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# Digital **Practical advice for enthusiasts and pros** **Photographer**

www.digitalcameraworld.com

Issue 274

**PRO SKILLS TO CAPTURE**

## **SUPER SUNSETS**

- ☉ Shoot strong colour
- ☉ Manage exposure
- ☉ Edit like an expert

**THE NO. 1 MAG**

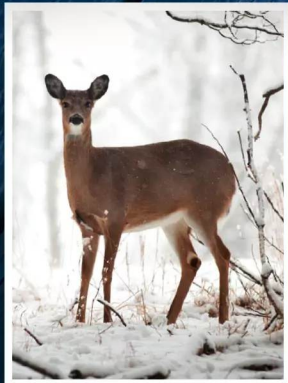
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## **MAGICAL LANDSCAPES**

**FIND AND PHOTOGRAPH**

## **WINTER WILDLIFE**



**BEHIND THE SCENES**

## **PRO PORTRAITS ON LOCATION**



**PRO EDITING TRICKS**

**NIKKOR Z 400mm f/2.8 TC VR S**

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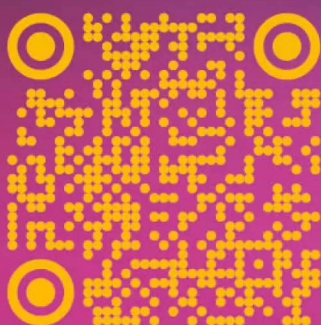
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## “It's said that the best things can be found at boundaries – of day and night, technology and creative trends”



Many people have a favourite season but I find something in each to enjoy, whether it's through a camera or simply soaking up the atmosphere on a long walk. I appreciate the transition from one set of colours and conditions to the next as it keeps me creatively inspired. To make the most of the winter season, check out our feature on seasonal wildlife, starting on p36. Featuring the wonderful imagery of Reed Miller, we explore the best ways to capture critters large and small while making use of the clean winter landscape as a canvas for creative compositions.

Next up, don't miss our creative project on p50, which is about shooting and editing stunning sunset colour. Time your shots to perfection and capture dynamic exposures with golden tones and detail.

AI is a big topic in the world of photography right now but, as award-winning artist and photographer Nancy Poeran explains, there is much potential for artistic exploration to be found in the new age of AI collaboration. Read our interview with her from p76.

In this issue, you'll also find our usual array of essential editing tutorials, starting on p58, printing advice (p64) and detailed reviews of the Sony A7C R camera and the monster Nikon Z 400mm f/2.8TC VR S lens on p104 and p110 respectively.

It's often said that the best things can be found at boundaries – of day and night, technology and creative trends. As we see out the year, I hope this issue inspires you to look ahead with optimism and excitement. From all of us at *Digital Photographer*, Merry Christmas!

**Peter Fenech, Editor**  
peter.fenech@futurenet.com

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## Our contributors



### KIM BUNERMANN

As the magazine's technique editor, Kim works across a range of photo genres. In this issue, she turns her attention to wildlife for our main feature (p36), portrait retouching in her Affinity Photo tutorial (p62) and techniques for long-lasting photographic prints on p64. Kim also analyses a pro's image on p74.

Website: [digitalcameraworld.com](http://digitalcameraworld.com)



### PAULA STOPKA

For our Shoot Like a Pro feature, we headed into London with portrait photographer and graphic designer, Paula Stopka, to learn how best to use the environment in a photo to complement the subject. Turn to p14 to read Paula's advice on thinking and shooting like an art editor.

Website: [paulastopka.com](http://paulastopka.com)



### REED MILLER

Reed is no stranger to the pages of Digital Photographer magazine, having been featured

numerous times. This month, his wonderful images illustrate our winter wildlife feature from p36 where he also offers some tips and advice for capturing creatures big and small when out in the cold.

Instagram: [@rh\\_miller](https://www.instagram.com/rh_miller)



### NANCY POERAN

Nancy is a photographer with a different viewpoint. While many are worried about the impact of AI on their craft, in our interview from p76, she explains how she uses the controversial technology to create her dreamy, abstract images and why she feels AI tools have much to offer the world of photography.

Website: [nancy-poeran.nl](http://nancy-poeran.nl)



### DAN MOLD

Dan is the deputy editor for our sister magazine, PhotoPlus, and has tremendous insight into the business side of photography. In our career feature this month, Dan explores the exciting possibilities offered by part-time photography, combining your regular day job with a passion for shooting great images.

Website: [digitalcameraworld.com](http://digitalcameraworld.com)



### CHRISTY LEE ROGERS

Many photographers are influenced by the master painters of old, not least Christy, who has built an international reputation as a fine-art portrait photographer for her enchanting underwater shots. Appearing in our Photo CV on p70, she recalls her career journey.

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





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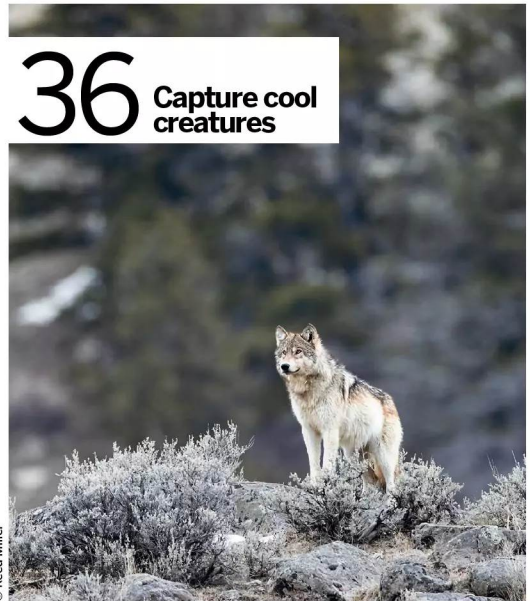
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© Michael Wake

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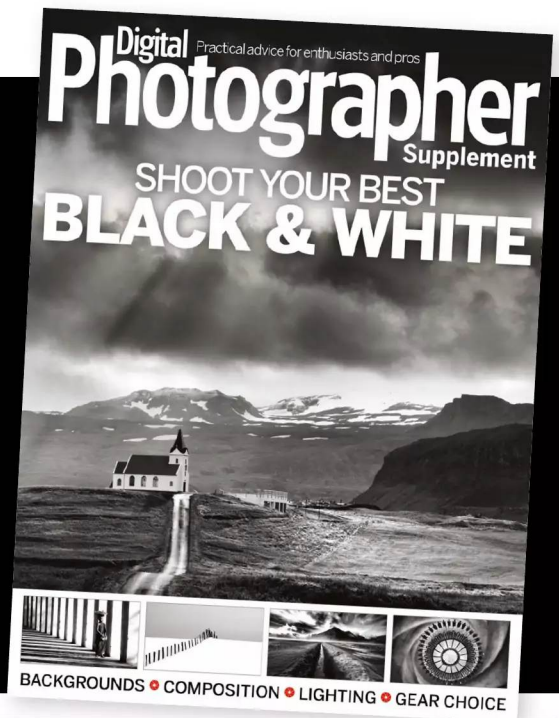


# Gifts & giveaways

## Free ebook to download Shoot your best Black & White

Black and white photography is as popular as ever thanks to the huge variety of monochrome editing tools available today. It's imperative to shoot for B&W correctly too, however. In this free guide, pro shooter Lee Frost explains how to work with simplicity, find beautiful scenes for colourless treatment and, above all else, how to learn to see in monochrome to create shots with perfect drama.

To claim your free ebook, visit <https://bit.ly/DPH274>



## Enter our Photocrowd contests online to win Affinity prizes

Every month, we team up with Photocrowd – the world's leading photography competition platform – to offer you the chance to win an Affinity Photo editing software licence (worth £60 for Mac or Windows) and have your images printed in *Digital Photographer*. Affinity Photo is a toolset engineered for modern photography professionals. Whether you're editing and retouching images or creating full-blown multi-layered compositions, it has all the power and performance you'll need. For a chance to win, go to Photocrowd and discover our latest contest. It's easy, free and fun – we love seeing your entries!

Visit: [www.photocrowd.com/digitalphotographer](http://www.photocrowd.com/digitalphotographer)

## Review test shots

We think test shots are important when it comes to reviewing and comparing the latest kit, but we know it's hard to tell the difference between test images when they are printed in the magazine. You can open, view and compare test shots from our kit reviews anywhere you see the download icon, pictured on the right.



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# SONY A9 III BOASTS GAME- CHANGING FULL-FRAME GLOBAL SHUTTER SENSOR

The next generation of pro sports cameras is here! The Sony A9 III has a game-changing full-frame global shutter chip and a top shutter speed of 1/80,000sec



© Sony



The recently announced Sony A9 III will feature the first full-frame global shutter on a professional mirrorless camera. It will also have a top shutter speed of 1/80,000sec and can shoot in RAW format at 120 frames per second.

Having a global shutter is a game changer for mirrorless cameras using an electronic shutter and for video use. It means that instead of scanning the sensor line-by-line, it can process every photosite at the exact same time to eliminate distortion and rolling shutter. The full-frame chip is a BSI Exmore RS CMOS type with a resolution of 24.6MP.

Dual Bionz XR processors give the Sony A9 III a ground-breaking continuous burst rate of up to 120fps and means that flashes can be synced at up to 1/80,000 sec – these are simply staggering specs.

A base native ISO of 250 is touted and goes up to 25,600, though the ISO can be expanded to a range of 125-51,200. 95.6 percent of the image sensor is covered with 759 phase detect focus points too. In-body image stabilisation is claimed to offer an 8-stop advantage. The screen takes the form of a 3.2-in, 2095k-dot, 4-axis angle LCD while the EVF is a 9.4m dot type.

In terms of video, users can shoot up to 6K video in 60p, or 4K 120p with no crop and you also have the option of 10-bit 4:2:2 S-Log 3/S-Cinetone. Sony also makes a big deal of its Real-time Recognition AF, powered by a dedicated AI processing unit. This employs 'human pose estimation technology', that "recognises not just eyes but also body and head position with high precision. This makes it possible to track a subject facing away from the camera or whose face is covered."

The game-changing Sony A9 III will launch in spring 2024, priced at £6,100 (body only). [sony.co.uk](http://sony.co.uk)

## Sony completes its telephoto trinity lineup with new 300mm G Master



The Sony fun continues with the Sony FE 300mm f/2.8 GM OSS – the 73rd lens in the E-Mount lineup and the 53rd such full-frame lens, it's also the 19th G Master lens. It joins the Sony FE 400mm f/2.8 GM OSS and Sony FE 600mm f/4 GM OSS, completing Sony's trinity of telephoto prime lenses.

The 300mm f/2.8 comprises 20 elements in 16 groups, including a single extra-low dispersion and a trio of super extra-low dispersion glass elements to minimise lateral and axial chromatic aberration, with a Nano AR II coating to

suppress flare and ghosting. The lens boasts an 11-blade aperture for circular bokeh, with 'careful control' of spherical aberration. A pair of XD dynamic linear motors work with an optimised algorithm to drive fast and precise AF with low vibration and minimal noise and tracking down to an aperture of f/22.

It measures 265mm in length and weighs 1,470g. Lens stabilisation is built-in and it supports 40mm drop-in filters.



The Sony FE 300mm f/2.8 GM OSS is available from early 2024, priced £5,800. [sony.co.uk](http://sony.co.uk)

© Sony



# Sigma's 70-200mm f/2.8 Sports lens is here

The Sigma 70-200mm f/2.8 DG DN OS | Sport telephoto lands for Sony E and L-mounts – and at an enticing £1,499



The Sigma 70-200mm f/2.8 DG DN OS | Sports lens has been developed exclusively for full-frame Leica Alliance L and Sony E-mounts for mirrorless cameras.

Sigma's lenses are renowned for offering exceptional performance, for a more affordable price than native lenses, and this new release is no different. It will be released at an enticing price of £1,499, especially compared with the native Sony E-mount equivalent that costs £2,599.

The Sigma 70-200mm f/2.8 DG DN OS | Sports will be the go-to tool for sports, wildlife, weddings and live events offering exceptionally sharp detail. Designed using ultra-high performance low-dispersion glass, which includes six FLD and two SLD elements the lens's image quality is consistent throughout the zoom range, even wide open at f/2.8.

This lens falls into Sigma's Sports category and with the performance features it's easy to see why. Designed for use by both professionals and enthusiasts



© Sigma

alike, the unique floating focusing system is designed to keep up with the most fast-paced action, whether wildlife or sports. A combination of two High-response Linear Actuator motors and Sigma's OS2 optical stabilisation algorithm, Sigma claims that the lens is "able to deliver fast, accurate

and near-silent autofocus". The OS2 optical stabilisation algorithm enables the user to shoot handheld in low light with up to a 7.5 stop advantage at 70mm.

The lens is scheduled for release in early December, priced £1,500. [sigmauk.com](http://sigmauk.com)

## Sirui launches trio of f/1.2 AF APS-C primes

Sirui announces a trio of f/1.2 AF prime lenses for under \$1,000 in latest crowd-funded Sniper Series



Sirui is launching a new series of lenses named the Sniper Series. The set of APS-C lenses will be the first autofocus optics set manufactured by Sirui, which usually specialises in anamorphic and cine lens options, available natively for the Fujifilm X-mount, Sony E-mount and Nikon Z-mount. This set includes 23mm, 33mm and 56mm focal lengths (35mm, 50mm and 85mm full-frame equivalent), each with an ultra-fast f/1.2 aperture.

Although available separately, the Sniper Series is marketed as a set – a trilogy of primes that are almost identical apart from the focal length. Each comes in one of three colour schemes – Black Carbon, Silver Aluminum or White Ceramic. Each lens will cost \$349 (approx £280) making this lens set an affordable option for APS-C users. However, the low price does not necessarily equal low quality, as the specs look particularly enticing. The fast f/1.2 aperture enables great low-light performance, a shallow depth of field and rounded bokeh due to the 11 aperture blades. They also boast STM motors for quick, quiet and efficient autofocus.

The new Sniper Series is now live on Indiegogo, with Sirui offering an early bird discount for backers, meaning that each lens will cost just \$299 (approx £240).

[indiegogo.com](http://indiegogo.com)



© Sirui

## In other news

More snippets of photography news from around the world

### VILTROX LAUNCHES BUDGET 20MM FOR SONY E-MOUNT

Viltrox has announced a brand-new lightweight 20mm f/2.8 lens for Sony full-frame cameras with an E-mount. The new lens weighs only 157g, is made up of 10 elements in eight groups, including two ED lenses, one lens with a high refractive index and two aspherical lenses, and has dimensions of 65x59.5mm. This affordable super-wide prime is available to buy now, costing £130.

### PHOTOSHOP COMES TO GOOGLE CHROMEBOOKS

Photoshop announcements at this year's Adobe Max were a little thin on the ground. However, there was an interesting development in the shape of the Photoshop web version, which will soon be available to Google Chromebook Plus devices. Chromebooks have seemed a bit of a blindspot in the Adobe ecosystem until now, so it's great news that the company's functionality will finally be available to this user base.



# STORY BEHIND THE STILL



**Photographer:** Rico X  
**@adventures\_of\_rico**

**Website:** adventuresofrico.com

**Image location:** Nungwi, Zanzibar, Tanzania

**Type of commission:** Personal

**Shot details** Nikon D850,

Nikon AF-S Nikkor 24mm f/1.8G ED

Aperture: f/9, SS: 1/200sec ISO: 1600

**About the shot:** Documentary photography captures moments from everyday lives that not only show how people around the world live but can also serve as a reminder of events in our own lives. By reflecting on the past, bygone moments are brought back to life and reflected in our memories. This is particularly true when the images document aspects of childhood.

"These boys had just finished school and were fooling around before heading home," Rico explains. "Watching them reminded me of my own childhood memories. Most days, I would drag out the time from finishing school to getting home, messing around with friends."

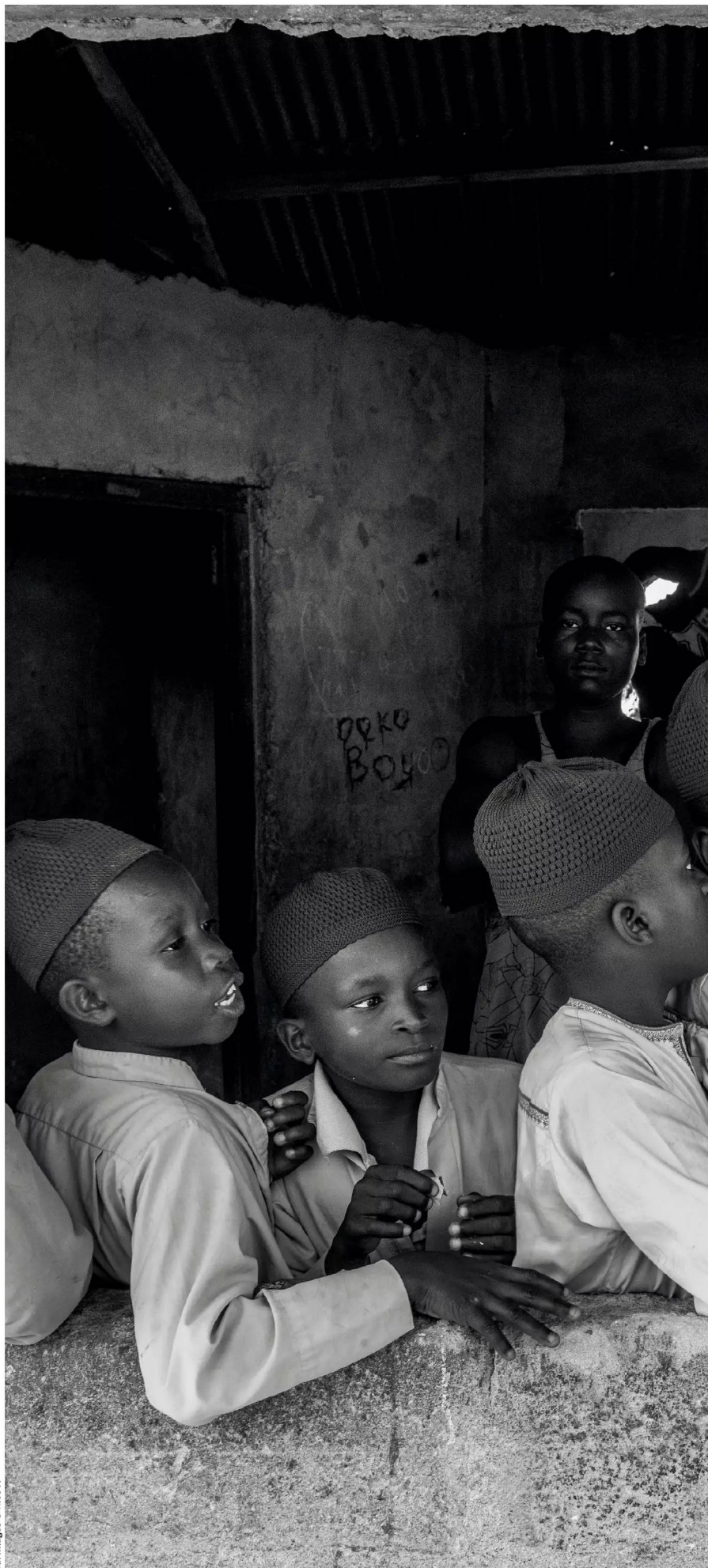
The most interesting images are the ones that allow the viewer to interpret the scene. In this photo, the focus is on the interaction between multiple subjects, creating a sense of intrigue in the viewer. "In this case, it was important for me to include the boys who were watching. You have one boy watching me and another boy watching them, while I am watching them all," says Rico. This gives the picture a narrative level.

"When composing this image, I needed to get everything proportionally in the frame – and especially the two boys watching," Rico explains. To do so, he paid particular attention to the framing of the image in post-processing. "It was all about the corners," he says. "I cropped the image in post-processing and converted it to black and white. I felt that their skin tone against the school uniform would really make the image pop."

*Right*

**Sooo, I missed the school bus**

"As a documentary photographer,  
I click the shutter and just roll  
with what the universe presents."









SHOOT LIKE A PRO 

# URBAN ENERGY

**Peter Fenech** meets **Paula Stopka**  
to discover how she selects her urban  
locations and uses them to the max  
to shoot portraits with a creative edge

All images © Paula Stopka/ Radoslaw Kowalczyk







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I was recently reading a book on the history of photography and, leafing through its pages, I couldn't help but appreciate the freedom digital imaging affords us. Looking at early portraits taken on plate cameras – each of which required exposure times of several seconds, if not minutes, due to the low media sensitivity – it was easy to see how restricting that equipment was in terms of composition, backgrounds and lighting conditions.

While studio photography is clearly still a large part of the portrait photographer's workflow, modern technology allows us to take our setups outside, making use of any location as a stage. Of course, leaving the controlled

conditions of a studio space introduces its own challenges. It's those unique quirks I'm keen to explore today and Paula Stopka is the person armed with all the answers. I'm meeting Paula for a location portrait shoot in London. Cities offer a huge variety of textures and colours to work with but they are also full of distracting details, something that Paula will have to be mindful of when composing her images. I start by asking her what she looks for when first arriving at an outdoor location and how she plans her portraits around what is on offer.

"Usually, what I do is I pay attention to everything that is going on around me, from the light to any unique features I see in the buildings" she explains.

## Paula Stopka



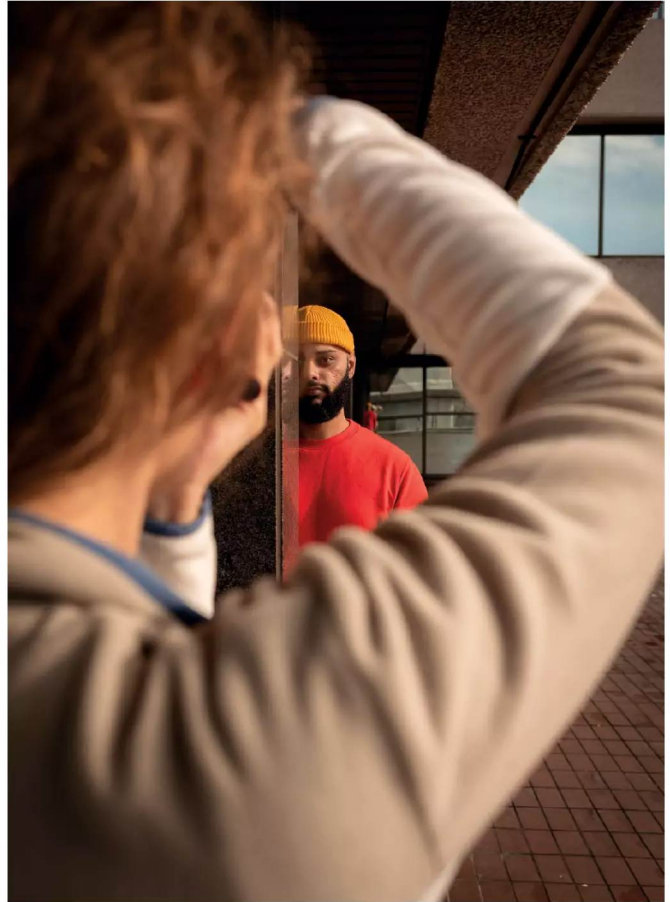
Born and raised in Krakow, Poland, Paula is a London-based graphic designer and photographer. Having been an enthusiastic photographer since her teenage years, Paula is now a full-time working pro, blending two of her passions in image creation and graphic design. Her photography covers a variety of genres

from fashion portraiture to landscapes and architecture.

See more of Paula's work at: [paulastopka.com](http://paulastopka.com)

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





“Normally, I’ll go to the location by myself before the shoot. I might take some pictures on my phone and scout the area so, once the client arrives on the day, I know exactly where I want to position them. Sometimes, during the shoot, a few new ideas will come into my mind and I’ll ask my subject whether they would like to try a few different poses. So, while it is quite open and flexible, the shoot already has some kind of structure.”

Upon seeing Paula’s subject today, Tahir, my eye is immediately drawn to his bright orange jumper, which will stand out beautifully against the grey concrete of the urban surroundings. This is clearly not a happy accident, so I ask Paula how she decides what does and what doesn’t make a great portrait background out ‘in the wild’ and how she plans to direct the subject in that space once the shoot begins.

“I often come up with a mood board for the photo session and discuss this with the model. We talk about the vision, ideas and overall mood we aim to achieve days before the photo shoot takes place,” Paula explains. “This early planning helps us understand not only the purpose of the photo session but also builds trust and creates a comfortable atmosphere.”

Paula begins to work some angles, capturing Tahir from multiple elevations. “On location, I pay close attention to unique features that can help me envisage how I want the final image to look,” she says. “This could be leading lines, different colours, backgrounds, symmetry or any other elements, such as stairs or flowers – anything that might give a different look to the composition really.”

Spotting a potential contrast to complement Tahir’s colourful outfit, Paula moves him to make the best use of separation from the background tone.

“I position the model to complement these elements or draw attention to them, for example, by using lines. If I have a model who is wearing contrast colours, I’ll try to look for elements that can make it stand out even more by positioning the subject in front of the dark background wall. I’m looking to make that colour really pop.”

Paula asks Tahir to sit on the wall of a stairwell, which allows her to shoot up towards him, exaggerating the perspective. She then asks him to hold out his hand, which further introduces a sense of actively using the space available and adds depth. He isn’t simply sitting still but demonstrating his energy.

I notice this is a far cry from many traditional portrait sittings I’ve observed in the past and Paula is quick to highlight that it’s an integral part of her style.

“I love to get creative with my photography. For instance, I might even suggest dynamic poses like jumping or leaning forward –

## Work with outdoor light

Paula’s advice for managing ambience

“I once had a shoot in the middle of the day in completely harsh lighting. Many photographers would point out that this is far from the ideal time to shoot portraits, but we were on-location and it was the only time we had. Instead, I considered how I could use the light for a unique effect and placed the subject between the dark and the light. It actually turned out to be really effective. If you can’t change the lighting, alter your composition to make a feature of it and complement this with your post-processing.”





“It’s important to have an honest discussion with the model. Be open about your vision”



# SHOOT LIKE A PRO



## Paula's shoot setup

**1 Mirrorless camera** While it is by no means essential to use a newer mirrorless camera model for location shoots, the weight saving can be highly noticeable during a long day of taking images. Meanwhile, the smaller form and thinner profile of many mainstream mirrorless cameras creates less of an obstacle between the photographer and the subject and the 100 percent viewfinder offers a natural view of the scene being shot.

**2 Constant aperture zoom** A standard focal length can be more useful for location portraiture than a telephoto prime lens, due to the compositional freedom. A lens model with a constant aperture, whether f/2.8 or f/4, prevents exposure and DOF changes between frames.

**3 Lens hood** Since you can't move the light source as easily as you can in the studio, should you encounter flare, a lens hood is an essential item when shooting out on location. In urban environments, such as the one Paula was shooting in today, there are many direct light sources, both from artificial bulbs and reflected points in glass buildings, for example.

**4 Removable strap** A camera strap is useful for ensuring the safety of your equipment when shooting in an unfamiliar environment. However, the types bundled with your camera are often cumbersome and easily tangled. A removable clip system, like on Paula's PeakDesign model, is a good compromise.

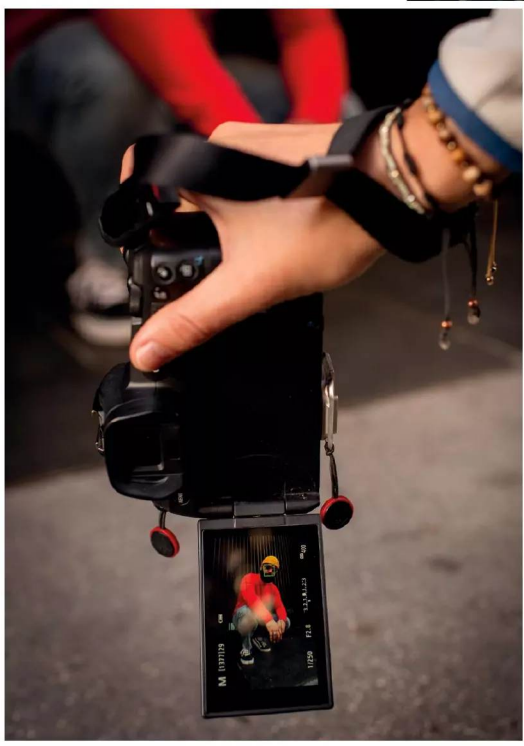
something different just to trigger the imagination so that it's not a traditional way of taking portraits. I see it as a collaboration with the model. Because of my style, they know that they won't get the traditional portrait, but they will get something that is a bit more artistic," she says.

