



The
Royal
Photographic
Society

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travel group
travel log

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info@travelgroup.rps.org

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How to make a photobook

*Deadline for submissions: **1st Feb 2012***

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Chairman's Chatter

The festive season is starting to loom large as I write this but I for one have started to look beyond it as I begin to think about where I may go off to next year! One of my great pleasures as the evenings draw in is flicking through an atlas and drawing up a list of countries/places that I would like to go to, funds permitting. Some places are still out of reach due to upheavals, particularly in the Middle East, but I find myself drawing closer to home as I realise there is still a great deal of the British Isles I would like to explore with my camera. Which brings me once again to the question of 'what is travel photography?' I still do not really know the answer but it seems that 'Travel Photography' continues to be on a roll as I recently came across a publication called "Travel Photography made easy"! I'm hoping it will help to answer the above question but if nothing else, maybe it will help me to get better images that capture the essence of places visited.

As befits a Travel Group, we are on the move next year with a new location for the Spring Weekend in April. We shall be based at Lacock, home to the Fox Talbot Museum and one of the pioneers of photography.

I am hoping that this location will attract more members to attend and in addition to a range of speakers we are planning one or two 'photographic' walks in the vicinity. Full details will be available in the new year.

And now a plea! The Committee is in need of a couple more members. If you would like to become involved, please let me know. It is a matter of helping to put together a programme of activities for members so that everyone can feel being a member is worthwhile.

Finally, congratulations to Andrew Gasson ARPS, this year's winner of the Gold Medal in the Nature category of this year's RPS International Projected Image Competition. You can see his fantastic shot of a lone penguin on the back page.

With all good wishes for the festive season and the new year, as well as happy travelling!

Liz Rhodes

Dates for Your Diary

Travel Group Spring Weekend, 28th-29th April, 2012 at Lacock, Wiltshire.

"Art Meets Travel in the South West", 12th-15th October, 2012: A weekend event in Torquay. Organised by the RPS SW Region in conjunction with the Visual Art and Travel Groups. Further details will be available early in 2012.

Antartica:

Confessions of a Repeat Offender

Andrew Gasson, ARPS



Our vessel making its way through packice

Why would anyone want to spend several days sailing across roughest seas in the world with the worst weather to spend a month in the remotest, coldest most inhospitable place on earth? There's actually no point in trying to explain: Antarctica either takes a hold on you or it doesn't.

It is often said that you never go to Antarctica only once. Of the 100 or so passengers on this latest voyage over three-quarters had been to the ice before and were what they term down there 'repeat offenders'. If explanation there must be, it could be summed up as: Adventure, Ice, History, Wildlife and Photography.

Adventure.

The adventure starts when the ship begins to roll 20° – keep taking the tablets - and is confirmed a day or two later with the sighting of the first iceberg. This particular Antarctic journey was a circumnavigation of the continent, starting in the Falklands and ending in Hobart (see Map below). The itinerary passed along the Phantom coast, so named because it hadn't even been mapped until the 1960s. It is scarcely ever possible to visit and then only by means of a specialised vessel such as our icebreaker, the Kapitan Khlebnikov. Mainly for environmental reasons, there will be just one more season in Antarctica before it returns to full time duties in Russian waters. After 2011 it is possible that

