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Chairman's Chatter

As I write this the clocks have gone back and the nights are drawing in with the result that my mind turns to thinking and planning my travels for next year, as no doubt are many of you. This year, however, I have with the Committee also been thinking about what travels we should be organising for the Travel Group and we have been busy planning a range of things which we hope to run over the next couple of years. Thanks to the enthusiasm of a relatively new member of the Group, Aline Hopkins, a number of trips are now in place and you will find details of these in an article on page 15 in this issue. Aline has taken as her starting point the places that were listed by those members who responded to the Group questionnaire earlier this year. The list was long and varied and our plan is to try and cover as much as is practicable.

The questionnaire results also came up with some ideas for other events that we might hold, focussing on such practical issues as workshops on aspects of travel photography, achieving distinctions, particularly in travel and what makes for a good panel. The latter might focus on why a particular panel did not make it rather than why it did, because I sense that is

what people really want to know. Such events would be held with one or other of the special interest groups to maximise attendance. Details will be available in due course and put on the website.

One of the issues I am still grappling with is 'What is Travel Photography?' Has anyone seen a definition? For a recent competition I noticed that one category was headed 'A Passion for Travel' and then went on to say they were looking for images that 'capture the spirit of travel in all its various guises'. That to me means that travel photography can encompass anything and perhaps therein lies the difficulty when trying to define it. For now though, I shall return to the pleasurable task of looking through an atlas and deciding where my itchy feet should take me next!

Finally, for those of you that were at the Spring Weekend when a collection was made in memory of Anne Minter FRPS, a total of £154 was raised and at her husband John's suggestion this was donated to the Disabled Photographers Society, whose admirable work she much admired.

With all good wishes for the festive season.

Liz Rhodes

**DATE FOR YOUR DIARY
SPRING WEEKEND 2011
14-15th MAY 2011
BUXTON**

Burmese Days

Jane Murphy



Temples of Bagan

Friends and family were divided when I announced that I had booked a trip to Myanmar (Burma). Some were as excited as I was while others expressed horror that I might be condoning the military regime that had curbed human rights since 1962 and suppressed all attempts at democratisation. However, a luxury cruise on the Irrawaddy River with the Ultimate Travel Company promised to be a perfect holiday which would be packed with interesting new experiences and have loads of opportunities for photography. A pre-trip reading list included the Lonely Planet Myanmar guide which opens with the challenge 'Should you go?' I went and the trip lived up to all my expectations.

Myanmar is only visited by about 20,000 tourists per year. It is populated with wonderful, kind, honest people who received us with enthusi-

asm wherever we went. Everyone, in particular the children appeared to be thrilled to be photographed and never once did anyone request payment. Whilst taking pictures of children they would always be joined by numerous siblings and friends grinning happily and then clustering around our cameras anxious to see the resulting photos.

On our arrival in Yangon (Rangoon) we had a restful afternoon followed by a traditional puppet show in the evening. The next day we had our first real taste of Yangon, previously the capital city. A new capital Nay Pyi Taw (Royal Capital) has been built on an arid plain about 350 km to the north and from there the military regime has ruled since 2005.

We visited the Swedagon Paya, which all Burmese Buddhists are supposed to visit at least once in their

lives. In contrast to the surrounding city the 14 acre site was spotlessly clean with everything glistening in the pouring monsoon rain. We walked clockwise around the most amazing glittering gilded stupa in the world with its surrounding lesser stupas, images of the Buddha, shrines, columns, temples and pavilions. Barefooted we took great care not to slip on the wet decorative tiled paving. The central stupa covered in pure gold and topped with immense gem stones is believed to date back 2,500 years. It has been suggested that there is more gold at Swedagon than in the Bank of England! The rest of the day included a shopping trip to the Bogyoke (Scott) market and a visit to the Chauk Htat Gyi Pagoda with its enormous reclining Buddha.

