

# On Sunsets

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<http://www.loveanda35.com>

# Sunset

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Everyone has seen them. Stunning pictures of gleaming sunsets, rich with colour and warmth that seems to reach out beyond the boundaries of the photograph.

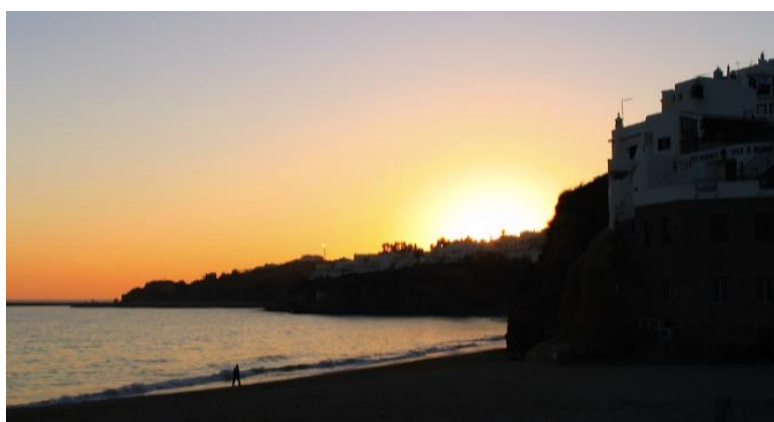
Whether you are taking an evening stroll across the beach, or just sitting in your local park, this short article will attempt to improve your sunset taking abilities.

## Get Out Early

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It is hard to know when the best and most beautiful light is going to happen, but there is a very short window which can be any time within 15 minutes before and after sunset. This window is sometimes referred to as the magic hour.

Consequently, you wish to be on location at least half an hour, if not an hour, before the sun sets to have plenty of time to look around to select the perfect location and set-up your equipment.



*The Algarve, Portugal – February 2005*

# Setting up the Camera

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Experiment with exposure compensation (to lighten or darken your image, refer to the camera manual for more information). You don't want to end up with large parts of the sky blown out (overexposed). Digital cameras allow to shoot in RAW which is highly recommended since it will allow for recovery options but do realize that what is not recorded by the sensor can no longer be salvaged in post processing!

Set the ISO value low (base ISO, which for some cameras is ISO 200). A sunset will have sufficient light available for shooting hand-held and working with a low ISO will provide more latitude in post processing. Realize that in post processing every step you add will bring in more noise and hence it is a challenge to get the image as much as possible correct in-camera.

Although sufficient light will be available for shooting hand-held, put your camera on a tripod for a sharp and motion free exposure. Furthermore, using a tripod will assist in correctly framing the image and keep the horizon straight which evidently will appear in the image.

Auto white balance (AWB on most cameras) may not deliver the best result shooting sunsets. Digital cameras allow for custom white balance setting, pushing for the warmer colours.

Refer to your camera manual for more information on custom/manual white balance. True, RAW allows for correction in post processing but once sitting behind the screen may no longer result in the colours that were present at the moment, simply because the brain can no longer reproduce them. If shooting exclusively in JPG white balance salvage may render disappointing results.

Get to know your camera in terms of metering the light. If you are using centre-weighted or spot metering try to aim for a bright part (not the brightest) of the composition using auto exposure lock and re-compose.

# Finding the Right Place

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If you are close to water elements try to experiment with reflections. Try to get low or perhaps higher than usual for an entirely different reflection in the water.

Consider different type of composition rules. Using the rules of third works well most of the times but a symmetrical shot belongs to the options when shooting sunsets.

Try different focal lengths. Not necessarily do you have to use a wide or perhaps even ultra wide angle to shoot a sunset. The classic egg yolk sunset shot with a tele-lens still fascinates lots of people for the simple fact that it is a hard catch from a photographic perspective.

Interesting silhouettes may appear, this could be people or animals but eventually anything else that reflects against the sky or the sun.

Panorama format images work well with sunset composition and with current software options it is easy as '123' to stitch a few images together. If you are very serious about panorama format shooting consider getting a 'professional' tripod ball head and work with the nodal point.



*Victoria Bay, Hong Kong – 2011*

# Photography Foundations

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## Photography Foundations

- 10 lessons to improve your photography -

Upon course completion, we are convinced that the you have gained the knowledge to bring your photography to a next level improving your images and experience a greater joy in your hobby!

### TOPICS:

- A short history of photography
  - Film photography
  - Digital photography
- Genres of photography
  - Focal lengths
  - Shooting modes
    - Colour
  - Black and white
    - Light
  - Composition

for more information visit: <http://www.loveanda35.com>

# See the Light

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Wait for the sun and start taking pictures. Do not limit yourself to one image only as the light is changing very fast and it is always hard to tell when the best light is available, but sometimes it happens in fractions of minutes. In the below image, one minute after it was taken the glow was completely gone and the sky had lost all its magic light.



*Loch Ard Gorge, Australia – March 2013*

What is the best light is hard to tell since it comes down to artistic judgment. Sometimes the sun sits behind the cloud and rays of light will shoot out instantly giving a dramatic effect. Again, these moments come and go so continue to pay attention and shoot, ideally using a remote trigger to avoid camera shake in the spur of the moment (and most probably the excitement if the light is really good!)

Sometimes the best light appears after sunset (see the image on the previous page) so once the sun is down don't turn around, pack up and leave, you could have missed the moment of a lifetime. This is especially the case when shooting sunsets over the city where the magic light starts to appear when the buildings light up and the sunset glow still appears as a backdrop.

# Processing the Image

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Finally the image needs to be processed. Most of us shoot digital today so it is a matter of downloading the images to the computer and select the shots that appear good in terms of light and composition.



*Kinderdijk, The Netherlands – April 2014*

Ideally use a RAW editor since the file you are working on is non-destructive. What used to be called a negative in the old days of film is now considered the RAW file in the world of digital. Most camera brands have their own RAW version so the file may have a different extension.



Post processing on a RAW file is inevitable; most likely the image looks somewhat dull and less sharp so corrections need to be made. These may vary from adjusting the white balance and tone, to creating a curve, adding contrast, vibrance and sharpening the image. Try not to overdo it, post processing a sunset can quickly result in an image that no longer looks natural.

Lastly, after putting in all the hard work, consider printing the image and put it in a frame. After all, your efforts are worth to be admired by others!

All images Jan W. Mooren

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