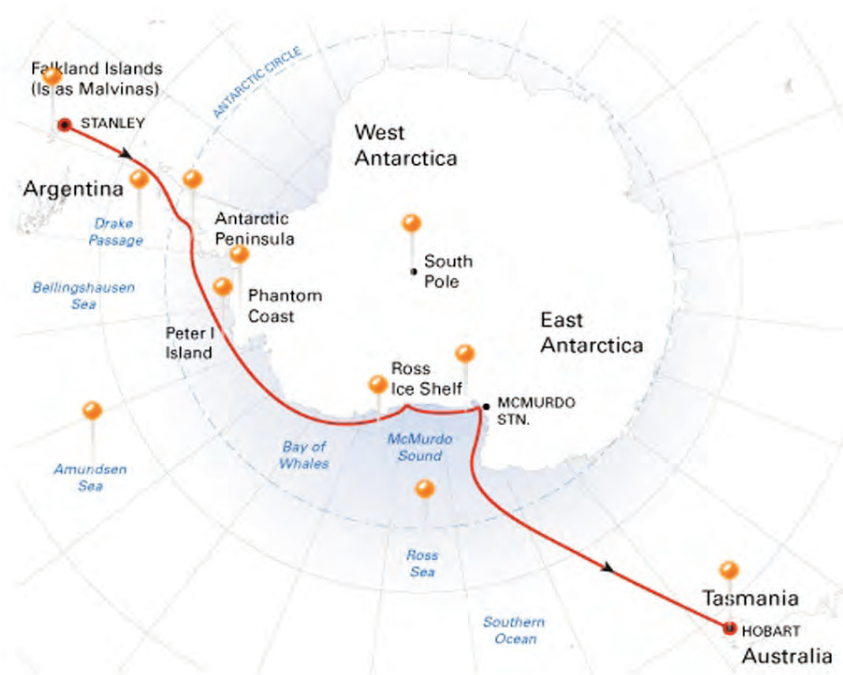
some of the remotest places on the planet may never be revisited.

The ice

There is a certain magic to being surrounded by ice as far as the eye can see. The weather, fortunately, was good for the majority of the trip. The temperature varied mainly between plus and minus 5°C, It certainly comes to something when you have to go to Antarctica to find better weather than England! The ice isn't just plain white to the horizon. The sea ice was constantly forming, melting and reforming giving in ascending order of size, the tiny crystals of frazil ice, the slushy grease ice, pancake ice, pack ice, growlers and icebergs. The older ice, compressed within icebergs, can be a startlingly deep blue. The scene is constantly changing with the temperature, the wind and, from the photographic point of view, the light.

History

This particular journey featured visits to the most important historic sites of Antarctica. These included Captain Scott's huts at Hut Point and Cape Evans, built respectively for the Discovery Expedition of 1901-04 and the Terra Nova Expedition of 1910-1913, as well as Shackleton's hut at Cape Royds from 1909. Admission is carefully controlled with only eight or so people allowed in at a time and then only for five to ten minutes. This is a frustratingly short time and one is forced to choose between rapidly taking all the photographs possible or just standing there soaking up the





Iceberg and pancake ice

atmosphere and enjoying the privilege of standing where the Antarctic pioneers stood. Still to be seen are Scott's desk with a decaying half read copy of *The Illustrated London News*; Herbert Ponting's original darkroom, full of his original plates and chemicals; boxes of human and canine sledging rations; Shackleton's blubber stove; faded photographs of the Royal Family – all the result of painstaking restoration work by the Antarctic Heritage Trust.

The wildlife

Perhaps the greatest delight is the abundance of wildlife. Everyone loves penguins, stately Emperors, gregarious Kings, feisty Royals, the ubiquitous Adelie and the cheeky looking Chinstraps. Standing instructions are not to approach closer than five metres but stay still during a landing and these flat footed avians come to you, staring you out and pecking your boots. But there are also seals, common fur and crabeater, much rarer Ross seals and leopard seals in penguin kill mode. Even at sea, bird life is there in abundance from the huge wandering albatross

to the tiny snow petrels.

