

OLYMPUS OM-D E-M5 III

A new sensor and processor in a smaller body – but was it worth the wait?



Digital Practical advice for enthusiasts and pros Photographer

www.digitalcameraworld.com

Issue 223



BLACK & WHITE LANDSCAPES

Bring mono images to life with our top techniques

10 steps for stunning street images

Capture candid like a pro

EXPERT REVIEWS

- Fujifilm X-A7
- Messenger bags
- Nikon 58mm f/0.95 S Noct

PRO GUIDE

TRAVEL PHOTOS

Avoiding clichés



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“When words become unclear, I shall focus with photographs”



Setting the tone is often easier with a quote, and who better to begin our Black & White issue than Ansel Adams – master of the monochrome landscape. In our main feature on p28, we’re using clear words and explaining how you can create impactful scenes in the absence of colour. Learn to really *think* in B&W, rather than just shooting a landscape and converting it to greyscale in Photoshop when you get home.

Many of us are already thinking ahead to our summer holidays, but our travel feature will show you how to take stunning shots at any time. From p42, Jeremy Flint explains how to plan your trips, pack and prep the right kit, and then turn tourist shots into more captivating results at exotic destinations.

Shooting familiar locations also has its merits, so turn to p56 to discover how to hone your skills a bit

closer to home with Craig Reilly’s ten tips for amazing street photography.

And for more photography techniques, turn to p78 for a creative portrait project, followed by bitesize tutorials on handheld long exposure and rim lighting.

This month, our pro section is geared around the online space. Print & share (p70) will help you to protect your images from theft, while on p88 we’ve compiled ten ways to improve your Instagram profile, engage with audiences and boost your exposure. Instagram is a powerful sharing tool, and with that in mind, tag your photos on Instagram with #mydigitalp for a chance to be our next featured photographer.

We end the issue with our expert reviews, including messenger bags (p96), the Olympus OM-D E-M5 III (p104), Fujifilm X-A7 (p108), the Nikon Nikkor Z 58mm f/0.95 S Noct lens (p 110) and new accessories. Enjoy!

Lauren Scott, Editor

lauren.scott@futurenet.com

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© Jeremy Flint

Our contributors



PETER FENECH
As Digital Photographer's staff writer, Peter is an expert on both creative techniques and

working as a pro photographer in this industry. Peter has put together a black & white landscapes feature (p28), a shooting tutorial for handheld long exposures (p84), plus a guide to protecting images from theft (p70).

Website: digitalcameraworld.com



TOM CALTON
Modern portrait and wedding pro Tom is a regular on Digital Photographer. He's back this

issue on p78 with a creative project on fairy light portraits. By combining a shallow depth of field with a twinkling backdrop, Tom will show you how to achieve a dreamlike portrait from the comfort of your own home.

Website: tomcaltonweddings.co.uk



COLBY BROWN
This month we talk to and quiz Colby, a travel and humanitarian photographer. Colby's foundation,

The Giving Lens, blends photo education with support for various NGOs and causes around the world. On p20, he shares the ideas behind his images and explains how photography can be used for positive causes.

Website: colbybrownphotography.com



MATTHEW RICHARDSON
Regular readers will know Matthew as our resident group test reviewer of cameras and photo gear. As

technology improves and our regular photo kit gets smaller, so too can our bags. This time, Matthew compares four messenger camera bags that manage to combine both style and substance. Turn to p96 for the results.

Website: matthewrichards.uk



CRAIG REILLY
As a London-based street photographer, workshop leader and co-founder of the Street

Photography International Collective, Craig is the ultimate pro to bring you a street photography tips feature. From staying candid to route-planning, his advice – 10 steps for successful street images – starts on p56.

Website: craigreillyphotography.com



ANGELA NICHOLSON
If a new bit of kit is worth investing in, you can trust our gear guru Angela to let you know. She reviews

the Olympus OM-D E-M5 Mark III on p104 – which sports a new sensor and processor in a smaller body – followed by the neat-featured Fujifilm X-A7 on p108. Find her usual roundup of ten photo-friendly accessories on p112.

Website: angelanicholson.com

Digital Photographer

The ultimate monthly kitbag companion for pros and enthusiasts

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Practical advice for enthusiasts and pros

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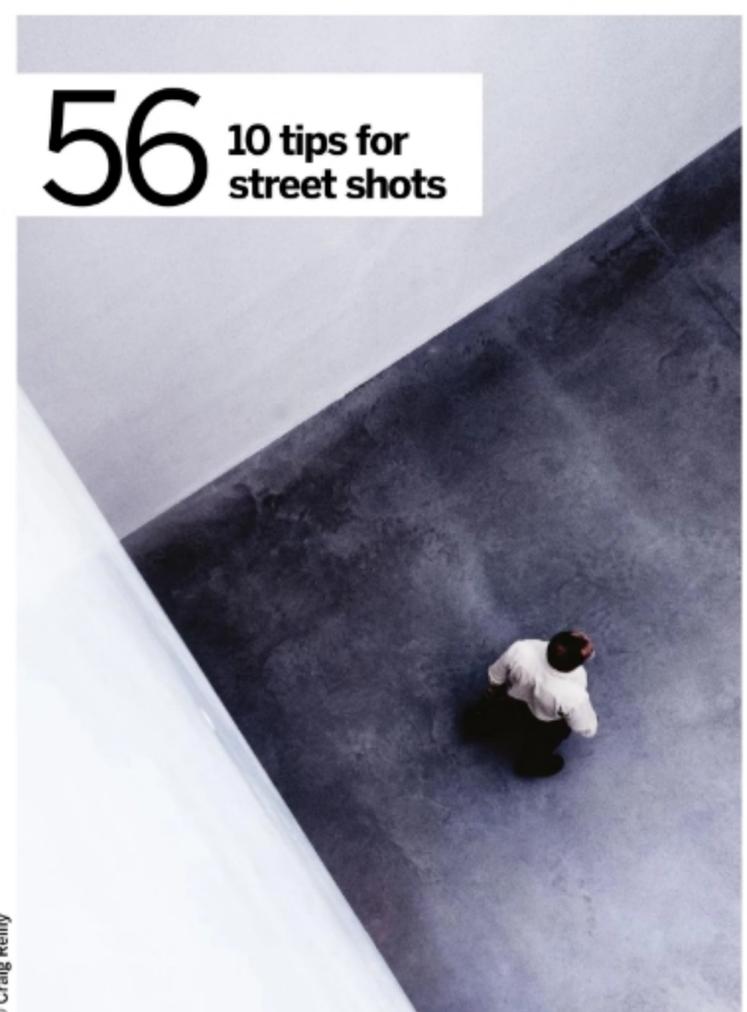
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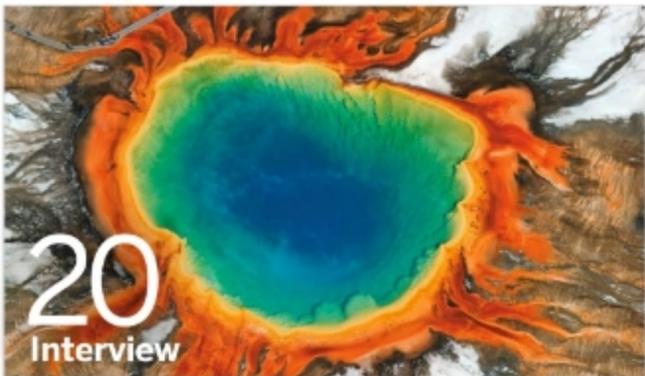
Claire Gillo shows you how to outline your subject using flashguns for an artsy feel





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© Laurent Antony



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YOUR IMAGES

The Gallery

Some of the best images from our online community



Sandra Upe-Vāģe

Image title:
Girls dance

What camera, lens and settings did you use to capture this stunning shot?

Canon EOS 60D, 18-270mm, 1/200sec, f/5.6, ISO 2000.

How did you decide on the composition?

Every five years, the Latvian Song and Dance Festival is held – it is one of the world's largest amateur choral and dance events and is an

important event in Latvian culture. It's included in UNESCO's Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity List. Last year I applied for a photographer card, which gave me permission to photograph almost all the events at the festival. It was a magical experience and very different from when I worked in the orchestra and played in this event – a completely different role!

What do you like most about the image?

I am really proud of my nation. Almost all the dancers and singers are amateurs, and they do a fantastic job. The reason I like this picture is that it's a mess! I like it because of its randomness.

Upload your images to our Facebook page now for your chance to get them printed in the magazine. Go to facebook.com/DigitalPhotographerUK.

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Every issue one reader gallery entry wins a Samsung 128GB EVO Plus memory card with SD adapter worth £47.99. The card boasts 100MB/s & 90MB/s read and write speeds respectively – perfect for shooting and playing 4K UHD video without glitches. Find out more at samsung.com/uk/memory-cards

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YOUR IMAGES



**Paulo
Pereira**

Image title:
The Winter Falls

This photo is from Seljalandsfoss, Iceland. To gain access, it was necessary to use crampons to climb up the ice on the slope. The wind was pushing all the spray from the waterfall towards me, so I had to continually clean the lens and repeat the shots, hoping to get some without water droplets. When I got out of there, my winter jacket was full of frozen ice droplets. The difficulty of shooting in these harsh conditions is what makes me like this photo.

x2 © Paulo Pereira



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Every issue our runner-up gallery contributor wins a Samsung 32GB EVO Plus memory card with SD adaptor (worth £14.99). With read/write speeds of 95MB/s and 20MB/s respectively, this card is ideal for use with today's high-resolution DSLRs and mirrorless cameras for stills and HD video. For more information visit samsung.com/uk/memory-cards



THE BEST OF WINTER VISTAS

The winners of our latest contest with Photocrowd have been revealed

For our latest competition in association with Photocrowd, we challenged you to submit your best images of wintry vistas, and after sifting through over 2,000 photos, the winners have been selected.

Both crowd-voted and expert winners will win a licence to Affinity Photo professional editing software. Congratulations to all of the winners – as usual the standard of submitted images was incredibly high, and picking out the stand-out shots was a tough task.

1ST PLACE WINNER

Winterforest

Photographer: Dirk Vonten

Our comment: The atmosphere in this woodland study is superb. The receding contrast and clarity as the eye moves into the frame offers tremendous depth and the sense that this forest stretches on forever. The colour provides a wintry feel without being over-saturated. The brightness gradient from top to bottom is also very satisfying.



WIN! Prizes from Affinity

Enter our Urban Exploration contest in association with Photocrowd before 1 March for a chance to win

The urban environment offers photographic opportunities in the most unlikely of places. We want to see shots that capture the mood of these forgotten areas of the urban jungle and present hidden and unexpected views in a unique way. Enter at photocrowd.com/digitalphotographerurbanexploration for a chance to win a licence to Affinity Photo professional editing software (£48.99 for Mac and £19.99 for Windows).

Affinity Photo is a huge toolset engineered for modern photography professionals. Whether you're editing and retouching images or creating full-blown multi-layered compositions, it has all the power and performance you'll

ever need. Speed, power and accuracy are at the heart of Affinity Photo's workflow, with non-destructive editing, RAW processing and end-to-end colour management as standard. Edits work in real time, so there's no waiting to see results.

Expert and Crowd winners will be able to pick between Mac, Windows or iPad versions. The Urban exploration contest ends on 1 March 2020.





2ND PLACE The Magical Storr

Photographer: Andy Fowlie

Our comment: We saw many snowy landscapes in this round, but this shot stood out for the exceptional colour. The golden light of the sunset is in stark contrast to the almost monochrome terrain and draws the eye into the centre of the shot. The high-key feel lifts the tone of the scene, which is otherwise bleak, providing a balanced shot that shows the wild beauty of the location.



3RD PLACE Emerald Winter

Photographer: Paul C

Our comment: The widescreen aspect ratio of this frame really enhances the majestic and epic nature of the landscape. The levels of detail are superb, and the presence of the figures provides an identifiable human component that acts as a visual anchor. The people also add scale to the scene, which effectively exaggerates the size of the towering mountains. It makes us want to fetch our skis!

1ST PLACE CROWD-VOTED

Moody blues **Photographer:** Trevor Cole



STORY BEHIND THE STILL



Photographer's name: Philip Platzer

Photographer's website: philip-platzer.com

Image location: Fromberg, Austria

Type of commission: Assignment

Shot details: Nikon D4S, Nikkor 16mm Fisheye,
1/2000 sec, f/6.3, ISO 320

About the shot: There are certain images where it's impossible to decode the shooting process behind them, regardless of how long they are studied. How did the photographer manage to achieve the exposure? How on Earth (or in this case, in the air) did they find a way of shooting the frame from that perspective? Philip Platzer's award-winning shot of an aerial athlete performing a hair-raising swing between two hot air balloons is a great example.

"Together with the Red Bull Skydive Team I did this crazy project called 'Megaswing' back in 2016," explains Philip. "[straight away] I already knew this was a tricky one: two hot air balloons, one with a long rope attached and the other one to jump out [of] with the 'swing' and of course the skydiver with his parachute."

When faced with a scenario as technically challenging as this it can be easy to forget the basic photographic elements of composition, without which a shot will still fail, despite the dramatic conditions. Philip had to recognise the framing challenges and devise a way of creating the maximum visual impact.

"After the first couple of jumps I realised that I wouldn't get the perfect shot by simply shooting from inside the basket that they were jumping out of. Luckily, I had my monopod in the car as well as a pair of radio triggers. My solution to get the right angle was to hold the camera – which I had attached to my monopod – deep under the basket and hope to get the perfect framing. I asked the athlete Marco Fürst to turn a little bit towards my direction, to avoid getting an ass shot and to get this playful mood in the image. In the end it was the very last try that gave us the 'moneyshot'."

Right

Red Bull Megaswing 2016

"I am constantly pushing my own limits, looking to capture truly unique shots and fuelling my passion for this incredible work," says Philip Platzer. This image won the Wings round of Red Bull Illume 2019







LEICA M10 MONOCHROM

The launch of the black-and-white-only rangefinder brings supercharged resolution to the 40-megapixel full-frame Leica M10 Monochrom

 A high price tag is nothing unusual for a Leica camera. But what makes the company's latest launch special is that it will only shoot black and white images. If you want to capture colour pictures at any point – or if you hanker after shooting video – the new Leica M10 Monochrom rangefinder camera is definitely not for you. So who exactly is it for?

This camera is built specifically for those who see (or want to see) their images exclusively in monochrome and is the latest in a family of cameras that Leica has produced to do just that. The original 18-megapixel full-frame Leica M Monochrom was launched in 2012, superseded by the Leica M Monochrom (Typ 246) in 2015 with a 24-megapixel sensor. Over the years, this series of cameras (along with a number of special editions) has

managed to establish something of a cult following among street photographers as well as Leica enthusiasts.

The Leica M10 Monochrom supercharges the resolution of this specialist camera to 40 megapixels. As the sensor doesn't have the usual colour filters of digital cameras, it can use every photosite more effectively. Leica tells us that the effective resolution of the camera is much higher – giving you quality that's closer to a camera with twice as many pixels. The Leica engineers also claim an improved, and impressive, 15 stops of dynamic range. The new version is essentially a black-and-white version of the Leica M10-P rangefinder camera (becoming the fourth member of the current Leica M10 range).

Although the jump in resolution is the main attraction of the new Leica M10 Monochrom,

there are other advantages over the previous Monochrom models, including a top ISO setting boost from 25,000 to 100,000, super-quiet shutter inherited from the M10-P, plus support for Wi-Fi, with connectivity to the Leica Fotos app. It has a three-inch touchscreen LCD (1.04 million pixels), Live View with focus peaking, electronic spirit level, shooting a maximum 5.5fps with a 2GB buffer capacity (approx 30 RAW DNGs or 100 JPEGs).

The Leica M10 Monochrom is available now at £7,250/\$8,295, and that price is before adding the cost of a lens. Whether it is worth paying for a camera that offers a seemingly limited set of shooting possibilities is debatable for most people. But you can be sure that the high resolution offered by the latest Monochrom will see it on back order for some time.



OLYMPUS

Canon

FUJIFILM

LUMIX

Wex Photo Video expands retail offering

The specialist retailer has opened a brand new Milton Keynes store and relocated its Birmingham outlet to a larger-capacity premises



Wex Photo Video will open the doors to two new stores in the first quarter of 2020, expanding its presence in the UK to nine locations. This spring, the photography specialist will unveil an entirely new, 280-square metre store on Silbury Boulevard in central Milton Keynes, which will be open seven days a week.

Wex has also just opened a new showroom on Hagley Road, Birmingham. Boasting a floor capacity of 350 square metres, it can stock an even greater volume of kit and extend customer demo areas, as well as offer an integrated gallery space that will host a variety of exhibitions, talks and workshops during the year. "We see a healthy future in multichannel

retailing and have ambitious plans for 2020 and beyond," says Louis Wahl, Wex's chief executive officer.

Amid this positive growth, the British high street remains an unpredictable model for camera retailers. Jessops is still seeking a second rescue deal, after first going into administration over six years ago.

The Photography Show 2020 live lineup announced

Discover this year's epic array of live speakers



Running from 14-17 March 2020 at NEC Birmingham, The Photography Show and The Video Show are your opportunity to find out how some of the best photographers and filmmakers create spectacular pieces of work.

The Studio and Photo Live programs for TPS have now officially been announced, with each day full of content. The Photo Live area will see top pros taking you through practical tips for tackling various shoots, including working with models, lighting techniques and capturing movement.

For videographers, The Studio has experts on hand to give you insights into what it takes to produce engaging video content. Look out for BBC camera operator and filmmaker Carys Kaiser, who will be going through her kit bag and giving secret tips and tricks on what to use to make a broadcast-quality film with portable kit.

Our favourite area of TPS is always the Super Stage, where legends of photography and filmmaking delve into their careers, their work and their journey to the top. In recent years we've

heard from the likes of Martin Parr, Lindsay Adler and Sebastião Salgado. The lineup for the 2020 Super Stage includes award-winning photographer and entrepreneur Chase Jarvis, and the rest of the luminaries can be found online.

If you make the majority of your income from photography or video-related activities, you can apply for a free pro pass to The Photography Show. Keep up to date with the latest announcements and book your tickets (use the code DGTPS20 for a 20% discount) at photographyshow.com



In other news

More snippets of photography news from around the world

LANDSCAPE POTY 2020 OPEN

Submissions for the 13th Landscape Photographer Of The Year Awards are now open. The prize fund is worth over £20,000, with £10,000 for the overall winner. The contest is open to all, with a special class for under 18's. Enter images now at lpoty.co.uk before 5 April.

GETTY GRANT FOR CLIMATE ISSUES

Getty Images has partnered with Climate Visuals to launch the Getty Images Climate Visuals Grants. Two grants of \$10,000 each will be awarded to photojournalists whose work focuses on the impacts of and solutions to climate change. wherewestand.gettyimages.com/grants

CAMS IN COURTROOMS AGAIN

After a century-long ban, cameras are being allowed back into UK courtrooms to broadcast high-profile cases. Filming rules are more relaxed in countries such as the US, with full court cases often aired live. UK rules will change in a few months.

INTERVIEW

A ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

Powered by an insatiable wanderlust, **Colby Brown** shares his passion for respectfully capturing nature and culture



Colby Brown is a photographer, photo educator and author based in Pennsylvania in the USA. He specialises in

landscape, travel and humanitarian photography across the globe. Each of his photos tells a story about life on this planet.

In 2011 Colby founded The Giving Lens, an organisation that aims to blend photo education with support for various NGOs and causes around the world.

For more of Colby's work, head to colbybrownphotography.com

Wyoming
This mesmerising image makes use of an extreme angle to create an almost abstract perspective, highlighting the colour present in the scene

All images © Colby Brown

INTERVIEW

Tell us a bit about yourself – what are your specialisms? How would you define your style?

After being in the photo industry for the last 13 years, my focus and style has certainly evolved over the years. These days I tend to specialise in landscape, travel and wildlife photography, which typically involves exploring all seven continents each year.

In terms of style, like many photographers I like to create images that have impact – photos that have something to say. With each of my images my goal is to get you to feel as if you were there with me as I was capturing the image.

How does your photographic approach differ between wildlife and landscapes? What kind of story are you trying to tell?

To be honest, I tend to approach both wildlife and landscape photography with a similar mindset. I look for subjects that I am both interested in and passionate about and then try to find the most impactful way of capturing the various different elements that make them unique. This includes elements such as light/atmosphere, colour variance and composition, to name a few.

I try to treat each image and subject as its own story rather than attempting to apply my own personal style to every single image I capture. All too often I see photographers push out images that all have the same colour tones – the same look and feel. In my mind this makes the image more about their story rather than about the subject.

What are the greatest challenges associated with your most photographed genres (remote landscapes, travel, wildlife) and how do you overcome these?

I think every genre of photography has its own set of challenges, but if I could give you a more broad answer, it would be staying relevant in an ever-growing and expanding industry. As a photographer, it is a body of work that often dictates the story of one's career, and with so many people out there taking images, the challenge is to continue to have your work stand out.

How does you do that? Well in a couple of ways. Firstly, I would say never stop learning. I am always on the lookout for new post-processing techniques or in-field skills that can help me elevate the story of the images I am trying to create. Additionally, I like looking for a subject or story that isn't already being heavily covered on platforms like Instagram. If a million people share photos of the same waterfall, it can be hard to separate your work from the rest.

While I still enjoy going to places like Iceland, which have grown in popularity over the last few years, my favourite moments are when I am out in a remote part of the



Colby's favourite image

If I had to pick out a favourite image from 2019, it would have to be this one of Bashire Khan, an eagle hunter from western Mongolia.

Back in September I spent a week documenting various different eagle hunters in the country. Because of the remote nature of this region, I often found myself staying with the families of the eagle hunters I was photographing. While each of the families that opened up their home to me were incredible, I will never forget spending the early mornings with Mr. Khan's young son as he did his chores.

When I took this image of Bashire Khan one afternoon, after a passing rain storm, his son was standing right next to me the entire time. It is an image and an experience that I will never forget.

world, photographing something that very few people on the planet might ever see with their own eyes.

Of all the places you've travelled to, which has been your favourite, and why?

Surprisingly enough, this is a harder question to answer than you might think. Because I photograph such a wide variety of subjects, the answer varies depending on my current state of mind.

Sometimes I find myself disconnected from humanity, so I put together more humanitarian projects in places like Mongolia or Papua New Guinea, where I can work closely with people. At other times, I might need some time to reflect, so chasing sunsets in the remote regions of Patagonia in South America might be speaking to me. At other points I might miss my connection

with mother nature and plan a return trip to Brazil to photograph jaguars, or Uganda in East Africa to photograph silverback gorillas in the wild.

I have many favourite places around the world, and I truly love them all!

Is there a destination or subject you've yet to photograph that is on your wishlist, and why?

Like any photographer (or traveller), I have a growing bucket list. While I am normally booked out anywhere from 12 to 18 months in advance for various projects or photography workshops, I am fortunate to be able to knock off three or four each year, as I find gaps in my schedule.

These days I find myself gravitating towards documentation of different wildlife species around the planet. This year I am





Above
Wildlife passion
Colby has an ever-growing photography bucket list drawing him to new places and species around the globe. Often the trips themselves to a specific place are an enormous challenge

Right
Natural style
While Colby's signature style has evolved over the years, he concentrates on capturing realism, rather than imposing his own creative goals at the expense of the subject's story

not only planning a trip to Madagascar to photograph lemurs, but I am also looking into a trip to India or Sri Lanka (or both) to finally photograph a tiger in the wild.

You might also find me searching for orangutans in Borneo and doing research on the different locations in China where I might find the golden snub-nosed monkeys. Needless to say it is going to be an awesome year!





Colby's kit list

1. Sony A7R IV
2. Sony A9 II
3. 16-35mm f/2.8 GM
4. 24mm f/1.4 GM
5. 200-600mm f/5.6-6.3 G
6. 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6 GM
7. 400mm f/2.8 GM
8. Sony 1.4x and 2x teleconverters



How did you come to start leading photo workshops, and what do you enjoy most about teaching these?

While I had some experience in high school and college teaching and leading others, it wasn't until my first job with National Geographic in 2008 when things really began to come together. Just three years after picking up my first digital camera I was hired to help expand its Student Expedition program in South America.

Originally I was hired to go to Belize, but I got a call about a spot opening up in Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands, which I jumped at. It was there I realised that I not only love teaching but also creating unique trips and experiences together.

There is something about the challenge of logistical planning balanced with client



COLBY BROWN

Above
Wide repertoire
Colby shoots a variety of subjects, so his gear bag is always changing, depending on the destination and goals

Left
Uganda
Colby's choice of focal length has provided a close-up composition that captures an intimate portrait of his subject

Right
Travelling light
Colby travels to many remote destinations, so lightweight photo gear is a huge benefit



experience that I still enjoy. You can find out more about my workshops by checking out my website, colbybrownphotography.com/photography-workshops.

What has been your proudest achievement to date as a photographer?

I think I can honestly say it is the founding of The Giving Lens in 2011. It has been amazing to watch it grow and evolve over the years to become what it is today. Each year we raise over \$30,000, which gets donated back to our incredible NGO partners and the local communities that give those organisations a home.

Additionally, we see so many photographers come through our program to learn more about photography, giving back, working with NGOs and being better



stewards of their own communities. At the end of the day, our goal is to change lives.

Tell us a bit about The Giving Lens: what inspired this, and how does it integrate with your work as a photographer?

The Giving Lens is an organisation that blends our collective passion for art and photography with the desire to give back and make tangible differences to the lives of people struggling all over the globe.

Essentially, we take teams of aspiring photographers to locations around the world, where we have partnered with local NGOs and charities that are helping to fight and combat various causes. These range from woman's vocational programs and youth education projects to refugee support and everything in between. Each trip acts as a fundraiser for the communities we work in, and then the images and content created on the trip are used to help build advocacy programs for these organisations.

I created The Giving Lens because I came across so many photographers who wanted to make a difference but they didn't know where to start. TGL can be the conduit or vehicle to connect you to causes and communities you are passionate about.

Above
Patagonia

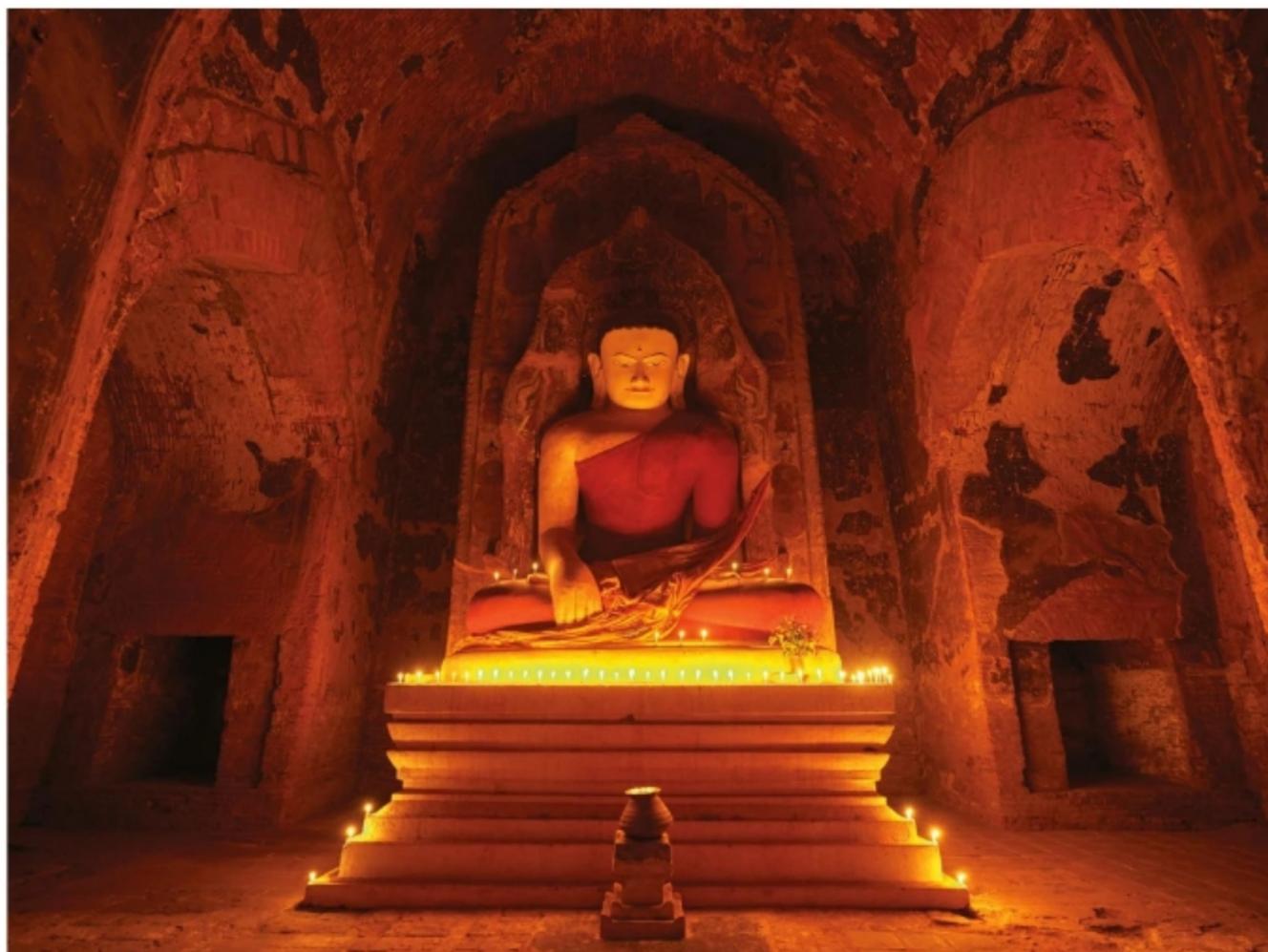
The camera features that are most important to Colby's work are dynamic range, ISO performance, resolution, AF speed and accuracy, and silent operation

Below
Myanmar

Colby specialises in landscape, travel and wildlife photography and is widely travelled, having documented a huge range of locations and cultures

Right
South Africa

For wildlife, Colby uses his Sony A9 II paired with either a 100-400 f/4.5-5.6 GM, 200-600 f/5.6-6.3 G or 400 f/2.8 GM lens, depending on the subject species





Black and white beauty

By choosing the right perspective, composition and using intelligent processing techniques, traditional landscape scenes can be transformed into monochromatic masterpieces

© Justin Minns



Shoot black and landscape

Create stunning monochrome scenes by mastering exposure control and textural balance

There is an undeniable irony that black and white photography is one of the most popular genres of the medium today. Despite the advances in photographic technology and colour reproduction processes, photographers the world over still choose to either shoot in

monochrome immediately or convert their colour digital images to black and white later in software.

