



The
Royal
Photographic
Society

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Travel Log

Newsletter of the Travel Group



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Travel Log – Your Newsletter!

Do you have images languishing in your computer, never to be seen by others save friends and family, or perhaps your camera club? Now is a good time to think about putting together an article for *Travel Log*! There is nothing quite like the sense of achievement of seeing your work in print, and knowing that others in the Travel Group can also enjoy the fruits of your efforts.

All articles on travel photography, long or short, are welcome. Instructions for submissions are to be found below.

Travel Log is published by the Travel Group of the Royal Photographic Society three times a year: in January, May and September.

Contributions are welcome on all aspects of travel and travel photography. Full articles typically contain five to six images selected from those submitted, plus an accompanying text describing aspects of the journey and any technical issues encountered. It is worth noting that a mix of landscape and portrait images is useful. The layout of the text and images in the publishing software often means that it is necessary to crop pictures in order to balance the layout so images with a fair amount of open space surrounding the main subject work particularly well. It is also worth bearing in mind that images with much detail loose impact on the printed page as the final printed version is inevitably smaller than a print.

Many members are not comfortable with writing lengthy text: if this is the case, please contact the Editor who will be glad to assist. All text is copy edited and proof-read by another member of the Travel Group committee.

Shorter submissions are also welcome as well as articles describing photographic exhibitions with a strong travel theme or reviews of techniques, etc. of particular value to fellow travel photographers. Both colour and monochrome images are acceptable.

There is always a need for strong images for the **front cover**. It is not necessary to submit an article for an image to be considered for the cover, although it should be borne in mind that the cover image must have impact and be technically

perfect.

Copy for articles can be sent on CD or by email in Word, RTF or TXT format. Digital image files are preferred.

Digital files should be in JPEG format, minimum resolution 300dpi, and adjusted to produce an image file of not more than 5 megabyte (5mB). Many cameras produce files of a lower resolution, adequate for many purposes including projection, but much lower than the resolution required for printing.

Users of Photoshop can find the necessary option under the Image/Image Size menu. If you are uncertain how to adjust image properties, please contact the Editor for advice.

If you wish to submit prints, please contact the Editor before dispatch.

Travel Log accepts **advertisements**. Advertisers should contact the Editor by email at the address opposite.

Receipt of all submissions will be sent by email. Unless specifically requested material will not be returned.

Please send all material to the Editor, Colin R. Howard, 11 Nightingale Way, Hereford HR1 2NQ.

The **deadlines** are 1st April (May issue), 1st July (September issue) and 1st November (January issue).

The small print

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.

The Travel Group and the Royal Photographic Society do not recommend any tours or services nor accept any liability whatsoever for members who may make bookings with, or purchases from, any companies or individuals who advertise in *Travel Log* or are mentioned in published articles.

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Note from the Editor

Members may note that the publication schedule for *Travel Log's* three issues a year has been changed slightly to January, May and September. **The deadline for the September issue is 1st July.**

Dates for Your Diary

17th - 24th August 2013

Visit to Helsinki, Finland (see page 5)

10th - 11th May 2014

Travel Group Spring Weekend, Ludlow, Shropshire

Charlie Waite discussing the finer details of a Henri Cartier-Bresson print with John Cucksey ARPS at this year's Spring Weekend in Lacock





Chairman's Chatter

Liz Rhodes

By the time you read this my big hope is that there has been a definite improvement in the weather! It is coming up to the end of April, the days have been grey and cold but now there are occasional signs that Spring has sprung. Thoughts of warmer climes fill my mind but having been on the Costa Rica trip, which you will be able to read about in the September issue of *Travel Log*, I will not be going anywhere for a while, so my photographic thoughts are focussed on what can the Travel Group offer its members in the coming months. This is an on-going issue: despite the best efforts of the committee we seem unable to engage with the majority of the members of the group. Perhaps the majority do not like what we organise by way of events and trips: fair enough, but why then join the group? Have you any ideas of what we might offer that would bring a fresh approach to events and so engage more people? I would love to know.

We have just come away from a highly successful Spring Weekend in Lacock. This year the weather was much kinder and on many accounts it was the best yet, with several new attendees commenting on how much they enjoyed the weekend. You can read a full report of the event on page 17, including some preliminary results of the short questionnaire handed out to all attendees. If you have as yet not been to a Spring Weekend, why not take the plunge and join us next year in Ludlow? It promises once again to be an exciting opportunity to show and discuss what we all have a passion for - travel photography. To whet your appetite, an article will appear in the next issue of *Travel Log* showing Ludlow in all its splendour.

*One of the many
splendid panoramas to
be had in Costa Rica.
Picture by Liz Rhodes*

One initiative has been to form a sub-group in the South West. Ian Wright, a member there, organised a meeting back in January which was well attended by members in the region. Another meeting is planned for August. Perhaps someone in another region might do something similar? So far as the RPS Headquarters in Bath are concerned, the setting up of sub-groups is a matter for the Groups themselves with the sub-groups working alongside the Group's committee and something to be encouraged.

