

TRAVEL LOG

The Journal of the RPS Travel Group
Issue 93 | Winter/Spring 2025

THE RPS
ROYAL
PHOTOGRAPHIC
SOCIETY



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Travel Log



The Journal of the RPS Travel Group

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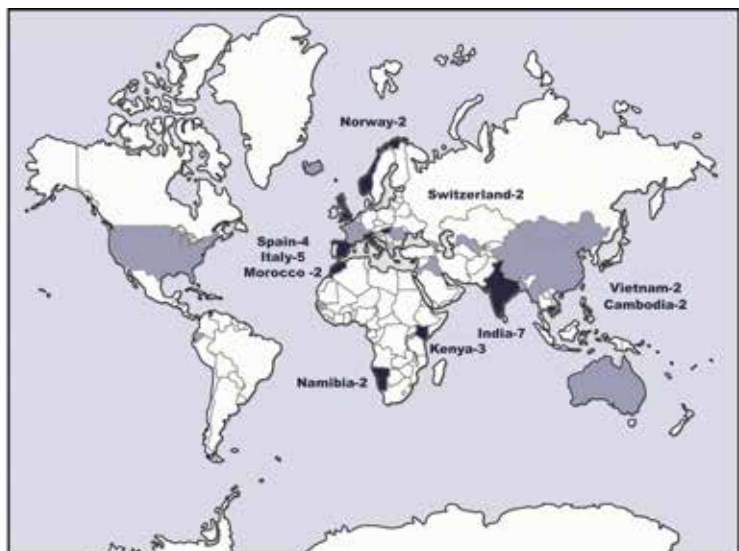
Views of contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the RPS Travel Group or The Royal Photographic Society.

A note from the Editorial Team

When putting together the content for this issue it struck me that many of the locations featured in the issues I have been involved in have focused on Asia, Europe and Africa. There have been very few articles submitted on North, South or Central America. It made me wonder why this is. Do our members travel more frequently to Eastern locations? Do we think these locations are more interesting, more photogenic or tell a better story? It has made me curious, especially with the theme of our big event in October the 'Roads less travelled'.

I would love to feature more articles from the west. I was fortunate to spend December in South America. I had a few days in Buenos Aires, Argentina, before venturing south to Ushuaia and then Falkland Islands, South Georgia and Antarctica. I have been to South America before but there is definitely more of it I would like to explore. I would love to feature some articles from the Americas. Not just to gain some inspiration, but because I think it would be good to help diversify the content of Travel Log.

I have pulled together a map showing the main location of articles, not including this issue, since I took over as editor.



The dark purple shows countries with more than two articles. There is a lot more of the world we could cover in future issues. Please get in touch if you can take up this challenge.

Regards from the
Travel Log Editor
editortravel@rps.org
Winter/Spring 2025



Cover photo by
Valerie Mather ARPS

"The beautiful light in Marrakesh highlighting the stark contrast between the finery of the clothing worn by a mother and her daughter and the decay of the surrounding buildings is why I pressed the shutter at this moment"



A note from our Chair



Mike Longhurst in his article about Orkney writes of being 'of a certain age': this edition reminds me just how fortunate so many of us in the Travel Group are - both to have lived so long and to have had so many opportunities to travel and 'get inside' places we visit. John Cavana reminds us that it's not only when photography is the prime purpose of our travel that we both learn about places and their people and enjoy them: we can come home from package holidays now with cracking images and have had all the planning done for us.

And I'm grateful that Peter Mudd responded to Peter Walmsley's article and felt able to produce his counter-argument. I am firmly convinced that it is possible to bring a travel photographer's eye to the places we visit within our home countries: though it may be more difficult to bring the excitement of the newly seen, it's certainly not impossible. The Group has an increasing number of visits and walks within the UK which I hope will validate this belief (look at the images of the Elan Valley in this edition of Travel Log) and we'd be delighted to work with some of our overseas members to offer something where they live. And notice that Karen Brindley, sharing her fascinating images of Naples, indicates that more than one visit was necessary to gain the understanding and images she felt necessary to achieve her Associate Distinction. So maybe there's balance here, maybe it's about seeing differently something which is familiar.....