Not only have black and white films maintained a significant presence on the market, but entire companies are based on products solely used to convert images to

monochrome, giving photographs a classic filmic quality. Software packages such as Silver Efex Pro from the Nik Collection by DxO are carefully crafted to apply film simulation filters to your shots, working to recreate the tonality and texture of well-known film stock.

white apes

It can be difficult to identify the exact qualities of black and white images that audiences identify with. But of all the areas of photography to benefit, landscape is a common recipient of the black and white treatment. The range of brightness values in scenic images lends itself to colourless

rendition, as this enables the viewer to focus on the most critical components of landscapes – texture and depth.

Removal of colour is not a get out of jail free card, however, and while it can be used as a creative technique to add drama and focus attention, desaturation cannot be

seen as a quick remedy for a bad shot. In order to create mono masterpieces we must first identify which scenes are receptive to conversion, and how best to approach this.

Here we'll explore the best routes to identify landscape subjects and tailor image styles for maximum effect.

TECHNIQUES

LOCAL CONTRAST

White clouds in a deep blue sky show great contrast when a red filter is used

LOW-FREQUENCY DETAIL

A mono conversion can give greater separation and purpose to otherwise bland detail like cut grass or sand

Good contrast

Identify suitable scenes

Not every landscape works in monochrome. Recognise which subjects and lighting conditions offer the greatest potential

When black and white film was the only photographic medium available and every image created was devoid of colour, the viewer had their expectations set by these limitations. And while the photographer had to be aware of the effects of shooting a scene without the ability to reproduce colour and worked to maintain impact, they had the familiarity of monochrome in their favour.

In today's modern age of advanced digital technology, where cameras are able

to capture even the most subtle of colour gradation and HD TVs display breathtaking contrast and saturation, things are very different. Audiences expect strong, life-like colour images, as even camera phones are able to reproduce impressive colour gamuts. If we are going to intentionally remove this chromatic information to produce a black and white image, we have to be certain there is enough interesting detail remaining to justify the existence of the shot.

This is the main area of confusion among new photographers. A successful monochrome photo is more than simply a digital file with the colour removed – to 'sell' the impact of a colourless scene we have to pick ones with appropriate tonality and shoot with the intention of converting it in processing.

So what works well in black and white? A good example is a scene with extensive contrast, such as those found during the midday sun. This is far from the ideal time to



COLOUR VARIANCE
Scenes containing a good range of colours are more likely to exhibit contrast in the converted image

x2 © Laurent Antony



BLACK & WHITE

TONAL CONTRAST
Bright highlights and dark shadows are emphasised as features by removing colour

FOCUS ON FORM
Strong directional light creates defined gradients that suit the graphic properties of monochrome

OUT OF RANGE
In situations where dynamic range is exceeded, use this to your advantage for graphic impact

Harsh lighting

Focus the viewer on the detail and form of landscape elements

shoot a standard landscape, as colour is often muted and uncomfortably cool, with a high kelvin value in the shadows. But it's an ideal opportunity for a monochrome shot, as this will focus the viewer on the detail and form of landscape elements, without the distraction of intrusive hues. In any scene where you feel the colour is failing to add any value, thinking in terms of creating a black and white reproduction is a possible solution.

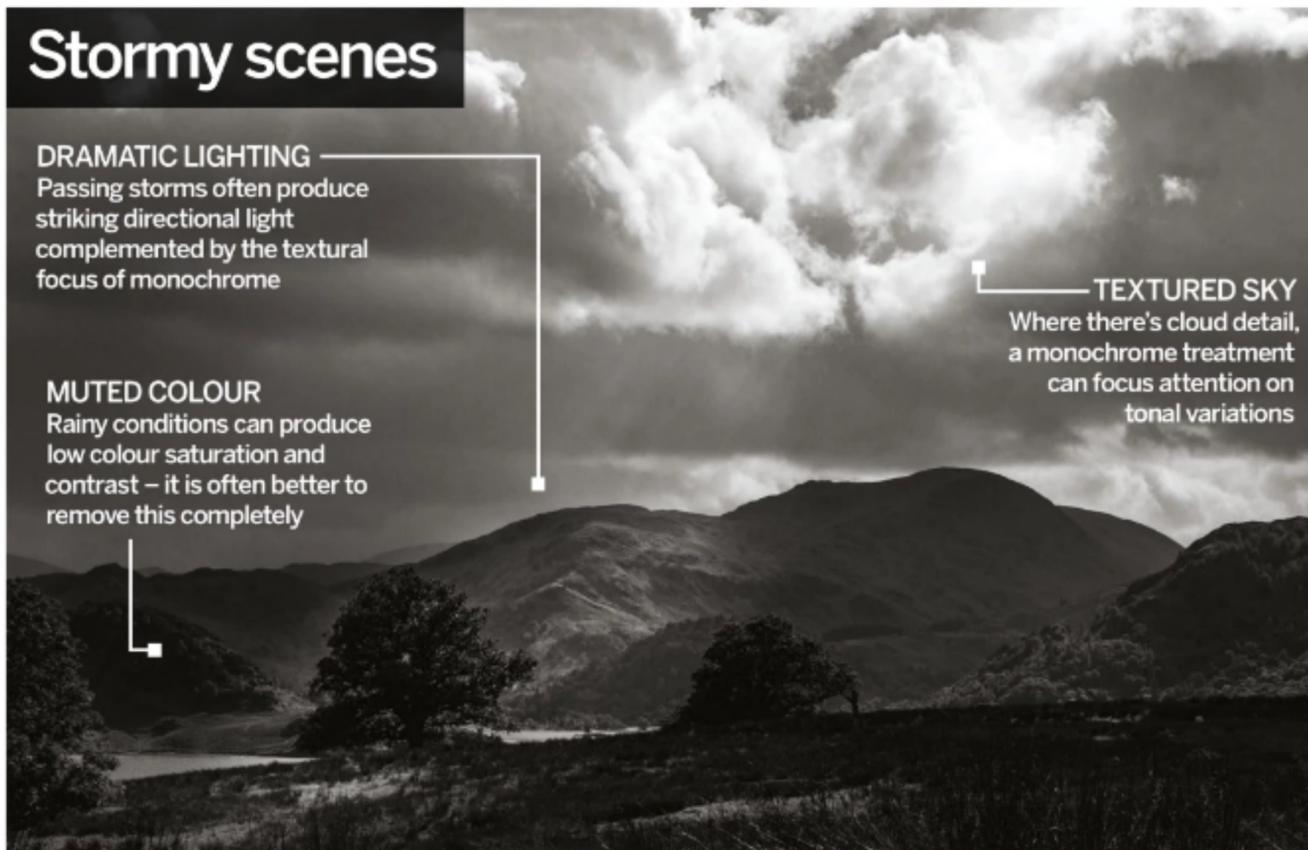
Although it may seem counter-intuitive in a monochrome workflow, it is critical to assess colour range. The colour visible in a scene will continue to dictate the tonality of your image after conversion, which is a vital consideration for predicting the contrast of the final image. Two colours that appear different in a colour shot can seem similar in monochrome, producing a flat shot if left unmodified.

Stormy scenes

DRAMATIC LIGHTING
Passing storms often produce striking directional light complemented by the textural focus of monochrome

MUTED COLOUR
Rainy conditions can produce low colour saturation and contrast – it is often better to remove this completely

TEXTURED SKY
Where there's cloud detail, a monochrome treatment can focus attention on tonal variations



©Peter Fenech

Shoot low key

Use dark tones to your advantage for moody, atmospheric landscape scenes

Low-key lighting has been favoured for its dramatic style in photography and cinema for decades. Closely associated with film noir, low-key images focus viewer attention on one area of the frame by limiting contextual detail. They introduce a sense of isolation and limit the feeling that the scene continues beyond the edges of the frame.

Low-key effects produce strong contrast, with a prevalence of deep shadows. This can be ideal for landscapes, where we want to emphasise intense light sources and highlight detail in textured surfaces. With care, the low-key formula can be used to produce a theatrical look to create the appearance of a set or a highly controlled environment, which is unusual in a natural location.

As photographers, our job is to control where our viewers should look. We take a busy scene and find the elements that are most photogenic, placing these centre stage in our composition. Low-key lighting moderates the dominance of individual zones and objects in the frame. By using strong lighting we can throw less-important areas into shadow for both practical and artistic purposes.

To do this we need a deep understanding of exposure measurement and the way in which our camera interprets light in different scenes. Low-key images have a bias towards shadows, so we should enhance how darker tones are rendered, being mindful of overexposure. Overexposure in this context doesn't mean loss of highlight detail, but rather a lack of dense blacks caused by the camera pulling detail out of the deepest shadow areas. This would produce a scene with reduced drama and an awkward lack of contrast.

Below
Light direction

In images like this one the light is striking the landscape at an angle, picking out texture and shape without lifting too many shadows – similar to some traditional low-key lighting ratios

Right
Shimmering

Exposing the shot to the left to hold dark shadows, photographer Justin Minns knew this shot of Saxtead Green Mill, bathed in morning sidelight, would look good in monotone



©Laurent Antony



Expose for low key

Lower your exposure for dramatic shadows and isolated image features



1 Compose your image We need to set the scene for the dramatic low-key style. Zoom in to exclude extraneous bright spots, such as dappled light filtering through trees, and place the main subject so that it will stand out against the dark surroundings.



2 Switch to Spot Use Spot Metering mode to bias the exposure towards a small area of the scene and prevent the camera from brightening the image to reveal background detail. This tells the camera you intend to create an atypical exposure.



3 Meter from highlights Place the active AF point over the brightest area to take a meter reading that will set up a darker atmosphere. Hold down exposure lock (AE Lock) and refocus the scene, or enter the measured settings in Manual mode.



© Justin Minns



4 Drop the brightness In P, A or S modes use exposure compensation to darken the frame until you have a subject that stands out from an underlit background. In M mode, stop down the aperture or increase shutter speed to reduce brightness.



5 Adjust for function Adjust the aperture or shutter speed for further desired effects. For example, if you'd like a long exposure, prioritise shutter speed while varying other settings to maintain the low-key look. ISO can stay at 100 if tripod-mounted.



6 Check the histogram Keep an eye on the distribution of tones by referring to the histogram. Some clipping may occur, but this is expected – the majority of the tones should be bunched at the left side of the graph as there is a prevalence of shadows.

Create high key images

Make the most of highlights to shoot bright and airy minimalist scenes

When it comes to black and white images there is a significant difference in the most effective style for each scene. One approach does not fit all conditions, and just as with the choice to convert to monochrome or leave it in colour, the style of black and white exposure and processing must be tailored for the scene currently being studied.

As such, low-key lighting will not fit all types of landscape or lighting. In these cases we can try adjusting our low-key approach to make exposure more appropriate for the scene, or alternatively we can instead consider inverting the settings and trying our hand at high-key lighting.

Just as low key uses shadows to best effect, the high-key approach exploits the highlights. Originally used as a method of reducing contrast on a set or location to avoid tones falling outside of the dynamic range of the filmstock, high-key images can almost be considered overlit, since they remove shadows almost entirely.

In the natural landscape we can introduce this effect by biasing the exposure towards

the upper midtones and highlights. In some cases this may even result in the loss of retrievable details in the brightest highlights. While this is something we are widely taught to avoid at all costs, for our purposes here it can be advantageous. A bright white background adds a 'blank canvas' aspect that works to increase the visibility of other landscape features.

The key concept when attempting a style such as this is to clearly communicate your intent, especially when shooting a subject that is often approached in a highly formulaic way, such as a landscape. If your shot is to appear overexposed this must be your goal from the outset, and it must be evident that it is an intentional creative decision, not a miscalculation in exposure.

By pushing the shadow/highlight balance to the extremes we can give our images a bright lifestyle-type atmosphere. This can greatly benefit minimalist scenes or juxtapose those that usually display strong colour and detail, producing a surprising and intriguing tonality to a shot.



HIGH KEY HISTOGRAM

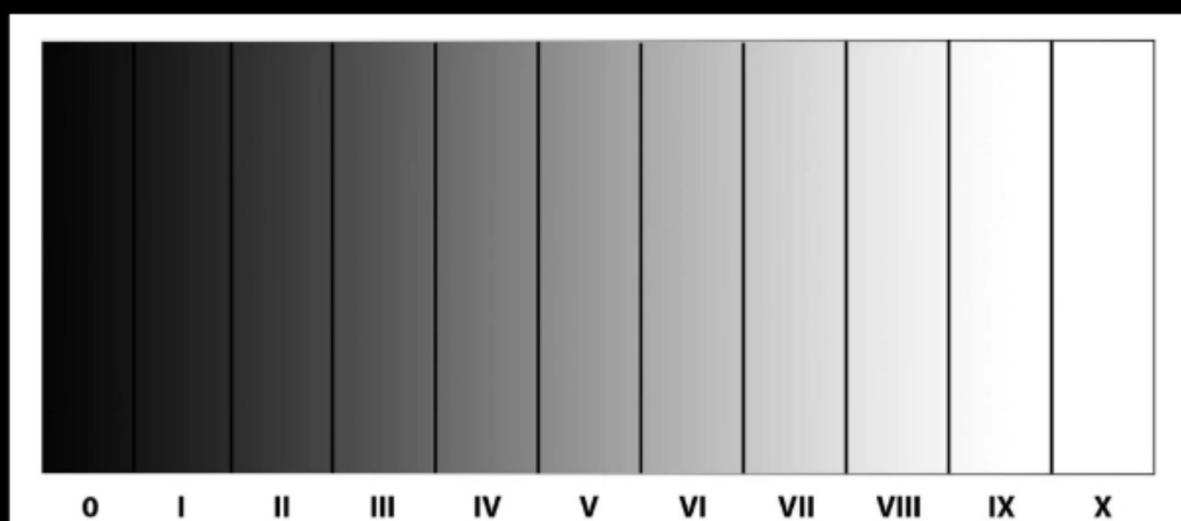


Understand the zone system

The classic exposure assessment scale applied to modern digital imaging

It is useful to understand the relationship between brightness and detail, as described by the zone system. Ansel Adams's original, iconic system warned photographers to avoid zones 0 and X, as these were pure black and white respectively, and still applies today. It was more difficult to recover shadow detail

than highlights in film – the opposite to digital photography. We should now be more cautious of tones falling in zone IX, as these are most at risk of falling outside the dynamic range of the camera. For dramatic monochrome landscapes, try utilising the lower zones (I and II) for deep blacks, while safely retaining highlights.



HIGH OR LOW KEY?

Look for aspects that could spoil a high or low-key effect. If you want a shadow-heavy scene, avoid unintentional bright highlights in the background. Likewise, don't attempt a bright, airy image if there are deep shadows present.

*Left***Easy on the eye**

The brightness of this image compliments the minimalist style of the scene and allows us to focus on the texture rather than the shape or colour of the subject

*Below***Light on shadows**

This image has low-density shadows to create a bright frame. The photographer took advantage of snow and a blank sky for an effective high-key approach

© Peter Fenech



© Justin Minns

How to capture high-key shots

Push highlights for a skewed distribution of tonal values

1 Use a tripod As you will likely be using lengthened exposures to create a brighter feel, it is essential that you support your camera to minimise blur. It is especially important to use a heavy-duty model if you're shooting near moving water.

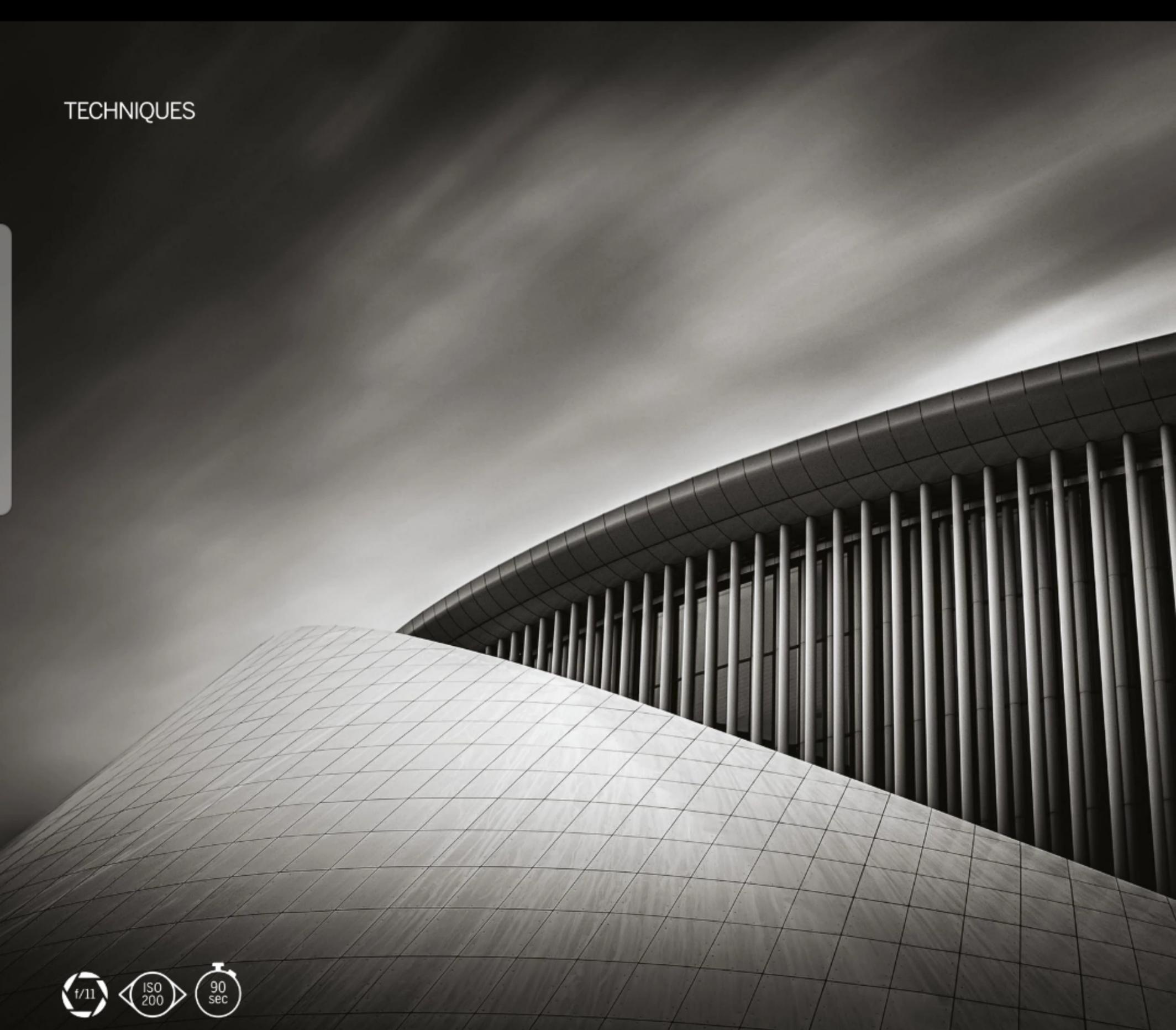
2 Meter from the shadows The characteristic feature of high-key images is the low-density shadows. While this may be created using flash in a studio, we can produce a similar look by getting the camera to shift all tones 'to the right' – towards the highlights.

3 Observe clipping Turn on the highlight alerts on your camera to visualise blown highlight detail. Try to keep this to a minimum if possible, though in some cases this is desirable for a bleached look. Ensure that no clipping occurs over key subject areas in either instance.

4 Push to the extremes Increase exposure until you reach the point where you would usually stop when exposing 'to the right', then increase shutter speed or aperture further until the brightest highlights clip. As long as these are in negative space, the effect will seem desirable.

5 Adjust framing If using blown highlights as a feature – in some cases this can be widespread, depending on location and subject – vary the composition to experiment with the balance of tones. Use a blown sky as a background element, for example, mimicking the classic studio look.

6 Watch the midtones The aim of high-key photography is to control the density of the shadows, so be mindful of what is happening to the midtones. If they're pushed too far towards the highlights, they can lose impact and contribute towards a flat image – use negative exposure compensation if needed.



Use special effects

Exposure, lighting and contrast choices all enrich atmosphere

One of the most important things novices learn about photography is that an effect or style is not reason enough for an image to exist. Any exposure, colour, lighting or composition choice should enhance the impact of a carefully selected and positioned subject, rather than becoming the main focus of the image in its own right. If the photographer approaches a shot with the intention of making the rule of thirds, a long exposure or a colour effect the subject of the composition, then the resulting photograph will likely fail to capture the imagination.

In a similar way, black and white conversions (or the use of a camera's monochrome picture style) must also be thought of as a means to an end, rather than the main purpose of any shot. A great way

to add value to a monochrome frame is to introduce other photographic effects to the mix, which may help justify the photographer's choice to create a black and white image. The lack of colour may then feel less jarring to the viewer, who will be encouraged to look past it as a defining feature of the composition and think of the monochrome nature of the frame as its native state. In essence we need to make modern audiences temporarily forget they are used to seeing brightly coloured photographs, so we can steer them to notice the aspects that encouraged us to make the image in the first place.

Once we have removed the colour from a scene, we can experiment with lighting ratios and contrast in ways that do not work successfully when colour information can

'contaminate' the balance. If we underexpose to create an ultra-high-contrast image, for example, this may increase colour saturation to unattractive extremes. In a black and white landscape, meanwhile, we only have luminance information present.

Try varying your position relative to the light source and working to enhance the most effective characteristics of a monochrome image – the cinematic feel, filmic texture and less-familiar tonal rendition, as dictated by the range of colours present.

Above **Urban forms**

Coastal landscapes and urban environments are two of the most conducive to ultra-long exposures, as they contain static elements in close proximity to moving features, such as water or clouds

Create ultra-long exposures

Eliminate people from the landscape and create otherworldly scenes



1 Find your composition Begin working handheld, experimenting with focal lengths and perspectives to find the frame that best suits the scene and will emphasise the properties of long exposure.



2 Deactivate Long Exposure NR While this form of noise reduction is the most effective, it will double the duration of the creation each image, so turn off NR for the benefit of speed.



3 Set focus Calculate aperture and preset focus. This is important if the front of your lens barrel rotates during focusing, as we will be attaching filters later that must be precisely positioned.



4 Prevent errors Cover your optical viewfinder (OVF) if you have a DSLR to prevent exposure errors caused by light leaking into the camera. Lock your zoom lens if possible to prevent lens creep.



5 Attach correct filters Use a 10-stop ND filter for a long-exposure black and white look, or try a 2-8 stop variable ND for better control over the exposure time. An ND grad will help hold sky detail.



6 Reshoot for variation Vary the exposure duration and reshoot if the lighting alters. Different exposures also increase opportunities for cloud positioning or lighting styles.

Shoot in-camera black and white

It is often advised that all major image treatments are left to the processing stage, but while this does give full control over all parameters, shooting black and white images in-camera gives you instant feedback. You no longer have to imagine what the colour image will look like after conversion, as you have an instant preview. Since monochrome picture styles must be applied to JPEGs, consider shooting both RAW and JPEG, so you have a 'finished' black and white file and a RAW for software conversion – the best of both worlds.



© Laurent Antony



Left
Creative flare
Vary your position to the sun to introduce lighting effects and alter shadow position. While colour is often the main draw, this image was made at sunset, creating a light-focused monochrome shot
©Peter Fenech

Process mono landscapes

Enhance the best qualities of your images

Any successful digital photographer working at a professional level understands the importance of bespoke image processing. No two images benefit from identical editing settings, and when working with genres as different as colour and monochrome photography it is even more crucial to identify how and why the processing recipes differ.

As we are working without colour, white balance correction is an area we can be less concerned about, but this doesn't mean that colour can be ignored entirely. Depending on those present in the landscape, it will often be necessary to adjust contrast via the HSL panel in Lightroom or Camera Raw and the dedicated Black and White controls in Photoshop. These can also be used for

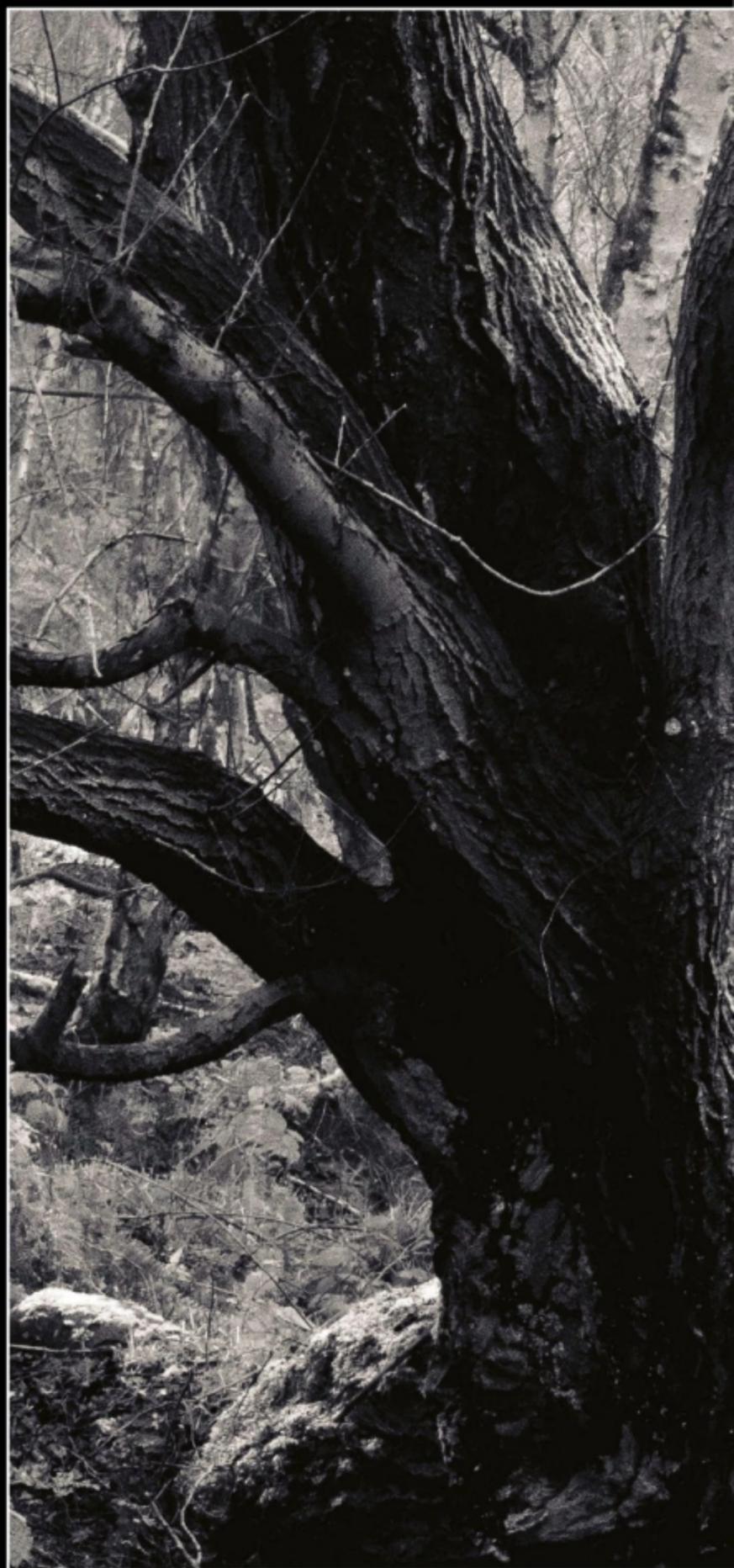
creative effect, to alter the balance of tones based on the distribution of colour values throughout the frame.

