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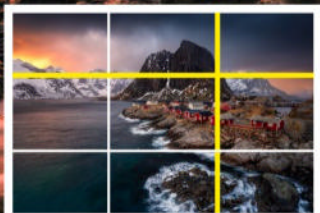
Digital Camera World

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LANDSCAPES SPECIAL

MASTER FRAMING

12 ways to compose your shots like a pro



Rule of thirds



Dynamic diagonals



Hotshots

The year's best
garden photos



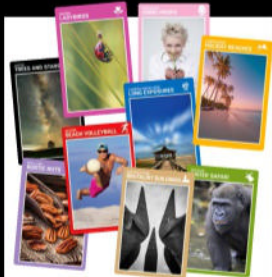
Reader challenge

Shoot interiors and
build a big following!

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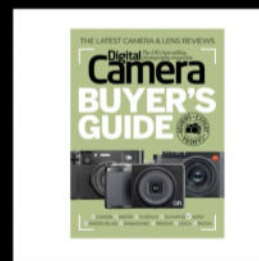
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9 all-new photo
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Welcome

Landscape photographers, you are in for a treat this month, as top pro Karolina Konsur delivers a masterclass in framing scenic shots, focusing on capturing hidden frame structures – that's our cover feature (p64). Heading indoors, you can learn how to shoot property interiors with Nick Church (p8), and Camera Clinic (p84) will show you how to bag brilliant pictures of bugs. There's another selection of creative projects in Photo Skills (p41), while in this month's interview (p118), Glenn Røkeberg tells us about an epic long-term documentary project. Camera and lens reviews include the Lumix TZ300 (p108) and Canon's RF 45mm F1.2 STM lens (p114). Enjoy the issue.

Niall

Niall Hampton, editor
niall.hampton@futurenet.com



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Turn to page 38

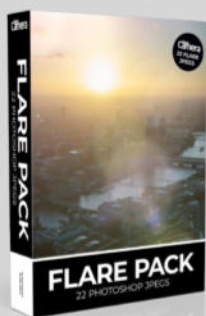


This issue's bonus gifts **Find out more on pages 6 and 106**



Nine all-new photo tips cards

Our latest selection of tips cards gives wallet-sized advice on how to take better photos on location



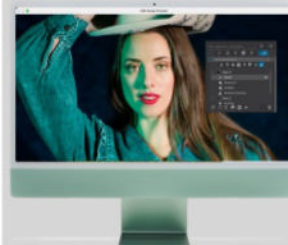
33 Actions, presets, LUTs and lens flares

As seen in this month's tutorials, give your photos a new look in just a few clicks with these bonus software extras



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Our experts highlight the latest features of Adobe Photoshop, Lightroom and Affinity

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JULY 2026

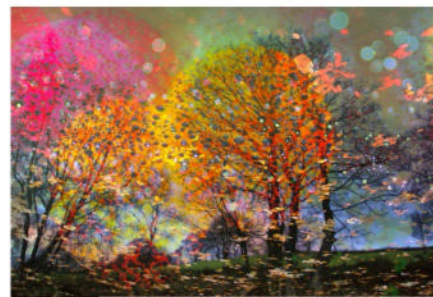


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LANDSCAPES SPECIAL

MASTER FRAMING

12 ways to compose your shots like a pro



© Ian Gilmour/GPOTY

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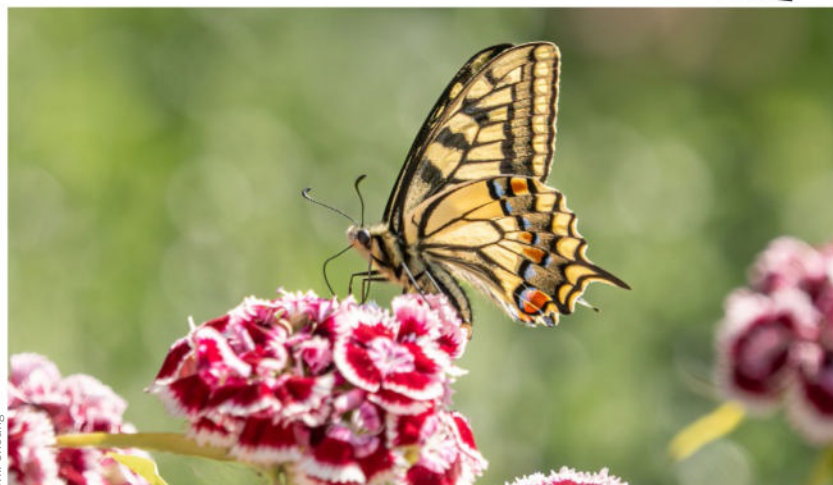
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This month's contributors

Will Cheung



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Camera Clinic _ Insect photography is a great test of your camera skills, so give it a try, says Will Cheung. He has curated a range of approaches to get started with, many of them using the camera and lenses you already own

Karolina Konsur



Karolina Konsur
Landscape photographer

Specialising in seascapes and long-exposure photography, Karolina has attracted an international audience. She helms this month's cover feature, from **page 64**

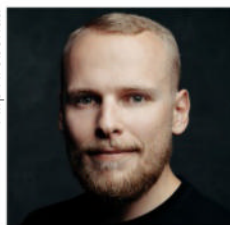
Glenn Røkeberg



Glenn Røkeberg
Photographer

Born in the US to Norwegian parents, Glenn recently spent two years photographing the British Army's most senior regiment. He tells us all about it, from **page 118**

Filip Hrebenda



Filip Hrebenda
Landscape photographer

We speak to the Slovakian photographer about his photo 'The Gate', which took first prize in the latest edition of the SkyPixel Awards. Turn to **page 94**



Jon Devo
Photographer and writer

Our resident tech columnist enjoys considering the latest developments in photography and digital imaging. Read his latest dispatch on **page 28**



Will Cheung
Photographer and writer

A fellow of the Royal Photographic Society and the former editor of many photography titles, Will is the man behind Camera Clinic, which continues on **page 84**

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The Apprentice _ We all have an eye for what makes home sweet home, but for anyone who has ever wondered how to photograph interiors like a pro, see how reader Adrian Robinson fared with tips and insights from Nick Church

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Photo Skills _ **NEW!** We've given our photo projects section a makeover. It now features step-by-step techniques and in-depth image analysis to help make you a better photographer. Turn to page 41 to get started



Wendy Evans

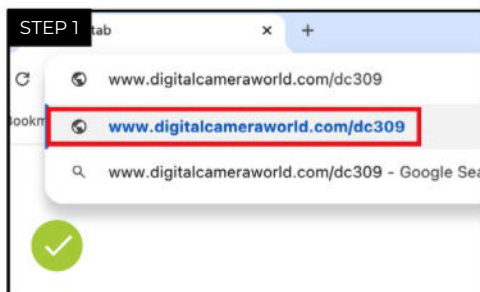
How to get your 34 digital gifts

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SOFTWARE
EXTRAS!**
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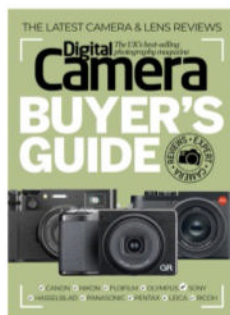
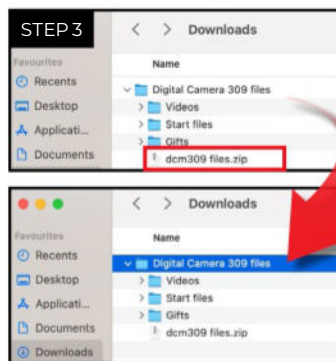
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Digital Camera APPRENTICE



The Pro

Name: Nick Church

Camera: Sony A7 IV

Following a career in the software industry, Nick became a commercial photographer, working for various brands, and also shoots weddings. He is also an educator, having founded the Nick Church Creative Academy, an online training suite for photographers.
www.nickchurchcreativeacademy.com
IG: @nickchurchcreativeacademy

The Apprentice

Name: Adrian Robinson

Camera: Fujifilm X-H2

Based in Hertfordshire in England, Adrian is a professional wedding photographer who specialises in recording his clients' special days in a documentary style. He seeks to create natural, emotive images – precious memories for couples to cherish.
www.adrianrobinsonphotography.com
IG: @adrianrobinsonphotography

The background image shows a rustic interior. A stone fireplace mantel is the central focus, with a black rectangular vent above it and a black-framed opening below. On the mantel, there is a bronze sculpture of a rabbit on the left and a light-colored, abstract sculpture of a seated figure on the right. To the left of the mantel, a framed painting of a street scene hangs on the stone wall, with a small cylindrical lamp above it. Below the mantel is a wooden bench with a striped cushion. A colorful, patterned rug is on the floor. To the right, a wooden door leads to another room with bookshelves.

Building up a following

One reader, one pro... capturing property interiors with guidance from **Nick Church**

W

elcome to *Digital Camera Apprentice*, where we pair a reader with a professional photographer for a day of shooting together. The concept is simple: the pro acts as a photographic mentor, sharing their expert insights to help the reader improve their favoured genre of photography – it's like a one-to-one workshop, but one that gets to be seen by a wider audience. This month, Adrian Robinson is having a masterclass in photographing interiors from commercial photographer and educator Nick Church. Architectural photography is one of various strings in Nick's bow: as well as shooting weddings and commercial work, he also runs —→

SUPER SHOT #1



Camera:	Fujifilm X-H2
Lens:	Fujinon XF16mm F1.4 R WR
Exposure:	1/400 sec at f/8, ISO 500



Arrange household objects within the frame at the point of capture – don't do it in editing.

ABOVE: KITCHEN

THE APPRENTICE: "A bright kitchen scene and challenging sunlight required careful bracketing. Maybe I'd restyle the foreground next time."

THE PRO: "The symmetry of the coffee table and the sofas is a great lead-in. The roof lights add some more interest to the shot, too."

the Nick Church Creative Academy, which offers a range of online courses and one-to-one coaching sessions, plus a mentoring scheme with three tiers of membership (www.bit.ly/dcm309_mentor).

Based near Bristol in south-west England, Nick came to photography following a career in the software industry. Readers who visited this year's Photography and Video Show in Birmingham may have seen his insightful talk 'Da Vinci Got it Wrong: The Histogram Myth'.

Back to today, let's meet our reader apprentice. Adrian Robinson saw Nick



Nick Church



Nick Church

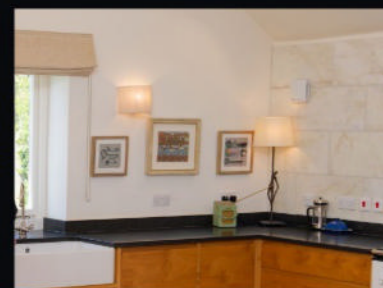


Pro tip What clients want

There are different strands of interiors photography, depending on who's paying for the images. Estate agents commissioning photos for property listings want to show the potential of a home, so the property needs to look as bright and cheerful as possible. Property owners renting holiday lets need to emphasise spaces for living, eating and sleeping, so clients can imagine themselves in the rooms. Architects showcasing work for potential clients want expansive views that also emphasise how the interiors function.

Capturing interiors 101

Things to bear in mind when photographing indoor spaces



1 Turn the lights on

There's plenty of natural light today, but it's always a good idea to turn on all the artificial lights in the room – it helps to make things look warm and cosy. Plus, if the bulbs aren't switched on, lights might look like they are broken.



2 Plump it up

If you're shooting in a property that isn't currently occupied, then give the soft furnishings a quick plump – it makes living areas look more welcoming. Also, remove any creases in fabrics and fix curtains that aren't hanging straight.



3 Details, details...

Perhaps less essential for the marketing materials of estate agents, detail shots are a must for photos of holiday rentals. For example, the badge on this Aga range cooker signifies that this property is an upmarket one.

speaking at a photo convention last winter, so he applied to spend a day shooting with him. A documentary wedding photographer, Adrian uses Fujifilm's flagship X Series body, the X-H2. With a 40.2MP sensor, this was the highest-resolution APS-C camera when it launched in 2022, so it's an ideal tool for capturing the wonders of the big day.

Wedding photography combines various genres, including formal portraiture, documentary, behind-the-scenes photos and – whether held in a church, register office or licensed venue – interiors. So perhaps it's not surprising that Nick also shoots architecture and interiors for a range of clients including estate agents and property landlords. Given that we all have an eye for what makes a homely space, it's a style that could be attempted by *Digital Camera* readers.

For any readers not familiar with it, what are the technical aspects of shooting interiors?

Visit any property or holiday lets website and you'll click through picture galleries showing properties looking their very best, with smartphone-esque perfect exposures – no extremes of brightness or darkness across the scene, everything well balanced. We're interested in how this look is achieved on a proper camera, however. So how does Nick get the same result with his photographs – especially as he doesn't use flash lighting or shoot from a tripod? →

“How do you get perfect exposures without using flash lighting or a tripod?”



Our pro's kit Sony A7 IV

Nick Church uses this 33MP full-frame mirrorless for commercial work, with Sony FE 14mm F1.8 GM, 70-200mm F2.8 GM OSS II and 35mm F1.4 GM lenses. www.sony.co.uk

Camera skills Brace yourself

Avoiding the use of tripods and flash lighting allows Nick to work quickly and efficiently – handy when he might find himself photographing a property with 12 bedrooms and multiple shared spaces – and he was keen for Adrian to do the same. Shooting at around 1/400 sec with a 24mm-equivalent lens at f/8, this shutter speed keeps Adrian well away from the risk of camera shake, even for the brightest image in the bracket set. If you find yourself having to handhold at slower shutter speeds, though, then leaning against a wall and locking the upper arms into the body will help keep things stable.



Pro Nick walks apprentice Adrian through the property he'll be photographing. Having shot here before, Nick knows all the nooks and crannies.

The answer is HDR bracketing (see below), where a set of captures is blended to create extra dynamic range. The blended image combines the portions of the individual frames where the shadows and highlights are well-exposed, plus what was recorded at the mid-point exposure; the blending process can be done automatically in editing software.

Arriving at the location for today's shoot – the kitchen of a family home a few minutes away from where Nick is based – Adrian is going to need a lot of dynamic range for his images. It's a sunny and warm day with clear blue skies, and sunlight is streaming in through the large windows and rooflights.

Hero shots

With introductions made, Nick takes Adrian around the space to pick out the key details.

"The first thing I think about when walking in is where the hero shots are going to be," Nick says. "You also want elements that

RIGHT: THE HEART OF THE HOUSE

THE APPRENTICE: "Focusing on leading lines, the wide-angle composition worked well, though if I shot this again, I'd lower the camera slightly."

THE PRO: "This photo looks right out of a luxury homes magazine! The depth of field is perfect – you feel like you could walk into the scene."

will provide some foreground interest, which works really well in all types of photography – that's anything that makes leading lines."

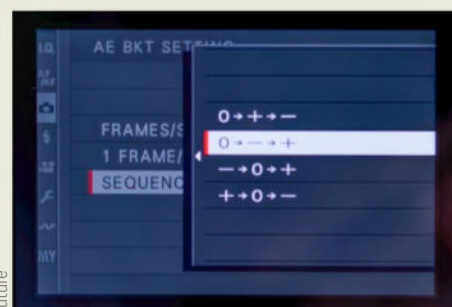
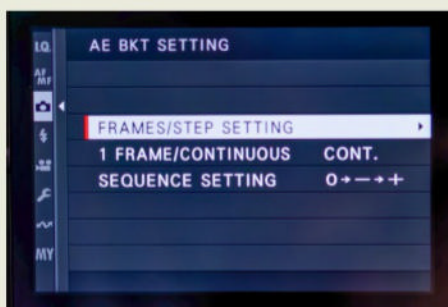
While this room is neatly arranged, having too many objects in a scene will make it look messy once you're shooting wide-angle pictures, Nick cautions. Best to remove what you don't want to appear in the shot, rather than having to clone it all out afterwards.

"As my 14mm lens has a field of view that's virtually 90°, whatever you tidy up is going to be in a shot somewhere, so you should actually just put things away." →

Pro tip Bracketing

Auto Exposure Bracketing (AEB) allows the photographer to capture dynamic range (the spread of tones from dark shadows to bright highlights) closer to what the human eye sees, which cameras aren't able to replicate. This is achieved by blending three or more images captured at different exposure values

– one at a mid-point, and others above and below it – in editing software to create a new file with extended dynamic range. The photographer can determine the AEB settings, including the number of shots in the sequence (above left) and the order they're taken in (above right).



SUPER
SHOT #2

Camera:	Fujifilm X-H2
Lens:	Fujinon XF16mm F1.4 R WR
Exposure:	1/400 sec at f/8, ISO 500

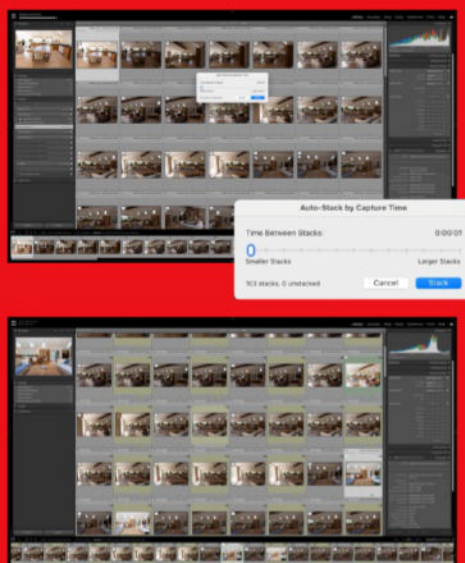
SUPER SHOT #3



Camera:	Fujifilm X-H2
Lens:	Fujinon XF16mm F1.4 R WR
Exposure:	1/8000 sec at f/8, ISO 500

Editing skills Batch processing

Nick Church shoots commercial work and weddings, so finds Adobe Lightroom Classic – the desktop variant of the software – invaluable for managing and processing large volumes of photos. Lightroom is also adept at producing HDR exposure blends, as its handy Auto-Stack by Capture Time tool means that bracket sets don't have to be manually defined, saving a lot of editing time. Once the set of bracketed images has been put into a stack, an HDR image with extended dynamic range will be generated. HDR merge functionality is also offered in software including Affinity and ON1 Photo RAW.



ABOVE: PATIO

THE APPRENTICE: "I balanced natural light to capture the details. The layered composition feels strong, but I'd include more foreground next time."

THE PRO: "Strong layers, great composition and a good edit with lovely colours. This shows the property in its wider environment really well."

As Nick says, his go-to option for shooting interiors is a 14mm prime on his full-frame Sony A7 IV mirrorless. Adrian is using a Fujinon XF16mm F1.4 R WR, which is equivalent to 24mm in full-frame terms.

So before we go any further, why does Nick eschew using a tripod and flash?

"I just find it much quicker to move around," he replies. "The advantages of a tripod are being able to keep the shutter speed and ISO really low, but for me it's a trade-off between having noisier images and a slightly shallower depth of field than I would otherwise have, with the pros of being able to get around a



HDR bracketing is a way of handling the extreme highlights and shadows in scenes like this.



The property's beautifully kept garden meant that there were plenty of pleasing details to capture.

property much faster. I would much rather compromise on image noise, which isn't such a problem with newer cameras, than on how long it takes me to do a shoot.

"The sunlight coming into this room is making the colours look softer, like pastels. If I used flash that would all be gone; flash would just blast everything out of the way.

"The reason photographers use flash is that it helps with the dynamic range, and they can get the exposure they want in one shot without having to use bracketing. But then you're spending longer on the shoot with the benefit of being quicker during editing.

"I'd rather get in and out of the property as quickly as possible', says Nick, 'then spend more time editing afterwards'"

"I'd rather get in and out of the property as quickly as possible with the shots I need and spend a bit more time in Lightroom later on."

It hinges on the bracket

With some set dressing taken care of, it's time for Nick to discuss his camera settings strategy with Adrian. To keep the ISO as low as he can, for minimising digital noise and capturing optimum image quality, Nick opts for medium apertures, as using smaller apertures will require higher ISO values when shooting handheld. Another factor when setting apertures is how close the

Technique assessment

You won't go wrong with these top tips for shooting interiors



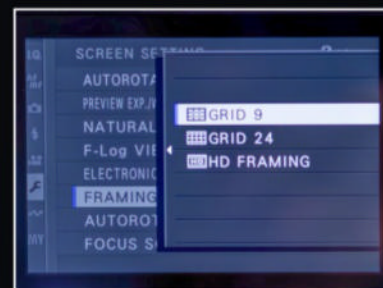
1 Capture raw files

For producing the most dynamic range possible in three- or five-shot exposure bracket sets, having the full range of information captured by the sensor will be essential. So set your camera to shoot uncompressed raws.



2 Keep things level

Using a tripod for support is a typical approach for this kind of photography, but Nick likes to work quickly by shooting hand-held (see p13). Enable the camera's electronic level to make sure your captures are straight.



3 Go on-grid

Viewfinder grid displays ('Grid Display' on Canon, 'Grid type' on Nikon and 'Grid Line' on Sony) are handy compositional tools. On Fujifilm cameras, head into the settings menu (the spanner icon) and look for 'Framing guideline'.

SUPER SHOT #4



With Nick offering insight, Adrian works on some of his bracketed captures. Getting hands-on with editing is a key aspect of Nick's workshops.

ABOVE: AN ENGLISH GARDEN

THE APPRENTICE: "Shooting the garden helped me think more carefully about depth, framing and composition to maximise the visual interest."

THE PRO: "Adrian followed my focusing tips to ensure front-to-back sharpness – not easy on this shot due to the foreground interest. He's nailed it."

nearest object in the scene is to the camera, although Nick can accept some foreground details being in slightly softer focus. One thing he won't accept, though, is wonky verticals. Make sure they're upright, he says, as fixing them in editing is an extra task you can avoid.

For the exposure bracketing, Nick favours three-shot sets rather than five-shot ones.

"When bracketing, the frame with the brightest exposure uses a slow shutter speed," he explains. "Given that I don't use a tripod, the brightest shot needs to be something I can still handhold. So I tend to go



Camera:	Fujifilm X-H2
Lens:	Fujinon XF16mm F1.4 R WR
Exposure:	1/8000 sec at f/8, ISO 500

with the reciprocal rule [*shoot with a shutter speed that puts a '1/' over the focal length*]. "With my 14mm lens, this will be 1/20 sec, and I can hold the camera steady enough to use that shutter speed." As Adrian shoots on a crop-sensor camera, Nick recommends that he adds an extra half a stop.

For the exposure variation across the bracketed set, Nick sets a two-stop difference, because three shots taken at a difference of two stops results in a four-stop increase in dynamic range over the initial one.

Adrian transposes the settings to his Fujifilm X-H2 and gets busy, with one shutter press for each bracket set. Adrian works his way around the room with Nick, capturing wide shots from various points before picking out small details to complement the wides.

Nick says he prefers shooting all the wide shots in one go, while he's in the flow of things, then changing to a 35mm or 50mm lens for



From top: The 40.2MP Fujifilm X-H2 and XF16mm F1.4 is Adrian's setup for today; Nick dispenses framing tips; Adrian capturing the water feature.

getting the detail shots he needs. This means he'll have to go around the property twice – a considerable undertaking if he's shooting a 12-bedroom house – but he says this is preferable to constantly switching cameras and risking leaving the body that he isn't using being included in the corner of a shot.

To wrap things up at the location, our pro and apprentice venture outdoors to shoot some pictures of the exterior features of the property and its pristine garden, plus some frames of the interior for combining into a super-wide-angle panorama later on.

Light room to Lightroom

Then it's back to the batcave – Nick's studio – for the second half of today's shoot. A quick coffee and biscuits, and it's time for Adrian to copy his memory card to Nick's computer for importing his captures into Lightroom Classic, Nick's chosen image editing →

Pro portfolio Nick Church



Nick Church

Swinfen Hall

"This angle used the hedges for lead-in lines and layers, showcasing both property and gardens. The sky was added in Photoshop due to the awful weather, an occupational hazard of shooting properties in the UK."



Nick Church

Brookburn Road

"The owner of this property put a lot of attention into the interior design, something that needs to be highlighted – especially for luxury holiday lets like this. Texture, light and tone all take equal billing here."



Nick Church

Swinfen Hall

"Alongside capturing epic spaces, I'm looking for scenes that show luxury and aesthetics for potential guests. You almost feel like you could enjoy a cup of tea and a book here, like the lord or lady of the manor."



Camera: Fujifilm X-H2
Lens: Fujinon XF16mm F1.4 R WR
Exposure: 1/400 sec at f/8, ISO 500



Adrian Robinson

ABOVE: THREE-SHOT PANORAMA

THE APPRENTICE: "This captures the property's scale naturally while maintaining detail, balance and a realistic perspective throughout."

THE PRO: "Adrian used a good shooting technique and kept the verticals straight throughout. The whole living space is seen in one excellent shot."

Editing skills Try a panorama

Want to create an expansive image but don't have an ultra-wide-angle lens? Then shoot a panorama. You'll need a lens with a focal length of around 35mm, and the plan is to capture a series of vertical images along a horizontal plane, overlapping each shot by around a quarter of the frame. Again using Lightroom (alternatives include Capture One

and Affinity), open the panoramic sequence in the Develop module, click the sequence and select Photo Merge > Panorama. Select Cylindrical projection, then click Auto Crop and hit Merge. Once the software has completed the operation, you can edit the merged image in the usual way, adjusting colours and making tonal tweaks.

software. The first step is to inspect Adrian's bracket sets and put the software to work creating HDR images. While Photoshop has long been able to create HDR images, the Photo Merge functionality in Lightroom has improved in recent years and produces great results. Auto-Stack by Capture Time is a handy tool that does all the heavy lifting and means that bracket sets don't have to be defined manually (make sure there's a clear gap between each set of bracketed shots).

Once the software has worked its magic, a new DNG (uncompressed digital negative) image is created, containing the extra dynamic range and with 'HDR' appended to the filename for easy identification. When editing a set of bracketed HDRs, Nick will adjust the highlights and shadows, then create a preset based on the changes before

SHOT
OF THE
DAY!



applying this to the rest of the images and adjusting the exposure and white balance, and fixing any geometry issues – making sure horizontals and verticals are 100 per cent straight. What do you do about white balance in your photos, Adrian asks Nick?

"I always try to get back to what the room actually looked like," says Nick, "so I might see what Auto White Balance gives me. With this morning's warm sunlight, it looked warmer to our eyes than it does now on screen, so I might tweak the white balance to reflect that."

Another necessary step is reducing the exposure of any windows that might be overexposed, which Nick does using

Lightroom's masking tools, painting detail back into any blown-out areas with a brush.

Having shown him the ropes, it's over to Adrian, who chooses some bracket stacks to work on – getting hands-on is a key element of Nick's education and mentoring approach.

Adrian is a fast learner, and his edits reveal that he is building some solid foundations for a side hustle doing interiors photography. ● Digital Camera readers can get 33% off Nick's Photographer Unleashed! (www.bit.ly/dcm309_nick1) and Lightroom Unleashed! online courses (www.bit.ly/dcm309_nick2). Use the links above and enter the code DIGITAL-CAMERA-50 at checkout.



Apprentice verdict

"Shooting with Nick has completely changed my understanding of interiors photography, workflow efficiency and creating natural-looking results."



Pro verdict

"Adrian was dropped into a totally new scenario for him, and he took everything on board brilliantly, as shown by his photos. It was great to work with him on the day."

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Email us at: digitalcamera@futurenet.com



InFocus

Photography news from around the globe

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1 RESOLUTION AND SPEED DEMON

An upgraded 67MP full-frame sensor is paired with the new Bionz XR2 processor.

2 A BONUS FOR LOW-LIGHT WORK

This is the first Sony mirrorless camera to benefit from key buttons that light up.

3 BATTERY AND STAMINA BOOST

New cell offers a 17 per cent higher capacity, but is only 5 per cent larger.



4 SEALED FOR EXACTING USE

As a GM lens, there are weather-seals to help prevent dust and moisture ingress.

5 WEIGHT AND SIZE INCREASE

The new features make the lens both heavier and larger than its predecessor.

6 PLENTY TO KEEP THE HANDS BUSY

The 100-400mm F4.5 has the usual G Master bank of switches.

7 BUILT-IN FILTER

40.5mm drop-in circular filters can be inserted in this holder; the filter thread at the front element is 95mm in diameter.



Sony A7R VI and new 100-400mm zoom

Sony A7R VI gets a modest megapixels bump, but burst speeds have been tripled – and there's a new 100-400mm constant aperture zoom

The latest version of Sony's high-resolution full-frame mirrorless has a 67MP sensor, up from the A7 V's 61MP, but its burst rate has been tripled to 30fps when using the electronic shutter. Previously a go-to camera for photographers prizing resolution, this boost to the burst rate means the latest tech delivers both resolution and speed.

Other headline features include stabilisation increased to 8.5 stops at the centre, a new electronic viewfinder

that's three times brighter than the earlier model and a new battery.

Also released is the **Sony FE 100-400mm F4.5 GM OSS**, which brings a constant aperture and internal zoom in a major refresh of 2017's 100-400mm F4.5-5.6 GM OSS. Four XD linear motors deliver autofocus that's up to triple the speed of the previous 100-400mm, says Sony. **Find out more at: www.sony.co.uk £4,399/\$4,499 (Sony A7R VI); £4,399/\$4,298 (FE 100-400mm)**



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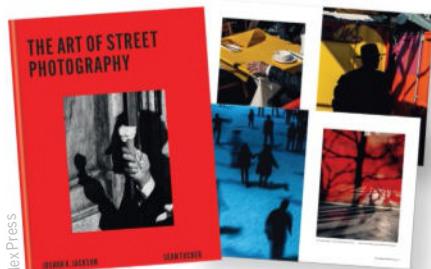
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Focal point

Rounding up what's new and exciting this month



Master the art of street photography with Ilex's new book

Written by Joshua K Jackson and Sean Tucker, this new volume will help newbie or experienced street shooters alike find their creative voice. Striking images and expert insights will help reposition street photography as something 'truly artistic'. www.ilexinstant.com; £30/\$35



Support new RPS initiative to photograph Britain's female MPs

The 40% Project is marking the milestone of 40% female representation in the UK's House of Commons by commissioning portraits of the MPs. A book of the photos will be published later this year, and can be supported via a Kickstarter campaign. www.bit.ly/dcm309_40project

Instax mini 13 has extra appeal for users who want to take selfies

The latest version of Fujifilm's popular instant camera brings some benefits for selfie-takers. These include a selfie timer that can be set to either two or 10 seconds and a wedge built into the strap to help prop up the camera when using the timer. www.instax.com; £80/\$94



Tamron 35-100mm F2.8 Di III VXD

Designed for travel photography, this lens puts all the popular portrait focal lengths into a single zoom that's lighter and more affordable than the common 24-70mm

Tamron 35-100mm F2.8 Di III VXD puts portrait-ready focal lengths into a single zoom weighing just 565g (for Sony E-mount) and 575g (Nikon Z). Inspired by the brand's earlier 35-150mm F2-2.8 Di III, the new lens takes that popular optic and cuts back some of the zoom and aperture to create a more portable lens. Explaining the less common zoom range, Tamron says it wanted to pack the most common focal lengths for portraits (35mm, 50mm, 85mm and 100mm) into one optic. Built from 15 elements in 13 groups and with a nine-blade circular aperture, the 35-100mm has a VXD autofocus motor and a close-focusing distance of 8.7 inches from the front of the lens.

Find out more at: www.tamron.eu; £799/\$899 (Sony E) or £799/\$929 (Nikon Z)



With a 24-75mm equivalent zoom, the L10 feels made for street and travel photography.

Lumix L10

Coinciding with the 25th anniversary of Panasonic's Lumix cameras, this new MFT compact for everyday shooting offers a useful zoom range and tactile controls

Designed for photographers who want premium image quality without the bulk of an interchangeable-lens system, the L10 combines a retro-inspired body, a Leica-branded zoom lens and a Micro Four Thirds sensor in a camera that feels made for street, travel, documentary and everyday photography. The L10 is based around a 20.4MP MFT back-illuminated CMOS sensor, paired with Panasonic's latest image

processing engine. The fixed lens zoom is 24-75mm equivalent in full-frame terms, with a bright f/1.7-2.8 aperture range. There's also Phase Hybrid AF and up to 30fps burst mode shooting when using the electronic shutter. The Titanium Gold limited edition also features dedicated accessories for serious Lumix fans.

Find out more at: www.panasonic.com; £1,299/\$1,497 (standard finishes). £TBC/\$TBC (Titanium Gold edition)



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Matthew Richards

Matthew Richards is a photographer and journalist who has spent many years using all manner of photo gear.

