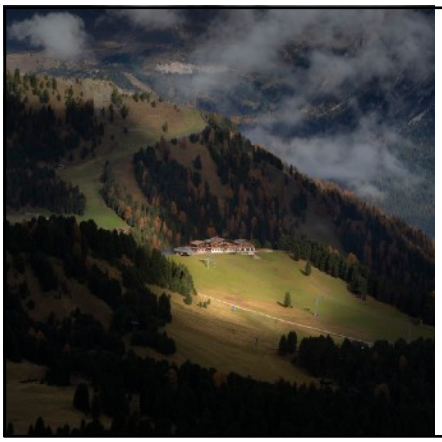
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On Location

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Finding compositions on a Lofoten beach



Introduction

The first time I arrived on the beach near Vareid was before sunrise on a cold winter's morning, with a clear sky and thick plates of ice in the water. I hadn't expected much. On previous trips to Lofoten, I had driven past this place regularly, more interested in reaching the familiar photography locations further along the road. Eventually, I began to suspect that I was missing something and decided to invest some time exploring this tiny beach.

The beaches at Vareid aren't exactly hidden; the main route through the southern reaches of Lofoten is close by, and there's a large parking area with access directly to the rocks. It isn’t difficult to find Vareid, but it is very easy to ignore its potential, and even from the parking area above it looks barely more than a narrow stretch of rocks by a fjord.

Nearby, popular visitor locations announce themselves clearly. Skagsanden Beach is just across the water, with a large parking area and visitor facilities. The village of Nusfjord has an entrance fee just to walk around the historic streets. But Vareid mostly goes unnoticed, even though almost everyone in this part of Lofoten passes within metres of it as they travel around.

I realised what I might be missing in between trips to Lofoten, and planned the first sunrise of my next journey at Vareid. Heading down the slippery rocks in the dark felt treacherous, and trying to find a first composition under the pressure of sunrise is never the ideal way to start at a new location. However, the view from this unassuming spot turned out to be spectacular, and I realised that I’d be spending most of the sunrises of the next week on these rocks.



Discovering Varied

I noticed Vareid thanks to other photographers. Thousands of people visit the well-known sights in Lofoten and post images of those places each year. However, some photographs included a distinctive set of peaks that I couldn't quite place, and I started to investigate where they might have been taken. The photographs all led to this unusual area at the end of Flakstadpollen, a fjord where I had already spent a lot of time with the camera.

There isn't a single defined beach here, and the rocky shoreline curves around at the end of the fjord with the tiny hamlet of Vareid roughly in the middle. You can access the water at different points, and each one changes your angle on the mountains opposite, with a different set of foregrounds to explore among the rocks.

At the southern edge is a roadside viewpoint looking over the fjord and out to sea. It's an obvious place to stop by the road, and has a great perspective on the mountains across the fjord. I'd stopped here on previous trips, but the stretch of rocks between the parking area and the water doesn't look big enough to be worth exploring. At the northern end, past the village, the beach is much wider and there are pools to investigate among the rocks.

Without a single focal point or obvious viewpoint, Vareid is an unobtrusive stretch of the coast where the land drops quickly into the water. However, if you look closer and search for potential photographs, you soon realise that they are everywhere. Compositions are hiding among the boulders, rock pools and snow, and it turned out that Vareid also faces in just the right direction for sunrise in February.



Winter Sunrise

One of the great features of Lofoten is how the coastline bends around the mountains and islands, giving you opportunities to face in every possible direction. Vareid faces due west, with the morning sun behind you as you look out to the water. The sun rises in different places over the seasons at this northern latitude, appearing much further north in the summer and towards the south in the winter. However, west-facing spots always have the morning sun roughly behind them, illuminating the scene when the light is at its best.

During this visit in February, the sun rose towards the southeast and often found a gap in the mountains along Flakstadpollen so that it could reach the peaks facing Vareid. In the evenings, the sun drops behind these mountains, blocking the light long before sunset. However eager I might have been for more time at Vareid, sunrise was always the best opportunity.

Of course, clear skies at sunrise are never guaranteed in Lofoten. The mountains are often hidden beneath a blanket of cloud or behind a thick curtain of snow, and I've met visitors who've spent a couple of weeks in the islands without ever seeing the sky. I've always had unusually good luck in Norway, and my trip started with a run of seven clear mornings and great light (I've made up for this good luck in other places plenty of times).

I usually started early at Vareid, trying to get in position for the first hint of colour in the sky and often the warm colours of alpenglow on the mountains lining the shore. There were options to change the framing and capture different parts of the background, and so much to discover in the foreground. There never felt like enough time as the light and colours changed while I moved along the beaches looking for new combinations.



Finding Foregrounds

My first day at Vareid was optimistic but disorganised. I needed a headtorch to get down onto the beach, and had to pick my way between patches of ice and banks of snow that occasionally swallowed me up to my waist as I dropped off a platform of hidden rock. I'm never fully ready at the start of a trip, and always begin with the worry that I might have forgotten how to do photography altogether.

With time I started noticing potential patterns among the rock pools, boulders and colourful mineral deposits on the shore. Changing my position and focal length made a huge difference when looking for a foreground, and every part of the beach seemed to contain opportunities to get very close to a tiny feature and make it prominent in the frame, or pull back and explore wider patterns in the ice and snow.

The snow and rock pools forced me to consider negative space and which parts of the foreground were likely to capture attention. Sometimes, it was the gaps between patches of snow which seemed most striking, but sometimes it was the snow itself. The same was true of the rock pools, where either the water or the surrounding rocks could draw my attention. I realised that it was often the contrast between light and dark, and the shapes it created between features, that pulled me into the image.

After several mornings at Vareid I started to recognise individual rocks and particular patterns in the mineral deposits, and had to work harder to avoid returning to foregrounds I'd already photographed. Things still changed each day as the snow melted and the tide shifted, but I liked that each return visit pushed me to search a little harder for new features and compositions.