This strikes me as a hugely effective way of making use of an outdoor space, truly taking advantage of the freedom of being out of the studio. But how does Paula's approach differ between working with

professional and non-professional models in front of her lens?

"I'm trying to get into the fashion field, where I work with professional models. I'm getting there but it's still a learning process for me. Therefore, a lot of my portrait photography is of people who want to have some images taken for their own memories. This is why it's important to have a proper conversation with them before the photo shoot and even meet face-to-face, if possible. This helps a lot during the live shoot."





"I think it's important to have an honest discussion with the model and to be open with them about your vision. I often have a very clear idea going in what it is I want to achieve, so I tell them how important it is for them to let me know if something is uncomfortable."

Paula moves Tahir to another position, where she uses a window to capture a split reflected image, ensuring she incorporates as much of the environment as possible. With such a variety of potential images,



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## Top tips from MPB

- **Compact Mirrorless Cameras:** Opt for lightweight and compact mirrorless cameras for urban portrait agility. Their portability ensures quick and discreet shooting, capturing candid moments without being intrusive.
- **Versatile Prime Lenses:** Choose versatile prime lenses with wide apertures (eg. f/1.4 or f/1.8) for urban portrait flexibility. These lenses allow for

creative depth of field and perform well in varying light conditions, emphasising your subject against dynamic city backdrops.

- **Fast Autofocus Technology:** Prioritise cameras with fast autofocus technology to seize spontaneous urban moments effortlessly. Swift and accurate autofocus ensures you never miss a crucial expression or gesture, allowing you to create

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compelling and authentic urban portraits. Streamlined gear choices maximise your ability to navigate the cityscape and capture memorable portraits.



SHOOT LIKE A PRO







I wonder if there is a core set of shots that a photographer should capture. "I would say that I usually start with a few similar, easier shots each time, just to warm up," Paula says. And what about rights – does she often have to manage property permissions when she is shooting on location?

"When I'm working with fashion brands, yes, this definitely has to be covered. I think this is something all photographers should be aware of. However, I tend to choose locations that I know won't create issues, so it's often unnecessary for many of my sessions."

As Paula places building elements between her and Tahir to create a three-dimensional feel, it's clear that to get as much from an environmental portrait as possible, you need to go all-in with using the space, it's about more than backgrounds. But how

does Paula deal with the myriad aspect ratios of social media when framing location shots?

"Someone asked me recently why I was shooting portraits in landscape format and I said it was just part of my process. I wasn't really thinking about it. I'm also a graphic designer, which I feel helps me with planning layout and presentation." And what about post-processing?

"Authenticity is important to me," says Paula, as our session draws to a close. "But I believe we all have a story to tell and if something isn't working, I'll try and do something about it. There is no rule that I set myself and I'm quite open to exploring," she says. "I load up Photoshop and just let my creativity flow. I think that's what I love about art in general – it gives both you and your subject the freedom to express yourselves."



## Paula's favourite photo gear



**1 Canon RF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM** "This lens is my all-time favourite, it never leaves my backpack," says Paula. This RF mount lens balances the sharpness she needs for capturing textured environments with low weight – handy on location shoots.



**2 Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8L II USM** Built for the EF mount, this staple of many Canon photographer's kit can be repurposed on Paula's mirrorless cameras using the adaptor shown here. The f/2.8 allows creative backgrounds in her portraits.



**3 Lowepro Flipside Backpack 450** Whenever people ask me what backpack they should get for their photo gear, I always recommend this one. It's comfortable and packs pretty much all of my gear, including my laptop and clothes.



**4 Canon Mount Adapter EF-EOS R** This popular accessory allows older glass to be mounted on newer mirrorless camera bodies, such as Paula's EOS R. Other brands offer similar products, such as Nikon's FTZ II adaptor for DSLR lenses.



**5 Godox V1 flash** This powerful third-party speedlight offers a fast 1.5-second recycling time, an auto-zoom feature, a built-in LED modelling lamp and a versatile swivelling head, allowing easy and dynamic control of ambient lighting.

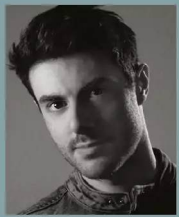


**6 Canon EOS R** Featuring a 30MP full-frame sensor, Canon's first RF-mount body has a solid build for use in a range of outdoor conditions, an articulated screen for low-level shooting and an AF system with 5655 selectable points.



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# **COMPLETE GUIDE TO** LANDSCAPE COMPOSITION

Take your landscape photography to the next level  
with these essential composition techniques

Words by Peter Fenech



### *Pictured* **Unconventional**

Landscape photography may seem like a formulaic genre, but with some lateral thinking, it is possible to create inspiring, narrative images



In the *Digital Photographer* office, we often joke that Ansel Adams ruined landscape photography for the rest of us. Long before the first digital camera was created, Adams produced masterful scenic shots that would set the benchmark for almost every landscape composition for the next half-century. That's a tough act to follow. However, the beauty of photography as a creative medium is that we can draw inspiration from our idols, including Adams in many cases, but still find something original and interesting to try ourselves.

One of the biggest draws of landscape as a genre is the sheer diversity of colours, textures, shapes and light conditions on offer. Every location is subtly different – the topography varies, the arrangement of vegetation controls the foreground interest, the elevation dictates how water flows around the frame and light refracts and scatters depending on atmospheric conditions and direction. This provides the opportunity to capture shots with a difference every time we head out, even at a location we've visited many times previously.

However, with this variety comes challenges. Unlike studio-based photography, or any other genre that involves predictable conditions, no single photo formula will suit every scene. As experienced photographers, we need to recognise the need to adjust our approach to composition and exposure to the individual requirements of the image. In this feature, we'll aim to break down the main elements of different landscape types and explore how we embrace their graphic properties. And helpfully, you can use these core techniques in any scenic image you might encounter.



**NATURAL FRAMES**

Woodlands are the home of natural lines and arcs. Use foliage or branches to isolate your subject in a field of diffused colour

**EASIER COLOUR CONTRAST**

In the absence of texture, we can bring coloured areas together. This would not be possible if they were both equally in focus

# Capture busy scenes

## Find order amongst the natural chaos of detail-rich landscape locations such as woodlands

Woodlands and forests are wonderful locations to explore in search of landscape images. They are highly atmospheric places, due largely to the micro-climates you'll commonly find when surrounded by respiring trees. Mist, carpets of flowers and vibrant colour, especially in the autumn months, mean there is always some reason to turn your camera on.

With lots of detail comes the risk of overly 'busy' images, however. One of the staples of a landscape image is a clear subject, which can be difficult to define among the tangle of branches, ground-level shrubs and colourful mosses and lichens, all of which compete for attention. A mistake you'll often see in forest photography is a focal length that is too wide, bringing excess detail around the edges of the frame. The regimented trees will also feel static when shot straight-on – there is no symmetry, yet no identifiably unique elements suggested as the main focus.

The goal should be to create a sense of false isolation. We need to find a detail that represents the colour and texture of the

location, decide on this as the main actor on our stage and then use camera elevation, focal length and background to cut most other details. Think 'within the frame', concentrating on how each object within the viewfinder complements the others. If something doesn't add colour contrast, juxtapose the main subject in texture or act as a form of leading line, it should be removed, either by shifting the frame or zooming in.

If you can't remove an element through re-composition, either because you don't have an appropriate lens or because there is simply not enough room in the scene to shift your framing, try making it a secondary element. Background leaves might have to be within the frame boundary for practical reasons, but you can change how they are represented through depth-of-field control. Not all landscapes require front-to-back sharpness. Indeed, it has become somewhat of a trend on social media to limit focus in scenic shots. The professional approach to busy landscape photography is, if you can't move a detail, make an asset of it.

## Compose woodlands

**CAMERA HEIGHT**

Here, we can make the most of optical distortion by angling the lens up from a low position to create a sense of scale in the trees

**BRANCH DIRECTION**

Find a position that appears to show the tree branches pointing into the scene, creating a line for the eye to follow



**LIGHT GRADIENT**

By reducing texture, we can use gradients of brightness to lead the viewer through the frame without the risk of distracting patterns

**DISCERNIBLE SHAPES**

Set an aperture that reveals enough of the shape of background objects to suggest at the wider environment

**Kit out your kitbag**

**FAST PRIME**

A 50mm f/1.8 on a full-frame camera body or a 35mm f/1.8 for a crop-sensor body will allow a more natural view of the woodland landscape, helping you resist the temptation to go too wide in your framing.

**ND FILTER**

A 0.6 ND filter will allow you to blur distracting details through a lengthened exposure, which can also create eye-catching abstract images. Combine this with an aperture of around f/11 for shutter speeds of 0.5 to 2 seconds.

**MINI TRIPOD**

Use a mini tripod, full-size legs with a reversible and removable centre column, or a bean bag to allow stable ultra-low-level compositions, that omit forest-floor vegetation. Check your model can support a full load in low configuration.



**EXCLUDED GROUND**

Cut the forest floor from clean compositions – this is often the busiest part of the scene and contains the most distractions

**EMPTY SPACES**

Avoid gaps in the canopy. If too much sky is showing, use a longer focal length to avoid breaking up intentional patterns and colour

© Getty Images/Bac3nes

© Johannes Plenio

**Colour overlap**

Sometimes, it just isn't possible to create a clean frame in a particular location. If there is lots of high-frequency or densely packed detail, then we must look for other ways of arranging it into some kind of order. If the texture is rather homogenous, create some separation by ordering colour in the frame. Position yourself so that you can capture layers of colour, indicating depth in the scene and giving your viewer a path to follow through the mass of competing shapes and patterns.



## TECHNIQUES

*Pictured*

### **Heathland study**

While subtle colour is visible, this misty scene is almost monochromatic. In these cases, texture becomes far more prominent so I chose to contrast the grass with the diffused trees

© Peter Fenech





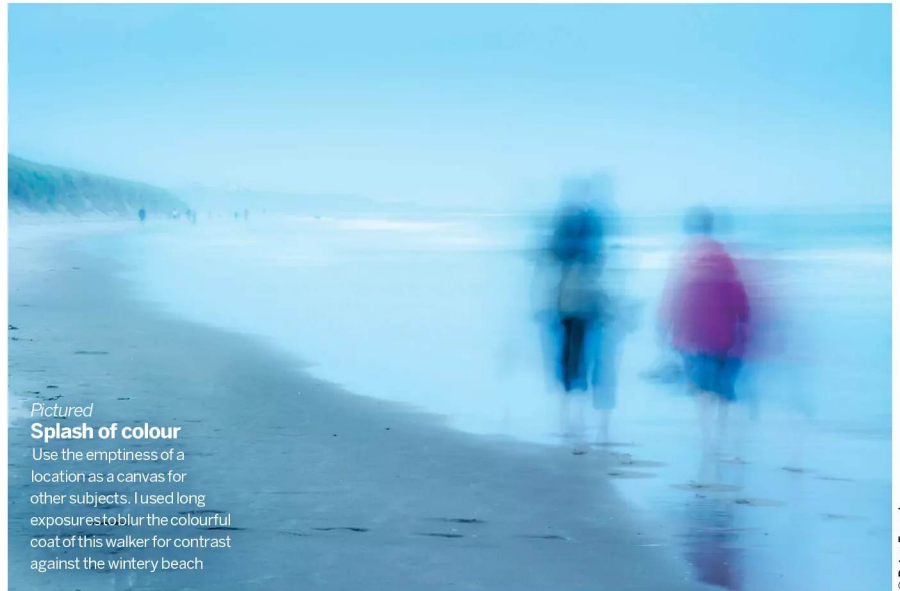
# Work in minimalist landscapes

Control your composition for effective shots in detail-sparse locations

Many photographers look for and appreciate painterly lighting in their images. However, in many ways, this is where the similarities between photography and other types of art end. There are some key differences in the compositional approach to a photograph and a painting. For example, a photographer is accustomed to starting with lots of detail in the world around them, which they must cut back and order into a clean frame. A painter, meanwhile, starts with a blank canvas on which they must build up the detail. Therefore, while busy landscapes are certainly a challenge to get right, it is often the less populated scenes that cause the most confusion.

## Adapt aspect ratio

If you can't make the scene fit the frame, make the frame fit the scene. Many photographers are still locked into the idea of shooting for traditional print sizes, which can be limiting. Straying too far from 10x8 or 8x6 might not be advisable for future-proofing reasons, but consider whether a frame shape other than the standard 4:3 or 3:2 output of modern sensors might better suit your current subject. If you don't want to change the ratio in-camera, consider applying a paper or card mask to your LCD to help you preview the final composition.



*Pictured*  
**Splash of colour**

Use the emptiness of a location as a canvas for other subjects. I used long exposures to blur the colourful coat of this walker for contrast against the wintery beach

© Peter Fenech

This is often introduced by the shape and direction of the landscape. Scenics are usually quite long, with the majority of detail arranged laterally. Where all of the detail is bunched up towards the horizon, it can produce ugly, empty foregrounds that do not serve to improve the overall composition and create a disconnect with the viewer – giving a feeling that the 'main event' is hidden at the back of the picture. Meanwhile, if the horizon is broken by a sudden tall object, controlling negative space either side becomes the biggest consideration.

If you are in doubt as to the best approach to tackle this issue, use a longer focal length. Any problems arising from an imbalance of the interest in a scene will be made worse by using a wide lens. A setting of 100mm or greater has a better chance of bringing scene elements together, minimising negative space and isolating the intended subject. You will then have better control over aspects like symmetry, which can be used to hide the detail weighting in the frame by making any empty areas feel natural and intentional.

1



## Flat and tall subjects

Capture scenes punctuated with imbalanced Y-axis detail

Lighthouses and coastal stacks, as just two good examples, take up a small percentage of the frame. This type of landscape is often defined by lots of empty sky, with the majority of the interest weighted at the bottom of the composition. One solution is to use portrait orientation (image 1), which is a clear method of reducing space at the edges. Alternatively, you could opt to make a feature of the negative areas, using a 7/8ths division, where the tall subject is shot from a lower angle and its isolation on the horizon line, placed so as just to be a sliver along the bottom, focuses attention (image 2). Finally, you could use the foreground texture to contrast against the flat sky or use the shape of the topography for its graphic properties, making the tall subject feel like a continuation of the land (image 3).

2



3





**WIDESCREEN CROP**

Coastlines are long and thin, so complement this with a longer aspect ratio, minimising unnecessary foreground or sky

**BOUNDARIES**

The real subject is the boundary between land and water. Shoot diagonally along the coast to highlight this element

**FULL STOP**

Placing an object along the horizon provides somewhere for the eye to settle

# Work with water

## Use still or flowing water to add balance and energy to your landscapes

In the UK, we have the fortune of living fairly close to the ocean wherever we call home. Furthermore, all of that rain we complain about has the effect of keeping our lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, becks and brooks filled for the majority of the year, so when it comes to shooting landscapes with water, we are spoiled for choice. Once you are accustomed to working bodies of water into your landscapes, shots without them can seem oddly dull. This is due to the reflective properties of water, which bounce much of the light from the sky

back into the scene, filling in shadows and applying washes of reflected colour.

Reflections add a symmetry that can produce a feeling of balance in otherwise sparse frames. Even the smallest of puddles can fill in a gap, such as an area of dull concrete or muddy foreground, neither of which would likely be considered beautiful, and draw together all zones of the composition. Be aware that reflected images can take the eye away from the 'real' subject, so use caution in how much space each takes up in the shot. You

will also have to balance the exposure for both the reflection and the real surfaces since the water will absorb a percentage of the light and underexpose the duplicated detail. Start with +2/3 EV exposure compensation.

Meanwhile, moving water can give scenes a more active sensation, reiterating that there is a living landscape in your pictures. As stills photographers, we are at a disadvantage compared to videographers in that we can only capture a single moment. A longer exposure of a moving subject breaks that wall and

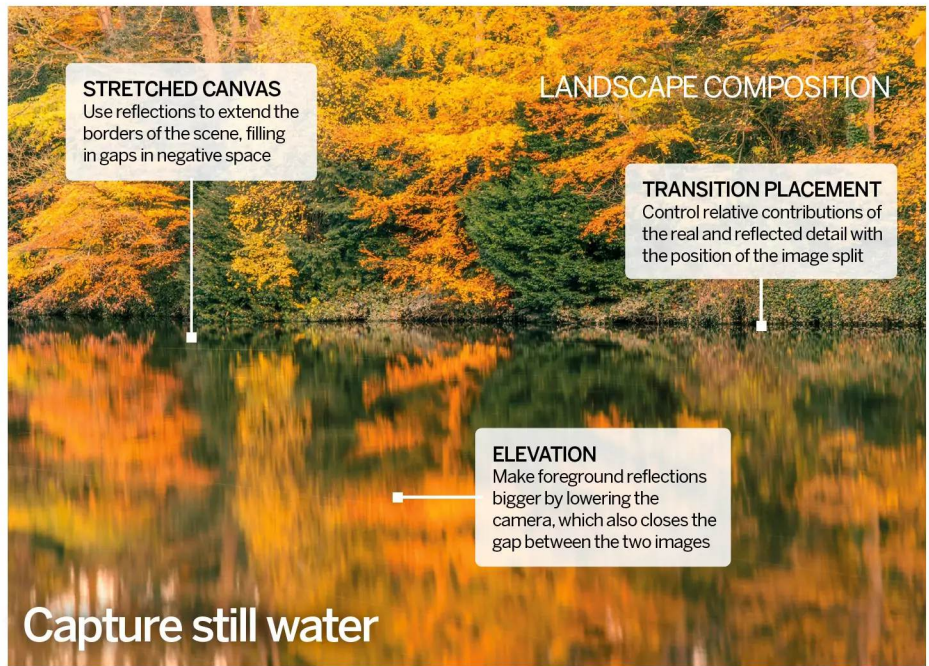


## HIGH OR LOW

Tidal times will impact your composition choices. At high tide, lots of foreground detail is lost to the sea, but a wider lens can be used to capture incoming and receding wave patterns. Low tides might require a longer focal length if there are large, empty areas of beach or dry rocks

## CAMERA PITCH

A three-quarters foreground/sky division can work well, with the area selected to dominate based on the interest it contains



## STRETCHED CANVAS

Use reflections to extend the borders of the scene, filling in gaps in negative space

## LANDSCAPE COMPOSITION

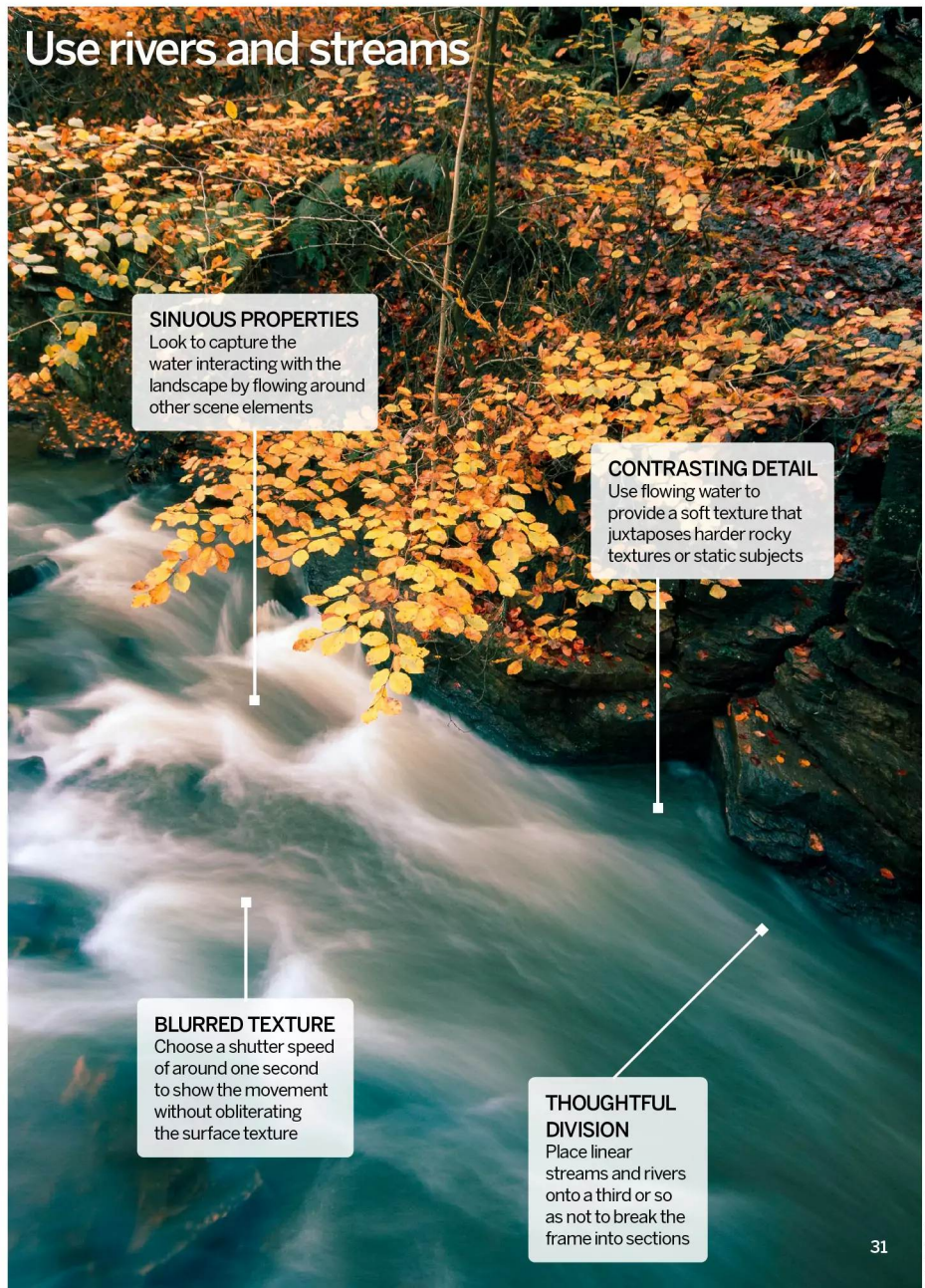
## TRANSITION PLACEMENT

Control relative contributions of the real and reflected detail with the position of the image split

## ELEVATION

Make foreground reflections bigger by lowering the camera, which also closes the gap between the two images

## Capture still water



## Use rivers and streams

## SINUOUS PROPERTIES

Look to capture the water interacting with the landscape by flowing around other scene elements

## CONTRASTING DETAIL

Use flowing water to provide a soft texture that juxtaposes harder rocky textures or static subjects

## BLURRED TEXTURE

Choose a shutter speed of around one second to show the movement without obliterating the surface texture

## THOUGHTFUL DIVISION

Place linear streams and rivers onto a third or so as not to break the frame into sections

simulates the passage of time, something that surprisingly few photographers think to apply to a landscape.

With this comes its own considerations, such as exposure length and placement of the water to divide up the shot. With long, thin streams and rivers, avoid splitting the composition down the middle or into disparate areas. Having a stream run straight through the frame can create a visual barrier between the viewer and the subject, which looks uncomfortable. First, find a good place for the main subject, then pivot around this until any water either leads to this object or wraps around it, creating a frame in which everything seems joined up.



# Compose for contrast

Adjust your framing to account for the direction and intensity of light at different times of the day

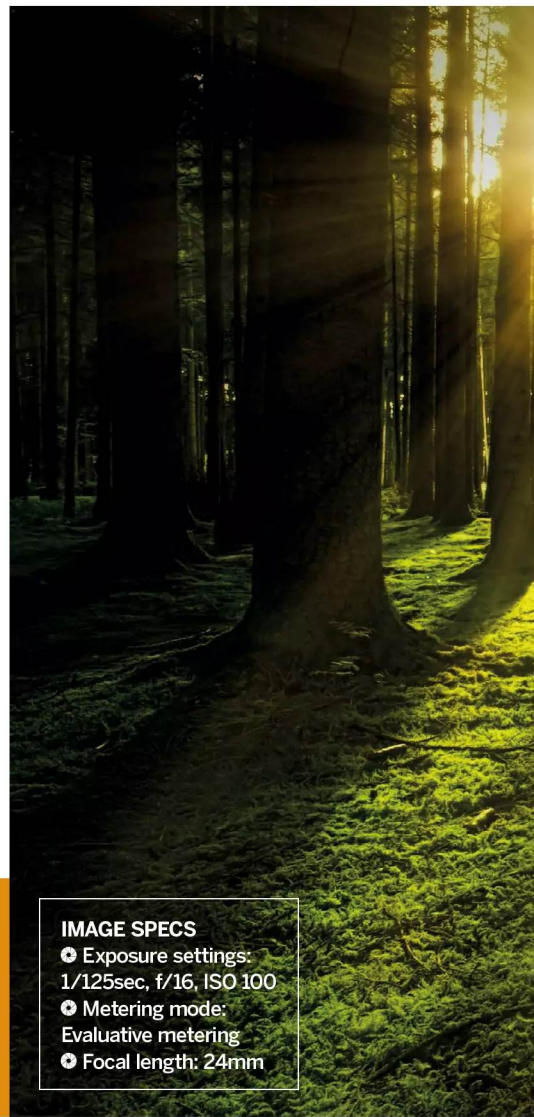
Landscape composition is about more than simply choosing a spot from which to shoot a scene. The glory of landscape as a genre of photography is that, as the light changes throughout the day and across the four seasons of the year, the terrain alters in appearance. The direction, intensity and brightness of light impact how texture, shape and colour look in an image and, as such, we must adjust our camera techniques to match.

Contrast is, by definition, the difference in luminance or colour of one object or area of a photo from another. Absolute black and absolute white might represent the greatest contrast of exposure, but these are rarely seen together in the same frame. Similarly, colours on opposite sides of the colour wheel provide the greatest contrast but, in a natural

environment, these opposing colour values are rarely observed in abundance.

Beyond the difference in characteristics between one zone and another, it is important to remember the distinction between global and local contrast. A bright area might be visible in the same frame as a dark spot, but if they are located far apart, such as on opposite sides of the composition, the viewer might not perceive the image as high contrast. Place these two areas beside one another, however, and the image seems far punchier.

Learn how to recognise where best in the frame to place your light sources and the shadows they cast in the landscape. You can then create more intelligently structured shots that tap into the viewer's expectations and elicit the greatest emotional response.



#### IMAGE SPECS

- Exposure settings: 1/125sec, f/16, ISO 100
- Metering mode: Evaluative metering
- Focal length: 24mm

## Golden hour contrast

Times close to sunrise and sunset offer the best light quality, but shadows can be especially directional when the sun is visible. If you are shooting directly towards it, place the sun disc on a third or close to the intended subject, to draw the eye to that part of the frame. Be conscious of long shadows running perpendicular to leading lines, as this can reduce their effect. Where possible, use these shadows themselves as leading elements.



#### IMAGE SPECS

- Exposure settings: 1/800sec, f/3.2, ISO 100
- Metering mode: Spot metering
- Focal length: 110mm





© Johannes Plenio

## Overcast light

Generally, overcast skies either show up as a dull grey or, potentially worse, as solid white. This light is ideal for capturing saturated foliage colour, so consider a longer lens to bring trees together and limit the sky to a maximum of 25 percent of the frame. Where possible, avoid portrait format or, alternatively, use a more square aspect such as 4:3 or even 1:1. This reduces the excess space at the frame edges and at the top and bottom.

