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Digital *The world's favorite photography magazine* Camera World

Issue 310 August 2026

NATURE SPECIAL

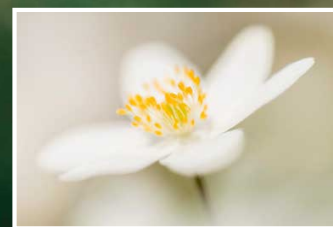
ON A RED SQUIRREL SAFARI WITH TOP PRO DANI CONNOR
12 pages of tips for capturing these bushy tailed beauties

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- ✓ Lens choice
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Hotshots

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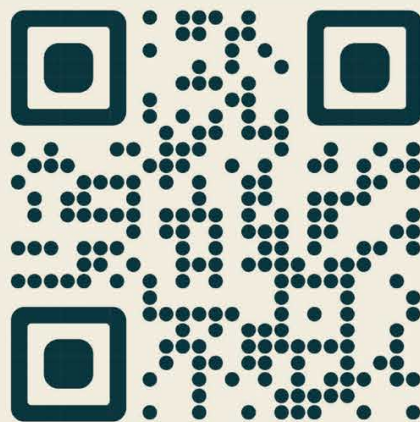
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Welcome

Nature photography is our main topic this month, with a squirrel safari-themed Apprentice and a macro masterclass cover feature. Read our tale of a trip to a red squirrel paradise with top wildlife pro Dani Connor (p8), and glean some top tips from Ross Hoddinott for shooting close-ups of the natural world (p62). More creative ideas and techniques can be found in Photo Skills (p41) and Camera Clinic (p82), plus we go behind the scenes of a portraiture project that focuses on female UK parliamentarians (p118). Also this month, we test the Sony A7R VI and the Lumix L10, as well as a pair of new primes for a range of full-frame and APS-C mirrorless bodies (p105). Enjoy the issue.

Niall

Niall Hampton, editor
niall.hampton@futurenet.com

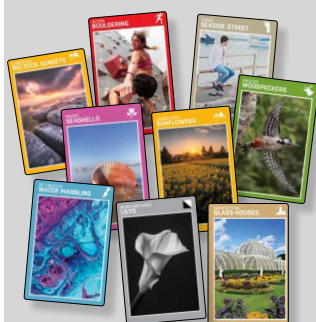


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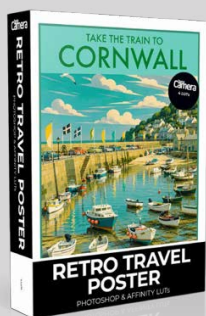


This issue's bonus gifts **Find out more on pages 6 and 104**



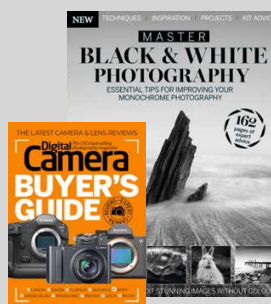
Nine all-new photo tips cards

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



15 Actions, presets, LUTs and templates

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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This month's contributors

Dani Connor Wildlife photographer

Who better to mentor this month's Apprentice reader challenge, on the red squirrel paradise of Brownsea Island in Dorset, than 'Dani The Squirrel Girl' herself? **Page 8**

Ross Hoddinott Macro photographer

One of the world's leading macro photographers shares his tips and insights for success in the genre. An exclusive extract from Ross Hoddinott's book starts on **page 62**

Natalia Zmyslowska Photographer and writer

Try a higher perspective for some photographic inspiration, says our columnist – it's a great creative exercise. And there's no need for a camera drone either. **Page 30**

Ian Groves Photographer

The accomplished wildlife photographer needed quick reactions to capture the fast-moving squirrel on our cover. He tells us how it was done. **Page 92**

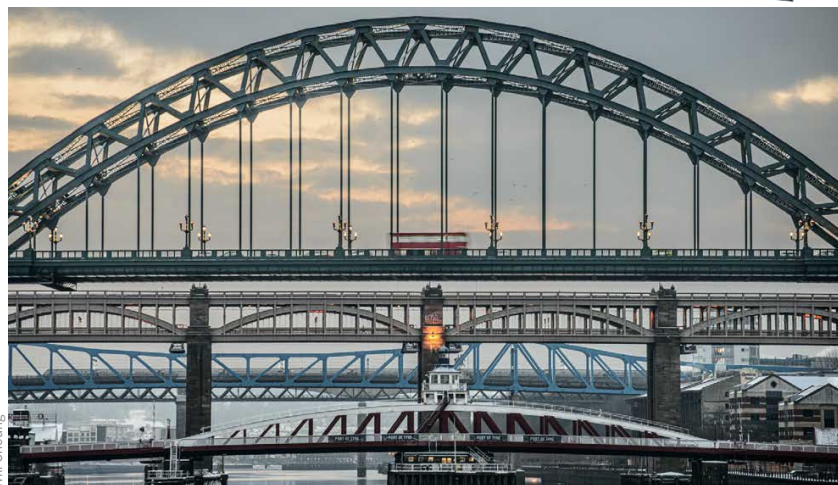
Sarah Plummer Photographer

The street photographer from Lincolnshire in the UK recently published a photo zine on seaside street photography. She takes us behind the scenes on **page 54**

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 82**

Will Cheung



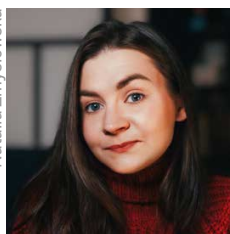
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Camera Clinic _ It's easy to take bridges for granted, says Will Cheung, but many of them make fantastic photographic subjects. Learn how to go beyond taking record shots of these super structures by turning to page 82

Ross Hoddinott



Natalia Zmyslowska



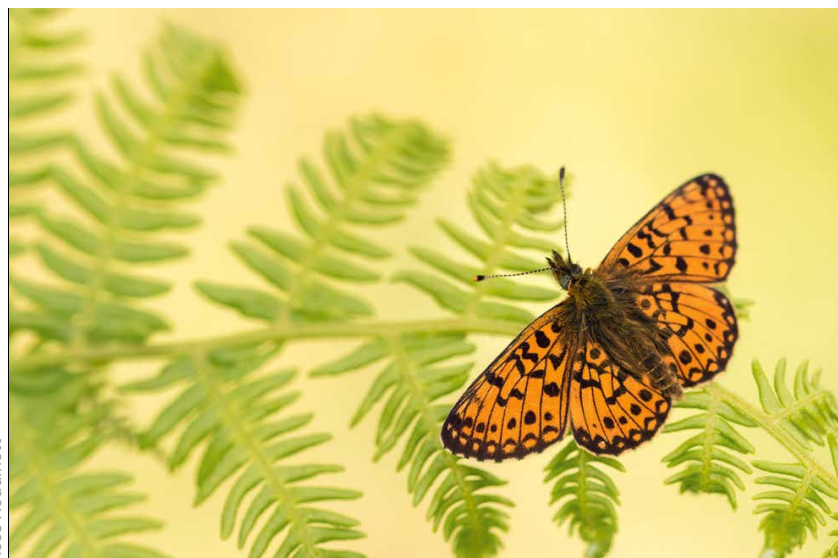
Ian Groves



Mark Rowe



Ross Hoddinott



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10 top tips for macro _ Ross Hoddinott specialises in creating detailed photos of tiny subjects. In an exclusive extract from his *Digital Macro and Close-Up Photography* book, he shares 10 top tips for creating stunning close-ups

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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 that will help make you a better photographer. Turn to page 41 to get started



NEW SECTION!
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 improve your
 photo skills
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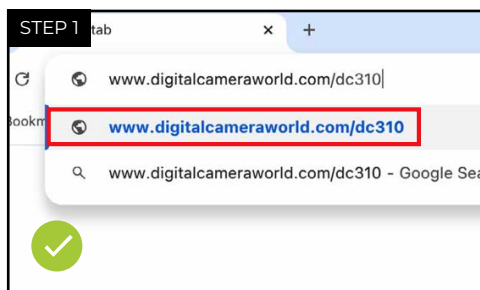
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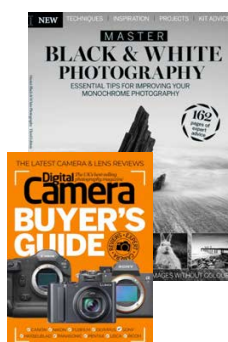
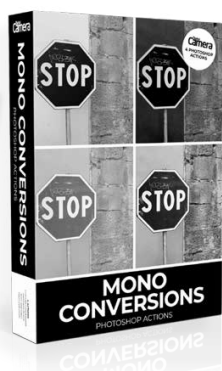
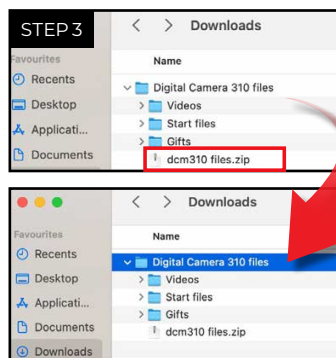
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Red alert on Brownsea Island

One reader, one pro... we visit a National Trust squirrel reserve with top wildlife photographer **Dani Connor**

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 having a one-to-one workshop, but a wider audience gets to see what happens. This month, we're on the hunt for red squirrels at one of the UK's leading locations for spotting and photographing them. Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour, Dorset, is operated by the National Trust and is a safe, protected space for these super-cute furry creatures. And who better to go



The Pro

Name: Dani Connor

Camera: Canon EOS R5

A British wildlife photographer and content creator based in Sweden, Dani came to prominence in 2020 when her photos and videos of baby squirrels went viral on Twitter. Dani has since captured wildlife across the world and is a Canon Ambassador. She also posts video diaries on social media of her connecting with nature in the wild.

www.daniconnorwild.com

Instagram: @daniconnorwild

The Apprentice

Name: Pauline Gibbs

Camera: Canon EOS R5 Mark II

A nature photographer based in the Forest of Dean, Pauline has a passion for the natural world and landscapes and is a long-time Canon user. Having started on film cameras, Pauline has embraced digital and is an active member of the Forest of Dean Camera Club, the Guild of Photographers and SheClicks.

Instagram: @gibbspauline

flickr.com/photos/32939524@N02



Camera:	Canon EOS R5 Mark II
Lens:	Canon RF 100-500mm at 500mm
Exposure:	1/3200 sec at f/5.6, ISO 1600

ABOVE

THE APPRENTICE: “My aim here was to capture a different portrait, but still include key aspects like the ears and tail, with a soft background.”

THE PRO: “Excellent composition, with the squirrel looking into the frame and lovely negative space surrounding it. The squirrel’s aspects are perfect.”



looking for squirrels with than Dani Connor? Dani, whose Instagram account is ‘Dani The Squirrel Girl’, started photographing wildlife when she was a teenager and bought her first camera with the prize money from winning the Young Marwell Photographer of the Year title in 2012. Self-taught, Dani honed her skills through trial and error, and her regular video diaries on social media have helped her build a wide following for her photography.

Having lived next to a forest in northern Sweden full-time since 2022, so that she could practise wildlife photography on her

doorstep, rather than having to squeeze it in around a 9-5 job, Dani loves being outdoors, observing and capturing the behaviour of squirrels, hares, birds and other animals.

A return visit

Reader Pauline Gibbs isn’t averse to putting in the hours for wildlife, either. A seasoned photographer based in Gloucestershire in the UK, Pauline uses a Canon EOS R5 Mark II and enjoys taking pictures of birds and other species. Having previously visited Brownsea Island, she jumped at the chance of making a

“Dani’s regular video diaries on social media have helped her build a wide following for her wildlife photography” —→

SUPER SHOT #1

The Apprentice with Dani Connor

Expert insight Reds vs greys

Native to the British Isles for at least 10,000 years, red squirrels have become a rare sight. There are approximately 287,000 of them, compared to around 2.7 million of their grey cousins. The latter were introduced to the UK in the 1870s; they are larger and have stronger constitutions: grey squirrels can eat a wider range of food and are immune to squirrel pox, which is fatal to red squirrels. But reds are making a slow comeback, thanks to conservation initiatives and protected habitats. One of these is Brownsea Island, where an estimated 150 are thriving. Other locations where you can see red squirrels include the Isle of Wight, Anglesey and the Scottish Highlands.

You can join the fight to protect the UK's red squirrels by getting involved with the Save Our Reds campaign. Find out more at: <https://saveourreds.uk>



Future



Future

Pro tip Feeding squirrels

"When I'm in Sweden, I feed squirrels shelled walnuts and hazelnuts," says Dani. "It's quite a clean way of feeding them. Red squirrels can easily carry away shelled walnuts and hazelnuts, whereas many garden birds struggle to access them. It also creates a cleaner feeding area."



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Sunflower seeds



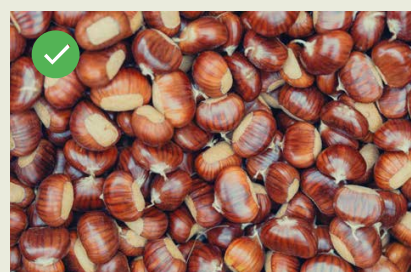
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Shelled walnuts



Getty

Peanuts



Getty

Hazelnuts

Long lenses at the ready, Dani offers her insights on which part of the woodland our squirrel's drey is likely to be located.



Pauline Gibbs

Red squirrel photos 101

Things to bear in mind when photographing *Sciurus vulgaris*



1 Where to find reds

Brownsea Island and the Isle of Wight are two of the best locations in the south of England. Further north, reds can be found in the Yorkshire Dales, Cumbria and the Scottish Highlands. See page 20 for other locations in the UK and beyond.



2 Observe the rules

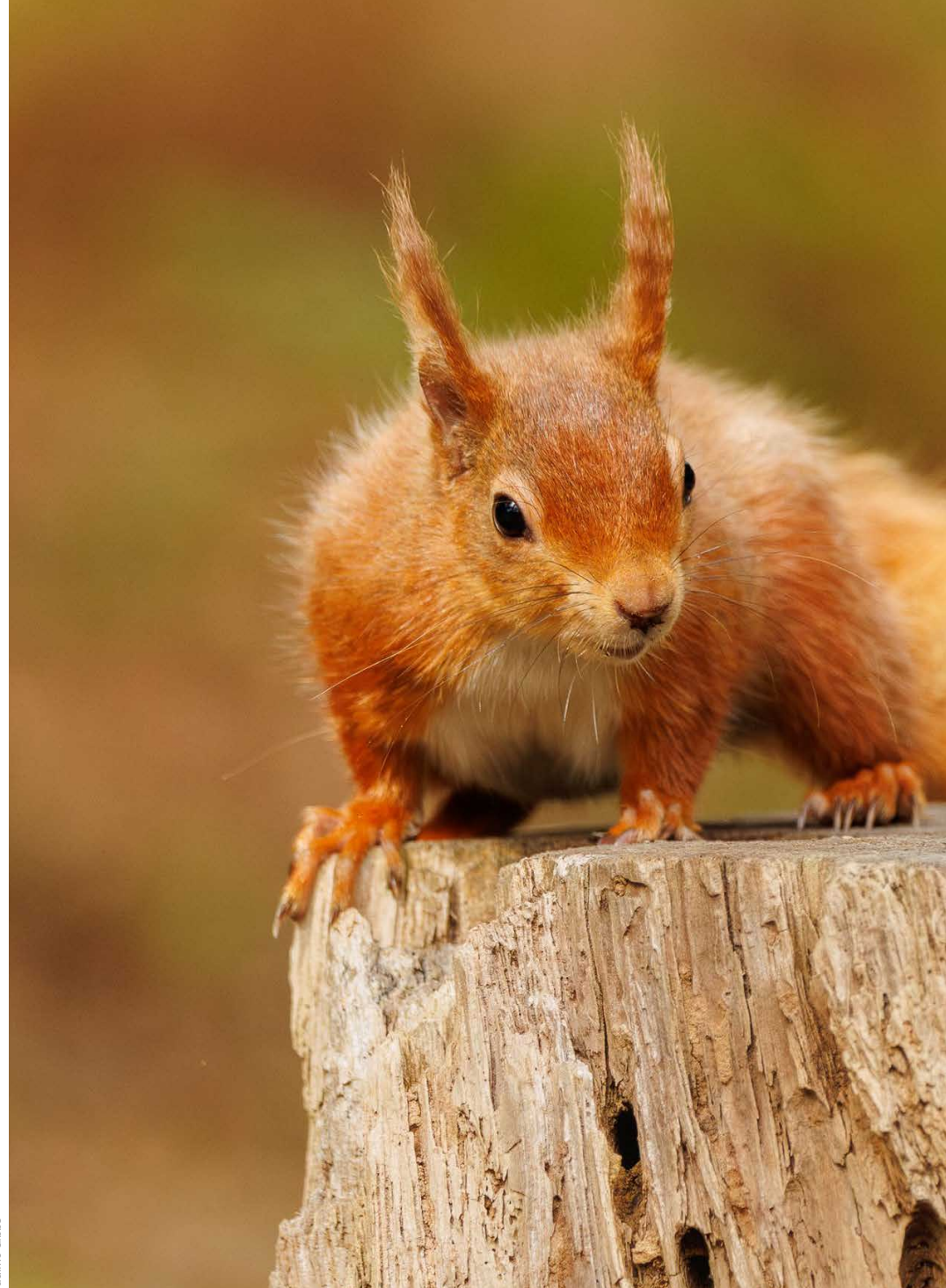
When photographing squirrels at a wildlife reserve, respect the rules – they exist to ensure every visitor will get the most from their day. Brownsea Island has a 'no feeding' policy in place to protect the 150 or so red squirrels who live there.



3 Light levels

As squirrels live in wooded habitats, light levels will vary depending on how much tree canopy there is, and whether it's cloudy or sunny. If the latter, then shift your position to see if you can catch your subject in a pocket of light.

Pauline Gibbs



return visit, this time with Dani acting as her squirrel photography mentor.

Access to the island is via a foot ferry operated by Greenslade Pleasure Boats, with seven daily sailings from Poole Quay. As the crossing takes around 20 minutes, Pauline recommended catching the first departure, at 10am, to maximise our time with the squirrels. Meeting next to the ticket kiosk, we make our introductions and take our seats around a table on the lower deck. Over a cup of tea, we review our plan for the coming hours, and as a first-time Brownsea visitor, Dani gleans some insights on the island from Pauline.

Disembarking and checking in at the reception desk, we then make our way to the edge of the woodland next to St Mary's Church. One of the key locations for squirrels on the island, as evidenced by the sign that warns against feeding them, this area is home to several fallen tree trunks and tree stumps.

Long lenses at the ready

Dani and Pauline find somewhere to put their backpacks down and prepare their cameras. Dani is shooting with her trusty EOS R5, with the super-sharp RF 400mm F2.8L IS USM. Pauline has an EOS R5 Mark II, and —→

“Pauline jumped at the chance of making a return visit to Brownsea Island, with Dani acting as her squirrel photography mentor”

SUPER SHOT #2

LEFT

THE APPRENTICE: “The squirrel spent ages feeding on this log, so I patiently waited and captured a clean portrait once it finally paused.”

THE PRO: “Pauline considered the rule of thirds and moved into a position with a clean background, avoiding distracting branches or sticks.”



Our pro's kit **Canon EOS R5**

With a 45MP full-frame sensor, up to eight stops of IBIS and extensive AF options, the EOS R5 is a very capable camera. Dani recently switched to the EOS R5 Mark II, which has even snappier autofocus plus improvements including pre-capture mode – a major boon for wildlife photography. Dani's lens for today is the Canon RF 400mm F2.8L IS USM – a top-end optic for professional wildlife photographers. www.canon.co.uk

Camera:	Canon EOS R5 Mark II
Lens:	Canon RF 100-500mm at 270mm
Exposure:	1/3200 sec at f/5, ISO 1600

Pro tip **Behaviour**

Leaving their dreys to forage for food gives photographers an ideal chance to capture squirrel behaviour. But you won't always catch them eating – squirrels cache food so they can retrieve it for times when there's no food. “They will either run up to the tops of the trees to eat,” Dani explains, “or run off and cache the food in the ground.” So a food source or a cache point could be good places to stake out.



Future



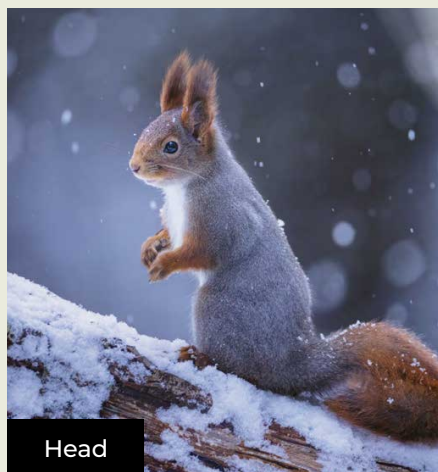
It's in a squirrel's nature to cache food, so observing this behaviour could lead to some ideal opportunities for photographing them.

Pro tip **Dani's rule for photographing squirrels**

"I have a rule called 'Head, Pose, Tail,'" says Dani. "It's three main elements that, in my opinion, are required to make the perfect squirrel photograph, without having to think about light and composition. Head: I like to have the angle of the head either looking

slightly to the side or directly to the camera, but not looking away from the camera, unless I'm doing something interesting with light or composition. Pose: I like to have the tail up – bonus points for a curled tail. I love it when the front paws are held close to the chest

rather than covering the face. And squirrels have ear tufts in winter, which look really nice. Tail: it should be up. If a tail is down, then at least show it. Without the tail visible, you can lose one of the features that instantly makes a squirrel recognisable."



Head



Pose



Tail

OPPOSITE

THE APPRENTICE: "I used Dani's tip of shooting through surroundings, and f/4 at 260mm provided a soft background, keeping the subject sharp."

THE PRO: "The perfect angle, with soft morning sun lighting the squirrel beautifully. The curving fern complements the squirrel's orange fur."

her lens of choice for today is a Canon RF 100-500mm F4.5-7.1L IS USM. Thanks to Canon UK (see page 18), she can also call on an RF 100-300mm F2.8L IS USM, an £11,499 (\$10,599) premium telephoto that's designed to offer the optical performance of a

prime lens. Canon has also kindly loaned us an EOS R3, a 24.1MP workhorse for pro news and sports photographers, as a backup body.

It doesn't take long for a squirrel to be sighted; some of the other ferry passengers have also made this area their first stop, and a hubbub close to one of the fallen tree trunks indicates that a red alert is in progress.

Dani and Pauline hurry over to the scene and join in with the gaggle of nature lovers who are taking pictures of a female red on their phones and cameras. Our furry friend doesn't seem remotely fazed by being the centre of attention. It flits back and forth along the fallen tree trunks, darting here and there before

scurrying to the top of a tree stump, pausing to watch the watchers, then scampering off.

Storing nuts for winter

Despite the sign prohibiting feeding (see page 10), it seems that some of the people here have been putting nuts out for the squirrel, which might explain why it seems so at ease with coming close to humans. Where does Dani stand on feeding squirrels, I ask? She feeds them in the forest in Sweden, but doesn't think that leaving food out reduces a squirrel's natural instinct to forage.

"Red and grey squirrels have an innate instinct to cache food," she says, "so it doesn't matter how much is provided for them – they will always bury some in the ground for when food is not as plentiful.

"I also find that many species, including squirrels, always prefer wild food. This helps predict where squirrels might be – they'll be eating the wild buds of new shoots of plants and trees, and leaves."

While we've only seen one squirrel so far, we can't have any complaints about its behaviour up to this point – not shy at all, she's moving around a lot, and the assembled throng tries its best to keep up. It's nothing to do with stamina; it's more a case of having followed the squirrel to another tree trunk or stump, she'll rush off somewhere else before you manage to compose your first shot.

As Pauline has visited before, I wonder if we're likely to see many other squirrels today. "People come here just to spot a red, but seeing wildlife is never guaranteed." →



An experienced workshop leader, and a squirrel authority in her own right, Dani was always on hand for Pauline with advice and insights.

A close-up photograph of a red squirrel with a large, bushy tail, perched on a tree trunk and eating a nut. The squirrel's fur is a mix of reddish-brown and white, and its tail is a vibrant red. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting a forest setting. A red circular graphic in the top right corner contains the text "SUPER SHOT #3".

SUPER
SHOT #3

Pauline Gibbs

Camera:	Canon EOS R5 Mark II
Lens:	Canon RF 100-300mm at 260mm
Exposure:	1/3200 sec at f/4, ISO 400

Technique assessment

You won't go wrong with these top tips for capturing squirrels



1 Shutter speeds

Squirrels move quickly and are unpredictable. So for sharp shots that freeze any movement, dial in a fast shutter speed (Pauline is using 1/2000 sec here) and use the reciprocal rule to avoid camera shake (use a shutter speed that's double or more your focal length).



2 Autofocus settings

Mirrorless shooters like Pauline can use animal subject detection autofocus to acquire and lock focus. DSLR users can set the AF tracking mode that's optimised for capturing moving subjects (AI Servo AF on Canon, or AF-C Continuous Servo on Nikon).



3 ISO & white balance

To enable faster shutter speeds and when shooting under lower light levels in woodlands, increase the ISO value. Pauline was using her camera's Cloudy white balance preset, but as she was shooting raw files, she could alter the colour temperature in editing afterwards.



When the squirrels don't come out to play, there are plenty of other things to see on the island, so it's definitely worth walking around to explore it.

Pro tip Go wide

While the squirrels had gone to ground, Pauline tried some wide-angle shots of bluebells, using a Canon RF 24mm F1.8 Macro IS STM. The lens has a minimum focusing distance of 14cm, so she could get really close, and its wide apertures can blur backgrounds beautifully.



Pauline Gibbs

Camera:	Canon EOS R5 Mark II
Lens:	Canon RF 24mm F1.8 Macro IS STM
Exposure:	1/8000 sec at f/6.3, ISO 400

Indeed, one of the best aspects of wildlife photography is being able to spend time outdoors, even if you don't see any wildlife.

It's clear that Pauline really enjoys photographing red squirrels, so why does the *Sciurus vulgaris* genus appeal to her? "I just think they're beautiful – that's it", she smiles. "It's the tufts on the ears, at this time

of year or in the winter. I love their character, too – squirrels are fun, and their actions are fun. Where I live, in a forest, we have loads of grey squirrels, but there aren't any reds."

And how's the day going so far, Pauline? "It's a shame we've only seen one squirrel up to now, but that squirrel has been pretty active, so we've had lots of opportunities."

“Framing up with a fern in the foreground means that it won't look like the squirrel is sitting on a tree stump,' explains Dani”



SUPER SHOT #4

Being able to work in a small area with an obliging and relatively predictable subject has given our pro and apprentice the chance to explore some creative options together, including composition.

"This isn't a particularly wild environment, so the challenge is trying to get photos that don't look like we're in a park," says Dani. "I prefer mossy areas to bare logs like these. Ideally, I'd like the squirrel to be sitting on that mossy stump over there, because it looks more wild and natural."

"But if people are leaving food out on logs like this, then this is where the squirrels are going to be. On a day trip, it's very difficult to

see real wild behaviour because you're only here for a few hours. So in these situations, it's good to start thinking about what you can do with backgrounds, foregrounds and the other interesting elements of a photo."

For example, Dani suggests that Pauline frames up with a fern at the front of the scene. "Shooting from low down, this will create a mushy foreground that doesn't look like the squirrel is sitting on a tree stump," she says.

Pauline gives it a go and approves of the result. "Some of the ferns are quite green and lush now, so using them for a blurred through-shot, rather than just trying to get a clean background or a clean ———▶

ABOVE

THE APPRENTICE: "I chose these bluebells to make the most of the F1.8 Macro's soft background and bokeh, despite the bright, breezy conditions."

THE PRO: "The ladybird is sharp, despite the wind moving the flowers. I'd reduce the background highlights a little to focus the eye on the subject."

foreground, works really well," she says. "I'm trying to add something extra, for a more environmental approach."

"It's quite difficult on a day trip when the time you have is short, but it's great to learn techniques like this and get to try them out."

Pro portfolio Dani Connor



Dani Connor

Forest Jump

"Red squirrels are arboreal animals, so they spend most of their time in trees, but they do come down to the ground to forage and access different areas of the forest. They are extremely agile with dextrous hands, strong claws and a long tail for balance."



Dani Connor

Interrupted Breakfast

"A red squirrel is briefly distracted from its morning routine. They can expertly rotate pine cones from the base to the top, peeling away each scale to reveal the tiny seeds. With such low-calorie rewards, they must eat a remarkable amount to survive the winter."

Five More Minutes

"A red squirrel peers out of its hidden drey, a cosy nest tucked amongst branches and lichen. Red squirrels are very secretive about their sleeping places, using these sheltered homes to rest, sleep and raise their young. During winter in northern Sweden, they can spend up to 22 hours a day inside a drey."



Dani Connor



Thanks to... **Canon**

Canon kindly loaned us some pro-level kit for today. Pauline got to try a Canon EOS R3 and Canon RF 100-300mm F2.8L IS USM, plus a Canon RF 24mm F1.8 Macro IS STM. Canon Club members get an extra 24 hours on Test Drives of Canon kit. www.canon.co.uk/canon-club



Our squirrel suddenly disappears, so an early lunch seems like a good idea. Returning from the National Trust's excellent cafe, Dani and Pauline are hoping to carry on as they left off, but the squirrel hasn't come out to play. Where does Dani think she's gone?

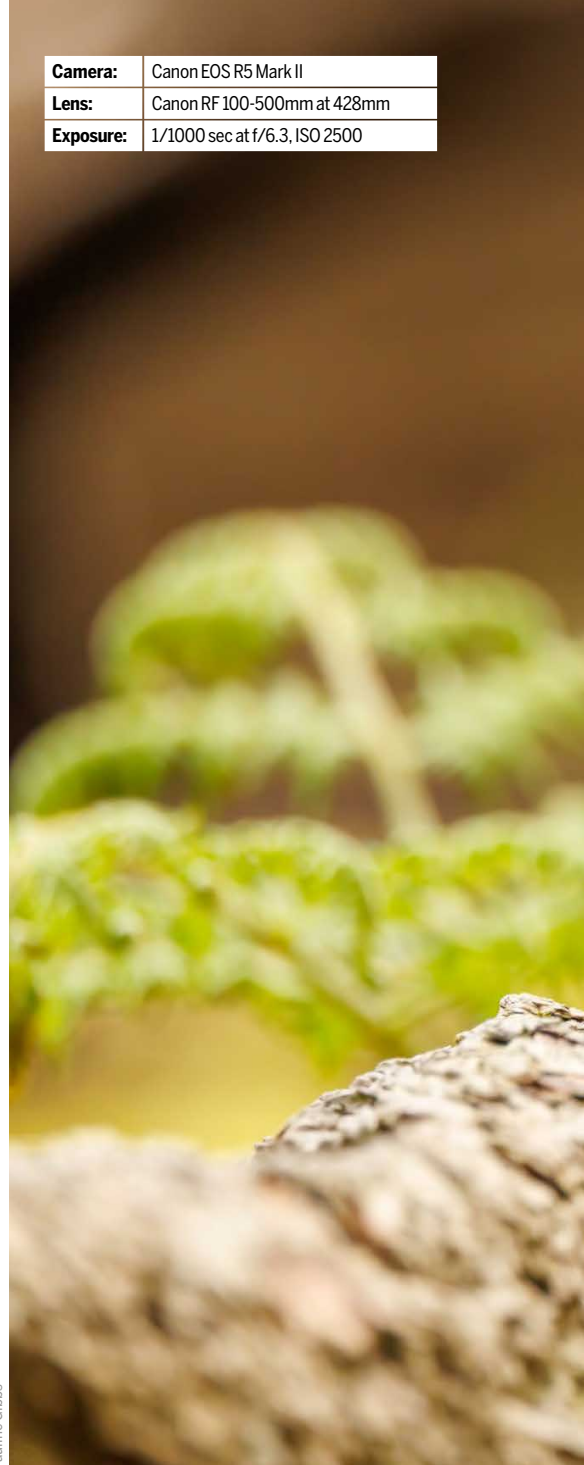
"She might have just given birth or is about to," she replies. "I saw her go into the drey [a squirrel's nest], which is where they sleep and where they give birth. It could be that she's more interested in food because she knows she'll be caring for young soon."

Dani and Pauline take a walk around our immediate vicinity and look for dreys in the trees, but it must be squirrel siesta time. We decide to go for a wander around the island, a bona fide paradise for nature lovers. Back at the church, there are still no squirrels, so it might be time to turn from fauna to flora.

Gone to ground

Attaching the RF 100-300mm to the Canon EOS R3, Pauline frames up for some bluebells in the graveyard. The telephoto compression is pleasing, but a wider-angle view might be a better option. Swapping over to the RF 24mm F1.8 Macro IS STM, on her EOS R5 Mark II, the wider aperture defocuses the background beautifully. After a few variations, it's almost time to catch the return ferry. Our squirrel might have gone to ground, but Pauline's photos are full of furry red cuteness. ● *Special thanks to National Trust Brownsea Island for hosting Digital Camera today. Find out more at: www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/dorset/brownsea-island*

Camera:	Canon EOS R5 Mark II
Lens:	Canon RF 100-500mm at 428mm
Exposure:	1/1000 sec at f/6.3, ISO 2500



Pauline Gibbs

ABOVE

THE APPRENTICE: "I got down low to be in the right place to capture character and movement."

THE PRO: "A wonderful shot – all the squirrel's features are visible, and it's captured in motion!"



Apprentice verdict

"I loved learning from Dani's expertise today and gained fresh insights into red squirrel behaviour and making the most of every opportunity."



Pro verdict

"Despite only one squirrel appearing, Pauline stayed patient, adapted well and made the most of every opportunity, producing some wonderful photographs."



SHOT
OF THE
DAY!



Pauline swapped to a Canon
EOS R3 during our shoot,
paired with the RF 100-
300mm F2.8L IS USM.

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Email us at:
digitalcamera@futurenet.com

Squirrel safaris

Where you can photograph *Sciurus vulgaris*

Five places to see red squirrels in the UK

Here's where the species thrives – why not visit as part of a photography workshop?

01 Paul Fowle Yorkshire Dales

A true expert in his field, with a keen eye for detail and an unyielding passion for wildlife photography, Paul Fowle goes above and beyond to capture the richness and beauty of nature. His expertise and knowledge will take your photography to the next level.

www.paulfowlephotography.co.uk

02 Karen Miller Lentran, Scotland

Combine a photo trip to the Scottish Highlands with one of Karen Miller's red squirrel photography workshops in Lentran, near Inverness.

karenmillerphotography.co.uk

03 Alastair Currill Brownsea Island, Dorset

As seen on previous pages, Brownsea Island is a paradise for nature lovers. Photographer Alastair Currill will be running a day-long red squirrel workshop on the island on Friday 18 September.

www.alastaircurrill.com/brownsea-islandredsquirrelphotographytrip

04 Parkhurst Forest, near Newport, Isle of Wight

Dotted with squirrel hides that are perfect for photographers, this is an ideal location to capture one of the UK's last strongholds of the red squirrel population. There are many other spots for wildlife on the island. You can find the squirrel hotspot locations here:

www.visitisleofwight.co.uk/things-to-do/activities/wildlife

05 Gary Jones, Anglesey, Wales

Known as the 'Mother of Wales' for its fertile agricultural land, the Isle of Anglesey, off the north-west coast of Wales, is a stronghold for red squirrels. Much work has been carried out by nature and environmental agencies to keep the island grey squirrel-free, which has meant that red squirrels continue to live here relatively undisturbed.

gjwp.co.uk/uk-workshops/red-squirrel



Share other locations and tag your photos on Instagram to: [#digitalcameramag](https://www.instagram.com/digitalcameramag)



Red squirrel habitats around the world

Here's where readers outside the UK can capture these beautiful creatures

06 Rocky Mountains, USA

The red squirrel thrives in the coniferous forests of the Rocky Mountains, so you can combine fantastic wildlife photography with breathtaking landscapes.

