



# MPhoto

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Issue 162 • May 2024  
www.digitalcameraworld.com

## THE NIKON MAGAZINE

**EXPERT ADVICE!**

# Capture the Lakes

Shoot your best scenic shots in Britain's most iconic national park



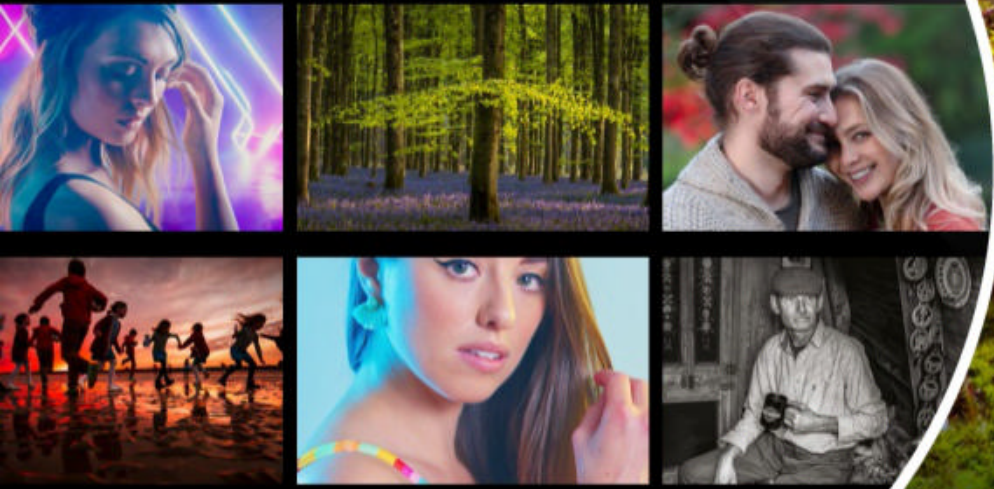
**BIG TEST!**

### Wide primes

8 ace lenses for street and travel photography

**PHOTO PROJECTS**  
6 INSPIRATIONAL IDEAS  
TO TRY AT HOME TODAY!

## NikonSkills



**PRO TIPS!**

### Shootin' in the rain!

Our apprentice learns to capture atmospheric portraits in the wet



**John Miskelly**  
"Some of my shots are 20 minutes long" **p60**



**Bloomin' brilliant**  
Best Nikon International Garden POTY shots **p16**



**Open wide!**  
When & why to use max aperture **p70**







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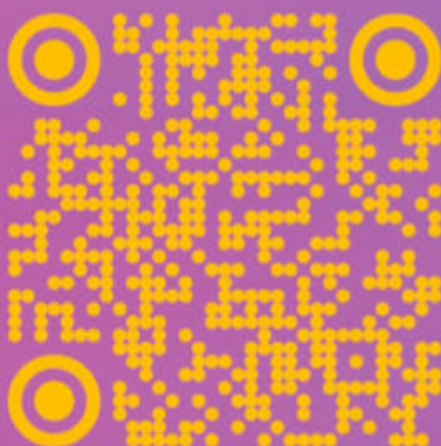
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\*Average saving, top 700 'Like new' models versus brand-new RRP



# NPhoto

## This issue's special contributors...



### Halo Haynes

**PAGE 6**

Our apprentice goes shootin' in the rain – inside a purpose-built wet studio – under the instruction of portrait pro Halo.



### Edyta Rice

**PAGE 26**

Lake District local Edyta takes you on a photographic tour of the incredible Cumbrian countryside that she calls her backyard.



### Tom Mackie

**PAGE 38**

Who needs Tuscany? Travel photographer Tom packs his bags for a shoot in the lesser-known Italian region of Umbria.



### John Miskelly

**PAGE 60**

Famed for his slow-shutter-speed scenic shots, we sit down with landscape photographer John for this issue's *N-Photo* interview.



### Andrew Macdonald

**PAGE 68**

Andrew explains why he likes to photograph his subjects dressed from head to toe in latex. His models, that is, not him...



### Rhodri Wyn

**PAGE 84**

Rhodri was a man with a mission on a recent trip to Iceland: capture the aurora borealis or don't come back at all.

Winners from the International Garden Photographer of the Year competition, see page 16.

Image: © Fernando Evanka

## Welcome to issue 162



The Lake District regularly tops the polls as Britain's favourite national park, and capturing its stunning natural beauty is on every landscape photographer's bucket list. Pro photographer Edyta Rice is lucky enough to call it home, and in this issue's lead feature she shares her top tips for getting your best-ever images of the Cumbrian countryside.

The weather can be wild in the mountains, mind, so our apprentice opts for the comfort of an indoor portrait shoot with a difference: it's in a rain studio. But at least the rain is warm...

In our Gear section, we put eight wide-angle primes that are ideal for street and walkabout photography through their paces. We also check out a macro lens for DX-sensor Nikons that not only renders everything twice as large as life, but it's a 'probe' lens that can be poked into places that other lenses would find impossible...

Plus we have our usual mix of shooting projects to try your hand at, including capturing carpets of bluebells, natural light portraits, documentary shots and sunset silhouettes, and we explore Affinity Photo's Develop Persona and generate AI backdrops in Photoshop.

**Adam Waring, Editor**

adam.waring@futurenet.com

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Take out a subscription to **N-Photo** and get a Lowepro Truckee SH120 bag worth £27! **SEE PAGE 24**





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## Free! Black & White Photography bookazine

Master the art of monochrome with this 196-page bookazine, filled with expert advice. Enjoy step-by-step guides for editing portraits, learn to capture and process creative imagery, and discover key Photoshop tricks for striking high-contrast pics: <https://bit.ly/tybwphoto>

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# NikonSkills

Master your Nikon today!



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John Miskelly is renowned for carefully composed fine-art long exposures, we go behind the lens



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Find and frame lush carpets of bluebells

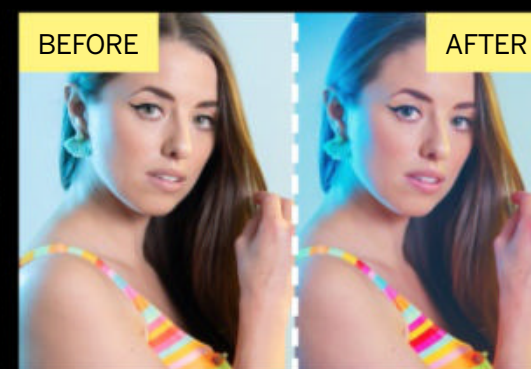
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Whenever you see this logo you'll know there's an accompanying video that you can **watch online**.

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# NPhoto APPRENTICE



## Pour-traits

**Halo Haynes** throws our apprentice in at the deep end – but does she sink or swim?



ankSpace is home to a whopping 10,000 litre tank and 7x7m rain machine. Both studios are custom built for photography and videography, and are served by heated and treated water reserves to ensure comfort and

safety. The Nottinghamshire-based firm's vision was to provide a big-budget studio experience to small productions, content creators and enthusiasts, and five years after its inception, business is flowing like a raging river. As Helen arrived for her evening slot, studio manager Halo was saying





## THE APPRENTICE

NAME: **Helen Everatt**

CAMERA: **Nikon Z 7II**

Manchester-based Helen might be about to get wet behind the ears, but she's certainly not a photography newcomer. Such is her passion, she's currently studying for a diploma at the Institute of Photography (IOP) and has built up a formidable portfolio of images. What she does lack, though, is studio experience. Thankfully, Halo and the TankSpace team are on hand to make sure that the People & Culture Director learns the ropes and bags an SD card full of perfect portraits.

## THE PRO

NAME: **Halo Haynes**

CAMERA: **Nikon Z 6II**

Nobody is more qualified to teach TankSpace's unique brand of water-based portrait photography than Halo (@earlgreyhot.images). She works as the Ollerton-based outfit's studio manager, as well as photographer, but started her creative journey as a model. The camera was too hard to resist, so she picked up her first Nikon and quickly built up a formidable portfolio. To sign up for a TankSpace Experience Day or hire a studio, visit: [www.tankspace.co.uk](http://www.tankspace.co.uk)



## TECHNIQUE ASSESSMENT

1

200 F2.8  
ISO 250  
3 [-E-]

### EXPOSURE SETTINGS

**Halo says...** I tend to keep my shutter speed between 1/80 and 1/200 sec to either extend or freeze the water droplets, while keeping the model sharp. I shoot wide open to add depth to the rain via a mix of sharp and blurry droplets, adjusting the ISO or the intensity of the lights to compensate.

2

Single-point AF



### FOCUS MODES

**Halo says...** You can use Face/Eye Detection with some success, but I prefer to use single-point AF (AF-C), because the rain can cause hunting. I'll often target areas on a similar focal plane to the model's eyes, like a shoulder, especially if it's shiny and wet, which helps the camera to lock on.

3

Continuous L



### SPEED TRAP

**Halo says...** I try to avoid using the very fastest burst speeds available, otherwise you end up with thousands of virtually identical images to sift through, but continuous shooting is essential. Capturing a burst can be the difference between capturing a splash just right or missing it altogether.

## EXPERT INSIGHT REFLECTIONS

**Halo says...** The rain studio isn't just about capturing falling raindrops. Once the floor is saturated, you can capture gorgeous reflections; either a disturbed reflection (pictured) or a mirror-like reflection (Super Shot #2) by turning off the raindrops and waiting for calm.

Reflections are a great way to balance the frame and add additional interest.



goodbye to the previous client. "Right," she said, "that's another tank shoot sorted, now it's straight onto the rain machine."

"You must do so many interesting shoots," said Helen as she marvelled at a row of drum kits and a clothing rack rammed full of extravagant costumes.

"We do music videos, documentaries, dance videos and every portrait-photography concept you can think of. Every time I step into the building, there's a new thing I need to figure out."

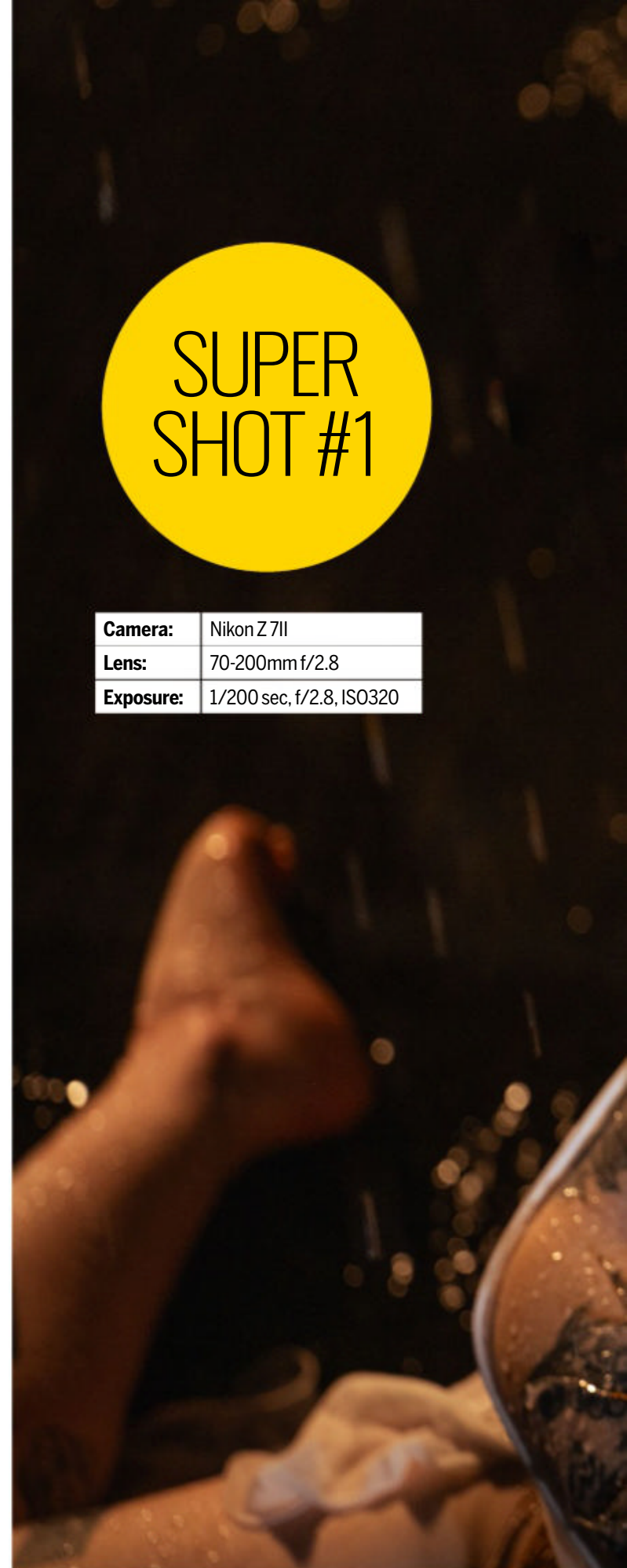
As the pro began readying the rain studio, the pair were joined by TankSpace commercial manager and model Elle (@everything.s.in) and model Lyra (@lyra.rose.modelling). The group shared a few laughs before the models left to get ready, leaving Helen to take note as Halo finished preparing the lighting setup.

### THAT'S BLOWN IT...

"You should stay *mostly* dry," said Halo as she placed the Anova PRO 3 in the far left-hand corner. "The only time you might get a bit wet is when we do some dramatic splashes, but most pro kit is weather-sealed and we'll keep you out of the main

## SUPER SHOT #1

Camera:	Nikon Z7II
Lens:	70-200mm f/2.8
Exposure:	1/200 sec, f/2.8, ISO320



splash zone." She then positioned an Arri Arrilite 800 in the opposite corner to the Anova PRO, just to the right of where the photographers would be shooting.

"These are both continuous light sources," said the pro, "so what you see is what you get. I really enjoy working with... *typical*," she said after the light died, "we haven't had a blown bulb in ages. It's always when people are watching," she tittered as she wheeled out the Arri and wheeled in an Aputure LS 300D II. "This is why you always have a backup."

Halo returned to the Anova PRO and pulled a black curtain over its light stand. "This is to stop the silver light stand from reflecting in the water and bouncing light. I've actually been meaning to cover it in black vinyl tape, which is a thrifty tip since black stands are always more expensive."

Now that the lighting was set, Halo





turned on the rain machine and called through Elle, who stepped out onto the studio floor. The model gently rolled her head around beneath the pouring water droplets. “She’s making sure her hair is completely wet,” said Halo. “It can look a bit strange if there are dry patches.

Halo told her apprentice to shoot towards the Anova PRO 3, with Elle positioned right between the opposing studio lights. This created a beautiful golden rim light around the model and also illuminated the raindrops, causing them to pop against the black backdrop. The rain studio filled a large space, but Helen’s 70-200mm f/2.8 allowed her to close the gap, while keeping her kit dry. After a few test shots, she presented Halo with the results on the Playback screen.

“Your composition skills are excellent,” said the pro. “Try shooting wide open →

**Working with experienced models allowed Helen to focus on her camera settings.**





SUPER  
SHOT #2

Camera:	Nikon Z 7II
Lens:	85mm f/1.8
Exposure:	1/200 sec, f/2.8, ISO640



The upside of using an LED panel, like the Anova PRO 3, is the ability to change the colour instantly, matching the shoot's vibe.



at f/2.8. In a conventional studio setting you might select f/8 for overall sharpness, but a shallow depth of field will blur the falling rain beyond the plane of focus, creating a gorgeous sense of depth.

“For white balance I usually go with the Daylight Auto preset. I will occasionally go into the menu and adjust the colour spectrum grid as it’s nice to get it right in-camera. But as we’re shooting Raw, we can alter the colour temperature as much as we like in Adobe Lightroom.

“You’ll want to consider the style of the

droplets, too. Think of the rain as an extra character in the scene. Some people want long strands of rain, others want a dappled strobe look. Stop down for longer raindrops and increase the shutter speed to freeze them. A sharp subject always takes precedence though. If the model is moving a lot, I’ll increase the shutter speed as much as is necessary.”

Elle’s experience allowed Helen to focus on her shooting to begin with, as the model cycled through a series of poses in time with each shutter actuation. Once Helen was comfortable balancing her shutter speed and ISO to create the rain effect that she wanted, Halo suggested she move in closer to try out some more creative compositions.

As Elle laid down on the studio floor, Halo encouraged her apprentice to stand over the model and angle the camera downwards. Helen used her Z 7II’s tilting rear LCD screen to keep tabs on her composition, carefully guiding a single AF point over the model’s closest eye, and captured Super Shot #1.

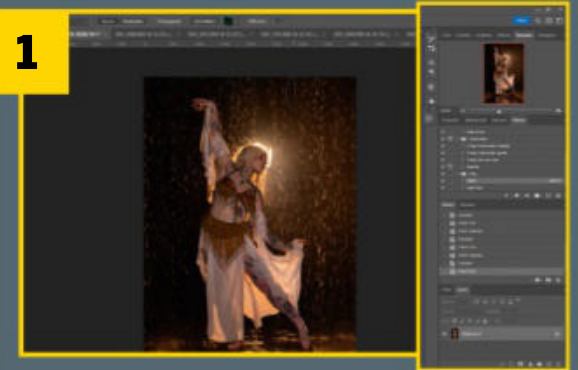
### ROSE-TINTED SPECTACLE

It was now Lyra’s turn to take centre stage. Elle’s skin tone and gold and white ensemble had benefited from a warm backlight, courtesy of the Anova PRO. But Halo explained that Lyra’s skin tone and blush pink dress would benefit from a rose-tinted backlight.

Helen was tasked with counting down from three before Lyra threw the base of her dress into the air so it billowed for a split second. “You learn very quickly that ‘outdoor’ voices are preferred in here,” said Halo, over the sound of the hammering rain and the rumbling water tank. →

## HOW TO EDIT: WATER PORTRAITS

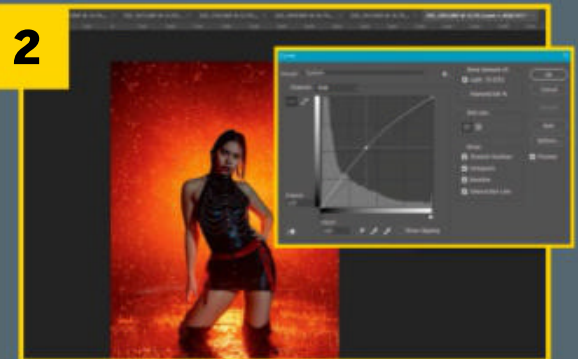
1



### AN EVEN SPREAD

**Halo says...** Use Adobe Photoshop’s Patch or Clone Stamp tool to fill in dry areas of the image with water droplets to keep the rain looking more full and even. Only work on small areas at a time. This will minimize the chance of the rain looking too repetitive and fake, because real rainfall is very random.

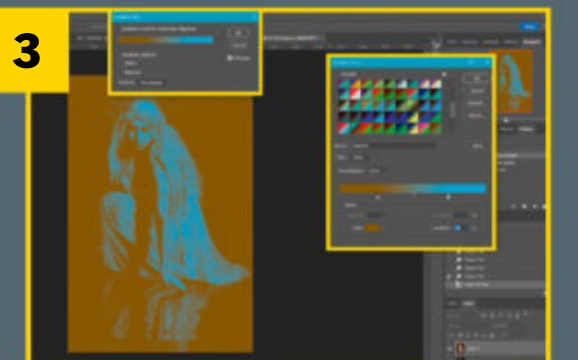
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### SELECTIVE EDITS

**Halo says...** I used a layer mask to selectively enhance details on the backlit subject without blowing out the backlight behind. I brightened the midtones of a duplicate layer using Curves, added a layer mask, inverted it (Cmd/Ctrl+I) and then painted the layer back in, using a soft white brush.

3



### MAP IT OUT

**Halo says...** I like to add in painterly tones by duplicating the layer and adding a brown/blue gradient map to cool the highlights and gently warm the shadows. You can control the effect by selecting the Soft Light blending mode and altering the opacity to taste.



## PRO KIT THE RAIN ROOM

**Halo says...** TankSpace is home to one of the largest dedicated rain-machine studios in the UK. The space measures 7x7m and is covered in a thick, non-slip surface. Suspended above the studio is a custom-built rig, which houses a grid system of nozzles fed by one of three treated and heated water tanks. There’s enough water reserve for the studio to be in use all day long.





Halo adjusts the Rotolight Anova PRO 3's whopping range of 16.7 million colours.

After a few successful attempts the rain machine cut out. "Sorry Lyra," said Halo as she turned to Helen. "The water's nice and warm, it's when it stops that it can get a bit cold. The reason I've stopped it is that you'll notice the studio floor has now become completely saturated, causing a visible reflection. Raindrops hammering onto the water's surface disturb that

reflection but if Lyra can remain still for a few seconds we'll see what it looks like when the water settles."

"Look at that mirror-like reflection. I would deliberately shoot along here," Halo continued as she crouched right down towards the water's surface and mimicked holding the camera. Helen followed her instruction and skimmed the surface with the 85mm prime she had just attached: "I can frame plenty of the reflection now."

"Can you gently touch the water like this please, Lyra?" asked Halo who was reaching towards the floor. The model copied the movement and gently touched the surface of the water with a finger tip, which sent a subtle wake across the reflection.

"Lovely," said Helen as she fired off a burst. "I think that's Super Shot #2."

### WATER PRESSURE

"We're going to change the mood now," said Halo as she wheeled out a flash head. "This is where we go all out on splashes and action, so I thought a *Blade Runner* cyberpunk theme would be appropriate."

While Helen switched to her 'nifty fifty' so she could accommodate the impending action, the pro positioned the flash head directly behind where the models had been standing and layered a red gel over the bulb. "The trick here is to obscure the flash head with the model, so you get a nice red backlight, but don't capture the light itself."

## EXPERT INSIGHT RAINDROPS

**Halo says...** I think of the rain as an extra character in the scene. Some people want frozen droplets, others want long lashings of rain. You increase the shutter speed for the former and stop it down for the latter. A sharp model takes precedence, so if the model is moving a lot, I will increase the shutter speed as much as is necessary.



The Anova PRO was then brought to the front of the studio floor and positioned on the right-hand side, so the models would be lit from a traditional 3/4 two-point setup. Halo then directed Helen's attention towards a row of large panel lights, rigged above the studio, just behind the rain machine. "We often end up using these for music videos," she said as she turned on the rain machine and the studio floor began to flood once again.

Elle and Lyra reappeared, having traded in their flowing renaissance-themed costumes for a bright red jumpsuit and futuristic black dress. Lyra stepped under the lights first, while Halo attached a universal transceiver to the hotshoe of Helen's Z 7II. "Let's up that shutter speed to 1/200 sec and see what the frozen raindrops look like," said the pro.

Helen fired the shutter and a pop of red flash illuminated the room. "Hmmm," mused Halo as she viewed the rear LCD. "We've got such a nice punchy red backlight, I think the white backlights are too distracting, so let's turn them off."

"Chef's kiss," said the pro as Helen took another test shot. Now that the settings were dialled in, Helen was able to take shot after shot as Lyra cycled through a series of poses. "Lovely, Lyra," said Helen. "Could you put your hand on your hip again, please?" The model complied and the apprentice fired the shutter. Super Shot #3 depicted the model kneeling in the water, serving a generous dose of attitude, surrounded by frozen droplets. →



## PRO KIT PRISM TIME

**Halo says...** I always keep a bag of prisms with me. By holding them right up to the lens and repositioning, twisting and turning them, you can bounce light in various directions, creating incredible in-camera patterns, colours and reflections. Some of my accessories came from the Lensbaby OMNI range, but you can find individual prisms online for next to nothing. They're a great way to spice up your images and a lot of fun.



SUPER  
SHOT #3

Camera:	Nikon Z7II
Lens:	50mm f/1.8
Exposure:	1/200 sec, f/2.8, ISO250





SUPER  
SHOT #4

Camera:	Nikon Z 7II
Lens:	50mm f/1.8
Exposure:	1/200 sec, f/2.8, ISO320



## PRO KIT ANOVA PRO

**Halo says...** We were fortunate enough to have a Rotolight Anova PRO 3 test unit in the studio. This powerful continuous/flash unit boasts millions of colours at the tap of a button. It features Rotolight's SmartSoft Box tech, which digitally diffuses the lighting without the need for a modifier. Best of all, the light has an IP65 water-resistance rating, which is extremely useful when you're working with a rain machine and splashing water around!

"Elle and Lyra are going to finish with some splashing movements," said Halo, "so you'll want to keep your shutter speed at 1/200 sec to freeze the action."

### BLADE RUNNERS

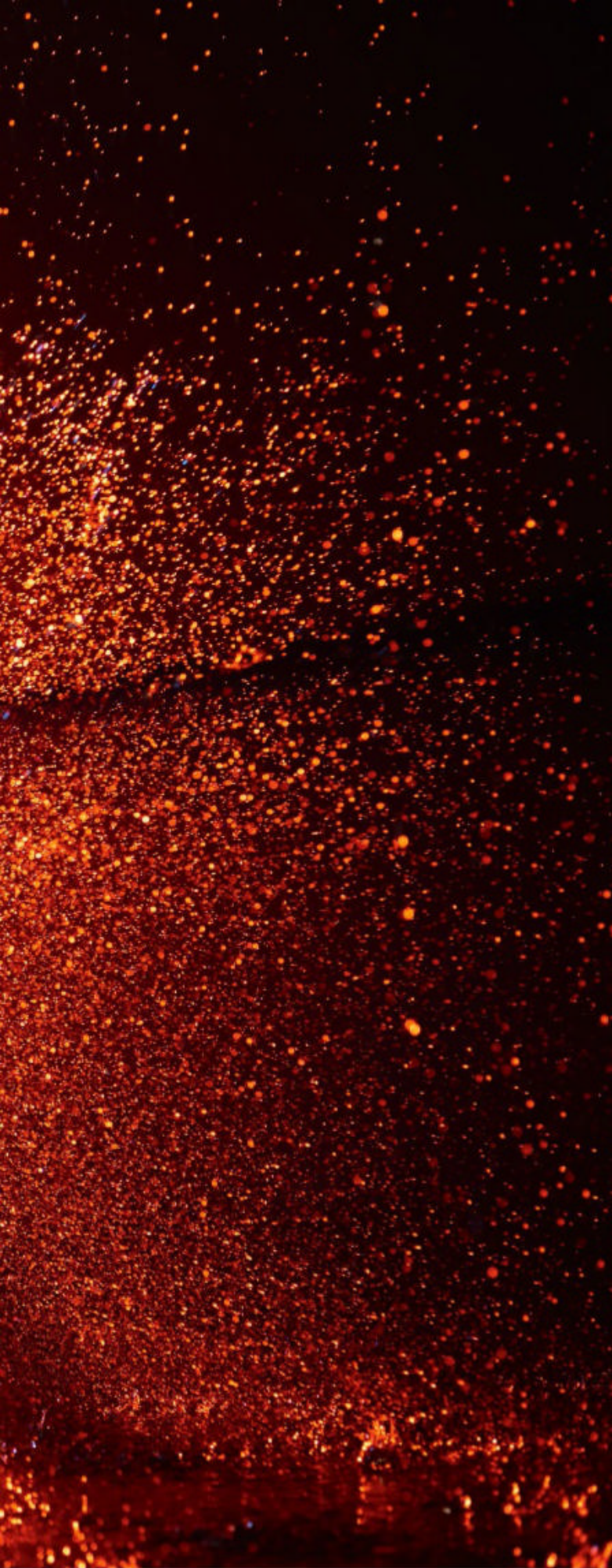
Helen counted down from three and Elle did a low kick, brushing the studio floor with her boot and spraying the water.

"I think my focus is slightly off," said Helen. "It's really hard to focus on the eyes when there's movement."

"A good trick is to focus on an area that's shiny and on a similar focal plane to the eyes," said Halo. "You'll also want to step back a little so you've got a little more room to frame the movement and spray."

Helen counted Elle in again and the model kicked up the water. "*Brilliant!*" cried Halo. "Let's get Lyra in and see what we can do with two subjects." "How about some





## WATER PORTRAITS



### PRO PORTFOLIO HALO HAYNES

A smoke machine was used to add a little texture to the background.



on the metal sword. Helen counted the pair in and Lyra swept the implement across the stage, sending an almighty wave across the studio floor. A cyberpunk-themed Super Shot #4 was in the bag.



#### HELEN'S COMMENT

I loved every minute of the shoot and am super-grateful for the experience. I feel much more confident in the studio, having had such an in-depth grounding. Halo is an amazing photography tutor and Elle and Lyra were fantastic to work with.



#### HALO'S VERDICT

I'm so proud of Helen! We covered a lot of ground today and she took it all in her stride. She knows her camera inside out, which meant we could focus almost entirely on the lighting and the unique experience of working with water. 📸

## BE OUR NEXT APPRENTICE!

We're looking for future apprentices to accompany *N-Photo* on exciting adventures! So, if you would like to appear on these pages and get top one-to-one professional tuition thrown into the bargain, fill out our Apprentice form at: <https://bit.ly/npapprentice> Please fill out the form in its entirety and be as detailed as possible with your answers. Fingers crossed; the next *N-Photo* apprentice could be you!



#### BAMBI OPHELIA

Inspired by the classic painting by John Everett Millais but with a modern twist, this shot incorporates a royal purple palette and tattooed model, representing more modern expressions of artistry.



#### GOLDEN

Miriam is backlit by golden light, which the smoke emphasizes. Her expression is suggestive of letting go, something I find many people are able to do in the water, as it's such a different environment.



#### YINSEY

I love storytelling with water. Yinsey portrays an ancient moon goddess. I adore the serenity of the movement and the dapple of the surface moonlight.

swords? I've been meaning to use my new one," said Elle with a big grin.

The model fetched a long, wooden katana and a rather ornate metal broadsword. "She'll sweep the wooden one across the studio floor and create a curved wave of water," said Halo. Helen looked on as Elle dragged the sword across the floor in one fluid motion and a wave of water scythed through the air.

"That's looking great," said Halo. "You might want to up your ISO just a touch. When you're working with two models, you often have to expose for different skin tones. The trick is to find a middle ground between the two." Now that the camera settings were perfectly dialled in, it was just a case of capturing a series of images and selecting the right shot.

After a few tries, Elle handed Lyra the katana and stood next to her while leaning



# LIGHTBOX

Our favourite Nikon images from the International Garden Photographer of the Year competition





## The Three Sisters of Glencoe

**ADAM BURTON**

*Breathing Spaces – Finalist*

I captured these dramatic mountain peaks, which are known as The Three Sisters, on an atmospheric afternoon in winter. They form part of the Bidean nam Bian mountain range, and are found situated above the Pass of Glencoe in the Scottish Highlands.

<b>Camera:</b>	Nikon D850
<b>Lens:</b>	Nikon 18-35mm f/3.5-4.5
<b>Exposure:</b>	1/80 sec, f/13, ISO400





© Piotr Grochala / International Garden Photographer of the Year

## In the Autumn Forest

**PIOTR GROCHALA**

*Trees, Woods & Forests – Finalist*

I captured this atmospheric woodland landscape, with the trees receding into the mist, during one foggy day in autumn, in a beech forest in the Beskid Mountains, Poland.

<b>Camera:</b>	Nikon D810
<b>Lens:</b>	Nikon 24-70mm f/2.8
<b>Exposure:</b>	1/80 sec, f/5.6, ISO400





© Leena Roy / International Garden Photographer of the Year

## Mangrove Tree (from Underwater)

**LEENA ROY**

**Plants & Planet – 1st Place**

A mangrove tree surrounded by numerous roots, shooting up from the seabed, which I photographed from underwater, looking up. The leaves of the tree are underwater at high tide. Mangrove forests not only act as carbon banks, they stabilize the coastline from storms and erosion, as well as being a vital habitat for fish, crustaceans and hunters.

<b>Camera:</b>	Nikon D500
<b>Lens:</b>	Tokina AT-X 10-17mm f/3.5-4.5 DX Fisheye
<b>Exposure:</b>	1/60 sec, f/13, ISO800





© Fernando Avanka / International Garden Photographer of the Year

## Tasty

**FERNANDO AVANKA**

**Wildlife in the Garden – 1st Place**

During the morning and evening hours, most creatures are usually busy finding their food. It was a bit of a cloudy afternoon, when I saw several squirrels moving across the grass. I was lucky to spot this individual, standing on its hind legs, nibbling a grass seedhead.

<b>Camera:</b>	Nikon D7200
<b>Lens:</b>	Nikon 500mm f/4
<b>Exposure:</b>	1/1250 sec, f/5.6, ISO500

## Spiral Fern Forms

**DONALD BOLAK**

**The Beauty of Plants – Finalist**

Spiral forms in nature are fairly common and ferns are a good example of this. The goal with my capture was an impressionistic rendering of this spiral of a single frond – which is comprised of five focus-stacked images.

<b>Camera:</b>	Nikon D800E
<b>Lens:</b>	Nikon 200mm f/4 Macro
<b>Exposure:</b>	1/30 sec, f/5.6, ISO400









© Tony North / International Garden Photographer of the Year

## Honey Fungi

**TONY NORTH**

**The World of Fungi – 2nd Place**

I found this clump of honey fungus mushrooms growing on a log in Marbury Country Park, Cheshire. I focus-stacked multiple images together to capture the maximum amount of detail.

<b>Camera:</b>	Nikon D7100
<b>Lens:</b>	Nikon 105mm f/2.8 Macro
<b>Exposure:</b>	1/80 sec, f/4, ISO250



International Garden Photographer of the Year (IGPOTY) is now in its 18th year, and is one of the world's most respected photography competitions and touring exhibitions, especially in the garden, flora, fauna and fungi genres. IGPOTY accepts entries from both amateur and professional adult photographers, worldwide. The main competition normally opens in January-February and closes on 31 October each year. For more information, visit [www.igpoty.com](http://www.igpoty.com)





**Vincent Fournier**

“Flora Incognita”

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40 x 55 cm | printed by WhiteWall.com

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How to...

# Capture the Lakes

Landscape photographer **Edyta Rice** takes you on a visual journey through Britain's best-loved national park, and shows how you can take your best-ever images of its stunning scenery

**N**

estled amidst rolling hills and mirror-like lakes, the Cumbrian landscape stands as a captivating muse for photographers seeking to capture the soul-stirring essence of its beauty.

In the pursuit of trying to encapsulate its awe-inspiring scenery, many photographers often embark on a challenging journey, seeking to freeze fleeting moments and evoke profound emotions. However, not every endeavour ends up in success. Some photographers may struggle with conveying the evocative essence, others with composition, and

a few may fall short in the face of technical limitations. In these instances, the path to capturing the elusive beauty of Cumbrian landscapes becomes a humbling exploration, reminding photographers that every frame is a lesson, and not every attempt results in the envisioned masterpiece.

In this journey through the lens, I delve into the enchanting landscapes on my own doorstep – a journey that transcends pixels to preserve the timeless allure of this breathtaking scenery. Join me as I unravel the secrets behind my lens, unveiling the magic that transforms each click into a visual odyssey of mountains, waters and the untamed spirit of the region's nature.

While the focus of this article is the Lake District – which should be on any landscape photographer's bucket list – most of the tips and techniques apply to national parks throughout the UK and indeed the wider world.





## Edyta Rice

Award-winning photographer Edyta places the emphasis firmly on technique as she records the natural beauty of landscapes. She's a brand ambassador for Fotopro tripods and NiSi filters. [www.edytaricephotography.com](http://www.edytaricephotography.com)

All images: © Edyta Rice



# Capture the Lakes



## Things you need to know

**Britain's foremost national park is a landscape photographer's dream, but whether it's on your doorstep or a once-in-a-lifetime trip, it pays to heed our advice before setting out**

The Lake District offers a rich tapestry of natural beauty and diverse landscapes, providing a plethora of subjects for landscape photographers. Few destinations in the United Kingdom boast the convergence of stunning lakes, scenic valleys, verdant forests, impressive waterfalls, charming tarns, towering mountains, and even coastal beauty.

The area stands as a unique haven that encompasses all these elements, making it a photogenic hotspot for visitors eager to capture its diverse and alluring landscapes.

### **Introduction to Lake District photography**

The majority of tourists capture a few snapshots as a keepsake of their visit. More committed photographers come with the sole purpose of delving into the region's photographic possibilities. These enthusiasts rise early and extend their stay into the late hours, seizing those golden moments when the interplay of landscape and light converges to create a striking and dramatic effect. Getting the best out of surrounding scenery involves

a combination of advanced planning, technical proficiency and creative approach. This, in practice, means researching chosen locations, identifying points of interest, checking the weather forecast to anticipate best lighting conditions and considering the application of different compositional techniques, which may sometimes also require minor refinements in post-processing.

Whether it's your first trip to the Lake District or you are regular visitor, a beginner photographer or a seasoned pro, I will point you to some of the best locations and offer technical advice on how to best photograph them. Hopefully, this will inspire you to explore the limitless photographic possibilities of the compelling Cumbrian landscapes.

