

Let There Be
Light:

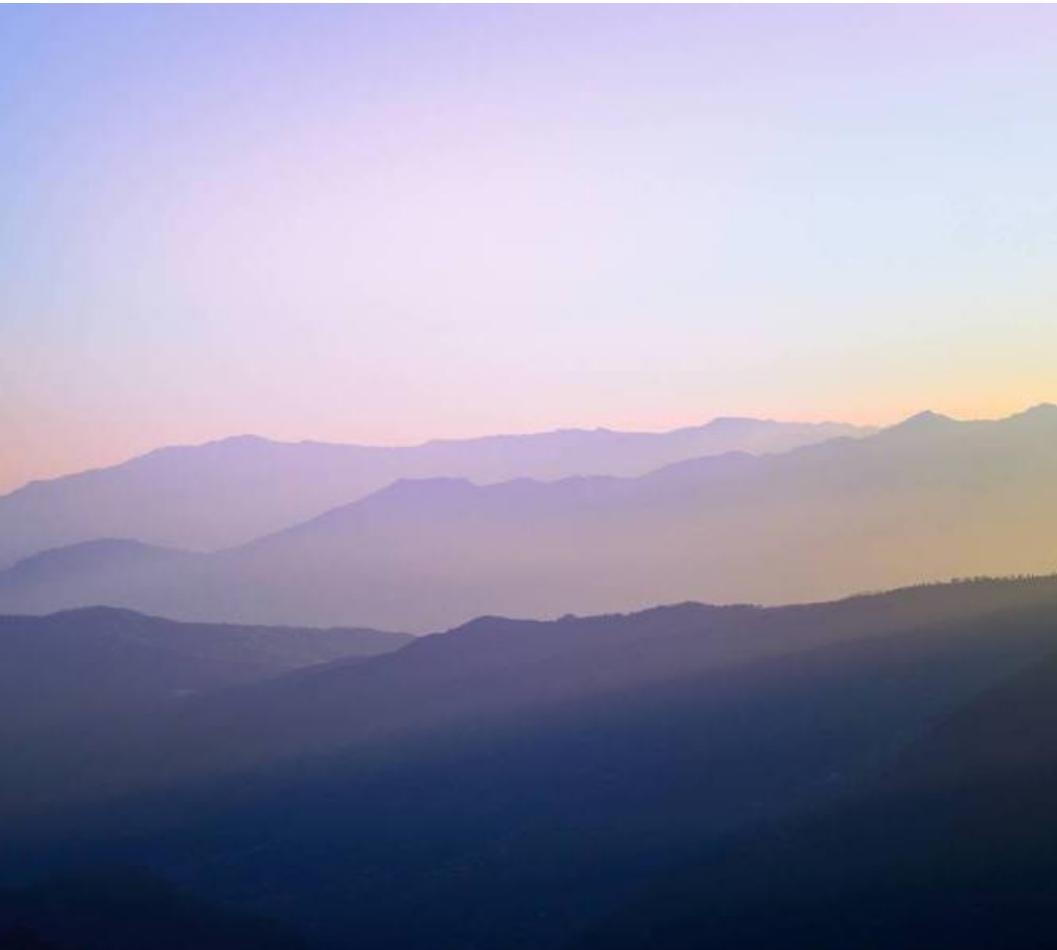
Please

Don Stenson

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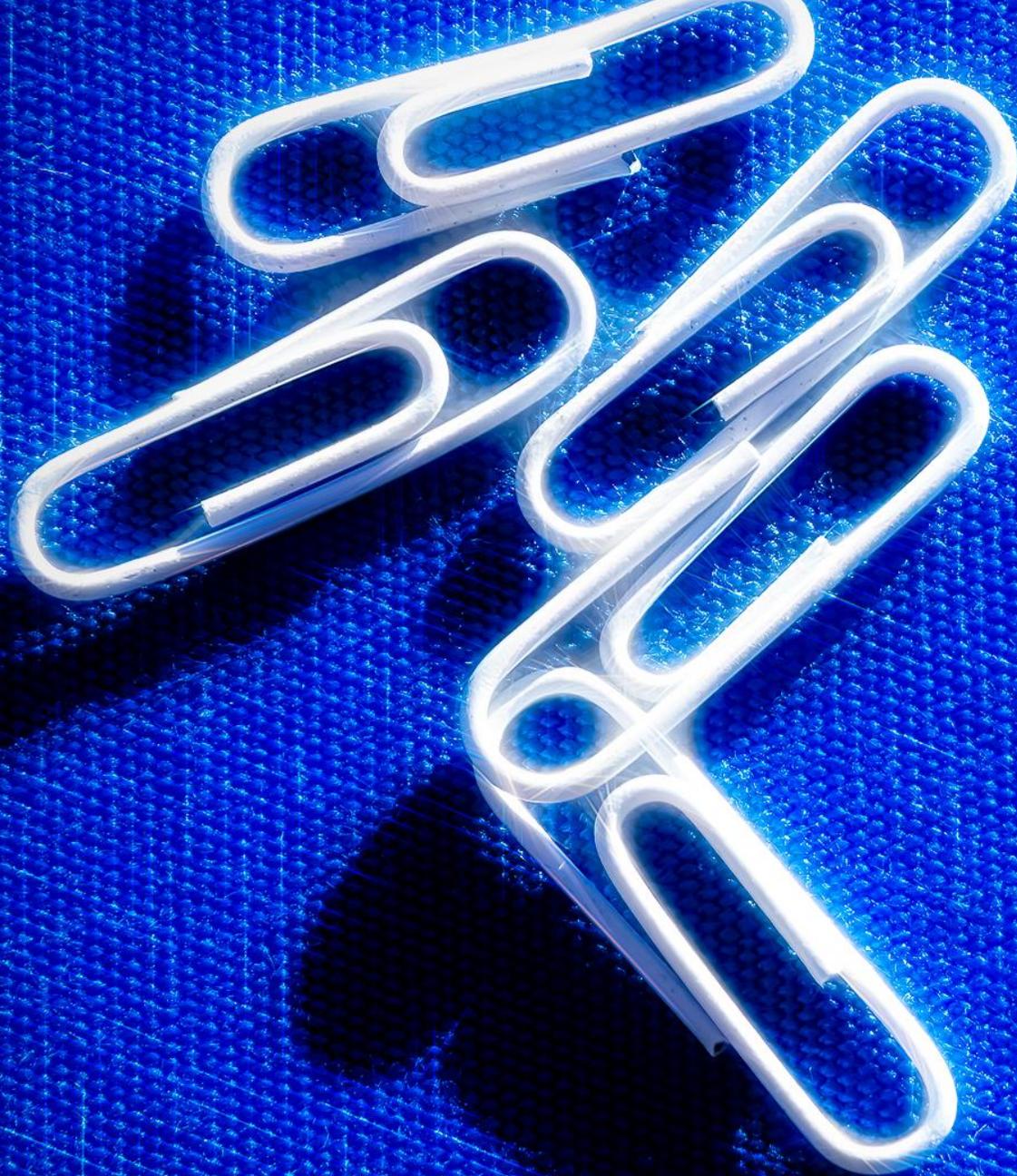


What is Natural Light in Photography



Natural light photography uses the sun as a light source.

