REVIEWS



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LAOWA 12MM F2.8 LITE ZERO-D AF

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Smart Photography



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- Mohit Ghatak
- Venkiteswaran Ramasubhramoni
- Vaibhav Jaguste

Mastercraftsman

Steve McCurry

Printing & Beyond

Perspectives, by Vimal Parmar

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- Focus Stacking Using Photoshop
- Checklist for a Photo Trip
- Intentional Camera Movement: Finding Meaning in Motion (Part 1)

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Girish Mallya
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER & GENERAL MANAGER (NORTH & EAST)
Ellora Dasgupta (Mob No. +98710 48666)
GENERAL MANAGER (SOUTH)
Girish Shet
PRODUCT MANAGER
Perseus Master

HEAD OFFICE - MUMBAI
608, Trade World, 6th floor, C wing, Kamala Mills compound, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel (W), Mumbai - 400013, Mob No. +91 93215 46598
Email: sp@nextgenpublishing.net

CIRCULATION AND SUBSCRIPTION
Kapil Kaushik (Manager Circulation (North & East)

Mob No. +91 98732 00589
Sachin Kelkar (Subscription Supervisor)
Mob No. +91 93215 46598
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WELCOME

Smart Photography

INDIA'S NUMBER 1 IMAGING MAGAZINE!



Just when everybody gets more and more worried about the impact of AI on traditional photography, along comes the news that Nikon has disqualified the winner of its microscopy contest 'Small World In Motion'. The winner, optical engineer Ning Xu used generative AI in his composition and in post processing and thereby broke the strict rules of the contest. This contrasts with news that Getty Images has filed for bankruptcy blaming AI generated imagery for its woes.

Unrelated but equally interesting is that a trend has started whereby audiophiles are moving away from streaming services and migrating back to CDs. CD demand in 2025-26 has revived and the possibility of CDs snatching back their days of glory certainly seem more plausible than before.

We do live in interesting times.

H. S. Billimoria

HERE'S WHAT MAKES US #1

WE ARE GLUED TO THE GLOBAL IMAGING INDUSTRY
Our team is updated with all the benchmarks and road blocks that the field of photography and imaging across the globe experiences. This helps us record the changes in the global perspective, thus making us the first to predict which products will be a rage in the Indian markets.

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Loyalty towards our readers is a given, and their best interests are always on our mind. Every verdict is honest and not influenced by advertisers or personal favourites. So when we say a product is a 'BEST BUY', then, it is just that!

OUR TESTS ARE CONDUCTED BY EXPERTS
All equipment go through a series of tests at the hands of our experts. Our reviewers are experts in the field of photography across the country and have many years of experience. That gives us the foresight to distinguish between a passing trend and a big change in the field of photography and imaging. And finally, our reviews are not extended to just fill up the pages!

WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU
There is no debate on why we are here. Our sole goal is to provide you options and better your judgement in product purchase while, sharing tips and tricks to improve your images. Our biggest joy is in building a bridge between you and your perfect picture!

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Editor – Hoshang S Billimoria

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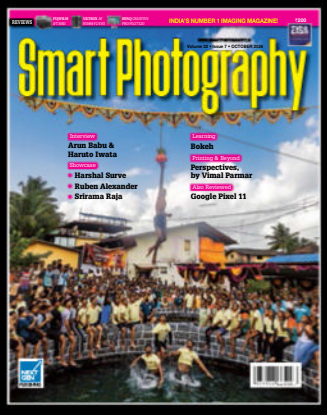
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Photographer : **Mohit Ghatak**





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SNIPPETS

- Following the announcement from Fujifilm, Canon has announced that it had plans to collaborate on semiconductor manufacturing in India.
- Canon has announced that it will end service support to DSLR cameras like the EOS 800D and the EOS 77D. Both were released in 2017. Canon has also discontinued support for the EOS M 100 mirrorless camera released in 2017. Amongst compact cameras, Canon has discontinued service for the IXUS 175, the ELPH 180 and the ELPH 185. Also included is the SX 620.
- Venus Optics (Laowa) has introduced the 24 mm F 2 Zero -D tilt and shift lens which seems ideal for architectural photography.
- Nikon has clearly spelt out its future focus areas. These include next gen image sensors, image processors, video cameras and an engine and software platform.
- Not to be left behind, TT Artisan has announced a new 85 mm AF F 1.8 Neo lens.
- Mandler, yet another Chinese manufacturer has announced a 50 mm F 1.4 lens for Leica cameras. The Mandler carries a very competitive price.
- Jessops, one time retail leader in the UK market has been going through indifferent times. Its owner Dragon's Den has sold Jessops to white goods retailer AO.
- Panasonic has announced firmware improvements for the Lumix S 9, S1R II, S1 II and the S 1 II E. New video recording options and expanded customisation are some of the updates.
- Sigma has launched 2 new APS–C lenses in India. These are the 50–120 mm F 2.8 DC OS C and the 16–300 mm F 3.5–6.7 DC OS C.
- Nikon has disqualified the winner of its ' Small World In Motion' competition after finding out that the winning video had used generative AI in producing the images.
- Due to a component shortage Fujifilm's X-T 6 is now scheduled to be released in November.
- 80% of the Top 10 selling lenses are third party lenses . Tamron is the leader and Canon does not make the list at all.
- Tamron has now launched its popular 20–40 mm F 2.8 lens in Nikon's Z mount.
- AstrHori has launched an 8 mm F 2.4 Medium format lens for Fujifilm and Hasselblad cameras.



Top 10 cameras of September according to MAP Camera

MAP Camera, Japan has released its list of top selling cameras for September 2026. Here goes the list :

1. Sony A 7 V
2. Canon Power Shot SX 740 HS Lite
3. Ricoh GR IV
4. Fujifilm X-T 30 III
5. Fujifilm X 100 VI
6. Sony a 6700
7. Canon Power Shot G 7 X Mk III
8. Sony A 7 C II
9. DJI Osmo Pocket 4P
10. Fujifilm X–M 5

Panasonic celebrates 25 years of Lumix cameras

To celebrate its 25th Anniversary, Panasonic has kicked off a series of events across major global cities like New York, Manchester, Berlin, Paris, Sao Paulo and Sydney. No India however.

Tamron announces 16–50mm F 2.8 lens for APS-C

Tamron has launched a new compact, unstabilised lens for APS-C camera users. The 16–50mm F 2.8 is available in Sony E mount, Fujifilm X mount and Nikon's Z mount. The lens is light at 305g and accepts 58mm filters.
14 elements in 10 groups comprise the lens and this includes 1 low dispersion element, 2 moulded glass aspherics and 2 hybrid aspherical lenses. Price is estimated to be around 550 dollars.



SNIPPETS

- San Disk has upgraded its Extreme PRO SDXC UHS -II V 60 and V 90 cards. The upgrade allows higher speeds and an ability to record longer in 4K, 6K and 8K.
- Voigtlander, now owned by Cosina, is celebrating the 100th anniversary of its " Skopar" series of lenses. A commemorative model, the Color -Skopar 35 mm F 2.5 has been launched on this occasion.
- GoPro's merger with Starman Optical is on track and expected to close shortly.
- Kenko Tokina has launched a tiny compact camera that comes with an optical viewfinder, a micro SD slot and a USB-C port for charging. The camera, called the Pieni III weighs a mere 18 gms.
- Brightin Star's 35 mm F 0.95 lens is now available in a silver finish and promises super bokeh.
- Getty Images filed for bankruptcy in the US after its planned merger with Shutterstock collapsed. Growing competition from AI generated imagery was blamed.
- Nikon has announced new firmware for the Z 9 (V 5.33) and the Z 8 (V 3.12). These updates would fix an issue whereby the camera would stop responding with some lenses.



Time magazine's list of best inventions

The Nikon ZR, Go Pro Mission 1 Pro ILS and Instax Mini EVO Cinema earned a spot on Time Magazine's list of best inventions for 2026.

SIGMA

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Sigma announces small and light portrait lens

The 85mm focal range has been receiving a lot of attention from lens manufacturers. Sigma has announced the new 85mm F 1.2 DG Art lens. The lens incorporates aspherical and SLD elements and is weather resistant. The lens accepts a 82mm filter thread. The lens weighs 905g and is available in Sony E mount and Panasonic L mount.

Sigma has also announced a 20–60 mm F 2.8/4 DG lens.





Pentax phase out 5 K mount lenses

Along with the announcement of discontinuation of the Pentax K-1 II, Pentax has also discontinued the following five lenses:
16–85 mm
18–135 mm
35 mm
300 mm
120–450 mm
Strong rumours suggest that Pentax is developing a new series of digital SLR cameras based on an entirely new concept.

Sigma launches new line of lenses

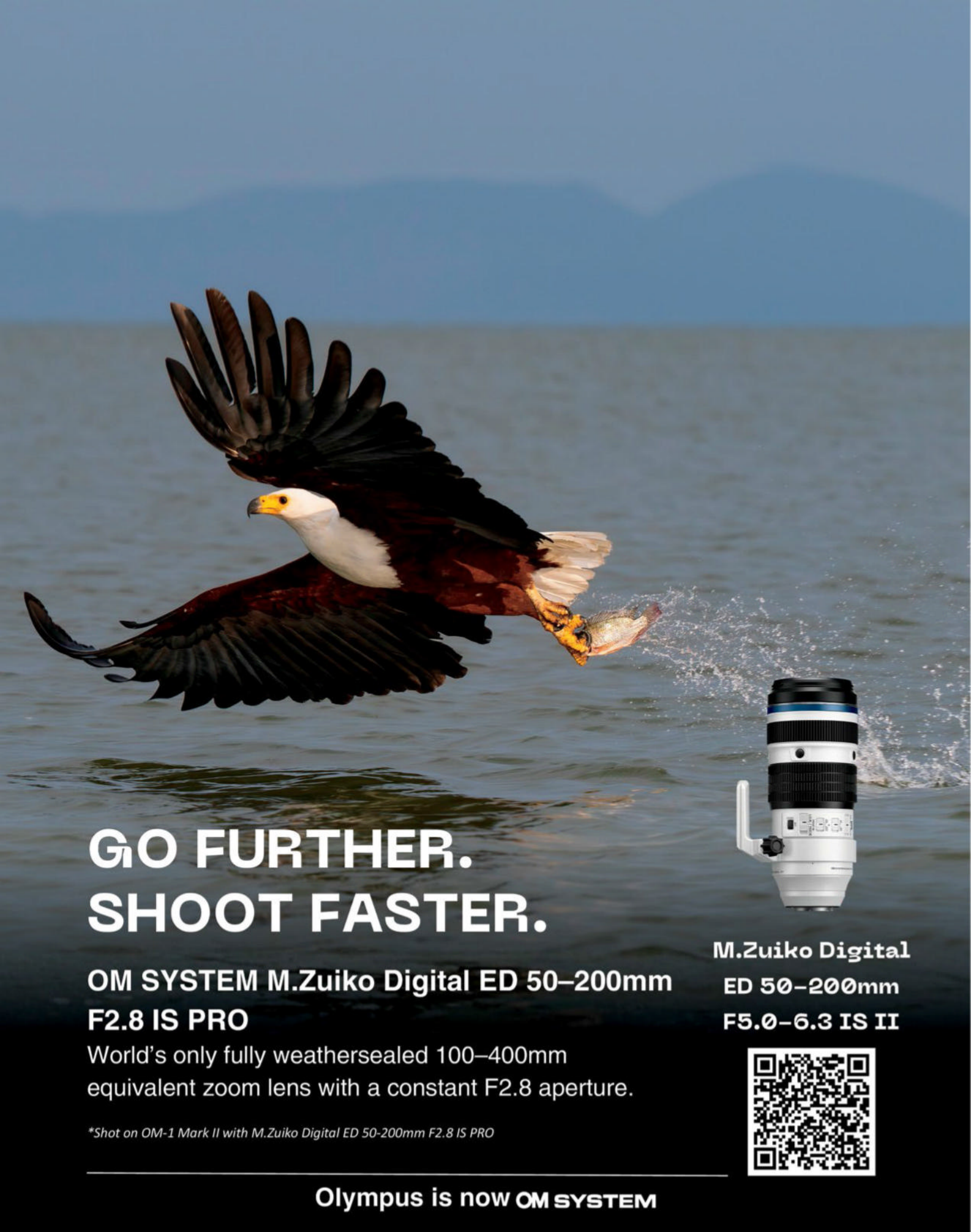
Sigma has announced a new line of lenses focusing on vintage aesthetics and metal construction. The new line is called the CL line and the first lens to be launched is the 50 mm F 1.4 CL DG Contemporary. The new lenses are designed to be small and lightweight with the 50 mm measuring only 65 mm in length and weighing 375 gms.



Nikon Redefines Wildlife Storytelling with the New NIKKOR Z 120-300mm f/2.8 TC VR S

The world's first*1 interchangeable zoom lens to combine a constant f/2.8 maximum aperture with a built-in 1.4× teleconverter, delivering exceptional optical performance and flexibility for fast-paced shooting environments. Nikon India Pvt. Ltd. is pleased to announce the release of the NIKKOR Z 120-300mm f/2.8 TC VR S, a professional telephoto zoom lens compatible with full-frame/FX-format mirrorless cameras. As part of Nikon's S-Line*2 range, the NIKKOR Z 120-300mm f/2.8 TC VR S is the world's first*1 interchangeable zoom lens to combine a constant maximum aperture of f/2.8*3 with a built-in 1.4× teleconverter.

"At Nikon India, we continuously strive to equip creators with cutting-edge imaging solutions that help them realize their creative vision. The NIKKOR Z 120-300mm f/2.8 TC VR S combines exceptional optical performance, extended reach, and unmatched versatility, making it an ideal companion for wildlife photographers seeking to capture distant and unpredictable subjects." Sajjan Kumar, Managing Director, Nikon India Pvt. Ltd.



OM SYSTEM M.Zuiko Digital ED 50–200mm F2.8 IS PRO

World's only fully weathersealed 100–400mm equivalent zoom lens with a constant F2.8 aperture.

**Shot on OM-1 Mark II with M.Zuiko Digital ED 50-200mm F2.8 IS PRO*

Olympus is now OM SYSTEM



African Fish Eagle, ***Nilange More***

KENYA : A Living Canvas...

24 members who travelled with WILDWOOD TOURS OF INDIA to Kenya for East African safari came together to jointly organise an exhibition at the prestigious Jehangir Art Gallery in Mumbai, which was inaugurated on 21st October by Ms Nidhi Choudhary, IAS Cultural Secretary, Govt. of India.

Other dignitaries present were film artist Santosh Juvekar, Rohinton Mehta, Dr. Sandeep Mane, Deputy Collector, Thane, Dr. H. B. Singh renowned Ayurvedic physician, and Ms Vaishali Samant, playback singer. The participants, including doctors, government officers, artists, and homemakers presented a visual treat and virtual safari of African savannah to the visitors. While visitors to Kenya usually wish to see the big five, Kenya is very rich in Avifauna biodiversity too and this group photographed 183 species of birds and some of them were displayed at the exhibition along with the photo of mammals. The exhibition which was held from 21 October to 27th October 2026 was very well responded and the organizing team raised almost Rs. 1,50,000/- through sale of the photographs. The whole proceeds will be donated to the Drought Relief Fund of the Govt. of Maharashtra. Ramavtar Goenka, Hon. Consul , Kenya Consulate expressed satisfaction upon his visit to the exhibition and encouraged the group to carry on with more such social activities.



Leopard, ***Dr. Sudhir Gaikwad***



Rhinoceros, ***Ravikant Chitnis***



Tusker, ***Damodar Khanolkar***



Impalas, ***Neeta Gandhi***



Little Bee-Eater, ***Dr. Deviprasad Rao***



Malachite Kingfisher, ***Sankara Narayanan A***

Where Light Meets the Wild

Capturing the untamed through Sony's FE 400 mm F4.5 GM OSS and FE 600 mm F6.3 GM OSS lenses.

Wildlife photography no longer has to mean carrying heavy, cumbersome lenses into the wilderness. Sony's lightweight G Master telephoto lenses deliver professional-grade reach and exceptional optics, helping wildlife and bird photographers stay agile, track fast-moving subjects, and capture extraordinary moments with greater ease. Adding to their incredible versatility, both lenses are fully compatible with Sony's 1.4x (SEL14TC) and 2x (SEL20TC) teleconverters, allowing you to seamlessly extend your reach in the field without sacrificing mobility or optical performance.



Shot on :
Sony FE 600mm F6.3 GM OSS

Varun Aditya

Varun Aditya is an award-winning nature and wildlife photographer from Coimbatore, India, and the first-prize winner of National Geographic Nature Photographer of the Year 2016. A self-taught photographer, his work is recognised for its vibrant, underexposed imagery, distinctive compositions and compelling visual storytelling. His photographs have been published by leading platforms, including BBC, Apple, National Geographic and HuffPost. With extensive experience photographing wildlife across India, Africa and several other countries, Varun specialises in wide-frame compositions, animal behaviour and the interplay of light, weather and environment.



For Varun Aditya, wildlife photography is as much about the art of seeing as capturing a moment. Known for his distinctive wide-frame compositions and dramatic use of light, he believes a thoughtfully composed photograph tells a more powerful story than video. His approach is shaped by deep patience and intimate familiarity with his subjects, having travelled to Kenya's Masai Mara over ten times to master the moods of the African savannah. Fascinated by changing weather and golden hours, Varun meticulously positions himself to capture fleeting interactions. Ultimately, his pursuit is to create evocative images that draw viewers directly into the heart of the wild.



Sony FE 400 mm F4.5 GM OSS

Weighing just 994g, the Sony FE 400 mm F4.5 GM OSS combines reach, speed and portability. I used it to photograph fast-moving blackbucks, where its dual XD Linear Motors delivered quick, precise autofocus to track sudden sprints and leaps. Its G Master optics produce excellent sharpness and beautiful background separation.

The 400 mm focal length also offers creative flexibility, allowing me to frame wildlife within its natural surroundings rather than restricting compositions to tight close-ups. Lightweight, responsive and exceptionally sharp, it is ideal for photographers who value mobility without compromising image quality.



What surprised me most about these two lenses was how much they could do while being so incredibly light. At just 994 g and 995 g, both lenses were incredibly easy to carry and use through the day. For someone starting wildlife photography, birders who walk a lot, or even photographers who simply want serious reach without carrying a huge prime, these two lenses make a lot of sense.

— Varun Aditya



Sony FE 600 mm F6.3 GM OSS

At just 995g, the Sony FE 600 mm F6.3 GM OSS delivers super-telephoto reach in a remarkably lightweight design. I tested it on birds, capturing an Indian roller in flight and the intricate details of a peacock's plumage. Dual XD Linear Motors track erratic movements, from sudden bird take-offs, the optics rendered fine feather details to distant animal behavior, with absolute accuracy. Super ED glass and Nano AR Coating II help control chromatic aberration, flare and ghosting, even in challenging backlit conditions. Combined with Optical SteadyShot stabilisation, this lens is ideal for photographing distant wildlife and birds with precision while maintaining a respectful distance.

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Morning market in Inle Lake

Where the River Sets the Pace : **Daily Life in Myanmar**



Mohit Ghatak from Singapore is a businessman as well as an enthusiastic photographer. His love for photography extends to several genres, be it travel, nature, enjoying a lazy afternoon in thickly wooded forests, et al.