### **Best landscape photography locations**

Numerous locations await exploration, revealing natural marvels and beauty at every twist and turn. For iconic lake vistas, Coniston Water and Windermere stand out – particularly during misty autumn mornings. If you are embarking on your

**Above: A serene sunrise over Coniston Water, a tranquil start to the day.**

**Top right: Painting the sky pink; a breathtaking image of Derwentwater.**

**Bottom right: A mesmerizing inversion over Lake Windermere.**





first fell walk, consider the Catbells or Latrigg Fell as ideal starting points. Renowned as among the Lake District's favoured easy fells for beginners, both offer a mini-mountain experience with breathtaking views of the surrounding mountains and the picturesque lake of Derwentwater – but opt for an early start to avoid the crowds.

For an awe-inspiring waterfall experience, venture to Aira Force, nestled beside Ullswater. Cascading from beneath a stone arch bridge, the force plummets into a pool 20 metres below. With sunlight piercing through the tree canopy, you may even be fortunate enough to capture a rainbow in the magical mist at the fall's base.

**Heading off the beaten track for an adventure**

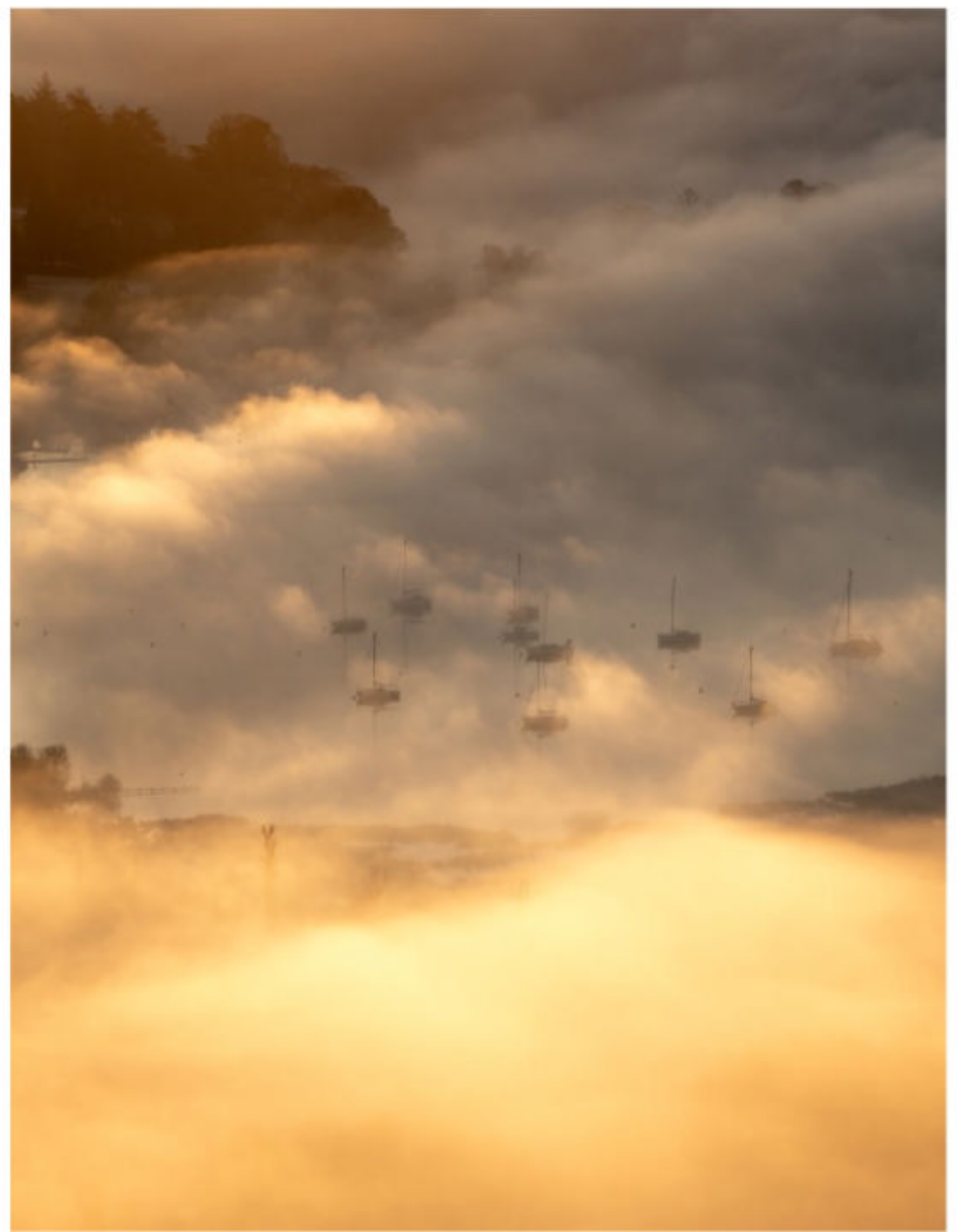
If you're feeling adventurous, you can also consider venturing beyond the well-trodden routes and build a more intimate connection with nature. While popular peaks like Skiddaw dominate the landscape, lesser-known fells offer a quieter, unspoiled connection with nature. At Side Pike and Raven Crag, expansive vistas stretch far beyond the beaten paths. The reward for reaching these remote peaks is a host of panoramic views, offering photographers a unique perspective that captures the vastness of the Lake District. →



**With sunlight piercing through the tree canopy, you may even be fortunate enough to capture a rainbow in the mist**

**The lure of The Lakes**

With more than 16 million visitors arriving each year, the Lake District is Britain's most visited national park, and regularly tops surveys as its most beautiful, too. Landscape photographers, in particular, feel irresistibly drawn to its majestic mountains, shimmering lakes and verdant valleys, and it's difficult not to form an unbreakable connection with the area. Such moments feel magical and leave those who witness them all the richer for it.





# Capture the Lakes



Take a second camera body for back-up and convenience – dedicating one for wide-angle lenses, the other for telephotos

## Art of preparation

**While it may be tempting to make a beeline for the Lake District at the next available opportunity, it pays to do your research to ensure you're prepared for any eventuality**

Venturing into uncharted territories in the Lake District demands a balance of knowledge and courage. If your intention is to photograph such landscapes, thorough preparation is crucial.

Having a car is essential, as relying on local public transport proves challenging at best, and seldom aligns with the optimal arrival times for capturing the best lighting conditions.

### Scouting and planning your expedition

To start, consider whether you're comfortable navigating alone or if a knowledgeable guide is necessary. If driving independently, ensure your vehicle is reliable. While in the area, engage with locals for valuable insights – they can often offer indispensable tips. For extended hikes, carry ample food and water, accounting for additional days. If you're travelling alone, inform someone of your plans. This precaution ensures swift action in case

of any accident. If you're embarking on multi-day journeys, good quality essentials like a backpack, mattress, tent and sleeping bag are imperative. The specific items you'll need will depend on the location, duration and anticipated conditions.

When it comes to camera equipment, take a second camera body for back-up and convenience – dedicating one for wide-angle lenses, the other for telephotos. This eliminates the need for lens changes in potentially dusty environments.

### What's the weather doing? There's an app for that

The weather, sun position and tidal changes are vital considerations. Use photo apps like PhotoPills ([www.photopills.com](http://www.photopills.com)) for planning journeys that account for where the sun will be at what time of day and for astrophotography on clear nights. Cross-reference meteorological information with reliable sources. Try AccuWeather ([www.accuweather.com](http://www.accuweather.com))

**Above: West Water's vibrant hues as the evening falls.**

**Top right: Misty magic at Rydal Water, nature's green sanctuary.**

**Bottom right: Golden glow from Catbells, a peak sunrise special.**





and the Met Office ([www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk)) for a detailed breakdown of temperature, cloud cover, wind and visibility. There are several apps that offer tidal information and additional insights on moon phases, sunrise and sunset, and the tide times ([www.tidetimes.org.uk](http://www.tidetimes.org.uk)) website is invaluable. With meticulous planning and the right resources, navigating the challenges of remote countryside photography becomes a rewarding endeavour.

#### **Navigating the Lakes for the best landscapes**

Local roads are generally well-maintained, but their narrow and winding nature requires caution. There are steep mountain passes, with Hardknott and Wrynose presenting the most challenging driving conditions – complete with hairpin bends, blind summits and steep inclines. Before beginning the journey to these regions, it is important to ensure your vehicle is in optimal condition.

A good rule for driving in the Lakes is to ‘expect the unexpected’. Weather conditions can change quickly and can rapidly render roads impassable – temporary flooding might close some minor routes and higher roads and mountain passes are often left untreated for days in the winter, so carry extra clothing, food and drink in case you get caught out.

This also applies to camping in the mountains – the weather in the hills, even in the summer, is dramatically different from the valleys. Always carry waterproofs, extra warm clothing, map, compass and a mobile phone. If you’re wild camping, the rule of thumb in the Lake District is that you can camp anywhere above the highest fell wall, leaving no sign of you having been there. →

## **A woman with a plan**

6

In my approach to landscapes, I first develop a vision or idea of what I want to create and then begin my research. As a part of that process, I often plan thematic projects – enchanted woodlands, mysterious castles, magical valleys, majestic mountains. I start by visiting websites about the area to find out information such as location access, weather, seasons and any potential hazard considerations that would be important to know. I pay particular interest to changing light at different times of a day, seasonal changes, the effects of weather and compositional approaches. Once at the location, I make repeated visits and document what I’ve seen in a journal to refresh my knowledge when I return. All these help me to start building a mental framework and allows me to develop and visualize the images I intend to capture.







I want to highlight key factors that play a pivotal role in my personal approach to Cumbrian landscapes



## Seasonal compositions

**There are photo opportunities throughout the year, from the russet hues of autumn and snow-capped peaks of winter to the new life of spring and hazy scenes of summer**

Capturing the essence of a season in the Lake District involves exploring the transformations in the landscape that occur during specific times of the year. This requires an understanding of the season's unique characteristics, encompassing its weather, light, colour and demands on your camera skills. The approach to seasonal landscapes is a two-fold process, requiring both keen observation to appreciate what makes each season special and the knowledge of how to effectively document it with your camera.

### **Changing seasons and different challenges**

Landscape photographers often engage in varied discussions about weather, and I firmly believe there's no such thing as inherently good or bad weather. Each set of seasonal conditions presents distinct challenges

and opportunities. However, it's acknowledged that certain conditions can yield more dramatic captures, and the skill lies in recognizing and pursuing these opportunities as they unfold.

In autumn, Cumbrian weather tends to be variable, offering numerous fantastic opportunities. Cold nights can result in mist at dawn, particularly in areas overlooking valleys, rivers and lakes. Following stormy November weather that sweeps away the remnants of autumn colours, plunging temperatures coincide with misty inversions and air frosts, creating a picturesque coating of white on trees and shrubs that transforms the landscape. The enchantment continues into winter, where snow-covered vistas, bathed in the soft glow of low winter light, provide stunning visual experiences. With the arrival of

**Above: The rustic charm of Buttermere's fog-covered trees.**

**Top right: A misty veil hangs over the waterfall emerging from the trees.**

**Bottom right: A lone boat awaits the dawn on the River Rothay.**



## SEASONAL COMPOSITIONS

spring, temperatures rise and nature begins to stir but occasional frosty mornings can still occur, much like in winter. It's advisable to monitor high-pressure systems and temperature forecasts during this period. Summer often brings hazy, late afternoons that work with coastal landscapes. Wildflowers, such as thrift, for example, and heather, can add captivating foreground interest.

### Master the art of composition

Well before delving into landscape photography, my passion was deeply rooted in painting landscapes. I've observed that both endeavours are guided by a shared set of universal principles pertaining to composition and its subsequent elements, such as colour, shape, space and light. While there is much to discuss about composition, I don't aim to delve into every technique. Instead, I want to highlight key factors that play a pivotal role in my personal approach to Cumbrian landscapes.

In my view, the personality of any image is richly expressed through the interplay of colour, light and arrangement concerning the subject. When seeking compositions, I often try to adopt the mindset of a painter, shaping scenes, focusing on these elements.

### Succeed with the 'colour wheel'

Taking colour as an initial example, I draw principles from the 'colour wheel' to evoke the desired mood. For heightened drama, I explore contrasting colours, such as orange and purple, blue and yellow, or red and green. For a more subtle and delicate atmosphere, I seek arrangements of colours that result in low contrast, such as blue/purple and green, green and yellow, or red/orange and yellow. The intentional predominance of specific colours within my composition serves to accentuate a particular mood or highlight distinctive features.

Similarly, I actively seek the 'right light' to craft my compositions. Attention is dedicated to shadows and contrast, as they contribute to the perception of depth and shape. My landscapes often utilize unidirectional light from the side or behind, typically found during the golden hour. However, I'm open to experimenting with other light types, and a favourite is the soft, diffused light present during foggy conditions or the blue hour.

The choice of light direction holds significance, as it aids in achieving the desired mood. In the Lake District, I look for radiant light that aligns with a tranquil and uplifting atmosphere. →

### Focal points

To capture an image with a clear focal point, you will need to ensure that the rest of the image is worth exploring. If your focal point object is heavily textured, then also adjust your perspective to include other areas that are less textured but are nevertheless interesting. Playing with tones and colours helps you to create a dreamlike image – in particular the use of pastel colours will echo dominant subjects. This works well combined with layers with different undertones of colours.





# Capture the Lakes



**Soft light has a notable impact on colour perception, as colour is relative and dependent on its surroundings**

## Helpful tools

**While we all love being out in nature, reproducing the epic scenes unfolding before your eyes in an impactful photograph will also require spending time in the digital darkroom**

I have always held the belief that much like painters – who are recognized for their consistent tendencies, unique styles and brush strokes – landscape photographers can develop distinctive post-processing styles. Post-processing has no definitive right or wrong; it is shaped by your subjective vision and your skill in extracting the best from your image.

### **The elements of light and colour**

Two initial elements that immediately capture my attention in any landscape image are light and colour. How these elements are manipulated defines one's style and can result in either a successful shot or a poorly executed one. Light and colour play a pivotal role in breathing life into otherwise-dull scenes, allowing the photographer to capture the essential atmosphere crucial in any landscape photography.

In my personal approach to harnessing light and colour, I adopt a two-stage method. Initially, I contemplate which type of light would best convey

my subject, and then I strategically choose the specific time and position to capture the desired composition. An early lesson I learned is that preconceived notions about optimal lighting conditions can sometimes hinder the perception and capture of the best possible image. Both light and colour serve as potent tools for communication, influencing mood and shaping compositions. The direction of light significantly affects how a composition is crafted and exposed, while the colour and its temperature play a pivotal role in determining the structure and mood of a scene.

### **Softly does it between highlights and shadows**

The most favourable light isn't always the most vibrant; at times, it's the gentle, soft light that proves to be the most dramatic and effective. Soft light, with its ability to 'wrap' around the subject and illuminate shadows to a certain degree, presents distinct advantages. It produces diffused, gradual transitions between highlights and shadows, contributing to the shaping of the composition.

**Above: Mirror-like reflections across West Water.**

**Top right: Bassenthwaite Lake framed by nature's embrace.**

**Bottom right: Peace and serenity at Warnscale Bothy, overlooking Buttermere.**



Additionally, soft light has a notable impact on colour perception, as colour is relative and dependent on its surroundings. Golden hour light, for instance, often imparts a warm glow that I frequently employ in countryside photography, evoking feelings of happiness and comfort.

### **Harnessing dynamic range**

In the realm of landscapes, especially during the golden hour, a valuable skill is the ability to overcome dynamic range issues. My personal preference involves the use of multiple exposures and subsequent treatment using luminosity masks. I blend no more than three exposures with a one-stop difference between each image. This method enables me to create a faithful representation of the various tones, details and lighting observed on location. Luminosity masks, with their self-feathering quality, contribute to a smoother and more natural transition in blending.

Undoubtedly, luminosity masks stand apart from other methods of creating masks in Photoshop. Unlike selection tools that generate hard line selections, luminosity masks provide smooth, graduated transitions, allowing for adjustments without harsh contour lines.

Among my preferred luminosity masks is the manual 'exposure blending' technique. While similar to HDR (high dynamic range), exposure blending often produces more realistic-looking results. This method allows for the addition of significantly more detail in both highlights and shadows by combining multiple exposures. The process can be applied to a single Raw file, offering powerful ways to extract intricate details.

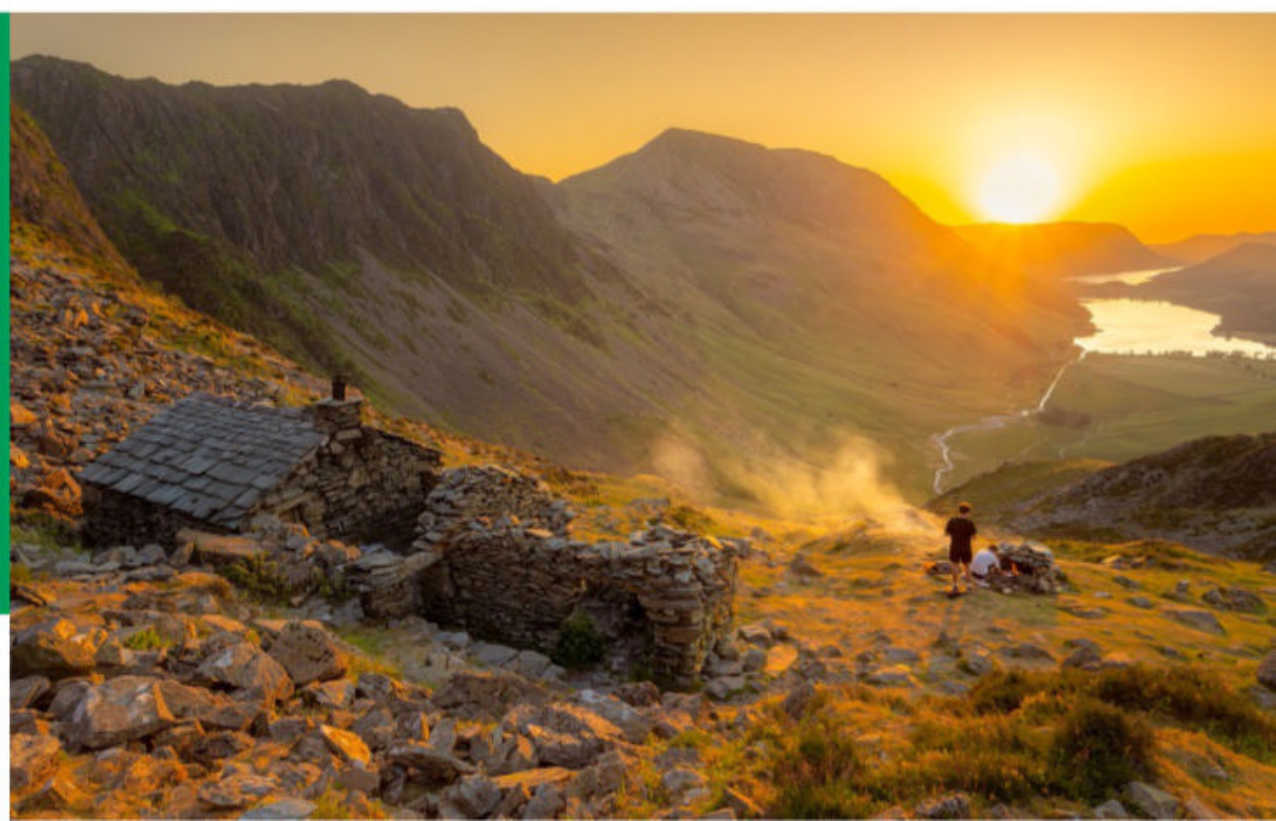
### **Keep it subtle... less is more**

Establishing a post-processing workflow for images is a significant step towards the final output. I emphasize the principle that less is often more, and subtle changes can have a profound impact. Remember that not every image requires the same type of post-processing, and the final look of your image reflects how you captured it, composed it and processed it. Even the most adept post-processing cannot rescue a weak composition, and vice versa. A successful landscape image is an amalgamation of all these elements. →



## **Light and subject**

In my search for good light for magical landscapes, I often find myself looking for a quality of light that mirrors the character of the landscape and harmonizes with the subject that I am photographing. When the light does not harmonize with the subject, you might end up with a disjointed look, where the subject and light are each seemingly trying to say something different. The key to capturing landscapes that convey emotional impact is to combine the subject with the light in such way that they form a single, strong message. The subject and light need to complement one another.





# Capture the Lakes



## High & low-key images

**Try employing a more unconventional approach to processing your images to help to convey the mood and feeling that you want your photographs to evoke in the viewer**

Creating beautiful landscapes sometimes involves pushing the established norms and prevailing trends, even if it means defying conventional rules. Two distinctive techniques that can inspire creativity and yield original results are high-key and low-key photography. Both techniques are known to complement challenging weather conditions, offering the chance to experiment.

### **Overexpose for high-key images**

When overcast conditions prevail with flat, grey light, uninspiring skies, snowy landscapes or foggy scenes, high-key photography can be a compelling choice. This style uses exceptionally bright lighting to diminish or entirely blow out dark shadows in the image, resulting in a positive and calming aesthetic. When shooting high key, camera settings should be configured to intentionally overexpose the scene.

Post-processing of high-key images can involve converting them to black and white initially to assess their potential. Adjustments to Lightroom or Adobe Camera Raw's Exposure, Highlights, Whites and Contrast sliders are made to achieve the desired effect, pushing the histogram data to the right edge.

### **Darken it down for low-key photography**

In contrast to high-key, low-key photography is characterized by darker tones, often featuring shadowed or black backgrounds. This style creates moody, mysterious, dark and dramatic photos, making it particularly effective in stormy weather. Low key is also frequently employed to emphasize texture in landscapes. This technique is well-suited for capturing subjects with substantial surface texture, such as dunes, rolling hills or mountains. Underexposing the image by adjusting shutter

**Above: Ethereal fog drifts through the woodland.**

**Top right: The frozen whispers of Brathay's icy morning enchantment.**

**Bottom right: Storm clouds gather over a lone tree in Derwentwater's solitude.**

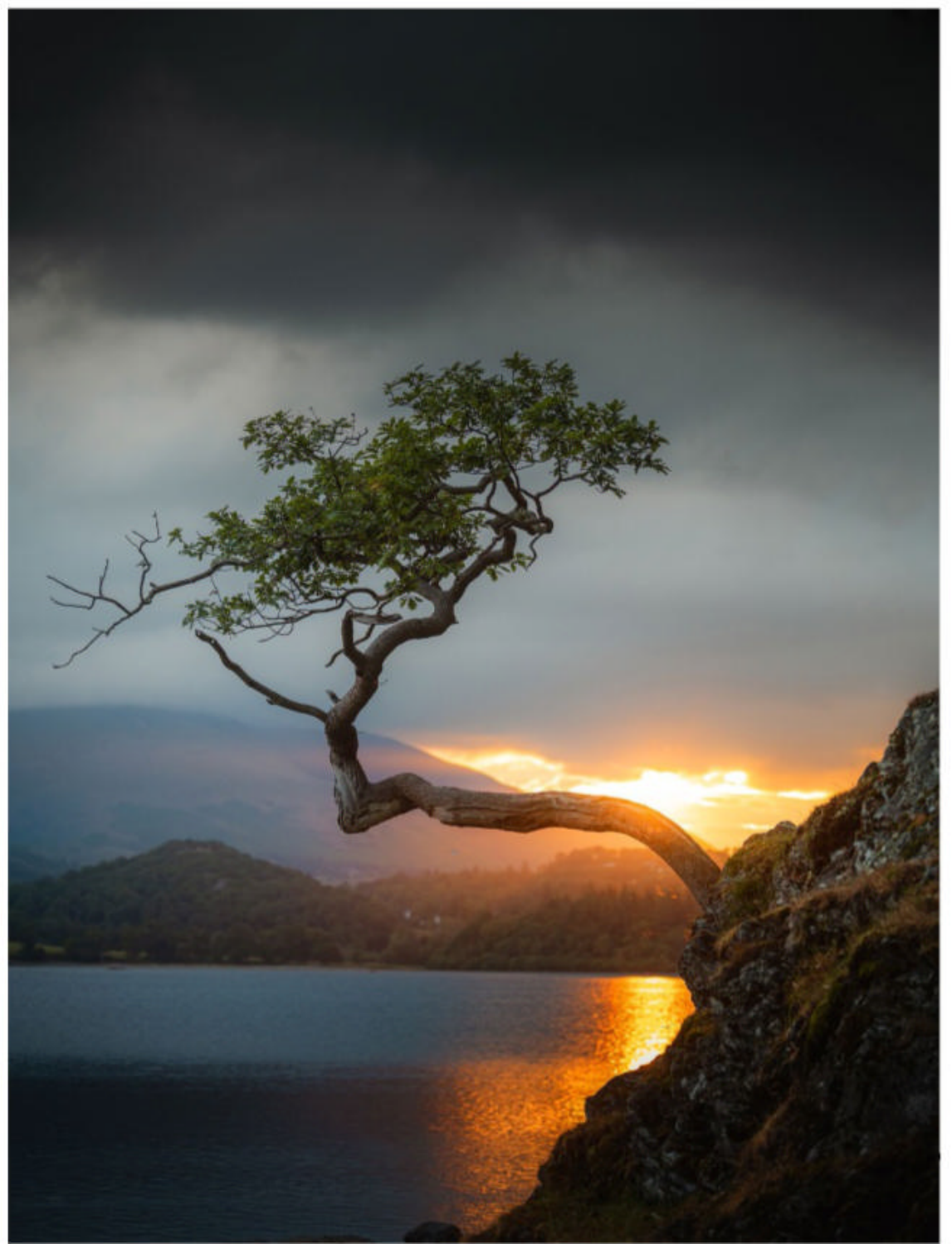




## Otherworldly imagery

Not surprisingly, ethereal, delicate and otherworldly post-processing techniques have become very popular in recent years. Dream-like, fairy-tale images are nothing short of inspiring and many photographers have a strong desire to capture magical landscapes. Luckily, there are many techniques and tools available in post-processing software that can help us enhance the ethereal look. I use both Lightroom and Photoshop and tend to concentrate on the use of 'local adjustments' and non-invasive ways of enhancing my images.

speed or using ND filters to block light can achieve the desired low-key effect. In post-processing, a useful approach is to make the image entirely black and then gradually brighten it until the natural highlights emerge. Similarly, for shadows, start by making the image entirely white and then slowly reduce the exposure until shadows become visible. The objective is to give equal attention to shadows as to illuminated elements, using light to shape the darkness. Monochrome conversions, where light outlines shape and form, can produce impactful effects in low-key photography. **M**







**Tom  
Mackie**  
On Location

Tom is an award-winning professional photographer, best known for his high-quality landscape work. More info at: [www.tommackie.com](http://www.tommackie.com)  
YouTube: [Landscape Photography IQ](#)

Using The Photographer's Ephemeris, Tom determined the supermoon would rise over the mountains in the distance. A telephoto lens compresses the mountains, creating a layering effect to the composition.

# Umbrian odyssey

Tom ventures to a lesser-known region of Italy, uncovering dramatic landscapes while avoiding the hustle and bustle with fewer crowds



Photographers seem to flock to Tuscany and rightly so, the landscapes are stunning. Rolling hills, adorned with vineyards and olive groves, are punctuated by charming rustic villages and iconic cypress tree-lined country roads.

However, I always prefer to take the road less travelled.

I'll admit I'm selfish, but I prefer to have a location all to myself if possible, and I think the majority of landscape photographers feel the same way. A couple of years back, I reached a point where I decided to venture beyond Tuscany and explore equally some enchanting regions in Italy.

The turning point occurred when I revisited a location I hadn't captured in years, only to find myself sharing it with a crowd of 50 other photographers. I didn't have to look far for a less-busy alternative as Umbria is situated right next to Tuscany and offers a unique mix of features. It has the same charm as Tuscany, but is more wooded with rugged mountains. And the best part? Avoiding a ton of photographers crowding locations.

Arriving in Perugia a few days before leading a workshop last year, I checked out a couple of new locations, which unfortunately didn't pan out, but instead, I found an amazing field of sunflowers along the way. After checking the direction of the sunset on The Photographer's Ephemeris (TPE) app, I determined this would be a perfect location to capture the sunset over the flowers. But with such an expansive field, where do I start to find a composition?

I walked around with just my iPhone taking a few test compositions before I found three prominent sunflowers that I positioned in the bottom of the frame. Then it was just a matter of setting up the camera and waiting until the sun emerged from behind the clouds. I used a Nikon 24mm f/1.8 prime lens, which produces great sunbursts. After the sun sank below the horizon, the clouds lit up. Now, fingers crossed for a repeat of this magic with the group. We came back for sunset on the first day of the workshop, and the conditions were even better. Gotta love it when a plan comes together.

## Over the moon

The month of July brings a prime opportunity to capture the vibrant wildflowers on the plain beneath the Sibillini Mountains. I strategically timed the workshop to align with the rising of the supermoon, envisioning a shot with the flowers in the foreground and the moon ascending over the mountains. However, as is often the case, plans don't always unfold as expected.

We reached Norcia, which was still in the process of recovering from the 2016 earthquake, and the town's skyline was dominated by scaffolding. When we checked into our hotel, I mentioned to the receptionist we were heading up to the plain to photograph the wildflowers. He broke the bad news saying there were no wildflowers this year due to the extremely hot weather. We decided to give it a look anyway, flowers or no flowers, as we wanted to capture the supermoon rise that night. Interestingly, when attempting to input the destination into my GPS, there was a noticeable lack of signal. Undeterred and armed with a general sense of direction, we set off.



**I mounted the 300mm f/4 to compress the mountains, making them and the moon a decent size within the frame**

When one of my companions gained a signal and pointed out we had missed a crucial turn several miles back, we redirected our route. I stumbled upon a sign for a restaurant named Bella Vista, promising a remarkable view. We decided to explore and see if Bella Vista lived up to its name. The narrow road climbed into the mountains, unveiling a breathtaking panorama as it levelled out. The sign's claim proved accurate; we had an incredible view towards the mountains. Using The Photographer's Ephemeris for the moonrise position, serendipity struck again. It was aligned





perfectly over the mountains. I mounted the Nikon 300mm f/4 lens to compress the mountains, making them and the moon a decent size within the frame. The sky exhibited a beautiful pink afterglow, providing a compelling contrast to the blue haze.

The supermoon rose as anticipated and, in post-production, I did an exposure blend to preserve detail in both the moon and the landscape. This unexpected spot turned out even better than our initial intention, reminding us that it pays off to stay open-minded and explore new places. 📸



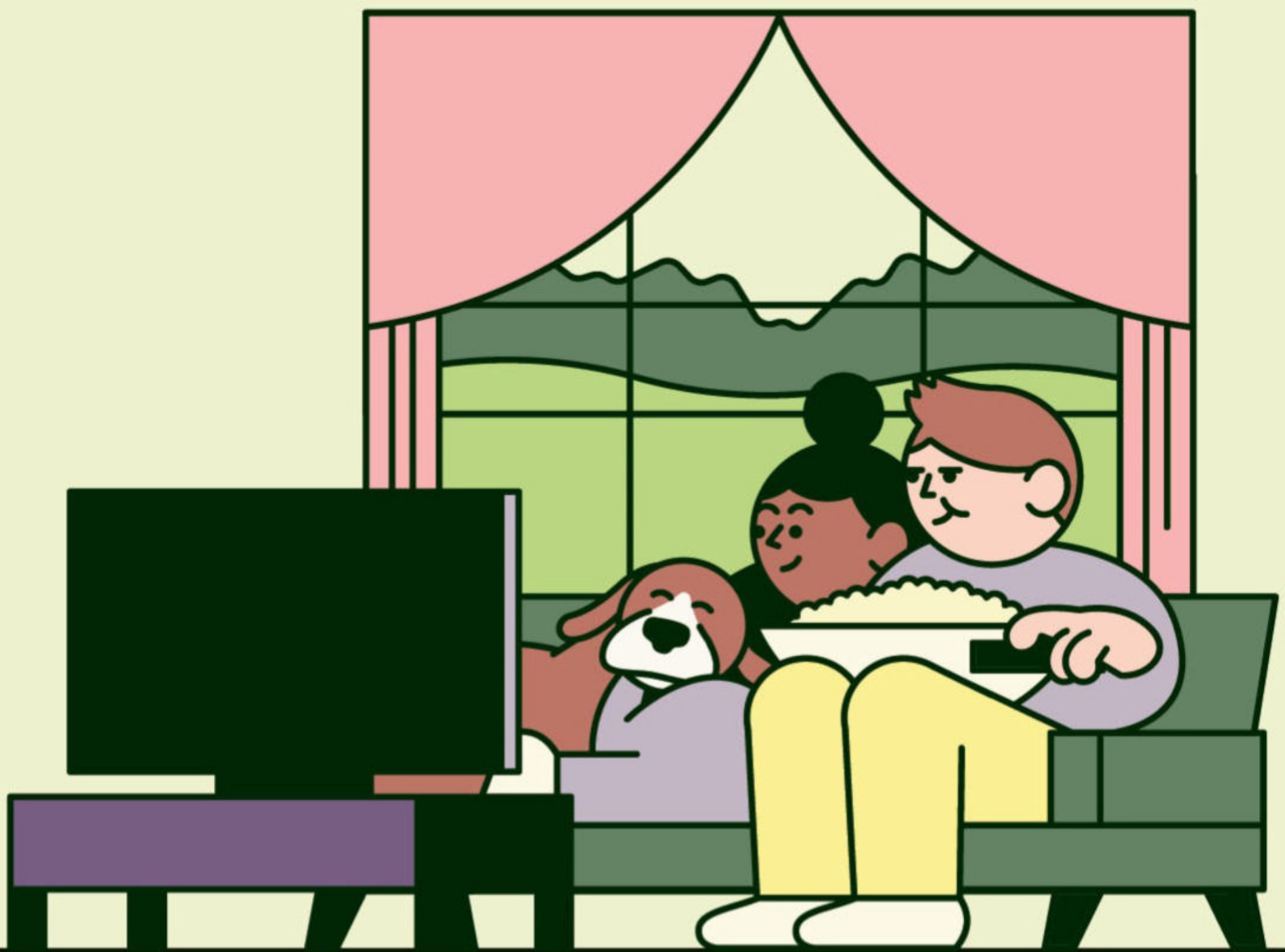
**Unconstricted by a tripod and camera, Tom used his iPhone to make quick test shots to determine which compositions would work best, prior to taking this.**

Photography: © Tom Mackie



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## Bag brilliant bluebell shots this spring

How to find and capture lush carpets of bluebells when they're at their dazzling best



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Transform images in just a few words by adding this powerful Adobe CC filter to your workflow



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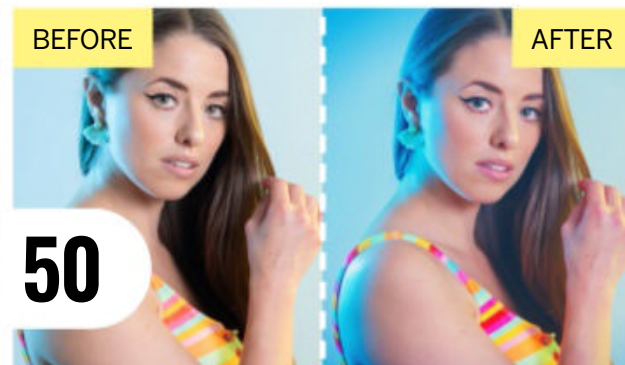
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Whenever you see this logo, it means there's a video to accompany the tutorial, taking you through things step by step. If a tutorial has accompanying project files, there will be an accompanying download link too.





*Project one: Bluebells*

## Magic carpets

**Mark Bauer** gives you the best shot at finding and capturing lush carpets of bluebells this spring

Despite the increasingly early starts, spring is the favourite time of year for many landscape photographers. It's warm, the weather is – in theory – more settled, and the landscape is starting to come back to life with fresh, green leaves on the trees and beautiful wildflowers in the countryside.

One of the most enchanting sights of the season has to be a thick carpet of bluebells

covering a woodland floor, with a vibrant canopy above. Bluebell woods are not just a stunning sight; with their intoxicating aroma and the sounds of nearby wildlife, they can be a complete sensory experience.

While you can't photograph the scent or sounds of a bluebell wood, the right technique and a bit of creativity will help you to capture some springtime magic.

### Expert Tip



When shooting in a bluebell wood with the rising or setting sun shining through the trees, select a small aperture, such as f/16 or f/22, and frame the scene so that the sun is partially obscured by a branch or trunk. The diffraction from the small aperture will create an attractive starburst effect or 'sun star'.



