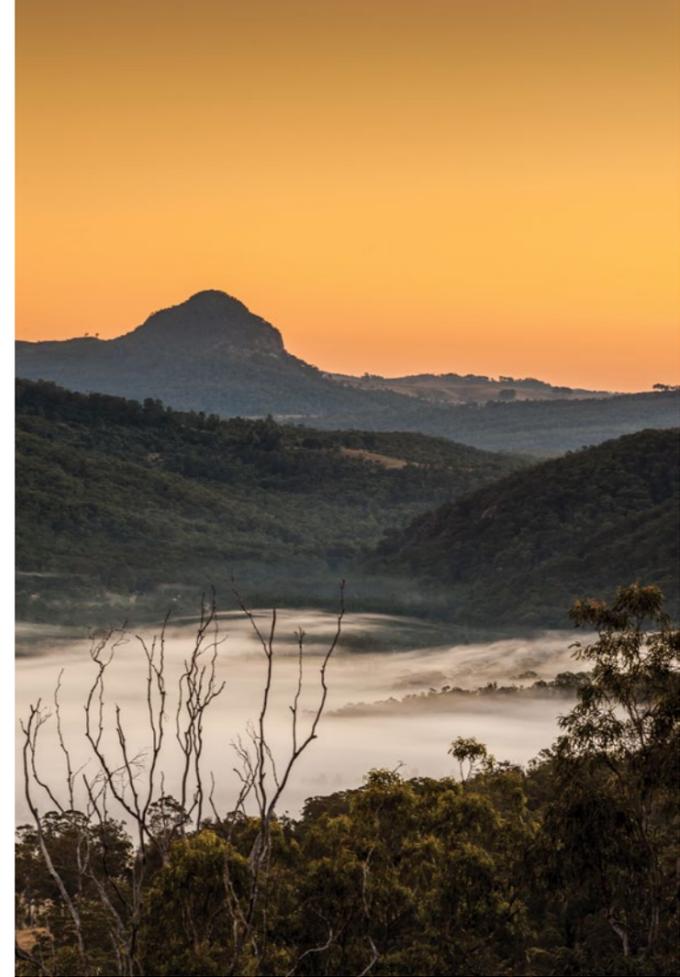


This image was composed in such a way that it draws the viewer's eyes along the line of the trees, straight towards the two main features, Mt Gower and Mt Lidgebird. I also used the rule of thirds when composing this image, splitting the sky into one third and the landscape into two thirds. Nikon D800, Nikon 24-70mm f/2.8 lens. 1s @ f16, ISO 100. -1.3 EV.



## PHOTO TIPS: VERTICAL LANDSCAPES



# THE PORTRAIT LANDSCAPE

BY MICHAEL SNEDIC

When most photographers think landscapes, they tend to think horizontal. But that's just one perspective, and shifting your framing from left to right to up and down can really transform your work. Here are some ideas for changing your view of verticals.

ABOVE: A peak in the Mount Barney region, Queensland. I wasn't planning to shoot with my 200mm prime lens, but the rush to get my camera out as the light changed left me with little choice. In the end, it was the perfect lens to compress the distance between the peak and foreground, while still emphasising the dead trees and mist. Nikon D700, 200mm f/4 lens. 0.4s @ f16, ISO 100.

As someone who presents audio-visuals at photography clubs, I regularly add portrait orientation landscape images into my presentations, and I am surprised at how often photographers come up to me and say they have never thought of taking landscape images as verticals! I think this is because landscapes are usually seen left-to-right, so that's how many photographers subconsciously compose their shots. But by honing in on one particular section of a landscape and composing in portrait orientation, it can open up your creativity and give you much more dynamic images.

Here are some tips for achieving great landscape images in portrait orientation.



LEFT: Antarctica has without doubt some of the most breathtaking landscapes on earth. By zooming in on this section of melting blue ice, I was able to obscure any 'dirty' ice around it. This has the effect of focusing all attention onto the main feature – the shape, texture and contrast of the stunning blue ice. Thankfully, the light was just perfect, allowing a view into the melting ice cave. Nikon D810, Nikon 70-200mm lens @ 200mm. 1/1600s @ f5.6, ISO 250.

