

Text & Photos by  
**Linda Greenup**

# Planning the Perfect Shot

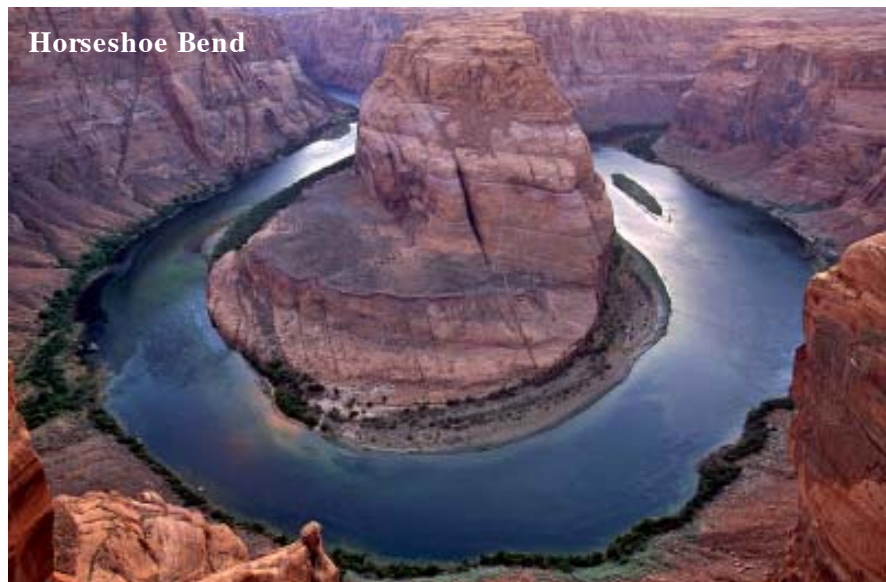
**O**ne rite of passage in the world of photography is the ability to seek out the location of the perfect shot. Eventually those shots may come to you but more honestly there will always be some planning involved. Your level of photography aside and long after you conquer the “how” of being accomplished at your craft, an important aspect of being a good photographer may be what and where you shoot.

And how might you find that perfect shot? You can shoot in your own locale and return to a favorite scene several times. You can attend workshops and work at good shots provided by the leader. You can even get travel ideas as offshoots of workshops and return to them at a later time. But about once a year it is fun to venture out in to unknown territory. Maybe you’ve gazed at a beautiful sunset image with its perfect blend of cerulean blue and soft pink clouds just one time too many. And now you need to know if you can get that shot and where you might find it. So plan that big photo trip. Jump in and decide where you begin and how you might follow through on a final itinerary to that beautiful image in your mind.

There are some questions to ask yourself before you begin the planning process: 1) How much time to you have to spend? 2) What does your expense budget allow? 3) What locale interests you and what time of year is best for that location?

You may have seen a favorite shot that piques your interest or you may have heard about a special photo idea

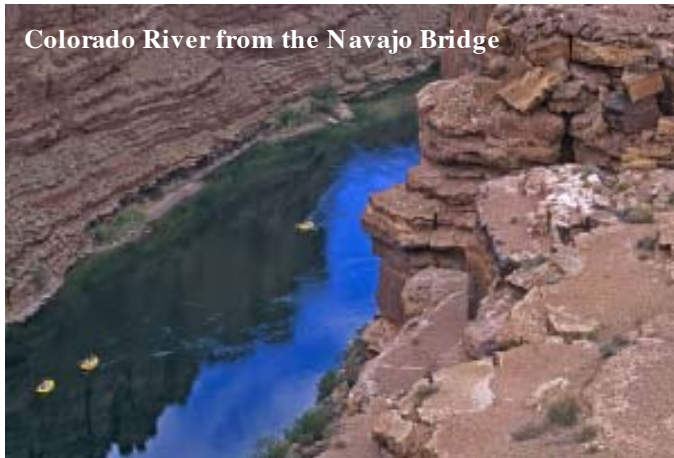
through your contacts. If you are like me, you collect information about possible image ideas constantly. It seems that your mind is always looking at the world in terms of how you might capture a beautiful image from what your eyes see. The hard part may be deciding which place to choose of the many possibilities. I tend to investigate several choices before narrowing it down to one or two. I cull out the duplicate information I may have on my choice



Horseshoe Bend

and then go to specifics from the internet, magazines, travel handbooks, guidebooks, weather data and maps. Once the pre-planning questions are answered you are well on your way and the search becomes an easy task. And once there, information can be verified through local resources.