Tamron 150-500mm
at 1/1000 sec



A fast shutter speed of 1/1000 sec freezes the action, whereas using 1/60 sec while panning produces motion blur and creates a sense of speed.

Matthew Richards

Top gear for motorsport

Q

I have a full-frame Nikon Z 5II camera and want to try my hand at motorsport photography. Can you suggest a good lens and suitable camera settings for some common shot types?

Damien Harper

A

You are typically limited to spectators' areas when shooting motorsport, and there's often a lot of run-off between you and the track, so a long telephoto lens is a must. I recently bought a Tamron 150-500mm F5-6.7 Di III VC VXD, which is excellent and keenly priced

at £1,099 (\$1,199). It's available in Nikon Z, Sony E and Fujifilm X mount options and is full-frame compatible, delivering an 'effective' zoom range of about 225-750mm on APS-C format cameras. It has a super-fast voice coil motor autofocus system and highly effective optical stabilisation.

For camera settings, try shutter-priority mode and Auto ISO in variable lighting conditions. Continuous autofocus works well, especially if your camera has vehicle subject-recognition and tracking. I'd use a fast continuous drive setting and fire bursts of shots to ensure you get a few keepers.



Tamron 150-500mm
at 1/60 sec

Matthew Richards



Circular fisheye lenses have always been popular with meteorologists, as their expansive, round images can capture the whole sky in a single shot.

The eyes have it

Q I'm a bit confused about the difference between circular and diagonal fisheye lenses. Which one is the better option, and is it true that some lenses offer both effects?

Alison Woods

A A circular fisheye lens delivers a full 180° viewing angle on both the vertical and horizontal, resulting in circular images that only use a portion of the camera's image sensor. A diagonal fisheye gives rectangular images using the whole image sensor, still with that funky 'fisheye' distortion but a less extreme viewing angle.

Canon and Nikon both manufactured fisheye zoom lenses for DSLRs, giving circular or diagonal fisheye effects at the shortest or longest zoom settings, respectively. Mirrorless equivalents include the Canon RF 7-14mm F2.8-3.5L Fisheye STM, priced at £1,719 (\$1,899) and the fully manual Laowa 8-15mm f/2.8 FF Zoom Fisheye, costing £699 (\$699). The latter is available in Canon RF, L-mount, Nikon Z and Sony E mount options.

Don't try this at home!

Q A few months ago, I read that you recommended Ni-MH AA batteries for use in flashguns, rather than disposable alkaline batteries. Would using long-lasting lithium AA batteries be an even better alternative?

Marcus Kramer

A Lithium batteries sound almost too good to be true. They last up to eight times longer than alkaline batteries, are up to 50 per cent lighter in weight, keep working in extreme hot and cold temperatures and have a shelf life of up to 25 years. But – and this is a big but – Canon has issued a warning to photographers, advising them not to use lithium batteries in flashguns because they can lead to overheating and reduced performance. They can even damage equipment and be a fire risk.

Many modern Ni-MH batteries, such as these Ison ItsRecharge Pro cells, keep running for much longer than alkaline cells, can be recharged more than 100 times, and hold their charge for more than a year if unused.



Second-hand superstar

A full-frame Nikon DSLR that still gives you a whole lot of bang for your buck

Q I've built up a collection of high-quality, full-frame Nikon F-mount lenses, but my camera body has died. What would you recommend as a high-performance but budget-friendly replacement?

Kumah Rajapaksa

A **Matthew recommends...**
Nikon D810
This 36MP camera took Nikon DSLRs to new heights and remains a great used buy



This camera built on the success of the Nikon D800, and features Nikon's typical pro-grade layout of controls

Released (year): 2014
Price new £1,999/\$2,399
'Excellent' £580/\$750
'Good' £250/\$650

Although the Nikon D810 has the same 36MP resolution as its predecessor, the D800, it launched with a new image sensor and no anti-aliasing filter, plus an updated EXPEED 4 image processor. These helped deliver superior image quality with greater dynamic range and a better signal-to-noise ratio. The standard ISO range increased from ISO 100-6400 to ISO 64-12,800, compared with the D800.

Further upgrades included a continuous drive rate of 5fps from 4fps, a higher-resolution 1,229k rear LCD and a battery life of up to 1,200 shots. The D810 is a pro-grade, full-frame camera that set the world alight on its release and is now a true second-hand star.

1 Pro-grade controls
Like other pro-grade Nikon DSLRs, the D810 has a button cluster on the top plate instead of a regular shooting mode dial.

2 Pentaprism viewfinder
The pentaprism viewfinder has a sliding internal cover to stop unwanted light from entering during tripod-mounted shooting.

3 Top panel LCD
The top panel LCD offers a view of the main settings. On the right are dual CompactFlash and SD/HC/XC card slots.

Image sensor: 36.3MP CMOS
Image processor: EXPEED 4
Viewfinder: Pentaprism, 0.7x, 100%
ISO range (expanded): ISO 64-12,800 (32-51,200)
AF points: 51 (15 cross-type)
Shutter speeds: 1/8000 to 30 secs, Bulb
Memory: 1x CF, 1x SD/HC/XC
Size/weight: 146 x 123 x 82mm, 980g
Battery (life): EN-EL15, 1,200 shots

Readers' Letters

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Ian Rowing

Star letter Reaching for the skies

Following Wendy's project on visiting an aviation museum in the June 2026 issue (308), I have included a photo for your consideration. These iconic aircraft are suspended from the ceiling at the RAF Museum in Hendon, north London. There's a small first floor viewing area, which provides a vantage point behind the German Fokker D.VII in the foreground, looking towards the Sopwith Camel behind it. This provides an opportunity to create a bit of drama through Photoshop.

For this image, I removed some distractions, such as lights, cables, the ceiling and other exhibits, then I added the aircraft to a background photo of the sky. Once I'd completed a few tweaks, such as highlights and grain, I added a vignette to create a painterly representation of a late wartime dogfight between these formidable aircraft. The original photo was taken in September 2019 with my Canon EOS 100D handheld using its 18-55mm kit lens.

Ian Rowing, by email

www.flickr.com/photos/ianwestbergholt/



If you've been inspired by any of our projects, send in the images you took for a chance to be featured in the magazine.

Digital Camera says: Great image, Ian! As we mentioned, shooting inside an aviation museum is tricky because of the low levels of light, but you've managed to take the aircraft back to their heyday over the Western Front in WWI. If you can get an elevated position for either the aircraft or yourself, you can exclude much of the surrounding environment.



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Helen Simon

@helensimonphoto

Photographer from Surrey, UK, who shoots a wide array of creative images, ranging from architecture and wildlife to products captured with her Canon.

Cazerella Tavs

@insta_cazerella_pics

An internationally published street photographer with beautifully composed shots, mainly in black and white. She was the Winner of the Pure Street Photography Awards 2025.

Lisa Sundin

@lisasundin.photography

Swedish photographer, now based in Los Angeles, USA, with a wide collection of minimalist black & white and colour seascapes, landscapes, still lifes and architectural captures.

Anthony Murray

@alternative.exposure

Glasgow-based photographer whose experimental visual photography work examines the theme of light and motion in urban scenes from around the city.

Carlos Miguel

@cmiguelphotography

Photographer from Oregon, USA, who specialises in beautiful landscape and nature photography, mainly from the United States, but also further afield.

NEXT ISSUE: Shoot the weird world of water marbling, don't throw stones in glass houses and discover Sarah Plummer's seaside photozine.



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Instagram: [@digitalcameramag](https://www.instagram.com/digitalcameramag)

Antique bird prints

I have found what I think is a unique idea for my nature shots of birds. After editing the images, I get AI to turn them into Audubon plates and frame them. Please let me know what you think of this shot of a Night Heron, taken through reeds.

Jerry Dawson, Hernando, Florida, USA

<https://gmanpics.weebly.com/>



Jerry Dawson

Digital Camera says: John James Audubon (1785-1851) was a French-American artist, naturalist and ornithologist. He is best known for his seminal work, *The Birds of America*, which featured 435 life-size colour engravings in the same style that Jerry has managed to recreate using AI. The original photo is a great capture, but it's rather murky and partially obscured by the reeds, so this is actually a brilliant idea – the result is perfect for that Audubon style. Is anyone else inspired to have a go at this?



Jerry came up with the great idea of getting AI to create this vintage plate.



Dave Handley

Action stations

After seeing the image of a vintage Hot Rod car in the Reader Gallery section of issue 308 (June 2026), I thought you might like to see a similar one that I took at the Oulton Park race circuit in Cheshire last year. I always like to try capturing

a sense of speed in my action shots, so I generally set the shutter speed to 1/160 sec and see how things go from there. Fortunately, those settings worked for this shot. Hope you like it!
Dave Handley, by email

Digital Camera says: Usually, for these kind of photos, you use a slower shutter speed so you can get more panning motion into it. Here, though, there's a little movement in the background, but you've locked in the detail on the car superbly, so all of it is sharp.



Jon Devo



Jon Devo
[instagram.com/gadgetsjon](https://www.instagram.com/gadgetsjon)

Jon is a professional photographer, videographer and technology journalist.

“Adobe’s move to Cannes Lions signals a change in strategic direction for the industry titan.”

Premiere for mobile, introducing free tools and templates and a seamlessly integrated mobile-to-desktop workflow. Meanwhile, tools like ChatGPT can now produce and manipulate visual content on the go, without a subscription. Adobe didn’t create these pressures, but it has to live in the world it helped to inspire.

Against that backdrop, Adobe is repositioning itself. No longer simply the toolkit that creatives bring to the job, it is repositioning itself as the layer connecting creative professionals to the brands commissioning their work. Its new platform, CX Enterprise, merges the creative tools we know with enterprise marketing capabilities under a single AI-driven architecture. Cannes, where creators and CMOs share the same stretch of beach, is the perfect stage for that repositioning.

For photographers and filmmakers, this shift deserves attention. Adobe is the software we open before we start work and close when we finish. What it’s doing now implies it wants to be embedded in how brands plan, commission and distribute visual content. That could be beneficial. A more seamless pipeline between brief and delivery, with tools that speak to each other across the workflow, is something many would welcome. But it also raises a question worth considering. As Adobe embeds itself more deeply into the commissioning process, does that make it a more powerful ally or a new kind of gatekeeper?

Do I think Adobe is working against us? No, but I’ve used its software long enough to know that the most consequential changes to the creative industry rarely announce themselves as threats; they arrive as opportunities. And this one is worth watching with a mixture of excitement and scrutiny. My approach is to educate myself and work as collaboratively as possible with the tools and the makers of the tools I use. A titan of the creative world is on the move. If we stay engaged, I believe we can help to shape a creative future that benefits us rather than sidelines us. ●

Scanning ahead...

Does Adobe’s strategic shift benefit or pose a threat to photographers, asks **Jon Devo**?

I have been using Adobe products since Photoshop 3.0, which was released in 1994. I say that not to date myself, even though it

does, but because the distance between that version and the company that made its debut at Cannes Lions in June tells us something important about where the creative industry is heading.

Full disclosure: I’m writing this as I prepare to attend Cannes as a roving reporter for Adobe. But this column isn’t about what happens at Creator Beach. It’s about what the beach represents. Cannes Lions is the world’s most prestigious advertising festival, where brands that commission creative work meet the agencies and platforms competing for their budgets. Creators

joined the programme in 2024, on the rooftop of the Palais des Festivals. This year, they have moved to the seafront, with Adobe as headline partner. That is no accident. It reflects how the industry now views the creator economy: no longer a side conversation, but central to how brands communicate.

So why does it matter who the headline partner is? Because Adobe’s presence here isn’t just a sponsorship decision, it’s a strategic declaration. The way people create has fundamentally changed. Mobile editing tools are now powerful, with Android manufacturers, such as Samsung and Oppo, building computational photography and video tools directly into their devices. CapCut turned an entire generation of creators into editors without them ever opening a laptop. In response, Adobe built

“The most consequential changes to the creative industry rarely announce themselves as threats. They tend to arrive as opportunities”

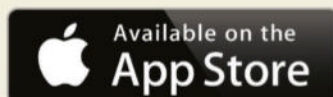
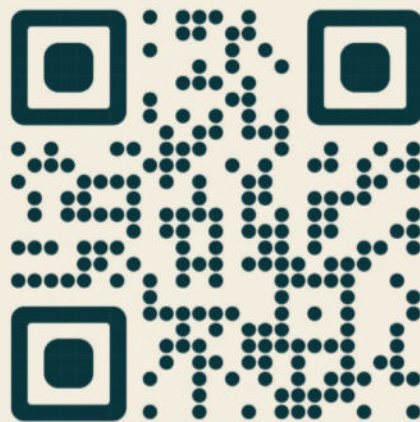
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Reader gallery

Digital Camera readers show how they've been getting creative, submitting images across a range of genres



1 'Bluebell Sunrise' by Andy Gray

"This handheld single exposure was taken at dawn. Shooting into the sunlight beyond, I exposed for the highlights and recovered shadow detail in editing." Taken with a Sony A7R V and 28-200mm Tamron lens. Settings: 1/15 sec at f/8, ISO 640. **Instagram:** @andygrayphotographer

Digital Camera says:

There's a beautiful combination of colours here, with the flowers and sunrise. Exposing for the highlights ensured that no details were lost.



2 'Blue Tit' by Ian Harris

"This photo was taken at RSPB Ham Wall, near Glastonbury in Somerset. I like that it captures a blue tit balancing on a reed stem and looking back to the camera with the reed bed making a good backdrop. Blue tits are small, fast-moving birds that don't often stay still for long, so I knew that as soon as it landed, I didn't have long before it would take flight again." **Instagram:** @ihphotography58

Digital Camera says: A lovely contrast between the colourful bird and golden reeds. You managed to keep it all in focus before it flew off.

3 'Cafe Reflection' by Stephen Murtargh

"The shot was taken in my local park in Dublin. I was just leaving the cafe with my daughters when I saw this reflection on the external glazing. Thankfully, I had my camera with me." **Instagram:** @smurts

Digital Camera says:

Well seen and captured, too. It's not quite symmetrical, but it is close enough to be intriguing.



"During my journey through the Netherlands, Kinderdijk left a lasting impression. The centuries-old windmills stand in quiet continuity, with 19 of them still preserved within this historic landscape. As we moved along on a boat, one frame stood out – the windmills reflected in the still water, forming a calm and balanced composition."

Instagram: @subhabrata.biswas

Digital Camera says: This is a lovely, calm scene, and the muted tones perfectly suit the subject matter.



5 'Northern Gannet'
by Kim Millburn

"I captured this gannet along the cliffs while it paused between flights. I wanted to focus on the clean shape of the bird and its striking blue eyes, using a shallow depth of field to separate it from the background."

Instagram: @kim.in.wildlife

Digital Camera says: An excellent composition that's perfectly focused on the key element, the bird's eye.





6 'Desert Birds' by Jonathon Isola

"I went to the desert in Marana, outside Tucson, Arizona, USA. A gila woodpecker and a curve-billed thrasher, both desert birds, decided to share the same branch. They really didn't seem to like each other much." Instagram: @jonathon_isola

Digital Camera says: Great timing! It's an unusual and dramatic image, and you've captured it perfectly.

7 'Elephants at Sunset' by Ralph Cowden

"I captured this fantastic sunset in Chobe National Park, Botswana. I waited until the elephants were perfectly positioned." Taken with a Nikon D810 at 480mm. Settings: 1/1,000 sec at f/8, ISO 200.

Digital Camera says: Great capture. By exposing for the setting sun, you have turned the elephants into silhouettes set against a wonderful sky.







**8 'Beachy Head Tree'
by Lee J Rouse**

"This was my first Milky Way shoot of the year. It consisted of two exposures: one for the light-painted foreground at a smaller aperture, and the other for the Milky Way at a higher ISO and a wider aperture to capture more light without the stars trailing." Canon EOS R6 Mark II and Canon EF 16-35mm f/2.8 at 16mm, with a NiSi Natural Night Filter.

Instagram: @ljrouse

Website: www.ljrouse.com

Digital Camera says: This is a spectacular astro shot of the Milky Way, but the unusually shaped tree in the foreground grabbed our attention, too. Overall, well lit and a superb composition.

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The image shows the July 2026 issue of Digital Camera magazine. The cover features a dramatic landscape with a sunset over a body of water, with the headline 'MASTER FRAMING' and '12 ways to compose your shots like a pro'. It also mentions 'ON TEST LUMIX TZ300/ZS300 • CANON RF 45mm F1.2 STM' and 'PLUS! 33 SOFTWARE EXTRAS FOR PHOTOSHOP & LIGHTROOM'. Below the main headline, there are sections for 'Rule of thirds', 'Dynamic diagonals', 'Reader challenge: Shoot interiors and build a big following!', 'Photo Skills: 10 new projects to try today', and '9 tip cards: Take them on location'. To the right, a circular badge says 'SUBSCRIBE AND HAVE YOUR BEST-EVER PHOTO YEAR!'. Below the magazine, a tablet and a smartphone display the digital version of the same issue.

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Tips, tricks and techniques
to improve your
photography

IN THIS ISSUE

10 skills for you to learn this month

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The boat was fairly static for this photo across the water to the gorillas (above), so a shutter speed of 1/640 sec was enough to get a sharp shot at the 600mm end of the telephoto lens. Cropping into the image (left) shows the level of detail that can be captured with a 180-600mm f/5.6-6.3 lens and a 45.7MP full-frame camera.



01

WILDLIFE

Water great way to go on safari

Wendy Evans tackles the problems encountered when shooting various wildlife from a moving boat

Photographing animals from a moving platform rocking about on the water presents some interesting challenges compared to doing it from dry land.

No matter whether you're sailing down the Amazon, braving a midge-infested Scottish loch or traversing the lake at Longleat Safari Park by boat, as I did for this project, the first consideration is safety, both for you and your camera equipment.

When shooting, you should always make sure you're securely braced, as a sudden movement of the boat can wreak havoc if the flooring is wet. Falling in when there are hippos about isn't a good idea, as these amiable-looking creatures are aggressively territorial and will happily tear you limb from limb if you enter the water. Sea lions are another menace because, to them, there's little difference between a juicy fish and a fleshy hand holding a camera over the side.

Obviously, you will need to have the camera secured, so consider having a strap from it attached to you, in case you lose your actual grip on the camera – if you drop it over the side, no one is going to dive in and get it back for you. But assuming you and the camera are now secure, let's take a look at some of the practicalities of shooting from a rocking platform. →

Camera: Nikon Z 8 and Nikkor Z 180-600mm f/5.6-6.3 VR

Settings: 1/640 sec at f/6.3, ISO 1000, Aperture Priority mode, Centre-weighted metering

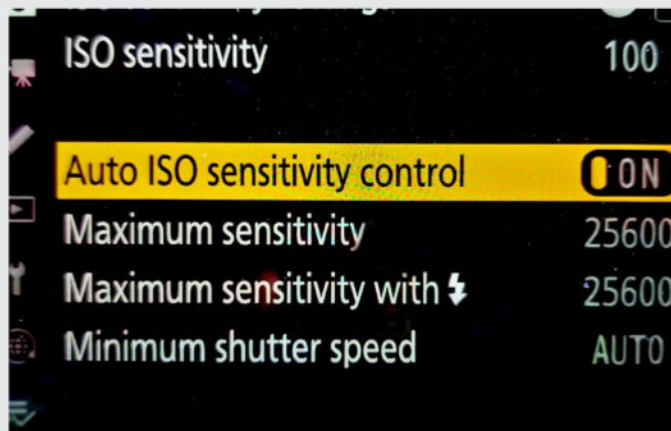
THANKS TO... LONGLEAT SAFARI PARK

Thanks to Longleat for providing access to the Boat Safari for this project. Standard adult tickets cost £39.95 when purchased in advance, while children cost £29.95.

Location: Longleat, Warminster, Wiltshire BA12 7NW

Website: www.longleat.co.uk

Step by step Shoot fast How to capture the action



01 Which exposure mode to use?

For the first couple of trips around the lake, I used the Mode dial (your camera may either have a PASM or a P/Tv/Av/M dial) to set the camera to Aperture Priority and the ISO to 1000. I was aiming for a shutter speed of 1/1,000 sec, but the light was changing and getting increasingly murky, so I switched to Manual mode for the subsequent trips.

02 Let's go Auto for ISO

Having had difficulty capturing the fast-moving sea lions, I decided on f/6.3 and 1/1,600 sec as the manual settings, along with Auto ISO. It's a trade between noise and getting the speed and aperture that you want. A wider aperture on a faster lens would let in more light, but an f/6.3 aperture meant that focusing on the gorilla's face resulted in all of the animal being in focus.



03 Autofocus area and subject

This was set up with a wide area box for the focus detection and animals as the subject detection. Focusing on the gorillas, hippos and monkeys wasn't a problem, because they weren't moving around much, so even with the rocking boat, locking onto them was easy. With the sea lions, it was much harder as they were moving quickly; however, this combination worked the best.

04 Continuous shooting

The focusing was set to continuous, which was essential for the seals. Having Auto ISO and fixed settings here was also the best option because with reflective water and patchy sunshine, the metering changed with every shot. It was also better to have a slightly wider view than a tight crop, to get the seals in the shot so that they weren't half out of the frame.

How long a lens? What I used at Longleat

Much depends on how close your boat goes to the shoreline or within range of the water-based animals. I took my 180-600mm f/5.6-f/6.3 VR lens, which was perfect for the gorillas, even though I was some distance away, because they are fairly large. When the hippos are in the water all you see are eyes and ears, so a longer reach would be preferable, but on land 600mm was long enough. The photos of the smaller monkeys in their colony needed cropping, so in this case an 800mm lens would have been the minimum required. The seals came quite near to the boat, so anything from 150 to 300mm would have been fine to get a close-up shot of them.



Above: To capture the gorillas, I used my 180-600mm lens at the long end.

Right: When shooting from the boat, make sure you can brace yourself.



Take it further Animal magic

A selection of images from the water safari boat at Longleat



Hungry hippo on land

Catching a giant hippo out of the water makes for a much easier shot, because although they can run at up to 30km/h for short bursts, most of the time they just amble about. Focusing is therefore not a problem, and you can decide on how much of the frame to fill. When they are in the water, all you see are eyes, ears and the top of their back – you'd need 600-800mm to fill the frame. If they are hiding under foliage, focusing from a boat becomes tricky, as you'd need to do it manually.



Splashing Californian sea lions

Catching the sea lions when they are splashing about requires a fast shutter speed, continuous focusing and generous framing to get them into the shot. It takes some practice to follow where they are going, but it makes for more dynamic and action-filled shots. Here, the subject detection did a good job of picking up and tracking the eyes, making sure their faces were usually in focus.



Monkey island

Another group of animals present are these little colobus monkeys, who have their own island. There are two problems here: the first is actually getting a clear shot of them. Even if you can do that, the second issue is that they are quite small and you are some distance away. Even at 600mm, the image above has been significantly cropped, so you may need something like 800-1000mm.



Todd Wain

02 ARCHITECTURE Brutalist buildings

Capturing the imposing angles of concrete structures requires a balance of light and shadow, says **Todd Wain**



Todd Wain is an amateur photographer who works in international education across several nations in Eastern Europe. "My career allows me to visit some stunning landscapes. I'm currently based in Serbia, and I focus on architecture," he says.

"My journey into photography began with capturing landscapes and expansive cityscapes. However, since I've been living in Belgrade, my creative vision has shifted. I wanted to capture the visual identity of the city and its surrounding regions, which led me to develop a cohesive series of photographs united by a specific theme of the striking presence of Socialist Modernism and brutalist architecture in the city.

"Standing beneath the towering concrete fins of the Kosmaj monument, the abstract scale of the structure demands immediate attention. With this image, my goal was to isolate the imposing geometry. By composing from a low angle, I emphasised the aggressive lines reaching towards the sky, creating a stark, high-contrast silhouette.

"Black and white strips away environmental noise, reducing the scene to its raw, structural essence. Because the concrete is naturally monotone, the diffused light of an overcast sky drew out the rugged, weathered textures. It perfectly encapsulates my project, capturing the beauty of concrete suspended in time."

Camera: Fujifilm X-S10

Settings: 1/40 sec at f/5, ISO 800

Instagram: @todd.wain

Top kit

Fujinon XF16mm F2.8 R WR

I frequently found myself in situations where I needed a wider angle. I opted for the 16mm to see its impact, and it beautifully captures the sweeping, imposing scale of these massive concrete monuments.

Find out more at www.fujifilm.eu



Todd's five tips for brutalist monuments



Look for leading lines

Brutalist architecture is defined by its strong geometric shapes. Use the natural sweeping lines of concrete structures to draw the viewer's eye directly through the frame. Angling your camera upwards can dramatically emphasise the sheer, imposing scale.



Wait for overcast skies

With landscape photography, I usually aim to avoid dull conditions. However, flat, grey skies act as a giant softbox, creating an even, diffused light that prevents harsh shadows from obscuring intricate architectural details.



Zoom in

You don't always need to capture the entire building. Zooming in to isolate specific repeating patterns, sharp corners or symmetrical concrete fins can create compelling abstract compositions that highlight the unique, almost alien design of Cold War architecture.



Embrace high contrast

Since brutalist concrete is naturally monotone, true contrast must come from the light. Stripping away colour forces the viewer to focus entirely on light and shadow, shape, texture and form, transforming a standard architectural shot into a moody, atmospheric visual experience.



Explore angles and focal lengths

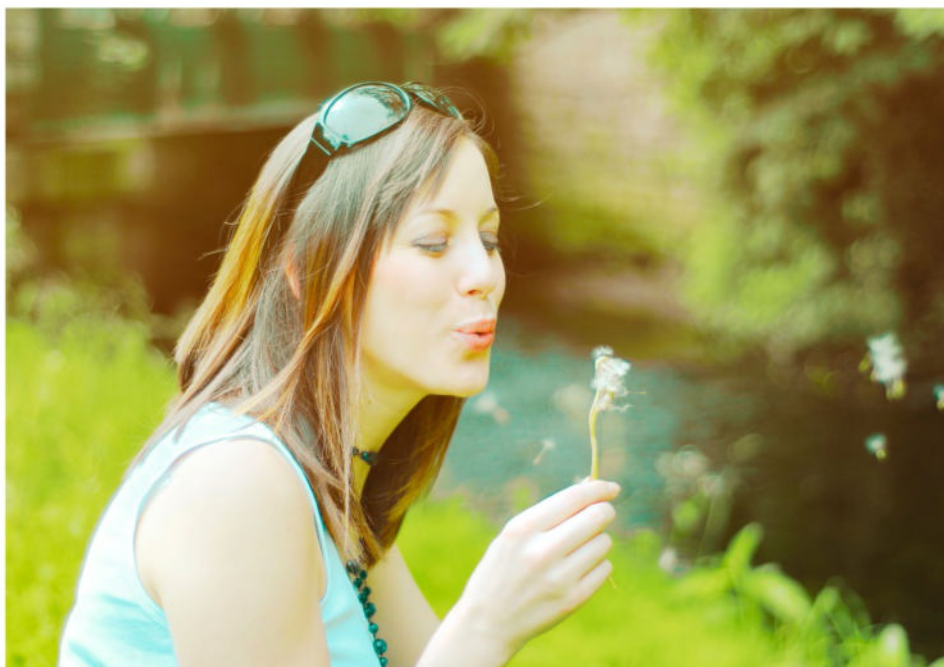
Brutalist structures reward those who look closer. Don't settle for the obvious shot. Move around the monument, experiment with different directions and vary your focal lengths to discover hidden geometric details and fresh, abstract perspectives others might miss.

03

PORTRAITS

Props to the hands!

Wendy Evans explains what to do when your portrait sitter is nervous or fidgeting



Wendy Evans

Unless your subject is a professional model, they are unlikely to know what to do with their hands when you're taking a portrait photo. The more nervous and inexperienced they are about being in front of a camera, the more people tend to fidget. The solution is to give them a prop to handle. This provides a number of benefits, the most basic of which is that it gives them something to hold and makes the hands look more natural. However, props can go further

than that; they can be an essential part of someone's attire, they can add narrative to a shot, provide focus, be the centre of attention, be part of a performance and even say everything about the subject that the person wants to convey in the photograph. Which is quite a lot of useful things.

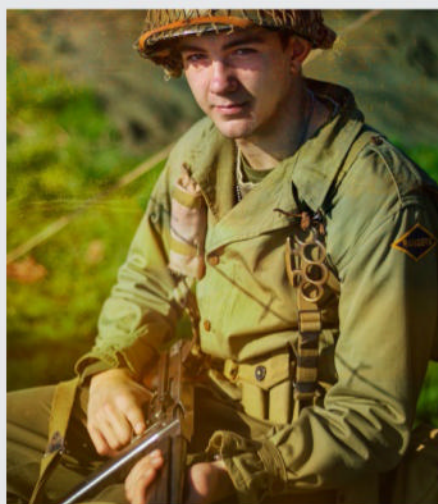
If there's one thing to beware of, it's depth of field. If you're using a typically wide aperture for shallow depth of field, then it's best to keep the prop close to the plane of the point of focus (usually the eyes and face), as

anything held out in front of the person may start to go out of focus. Take the main photo here; one of the other shots in the sequence has the subject blowing the dandelion seeds towards the camera, which meant that either the prop was slightly out of focus or the face was, when using an aperture of $f/1.8$ to blur the background. For this shot, I wanted both in focus, without increasing the aperture, so I asked the subject to turn sideways instead. **Settings:** 1/1,000 sec at $f/1.8$, ISO 100, 75mm focal length

Other strategies for using props

01 Holding still

In this shot, the re-enactor has a full set of accessories for their WWII US Rangers role. The main prop is the sub-machine gun, but he isn't doing anything other than holding it, which keeps his hands in a natural position. The front of the gun and the hand are going out of focus, but that's fine because the focus is on the subject's face.



02 Expressing her passion

Here, the subject wanted some portfolio images showcasing her passion for martial arts. Because of the bright sun, flash was used to even out the exposure. The prop now adds to the narrative, that of demonstrating the various moves (this was one in a sequence) that she had learnt. An 18mm lens was used to create a dynamic pose.



03 Make a performance

This time, it's a group of re-enactors and, besides the uniforms and accessories, the props here are the vintage newspapers. The difference is that they are part of the performance, so instead of passively holding them, the newspapers are an integral element in the scene. This shot used an aperture of $f/6.3$ to ensure everything was in focus.



Wendy Evans

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04

LANDSCAPES

Blurring a babbling brook

Shooting waterfalls in the middle of the day requires filters – and lots of them – as **Wendy Evans** explains

When you visit a picturesque waterfall during the day in the summer months, there's a good chance that there will be lots of light about, even sunshine, if you're lucky. And that makes capturing a long-exposure shot of a waterfall trickier than doing it later in the year when the perpetual winter gloom has set in. However, don't let that put you off; you just need strong enough neutral density filters and a circular polariser. And don't forget to bring a tripod, too.

I headed for my nearest babbling brook, complete with a tumbling waterfall. After two weeks of record temperatures and blazing sunshine, it was cloudy, of course. The process and the theory are still the same, though, so let's see how the image on these pages was shot.

Settings: 20 secs at f/8, ISO 100, circular polariser, ND8 filter



What I used NiSi JetMag Pro Landscape ND Kit

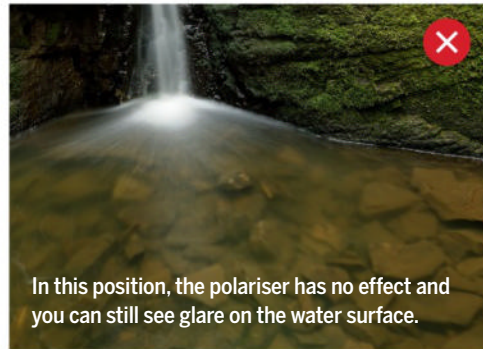
For this project, I used the NiSi JetMag Pro Landscape ND Kit, which contains an adapter ring for your lens, a circular polariser, an ND8 three-stop filter, an ND64 six-stop filter and an ND1000 10-stop filter. It's available in three kit sizes – you choose the size up from the lens filter size you are fitting it to, so in this case, it was the 82mm kit, which costs £360/\$499.