07 Newfoundland, Canada

Red squirrels were introduced to Newfoundland and have lived there in abundance for decades. This island also has wonderful stretches of coastline just crying out to be captured on a photo trip.

08 Stockholm, Sweden

Native red squirrels remain abundant in Scandinavia, so these cute creatures can be widely spotted in Stockholm's woodlands, city parks and nature reserves.

09 Shanghai, China

Even though Shanghai is a dynamic modern metropolis, red squirrels can still be found in Gongqing Forest Park, where tall cedar groves provide an ideal habitat. They can also be spotted in Shanghai Botanical Gardens, along with many types of birds and reptiles.

10 Hokkaido Island, Japan

Hokkaido is the northernmost of Japan's four islands. Famous for its vast natural wilderness, cooler summers and world-class winter powder snow, Eurasian squirrels can be found here in the winter snows and among colourful blooms in the spring and summer.

RIGHT: Hokkaido is a fantastic place to capture squirrels in snow or summer blooms.





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InFocus

Photography news from around the globe

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1 NO RED DOT

Unlike its SL3 siblings, the SL3-P doesn't feature Leica's distinctive red dot logo on the front.

2 READY FOR THE OUTDOORS

The full-metal body comes with weatherproofing certified to IP54.



Leica launches SL3-P

The third member of the brand's SL3 family of full-frame mirrorless cameras is its fastest ever, with 40fps stills and 8K open gate video

The Leica SL3-P offers big improvements to both the stills and video capabilities of the SL3 range, aiming to be the Leica mirrorless that appeals to the majority of photographers and videographers.

At the heart of this new L-Mount camera is a 44MP back-side-illuminated sensor that, for resolution, places it between the 60MP sensor of the original SL3 and the more affordable, faster 24MP SL3-S that was launched last year. It fits between the two in terms of price.

A new hybrid autofocus system combines phase detection, depth mapping (object detection AF) and

contrast detection AF – to make it suitable for fast-moving subjects – with six automatic detection modes for people, animals and cars.

The SL3-P boasts a dynamic range of up to 14 stops, with ISO ranging from 50 to 200,000. A Multishot mode can capture extremely detailed 176MP high-resolution images.

Other features include support for Content Credentials, the ability to connect with the Leica Fotos app, and two memory card slots – both CFexpress Type B and SDXC UHS-II.

Find out more at: leica-camera.com; £5,150/\$6,690 (body only)

3 CLEAN, SIMPLE DESIGN

As with previous SL3 iterations, ease of handling is a priority, with tactile controls and one of the best camera menu systems.



4 OPEN GATE VIDEO FOR CREATORS

It can shoot 8.1K open gate in 3:2 ratio at up to 30p, and HDMI RAW at 8K in open gate.

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Viltrox AF 90mm F2.2 Evo

Affordable, portrait-friendly prime for Fujifilm, Nikon and Sony APS-C mirrorless cameras with an effective focal length of 135mm in full-frame terms

Announced during a trade fair in Beijing, the Chinese brand teased a raft of new lens launches, including the AF 75mm F1.8 EVO and AF 90mm F2.2 EVO, both for APS-C-sensor cameras. Both these primes belong to Viltrox's mid-range Evo line-up (read our review of the new AF 75mm on page 116).

The AF 90mm F2.2 is available for Fujifilm X, Nikon Z and Sony E lens mounts. The optical path comprises 10 elements in eight groups, with two ED (Extra-low Dispersion) elements and two HRI (High Refractive index) elements. All three mount options of the lens offer an aperture ring and an autofocus system based on a linear stepping motor. Multiple weather seals are included, and the filter thread size is 58mm.

Find out more at: www.viltrox.co.uk; £359/\$369



With a minimum focus distance of 0.19m, the lens is ideally suited to close-up photography.

Tamron 17-70mm F2.8 Di III-A VC RXD

Canon RF and Nikon Z crop-sensor shooters are finally getting an affordable f/2.8 all-in-one zoom with optical stabilisation and weather-resistant construction

A best-selling third-party E-mount and X-Mount lens, the Tamron 17-70mm F2.8 Di III-A VC RXD is now available for Canon RF and Nikon Z cameras with APS-C sensors. A constant aperture, stabilisation and weather-resistant construction made this optic a popular choice. The 17-70mm focal range is equivalent to a 25.5-105mm full-frame range on the Nikon Z and 27.2-112mm on

Canon RF, allowing it to capture both wide-angle and shorter telephoto ranges. Adding to the versatility is a minimum focus distance of 0.19m for close-up shooting. At 117mm long and weighing 530g (Canon RF), or 121.3mm and 540g (Nikon Z), the Tamron 17-70mm is larger and heavier than typical kit lenses.

Find out more at: www.tamron.eu; £550/\$749

Focal point

Rounding up what's new and exciting this month



Seven-year warranty for selected Eizo FlexScan monitors

Covering seven years for the unit and up to 30,000 operating hours for the LCD module, whichever comes first, the length of this warranty is said to be an industry first. It will also be applied retrospectively to units that have been already purchased. www.eizo.eu



Excire Foto 2027 photo management software on sale now

Available for PC and macOS, the latest version of the program introduces new features, including enhanced filtering options, the recognition of text captured in images, a world map view – and more. excire.com; £229/\$249

Tokyo: Street Photography is teNeues' latest 'Now Is Now' title

Co-edited by photographer Lukasz Palka, this new volume is a visual exploration of one of the world's most enigmatic cities. A roster of top photographers capture the fleeting reality of its chaotic streets. www.teneues.com; £50/\$75



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Website: www.digitalcameraworld.com

**OPEN NOW! RMetS Weather Photographer of the Year 2026**

This prestigious global competition celebrates outstanding photography, showcasing both dramatic weather events and the growing influence of climate change. Free to enter, there are three categories plus a public vote. Entries close on Thursday 20 August.

Website: www.rmets.org/weather-photographer-of-the-year



- 1 GOPRO MISSION 1 PRO**
50MP one-inch sensor and ultra-wide 15mm equivalent lens. Max video res is 8K 60p.

Major new launches from GoPro

Brand's biggest product reveal in years sees three cameras unleashed, but they are 'cinema' not action cameras

Introducing the next generation of GoPro cameras... the Mission 1 series features three models, with all of them using the same 50MP one-inch sensor. The Mission 1 and Mission 1 Pro are both high-end cinema cameras (not action cams), and the Mission 1 Pro ILS – due in autumn – combines the one-inch sensor with a Micro Four Thirds lens mount. The new models mark a significant development for GoPro, which is departing from the Hero name that has featured in the brand's line-up since 2004.

The **Mission 1 Pro** is the flagship of the two action cameras, with an ultra-wide 15mm equivalent lens with fixed aperture and fixed focusing. Video specs top out at

8K 60p, slow-mo at 4K 240fps and 1080 at 960fps. Features include HyperSmooth electronic image stabilisation, open gate (where every pixel on the sensor is used for more flexibility when cropping, for those who want video in multiple aspect ratios), and 44MP stills can be pulled from the 8K footage. Dynamic range is 14 stops, says GoPro. A new battery and improved image processor efficiency have extended the stamina (4K 30p footage can be captured for three hours), and the camera is waterproof to 20m without having to use it within an additional housing.

While the **Mission 1** has most of the same features as the Pro, recording tops out at 8K 30p, and open gate is only

available for the 4K recording modes. Completing the new three-strong line-up is the **Mission 1 Pro ILS**. While this version carries the same sensor, processor, stabilisation and battery life as the two fixed-lens models, the 15mm lens is swapped for a Micro Four Thirds Mount, which means that hundreds of different compatible lenses, including those from OM System and Panasonic, can be attached. As an MFT sensor is larger than a one-inch sensor, a 3x crop factor will make a 50mm lens look like a 150mm one, and users will have to focus manually.

www.gopro.com; £529/\$599 (Mission 1), £599/\$699 (Mission 1 Pro), £599/\$699 (Mission 1 Pro ILS)



- 2 GOPRO MISSION 1**
Same specs as the Pro, but recording tops out at 8K 30p and open gate is in 4K only.

- 3 GOPRO MISSION 1 PRO ILS**
A Micro Four Thirds mount makes it compatible with hundreds of lenses.



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AskMatthew

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Matthew Richards

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



Badged as Rokinin in the USA, the LK Samyang AF 24-60mm F2.8 FE offers impressive performance at a budget price.

Matthew Richards

Alternative trinity zoom

Q I'm after a budget-friendly 'alternative trinity' standard zoom for my Sony A7 III. I don't want to sacrifice wide-angle coverage but don't mind less telephoto reach. What would you recommend?

Linda Virgo

A My favourite lens of this type is the Tamron 28-75mm F2.8 Di III VXD G2, which is available in both Sony E and Nikon Z mount options, at £649 (\$799). There's also the Sigma 28-70mm F2.8 DG DN Contemporary at £779 (\$889). However, while both of these 'alternative trinity' standard zooms have the requisite f/2.8 constant aperture rating, they also both lack the wide-angle coverage of a more typical 24-70mm trinity lens. There's an



Matthew Richards

'Alternative trinity' standard zooms are compact and light, making them ideal everyday lenses.

own-brand Sony FE 24-50mm F2.8 G, but at £1,034 (\$1,298) it isn't budget-friendly.

I'd choose the LK Samyang AF 24-60mm F2.8 FE, with input from legendary lens maker Schneider-Kreuznach. It launched

at £635 (\$899) in the UK, but is currently available for £477. Another option is the new Thypoch Voyager 24-50mm F2.8 at £586 (\$649), which has just launched as the first autofocus zoom lens to come out of China.



Canon makes TS-E 50mm and 90mm macro lenses, which cost around £2,569 (\$2,499) each. The Venus Optics Laowa FF11 TS 100mm F2.8 Macro 1X comes in various mount options at around £1,299 (\$1,250).

Affordable tilt-shift

Q I thought tilt-shift lenses were mainly for architectural photography, but somebody told me that they're also useful for shooting macro images. Is this true, and are there any 'affordable' options?

Ben Stapely

A The 'shift' function of tilt-shift lenses is often the main attraction, enabling you to correct perspective errors by stopping the uprights of tall buildings from looking like they're converging towards the top, which is particularly useful in architectural photography. However, the 'tilt' function can be equally useful, as it enables you to control depth of field, instead of relying solely on the aperture setting. At one extreme, you can tilt the axis of the lens to give a shallow depth of field, often referred to as a 'toy camera' effect. At the other, you can increase the depth of field, which can be useful in extreme close-up shooting, where DOF is notoriously minimal.

Green cast

Q I've heard that the Canon imagePROGRAF PRO-300 printer creates beautifully neutral black-and-white photo prints. However, all mine have a green cast. How can I correct this?

Steven Smith

A The PRO-300 and subsequent PRO-310 are among the best inkjet printers for creating professional-grade black and white photo prints. It's important to use own-brand Canon ink cartridges and to select the correct type of photo paper in the driver settings. I'd also download Canon's free 'Professional Print & Layout' software. This enables you to fine-tune settings and to make 'pattern prints' with subtly different variations in colour and tone, so you can pick your favourite before making the final print.

For both colour and mono photo printing, Canon's Professional Print & Layout is a great tool to ensure that you get exactly the results you want.



Second-hand superstar

This Panasonic camera was launched as the world's highest-resolution full-frame mirrorless body just a few years ago

Q I'm after a high-resolution full-frame camera to use with my Sigma L-Mount prime lenses. Quality is paramount, but my budget is limited, so which pre-owned option would you recommend?

John Davis

A **Matthew recommends...**

Lumix S1R

The first generation of this high-resolution camera still has a lot to offer



Reassuringly solid and robust, the Lumix S1R is relatively big and hefty for a full-frame mirrorless camera, and extremely well built.

Released (year): 2019
Price new £3,399/\$3,699
'Excellent' £939/\$1,250
'Good' £849/\$999

1 Electronic viewfinder
 The EVF is based on a 5.76 million-dot OLED display with a refresh rate of 120fps.

Panasonic pitched up at the full-frame mirrorless camera party with two initial models: the Lumix S1 (24MP) and the relatively high-res Lumix S1R (47.3MP). They both launched as pro-grade cameras, but if you're after even more megapixels, the S1R is naturally the more desirable option.

It certainly didn't come cheap, but now that it's been replaced by the Mark II model, it's much better value as a second-hand camera. And if 47.3MP isn't enough to satisfy your high-res hankering, the camera can use its 5-axis, 5.5-stop in-body image stabiliser to subtly shift the sensor through eight sequential shots, delivering huge 187MP images as a result.

2 Dual-axis tilting screen
 Around the back is a 3.2in touchscreen with a 2.1 million-dot resolution and a clever dual-axis vertical/horizontal tilt mechanism.

3 L-Mount lenses
 The L-Mount Alliance was originally formed in 2018 by Leica, Panasonic and Sigma, and has now grown to include more than 10 manufacturers. There's certainly no shortage of lenses.

Sensor, proc: 47.3MP CMOS, Venus
AF points: 225-area DFD Contrast AF
Shutter speeds: 1/16,000 to 60s, Bulb
ISO range: ISO 100-25,600 (exp. 500-51,200)
Viewfinder: EVF, OLED, 5.76m dots
Rear screen: 3.2-inch, 2.1m dots
Memory: SDXC UHS-II + XQD
Size (body only): 149 x 110 x 97mm
Weight (inc battery): 1.016g

Readers' Letters

Have a burning question about the future of photography? Want to discuss a feature or a tutorial in the magazine? Send us your letters...

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Simon is already getting some pretty impressive results from his Nikon Z 7II camera and Tamron lens.

Simon Richardson

Star letter: Will new lenses make me better?

I'm a novice photographer, particularly in terms of engaging in it in a mindful way. I have two cameras, a Nikon Z 5 and a Nikon Z 7II and a growing collection of lenses, most of which I suppose would be described as mid-range. There's a 50mm, an 85mm f/1.8, a 14-30mm and a 24-120mm f/4, along with a few others from Viltrox, Tamron and Lensbaby.

I know that these, or more expensive lenses, won't make me a better photographer, but I have been tempted to trade in and go for the trinity Nikon lenses, particularly the MkII versions. With the cameras I have, would that be a mistake? Would spending around £2.5k on the trinity be a bit like sticking lipstick on a pig, or would it be worth the return?

In a recent *Digital Camera* issue, I saw that the new Nikkor Z 70-200mm f/2.8 VR S II had been tested on a Z 8 (June issue, 308). It seems to me that new lenses are often tested on the more pro-end cameras. I suppose another question would be, can you test these lenses on some of the older cameras like the Z 5 and Z 7II, rather than the newer cameras, and discuss their performance?

Finally, I've attached this picture for no other reason than it was enjoyable to set up and it makes me smile. It's called 'You can't

make an omelette...' and was taken with a Nikon Z 7II and Tamron 90mm lens.

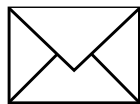
Simon Richardson, by email

Digital Camera says: On your Z 5, we doubt you would see any difference. With the much higher resolution of the Z 7II, you might benefit a little from the lenses you were considering... but you already have two primes, and the difference isn't going to be much between them and your replacements. Primes will always be better than the zoom lenses, but in our opinion, it's not worth spending that amount of money and expecting a significant uptick in image quality.

As for testing lenses on different cameras, our colleagues on the Digital Camera World website carry out the tests, so *Digital Camera* doesn't get to choose the camera and lens pairings. Also, given that the DCW website team tests lenses for all other camera systems as well, they don't have the time to test a particular lens on different camera bodies made by the same manufacturer.

Simon's collection of lenses incorporates primes and zooms.





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Rhiannon Lawler @rhiannonlawler

Landscape and wildlife photographer, from the UK, who has recently captured some amazing shots in Antarctica.

Ferg Flannery @thefergflannery

Fine-art landscape photographer from Ireland with breathtaking scenics in both colour and black and white.

Kah-Wai Lin @kahwailin

US-based Malaysian photographer with incredible captures from the natural world. We particularly liked his Scandinavian landscapes and captures of nomadic tribes from Mongolia.

Ben Salb @bens_small_world

Ben has a wonderful selection of macro wildlife photographs, shot with his OM System, mainly of spiders and insects.

Anastasia Gulova @aglv.ph

Astro and landscape photographer, with a fantastic selection of imagery. She was one of the winners in the Milky Way Photographer of the Year 2026 competition.

NEXT ISSUE: Read about Cazerella Tavs's top street photography advice



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Ride hard

Thank you for providing such a great magazine. I have recently returned to the hobby after many years. This photo (right) shows competitors in the Double Harness Scurry event at the Suffolk Show in May. It was taken with a Canon EOS R6 II and a Canon RF 100-500mm at 363mm, with settings of 1/1250 sec, f/5.6 and ISO 250. I would welcome your comments and advice.
Dr Stephen Feltwell, by email

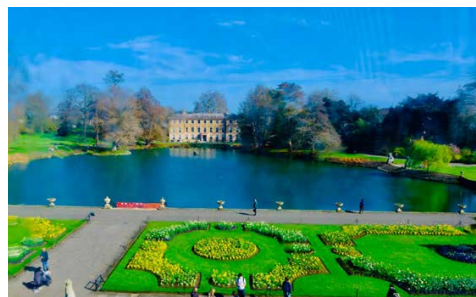


Dr Stephen Feltwell

Stephen got the technique for capturing this image spot on, but some alternative framing could have made it even better.

improved as the horses, carriage and people are all dead centre but looking left, making the right third of the frame redundant. With the vehicle coming in from the left, you'd usually leave space on the right, but here they are looking and turning to the left, so we'd put the carriage further to the right. Otherwise, well done!

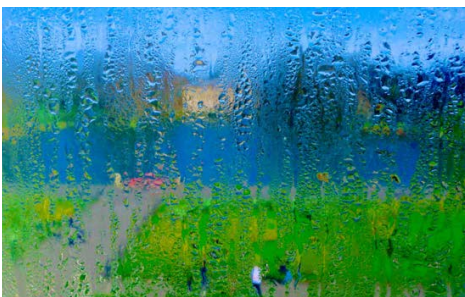
Digital Camera says: It's a great capture, and it looks like you've got the technique spot on in focusing and capturing the expressions of the people. The settings you've outlined above are pretty much what we would have used. The only criticism we would have is that the background is messy, though this is hard to avoid in stadium situations. The composition could also be



View from the gardens

On a recent visit to Kew Gardens, we walked around the upper balcony of the Palm House and saw this lovely view across the lake. To take a photo, I had to clear the window as most are steamed up through the humid atmosphere inside the glasshouse. As an experiment, I took a picture through a steamed-up pane, shown in the photo on the right, and I was amazed by the painterly scene. The steamed-up glass pane acted as a filter for my lens!
Kyri Stravri, by email

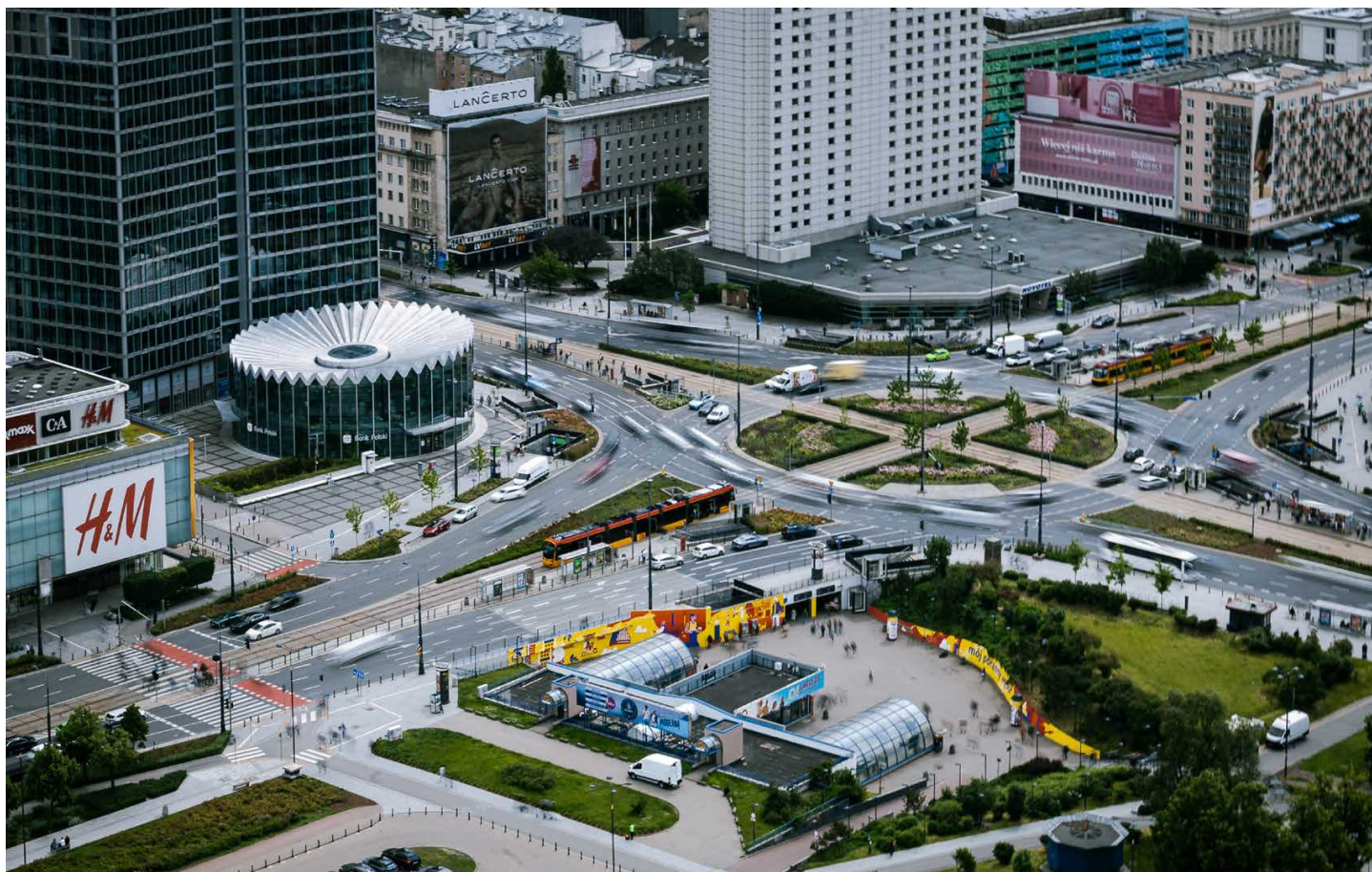
Digital Camera says: Technique Editor Wendy did a tutorial on custom diffusion in issue 308 and recently visited Kew Gardens (see page 42). It's always interesting to try different approaches for the same image. Here, we would suggest going into Manual focus



and focusing on the garden in the distance through the steamed up window. That would have made the drops look even more diffuse.



See the Photo Skills tutorial on how to capture the sights at Victorian botanical gardens on page 42.



Natalia Zmyslowska

The world with Nat

Looking for photographic inspiration? Try taking the higher ground, says **Natalia Zmyslowska**

In late summer, I find myself looking up so I can look down. I mean this in the most literal sense. By August, I've usually photographed all the familiar spots in my town. The same

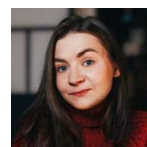
streets, crossings and café corners catch the same golden light everyone has shared countless times. That's when many people think they need to travel further to find something new.

But I've found the opposite is often true. Sometimes, you just need to get a little higher up. I took this photo from a skyscraper, a place where thousands of people walk every day without really noticing it. On the street, it's all noise and routine: traffic lights, trams, people rushing somewhere. But from above,

chaos turns into design. Roads curve into leading lines. Tiny people show the scale. Trams move like strokes of colour. The city stops feeling overwhelming and starts to look like a graphic pattern.

Changing your perspective like this is one of the best creative exercises that I know. It can help you see your surroundings in a new way and spark fresh ideas. Late summer is a great time for this. The light softens, pavements reflect highlights and cities mix holiday calm with the return of routine. From above, these details become part of the composition, not distractions. The best part is that you probably have places nearby where you can get this view, so you can explore new perspectives without having to travel very far.

From an elevated vantage point, you start to notice patterns such as symmetry, repetition and movement.



Natalia Zmyslowska
www.theworldwithnat.com
[@theworldwithnat](https://www.instagram.com/theworldwithnat)

Camera: Canon EOS R
Lens: Canon RF24-240mm F4-6.3 IS USM
Exposure: 1 sec at f/22, ISO 100

What I enjoy most about shooting from above is that it makes me slow down sufficiently so that I start to notice patterns, such as symmetry, repetition and movement. It also helps me approach composition more creatively and geometrically.

So the next time you're feeling stuck for inspiration, try seeking out a higher viewpoint. Even a multi-storey car park, the balcony of an apartment block or a hilltop overlooking the city can offer a new angle on the familiar. You might be surprised at how much more there is to see – and photograph – by looking at your world from a little higher up. That shift in perspective can broaden your creative possibilities and keep your photography feeling fresh. ●

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Reader gallery

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



**1 'Pangong' by
Subhabrata Biswas**

"At 4,250 metres above sea level, Pangong Tso in the Himalayas is one of Asia's largest brackish [saltwater] lakes, spanning 130km across the India-China border. It's a six-hour drive from Leh through Ladakh's scenic countryside. Despite Leh's short summer, the lake looks magical under clear skies. I took this long-exposure shot in the evening, which is the perfect time for solitude seekers to experience this renowned paradise."
Instagram: @subhabrata.biswas

Digital Camera says:

By using a long exposure, the water has been completely smoothed out, adding to the sense of tranquillity. The lovely colours have made the long trip to get there worthwhile.

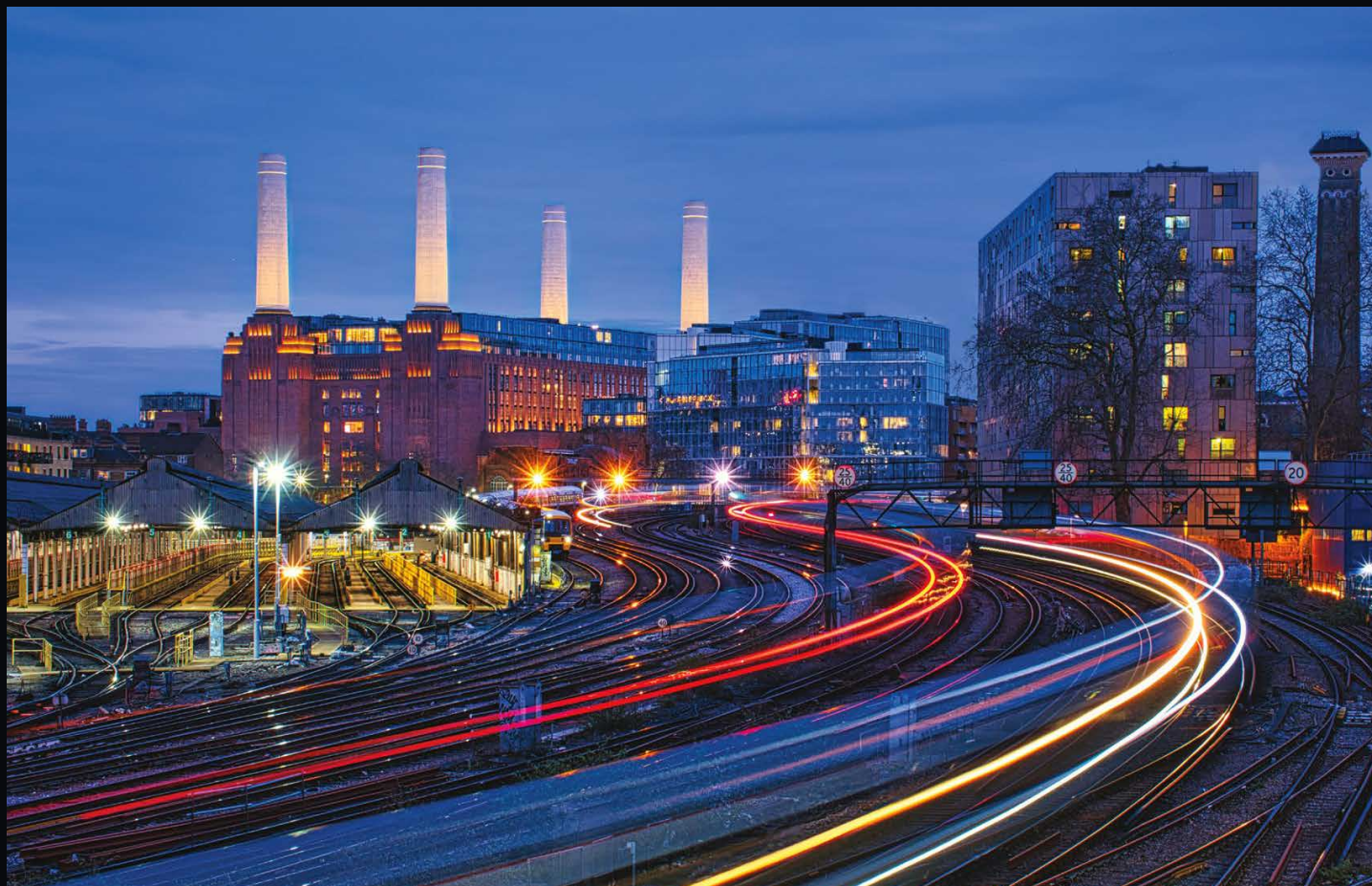


2

'Squirrel' by Ian Phillips

"I was sitting quietly in some woods near my home, waiting for some Muntjac deer, when this inquisitive squirrel decided to sit and watch me for quite some time. He then moved a bit closer, and I couldn't resist snapping this cute little pose." Taken with a Sony A7V and a Sony FE 70-200mm F2.8 lens. Settings: 1/500 sec at f/4, ISO 400. Instagram: @ianphillipsphoto

Digital Camera says: The colour palette on this image is fantastic. And the composition, with the squirrel looking across the scene, is perfect, too.



3 'Railway Rays' by Eric Gregory

"This is a shot of trains snaking their way to and from London Victoria station, with Battersea Power Station in the background. I shot it from the nearby Ebury Bridge during the blue hour." Taken with a Fujifilm X-S20 and 18-55mm lens at 50mm with CPL and three-stop ND filters. Settings: 40 secs at f/13, ISO 160." Website: ericgregoryphotography.com

Digital Camera says: This is a popular spot for photography, but all the elements work well, including the starbursts, light trails and background buildings.

4 'The Moon' by Sarah Peak

"The moon has always fascinated me. It is a familiar object, yet every phase reveals new textures and character. On this evening, the Waxing Gibbous phase showed beautiful contrast across the craters and capturing that crisp detail handheld felt incredibly rewarding. Handholding at 600mm meant that I needed a fast shutter speed to avoid motion blur." Instagram: [@sarahpeak_photography](https://www.instagram.com/sarahpeak_photography)

Digital Camera says:

This is a great image that emphasises the textures and detail in the moon. It is even more impressive knowing that it's a technically difficult handheld shot – keeping it sharp and focused is an achievement in itself.





5

'Embleton Bay Death Rocks' by Mark Forsyth

"Taking long-exposure images at the coast has always been one of my favourite types of photography. I love capturing the movement in the water as it pulls back through the rocks, with the sun highlighting them perfectly."

Instagram: @mf_dslr_photography

Digital Camera says:

The decision to turn the castle into a silhouette against the setting sun was inspired. It adds a brooding presence, looming over the foreground rocks and highlighting the gorgeous sunset sky.



6

'Blackpool North Pier' by John Dearden

"This is a long-exposure shot of Blackpool's North Pier with multiple images of the lightning focus-stacked and combined in editing software. To achieve this effect I used several filters, including a Cokin Polariser, Cokin 0.9 Soft Grad filter and Cokin 10-stop ND filter. I'm a disabled, wheelchair-bound content creator with a YouTube channel, where I explain how to shoot these images." Taken with a Canon EOS R5 Mark II and RF 24-70mm F2.8L lens.

Instagram: @chairview_chronicles

Digital Camera says: You have used filters and long-exposure techniques superbly, John, creating a stunning image.

7

'Fairy Pools' by Kevin Winter

"A couple of years ago, I spent a week on the Isle of Skye, and the Fairy Pools was the location I was most looking forward to visiting. I noticed that this waterfall had a channel of blue rocks leading up to it."

Instagram: @krwinterphotos

Digital Camera says: Well spotted! It's a beautiful location, with spectacular waterfalls and pools, and the channel makes a great leading line to the distant falls.

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Niall

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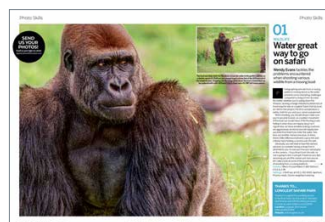


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PHOTO SKILLS

Tips, tricks and techniques
to improve your
photography

IN THIS ISSUE

10 skills for you to learn this month

01 Let's get botanical: capture a glasshouse	page 42	06 Sights of the seaside with Sarah Plummer	page 54
02 Sunflower shots at sunset	page 46	07 Shoot seashells on the seashore	page 56
03 Gritstone landscapes with Karl Roddis	page 47	08 Rate my photo: Abi Winkle's street candid	page 57
04 Become a marbling master	page 48	09 Why this shot works: Debbie Ellaway	page 58
05 Brett Townend's woodpecker capture	page 52	10 Photo Challenge: Sunsets/sunrises	page 60



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01 LOCATIONS

Let's get botanical

Summer is here, so head for the nearest rare plant repository with **Wendy Evans**

The Victorians built glasshouses, like this one at Kew Gardens in London, to house exotic flora that wouldn't have lasted 10 minutes in Britain's climate. As clever as those Victorians were, they couldn't have foreseen that just a couple of hundred years later, climate change would produce days so hot and humid that they would feel like being in a tropical rainforest anyway.

My challenge for you this month is to head to one of these vast cathedrals of

glass with just one lens and capture both architecture and flora. For my trip to Kew Gardens, I packed a Nikkor 24-85mm f/3.5 lens, with 24mm being wide enough to capture massive buildings if you stand back far enough, while the close focusing ability at the 85mm end made for an acceptable alternative to a macro lens. The other thing to bring along on your expedition is a circular polariser, which can reduce the glare and sunshine reflecting off the glass, letting you see through it to the inside.

The key for the building shot is to either frame it symmetrically or try to find an angle from a distance that gives it some dynamism and also uses the foreground. For the main image, we took the latter approach, composing it so that the building looked like the fossilised remains of Captain Nemo's *Nautilus* submarine.

Camera: Nikon Z 8 with Nikkor 24-85mm AF-S f/3.5-4.5 G, NiSi JetMag Pro circular polariser.

Settings: 1/250 sec at f/8, ISO 100.



Step by step Glasshouses Setting up the shot



01 Fitting the polariser

The first step was to fit the NiSi JetMag Pro circular polariser to help control the sunny glare off the glass panes. It can also help you to see through the glass and into the building; however, because the Palm House at Kew is around 178 years old, most of the glass is pretty murky. The loss of a couple of stops of light was inconsequential under the blazing sun.



03 Maximise quality

On the day we were shooting, the sky was particularly bright, and it soon became apparent that, even at an f/8 aperture, in terms of the shutter speed there was plenty of room to reduce the ISO to 64 for the outside shots. I had already taken the main photo on the previous spread at ISO 100 by this point, but for the other outdoor shots, ISO 80 and ISO 64 were possible.



02 Focus mode options

Nothing in the frame was moving about, so single focus was the best option here. This mode allows you to focus, lock it and then recompose, if required. When photographing a large building, such as the Palm House, a wide area box makes it easier than a smaller one. However, the opposite was true when shooting the flowers and plants.

