



The
Royal
Photographic
Society

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travel group

travel log

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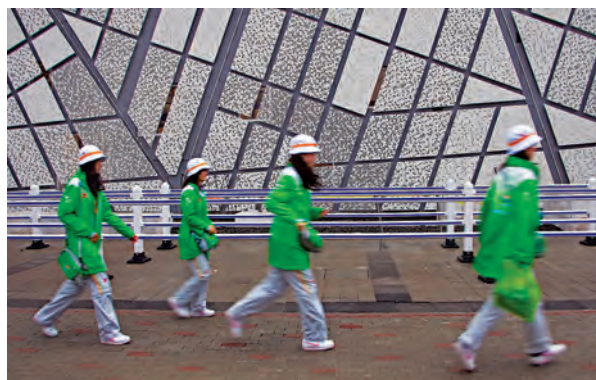
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The next issue:

Focus on travel and wildlife



Penguin chicks, by Andrew Gasson ARPS

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Chairman's Chatter

I am writing this in the middle of June and there is nothing 'flaming' about it as it is an overcast, chilly day, lacking in sunshine. Consequently the light is poor and this has put me off going out for the day to explore more of the region I live in. This is something I have decided to try and do more of following the Group's Spring Weekend in Buxton where we were treated to a range of high quality presentations that simply made me want to go off and see much more of the world!

By way of something new, the day before the weekend started about 15 members explored Cressbrook Dale, not far from Buxton. It was a joy to discover an unknown – to me at any rate – slice of Derbyshire which demonstrated the variety of landscape to be found in Britain. This was also seen in the wonderful presentation by Ben Osborne on the Jurassic Coast, which included poetry and music, not to mention recycled 'people'!

Continuing with the theme of discovering Britain, a successful joint event with the Visual Art Group resulted in learning more about Saffron Walden in Essex. The theme for the day was 'Art Meets Travel', the idea being to see how one might interpret a place photographically from a travel or visual art point of

view. Following a presentation by Tom Dodd FRPS, Chairman of the Travel Distinctions Panel, on what might make a 'travel' photograph and a Travel Panel, people were encouraged to go out for 45 minutes or so to take six images. Steve Smith, FRPS, who sits on the Visual Arts Distinctions Panel then spoke on the Visual Art perspective and this was followed by a showing of the images people had taken. Although time for taking images was limited, it was clear that the 'travel' images were very similar to the 'visual art' images thus proving 'travel photography' can be all things to all people! The moral I take from all of this is that if you are thinking of putting a panel together for an 'A' or 'F' Distinction, think long and hard as to whether it falls into 'Travel' or 'Visual Art'! The day was judged a success and we hope to run another in a different region some time in the future.

But for me, it's the travelling and exploring I like, so perhaps I should brave the elements, whether good or bad, because as you go out and about you never know what you may come across that would make a good image, and so capture a memory or two of the day.

Liz Rhodes



"Art Meets Travel" event held in June, photo by Richard Lewis, ARPS

A Journey to Laos

Nigel Plant ARPS, DPAGB



Reclining Buddha, Wat Chom Si, Luang Prabang

Judging by most friends and colleagues reaction, I gather that Laos (officially the Lao People's Democratic Republic) isn't everyone's first choice holiday destination. Even those that have heard of it struggled to decide if it was a country in its own right (it is) or a province of neighbouring Vietnam or Cambodia. Laos actually gained independence in

1954 and has been governed by the Communist Pathet Lao movement since 1975.

After a few days in Bangkok, the capital of Thailand we flew to Chiang Mai in the north and then continued by road to Chiang Khong on the banks of the Mekong. From there, a long-tailed boat ferried us across to Laos immigration at Ban Huay Xai. Arming myself with a million or so Kip (local currency, c. 13,000 Kip to the £), I started looking for photographs!

Before leaving the United Kingdom, I had begun to think about the one-off nature of holidays, and travel photography. This had inevitably resulted in me investing in (another!) new DSLR just before the start of the trip. Wanting to make the most of my new toy, I had packed 2 more lenses than I usually carry abroad. My standard travel kit of a 16-50 and 50-135 was supplemented by an 8-16 and, just for fun, a 10-17 fisheye. My camera has an APS-C sensor with a 1.5x crop ratio compared with 35mm.