Mohit Ghatak

Text and photos by Mohit Ghatak

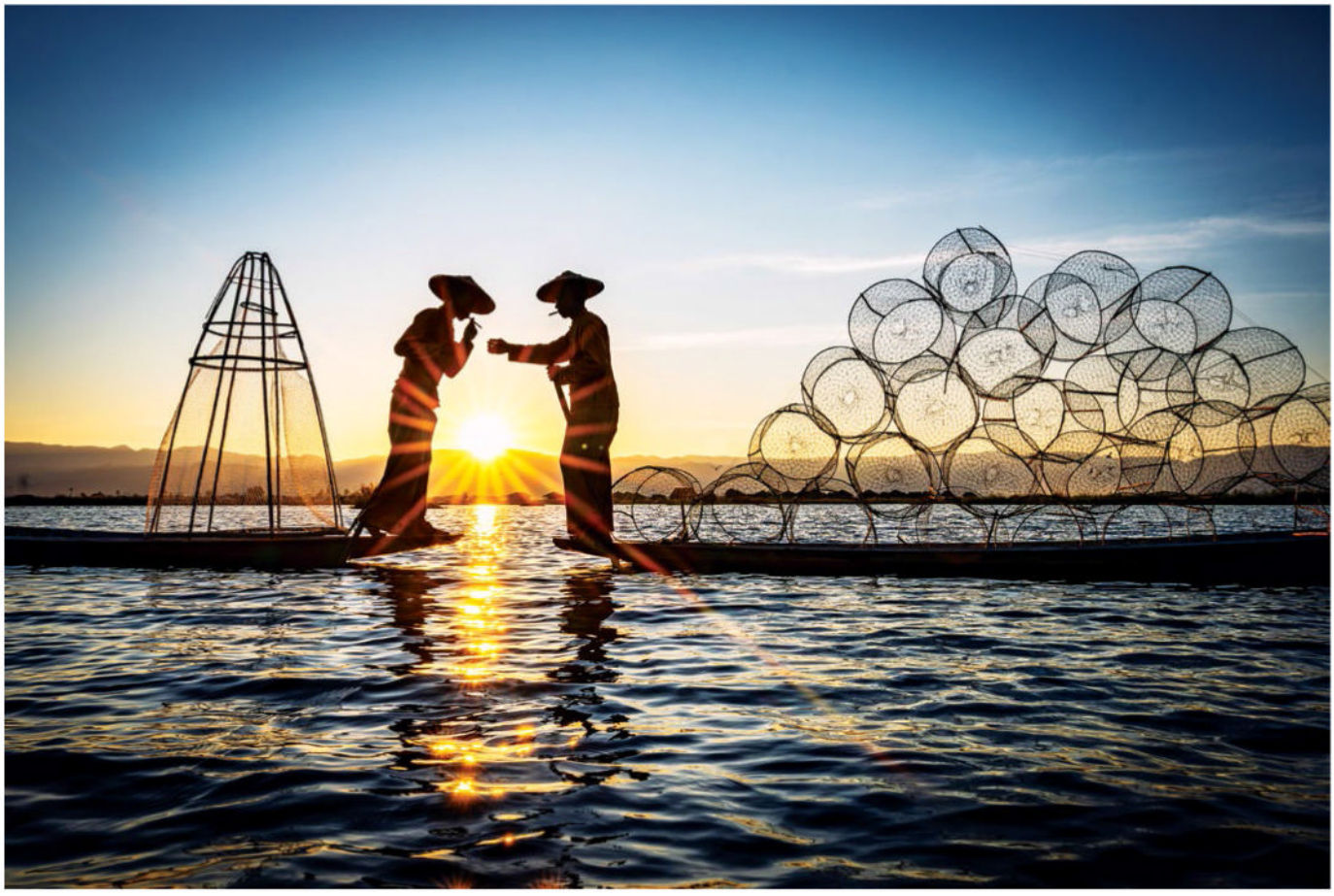
In December 2025, I travelled to Myanmar with one wish: to see daily life as it is lived, far from the headlines. I found a country that moves to the rhythm of its rivers and lakes.

On Inle Lake, my days began before sunrise. Fishermen balanced on one leg at the stern of their narrow boats, rowing with the other while lowering conical nets into the mist. Families lived in stilt houses above the water, and the boat was everything – school bus, delivery van and market stall. At the floating market, vegetables, fish and tea changed hands from boat to boat, and every transaction was in cash, counted out in worn kyat notes. No cards, no QR codes – just trust, a smile and a fold of paper money. Away from the water, life was equally unhurried.

In Bagan, dusty roads wound between ancient pagodas while hot-air balloons drifted overhead at dawn. Climbers scaled palm trees in the golden light, craftsmen shaped wooden wheels by hand, and kitchens filled with smoke from wood fires. In quiet pagodas, monks read and prayed while young novices peered at my camera.

What stayed with me most was the people. Again and again, strangers invited me to share tea or waved from their boats. In a largely rural country where most people have little, they gave generously – their time, their warmth and their stories.

These photographs are my attempt to honour that kindness, and the quiet beauty of everyday life in Myanmar.|SP



Fishermen at Dusk



Wheel Making



Cooking



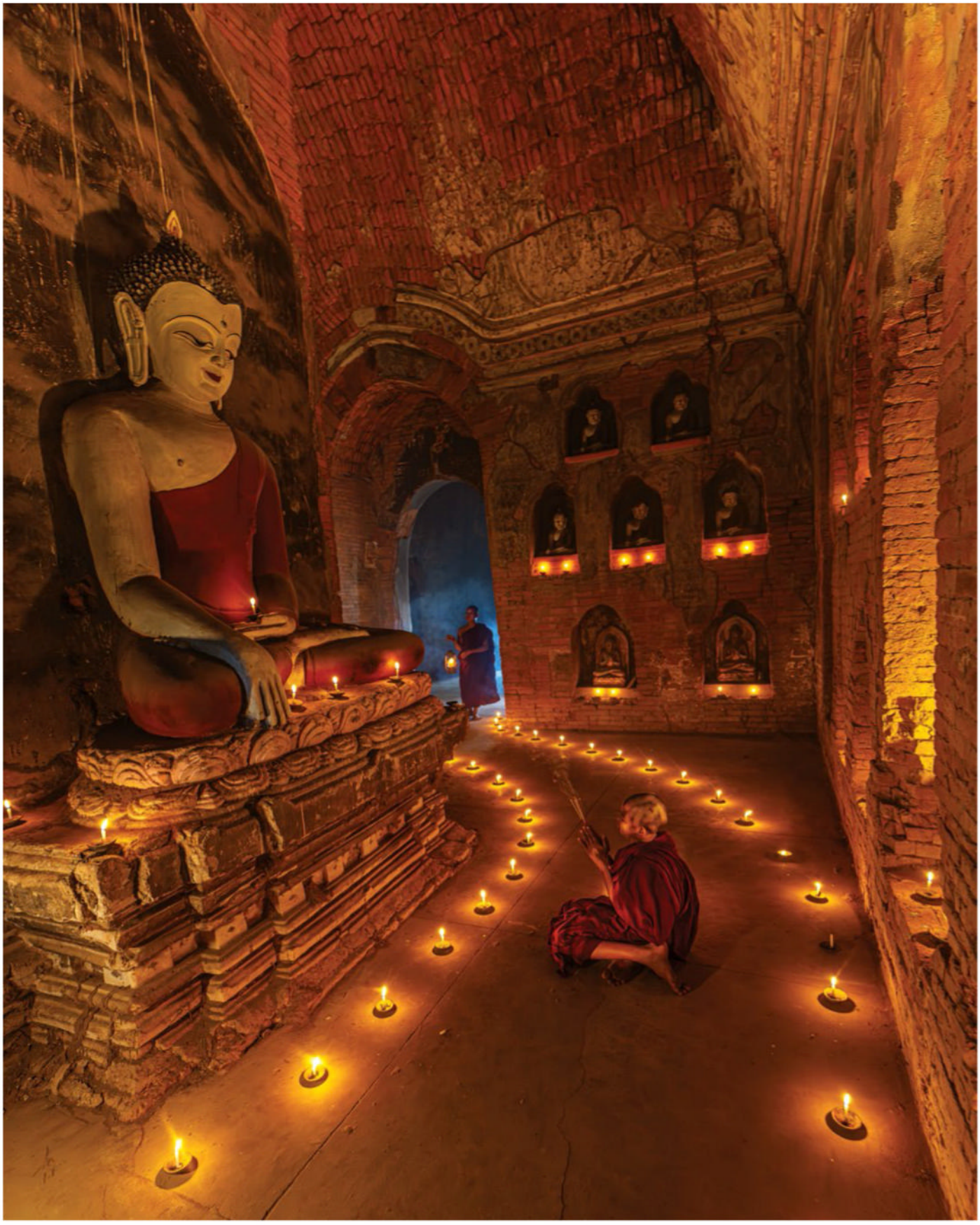
Monk deep in reading



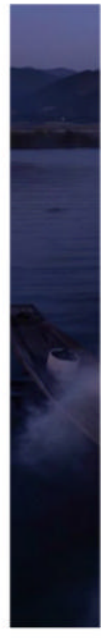
Inle lake family life



Inle Lake Fishermen - pouring tea



Monk Praying inside temple





Early Morning conversaion



Fishing in the evening



Finding Home



Evening Trade on Inle





Burmese Man



Pagoda and Hot Air Balloon



Where Light Turns Wildlife Into Myth



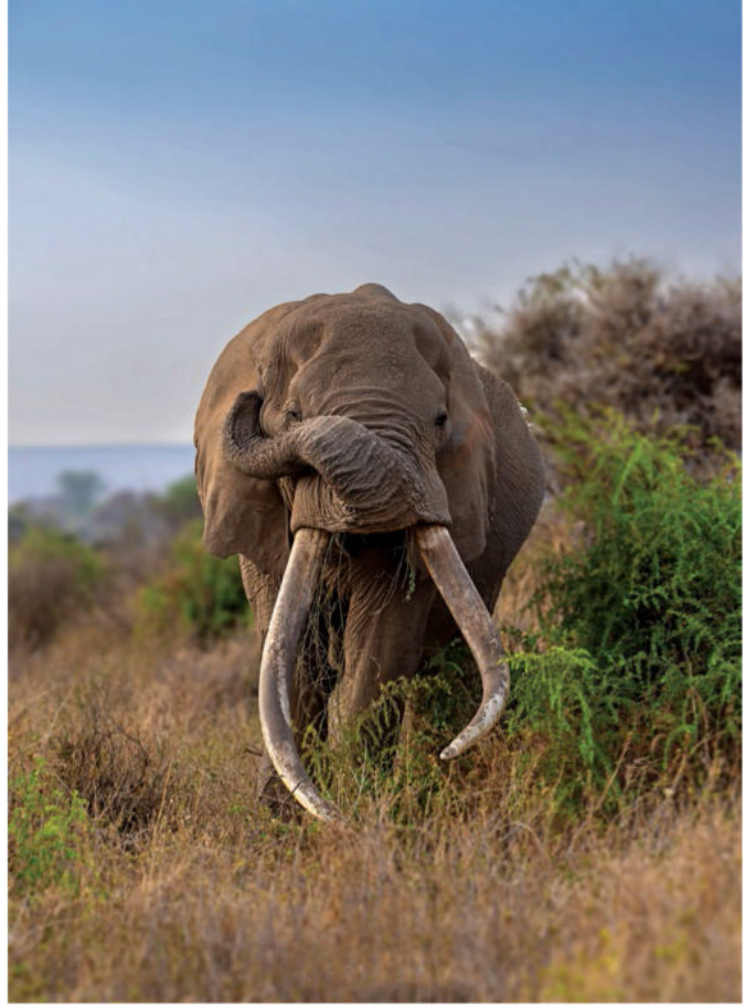
Venkiteswaran Ramasubhramoni

Born in Kerala, God's Own Country, **Venkiteswaran Ramasubhramoni** carries the soul of the rainforest and the rhythm of monsoon winds in his heart. A passionate photographer and a devoted wildlife lover, he finds magic in the rustle of leaves, the call of distant birds, and the quiet poetry of nature's silence. Travel fuels his spirit, and every journey becomes a canvas where he captures nature's fleeting masterpieces. Though he walks the path of a career banker in the vibrant city of Dubai, his lens always seeks the wild, the untamed, the beautiful, the profound. Each frame he shoots is a tribute to the world's raw wonder and a whisper of his roots. To know him more, visit www.framebyvenki.com or #framesbyvenki.

In the shadow of Kilimanjaro, Amboseli offers a visual theatre unlike anywhere else in Africa. Here, elephants move through rising dust like ancient giants, egrets dance in their wake, and the golden light sculpts every silhouette into something almost mythical. For photographers, this is a landscape of pure minimalism — wide horizons, uncluttered frames, and moments that feel both intimate and cinematic.

This feature explores how Amboseli's unique blend of light, dust, and behaviour transforms ordinary wildlife encounters into extraordinary photographic narratives. From backlit tuskers to storm lit plains, it reveals why this iconic ecosystem remains one of the world's most inspiring stages for visual storytelling. |SP

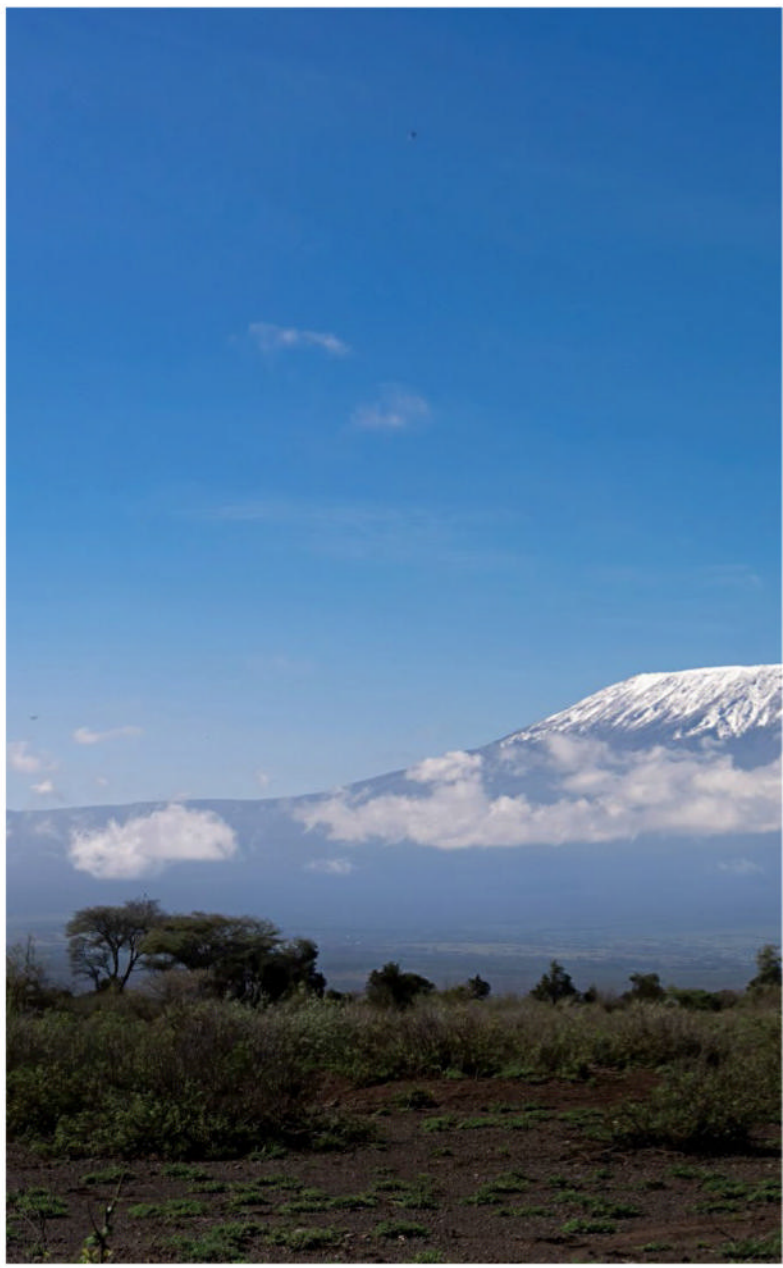




























Vermont fall



Tree On Fire - Cog Railway



Vaibhav Jaguste

Vaibhav Jaguste is a Mubai based self-taught pictorial photographer. He believes that the camera is the least important tool in photography. He is frequently a judge for international photography competitions and served as the Vice President of the Photographic Society of India, Mumbai, for four years from 2014-2018. He has had two solo photo exhibitions – 'Hymns of Nature' and 'Rocks and waves' in December 2017 and January 2020 respectively, both at the prestigious Jehangir Art Gallery in Mumbai. He has achieved the distinctions of EFIAP, BPSA, FFIP, MFIP (N) and APSI.

This Fall, my family and I drove through Vermont and New Hampshire. It was like stepping into a living painting, where every landscape told a story and every moment begged to be captured through the lens of a camera. It was a journey of winding country roads, majestic mountains, historic landmarks, cascading waterfalls, and the extraordinary beauty of New England.

Vermont was first, with its gentle rolling hills, quiet villages, rustic barns, and white farmhouses. Narrow roads cut between meadows, stone walls marked field boundaries, and tall trees lined the route. Vermont felt like a place to slow down and soak in mother nature with all her beauty and grace.

In New Hampshire's White Mountains, the landscape turned dramatic. Peaks stood tall and strong among the dense forest while light, soft clouds drifted across them. The light shifted constantly, as if it was dancing, striking a distant ridge one minute and casting deep shadows stretching across a valley the next. We took the Mount Washington Cog Railway up the mountain. An engineering feat, the train climbed the steep track toward the peak, and the soot-emitting workhorse engine gave the ride a classic feel. As we moved higher, the valleys shrank below us and the forest dissolved into sprawling patterns of green, yellow, orange, red, and gold.

At the base sits the Omni Mount Washington Resort. It is as beautiful as it is significant for hosting the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944. It featured a sweeping white facade, a red roof, and wide lawns set against the dark forest, with the peak rising right behind the roofline in the soft light. Further along, Crawford Notch cuts through the mountains with sheer rock faces on either side. Thick woods cover the slopes, punctuated by narrow streams and patches of sunlight. In the autumn air, dark evergreens, orange maples, and golden birches sit right against weathered



Fall At Gorge – Flume Gorge



Tree On Fire - Cog Railway

granite. The smaller details stood out just as much: the rough texture of the stone, leaves moving in the breeze, and morning mist hanging over the canopy.

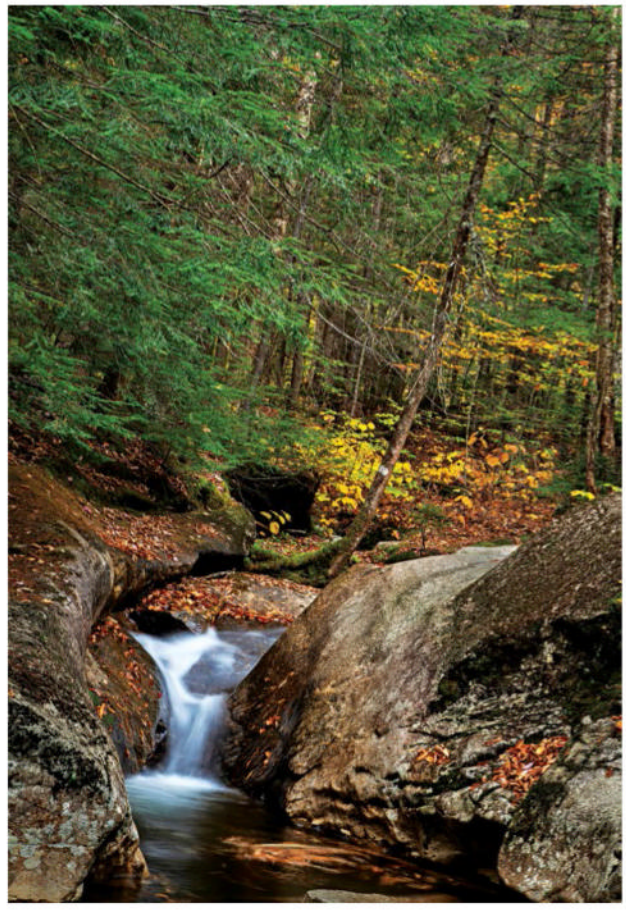
At Cathedral Ledge near North Conway, a granite cliff overlooks the valley, with the White Mountains stretching into the distance. We saw rock climbers try to ascend and descend the cliff, which made us realize how minuscule we humans are. From the top, the forest spreads out below, broken up by winding roads and scattered buildings. The contrast among the bare rock, green trees, and blue sky gave the scenery a sharp, colorful depth.

In Flume Gorge in Franconia Notch State Park, we walked through a narrow passage formed between high granite walls carved by centuries of running water. Wooden walkways wind past ferns, mossy stones, and clear mountain streams. Sunlight broke through the canopy to light up the mist and highlight the deep greens, while the gentle sound of rushing water echoed through the canyon. Every bend offered a new angle: water streaming over smooth rock, tree roots clinging to the cliffs, and fallen leaves gathered along the bank.

