

TRAVEL LOG

The Journal
of the
RPS Travel Group

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TRAVEL LOG



THE RPS
ROYAL
PHOTOGRAPHIC
SOCIETY

The Journal of the RPS Travel Group

For the past few years our annual event has been attracting fewer attendees so last year I asked those attending if they would support Springboard 2019 being staged at The Lowry in Salford Quays. The show of hands was very encouraging.

My aim was to organise an event that would be different and inspirational, not only in its' content but I also thought that the venue would signal the importance of art in the images of a 'Travel Photographer'. I found two people for the event that are both inspirational and informed. They are young and well versed in how people take and share their images in today's world. Our Society is seeking to attract a younger membership so I thought that this element would be important, not only in gaining new members but also helping some of our senior members make the most of the new communications technologies.

I approached some members to help me understand the lack of uptake for our annual event. The feedback was varied: some said it looked excellent, whilst one thought that it could be boring. One recurring issue seems to be that it is "up north" but a couple were pleased by the change of scene.

I think that the most difficult thing that we face for the future of the Travel Group is what we do that will be of benefit to our membership. I recently attended another Special Interest Group's event and was delighted to see the amount of support and the extent of their programme for the year.

To provide our members with a suitable programme we need two things: Ideas and Volunteers. This is where we can all help. There are several opportunities to get involved by putting yourself forward to serve on the Committee.

Some do not see themselves as 'Committee' people but you can volunteer to run a one-off event or a specific project. It would be great if some new faces were prepared to make a contribution.

I look forward to seeing all you who can join us in Salford. For those traveling from the South It does not need to be a total weekend commitment as it is doable on a Day Return from London Euston with Virgin Rail. Just 2 hours 9 minutes City to City.



John Riley LRPS

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Contributing to Travel Log - Travel Log is published three times a year around February, June and October. Please send your submissions to the Editor, editortravel@rps.org All aspects of travel photography are welcomed from articles of adventures, both home and abroad, to reports of events or exhibitions and individual images of note.

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The Trabocchi Coast of Abruzzo
Graham Vulliamy, LRPS



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Filters

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Travel Goup Tours

Richard Lewis
Robert Akester LRPS



A View from the Bridge

It is time for me to say 'Farewell' and step down as Chairman. One of my new year resolutions was to drop some of my commitments and spend more time exploring the world we live in. So, as there will be an AGM coming up, now seems an appropriate time to hand over the baton. I also feel some fresh thinking is required as to what sort of activities the Group should be offering you, the members, at a time when there are so many opportunities to go out and take photographs, let alone travel the world, with a range of other organisations and companies: in other words, what is the Travel Group for?

I have had two stints at being Chairman and looking back over all that time, I still find it difficult to 'pigeonhole' Travel Photography, which some want to do. One definition is to 'capture the essence of a place' but if you truly want to do that my feeling is that it overlaps with Landscape, Documentary, Nature and Street photography, particularly as another comment is that you should 'tell a story'. So boundaries are blurred and I was reminded of this when I went to see the successful images in the 'Wanderlust' Travel Photography competition at the Destinations Exhibition a few weeks ago. There were photographs of people, landscapes, buildings, activities, and wildlife from many parts of the world, some of which could quite easily fall into other 'genres'.

But in all this debate as to what is 'Travel Photography', the important thing is to develop your own views and take images that catch your eye and enjoy it while doing so. The world is an amazing place and those of us who travel a lot are privileged in doing so, capturing moments that we retain as memories and which may enable us to see things in a new way.

I will end with a quote I saw some months ago on a board at an Underground Station in London that greatly appealed to me: "Life is like a camera Focus on what's important, capture the good times, develop from the negatives and if things don't work out, take another shot". It seemed a good philosophy to me.

Happy travelling.



Liz Rhodes MBE

Cover Photo - Robert Akester LRPS

Appleby Horse Fair is said to be the biggest traditional Gypsy fair in Europe, and has been held in June every year since 1775. Many of the horses are taken down to be washed in the River Eden in the centre of Appleby, Cumbria. This serene couple and their horse seemed to embody the history of the event.

A Passion for Photography

Isabella Bird was 60 when she began to study photography in 1891. She was well known in the English-speaking world as a travel writer with a flair for adventure. She had the ability to describe in the most entertaining and informative way her experiences from life working on a ranch high in the Rocky Mountains, to travelling across Japan on horseback. She always combined the everyday with the thrill of the new in her descriptions. Aboard a ship she might describe removing her slippers at the end of the day, in order to kill the cockroaches that scuttled across the floor, before retiring to bed.

Her books were illustrated with engravings and she was well-aware of the need to make sketches or preferably acquire photographs when she travelled so engravers could use them as references on her return. As she was often the first person to travel in a particular region or area, there was a real need for her to develop the skill of photography.

She credited John Scott Keltie, Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society, with getting her started on photography, as he introduced her to John Thomson, Instructor of photography to the Royal Geographical Society. Isabella would follow Thomson's instructions to the letter; from the equipment he recommended to in-depth study for some years, before attempting to take cameras and chemicals as part of her travel pack. She enrolled at Regent Street Polytechnic and was taught by Howard Farmer and later learned how to make prints from her own glass and celluloid film negatives.

What is very clear is that once she began to study photography she became completely hooked. She described it as an "intense pleasure" and thought that darkroom work was the most interesting part.

Thomson's aim was to improve the standard of photography undertaken by explorers, enabling them to illustrate their routes and register their observations. He stressed the need to understand your camera, exposure times and how to compose and make good negatives, testing one or two in the field but to pack them securely, bring them back for printing by a professional darkroom. When Isabella set off for Korea in 1894, she took a Ross camera, with tripod "one of Ross's best" which weighed 16lb and a hand-held camera weighing 4lbs.

John Thomson recommended that travellers take two cameras; a lightweight camera which would supplement the work of a larger instrument. This was how he worked when travelling in Cambodia and China. However, he was working with the wet collodion process, which required an additional four or five extra carriers for safe transit of the equipment, glass and chemicals. Thomson's second camera was a stereo he designed and had constructed, made mainly of metal for lightness. By comparison the equipment Isabella Bird used was very lightweight and could be carried safely by one assistant. The introduction of gelatine emulsion had revolutionised exposure times and the introduction of "printing out paper" enabled enthusiasts like Isabella to make prints whilst travelling.