## Midday depth

Top-down lighting, as found around midday, will make foregrounds appear flat, due to a lack of contouring. Try shooting from a low position or arrange yourself to place objects at visibly different distances from the camera, to re-introduce a sense of three-dimensionality. Alternatively, find something to frame the scene and filter the light, such as a tree canopy, using a tall frame and wide lens to incorporate the light source and simulate directionality.



### IMAGE SPECS

- Exposure settings: 1/25sec, f/14, ISO 100
- Metering mode: Partial metering
- Focal length: 17mm

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TECHNIQUES

# CAPTURE COOL CREATURES

Unlock your knowledge of photography and winter wildlife so you can capture awe-inspiring moments

Words by Kim Bunermann  
All images by Reed Miller





**A**chieving the perfect winter wildlife shot can be a challenging task that demands patience, skill and perseverance. Waiting for hours in the freezing cold isn't exactly a photographer's dream scenario, however, once you've pressed the shutter and got the perfect photo, all those difficulties are quickly forgotten. During the winter months, some creatures are more active than usual. As food is scarce, they are drawn out of their hiding places, making this the perfect time to see them. In addition, the environmental changes often give us a better view of the animals. Bare branches, trees and bushes allow us to spot wildlife more easily and also to frame the animals with fewer distractions.

Winter wildlife photography is a thrilling experience that not only gives you the opportunity to observe and understand animal behaviour in a way that few other activities can but will also turn you into a better photographer. Facing freezing temperatures poses a unique set of challenges, so we must also consider the impact of snow on our gear when choosing the correct exposure. Furthermore, we need to locate the places inhabited by our chosen wildlife and make every effort to remain as unobtrusive as possible, both in terms of our appearance and behaviour so that we don't disturb the animals.

In this guide, we will outline some of the best methods for spotting and capturing winter wildlife through your camera lens, while offering some advice on how to protect and weatherproof your equipment.



*Pictured*  
**Majestic inhabitant**  
A wolf in Yellowstone National Park, captured by Reed Miller who extended his focal length from 600mm to impressive 840mm by adding a 1.4x extender



# Get winter ready

Locate your subjects and get the gear without breaking the bank

Winter is a wonderful time to spot wildlife, no matter where you are – either close to home or in far-flung corners of the world, in urban areas or even in your back garden. Commonly found species include squirrels, birds, owls, otters and deer. However, before grabbing the camera and heading out, it's important to do some research. By connecting with a local nature reserve and using helpful resources such as the RSPB website, forums and apps, you will learn more about rare sightings and identify the species you capture. To increase the chances of capturing winter wildlife, consider starting a photographic diary or journal. By keeping track of sightings and recording all the information in one place, you will see connections and build your knowledge. Record important details, including the date, time, and weather conditions to create a valuable resource.

As the winter season varies around the world due to the Earth's tilted axis, winter wildlife photography can be done all year round. When the North Pole tilts towards the sun, it is summer in the northern hemisphere, and when the South Pole tilts towards the sun, it is winter in the northern hemisphere. This means that north of the equator, winter runs from December to February, and south of the equator, it runs from June to August.

To capture powerful images, travel is not always necessary. Hidden gems may be found in local forests or nature reserves. However, when photographing wildlife in foreign areas, it is highly recommended to book an experienced guide. A guide helps you to stay safe in the cold and sometimes treacherous winter landscapes, while also directing you to the best locations. Additionally, they provide you with essential knowledge that may otherwise take years to build. This is especially important when it comes to wildlife that gives birth to their offspring since some species do so in the winter months and so are particularly sensitive to any disturbances.

*Pictured*

## **Curious guy**

"The Long-tailed Weasel is a ferocious and relentless predator, known for being fearless. This weasel will soon have a winter white coat, except for some yellow on its stomach and black-tipped tail"



### **TOP GEAR**

Winter wildlife photography can be captured with any camera, but full-frame cameras have an advantage. The bigger sensor produces less noisy high resolution images, so you can crop frames in editing to get closer to your subject – even if it's further away in the frame – without significantly compromising image quality. The Canon EOS R8, for example, boasts a blistering 40fps burst shooting mode and 4K 60p video, making it an excellent choice for capturing both natural behaviour in stills and moving images.



## Weatherproof your kit

Protect your gear to avoid losing it to mould or damp

When shooting in cold conditions, it is important to keep an eye on your gear. Even if the weather is dry, melting snow can pose a danger and your kit can get wet as soon as you are back in warm temperatures. Therefore, it's crucial to dry out your kit after every shoot to prevent condensation. Use a towel to remove any moisture from the camera and lenses to help avoid fungi and mould growth. Once either of these elements have entered the kit, it's nearly impossible to get rid of them.

When purchasing new gear, always check first whether it is weather-resistant and sealed. However, even when using weather-resistant gear, it's always a good idea to use accessories to protect the expensive equipment. Using a rain shield for lenses is an easy solution to keep water off them, alternatively, a well-attached and taped plastic bag will help keep the moisture out. Lens hoods are also an inexpensive option that protects the lens from water droplets falling on its front element.



## Select an optic

Gain more reach and learn how to get closer without needing to purchase new lenses

To enhance the zoom capabilities of your current lens, consider investing in an teleconverter. These have different strengths, with the 2x extender being a popular choice as it doubles the focal length. Keep in mind that an extender also reduces the effective lens aperture – a 1.4 extender decreases the maximum aperture by one stop, while a 2x model reduces it by two stops. Additionally, they can affect the optical quality, so it's recommended that you purchase own-brand extenders. If you're looking for a more cost-effective solution, it's always worth checking out second-hand gear.

### TELEPHOTO ZOOM

A lens such as the Sigma 70-200mm f/2.8 DG OS HSM is an excellent option to capture a broader view of the surroundings in your shot, while also providing the flexibility to zoom in on the subject from a reasonable distance.



### SUPER TELEPHOTO ZOOM

For getting really close, a focal length of 200mm plus is needed. The Sony FE 200-600mm F5.6-6.3 G OSS, for example, is a great choice. Bear in mind that these types of lenses can be quite heavy and aren't the easiest to carry around all day.



### Pictured Taking a stance

For impactful winter wildlife images, it is crucial to depict the species' natural behaviour, as Reed did in this image of a Bull Elk





# Blend in

Hide well to capture rare species and true wildlife behaviour

To coax winter wildlife to come out in front of the lens, you must become one with nature, being almost invisible and blending in with the surroundings by choosing clothing with muted colours and avoiding materials that make noise. Camouflage clothing is your ticket to remaining unnoticed and reliable waterproof quality gear will protect you from the cold and mud. Accessories such as a camouflage lens cover or crim net will help to stay hidden and protect the expensive equipment in unpredictable weather conditions.

Waiting for wildlife to appear can be a time-consuming process, which is why permanent and temporary hides can be a better solution. These hides allow you to blend in seamlessly with the surroundings, offering extra protection against the weather. They can even turn into a more comfortable environment with preparation. Nature reserves often have specialist wooden hides that are perfect for capturing hard-to-see species in a stable environment. Pop-up hides are similar to tents and are easy to set up wherever you decide to get in position. These come in various colours and patterns and fold away into a backpack for easy transportation. You can also create your own hide with a dome



**SHOW RESPECT**  
As photographers, we are guests in the animal's habitats. Don't get too close to the species, and let them be themselves. For the most captivating shots, the wildlife has to accept you and your lens first. Leave the environment as it was when you first arrived and pick up any litter you see.

**Above**  
**Impactful action**  
A battle of Bighorn Rams during the rut. Reed used a shutter speed of 1/2000 sec, while maintaining an aperture of f/4 and an ISO value of 100

or tent decorated with leaves. Finding the perfect spot for the hide can be challenging. As soon as you build it up, get the camera out and check the background and foreground of the frame. This way, you can rearrange its position to create a more appealing composition. It is best to leave the hide in position for several days before shooting, so the wildlife can become more familiar with it and accept its presence. Patience and quietness are key when photographing, so it's crucial to remain as quiet as possible upon arrival and when setting up your equipment.

## Essential tools

When capturing wildlife moments with big lenses, a stable support system for the camera is essential to avoid blurry shots. A tripod is a reliable choice to keep the camera set up and ready while waiting for the perfect shot. This has the benefit of hands-free use but also limits your ability to make quick changes in image composition and framing options.

For those seeking more flexibility, a bean bag is an excellent alternative, allowing you to support the camera at any level. Especially when photographing out of a built hide, a bean bag can allow you to position the camera on the open window frame often found in these spaces and is the perfect tool to let you reframe the scene with minimum fuss.

## Think ahead

Think comfort and ensure you have enough power when the action happens

Spending a long time in nature can be a relaxing experience if you prepare well. As it takes patience to wait for wild creatures to appear, the last thing you want to do is leave your position and risk missing the perfect shot.

Bring along some sandwiches, snacks and plenty of water to stay hydrated. When packing ready-to-eat food, make sure to remove it from the plastic packaging and store it in containers that won't make as much noise when you open them up.

When shooting in cold temperatures, camera batteries tend to drain faster than usual. To avoid running out of power, bring a spare pack of batteries with you. Have the backup battery in your pocket to keep it warm. Additionally, consider investing in a battery grip. This accessory allows you to store an extra battery, meaning you can use two batteries to power your camera. This will prevent you from needing to change batteries during important moments and make the shooting experience smoother. A camera



grip makes it more comfortable to shoot in portrait orientation, as it has an extra shutter button and command dials to enhance the control over your camera.





CAPTURE COOL CREATURES

*Pictured*  
**Slim pickings**

"In the starkness of winter, a big bull Bison has to take nourishment where he can find it. That concept works for mankind both physically and spiritually."



*Pictured*

**Pine Grosbeak**

This species inhabits coniferous forests across Alaska, western US mountains, Canada, subarctic Scandinavia and northern Russia to Siberia



# Build core skills

The secret to capturing quality winter wildlife images is to observe, be patient and practise

Build up your skills by capturing starter subjects that are commonly found, such as squirrels or robins. Those are often seen in gardens and therefore accustomed to human presence. These animals are generally more hungry during the winter and easy to attract with some food. With time they will return to the feeding station and you gain more chances to practise.

Documenting their winter behaviour, including food gathering will add an extra layer to the image, which educates and provides context to the viewer. Remember to respect their space and observe their behaviour. If they move away, don't harass and follow them. With patience, you will gain their trust and the next time they might get closer to the lens. This is a slow process but in

the end, it will make the experience even more special and rewarding.

Once you have built a rapport with the inhabitants of your garden, take it to the next level by introducing props and fun items to the scene. An apple or a mini picnic bench are great examples. You'll find that squirrels, in particular, are naturally curious and will be drawn to these objects, allowing you to capture more engaging shots.

As a next step, look out for local wildlife hotspots. Perhaps there is a nature reserve close by that you can visit regularly to become more familiar with the environment and wildlife. By returning to a known place, you will learn more about the species' behaviour and how to deal with different lighting and weather conditions.

## OBSERVATION FOR SUCCESS

Becoming a skilled wildlife photographer requires a solid understanding of both the camera and animals. Here, a monocular is a great tool for observing wildlife in close detail. It lets you study their behaviour and interactions, giving you an edge in being able to predict their next moves. This preparation gives you an advantage in framing fast-changing interactions before they pass.

*Pictured*

**The hunt**

"A Great Gray Owl finds a meal as the low sun starts to paint its colourful tones"



## Be ready

Maximise your chances of capturing the perfect shot

When it comes to capturing the appearance and interactions of wildlife, time is of the essence. It is vital to have your camera set up and ready to go at all times. Before heading out, take time to understand the camera, dial in the menu and check its special features. An effective way of improving your workflow is to customise the camera's buttons. Under the Custom Key option, select the most frequently used features to allow quick access. This helps you in situations where pressing the shutter can make the difference between missing or capturing a lifetime sighting. Take test shots to ensure that the exposure is correct. This will save you time and allow you to focus on composition and framing when the wildlife appears.



## Speed up your camera

Select the ideal settings to allow you to accurately capture changing behaviour and movements



**1 Shoot silent** The shutter release noise of a camera might scare any wildlife nearby. Compared with DSLRs, mirrorless cameras produce a much quieter sound. To further reduce the noise, activate the electronic or silent shutter option. If this feature is not available, some cameras have a lockup option to minimise noise.



**2 Shoot in M** To achieve sharp results, select an aperture of around f/8. The shutter speed should be adjusted depending on the speed of the subject, typically ranging from 1/400 to 1/2000 sec. Set ISO for a well-exposed photo. Use a high ISO if needed. A sharp, noisy image is better than a blurry one, as noise can always be corrected at the editing stage.



**3 Select burst mode** Using burst mode is a great way to ensure you never miss the action. In this mode, the camera takes multiple frames per second, giving you a better chance of capturing the perfect shot. Mirrorless cameras are particularly effective at this, as they have electronic shutters that perform better than those found in DSLR cameras.



**4 Back button focusing** Sometimes, it can be difficult to control both the focus and shutter button operations at the same time. Here, the back-button focus method is a great solution. This allows you to control both functions independently, as the autofocus can now be activated with the AF-ON button, which is located at the back of the camera.



**5 Detect the animal's eye** Many newer camera models come with an advanced feature that automatically focuses on the subject's eyes. With the Subject-to-Detect mode, found in the AF menu, the camera maintains focus and tracks the subject even when it moves within the frame. Alternatively, select the Servo AF, which acts in a similar way but isn't as accurate.



**6 Adjust tracking sensitivity** If the tracking sensitivity is set to a low value, the camera may fail to track the subject's movements correctly, which can result in unwanted blurry shots. To avoid this, it is essential to set the sensitivity to a high value. This way, the camera can accurately detect the movement and record the wildlife's action in detail.



# Include and exclude

Discover how to use camera settings to create mood and narrative in winter wildlife photography

When it comes to capturing wildlife, framing and aperture settings are crucial factors to consider. By using the right techniques, you can convey your message through two different photographic directions.

Sometimes, it can be challenging to find the right composition, as the nature in the background may distract from the subject but cannot simply be removed. In such cases, it's recommended to zoom right into your subject and work with open apertures like  $f/2$ . The reason is that the lower your f-stop number, the shallower the depth-of-field

appears, meaning that the background gets blurred out. This helps in smoothing out any distracting image elements and keeping the viewer's attention on the subject. Take care, because the shallower the depth of field, the narrower the focus area, meaning fewer image elements will be sharp. Frames shot with an open aperture convey a distinctive, calming atmosphere that captivates the viewer with close insights but less sharpness in the subject. However, focusing on the wildlife's main features means that its behaviour and a narrative layer may be missing.

To create a variety of winter wildlife shots, it's best to work with medium apertures such as  $f/11$  – as long as the surroundings are suitable. Bigger f-stop numbers have the benefit of rendering the scene sharp without significantly blurring other elements. It's worth considering to include the environment, as it plays a significant role in giving the viewer insights into the subject's life. This way, you build a context and even tell a story. Photographs with narratives are more informative and educate the viewer by showing natural behaviour.

## Stay flexible

Shift frame sections to show wild subjects in all their facets

When you are shooting in the wild, change your photographic approach from time to time. Rearranging the frame by zooming in and out and changing the depth-of-field intensity will help to keep the viewer engaged.

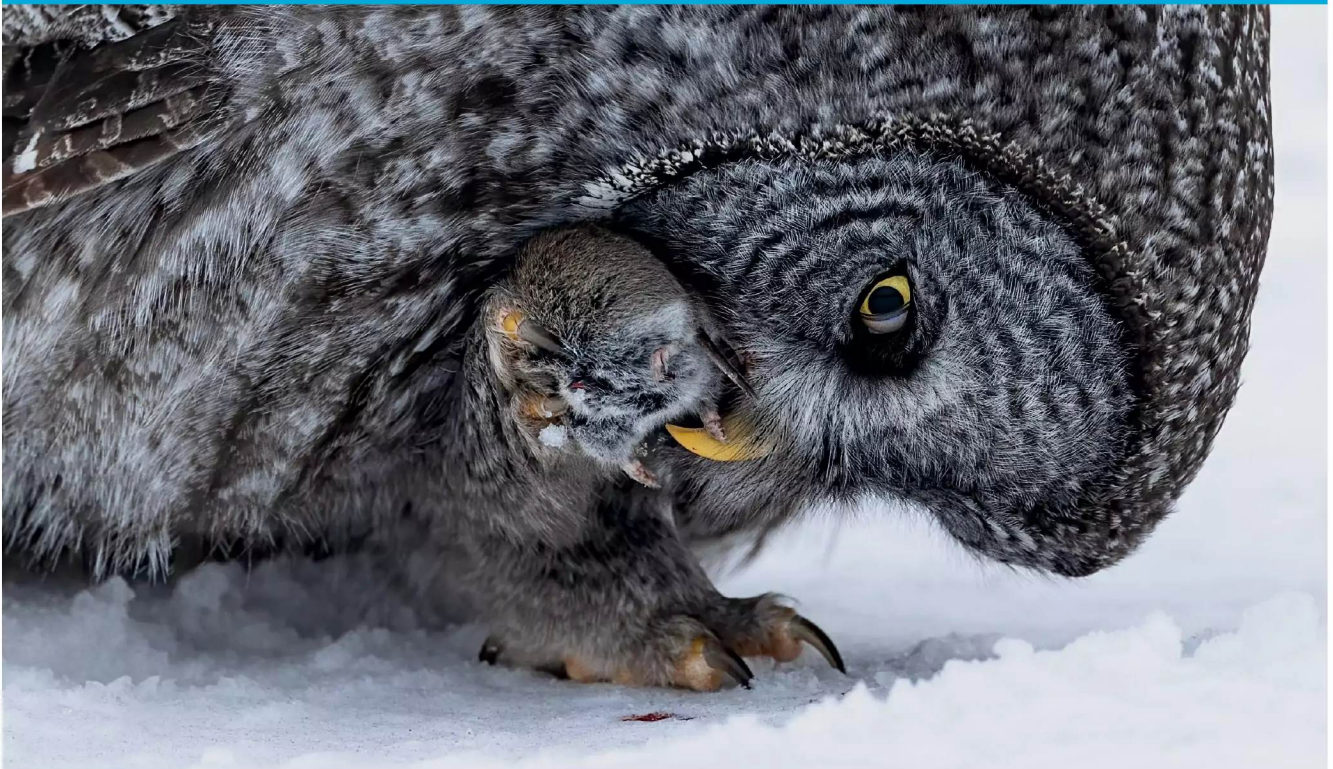
For example, one creative approach could be to go to the extremes and fill the frame with only the subject. By zooming right in on the wildlife, features like the fur gain new importance. Showing just a few parts of the subject

can also make the photograph look more abstract.

On the other hand, there are situations where it is necessary to frame the scene wider for practical reasons. For example, when capturing a flying bird or wildlife in action,

you want to be sure that you have captured the entire subject, especially if there are any unpredictable movements.

You can always fine-tune the cropping to achieve the desired effect later in post-processing.





## Create atmosphere

### SMALL DETAILS

Here, the viewer has a detailed view of the Belted Kingfisher while the falling snowflakes add an enchanting touch to the mesmerising winter atmosphere

### HIGHLIGHTED SUBJECT

The use of a shallow depth of field expertly draws the viewer's attention towards the subject, ensuring that it remains the focal point of the composition

### SHALLOW DOF

Reed used aperture priority mode and chose an f/4 aperture to create a blurred background that is not distracting and maintains the focus on the subject

## Show surroundings

### NARRATIVE LAYER

This Mule Deer Doe taking refuge from a snowstorm evokes curiosity, leaving the viewer to narrate a story and interpret the scene

### WIDE ANGLE

By framing the scene wider, Reed captured the serenity of the storm amid the harsh conditions, displaying the subject in its natural habitat

### RULE OF THIRDS

Reed applied this classic rule by placing the subject off-centre in the first third of the photograph to create a pleasing composition

## CREATE CAPTIVATING COMPOSITIONS

When framing a shot, it can be challenging to determine what should and shouldn't be included. As a general rule, prioritise your subject and avoid adding anything that could distract from the wildlife. This may require simplifying your composition, but doing so will allow your subject to really stand out.





*Pictured*  
**Hard-working fox**  
"This fox caught several voles and then did something I've never seen before. He buried the voles in the shallow snow with his nose and then came back later to gather a few and took them to the den"

**MAKE  
COLOURS POP**

To captivate the viewer, choosing subjects that boldly stand out against the white canvas is a great strategy. Squirrels or foxes are excellent choices, as their orange fur adds a splash of colour. During the editing process, enhance this colour using the selective colour layer option or by increasing vibrancy and saturation – Take care not to overdo the colours, as this can result in unnatural-looking subjects.



# Fill the white gaps

Learn how to handle exposure in the snow like a pro to capture magical winter light

During the winter season, natural light is a precious resource. To frame winter wildlife at its best, aim to take photographs during the golden hours of sunrise and sunset. In the morning, face east and, in the afternoon, position yourself towards the west to catch the warm glow of the winter sun – your smartphone's compass will help locate the direction in which you should be facing.

The bright snow backdrop can pose some challenges when it comes to the ideal exposure. The snow can deceive the camera's light meter, resulting in underexposed photographs. To combat this, it's best to intentionally overexpose or underexpose your images in specific situations.

A popular approach is to overexpose scenes on purpose by using maximum open apertures. This technique lets you increase the shutter speed which makes it possible to freeze wildlife interaction. This way, you

also avoid pushing the ISO settings to the extremes. This helps capture more vibrant colours and prevents the bright snow from having a grey tint. However, when taking pictures of winter birds against a bright sky, it's better to underexpose the image.

When it comes to pressing the shutter, there's no room for error in timing. Get your camera settings ready, frame the subject first and then remain in one spot for an extended period. Waiting patiently for the animal to turn around and make eye contact with the camera creates a sense of power and intensity in your composition. When the wildlife is staring directly at the lens, it makes a much stronger impact on the viewer, creating a powerful connection.

Since lots of winter wildlife is typically shy, capturing this moment is a rare and thrilling experience that will leave a lasting impression on you and anyone who sees the image.



## Seeing eye-to-eye

Lower your position to add new dimensions to your photographs

When you're taking pictures of winter creatures, don't stick to photographing them from head height. Especially when you have small subjects in front of the camera, standing at your normal height can result in a lack of impact in the images. Getting down low with the lens will significantly enhance the visual appeal of the subject while also adding foreground interest to the composition.

This way, you include rich details of the animal's habitat and provide additional information to the viewer. Here, blurring the background with low f-numbers such as f/2.8 or f/4 is a clever and effective technique to highlight the main subject.

## Pro advice

Wildlife photographer Reed Miller laments a lack of winter images



"Have you ever thought you had fantastic shots but downloaded the images and they just aren't sharp? I learned this lesson the hard way... many

times. Heat waves, mirages and optical distortion can all be difficult in the heat, however, I believe that it is a much bigger problem in the cold, especially if you are shooting with a long lens. Of course, the more magnification, the more distortion.

If I'm shooting an animal from my vehicle (yes, that sounds lazy but it's often the best way), I turn off the engine and roll down every window, so that the temperature equalises enough in my vehicle and I don't get distortion or blurry images. Believe me when I say that your passengers will love this method. Soon you will be able to put your camera on the seat next to you, which will increase your awesome fast camera access skills!"



# Top 10 places to shoot wildlife

Go further afield than your garden or local park



*Pictured*  
**Pinpoint pupils**  
"This Saw-whet Owl has much smaller pupils than I normally see because they are usually in the shadows"

## 1 ALPS, SWITZERLAND

Home of wolves, ibex, wild goats and red deer. Thanks to reintroduction programs, large predators such as the Eurasian Lynx have made a comeback.

## 2 FÁKASEL, ICELAND

A powerful winter subject is Icelandic horses. These are smaller than regular horses, sometimes even as small as a pony and are built to survive in harsh climates.

## 3 WEST HIGHLAND PENINSULAS, SCOTLAND

Scotland's big five are red squirrels, red deer, golden eagles, otters and harbour seals. Additionally, you will find diverse wildlife, including mountain hares, roe deer, swans, geese and more.

## 4 LADAKH, INDIA

Amidst the winter snow, roams the majestic Snow leopard, a master hunter with unparalleled tracking skills, always on the hunt for its next prey.

## 5 SVALBARD AND HALLINGDAL, NORWAY

Norway is a haven for winter wildlife, with species such as the Arctic Fox, Musk Ox, Polar Bear, and Reindeer thriving alongside the 700kg national animal, the Moose.

## 6 ISLE OF MULL, UNITED KINGDOM

Known as the otter capital of the UK, this island is perfect for capturing otters on the seashore, particularly during the winter months when they are more active.

## 7 WAPUSK NATIONAL PARK, CANADA

This national park, spanning over a vast expanse of 11,475km<sup>2</sup>, is known as the world's premier location for photographing polar bears and their cubs.

## 8 JIGOKUDANI YAEN-KOEN, JAPAN

Also known as Hell's Valley, this is a hotspot for Snow Monkeys. When the snow falls, macaques of Nagano enjoy soaking in the hot springs.

## 9 BIAŁOWIEŻA NATIONAL PARK, POLAND

A global leader in breeding European bison, with the population almost doubling to 200. It's home to roe and red deer, European mouflon sheep and wolves.

## 10 GIGRIN FARM, WALES

Amidst the serene mid-Wales countryside lies a haven for bird enthusiasts. A farm inhabited by over 400-500 bird species providing captivating subjects for your next shoot.





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# SUPER SUNSETS

Learn the essential in-camera steps to capture the end-of-day light and then apply targeted processing to make the best of your sunset shots



**Words and images by:** Peter Fenech

**Difficulty level:** Intermediate

**Time taken:** 1.5 hours



In many ways, sunset is the best time to shoot landscape photography. While dawn is the other golden hour for capturing scenic images, providing warmer light and softer shadows than midday, atmospheric factors often result in more saturated colours towards the end of the day. The other advantage of staying out later, rather than getting up early, is that the light is getting progressively better as the sun lowers in

the sky and so the window for the best images is generally longer.