The element that is of paramount importance when processing a monochrome file, after the basic conversion is complete, is the distribution of light and shadow, since these are all we are left with once the colour has been stripped. Dodging and burning on a local scale is a powerful method of contouring shape and form within the landscape. In a coloured scene the viewer's eye is drawn to both areas of strong colour contrast and extremes of brightness. As the latter takes almost total control in a mono shot, with the exception of varying focus, the process of directing attention is simplified at the processing stage.



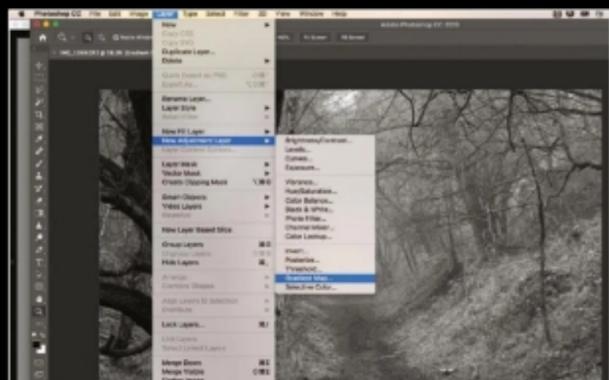
Left
Flat tones (before)
The misty winter conditions had potential, but in this colour image there is little in the way of contrast or depth

Right
Instant impact (after)
More than mere desaturation, the monochrome conversion process has added unique contrast to this shot, transforming a drab scene into an intriguing, otherworldly image



Perfect your monochrome conversion

Use localised editing procedures across both



1 Convert to monochrome In Lightroom click on the Black and White tab in the Treatment panel, which will do a basic mono conversion. In Photoshop consider setting the standard black/white foreground and background colours (D) and add a Gradient Map Adjustment Layer for good default contrast.



2 Set Blacks and Whites If working in RAW, add contrast by setting the Black and White points. Hold down Option/Alt while dragging and stop just before clipping occurs. Next, increase Contrast and adjust the Highlights and Shadows sliders until satisfied. Here we want to keep all tones in range.



3 Adjust HSL Manage the relative balance of each colour by using the sliders in the B&W Panel in Lightroom (named HSL/Color when Colour Treatment is selected). Move each slider to brighten or darken colours – here lowering red darkened the path, and increasing yellow brightened the foliage.



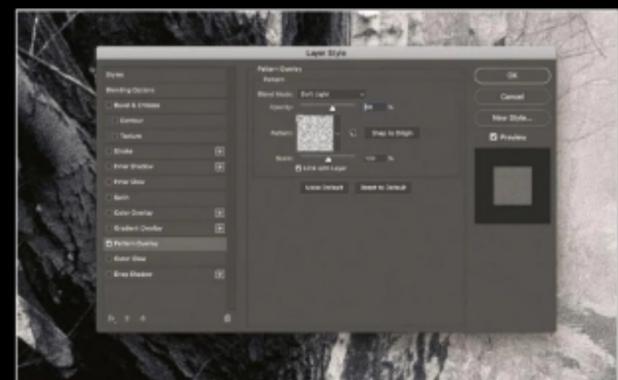
RAW and Photoshop workflows



4 Dodge and burn Use the dedicated Dodge and Burn tools in Photoshop or manipulate the highlights and shadows using the Adjustment Brush in Lightroom (K). Subtly brighten highlight areas and darken the shadows to introduce local contrast and better outline the form of subjects.



5 Customise colour theme Try working with colour toning to add bias to the shadows and highlights for a stylised look. Here the Split Toning control has been used to slightly warm the highlight areas and add a cool tone to the shadows. This gives a richness to the tonality of the scene.



6 Add texture If your image is destined for print it will pick up some of the texture of the paper, but if the file will be used primarily for screen viewing you can try adding some fine grain noise or a pattern overlay. This will help to give the landscape a more classical, filmic quality.

Thinking in monochrome

Five top tips for powerful black and white shots

1 Shoot in mono Try shooting in-camera black and white images to think of every frame in monochrome, rather than as candidates for later conversion. Shoot in JPEG format to apply B&W picture presets.

2 Change aspect Consider altering the native aspect ratio of your images in-camera. A 5:4 ratio or 1:1 square more closely resembles classic film and is conducive to minimalist or unconventional framing.

3 Coloured monochrome While black and white is a clear definition, 'monochrome' is open to interpretation. Technically images dominated by single colours are monochromatic, so try blending coloured midtones with pure shadows and highlights.

4 Black and white cameras If you're dedicated to black and white landscapes, consider getting your camera converted to infrared or even buy a mono-only camera such as the Leica M Monochrom for maximum detail capture.

5 Focus on light Black and white is photography at its most basic. Create simplified landscapes by looking for abstract detail emphasised by strong lighting. Use shadows to push depth and form rather than colour.

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Wish you were here

Travel photographer **Jeremy Flint** reveals how to move away from holiday snaps and capture authentic and creative images

Nothing sounds as exotic to the mind as travel photography. The term conjures up images of far-flung places, true adventures and new experiences. That being said, thousands of photographers – even professionals in other genres – take photos while travelling and are disappointed with the results. Some will take a shot without much consideration about what they are actually photographing, resulting in a ‘holiday snap’: a photo taken during your trip without much thought about the picture or subject itself.

Some examples of snaps are images with poor composition, poor camera technique, excess clutter, poor exposure, out-of-focus subjects, bad framing and flare. In the digital age, you can easily overturn these common mistakes and return from your travels with

more professional-looking photographs – it is a matter of improving your results step by step.

Firstly, to achieve a good travel photograph you need to capture your subject accurately. Then you can find a way to give your images a creative edge.

One way to take better photos while you are travelling, and go beyond capturing a mere snapshot, is to record images with narrative. Travel images that provide more information about your travels, such as an overview of the landscape, the people, interesting details and scenes will tell the viewer more about your photographic subject. Travel images with narrative provide more lasting memories than snapshots and you can enjoy the photos in their own right, or use them to expand your portfolio and creative technique. Here we’ll explore the ways to elevate your travel photography.



Jeremy Flint is an award-winning image-maker and writer from Oxfordshire, UK, who specialises in travel, landscape and location photography. His work stems from a curiosity for the people, places and cultures he visits, as well as the colourful and intimate moments that capture the essence of a place. Jeremy’s work has been featured in a myriad of guides and publications, including *National Geographic Traveller*, *Lonely Planet* and *The Sunday Times Travel Magazine*.

jeremyflintphotography.com

Kyoto, Japan

A maiko (apprentice geisha) in the Gion district of Kyoto, symbolic of traditional Japanese culture

© Jeremy Flint





Plan your trip wisely

Where to go, what to see, and how to keep yourself safe

The excitement of travel photography starts long before the trip itself, when you book a trip, decide where to visit and what to photograph. Every photographer is different in their approach to planning travel shoots. While some pros have specific projects in mind, like filling image gaps in a book, others want a trip that allows them to just explore an area, take in the culture and see what they find.

Whether you are planning a once-in-a-lifetime trip abroad or a visit to a location closer to home, go somewhere that fuels and inspires your photographic interests. For me, the Lake District and the Scottish Highlands in the UK are ideal for landscapes; Africa is great for wildlife; Cornwall and the Jurassic Coast in the UK are good for coastal scenes;

Snowdonia, Slovenia and the USA are amazing for lakes, mountains and canyons. Iceland, Norway and Scotland are perfect when you want to feel in a wild place. If you're lacking inspiration, scour travel guides in a bookshop.

Once your destination is locked in, make a shot list, as this will in turn determine the best time to visit. When to go depends on the kind of images you're after, different conditions and climates you might encounter, and any local events there are to experience. You might also time your visits to coincide with a major wildlife spectacle. For example, the great migration of wildebeests from Tanzania to Kenya occurs at different times of the year – the mass birthing of calves takes place between January and March in the

southern Serengeti, and river crossings occur between July and August. Research subjects and specific sites before you visit, scouting locations and the journey to them.

Once the main trip is booked, consider how you'll keep your gear safe. Insurance aside, it's worth packing a padlock so that you can lock items away in your suitcase when away.

Jumping ahead, when you are shooting in unfamiliar surroundings – particularly in dangerous areas – tell people where you are going beforehand, be vigilant if you are out after dark, and don't risk any harm coming to yourself or your camera gear by flashing it around. Theft can occur in crowded places, so be discreet with your camera and only bring it out when it's safe to do so.



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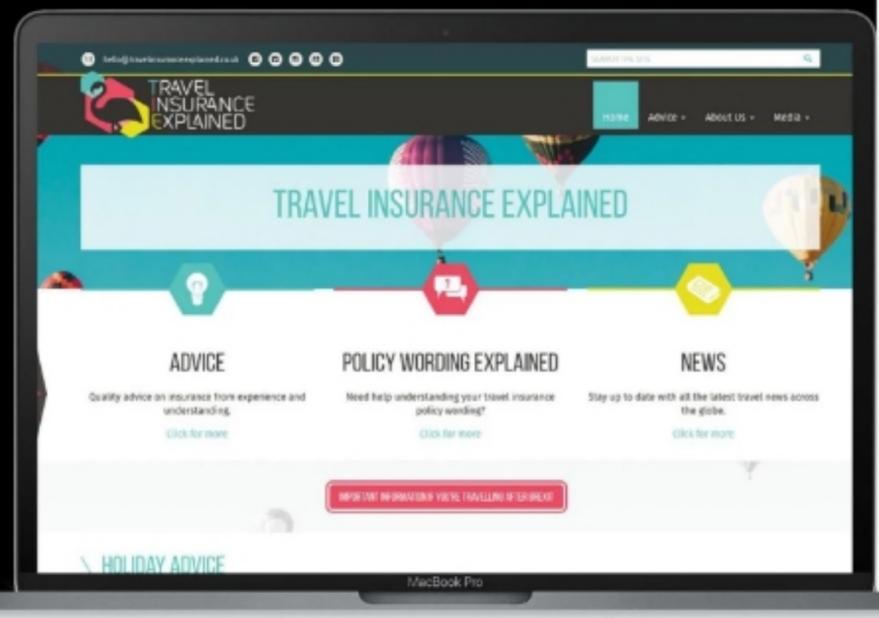
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Travel insurance Do you need it, and what should you look for?

Travel insurance is vital in safeguarding your gear from accidental damage, loss and theft. Insuring it will give you peace of mind if any of these unlikely events occur during your travels.

If this is your only trip of the year, opt for a single-trip insurance policy. If you have a few trips planned, consider an annual policy. Whether you choose a single or annual policy, aim to keep the premium low with sufficient cover for your gear that keeps the excesses to a minimum. Visit www.travelinsuranceexplained.co.uk to help you understand the terms used by insurance companies.



Travel and transport

Booking your journey

Are you going to fly, drive, ferry or walk to your destination? Some journeys are part of the travel experience, whereas for other trips you'll want to get to your destination as quickly as possible.

You should consider the time it takes to travel versus the cost. For flights, Skyscanner (skyscanner.net) is a comparison website to check times and prices. Direct flights are quicker, though usually more expensive than indirect flights, which take longer and may require an overnight stop or hours spent at the airport. Driving is usually more convenient if you are travelling within one country.



Opposite
See the sites
Consider what sites you wish to visit in each place and scout locations

Above
Make the most of it
With planning and research you can get more from your trips

Below
Use travel guides
Instead of relying on an internet search, flick through travel guides and books to glean trip inspiration



Pack the right kit

Consider what to take, and how to take it

Travel is a wonderful way to take a break from work and to recharge the batteries. Some of the main joys of travel are the sense of freedom it brings, and the feelings of excitement and anticipation associated with exploring somewhere new or returning to somewhere familiar. However, for the photographer, travel comes with challenges – especially deciding what kit to take and how to travel well with it.

A sturdy camera bag is an essential item to protect your camera and lenses. It's best to

take a prime, a telephoto and a zoom lens to cover several bases. Consider taking a tripod for extra stability when taking photos, plus accessories such as a lens hood to prevent flare, and spare batteries if you're going to be away from power for long periods of time.

If you're flying as part of your trip, one common challenge is deciding whether it is safer to put your camera gear into checked baggage or take it as hand luggage. If you find the prospect of checking camera gear into the hold worrying, bring it with you into the cabin.

Below
Stay light

Take the kit that's essential – travelling light makes it easier to move around

Right
Gear up

Protect your gear while you travel – cushion your camera and lenses

Be aware that weight limits and baggage size limits vary from airline to airline, so check carefully before packing. This will help to avoid having to repack at the airport, as well as avoiding any hefty fines incurred at check-in.

Sometimes your main luggage may be roughly handled by airport staff, so pack any camera gear away securely. With checked baggage, wrap kit inside clothing or a padded bag for protection, and ensure hand luggage is in a well-cushioned camera bag or holdall to secure it.

What to pack

What gear should you take?

Packing is an important part of the preparation for any trip. As well as your camera equipment, make a list of travel gear to pack. Consider the weather and where you are travelling to, so you can bring appropriate clothing. Take a hat, gloves and thermal layers for colder climates, and waterproof clothing for regions where it's likely to rain.

CAMERA BAG

Ideally your bag should blend in, and be made of tough, durable material with the ability to organise your kit, such as the Lowepro Pro Runner BP 450 AW II backpack.



CAMERA AND LENSES

Pack your camera body and prioritise a couple of lenses when travelling – ideally those that cover a range of focal lengths so that you don't have to carry extra weight.



TRIPOD AND ACCESSORIES

A tripod (possibly a compact model), lens hood and spare batteries are all vital items to take with you on your journeys. Pack these securely so they don't move excessively.



One top tip is to think about your trip in advance and only travel with the gear you will use. It's not enjoyable to carry around excess weight when shooting on holiday.

When travelling with batteries, airline rules require that lithium ion and lithium metal batteries must be taken with carry-on baggage and kept with the passenger in the aircraft cabin.

A good option to avoid problems is to consider hiring gear on the other end. You may want to hire equipment at your holiday destination to prevent the risk of damage during transit, to get around the airline weight restrictions and to avoid the burden of carrying lots of gear.



Choose camera settings and skills

Learn when to adopt different technical approaches

If you want to take your travel photography to a more professional level, there are both creative choices and tried-and-tested techniques that you can employ.

One approach is to do with aspect ratios, namely switching from the familiar landscape or portrait orientation and shooting a panorama of a scene. This letterbox format can be used to capture a larger vista – wide plains, mountain ranges and sprawling cityscapes – and can help you to incorporate a more immersive perspective. For a stitched panoramic shot, use a standard prime lens such as a 35mm or 50mm lens, shoot around five to six overlapping images, and then stitch them together using Photoshop. This always has more impact than shooting a scene with a wide-angle lens and simply cropping the image into a pano format after.

Regarding camera settings, don't just stick with semi-auto modes, but switch your camera dial into full Manual and experiment. Taking control of the exposure gives you a greater say over the look of your images in different situations. For example, when dealing with tricky lighting situations such as shooting in snow, in automatic mode the

snow will appear too dark, as the white mass will mislead your meter into underexposing. Shooting travel photos in Manual mode means you can manually adjust the aperture and shutter speed to give you an exposure compensation of +1-2 stops for a more accurate exposure. If the lighting doesn't change while you're shooting, Manual mode can even be quicker than auto, as the settings won't need changing.

Experiment with the aperture, using shallow depth of field to hone in on the most engaging parts of the scene, or for portraits. In terms of shutter speed, capture fast exposures of action scenes such as a parade or a performer, and slow shutter speeds down to add movement and dynamism when shooting waterfalls or subjects in motion, for example.

Focus depends on the type of image you want to achieve – whether you want all of your photos to be in focus or part in focus dictates how the viewer sees your image. Creating a single, strong focus point can lead to a more dynamic image that focuses attention on a particular area, while extending this into the foreground and background can spread the focus across the entire frame.

Right
Lake Bled, Slovenia

The Church of the Assumption on an island in Lake Bled is a wonderful icon of Slovenia

Below right
Take control

Adjust aperture to alter depth of field and focus the viewer's eye on specific areas of the scene

Below far right
Manage the view

Choosing to shoot in Manual mode gives you greater creative freedom to decide the mood of your shots

x 5 @ Jeremy Flint



Consider your focal length

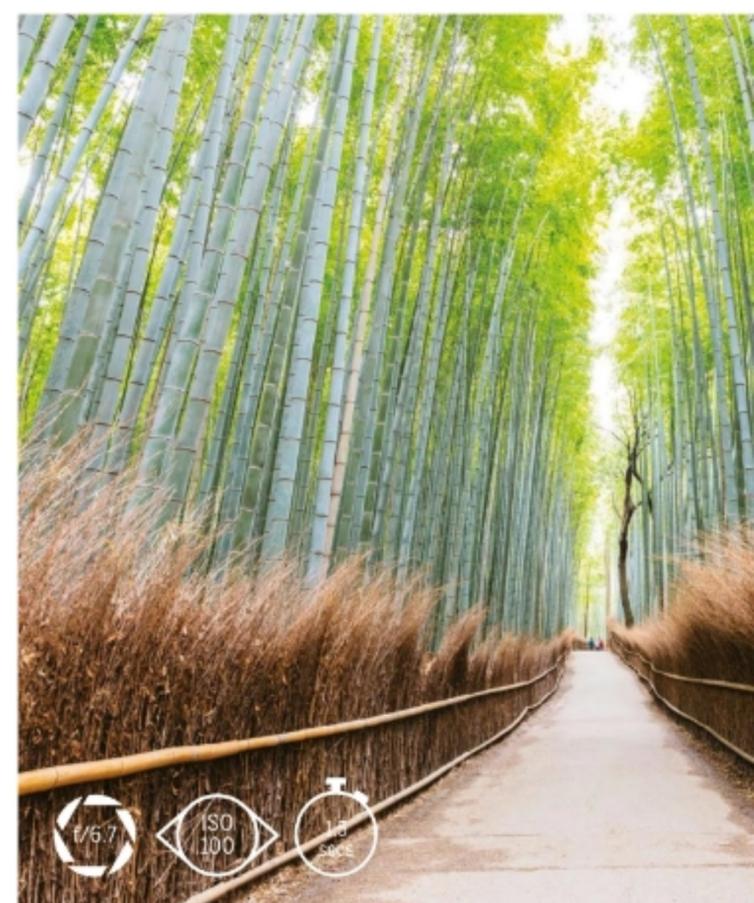
How does framing affect the way your scene is seen?



Above
Joshua Tree, California (Before)
Initially, I wanted to capture the sun in my shot framed by two Joshua trees (yucca palm trees) to give a sense of the harsh environment.



Above
Joshua Tree, California (After)
I decided to recompose for a wider scene. I felt the inclusion of more trees and a larger account of the landscape gave a better composition.







Show a travel narrative

Avoid standard landscapes and tell the story of your location

Creating a narrative in travel photography is about more than just taking pictures of pretty landscapes. To capture the essence and flavour of a place, you need to incorporate a variety of visual components that tell the viewer more.

This could mean shooting the entire scene to give context: using a wide-angle lens to provide more information about your location and include an overview of the landscape, revealing the lie of the land. On the other hand, using a prime lens and a longer focal length to capture local people and streets will also add narrative to a place. Photographing specific details of a location – famous statues, road signs or close-ups of architectural features – add interest, but avoid cliché postcard shots.

A narrative can also be created around a particular travel-related subject, for example

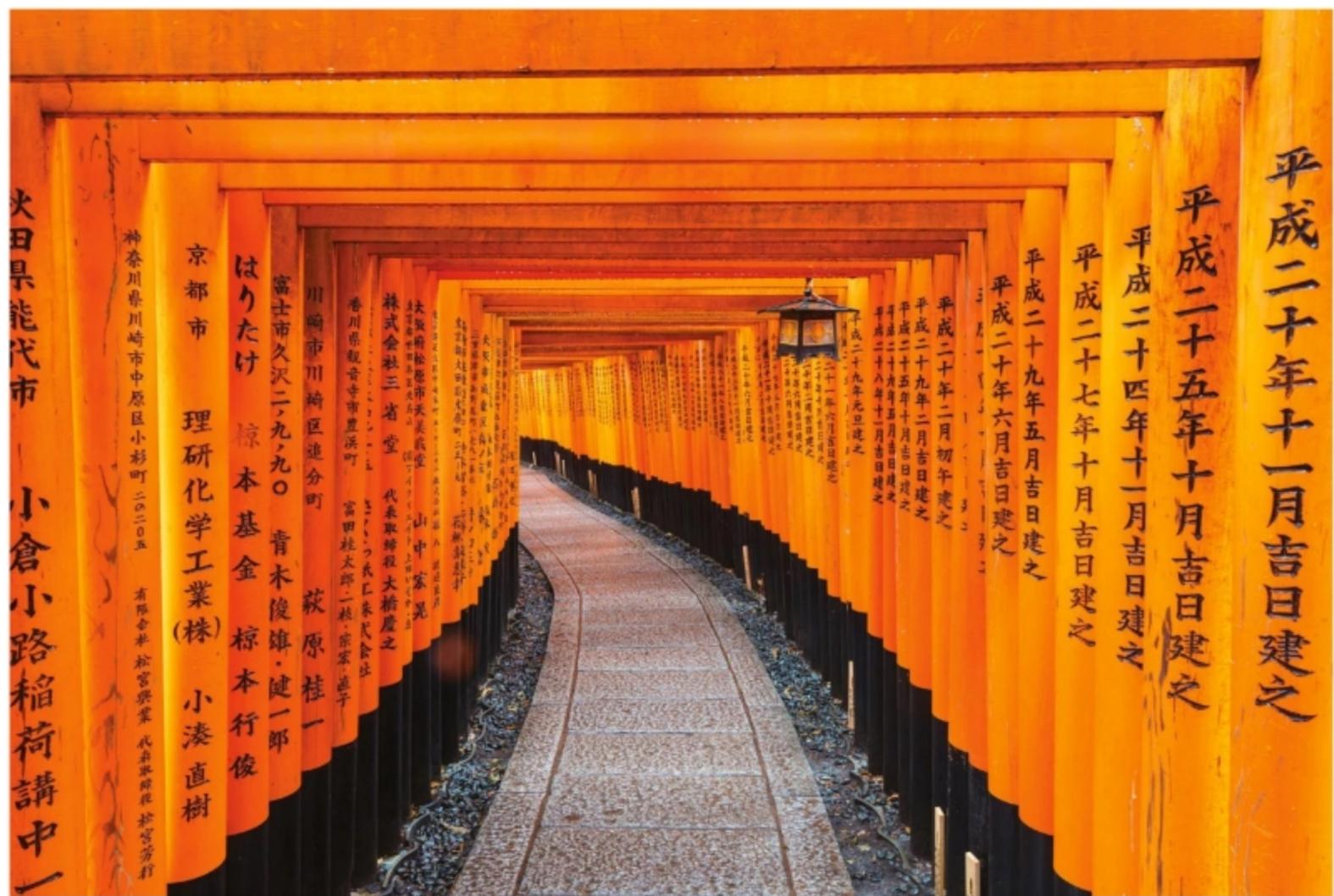
food markets, vistas or street interactions. If you find yourself in a marketplace and want to create a story with your photos, document the variety of different stalls, the market vendors and even the products on offer. With landscape shots, include focal points like trees and foliage that work alongside the sweeping views. Whatever you shoot, try capturing some images that show interesting parts or another side to the main subject.

All these tips add up to the same thing: in order to show more context in your travel shots, you need to capture elements that provide an insight into where you are. Really consider what makes each place unique, exotic and worth visiting. What scents fill the air? What can you hear? What is the atmosphere like? It's easier said than done,

but try appealing to the viewer's senses through your imagery.

You may be lucky enough to encounter a local festival during your travels – or you might have had the foresight to book a trip that coincides with one. Photographs of a major event will tell a viewer more about your location and reveal insights into the lives and the culture of the people that take part.

Pro travel photographers don't shoot like tourists. Anyone can take a picture of a famous landmark such as the Taj Mahal or Süleymaniye Mosque, so to truly succeed, focus on a specific part of the building, as well as its surroundings – giving unusual meaning to a familiar sight. An object or person in the frame adds scale to a scene and can again provide more context about the environment.



Shoot scenes with more meaning

Capture landscapes with context

Photographing travel landscapes requires a different approach to standard landscapes. To add meaning, include extra elements in your scene – a hiker walking on a mountain, a canoeist gliding down a river, local people going about their day – as these will all add more context. Another approach could be to include an interesting foreground with a striking background, such as a building in front of the landscape.



An old barn and the Teton Range

This old wooden barn adds character to this image, providing a sense of scale against the mountain range and illustrating the area's building style

x 5 © Jeremy Flint

Above left
Festival in Papua New Guinea

A western highlands group perform a sing-sing at the Goroka Show

Below
Portrait of a lady

This portrait from the remote corner of Maramures, Romania tells a story

Above right
Fushimi Inari Shrine, Kyoto

This shrine is a magical sight to behold and is famous for its torii gates

Right
Chinese calligraphy

An artist practises his craft of creating calligraphy – a shot that reveals something about Chinese culture



Add more impact

Adopt a varied approach to framing and exposure

After setting and subject choices, composition is another element that, when done correctly, can elevate your travel shots from run of the mill to pro status. To start with the basics, try shooting from a different angle to your normal field of view. For example, point the camera upwards and shoot the scene above you, such as at skyscrapers or a forest canopy.

Next up, look to add foreground interest, such as a glistening rock in front of a river or some native flowers in front of a mountain – both of which will also help to add scale.

Another way to add some impact to your images is through creative blur. Experiment with slow shutter speeds to capture expressive ethereal steam or blurred foliage, or capture even longer exposures to capture the pleasingly milky effect of moving water. You can be creative with your images by using fill-in flash. This helps to improve the lighting in difficult lighting situations. For example, when photographing portraits, fill-in flash can lighten your subject's shadows, particularly if they are wearing a hat. You can use fill-in

flash to lighten shadows on nearby animals or close-up photography.

The options for framing pictures are plentiful. Don't just stick to the traditional landscape format, but turn your camera on its side and shoot in portrait orientation. Another framing option is to shoot as normal and crop in a square image format, which is popular for sharing on social media.

I keep mentioning the importance of framing, but the frame (and negative space in it) can also be determined by an image's end use. For example, if your shot is destined for a magazine spread or book that will have text over it, it's important to leave empty areas in the sky. Try changing the position of your horizon from the top third of the image to the bottom third to see which looks best.

When framing your travel photos, ask yourself if there is a key point of interest in this shot, and where you should intentionally place it within the scene. Placing points of interest on the intersections of a 3x2 grid helps key features to stand out and can improve results.



Editing workflow techniques

How should you manage and edit your images?

After your trip, remember to back up your photos to your computer's hard drive or an external drive to ensure you have a spare copy. After that, you can process your images using editing software such as Photoshop or Lightroom to bring out the best from your travel shots. A few simple tweaks to key components will make a huge difference and will elevate your photos from good shots to pro-level images.