She often worked in the most primitive conditions, developing her negatives at night, printing and even toning prints whilst travelling. She described in detail her working method on the Yangtze River in 1896 on a small house boat she shared with the boatman's family and the trackers employed to drag the boat up the rapids between Ichang and Wan Hsien. Here she describes how she passes her time in the evenings after a full day's travelling:

"above all, there were photographic negatives to develop and print, and prints to tone, and the difficulties enhance the zest of these processes and made me think, with a feeling of complacent superiority, of the amateurs who need "dark rooms," sinks, water "laid on", tables, and other luxuries. Night supplied me with a dark room; the majestic Yangtze was "laid on"; a box served for a table: all else can be dispensed with.

I lined my "stall" with muslin curtains and newspapers and finding the light of the opium lamps still came in through the chinks, I tacked up my blanket and slept in my clothes and fur coat. With "water, water everywhere", water was the great difficulty. The Yangtze holds any amount of fine mud in suspension, which for drinking purposes is usually precipitated with alum, and unless filtered, deposits a fine, even veil on the negative. I had only a pocket filter, which produced about three quarts of water a day, of which Be-dien invariably abstracted some for making tea, leaving me with only enough for a final wash, not always quite effectual, as the critic will see from some of the illustrations.

I found that the most successful method of washing out "hypo" was to lean over the gunwale and hold the negative in the wash of the Great River, rapid even at the mooring place, and give it some final washes in the filtered water. This chilly arrangement was only possible when the trackers were ashore or smoking opium at the stern. Printing was a great difficulty, and I only overcame it by hanging the printing-frames over the side. When all these rough arrangements were successful, each print was a joy and a triumph, nor was there disgrace in failure".

When staying at a country Inn, she experienced frustration at night when trying to develop her negatives, only to have them fogged by a flash of light from a curious neighbour who had worked a hole through the wall of her bedroom.

When she returned in 1897 after

spending three years travelling in Korea, China and Japan she brought back 1,200 photographs and negatives. These were used in books and in lectures. Viewing Isabella's photographs today they seem like carefully crafted jewels. The majority are 10.5 x 15cm and are beautiful examples of toning. She photographed places and how people lived and worked. When there was time to set up a shot, the compositions are carefully considered, but often the image is a straight record of a place with the subject set square in the centre of the frame.

Isabella was realistic regarding her ability as a photographer and, she was quite confident in her technical ability, but regarded her negatives as "faithful though not artistic". In an effort to improve her artistic capability, Isabella joined The Royal Photographic Society as a member in 1897

and this provided her with the opportunity to study the "art and science of photography" which she expressed to John Scott Keltie:

"I am almost ashamed to say that photography has become a complete craze. I like it better than any pursuit I ever undertook and if I should ever have time to give to the techniques of the art, I hope to improve considerably".



Debbie Ireland-Frogg



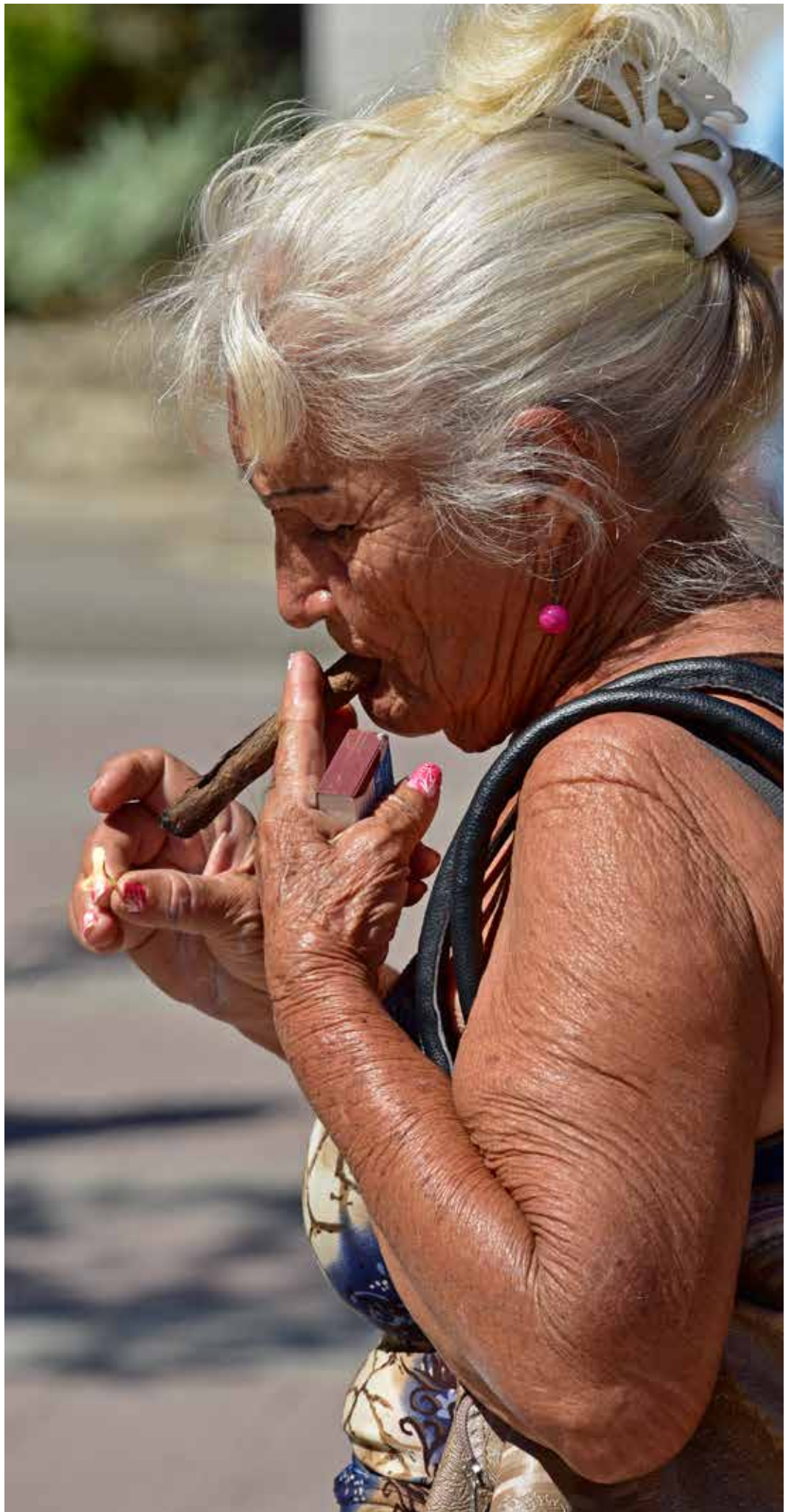
Cuba

beyond Havana



Cigar smoker's portrait

Mike Cook



Cigar smoker

The attractions of old Havana, its fine but mildewed buildings and legions of 1950's American cars are well documented and for that reason none are featured in this account. Rather, I have tried to illustrate other aspects of life in Cuba, it being another of those countries offering an assault on the senses, visual, aural and olfactory. These are not "brochure" pictures to entice you to visit the country (though I highly recommend a visit), rather they portray life as it happens.