However, capturing golden hour shots at the coast comes with several unique challenges. The close proximity of the sun to the reflective surface of the ocean often results in easily blown highlights. To make matters worse, these clipped areas are difficult to balance due to the localised nature of the exposure difference – it's not often possible to filter these areas using an

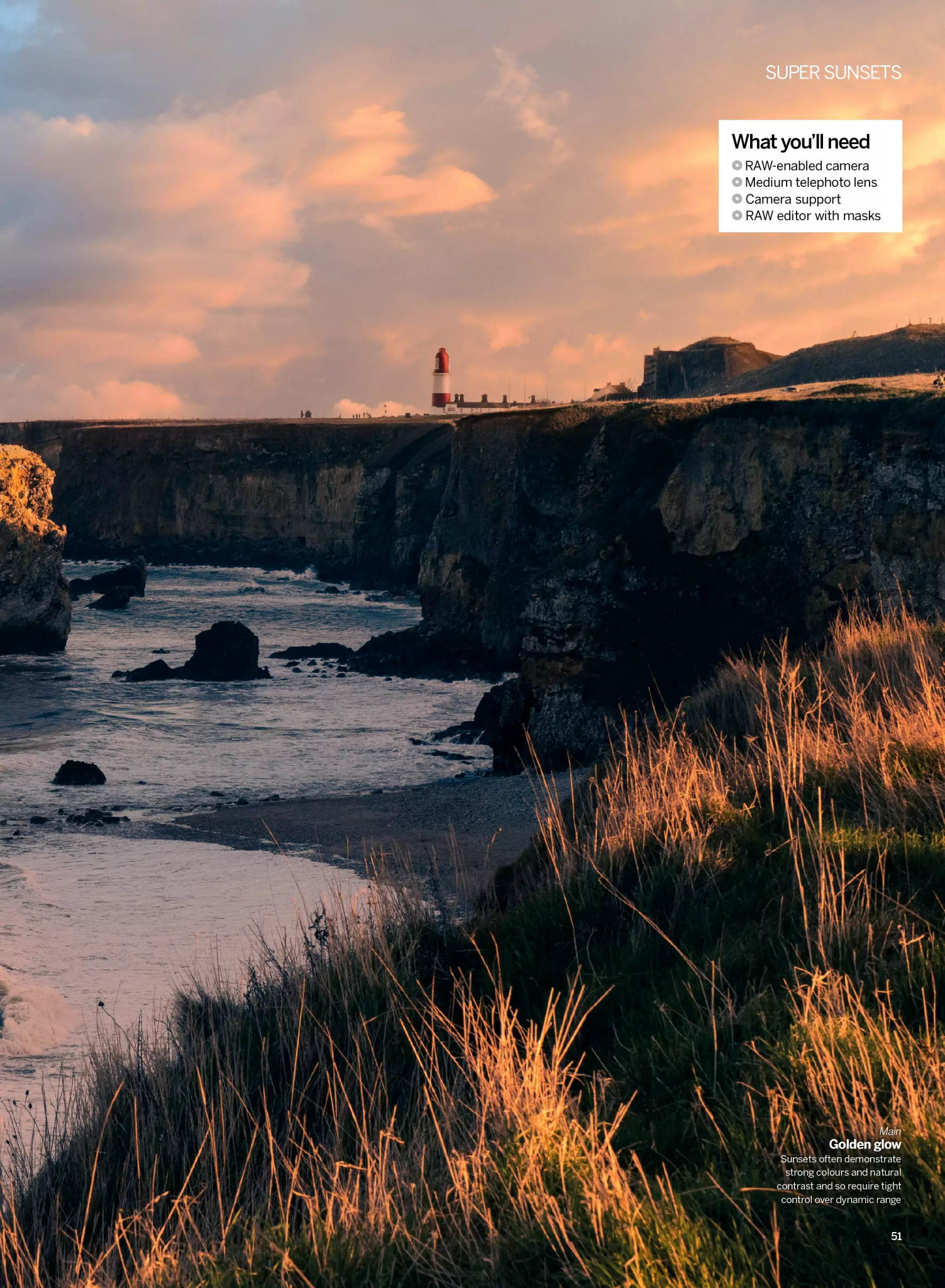
ND grad and HDR blending might require further local adjustment.

For this project, we're going to explore how to balance exposure and colour to maximise the sunset atmosphere. With careful camera work, these steps can be applied to any scene, anywhere. The aim is to recognise those characteristics that make the golden hours so attractive to the eye and learn to make these aspects as prominent in your images as possible.



### What you'll need

- RAW-enabled camera
- Medium telephoto lens
- Camera support
- RAW editor with masks



*Main*  
**Golden glow**

Sunsets often demonstrate strong colours and natural contrast and so require tight control over dynamic range





**1 Set metering mode** With extreme contrast, there is a risk of miscalculating the exposure. Spot metering underexposed the cliffs and beach, but Evaluative gave an exposure that didn't match any area well. Center-Weighted ensured zones close to the sun didn't overly influence the AE system but highlights weren't ignored totally.



**2 Attach a hood** To achieve the glowing sunset effect I'm after in this scene, we need to shoot towards the sun, which is just out of the frame. However, this opens up the risk of lens flare, so a hood is essential. If you don't have a hood for your lens model, use a baseball cap or similar item to shade the sun-facing side of the optic.



**3 Crop the scene** Many sunset images fail because too much of the scene not illuminated by the golden light is included. To enhance the effect, a quick and easy solution is to crop into the areas covered by the directional light. For this image, I used a 70-200mm lens to compress the illuminated areas and exclude a darker foreground.



**4 Control white balance** Although we think of sunset lighting as yellow, other hues are commonly present too. A Shade WB preset made the landscape too uniformly warm, so I scrolled through the manual Kelvin settings until a good balance of warm and cool tones was visible. These can be tweaked further at a later stage.



**5 Time the exposure** The most effective sunset contrast occurs when there are clouds in the sky to hold the colour. I shot this coastal scene on an overcast day and waited for the setting sun to break through a small gap in the cloud layer, which provided this tightly focused raking light and contrast with the darker sky areas.



**6 Shoot 'one-over'** While exposure blending will help in this context, sometimes all that is needed is an extra frame to capture tones that are most at risk. Since there are lots of shadows in the middle ground, I captured the ideal exposure for the sky, then used +1EV Exposure Compensation to reveal extra detail in the darks.



# The setup

SUPER SUNSETS



**MEDIUM TELEPHOTO**  
A 70-200mm or 300mm removes flat areas that diminish sunset ambience

**LENS HOOD**  
This reduces internal lens reflections, which is vital for shooting the exposed sun disc

**BALL HEAD**  
Offers more rapid reframing but take care of precise horizon angle adjustments

## Create a sunset glow

Use aperture to introduce some magic

A wide aperture allows light to flood into the lens and can create a wash of colour. Stopping down to above  $f/8$  may be needed for depth-of-field but might also generate harder, unsightly flare. An  $f$ /stop of  $f/2.8$  to  $f/5.6$  solves this problem and introduces an artistic magical glow effect. A good solution is to capture a frame at a

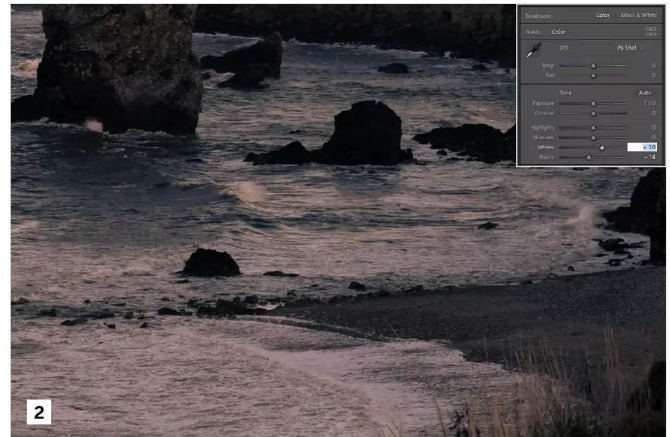
smaller aperture, for safer foreground sharpness then, with the focus set a third of the way into the frame or double the distance of the closest object, open up the diaphragm. This captures softer, diffused light around the sun itself, where it is just out of frame, as in this scene. The two frames can then be merged in software for the best of both worlds.



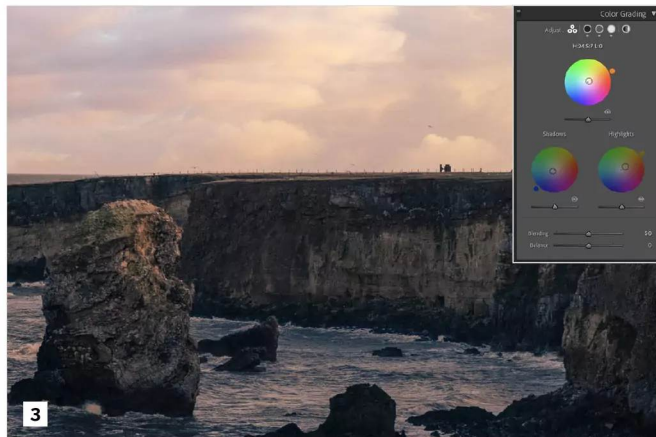




**1 Crop clipped detail** The area closest to the sun is slightly clipped, while the near foreground is missing direct illumination. A little cropping was applied to remove these problem areas and focus the composition on the glowing parts of the shot with retained detail.



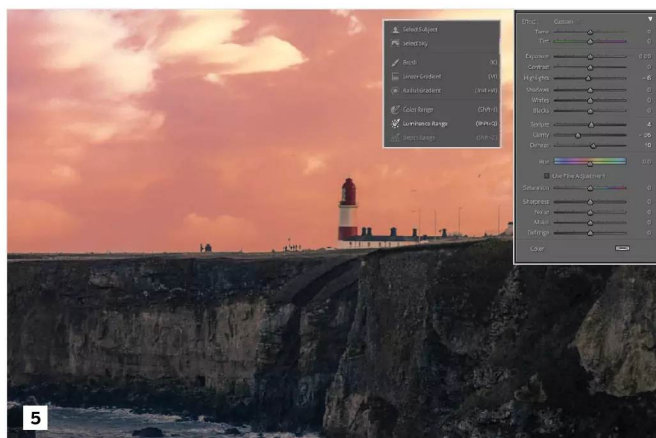
**2 Control the range** To compress the tones further, the Black and White points were set to prevent clipping (drag the sliders while observing the histogram) and the Highlights and Shadows sliders were moved until the dynamic range appeared balanced but natural.



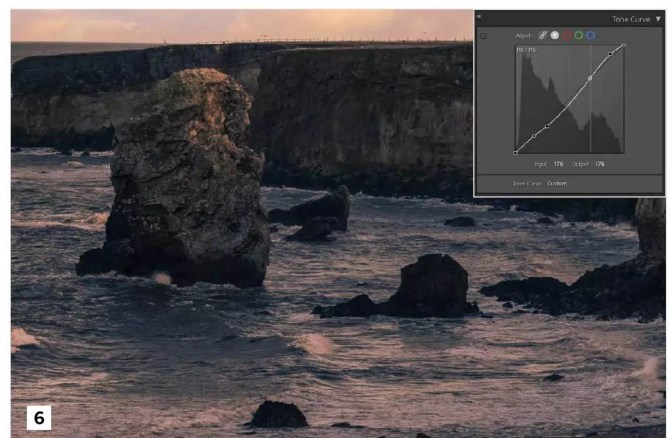
**3 Sunset toning** To highlight the golden theme, I added yellow to the highlights, magenta to the mid-tones and subtle blue to the shadows, using Color Grading and adjusting the balance until happy. I also added Blue Primary Saturation in Lightroom's Calibration Tab.



**4 Local adjustments** I didn't need a +1EV exposure, but used the Radial Filter to lift the shadows for aesthetic reasons – the detail was present but dark shadows drew the eye. I added negative Blacks to maintain natural contrast and dodged the highlights on the stacks.



**5 Diffuse the highlights** For a subtle boost, select the highlights using a Luminance Range mask. Use the Eyedropper to choose the brightest tones and drag the Luminance scale for better precision. To make the highlights softer, reduce the Clarity and Dehaze sliders.



**6 Final contrast** To finish the shot, use the Tone Curves to apply some final tonal adjustments. In this image, I required only a fairly shallow S-Curve overall, with some minor darkening of the lower mid-tones for added depth and extra natural contrast.





**Missing contrast**

While the colours in this image are pleasant, the timing of the shot has left much of the scene without direct lighting and therefore looking a little dull

**BEFORE**



**On cue**

Waiting for the perfect moment of lighting and using composition and processing to enhance the golden tones has created a shot with natural, satisfying depth

**AFTER**



# Create catchlights

Use festive lights to create magical reflections in your subject's eyes and boost your portraits



When taking a portrait, it is important to include catchlights. These are reflections of the light source in the subject's eyes that can add life, depth and a captivating sparkle. They make your subject look more vibrant and engaging and can turn a mundane portrait into an eye-catching one. The shape and intensity of catchlights can vary depending on the shooting environment.

When shooting in a studio, the most effective way to create catchlights is to direct a light source towards your subject. This can be easily accomplished using a softbox or beauty dish to diffuse light for flattering effects. Similarly, when shooting outdoors, the sun creates natural catchlights, even when the weather is overcast. In fact, on overcast days,

the clouds act as a natural softbox, creating gentle reflections in your subject's eyes.

Catchlights are essentially light reflections and so they offer limitless potential to experiment and create unique light shapes to complement the style of your portrait. At this time of the year, one technique is to use Christmas lights to create unique catchlights, for example in the shape of a Christmas tree or with festive green and red colours.

To create the outline, we need to attach a string of lights to a piece of wood or thick cardboard you may have lying around the home. Stick the lights down with either nails or tape into the desired shape. It's a quick and cost-effective way of adding a special touch that makes your festive portraits stand out.

## Insert

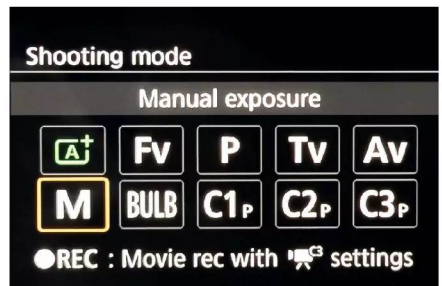
### Missing sparkle

Here, the eye reflection has been created by the window in the room. Though it adds depth to the subject, the photo lacks a captivating element or festive touch

## Main

### Christmas catchlight

Ordinary Christmas lights were arranged in the shape of a star and positioned in front of the subject. Using the optimal exposure settings, this created a bright and clear reflection in the subject's eye



**1 Set the scene** Choose a dark or dimly lit room with minimal ambient light as this will help make the reflections stand out more. Gently place the Christmas lights in front of your model, ensuring they are not too bright and are evenly distributed.

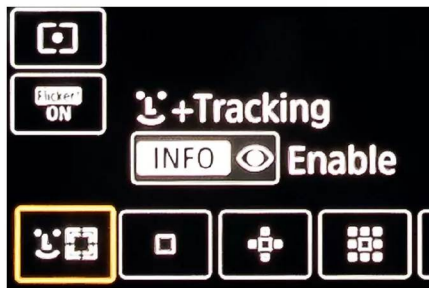
**2 Stay steady** When working in low-light conditions, place your camera on a tripod to keep it steady. This allows you to use longer shutter speeds, where more light can enter the sensor, and also prevents camera shake, resulting in sharp and well-exposed images.

**3 Shoot in Manual** Change to M mode to manually adjust the exposure settings. Use a slow shutter speed, between 1/4 to 1 sec, to allow the light reflection to stand out. Select an open aperture of about f/6.3 to enhance the light and create beautiful bokeh.





**4 Select ISO value** Keep your ISO setting as low as possible to reduce the amount of visible noise in the darker parts of the image. However, if the final result shows significant noise, you can correct it in post-production with the Denoise function in Lightroom.



**5 Set the focus** To ensure both the eye and catchlight are sharp, go into your camera menu to bring up the available focus options. The eye-tracking feature on Canon cameras, for example, works well and is a great way of ensuring that the subject's eyes are in focus.



**6 Choose focal length** Working with a versatile lens, such as the Canon 24-240mm f/4-6.3 telephoto lens, allows you to rearrange the frame with ease. Work with long focal lengths to achieve an aesthetically pleasing compressed perspective.





# Add surreal blur to woodland shots

## Meet the editing pro



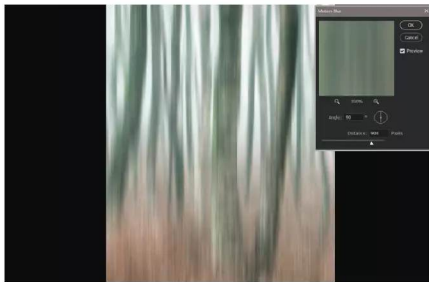
James Abbott is a professional photographer and photography journalist specialising in shooting and editing techniques. His first book was recently released and covers professional image editing skills in both Adobe Photoshop and Affinity Photo. @jamesaphoto jamesaphoto.co.uk

## Use Photoshop's Motion Blur Filter for fun and creative effects

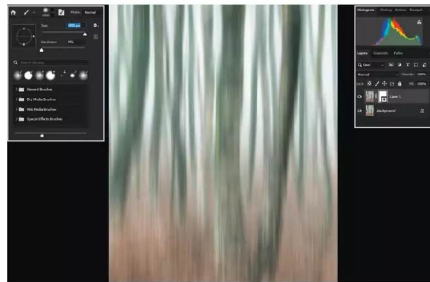
With autumn now a not-so-distant memory, there's a good chance you'll have plenty of woodland images to edit over the winter months. So, for something a little different, try this popular and fun technique where Motion Blur is added to trees to create a surreal appearance. It's an easy technique to apply and one that can be blended seamlessly using Layer Masking.

## What you'll be using

- Layer duplication
- Layer Masks
- Mask editing
- Hue/Saturation
- Colour channels



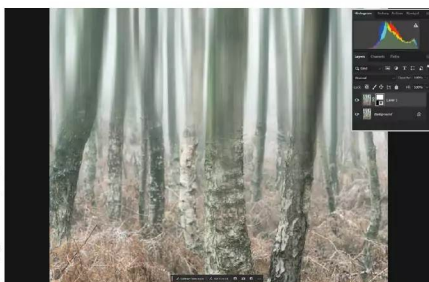
**1 Apply Blur** With the Background Layer Active, Press Ctrl/Cmd+J to duplicate the Layer. The new Layer will be active by default, so go to Filter > Blur > Motion Blur. When the dialogue opens, set the Angle to 90° or the angle of the trees' growth, then set Distance to around 900 pixels and hit OK to apply the blur.



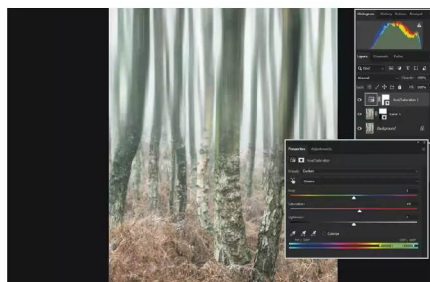
**2 Set up the Layer** Click on the Add a mask icon at the bottom of the Layers panel and then press D on the keyboard to set the palette colours to black and white. If white is in the foreground, press X to switch to black. Next, press B to activate the Brush Tool and set it to a large size with Hardness at 0%.



**3 Mask out blur** Zoom into the image and use the Spacebar to activate the Hand Tool to move the image up the screen so you can see the bottom area. Now paint black over the bottom area but don't go too high because you can refine the mask and overall effect in the next step using different brush sizes.



**4 Refine the Mask** Zoom into the image further and use the left and right square bracket keys to make the Brush smaller or larger as required. You can now paint out the blur in specific areas for a better and more interesting blend. Press X to switch to white and paint the blur back in, if required.



**5 Adjust saturation** This step is a great way to boost the saturation of individual colour channels. Click on the Create new fill or adjustment layer icon at the bottom of the Layers panel and select Hue/Saturation. Click on the Master dropdown menu and select each channel to increase the Saturation.

## KEY TIP

### CHANGE BRUSH OPACITY

To paint in a more gradual blend in the Layer Mask, reduce the Brush Opacity from 100% to around 55%. You'll need four passes of the brush to remove blur, but this can help to create a smoother blend between sharp and blurred areas.

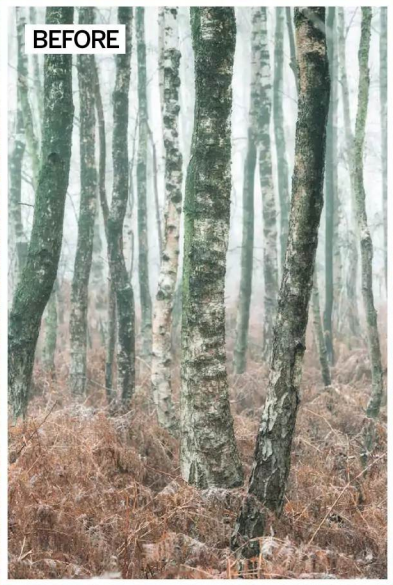
### Insert Straight trees

Straight trees work best for this technique because the Motion Blur makes it look as though ICM was used during shooting apart from the base of the trunks

### Main Surreal blur

Thanks to simple Layer duplication and Masking, the blurred image has been blended seamlessly with the sharp image at the bottom of the scene





BEFORE





# Make phone shots shine with Lightroom Mobile

Capture RAW files and enjoy full editing control

 With many smartphones featuring ultra-wide-angle, standard and telephoto lenses, we have an incredibly versatile camera with us at all times. Many modern phones can now capture

images in RAW format, opening up a wealth of editing options and, ultimately, higher image quality. And when that RAW image capture is paired with Lightroom Mobile for editing, that offers huge potential for creating great shots.

## What you'll be using

- Lightroom Mobile
- Light controls
- Color controls
- Effects controls
- Masking



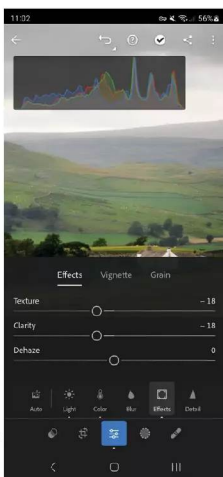
**1 Make basic adjustments**  
To get started, click on the Light tab at the bottom of the editing interface. For this image, Exposure was set to +0.23, Highlights to -35, Shadows to +20, Whites to +40 and Blacks to -10. Contrast was left at zero in favour of using the Tone Curve to apply more contrast to the image.



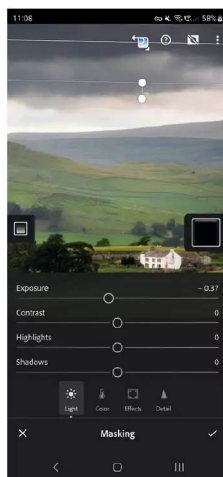
**2 Add contrast**  
Scroll down to below the main Light controls and click on the Curve button to open the Tone Curve. Create an S curve by placing your finger on the lower third of the curve and dragging it down and right. Do the same on the top third of the curve and drag up and to the left. Tap on a point to delete it.



**3 Adjust white balance**  
This image was taken late in the afternoon so the light was warmer than it appears. Click on the Color tab to open the White Balance and other colour controls. Here, the Temperature was set to 6203K and the Tint to -5 for a more faithful colour balance. Saturation was set to +6.



**4 Add Orton-style blur**  
Click on the Effects tab and drag the Texture and Clarity sliders to negative figures. The exact amount depends on the resolution of the image, but here, Texture and Clarity were set to -18 to add a subtle version of the Orton Effect that softens the scene while maintaining sharpness.



**5 Use Masking**  
A Linear Gradient was applied over the sky and midground with Dehaze set to +35, and another over the sky with Exposure at -0.39 and Highlights set to -24. A third Linear Gradient was added to darken the top of the sky and an inverted Radial Gradient was used as a subtle vignette.

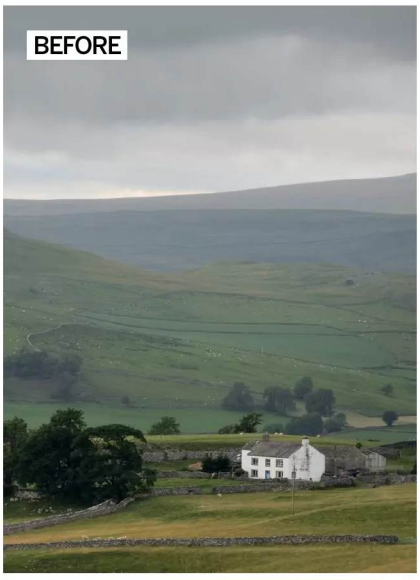
**KEY TIP**  
**SHOW THE HISTOGRAM**  
Click on the three horizontal dots in the top right corner of the interface and select View options > Histogram to bring up the histogram. This will help you with maintaining detail in the shadows and highlights during the editing process.

*Insert*  
**Well exposed**  
Though the image was carefully exposed to maintain detail in the highlights, this RAW file captured with a Samsung S23 Ultra required processing in Lightroom

*Main*  
**Bursting with life**  
Thanks to the processing capabilities of Lightroom Mobile, this landscape image looks like it was taken with an interchangeable lens camera rather than a smartphone



BEFORE







# Retouch for natural results

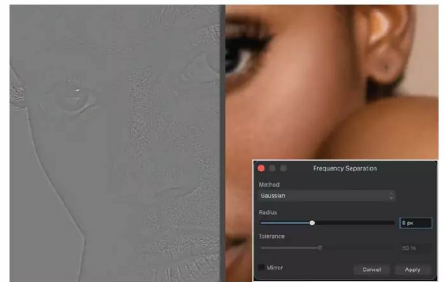
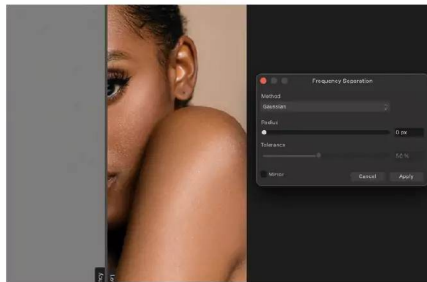
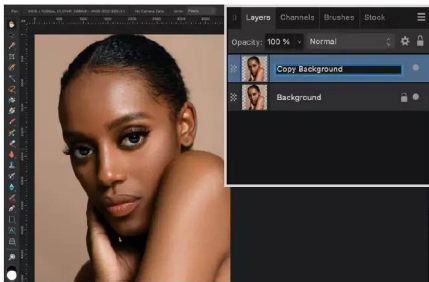
Use Frequency Separation to maintain skin texture

When editing skin tones, it is best to avoid too much retouching. We often focus on removing spots with the clone or smoothing tools, but these can affect the skin texture. To avoid unnatural-

looking results, Affinity Photo 2.0 has a Frequency Separation filter, where low and high frequencies are separated, so that colour spots (Low Frequency) and skin texture spots (High Frequency) can be edited separately.

## What you'll be using

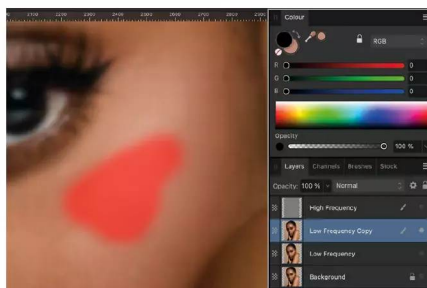
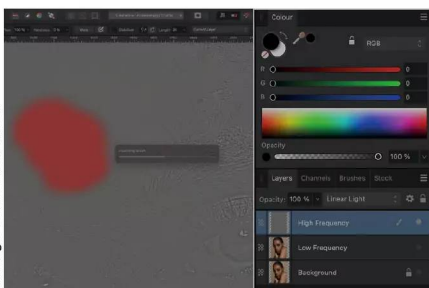
- Frequency Separation
- High Frequency
- Low Frequency
- Paint brush



**1 Copy Background layer** It is crucial to keep track of the retouching edits you make. To do this, start by duplicating the original background layer. This will create a copy that you can use to compare the 'before' and 'after' versions of the photograph. It also helps identify if any edits you make are too extreme.

**2 Select Frequency Separation filter** Go to the top bar, select the Filter option and choose Frequency Separation filter. Now, the image is split into two parts. On the right, you can see the high frequency, which displays the texture. On the left, the low frequency is visible, which contains the image colours.

**3 Apply filter** To adjust the texture, use the radius slider. By increasing the radius, the high-frequency side gains structure, while the low-frequency side appears blurry. This allows you to enhance the skin texture while blurring out the structure of spots that only contain the colours so you can smooth them separately.



**4 Work on structure** By applying the filter, two layers are automatically added. To start retouching, untick the visibility of all layers while leaving the High-Frequency layer active. Select the paintbrush tool and make sure black is selected. Leave the Current Layer option on and paint over any irregular structures.

**5 Correct tone irregularities** Activate the visibility of the Low-Frequency layer. Duplicate this layer and work on the copy. Focus on one area that shows spots. Select the paintbrush with a low flow and hold down the alt/option key to sample the skin colour. Paint over the areas that need touching up.

## KEY TIP

### USE FREQUENCIES TO EDIT THE SHADOWS

By applying lighter or darker skin frequencies, you can increase or decrease the appearance of shadows. Stay on the Low-Frequency layer, sample a skin tone and paint it in using the brush tool over the shadow areas you want to optimise.