There are some planning pitfalls to avoid. It works best if you drive so you have the equipment and clothing choices necessary for a variety of weather and scenery. Flexible scheduling always helps. Don't plan too much, filling every hour with activity. Be generous with your shooting time. Give yourself a light day after two full days of intense shooting, for example. You may want time just to savor your special surroundings. You may not be able to get all the shots you want in one trip. The weather may not cooperate or a different time of day may make the shot. With a flexible plan you can return to your spot later or on the return trip. And having a flexible travel partner helps too. With proper planning you are more likely to enjoy the trip and the side benefit to photography: sharing beautiful scenery with someone during the shot and with others once the shot becomes the amazing image you envisioned.



Colorado River from the Navajo Bridge

And once you get there, what might make your image special? Be willing to test your limits to reach places not easily frequented. You'd like to get that unusual shot not available on the typical tourist route. Even if you are on that route you can always look for an interesting or unusual perspective. Remember that photography is painting with light so perfect lighting will always make a good image. The best light comes from side lighting early in the morning and in the late afternoon. With experience it becomes second nature to incorporate the proper design techniques to shoot spectacular images.



Coral Pink Sand Dunes

*Linda Greenup is also a Field Contributor to Nature Photography Magazine.*

Here's an example of an itinerary filled with lots of image possibilities:

• **Day 1 with overnight in Springdale, Utah**

Sunrise shoot in Zion National Park

Late afternoon Virgin River shots in Zion

• **Day 2 with overnight in Page, Arizona**

Zion sunrise (if needed) on way out of Zion driving toward Page, Arizona

Coral Pink Sand Dunes between Mt. Carmel Junction and Kanab on Rte 89

Vermillion Cliffs begin 11 miles east of Jacob Lake on US89A and continue on to the Badger Canyon/Marble Canyon junction near Lees Ferry.

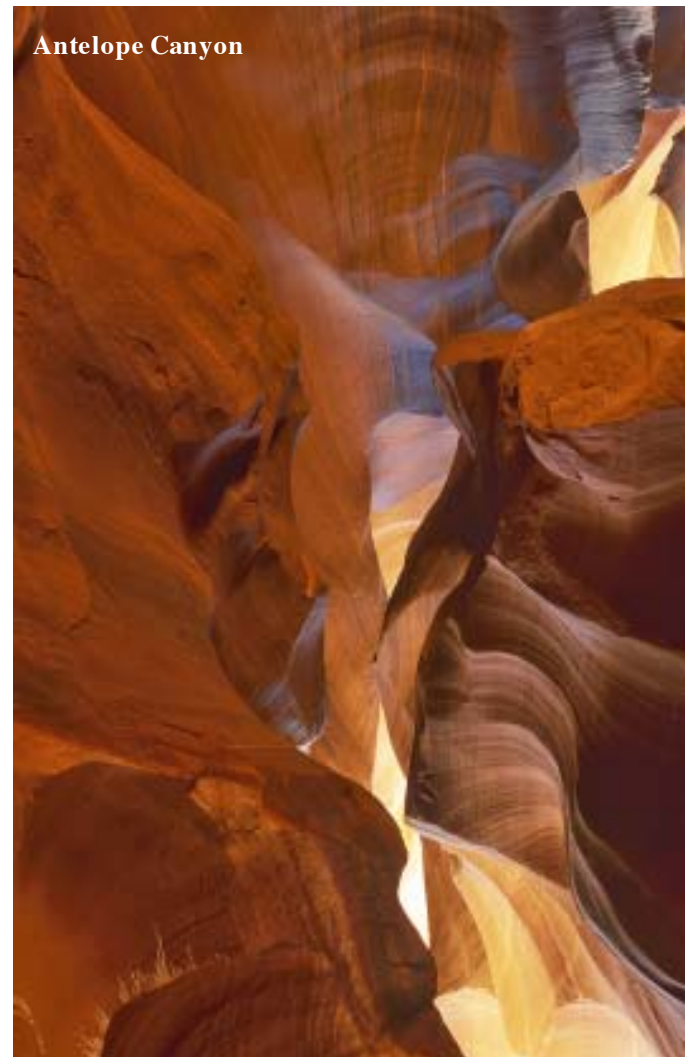
The 1000 foot high rose-hued cliffs meet the mouth of Paria Canyon at Lees Ferry.

Navajo Bridge crosses Marble Canyon formed by the forces of the Colorado River

Sunset at Horseshoe Bend on the Colorado River outside of Page, Arizona

• **Day 3 and Day 4 possibilities out of Page, Arizona**

Paria Canyon Wilderness, Antelope Canyon, Water Holes Canyon, the Rainbow Bridge boat ride on Lake Powell, reshoot Horseshoe Bend or the Vermillion Cliffs, or a trip through Monument Valley between Kayenta and Mexican Hat.



Antelope Canyon