LANDSCAPE COMPOSITION

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An eBook on composition
in landscape photography

28mm | f/5.6 | 1/200s | ISO100

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INTRODUCTION

Composition is how you place the different elements in your photo relative to each other, people, buildings, natural objects etc., and how you use the available light to optimise the scene in accordance to your vision / story.

There is no right or wrong but a set of principles (or tools) you can use to tell the story.

A photo does NOT become "better" the more tools you use.

In this eBook I will go through some of the main tools / principles I use to compose my landscape photos.

SETTINGS

This eBook is not about camera settings. Yet, because I provide EXIF data for each photo in the eBook, I will briefly explain how to decode the EXIF data given.

On the right, underlined by a red line, you can see how the photo's EXIF data is written.

51mm | f/4 | 2s | ISO1600

SETTINGS

EXIF data is just that, data!

There are many factors to consider when we are in the field and have to decide what settings to use.

There is no such thing as "the right settings" or "perfect settings". We can talk about "optimal settings", but they must be seen in relation to the specific scene, the amount of available light, the gear you use, and most importantly, the goal of your photo. The range of optimal settings is often surprisingly broad.

The EXIF data typically provided by photographers only comprise of focal length, aperture, shutter speed, and ISO. This information can at best give a vague idea of the photographer's decisions and at worst create confusion.

Photographers use many different techniques to take photos. Some techniques are used for technical reasons, such as focus stacking, while others are chosen for artistic reasons, such as time blending.

If a photographer does not state that a photo is focus stacked or time blended, the EXIF data can look incredibly confusing when compared to the final photo. The same is the case, if a neutral density filter has been used to lengthen the shutter speed or if a photo has been cropped in post-processing. This information is not automatically given in the EXIF data. The EXIF data will also not tell you whether a photo is a panorama, a composite, a bracketed photo blended with luminosity masking, or a high dynamic range (HDR) photo.

On the next page, I will explain how I display my EXIF data on the photos in this eBook.

EXIF DATA KEY

If all of the following information seems confusing to you, do not worry. I am providing all of the extended EXIF data and techniques as a "cherry on top" for experienced photographers. You will not need to understand it to benefit the most from this eBook.

X denotes the number of photos/exposures.

AEB:1.3EVX = Auto exposure bracketing with 1.3 stops of light between X amount of exposures.

B:X = Blend of several photos taken at approximately the same time.

C:X = Composite of several photos taken at different locations.

TB:X = Time blend. Blending of several photos, taken over an extended period of time.

FS:X = Focus stacking of several exposures.

FB:X = Focal blend of several exposures.

PAN:X = Panorama or vertorama of several exposures.

X-STOP = Neutral density filter. Here the X denotes the number of stops of light reduced.

12mm | f/16 | 30s | ISO400 | AEB:2.0EV3 | B:6 | C:2 | TB:5 | FS:4 | FB:2 | 10-STOP | PAN:3

FOCAL LENGTH
APERTURE
SHUTTER SPEED
ISO
BRACKETING
BLENDING
COMPOSITE
TIME BLEND
FOCUS STACK
FOCAL BLEND
FILTER
PANORAMA

FOCAL POINT

21mm | f/7.1 | 1/100s | ISO100

12mm | f/13 | 1/30s | ISO100

What Are You Photographing?

The focal point is the anchor or main character of your photo.

It is almost always essential to have a focal point. Ask yourself what you are taking a photo of?

Photograph something or someone in the scene. It is like photographing a stage in the theatre. What are you taking a photograph of on that stage?

If the stage is empty, what are you taking a photo of?

16mm | f/22 | 1/4s | ISO50

24mm | f/4 | 1/500s | ISO100

In these examples there is no doubt what the focal point is.

One subject dominating the frame.

105mm | f/7.1 | 1/40s | ISO100

ONE FOCAL POINT IN A CHAOTIC SCENE

SEVERAL SUBJECTS

One, two or three?

A photo can easily contain several focal points or subjects. Classical composition actually distinguishes between the composition of a photo and the subject of a photo.

SEVERAL SUBJECTS

You can introduce several subjects in your photos.

Be aware what the primary focal point is and let this dominate the scene.

SEVERAL SUBJECTS

46mm | f/9 | 1/250s | ISO100

Are the subjects supporting each other?

- Story-wise?
- Compositionally?

LIGHT & SHADOW

Light and High-Contrast Areas

Humans have a tendency to be drawn towards light, faces and high-contrast parts of the photo.

Knowing this, it becomes obvious that you should usually not place dark elements on dark backgrounds and light elements on light background.

Here you see a dark element on a bright background. It is obvious where to look.

16mm | f/22 | 1/50s | ISO100

Light & Shadow

Here we see a bright church on the darker mountain background. I figured this would have a larger impact than having the bright church on the brighter sky background.

46mm | f/16 | 1.3s | ISO100 | 6-STOP
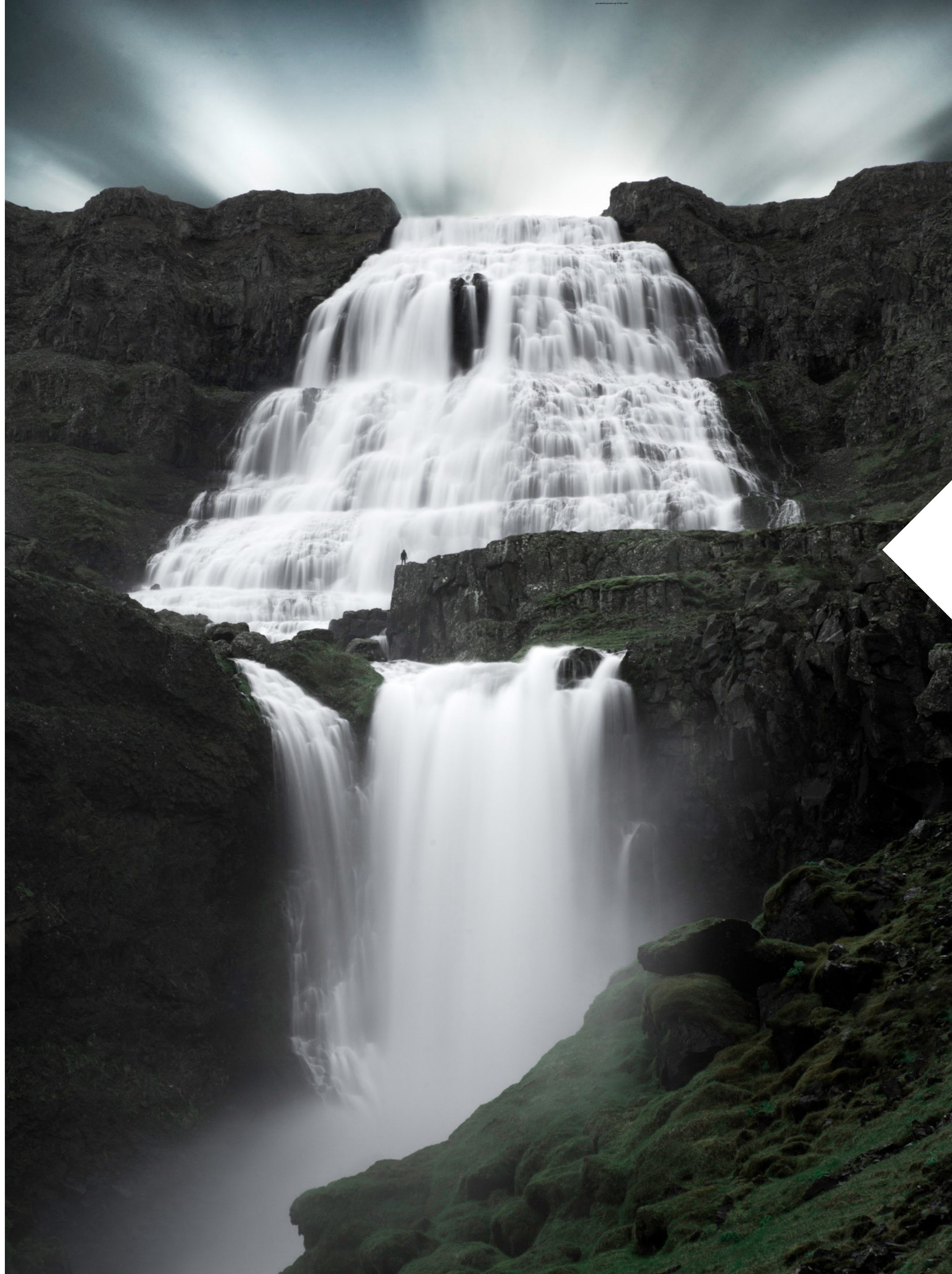
Light & Shadow

Even small elements that create a high contrast area stands out. It is nearly impossible to miss the person on the edge of the cliff.

Going through all my photos you can see how this is a recurring theme.

LIGHT AND SHADOW

The silhouetted dark lighthouse stands out against the bright background sun-rays, and the silhouetted person is prominent against the golden atmosphere. Not to mention, the bright text and title contrasts well with the dark parts of the photo.