Photography

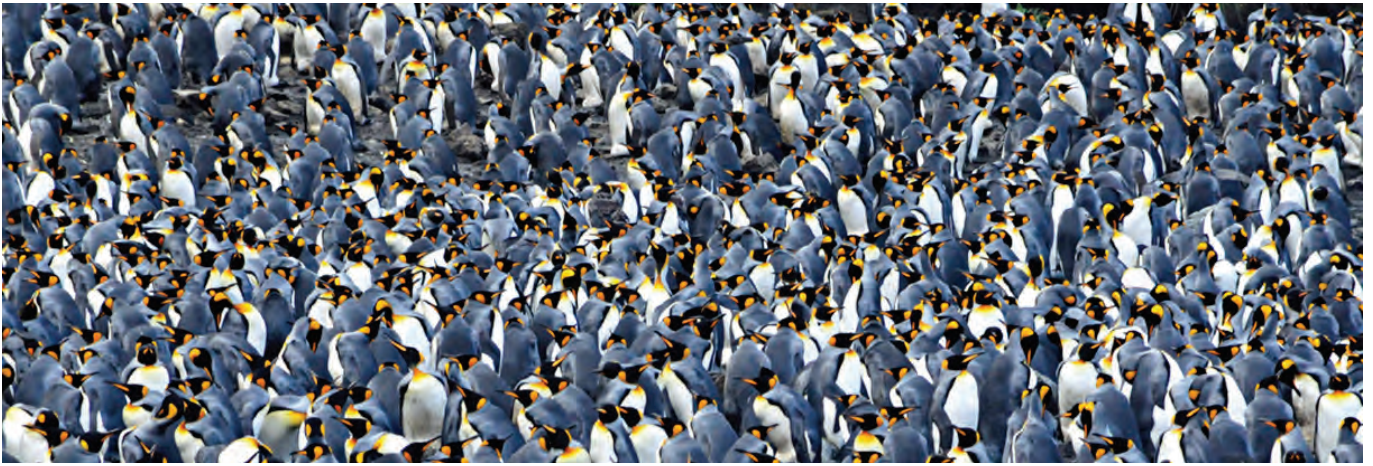
On board this particular trip one of the guest lecturers was Doug Alan, the noted photographer of '*Life in the Freezer*' fame. In high summer, there is daylight 24 hours a day. The sun never sets so there are no sunset pictures; but it also means that the light

can be beautiful and photographically inspiring at any time of the day or night. Sleep deprivation is a serious risk!

Eventually, the itinerary dictated that the ice, the heritage and the wildlife must be left behind; but as Arnold Schwarzenegger said, "I'll be back!"



Shackleton's Hut, Cape Royds



Antarctica in all its glory! All pictures by Andrew Gasson, ARPS

Cumbria, but not The Lakes

Quiller Barrett

Most visitors to Cumbria photograph the Lakes but when I spent a few days at *The Pheasant Inn* (recommended), close to Bassenthwaite Lake, I headed west instead. It was unknown country for me, except that I had long admired the photographs Raymond Moore had taken in the no-man's land bordering the Solway Firth. Moore was there in the late 70s and early 80s and he had an uncanny eye for understated detail; he produced some wonderful, intense images that reflect his rather melancholic state of mind. You can see many of them on the website www.weepin-gash.co.uk, including several that were in his major Hayward Gallery retrospective.

My visit coincided with some snow so I decided to restrict myself to mono and to try to follow in Raymond Moore's footsteps. From Bassenthwaite you pass through Cockermouth, devastated by floods but recovering, and discover villages and hamlets with intriguing names like Baggrow, Aspatria and Flimby. When you reach the coast there is plenty of variety with a mix of faded Edwardian resorts and some rather seedy and insalubrious stretches. I concentrated on the coastline between St Bees Head and Silloth that includes Georgian, regenerated Whitehaven and Maryport as well as Workington, badly flooded in 2009 and once a producer of coal, steel and iron ore.

Ray Moore was right: there is a lot more to Cumbria than The Lakes.



Silloth



Baggrow



Silloth Cafe

Ethiopia : The Cradle of Man

Liz Rhodes



View of the Siemian Mountaing

"The origin of Ethiopia is largely the origin of us all"

Javier Gozalbez

I have no idea who Javier Gozalbez is (I found the quote through the internet!) but after a two week trip to Ethiopia back in February, I have a better understanding of what he means. In 1974 the skeleton of a female was discovered to the east of Addis Ababa and as a result of carbon dating she is reputed to be 3.2 million years old. This makes her a very early ancestor of us all and is reason enough for going to Ethiopia.

It is country with a very long history, but is also one that many do not know much about unless it is to do with such legends as Prester John, reputedly a Christian King in an African country, or the more modern ravages of drought and starvation brought to our television screens through the wonders of technology.

It is, however, a country well worth visiting and is full of surprises. Over twice the size of France, it is one of the few countries in Africa never to have been fully colonised – the Italians left a late mark in the early 20th century in the north of the country, a consequence of which

has been the breaking away of the province of Eritrea to become an independent country. It has connections to the mythical Queen of Sheba, is mountainous and large parts of it were isolated for many centuries. Despite this, though, it was at the centre of many trade routes, particularly from Arabia and up through Egypt to the Mediterranean world. As a result Christianity developed as an important part of people's lives, drawing on roots from Syria and the Byzantine world, as well as through Jesuits from Rome. All these strands were mixed up and forged into something of a unique religion which remains so today.