Visually there is much of interest in the natural and built environments – there are colourful vernacular dwellings in the big city outskirts and smaller towns and some stunningly preserved grand buildings, contrasting with others in varying states of decay. To the west of Havana the countryside in Vinales is attractive and elsewhere fields of sugar cane and tobacco provide a scenic backdrop.

Aurally the assault comes in the form of traffic noise, particularly in the larger towns and cities. Streets are often narrow, flanked by tall buildings and all those 1950's vehicles have roaring engines and loud exhausts. Cubans are not timid when it comes to the use of the horn, either. Cubans love their music. Almost wherever you go, in cafes, restaurants, hotel lobbies and on the streets, you will find live performances delivering a mixture of music from traditional Spanish acoustic guitar to Latin American rhythms and Afro-Cuban jazz; but be prepared, it's often very, very, loud.

In the confined streets of the cities exhaust fumes from vehicles, many of which are now in their sixth decade of use, pervade the air, though the population seem untroubled by it – no-one wore a mask, but perhaps they are simply not available to buy. Cubans smoke. Smoking cigars is reasonably commonplace, and in one café that we visited a group

of young women chain-smoked cigarettes with the dedication usually reserved for digital devices (possibly explained by the fact that wi-fi access is not widely available and often restricted to parks and town squares). Reviewing my pictures, I was struck by the similarity between a portrait painting in a tourist shop doorway in Cienfuegos, and the lady I had photographed lighting up a cigar in Santiago de Cuba over 600km to the east. Might the lady concerned make a living or supplement her income as a sitter for artists?

There is every type of transport to be found. Pedal, horse drawn, and powered. Bicycle taxis are available for two to eight people, horse drawn traps and carriages are plentiful, and the motorized transport runs the whole gamut from the newest silent electric motor-scooters, through motor cycles, cars, estate wagons, lorries and coaches. American cars of the 1950's are everywhere, as are Ladas, but modern cars are few



Market



Taxi!



Making Music

and far between. A popular means of shared transport is what looks like a cattle truck with inward facing seats for up to thirty-six passengers plus eighteen standing, open-sided with rails and a canvas curtain should the weather become inclement.

Our itinerary (flagged by the tour operator as “for the hardier traveller”) took us west from Havana to Vinales, then in a series of hops eastward via Santa Clara, Cienfuegos, Trinidad, Camaguey and Bayamo all the way to Santiago de Cuba in the south, a journey of about 1,200km. On the way we passed through areas growing tobacco and sugar cane with ever-changing scenery from valleys to wooded hills, panoramic views and coastal glimpses. We took a boat ride through flooded caves, visited an organic farm, a former sugar mill, a market and of course well-curated museums and monuments commemorating the Revolution. The image of Che Guevara is everywhere, much more so than that of Fidel Castro.

Aside from Havana the most photogenic location was Trinidad, a UNESCO world heritage site. The cobbled streets are paved with the stone of ships’ ballast which makes them unusually irregular and uneven, encouraging progress at a slow pace. There is an interesting central square surrounded by fine buildings and many side streets of single-storey, brightly-painted houses. Many of the buildings do not have glass in the window openings; on the outside there is a screen, either of wooden spindles or a metal grille, with shutters on the inside, the combination providing both security and ventilation.

Markets appeared to have plenty of fresh produce for sale but shops throughout were sparsely stocked and people queued to buy everyday commodities, although there is a ration-book system which ensures that basic nutritional needs are met and there are outlets which offer a limited range of other goods at cheaper prices, albeit of lesser quality. It is not uncommon to be approached by residents asking for toiletries, which are in short supply, but we felt completely safe wherever we went, and on the whole the Cuban people came across as cheerful and resilient



Trinidad



Ration-book shop

Orderly queue



Traditional Crafts in Romania



Laura Morgan LRPS

Last year I travelled through rural Romania for two weeks in a group of ten, led by a travel photographer, our driver and a guide. We visited remote communities and some larger towns and villages. I had prepared myself by learning some basic Romanian and researching the fascinating history of the country. I envisaged photographing the vast difference between the wealthier cities, the failed remnants of the communist regime and the poverty of the rural population. I was being totally unrealistic of course! A project like this would require more research, making contacts and arranging complex travel plans. A guide or “fixer” would be essential to translate and help negotiate the country and communities as the infrastructure is not very well developed.

The tour, how was it? We stayed in lovely, little rustic hotels and met a large Roma family and people working in traditional crafts: a blacksmith and his sons, people brewing Palinka (the local fruit brandy), talented wood carvers and farmers. We also visited some more obviously “touristy” spots like Bran Castle. The food was varied, from less than authentic cuisine in a local’s home to fresh river trout and a wonderful lunch at an organic farm. The wine is very good too! We also had opportunities to do some early morning landscape photography. The Romanians we met were without exception friendly and welcoming but it’s difficult to really experience a country’s culture



Georghiu at work in his barn

Emil fashioning a copper mug



on this type of trip. We arrived at each location, disembarked, were given an overview of the people's lives by our guide, were offered Palinka and took some photographs. I learned to wait until the others had exhausted their interest and then tried to make some different images, less posed where possible. The people were well versed in meeting and being photographed by tourists as quite a few tours visit the same few communities.

Many Roma families have settled in Brateiu, building houses instead of travelling but they continue to face high levels of racism. The family we visited are coppersmiths and as is the tradition, the men are named Emil. We watched them at work and then the family danced, inviting us to join in.