As is true for most photography trips, some of our favorite shots were captured in between the major stops: sunlight hitting a quiet stretch of road, mountains reflected in a calm stream, or a train silhouetted against a distant ridge. We came home with an entire collection of such photos, maple leaves, and a deep appreciation of nature and its beauty. |**SP**



Rock In Path - Scenic Road At Stowe, Vermont



Serene Flow- Flume Gorge



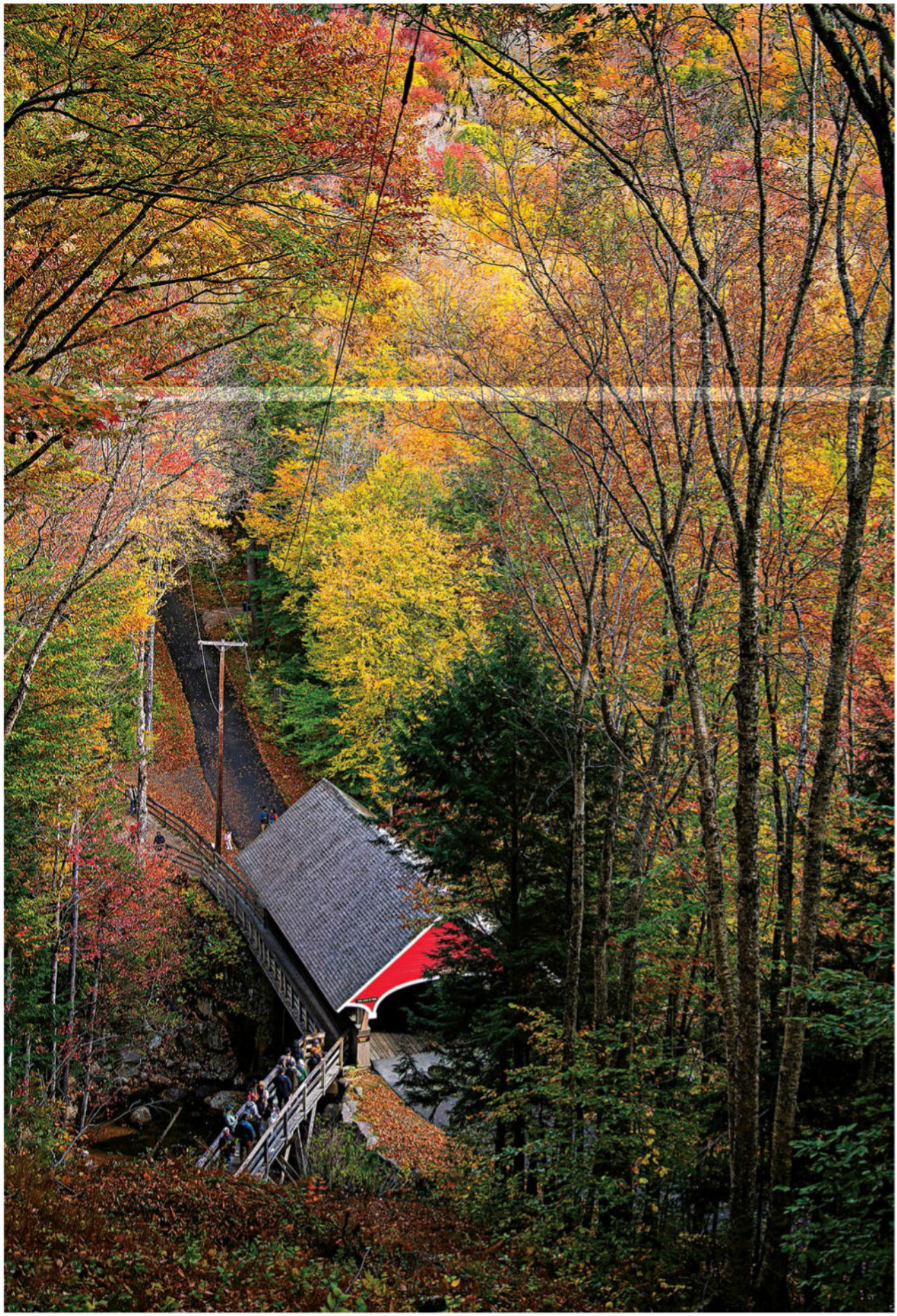
Stowe Church - Stowe, Vermont



Shadows- Willey House – Crawford Notch



Retreat In Vermont - Stowe, Vermont



Historic Covered Bridge In Forest- Flume Gorge



A Tapestry Of Autumn- Way To New Hampshire





Awaiting A Change – On Way To Bridgewater.



Selfie In Serenity – Willey House – Crawford Notch

Steve McCurry on Street Workshops

Authenticity and the Unchanging Core of Photography

Girish Mallya speaks with photographer Steve McCurry about his recent India Zoom photo tour through Kolkata and Varanasi, the value of learning on the street versus in a classroom, evolving tools from film to smartphones and AI, and his enduring approach to image-making.



- ***Girish Mallya : This India trip is a Zoom Tour photo workshop rather than a conventional classroom session. What is the trip about, and how does it differ from standard tutorial or training formats?***
  Steve McCurry: The real difference is that we are out in the street photographing life here in Kolkata. It is simply about exploring and being curious about the place, and finding wonderful pictures in this incredible, beautifully chaotic city. There is only so much you can learn sitting in a classroom. At a certain point you have to get out and actually apply what you know — walk around, photograph, and practise. The sooner you do that, the more you learn. It is a bit like reading the manual of a plane or watching endless videos: you can study all you want, but in the end it is about going out and applying it.

- ***Girish Mallya: From the participant's side, does being surrounded by life help absorption more than a controlled classroom, or does the environment distract?***
  Steve McCurry: There is really no comparison. You want to be out actually photographing, not in a classroom. When we are in this situation I am walking around with the students, looking at angles, looking at people, looking at how we photograph and solve problems of composition and light. It is a hands-on approach. The classroom is simply not the full answer to learning photography, you have to go and do it.

- ***Girish Mallya: How does the experience feel different for you as the person sharing knowledge?***
  Steve McCurry: In this kind of open setting it becomes much more about working through real situations together. We are looking at what is in front of us and figuring out how to photograph it. Everyone has their own style and their own way of approaching life, photography or people. That is a good thing. It is great that we all have different approaches. I would not want everybody to shoot the same way, or to shoot like me. They should shoot like themselves.

- ***Girish Mallya: You have visited Kolkata many times. Which areas do you keep returning to?***
  Steve McCurry: I like the neighbourhoods. I like the area where they make the statues for the different festivals. I also like the flower market area, but not for the flowers themselves, I have been there several times and I am not sure I have ever really photographed the flowers. I prefer the periphery, what is happening on the edges. More than anything, I enjoy just walking on the street. It is very vibrant and interesting. I am not primarily looking for colour; I am looking for more human stories — people engaged in whatever they are doing.

- ***Girish Mallya: The next stop is Varanasi. What draws you there, and how has it changed?***
  Steve McCurry: I think almost every traveller who has been to Varanasi is captivated by the city. You do not have



to be a photographer to understand that it is a special place. It felt even more special before. Now it has become a little more… someone decided to put a lot of lights on it and jazz it up a bit, and that has spoiled some of the natural authenticity. You do not need to put a lot of bells and whistles on something that is already beautiful.

I have heard there is a committee that gets together and decides how to spoil the ambience of the city. They think, "Let's put some really ugly lights, and maybe some architecture that does not really fit the location." There is something built right there on the ghats that looks a bit Eastern European to me — sort of blocky and out of character. It starts to feel a little like Disneyland. It is fascinating who makes those decisions. You do not need any of those lights.

- ***Girish Mallya: Some of this lighting and development seems aimed at domestic tourists, based on a perception that more colour and spectacle is what people want. Does that ring true?***
  Steve McCurry: I do not really think about whether places are getting cleaner or about the infrastructure side of it. I just notice what feels out of place with the character of the city. Some of the newer interventions seem to miss the point of what made the place special in the first place.

- ***Girish Mallya: Moving to the broader evolution of the medium: from analogue to digital, smartphones, and now AI. How do you view this transition?***
  Steve McCurry: Fundamentally it is still the same. It is the practice of observation, of curiosity, of walking around and looking at life. That does not change from film to digital to whatever you use, whether you do it with your phone or any other camera. The core of it has not really changed. Shooting film or shooting digital is pretty much the same in that sense.

- ***Girish Mallya: Many smartphones default to heavily processed images, tuned to what research suggests most people prefer. What is your feeling about that?***
  Steve McCurry: I just use my cell phone for snapshots around the house and notes. When I am travelling I do not really use my phone for my personal photography. For me it is just for snapshots of my family and friends, that is the extent of it. If I take a picture of myself and my daughter and wife, I just want a clear image, period. That is all. I do not think that deeply about the processing or the brand.










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- ***Girish Mallya: What camera do you carry for your own photography?***
  Steve McCurry: I use the Leica SL3. I have two of them, those are the ones I actually use. I have other cameras as well, but these are the ones I rely on. For the phone it is just an Apple iPhone, and for me it does not really matter what the brand is, whether it is Apple or Oppo or Xiaomi. I am just looking for a quick snapshot.

- ***Girish Mallya: Do you do much post-processing yourself?***
  Steve McCurry: I do not do any of that myself because I have an assistant who handles all of it. What I want is for the picture to look the way it was when I saw it and remembered it. Sometimes the highlights need to be brought down, sometimes the shadows need to be brought up. It is basically the same as photography from 150 years ago, from that perspective nothing has really changed. It is still about lightening and darkening as needed.

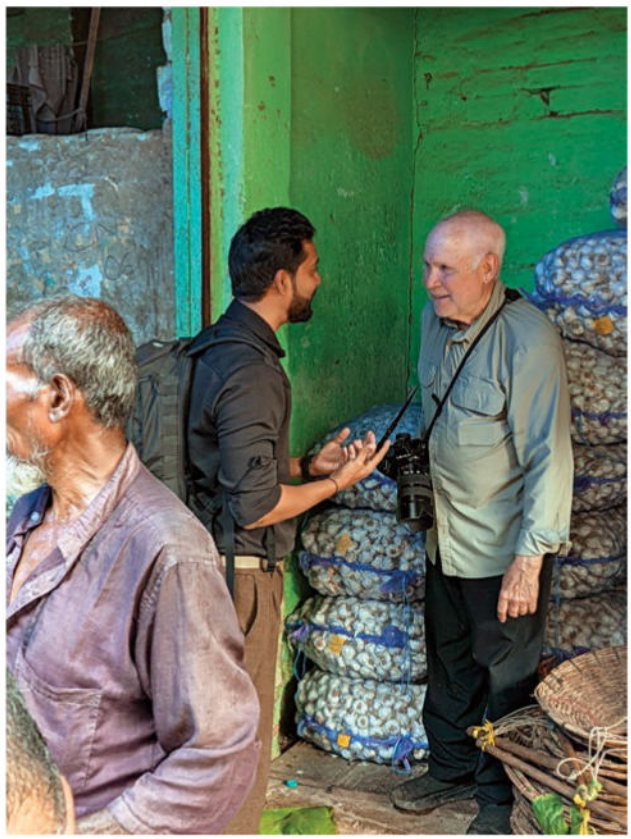
- ***Girish Mallya: Beyond Kolkata and Varanasi, which parts of India do you enjoy photographing?***
  Steve McCurry: I like Kolkata, Mumbai, Rajasthan. There are wonderful places in South India. I have been all over — the Northeast, Punjab, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu. There are rich areas to photograph almost all over the country.

- ***Girish Mallya: And outside India?***
  Steve McCurry: I like Asia. Places like Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, China, Russia. Parts of Africa are interesting too, but I would say Asia is often my first choice of places to work.

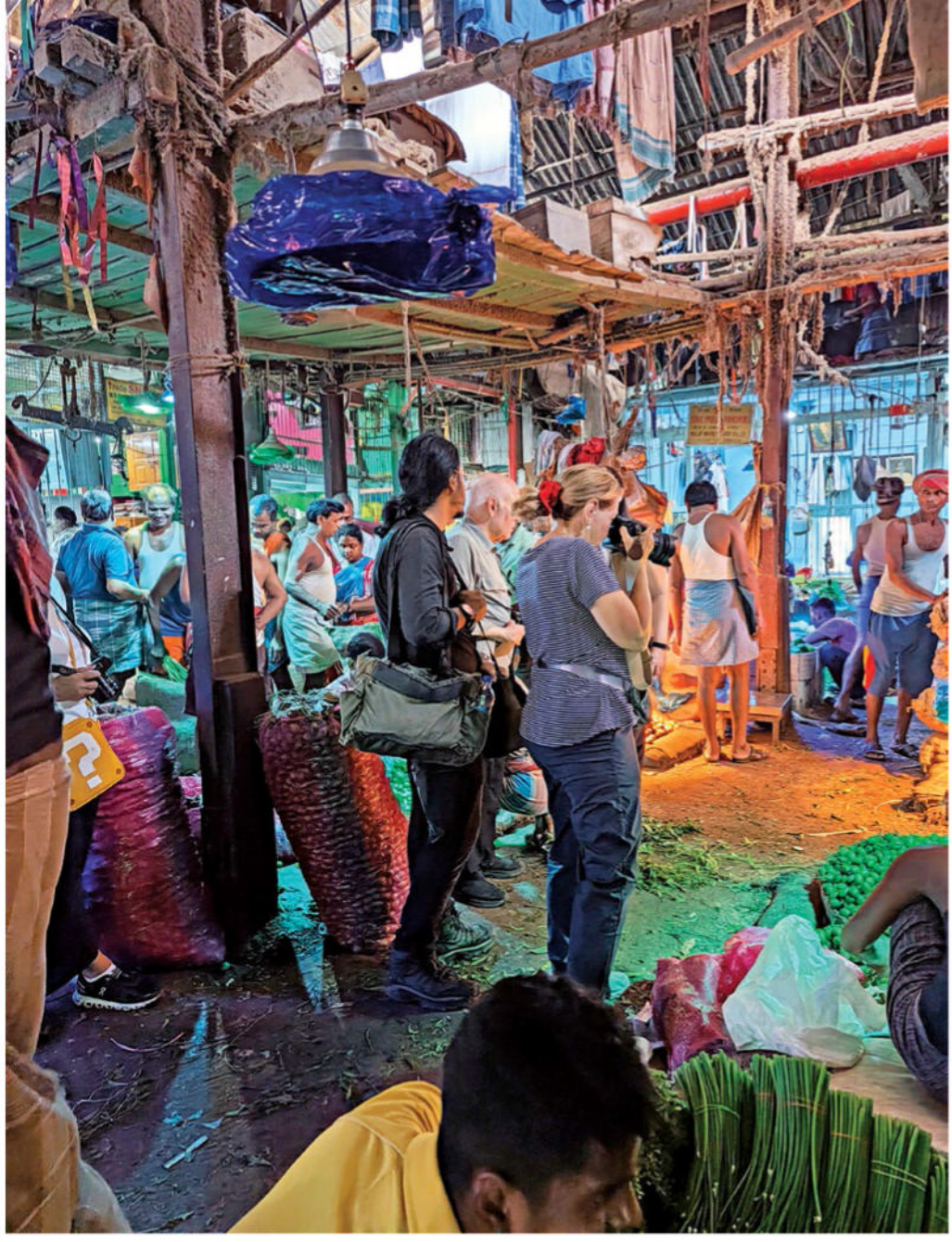
- ***Girish Mallya: Which genres pull you most?***
  Steve McCurry: I like documentary photography. I think all photography, whether it is flowers or cars or landscapes or whatever it happens to be, is interesting if it is done in a good way. But I gravitate more towards people and culture and human behaviour, and also animals.











- ***Girish Mallya: Have you experimented much with video or smartphone effects?***
  Steve McCurry: Not yet. I do not have much curiosity about that. I do videos, of course, we all do videos, but it is just standard video. I have not pushed into the other things; they do not really interest me.

- ***Girish Mallya: Do you follow social media platforms such as Instagram or TikTok?***
  Steve McCurry: A bit. There are other things I participate in and we collaborate on some of it, but I have no real interest in Instagram in general, or in TikTok. None of that particularly interests me. That is just me. I am not being judgemental about what other people want to do, but I have a very traditional way of approaching things.

- ***Girish Mallya: Have younger photographers or new technologies shown you anything that genuinely feels new or inspiring?***
  Steve McCurry: Honestly, I do not see anything new. I could be totally uninformed, but I do not see anything new that would improve on the classic way of producing images. In terms of film, I think it has all been done. Over a hundred years ago they were doing all kinds of incredible things with images, and I do not think there is anything new today that was not done fifty years ago, in my view. You can do a lot of stuff with AI or whatever, but you can also just stay home.|**SP**

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LEARNINGS

LEARNING



Ashok Kandimalla

Ashok Kandimalla has been in the photographic field for over three decades and has extensive experience in both film and digital photography. Being an electronics engineer by profession and a photographer, he possesses a unique and deep insight into the technical aspects of digital photography and equipment. He has published more than a 100 articles on photography and some of his writings have also been published in the well-known international magazine *Popular Photography*. With a huge collection of photographic books and vintage cameras, Ashok has a keen interest in the history of photography and a passion for sharing his knowledge on photography through teaching and writing. He is the only Indian photographer to be featured on the Nikon Centenary website. He is presently working as a Management and Engineering consutant. He can be reached at **kashokk@gmail.com.**

FOCUS STACKING USING PHOTOSHOP

Depth of field (often shortened to DOF) is an important aspect of photography. Sometimes you want it shallow, sometimes deep—but whatever the choice, its impact on an image is impossible to ignore. To appreciate how it works, let's start with the fundamentals.

When a lens is focused at a certain distance, only subjects at that exact distance are rendered in perfect focus. Collectively, these points form what's known as the **plane of focus**. Anything closer or farther lies outside this plane and is technically out of focus.

In practice, though, our eyes accept a range of sharpness before and after that plane. This "zone of acceptable focus" is what photographers call depth of field. Now, let's explore the key factors that shape DOF and how they influence the look and feel of a photograph.

DOF is calculated based on the following factors:

1. **Circle of confusion (COC)**
2. **Magnification**
3. **Aperture size (f/ number)**

The first factor may sound "confusing", but it is easy to understand. Note the key term used previously – "acceptable focus". The question is: how do you describe it? When you focus correctly, a point will appear as a sharp point on the sensor. If it is not in perfect focus, it will appear as a small fuzzy disc or circle. The more out of focus the point is, the bigger and fuzzier the circle will be. Hence, we can define how much "out of focus" we can accept by setting the circle size. This is what is called the Circle of Confusion (COC). The less fuzziness we can accept, the smaller the circle should be. The venerable German company Carl Zeiss (now just Zeiss) empirically derived COC and took into account three sub-factors. These are:

1. Format of sensor
2. Print size
3. Viewing Distance of a print

While we don't need to go into detail for our article, remember that smaller sensors also need a tighter (smaller) COC because their images need higher magnification when printing.

The next important factor is the magnification. It is the ratio of the image size (on the sensor) to the real subject size. Magnification depends on focal length and the distance to the subject. Each of these cannot be considered in isolation. That is why telephoto lenses don't always provide greater magnification than wide-angle lenses. **DOF is, in fact, independent of focal length and decreases as the magnification increases.**

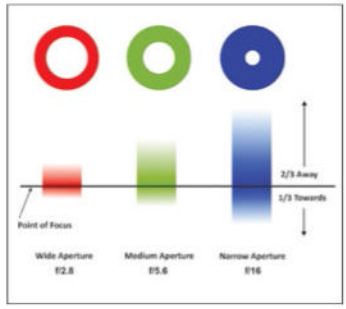
Another key factor that shapes DOF is the aperture. A narrower aperture (a higher f number) increases DOF because "stopping down" narrows the spread of light rays, keeping more of the image acceptably sharp. In effect, the zone of focus becomes deeper. However, a problem lurks here. If you make the aperture too narrow, diffraction begins to soften the image. More of this later.

It's also worth noting that DOF does not extend evenly in front and behind the plane of focus. Roughly one third lies in front, while two thirds falls behind (see Picture 1), though it tends to be divided equally at higher magnifications, such as those experienced in macro photography.

Controlling DOF is central to photography. Of all the factors that influence it, only magnification and aperture are under your control. Magnification is hard to change once you've framed your shot, so aperture becomes the main tool for adjusting DOF. Yet this tool has limits—especially in close up or macro work.

For example, at 1:1 magnification, even at f/16, the DOF may be as thin as 2.11 mm. Most lenses won't let you stop down beyond f/22 (or f/32 in some cases), and even if they do, diffraction will reduce sharpness. This problem is more pronounced with today's high megapixel count sensors.

So photographers face a paradox: we need more DOF, but stopping down further only reduces the overall image quality. These limits are set by physics. The solution? A clever technique known as **focus stacking**.



Picture 1: Effect of aperture and distribution of DOF.

Focus stacking

This involves capturing several images of the subject, whether it's a landscape or a macro object or anything in between. Each image is taken so that a point at a particular distance from the lens is in perfect focus.

We start by focusing on the closest point. We then focus on intermediate points, progressively moving the focus point away till we take the final image, which keeps the farthest point in focus. In the specific case of landscapes, this point will be mostly at infinity.

Thus, we have different points throughout the scene in perfect focus, but each in a different image. In other words, each image will keep just a slice of the scene in perfect focus, with the size (depth) of the slice depending on the aperture you have used. A set of these images is called a **stack**.

Within the stack, no image will have the whole scene in focus. However, if we put together all images, each with a slice in perfect focus, then extract only those regions in focus and then merge them, then we can get the whole scene in focus.

Focus stacking software does the merging. With this technique, we can theoretically get infinite DOF. The restrictions come from limited computing power and other PC resources, since several images must be opened and merged simultaneously. This is especially true with modern high megapixel count cameras that can exceed 60 MP. Lastly, note that we have not altered the physical laws (which is impossible), but we have worked around them!

Procedure:

So, how do we go about it? We need to execute three steps.