Find out more at: www.nisioptics.co.uk

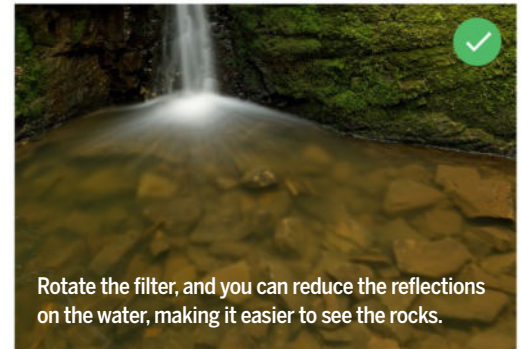
Using a circular polariser Avoid glare on the water



Bright light creates more distinct reflections on the water, but with cloudy conditions and the pool at the bottom of the fall being in the shade, there was less of it. However, there was still reflected glare from the waterfall in the pool. The effect of the polariser is to remove the reflections on the surface of the water, so you can see through it. However, it has a secondary effect in reducing the available light, which was ideal when used in combination with the neutral density filter.



In this position, the polariser has no effect and you can still see glare on the water surface.



Rotate the filter, and you can reduce the reflections on the water, making it easier to see the rocks.

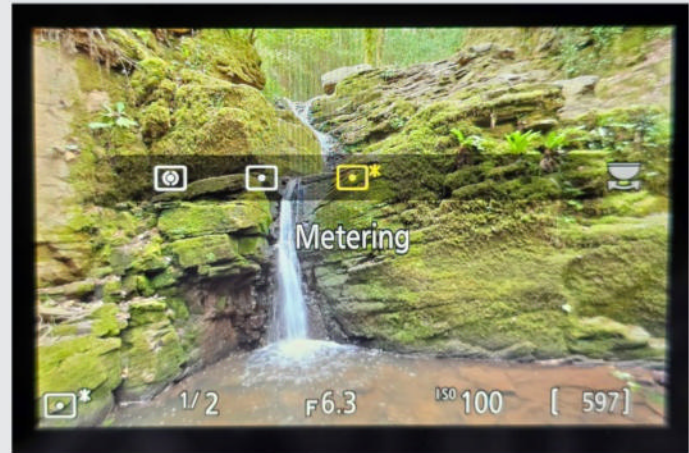
Step by step Using filters

Setting up the camera for long-exposure waterfalls



01 Attach the filters

The first task is to attach the filter thread for the lens. The filters fit lenses up to 82mm, but first you attach the magnetic filter ring that has the same thread as your own lens – in this case, it's 77mm. Then you can simply add the magnetic filters, which snap on. I added the CPL and the ND8.



02 Metering mode

Using Centre-weighted or Zone metering usually makes the water overexposed, and it's impossible to get the highlights back, even with raw files. So either dial in some minus exposure compensation or switch to Highlight metering, which specifically looks for the bright tones in the image.



03 Firing the shutter

For a long exposure, you want the camera to be perfectly still so either use a remote shutter release or use the self-timer option. Here, I set it to a five-second delay after fully depressing the shutter button. On a DSLR, you can also use the mirror lock-up function to avoid vibrations when shooting.



04 Focusing through filters

On a sunny day, with plenty of contrast, focusing is less of a problem, but on an overcast day like this, AF through filters can struggle. In that case, switch to manual focus. I focused just in front of the waterfall, which was 5m away, as with a 20mm focal length, everything in the shot was in focus.

Consider the composition

Try composing the scene in a vertical orientation

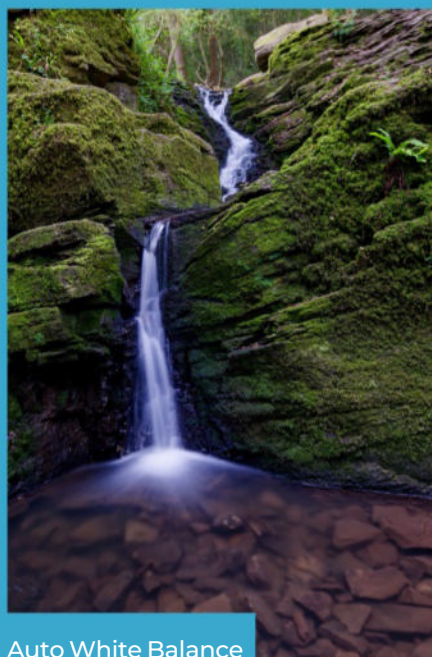
Look where the rule of thirds gridlines fall. The base of the waterfall is along the bottom third, the start and end points of the final drop are on intersections and the main waterfall runs down the left side vertical.



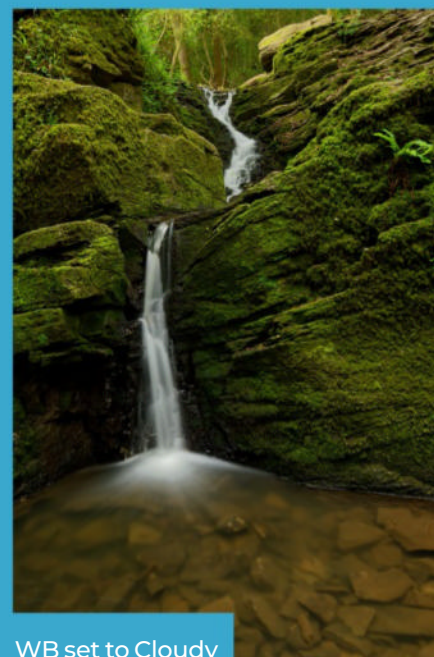
White balance

Get the colour tone you want from the outset

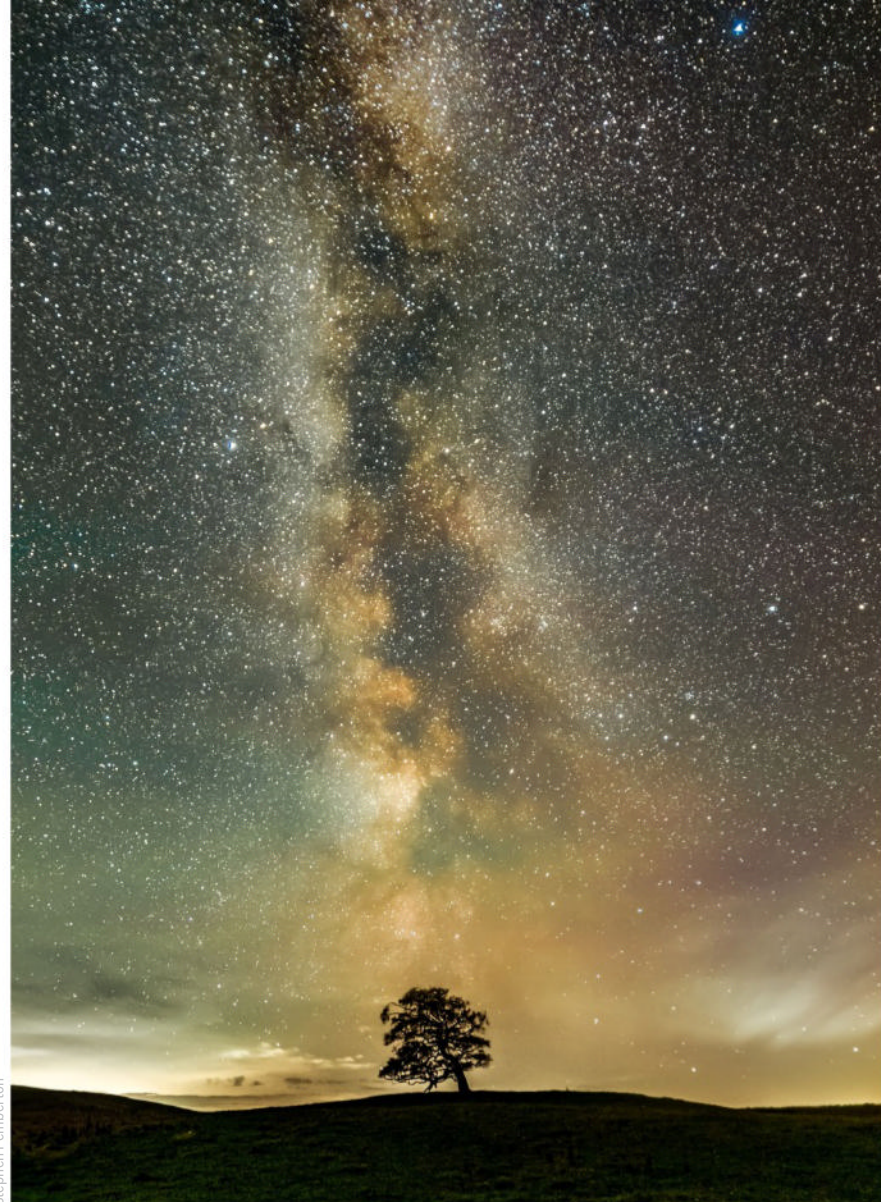
If you're shooting raw files, you don't have to worry about this, as you can set the white balance during editing. However, if you're shooting jpegs, you need to take WB into consideration. Even when shooting raw files, it gives you a better view of what the result will be and saves an editing step afterwards.



Auto White Balance



WB set to Cloudy



05 ASTRO Trees to the stars

Discover how **Stephen Pemberton** shot this starry scene and learn to plan your own brilliant astro shot



Stephen Pemberton is a landscape, wildlife and astro enthusiast who is passionate about helping people to get out and explore the

night sky while mastering their cameras.

"Near my home in Northumberland, I spotted this fantastic, windswept tree standing all by itself. Right away, I knew it would be amazing for a Milky Way shot," he says. "Astrophotography takes a little planning, so I used a few apps to figure out exactly when the stars would line up perfectly behind its branches. After a few failed attempts due to the weather, I finally got a clear night, so I packed my kit and headed out.

"To get the best possible detail, I used my trusty star tracker and shot 14 consecutive 60-second exposures. The

tracker follows the stars so they don't blur. Afterwards, I stacked them in the Sequator app to smooth out the noise, and then used Lightroom to bring out those lovely colours and detail.

"My biggest goal with photos like this is simply to inspire more people to get outside. That's why I set up my website (www.northernpixl.co.uk). It's totally free and packed with tutorials, locations, routes and complex astro planners for all sorts of outdoor photography, from capturing the night sky, sweeping landscapes or local wildlife. I hope it inspires people to enjoy the fresh air and try something new with their camera."

Camera: Sony A7 IV and Viltrox AF 16mm F1.8

Settings: 60 secs at f/2, ISO 1600 (14 stacked shots merged in software)

Instagram: @northernpixl

Top astro kit

USB Dew Heater

A sudden drop in temperature can easily fog up your glass and ruin an entire night of shooting. Wrapping a simple, USB-powered dew heater keeps condensation away, ensuring your stars stay perfectly clear.



Move Shoot Move Nomad

This portable star tracker slowly rotates your camera to follow the night sky. It's a handy piece of kit that allows me to shoot 60-second exposures without the stars trailing, giving clean and detailed skies with hardly any noise.



Stephen's five tips for astrophotography



Plan your starry adventure

Discovering where the Milky Way will appear is half the fun of astrophotography. Have a look at the free planning tools on my website; they're great for mapping out astro, landscape and wildlife trips alike. For stars, you're really looking for a nice, dark, moonless night with wonderfully clear skies.



Master your manual focus

Autofocus gets confused in the dark. Switch your lens to manual, zoom in on the brightest star using your camera's screen and gently tweak the focus ring until that star is a tiny, sharp little dot.



Invest in a dew heater

When shooting at night, your lens can quickly fog up with condensation, completely ruining your long exposures. A simple, USB-powered lens heater wraps around the barrel to keep the glass warm. It's an absolute lifesaver for crisp astrophotography.



Keep things steady

A solid tripod is your best friend for night photography. Even a tiny wobble can blur the stars in your shot. To be extra safe, use a two- to five-second delay timer or a remote shutter so you don't shake the camera when clicking.



Give image stacking a go

Try shooting a batch of identical photos and blending them together using free software such as Sequator. It sounds technical, but it's fairly easy and reveals a beautifully smooth, detailed night sky.



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06

ACTION

Beach volleyball

Wendy Evans is beach-ready and explains how to capture the action

Volleyball is one of those sports that's on the worthy, but dull scale. But shift the action to the beach, and it's a lot more entertaining. Not only is everyone wearing beachwear, but there's more spectacle as well, with players throwing themselves around. Add in sand kicking up and a glimpse of the sea in the background, and you have a far more photogenic sport.

You can often get close to the action, so a 200mm telephoto lens should allow you to frame a player leaping for the ball. The key is to find a background free of distractions, even if there's a shallow depth of field. The other consideration is the sun. Ideally, you want it to be falling on the players' faces as you shoot towards them.

There are beach volleyball events all summer across the UK. For more info, visit www.volleyballengland.org and www.ukbeachtour-playerzone.com



Getty

Step by step Set up for success

Optimise your camera to capture the action



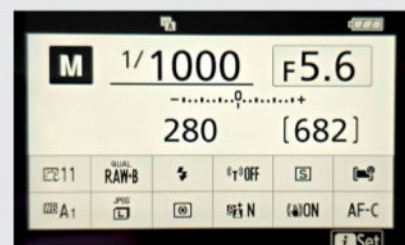
01 Continuous focusing

The key here is continuous focusing, so the camera doesn't have to reset. If you're an adherent of back-button focusing, it can pay off here, allowing you to keep focusing on players and firing off shots when you want. Otherwise, just track and shoot.



02 Focus modes

Go for a wide focus box, rather than a vertical one, as the players will be moving side-to-side and will quickly move outside the box. Turn on face/people detection to help with tracking, even though most will be wearing sunglasses. Focus on the faces of the players.



03 Pick a mode

Freezing the action is paramount, so that you can capture mid-air action with sand spraying around. One option is to set the shutter speed to 1/1000 sec and the aperture to the maximum, which could be f/4-f/5.6. Use Auto ISO to ensure there's enough sensitivity.

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Above: Finlay Morgan



Above: Gaïa

07 PORTRAITS

Portraits, and all that jazz

Alan Donaldson pays homage to the Glasgow music scene with a colourful zine



After years of running a successful commercial photography business, Glasgow-based Alan Donaldson has recently rediscovered the value

of personal projects. “When I started photography, wet processing and fibre-based paper were the only way to go. Now, I’m a converted digital practitioner,” he says.

“American photographer Walker Evans was the first to catch my attention, and more recently, Nadav Kander’s work has been an inspiration. Commercially, I’m a food and drink photographer; my work is in the studio or on location. Wherever I go, I’m tethered to a laptop for approval from the client, but unlike some, I use Photoshop sparingly, more like the days of analogue photography.”

What’s the inspiration behind the *Glasgow Jazz Photographs* book and exhibition?

I wanted to support the vibrant jazz scene in my hometown of Glasgow. I am a food photographer by profession, so it was good to do something different for myself too.

What cameras and lenses did you use for the *Glasgow Jazz Photographs* project?

A Canon EOS 5D Mk IV with a 50mm lens.

There’s a particular colour and lighting style to the images. How did you create this look?

That’s complicated! It’s a mixture of continuous and flash lighting, all done with coloured gels. The key to getting the ghosting effect is to use slow shutter speeds. I also take a beauty dish and barn doors with me for the light shaping.

Once you’ve shot them, what’s your workflow process to create the final images?

I use Canon software to capture and tweak the colour balance, then Photoshop to finish. The Photoshop work I do is similar to the old days of analogue printing – just a bit of burning and holding, but not much else. Essentially, everything happens in-camera, in the studio, like a live jazz performance.

Are you working on any other projects at the moment?

I have an exhibition next year, based on a nature reserve close to where I stay. I’m also working on a series of pictures of the River Kelvin in Glasgow. So, completely different from the jazz pictures.

Instagram: @alan_donaldson

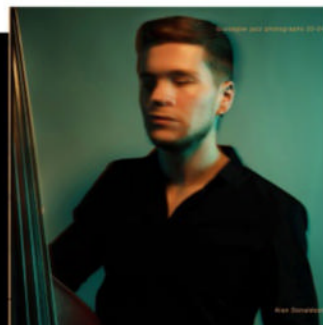
Website: alandonaldson.co.uk



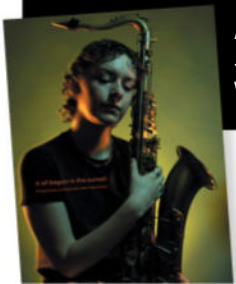
Above: Allon Beauvoisin

Get the book Glasgow Jazz Photographs 22-24

This is a series of studio portraits, performance pictures and venue photographs celebrating Glasgow's vibrant jazz scene. It runs to 104 pages and is printed on premium 170gsm paper, with a 250gsm soft cover laminated with a satin finish. A limited edition of 100 copies, *Glasgow Jazz Photographs 22-24* can be purchased from: www.alandonaldson.uk/shop/glasgow-jazz-photographs-22-24



Alan also has a 24-page photo zine titled *It All Began in the Sunset: Glasgow Jazz Photographs*. Priced £8, plus £2 postage, it can be ordered from: www.alandonaldson.uk/shop/sunset-jazz-photographs



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Alan's five tips for shooting musicians

- 1 Create a concept**
Be prepared! Think through the concept; what is the light going to be like? If you're using artificial lighting, shoot some test shots to ensure it is what you want. Check the camera and select your settings, the background and make sure you have enough space to shoot it!
- 2 Simplify the process**
Keep it simple by concentrating on one aspect. In my case, it was the lighting. My direction for posing or expressions was minimal, which is fine, but communicate this to your subject.
- 3 Get into the groove**
If time permits, have a tea or coffee with your subject first, as this will help calm any nerves. Talk to the subject and observe their reactions. There may be something said or an expression that helps during the shoot.
- 4 Don't overload the subject**
Don't talk too much during the shoot; concentrate on the photography, using minimal direction for positioning and expressions. Intersperse with just enough conversation to keep the shoot flowing.
- 5 Time management**
Don't take too long setting up and taking each shot. The subject will start to lose interest and look bored in the photos. If something is not working out quite how you want, give the subject a break from the set, refresh for a while, then go again with fresh energy.



08 STILL-LIFE Rate my photo

This month, a carefully constructed still-life image from **Robert Dan** comes under the microscope

The idea behind this shot was to create a macro photograph that highlights the beauty found in everyday subjects. To achieve this, I used a macro extension tube to get incredibly close to the subject, allowing for extreme detail. The shallow depth of field was carefully chosen to keep the feather and some coffee beans in sharp focus while blurring the background, adding depth and drawing the eye to the main elements.

Lighting played a crucial role. I opted for soft, diffused light to avoid harsh shadows and to highlight the textures gently. The addition of water drops was intended to add a sense of freshness, depth and visual interest. I wanted them to catch the light and add a shimmering quality.

One challenge was balancing the moisture on the coffee beans without making them look overly wet or losing their natural matte finish. Another was positioning the feather delicately, so that it appeared to be naturally resting among the beans and not looking out of place – that was a bit of a balancing act. Overall, the photo is an exploration of texture, light and contrast.

Camera: Canon EOS 1100D

Lens: 41mm with extension tubes

Settings: 1/80 sec at f/4.5, ISO 100

Instagram: @robertdanphotography



Get in close

It's important to realise these are coffee beans you're looking at, not hazelnuts. They are pretty small, and getting amongst them so they appear much larger than their actual size is an accomplishment. Similarly, the feather must be tiny and yet we are treated to seeing its fine details.



Water for the win

Sprinkling water drops over the scene adds visual interest. Do they reflect much, as Robert intended? Not really, they just add to the narrative and force you to question why they are there. They do catch the light, adding highlights throughout.



Soft lighting, but...

Robert's idea was to use soft, diffused light to avoid harsh shadows, and to some degree, this has worked on the beans. However, because the light source is at the back of the photo, the shadows are in front of the beans. So even though the light isn't harsh, there are still deep shadows prominently featured, which rather spoils the whole concept.

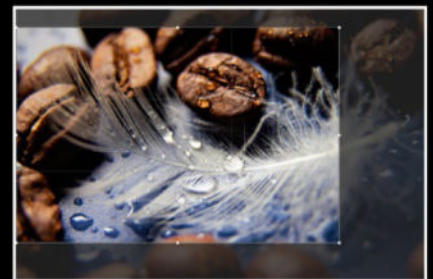


Colour and theme

The coffee beans and white feather suggest a theme of rustic vibes. However, set under this is a plastic, blue surface. Both the colour and the texture clash with the main components of the image. It's a dark blue, so at least it isn't too distracting, but a light, wooden surface may have worked better.

An alternative crop

Using the rule of thirds guidelines, we can see how much more effective this crop is. Here, the only bean that's in focus is now on the top intersection of the guidelines, giving it a much stronger position. Now, the feather leads the eye into the photo and curves around under that key bean. Yes, that bean in the middle at the bottom is doing nothing, and we would be tempted to remove it entirely, but the overall structure is much better with the beans sweeping around the feather as well.



Composition and depth

Getting in so close means there's very little depth of field, even at a 41mm focal length, thanks to the f/4.5 aperture. So the area that's really in focus is the middle of the feather and the edge of the nearest bean. Everything else is out of focus to a greater or lesser degree. What makes this a bigger problem is that there are no leading lines; the feather just sits in the middle of the photo. The alternative route is to structure the photo so the eye can look around it naturally, but this doesn't happen either.

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09

WILDLIFE

Bitten by the bug

Ole Nygaard won last month's 'Insects' challenge with this colourful entry of a hoverfly



When the bird sanctuary near Kvaerkeby in Denmark invited guests interested in photography and nature to a tour, the guide told us we might see the Hornet Hoverfly (*Volucella Zonaria*), even

though it's not particularly common in the area. The specimen here is a female. You can see that it has separate eyes, while the male has eyes that meet in the middle. I used my Canon EOS R5, and since I was prepared to photograph birds that day, had mounted a Canon RF 100-500mm F4.5-7.1L IS USM. This lens is distinguished by its close-up limit of just 120cm at its long end, which I used while shooting the hoverfly; it is therefore also usable as a macro lens for outdoor photography.

Camera: Canon EOS R5 and Canon RF 100-500mm
Settings: 1/500 sec at f/8, ISO 320

IMAGE ANALYSIS

1 EXCELLENT DETAIL

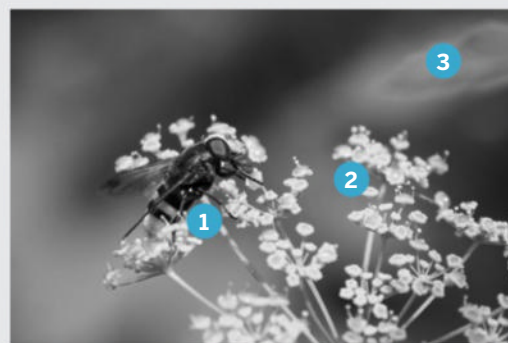
Using an f/8 aperture has created enough depth of field to get all of the insect in focus.

2 COLOUR SCHEME

The colours of the hoverfly are duplicated in the flowers, making for a bright and attractive image.

3 OUT OF FOCUS

Because Ole used a 500mm lens for the shot, the background is pleasingly defocused.



Ole Nygaard

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10 ACTION Sports challenge

From the ecstasy of victory to the despair of defeat, send us your best sports shots

W

elcome to our monthly reader photo challenge, where the winning image will feature in the magazine, and you can claim bragging rights. For

July, the theme is 'Sports'. That includes solo sports, one-on-one contests or team competition. The venue could be in the water, in the air or on land. That means you could capture swimming, boxing, motorsport,

football or the action at the world log-cutting championship. We are looking for drama, action and intensity; the ecstasy of winning or the despair of defeat. It can be a physical sport or more cerebral, such as chess.

Enter via email

Email digitalcamera@futurenet.com with 'Sports' as the subject. Please attach your entry (sending a hi-res version in jpeg format,

rather than links) and include a description of how you came to take this particular image. Remember to list your social handles or website so we can give you due credit if you win. Enter by 16 July and remember, only one image per reader, please.

The winner will be announced in the September 2026 issue (311) of *Digital Camera*, on sale from Friday 14 August.

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or enter at: www.facebook.com/digitalcameraworld



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HIDDEN FRAME STRUCTURE

What you see in a landscape shot is only part of the story. Composition and intention will define the image as a whole, says **Karolina Konsur**

A

compelling landscape photograph rarely relies solely on spectacle. Beyond breathtaking locations and fleeting light, what shapes

a powerful image is an underlying structure – often subtle, sometimes invisible, yet essential to how the scene is perceived.

Composition is not just a set of rules, but also a deliberate way of organising elements so the frame appears consistent, purposeful and complete. It forms relationships that begin to resemble a kind of visual logic, almost mathematical in nature. The hidden frame concept involves finding order through geometry, alignment and the architecture of a scene. Recognising subtle lines, natural shapes and directional flow allows the viewer's eye to be guided with precision, transforming complexity into coherence while maintaining depth and intrigue.

For landscape photographers, mastery of hidden framing reflects a refined visual intuition, requiring patience and the ability to see beyond the obvious. Through such compositional frameworks, even chaotic landscapes reveal harmony, balance and a photographic narrative that sustains meaning throughout the frame. Each element contributes to the structure, enhancing clarity and a sense of conscious design that elevates the image beyond mere depiction.

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**PRO SHOT****Fanad Head Lighthouse, Ireland**

The lighthouse, set on rugged rocks and centred in the frame, is briefly touched by soft sunrise light breaking through the clouds, as the sky momentarily opens with a subtle glow.

**KAROLINA KONSUR**

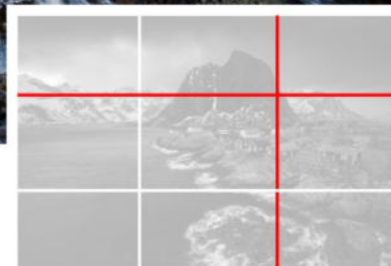
A landscape photographer based

in Gdansk, Poland. Karolina specialises in seascapes and long exposures. She is an award-winning artist and author of articles published in leading photography magazines, speaks at prestigious industry events and is a global ambassador for Marumi lens filters. **Instagram:** @karolinakonsur

Karolina Konsur

**PRO SHOT****Hamnøy, Lofoten, Norway**

One afternoon in Hamnøy, gale-force winds cleared the heavy clouds just before sunset, revealing a glowing sky above the iconic red rorbu (fishing cabins) and snow-covered peaks.



1 CLASSIC APPROACH

Use balanced division to position key elements and guide the viewer's attention

T

he rule of thirds remains the most powerful tool for creating complex landscapes with clarity and intention.

Dividing the frame into nine equal parts creates intersections that naturally draw the viewer's eye. Placing

key objects along these lines or at their intersections, for example, the sky takes up one-third of the frame and the ground two-thirds, introduces balance without rigidity, making the composition seem both stable and dynamic. For advanced work, the grid should be considered a flexible

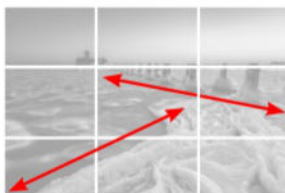
guide, not a rigid rule. Aligning horizons, dominant shapes or transitions between elements along these divisions reinforces structure. In chaotic scenes, this approach helps organise competing elements, providing a conscious visual flow while maintaining a natural, unforced aesthetic.

2 DIRECTIONAL LINES

Identify and align natural lines to establish visual flow and shape movement across the frame

H

idden geometry begins with recognising the dominant directional forces in a scene. Diagonal lines, converging lines and repeating forms create natural paths that organise visual chaos, so consider how these lines intersect and anchor key elements. Avoid bisecting the frame with a single line, especially a vertical line through the centre, as it disrupts balance and distracts. Instead, position lines so they remain within the composition, drawing the viewer's eye inward rather than outward. Use camera position and focal length to adjust the interaction and convergence of these lines. Notice how foreground textures lead to background structures and distant focal points. This layered approach ensures that each line contributes to a well-thought-out plan.

**PRO SHOT Gdynia Babie Doły, Poland**

Before sunrise, the quiet of a winter beach reveals a raw, unpredictable landscape, where natural leading lines guide the eye through sculpted forms, creating a peaceful, yet engaging scene.

PRO SHOT

Puck, Poland

Blue hour settles over calm water as clouds move across the sky. The reflections create a living canvas, preserved within a thin, glassy layer of ice.

3 CONTROLLED SYMMETRY

Refine symmetry in the frame through the precise positioning of your subjects and reflections to achieve a resolved composition

S

ymmetry in landscape photography rarely exists in its purest form – it is discovered, constructed or complemented by the position of the photographer. When present, it introduces an immediate sense of order that seems almost architectural,

as if the landscape momentarily transforms into a structure.

Axial symmetry, typically aligned along a vertical or horizontal axis, most often occurs in calm horizons or in solitary forms, where geometry is already implied. Reflections deepen this symmetry, especially in calm water, tidal flats or even

ice, where the scene is replicated and the spatial hierarchy is flattened into balance.

Micro-adjustment is key: subtle changes in camera height can determine whether the reflection is perfectly aligned or distorted. Precision in framing, rather than reliance on post-processing, distinguishes effective symmetrical compositions.

4 RHYTHMIC PATTERNS

Manage geometric repetition to capture patterns that extend beyond the frame

P

atterns form a hidden structure in an image through the repetition of elements. Their strength lies in the geometry and continuity, which allows individual pieces to be distinguished before they merge into a seamless texture from a distance. With unclear boundaries, patterns appear infinite, extending beyond the frame, creating a uniform field of vision. However, repetition alone can become monotonous, so we need to introduce controlled disruptions, such as contrast or scale shifts, which act as focal points or anchors. Natural patterns, such as ice formations, leaves or tides, can be incorporated into a composition to highlight key themes while maintaining overall harmony.

PRO SHOT Gdynia Orłowo, Poland

The pier stretches across a field of fractured ice shaped by days of frost, as the low morning light brings out the texture, lending the scene a crisp, graphic quality.



All photos: Karolina Korsur

5 NEGATIVE SPACE

Emptiness is part of the structure, shaping perception through spatial intention

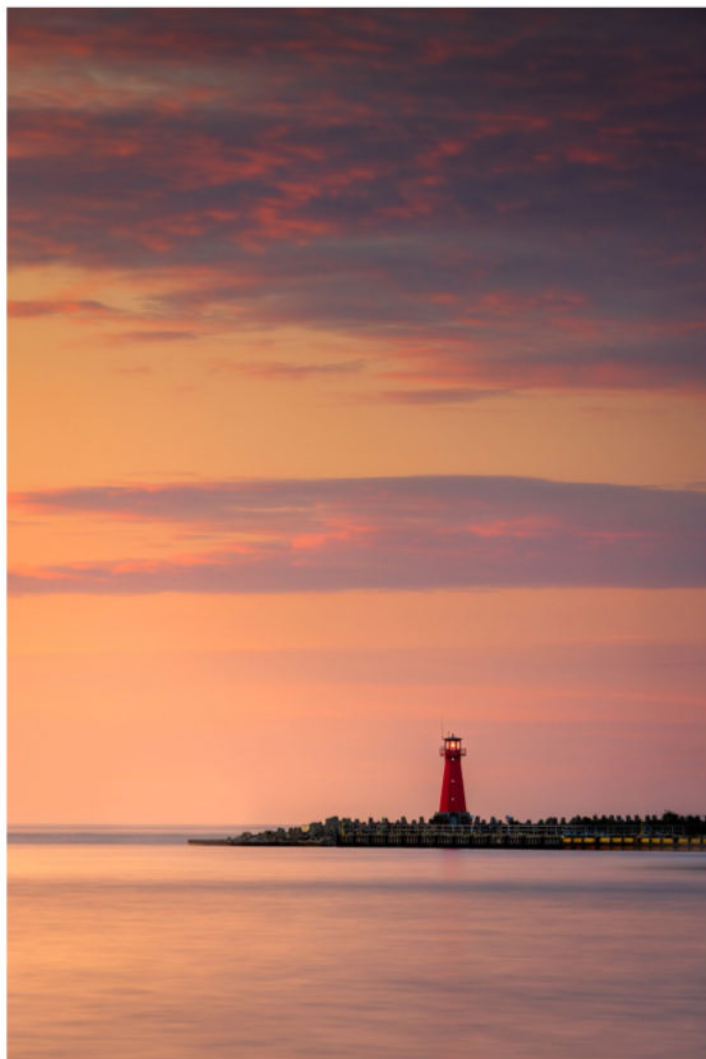
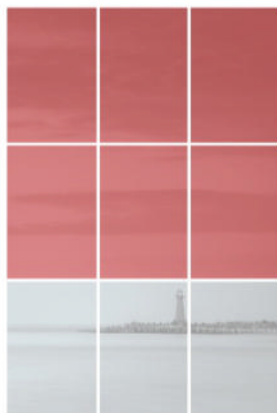
N

egative space serves as an active compositional tool, helping to organise the frame and focusing the viewer's eye on the main subject. It adds clarity and 'breathing room' without implying emptiness or a lack of detail. Negative space

may appear as soft textures, uniform tones or blurred elements, as long as it reduces visual competition.

