



Introduction To Seascape Photography

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Disclaimer

The following is a brief description of how I approach Seascape Photography.

As with all forms of photography, the individual photographer will have the final say on how they approach it.

My approach may differ with others,
But it works for me .



- Equipment
- Technique
- Locations
- Understanding Light
- Composition
- Hints and Tips
- Processing



Equipment

I Use a Canon 6D with 3 lenses.

Canon 16-35L

Canon 24-105L

Canon 70-200L

Lee Filters, Soft Grads and Full ND

Monfrotto Tripod +Head

Cable Release

Wellingtons !!!!!



Exposure Times

I try to shoot early morning or late evening when the Sun is low in the sky.

Typical exposure time would be between 1 to 4 seconds, but it can vary depending on the conditions and the effect I am looking for.

Typical Aperture would be F11 to F16
Iso as low as possible (100)



Depth of Field

Depth of Field (DOF), is one of the critical considerations when taking Seascape Images.

Depending on your Camera / Lens combination, you should choose an aperture to give maximum DOF.

Depth of field is the distance either side of the focal point that is 'acceptably sharp'; it's determined by aperture, **focus** distance and focal length, and – crucially – it extends twice as far beyond the **focus point** as it does in front.



Ballycroneen

Hint

When choosing an aperture for shooting Landscape/Seascape photos, I usually shoot in the range of F11 to F16, to give a good DOF.

Another reason for shooting in this range is that, MOST lenses are at there sharpest between these Apertures.

It's worth experimenting with your own equipment to see if there is any discernable difference in sharpness when shooting at different F stops.