1. Setting up the camera
2. Creating the focus stack
3. Processing the stack

1. **Setting up the camera:**

a. Mount your camera to a sturdy tripod. No tripod means no focus stacking!
b. Switch off the IS/VR as the camera is mounted on a tripod.
c. Focusing: You can use autofocus as it will speed up the work. However, in this case your camera needs enough closely packed AF points so you can keep an AF point precisely where you want it. If not, you can also focus manually at each intermediate point you choose. Some cameras can shift focus themselves. More of this later.
d. Exposure: Use aperture priority mode. This is preferred to manual for two reasons. First, light may vary while you create the stack. Second, in macro photography, you lose light as the lens focuses closer. Both of these are automatically taken care of if you use aperture priority. Set the aperture to f/11 for full-frame and f/8 for cropped sensor cameras. You can use a wider aperture, but then you might have to take more images. Also, don't stop down beyond f/11, or the whole purpose of this exercise is defeated.
e. White Balance: Set a fixed WB as needed. Avoid Auto WB.
f. Set the camera to single-frame

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CHECKLIST FOR **A PHOTO TRIP**

Rohinton Mehta

When on a photo trip, have you ever found yourself searching for some gadget but could not find it in your camera bag? Have you ever forgotten to carry extra memory cards? Did you ever leave your home for a photo shoot but without your trusty circular polariser? Well, I don't know about you, but I definitely have! So here's a ready-made checklist for you so you may never fall victim to short memory loss.

You may make a copy of the checklist and add/ item that you do not want to miss taking on your photo trips.

1. Camera body/s (keep serial numbers with you, just in case)
2. Lenses (keep serial numbers with you, just in case)
3. Lens hood/s
4. Is there a battery in the camera/s? Extra batteries
5. Battery charger/s and power chord/s.
6. Check if you have placed memory card/s in the camera. Extra cards
7. Have you dusted/cleaned your lenses and the end caps?
8. Cleaning kit: Microfiber cloth for glass (in a zip-lock bag), soft brush for external cleaning, lens tissues, blower, cleaning liquid, Speck-grabber (or similar) for removing dust on the sensor when out in the field. A small napkin or two as well for wiping away dust and water splashes.
9. Contact cleaner (I use ProGold). This, seemingly unimportant item, can save you lots of misery. If your autofocus stops or if you find that the AF is suddenly sluggish, it is possible that the culprit could be the electronic contacts on the camera and/or lens. Over time, these electronic contacts can get oxidised (or dusty) and prevent or intermittently allow the data to be transferred between the camera body and the lens. Keeping these contacts clean is a good habit.
10. A lightweight plastic raincoat or a poncho always stays in my camera bag. Also, large plastic bag/s and rubber bands (just in case it rains or the weather turns nasty. Just for the record, I have seen it rain in every month of the year –not in the same year! If it starts raining, you can wrap up each individual lens/camera body in a clean plastic bag and place rubber bands on the package to prevent water seeping in and damaging the lens/camera body)
11. Neutral Density filter/s
12. Polarising filter/s
13. Tripod
14. Cable release (First choice: Radio-controlled)
15. Chemical hand warmer/s (if you are visiting a cold place)
16. Powerful torchlight
17. Extra batteries/charger for torchlight
18. Image back-up gear (Laptop, or any other device to back-up your images)
19. Laptop charger and cable
20. Mobile phone and charger
21. Personal medicines
22. An additional small camera bag (besides your regular camera bag). The smaller bag is for a small trip when you don't need your entire gear

A LIFE SAVER: ALWAYS inform a friend/relative as to where you are going. JSP

LEARNING

INTENTIONAL CAMERA MOVEMENT: **FINDING MEANING IN MOTION**

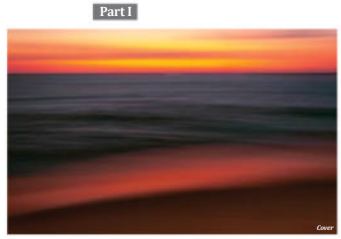
Part I



Ruben Alexander

Ruben Alexander is an enthusiast photographer based in Bangalore, India, with interests spanning landscapes, seascapes, cityscapes, architecture and experimental photography. His work explores how light, movement and time can transform the perception of a familiar scene, with a particular interest in long exposures and Intentional Camera Movement (ICM), where photography meets abstract art. His photographs have been featured in photography magazines in India and the UK. He was shortlisted for the Sony World Photo Award and has earned awards and acceptances in national and international photography salons, including a Master of Light award from the Master of Light Photographic Association. His work has also been exhibited through the Thank God it's Saturday (TGIS) and Youth Photographic Society (YPS) photo clubs. Beyond making photographs, Ruben is passionate about sharing knowledge, teaching photography and giving back to the photographic community by encouraging others to learn, experiment and develop their own creative voices.

email: thewandererseye.rubenalexander@gmail.com | www.thewandererseye.com
Flickr Photostream: https://www.flickr.com/photos/the-wanderers-eye/ **Instagram:@** thewandererseye_rubenalexander



Cover

From a traditional photography point of view, I spent years trying to keep my camera still. Then ICM taught me that sometimes moving the camera deliberately can produce a different outcome. I learnt that moving the camera during an exposure could create images that sit somewhere between conventional photography and abstract painting. Intentional Camera Movement Photography, or ICM Photography, turns conventional photography into an exploration of colour, light, shape and movement. In this article, I try to look at the connection between ICM and Impressionism, explore a few practical techniques and encourage photographers to experiment, make mistakes and develop their own visual language.

ICM and Impressionism

When photography becomes a brushstroke Tripods, image stabilisation, breathing techniques to hold still, fast shutter speeds and sharp lenses all help us achieve one thing: sharpness. ICM asks us to let go of some of that sharpness and detail. ICM involves deliberately moving the camera during the exposure. The movement stretches, distorts or transforms the subject, often producing an image that sits somewhere between photography and abstract art.



Claude Monet Water Lilies 1908

For me, ICM is not simply about blur. It is about interpretation. I realised ICM images still retain enough detail for the viewer to guess what they are looking at. This is where I find an interesting connection with impressionist paintings.

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FOCUS STACKING USING PHOTOSHOP



Ashok Kandimalla

Ashok Kandimalla has been in the photographic field for over three decades and has extensive experience in both film and digital photography. Being an electronics engineer by profession and a photographer, he possesses a unique and deep insight into the technical aspects of digital photography and equipment. He has published more than a 100 articles on photography and some of his writings have also been published in the well-known international magazine *Popular Photography*. An avid collector of photographic books and vintage cameras, Ashok has a keen interest in the history of photography and a passion for sharing his knowledge on photography through teaching and writing. He is the only Indian photographer to be featured on the Nikon Centenary website. He is presently working as a Management and Engineering consutant. He can be reached at **kashokk@gmail.com.**

Depth of field (often shortened to DOF) is an important aspect of photography. Sometimes you want it shallow, sometimes deep—but whatever the choice, its impact on an image is impossible to ignore. To appreciate how it works, let's start with the fundamentals.

When a lens is focused at a certain distance, only subjects at that exact distance are rendered in perfect focus. Collectively, these points form what's known as the **plane of focus**. Anything closer or farther lies outside this plane and is technically out of focus.

In practice, though, our eyes accept a range of sharpness before and after that plane. This "zone of acceptable focus" is what photographers call depth of field.
Now, let's explore the key factors that shape DOF and how they influence the look and feel of a photograph.
DOF is calculated based on the following factors:

1. **Circle of confusion (COC)**
2. **Magnification**
3. **Aperture size (f/ number)**

The first factor may sound "confusing", but it is easy to understand. Note the key term used previously – "acceptable focus". The question is: how do you describe it? When you focus correctly, a point will appear as a sharp point on the sensor. If it is not in perfect focus, it will appear as a small fuzzy disc or circle. The more out of focus the point is, the bigger and fuzzier the circle will be. Hence, we can define how much "out of focus" we can accept by setting the circle size. This is what is called the Circle of Confusion (COC). The less fuzziness we can accept, the smaller the circle should be. The venerable German company Carl Zeiss (now just Zeiss) empirically derived COC and took into account three sub-factors. These are:

1. Format of sensor
2. Print size
3. Viewing Distance of a print

While we don't need to go into detail for our article, remember that smaller sensors also need a tighter (smaller) COC because their images need higher magnification when printing.

The next important factor is the magnification. It is the ratio of the image size (on the sensor) to the real subject size. Magnification depends on focal length and the distance to the subject. Each of these cannot be considered in isolation. That is why telephoto lenses don't always provide greater magnification than wide-angle lenses. **DOF is, in fact, independent of focal length and decreases as the magnification increases.**

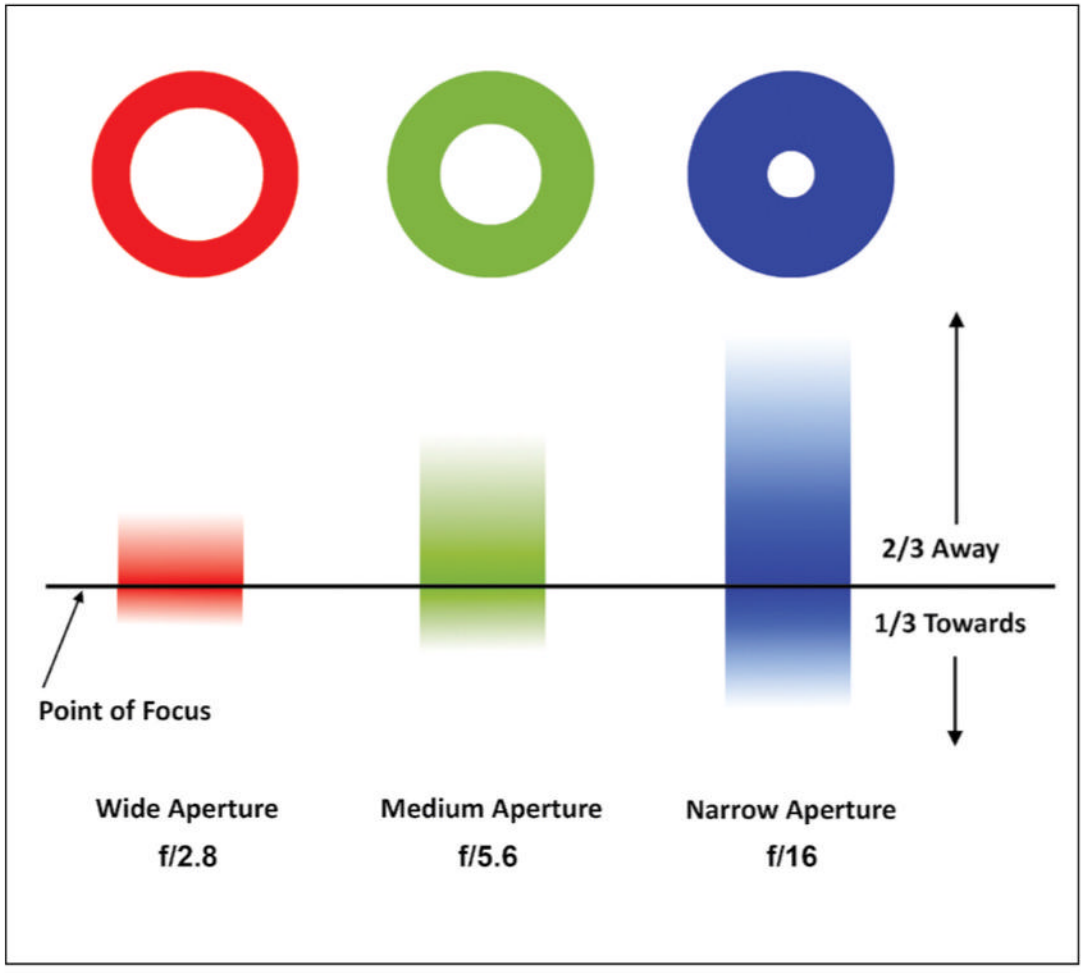
Another key factor that shapes DOF is the aperture. A narrower aperture (a higher f number) increases DOF because "stopping down" narrows the spread of light rays, keeping more of the image acceptably sharp. In effect, the zone of focus becomes deeper. However, a problem lurks here. If you make the aperture too narrow, diffraction begins to soften the image. More of this later.

It's also worth noting that DOF does not extend evenly in front and behind the plane of focus. Roughly one third lies in front, while two thirds falls behind (see Picture 1), though it tends to be divided equally at higher magnifications, such as those experienced in macro photography.

Controlling DOF is central to photography. Of all the factors that influence it, only magnification and aperture are under your control. Magnification is hard to change once you've framed your shot, so aperture becomes the main tool for adjusting DOF. Yet this tool has limits—especially in close up or macro work.

For example, at 1:1 magnification, even at f/16, the DOF may be as thin as 2.11 mm. Most lenses won't let you stop down beyond f/22 (or f/32 in some cases), and even if they do, diffraction will reduce sharpness. This problem is more pronounced with today's high megapixel count sensors.

So photographers face a paradox: we need more DOF, but stopping down further



Picture 1: *Effect of aperture and distribution of DOF.*

only reduces the overall image quality. These limits are set by physics. The solution? A clever technique known as **focus stacking**.

Focus stacking

This involves capturing several images of the subject, whether it's a landscape or a macro object or anything in between. Each image is taken so that a point at a particular distance from the lens is in perfect focus.

We start by focusing on the closest point. We then focus on intermediate points, progressively moving the focus point away till we take the final image, which keeps the farthest point in focus. In the specific case of landscapes, this point will be mostly at infinity.

Thus, we have different points throughout the scene in perfect focus, but each in a different image. In other words, each image will keep just a slice of the scene in perfect focus, with the size (depth) of the slice depending on the aperture you have used. A set of these images is called a **stack**.

Within the stack, no image will have the whole scene in focus. However, if we put together all images, each with a slice in perfect focus, then extract only those regions in focus and then merge them, then we can get the whole scene in focus.

Focus stacking software does the merging. With this technique, we can theoretically get infinite DOF. The restrictions come from limited computing power and other PC resources, since several images must be opened and merged simultaneously. This is especially true with modern high megapixel count cameras that can exceed 60 MP. Lastly, note that we have not altered the physical laws (which is impossible), but we have worked around them!

Procedure:

So, how do we go about it? We need to execute three steps.

1. Setting up the camera
2. Creating the focus stack
3. Processing the stack

1. Setting up the camera:

a. Mount your camera to a sturdy tripod. No tripod means no focus stacking!

b. Switch off the IS/VR as the camera is mounted on a tripod.

c. Focusing: You can use autofocus as it will speed up the work. However, in this case your camera needs enough closely packed AF points so you can keep an AF point precisely where you want it. If not, you can also focus manually at each intermediate point you choose. Some cameras can shift focus themselves. More of this later.

d. Exposure: Use aperture priority mode. This is preferred to manual for two reasons. First, light may vary while you create the stack. Second, in macro photography, you lose light as the lens focuses closer. Both of these are automatically taken care of if you use aperture priority. Set the aperture to f/11 for full-frame and f/8 for cropped sensor cameras. You can use a wider aperture, but then you might have to take more images. Also, don't stop down beyond f/11, or the whole purpose of this exercise is defeated.

e. White Balance: Set a fixed WB as needed. Avoid Auto WB.

f. Set the camera to single-frame

advance.

g. Use a remote shutter release or use the self-timer for a short duration to prevent any camera shake.

2. Creating the focus stack

a. Decide on the number of images. More details are given below.

b. Compose a little **loosely**, as the camera might shift during the creation of the stack even if mounted on a tripod.

c. Start by focusing on the closest point of your subject and take an image.

d. Keep shifting the focus point towards the next farther point till you reach the end (the farthest point), capturing an image at every point.

e. Note that the farthest point could be even towards the left or right of the scene. It may not necessarily be directly in front of you.

f. All these images constitute the stack that needs to be processed.

g. Keep the stack in a separate folder to avoid confusion. If you have multiple stacks, store each in its own folder.

h. Make a note of the first and the last image file numbers of a stack. This will help you identify stacks if you create multiple stacks in a single session.

Deciding on the number of images:
This is important and a bit subjective, since there is no hard-and-fast rule. It largely depends on the subject. In my experience, for landscapes and the apertures I mentioned, you will not need more than 10 images to get everything in focus. This is for lenses with focal lengths of 50 mm or less.

As magnification increases, as in close-up or macro photography, you will need more images. Consider this practical case. This car model was 25 cm long and 10 cm wide. To keep all parts of the car in sharp focus, I created a stack of 20 images. Pictures 2 and 3 show the first and last images in the stack. I used a Nikon Z6II (a 24 MP camera) to capture these images in RAW format. I used a Nikkor Z 24-200 mm lens with an 18 mm extension tube. The focal length was 130 mm. Picture 4 shows the final focus stacked image. Please use this information as a guideline. It is best to experiment and take notes on your observations to get a feel for how many images you need. Also, recall that as magnification increases, as in close-up or macro photography, you need more images. For macro work, depending on the depth you need, you may have to capture more than 100 images.

Automatic focus stacking:
Capturing such a large number of images while shifting the focus point minutely is not easy. Hence, some camera manufacturers, notably Nikon, offer



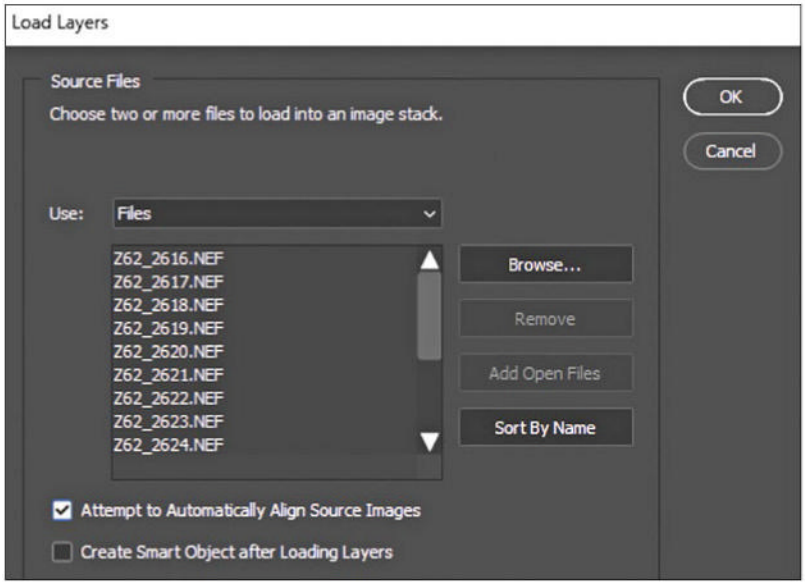
Picture 2: *The first image in the stack, focused at the nearest point.*



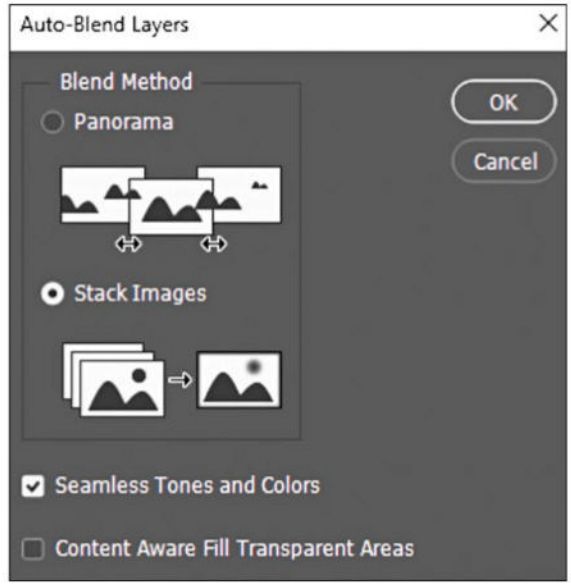
Picture 3: *The last image in the stack, focused at the farthest point.*



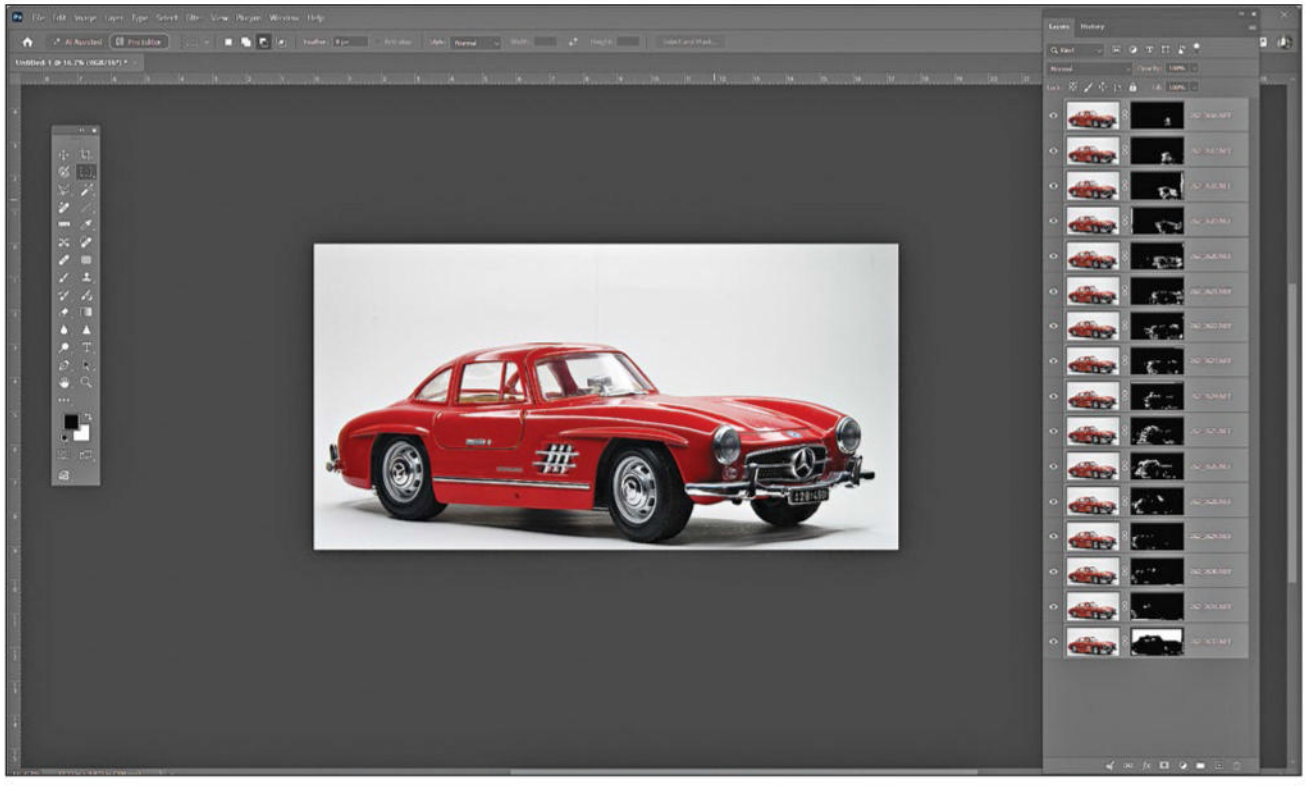
Picture 4: *The final processed image.*



Picture 5



Picture 6



Picture 7: *Photoshop screen after blending but before the layers are merged.*

automatic focus stacking. You need to set the closest focus point, the number of images, the focus width, etc. Once set up, the camera increments the focus distance from image to image, starting at the nearest point until it reaches the number of images you set. This greatly simplifies creating the stack. After that, the processing steps are the same.