Large areas of sky, water or fog in the frame create a natural backdrop that contrasts with more complex elements, such as coastlines, trees or rock formations. Its depth depends on proportion and placement – too little leads to clutter, while too much weakens the impact.

When used intentionally, this space allows photographers to break away from the classic compositional rules, for example, by placing the horizon higher or lower, depending on the intended role of space.



PRO SHOT Gdańsk Nowy Port, Poland

A minimalist, pinkish-orange end to the day, where a few elements convey the prevailing tranquillity – a colourful sky, smooth water and a lighthouse quietly balancing the surrounding space.

PRO SHOT
The Abbots' Palace, Gdańsk Oliwa, Poland
 Framed naturally by foreground autumn leaves, the elegant palace is reflected in the still pond and partially veiled behind the foliage.



6 FRAME WITHIN

Use existing elements to create internal boundaries that strengthen your composition

Framing within a landscape is one of the most effective techniques for imposing order. Overhanging branches, rock formations or shadowy edges can create subtle boundaries, isolating the subject. These frames do not

have to be symmetrical; irregularity often enhances authenticity. The goal is to create a sense of confinement, preventing the viewer's gaze from wandering aimlessly.

Explore how light and shadow can emphasise these boundaries, drawing focus to brighter or more detailed areas. Position

yourself so that the frame seamlessly integrates with the scene rather than seeming imposed. Properly executed, internal framing strengthens the composition without distracting from the subject, creating a sense of intimacy and control in expansive landscapes.

7 GEOMETRIC INTENT

Structure the scene with triangles to bind space in a dynamic composition

Geometric shapes build an invisible frame for the composition, giving the scene a sense of dynamism. Horizontal and vertical lines, perceived by the eye as stable and grounded, create a sense of calm, while diagonals introduce subtle tension and movement. It is this departure from the 'natural' order that makes an image exude energy.

In this context, triangles are effective: they connect different planes, draw attention and develop dynamic relationships between elements in the frame while maintaining harmony. They may be explicit or implied, but managed deliberately, these shapes transform complex landscapes into multi-layered compositions.

Technically, careful choices of focal length and perspective, such as shooting with a wide-angle lens, can strongly emphasise geometric connections.



PRO SHOT Sakrisøy, Lofoten, Norway

A yellow house in the foreground contrasts with the grey-blue sky and rugged mountains beyond it. The subtle light enhances the colour and mood, while the repeating triangular forms in the building and peaks bring structure to the composition.



8 WEIGHT BALANCE

Understand how visual elements interact through their weight, distance and intuitive principles of balance

A

captivating composition often feels right before it can be logically explained, yet this intuition can be refined through

understanding. One useful concept is the idea of compositional weight; that every element in an image carries a visual

'mass' based on size, detail, contrast and prominence. Just as in physics, where balance depends on torque, photographic balance emerges when these visual weights are harmoniously distributed within the frame. A large or highly detailed object can be counterbalanced by smaller elements placed further away

from the centre, maintaining equilibrium around an invisible axis. Although this system is inherently subjective, it offers a structured way to interpret what makes a successful photograph. Over time, this almost mathematical awareness becomes instinctive, allowing photographers to sense balance rather than calculate it.

PRO SHOT

Reinebringen, Lofoten, Norway

A view from one of Lofoten's peaks, with golden sunset light wrapped around the mountains, calm fjord waters below and the village of Reine resting in an end-of-the-world stillness.



9 TIPS FOR STRONGER COMPOSITION

Beyond basic composition techniques, these refinements will help take your images further, adding finishing touches to emerging frames

SHIFT PERSPECTIVE

1 Explore different perspectives by actively changing your viewpoint instead of shooting at eye level. Get close to the ground for a worm's-eye view, or move higher for a sweeping panorama. Use subtle height adjustments to control intersections, avoiding awkward line crossings and unwanted overlaps between key elements.

LENGTHEN THE EXPOSURE

2 Choose a long exposure that simplifies busy scenes and controls the visual rhythm by separating static and moving elements – for example, sharp land against blurred water or sky, introducing a softer, more atmospheric quality. Slower shutter speeds often require ND filters, which smooth water into a silky surface and add dreamy motion to cloud movement without disrupting the structure.

CONTROL DEPTH OF FIELD

3 Work with depth of field to shape composition by controlling what remains in focus and how elements are prioritised. Keep the entire scene sharp to emphasise depth throughout the frame, or use shallow focus to isolate a foreground subject. When a single exposure falls short, focus stacking allows front-to-back detail to be retained.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

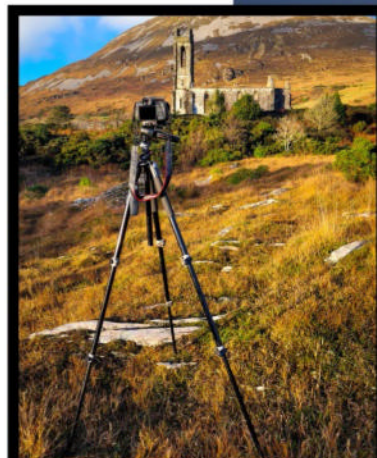
4 When a scene offers many elements, resist the temptation to cram everything into the frame. Instead, aim for a more minimalist approach – fewer elements but with a clearer intention. Strong compositions rely on selecting a few well-placed elements rather than many competing with each other.

ADD SCALE

5 Introduce a human figure or a recognisable object to convey scale and to emphasise the figure-to-ground relation. A small silhouette, a boat or a lone tree can anchor the scene. Place it thoughtfully, ideally along leading lines or near compositional intersections.

WATCH THE EDGES

6 Always scan the frame edges, especially the corners, before pressing the shutter. High-contrast or cropped elements can pull attention away from the main subject. Even small details near the corners become dominant, so adjust the framing to remove distractions and prevent the viewer's eye from shifting.



TOP TIP

Vantage point

I raised the tripod higher than usual to get a cleaner angle from a slightly elevated viewpoint, and to avoid distorting the shape of the church.

All photos: Karolina Kossur

10 FRAMING IT TOGETHER

Get closer with a telephoto, compress depth and strip a scene down to its essentials

A

telephoto lens transforms composition by compressing distance, bringing far-away elements closer and making them more prominent within the frame. This creates a stunning layered effect, where mountains, trees, or atmospheric haze stack visually, adding intensity and drama. Its narrow field of view simplifies complex scenes,

eliminating distractions and focusing on a carefully selected element. This makes it particularly effective for isolating details, filling the frame from a distance, or revealing abstract patterns and textures in the landscape.

Longer focal lengths can also produce a shallow depth of field, subtly separating objects from their surroundings. Because even slight movements are magnified, it becomes

essential to use faster shutter speeds, image stabilisation or a tripod to avoid blur and preserve sharpness.

PRO SHOT

Kacwin, Tatra Mountains, Poland

Soft spring contrasts beneath the Tatra Mountains at sunrise, with snow-covered peaks above green foothills and a small chapel. The scene was subtly compressed by a telephoto lens as the drifting clouds completed the composition.

PRO SHOT**Dunlewey Church, Donegal, Ireland**

Set at the foot of Mount Errigal in Poisoned Glen, the abandoned church stands as a striking roofless shell set against hills and a lake.

TOP KIT**ND filter**

I stopped down the aperture (f/13) to hold detail, keeping everything in focus across the frame. I then applied a 10-stop ND filter to capture the motion in the clouds, letting them drift over the mountain top. I added an 8-stop ND grad to balance the tonal range – avoiding underexposed foregrounds and blown-out skies.

**TOP KIT****Telephoto lens**

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11 SHAPING YOUR SCENES WITH LIGHT

Consider timing and conditions, as both directly influence a composition's arrangement

Captured at sunrise in Vestrahorn, Iceland, this image combines several key compositional

decisions in a single frame. Shot with a wide-angle lens, the foreground is dominated by dunes, forming a triangle that echoes the mountain in the backdrop, enhancing visual coherence.

Their arrangement draws the eye to the jagged peaks, reinforcing the relationship between foreground and background. The wind-blown sand textures lead the scene, enhanced by low, directional light from the side, which reveals surface details through light and shadow. The composition follows the rule of thirds, with framing and perspective helping to simplify the scene while maintaining depth, balance and clarity.



All photos: Karolina Konur

CHOOSE GOLDEN HOUR

1 Golden hour, just after sunrise or before sunset, offers warm, directional light that defines form and texture. It creates soft contrasts and long shadows that help define structure within the frame, revealing surface detail and making transitions between planes more readable. These moments are brief, so anticipating light on location is essential.

APPRECIATE BLUE HOUR

2 Blue hour, before sunrise or after sunset, introduces soft, diffused light and reduced contrast that simplify the scene, with blue and pinkish-purple tones dominating. Without strong directional light, compositions rely more on shape, softened shadows and tonal relationships, making transitions between elements easier to read.

MANAGE DAYLIGHT

3 Midday light is often harsh and flattening, but it can emphasise structure in a different way. Intense light reduces subtle gradients, making lines and patterns more pronounced. It also increases colour saturation – especially greens and blues – while strong light-shadow contrast and dynamic weather can be used to build bold, graphic frames.

12 HOW LENSES CAN INFLUENCE COMPOSITION

A wide-angle optic can change the distance, pushing elements apart and giving the foreground a stronger visual role

A wide-angle lens is a tool that can shape a composition in a distinct way, offering a range of creative possibilities. It is my favourite type of lens because it actively reshapes how elements relate within the frame. With a wide-angle lens, foreground details can be approached closely, giving them visual dominance and anchoring the composition, while building depth through

clear layering from front to back. Shooting low enhances scale, and choosing a vertical orientation helps combine a strong foreground with an expansive sky. However, because a wide-angle lens captures a broad field of view, often including multiple unwanted elements, it often requires careful selection and a focus on a clear, single subject, as well as precise levelling to avoid distortion of vertical lines and stretching of elements near the edges.

TOP KIT

Wide-angle lens

We've rounded up the best-buy options for capturing wider views of scenes, including rolling hills, rocky mountains, enchanted forests and more, at:

www.bit.ly/dcm309_ultrawides



PRO SHOT

Dragon's Eye at Uttakleiv beach, Lofoten, Norway

This was captured using a wide-angle lens in a vertical manner. In the foreground, the Dragon's Eye lies among coastal rocks – a unique formation shaped beneath the Fennoscandian ice sheet, where a central boulder forms the pupil, surrounded by vividly banded layers of metamorphic rock.

Hotshots

Winners from the International Garden
Photographer of the Year 19 competition





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WINNER: ABSTRACT VIEWS

'Autumn Flurry'

Ian Gilmour

This image of trees reflected in the Rochdale Canal in West Yorkshire was created by combining two separate photographs using blending modes in post-processing. The original image of the trees was blended with a photograph featuring the bokeh of lights reflected in a window. The end result gives the impression of a painting on a windy autumn day.

Camera: Pentax K-5 and Laowa 60mm f/2.8 2X Ultra Macro.

Settings: 0.3 sec at f/4.5, ISO 200

WINNER: THE WORLD OF FUNGI**'Amethyst Deceivers'****Tony North**

This image of a pair of amethyst deceiver mushrooms and a fly exploring the world of fungi was taken in Styal Woods, Cheshire, UK. Despite their striking purple colour, these mushrooms are edible; however, they are similar in appearance to the poisonous lilac fibrecap mushroom. This shot is comprised of multiple images, which were focus stacked together in post-processing using image-editing software.

Camera: OM System OM-1 and OM System

M.Zuiko ED 90mm F3.5 Macro IS Pro.

Settings: 1/60 sec at f/3.5, ISO 200





© Stephen Studd/IGPOTY

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WINNER: PLANTS & PLANET 'Mangrove Restoration' Stephen Studd

As well as being important habitats for wildlife, mangrove forests are vital in the fight against climate change, providing a natural barrier for coastal communities. Despite this, mangroves have been subjected to much destruction over the past 50 years. In Kep, Cambodia, a project aims to restore mangroves, providing important habitats for supporting fisheries and forming a basis for economic prosperity.

Camera: Canon EOS 6D and Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8L II USM, ND 0.6 soft graduated filter. **Settings:** 1/100 sec at f/14, ISO 500

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**WINNER:
BEAUTIFUL GARDENS
'Lower Pool,
Exbury Gardens'
Stephen Studd**

A spring morning at Exbury Gardens, near Beaulieu in the New Forest, Hampshire, UK. The image was taken from the lower pool with sunlight bursting through the tree canopy, which illuminated the spectacular display of colours and epitomised Exbury in spring.

Camera: Canon EOS 6D Mark II and Canon EF 24-105mm f/4L IS II USM, ND 0.75 soft graduated filter. **Settings:** 1.3 secs at f/22, ISO 200



© Stephen Studd/IGPOTY



© Alison Tinson/IGPOTY

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WINNER: THE BEAUTY OF PLANTS 'Game, Set and Match' Alison Tinson

"Here, in Beziers in the south of France, we usually see dahlias in late spring, so I was surprised to see these beautiful specimens at a flower market in October. Having placed the flower in a black box, I captured it with my Lensbaby 85mm lens, using a narrow aperture. I used a handheld reflector to direct the light to the jewelled centre. The colours reminded me of a famous tennis tournament, hence the title."

Camera: Fujifilm XT-5 and Lensbaby Velvet 85mm f/1.8. **Settings:** 1.5 secs at f/11, ISO 200

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**WINNER: BREATHING SPACES
'Grange Fell Last Light'
Mark Hetherington**

"As the sun went down over Grange Fell in Borrowdale, in the Lake District, the combination of the golden sun, blooming heather and silver birch trees created a mesmerising scene. With Derwentwater and Skiddaw forming a stunning backdrop, it was compelling. I blended four exposures to form this image."

Camera: Sony A7 IV and Sony FE 16-35mm F2.8 GM II.

Settings: 1/160 sec to 1/20 sec at f/11, ISO 100



© Mark Hetherington/IGPOTY



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WINNER: WILDLIFE IN THE GARDEN

'Rare Beauty' Perdita Petzl

"Visiting a nature reserve in Lower Austria, I spotted this beautiful eastern festoon butterfly (*Zerynthia cerisy*) roosting in the early morning. It is one of the rarest butterflies in Austria, but I'm very fortunate that some small populations exist in my local area. The butterfly often lives near vineyards, where its food plant, the European birthwort, thrives. The caterpillar of the eastern festoon butterfly is toxic, as it absorbs the poison from this plant."

Camera: Canon EOS R6 Mark II
and Sigma APO Macro 150mm
F2.8 EX DG OS HSM.

Settings: 1/250 sec at f/2.8, ISO 500



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WINNER: WILDFLOWER LANDSCAPES 'Alpine Cotton Balls' Bernadette Benz

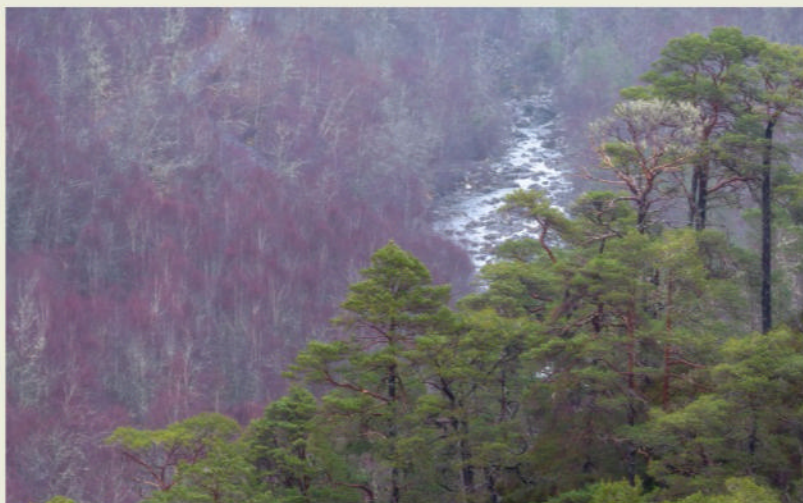
Scheuchzer's cottongrass (*Eriophorum scheuchzeri*) is a protected alpine plant that typically grows in wet, nutrient-poor peat in lowland moors, around ponds and on the banks of standing waters at high altitudes of approximately 2,500 metres above sea level. During its flowering period from spring to summer, it can be recognised by its white, spherical spikes, which look like small cotton balls. This image was taken in Märjelensee in Switzerland, a stunning glacial lake situated at the foot of the Aletsch Glacier. Known for its breathtaking turquoise waters and dramatic mountain scenery, this picturesque lake is a popular destination for hiking and photography.

Camera: Canon EOS 6D and Canon EF 24-105mm f/4L IS II USM. **Settings:** 1/400 sec at f/4, ISO 100



©Bernadette Benz/IGPOTY

©Grant Bulloch/IGPOTY



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WINNER: TREES, WOODS & FORESTS

'Glen Affric' Grant Bulloch

"I climbed up above the treetops of the old Caledonian pines so that I could get a good view looking down over Glen Affric, near Inverness, Scotland. Once I'd reached a high enough point, I noticed this diagonal contrast between the green pine trees and the purple birch trees on the far side of the river."

Camera: Nikon D750 and Nikkor AF-S 70-200mm f/4G ED VR.

Settings: 1/8 sec at f/5, ISO 100.



About the competition

One of the world's most respected photography competitions and exhibitions, IGPOTY is supported by the Royal Botanic Gardens in London, with the main exhibition held annually at Kew and a rolling programme of touring exhibitions in the UK and all over the world. IGPOTY embraces the word 'garden' in its broadest sense, and the annual competition attracts thousands of individual entries, including images of balcony gardens, local parks, woodlands and forest landscapes from across the world.

www.igpoty.com

The main categories of IGPOTY 20 are now open for entries. Go to:
<https://enter.igpoty.com>

CAMERA CLINIC

Master the art of modern photography

This month: Insects

Bugs are a great test of your camera skills, so why not give them a go?



One of the benefits of insect photography is that you don't have to travel far to enjoy it.

Will Cheung



Will
Cheung

An imaging journalist and freelance photographer based in London, Cheung has a wealth of experience over several decades.
www.williamcheung.co.uk

The wonderful thing about insect photography is that you don't have to travel further than your garden or local park to enjoy it. Furthermore, with over 20,000 species in the UK alone, you won't struggle with diversity, with subjects ranging from the small to the tiny. How many of those species appeal to you is something only you can answer, but there are two key considerations.

First, aesthetics. Let's face it, not all insects are photogenic. Generally, butterflies, moths, damselflies and dragonflies have a broader appeal, with the advantage of being common, accessible and relatively large, making them easier prey for the insect photographer. Use them to develop and refine your skills before delving into the world of smaller bugs, such as flies, ladybirds and weevils.

Another benefit of larger insects is that you can probably get involved with the kit you already own.

A telezoom with a close focusing distance of around 90-100cm is enough to give a magnification of 0.3x lifesize or so, which is fine. Filling the frame isn't essential in this form of photography, and shooting with a telephoto zoom means you're a reasonable distance from the subject. This has practical benefits – insects are easily spooked, so being further away helps, and there's also the matter of depth of field. Shoot a scene at f/11, and you get a broad zone of acceptable sharpness. Move in close with the same lens at the identical f/stop and the depth of field decreases massively, getting shallower as you get closer.

It makes sense to shoot from further away to give a greater depth of field. While that means a smaller subject in the frame, with high megapixel cameras, you still have a decent image size after cropping. Insect photography is a great test of your camera skills, so give it a try.

Get the knowledge

Working with tiny insects, having the right kit is vital

Capturing the wonder of nature is challenging enough with birds and mammals, and it doesn't get any easier with insects. You're dealing with tiny, often active subjects, so focusing can be difficult. With little depth of field to cover for errors, you can't always rely on the camera. Macro lenses often 'search' for focus, so doing it manually is more reliable. Even if you nail the focus on the eyes, the limited depth

means other parts of the anatomy may be blurred, though this is something you can use creatively.

You're also often fighting against the conditions. A gentle breeze can seem like a gale when you're working in the close-up world. Despite this, excellent photos are possible with patience, perseverance and practice, so give insects a chance.

Enjoy bug life more

Three optical solutions to get you close to your subject

THE LONG APPROACH

A macro lens gets you in close, but also means you have to be physically close, which is not always feasible. Therefore, a more practical proposition is a telezoom with good close focusing, which gives a more comfortable working distance, so you don't scare the subject off. It also means you can shoot without having to risk getting caught by stinging nettles and brambles. Most cameras/lens combos have image stabilisers, so make sure it's switched on.



GETTING IN CLOSE

A true macro lens that can focus close enough for a 1:1, or lifesize magnification, means that a creature measuring 1cm will appear that size on the sensor. If the lens gives half lifesize, or 1:2 magnification, the insect would measure just 5mm. For insects, the ideal macro focal length is a telephoto, so a 100-150mm in full-frame, 80-100mm in APS-C format and 50-100mm in Micro Four Thirds. Lenses with even greater magnifications are available if you get bitten by the insect photography bug.



LENS ATTACHMENTS

Close-up lenses fit on the lens front and enable closer focusing, but for something more powerful, try the Raynox DCR-250 Super Macro Conversion lens, which gives 2.5x magnification. This fits lenses with 52-67mm filter threads and costs £70 (\$76). These fit on the lens front, but there are accessories to fit between the lens and the camera body. Extension tubes are non-optical devices to enable closer focusing for a larger image, while teleconverters give a greater magnification without altering the minimum focus distance.



Solve the lighting dilemma

Three accessories to enhance daylight for better results

USE A SPEEDLIGHT

A speedlight used on or off the camera is a great light source, ideal for adding sparkle to your insect shots. Speedlights are easy to use, with the option of manual control or automatic TTL flash metering, and many have high-speed sync (HSS) for balancing with daylight. For fill-in flash, use a low manual power or in auto TTL mode, dial in some minus flash exposure compensation, so the effect is not too obvious.



SPECIALIST MACRO FLASH

This is either a ring flash or several small flash units that fit onto a frame that screws onto the front of the lens. The beauty of this flash type is that it gives a shadowless light and can usually be used with TTL [through the lens] flash metering for excellent accuracy and control. If there is a downside, it's their relatively low power, which rules out the use of small f/stops and restricts their effective working range.

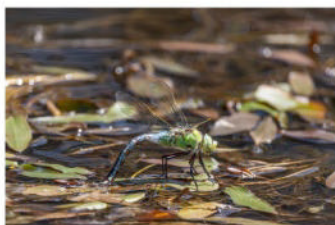
MODIFY THE LIGHT

Direct light from an unmodified speedlight can be harsh, causing issues with glare, deep shadows and a harsh, unattractive light. A diffuser gives better results, and there are plenty of options on the market, ranging from slip-on pieces of moulded plastic to mini softboxes. For softer flash effects, modifiers specifically for macro are available, though they tend to be expensive and cumbersome.



Perfect pictures of insect photography

Shooting successful insect images requires great technique, and getting out there



EGG-LAYING EMPRESS

Emperor dragonflies are beautiful insects and a highlight of the summer. I've seen and photographed emperors ovi-posting (laying eggs) in water, but only from a distance and with leaves and other detritus, resulting in messy compositions. So finding an emperor ovi-posting in a rotting tree trunk on the shore of a small pond was a joy. The cloudy day meant low light levels, so a high ISO was needed for fast shutter speeds. I used a Canon RF 100-500mm zoom lens, trying to stay parallel with the insect to get it sharp across its head and body. Inevitably, there were plenty of rejects, but I managed to get a few shots I was pleased with.



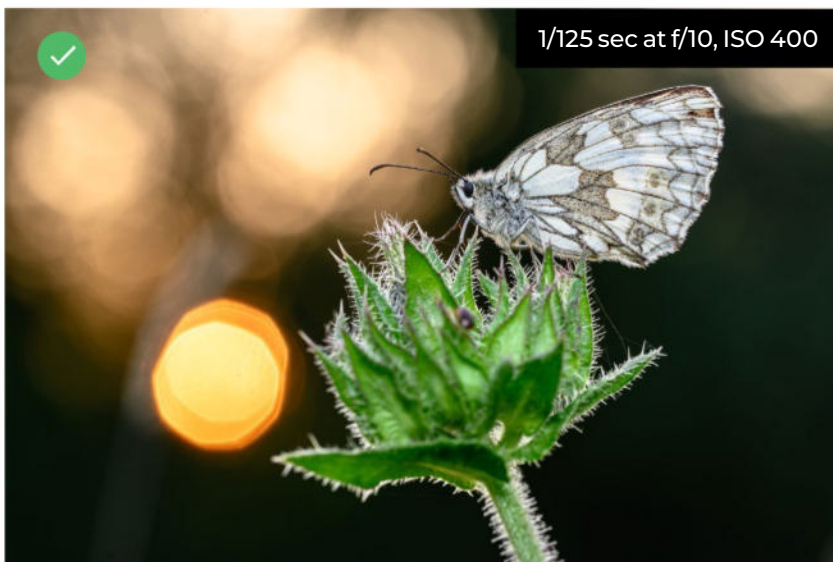
1/250 sec at f/6.7, ISO 800

Will Cheung



SLEEPING BEAUTY

Butterflies are diurnal, so the best times to photograph them are early morning or late evening. I spotted this marbled white that was preparing to roost late in the day. The sun was low in the sky and being shielded by the trees of a wood in the distance. This meant there wasn't the challenge of dealing with extreme high contrast, and I could just meter the butterfly as normal without adding exposure compensation. The butterfly's close proximity and the trees being around 50 metres behind gave a lovely background bokeh. With the marbled white settled, I had time to explore camera angles and try different apertures.



1/125 sec at f/10, ISO 400

Will Cheung



A LUCKY BREAK

I was on a macro photography trip to Bulgaria, shooting a broad range of insects, but the scarce swallowtail proved to be a challenging subject. In the hotel garden, it would suddenly appear, dart from plant to plant feeding, but fly off seconds later. Moving and shooting quickly, the results were disappointing. At the end of the tour, we were heading for the airport and stopped at a service station. Enjoying an ice cream while looking out over a patch of rough ground, we realised that the area was bristling with butterflies. Minutes later, I had my favourite shot of the trip: a scarce swallowtail feeding within touching distance.



1/800 sec at f/8, ISO 480

Will Cheung



How to make the most of insects

Good insect photography requires patience, persistence and practice

Good photography demands patience, persistence and perseverance, and that especially applies to insects. They're often hard to find, and you have little control over them. So the first technique to master is to open your eyes. That hedgerow you walk past is teeming with life, and now's the time to take in the photo opportunities. Next, you

need the right kit. To obtain a decent image of small subjects means lenses that focus close. Now you've taken a few photos, that's when the realisation hits home that this photography isn't easy. Focusing suddenly becomes difficult, for example. So there's a fourth 'P' to add to the list, and that's practice.

Nine species to get in front of your lens this summer



BEES

There are around 250 UK bee species, with honey bees and bumblebees the most familiar. Most are solitary, like this ground-nesting Ashy Mining bee. Bees need high shutter speeds and good focusing skills, so make it easier by waiting for them to settle.



BUTTERFLIES

Calm, bright summer days are ideal for butterfly photography, and with 60 species in the UK, there's plenty of variety. Expect to find Brimstone, Comma, Common Blue, Meadow Brown, Peacock, Red Admiral and The Gatekeeper (above).



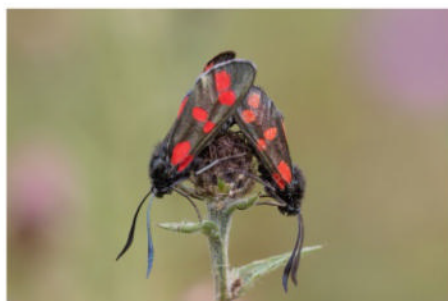
DRAGONFLIES

These creatures are great subjects. Catching them in flight is hard, but some hover, giving you time to focus and shoot. The Common Darter, Four-spotted Chaser, Migrant Hawker and Black-tailed Skimmer (above) are among the easier species to shoot.



WEEVILS

Weevils are tiny beetles with elongated snouts, and at around 1-6mm long, you will need a macro lens to get a decent-sized image of them. This is the Nettle weevil, which is common in early summer and is just one of over 600 species in the UK.



MOTHS

There are around 2,500 moth species in the UK. The Six Spot Burnet moth is a medium-sized insect and flies from June to August. Photographically, it's possible to get in close, but it's a challenge getting detail in its black head. A blip of flash will help.



DAMSELFLIES

Damselflies are common sights near water in summer and are photographer-friendly. This is a male Banded Demoiselle. It's a handsome insect, and because it's around 45mm in length, a close-focusing telephoto will do a great job.



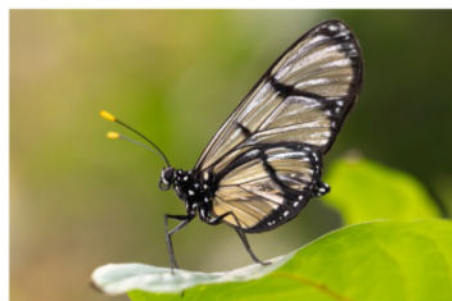
LADYBIRDS

The UK is home to over 40 ladybird species, and the most common yellow and black one is the 14-spot, which is up to 5mm in length. The red 7-spot and Harlequin are found in gardens, parks and heathland everywhere. Use a small f/stop to get them sharp.



MAYFLIES

Adult mayflies don't live long, and so their focus is on breeding. They spend most of the day in the air performing an aerial ballet, so photographing them isn't easy. The best bet is to set the alarm clock for an early start or hope to catch an adult after a moult.



TRY SOMETHING EXOTIC

In the UK, the only way to find a Confusa Tigerwing, along with more exotic species, is in a butterfly farm. The controlled conditions make photography easier, but allow 10 minutes for your kit to acclimatise in the butterfly house and avoid school holidays.

Pros and cons

Inspiring insects

Tackling tiny subjects means you must learn new skills for the best results

Photographing insects presents all manner of technical and practical challenges, which is no surprise given their size. The UK's biggest insect is the stag beetle, which measures up to 7-8cm long, while the Emperor is the largest dragonfly at around the same length. With such small subject matter, your camera skills must be up to scratch, but get it right and it's an immensely satisfying subject.

✓ Easy does it
When you're stalking the subject, make sure your shadow doesn't fall across it. Also, tread carefully so you don't knock the plant where your subject is perched. The best thing is to move in slowly, taking a shot or two for insurance as you go.

✓ Weather check
For insects, cool, windy summer days aren't worth the effort. A gentle breeze might not be a problem for most photo subjects, but it's a different proposition when you're trying to shoot a ladybird on a leaf. The ideal is a warm, calm day with high cloud to take the edge off the sun.

✓ Set the alarm clock
The skill of the expert insect photographer is finding the subject. Go out early before insects have warmed up, or their wings are still damp from dew and walk the hedgerow slowly. Once it's warmer, insects are more active and don't settle.

✓ Pack some accessories
The well-prepared insect photographer will often add a few choice accessories to their kit. These include kneeling pads for comfort, travel scissors to remove annoying grass strands and a sheet of white card to act as a reflector.

✗ The ethical way
The welfare of your subject and the surrounding habitat is more important than getting the perfect photo. If you want to encourage the creature to move in a particular direction, use a soft brush rather than picking it up. Don't refrigerate the subject to slow it down either.

✗ Don't overflash
Using flash to lighten the deep shadows caused by vegetation in bright light is worth doing, but don't over-flash the subject because the result will be too harsh and look unnatural. Reduce the flash output by setting a lower manual output or using minus flash exposure compensation.

✗ Choose your speed wisely
For insect-in-flight shots, you will need at least 1/4000 sec or faster to 'freeze' the wings. However, a little blur gives a feeling of movement, and of course, extremely fast speeds are only possible with a wide lens aperture, high ISO and good light. If your camera has an electronic shutter, try it, but if the wings appear distorted, switch back to the mechanical shutter option.

Background

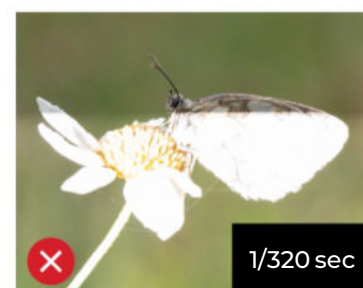
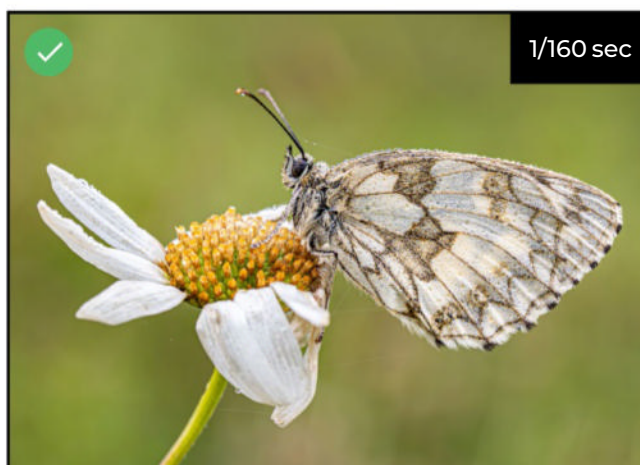
Look for a clear background to highlight your subject.