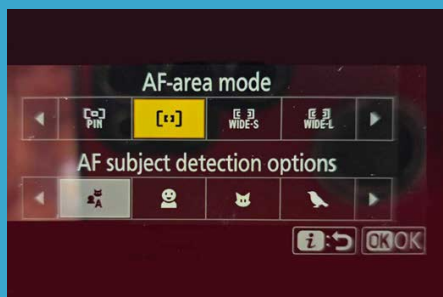


04 Outdoor settings

These were my baseline settings for shooting outdoors. With an aperture of f/8 to combine plenty of depth of field with the wide angle, and sharpness, using ISO 64 gave a shutter speed of around 1/250 sec. Shooting in Aperture Priority mode, I set the aperture wide open for the flower shots and back to f/5.6 or f/8 for the architecture ones, depending on the foreground.

Get closer But what about the plants?

As mentioned, the initial idea was to use the 85mm telephoto to produce close-ups of the flowers and plants without having to carry a macro lens around as well. However, to make this work better, I changed the focus point to a small, movable point. This enabled the focusing to be far more accurate than using a large focus box. For the outdoor shots, there was enough light, so I didn't need to remove the polariser.



Take it further Compositional camera aids

Use a small
focus point
with gridlines



As well as turning on the gridlines for your display to help position the horizon, you can also use that small focus box to help create front-to-back depth of field.

For a portrait-oriented image, such as this one here, position the focus point on the bottom third horizontal, at the left or right vertical intersections. Then look at the scene for a main foreground feature and compose so that the focus point is on that element.

You'll notice that this element will lead into the background and that, with an aperture like the $f/10$ used here (right), you'll have sharp focus all the way to the back.

THANKS TO KEW GARDENS

This fantastic botanical garden in west London can be found on the Richmond branch of the District line; alight at Kew Gardens.

For more info,
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02

LANDSCAPES

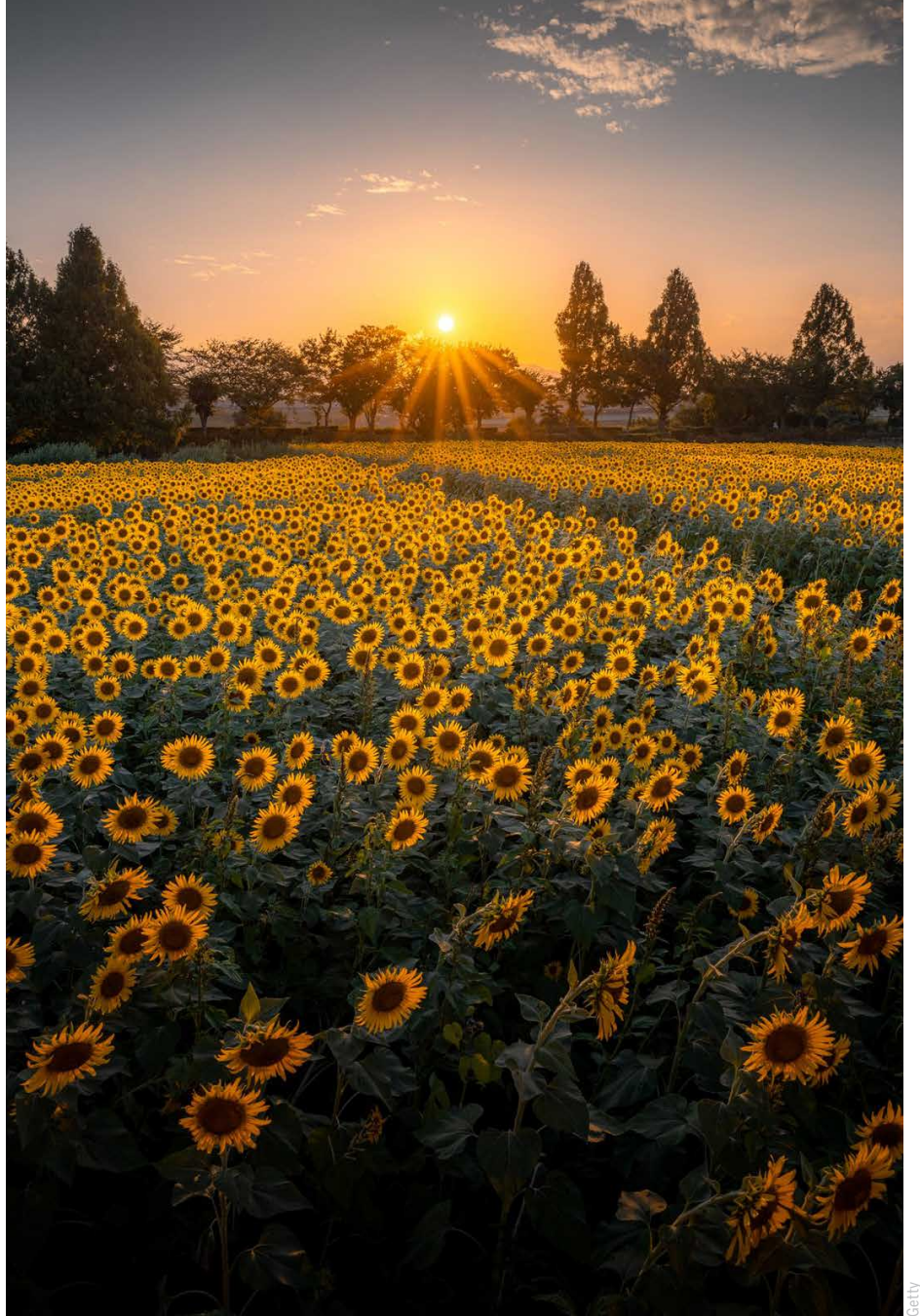
Sunflowers at sunset

Wendy Evans explains how to capture that most summery of scenes

Let's face it, is there anything that says summer more than a field of sunflowers basking under the setting sun? OK, maybe a shot of the seaside and a bawling child dropping an ice cream in front of stressed-out parents. But apart from Martin Parr-type scenes, a field of sunflowers is a must-have shot for the summer.

Shooting into the setting sun is a challenge, though, requiring a graduated ND filter to help balance the exposure. The alternative to this is to take bracketed shots for the sky and the foreground landscape and combine them at the editing stage. If you don't want to do that, then using a graduated ND filter is the way to go, combined with a narrow aperture to create the burst of rays from the sun. You'll need a wide-angle lens to capture the foreground, which will also help with the depth of field.

Settings: 1/1000 sec at f/11, ISO 100, 24mm



Getty

Step by step Configure your camera

Set it up for a successful capture in tricky lighting

01 Set the ISO and mode

Set the mode to Aperture Priority (AP/Av) and put the aperture on f/11. Dial in the lowest ISO you have, even if that's ISO 100. With bright evening sunlight, there should be sufficient light to handhold the camera. However, if you can, set the camera up on a tripod anyway, as that will help you get the composition right.



02 Set the focus and style

If your camera supports them, set a suitable picture style that's been designed for landscapes. You want to use single focus, rather than continuous focusing, and a wide-area box, suitable for landscapes, rather than people. With a 24mm focal length on a full-frame camera, focus 2m into the scene for maximum depth of field.



03 Metering matters

Fit your graduated ND filter and take a test shot using Centre-weighted metering. If you find that the image is coming out overexposed because of the bright sky, even with the filter, then either dial in -1EV exposure compensation or set the metering mode to Highlight metering, which exposes for the highlights and stops them from blowing out.



Wendy Evans

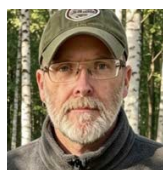


Karl Roddis

03 LANDSCAPES

Gritstone sunsets

Karl Roddis explains how to shoot the rugged gritstone upland of Stanage Edge in the Peak District at golden hour



Karl Roddis is a landscape photographer, based in Derbyshire, focusing on the rugged beauty of the Peak District's woodlands and iconic gritstone edges.

"If you have ever been on the gritstone edges of the Peak District, you'll know how photographically challenging the environment can be. With exposed, changeable weather and myriad rocks and boulders, finding the perfect subject takes time, persistence and a keen eye," says Karl.

"Arriving early is vital so you can take in your surroundings. I like to use my phone's camera to test compositions, looking for interesting shapes and leading lines. For this image, I was drawn to a striking cluster of rocks with a

three-dimensional quality that anchors the scene. Eroded and scarred with a dusting of lichen, it adds lots of texture to the foreground.

"With my camera set up on the tripod and the sun starting to set, I framed up the composition and began taking photos, using the exposure compensation dial to bracket exposures and capture the full palette of tones in the sky. As the clouds rolled in, I was initially worried that the light would disappear, but instead, nature put on a dazzling show with golden rays breaking through the clouds, bathing the landscape in rich, warm hues."

Camera: Fujifilm X-T1 with Fujinon XF 18-55mm F2.8-4 R LM OIS

Settings: Bracketed exposures at f/8, ISO 200

Instagram: @rodkarlosphoto

Top kit

Induro CLT 203 Stealth Carbon Fibre tripod

Lightweight yet incredibly rigid, this tripod handles windy upland conditions with ease. Its stability ensures pin-sharp images, even during long exposures in challenging terrain like the Peak District.

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Karl's five tips for rocky landscapes

✓ Arrive early, be prepared and stay safe

Arrive early to explore and find the best compositions. The uplands are exposed and changeable, so check weather conditions, carry suitable clothing, safety gear and plenty of water to stay hydrated.

✓ Use foreground interest

Look for striking rocks or textures to place in the foreground. This adds depth, leads the viewer's eye into the scene and gives your image a strong sense of scale and place.

✓ Focus on dynamic range

Sunset creates bright skies and the darkest shadows. Use exposure bracketing and shoot in raw format to retain detail across the whole scene, from the dark gaps between the rocks to the brightest light in the clouds.

✓ Keep your camera stable for sharp shots

Use a sturdy tripod and set the legs low, keeping the central column retracted. This maximises rigidity in the tripod, which is critical for pin-sharp results, especially for low-light long exposures in windy upland conditions.

✓ Wait for the moment

Don't pack up too soon. Light changes rapidly; the best colours often appear as the sun dips low or breaks through cloud cover. Mist can materialise and add atmosphere at any moment.

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04

CREATIVE

Become a marbling master

Get your groove on with funky ink patterns and Wendy Evans

M

arbling is the ancient practice of dropping coloured inks onto thickened water and

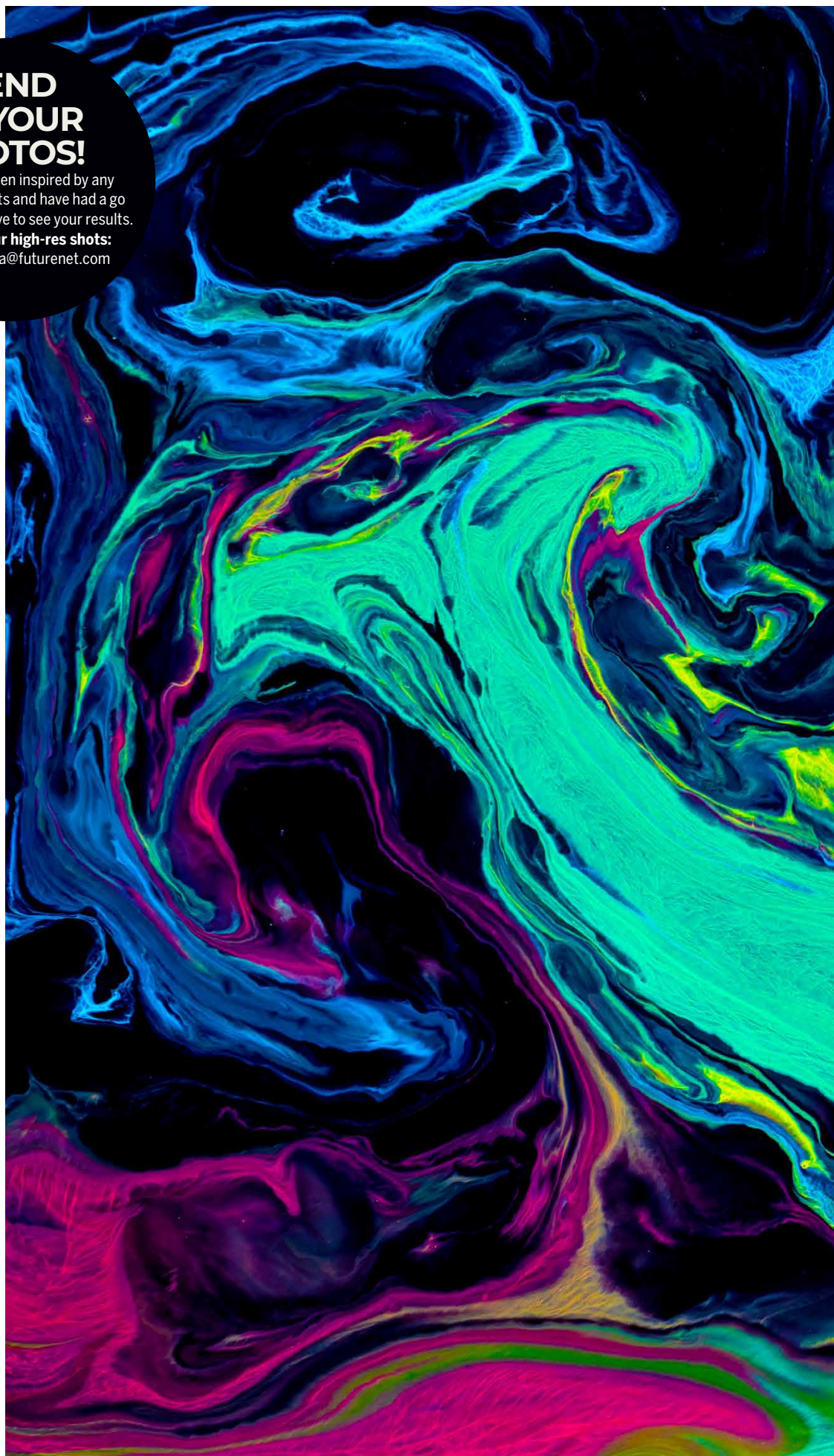
creating swirling patterns by stirring them with sticks or pins, before laying a sheet of paper or fabric on the surface to absorb the design. The process has traditionally been used for decorating paper edges and covers in book bindings. The Japanese had a version called Suminagashi, meaning ink floating, while the Turkish called it Ebru, or cloud art.

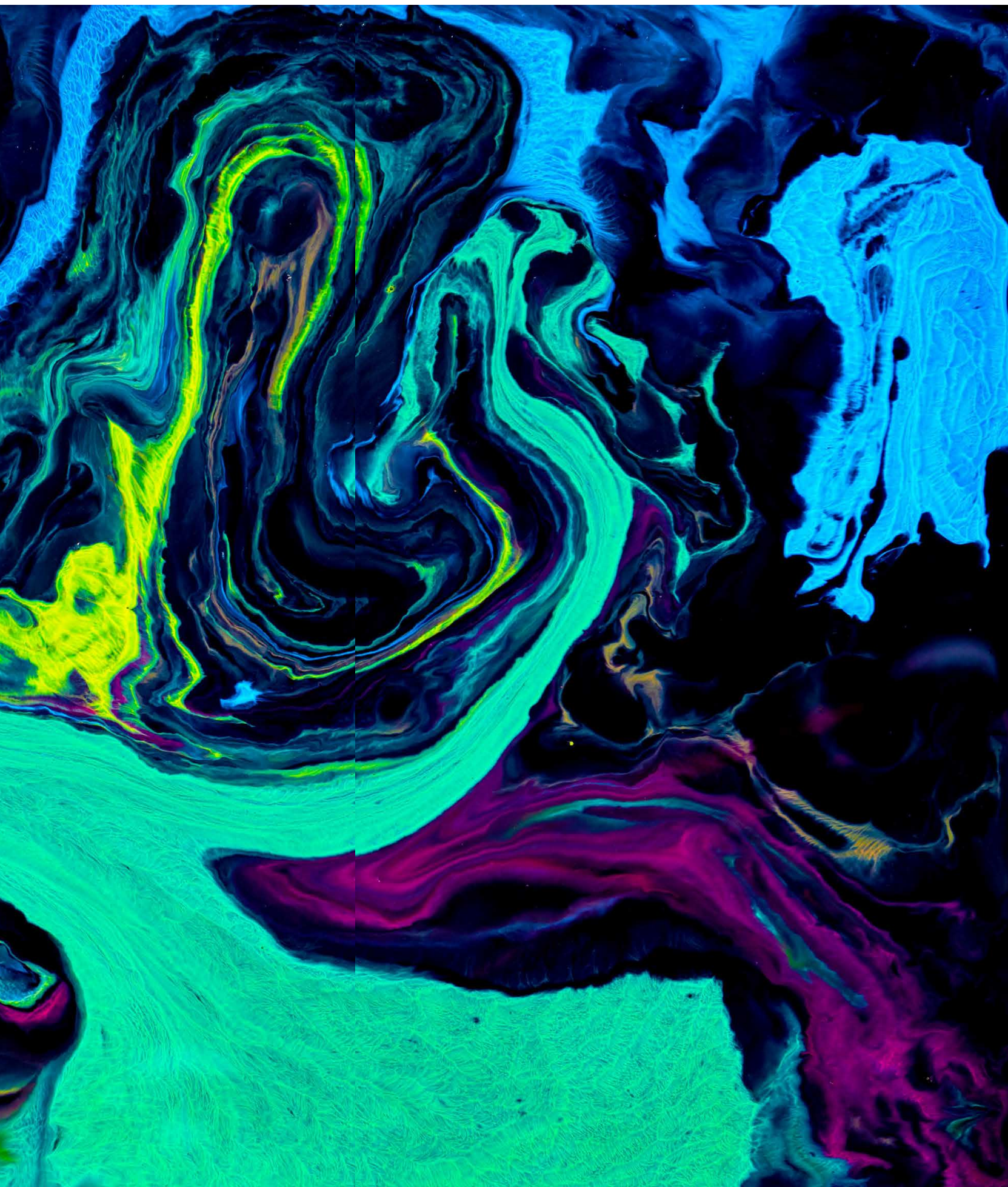
You can finish this project by making paper prints from the liquid, or stick to photographing it, which is what we're going to do here. It's a fun project, but it tends to get messy quickly, so have wet wipes or a cloth handy. The first thing to do is get a marbling kit, which can be found in craft shops and online, for as little as £12/\$16.

Camera: Nikon Z 8 and Nikkor AF-S 24-85mm f/3.5-4.5G

Settings: 1/50 sec at f/8, ISO 200

Wendy Evans





How to set up your marbled masterpiece

Lighting options

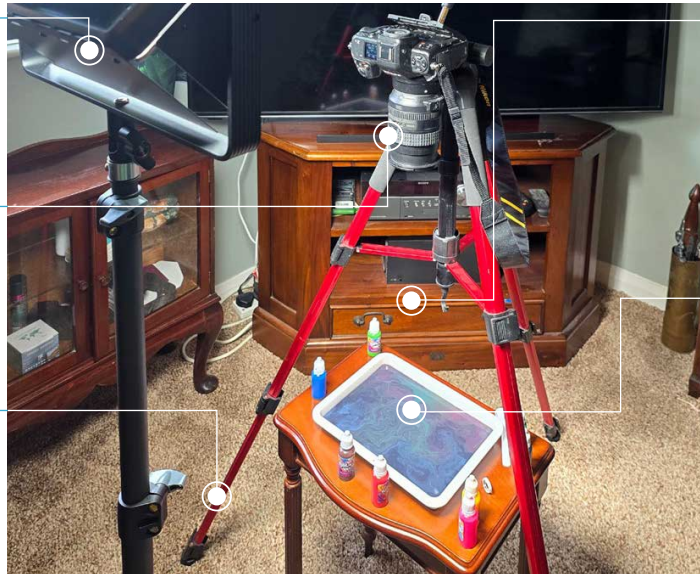
It's better if you have a light source so that it's more evenly distributed across the surface, and to keep the ISO rating down. Here, I manually set the colour temperature of the lights to 5600K.

Camera position

Position the camera above, shooting down, parallel to the surface of the ink tray. I used a 24-85mm lens at the 85mm setting to fill the screen. You don't need a macro lens; a short telephoto lens will do.

Tripod required

It makes sense to use a tripod so that you can take the time to get it perfectly lined up. Also, once you're marbling, you don't want to be fussing over lining it up each time. Finally, it helps keep things still.



Configure the settings

If your camera has a flip-out LCD screen, it will be easier to set up and change the settings. Try taking some test shots for the lighting first, then switch to Manual mode.

Get ready to paint

Setting up the thickened water takes a few hours, so do it before you start inking and photographing. This kit came with an A5 tray, which is the ideal size to fit under the camera. Have all your inks ready so that you can work quickly.

Step by step The magic of marbling

Getting the camera set up first is the key to successfully capturing the emerging patterns



01 Set the lights

I set the key light to 5600K and the camera to the same setting using the custom WB settings. Though not critical when shooting in raw format, it helps make the editing process quicker afterwards. If there are reflections off the surface, you could use a polariser or shoot later to remove ambient light.



03 Choose settings

These were the final settings for the subsequent shots. The shutter speed was fast enough to avoid any shake, but to make sure, I also used a two-second delay. The focusing used a wide area, single-shot focus mode, which worked well on the patterned surface.



02 Work out the exposure

I did some test shots in Aperture Priority mode at f/8 with Zone/Eval metering, and it was overexposed. I changed this to Highlight metering, which gave the best results. With a basic mix in the ink tray, I switched to Manual mode, increased the ISO to double the shutter speed and used those settings.



04 Start marbling

With all the settings determined, now work on creating the patterns. Use a dark brown or black paint for the background and lighter colours for the patterns. Or you could try using white paint for the background and darker colours for the patterns.

Prepare for marbling

Here's how to set up your marbling ink tray

This marbling kit came with three sachets of Carrageenan powder, 12 paints, a variety of tools to create the patterns with and some hanging ornaments and papers if you wanted to create a physical product out of it. The first step was to pour the Carrageenan powder evenly around the tray and fill it with 400mg of water. Stir it and then leave for four to six hours until it becomes thick enough to support the paint. Personally, after trying this, I'd be tempted to use only half that amount of water with the same amount of powder. To apply the inks, place drops from 1-2cm onto the surface, wait for them to spread, then create your pattern.



The paint tubes have little rings that can be used to hold ink in place or make an eye-like feature.



Wendy Evans



Brett Townend

05 WILDLIFE

Flight of the woodpecker

Brett Townend catches nature's speed, detail and unpredictability in a single frame



Brett Townend is an aspiring nature and wildlife photographer from Yorkshire who says his favourite genre is all about 'patience and observation'.

"This image was captured near RSPB St Aidens in Leeds," says Brett. "I spent time studying the behaviour of the great spotted woodpecker so I could predict the moment it would leave the tree and launch into the air."



Top kit

Manbily A-222
Aluminum Extension
DSLR Camera
Monopod

This extendable monopod, with a range from 45cm to 165cm helps keep the camera steady, especially if you are shooting birds towards dawn or dusk, which is essential for lower shutter speeds.

<https://manbily.com/collections/monopod.com>



Brett's five tips for capturing woodpeckers

-  **Patience is key**
Spend time observing wildlife behaviour and patterns. The more you watch your chosen species, the better you can anticipate decisive moments and get the shot.
-  **Don't be afraid of ISO**
A sharp image with noise is always better than motion blur or soft images. Modern cameras handle higher ISOs remarkably well.
-  **Post-shoot processing**
Not every image is perfect from the camera, but make sure to carefully edit to retain a natural look with detail, light and texture.
-  **Think about the background**
A clean, uncluttered background helps your subject stand out and helps create a stronger, more visually pleasing wildlife image.
-  **Shoot at sunrise or sunset**
Soft golden-hour light adds warmth, detail and atmosphere while avoiding the harsh shadows often created by the midday sun.

"Living in Yorkshire, I have plenty of woodland and open spaces where birds and other species flourish. I enjoy capturing moments that happen in a fraction of a second, especially when there's little room for error. This shot took several failed attempts before everything came together.

"Without the advantage of pre-capture on my camera, the timing becomes even more important. I relied on the camera's 30fps capture rate, alongside the large buffer capacity, to improve my chances of freezing the frame perfectly.

"What I enjoy most about this image is the amount of detail visible throughout the wings and feathers, while still preserving the sense of movement and energy as the bird launches into flight. I captured the shot at a shutter speed of 1/4000 sec and an aperture of f/5, which gave me an ISO 2500. The shutter has to be fast to freeze the subject while capturing maximum detail and avoiding motion blur.

"I shoot in Manual mode with Auto ISO, so that I get full control over the shutter speed, aperture and EV compensation, which I find

works best. Unlike in a studio, where you have control, the conditions are constantly changing. That's why wildlife photography often involves far more missed moments than successful ones, but that's part of what makes it rewarding. Spending time in nature and understanding animal behaviour has helped me improve not only my timing but also my ability to capture more natural and authentic moments in the wild."

Camera: Canon EOS R3

Settings: 1/4000 sec at f/5, ISO 2500

Instagram: @townend.wildlife

06

URBAN

Sights of the seaside

Sarah Plummer's photo zine celebrates the comfort of coastal resorts

Mark Rowe



As an empath, I tend to feel things deeply – and as a street photographer, I am aiming to translate those feelings through observations and connections with other people as well as the environment into something that resonates with the viewer. The streets level us out somehow, especially at the seaside.

What is your zine about?

This collection is about how many of us find comfort at the seaside. Coastal resorts seem to be places where we can allow our mask to slip and to discard everything we think we should be and truly connect with who we are at heart.

How did you approach shooting it?

I found myself heading to the coast when I was feeling overwhelmed and was drawn to people who were, perhaps, feeling similarly. Sometimes, it came from the environment and not just the people.

What were the challenges?

Confidence around other people is something I'm always working on. Street photography pushes me to be more open, and in turn, I've come to notice that other people are friendly and open too.

Who are your inspirations?

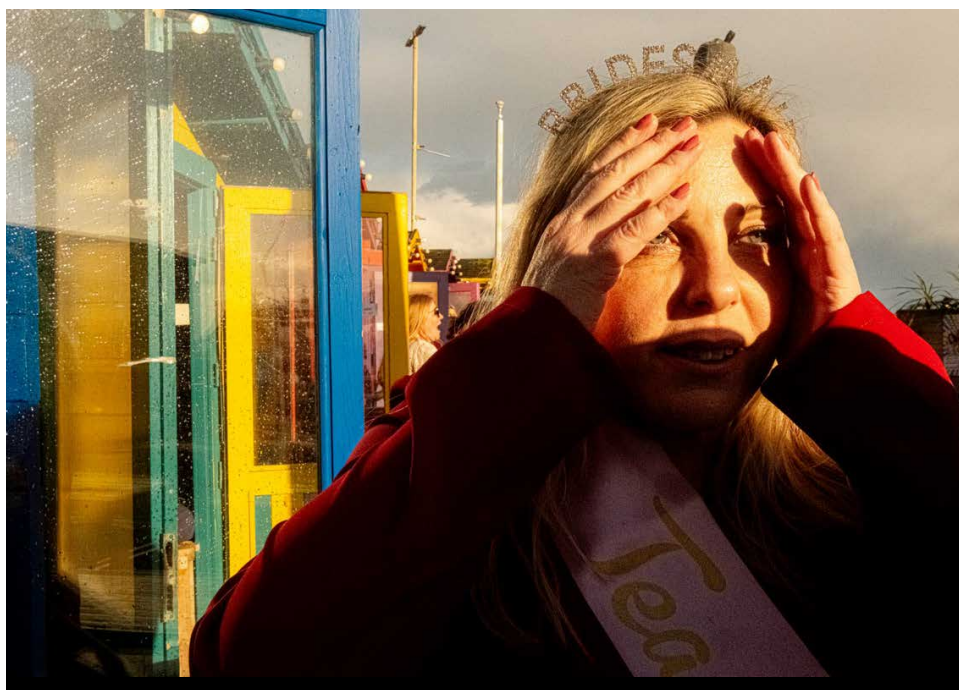
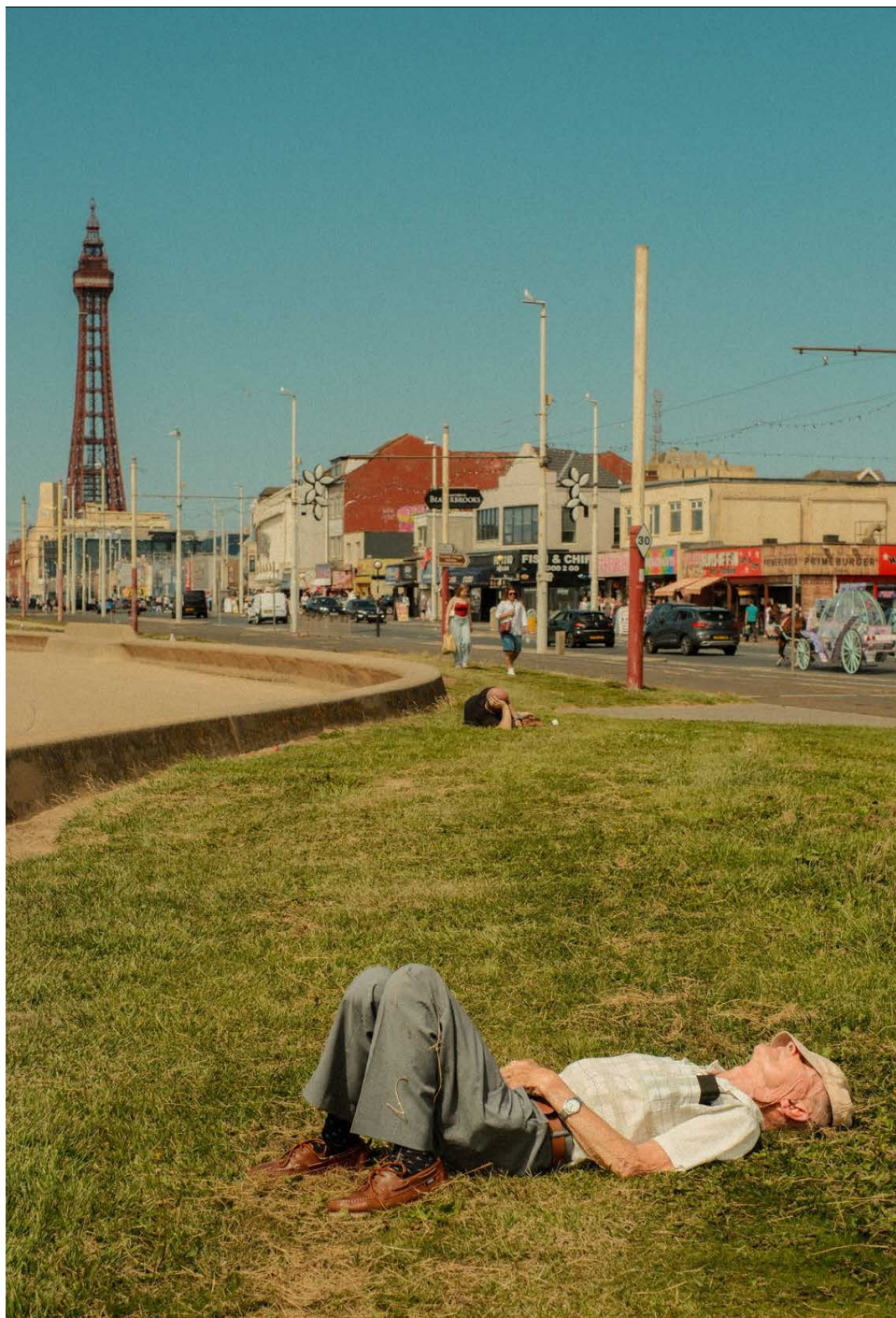
Martin Parr is a huge inspiration. I love the colour, humour and honesty.

Are there any plans for a follow-up?

I'd like to continue developing confidence in approaching people on the street and have an idea for a portrait-based project.

Instagram: @sarahplummer._

Website: sarahplummerphotography.com





DO YOU HAVE A PHOTOBOOK OR ZINE?

It could be featured here!

If you're looking to promote your photobook or zine, then we'd love to hear from you. Send them to: digitalcamera@futurenet.com

Sarah's five tips for shooting seaside street photography

1 Accept the weather for what it is

At the seaside, the weather is part of the story. Wind, mist, rain, harsh sun, sea spray, grey skies. Don't fight it; learn to work with the atmosphere.

2 Trust your intuition and instinct

Street photography moves fast, especially around beaches and promenades. Your instinct will often notice emotion, gesture, light or tension before your mind fully understands why.

3 Be confident when shooting

Confidence changes the way you photograph people. Move with purpose, commit to the frame and don't hesitate. Most people respond to your energy more than the camera itself.

4 Stay open, friendly and approachable

The seaside is usually full of relaxed, social energy. Smile, acknowledge people and don't hide behind the camera. Openness creates opportunities.

5 Slow down and observe the small details

Everyone photographs sunsets and waves. Look beyond the obvious. Watch body language, interactions, reflections, loneliness, humour, movement and the way people relate to the sea.



Get the zine Tomorrow's chip wrappers

Sarah's zine can be purchased through her website or by contacting her on Instagram. The 56-page zine is printed in full colour and costs £12.50/\$17. www.sarahplummerphotography.com

07

MACRO

Shooting seashells

Head for the seashore for a macro project with **Wendy Evans**

B Each photography doesn't have to be long exposures, piers and dazzling sunsets; you can also make use of other times of the day to shoot interesting macro shots with seashells. The first tip is that, because you don't want to be spending all your time looking for a suitably photogenic shell, no one will know if you bring along an attractive specimen you found or bought elsewhere and add it to the landscape. The idea is to place the shell so that it catches the sun falling onto it, not so it's backlit. You want it in shallow water so that you can get a decent reflection, too. Get yourself down as low as possible, which means getting your knees wet, and have the shell and reflection fill the bottom two-thirds of the image, with the sky and distant shoreline on the top third. **Settings:** 100mm macro lens, 1/250 sec at f/11, ISO 100



Getty

Step by step Get your technique right

Focusing and depth of field are key for a macro shot



01 Meter this

With sunlight falling on the side of the shell facing the camera, the best metering mode to use is probably Zone/Evaluative or Centre-weighted, which takes into account the background zone but adds more weight to the centre. Take a shot using Zone metering, and if it's overexposed, switch to Centre-weighted.



02 Focus point

Focusing with macro shots is key, as is the depth of field. Set the aperture to f/11 and go into your focus box selection menu. Pick one with a small, but not pinpoint, focus box. Compose the image as mentioned, then move the focus point to the leading edge of the shell. Everything in front of the shell doesn't matter.



03 Is it fast enough?

Even with f/11 on a macro lens, that might not be enough to get all of the shell in focus. If necessary, stop down to f/16, at which point you might need to increase the ISO value to 200 or even 400, depending on how bright it is. Unless you have a minipod, you'll be hand-holding the shot near the ground.



Abi Winkle

08 URBAN Rate my photo

Abi Winkle's street candid goes under the microscope

This image was taken on a photo walk in Chester last September. I was chasing something unique, and among all the inspiring architecture, I found this staircase. I waited, hoping for a subject, and this gentleman gave me what I needed. Later, I realised a lady had walked by as he was looking over. To me, that completes the image. It's like a long goodbye. **Camera:** Canon EOS 6D and EF 24-105mm **Settings:** 1/160 sec at f/10, ISO 640, 28mm. **Instagram:** @asl_photos

✓ Colour or mono? Most images start in colour, so the question should be: does converting to mono add anything? Does it allow you to focus on the elements better? Does the lighting have more impact? Here, mono is the right decision because it strips out any distraction from what would be muted colours at best, and focuses on the figures.

✓ Composition There's a lot going on in this photo, but the composition breaks it all down well. For a start, there's the open gate from the street, letting the figure onto the stairs. Meanwhile, to the left, we have

some information about where the steps lead. The main theme is the man looking over as another person exits the scene on the right. Let's not forget the photographer's position either, looking down on the interaction from above. It's a brilliant capture.