I know many of you enjoy the trips: we have a group visit to Helsinki coming up in August and you can find out more as to all this fascinating Nordic capital has to offer on page 5 where Richard Lewis, the organiser and a frequent visitor to Helsinki, shares with us the delights to be experienced there. Further afield, our planned trip to Burma in 2014 is proving highly popular. Other suggestions are always welcome: please contact Aline Hopkins who it is a pleasure to welcome to the Travel Group Committee and will be co-ordinating our travel schedule with other committee members and, of course, you, our members.

Happy Travelling!





Helsinki - The Capital of Finland

Richard Lewis ARPS

Helsinki became the capital of Finland in 1812. It is a comfortable city – big enough to have all the trappings of a capital but small enough for interesting places to be close at hand. Everything seems to be within walking distance, yet is backed up by an excellent public transport system that's properly integrated – a network of buses, trams, trains and ferries, all of which can be used with one multi-day travel card. And they work – its online transport planner gives connections that are realistic and convenient. If you're stuck – nearly everybody speaks very good English.

Helsinki is a Nordic city, so is clean and has the designer feel about it – seamlessly blending the new with the old.

It has distinct seasons –

Snowy winters, yielding great snowscapes, frozen seascapes, families skating on impromptu ice rinks, and in December truly traditional Christmas markets (all Finnish artisan stalls) including an outdoor market in Helsinki Cathedral's Senaatintori square.

Warming springs, culminating with May Day when it

seems that all of Helsinki celebrates winter's end by spending the day outdoors. It's noticeable how people occupying the pavement tables of the city cafés rotate their seats to always face the sun as it passes. On the eve of May Day, Finnish high school graduates of all ages adorned in white student caps, gather around the statue of Havis Amanda at the harbour end of Esplanadi while university students are hoisted up by crane to wash the statue and place a student cap on her head. At that moment, a sea of white hats fills the air above Esplanadi, corks pop, and May Day celebrations begin.

Sunny summers, where so much seems to be centred around the water (Helsinki has the largest archipelago in the world), either on boats, at waterside cafés and restaurants, waterside parks, or on the island of Suomenlinna which is popular for family picnics and games. There's even a Pub Tram for you to appreciate the city whilst tasting the local brews.

Year round there is much to do, with museums and public art in abundance, many cultural and sporting events, and several markets with excellent food stalls.

Helsinki has a wide range of architecture from stark modernism through classical romantic. There's

Below: Fishing boat in dry dock, Suomenlinna Island



the surrounding countryside with public parks and country houses to enjoy. And of course, it's the gateway to the rest of Finland (I can recommend the rail service through the lakes and forests to Rovaniemi on the Arctic circle, then on by car through Lapland to Norway's Barent Sea coast – very unspoiled and photogenic), and the other countries in the region.

All this adds up to an excellent base for photography whatever the time of year, and whatever your interest. Just be prepared for the season you visit – it can get very cold in winter and rather warm – actually hot – in the summer. Also be prepared for seasons not to align with those you might be accustomed to. Schools go back in mid-August so summer activities can start winding down quickly from then on.

Being a Nordic country, accommodation in Finland can be pricey, but for those on a budget I can suggest CheapSleep hostel (www.cheapsleep.fi) with beds from around €20/night through to private double rooms from around €49. For a full service hotel, the Radisson Blu Seaside hotel (www.radissonblu.com/seasidehotel-helsinki), less than 10 minutes out of the centre by tram) has always served us well - double rooms en-suite with breakfast from around €115. Obviously these rates will vary by season and according to what's happening in the city, and there are many other hotels to suit individual preferences. Eating out can also be expensive but there is a wide range of places to eat with prices to suit all pockets. We've had excellent experiences in Salve, Merimakasiini, Karl Johan, Eckberg's, Kappeli (on Esplanadi), to name but a few.

Summing up, here are some places to go for photography:

National Museum of Photography. Always has a major exhibition and smaller ones featuring Finnish or well known international photographers.

Suomenlinna Island. An old naval fortress actually spread over several islands and now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It's reached by a 15 minute ferry ride from the east harbour.

Seurasaari Open Air Museum. On an island within the city, you'll find old buildings in rural settings from around Finland, many staffed by interpreters in costume.

Esplanadi. This is a tree lined boulevard dropping down from the city centre to the harbour and, with its pavement cafés and parks, is the place to people watch.

Interesting Buildings. There are many – for example the Church in the Rock, Helsinki Market Hall, the National Museum, Helsinki Cathedral, the Russian Orthodox Cathedral, the Parliament building, Finlandia Hall, the Fish Market. Add in the Neoclassical and Art-Nouveau quarters, and the city gives opportunities in abundance for street and architectural photography. Just outside Helsinki, in its own grounds overlooking a lake, is Hvittrask, a country house formerly the home/studio (now museum) of Finnish architects Gesellius, Lindberg & Saarinen.

Söderskär. A two hour boat trip takes you to this island in Helsinki's outer archipelago, with its old lighthouse, flora, and birds. So peaceful and so photo-

Below: Söderskär Island in the Helsinki Archipelago





Top left: Ferry bound for Sweden, South Harbour; Top Right: Old Finnish Farm, with interpreter, Open Air Museum

Bottom left: Statue of Alexander III of Russia in front of Helsinki Cathedral; Bottom Right: Picnic time, Seurasaari Island

genic, but only available in mid-summer.