Driving around in Yangon we passed mainly buildings which had all seen far better days. Apartment blocks and old colonial mansions were blackened by algae, windows were broken and walls were cracked, weeds and vegetation growing in the crevices. Guarded by a few soldiers, disused government buildings are secured behind barbed wire while the jungle rapidly sprouts in the grounds. Although the majority of the residents of Yangon live in extreme poverty I always felt safe and when at the end of the holiday I walked around the streets near the Bogyoke market and ate in local cafes I was never jostled nor felt that I was likely to be the victim of pick-pocketing. This applied to my experiences throughout the country.

The following day we flew to Mandalay to join our boat, Orient



Bath time



On the way to the river

Express's recently restored Road to Mandalay which had been severely damaged during Cyclone Nagis in May 2008. First however there was an unscheduled visit to Sagaing Hill on the opposite bank of the Irrawaddy from the city. As the first commercial cruise following refurbishment we were accompanied initially by some of the repair team and later discovered that as we arrived at the airport they were still applying the final coats of paint to some of the cabins, hence the stalling of our arrival on board! Visiting Sagaing was our gain as there were numerous pagodas dotted over the hillside and at the summit we were treated to a beautiful stupa complex. From the terraces there were staggering views of the river and plains below and the two huge bridges which span the Irrawaddy.

Later in the day we anchored off Mingun to visit a huge brick built plinth 140 metres high which should have been the base of the largest pagoda in the world (a project halted by an earthquake in 1838), the world's largest un-cracked bell weighing 90 tonnes and a beautiful white washed pagoda which shone in the late afternoon sun. Here there were local girls selling trinkets including bamboo rulers and fold-

ing sun hats. After we left Mingun we were off the tourist route seeing virtually no Europeans until we returned to Mandalay 7 days later.

We cruised north stopping next at the pottery village of Nwe Nyein where the population is dedicated to the production of huge terracotta urns and pots which are sold throughout Burma to hold water, oil, grain and anything else that can be usefully stored in them. Photographic opportunities were abundant.

The monsoon caught us when we stopped at Kyan Hnyat and the path through the village turned into a fast flowing river of mud soaking even those of us who thought we were adequately clad. At the local school, which has around 1,700 students of all ages from toddlers to teenagers, we were greeted and shown around the classrooms. Once the rain stopped most of the children lined up on the grassy quadrangle for the daily assembly. This was a highly regimented ceremony with the head boy calling all to order, to sing the national anthem and to bow deeply to the Burmese flag before our ship's manager and doctor

presented the headmaster with bundles of note-books, pencils, rulers and rubbers, some of which had been brought from the UK by the passengers. As yet children in this part of Burma do not beg from tourists and personal gifts are strongly discouraged. Later in our travels we visited other schools where we all helped to hand out similar items individually to the delighted children who then sang Burmese songs and posed for yet more photographs.

Other highlights in this northern section of the cruise included visiting Katha, onetime home to George Orwell and the setting for his first novel, 'Burmese Days'. From there we took a rail journey through the forest to the town of Naba where what seemed to be the entire population were waiting for us on the platform. Children galore lined up to wave at us and grin as we took yet more pictures. Then on to Bhamo, the most northerly point on our journey, from where we went by truck to the foothills of the Yunnan Mountains close to the Chinese border. We passed small village communities, paddy fields and witnessed rural agriculture. Villagers waved happily as we passed, often from wayside cafes where they were meeting to take tea. Eventually in a beautiful clearing an advance party of the ship's catering staff had laid out a magnificent picnic for us, a luxury totally out of keeping with the impoverished environment.

A bus trip through a restricted zone took us to an elephant camp in the teak forest. Here elephants



Nwe Nyein Pottery Village

demonstrated how they move the huge logs which later float down river. Lashed together and manoeuvred by barges they form a major feature of river life. Teak is one of Burma's most valuable resources, others being gem stones, rice, and oil. We were the first tourists to visit the elephant camp for 2 years and the locals were keen to sell the only things they had available, a few genuine muddy elephant bells which have a delightfully melodic clonking sound, one of which is now in my home in England.