Natural light in photography refers to any source of light that is created by the sun. Natural light is the most basic form of light there is. The quality and amount of light present depends on different variables, most notably the weather and the time of day. There are pros and cons when it comes to natural light photography. The quality of light can't be beat but it's harder to control, for example. It's constantly changing so you've got to work fast.



What Are the Benefits of Photographing With Natural Light?

Natural light photography offers the following benefits to professional and amateur photographers alike:

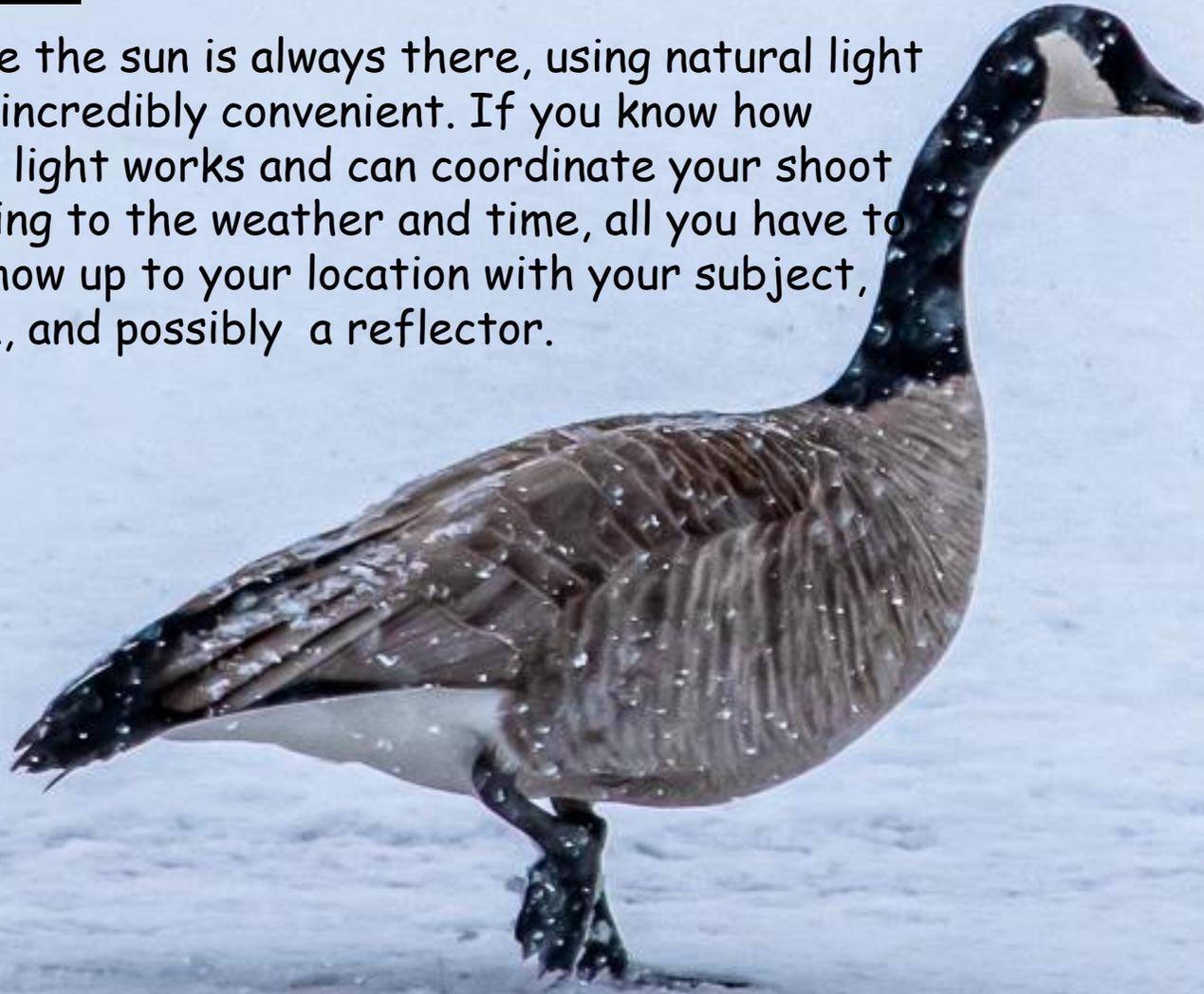
- **It's affordable.** There's no need to purchase expensive artificial light sources.
- **It offers variety.** Natural light photos vary depending on the time of day that they are shot. A photo taken during the golden hour will look markedly different from one taken in the middle of a sunny day, which in turn will look different from a photo at dusk, or even at night



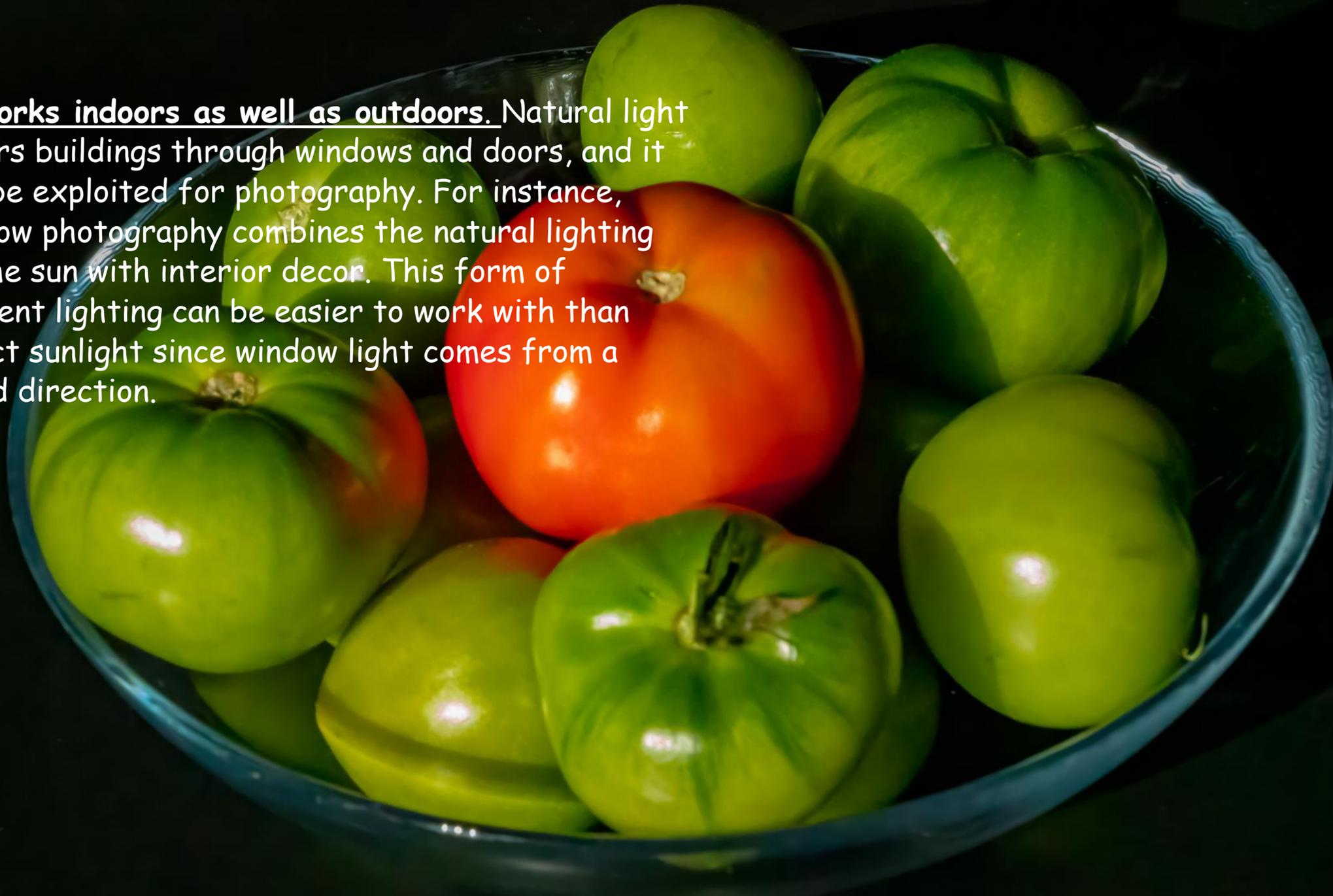
- It can be used for landscapes and portraits alike. Many people associate natural lighting with landscape images, but it is also used for portrait photography. By managing your white balance and experimenting with different exposures and camera settings, a natural light photographer can create outdoor portraits that are amazing.