# How to shoot bluebells

## 1 Find a location

Ideally, your bluebell wood will be full of mature trees with straight trunks – beech woods are perfect. Look for areas of woodland where the forest floor is clean, free of fallen branches and twigs, and has clear pathways through it. The latter allows you to access woodland viewpoints without stepping on these protected flowers.



## 2 Come back for more

Depending on the conditions and location, bluebells peak anywhere between mid-April and mid-May. Only a week will separate vivid carpets of colour from fading glory, so frequent reces will help you time your visit to coincide with their peak. This shot is a little late in the season, and the flowers have already started to wilt.



## 3 The right conditions

Woodland is very contrasty in bright sunlight. Visit on overcast days when the light is diffused or early/late in the day, when the sun is low. On early/late sunny days, shoot at the edge of the woods, so the sun casts shadows towards the camera to create dynamic compositions. Use a polarizer to reduce glare and boost colours.

## 4 Comp and creativity

Woodlands are busy environments. Create a structured composition by selecting obvious groups of trees or a natural focal point, such as a distinctive trunk. Separate elements as much as possible – avoid overlapping trunks in key parts of the frame. Be patient, and wait for the light to hit a key part of the scene.



Camera:	Nikon Z 7II
Lens:	24-200mm f/4-6.3
Exposure:	1/4 sec, f/16, ISO800

Above: Use a short-telephoto focal length to compress the view and make carpets of bluebells seem more dense.

## 5 Camera settings

Aperture priority will make it easier to cope with changing light, while still allowing you to control depth of field (f/8 is good for front-to-back sharpness). Increase your shutter speed if you notice motion blur due to swaying branches and don't be afraid to increase your ISO if you have to. **N**





Overcast days emit soft, diffused light. Also, work early/late in the day to capture gorgeous golden light.

A fast 35mm, 50mm, 85mm or 135mm prime is ideal for capturing sharp, subject-popping portraits.

A reflector or LED panel can be used to gently fill in shadows and even out the lighting on the face.

## Project two: Outdoor portraits

# Take it outside

**Mike Harris** shows you how to capture stunning portraits on location and in golden light

It's easy to shy away from portrait photography. On the surface, it doesn't seem very accessible: you need a willing model, super-fast lenses and all manner of lighting equipment, right? But portrait photography might be more accessible than you think.

Sure, you can't get around sourcing a model, but you'd be surprised how family and friends are happy to sit in return for some photos. And failing that, there are plenty of portrait groups out there that share the price of hiring a professional

model or two. While I'm sure we'd all love the Nikon Z 85mm f/1.2 S, you can pick up some really affordable f/1.8 primes, such as the superb Viltrox 85mm f/1.8 Z, that will stand you in good stead. And as dynamic range and image quality has increased, naturally lit, outdoor portraiture is more popular than ever.

Best of all, you don't need to find an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or gain press access to source a suitable location for your outdoor portrait session. Whether you're based in an urban or rural setting,

there are likely to be thousands of potential locations right outside your door.

Throughout this article, we'll teach you what kit to prioritize, which camera settings to use, how to find a good location and ways you can harness natural light. We shot with modelling duo @connor\_and\_jessica, who cycled through poses without needing prompts and even suggested costume changes. Working with pro models is a great way to learn, because they'll bring their experience to the shoot, allowing you to focus on your composition and settings. →





When shooting at 35mm (FX equivalent), keep your subject in the centre of the frame to minimize distortion.





A fast 135mm prime lens is ideal for frame-filling shots of subjects, with creamy, ethereal backdrops.

## Camera kit

### ◀ For every budget

You don't need expensive kit to capture jaw-dropping portraits. Fast autofocus is helpful – but not essential – and although fast lenses give the best bokeh-filled backgrounds, there are lots of good-value f/1.8 primes.

The three most common portrait focal lengths are 50mm, 85mm and 135mm, with many photographers opting for a 70-200mm f/2.8 for the latter. However, 35mm is another fantastic and often overlooked choice, since it can be used to cram in plenty of context.

The Nikon AF-S 50mm f/1.8G is our top choice for portraits on a budget. It can be found for well under £100 used and provides a great 50mm or 75mm focal length for FX and DX users respectively.

## Stay sharp

### Camera settings ▶

Always expose for your subject's skin. Use the reciprocal rule to avoid camera shake by matching your shutter speed's denominator with your focal length (or exceeding it). You may need to double or even triple your shutter speed if you're using a sensor that's above 24.5Mp.

Z-Series users can use Face/Eye Detection to lock focus on the eye that's closest to the camera, but if you're using a Nikon DSLR, we suggest using single-point AF (AF-S). You can then half depress the shutter button to lock focus with the centre focus point (the most accurate). Keep the button half depressed while you refine your composition – on the same focal plane – and take the shot.

Many portraits are shot at wide apertures to separate the subject from the background, so you'll want to shoot fully manual or in aperture priority. Whether you choose a white balance preset or set it manually, shoot Raw so you can alter it in post.



When shooting two subjects wide open, keep their faces on the same focal plane so they are both sharp.







## Setting the scene

### ◀ Costumes and location

A good location is vital. You can capture incredible images in both urban and rural settings, but always scout potential locations before the shoot. You don't want to be wasting available light or time while searching for locations.

Look for compositional cues, such as leading lines, frames within frames, complementary colours and clean backgrounds. Think about the relationship between model and location,

too. Research the model's portfolio to understand their character and style, and discuss what kind of outfits they have available. A long, flowing dress might look great in a rural setting and activewear might complement an urban setting.

We shot in a botanical garden on a cold day, so our models dressed appropriately for the weather and brought along several top layers that could be swapped out to fit each scene.

This tan jacket complements the pink hues from the foliage behind and the soft, evening light.



Direct sunlight (left) has created harsh, distracting shadows, but soft light in this image is perfectly even.



## Lighting

### That's a bit harsh ▶

While it's entirely possible to capture amazing portraits in high-contrast lighting, this is a very specific and more advanced technique. In most situations, portrait photographers opt to shoot in soft, diffused lighting. Soft, natural light is present on an overcast day or later/earlier in the day when the sun is lower in the sky. If you've no choice but to shoot in the middle of the day, simply position your model out of direct sunlight. Use a reflector to soften shadows on the model's face, if you have to, and be mindful of your surroundings.

Anything large and white can act as an improvised giant reflector, but colourful objects can alter the hue of reflected light and cause unsightly colour casts. ■



# Cabin fervour

**Tracey Welch** boards a narrowboat and captures the spirit of the waterways

This portrait was taken in Braunston where I met Nick who works and lives on an old narrowboat. My image shows him in the small boatman's cabin, which he calls home. When photographing a documentary-style portrait, it's essential that you capture the subject's character and frame their surroundings to build a strong narrative.

### 1 Build a rapport

Absorb yourself in your chosen environment. I spent time chatting to all the different characters who live along the canal. Living on a boat myself meant I was able to quickly establish a rapport. It's essential that you choose a topic that interests you both, so you can build genuine relationships.

### 2 Put them at ease

You may need to make a few visits to really build a relationship with your chosen subject. I spent time earning Nick's trust and getting to know his character, which made it easier to give directions during the shoot. It also meant he was comfortable in my presence, making for a more natural portrait.

### 3 Travel light

I used my Nikon Z 6II with a 24-70mm lens to give me versatility – a lightweight setup is ideal for walking around locations. Using a standard zoom enabled me to use wider focal lengths to capture more of the cabin space and tighter focal lengths for a more conventional portrait-style image.

### 4 Fill the frame

I shot from the back of the boat, through to the cabin and used the wide end of my lens to fit in the environment. I avoided flash to keep the image as natural as possible by fully opening the hatch and doors to flood the cabin with natural light.

### 5 Master mono

After selecting the image in Adobe Bridge, I wanted my edit to help convey the nostalgic atmosphere of the waterways and Nick's story. In Camera Raw, I converted the Raw file to black and white, adding contrast and boosting the levels to increase the impact of the image. **N**







The atmospheric cabin on board Nick's boat evokes the spirit of a centuries-old way of life.

Camera:	Nikon Z 6II
Lens:	24-70mm f/2.8
Exposure:	1/100 sec, f/2.8, ISO400





BEFORE

AFTER

## Project four: Affinity Photo

# Raw portrait power

James Paterson shows you how to use the Develop Persona in Affinity Photo to enhance your Raw portraits



[www.bit.ly/np162portraits](http://www.bit.ly/np162portraits)

When it comes to editing portraits, a few simple techniques can take your image in all kinds of interesting directions. In this project we'll explore a range of edits you can make in Affinity Photo. Most of these are carried out in the Develop Persona, which is the workspace for Raw editing. This is the place to process and enhance your Raw photos before taking them into the main Photo Persona for further editing, if necessary.

Straight-out-of-camera Raw files tend

to look a little flat and dull. But this is because Raw is meant to give you the best possible starting point for editing. Raws contain greater dynamic range and colour data than JPEGs, and we can use the tools in the Affinity Photo Develop Persona in order to harness all this extra data.

This is why, as a rule of thumb, it's best to take a Raw image as far as we can using Raw development tools, and only then open it into the Photo Persona for any further editing required. While the Raw tools in the

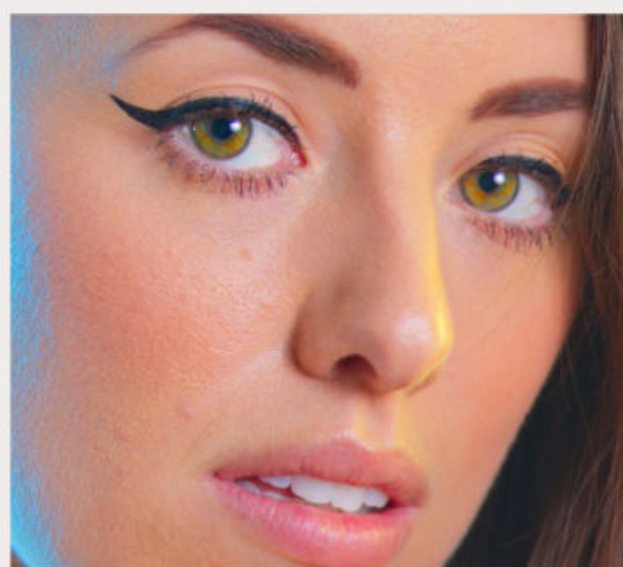
Develop Persona lack the depth of features in the Photo Persona, there are still several powerful features, such as Curves and Overlays. We can use these to enhance our portrait, make local adjustments and to boost the colours.

We've supplied a portrait for you to try out, but it's better to use your own, and it needn't even be a Raw file. You can edit JPEGs or TIFF files in the Develop Persona too, just click the icon at top left to open any image into Affinity Photo's Raw workspace.

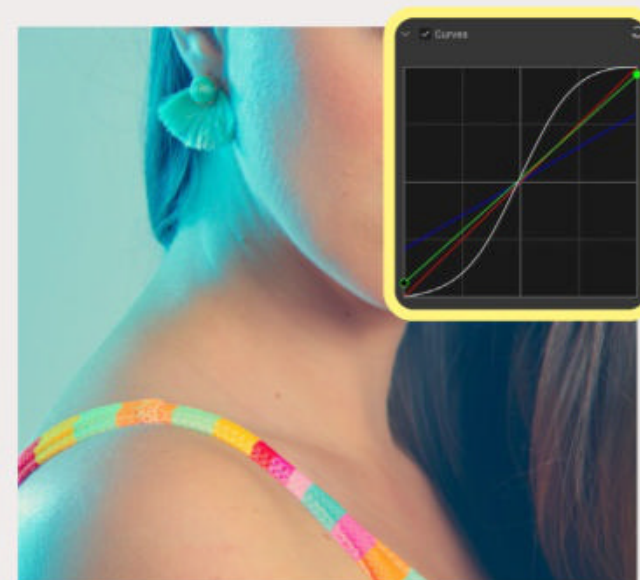




**1 Classic S-curve**  
Go to the Develop Persona. Then go to the Curves panel and plot an S-shaped curve to boost contrast and saturation. Sometimes it's worth reducing the contrast using the Contrast slider, then adding it with an S-curve. This gives you more control over shadows and highlights.



**2 Boost the eyes**  
The Overlay tools allow you to paint over areas to make adjustments. A boost to the eyes can be very effective. Go to the Overlay panel and click on the brush then paint over the iris. Go to the Basic panel and increase saturation and contrast. Repeat to lighten the whites of the eyes.

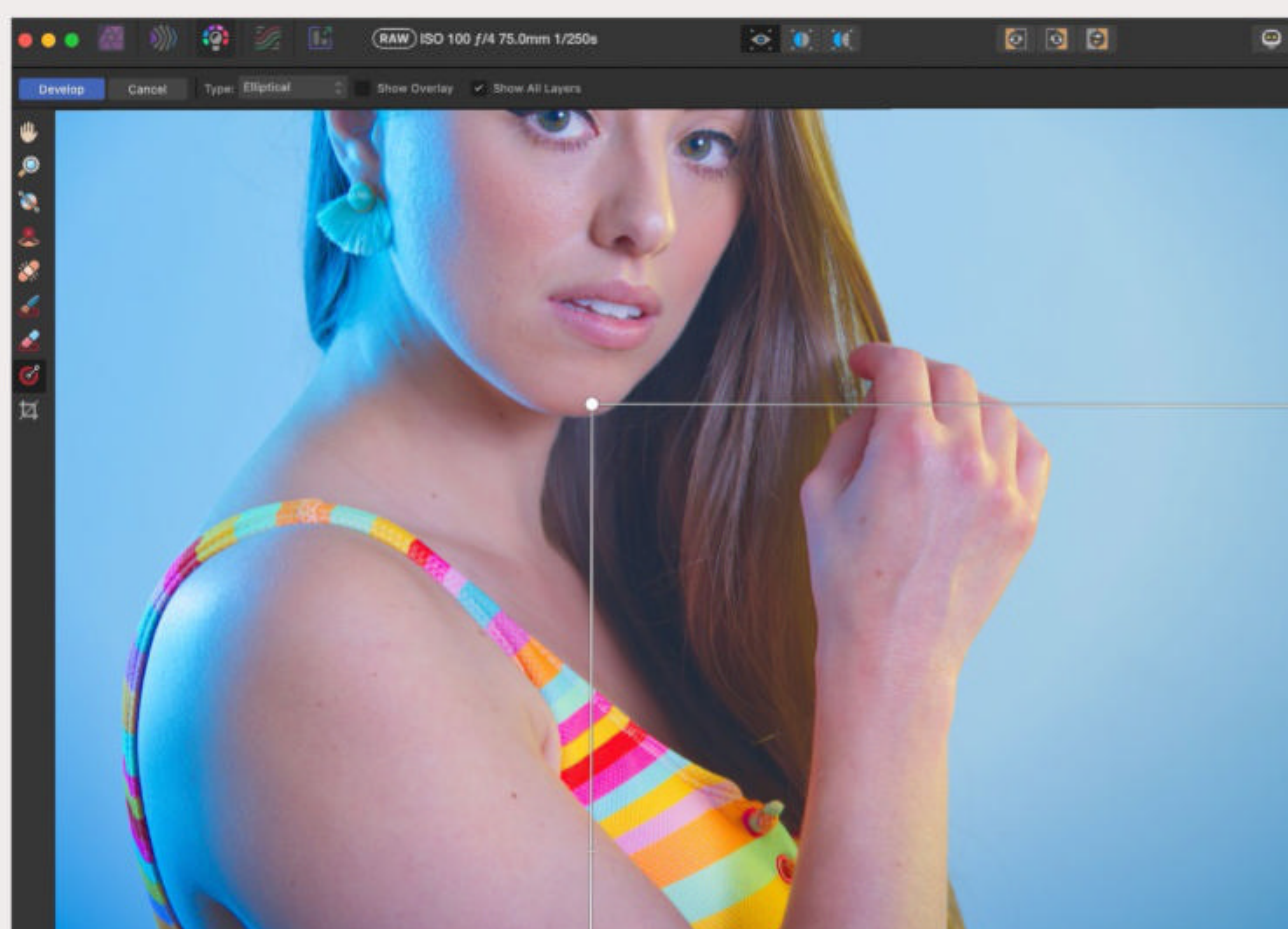


**3 Experiment**  
Create colour effects by experimenting with the curves channels. Go to the Curves panel and change the dropdown from Master to Red, Green or Blue. Drag the top right and bottom left points inwards or up/down to introduce colour shifts to the shadows or highlights.

**4 Add a vignette**  
Portraits will often benefit from a vignette. First darken the image by reducing Exposure, and, if you like, drag the White Balance Temperature slider left to skew colours. Next grab the Gradient Overlay tool, set Mode to Radial and drag out from the face to make an overlay, then increase Exposure to lift the face.



**5 Clarity reduction**  
The Clarity setting can look a little heavy, so try reducing it to act more kindly over skin. To remove spots or marks, grab the Blemish Removal tool. Use the ] and [ keys to resize the brush tip. Click over a mark, then, if necessary, drag the sample point to a clean area of skin nearby.



**6 Try the free LUTs**  
The Raw tools in Affinity Photo are basic compared with what can be done in the main Photo Persona. So once you have taken the Raw image as far as you can, click the Develop button at top left. Try out the free LUT presets supplied in the project files (see right). **N**

**Expert Tip**



We've supplied a set of colour lookup tables (LUTs) to add colour treatments in Affinity Photo. To load them, go to the Photo Persona, then Window > Adjustments. Expand the LUT section, click the cog and choose Import LUTs, then click through the LUTs to try them out. If an effect is too strong, go to the Layers panel for the LUT adjustment layer to reduce the layer opacity.



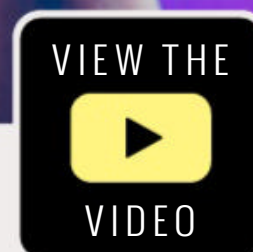


BEFORE



AFTER

*Project five: Adobe CC*



[www.bit.ly/np162ai](http://www.bit.ly/np162ai)

## Generate AI backdrops

Meet the filter that creates backgrounds based on a few words, **James Paterson** shows you how

If you've been paying attention to photography news outlets, you cannot have failed to notice the furor over AI-image generation. Generators such as Stable Diffusion, Dall-E and Midjourney make it possible to create artwork from nothing more than a sentence. This has caused excitement and apprehension among photographers, and the way these tools gather and reassemble the substance of existing photographs raises genuine concerns about intellectual property.

Whether you see AI as ground-breaking technology or a threat to traditional

creatives, there's no denying that we're entering a new era of image-making.

Users looking to experiment with text-to-image generation will find an intriguing tool within Photoshop's Beta software (at the time of writing). The Backdrop Creator Neural filter lets you create a whole new backdrop from just a few words. Of course, anything in beta isn't the finished article, but it's worth experimenting with the latest Adobe tools. Backdrop Creator is designed to work with your images, and, as such, it may offer a glimpse of how photography and AI can work together in the future.

### Expert Tip



You need to make your cutout and backdrop look like they belong together. Solutions include adjusting colours and tones, adding a vignette or applying other filter effects. Another trick is to add a texture layer on top, using blend modes to combine it with the layers below. We've supplied 15 textures; drag them into your image and experiment with blend modes, opacity and masking.



## 1 Photoshop Beta

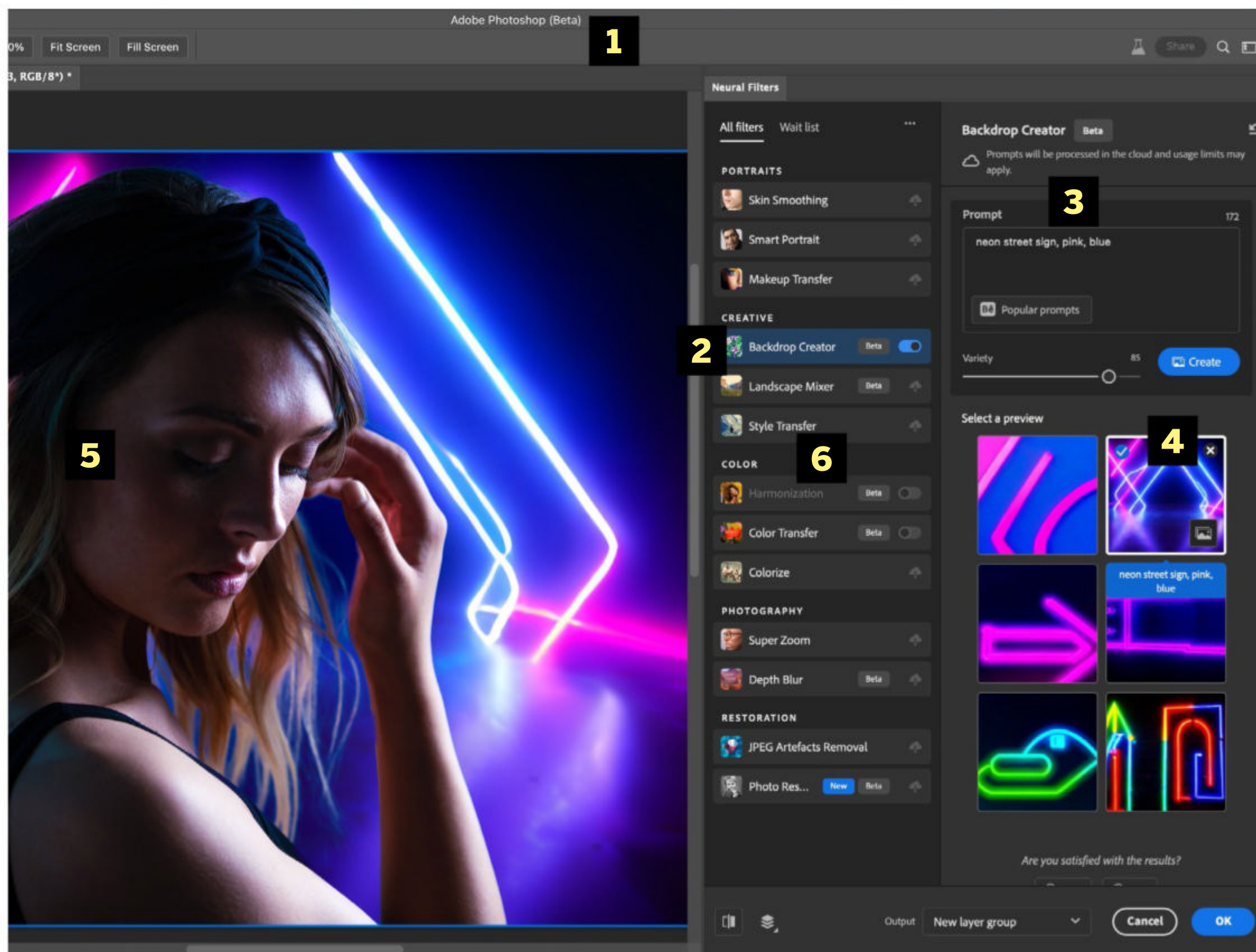
Photoshop Beta is a separate application to Photoshop. In most regards it's identical, but Adobe uses it to trial new tools and filters like the Backdrop Creator filter, while gathering usage data that helps to shape the finished product. Anybody with a Creative Cloud subscription can download it. Open your Creative Cloud app and go to the Beta Apps tab on the left, install it, then launch it and open an image to get started.

## 2 Background Creator

The Background Creator can be found under Filter > Neural Filters. You'll need to download the filter if it's your first time using it. It won't let you craft highly detailed scenes, so you won't get photo-realistic results. It's more geared towards creating abstracts, patterns and blurred impressions. As such, it works well when combined with portraits where the background would be out of focus.

## 3 Text prompts

Type your text prompts here. We tried 'neon street sign, pink, blue' to generate the backdrop for our portrait. Some text prompts aren't permitted – for instance, anything related to people will be met with 'Filter does not support human imagery'. You'll also occasionally see that words are omitted. You might find you get more detailed images if you add in words like 'HD' (high definition) or 'photograph'.



## 4 Generated images

Type out your text prompt, the filter will generate three different images. Click on the corresponding thumbnail to see how any one will look. Any ticked images will be created as separate layers once you hit OK. If you like the look of an image but would like to see more variations, click the 'More like this' icon to generate three more options. Set Variety to a high value, and use a low value to focus on specifics.

## 5 Cut out

Begin by cutting out the person or object you want in front of a new backdrop. Open the image, then go to Select > Select and Mask. Click the Select Subject button, then click the Refine Hair button. Use the sliders to fine-tune the selection edge, then choose Output: New Layer with Layer Mask and hit OK. Highlight the bottom layer, then go to Filter > Neural Filters to start using the Background Creator.

## 6 Try Harmonize

Once you've generated the new backdrop, it's likely that you'll need to tweak the colours in the subject. The Harmonize filter can be useful. Go to Filter > Neural Filters and turn on Harmonize. Target the background in the Source dropdown, then use the sliders to fine-tune the results. Output to a new layer and experiment with the layer opacity to control the strength of the effect. **N**



## *Project six: The big project*

# A place in the sunset

Stitch together a set of sunset silhouettes and master key skills with **James Paterson**

As any photographer worth their salty tripod legs knows, sunrise and sunset is a good time to head out to the beach with the camera. When the sun goes low and reflections tint the water, we can be treated to one of the most gorgeous sights of the great outdoors. But the best sunset photos capture more than just bold clouds and vibrant colours. What we need is a subject to frame against the sky. Because of the stark contrast between the sky and foreground, it's often impossible to record detail in both. Instead, we have the opportunity to capture bold silhouettes.

You can have all kinds of fun crafting playful silhouetted portraits. In this project, we'll show you how to shoot for a striking stitch. This involves capturing our subjects in lots of different positions around the frame, shooting a variety of poses and bringing in different props. By using a tripod to keep all the frames aligned, it's a simple task to combine the best poses later on into an eye-catching array of silhouettes.

Whether you want to combine portraits or capture a single frame at sundown, you'll find lots of tips and tricks. We'll look at the ideal camera settings, the best angles and posing suggestions. You'll also find editing tips on how to bring a set of poses together, and a Photoshop guide in the video. →

VIEW THE



VIDEO

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A series of silhouetted figures contrast against the clouds to really stand out on the beach.

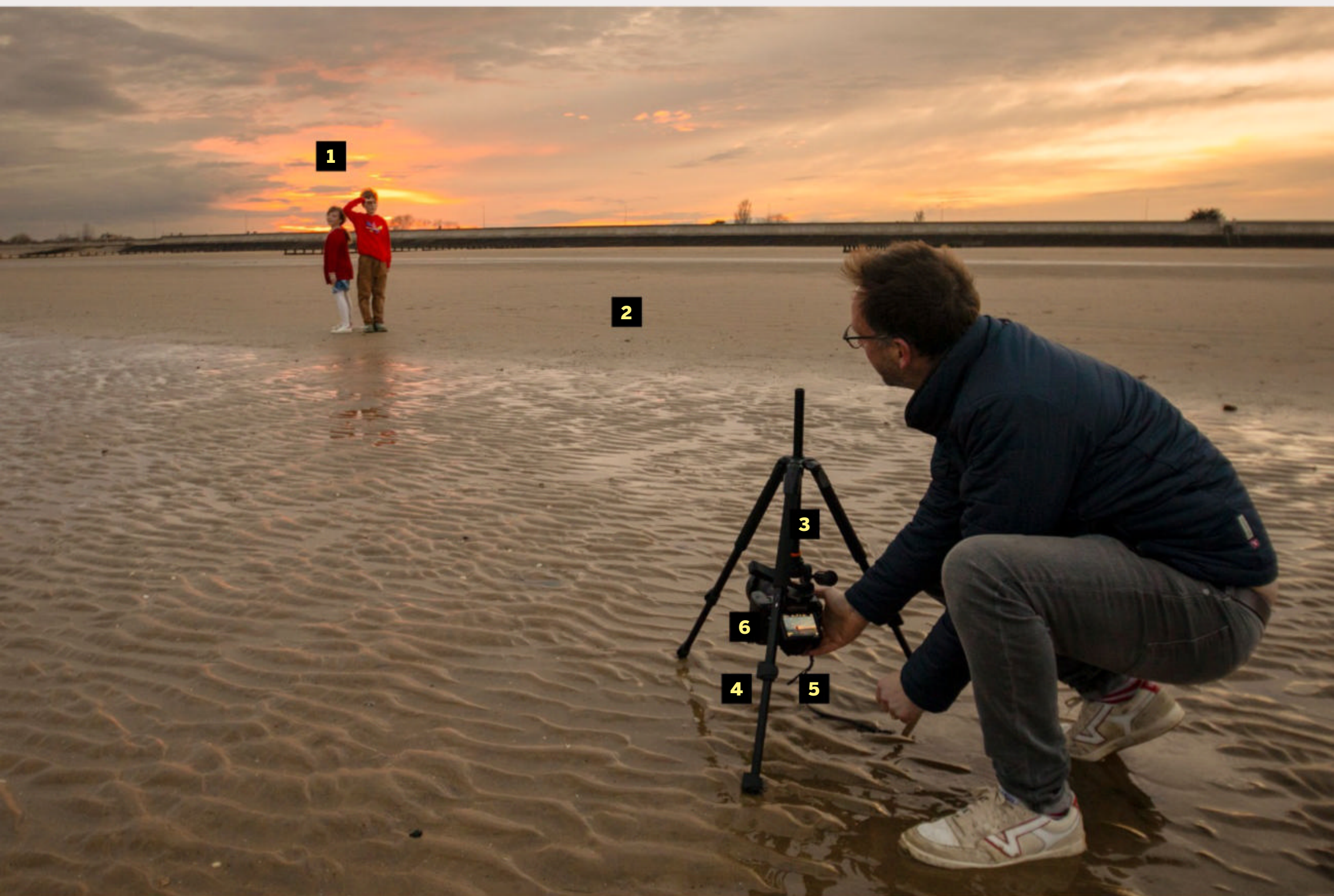


## The set-up: Sunset stitches LEARN HOW TO SHOOT A SET OF SILHOUETTED PORTRAITS AT SUNSET

**1 Shoot into the sun**  
The best sunset colours usually appear around the direction of the setting sun. Here it meant turning away from the sea towards the land, but if you can get an angle with the sun setting over the sea, even better. Often the best sunsets occur after a storm or a rainy day, as the clouds will be lower and heavier.

**2 At the beach**  
A wide flat beach is ideal for this, especially if there are pools and puddles of water to reflect the sunset sky. Look for a beach with an expanse of sand, like our shot here at Dymchurch, Kent. Time your visit so that the tide is out, as this way you'll achieve pristine sand and puddles for reflections.

**3 Get low with a tripod**  
If you want to stitch together a set of silhouetted portraits, you'll need a tripod to keep all the frames in alignment. A low camera angle is ideal as it gets the camera closer to the puddles for better reflections and frames the subjects against the vibrant sky. Here we reversed the centre column for a low angle.



**4 Exposing for silhouettes**  
Shooting in manual exposure mode is best for sunset portraits, especially if you want to combine several frames as it keeps things consistent. Here we're at aperture f/4, shutter speed 1/400 sec, ISO160 – a fairly fast shutter speed such as this will freeze the motion.

**5 Set a high drive mode**  
Time is short as the sunset colours fade quickly and the clouds may move, which can cause a problem later on when combining photos. So a rapid fire approach is best. Engage Continuous High drive mode and then shoot more frames than you need, capturing the subjects in all parts of the image.

**6 Use a wide angle lens**  
A wide angle lens is ideal for a sunset stitch as it lets us frame low to the ground and exaggerate the perspective with reflections and foreground details. It also means we can frame fairly loosely and concentrate on posing rather than having to keep an eye on where the subjects are in the frame.



# Top tips for striking silhouettes



## 1 Look for clouds

A bit of cloud cover is usually best, as if the sky is too clear then the sunset can look dull. Scattered high clouds are ideal. If they're too low, they'll block the sun at the critical moment as it dips towards the horizon. There are lots of sunset apps to help you predict when a good one will appear.



## 2 Underexpose the subject

Underexpose the subjects so they come out dark and you get a bold, vibrant sky. A sunset can look better than it does to the naked eye when underexposed, so take test shots and keep things dark. Use the histogram to ensure that the highlights aren't clipped.



## 3 Shoot lots of poses

We shot a set of photos here while the kids ran, jumped and skipped around the beach. When the sun sets you won't have much time so plan a few poses in advance. If you have more than one person in the frame try to separate the poses so they are not overlapping, and shoot them side-on for strong shapes and profiles.



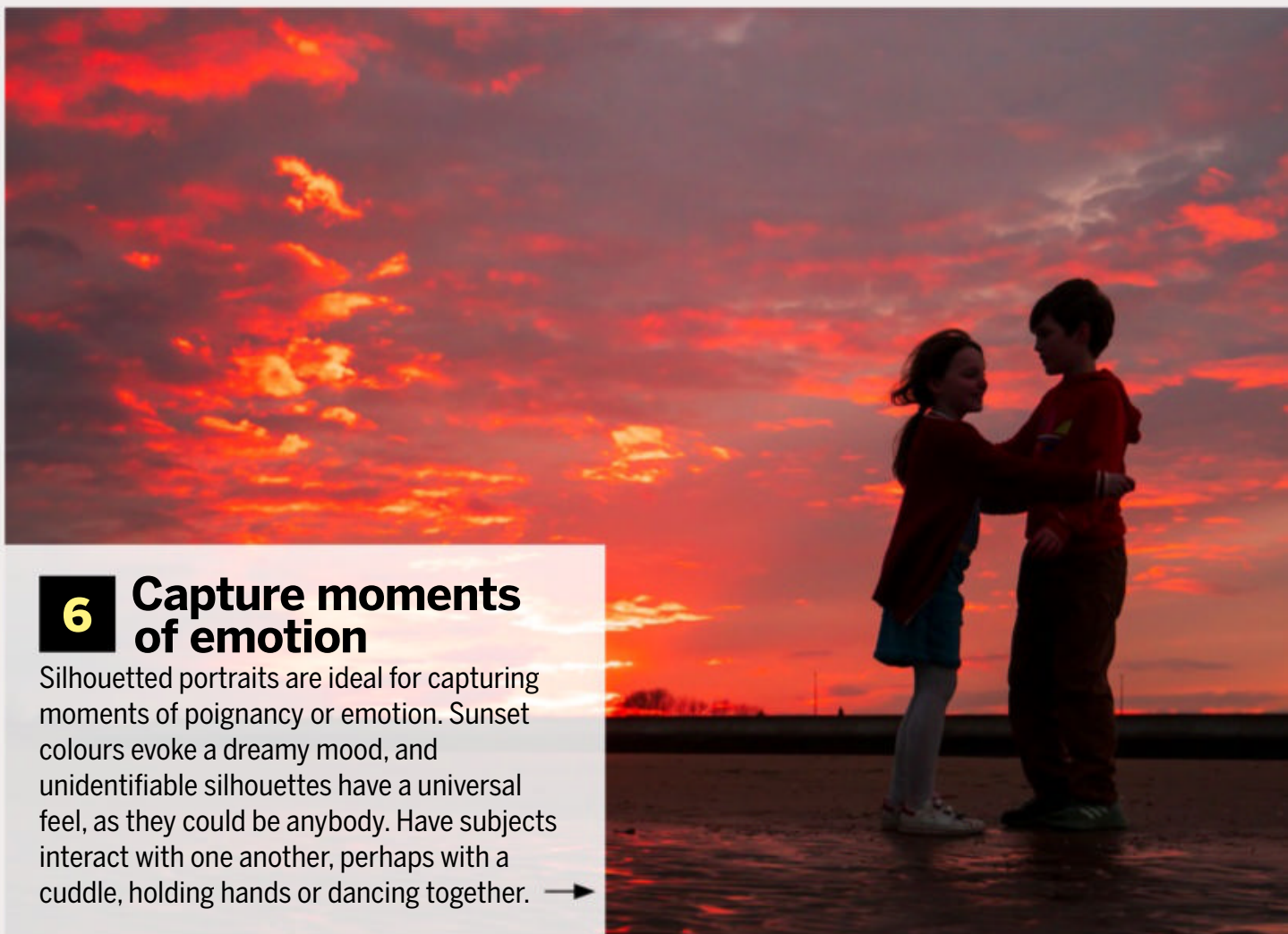
## 4 Use props

Use props for your silhouette portraits. Things like balls and sports kit are good for poses, as are bubbles and toys for kids. Anything that makes an interesting shape or looks good in an action shot will work. Think about clothes too, you'll want bodies to be clearly defined, so avoid bulky or baggy outfits.



## 5 Shoot through striking shapes

Try shooting through things like branches or fences to create strong silhouetted shapes. Here the camera is on the ground, and a wide-angle lens exaggerates the perspective of the fence. It can be hard to visualize how objects will look in black, so engage Live View and use the camera preview.