In the past, I have used one of those portable hard drives that you can download flash memory cards onto. But as modern SDHC cards have rendered it obsolete I had to find an alternative. After looking at the available solutions, I reckoned I could buy a few more 8GB cards for less money than some of the hard drive devices on offer and, with some judicious editing along the way, have enough storage for the whole trip.

As always, it is useful to understand something of the culture of a country. The people of Laos are generally friendly although often shy – especially in villages away from the main towns where tourists are something of a novelty. Most people are happy to be photographed, but visitors should always ask permission. If they shake their head, smile and find another subject. Don't give sweets or pens to children in exchange for photographs; it encourages them to beg from tourists. If you want to help relieve some of the poverty, donate writing materials such as books or pens directly to schools. Or give money to one of the many charities that work in the country.

One such charity is the Mines Advisory Group (MAG). Per capita, Laos is the most bombed country in the world. It is estimated that more than 1.3 million metric tonnes of ordnance was dropped on Laos between 1964 & 1973. Up to 30% of some types of ordnance (i.e. cluster bombs) did not detonate and contaminates the ground. Affecting a quar-



Girl on the bank of the Nam Ou River

ter of all villages in Laos, this unexploded ordnance (UXO) contamination keeps people poor by preventing them from using land. It is one of the prime factors limiting long-term development in Laos. MAG trains local people to clear UXO safely. In 2008, MAG located and destroyed 98,061 items of UXO clearing 3,763,582 square metres of land.

From the border at Ban Huay Xai we travelled by east by road to Nong Khiaw via Luang Namtha and then by riverboat along the Nam Ou river to the picturesque town of Luang Prabang. Next stop was the mysterious Plain of Jars at Phonsovan. No one really knows how old the jars are (the largest of which weigh about 6 tons and measure 4 metres high) or what they were used for, although there are plenty of theories.

A short flight from Phonsovan took us to the capital, Vientiane. The French transliteration is a hangover from the colonial past and is actually pronounced Wiang Chan.

After another flight to Pakse in the south we transferred first to a bus and then to a small boat for the journey to Don Khong, an island in the Mekong. A trip in small boats gave us the opportunity to see the rare Irawaddy dolphins near the Cambodian border, but sadly too far away for photos. We also saw remnants of the old French colonial railway, built to transport goods around the treacherous Mekong rapids. Our final night in Laos was spent at a picturesque hotel near a waterfall at Tad Lo.

We travelled with Explore - www.explore.co.uk. To learn more about UXO clearance go to: www.maginternational.org/laopdr.

My own website will be updated with pictures from the trip as I process them - my website address is:

www.imageplant.co.uk



Tak Bat ceremony, Luang Prabang



Young Monks, Don Khong



Food stall near Tat Kuang Si waterfall

The World Expo, Shanghai China

Rosemary Willman

Hon FRPS



As President of The Society I received an invitation to be a selector for the 10th Shanghai International Photographic Art Exhibition. For two of the days we were provided with tickets to the Shanghai World Expo which had opened the previous week. The theme was *"Better City, Better Life"*. Unfortunately, both days were overcast, with constant drizzle on one day. Moving around the huge site was easy but there were queues of many hours for the more interesting pavilions. I spent my time mostly outside and on the second day sped directly to the UK pavilion, which was getting very good press.

I showed some images from my visit at the Spring Weekend, as an unscheduled Soapbox slot. Here I

have tried to select some images with a travel bias but all have a personal stamp on them and have three themes: the staff, the visitors and the UK Seed Pavilion.