RIGHT: Deadvlei – Namibia, Africa. I lay on the ground, resting my ultra-wide lens and camera on my elbows. By focusing about a third of the way into this scene and using a small aperture, the cracked earth back towards me was in focus, as were the tree and sand dunes. The image was composed so that the tree was off-centre. Also, timing was of the essence. This image was taken at sunrise, just as the shadow of the sun was at the very bottom of the sand dunes. Nikon D800, 14-24mm f/2.8 lens @ 14mm. 1/400s @ f8, ISO 200. +0.33EV.

## 2 EMPHASISING DEPTH

Photographing landscapes in portrait format can emphasise the feeling of depth in the frame, especially if the images were taken with a wide angle lens. You can get quite close to a foreground feature, while at the same time allowing space for the rest of the scene to unfold. Just be careful with your focusing, as you will need to focus part of the way into the scene, using a small aperture (such as f11 or f16) in order to achieve sharpness throughout the whole image, or consider identifying your lens' hyperfocal distance, which is the distance beyond which all objects can be brought into an "acceptable" focus. (see the table on page 45).

The other thing to consider is scenes with a lot of vertical height like mountain ranges. By shooting these in portrait orientation you can emphasise the difference in height between the top and bottom, and create an image with much greater impact.

## 3 WORK THE ANGLES

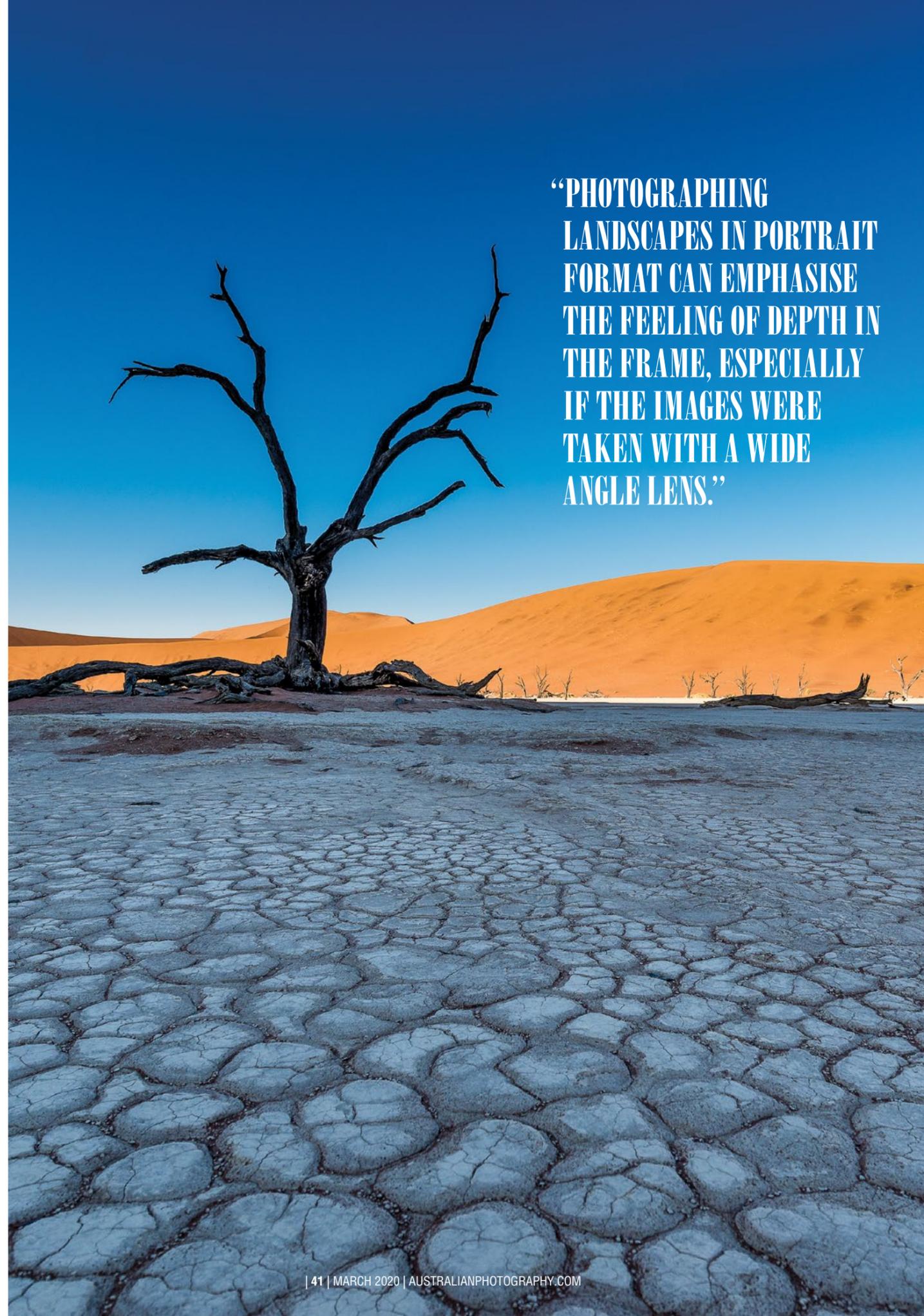
If possible, move around and take images at various angles. This could be getting low to the ground, perched high on a rock or from a vantage point that most photographers may never think of.