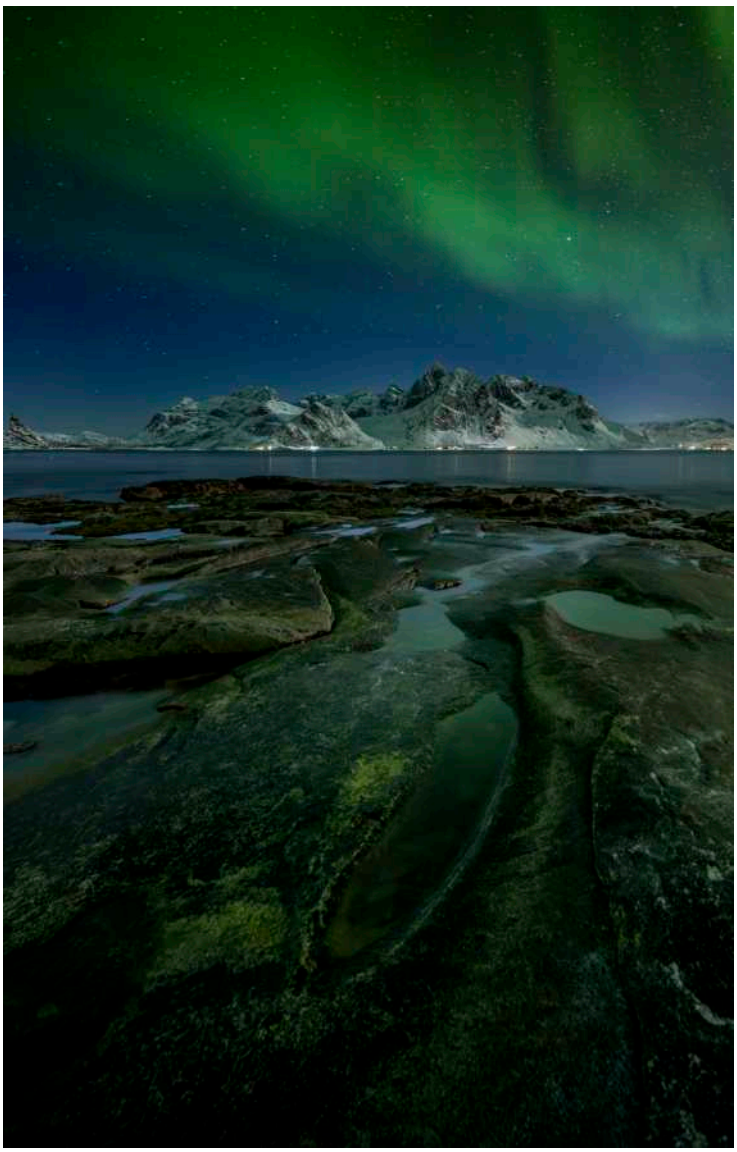
Leading the Eye

Different parts of the beach around Vareid face in slightly different directions as the shoreline curves around the end of the fjord. I became obsessed with the direction of the foreground. Although there isn't an isolated mountain to include in images from Vareid, the set of peaks at the far end of the fjord makes an obvious anchor for the background, and lining them up with the foreground was a constant puzzle.

Some foregrounds can be flexible, especially if they have a scattered pattern that works from any angle. However, some seem to have a natural direction, and pull your eye along a particular line through the scene. This works incredibly well when it connects the different parts of a composition, but it also limits where you can position the camera.

The main disadvantage of Vareid is that the mountains are quite far away, and that restricts how much foreground you can include. A very wide focal length makes them too small in the frame, and the distinctive peaks at the end of the fjord have to be carefully positioned for the scene to work. If the direction of the foreground didn't line up with the peaks on the horizon, moving to follow it could take the mountains out of the frame, while keeping the mountains in position left the foreground leading elsewhere.

I always like to learn something from each place I visit with the camera, and Vareid made me look much more carefully at where a foreground leads the eye. I started moving around every feature, checking different angles to see if it had a natural flow, and then questioning whether it led somewhere interesting in the distance. I lost many promising foregrounds to this process, but the ones I did capture seemed to work better for the extra effort.