Convenient

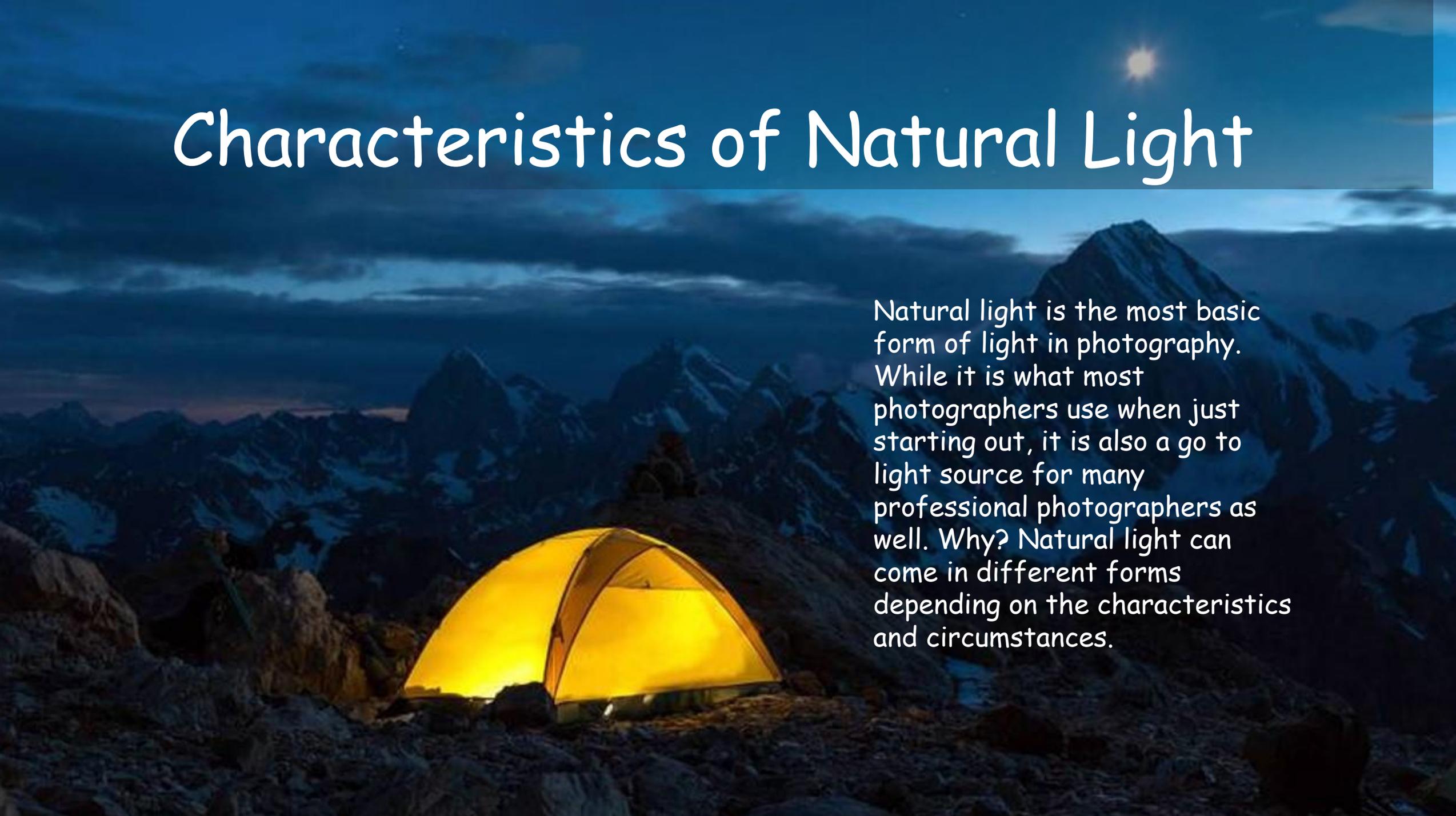
Because the sun is always there, using natural light can be incredibly convenient. If you know how natural light works and can coordinate your shoot according to the weather and time, all you have to do is show up to your location with your subject, camera, and possibly a reflector.



- It works indoors as well as outdoors. Natural light enters buildings through windows and doors, and it can be exploited for photography. For instance, window photography combines the natural lighting of the sun with interior decor. This form of ambient lighting can be easier to work with than direct sunlight since window light comes from a fixed direction.