Ballycotton

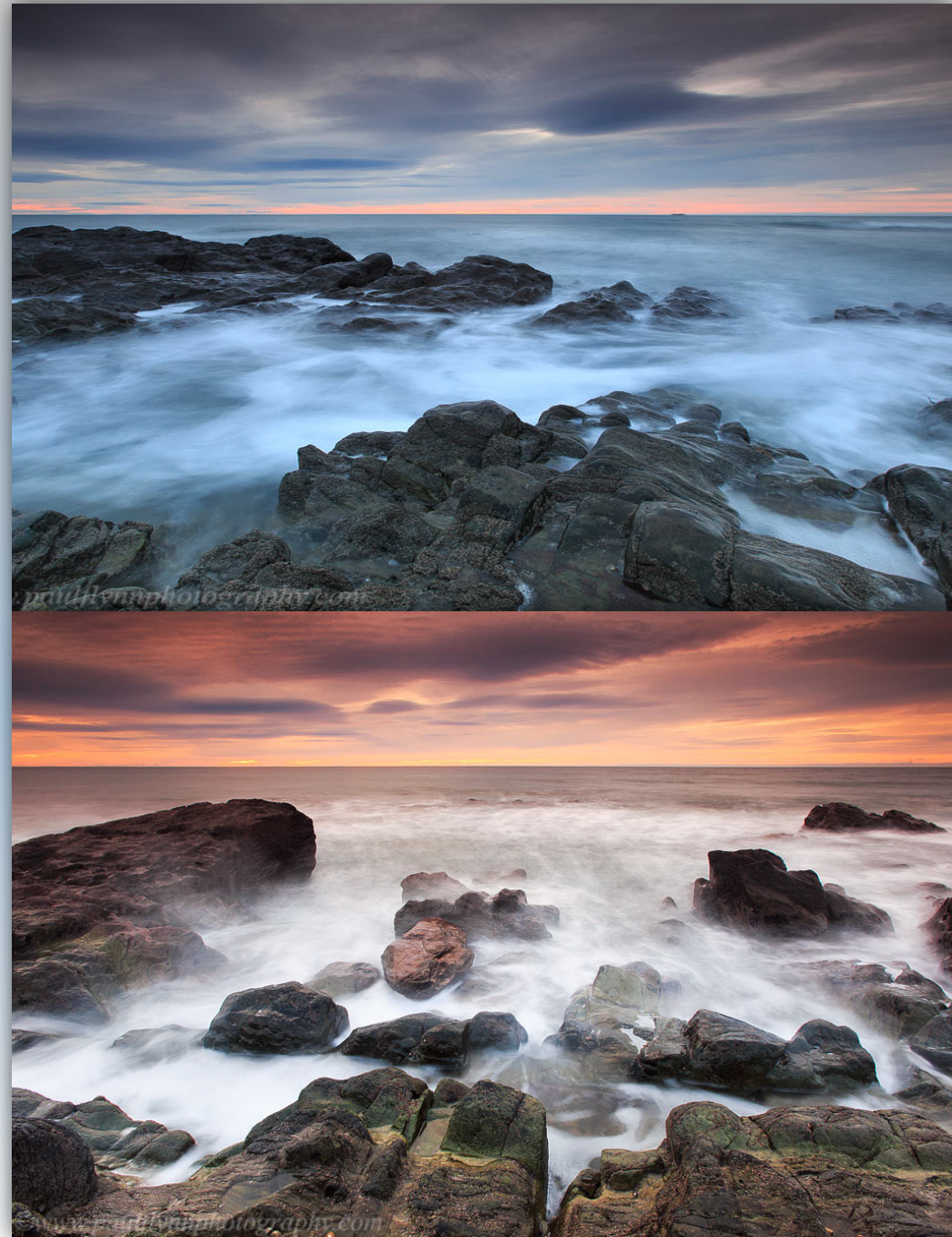
Hint

Try varying the White Balance from time to time

A little is a lot

If your shooting in the morning, the light will be cooler and getting warmer as the Sun Rises

If your shooting in the evening, the light will be warmer and getting cooler (blue), as the Sun sets



Use Filters to Balance your Exposure

Filters are used to balance the exposure.

A typical scenario is when shooting into the Sun. The Sun and the surrounding sky will be much brighter than the foreground.

This is less of an issue when shooting away from the Sun.

You can “bracket” your shots if you don’t have Filters, but this will necessitate extra post processing work later.

The human eye is estimated to have a Dynamic range of approx. 14 stops of light. Most DSLR’s have approx. 9-10 stops of Dynamic Range.



Copper Coast

Why do I use Filters?

Graduated filters allow us to balance an exposure when we are faced with a High Contrast scene. IEtypically when I'm shooting into the Sun

In this image the sky portion of the frame is significantly brighter than the rocks near the bottom of the frame. If I shot this scene without a Grad filter, either the sky or the rocks wouldn't be exposed correctly.

In this case I had a 1.2 Graduated filter on the front of my lens, This equates to -4 stops of light .

The down side of putting filters on the front of your lens is that they tend to pick up sea spray , which can affect the image quality.

ND Filters are different . ND filters are fully shaded . The purpose of these is to reduce the amount of light getting into your lens, which allows for longer exposure times.



Inch

Types of filters

I use Lee Filters, but there are many manufacturers of good quality filters.

I carry 4 Soft Graduated filters and 2 ND filters.

The softs range from 0.3, 0.6, 0.9, 1.2

The ND's are 0.9 and a "10 Stop" filter.



ND Filter



Soft Grad



Hard Grad



Guileen



Locations

I shoot mainly on the Coastline of East Cork

Ireland has an abundance of super Seascape locations. East Cork may not have the most dramatic beaches , but it is convenient to me.