3. Processing of the focus stack:
Many software packages support focus-stack processing. Helicon Focus is considered one of the best. The well-known software Photoshop can also perform focus stacking. Older versions created artefacts, but newer versions (v26.4.1 or later) work very well. We will use Photoshop to process stacks in this article. Before you start processing, store all images in a stack in a folder.
Method 1: Using Photoshop only.
Method 2: Using Lightroom Classic and then Photoshop. Note that the former alone cannot do the job.

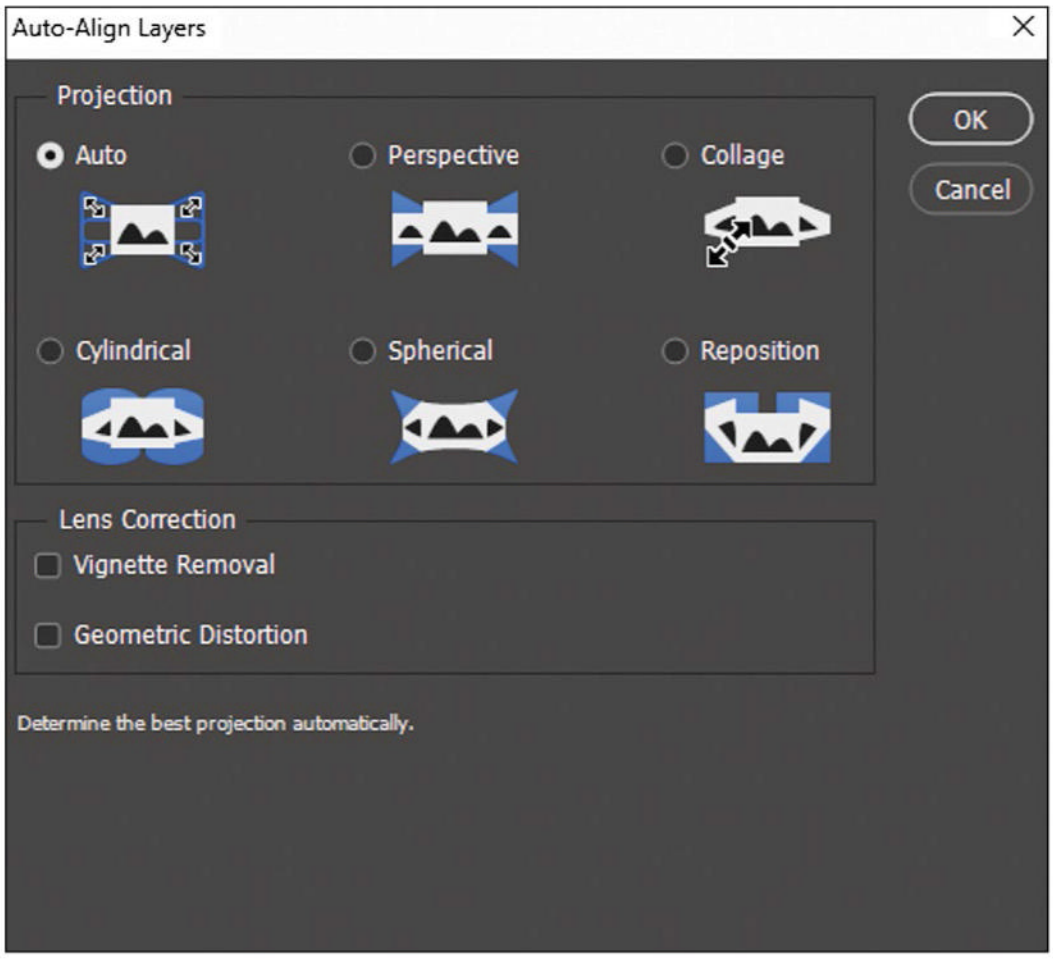
Method 1: You can do all the operations in Photoshop itself, following the steps given below:

a. From the Photoshop main menu: **File > Script > Load files into stack** (Picture 5).

b. Important: The layers must be aligned properly. Hence, tick **Attempt to Align Source Images Automatically** (Picture 5).

c. Select all the images in the stack and click **OK**. The images will now appear as layers in Photoshop.

d. Open the Layers panel (F7) in Photoshop and select all layers by clicking on each layer while holding down the Ctrl key. Alternatively, click the first and last layer while holding down the Shift key.



Picture 8

e. From the Photoshop main menu: **Edit > Auto-Blend Layers** (Picture 6).
f. Tick **Stack Images**, tick **Seamless Tones and Colours** and then click **OK**.
g. Wait until the processing is complete. The screen at this stage is shown in Picture 7, with each layer masked for the sharpest part.
h. Select all layers and then, from the main menu, **Layers > Merge Layers.** This flattens the layers and reduces the file size.
i. Save the file.

Method 2: Follow these steps if you are a Lightroom Classic user:
a. Import the stack(s) into your catalogue.
b. Select all the images in the stack.
c. From the Lightroom main menu: **Photo > Edit In > Open as Layers in Photoshop.**
d. Control will now shift to Photoshop, with images now appearing as layers.
e. Important: The layers must be aligned properly. Open the Layers panel (F7) in Photoshop and select all layers by clicking on each layer while holding down the Ctrl key. Alternatively, click the first and last layer while holding down the Shift key.
f. From the Photoshop main menu: **Edit > Auto-Align Layers** (Picture 8). The remaining steps are the same.
g. Select all the layers again.
h. From the Photoshop main menu: **Edit > Auto-Blend Layers** (Picture 6).
i. Tick **Stack Images**, tick **Seamless Tones and Colours** and then click **OK.**
j. Wait until the processing is complete. The screen at this stage is shown in Picture 7, with each layer masked for the sharpest part.
k. Select all layers and then, from the main menu, **Layers > Merge Layers**. This flattens the layers and reduces the file size.
l. Save the file.
m. Control will return to Lightroom, and the processed file will be imported into the catalogue automatically for further processing (if needed). |SP

CONCLUSION

Newer versions of Photoshop offer excellent focus stacking features at no extra cost. We can now increase DOF to an extent impossible with a single image because of physical limitations that cannot be changed. All serious landscape and macro photographers should know and practice this technique.

All text, diagrams, and images © Ashok Kandimalla.



CHECKLIST FOR **A PHOTO TRIP**

Rohinton Mehta

When on a photo trip, have you ever found yourself searching for some gadget but could not find it in your camera bag? Have you ever forgotten to carry extra memory cards? Did you ever leave your home for a photo shoot but without your trusty circular polariser? Well, I don't know about you, but I definitely have! So here's a ready-made checklist for you so you may never fall victim to short memory loss.

You may make a copy of the checklist and add any item that you do not want to miss taking on your photo trips.

1. Camera body/s (keep serial numbers with you, just in case)
2. Lenses (keep serial numbers with you, just in case)
3. Lens hood/s
4. Is there a battery in the camera/s? Extra batteries
5. Battery charger/s and power chord/s.
6. Check if you have placed memory card/s in the camera. Extra cards
7. Have you dusted/cleaned your lenses and the end caps?
8. Cleaning kit: Microfiber cloth for glass (in a zip-lock bag), soft brush for external cleaning, lens tissues, blower, cleaning liquid, Speck-grabber (or similar) for removing dust on the sensor when out in the field. A small napkin or two as well for wiping away dust and water splashes.
9. Contact cleaner (I use ProGold). This, seemingly unimportant item, can save you lots of misery. If your autofocus stops or if you find that the AF is suddenly sluggish, it is possible that the culprit could be the electronic contacts on the camera and/or lens. Over time, these electronic contacts can get oxidised (or dusty) and prevent or intermittently allow the data to be transferred between the camera body and the lens. Keeping these contacts clean is a good habit.
10. A lightweight plastic raincoat or a poncho always stays in my camera bag. Also, large plastic bag/s and rubber bands (just in case it rains or the weather turns nasty. Just for the record, I have seen it rain in every month of the year –not in the same year! If it starts raining, you can wrap up each individual lens/camera body in a clean plastic bag and place rubber bands on the package to prevent water seeping in and damaging the lens/camera body)
11. Neutral Density filter/s
12. Polarising filter/s
13. Tripod
14. Cable release (First choice: Radio-controlled)
15. Chemical hand warmer/s (if you are visiting a cold place)
16. Powerful torchlight
17. Extra batteries/charger for torchlight
18. Image back-up gear (Laptop, or any other device to back-up your images)
19. Laptop charger and cable
20. Mobile phone and charger
21. Personal medicines
22. An additional small camera bag (besides your regular camera bag). The smaller bag is for a small trip when you don't need your entire gear.

A LIFE SAVER: ALWAYS inform a friend/relative as to where you are going. |SP

INTENTIONAL CAMERA MOVEMENT: FINDING MEANING IN MOTION

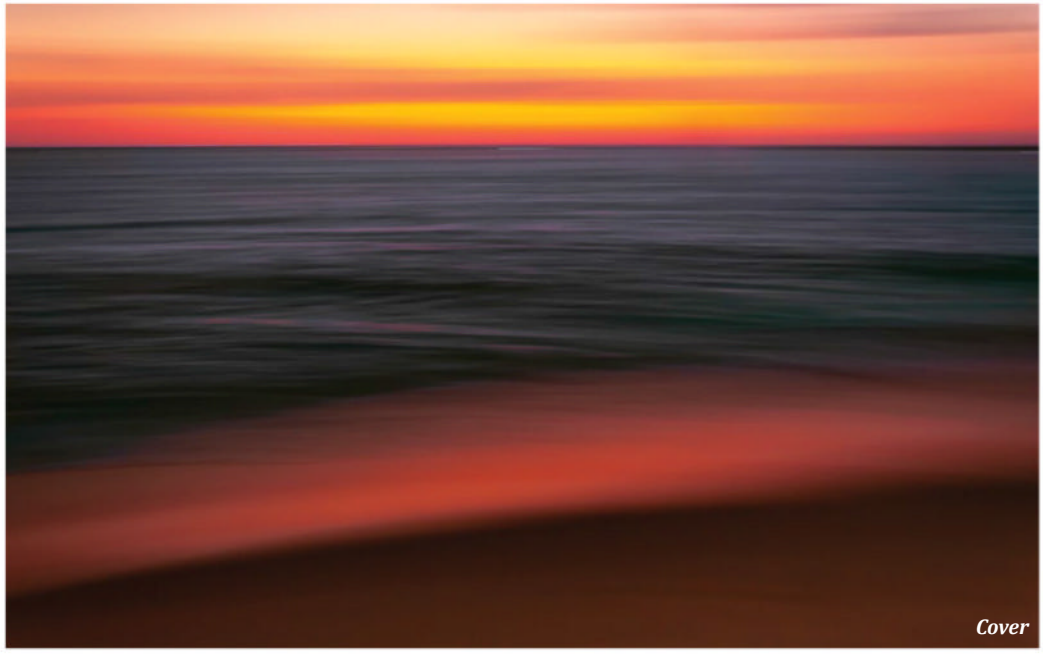
Part I



Ruben Alexander

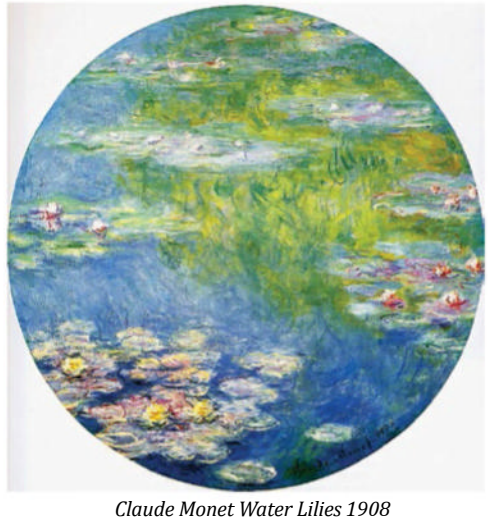
Ruben Alexander is an enthusiast photographer based in Bangalore, India, with interests spanning landscapes, seascapes, cityscapes, architecture and experimental photography. His work explores how light, movement and time can transform the perception of a familiar scene, with a particular interest in long exposures and Intentional Camera Movement (ICM), where photography meets abstract art. His photographs have been featured in photography magazines in India and the UK. He is a recipient of the Askari Youth Photo Award and has earned awards and acceptances in national and international photography salons, including a Master of Light award from the Master of Light Photographic Association. His work has also been exhibited through the Thank God It's Saturday (TGIS) and Youth Photographic Society (YPS) photo clubs. Beyond making photographs, Ruben is passionate about sharing knowledge, teaching photography and giving back to the photographic community by encouraging others to learn, experiment and develop their own creative vision.

email: thewandererseye.rubenalexander@gmail.com | www.thewandererseye.com
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Cover

From a traditional photography point of view, I spent years trying to keep my camera still. Then ICM taught me that sometimes moving the camera deliberately can produce a different outcome. I learnt that moving the camera during an exposure could create images that sit somewhere between conventional photography and abstract painting. Intentional Camera Movement Photography, or ICM Photography, turns conventional photography into an exploration of colour, light, shape and movement. In this article, I try to look at the connection between ICM and Impressionism, explore a few practical techniques and encourage photographers to experiment, make mistakes and develop their own visual language.

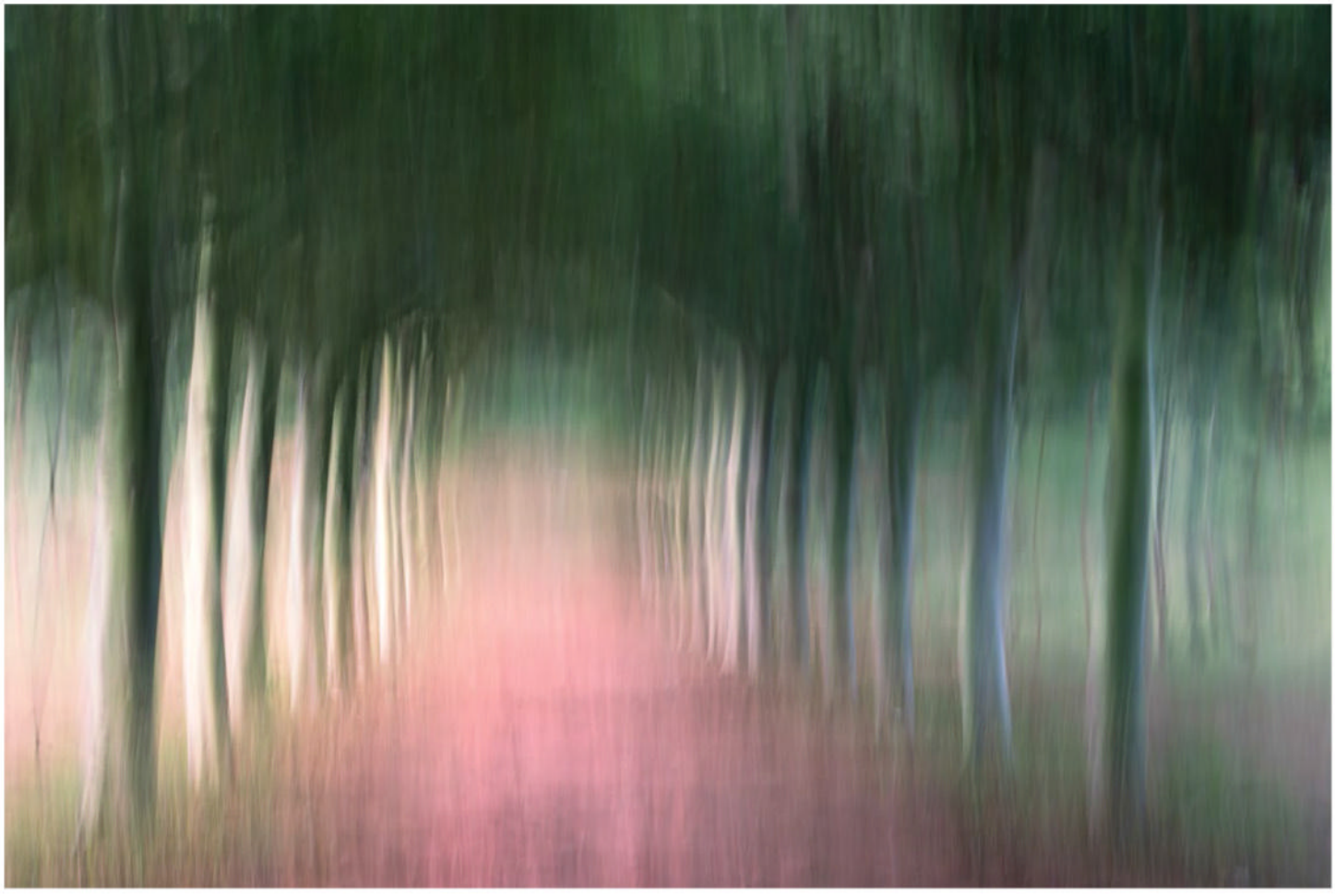


Claude Monet Water Lilies 1908

ICM and Impressionism

When photography becomes a brushstroke : Tripods, image stabilisation, breathing techniques to hold still, fast shutter speeds and sharp lenses all help us achieve one thing: sharpness. ICM asks us to let go of some of that sharpness and detail. ICM involves deliberately moving the camera during the exposure. The movement stretches, distorts or transforms the subject, often producing an image that sits somewhere between photography and abstract art.

For me, ICM is not simply about blur. It is about interpretation. I realised ICM images still retain enough detail for the viewer to guess what they are looking at. This is where I find an interesting connection with impressionist paintings.



Picture 1: *ICM of trees using vertical camera movement*

As a visual analogy, Claude Monet did not always try to reproduce a landscape with precise detail. His paintings often captured the changing effects of light, colour and atmosphere.

"The aim of ICM Photography is not to make a photograph blurry. It is to make it expressive."

Look Before you Move

One of the easiest mistakes when starting ICM is asking: "What shutter speed should I use?"
I think the better question is:
"What does this scene give me to work with?"
I find this question particularly useful when I am out exploring for ICM subjects. I don't necessarily look for a beautiful scene. I look for:

- strong lines
- blocks of colour
- repeated patterns
- tonal contrast
- interesting light
- simple shapes
- movement or rhythm

The subject should influence the movement. You are no longer simply photographing the subject. A row of trees, the waves of the sea, people walking on a street for example, may present an ICM photo opportunity. You are photographing the relationship between the subject and your movement.

I find it useful to imagine the camera as a brush. The shutter opens and the camera movement becomes the imagined brushstroke.