By getting down low and close, it really helps increase the visual emphasis on your foreground subject. This is especially prevalent when using an ultra-wide lens. Get down as low as you can and tilt the lens, and you'll create an image with a distorted view of the foreground, which makes it more prominent. Doing this can turn a tiny pebble into a rock, or a small wildflower into a beautiful large focal point.

## 1 GIVE IT A GO

Although your initial approach when considering a shot may be to compose it in landscape orientation, it's always worth considering whether portrait orientation could bring something different to the image. Some scenes won't work in portrait orientation, but those that do can really have a 'wow' factor. The key is to first pick out a prominent feature in the foreground of the landscape, such as a rock, plant, or a tree, and make that the focal point of the image. By building your frame from that point, the viewer of the image will settle first at the focal point before their eyes continue to the rest of the landscape.

Another example is the use of leading lines to direct the gaze of the viewer, such as a path in a rainforest. By composing your image so that the path starts at the bottom of your image and continues to the top, it can create a sense of mystery. People may think "I wonder where the path leads to?"



“PHOTOGRAPHING LANDSCAPES IN PORTRAIT FORMAT CAN EMPHASISE THE FEELING OF DEPTH IN THE FRAME, ESPECIALLY IF THE IMAGES WERE TAKEN WITH A WIDE ANGLE LENS.”



ABOVE, FROM LEFT: Campbell island. Campbell island is known for its rare megafauna, and I wanted to show this unique yellow *Bulbinella Rossii*, as well as the grass and water. Portrait orientation was the perfect choice. Nikon D810, Nikon 14-24mm @ 14mm. 1/250s @ f8, ISO 100, tripod.

Sunrise at Bowra Sanctuary lagoon, Queensland. The portrait composition here helped capture the tree, moody clouds and the water in the foreground all in the same shot. Nikon D700, 24-70mm f/2.8 lens @ 34mm. 1/8s @ f16, ISO 800. -0.33EV.



# 4

## COMPOSE WITH INTENT

Landscape images take on a very different look when they are taken in portrait orientation. Images shot vertically lend themselves well to structured compositions – deliberately placing subjects in certain areas will help your portrait landscapes ‘pop’ visually. As the photographer, look for the best way to emphasise the contrast between the foreground and the background elements.

Like in landscape orientation images, the rule of thirds works well in portrait format too. Try identifying three different points of interest - the foreground, midground and background, with each point occupying a third of your frame. With horizons, try to place these in the third nearest the top or bottom.