LIGHT AND SHADOW

These two photos are great examples where the subject (me) is difficult to discern. Because I'm wearing black clothes and the background is in shadow, even with a bit of side-light, I blend into the background and do not stand out. Had I worn brighter or more colourful clothes, such as a yellow or red jacket, it would have been easier to see me.
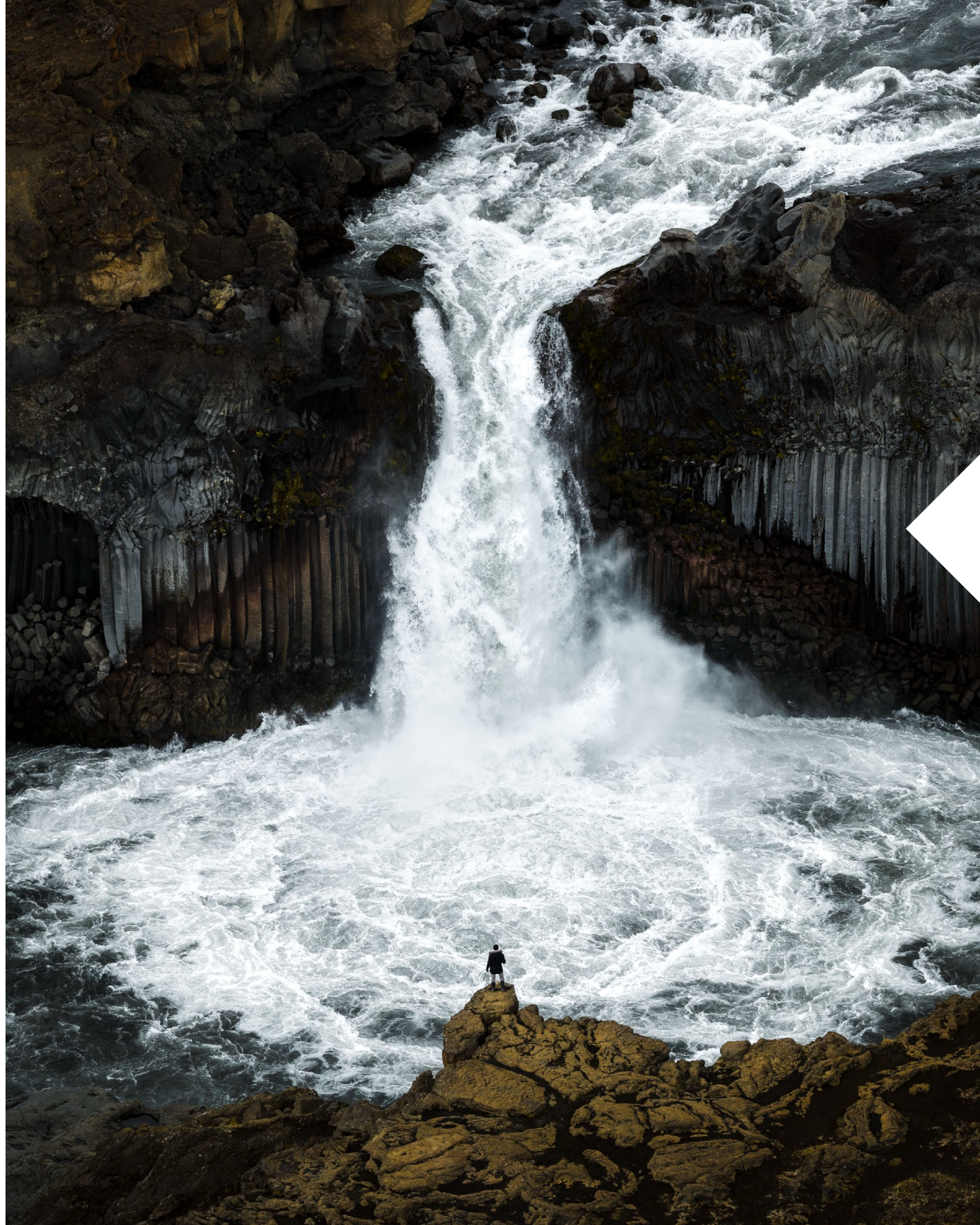

56mm | f/10 | 1/60s | ISO100

26mm | f/16 | 1/25s | ISO100

Light & Shadow

When composing a photo, it's crucial to place the main elements so they stand out and are clearly visible.

BALANCE

BALANCE

Visual balance is another tool in your compositional toolbox that is hard to ignore.

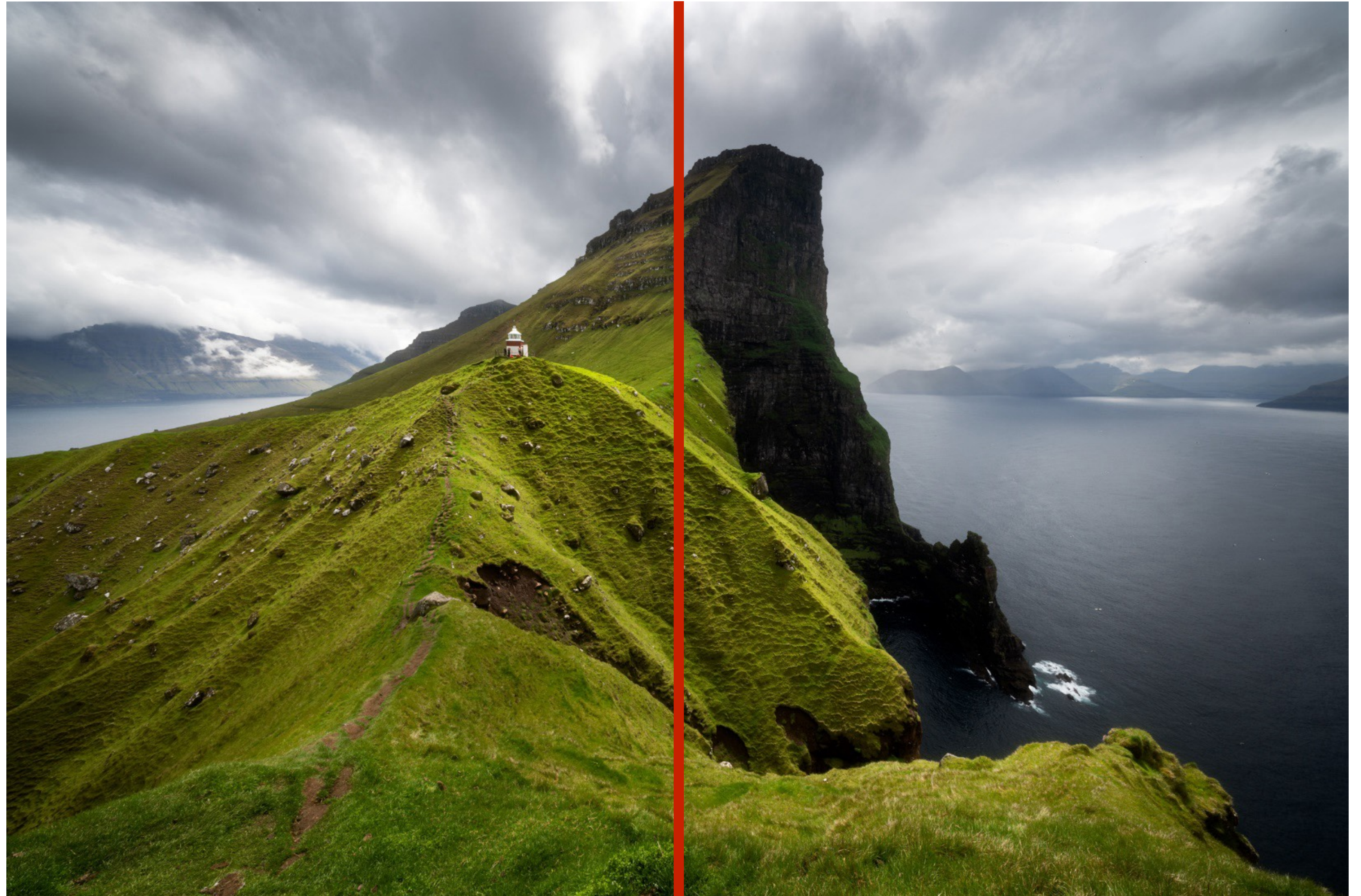If your photo is not in balance, it easily becomes "annoying" to look at.

16mm | f/4 | 0,5s | ISO100 | 6-STOP

BALANCE

If you place the photo on a scale it should not tip to one side or the other.

The amount of visual weight in the photo should be distributed approximately equally.

13mm | f/11 | 1/250s | ISO100

BALANCE

This is not a perfect science. It is more of a personal feeling.

In this example the brighter parts in the lower right and the upper left corners balance each other out, while the darker parts in the upper right and the lower left corners do the same.

16mm | f/16 | 0.3s | ISO100 | TB:3

BALANCE

Here the left sea stack is closer to the left edge of the frame than the right sea stack is to the right edge of the frame. The small person just to the right of the middle counter-weights this imbalance.

113mm | f/13 | 1/125s | ISO100 | B:2

BALANCE

The sea stack arch to the left of the middle is counter-balanced by the person and mountains to the right of the middle.

12mm | f/16 | 0.4s | ISO100 | AEB:2.0EV3

BALANCE

Even though the mountain and waterfall are on the left side of the middle they are counter-weighed by the large amount of darkness on the right side.

16mm | f/7.1 | 0.4s | ISO200 | 6-STOP

BALANCE

Shadows have a tendency to "weigh" more than light.

Without the person to counter the weight of the dark cliffs on the very left side, this photo would be out of balance.

VISUAL
FLOW

12mm | f/14 | 0.8s | ISO50

VISUAL FLOW

Visual flow is the viewer's visual journey through the photo. It can manifest in different ways such as lines and patterns.

In this example the train tracks create a couple of leading lines.

16mm | f/4.5 | 1/60s | ISO200

VISUAL FLOW

Nature is full of lines, curves and geometry.

Some are "hidden" to us and only show if you "stretch time"

This is a four second exposure of a receding wave. The foam on top creates these streaks.

12mm | f/16 | 4s | ISO100 | 6-STOP

VISUAL FLOW

I usually say that leading lines and visual flow lead towards something in the photo (usually your focal point) or lead you through the photo.

In this example, all the lines force the viewer's eye into the chunk of ice.