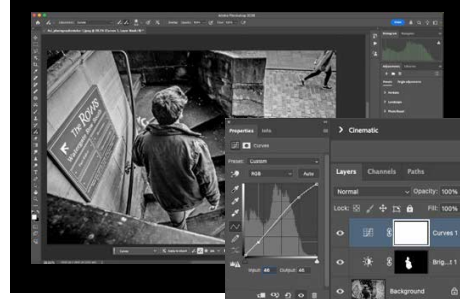
✓ Technical elements With a wide-angle lens, you get more depth of field and the choice of f/10 aperture adds to that. The focus is on the man's head, which means everything from him to the figure in the background is in focus. To avoid camera shake, the ISO was increased to 640, which, with a mono shot, adds to the gritty texture.

✓ Storytelling Abi was waiting for someone to come up the steps. It doesn't matter that we can't see his face, because if he was coming down, he would have noticed Abi, which may have ruined the narrative. As it is, we are left thinking whether he has said goodbye to the other person or is just casually looking across.

✗ Is it too dark? While the whole scene is nicely exposed, there's a little too much dark jacket and back of the head. Shooting in raw format, these could have been lightened at the editing stage without affecting the

An alternative edit

Here's one way the photo could have had some additional editing. First, we tweaked the Shadows/Highlights to brighten the photo, then made some local adjustments with brightness to the particularly dark areas. Finally, a Curves adjustment layer was used to retain the contrast and impact.



mood or balance. But if Abi had tried to expose the image for the back of the jacket, there was the risk of losing highlights from the sunshine on the hand and jacket collar, so this was the best approach.

✗ Whose face is it anyway? With one face turned away, framing the image so we could see the face of the other person might have added balance. But that's the challenge of street photography: everything happens so quickly that getting a perfect composition is difficult. You have to shoot fast and often as the situation develops.



Debbie Ellaway

09 WILDLIFE Bellowing stag

Debbie Ellaway explains how she came up with this image, which won the 'Mammals' challenge



Debbie Ellaway is a wildlife photographer whose work captures the quiet magic in nature. She finds joy in the chase and the stillness, tracking elusive creatures and capturing fleeting moments with shallow depth of field and beautiful, natural bokeh.

"This image is of a red deer stag bellowing in the rusty autumn bracken, letting every other stag and hind know who's the boss,"



Top kit

Sony FE 200-600mm
F5.6-6.3 G OSS

The powerful lens has a great range, with 200mm useful for fairly close subjects and a maximum reach of 600mm being ideal for those at a distance. The three modes of image stabilisation help ensure a shake-free capture. Read our review: www.bit.ly/dcm310_200_600mm

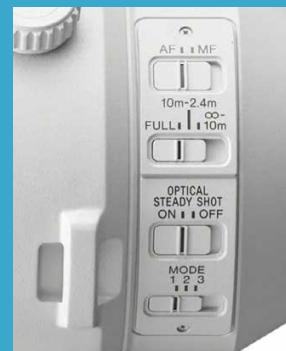


IMAGE ANALYSIS

1 FOCUS AND COMPOSITION

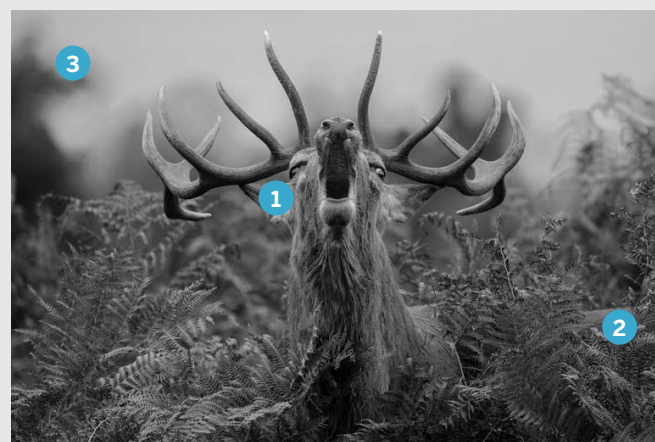
Fantastic reactions to capture the stag as he was bellowing. The focus is perfect and the central composition shows off the stag's antlers against the background. Catching the stag in the middle of a bellow captures all the drama of the moment.

2 SYMPATHETIC COLOURS

There are some great colours here, with the green and brown heather fitting perfectly with the russet tones of the stag's fur.

3 DEPTH OF FIELD

The f/6.3 aperture means that, while the stag and immediate foliage around him are perfectly in focus, the background is pleasingly blurred, allowing the stag himself to stand out.



says Debbie. It was taken in Bushy Park, London, in October last year. The bellow from stags is used to attract females and challenge any rival males during the rutting season of late autumn.

"I was walking along a footpath when the deer appeared from out of the foliage, a short distance from me. I crouched down so I could be at eye level with it. As soon as I clicked the shutter, it felt extra special. The dominant alpha-like behaviour of this magnificent

creature, the central composition and the framing of the bracken, plus the settings on my camera, all seemed to align, which is quite a rare occurrence when photographing wildlife. I was able to keep the ISO low, resulting in a high-quality image with little noise. As a rule, I always shoot in raw format and slightly underexpose my shots so that I can make final adjustments in Lightroom while keeping much of the detail and richness of the colours.

"It was such a privilege to witness this majestic creature rise from the bracken, marking his territory with a mighty roar. It was one of the most amazing wildlife encounters I've experienced to date. And it was made even better because I was able to capture him and share the moment."

Camera: Sony A7 IV and FE 200-600mm F5.6-6.3 G OSS

Settings: 1/640 sec at f/6.3, ISO 320

Instagram: @three_oaks_nature_photography

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Future



Getty



Getty

10 LANDSCAPES Sunset/sunrise challenge

Whether it's coming up or going down, send us your best sunshine shots

W

elcome to our monthly reader photo challenge, where the winning image will feature in the magazine. For August, the theme is 'Sunset/sunrise'.

To be more specific, the sun can't have set, and it should already have risen at dawn. Even if the sun is obscured by clouds, it must be in the sky for this sunset/sunrise challenge. We want to see you master the technical

challenge of extreme contrast, no matter what the actual subject matter is. For many, this will be a landscape shot, but it could be anything, as long as it features our local star, either going down or coming up.

Enter via email

Email digitalcamera@futurenet.com with 'Sunset/sunrise' 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 13 August and remember, only one image per reader, please.

The winner will be announced in the October 2026 issue (312) of *Digital Camera*, which is on sale from Friday 11 September.

Email your entry to: digitalcamera@futurenet.com

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HOW TO

CREATE STUNNING CLOSE-UPS

Exclusive extracts from *Digital Macro and Close-Up Photography*, by **Ross Hoddinott**

Ross Hoddinott



ROSS HODDINOTT

Macro photographer

Ross Hoddinott has had a lifelong fascination with the natural world. His parents introduced him to photography at an early age, and he was quickly bitten by the bug. After winning many awards, including BBC Countryfile and Young Wildlife Photographer of the Year, Ross decided to pursue a career in photography.

Ross is now among the UK's leading outdoor photographers. He is a regular contributor to the UK photo press and has written several bestselling photography books, including *The Landscape Photography Workshop* (co-authored with Mark Bauer), *52 Assignments: Nature Photography* (co-authored with Ben Hall) and *The Art of Landscape Photography*.

Ross has enjoyed success in international contests, such as Wildlife Photographer of the Year and International Garden Photographer of the Year. He is a Manfrotto Ambassador, a Nikon Alumni, a Lee Filters Master and a global Icon for F-Stop Gear.
www.rosshoddinott.co.uk

T

hrough a macro lens or close-up attachment, the world around you will appear very different. In close-up, you begin to see and

appreciate the beauty and design of miniature things that otherwise go unnoticed. Through magnification, you will reveal exquisite hidden detail and be able to highlight your subject's shape, form and colour. Quite simply, close-up photography will completely change your perspective and give you renewed appreciation for nature and all things small.

I'm often asked why I began shooting close-ups. I inherited my parents' passion for nature and conservation, so when I was given a little compact film camera aged nine or 10, I instinctively wanted to photograph the wildlife close to my home in Cornwall, south-west England. Since I couldn't afford to buy long, costly telephoto lenses, birds and mammals were out of my reach. A family friend kindly gave me an inexpensive close-up filter to try, which allowed me to capture frame-filling close-ups of the flowers and insects on my doorstep. I quickly caught the photography bug, and shooting close-up images soon became a conscious choice.

Natural subjects – particularly insects and plant life – remain my favourite close-up subjects, and you will no doubt notice a bias

towards nature within this feature. However, a close approach can suit almost anything; by cropping in tight to an object, you have the ability to highlight, disguise or abstract it.

Potential close-up subjects are everywhere – our homes and gardens are full of them – and its great accessibility is one of the biggest appeals of close-up photography. Unlike some other subjects, you do not need to travel to far-flung places or invest in expensive kit to take images comparable to those of the professionals. If your time and budget are limited, close-up photography is definitely the genre for you.



An overhead view, looking directly down on the subject, can help to highlight the subject's shape and form, or turn the image into a more abstract interpretation.
Nikon D810 and Nikkor 200mm Micro: 1/500 sec at f/7.1, ISO 800. Handheld



While no technique book could ever be truly exhaustive, my *Digital Macro and Close Up Photography* book is designed to take you through the steps needed to create your own stunning close-ups, starting with the kit and techniques required, through to advice on lighting, popular macro subjects and how best to photograph them, concluding with post-production.

One section of the book is dedicated to a number of 'Top Tips' – quick hints and pointers with the ability to significantly improve your close-up photographs.

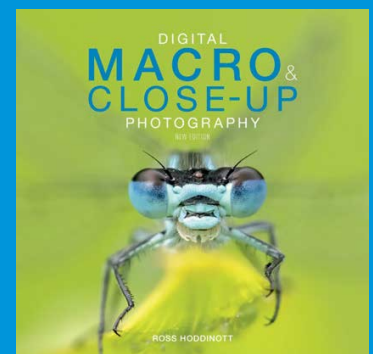
BUY THE BOOK

Digital Macro and Close-Up Photography

by Ross Hoddinott is published by Ammonite Press (ISBN: 978-1-78145-443-5), priced £16.99/\$24.95, and is available online and from all good bookshops.

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TEN CLOSE-UP TOP TIPS

For over 25 years, I've been peering through either a macro lens or close-up attachment trying to highlight the beauty, texture and intricacy of small things

A

s close-up photographers, we have the opportunity to capture minute detail and interest that others easily overlook. On my way to being

recognised as a close-up specialist, I've taken a vast number of photos, both good and bad. Although just like any other photographer, I still have a huge amount of learning and improving to do, I have picked

up lots of experience, tips and tricks over the years. Hopefully, by sharing a selection of my 'Top Tips', it will improve your close-ups, but also help you avoid some of the mistakes I've made over the years...

01

Use a makeshift windbreak

Windy weather is a close-up photographer's biggest nemesis. Even the slightest breeze can appear vastly exaggerated when working up close. Thankfully, when shooting nearby static subjects, such as flowers, it is often possible to shelter your subject. Try using your body or your camera backpack, placed to the side of the subject, to shield it from the wind. Release the shutter remotely, if required. Another option is to erect some sort of temporary windbreak, using clear polythene and a handful of garden canes, or you could try using a plamp (see page 41 of the book) to gently grip the stem in order to steady your subject.

Camera and settings: Nikon D850 and Nikkor 200mm Micro: 1/1250 sec at f/6.3, ISO 800. Tripod





02

Diffuse the light

One of the benefits of working so close to the subject is that you have more control over lighting. When sunlight is harsh and unflattering, you can diffuse the light to soften its strength and reduce contrast. Certain companies, such as Manfrotto, market diffusers. Alternatively, a sheet of translucent, opaque plastic will do the job. I've even seen photographers make diffusers from a coat hanger and a semi-clear shower curtain! Simply bend the wire hanger into a square or circular shape, cut the shower curtain to fit, and secure it onto the hanger frame using tape. Using a diffuser is straightforward – simply hold it between the light source and your subject to soften the light.

Camera and settings: Nikon D800 and Sigma 150mm

Macro: 1/1250 sec at f/5, ISO 200. Handheld

03

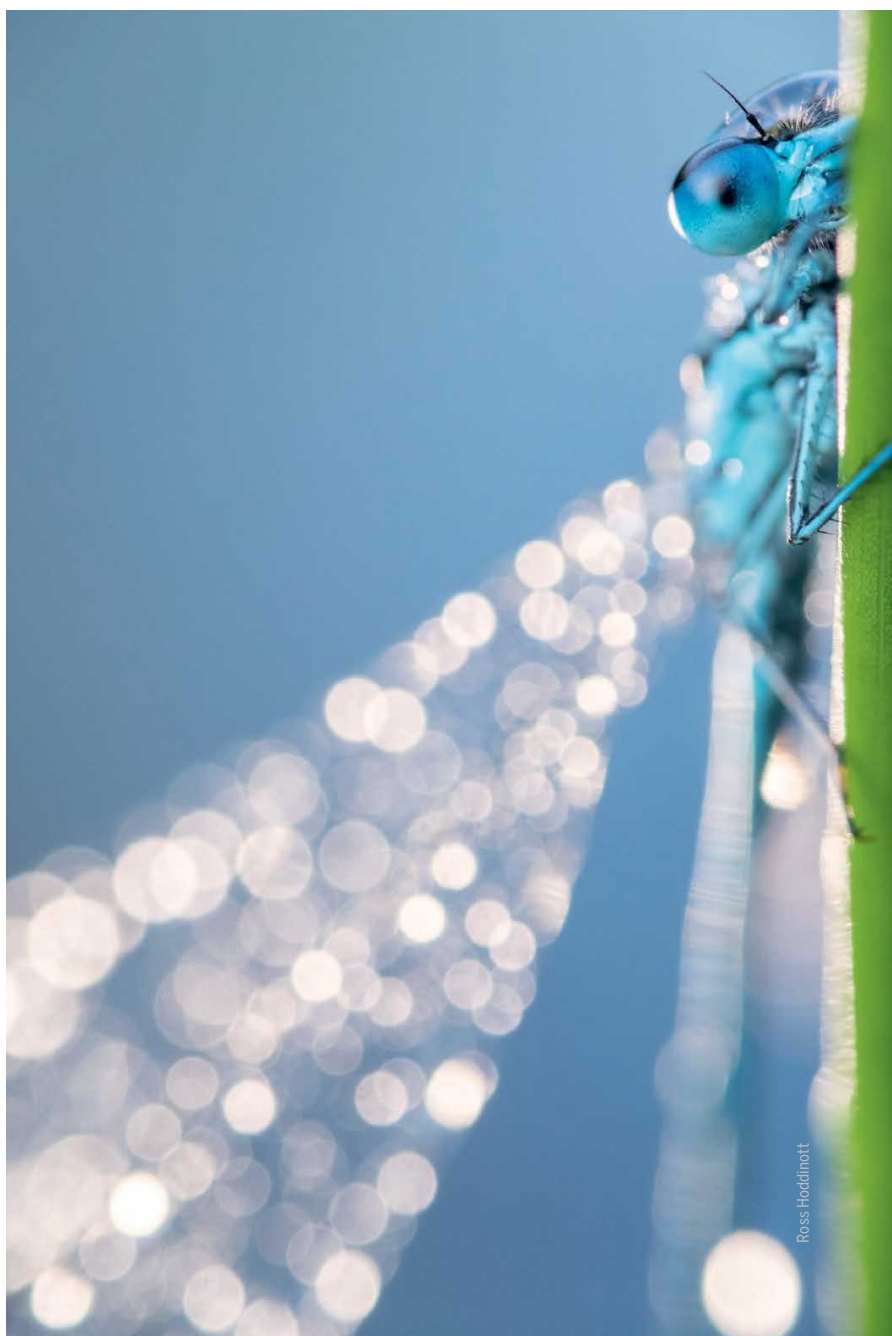
Break the rules

The rules of composition (see page 56 of the book) are a great starting point when constructing your photographs. These rules exist to help us logically organise the elements within the viewfinder. However, don't be bound by them; following them won't always guarantee the best results.

For example, placing your subject centrally, rather than on an intersecting third, can produce more striking, eye-catching results. In this instance, the main focal point – the damselfly's eye – is positioned too high and too far to the right, while most of the negative space is behind the subject. However, it is for these reasons that the composition works. It is bold, eye-catching and unconventional. By breaking the rules, the image is more memorable than a more conventional shot.

The key is to always compose instinctively.

Camera and settings: Nikon D850 and Nikkor 200mm Micro: 1/160 sec at f/8, ISO 2500. Tripod



04

Learn to 'see'

One of the key skills to capturing great close-ups is the ability to 'see' the image in the first place. Macro photographers have the ability to reveal a hidden world, highlighting or isolating small, interesting details, textures, shapes and forms. You need to rediscover childlike curiosity; if necessary, get down on your hands and knees to see what you can find. Look closely and then look again. Study objects that you might otherwise walk by or overlook. For example, mossy logs, lichen-encrusted boulders and seaweed-clad rocks can all present a host of opportunities when viewed close up.

Camera and settings: Nikon D850 and Nikkor 200mm Micro: 1/1000 sec at f/5, ISO 1000. Tripod







05

Use a groundsheet

Close-up photographers are often kneeling down, lying prone on the ground or crawling through undergrowth. To avoid getting muddy or soggy, use a groundsheet, such as the Linpix Photography Mat, to help keep you and your equipment clean and dry. Alternatively, wear waterproof clothing, or buy garden kneeling pads. If push comes to shove, even a bin liner will do.

Camera and settings: Nikon D850 and Nikkor 200mm Micro: 1/1250 sec at f/5, ISO 1600. Handheld



06

Check for background clutter

What you exclude from the frame is often as important as what you include. However, it is easy to get so preoccupied with your subject that you completely overlook what is going on in the image's foreground and backdrop. Messy surroundings can completely ruin an otherwise good close-up. For example, distracting grasses or ugly highlights will draw the viewer's attention away from the intended focal point.

Prior to releasing the shutter, get into the habit of allowing your eye time to fully explore the frame.

Camera and settings: Nikon D850 and Nikkor 200mm Micro: 1/500 sec at f/8, ISO 1600. Tripod



Focus on the eyes

OK, so you've most likely read this advice countless times before, but it is so important that I feel it is worth reiterating. Quite simply, always focus on the subject's eyes. While there are exceptions to the rule, it is rare for an image to succeed if the subject's eyes aren't bitingly sharp. Eyes are engaging and help us to connect with the subject, which is why they are one of the first things we instinctively look at when we view a photograph featuring either a human or an animal.

Camera and settings: Nikon D7100 and Sigma 105mm

Macro: 1/2500 sec at f/3.5, ISO 800. Handheld

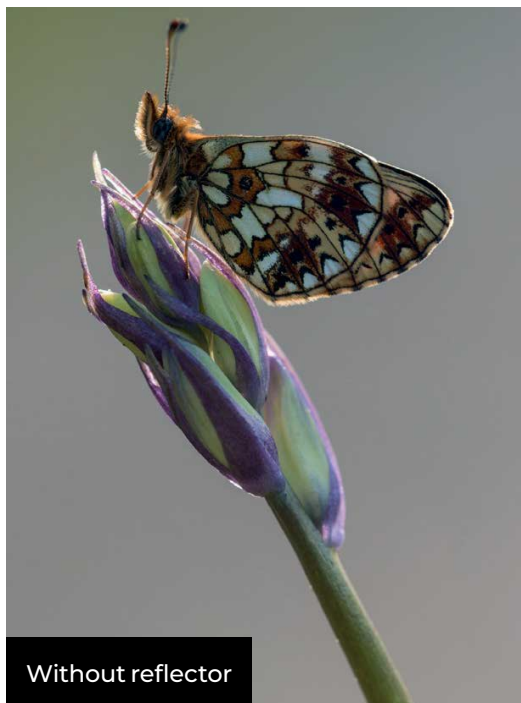


08

Make a reflector

When photographing miniature subjects, light is often in short supply (right). One of the best ways to supplement natural light is by using a reflector (see page 68 of the book). You can relieve dark, ugly shadows by bouncing light onto the subject (far right). Although compact, foldaway reflectors are inexpensive, you can save money by making your own. Simply tape silver foil onto a piece of stiff card. A4 is a good size, being large enough to be able to illuminate small subjects, such as plants and flowers, yet small enough to slip into most camera bags without being folded.

Camera & settings: Nikon D800 and Nikkor 200mm Micro: 1/250 sec at f/11, ISO 800. Tripod



Without reflector



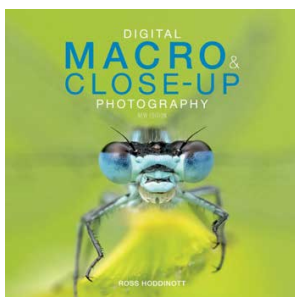
With reflector

09

Carry a soft brush

Through a close-focusing lens, even the smallest particles of dirt, dust or pollen can prove ugly or distracting. One option is to simply remove them during post-processing using the Clone Tool or Healing Brush in Photoshop. However, this can be a fiddly and time-consuming business. Instead, use a small, soft brush or blower to gently remove any specks of dirt from your subject before taking photos. This will save time in the long run.

Camera and settings: Nikon D850 and Nikkor 200mm Micro: 1/13 sec at f/9, ISO 64. Tripod



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Attach a lens hood

When shooting backlit or silhouetted subjects, the risk of flare is greatly enhanced due to shooting towards the light's direction. To help prevent ugly flare from degrading your close-ups, attach a lens hood. Most lenses are supplied with a compatible hood, but they can be purchased separately. If you don't have a lens hood, try shielding the lens with your hand or a piece of card. Even when a hood isn't necessary, it can still be worthwhile attaching one; a hood will give the front element of the lens a degree of physical protection from the weather and from getting scratched or dirty.

Camera and settings: Nikon D810 and Nikkor 200mm Micro:
1/1000 sec at f/4.2, ISO 400. Tripod



**OVERALL WINNER and
WINNER: FORTNUM & MASON
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**'A Woman Eats in the Canteen
of the Soviet-era Sanatorium'
Jo Kearney (United Kingdom)**

The Khoja Obi Garm sanatorium (health hotel), Tajikistan, is a brutalist concrete monstrosity built on hot radon gas-infused springs in the mountains. During the Soviet Union communist era, workers were given two weeks of annual holiday here. Today, its low price – \$28 per day including full board and treatments – attracts ordinary Tajiks plus tourists from the neighbouring 'Stans' and the odd backpacker. Treatments include hot pools and steam rooms, wax wraps and tanning barrels, plus hearty, healthy meals.

Instagram: @jokearneyphotography





Hotshots

Category winners of the World Food Photography Awards 2026 sponsored by Tenderstem Bimi Broccolini



© Albert González / World Food Photography Awards sponsored by Tenderstem Bimi Broccolini

WINNER: CREAM OF THE CROP

'Ine Fishing Village, Kyoto, Japan' Albert González (Spain)

Squids drying in the sun, using the traditional Japanese technique of Himono, in the fishing village of Ine, Kyoto Prefecture, Japan.

Instagram: @leckerstudio



© Claudia Anton / World Food Photography Awards sponsored by Tenderstem Bimi Broccolini

WINNER: CAKE AWARD

'A Mid-Century Man and his Cake'

Claudia Anton (Australia)

This image creates a cinematic mid-century mood with high contrast, and warm tones and textures. The cake is the centrepiece with symmetrical lines and buttercream swirls glowing in firelight. The scene is filled with hidden vintage surprises, family heirlooms and trinkets. A nod to the era and a moment in time.

Instagram: @thesugarologist



© Pingyao Song / World Food Photography Awards sponsored by Tenderstem Bimi Broccolini

WINNER: CHAMPAGNE TAITTINGER FOOD FOR CELEBRATION
'The Festival of Food Enthusiasts' Pingyao Song (China)

At the Gourmet Festival, organised by China's 'Zouchuan Hotpot' brand, hundreds of food enthusiasts gather around a communal banquet. The rich aroma of red broth – simmered with chilli peppers, fermented bean paste, beef tallow, Sichuan peppercorn, ginger, sugar, salt, soy sauce and spices – fills the air. Participants savour fresh ingredients like beef, beef aorta, tripe, luncheon meat and tofu, or lift their lights and phones to photograph or livestream the bubbling pot. Through tasting, sharing, and interaction, they convey the authentic flavours and lively atmosphere of Sichuan hotpot to food lovers across China and around the world.



© Marco Rutten / World Food Photography Awards sponsored by Tenderstem Bimi Broccolini

WINNER: BRING HOME THE HARVEST
'Early Morning Catch, Hooghly River'
Marco Rutten (Netherlands)

At sunrise beneath the Howrah Bridge, a small crew hauls in their nets on the Hooghly River in Kolkata, India. River fish remain everyday food and income here; catches from boats such as this are sold in nearby markets and prepared that same morning in Bengali kitchens. A quiet, collective harvest beneath the city's busiest crossing.

Instagram: @marcophotoworld



© Emma Stoner / World Food Photography Awards sponsored by Tenderstem Biml Broccolini

WINNER: CHAMPAGNE TAITTINGER WEDDING FOOD PHOTOGRAPHER
'Twin Bridesmaids Enjoy Canapés, Devon, UK' Emma Stoner (United Kingdom)
 Twin bridesmaids enjoy canapés of 'Proper Crisps' at Jess and Tom's wedding in May 2025, held in the gardens of The Grain Store, near Kingsbridge in Devon, UK.
Instagram: @emmastonerphotos

WINNER: ON THE PHONE IN SUPPORT OF ACTION AGAINST HUNGER

'The Chip 'n' Ladies Day Out' Maggie Jary (United Kingdom)

"This image portrays the power of friendship," says Maggie. "These four women, who were unknown to me, were having a fun day out and enjoying a bag of chips at the open-air Beamish Museum in County Durham. The image wasn't staged; it's a spontaneous capture of a joyous moment they were happy to share."



© Maggie Jary / World Food Photography Awards sponsored by Tenderstem Biml Broccolini



© Maja Lewicz / World Food Photography Awards sponsored by Tenderstem Bimi Broccoli

WINNER: FOOD INFLUENCER

'Noodles' Maja Lewicz (United Kingdom)

Dark, moody noodles with texture that you can almost feel. Mysterious, bold and irresistible.

Instagram: @veggie_intervention

OVERALL WINNER:
LOUIS JADOT WINE
PHOTOGRAPHER
OF THE YEAR
(AND PEOPLE)

**'In the Depths
of the Deposit'**

**Juan Miguel Ortuño
Martinez (Spain)**

"During the cleaning of the underground tanks, Pedro goes down and cleans the walls and floor of the remains of the previous wine with pressurised water. Once clean, his partner lowers a small bucket with a sponge inside to collect the remains that are left in the lower corner."



© Kellie Carter / World Food Photography Awards sponsored by Tenderstem Bimi Broccolini

WINNER: CLAIRE AHO AWARD FOR WOMEN PHOTOGRAPHERS
'Granny's Welcoming Gift of Love' Kellie Carter (United States)

This home affirms the true meaning of family. Where home is sustained by generosity, where love is expressed through making, sharing and showing up again and again. Where Granny's smile, freshly baked cookies and a glass of cold milk can make even the bleakest of days bright again.



WINNER: FOOD PORTRAITURE
'Jelly with a Cherry' Danielle Marie (Australia)

"I wanted to capture this image in a minimal and moody style, showing the quiet drama of this classic dessert," says Danielle. "I was inspired by the way the light filters through the jelly like a jewel, and I used a shadowed and geometric background to show beauty in the ordinary."

Instagram: @dm.fotographica



About the competition

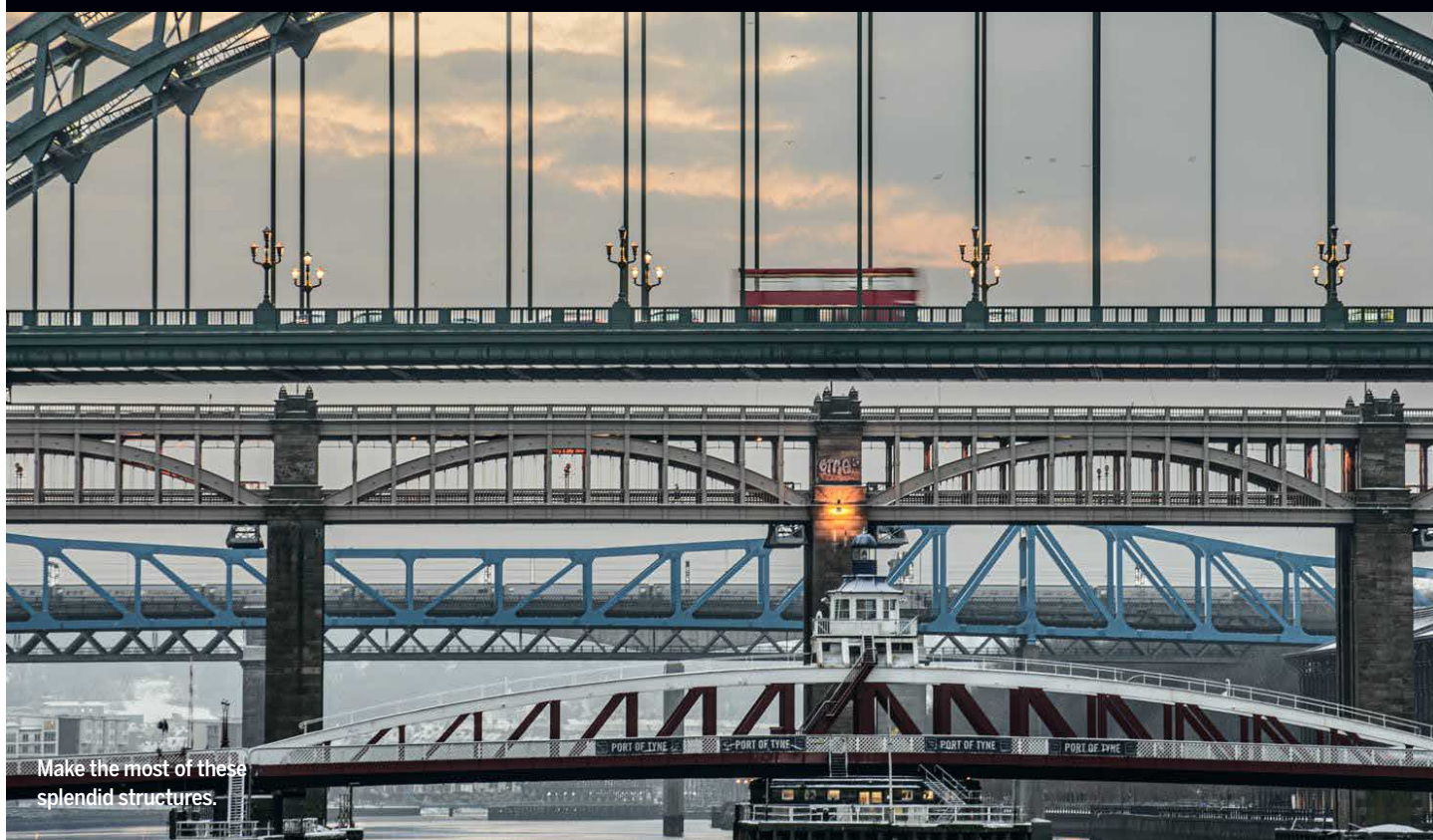
The World Food Photography Awards, sponsored by Tenderstem Bimi Broccolini, is a unique photography competition celebrating the very best in food photography from around the world. Open to both professionals and non-professionals, a range of cash prizes is awarded, including £5,000 (\$6,600) for the overall winner. For more information and details on how to enter next year's competition, visit: www.worldfoodphotographyawards.com

CAMERA CLINIC

Master the art of modern photography

This month: Bridges

These structures come in all shapes and sizes. so enjoy them with your camera



Will
Cheung

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

There are lots of bridges in the UK. Over 110,000, according to a web search, and that doesn't include stone bridges, small road bridges and footbridges. However, these structures serve a specific purpose and aren't usually designed as camera fodder, so are they worth a serious look from a photographer's perspective?

We take bridges for granted – most people use them every day without a second thought. They serve their function, but it's not often that they deserve any extra attention. Of course, there are notable exceptions, and many bridges are world-renowned structures – Tower Bridge, Tyne Bridge, Severn Bridge, Glenfinnan Viaduct and Ribblesdale Viaduct, to name just five UK landmarks.

To embark on your photo journey, start by taking a considered look at the bridges you see and use every day, commuting to work, walking the dog or out shopping.

You might find that they have some photographic merit and the potential to make decent images. Try exploring the textures, shooting long exposures or looking for interesting architectural detail on your nearest bridges.

If, after serious thought, you come to the conclusion that your local bridges are so ordinary that there are no possibilities for photos, that's when you must spread your wings and explore further afield. If you live near a river, it makes sense to head there – adding water to the equation brings plenty of creative options, such as reflections and long shutter speeds for creative blur.

Essentially, starting off by examining bridges in this way gives you a solid start and helps crystallise your thoughts for the bigger challenges ahead. Once you get sucked into this subject, there's enough potential to keep you busy for a very long time indeed.



Get the knowledge

Not all bridges are beautiful, but they all have a purpose

The joy of bridge photography is that you don't need special kit or knowledge – just rock up and enjoy the experience. Soak up the history or simply appreciate the skill, engineering and blood, sweat and tears that made them possible. Which technique approach you take is worth thinking about beforehand, so that your results will have some commonality as well as a sense of personal input.

You may decide that viaducts are your subject, or perhaps you'll stick with rural bridges or rail bridges. Another idea is to shoot those from a particular era or designer. Isambard Kingdom Brunel designed over 100 bridges, including the Clifton Suspension Bridge, while Thomas Telford was even more prolific with over 1,200 to his name.

Bridging the gap

Pick the right type of lens to suit your creativity

GO ULTRA-WIDE

Ultra-wide lenses are available for most cameras and are certainly worth considering for your bridge kit. It can get more of the bridge underside in the frame, make the most of bold lines and give powerful compositional angles. How wide you go is, of course, down to taste and budget, but if resources are limited, there are plenty of budget wide-angle lenses on the market. As an example, this is the full-frame AF Viltrox 14mm f/4 (below), which costs £190 (\$199).



TAKE THE SUPERZOOM ROUTE

Zooms that cover an extreme focal length from wide-angle to telephoto might not boast the optical performance of less ambitious zooms, but they are undoubtedly capable and good enough to produce pro-quality images, even when used at their widest apertures. Their relatively slow maximum aperture is a downside, but that is often outweighed by the huge versatility and convenience of having a single lens. If the slow aperture is an issue, add a 50mm f/1.8 to your kit.

TRY SOMETHING DIFFERENT

Take an oblique view of bridges by using a creative effect lens, such as a Lensbaby, a fisheye or a toy lens. Soft dreamy effects, uncorrected lens distortion and inferior optics let you put your own stamp on images. Another optical option is a budget shift lens, which allows you to adjust the lens for lots of blur and a range of creative effects. The TtArtisan Tilt 50mm F1.4 is a manual focusing lens selling at £249 (\$229).



Accessories to expand your repertoire

Essential stuff for your ideal bridge shooting outfit

YOUR THREE-LEGGED FRIEND

To explore long exposures and make the most of your camera's resolution, a tripod is worth the investment, even though they add to your burden. A carbon fibre travel tripod makes the most sense, as it is usually light enough to carry for long walks, yet still offers a good maximum working height and excellent stability. Add a solid ballhead, preferably one with adjustable friction, and you have a solid yet portable combination.



CONTROL THE LIGHT

Shooting long exposures is an exciting creative avenue to explore, allowing you to blur traffic, water and skies. To do this, you'll need a neutral density filter or two. Consider a six- and 10-stop as essential, but an even stronger ND, such as a 15- or 16-stop, is worth its weight in gold so that you can make exposures lasting several minutes in daylight without needing to select the smallest f/stops.

HANDS-FREE RELEASE

To make the most of a tripod, you need to release the shutter without touching the camera. The modern way is to use an app on your smart device, but some apps can be fiddly or flaky. There is much to be said for a wired remote release, and more advanced models have extras such as an interval timer. Another option is to use the camera's self-timer, but not being able to time the shot is a downside.