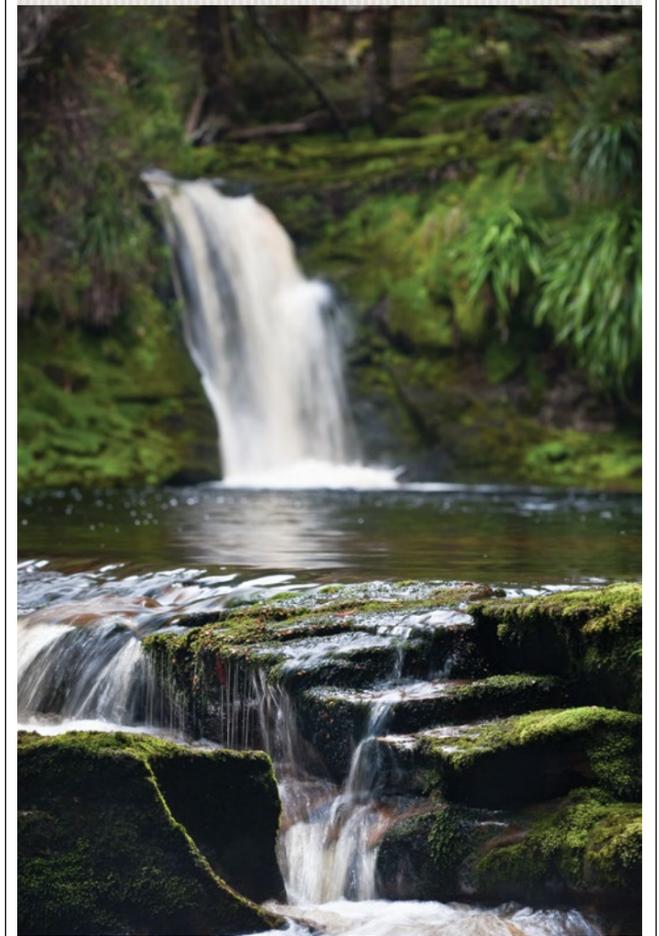
Often you will know when a composition feels right at the time of shooting. There’s no harm in ‘giving it a go’ and seeing what eventuates.

“AS THE PHOTOGRAPHER, LOOK FOR THE BEST WAY TO EMPHASISE THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE FOREGROUND AND BACKGROUND ELEMENTS...”

## WATERFALLS

Waterfalls are a great example of where shooting the same scene in both portrait and landscape orientation can totally change the feel of the end result. In landscape format you should try to emphasise the waterfall in its environment, revealing some of the landscape either side of the flow. In portrait format, the aim is to accentuate the waterfall itself.

Importantly, for both styles, make sure you don’t cut the top of the waterfall off, and leave room at the bottom of the waterfall so that the water has somewhere to go.



# 5

## AVOIDING ‘MESSY’ SCENES EITHER SIDE OF YOUR IMAGE

By shooting in portrait mode you can eliminate distractions in your landscape by composing in a way that removes things like dead leaves on branches, muddy patches or footprints on sand, or snow on either side of the landscape. The reason for doing this is simple: the more prominent the main focal point is, the more the viewer’s eyes will be drawn to it.

# 6

## USE DIFFERENT FOCAL LENGTHS

Many photographers are surprised when I suggest zooming in and out with their wide-angled lens, taking lots of shots at different focal lengths. Images will take on a completely different look when you do this. By shooting at the widest focal length, the whole of the landscape may be visible. But by zooming in closer to a landscape scene using a longer focal length telephoto or zoom lens, you can really emphasise height and compress the perceived distance between subjects. You may want to consider a zoom or telephoto lens with a long focal length to capture a distant scene that may be impossible to venture closer to.



ABOVE: Bicheno Blowhole, Tasmania. The clouds were a stunning peach colour and a beautiful ray of light was flaring up from the ocean. I wanted to include the rays, colour of the clouds and the rock, so a vertical composition was perfect in this instance. Nikon D810, Nikon 24-70mm lens @ 24mm. 30s @ f16, ISO 100, tripod.