Eventually we returned to Mandalay, Burma's second city and one time capital, for some sight-seeing and to visit a number of craft factories. Some of the passengers purchased silk and traditional clothing, lacquer ware with gold leaf decoration, marble ornaments and carved wooden items before we sailed south to our final destination, Bagan, the jewel of historical Burmese culture. In the 13th century there were as many as 13,000 grand buildings including over 4,000 temples but Kublai Khan's Mongol invasion in 1287 destroyed the majority and they were never rebuilt. Nevertheless despite invasions, looting, weather and earthquakes the remains of over 2,000 buildings are still to be found today. The surviving temples are seen arising from fields where local farmers still plough with oxen and scatter seeds from old tin cans. There are no remains of homes or the city state which was once here. Together with 3 friends I set off at 5.45am for a cycle ride to explore the ruins at dawn. We climbed various temples for fabulous views and finally spent 6 hours peddling along mud tracks led by a couple of enthusiastic teenagers who were enjoying playing truant from school. At least they had practice speaking English! We felt surprisingly free here although at one stage were aware of a further cyclist who seemed to be following us and might later be reporting on our activities to the authorities - such is life in Myanmar.

Entertainment on board included a series of lectures from 3 guest lecturers and a lesson in how to wear longyis (the Burmese unisex sarong) to be worn at a party in the evening. One night we set off Shan balloons and on another were treated to 2009 floating candles drifting past us down river,

which we were reassured would be collected up the following morning. A puppet show and a display of tribal costumes took place on other evenings. However it was the river with its ever changing landscape, wide flat flood plains, narrow defiles (gorges), villages, rural agriculture, thousands of small pagodas dotted along the shore, little boats, ferry boats, rafts of logs and the river life which were the most enduring 'entertainment'.

As for the military regime, of course we were aware of it but it caused no inconvenience to us passengers. Visas were easily obtained in London and the formalities at Yangon airport were not nearly as rigorous as the guidebooks predicted. The airport officials were more concerned about swine flu than anything else and all were optimistically protecting themselves with face masks. There was a cursory head count as we boarded the busses to take us to the elephant camp and we were accompanied on the train to Naba by a soldier in each carriage. We were told they were 'very friendly and only there to sort out problems should they arise' - they didn't!

We noted that the villages we visited were usually pristine clean unlike some we spied from the boat where plastic bags and bottles cascaded down the river banks in front of houses. Had they been cleaned up in anticipation of our visit? Driving through



Jug and urn

the countryside we occasionally passed the entrances to military barracks but saw no signs of activity. Although the shipping company must have had to obtain permits to take us to certain areas but we were blissfully uninvolved with this. It must be very different for the citizens of Myanmar whose lives are dominated by the regime. Nevertheless they welcome visitors and they yearn for contact with the outside world. How often we were greeted by grinning children practicing their English: 'Where are you from?' they asked. 'From England' we replied. 'England, oh England, England - BBC!' and off they ran.

Sanctions and condemnation of the military regime have done nothing to improve the lives of these people. Cautious tourism giving due regard to where one spends one's money, putting as much as possible into the private sector and supporting aid projects can



Vegetable market

A Libyan Experience

Christopher Wright, LRPS

As a consequence of a wonderful holiday in Libya in March 2009 when we visited the coastal Greco-Romano cities of Leptis Magna and Sabratha near Tripoli and Apollonia and Cyrene near Benghazi, a small number of us made our own private arrangements for a return visit in March 2010, but this time to travel inland to explore the troglodyte Berber houses in the mountains of the Jebel Nafusa as well as to visit the World Heritage Sites of the oasis town Ghadhamis on the Algerian border and the pre-historic rock art deep in the scorching Sahara desert in the south of the country.

The Jebel Nafusa rises starkly from the coastal plain some 80 km south of Tripoli and on the way to our first overnight stop at Gharyan we visited some of the houses of the Berber inhabitants had carved into



Jamran Square and Omran Mosque, Ghadames

the limestone rock. A ramped tunnel leads underground to each house where several generations of the family would live in rooms leading off a rectangular pit, three stories deep and open to the sky. Many have been abandoned and fallen into disrepair as most owners have moved into modern houses with water supply and sanitary conveniences.