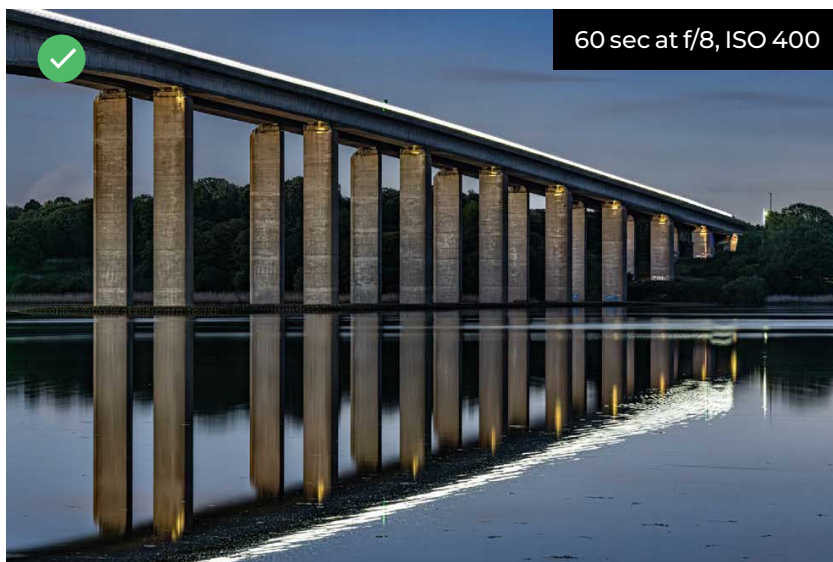
Perfect examples of bridge photography

Elevate your bridge photos to the next level by trying something different



BRIDGE OF LIGHT

Driving past the Orwell Bridge in Suffolk at twilight, I realised there was a picture to be had, so I pulled over, set up the tripod and took a few shots. However, the scene was missing something to elevate it from a straight record photo. The parapet on the bridge means that car headlights don't show, but lorry lights do, so I opened the shutter and crossed my fingers for a suitable vehicle. The A14 road crossing the bridge starts from Felixstowe, the UK's busiest container port, but it was late in the evening, so there were few lorries. Luckily, one with bright spotlights came over when the shutter was open and that made the shot.



Will Cheung

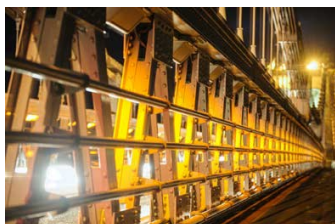


WAITING FOR TRAINS

Berwick-upon-Tweed is known for its three bridges spanning the River Tweed. For this photo of the Royal Tweed Bridge framing the Royal Border Bridge, a Grade 1 listed railway viaduct designed by Robert Stephenson, I stood on the Old Bridge using a 70-200mm zoom on my full-frame camera. I tried different compositions when the trains appeared – it helped that the station was nearby, so they were moving slowly. My favoured shot had a train plus a couple walking across the road bridge, which added interest to the top corner. Having the base of the viaduct columns visible also helped give a more balanced composition.

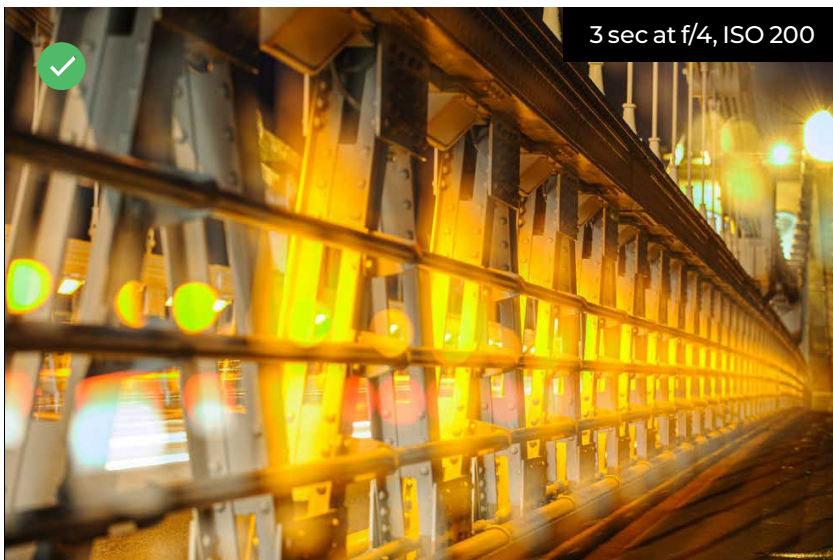


Will Cheung



GETTING CREATIVE ON THE BRIDGE

After spending a few hours exploring the Menai Suspension Bridge with my camera, I moved on to shooting light trails in the evening. The original shot was taken with the camera on a tripod and fitted with a 70-200mm telezoom using a wide lens aperture with depth of field limited to a small section. So I started experimenting with multiple exposures. The camera could do up to 10 exposures on a single frame, but I shot just two exposures, one sharp and one out of focus. The defocused shot added lovely glowing highlights, with the result dependent on how out of focus the second exposure was, so I tried different distances.



Will Cheung



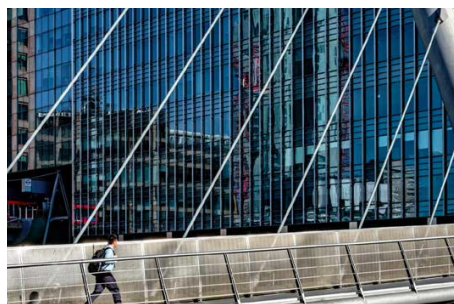
Capture your best-ever bridge photos

Expert hints and tips for great images of these super structures

You won't live far from a bridge of some description, but there may be none worth taking the camera out for. Bridges are there for a purpose, and while they often make good vantage points, most have no creative benefit. Of course, your outlook may change after this Camera Clinic, and you might be surprised at what you find if you look

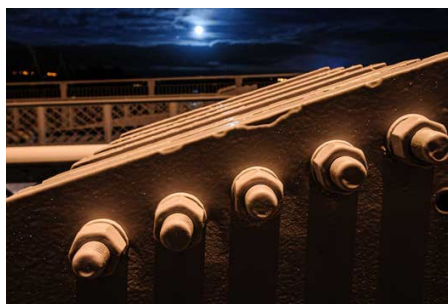
with a fresh eye. Fortunately, there are plenty of photogenic bridges and viaducts across the country, so the potential for great photos is huge, and they suit a broad spectrum of photographic approaches. We cover nine creative avenues you can take below, but it's far from a comprehensive list.

Nine ways you can shoot bridges and viaducts



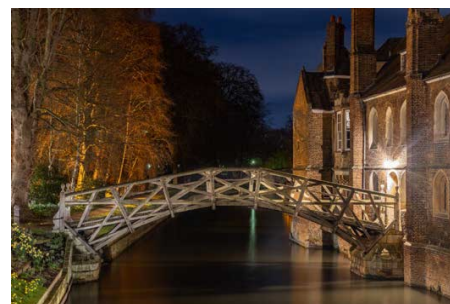
SET THE ALARM CLOCK

Arriving at a location early has benefits – fewer people cluttering up the scene and less competition for the best camera position. Then there's the light. A lower sun will bring out texture, depending on the orientation, and bathe the scene in warm light.



GET IN CLOSE

Shooting structural details, such as these cable supports from the Menai Suspension Bridge, will give your portfolio variety. The most versatile lens is a 70-200mm or 70-300mm for isolating detail, but a standard zoom is ideal if you can get close.



NIGHT MAGIC

Shooting bridges at night is a different challenge from photographing in daylight, but the results make it worthwhile. Famous bridges are often lit, as here on Cambridge's Mathematical Bridge, but that can create problems with hotspots and flare.



PERSPECTIVE

Telephoto lenses are great for isolating detail, but they also compress perspective, so elements look closer. This effect works with the bold lines found in bridges. Use a small f/stop, such as f/11, to give lots of depth of field, as here at the Ouse Valley Viaduct.



SHOOT THE GRITTY SIDE

Graffiti is part of urban life, so don't be surprised if you come across it as you tackle bridges. Treat the art as an extra creative opportunity to explore. Add your input by shooting smaller areas for colourful abstracts, as here at Wharncliffe Viaduct in London.



PUT ON AN ULTRA-WIDE

Try an ultra-wide-angle lens and aim upwards for drama. Don't worry about the converging verticals, enjoy the strong lines and bold shapes. You will have sky in your shots, so consider using an exposure bracket and merging shots, like on the Tyne Bridge.



LONG EXPOSURES

Explore longer shutter speeds. Try a strong ND filter, and moving clouds and flowing water will record nicely as a soft blur with an exposure of 60 secs or more. Moving traffic and people will also blur, so it's a good way of reducing the number of distractions.



MULTIPLE EXPOSURES

If your camera has the feature, try shooting multiple exposures – one sharp and a second out of focus can look great at night, like the Tyne Bridge here. Or shoot a few exposures, moving the camera between each shot. Explore the different merge modes, too.



ADD SCALE

Not all bridges are awe-inspiring, so this technique is not universally effective, but to illustrate the enormity of a structure, use people, cars or trains to add scale and a focal point to your images. Keep the scene simple, like here at the Ribbleshead Viaduct.

Pros and cons

Shooting bridges is a good all-round test

Use your architecture, landscape and urban skills

Get into shooting bridges, and you will see plenty of variety. Whether your taste is for the grand, spectacular or quaint, every bridge offers different challenges and pictorial possibilities. That's probably why, as a subject, bridges have such a broad, popular and enduring appeal. It also helps that they are in plentiful supply and scattered around the country.

Explore bridge details
A wide view of a bridge, showing it in its environment, gives context, but there's much to be said for exploring fine detail. We're talking about the nuts and bolts that hold the bridge together.

Night moves
As day gives way to night, techniques such as shooting light trails become a creative option. Find a safe spot, set up the tripod and shoot exposures of up to multiple seconds. The longer the exposure, the greater the number of colourful lines of light. Use the camera's Bulb setting for exposures beyond 30 seconds and turn off the camera's long exposure noise reduction.

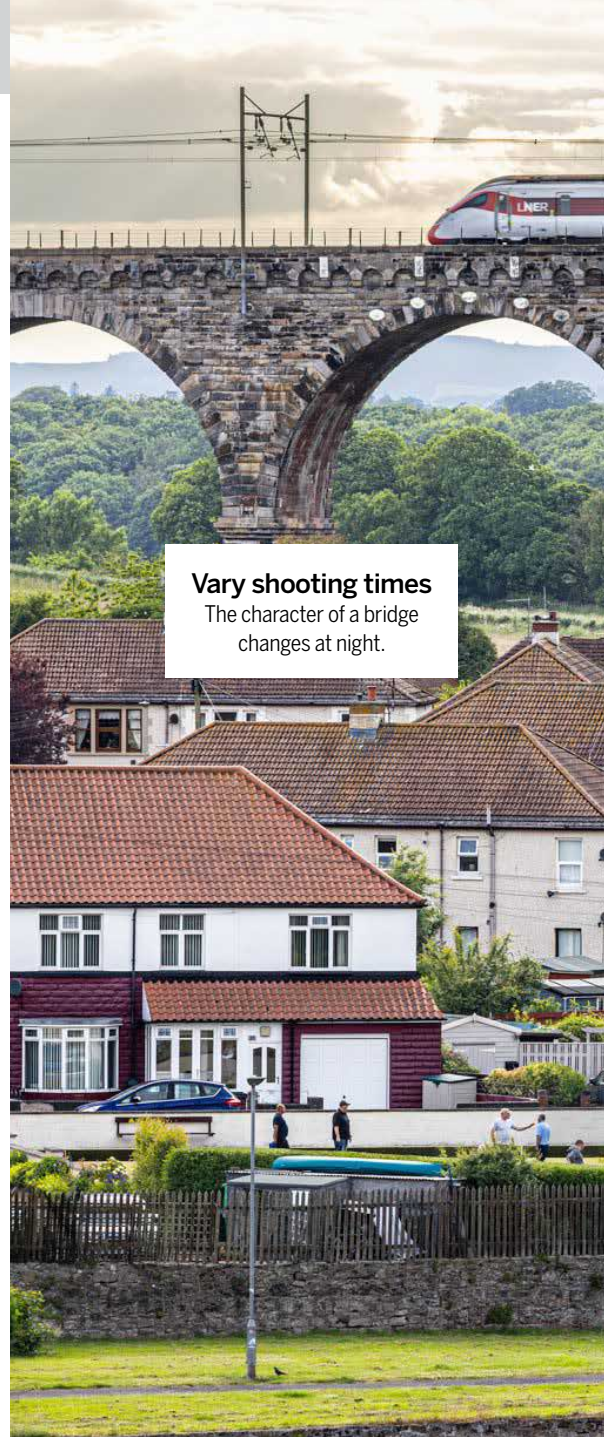
Wait for the right conditions
Shots of bridges are less impactful with dull skies, so plan your shoots when there's some detail. Clear blue skies are just as difficult to work with as flat cloudy days. Changeable days can be the most fruitful, as you get a flow of different conditions.

Scale matters
Massive bridges can look even more impressive if you include an element in your compositions that emphasises this. Try to capture people, traffic or a train in the frame so that you get a true sense of the bridge's enormity.

Dealing with urban clutter
Road signs, graffiti, bollards and lampposts can be distracting elements in bridge photographs and impossible to avoid, but what you can do is compose carefully to minimise their impact.

The rumble of traffic
Shooting on a bridge, whether it's designed for pedestrian, rail or road use, has its own unique technical challenge – and that's vibration. Shoot handheld, and you won't notice a thing, but that changes when you bring the tripod out. Clearly, much depends on the type of bridge you're shooting from, but if you make an exposure that isn't sharp, bridge shake could be the cause.

Look after yourself
Traffic, rough terrain and unsavoury people hanging around in dark places are all potential hazards in this form of photography. Wearing a high-vis vest, making sure you're dressed appropriately and avoiding potentially awkward situations or visiting locations with fellow photographers are all tactics to employ. Put simply, be risk-aware and use your common sense.



Vary shooting times
The character of a bridge changes at night.

Camera know-how

Shoot high resolution

Making the most of fine details

The chances are that your camera has enough megapixels for your needs. However, if you do need more, many models offer high-resolution shooting. This mode makes several exposures that are merged in-camera or in software, giving much larger detail-rich files from which you can make huge prints.

There is a downside, and that is the camera and subject must be absolutely static as the exposure is made. There are high-resolution modes designed for handheld shooting, so in this case, grip the camera firmly, breathe gently and squeeze the shutter release.





Keep it strong

Use lines and shapes
for bold images.

Compose with care

Use foreground interest.

Will Cheung

Lens tech Contrast control

Tips on how to deal with a huge tonal range in your scene

Not much light reaches the underside of a bridge, so that means exposure is a challenge. The dynamic range from under a bridge to the more brightly lit scene beyond can be many f/stops, and coping with that and getting a good tonal range in both areas can be very difficult. Careful metering and shooting in raw will give a file that can be edited to give good highlight and shadow detail, but there's a limit to how far you can go.

As an example of what can be achieved, this shot of the Humber Bridge was exposed for the highlights, which meant the shadows were about two stops underexposed. In editing, the exposure, highlight and shadow controls were used to give an acceptable result.

With careful metering, you can maintain detail under a bridge.

Original shot



Exposure corrected



Shoot photos like a pro

Do your research. Use the internet before you head off to your shoot

Before you set off to your chosen location, save yourself time, money and potential grief by checking the nearby roads, access paths and possible vantage points, plus essentials such as the available parking places, by using apps such as Google Maps.

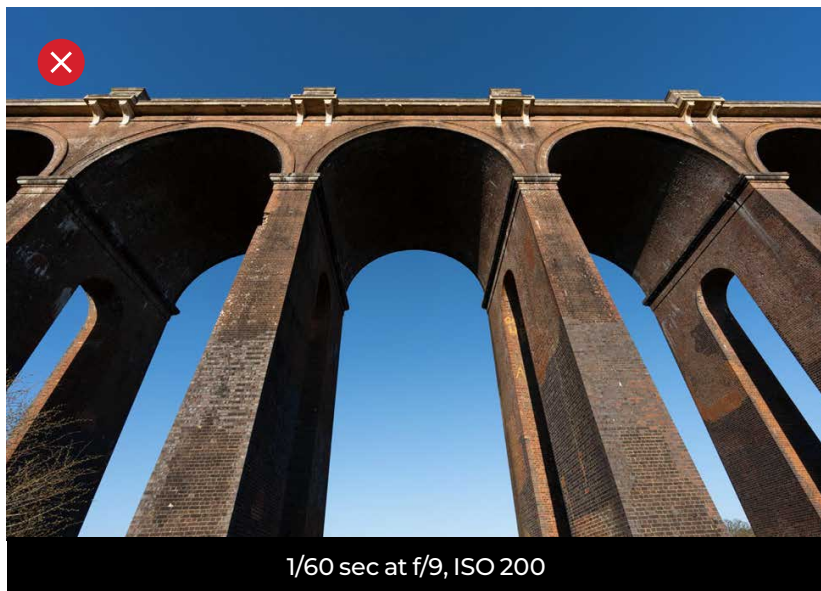
The orientation of the structure relative to the sun's position during the day is also worth checking, so you can capture your

bridge in the best light. Some of the best apps for this include PhotoPills and SunSeeker, both of which have Augmented Reality (AR) maps to show how the sun will fall on your bridge over time.

Of course, however deep your virtual research is, it isn't infallible and there's nothing that can replicate actually being there. However, it will give you a head start, and means you don't waste too much time.

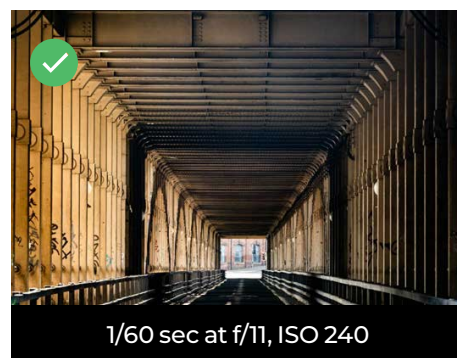
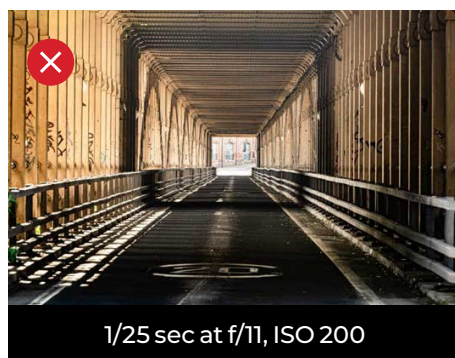
Looking up

If you have a wide-angle lens, you could try pointing it up and photographing the bridge from below. This is a creative approach that can work really well, as it does here with the magnificent Ouse Valley Viaduct, near Balcombe in West Sussex. Although you will get converging verticals, where straight lines appear to be distorted, this can emphasise the imposing height of the structure. While you get bold lines, contrast and drama, it isn't necessarily a technique for architectural photography purists.

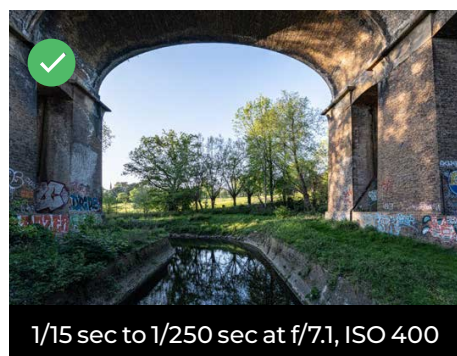
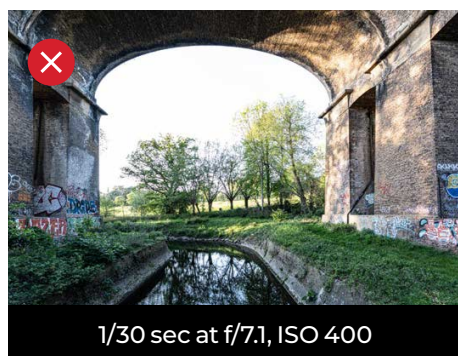
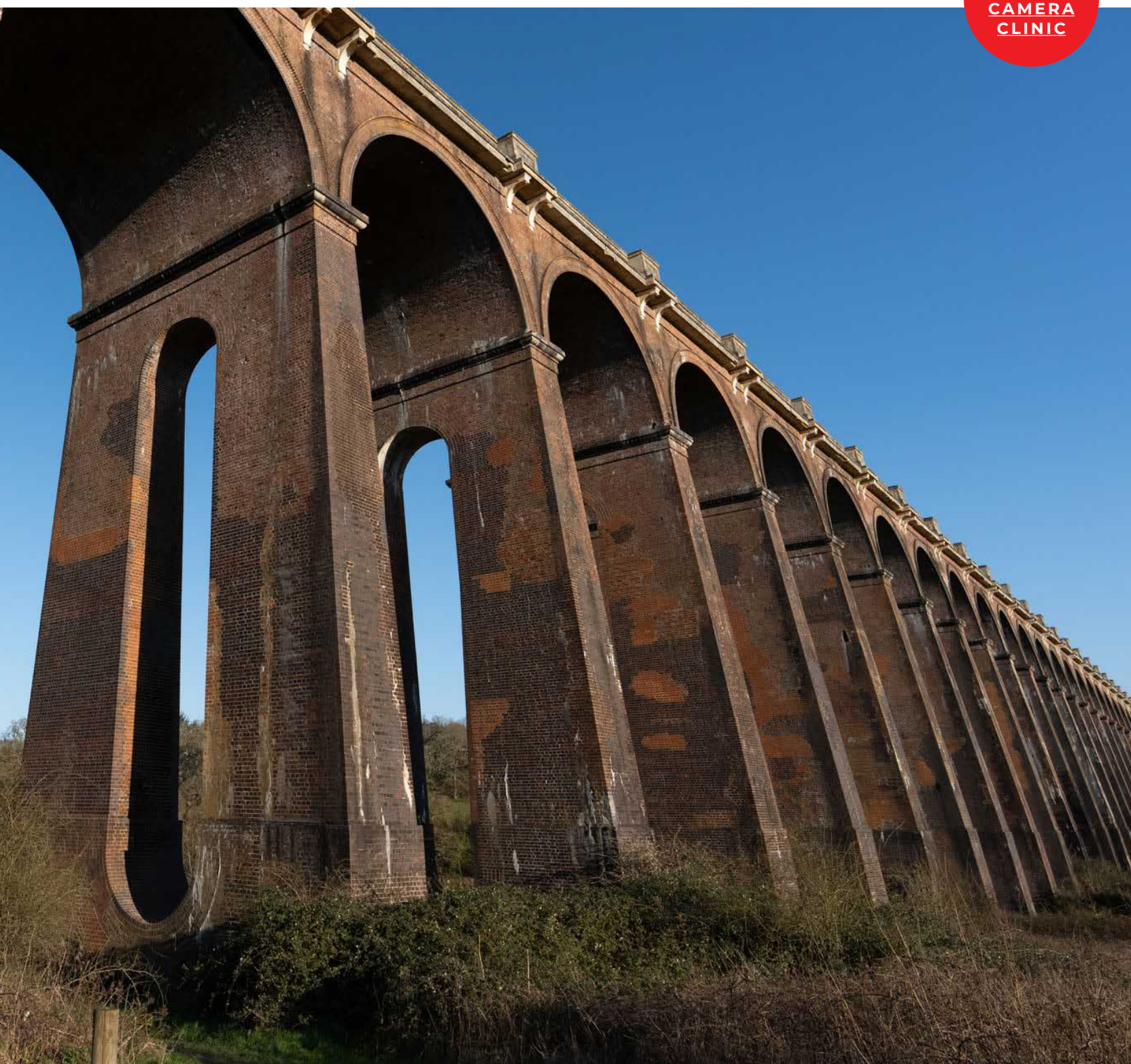


Compose yourself

It's always worth shooting different compositions because you never know which one you'll prefer in the cold light of day. This scene was taken looking down the road on the High Level Bridge in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The play of light and the repeating patterns make for a compelling composition, so it was a matter of where to place the end of the tunnel within the frame. I'm happy with both, but I prefer the more unusual look.



Will Cheung



Will Cheung

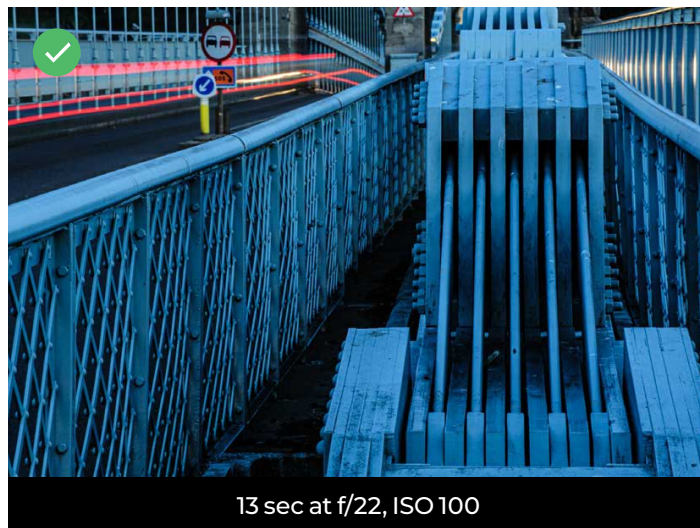
Try HDR

Expose correctly for the typically dark underside of a bridge and that will blow out the highlights. Meter and expose for the highlights and the shadows will be too deep to retrieve the details. Shooting raw files is one potential solution, but another is to shoot an exposure bracket and merge the results in editing. This merged image of Wharnccliffe Viaduct in London was produced from a five-shot bracket at ± 1 f/stop.



Serendipity strikes

Here, I was photographing the Orwell Bridge in Suffolk at around twilight. The lay-by where I had parked was busy with cars coming and going, and during one of my 30-sec exposures, the headlights from a passing car spoiled the shot. However, that gave me the idea of using my headtorch to bring up the foreground. During the next exposure, I painted the area in front of me, keeping the torch moving to avoid hot spots.



Crunching into the detail

The Grade 1 listed Menai Suspension Bridge, near Bangor in Wales, is one of the world's earliest suspension bridges. Designed by Thomas Telford, it's a fabulous subject for pictures, especially with its intricate details. It was twilight, so there wasn't much light around, and details looked even more blue than usual. Using a telezoom set to a small f/stop meant a long shutter speed, so I opened the shutter and waited for traffic to add some colour. The red rear lights made a better composition.

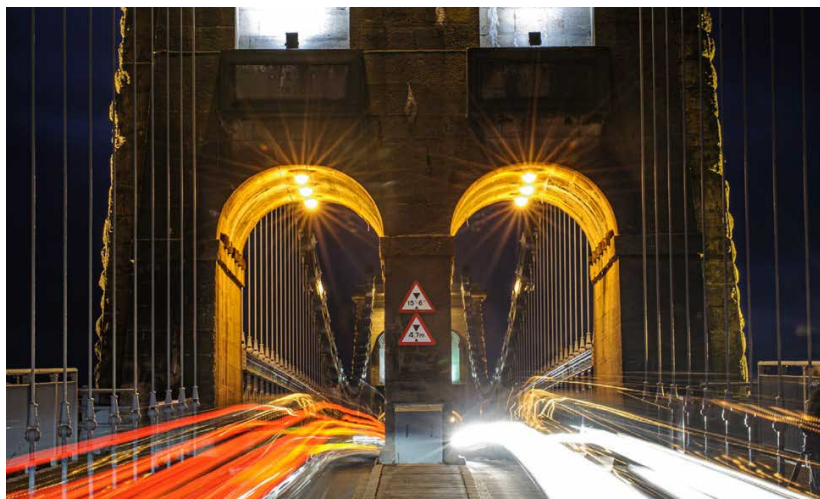
Camera tech

Shoot light trails

Wait for darkness and try long exposures

Bridges are prime targets for long-exposure photography. During the daylight hours, moving skies and flowing water can make for great pictures, but when it gets dark, traffic can add colour to your shots. Exposures from a few seconds to several minutes can work, with much depending on traffic flow.

In this example, the exposure was 15 sec, but with a steady stream of traffic in both directions of the Menai Suspension Bridge, it was enough to make it a successful picture. Make sure you shoot from a safe spot and away from the direct glare of headlights, which can give exposure and flare problems.





Get funky

London's Millennium Bridge is an extremely popular photo spot. On this evening, there was a lovely light falling on St Paul's Cathedral across the river, but rather than stick with a straight shot, I fitted a Lensbaby Composer and adjusted it to blur the left side of the bridge, which was in shadow. Blurring that part of the bridge also encourages the eye to travel along the bridge to the St Paul's focal point.



Moonrise, Tower Bridge

Whether you've planned a moonrise over your bridge shot or simply stumbled across one, you have to work quickly. Once the moon gets higher in the sky and darkness falls, contrast becomes a problem. Here, I happened to be by the Thames when I saw the moon rising over Tower Bridge. I grabbed a couple of shots before changing position. It helped that there was some haze, which took the edge off the moon's brightness, so I got detail in its face without much editing.

Pro tip

Shoot a panorama

Long bridges or viaducts are the ideal shape for the panorama treatment

Multi-image panoramas are fun to do, and you don't need any extra kit. What you will need is a software package with merging skills, such as Adobe Lightroom Classic or Affinity by Canva. Start by shooting from the left, with the camera upright and moving it each time, but allowing for some image overlap to assist the merging process. Shooting handheld works if the shutter speed is fast enough, but use manual exposure and white balance for consistency. This panorama of the Ouse Valley Viaduct in West Sussex was produced from eight shots taken at 70mm on a full-frame camera. For handheld panoramas, a standard or short telephoto focal length works best, and wider lenses are less effective.





Ian Groves
Photographer

Title: 'Squirrel on a Branch'
Location: Isle of Wight, UK
Camera and lens: Sony A1 with Sony FE 200-600mm F5.6-6.3 at 200mm
Settings: 1/30 sec at f/8, ISO 3200
Instagram: @i.groves

"Everybody loves a squirrel on a stick, right?" asks Ian Groves, who took this shot of a red squirrel on the Isle of Wight.

The ear tufts really make the image stand out, too. One of the main differences between native red squirrels and the imported grey squirrels is the ear tufts; reds have them and greys don't. They grow in the autumn and moult away by the summer.

"One of my main goals with this type of wildlife portrait is being able to get a clean background. Once I had chosen the location, I needed a pleasing mossy branch for the squirrel to perch on, and pray one obliged.

"As much as I enjoy photographing red squirrels, I also hope that in some small way, I can highlight just how endangered they are in the UK. They are under constant threat from invasive grey squirrels – I am fortunate to live in an area where they survive and thrive through the great work of local conservation groups and landowners.

"Light is always at a premium when you're deep in woodland like this, so I had a pair of NeeWER off-camera flashes, fired wirelessly, one behind the squirrel and one in front. Both were set to very low power; the rear one highlights the fur and the one at the front fills in shadows. Squirrels aren't bothered in the slightest by flash light.

"The Sony A1 has superb animal eye-detection and autofocus, which proved very useful here. I supported the camera on a Leofoto tripod with a Benro gimbal head. Camouflage isn't essential when photographing red squirrels as they respond to movement rather than colours, but being concealed certainly helps when more timid wildlife comes along." ●

See more of Ian's photography on his Instagram feed: @i.groves

Shot of the month

Ian Groves, who captured this month's cover image, discusses the photo – and helping to raise awareness of red squirrels

This month's award-winning cover photographer is Ian Groves, based on the Isle of Wight. This island off the coast of southern England is home to a large population of red squirrels, one of the last remaining strongholds for *Sciurus vulgaris* in England, supporting a thriving population of around 3,000 individuals. As the Solent, the

strait of water between mainland England and the island, acts as a natural barrier, the Isle of Wight remains entirely free of invasive grey squirrels, introduced to England in the 1870s. Ian captured this photo at Binstead, near Ryde, in the north-east of the island.

"I am lucky to have the encouragement of a local landowner to photograph on his estate," says Ian. "I love the squirrel's expression as it scans its surroundings.

SUPPORT RED SQUIRRELS THE RED SQUIRREL SURVIVAL TRUST

RSST is a national charity that protects and conserves the red squirrel in the UK by raising awareness, encouraging successful populations and securing their natural woodland environments.

Find out more at: www.rsst.org.uk

Digital Darkroom

Transform your photos with our easy, effective guides



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Photoshop

Give your summer holiday snaps the postcard treatment.

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Lightroom

Use Masking tools for local adjustments on your outdoor portraits.

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Photoshop

Four linear techniques to convert your colour shots to black and white.

PAGE 100

Affinity

Create your own art deco-style travel poster from a bygone era.

PAGE 102

DxO PhotoLab

In part three of our series, we examine noise reduction tools.

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.



Wish you were here!

Dan Mold explains how to use Photoshop to transform your holiday snaps into perfect postcards for a vintage vacation memento

Summer is here, and that means we can get out and visit some new places. As photographers, we never really have a day off, and if you're anything like me, you'll have your camera around your neck taking pictures of every new location.

On a recent trip to the coastal resort of Cromer in Norfolk, I shot everything from sunsets to beach huts, street signs and beach life, but when I got home, I wasn't sure what to do with them. I stumbled upon the idea of creating a postcard, which seemed like a novel way to display my favourite images from the trip.

This month, we're giving away two free postcard template files that you can use in Photoshop. They each have lots of different layers for image layouts, text and borders, so that you can customise them to achieve the exact look that you want. The templates include a version with one image that fills the whole postcard and another one with four smaller images arranged in a grid. So let's get to it...

Add a back to your postcard

If you'd like to print your postcards, why not add a graphic on the back with some fake stamps, a colourful border and lines to write your message, name and address for extra authenticity?

There are plenty of options on free image sites like this image (below) from Pixabay.com (Image: 8588017). Just make sure that both the front and back of your postcard are the same image size, usually A6 (14.8 x 10.5cm) and also that your photo paper doesn't have any writing on the back.

Download your files

www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc310
Download your files and video tutorial from the folder titled 'Photoshop_Postcards'.