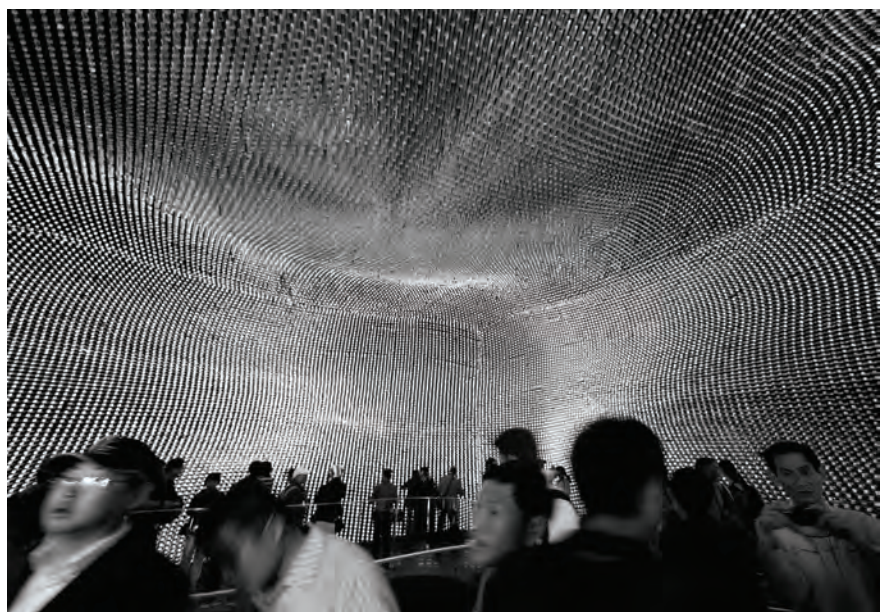
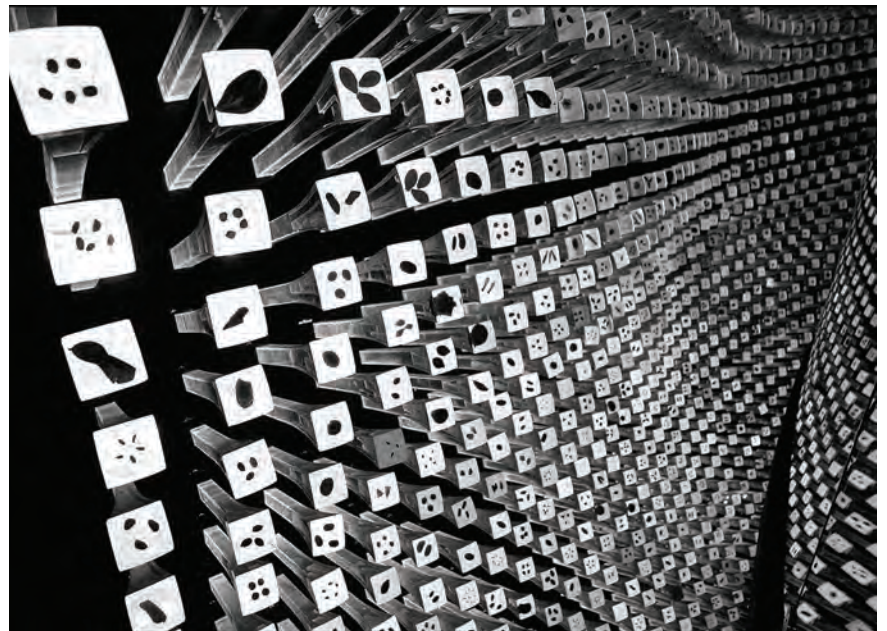
The staff and visitors speak for themselves but the Seed Cathedral deserves some background.

Built of 60,000 glass rods built into a framework the tip of each rod had seeds from the Royal Botanical Garden's Seed Bank at Kew. The glass rods are about 3 cm across and are designed to bring the colour of the sky into the cathedral, but not on a grey day! The only colour provided was the people and their clothes, producing what appeared to be digital artefacts in the images, hence the use of monochrome. The Seed

Cathedral was being heralded as the best in show, although it did not hit the headlines in the UK. I have discovered that the glass rods have now been distributed to thousands of schools in China and the UK, apparently as a memento of the Expo. An opportunity missed - I wish it could have been reassembled in the UK, perhaps as a wonderful addition to Kew Gardens or London 2012.

My visit extended to Hong Kong and Singapore following an invitation to a series of outdoor concerts in Hong Kong accompanied by images, an unusual form of AV presentation. This tour was at no cost to The Society and I was able to promote the RPS and meet with members in both Hong Kong and Singapore.