Further afield, Porvoo to the east and Hanku to the west are photogenic old towns with traditional wooden buildings. Saimaa, to the north east of Helsinki, is the heart of Finland's lake district (and where Russian traditions remain strong). Rovaniemi lies on the Arctic circle with Finnish (and Norwegian) Lapland beyond. Just across the Baltic, Tallinn in

Estonia is an easy day trip, with its largely unspoilt old quarter. Less than four hours on a high speed train will take you to St. Petersburg (visa required unless you take the alternative boat trip). West, via the Stockholm ferry, are the tranquil Åland islands. Or just go out and enjoy Finland's lakes and forests.

For more information on Helsinki, the city has an excellent website: www.visithelsinki.fi



The Gardens of Prague - the Softer Side of Prague

Cindy Eccles

Prague. Just the name conjures images of gothic romanticism, grand architecture, and bowlfuls of goulash. As an archaeologist and travel hound, I was enthralled by the allure of stomping around such a historically and culturally rich landscape. But in July, this medieval city revealed a softer side with spectacular gardens fit for royalty and lovers and those with a childhood dream to frolic in a secret garden.

As most visitors were queuing for access to Castle Prague's sites, I sought refuge in the castle's Royal Gardens. One of seven landscapes scattered throughout the castle grounds, the Royal Gardens were originally designed by Italian architect Giovanni Spatia during the early Renaissance. Restoration work on the gardens after the Thirty Years' War added a Baroque style, and its current English park-style state with grassy lawns replaced ornamental flower beds in the late 19th Century.

On the south side of the castle, the Garden of Paradise--with Roman-style pergolas--and the Ramparts led to a pay-to-enter self-guided tour of the stepped gardens below the castle. The narrow pathway dropped off into sections of terraced and seemingly private gardens that were only accessible by steep and slick stone steps. There were very few shady spots from the top to the bottom, but the July mid-day heat worked in my favor as I had the garden segments to

myself.

Built in 1348, the Franciscan Garden was tucked away behind the Church of Our Lady of the Snows between Wenceslas and Jungmann Squares. It was closed to the public until 1950, when the Franciscans were displaced. A small portion was given back to the Franciscans in 1989, and reconstruction of the gardens was complete in 1992. A simple square design with intersecting pathways belied artful patches of flowers or hedge-guarded fruit trees, and works of art included the Wild Nymphs sculpture and the Fountain Boy with Shell.

Established sometime between 1932 and 1934, the Rosarium, or Rose Garden is perched atop Petrin Hill and is near the Stefanik Observatory. The entrance was marked by stone-sculpted lovers locked in a passionate embrace. The garden design includes over 12,000 roses of varying species and color arranged in a rosette- and fan-shaped sections. Some of the roses were starting to show the effects of the hot summer, but there were plenty still in full bloom producing a heavenly scent.

The Wallenstein Gardens in Mala Strana (Little Quarter) was an amazing mix of beauty and dark history. Built as part of the baroque palace complex in the mid 17th Century, the gardens were a maze of tall

hedges, topiary decorations, peek-a-boo pockets of grass, and myriad pools and fountains. There was also an impressive array of replica bronze statues flanking a walkway leading to the Senate building. Perhaps most strange was the grotto or artificial stalactites complete with twisted masks of various species hidden within the structure.

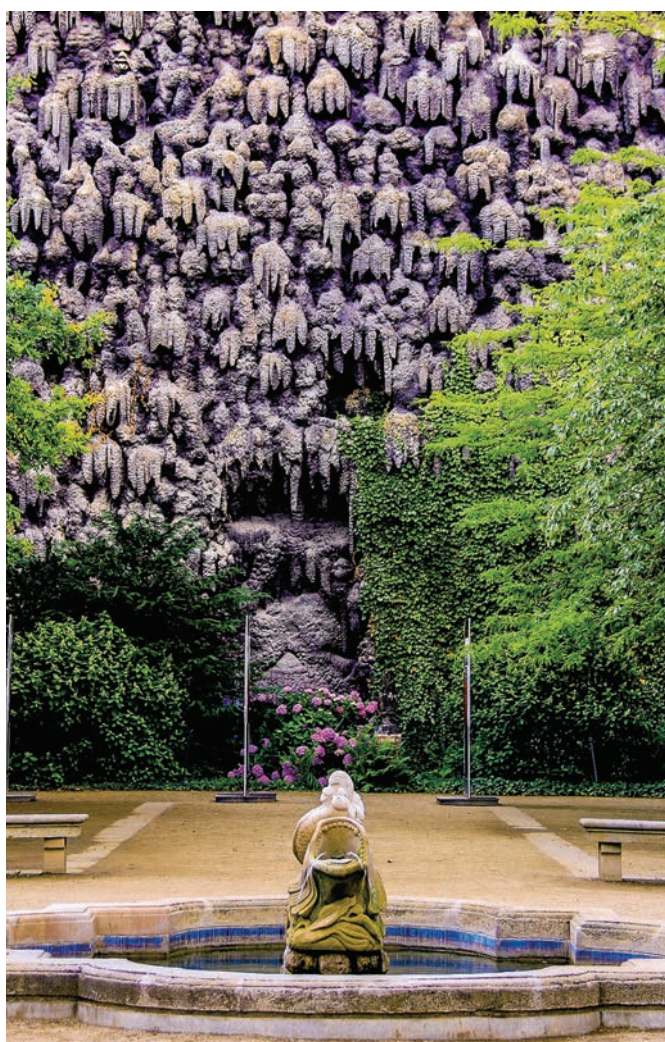
Of all the gardens in Prague, my favorite was the Nebozizek Garden. It was early in the morning, and the sun was slowly finding its way to illuminating this tiny corner of heaven. I