Haystack construction in the style unique to Maramures. Typically, the woman stands on top receiving the hay (which is dried vegetation from the field), stamping it down and shaping it until it's almost at the top of the pole. Her husband then gets a ladder to help her down. There is a wooden base which prevents the hay at the bottom rotting. The hay feeds the livestock through the winter months. The forks used are handmade by craftsmen like Georghiu, 92 years old, shown in his barn in Breb. He has been making wooden forks for haymaking all his life. They are very precisely carved although sometimes a suitably shaped branch from a tree will be fashioned from one piece.

The area is famous for its wooden churches, some built in the 16th Century. There are ornate wooden carvings in and around the churches and typically a substantial wooden gate. Many houses have impressive wooden gates (many feet high) in front of their houses and these are still being made today. Nicolas, a Frenchman whose grandmother volunteered to help in Romania after the revolution, moved here to work as an apprentice carver.



Family celebrations

Haystacks unique to the region



World renowned artist Lucia Condrea in Moldovita paints eggs and has trademarked some of her many techniques and designs. This method demonstrated involves painting a wax design before the egg is dipped in dye. When the wax is melted the design is revealed. Wax is again applied and the process is repeated with another colour and so on. It's like working in negative and incredibly detailed and difficult. I know: I tried.



Eggs with trademarked designs

Breadmaking is unusual in Viscri. The dough is baked deep in the oven for around two hours until the outside is burnt. When cool the loaves are beaten to remove the blackened crust and then the loaves are polished.

Blacksmiths Dan and his two sons in Marginea, Suceava County, shoe horses, making their own shoes from scratch. They also fashion ornate iron gates and other types of metalwork. It was fascinating to watch the precision, the heat and no safety gear at all!



Two brothers working in the family business

I would have liked more in-depth contact on this trip to better understand the lives of the people we encountered. The guide was superb and we did learn a lot but it felt very "curated", perhaps because I have travelled more independently in recent years. That said, I made the most of the opportunity; the group were fun to travel with, the guide was superb, the scenery breath-taking and it was a safe and comfortable way to explore a new country. I definitely recommend visiting Romania. It is absolutely beautiful and has an intriguing history and wonderful people. If I return with the right preparation, I might find myself developing the project I'd envisaged.

Breadmaking in Viscri.





Emil



Traditional farming

Dan with angle-grinder, an essential tool



Nicolas, a French Carpenter



Ich Bin Ein Bulleener

I live in the Melbourne suburb of Bulleen. Ich bin ein Bulleener. I even have the T shirt to prove it, obtained on a recent trip to Germany. After the Travel Group Springboard get-together in May 2018, my wife Lucy and I spent almost three weeks in Germany, in Berchtesgaden, Dresden, Nuremburg and Heidelberg. All brilliant travel locations, but let me focus here on our other destination, Berlin.

Less than 30 years ago Berlin was divided. Now it's vibrant, alive and very welcoming. I'm used to 'cosmopolitan' at home in Melbourne; Berlin is the same. In addition, the city is very upfront about its recent past, as well as its Nazi past – as are many of the places we visited in Germany. That level of openness about past ills and wrongs is inspiring – and way beyond what Oz is capable of at the moment.

So, how might I seek to capture this fascinating city? My answer connects with a question raised in Travel Log 79: can travel photography be art? Or even creative art? Of course it can be: why would I, when I travel, leave at home the aspects of my photography that are important to me – composition, lighting and the desire for viewers to see a story in my images? With the world awash with images, I seek to create something worth looking at with my travel images.

Brandenburg Bikes





Berlin Wall

Red Shoes in the Reichstag





Hole in the Wall



Survival

Around the world, some places are incomparable, simply by their unusual and thought-provoking design. Berlin's holocaust memorial (The Field of Stelae, at the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe) ranks with the best. The photographic opportunities are almost endless. Lines this way, lines that way. People in, people out. Fast shutter speed, slow shutter speed. Taller than the pillars, down amongst the pillars. I went there three times. Also, the exhibition beneath it is so well-arranged and displayed.

Politics and history are everywhere in Berlin. Many sections of the Berlin Wall remain. The absurdity of the Wall is obvious, with people now walking or cycling through gaps in it, where once there was a

no-man's-land with armed patrols. Next to Checkpoint Charlie there's a McDonalds store. The Wall has now been down longer than it was in place, all within my lifetime. 'This too will pass'.

The reconstruction of the Reichstag dome was completed in 1999. This has to be one of the great architectural gems of the modern world. And it's free to visit for locals and tourists alike. Just get your tickets the day before. Mirrors, glass, curves, patterns, lines this way and that. Surely it was just conceived for photographers. We spent an enjoyable late afternoon wandering around it.

Nearby on another day a rally of sorts was being held at the Brandenburg Gate, with numerous

Harley Davidson riders (and others) complaining about their Chancellor, Angela Merkel. The organisers were good enough to provide lots of bright, new German flags. So, like a moth to a lamp, I was in there, trying to capture the colourful scene. It was all good-natured and I chatted with one Harley rider (in English) before asking to take his photo, which he was happy about.

Ich might be ein Bulleener, but I reckon that other place with a similar name has just a little more going for it.



Rob Morgan, ARPS



Indonesian pilgrim in Jeddah with hennaed hands



Elizabeth Bizzie Frost FRPS FDPS



The Gaze of the Female Travel Photographer

My passion for travel photography began when I set off from London on the "hippy trail" in 1976, a route that went through Europe, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and beyond. In those days, I hadn't thought about the relationship between me, my camera and my subjects – I was just learning the craft and enjoying taking pictures. The most important lesson I learnt, however, was that if you are friendly towards people, they are generally friendly back.

After I got married in 1978, I lived in Nairobi, Kenya, with my husband and gradually built up a career as a freelance social photographer. When doing wedding photography, I immediately realised the advantage of being a female because, unlike my male counterparts, I was allowed into the room where the bride and her bridesmaids were getting ready. Under the unthreatening gaze of a female photographer, they were all completely relaxed as

they sat in front of mirrors in their underwear applying their make up, and preparing for the exciting moment when the bride would step into her wedding dress.

When I went to live in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in 1984 I really began to realise the advantages of being a female photographer in their heavily segregated society. While men were restricted to the male-only environment, as a Western woman, I was accepted into both the Saudi male circles as well as those of the women. Whereas in the West, brides didn't mind having male wedding photographers, the Saudis insisted that the wedding photographers were women. Having thought I wouldn't be allowed to work there as my husband had signed a document saying that he would forbid me to work, I very quickly found freelance work with a Saudi run photography studio as a wedding photographer. Although the work essentially fell under the category of wedding photography, it also had a great

'travel' feel about it because I was immediately involved in and photographing a society that was completely foreign to me and to which very few Westerners had access.