1 Adjust brightness and contrast Adjust the contrast in Lightroom or brightness and contrast in Photoshop to bring out and alter the variety of tones in your image.

2 Adjust colour Add some colour by adjusting the Vibrancy or Saturation sliders. It can be easy to over-enhance an image, so be careful not to over-do it when processing.

3 Remove dust spots Sensor dust can be a real problem for your photographs, so tidy up any unwanted spots by removing them from all your images with editing software.

4 Cropping When you are editing your images you may want to change the crop to a more suitable format or ratio, or to remove an aspect you don't want in the final photo.



Above
Floating around (Before)
Straight out of the camera, this image looks passable but is slightly flat and has some dust spots. It required editing to help improve it

Right
Flying high (After)
Adding a touch of contrast with a bit of colour helps to lift the image. The rocks look more prominent in the scene and the balloons stand out more with these changes





Left
A grand scale
 Including more sky and the tips of the looming mountains creates a powerful illustration of scale

Above
Portrait format
 Turning the camera on its side and shooting in portrait format gave this scene a more prominent foreground

Scenes with impact What steps should you consider?



1 Find a location Scout out a good location on foot or by vehicle and find a viewpoint you like. Once you have found an interesting location it is then a matter of getting some good shots from that spot.



2 Gorgeous light When shooting a landscape, light plays a big role in elevating your shots from ordinary to exceptional. The light can give your scenes a warm, soft tone and really lift reflections in water.



3 Time it right Time your visit to photograph the landscape at the best time of day. During sunset and sunrise the sun is low in the sky, which is a great time to capture something special.



4 Foreground Find an interesting foreground to add some depth to your picture. Have a look for rocks, plants or even wildlife that can make good foreground features to add to your scene.



5 Keep it simple Remember that less is more in landscape photography and that you don't need to overcomplicate scenes. Try including fewer natural components and isolate certain features of a given scene.



6 Shoot creatively Be imaginative with your shots. Consider using a wider angle and placing a tree in the scene, or photograph a familiar scene from a fresh perspective to transform your images.

Ten top tips for travel

Pro advice for shooting on your travels

1 Travel light Only take the gear you need. Consider a lightweight travel tripod to minimise weight and travel as comfortably as possible.

2 See the light Watch how the light changes within your scene, and shoot interesting light to add impact to your photographs.

3 Shoot what you love The best way to enjoy your photography is to shoot what interests you about a place, so focus on elements such as landscapes, street photography or portraiture.

4 Shoot something different Also challenge yourself to shoot something you wouldn't normally shoot. For example, if you like landscapes, try photographing a street scene or cityscape for a change.

5 Keep horizons straight Remember to keep your horizons straight when shooting to make your images look more pleasing and level.

6 Be original It can be tempting to copy a picture you've seen on a website or magazine, but try to be original and creative with compositions.

7 Be prepared to learn Take the time to learn your craft by reading the camera manual to see how your camera operates and what functions are best to use.

8 Stay safe Don't risk putting yourself or your camera gear in danger. Be considerate of where you go and when and keep safe. It is a good idea to tell people where you are going.

9 Have fun Simply enjoying photography on your travels and you will be more likely to capture better pictures that you are happy with.

10 Get lost Don't be afraid to visit another place besides the familiar tourist sites and get lost. Just make sure you are not going somewhere dangerous.



★ Trustpilot ★★★★★

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Brighten the street

Deliberately overexposing the image by taking an exposure reading from a darker area allows bolder colours to pop in a bright scene

All images © Craig Reilly



Craig Reilly is a London-based street photographer and workshop leader. He started shooting on the streets in 2015 and has honed his skills by covering many hundreds of kilometres across London and other European cities.

Craig co-founded the Street Photography International Collective (SPI) and curates its Instagram account ([streetphotographyinternational](https://www.instagram.com/streetphotographyinternational)), which has 1 million followers and over 6 million images in its pool of work.

craigreillyphotography.com

10

steps for

STREET photography

Craig Reilly shares his advice from the streets to help you sharpen your skills

Street photography right now seems to be the in-vogue genre for newcomers and experienced photographers around the world. People of all ages are posting their work on social media, entering competitions, attending workshops, festivals and exhibitions, and the sheer volume of photos I see just in Street Photography International's #SPiCollective pool of images (4.5 million) reiterates its enormous popularity.

Some of the reasons for this are because of its accessibility (you don't need an invite or backstage pass to attend), the lack of

equipment required (any one camera is enough), lack of expense (walk to your nearest town), and it's a great way to keep your eye in if you work in other genres.

Even though it's called street photography, it doesn't have to be taken on a street – it can be a photo of anything happening in a public place. There are also so many definitions of street photography; each one unique to the photographer shooting. I see it as trying to capture or create art from an everyday, mundane and candid moment. Hopefully, using the tips in this feature will help you to increase your success rate in catching them.

1 Take the right gear

What is the perfect lens or camera for the street?

First and foremost, in terms of camera equipment, the right gear can only be chosen by you, the photographer. There are many websites, magazine articles and chapters in books telling you what the perfect camera, lens and settings are for a particular genre, and street photography seems to be one of the most featured right now. There is no such thing as the 'perfect' model or technique.

If you're able to capture the type of photo you're aiming for, stick with your current kit. Only look to change when you want to try a different approach or create a new style.

I use the Olympus Micro Four Thirds system on the OM-D range of cameras, and I chose that system by doing research and deciding what was best for me. Being able to customise certain buttons, and the size and weight of the camera body combined with a quality, weather-sealed lens, makes it easier for me to work without any worries of getting fatigued and achy, damaging my camera in bad weather, and not having to second-guess how to use it when I need to react quickly.

I prefer to use a prime lens (the Olympus 17mm f/1.8 is my most-used lens). This forces me to move and change my position when I'm trying to get the best composition in a particular scene, as opposed to just zooming in and out. It also encouraged me to get closer to my subjects when I first started shooting street shots.

Right
Utilise reflections
Using reflections and light creates a symmetrical image and strong leading lines

My kit And why I use it

OLYMPUS OM-D E-M1 MARK I

I use this camera due to its customisation options, how quickly I can access or change the settings when needed, and of course, its image quality.

TENBA COOPER 15 SLIM

This bag is large enough to fit both bodies, my three lenses, MacBook Pro and a drink, and yet still be comfortable. The quick-access top zip and the signature Whisper Hook (silent Velcro) system are brilliant added benefits.

OLYMPUS OM-D E-M1 MARK II

It's set-up exactly how I have the Mark I, but this has a rotating screen instead of a tilt screen, which gives me other options in certain situations and locations.

OLYMPUS M.ZUIKO 12-40MM F/2.8 PRO

This lens is heavier than the two prime lenses, but it covers an excellent range of focal lengths, with the bonus of being weatherproof. I use this in all weathers and for workshops.

OLYMPUS M.ZUIKO 17MM F/1.8

This is my most-used lens. It's lightweight, small, and absolutely fantastic to use. I especially like the pull-back focus ring to switch between auto and manual focus.





Wait for it

This was taken after a five-minute wait while leaning over a parapet wall in Newport Street Gallery, London

2 Don't be in such a rush

Wait for the final element to arrive

When we first start out in street photography – and most new genres, in fact – our initial instinct and excitement tells us to capture pretty much everything we see moving (or sitting still). But in doing so, we have hundreds or possibly thousands of photos to trawl through when we get home, with huge disappointment due to the lack of even a half-decent result.

I strongly recommend studying and waiting at a location if the light, subject matter or location make it worthwhile to stick around. Street photography isn't always about seeing the exact moment and capturing it – sometimes it's a case of predicting when something is going to happen and then capturing what you foresaw.

If you are going to wait, it's a good idea to gauge how busy that location is. Ask yourself how long you may have to wait for someone of interest to walk into this scene, or if it's too busy, would it be better to make a mental note of the day, time and available light, and return when it could be quieter?



Fast framing

With a bit of practice you'll be able to compose the shot as you're approaching a subject

3 Check the whole frame

Remove any distractions in the shot in situ

When a location has most of the elements to make a great image and just needs the final factor (a subject) to enter the scene, my preparation and process is to get as much as I can correct in camera rather than having to spend unnecessary time looking for something on a computer screen that I didn't see initially. That's not photography to me.

Firstly, I get my exposure correct. Once that's locked in, my next process is to decide on how best to compose the frame. All the time I'm looking through my viewfinder, I'm

looking in all the corners and edges for any distractions and making minor adjustments to remove them – whether that's changing my location or adjusting the position of my camera. The things I want to eliminate can include minor spots of light, other people, signs with text or symbols, or just busy environments in general.

While eliminating the distractions, I'll use the straight edges within that location to align with my frame, and also utilise any leading lines from a particular corner to the subject.



Background thoughts

The right side of my frame is aligned with the vertical wall, but a slight wrong movement has allowed a touch of white to show beside the last red stripe

4 Think about the background

Get into position to isolate your subject

It's easy to be so focused on our subject that we forget about the background. This is apparent when looking at the photos we've taken that day, and we either find the subject has been lost among a bush behind them, has a lamppost or sign coming out of their head,

or there's someone else in the background doing something much more interesting.

To eliminate these errors or use them to your advantage, your next thought, once you've spotted a subject, should be about the background and what position you need to be

in to isolate them or use something behind them as a juxtaposition or aid.

The more you do this, the more you'll recognise an opportunity and get into the correct position quicker, saving you seconds on the street and many minutes editing at home.

New look

By looking at things from above you can see moments in a totally unique way

5

Change your perspective

Look from above or below, inwards or outwards

When you're out walking the streets, visiting a gallery or museum, or travelling by bus or the Underground, it's always good practice to take the opportunity to look at things from a totally different perspective.

It's very easy to take a photo at eye level, which of course will be needed on a lot of occasions. But if it's an option, take the time to look at your location from the ground, from above or at an odd angle. It will open you up

to so many new ways of being creative. Can you look inside a window of a shop, a passing car or bus? Can you look outwards from a stationary vehicle? Can you raise your camera way above your head or lay it on the ground?

When I'm shooting I look around the whole scene from different angles. Just because you've seen something that's caught your eye in one spot doesn't necessarily mean you have to be rooted to that position.



Left
Contrast
 By using spot metering and taking an exposure reading from the brightest point, you can get a high contrast

Above
Perspective
 By holding the camera above my head to take the shot, I was able to give the impression the couple are sitting on the railing

Below
Be ready
 Having your settings, such as shutter speed and aperture prepared, allows you to react quickly when you need to

6 Be prepared Charged up, enough memory, settings set?

Making sure you have charged your batteries and have enough free memory on your memory cards is the first step to being prepared for a day's shoot. I transfer all my photos to an external hard drive at the end of the day, and clear my memory card the morning before going out.

When out, I make sure to have my settings prepared depending on my location and the amount of light available. A good habit to get into is to check your shutter speed and depth

of field every so often or when you're entering a location where the light differs greatly.

If I'm waiting at a point of interest, the first thing I do after studying the scene is to get my exposure correct. I do this using spot metering. This allows me to be very selective with the available light, and a little creative too.

If it's a dark shadow/high-contrast shot, I'll expose from the brightest point. If it's a bright, clean location, I will take a meter reading from a darker spot to overexpose the white walls.

That way, anyone with a bright item of clothing or accessory will pop out and give the image a minimalistic feel if composed correctly. I do all this visually, rather than using the in-camera histogram. Once I'm happy with that, I'll lock it in by pressing the AEL button. This allows me to compose the scene exactly how I wish.

Not having to worry about my exposure changing if the light remains the same is one less thing to think about when the time comes to get the shot.



7 Be confident in your approach

Avoid sticking out like a sore thumb

The biggest fear or hurdle the majority of people have when first getting into street photography (myself included) is being able to get close to strangers. One of the best tips I can give you to help you blend in is to be confident with your approach. This is easier said than done of course, but if you're hesitant, looking at and then away from your subject, wondering whether to commit, you're going to stand out, possibly look quite suspicious and more than likely miss the shot.

A tip to help build that confidence is a technique I have used many times. If I've spotted an interesting moment or person, I don't want to make eye contact with them

until I'm in my desired position. I'll look beyond them and then bring the camera to my eye, frame them how I want to frame them and wait for eye contact. Upon getting the eye contact I'll press the shutter button. After getting their photo, I take the camera away from my eye and look at the spot I was looking at before. Most of the time the subject will turn around to look at what you were fascinated with.

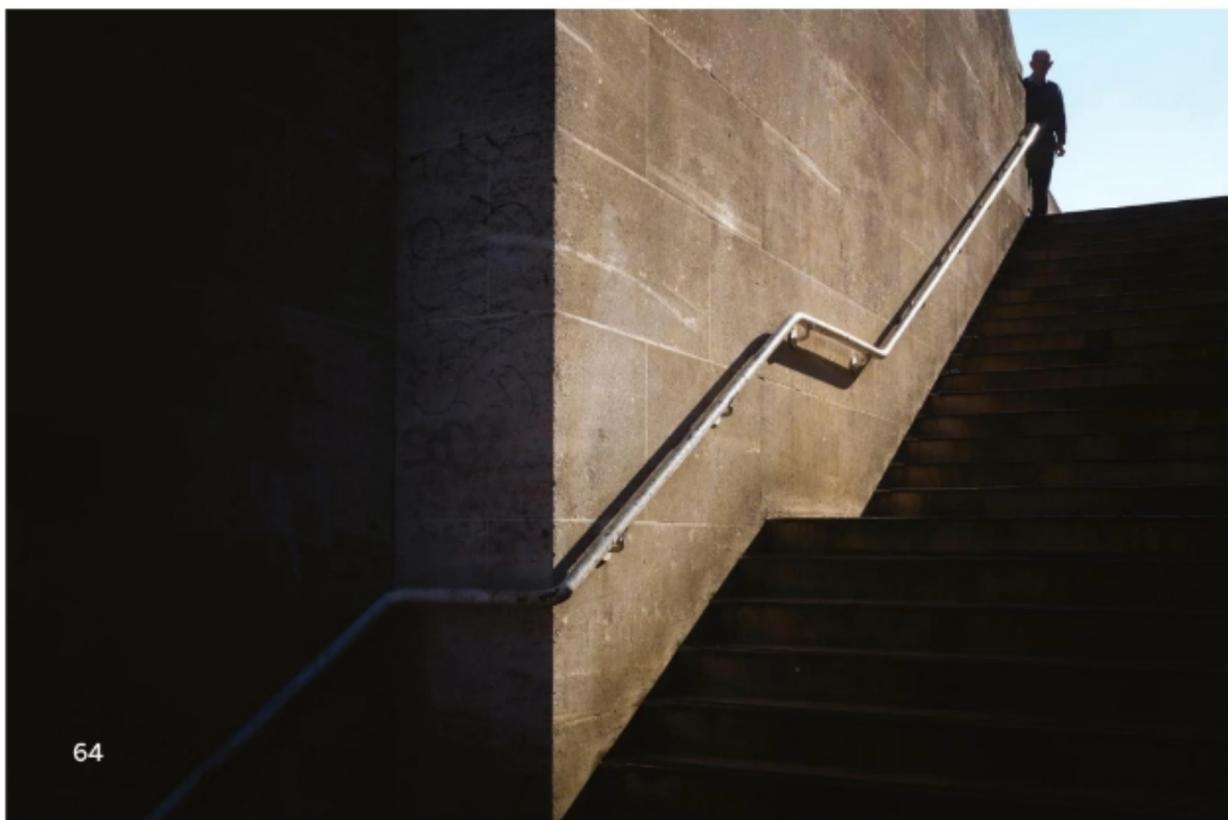
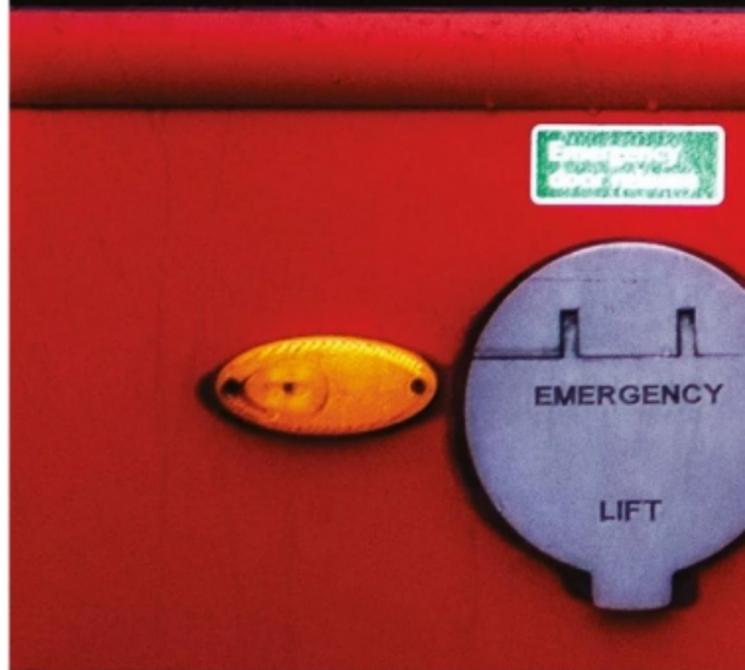
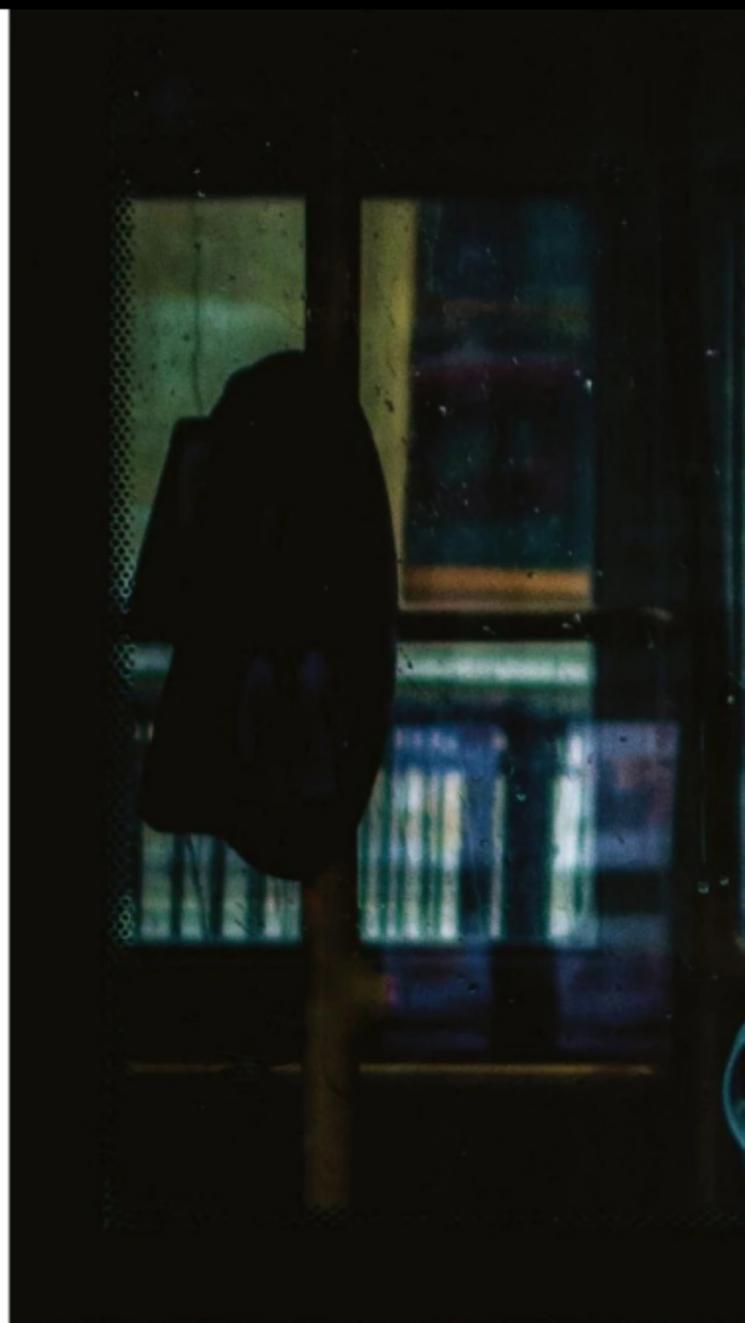
When you're more confident and the quality of your images improves, you'll happily wave or even speak to and show your subject their candid portrait, and they'll probably ask you to send them a copy.

8 Stick to the same route

The same location can look very different

This may seem an odd tip to give, but it's something many popular street photographers do. The reason I give this tip is because, by sticking to a particular route for at least a year and a half on and off, you'll see how the same locations change dramatically due to the amount of light at certain times of the day, at different times of the year and in different types of weather.

Not only will you see how the light affects the same location, you'll also see how much an area's landscape can change from one month to the next. This is one of the reasons why I love street photography. Not only are we creating art from everyday moments, we're also capturing the history of people's lives, fashion, habits and surroundings in cities, towns and districts all over the world.





Don't hesitate
Seeing an opportunity
and committing to it will
bring you more success
than being hesitant



Far left
Same route
A shot on the stairs
leading to Waterloo
Bridge, London, taken
on 24/02/2019

Middle left
Lifting the mundane
This was taken in front
of the stairs leading
to Waterloo Bridge on
13/08/2016

Left
Different day
Another shot on
the stairs leading to
Waterloo Bridge, London,
taken exactly a year
earlier (than the far left):
24/02/2018

9 Post-process your images

Craig's subtle boosts in software

When post-processing my images, there's not anything specific I'm looking to do, and it's all done aesthetically for each image. This is because the locations will be different from one day to the next.

Learning how to post-process your work is really important in creating your own style.

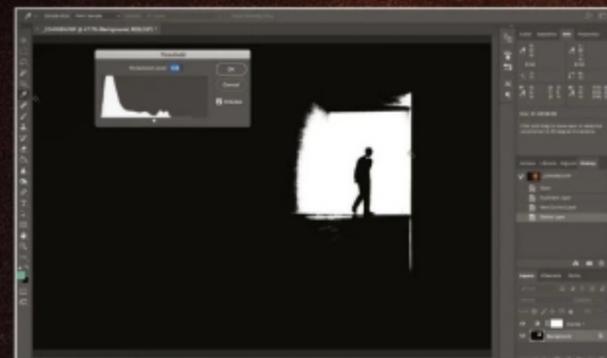
There was a time I watched a YouTube video on post-processing and put all that person's process into my own photos for a while. They look terrible when I go back and view them now. It's nothing to do with his tips, it's because I was using a technique that worked for someone else's photos, not mine.



My favourite tool in Lightroom is the White Balance eye dropper. Move your cursor around the photo to see the thumbnail image in the Navigator section (top left) change with each movement. Select a neutral point on something such as a concrete paving slab to give your photo a more natural-looking colour palette.



This is the original image: 4x3 with no crop. Getting as much correct in-camera means that less editing is needed. Adjustments in Adobe Lightroom are made with a 3x2 crop. Increasing the shadows brings out the left wall's texture, and using a cooler white balance brings out the whites of the entrance.



To use curves in Photoshop as a colour-correcting tool, click on the Add Adjustment Layer icon and select Curves. To adjust the colour balance, in the Properties panel choose the channel you want to adjust. Summarising this process, you can drag the curve and add points to make tonal alterations.



AFTER

The white is cleaner and lighter, while the black is darker and deeper, giving the orange more vibrance and making the man's suit more prominent. This whole process took ten minutes

Do not delete How much can you learn from your poor photos?

This is one of the greatest learning tools we can have in photography, and one of the fastest ways to train your eye to seek out opportunities. When you are looking at your photos on a computer or camera's LCD screen, it's a natural reaction to delete photos you think are useless. But don't be so hasty. I strongly recommend you study the photos you consider a poor standard.

Rather than using a ratio such as rule of thirds or the golden spiral, using your eyes is the best way to analyse your own work, as you know what's aesthetically pleasing to you and your creative style. Ask yourself what makes them bad. Could you have positioned yourself in a different location? Should you have waited until your subject was in 'x' position? What if you had used a

faster shutter speed or a shallower depth of field? Continuously asking yourself these types of questions will teach you to have the answers before you press the shutter.

Another good reason not to delete your photos is because your eye will likely change over time, and you may notice some decent photos that you overlooked many months or even years before.

10 Dress up

Comfortable gear and clothing is essential

It cannot be stressed enough how important it is to feel comfortable with what you're wearing for a full day of photographing on the streets. Obviously, shoes will be one of the most essential items on that list. Walking up to 21 kilometres during a single day's workshop is common practice. It's made very clear to workshop attendees that they make sure they're wearing comfortable shoes for the day's activity upon signing up.

In terms of clothing, again it's important to be comfortable and warm, but I believe it's also important to blend in with the people around you. I'm not suggesting you go head to toe in camouflage, but wearing something you're likely to wear to your local supermarket – instead of wearing your full kit on a photographer's vest – will not be screaming, "Look at me, I'm going to take your photo!"

I mentioned my bag in the kit section, and some people may not pay too much attention to their bag, but there's nothing more frustrating than something that continuously slips off your shoulder, or that you have to adjust the position of every ten strides. If your mind is being distracted by any of these factors, there's a good chance you're going to miss a number of photo opportunities because of it, so dress smartly.

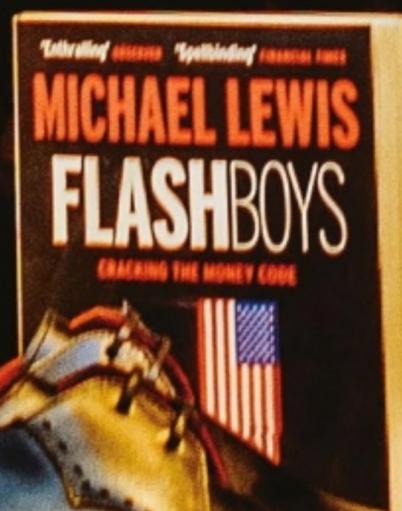
Have fun

During the Easter weekend in 2016 I took this selfie using my reflection and a papier-mâché pig head for a bit of fun



niws

I-M



Kase Wolverine Magnetic Circular Filters

Matt Holland, outdoors photographer and designer, tells us why the Kase Filters Magnetic Circular system is a force to be reckoned with!

For a long time, I used square filters, typically opting for the 100mm system. From an early stage in my photographic career you would always be told square was best. Circular was for amateurs and breaking into filters.

When it comes to genres of photography such as long exposures and landscapes, square has always been seen to be the champion and must have for photographers but circular filters are on the rise for their ease of use, lightweight and now matching the quality of glass and build to that of the 100mm systems. Kase's Magnetic Circular system is a testament to this, using the toughened Wolverine glass, which is drop proof as we tested in Scotland, where we threw the filters off a mountain and come out with no scratches!

If like me and often out traveling, up a mountain side or sat knee height in a river in pursuit of that next photo then you need a system which is lightweight, space saving, tough and can stand up to whatever the outdoors can throw at you. Come rain or shine.

After losing my expensive 100mm square system to a river I was tired with the frustration of using these larger filters and paying out large sums of money for replacements or just generally keeping them clean and dry whilst out camping in these regions.

lightweight, space saving, tough and can stand up to what the outdoors can throw at you.

In reviewing what I wished the filters to achieve for me, I came to the conclusion I didn't need graduated filters as my style of post-processing closely matched that of composite and digital artists. Stacking multiple exposures and blending together to get the best results and greater control, so

this left me only needing the polariser and plain neutral density filters.

I then discovered the Kase Circular Filter system and it answered everything I was looking for. As an early adapter to the system, it was still a screw thread system.

Months later the Magnetic series was released, and this was the game changer!

The Wolverine glass was tough, drop proof, easy to keep dry and clean in the outdoors and ultimately saved me a great deal of space and weight.

this was the game changer!

They gave me the best clarity and no colour casting when using 6 to 10 stop neutral density filters. Better yet, being a magnetic filter, they are faster to use with a snap on to the front element and remove just as quickly in poor weather which meant no more frozen step up rings and struggling to remove



ABOVE: Burnham-on-sea low lighthouse, captured using Olympus OM-D E-M5 mkII with a 12-40mm Pro f/2.8 lens with a Kase Wolverine Magnetic Polariser and ND 64 attached.

filters in the wet. Not just limited to the Kase Circular Filters, I could house and protect the filters inside my lens hoods and continue shooting no matter the weather.