#### Insert Smooth nightmare

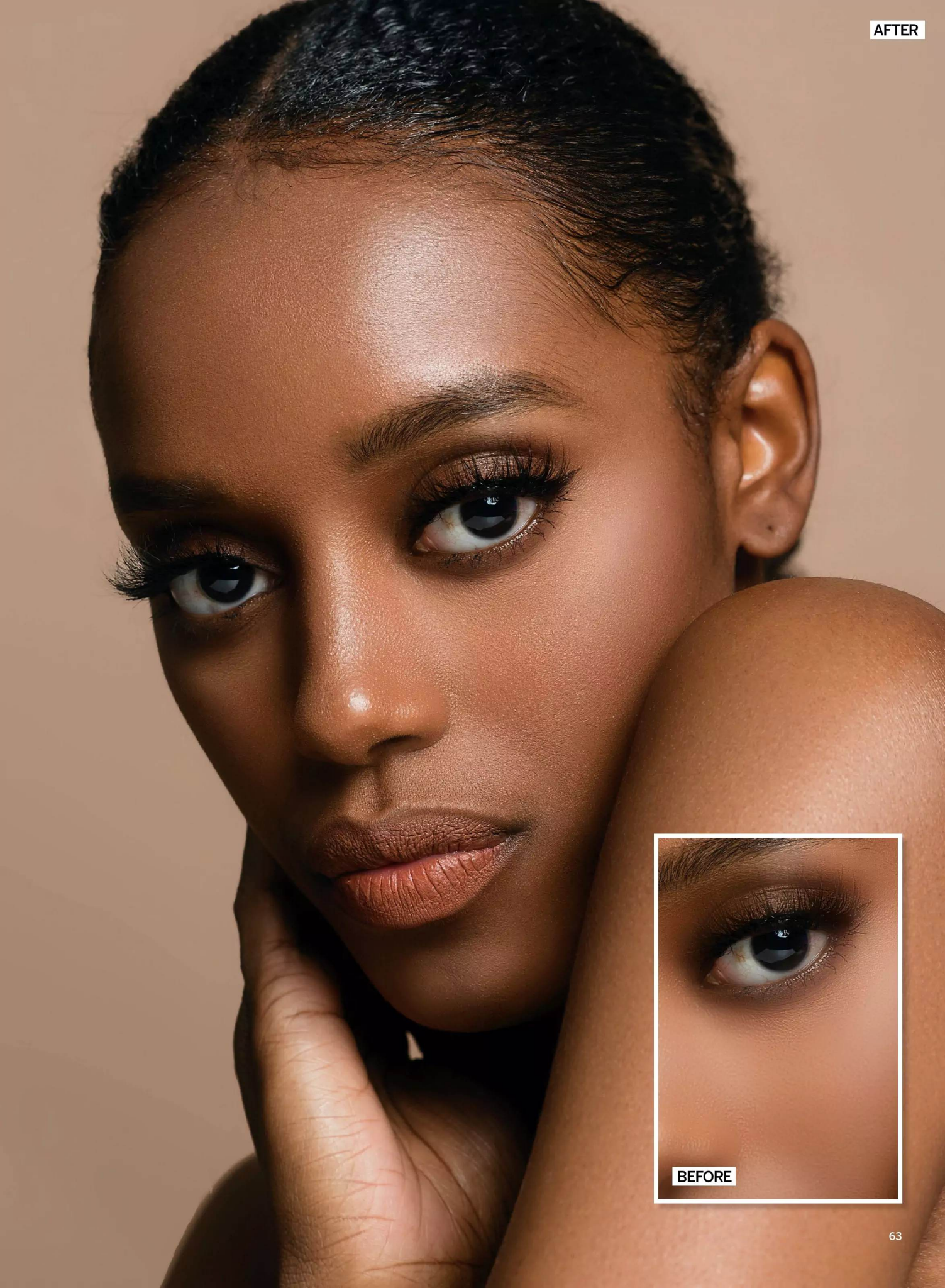
The skin has clearly been refined while editing. Unfortunately, the smoothing tools also removed the skin texture, resulting in an unnatural look

#### Main Natural approach

The skin now looks more natural with retouched imperfections that preserve the texture of the skin, making it look more realistic



AFTER




BEFORE



# MAKE PRINTS LAST

Follow these five pro tips to extend the lifespan of your printed photos

 The preservation of printed images is not only important on a personal level but also for museums worldwide that rely on them to educate society on bygone times. However, time can take a toll on old photographic prints, making it a challenge to see the subject in detail and original colour.

Generally speaking, black-and-white prints have a longer lifespan than colour

ones – this is because most colour processes use dyes on different standards that fade at different rates over time. Often, the blue colour layer fades faster, creating tints after just a few years. For instance, prints from the 1950s tend to have a red tint, while photographs taken in the 1970s will often now feature a yellow tint.

Technology has evolved, including print processes, materials and paper quality.

However, the three main enemies of conservation, namely light, moisture and air exposure, can still cause fading. So it's time to consider both short-term production and long-term display and adopt a future-proof approach to retain the original impact of your photo prints.

## Conclusion

In the digital age, it's easier to duplicate images. We don't have to worry about losing files due to ageing or damage but we can still lose them to technical failure. Back up your digital photo files and store them on different devices.

## Select archive paper

Even the best ink won't prevent your images from fading if the paper is not up to par. Standard paper, for instance, absorbs ink poorly, which can compromise the quality of your images. However, professional-grade paper such as 100% cotton or acid-free paper is designed specifically for image archiving and helps to maintain the integrity of your prints. Some popular and long-lasting choices in this category include Kodak Professional Endura Premier Photo paper and Fujifilm Fujicolor Crystal Archive Super Type PDN.



## Use pigment-based inks

It's crucial to choose the right ink to slow down air exposure fading. This oxidation process is inevitable and causes colour reduction over time, but by opting for high-quality pigment-based ink, your prints will last for around 200 years. Pigment-based ink provides sharper details, a wider range of colours, and ink particles suspended in a clear resin that decelerates the fading process. In contrast, dye-based ink is known to fade after a mere 25-30 years.







## Reduce ink degradation

After printing, let the ink sink first, so that it can settle and firmly bond with the paper. Leave the prints to dry in a low-dust environment first. Here, the drying time will depend on the combination of ink and paper used. Before touching the prints, wash your hands thoroughly or, even better, use cotton gloves. These are affordable and make a big difference in preventing the transfer of degrading solvents onto the printing paper. You can purchase cotton gloves in most art shops or online stores, such as [icanFRAME](#).

## Prevent light fading

UV light, also known as ultraviolet light, is undoubtedly one of the biggest enemies of photo prints. Over time, it causes washed out colours, reduced saturation and misted shadow areas. UV-protected framing glass can help prevent this issue. When displaying framed photos, it is strongly recommend that you choose a location with no direct sunlight shining on it.

This is also the reason why flash photography is typically not allowed in art galleries or museums, as this strong light could damage the often old and delicate artworks.



## Acid-free storage


Simply storing prints in the attic or basement increases the risk of moisture damage and fading. To keep the prints in optimum condition, store them in a climate-controlled and dry area that is neither too hot nor too cold. Protect the prints further by wrapping them in acid-free tissue paper, available in most art stores, and storing them in classic paper boxes. Avoid dyed and recycled boxes, instead, choose acid-free or lignin options for maximum protection.





# PART-TIME PHOTOGRAPHY

Balancing your day job with a photography side-hustle is a great way to earn some pocket money and cut your teeth managing a small business

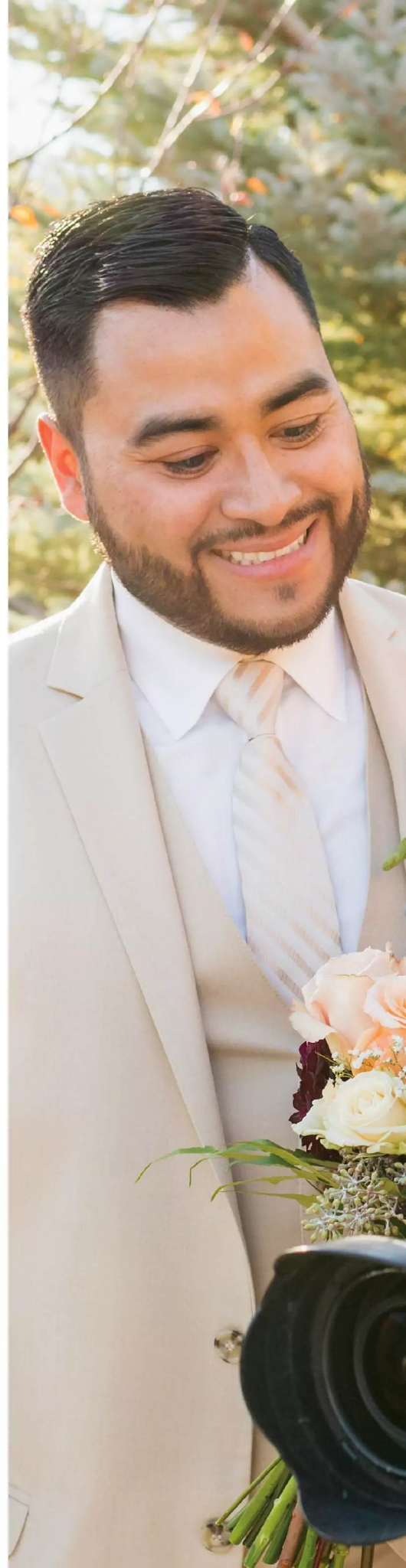
 Making some extra money from your hobby is a brilliant feeling and, fortunately for photographers, there are no shortage of potential clients willing to pay for your photography services, from shooting weddings for happy couples to interior architecture for realtors or product photography to video drone services.

The good news is you can pick up a lot of these jobs in your free time around your full-time working hours. The latest mirrorless cameras and optics can cost thousands of pounds, so using your spare time to earn some extra dosh is a smart way to fund your next upgrade or photography trip.

It's good to have a goal in mind – are you happy with just picking up the odd freelance job on the side or would you rather build

up your experience and client lists so that you can eventually take your photography business full-time? It's also not a bad idea to let your employer know about your photography, as many businesses need marketing materials, headshots or product photography – they may even be able to give you your first freelance job.

Even if you're only applying yourself to it in your spare time, setting up a photography business can still be daunting. You will still need to make sure everything is all above board when it comes to balancing your books and accounting. You'll also need to be careful of working too hard and making sure you regularly take a well-deserved break. In this article, we'll cover some of the most important aspects to consider...



## Catch up on our career features



ISSUE 272: GOING PRO LATER IN LIFE

ISSUE 273: DIVERSIFY YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY

GET YOUR BACK COPIES HERE: [HTTPS://BIT.LY/DPBACKISSUES](https://bit.ly/dpbackissues)

The image shows two magazine covers for 'Photographer' magazine. The left cover is Issue 272, 'Going Pro Later in Life', featuring a woman and a man looking at a laptop. The right cover is Issue 273, 'Diversify Your Photography', featuring a man with a backpack in a mountain landscape. The text 'GET YOUR BACK COPIES HERE: HTTPS://BIT.LY/DPBACKISSUES' is prominently displayed at the bottom.









## Keeping busy

Having a full-time job will provide you with a regular salary and picking up additional photography projects on the side is a great way to earn some extra pocket money. How much you work in your spare time is completely up to you, whether it's a wedding once a month or studio photography sessions every weekend. Be sure to spread the word around your workplace and fellow colleagues: friends and family are likely to be your first clients when you're first starting out. Word of mouth is an effective and low cost way to pick up jobs, though if you need more work, it's worth considering marketing options such as advertising on social media. Make sure you have a professional website displaying your best work, rates and contact information so customers can book you.

© Patchareeporn Sakoolchai via Getty Images



## Part-time hours

Depending on how proactive you've been with your photography business, you may find that you have more clients approaching you with work than you're able to fulfil in your spare time, which is certainly a nice problem to have. Hopefully, your photography business is more enjoyable (and more lucrative) than your full-time day job. These are two great reasons to consider dropping your full-time hours to take on more photography jobs and build your photography business. Going part-time is a great way of still ensuring a guaranteed monthly paycheck and pension contributions from your employer, while letting you build up the confidence and client contacts required to dive fully into self-employment.

© Enigma\_Images via Getty Images

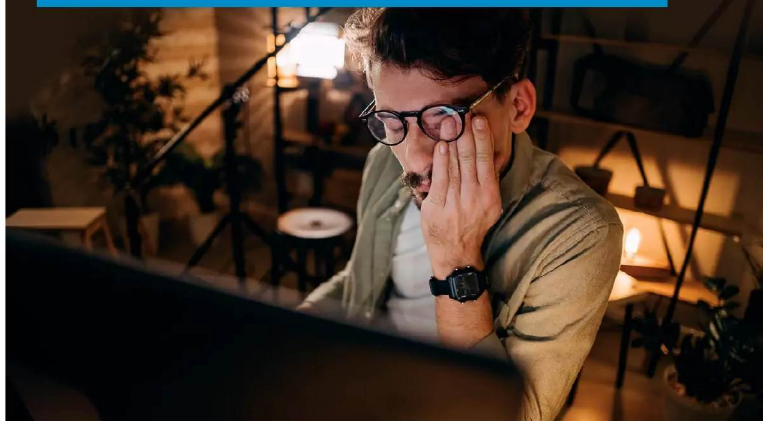
## Don't burn yourself out

If you're known as the photographer amongst friends and family, it can feel awkward charging a fee. But remember that all of your camera kit, hard drives, memory cards, insurance and other costs don't come cheap – and that's before factoring in your experience and personal time.

In the early days, it's okay to charge 'mate's rates' if it helps you build up your confidence and put together a portfolio, but you'll want to start charging your full worth as soon as possible. Working overtime and not charging for it is a surefire way to burn yourself out.

It's also vital to book in some R&R days and family time. Put days off in your calendar and stick to them – you need to be well rested to perform at your top level. Use photography as a tool to relax too, if you're shooting high-pressure weddings as your side-hustle, try going out with your camera to take landscapes and unwind in nature.

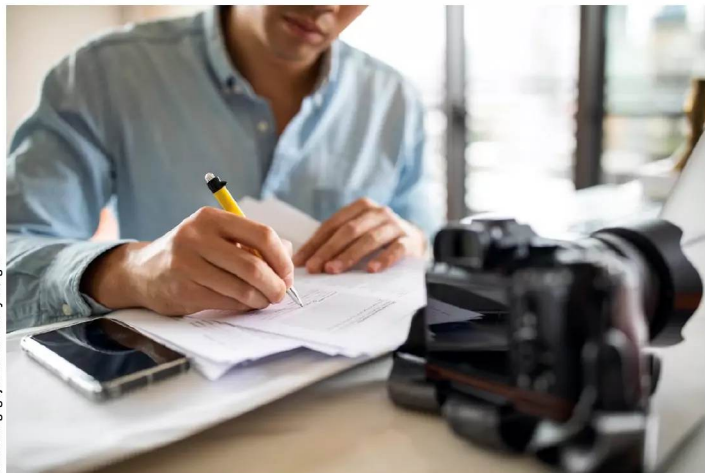
© Eclipse\_Images via Getty Images



## Keep on top of your books

If you aren't already, you'll need to register for a Self-Assessment tax return (see the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website). Keep on top of your books with a spreadsheet that shows all of your income and outgoings and keep receipts of all your expenses so that you're ready for your annual tax return. It also helps to have a well organised invoicing system. You'll then input how much you earned from your full-time employment as well as your income and outgoings from your photography business, it will then calculate how much income tax and National Insurance contributions you need to make. You may even get money sent back to you if you've paid too much.

Working part-time, it's unlikely that you'll hit the £85,000 (taxable turnover) threshold at which your business would need to become VAT registered, though it's worth keeping in mind if you were to take your business full-time. If you're in any doubt, it's always worth paying for an accountant for professional advice: a good accountant will pay for themselves by finding savings across your business.



© Mirodrag Ignjatovic via Getty Images





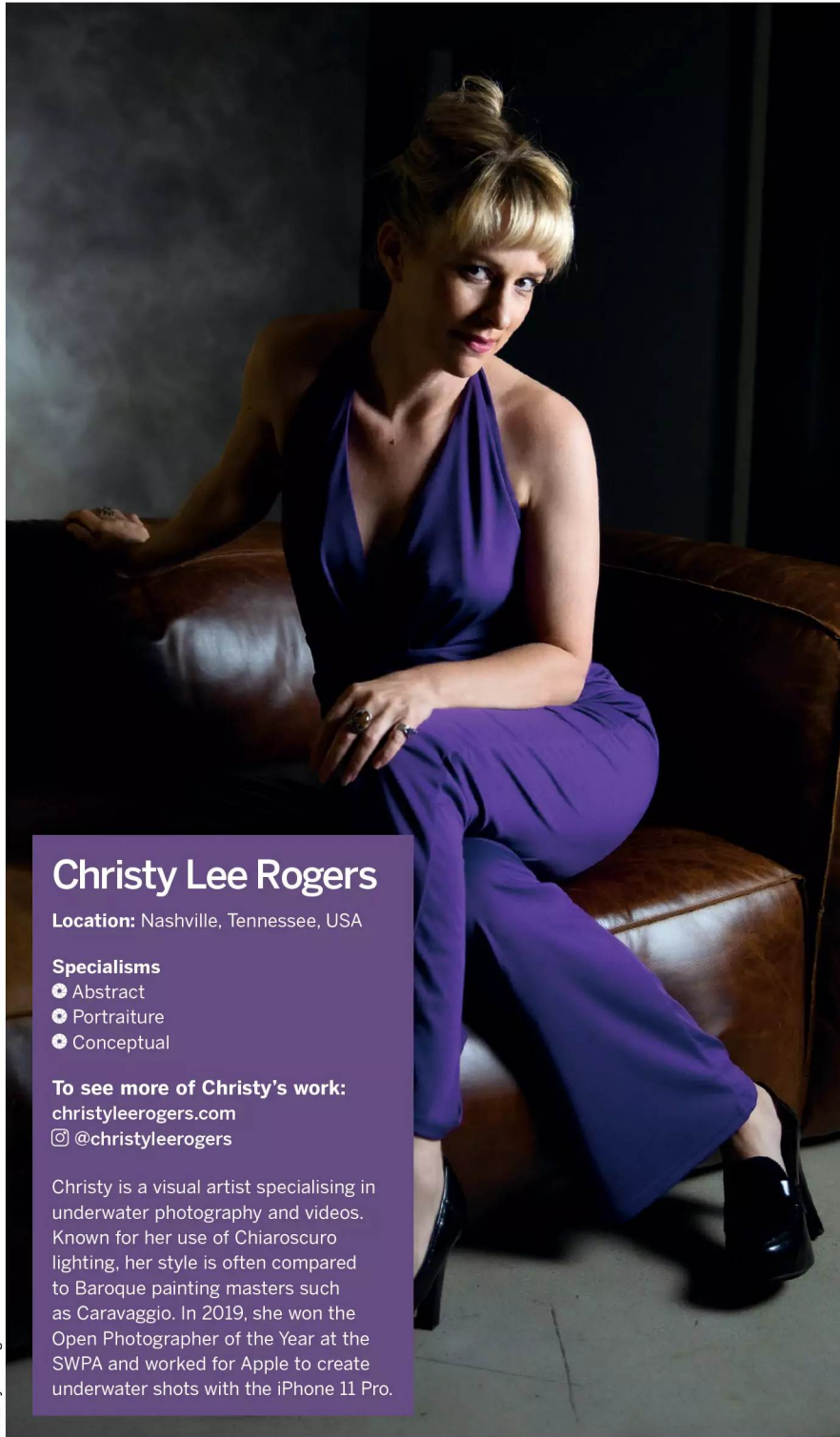
### **Conflicting schedules**

One of the biggest drawbacks you'll face from a photography side-hustle is that you'll be limited to doing shoots in your free time. If you work a regular nine-to-five job, that will usually mean just evenings and weekends, which can be frustrating. If a photography job pops up that doesn't fall in your usual spare time, you might occasionally need to use up some of your annual leave. You'll also have your family commitments to consider, such as caring for children or pets, which can sometimes be a balancing act. Your best bet is to be upfront and let your clients know what days you are and aren't free so that you're not forced to make such a decision.



# Photo CV

We profile an expert photographer's career journey for insight on becoming established in the industry



## Christy Lee Rogers

**Location:** Nashville, Tennessee, USA

### Specialisms

- Abstract
- Portraiture
- Conceptual

### To see more of Christy's work:

[christyleerogers.com](http://christyleerogers.com)

📷 @christyleerogers

Christy is a visual artist specialising in underwater photography and videos. Known for her use of Chiaroscuro lighting, her style is often compared to Baroque painting masters such as Caravaggio. In 2019, she won the Open Photographer of the Year at the SWPA and worked for Apple to create underwater shots with the iPhone 11 Pro.

© Christy Lee Rogers x5



### Renaissance beauty

Rogers' images make use of the popular Chiaroscuro style of lighting and resemble master oil paintings



### The deep end

Working underwater presents unique practical and technical challenges, including lighting and exposure





*Left*  
**Inspirations**  
Christy takes cues from Baroque paintings but adds a modern, cinematic twist

*Below*  
**Complex simplicity**  
When Christy began experimenting with water, she had limited resources but was fascinated by its effect



## Christy's photo kit

The essential gear she couldn't do without for her everyday work



**FUJIFILM GFX 100**  
"I love the quality of the images I take with my Fuji. They could be blown up to billboard size, no problem," says Christy of her 102MP medium-format camera



**CANON EOS 5D MARK III**  
Christy's second body is this popular DSLR. "This is my 'everything' camera. It somehow captures the colours and softness that I love best," she says



**CANON EF 24-70MM F/2.8L II USM**  
"I love the versatility of this lens. It allows me to get all those wide-angle shots in super-low lighting"



**GOODSMANN RECHARGEABLE SPOTLIGHT**  
Christy uses this to overcome exposure challenges underwater. "This 4,500-lumen waterproof flashlight has been a great tool for adding dimension to my images with light"

## Career Path

### When did you start out in your current photographic genres?

When I started to use water as a creative tool, I had no idea what this feeling was or the power and allure that it had over me. That was in Los Angeles in around 2003, and from there, I continued to experiment with different lighting, movements and techniques.

Everything was done by eye, I had no light meters, no proper lights and I was looking for something that was not quite there yet. But as soon as I saw the magic that the water expressed, I was in love and never stopped.

### What challenges did you face as a startup and how did you overcome them?

The biggest challenge was working through some of my own anxieties about trying to create something more magical than what was humanly possible on a limited budget. Being a starving artist was actually freeing.

There were no outside expectations and no massive workloads, except for those that I placed on myself. These things were overcome by persistence and incredible amounts of experimentation and hard work. I had to make some mistakes along the way to get to where I am today, and I'm so grateful for that path.

### What key skills are needed for your line of work?

I would say that ideas are the most important, and being able to disconnect from the outside world for a while to let them surface and take physical form. It's as though the building of these visions are being pulled from a place that I don't have full access to. I feel creative pain until it all really comes together into this big beautiful clarity and purpose. Communication is everything; along with patience, a nurturing ability, technical know-how and being able to let go.

### Which social platforms are you on, which are your favourites and how do you use each for your business?

I feel like I'm on all of the social media platforms, although I don't really have the time to keep up with all of their intricacies. My favourite one is Instagram because I feel like it's just a great way to reach out into the world with my images. I don't necessarily use them for business, although I have sold works because of them.

### What are your future plans for the business? Are there any other genres you'd like to try or expand into?

Yes, I have a few big projects that I'm going to release soon, as well as notebooks full of new ideas that I need to find time for. I'm eager to work with the Save the Children charity on a new project and to do some test shoots with a new camera in the ocean.



# Career advice

This month, **Claire Gillo** shares her tips on working part time and what to charge for travel expenses

## Working two jobs

I've always wanted to become a photographer, however, I simply don't have the luxury, as my current full-time job pays the bills. I also feel particularly anxious at the thought of being self-employed. What would your advice be?  
**Lorna Jones**

Unless you have financial security, it is hard to make the jump. Being self-employed and running your own company isn't for everyone, as there are many difficult aspects to it.

Don't feel bad that you can't or don't want to be self-employed – there's no point in leaving a steady income if your mental health is going to suffer or there's a

danger you'll be homeless if you can't pay the bills! Many photographers work multiple jobs or have multiple revenue streams coming into their business – see our interview with Chantal Macleod-Holdsworth, who runs two businesses side by side.

If photography is something you've always wanted to do, you will get there in the end but, if you want to succeed, you have to make some space for it. Is there a way you could drop your hours by one day a week to free up some time for your photography? Have you looked at the market to see if there are any employment opportunities in the photography profession? Going self-employed is only one way into the industry.



Going self-employed isn't for everyone, especially if you aren't financially secure, however, there are other ways to get into the photography industry

## Charging for travel

I've never charged for travel in the past as most of the jobs I've been doing have been close to home. However, in the last few months, I've had a few bookings further afield so I'm wondering what rates other photographers charge?  
**Peter, Brighton**

In business, there are many hidden costs and travel is one of those, so it's good to get your policy in order. First, you need to take into account your fuel costs and then your time. Most big companies will compensate mileage claims at 45p per mile. This is also, as I'm sure you're aware, the amount you can claim against your taxes. So 45p per mile is a good place to start. You also need to take into account

your time. For example, if you travel 100 miles and it takes you an hour each way, that's two hours of your time plus 100 miles at 45p. Calculate what two hours of your work time costs you, what 100 miles at 45p is and then balance it out. You don't want to put your client off by charging a fortune for travel but, equally, don't undervalue yourself as you need to be making a profit.



Be sure to charge for your travel costs so you don't miss out financially

## Studio lights on a budget

I want to set up a studio as I'm keen to shoot product shots. I only have a limited budget, so what studio lights would you recommend?  
**Lacey Bain**

The first that springs to mind is the Godox AD200 Pro 200Ws 2.4G Flash Strobe. This light is relatively lightweight so it's easy to move about and has a maximum power output of 200W, which is fine for product photography.

If you're after something more powerful, the PixaPro LUMI 400 II 400Ws studio flash light is a great option and costs only

£155 per light. You can also buy kits from PixaPro that come with lights and accessories and have been designed with the budget studio photographer in mind.

Finally, the Newer S101-400W PRO Studio Monolight Strobe Flash has also been made for those on a budget, and you can pick up this model for £142. Good luck with your venture!



If you are just starting to kit out your studio, there are plenty of lighting options that need not cost a fortune





These images are taken from Chantal Macleod-Holdsworth's photography business, which combines her love of animals with her love of photography

# How to run two businesses

## Chantal Macleod-Holdsworth on balancing photography and dog-walking



### Tell me about yourself and how you got to where you are today...

I was born and raised in Germany but moved to Scotland in July 2005, when I was 23. For the first eight years, I worked in hotels, but my health kept declining due to an autoimmune illness. I couldn't handle the hours and stress of hospitality anymore, and I was really unwell. I left the hotel scene in around 2012, and a friend offered me a part-time job in her grooming salon. It wasn't really for me but it just reminded me how much I love dogs and with that, Chantal's Walkabout, my wee dog-walking business was born. At the same time, I took in my dog Jack, who I credit for the person I am today, and his sister, Kalli, came along in 2013. Sadly we lost her in 2020. She was a rescue dog and taught me more than I could have imagined.

At the start, I just wanted better photos of the dogs, so I dragged the Nikon D60 my dad had gifted me a couple of years before out of the cupboard and a new obsession was born. I used my own dogs as well as my dog-walking clients as practice, and Jack and I especially have a close bond because of it but I never thought it would go any further than that. In 2014, I started taking on paying clients and the rest, as they say, is history. Now I enjoy photographing dogs, horses and sometimes even families!

### How do you split your time between your photography and your dog-walking business?

The dog-walking business sort of runs itself now. I'm a solo dog walker, which means, for the most part, I only take one owner's dog (or dogs) at a time. I've been going with that for 11 years and spaces are few and far between. Changes don't happen often, and I don't have to advertise and all that jazz, which makes it easier to allocate more time to my photography business, CMH Photo.