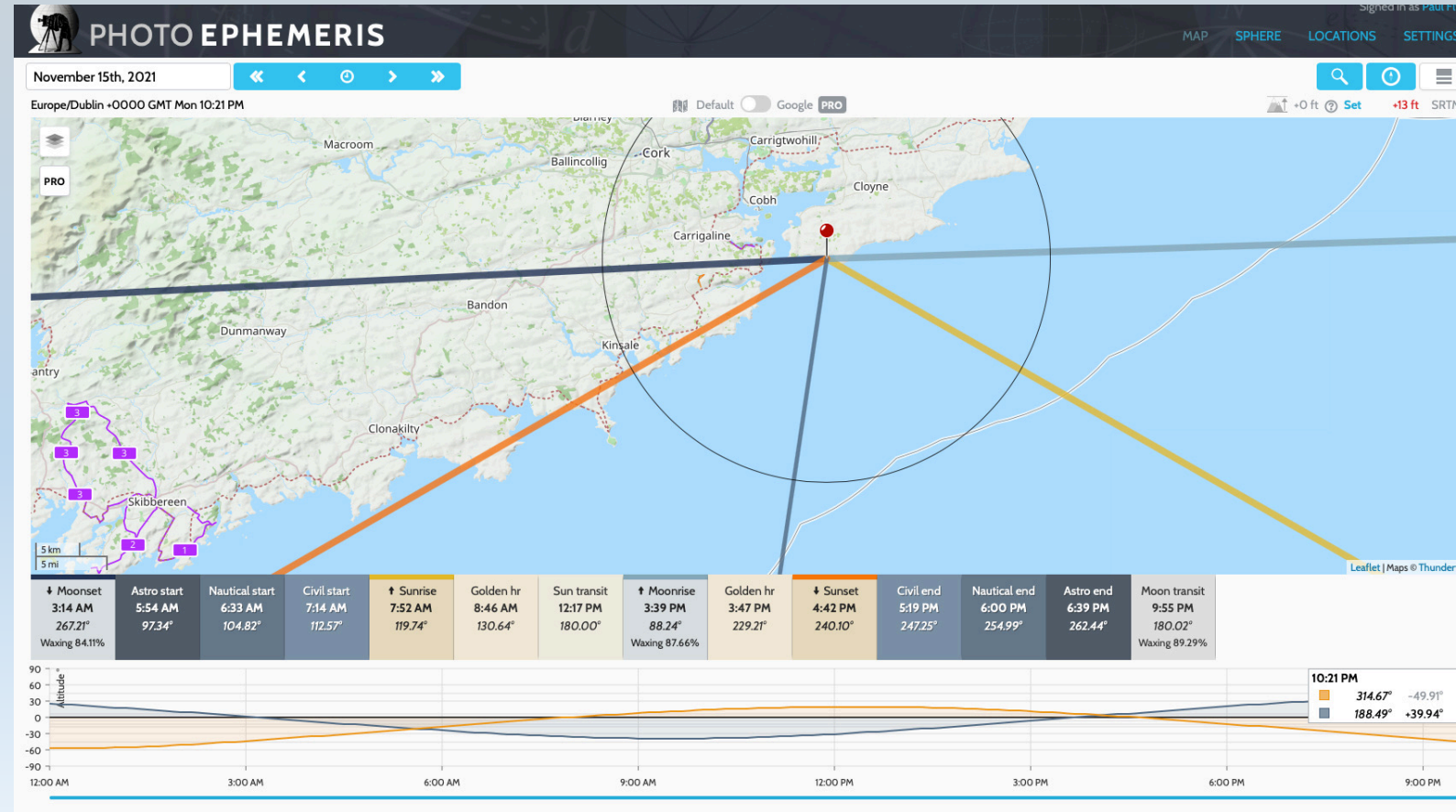
It is always helpful if you are familiar with your location.