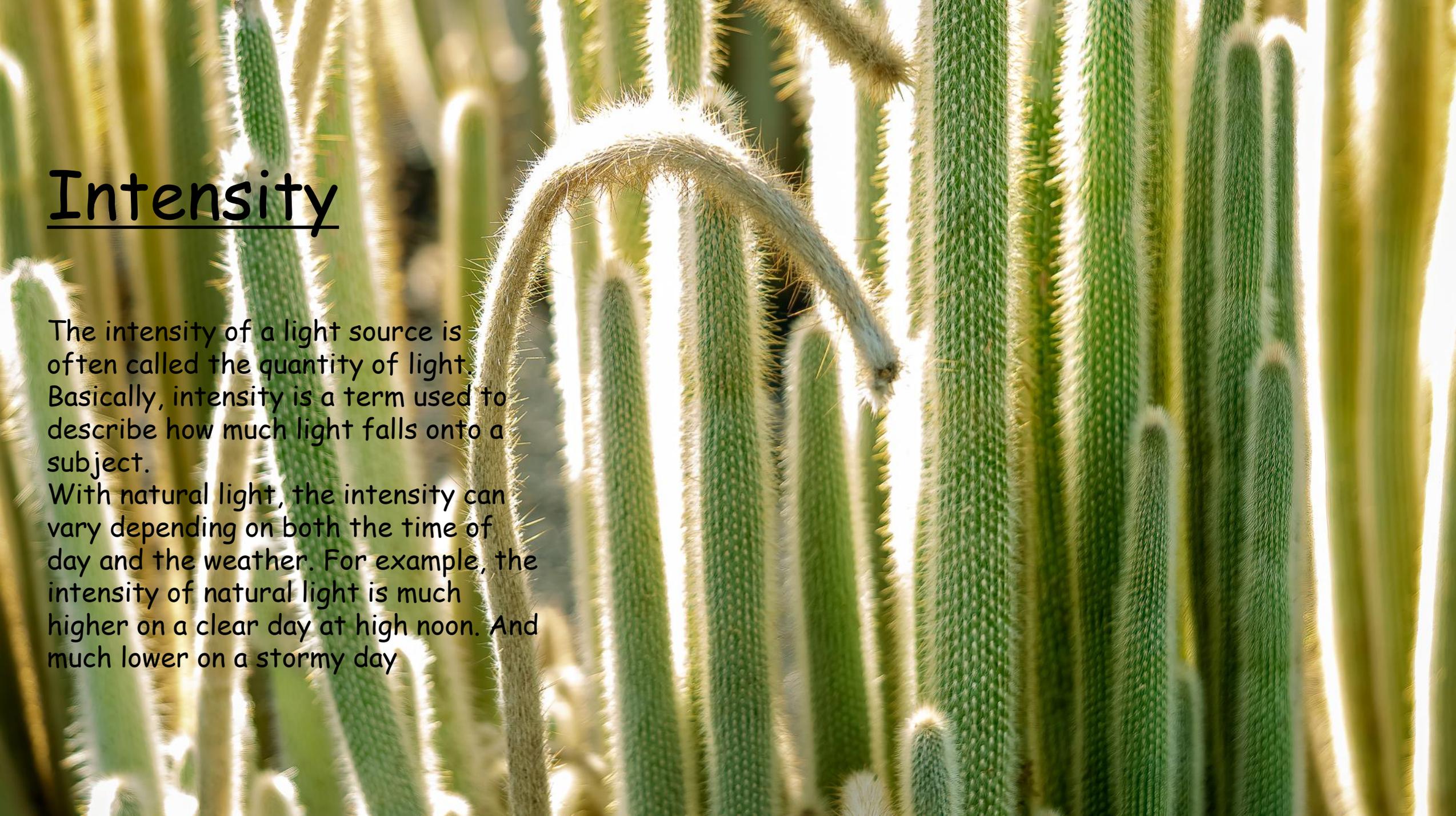


Characteristics of Natural Light

A photograph of a glowing yellow tent pitched in a dark, mountainous landscape under a starry night sky. The tent is illuminated from within, casting a warm glow. The background features rugged, snow-capped mountains and a clear night sky with a bright star or moon in the upper right corner.

Natural light is the most basic form of light in photography. While it is what most photographers use when just starting out, it is also a go to light source for many professional photographers as well. Why? Natural light can come in different forms depending on the characteristics and circumstances.

Intensity



The intensity of a light source is often called the quantity of light. Basically, intensity is a term used to describe how much light falls onto a subject.

With natural light, the intensity can vary depending on both the time of day and the weather. For example, the intensity of natural light is much higher on a clear day at high noon. And much lower on a stormy day

Color Temperature

Another important characteristic to be mindful of when using natural light is color temperature. The color temperature of natural light changes throughout the day. This is due to the fact that as the Earth revolves around the Sun. The sun's position in the sky changes. This causes different wavelengths of light to be seen at different times of the day and therefore different color temperatures.

For example, golden hour is so named because of the warmer color temperature natural light has at this time. Just before sun set or just after Sun Rise.

At high noon, the color temperature is less warm since the sunlight is more direct.



Aside from the time of day, weather can also affect color temperature. Clouds and snow can make the color temperature of natural light much cooler.





Direction

The position of the sun in the sky not only affects color temperature, but the direction of light as it hits the subject. This is important depending on what type of photography you are shooting.

For example, if you are shooting portrait photography, natural light at midday will be directed downward on a subject. This can be unflattering. Instead, you'll want to shoot closer to sunrise or sunset to have the natural light come in from the side or it can be used as a back light.

Quality of Light

Lastly, the quality of natural light will undoubtedly be a characteristic to keep in mind. By quality of light, think of either hard and direct light versus soft and diffused light.

The quality of light you need will depend on what you are shooting. For example, most portraits will require softer, diffused light. This can be achieved by shooting closer to golden hour or on an overcast day when the clouds are diffusing the sunlight.