### Would you like to go full-time with your photography business or are you happy with your setup as it is?

The photography business is where I have loads of room to grow, but I'm doing it at my own pace. It's so much more work intensive with behind-the-scenes stuff, editing, the



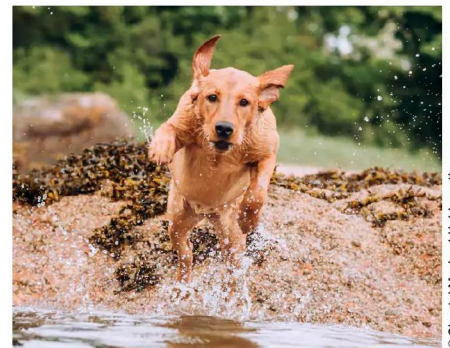
website and social media, so I am mostly keeping to one or two shoots per week. In the long run, I hope to phase out the dog walking slowly and eventually just do the photography.

### Do you ever find it overwhelming running two businesses?

Loads of people ask whether being self-employed is stressful and, sure, it has its moments! But it's my stress and I can take on as much or as little work as I like.

### What advice would you give to anyone else wanting to work as a part-time photographer alongside their other work?

The best tip I can give anyone who is considering being a part-time photographer is to just go for it! Try not to overstretch yourself though, and don't compare your progress to anyone else.



© Chantal Macleod-Holdsworth

To find out more about Chantal go to [cmhphoto.co.uk](http://cmhphoto.co.uk) and follow her on Instagram @cmhdogtog and on FB @CMacleodHoldsworth



# WHY SHOTS WORK

**Name:** Scarlet Elegance

**Date:** January 2018

**Kit:**

- Nikon D850
- Nikkor 200mm F2G ED VR II
- Focal length: 200mm

**Instagram:** @the\_roktographer



"Through my portraits, I delve into human emotions, capturing untold stories and revealing their raw essence. At concerts, the fusion of music and energy fuels my lens, enabling me to encapsulate the passion of the performers and their adoring audience."

## Christian Mayberry



Based in Orlando, FL, Christian Mayberry is a professional music and portrait photographer who has become renowned

for his evocative images.

With over 15 years of experience, Christian has established himself as a versatile photographer and his portfolio spans a wide range of genres, including fashion, portrait, commercial and concert photography. His work is characterised by his creativity, attention to detail and an ability to capture the essence of his subjects.





### **Foreground interest**

For this image, Christian planned a strong visual strategy that included foreground elements in the image composition. "After exploring the surroundings, I found the perfect vantage point through the leaves. This creates a frame that invites the viewer to peek into a timeless moment," he says. Christian worked with a maximum aperture of f/2 so he could shoot through the leaves and blend the blurred shapes into the shot, adding some colour and interest without dominating the main subject of the image. "With my assistant skilfully managing the light to the right, there was a harmonious collaboration. This resulted in the creation of a captivating image that weaved a narrative," he explains.

### **Splash of colour**

By choosing this colour and style of clothing, Christian aimed to show the natural environment in a different context. "The choice of dress colour ultimately depends on the mood and the aesthetics you want from the photo shoot but, here, it fits perfectly," he says. The red dress stands out against the green background and draws the viewer's attention towards the subject. "A red dress can add vibrancy and visual appeal to photoshoots," Christian says. "The colour red often conveys emotions such as passion and energy, making it a popular choice for creating striking and memorable images."



### **Telling a story**

For this shoot, Christian had a clear vision in mind, "I wanted to evoke the enchanting essence of a storybook, akin to a princess anticipating the arrival of her prince." To achieve this, it was essential to create a narrative layer in this frame, so the location, styling, composition and lighting were all key factors in building a fairytale atmosphere. "The scene unfolds like a clandestine glimpse through distant trees, capturing a suspended moment where time is standing still – a spellbinding preview into a world where someone is about to be whisked away to faraway lands."

### **Skilful posing**

Capturing the perfect shot of a model requires more than just photography skills. It's about creating a comfortable and welcoming environment that allows the subject's energy to shine through. "You have to forge a warm and professional connection with the model by initiating casual conversation before the shoot," Christian explains. "You also have to display some authentic curiosity in their concepts and preferences, providing positive reinforcement throughout the session to instil confidence," he adds. "Cultivating a relaxed and collaborative ambience not only helps ease the model but also coaxes their innate expressions out, resulting in a more authentic and compelling photo session."



# WHAT IS REALITY?

Dutch artist **Nancy Poeran** uses AI to create images that explore our perception of reality

**Words by: Kim Bunermann**  
All images © Nancy Poeran

**T**he medium of photography is about capturing reality and depicting it in the form of an image. But when we come across a photo where familiar elements such as shape, colour and texture differ from the characteristics we experience in our own reality, how do we process that information? Imagery that differs from our reality presents the opportunity to challenge our brains and learn about ourselves.

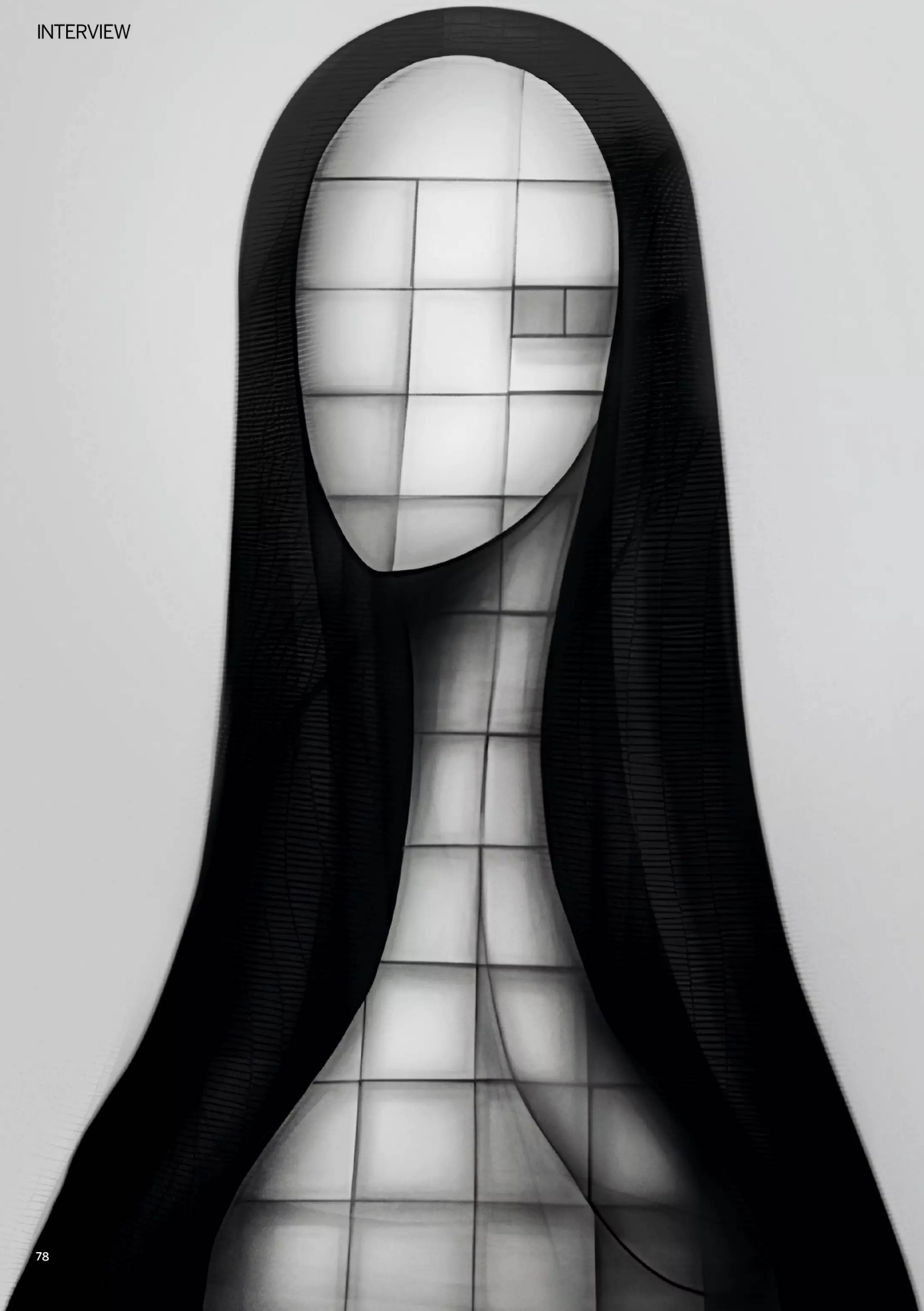
The human brain recognises an image in mere milliseconds, classifies it and attributes different characteristics to it. That is why everyone inevitably ends up with different interpretations and emotions. After all, one beautiful aspect of visual art can be that everyone connects it with their own impressions – we all live in the same reality, but our perception of it varies. This variation occurs in our minds and leads some to assign meaning to things that may not exist. So this leads to the question: What is reality?

**Right Diversity**  
"How is it possible to come up with a definition for something – sometimes in just a matter of seconds?"

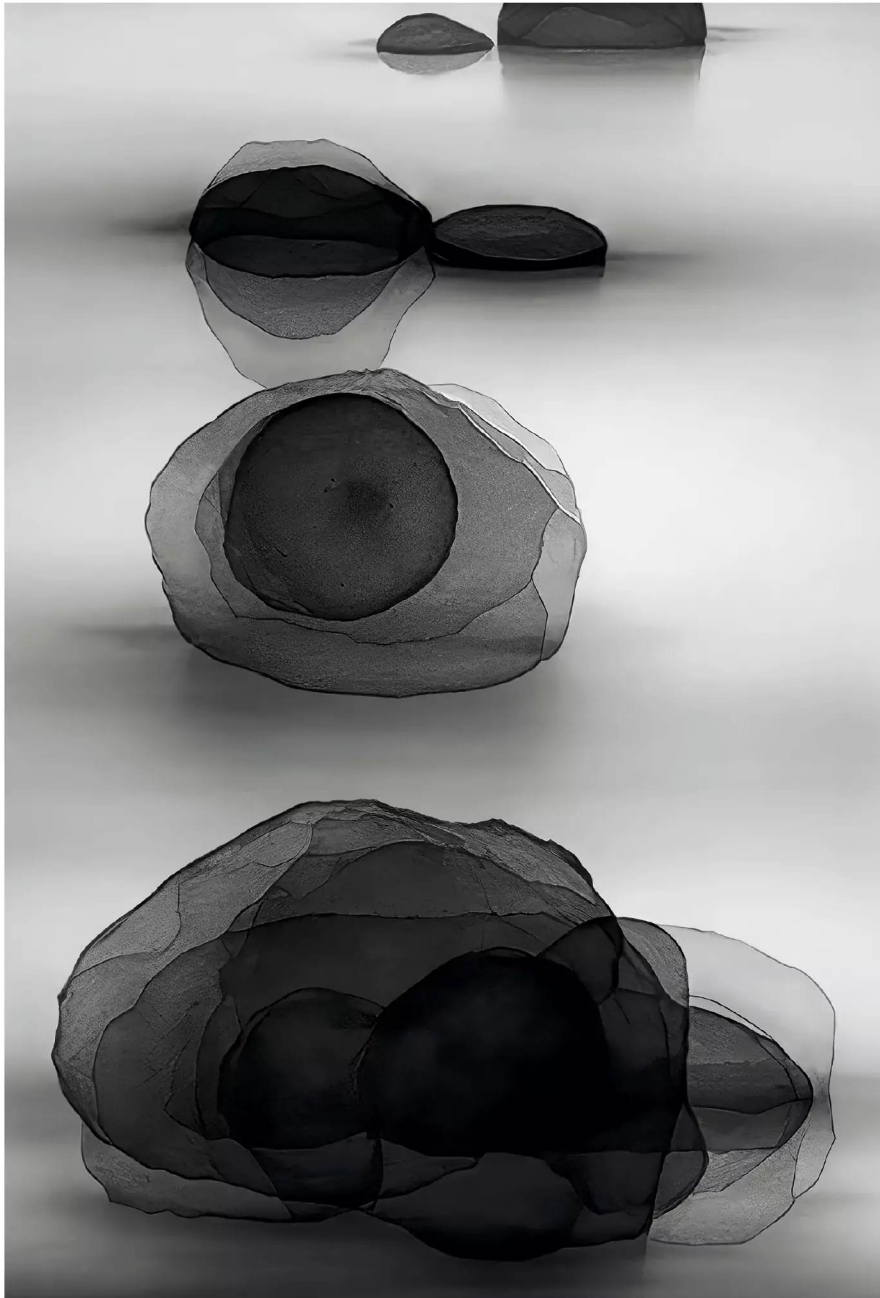












*Far left*

**Complexity**

Nancy's work combines the multifaceted and heterogeneous nature of the world with the human psyche

*Left*

**Visual variety**

In her work, Nancy combines opposing elements such as sharpness and blur, light and dark, and organic and geometric shapes

## Nancy Poeran



After studying for her Masters degree, Nancy Poeran worked for 20 years in various management positions. In 2020, she changed her career path and decided to pursue her true passion of photography. In 2021, her series 'Any Body' was nominated for the Rabo Portrait Prize Talent Award. In 2022 and 2023, she showcased her series 'Women Past and Present' at Nyenrode University in Breukelen and Amsterdam. In December 2023, Nancy graduated from The Photo Academy in Amsterdam.

[nancy-poeran.nl](http://nancy-poeran.nl)  
[@nancy.poeran.nl](https://www.instagram.com/nancy.poeran.nl)

Dutch artist Nancy Poeran raises this question in her work. She combines a variety of art forms, including photography, sketches and other techniques, augmented by a tool that has proved controversial in photography – Artificial Intelligence (AI). Nancy's work focuses on subjectivity so, when she engages in a dialogue with AI, her goal is not to generate purely artificial images but to enhance aspects of reality.

Nancy's work demonstrates how a machine, programmed by humans but unable to exist or operate like us, can effectively augment our perception of reality.

**You use a variety of techniques to bring your visions to life, so what significance does photography have here?**

In every technique I use, I think as a photographer. On the one hand, I decide which settings to use. I determine the input, composition, light, setting and the pose. And like photography, it is all about capturing the decisive moment. Making the judgment call as to when all the ingredients are the optimal blend and will result in an image that perfectly portrays what I have envisaged.

The remarkable thing is now that nearly everything can be created through AI, I am

abstracting and isolating my subjects to get back to the essence of an image.

**Many photographers believe that AI will negatively impact the industry, but how important is it for your work?**

I think the introduction of AI is comparable to the introduction of photography compared with painting, and in turn, digital photography compared with analogue photography. There is a lot of fear around the artistic value and the perceived ease of use. Of course, in theory, anyone can start with AI, but it requires a new set of skills and a different way of



*Right*  
**Light and shadow**  
Nancy's series, called 'We Are All Made of Light and Shadow', is based on two images: a self-made sketch of a female silhouette and an abstract clay image

thinking to achieve a good quality image with my signature. AI is constantly developing, requiring the user to grow and stretch oneself.

For me, AI offers me new artistic possibilities, stimulates my creativity and therefore broadens my conceptual framework. It has also encouraged me to work with other techniques, such as video and sculpture.

**How does your creative process look from conception to realisation?**

The figures I create through AI are inspired by my own emotions or people in my surroundings that I observe and try to understand. I always start the working process with an image of my own. This can vary from a sketch, a photo or even a certain texture. Subsequently, I enter into a dialogue with AI. I never accept the output outright. I always keep adapting it to create the image I want to portray, using elements such as ambiguity, sensuality and the emotions that I want to convey. I love every minute of this quest.

**Can you give more insight into the visual strategies you employ to explore the relationship between inner perceptions and external reality?**

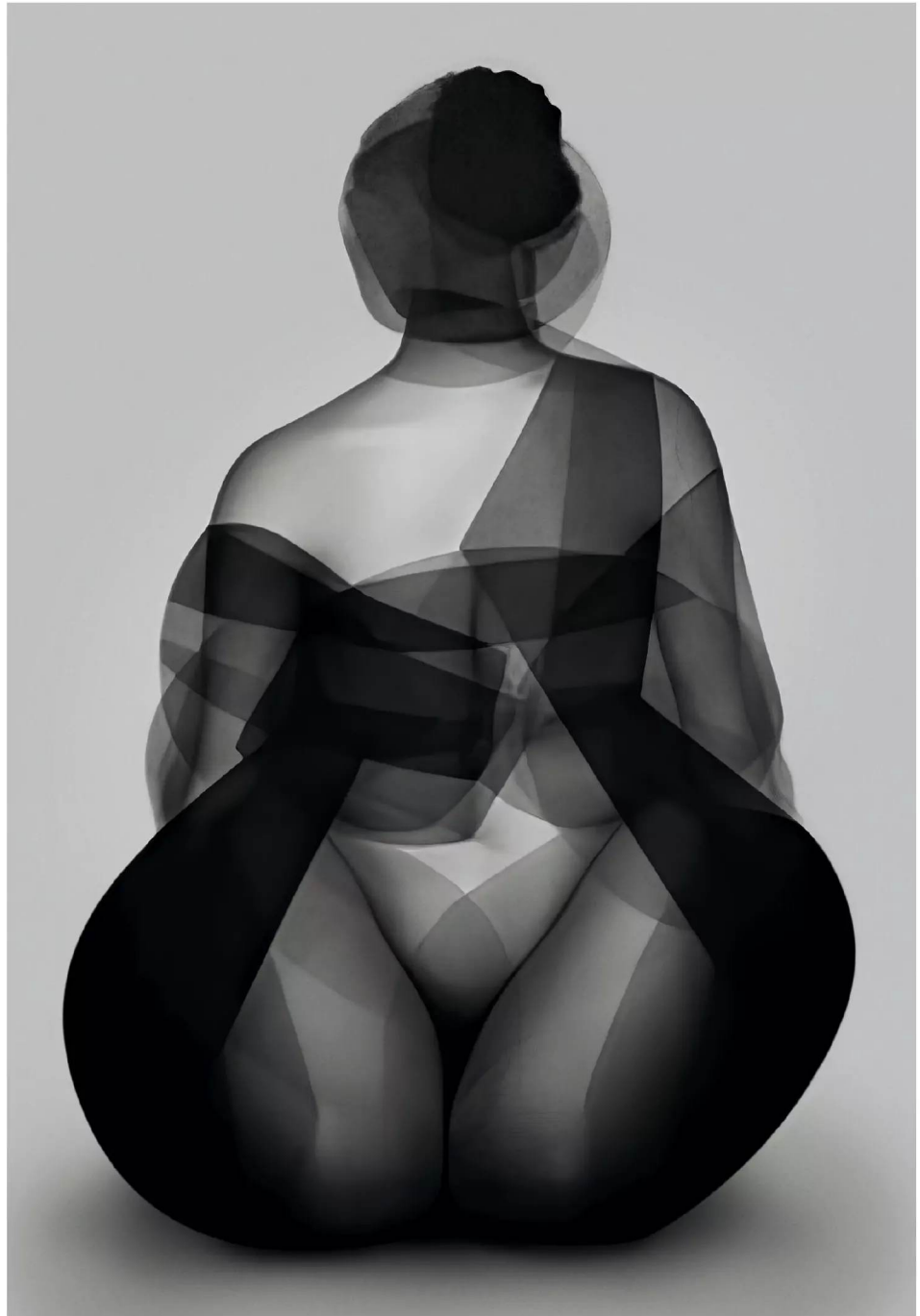
In the series 'We Are All Made of Light and Shadow', I use contrasts in an interplay – black and white, lines and organic shapes – to create figures that I abstract and deform. And despite the same ingredients, we interpret each individual image differently. We can observe various human shapes with different expressions of emotion. This is a process that takes place in our minds. We give meaning to something that might not even exist.

**You embrace the idea that reality is subjective and that there are multiple layers of truth. Could you expand on this concept?**

I have always been interested in human psychology and identity. When we look at the other person, we have an opinion based on our own frame of reference. It all depends on what we want to see and also on what the other person wants to reveal. But essentially, we are all made out of the same elements. Perhaps this is what we need to be more open to, the idea that there is not only one reality.

**Why is art history, particularly cubism, a source of inspiration for your work?**

What I find interesting about cubism is that it is about a different way of seeing



“Historically, all art movements face scepticism and, with the rise of AI, we are entering a new era. There’s a misconception that the use of AI is less creative, but this group does not want to explore the deeper meaning of the art”



## WHAT IS REALITY?

*Pictured*  
**Reality does not exist**  
"Everything is subjective,"  
says Nancy. "To me, this  
is the start of something  
new. A beginning"



## INTERVIEW

*Pictured*

### **Entering a dialogue**

When Nancy starts work, she has a clear idea in her mind before the collaboration with AI can begin



*Right*  
**Blending in**

Nancy combines photography, artificial intelligence, sketching, and other techniques to create her images

*Bottom*  
**What do you see?**

This image, composed entirely of lines, conveys an abstract narrative that requires the viewer to interpret for themselves

things. This raises the question, can I trust my observations? I find elements such as the simplification of shapes and confusing perspectives intriguing. With everything happening in the world today, we need to be constantly alert to what we observe. Not through suspicion, but from realising that there is room for different perspectives and contrasts that can enrich each other.

**You refer to yourself as an AI Explorer. What is the most impactful aspect that you've discovered so far for your art?**

AI is a tool for me to realise my ideas and it brings me new possibilities and perspectives. It can sometimes be frustrating because I don't have 100 percent control. Working with AI is like being on holiday exploring a new city and walking into an unknown alleyway. Sometimes, this results in the most wonderful experience and, at other times, you might end up lost. But in the end, you always have to take control of your own journey.

**Do you find that you have experienced a lack of recognition for your photographic work due to the involvement of AI?**

Over the past year, I have been in contact with many people, ranging from art collectors, curators, art critics, scholars and fellow artists. One thing I have noticed is that, with the rise of AI, we are entering a new era. Historically, all art movements and developments within technology first face scepticism and then the friction arrives. That is a natural phenomenon.

There's a misconception amongst some audiences, who think that the use of AI is an easy route and less creative. This group rejects it straight away and does not want to explore the deeper meaning of the art and its creation. There is also a group that is more neutral and open-minded, however, they prefer the medium of photography as the only way to capture the soul of a person. Then there is a group that finds it interesting and intriguing.

It is an interesting journey. I think what it comes down to is that I do not pretend that my images are real life, I ask the question 'What is reality'? And is a portrait taken with a camera 'reality' and a good representation of the person? In the end, I want to present



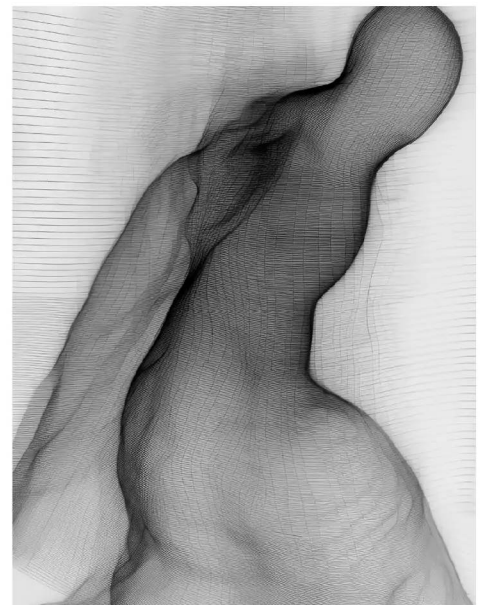
my vision. For me, the medium does not matter. I would like my art to be appreciated because of its conceptual meaning and visual representation. Art needs to be stimulating and it needs to be slightly disturbing. I hope to be able to contribute to this.

**Why don't you name your artworks or give them titles?**

If I gave each image a title, I would label them for one certain thing. And that is exactly what I want to prevent – it would be a contradiction to the conceptual thought of the series. Each viewer has his or her own version of it, so the title has to be given by them.

**Have you found the answers to any of the questions raised in your work?**

The answer is that reality does not exist, or at least, there is no single version of the truth. What has helped me in this process is the acceptance that everything can coexist side by side as long as we stay inquisitive.





THE GALLERY

# The Gallery

The Northern Photography Prize 2023





## The Northern Photography Prize 2023

Now in its third year, The Northern Photography Prize encourages budding and established amateur photographers to capture the spirit and heart of the north-east of England through its people and places. Founded and sponsored by international best-selling author LJ Ross through her publishing imprint, Dark Skies Publishing, the two winners each collected a £1,000 cash prize. In addition, the 16 photographers who made the prize's shortlist this year had their images showcased at a special free-to-enter exhibition held at The Biscuit Factory in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.



**NORTHERN  
PHOTOGRAPHY  
PRIZE**

*Pictured*  
**Counting Sheep**

Taken in Harehope Burn in the Weardale Valley, Alan Rees captured this early morning image of some inquisitive sheep







*Above*  
**The Heart of Teesside**

Andrew McCardle captured this fiery image of industrial Teesside, with the Redcar steelworks as his subject

*Right*  
**Any Port in a Storm**

Scott Wynne captures the sea hitting the breakwater at Roker, Sunderland, during Storm Arwen in 2021



© Scott Wynne





© Andrew McCardle

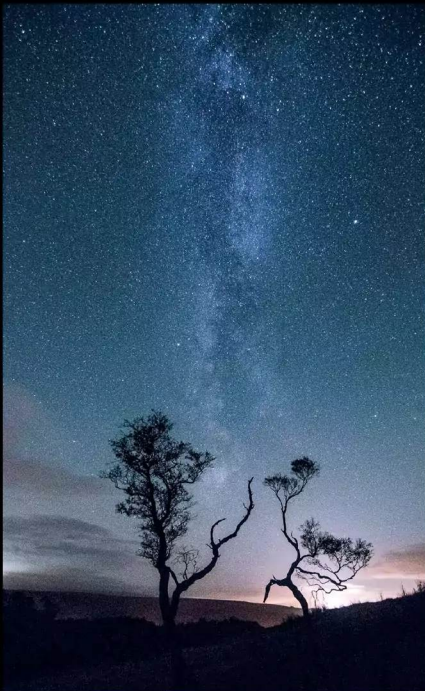


*Left*  
**Sea Fret at Saltburn**  
The sun pierces through the fog as it rolls in on one warm summer's evening in Saltburn, North Yorkshire

*Below left*  
**Dancing Trees**  
Julie Smith made the most of the dark skies of Northumberland for this winning shot in the Landscape category

*Below*  
**The Shopkeeper**  
Nicola Robley captured this timeless scene in a period shop at the Beamish Museum in County Durham

© Jonathan Baillie



© Dr. Julie Smith



© Nicola Robley





*Above*  
**Hadrian's  
Wall Sunrise**

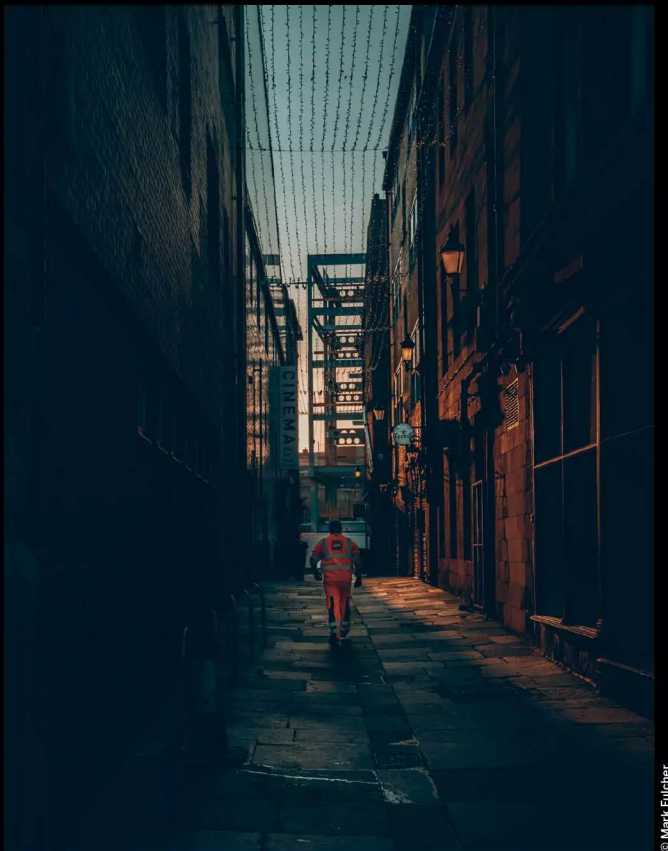
Richard Turnbull arrived at Hadrian's Wall in darkness to capture this misty sunrise shot

*Right*  
**Start of the Week**

Mark Fulcher won the People & Portrait Award with this shot of early morning life in Newcastle city centre

*Right, centre*  
**Dan, as Peter Pan**

Jane Curtis is a regular swimmer in the waters of the North Sea and she captured this action shot at Cullercoats



© Mark Fulcher



© Richard Turnbull



© Michael Wake

**Left  
Fire and Ice**

Michael Wake's shot combines light snow and a perfect sunset behind the Penshaw Monument, County Durham

**Below  
Fog on the Tyne**

Mist rolls in from the North Sea, obscuring the lighthouse at Tynemouth



© Rachel Riley



© Jane Curtis



© Sasha Blythe

**Above  
Waiting for a Break**

A surfer ponders his options on the beach at South Shields in Sasha Blythe's monochrome study



© Brendan Lewis

**Left  
Not a Crossed Word**

Brendan Lewis from Middlesbrough was drawn to the contrast in lighting when shooting this cafe scene



YOUR IMAGES



**WIN! SAMSUNG  
256GB PRO PLUS  
MICRO SDXC MEMORY  
CARD WITH SD ADAPTER**

Every issue, one *Digital Photographer* reader wins a Samsung 256GB PRO Plus MicroSDXC memory card with SD adapter.