The trip started in the capital Addis Ababa, a city striving to be modern with much building work. It seemed to lack a centre but as we only there for two days there was not much time to get properly orientated. Two things stick in the mind, though: the first was coming across numerous wedding parties making their way through a park just below our hotel on the Sunday morning we arrived. The Bride and Groom were dressed just as any western couple but as they progressed they were followed by their family and friends clapping and singing, making for a very jolly procession. The other was coming across a Tombstone to Sylvia Pankhurst outside the Cathedral. It transpired that she knew the Emperor Haile Selassie and went out to Ethiopia in the 1930s to help him against the



Blue Nile Falls

Fascists and stayed until she died in 1960.

Ethiopia lacks a good road network – though we came across signs of the Chinese busy building new ones – and so the only way to get around quickly is to fly. We were heading north, our first stop being Axum, a town not far from the border with Eritrea. It is here that the fabled ‘Ark of the Covenant’ is supposed to reside but since it is guarded by a lone priest and no-one is allowed to see it, it is matter of conjecture whether it really exists or not! We made visits to churches and archaeological sites driving through a landscape dotted with terrace farming and small villages consisting of mud huts, always with a small church set aside on its own. Roads, for the most part, were dusty tracks that wound up and down hills through a landscape that could not have changed for centuries.

Next stop was Lalibela, a town that perches up a mountainside and houses a number of spectacular churches, many carved out of the rock face. It is hard to imagine how they were done and thus they are all the more awe-inspiring. It is not always easy to get a sense of the shape of the church from the outside but inside is another matter. While dark, they can be full of colour due to the paintings they contain, some on the walls, others on large cloths. Usually there is one priest, who is the guardian of the church, and if asked, he will show a small collection of richly illustrated bibles and Ethiopian crosses, which come in many different patterns. Most of the churches were quite small, with mats covering the stone floors. There are no chairs because people stand during the services, the many leaning on long sticks that are shaped in a ‘Y’ at the top to lean on. It was in Lalibela that I got a sense of the importance of religion in people’s lives. We happened to be there on a Sunday so early in the morning we went to one of the church complexes. It was like a scene from biblical times - a large number of people squatted on the ground outside while a richly-dressed priest took the service – the story of the ‘Sermon on the Mount’



Religious wall painting



Priest with crosses



“Sermon on the Mount”



Dusty road landscape

came to mind.

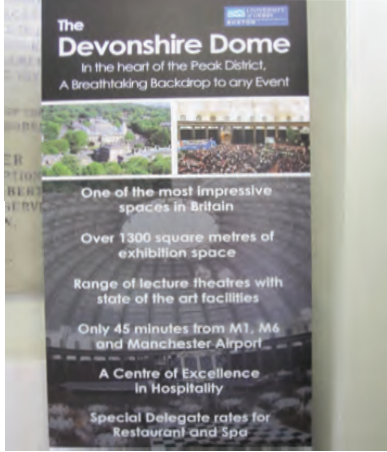
Then it was on to Gondar, the centre of the Ethiopian Empire in the 17th and 18th centuries. A bustling town, with remnants of Italian architecture, it has a collection of castles which have a distinctly European feel. This is due to the influence of the Portuguese who sent an expeditionary force during the 16th/17th centuries, though they didn't stay long. It was near here that we had the opportunity to take a short walk in the foothills of the Siemian Mountains, a spectacular range that rose and fell away for a great distance. Out of nowhere sprang lots of children and young people who followed us to a view point which looked over a landscape that was breathtaking.

From Gondar we headed south by bus to Bahar Dar, at the southern end of Lake Tana, one of the largest in Africa. Dotted around this southern end of the Lake are some churches which differed in style to those we had seen further north. Circular and with a covered walkway around the building, they were covered in colourful paintings both inside and out, many depicting familiar scenes from the Bible, as well as St. George killing the dragon – it turns out he is patron saint of Ethiopia as well as England.