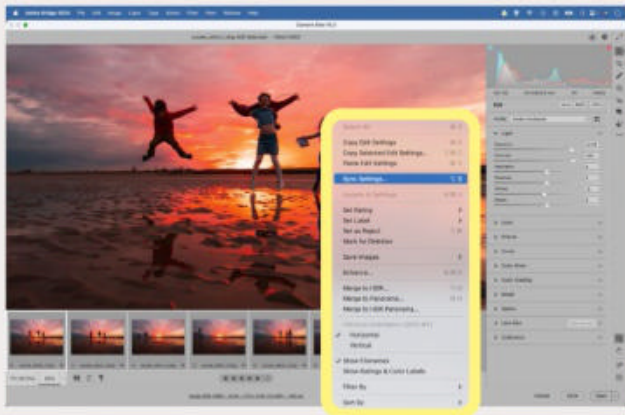
## 6 Capture moments of emotion

Silhouetted portraits are ideal for capturing moments of poignancy or emotion. Sunset colours evoke a dreamy mood, and unidentifiable silhouettes have a universal feel, as they could be anybody. Have subjects interact with one another, perhaps with a cuddle, holding hands or dancing together. →

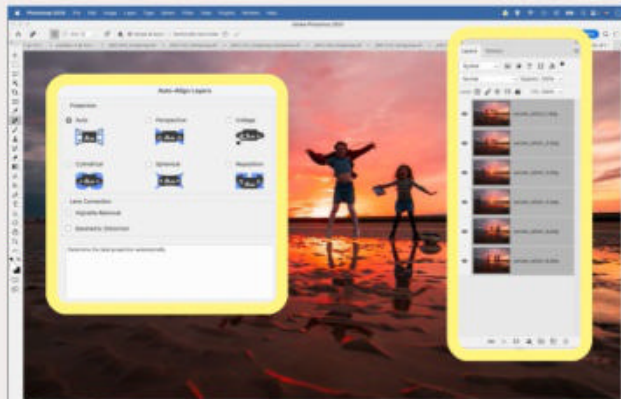


## Build a sunset stitch

COMBINE YOUR SET OF SILHOUETTED PORTRAITS IN PHOTOSHOP WITH SIMPLE LAYER MASKING SKILLS



**1 Boost the colours**  
Highlight the set of images in Adobe Bridge, right-click and 'Open in Camera Raw'. Use the tonal sliders to fine-tune brightness, contrast and colours to one image, then hit Cmd/Ctrl+A to select the rest, right-click and sync your edits. Hit OK, then go to Tools > Photoshop > Load Files into Photoshop Layers.



**2 Align and mask**  
In the Layers panel, hold shift and click the bottom layer to highlight them all. Go to Edit > Auto-Align Layers, set Auto and hit OK. This corrects any slight misalignment. Next, hold Alt and click the eye icon on the bottom layer to hide all the others. Reveal the layer above, then Alt-click the Mask icon to add a full mask to it.



**3 Combine your shots**  
Grab the Brush tool and paint white over the parts of the layer you want to reveal. Next highlight and reveal the next layer up, add a full mask again and paint white to reveal the areas you want. Continue with this painting procedure until you have blended all the layers you want to use in your image.

## Shoot for a sunstar

USE A NARROW APERTURE TO CREATE A SUNSTAR EFFECT AS AN EXTRA BONUS

A setting or rising sun gives us the opportunity to shoot for a sunstar. Use a narrow aperture, like f/16. You can sometimes create sunstars with wider apertures depending on the lens, but, in general, the narrower the aperture the stronger the star shape. That shape tells you something about the lens too. If its a six-bladed aperture, you'll see six spikes on the sunstar. If the lens has an odd number of blades you'll see double the number of spikes, so a nine-bladed aperture will result in a star with 18 spikes. Typically you'll want to position the sun against a dark object like the edge of a person. A partially-obscured sun tends to work better as it makes for a smaller point of bright light. The dark shape also gives you strong contrast with the bright sunstar. **N**





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# John Miskelly

The landscape photos of **John Miskelly** are renowned for their carefully composed framing and long exposures – revealing a natural curiosity, as Keith Wilson discovers

All images: John Miskelly





## John Miskelly Profile

- From his home in Northern Ireland, John Miskelly enjoys travelling all over the British Isles, as well as abroad, for his widely acclaimed landscape and fine art images.
- His work has been honoured by the International Photography Awards, Prix de la Photographie Paris (PX3), and other major photo competitions.
- John is a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society, British Institute of Professional Photography and the Irish Photographic Federation.
- His early interest in photography was influenced by his love of the outdoors, particularly skiing, and a fascination with the aesthetic of Japanese Zen gardens.
- John is also a proficient fine art printer and tutor. He runs regular landscape workshops to the Outer Hebrides of Scotland and Ireland's north coast.

[www.johnmiskelly.co.uk](http://www.johnmiskelly.co.uk)



# S

uch is the attraction of Iceland as a destination, that you could be forgiven for thinking that there isn't any professional landscape photographer worth

their neutral density

filters who hasn't lugged a tripod and ball head to its seismic shores. Yet, until a year ago, Northern Ireland's John Miskelly had been deliberately avoiding making the flight to Reykjavík. "I had always avoided Iceland because I thought it had been shot to death," he says.

However, recent volcanic eruptions and the chance to use a drone for aerial views of the landscape enticed his change of sentiment. "I went for an 11-day trip and rented a Jeep with a roof tent and stopped at the campsites scattered around the country," he enthuses. "The drone gave me the opportunity to do a wider variety of stuff up there."

John now regards that first visit as a recce for another carefully planned return trip he hopes to make next January or February: "I would like

to do it in winter with a lot more snow. I like simplistic compositions. A lot of my images are very simple and broken down into their very basic elements."

One place that John returns to often is Venice, and with another trip planned six weeks after we speak, you can hear the excitement building in his voice: "I would shoot Venice most years, I just love the city."

Winter and early spring are also his preferred times for shooting landscapes because, as he explains: "You just get much more interesting skies with a sense of mood, a sense of emotion, which are the things I'm trying to achieve with my style of photography."

**You're known for long exposures. Has that always been your style?**

It's a good question, it's something I've arrived at. Originally, I was what



**I had a number of images which were long exposures and they received really positive comments**

**Previous page:**  
The steep craggy Vestrahorn peaks rise above the flat black sand beach of Stokksnes in southeast Iceland, photographed in the evening light in late September.

**Below:** The snow-covered beach at Ersfjord on the island of Senja, off Norway's Arctic coast at sunrise, taken on a Z 7 with an exposure of 135 seconds.



would be classed as a traditional, eyewitness landscape photographer. I did that for many years and still do commissioned work in that style for clients. But I was going for my British Institute of Professional Photography Fellowship in 2017, and the portfolio allowed different styles within it, so I had a number of images that were long exposures and they received really positive comments from the adjudication panel. I'd only been taking them for a short space of time, I'd just been experimenting.

**What made you try it out?**

I was probably influenced by Michael Kenna, who's one of my favourite photographers, particularly his work from Hokkaido in Japan. His book





inspired me to play around with long exposures, and got me into the idea of simplifying. The other influence is I've been interested in Japanese gardens for 20 or 25 years.

#### How did that interest come about?

I'm not sure. I probably read an article somewhere a long time ago, and then I recreated my own Western version of a Japanese garden, in my garden. I was convinced by the aesthetic of very carefully placing the elements in the Zen garden, the effort that goes into making sure that everything is just right. That approach, I hope, comes through in my photography. So, probably a mixture of Michael Kenna, Japanese gardens and the very positive →

**Above: An eight-minute exposure of this old fishing hut on Venice lagoon has rendered the horizon between water and sky barely discernible.**



## DEFINING FINE ART

**MORE AND MORE PHOTOGRAPHERS ARE OFFERING THEIR WORK AS FINE ART PRINTS. BUT WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

#### What makes a fine art print? What's your interpretation?

I'm not sure that anybody has come up with the definitive definition, but a fine art print to me starts off with an image that somebody wants to put up on their wall as a piece of art. For example, if you get a wonderful, well exposed image of an elephant in Africa at sunset at the water's edge, then you've got the potential of a fine art print. It's then how you print it to make the best possible result. For my fine art prints – and this is a personal thing – I print on Canson. I will take one of the Canson fine art matte papers, one without optical brighteners, a cotton rag paper. So, a fine art print is down to the choice of paper, printing it to the highest possible standard on that paper, and then how it's mounted and presented to something that people want to put up on their wall and ultimately pay money for it.



# THE N-PHOTO INTERVIEW

comments from the fellowship panel that made me think, this is something that I want to explore a little bit more.

## So, how long are your exposures?

A lot of my shots will be between four and eight minutes. Some are only 30 seconds. I've done some up to 20 minutes. If I stick to between four and eight minutes, I still get some layering in the sky, whereas a lot of long-exposure photographers shoot for a grey flat sky, often in black and white. However, I always go for my muted colour palette.

## Does the increased technical challenge appeal to you?

Yeah, I'm quite a logical person, I do a lot of planning for my shoots. It's about identifying what's in your frame. People often don't look at what's in their frame. Instead, they'll rely on the idea of taking, let's say a sunset, in 50, 60, 100 shots, and then hope that one or two might work, whereas if you're doing a four-minute exposure you might get two exposures done before the light's gone. So, you're forced to be quite precise in what you're doing. I think long exposures force you to think more about composition than probably any other genre of photography.

## So, do long exposures appeal to your visual aesthetic?

Absolutely. I do quite a lot of talks and, when I speak to photographers, most understand light and how to make the most of it. But an awful lot of photographers struggle with composition. What I aim to achieve with my images is very much determined by how I've composed it, how I want the viewer's eye to view that image. Whether your eye goes to a fishing hut in the Gironde estuary, or whether that be a bridge, or a pier, or a rock, I want to control where the viewer's eye goes. Therefore, by smoothing out the water and the sky, I'm removing things that could confuse the viewer's eye.

## Removing the distractions?

A bit of me loves arranging the elements. That's what a Japanese garden designer will do, they will carefully place the rocks in a Zen garden, or the planting will be very carefully thought through. But when shooting on location, you can't



always be sure what you're going to get, you've got to work with what you get from nature, and that's part of the attraction as well.

## Have you been to Japan yet?

I haven't! It's on my bucket list. I was due to go in 2020, but did something happen in 2020 that seemed to stop travel generally?

## Yes indeed, it stopped the world!

Ironically, I was going to do powder skiing and photography, which would combine my two passions, and then the trip was cancelled. I haven't had the chance to reschedule that same trip again. Next year I hope to travel to Western Australia, potentially the year after could be Japan. Having said all that, I'm very conscience of my carbon footprint and, as a landscape photographer, I don't travel as much as I used to, so I make much more use of what we have on our doorstep.

## Where especially?

I love the west coast of Scotland and the west coast of Ireland. Harris,



**I always come back and say we've got so much good landscape around the British Isles on our doorstep**

**Above:** A six-minute exposure has smoothed out any detail in the water and sky to emphasize the colour and shapes of the Santissimo Redentore Church, along with neighbouring buildings, on Giudecca Island, Venice. Taken at sunrise with a 24mm lens.

**Right:** A zig-zag line of groynes stretches out from the Norfolk coast at Hunstanton at sunset. John made a 62-second exposure on his Z 7 with a Z 24-70mm f/4 S zoom.

Lewis and the Hebrides are particular favourites. I've been fortunate to travel to lots of places but I always come back and say we've got so many good landscapes around the British Isles on our doorstep... we don't have to travel far.

## And in Northern Ireland you're well placed in every direction?

Yes, and here we've got The Giant's Causeway. The recent workshop I was running on the north coast is just an hour-and-a-half's drive for me, Donegal is just two-and-a-half hours drive, so travelling to the west coast of Ireland is easy.

## You're a printer and a platinum printer, How did you get into that?

I did a workshop maybe 20 years ago with a gentleman called Dan Burkholder. He's an American photographer and platinum printer. He came over to Northern Ireland for a workshop at a local camera club, which I attended. I didn't do much with platinum for maybe 10 or 12 years, and then I fancied having a go with it, so I set up all the bits and pieces and started exploring that.

## How did that experience go?

That was a bit of a rabbit hole to go down because you then realize what you *don't* know. It's different to doing a workshop when somebody is actually there helping you! You're getting your Curves done properly and your digital negatives all produced properly, so I had to →









teach myself a lot of detail and figure a lot of things out by trial and error. There was a lot of experimentation. But I have quite an enquiring mind, I like to learn new things and push the boundaries. I also did platinum/palladium with colour pigment, which is a bit unusual. I also get contacted every so often for platinum prints for a gallery. Plus, I also get enquiries from people who want to learn platinum printing.

#### **You produce platinum with colour?**

There are a small number of platinum printers worldwide, many of us know each other. We're in a couple of specialist Facebook groups where we share information. The ones who do colour I could probably count on one hand. Dan Burkholder is one, he also does gold leaf with platinum. There's another guy in the States who does gum over platinum, so he'll apply different coloured gum layers. These are high-end guys, working in the Ansel Adams Gallery and places like that, so it's quite inspiring to see.

#### **How did you get into photography?**

I started off as a teenager when it was a hobby, and then it became a business. There are some fabulous amateur photographers, but if I want to stay ahead of my profession and make a successful business, I've got to be producing really good quality work for people, whether that be the photographs or the prints.

#### **What was your first Nikon camera?**

My first Nikon was an F301. I started my career working for the BBC and then I worked for a couple of years at



**I love beaches, I'm originally a surfer, I love beach culture. That's why I'm drawn to the coast**

**Above: John made an eight-minute exposure on his D810 to compose this stilt-like fishing hut on the Gironde Estuary, near Bordeaux, France.**

**Above right: View beneath the Skye Bridge looking towards the Eilean Bàn lighthouse, photographed on a mid-autumn afternoon with a six-minute exposure.**

ITV where they had a fleet of F301 bodies. I remember borrowing one and I really liked it so I bought myself an F301. Then I bought an F100 because I broke my F301 in Africa.

#### **When did you switch to digital?**

When I bought the D100 in the early 2000s, I was shooting weddings and I had been lent one for a weekend and I just loved it, so I bought one the following week. I've used various Nikon cameras, currently I'm using a Z 7. I keep thinking about going to the Z 8, but I like the Z 7 being that little bit smaller and I don't need fast focus for the sort of work that I do. Occasionally, it's nice to use faster focus, but I just love the Z 7, and the Nikon lenses with it are just superb.

#### **What are your preferred lenses for landscapes that you shoot?**

I use the PC-E 24mm f/3.5 tilt-and-shift lens a lot. It's a big lump of a lens and I don't always use it in tilt-and-shift, but the optical quality is second to none because of the size





## \* KEEPING A LEVEL HEAD

UNSURPRISINGLY, A TRIPOD IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF JOHN'S KIT FOR TAKING HIS LONG EXPOSURE LANDSCAPE IMAGES...

### What tripod do you use and what are its attributes?

I use Gitzo tripods and I've used them for years. I use them with a Really Right Stuff (RRS) ball head, which is almost more important. My RRS is a BH55, and it's been banged against cliffs and rocks, it's been dropped and kicked, soaked by sea water, and although it looks a bit rough and ready, it still performs as well as the day I got it. It was an expensive bit of kit but it is more important than the tripod, which is just a set of legs. There's a lot of good, carbon tripods at fair prices now, but the ball head is the important thing.

I also have a little Arca Swiss reverse ball head, which is great because I can do panoramas and level up with a levelling plate. I want something that will stand the abuse that I throw at it because marine environments and cold environments are hard on gear.



of the image circle. When I bought the Z 7, I bought it with the 24-70mm f/4, which I still use. I also have the Z 14-24mm if I need ultra-wide. I don't do that very often, but if I'm in a city where I need to be very close, I'll use that. I've recently bought the 24-120mm because I do a little bit of ICM (intentional camera movement) as well. I'm experimenting more with ICM and multiple exposures.

### You're obsessed with precision yet you're experimenting with ICM?

I'm thoroughly enjoying it and the impressionistic side. Detail is important but the artistic side has to come to the fore. I wouldn't class myself as the most technical of photographers. I have my settings on my camera set and I leave them, and if somebody says you've got to change the settings to X, Y or Z, I'll have to go back to the manual to figure that out! I use the camera as a tool, often in manual focus when doing long exposures, and I work in that way because I'm using filters.

### Which filter system do you use?

I use the Lee filter system. If I've got on a 10-stopper (Big Stopper) or 15-stopper (Super Stopper), I set everything up manually beforehand and just rely on that, so I'm not that technical in what I do, but I know what I need to do and I know how to get the best out of the camera.

### You're a curious individual...

That's one way of putting it! I love looking at other work that I may never want to get involved in. For example, Nick Brandt's black-and-white African work is just stunning. I like to see work by people at the top of their game who inspire me, but I have no intention of replicating or even trying to get involved in his genre of photography. I'm inspired by music, I'm inspired by paintings and the likes of Turner – that's probably why I do ICM, because I think it's almost a photographic version of Turner. I love seeing different genres of art. I love beaches, I'm originally a surfer, I love beach culture.

That's why I'm drawn to the coast. I can see the sea from my window here, it's just half a mile away. I'm heavily influenced by my love of the sea. That's why I like the Hebrides so much, I could be on Luskentyre or Seilebost beach and maybe see one other person in three or four hours. That's one of the attractions.

### What's your single best piece of advice for someone who wants to be a landscape photographer?

Once you've got your camera and a couple of lenses, get to know how they operate so that it becomes second nature, and then you can apply your energy and process to taking images. The more you practise, the better you get. Because I've been with Nikon for years, I know exactly what it's going to be like. I find Nikon systems more logical and more natural to use... I can set up within 30 seconds, filters on and the camera on the tripod. If the light shows something wonderful, I'm already concentrating on the shot. **N**

**Next Month**  
Macro  
photographer  
Tony North





1

# Risqué business



Portrait photographer **Andrew Macdonald** explains why he has a fetish for dressing up his models from head to toe in latex

# B

ack in the 1980s I bought a book, *The Dark Summer* by Bob Carlos Clarke, and that changed pretty much immediately what I wanted to shoot. His monochrome prints of models in latex were such a stunning visual treat. The thin rubber fits like

a second skin, enhancing natural physical attributes: a corset and Wonderbra all in one!

Many models find it liberating too, in terms of posing for the camera. Turning the everyday into a nightmare/fantasy/hero/villain. It can be very stylized, but the various outfits can be as revealing as you dare, or completely covered if you wish. For example, in a catsuit zipped up to the neck, you can be extreme and extravagant in your posing, safe in the knowledge there is not going to be an accidental flash of flesh.

I am looking to try and do something a little different each time. I think that's important in order to satisfy my own creative needs. Doing the same thing over and over would get a little boring, and I felt

I had got to that point with high-key shots of black latex a while back. I aim to create something provocative, but that doesn't mean it has to be overt. There is far more intrigue in what you *don't* see over what is actually revealed. The viewer has an imagination and has the potential to project that onto the image too.

## Rubber soul

There is a fair amount of prep work in getting outfits ready for shooting. Cleaning, polishing, more polishing... it takes time. Then there's dressing the model, with catsuits being the most challenging to get into. But over the years I have become a dab hand with gloves and stockings and I sure know how to lace up a corset!

During the shoot itself, you have to keep an eye out for bits of fluff, or stray hairs sticking to the latex clothing. The polished rubber also clearly creates a reflective surface, and lighting set-ups can often be seen in the darker-pigment garments. Modifiers are certainly identifiable and occasionally even the photographer – camera in hand – can be glimpsed.

I prefer the studio environment. Setting a background, adding props and the flexibility of controllable lighting, as well as an adjustable room temperature, makes for a very productive session. External location shoots not only rely on our very changeable weather cooperating, but also an element of 'crowd control' as a latex-clad dominatrix in eight-inch heels is certain to draw attention!

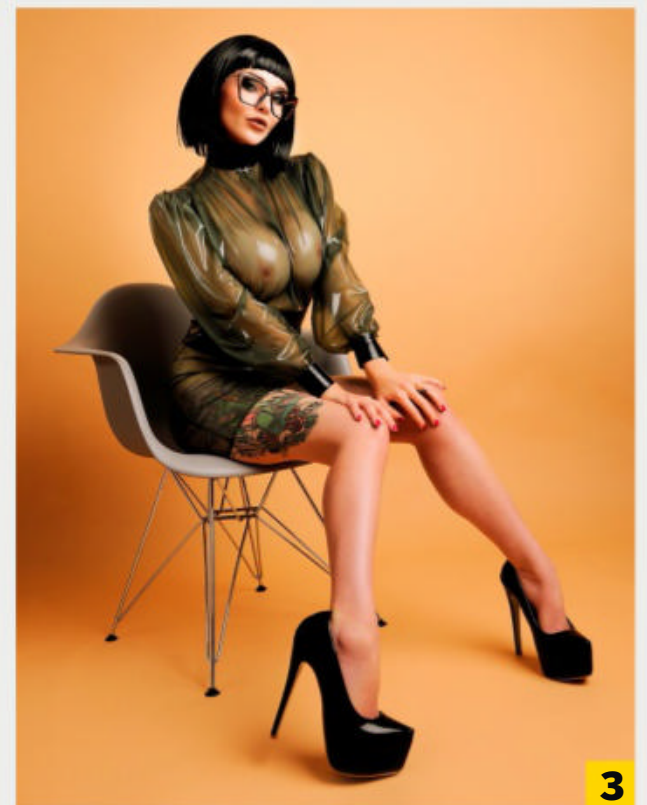
The first Nikons I ever had in my hands were FM and F3 film cameras. These days, I stick with a D3 and D3x, with a set of primes: 50mm f/1.4, 85mm f/1.4 and a 105mm f/2.8. There is also the Holy Trinity of zooms: 14-24mm, 24-70mm and the 70-200mm – all f/2.8, of course. It would be reasonable to say that the 24-70mm sees the most action, but the 14-24mm can create wonderful exaggerated frames, shot either from on high looking down, or right at ground level aiming up a heel and leg. **N**

**Andrew Macdonald runs Killer Heels Photography and won the Best Photographer category at the UK Fetish awards for the third time in 2023 (<https://ukfetishawards.com>). See more of his work on Facebook (Killer Heels Photography), Instagram (@killer\_heels\_photography) and X (@killerheelspho2).**



**Over the years I have become a dab hand with gloves and stockings, and I sure know how to lace up a corset!**





[1] Natasha is a very accomplished photographer as well as a model. Her understanding of lighting is a real benefit with her posing.

[2] I often take a wide shot to record lighting positions. I really liked the image of Zara DuRose showing the rim lighting set-up.

[3] This image of Jasmine James was one of two images I submitted as my winning entry at the 2023 UK Fetish Awards.

[4] I had this 'Imperial Family' idea, and discovered a locally based *Star Wars*-themed band. TK4468 here is the drummer.

[5] Latex Lucy is a legend in the rubber fetish community – we've shot over 15,000 frames together.

[6] Tracy was an amateur model that absolutely loved the rubber latex look and feel.

Images: © Andrew Macdonald



# NIKOPEDIA

The only camera manual you'll ever need...

**70 Nikon Know-How** Wide maximum apertures help to tackle low-light conditions

**74 Ask Matthew** Our resident agony uncle solves your camera-related woes

Lenses with a wide maximum aperture let you capture atmospheric portraits, sports and low-light shots without the need for a tripod, flash or higher ISOs.



**NIKON KNOW-HOW**

## What is maximum aperture?

Why the maximum aperture value of a lens proves to be a major selling point

The aperture setting of the lens controls the amount of light that passes through, so you can use this setting as part of your exposure adjustments. In dim light you can use a wider lens aperture so that more of the light gets through to reach the sensor, and in bright light you can use a smaller lens aperture to reduce the intensity.

There are other exposure adjustments too, of course, including the shutter speed (or exposure time) and ISO (or sensitivity setting of the sensor). In practice, you adjust all three – aperture, shutter speed and ISO – according to the conditions and the type of subject you're shooting.

However, if the lens lets through more light, you can use a faster shutter speed, which means you can freeze fast-moving action more easily, or shoot in lower light without risking camera shake from slow shutter speeds. Without that, your only alternative would be to increase the ISO setting, which increases the digital noise in your pictures.

### CREATIVE CONTROL

The lens aperture also has an effect on the depth of field, or near-to-far sharpness, in your pictures. The wider the aperture, the shallower the depth of field. For landscape

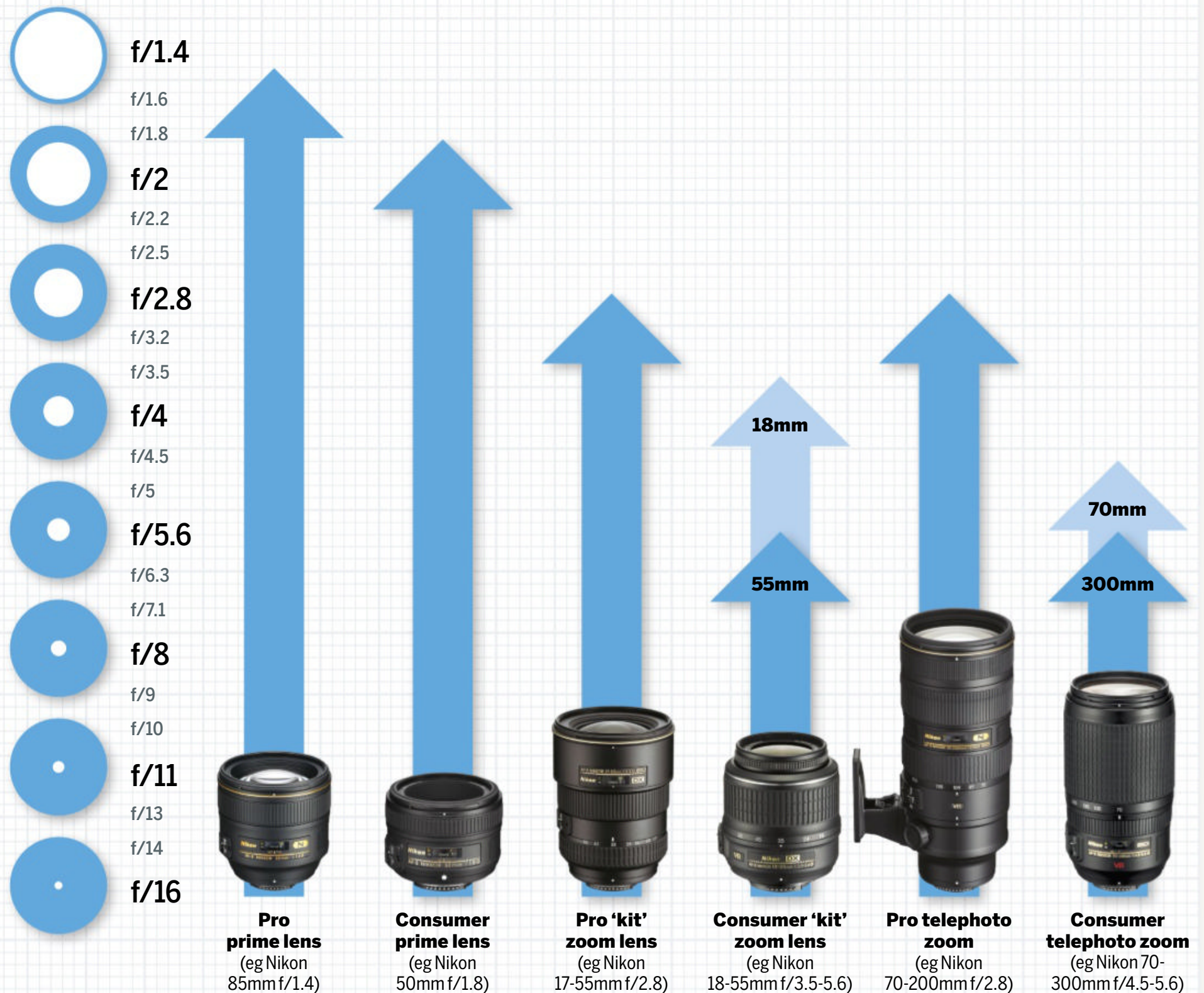
photography and close-ups, extra-wide apertures are less important, because you generally want as much depth of field as you can get. When shooting portraits and sports photography, however, it's much better if you can blur the background so that your subject stands out more clearly – and that's when it is important to shoot with a wide maximum aperture.

This is why so-called 'portrait' lenses and professional telephotos have wide maximum apertures. They are more expensive to buy, but they produce the special shallow depth-of-field effects that professional photographers look for. →



# Which lenses go widest?

Prime lenses and 'pro' zooms offer much wider apertures than consumer lenses



## Maximum aperture: Key points

Not all lenses have constant, wide maximum apertures...

- Lens aperture values follow a fixed sequence of values from f/16 to f/11 to f/8 and so on. Your Nikon DSLR or mirrorless can also set intermediate values, which we have shown above in smaller text between the main ones.
- Professional-quality lenses usually offer wider maximum apertures than

- cheaper 'consumer' lenses – even lenses that have the same focal length.
- Professional zooms usually have constant maximum apertures through the zoom range.
- Cheaper 'consumer' zoom lenses will usually have a lower maximum aperture at full zoom than at their shortest length.





**NIKON KNOW-HOW – CONTINUED**

# The numbers on the lens

Lenses are marked with their focal lengths and maximum apertures – here’s where to find them



Sometimes the information is on the front of the lens.

- 1** The focal length always comes first, so we can see this lens has a focal range of 18-55mm.
- 2** The maximum aperture setting of the lens is next – here it’s f/3.5-5.6.
- 3** This information tells us the maximum aperture changes from f/3.5 at a focal length of 18mm to f/5.6 at a focal length of 55mm. The lens is a variable aperture zoom.



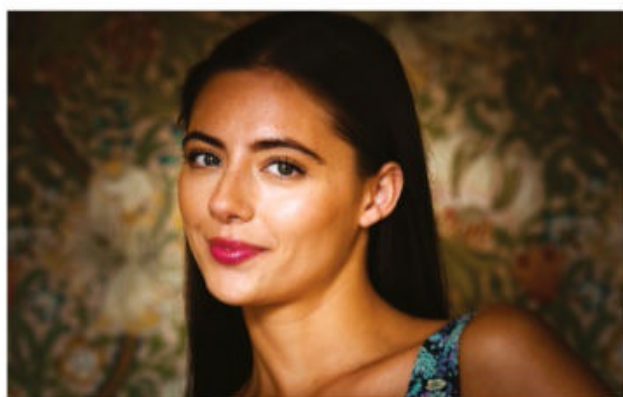
You’ll always find lens details on the barrel.

- 1** This lens has a focal range of 24-120mm.
- 2** The maximum aperture is just one number – f/4. This tells us that it’s a ‘constant aperture’ zoom – the maximum aperture is f/4 throughout the zoom range.

**PUTTING IT TO USE**

## What will you gain?

Discover what a wide maximum lens aperture can do for your favourite sort of subject



**PORTRAITS**

A wide maximum aperture will let you shoot indoor portraits with out-of-focus backgrounds. It will also let you use faster shutter speeds in dim light. With a kit lens at full zoom you might get a speed of 1/8 sec, for example, but with an f/1.4 lens you could shoot at 1/125 sec in the same lighting conditions.

MAXIMUM APERTURE	SHUTTER SPEED
f/1.4	1/125 sec
f/2	1/60 sec
f/2.8	1/30 sec
f/4	1/15 sec
f/5.6	1/8 sec



**SPORT**

For sporting events such as football you need to be able to shoot at 1/500 sec or faster to freeze the action and stop the players turning into a blur. Nikon’s 70-300mm consumer lens has a maximum aperture of f/5.6 at full zoom, but the 300mm f/2.8 pro lens offers speeds three stops faster.

MAXIMUM APERTURE	SHUTTER SPEED
f/2.8	1/500 sec
f/4	1/250 sec
f/5.6	1/125 sec



**NIGHT**

The light levels at night are very low and it’s not always possible to use a tripod. A lens with a wide aperture lets you shoot handheld at fairly ‘safe’ shake-free shutter speeds without having to increase the ISO. This table shows how much you must push up the ISO to allow for a lower maximum aperture. **N**

MAXIMUM APERTURE	ISO
f/1.4	100
f/2	200
f/2.8	400
f/4	800





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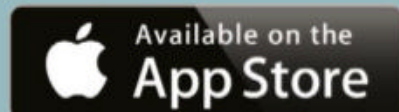


# WHAT HI-FI?

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# Ask Matthew...

Our resident Nikon expert **Matthew Richards** answers your questions and solves your problems. If you have a Nikon-related question, email it to [mail@nphotomag.com](mailto:mail@nphotomag.com)

**Q** I'm going to the Atacama Desert and want a faster, more compact wide-angle lens than my Z 14-30mm f/4 for shooting the night sky. What would you suggest?

**Bruno Wägli**

**A** I have the Nikon Z 14-30mm f/4 S myself and think it's a phenomenal lens – with fabulous image quality and all-round performance, and it's refreshingly compact for a full-frame wide-angle zoom. However, its f/4 aperture is a bit 'slow' for astrophotography.

I actually wanted something a bit different that would be suitable for shooting the night sky, as well as giving an alternative creative effect in other scenarios. A while ago,

I reviewed the 7Artisans 10mm f/2.8 fisheye lens in Z-mount, and liked it so much I ended up buying one. It's amazingly sharp for a fisheye lens, right out to the extreme edges and corners. Manual focusing is no problem at all due to the massive depth of field (I'd use manual focus for astrophotography anyway), it's small and light at 87x68mm and 570g, and only costs £249/\$256 to buy.

**Q** I've recently started shooting video but have noticed that my tripod-mounted sequences end up on the slant when I pan, even though they're level to start with. Why is this?

**Justin Jackson**



**The 3 Legged Thing LevelHed (£129/\$139) sits between the tripod platform and head, and enables quick and easy levelling.**

**A** When you're taking a still image, all you need to worry about is that the camera itself is level. So if you're using a tripod, it doesn't matter if the platform at the top of the tripod is on the slant, as you can level the camera by adjusting the head. However, that's not good enough if you're panning, which you might use when taking a sequence of stills for stitching into a panorama, as well as when shooting video.

If the tripod platform isn't level and you're compensating by adjusting the head, the camera will become slanted when you pan to a different position. You therefore need to level the legs as well as the head. This can be a tricky task, especially when shooting on uneven terrain, but a levelling base like the 3 Legged Thing LevelHed can make setup much quicker and easier.

**Q** I've just swapped from Canon to Nikon and am wondering what autofocus setting to use for moving subjects that are a similar colour to the background. Can you help?

**Gareth Steel**



Being a 'diagonal' rather than 'circular' fisheye lens, the 7Artisans 10mm f/2.8 produces full-sized pictures that cover the entire image sensor of a full-frame camera.





Image: © Gareth Steel

**Dynamic-area AF mode is the best autofocus choice for this shot of Gareth's, where the main subject is a similar colour to its surroundings.**

**A** While the subject-specific autofocus modes in Z-system cameras work really well, it pays to be selective with DSLRs. Continuous AF mode tracks moving subjects but there are additional options. Single-point AF isn't ideal, whereas Dynamic-area AF can make it easier to keep autofocus locked on, and you can choose the initial AF point to use. Typically, 9-point works well when subjects are moving predictably, whereas 21-point and 51-point are better for increasingly erratic movement.

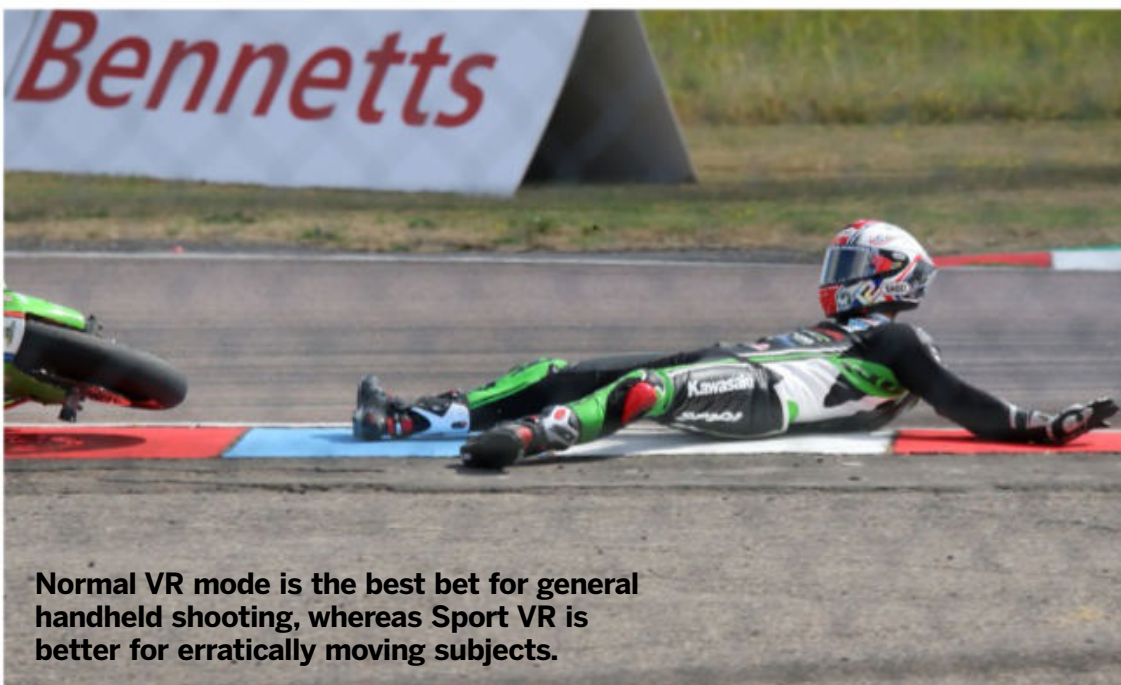
The 3D-tracking AF mode also works well for erratically moving subjects, as it will track subjects that leave the designated autofocus area, utilizing additional AF points automatically, but it's not so reliable when the main subject is a similar colour to its surroundings. Group-area AF and Auto-area AF are also available, but are less ideal for tracking in wildlife scenarios. I'd go for Dynamic-area AF mode.