12mm | f/20 | 1/6s | ISO50

VISUAL FLOW

Lines do not have to be straight. They can be curves, s-curves, z-curves etc.
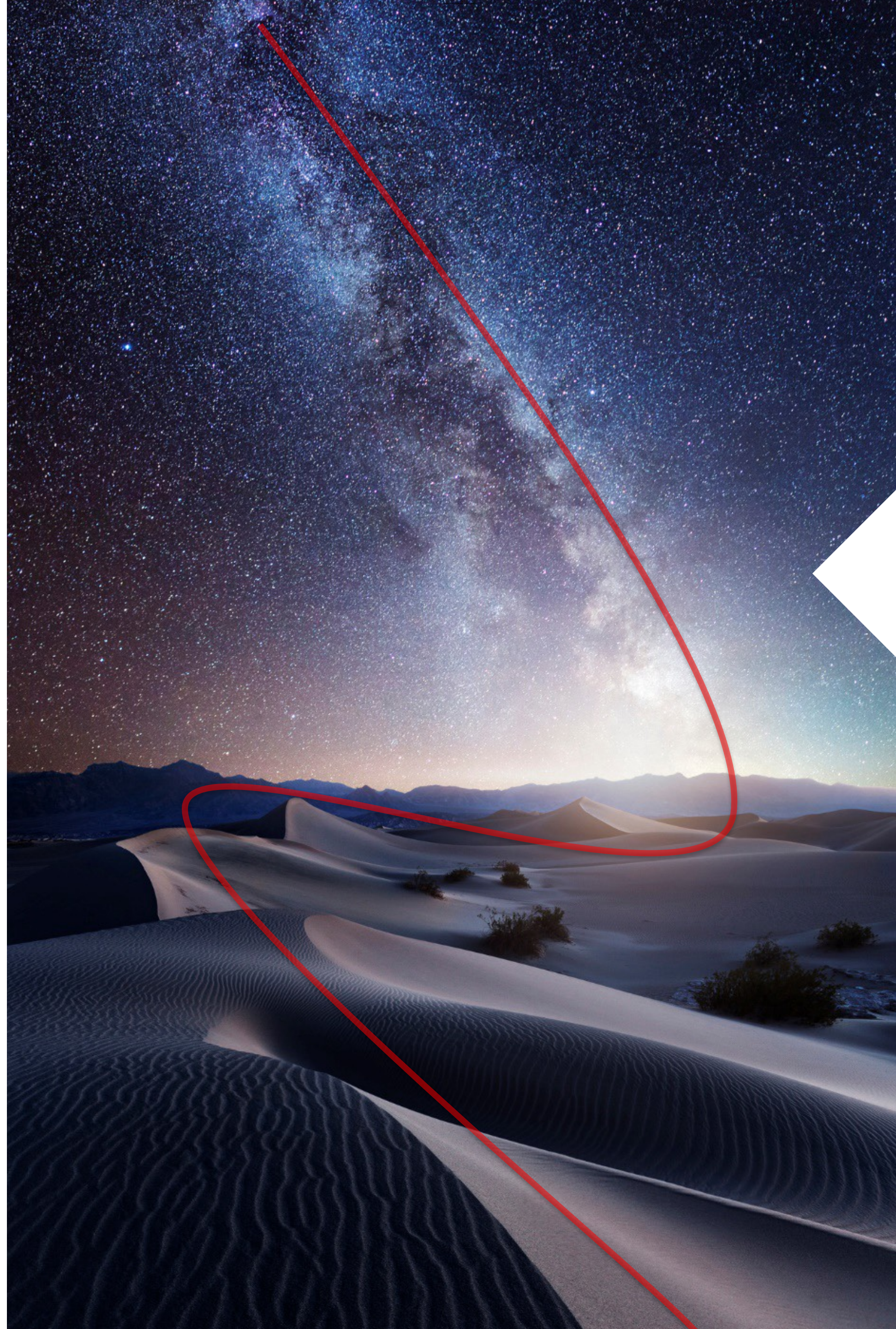
In this example, the wave creates a strong leading line.

12mm | f/14 | 0.8s | ISO50

Visual Flow

Here we follow the water up through the photo in a classic s-curve.
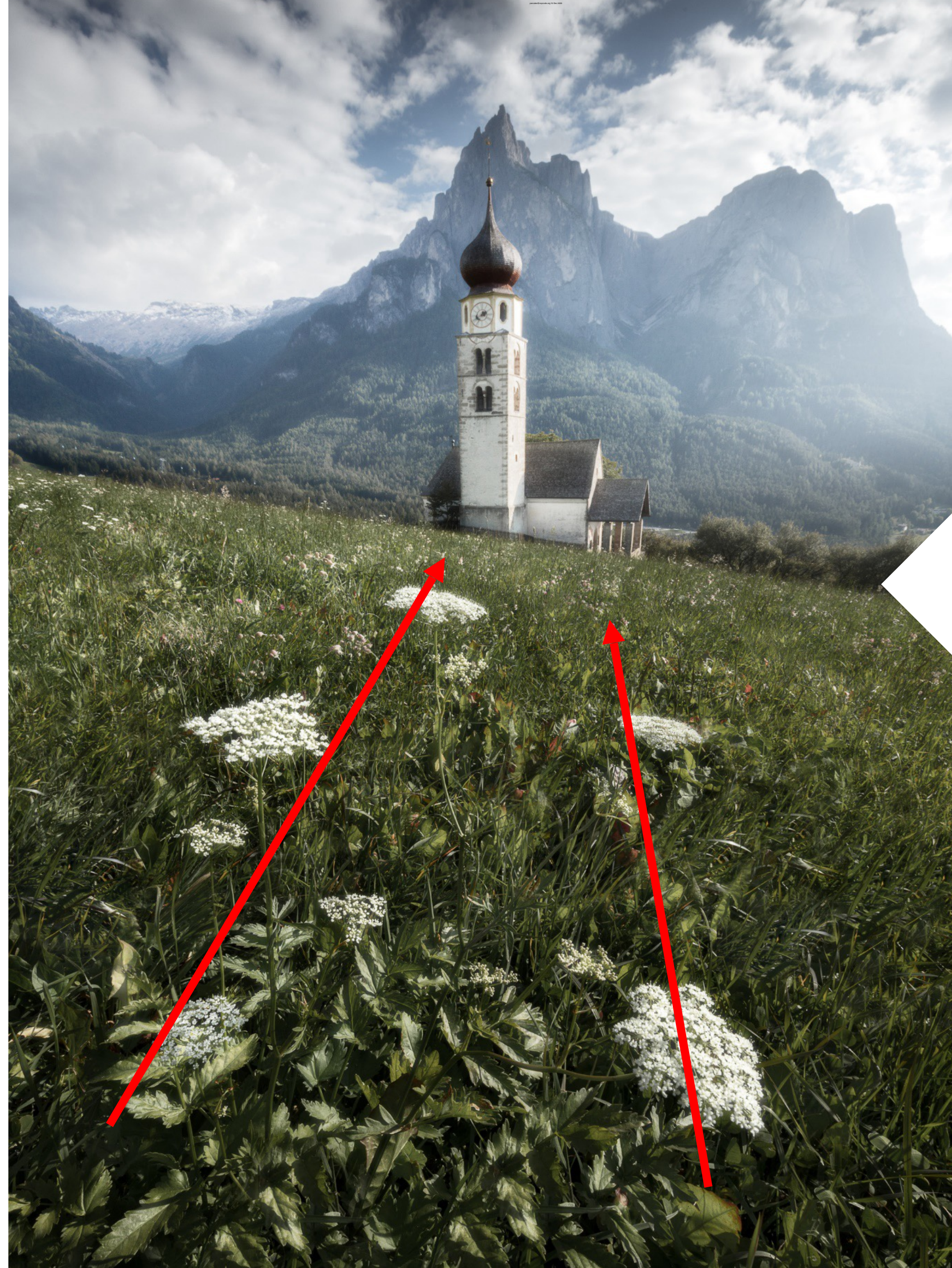
20mm | f/10 | 1s | ISO100 | 6-STOP

Visual Flow

The implied line along the top of the dunes and the Milky Way creates an s-curve through the entire photo.

16mm | f/5.6 | 30s | ISO100 | FS:3 | C:2

Visual Flow

Connecting the dots of a photo can also imply a visual flow. Here a couple of implied lines lead to the church.

16mm | f/22 | 1/50s | ISO100

VISUAL
FLOW

The repeating waterfalls almost work as a tipped over ladder by which you climb into the photo.

26mm | f/2.2 | 1/120s | ISO100

VISUAL FLOW

Cliffs, clouds and sea come together to lead the eye towards the sea stack.

1 2 m m | f / 1 0 | 0 , 5 s | I S O 1 0 0 | A E B : 2 . 0 E V 3 | T B : 7

VISUAL FLOW

The foreground stream comes together with the fjord to lead the eye into the background island.

The long-exposed clouds also create visual flow towards the island.

16mm | f/20 | 0,4s | ISO100 | FS:2 | TB:2

Visual Flow

As a rule of thumb, it is aesthetically pleasing to have leading lines enter or exit the photo from the corners.

You can notice this in most of the photos I have used in this eBook.

DEPTH

Background

Midground

Foreground

DEPTH

Traditionally we think in terms of "foreground, midground and background" as shown on the previous page.

The transition between the layers can be fuzzy.

In this example we have the dramatic line in the immediate foreground leading into the background (or the midground??)

The point is that there is a clear distinction between what is close to the camera and what is far away.

12mm | f/14 | 0.8s | ISO50

DEPTH

Sometimes the classical three-layer structure is inadequate as more than three layers can be identified.

In this example we can identify four or five layers. As we can see, they clearly overlap.

1st layer: The immediate foreground with the sheep.

2nd layer: The tree on the hill, which leads towards the right.

3rd layer: The pointy hill.

4th layer: Hills behind the clouds.

5th layer: The sky.

DEPTH

Whether you use a wide-angle lens or a standard-zoom, you will likely notice that the foreground tends to be relatively larger than the background. This emphasises a sense of depth.

1st layer: Silhouetted person and cliff.

2nd layer: Bright cliff.

3rd layer: The sea and clouds.

4th layer: Background cliff.

38mm | f/10 | 1/400s | ISO100

DEPTH

With a longer lens the sense of depth decreases and you will have to rely on the overlapping layers to show depth.

Additionally as you move into the scene, a natural loss of contrast occurs. This helps to show depth.

1st layer: Trees.

2nd layer: Ridge with person.

3rd layer: Ridge with trees.

4th layer: Mountaintop.

5th layer: Sky.

97mm | f/16 | 1/13s | ISO100

DEPTH

The natural loss of contrast occurs because there is more atmospheric haze between the camera and the background.

1st layer: Ridge with person.

2nd layer: Left sea stack.