Camera know-how Correct shutter speed

Avoid using too fast a shutter speed, which can result in a dark frame

A flashgun is a potent addition to any insect shooting outfit, but take the time to understand the core settings. For normal flash photography, don't use a shutter speed faster than the camera's sync speed, often 1/125 sec or 1/160 sec. The result is either a dark frame or a half-and-half image, depending on the speed.

Many camera/flashgun combinations have high-speed flash (HSS), and it's a great feature for mixing flash with daylight. Mechanical shutter speeds up to 1/8000 sec can be used, although the amount of power available drops off as the shutter speed increases, so stick to 1/500 sec and 1/1000 sec.



Shoot faster than the camera's sync speed, often 1/125 sec or 1/160 sec, and either a dark frame or a half-and-half image will be the result (above).



Keep it fast

High shutter speeds are best for freezing the action.

Sharp shooting

Focus with care, aiming to reduce any blurring.

Will Cheung

Lens tech Focus bracketing

Control depth of field with this in-camera or in-software technique

Try focus bracketing or stacking for insect shooting.

Whether automated focus bracketing or stacking is practical for insect shooting depends on your camera. OM System/Olympus users are fine, because many models have excellent in-camera focus stacking that works handheld. You can take up to 15 shots and you get an in-camera merged jpeg, plus all the raw files for stacking on the computer. Canon and Panasonic cameras have focus stacking, too, although it isn't as good as OM System.

Widely available is focus bracketing, where you get a series of shots at different focus points for stacking on the computer. Some systems can work with tiny amounts of movement, so they can be used handheld, although others that shoot focus bracket sequences slowly, including Sony, need a still subject with the camera on a tripod.



Shoot photos like a pro

With such a diverse range of subjects, it pays to specialise

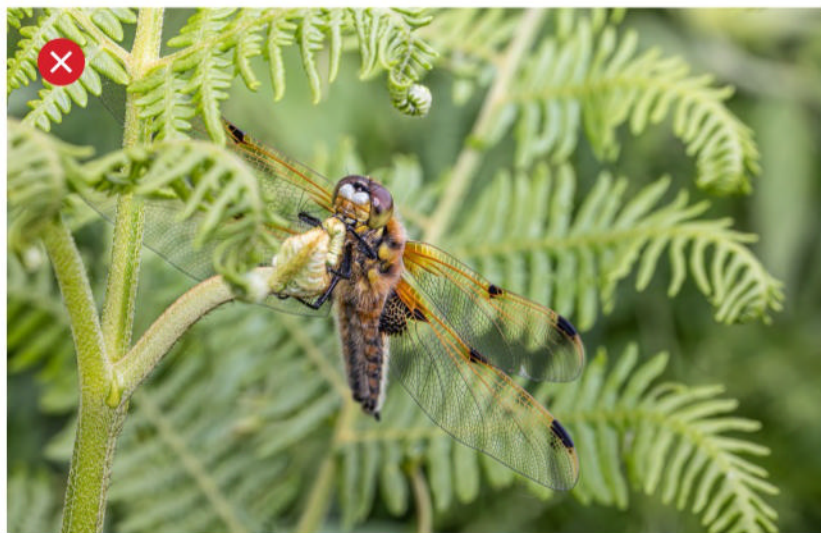
Insect photography is an opportunity to develop your photography skills, and you can find plenty of subjects on which to practise your skills without having to travel far. That said, once you get involved, you will have to go further afield for a wider variety of species, and many are localised or only exist in specific habitats.

The bigger challenge is time, especially as many days of the summer can be ruled

out because of unsuitable conditions. Many insects are active for just six months of the year, with individual species around for short spells within that time frame. Bees and butterflies can be found for a good part of the year, from March through to October, while dragonflies are active from around May to early autumn. What it means for you as a photographer is that there's no time to lose.

The right f/stop

Unless you're deliberately aiming for a shallow zone of sharp focus, shooting at f/11 or even f/16 gives a good amount of depth of field, but avoid the lens's smallest f/stop because diffraction will soften your photos. However, using a small f/stop does not always work because too much depth of field can result in a visual conflict between the subject and background. Using a wider f/stop is the answer.



1/90 sec at f/11, ISO 800

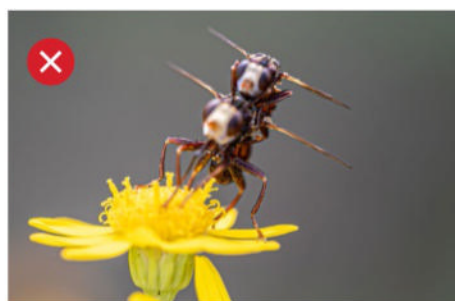


1/1000 sec at f/3.5, ISO 800

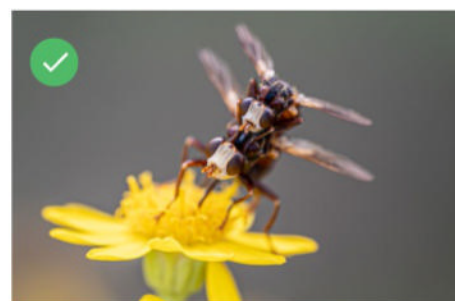
Focusing finesse

There's little room for error when it comes to close-up focusing, but don't rely on the camera to do the job for you. In situations

like this, you need to watch the subject carefully and tweak the focus to make sure the areas you want to be sharp are sharp. There's nothing wrong with using autofocus, but have full-time override active so you can fine-tune focusing if needed. Practise this skill so you can do it instinctively and rapidly.

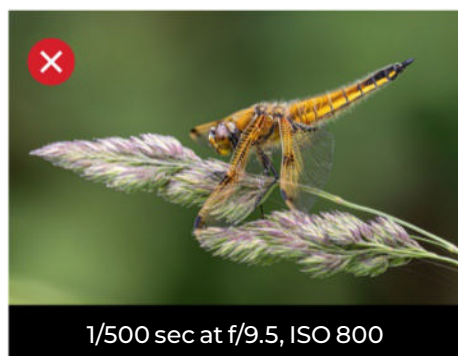
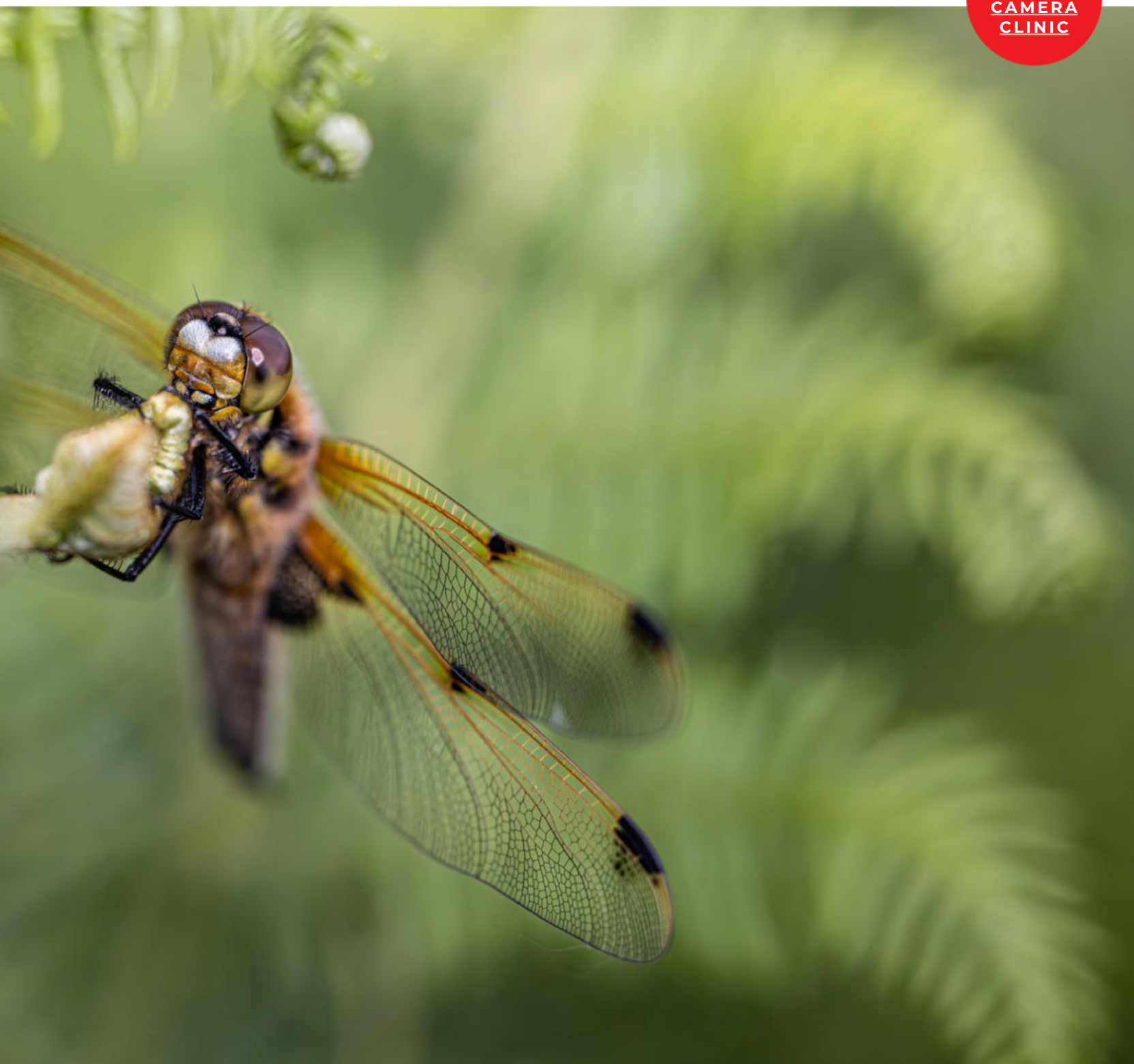


1/800 sec at f/4, ISO 1000

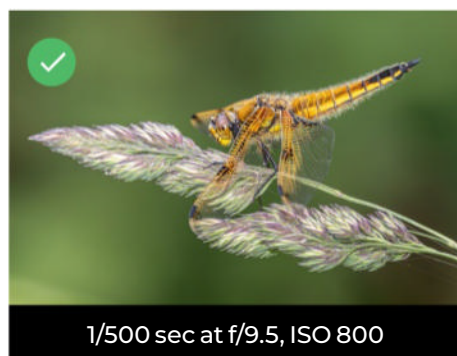


1/1000 sec at f/4, ISO 1000

Will Cheung



1/500 sec at f/9.5, ISO 800



1/500 sec at f/9.5, ISO 800

Will Cheung

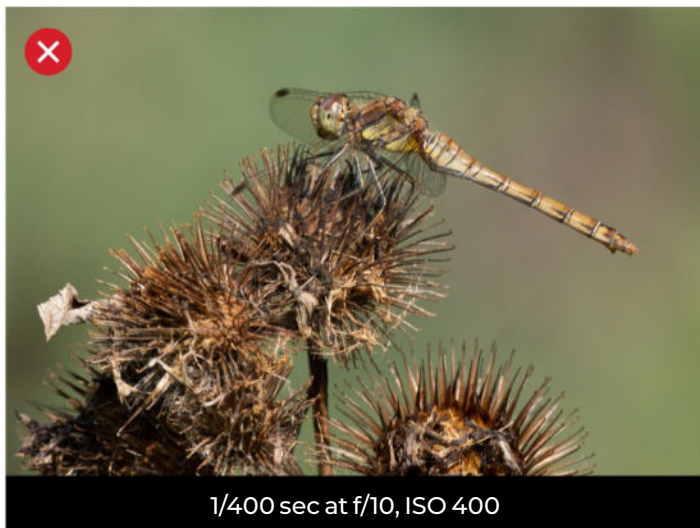
Splash the flash

A tiny burst of flash can lift the image with the extra light filling in shadows and perhaps adding a catchlight to the eye. A camera/flash duo with high-speed flash sync (HSS) means you can do this even in bright light. The skill in using flash during daylight hours is getting the balance right. Too little flash and it has minimal impact; too much and the subject is overexposed.



Ready, steady, action

Shoot insects and be prepared for fast-moving action. For example, swallowtail butterflies have a short attention span and flit from flower to flower when feeding, with their wings in constant motion. Use continuous drive mode, a fast shutter speed and tracking autofocus or single point AF, depending on which you find the most reliable with your camera. Have full-time focus override active so you can tweak focus if needed.



Back the background

The background has a huge impact on the success of a picture. Of course, the focus of attention should be on the subject, but it always pays to check what's happening in the background before pressing the shutter button. Brightly lit grasses and branches are distracting, but in nature photography, there's often not much that can be done about that. Shifting position is one way that this can work, as this example shows. Here, just moving a couple of steps meant that the same creature stood out more prominently from a dark background.

Camera tech Turn back time

Pre-capture is a powerful feature found on an increasing number of cameras

Capturing the instant an insect takes to the air is possible with luck and lightning-quick reflexes. Pre-release or pre-capture (camera brands often use different terms) makes it accessible, so if you have it, give it a go. Pre-capture works with the camera's electronic shutter. With your finger partially depressing the shutter button, the camera takes shots that it holds in its buffer and are only recorded to the memory card when the shutter button is fully depressed. Shots from up to a second before the shutter is depressed are saved. The time varies depending on the camera, but Sony's pre-release is the most flexible, being adjustable from 0.03 to 1 sec. Pre-capture makes capturing fleeting instances possible, although the downside is that it consumes a lot of battery power, and you end up with many near-identical frames to sift through.





1/400 sec at f/5.6, ISO 800



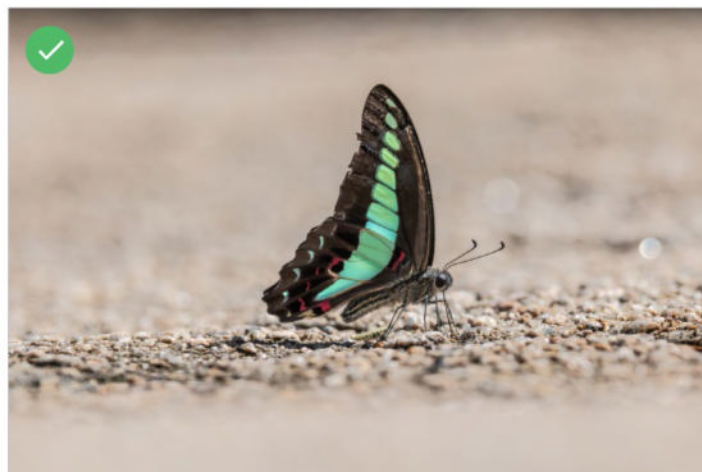
1/400 sec at f/5.6, ISO 800

Zone focusing

Using a small single focus point means you can focus precisely on the subject. Scenarios where the subject is on a flat plane mean the autofocus system can latch onto another part of the scene rather than the subject. Using a single AF zone and positioning it over the subject or on its eye means you'll get accurate focus. Of course, if the subject is lively, you'll have to move the AF point to keep pace.



1/1250 sec at f/10, ISO 400



1/1250 sec at f/11, ISO 400

Getting down to it

The background can be varied with aperture and camera position, but also the height you're shooting from. Here, a common bluebottle butterfly, taken in Hong Kong, was drinking water off a pavement. I grabbed an insurance shot, but then realised that I had enough time to get down and rest the camera on the ground for a few frames. With a 500mm telephoto lens, getting the butterfly in the frame was tricky, so I zoomed out and found the insect before zooming in.

Pro tip

Fine-tune your focusing skills

Ensure the subject is sharp in the right places by adjusting the camera's alignment

The closer you move towards the subject, the shallower the depth of field becomes, which means getting the photo sharp where you want it to be sharp is not as easy as you might think. Shooting a damselfly, for example, you might get the head sharp, but its abdomen or wings might be out of focus, even if you are shooting at f/8 or f/11.

To give yourself the best chance of success, try aligning the camera so that its focal plane is parallel to the subject. Practise this by holding the camera in place and backing away slightly to check its position relative to the subject.





Filip Hrebenda
Photographer

Location: Norway

Title: 'The Gate'

Camera drone and settings: DJI Mavic Pro 3.
Exposure: 1/60 sec at f/5, ISO 100

Instagram: @filiphrebenda

Website: www.filiphrebenda.com/en

Filip's winning image, 'The Gate', beat a total of 100,000 photos that were submitted from 96 countries.

remember the exact settings, but my goal was to keep the noise to a minimum and adjust the shutter speed to ensure the highlights in the sky weren't overexposed. The final image is actually a panorama stitched from six photographs, as a single shot wouldn't have included everything I wanted within the composition.

What makes this image special is that it depicts a location that's largely undiscovered and unfamiliar. I actively seek out places like this. But when a perfect location comes together with ideal conditions, something truly exceptional can happen – and that's what happened on that morning. While I had hoped to shoot a colourful sunrise, I ended up wishing for fog to appear and flow through the gap in the mountains like a gateway. The chances of such conditions happening were slim, yet after a rainy night, that's exactly what unfolded – it was pure euphoria. That's how I want to remember the moment whenever I look at 'The Gate'.

I enjoy capturing places that aren't familiar or over-photographed. Every such location has a certain potential, which is enhanced by specific conditions. At this spot, I could imagine either side-lit morning light, which would further emphasise and define the shape of the 'gate' in a more sculptural way or, ideally, foggy conditions that would add a sense of mystery and drama to the scene. To enhance this effect, I processed the image into cool, almost monochromatic tones, but left my wife's red backpack in a different colour so it would stand out and create contrast. It also serves as an important scale reference, helping viewers realise how large the scene actually was.

I've been organising photo tours and expeditions for nine years. My tours are accessible to everyone, while my expeditions involve camping and hiking. In both formats, I try to take clients not only to well-known spots, but also to less explored locations. When people tell me that these less-familiar images helped them win a competition or organise an exhibition, it's very rewarding. ●

Find out more and book Filip's photo tours at: www.landscapenomads.com

Shot of the month

Filip Hrebenda wins the Grand Prize in the 11th edition of the SkyPixel Awards

This photograph is titled 'The Gate', and it was taken in northern Norway in September 2025. I travel to this region quite often, as I lead several photo tours every year. However, this trip was a little different. My wife and I set out to photograph some of the more remote locations under the most interesting conditions possible, and we spent many rainy and windy nights in a tent.

Before capturing this shot, the circumstances were much the same. It rained the whole night, and the sunrise didn't look particularly promising, but we decided to give it a try and climbed a nearby hill. Although we didn't get the spectacular colours at sunrise, a different kind of spectacle unfolded before us. Flowing fog swept through the landscape, cutting off the surrounding peaks and creating this remarkable scene. To reach the ideal vantage point, I had to use a camera drone. I don't

Digital Darkroom

Transform your photos with our easy, effective guides



PAGE 96

Photoshop

Recreate the days of lens flare and give your images a retro look.

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Lightroom

Disappointing holiday snaps? We'll help you fix some common errors.

PAGE 100

Photoshop

Use blending modes to create transparency for a range of great effects.

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Affinity

Editing raw files using features in the latest version of the software.

PAGE 104

DxO PhotoLab 9

In part two of our guide, we look at AI-powered masking functions.

MEET YOUR TRAINERS Edit like a pro with their expert insights



Dan Mold

As the deputy editor of our former sister title *Photo Plus*, Dan Mold has over a decade of experience in writing Photoshop tutorials and guides.



James Abbott

Specialising in landscapes and portraits, James Abbott is an advanced Photoshop user and has created hundreds of tutorials.



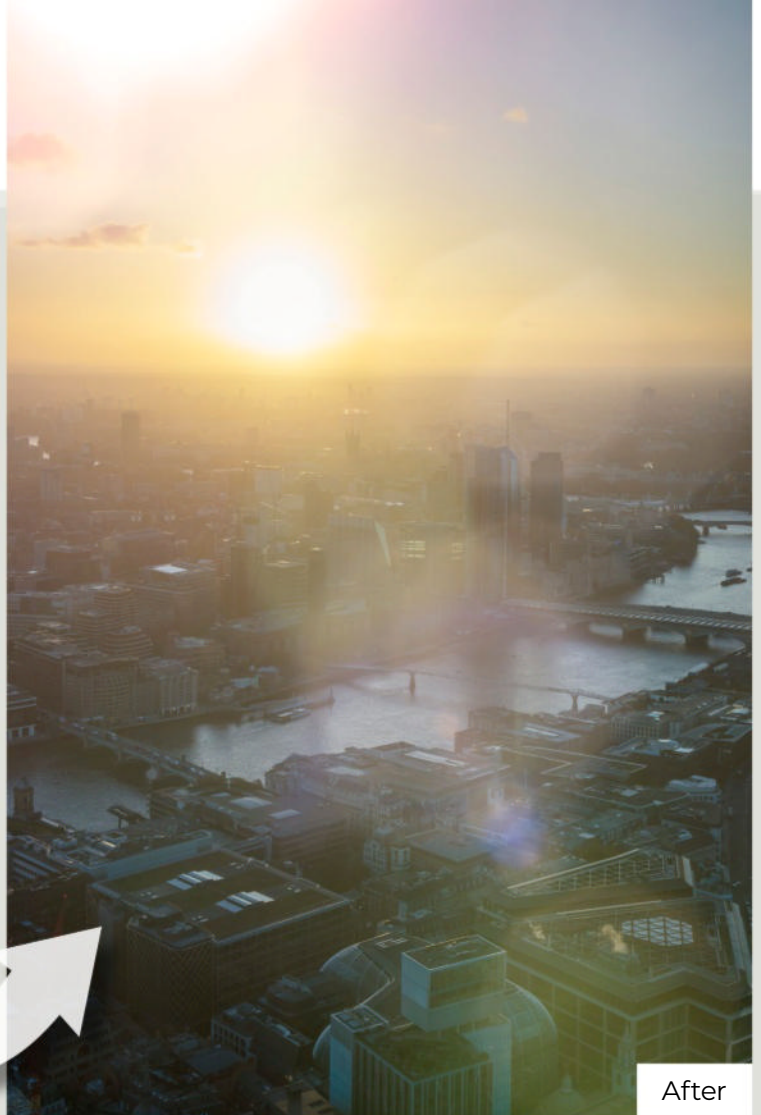
Sean McCormack

A photographer and writer based in Galway, Ireland, Sean McCormack is the author of books including *The Indispensable Guide to Lightroom CC*.



Wendy Evans LRPS

The author of over a dozen books on the subjects of photography, CGI and Photoshop, Wendy Evans has used Photoshop since version 3.0.



Add some flare to your photographs

Dan Mold explains how to recreate the days of analogue and add some retro cinematic flair

Lenses today tend to have all sorts of modern optical tricks and coatings to suppress flare and help produce the sharpest images possible. While sharpness is great for many imaging scenarios, I can't help but feel we've lost some of the character that came from shooting with lenses in the days of film. Without these glare-suppressing coatings, shooting towards the sun could create all sorts of light leaks and flares in your pictures. These could even be strategically positioned within your frame to add to the composition, giving it a hazy, dream-like, washed-out appearance, rather than a sterile shot that's pin-sharp all the way through.

We're giving away a free pack of lens flares and light leaks with this month's download. With this pack, you can capture your sharp shots, then add flare to them in Photoshop. You can also choose the shape of the flare and move it around the image to find the perfect position, as well as add colour to it and blend it in until it looks perfect. Follow the step-by-step guide and watch the accompanying video to see how it's done.

Adapt vintage lenses for flare

If you'd like to capture flare in-camera instead, I'd recommend adapting some old vintage lenses to a modern DSLR or mirrorless camera. Old lenses such as the legendary Helios 44-2 58mm f/2 lens lack the coatings found on modern glass, so it creates weird and wonderful flare patterns when shooting towards a bright light source. The beauty of this technique is that old lenses are cheap and the adapters to use them on modern cameras don't break the bank either. Every flare will be unique, and you can have lots of fun experimenting and seeing where the flare will appear.



Download your files

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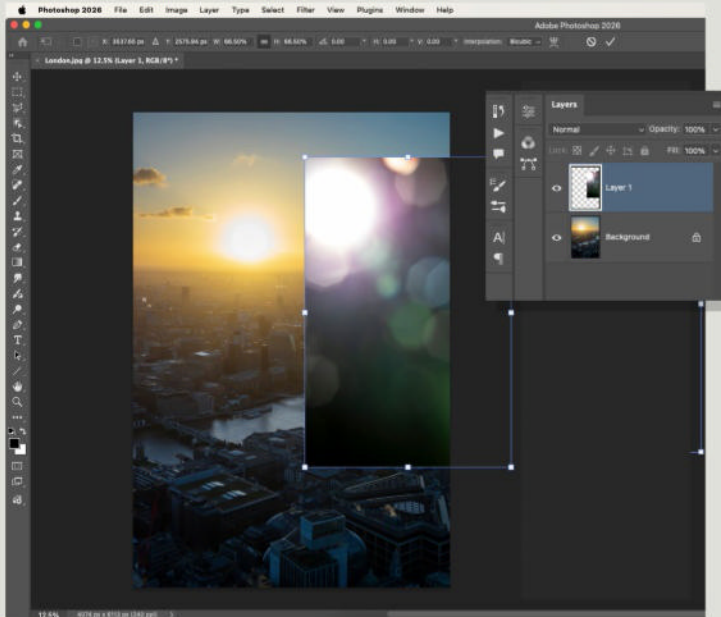
22 lens flare effects for Photoshop



8-minute video tutorial



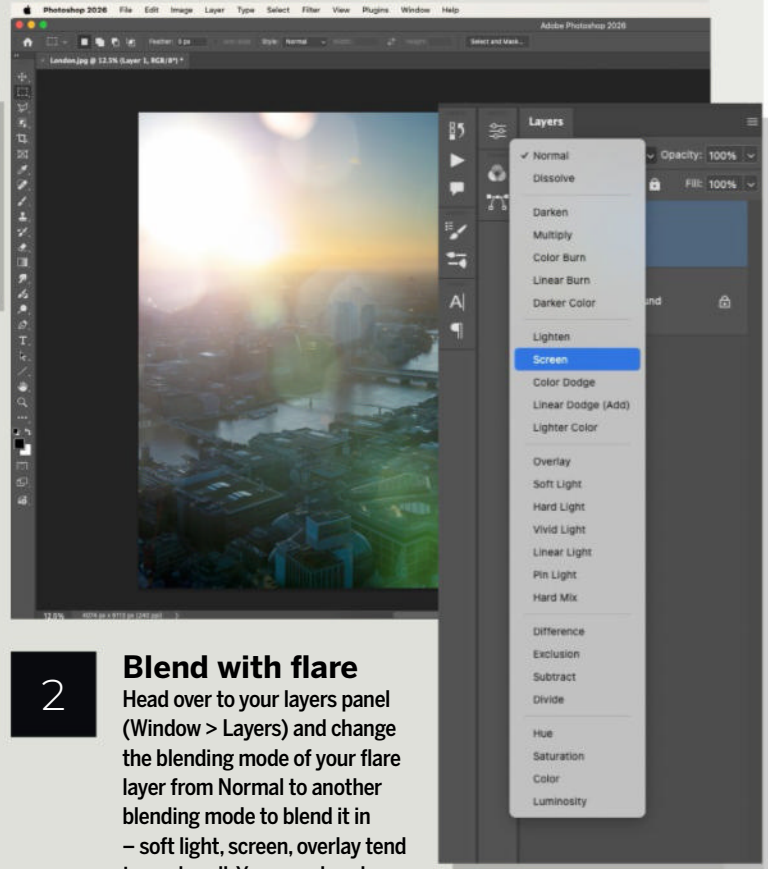
Project files and instructions



1

Open an image

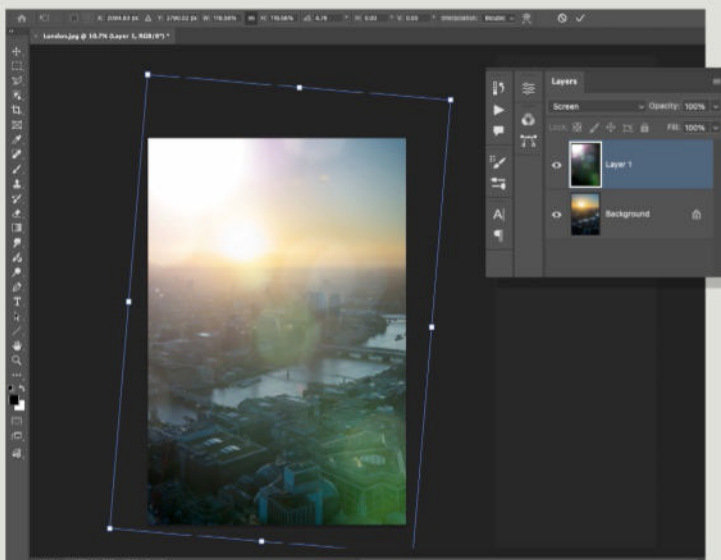
Open up your image, or use the London skyline image supplied (Start.jpg), then open up one of the flares you like the look of from your free download pack. Hit Ctrl/Cmd+A to select the flare, Ctrl/Cmd+C to copy it and Ctrl/Cmd+W to close it down. Now hit Ctrl/Cmd+V to paste the flare in. Hit Ctrl/Cmd+T to put it into free transform mode and then pull the corner handles of the bounding box to make it bigger or smaller (hold Shift to keep the aspect ratio the same). Now click and drag your picture to move it around and make sure all of the white window in the frame is covered before hitting Return to set it in place.



2

Blend with flare

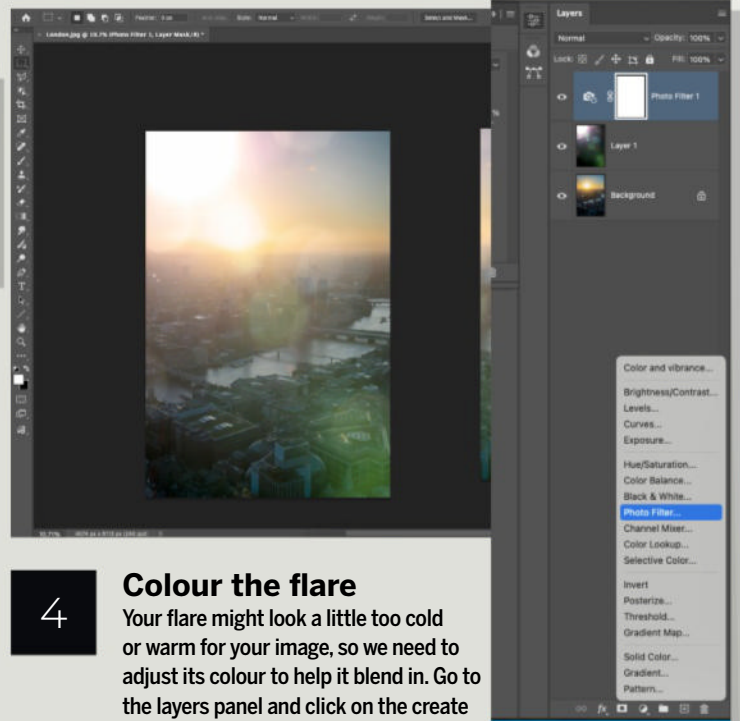
Head over to your layers panel (Window > Layers) and change the blending mode of your flare layer from Normal to another blending mode to blend it in – soft light, screen, overlay tend to work well. You can also change the Layer Opacity and lower it down from 100 per cent to blend it in until it looks as subtle as you prefer for your image. Here, I set it to 85 per cent.



3

Transform and reposition

Now it's time to reposition the flare, so hit Ctrl/Cmd+T to put the flare layer into Free Transform mode. You'll see a bounding box appear around the flare, and you can click and drag the flare to move it around the frame. Drag it into a good position – it's sometimes more realistic to have the flare appearing from behind an object like a tree. You can also resize the flare by pulling the corner handles of the bounding box to make it bigger or smaller. Hovering your cursor on the outside of a corner will turn the corners into double-ended arrows – you can now click and drag to rotate the flare. When you're done, hit Return to set it in place.