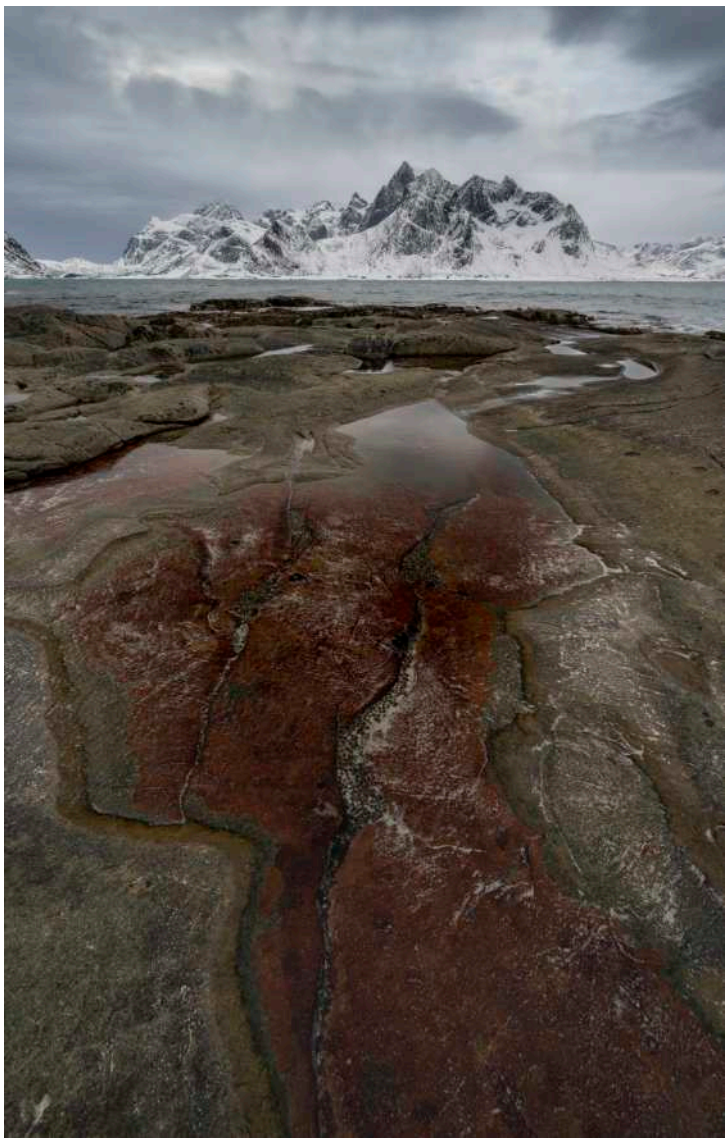
Returning to Vareid

It's a real privilege to revisit photography destinations, and my previous visits to Lofoten reduced the pressure that often comes with exploring a new area. I didn't need to re-photograph some of the more well-known spots where I'd already spent time, and could invest more mornings at this unassuming beach, learning more about its possibilities and trying different compositions.

There is a surprising amount to discover at Vareid. The rocky shore stretches around 2 km from the southern roadside lookout to the wider areas north of the village. You can't easily reach every part, but there are several places where you can stop the car and get down to the shore. Over the course of my visits I went from seeing it as a small and limited opportunity to recognising how much there was to explore, with different parts of the beach giving me something new to work with.

One of the most helpful things about Vareid is that it doesn't have a single main composition that pulls your attention. Revisiting a familiar viewpoint can be rewarding, but the attraction is often the chance to take the same photograph in different light and conditions. Even if you do spend some time looking for other compositions, it's hard not to get drawn back to that established view.

Each visit to Vareid also gave me different light and weather, but I didn't feel that pressure to recreate one iconic scene with a different atmosphere. That made subsequent visits feel full of possibilities, because I could discover a new composition or return to a familiar foreground in different conditions.



Conclusion

Vareid might be one of the most unusual photography locations in Lofoten, hidden in plain sight and easy to underestimate, as I did for years. The wider landscape around Flakstadpollen is beautiful, and the drive along the fjord is one of the prettiest in Lofoten. From the road, the shore around Vareid looks much the same as the rest of the route, and the photography opportunities only reveal themselves when you take the time to look.

It was only after a few days on the beach that I realised what an advantage this is for photographers. Many of us want to go beyond the main attractions, especially when that means finding somewhere quieter. However, finding somewhere off the beaten path often means a difficult journey, while places that are easily accessible and beautiful tend to attract more visitors.

Vareid is different. It is very easy to visit, and the photography opportunities are as good as anywhere in Lofoten. However, finding compositions among the complexity of the shoreline takes some effort, and although plenty of people stop to admire the view, few seem to spend much time exploring below the road. It seems to combine three things that can be difficult to find together at photography locations: accessibility, rewarding subjects and a quiet atmosphere.

Of course, plenty of photographers have discovered it. Although I didn't see anyone else on the beaches over the course of about 12 hours at Vareid, I'm sure that occasionally other determined photographers show up. I've often met interesting people in unusual places, and always enjoy hearing the stories of other visiting photographers. Perhaps one day more people will notice the incredible images lying just below the main road through Lofoten, but for now I'm happy to spend a few quiet mornings looking for them.

Behind the Scene

Goče | Slovenia



Research, exploration and a gamble before sunset



Introduction

Often our most exciting photographs are the ones we feel we've had to work for, and there's a particular satisfaction in finding a scene that we could easily have missed. It might mean a long hike or a very early start to get on location for the right conditions, but even a physically relaxing day can lead to something that feels like a real achievement if we spend it actively searching for a new place.

I had plenty of time for this in Slovenia. Many of the most recognisable photography locations in the country are close together in the northwest, in the valleys around Triglav National Park. Having photographed that area in the past, I could devote more time to regions where there were interesting places to visit, but fewer obvious places to start with the camera.

Searching for a new spot can involve a lot of patience, failed attempts and surprises. Sometimes I'd arrive at a place where the geography looked promising or there was a picturesque town that I'd researched, only to find that the angles that would make the scene work were all out of reach. At other times, I'd find the perfect lookout with easy parking and an unobstructed view, but nothing in the landscape seemed to make a good photo.

Occasionally, I would discover a scene that looked like it belonged among the most famous locations in Slovenia. It felt like finding a nugget of gold after a day of sifting through rocks in the riverbed, and some of my favourite images from the trip came from those moments. This is the story of one of those finds, and how I ended up in the hills above the Vipava Valley, overlooking a small village at the perfect time of day.



Choosing a Region

The search for a new photography location relies on a balance between research and serendipity. We tend to think that the alternative to visiting a well-photographed location we've thoroughly researched is to head off down a random road and hope for the best. Instead, you can improve your chances by planning just enough to know where to look.

The Vipava Valley is not a hidden location where few people live and no tourists visit. One of the major routes connecting Ljubljana with Italy runs through the valley, and it's a well-known wine region with vineyard tours and plenty of visitor accommodation in the hillside villages. However, it's not particularly well known as a photography destination, and there are no popular lookouts where you can make your own version of a recognisable composition.

It seemed like a great place to scout for photography opportunities. The vineyards and forests covering the hills are naturally beautiful subjects, and the villages scattered along the valley are mostly historic places with beautiful old churches at the centre. There are big, modern towns and lots of infrastructure in the centre of the valley, but I hoped that I'd also find places where more industrial features were hidden by the folds in the landscape.