3rd layer: Right sea stack.

4th layer: Background.

113mm | f/13 | 1/125s | ISO100 | B:2

DEPTH

Here is another example where the immediate foreground is very contrasty. As we move into the scene each layer becomes less contrasty.

89mm | f/16 | 1/15s | ISO100

DEPTH

As this is a photo with great depth, about 23 kilometres from the foreground to the rearmost cliff, the loss of contrast as we move through the scene is very distinct.

200mm | f/14 | 1/100s | ISO100

DEPTH

It is the exact same effect we see on a foggy day. The foreground is more visible than the background. This creates a natural sense of depth. Editing tip: When editing your photo, this is an effect you often want to keep. So either stay away from the clarity and dehaze sliders or use them carefully and locally.

291mm | f/14 | 1/4s | ISO100 | TB:2 | B:8

100mm | f/16 | 5s | ISO100 | FS:2

DEPTH

Fog (as in the left-hand photo) and low ground fog (as in the right-hand photo) are excellent atmospheric phenomena for creating depth in a photo, as they help separate the layers throughout the scene. Fog works great for creating a sense of depth in both flat, hilly, and mountainous areas.

56mm | f/16 | 0,5s | ISO100

200mm | f/16 | 4s | ISO100 | B:2

SYMMETRY

15mm | f/2 | 5s | ISO3200

SYMMETRY

Creating symmetry in a photo can be done in several different ways.

Reflection is a typical way of adding symmetry to a photo.

There is something fascinating and rewarding about reflections.

20mm | f/1.4 | 10s | ISO3200

SYMMETRY

In everyday language, symmetry refers to a sense of harmonious and beautiful proportion and balance.

The reflection emphasises the harmony and calmness from the blue hour in this photo of the traditional windmills in the Netherlands.

31mm | f/4.5 | 30s | ISO100 | 6-STOP

SYMMETRY

Humans are evolutionarily predisposed to find symmetry aesthetically pleasing. For example, we tend to find symmetrical faces attractive.

However, excessive symmetry has a tendency to be perceived as uninteresting or even boring.

When it comes to composition, humans are inclined to prefer the middle road, favouring some symmetry but enough complexity to make it interesting.

SYMMETRY

In these examples, the water reflects the background, creating order and symmetry, while the foreground "breaks" the symmetry, thereby adding interest.

SYMMETRY

Here is another example of how broken symmetry can add interest to the composition.
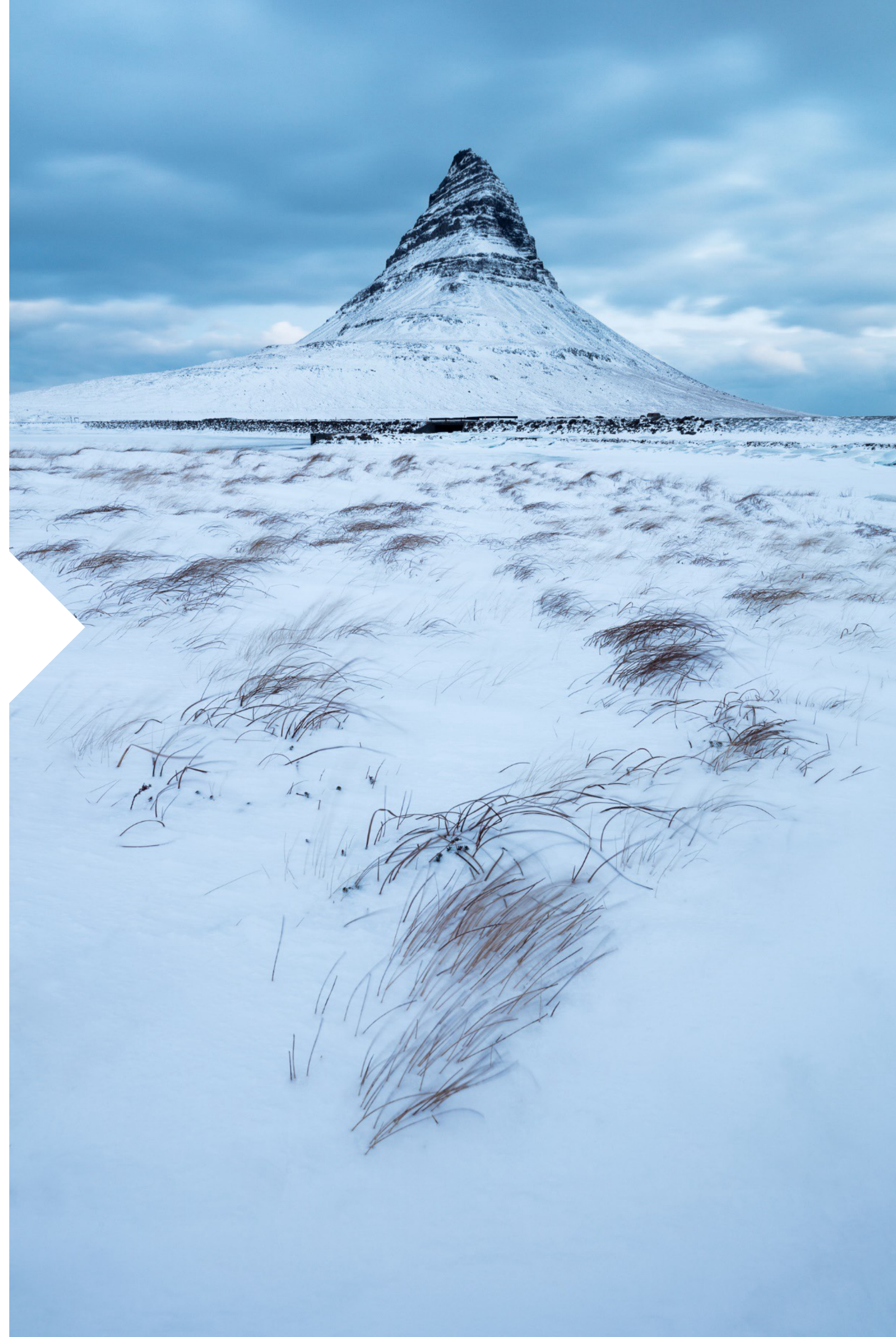
This photo would not have been half as interesting if not for the broken reflection.

35mm | f/16 | 5s | ISO100 | FS:2 | 6-STOP

SYMMETRY

Symmetry does not have to be reflections on water surfaces. It can also be shapes "mirrored" in other shapes. Such as the shape of the mountain being mirrored in the triangular shape of the grass.

20mm | f/16 | 10s | ISO100

SYMMETRY

Here is another example where the cloud above the mountain is "mirrored" in the foreground rock. The crescent shape helps create interest within the photo.
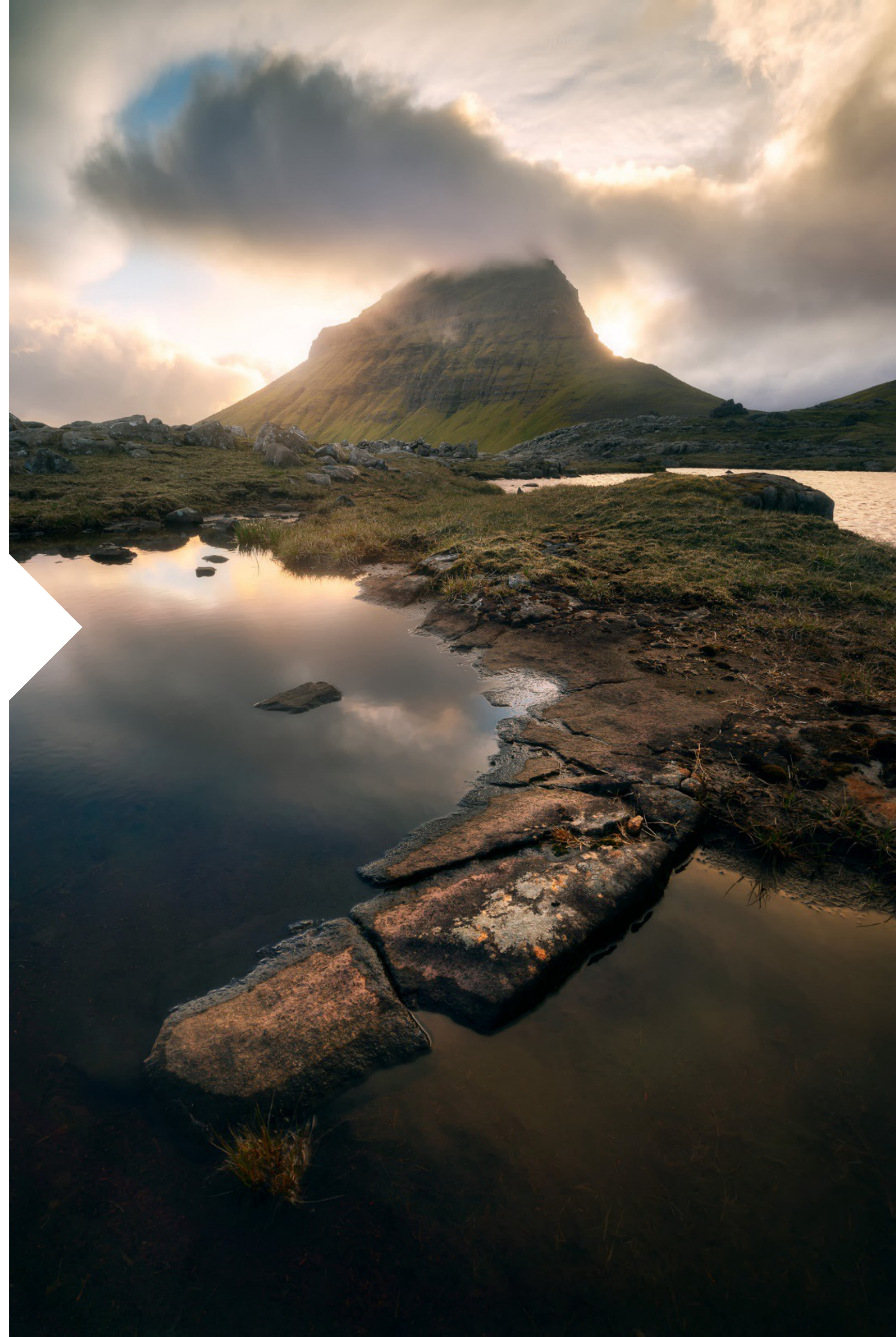
15mm | f/16 | 1/25s | ISO100 | FS:2