I Tend to shoot during the Winter months because

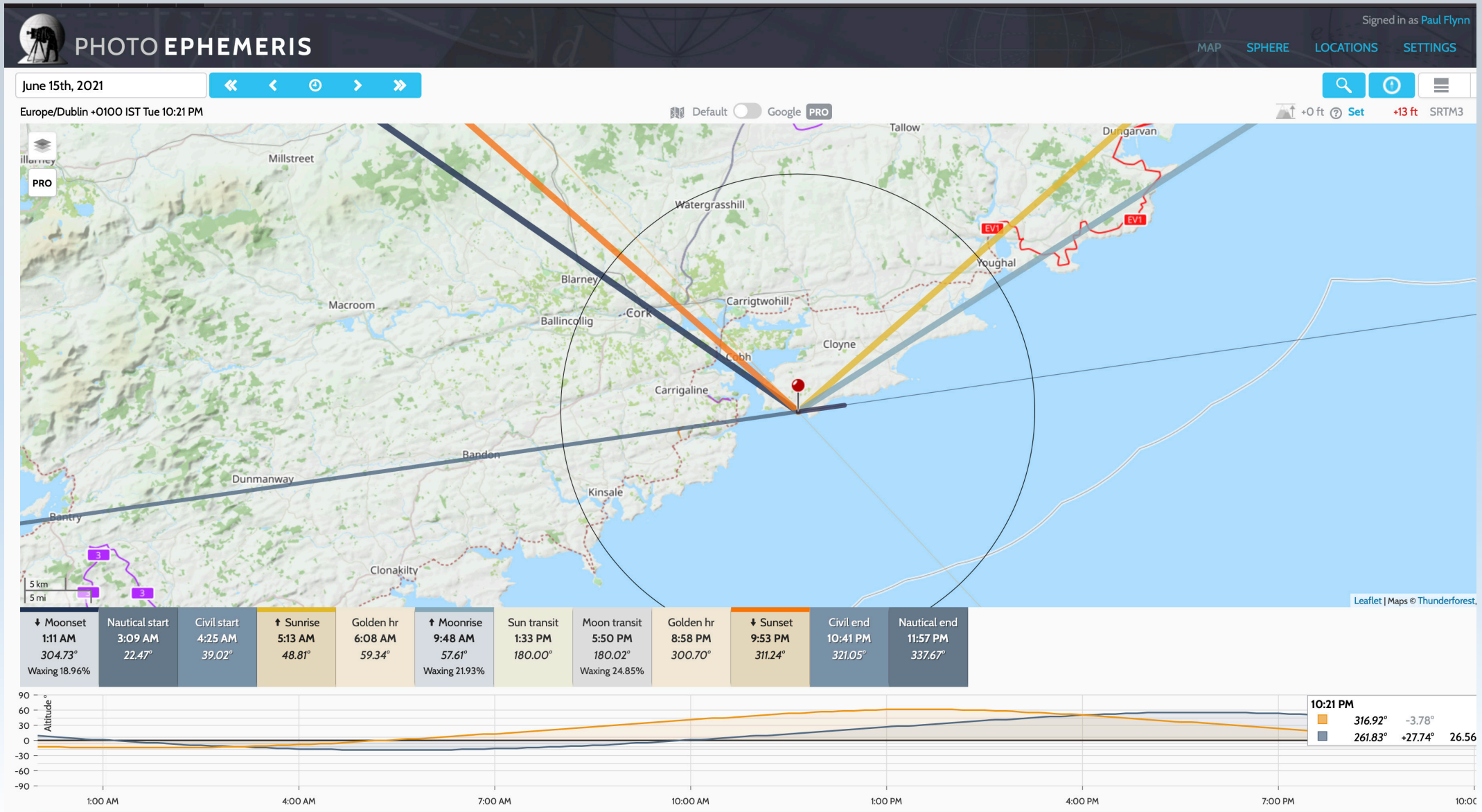
- The Sun is in the best position in the Sky
- The Skies tend to be a bit more dramatic
- Evenings are shorter

In this example , the Photographers Ephemeris is showing me the direction of the setting Sun on Nov 15th 2021.

If I check the Tide Tables, I can then make a decision on which location will suit the conditions



Photographers Ephemeris Jun 15th Guileen



Know your location

Over time if you return to the same locations, it will become apparent which location is suited to which conditions. To use East Cork as an example.....

Inch Beach has a large sandy area. When the tide is low this makes for some nice reflections.....



Inch

Get to Know your location

Finure /Guileen is made up of Rocky coastline and can be shot at pretty much any Tide.



Finure



Guileen

Conditions

What are the best conditions for shooting Seascapes?