Because the valley was already popular with visitors, there was plenty of material to help me decide where to look before I set out. The infrastructure would also make it easier to test more ideas quickly. I didn't know exactly where I would end up after a day of exploring, but with some planning I was more likely to end up in a pretty vineyard than stuck down a dirt road, lost and surrounded by trees.



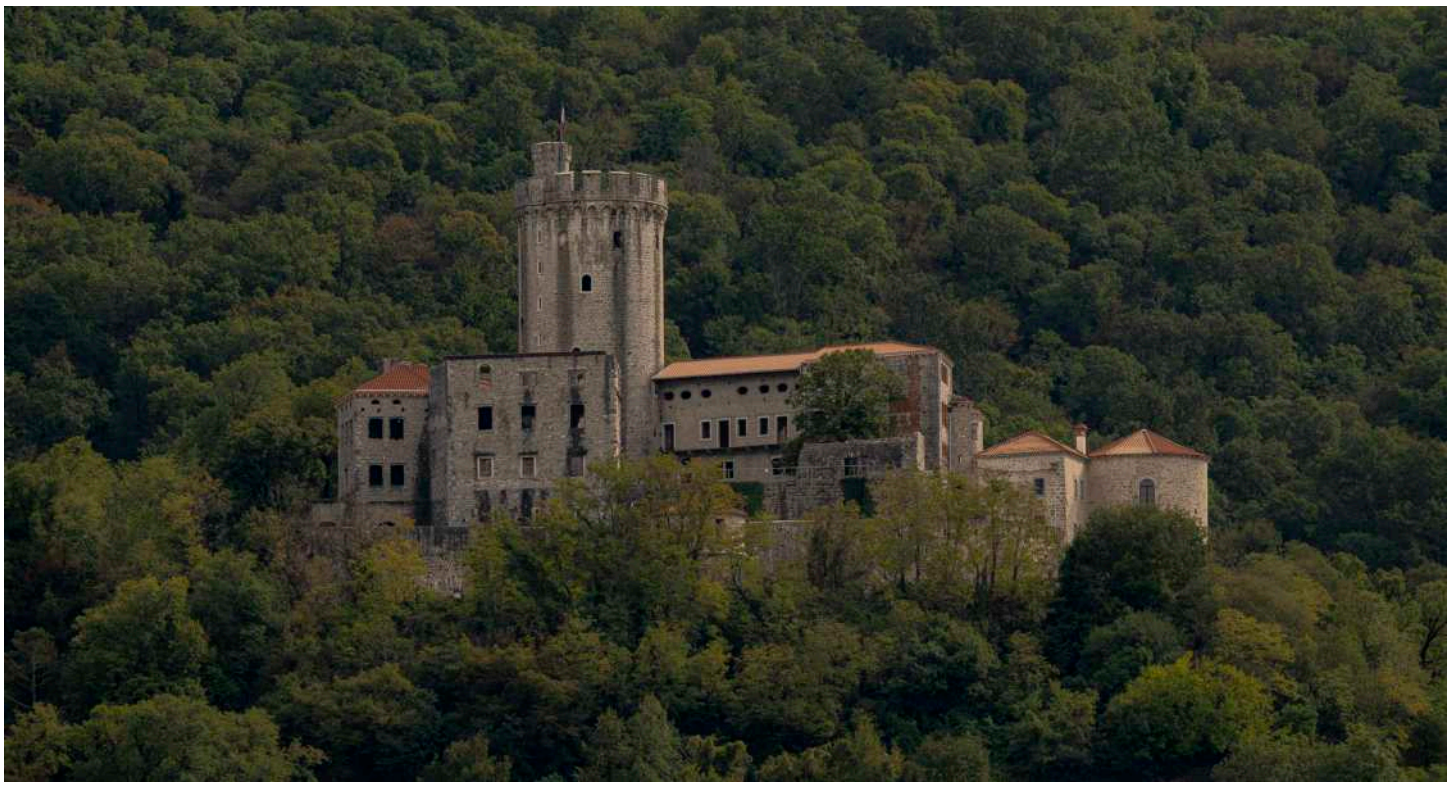
Planning to Scout

I started research the night before, using photography websites, blogs and other online resources to identify potential areas to visit along the Vipava Valley. I could probably afford four stops with two optional extras before I ran out of light and time to move around. I find planning the day around a few stops easier than working out exactly when I'll move between them, and I usually visit between two and four locations on any day of photography.

My favourite way to narrow things down is using Google Street View, especially the small blue dots that indicate someone has taken a 360-degree image of a place that's often away from the nearest road. This can give you a better sense of the location than a curated photograph and allow you to virtually visit a few locations before committing to the journey.

There were potential spots throughout the Vipava Valley, with villages and viewpoints on both sides and castles and churches that could all work as part of a wider photograph. However, I had to be selective about what I used from that research, because so much of the information was aimed at visitors with different priorities. There was information on particular vineyards, popular accommodation or great restaurants, but these things don't always overlap with great opportunities for photography.

After narrowing down the list to a set of six likely options, I plotted a journey from one end of the valley to the other. Usually I plan shoots according to the geography and light, but on a day of scouting it made more sense to choose a route that kept the driving to a minimum. I'd leave the weather and light up to fate and focus on maximising my time out in the valley with the camera.



A Day in Vipava

The day began in a historic fort town, where I wandered the streets looking for small details among the buildings and patterns in the complex network of alleyways. There were views over the surrounding landscape, but I couldn't find an angle that kept the busy roads and modern infrastructure out of the frame, and I soon became restless and left to look for more appealing views of the valley.

I stopped by the road where you can photograph a historic castle nestled amongst the trees, and made a few more stops in villages with small churches that you can shoot from different angles. There was a lot to see in the Vipava Valley, with historic buildings and tree-covered hills on both sides, and agricultural land in between on the valley floor. However, it was difficult to find a good viewpoint from which to capture the whole area.