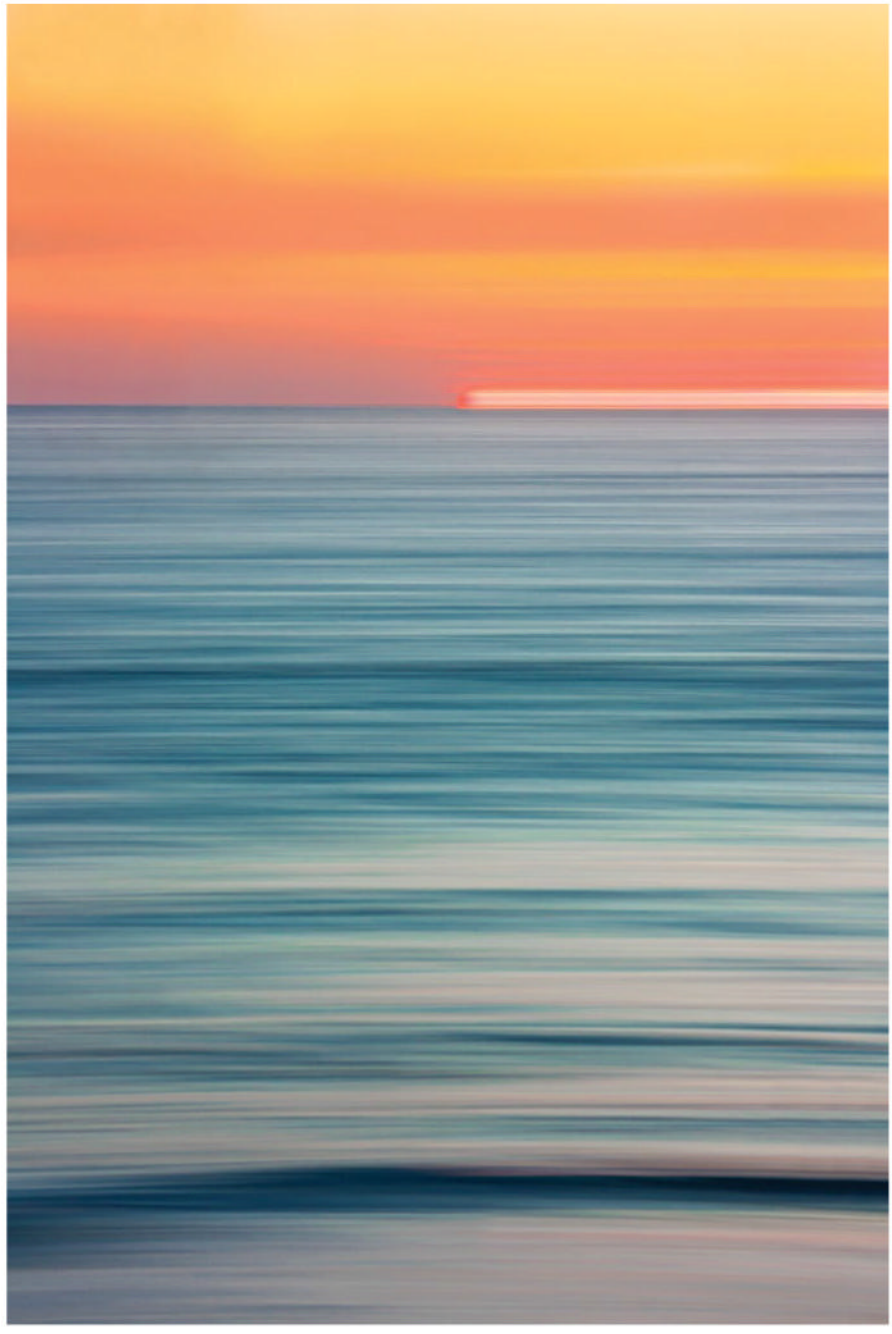
What will happen when those elements are stretched across the image? Composition still matters. In fact, composition matters even more when much of the detail is being deliberately removed. Most familiar principles of composition still apply, although ICM also gives us permission to bend or break some of them. Movement can hide a lot of mistakes, but it cannot magically turn a poor starting composition into a good photograph. A bright patch of sky, for example, can become a distracting streak if it occupies too much of the frame.

The starting composition still needs to work. The difference is that you are now thinking about what will happen to that composition during the exposure.

Choosing the Movement

Trees, beaches, mountains, flower beds and people are some of the most common ICM subjects.

I started my ICM journey with the straightforward Linear Camera Movement: vertical or horizontal movement. For trees, try a vertical movement, as the trunks and branches provide strong vertical cues. With a seascape, a horizontal movement can



Picture 2: *ICM of the Sea using Horizontal Camera Movement*

work better as it follows the horizon and the movement of the waves.

Use a relatively slow shutter speed and move the camera in the same general direction as the dominant shapes in the scene. There is no magic shutter speed. Something around 1/10–1/4 sec can be a useful starting point, but longer exposures can produce very different results. The important thing is not to become obsessed with the number. Keep experimenting. That is how you learn ICM!

Once you get the hang of simple movements, you can go on to more complex movements and start combining movements as well.

Some examples of more Complex Camera Movements are:

- **Path :** This is probably the movement I use most often and enjoy experimenting with. Instead of moving in a straight line, I try to follow a strong natural line in the scene – like the curve of a stream or the outline of a mountain. This creates a 'flow' that complements the subject.
- **Circular :** Rotating the camera during the exposure creates an interesting 'swirl' effect. This works quite well with flowers and centrally composed photos.
- **Random :** I've had some success using random movements (sometimes really wild) while shooting. As with the movement itself, the results can vary just as wildly.
- **Jitter :** This technique uses a shaking



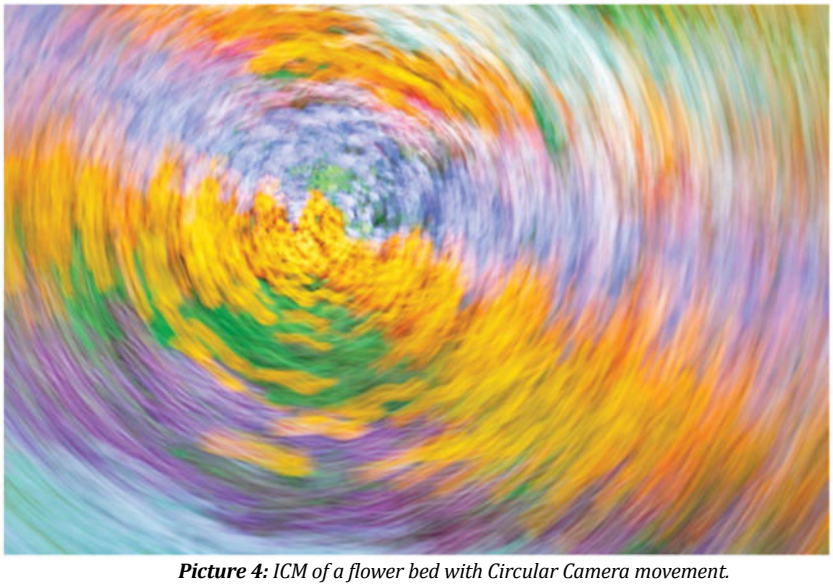
Picture 3 : *ICM of hills using camera movement that follows the contours of the hills and the landscape*

motion during the exposure — think of the way you shiver — to produce an extra layer of effect.

- **Moving Subject / Moving Camera :** Here, the movement can come from the subject, the camera platform or both. Shooting from a moving train, for example, can turn the passing landscape into abstract streaks. Similarly, following a moving subject while releasing the shutter can introduce another layer of movement.
- **Zoom pan :** Zoom pans require changing the focal length of a zoom lens while the shutter is open.

I experimented with several combinations of these movements. Some produced interesting results; others produced nothing I would ever want to show anyone! That is probably one of the reasons I enjoy ICM — failure is relatively cheap.

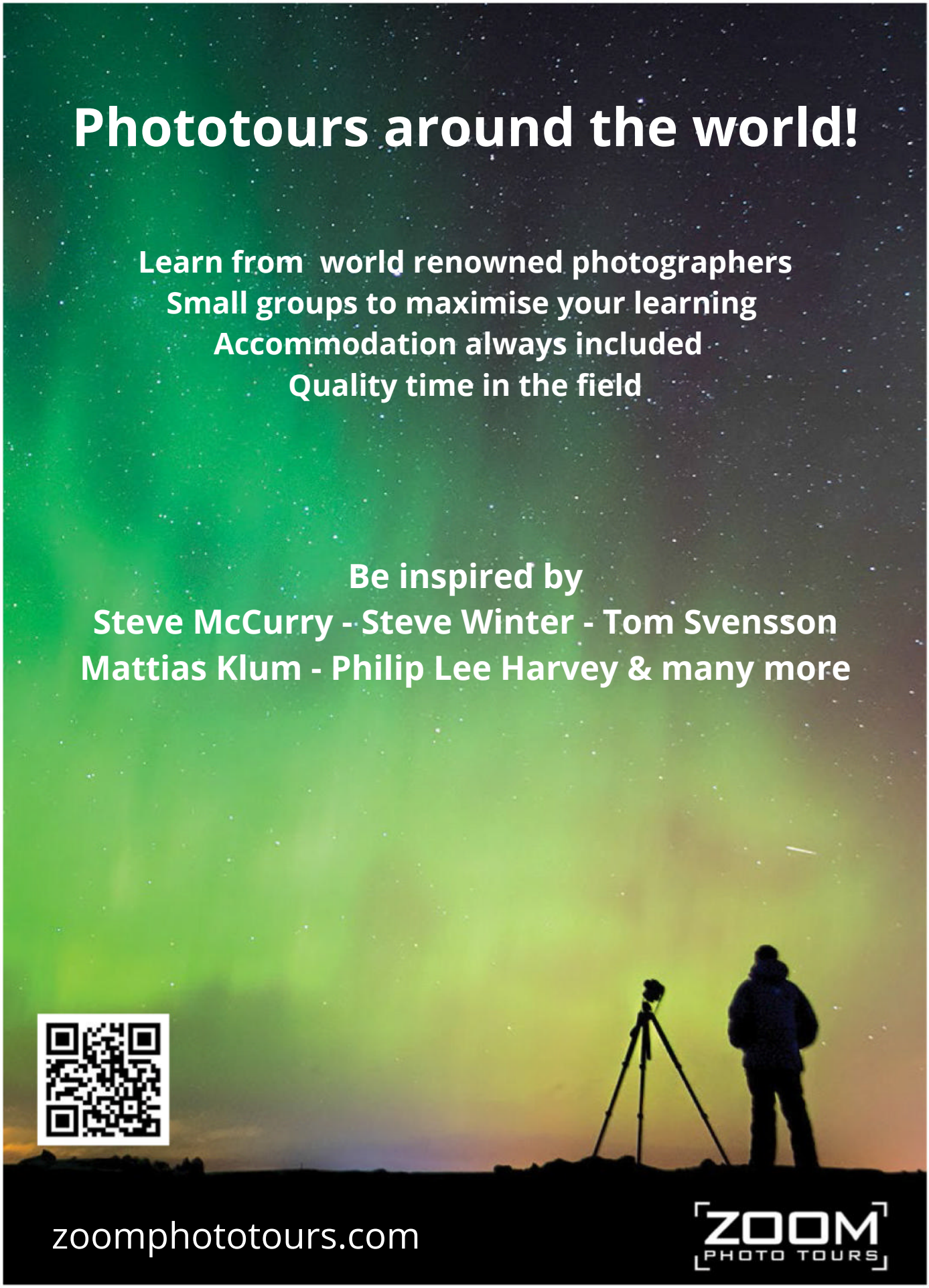
Once you are comfortable with conventional ICM, techniques such as combining multiple ICM exposures and Pep Ventosa's In the Round approach (a multiple-image technique) can open up further areas of ICM experimentation.|**SP**



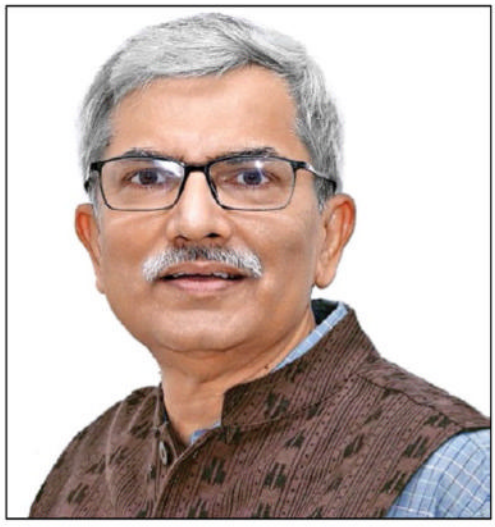
Picture 4: *ICM of a flower bed with Circular Camera movement.*



Picture 5: *ICM with Multiple Explosures using Pep Ventosa technique*


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PRINTING AND BEYOND



Vimal Parmar
An independent marketing consultant and digital print evangelist with over 40 years of experience in the imaging industry.
@vimalparmar

This New Year, Let Your Photographs Travel by Post!

With 2027 just around the corner, here's an invitation to rediscover the joy of printed greetings, handwritten messages and the wonderful feeling of receiving something tangible in the mail.

Dear Readers,

When was the last time you visited a post office to buy postage stamps? And when did you last send someone a greeting card through the post?

If you are struggling to remember, you are not alone. We have become so accustomed to sending greetings through WhatsApp and social media that the simple pleasure of choosing a card, writing a personal message, sticking a stamp on an envelope and dropping it into a letterbox has almost disappeared from our lives.

But why should it?

With the New Year 2027 just around the corner, I would like to suggest something different this time. Choose one of your favourite photographs, turn it into a greeting card, write a few heartfelt words and send it to someone you care about. Better still, visit your neighbourhood post office, buy a few stamps and experience the pleasure of sending something the old-fashioned way.

In the accompanying feature, I have taken this idea a step further. Instead of a conventional, single-fold greeting card, I have created a tri-fold card that accommodates several photographs. The interesting folding format adds an element of surprise and discovery, engaging the viewer as the card unfolds to reveal more images. I have also shared a simple, step-by-step guide to creating one yourself using nothing more than an A4-size (210x297 mm) sheet. You don't need elaborate equipment or complicated design skills; just a few good photographs and the willingness to experiment. Think about the person receiving your card. Unlike a digital greeting that might disappear among hundreds of messages, a printed card can be displayed, shared with family or kept as a cherished memory. And knowing that you took the photographs makes it even more special.

Perhaps this is also an opportunity to remind ourselves why we print. Photographs are meant to be seen, experienced and enjoyed, not merely stored on hard drives or buried in smartphone galleries.

So, as we prepare to welcome another year, let us put our photographs to work in a more personal way. Print a greeting. Write a message. Buy a stamp. Send a smile.

Who knows? Your little gesture might inspire someone else to rediscover the joy of print, too.

Happy Printing,
Vimal Parmar

Make Your Own Tri-Fold Photo Greeting Card

Turn an ordinary A4 sheet into an engaging, multi-panel greeting card featuring several photographs. With a little planning, a few folds and your favourite images, you can create a personalised greeting that is meant to be opened, explored and treasured.

A greeting card with a difference

A greeting card need not feature just one photograph and a few lines of text. With a little imagination, it can become a miniature photographic experience, revealing something new as the recipient opens it.

For this project, I have created a tri-fold greeting card for New Year 2027 using an A4 sheet. Its multiple panels fold in different directions to create an interesting, three-dimensional structure. Each panel offers space for a photograph, illustration, greeting or personal message.

The fun lies in the element of discovery. As the card opens, photographs and messages reveal themselves. The projecting panels add depth, making the card an engaging display rather than just another greeting. You will need A4 inkjet photo paper, a steel ruler, a sharp scalpel and a paper creaser or scoring tool (also known as a bone folder). You will, of course, need a collection of photographs.

If you don't have an inkjet printer at home, you can get your card printed at a good digital printing or photocopying outlet in your city. Many have in-house graphic designers who can help you design the card. Just show them this article! I used the paid version of Canva to create the grid and position my photographs precisely. Alternatively, print a blank grid template, work out the folds and cut and paste photographs to fit the individual panels.

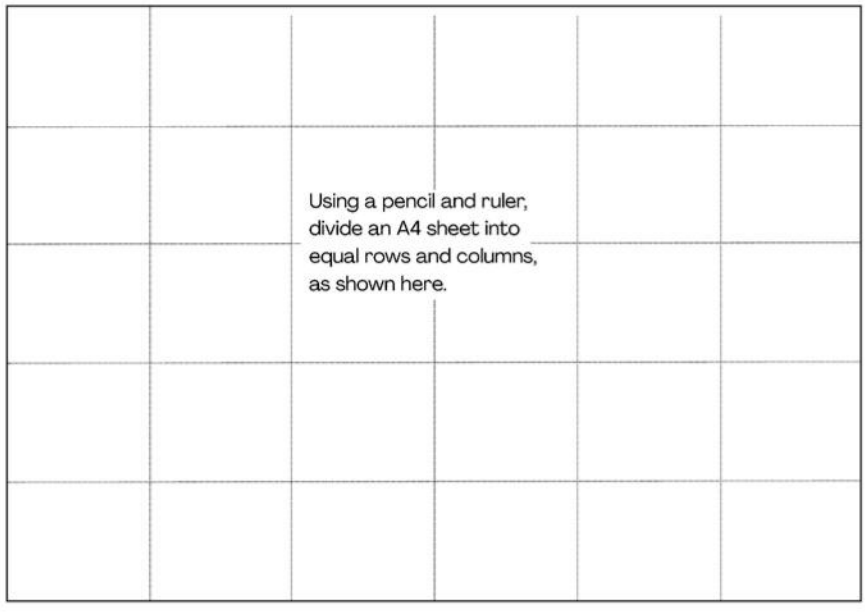


Image 1 - *Divide an A4 sheet into a grid using a pencil and ruler. The grid helps you plan the layout and locate the folds.*

Step 1 : Divide the sheet into a grid

Start with an A4 sheet in landscape orientation. Using a pencil and ruler, divide it into equal rows and columns, as shown in Image 1. The grid will help you plan the layout and identify where the folds and cuts need to be made.

Select suitable photographs, print them to size and position and paste them within the grid, adjusting their sizes to fit the individual panels. Repeat until you have covered the areas you wish to use.

Alternatively, you can design the card digitally, as I did, using Canva, a graphic design platform available on the web and mobile devices.

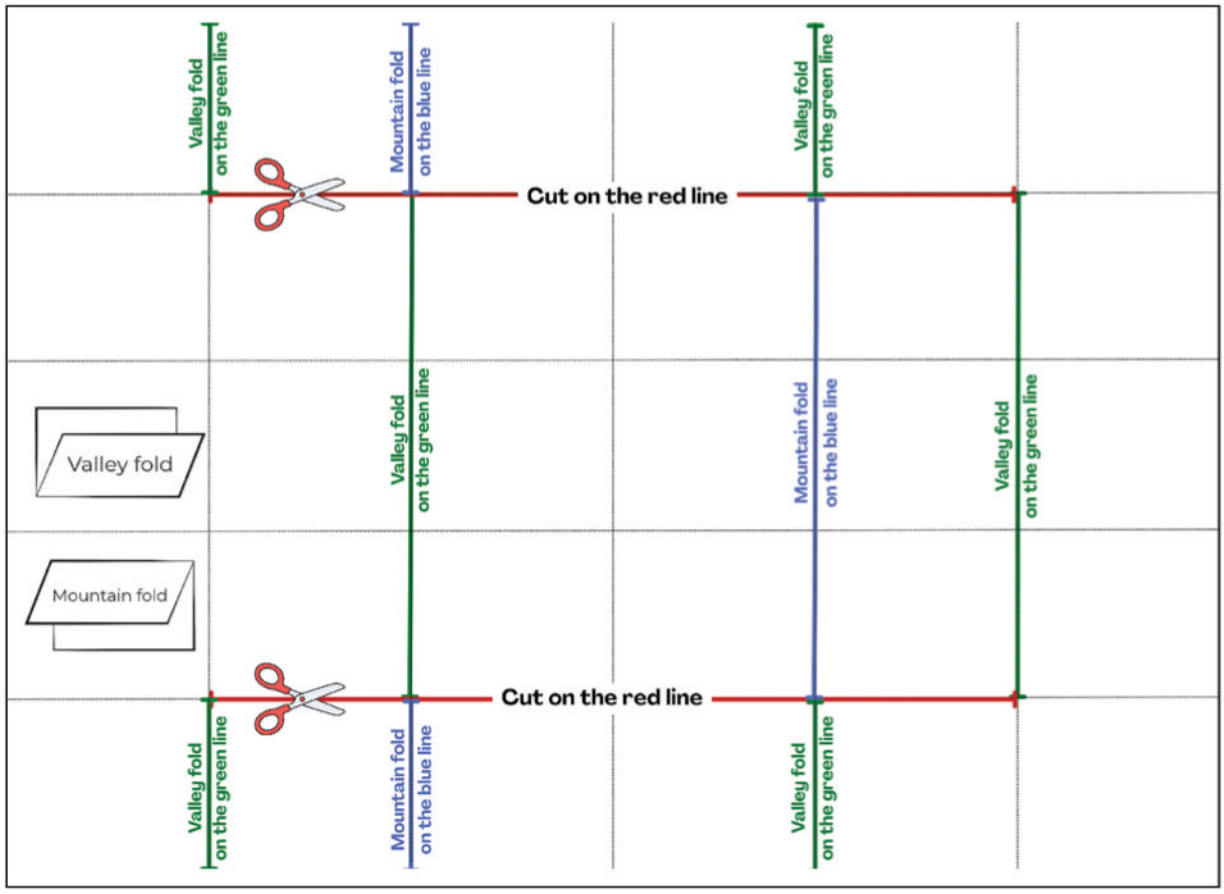


Image 2 - *Follow the colour-coded template: cut along the red lines, make mountain folds along the blue lines and valley folds along the green lines.*

Step 2 : Mark the cuts and folds

Study the colour-coded template in Image 2. The red lines indicate where to cut, while the blue and green lines indicate mountain and valley folds, respectively.