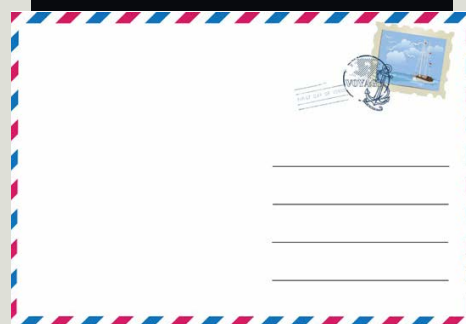
Two
postcard
template files

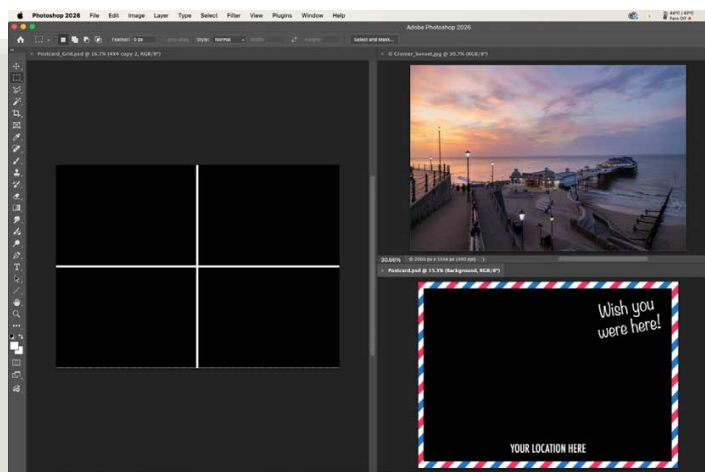


9-minute
video
tutorial



Project
files and
instructions

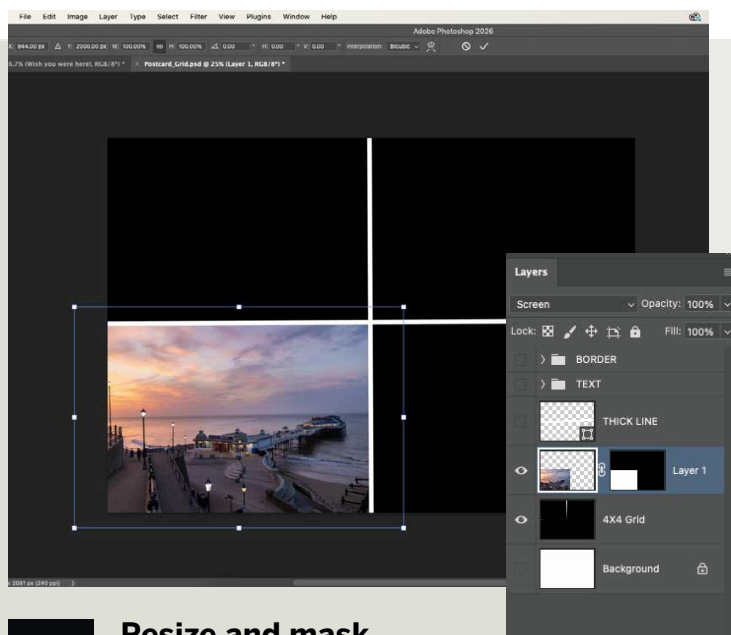
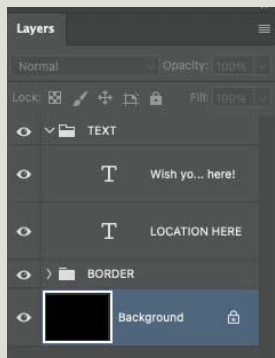




1

Open your images

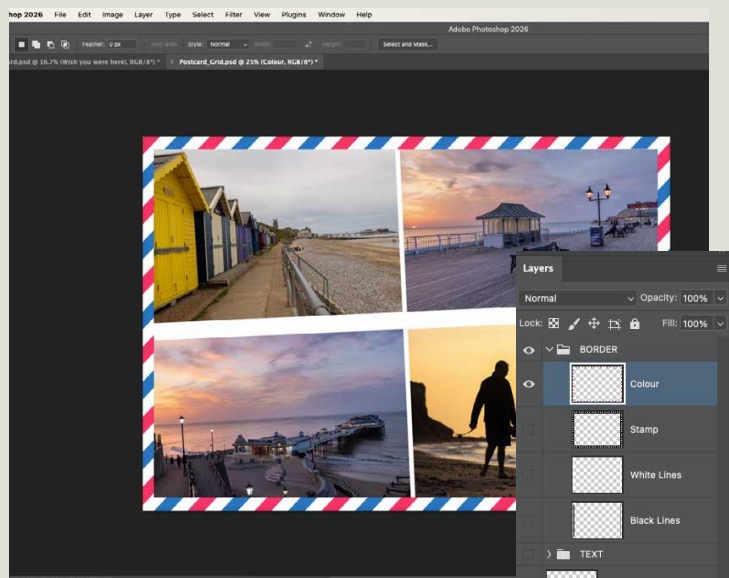
In Photoshop, go to File > Open and open the Postcard.psd or Postcard_Grid.psd file from your free download, depending on whether you want to insert one or four images. Then open up the images you'd like to use – or use the Cromer.jpg start file to practise with. Copy your photos by pressing Ctrl/Cmd+A to select, Ctrl/Cmd+C to copy and Ctrl/Cmd+W to close them down, then paste them into your postcard template by pressing Ctrl/Cmd+V. Repeat for all of the images that you wish to use.



2

Resize and mask

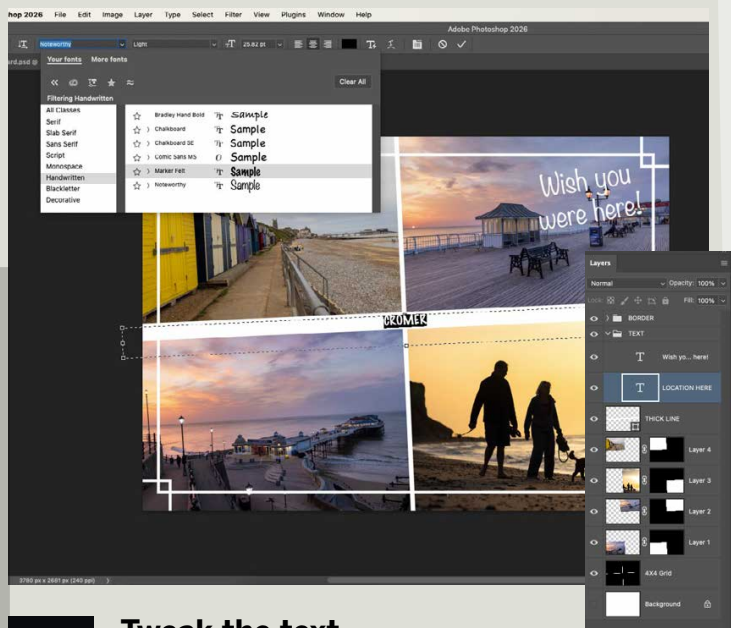
For the simple one-image template, you will need to hit Ctrl/Cmd+T to put it into Free Transform mode, then drag the corners of the bounding box to resize. Click and drag the image to move it into the correct position and press Return to set it in place. For the four-picture template, head over to the Layers panel, change the Blending Mode from Normal to Screen and resize your image to fill one of the four segments. If your image is spilling over into another quadrant, drag a selection around it with the Rectangular Marquee tool and click Add Layer Mask to mask it off. Repeat for all four of the image sections.



3

Add your border

In the Layers panel, you can click on the eye icon to turn on and off a variety of border effects. Head to your Layers panel (Window > Layers) and click on the Group that says 'Borders'. Here, you'll see a folder icon next to this layer, showing that these borders have been grouped together to keep your Layers stack neat and tidy. Click the eye icon next to Colour Border, Stamp, White Lines and Black Lines to toggle them on and off. When you find one you like, make sure only one border is visible, as you don't want to use more than one at once.



4

Tweak the text

To finish our holiday postcards off, the final step is to add the location and a greeting too, if you like. Head back to the Layers panel (Window > Layers) and click to open the 'Text' folder group. Now click on the eye icon next to 'Wish you were here!' to activate it and also the eye icon next to 'Location here'. Now double-click the 'T' on the 'Location Here' layer to edit the text and type in the name of the location for your postcard – in my case, this was 'Cromer'. With the text selected, you can head to the Options Bar at the top of your Photoshop window to choose the Font, Size and Color of the text. For example, you could opt for a handwritten font style if you prefer, or change the colour of the text if it's difficult to read against the colours of your photo.

Before



After

Use simple masks to boost your outdoor portraits

Sean McCormack makes his portraits shine with AI masking tools

Lightroom Classic has substantial global editing controls. These are sufficient for editing the majority of your images, so most people will only ever use these controls.

But it also has some tools that act on certain parts of a photo, and these can be manually created using brushes, linear or radial gradients. For beginners, this is often a deterrent, but Lightroom can help build them automatically.

Originally called local adjustments, the tool was renamed to Masking with the addition of AI. While there are recent additions, like Landscape Masking or People Masking, where different aspects of the landscape or personal features are detected, we're going to look at the three main AI masks you see at the top of the Masking Panel: Sky, Subject and Background.

Sky is obvious, as it detects the sky. Subject looks for the focal item in frame, whether it's a person, people or objects. Background is anything that isn't the subject and can include the sky, which means removing the sky from the background mask can sometimes produce better results. So let's put these masks to use on a sunny, flash-lit, outdoor portrait.

Download your files

www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc310
Download your files and video tutorial from the folder titled 'Lightroom_Outdoor Portraits'.



Five
Masking
presets



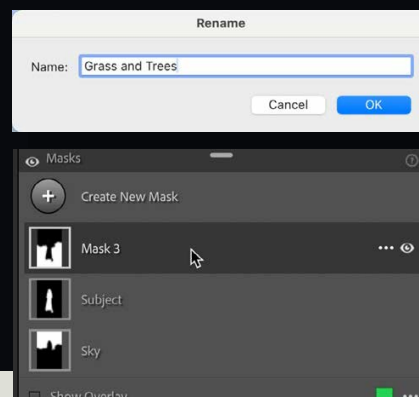
12-minute
video
tutorial

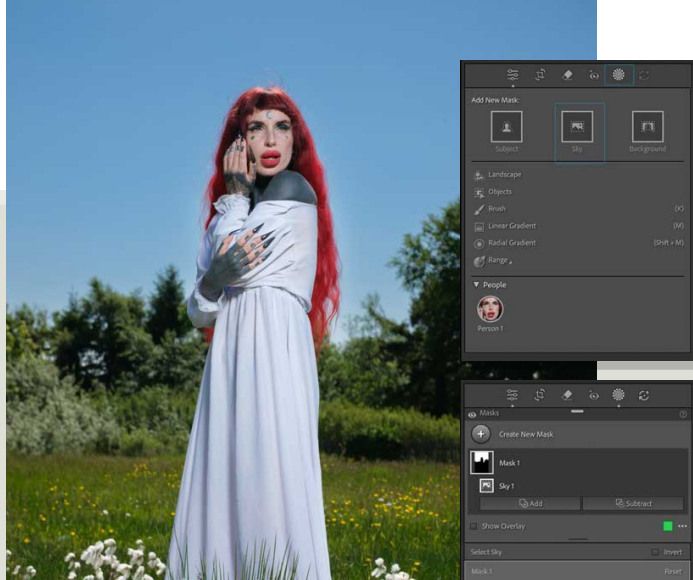


Project
files and
instructions

Don't forget to name your masks

It may sound obvious, but you should name your masks. This is especially useful if you create presets, as you can see what is what. Double-click on the mask to bring up a dialog box, then give the mask a useful name. The underlying mask type is contained in the mask, but it isn't always visible, so a name is better.

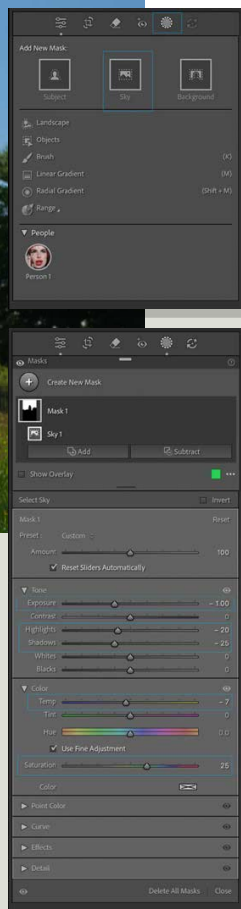




1

Mister Blue Sky

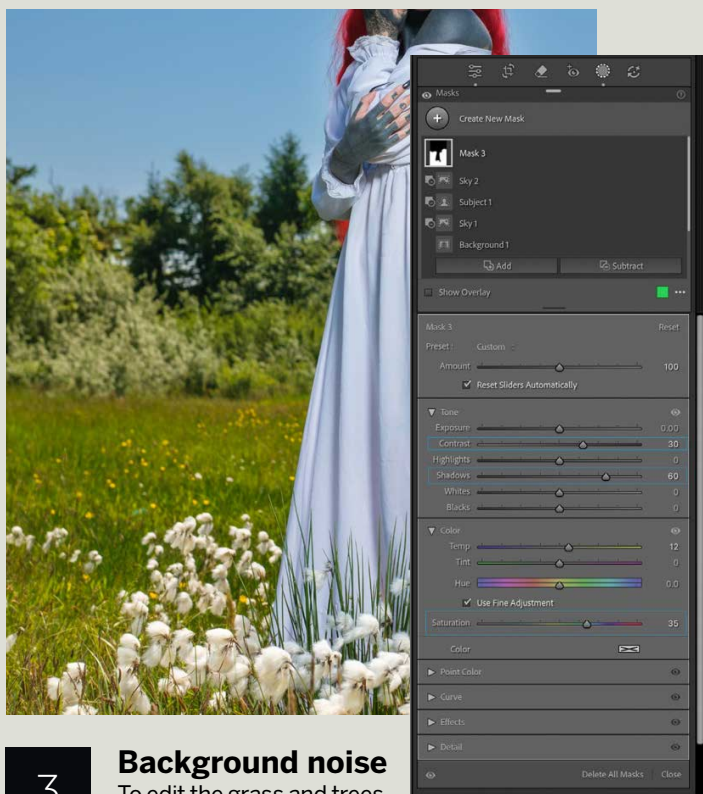
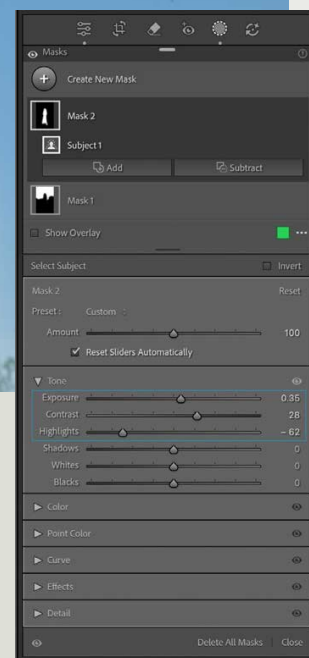
Even using flash, you have to balance the sky and the ground – often, the sky is too light and the ground too dark. Saturation and darkening will enhance the sky, something that needs to be separate from the subject. Click the Masking icon, then choose Sky. The red mask overlay covers the sky and will disappear when you start editing. Set Saturation to 25 and then reduce Highlights to -20. To complete the look, set Exposure to -1, Shadows to -25 and Temp to -7.



2

Subjective editing

Move on to the main feature now. To edit the entire person, click Create New Mask again, this time choosing Subject, which should mask the entire person. Your aim here is to have a good balance with the rest of the photo and to avoid creating halo edges that break the sense of reality in the edit. First, tame the dress by reducing the Highlights to -62. Lighten overall with Exposure of 0.35 and finish by bumping up the Contrast to 28 to seal the look.



3

Background noise

To edit the grass and trees, click Create New Mask and choose Background. Below the mask, there are Add and Subtract buttons. Click Subtract and then choose Select Sky. Repeat the process, this time subtracting the Subject. This will give you a clean mask to edit the background elements. Again, you'll see a red mask. Open up the Shadows to 60 and boost Saturation to 35. You could warm up the shot by raising Temperature to 12, with a final Contrast bump of 30.



4

Lighten edges

Lightroom applies individual Lens Correction profiles to tackle issues such as optical distortion and vignetting. The software reads the metadata information from the raw file and applies the correct profile. Generally, it does a great job, but in this case, the lens was the 1.5x telephoto adaptor for the Fujifilm X100VI from Freewell, and it has noticeable vignetting. To lighten the dark corners, go to the Lens Corrections panel and set Vignetting to +54.



Black and white with a difference

James Abbott converts his colour images to mono using a range of linear conversion techniques in Photoshop

It's probably impossible to reinvent the black and white wheel. This is the original style of photography, and it has been applied in many more ways than we can imagine, so it's safe to say practically nothing is new. But that doesn't mean you can't experiment to change the ways different colours are converted to greyscale. What you achieve may have been done before, but it could be an obscure or forgotten approach.

There are several ways to convert to black and white in Photoshop, but one that works particularly well, and is probably among the most popular, is the Black & White Adjustment Layer. This method is incredibly versatile and can be used for manual conversions, with its presets, combined with Blending modes, and alongside other Adjustment Layers. It's such a cliché to say, but the possibilities become seemingly endless – there's always something new to discover.

Download your files

www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc310
Download your files and video tutorial from the folder titled 'Photoshop_Mono Techniques'.



Four
Actions for
Photoshop



5-minute
video
tutorial



Project
files and
instructions



1

Custom conversion

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, for this image, we're going to drag the Reds slider to -18 to darken and the Yellows slider to 113 to lighten. Custom black and white conversions are easy and simply require you to drag the sliders left to darken and right to lighten the conversion of different colour channels to greyscale. Experiment and see what works for you and your shots.



2

Maximum Black

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, click on the dropdown menu set to Default and select Maximum Black, then close the dialog. Now create a Levels Adjustment Layer, and when the dialog opens, drag the black point below the histogram to 15. This will increase the black point and deepen the darker tones in the image further for an interesting mono conversion.



3

Soft and Hazy

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're going to use the default conversion. Now create a Levels Adjustment Layer, and when the dialog opens, drag the black Output Level to 40 to reduce the black point and reduce contrast. Next, drag the white point below the histogram to the edge of the histogram. Here, that was 235.



4

High Contrast

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, then press Ctrl/Cmd+J to duplicate this Layer. Now change the Blending mode of the copied Layer from Normal to Overlay for a boost of contrast. There are many ways to increase contrast, but this is one of the quickest you can use in this situation, and it provides a good result. Use Opacity to reduce the effect, if desired.

Before



After

Wendy Evans

How to create a retro travel poster

Wendy Evans uses Affinity to create an art deco-style poster redolent of a bygone era

Download your files

www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc310
Download your files and video tutorial from the folder titled 'Affinity_Travel Poster'.



Four LUTs to apply to your images

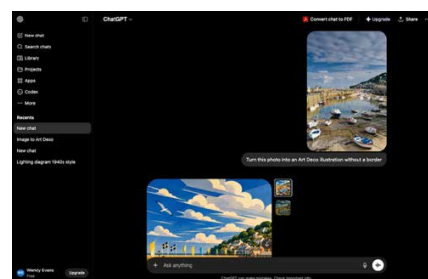


5-minute video tutorial



Project files to follow along

The 1930s were notable for the art deco style of geometric shapes and curves, and the travel posters and brochures of the time reflected that era. Many of these used illustrations to tempt busy city workers to head to the countryside for rest, relaxation and even to new commuting hubs. If you search on websites such as Etsy, you can draw inspiration for how you want to approach this, whether it's featuring an actual art deco-style building or a tourist location as the subject of travel, which is what we're going to do here. You can use photos, but it looks more authentic if you convert them into an illustration first.



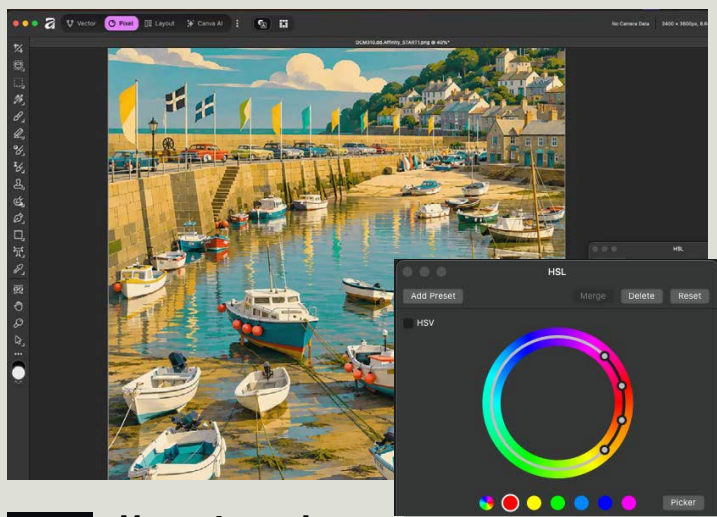
Start here

So the question you have to ask yourself is, do you want to use a photo or an illustration? We have included project files for both, as the settings are slightly different and the photo has more steps than can be shown here, so you can see how they look. The easiest way to get an illustration in the correct style is to get Canva AI, ChatGPT or another AI tool to do it for you. If you object to using AI for this, then use a photo of the location.

1

Brightness and contrast

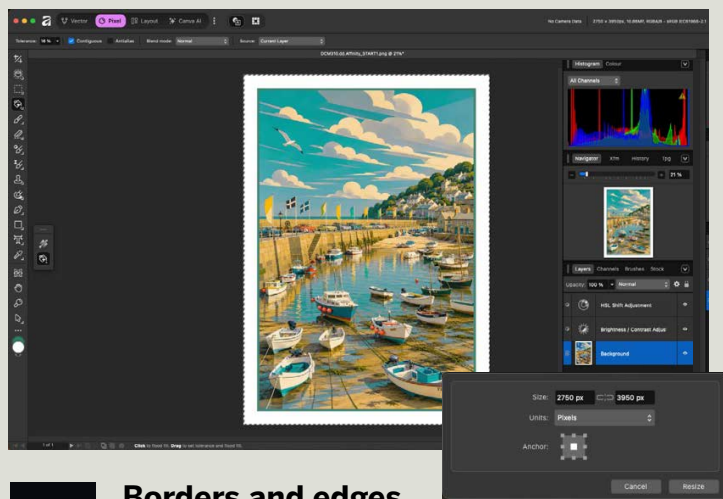
Most photos or illustrations will have too much contrast, so let's tackle that first. The poster should have flatter tones, so load the image and click on Pixel > New Adjustment Layer > Brightness/Contrast. Or click on the adjustment icon in the Layers palette. Here, we've increased the Brightness by 10 per cent and reduced the Contrast by 70 per cent. Be prepared to adjust these settings if required.



2

Use retro colours

Add an adjustment layer, this time for HSL. Select the Cyan channel, then use the picker to select the colour in the sky just above the clouds to the right. Move the Hue Shift to 22 degrees, which should turn that part cyan and the sky to the left more aquamarine. Then select the Red channel and use the picker on the red boat to the left. Now move the Hue Shift to -15 degrees.



3

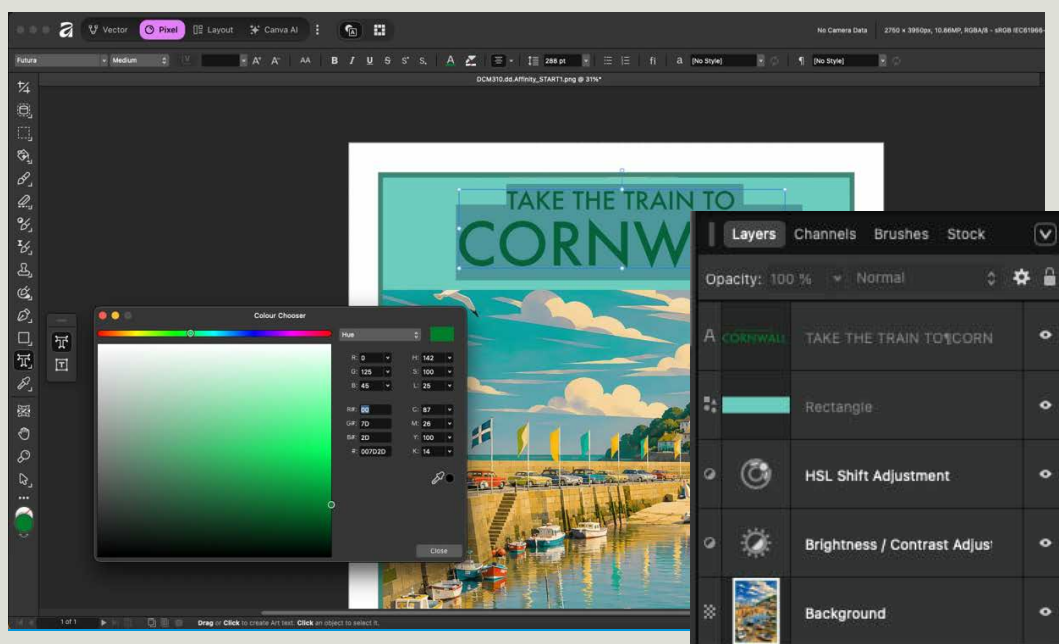
Borders and edges

Go to Document > Setup > Resize > Canvas and add 50 pixels to each side. Click on Resize, then double-click on the Background colour and set it to R:30, G:130, B:110. Select the Background in the Layers palette and press Ctrl/Cmd-A to select it all. Select the Flood Fill tool and click on the new part of the canvas to fill it. Deselect, then repeat the process. Finally, expand the canvas by 300 pixels, then fill the new border with white.

4

Add the box and text

Select the Rectangle tool (U) and draw a box at the top of the image – you'll need to zoom in to size it correctly. Change the colour to something like R:109, G: 205, B: 190. If you don't have any art deco-style fonts on your system, then head to www.1001fonts.com and search for 'Park Lane NF' font by Nick Curtiss. Here, we used the Futura font. Finally, centre the text.



PART 3 OF 4

See issue 311, on sale 14 August, for Part 4



Noise reduction in PhotoLab 9

Wendy Evans looks at the new options in DxO's flagship program

One of PhotoLab's strengths has always been its lens correction and noise reduction functions. However, the best noise reduction function, DeepPRIME XD3, was previously only available for Fujifilm's X-Trans sensors and not the Bayer sensors used by most other cameras.

The good news is that the new version of PhotoLab XD3 now works on Bayer sensor cameras, too. Combine that with the new loupe preview function, and your high-ISO images just got a whole lot better. One of the other new features is that these advanced functions can now be used locally, as well as globally, thanks to masks you can create on the image. That means you can specifically sharpen and enhance particular features in the image, leaving the rest of it more subtle.

Download your files

www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc310
Download your files and video tutorial from the folder titled 'PhotoLab_Noise Reduction'.



No software extras this time



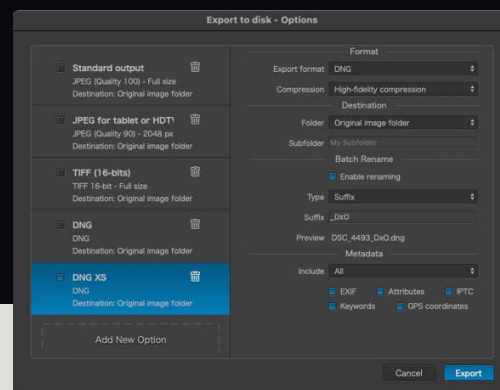
4-minute video tutorial



Project files to follow along

Save as a DNG

While you can save your work on the raw file, if you want to share it with someone who doesn't have the same camera or software, then a better option – apart from exporting it as a jpeg – is to use the new compressed DNG function in PhotoLab 9. Go to Image > Export > Export to disc. Select DNG XS as the preset and this will export a high-fidelity, compressed raw file in the universal DNG format that's up to four times smaller than a standard DNG.

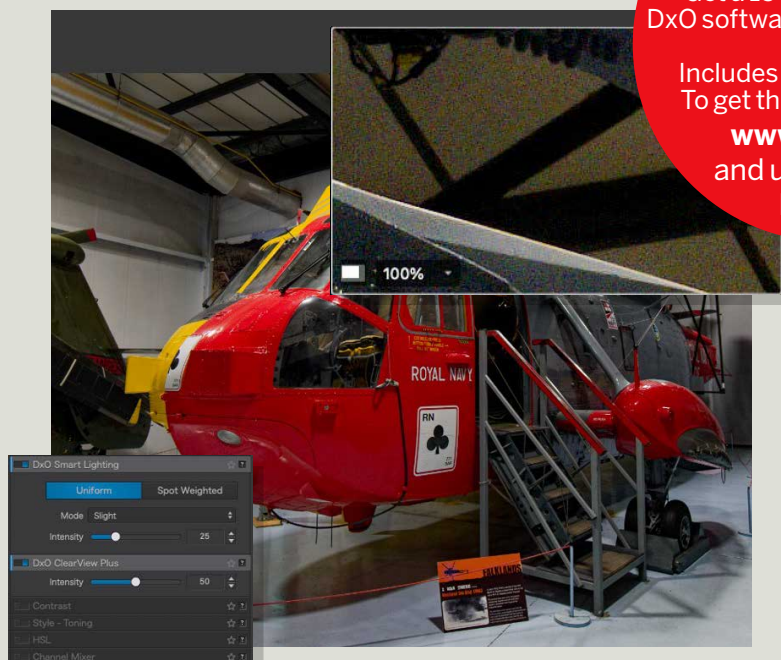


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1

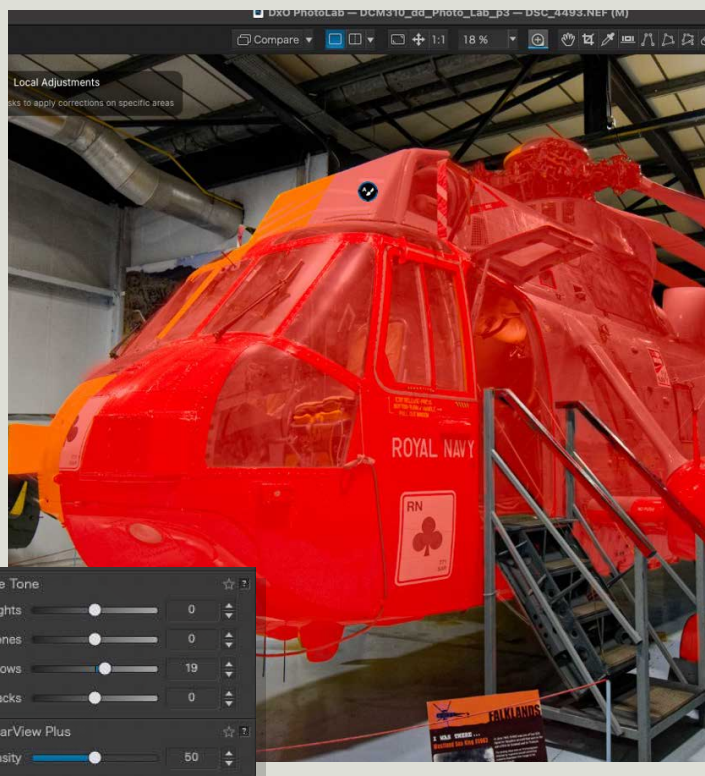
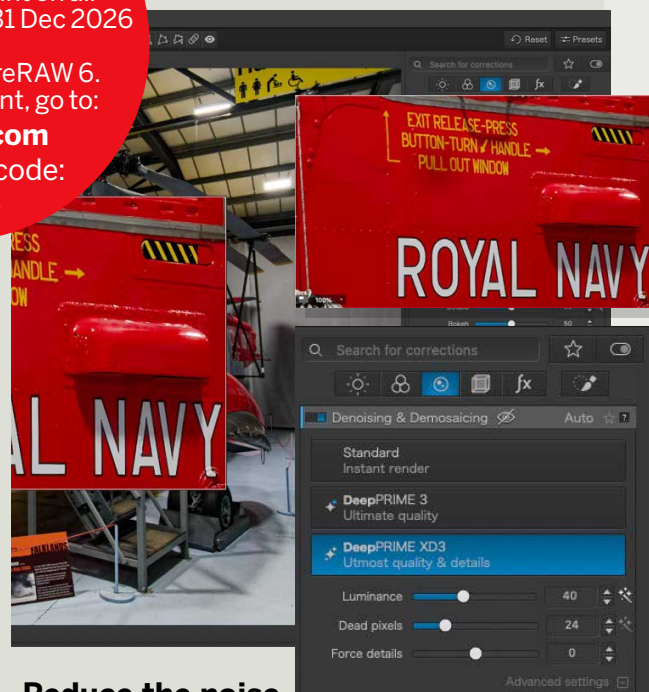
Loupe and view

This image was shot at ISO 800, so there is some visible noise, though it's not terrible. The first thing to do is click on the Loupe tool and position it in a noisy area so you can see what's going on. Then, go to the Light toolset and turn on both DxO Smart Lighting and DxO ClearView Plus to brighten and add contrast. It will also make the noise stand out more.

2

Reduce the noise

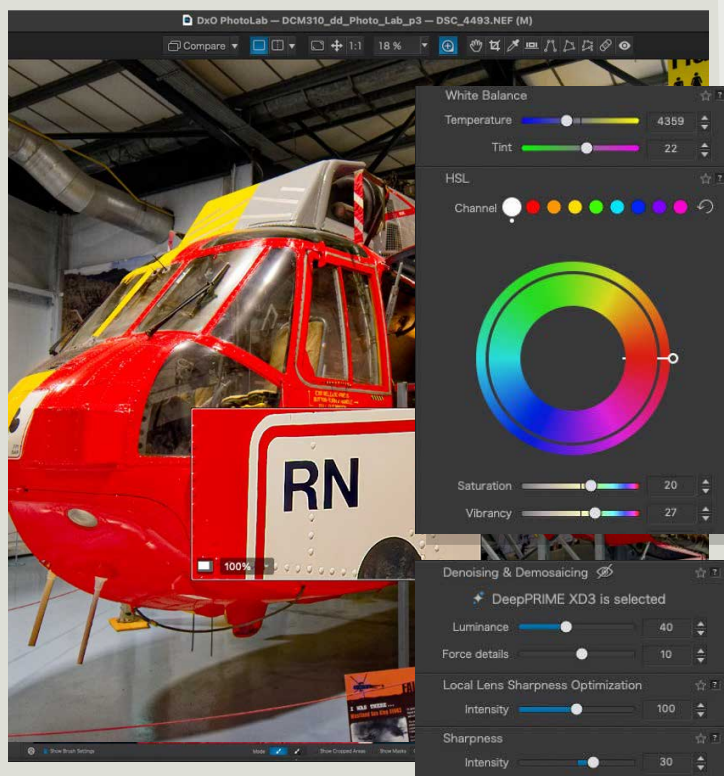
Click on the Detail tool collection icon, and you will see that the Standard denoise engine is automatically selected. This previews across the whole image in the main view, but it isn't that effective. Instead, click on DeepPRIME XD3. The Loupe window will briefly process and then show the results. Click on the little white icon in the bottom left corner for a bigger view.



3

Mask it off

To apply some effects locally, click on the Local Adjustments brush, then the Auto Brush icon. Paint over the helicopter with the brush in general terms – don't worry if you miss a few bits. Then, use the mask brush to fill in gaps and remove elements that have been incorrectly selected. Below this, you can brighten the Shadows by 19 and add more contrast with ClearView Plus at 50.



4

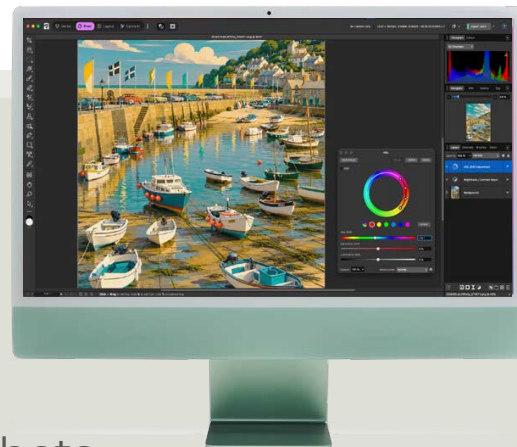
Enhance local features

Scroll down the adjustments panel and tweak the White Balance temperature to remove the coldness from the shadows (but try not to overdo it), then add more Saturation and Vibrancy. Go to the Local Lens Sharpness Optimisation and increase Sharpness Intensity to around 30. If you turned the Loupe off when painting the mask, turn it on here so you don't oversharpen.

THIS MONTH'S SOFTWARE EXTRAS

15 Actions, presets, LUTs and templates

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 15 software extras with our Digital Darkroom tutorials. Once installed in Adobe Photoshop, Lightroom or Affinity, these Actions, presets, LUTs and templates will help transform your images. There are two postcard templates, one for single images and another for multiple images. We also have

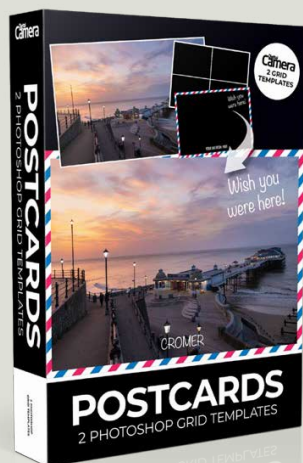
five outdoor portrait presets for Lightroom, which use AI masking to select parts of the image for quick edits. There are four mono Actions for Photoshop offering fast B&W conversions that can be refined. Finally, to go with the retro travel poster tutorial, we have four lookup tables (LUTs). Designed for Affinity, they are in .look format, so can also be used in Photoshop and other software.

How to use your software extras

Once you have downloaded the 'dcm310-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.