Boasting up to 160MB/s and 120MB/s read/write speeds, the card is perfect for high-res stills and Ultra HD video. It is the go-to card for the modern content creator using mirrorless, smartphone, action cam and drone cameras. Find out more at [samsung.com/uk/memory-storage](https://samsung.com/uk/memory-storage)





# SHOT OF THE MONTH



**Photographer:** James Allen  
**Title:** Minimalistic Slow Exposure  
**Location:** Corton Sands, Suffolk, UK  
**@jamesthephotographeratsnapz**

**About the shot:** "This stretch of coastline in Suffolk offers a variety of interesting objects, such as battered and well-worn sea defences that stick up out of the water when the tides are low, and these can make for some truly unique compositions. I set up my Nikon D850 with a 16-35mm F4 VR lens for the slow exposure shot – I wanted to get that smooth and shiny look on the water with the reflections and highlights from the sea defences and bring out the sky and clouds. I exposed the scene for about four minutes and worked with a 3-stop Soft Grad ND filter and a 10-stop ND from K&F Concept. I started photography around 13 years ago as a wildlife photographer and have since developed a passion for shooting photos of barn owls. Wildlife is unpredictable, so I wanted to discover another aspect of photography. Landscape photography combined with long-exposure techniques gives me the enthusiasm to go out there, capture images and share them with the world."



**Tag us @dphotographermag  
for a chance to feature here**

Every issue, we'll be sharing the best images from our Instagram community. Tag us on @dphotographermag





# THE BEST OF **AUTUMN ATMOSPHERE**

The winners of our latest contest with Photocrowd have been revealed

**F**or our latest competition in association with Photocrowd, we challenged you to submit your best Autumn Atmosphere images. After working through all the entries, the winners have been selected. As a prize, the expert winners will get a licence for Affinity Photo professional editing software. Congratulations to all of the winners – the standard of submitted images was extremely high, and it was a difficult task to select the best ones.

## **1<sup>ST</sup> PLACE WINNER**

### **Beauty in the woods**

**Photographer** Jaz72

What an absolutely gorgeous image! We like the creativity in this image – it's an interesting take on the brief, managing to blend landscape and macro photography into an unusual perspective. The colours are seasonal, but there is more to the shot than autumnal hues. A well-thought-out and executed shot!

## **WIN! Prizes from Affinity**

Enter our Dark Nights contest before 3rd January 2024 for a chance to win Affinity Photo

The days are short at this time of year, so look to capture the drama of low light. Use high contrast to your advantage for portraits, cityscapes and even astro. Enter at [photocrowd.com/digitalphotographer](https://photocrowd.com/digitalphotographer) from 7th December for a chance to win a licence to Affinity Photo editing software (worth £49 for Mac or Windows). Affinity Photo is a toolset for photography professionals.

Whether you're editing and retouching or creating multi-layered compositions, Affinity Photo has the power you need, with non-destructive editing, RAW processing and colour management as standard. Winners will be notified by email and can choose between Mac, Windows or iPad versions. Winning images will be revealed in issue 276 of *Digital Photographer*, on sale 16th February.







## 2<sup>ND</sup> PLACE

### Untitled

**Photographer** Robert Juvet

Any image that pushes boundaries is going to attract the judge's attention and in this image, taken from a less-than-ordinary point of view, the photographer has combined an engaging composition with the excellently balanced autumn colours. Despite the elevated perspective, there is enough depth to lead us into the shot too. Well done.

## 3<sup>RD</sup> PLACE

### Early Morning in Siusi

**Photographer** Madison

This is a wonderfully tranquil shot that has just enough colour to allow the viewer to identify the season without the frame becoming overloaded. The sweeping hills offer something for the eye to follow and the looming mountains provide a lovely compositional full stop. Everything is nicely placed and the shot feels perfectly balanced. A classic landscape that ticks all the boxes.







**4<sup>TH</sup> PLACE**  
**Autumn in New York City**

**Photographer** Ashley  
Autumn photography is often seen as a largely rural genre but it's important not to forget the potential of urban locations. This shot of Billionaire's Row in New York is a perfect mirror image composition and it manages to capture the atmosphere of the famous Fall season in NYC. The reflection is well placed and overall exposure is nicely managed.

**6<sup>TH</sup> PLACE**  
**Magical morning**

**Photographer** adrianstanica  
This shot is filled with autumnal atmosphere without overdoing it! The colours and atmospheric conditions give away the season but it feels as if the specific scene is the focus rather than just the bold tones. It is a restrained composition that really tells the story of autumn. Lovely light, great exposure and ideal framing. Very well done.

**8<sup>TH</sup> PLACE**  
***Amanita muscaria***

**Photographer** Jaz72  
We love to see images that are a little different from the usual and this shot fits the bill. Often, looking a little closer for detail can tell a much more impactful story and this macro shot really captures the atmosphere of the season. The colour, light and perspective all inspire the imagination and make us feel like going on a woodland walk in the autumnal atmosphere.





**96 Super-telephoto zooms**

When you need to get up close to the action, a telephoto zoom is often the ticket. We compare eight heavyweight contenders for the best super-tele zoom to see which offers the greatest value

# Kit intro

The expert and independent reviews of gear we've bagged this issue



**104 Sony A7CR**

Peter Fenech takes a close look to see if the extra resolution is enough to separate this camera from its A7C II stablemate – especially as it costs over £850/\$800 more

**108 Godox V1 flashgun**

Fully rounded in more ways than one, can this speedlight offer a genuine alternative to a studio strobe? Matthew Richards investigates

**110 Lenses**

Every month, we take two pro optics out into the field. Matthew Richards tests the Nikon Z 400mm f/2.8 TC VR S while Gareth Bevan tries the Canon RF-S 10-18mm f/4.5-6.3 IS STM

**112 Accessories**

It's the little things that can enhance your photography, so we've rounded up the best photo gadgets and gifts to add to your kitbag

**Our ratings**

Our team of trusted and expert reviewers score gear thoroughly to help you make better buying choices.

- Don't go there ★★★★★
- Could be better ★★★★★
- Solid performer ★★★★★
- Excellent bit of kit ★★★★★
- Best on the market ★★★★★

**Product awards**

Digital Photographer's awards are given out when a product really catches our attention. Here are our three most used accolades.



**Lab testing**

Some of our product reviews also have in-depth lab data, graphs and scores. This means that the kit has been subjected to more rigorous testing. Lens tests are carried out using Imatest, and cameras are tested in our laboratory using DxO Analyzer hardware and software to check the image noise and dynamic range.





Allowing you to punch right in on distant subjects like this hungry puffin, super-telephoto zooms are go-to lenses for capturing wildlife.

# Super-tele zoom lenses

When you need to get close to the action, for sport, wildlife or air shows, one of these best-buy super-telephoto zooms is ideal



There are many occasions when we can't get as close as we'd like. If you're shooting anything from small timid birds to planes at an air show, from athletes to motorsports or wildlife on safari, you'll need a lens that really covers the distance. A super-telephoto lens will get you there, and a zoom beats a prime for flexibility when your movements are limited.

That's especially true if you're confined to a hide for shooting wildlife,

or in a spectators' area at a sporting event. A super-telephoto zoom can also come in handy for shooting candid portraits at events, so you can be unobtrusive and pick people out from a distance, while also blurring the background with a fairly tight depth of field. They can even provide a creative alternative for landscape photography, giving a different look by compressing the perspective. All in all, it's an extremely versatile bit of kit.

*Matthew Richards*

## The contenders

1	Canon RF 100-400mm f5.6-8 IS USM	£669/\$649
2	Fujinon XF100-400mm F4.5-5.6 R LM OIS WR	£1,549/\$1,899
3	Nikkor Z 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6 VR S	£2,699/\$2,697
4	Panasonic Leica DG 100-400mm f/4-6.3	£1,149/\$1,598
5	Pentax FA 150-450mm f/4.5-5.6 ED DC AW HD	£1,979/\$1,897
6	Sigma 150-600mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM   S	£1,329/\$1,999
7	Sony FE 200-600mm F5.6-6.3 G OSS	£1,599/\$1,998
8	Tamron SP 150-600mm F/5-6.3 Di VC USD G2	£1,249/\$1,399









## Canon RF 100-400mm f/5.6-8 IS USM

£669/\$649

Compact and affordable RF zoom

Less than a quarter of the price of Canon's RF 100-500mm F4.5-7.1L IS USM zoom and much more compact, this is a tempting proposition. Typical of Canon's non-L-series lenses, the RF 100-400mm doesn't have any weather-seals but there are plenty of enticing features nonetheless.

Autofocus is driven by a Nano USM motor that is super-fast for stills and delivers smooth focus transitions. There's a 5.5-stop optical stabiliser, boosted to 6-stop effectiveness with R system cameras that feature IBIS, and an additional control ring. The glass includes one UD element and one precision-moulded aspherical element.

### Performance

Autofocus speed and stabilisation live up to their claims, while image quality is impressive. Sharpness is good across most of the frame throughout the zoom range, while colour fringing and pincushion distortion are minimal, even when uncorrected in-camera.

### Digital Photographer verdict

The RF 100-400mm is a real bargain buy for an own-brand Canon RF lens, packing good features and solid performance into a refreshingly compact and lightweight build.

#### Summary

Features	★★★★★
Build & handling	★★★★★
Performance	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★

**Overall** ★★★★★



## Fujinon XF100-400mm F4.5-5.6 R LM OIS WR

£1,549/\$1,899

X-mount cameras boost its reach

This is the only lens in the group that is designed exclusively for APS-C format cameras, on which it gives an 'effective' maximum focal length of just over 600mm. It has a linear motor AF system, optical image stabilisation and weather-resistant construction – pretty much everything on a Fujifilm X Series photographer's wish list.

Given that the lens only has to produce a small image circle, it's more lightweight. However, it is beautifully engineered with a high-precision feel and no hint of zoom creep. The optical path includes no less than five ED (Extra-low Dispersion) elements, plus a Super ED element.

### Performance

The autofocus system's dual linear stepping motors enable extremely fast performance and the five-stop stabiliser is effective, complete with automatic panning detection. Sharpness proves best in the short to mid-range sector of the zoom range.

### Digital Photographer verdict

This high-performance zoom delivers excellent performance in a tough, strong build and the APS-C format boosts the maximum telephoto reach of the lens.

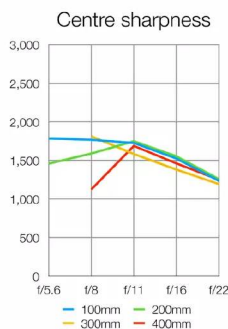
#### Summary

Features	★★★★★
Build & handling	★★★★★
Performance	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★

**Overall** ★★★★★

#### SHARPNESS

Sharpness drops off towards the corners of the image frame but it's mostly very good



#### FRINGING

Short 0.67 Long 1.66

Colour fringing can be noticeable towards the edges of the frame at 200-400mm

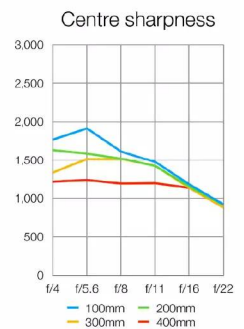
#### DISTORTION

Short 1.58 Long 1.45

Uncorrected pincushion distortion is quite slight and consistent throughout

#### SHARPNESS

Sharpness is best at the short end of the zoom range, but drops off near the long end



#### FRINGING

Short 0.24 Long 0.41

Colour fringing is practically impossible to spot at any zoom position

#### DISTORTION

Short -0.01 Long 0.07

It's a non-issue, with the lens delivering essentially distortion-free images





## Nikor

### Z 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6 VR S

£2,699/\$2,697

Nikon's first super-tele Z zoom

The Z 100-400mm features high-tech attractions and plenty of handling exotica. The autofocus system is driven by two linear stepping motors. Unlike the other lenses, this gives smooth autofocus transitions.

The VR system is equally impressive, based on voice coil motors that deliver 5.5-stop effectiveness. There's no holding back in optical quality either, with no less than six ED elements, two Super-ED elements and both ARNEO and Nano Crystal coatings, plus a fluorine coating on the front. There's a multi-function OLED display, one primary L-fn (Lens-function) button and four secondary L-fn2 buttons.

#### Performance

Autofocus speed and accuracy coupled with the effectiveness of VR guarantee an excellent hit rate, even when shooting tricky subjects such as birds. Sharpness itself is impressively consistent from the centre of the frame to the extreme edges and corners.

#### Digital Photographer verdict

The lab test results don't look too special, and it's quite pricey, but in real-world shooting tests, everything comes together to deliver superb handling and performance.

#### Summary

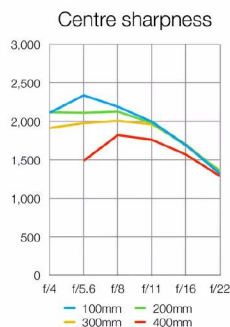
Features	★★★★★
Build & handling	★★★★★
Performance	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★

Overall



#### SHARPNESS

There's a drop-off at 400mm in our lab tests, but real-world results proved impressive



#### FRINGING

Short **0.24** Long **0.41**

Colour fringing is negligible at the short end and still minimal at medium to long settings

#### DISTORTION

Short **-0.01** Long **0.07**

There's pincushion distortion at mid to long zoom, but auto correction is available



## Panasonic

### Leica DG 100-400mm f/4-6.3

£1,149/\$1,598

Telephoto super-powers for MFT

Like the Fujifilm 100-400mm lens, this is designed for crop-sensor cameras, but this time of the Micro Four Thirds variety. As such, the size of the image sensor enables a more lightweight construction and a 2x focal length multiplier that boosts the effective zoom range to 200-800mm.

The Panasonic Leica DG Vario-Elmar 100-400mm f/4-6.3 Asph. Power O.I.S., to give this lens its full title, boasts the backing of Leica, aspherical elements and optical image stabilisation, which can work with the in-body stabilisers of various MFTs. The optical path includes two ED elements, one aspherical ED element and one Ultra ED element. A locking ring lets you lock the zoom ring at any position.

#### Performance

Autofocus is fast and accurate and the image stabilisation works well, although it lacks a switchable panning mode. The optical performance is highly impressive all-round.

#### Digital Photographer verdict

The Panasonic is well-balanced on MFT bodies and enables prolonged periods of handheld shooting. Performance and image quality are strong in all respects.

#### Summary

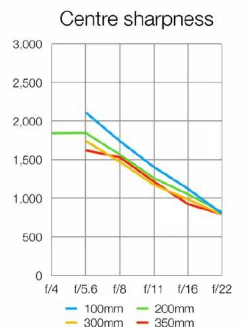
Features	★★★★★
Build & handling	★★★★★
Performance	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★

Overall



#### SHARPNESS

Sharpness tends to be most impressive when shooting wide-open



#### FRINGING

Short **0.79** Long **1.01**

There's virtually no lateral chromatic aberration, even in extreme corners of the frame

#### DISTORTION

Short **0** Long **0.08**

Helped by firmware, it is an essentially distortion-free lens throughout the zoom range





# Pentax

## FA 150-450mm f/4.5-5.6 ED DC AW HD

£1,979/\$1,897

A powerful Pentax super-tele

Pentax designed this full-frame compatible lens when they only made APS-C format DSLRs. The decision has come good with the launch of Pentax's full-frame DSLRs.

There are both auto and manual priority 'Quick Shift' modes, plus an AF preset facility and four customisable buttons. These can act as AF-on or AF-hold buttons, or select a previously stored focus distance.

Other attractions include a weather-sealed construction, HD coatings and a 'super protect' coating on the front element. One SLD (Super Low Dispersion) element is fitted, along with three ED elements.

### Performance

Based on a built-in DC motor, autofocus speed is a little pedestrian compared with other lenses on test. Sharpness drops off rather noticeably at the long end of the zoom range – a situation that isn't helped by the lens's reliance on in-camera stabilisation.

### Digital Photographer verdict

A high-tech lens that's ideal for both APS-C and full-frame Pentax DSLRs, but it's pricey and sharpness could be better, especially towards the long end of the zoom range.

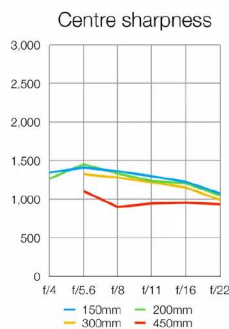
#### Summary

Features	★★★★★
Build & handling	★★★★★
Performance	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★

### Overall ★★★★★

#### SHARPNESS

Levels of sharpness are a little lacklustre towards the long end of the zoom range



#### FRINGING

Short **1.47** Long **2.34**  
At the maximum zoom length, colour fringing can become noticeable in image corners

#### DISTORTION

Short **1.45** Long **1.13**  
Pincushion actually decreases slightly as you extend through the zoom range



# Sigma

## 150-600mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM | S

£1,329/\$1,999

Hefty but worth the weight

This Sigma Sports lens is around 1.5x to 2x the weight of most of the other contenders on test, tipping the scales at nearly 3kg. Sigma also makes a smaller and lighter Contemporary edition of its 150-600mm lens, but this one is better built. The barrel and hood are metal rather than plastic and it also features a full set of weather-seals.

Optical highlights include two FLD (Fluorite Low Dispersion) elements and fluorine coatings on the front and rear. Advanced features include dual autofocus modes, dual-mode stabilisation and two switchable custom modes. The zoom lock can be engaged at any marked focal length.

### Performance

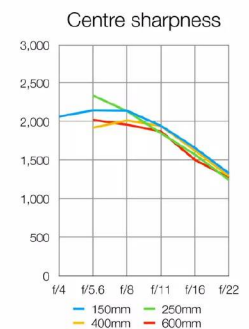
All aspects of image quality are excellent throughout the entire zoom range. Autofocus is extremely fast and the stabiliser works well in both static and panning modes. It's a fabulous super-tele zoom with a suitably 'sporty' performance.

### Digital Photographer verdict

It's a relatively heavyweight lens, especially compared with Tamron's 150-600mm zoom, but the Sigma wins with superb performance and image quality.

#### SHARPNESS

Even at the extra-long 600mm mark, sharpness remains impressive



#### FRINGING

Short **1.99** Long **1.01**  
There's little colour fringing at the short end, and even less in the mid to long zoom sector

#### DISTORTION

Short **0.64** Long **0.95**  
Pincushion remains quite minimal throughout the entire zoom range

#### Summary

Features	★★★★★
Build & handling	★★★★★
Performance	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★

### Overall ★★★★★





# Sony

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

£1,599/\$1,998

A spectacular Sony super-tele

We have been impressed by the Sony FE 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6 G Master OSS super-tele zoom for E-mount mirrorless cameras, but the newer 200-600mm boosts telephoto reach and with only a minimal narrowing of the aperture rating.

Handling is excellent with a switchable triple-mode optical stabiliser, autofocus range limiter and customisable AF-on/AF-lock buttons. Unusually, the physical length remains fixed throughout the zoom range. The Nano AR coating reduces the amount of ghosting and flare and there's a fluorine coating on the front, along with weather-seals.

### Performance

The DDSSM (Direct Drive Super Sonic Motor) autofocus system is fast, accurate and ultra-quiet. The optical stabiliser works best in conjunction with in-body stabilisers featured in recent Sony cameras, and sharpness is both scintillating and impressively consistent throughout the zoom range.

### Digital Photographer verdict

Picking up the baton from the FE 100-400mm G Master, this Sony lens has similarly refined handling and delivers scintillating performance and image quality.

#### Summary

Features	★★★★★
Build & handling	★★★★★
Performance	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★

Overall



# Tamron

## SP 150-600mm F/5-6.3 Di VC USD G2

£1,249/\$1,399

The G2 is a worthy upgrade

The original Tamron 150-600mm was good, but the G2 edition is a major upgrade. Two LD (Low Dispersion) elements and secondary nano-structure coatings are present, along with better weather-seals and a fluorine coating on the front.

New and improved VC (Vibration Compensation) is rated at 4.5-stops, with three operating modes. These include static and panning options, plus a tracking mode. The autofocus system is faster and a 'flex zoom lock' can be engaged. The G2 also gains compatibility with Tamron's TAP-in Console for customisation and firmware upgrades, and the company's new 1.4x and 2.0x teleconverters.

### Performance

Everything works well, especially the revamped autofocus and stabilisation systems and the handling is refined too. Sharpness is a little lacking in the short to medium zoom sector but comes on strong between 400mm and 600mm.

### Digital Photographer verdict

Nearly a kilogram lighter than the Sigma 150-600mm lens, the Tamron is more comfortable for prolonged periods of handheld shooting. The G2 is a worthy upgrade.

#### Summary

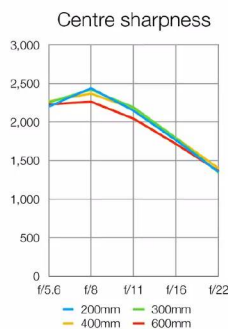
Features	★★★★★
Build & handling	★★★★★
Performance	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★

Overall



#### SHARPNESS

Sharpness is impressively consistent throughout the entire zoom range



#### FRINGING

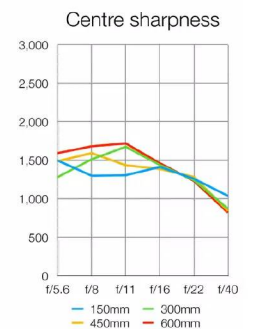
**Short 1.19 Long 1.38**  
Chromatic aberrations are minimal at all zoom settings, even in the extreme corners

#### DISTORTION

**Short 1.56 Long 1.87**  
There's minimal pincushion distortion, which remains consistent at all focal lengths

#### SHARPNESS

Unusually for this class of lens, sharpness is best at the long end of the zoom range



#### FRINGING

**Short 1.61 Long 1.91**  
It's fairly minimal at either end and absolutely negligible in the mid-zoom sector

#### DISTORTION

**Short 1.59 Long 1.57**  
Mild pincushion remains at a constant level throughout the entire zoom range



# THE WINNER IS...

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

The Sony really delivers with a great price and performance



Sony has come up trumps with its FE 200-600mm. Building on the success of the FE 100-400mm G Master, the newer, bigger lens adds a third stabilisation mode and a more effective autofocus range limiter switch that can lock out both the short and long sectors. Image quality and all-round performance are superb, as are handling and build quality.

For Canon and Nikon DSLRs, as well as for full-frame mirrorless cameras via adapters, the Sigma 150-600mm Sports is our top

choice for performance at a reasonable price. However, the Canon RF 100-400mm is a more compact and lightweight option for EOS R system mirrorless cameras and is relatively inexpensive. The Nikon Z 100-400mm is an excellent but comparatively pricey lens for Nikon's mirrorless Z system cameras.

The Tamron G2 is an appealing alternative if you want maximum telephoto reach in a smaller and lighter package than the Sigma Sports lens. Taking downsizing to the extreme,

the Panasonic 100-400mm is the most compact and lightweight lens in the group but delivers a mighty effective telephoto reach for MFT cameras, equating to 200-800mm. The Fujifilm 100-400mm for APS-C format X-mount cameras is larger and heavier but a great buy at the price. Finally, the Pentax 150-400mm has some seriously advanced features and great handling, but lacks optical stabilisation and comes up a little short on telephoto reach for full-frame K-mount bodies.

### How the lenses compare



Name	Canon RF 100-400mm f5.6-8 IS USM	Fujifilm XF100-400mm F4.5-5.6 R LM OIS WR	Nikon Z 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6 VR S	Panasonic Leica DG 100-400mm f/4-6.3	Pentax FA 150-450mm f/4.5-5.6 ED DC AW HD	Sigma 150-600mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM   S	Sony FE 200-600mm F5.6-6.3 G OSS	Tamron SP 150-600mm F/5-6.3 Di VC USD G2
Contact	www.canon.co.uk	www.fujifilm.co.uk	www.nikon.co.uk	www.panasonic.com	www.pentax.co.uk	www.sigma-imaging-uk.com	www.sony.co.uk	www.tamron.co.uk
Street price	£669/\$649	£1,549/\$1,899	£2,699/\$2,697	£1,149/\$1,598	£1,979/\$1,897	£1,329/\$1,999	£1,599/\$1,998	£1,249/\$1,399
Mount options	C RF	F X	N Z	MFT	P K	C EF, N F, Sg	S E	C EF, N F
Elements/Groups	12/9	21/14	25/20	20/13	18/14	24/16	24/17	21/13
Diaphragm blades	9 blades	9 blades	9 blades	9 blades	9 blades	9 blades	11 blades	9 blades
Min aperture	f/32-45	f/22	f/32-40	f/22	f/22-27	f/22	f/32-36	f/32-40
Optical stabiliser	5.5 stops	5 stops	5.5 stops	Yes (unspecified)	None	4 stops	Yes (unspecified)	4.5 stops
Autofocus motor type	Nano USM	Dual linear stepping motors	Dual linear stepping motors	Stepping motor	DC motor	Ultrasonic (ring-type)	Direct Drive Supersonic Wave	Ultrasonic (ring-type)
Internal zoom/focus	No/Yes	No/Yes	No/Yes	No/Yes	No/Yes	No/Yes	Yes/Yes	No/Yes
Angle of view (diagonal)	24-6 degrees	16-4 degrees	24-6 degrees	12-3 degrees	17-6 degrees	16-4 degrees	12-4 degrees	16-4 degrees
Min focus distance	0.88m	1.75m	0.75-0.98m	1.3m	2.0m	2.6m	2.4m	2.2m
Max magnification	0.41x	0.19x	0.38x	0.25x	0.22x	0.2x	0.2x	0.26x
Filter size	67mm	77mm	77mm	72mm	86mm	105mm	95mm	95mm
Weather seals	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Included accessories	None	Hood, tripod collar	Hood, tripod collar	Hood, tripod collar, soft case	Hood, tripod collar, soft case	Hood, tripod collar	Hood, tripod collar, soft case	Hood, tripod collar, pouch
Dimensions (dia x length)	80x165mm	95x211mm	98x222mm	83x172mm	95x242mm	121x290mm	112x318mm	108x260mm
Weight	635g	1,375g	1,435g	985g	2,000g	2,860g	2,115g	2,010g
Features	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Build & handling	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Performance	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★





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**Price:** £2,849/\$2,998

# Sony Alpha 7CR

It looks identical to the A7C II, but is there enough difference on the inside to justify its position in the Sony range? **Peter Fenech** takes a closer look



Sony has long adopted a 'cover every base' approach to its marketing strategy. Since the DSLR days, the company's business model has seen it flood the market with an array of outwardly similar models, the point being that whatever a prospective buyer may be looking for, in terms of both spec and budget, there is likely to be something with an Alpha logo on it to suit.