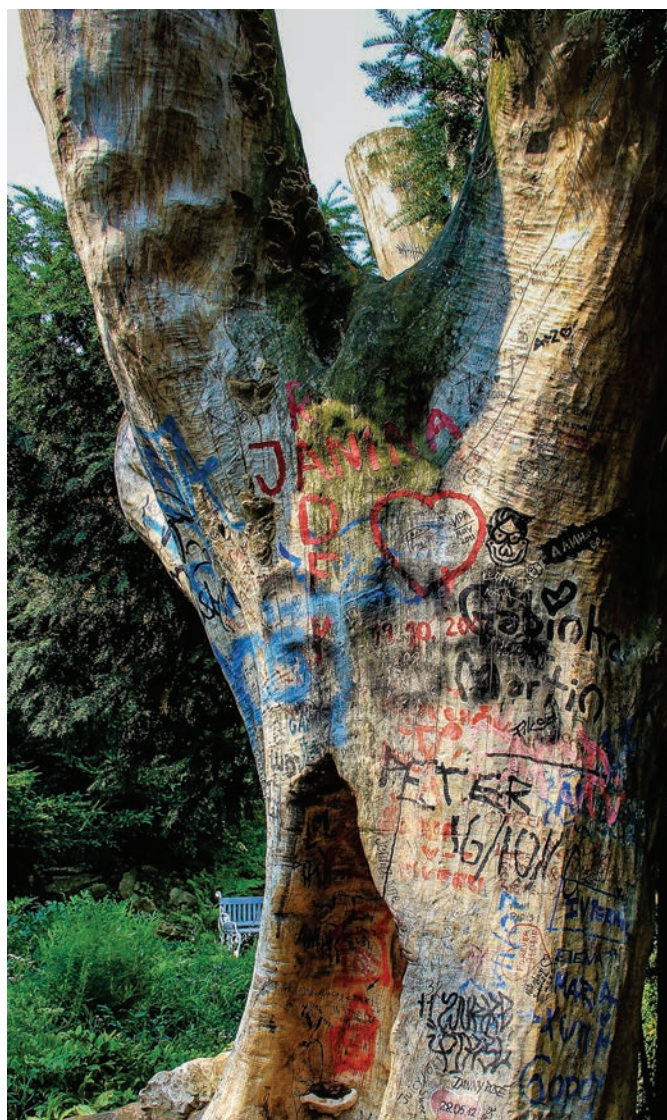
Left: The Royal Gardens, Prague Castle



Above: The Lower Terraced Gardens, Prague Castle



Above: Travel fish fountain, Wallenstein Gardens



Right: The "Freedom Tree", Nebozizek Garden, Prague



Top: Royal Gardens, Prague

Above left: Coreopsis verticillata (Moon Beam flowers)

Above right: The Rosarium, Petrin Hill, Prague

stepped through the open side of the rusted and vine-covered wrought-iron gate and emerged into a fairy-tale world full of sun-kissed wild flowers and buzzing insects. There was no formal design or structure to the garden, which only added to its natural charm. Nebozizek lacked grand fountains or regal sculptures, but instead offered inviting weath-

ered benches and a pebbled pathway meandering through the small complex. I happened upon a "freedom tree" with decades of quips and quotes carved and painted on the withered trunk reminding me that Prague's gardens are not just about beauty, but also serve as a reminder of the nation's struggle for freedom and peace.



A Tour of Northern France

Elizabeth Frost FRPS

When our son and his fiancée announced that they were to be married in France at her parents' home in the Charente area, we saw it as a golden opportunity to combine the wedding with a trip in our Mercedes Pagoda 280 SL. She had already earned herself the nick-name "Bella Benza" on a previous tour to Lake Como, so this is how I will refer to her in this article.

A few weeks before the due date, disaster struck: I arrived in London from Saudi Arabia on 28th June and the porter of our block of flats said: "You had better go and have a look at your car in the garage. There was a fire in one of the garages yesterday and a lot of damage in other garages." As the garage door opened, a sorry sight greeted me: Bella Benza's satiny off-white body had turned a deep shade of tobacco. Only the roof had been covered with a sheet, and where edges of the sheet had covered bits of paintwork below the windscreen, the paint was still white. Fortunately, most of the smoke damage could be polished off by professionals at the garage where she is serviced, and only the boot had to be re-sprayed. They had her looking like new in good time for our departure.