Further west is an abandoned stone village on a rocky perch above the plain and nearby is the magnifi-

cent fortified granary store, one of the most spectacular examples of Berber architecture. Built c.1150-1200 it is a circular building, three stories high with a basement. It has 114 storage rooms, exactly the same number of verses, or chapters, in the Koran. Rooms below ground level stored olive oil: the above-ground rooms, 5m deep, customarily stored barley, wheat and dates. The rooms on the intermediate storey were reached by wooden ladders, while a single staircase led to a 1 metre wide walkway at the upper level. We visited another one at Nalut before driving 300 km to Ghadhamis for a two-night stay.

The magical old walled city of Ghademis, a UNESCO World Heritage Site was founded about 800 years ago and comprises covered alleyways, relying entirely on natural light through skylights to access some 1250 houses and 21 mosques. Ghademis was an important trans-Saharan caravan town until the abolition of the slave trade in neighbouring Algeria and Tunisia in 19th century. The revolutionary Libyan government built a new town in the 1980s to rehouse residents which now accommodates a population of 17,000; the old city is deserted.

A 400km drive east on a straight highway across the level desert plain, followed by another



Ben Yaddar



Qasr al-Haj



*Pastoral period (top)
Elephant drawing (bottom)*



Hattia Pyramids, Germa



Ubari Lakes, Gebraun

similar drive for 450km south brought us to Sabha, the largest settlement in the Libyan Sahara, having a population of 130,000. From here we were to make our way south-west into the Fezzan to see remnants of the great fabled Garamantian civilisation and to camp in the great sand seas of Murzaq and Ubari and to visit prehistoric rock art in the stunning landscape of the Jebel Acacus.

En route we stopped at Germa, a small town across the road from the ancient city of the Garamantes, which was founded 2,000 years ago. From their stone and mud built city the Garamantians traded local horses, dates, barley and wheat as well as gold, ivory, slaves and wild animals from sub-Saharan Africa with the Romans with whom they had an uneasy peace. There were once 50,000 curious square-topped pyramid tombs around Germa. At nearby Abrammat al-Hattia the Garamantes had their principal dynastic burial site. Of the 100 or so tombs at al-Hattia some have been reconstructed to show their original form.

Ghat, a principal Garamantian oasis on the caravan trade route from central Africa to the Mediterranean via Ghadames was our jumping-off point for the Jebel Acacus an area of hauntingly beautiful black basalt monoliths and sandstone cliffs and arches. The weird and wonderful landscape of Jebel Acacus with its prehistoric rock art is

A Visit to South Georgia

Barbara Fleming



Grytviken

This windswept, mountainous sub-Antarctic island lies 800 miles east of the Falkland Islands, where it sits in almost total isolation. It was in 1775 that Captain Cook landed at Possession Bay and declared this wilderness a possession of the British crown in the name of George III. We were on a Voyage of Discovery nearing this magnificent island and knew our arrival was imminent when we were asked to have all our boots, shoes and camera bags disinfected to prevent any form of contamination being carried ashore.

Our ship, the 'MV Discovery', had anchored in the bay in the early hours of the morning off Grytviken, a small village nestled on the shore at the base of the mountains on the east coast of the island, which is also the capital. It was a beautiful day with clear, blue skies. This truly is a desolate place, but it is also a beautiful place where brilliant blue fiords cut deep inland,

snow melt feeds the rivers and waterfalls tumble into lakes and where flowers, lichens and mosses abound.

Grytviken has only sixteen semi-permanent residents – mainly surveyors and geologists – who share the island with a huge number of King Penguins, Fur Seals and Elephant Seals. It holds many memories of the days when it was a thriving whaling and sealing station as evidence by the decayed metal drums for storing the whole and seal oil from the rendered blubber. Beached wrecks of whaling ships, with bow-mounted harpoons still in place, all rusting into oblivion, can be seen in this now silent place, but it is not difficult to imagine how busy and noisy it once was.