DOWNLOAD FILES & VIDEO AT
www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc310



2 POSTCARD TEMPLATES

Software: Photoshop
(Version 25.5 or higher)

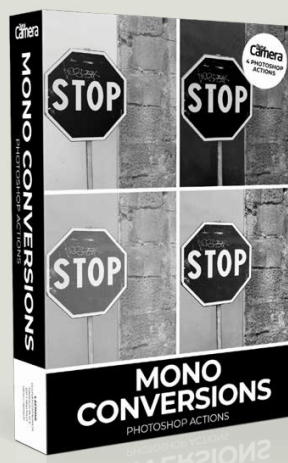
These two postcard templates are set up for single images and a group of images. Simply drop your favourite holiday snaps into the template, then decide which of the borders you want to use. Finally, there are some texture options so you can add finishing touches.



5 OUTDOOR MASKING PRESETS

Software: Lightroom

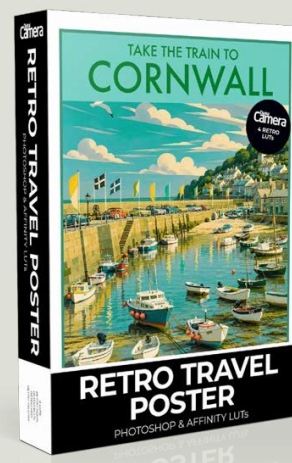
These five presets allow different parts of an outdoor portrait image to be selected for quick masking. Some are aimed at portraits, as in the tutorial, but others can be used simply to select the landscape or sky in your shot.



4 MONO ACTIONS

Software: Photoshop
(Version 25.5 or higher)

These four Actions for Photoshop can be used to quickly convert images to mono. Results will range from subtle, with shades of grey, to high contrast with dark blacks and bright whites. Once the Action has run, you can adjust the strength.



4 TONING IMAGE LUTs

Software: Photoshop/ Affinity

As seen in the tutorial on retro travel posters, these four toning LUTs give specific colour themes. They are based on shifting the colours in a seaside image with plenty of blues and greens, so apply them to a suitable image for a 1930s art deco-style look.

Download all four packs from: www.digitalcameraworld.com/dc310

KitZone

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



106 **Sony A7R VI** _ The high-resolution full-frame mirrorless gets an update



110 **Lumix L10** _ New MFT compact featuring travel-friendly zoom lens



114 **Sigma 35mm F1.4 DG II Art** _ Updated prime for Sony E-mount and L-Mount



116 **Viltrox AF 75mm F1.8 Evo** _ New optic for Fujifilm, Nikon and Sony APS-C cameras



With the sixth version of its high-resolution full-frame mirrorless, Sony continues to push the technological envelope. The A7R VI tweaks the already impressive specs of its forebear with improvements to autofocus, speed and video. The result is a camera that can literally do everything... if that's the kind of camera you're looking for. See what we make of the upgrades in the A7R VI on the next page. The Lumix L10 has been unveiled in the brand's 25th anniversary year. It's another Micro Four Thirds model from

Panasonic, and unlike one of its main rivals in the on-trend compact camera space, it features a 24-75mm equivalent zoom lens. Speaking of glass, we test a recent launch from leading third-party lens brand Sigma. The 35mm F1.4 DG II Art updates a highly regarded prime for Sony E-mount and L-Mount users; see how it performs under exacting testing conditions on page 114. Chinese lens maker Viltrox has been busy lately, launching two new Evo primes for APS-C mirrorless bodies, and we've spent time with both. You can read the first of the two Evo reviews on page 116. **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

Mirrorless Sony A7R VI



1 The grip is a little deeper, and there's more of a lip for the top finger, which improves handling.

2 A new 66.8MP stacked full-frame sensor is the headline feature, up from the A7R V's 61MP.

3 It's paired with a Bionz XR 2 processor that includes an integrated AI processing unit.

Sony A7R VI

£4,399/\$4,500 (body only)

High-resolution hybrid gets faster, smarter... and more expensive

www.sony.co.uk

Specifications

Lens mount: Sony E
Sensor: Full-frame stacked CMOS, 66.8MP
Image processor: BIONZ XR2 with built-in AI Autofocus
ISO range: 100-32,000 (50-102,400 expanded)
Stabilisation: 8.5 stops centre, 7.0 stops periphery, five-axis
Max burst: 10fps mechanical shutter, 30fps electronic shutter with AE/AF
Viewfinder: 9.44-million-dot EVF
LCD: 3.2-inch, 3:2, 2.1-million-dot, four-axis
Max image size: 9984 x 6656px
Video: 8K 30p, 8K 25p, 8K 24p (1.2x crop); 4K 60p (no crop); 4K 120p (1.1x crop or no crop in View Priority mode)
Storage: 1x CFexpress Type A, 1x SD UHS-II
Battery/ shots: NP-SA100; 600 (LCD), 710 (EVF)
Connectivity: 6GHz Wi-Fi, dual USB-C, top port USB 3.2 Gen 2 10Gbps
Dimensions (W x H x D): 132.7 x 96.9 x 82.9mm
Weight: 713g (incl battery and memory cards)

Sony's A7R series has always been about resolution first, but this time Sony has cranked up the speed, too. The new 66.8MP stacked full-frame sensor, paired with Sony's BIONZ XR2 processor with built-in AI processing, gives the A7R VI more resolution than the A7R V, but also much more speed with 30fps blackout-free shooting with autofocus and auto exposure measured around 60 times per second. There is also 8K or 4K 120 video with reduced rolling shutter and stronger subject tracking than on the A7R V.

This makes the A7R VI less of a specialist landscape, commercial or studio camera, and more of a camera that can plausibly do almost everything. It isn't just competing with quick high-resolution cameras like the Canon EOS R5 Mark II, the Nikon Z 8 and the Lumix S1 II, but also with Sony's own A1 II. With this update, the lines between the A7R VI and the A1 II have become increasingly hard to decipher.

Build and handling

The Sony A7R VI will feel instantly familiar to users of recent Sony Alpha cameras. Sony hasn't reinvented the body here, but it probably didn't need to. However, it's not just all about the looks; the A7R VI also feels well built. There's a proper sense of solidity here, with some reassuring heft in the hand that doesn't become heavy or tiring to carry. It also has the reassurance of weather sealing.

While the overall shape is roughly the same as the A7R V, a few key details have improved. The grip has been updated to the same as that found on the recent A7 V. It's a little deeper, with a bit more of a lip for your top finger, and it's comfortable and secure, even with larger lenses. Sony's camera bodies just keep growing, and as the A7R VI has also become larger, a bigger grip is partly a necessity, but the handling is all the better for it. The A7R VI felt really natural, even in just one hand.

With no sweeping changes to the design this time around, the layout of the buttons and dials continues

Sony A7R VI Mirrorless



4

The electronic viewfinder is three times brighter, with a 9.44 million-dot resolution.

6

A new battery gives 600 shots (with LCD) and 710 shots (EVF), says Sony.

8

The light-up buttons are toggled on and off via this button on the top plate.

5

Some of the key buttons on the A7R VI illuminate – handy for working in low light levels.

7

Not one but two USB-C ports... one for charging and one for transferring data.

9

There are twin UHS-II SD card slots; the top one also takes CFexpress Type A cards.

to be excellent; there are controls for pretty much everything, plus several extra custom buttons.

However, one major change you'll notice is that Sony has now illuminated several of the key buttons on the back, which makes the A7R VI easier to use at night. It's triggered by a little lightbulb-icon button on the top of the camera, which sits naturally under an index finger and can be found without looking at the camera. A small addition, this is likely to be especially appreciated by event or wedding photographers as well as astrophotographers.

The EVF has been upgraded to a 9.44-million-dot viewfinder that Sony says is three times brighter than that of the A7R V, with a wider colour gamut and high dynamic range. In practice, it's clear and easy to frame through.

The rear screen, in terms of quality, is unchanged. It is still a 3.2-inch, 3:2, 2.1-million-dot monitor, but the screen does see a functional upgrade, joining recent Sony models in the four-axis club. It now both folds out and rotates, so you can tilt the screen for waist-level shooting or fully articulate it for video. The screen will also now automatically

Gareth Bevan



Sony's Dynamic Range Optimizer is essentially a dynamic range boost for jpegs and HEIF files. In this image (above), it is set to Level 0...

Gareth Bevan



Here, it was set to the maximum Level 8, which is three levels greater than before. Take care, though, as images can look unnatural at the highest levels.

switch to a vertical display mode when shooting vertically. For connectivity, the A7R VI now features two USB-C ports, one for charging and one for power or data transfer. There is also a full-sized HDMI port, as well as headphone and mic jacks.

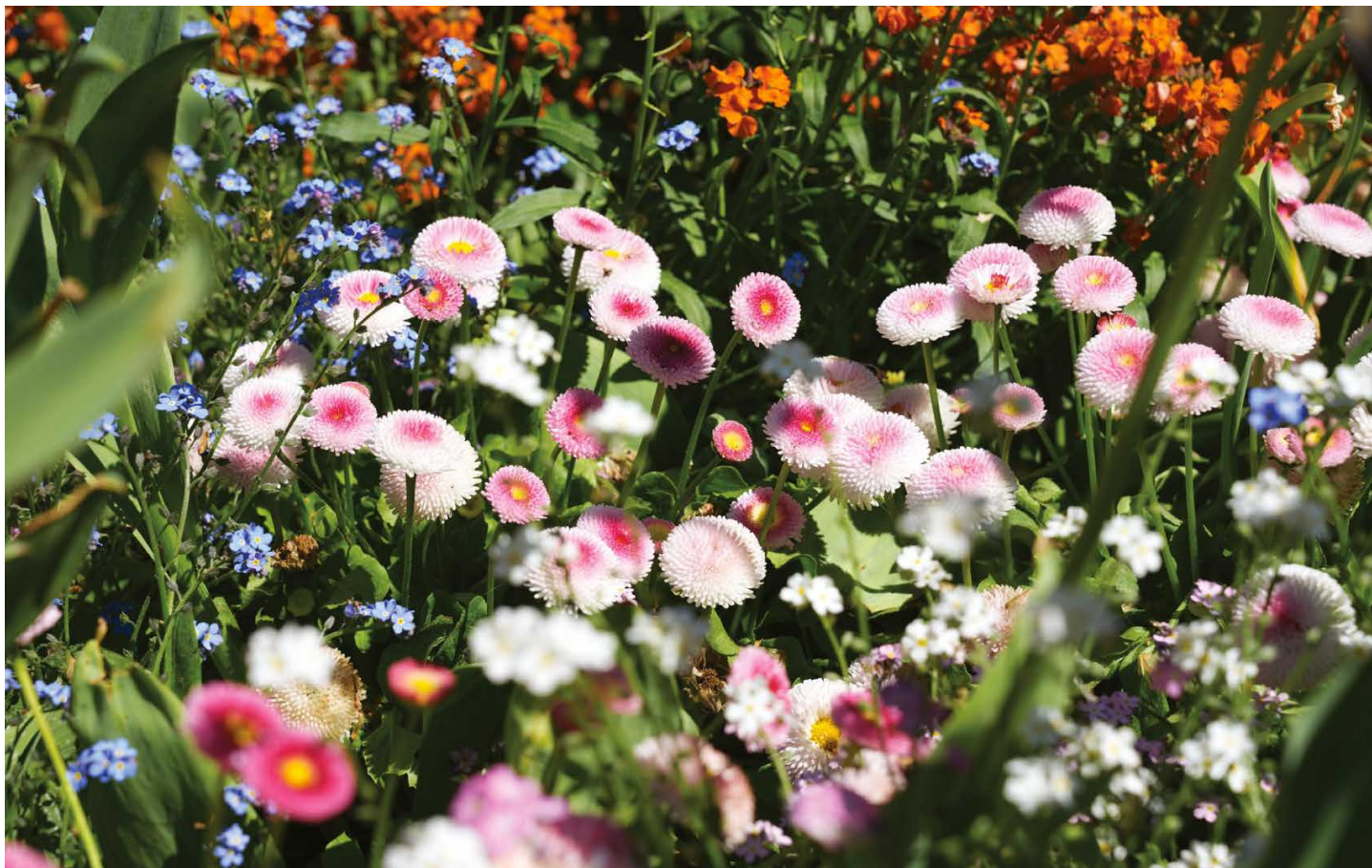
The camera also ships with a new battery, which is perhaps the most interesting design change, as Sony cameras have used the same battery for a while. The new NP-SA100 battery has a 2,670mAh capacity, which is 17 per cent higher than the previous 2,280mAh NP-FZ100, and Sony claims 600 shots with the LCD and 710 shots with the EVF. Sony also says the battery should charge faster.

In use, I actually found battery life a little better than the quoted number for stills, and noticeably better than before. The battery also performed exceptionally well for video, I easily got four to five hours of 4K 30p.

Performance

The A7R VI's image quality is incredible. The 66.8MP stacked sensor captures a huge amount of detail. But while resolution has always been the hallmark of the A7R, it's the stacked sensor that takes it to the —→

Mirrorless Sony A7R VI



Gareth Bevan

Captured on a 20-70mm F4 lens at 70mm, the A7R VI has so much detail that cropping tightly in editing is possible, effectively extending the lens's focal length.

next level over previous high-resolution bodies and really pushes the A7R cameras away from being just for static subjects.

The A7R VI can shoot blackout-free at 30fps with autofocus and auto exposure using the electronic shutter, and that is in 14-bit RAW. That is a massive step up from the A7R V, which topped out at 7fps in 12-bit RAW electronically. Mechanical shutter shooting remains 10fps, but that is now also 14-bit rather than 12-bit. For most people and most shooting situations, 30fps

is overkill. Even Sony recognises this, and so it encourages you to limit the shooting speed by having to use a custom button to boost up to 30fps, meaning that you only use it when it's needed. The A7R VI also adds pre-capture from 0.03 to 1 second, so you can start shooting at 30fps before you even fully depress the shutter.

The buffer is improved, too, with Sony quoting 215 jpegs and 60-150 raw files at 30fps, depending on your chosen method of raw compression, or more than 1,000

jpegs and 130 to 535 raw files at 10fps using the mechanical shutter with Sony's CFexpress Type A cards.

Sony's subject recognition remains some of the best in the business. The A7R VI has 759 phase detection AF points covering 94 per cent of the sensor, with sensitivity down to -6.0 EV, plus the AF tracking speed and sensitivity are more adjustable. The latest version of Sony's human pose estimation tech has been added. This tracks a human subject's entire body through movements, and Sony says tracking has also been improved when subjects move in and out of cover. Despite these claims, I did find the AF could still be tripped up by branches, leaves or other objects obscuring the subject – not often, but enough to be notable.

The A7R VI also gains Sony's auto subject recognition mode, which means you don't have to constantly dive into menus or switch subject types manually – although Sony suggests that the dedicated subject modes do remain more accurate. In terms of the stabilisation, Sony claims up to 8.5 stops at the centre and 7.0 stops at the periphery. In real-world stills shooting, I discovered that I could get steady handheld photos when walking in good light. When quickly snapping street shots in low-light conditions, I could comfortably get night shots down to around 1/5 second.

Rival cameras



Canon EOS R5 Mark II
£4,499/\$3,999
 AI-powered predictive autofocus, reduced rolling shutter, Eye Control AF – it's Canon's ultimate camera.
 Reviewed: issue 295
 ★★★★★



Lumix S1R II
£2,999/\$3,299
 Everything Lumix fans want in a flagship camera – smaller body, faster sensor, improved AF and towering video specs.
www.bit.ly/dcm310_slrII
 ★★★★★



Nikon Z 8
£3,999/\$3,999
 Inherits the vast majority of the Nikon Z 9's specs, including its blisteringly fast electronic shutter and EXPED 7 processor.
 Reviewed: issue 270
 ★★★★★

Sony A7R VI **Mirrorless**

Gareth Bevan



The A7R VI gains auto subject recognition autofocus, so users don't have to switch subject types manually. However, testing showed that it's not infallible, and switching the camera into bird mode was more reliable.

Raw dynamic range is excellent; Sony says the A7R VI can deliver 16 stops of dynamic range, and Sony's dynamic range optimiser – a dynamic range boost for jpegs/HEIFs – now goes up to level 8, three levels up from before. The Auto White Balance, now powered by 'AI', is good and it seemed pretty accurate, but I'm not sure it's significantly better than before.

Sony has simplified the raw options, down from five to three, and added a new compressed HQ option. Close up, the new RAW HQ looks pretty clean with a similar level of dynamic range to the uncompressed version. The camera also adds 270MP pixel shift shooting, which can be combined in Sony's Imaging Edge desktop software, where you can also find composite raw shooting and Sony's AI tools for noise reduction or resolution enhancement.

Sony also now includes a total of 12 Creative Looks, including the new Film Look 2 and Film Look 3, which look a little like film, but not really. However, they add some welcome in-camera flexibility for anyone who wants a more finished file straight out of camera, but they don't match Fujifilm's film simulations/recipes or Lumix's photo LUTs for breadth or control.

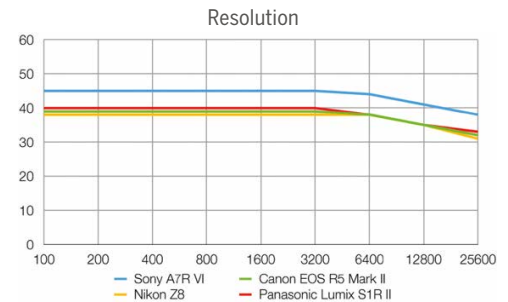
Video quality is excellent. The A7R VI can shoot 8K 30p, 25p and 24p, oversampled from 8.2K, though all 8K modes come with

a 1.2x crop. In 8K, the files are monstrous, but the footage is incredibly detailed and has huge cropping potential. More practical is 4K, where you get 4K 60p (oversampled from 5K) with no crop, and 4K 120p (also oversampled from 5K) with a 1.1x crop. There is also a View Priority mode that removes the 4K 120p crop, but at the expense of noise reduction. Here, you can go a little wider if shooting a well-lit scene.

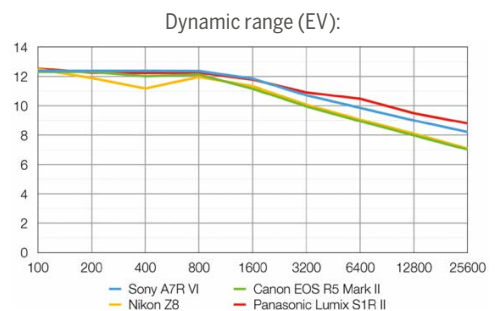
There is still no open gate, which is a shame as it's also absent in the A7V – Sony needs to get with the times. You can also shoot in Super 35 for extra reach, with 4K 60p and 4K 30p oversampled from 4.6K at a 1.5x crop from the full sensor or 4K 120p with a further 1.4x crop from Super 35.

The A7R VI also adds Dynamic Active stabilisation, which is Sony's most powerful digital image stabilisation. It is effective, especially for heavy movement, but the crop is significant, and it still suffers from jitters, where sometimes it feels like the sensor is playing catch-up to my movements with small jumps that are a little too obvious.

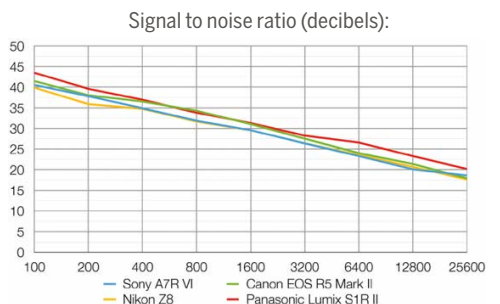
If you want a stabilised result quickly, it is incredibly useful, but I would still choose to use the gyro data Sony handily provides with video files and stabilise later in Gyroflow or Sony's own Catalyst Browse. It gives more control over the final crop while getting a similar result. **Gareth Bevan**



Though all four cameras prioritise stills resolution, the 66.8MP A7R VI prioritises it a little more: the result is that it captures noticeably more fine detail than the ~45MP cameras can resolve.



Dynamic range is excellent, narrowly beating its rivals at lower sensitivities. Past ISO 1600, the S1R II has a 0.5EV advantage, but the A7R VI outperforms the Canon and Nikon by around 1EV more dynamic range.



Sony has crammed more pixels onto the A7R VI's full-frame sensor, which compromises its sensitivity to light. The result is that the A7R VI produces noisier images than the Canon and Panasonic cameras.

Digital Camera verdict

4.5 ★★★★★ Outstanding



The Sony A7R VI takes resolution and image quality from the A7R series and adds speed, autofocus and video capability, making it feel closer to an all-round flagship. Handling is good, with a comfortable grip, a superb EVF, a flexible screen and practical touches like illuminated buttons. But the A7R VI is expensive – at £4,400 (\$4,500), that price is hard to ignore. If you need high resolution and speed in one body, it makes a strong case. However, if you want resolution, the A7R V offers better value. The A7R VI is a brilliant camera, but it is not an automatic upgrade for all.

“The A7R VI is less a specialist commercial, landscape or studio camera, and more one that can plausibly do almost everything”

Compact Lumix L10



1 The retro-inspired design of the L10 is the best-looking Lumix camera in years.

2 Panasonic says the 24-75mm equivalent lens has been updated with dust resistance.

3 Black faux Saffiano-style leather wraps the front case, which is made from magnesium alloy.

Lumix L10

£1,299/\$1,499

A stylish compact and a zoom lens alternative to Fujifilm's X100VI

www.panasonic.com

Specifications

Lens: Leica DC Vario-Summilux 10.9-34mm (24-75mm equivalent), F1.7-2.8

Sensor: Micro Four Thirds BSI CMOS, 26.5MP total, 20.4MP effective

Image processor: Latest-generation Lumix image processing engine

Autofocus: Hybrid phase/contrast (779-point/315-area)

Stabilisation: None, lens-based POWER O.I.S. only

ISO range: 50-25,600

Max burst: 11fps mechanical, 30fps electronic

EVF: 0.39-inch OLED LVF,

2.36m dots, 0.74x magnification

LCD: 3.0-inch free-angle touchscreen, 1.84m

Max image size: 5200 x 3904px

Video: 5.6K up to 60p, 5.2K 4:3 up to 30p, C4K/4K up to 120p, FHD up to 240p

Storage: 1x UHS-II SD card slot

Battery/shots: DMW-BLK22/approx 420 (w/rear monitor), 410 (w/LVF)

Dimensions (W x H x D): 127.1 x 73.9 x 66.9mm

Weight: 508g (incl battery, SD card)

Compact cameras are back in a big way – not simply because people want something better than their smartphone camera, but also because they want something that produces finished-looking jpegs straight out of the camera. Panasonic has plenty of history in this space. The Lumix LX100 and LX100 II were cult favourites, pairing a Micro Four Thirds-sized sensor with a fast 24-75mm equivalent zoom lens in a compact body. The new Lumix L10 is a spiritual successor to those cameras; it picks up the same large-ish 4/3-type sensor, a fast Leica-branded zoom lens, an electronic viewfinder, a fully articulating screen and Panasonic's excellent Real Time LUT system baked in – something which will undoubtedly be hugely influential to its success. Fujifilm has built a huge audience around film simulations and recipes, and this feels like Panasonic's response to that. This is a camera aimed at the same crowd that is currently hunting down

models such as the Fujifilm X100VI, Leica D-Lux 8 and Ricoh GR III. The question is, does it do enough to stand out against these much-hyped rivals?

Build and handling

The Lumix L10 looks fantastic. It comes in black, silver and Titanium Gold versions, the latter of which is on test here and was produced to mark the 25th anniversary of Lumix. All three models have metal top and bottom plates, a magnesium alloy front case, matching lens barrels and a black Saffiano-style faux leather wrap.

The lens is the familiar Leica DC Vario-Summilux 24-75mm equivalent F1.7-2.8 zoom, which keeps the same focal length range and aperture rating as the LX100 II. It has an excellent everyday range, wide enough for travel and street, long enough for portraits and detail shots and fast enough to give the camera some low-light and depth of field flexibility. A wider aperture or longer zoom would have been great, but it would have made the L10

Lumix L10 Compact



4

The 2.36m-dot OLED EVF is easy to see in bright sunshine and has a decent resolution.

5

The rear screen is a 3-inch, 1.84m-dot fully articulating touchscreen unit.

6

A dedicated LUT (look-up table) button gives fast access to the colour tools.

7

When shooting close-ups, you will need to manually switch the lens into macro mode.

8

Set zoom with this rocker, although you can also zoom using the lens control ring.

9

The manual dial changes the main parameter of whichever mode you're shooting in.

even bigger, and it already pushes the concept of 'compact' to the limits.

The L10 is bigger than the LX100 II, and while it still just about qualifies as a compact camera, it won't slip into a jeans pocket. Then again, neither will the LX100 II or Fujifilm X100VI. More surprisingly, the L10 is around the same size as the X100VI, despite the Fujifilm squeezing in an APS-C sensor, IBIS and a hybrid optical/electronic viewfinder. I'm not entirely sure how all the extra space has been used on the Lumix.

The LX100 II's shutter speed and exposure compensation dials have

gone, replaced by a mode dial and a more multifunctional control dial. This seems like a big concession to hybrid shooters, who will welcome the new dedicated record button.

Functionally, the L10 still operates in the same way. It has a manual dial in the corner, which by default changes the main parameter of whichever mode you are using, with an exposure compensation button beside it and a custom function button in the centre. The shutter is surrounded by a zoom rocker, although you can also zoom using the lens control ring, either in



The Lumix L10 is available in black or silver body finishes, with a Lumix logo on the front. The logo doesn't feature on the Titanium Gold edition.



This is a limited edition, and lucky buyers will get extras including an auto lens cap, a Lumix-branded leather strap and a dedicated L10 lens cloth.

As a linear way or by using step zoom to jump between common focal lengths.

One change is the revamped aspect ratio switch, which can also be repurposed as a custom switch; I set it up to jump between three LUTs for quick access. Around the back is a dedicated LUT button that gives fast access to Panasonic's colour tools, as well as an AF-ON button. There is a small rear thumb wheel and a four-way controller for ISO, focus, white balance and shutter/self-timer controls. The thumb wheel is a little fiddly on a camera this small, but overall, the L10 is still easy to use.

The 3-inch fully articulating touchscreen isn't a class-leading panel, but it gets the job done. The full articulation is useful for video, vertical shooting and awkward angles, and as there is no joystick, it is the only way to position the focus point.

I'm a firm believer that a premium compact should have a viewfinder, and the L10's 2.36m-dot OLED EVF is a good one. It's easy to see in bright sunshine and with a decent resolution. There's also a hotshoe, which is good news after being omitted from the Lumix S9, but as there's no built-in

Compact Lumix L10

Gareth Bevan



Captured at f/2.8, the lens is sharp in the centre throughout the zoom range, but with a little softness at the edges and corners when shooting wide open.

flash, you will need to use an external unit. The single UHS-II SD card slot is on the bottom of the camera in a compartment, separate from the DMW-BLK22 battery.

The grip is minimal, but this is a small camera after all. It is just about enough, although using a SmallRig thumb grip made the camera feel more secure. I am less keen on the strap lugs. I wish Panasonic had kept the eyelet-style lugs from the LX100 II, which looked neater and felt better suited to most of my third-party straps.

Performance

The L10's biggest selling point is Panasonic's built-in Photo LUT system, which feels like Panasonic's answer to the Fujifilm X100VI's film simulations and community recipes. It isn't a direct replication, though. Rather than locking you into a fixed set of simulations as your starting point, Panasonic lets you load any custom LUT (look-up table) into the camera, or even layer two LUTs, with hundreds more to download or share through the Lumix Lab app.

Panasonic has also added new film-inspired Photo Styles to get you started, including L.Classic, L.ClassicNeo and L.ClassicGold, as well as Leica Monochrome. We can argue all day about the strengths and weaknesses of film recipes versus LUTs, but LUTs have reached the point where the right ones can be just as versatile and filmic. After years of being a Fujifilm shooter, I am already a convert to this way of working. The L10 can produce instant social media-ready jpegs, and frankly, that is what many people want these days, particularly if they want to avoid spending hours tweaking photos in editing.

I find Micro Four Thirds to be something of a sweet spot for compact cameras, as it allows for smaller designs (although the L10 has grown in size). The L10's sensor isn't the newest or the highest-resolution around, but the image quality is excellent. It's another of these multi-aspect-ratio sensors where the image circle doesn't cover the whole 26.5MP sensor in any aspect ratio, with different megapixel counts depending on what aspect ratio you shoot at.

The effective 20.4MP leaves less room for cropping than some rivals, but it's fine for web, social and prints at sensible sizes. Dynamic range is good, with some latitude in the shadows, and if you choose not to use styles or LUTs, Panasonic's colour science gives natural, pleasing results.

Rival cameras



Fujifilm X100VI
£1,599/\$1,599
APS-C compact gets faster autofocus and improved video over the X100V. Excellent image quality, but expensive.
Reviewed: issue 280
★★★★★



Lumix S9
£1,499/\$1,499
Optimised for content creation – its compact size, video features and full-frame sensor set the S9 apart at its price.
Reviewed: issue 300
★★★★★



Ricoh GR IIIx HDF
£1,049/\$1,067
A 24MP APS-C sensor with a fixed 40mm f/2.8 lens and HDF filter. Limited by modern standards, it's also awkward to use.
Reviewed: issue 287
★★★★★

Gareth Bevan



Captured with the lens at its longest setting of 34mm (75mm full-frame equivalent) and stopping down to f/2.8 from the widest f/1.7 aperture, there's a decent amount of depth of field and detail in this photo.

The lens is sharp in the centre throughout the zoom range, with a little softness at the edges and corners when shooting wide open, but it sharpens up nicely when stopped down. Low-light performance is good, too; the L10 can capture a decent amount of detail, and noise reduction isn't overly aggressive, although some finer detail is a little smoothed out.

Autofocus (a Phase Hybrid system with 779 points) is quick and mostly reliable. There's AI subject recognition for people, animals, vehicles and more dynamic subjects, such as urban sports. Subject recognition worked well, although AF tracking isn't quite at the Sony or Canon level. However, once it locked onto what I wanted it to, it generally stayed locked.

The L10 can focus down to 3cm at the wide end, which is close, but not always the most flattering or practical perspective for macro photography. At the long end, close focus jumps to 30cm, which is a little too far away if you want to capture truly tiny details. Full manual focus is also available if you need some more precision.

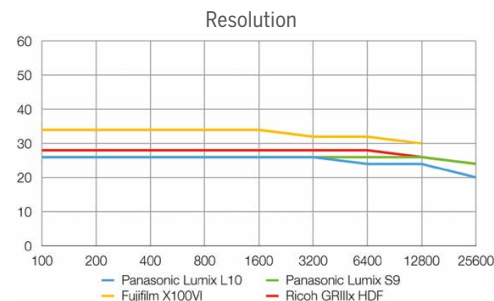
The L10 includes Panasonic's high-resolution mode, which stacks images to create a 96MP file in-camera, although I have yet to find a use for this feature. It also has Crop Zoom, which digitally crops beyond the optical zoom range.

Probably the biggest omission in the L10 is in-body image stabilisation. The L10 has lens-based POWER O.I.S., and while that helps for night shooting and walking street shots, it isn't as effective as IBIS. Ideally, you'd want a combination of the two, but given the L10's larger body, it feels like IBIS could have been included.

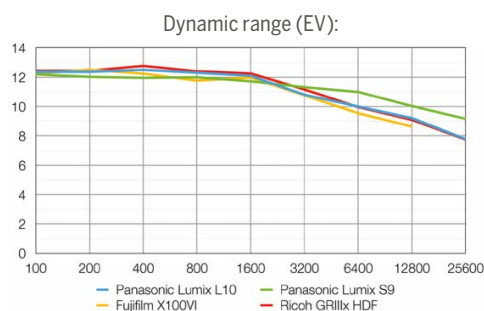
Burst shooting is surprisingly powerful for this type of camera; it shares the processor from the S1 II, but no level of sensor stacking. The mechanical leaf shutter reaches around 11fps, while the electronic shutter can shoot at up to 30fps. While I don't think this will be anyone's first-choice sports or wildlife camera, having this speed could be useful for the likes of urban sports, school sports days or chasing your dog around the park.

Battery life is a strength and a benefit of having the larger body. Rated for around 420 shots using the rear screen, or 410 using the EVF, I exceeded that in a day of walk-around shooting – it also takes a hit when shooting high-res video. The video performance is far better than I expected from a camera that isn't primarily video-focused. Autofocus is snappy, tracking and subject recognition are good, but the lack of IBIS limits the L10's usefulness as a hybrid camera. While it's a stronger hybrid compact than I expected, the Lumix S9 may be a better choice from the brand's small-body lineup. **Gareth Bevan**

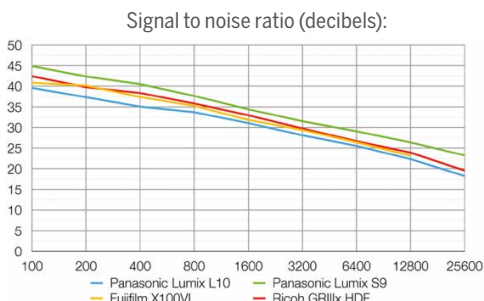
“The L10 can produce instant social media-ready jpegs – frankly, that's what people want to avoid spending hours in editing”



At 20.4MP, the L10 was never going to ace this test, but that it equals the 24.2MP Lumix S9 throughout most of the sensitivity scale is impressive. Only at high ISOs does the L10 struggle with image noise.



The L10 captures excellent dynamic range at lower sensitivities, outperforming its full-frame S9 sibling. Only at ISO 3200 and above does it start to lose out to the S9, but the L10 still matches its APS-C rivals.



The L10's smaller Micro Four Thirds sensor can't match the performance of the larger APS-C cameras, nor the full-frame S9. Its smaller photosites (pixels) are less light-sensitive, resulting in higher noise levels.

Digital Camera verdict

4.0 ★★★★★ Excellent



The Lumix L10 is an excellent camera, with its lens, LUT system and photography-first features such as an EVF and a hotshoe. But I wish it was smaller, had IBIS and retained more of the marked manual dials. The L10 appears to be caught between two ideas – it aims to be a fixed-lens compact for photographers, but with features to please hybrid shooters, it's definitely nodding towards the needs of creators. Still, the Lumix L10 gives Panasonic a much-needed premium compact when the genre couldn't be hotter – and a genuine alternative to the Fujifilm X100VI.

Prime lens Sigma 35mm F1.4 DG II Art



Digital
Camera
GOLD
AWARD

Sigma 35mm F1.4 DG II Art

£1,429/\$1,598

Revamped lens for Sony E-mount and L-Mount has an impeccable heritage

sigmauk.com

Let's turn the clock back to 2012. The original Sigma 35mm F1.4 DG HSM Art was unleashed as the very first 'Art' lens in Sigma's Global Vision line-up. Designed primarily for Canon and Nikon full-frame DSLRs, it was the best 35mm prime lens that I'd ever used at the time. Keeping abreast of changes in the marketplace, Sigma brought out a subsequent 35mm F1.4 DG DN Art for mirrorless cameras in 2021, which was available in Sony E-mount and L-Mount options. The latest Mark II pushes the envelope even further, with a raft of improvements that aim to ensure that it keeps top spot as one of the best 35mm lenses on the market. Even so, it's still only available in the same two mount options.

Build and handling

Sometimes, less is more. I really like using a 35mm prime lens for street photography, where it pays to be inconspicuous. I liked that the original 35mm Art lens for DSLRs was a lot less chunky than many Sigma Art lenses, which were typically designed with premium image quality in mind and no compromise in terms of size and weight. Fast forward two generations, and the Mark II of the mirrorless lens is significantly shorter and lighter than its predecessor, and a real joy for everyday shooting.

Although relatively small and lightweight, there's no shortage of high-quality glass. The optical design is based on no less than 15 elements, arranged in 12 groups, including four aspherical elements and two SLD (Special Low Dispersion) elements. The overall aim is to optimise clarity and sharpness, while minimising colour fringing and other aberrations. The quality of bokeh is another key factor, which is helped when stopping down a little by a very well-rounded 11-blade aperture diaphragm.