A mountain fold forms a raised ridge, while a valley fold creates a groove. Follow the template carefully, as the alternating folds give the card its three-dimensional structure. Using a steel ruler and scalpel, cut precisely along the red lines, stopping at the indicated endpoints. Exercise extreme caution when handling a scalpel. Children should use one only under close adult supervision.



Image 3 - *An unprinted folded-paper model illustrates how alternating folds create a three-dimensional structure. Practise on scrap paper before attempting the final card.*

Step 3 : Practise the folds

Before working on your final print, practise the cuts and folds on a spare sheet of ordinary paper. Make the cuts, crease the fold lines and gently open and close the structure. Observe how the panels move and which sections project forward or recede. This trial run will help you understand the construction and avoid damaging your finished card. A paper creaser or bone folder helps create clean, sharp creases without tearing or unnecessarily marking the paper.

Step 4 : Plan your photographs and message

Now comes the creative part! Choose photographs that work well together. They could be from a holiday, a photo walk, a family celebration or a collection of favourite images. You can also combine photographs with illustrations and graphic elements. Pay attention to the placement of each image. Keep faces, important subjects and text away from cut lines and folds wherever possible. The coloured blocks in the layout indicate flat areas without folds and are useful guides for positioning photographs. For my New Year card, I have combined photographs, illustrations, a greeting and a personal message. You can develop your own theme to suit the recipient.

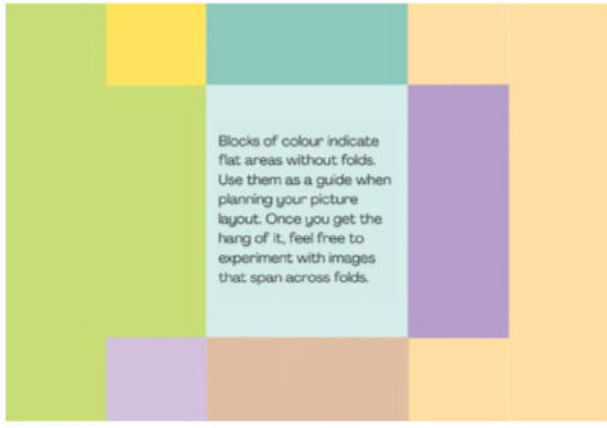


Image 4 - *The flat artwork before folding. Arrange photographs, illustrations and text within panels of the same colour, keeping important details clear of cuts and folds.*



Image 5 - *The completed artwork, ready for cutting and folding. Check that every photograph is correctly positioned within its intended panel.*

Step 5 : Print, cut and fold

Once the layout is ready, print it on an A4 sheet. Choose paper that is sturdy enough to hold its shape yet flexible enough to fold neatly. I have used Compucolor Ultra Glossy 240 gsm for this project, but you can experiment with different papers, including matte-coated inkjet and textured stocks. Check that your chosen paper is compatible with your printer. On another occasion I had also used VMS Imperial Glossy 260 gsm. If you prefer, you may print the photographs separately, cut them to size and paste them onto a suitable base sheet to match the grids and panels. Before cutting, check that the photographs and text are correctly positioned and that the artwork matches the folding template. Carefully cut along the red lines, then make the mountain and valley folds as indicated. Work slowly and avoid forcing any panel into position.



Image 6 - *The finished tri-fold greeting card, opened to reveal its photographs and message in a three-dimensional arrangement.*

Step 6 : Reveal the finished card

Once the cuts and folds are complete, gently open the card and adjust the panels until they sit correctly. The finished structure reveals a layered arrangement of photographs, creating depth and shadows that make the images more engaging. Choose an envelope large enough to accommodate the folded card. A coloured envelope can add extra charm. Write a personal message, insert the card and send it to someone special. You can adapt this format for birthdays, anniversaries, travel memories or any occasion worth celebrating. Imagine creating one with photographs from a family holiday, a birthday celebration or another memorable event.

A little print, a lot of thought

This project shows how a simple sheet of photo paper can become something special through thoughtful design and a little experimentation. As we welcome 2027, why not create a card for someone you care about? Add a handwritten note, put it in an envelope, visit your local post office, buy a stamp and send it on its way. In an age of instant digital greetings, a handmade photo card arriving through the post can be a memorable gesture. You are not merely sharing photographs; you are giving someone something to open, explore and keep.

Happy printing and happy folding! **- Vimal Parmar**

REVIEWS

FINAL RATING

The final ratings given in the reviews are not an indication of the performance or features of the reviewed device in isolation. It is a combination of all parameters including the price of the product.



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Camera Review

Nikon Z5IIC



72

Lens Review

OM-System 100-400mm F5-6.3 II IS ED MSC

Lens Review

Laowa 12mm f/2.8 Lite Zero-D AF Lens

76



Nikon Z5IIC **₹1,39,995/- (Body only)**

The lowest cost full-frame MLC on the market!



In the Box

- ✓ *Camera body*
- ✓ *Accessory Shoe Cover*
- ✓ *BF-N1 Body Cap,*
- ✓ *EN-EL15c Battery*
- ✓ *Neck Strap,*
- ✓ *USB Cable with Type- C to C*



Ashok Kandimalla

After a long hiatus, Nikon India introduced a new camera, the Z5IIC. Photography enthusiasts quickly saw it as the EVF-less version of the popular Z5II. Technically, that is correct, but the Z5IIC is more than that. As for the name, following industry convention, the letter C might make you think this camera is a cine version of the Z5II. However, Nikon says that C here means 'casual'! Many questions also came up about how it differs from the recently introduced ZR, another full-frame camera without an EVF. If you have similar questions or want to learn more about this interesting product, read on for answers.

Design and Build Quality

The Nikon Z5IIC is a mirrorless interchangeable lens camera using the Nikon Z mount. It has a solid build and an excellent fit and finish that characterises all Nikon products. Most of the body is built of lightweight alloys. It features weather sealing and a comfortable grip. The labels on all the buttons are very cleanly engraved and legible.

The camera comes in two variations: an all-black version and a handsome silver-topped one that we received for review. The latter pairs very well with Nikon's silver-ringed SE lenses (see picture). While the camera is essentially the same as the Z5II, minus the EVF, it looks considerably smaller because it lacks the EVF's rear protrusion. Most published specifications don't reveal this, since manufacturers exclude it from the dimensions. The body is made in Thailand.

Key features

Compared to the Z5II, aside from the missing EVF, the rear LCD monitor is also degraded. While the size remains the same, the number of dots has been cut drastically. The second memory slot and the sub-selector (commonly called the joystick) have also been eliminated.

In this review, we focus on the new features compared with the Z5II and the similar-looking yet very different Nikon ZR. Table I summarises the differences between the two siblings.

Table I

	Z5IIC	Z5II
EVF	None	1.27-cm/0.5-in. approx. 3.7 M-dot (Quad VGA) OLED
Rear LCD Monitor	8 cm (3.2") 1 M-dot	8 cm (3.2") 2.1 M-dot
Card Slots	Single (UHS-I and II)	Dual (UHS-I and II)
AF-On button	Labelled as AE-L/ AF-L but customisable as AF-On button	Dedicated AF-On button
Sub -selector (joystick)	No	Yes
Fish detect AF	Yes	No

Table II shows the differences compared with the other EVF-less Nikon ZR.

Table II		
	Z5IIC	**ZR**
Sensor	None	None
Rear LCD Monitor	8 cm (3.2”), 1 M-dot	4", 3 M- dot, 1000 Nit (high brightness), and DCI-P3 colour
Card Slots	Single (UHS-I and II)	Two, CF Express and Micro SD
Mechanical shutter	Yes	No
Fish-detect AF	Yes	No
RED colour science, RAW and codecs	No	Yes
Overall audio and video	Decent	Superior
User Interface	Follows the Nikon MLC layout	Different but simpler
Handling	Hhand grip for single-hand operation	Flat body

The camera uses the same sensor as the Z5II: a BSI 24.5 MP CMOS type. It has a slower readout than the Z8/9, or even the Z6III, so it’s more prone to rolling shutter effects. This is something you should be aware of if you plan to use it for video or use the electronic shutter. The AF subsystem is the same, but includes a new subject detection feature for fish. We are not sure how useful this will be in real life, but it can be handy when photographing aquariums, fish markets, etc. IBIS an extremely useful feature, is retained,

While Nikon has skimped on some hardware features, it has included all the advanced features of the Z5II. These include all the AF and AF area modes, high-speed capture, pre-release capture, time-lapse, automatic focus shifting, pixel shift for high-res shooting, etc.

Likewise, it retains the full range of shutter speeds (1/8000 to 900 seconds) for still photography, plus all frame rates and resolutions for videography. Even internal RAW recording is supported. You can also do external recording through the HDMI connector, though it is Type D and not full size.

The top deck shows the familiar mode dial but is slightly different from the one on Z5II. The user-definable modes – U1,



Camera: Nikon Z5IIC
Aperture: f/6.0
Shutter Speed: 1/50 sec
Focal Length: 60.0 mm
ISO: 5000

U2 and U3 have been reduced to U1 and U2, but a new setting called SCN for SCENE has been added. This lets you quickly switch to scene modes, and there are no fewer than 15 of them! Top deck also has a dedicated button for Picture Controls. The camera itself has 31 presets stored internally. An interesting feature lets you overlay the preset on the monitor to simulate the results. Many Nikon shooters create Creator Recipes (another name for Picture Controls), and you can download them through Nikon Imaging Cloud for your own use. These include many film simulations, which are a new rage among the trendies!

The differences as compared to ZR are far more significant (Table II). Although neither has EVF, the ZR's monitor is much brighter, larger, and covers the full DCI-P3 colour gamut. The most important change is the incorporation of the RED colour science and associated file formats, codecs, etc. In other words, ZR is a much more video-oriented camera, though it can also shoot stills. One feature in favour of Z5IIC is the mechanical shutter, which is absent in ZR and thus restricts the X-Sync speed in the latter. Physically, ZR is more like a 'soap bar' without a grip, lighter and also smaller. In the author's opinion, these two do not compete but complement each other.

Video

Nikon has recognised the need for hybrid cameras with strong videography and photography features. The Z5IIC includes all the video features of the Z5II. It even retains the very high-end feature of recording 12-bit N-RAW (NEV format) internally to an UHS-II SD card. The best recording spec is 4K RAW at 30 fps. The 10-bit N-Log (H.265 format) supports both 4K UHD and HD recording. It has three slow-motion modes, but all record only at HD resolution and in 8-bit. As with the Z5II, 6K video is not supported.

The following is the summary of the important video specifications:

- 3840 x 2160px (4K UHD) – 60p/50p/30p/25p/24p
- 1920 x 1080px: 120p/100p/60p/50p/30p/25p/24p
- 1920 x 1080px (slow-motion): 30p x 4 / 25p x 4 / 25p x 5
- Video frame size and frame rates (for Raw video): [FX] 4032 x 2268: 30p / 25p / 24p; [DX] 3984 x 2240: 30p /25p / 24p.



Ergonomics

Let us start with the most obvious: the lack of an EVF. For some of us, no EVF is a deal breaker. However, we recognise that many photographers use an 'arm's length' shooting approach and will not miss the EVF. In return, you get a lower price, weight, and size. Without the EVF, the monitor is the only viewing device. Unfortunately, the resolution is reduced, but on the plus side, it is very bright and easy to read even in sunny conditions.

Let us come to the missing sub-selector. It was used mostly to move the AF point around, and pressing it also snapped the AF point to the centre of the screen. In our experience, this was most useful while looking through the EVF. Now that the EVF is gone, Nikon may have felt that it was unnecessary. You can achieve the same functions with the multi-selector and OK button. You can also move the AF point easily by touching the screen, but that requires two hands. The front self-timer lamp now also serves as a recording indicator, a useful addition. Other than these, it differs from the Z5II in no significant way. All the buttons are well placed, and most, including Picture Control, can be customised to help users choose the best interface. The grip is deep and helps in case you want single-hand operation (for overhead image capture, for example).

Performance

Since the Z5IIC uses the same sensor and internal circuitry, we refer you to the Z5II review published in Smart Photography,



Camera: Nikon Z5IIC
Aperture: f/6.3
Shutter Speed: 1/400 sec
Focal Length: 190.0 mm
ISO: 800

July 2025 issue, for performance-related issues, viz., AF speeds, noise levels, etc. The Z5IIC delivered, unsurprisingly, identical performance to the Z5II. AF speed, tracking, image quality, and noise characteristics were the same. We tried fish detection, and it worked well. It even tracked fish as they moved in a tank, even under very difficult lighting.

Value for Money

The MRP of the Z5IIC is Rs. 1,39,995/-. This price puts it in a very attractive position compared to other manufacturers, as it is the lowest-priced full-frame MLC body (as we go to press). However, we feel the strongest competition comes from its sibling, the Z5II. |SP

VERDICT

The first question that comes to mind is: should you choose this or the Z5II, which currently has an MRP of Rs. 1,64,495/-? For this Rs. 24,500/- difference, you lose the EVF, a card slot, a joystick, and a higher-resolution LCD monitor. On the plus side, you get a lighter, smaller body, which makes it more portable. There has been some discussion online about the camera not having a second memory slot. We feel that it is more an emotive issue, as we have never had a single card failure over many decades.

In our opinion, the Z5IIC would be a good choice in three situations. First, if you want to enter the Nikon Z Family with a full-frame body at the lowest price point; second, if you don't want or need the EVF (for whatever reason) but still need a competent hybrid camera. Third, it makes an excellent spare body if you already use high-end Z cameras, since it has virtually the same button and menu layout, so you can switch between cameras seamlessly.

FINAL SCORE



Design and Build Quality

★★★★☆

Key Features

★★★★☆

Ergonomics

★★★½☆

Performance

★★★★☆

Value for Money

★★★★½

Overall

★★★★☆

PLUS

- Lowest cost full-frame MLC
- Excellent image quality with low noise
- Good ergonomics
- Good AF performance in low light
- Many AF area modes
- Pixel-Shift shooting possible
- Focus shifting

MINUS

- Not suitable for action shooting
- Micro HDMI port
- Rolling shutter

KEY SPECIFICATIONS

Lens mount : Nikon Z mount (F-mount lenses can be used with an adapter)
Effective megapixels : 24.5 million
Sensor : CMOS (Full frame, 35.9 x 23.9 mm)
Media : SD/SDHC/SDXC (SDHC & SDXC UHS-II compliant)
Scene Modes : 15 through mode dial.
Card slots : Single
EVF: None
Monitor: 8 cm (3.2") approx. 1040 K-dot vari-angle, touch-sensitive
Release modes: S, CL, CH, CH (extended)
Pre-release capture: Possible in JPEG
Shutter speeds: 30 sec – 1/8000 sec, extendable to 900 sec in M mode, B, T
Flash sync: 1/200 sec or slower, Auto FP high-speed sync.
Frame advance rates: up to 15 fps in RAW (in silent mode) and up to 30 fps for JPEG
Metering modes: Matrix, Centre-weighted, Spot, Highlight-weighted
ISO sensitivity: 100-64000
Multiple exposure: Add, average, lighten, darken
VR: 5-axis sensor shift (in camera); Lens shift (with VR lenses)
Body dimensions: 134 (W) x 80.5 (H) x 72 mm (D)

All text, diagrams, and images © Ashok Kandimalla.

OM-System 100-400mm F5-6.3 II IS ED MSC **₹1,44,990/-**

An Affordable Telephoto Zoom

In the Box

✓ Lens
✓ Front & rear lens caps
✓ Lens hood, with lock

Rohinton Mehta

The first OM-1 SLR was released in 1972 and some say that the letters 'OM' stood for Olympus Maitani. Yoshihisa Maitani was the brilliant engineer who designed the OM-1 SLR. The system was based around creating a lightweight, strong and ultra-compact camera. Around the year 2021-2022, the Olympus name was changed to the OM System. The OM-System 100-400mm F5-6.3 II IS ED MSC lens was released in September 2020. The lens is splash proof. Let's see how this lens performs on our testbench…

Design & Build Quality

The OM-System 100-400mm F5-6.3 II IS ED MSC lens is a 'push-pull zoom that extends when zooming from 100mm to 400mm. The front element is fluorine coated to reduce/prevent rain drops and smudges showing up. Build quality is good and the lens is weather sealed (IPX-1 certified). Filter size is 72mm and the lens is made in Japan.

Key Features

The lens is constructed with 21 elements in 15 groups that include 4 ED (Extra-low Dispersion), 2 Super HR (High Refractive index) and 2 HR elements. These special lens elements improve colour, sharpness, contrast and prevent/reduce flare and ghosting.

The OM 100-400mm f/5-6.3 II IS ED MSC supports the 5-axis Sync IS in the OM3 body, along with the 3-stop IS in the lens, to offer up to 7-stop advantage in reducing camera movement during exposure. Do remember that any IS can only help to reduce/eliminate reasonable camera movements and not subject movements.



The zoom ring is clearly marked at 100, 150, 200, 300 and 400mm settings. The ring travels anticlockwise to go from 100 to 400mm. The zoom ring was a wee-bit stiff on my test lens but in a way, that will prevent accidental changes to the focal length. A Focus Limiter switch allows you to set the focus between FULL or 1.3 to 6m or from 6m to infinity. Below the focus limiter switch is the AF/MF switch. Under this lies the IS ON/OFF switch. On the other side of the lens is the zoom lock switch to lock the lens at the 100mm end where the physical length of the lens is the shortest.

Ergonomics

Most users will mention the lens as 'lightweight' – and it is so when compared to similar focal length lenses from the competition – but I would say the lens is 'medium weight' (1320g with the lens collar). After a while you are going to feel its weight! Another ergonomics issue (when using the lens on an OM3 body) is that the OM3 body does not have a handgrip, so the grip of the combo does not feel satisfying when using the 100-400mm f/5-6.3 II IS ED MSC lens. Other than what's already mentioned, the lens is easy to use.

I would like to mention my appreciation, that the lens comes with a removeable collar that offers 'Arca-Swiss' type lens foot. This helps to avoid buying a separate lens plate that attaches to the lens foot if you are using a compatible tripod-head.

Performance

Before I mention the performance, one point I need to emphasize is that with *any long focal length*, while taking shots of subjects far away, you must consider the heat waves and atmospheric haze between the lens and the subject. Several times, even though you do not see the heat waves (shimmering effect), it can be there. The greater the subject distance, the greater the problem. Hence before stamping the lens as 'soft', you must consider this important point. The solution is to shoot before the sun heats up the land (early mornings, and late evenings). During my testing of this lens, I too had this issue. Many of my distant shots at the 400mm end were not up to my standards in terms of sharpness, but I realized that was due to the heat waves and the atmospheric haze. One also must



Camera : OM3
Lens : OM-System 100-400 mm
Aperture : F/6.3
Shutter Speed : 1/400 sec
Focal Length : 400 mm
ISO : 400
Camera on tripod, IS OFF

Rohinton Mehta

Super high resolution shot, cropped

keep in mind that most long telephoto zooms do not perform their best at the longest end.

For my mental satisfaction, I repeated my tests on another day at the longest (400mm) end, using a sturdy tripod with a gimbal head when the climate was a bit cooler. I am happy to say that even at the longest focal length, my pictures were sharp.

Now let's get on with the performance. I shot in the RAW format.

At 100mm setting, at wide open aperture of f/5, I found the lens to be sharp at the center, with just a wee bit 'softer' at the sides. Stopping down the lens by 1-stop improved the center as well as the sides' sharpness.

At 200mm (f/6.3), center and sides were very sharp. Stopping down to f/8 and f/10 showed an improvement. At 300mm (f/6.3-f/7.1), same as above. At 400mm (f/6.3) equivalent to 800mm in the 35mm format), center sharpness was still good, though not as good as with the other focal range. Sides/edges were slightly lacking in contrast and sharpness when pixel-peeped. Here too, stopping down the lens (up to f/10) improved the overall performance. I would say the best range is between 200-300mm.