Lake Tana is the source of the Blue Nile and the Blue Nile Falls, discovered by the Scottish explorer, James Bruce in 1770, sends the water on its way through a narrow gorge and then on to the Mediterranean, following a large loop to the West before heading northwards.

Then it was back to Addis Ababa by plane with another day there before flying home. It was a fascinating trip, an opportunity to see something of a country that is rich in its traditions but also wanting to catch up with the 'West'. I got the sense that despite the fact that 85% of the population live in the countryside and there is a huge gap between the rich and the poor, there is small but growing middle-class who hope to reap the benefits of education and go on to address the challenges of poverty and climate change as well as growing the economy. In the process I hope they don't destroy what makes Ethiopia a unique country.

Buxton Weekend
May 2011 - Memories of
our Spring Weekend in
the Peak District
Hillary Hammond





Portfolio
Round 17

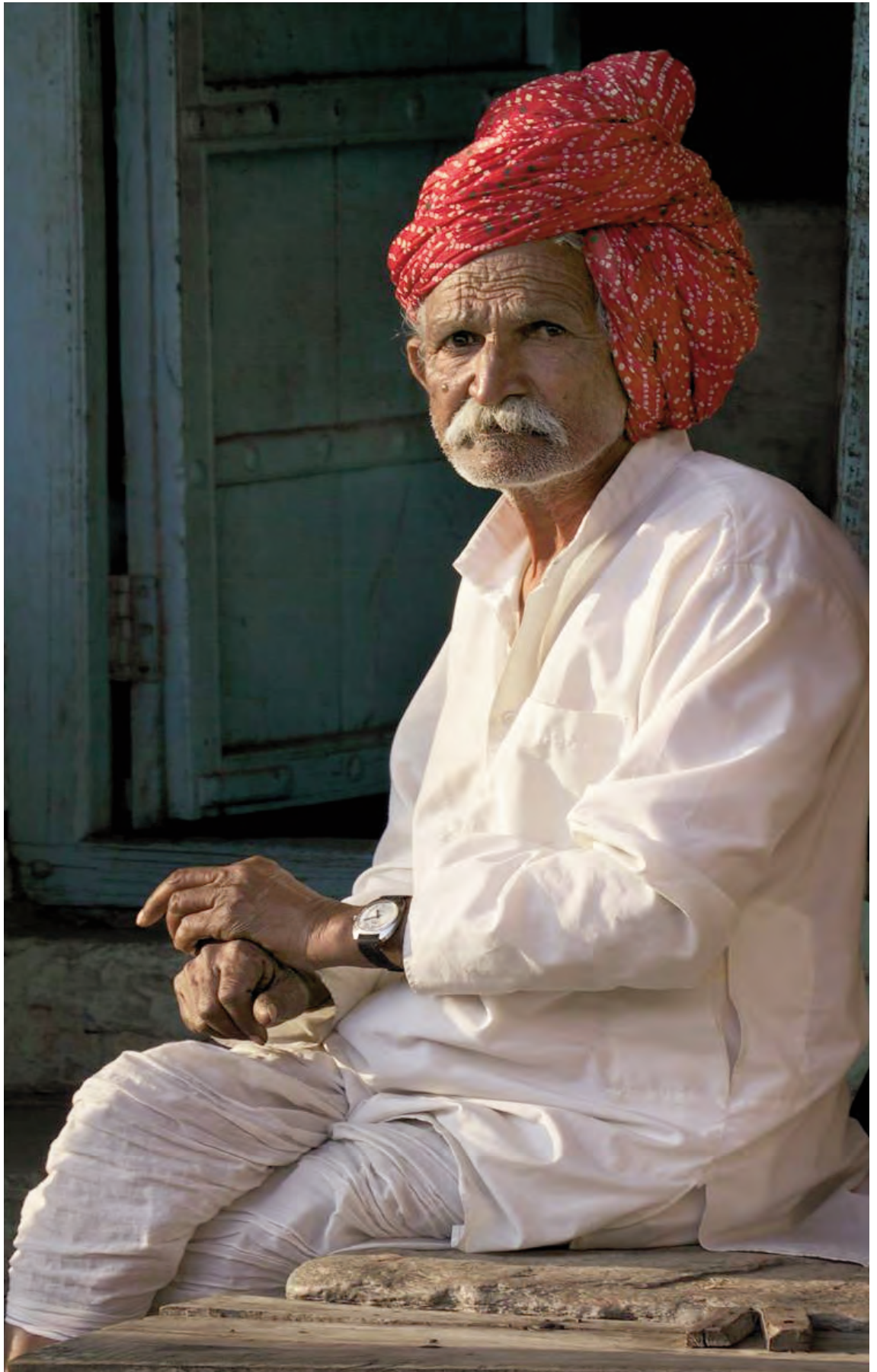
Morning Laundry, by Heng, Zee Keks.