Occasionally, this involves simply leaving an older model on sale once a natural successor is released, essentially repurposing it as a lower-range option at a newly reduced price. Every so often, two products appear at the same time, both of which seem to be aimed at the same customer, complicating matters if you thought you knew what you wanted.

This is the case with the A7CR, which at first glance, seems identical to its A7C II stablemate. It's only when you look on the inside that you spot the difference and can sort of see what Sony had in mind when it mapped out its camera roadmap for the year. When the A7CR was dropped off on my doorstep, I briefly considered writing this as a head-to-head review, comparing it with the similar camera. However, sometimes it can be better to review a camera in isolation and, besides, I was keen to discover if this one was worth my money on its own merit.

As far as handling goes, the A7CR doesn't offer any nasty surprises. If you are a seasoned Sony shooter, you'll fall right into step with the control and menu layout. The body is fairly

intuitive and everything is roughly where you'd expect it to be. The rear control wheel is a little on the small side, thanks to the camera's compact design and this can make it awkward to use if you happen to have large hands. However, this is more of a user-specific niggle and clearly isn't a deal-breaker.

The body itself is quite boxy, featuring lots of straight lines and sharp edges, just as with the other members of the A7C lineup. It might not be the most sexy of designs, but as a tech reviewer, it is sometimes good to remember that this is a camera we're discussing – it's functional and does the job of keeping all of the buttons and dials together. We can't reasonably knock marks off for that.

Speaking of the compact nature, the A7CR is tiny and at times I forgot I was shooting with a full-frame camera. A chassis of this size containing a sensor this big would have been unthinkable a decade ago, so hats off to Sony on this point. Even so, the grip is deep so with a standard lens attached you can shoot one-handed with confidence. This is less easy with

Speaking of the compact nature, the A7CR is tiny and, at times, I forgot I was shooting with a full-frame camera



## FEATURES

### FULL-FRAME SENSOR

The imaging sensor measures 35.7 by 23.8mm and is the same unit found on the Sony A7R IV and A7R V models

### MAX RESOLUTION

While the actual resolution of the sensor is 62.5MP, the effective 61MP images output by the A7CR have maximum pixel dimensions of 9504 x 6336

### VIDEO RESOLUTION

The Sony A7CR can shoot Ultra HD 4K (3840 x 2160) video at 23.98, 50.00 and 59.94fps. It can also shoot Full HD clips (1920 x 1080) at up to 120fps internally.

### LOG MODES

S-Cinetone, and S-Log 3 modes are available for application in-camera. This provides colour-graded footage for use directly on social media or for further work in processing

### DRIVE SPECS

Despite its high-resolution sensor, the Sony A7CR can still shoot at up to 8fps. Meanwhile, the shutter speed ranges from 1/8000sec up to 30 seconds

### VIEWFINDER

The electronic viewfinder is not the largest model around at 0.39in but you'll still find a 2,359,296 Dot resolution and 0.7x approx magnification



MAIN LCD

larger optics, though, which might be an issue if this is going to be your main camera, for use with trinity zooms or fast telephoto primes.

The biggest headline difference between this model and the A7C II, which was released at the same time, is the pixel count, which is a little under double the resolution at 61MP (compared with 33MP on the A7C II). This clearly offers cropping advantages.

In our test samples, it also didn't come with too much of a noise penalty either. I could confidently shoot up to ISO 12,800 with minimal effect on detail and colour. Only when the sensitivity was pushed up to ISO 51,200 and beyond did files take on a mushy appearance with visible coloured speckling. At the maximum extended setting of ISO 102,400, this was noticeable, even in JPEGs. My advice would be to steer clear of these extremes.

Colour straight from the camera is generally lovely, providing smooth gradations and natural intensity. Shooting outdoors, under cloudy skies at low ISO settings, images are richly detailed and true-to-life thanks to an







*Above*  
**Rich detail**  
 Shooting outdoors under natural light, images are richly detailed and true-to-life

accurate automatic white balance system. Without processing, images from Sony cameras can be a little 'sterile' for my tastes, however, images from the A7CR offer plenty of scope to play around with at the editing stage. In darker conditions, the IBIS system is effective and I could handhold at 1/13sec using a 50mm lens with comparative ease.

Another area where the A7CR excels is autofocus. It snaps into position quickly when shifting the focus point between near and far subjects. The viewfinder is fairly small, which can make judging focus a challenge on the move but I was confident the camera had done the legwork for me without much encouragement.

Overall, the A7CR is a great camera that has plenty of features, a powerful processor, amazing resolution and workable low-light performance. It's snappy in all respects and will make a fantastic travel companion. The question comes down to whether you feel it's £850 (\$800) better than the A7C II – for many people, 33MP will be more than enough. While both cameras are good in low light, the A7C II has an advantage, meaning you'll need to use weightier, brighter lenses on the A7CR.

*Left*  
**Head start**  
 In low-light conditions, the IBIS system is effective. It was easy to handhold with a 50mm lens



x4 © Peter Fenech

## TALKING POINT... Feature comparison

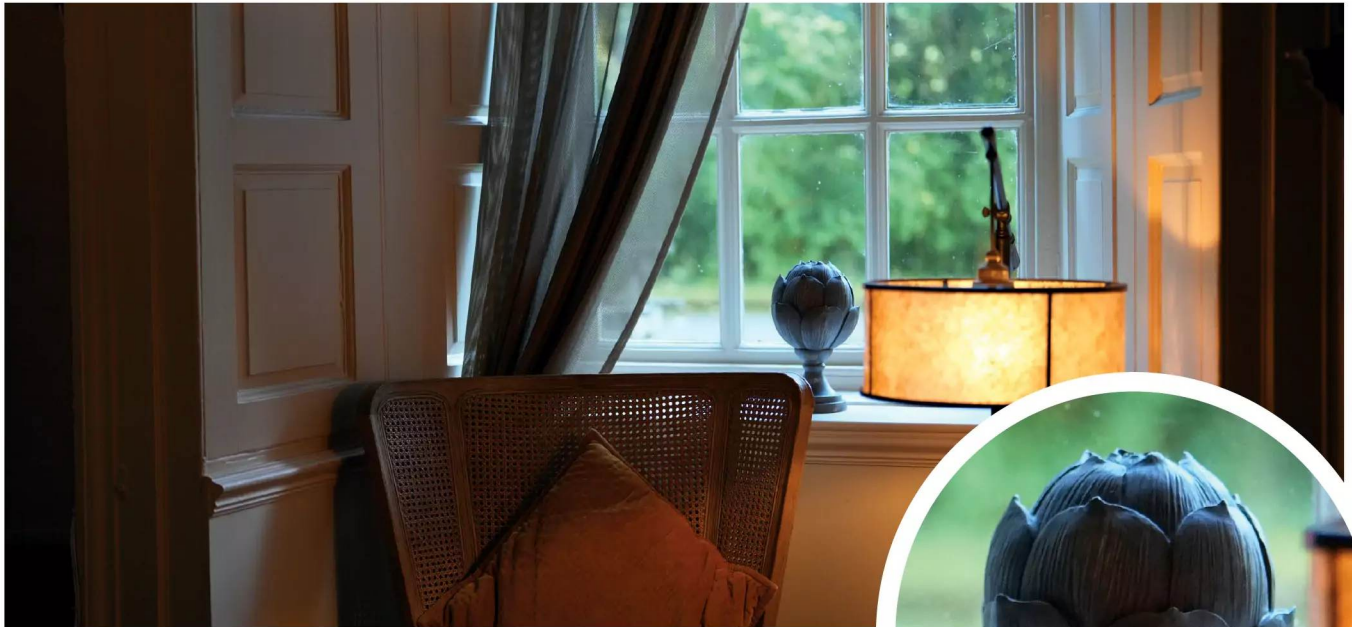
While this isn't a direct competition, the presence of the A7C II can't be ignored. So what does the extra cost of the A7CR get you besides extra pixels? Even more pixels! The latter model not only has a native pixel count advantage, but it also features a pixel-shift multi-shot High-Res Mode lacking on the A7C II, which blends several frames into one gigantic 241MP image. That said, while both models feature 4K video, the A7C II applies less of a crop factor (1.24x vs 1.5x) which vloggers will definitely appreciate.

The larger files of the A7CR also come at the cost of 2fps in burst mode, which tops out at 8fps compared with the A7C II's 10fps. It also has slightly fewer autofocus points at 693 (the A7C II has 759) although, in practice, this isn't likely to have a huge impact. The native ISO range of the A7C II creeps beyond the A7CR's 32,000 to 51,200. Besides this, there is little else different. Both cameras have an anti-aliasing filter-less design and feature seven-stop IBIS and the same Bionz XR processing engine.



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## Sony A7CR

**Megapixels**  
61MP

**Sensor information**  
Full-frame CMOS  
(35.7 x 23.8mm)

**Shutter speed**  
30sec-1/8000sec

**Native ISO sensitivity**  
100-32,000 (Native)  
50-102,400 (Ext.)

**Drive speed**  
8fps

**Buffer**  
36 Frames (RAW)/1000  
Frames (JPEG)

**Max video resolution**  
UHD 4K (3840 x 2160)

**Metering options**  
Average, Center-  
Weighted Average,  
Highlight Weighted,  
Multiple, Spot

**Log modes**  
S-Cinetone, Sony  
S-Log 3

**Connectivity**  
WiFi, USB-C, HDMI,  
headphone in/out

**Batteries**  
Rechargeable Li-ion  
(NP-FZ100)

**Storage**  
2x UHS-II, SDXC/  
SD cards

**LCD**  
3-inch,  
1,036,800 Dot tilting,  
touch-sensitive LCD

**Viewfinder**  
0.39inch, 2,359,296  
Dot OLED, 0.79x  
magnification

**Weight**  
515g  
(inc. battery/card)

**Dimensions**  
124 x 71.1 x 63.4mm

### FEATURES

The A7CR packs in a lot for the money with plenty to cater for both stills and video shooters

★★★★★

### BUILD QUALITY

The body feels substantial and while not up to pro standard, it's enough

★★★★★

### HANDLING

The compact size is handy for portability but a struggle with large lenses attached

★★★★★

### QUALITY OF RESULTS

The performance nicely blends resolution and sensitivity – ideal for almost any scenario

★★★★★

### VALUE FOR MONEY

As a standalone, it's well priced, although we're not sure we'd pay the extra over the A7C II

★★★★★

I could confidently shoot up to ISO 12,800 with minimal effect on detail



#### 1 STREAMLINED LAYOUT

The dials and buttons offer easy access to all the everyday settings and functions

#### 2 EASY HANDGRIP

Despite the small dimensions, the main grip offers a DSLR-like handheld experience

#### 3 LENS MOUNT

Featuring a full-frame sensor, the camera can accept all FE-compatible optics

#### 4 SINGLE CARD SLOT

Disappointingly for a multi-media camera, only one SD UHS-II slot is available

## Overall

Value is tricky to judge against the A7C II, but as a standalone camera, the A7CR is an impressive entry into Sony's crowded lineup

★★★★★



**Price:** £257/\$259


**Website:** godoxstore.co.uk

# Godox V1 flashgun

The Godox V1 is a powerful, feature-packed round-head flashgun, available in several versions and reasonably priced, too.

**Matthew Richards** finds out how it works in practice



 The Godox V1 is nothing if not well-rounded. Compared with regular flashguns that have a rectangular head, the V1 has a circular flash tube that has been designed to give a softer, smoother and more flattering lighting effect. It's not just that the head is round, it also features a panel at the front that spreads the light more

evenly, avoiding the creation of a hot spot at the centre and giving a more gradual fall-off towards the circumference.

The V1 is arguably more like a miniature studio flash head, packed into a highly portable, hot-shoe-mounting package. Even so, it boasts all of the advanced features that we've come to expect in top-end conventional

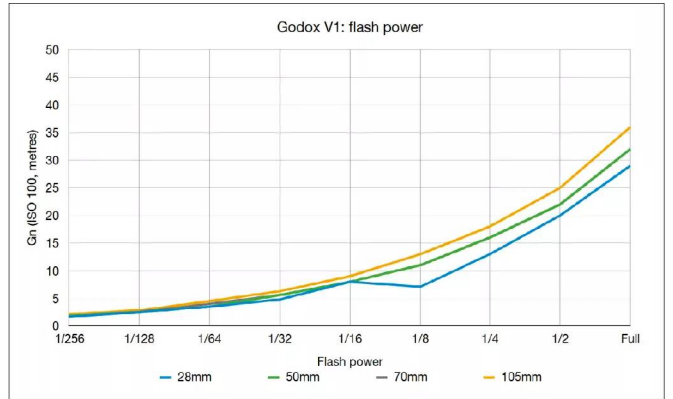
flashguns. Indeed, it's essentially a round-head adaptation of the Godox VING V860III, which is one of our all-time favourite flashguns. As such, it includes TTL (Through The Lens) automatic flash metering and other camera-specific functions, thanks to the wide variety of dedicated versions to suit Canon, Nikon, Sony, Fujifilm, Olympus, Panasonic and Pentax cameras. The maximum output power is quoted as 76Ws – Watt seconds being a more usual rating for studio flash heads, rather than the Gn (Guide number) typically associated with flashguns.

Either way, the maximum output power is generous and TTL automatic flash metering is available in all of the different dedicated versions, along with +/-3EV flash exposure compensation and fully manual power settings, with adjustments being available in one-third and one-tenth EV increments respectively. In our tests using the Nikon dedicated version of the V1, we found that TTL accuracy was excellent and particularly consistent in different shooting scenarios.

The zoom range is a fairly standard 28-105mm (in full-frame terms), which is significantly less than the V860III's oversized 20-200mm coverage. Notably, the V1's round-head design precludes the inclusion of a catchlight card or wide-angle diffusion panel. The power range of the V1 proved impressive







and fairly similar to that of the VING V860III in our tests. That's perhaps no surprise as both flashguns are running on the same 7.2V 2600mAh rechargeable Li-ion battery, with exactly the same rating of 480 full-power flashes. That said, the nature of the diffusing lens and its larger circular head give the V1 a little less maximum power. There is also less power on tap for telephoto shooting, due to the more limited 28-105mm zoom range.

Our measurements of power output throughout the zoom range fell a little short of those from the Godox VING V860III, but that's possibly the price you pay for smoother, more even lighting.

Even the latest, top-of-the-range flashguns from some camera manufacturers, such as the Nikon Speedlight SB-5000, lack a built-in RF (Radio Frequency) transceiver. However, the V1 covers everything off with an RF transceiver that enables wireless RF master and slave triggering for multi-flashgun setups, in no less than five groups with the option of 32 different channels, and over a mighty transmission range of up to 100m (330ft).

Meanwhile, another welcome similarity between the V1 and the V860III is that they have extremely fast recycling speeds. In terms of handling, the only real room for improvement is that the control panel and

illuminated rear screen look a little dated and unimaginative. The context-sensitive menu buttons work fine but aren't the best quality.

We often feel that flashguns can be harsh, delivering less than flattering light. The Godox V1 has a circular head with a built-in Fresnel-type lens that gives a smoother, softer and more even lighting effect. It's like a cross between a regular flashgun and a studio flash head, yet maintains a compact build. We love that it runs on a rechargeable Li-ion battery, giving it great stamina and super-fast recycling speeds. We're also impressed by the full range of flash modes. Overall, it's a fully tricked-up bit of kit and a standout bargain at the price.

## Flash modes

This Godox flash offers the full range of advanced lighting modes

There's a full range of flash modes on offer, from regular front-curtain sync to slow sync and rear-curtain sync. HSS (High-Speed Sync) is also on the menu, enabling shutter speeds much faster than the camera's regular sync speed (typically of around 1/200th of a second) right up to 1/8000th of a second. As usual, this is based on a rapid firing of successive flashes with the typical drop in maximum output power. You also get the option of programmable stroboscopic output, so you can shoot a sequence of an object in motion at various points along its progress, using a long exposure, with up to 100 flashes at a maximum rate of 199 flashes per second, depending on which dedicated version you use.

## Summary

Ease of use	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Quality of results	★★★★★

## Overall



The Godox V1 offers plenty to keep mobile photographers happy. Fast recycling, intelligent TTL metering, versatile head positioning and softer light than comparable speedlights make it a great tool for location work on a budget.





**PRICE:**  
£13,499/\$13,997

**FOCUS DISTANCE:**  
2.5m

**WEIGHT:**  
2,950g

# Nikon Z 400mm f/2.8 TC VR S

Matthew Richards asks if it's worth selling your car for this feature-heavy lens

## Build and handling

Lenses with built-in teleconverters are rare but not unique. This prime combines a native 400mm f/2.8 configuration with a 1.4x extender that gives you 560mm at f/4. Sure, it's a heavyweight lens but that comes with the territory. Build quality is exceptional with a tough, weather-sealed construction incorporating a magnesium alloy barrel and fluorine coatings on the front and rear elements. There are handling refinements aplenty. The three control rings include a customisable ring that you can assign to step-less aperture control, exposure compensation or ISO, for example.



Left

### Straight and narrow

The 400mm TC is essentially a distortion-free lens at its native focal length and there is only a touch of pincushion when adding the 1.4x tele-converter

Below left

### Fast tracked

The AF speed keeps up with most subjects and results are pin sharp. For those who wish to invest in one, this lens ticks the right boxes for pro action shooters

## Performance

The image quality is absolutely spectacular in all respects. Moreover, while teleconverters are notorious for downgrading image quality and all-round performance, the lens remains scarily sharp at 560mm with epic autofocus performance and rock-steady stabilisation. Indeed, the speed of autofocus is breathtaking, snapping into position and accurately tracking fast-moving subjects. Colour fringing and distortion are negligible and the optical design with its three different coatings does a superb job of suppressing ghosting and flare.



## Technical specs

Manufacturer	Nikon
Model	Z 400mm f/2.8 TC VR S
Web	nikon.co.uk
Elements/construction	25 elements in 19 groups
Angle of view	6° 10' - 4° 30'
Max aperture	f/2.8-4
Min aperture	f/22-32
Min focus distance	2.5m
Mount	Nikon Z
Filter size	46mm (drop-in type)
Length	380mm
Diameter	156mm
Weight	2,950g

BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★
IMAGE QUALITY	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★

## Overall ★★★★★

- ✚ Jaw-dropping performance
- ✚ Fast aperture
- ✚ Built-in teleconverter
- ✚ Heavyweight build
- ✚ Beyond most budgets

## Verdict

Not many of us could afford to spend almost £13,500/\$14,000 on a lens. The million-dollar question is does this Nikkor justify its price? In one word... absolutely. It is two lenses in one – a 400mm f/2.8 and a 560mm f/4. It delivers spectacular overall performance and stunning image quality in both configurations.

Images by Chris George/Matthew Richards





**PRICE:**  
£379/\$329

**FOCUS DISTANCE:**  
0.14m

**WEIGHT:**  
150g

# Canon RF-S 10-18mm f/4.5-6.3 IS STM

Gareth Bevan tries out this tiny lens with a big field of view for APS-C

## Build and handling

Since it first came onto the scene, the RF-S mount has struggled a little to find its place. The Canon RF-S 10-18mm f/4.5-6.3 IS STM, however, has come along to fill a much-needed hole in the existing lineup. This is one of the shortest zoom lenses I have used; the entire zoom range only moves the front of the lens in and out a couple of millimetres. This lens is the perfect pocketable-sized companion for a camera such as the Canon EOS R50 or Canon EOS R100. Build quality is good as always with Canon. The lens is made of robust-feeling plastic, although at this price, don't expect to find any weather sealing. The zoom ring is small, but I found it easy enough to turn, with a ridged surface to the plastic, but no rubber or more grippy material.

## Performance

The RF-S 10-18mm puts in a strong performance for a lens of its class, and I was pleasantly surprised by the results of such a tiny optic. The photos are sharp with a good amount of contrast. Diving into the RAW files, the distortion is not quite as bad as some recent lenses but the lens does suffer from peripheral distortion, especially at 10mm. The sharpness isn't going to rival bigger, more expensive lenses, but for the size and price, it is more than acceptable.

## Verdict

The Canon RF-S 10-18mm f/4.5-6.3 IS STM is the perfect wide-angle lens for Canon's smallest EOS R cameras. The lens is compact and, paired with something like the EOS R100, it makes an almost pocketable combination.



Left

### Uncorrected

CR2 files from a Canon EOS R5 show there is significant distortion of images out-of-camera. This is largely remedied with automatic corrections turned on

Below left

### Small form

The RF-S 10-18mm lens is the perfect match for smaller cameras like the EOS R100 and makes an ideal travel companion when weight reduction is paramount



## Technical specs

Manufacturer	Canon
Model	RF-S 10-18mm f/4.5-6.3
Web	canon.co.uk
Elements/construction	12 elements in 10 groups
Angle of view	107° 30' - 74° 20'
Max aperture	f/4.5-6.3
Min aperture	f/22-32
Min focus distance	0.14m
Mounts	Canon RF/RF-S
Filter size	49mm
Length	44.9mm
Diameter	69mm
Weight	150g

BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★
IMAGE QUALITY	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★

## Overall ★★★★★

- Tiny, compact size
- Solid image quality
- Quick, silent autofocus
- Narrow aperture for low-light
- Significant distortion in RAWs

Images by Gareth Bevan



# ACCESSORIES

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

## DB RAMVERK PRO BACKPACK 26L & MEDIUM CAMERA INSERT

*dbjourney.com*

(£239+£119/\$289+\$159)

The DB company was founded in Norway in 2009 with the aim of designing bags for people who love travelling and outdoor pursuits. One of its products is the Ramverk Pro Backpack, which is available in two capacities, 26L and 32L. The 26L backpack reviewed here measures 48x30x15.5cm, weighs 1.58kg and is compatible with the Ramverk Medium Camera Insert. The Ramverk Pro Backpack is fairly unusual these days in that the zippered main compartment opens from the front. With this in mind, you should always ensure that the zip of the Camera Insert is closed when carrying camera kit around in crowded areas.

An integrated 'rib cage' made from strong yet lightweight ABS and the water-resistant coating of the main fabric, recycled Nylon 500D, help protect your camera gear. There are straps on the front and sides of the pack to carry accessories like a tripod and a fleece-lined pocket at the top with enough room for a wallet or purse and other essentials. The main flap and insert flap also each have three mesh zip-closed pockets that are useful for small items like filters. Meanwhile, there's a laptop pocket accessible from the side that can house a 16-inch MacBook Pro.

Although the shoulder straps are slim, they contain dense foam padding, which makes a heavy load comfortable. The customisable position dividers are also thin but effective, which means you can make the most of the Ramverk Pro Backpack's capacity for carrying kit.





# SAMSUNG T9

samsung.com

(From £118/\$130)

The Samsung T9 is the latest in Samsung's series of portable Solid State Drives (SSDs). The new model measures just 88x60x14mm, weighs 122g and features a USB 3.2 Gen 2x2 interface that is capable of delivering data transfer speeds of up to 2,000MB/s. It comes with both USB-C-to-USB-C and USB-C-to-USB-A cables so it can be connected to older computers as well as the most recent models.

With the T9 connected to an Apple Studio Ultra via a Thunderbolt 4 connection using the supplied USB-C-to-USB-C cable, we were able to transfer 9.7GB of images (100 RAW and 100 jpeg) from a Nikon Z7 II from the computer to the drive in around 14 seconds.



Transferring the same images from the drive to the computer took around 11 seconds. To investigate the transfer speeds further, we fired up the Blackmagic Disk Speed Test software. This indicated that, when it's connected to the Apple Studio, the T9 is capable of write speeds of up to around 950MB/s and read speeds of up to 860MB/s. This reflects the fact

that despite their 40Gbps capability, Thunderbolt 4 ports cannot exploit the full potential of a USB 3.2 Gen 2x2 device. Nevertheless, the T9 performs flawlessly as a working drive for editing 4K video and images are rendered in a flash.



# RODE WIRELESS PRO

rode.com

(£399/\$399)

Rode's Wireless Pro is an easy-to-use, dual-channel wireless microphone system that builds on the excellent Wireless Go II and Wireless Go, adding 32-bit float onboard recording (for recovering clipped or quiet audio) and advanced timecode capability while maintaining the same compact size.

The kit includes two transmitters and a receiver, a host of cables, two Lavalier II microphones, a charging case and three

furry windshields. Basically, that's everything you need to record high-quality audio wirelessly. The transmitters each have a microphone built-in, but the Lavalier II mics can be connected for a more discrete look.

There's an LCD on the receiver that lets you check the audio levels and all the settings can be customised using the Rode Central app on



your computer or smartphone. Everything feels well made and it's easy to connect the receiver to a camera or other recording device and start recording from one or both of the transmitters. Provided there's a clear line of sight, you can record over a distance of up to 250m. If you go beyond that or lose the line of sight and the connection drops, the

transmitters also have internal recording capability so the audio is still captured.

There are cheaper wireless microphone systems available, but the Rode Wireless Pro has everything you need in one package and also delivers excellent results.







# SIGHTSEEING THROUGH A LENS

Travel photography is the best way to experience a destination, says Bella Falk

All images © Bella Falk

**W**henever we went on holiday, my ex-boyfriend would complain about me bringing my camera. “Put it away,” he’d say. “Enjoy the moment! Take in what’s in front of you with your eyes!” But he couldn’t have been more wrong. Far from being a distraction, photography helps you immerse yourself far more fully in a destination than aimless sightseeing ever could.

Ever since explorers took photographers with them to record their discoveries, travel and image-making have gone hand in hand. Today, with the rise in quality cameraphones and digital equipment and picture-sharing sites like Instagram, photography tourism is booming. There’s a reason – and it isn’t just to brag about our adventures on social media.

The act of photographing a place makes me experience it more richly: from the way I explore, looking for details, colours and angles, to the interactions I have with people, chatting to market traders or bonding with tour guides in my pursuit of the best shots.

I recently did a five-day tour of beautiful Nova Scotia in Canada. On the first morning in the capital, Halifax, I got up before dawn and walked along the waterfront, capturing the resplendent sunrise. Apart from a couple of joggers, I had the boardwalk to myself – a vastly different experience from later in the day once everyone else had woken up. I discovered tall ships, their rigging silhouetted against the tangerine sky, and several intriguing pieces of public art – things I’d probably have walked past with barely a glance if I hadn’t been looking for images.

I did the same thing the next day on the mysterious Oak Island, where my early wandering led me to a marina with a miniature lighthouse, which lined up so perfectly with the rising sun that the beacon seemed alight.

At Hall’s Harbour Lobster Pound, where they sort and grade Nova Scotia’s most



## PRO BIO

Bella Falk is a travel photographer, documentary director and writer from London. She writes the award-winning travel blog [Passport & Pixels](http://Passport & Pixels.com) and won Best Photography at the Travel Media Awards 2020. Her images and articles have been featured in National Geographic Traveller, BBC Travel and Lonely Planet, among others. [passportandpixels.com](http://passportandpixels.com) @passportandpixels

famous catch, I got to know Lowell, the tour guide, while taking his photo. And in colourful Annapolis Royal, I ditched my group and went for a walk to photograph the historic houses, discovering hidden gems the non-photographers missed.

If I never do anything with the images beyond posting a few on Instagram, it won’t matter. For me, the act of photography is a reward in itself: stumbling across an unseen corner, feeling the thrill of perfect light or a close wildlife encounter. These are trip highlights, regardless of whether anyone sees the images.

But there’s a bonus: if I choose to edit them, I’ll get to relive those moments all over again and possibly even spot new details I didn’t notice at the time. Some people love to bask in the sun when they’re on holiday, but not me. Put the camera down and ‘enjoy the moment’? Not a chance.



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