I had saved the most promising locations for the end of the day, and hiked up to a castle above the village of Vipava in the late afternoon. I suspected the local geography would provide a better lookout, and from the ruins above the town I could see all along the valley in both directions. It was a pretty spot and the clearest view of the valley I'd found so far, but still not quite the composition I was hoping for.

I'd structured the day around a series of locations, and deliberately not set a schedule so that I'd have time to explore each one without pressure. However, the sun was approaching the horizon and I had to think about where I wanted to be when it set. I had to choose between waiting at this viewpoint or moving to the one remaining location on my list: the small village of Goče.



Arriving in Goče

I was optimistic about Goče from the moment I discovered it in my research. The village was high up and separated from a lot of the busier areas on the valley floor. It was surrounded by trees with a pretty church at the centre, and I had discovered a potential viewpoint at a chapel in the forest above. From there, I hoped I'd get a wide view of the Vipava Valley.

Heading to Goče near the end of the day was a gamble. The sky was clearing and it was beginning to look like there would be an impressive sunset that evening. There would be no time to head back to the castle above Vipava, and if there was nothing to photograph at Goče, I'd have given up my best viewpoint so far without getting a good shot of the sunset. Still, I was feeling optimistic after a fun day of discovery and decided to take the chance.

One factor that made this an easier decision was that someone had visited the chapel above Goče and helpfully posted a 360-degree image of the scene. I'd looked around the hillside in the image the night before and had some idea of what I'd be able to see from the chapel. There was no guarantee that I could reach the spot or that it wouldn't be overgrown when I got there, but it looked like the perfect sunset viewpoint if things did work out.

I arrived with about an hour to spare, but still had a 2 km uphill walk from the parking area in the village. There was no time to waste as I walked out of the village and up the twisting roads to the chapel, and the sky continued to become richer in colour as the sun dipped lower in the distance. I couldn't see the sun behind the hills overlooking Goče, but made it to the chapel as the shadows over the Vipava Valley were getting longer.



Finding the Composition

The viewpoint above Goče had all the elements I'd hoped to find that day. I could include plenty of the Vipava Valley in the frame, with the village giving the wider view a real anchor. I was also high enough that the industrial features of the valley floor looked small, and it felt like a fairly natural scene.

There was a useful place to set up above a vineyard overlooking the scene, and moving around didn't have much effect on the composition. This allowed me to stay in place and try different focal lengths and framings to look for variety. I could get close in to the church and the village or pull out for wider views of the valley and surrounding mountains. This spot didn't have views in every direction, but there was enough of the landscape visible on either side of the village to try a few other compositions.

I had arrived early enough to set up just as the light was getting more interesting and worked quickly as the scene changed from moment to moment. The wide view was the most obvious place to start, but the shifting light occasionally opened up other compositions among the forests and fields. I couldn't see the sun from my position, so I simply had to react to the light in front of me.

I caught Goče in the perfect patch of light, surrounded by the forest in shadow. The sky lit up as the sun dipped below the clouds and caught them from underneath. As the sun reached the horizon behind me, a warm glow appeared on the distant ridge. The colours kept changing as the daylight faded, and I stayed above Goče to see what would happen next.



Capturing Goče

As it got darker, the lights came on in the village below and I started watching how they balanced with the fading daylight. Capturing streetlights at dusk takes careful timing, as the ambient light in the sky drops and the artificial lights of the village become relatively stronger. If you capture the scene too early, it often loses the sense of night-time, but if you wait too late, the streetlights become too dominant and you lose detail in the rest of the scene.

I photographed Goče throughout twilight until the sky was completely dark and frequently adjusted my frame and focal length. The road behind the village lit up with headlights, framing the scene from above. The glowing streets surrounded by forest made a perfectly cosy mountain scene. I had run out of energy at the end of a long day and just had to keep shooting, knowing that I could decide later which version of the scene I preferred.

I'm not sure which frame I prefer from Goče even now. The early stages of sunset produced beautiful golden light that made the village stand out from the surroundings. The sky was dramatic and interesting, although it didn't always feel right for the soft colours in the landscape. Twilight is often my favourite time to shoot, but as the light faded, the photographs became more about Goče than the valley around it.

Not every scouting trip ends with the perfect viewpoint at sunset, and I was lucky that day that the light changed at the right moment for my plans. However, researching an area that was already popular with visitors gave me a real head start on the search, even though there were few established photography locations to work from. I do think that the viewpoint above Goče deserves to be among the best-known spots in Slovenia, but I would say that after so much planning and effort to find it. Either way, that evening above Goče gave me some of my favourite photographs from the trip.

Stay or Go

Knowing when to question your experience





Introduction

Photography is full of decisions, whether it's the places we visit with the camera, the way we frame a composition, or the settings we use to capture it. One of the most difficult is deciding how long to stay at your current location and when to move on to the next one. There is rarely an obvious choice, even though the decision can have a huge impact on the images you capture.

I've written about this topic in other articles, but found myself thinking about it again while in Slovenia, especially because that trip was so focussed on research and exploration. I thought my approach to spending time on location had been carefully calibrated, and felt confident that most of the time I was making sensible decisions. During the trip, I began to question that confidence and deliberately tried going against my instinct.

In Ljubljana I left a beautiful viewpoint shortly before sunset to try a new and untested one across the city. In Piran, I added another stop on a walk around the streets, knowing that it would leave me much less time to set up at my favourite location as the light changed. The previous article in this magazine describes another of those decisions, when I left a promising viewpoint to explore Goče.

I began to notice that when I ignored my urge to stay and wait, things often worked out at the next location. I couldn't know what I'd missed by leaving, and perhaps those shoots would have been just as good if I hadn't moved. However, I rarely had any regrets after moving on to a new spot, and had to wonder if I had been getting this decision wrong.