I had made all our ferry bookings on LD Lines, and our hotel bookings on www.bookings.com. I highly recommend both. Bookings.com have a huge range of establishments and hotels with an equally huge price range. They have a good "Review" section from previous customers. This especially helped when looking for places that had off-street and secure parking.

We left Twickenham with the rising sun at 5.30 a.m., with my 11 year old nephew, visiting us from Canada, waving goodbye. Our ferry left from Portsmouth to Le Havre, and our first port of call for lunch was the lovely old harbour at Honfleur. It is easily accessed via the impressive cable-stayed Pont de Normandie across the Seine – but we had a very old map, missed the bridge and had to go the long way round! Honfleur is surrounded on three sides by terraces of old and mainly grey town houses, each one different to the other, with various heights and widths. They look like a series of dolls houses stuck together. At the base of all of them are cafés and restaurants

with brightly coloured umbrellas.

After lunch, we headed south towards Le Mans. I enjoy map reading, getting lost occasionally and, if necessary, asking people the way. It is astonishing how many people will say: "Follow me! I will take you there!" Our hotel in Le Mans was even better than expected: situated in the heart of old Le Mans (Vieux Mans) in the square of the Cathédrale St-Julien du Mans. The owners pointed us in the direction of a narrow cobbled street leading off the square where there are lots of restaurants and bars. In the summer the old town is transformed at night by numerous laser light shows. The entire façade of the cathedral became a stained glass window, changing designs every few minutes. Patches of light would appear on the lanes as you walked along, and other walls were used to show



Right: Chateau de Villandry



constantly changing pageants.

Le Mans is justifiably famous for the car race, but a visit to the St. Julien Cathedral, dating as far back as the 9th Century, is a must. We spent over an hour there, marveling at the architecture, sculptures, 13th Century stained glass windows, and atmosphere.

With no time left to visit the racing museum, we continued south down the “Le Mans Straight” towards Poitiers.

Soon after Tours, we got side-tracked in search of lunch and followed signs to Chateau de Brou. It is in Noyant de Touraine, half way between Montbazoin and Châtellerauld, and a few miles off the A10. The signs led us to some huge and intimidating iron gates, where we rang a bell, the gates eventually opening. We drove along a dirt road for several kilometres, through thick woods; it was slightly spooky and felt as though we were driving to the Castle of Viscount Dracula or about to be part of the Rocky Horror Show. We later learned that this fairy-tale chateau was built in 1475 and stands in the middle of a 100 hectare forest. It could have come to a tragic end, but in 1997 it became the property of the Girault family who fully restored the chateau to its former glory.



We continued on towards Poitiers and arrived at our destination for the wedding, the hamlet of Germeville, just outside Aigre. It is in the heart of sunflower growing country, with picturesque houses and barns made out of the local light yellow stone, all a perfect setting for the occasion. Our days leading up to the wedding were spent decorating the huge barn, buying white ribbon for Bella Benza, and enjoying the cafes and



Top: Le Mans Cathedral by day

Middle:... and by night during the summer festival

Bottom: Annual pageant, Chateau d'Amboise

restaurants in Aigre and nearby towns.

After all the fun of the wedding, we set off back towards Tours. The area is steeped in the history of the Hundred Years War (1337 – 1453) involving the House of Valois and the Plantagenets. It was during this time that so many beautiful Chateaux were built as King Charles VII, the Dauphin, moved his royal administration to the Loire. Because there are so many chateaux, it is a good idea to research them before you leave and plan which ones you want to see, booking hotels nearby.

We arrived near Tours in brilliant sunshine, so we stopped off at the Chateau de Villandry, renowned for its formal gardens. This moated chateau was completed toward 1536 and was the last of the large chateaux built in the Loire Valley during the Renaissance. The Chateau has an on-going refurbishment programme, and all the gardens – including the organic vegetable gardens – are formally laid out and immaculately kept. Villandry village has several restaurants and bars which close quite early (9.30 – just after dark!), or you can go into Tours and eat at one of the many restaurants in the old part of the City. It is a University town, buzzing with life and atmosphere, and in the Place Plumereau, nothing closes until well after midnight.

Our next chateau was Chenonceau, known as the “Ladies’ Chateau”, partly because of its lovely appearance with arches striding across the River Cher, but mainly because there was a succession of five women who loved, administered and protected it. It was built in 1513 and, as it says on the website, “The iron, but very feminine, fist in the velvet glove has always preserved Chenonceau during times of conflict and war in

order to make it forever a place of peace”.

We spent that night in the Auberge du bon Labourer in Chenonceau. After supper, we drove to the Chateau d’Amboise to see the historical pageant that takes place several days a week throughout the summer. The show employs hundreds of adults and children from Amboise and is quite a spectacle. Chateau d’Amboise is one we would love to return to because there is so much to see there, and so much going on – but we had chosen to spend our last day visiting the magnificent gothic Chateau de Chambord, the largest in the Loire Valley.