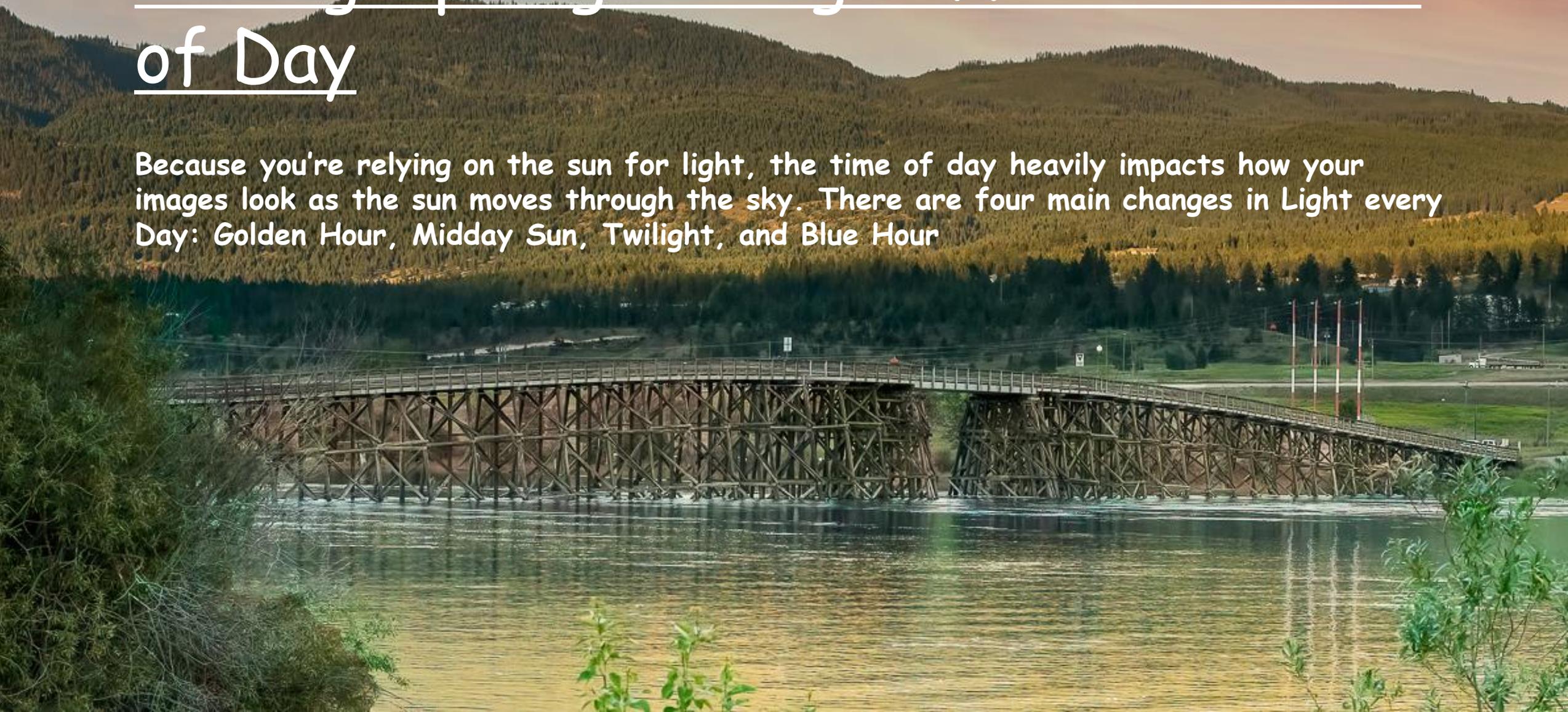
If you are shooting in Black and White Landscapes or Black and White Street Photography. Hard Natural Light will lend itself to the High contrast Photography you are shooting

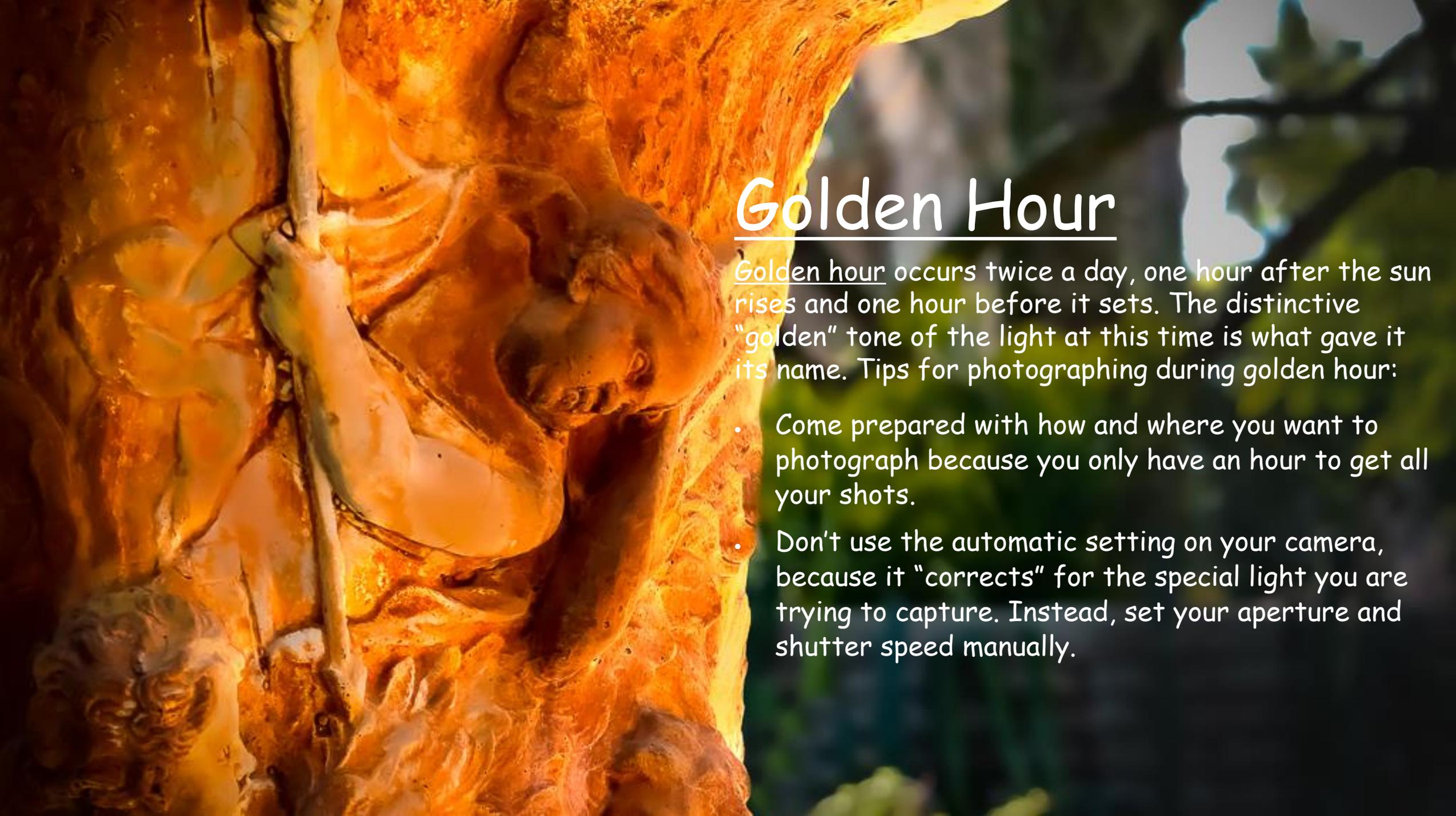


It's important to understand what factors affect the different characteristics of light. Understanding how weather and the time of day affects natural light will make you better at using it to achieve the images you desire.