Stay or Go

Every photographer knows the feeling of photographing a scene that almost works, and wondering how long they should wait for the light to improve. There are many different factors to consider. Is the weather changing quickly? Are there other promising locations nearby? Is there enough time to reach one and set up before the sun sets? There's no simple way to make the decision, but the conditions and our local knowledge can help us judge what to do.

Many new photographers start by moving often and trying to capture as many places as they can fit into the day, especially if they are travelling with limited time to explore. With experience, we often learn to slow down and look more deeply. Some compositions don't reveal themselves immediately, and gradually we come to appreciate the kind of photographs that take time and patience to create.

Sometimes there are compelling reasons to give up on a location and look for somewhere new. If there's a familiar location nearby that you know will work in the conditions you're experiencing, it might be a safer bet. In a region with distinct microclimates, staying on location can sometimes keep you stuck in a weather system when moving could uncover different conditions.

However, I'd come to believe that my best chance of finding great light was to spend more time on location with the camera and less travelling between spots. After years of exploring, my rule had become to stay whenever I had doubts about moving, and work with the conditions and opportunities in front of me. More often than not, the light would change and I'd be grateful for being patient.



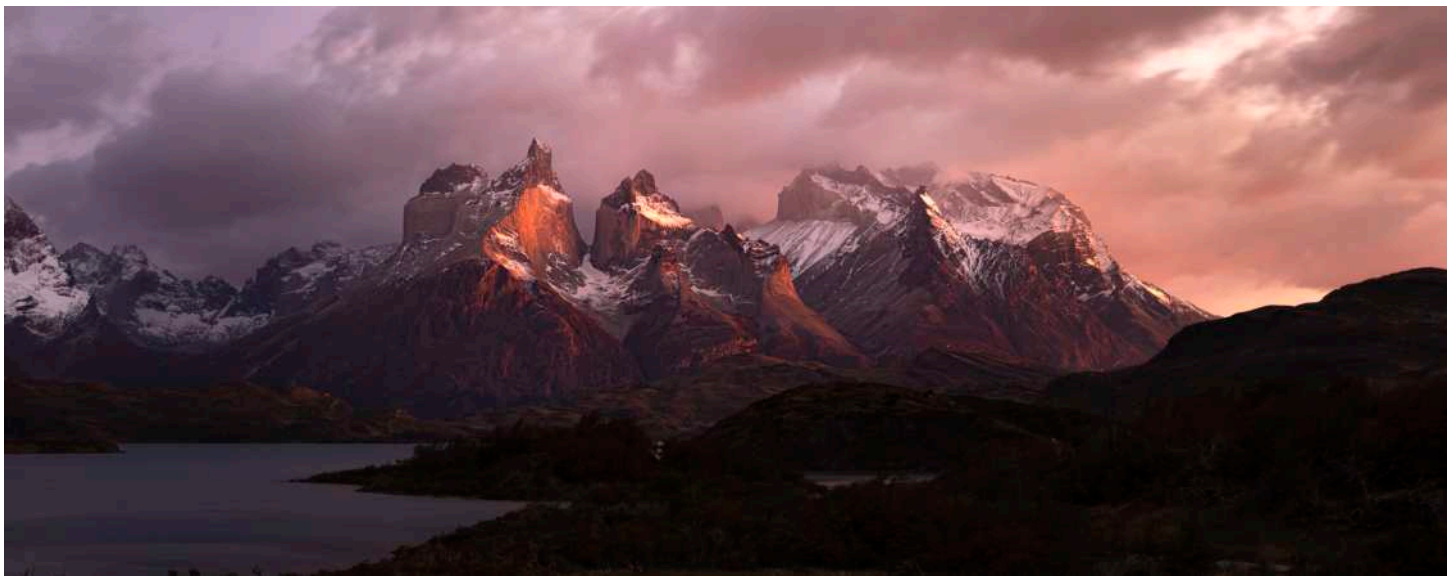
Experience and Habit

Although there are plenty of photographic reasons to stay and wait for better light, I suspect my preference for patience also had something to do with how I felt about getting the decision wrong.

In a classic study of regret, psychologists Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky asked people to compare two imaginary investors. One had considered switching shares but stayed with his original investment, while the other had switched. Both discovered that they would have been $1,200 better off if they'd chosen differently, but most participants thought the investor who switched would feel more regret.

How much of my tendency to wait out difficult light or persevere at a tough location came from my experience watching the landscape, and how much came from wanting to avoid the regret of leaving a potentially great place just as the conditions changed? I had become cautious, and wondered whether I sometimes spent too long hoping for things to get better when taking a risk might have led to something more rewarding.

Slovenia gave me the ideal excuse to push out of my comfort zone. I wanted to research thoroughly in the hope that the material could one day become a book, so there was more of an incentive to search more widely than usual. I still wanted to make the most of each place and capture a good image wherever I went, but the hope of discovering a few extra locations gave me another reason to move on.



Knowing the Alternative

One thing that had changed was how much I knew about the alternatives. On my early photography trips, I often drove past places that turned out to be incredible locations, simply because their potential wasn't obvious from the road. I had researched Slovenia extensively for this visit, so I often had a list of several alternative places to try when a spot wasn't working as I had hoped.

Better research isn't just about knowing which alternatives exist, but also about understanding what you might find there. I often had some idea of the layout and logistics of each place before I arrived, and a sense of what images were possible and how the light might affect them. When I was deciding whether to move to Goče, I already knew that the sun would be behind the viewpoint and that I could probably catch the village in sunlight if I arrived before the sun dropped below the hills.

I had developed my approach to decision-making when there was a lot of uncertainty about where I might go instead. I might have had a list of potential spots that I could try out nearby, but moving meant risking that the light would be wrong for the location or that reaching the viewpoint for an image I'd discovered would require a long hike.