Seals were hunted towards the end of the 18th century but by 1820 this activity was considered to be no longer worthwhile as they had been eliminated almost to extinction. It was

at the start of the 20th century that the whaling era really began, following the introduction of faster, steam-powered boats and explosive harpoons. Once again it was over-hunting of the various whale species by the mainly Norwegian whalers that virtually resulted in their extinction. Fortunately, since all these creatures have been left along their species have become well-established once more.

Our first port of call on land was to a small museum full of truly fascinating artefacts relating to past explorers, various pieces of photographic equipment and small items of interest found in the area during the last century, including a few relating to 1982 when the Falklands War took place. We were astonished to find that the curator was a young lady in her twenties. She had recently arrived on a six-month secondment from Scotland but told us that she had held a similar position in a remote part of the Scottish



Seal mother and pup



King penguin

Islands, where the climatic conditions were somewhat similar, so her new post held no fears for her.

There was also a small shop containing a post office where it was possible to purchase postcards, specially product South Georgia stamps to commemorate the success of the 1982 skirmish and other mementoes. After leaving the shop we took a short walk to visit the island's tiny church, known as 'The Whalers' Church', dedicated to those who had worked on the island as well as to the various explorers who had spent time there in preparation for crossing the inhospitable Antarctic continent, the most famous probably being Sir Ernest Shackleton.

Nearly everyone knows the story of how Shackleton lost his ship, *Endurance*, here when it was crushed by ice in 1915. He set off from the more remote Elephant Island in 1916 with five companions in a small open rowing boat to make for South Georgia some 900 miles away to get help to rescue the remainder of his team which had no option but to stay behind and wait. On revisiting the island some six years later, Shackleton suffered a heart attack and died. He is buried in the little cemetery where a small monument marks his grave.

On walking along the shoreline at Grytviken it is essential to take great care to ensure the wildlife is not disturbed as all these creatures take precedence over humans. It is possible to take close-up photographs of the King Penguins as they walk across your path to or from the sea totally oblivious of our presence despite being almost within touching distance.



South Georgian landscape



Grytviken

As late afternoon arrived we sailed across the bay to view the Nordenskjold Glacier, a wonderful sight in the low sun with small strands of white cloud stretched across the ice. We were now on our way towards the south of the island to visit Gold

Harbour. The next morning inflatable boats took us close in along the seashore to view at close quarters the

Continued on Page 13 ...

A Visit to South Georgia ...continued A



South Georgian landscape

The Last Dhow to Zanzibar

Harry Hall, MA, FRPS



Dawn in Lamu Harbort

As the wind filled the great triangular sail, the bow lifted and the sea began to gurgle along the planks of the great dhow as it began its voyage. Dhows have set sail from ports along the coasts of the Persian Gulf, East Africa and India for over 3,000 years. Their trade route begins in the Persian Gulf when the dhows catch the southerly trade wind to carry them along the East African coast. Along the way, they visit the Sahel Ports trading spices for mangrove poles and cloves. By March the southward wind has blown out and is replaced by the rainy season, by now the dhows will have reached Zanzibar or even Madagascar.

In May a new trade wind blows the vessels to the west coast of India where they pick up timber and spices before returning to the Persian Gulf in November. The advent of steam and later motor vessels has brought about the demise of the trading dhow by the turn of the millennium only around 20 dhows still plied the route, in 2008 this number had dropped to only 7.

Having already photographed stories about the demise of traditional ways of life, this was a project I had to pursue. I chose to start at Lamu Island which is the most northerly port in Kenya. My plan was to talk my way onto a dhow from the Persian Gulf sailing down the African coast to Zanzibar in Tanzania. Days

went by but no dhows arrived. A port official confirmed a rumour, that the Kenyan Navy had closed the sea boarder with Somalia in response to the problems of pirates operating from its coast. Any dhows sailing southward were now being turned back. I reflected that as only 7 large Arabian Dhows had entered Kenyan waters last year, the blockade would probably be the death nail of the ocean going dhows in Africa.