Twelve months after first getting my Kase Magnetic Circular Filters they have performed above and beyond my needs and the filters themselves have been dropped numerous times, been swimming, frozen in the snow

ABOVE: Castle Stalker. **BELOW:** St Cwyfan's church. Captured using Olympus OM-D E-M5 mkII with a 12-40mm Pro f/2.8 lens with a Kase Wolverine Magnetic Polariser and ND 64 attached.



and rolled down hills and are yet to show any scratches, let alone smash.

The speed and ease of use with the Kase Magnetic Circular Filters has meant more time shooting and doing what I enjoy, rather than setting up and the repetitive cleaning of filters in the rain. Simply put, I can now rely on my filters to perform above and beyond my requirements.

I'd highly recommend the Kase Magnetic Circular system, it's compact, lightweight, easy to use and can withstand whatever the outdoors or you can throw at them.



Matt Holland is an outdoors photographer and designer working for global brands. On his website he shares techniques, reviews and adventures, venturing out no matter the weather.

mihollandphoto.com

The Kase Wolverine Magnetic circular kit includes a magnetic lens adapter ring, circular polarise, ND 8, ND 64 and ND 1000 neutral density filters, a carry pouch and a free magnetic lens cap. The 77mm version costs £280 and its £285 for the 82mm kit.

Kasefilters.com



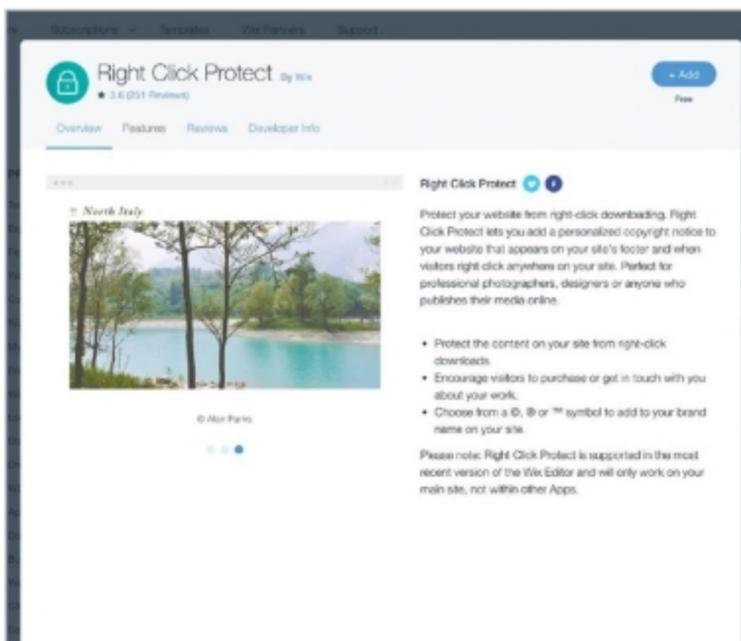
PROTECT YOUR IMAGES

We take a look at the ways to help you avoid online image theft

The internet is a great platform for showing off images, and it gives access to a massive audience of like-minded photographers and potential clients. The options for websites and portfolios are constantly growing, which gives more opportunities to spread the word about images, areas of expertise and style.

However, alongside this exposure is the continual threat of copyright infringement and image theft. While many instances are the result of innocent under-appreciation of the serious nature of intellectual property theft – children downloading photos from Google, for example – it's important to protect your assets.

There are multiple solutions to prevent the theft of images placed online, although no single one may effectively cover all situations and platforms in isolation. Here, we look at some of the most popular options among professional photographers and analyse their benefits and disadvantages.

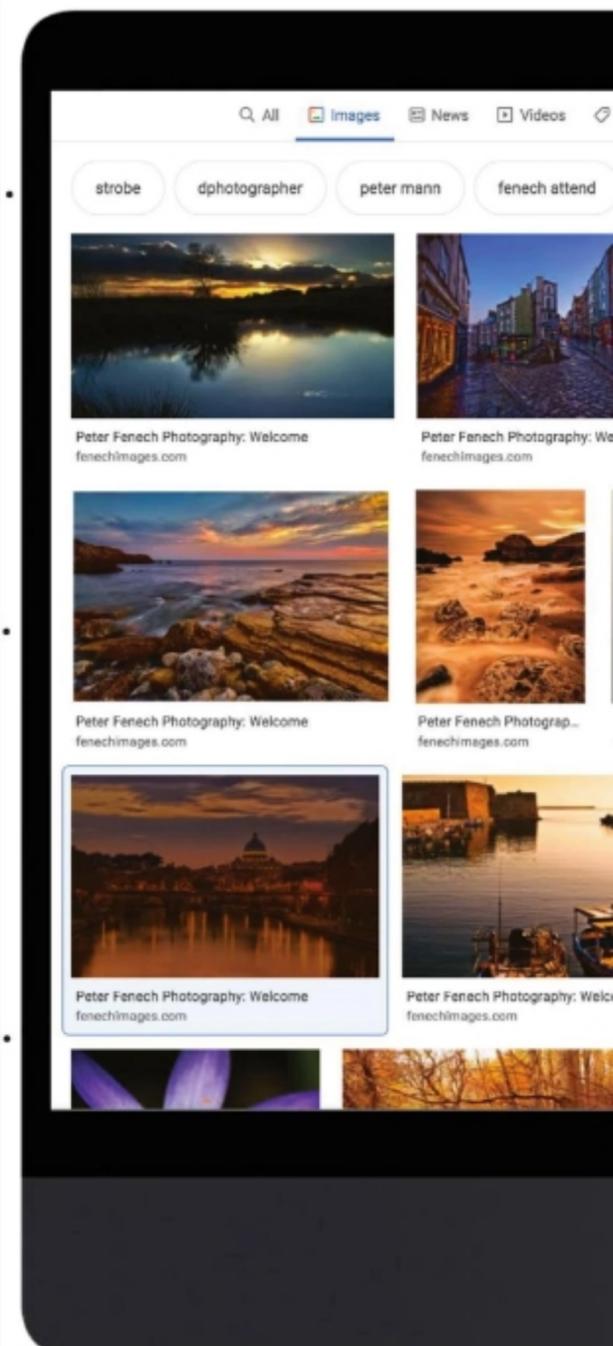


Right-click protection
One of the most common strategies for preventing image theft is to add right-click protection apps to your website. This will usually consist of a system that displays a copyright message to users who attempt to copy images using the right-click functionality. While some website-builders charge for this, other sites, such as Wix, offer free protection features. Dedicated protection packages such as SmartFrame (smartframe.io) have enhanced functions for securely embedding photographs on your website.

Logo overlays
Similar to text watermarks, these logos interrupt image details and limit possible reproduction usage. The main advantage of the choice of a graphic rather than text is that the image can be identified as your property, yet the icon itself is less visually intrusive. You can also decide to place the mark in the same area each time, making the mark an expected feature of shots.



Trace your images
If you need to upload higher-quality files or prefer not to apply watermarks, consider tracking stolen copies rather than attempting to prevent the theft process. A simple Google Image search can find where individual files have been placed online (upload an image on the Google homepage) or you can use an online digital 'barcoding' service such as Digimarc (digimarc.com).



Reduce resolution

Probably the most common solution is to use software to create a low-resolution copy of the images you plan to upload to your website. While this does not aim to prevent theft, it does serve to deter people from copying your work or at worst limits the use of them. The main disadvantage is that very-low-res files may not allow fullscreen previews, degrading the viewer's engagement.

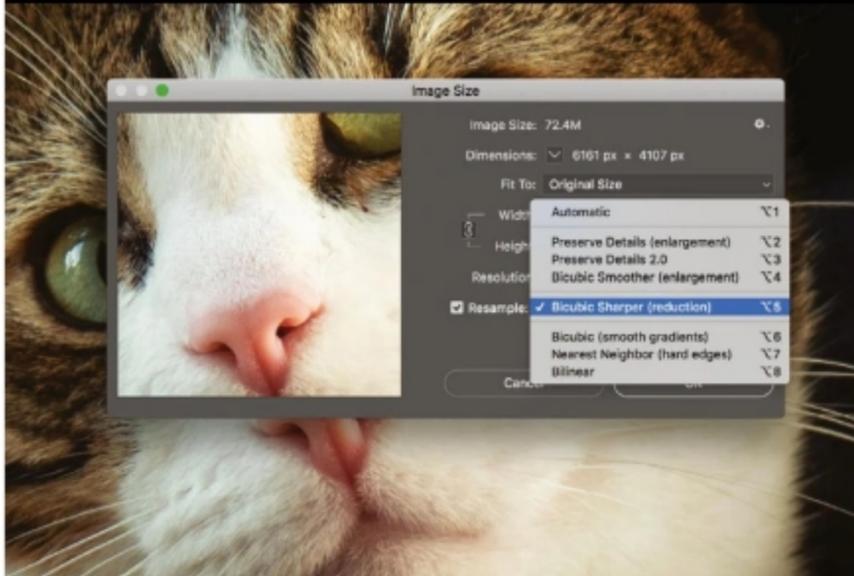
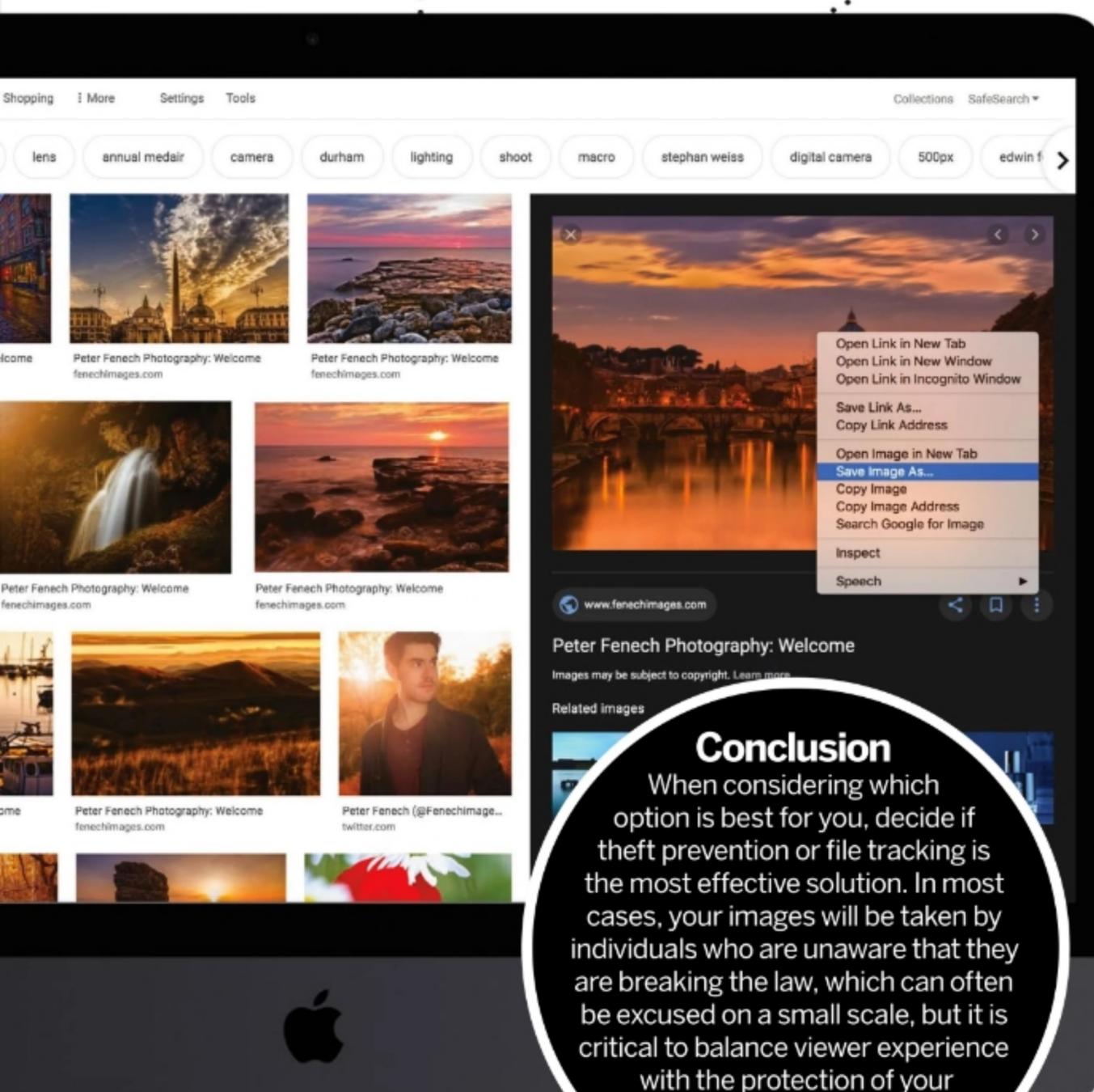


Photo compression

Instead of reducing resolution, consider applying higher compression to your images. Setting a quality rating of seven or eight in Photoshop (Medium/High) will produce usable web quality with minimal artefacts, yet will allow higher resolutions for display in a large gallery. The greater compression will make creating large prints from stolen files challenging.



Instead of reducing resolution, consider applying higher compression to your images



Apply watermarks

Another commonly adopted solution is to add watermarks to your image before uploading it anywhere. This usually consists of adding your web address, your name or the name of your business on top of the image, so that it overlaps with key areas of the shot. This essentially prevents editorial or advertising usage without significant image retouching, but the downside is the greatly distracting nature of the watermark itself.



WINNER Guru's top photographer: **Dmitriy S.** Russian Federation

GuruShots

We joined up with online photo game GuruShots to print the winning images from the 'Touristic Destinations' challenge.

Over 43 million votes were cast, and these are the winners!



GuruShots is billed as the world's leading photo game. It's an online platform conceived to give global exposure to people who love taking photographs. GuruShots members start out as Newbies and compete with other photographers to win challenges, increase their ranking on the site and eventually progress to coveted

'Guru' status. Challenges are voted on by Gurus and the wider GuruShots community, and there's a fresh challenge – like Beautiful Mountains' – every day. Winners receive prizes from GuruShot's sponsors, including Lowepro, Kodak and Lensbaby.

Check out gurushots.com to find out more.



WINNER Top photo: Glen Gebert Canada



WINNER Guru top pick: ジョニ アバンド Japan

GuruShots is the world's leading photo game, giving its members exposure and fresh challenges

Honorable mentions

Here are noteworthy entrants for Touristic Destinations



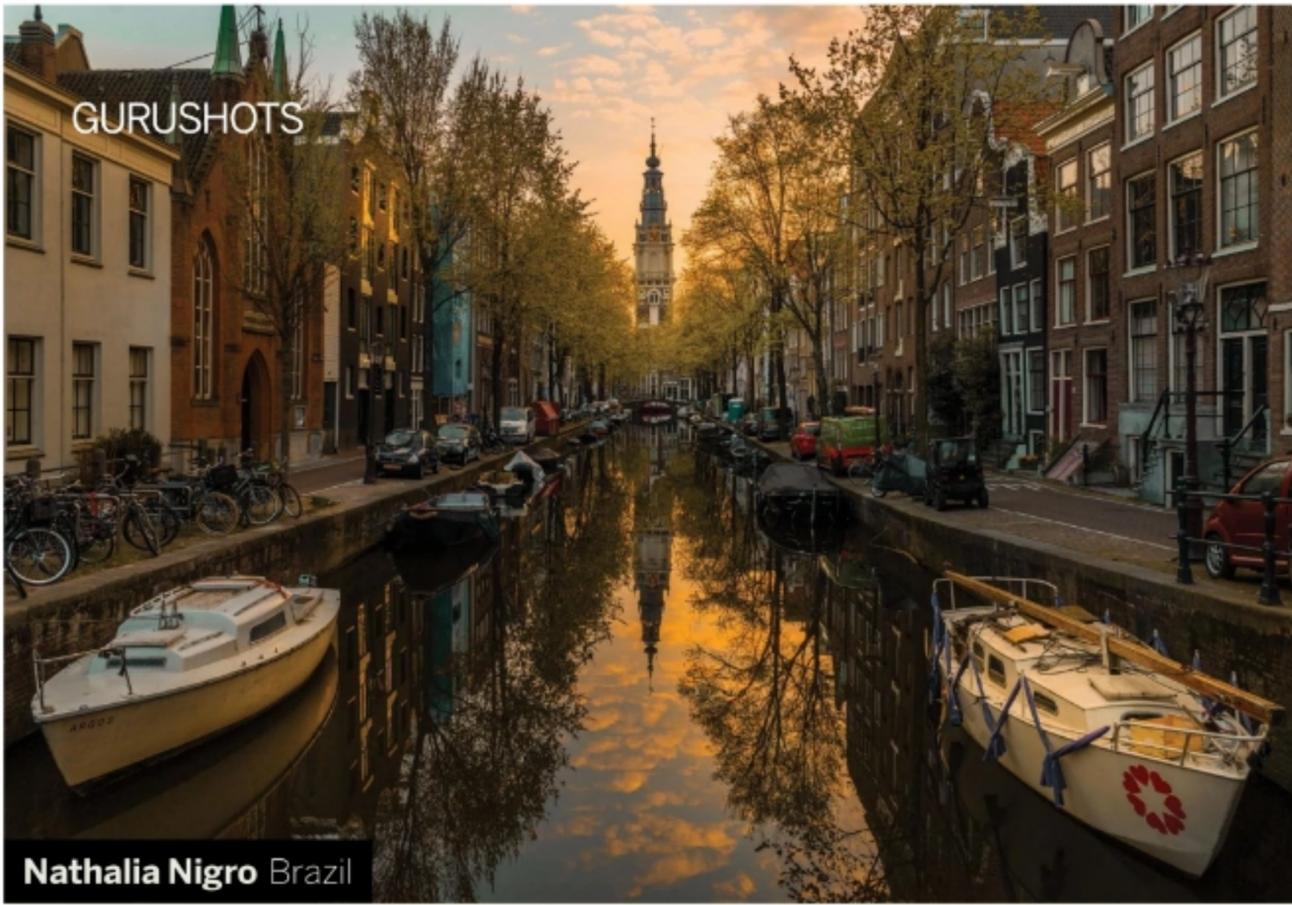
Amy Louhela United States



John Randazzo United States



Antonio Gano Portugal



GURUSHOTS

Nathalia Nigro Brazil



Jay McCartney New Zealand



Manish Sharma India



Frédéric Pallanca France



Andy Fowle Finland



tunc.ozcivelek Turkey

Rick Cutright United States



Dewan Karim Canada



Hossam Sadek United States





Margarida Afonso Silva Portugal



Hermann Klecker Germany



Grégory Ortiz France



Jeffrey Friedkin United States



kuriene Netherlands



Mauro Schievano Italy



Andrew Blanchard United States



Gabriel Fox Brazil

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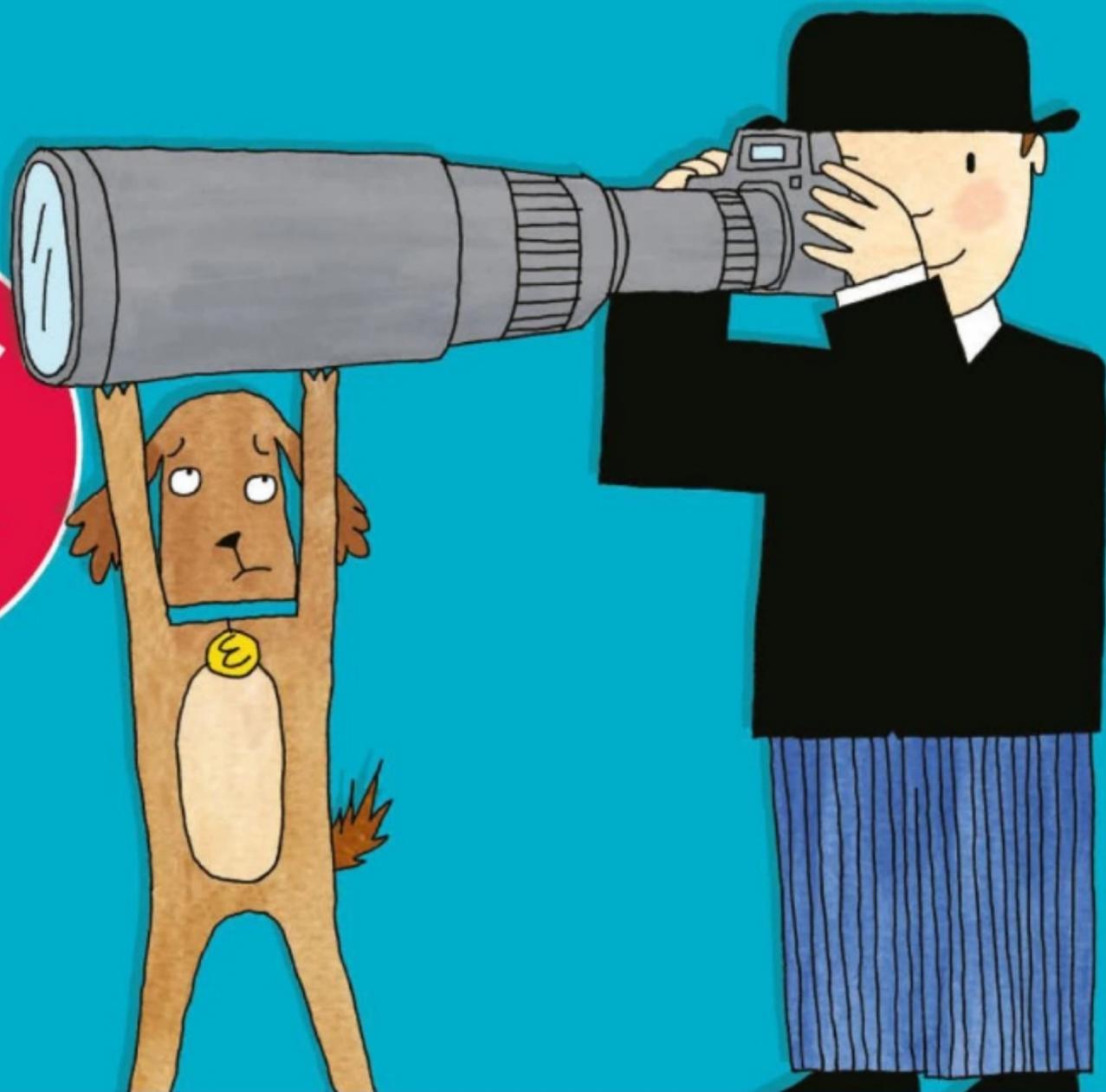
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Beautiful bokeh

By combining a shallow depth of field with a twinkling fairy light backdrop, you can achieve a dreamlike portrait from the comfort of your own home

All images © Tom Calton

Fairy light portraits

Tom Calton shows you how to set up and shoot a dreamy, low light portrait in your own home

Difficulty level: Beginner

Time taken: 2 hours



Christmas might be over for another year, but don't hurry to pack away the fairy lights just yet – there's still plenty of photographic fun to be had with them! This month we're going to show you how to transform a room in your house into a dreamy, fairy-lit world, perfect for a spot of creative portrait photography.

The concept is simple – by sticking a fast prime lens onto the front of your DSLR or mirrorless camera and taking advantage of its super-wide aperture, we'll be able to create a nicely blurred

background to transform those tiny, twinkling points of light into beautiful bokeh balls.

This project really is as quick, easy and fun to do as it sounds. Essentially, all you need is your camera, a fast lens (be that a prime or a zoom), a few strings of fairy lights left over from the winter celebrations, and a willing volunteer to pose for you. After we've shown you how to bag the shot, we'll then take our chosen image over to Photoshop for a simple but effective colour treatment to make it really stand out.



What you'll need

- DSLR or mirrorless camera
- Lens – a prime or fast zoom lens with a wide maximum aperture between f/1.4 and f/2.8
- A net of fairy lights for the background
- Some wire fairy lights for your model to hold
- Photoshop

Shooting steps

1 Block out the light To get started with this photograph, make sure that the fairy lights will be the only source of light in the room. Block out any window light and close all of the blinds and curtains. Switch off any room lights and lamps as well.

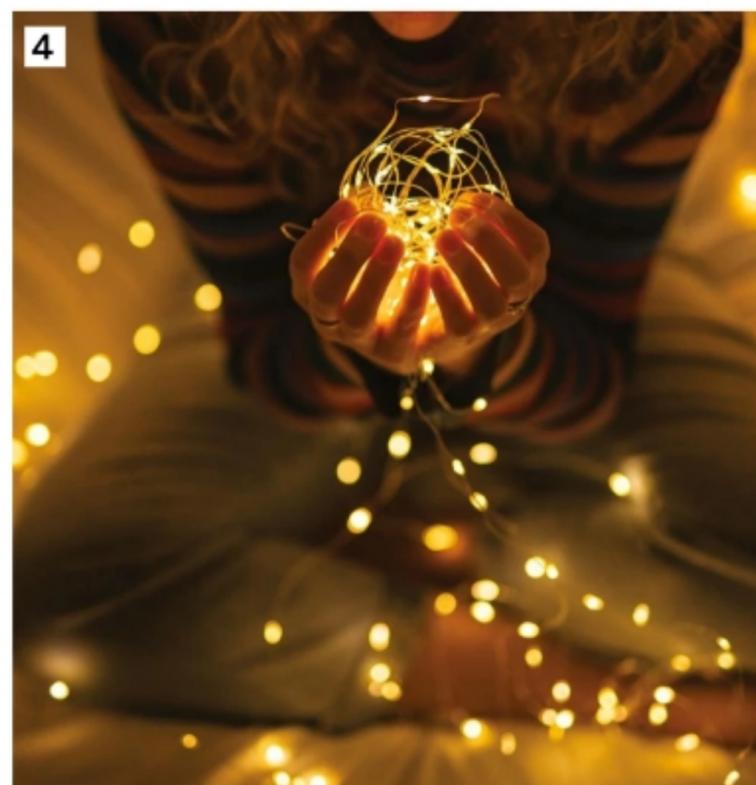
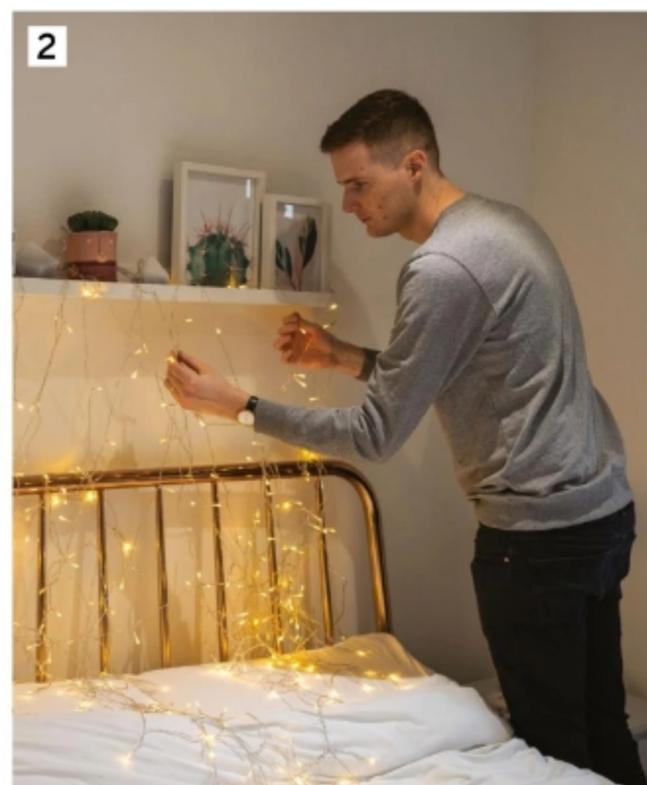
2 Set up the background The next step is to hang the net of fairy lights in the background to create a nice, twinkly backdrop for our shot. Hang the lights from a shelf above the bed, or alternatively try and drape them over a backdrop stand or hang them between two light stands.

3 Use a fast lens In order to turn the fairy lights into twinkling orbs in the shot, use a lens with a wide aperture. Prime lenses are the best choice, as they generally offer a wider maximum aperture than zooms. Here, a 50mm f/1.4 lens has been used, which is a great option for portraits in general.

4 Add more fairy lights Ask the model to sit in position. Drape one set of fairy lights around where they are sat and then carefully ball-up a second set of lights and place them in the model's hand – these will be used to illuminate the model's face.

5 Camera settings Switch the camera to Aperture Priority mode, and then set the widest aperture possible. Frame up the shot and adjust the ISO until the shutter speed is reading a value of 1/250sec or faster. This will help to ensure a sharp shot while shooting handheld. Finally, set the camera so that it shoots in RAW.