As the years went by and I began to write travel and other features for a local national paper and the airline magazine, I again found that I had access to photographing women in areas where men either weren't allowed, or could be seen as predators with their cameras. In 1986, my husband and I and our two small children spent three weeks touring southern Saudi Arabia. One evening in the Asir Mountains, we came across a timeless scene of families bringing in the wheat harvest. In the late afternoon sunshine, the men and some of the women were winnowing the wheat while other women were standing by looking after several small children. We stopped to watch them, and took out some biscuits and sweets to offer the children. When I asked



Family travel in Rajasthan, India.

Couple on Jeddah promenade with new baby. Jeddah.





Two young women out for an evening stroll on Jeddah promenade.

Two women in Rajasthan, India





Taking a selfie with graffiti portrait of recently deceased King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia.

Egyptian fisherman enjoying have a camera pointed his way





Men fishing on Jeddah Corniche

the women if I could photograph them, the men, who were keeping an eye on us, immediately said, "No photos!" The women had other plans though and took me aside as an ally. They told me to ignore the men and to go ahead and take pictures. I could connect with them in a way that would have been impossible for a man. Unlike most women in Saudi Arabia, these women were unveiled and wore floral dresses instead of the austere black cloak. Twenty-five years later, this had all changed and when we returned to the area, their faces and colourful dresses were covered up just like the rest of the women in the country.

In general, I found that in Saudi Arabia men also responded well to me as a female photographer. I frequently went walking along the Corniche in the evenings in Jeddah – the long road that winds along the shores of the Red Sea – to build up my own library of photographs of the city. I frequently approached women and families and asked if they would mind

being photographed. Sometimes the women were veiled, but many other women I photographed didn't wear the niqab. If there was a family group, the men didn't mind their women-folk being photographed by a female photographer, but I don't think a male photographer would have been welcomed quite so warmly. The friendliness of the people towards me and my camera frequently surprised me. With the women, even if only their eyes were visible, it was extraordinary how their warmth would shine through. I nearly always asked them for their email addresses and sent them copies of the photographs.

As a travel photographer, it is essential that you like people and are genuinely interested in them. I went trekking in the Karakoram mountains in Pakistan in 1994 with my children, then aged 12 and 10. We came across several small mountain settlements and I found the women were very friendly towards me, inviting me into their humble homes and offering me

tea and freshly made bread. After we had been talking for a while, they were very happy for me to photograph them, and their children.

In 2014, when we spent ten days travelling around Rajasthan in India, I found all the women responded to a friendly approach and a smile. I also believe in asking people if they mind being photographed. If you can't speak the language, a smile and a gesture with the camera, a raised eyebrow, a shrug of the shoulders – something to indicate respect and that you are asking their permission – is all that is needed. And it is important to say 'Thank you'. Now that cameras are digital, you can also show them the photos you have taken. I think female travel photographers have the best of both worlds: men are frequently flattered to be photographed by a woman, and women don't feel threatened when under the scrutiny of the female gaze and accept you into their domain.



The Trek to the Forbidden Kingdom of Upper Mustang

By David E. Ireland LRPS



In October 2010, myself and my wife Carol embarked on an epic 180-mile trek through Nepal [our Honeymoon] to reach the remote and isolated region of "Upper Mustang – The Forbidden Kingdom" which is situated some 40 miles from Tibet. Until 1992, it was a restricted demilitarized area, and now only a small number of people are allowed in per year, paying the princely sum of \$500 for the privilege. There is a checkpoint in Kagbeni where you pay the money and they grant you a 10-day access period to the region. Our trek was organised with Himalayan Glacier, and our small group consisted of ourselves, Abbas (an American), a guide & two porters. We averaged walking 10-12 hours a day, covering the 180 miles in 18 days.



Young Nepalese Girl Tatopani

We stayed in Tea Houses en route, and although very basic, you were always assured a lovely welcome. The beds consisted of wood slats with a thin mattress, but we never suffered with bad backs on the walk. Vegetarian food was definitely the safest option, as the meat was transported in baskets on the backs of the Nepalese people in 35 degrees heat. Noodles and rice dishes were the order of the day, and our guide and porters ate Dal-bhat, Dal is a soup made of lentils and spices, and the bhat is usually rice or vegetable curry.

Our journey started at Nayapul [1070m] at the start of the Annapurna circuit, following the Kali Gandaki River and gorge to Lo Manthang, capital of Upper Mustang. This gorge is the world's deepest, and separates 2 major peaks – Dhaulagiri [8,167m] to the west, and Annapurna [8,091m] to the east. We passed through the villages of Tikhedhunga, Ghorepani, Tatopani, Ghasa, Larjung, and Jomsom on our way to Kagbeni. The scenery at first was lush with fields of rice and buckwheat being grown everywhere.



The Old Palace of the King

Our trek started to get harder upon leaving Tikhedhunga [1480m] as there were 3,500 steps immediately after leaving the tea room and another 1,500 steps to the top at Ghorepani [2874m]. The height climbed was twice that of Ben Nevis.

We had a similar descent the next day to the village of Tatopani [1190m], and after 11 hours walking, we had to cross over the rivers and gorges using a series of flimsy bridges which had a number of pieces of wood missing. Carol had an ingrained fear of heights,

but sandwiched between Basu our guide and me, we managed to get her across these dodgy bridges. This was all part of the acclimatisation process when trekking in the Himalayas.

On to Tatopani





The Phallic Man Kagbeni



Monastery in Tsarang



Village Prayer Wheels



Chorten (Stupas) Syanbochen to Tsarang

Synbochan to Tsarang Chorten(Stupa)



From Tatopani to Ghasa [2113m], we passed "The Hanging Bridge of Ghasa", which is apparently classed as one of the most dangerous bridges in the World. Its mere appearance is breath-taking. From Ghasa, we walked to Larjung [2700 m], where the main attraction here is the views of Dhaulagiri Mountain. An early morning start rewards you with an incredible sunrise over the mountain.