- 60

SYMMETRY

In this photo, the axis of symmetry is vertical. The rainbow creates a symmetrical shape in the middle of the photo.
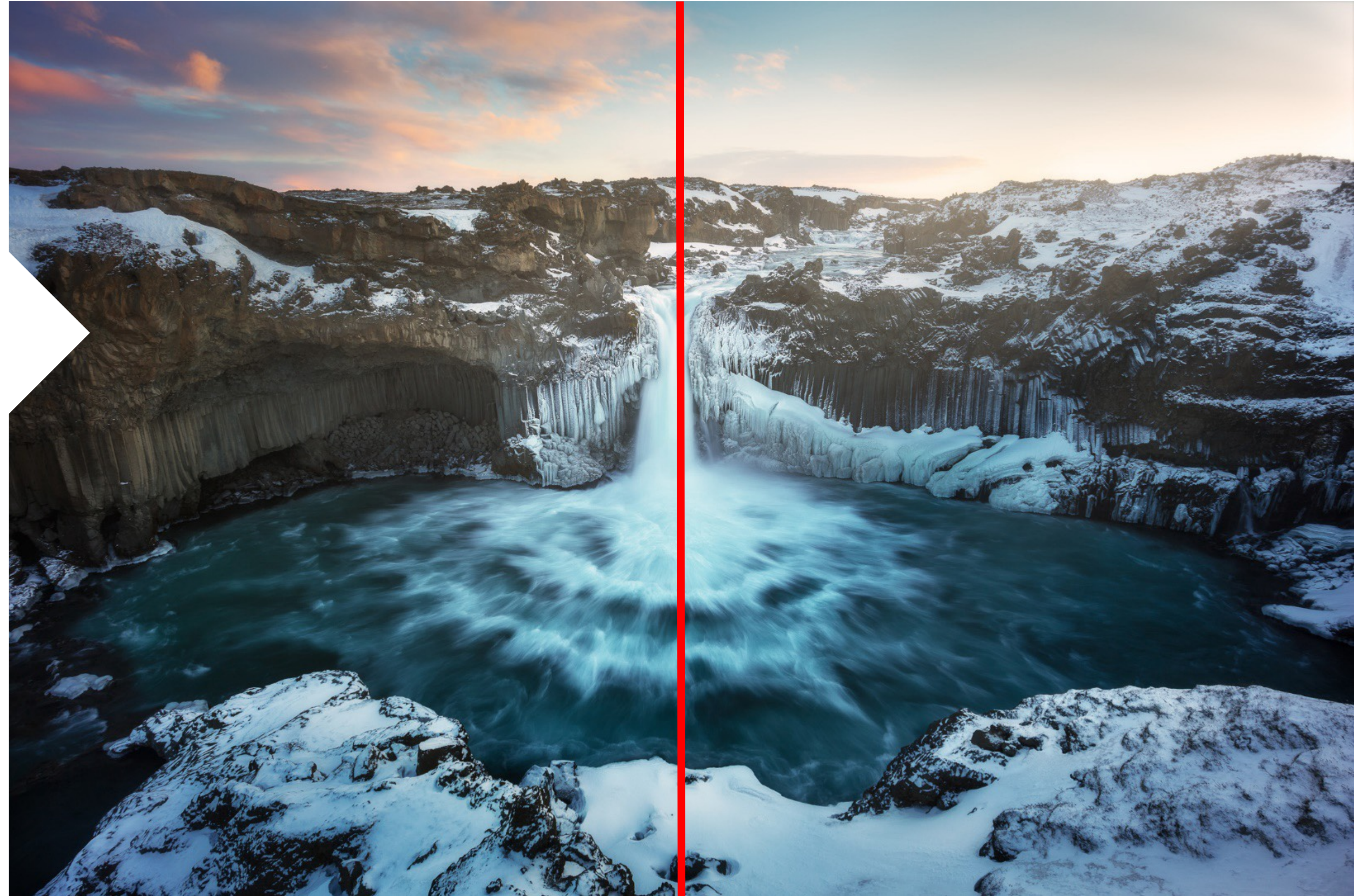

12mm | f/7.1 | 1/60s | ISO100

SYMMETRY

An entire location can be aesthetically pleasing simply because of its shape.

In this photo, the red line is a vertical axis of symmetry, along which the two halves almost match up.

19mm | f/7.1 | 0,8s | ISO100 | 6-STOP

97mm | f/16 | 1/13s | ISO100

EDGES

The edges of a photo are just as important as the rest of the photo.

There are three things I am aware of when I compose a photo:

- Framing
- Clean Edges
- Breathing Room

FRAMING

There are many ways to "frame" your photo or subject. In this example, the church is framed by the grass in the foreground and the gradually darker clouds.

FRAMING

The most obvious way to frame a scene is literally to frame it using elements in the foreground. In this example, I used a couple of trees and the grassy bank. The frame does not have to encircle the entire photo.

97mm | f/16 | 1/13s | ISO100

FRAMING

Here the combination of the foreground, the cliffs, and the dark clouds create a natural frame around the waterfall.

4 1 m m | f / 5 . 6 | 1 / 2 0 0 s | I S O 3 2 0

CLEAN EDGES

If you have distracting elements along your edges they pull attention from what is of interest in your photo.

Make sure your edges are "optimally" clean of high contrast elements, as in this photo.

16mm | f/20 | 0.6s | ISO100

CLEAN EDGES

Here we have distracting high-contrast elements along the edges of the photo.

Photoshop is an amazing program to remove such elements.

13mm | f/16 | 1.6s | ISO100 | 6-STOP

- 69

CLEAN EDGES

Less distractions along the edges make for a more harmonious and calm photo.

13mm | f/16 | 1,6s | ISO100 | 6-STOP

CLEAN EDGES

41mm | f/5.6 | 1/200s | ISO320

As you want to draw attention to your subject, it is important that you do not include distractions.

Use light and shadow to guide your viewers' eyes.

If the edges of your photo are already naturally dark, you can darken them more to make sure peoples' attention stay in the middle.

It is only after further examination of the photo that you see all the tourists.

BREATHING ROOM

Give your subject(s) room to "breathe" and leave space around the edges.

If your subject is too close to the edge, it can create unease and a sense of claustrophobia.

16mm | f/9 | 30s | ISO100 | TB:2

BREATHING ROOM

A too tightly cropped photo can be uncomfortable to look at. The photo on the right feels too squeezed together.

16mm | f/16 | 0.3s | ISO100 | TB:3

BREATHING ROOM

In the right-hand photo, the sea stacks are too close to the top, the wave touches the lower edge, creating unease, and both rocks to the sides are cut off.

24mm | f/2.8 | 1.6s | ISO100 | PAN:3 | 10-STOP

BREATHING ROOM

The sense of claustrophobia is obvious on the
left-hand photo where the mountain is too close
to the upper right corner.

1 3 m m | f / 1 6 | 1 , 6 s | I S O 1 0 0 | 6 - S T O P

SCALE

SCALE

Displaying size and scale in landscape photography is very hard to do.

This photo does not convey that some of the cacti has a height of 10 meters.

200mm | f/5 | 1/500s | ISO200

SCALE

The small people on the sand dunes help show the size of the dunes.

SCALE

Adding a human, a car, a house, or something relatable to your scene, greatly helps to display the scale of the landscape.

SCALE

If you use humans in your composition, the question is what you want to use them for? Is it to give a sense of scale, adventure, or something else?

In this example, the person does not add a sense of scale to the landscape.

It does, however, give a sense of adventure and exploration.

12mm | f/16 | 0.4s | ISO100 | AEB:2.0EV3

SCALE

In this example, from the same location as the previous photo, the smaller person does a much better job of showing the size of the landscape.

Neither one of the photos is "better" than the other. The two persons simply serve different purposes.

21mm | f/16 | 1/20s | ISO100 | B:5

SCALE

You can change the size-perception of a subject by not showing where it starts and/or ends. By cropping off the top and/or bottom of a waterfall you can make it seem to go on "forever".

SCALE

Despite being the exact same photograph the tighter crop makes the waterfall seem "bigger" because you can not see the top.

151mm | f/9 | 1/800s | ISO320

SCALE

In this 12mm photo, the top of the basalt columns to the left is deliberately cut off. When the top is not defined, they could potentially be much taller.

SCALE

Different focal lengths produce different results. By zooming in to 24mm and leaving out everything but the river and basalt columns, the photo becomes more focused and impactful.

24mm | f/16 | 1/4s | ISO50

SCALE

Introducing a person to the composition will give an even better understanding of the size of the scene.

16mm | f/11 | 1/40s | ISO100 | AEB:2.0EV3

SCALE

But be careful, as a person can also be so small that they are hard to see.

Can you see the person on top of the cliff?

NEGATIVE SPACE

Where does your eye go to on this page? Here, right? That is the power of negative space.

74mm | f/8 | 1/80s | ISO200

NEGATIVE SPACE

Negative space is the "empty" space between your subjects.

Negative space delivers breathing room for your subject.

Negative space can in itself be a subject of your photo and help tell the story.

