



Beinn na Caillich, Isle of Sky, Highland, Scotland

Camera: Hasselblad X-Pan II

Lens: 90mm f/4.0

Film: Fuji Velvia 50

Tripod: Gitzo Mountaineer carbon fibre

Hunting Light

By Colin Prior

One of the most rewarding aspects of mountain photography is the opportunity to capture images that weren't anticipated.

There's nothing quite like the feeling when you awake on the summit of a mountain and know that the weather looks great. All your planning and effort has paid off and the image, which you have pre-visualised, perhaps years before, is potentially going to manifest itself before your eyes, as the sun rises.

But, the sun's not up yet and the purple and crimson theatre which is the hallmark of sunrise has yet to happen. Being at height gives you great potential for new compositions as the character of the landscape is revealed below. When the sun is low on the horizon, sunlight passes through more air at sunrise and sunset than during the day, when the sun is higher in the sky. More atmosphere means more molecules scattering violet and blue light away from your eyes. If the path is long enough, all of the blue and violet light scatters out of your line of sight, whilst the other colours continue on their way to your eyes. This is why sunsets are often yellow, orange, and red.

Because red has the longest wavelength of any visible light, the sun is red when it's on the horizon, where its extremely long path through the atmosphere blocks all other colours.

Often the best colours actually happen when the sun is still on the other side of the horizon as the light is scattered into the upper atmosphere.

At this time there is no flare from the sun and the associated desaturation, which results. All this activity is taking place in the opposite direction to that which I had initially climbed the mountain for and as the sun rises I will essentially be facing west with the sun at my back but before it rises I will be shooting east, towards it.

The rewards are always there for those who are prepared to make the effort. It's simply a form of hunting - using your knowledge of the terrain, experience and current information of weather patterns, to narrow the odds in your favour and to capture a pre-visualised image.

The successful return with the trophies.

For more about Colin and his work, visit <http://www.colinprior.co.uk>