A Plan B was needed – urgently! As smaller inshore dhows are used between coastal town surely I could still make the journey by hitching from port to port on these smaller vessels until I reached Zanzibar. So it was. I travelled with 20 tons of rice, a shipment of fishing nets, mangrove poles, fish, chickens and a load of sand and cement. It did occur to me that this latter cargo could have been interesting to unload had it got wet!

Dhows are characterised by their large lateen rig which consists of a short mast racked forwards, at the top of this is attached a wooden boom that reaches into the sky at an angle of 45degrees, hung from which is a large triangular sail. The sail harnesses the wind efficiently making the dhow move quickly; furthermore the rig allows the vessel to sail into the wind, something that

square rigged galleons and clippers were unable to do. Unlike modern yachts the rig of a dhow moves in the wind independently of the hull, making the ride both smoother and a much drier experience for those on board.

Sailing is refreshingly uncomplicated; the only mechanical device on board is a pulley block used to raise the sail. This is set to the right of the mast if the wind is blowing from the left, and vice versa if the wind blows from the right. Two ropes hold the mast in place while a



Dhow captain

third rope tightens the sail to drive the vessel forward. A simple rudder/tiller sets the direction of travel. One night while travelling across open, I noticed that the captain had no navigation instruments, not even a compass. I asked him how he knew where to steer the vessel. Pointing to two stars in the sky and told me that he was heading for one of them and that when the second was level with it in the sky we would reach port. For the next six hours I monitored out progress across the celestial chart, as the two stars aliened the lights of our destination came into view as it had for hundreds of voyages before.

A dhow has a working life of about 40 years, it is commissioned when a family who are dhow owners find a young capable sailor and appoint him as captain. The vessel is built and the dhow and captain spend their working life together. Life on broad the open boat is hard; food is normally rice and fish cooked on a small fire at the bow, the crew sleep where they can find space around the cargo on the open deck. On arriving in port, the crew unload the cargo and carry out repairs followed by a rest day before reloading the dhow for its next voyage.

I had heard reports of dhows capsizing and found these hard to believe considering how well they coped with heavy seas', however the 60 mile journey from the mainland to Zanzibar changed my mind. The vessel was heavily laden with rice before the 67 passengers joined the crew of 6 onboard. The dhow sat so low in the water that it left only a foot or so of freeboard between the sea and the open deck, a large wave would have swamped the dhow sending it down. This callous disregard for safety was perhaps a reflection of how low the social status of the sailors has fallen, the days of the proud seafarer are now long gone, these men were making a meagre living by carrying cargos that have so little value that they are not worth transporting along the coast road by truck. It seems that for these coastal peddlers, like the Arabian ocean going dhows, the end is also in sight.



Dhow crashing through the waves



Helmsman steers with his foot!



Dhows at sunset

Constantly travelling in open boats was going to be a challenge for camera gear. I chose to use a Nikon D300 and a D700, although their file size is similar, the D700 is full frame sensor, while the D300 has a DX chip. This meant I could maximise the range of my lenses to carry less of them. My 24-120 and 16-85 zoom lenses were my most useful lens augmented by my prime 20, 28 and 85mm lenses. An SB600 flash gun with diffuser proved invaluable when photographing around mid-day to provide some illumination into the shadow areas. The cameras were wrapped in cling film with gaffer tape to keep the sea spray out but enabling me to manipulate the controls. Along with 4 x 8Gb memory cards, and 4 spare batteries. The kit was carried in a Lowpro flipside rucksack.

Is there a future for the dhow? Simba Ali Sheha the dynamic master boat builder thinks there is. From his boat yard in Nungwi on Zanzibar he



Replacing a damaged plank

has travelled to Norway to look at the way wooden pleasure craft are designed and constructed. He sees a future in building traditional dhows that are fitted out as pleasure craft. These vessels would combine the traditional characteristics of the

mahogany and teak built dhow, with the fittings of a modern cruising yacht. The secret of longevity for any classic design is its flexibility to adapt to future needs: Simbas' vision may be the future of the dhow.