Chambord is set in 13,000 acres of parklands and woods, with no formal gardens, and is popular for walking and cycling as well as visiting the Chateau. There are lots of intricate spiral staircases taking you to all the different levels, the most impressive and fascinating being the double-helix, open-work staircase, supposedly designed by Leonardo da Vinci. Its unique design allowed people – such as the King – to see people using the other staircase, but to be able to go up and down without meeting them. If (like me) you have walking difficulties, it is still worth the effort to haul yourself up to the Gothic rooftop and enjoy the numerous asymmetrical and elaborate towers and windows at close quarters.

After our ten days in France, ending with our intense immersion in the history of the Loire chateaux, we were ready to head for home. Nonetheless, with so much to see and learn in France we were definitely inspired to come back another time for more!

Below: Annual pageant at Chateau d’Amboise





Peru, the Land of Alpacas

John Coates LRPS

Why have I called it Peru, the Land of Alpacas? There were three couples involved in this visit to Peru, all with one thing in common: we are alpaca farmers and breeders in the UK, two couples from Cornwall, including my wife and I, and one couple from Yorkshire. Our plan was to visit the alpaca breeding and genetics centre at Mallkini, the largest private alpaca ranch in Peru, to see how they do it and learn a little from them, but in my case being an enthusiastic photographer, I had the secondary interest to make a photographic record of the whole event.

Of course travelling all the way from the UK to Peru we were not going to miss out on the popular tourist hot spots and indeed our itinerary took us firstly to Cusco the mythical capital of the Inca Empire and our first introduction to altitude, but at 3,360 metres (11,023ft) above sea level it was not a patch on what we were to experience later at the Mallkini Ranch.

After a few days taking in the historical monuments, myths and legends of Cusco, it was time to move on to the citadel of Machu Picchu a fascinating and awe inspiring place, then over the next week or so it was on to the Sacred Valley, followed by the Colca Canyon which they say is bigger, longer and deeper than the Grand Canyon in the USA.

Lake Titicaca and the floating islands of the Uros Indians was next on our agenda, then it was on to Arequipa, a pleasant colonial city the second largest in Peru. It is known as the White City because it is almost completely built of sillar, a white volcanic stone. Our tour ended in Lima the capitol and with the only international airport in Peru. All of this was a full itinerary in itself but the highlight for us alpaca breeders was our trip to the Mallkini Alpaca Ranch high up in the Andes Mountains.

Alpacas at Mallkini

Alpacas are the new world camels and are the same biological family as the dromedaries of Asia, along with llamas, guanaco and vicuna also to be found in South America; they have been quietly grazing in these high altitudes for thousands of years. Long ago the fine fleeces of the alpaca and vicuna would have been reserved for Inca Royalty, whilst even up to the present day the coarser haired and larger llama has always been a beast of burden.

The Mallkini Ranch is located in the heart of alpaca country in the province of Azangaro, near Puno, high on the Altiplano about 40 miles from the border with Bolivia. The Ranch covers over 3,000 hectares across the Altiplano and is home to more than 2,000 alpacas. The altitude at the Mallkini Ranch ranges from 4,000 metres (13,123 ft) to 4,800 metres (15,400 ft) and getting about at these altitudes we all found challenging at times.

For the first part of our journey to the Mallkini Ranch, we left Cusco by train bound for Puno; the journey is considered one of the great train journeys of the world and took about ten hours to complete. The comfortable carriages of the Orient Express "Andean Explorer" offered us first class restaurant service and our own carriage attendant providing beverages and light snacks during the journey. The train also has an excellent observation car at the rear offering clear and spectacular views as you traverse the "High Plateau" of this vast territory, they even provide bottled oxygen





Top left: ladies grading alpaca fleeces

Bottom left: Main street, Cuyocuyo

Top right: Observation car, Orient Express

Bottom right: Mallkini Ranch Hacienda

for those suffering somewhat with the altitude, as some did.

Upon arrival at Puno railway station, which appeared to be straight down the main street, everyone's luggage, all mixed up by now, was taken from the luggage car by the porters and unceremoniously placed on the platform in several large heaps, it was an interesting thirty minutes or so trying to find ours. Nevertheless, when we were ready our transport to Mallkini was waiting for us. We then had a four hour ride mostly over unmade roads through wild and remote countryside. During the ride our hosts provided us with coca tea (mate de coca) from a flask, a common drink in the Andes and said to help with the altitude, I felt it should work as it is from the same base plant as cocaine!

The Mallkini Ranch started its operation in 1996 thanks to the efforts of the Michell Group, a company started by Frank Michell (1897-1987) an Englishman who came to Peru in 1922 searching for chinchillas! It is now the largest alpaca textile conglomerate in Peru. The mission of the Mallkini Ranch is to improve the fibre quality of alpacas, export alpacas and its products worldwide, promote ecotourism, and also to train and raise the living standards of the indigenous Quechua Indians.