**Q** My Z 6II camera has Normal and Sports VR modes. What's the difference and which is the best to use for general shooting?

**Nick Anderson**

**A** As with the optical VR (Vibration Reduction) systems in many recent Nikon lenses, the in-body stabilizers of full-frame Z-mount cameras offer Normal and Sport – rather than the Normal and Active modes that are common in older lenses. The Normal setting is ideal for stationary subjects during handheld shooting, or when using a monopod, and gives good feedback of the stabilization effect in the camera's viewfinder.

Sport mode is better for shooting fast-moving subjects, especially if their movement is erratic. **M**



**Normal VR mode is the best bet for general handheld shooting, whereas Sport VR is better for erratically moving subjects.**

## Secondhand superstar

**Q** I want a greater zoom range than my AF-S 18-55mm. Can you recommend a good but very low-budget option?

**Liz Miller**

**A** **Matthew recommends...** Nikon launched the AF-S DX 18-105mm f/3.5-5.6G ED VR in 2008. It's since been discontinued but remains a bargain secondhand buy. Even better is the more powerful 18-140mm.



### Nikon AF-S DX 18-140mm f/3.5-5.6G ED VR

**THERE ARE SOME SERIOUS SECONDHAND BARGAINS TO BE HAD FOR THIS POWERFUL ZOOM LENS THAT HANDLES MOST SCENARIOS**

**RELEASED:** 2013

**PRICE NEW:** £599/\$497

**SECONDHAND PRICE:**

'Excellent' £125/\$200

'Good' £100/\$170

Sold separately and as a kit lens option for various DX format Nikon DSLRs since 2013, this Nikon zoom has a lot going for it. The zoom range is much more generous than in the 18-55mm kit lens, equating to 27-210mm in full-frame terms. Quality optics include one aspherical and one ED (Extra-low Dispersion) element. It's more robust than the 18-55mm lens, with a metal rather than plastic mounting plate that also adds a weather-seal, and includes an effective 4-stop optical stabilizer. It's all wrapped up in a compact build, measuring 78x97mm and weighing 490g. Overall,

it's a single lens that will cover most eventualities.

#### Key points

##### 1. Zoom range

The 7.8x zoom range delivers excellent versatility, from wide-angle coverage to useful telephoto reach.

##### 2. Autofocus override

Full-time manual override of autofocus is available via the mechanically coupled focus ring.

##### 3. Sealed mount

The metal mounting plate adds a weather-seal ring.

**Elements/groups:** 17/12

**Aperture diaphragm:**

7 blades

**VR:** 4-stop

**Min focus distance:** 0.45m

**Max magnification:** 0.23x

**Filter size:** 67mm

**Dimensions:** 78x97mm

**Weight:** 490g





The search for the **world's best Nikon photographer of 2024** continues! Each issue the monthly *N-Photo* POTY 2024 photo contest's top 10 images are selected by the *N-Photo* team. This issue's competition has the theme of **wildlife photography**...

NPOTY is powered by  Photocrowd





2

## 1. Blue Damsel

BY TONYNORTH

This stunning macro image was created entirely in-camera. The purple vignette was formed by shooting through a carefully arranged frame of purple loosestrife. This guides the viewer directly towards the blue-tailed damselfly, resplendent in morning dew and beautifully sharp. Crucially, the background is neutrally toned, so it doesn't detract from the subject or vignette.

<b>Camera:</b>	Nikon D500
<b>Lens:</b>	105mm f/2.8
<b>Exposure:</b>	1/40 sec, f/11, ISO800

## 2. Levitate

BY LIGHTBROOM

This captivating image of a northern shoveler is proof that even more common animals can make enthralling subjects when the right moment is captured. And you'd be hard-pressed to capture this moment again in a hurry. The drake is landing directly towards the camera, and has been captured millimetres from the surface, creating the illusion that it's walking on water.

<b>Camera:</b>	Nikon Z9
<b>Lens:</b>	800mm f/5.6
<b>Exposure:</b>	1/2000 sec, f/5.6, ISO4000

1



### WIN! A WhiteWall Photo Lab voucher Worth £100! WHITE WALL

Witness your work as a glorious gallery-quality print from award-winning online photo laboratory WhiteWall. The winner, as judged by the *N-Photo* team, will receive a £100 WhiteWall voucher to have their entry printed in a range of stylish options including acrylic, aluminium, giclée and canvas in a huge array of sizes. See [www.whitewall.com/uk](http://www.whitewall.com/uk)





**3**

### 3. Mur-mare-ation

BY MIKE MORLEY

Look closely at this stunning starling murmuration and you'll spot a jumping racehorse. What makes this incredible image even more special, is that it's jumping over the track at Ripon Racecourse, North Yorkshire. This really is a once-in-a-lifetime moment immortalized through the lens.

<b>Camera:</b>	Nikon Z8
<b>Lens:</b>	70-200mm f/4
<b>Exposure:</b>	1/100 sec, f/4, ISO5000

### 4. Towards the Light

BY VICTORIA BYKANOVA

This close-up image of the forest floor conveys a strong narrative. The eye is drawn immediately to the stag beetle and the angle of the shot makes it look like the insect is rising up towards the light in the background. Pulling back to frame the fungi was a clever idea, conveying the insect's habitat.

<b>Camera:</b>	Nikon D3300
<b>Lens:</b>	105mm f/2.8
<b>Exposure:</b>	1/100 sec, f/13, ISO200

**4**







5

## 5. Ol' Blue Eyes

BY JAZ72

Yellow hues complement the striking blue eyes, the flower is isolated and both subjects are tack sharp, camera angled so they sit on the same focal plane.

Camera:	Nikon D500
Lens:	150mm f/2.8
Exposure:	1/2 sec, f/18, ISO100

## 6. Autumn's Call

BY MARKET ZVELEBIL

A bellowing stag is a hallmark of autumn; crucially, a long focal length and open aperture has been used to separate the subject from the backdrop.

Camera:	Nikon Z9
Lens:	100-400mm f/4.5-5.6
Exposure:	1/500 sec, f/5.6, ISO400



6

## 7. Catch of the Day

BY FARY AFSHAR

It's rare to find a close-up action shot of a kingfisher that's this sharp and rich in detail.

Camera:	Nikon D850
Lens:	70-200mm f/2.8
Exposure:	1/8000 sec, f/7.1, ISO4000



7





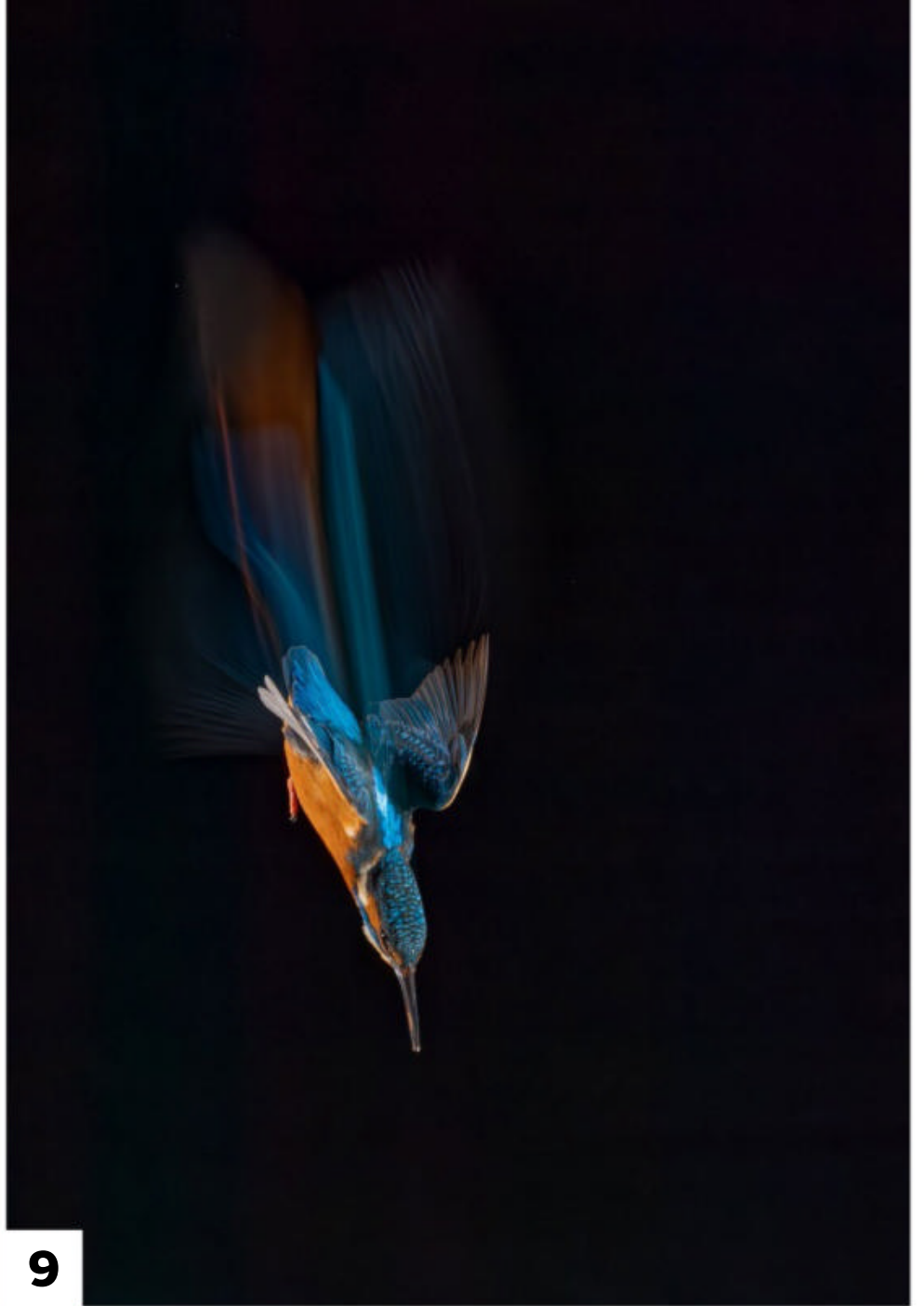
8

## 8. Yin and Yang

BY EDISON LUCAS  
CAETANO DE SOUZA

We love how the cloud cover scythes diagonally through this image, separating the frame into two halves. Along with the bird in flight, this beautiful blend of abstract and wildlife bears a striking resemblance of the yin and yang symbol.

Camera:	Nikon Z 6
Lens:	85mm f/1.8
Exposure:	1/4000 sec, f/1.8, ISO180



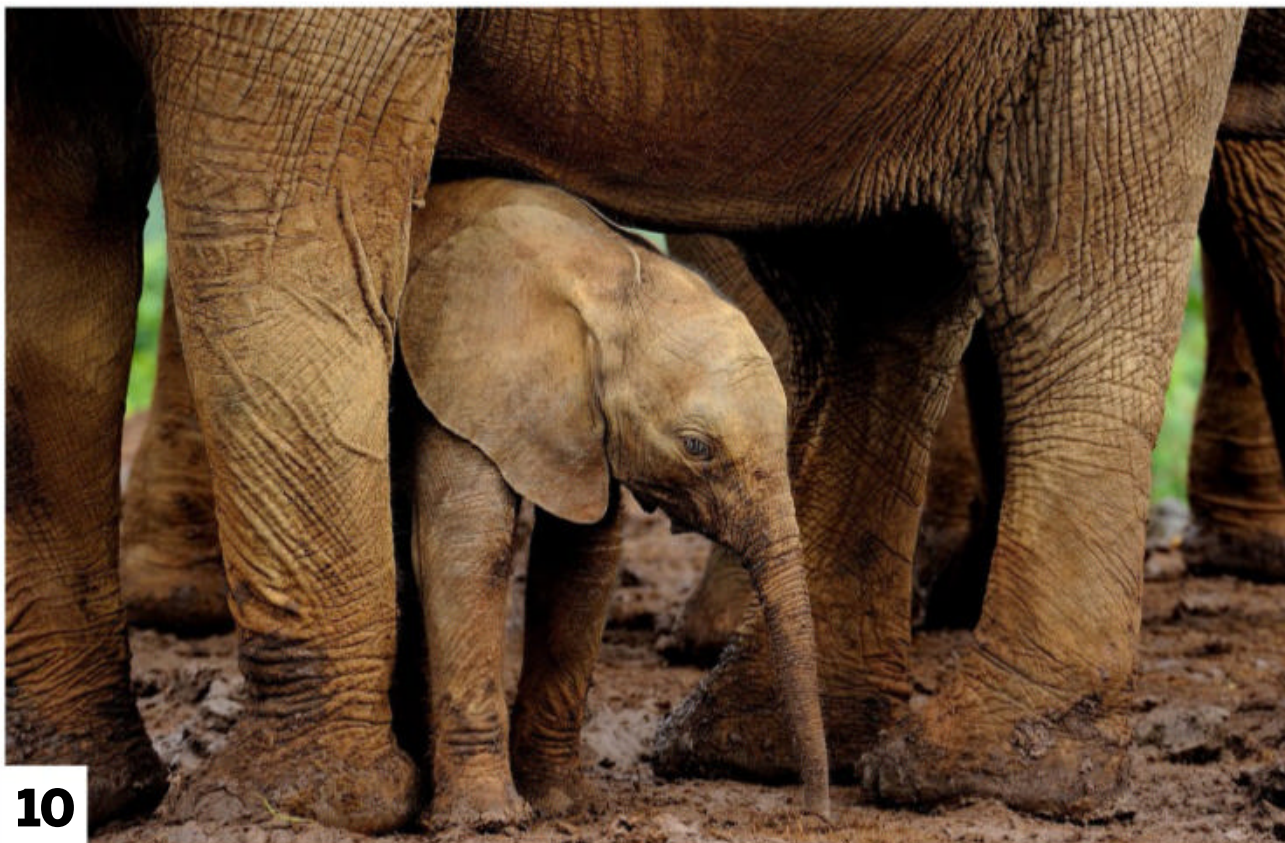
9

## 9. Blue Bullet

BY ABEE

This is a really creative shot of a diving kingfisher, created entirely in-camera. A slow shutter speed was used to blur the bird as it dived, while a pop of flash at the end of the exposure from several lights froze it. The result is an incredible action shot that blends abstract and wildlife beautifully.

Camera:	Nikon D6
Lens:	100-400mm f/5-6.3
Exposure:	1/13 sec, f/10, ISO250



10

## 10. Forest of Legs

BY PHOTO703

This beautiful image was captured at Aberdare National Park in Nairobi, Kenya. It depicts an elephant calf between the legs of an adult, while the herd visits a watering hole. A 400mm focal length was used to close the gap and an aperture of f/8 has ensured front-to-back sharpness. This image is all about the endearing moment.

Camera:	Nikon D3S
Lens:	200-400mm f/4
Exposure:	1/125 sec, f/8, ISO800





# WIN! A Nikon Z f

The overall winner of *N-Photo's* Photographer of the Year 2024 will receive the grand prize of a Nikon Z f!

When we reviewed the Nikon Z f, we called it 'Nikon's best-looking camera since 1982!' And now, together with Nikon UK, we're giving *you* the chance to win this full-frame retro-style Z camera. It's an incredible prize that's worth a whopping £2299/\$1999. Enter any of the 12 rounds of NPOTY 2024 to be in with a chance of taking Nikon's nostalgia-infused Z camera home – and of being crowned *N-Photo's* Photographer of the Year 2024.

## A blast from the... future?

The Z f is far from retro under the hood. It's built around a 24.5Mp full-frame CMOS sensor and inherits some of the latest advancements from the Nikon Z 8 and Z 9. It's powered by the latest EXPEED 7 processor, has a native ISO range of 100-64,000, and uses the same impressive autofocus system as the Z 8 and Z 9.

It's equipped with 299 focus points that enable you to pinpoint your subject with superb accuracy. This system is adept at subject tracking, including humans (faces, eyes), animals, birds and vehicles, ensuring precision even in challenging shooting conditions, down to an impressive -10EV.

Unique to the Nikon Z f is the introduction of subject-detection algorithms that function seamlessly in manual focus mode or when using adapted manual-focus lenses, enhancing exposure accuracy based on recognizing the subject.

The camera is also capable of achieving up to eight stops of image stabilization with

compatible lenses and is the first Nikon camera to offer Pixel Shift Shooting. This physically moves the sensor to capture a sequence of up to 32 Raw images. When blended together in Nikon NX Studio, this creates a whopping 96Mp image.

Nikon's Focus Point VR system takes in-body image stabilization a step further by employing the camera's active focus point to enhance stabilization around the subject.

It's a serious video tool too, supporting 4K up to 60p; oversampled 6K footage up to 30p for better quality 4K; and Full HD up to 120p. It also shoots 10-bit internally and records continuously up to 125 minutes.

## Z f Features

- 1 The camera body has a leather-like textured finish, adding to its retro charm.
- 2 Z 8/9 tech and totally new features make this a modern camera beneath the hood.
- 3 Precision-milled brass control dials don't just look the part, they will patina with age.
- 4 Black-and-white switch allows you to toggle seamlessly between colour and mono.
- 5 The rear LCD is fully articulating, rather than tilting as seen on Nikons like the Z 6II.
- 6 Retro-style shutter button has a screw to fit an after-market soft-shutter-release.

## How to enter

### HOW OUR COMPETITION WORKS

- Each issue, the *N-Photo: The Nikon Magazine* team sets a theme – we next want to see your best Mono photography. Enter your photo(s) at [www.photocrowd.com/npoty24mono](http://www.photocrowd.com/npoty24mono)
- The deadline for entries is 09 May 2024. The top 10 gallery will appear in *N-Photo* 164, on sale 11 April 2024
- Here are our next three competitions:  
Action Opens: 02 May Closes: 06 Jun  
[www.photocrowd.com/npoty24action](http://www.photocrowd.com/npoty24action)  
Travel Opens: 30 May Closes: 04 Jul  
[www.photocrowd.com/npoty24travel](http://www.photocrowd.com/npoty24travel)  
Low Light Opens: 27 Jun Closes: 01 Aug  
[www.photocrowd.com/npoty24lowlight](http://www.photocrowd.com/npoty24lowlight)
- It goes without saying that *all* images must be shot on Nikon cameras!
- Please ensure your entry *does not* contain a watermark and *is* submitted with the necessary EXIF data: the model of the camera and lens, and the shutter speed, aperture and ISO used.
- 12 competitions will appear throughout 2024, and the overall *N-Photo* Photographer of the Year 2024 – and winner of the grand prize – will be crowned in the issue that goes on sale in January 2025. So, grab your Nikon and start capturing photos. Good luck! 📷



# Readers' letters

We'd love to hear your thoughts on the mag and all things photographic! You can write to us, message us or share your images in the following ways: ✉ [mail@nphotomag.com](mailto:mail@nphotomag.com) ✕ [twitter.com/nphotomag](https://twitter.com/nphotomag) 📘 [facebook.com/nphotomag](https://facebook.com/nphotomag) 📷 [instagram.com/nphotomag](https://instagram.com/nphotomag)

## ★ Star Letter

### Film star

B

eing a regular reader of your magazine, I always enjoy the NPOTY competition featuring readers' photographs on Photocrowd.

I understand your push for photographs taken with Nikon digital cameras, complete with EXIF data. But some of us have been shooting with Nikon film cameras for quite some time – since the 1970s for me. Your request to have the complete EXIF data falls on deaf film ears. Could you include Nikon film contests?

As an example, I took this photograph using a Nikon F3 on Kodachrome film. It is a very tight crop to isolate this girl from a group of girls on either side of her. Looking at the original photo I would think that I used a 105mm lens. The photo was taken when I was deployed to Somalia in the early 1990s. We were documenting the Navy Seabees building school facilities for the

children who were watching from behind a fence.

I joined the digital age with a prototype Nikon camera as a Navy photojournalist in Somalia in 1992. It gave us the ability to send photos back to Washington nightly. You will be happy to know that this old, retired photojournalist now shoots with two Z 9s and a Z 6II.

**Terry Mitchell**

**We ask readers to include details of the camera, lens and exposure details that their image was shot on, and the easiest way to do this on a digital camera is by ensuring that the EXIF data is intact. Many readers find this information useful for their own photography.**

**However, we appreciate that this information will not be readily available for images taken on film – which readers are welcome to enter in our NPOTY competitions, we just ask that they provide as much information as they can, and to confirm they were shot on a Nikon body.**



Terry shot this image on film using a Nikon F3 and 105mm lens, he *thinks*, but can't recall his exposure settings.

Image: © Terry Mitchell



WORTH  
**£49**

## WIN! A copy of Affinity Photo 2

Write our star letter and you'll win a copy of the amazing Affinity Photo\* for Mac or PC from Serif. This feature-packed software is just as powerful as programs that retail for many times its price – and all without having to pay a monthly subscription fee. With full support for Raw files, layers and 'professional' features such as Curves and live filters, it also boasts top-class focus stacking, HDR merging, panorama stitching and batch processing. Affinity Photo is available for Mac, PC and iPad, and files can be easily shared between devices so you can continue editing on the move. It opens Photoshop files, too. [www.affinity.serif.com](http://www.affinity.serif.com)

\*Winners will need to create an Affinity user account to download the app. The prizes are issued in accordance with the standard Affinity EULA and there's no cash alternative.





If you're having trouble accessing our tutorials, it's likely to be your security settings. An easy fix is to try using a different browser.

### The missing link

I am a subscriber to your magazine and never understand how to access the links supplied with your Nikon Skills articles. For example, in the November 2023 issue (*N-Photo* 155) there's an article on HDR versus Luminosity Masking and I cannot access the video link ([www.bit.ly/np155hdr](http://www.bit.ly/np155hdr)) as I get an error message when using Google Chrome.

While I enjoy the magazine I found this very frustrating, I never seem to be able to access the extra things supplied, like the action set in this example. Please help!

**Nicky Rochussen**

**We double-check that the links to our video tutorials work prior to publication.**

**Tutorials that have videos are hosted on our companion website [www.digitalcameraworld.com](http://www.digitalcameraworld.com), with a link to download any project files, if included.**

**This works for the vast majority of our readers, however, we have had a handful of people reporting difficulties with accessing these pages. We believe this is related to their browser's security measures, particularly Google Chrome. Using a**

**different browser, such as Firefox, appears to get around the problem.**

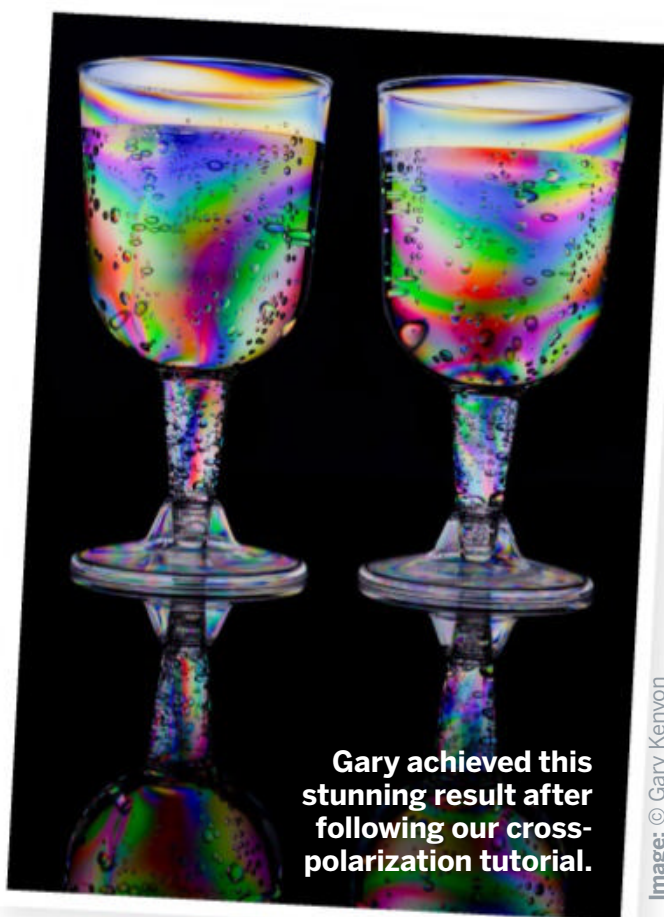
### Cross purposes

I just wanted to show you a photo I took after following the instructions for the project on cross-polarization of an acrylic glass in your March 2024 edition (*N-Photo* 160). I hope you like the shot!

I would be honoured if you would like to use it to show people how easy it was to follow the steps.

**Gary Kenyon**

**We absolutely love to see how readers have followed our projects in their own photography, so if you've been inspired to follow our tutorials, we would be delighted to see the results.**



Gary achieved this stunning result after following our cross-polarization tutorial.

Image: © Gary Kenyon

## www.DigitalCameraWorld.com

The best from our companion website



Image: NASA

### 1. Nikon Z 9 has been chosen by NASA for moon voyage

With NASA's original lunar landings far back enough in the rear-view mirror that even the conspiracy theories are getting buried under piles of dust, it's already time to go back. The question has been what camera do they take. It will be a Nikon Z 9, adapted, of course, for the space suits. The device will be known as the Handheld Universal Lunar Camera. <https://bit.ly/3V04dXL>



Image: Gareth Bevan / Digital Camera World

### 2. Your Nikon Z f eclipses the X100VI with its film profiles

While the Fujifilm X100VI is the latest photography sensation, what if I told all you Nikon Z f owners that you can have all the 'film simulations' you ever wanted and with free third-party software called Nikon Picture Control Editor (not to be confused with the Nikon Picture Control Utility). You can install image profiles to your Nikon Z or Nikon DSLR. <https://bit.ly/49VM0Uc>



Image: Nikon

### 3. Nikon is future-proofing cameras with focus on firmware

Firmware updates have been increasing in frequency, with camera and lens manufacturers issuing fixes and enhancing the equipment with newly developed features. Nikon has recently stated that it plans on placing a higher degree of focus on firmware updates. The best Nikon cameras have been updated with new features as and when they arise. <https://bit.ly/4bXL52t>



Sign up to our newsletter for the latest Nikon news! Simply scan this QR code or go to <https://bit.ly/dcwnews>





Camera:	Nikon Z 6II
Lens:	28mm f/2.8
Exposure:	10 secs, f/2.8, ISO2000

[1] Rhodri rested all his hopes on a single night and thankfully the aurora delivered.

# Northern Lights



Capturing the aurora borealis is on every photographer's bucket list, and **Rhodri Wyn** isn't about to leave Iceland empty-handed...

a last-minute holiday to Iceland with a friend, photography wasn't far from my mind. I had one mission, capture an aurora.

Flying with heavy photography kit isn't cheap and I'm not keen on leaving expensive kit in a hotel room, so I decided to travel light. Along with my Z 6II, I took my ultra-compact Peak Design Travel Tripod, a shutter release cable and the Nikon Z 28mm f/2.8, which is comparatively cheap, small and weighs just 155g.

## A green-lit trip

Seeing an aurora isn't a given, so it does require a little luck. We put all our hopes on a clear night for our second night in the southern town of Flóahreppur and the skies didn't disappoint. The Northern Lights appeared around 10:30pm and stayed until the early hours of the morning. I hastily took an image – anxious to get →



**Seeing an aurora isn't a given, so it does require a little luck. We put all our hopes on a clear night**

**MISSION:** Travel to Iceland and photograph the Northern Lights, or don't come back at all!

**PHOTOGRAPHER:** Rhodri Wyn

**SHOOT LOCATION:** Flóahreppur, Iceland

**KIT USED:** Nikon Z 6II, Nikon Z 28mm f/2.8

I can remember watching my father take pictures on family holidays, but it wasn't until I was introduced to Nikon DSLRs by a friend of mine (@the\_tall\_camera\_man) that I began to consider photography a hobby. I invested in a Nikon D3500 and began developing my skills and knowledge. Experimentation and

discussion with fellow photographers was key. I'm also fortunate enough to live near Carmarthen Cameras, who helped me to conquer the steep learning curve.

I soon decided to invest in more lenses, but because I could see myself making the jump to mirrorless in the near future, I opted not to purchase more F-mount glass and made the jump immediately. My Nikon Z 6II has been my faithful full-frame companion for a couple of years now.

I've always loved to travel and photography has only increased my wanderlust. I recently enjoyed capturing landscapes in Norway, and Iceland was high on my list, too. So, when I booked





<b>Camera:</b>	Nikon Z 6II
<b>Lens:</b>	28mm f/2.8
<b>Exposure:</b>	10 secs, f/2.8, ISO2000

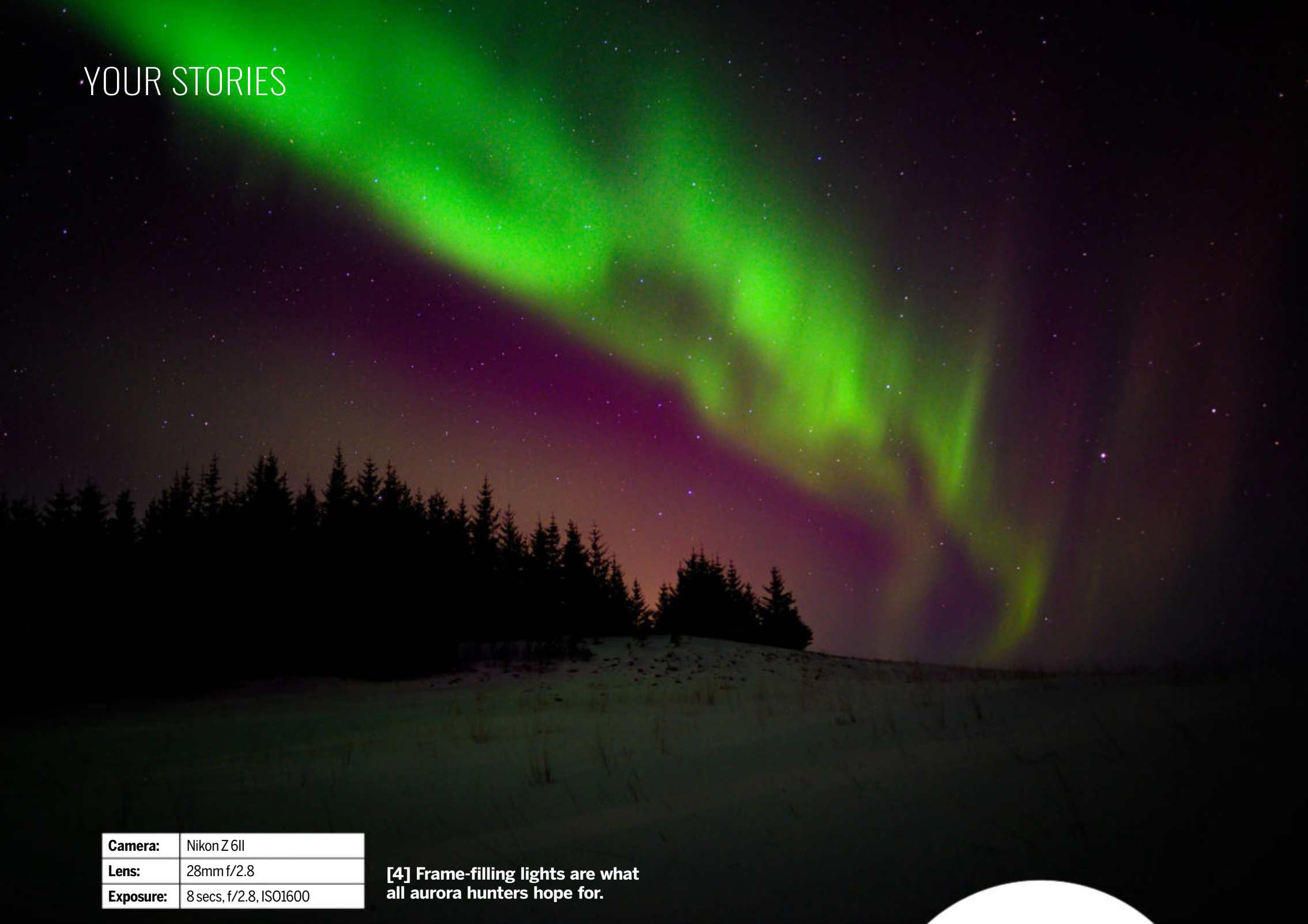


<b>Camera:</b>	Nikon Z 6II
<b>Lens:</b>	28mm f/2.8
<b>Exposure:</b>	10 secs, f/2.8, ISO2000

**[2] Above:** A head torch was used to illuminate the treeline so the AF could lock focus.

**[3] Left:** Armed with a remote shutter release, Rhodri was able to capture multiple shots comfortably to freeze a variety of aurora patterns.





Camera:	Nikon Z 6II
Lens:	28mm f/2.8
Exposure:	8 secs, f/2.8, ISO1600

**[4] Frame-filling lights are what all aurora hunters hope for.**



**[5] As the lights moved through the sky, Rhodri was able to frame this dome.**

Camera:	Nikon Z 6II
Lens:	28mm f/2.8
Exposure:	10 secs, f/2.8, ISO3200

an image on the memory card before the aurora vanished. Once I had set up my tripod, I pointed the camera towards the horizon and then switched on my head torch. I directed it on a few trees so I could use autofocus (single-point AF). I opened up the aperture and dialled in ISO1600, which yielded an eight-second exposure. I was happy with this initial image [4], but I knew that I could do better.

Once I realized the Northern Lights were likely to stick around for a while, I relaxed and began to experiment. There wasn't much else to frame in the foreground beyond the many trees and our accommodation. As the lights changed, I had to tweak my setting to make sure I was exposing the aurora as well as possible. I boosted my ISO to 2000 and increased my shutter speed to 10 secs. I then spent a while focusing on the incredible shapes produced by the aurora [1,2,3]. One of my main challenges was to ensure my tripod didn't move around in the snow. Using my remote shutter release certainly helped.

The lights moved and I thought a nearby dome would make an interesting foreground. The sky wasn't as bright, so I increased my ISO to 3200 and captured the shot [5]. I'd been blessed with a fantastic display of lights and a full SD card. **N**

**SUBMIT YOUR IMAGES!**  
To see your images here, send a small portfolio to [mail@nphotomag.com](mailto:mail@nphotomag.com) with 'Your Stories' as the subject

**Rhodri's Top Tips** \*

- A light kit bag can be kept on you at all times and avoids excess baggage fees.
- A remote shutter release helps to prevent camera shake when using a tripod, while also allowing you to precisely time your exposures.
- While the aurora might be the main subject of your image, take the time to consider foreground interest.



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Zinio: [www.bit.ly/nphoto\\_Zinio](http://www.bit.ly/nphoto_Zinio)  
Pocketmags: [www.bit.ly/nphoto\\_pocket](http://www.bit.ly/nphoto_pocket)
- **Other options** *N-Photo* is also available for Kobo, Kindle, Nook. It can be found on the all-you-can read Readly magazine app, and it's available on Magzter, Pocketmags and PressReader.