Spring Weekend Photographic Competition



Joan Wakelin Trophy and Gold Medal "Ice Cold in Harbin"
by Neil Harris



Bronze Medal "Tak Lo primary School"
by Nigel Plant ARPS, DPAGB

Commended Entries as follows:

Clouds above Rum from Eigg by John Speller (top panel above)
... and clockwise on opposite page:

A foggy night in Sapa by Trevor Davenport, ARPS

Camel Boy, Ladakh, India by Richard W Lewis

Khardong La Pass, Ladakh, India by Richard W Lewis

Icelandic Farm – Midsummer Night by Nigel Ready, ARPS

Cuba – What the revolution did for me – by Andrew Gasson, ARPS

Cheetahs at Buffalo Springs by Michael Huggan, ARPS

Antartica by Andrew Gasson, ARPS

Tarn Hows, the Lake District by Helen Shipley, LRPS

Coast, Northern Iceland by Nigel Ready, ARPS



Across Bhutan

Aline Hopkins



Young monk, Tongsa Dzong

Bhutan is a small kingdom which nestles in the Himalayas between India and Tibet.

Independent since the 8th century, this Buddhist nation strives to preserve its ancient traditions and lifestyle. Protected by mountains to the north and jungle to the south, there have been few outside influences on Bhutan's culture until relatively recently.

Bhutan is entering the 21st century with care. Visitor numbers are limited, televisions are rare, yet even monks carry mobile phones! Happiness is regarded as being of greater importance than any economic measure, and judging by the smiles and greetings which welcome visitors, this seems to work well.

Flying from Kathmandu to Paro gives marvellous views of the spectacular mountains of the Himalayas: Everest, K2, Kanchenjunga, Lhotse, to name but a few.

I was lucky to be in Paro during the previous King's birthday celebrations. People came into town from the surrounding areas, all wearing their finest outfits. Tents were erected in a large field and chairs set out for the local dignitaries. School children paraded and sang, and monks performed traditional dances. Families picnicked on the grass and children clamoured to have their photographs taken by unsuspecting tourists.

Paro is also a good place to see an archery contest. Archery is popular in Bhutan, and is taken very seri-

ously, though watching the way the contestants try to distract their opponents, and the singing and dancing which goes on between changes of ends, you wouldn't think so!

Close to Paro is the much-photographed Tiger's Nest Monastery, which clings perilously to the cliffs high upon a hillside. My main memory from here however, is of a minibus arriving in the car park carrying a group of young monks, who asked me to take group photos using each of their cameras. It took a while!

Buddhism is a key part of life in Bhutan. Almost every town and village has a monastery or dzong. Thimpu, the capital, has the impressive Tasichoedzong, which is the administrative centre as well as a monastery.

East of Thimpu, mountain passes give incredible views over snow-capped mountain ranges and lead to picturesque towns and villages where the traditional way of life remains largely unchanged.

Chillies and radishes are put out to dry in the sun, farmers tend to their fields, and women carry huge bales of straw down the mountain sides to be threshed by hand.

At Punakha Dzong, I watched in trepidation as painters clambered around on the roof of this very large building. In the courtyard, young monks played games on the paving stones while chickens strutted around them.

Across the Black Mountains, in the Phobjikha Valley, lies Gantey,



Girl carrying straw bale

home to the rare Tibetan black-necked crane, which over-winters here. The road east goes over the Chele La, which leads to Tongsa, and over the Yutong La to Jakar, both towns with impressive dzongs.

The roads throughout Bhutan can be quite scary. In one place a landslip had wiped out the road altogether, but vehicles still made their way across the slope, ignoring the precipitous drop! Elsewhere the road has been hewn out of the mountain side, and the overhanging rock gives one the impression of being in a tunnel.

From Jakar the road goes across the high Thumsing La and descends into Mongar. In November or December, the towns of Mongar, Trashigang and Wamrong all hold tsechus (festivals).

People come to the tsechus from surrounding areas, to watch as the monks perform such dances as the dance of the black hats, the stag dance, the drum dance Dramitse ngacham, the dance of the sixteen divinities, and the dance of the three kings of Ging.

Accompanied by horns and drums, the barefoot monks, dressed in colourful outfits and face masks, jump and swirl around the court-

yards of the dzongs. Each dance tells a particular story related to Buddhist beliefs. Trashigang Dzong has a fairly small central courtyard and I gasped for breath as I was caught up in the crowds trying to make their way in.

On the first day, I saw a thongdrol – a kind of large tapestry, of great religious significance, hanging at one side of the courtyard. It is only hung for a short time so that it does not fade in the sun.

At Wamrong the local people were more interested in looking at the tourists than at the dancers. It seems that tourists are a novelty here! Many people were eager to have their photographs taken, just to see themselves on a camera screen.