Picture captured at Kampong Ketam, a small village situated along the coastal area of Pulau Ketam which is about 2.5 hours boat-ride from Semporna, Sabah, Malaysia. It was early morning, about 7:30am, 1 March 2011. I wonder whether the clothes need to be rinsed by fresh water after washing? The villagers are immigrants from the southern Philippines.



Rajasthani Man, by Jonathan Ratnage.

Taken on my trip in February 2011. I liked the light on this old man who was sitting outside the tailors shop in Pushkar.



Travel Tours Update

COSTA RICA – Paradise of the Neotropics



Emerald basilisk, by Keith Offord

Royal Photographic Society Travel Group Tour to Costa Rica

****only two places left****

19 January - 2 February 2013

Costa Rica is a photographer's dream. Be prepared to be stunned by the extraordinary array of birds and other wildlife which awaits you. This tiny country is one of the most biodiverse in the world with as great a number of species per square kilometre as almost anywhere. Not only is there a vast array of species but many of them are exotically coloured and photogenic such as the stunningly-plumaged Resplendent Quetzal, prehistoric Basilisk Lizards and jewel-like hummingbirds. This tour has been designed to explore a number of the key habitats from cloud forests to coastal plains, taking time to enjoy and savour the riches on offer and maximise photographic opportunities. Throughout this tour plenty of unscheduled time will be available to wander at will with your camera as well as more organised activities including the not-to-be-missed boat trip on the River Tarcoles. Help and photographic tips will be available throughout and accommodation has been chosen for comfort, quality and location.

Itinerary:

Day 1: Depart Heathrow Saturday a.m for flight via the USA to Costa Rica. Arrive San Jose late afternoon. Overnight Hotel Bougainvillea.

Day 2-4: The morning will start with an optional stroll around the hotel garden which is large and beautifully maintained. It will provide the first chance to photograph some of Costa Rica's exotic plants such as bromeliads as well as a number of bird species – one of the most photogenic being the fabulous Blue-crowned Motmot which is a regular visitor. Other exciting birds include Squirrel Cuckoo, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird and a variety of colourful warblers and tanagers. Our destination today is the high altitude cloud forest and our journey of about three hours will take us due south from San Jose, pausing

along the way for photos of course. Soon we will be in a fresher climate and the Savegre Valley is one of the best examples of this special habitat where vast forests cover the mountains. Our lodge is the perfect base and without going any distance we are surrounded by fabulous birds – at least six species of hummingbird plus woodpeckers, woodcreepers, flycatchers, tanagers and possibly our first toucanet. The star of the area is of course the Resplendent Quetzal, iconic to Costa Rica and a truly fabulous sight although not always easy to see or photograph. We may be lucky, who knows? The three nights will be spent at the delightful Savegre Mountain Lodge where our very comfortable chalets integrate with flower-filled gardens and are surrounded by immense trees. Overnights Savegre Mountain Lodge.

Day 5: We head to Costa Rica's Pacific coastline to spend the next three nights at Hotel Villa Lapas which is on the very edge of the Carara National Park. Here, dry forest meets lowland rainforest and the area supports an amazing wealth of wildlife. As well as a multitude of birds including perfectly photogenic trogons, toucans and Scarlet macaws we will look out for Orange-collared Manakins dancing at their leks. All around there are great photographic subjects including White-faced Capucin Monkeys, enormous Black Ctenosaurus lizards and at night the grounds of the hotel come alive with frogs and the occasional visit from anteaters. On one of the days we will take a boat trip into the mangroves along the river Tarcoles which is one of the best opportunities for close-up images of water birds. Overnights Hotel Villa Lapas.