**Issue 161**

- Man-made landscapes
- Super-tele primes rated
- Capture city lights



**Issue 160**

- Coastal landscapes
- Portrait primes on test
- Food photography tips



**Issue 159**

- 24 photo ideas for 2024
- Flashguns on test
- Street photography



**Issue 158**

- 25 winter wildlife tips
- The best gear of 2023
- High-speed flash photos



**Issue 157**

- Nikon Z f full review!
- 20 tips for portrait pics
- How to shoot forests



**Issue 156**

- Best British landscapes
- Fast tele-zooms on test
- Autumn wildlife



**Issue 155**

- Autumn landscape tips
- Best mirrorless for you
- Shoot fantasy portraits



**Issue 154**

- 100 outdoor photo tips
- Filter holder systems
- Birds of prey Apprentice



**Issue 153**

- Shoot dramatic scenes
- Music photography tips
- Standard zooms on test



**Issue 152**

- Inspiring travel images
- Shoot summer scenes
- Fast budget Z primes



**Issue 151**

- Wildlife skills revealed
- Nikon Z 8 review
- Fine art flowers



**Issue 150**

- 25 landscape tips
- Macro lens test
- Trend-setting portraits

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# NPhoto GearZone

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



**NEW GEAR**

## 90 Shiny new stuff!

We round up the best Nikon-fit kit from The Photography & Video Show



**REVIEW**

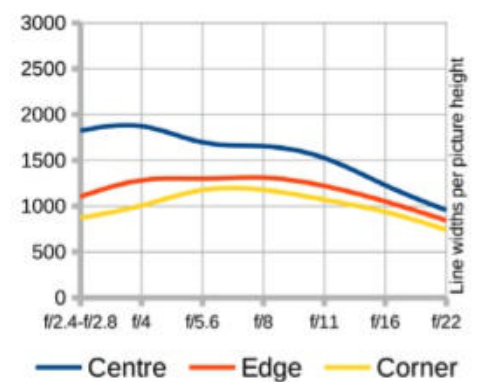
## 92 AstrHori 18mm f/8

The DX format 2x Periscope Probe Macro under the microscope!

### Lab tests explained

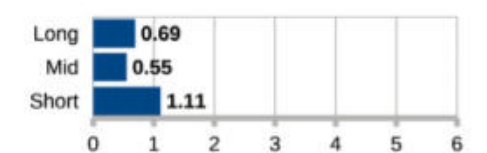
#### Sharpness

A chart with multiple sharp boundaries is photographed, the extent of blur at the centre, mid and edges showing how many line widths per picture height the lens can resolve. Simply put, the bigger the numbers the sharper the lens.



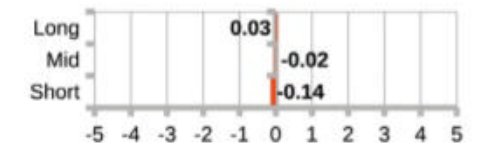
#### Fringing

Chromatic aberration is visible as purple or green fringing around high-contrast boundaries, caused by different wavelengths being focused on different areas of the sensor. The larger the number, the worse the score.



#### Distortion

A lens that bulges towards the edges of the frame produces barrel distortion, shown as a negative score. Pincushion distortion produces a positive score. A score of zero indicates no distortion.



**REVIEW**

## 94 One by Wacom

It's Wacom's cheapest graphics tablet by some margin, but is it any good?



**BIG TEST**

## 96 Wide-angle primes

What's the best light, compact lens for street, travel and everyday shooting?

**BUYER'S GUIDE**

## 108 Nikon cameras & F/Z-fit lenses

Every current Nikon camera, plus an exhaustive round-up of lenses to put on 'em



### Our awards in a nutshell



The best performance, design and value



A product that gives you more for your money



The very best kit that really sets the standard

### Our scoring system

- 1.0** Forget about it!
- 2.0** Below average
- 3.0** Good for the money
- 4.0** Excellent product
- 5.0** Best-in-class



# New gear

Here's what caught our eye this month

## PMI Gear SmokeNINJA

£299/\$249 [www.smoke-ninja.com](http://www.smoke-ninja.com)

**T**he SmokeNINJA is a battery-powered, wireless, handheld smoke machine that is ideal for adding a variety of atmospheric effects to shoots. With three distinct settings – Fog, Haze and Dry Ice – the device offers a variety of creative ways to enhance a whole host of photography and videography genres, such as conceptual portraits and product shots, or adding mood to movies.

Measuring only 14cm tall, the device is super-portable and easy



to hide so that it's always out of shot. It comes with a standard 3/8in threaded mount, as well as a magnetic plate that enables it to attach to any steel surface, so it can be placed unobtrusively in any scene or shooting set-up.

It comes complete with a dedicated range of versatile mounting accessories and smoke-shaping adaptors, allowing you to place the smoke exactly where you want it, making it a highly versatile creative tool. Smoke can be generated by pressing a button on the device itself, or via a remote control, giving you all the flexibility and control you need on a shoot.

The SmokeNINJA is highly efficient and only consumes 0.5ml of smoke liquid per minute and the provided 100ml bottle of Cloud Formula fluid will deliver 200 minutes of smoke. It can create continuous bursts of up to 60 seconds, which is enough to fill a 500 sq ft space. The entire smoke-generation process is clean, odourless and free from any burning smell. With an intuitive, smart interface, you can see in real time how much smoke is left before overheating. It also shows the rate of recovery, so you know exactly when the machine is ready to work again. It is battery powered and full charge takes only 90 minutes via USB-C.



### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The SmokeNINJA is a fantastic little device for adding subtle ambience to photo or video shoots that you have to see for yourself!

## PGYTECH CFexpress CreateMate

£100/\$100 [www.pgytech.com](http://www.pgytech.com)

**P**GYTech has combined a card storage case with a card reader into a product that will speed up the workflow of photographers who are on the move.

The CFexpress CreateMate can accommodate two CFexpress Type-B cards, as well as three SD cards, four Micro SD cards, two Nano SIM cards, and a card ejector pin. But as well as ensuring protection for your memory devices, it doubles up to offer a pretty zippy card reader, achieving impressive theoretical data transfer speeds

of 312MB/s for SD 4.0 SD/Micro SD cards (via high-speed card adapter) and 1000MB/s for CFexpress cards. It joins PGYTEch's existing SD-only CreateMate and there's also a model available for CFexpress Type-A cards.

"PGYTEch's product development team has always been user-centric, considering the practical needs of photography enthusiasts in different scenarios, developing products that balance high-end quality and innovation to meet the demands of smooth interaction and creation. Therefore, in addition to considering



the practicality of the product, we also took into account the convenience and protection aspect," said a company spokesperson.

The CreateMate is IP54 shockproof, dustproof, splash-resistant and ruggedly designed to be utilized in challenging environments. It connects via a standard USB-C interface.

CreateMate is available in Classic Black and Moss Green colourways, offering the perfect combination of style and substance.

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Combining a robust carrying case and card reader is a clever idea, particularly one with such a speedy interface, and will be welcomed by photographers on the go.





## Brister's SpeediGimbal

£79 worldwide [www.colinbrister.co.uk](http://www.colinbrister.co.uk)

**T**he SpeediGimbal is a monopod/tripod head that is designed to offer instant support to take the weight of a camera with large lens attached – rather than providing a secure attachment – but offers unrivalled manoeuvrability.

It consists of a two-part ball-and-cup design, with one part mounted to the lens bracket and the other fitted atop a monopod or tripod. Both parts have 3/8in UNC threads, and come with standard 1/4in UNC adapters, too.

Manufactured from Black Nylon 66, it's a high-performance product that is designed to withstand the effects of long-term wear and tear. The device is perfect for sports, wildlife and macro, and also works with scopes, making it ideal for birdwatchers too. The lightweight,



compact head is less than three inches in size, enabling it to be easily stashed in a spare corner of a camera bag.

It's the brainchild of wildlife photographer Colin Brister, who developed it after having spent many years handholding heavy lenses, but found standard heads didn't offer the manoeuvrability he needed. It is available directly from his website and the £79 price includes free worldwide delivery.

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

You'll still need to keep a firm grip on your camera, but this offers the manoeuvrability of a gimbal head without the bulk.



## Lowepro Pro Trekker 650 AW II

£470/\$550 [www.lowepro.com](http://www.lowepro.com)

**T**he latest and largest backpack in Lowepro's Pro Trekker line, the 650 AW II is ideal for rugged outdoor and wildlife photo assignments. It boasts the largest padded interior in the entire Lowepro range, while the backpack's modular exterior and MaxFit divider system empower users to tailor their kit to any assignment. It'll easily store a hefty pro DSLR or mirrorless body, such as D6 or Z 9, with a large lens attached (such as an 800mm f/5.6), plus countless other lenses and accessories.

It's also the first Pro Trekker to combine rear access with adjustable torso length ActivLift. Back access

keeps photographers and their gear clean and the ActivLift harness system means better fit and load distribution. Constructed with the same technical materials that define the Pro Trekker series, the addition of ripstop panels with carbonate and TPU coatings ensures exceptional resistance to nature's elements like water, dirt, mud and snow. Its Green Line label signifies that it has been constructed with 87% recycled fabric content.

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Bigger is better! This latest Pro Trekker is the ultimate carry-all for the outdoorsy photographer with way too much kit to haul.

## Zhiyun Molus X60 COB lights

From £199/\$199 [www.zhiyun-tech.com](http://www.zhiyun-tech.com)

**Z**hiyun's Molus X60 and X60-RGB COB lights offer a decent 60W power output in a minimal footprint. COB is an acronym for Chip On Board; LEDs are directly mounted on the circuit board, giving an even spread of light over a large area, with benefits such as faster cooling, greater energy efficiency and compact design.

The Molus X60 and X60-RGB measure 100x71x56mm and weigh just 313g (319g for the X60-RGB), yet are constructed from a rugged sleek and modern all-metal design.

The standard X60 offers flicker-free white light with 2700-6500 K colour temperatures, while the X60-RGB additionally offers vibrant coloured light that is precisely adjustable across the RGB spectrum. The interface is based on a simple dual dial control, one for light temperature and one for intensity/brightness.

The X60 series offers 50 minutes of battery life, with further power options via a USB connection. Zhiyun's DynaVort Cooling System ensures users never have to worry about overheating. 100W PD fast

charge support is on offer, as are six creative RGB lighting moods and nine lighting effects. The lights are compatible with Zhiyun's ecosystem of lighting modifiers and accessories, plus the company's ZY Vega app.

The Standard Kit includes a lamp, AC adapter, mini reflector, and dome. The Combo Kit adds a battery power grip, USB-C cable, and carrying case. The Pro Kit also comes with a softbox and additional battery power grip.



### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

With dimensions barely bigger than a credit card (if you ignore the depth aspect), these pocket-sized lights offer maximum intensity in a miniscule package. **N**





# AstrHori 18mm f/8 2x Periscope Probe Macro

**£879/\$719** [www.astrhori.cn](http://www.astrhori.cn)

This niche macro lens for crop-sensor Z-series Nikons provides a whole different perspective when you're shooting extreme close-ups

## Specifications

**Mount:** Nikon Z

**Full-frame:** No

**Autofocus:** No

**Stabilization:** No

**Construction:** 23 elements in 17 groups

**Angle of view:** 76 degrees

**Diaphragm blades:** 7

**Minimum aperture:** f/28

**Minimum focusing distance:** 0.47m

**Maximum magnification ratio:** 2.0x (2:1)

**Filter size:** N/A

**Dimensions:** 60x457mm

**Weight:** 704g

# A

Although niche and rather oddball, the AstrHori 18mm f/8 2x Periscope Probe Macro isn't a new concept. It's essentially a newer version of the company's full-frame compatible 28mm f/13 2X Probe Macro lens, but designed for crop-sensor Z-series Nikon cameras. As such, it has an 'effective' 27mm focal length and gives virtually the same field of view as using the preceding 28mm lens on a full-frame camera.

The AstrHori 28mm itself wasn't a whole new thing. It looked a very close copy of the Venus Optics Laowa 24mm f/14 Probe, which was also designed for full-frame cameras. However, both of the AstrHori 18mm and 28mm lenses only cost about half the price of the Laowa 24mm optic.

### Key features

If you're into shooting bugs, you'll know they can have an unsociable habit of crawling, jumping or flying away as soon as you get vaguely near enough to photograph them with a regular macro lens. The big idea of this lens is that it has a long probe section that fits to the front of the lens. The probe is comparatively thin and unobtrusive,

so you're less prone to scare things away. Being long and thin, the probe also enables you to poke it where the sun don't shine, so to speak. For example, if you're feeling particularly reckless, you could stick it into a hornets' nest but, to be clear, we're absolutely *not* suggesting that you do that.

Naturally, a downside is that if you extend the probe into small, dark places, there's generally not enough light to take a photo anyway. Typical of probe lenses (not that there are many), this one therefore features an LED lamp array built into the business end at the front. We've seen built-in LED lamps in some conventional macro lenses, which are powered directly from the battery in the host camera. But again, typical of probe lenses, that's not the case here. The LED array is USB powered, so you need to plug it into a mains adapter if you're shooting at home, or a USB power bank if you're out and about.

You'd think that 2x (2:1) magnification should be enough for anyone, but the crop factor gives you an extra bonus. For APS-C format cameras, you not only get a focal length multiplier of 1.5x, but you also get a similar 'effective' boost in macro magnification, to 3x at the shortest focus distance. Another bonus of crop-sensor cameras is that depth of field is more dependent on actual rather than effective

focal length. As such, you can get a bit more than the wafer-thin depth of field that's typical when shooting macro images on a full-frame camera.

Serious macro photographers usually prefer to focus manually, which is just as well as this lens has no autofocus capability. In fact, it has no built-in electronics at all, apart from the LED light. Such a set-up means that there's no data communication with the camera body.

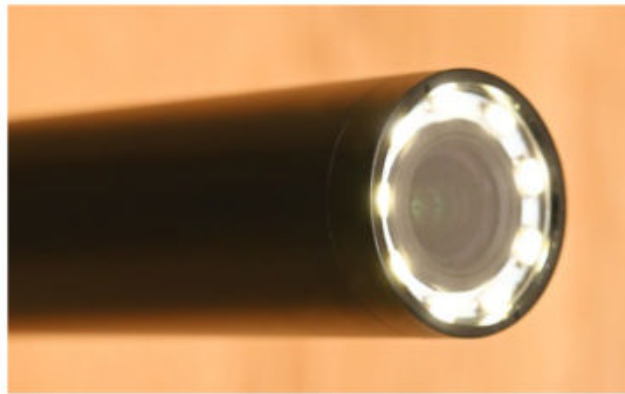
As such, you'll need to set the aperture as well as the focus distance via the lens's on-board control rings, which takes Program AE and shutter-priority shooting off the menu. Naturally, no lens-based EXIF information will be saved in image files, as the camera has no way of knowing what lens is fitted, let alone its settings.

### Build and handling

The AstrHori Periscope feels very much a 'me too' lens, following in the footsteps of the Laowa probe in terms of build and handling characteristics. It comes as a kit of parts, which is supplied in a protective case with cut-out foam inserts. A full set



# ASTRHORI 18MM F/8 2X PERISCOPE PROBE MACRO



The LED light array in the front of the probe offers different levels of illumination.

of front and rear caps is supplied for both the main section of the lens and the probe, along with microfibre pouches for both components. There's also a USB-A to USB-C cable for the LED lamp array built into the front of the probe. Again, like the Laowa, the cable includes a module that hosts an on/off button and up/down buttons for controlling the intensity of light you are shooting with.

Let's talk 'working distance'. The very nature of the probe lens gives you a comparatively relaxed working distance between the camera and the subject, of just over 46cm (18 inches), even at full 2x macro magnification.

That's more than twice as much as with the more conventional Laowa 90mm f/2.8 2x Ultra Macro APO lens, which has a working distance of about 20cm (8 inches) at its maximum 2x magnification.

It's not all good news, however. The downside is that the front end of the AstrHori's long probe comes to just 5mm (1/5in) from the subject at its shortest focus distance. In practice, you can often find that the front of the probe casts a shadow over what you're attempting to shoot, so the LED lamp array definitely comes in handy.

Manual focusing with autofocus macro lenses can be a real pain. The rotational travel is often quite small and it can be easier to move the camera slightly in pursuit of accurate focusing for extreme close-ups. The AstrHori is very different. We love the long rotational travel of the focus ring and that it operates with silky smoothness.

This makes highly accurate macro focusing comparatively easy. Switching to a magnified preview in the viewfinder or rear screen and pinpointing focusing is a doddle.



The delicate inner workings of a fob watch shot using 2x macro magnification.

## Performance

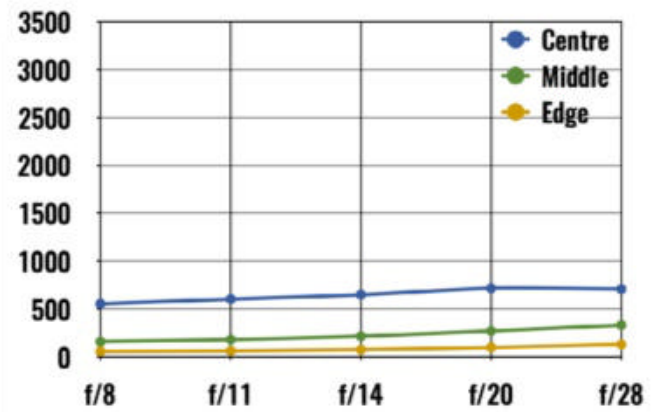
The f/8 aperture rating is pretty fast for a probe lens. Narrower apertures are generally preferred in macro photography, for more than a marginal depth of field, but the f/8 rating gives greater versatility. For a probe lens, we really liked the sharpness and clarity that we were able to get from the AstrHori when shooting extreme close-ups. It's capable of delivering ultra-fine levels of detail that are virtually invisible to the naked eye. Colour quality and contrast are very good too. Suffice it to say that all-round image quality is very convincing.

Although the lens is clearly a specialist macro optic, it can nevertheless focus all the way to infinity. That's a bit of a moot point, as performance at longer focus distances is poor, as demonstrated by our lab-tests. Unlike most regular modern macro lenses, it's really a one-trick pony. **N**

## Features

- 1 The lens boasts 2x (2:1) maximum macro magnification for extreme close-ups.
- 2 It comes in two parts, with the probe clicking into the main lens body.
- 3 The built-in dimmable LED light at the front of the probe needs a USB power source.
- 4 A purely manual lens, there's no electronic communication with the host camera.
- 5 Aperture is set via ring, with selectable steps of f/8, f/11, f/14, f/20 and f/28.
- 6 The focus ring has a long operational travel, with depth-of field-markers on the barrel.

## Sharpness



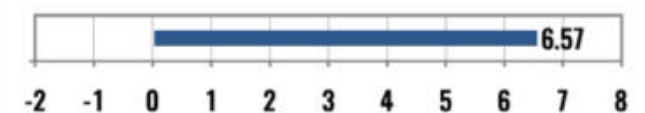
Lab-test results for sharpness are dire but bear in mind, these are based on shooting full-sized test charts at a regular focus distance, much longer than what this lens is intended for. With extreme close-ups, we found it was able to resolve very fine detail across the whole APS-C format image frame.

## Fringing



Colour fringing can be very noticeable away from the central region of the frame in general shooting but, again, we found this to be less of a problem when shooting extreme close-ups, as shown in our example image.

## Distortion



As with sharpness and colour fringing, distortion is less of an issue when shooting at very close range, although the lab-test result shows heavy pincushion.

## N-Photo verdict

Taking a leaf out of Laowa's book and building on its own 28mm full-frame compatible probe macro lens, this 18mm optic is designed for crop-sensor cameras. You can poke your nose (or rather the front of the long, thin probe) into tight spaces and take macro shots like never before. The front section is waterproof too, so you can even explore rock pools or get up close and personal with aquatic life. It's a great idea that translates into a really neat lens, and at a very competitive price.







# Wacom One by Wacom

From **£35.99/\$49.95** [www.wacom.com](http://www.wacom.com)

Wacom's most affordable graphics tablet might just convert a few trackpad stalwarts

**G**raphics tablets can be a welcome alternative to hunching over a trackpad and can even enhance your workflow, when using brushes for tasks such as dodging and burning. Some boast thousands of pressure levels, shortcut buttons and premium styluses, but the One by Wacom offers a no-frills approach that's ideal if you want a portable tablet at an affordable price tag.

## Mightier than the mouse

We reviewed the small variant, but if you want more real estate you can pick up a medium variant. The tablet comes with a stylus, microUSB-to-USB-A cable, a trio of replacement nibs and a nib-removal tool. No drivers or installation wizards are required for compatible Chromebooks, but a quick-start guide provides a link to set up instructions where you can find Windows and macOS drivers. The tablet also grants access to the Wacom Center, which allows you to customize its performance.

The One by Wacom's stripped-back design means there are no shortcut buttons

– like the four ExpressKeys you'll find on the standard Wacom Intuos series tablets – but there is a cloth tab to hold the pen when not in use. You'll find two buttons on the pen itself, which are mapped to right-click and scroll by default, but can be changed to perform functions such as erase and undo.

The tablet feels sturdy and reminds us of the Amazon Kindle's build. Just like a well-worn notepad or sketchbook, it's meant to be shoved into a rucksack or kit bag. The microUSB-to-USB-A cable does hamper the tablet's portability slightly if you require a USB-C adapter to connect it to your computer. And the lack of Bluetooth connectivity will make it slightly less enjoyable to use on the go, but its absence is understandable given the pricing.

Pick up the pen for the first time and you'll notice it's extremely lightweight. The plastic feels cheap, and the two buttons aren't particularly reassuring. This is clearly where Wacom has decided to cut corners and given the sturdy nature of the tablet itself, it seems a sensible sacrifice for the competitive price point.

The One by Wacom's small and sturdy design makes it ideal for photographers on the go.

## Features

- 1** The Small pad measures 210x146x8.7mm while the Medium is 277x189x8.7mm.
- 2** The drawing surface has a matt, papery feel providing an authentic drawing experience.
- 3** A Wacom-branded cloth tab holds the pen securely in place when it's not in use.
- 4** The pen's 2048 sensitivity levels can be customized further via Wacom Center.
- 5** Utilitarian design feels very robust, so you can chuck the tablet in a bag and go.

The Wacom Center allows you to switch between two modes: Mouse and Pen. It's important that you're aware of this, since Mouse mode really isn't fit for drawing. It's also worth noting that we increased the pen's acceleration to 100%, which made it feel much more responsive.

The tablet's surface is suitably papery and when paired with the pen's nibs, the drawing experience is really enjoyable.

## N-Photo verdict

Want an affordable and portable tablet to do a bit of retouching on the go? You'll struggle to find one that boasts the One by Wacom's quality at such an affordable price point. The cheap-feeling stylus is the only blight on this impressive little tablet. **N**

**PROS** Robust; customizable; paper-like surface; small size ideal for travel; smooth and responsive

**CONS** The stylus feels a little cheap; only 2048 pressure levels may not offer enough fine control

4.5 Overall



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# Everyday wide-angle primes

A modest to generously wide viewing angle is shoehorned into these compact and lightweight prime lenses, ideal for street and travel shots

E

Everybody uses a zoom lens for general shooting nowadays, right? Actually, no. A 'fast' standard zoom tends to be big and clunky, so many discerning photographers go for prime time instead. Indeed, *N-Photo's* in-house pro photographers based in our studio are usually spotted out and about with a moderately wide-angle prime lens as their tool of choice. So what are the plus points?

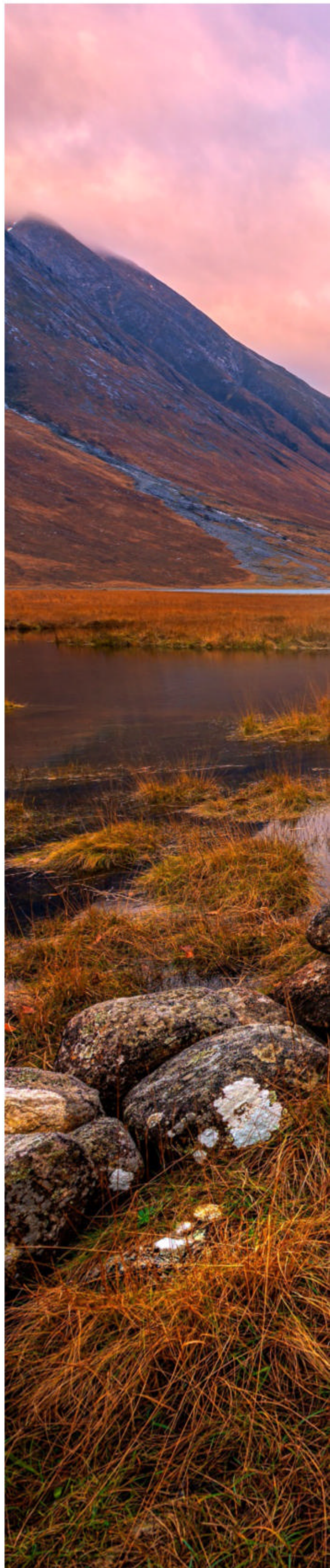
First up, if you want to freeze movement under dull lighting conditions, relatively fast prime lenses enable fast shutter speeds without the need to bump up your camera's ISO setting, which degrades image quality. Next up, you can get a tight depth of field when you want it,

for isolating the main subject in a scene against a blurred background. And yes, size matters. If you're on walkabout or travelling with your camera, a compact and lightweight lens is a winner. There's a lot to be said for a prime rather than zoom lens. It nudges you into thinking about your shooting position and composition, and how the elements in a scene work together for best effect. That can be something of a lost art when you rely on twisting the zoom ring instead of 'zooming with your feet'.

With all of that in mind, we've picked out the best-buy DX and FX format Z-mount wide prime lenses for everyday shooting, some of which are very budget friendly. We'll also be covering F-mount lenses at the bottom of the following pages. →

## The contenders

<b>Nikon</b> Z DX 24mm f/1.7	£269/\$277
<b>Viltrox</b> AF 23mm f/1.4 Z	£269/\$325
<b>Nikon</b> Z 28mm f/2.8 SE	£309/\$307
<b>Viltrox</b> AF 13mm f/1.4 Z	£383/\$459
<b>Sigma</b> 16mm f/1.4 DC DN   C	£459/\$449
<b>Nikon</b> Z 26mm f/2.8	£529/\$497
<b>Voigtlander</b> D23mm f/1.2 Nokton Z	£649/\$699
<b>Nikon</b> Z 35mm f/1.8 S	£899/\$847









# Nikon

## Z DX 24mm f/1.7

£269/\$277

This is the first and, so far, only own-brand Nikon prime lens that's made exclusively for DX format Z-system cameras



**F**eel the need for speed? A key feature of this lens is its relatively fast f/1.7 aperture. Shoot with the Nikon Z DX 16-50mm f/3.5-6.3 VR zoom at the equivalent 24mm focal length and the widest available aperture is f/4.2. That's just over 2.5 f/stops slower. Add in the crop factor of DX format cameras and you get an 'effective' focal length of 36mm, equating to moderately wide but very natural viewing perspective.

As well as enabling fast shutter speeds under low lighting conditions, the wide aperture delivers a tight depth of field for close-up photography. Speaking of which, the minimum focus distance is very short at just 18cm, with a maximum magnification ratio of 0.19x, which is very similar to the other Nikon lenses on test.

The optical design is based on nine elements which are arranged in eight groups, including two aspherical elements to boost quality and reduce the lens's overall size. Autofocus is courtesy of the now-common stepping motor, and only the rear elements move during focusing, so the front end stays fixed. The aperture diaphragm isn't particularly well-rounded, based on seven blades.

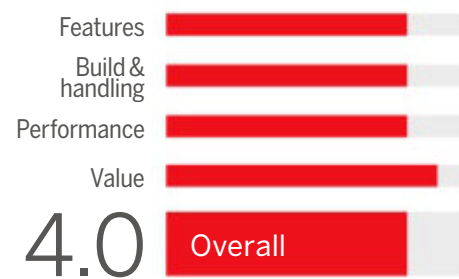
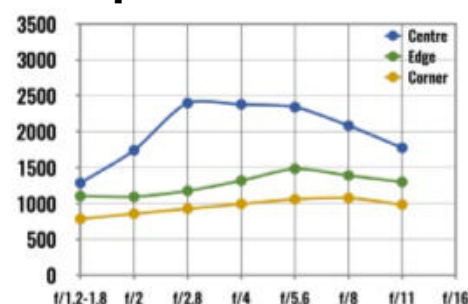
When size is of the essence, this lens is very compact and lightweight. For the sake of comparison, it's little more than half the physical length of the directly competing Viltrox AF 23mm f/1.4 lens on test and less than half the weight, which is helped by the plastic mounting plate.

### Performance

Sharpness is a little mediocre when shooting wide-open at

f/1.7 but steps up nicely at f/2, at least in the centre of the image frame. Apertures of f/5.6 to f/8 give the best levels of sharpness across the whole frame. Even here, the Nikon lags behind the competing Viltrox AF 23mm lens for sharpness, while also producing more distortion when uncorrected in-camera.

### Sharpness



### Features

- 1 Unlike some low-budget Nikon lenses, this one comes complete with a hood, which screws into the 46mm filter thread.
- 2 Unusually, the narrowest available aperture is f/11 rather than f/16 or f/22.
- 3 A casualty of the downsized design is that there's no AF/MF focus mode switch, so you need to rely on in-camera menus for this.
- 4 Measuring 70x40mm and weighing just 136g, this is one of the smallest and lightest lenses in the group.
- 5 Like other Z DX lenses, this one has a plastic mounting plate but at least it includes a rubber weather-seal ring.

## How we test

We combine a range of lab tests with real-world shooting



To test real-world performance, we use lenses in all sorts of lighting conditions, for indoor and outdoor shooting scenarios. We check for good build quality and handling, smooth and precise operation of all controls, and we test the speed and accuracy of autofocus. We typically test full-frame compatible lenses on a range of FX and DX bodies, whereas APS-C format lenses are just tested on DX cameras. These include DSLRs like the D850 and D7500, and mirrorless cameras like the Z 7II and Z fc.

In-camera and Raw processing corrections for chromatic aberration, distortion and vignetting

are disabled where possible, throughout lab-testing, to better reveal the true optical performance of each lens. In our lab, we test lenses under controlled conditions, shooting specialist test charts and processing the results with the Imatest Master and DxO Analyzer suites. The test shots are taken across the range of apertures and zoom settings (where applicable), then analysed for sharpness, chromatic aberrations (colour fringing) and distortion. We go on to judge the overall performance by taking both real-world testing and the lab tests into account.



# Viltrox

## AF 23mm f/1.4 Z

£269/\$325

Designed for DX format Z-system cameras, this Viltrox lens feels like a step up in quality compared with the Nikon DX 24mm lens



**V**iltrox burst onto the Z DX format scene with a trio of 23mm, 33mm and 56mm lenses. All three are virtually the same size and weight, have the same 52mm filter attachment thread and, more crucially, the same fast f/1.4 aperture rating. They all feature a physical aperture control ring, which has a calibrated scale in one-third f/stops but a de-clicked design, more ideal for shooting video. Naturally, there's an A (Auto) position at one end of the travel for setting camera-based aperture control.

Build quality and handling are exemplary, especially for a lens with such a budget-friendly price tag. The barrel, mounting plate and even the petal shaped hood are all made from metal rather than plastic, the front element has a moisture/grease-resistant fluorine coating and there's even a

USB-C port in the mounting plate for the application of firmware updates.

Optical highlights include two ED (Extra-low Dispersion) elements and two HR (High Refractive index) elements, along with HD Nano multi-layer coatings to combat ghosting and flare. The autofocus system is based on the usual linear stepping motor and the focusing design ensures minimal focus breathing, which is another plus point for videographers.

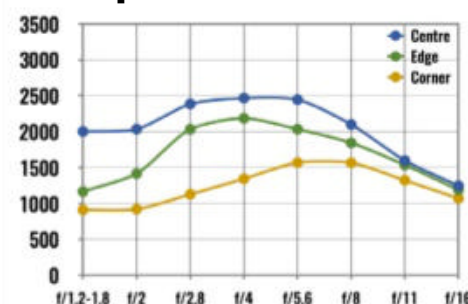
### Performance

As well as delivering quick and consistently accurate autofocus performance, the lens is impressive in terms of image quality. The centre-sharpness is excellent even when shooting wide-open at f/1.4, although it pays to stop down a little if you want really strong corner-sharpness. Even so,

it resoundingly beats the Nikon Z DX 24mm for sharpness away from the centre of the frame. Both axial and lateral chromatic aberrations are minimal, barrel distortion is only slight, and resistance to ghosting and flare is very good.

All in all, a top performer for such a budget-friendly lens.

### Sharpness



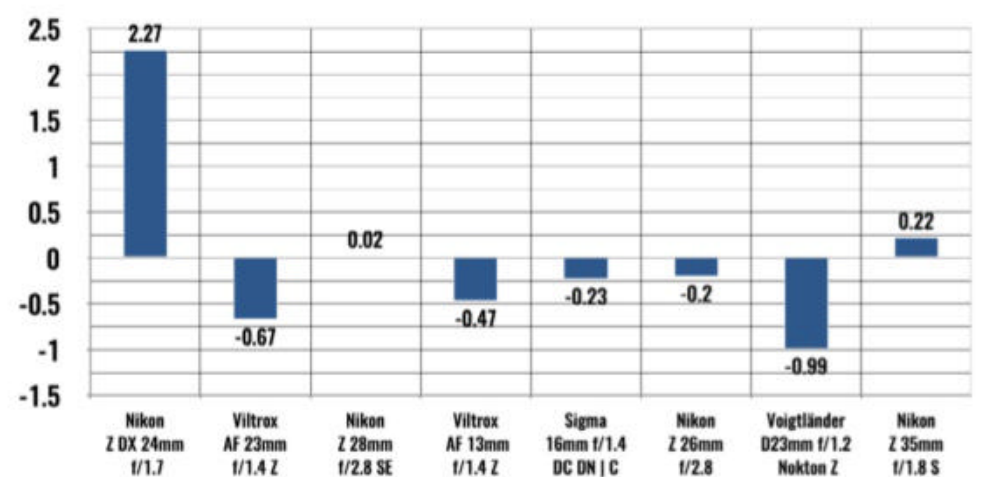
### Features

- 1 The mounting plate is plated brass and is more heavy-duty than that of the Nikon Z DX 24mm lens.
- 2 The trio of DX format Viltrox AF 23mm, 33mm and 56mm f/1.4 lenses give classic 35mm, 50mm and 85mm focal lengths in full-frame terms.
- 3 Available in black or silver, the lens is well suited to the style and handling characteristics of the Z fc.
- 4 There's no locking switch for the aperture control ring to prevent you accidentally nudging it.
- 5 Build quality is excellent but doesn't feature weather-seals.

## Distortion

Good news... there's not much to worry about

Our lab test results for distortion don't tell the whole story. As with other manufacturers, Nikon has been designing some of its more compact lenses for mirrorless Z-system cameras with downsizing in mind. The Nikon Z 26mm f/2.8 and Z 28mm f/2.8 on test are a case in point. As such, some lenses rely heavily on automatic in-camera correction for distortion, which can't be disabled in the menu system. The same correction is also tagged in Raw files, so it's automatically applied when processing images. For most lenses in the group, distortion results are shown with no correction applied.





# Nikon

## Z 28mm f/2.8 SE

£309/\$307

The retro-styled 'Special Edition' of Nikon's Z 28mm looks very much at home on Z f and Z fc cameras



**T**he look and feel of this lens hark back to the golden era of 35mm film photography, with the texture of the grip areas and the font for the lettering being recreated from Nikon's archive of blueprints. As such, it looks right at home on the Z fc camera and is available as a kit lens option, where it has an 'effective' focal length of 42mm. Many find that ideal for general shooting, as it falls neatly between a 35mm wide-angle perspective and a 50mm standard field of view. The lens is eminently suitable for the Z f as well, as it's a full-frame compatible lens, this time giving a more wide-angle view.

Cosmetics aside, the SE lens is optically, electronically and mechanically identical to the standard Z 28mm f/2.8, which has more mainstream Z-system styling. The only difference is

that the retro looks come with a 2mm growth in physical diameter and a 5g weight gain. In both lenses, autofocus is driven by the usual stepping motor, which is ideal for both stills and video, the latter benefiting from an absence of focus breathing.

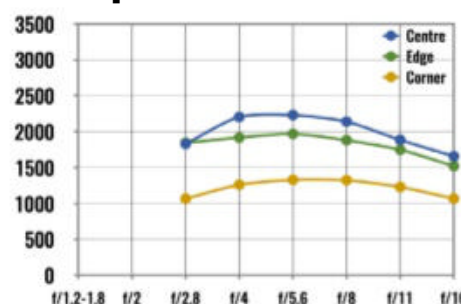
As with the Nikon Z DX 24mm lens on test, this one has no ED (Extra-low Dispersion) elements and is based on a simple arrangement of nine elements in eight groups, including two aspherical elements and a seven-blade aperture diaphragm. Another similarity between the two lenses is the plastic mounting plate, rather than metal.

### Performance

Sharpness across nearly all of the frame is very impressive, even when shooting wide-open at the albeit comparatively modest aperture of f/2.8.

Corner sharpness gets into its stride at f/4. The stepping motor-based autofocus system is typically quick, virtually silent and equally adept at stills and video capture. Colour fringing is barely noticeable and, thanks to in-camera correction (which cannot be disabled), this Nikon acts like a zero-distortion lens.