All too quickly my journey was over. I waited in line at a small bungalow at the border with India..



Dancing monk at Mongar

Inside, a man interviewed each person in turn, looked at their passport, and entered the details into a large book.

India, with its colour, noise and chaos awaited. But that's another



Punakha Dzong

KNOYDART, AUTUMN 2010

A visit by Members of the
Royal Photographic Society
Travel Group

Several members of the Travel Group joined Colin Prior on a photographic trip to Doune, situated at the tip of the Knoydart peninsular on the western edge of mainland Scotland. Doune is a hamlet of four houses, a lodge and an accommodation cabin, in which our party slept, situated in one of the wildest and remotest parts of the British Isles with no road access.

Most of the party travelled on the scenic West Highland Railway from Glasgow to Mallaig, past lochs, round mountains, through tunnels, over viaducts, along valleys and through mist and cloud, five and a half hours of spectacular beauty.

On arrival at Mallaig we were met by Colin accompanied by Andy Tibbets with his boat the *Mary Doune*. We came to know

Andy and *Mary Doune* well as they transported us with impressive skill and great enthusiasm on our daily trips to the nearby islands and lochs.

The photographs our members took can tell their own story. For the record we visited Loch Hourn, the small village of Inverie on the Knoydart shore of Loch Nevis, the Isle of Eigg with stunning views of Rum from Laig Bay; Loch Scavaig on Skye where there is a large colony of common seals, and Loch Coruisk surrounded by the peaks of the Cullin; the Sandaig Islands and the Isle of Canna. The weather was mixed but only on the last day were we unable to land anywhere. We had no rain until a deluge arrived just as we were leaving. I shall let the comments made by the various members speak for themselves:

"Colin was so inspiring and the resulting photographs make it difficult to narrow it down to just six;"

"The holiday was a huge success and everyone at Doune got on very well together. The group were all good fun and excellent photographers;"

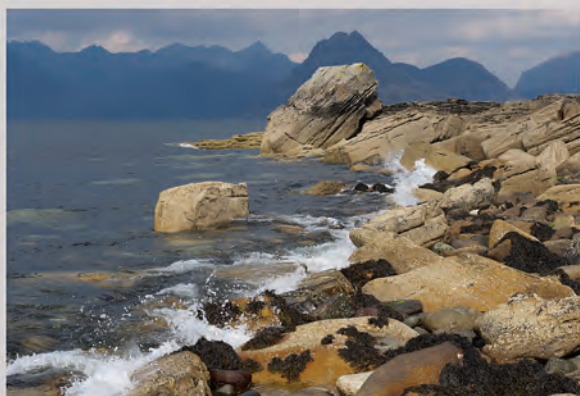
"I had a most enjoyable week at Doune and thanks to the Scottish weather I improved my cloud photography. On return I

put the camera in the airing cupboard to dry it out, which I believe is typical upon a return from western Scotland. The whole holiday went very well and was truly harmonious and enjoyable. Colin Prior was very helpful;"

"For me the entire trip was a very enjoyable adventure. Our tutor, Colin, did an admirable job both as instructor and host, his friendly approach coupled with his knowledge of places to visit I found inspiring. The boat trips with Andy at the helm were most invigorating. The restaurant and food were of exceptionally high standard, all served by friendly staff;"

"We had one wet day a couple of dull overcast days and the rest were fine. No major midge problems just one evening when we had to land at Doune by dinghy as spring tides had flooded the pier. Good food - lodge could be a bit noisy, bedrooms a bit small and no private facilities but comfortable lounge and kitchen made up for that".

"...interesting mix of people ranging from a University professor at Oxford, an Irish Church of Scotland Minister, and young American woman - everyone got on well and seemed to enjoy it."