RIGHT: Uluru, NT. There have been loads of images taken of Uluru at sunset in landscape orientation. Here, I positioned the camera in front of the grass and driftwood, making for the perfect foreground detail to a very colourful Uluru at sunset. By using a portrait orientation, it allowed for more of the interesting foreground elements to be featured. Nikon D700, 16-35mm f/4 lens @ 24mm. 1/5s @ f16, ISO 200.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Devil's Marbles at night, NT. Rather than composing all of the Devil's Marbles, I chose to pick out one section and zoom in. This image was taken at night, using a sturdy tripod and cable release, to minimise any movement. Nikon D800, 24-70mm f/2.8 lens @ 24mm. 30s @ f7.1, ISO 2500.

# 7

## PARALLEL LINES

Sometimes you will come across a landscape that has distinct, parallel lines throughout it. These lines could be horizontal or vertical and lend themselves really well to portrait images. If there are lots of sections with lines, or the lines cover a large area, choose one specific area where the lines are the most interesting. A forest with lots of straight, tall trees is a perfect example, as is a seascape, which may have lots of parallel lines created by the surf.

# 8

## CONSIDER A PANO

Vertical panoramas are a great way to capture 'more' in your image, both detail and information. It is important to use a sturdy tripod, preferably one with a specific pano head attached, and make sure you include some overlap between your frames. As well as increasing the size of the image, panoramas allow for more flexibility when printing and cropping.