A vast landscape of silver-grey river stones and stark brown cliffs confronted us as we approached Kagbeni, the green lush fields now a distant memory. Kagbeni is located at the narrowest point in the river, and, every afternoon, a strong wind blows through here and down the Kali Gandaki gorge, sandblasting anything in its path.

The streets are narrow, accessed only by foot, and it feels you have gone back in time. Its red-coloured monastery is the oldest in Nepal.

From now on, the red colour will be dominant on the many gigantic cliffs, and most religious buildings and Chortens.

An addendum to the trip was a visit to the Hindu Temple of Muktinath at 3710m, a sacred place for both Hindus and Buddhists. Only the devoted worshippers went into the central part of the temple, but in the Pakaram [Outer Courtyard], there were 108 bull-faced spouts through which the sacred Pushkarini waters flow. Devotees walk under all 108 spouts before plunging into the sacred baths, despite the coldness of the mountain waters.

Back to Kagbeni, we paid our dues at the checkpoint before entering Upper Mustang on stage 2 of our trek, taking in Chele, Syanbochen and Tsarang and eventually arriving at Lo Manthang.

Chele [4,200 m] is reached by a very steep climb, and on the way up you get views of red-coloured eroded cliffs and caves that were once lived in. This part of the trek

has a Tibetan influence, and the scenery gets more barren and the villages less in numbers.

Lo Manthang is the walled capital of Upper Mustang and is graced with its very own king. Its location is on an isolated, rugged plateau hidden by snow-capped Himalayan Mountains. It is considered to be the best-preserved example of Tibetan culture in the world. We had an audience with the King of Upper Mustang, Jigme Dorje Palbar Bista, and his son showed us around the temples and houses of Lo. One such house had a Lama chanting for 24 hrs. This was a fantastic experience and one we will never forget.

We visited the nearby Jhong Caves, one of the best examples of cave civilisation, and Nifuk Gompa Cave Monastery, which is carved into the mountain; both were at Chhoser village.

We had to be very selective with our camera gear as weight is very important when you are trekking

at altitude. My chosen equipment was a Canon 7D Mk 1 together with the following lenses, a 70 to 200 f4 IS USM, a Sigma 10 to 20mm f3.5. A Polarising filter was the main filter of choice together with my UV attached filter. The porters didn't stay with us during the trek but travelled on to our next destination so for them to carry any additional equipment, such as a tripod for us to use along the way, was not a possibility.

We returned to Jomsom on foot and for the first time on the trip, we were caught out in a sandstorm down the Kali Gandaki valley. We returned to Pokhara on a hair-raising jeep and bus ride, before travelling on to Chitwan Nature reserve for a week's well-earned rest.

I do hope you enjoy the images produced as much as we did when taking them. The end of an unforgettable travelling experience.

Young Girl Nepal





THE DURGA PUJA IN KOLKATA





West Bengal





Towards the end of September, as the monsoon comes to an end, thoughts turn to the Durga Puja, West Bengal's favourite festival. For five days early in October, the Goddess Durga, lovingly known as Maa (mother) will be worshipped and celebrated as she has been for centuries. As with most Indian festivals, dates vary from year to year as determined by the lunar calendar.

Hindu mythology informs us that Durga was created by Lord Vishnu to protect people from evil and to destroy the Buffalo Demon Mahhishasura, as lesser gods had failed. She is another form of the Goddess Pavarti, the second wife of Lord Shiva and mother of Ganesha, the Elephant Headed God.

The central points of worship are the many Pandals, the beautiful temporary buildings constructed to contain the idols and the roadside shrines. In addition, several rich families open their homes to invited and local people, which I particularly enjoyed, despite having my shoes stolen. The Pandals are financed by local government, local communities and businesses and by philanthropic donations. In 2017, for the first time, the sex workers of Kolkata were allowed to finance their own shrine. They constructed it in a small square surrounded by brothels – a sign perhaps that the world is changing even in India.

Long before the festival starts the commissioned sculptors and ancillary artisans at Kulatumi, are busily-creating the idols that must be ready for collection the day before the festival starts. A good time to visit the Colony is a day or two beforehand to enjoy the beautiful craftsmanship and the infinite variations of the completed idols awaiting collection. The day before public worship starts, and late into the night, there is much activity and excitement as the idols are collected and taken away. This day is known as Shasthi, and celebrates the day the Goddess Durga descended to earth with her four children.

The idols are made with mud taken from the Hooghly River (Ganga), handcrafted onto a frame of bamboo and straw before being dressed and adorned. Whilst they vary according to the vision of the sculptor and his client, tradition dictates the form. If you cannot be there for the Durga Puja Khumatuli is well worth a visit at any time of the year. Idol production never stops: not only will you see the various stages of idols being made but many completed ones too before they are sent to Bengali communities around the world.

The first festival day commences before dawn with Kola Bou. A young banana tree, its leaves tinged with vermillion and wrapped in a sari “like a new bride” is bathed in the Hooghly and processed to the pandal



where it will stay beside the idols, a manifestation of the Durga. I find this a very moving ceremony held as it is at the water's edge as the sun is rising and with the mist still sitting on the river. Later today, the priests evoke the holy presence of the Durga into the idol in order that worship can commence.

For three more days, attended by priests, the Goddess Durga is worshipped and revered. Donated marigold garlands are hung around her neck, food is brought as her attendants attend as if she were alive. Devotees, Bengalis of other faiths and curious tourists arrive throughout the day and night, many with small gifts and cash donations that are placed around her. There are many Pandals and Shrines and you don't need to see them all. You will ideally need a guide to get around them; ask to be taken to the biggest, the most beautiful and the most interesting. There is no need for a car and driver, use trams and buses, taxis and Tuc Tuc. More fun and quicker.

There are a few significant highlights you shouldn't miss. On the third day, Navami, everyone gets dressed up in their finest clothes. In the private homes, the rich and privileged women will appear adorned in an amazing array of gold jewellery. Together they attend the Goddess putting food to her mouth and touching her to attract her blessings.

It was on a such day in a private house my shoes were stolen – so beware.

On the final day, following ritual worship, married women play Sindur Khela, the vermillion game.

Having applied sindur to the forehead and feet of the Durga and offered her sweets they anoint each other with much hilarity, surrounded by onlookers and photographers. Don't hang back, get amongst the ladies, it's a fun event and they will enjoy sharing it with you. Married or not, male or female you are going to be anointed. Enjoy it!