Photographing During Different Times of Day

Because you're relying on the sun for light, the time of day heavily impacts how your images look as the sun moves through the sky. There are four main changes in Light every Day: Golden Hour, Midday Sun, Twilight, and Blue Hour

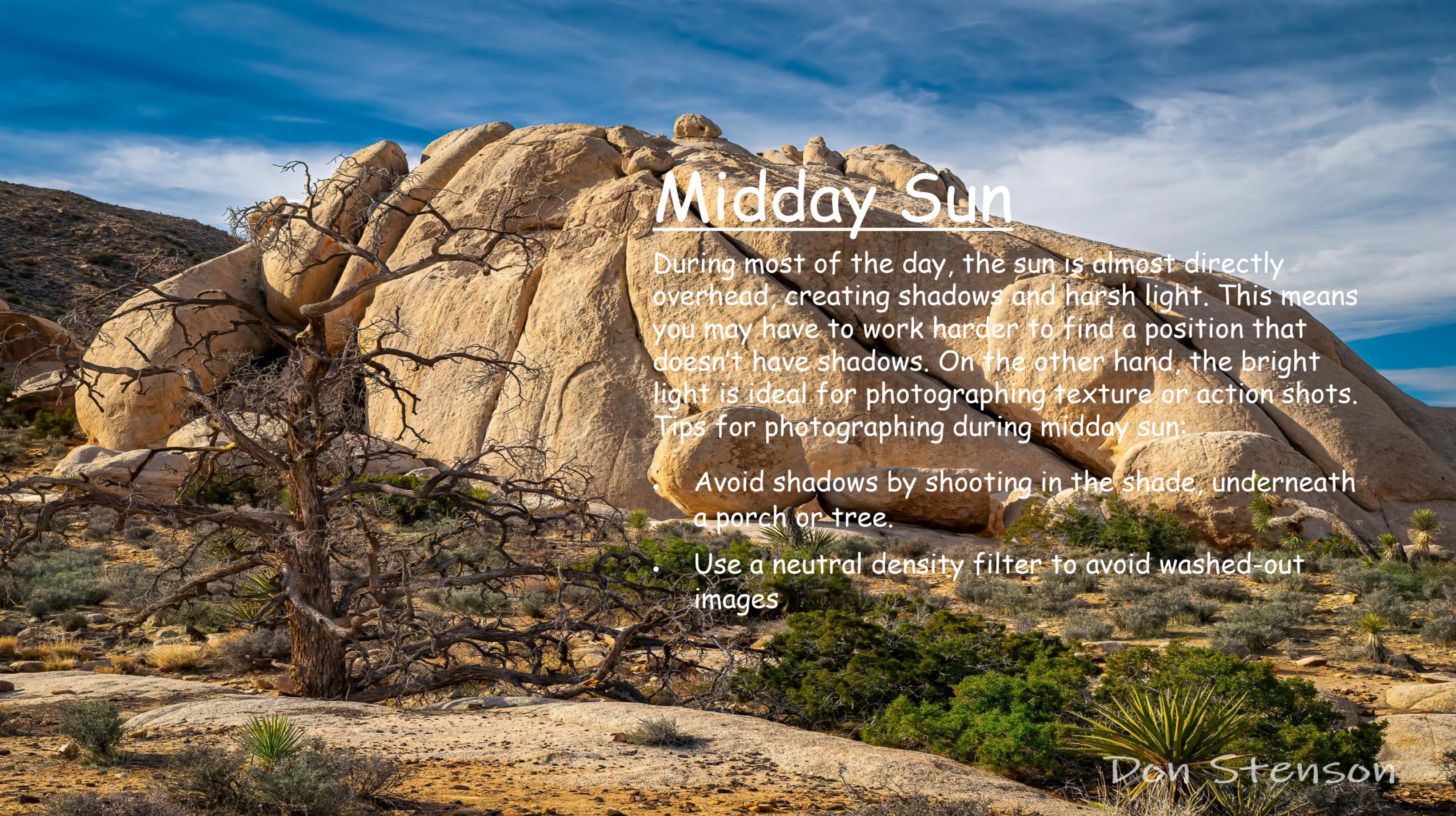




Golden Hour

Golden hour occurs twice a day, one hour after the sun rises and one hour before it sets. The distinctive "golden" tone of the light at this time is what gave it its name. Tips for photographing during golden hour:

- Come prepared with how and where you want to photograph because you only have an hour to get all your shots.
- Don't use the automatic setting on your camera, because it "corrects" for the special light you are trying to capture. Instead, set your aperture and shutter speed manually.



Midday Sun

During most of the day, the sun is almost directly overhead, creating shadows and harsh light. This means you may have to work harder to find a position that doesn't have shadows. On the other hand, the bright light is ideal for photographing texture or action shots. Tips for photographing during midday sun:

- Avoid shadows by shooting in the shade, underneath a porch or tree.
- Use a neutral density filter to avoid washed-out images

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Twilight

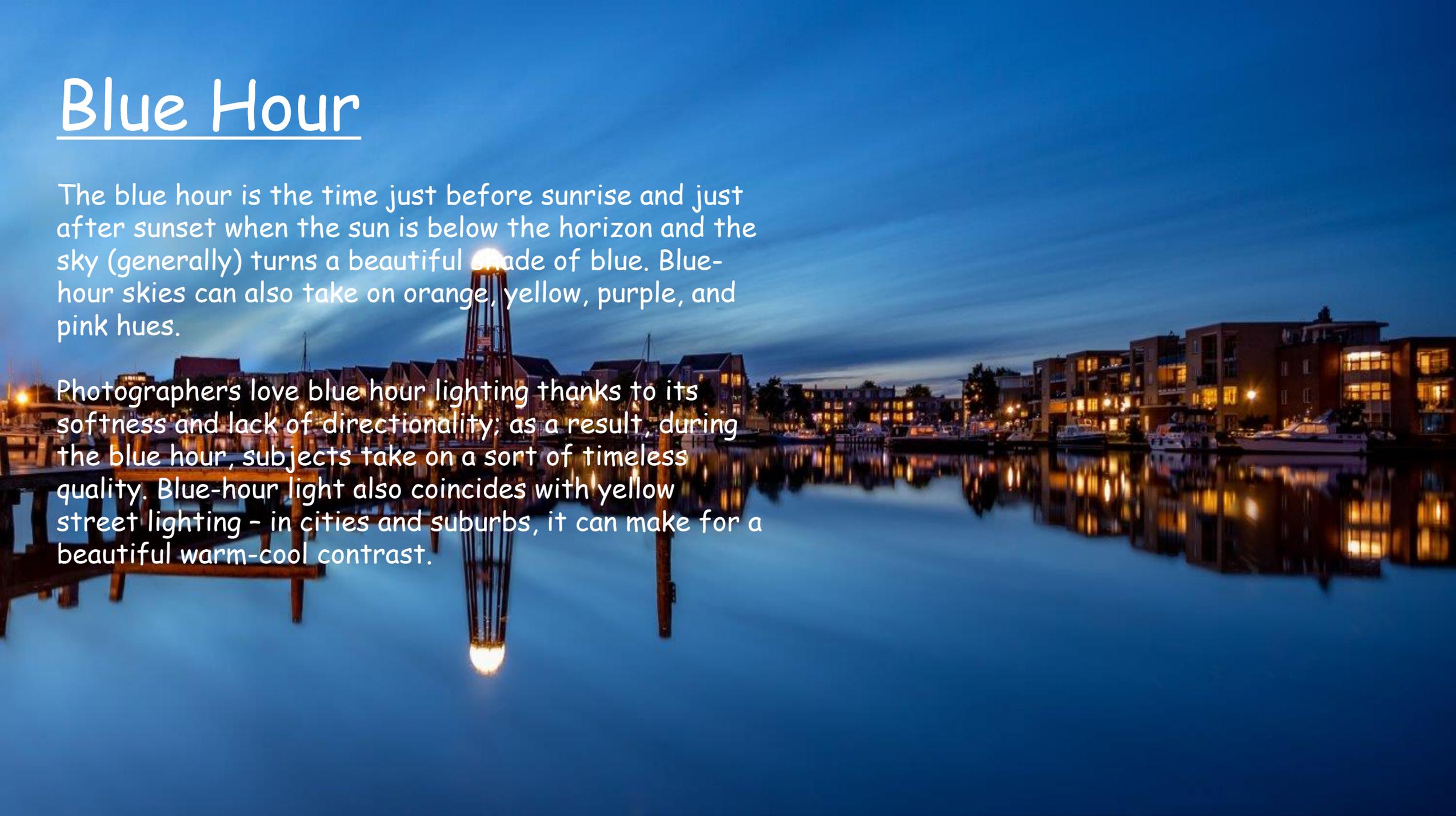
Similar to the golden hour, twilight occurs twice a day. The first time is about 20 minutes before the sun rises, and the second is about 20 minutes after it sets. The light during twilight is dark and blue, but it's not yet as dark as night. Tips for photographing during twilight:

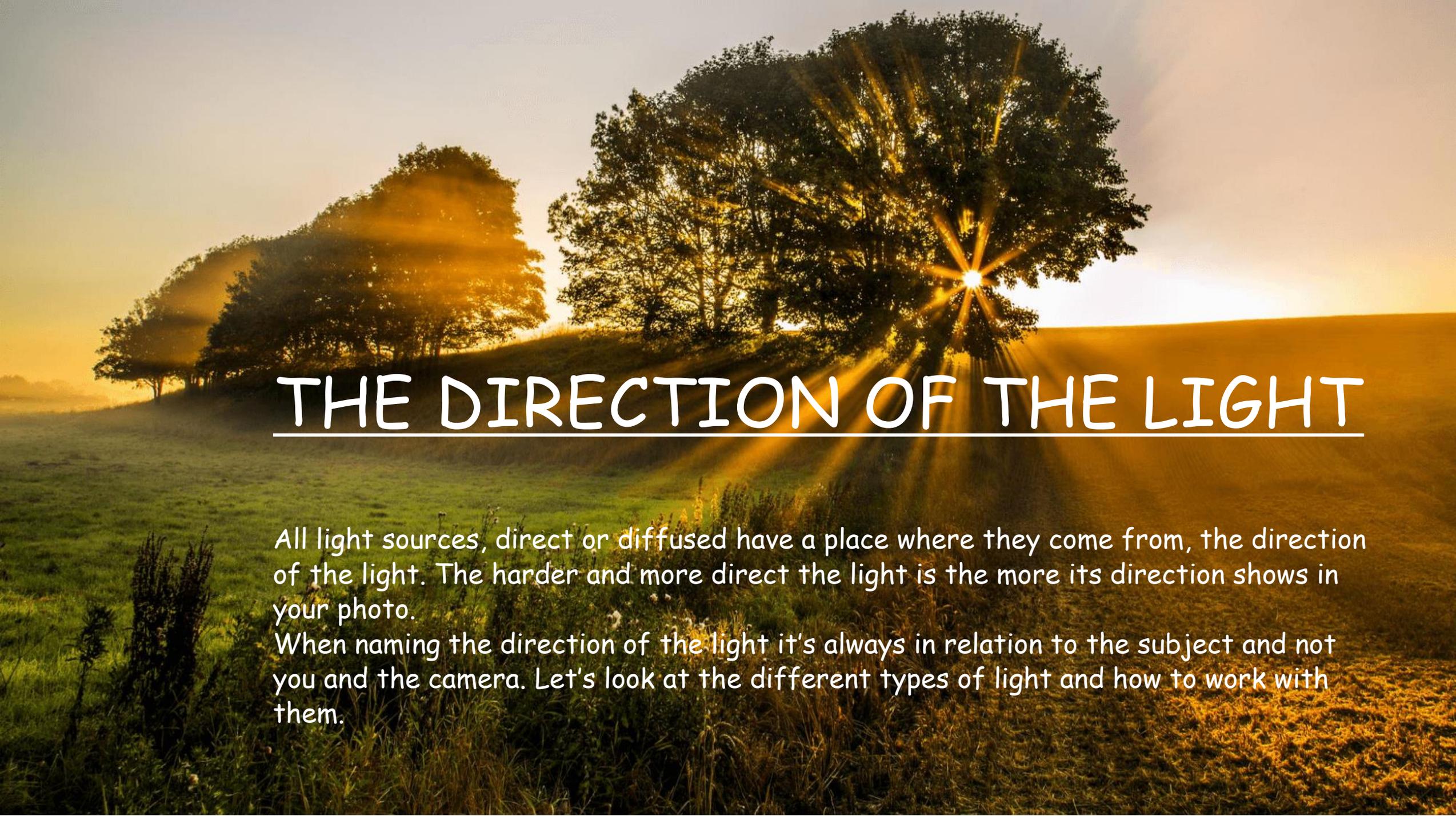
- When you need to get an up-close photo, don't use the zoom on your lens. Instead, walk up to the subject. This way, you eliminate the shaking that's amplified through zoom, especially in low light. You may need the help of a tripod to eliminate blur from movement.
- Use a lens with a much faster shutter speed than usual to capture crisp photos in low light.

Blue Hour

The blue hour is the time just before sunrise and just after sunset when the sun is below the horizon and the sky (generally) turns a beautiful shade of blue. Blue-hour skies can also take on orange, yellow, purple, and pink hues.

Photographers love blue hour lighting thanks to its softness and lack of directionality; as a result, during the blue hour, subjects take on a sort of timeless quality. Blue-hour light also coincides with yellow street lighting - in cities and suburbs, it can make for a beautiful warm-cool contrast.





THE DIRECTION OF THE LIGHT

All light sources, direct or diffused have a place where they come from, the direction of the light. The harder and more direct the light is the more its direction shows in your photo.