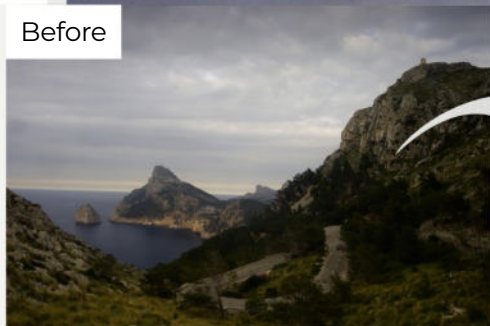


4

Colour the flare

Your flare might look a little too cold or warm for your image, so we need to adjust its colour to help it blend in. Go to the layers panel and click on the create new adjustment layer icon, then choose Photo Filter from the list. The flare looks a little too cool for my image, so I'll choose Warming Filter (85) and set the Density to 80 per cent – though you can have lots of fun playing with these filters to get your flare looking spot-on. Now right-click on the Photo Filter adjustment layer and choose Create Clipping Mask, so that the filter layer only applies to the flare.

Before



After



How to fix unravelled travel

Dodgy holiday snaps? Lightroom can help, says **Sean McCormack**

So you've made the best-laid plans. You've picked the location and you have some viewpoints in mind for your bucket list of shots for the holiday. But when you arrive at the destination, the day just doesn't deliver. The light is weak, the haze is dismal and everything looks washed out.

You still had to pack light for your baggage, and that can have side effects. Your travel tripod won't lock at horizontal and you've managed to get dust on the sensor from changing lenses. You haven't brought anything with you to clean it, of course, and the larger dust spots are spoiling your photos.

Don't despair! Adobe has your back. Lightroom's latest AI features will make your life significantly easier. The most useful one here is Dust in the Distraction Removal panel in the Remove Tool. For really difficult areas, you can use Generative Remove and even combine with detect objects for clean removal.

The Dehaze tool will fix the haze somewhat; you're only doing a basic fix here, and of course, the crop tool will let you sort out the horizon – with an added extra to make life much easier!

Straight horizon

If the horizon is wonky, it's a sure sign of a beginner or a dodgy tripod. Press R to open Crop. Now zoom in and out using Control/Command + and -. Hold Control/Command and click on a point on the horizon, then drag to another point on the horizon to straighten the photo. Zooming in while cropping is a new feature.



Download your files

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Download your files and video tutorial from the folder titled 'Lightroom_Travel Photo Fixes'.



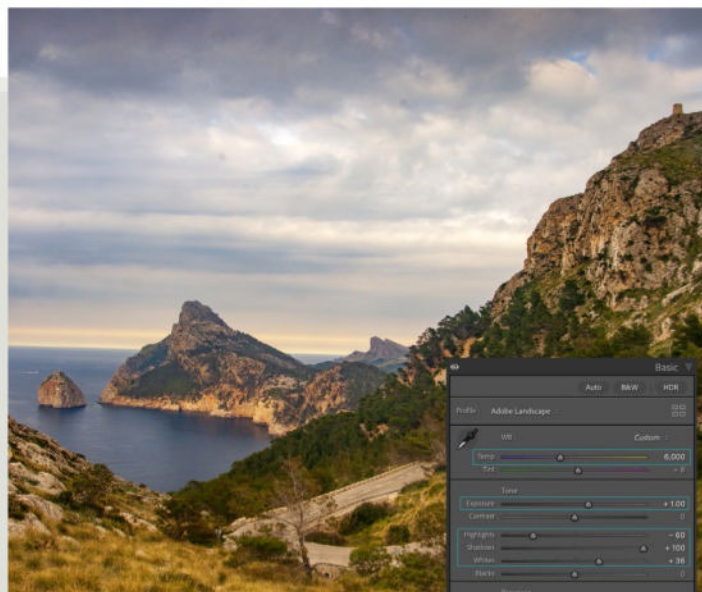
Three travel photo presets



14-minute video tutorial



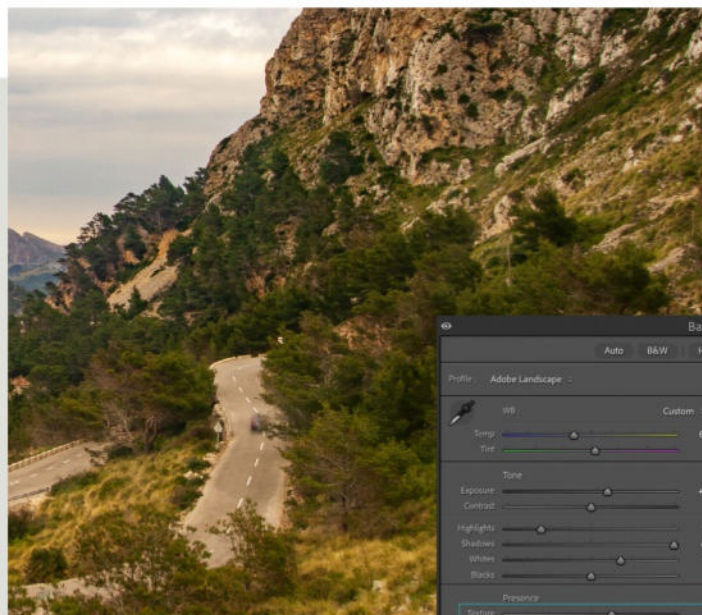
Project files and instructions



1

Resetting the scene

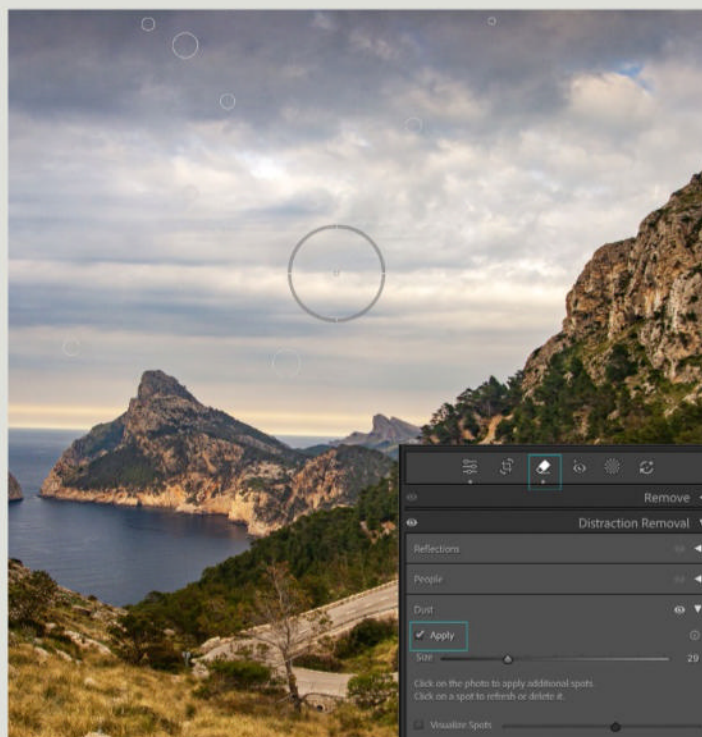
From the Profile dropdown, choose Adobe Landscape. Warm up the scene by setting the Temp to 6000K. For the haze, set Dehaze to 50. Now, to compensate for the underexposure and Dehaze, set Exposure to +1.00 stops. Much better! You can expand the tonal range by holding Shift and double-clicking on Whites, then reducing Highlights to -60. This sets the white point and allows you to reduce the cloud impact. Finally, increase Shadows to +100 to open up the woods.



2

Details and colour

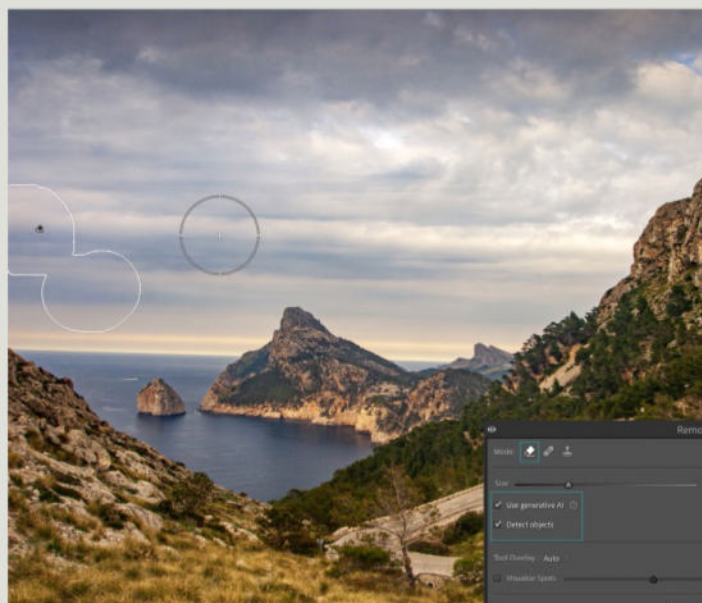
The combination of Dehaze and the profile has made for a saturated photo. Before you tackle this, finish off any contrast adjustments, which usually affect what's next. First, set your Texture to 25 to give the leaves more detail. Set Clarity to 20 to give more punch to the photo. This has removed some of the saturation. To give this a final nudge, set Vibrance to -5 and Saturation to -5. Of course, you can set this to taste.



3

Dust yourself off

To exaggerate the dust spots, set Dehaze to 100 (set it back to 50 afterwards). Now click on the eraser icon. Open Distraction Removal and then Dust. Click Apply. AI will run and find dust spots and remove them. You can also manually remove more in this tool, which has a Visualize Spots option. One of the larger spots on the left looks bad, so click on this and hit Delete. It also missed the larger, but not quite as defined spot close to it.



4

Generation game

When there is a series of spots near each other, the source spot seems to be taken from the underlying, pre-AI dust image. Even if you stay in Dust, it's not always the best result. Heal and Clone also use existing material in the image, so Remove in Generative AI mode often works best for this – with Detect objects ticked, it's great for filling in awkward spots. Click on the area and then click Remove. Choose from one of the three variations to finish.

Before



Layer up with Multiply and Screen

James Abbott combines two key features in Photoshop for fantastic creative effects

There are many ways to use Blending modes in Photoshop along with Adjustment Layers to create plenty of additional effects. With a total of 27 Blending modes and 21 Adjustment Layers, you can only imagine the possibilities. Some Blending modes are more useful than others – a few are used regularly, while many are rarely used. Two of the most useful ones are Multiply and Screen, while other popular modes include Overlay and Soft Light, which are contrast-based. There are many others, but for this tutorial, let's focus on Multiply and Screen.

Multiply is a darkening Blending mode, while Screen lightens, and you can use them to do just this when applied to an untouched Adjustment Layer. You can then, of course, make adjustments to the Adjustment Layer to take additional control of the effect being created. For the four techniques we'll cover here, we'll use these Blending modes combined to add transparency and a levelling effect to the looks we're applying.

Download your files

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Download your files and video tutorial from the folder titled 'Photoshop_Bleeding Modes'.



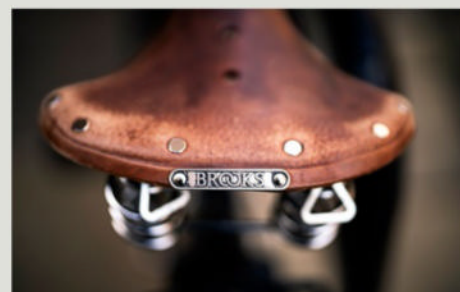
Four
Actions for
Photoshop



5-minute
video
tutorial



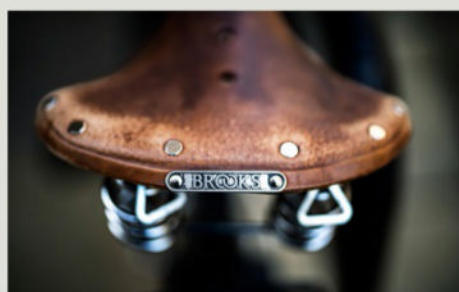
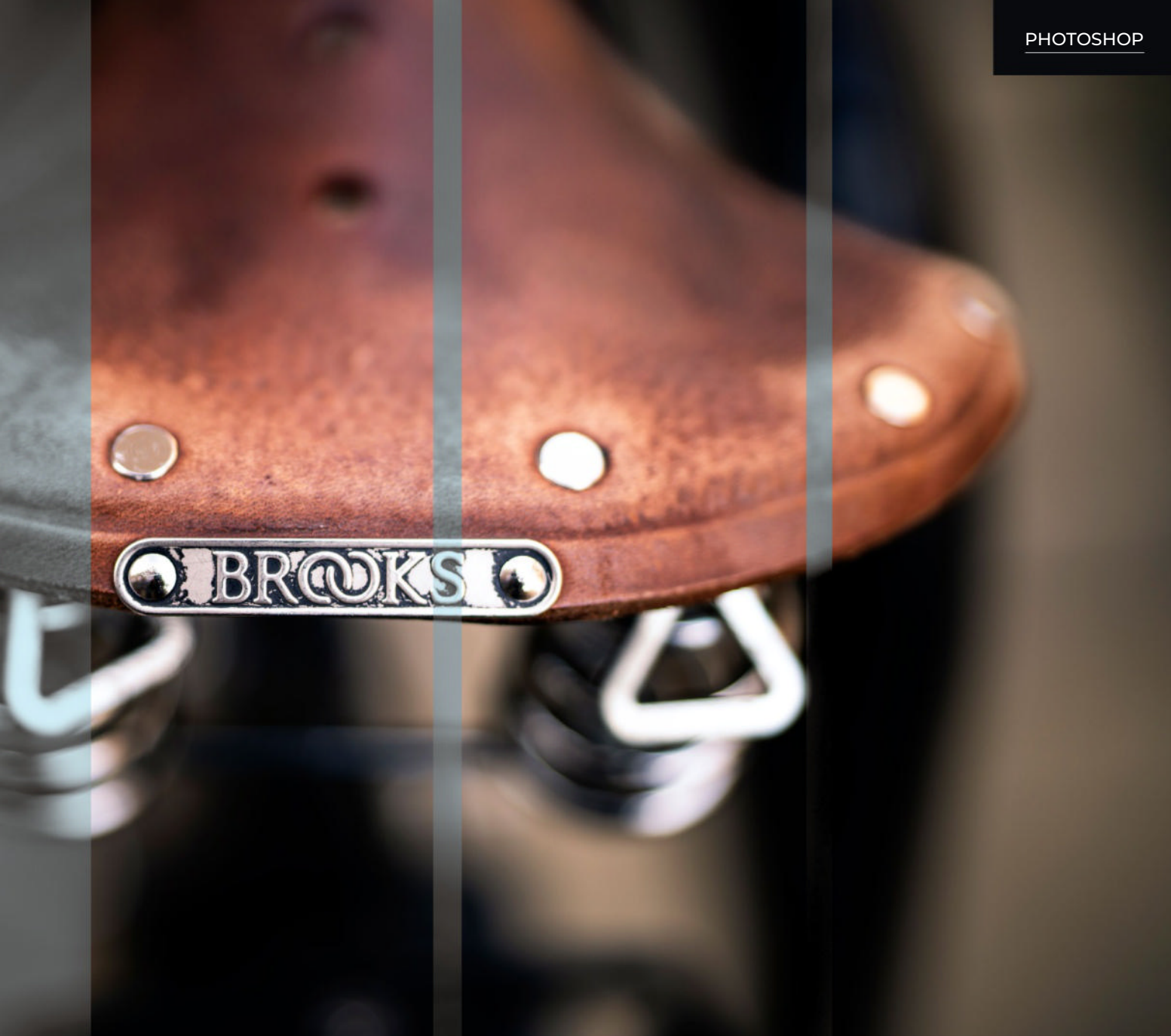
Project
files and
instructions



1

Apply vintage colour

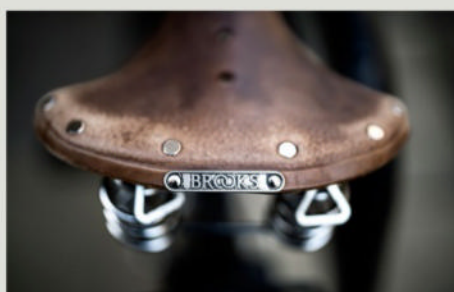
Click on the Create new fill or adjustment layer icon at the bottom of the Layers panel and select Photo Filter. Click on the dropdown menu set to Warming Filter (85), select Orange from the list of options and set Density to 70 per cent. Close the dialog, then change the Blending mode from Normal to Multiply. Press Ctrl/Cmd+J to duplicate the Layer, then change the Blending mode of the copy from Multiply to Screen. Reduce the Opacity of the Layers to control the strength.



2

Boost Clarity

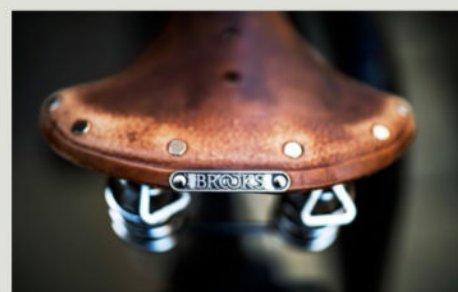
Click on the Create new fill or adjustment layer icon at the bottom of the Layers panel and select Clarity & Dehaze. Now drag the Clarity slider to +50 and the Dehaze slider to +30, which will accentuate detail and add some contrast. Close the dialog, then change the Blending mode from Normal to Multiply. Press Ctrl/Cmd+J to duplicate the Layer, then change the Blending mode of the copy from Multiply to Screen. Reduce the Opacity of the Layers to control the strength.



3

Reduce Saturation

Click on the Create new fill or adjustment layer icon at the bottom of the Layers panel and select Black & White. When the dialog opens, close it immediately because we only need the default settings for the desaturation effect to work. Now change the Blending mode from Normal to Multiply. Press Ctrl/Cmd+J to duplicate the Layer, then change the Blending mode of the copy from Multiply to Screen. Reduce the Opacity of the Layers to control the strength.



4

Increase Contrast

Click on the Create new fill or adjustment layer icon at the bottom of the Layers panel and select Curves. Create an S-curve by placing a point three-quarters of the way up and dragging up and to the left. Place another point a quarter of the way up and drag down and to the right. Close the dialog and change the Blending mode to Multiply. Press Ctrl/Cmd+J to duplicate the Layer, then change the Blending mode of the copy from Multiply to Screen. Reduce the Opacity of the Layers.

Before



After



Wendy Evans

Enhance your raw files with Affinity

Wendy Evans gets to grips with the latest version, now under the Canva banner

Download your files

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Download your project files and video tutorial from the folder titled 'Affinity_Raw Editing'.



Four LUTs to apply to your images



4-minute video tutorial



Project files to follow along

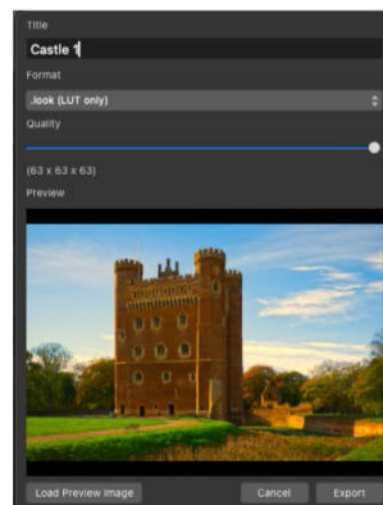
There's no doubt that Affinity Photo 2 was a powerful piece of software, but thanks to an interface that could best be described as 'idiosyncratic',

if you were being generous, it wasn't the easiest program to get to grips with.

Affinity is now part of the Canva stable, which explains why other Canva elements have been integrated and are available with one click. But let's not go there just yet; let's dive in with a raw file and see what's changed about the editing process. Most of your favourite functions are still here, but things are now organised a little more logically.

Export an LUT

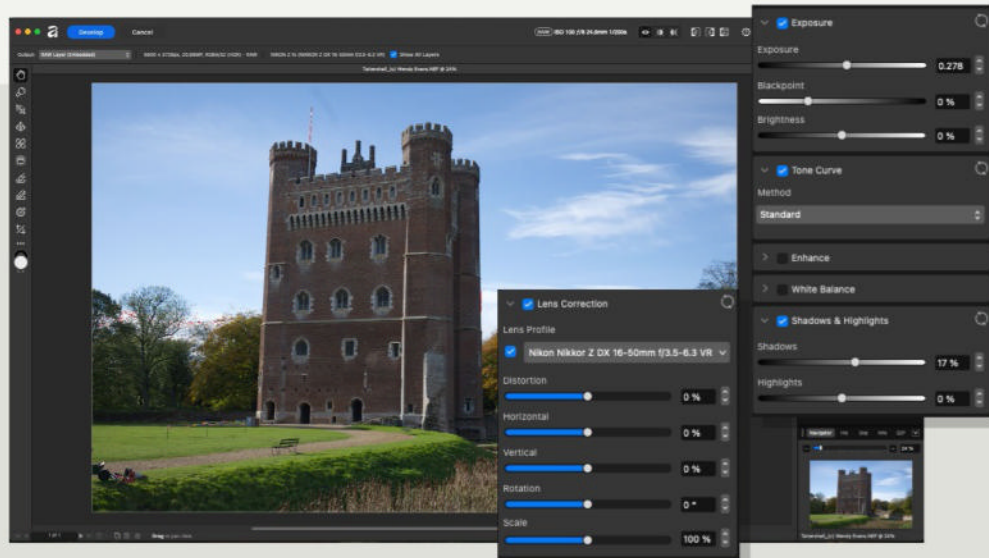
Once you've finished editing for colour and tone, it might be worthwhile exporting the colour shifts as a lookup table (LUT) so you can use it on other landscape images that have buildings with brick or stonework features. To do this, go to File > Export > LUT, select 'look' as the format and set the quality to 64 x 64 x 64. To start you off, I've created a set of four LUTs, specifically for stone or brick buildings in landscapes.



1

Import the raw file

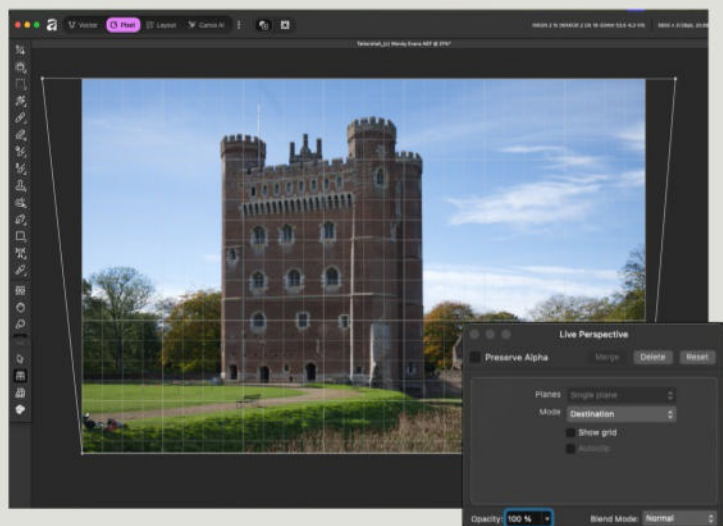
Drag and drop your raw file onto the Affinity interface to load it. There's a series of tools on the left, but it's more useful to access them in the next step. For now, go to the Basic tab on the right, click on Tone Curve and select Standard. Tweak the Exposure then adjust the Shadows and Highlights. Click on the Lens tab and check that the correct Lens Profile has been used.



2

Correct the geometry

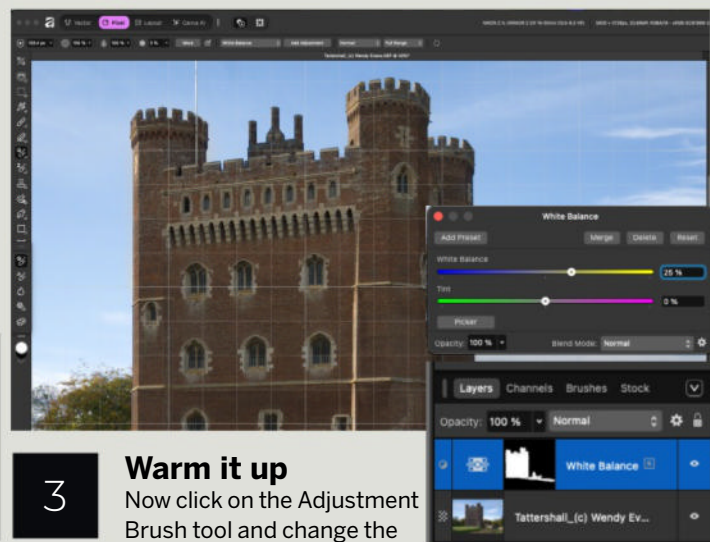
Click on Develop to exit the raw module and return to the main interface. Click on the Move tool (V), then select the Perspective tool that it's grouped with. Use the corner control points to correct the converging verticals. Right-click on this corrected layer and select Rasterize and Trim to turn it back into a regular layer.



3

Warm it up

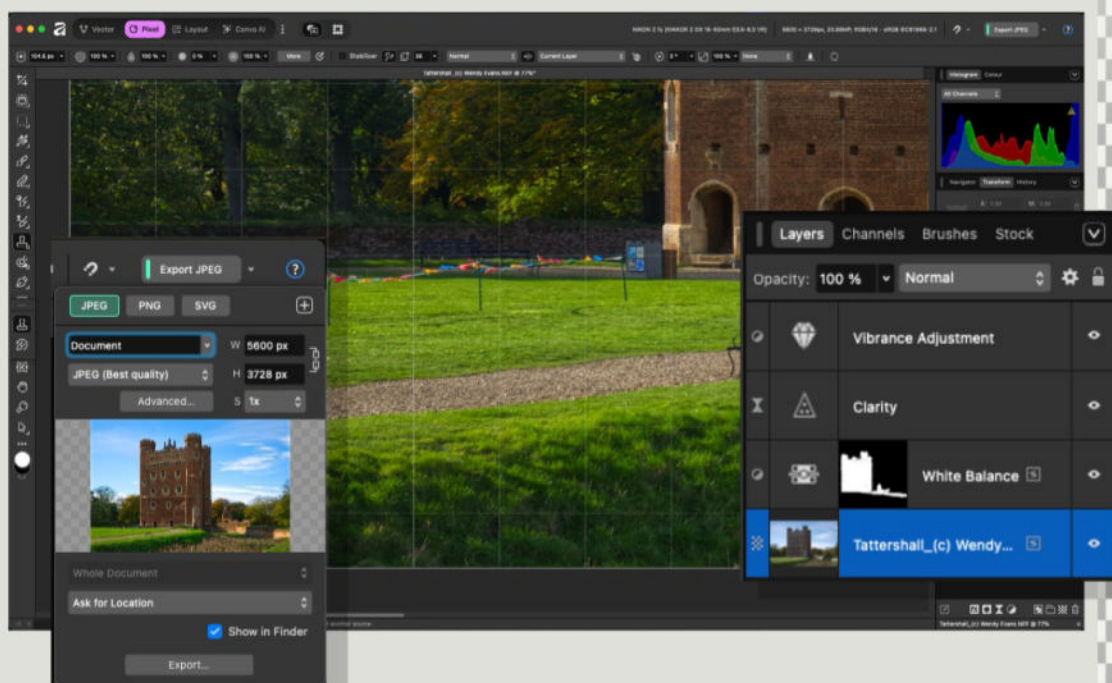
Now click on the Adjustment Brush tool and change the type to White Balance. Paint over the castle. As soon as you start painting, the adjustment dialog box will appear. Increase the White Balance by 25 per cent. Use the square brackets to adjust the brush size. The black parts of the mask block the adjustment, while the white parts let it through. You can also tweak the overall opacity if required.



4

Adding clarity and more

In the Layers palette, click on the Filters icon and select Clarity at 75 per cent. Click on Adjustments and select Vibrance. Enter values of 40 per cent for Vibrance and 25 per cent for Saturation. Finally, select the background layer and click on the Clone tool. Use this to remove the imperfections in the sky and the rubbish in the bottom left. You can save this as an Affinity Project and also click on Export JPEG to export.



Before



After



AI masking in PhotoLab 9

DxO's flagship image editor can use clever tech for precise selections – **Wendy Evans** tries it out

In the second part of this series, we're going to take a look at the power of AI masking. This has been

introduced in addition to all the other types of masking, rather than as a replacement. The core capability is that it creates a mask based on either basic shapes or subject matter.

When you add to the mask, either because it missed a bit or you want something else to be selected, too, it is then added as a sub-mask, so it can use a different opacity for the effects if you want. Or you can simply click on the mask group title and apply effects to all the areas selected. But first, find the image to edit in the file browser section and double-click on it to jump into editing mode.

Download your files

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Download your files and video tutorial from the folder titled 'PhotoLab_AI Masking'.



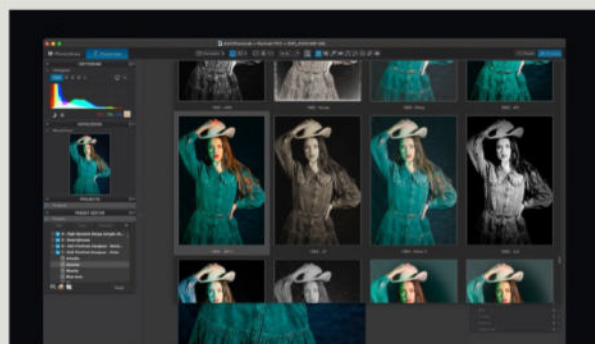
No extras
this time



No
video
tutorial



Project files
to follow
along



Extra presets

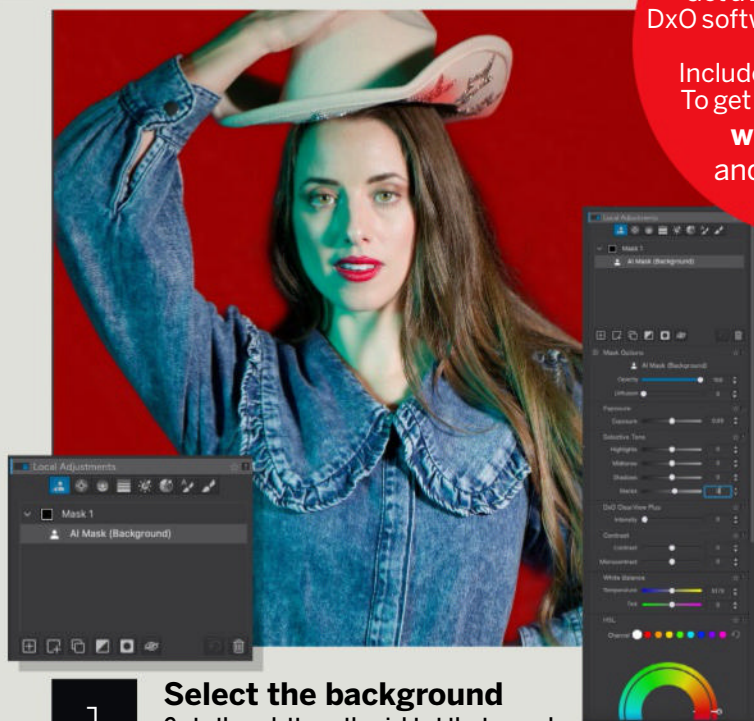
Having made local adjustments with the use of masks, you can then make global adjustments with all the other tools and filters. If you want a quick one-stop image change, click on Presets on the top right. That will bring up a modest range of options – unless you've bought into the DxO FilmPack add-on, in which case a range of other, more creative options will appear, like here, with a retro-styled colour palette.

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1

Select the background

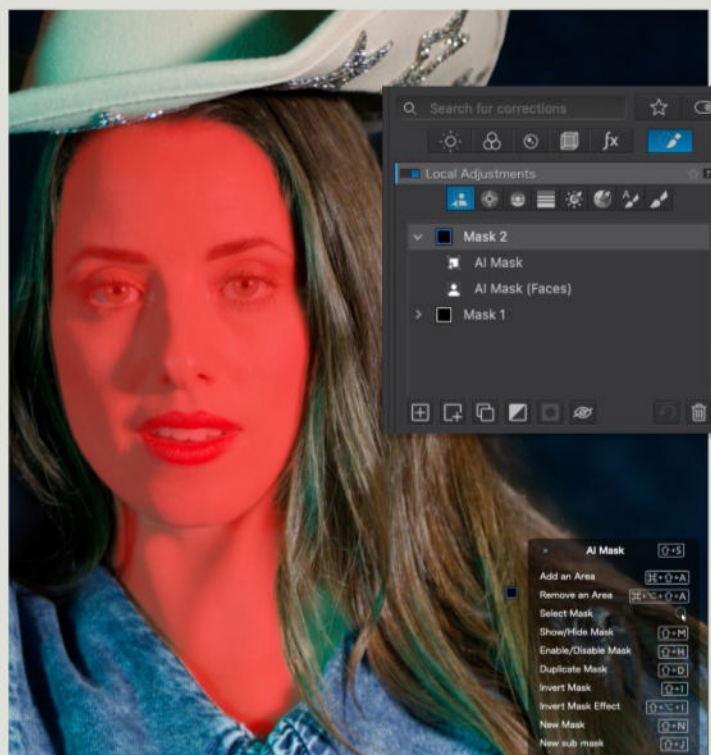
Go to the palette on the right at the top, and click on the paintbrush icon on the right for Local Adjustments. In the palette for Local Adjustments, select the first icon, an arrow pointing at someone. This is for AI masking. Underneath the photo in the middle is an icon with a person and a down arrow. Click on this icon and select Background then click on the background.