The mud that came from the Hooghly to create the idols has to be returned to complete the circle. Every idol is taken to the river, some by lorry and some carried on long poles by teams of porters. Most are accompanied by the Dhakis (drummers) an essential and omnipresent component at the festival.

Finally, the idols are dragged or carried and cast into the river. The very large are taken into deeper water suspended between two boats filled with devotees. As the ropes are released and the boats separate the idols drop into the brown water to much cheering. The day finishes with friends and relatives exchanging sweets and dining together. Once in the river, the



city authorities take over. Boats, barges and cranes surround the immersion ghats and workers quickly remove the spent idols to huge stacks at the river's edge as opportunists salvage what they can to sell later. An ignominious end to a wonderful festival experience. There are always a lot of onlookers and young Indian "photographers"

so you will have to be brave to get the best shots. As the river is tidal the slipways will be very muddy and slippery at times, so be careful.

This truly is a wonderful festival and well worth a week to do it justice. The people of Kolkata are friendly and welcoming and at the Durga Puja you will see them at their best.

I have made several visits to Kolkata and to two Durga Pujas. If I can help with your visit I will be pleased to, just ask.

Tony Smith APRS





PLANNING NOTES

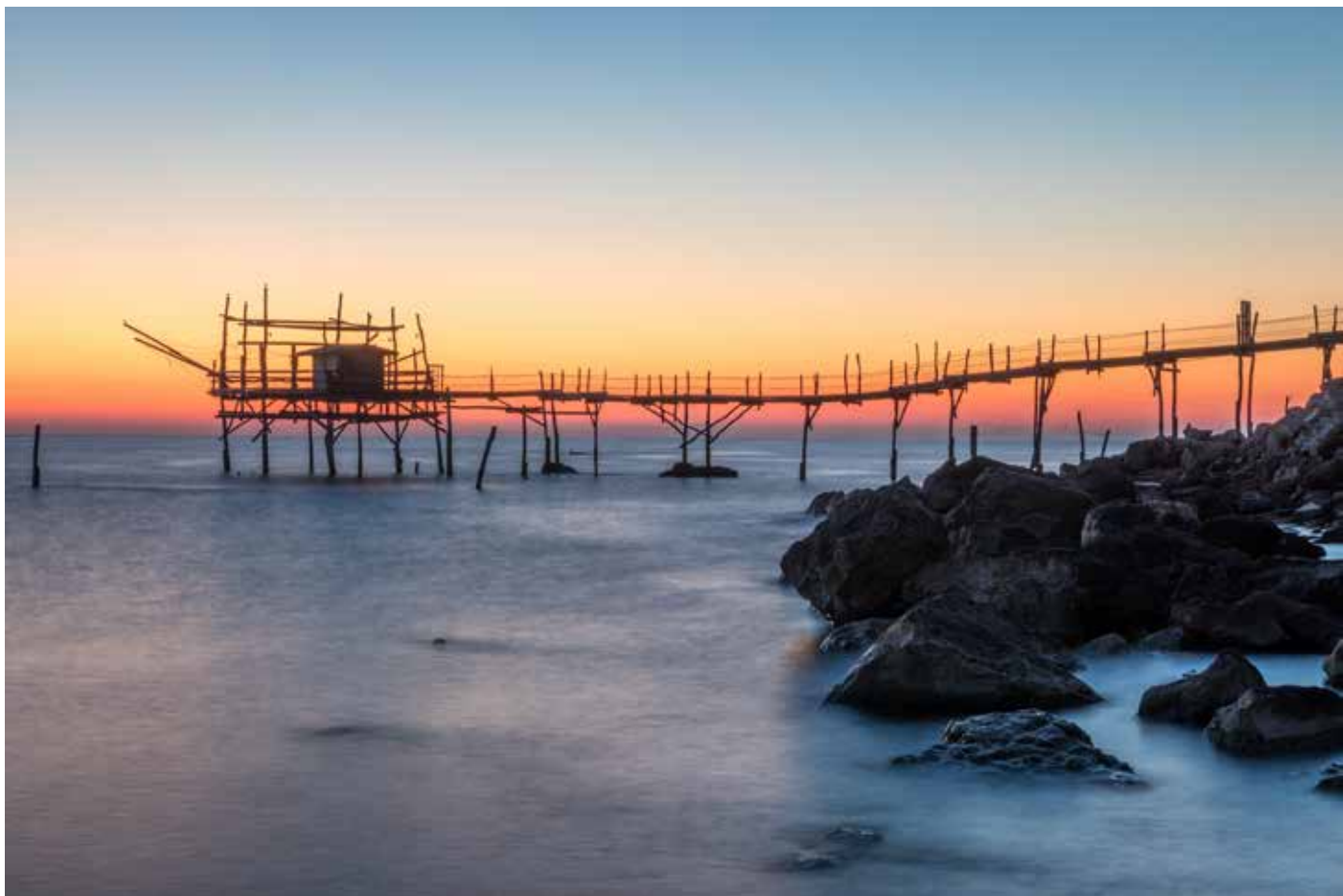
Pre-planning and careful kit selection are required to make the best of your visit and to return with images that record the whole story. Allow seven or eight days for the festival and to visit Kolkata. There will be ample time for sightseeing in-between festival highlights.

Kolkata is well served with hotels and apartments at all price levels, check out [bookings.com](https://www.bookings.com) for more information.

Book a well-connected Hindu guide well in advance as they become scarce nearer the date and plan your schedule before you arrive. I would strongly advise you to make your own arrangements and not use a UK travel company who can create more problems than they solve. Arrive two or three days beforehand to see the final touches being made to the idols in the workshops and when they are collected the day before the festival starts. Visit the amazing Mullick Ghat Flower Market as flowers and banana trees are being selected. Go to the railway stations and see the Dkakis (drummers) arriving from the countryside in their droves, many of whom will perform their party pieces as they wait in the car park.

Make sure your guide has access to idols in private houses.

Remember that if you miss anything it's a year before you get another chance and a long way away. It's holiday time for the locals so do allow extra time to move around. Don't have a car and driver; taxis, trams, tuc tuc and leg power will be best. Your guide will know the quickest way. Lenses. 18mm to 100mm on a full frame will cover just about everything. Use your feet if you need to get closer. I do recommend a wide angle prime with a wide aperture as you will find yourself very close to people at times, especially at Sindur Khela and Immersion. The wide aperture will prove invaluable too in poor light to keep the ISO down and the shutter speed up. In recent years I have found my iPhone to be essential at festivals and other times. There are many occasions when using a camera is inappropriate, when I quickly need a wide angle alternative or to make a movie or sound recording. Many of my best and favourite street portraits are made with my iPhone.