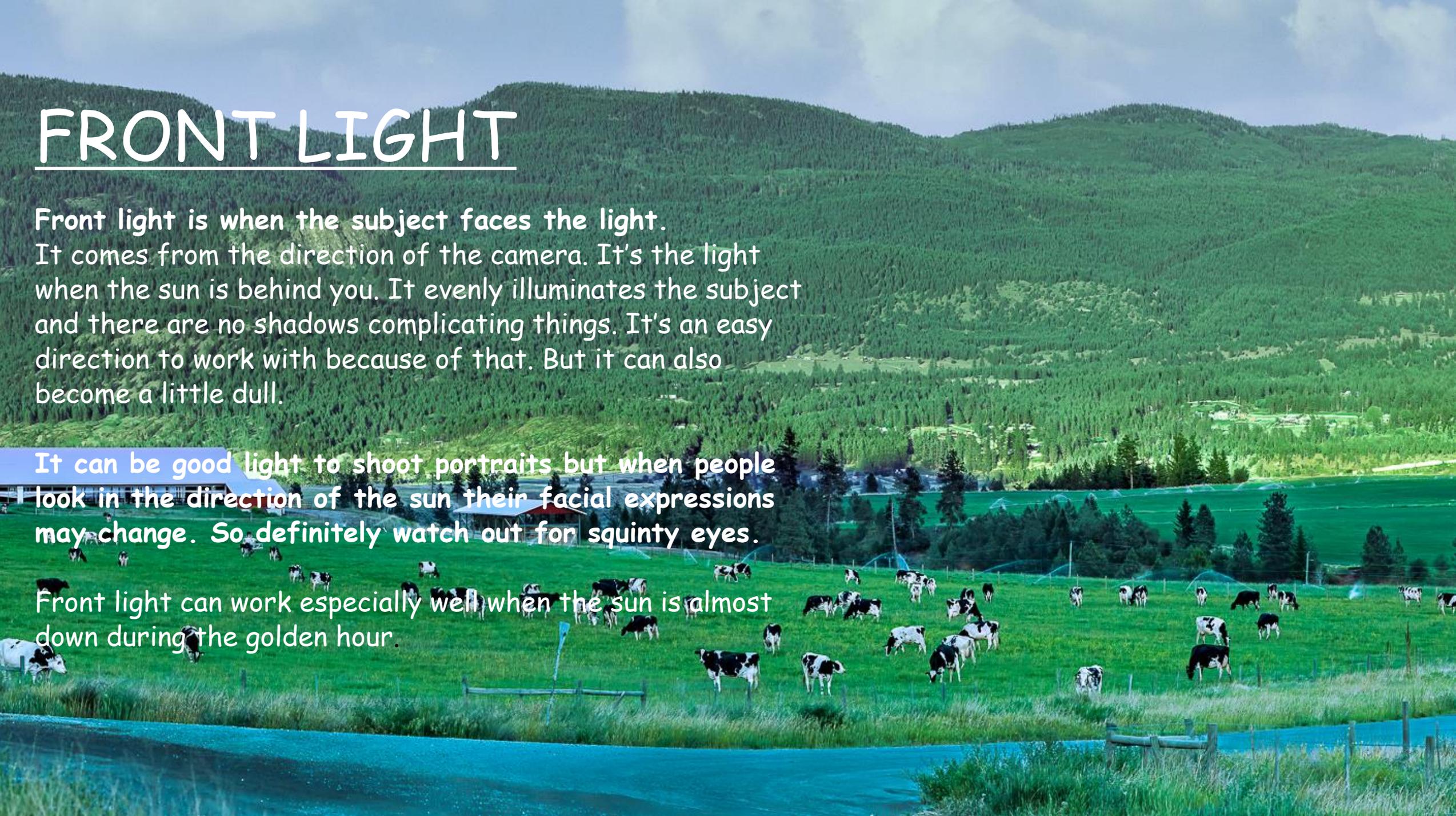
When naming the direction of the light it's always in relation to the subject and not you and the camera. Let's look at the different types of light and how to work with them.

FRONT LIGHT

Front light is when the subject faces the light. It comes from the direction of the camera. It's the light when the sun is behind you. It evenly illuminates the subject and there are no shadows complicating things. It's an easy direction to work with because of that. But it can also become a little dull.

It can be good light to shoot portraits but when people look in the direction of the sun their facial expressions may change. So definitely watch out for squinty eyes.

Front light can work especially well when the sun is almost down during the golden hour.



TOP LIGHT

The light coming from above is called top light. It's the light the sun creates in the hours just before and after mid-day.

A lot of wannabe photographers will tell you to leave your camera at home at this time of day because it's 'bad' light. Bad light does not exist. There's only light that's suitable for your scene and subject or light that's not suitable.

They tell you to wait for sunrise or sunset and only make photos during those 'golden hours'.

Can you imagine you wouldn't be able to photograph from 11 AM till 3 PM! What a waste of photography joy that would be.

So, please, just go ahead and shoot when the sun is high (wearing a hat might be a good idea at this time of day).



SIDE LIGHT

Side light comes from either side of the subject.

It's the light when the sun is on your left or right, in the morning or the afternoon. Side light will instantly give your subject a three-dimensional look because it creates shadows. It also emphasizes color and texture.

Exposing for side light can be a little tricky because of the large contrasts. Shooting in semi-auto or manual mode will be your best option so you can compensate for the large contrast.

Rule of thumb is to make sure your highlights are exposed properly.

BACK LIGHT

Back light comes from behind the subject.

It's the light in front of you, facing the camera during the early morning and late afternoon. It creates large, long shadows in front of the subject, and it can give a dramatic feel to an image.

It is the light you need to create silhouettes.

Exposing for backlight is even trickier than for side light because the light meter in your camera will be confused by the huge amount of light streaming into your camera especially when the sun is in your frame.

This is also a situation when you need to take control and adjust your exposure. Expose for the bright areas in your scene.



Be Flexible

If the light is behaving exactly as you want it to congratulations! That's awesome.

But there will be many occasions when it's behaving like a rebellious child and does not cooperate with your plans for the day. You have 2 options. You can postpone your photo shoot time, but who wants to do that! So really you only have 1 option. **You adapt.**



You can change the way the light illuminates your subject, by turning your subject.

By doing that you can change the direction of the light for instance from front light to sidelight or even backlight.

If that's not possible because You can't always change the position of your subject. But you can change your own position in relation to the subject. For instance, you can turn a backlit situation into a side lighting situation by simply walking around and shooting from a different angle



ROLL WITH IT

You look out of the window in the morning and the sky is like a grey blanket covering the world.

You check the weather forecast and it's going to be like this for a few days. "Not Good". This is especially disheartening when you're traveling, and you anticipated sun kissed landscape photography or contrasty urban shots.

Remember to go with the flow and accept what is.



In a situation when the light is direct and hard and you would like to do portrait photography, you can change locations. You know, wherever there is direct sunlight there are likely larger areas with shadow as well. Look for areas that have shade to evenly illuminate your subject and create a small contrast.



Equipment

1. Camera
2. Reflector
3. Tripod

Summary

1. There is no such thing as bad Light, only light that presents some challenges
2. Keys to remember:
 1. Intensity
 2. Colour Temperature
 3. Direction
 4. Quality of Light
 5. Time of Day



Other Resources

<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/photography-101-what-is-natural-light-learn-about-natural-light-in-photography-and-4-tips-for-using-natural-light-in-your-photography>

<https://www.photojaanic.com/blog/beginners-natural-light-photography#Time-of-Day-for-Natural-Light-Photography>

<https://www.nexcess.net/blog/natural-light-photography/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oB1ezvVSmA&t=26s>
Kameron Klubbe - You Tube Channel
Glenn Jones "It's All About the Light"