2

Make some adjustments

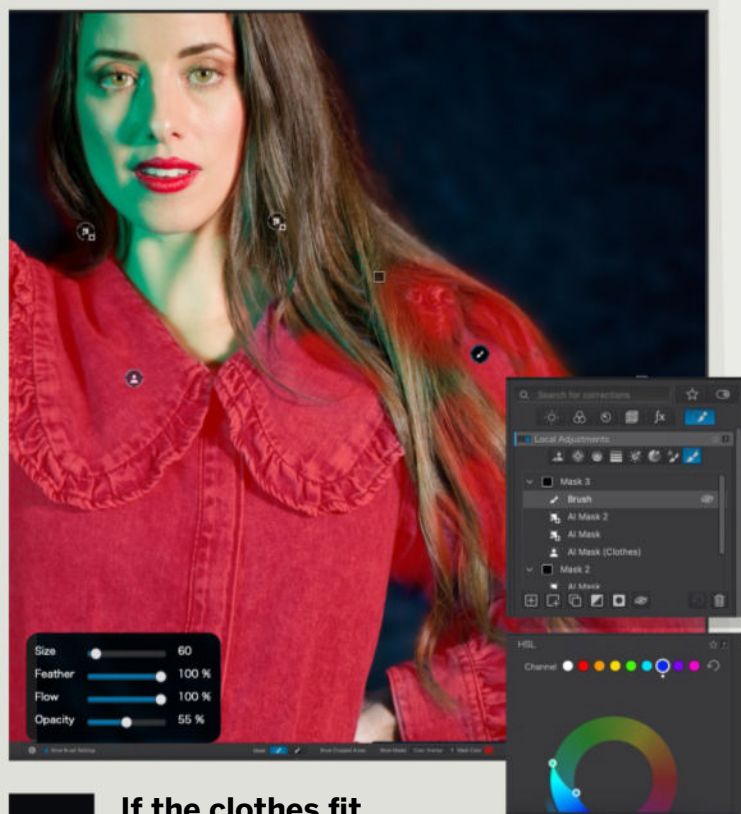
At the moment, the background isn't adding anything to this shot, but we don't want it to distract from the subject either. So under Selecting Tone, set the Shadows to +30 and the Blacks to +10. Then under White Balance, reduce the Temperature to 3600 to give the background a blue tone that's consistent with the rest of the photo. Finally, go down to Blur and set the Intensity to 35.



3

Face up to it

Go to the Local Adjustments palette and, in the masking mode selection, choose Faces. The AI will mask the face and a new mask entry will appear under Local Adjustments. Hold Control-Shift-A and click on the neck area to add this as a sub-mask; now when you click on Mask 2, it selects both parts of the mask. Push the White Balance Temperature to 7000K to stop her looking sickly.



4

If the clothes fit

In the masking selections, create a new one for Clothes. If it picks some of the subject's hair, click on the Remove mode icon under the figure and click on the hair to remove it from the selection. If there are parts that aren't picked up by the AI features, add a Submask and then use the Brush to manually add them. Finally, use the HSL control with blue selected to adjust the colour.

THIS MONTH'S SOFTWARE EXTRAS

33 Actions, presets, LUTs and lens flares

As seen in this month's tutorials, give your shots a new look with our collection of software extras



This month, we are giving away 33 software extras with our Digital Darkroom tutorials. Once installed in Adobe Photoshop, Lightroom or Affinity Photo, these Actions, presets, LUTs and lens flare effects will transform your images, getting you there in just a few clicks. This month's giveaways include 22 Lens Flare effects to help give

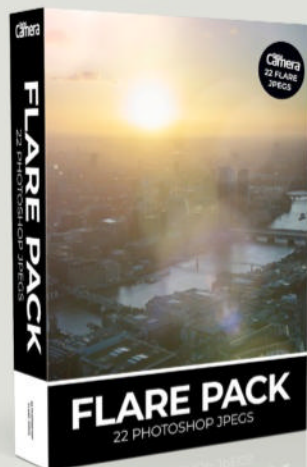
your images a retro cinematic look. There are three Travel Photo presets for Lightroom that offer some basic fixes for your holiday snaps. We also have four Multiply Screen Actions for Photoshop for a range of effects using Blending modes and Adjustment Layers. Finally, there are four LUTs for Affinity Photo and Photoshop to tone images of brick or stonework buildings.

How to use your software extras

Once you have downloaded the 'dcm309-files.zip' file to your computer, extract it and put the folders where you can easily access them. These folders contain the software, project files and a PDF with installation instructions.



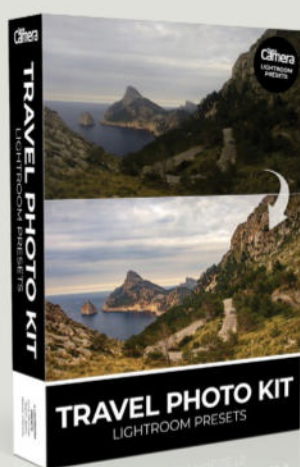
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www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc309



22 LENS FLARE EFFECTS

Software: Photoshop
(Version 25.5 or higher)

This pack of 22 lens flares and light leaks will give your images a retro cinematic look. Choose your shot, then add flare in Photoshop (or any software that works with layers). Adjust the shape and position of the flare, add colour and blend in until you get the look you want.



3 TRAVEL SHOT PRESETS

Software: Lightroom

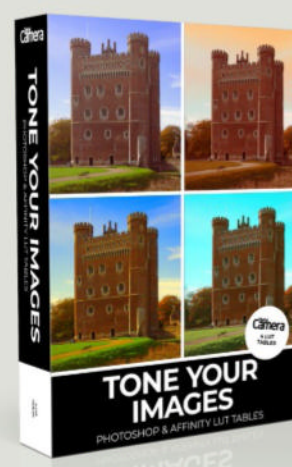
These three presets will help fix your disappointing holiday snaps. The presets include: Dust Removal, which activates the AI Dust tool; Travel Basic, which applies the fixes except Exposure, Dehaze and Dust; and Travel Unravel, which applies all the tutorial settings.



4 BLENDING MODE ACTIONS

Software: Photoshop
(Version 25.5 or higher)

These four Actions for Photoshop use a combination of Blending modes and Adjustment Layers as a quick and easy way to transform your shots. The four Actions include: Vintage Colour; Boost Clarity; Reduce Saturation; and Increase Contrast.



4 TONING IMAGE LUTs

Software: Photoshop/Affinity

To go with our tutorial on editing raw images, these four lookup tables are designed for stone or brick buildings in landscapes. As standard .look format files, they will work with Affinity Photo and Photoshop, as adjustment layers, so you can tweak the effect to taste.

Download all four packs from: www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc309

KitZone

New gear, buying tips and the world's toughest tests



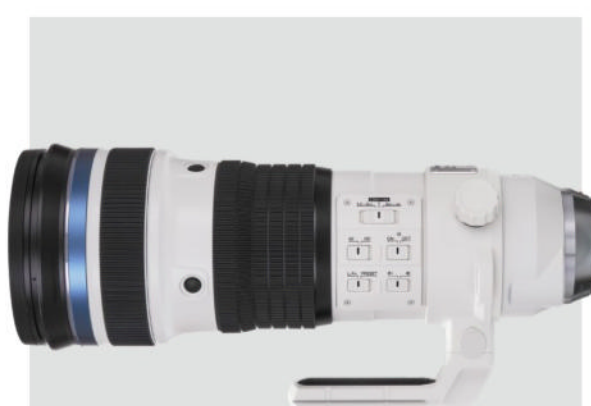
108 **Lumix TZ300/ZS300** _ Compact travel camera with impressive zoom



112 **Leica Leitzphone** _ Xiaomi camera phone sprinkled with Leica magic



114 **Canon RF 45mm F1.2 STM** _ Bokeh-tastic prime at an eye-catching price



116 **OM System M.Zuiko ED 150-400mm F4.5 TC1.25X IS Pro** _ Super-telephoto



If you're in the market for a travel-friendly compact camera for this year, then we might have an ideal solution. On paper, the Lumix TZ300 (ZS300 in the USA) can do a whole lot more than a smartphone camera, and thanks to a retractable lens it will slide into all styles of pocket. Its 1-inch image sensor records scenes from a zoom that goes all the way up to 15x (equivalent to 24-360mm in full-frame terms). Could the TZ300 become your everyday camera for travelling? Turn the page to find out. Also tested this month

is a collaboration between two brands that are aiming to offer the best results – and user experience – possible on a camera phone. See page 112 for how the Leica Leitzphone powered by Xiaomi performs.

Lenses on test this month couldn't be more different. With a super-fast aperture, Canon's RF 45mm F1.2 is priced under £/\$500 and has duly raised plenty of eyebrows. So let's see how its images look, from page 114. Plus, we've spent some time capturing wildlife with OM System's 'Big White', assessing its monster focal range. **Niall Hampton**



250-page gear Buyer's Guide
Find out more on page 6

The awards bestowed by the *Digital Camera* lab...



Given to the top product in a group test



For products that receive five stars overall



Given to products that offer superb value for money

Ratings explained

★★★★★ Best in class
★★★★☆ Excellent
★★★☆☆ Good
★★☆☆☆ So-so
★☆☆☆☆ Poor

All products reviewed in KitZone are tested independently by photographers with years of experience, using lab and real-world testing

Compact Lumix TZ300/ZS300



1 With the lens retracted, the Lumix TZ300/ZS300 looks deceptively small from the front.

2 There's a nod to ergonomics with a rounded corner and a rubberised hand grip.

3 The 15x optical zoom lens is 24-360mm in full-frame terms and is badged 'Leica'.

Lumix TZ300/ZS300

£869/\$899

This compact 'travel zoom' camera is a force to be reckoned with

www.panasonic.com

Specifications

Lens: 15x zoom 24-360mm (equivalent) f/3.3-6.4
Sensor: 1.0-inch BSI CMOS, 20.1MP
Autofocus: 49-area, 1-area, pinpoint, full area touch
Stabilisation: 5-axis Hybrid O.I.S. (except for 4K video)
ISO range: ISO 125-12,800 (80-25,600 extended)
Max burst: 10fps (AF-S), 7fps (AF-C, Live View)
EVF: None
LCD: 3.0-inch fixed touchscreen, 1.840m dots
Max image size: 5472 x 3648px
Video: 4K 30p, 1080 120p
Storage: SD/HC/XC UHS-I
Connectivity: USB-C, microHDMI typeD, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth
Battery/shots per charge: Li-ion, 360 (approx)
Dimensions (W x H x D): 111.2 x 66.4 x 45.2mm
Weight: 337g (incl battery and memory card)

I have many happy recollections of high days and holidays in years gone by, and also the photographic evidence to prove it. That's thanks to my trusty Panasonic Lumix TZ100. I bought one in 2016, as a high-end compact that was small enough to carry in a pocket, mostly for family outings when my DSLR kit seemed too cumbersome. That Panasonic 'Travel Zoom' camera was superseded by the TZ200/ZS200 in 2018, followed by the TZ300/ZS300 that I'm reviewing here, fresh for 2026.

Like its forebears, the latest TZ300 (ZS300 in the USA) features a relatively large 1-inch format image sensor and a zoom lens of generous proportions, at least in terms of optical zoom range. Even so, the retractable nature of the lens in each subsequent model makes the cameras pocketable. While the original camera had a 10x optical zoom lens, it stretched to 15x for the 200 and 300 models, equating to 24-360mm in full-frame equivalence.

All in all, the camera seeks to address a wide remit, but one thing holds true throughout. The TZ300/ZS300, with its mighty zoom range and telephoto reach, is one of those compact cameras that still has something to offer in an age where so many people rely on their mobile phones for daily shooting.

Build and handling

The Lumix TZ300/ZS300 builds on the design ethos of the former 100 and 200 models, aiming to be your constant travel companion. It looks deceptively small from the front, at least with the lens retracted for stowage, but the camera has a big heart in the shape of a 20.1MP 1.0 type BSI CMOS image sensor. Coupled with a 15x 24-360mm (effective) optical zoom lens, the intention is that it can capture anything from sweeping landscapes and cityscapes to long shots of distant objects and wildlife.

The camera also aims to be one that you can call upon 24/7; the size and sensitivity of the image sensor make

Lumix TZ300/ZS300 Compact

Matthew Richards



Use the D-pad to scroll through the camera menus, which are arranged vertically, and make your selections using the Set button at its centre.

Matthew Richards



The pop-up flash module is pretty tiny and isn't particularly powerful, but it will supplement dull ambient lighting and supply fill-in flash for daylight.

Matthew Richards



The 15x zoom lens stretches from its wide-angle setting in its retracted state to its most telephoto setting, with an 'effective' range of 24-360mm.



4

The 3-inch LCD has a decent 1,840k dots of resolution, but it doesn't flip around.

6

The four-way pad accesses settings, including exposure compensation and flash.

8

The user-friendly PASM exposure mode dial offers two customisable settings.

5

The layout of control buttons on the rear panel will feel familiar to Lumix owners.

7

With its epic zoom range, the TZ300 can offer something more than a camera phone.

9

Extend and retract the zoom lens to Wide and Telephoto positions with this lever.

it suitable for night shots and indoor scenarios where lighting is low. Even extreme close-ups are within the camera's remit, with a minimum focus distance of just 3cm, complete with autofocus in Macro mode.

Let's get back to front and start our more detailed examination with the rear of the camera. Everything looks pretty standard, with a familiar layout of control buttons, a four-way pad with a Menu/Set button at its centre, and a well-proportioned 3.0-inch touchscreen with a generous 1,840k dots of resolution. That's just as well, as you'll

need to compose all of your shots on the touchscreen, in the absence of a viewfinder, which was actually featured in the previous 100 and 200 cameras.

So let's get that glaring omission out of the way. To my mind, most self-respecting travel cameras nowadays should accept that you're likely to want to put yourself in the picture, at least some of the time. A flip-around screen that enables you to compose selfies and do a spot of vlogging, if and when you feel the need to be sociable, should be the order of the day. Therefore, I'm surprised that the camera lacks a

fully articulated screen, or even a flip-around mechanism, as featured in the TZ99/ZS99.

Now that's over and done with, let's get back to the positives. A big plus point is the 15x zoom lens, with its 'effective' 24-360mm range in full-frame terms. That covers everything from generous wide-angle coverage to serious telephoto reach. The images of Wells Cathedral (see p111) show what that looks like in physical terms, when the lens springs to life from its retracted state and stretches from its widest-angle setting to its most telephoto setting.

The lens comes complete with a control ring that's nominally used for adjusting the

Compact Lumix TZ300/ZS300

Matthew Richards



For this shot, the camera's sensitivity was pushed up to ISO 3200. The image is clean and fine detail is retained, though there is some smoothing in evidence.

aperture. In the time-honoured tradition, this also acts as Program-shift, so you can alter the aperture and therefore the overall exposure settings when in Program shooting mode. Switch to Shutter Priority mode and the control ring enables you to set the shutter speed instead.

The top panel of the camera hosts many of the essentials for creative shooting. The shooting mode dial includes PASM options, although the aperture range of the lens is fairly limited. That's typical of most compact

cameras. You also get 'Intelligent Auto', Movie, two custom settings, a bunch of Scene modes and no less than 22 creative filter effects to choose from. To the right of the shooting mode dial, there's the shutter-release button with a motorised zoom lever around it, a movie start/stop button and a rotary control dial at the right edge.

Along the top panel of the camera, there is a pop-up flash module. It's pretty tiny and not particularly powerful, but it is useful for supplementing dull ambient lighting as well

as supplying fill-in flash to banish unsightly shadows in sunny-day portraiture. The camera is well-connected, boasting built-in Bluetooth and Wi-Fi, making it easy to link to a mobile phone and to share photos while you're out and about. Physical connections include a USB-C port for data transfer and battery charging, as well as a mini-HDMI port.

Considering the generous 360mm maximum zoom range in such a small camera that has to be operated at arm's length, in addition to the absence of a viewfinder, image stabilisation is all but essential. The Leica-certified lens has optical image stabilisation that works in tandem with five-axis in-body stabilisation, coming to the fore at long focal lengths and when low lighting conditions dictate slow shutter speeds. It's particularly advantageous under low lighting if you don't want to push your ISO setting too far, as the lens has a fairly pedestrian aperture rating of f/3.3-6.4.

I've seen a few cameras and other gadgets recently with internal batteries that you can't easily access, so I'm pleased to see that the Lumix TZ300/ZS300 has a removable Li-ion battery. You still charge it in-camera, but at least you have the choice of buying extra batteries and swapping to a spare while you're out and about, so you don't have to leave your camera on charge if and when the battery goes flat.

Rival cameras



Fujifilm X-M5
£799/\$799

In testing, we said it was the best-value camera you can buy. A great choice for vlogging and for casual shooters.

Reviewed: issue 290



Lumix TZ99/ZS99
£469/\$498

A fun camera to use, with a mighty zoom range, but the dynamic range is poor and image detail suffers under poor lighting.

Reviewed: issue 293



Ricoh GR IIIx
£900/\$797

Pocket-sized APS-C sensor compact that's big on features including a wide f/2.8 lens and super-fast eye autofocus.

Reviewed: issue 268





24mm wide-angle

This shot of Wells Cathedral in Somerset, UK, taken from the Bishop's Palace garden, was captured at the most wide-angle extremity of the zoom range, enabling a lot to be shoehorned into the image frame.

Performance

A major performance boost comes in the extending form of the 15x zoom lens. An effective 24-360mm range leaves mobile phones and most other compact cameras standing. You can really cover the distance for wildlife and bird photography, as well as getting closer to the action and to subjects further away. Sharpness remains satisfying throughout the entire zoom range, right through to the longest telephoto setting.

The camera also beats most 'superzoom' lenses for interchangeable-lens bodies when it comes to reach, stretching to serious telephoto lengths. The entire range is demonstrated in the example shots of Wells Cathedral (above), taken at the shortest and longest optical zoom settings, respectively. For other aspects of image quality, colour rendition is rich and vibrant while still looking natural in the standard setting. Pictures look lively with good contrast, and there's good retention of detail in both bright highlights and areas of dark shadows.

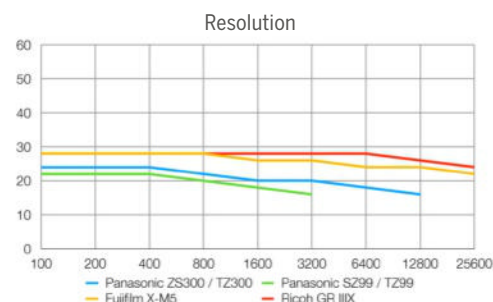
The lens isn't the quickest in terms of aperture rating, although autofocus is swift. For indoor and late-night handheld shots, image stabilisation comes to your aid, and the camera does well to suppress image noise at high ISO settings, without losing too much fine detail and texture.



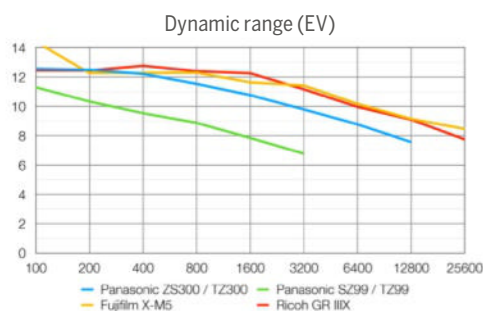
360mm zoom

This shot was taken from the same vantage point as the one above, using the longest optical zoom setting. It shows the lens's mighty overall range.

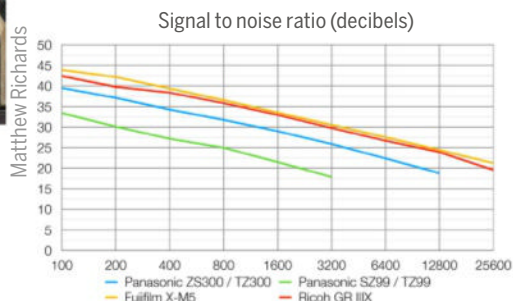
We don't lab-test many compact cameras, so there aren't many direct rivals in our database with which to compare the TZ300. The closest option is the Panasonic TZ99, which has a 30x zoom, but a much smaller 1/2.3-inch sensor. However, with the TZ300 costing the thick end of £1,000, you could have a decent APS-C interchangeable lens camera with a kit lens for similar money. The Fujifilm X-M5, equipped with a 15-45mm lens, is around the same price as the TZ300 and is almost as compact. We're including the Ricoh GR IIIx as an example of a premium APS-C compact camera. It costs more than the TZ300, but in some markets, it's not significantly more. **Matthew Richards**



The larger sensors in the Fujifilm and Ricoh cameras are on top, resolving more detail than the TZ300, though its 1-inch sensor gives it an advantage at higher sensitivities over the small-sensor TZ99.



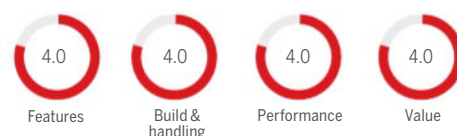
The TZ300 matches the dynamic range of the APS-C cameras at low sensitivities, but struggles at ISO 800. The gap between the two Panasonic cameras is huge, justifying the TZ300's price premium over the TZ99.



The TZ300's 1-inch sensor proves its worth over the 1/2.3-inch sensor in the TZ99, as its larger pixels are more light-sensitive and generate less noise. Step up in size to APS-C, and noise levels drop noticeably.

Digital Camera verdict

4.0 ★★★★★ Excellent



There's lots to like in the Lumix TZ300/ZS300, but also a few niggles. The image quality is pleasing in all sorts of shooting conditions, even low light. The 15x optical zoom lens makes it a versatile camera for travel shooting, but the fixed touchscreen has no tilt or full articulation facilities for selfies or vlogging. Finally, the lens has a slow aperture rating, especially at the long end of its zoom range, although that's expected with this zoom range. All in all, the Lumix TZ300/ZS300 is a compact travel camera that's ideal for the journey, although it could be even better.

“The TZ300 beats most ‘superzoom’ lenses for interchangeable lens bodies in reach, stretching to serious telephoto lengths”

Camera phone Leica Leitzphone



Leica Leitzphone

£1,700/\$N/A

Takes the Xiaomi 17 Ultra's superb camera hardware and gives it some Leica magic

www.leica-camera.com

While Leica has been co-branding Xiaomi phones for some time, its own Leitzphone line has historically been a niche Japan-only curiosity. However, this latest model, the full title of which is the Leica Leitzphone powered by Xiaomi, changes that. The first globally available Leitzphone pairs Xiaomi's latest flagship hardware from the 17 Ultra with a more overtly Leica design and user experience. While the 17 Ultra is a Xiaomi flagship with Leica-tuned cameras, the Leitzphone is a Leica-designed phone with Leica cameras that runs on Xiaomi hardware. In practical terms, that means the same core internals, screen, battery and camera hardware, but with a redesigned exterior, a new rotatable camera control ring, Leica-specific software touches and a more obvious Leica identity.

Design and interface

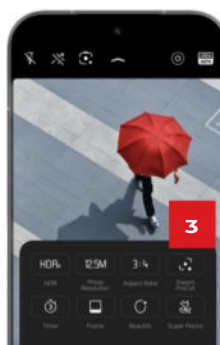
The main differences between the Leica Leitzphone and the Xiaomi 17 Ultra are concentrated in the exterior design. The Leitzphone has a black fibreglass rear, knurled metal frame and pared-back Leica styling. It also adds a rotatable camera control ring and a more Leica-specific user interface with bespoke looks, sounds and filters.

With Leica leaning into its usual design language of restraint, the Leitzphone is a handsome device and a phone that feels very 'Leica'. The black finish is understated, the textures are premium and the aesthetic feels much closer to a Leica camera than a smartphone. The fibreglass rear panel gives the Leitzphone a slightly softer feel

1 The Leitzphone gets the iconic red dot and comes with a lens cap.

2 Use the rotating ring to adjust the zoom, exposure and more.

3 The camera app boasts Leica design cues and looks simple and classy.



Gareth Bevan

The Leica Leitzphone powered by Xiaomi (above) with the Xiaomi 17 Ultra that it's based on. Phones made by Xiaomi are not available in the USA.

in the hand, although the downside is that it's an absolute fingerprint magnet. The knurled metal rail on the outside feels pleasant in the hand and adds a significant amount of grip.

Leica's rotating camera ring brings more mechanical interaction into the shooting experience, letting you adjust zoom, exposure and Leica Looks. But in practice, it's more irritating than useful. The ring turns too easily and can be knocked when shooting, sometimes zooming in or out enough to jump between cameras.

The Leitzphone is built around some serious camera hardware and comes with a pretty substantial camera bump – the kind you might expect from a device with a 1-inch main sensor and a mechanical zoom module. However, the phone still manages to stay relatively lightweight at 223g, which is in line with a lot of other flagships with far less ambitious camera hardware inside.

The display panel is bright, sharp, colourful and exactly what I would want on a flagship phone aimed at photographers and video creators. Images look punchy and detailed, the high refresh rate keeps everything feeling smooth, and there is plenty of brightness when working outdoors.

Photo performance

Like the Xiaomi 17 Ultra, the 50MP 1-inch Light Fusion 1050L main camera remains the hero. It's still one of the best phone cameras I've used for producing images that feel photographic rather than overly processed, with a depth that most phone cameras still struggle to match.

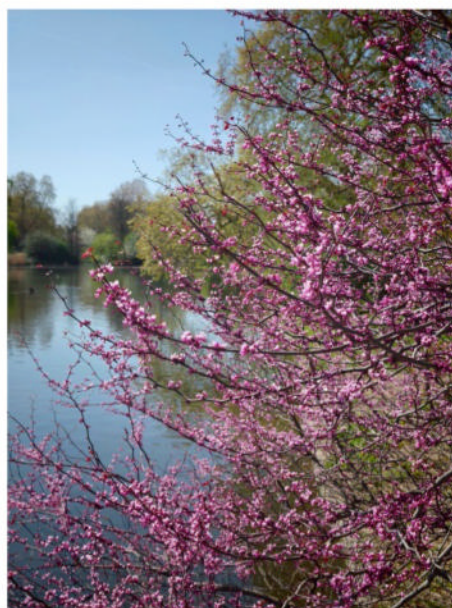
The Leitzphone also debuts new LOFIC tech, which expands dynamic range by storing greater charge directly at the pixel level. Essentially, that means the camera can capture more detail in the highs and lows as well as at night – and it really works. The dynamic range on the main camera is fantastic; skies that could easily be blown out kept their colour and definition, and there was a lot of detail held in the shadows.



Much of the Leitzphone's character comes from the Leica colour profiles that give jpegs a photographic feel straight out of the camera, rather than the flatter, cleaner default look from many camera phones.



Above left: Captured on the 50MP wide lens, with a 23mm focal length in full-frame terms. Right: Images feel photographic rather than overly processed, with a depth most phone cameras struggle to match.



In isolation, the 200MP 75-100mm periscope telephoto is superb. At 75-100mm, the optical zoom is a useful length for portraits, and the large 1/1.4-inch sensor, along with Leica's processing, gives it a level of subject isolation that looks like a larger camera and lens. The large sensor captures a lot of detail, but for the best dynamic range or night shots, stick to the main lens.

The Leitzphone also features a mechanical zoom that physically moves between 75mm and 100mm, the same as a camera lens. Though technically a better solution than in-sensor cropping, as you use the entire 200MP sensor throughout the whole zoom range, it's still a relatively modest range.

The mechanical lens also makes close-up shooting more impaired than the previous model, as it can't focus nearly as close. Within the telephoto's sweet spot, the Leitzphone captures attractive close-focus images with plenty of depth and character,

but it isn't a macro specialist. The ultrawide lens also shoots macro images, although the perspective isn't ideal for flattering shots.

The superzoom is impressive, with the 200MP telephoto sensor holding cropped zoom shots together until the 400mm-equivalent mark, after which AI steps in to clean up the images. The AI is decent up until around 60x, though push further and fine detail starts to look overprocessed; the image loses natural texture and the AI invents details. But for fun rather than photography, the AI superzoom is useful.

What makes the Leitzphone's cameras stand out, though, is their photographic character. Much of that comes from Leica's colour profiles, which give jpegs a more photographic feel straight out of the camera. You can choose between Leica Vibrant and Leica Authentic. Vibrant is the more conventional option, with punchier colour and a brighter feel, while Authentic has

Camera phone

Specifications

Rear cameras: 50MP wide, 23mm full-frame equivalent; 50MP ultra-wide, 14mm; 200MP telephoto, 75-100mm

Front camera: 50MP, 21mm

Display: 6.9-in OLED, 2608 x 1200, 1-120Hz LTPO, 3500 nits peak

Processor: Snapdragon 8 Elite Gen 5

Operating System: Xiaomi HyperOS 3 (based on Android 16)

Video resolution: Up to 8K 30p; 4K 120p Dolby Vision; 4K 120p Log

Capacity: 16GB+1TB

Battery: 6000mAh

Charging: 90W wired; 50W wireless

Dimensions (W x H x D): 162.9 x 77.6 x 8.29mm

Weight: 223.4g

more restrained colour, a subtle vignette and moodier contrast for a more cinematic look. The Leitzphone also adds two profiles made to match the Leica M9 and M3 cameras – both produce beautiful photos that almost convince you they weren't taken on a phone. There are plenty of filters, too, with Leica's black and white and film-inspired looks some of the most convincing you'll find on a phone.

If you want a neutral point-and-shoot result, an iPhone or Google Pixel is the more obvious choice. But for photographers who care about mood, tone and a strong visual identity in their images, the Leitzphone offers something different from almost anything else on the market. **Gareth Bevan**

Read more: Phone performance and battery life: www.bit.ly/dcm309_leitzphone

Digital Camera verdict



Strip away the Leica design and this is still the highly rated Xiaomi 17 Ultra. But the fibreglass body, knurled frame, rotating camera ring, Leica-inspired interface and Leica Looks give it a stronger sense of identity and make it feel more like a photographic tool than another camera-centric Android flagship. The 1-inch main camera is still the star of the show, especially thanks to the way LOFIC helps it handle highlights and colour in difficult lighting. The telephoto is excellent and the 75-100mm mechanical zoom remains impressive as an engineering feat, but 25mm is limited in practice. The real sticking point is price. Leica has taken the Xiaomi phone and made it more desirable, but also more expensive. For most, the Xiaomi 17 Ultra is a more rational buy. But rationality has never been the point of Leica.

Prime lens Canon RF 45mm F1.2 STM



Canon RF 45mm F1.2 STM

£480/\$469

Rapid apertures and beautiful bokeh backgrounds for a reasonable price

www.canon.co.uk

I love a bit of bokeh, so the Canon RF 45mm F1.2 STM lens has won me over on its aperture alone, but for the price, this lens is an absolute no-brainer. If you're someone who loves fast glass, whether it's to get the blurriest backgrounds or to work in low light, the fact that you can get an f/1.2 optic with autofocus for less than half a grand makes this a truly phenomenal lens. And if you're an APS-C shooter, it's an equivalent 72mm f/1.2 that's perfect for portraiture. Does all this sound too good to be true? Let's see...

Build and handling

The Canon RF 45mm F1.2 STM is part of the company's enthusiast range, which includes the Canon RF 85mm F2 IS Macro and the RF 50mm F1.8, with which many will compare this lens. This means that, while you don't get weather-sealing, you still get a lens with impressive construction that's great for day-to-day shooting.

Like other RF glass, it comes with a customisable control ring, which can be set to manipulate exposure values or other camera functions. However, unlike the RF 50mm F1.8, the Canon RF 45mm F1.2 STM also features a separate and satisfyingly chunky manual control ring, which you'll certainly need if you're trying to hand-focus at the razor-thin f/1.2 depth of field. Personally, I'd leave the AF/MF switch set to autofocus.