Day 8-10: Today our tour takes us across to Selva Verde Lodge in the tropical lowlands of Sarapiquí. The lodge is located at the edge of the wildlife-rich rain forest region along the banks of the Sarapiquí river. This at the base of the Caribbean slope is well-known for hosting the greatest diversity of tropical flora and fauna in the country. It is a photographer's dream with numerous feeders around the grounds attracting exotically-coloured tanagers, toucans and honeycreepers to name a few. Massive Blue Morpho Butterflies float around, prehistoric-looking Emerald Basilisk lizards forage the grounds and in the leaf litter we will be looking out for colourful poison-dart

frogs. Also lurking in the forest are two- and three-toed sloths, 3 different species of monkeys, and peccaries.

During the next two days we will visit La Selva Biological Station run by the Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS), clearly a highlight of the tour. The station is among the four most famous tropical research facilities in the world. We will see an outstanding abundance of wildlife. The station is home to more than 420 bird species, more than 500 species of butterflies, 55 species of snakes, and 120 species of mammals. Overnights Selva Verde Lodge.

Day 11, 12, 13: We then travel to Arenal Observatory which overlooks the active Arenal Volcano. On a clear day spectacular views can be enjoyed of this geological monument. This mid-elevation area also is an excellent spot for birds such as Crimson-collared, Bay-headed, Silver-

throated and Hepatic Tanagers, Red-legged Honeycreeper, and a range of raptors including Ornate Hawk-eagle and White Hawk. The feeding station at the Observatory where we are staying is a magnet for a range of birds, Coati Mundis and on a recent trip an Oncilla (beautiful spotted forest cat) made an appearance! The gardens and trails surrounding our accommodation are also excellent with endless photographic opportunities. Overnights Arenal Observatory Lodge.

Day 14: Return to San Jose for a farewell dinner and an overnight stay.

Day 15: Departure first thing for the airport to return home. Flight arrives back in UK next day (Sunday)

Holiday Information

Dates: 19 January-2 February 2013 (14 nights in Costa Rica)

Departure Airport Heathrow

Flight Times* To be confirmed

Accommodation Good quality hotels and lodges

Transport Comfortable air-conditioned bus

Leader Keith Offord

Cost £3900 per person sharing a twin room

Single Supplement £300

Deposit £500

Group size Minimum 6, Maximum 12

Pace Walks will be generally no longer than 4 Km, at a gentle pace on level gradients but sometimes over uneven ground. Opportunities will be taken routinely to stop with plenty of time to photograph. A reasonable level of mobility is required throughout

*Flight times are quoted to the best of our knowledge but are subject to possible changes.

Price includes: Economy class flights, accommodation at good quality hotels and lodges with private facilities, full board (breakfast, lunch, dinner), transport by private air-conditioned bus, entrance fees, tips and services of Wild Insights leader.

Booking Instructions:

Contact WildWings 0117 9658333 to advance register your place. A £50 (returnable) deposit will be taken at this stage followed by a request for the full deposit 12 months ahead of the trip. Places will be allocated on a strictly first-come first-serve basis.

Wild Insights overseas tours are part of a wider programme of WildWings birdwatching and wildlife holidays worldwide, and their terms and conditions apply. WildWings is fully licensed and bonded with ABTA and IATA and all their overseas tours are fully protected by their Civil Aviation Authority ATOL Licence, number 5429.

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Lone emperor penguin: Gold Medal Winner, RPS International Projected Image Competition, 2011

Publication dates

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

Contributions

Contributions are welcome on all aspects of travel, travel photography, travel holidays and exhibitions.

Material for articles can be submitted by email to the Editor or on a CD and mailed to the address on page 3.

Text should be sent as an MS Word or TXT file. 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 submit 10-12 to enable a selection to be made, including images in landscape or portrait format.

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.

If in doubt, please contact the Editor for advice, particularly if assistance is required in formatting digital images.

Copy deadlines

April issue - 1st February

August issue - 1st June

December issue - 1st October

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