The Quechua people are an abandoned race who

seem quite lost in our modern world: outside of the big cities basic health and education for these people does not seem to exist, except for that provided by foreign-based charities. I found the Quechua to be very spiritual and uninterested in politics. They are very loyal to their families and did not appear greedy or materialistic, expressing themselves in shy smiles, rarely complaining. Certainly there was no begging as their pride is very much intact despite the almost inhumane solitude of life on the Altiplano.

The Mallkini Hacienda was built with local materials of volcanic stone, rocks and clay, electricity was only connected for about an hour in the morning, and after an hour in the evening they would fire up an old electric generating set, it was in fact a British machine powered by a good old Lister Diesel engine. The evenings at Mallkini were spent around a large log fire in the lounge discussing the day's events with colleagues and as the temperature outside dropped to about minus five degrees our very thoughtful hosts would place hot water bottles in our beds.

Our days at Mallkini were spent undertaking a programme of alpaca clinics, lectures and field visits and we found the preferred way of getting about on the range was by horseback although they did have a four wheel drive vehicle. We discovered that even at these altitudes there seemed to be abundant pasture for the alpacas to graze on. They call this 'ichu', a very



Above: Farming at high altitude

Right: Woman shepherd spinning whilst working!



coarse grass, nothing like the green pastures we are used to in the UK. Some agriculture also takes place here but all they can grow at these altitudes are maize and potatoes and along with alpaca meat these constitutes their staple diet.

The little village of Cuyocuyo near by with it's abandoned church provided my wife and I with a welcome relief for a walk one free afternoon and also a photo opportunity for me. I couldn't help thinking as we walked around the village that life here was just about at existence level and that the people who were employed up at the Mallkini Ranch were indeed a little better off than others in this area.

On our last day at Mallkini we continued to follow the programme of organised events and lectures and in the evening we all attended a presentation din-

ner when we received our completion of course certificates with time afterwards to relax and enjoy the party, before the next and final stage of our trip, a private visit to the Michell factory in Arequipa to see the transformation of raw alpaca fleece into beautiful knitted garments.

I must say that after the rural aspect of Mallkini and its surroundings I was completely taken aback by the size and scale of the Michell Group's modern manufacturing plants in Arequipa, three sites in all employing over 2,500 people working 7 days a week, making the Michell Group the largest alpaca and wool manufacturers in Peru and one of the largest textile groups in Latin America.

We saw tons of raw alpaca fleeces being sorted. A manual task performed by expert women, it is said to be a skill inherited from their mothers who did the job before them. They do an amazing job classifying fineness and colours of the fleeces just by touch alone. Our tour continued through the scouring and combing plants of the factory, then onto the spinning process and finally the dyeing plant. The yarn then goes onto the knitting factory where fine alpaca garments are produced.

Inevitably we ended our tour at the Michell Factory Shop. My wife now has pride of place in her wardrobe a very fine full length black alpaca coat! A worthy souvenir of our wonderful visit to Peru!



Lady with llama, Cusco



Spring Weekend, April 2013

Colin Howard and Aline Hopkins

Lacock was once again the venue for the Travel Group Spring Weekend, held this year in the Village Hall. Some 52 members assembled on a fine Saturday morning to what turned out to be one of the most successful weekend meetings yet. A number of members had already worked up a thirst for good images by visiting the National Trust property at Stourhead the previous afternoon, and of course Lacock has much to offer all photographers.

Robert Canis got us off to a fine start, sharing with us his evocative images of Dungeness and the remoter marshes of North Kent. From there he took us to the parts of Poland and the Tatras Mountains that few tourists ever visit. The mix of fine landscapes and natural history had us all hushed as Robert put across his passion for getting up early or to bed late in order to capture the best light. There was much to assimilate, and a number of brave souls ventured out into the village to shoot to a brief of capturing unusual images for Robert to critique.

After lunch we were thrilled by Charlie Waite's inimitable style of tackling both landscapes and urban shots as he addressed why so often our photographs fall short of our expectations at the time of pressing the shutter. We were treated to a feast of images that showed how patience in composing a shot pays dividends, and how small details of perspective are vital to turn a good image into a great photograph. Charlie also shared with us his admiration of the legendary photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson, especially his work taken on the Greek island of Sifnos.

Many members enjoyed a well-earned drink and dinner at *The George Inn* in readiness for the next day's activities.

Sunday was very much members' day. Aline Hopkins had assembled an audio-visual presentation from the Group's trip in January to Costa Rica, admirably displaying the abundant wildlife of this fascinating country of Central America - a nature photographer's paradise. This was followed by Chris Hammond's audiovisual presentation of members' work taken on the Group trip along the Hooghly River in India. The vibrancy of life along the river banks to

Kolkata was almost palpable from the members' pictures.

The ten minute "Soapbox" session has always been popular and this year was no exception. Five members gave presentations on topics as diverse as the Hakka villages of Hong Kong (Brian Pearce), Wrangell Island off the coast of northern Siberia (Andrew Gasson) and the Miao festivities in South West China (Neil Harris). Marget Hocking took us on a tour of the Queensland outback and Maggie Manson took us to Spitsbergen in search of ice bears.