The negative space in this photo emphasises a feeling of emptiness, and from a compositional point of view it draws your eye to the iceberg and the seagull.
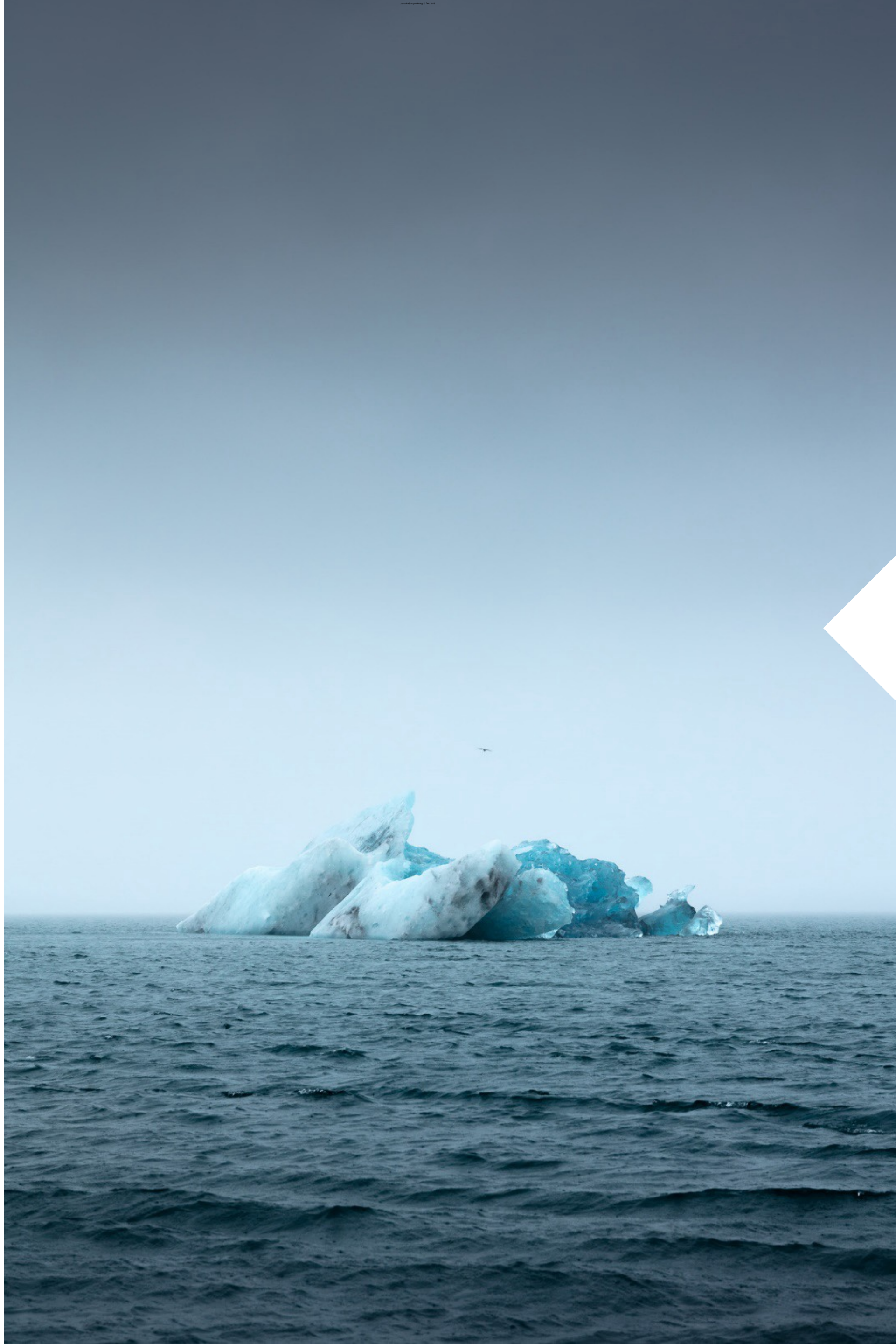
NEGATIVE SPACE

The use of negative space makes your eye go straight to the horses.

The negative space also gives an impression of big, empty vastness.

105mm | f/7.1 | 1/250s | ISO100

NEGATIVE SPACE

The vast glacier constitutes a negative space in this photo.

The glacier is also a subject of the photo and plays an essential role in the story.

172mm | f/16 | 1/200s | ISO100

NEGATIVE SPACE

Be aware that using a lot of negative space in your photo can compromise the sense of scale. On the left-hand photo it is harder to perceive the magnitude of the mountain, as compared to the right-hand photo.

16mm | f/14 | 1s | ISO100

43mm | f/13 | 1/13s | ISO100

93

175mm | f/8 | 1/320s | ISO100

NEGATIVE SPACE

This photo gives a great sense of moody solitude.

But it compromises the sense of scale of the two sea stacks, which are 68 and 81 meters tall.

NEGATIVE SPACE

In this photo too, the negative space compromises the sense of scale.

However, giving an understanding of scale is not the point of the photo.

24mm | f/16 | 1/30s | ISO50 | TB:2

NEGATIVE SPACE

This photo also gives a great sense of moody solitude. But as we already have a good sense of the size of a church or a house, the negative space does not compromise the sense of scale.

16mm | f/11 | 1/30s | ISO100

DIRECTION

DIRECTION

When your subject(s) have a recognisable front and back, it greatly benefits the photo to have the subject turned "into" the photo.

By "into" I mean either towards the centre of the photo, towards another subject, or into the background.

By doing so you help guide the viewer's eye into the photo.

151mm | f/9 | 1/800s | ISO320

DIRECTION

Here all the photographers (subjects) in the foreground look into the background.

As viewers we want to know what they are looking at and photographing.

105mm | f/8 | 1/1000s | ISO100

DIRECTION

Here, both subjects look towards the hill, coming out of the fog in the background. This implies to the viewer that this is where their eye should go.

42mm | f/8 | 1/1600s | ISO100

DIRECTION

If you browse through all the photos in this eBook, all humans are either looking into the photo or towards another subject / point of interest.

200mm | f/14 | 1/100s | ISO100

DIRECTION

The same goes for non-human objects. In the left-hand photo, the plane directs the viewer's attention out of the photo.

In the right-hand photo, the plane points into the photo. This also helps to keep the balance of the photo.

35mm | f/4 | 1/50s | ISO100

DIRECTION

Here is another example with buildings. In the photo on the left, the church directs the viewer's attention out of the photo.

In the photo on the right, the direction of the church makes sure our attention stays within the frame of the photo.

1 7 m m | f / 1 1 | 3 0 s | I S O 1 0 0 | 1 0 - S T O P

DIRECTION

70mm | f/4.5 | 0,3s | ISO100

Again, it is important to consider what you want to say with the photo.

We can use the effect of direction for story-telling.

Having the person turned away from the church implies that he has lost his faith.

The church turned towards the person implies that there is still time to regain faith. And it directs our attention towards the person.

BRINGING
IT ALL
TOGETHER

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

In the following examples, I show the same photo twice. One photo with lines to illustrate the visual vision and one photo without lines.

The photos are different examples of how I use different compositional tools.

Some tools are generally present:
- Focal Point
- Balance
- Light and Shadow
- Awareness of the edges

BRINGING
IT ALL
TOGETHER

Starting out with this simple composition we have the strong curvy leading line smack in the middle.

The background mountains work as the focal point and are further emphasised by the reflection.

The central composition secures balance.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

All the elements come together to make a simple, balanced, and powerful photo.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

The main subject is the person. He provides scale and drama to the scene in general and the waterfall specifically.

The photo is balanced around the middle.

The corners of the photo are darker than the middle, creating a natural vignette to draw attention to where the action takes place.

151mm | f/9 | 1/800s | ISO320

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

The dark person constitutes a high contrast element against the white background of the waterfall.

Had there been no water, it would have been hard to see the person.

As a result, the story of the photo becomes about the person in the waterfall and not about the waterfall.

151mm | f/9 | 1/800s | ISO320

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

The arch is the focal point as we are attracted to the light and high-contrast area. The person is secondary and serves to show scale.

The small and important figure requires breathing room to make him stand out and separate him from the background mountains.

The dark elements (the clouds, the background island, and the textured foreground) frame the photo, keeping the viewer's attention on the arch and the person.

21mm | f/16 | 1/20s | ISO100 | B:5

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

The balance of the photo is evenly distributed between the left and right sides.

The arch is the most visually heavy element in the photo, but it is countered by the person, the foreground, and the background cliffs.

Both subjects (the arch and the person) are turned towards each other.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

The focal point is the rock in the middle, framed by the cliffs on each side.

The line-up of triangles create symmetry. And the slightly split levels create depth from the left-hand cliff, through the middle, to the right-hand cliff, and into the background.

The trail coming in from the left further emphasises the depth, leading into the photo and the small person, who adds scale to this grand scene.

16mm | f/8 | 1/80s | ISO100

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

This is one of my favorite photos from Scotland, and to me it is a fantastic example of a relatively complex scene, where the elements come together and benefit each other.


16mm | f/8 | 1/80s | ISO100

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

The mountain is the main subject of the photo. The stream and the light beams are secondary.

The foreground stream leads the eye in a curve into the photo. This makes sure our attention stays well within the frame. The light beaming in from the right also leads the eye towards the lake and mountain.