The Trabocchi Coast of Abruzzo

Graham Vulliamy, LRPS





Last September I spent a week with a small group of photographers in the Abruzzo region of Italy. There were numerous varied photo opportunities: mountain scenery and wildlife, hilltop medieval towns (some with characterful derelict and abandoned houses) and working vineyards and wineries. However, perhaps the most unusual and photogenic area was the Trabocchi Coast of Abruzzo, a 70-kilometre section of the Chieti coast from Ortona to San Salvo, a small town south of the city of Vasto.

Trabocchi are wooden fishing huts jutting out into the sea, connected to the land by wooden ramps. They are throw-backs to ancient fishing methods, in use on the Abruzzo coast since the 13th century, as a safer alternative to risking small boats in the often-stormy Adriatic

Sea. A trabocchetto is a complex mix of a wooden platform with long wooden arms extending in different directions and a system of winches, ropes and pulleys which lower and raise a large square net into the sea to trap the fish. The protruding rods and overall form of these traditional structures resemble giant wooden crabs or, as the famous Italian poet Gabriele D'Annunzio wrote, 'colossal spiders'. Despite their spindly appearance, trabocchi are firmly anchored in the rocky seabed below the water surface.

As methods of fishing, trabocchi have been replaced over the past few decades by the use of larger fishing boats and commercial fishing. However, in order to preserve them as part of the region's historic heritage, they have been declared national monuments with special

grants provided to restore, renovate and maintain them. Some have been converted into rustic seafood restaurants. However, I found the most photogenic ones to be those that had been restored to their original form. Thus, for example, the Trabocco Turchino, illustrated here by two of my four photos, had to undergo a major restoration following its collapse in severe storms in July 2014.

The locations of the trabocchi were such as to make them well suited to long exposures. The available light at dawn resulted in an 8-second exposure but I extended the sunset exposure to 151 seconds at f/16 by using a 10-stop ND filter. The latter was also used for the Trabocco Punta Aderci photograph (46 secs at f/16) because we visited it around midday.



Digital Forum Round 46

Laura was voted most popular this month with her image from Romania. Second was Rachel with The Red House and Barbara was 3rd with her image of Hoar Frost on the Bison of Yellowstone

Hazel Mason FRPS



Early Morning in Marmures, Romania

Laura Morgan LRPS

Romania is a beautiful country, with contrasts between the Carpathian mountains and the valleys below, fast changing weather, stunning colours and atmosphere. People, particularly in Marmures and Transylvania, living in remote villages still wear traditional clothing, continue with their traditional crafts and use manual labour on the farms. It was fascinating to watch them build the haystacks in a style unique to this region. This image was taken on our first day of exploration.

Canon 5D Mk III, 70-200mm f/4 LS, f/9.0, 1/160, 70mm, hand-held



The Red House

Rachel Dunsdon LRPS, CPAGB, EFIAP.

Taken from a working cruise ship while travelling along the Norwegian Coast. Taken in March 2017. The temperature was freezing but exceedingly pretty and atmospheric. I liked this scene with the red house on the shoreline.

Settings were F9, ISO 800, 1/40 sec. Canon 5D mark 1V, Canon 70-200mm lens.



Hoar Frost on the Bison of Yellowstone

Barbara Bogacka LRPS

One morning in winter in Yellowstone the temperature was about minus 30 degrees Centigrade. We drove to the park in mist and the delicate light of an early sun. Everything was covered by hoar frost, even the bison. Unforgettable feelings and views.



As shot



Flat & Green



Aged Photo



B&W Landscape

A few of the many filters available in Lightroom. Very much a personal choice. John Riley LRPS

RPS Travel Group Tours

Dolomites

June 24th – June 29th 2019

The Travel Group is pleased to offer a new tour in conjunction with specialist photography tour operators Light & Land.



Renowned landscape photographer Charlie Waite, founder of Light & Land, will lead a group of up to eight Travel Group members to northern Italy on a six day photographic tour of the Dolomites mountain range in late Spring 2019. As well as leading the group, Charlie will provide tuition and advice on the photographic opportunities that become available.

This one-off itinerary is exclusive to the Travel Group and is not available to the general public.

It will be based in the heart of the Dolomites region, in the town of Colfosco, and is timed to capture not only the spectacular mountain range, but also hopefully the carpets of alpine flowers stretching out beneath it.

For further details and to book, please visit

<https://www.lightandland.co.uk/photography-tours/private-view/rps-travel-group-tour-to-the-dolomites/>

Travel Group Committee Member
Richard Lewis - rlewisuk1@aol.com

Brazil's Northeast

off the beaten track among
dunes and lagoons

16 August 2019 - 26 August 2019



Fly into the dynamic port Recife, with its history of slaving, now renewed as a capital of the arts, especially music and dance.

The tour starts in the nearby centuries-old town Olinda, with historic Portuguese architecture lining cobbled streets.

We then travel on to the remote far north of Brazil and the huge Parnaíba delta. Its islets and lagoons are fabulous bird-watching destinations. Beyond are the surreal dunes and crystalline pools of Lençóis Maranhenses National Park.

A traditional way of life survives in the region's sleepy, riverine fishing communities and small coastal towns.

An optional trip-extension visits the unique rock formations of another National Park, Sete Cidades. This is an adventurous trip, exploring by jeep, boat and 4WD.

From £1,373 pp for a triple room, excluding flights. For further information on pricing please contact Journey Latin America.

Travel Group Committee Member
Bob Akester - bob.akester@btinternet.com

the art and science of photography



Andrew Brooks
Photographer

FloodedTunnel

Salford Junction Canal Tunnel
that runs beneath Manchester

SPRINGBOARD 2019

A day of Talks, Discussions & Presentations

Distinguished Guest Speakers

Lucy Dusgate & Andrew Brooks

Exploring the fusion of Art & Science in the evolving World of Photography.

The day will provide an opportunity for all who enjoy producing images that illustrate how we all see our world through our own eyes by using our individual skills and creative techniques.

RPS Members £45 Non-Members £50

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20 Student places available at £20

Saturday 13 April 2019

The Lowry

Salford Quays

0915 Registration 0945 Opening