A Visit to South Georgia ... continued from Page 10

abundance of wildlife, mainly many thousands of penguins and their chicks. The young, thought not quite the height of the adult birds, still have not fully shed their original plumage which gave the amusing appearance of scuffy and moth-eaten brown fur coats! Here again was an abundance of seals and walrus lazing in the low sunshine.

As our 'inflatable' slowly meandered on a long course back to our ship we were able to examine many different types and shapes of iceberg at very close quarters, marvelling at the almost unreal shades of green and blue set within them.

The next leg of our voyage took us to the south west coast of South Georgia to see some amazing glaciers creeping their way down through the mountainous landscape to the shore. Our destination was one of the many fiords on the west coast and as our specialist Ice Pilot navigated the ship through more and larger icebergs a thick fog suddenly appeared so he prudently informed the Captain that it would be unwise to venture further.

These conditions reminded us of the early 1900s when a very famous line was caught in a similar situation in the North Atlantic!! At least we had our Ice Pilot and several radar installations to keep us safe from the icebergs around us.

So it was that our Ship's Master decided we could no longer stay in these waters under such challenging conditions. Instead he resumed our original plan of heading towards the South Shetland Islands on the rim of the Antarctic Circle before turning northwards towards Cape Horn, passing Shackleton's Elephant Island on our way, then across Drake's Passage which is notorious for its usually rough seas. In the event we experienced only a slight swell and docked in Ushuaia the most southerly city in South America two days later.

South Georgia is such a special place. We feel so fortunate to have

been able to make our visit when we did, especially as the number of ships that call at the island is strictly limited, as are the number of modern-day 'explorers' permitted to land.

Our memories are undimmed and will remain with use for many years to come, supported by the many photographic records.



Sir Ernest Shackleton's headstone

Portfolio Circle

On the Thai border, the yellow robes of the monks are present as well as the more usual red robes of Burmese monks. We were lucky in Burma to come across this monastery early in the morning with the young monks cleaning main hall.

We had a few minutes to grab these lads before they dashed off to study.
If only I had a faster telephoto lens!

James Frost.



Young Buddhist Monk



Icebergs by Barbara Fleming

Travel Group Plans

Aline Hopkins

Little did I know, when I called Liz Rhodes to volunteer to edit 'Travel Log', that half an hour later I would be organising tours for the Travel Group. Not that I have any objections, in fact, I'm looking forward to the opportunity to go on tours with like-minded people, hopefully to some exciting and visually inspiring destinations.

The feedback from the questionnaire circulated a few months ago seemed a good place to start. The favourite destination for an overseas trip was Iceland, and for a UK trip, the Lake District.

Iceland June 2011

In conjunction with KE Adventure Travel, there will be a trip to Iceland for Travel Group members in June. Iceland offers a wealth of photographic opportunities. It is a volcanic hotspot, a land of extreme contrasts, where the combination of volcanoes and glaciers can be very disruptive, as many discovered earlier this year.

The tour will consist of two one-week trips, which can be taken together, or members can choose to go on just one of the two. The first week will see us exploring the south of the island and will include Thingvellir, Vik, Skaftafell National Park at the Vatnajökull glacier, the impressive waterfalls of Seljalandsfoss, Skogafoss, and Gullfoss, and the original Geysir.

There will be opportunities for bird watching, as well as whale watching from Reykjavik.

The second week will see us heading to the north west and north, where we may visit a seal colony, explore the 'northern capital' Akureyri, and go whale watching from Husavik, where we may see humpback and perhaps even blue whales. We will also see geothermal activity around Myvatn, relax in the Myvatn nature bath, visit the waterfalls of Godafoss and Dettifoss, and then we may cross the centre of the island to the multi-coloured mountains of Landmannalaugar before heading back to Reykjavik.

This tour is being organised specially for us. I am to blame for the schedule (!) as I have been to Iceland before and have tried to put together a varied itinerary which includes time for photographing different landscapes and wildlife, and some relaxation.

My recommendation is to take a few extra days in Reykjavik either at the beginning or end of the tour, as the city is an interesting place. It's also a good base for excursions, for example to the Blue Lagoon, or even to Kulusuk in Greenland for the day.