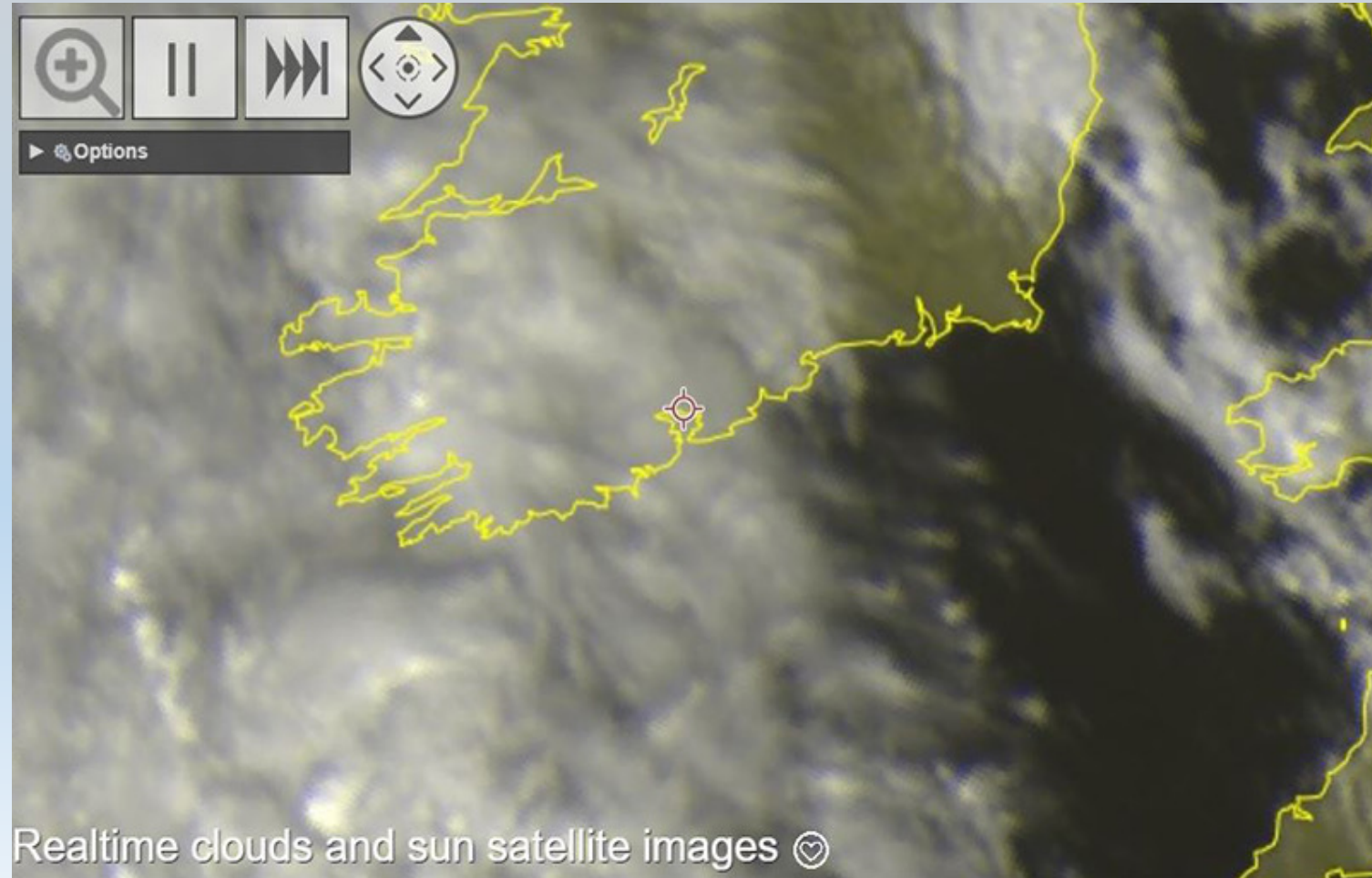
I'm lucky. I live about 8-10 miles from the various beaches along the East Cork, so from a home to the Coast takes about 20-25 mins.

When I think about heading out, I check the weather and tidal conditions.

Sat24 is an online real-time Satellite view of any location in Europe, and it's useful to see what cloud cover is going to be like before I leave.

Over time, I have learned which locations are suited to the differing conditions.

As much as you can prepare and check weather forecasts, it doesn't always work out. Sometimes the light just doesn't arrive.



Understanding Light

In the context of Seascape Photography, it is imperative to understand Light. Good light can add dimension, depth and Contrast to a scene. Poor or flat light tends to give less impactful images.

This in conjunction with being familiar with your location are vital components to giving yourself the best chance at getting good images.