Understandably, given the size of the elements required for such a fast aperture, the RF 45mm is quite a bit bigger than the RF 50mm F1.8, but it's still surprisingly small at just 75mm in length. It's both smaller and lighter than the behemoth RF 50mm F1.2L, despite both lenses possessing the same speed, although obviously you aren't getting either the weather-sealing or the pristine optical engineering of the L-series.



Not much of a handful, the RF 45mm is refreshingly compact and lightweight for an f/1.2 prime.

As someone who owns lots of third-party fast glass, including the Mitakon Speedmaster RF 50mm f/0.95, which weighs 720g, and the EF version that tips the scales at 1,500g, the fact that the Canon RF 45mm F1.2 STM weighs a paltry 346g is truly remarkable. Its size and weight make it a suitable companion for just about any camera in the EOS R family – including small bodies like the Canon EOS R50 V, where it's a far better match than the hulking great RF 50mm F1.2L. Indeed, some shooters find the RF 50mm F1.8 to be too small, particularly since it doesn't have a dedicated manual focus ring. By contrast, the RF 45mm feels just right, being perfectly cuppable in the crook of even large hands without feeling oversized like its f/1.2L bigger brother. It really is a pleasurable lens to hold and handle, whichever body you're using it with.

Unlike some budget-friendly lenses, the RF 45mm has a metal rather than plastic mounting plate that should prove durable. It features gold-plated electronic contacts, but lacks a rubber weather-seal ring.

Performance

As someone who owns and loves the RF 50mm F1.8, and given the similarity in focal length and price, many people reading this review will be wondering how the two lenses directly compare. In a nutshell, if I didn't already own the 50mm f/1.8 (and those Chinese f/0.95 lenses), I would buy the Canon RF 45mm F1.2 STM instead.

Optical performance is impressive even when shooting wide open, with good clarity and centre-sharpness, although sharpness at the edges and corners is disappointing at apertures wider than f/2.8. The bokeh, background blur and subject separation are pleasing, on the whole. If you're wondering what the difference is between f/1.2 and f/1.8, apart from the 5mm difference in focal length, the short answer is that when shooting a subject close up, the background at f/1.2 is much blurrier than at f/1.8.

The difference in bokeh and separation is more pronounced when shooting on an APS-C sensor (such as the EOS R50 or EOS R10), where the equivalent focal length is 72mm. That puts this lens in portrait territory, for which it is easily sharp enough.

1 This isn't an L-series lens, so you'll need to buy the ES-73B lens hood separately.

2 The control ring function can be defined by the user – options include the ISO value.

3 A metal rather than plastic mounting plate should prove perfectly durable in the field.





Shooting a close-up subject wide open, the RF 45mm F1.2 produces a pleasingly defocused background.



f/1.2



f/16

Compare the sharpness levels on the fine text and lines of the head, as well as the quality of bokeh in the background, at the opposite ends of the RF 45mm F1.2 STM's aperture range.

While we're doing some comparisons, it's worth noting that the Canon RF 45mm F1.2 STM relies on in-camera corrections to do some of the heavy lifting – and it's here that the real differences between this lens and the L-series 50mm F1.2 VCM and F1.2L USM start to become apparent.

There's a notable amount of barrel distortion and vignetting straight out of the camera. Of course, the camera corrects the effect, and it's only a couple of clicks to fix it in post-production if you work from your raw files, but it's something to be aware of. You'll also notice some fringing, which you'll need to correct manually.

For another test, my colleague shot a few images of a phrenology head against a garden background (see above), which serves a variety of purposes. Taken at all major aperture steps between f/1.2 and f/11, you can gauge sharpness levels on the fine text and lines of the head, as well as the quality of bokeh in the background. The composition also draws attention to any axial chromatic aberration (bokeh fringing) around high-contrast transitions just in front of or behind the plane of focus, which can be problematic for fast lenses at or near their widest aperture.

Obviously, there is a world of difference between the Canon RF 45mm F1.2 STM and the 50mm L-series alternatives in terms of pure optical performance – and nowhere is this more apparent than in the bokeh. The 45mm has a Petzval effect, characterised by 'swirling' at the periphery of the image. In some images, you'll notice 'cat's eye' bokeh balls, which are shaped more like a lemon than a perfect circle, again at the edges of the frame. And in other images, in addition to the Petzval effect, the specular highlights create 'soap bubble' bokeh balls, which have a thin bright ring around a pale centre.

While some shooters love the swirly bokeh effect (and even buy special Petzval lenses to achieve it), this and the other characteristics are generally regarded as 'noisy bokeh' and may or may not be to your liking. The L-series optics have much smoother 'creamier' bokeh, which is the result of a more complex (and expensive) optical formula.

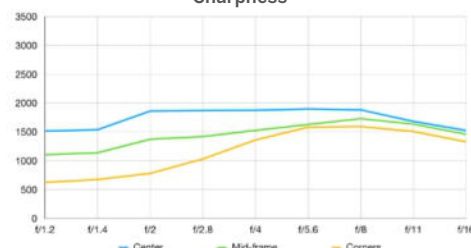
Even if you prefer the 'noisier' look, the quality of the blur is better on the Canon RF 45mm F1.2 STM than on the RF 50mm F1.8 – and this lens is more than good enough to shoot wide open while retaining sharpness and detail, certainly in the centre of the frame. **James Artaius**

Prime lens

Specifications

Mount options: Canon RF
Full-frame: Yes
Autofocus: Yes
Image stabilisation: No
Lens construction: 9 elements in 7 groups
Angle of view: 51°
Diaphragm blades: 9
Max aperture: f/1.2
Min aperture: f/16
Min focus distance: 0.45m
Max magnification ratio: 0.13x
Filter size: 67mm
Dimensions (D x L): 78 x 75mm
Weight: 346g

Sharpness



Sharpness

Centre-sharpness is satisfying, even wide-open at f/1.2, and improves when stopping down to apertures between f/2 and f/11. Away from the middle of the frame, sharpness is lacklustre at apertures wider than f/2.8 and disappointing towards the edges and corners.

Fringing

0.77

Colour fringing can be noticeable towards the edges and corners of the frame, but nevertheless is easily within the remit of automatic in-camera correction.

Distortion

-5.23

Like many modern lenses, the RF 45mm suffers from severe native distortion, with a pronounced barrel effect. Automatic in-camera correction is required.

Digital Camera verdict

4.5 ★★★★★ Outstanding



The Canon RF 45mm F1.2 STM is a brilliant lens. While the RF 50mm F1.8 is still the cheapest and smallest lens in the lineup, the 45mm is a better option. Optical performance is on par, but you get better light transmission and background blur. Edge and corner sharpness are disappointing at wide apertures, but that's irrelevant if you're interested in bokeh. If you're an APS-C shooter, it's a fantastic proposition for portraiture – an effective 72mm f/1.2 being a powerful portrait tool. But whether you're an RF or RF-S shooter, care about bokeh or just want a more useful lens, the Canon RF 45mm F1.2 STM could be the smartest buy in the RF lineup.

Super-telephoto OM System 150-400mm F4.5



OM System M.Zuiko Digital ED 150-400mm F4.5 TC1.25x IS Pro

£6,799/\$9,000

Cheaper and lighter than its competitors

explore.omsystem.com



Our reviewer's Manfrotto Befree Advanced travel tripod had no issues with the 150-400mm lens.



The lens hood is big and solid, but its carbon-fibre build means it's also surprisingly light for the size.

reassuringly solid throughout, from the barrel to the onboard controls.

Some wildlife photographers like to cover white lenses in a camouflage skin, but the OM System 150-400mm F4.5's white paint job doesn't just look good; it serves a purpose as part of a three-layer heat-repellent coating. As you'd expect from a Pro-line OM System lens, the 150-400mm f/4.5 has an extensive IP53 rating, meaning it's splashproof and dustproof.

The tripod collar and foot are impressive, but it's a shame that the tripod collar isn't removable so that you could choose to shed even more weight – although the foot can be removed. The foot is Arca-Swiss compatible for quick release and attachment, and I'm particularly impressed by the rubber lining on the inside surface.

There are two attachment points on the collar for a strap, and while you can rotate the collar to level your horizon at any angle, it also clicks securely into four different positions set at equidistant intervals at 12, 3, 6 and 9 o'clock, each lining up perfectly with one of four custom buttons set further down the barrel. These buttons are set before the focusing ring so you're in no danger of inadvertently nudging it.

Both the focus and zoom rings are suitably smooth, and the throw of the zoom ring is short, so you can quickly amend your framing. The switch for the built-in 1.25x teleconverter is cleverly positioned on the right-hand side of the barrel, very close to the host camera's grip. This allows you to toggle the converter on/off by extending a single finger while still clasping the grip.

1

The blue band near the front element is a little design touch that screams quality.

2

The throw of the zoom ring is short, so framing can quickly be amended on the fly.

3

The removable foot is Arca-Swiss compatible and lined with rubber on the inside.



The OM System M.Zuiko Digital ED 150-400mm F4.5 TC1.25X IS Pro is undoubtedly the 'holy grail' lens for any wildlife or sports photographer with a Micro Four Thirds camera. And what better camera to test this monster 'Big White' optic than the flagship OM System OM-1 Mark II? These two MFT titans combine to create a truly formidable pro-grade package. The lens itself delivers an incredible 35mm-equivalent zoom range of 300-800mm, extended to a whopping 375-1,000mm with the built-in 1.25x teleconverter. And while it's a huge lens for a system that's known for its pint-sized optics, it's still exceedingly small and light for a lens of its class.

This OM System classic is, without a doubt, targeted at the most serious MFT wildlife/sports enthusiasts and professionals on the planet. So I decided to visit both WWT Slimbridge Wetland Centre and the Hawk Conservancy Trust in Andover to put this top-tier optic through its paces by photographing birds in flight.

Build and handling

When I first picked up the OM System 150-400mm F4.5, I was struck by two things: its weight and build. It weighs 1,875g (without lens hood and cap) and measures 314.3 x 115.8mm, which is comparatively huge for an MFT lens, but relatively small compared with some other range-topping full-frame lenses. To put that into perspective, you're getting a full-frame-equivalent focal length of 300-800mm (375-1,000mm with the teleconverter) in a package that you can actually handhold.

The lens's build reminds me of a pro-grade DSLR optic. I've often thought that premium DSLR glass feels slightly more solid than most top-tier mirrorless offerings, so I mean that entirely as a compliment. Its magnesium-alloy construction might be light, but it feels



Mike Harris

An African fish eagle coming in to land at the Hawk Conservancy Trust in Andover, Hampshire, UK.

Unfortunately, the drawstring canvas bag that comes with the lens is a bit of a let-down, especially if you were anticipating the robust kind of cases that come with Sony, Canon and Nikon's range-topping wildlife optics. There's minimal padding around the barrel, more padding around the base (but not enough), and although it was workable, I couldn't completely close the bag with the OM-1 Mark II attached.

Performance

Real-world testing presents difficulties when working with super-telephoto optics due to phenomena such as heat distortion and camera shake. Camera shake is the bane of the super-telephoto photographer's life, but the first thing I noticed about the OM System 150-400mm F4.5 is just how stable it is.

Despite that monster 35mm-equivalent 1,000mm potential, a combination of the OM-1 Mark II's 20MP sensor and the lens's excellent 5-Axis Sync IS (optical image stabilisation) delivering up to eight stops of compensation meant I was rarely bothered by camera shake. In a world where high-resolution sensors are causing photographers to double or even triple the reciprocal rule, it's a joy to shoot with a long lens (and camera) that isn't working against you. And of course, that constant f/4.5 aperture certainly helps in poorer lighting conditions. I did notice some chromatic aberration, but this was easily mitigated via editing software corrections.

When it comes to overall image quality, the OM System 150-400mm F4.5 performs well, but stops short of being exceptionally sharp. Even for a lens that debuted in 2021, I couldn't help but feel slightly left wanting from what is ultimately a range-topping optic in a very high-end price range. However, it's also important to remember that the

150mm (300mm equivalent)



Image captured at the WWT Slimbridge Wetland Centre. Exposure: 1/800 sec at f/4.5, ISO 200.



500mm (1000mm equivalent)

At long end with the built-in 1.25x teleconverter. Exposure: 1/500 sec at f/5.6, ISO 200.

equivalent focal range made possible by a Micro Four Thirds sensor means you're getting much closer to the subject than you would with a full-frame setup. This, in turn, reduces the amount of cropping required, meaning you're less likely to hack away at the resolution of your images.

What impressed me was the quality of the built-in teleconverter, which really doesn't impact image quality that much at all. Really, the only penalty is the narrower aperture; beyond that, the teleconverter feels a little like a cheat code in the best way possible. So much so, I could easily forget it was engaged.

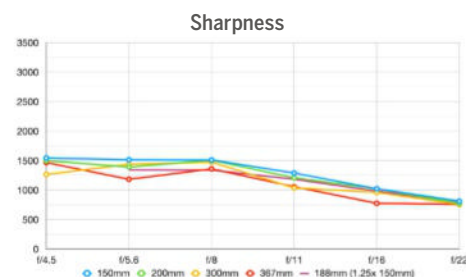
Mike Harris

Thanks to the WWT Slimbridge Wetland Centre and the Hawk Conservancy Trust.

Super-telephoto

Specifications

Mount options: Micro Four Thirds
Full-frame: No
Autofocus: Yes
Image stabilisation: Yes
Lens construction: 28 elements in 18 groups
Angle of view: 8.2° (W) - 3.1° (T)
Diaphragm blades: 9
Max aperture: f/4.5 (f/5.6 w/ teleconverter)
Min aperture: f/22 (f/29 w/ teleconverter)
Min focus distance: 1.3m (across zoom range)
Max magnification ratio: 0.13x (W) 0.29x (T)
Filter size: 95mm
Dimensions (L x D): 314 x 116cm
Weight (incl tripod collar): 1.875g



Sharpness

In the central region, sharpness is good although not particularly special; there is very good consistency throughout the focal range. When tested at 150mm with the 1.25x teleconverter enabled (focal length 187.5mm), sharpness reduction is minimal.

Fringing

Short 0.86 Long 0.83

There is some chromatic aberration, but it's not strong enough to be obvious in real-world shooting.

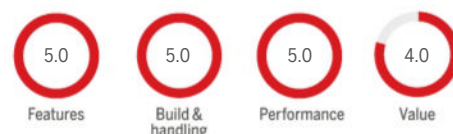
Distortion

Short 0.26 Long 0.45

Thanks largely to firmware-based distortion correction, which cannot be disabled, the lens appears to be almost distortion-free.

Digital Camera verdict

4.5 ★★★★★ Outstanding



The OM System M.Zuiko Digital ED 150-400mm F4.5 TC1.25X IS Pro is a formidable lens at a formidable price. It's built like a tank for use in the most rugged conditions and, despite boasting an equivalent 300-800mm zoom range, it's small enough and light enough to hand-hold. Kick in the 1.25x teleconverter and you can get up to a whopping 1,000mm with remarkably minimal distortions. My only gripe is that the image quality lacks that exceptional wow factor for this price range. However, if you're a professional or serious Micro Four Thirds wildlife photographer, this is still the 'holy grail' of super-telephoto lenses.

Right: Regimental Vet Captain Emily Marriott riding in the sea on the beach ride at the HCMR's summer camp in 2025.

Glenn Røkeberg

The Norwegian photographer's love of horses led to a two-year project on the Household Cavalry. **Niall Hampton** finds out more

Glenn Røkeberg



Glenn Røkeberg Photographer

Glenn Røkeberg is a professional photographer specialising in employer branding, portrait and automotive photography.

Born in Detroit, USA, he studied photography at the Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara, California.

In addition to his commercial work for commercial clients across Europe, Glenn pursues personal photographic projects.

These reflect his social engagement and interest in portraying life through images of people and their environments.

Instagram: @glennrokeberg

Website: rokeberg.com

June's Trooping the Colour ceremony in London, UK, is an annual military parade celebrating the monarch's official birthday. Featuring 1,800 soldiers and musicians, the equestrian element is provided by the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment, the most senior regiment in the British Army. The Household Cavalry has been the monarch's official bodyguard since 1660 and comprises the Blues and Royals and the Life Guards. During Trooping the Colour, the HCMR escorts the carriage carrying King Charles and Queen Camilla from Buckingham Palace to the ceremony at Horse Guards Parade.

The HCMR is the subject of a new documentary photography book titled *Trusted Guardians: Inside the Mounted Regiment* by Norwegian photographer Glenn Røkeberg. Glenn had two years of exclusive access to the HCMR, where he captured images of the regiment, showing the other side of its life, beyond its public role. The result is a 352-page hardback book that features more than 200 photographs, almost all of them in black and white, captured on a Nikon Z 8 and a Hasselblad 500ELX film camera.

So how did a commercial photographer from Norway happen to get such extensive access to one of the United Kingdom's most hallowed institutions? We met Glenn in London to find out.

What's your photography journey to date – how did it start for you, and why did you want to become a photographer?

I got a camera from my father when I was around 12 years old. He was a civil engineer, so photography was a hobby. He travelled a lot, so for him, photography was about recording where he had been on journeys, and I grew up with family slideshows when he returned from faraway places – he used to travel to Asia a lot. I never really thought of photography as

Glenn Røkeberg





Above: 'Distress!' Corporal of Horse James Harvey, The Life Guards, on Reaper.

a career until I was around 18 and had to make a choice about what to do as a career. My heart was set on going into law, but my wife and I were just beginning our courtship at the time. She saw my passion for photography and suggested I do it as a career.

I didn't know that commercial photography was a career, but spurred on by my wife, I travelled to the USA and studied photography at the Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara. It is now defunct, but it was a really good school. They had lots of renowned photographers visiting to pick assistants – the likes of Richard Avedon, Yousuf Karsh and Jay Maisel.

I was fond of architectural photography at school, so I came back to Norway with my mind set on shooting architecture, but a year after I returned, there was a complete stop in anything being built. I had a sideline doing editorial interiors photography, and based on that, I got hired by IKEA. It had a huge studio in Sweden – and still does – to shoot all its photography, on 4x5 large-format slide film. The IKEA catalogue was the biggest publication in the world, apart from the bible, with around 70 different editions across the continents.

After you've done the IKEA catalogue for a while, you know what's going to happen the next year and the year

after that, so I went back to Norway and broadened into general advertising photography – everything from product shots to lifestyle commissions. Working for ad agencies, you always worked to a brief approved by a client, so a commission didn't really lend itself much to creativity – because the concepts had already been figured out, it was more of a test of craftsmanship.

So I started mainly doing portraiture and editorial work, because that gave me creative freedom. At that time in the early 1990s, access to celebrities was very different to what it is now. I would be given a celebrity's phone number and be told to go off and set it up, and there wouldn't be a publicist present in the room.

Working commercially as an advertising photographer with an editorial sideline kept the flame alive for me, but the big volumes of advertising photography have stopped now. Advertising has shifted to social media, and I think the sense of quality has gone out the window. This has made me cherish doing my own projects even more, but because there's no obvious client to work for, there's a limitation. So for the past couple of years, I've been having some success selling fine-art prints, which I find really rewarding.

How did *Trusted Guardians* come about?

I stumbled into it because we used to have horses; my daughter was a competitive rider. She studied in the UK and is still here. We've always been fascinated by the Household Cavalry because they did a display at the Oslo Horse Show, which my daughter also rode in. Through work, she met someone connected with

“The tour didn't lend itself to serious photography, so I asked for another session and, luckily, they agreed to it”



Glenn Røkeberg

the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment, so we were given a guided tour of the barracks in Knightsbridge. I love horses, so having these wonderful black horses and their riders in spectacular uniforms was stimulating. I started by taking some shots on the tour, but it didn't lend itself to serious photography, so I asked if it was possible to have a proper session another time. I was lucky that they said 'yes' and it basically grew from then.

I was proud to show them some of my pictures; they were eager to see what I had done and they liked what they saw. To them, it was their everyday work and so they were keen to see my take on their lives. I soon realised I wanted to exhibit the photos, but having been unable to stop shooting, I felt like carrying on and making a book that would be a portrait of the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment. I pitched the

idea to senior officers in the regiment, and they said they would be happy with a book. So I travelled to and from the UK for two years, photographing the regiment.

At what point in the project did you first show the book to the regiment?

We had some review sessions; the first was after I had a three-day shoot early on. I worked with Captain Elizabeth Godwin, who is sadly no longer with us. She was the first woman to be commissioned into the Life Guards after being awarded the Sword of Honour as the best Officer Cadet of her intake at [Royal Military Academy] Sandhurst and was very proud of her regiment. I guess she was eager to see it documented because even though the Household Cavalry has been in existence since 1660, the book is a portrait of it in the

Above: (Clockwise from top left): Formation drills in Hyde Park. Corporal of Horse Andy Drummond on Harry – the largest drum horse. Trooper Green, The Blues and Royals, on Platinum. A Boxman opposite the Old War Office.

Glenn Røkeberg



Above: Winnifred with Captain Henry Tregear, The Blues and Royals.

Right: A jackboot polished to perfection before parade. Originally designed in the 18th century, the boot has remained near unchanged since.



Glenn Røkeberg

present day. After the first three sessions, I went home to Norway. I culled all my shots and ended up with 20 to 25 images that I printed at A2 and brought back to London for a review with the top brass.

They really liked them, so I said I wanted to put on an exhibition and have part of the proceeds go to the Household Cavalry Foundation to pay back, which I have done. I don't know how I became an ambassador for a British Army regiment [laughs]. They treated me with a friendly respect that I want to honour.

Did the regiment suggest things for you to come and photograph, or did you have to do that?

Captain Godwin and Captain Tregear impressed me with their creative eyes. I had an old yearbook, so I could see what type of regular duties the regiment carries out over the course of a year. I researched where these events would be and tried to tag along, making my own way there and paying my own way.

Which particular moments from photographing the regiment stand out most, and why?

A key moment was during preparations for Trooping the Colour as the whole regiment rode down Constitution Hill. I was with them, in the middle of it, when all you could hear was the hooves of 200 horses clattering along – there's a distinctive sound of the scabbards of the swords knocking on the stirrups, a metallic clunk, and the hooves, but otherwise it's hushed. I had my camera set to shoot in black and white because I thought the photos couldn't be in colour. I was



Glenn Røkeberg

watching it all in black and white, nothing modern in the viewfinder, with these sounds going on around me. It was all swords, clouds, trees, horses and the old uniforms, and it transported me back to an age when you wouldn't be able to see a mobile phone in a pocket or anything like that. That was a key moment.

During the early days of shooting, I took an image, titled 'Distress', of a trooper storming flat out down Rotten Row in Hyde Park with a flag. It was one of those moments where everything came together because the weather wasn't great. We tried shooting a couple of passes, then the sun came through the clouds and the image looked almost too perfect.

When I flipped it into black and white, with the colour of the trees and the sun breaking through, it almost looked like an infrared image. People think it's doctored, but it isn't – it's just one of those rare occasions when everything comes together. On one attempt, I saw it all come together and got so excited that my Apple Watch warned me about having a cardiac arrhythmia! It's one of those images when everything looks perfect, but you

just have to punch in to see if it's in focus, because there are so many occasions where something is 90 per cent there, and not 100 per cent, but I could see on the back of my camera that it was just perfect.

Military parades are usually colourful. Do you think you lost anything by shooting in black and white?

No, the Household Cavalry has been photographed in colour so many times that seeing it in colour almost bores me a little bit. I wouldn't say seeing the regiment in colour is mundane, but you watch Trooping the Colour on television in colour. I don't have any clients that tell me I have to shoot something in

Above: Warrant Officer Class 2 (W02) Anthony Glass, The Life Guards, the Equitation Warrant Officer.

“Everything came together in the shot. I got so excited that my smartwatch had to warn me about my heart rate!”



colour – that's my thing – but with digital, of course, you just shoot raw files, so you don't really have to make that decision either; you can deal with that later on.

Are all the photos in the book black and white?

We interspersed black and white with some colour photos because there were a couple of shots that actually lost impact in black and white, like the one taken in Horse Guards. I doubt anyone in the regiment would admit they believe in ghosts, but I think there is something strange going on there. Horse Guards is one of the oldest buildings in London, and I wanted to have a night shot at Horse Guards because we always see it in daylight. I went over there one night and was in the staging area, not something people usually get to see.

I was with Trooper Collins when he brought out his horse. It was just him, me and the horse, and the horse was really focused on something. There was nothing there, but you can see in the photo that the horse's tail is raised and it's really focusing on something that was lost on us. When I looked at the image, which I really liked, it didn't work in black and white. Because you have these night-time sodium lamps and an eerie atmosphere, it had to be in colour.

The designer of the book, Matthew Wilson, wanted some colour shots to sprinkle through the book, because with all the grey tones, it would look monotonal. We included some colour photos because of the night shot, which forced me to acknowledge that maybe there is something to colour photographs, too.

Which cameras did you use to shoot the book?

A Nikon Z 8, which is basically my main tool, but I also shot some pictures with my old Hasselblad 500ELX. When I went to photography school in California, I had to buy my own kit, and my camera of choice was the Hasselblad. I got that from my father and mother as a going-away present; my father wasn't into luxury at all, but he said that the right tools are half the job.

I toyed with the idea of shooting the whole project on medium-format, but there was no way I could capture the fleeting moments. And equally as important is that I would never have been able to afford to shoot analogue, because of the cost of processing.

Are you pleased with how the book turned out?

Yes, despite having shot too many photographs, I got on well with the designer and had the good fortune of a publisher that allowed me to do the book my way. Deciding on the different sections and sequencing the images was ultimately all my decision, plus most of the copywriting, and I was really lucky to have so many good and gracious people working on the project.

The funny thing is, I never really wanted to make a photography book – or any book. A lot of people have this thing about leaving a book behind. I didn't, but I did see a body of work growing into something I thought could be really worthwhile. By that time, I had such deep respect and love for the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment that I wanted to do *Trusted Guardians* as a testament to them. It wasn't much about me at all. ●

Above: Corporal of Horse Andy Drummond, The Life Guards.

Trusted Guardians: Inside the Mounted Regiment by Glenn Røkeberg is published by Unicorn (ISBN 978-1-917458-91-7) and is priced £60/\$90. www.unicornpublishing.org



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300mm F2.8 IS USM LII £2899
400mm F4 DO IS USMIII £3499

Used Canon

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R6 body	£999
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RF 24-70 F2.8 L IS USM box	£1899
RF 24-105 F4 L IS	£899
RF 35 F1.8 IS macro box	£429
RF 70-200 F2.8 L IS USM box	£1899
RF 100 F2.8 L IS USM macro	£1099
RF 100-400 F5.6/3 IS USM	£599
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100 F2.8 IS USM L macro	£699
100-400 F4.5/5.6 LII box	£1399
135 F2 USM L box	£549
180 F3.5 L USM macro box	£599
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200-400 F4 IS USM L box	£4499
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18-300 F3.5/6.3 DC OS box	£299
35 F1.4 Art DG	£499
50 F1.4 Art DG	£499
105 F2.8 EX DG HSM OS	£299
150-600 F5/6.3 DG OS sport	£999
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TC1401 1.4x extender	£149

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18-400 F3.5/6.3 DiII VC	£399
70-300 F4/5.6 VC USD	£249
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180 F3.5 SP Di	£249

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300mm F2.8 AFS VR £1999
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D500 body £799
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Z8 body box	£2699
Z6 MKIII body box	£1699
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24-70 F4 S	£399
24-120 F4 S	£749
24-200 F4/6.3 VR	£599
35 F1.8 S box	£599
50 F2.8 S macro	£439
70-200 F2.8 VR S box	£1499
85 F1.8 S	£599
105 F2.8 macro VR S box	£699
180-600 F5.6/6.3 VR box	£1399
400 F4.5 S VR box	£1999
800 F6.3 VR S box	£3799
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TC 2x tele converter box	£479
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D4s body box	£999
D3x body	£799
D850 body box	£1699
D780 body box	£1199
D750 body box	£599
D500 body box	£799
D7200 body box	£449
D7100 body box	£299
D5300 body box	£299
D5100 body box	£149
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12-24 F4 AFS DX	£199
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18-35 F3.5/4.5 AFS	£299
18-55 F3.5/5.6 DX VR	£99
18-105 F3.5/5.6 VR DX AFS	£199
18-140 F3.5/5.6 AFS VR DX	£199
18-200 F3.5/5.6 VR DX MKII	£299
18-200 F3.5/5.6 VR DX	£149
18-300 F3.5/5.6 VR DX box	£449
20 F1.8 AFS box	£499
24 F2.8 AFD box	£249
24-70 F2.8 AFS VR box	£1199
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24-120 F4 AFS VR	£499
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55-300 F4.5/5.6 AFS DX VR	£229
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70-200 F2.8 E FL AFS VR box	£1199
70-300 F4.5/5.6 E AF P VR	£499
70-300 F4.5/5.6 AFS VR	£299
85 F1.8 AFS box	£299
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16-80 F4 WR	£399
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23 F1.4 XF WR	£349
27 F2.8 XF	£349
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9-18 F4/5.6	£299
12-40 F2.8 Pro	£299
12-100 F4 IS Pro	£799
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25 F1.8	£249
30 F3.5 macro box	£199
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40-150 F4 Pro box	£649
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G5 body box	£399
G7 body	£299
7-14 F4	£399
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14-140 F3.5/5.6	£299
25 F1.4 box	£399
25 F1.7	£149
45 F2.8 DG macro	£149
45-175 F4.5/5.6	£249
45-200 F4.5/5.6 box	£149
100-300 F4/5.6 MKI	£299
Samyang 12 F2 man focus	£179
Sigma 16 F1.4 DC DN	£299

Sony Used

A1 Body box £2599
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A7 MK III body box	£899
16-35 F2.8 GM box	£999
20 F1.8 G box	£699
24 F1.4 GM box	£899
24-70 F4 ZA	£449
24-105 F4 G OSS box	£599
24-240 F3.5/6.3 OSS box	£499
50 F1.2 GM	£1199
50 F1.4 ZA	£699
70-200 F2.8 GM OSS MKII box	£1699
85 F1.4 GM box	£799
100-400 F4.5/5.6 GM OSS box	£1399
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with Chris George

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Vinnie Zuffante / Stringer / Getty

7 Kodak's T-Max is now available under which new name?

- ☐ A Ektapan
- ☐ B Monopan
- ☐ C Monochrome
- ☐ D Pro-X

8 What is the size of the sensor used in Panasonic's new Lumix L10 luxury compact camera?

- ☐ A 1in
- ☐ B 1.4in
- ☐ C Four Thirds
- ☐ D APS-C



9 What is the maximum aperture available if you put a 2x teleconverter on a 400mm f/2.8 lens?

- ☐ A f/2.8
- ☐ B f/4
- ☐ C f/1.4
- ☐ D f/5.6

10 The Kodak Charmera has been one of the best-selling cameras of the last year. How many different designs are there?

- ☐ A 4
- ☐ B 5
- ☐ C 6
- ☐ D 7



How did you do?

10 points You're a photo mastermind!
8-9 points Fantastic, you're a brainiac
6-7 points Really good score
4-5 points Respectable, but no cigar
2-3 points We'll keep your score secret
0-1 points Epic fail

ANSWERS 1A,2D,3C,4B,5B,6B,7A,8C,9D,10D

1 Which actor is holding the medium-format camera?

- ☐ A Jim Belushi
- ☐ B Dan Ackroyd
- ☐ C John Belushi
- ☐ D John Candy

2 Which of these photography books is the odd one out?

- ☐ A Cake & Balls
- ☐ B Think of England
- ☐ C Life's a Beach
- ☐ D Rude Food

3 What is Clint Eastwood photographing in the 1995 film where he plays a *National Geographic* photojournalist?

- ☐ A Vietnam war
- ☐ B Apes
- ☐ C Bridges
- ☐ D Presidential election campaign

4 Which manufacturer has recently launched a mirrorless camera with a 67MP full-frame sensor?

- ☐ A Leica
- ☐ B Sony
- ☐ C Canon
- ☐ D Fujifilm

5 Which photographer once said, "The Earth is art, the photographer is only a witness"?

- ☐ A Art Wolfe
- ☐ B Yann Arthus-Bertrand
- ☐ C Sandra Bartocha
- ☐ D Sebastião Salgado

6 What is this once-popular film format?

- ☐ A 110
- ☐ B 126
- ☐ C 220
- ☐ D 240



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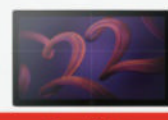


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