6 Take the shot Frame up the shot and make sure that the active AF point is positioned over one of the model's eyes. Then focus and take the shot. Check the results to make sure that the model is sharp and in focus, and repeat the shot if necessary.





TWINKLING BACKDROP
Our background is a simple net of fairy lights hung against a blank wall that is free from hanging ornaments and picture frames.

BLACKOUT
To capture the full effect of the fairy lights, it's important that they are the only light source in the room. Turn off all the room lights and block out the windows.

WARM LIGHTS
We've opted to use warm fairy lights to give the shot a cosy, wintry feel. However, you could experiment by using white or multicoloured lights (or a mixture of the two). Just ensure the lights that are used are bright.

MORE LIGHTS
A few additional strings of lights are needed for the model to hold to illuminate their face. You can also try draping lights across the bed and elsewhere in the room to increase the effect.

The setup

Keep your distance

Ensure there's space between the subject and background

Although using a wide aperture will give you the best chance of transforming all of those small points of light in the background into big, beautiful orbs, distance is also another factor you'll need to keep in mind. In short, the greater the distance between the lights and your point of focus (the model's face), the more blurred the background will become and the bigger the orbs of light will be. So bear this in mind while setting up your shot.



Edit the shot

1 Contrast and colour Open the RAW photo in Photoshop, and the Camera Raw Interface will appear. Crank the Contrast slider to +100 and the Clarity to +50. Then, set the Vibrance to +30 to bolster the colours.

2 Lift the shadows Don't worry if the photo has too much contrast as this can easily be fixed by increasing the Shadows +50 and the Blacks to +60. This will brighten the shadow detail for a more balanced result.

3 Split toning Click the Split Toning tab at the top right of the screen (beneath the histogram). Under the Shadows section, set the Hue to a value of 230, then increase the Saturation to 80 to turn the shadows blue.

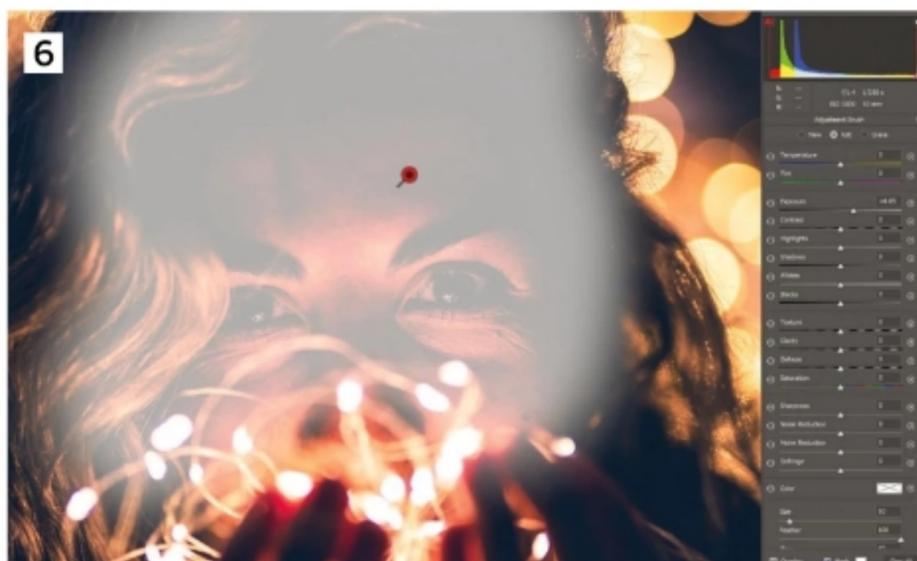
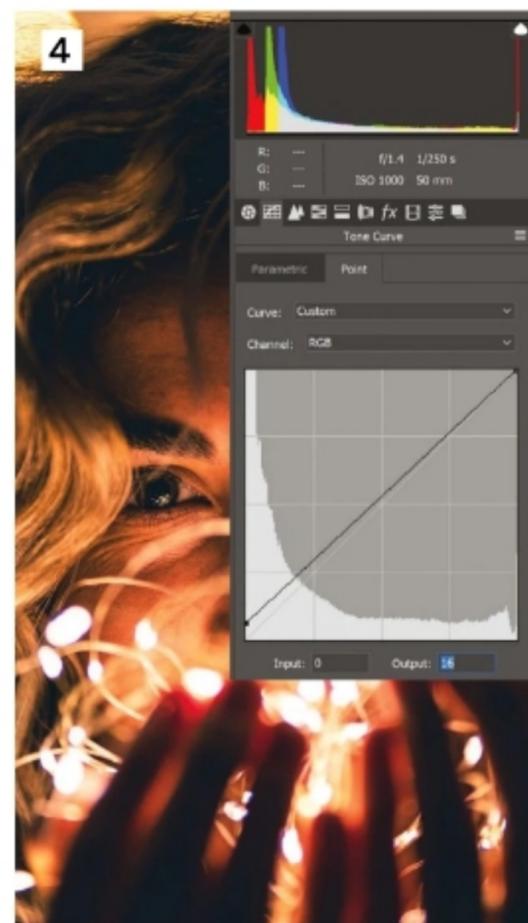
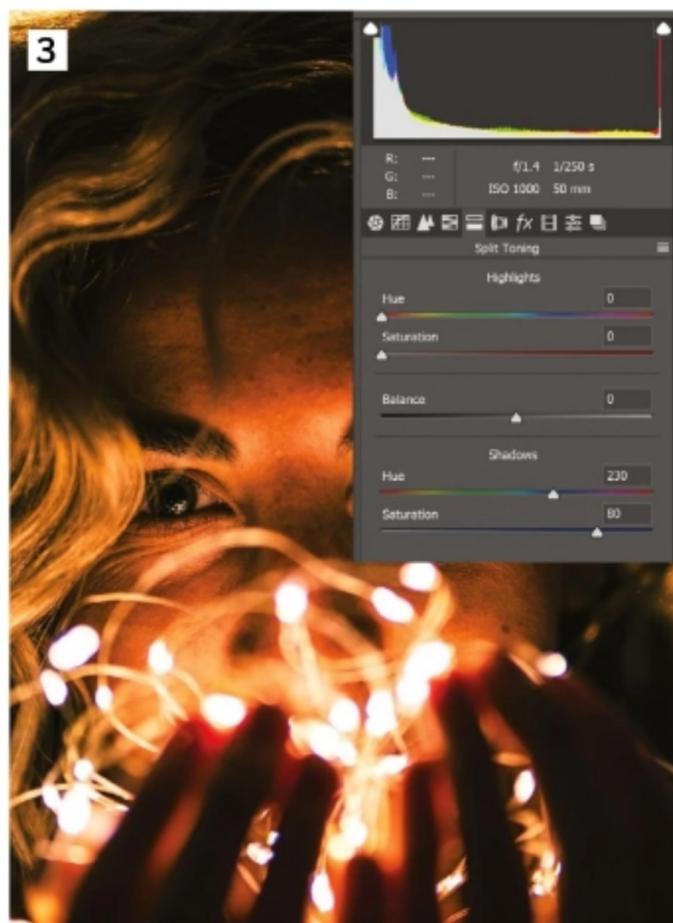
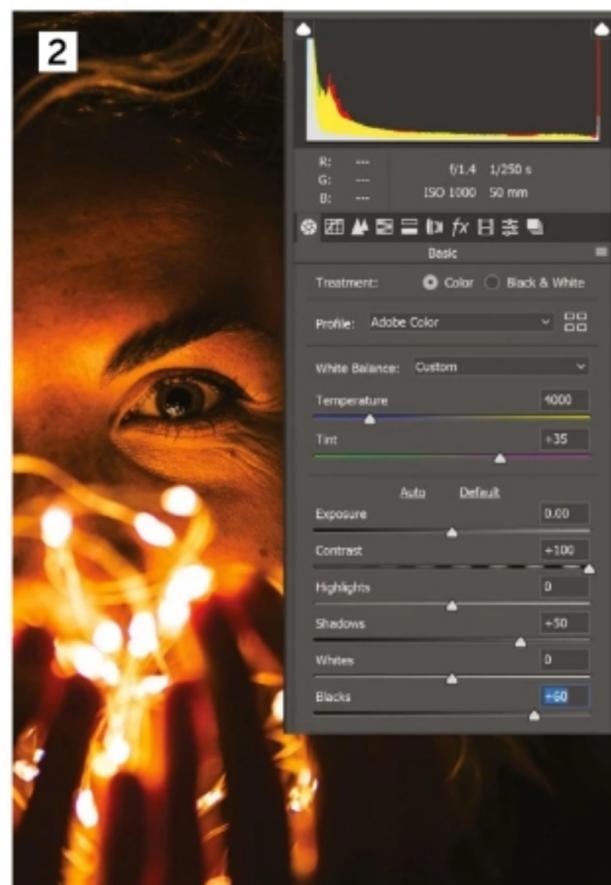
4 Curves Click the Curves tab at the top, then underneath the Curves diagram, find the Output box and set it to a value of 16. This will crush the blacks within the image to give it a much softer appearance.

5 Blue curves Staying in the Curves tab for the moment, locate the Channel option above the Curves diagram and change it from RGB to Blue. Then, set the Output to 10 in order to add more blue to the shadows within the image.

6 Brighten the model Finally, grab the Adjustment Brush from the toolbar at the top of the screen and brush over the model's face. Pull the Exposure slider to the right to brighten their face – a value of +0.85 worked for our image here.

Right Warm and cold

With a little bit of tinkering in Photoshop, we've managed to add a striking blue tint to the shadows, which complements the warmth of the fairy lights



BEFORE



AFTER



Shoot handheld long exposures

Capture motion in active scenes even when working without the support of a tripod or monopod

 Sometimes it just isn't practical to take a tripod with you everywhere you travel. Even compact models can take up considerable space in a camera bag, which can be costly when utilising budget airlines, for example. Safety and security can also be an issue. This image was taken on the Passeig de Gràcia in Barcelona – one of the busiest streets in the city – and it was impossible to set up a tripod on the pavement without disrupting the significant flow of people.

However, for creative reasons, longer exposures can sometimes be the only way to accurately capture the energy of a location. In some circumstances, we need an approach that will allow us to set a slower shutter speed while maintaining critical sharpness. Here, I knew I wanted to capture the traffic in motion, in order to add extra interest to this study of the famous Casa Batlló.

The following technique involves using modern image stabilisation systems to minimise camera shake and enable us to push exposure to the extremes of the possible hand-

holdable shutter speed range. While some lenses have dedicated IS modes for varying situations, here we have used an example with a basic On/Off functionality, meaning the procedure is relevant regardless of the system present in your current equipment.



Inset
Static atmosphere
Using a faster shutter speed has retained too much detail in the foreground, and the image lacks energy. A wider frame has also included too much empty road
All images © Peter Fenech



1 Test exposure Set ISO to the maximum you are comfortable with for your camera under the current lighting conditions. Test the minimum shutter speed this produces at the current aperture setting as a reference.



2 Set max aperture If the shutter speed is above 1/60sec then stop down, but in most cases the max aperture will be required when shooting after sunset. Choose this setting to keep the shutter speed above 1 sec.



3 Activate stabilisers Turn on image stabilisation, whether this is built into the camera or the lens. If a 'Hybrid IS' mode is available, use this, as it's better for handheld shooting, covering rotational movements.



AFTER

Traffic magic
Finding a 'sweet spot' for the exposure has filled the foreground space with motion, while effective use of equipment features has produced a sharp image



4 Support the camera Lean against a stable surface, or lightly press the camera against a surface to reduce micro-movements. Choose a focal length that will give you achievable sharpness at the expected exposure.



5 Set exposure Find out the stabilisation ability of your kit, and set the shutter speed at the EV value below the minimum unsteadied handholdable speed. For a 60mm lens (1/60sec) 5 stops slower would be 1/2sec.



6 Use burst mode Set the camera to the maximum continuous shooting mode and fire a sequence of images at this exposure. Subtly increase and decrease shutter speed to find a balance of motion and sharpness.

Rim lighting

Claire Gillo reveals how to outline your subject with flashguns to produce an arty result

 Rim lighting essentially means you light your setup from behind, producing a small rim of light around the edge of your subject to make it glow. Rim lighting can be used by itself to produce an outline and a silhouetted effect (like in our example) or with other lights, for example with a key light or fill light, so the subject is also lit from the front as well as having a glowing rim.

In this tutorial we are going to use two external flash units so we can evenly light our setup all the way along. However, if you only have one flashgun you can make do with that.

The main thing to think about when shooting with flash is your shutter speed setting. This is because it needs to sync with the flashlight. The standard flash sync shutter speed setting is 1/250sec or slower. If you fire your flash at a higher shutter speed, your camera's shutter won't have enough time to stay open to record the light hitting the sensor. Some flashguns are capable of shooting at a higher flash sync setting (for example 1/1000sec), which is useful if you are shooting in bright light and want to open the aperture setting wide. However, for this tutorial we will sync the flash at 1/200sec and balance the aperture, ISO and flash strength together.



1 Set up background Set a backdrop up behind your setup. This could be a black sheet or the black side of a reflector. Next, set up your objects. We're using dried flowers as they create interesting shapes and outlines.



2 Select settings Put your camera in Manual mode. Set the shutter speed to 1/200sec and ISO to 100. We're going to start with our aperture at f/11, but we can adjust this with the flash power if need be.



3 Change to monochrome For an easy B&W conversion, apply a monochrome picture style setting to your file in-camera. Note it will only be applied to a JPEG – a RAW file will need to be converted in editing software.

AFTER

The final effect

By using flash and a rim-lighting effect the scene is transformed. The monochrome approach enables the form and shape of the plants to come into their own



BEFORE



Inset
No lights
Before the lights are set in place and the monochrome picture style setting applied, the image appears flat and dull, and with a bad colour cast caused by indoor tungsten lights



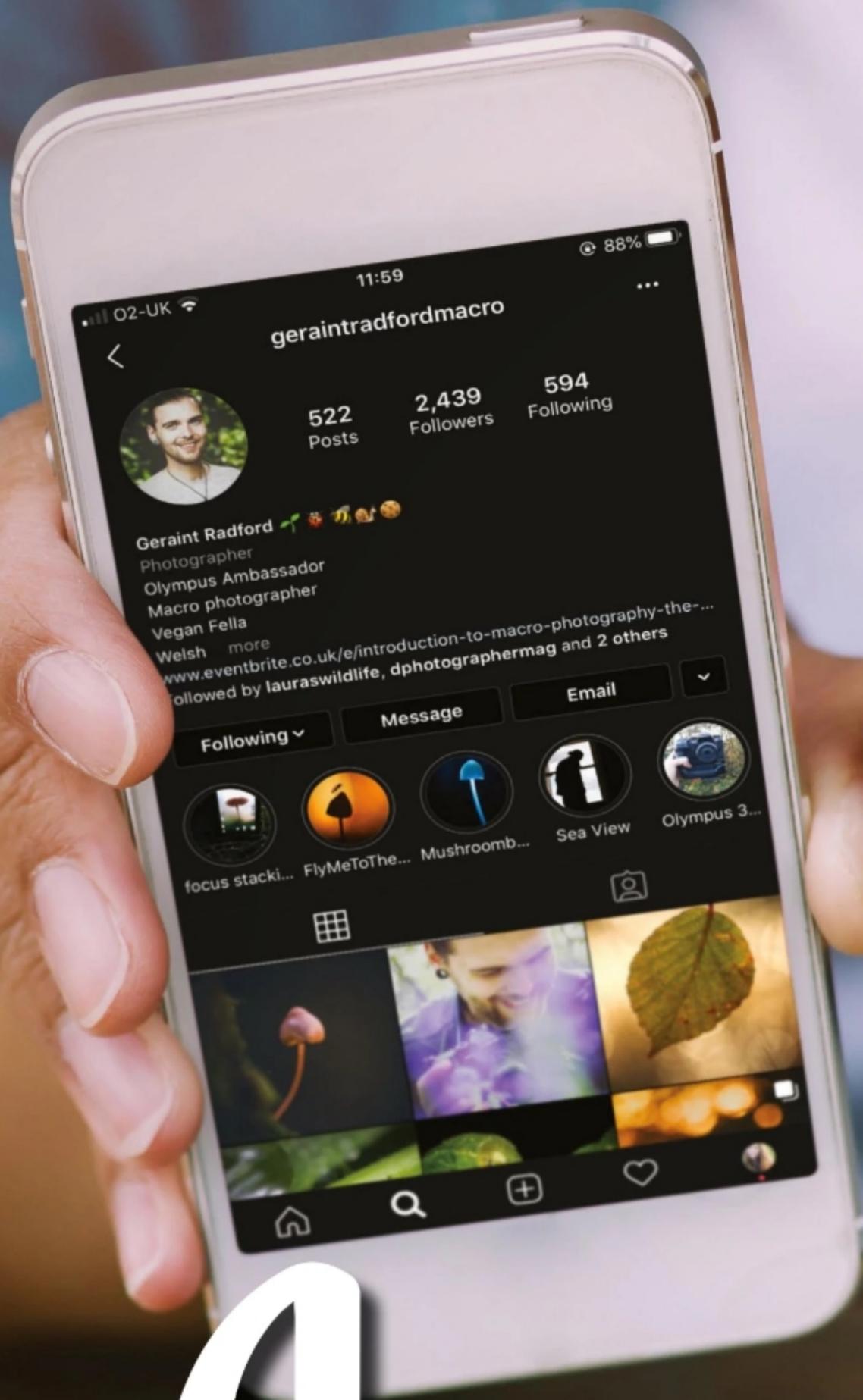
4 Position lights Place two flashguns behind and below the subject so that the flashes are pointing up. Our flashes are firing at the same strength (1/40) in Manual mode, which we can control independently from our camera.



5 Take a test shot Take a shot to test the flash strength, direction and camera settings, and tweak if necessary. Don't fully rely on your LCD screen – use the histogram as well to read what is happening in the image.



6 Keep experimenting This type of shoot can be done from the comfort of your own home, and you can return to it whenever you please. Experiment using different objects and subjects to enhance your rim-lighting skills.



Inst



10 tips for Instagram

The visual social platform is the perfect place to showcase your work and build your brand online, but how do you make your portfolio stand out from the rest?



Whether you love it or loathe it, social media has become so ingrained in our daily lives that it's almost impossible to be a photographer without getting on the bandwagon. Many picture buyers and editors now look to platforms like Instagram when searching for stunning photos and content, while brands and manufacturers use the app to attract new followers and customers.

Social media is still relatively new to some of us, however, and it's hard to know how to navigate through the ever-changing algorithms, understand what content people want to see and how to use it to promote images (and our photography business).

We know that photo likes and follows aren't everything, but in our modern world they certainly help you to get noticed. So, over the next few pages we'll be providing ten tips to turn an Instagram account into a beautiful portfolio and community opportunity, attract views and hopefully grow your presence in the industry to a social-savvy generation – if you're not there already.

Turn an Instagram account into a beautiful portfolio

© Shutterstock

406 Posts **3,846** Followers **520** Following

Jim Cossey
 Photographer
 Panasonic Lumix Ambassador
 Co host @TALKINGSHOTPODCAST
 Weddings @jimcosseyweddings
 Brecon Beacons
 www.jimcosseyphotography.co.uk/
 Brecon
 Followed by triggertrap, wexphotovideo and lumixuk

1

Choose your account

Firstly, you need to make sure you've got the right Instagram account for you – business, creator or personal? You'd think that setting up as a creator would be the best shout for photographers, but the choice isn't always that clear-cut. While as a creator you can access Instagram Creator Studio on your desktop, you can't connect your profile to any third-party apps.

Going full business arguably gives you the best range of analytics (Instagram Insights) about your posts and followers, plus features that will help you to further the reach of your images with promotions. It's still free to use if you don't want to schedule content or use ads, but you can also add a Contact button near the top of the profile for a phone number or direct email address (there's no obligation to do this if you'd rather not).

2

Perfect your bio

With your profile type chosen, it's important that you make sure your bio is up to scratch, giving it some love and making sure it accurately represents you. This area is personal, and what you add or don't add will depend on your genre, style and general approach to image-making.

See the bio as the 'about me' section that you would have on a traditional portfolio website, just condensed considerably. Think about what information is key for viewers to see when they first hit your profile. For example, a fine-art photographer might keep their bio simple with just a name and website, whereas a travel photographer would likely update their bio regularly by adding their current location, plus any brand affiliations. Some photographers also choose to add an email or call option via the Contact button, but Instagram has a messaging function itself, so this isn't vital.

Emojis are no longer resigned to informal conversations with pals, so break through any language barriers by adding fun icons to your page if these help to illustrate what you and your photography are about. Instagram isn't so much about being stuffy and professional as being uniquely you, so let your own personality and your bio be your first selling point and way to engage viewers.

3

Add and schedule the right content

Once your profile is set up, it's a good idea to start populating your feed with images so that it doesn't look bare. It's likely that you've already got a website, so think about your favourite or best-performing images from your portfolio there.

If you've already set up your Instagram account and just want tips for smarter ways to post content and find followers, there are paid tools out there. For example, Combin is an Instagram 'growth' tool aimed at attracting organic audiences, with a search function that lets you find accounts and posts from your targeted audience by hashtag and location.

4   **Keep the visuals spot on**

As an accomplished photographer, it goes without saying that your images should speak for themselves. But Instagram is such a unique (sometimes limited) photo platform that you need to optimise your images so that they look their best when shown off in such a small format. How is that tiny square crop going to display your shot? It's fine to upload images that aren't square in format, just consider where the main focal point will be once shown as a square on your feed. Edit your images using your preferred software first, send them to your mobile device, then upload them from there.

To allow images room to breathe, many photographers decide to crop their images into square sections, posting them in sequence so that they add up to a larger display of an image on your feed. Some photographers abhor those that apply the same filters to all of their images, but this approach can create a consistent look and style across your feed. Stray away from conventional Instagram filters, and opt for offerings from apps such as VSCO.



© Geraint Radford

5   **Engage with your audience**

Instagram has several algorithms it uses to prioritise the images on a user's feed. It goes without saying that you need to be uploading 'quality content' – not just technically good images but also timely and relevant ones – but you also need to focus on the relationship you have with your audience.

The general idea is that if a user interacts with lots of your content, they are even more likely to see what you post in the future. In other words, consistent content from you, plus consistent engagement on your posts (and Instagram stories) could help you rank better, so that more people will see your photos, share them, and it will snowball.

Because engagement breeds engagement, the more you post fun, quirky stories or images, the more likely your audience will be to feed back to you again. But what should you post? Instagram is a place to give followers an insight into your daily photo activity, whether that means posting stories from behind the scenes of a busy shoot, final images that you love, or even touches you might think are too personal, such as where you went for a lunch meeting with a model or client. If you're a photographer who's still building a career, share the inspirations behind your work, or any personal projects that you're working on.

There's a certain authenticity to Instagram, so it's a tough balance between creating interesting content and trying so hard that you come across as someone who isn't being genuine. You don't want to build up a following for portraying images that aren't really you, as this approach will be hard to maintain as you grow.



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6   **Use hashtags smartly**

Using the right Instagram hashtag is an important way to get more eyes on your images. Aim to use relevant, targeted hashtags on your posts and stories, as these will help non-followers to find your work amid the millions posted on the platform. You can use up to 30 hashtags on a post and ten on a story, but it's best to think carefully about which apply to your specific post.

To break down the confusion over hashtags, there are several types. Community hashtags, for example #photographersoflondon will connect like-minded viewers. Some companies also have branded hashtags, such as #TeamCanon for Canon USA.

Instead of using popular but generic hashtags such as #camera, aim to find niche ones that are more relevant to your viewers. Research the hashtags other photographers, competitors and manufacturers are using.

© Shutterstock



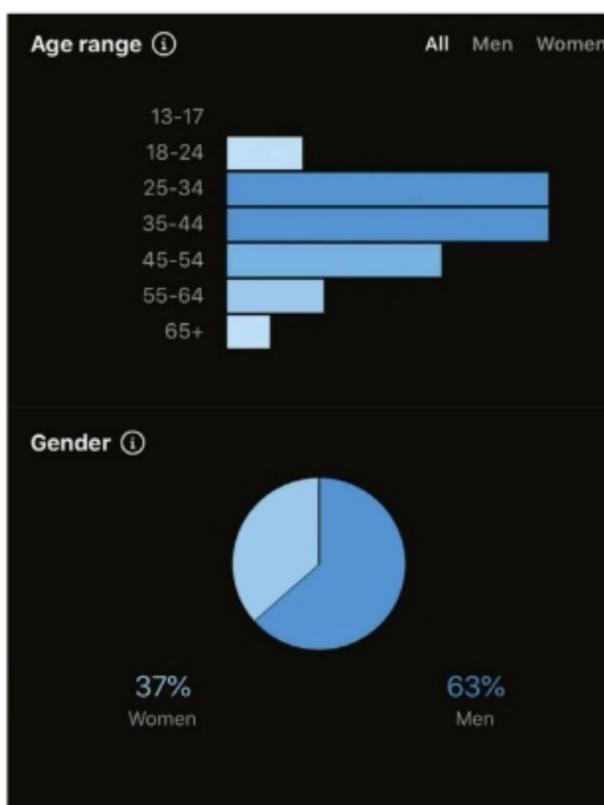
GO PRO

7

Use Insights

We've already mentioned the benefits of setting up a business rather than personal Instagram profile for your work. Instagram Insights provides a breakdown of your performance on the platform, including new followers, profile views, impressions, number of posts, reach, website clicks, and also email clicks.

Once you've been posting for a while though, you'll also be able to see the makeup of your regular audience, including their age, gender and where they're from. As the previous tip was to post content that felt authentic to you, we're not saying you start tailoring posts to suit your audience, but it's nice – and downright fascinating – to know who and where they are.



10

Don't focus on the likes

You might think that likes are the only thing worth counting when quantifying your 'success' on Instagram, but this isn't true. It's also worth noting that if you're in the United States, Instagram is now hiding public likes on all posts. This a BIG deal for the platform, but it doesn't have to affect why or how you post photographs. Adam Mosseri (the CEO of Instagram) told *Buzzfeed* last year that removing likes was "about creating a less pressurised environment where people feel comfortable expressing themselves." So with that in mind, let your photography and your own personality do the talking. Don't expect major engagement or growth on Instagram overnight, as it can take years to build up an audience – much like building a photographic career. Keep scheduling gorgeous images when you can, and the audience will follow.

8

Post regularly

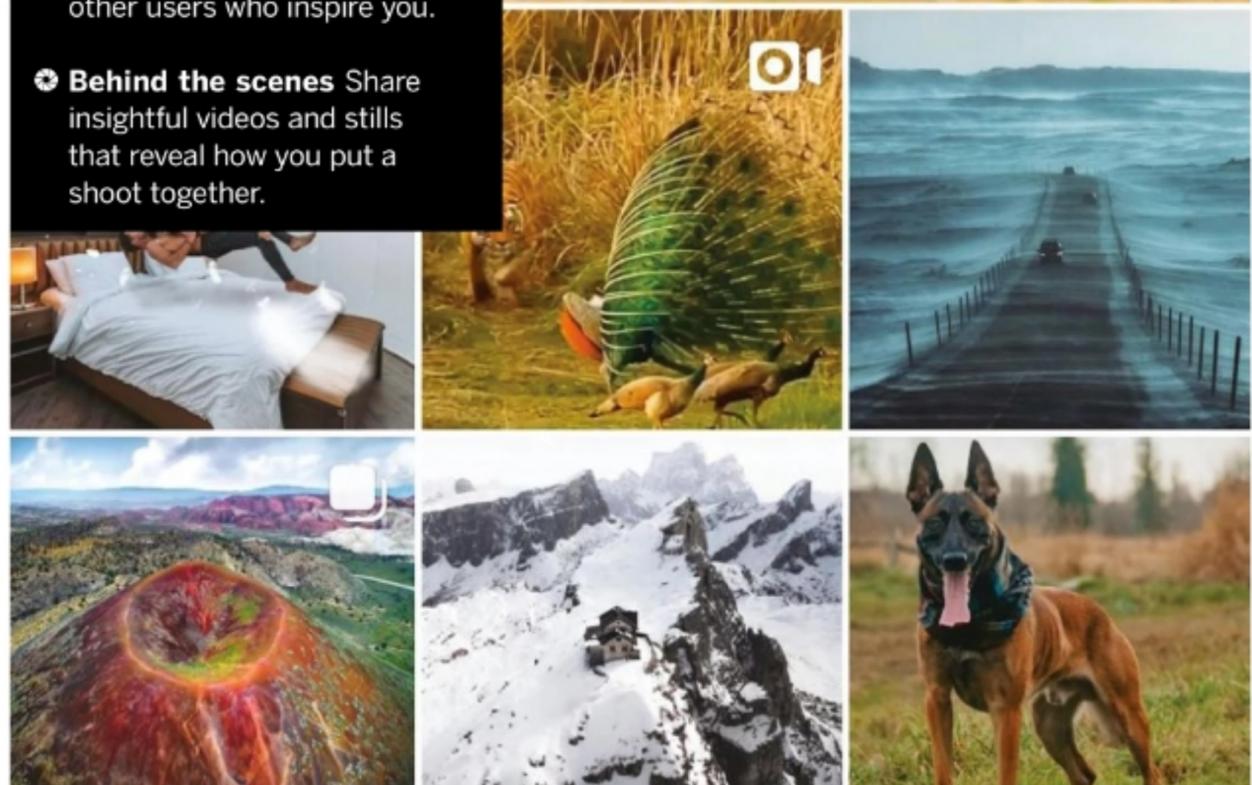
One of the easiest ways to plan out your posts is by using an Instagram scheduling platform. Scheduling your posts ahead of time doesn't just make it easier for you to maintain a consistent aesthetic, it also helps you to post at regular intervals, and more importantly when your followers are most likely to be online.