Thank you to our Editorial Team and to our contributors for an edition of Travel Log which has had me longing to return to some places, to visit others and definitely to go through those old slides and see what can be resurrected: like Pia, I visited China in the 1990s! And it was in the 70s that I visited the Golden Temple in Amritsar, shared

the Langar and was able to photograph inside the actual shrine. Thanks for the memories, Andrew!

In other news: the Travel Group is growing and we are delighted to welcome new members whom we hope will also feel free to contribute to our on-going discussions.

I very much hope many of you will join us in Royal Leamington Spa in October. The programme is a full one - and varied, paying attention to the motivation for travel as well as the styles and techniques which are part of travel photography. Please do book early to take advantage of both the Group member's Early Bird rate for the conference (ends May 18th) and the accommodation (ends July 31st). We are looking forward to a really good weekend with lots of discussion and many opportunities to meet other Group members. Bookings, to date, suggest that will be the case.

We'd also be glad to have a good attendance at our AGM - 17th May 10.00a.m online. We'd love to see a good representation of our overseas members, too as they are increasingly present at Share and Chat sessions and online talks during the year. This will be your opportunity to make suggestions for Group activities and to offer to help as a volunteer whether by serving on the committee or in some other way more relevant to your personal skills. We'd love to have you actively on board!

Kath
Kathryn Phillips ARPS
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THE GOLDEN TEMPLE

AMRITSAR - PUNJAB

Travelling offers the opportunity to combine photography with gaining a deeper understanding of the people, culture, and history of the places I am fortunate enough to visit. Spending time learning about the places and people offers an ability to get “under the skin” of a location. I do though wonder if getting under the skin actually improves photography...

I was fortunate to visit Amritsar in early 2024 and during my time I was introduced to its highly notable history. Amritsar has also endured more than its fair share of tragic events. The year I visited was the 40-year anniversary of the Blue Star Operation when the city's Golden Temple was stormed and around 400 people were massacred.

Ultimately, this resulted in the death of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and the impact of these bloody events is still felt today by Sikhs across the world.

In 1919 a similar number were killed, but thousands more were wounded in what is known as the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre. British troops fired on unarmed Indians in a public enclosed area which hampered any opportunity to escape. The evidence of the atrocity remains in place as the site is now a national monument.

Given its location in the Punjab and the closeness to Pakistan, Amritsar played a major role in the partition of India. The city suffered much tragedy over this period, most notably in the 1947 Amritsar train massacre when three thousand Muslim refugees were killed and one thousand injured.

Learning about these events certainly gave me a deeper understanding of Amritsar and being British accentuates the emotions one feels when learning more about the role we played in the horror of these events.

Perhaps these historical events enhance the spiritual feeling that one gets upon entering the Golden Temple area. This, combined with the sheer beauty of the architecture and the recognition that this is the spiritual centre of the Sikh religion just raises the bar beyond what I have experienced before. My hope is that some degree of this is captured in the images in this article. I wanted to capture the Golden Temple at sunrise



WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY ANDREW ALBERT FLANNIGAN ARPS



***The Golden Temple is busy from early morning,
yet an elderly Sikh couple find a spot for quiet contemplation and prayer***

and sunset and to show the profound reverence displayed by the visiting Sikhs. Many will have made a once in a lifetime pilgrimage from beyond the Punjab and many from outside India. There are moments of individual contemplation and of family and friends sharing a very unique experience.



The morning light can be incredibly soft, reflecting off the marble and the pool. Sikhs will often enter the water to offer prayer. Anyone can take a dip, a symbolic cleansing of the soul