You can never be guaranteed “perfect” light, but if you know the direction of the Light, Predict the weather, and stand in the right placeWhat can go wrong???



Inch

Hint

When it comes to Light,

I find it's usually better to shoot when the Sun is low in the sky, and diffused/reflected by the clouds.

Clear Sky's in my view aren't ideal.



Guileen

Composition

In Seascape Photography, Compositions are probably the most difficult part to master.

As with most genres of photography, Composition is in the eye of the Photographer.

This is where the photographer can put their own mark on a photograph. Yes there are Rules, but if you understand them, you can break them.

In reality there are no “Rules” to composition.

If you understand the “Rule of Thirds”, when the time is right, Break the Rule of Thirds.

If you are new to Seascape Photography, try using one object in the foreground to give interest.

Leading Lines, Slow shutter, shapes, symmetry, mood, etc are all elements which can be considered when choosing a composition.



Ballybrannigan

Hint

To create leading lines or shapes in tidal water..... Keep your shutter speed at approx. 1-3 seconds. Anything longer and you will blur the water motion too much and lose the texture in the water.

Watch the wave motion, if you can time it right, wait until a wave is receding, this is when you have your best chance of creating lines and shapes in tidal water.



Kilfarrassy

RAW or JPEG

In my opinion, If the image is taken correctly in Camera, then minimal processing is needed.

RAW files by design, will look flat and dull in comparison to a JPEG file.

In camera I choose the “Landscape” Picture Style on my Canon 6D. I tweak it to my liking.

Always bear in mind, when you look at your image on the back of your camera, it will be a JPEG image, not RAW.

JPEG images are usually punchier and than a RAW file. BUT the RAW file will have a whole lot more information than a JPEG file.

SHOOT RAW !



Jpeg v RAW

Why shoot in RAW ?

RAW files retain far far more information, than Jpegs. Shooting RAW , gives a comfort zone when it comes to processing images.

In Seascape Photography, You can often be faced with a very high contrast scene. As mentioned before, Filters can aid this scenario, but sometimes even with the aid of filters, the dynamic range is too much for you camera. RAW files will retain far more detail than a Jpeg File, and thus , giving you the best chance of recovering shadow details or hotspots in the highlights.

Unedited RAW



Unedited JPEG



Processing

When I open the image in Adobe Camera RAW, I go to the “Camera Calibration Tab”,

In the dropdown menu, I select “Camera Landscape”, this will ~~make~~ the RAW file look more like the Image preview which you see on the rear screen of your camera, and it’s a good starting point to edit your image.

This works for my images, it may not be suitable for every image.

After that , I adjust , Exposure, contrast, etc

Final steps in ACR is straighten & crop image, dust spot removal.

Open the Image in Photoshop/Lightroom, and add any final adjustments to suit your taste. In reality, apart from Mono conversion, I don’t make many adjustments in PS.



Unedited RAW File

Finure Feb 2021_2_0062.CR2 - Canon EOS 6D



Fit (54.9%)100%

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Adobe RGB (1998) - 8 bit - 5439 x 3626 (19.7MP) - 300 ppi



ISO 200 16-35@16 mm f/11 6.00s

AutoB&W

Profile Adobe Color

Basic

White balance As Shot

Temperature 6700

Tint -2

Auto Exposure +0.10

Auto Contrast 0

Auto Highlights 0

Auto Shadows 0

Auto Whites 0

Auto Blacks 0

Texture 0

Clarity 0

Dehaze 0

Auto Vibrance 0

Auto Saturation 0

Curve

Detail

Color Mixer

Color Grading

Optics

Geometry

Effects

CancelDoneOpen Object

Edited RAW File



Finally

What is the most important thing about Seascape or any type of photography you choose to do?

Be Safe and Enjoy It.

Seascape photography is one of the genres of photography which can do done on your own if you choose.

Enjoy it.

There may be days when the light isn't ideal, or your eye just can't see that composition that you are looking for. Leave the camera in the bag. Go for a walk, have a sit down, but most of all look around and enjoy the beautiful coastline with which we are blessed with here in Ireland.



Thank You



Myst