Digging into your Instagram Insights is another way to help you make sure you're posting at the right time. Find out exactly when your audience is most active, schedule your content, increase your exposure and make sure your imagery is reaching more eyes. When it comes to choosing what content to post to Instagram, more isn't always better. Better is better.

There are many apps and tools for scheduling posts, including Buffer, Hootsuite and Later. Research the pricing and function of each to see which fits your needs best.

What content should you post?

- 📌 **A day in the life** Followers tend to love posts that show the personal and creative details of photography life.
- 📌 **Milestones** Celebrate a certain number of followers, a new camera, the number of years you've been shooting – use your imagination!
- 📌 **Announcements** Shout about a recent collaboration, award, competition win or new body of work.
- 📌 **Inspiration** Use the Repost app to share images from other users who inspire you.
- 📌 **Behind the scenes** Share insightful videos and stills that reveal how you put a shoot together.



Pro case study



Macro photographer **Geraint Radford** on using Instagram stories to share experiences with his followers

Social media allows us to instantly share an image to a wide audience. However, something I've come to realise is that getting seen and being noticed are two very different things. Over 95 million images and videos are posted to Instagram per day. So how do we stand out? I actually discovered the answer by accident.

In today's highly digitised world, I feel that having a connection with others is super-important – not just for business development, but to build real connections

with others who have shared passions and interests. Macro photography allows me to share images of the world I love and hopefully inspire others to take care of nature, especially my bug buddies. However, there is far more to a photograph than just the end result.

For me, the most fun aspect of photography is my time spent in nature, so I figured; why not take folks out and about with me? The stories feature on Instagram is an awesome tool to share (in real time) my adventures in nature, chat photography techniques and genuinely have fun with the

lovely people who follow along. When I head out into the woods with a flask and biscuits, we all go together, and it's that aspect of social media that I really enjoy!

I see social media as a hobby, but to my surprise it has helped greatly in my career. This year I was given the amazing opportunity of becoming an Olympus ambassador for macro photography.

The wonderful people who discovered me did so through my interactions with the Olympus UK Instagram feed. After tagging them in my posts and stories they took an interest, and quite honestly changed my life.

The stories feature on Instagram is an awesome tool to share (in real time) my adventures in nature



Share the world
Geraint's combination of awesome macro shots and taking his followers along on his journeys has helped him to get noticed by the likes of Olympus
© Geraint Radford



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BAGS OF STYLE

Forget bulky gadget bags and backpacks – messenger bags have become the most convenient and stylish way to carry your camera kit around

 Dedicated photo backpacks and large gadget bags are useful if you're specifically going on a shoot and need to take all of your camera kit. But most of us have a life outside of photography and often need to combine our shooting with the daily commute, a family outing or a trip into town.

Messenger bags are becoming enormously popular, offering a more streamlined option for carrying a camera with a couple of extra lenses or accessories, plus daily essentials and maybe a tablet or laptop. You can also mix and match, as camera messenger bags typically have removable dividers, and in the case of the Billingham and Tenba bags on test, completely removable camera compartments. You can stow just your camera kit, a mix of photographic and other useful items, or simply use it as a regular messenger bag.

For this group test, we've selected four of our favourite messenger bags on the market. They're all large enough to accommodate a full-frame DSLR with a 24-70mm f/2.8 standard zoom attached, plus a 70-200mm f/2.8 lens and an additional smaller lens or flashgun in the main compartment. That said, the unusually large Sigma 70-200mm Sports lens is a little too big for upright storage in the Billingham bag.

There are clever design flourishes aplenty in all of the bags on test, and since we've picked our favoured four, the ratings are all very close. We're also big fans of the Peak Design Everyday Messenger, but at the time of testing the original edition was being replaced by the V2, which wasn't yet available.

While the bags are broadly similar, there are notable differences. Let's take a closer look at how the features and specifications compare.

PRICE: £240 / \$329

Billingham Hadley Pro 2020

The reinvention of a classic, the 2020 takes Billingham's iconic Hadley Pro into the new decade

The Hadley Pro is something of a style icon. It's Billingham's best-selling bag of all time, combining classic good looks with impeccable build quality and outstanding functionality. Smart but simple, the new 2020 edition continues the tradition of featuring a main compartment with a removable padded camera insert, along with two additional dump pockets at the front. Separate 'AVEA' end pockets are available in a variety of sizes as optional extras, which can be secured to either end of the bag.

Access to the main compartment is via two quick-release clasps, based on brass studs and adjustable leather straps with eyelets. These enable quick and easy one-handed operation, and although it might look otherwise, you don't need to unbuckle the strap to release the clasp. Two inner flaps with popper fasteners enable access to the dump pockets. Around the back, there's a full-length zippered pocket for storing documents or a tablet.

Like the original, the 2020 is available in a choice of canvas or FibreNyte material, both of which have a waterproof triple-layer construction and come in a range of colour options with contrasting leather trim. Upgrades in the 2020 edition include the addition of a luggage trolley retainer strap at the rear and a weatherproofed zipper for the document pocket. A leather strip is added to the underneath of the grab handle, and the main shoulder strap is now removable and replaceable, rather than being permanently fixed. However, the comfort-enhancing shoulder pad is still supplied as a pricey optional extra, whereas it's included as standard with all of the other bags on test.

The same size as the original Hadley Pro, the 2020 is ideal for most DSLR camera outfits. For smaller mirrorless kits or larger collections, Billingham offers Hadley Small Pro and Hadley One bags. All in all, the 2020 is simple yet effective and really rugged.

SHOULDER STRAP FIXINGS

Instead of being sewn into the body of the bag, the main shoulder strap on the 2020 is removable and replaceable

Below
Camera compartment
As in the original Hadley Pro, the padded inner camera compartment and dividers can be easily removed

UPGRADING THE ORIGINAL

The 2020 adds a luggage trolley retaining strap at the rear, and its document pocket zip gains weatherproofing

Left Timeless looks

Reminiscent of a school satchel, the Hadley Pro has a front flap that reveals double-fronted dump pockets

PRICE: £185 / \$200

Gitzo Century Traveler Camera Messenger

As you might expect from Gitzo, this is a messenger bag that can play host to a tripod as well as camera kit

Best known for its top-end carbon fibre tripods, Gitzo also makes a range of camera straps, photo backpacks and messenger bags. The bags come in two sizes, kicking off with the Century Compact, which is ideally suited to small mirrorless camera kits. We went for the larger Century Traveler, which is about the same size as the Hadley Pro 2020 but slightly taller and more voluminous inside, as it doesn't have a removable padded insert. Some chunky lenses are an easy fit in this bag, whereas they're a little too large for the Hadley Pro 2020.

Italian full-grain leather panels and trim have a carbon fibre-style finish. This continues the theme of Gitzo's legendary tripods. Leather, combined with weather-resistant, heavy-duty black nylon, creates a strong, durable and stylish overall build.

As with the Hadley Pro 2020, the Gitzo is supplied with two adjustable and removable upright dividers, along with two

similar horizontal dividers. The main compartment can be easily configured to accommodate a DSLR or mirrorless camera with a lens attached, plus up to four additional lenses or accessories.

There are no front dump pockets in the Gitzo, but there is a dedicated compartment for a 13-inch laptop or large tablet, plus an additional document pocket at the rear and a front pocket with organiser sections. Below the front pocket, there's an additional zippered pull-out holder for securing a travel tripod. And finally, there are small zippered compartments at both ends of the bag.

Although fairly slim and svelte, the Gitzo can hold a lot of kit. It's very well-made and comfortable to wear, either as a shoulder bag or across the body, thanks to a well-padded, non-slip shoulder pad. And for something bearing a Gitzo badge, the bag is refreshingly affordable.

REAR DETAILS

As well as a zippered document compartment at the rear, there's a matching leather luggage trolley strap and grab handle

Below

Side pocket

The side pocket zippers have twist-action locks, which stop the pullers flapping around and avoid accidental opening of the sliders



Left

Main compartment

This features a zip opening at the top of the bag for quick and easy access



TRIPOD CARRIER

The front of the bag features a zippered, pull-out carrier at its base, ideal for stowing a small travel tripod

PRICE: £125 / \$175

Tenba DNA 15 Messenger Bag

With a design inspired by New York's bike messengers, this bag sets the pace, whether you're on two wheels, four wheels, or none at all

So good they named it more than twice, there are actually five different DNA messenger bags in Tenba's lineup, plus a backpack. The DNA 15 on test is the largest of the messenger bags, and it's noticeably deeper than the others in the group, although there's also a DNA 15 Slim Messenger edition if you'd prefer something more streamlined.

The main advantage of the regular 15 model is that you can store four lenses, flashguns or other accessories side by side for quicker, easier access, rather than needing to stack them in pairs. Without stacking, the items can naturally be rather longer as well. The central position in the main compartment is still likely to be taken up by a camera with an attached lens.

The main front flap is secured by two magnetic slide-catches that operate silently. However, there are also dual Velcro strips that add security but give the usual rasping sound. Cleverly

though, they're actually 'whisper hooks', and if you pull the flap directly downwards to release it, the separation is ultra-quiet.

In addition to the voluminous and removable padded camera insert, there are separate sleeves at the rear of the main compartment for both a 15-inch laptop and a large tablet. Around the back, there's a zippered document compartment with an internal organiser. The front of the bag features four smaller pockets in dual layers, and there are two further pockets on the front flap. Stretchy mesh pockets are featured on both sides of the bags for holding drinks bottles or other items.

As with the Gitzo bag, a full-length zip on the top enables you to quickly grab your camera or other items in the main compartment without undoing the main flap. Overall, the features are really well thought through, and despite being a bit on the large side for a messenger bag, it's very comfortable.

SECURITY STRAP

Part of its messenger biker 'DNA' is an additional strap that can fasten around your body, keeping the bag secure when you're biking or being generally lively

Below

Main compartment

Extra depth enables the padded camera insert to be configured with two adjacent rows for pairs of lenses and other accessories



Left

Keep it hidden

There are hidden pockets galore, stashed behind magnetic closures and zips. A 'Slim' version of the bag is also available

BAG REAR

The luggage trolley strap has a Velcro fastener at its centre, while the rear document pocket has an internal organiser

PRICE: £129 / \$140

Think Tank Vision 15

A lot of thought has clearly gone into this Think Tank bag, which boasts clever touches aplenty

There are three editions of this bag to choose from – the small Vision 10, medium-sized Vision 13 and the larger Vision 15, the last of which we're featuring here. It's able to comfortably accommodate a DSLR with a 24-70mm f/2.8 lens attached, and up to four additional lenses. As with the Gitzo bag, there's no removable padded camera insert, while sufficient dividers are supplied so that you can house a camera with an attached lens centrally and two tiers of relatively small lenses on either side. The Think Tank bag also includes an additional divider, suitable for sectioning off a flashgun at one end or the other.

The main compartment includes an additional full-length non-removable divider that forms a sleeve large enough to accommodate a 15-inch laptop. A zippered front pocket that nestles behind the main front flap hosts a further sleeve for a large tablet, as well as generous storage space for daily

essentials and an organiser section. There are additional non-zippered pockets at the front and back, plus a pull-out pocket on one side that's ideal for stowing a drinks bottle.

The main closure for the front flap is a single compression clasp, which enables very fast access to the main compartment. If you feel it's a bit too quick and easy and would rather be more security-conscious, there's also a flap that you can zip around the top of the compartment. When zipped up, this also enhances weather resistance, and as with all but the Billingham bag on test, the Think Tank is supplied with a separate rainproof cover.

Like the Gitzo, the Vision 15 enables you to pack a lot of camera gear into a relatively small space due to not having a padded removable insert. Again though, you can easily remove the dividers if you want to use the bag simply as a regular messenger bag.

Below

Zippered cover

For extra security and weather resistance, an additional cover can be pulled down from the main front flap and zippered around the top of the main compartment

FRONT POCKET

The main front pocket has generous storage space and a neat organiser section. Additional pockets are built into the large front compartment, as well as in the inside of the main flap

GENEROUS SPACE

With no separate, additional padded camera insert, this bag can hold more kit than you might think. There are plentiful extra pockets for adding daily essentials

Left

No zipper

A basic rear pocket behind the travel trolley strap has a Velcro closure. There's a grab handle up on top but no additional quick-access zipper



billingham.co.uk

**Billingham
Hadley Pro 2020**

Price £240/\$329
Exterior dimensions (WxHxD) 430x240x160mm
Interior dimensions (WxHxD) 340x210x80mm
Weight 1.2kg
Main material Canvas or FibreNyte
Removable camera compartment Yes
Laptop/tablet compartment Tablet/document
Additional pockets Front, rear
Main compartment closures 2x quick-release studs
Top zipper access No
Shoulder pad Optional
Grab handle Yes
Rear trolley strap Yes
Weatherproofing Rainproof
Additional rain cover No

FEATURES
 It's mostly great, but there's no laptop compartment and the shoulder pad is sold separately

★★★★★

BUILD QUALITY
 Tough and dependable, the bag is immaculately crafted and is highly resistant to all the elements

★★★★★

VERSATILITY
 The dual dump pockets are useful, and a range of optional AVEA end pockets are available

★★★★★

EASE OF ACCESS
 The quick-release fasteners with adjustable length straps enable speedy access to your kit

★★★★★

VALUE FOR MONEY
 Although it's beautifully crafted, the 2020 is pricey and fails to offer especially good value

★★★★★

gitzo.com

**Gitzo Century Traveler
Camera Messenger**

Price £185/\$200
Exterior dimensions (WxHxD) 390x280x140mm
Interior dimensions (WxHxD) 360x250x90mm
Weight 1.2kg
Main material Nylon and leather
Removable camera compartment No, removable dividers
Laptop/tablet compartment 13-inch laptop
Additional pockets Front, rear, sides
Main compartment closures 1x pull catch
Top zipper access Yes
Shoulder pad Yes
Grab handle Yes
Rear trolley strap Yes
Weatherproofing Shower-resistant
Additional rain cover Yes

FEATURES
 Designed with Italian flair, there are plenty of neat features, including a tripod carrier

★★★★★

BUILD QUALITY
 There's a good mix of weather-resistant nylon and leather, well stitched together

★★★★★

VERSATILITY
 It doesn't have the double-padding of a removable camera insert, but it's still very versatile

★★★★★

EASE OF ACCESS
 The simple pull-strap for releasing the main flap is great, and there's also zippered camera access

★★★★★

VALUE FOR MONEY
 It's inexpensive for a Gitzo product, but it is still pricier than the Tenba and Think Tank

★★★★★

tenba.com

**Tenba DNA 15
Messenger Bag**

Price £125/\$175
Exterior dimensions (WxHxD) 410x290x200-230mm
Interior dimensions (WxHxD) 380x270x180-200mm
Weight 1.4kg
Main material Nylon
Removable camera compartment Yes
Laptop/tablet compartment 15-inch laptop
Additional pockets Front, rear, sides
Main compartment closures 2x magnetic catches
Top zipper access Yes
Shoulder pad Yes
Grab handle Yes
Rear trolley strap Yes
Weatherproofing Shower-resistant
Additional rain cover Yes

FEATURES
 The bag packs in a lot of clever features, and you can pack a lot into the bag as well

★★★★★

BUILD QUALITY
 There's excellent attention to every detail in this bag, with superb craftsmanship

★★★★★

VERSATILITY
 Plentiful pockets enable great versatility, and the camera insert is removable

★★★★★

EASE OF ACCESS
 The main flap combines security with fast access, and the zipper up on top gives alternative access

★★★★★

VALUE FOR MONEY
 This bag is outstanding value for money in the UK, though a little less so in the USA

★★★★★

thinktankphoto.com

**Think Tank
Vision 15**

Price £129/\$134
Exterior dimensions (WxHxD) 440x270x160mm
Interior dimensions (WxHxD) 390x250x130mm
Weight 1.2kg
Main material Nylon
Removable camera compartment No, removable dividers
Laptop/tablet compartment 15-inch laptop + tablet
Additional pockets Front, rear, side
Main compartment closures 1x compression catch plus zip
Top zipper access No
Shoulder pad Yes
Grab handle Yes
Rear trolley strap Yes
Weatherproofing Shower-resistant
Additional rain cover Yes

FEATURES
 Smart features enable you to stash a lot of gear, and the bag comes complete with tripod straps

★★★★★

BUILD QUALITY
 The quality is very good throughout, from the well-stitched top down to the bag's waterproofed bottom

★★★★★

VERSATILITY
 It's ideal for use as a dedicated camera bag, a simple messenger bag or any mix of the two

★★★★★

EASE OF ACCESS
 There's no secondary zippered access in the top of the main flap, but access is still quick and easy

★★★★★

VALUE FOR MONEY
 The bag is very good value for money in the UK and even more of a bargain in the USA

★★★★★

Overall

The Hadley Pro is a favourite with many photographers, and the 2020 edition delivers several enhancements.



Overall

The Gitzo feels almost bigger on the inside than the outside. It's a great buy if you also want to carry a tripod in style.



Overall

It's the pick of the bunch for versatility and capacity, but the 'Slim' version might suit better if you don't need the extra space.



Overall

It's surprisingly big on the inside for such a slim bag and can play host to a fairly large collection of camera gear.





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Above
Compact
The E-M5 III is lightweight and compact, producing high-quality images in a smaller package

Left
Navigation pad
The E-M5 III uses a navigation pad rather than a mini-joystick, making it slower to set AF points



Left
Weatherproofed
Thanks to the camera's polycarbonate housing, you can keep shooting in all the elements



Price: £1,100 / \$1,200 body only

Olympus OM-D E-M5 Mark III

A new sensor and processor in a smaller body gives Olympus's latest camera serious appeal. Is it third time lucky? **Angela Nicholson** investigates

Although Olympus has given the OM-D E-M5 III the same 20.4MP Live MOS sensor and TruePic VIII processing engine as the flagship OM-D E-M1 II, the processor has been reworked to make it even snappier.

Using this sensor means that the E-M5 III has the same 121-point (all cross-type) hybrid autofocus hardware as the E-M1 II. However, Olympus has rejigged the focusing algorithm to make it more sensitive and consistent in difficult conditions. In addition, the tracking performance has been upgraded, as the AF system uses data from both the Live View feed and recorded images.

That's good news, and it comes paired with the ability to shoot at up to 10fps with the electronic shutter in continuous autofocus (C-AF) mode. The maximum rate with the mechanical shutter with C-AF is 6fps, but it can achieve 10fps in Single AF (S-AF) mode.

If you need to capture split-second moments, there's Pro Capture mode, which enables shooting at up to 30fps in Single AF mode. When this mode is selected, the camera starts shooting from the moment the shutter release is half-pressed. When it's fully pressed, it records the 14 preceding images and continues to write files until either the maximum frame count is reached or the shutter button is released.

Further good news is that the sensor cleaning system has been upgraded with the addition of the electronic membrane of the E-M1X, which is said to reduce the chance of dust sticking to it.

Thanks in part to the reduction in the size of the in-body image stabilisation system, Olympus has been able to make the E-M5 III smaller than the E-M5 II. Although it's made from polycarbonate, it still feels pretty robust.

It's also good to see that the three-inch, 1.04 million-dot touchscreen is mounted on a variable-angle hinge. That's really useful when you're shooting above or below head height in either landscape or portrait orientation.

There's also an OLED electronic viewfinder (EVF) with 2.36 million dots. There are larger, more resolute viewfinders available, but the E-M5 Mark III's is fine, and it gives a decent preview of the scene. If you prefer, you can activate the Simulated Optical Viewfinder (S-OVF) to see the image without any of the camera's settings applied, but that misses a key benefit of an EVF.

Existing OM-D E-M5 II users will spot a few differences in the Mark III's control arrangement, and it's now quite similar to the E-M1 II, with the mode dial sitting on the right side of the top plate. Crucially, there's direct access to most of the key parameters (white balance is a notable exception), and the Super Control Panel is activated with a press of the OK button.

It's great to see that the clever Bulb modes (Live Bulb, Live Time and Live Composite) are now accessed via a B option on the mode dial, instead of adjusting the shutter speed beyond the longest selected exposure time.

One disappointment is that Olympus has stuck with the navigation pad on the back of the camera. A mini-joystick would be faster and easier to use, especially for setting the AF point when the viewfinder is in use, but it's not to be. When AF Targeting Pad is set to On in the menu, you can use the screen to set the AF point while you look in the viewfinder, but it's a bit temperamental.

As it has a Four Thirds type sensor, the E-M5 III lags a little behind APS-C and full-frame cameras for image quality at high sensitivity settings, but it delivers excellent results in

FEATURES

SUPER STABILISATION

The E-M5 III's stabilisation system is claimed to give 0.5EV more shutter speed compensation than the Mark II, taking it to 6.5EV with the M.Zuiko 12-100mm f/4 IS PRO at 100mm.

TRUEPIC VIII PROCESSOR

Although the E-M5 III has the same TruePic VIII processing engine as the OM-D E-M1 II, it has been tuned to produce a better performance with the 20.4MP sensor.

STORAGE

Olympus has stuck with a single SD/SDHC/SDXC card port for the E-M5 III, and it's compatible with UHS-II compliant media, making C4K video recording feasible.

NEW CONTROL LAYOUT

Olympus has shifted some of the controls around, and the top plate layout is now similar to the E-M1 II's, with the mode dial on the right.

HIGH-RES SHOT

High-Res Shot mode is a tripod-only option that shifts the imaging sensor by half a pixel between each of eight shots and then merges them into one image equivalent to 50MP.

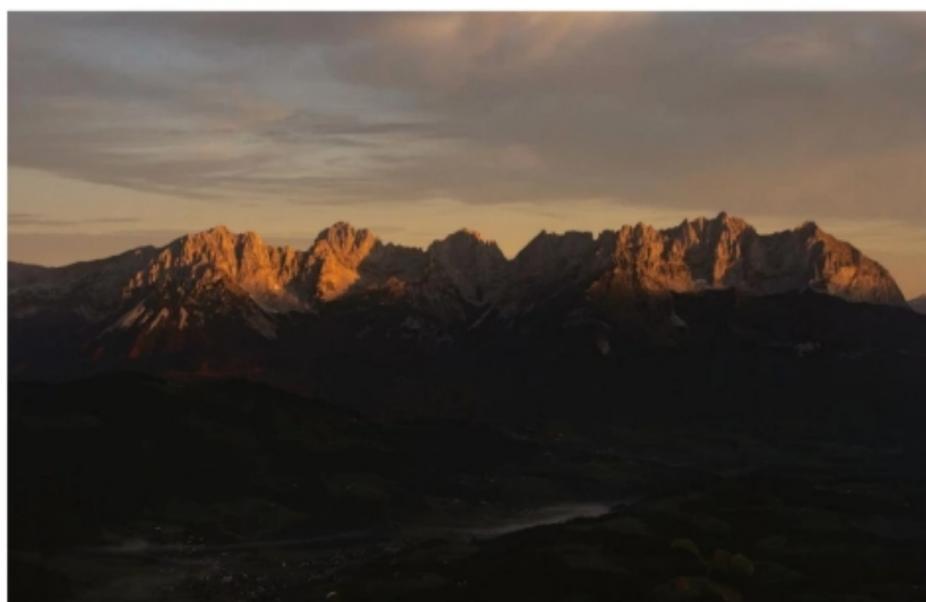
FOCUS BRACKETING MODE

This enables up to 999 shots to be captured with one press of the shutter release, with the focus moving between each shot. The images can then be merged on a computer.



HANDHELD STABILISATION

REVIEWS



Above

Free to explore

Its light weight and weatherproofing makes the E-M5 III a great choice for trips to remote areas

Left

Long exposure

In low light, with good technique you can shoot sharp images with exposures of several seconds

Right

Face detection

The E-M5 III Face Detection system proves reliable when photographing people

most situations. Noise is controlled well up to around ISO 6,400 or 12,800, but the top setting of ISO 25,600 is best avoided because there's a bit too much noise or smudging of details, depending upon whether you look at RAW or JPEG files.

However, thanks to the excellent stabilisation system, the upper sensitivity settings aren't required as often as they might be with another camera. At the wide end of the 12-40mm f/2.8, for example, we managed to get sharp handheld images when shooting with shutter speeds measured in whole seconds. With an elbow rest, we could even get sharp handheld shots with exposure times of around eight seconds. That means on many occasions you can leave your tripod behind, and a motorised gimbal is unnecessary for video shooting.

Olympus's work on the AF system has paid off here, and the E-M5 III copes extremely well with most situations that are thrown its way, including very low light. In good light it can be relied upon to get fast-moving subjects sharp when they contrast from their background. And although the AF Tracking (C-AF TR) struggles with very fast movement, it's great with subjects like birds that tend to move rather unpredictably.

In addition, the Face and Eye detection picks out eyes in a scene very quickly, even in very dim conditions, helping to get the most important part of a portrait sharp.

TALKING POINT...

Great video

The E-M5 II was a popular choice among vloggers, and Olympus has upgraded the Mark III's video specification so that it can record at up to C4K (4,096x2,160) resolution at 24p and up to 237Mbps or 4K (3,840x2,160) at 30p, 25p, 24p and 102 Mbps. Further good news here is that the stabilisation system, which has been shrunk in size but boosted in power, operates in video mode. In fact, it works brilliantly. In our testing, it did a great job of smoothing out walking movement, even when we were walking across rough ground or up and down stairs. Naturally, there's still some movement, but the footage is perfectly watchable.

Olympus has also enhanced the E-M5 III's video credentials by providing a mic port, but using it does limit the movement of the vari-angle screen.

There's also a Flat Picture mode that creates low-contrast footage, but it's not a true Log mode.