Despite the fast f/1.4 aperture rating, this lens has a modest 67mm filter attachment thread size.

A key upgrade in the Mark II lens is that it has a go-faster autofocus system. It's driven by two of Sigma's HLA (High-response Linear Actuator) motors, which shift two separate groups of lens elements with speed and accuracy, in almost total silence. Most photographers use autofocus for most of the time, but manual focusing can still be advantageous in certain situations. I hate having to rummage around in a camera's menu system to make the change, so I'm happy that the Sigma features an AF/MF focus mode switch.

Another handling luxury is that the lens features two customisable function buttons, offset on the barrel at a 90° spacing. The upshot is that they fall neatly under the thumb when you're shooting in either landscape or portrait (upright) orientation, so the ergonomics feel entirely natural. The range of available functions depends on the Sony E-mount or L-Mount camera body that you're using, but I'd normally double up on AF-Hold for both of them.

Even if you aren't a 'hybrid' photographer with the intention of content creation, the chances are that you will shoot video, at least occasionally. The lens obliges with a click/de-click switch for the aperture ring, the de-click mode ensuring smooth and silent aperture adjustments for when you're shooting video.

As I'd expect, the aperture control ring itself is clearly marked in one-third f/stops, all the way from f/1.4 to the narrowest aperture of f/16. Thanks to the click/de-click switch shown in the previous image, you can use this in steps for stills or in stepless mode when shooting video. With either option, the aperture ring is useful when you're using your camera in Aperture Priority or Manual shooting modes.

Call me clumsy, but I often find that it's all too easy to accidentally nudge the aperture control ring in lenses that feature one, from its Auto position to a narrow aperture setting. It seems I'm not the only person, as Sigma has taken the unusual step of retaining a locking switch for Auto aperture control, which is sadly lacking in a great many modern lens designs.

I'd expect any decent lens to come complete with a hood, but sometimes

1 High-quality glass aims to optimise clarity and sharpness and minimise fringing.

2 This lens features an AF/MF focus mode switch, so there's no need to dip into menus.

3 The mounting plate is made from coated brass for precision and durability.

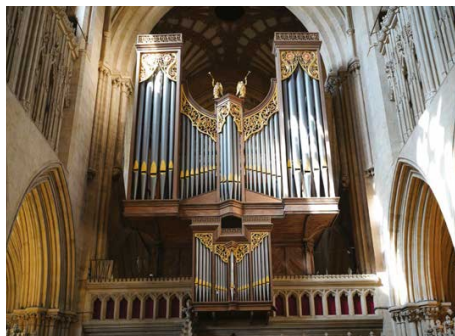




Naturally, it's not just about the sharpness. The quality of bokeh produced by this lens is soft and smooth, adding to the overall feel-good factor of image quality. Taken on a Sony A7 III: 1/250sec at f/1.4, ISO 400.



Left: There's fabulous clarity, sharpness and colour rendition at medium to narrow apertures (f/5.6 here). Right: Even shooting wide open at f/1.4, the lens delivers impressive clarity and edge-to-edge sharpness.



I'm disappointed and feel somewhat aggrieved that I have to buy the hood separately, as an 'optional extra'. Like many third-party lens manufacturers, Sigma tends to supply hoods with all of its lenses – unlike many own-brand manufacturers – and this one comes with a highly effective petal-shaped hood that includes a locking button.

As usual for Sigma lenses, the mounting plate is made from coated brass for extra precision and robustness. Unlike the original 35mm Art lens for DSLRs, the mounting plate of this one has a rubber weather-seal ring to guard against dust and moisture, as fitted to most Sigma lenses nowadays.

Performance

Before we get into the important business of image quality, let's dedicate a few words to the autofocus performance. I found autofocus fast and consistently accurate, well able to keep up with the tracking facilities on my Sony camera. Consistently accurate autofocus is particularly vital when shooting close-ups at wide apertures, where the depth of field becomes shallow. The lens continued to impress in this situation, giving me a great hit rate.

Naturally, in the context of street photography and general shooting, a tight depth of field often isn't preferable. At

medium to narrow apertures in real-world shooting, I found that the lens delivered fabulous clarity, sharpness and colour rendition, with sharpness staying on song from the centre right out to the extremities of the image frame.

OK, so medium aperture settings return excellent edge-to-edge sharpness, but you're only likely to buy a 'fast' prime lens if you want to use it at wide apertures for at least some of the time. There are two advantages, so I'll start with the most obvious. Wide apertures equate to a tight depth of field, so you can isolate the main subject in a scene by blurring the background. The Sigma does well to combine excellent sharpness, even wide-open at f/1.4, with beautifully smooth and soft bokeh.

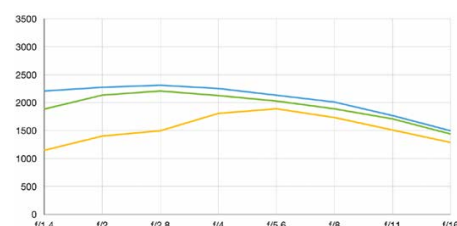
The second advantage of 'fast' apertures is that you can retain quick shutter speeds even under very low lighting conditions, without the need to push your camera's ISO setting too far. This enables you to freeze motion and to avoid camera-shake when shooting handheld, for example, in cathedrals and museums, where using a tripod is often prohibited. I'm impressed that even wide-open at f/1.4, the Sigma exhibits impressive clarity and edge-to-edge sharpness. **Matthew Richards**

Prime lens

Specifications

Mount options: Sony E (FE), L-Mount
Full-frame: Yes
Autofocus: Yes
Image stabilisation: No
Lens construction: 15 elements in 12 groups
Angle of view: 63.4°
Max aperture: f/1.4
Min aperture: f/16
Diaphragm blades: 11
Min focus distance: 0.28cm
Max magnification ratio: 0.19x
Filter size: 67mm
Dimensions (L x D): 95 x 73mm
Weight: 525g

Sharpness



Sharpness

Centre sharpness is impressive from f/1.4 through to f/11, and stays so even as you move out towards the corners of the frame. There's a drop in sharpness in the corners at larger apertures, but by f/4, detail is remarkably consistent across the whole frame.

Fringing

0.21

Chromatic aberration is particularly well controlled at all apertures – you'll struggle to spot any fringing in real-world images.

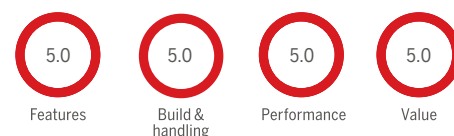
Distortion

-0.91

The lens produces a little barrel distortion, but it should go unnoticed in real-world conditions. Again, this is with automatic in-camera correction disabled.

Digital Camera verdict

5.0 ★★★★★
 A best-in-class product



I used to feel that the original Sigma 35mm F1.4 Art lens was the pinnacle of primes, back in the glory days of DSLRs. I absolutely loved mine, and it was a constant companion. As the saying goes, 'the more things change, the more they stay the same'. The mirrorless Mark II lens is certainly much changed, from its downsized, relatively lightweight build to its improved optical prowess and super-fast autofocus system. What remains the same is that the new lens is still a frontrunner in terms of image quality and overall design. It's also great value for money, making it a top choice if you own a Sony Alpha E-mount camera or a body with the L-Mount.

Prime lens Viltrox AF 75mm F1.8 Evo



Viltrox AF 75mm F1.8 Evo

£319/\$329

Classy short telephoto prime for Fujifilm, Nikon and Sony APS-C mirrorless cameras

www.viltrox.co.uk

I started my collection of Viltrox prime lenses a few years ago, with four f/1.4 primes for my Nikon Z fc. Things have moved on, with Viltrox now focusing on lightweight and low-budget Air lenses, top-grade Pro and Lab lenses and next-generation Evo lenses. The evolution in question came to fruition with the full-frame-compatible Viltrox AF 85mm F2.0 Evo for Nikon Z and Sony E-mount mirrorless cameras. That was followed by the Viltrox AF 35mm F1.8 Evo and the Viltrox AF 55mm F1.8 Evo, launched together in the same two mount options. Fast forward a little, and there are now two APS-C format Evo lenses in virtually the same size and weight, and with the same handling characteristics and filter thread as the full-frame lenses.

The new kids on the block are the Viltrox AF 75mm F1.8 Evo, on review here, and the Viltrox AF 90mm F2.2 Evo. Both are suitable for APS-C format portraiture and are available in Nikon Z and Sony E-mount options. There are also Fujifilm X mount editions, although the Fuji versions lack the AF/MF focus mode switch, customisable function button and click/de-click switch of the other two variants.

Other portrait-friendly, dedicated APS-C format Viltrox lenses in the same choice of three mount options include the cut-price Viltrox AF 56mm F1.7 Air and the super-fast Viltrox AF 56mm F1.2 Pro.

Build and handling

Unlike the previous three offerings in the Viltrox Evo line-up of prime lenses, the two latest 75mm and 90mm lenses are designed specifically for APS-C format Fujifilm, Nikon and Sony mirrorless cameras, instead of being full-frame-compatible. Naturally, if you're in either the Nikon or Sony camp, you can use the full-frame Viltrox AF 85mm F2.0 Evo on your APS-C format body with no compromises. The new lenses are arguably of greater interest



The scale on the aperture control ring is in f/stops with subtle click steps at one-third f/stop intervals.

to Fujifilm shooters, as these are the first Evo lenses available in Fuji's X-Mount.

What I like most about all five Evo lenses in the line-up so far is that, irrespective of whether they're full-frame or APS-C format, they're all pretty much the same size and weight, and have the same 58mm filter attachment thread. Apart from the Fujifilm versions, the handling characteristics are also identical. The upshot is that if you're chopping and changing between lenses in the series to make use of different focal lengths, the shooting experience is virtually identical. That means you can concentrate fully on shooting, without any differences in handling spoiling your creative flow.

But any lens is only as good as its glass, and this one features 11 elements in nine groups, including two ED (Extra-low Dispersion) elements and two HRi (High Refractive index) elements. The aim is for excellent clarity and contrast, along with natural colour rendition and the minimum of unwanted aberrations. Other optical highlights include HD Nano multi-layer coatings to minimise ghosting and flare, and a moisture/grease-repellant fluorine coating on the front element.

Handling extras, at least for the Nikon and Sony mount editions, include an AF/MF focus mode switch and a customisable function button. The former avoids any time and effort spent in camera menus when you want to swap between autofocus and manual focus. The latter can be assigned to various functions, but AF-hold is usually the favoured option.

One thing that's shared by all three mount versions of the lens is the dedicated aperture control ring. Unlike some, the scale is marked in full f/stop increments rather than intermediate one-third f/stop markings. As usual, there's an A (Auto) setting at the narrow end of the aperture range for controlling the aperture directly from the camera body. This is essential in Program and Shutter Priority shooting modes. My only gripe is that there's no locking switch for the aperture ring's Auto position. As such, you need to be careful while shooting that you don't nudge the ring from its A setting to a narrow aperture, which overrides the camera-driven value.

1 The five Viltrox Evo optics have the same 58mm filter attachment thread.

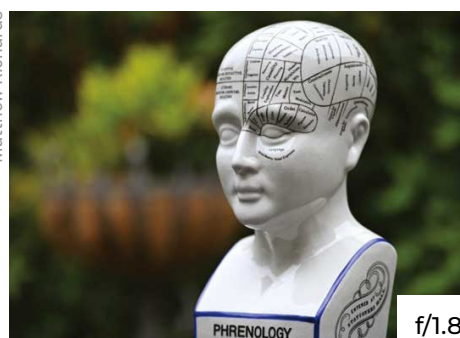
2 The Nikon and Sony mount editions of the lens include an AF/MF focus mode switch.

3 Weather-seals, a metal mounting plate and gold-plated electronic contacts all feature.

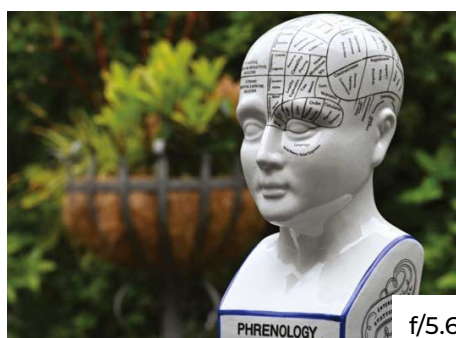




With the crop factor of the APS-C Nikon Z50 II, the Viltrox 75mm is 112.5mm in full-frame equivalent terms.



f/1.8



f/5.6

These images of a phrenology head, taken at apertures of f/1.8 (left) and f/5.6 (right), are a good test for the qualities of sharpness, bokeh and axial chromatic aberration, known as 'bokeh fringing'.

The click steps in the aperture control ring are subtle and quiet in operation, but there's a click/de-click switch on the Nikon and Sony mount versions of the lens. The latter mode enables smooth, stepless and virtually silent aperture transitions, more useful when shooting video rather than stills. The autofocus system is near-silent, based on the common variety of linear stepping motor. As such, the motor is also employed to shift the relevant groups of elements when focusing manually as well as in autofocus modes.

Build quality feels solid and sturdy, including the metal mounting plate. The control rings, switches and function button work with smooth precision and feel like high-quality items. I'd expect a lens of this calibre to be supplied with a hood and, in this case, it's an efficient circular-profile hood befitting the lens's short telephoto nature. With a bayonet-fit coupling, it can be reversed on the lens to enable compact stowage.

Performance

As always with APS-C format lenses, it's important to take the crop factor into account. Applying the 1.5x conversion factor, the Viltrox AF 75mm F1.8 Evo has an 'effective' focal length of 112.5mm in

full-frame terms. This delivers a natural and comfortable working distance for head-and-shoulders portraiture, as well as tight head shots. The effective focal length also works for still-life and product photography.

Coupled with the widest available aperture of f/1.8, the focal length enables a tight depth of field, ideal for isolating subjects by blurring the background. The lens is good in this respect, combining excellent sharpness when shooting wide-open at f/1.8 with sumptuous, smooth bokeh. It remains of good quality when stopping down, helped by a well-rounded 9-blade aperture diaphragm.

While testing the lens, I shot some images of a phrenology head against a backdrop of garden plants and hedging. The series of images was taken at apertures from f/1.8 up to and including f/5.6. They serve as a good test for the qualities of sharpness, bokeh and axial chromatic aberration. The last of these is a phenomenon also known as 'bokeh fringing', which can be problematic with fast lenses at their widest aperture. It results in colour fringing around high-contrast transitions just in front of and behind the plane of focus, such as the phrenology head's black lines and writing on its white porcelain background. **Matthew Richards**

Prime lens

Specifications

Mount options: Fujifilm X, Nikon Z, Sony E

Full-frame: No

Autofocus: Yes

Stabilisation: No

Lens construction: 11 elements in 9 groups

Angle of view: 21.4°

Max aperture: f/1.8

Min aperture: f/16

Diaphragm blades: 9

Min focus distance: 0.74m

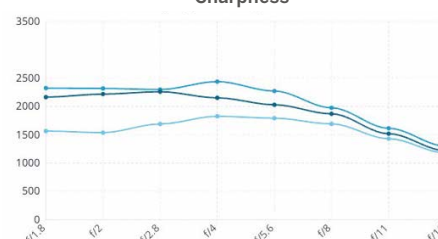
Max magnification ratio: 0.12x

Filter size: 58mm

Dimensions (L x D): 78 x 69mm

Weight: 355g

Sharpness



Sharpness

Sharpness is impressive from the centre of the image frame right out to the extreme edges and corners, even when shooting wide open at f/1.8. Sharpness only really drops off noticeably at the narrowest aperture of f/16, due to the normal issue of diffraction.

Fringing

0.58

Axial and lateral chromatic aberrations are minimal and will go unnoticed even with automatic correction disabled, either in-camera or when editing raw files.

Distortion

0.18

There's slight pincushion distortion revealed in our lab tests, but it's impossible to detect with the majority of subject matter in real-world shooting conditions.

Digital Camera verdict

5.0



A best-in-class product



Features



Build & handling



Performance



Value

The Viltrox AF 75mm F1.8 Evo works a treat for head-and-shoulders portraiture, tight head shots and still-life photography. The build quality and handling are impressive, with everything wrapped up in a sturdy metal casing with multiple weather-seals. Performance is excellent, too, from the speed and consistent accuracy of autofocus to the image quality, which combines excellent edge-to-edge sharpness even when shooting wide-open at f/1.8, with beautifully smooth bokeh. Nikon and Sony shooters might be tempted to buy the similar but full-frame-compatible Viltrox AF 85mm f/2.0 Evo, even if that lens is one-third of an f/stop slower.

INTERVIEW

The 40% Project

We talk to seven female photographers who shot portraits for this RPS project

T

he 40% Project is a national portrait series by the Royal Photographic Society Women in Photography (RPS WIP) Group, which

was created to mark a historic moment in UK democracy. Following the general election in 2024, women now make up over 40 per cent of Members of Parliament – the highest level of representation in British parliamentary history. To record this milestone, women photographers from across the UK have come together to photograph portraits of the women shaping Parliament today.

The project was co-conceived by Sue Wright and Christina Osborne after the 2024 general election. “As Chair of the RPS WIP Group,” explains Sue, “I wanted to create a positive, non-political visual record of this moment – with women photographers photographing women MPs.” A book of the portraits – nearly 265 in all – is planned for later this year. ●
Find out more and support the book at: www.kickstarter.com/projects/iar/the-40-project



Sue Wright

Sue Wright

Sitter: Dame Harriett Baldwin DBE MP



Did you know much about Dame Harriett before you met?

Dame Harriett Baldwin has had a long and significant career in Parliament,

including several important government and parliamentary roles. When she first came to Parliament, there were far fewer women MPs than there are today, so I wanted the portrait to acknowledge both her achievements and her place in the longer story of women's representation in public life.

What influenced the creative approach you used for the shoot? Was this worked out beforehand, or did it develop on the day?

The sitting took place at Westminster, in one of the boardrooms in Portcullis House. Dame Harriett wore a purple velvet jacket, bringing a subtle suffragette feel to the portrait, which

felt fitting for The 40% Project. I wanted the image to feel composed, respectful and quietly strong, while still warm and human.

Are you pleased with the portrait?

Yes, very much. I feel the portrait has dignity, warmth and quiet strength, and it sits well within the wider body of work. For me, it reflects what The 40% Project is trying to achieve – not simply a record of MPs, but a visual archive of women in leadership, photographed by women.

And what did Dame Harriett think of it?

She was very supportive of the project. I think many MPs understood that this was about marking an important moment for women in Parliament, and her portrait feels like an important part of that wider story.

See more of Sue's work at:

[www.flickr.com/photos](https://www.flickr.com/photos/suewrighttuppington)

[suewrighttuppington](https://www.flickr.com/photos/suewrighttuppington)

Instagram: @suewrighttuppington



Ruth Samuels

Sitter: Diane Abbott MP



How did you get involved in The 40% Project?

Some friends from another group of female photographers had been involved in the project,

and they mentioned that there were still a number of MPs waiting to be paired up with photographers. They suggested it would be the perfect project for me to get involved with... so I did!

Diane Abbott is a household name in the UK, but how much did you know about her before the photoshoot took place?

Diane Abbott is such an icon. I couldn't believe I had the honour of photographing the first black female MP in the UK and Mother of the House. Her impact in the political sphere – particularly for women and people of colour – cannot be overstated.

I truly admire her commitment to justice, despite how costly it has often been for her.

What influenced the creative approach you used for the shoot? Was this worked out beforehand, or did it develop on the day?

I went to Diane's office in Whitehall during a break between her meetings, so with the tight, airport-like security and limited space in the office itself, all I really had was my camera and the available light. My intention was to honour her resolve and dignity, while giving a nod to her legacy and achievements.

Are you pleased with the portrait?

I think I am now. At first, I felt like I hadn't quite done enough. But when I received

a voice note from a friend who had been brought to tears by the quiet strength they felt through the portrait, I started to see the image in a new light.

And have you heard what Diane thinks of her portrait?

I don't really know! There are so many images that exist of Diane Abbott, and I was so fortunate that she made time in her busy schedule to allow me to create another. I think the fact that she gave it her approval must mean that she thinks it's OK!

See more of Ruth's work at:

www.ruth-samuels.com

Instagram: @ruthsamuelsphoto

"I couldn't believe I had the honour of photographing the first black female MP in the UK, and Mother of the House"



Rah Petherbridge

Rah Petherbridge

Sitter: Sally Jameson MP

Flavia Fraser



Did you know much about Sally Jameson before you met?

Not a great deal – just that she represented Doncaster. I did some research

before the shoot and was impressed by her calm presence and quiet authority.

What influenced the creative approach you used for the shoot?

I love giving the sitter power – that's my starting point. I'm drawn to work where people are seen clearly, in good light, in the painting tradition as much as in photography. I'd been reading *Beauty and the Bank Note: Images of Women on Paper Money* by

Virginia H Hewitt and was struck by how women's power in historical imagery tends to be portrayed through dignity rather than force. That felt relevant to this portrait.

Was the creative approach worked out beforehand, or did it develop on the day?

When I'm shooting someone I haven't met, I try not to arrive with fixed expectations; I let the conversation and the light do the steering. That said, arriving at the Houses of Parliament was quite something; I was a little nervous, but Sally walked me through Westminster Hall, and I saw New Dawn by Mary Branson, an extraordinary light sculpture at the entrance to St Stephen's Hall, made of 168 hand-blown glass scrolls, installed on the spot where suffragettes were barred from entering Parliament. After Sally went back to her office, I stood and looked

at it for some time. I felt small and important all at once – a perfect detail to the day.

Are you pleased with the portrait?

Very much so. There was that shaky moment stepping into that blinding sun – outwardly calm, inwardly calculating the physics of the light, hoping I had the right exposure. I can't bear to look at my settings in front of a sitter – I feel it implies something isn't right – so I'm pleased with how it landed. I felt her image had a quality of marching forward with hope, dignity and grace. I love where the focal point landed, and it captures that moment we both relaxed after a genuinely inspiring conversation. To me, she looks exactly as I found her: professional, focused, kind, with an underlying strength I'd trust.

And what did Sally think of it?

Sally messaged afterwards to thank me for the collection I sent over, and she made a contribution through my website. That was incredibly kind, and I felt validated by it.

“To me, Sally looks exactly as I found her: professional, focused, kind, with an underlying strength that I'd trust”

See more of Rah's work at:
www.rahpetherbridge.com
 Instagram: @rahpetherbridgephotography



Allie Crewe

Sitter: Ashley Dalton MP



Did you know much about Ashley before you met her?

No. I never

do much research about a person because I like to respond to them in that moment. The image reflects the connection we make.

What influenced the creative approach you used? Was this worked out beforehand or did it develop on the day?

We met on a spring day at The Ship in Lathom, the room filled with dappled sunlight. Ashley Dalton, MP for West Lancashire, joined The 40% Project as part of a growing portrait of women in Parliament, each bringing their own voice, their own way of leading. She admires the diversity we are representing. She spoke with humour and warmth, explaining that her role is not to enter a room and speak, but to

listen. To make space for others, rather than fill it. And that vulnerability, so often mistaken for weakness, is a form of courage. A different kind of strength, in truth, and my role was to represent this energy.

Are you pleased with how the portrait turned out?

Absolutely. This is my speciality, and I love this part of my work. Of course, I would love to do it all again – and I'd make changes, too. To photograph is to learn.

And what did Ashley think of it?

She doesn't generally enjoy having her portrait made, but we agreed that it was a great session. She preferred the softer version of the portrait to my favourite, which was more edgy. We both loved the light on her choice.

See more of Allie's work at:
Website: www.allie-crewe.uk
Instagram: @allie_crewe



Churnet Pieters

Sitter: Sarah Owen MP



Did you know much about Sarah before you met her?

I didn't know

Sarah before, so I researched her work ahead of the shoot – her fight against Islamophobia, advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights and tackling abuse against women. The more I read, the more I appreciated her commitment to equality. It gave me an understanding of the person I was about to photograph.

What influenced the creative approach you used on the day?

Originally, I imagined shooting Sarah outside with the Houses of Parliament as a backdrop. However, she suggested using the Lord Mountbatten Room instead. The moment I walked in, I was struck by its scale, history and elegance, and we agreed it would make the perfect setting. Once we started shooting, the

session evolved naturally. There was plenty of laughter, even some dancing. Capturing that felt more important than any original plan.

Are you pleased with the result?

Absolutely. It captures Sarah's warmth, confidence and authenticity. While the setting reflects the significance of her role as an MP, the image shows the person behind the title. Everything came together naturally, and I left feeling I had photographed someone who was both influential and approachable.

And what did Sarah think of it?

Sarah chose the image that's featured in The 40% Project because she said it reflected how she wanted to be represented. As a portrait photographer, that has always been my goal.

See more of Churnet's work at:
www.brandedbychurnet.com
IG: @photographybychurnet



Geraldine Curtis

Geraldine Curtis

Sitter: Helen Morgan MP



How did you get involved in The 40% Project?

When I saw the RPS was looking for female photographers to take part in The 40% Project, I couldn't wait to volunteer. In 2019, I visited the 209 exhibition, which celebrated women being given the vote, and was inspired by all the wonderful portraits.

Did you know much about Helen Morgan before you began the shoot?

No, I knew absolutely nothing about Helen

before I met her. All my local MPs had already been allocated a photographer, so I chose Helen from the list as someone I could easily travel to within two hours.

What influenced your creative approach for the shoot? Was this worked out beforehand, or did it develop on the day?

Before meeting Helen, I spoke with her team at Westminster and her local office at Wem in Shropshire about where the photoshoot should take place. One of the options was to photograph Helen at a farm in her mainly rural constituency of North Shropshire. As a farmer's daughter, I was pleased with this decision. I also planned to use flash to make the portrait more dynamic.

Are you pleased with the portrait?

On the day, I found Helen very easy to talk to, and I think this shows in her relaxed manner in the photo. It was a hugely enjoyable experience for me – and I hope for her, too.

And what did Helen think of it?

I sent several photos for Helen to choose from. I think she must have been very happy with this portrait because it was later used in her local paper to illustrate an article where she was urging the Government to prioritise rural services in Shropshire.

See more of Geraldine's work at:

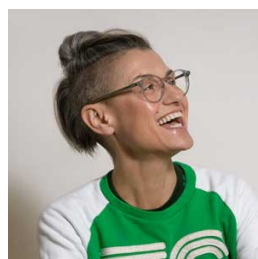
www.flickr.com/photos/geraldinecurtis
Instagram: @geraldine.curtis

Karen Yeomans



Karen Yeomans

Sitter: Jess Phillips MP



Did you know much about Jess Phillips before you met?

Yes, particularly her campaigning to prevent violence against women and girls,

something I care deeply about. There was also a lovely personal connection. My parents both grew up in Birmingham, my father not far from Jess's constituency, and Jess attended King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Girls, the same school my mum went to. Photographing Jess in a part of Birmingham that meant something to both of us made the session feel personal.

What influenced the creative approach you used for the shoot? Was this worked out beforehand, or did it develop on the day?

Jess suggested meeting at St Edburgha's Church in Yardley, where both of her parents were christened. I loved the idea because it rooted the portrait in somewhere personal

rather than somewhere political. I rarely over-plan portraits; I prefer them to evolve through conversation and trust. Whether I'm photographing an elite athlete or an MP, I'm looking for the same thing: an honest moment that reveals the person behind the achievement. I wanted the portrait to feel authentic, grounded and distinctly Jess.

Are you pleased with the portrait?

Very. Although this wasn't a sporting assignment, it felt familiar. My photography has always been more about the people within sport: their vulnerability, courage and character. I approached Jess's portrait in the same way, with the same desire to create an image that feels authentic and representative of the person in front of my camera.

And what did Jess think of it?

I haven't had any direct feedback from Jess or her office since delivering the images, but she was incredibly generous with her time and very open throughout the afternoon. I hope the portrait reflects both her warmth and direct energy. More broadly, I'm proud that it's part of a project celebrating women photographing women and helping women be seen, celebrated and represented truthfully. That's a thread running through my work, whether I'm photographing athletes on the field of play or women leading change in politics, business or their communities.

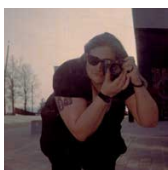
See more of Karen's work at:
www.karenyeomans
 Instagram: @karen_yeomans

"Whoever I'm photographing, I'm looking for an honest moment that reveals the person behind the achievement"



Alice Armstrong

Sitter: Hannah Spencer MP



How did you get involved in The 40% Project?

I was a member of the RPS, and I saw a call-out for female photographers. I'd been hoping to challenge myself

last year by shooting more portraiture, and this project sounded like a great opportunity.

Did you know much about Hannah before you met her?

I probably knew more than I would have if there hadn't recently been a high-profile by-election. There was so much media interest in the candidates and, being my own constituency, I'd done a good amount of research before voting. Hannah Spencer was as down-to-earth and lovely as she came across in the run-up to the election, and everyone wanted to say hi.

What influenced the creative approach you used for the shoot? Was this worked out beforehand or did it develop on the day?

I wanted to represent Hannah somewhere that was important to her and showed off her personality, so I worked with her and her team to find a suitable location. It actually developed a little on the day because she'd chosen a local park on a bright day.

Are you pleased with the portrait?

I am, especially as it was quite short notice, but thankfully, we had lovely weather for the outdoor location on the day. Hannah made it easy too, as she's very relaxed and a delight to work with.

And what did Hannah think of it?

Hannah liked the portrait, and her team asked me if she could use it elsewhere. I'll admit that it wasn't my favourite photo from the shoot, but as a predominantly analogue photographer, the one that is part of the project was actually shot on my backup digital camera!

See more of Alice's work at:
Instagram: @alicearmstrong



SUPPORT THE BOOK!

The RPS WIP Group is working with the publisher Image & Reality to bring The 40% Project together as a 260-page hardback photobook.

A Kickstarter campaign to help fund the book is open for pledges now. Support it today by visiting the Kickstarter page at:
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ON SALE Friday 14 Aug

Contents subject to change

Summer in motion

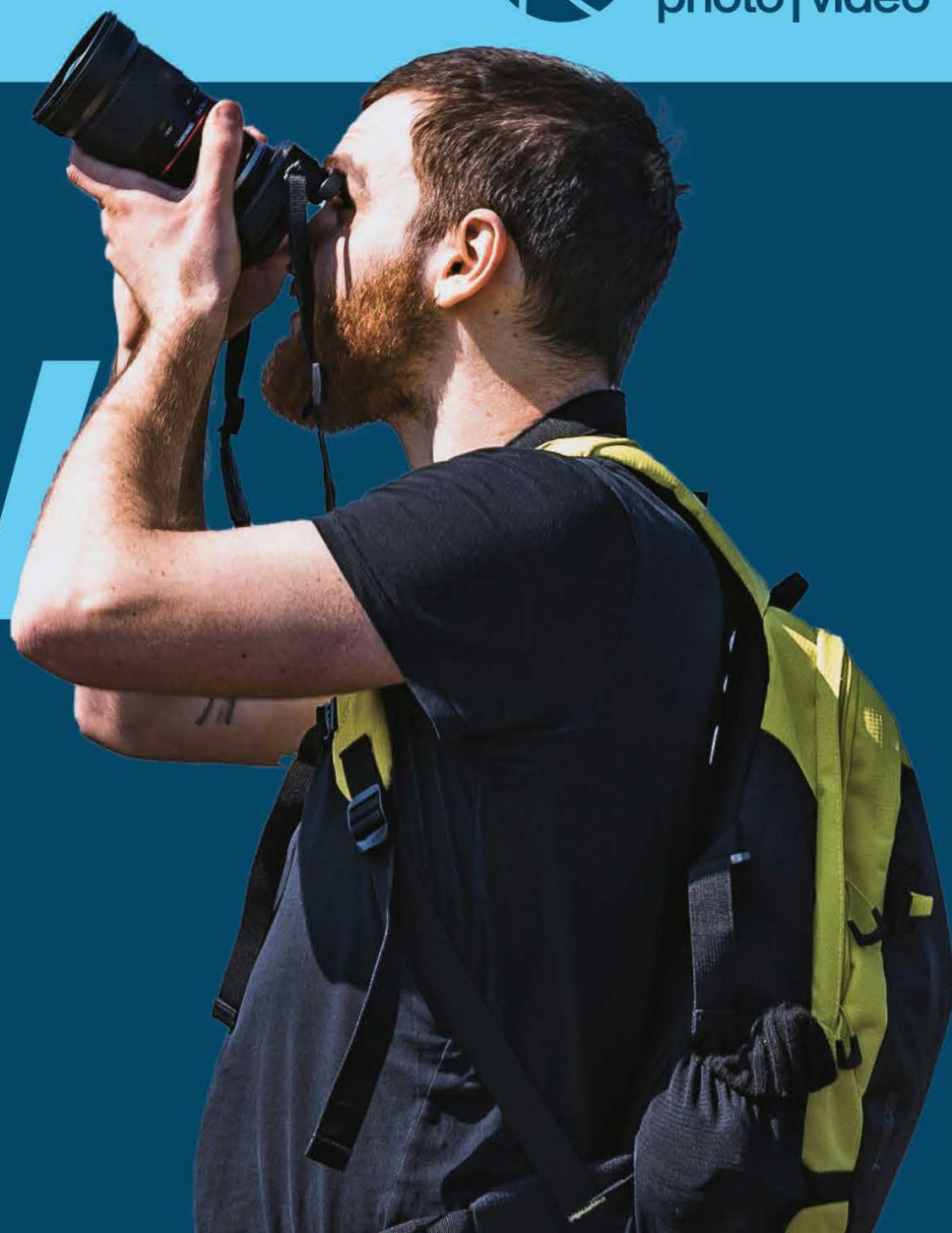
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with Chris George

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- 1 What was the photographic collage technique popularised by the late David Hockney?**
 - ☐ A Assemblage
 - ☐ B Papier collé
 - ☐ C Joiners
 - ☐ D Decoupage
- 2 What is the maximum aperture available if you put a 1.4x teleconverter onto a 300mm f/2.8 lens?**
 - ☐ A f/2.8
 - ☐ B f/4
 - ☐ C f/1.4
 - ☐ D f/5.6
- 3 What variables do you need to know to get a flashgun's guide number?**
 - ☐ A Distance
 - ☐ B ISO
 - ☐ C Distance and ISO
 - ☐ D Distance, ISO and tube size

- 4 In which film does Bradley Cooper play a photographer who is obsessed with taking photographs of violence?**
 - ☐ A Case 39
 - ☐ B The Midnight Meat Train
 - ☐ C American Hustle
 - ☐ D Nightmare Alley
- 5 What is the range of instant print cameras sold by Canon?**
 - ☐ A Zoemini
 - ☐ B Zodiac
 - ☐ C Zoomimic
 - ☐ D Zoetrope
- 6 The Fujifilm QuickSnap disposable camera is celebrating which anniversary this year?**
 - ☐ A 20th
 - ☐ B 25th
 - ☐ C 30th
 - ☐ D 40th



- 7 What was Nikon's first APS-C mirrorless camera?**
 - ☐ A Z 6
 - ☐ B Z fc
 - ☐ C Z 30
 - ☐ D Z 50
- 8 Which city is celebrating the 200th anniversary of photography this autumn?**
 - ☐ A New York
 - ☐ B London
 - ☐ C Paris
 - ☐ D Berlin
- 9 The Vera C Rubin Observatory has just switched on its 3,200MP camera. Where is the observatory located?**
 - ☐ A Atacama Desert, Chile
 - ☐ B Mauna Kea, Hawaii
 - ☐ C La Palma, Canary Islands
 - ☐ D Antarctic Plateau
- 10 What size sensor did Olympus PEN digital cameras use?**
 - ☐ A APS-C
 - ☐ B 1-inch
 - ☐ C Full-frame
 - ☐ D Four Thirds



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

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