Research had almost allowed me to visit the locations in advance, and that had tipped the balance towards trying out new places when they looked like a better bet. It wasn't until a few days into my journey that I started to change my approach, and realised that what had begun as considered decisions had solidified into a fixed rule that I no longer questioned.



Questioning Experience

Among the people I know, there seems to be a rough split between those who love to try new things and those who prefer to go into more depth on a particular topic or idea. To the depth people, the idea of trying a new activity each weekend can feel shallow, like you can never begin to understand how something works. To the variety people, doing the same activity all the time can seem repetitive and boring, like missing out on everything that life has to offer.

Inevitably, I am a depth person: I'm most interested in uncovering new ways of seeing and experiencing a few things. I'm happy to miss out on some variety to understand those few things in ways that only come from spending more time with them. However, as you build experience, it can be hard to tell whether you're simply repeating yourself or making subtle progress. Sometimes you are discovering ever more nuanced ideas, and sometimes you're just stuck in a rut.

Staying in one place can be a way to look more deeply, but it can also simply be the safer option. At Vareid, returning to familiar rocks gave me new foregrounds to explore and different ways to connect them with the mountains. However, there are other times when I keep checking the same composition, hoping that better light will solve a problem I haven't really understood. It's hard to tell whether we are being patient or simply reluctant to try something else, especially when patience has been the most successful approach in the past.

Moving more often in Slovenia gave me a way to question whether my patience was still helping me find better photographs. I was still using my experience to judge the light and assess the alternatives, but deliberately giving those alternatives more weight helped me notice how automatic my preference for staying had become. The results didn't prove that leaving was always the better choice, but they did make me reconsider why I was always so keen to persevere. Sometimes the best way to understand a familiar approach is to try something different and see what it reveals.



Reflections

I love spending time on a topic to understand it in more depth, and photography trips are a great opportunity to concentrate on learning over at least a few days. This often works best when we can identify something specific to study, rather than hoping that the activity will automatically help us to improve. Learning from experience takes deliberate attention, and the more you develop, the more important it is to find new ways to question what you know.

I hadn't intended to spend my time in Slovenia thinking about whether to stay or move. I'd considered the decision plenty of times before, and thought I had a good understanding of how to make it. However, I was often surprised by how well moving worked out. Once I noticed that surprise, I started paying closer attention to why I wanted to stay, what persuaded me to leave, and what happened when I did.

It's difficult to learn from decisions when you can only see one of the possible outcomes. I don't know whether I missed incredible light at the places I left, and finding a good photograph elsewhere doesn't prove that moving was the best choice. However, the gap between what I expected and what I found was enough to make me question my approach, and realise how readily I'd been accepting my usual reasons for staying.

Patience and perseverance are still incredibly important in photography, and waiting is often a sensible choice if you want to capture a location in the ideal conditions. However, I want to be clearer about what I'm waiting for, and whether my reasons for staying are stronger than the possibilities elsewhere. The next time I'm wondering whether to pack up or wait a little longer, I'll try to give both options a fair hearing.



Thanks for Reading

I hope you liked this issue of In The Frame, and I'd love to hear any feedback or ideas for what the magazine might cover in the future. If you'd like to support this project and help me continue to write about travel and photography, there are a few ways you can contribute.

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Shutter Safari

Photography Travel Guides



Planning a photography trip can take a lot of research, and the information you need is often scattered across countless blogs and websites.

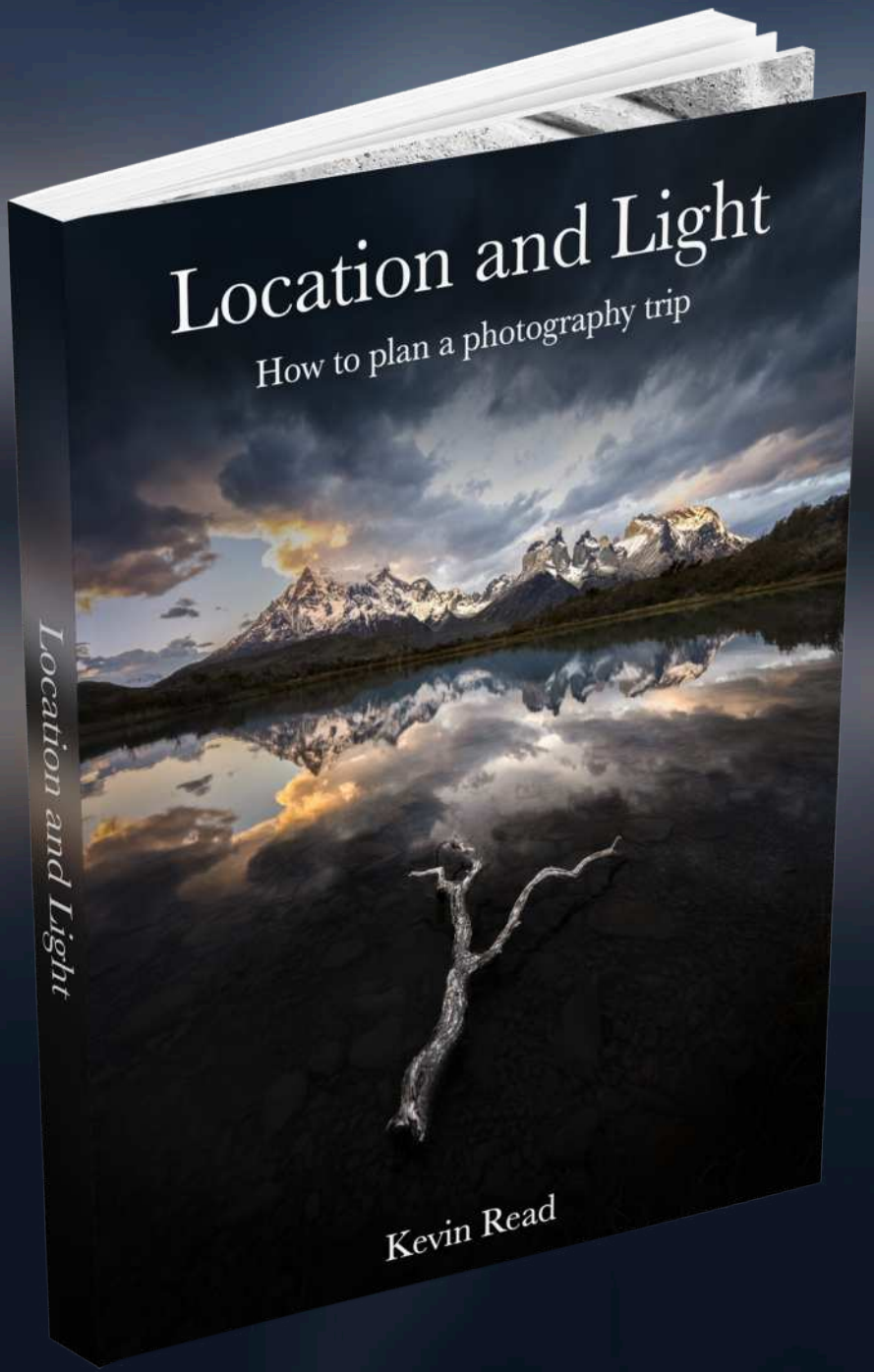
Photography Travel Guides put everything in one place, with structured information to help you plan both your journey and your photography.