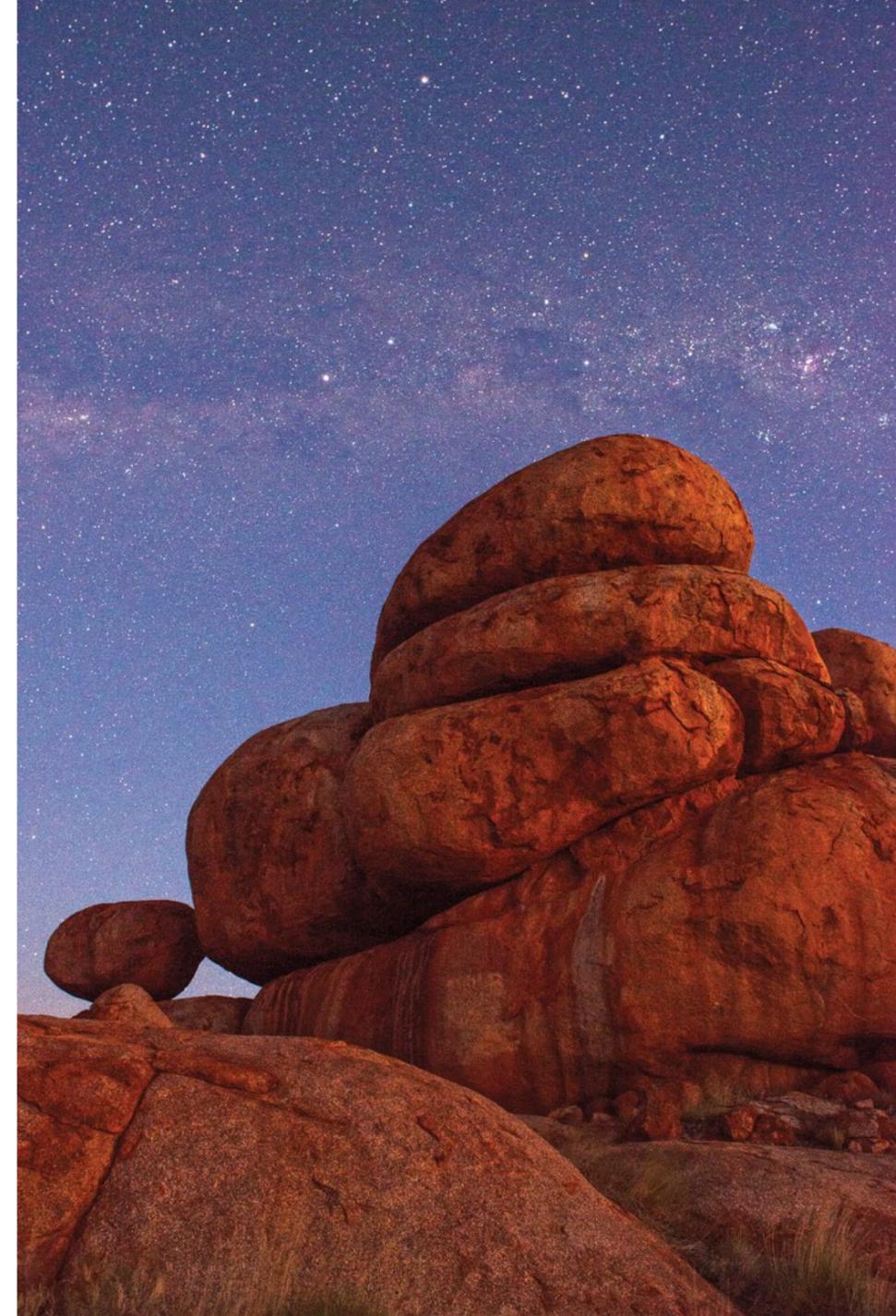


# 9

## SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

For landscape photography, I wouldn't consider using my SLR without an L-bracket. These brackets can be purchased to suit the exact camera make and model you own and once screwed in place, should be permanently left on the camera. The benefits of an L-bracket are that they are exceptionally secure when mounted to your tripod head. They work with all Arca Swiss style heads and when positioned, create a very secure 'lock' for your camera. Rather than flopping the ball head of your tripod (with camera attached) on its side, you turn the camera to a vertical orientation and slide it into the bevelled plate on the tripod head.

When it comes to a tripod, I recommend one that is sturdy, yet not overly heavy. That's why I'm a fan of carbon fibre tripods – solid and easier to cart around. If you are using a tripod for the first time, I strongly suggest spending time practising how everything works. There's nothing more frustrating than seeing an incredible sunrise or sunset happen in front of your eye, yet you are missing the best parts of it due to your fumbling with the tripod legs and ball head. Tripods with removable centre columns are great for getting down much lower than regular tripods, too.



LENS HYPERFOCAL DISTANCE TABLE

meters	16 mm	24 mm	35 mm	50 mm	85 mm	135 mm	200 mm
f/2.8	5.7 m	12.9 m	27.3 m	55.8 m	161.3 m	406.8 m	892.9 m
f/4.0	4 m	9 m	19.1 m	39.1 m	112.9 m	284.8 m	625 m
f/5.6	2.9 m	6.4 m	13.7 m	27.9 m	80.6 m	203.4 m	446.4 m
f/8.0	2 m	4.5 m	9.6 m	19.5 m	56.4 m	142.4 m	312.5 m
f/11	1.5 m	3.3 m	7 m	14.2 m	41.1 m	103.6 m	227.3 m
f/16	1 m	2.3 m	4.8 m	9.8 m	28.2 m	71.2 m	156.3 m
f/22	0.7 m	1.6 m	3.5 m	7.1 m	20.5 m	51.8 m	113.6 m
f/32	0.5 m	1.1 m	2.4 m	4.9 m	14.1 m	35.6 m	78.1 m



## PHOTO TIPS: VERTICAL LANDSCAPES



# 10

### SHOOTING FOR SPECIFIC COMMERCIAL PROJECTS

Another reason to shoot landscapes in portrait mode is that you need portrait images for specific publishing purposes. It could be a front cover of a magazine like this, or images for an article where the editor requires both landscape and portrait orientated images for layout purposes. The more images you have, in different formats, the more choice an editor or designer has to work with. Finally, shooting landscapes in portrait orientation also gives you a point of difference, as the majority of photographers shoot landscapes in landscape orientation. 📷

ABOVE: Ronny Creek, Cradle Mountain, Tasmania. In this instance, this scene wouldn't have worked as well in landscape orientation, due to the fact that the Pandanus trees were quite tall. Careful composition was needed so that the trees were in the foreground, whilst the creek and background mist were also visible. Nikon D700, 24-70mm f/2.8 lens @ 32mm. 1/40s @ f16, ISO 200. -0.67EV.

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