Chromatic aberrations were well controlled, and I have no real complaints. In case there is any CA, the camera software easily takes care of that.

Corner darkening (vignetting) was observed over the entire focal range, but only when you shoot in RAW. And that can be easily corrected in post-processing. So, no real problem here as well. In JPEG shooting, the camera automatically corrects the vignetting.

Barrel/Pin-cushion distortions could not be noticed with the RAW files, since the OM3 body takes care of that automatically.

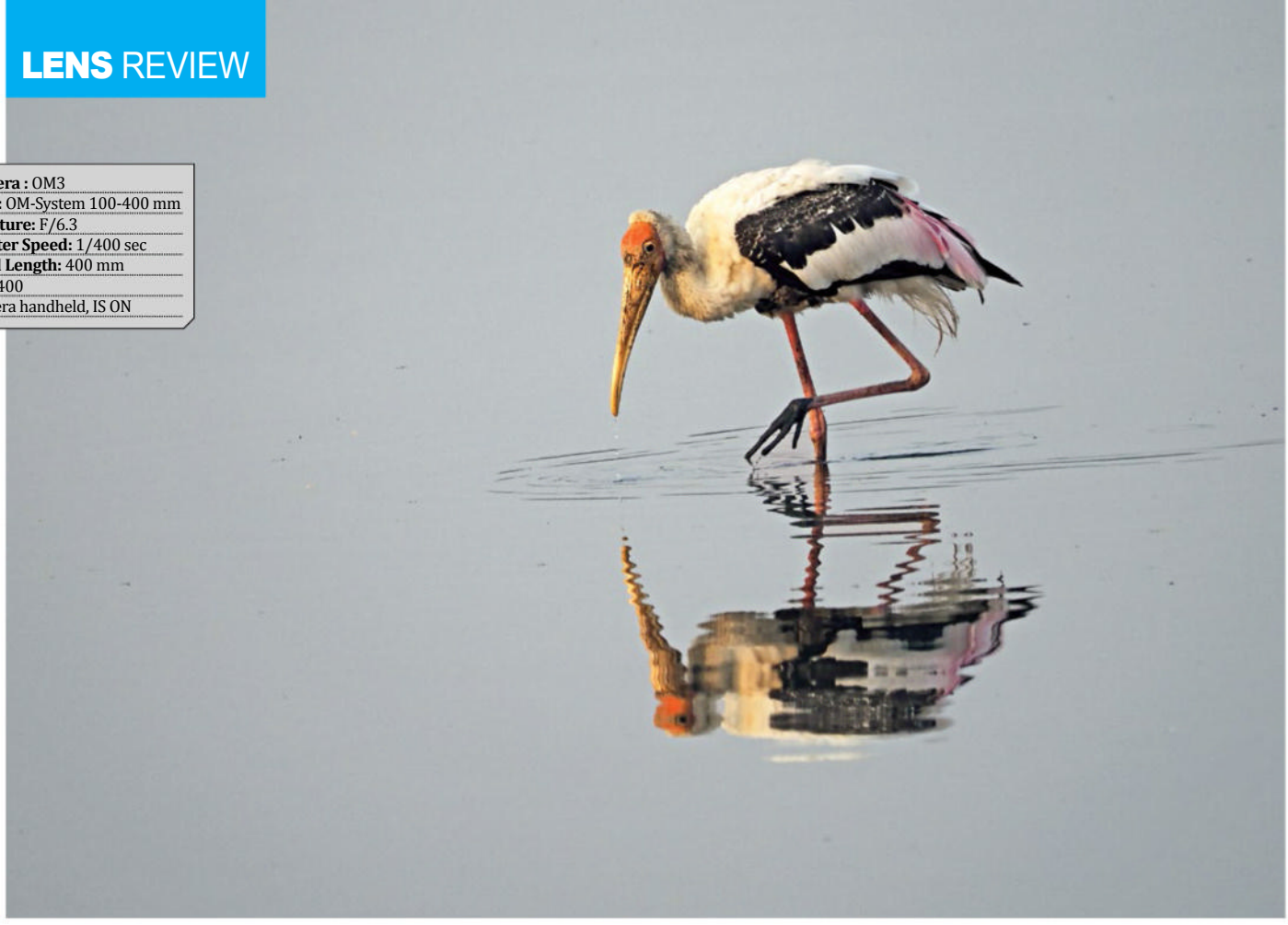
Overall, good to very good optical performance.

Note to our readers: This is a mid-to-high-quality lens, at a much lower price point. It is not fair to compare the performance of this lens to the OM Pro lenses (which cost much more)!

Another tip or two: Try to use the correct focal length lens for your subject. For example, don't use a 200mm lens where a 400mm is needed, and then crop the image to suit your composition. This will always get you a comparatively inferior image!

Shoot in the RAW format for overall better image quality. And learn the art of correct post-processing!

Autofocus was quiet, fast and accurate most of the time. I did have some



Camera : OM3
Lens: OM-System 100-400 mm
Aperture: F/6.3
Shutter Speed: 1/400 sec
Focal Length: 400 mm
ISO: 400
Camera handheld, IS ON

Rohinton Mehta

autofocusing difficulties when using the longer focal lengths, especially with low-contrast subjects. I am not very sure if this was due to the lens/body combination or an inappropriate setting for the AF in the camera body. Overall, a good performer!

Value for Money

The MRP of the OM 100-400mm f5-6.3 II IS ED MSC lens in India is Rs. 1,44,990/- though the street prices are comparatively lower. I believe this is a fair price for this lens. |SP

FINAL SCORE



Design and Build Quality ★★★★☆

Key Features ★★★★☆

Ergonomics ★★★★☆

Performance ★★★★☆

Value for Money ★★★★☆

Overall ★★★★☆

PLUS

- Good to very good optical performance
- Arca-Swiss type lens collar (removeable)
- Easily available 72mm diameter filter thread
- Quiet AF

MINUS

- Not a lightweight lens (for me)
- Lens length increases as you zoom (you can purchase the PRO lenses if you don't want that to happen!

KEY SPECIFICATIONS

Focal length: 100-400mm (equivalent to 200-800mm in the 35mm format)
Optical construction: 21 elements in 15 groups -- includes 4 ED (Extra-low Dispersion), 2 Super HR (High Refractive index) and 2 HR elements
Lens coating: Zuiko Extra-low Reflection Optical (ZERO) coating for controlling flare and ghosting
IBIS: Up to 3 stops compensation
MFD: 1.3m across the entire zoom range
Diaphragm blades: Nine
Max. Aperture: F5 at 100mm; F6.3 at 400mm
Min. Aperture: F22
Filter size: 72mm dia.
Dimensions: 86.4 (D) x 205.7mm (L)
Weight: 1320g including hood, including tripod collar
Teleconverters: 1.4x (MC-14) and 2.0x (MC-20) compatible

VERDICT

Considering the pros and the cons, the price point as well as the overall performance, I would rate this lens good to very good. Best Buy!

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- ✓ *Front lens cap*
- ✓ *Rear lens cap*
- ✓ *Bayonet lens hood*
- ✓ *Warranty card*

Laowa 12mm f/2.8 Lite Zero-D AF Lens **₹85,000/-**

Incredibly Wide and Remarkably Fast!

Ashok Kandimalla

Venus Optics (the official name is the tongue-twisting Anhui ChangGeng Optics Technology Co., Ltd.) is a Chinese lens manufacturer founded over a decade ago. Unlike the run-of-the-mill third-party manufacturers that produce endless variations of a few standard focal lengths, Venus Optics specialises in ultra-wide, low distortion, and tilt/shift lenses. They also make a variety of super-macro lenses and probe lenses. Though a relative newcomer, they have built a sterling reputation. Venus Optics sells its lenses under the trade name Laowa, which in Chinese means "old frog".

This is the first lens we are testing from this brand, and it is unique: a very short focal length of just 12 mm, combined with a decent f/2.8 speed and autofocus. Read on to see how it performs on our test bench.

Design & Build Quality

This is a very small and light lens, with solid all metal construction. It is a handsome lens finished in gunmetal blue accented with a dark blue ring at the top. There is a wide ring for focusing and one AF/MF switch. That's about it. The lens we tested came with the Nikon Z mount, and a Sony E version is also available. The mount is metal and is well finished. A rubber ring around the mount prevents moisture and dust ingress. The lens takes relatively small 72 mm diameter filters. The supplied lens hood is all metal too and snaps in nicely.

Key Features

The Laowa 12 mm lens is constructed with 16 elements in 9 groups. The lens elements are coated to reduce reflections. One key feature is its Zero-D design, meaning it has little to no barrel distortion, which is normally associated with lenses with such short focal lengths. The diaphragm has only 5 blades and is meant to produce a 10-point sun-star (see sample images). A version with a 14-blade diaphragm is available, but it comes with manual focusing only. We did not test this type, but it is optically similar. The focusing is internal, as with all modern lenses. The lens lacks image stabilisation, as the camera's internal stabilisation (IBIS) is expected to handle that function.

The lens's standout feature is its focal length. Though it is only 2 mm shorter than the 14 mm lenses, a plethora of which are available, the diagonal angle of view changes considerably. It is a whopping 122° for this lens vs. 114° for the 14 mm lenses. Lenses in this focal-length range usually fall under the fisheye category, but this is a rectilinear lens that renders straight lines straight. All this is offered at a fast aperture (for this focal length) of f/2.8. A lens with these specs would have been impossible to manufacture just a few years ago.

Ergonomics

This lens is extraordinarily light and is also very small. You can carry it all day without noticing it. The focus ring is lightly damped and has no rubber ribbing. However, it's very wide with two flat surfaces, so we had no difficulty gripping the lens and focusing it manually. Full-time manual override is available, and the AF/MF switch clicks positively and is well placed for easy access.

Lens: Nikon Z6II
Aperture: F/13
Shutter Speed: 1/13 sec
Focal Length: 12 mm
ISO: 720



Ashok Kandimalla

Performance

A noteworthy feature of this lens is the negligible distortion. While not technically zero, the distortion is so minimal that it can be ignored, even for critical architectural applications. The only downside is the vignetting, but that is inherent in such lenses due to the laws of physics. However, the small front element may have exacerbated it. When we viewed the image files in Lightroom, where the manufacturer-supplied profiles apply automatically, the vignetting was manageable, perhaps no more than 2 stops at full aperture. Note that this is after the application of the profile. You can further correct this in post-processing. Vignetting reduces as you narrow the aperture, but it never goes away.

The lens delivers impressive sharpness at the centre even wide open and, in fact, at any aperture. Edge sharpness drops noticeably at the open aperture (compared to the centre) but improves as you stop down. Apertures from f/5.6 to f/8.0 are recommended for the best overall quality. Chromatic aberrations (after corrections) are well controlled and unlikely to cause any trouble. AF speed isn't critical for a lens like this, but it focuses quickly and accurately. We also did not observe any hunting.

Value for Money

The lens's MRP is Rs. 85,000, which is an advantage, though similarly specified lenses aren't currently available. We believe this price gives the lens an excellent performance-to-price ratio. |SP

VERDICT

This lens delivers impressive optical performance, even if it falls short in vignetting. It is compact and light yet has a heft to it, suggesting solid construction. Because of its extremely short focal length, we are inclined to call it a specialised lens that needs care when used. However, once you master the lens, it produces truly unique images. It is excellent for architectural photography (especially interiors), astrophotography, landscapes, etc. It is also ideal for environmental portraits in tight spaces. Paired with modern high pixel count cameras, the lens's extreme wide view lets you create single-shot panoramas by cropping, eliminating the parallax issues that arise when stitching multiple images. Finally, it is so small that it makes a nice wide 18 mm-equivalent focal length lens for even cropped-sensor cameras.

FINAL SCORE



Design and Build Quality
★★★★☆

Key Features
★★★½☆

Ergonomics
★★★★☆

Performance
★★★½☆

Value for Money
★★★★½

Overall
★★★★☆

PLUS
- Ginormous angle of view
- Gives attractive sun-stars
- Excellent price-to-performance ratio
- Negligible distortion
- Compact size and weight
- Solid all-metal construction

MINUS
- Minimal controls
- Significant vignetting

KEY SPECIFICATIONS

Focal length & coverage :
35 mm full-frame, Nikon Z or Sony mounts
Aperture range :
f/2.8 to f/22 diaphragm with 5 blades
Lens construction: 16 elements in 9 groups
Picture angle (diagonal): 122°
Highest magnification: 0.21x
Focusing Range: 0.14 m to ∞
Filter/attachment size: 72 mm
Lens Hood : Included
Dimensions (diameter x length) :
77.2 x 80.6 mm for Z Mount
Weight : 390 g



Ashok Kandimalla

Lens: Nikon Z6II
Aperture: F/13
Shutter Speed: 1/13 sec
Focal Length: 12 mm
ISO: 5000



Remembering Wildlife publishes book focused on giraffes

Remembering Giraffes will raise funds to protect the world's tallest mammal

Remembering Wildlife, the photography book series that raises awareness and funds to save endangered animals around the world, will publish its 11th book, Remembering Giraffes, on 12 October, with an official launch on 14 October at the Royal Geographical Society, London.

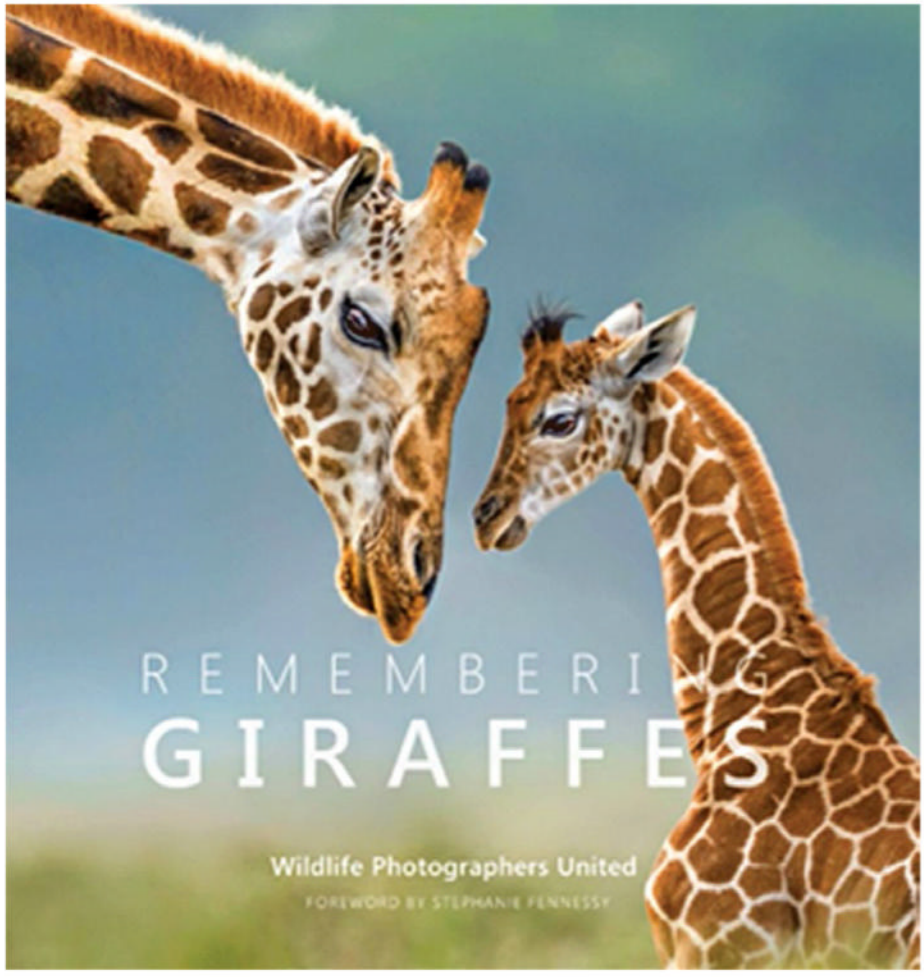
Remembering Giraffes is the latest book in the acclaimed Remembering Wildlife series. It features images donated by world-leading wildlife photographers, such as Jonathan & Angela Scott, Marsel van Oosten, Frans Lanting and Greg du Toit, in a stunning collection showcasing the world's tallest mammal.

All profits from sales of the book will go to giraffe conservation projects.

This year's cover image is by Gurcharan Roopra and the foreword is written by Giraffe Conservation Foundation Executive Director Stephanie Fennessy.

Although giraffes are instantly recognised around the world, most people are not aware they are vulnerable. Giraffes have lost almost 90% of their habitat in the past 300 years and are locally extinct in at least seven African countries. In the past four decades, since 1985, numbers have fallen dramatically – by up to 40%.*

Remembering Wildlife exists to raise awareness of the plight facing wildlife, as well as funds to protect species at risk. More than 62,000 books have been sold worldwide since its first title, Remembering Elephants, was published in 2016. All profits from the books go to conservation and more than £1.28m GBP/$1.66m USD has been donated to 86 projects in 36 countries. So far, 316 photographers from around the world have donated images to the series. Remembering Wildlife founder and producer Margot Raggett MBE said: "People love giraffes, but many don't realise they are in trouble. Most people assume giraffes are thriving but, in fact, populations have fallen by up to 40% since 1985.



"In certain protected areas they have become a taken-for-granted presence to travellers on safari, their silhouettes woven into our idea of the African landscape. Yet elsewhere, smaller and more isolated populations remain fragile and easily forgotten.

"Habitat loss, fragmentation, agriculture, fences, roads and human settlement increasingly divide ancient migratory routes and isolate populations into small pockets of habitat. In some regions, giraffes are still hunted for bushmeat, while elsewhere, conflict and political instability make meaningful conservation extraordinarily difficult.



"The photographs in Remembering Giraffes show what's at stake if Africa loses one of its most iconic animals."

Amongst the images is a thought-provoking photo of a giraffe that fell victim to a drought in East Africa. Another image shows the translocation of West African giraffes under military escort to a reserve 800km away, re-establishing the species in part of its former range after an absence of nearly 50 years.

Remembering Giraffes also includes fascinating insight into the lives of giraffes, including the recent recognition that there are four distinct species, contradicting the long-held belief that all giraffes were the same.

The Remembering Wildlife series of books was created by wildlife photographer Margot Raggett MBE, who was moved to act after seeing a poached elephant in Kenya. With each of the books in the series – Remembering Elephants, Remembering Rhinos, Remembering Great Apes, Remembering Lions, Remembering Cheetahs, Remembering African Wild Dogs, Remembering Bears, Remembering Leopards, Remembering Tigers, 10 Years of Remembering Wildlife and now Remembering Giraffes – Margot's goal is to make the most beautiful book on a species ever seen, using images donated by many of the world's top wildlife photographers. Famous supporters of the Remembering Wildlife series include Pierce Brosnan, Michelle Pfeiffer, Ricky Gervais and Russell Crowe.

To find out more about Remembering Wildlife, click here: https://rememberingwildlife.com/
To find out more about the projects that Remembering Wildlife has already funded, click here: https://rememberingwildlife.com/impact
Each book costs £55 GBP (approximately $75 USD) and copies can be ordered at www.rememberingwildlife.com. |SP



What's in a brand?

Camera lenses

Part II

Hoshang Billimoria

The 1960s and 70s were the golden years of photography. Japanese cameras and lenses had pushed German products into a niche and new companies kept on springing up in Japan producing either camera bodies or lenses or both. The SLR had indeed captured the imagination of the buying public all over the world.

In this article, let's look at some names which were popular in the lenses market but didn't quite make it to the days of autofocus. Apart from Sigma, Tamron, Tokina and Cosina, Japan was the birthplace of several brands like Komine, Kiron, Panagor, Sun, Chinon and others. To make things more confusing, brands like Vivitar, Soligor, and Hanimex were set up outside Japan, mainly in the US to buy lenses from Japanese companies and market them in their own names. Vivitar , for instance, never made any lenses; they only marketed them. The



famous Series 1 lenses from Vivitar were made by Komine or Kiron for Vivitar. The market was growing rapidly and there was place for everybody.

The advent of autofocus lenses brought about a huge disruption. Minolta owned most of the autofocus patents and demanded steep royalties. A number of Japanese lens companies decided to throw in the towel. Even top brands like Olympus had problems initially in producing autofocus lenses that did not keep hunting. Amongst independent lens manufacturers, only Sigma, Tamron, Tokina and Cosina survived; Cosina stuck to manual focus lenses for many years.

What about the German lens companies? Zeiss was the wisest. Realising that they could not compete with the Japanese, Zeiss started selling its designing expertise to companies like Yashica and later Sony. Leica was fiercely independent but had a brief flirtation with Minolta earlier and now Panasonic to whom Leica sells designs. Schneider now sells its lens expertise to Samyang of South Korea. The Voigtlander brand is now owned by Cosina. Meyer Optik went through a series of changes in ownership and is more or less defunct. Today, there are no takers for past brands like Pentacon or Rollei. |SP

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