The final session was a talk by Patricia Jones, FRPS, who has produced exquisite landscapes taken on her many trips to the highlands of Scotland and the Outer Hebrides. Noticeable was the dramatic lighting that she had captured by visiting during the autumn months. Getting the balance of the landscape elements correct was stressed and the quality of the prints outstanding. Patricia also shared with us how she had a 'Eureka moment' whilst photographing the wide sandy bays of Harris which led to her successful fellowship submission.

Members have always had the chance to display prints during the weekend, and this was no exception. This year we were delighted also to see a number of successful associateship panels by Richard Lewis and Sylvia Wilson as well as the successful fellowship submission by James Frost with his images of Burma.



Brian Pearce receiving the Joan Wakelin Trophy from the Chairman, Liz Rhodes

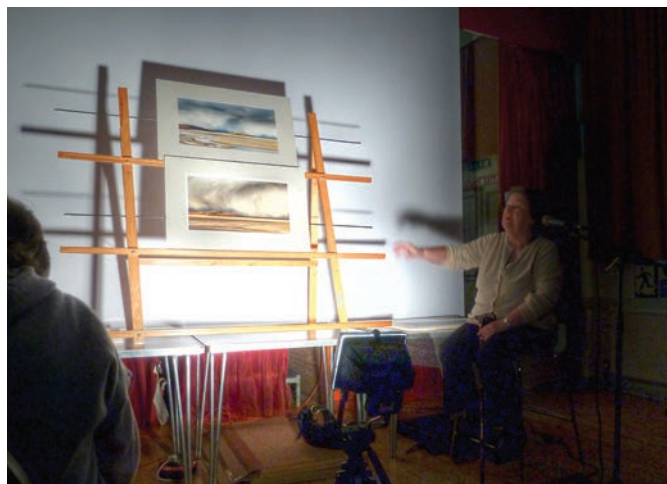
Finally, the Spring Weeknd would not be complete without the annual competition and congratulations go to Brian Pearce for winning the Gold Medal and Joan Wakelin Trophy for his image of sulphur mining in Indonesia. Jonathan Ratnage won the Silver Medal with his picture of Chicago's O'Hare Airport (see back page of January 2013 Travel Log!) and Keith Pointon the Bronze Medal for a stunning picture of the Aurora Borealis taken in Iceland. Thanks also to Leo Palmer FRPS for judging the competition.

The weekend would not be a success were it not for the catering and the Group is grateful for the sterling efforts of Elizabeth Lewis and Hilary Hammond who made sure the teas and coffee flowed and we were all well fed at lunchtime.

The weekend enlivened and elevated the photographic spirits of all who were there. The Committee is conscious, however, that there are many members of the Travel Group who have yet to come along to this annual fest of travel photography. Why not make a note of next year's meeting to be held in Ludlow, 10th and 11th May 2014. To whet the appetite, look out for an article on Ludlow in the Septemeber issue of *Travel Log*!

Top: Patricia Jones FRPS discussing her prints of Scotland
Right: Members' prints on display

Below: Silver medal winner Keith Pointon's evocative image of the Aurora Borealis in Iceland.





Gold medal and Joan Wakelin Trophy winner Brian Pearce's photograph of sulphur miners in Indonesia.

A short questionnaire was given to members attending the Spring Weekend, asking questions such as:

'What would you like to see the Travel Group do more of?' and 'Which trips might you be interested in?'.

This has produced some interesting results, in terms of both events in the UK and overseas trips. It is clear that members would like to see more weekend workshops in the UK, covering the licentiateships, technical issues, or just having a weekend away somewhere.

In terms of what type of tour appeals to members, 'far away' came top of the list, followed by 'wildlife' and 'city breaks'. When it came to the trips people were interested in, Yellowstone was the clear winner in the 'far away' category, with Botswana and Chile/Easter Island in equal second place.

On the UK/Europe list, Northumberland and

Denmark shared first place, followed by a cruise to the Norwegian fjords. In equal fourth place were Scottish Islands and the Dutch bulb fields.

In the 'Christmas Escape' category, Madagascar was in first place by some way, with Cuba second and Namibia third.

There were various other suggestions for tours, all completely different! This has given the committee a great deal to discuss, and should provide the basis for plans for the future.

If anyone has any comments on this, or wishes to register an early interest in any of the potential trips listed above, you can e-mail Aline at alinehopkins@btinternet.com.

Look out for more details and analysis of this questionnaire in the September issue of *Travel Log*.

Digital Portfolio Circle - Round 22 Result

Kolkata Street Scene, by Hazel Frost

This photograph was taken on our recent trip to Nagaland (North East India). We had a few hours in "transit" in Kolkata before our next flight and spent this walking the streets from sunrise. There were many people who lived their lives on the street. This lady slept under the awning to the left, with the tree demarcating her space. She was sewing and attaching decoration to the cloth by her feet.

Taken with a Canon EOS 1D with a 70-200 mm lens ISO 400, f 3.5, 1/320



The Travel Group Website? This is now located at <http://www.rps.org/travel>

Back copies of Travel Log can now be downloaded in pdf format from the RPS website and you will also find details of events and Travel Group activities. There is also the opportunity to display your own portfolio of travel photographs.