### Sharpness



### Features

- 1 Particularly compact for a full-frame compatible prime lens, it measures 72x43mm and weighs 160g.
- 2 The styling is impeccable, adding retro charm to new-era Z-system design.
- 3 Although it has a plastic mounting plate, the lens does feature weather-seals.
- 4 Unlike every other lens in this test group, the Z 28mm is supplied without a lens hood. The 52mm screw-in Nikon HN-1 lens hood is compatible and costs around £30/\$27.
- 5 The minimum focus distance of 19cm enables a 0.2x maximum magnification factor.

# Sigma 30mm f/1.4 DC HSM Art

£449/\$399

A fast f/1.4 prime for DX format Nikon DSLRs

This DX format F-mount lens is like a scaled-down version of the popular FX format Sigma 50mm f/1.4 Art lens. With an 'effective' focal length of 45mm, it's less than two-thirds the physical length and barely more than half the weight. The optical path includes a double aspheric element, with the aim of optimizing image quality while reducing the size. The nine-blade diaphragm is

well rounded and helps to maintain the quality of bokeh when narrowing the aperture. Autofocus speed is a bit on the sluggish side and, despite only the rearward optical elements moving to focus, these are almost as big as the forward elements. Image quality is very good, especially in terms of wide-open sharpness. Colour fringing and distortion are well-controlled. ★★★★★



**A really high-quality lens with premium build quality and excellent performance, this Sigma is good value at the price.**



# Viltrox AF 13mm f/1.4 Z

£383/\$459

Physically larger than the Viltrox AF 13mm lens on test, this Z DX offering gives a much more expansive field of view



**W**hen limited to the fixed focal length of a prime lens for everyday shooting, many photographers opt for a 35mm focal length (in full-frame terms), as it gives a moderately wide but very natural viewing perspective. Others prefer to see the 'bigger picture' with a more expansive field of view. That's certainly delivered by this Viltrox 13mm lens for Z DX format cameras, giving approximately a 20mm focal length in full-frame terms.

Naturally, combining a significantly wider viewing angle with the same f/1.4 aperture necessitates a larger and heavier build, but the 13mm lens is still fairly compact at 74x90mm and 455g. It features a plated brass mounting plate, metal barrel and hood, as well as a USB-C socket for applying firmware updates. This time weather-seals are also added.

The complex optical path features 14 elements in 11 groups. It includes two aspherical elements, four ED (Extra-low Dispersion) elements and two HR (High Refractive index) elements. The front element is oversized to help minimize distortion and vignetting.

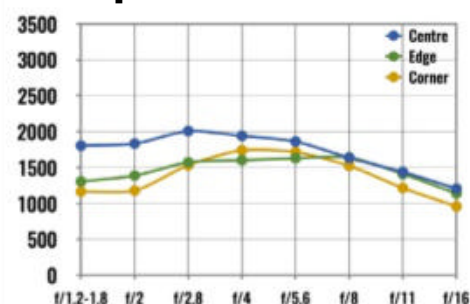
Handling is natural and intuitive. As with the 23mm lens though, there's no locking switch for the aperture ring, which is de-clicked to enable smooth aperture transitions when shooting video.

## Performance

Autofocus is fast, consistently accurate and typically silent for a stepping motor-based system. Centre-sharpness is excellent, even at the widest aperture of f/1.4, and edge-sharpness follows suit at f/2.8. As usual, diffraction causes a slight softening at very narrow

apertures but that's only to be expected. Colour fringing is very negligible throughout the entire aperture range and there's very little barrel distortion for such a wide-angle lens. Overall performance and image quality are highly impressive, and the lens works really well for astrophotography.

## Sharpness



## Features

- 1 The lens is compatible with Nikon's face/eye-detection autofocus.
- 2 Aspherical and ED elements combine to minimize coma as well as other aberrations, making the lens very suitable for astrophotography as well as landscapes, cityscapes and other scenarios.
- 3 The lens is designed to keep focus breathing to a minimum.
- 4 Creative expression benefits from the 22cm minimum focus distance and wide viewing angle.
- 5 The lens is supplied with a metal petal-shaped hood and carrying pouch.

# Nikon AF-S 35mm f/1.8G ED £529/\$527

This F-mount lens is something of a latter-day classic

Compared with Nikon's newer Z series 35mm for mirrorless cameras, this F-mount lens is smaller, lighter and much less expensive, at two-thirds the price. Both lenses have the same f/1.8 aperture rating. The ring-type ultrasonic system is quick and quiet, as well as enabling full-time manual override. There's a focus distance scale but there are no markings between 0.7m and infinity and

only rudimentary depth-of-field markers for f/16. Optical highlights include one aspherical element, one ED (Extra-low Dispersion) element and Super Integrated Coating. Centre sharpness is excellent but there's a noticeable drop-off towards the corners. Resistance to ghosting and flare is good but the seven-blade diaphragm isn't particularly well-rounded. ★★★★★



If smaller is better, this is a very appealing 35mm prime, but it's not the best for build quality or image quality.



# Sigma

## 16mm f/1.4 DC DN | C

£459/\$449

It's pretty pricey for a DX format prime but gives a generous viewing angle coupled with a fast aperture rating



**T**his is one of three Sigma lenses to be adapted for Z DX mount mirrorless cameras, the other two being 30mm and 56mm lenses. They give popular 'effective' focal lengths of approximately 24mm, 45mm and 85mm respectively, all with the same fast f/1.4 aperture rating. From Sigma's 'Contemporary' line-up, they're designed to have a modern look and feel, while aiming to combine good performance with a compact, lightweight construction. As it turns out, the Sigma 16mm is almost identical in size to the Viltrox 13mm lens on test, and a little lighter at 415g compared with 455g. The Sigma has a mostly TSC (Thermally Stable Composite) plastic build rather than being all-metal, but has a plated brass mounting plate.

The lens feels solid and handling is straightforward but

refined. The only moving part is the focus ring, which is nice and wide, and operates with a smooth and precise action. As usual with a stepping motor-based autofocus system, the manual focus ring is electronically coupled.

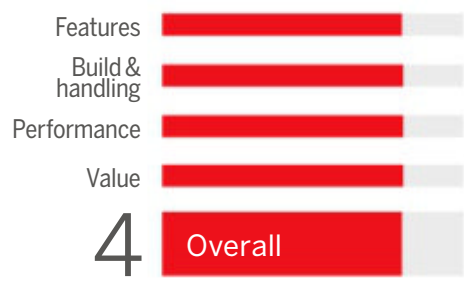
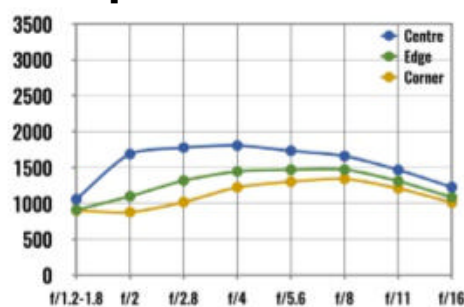
Although small, the lens packs in no less than 16 optical elements. These include three top-class FLD ('Fluorite' Low Dispersion), two SLD (Special Low Dispersion) and two aspherical elements. The overall aim is to maximize sharpness and contrast, while keeping chromatic aberrations and distortion to a minimum. Super Multi-Layer Coating is also applied to minimize ghosting and flare.

### Performance

Levels of sharpness are generally very good, although they drop off across the whole frame at the widest aperture of

f/1.4, and corner-sharpness doesn't get into its stride until f/2.8. The minimum focus distance of 25cm gives plenty of potential for a tight depth of field in close-up shooting, and bokeh is nice and smooth. Colour fringing is minimal, even out towards the extreme edges and corners of the image frame.

### Sharpness



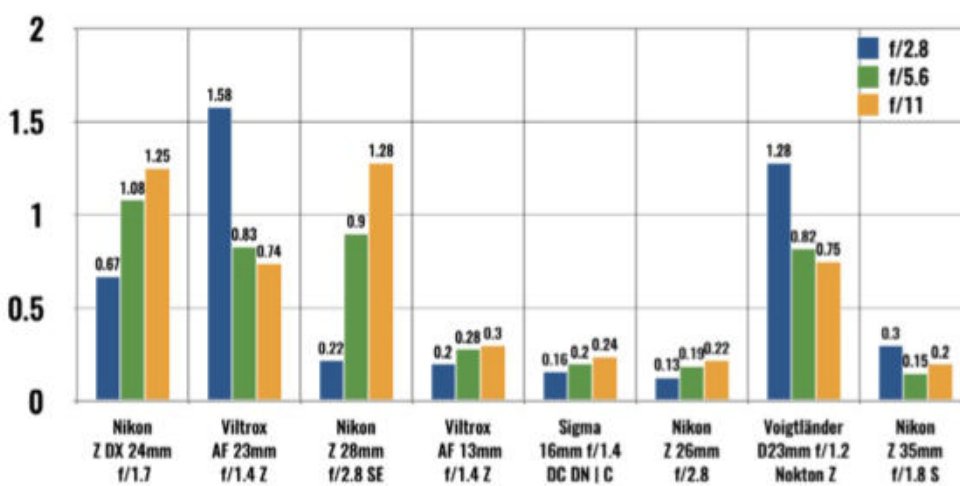
### Features

- 1 The main construction material of TSC plastic has the same thermal expansion coefficient as the lens's metal parts, maintaining overall integrity.
- 2 The lens is supplied complete with a petal-shaped, bayonet-fit hood.
- 3 The nine-blade aperture is better rounded than the Nikon 24mm, 26mm and 28mm lenses, which only have seven blades.
- 4 The filter thread has a diameter of 67mm, like the Viltrox 13mm lens on test.
- 5 Unlike many of Sigma's contemporary lenses, this one features weather-seals.

## Colour fringing

Our graphs show uncorrected fringing results

Unlike with distortion, automatic in-camera correction is applied for colour fringing in Z-system and recent Nikon DSLRs with no option of switching it off. Even so, our lab test results are based on processing image data without any correction, revealing the true extent of colour fringing. It's absolutely minimal in most cases but can be slightly noticeable with some of the lenses, either at wider or narrower aperture settings. When uncorrected, it typically displays as coloured fringes around high-contrast transitions, like dark tree branches against a bright sky.





# Nikon

## Z 26mm f/2.8

£529/\$497

A true 'pancake lens' the full-frame compatible Nikon Z 26mm is less than an inch thick and the lightest in the entire group



**W**alkabout lenses don't get any smaller or lighter than this. The most compact and lightweight lens in Nikon's Z-mount line-up to date, the Z 26mm f/2.8 measures just 24mm in length and tips the scales at a featherweight 125g. Even so, it gives a generously wide 79-degree viewing angle on FX cameras, as well as a very natural 39mm 'effective' focal length on DX format bodies. Ultimately, it's a strong contender for candid street photography as well as for travelling light.

Despite only having eight optical elements in total, three of them are aspherical, which helps to reduce size and weight while minimizing unwanted aberrations. Further downsizing is thanks to the lens being supplied with a slip-on front cap rather than Nikon's usual chunkier type that clips into the

filter thread. The lens has no filter attachment thread but the supplied bayonet-fit HB-111 hood has an integral 52mm filter thread.

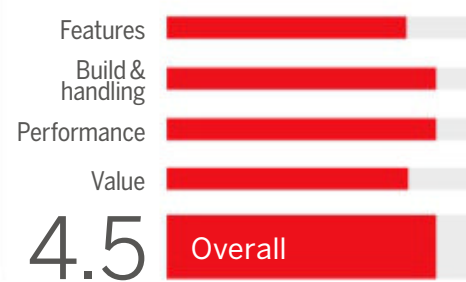
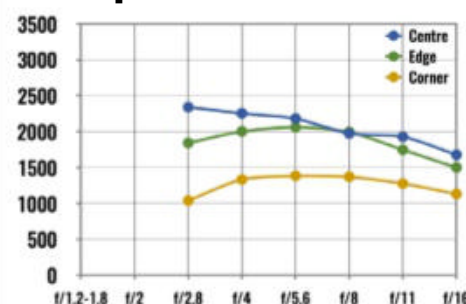
Build quality feels solid, despite the lightweight construction. Unlike the Z DX 24mm and Z 28mm on test, this one has a metal rather than plastic mounting plate. There are also multiple weather-seals. The lens has an extending inner barrel and, while it fits flush with the front surface at the infinity focus setting, it gradually extends as you shorten the focus distance down to its minimum setting of 20cm.

### Performance

Autofocus speed is pedestrian compared with other AF lenses on test. Sharpness is very impressive for such a little lens with a tiny front element. It's very good across the image frame, only dropping off a little

at the extreme edges when shooting wide at f/2.8. Colour fringing is entirely negligible; as with many recent compact lenses designed for mirrorless cameras, this one relies heavily on automatic in-camera correction for distortion, which can't be switched off in the shooting menu.

### Sharpness



### Features

- 1 Flat as a pancake, the lens is just 0.9 inches thick and looks unfeasibly small for a full-frame compatible lens.
- 2 There's no filter attachment thread due to the extending inner barrel.
- 3 A slimline hood is supplied with the lens, and this does have a filter attachment thread, as the extra space gives sufficient clearance at any focus setting.
- 4 There's no room for an AF/MF focus mode switch, as the manual focus ring is very narrow.
- 5 This featherweight lens has a metal rather than plastic mounting plate and multiple weather-seals.

# Sigma 24mm f/1.4 DG HSM Art

£699/\$649

A go-faster wide-angle prime for FX format DSLRs

Not much bigger than the Nikon 24mm f/1.8 lens, the Sigma is nevertheless nearly twice as heavy and feels very robust and sturdy. It's certainly much more affordable than Nikon's directly competing AF-S 24mm f/1.4G (£1999/\$1997), at around just a third of the price. The barrel and various other parts are made from TSC (Thermally Stable Composite) plastic and the

mounting plate is brass. Despite being inexpensive for an F-mount 24mm f/1.4 lens, performance is superb. The ring-type autofocus is fast and whisper-quiet, while image quality is excellent in all respects. Corner sharpness beats that of even the newer Nikon Z 24mm f/1.8 S for mirrorless cameras, only dropping off at the wider f/1.4 aperture. ★★★★★



For all-round performance and image quality, it's the 24mm F-mount lens to beat and is great value at the price. →



# Voigtländer D23mm f/1.2 Nokton Z

£649/\$699

With its retro design, the D23mm looks genuinely vintage, complete with yesteryear manual focusing and aperture rings



**V**oigtländer started making lenses all the way back in 1840, so the D23mm f/1.2 Nokton very much looks the part. With an 'effective' 35mm focal length on Z DX cameras at which it's aimed, it's ideal for street photographers who pride themselves on reacting to unfolding events. The convention is to focus manually in advance and, indeed, this is the only manual-focus lens in the test group.

Zone focusing is often the preferred method in street photography, so you can set the near and far limits of sharpness, catering to the depth of field delivered by various apertures. The Voigtländer obliges with focus distance scales in both feet and metres, and colour-coded depth of field markers for apertures of f/4, f/8, f/11 and f/16, being adjusted via the built-in control ring.

Handling is simply sublime. As you'd hope for in a manual focus lens, the focus control ring has a long rotational travel and a wonderfully smooth, fluid feel. Both of these facets help to enable precise and accurate focusing, much more so than when trying to focus manually with the vast majority of autofocus lenses.

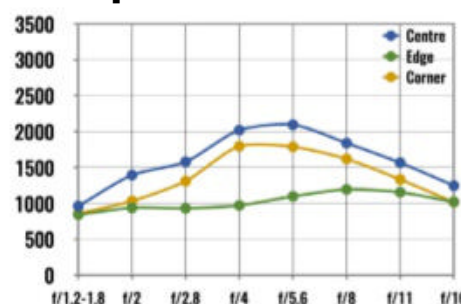
The focus and aperture control rings both have a precision-cut knurled and ridged design, which further enhances handling. The aperture ring works in 1/3 f-stop click steps but lacks a declick option, favoured by videographers.

## Performance

If you're after the sharpest tool in the box, this Voigtländer lens isn't for you. In our real-world testing and lab tests, we found outright sharpness to be a bit lacklustre at apertures wider

than f/2.8. Even so, image quality is very satisfying overall. There's good contrast and clarity even when shooting wide-open at f/1.2, with lovely colour rendition. Bokeh is lusciously smooth and great quality when stopping down, helped a very well-rounded 12-blade aperture diaphragm.

## Sharpness



## Features

- 1 This manual-focus lens features built-in electronics for data communication.
- 2 You can only adjust the aperture on the lens itself, which precludes shooting in Program or Shutter-priority modes.
- 3 Quality glass includes a complex double-sided aspherical element and two 'abnormal partial-dispersion' glass elements, to enhance image quality.
- 4 On an FX format Z-system camera in DX crop mode, you can take advantage of in-body image stabilization.
- 5 The build is based on metal casing, metal control rings and metal mounting plate.

# Sigma 35mm f/1.4 DG HSM Art £699/\$749

Next to many Sigma 'Art' lenses, this one's quite compact

Sigma Art-line lenses tend to be designed with no concession to saving size or weight. This one's comparatively compact but it's still about twice the weight of the slower-aperture Nikon AF-S 35mm f/1.8G ED competitor. A high-tech optical path includes two aspherical elements, one FLD (Fluorite-grade Low Dispersion) element, and four SLD (Special Low Dispersion) elements.

Build quality is excellent throughout although, as one of Sigma's first ever Art lenses, it's not weather-sealed. Image quality is excellent and the Sigma retains fabulous sharpness for an f/1.4 lens when shooting wide-open. Things get even better when stopping down a little and the lens is also a star in terms of minimizing colour fringing and barrel distortion. ★★★★★



This Sigma is our favourite wide-aperture 35mm prime lens for DSLR cameras, with outstanding performance in all respects.



# Nikon

## Z 35mm f/1.8 S

£899/\$847

Compact and lightweight for a full-frame compatible lens, it nevertheless packs a punch and serves up superb image quality



**T**he most expensive lens in the group, this one has a relatively modest f/1.8 aperture rating, shared by various other S-line primes in Nikon's Z-mount line-up. However, it's much more high-tech than Nikon's older F-mount 35mm lens, also featured along the bottom of these pages, taking the count of aspherical elements from one to three and doubling up on ED elements, aiming for maximum clarity and colour fidelity. It also features a combination of both Super Integrated Coating and Nano Crystal Coat, for minimizing ghosting and flare.

The stepping motor-based autofocus system is typically fast and virtually silent, while enabling very smooth and accurate manual focusing via its electronically coupled control ring. As usual with Z-mount lenses, when you're in

autofocus mode you can customize the function of the control ring, such as for aperture and ISO adjustment.

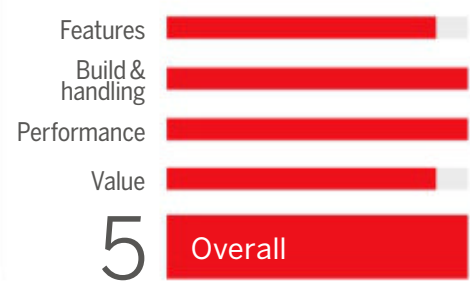
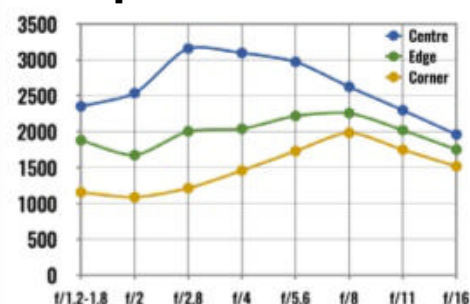
Typical of most stepping motor lenses, there's no focus distance scale. However, directional focus-assist lamps and a focus peaking option are available in Nikon's mirrorless bodies. Another bonus is a magnified preview for supreme manual focusing accuracy in critical situations. Unlike with Nikon (and other) more compact lenses on test, this one features a quick-action switch for selecting autofocus or manual focus modes.

### Performance

Image quality is fabulous, with particularly stunning centre-sharpness, even when shooting wide-open at f/1.8. As with other Z-series lenses that we've tested, the relatively large-diameter mounting plate helps

to enable superb image quality across the whole frame, while sharpness in handheld shooting is boosted by in-camera stabilization with FX mirrorless bodies. Colour fringing is absolutely negligible and there's very little pincushion distortion, even with in-camera correction switched off.

### Sharpness



### Features

- 1 The optical path is based on 11 elements arranged in nine groups, with a well-rounded nine-blade aperture diaphragm.
- 2 The lens gives a very natural viewing angle of 63 degrees (measured on the diagonal) when shooting with FX bodies.
- 3 A bayonet-fit lens hood and carrying pouch are included. The filter attachment thread is a modest 62mm.
- 4 The lens measures 73x86mm and weighs in at 370g.
- 5 The construction features a metal mounting plate and multiple weather-seals.

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

£749/\$747

This FX format wide-angle prime is good but not entirely great

This trusty 24mm lens from Nikon's back-catalogue of F-mount lenses is two-thirds of an f-stop slower than the competing – and cheaper – Sigma 24mm lens that we're also featuring. The Nikon's construction doesn't feel quite as robust but, while neither the Nikon nor the Sigma is fully weather-sealed, the Nikon does at least feature a rubber sealing ring on its mounting plate.

Autofocus isn't as quick as in the Sigma lens but is similarly accurate. There's no real improvement in sharpness, compared with Nikon's recent 24-70mm and 24-120mm zoom lenses at 24mm, but the prime does better in controlling colour fringing and barrel distortion. Vignetting is noticeable at f/1.8 but the Nano Crystal Coat does well to minimize ghosting and flare. ★★★★★



This own-brand Nikon prime loses out to the less expensive Sigma in terms of aperture speed and all-round image quality. →





# The winner is... Nikon Z 35mm f/1.8 S

It's the most expensive Z-mount lens in the group, but worth the money

**L**et's set up camp in full-frame territory to start with. Of the three Z FX lenses on test, the Nikon Z 35mm f/1.8 S easily wins out for build quality, image quality and all-round performance. We'd expect nothing less, as it's the only S-line lens in the group. Even so, the Nikon Z 28mm f/2.8 SE is very capable and super-stylish, whereas the Nikon Z 26mm f/2.8 'pancake' lens might

look like a novelty item but punches well above its diminutive size and weight.

Naturally, you can use Z FX format lenses on Z DX bodies with no restriction, whereas you can also fit Z DX lenses to full-frame cameras and shoot in DX crop mode.

For performance, handling, build quality and image quality, our top two DX picks are the Viltrox AF 13mm and 23mm f/1.4 Z lenses. It just comes down to which focal

length you personally prefer, although the 13mm is rather smaller and lighter. The Nikon Z DX 24mm f/1.7 is a good budget buy, whereas the Viltrox AF 13mm f/1.4 Z is rather pricier. The Voigtlander D23mm f/1.2 Nokton Z represents a high-tech lens wrapped up in impressive vintage styling but manual focusing can feel a retrograde step for many photographers nowadays. **M**



## How the lenses compare

	Nikon Z DX 24mm f/1.7	Viltrox AF 23mm f/1.4 Z	Nikon Z 28mm f/2.8 SE	Viltrox AF 13mm f/1.4 Z	Sigma 16mm f/1.4 DC DN   C	Nikon Z 26mm f/2.8	Voigtlander D23mm f/1.2 Nokton Z	Nikon Z 35mm f/1.8 S
<b>Website</b>	www.nikon.com	viltroxstore.com	www.nikon.com	viltroxstore.com	www.sigmaglobal.com	www.nikon.com	www.voigtlaender.de	www.nikon.com
<b>Street price</b>	£269/\$277	£269/\$325	£309/\$307	£383/\$459	£459/\$449	£529/\$497	£649/\$699	£899/\$847
<b>Mount</b>	Z (DX)	Z (DX)	Z (FX)	Z (DX)	Z (DX)	Z (FX)	Z (DX)	Z (FX)
<b>Effective focal length (DX)</b>	36mm	34.5mm	42mm	19.5mm	24mm	39mm	34.5mm	52.5mm
<b>Elements/groups</b>	9/8	11/10	9/8	14/11	16/13	9/6	10/6	11/9
<b>Diaphragm blades</b>	7 blades	9 blades	7 blades	9 blades	9 blades	7 blades	12 blades	9 blades
<b>Optical stabilizer</b>	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
<b>Autofocus type</b>	Stepping motor	Stepping motor	Stepping motor	Stepping motor	Stepping motor	Stepping motor	Manual focus	Stepping motor
<b>Min focus distance</b>	0.18m	0.3m	0.19m	0.22m	0.25m	0.2m	0.18m	0.25m
<b>Max magnification ratio</b>	0.19x	0.1x	0.2x	0.1x	0.1x	0.19x	0.2x	0.19x
<b>Angle of view</b>	61 degrees (DX)	63.4 degrees (DX)	75 degrees (FX)	94 degrees (DX)	83.2 degrees (DX)	79 degrees (FX)	63.2 degrees (DX)	63 degrees (FX)
<b>Filter thread</b>	46mm	52mm	52mm	67mm	67mm	52mm	46mm	62mm
<b>Included accessories</b>	Hood	Hood, pouch	None	Hood, pouch	Hood	Hood	Hood	Hood, pouch
<b>Dimensions (dia x length)</b>	70x40mm	69x73mm	72x43mm	74x90mm	72x90mm	70x24mm	66x45mm	73x86mm
<b>Weight</b>	136g	300g	160g	455g	415g	125g	240g	370g
<b>Features</b>	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
<b>Build &amp; handling</b>	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
<b>Performance</b>	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
<b>Value</b>	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
<b>Overall</b>	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★



**N**Photo

# Next issue

**Don't miss  
N-Photo 163**

See page 24 for  
our free bag  
subs offer!

## NEW NIKON SKILLS

# Adventure photography!

Bring out your daring side  
and get off the beaten track  
with intrepid explorer Iain  
Afshar to capture out-of-  
the-ordinary travel images

Image: © Iain Afshar

## ALSO NEXT ISSUE

Nifty fifties on test  
**Viltrox AF 40mm  
f/2.5 Z review**  
Lighthouses and  
landscapes Apprentice  
**Macro photographer  
Tony North interview**

# ON SALE THURSDAY 9 MAY

•Contents subject to change



# Nikon cameras

The current range of Nikon DSLR, Coolpix & Z-series mirrorless cameras

Current market prices are checked regularly with reputable stores to serve as a guideline. Body-only prices quoted unless stated. Different lens bundles are available. Prices correct at time of going to press.

	Category	Model	Description	Tested In Issue 155	Price															
DX DSLRS	DX DSLRS	<b>NIKON D7500</b>	<b>THE D7500 SHOEHORNS</b> the best bits from the now-discontinued pro-grade D500 into a smaller, more affordable body. The control layout makes everything easy to get at, and there's a top-plate info LCD, 51-point autofocus system, fast 1/8000 sec shutter speed and 8fps continuous drive rate. Video resolution stretches to 4K. ★★★★★	TESTED IN ISSUE 155	£1099/\$897															
				<table border="1"> <tr><td>Sensor</td><td>20.9Mp, DX (5568x3712)</td></tr> <tr><td>Processor</td><td>EXPEED 5</td></tr> <tr><td>Viewfinder</td><td>Pentaprism, 0.94x, 100%</td></tr> <tr><td>ISO</td><td>100-51,200 (50-1,640,000 expanded)</td></tr> <tr><td>AF</td><td>51-point (15 cross-type)</td></tr> <tr><td>LCD</td><td>3.2-inch, tilt, touch</td></tr> <tr><td>Max burst (buffer)</td><td>8fps (50 Raw)</td></tr> <tr><td>Memory card</td><td>SDXC UHS-I</td></tr> </table>	Sensor	20.9Mp, DX (5568x3712)	Processor	EXPEED 5	Viewfinder	Pentaprism, 0.94x, 100%	ISO	100-51,200 (50-1,640,000 expanded)	AF	51-point (15 cross-type)	LCD	3.2-inch, tilt, touch	Max burst (buffer)	8fps (50 Raw)	Memory card	SDXC UHS-I
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Max burst (buffer)	8fps (50 Raw)																			
Memory card	SDXC UHS-I																			
<b>NIKON D780</b>	<b>THE D780 TAKES</b> the D750's winning design and handling cues, but adds on-sensor phase-detection autofocus and EXPEED 6 processing, inherited directly from the Z 6. The result is a capable and natural-feeling DSLR for shooting stills in viewfinder mode, coupled with the same kind of performance as a mirrorless camera in live view. ★★★★★	TESTED IN ISSUE 155	£2299/\$2197																	
		<table border="1"> <tr><td>Sensor</td><td>24.5Mp, FX (6048x4024)</td></tr> <tr><td>Processor</td><td>EXPEED 6</td></tr> <tr><td>Viewfinder</td><td>Pentaprism, 0.7x, 100%</td></tr> <tr><td>ISO</td><td>100-51,200 (50-204,800 expanded)</td></tr> <tr><td>AF</td><td>51-point (15 cross-type)</td></tr> <tr><td>LCD</td><td>3.2-inch, 2359k, tilt, touch</td></tr> <tr><td>Max burst (buffer)</td><td>7fps (68-100 Raw)</td></tr> <tr><td>Memory card</td><td>Two SDXC UHS-II</td></tr> </table>	Sensor	24.5Mp, FX (6048x4024)	Processor	EXPEED 6	Viewfinder	Pentaprism, 0.7x, 100%	ISO	100-51,200 (50-204,800 expanded)	AF	51-point (15 cross-type)	LCD	3.2-inch, 2359k, tilt, touch	Max burst (buffer)	7fps (68-100 Raw)	Memory card	Two SDXC UHS-II		
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Max burst (buffer)	7fps (68-100 Raw)																			
Memory card	Two SDXC UHS-II																			
<b>NIKON D850</b>	<b>THE D850 GOES</b> extra-large in megapixel count with a 45.7Mp image sensor. Further attractions include a high-spec 153-point autofocus system and fairly recent EXPEED 5 processor. For live view and video capture, however, the contrast-detection autofocus system is massively inferior to that of Nikon's mirrorless cameras and the D780. ★★★★★	TESTED IN ISSUE 155	£2699/\$2497																	
		<table border="1"> <tr><td>Sensor</td><td>45.7Mp, FX (8256x5504)</td></tr> <tr><td>Processor</td><td>EXPEED 5</td></tr> <tr><td>Viewfinder</td><td>Pentaprism, 0.75x, 100%</td></tr> <tr><td>ISO</td><td>64-25,600 (32-102,400 expanded)</td></tr> <tr><td>AF</td><td>153-point (99 cross-type)</td></tr> <tr><td>LCD</td><td>3.2-inch, 2359k, tilt, touch</td></tr> <tr><td>Max burst (buffer)</td><td>7fps (29-200 Raw)</td></tr> <tr><td>Memory card</td><td>One XQD/CFexpress, one SDXC UHS-II</td></tr> </table>	Sensor	45.7Mp, FX (8256x5504)	Processor	EXPEED 5	Viewfinder	Pentaprism, 0.75x, 100%	ISO	64-25,600 (32-102,400 expanded)	AF	153-point (99 cross-type)	LCD	3.2-inch, 2359k, tilt, touch	Max burst (buffer)	7fps (29-200 Raw)	Memory card	One XQD/CFexpress, one SDXC UHS-II		
Sensor	45.7Mp, FX (8256x5504)																			
Processor	EXPEED 5																			
Viewfinder	Pentaprism, 0.75x, 100%																			
ISO	64-25,600 (32-102,400 expanded)																			
AF	153-point (99 cross-type)																			
LCD	3.2-inch, 2359k, tilt, touch																			
Max burst (buffer)	7fps (29-200 Raw)																			
Memory card	One XQD/CFexpress, one SDXC UHS-II																			
FX DSLRS	FX DSLRS	<b>NIKON D6</b>	<b>THE D6 HAS</b> the best autofocus module of any DSLR in Nikon's history, based on a 105-point system in which all of the points are cross-type. Eye-detection is also available in 3D tracking mode, and the 14fps burst rate is impressive. The flipside is that the D6 only has a 20.8Mp image sensor. One significant advantage over the Z 9 is a 3,580-shot battery life. ★★★★★	TESTED IN ISSUE 155	£6799/\$6497															
				<table border="1"> <tr><td>Sensor</td><td>20.8Mp, FX (5568x3712)</td></tr> <tr><td>Processor</td><td>EXPEED 6</td></tr> <tr><td>Viewfinder</td><td>Pentaprism, 0.72x, 100%</td></tr> <tr><td>ISO</td><td>100-102,400 (50-3,280,000 expanded)</td></tr> <tr><td>AF</td><td>105-point (105 cross-type)</td></tr> <tr><td>LCD</td><td>3.2-inch, 2359k, touch</td></tr> <tr><td>Max burst (buffer)</td><td>14fps (105-186 Raw)</td></tr> <tr><td>Memory card</td><td>Two XQD/CFexpress</td></tr> </table>	Sensor	20.8Mp, FX (5568x3712)	Processor	EXPEED 6	Viewfinder	Pentaprism, 0.72x, 100%	ISO	100-102,400 (50-3,280,000 expanded)	AF	105-point (105 cross-type)	LCD	3.2-inch, 2359k, touch	Max burst (buffer)	14fps (105-186 Raw)	Memory card	Two XQD/CFexpress
Sensor	20.8Mp, FX (5568x3712)																			
Processor	EXPEED 6																			
Viewfinder	Pentaprism, 0.72x, 100%																			
ISO	100-102,400 (50-3,280,000 expanded)																			
AF	105-point (105 cross-type)																			
LCD	3.2-inch, 2359k, touch																			
Max burst (buffer)	14fps (105-186 Raw)																			
Memory card	Two XQD/CFexpress																			
COOLPIX	COOLPIX	<b>NIKON P950</b>	<b>SMALLER &amp; LIGHTER</b> than the P1000, the P950 has broader appeal, but a smaller full-frame equivalent zoom range of 24-2000mm. Like all bridge cameras, image quality is the pay-off for unrivalled versatility. <b>£849/\$797</b> ★★★★★																	
																				
		<b>NIKON P1000</b>	<b>ANOTHER BRIDGE CAMERA,</b> the P1000 offers a zoom range equivalent to 24-3000mm in full-frame terms, so it's ready for any shooting situation. The camera has a 16Mp sensor and supports Raw photography. <b>£1029/\$1097</b> ★★★★★																	
																				
DX Z-SERIES	DX Z-SERIES	<b>NIKON Z 30</b>	<b>THE Z 30 LOOKS</b> and feels like the Z 50 with the viewfinder lopped off, and the tilting rear screen replaced by the vari-angle screen of the Z fc. The rangefinder style makes the camera about 20mm shorter and 40g lighter. The Z 30 is good value for vloggers, with little difference in image or video quality between it and the Z 50/Z fc. ★★★★★	TESTED IN ISSUE 155	£649/\$607															
				<table border="1"> <tr><td>Sensor</td><td>20.9Mp, DX (5568x3712)</td></tr> <tr><td>Processor</td><td>EXPEED 6</td></tr> <tr><td>Viewfinder</td><td>None</td></tr> <tr><td>ISO</td><td>100-51,200 (100-204,800 expanded)</td></tr> <tr><td>AF</td><td>209-point</td></tr> <tr><td>LCD</td><td>3-inch, 1040k, vari-angle, touch</td></tr> <tr><td>Max burst (buffer)</td><td>11fps (30-35 Raw)</td></tr> <tr><td>Memory card</td><td>SDXC UHS-I</td></tr> </table>	Sensor	20.9Mp, DX (5568x3712)	Processor	EXPEED 6	Viewfinder	None	ISO	100-51,200 (100-204,800 expanded)	AF	209-point	LCD	3-inch, 1040k, vari-angle, touch	Max burst (buffer)	11fps (30-35 Raw)	Memory card	SDXC UHS-I
		Sensor	20.9Mp, DX (5568x3712)																	
Processor	EXPEED 6																			
Viewfinder	None																			
ISO	100-51,200 (100-204,800 expanded)																			
AF	209-point																			
LCD	3-inch, 1040k, vari-angle, touch																			
Max burst (buffer)	11fps (30-35 Raw)																			
Memory card	SDXC UHS-I																			
<b>NIKON Z 50</b>	<b>WITH ITS DOWNSIZED</b> DX format image sensor, the Z 50 nevertheless inherits the same oversized lens mount from full-frame Z system bodies. The slimline build makes the most of the mirrorless design ethic. The 20.9Mp image sensor matches the megapixel count of the later Z fc and Z 30. It's a real joy to use, and very travel-friendly. ★★★★★	TESTED IN ISSUE 155	£849/\$857																	
		<table border="1"> <tr><td>Sensor</td><td>20.9Mp, DX (5568x3712)</td></tr> <tr><td>Processor</td><td>EXPEED 6</td></tr> <tr><td>Viewfinder</td><td>OLED, 2360k, 0.39-inch, 100%</td></tr> <tr><td>ISO</td><td>100-51,200 (100-204,800 expanded)</td></tr> <tr><td>AF</td><td>209-point</td></tr> <tr><td>LCD</td><td>3.2-inch, 1040k, tilt, touch</td></tr> <tr><td>Max burst (buffer)</td><td>11fps (30-35 Raw)</td></tr> <tr><td>Memory card</td><td>SDXC UHS-I</td></tr> </table>	Sensor	20.9Mp, DX (5568x3712)	Processor	EXPEED 6	Viewfinder	OLED, 2360k, 0.39-inch, 100%	ISO	100-51,200 (100-204,800 expanded)	AF	209-point	LCD	3.2-inch, 1040k, tilt, touch	Max burst (buffer)	11fps (30-35 Raw)	Memory card	SDXC UHS-I		
Sensor	20.9Mp, DX (5568x3712)																			
Processor	EXPEED 6																			
Viewfinder	OLED, 2360k, 0.39-inch, 100%																			
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LCD	3.2-inch, 1040k, tilt, touch																			
Max burst (buffer)	11fps (30-35 Raw)																			
Memory card	SDXC UHS-I																			