The dark edges (the clouds, the sides, and the immediate foreground) frames the photo.
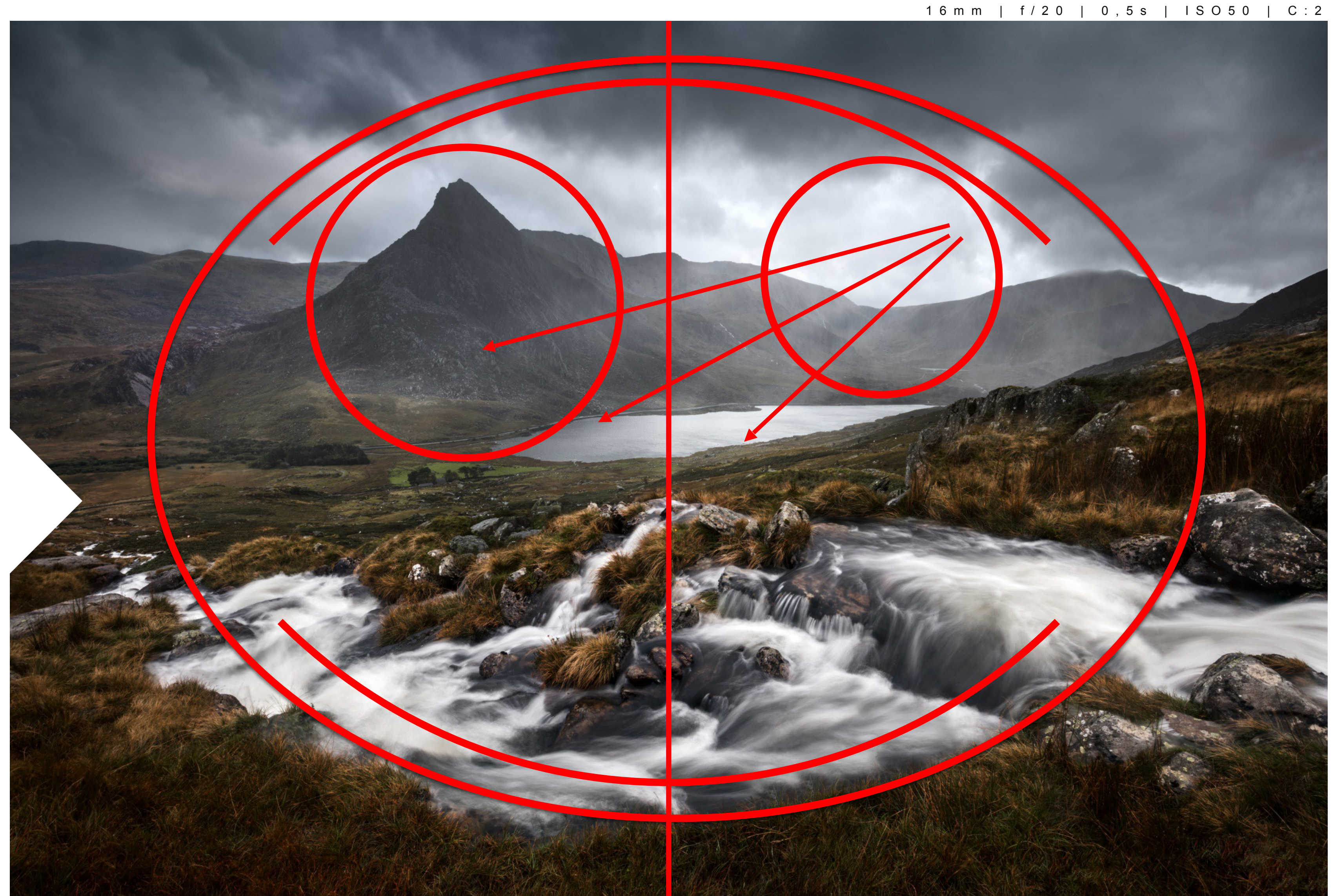
BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

As your experience with composing photos increase, you learn to see all these different elements.

That being said, I rely heavily on editing to make my vision come true. I rarely catch the "final" photo in-field in a single exposure.
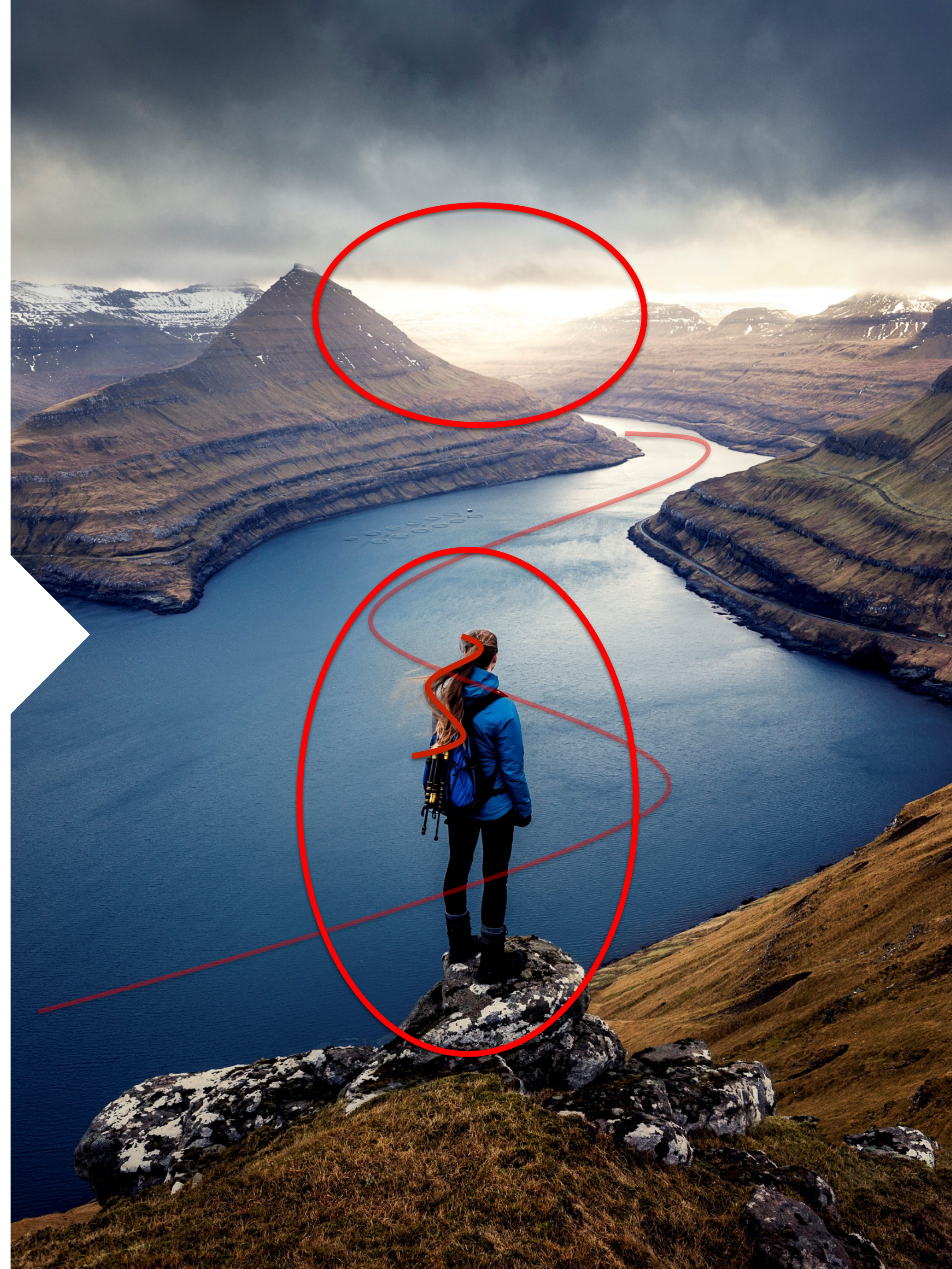
BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

The person is the main focal point, while the light in the background constitutes a secondary focal point. The curvy fjord makes a visual flow between the two subjects – a curve which is repeated in the person's hair.

A blue jacket on a blue background is not a problem. The contrast between the person and the background makes the person stand out. There is no need to wear a yellow raincoat or a red jacket.

BRINGING
IT ALL
TOGETHER

The central composition makes for a well-balanced photo, and the dark edges make sure the viewer's eye does not leave the photo.

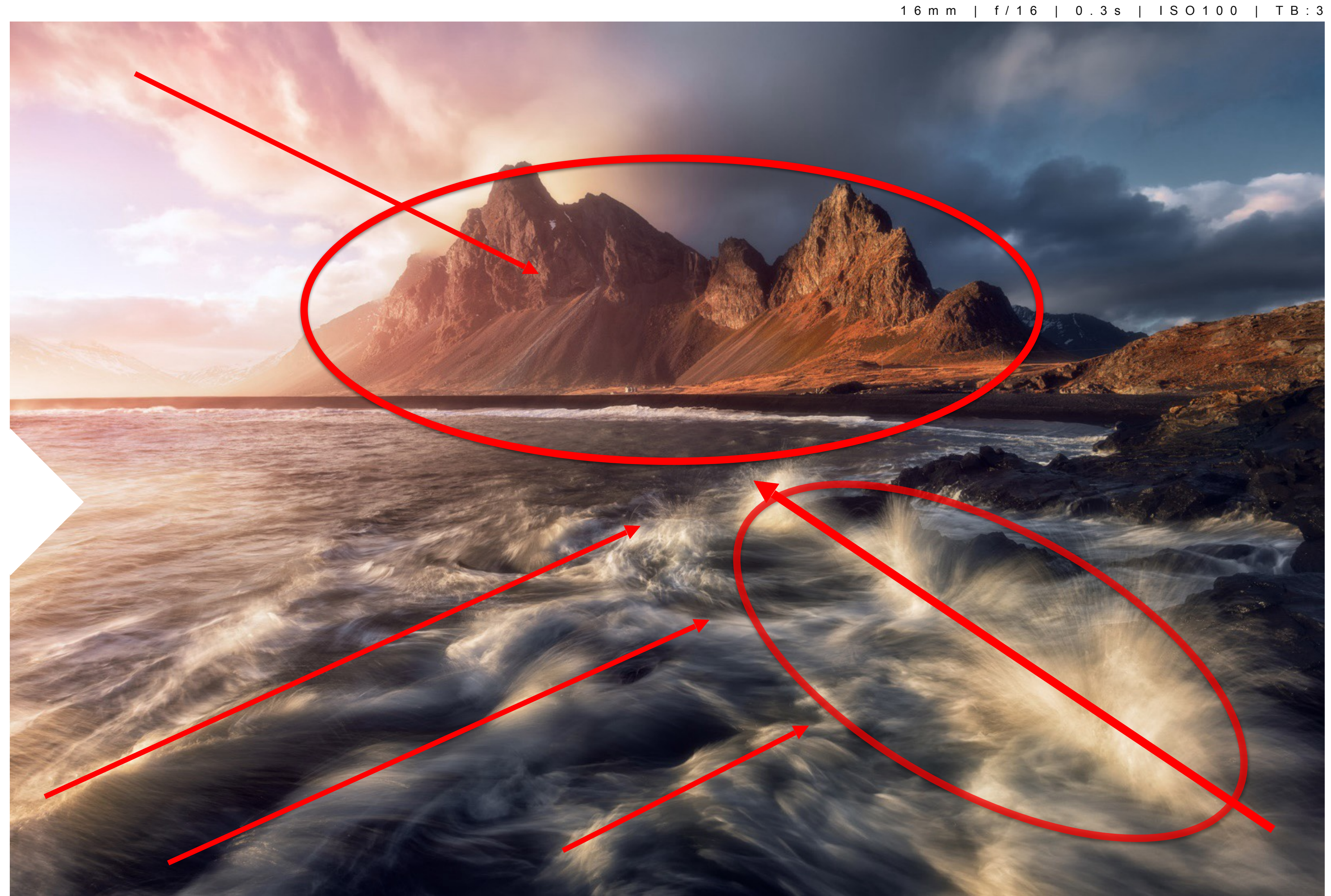To this day, this is still one of my all-time favourite photos!