Costs and the exact itinerary have yet to be finalised, but places will be limited and will be on a first come first served basis. Anyone who wishes to express an interest in going on the two week tour or just one of the two weeks, should contact me at:

alinehopkins@btinternet.com.

Please put 'RPS TG Iceland' in the title line of your e-mail.

Sri Lanka December 2011

Not far behind Iceland in the rankings from the questionnaires was Sri Lanka. For members keen to escape the British winter, or the chaos which precedes Christmas, a trip to Sri Lanka is on offer in early December. Once again this is a bespoke two week tour arranged by KE Adventure Travel and taking in such sights as the Lion Rock at Sigiriya, the caves at Dambulla, the Temple of the Tooth, World's End, tea plantations, and stilt fishermen at work. We will go game viewing in Udawalawe National Park, visit an elephant transit home, and there will be an opportunity to whale watch from the south of the island.

Again, places will be limited and will be on a first come first served basis. Anyone interested in this tour should e-mail me with 'RPS TG Sri Lanka' in the title line



Hevigir, Iceland: Liz Rhodes

travel group

travel log

Publication dates

Travel Log is published by the Travel Group of the Royal Photographic Society three times a year: in March/April, August and December.

Contributions

Articles and letters are welcome on all aspects of travel and travel photography.

Copy for articles can be sent on CD or by email in Word, RTF or TXT format.

Illustrations can be sent as:

- slides
- prints - **NOT** inkjet
- on CD or by email as scans or camera files: files preferably at 300dpi resolution, JPEG or TIFF format, maximum size 5mB.

Please enclose a separate list of legends for submitted images.

Contact Production for further details.

Note that in accordance with the requirements for travel photography distinctions composite images are unacceptable and will not be used.

Unless specifically requested material will not be returned.

Please send to the Editor at the address on page 3

Copy deadlines

March/April issue - 1 February

August issue - 15 June

December issue - 15 October

No payment is made for articles used and whilst every care is taken the Editor, Production or the Travel Group do not accept liability for any damage to photographic material submitted..

The views expressed in articles are those of the contributor, and not of the Travel Group or Editor.

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Travel Group Plans ... *contd.*

of their e-mail. When I have the exact dates and costs I will contact people to see if they are still interested.

Costa Rica January 2013

In second equal place was Costa Rica. I am pleased to be able to announce that Keith and Linda Offord, of Wild Insights, have agreed to run a tour for the Travel Group in January/February 2013. Exact dates, cost and itinerary are yet to be finalised. If you have travelled with Keith and Linda, you will know that their tours are very popular and are generally full up to eighteen months ahead. If you would like to go on this tour, please register your interest as soon as possible as places will be limited. Please e-mail me with 'RPS TG Costa Rica' in the title line to place your name on the list.

Where to go in 2012?

You may have noticed that I haven't mentioned any tours planned for 2012. Well, there are several suggestions, including Libya, Botswana, Japan, and Bhutan among others. I would like to hear from members - where do you want to go?

Some companies are prepared

to run bespoke trips for relatively small groups, so if enough people express an interest in a particular place, I am happy to look into the possibility of organising a trip there - especially if it's somewhere I want to go! Please e-mail me with 'RPS TG 2012' in the title of your e-mail.

Finally, in Britain

As the Lake District was the highest scoring destination in this country, I propose to lead an informal weekend in Keswick from Friday 1st to Sunday 3rd April 2011. I suggest members arrange their own accommodation, and depending on numbers, I will book a restaurant where we can all meet for dinner on Friday evening, then meeting up on Saturday morning to take a walk, perhaps to Castlerigg Stone Circle, and Derwentwater. If people want to meet again for dinner on the Saturday evening I will arrange it. On Sunday morning we will take another walk, finishing early so that people can head home late afternoon. If you are interested in this weekend please let me know, with 'RPS TG Keswick' in the title line of your e-mail.

I hope that members will respond favourably to the planned tour programme, we are a travel group after all, so let's go!



Boiling Mud, Iceland by Liz Rhodes