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Olympus OM-D E-M5 Mark III

Megapixels (effective)

20.4

Max resolution

5,184 x 3,888

Sensor information

Four Thirds Type (17.4 x 13.0mm) Live MOS

Lens data

Micro Four Thirds mount

Focus/macro

121-point cross-type phase detection AF and 121-point contrast AF

Shutter speed

1/32,000 - 60sec plus Live Bulb / Live Time and Live Composite

ISO sensitivity

64-25,600

Exposure modes

Auto, Program, Aperture priority, Shutter priority, Manual, Bulb, Scene select, Art Filter, Underwater wide

Metering options

Digital ESP, centre-weighted average, spot, spot metering with highlight control, spot metering with shadow control

Connectivity

USB Micro-B, 2.5mm remote jack, Micro HDMI (type D), 3.5mm mic port, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth

Weight

414g (with battery and memory card)

Storage

SD/SDHC/SDXC UHS-II

LCD

3-inch 1.04 million-dot vari-angle touchscreen

Viewfinder

2.36 million-dot OLED

FEATURES

While it lacks some more advanced video features, the E-M5 III has a good range of filming options

★★★★★

BUILD QUALITY

It may be made from polycarbonate, but it's a solid-feeling camera with good weatherproofing

★★★★★

HANDLING

There are minor niggles, but overall the camera handles well, with most features within reach

★★★★★

QUALITY OF RESULTS

Stick to ISO 12,800 or lower and it delivers high-quality images in a wide range of situations

★★★★★

VALUE FOR MONEY

The price compares favourably with the Fujifilm X-T30, and it offers good value

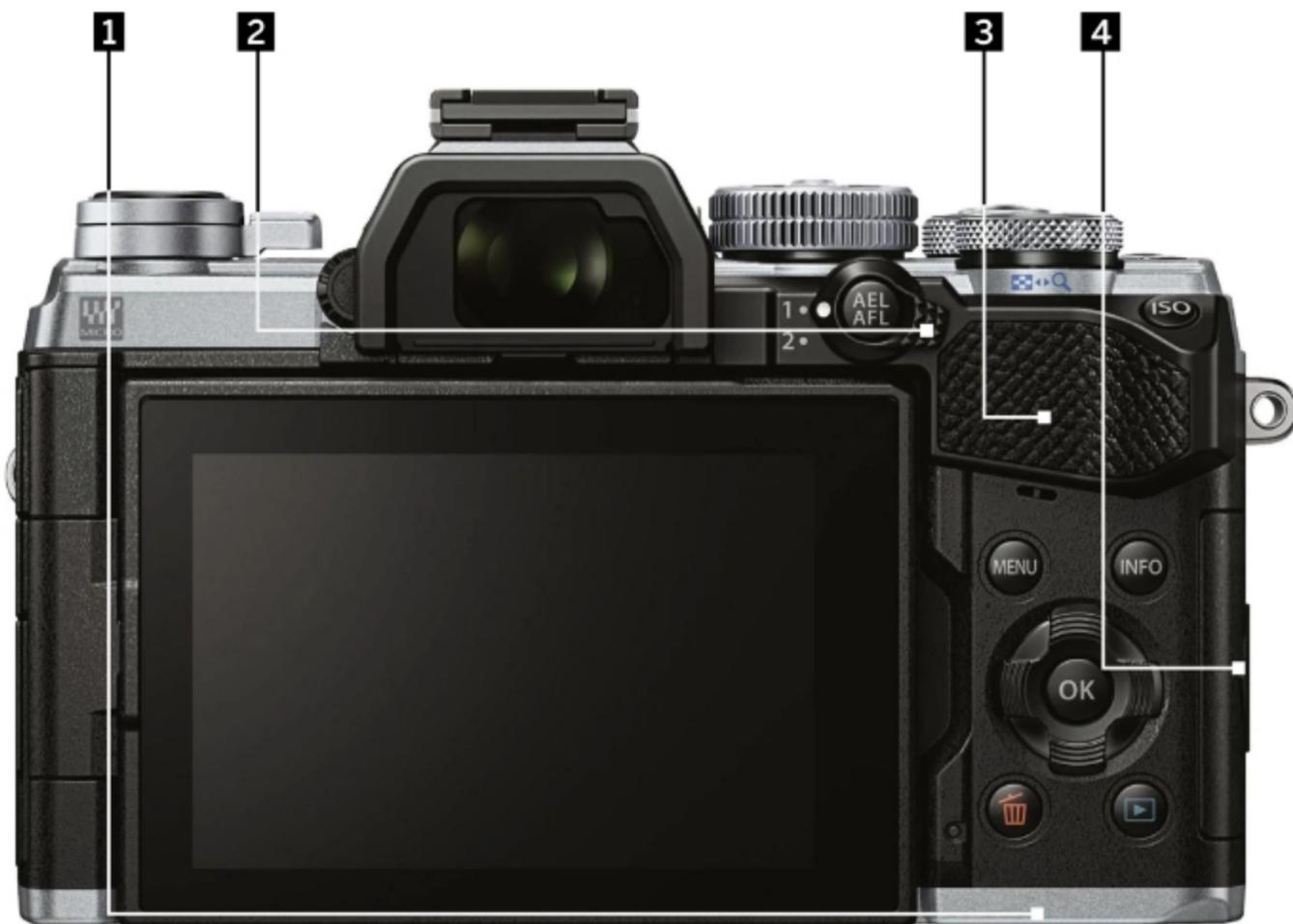
★★★★★

Overall

Olympus has packed in a wealth of useful features, making this a great lightweight and tripod-free option for everyday and travel photography.

★★★★★

Olympus's work on the AF system has paid off here, and the E-M5 III copes extremely well with most situations



1 BATTERY CHANGE

The E-M5 III uses a BLS-50 battery, rather than the BLN-1 of the Mark II

2 FUNCTION LEVER

This lever can be used to switch between two groups of previously selected AF settings

3 REMODELLED GRIPS

The grip and thumb rest are better shaped, increasing security and comfort

4 MIC PORT

It's great to have a mic port, but take care if you move the vari-angle screen



DOWNLOAD THE TEST SHOTS

bit.ly/223



Price: £699 / \$699 with 15-45mm kit lens

Fujifilm X-A7

Fujifilm's new entry-level camera has some neat features for beginners and the image quality that enthusiasts demand. **Angela Nicholson** explains the new model

FEATURES

STANDARD SENSOR

While cameras further up Fujifilm's X-Series lineup have an X-Trans CMOS sensor, the X-A7 has a more common sensor with a Bayer pattern filter array.

VARI-ANGLE SCREEN

In a first for the X-Series, the X-A7's 3.5-inch 2.76 million-dot screen is mounted on a vari-angle hinge, making it easy to shoot from creative angles.

KIT LENS

The X-A7 is sold with the XC 15-45mm f/3.5-5.6 OIS PZ lens, which is a power zoom lens but perhaps one of the lower quality Fujifilm optics.

4K VIDEO

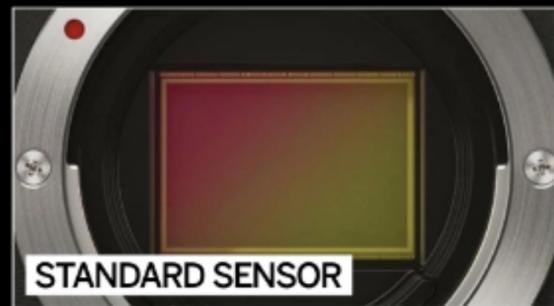
Whereas the X-A5 can only shoot 4K video at 15p, the X-A7 can shoot 4K 30p movies, which makes any movement look smoother and more natural.

MODE DIAL

Rather than the traditional exposure controls of most other Fujifilm X-Series cameras, the X-A7 has a mode dial and twin adjustment dials for setting the exposure.

MIC PORT

Fujifilm has given the X-A7 a mic port but strangely opted for a 2.5mm unit, so there's a 3.5mm adapter supplied in the box.



STANDARD SENSOR



The Fujifilm X-A7 is the replacement for the X-A5, and is the manufacturer's latest entry-level interchangeable lens camera. Although it has the same lens mount as cameras like the Fujifilm X-T30, X-T3 and X-Pro3 and is compatible with all of the company's XF and XC lenses, it doesn't have their X-Trans CMOS sensor. Instead, it has a 24.2MP sensor with a Bayer pattern coloured filter array. That's a more common type of filter, and it helps keep the cost of the X-A7 down. However, according to Fujifilm, the X-A7's APS-C format sensor uses copper wire, and its readout speed is faster than the X-A5's, which helps improve its high-ISO noise control by about 1EV.

The new camera also has a 425-point hybrid autofocus system, with 8.5 times as many phase detection pixels as the X-A5, which improves its subject detection and tracking as well as the Face/Eye Detection performance. In addition, the X-A7 has a maximum continuous shooting rate of 6fps with continuous autofocus.

Like the X-A5, the X-A7 doesn't have a built-in viewfinder, and it can't accept an external viewfinder. However, you can connect a smartphone running Fujifilm's free Camera Remote app and use the phone's screen to compose images if you want.

What the X-A7 does have is the first vari-angle screen that we've seen on a Fujifilm X-Series camera. It's a 3.5-inch unit with 2.76 million dots, which is good for a camera of this level. It's also not troubled excessively by reflections, although a viewfinder would be helpful in very bright light or when following a moving subject. However, there's a good level of detail visible on the screen, and the preview matches the captured images closely for both colour and exposure.

We also love the fact that the screen can be tilted to the perfect angle when you're shooting at ground level or from above head height, either in landscape or portrait format.

The screen is touch-sensitive and is very responsive, which is good news because the X-A7 doesn't have a huge array of buttons to

SMART MENU

The Smart Menu helps novices to take control of the camera via the mode dial. It uses non-technical language to help with adjusting aspects such as the aperture and white balance. Oddly, though, there's no shutter speed control.



Top
Intuitive design

The X-A7's design is uncluttered, with dual adjustment dials and touch-sensitive screen menus

Above
Tilting screen

The vari-angle screen makes shooting down low or up high significantly easier, in both portrait and landscape format

access key features directly. As well as being able to set the AF point (and trip the shutter if you want) with a tap, the menu options are touch-selectable. This and the Smart Menu make the camera very intuitive to use. There are also some neat features available, such as the ability to compare the impact of different Film Simulation modes by dragging a dividing line between two different modes across the screen to reveal more or less of each.

Unusually for an entry-level camera, the X-A7 has dual adjustment dials, which means there's a dial to set both the aperture and shutter speed in Manual Exposure mode, and you don't have to press a button to dial-in

exposure compensation in Shutter Priority or Aperture Priority.

It's also good to see a mini joystick on the back of the camera. This is quicker to operate than a navigation pad, and more importantly for the X-A7, it takes up less space so there's more room for your thumb. It comes in handy for nudging the AF point along a little when you're composing an image.

The X-A7's autofocus system really impressed us during our testing. It's very fast and can cope with low light as long as there's a bit of contrast in the scene. If it can't focus when light levels fall, it's usually possible to find a point of contrast in the scene that it will latch onto.

Noise is controlled well up to around ISO 6400, when the JPEGs start to look a little smoothed in the default settings. We prefer RAW files, but they have some speckling of luminance noise.

The X-A7's autofocus system really impressed us during our testing

Fujifilm X-A7

Megapixels (effective)

24.2

Max resolution

6,000 x 4,000

Sensor information

APS-C (23.5 x 15.7mm)

CMOS

Lens data

Fujifilm X mount

Focus/macro

Hybrid (phase and contrast detection)

with up to 425

selectable points

Shutter speed

30-1/32,000sec, bulb

to 60min

ISO sensitivity

Stills: ISO 200-12800,

expandable to

ISO 100-51,200.

Video: ISO 400-6,400

Exposure modes

Advanced SR Auto,

Program, Shutter-

Priority, Aperture-

Priority, Manual,

Panorama, Scene,

Advanced Filter

Weight

320g including battery

and memory card

Storage

SD/SDHC/SDXC UHS-I

LCD

3.5-inch 2.76 million-

dot vari-angle TFT

touchscreen

Viewfinder

No

FEATURES

The viewfinder is the obvious omission, but otherwise there's a good entry-level feature set

★★★★★

BUILD QUALITY

It's made of plastic, but the X-A7 still looks good and feels fairly solid

★★★★★

HANDLING

It has an uncluttered design, but a faster route to the Quick Menu would be nice

★★★★★

QUALITY OF RESULTS

There's nothing entry-level about the results – they're usually excellent

★★★★★

VALUE FOR MONEY

The vari-angle screen adds to the cost as well as the appeal of the X-A7

★★★★★

Overall

Although we missed a viewfinder, the X-A7 has a good collection of features for novice photographers, it has a nippy AF system and the image quality is great.

★★★★★



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TEST SHOTS

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PRICE: £8,299 / \$7,999

Nikon Nikkor Z 58mm f/0.95 S Noct

Nikon showcases its design skills with this ultra-high-speed standard prime

 Nikon has a fine pedigree of esoteric lens designs, dating back to its rangefinder days, but with few high-speed lenses lined up for the Z-mount except for a 50mm f/1.2 S, this lens seems a bit out of place.

It might be made for mirrorless, but don't be mistaken – this is a big lens. It's around the same size as Canon's RF 28-70mm f/2L, but while the Noct is actually more svelte, it's far heavier and is a bit of a beast on the diminutive Z 7. That said, this is a fine example of opto-mechanical excellence.

The wide and intricately machined focusing ring is silky smooth, and the long throw of around 350 degrees helps, but with no depth of field to speak of at f/0.95, you'd better start honing your focusing skills.

This lens is capable of highly detailed and wonderfully descriptive images wide open across the frame. At close distances, it's also capable of the most creamy-smooth blur you're ever likely to see, and that's not just in the background but also in the foreground and the transitions between them.

It's not perfect, though – no lens is. While there's no real distortion to speak of, at first sight it looks like there may not be any longitudinal fringing either, but on closer examination it's there all right. Still, it is slight, and less than in rival lenses.

This lens isn't for everyone, but it is certainly a unique offering for Z-mount users.



Left
Blur

Even wide open this lens is seriously sharp. It's also capable of the most sublime blur in out-of-focus areas

Left below

Rendering

This lens has a rather unique drawing style that will appeal not only to photographers but also to videographers



Technical specs

Manufacturer	Nikon
Model	Nikkor Z 58mm f/0.95 S Noct
Web	nikon.co.uk
Elements/construction	17/10
Angle of view	40.5 degrees (diagonal)
Max aperture	f/0.95
Min aperture	f/16
Min focus distance	0.5m
Mount	Z Mount
Filter size	82mm
Length	153mm
Diameter	102mm
Weight	2,000g

Overall



The Nikkor Z 58mm f/0.95 S Noct is a bit extreme for most users and hardly practical for everyday use, but there's no denying the quality. You get what you pay for.



PRICE: £549 / \$549

Sigma 45mm f/2.8 DG DN | C

This Contemporary lens for the Sony E and L-mount bodies is put to the test

 Sigma has garnered a reputation for quality over the years, especially with its high-end Art series, so this lens from the Contemporary line has a tough act to follow. Those Art-series lenses are big and pricey, though, while this lens is the complete opposite. It's small enough to still look compact on the Sigma fp and Sony A-series bodies, and on the Lumix S1 series or Leica SLs it will look tiny.

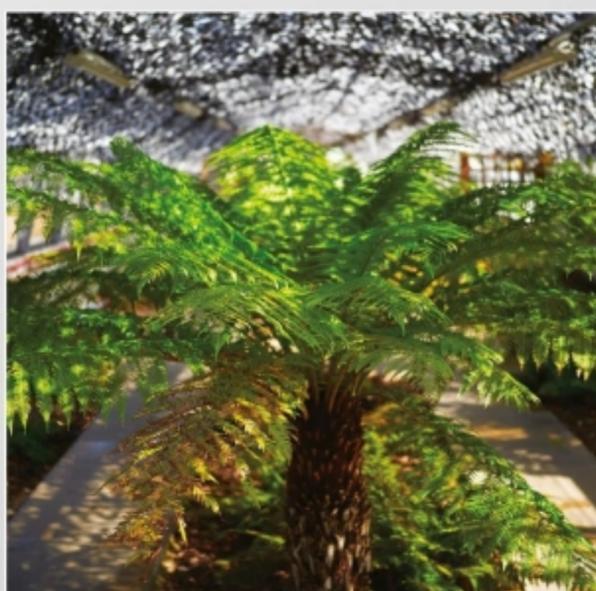
It's also very nicely made, almost Leica-like, with no plastic anywhere other than the front and rear cosmetic panels. Even the oddly satisfying, finely ridged hood is made from aluminium. The lens focuses internally, so there are no extending barrels to look out for.

While it's not the fastest to focus, it's no slouch either, and does so smoothly and in near-silence thanks to a stepping motor.

The 'fly-by-wire' manual focus is nicely weighted, and it enables all the fine adjustment you need for ultra-critical focusing using the camera's magnified view.

Optically, it doesn't match the extreme performance of Art-series primes, but it's still very good. It's sharp even wide open, but vignetting is noticeable and there's unexpected pincushion distortion. Still, fringing is low and flare and ghosting are well-controlled.

What this lens is really notable for is its attractive rendering or 'drawing style'. This and the all-round balance of performance make the lens very appealing.



Left Vignetting

Vignetting is noticeable when wide open, especially compared with images of the same scene taken when stopped down



Left below Distortion

The pincushion distortion is obvious in images with linear elements, but that's easy to correct in software

Technical specs

Manufacturer	Sigma
Model	45mm f/2.8 DG DN C
Web	sigma-imaging-uk.com
Elements/construction	8/7
Angle of view	51.3 degrees (horizontal)
Max aperture	f/2.8
Min aperture	f/22
Min focus distance	0.24m
Mount	Sony E, L mount
Filter size	55mm
Length	46.2mm
Diameter	64mm
Weight	215g

Overall



The 45mm Contemporary is not at the same high level optically as Sigma's 35mm or 50mm Art series, but it's still very good, while being both smaller and more affordable.

ACCESSORIES

A collection of ten fun-yet-functional products out there for photographers



Above

WANDRD VEER 18 PHOTOGRAPHY BUNDLE

Website: eu.wandrd.com
Price: £139 / \$148

Designed for packing inside a larger bag when you're traveling, this lightweight backpack kit has an inflatable back panel and an inflatable camera cube that can house a DSLR like the Nikon D850 with a 24-70mm f/2.8 lens attached. It gives some protection, but you need to put the bag down carefully.

Below

3 LEGGED THING ELLIE

Website: 3leggedthing.com
Price: £62 / \$65

3 Legged Thing's new range of universal L-brackets are available in four different versions. The camera size determines whether you need the standard or short version, and where you wish to mount the camera dictates whether you need the Peak Design (PD) or Arca-Swiss version.



Above

KASE WOLVERINE PRO 1.1 75MM ND 64 FILTER

Website: kasefilters.com
Price: £75 / approx \$100

As an ND 64, this filter cuts out six stops of light, making it ideal for capturing blurred movement in water or clouds. It's designed for use with Kase's K75 filter holder and is just 1.1mm thick, which means it's very light. It's also optically excellent and close to neutral.



Left

PHOTO BOARDS

Website: photoboards.org
Price: £18 / \$24

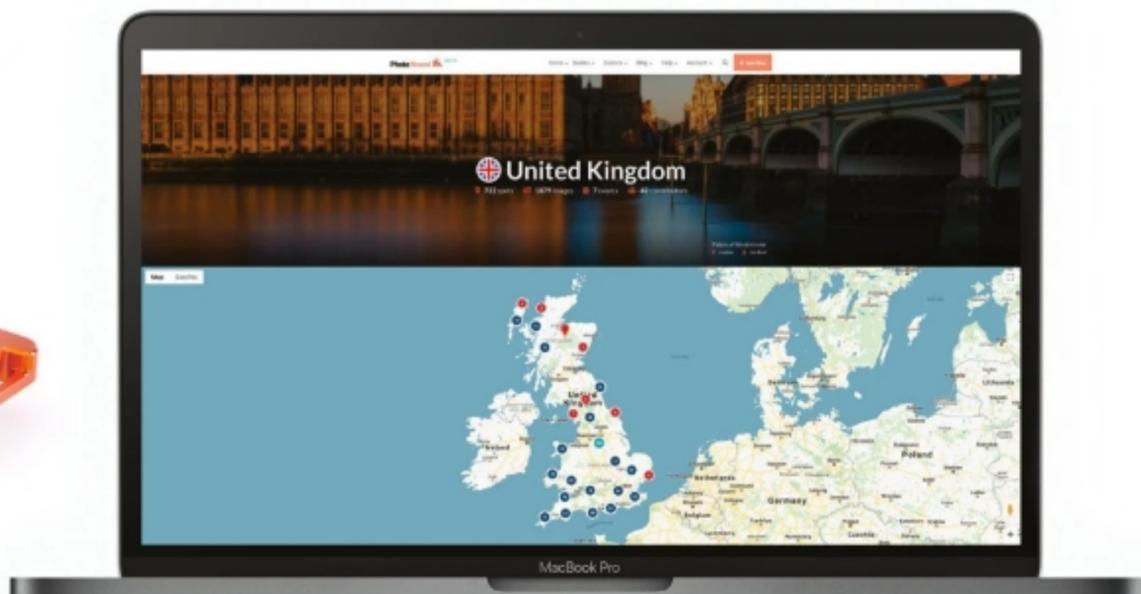
Available in 40x40cm and 60x60cm, these 3mm-thick PVC boards have a high-resolution print that replicates a range of surfaces. There are brick and painted effects as well as weathered wood and doors. They're perfect for use as a background or base for still life images, flat-lays or for macro photography.

Below

PHOTOHOUND

Website: photohound.co
Price: Free (beta version)

Photohound is a website for photographers who travel and want to share their favourite shooting locations or discover new spots. There are guides to locations across the world. It's currently operating as a free public beta version, so it's a great time to sign up.



Below

PEAK DESIGN EVERYDAY SLING 6L V2

Website: peakdesign.com

Price: £95 / \$100

While this smart bag can accommodate a large DSLR and lens, it comes into its own with a small mirrorless system, and can hold a camera plus two or three lenses. There's also a dedicated tablet compartment and a couple of useful zip-closing pockets – one with memory card holders.



Below

DJI OSMO POCKET WATERPROOF CASE

Website: dji.com

Price: £49 / \$55

If you want to take the Osmo Pocket into the water you need a waterproof housing. This is DJI's solution, which has two GoPro mounts to enable it to be mounted almost anywhere. The case restricts the gimbal movement, but there are a couple of buttons to power-up, switch between photos and video, and start recording.



Above

VANGUARD VEO 2S CM-264TR

Website: vanguardworld.co.uk

Price: £110 / \$147

Extending to 163cm and packing down to 55cm, this smart carbon fibre monopod weighs 800g and has a payload of 6kg. Its base has foldable feet attached via a ball joint for smooth panning, while a 1/4-inch thread at the top enables a camera or the supplied smartphone mount to be attached.



Left

BREAKTHROUGH CNC STEP-UP RING

Website: breakthroughfilters.co.uk

Price: £12 / \$14

Picking up one of these rings is enough to tell you that it's not the average step-up ring. That's because they are made from brass, which makes them heavier and more solid-feeling. They also screw more smoothly onto a filter or lens filter thread than most cheaper step-up rings.

Below

MOVO MTP-20

Website: movophoto.com

Price: £80 / \$100

This rotating tripod head makes shooting simple timelapses or smooth panning videos very easy, and as it's powered by four AA batteries you can take it away from home. The rotation speed and direction can be varied, while the rotating angle can vary between 10 and 360 degrees or continuous.



PREPARE TO IMPROVISE

Alex Stead on the challenges of a remote, last-minute photo expedition



PRO BIO

Alex is an Instagram phenomenon. As a photographer and film maker specialising in travel, lifestyle and adventure, he uses the platform to showcase his work to over 1.2 million followers.

alexstead.co.uk



We all face fresh challenges in our career from time to time, and this is no bad thing. I recently undertook a ship-based expedition to Svalbard, Norway to capture Arctic wildlife – a daunting challenge given that I'd never done anything quite like it before. One Saturday morning I booked onto a ten-day expedition, and on the following Monday I set off on this last-minute adventure, not sure what to expect but excited to experience a new location.

As a travel photographer, I'm always considering the best way to capture the locations I visit. This time I'd be travelling on a small ship called the M/V Kinfish through a company called Natural World Safaris. With a maximum of 12 guests and crew, we'd have the flexibility to sail into shallower waters and cruise around while still enjoying room to change position and wait and observe the wildlife we found.

I had set myself up with the greatest opportunity a photographer could to capture Arctic wildlife. That said, it meant being fixed to one distinct location, instead of roaming freely as I tend to do when I work.

Instead, I spent time learning and exploring my new home – the ship was a challenging but good working platform. Where were the best spots? Where was the lowest point to the water? What did I need to wear and use to remain comfortable while waiting? The most important lesson was learning to move around the ship as quietly as possible with heavy gear, as banging even a small bit of metal might scare off a polar bear. And being fixed instead of roaming free turned out to be an incredible blessing, not only allowing for a better chance to see wildlife, but also to see a lot more of otherwise inaccessible places.

In such an unpredictable environment and without the planning and research of areas that I usually undertake before shoots, my approach to imagery had to change. I was adapting to the landscape and weather conditions each day. Being in one of the most remote parts of the world was about preparing, even if that meant not being able to prepare at all.

All images © Alex Stead



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Sony A7R IV body

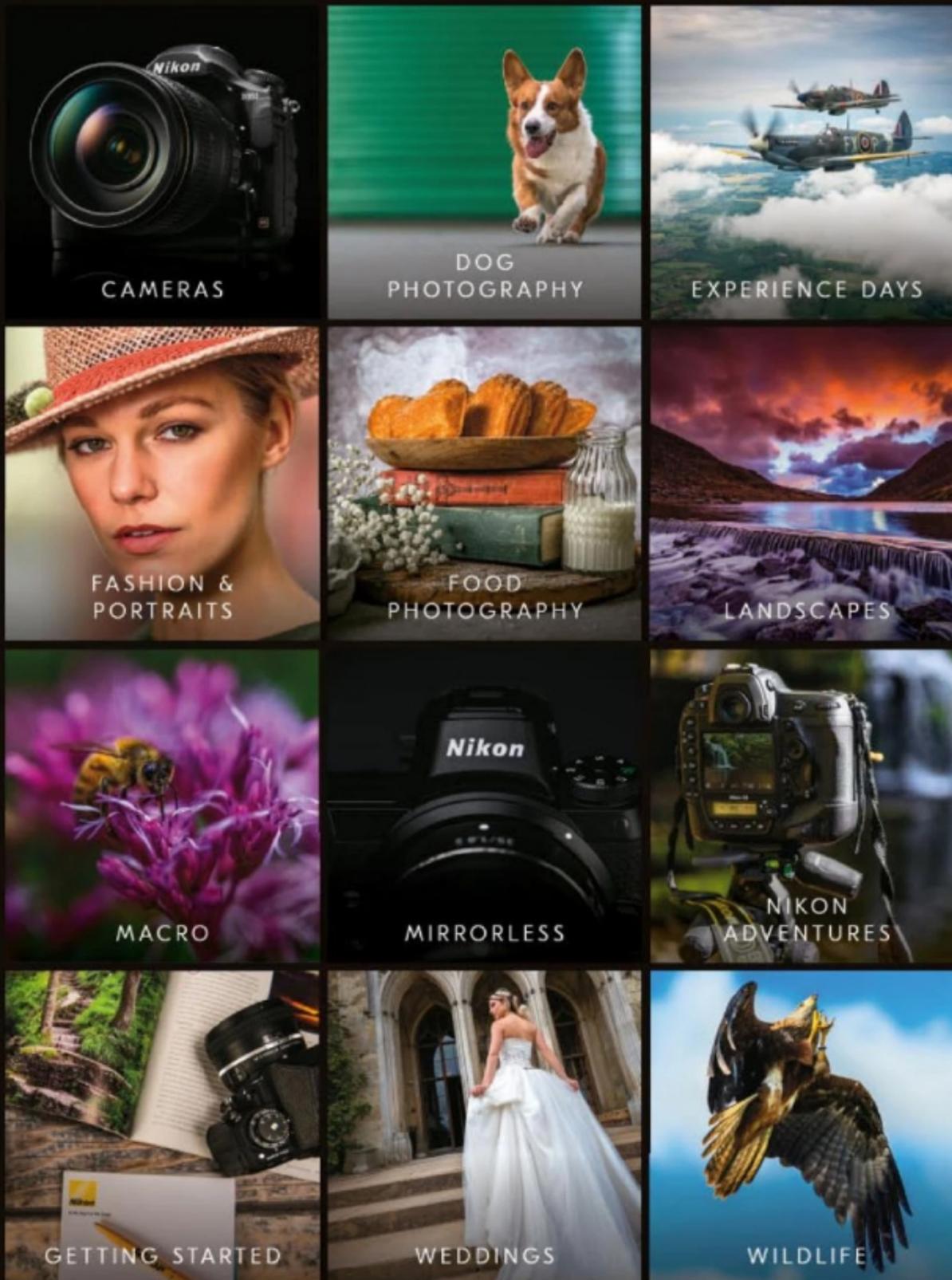
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Nikon School is a best in class photographic training facility located in the heart of London, just two minutes from Oxford Circus. Equipped with the latest Nikon camera technology, the school is a creative, inspiring venue that gives rise to the best in photography. Courses run from Tuesday to Saturday and range from getting started with D-SLR or Mirrorless photography, to technique-specific courses, photography experience days and location based workshops.

Book your course at nikon.co.uk/training
For more information visit www.nikonschool.co.uk

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