22mm | f/7.1 | 1/40s | ISO100

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

The main focal point is the mountains, and the secondary focal point is the crashing wave.

The waves (including the crashing one) work as leading elements, drawing the eye into the scene.
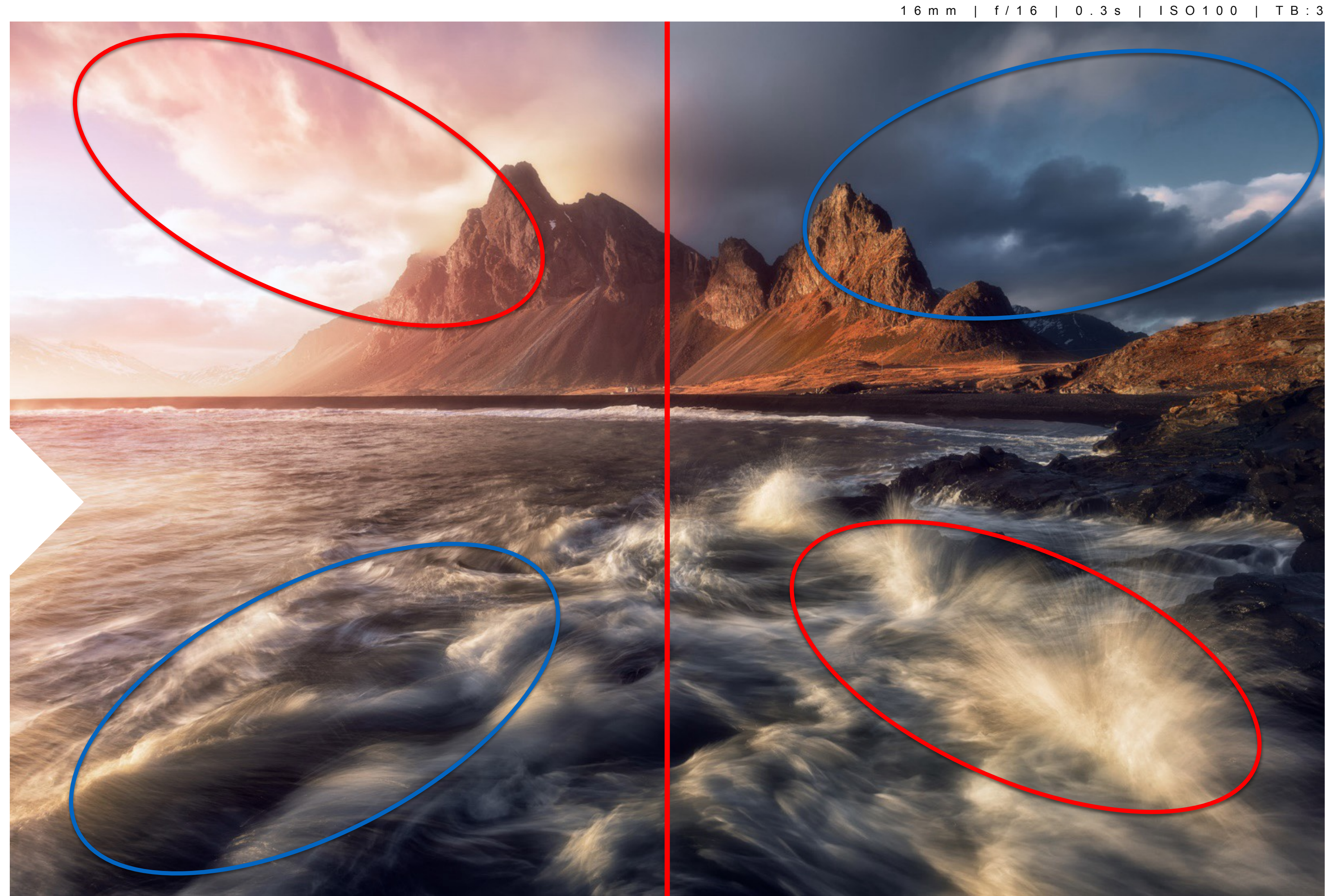
BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

The bright crashing wave is counter-balanced by the detailed bright clouds in the upper left corner.

And the dark upper corner is counter-balanced by the lower left darker waves.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Geometrical shapes, especially triangles, are visually stimulating. They can be used as focal points and as leading lines and elements.

Furthermore, you can see how the left, darker mountain has a bright background, while the right, brighter mountain has a dark background. This makes them stand out.
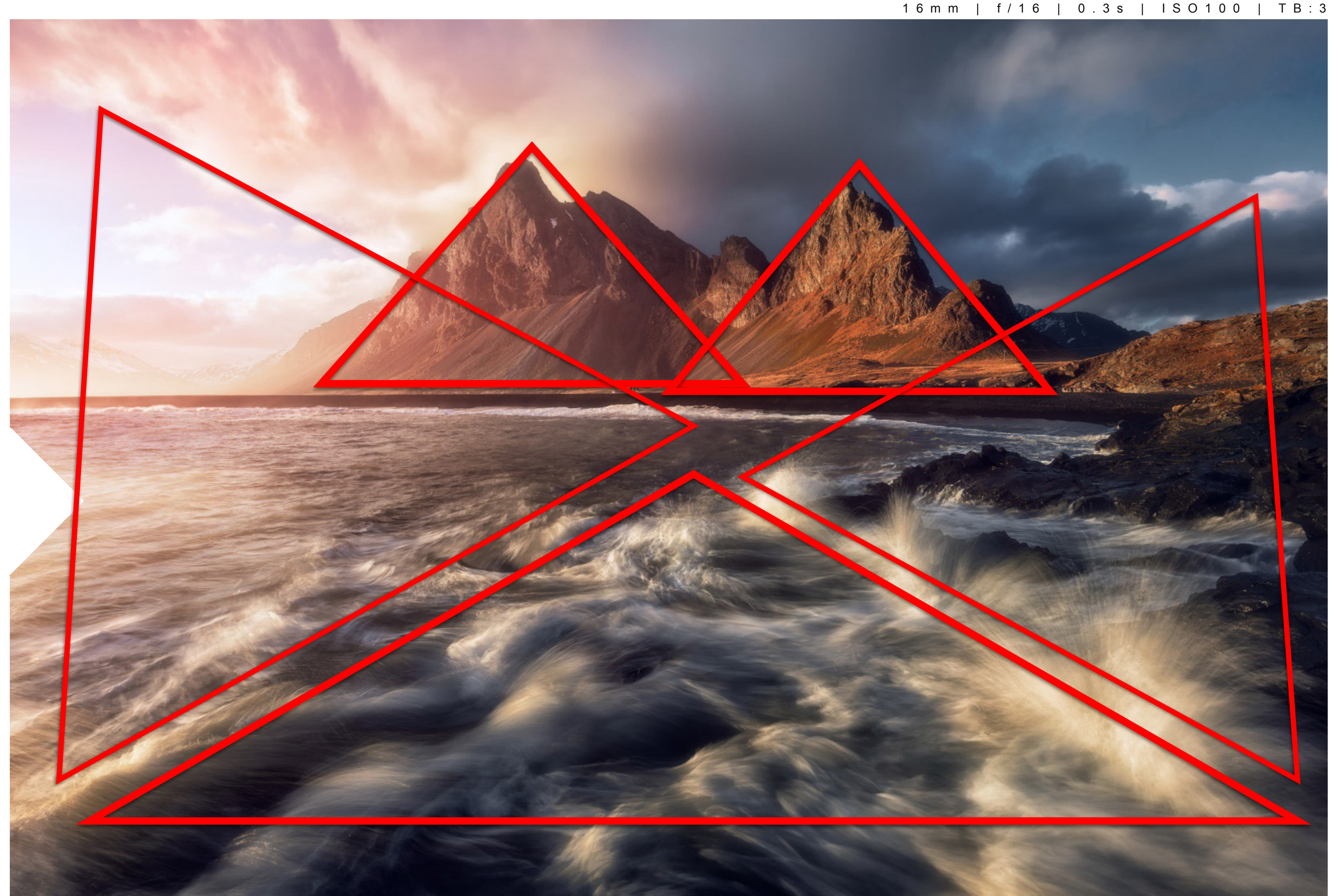
BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

There is so much going on in this photo.

The challenge is taming the chaos and presenting it in a pleasing way.

WRAPPING UP

There is much, much more to be said about composition, and there are many more compositional tools to be aware of. Be sure to check out 'Landscape Composition 2', which is a continuation of "Landscape Composition". And, if you want to learn about how I use light be sure to get my third eBook 'Landscape Light'.

As I mentioned in the start of this eBook, the number of compositional tools you use does not make your photo "better" or "worse".

Aim to only include the elements and compositional tools you need in order to show what you want to show.

Composition and photography in general is a highly subjective subject with no rules set in stone.

There are, however, principles you can use to optimize your art and storytelling.
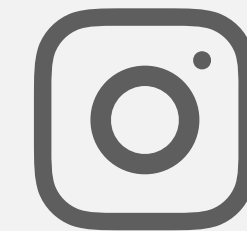
WRAPPING UP

With this eBook I hope to have provided a good starting point for composition in landscape photography.

Throughout my videos on YouTube I share many more tips, tricks, and thoughts on composition and photography.

In the future, as I learn and grow, I will share more.

A great thing about photography is, there are no limits to what you can learn.

WWW.MPIPHOTO.DK