DX Z-SERIES

## NIKON Z FC



**IT'S NOT JUST** the retro chic styling that makes the Z fc so alluring. The direct-access shutter speed, exposure compensation and ISO dials, as well as the usual command dial for aperture control, enable a really hands-on approach to creative shooting. It features highly competent people/animal autofocus modes, along with a vari-angle touchscreen. ★★★★★

TESTED IN ISSUE 155 • £899/\$957

Sensor	20.9Mp, DX (5568x3712)
Processor	EXPEED 6
Viewfinder	OLED, 2360k, 0.39-inch, 100%
ISO	100-51,200 (100-204,800 expanded)
AF	209-point
LCD	3-inch, 1040k, vari-angle, touch
Max burst (buffer)	11fps (30-35 Raw)
Memory card	SDXC UHS-I

## NIKON Z 5



**THE MOST AFFORDABLE** FX format mirrorless Nikon, the Z 5 costs much less than the Z 6II, although it lacks a top-panel OLED display. Dual card slots enable instant backups while you shoot. Like all other FX format Z-system cameras, the Z 5 features five-axis IBIS, which is a major plus point over the DX format cameras. ★★★★★

TESTED IN ISSUE 155 • £1299/\$997

Sensor	24.3Mp, FX (6016x4016)
Processor	EXPEED 6
Viewfinder	OLED, 3690k, 0.5-inch, 100%
ISO	100-51,200 (50-102,400 expanded)
AF	273-point
LCD	3.2-inch, 1040k, tilt, touch
Max burst (buffer)	4.5fps (100 Raw)
Memory card	Two SDXC UHS-II

## NIKON Z 6II



**THE Z 6II HAS** a pair of late-generation EXPEED 6 processors, a superb 3690k OLED electronic viewfinder and tilting 2100k touchscreen, as well as an identical control layout to the Z 7II. But with fewer megapixels to process, the Z 6II beats the Z 7II with a 14fps rather than 10fps drive rate, and the buffer holds around twice as many Raw files. ★★★★★

TESTED IN ISSUE 155 • £1999/\$1597

Sensor	24.5Mp, FX (6048x4024)
Processor	Dual EXPEED 6
Viewfinder	OLED, 3690k, 0.5-inch, 100%
ISO	100-51,200 (50-204,800 expanded)
AF	273-point
LCD	3.2-inch, 2100k, tilt, touch
Max burst (buffer)	14fps (19-200 Raw)
Memory card	One XQD/CFexpress, one SDXC UHS-II

## NIKON Z F



**ITS RETRO DESIGN** may be heavily inspired by the classic Nikon FM2 film camera, complete with brass dials for inputting exposure settings, but this stylish full-frame mirrorless Nikon is crammed with the latest tech. With an EXPEED 7 processor at its heart, it has better ISO, AF and subject tracking capabilities than the Z 6II, and a trick pixel-shift mode for super-hi-res images. ★★★★★

TESTED IN ISSUE 157 • £2149/\$1997

Sensor	24.5Mp, FX (6048x4024)
Processor	EXPEED 7
Viewfinder	OLED, 3690k, 0.5-inch, 100%
ISO	100-64,000 (50-204,800 expanded)
AF	299-point
LCD	3.2-inch, 2100k, tilt, vari-angle
Max burst (buffer)	7.8fps Raw (35 Raw), 30fps JPEG
Memory card	One SDXC UHS-II, one MicroSD

FX Z-SERIES

## NIKON Z 7II



**A MASSIVE 45.7MP** super-high-res image sensor and an astonishing 493 phase-detection AF points in its hybrid autofocus system are the chief enhancements over the Z 6II. Dual XQD/CFexpress and SDXC memory card slots are a big bonus over the single XQD slot of the original Z 7, and the bigger memory buffer enables much longer bursts. ★★★★★

TESTED IN ISSUE 155 • £2899/\$2297

Sensor	45.7Mp, FX (8256x5504)
Processor	Dual EXPEED 6
Viewfinder	OLED, 3690k, 0.5-inch, 100%
ISO	64-25,600 (32-102,400 expanded)
AF	493-point
LCD	3.2-inch, 2100k, tilt, touch
Max burst (buffer)	10fps (46-82 Raw)
Memory card	One XQD/CFexpress, one SDXC UHS-II

## NIKON Z 8



**SHARING THE SAME** new-generation EXPEED 7 image processor as the Z 9, the Z 8 is step ahead of the Z 6II and Z 7II, boasting intelligent autofocus recognition and tracking for vehicles in addition to people and animals. Its fully electronic shutter matches the Z 9's 1/32,000 sec max shutter speed and 20-120fps burst rate. ★★★★★

TESTED IN ISSUE 155 • £3789/\$3697

Sensor	45.7Mp, FX (8256x5504)
Processor	EXPEED 7
Viewfinder	OLED, 3690k, 0.5-inch, 100%
ISO	64-25,600 (32-102,400 expanded)
AF	493-point
LCD	3.2-inch, 2100k, v/h tilt, touch
Max burst (buffer)	20fps Raw (79-1000 Raw), 120fps JPEG
Memory card	One XQD/CFexpress, one SDXC UHS-II

## NIKON Z 9



**HEADLINE ATTRACTIONS INCLUDE** shutter speeds up to 1/32,000 sec and a 120fps continuous drive rate in JPEG mode – dropping to 20fps Raws, albeit with a massive 1000-shot buffer. A built-in vertical grip offers duplicated shooting controls, and houses an EN-EL18d battery with sufficient stamina for 700-770 shots. ★★★★★

TESTED IN ISSUE 155 • £4999/\$5497

Sensor	45.7Mp, FX (8256x5504)
Processor	EXPEED 7
Viewfinder	OLED, 3690k, 0.5-inch, 100%
ISO	64-25,600 (32-102,400 expanded)
AF	493-point
LCD	3.2-inch, 2100k, v/h tilt, touch
Max burst (buffer)	20fps Raw (79-1000 Raw), 120fps JPEG
Memory card	Two XQD/CFexpress



# Nikon-fit lenses

Your at-a-glance guide to the current crop of Nikon-fit lenses

KEY: ■ BEST ON TEST ■ GOLD AWARD ■ GREAT VALUE ■ Current market prices are checked regularly with reputable stores to serve as a guideline. Prices correct at time of going to press.

	LENS NAME	Price	Mount	DX/FX	Max zoom	Stabilizer	Autofocus	Weight	Min focus	Magnification	Filter size	Aperture blades	Issue reviewed	Rating	Awards	
WIDE ZOOMS	Nikon AF-S 8-15mm f/3.5-4.5E ED	£1449/\$1246	F	FX	1.9x	No	Ultrasonic	485g	0.16m	0.34x	None	7	149	★★★★★		
	Nikon AF-P DX 10-20mm f/4.5-5.6G VR	£299/\$308	F	DX	2x	Yes	Pulse	230g	0.22m	0.17x	72mm	7	149	★★★★★	■	
	Nikon AF-S DX 10-24mm f/3.5-4.5G ED	£949/\$900	F	DX	2.4x	No	Ultrasonic	460g	0.24m	0.2x	77mm	7	77	★★★★★		
	Nikon AF-S 14-24mm f/2.8G ED	£1619/\$1749	F	FX	1.7x	No	Ultrasonic	1000g	0.28m	0.15x	None	9	122	★★★★★		
	Nikon AF-S 16-35mm f/4G ED VR	£1149/\$1097	F	FX	2.5x	Yes	Ultrasonic	680g	0.28m	0.25x	77mm	9	149	★★★★★		
	Nikon Z DX 12-28mm f/3.5-5.6 PZ VR	£299/\$357	Z	DX	2.3x	Yes	Stepping	205g	0.19m	0.21x	67mm	7	152	★★★★★		
	Nikon Z 14-24mm f/2.8 S	£2169/\$2497	Z	FX	1.7x	No	Stepping	650g	0.28m	0.13x	112mm	9	149	★★★★★	■	
	Nikon Z 14-30mm f/4 S	£1069/\$1347	Z	FX	2.1x	No	Ultrasonic	485g	0.28m	0.16x	82mm	7	149	★★★★★	■	
	Nikon Z 17-28mm f/2.8	£1009/\$1200	Z	FX	1.65x	No	Stepping	450g	0.19m	0.19x	67mm	9	145	★★★★★	■	
	Sigma 12-24mm f/4 DG HSM   A	£1259/\$1299	F	FX	2x	No	Ultrasonic	1150g	0.24m	0.2x	None	9	149	★★★★★		
Sigma 14-24mm f/2.8 DG HSM   A	£1169/\$1299	F	FX	0.19x	No	Ultrasonic	1150g	0.26m	0.19x	None	9	149	★★★★★	■		
Tokina atx-i 11-16mm f/2.8 CF Plus	£480/\$449	F	DX	1.5x	No	Electric	555g	0.3m	0.09x	77mm	9	32	★★★★★			
Tokina atx-i 11-20mm f/2.8	£500/\$529	F	DX	1.8x	No	Ultrasonic	560g	0.28m	0.12x	82mm	9	135	★★★★★			
Tokina Opera 16-28mm f/2.8 FF	£700/\$700	F	FX	1.7x	No	Electric	940g	0.28m	0.19x	None	9	101	★★★★★			
STANDARD ZOOMS	Nikon AF-S 24-70mm f/2.8E ED VR	£1919/\$2400	F	FX	2.9x	Yes	Ultrasonic	1070g	0.38m	0.27x	82mm	9	138	★★★★★		
	Nikon AF-S 24-85mm f/3.5-4.5G ED VR	£579/\$500	F	FX	3.5x	Yes	Ultrasonic	465g	0.38m	0.22x	72mm	7	88	★★★★★		
	Nikon AF-S 24-120mm f/4G ED VR	£1069/\$1097	F	FX	5x	Yes	Ultrasonic	710g	0.45m	0.24x	77mm	9	153	★★★★★		
	Nikon Z DX 16-50mm f/3.5-6.3 VR	£329/\$307	Z	DX	3.1x	Yes	Stepping	135g	0.2m	0.2x	46mm	7	153	★★★★★		
	Nikon Z 24-50mm f/4-6.3	£449/\$397	Z	FX	2x	No	Stepping	195g	0.35m	0.17x	52mm	7	153	★★★★★		
	Nikon Z 24-70mm f/2.8 S	£1899/\$2300	Z	FX	2.9x	No	Ultrasonic	805g	0.38m	0.22x	82mm	7	138	★★★★★	■	
	Nikon Z 24-70mm f/4 S	£949/\$997	Z	FX	2.9x	No	Stepping	500g	0.3m	0.3x	72mm	7	153	★★★★★		
	Nikon Z 24-120mm f/4 S	£899/\$1097	Z	FX	5x	No	Stepping	630g	0.35m	0.39x	77mm	9	153	★★★★★		
	Nikon Z 28-75mm f/2.8	£849/\$897	Z	FX	2.7x	No	Stepping	565g	0.39m	0.34x	67mm	9	153	★★★★★	■	
	Sigma 24-70mm f/2.8 DG OS HSM   A	£1149/\$1299	F	FX	2.9x	Yes	Ultrasonic	1020g	0.37m	0.21x	82mm	9	153	★★★★★		
Sigma 24-105mm f/4 DG OS HSM   A	£639/\$899	F	FX	4.4x	Yes	Ultrasonic	885g	0.45m	0.22x	82mm	9	153	★★★★★	■		
Tamron SP AF 24-70mm f/2.8 Di VC USD G2	£1199/\$1200	F	FX	2.9x	Yes	Ultrasonic	905g	0.38m	0.2x	82mm	9	88	★★★★★			
TELEPHOTO ZOOMS	Nikon AF-S 70-200mm f/2.8E FL ED VR	£2219/\$2350	F	FX	2.9x	Yes	Ultrasonic	1430g	1.1m	0.21x	77mm	9	156	★★★★★	■	
	Nikon AF-P 70-300mm f/4.5-5.6E ED VR	£589/\$597	F	FX	4.3x	Yes	Ultrasonic	680g	1.2m	0.25x	67mm	9	148	★★★★★	■	
	Nikon AF-S 80-400mm f/4.5-5.6G ED VR	£2299/\$2297	F	FX	5x	Yes	Ultrasonic	1570g	1.5m	0.2x	77mm	9	157	★★★★★		
	Nikon AF-S 120-300mm f/2.8E FL ED SR VR	£10499/\$9500	F	FX	2.5x	Yes	Ultrasonic	3250g	2m	0.16x	112mm	9	156	★★★★★		
	Nikon AF-S 200-500mm f/5.6E ED VR	£1249/\$1397	F	FX	2.5x	Yes	Ultrasonic	2300g	2.2m	0.22x	95mm	9	157	★★★★★		
	Nikon Z DX 50-250mm f/4.5-6.3 VR	£289/\$377	Z	DX	5x	Yes	Stepping	405g	0.5m	0.23x	62mm	7	148	★★★★★	■	
	Nikon Z 70-180mm f/2.8	£1199/\$1247	Z	FX	2.6x	No	Stepping	795g	0.27m	0.48x	67mm	9	156	★★★★★		
	Nikon Z 70-200mm f/2.8 VR S	£2149/\$2600	Z	FX	2.9x	Yes	Stepping	1140g	0.5m	0.2x	77mm	9	156	★★★★★	■	
	Nikon Z 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6 VR S	£2199/\$2697	Z	FX	4x	No	Stepping	1355g	0.75m	0.38x	77mm	9	157	★★★★★	■	
	Nikon Z 180-600mm f/5.6-6.3 VR	£1799/\$1697	Z	FX	3.3x	Yes	Stepping	1955g	1.3m	0.25x	95mm	9	157	★★★★★	■	
Sigma 50-100mm f/1.8 DC HSM   A	£999/\$1100	F	DX	2x	No	Ultrasonic	1490g	0.95m	0.15x	82mm	9	72	★★★★★			
Sigma 60-600mm f/4.5-6.3 DG OS HSM   S	£1699/\$2000	F	FX	10x	Yes	Ultrasonic	2700g	0.6m	0.3x	105mm	9	127	★★★★★			
Sigma 70-200mm f/2.8 DG OS HSM   S	£1099/\$1380	F	FX	2.9x	Yes	Ultrasonic	1805g	0.95m	0.21x	82mm	11	156	★★★★★	■		
Sigma 100-400mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM   C	£699/\$699	F	FX	4x	Yes	Ultrasonic	1160g	1.6m	0.26x	67mm	9	157	★★★★★	■		
Sigma 120-300mm f/2.8 DG OS HSM   S	£2699/\$3600	F	FX	2.5x	Yes	Ultrasonic	3390g	1.5-2.5m	0.12x	105mm	9	156	★★★★★	■		
Sigma 150-600mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM   C	£849/\$939	F	FX	4x	Yes	Ultrasonic	1930g	2.8m	0.2x	95mm	9	157	★★★★★	■		
Tamron 35-150mm f/2-2.8 Di III VXD	£1799/\$1999	Z	FX	4.3x	No	Stepping	1165g	0.33-0.85m	0.17-0.18x	82mm	9	159	★★★★★			
Tamron SP 70-200mm f/2.8 Di VC USD G2	£1369/\$1200	F	FX	2.9x	Yes	Ultrasonic	1500g	0.95m	0.16x	77mm	9	156	★★★★★	■		
Tamron 70-300mm f/4.5-6.3 Di III RXD	£599/\$699	Z	FX	4.3x	No	Stepping	580g	0.8-1.5m	0.11-0.2x	67mm	7	148	★★★★★			
Tamron 100-400mm f/4.5-6.3 Di VC USD	£799/\$799	F	FX	4x	Yes	Ultrasonic	1115g	1.5m	0.28x	67mm	9	157	★★★★★			
Tamron SP 150-600mm f/5-6.3 Di VC USD G2	£1249/\$1399	F	FX	4x	Yes	Ultrasonic	2010g	2.2m	0.26x	95mm	9	157	★★★★★			
SUPER	Nikon AF-S DX 18-140mm f/3.5-5.6G ED VR	£599/\$500	F	DX	7.8x	Yes	Ultrasonic	490g	0.45m	0.23x	67mm	7	27	★★★★★		
	Nikon AF-S DX 18-300mm f/3.5-6.3G ED VR	£629/\$700	F	DX	16.7x	Yes	Ultrasonic	550g	0.48m	0.32x	67mm	7	136	★★★★★		
	Nikon Z DX 18-140mm f/3.5-6.3 VR	£555/\$650	Z	DX	7.7x	Yes	Stepping	315g	0.2m	0.33x	62mm	7	136	★★★★★		
	Nikon Z 24-200mm f/4-6.3 VR	£729/\$900	Z	FX	8.3x	Yes	Stepping	570g	0.5m	0.28x	67mm	7	136	★★★★★	■	
	Tamron AF 18-400mm f/3.5-6.3 Di II VC HLD	£699/\$650	F	DX	22.2x	Yes	HLD	710g	0.45m	0.34x	72mm	7	136	★★★★★		
	WIDE PRIMES	Irix 15mm f/2.4 Blackstone	£625/\$480	F	FX	None	No	None	653g	0.28m	0.1x	95mm	9	142	★★★★★	
		Laowa 20mm f/4 Zero-D Shift	£1179/\$1100	F	FX	None	No	None	747g	0.17m	0.17x	82mm	14	138	★★★★★	
		Nikon AF-S 20mm f/1.8G ED	£799/\$720	F	FX	None	No	Ultrasonic	355g	0.2m	0.23x	77mm	7	116	★★★★★	
		Nikon AF-S 24mm f/1.8G ED	£749/\$680	F	FX	None	No	Ultrasonic	355g	0.23m	0.2x	72mm	7	116	★★★★★	
		Nikon AF-S 24mm f/1.4G ED	£1999/\$2000	F	FX	None	No	Ultrasonic	620g	0.25m	0.18x	77mm	9	59	★★★★★	
Nikon AF-S 28mm f/1.8G		£699/\$700	F	FX	None	No	Ultrasonic	330g	0.25m	0.22x	67mm	7	87	★★★★★		
Nikon AF-S 35mm f/1.8G ED		£529/\$530	F	FX	None	No	Ultrasonic	305g	0.25m	0.24x	58mm	7	125	★★★★★		
Nikon AF-S DX 35mm f/1.8G		£169/\$177	F	DX	None	No	Ultrasonic	200g	0.3m	0.24x	52mm	7	111	★★★★★	■	
Nikon AF-S 35mm f/1.4G		£1799/\$1700	F	FX	None	No	Ultrasonic	600g	0.3m	0.2x	67mm	9	25	★★★★★		
Nikon Z 20mm f/1.8 S		£999/\$1047	Z	FX	None	No	Stepping	505g	0.2m	0.23x	77mm	9	149	★★★★★		
Nikon Z DX 24mm f/1.7	£269/\$277	Z	DX	None	No	Stepping	135g	0.18m	0.19x	42mm	7	162	★★★★★			
Nikon Z 24mm f/1.8 S	£959/\$1000	Z	FX	None	No	Stepping	450g	0.25m	0.18x	72mm	9	116	★★★★★	■		
Nikon Z 26mm f/2.8	£529/\$497	Z	FX	None	No	Stepping	125g	0.2m	0.19x	52mm	7	162	★★★★★			
Nikon Z 28mm f/2.8 SE	£309/\$307	Z	FX	None	No	Stepping	160g	0.19m	0.2x	52mm	7	162	★★★★★			
Nikon Z 35mm f/1.8 S	£899/\$847	Z	FX	None	No	Stepping	370g	0.25m	0.19x	62mm	9	162	★★★★★	■		
Samyang 8mm f/3.5 IF MC CSII Dh Circular Fisheye	£299/\$280	F	FX	None	No	None	435g	0.3m	N/S	None	6	12	★★★★★			
Samyang 10mm f/2.8 ED AS NCS CS	£429/\$400	F	DX	None	No	None	600g	0.25m	N/S	None	6	113	★★★★★			
Samyang MF 14mm f/2.8 Z	£359/\$349	F	FX	None	No	None	810g	0.28m	0.08x	None	6	142	★★★★★			



	LENS NAME	Price	Mount	DX/FX	Max zoom	Stabilizer	Autofocus	Weight	Min focus	Magnification	Filter size	Aperture blades	Issue reviewed	Rating	Awards
WIDE PRIMES	Samyang 14mm f/2.8 AF	£559/\$800	F	FX	None	No	None	474g	0.2m	0.15x	None	7	105	★★★★★	
	Samyang 14mm f/2.4 XP	£899/\$730	F	FX	None	No	None	791g	0.28m	0.08x	None	9	142	★★★★★	🏆🏆
	Samyang 14mm f/2.8 IF ED UMC	£349/\$350	F	FX	None	No	None	560g	0.28m	N/S	None	6	70	★★★★★	
	Samyang 20mm f/1.8 ED AS UMC	£499/\$580	F	FX	None	No	None	488g	0.2m	N/S	None	7	116	★★★★★	
	Samyang 24mm f/1.4 ED AS UMC	£559/\$550	F	FX	None	No	None	680g	0.25m	N/S	77mm	8	104	★★★★★	
	Samyang T-S 24mm f/3.5 ED AS UMC (tilt & shift)	£599/\$800	F	FX	None	No	None	680g	0.2m	N/S	82mm	8	25	★★★★★	
	Samyang 35mm f/1.4 AS UMC AE	£499/\$500	F	FX	None	No	None	660g	0.3m	0.2x	77mm	8	125	★★★★★	
	Sigma 14mm f/1.8 DG HSM   A	£1399/\$1599	F	FX	None	No	Ultrasonic	1170g	0.27m	0.1x	None	9	149	★★★★★	
	Sigma 15mm f/2.8 EX DG Diagonal Fisheye	£599/\$610	F	FX	None	No	Electric	370g	0.15m	0.26x	None	7	12	★★★★★	
	Sigma 16mm f/1.4 DC CN   C	£459/\$449	Z	DX	None	No	Stepping	405g	0.25m	0.1x	67mm	9	162	★★★★★	
	Sigma 20mm f/1.4 DG HSM   A	£779/\$900	F	FX	None	No	Ultrasonic	950g	0.28m	0.14x	77mm	9	116	★★★★★	
	Sigma 24mm f/1.4 DG HSM   A	£629/\$850	F	FX	None	No	Ultrasonic	665g	0.25m	0.19x	77mm	9	116	★★★★★	🏆🏆🏆
	Sigma 30mm f/1.4 DC HSM   A	£449/\$500	F	DX	None	No	Ultrasonic	435g	0.25m	0.15x	62mm	9	111	★★★★★	
	Sigma 30mm f/1.4 DC DN   C	£349/\$399	Z	DX	None	No	Stepping	265g	0.3m	0.14x	52mm	9	152	★★★★★	
	Sigma 35mm f/1.4 DG HSM   A	£649/\$800	F	FX	None	No	Ultrasonic	665g	0.3m	0.19x	67mm	9	125	★★★★★	
	Tamron SP 35mm f/1.4 Di USD	£829/\$900	F	FX	None	No	Ultrasonic	805g	0.3m	0.3x	72mm	9	111	★★★★★	🏆
	Viltrox AF 13mm f/1.4 Z	£383/\$459	Z	DX	None	No	Stepping	420g	0.22m	0.1x	67mm	9	162	★★★★★	🏆🏆
	Viltrox AF 23mm f/1.4 Z	£269/\$325	Z	DX	None	No	Stepping	300g	0.3m	0.1x	52mm	9	162	★★★★★	🏆
	Viltrox AF 27mm f/1.2 Pro	£420/\$545	Z	DX	None	No	Stepping	560g	0.28m	0.15x	67mm	11	161	★★★★★	🏆🏆
	Viltrox AF 33mm f/1.4 Z	£210/\$279	Z	DX	None	No	Stepping	270g	0.4m	0.1x	52mm	9	152	★★★★★	🏆
Voigtlander 15mm f/4.5 Super Wide-Heliar Z Aspherical	£849/\$799	Z	FX	None	No	None	290g	0.126m	0.25x	58mm	10	160	★★★★★		
Voigtlander D23mm f/1.2 Nokton Z Aspherical	£649/\$699	Z	DX	None	No	None	240g	0.18m	0.2x	46mm	12	162	★★★★★		
Zeiss Milvus 18mm f/2.8 ZF.2	£2190/\$2300	F	FX	None	No	None	675g	0.25m	0.1x	77mm	9	116	★★★★★		
Zeiss Milvus 35mm f/2 ZF.2	£1160/\$1200	F	FX	None	No	None	650g	0.3m	0.19x	58mm	9	87	★★★★★		
7Artisans 50mm f/1.05	£450/\$349	Z	FX	None	No	None	606g	0.57m	0.13x	58mm	13	152	★★★★★		
Nikon PC-E Micro 45mm f/2.8D ED (tilt & shift)	£1899/\$2050	F	FX	None	No	None	740g	0.25m	0.5x	77mm	9	25	★★★★★		
Nikon AF-S 50mm f/1.8G	£229/\$220	F	FX	None	No	Ultrasonic	185g	0.45m	0.15x	58mm	7	130	★★★★★		
Nikon AF-S 50mm f/1.4G	£459/\$450	F	FX	None	No	Ultrasonic	280g	0.45m	0.15x	58mm	9	130	★★★★★		
Nikon AF-S 58mm f/1.4G	£1699/\$1600	F	FX	None	No	Ultrasonic	385g	0.58m	0.13x	72mm	9	40	★★★★★		
Nikon Z 40mm f/2	£229/\$280	Z	FX	None	No	Stepping	170g	0.29m	0.17x	52mm	9	140	★★★★★	🏆	
Nikon Z 50mm f/1.8 S	£489/\$700	Z	FX	None	No	Ultrasonic	415g	0.4m	0.15x	62mm	9	140	★★★★★	🏆🏆	
Nikon Z 50mm f/1.2 S	£2099/\$2099	Z	FX	None	No	Stepping	1090g	0.45m	0.15x	82mm	9	122	★★★★★		
Nikon Z 58mm f/0.95 S Noct	£8299/\$7999	Z	FX	None	No	Stepping	2000g	0.5m	0.19x	82mm	11	108	★★★★★		
Sigma 50mm f/1.4 DG HSM   A	£649/\$950	F	FX	None	No	Ultrasonic	815g	0.4m	0.18x	77mm	9	130	★★★★★		
Sigma 56mm f/1.4 DC DN   C	£449/\$499	Z	DX	None	No	Stepping	280g	0.5m	0.14x	55mm	9	152	★★★★★		
Viltrox AF 56mm f/1.4Z	£250/\$299	Z	DX	None	No	Stepping	320g	0.6m	0.1x	52mm	9	152	★★★★★	🏆🏆	
Yongnuo YN50mm f/1.8Z DF DSM	£345/\$359	Z	FX	None	Yes	Stepping	417g	0.45m	0.15x	58mm	9	152	★★★★★	🏆	
Zeiss Milvus 50mm f/1.4 ZF.2	£1245/\$1200	F	FX	None	No	None	875g	0.45m	0.15x	67mm	9	130	★★★★★		
Nikon AF-S 85mm f/1.8G	£489/\$477	F	FX	None	No	Ultrasonic	350g	0.8m	0.12x	67mm	7	160	★★★★★	🏆	
Nikon AF-S 85mm f/1.4G	£1699/\$1447	F	FX	None	No	Ultrasonic	595g	0.85m	0.12x	77mm	9	160	★★★★★		
Nikon AF-S 105mm f/1.4E ED	£2099/\$2097	F	FX	None	No	Ultrasonic	985g	1m	0.13x	82mm	9	160	★★★★★		
Nikon AF-S 300mm f/4E PF ED VR	£1619/\$2000	F	FX	None	Yes	Ultrasonic	755g	1.4m	0.24x	77mm	9	63	★★★★★		
Nikon AF-S 400mm f/2.8E FL ED VR	£12199/\$11197	F	FX	None	Yes	Ultrasonic	3800g	2.6m	0.14x	40.5mm	9	161	★★★★★	🏆	
Nikon AF-S 500mm f/4E FL ED VR	£10999/\$10297	F	FX	None	Yes	Ultrasonic	3090g	3.6m	0.15x	40.5mm	9	161	★★★★★	🏆	
Nikon AF-S 500mm f/5.6E PF ED VR	£3229/\$3397	F	FX	None	Yes	Ultrasonic	1460g	3m	0.18x	95mm	9	161	★★★★★		
Nikon AF-S 600mm f/4E FL ED VR	£12099/\$12297	F	FX	None	Yes	Ultrasonic	3810g	4.4m	0.14x	40.5mm	9	161	★★★★★	🏆	
Nikon Z 85mm f/1.8 S	£699/\$697	Z	FX	None	No	Ultrasonic	470g	0.8m	0.12x	67mm	9	160	★★★★★	🏆	
Nikon Z 85mm f/1.2 S	£2819/\$2797	Z	FX	None	No	Ultrasonic	1160g	0.85m	0.11x	82mm	11	160	★★★★★	🏆	
Nikon Z 135mm f/1.8 S Plena	£2699/\$2497	Z	FX	None	Yes	Stepping	995g	0.82m	0.2x	82mm	11	160	★★★★★	🏆🏆	
Nikon Z 400mm f/2.8 TC VR S	£13499/\$13997	Z	FX	None	Yes	SSVCM	2950g	2.5m	0.17x	Drop-in	9	161	★★★★★	🏆	
Nikon Z 400mm f/4.5 VR S	£2849/\$2997	Z	FX	None	Yes	Dual stepping	1245g	2.5m	0.16x	95mm	9	161	★★★★★	🏆🏆🏆	
Nikon Z 600mm f/4 TC VR S	£15499/\$15497	Z	FX	None	Yes	SSVCM	3260g	4.3m	0.14-2x	Drop-in	9	161	★★★★★		
Nikon Z 600mm f/6.3 VR S	£4999/\$4799	Z	FX	None	Yes	Stepping	1470g	4m	0.15x	95mm	9	161	★★★★★	🏆	
Nikon Z 800mm f/6.3 VR S	£5799/\$5997	Z	FX	None	Yes	Dual stepping	2385g	5m	0.16x	Drop-in	9	161	★★★★★	🏆	
Samyang AF 85mm f/1.4 F	£550/\$530	F	FX	None	No	None	480g	0.9m	0.11x	77mm	9	140	★★★★★		
Samyang MF 85mm f/1.4 Z	£319/\$399	Z	FX	None	No	None	730g	1.1m	0.09x	72mm	8	152	★★★★★		
Sigma 85mm f/1.4 DG HSM   A	£929/\$1199	F	FX	None	No	Ultrasonic	815g	0.85m	0.12x	86mm	9	160	★★★★★	🏆🏆	
Sigma 105mm f/1.4 DG HSM   A	£1249/\$1599	F	FX	None	No	Ultrasonic	1645g	1m	0.12x	105mm	9	160	★★★★★		
Sigma 500mm f/4 DG OS HSM   S	£4699/\$5999	F	FX	None	Yes	Ultrasonic	3310g	3.5m	0.15x	46mm	9	161	★★★★★	🏆🏆	
Tokina SZX Super Tele 400mm f/8 Reflex MF	£209/\$229	F, Z	FX	None	No	None	355g	1.15m	0.4x	67mm	None	148	★★★★★		
Yongnuo YN85mm f/1.8Z DF DSM	£345/\$379	Z	FX	None	Yes	Stepping	405g	0.8m	0.13x	58mm	7	152	★★★★★	🏆	
AstrHori 18mm f/8 2x Periscope Probe Macro	£879/\$719	Z	DX	None	No	None	704g	0.47m	2x	None	7	162	★★★★★		
Irix 150mm f/2.8 Macro 1:1 Dragonfly	£510/\$495	F	FX	None	No	None	831g	0.35m	1x	77mm	11	150	★★★★★		
Laowa 90mm f/2.8 2:1 Ultra Macro APO	£569/\$499	Z	FX	None	No	None	619g	0.21m	2x	67mm	13	150	★★★★★		
Laowa 100mm f/2.8 2:1 Ultra Macro APO	£569/\$499	F, Z	FX	None	No	None	650g	0.25m	2x	67mm	7, 13	150	★★★★★		
Nikon AF-S DX 40mm f/2.8G Micro	£299/\$280	F	DX	None	No	Ultrasonic	235g	0.16m	1x	52mm	7	110	★★★★★		
Nikon AF-S DX 85mm f/3.5G ED VR Micro	£459/\$557	F	DX	None	Yes	Ultrasonic	355g	0.29m	1x	52mm	9	150	★★★★★		
Nikon Z MC 50mm f/2.8	£539/\$647	Z	FX	None	No	Stepping	260g	0.16m	1x	46mm	9	150	★★★★★		
Nikon Z MC 105mm f/2.8 VR S	£899/\$1047	Z	FX	None	Yes	Stepping	630g	0.29m	1x	62mm	9	150	★★★★★	🏆🏆🏆	
Samyang 100mm f/2.8 ED UMC Macro	£429/\$490	F	FX	None	No	None	715g	0.31m	1x	67mm	9	110	★★★★★		
Tokina atx-i 100mm f/2.8 FF Macro Plus	£424/\$429	F	FX	None	No	Electric	515g	0.3m	1x	55mm	9	150	★★★★★		



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# Flashback



**Mike Harris** has bought a new Nikon camera, just don't ask him how many megapixels it has or what EXPEED processor is inside it...

**I** bought a new camera. Not a Nikon Z 8 or Z f – although it's related to the latter. A Nikon FM (1977-1982). I've been meaning to pick up an analogue Nikon for a while, so when a beautiful example popped up at Grays of Westminster, I took the plunge. But why invest in film in 2024?

## Times they are a-changin'

As a child of the '90s, I can just about remember point-and-shoot film cameras. But where the nostalgia really lies is learning to operate fully manual on analogue cameras when I studied photography at college. My darkroom days are now a distant memory.

Clearly, something has changed recently regarding film. It can't be a coincidence that 2013's Nikon Df never received a true follow up, but when Nikon revisited retro cameras in 2021, with the Z fc, a spiritual successor was released just over two years later with the Z f.

Film is booming elsewhere, too. Fujifilm's X-Series cameras not only look retro, they replicate classic films such as Provia and Velvia. Its instant Instax cameras have proven incredibly popular, too, with the resurrected Polaroid also taking a piece of the pie. Then you have a slew of modern film cameras from brands such as Pentax (soon to be released)

and Lomography. Heck, there's even a company called Intrepid that's making brand-new large-format film cameras.

As I write this, I've just come back from The Photography & Video Show and I was amazed at the number of analogue-themed stands. But film never really went away. Photographers have and will continue to shoot film. In the movie industry, it's still very much a hallmark of quality, you have to look no further than Christopher Nolan's Oscar-winning epic blockbuster *Oppenheimer*.

The fact is, we live in a time of digital photography excess. The latest mirrorless cameras deliver higher resolutions and better shooting capabilities than perhaps any photographer ever really requires. And in that regard, film feels closer to photography. But arguably the main reason why film is garnering more interest is the rise and rise of AI. If editing software cast doubt on the validity of photography, AI has obliterated it.

Film is a way to rebuild the bridge that AI has demolished. It's everything AI can never be. It's a physical cell exposed to light. It's a moment in time. As AI continues to impact the industry, my Nikon FM will remain a bastion of photography. And while I'll never fully turn my back on digital, I can't think of a better time to rekindle my love for film. 🎬



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**Printed by** Buxton Press Limited, Palace Rd, Buxton SK17 6AE

**Distributed by** Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU [www.marketforce.co.uk](http://www.marketforce.co.uk)  
 Email: [mfcommunications@futurenet.com](mailto:mfcommunications@futurenet.com)

ISSN 2048370  
  
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N-Photo (ISSN 2048-3708) is published monthly with an extra issue in July by Future Publishing, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, UK.

The annual subscription rate is £77.87 UK, €164 Europe, \$186 USA, £143 Rest of World..

Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named World Container Inc., c/o BBT 150-15 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA

Application to Mail at Periodicals Postage Prices is Pending at Brooklyn NY 11256..

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to N-Photo, World Container Inc., c/o BBT 150-15 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA

Subscription records are maintained at Future Publishing, c/o Air Business Subscriptions, Rockwood House, Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 3DH. UK



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