STEP BY STEP

Take great landscape lighting photos

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The key to taking effective landscape lighting photos is to start with a good camera, such as a digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) camera. Next, learn how to manually set the aperture, shutter speed, color temperature and ISO. You'll also need a tripod (ideally with a bubble level); either a time release in the camera or a remote shutter release; and some basic photo-editing software skills.

Manually adjust your camera to the following settings: ISO set to the lowest number (usually 100); aperture set for maximum clarity (between 5.6 and 16); color temperature set to the color temperature of the lights on the project (check the specs); and shutter speed set to maximum time (usually 30 seconds).

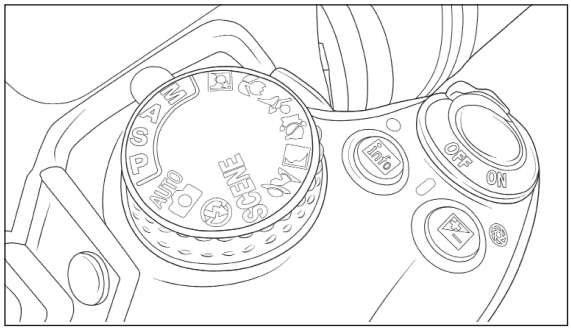
When shooting, the shadowed areas should have some detail, like your eye sees. To achieve this, consider bracketing, or taking the same shot using different shutter speeds or apertures (f-stops). Learn how to read the camera's internal meter, and take the first shot at the exposure the meter indicates as the correct exposure. Take the second shot by adjusting your shutter speed (preferable) or your f-stop (less preferable) so the meter reads +1.5 stops. Take the third shot at -1.5 stops. Your goals for the three shots are: Shot 1). Exposed so lit areas look nice; Shot 2). Exposed so shadowed areas show some detail; Shot 3). Exposed so areas that are too bright (such as directly under path lights or hot spots on walls). Ideally, your first shot will look great without any correction, but quite often the first shot has black shadows and white hot spots. That's why you bracket.

To use the bracketed shots, create a file in a program such as Photoshop and layer all three shots so they're superimposed. Then block out the underexposed and overexposed areas to produce the final image. LM

SOURCE: Steve Parrott, Volt Lighting

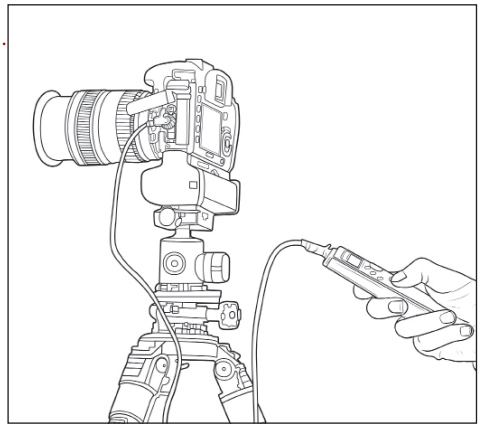
STEP 1

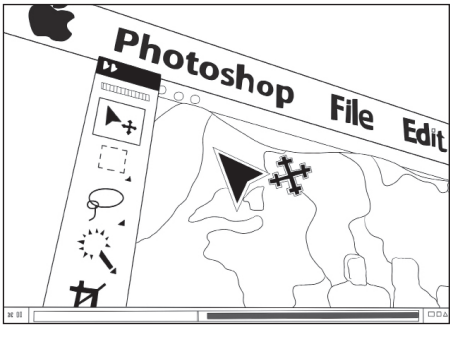
Ignore the automatic nighttime setting on your DSLR camera and learn how to manually set the aperture, shutter speed, color temperature and ISO.



STEP 2

Set up your camera on a tripod (ideally with a bubble level) and either a time release in the camera or a remote shutter release. Even touching the shutter button can create enough movement to create blurred results. Take photos about an hour after sunset.





STEP 3

Learn bracketing so you can take multiple shots to layer in a photo editing software to create a final image.

ILLUSTRATIONS: FIVERR.COM/ARTIST_TEAM