Elgol, Isle of Skye by Jonathan Ratnage



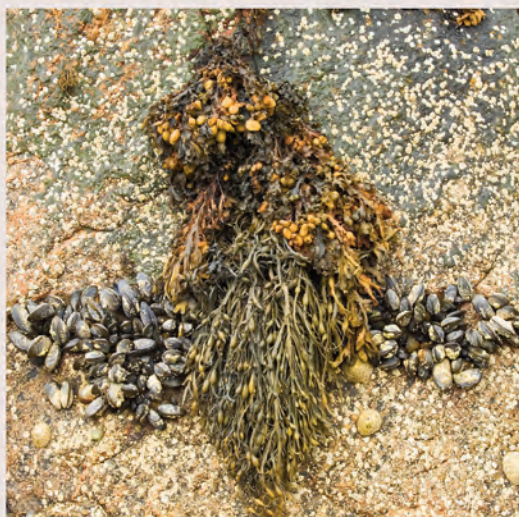
Wake of the Mary Doune & the Cullin, Skye
by John Keighley LRPS



Loch Coriusk & Cullins, Skye, by *Stan Saunders ARPS*



Loch Hourn, by *Jane Murphy*



Kelp & Mussels, by *John Cucksey ARPS*



Beach Pebble, Isle of Rum by *Keith Pointon LRPS*



St.Edwards Sanday,Isle of Canna by *Stan Saunders ARPS*



Grave circle, Isle of Muck by *John Keighley LRPS*



Rum from Bay of Laig, Eigg by *John Cucksey ARPS*



Rum from Bay of Laig by *Keith Pointon LRPS*



View Isle of Eigg by *Jonathan Ratnage*



Weathered cliff face, Elgol by *John Speller*



Reflection on Isle of Muck by *Jane Murphy*



Cows on beach, Bay of Laig by *John Speller*

The Open University Course for Digital Photographers

Andrew Seabourne Evans

Members may be interested in enrolling on the Open University's T189 Digital Photography course which starts in October - this will be the last time this popular online course is offered. The practical ten week programme is studied over the internet and aims to have you photographing varied subjects each week. Studying this way two years ago opened my eyes to the great benefits offered by digital capture.

Very much a novice I can thoroughly recommend signing up as you learn by doing and uploading images every week to the T189 website soon develops hands on

experience. The emphasis is on visual awareness and creativity and you are expected to comment constructively on the images of other students in your group; each group changes frequently so you get lots of feedback.

Sometimes you need a spur to get out and about with a camera when Winter sets in and having a course in photography to tackle proved the necessary encouragement. The October countryside at the Welsh Folk Museum near Cardiff offered great subjects with the autumnal colours and fleeting clouds and it proved fun to use the screen of my new DSLR to check the results as I went along. A couple of weeks later I visited the Glamorgan Heritage Coast for a splendid day's photography in the Winter sunshine - I had the place to myself on a trip that I would not have enjoyed otherwise.

Adobe Photoshop Elements 8 is included with the course material and you are given a good grounding in the digital workflow. Equipment requirements are

minimal. I found it easier to keep to a good standard of technique in camera as we probably all did with film technology. Manipulation takes time and skill.

To pass the course you have to submit a portfolio of ten photographs online. If you keep this in mind as you are going along you can use positive comments on your work to help select the images. Course online fora allow you to garner support and advice and more digitally experienced students can aim to use the course to build up a particular portfolio to suit their interests.

The Open University is very supportive and gives you many opportunities to hone your photographic skills through T189 Digital Photography. It is also very inspiring to see the varied interesting photography of many fellow students - I learnt a great deal and look back on the experience as time well spent.

(The fee for Oct 2011 is £205 and the Open University can be contacted on 0845 300 60 90).



Glamorgan Heritage Coast

Portfolio Circle Round 15

"We were taken to the Sanje waterfall (in Tanzania), the top one of several, by Jackson, a Park Ranger (on the left). He was very keen to get us to the top, which I found quite easy but my friends thought it pretty tough. (They don't walk!) We were accompanied by Leo, from our lodge, seen on the right. The waterfalls were very impressive and we saw the local red colobus monkeys on the way. The lads asked me to take photos of them - jumping around etc, which I did. I then got this one - Leo had never been there before and was very impressed. Jackson asked us to tell everyone about the park and

when I sent him his photos and told him I had shown them, and this one in particular, to a lot of people he sent me a lovely e-mail saying how I was a good ambassador for his park. The original image was in colour but I think it works well in mono."

Margaret Hocking



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Contributions

Contributions 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 prints but digital files are preferred. Files should be in JPEG format, minimum resolution 300dpi, and sized to produce a file not more than 5mB in size.

Please enclose a separate list of legends for submitted images, an evening telephone number, and an email address.

Note that in accordance with the requirements for travel photography distinctions composite

images are normally 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

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