I created these books from first-hand experience travelling with my camera to over fifty countries. Each guide combines travel and photography advice, so you can spend less time planning and more time shooting.

www.shuttersafari.com/photography-travel-guides

Location and Light

How to plan a photography trip

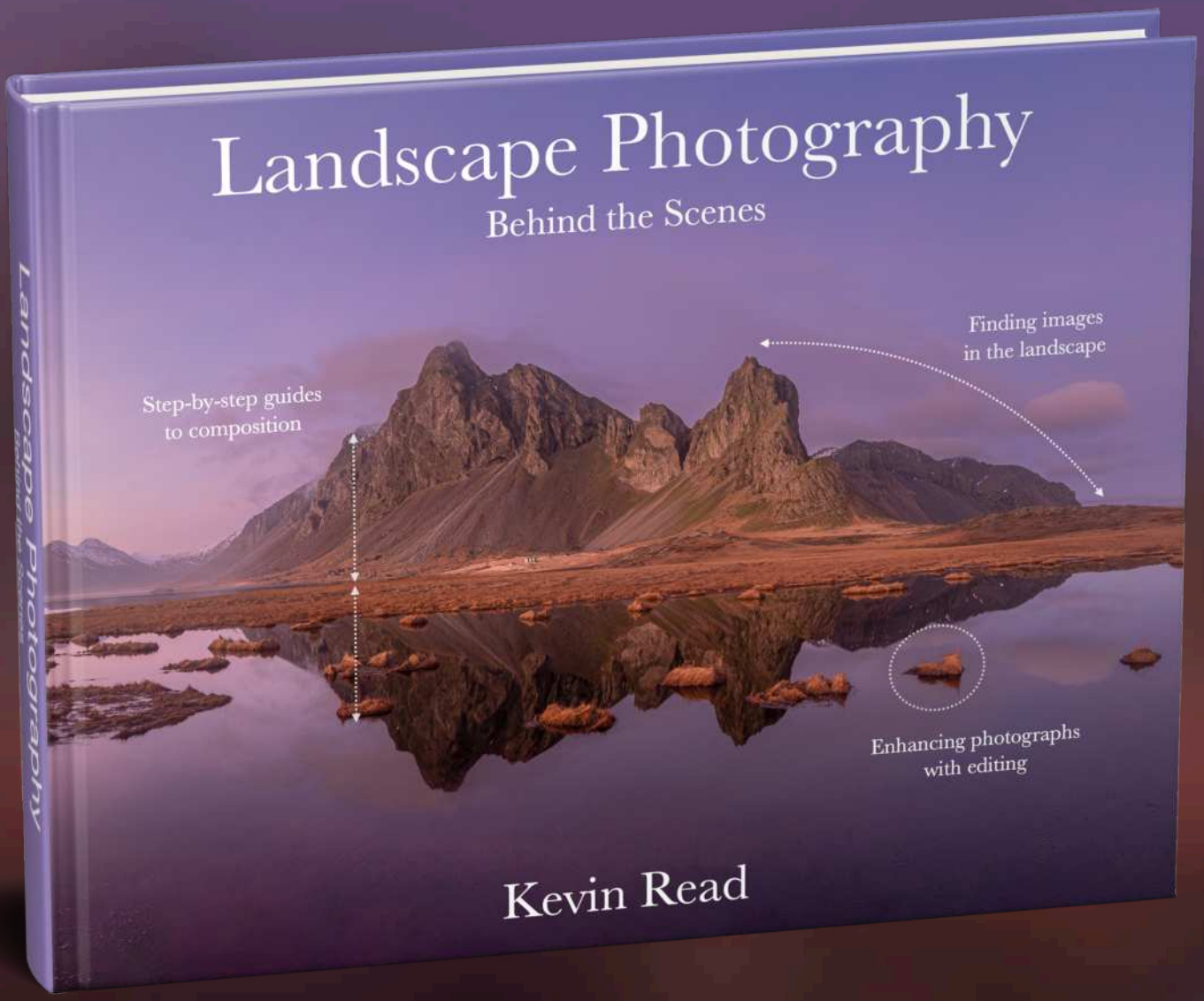


The ultimate guide to finding locations, predicting the light and getting the most from your photography adventures

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Landscape Photography

Behind the Scenes



My ebook on landscape photography takes a new approach to teaching the skills needed to compose, edit, and develop your own photographic style.

It follows the stories of twenty images from location to final edit, exploring how each was created and what they reveal about building an image.

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