***Many photographs are
taken to capture the
memories of what for
many will be a once in a
lifetime trip***



Sikh bathing in the temple pool



Sikh Guards protecting the Golden Temple



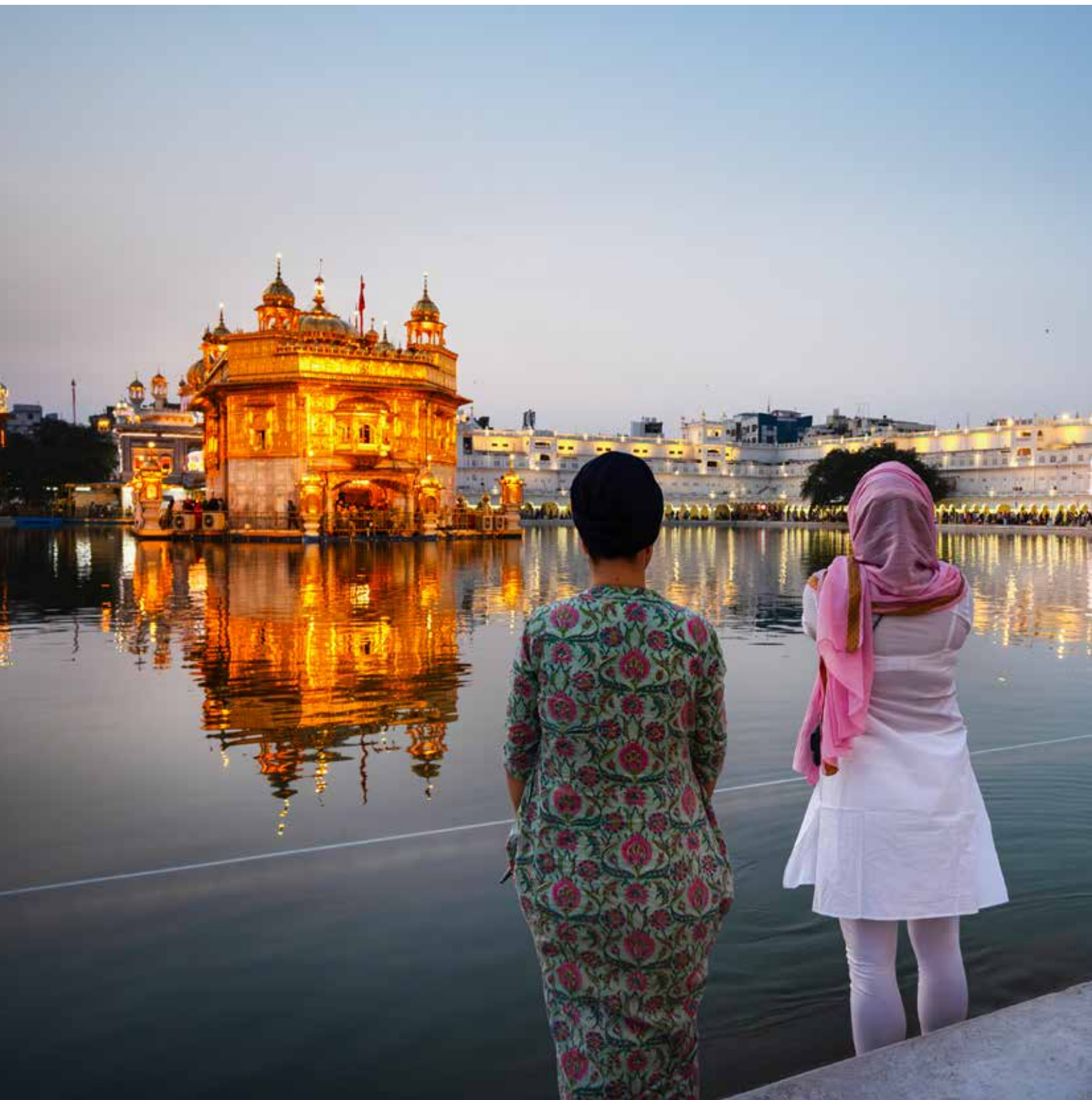
The Golden Temple, also known as the Harmandir Sahib, is one of the holiest sites in Sikhism. The temple was first constructed in 1604 and was rebuilt in copper, marble and gold leaf in the early 1800s. It has often required rebuilding and repair as it has been a target for persecution through its lifetime. Rebuild work was last done as recently as 1984 after storming by Indian army troops.

The layout is a square complex surrounding the pool which was built in mid 16th Century. The complex is a collection of buildings around the pool with four entrances. These include the clock tower, a museum and the Sikh community-run kitchen that offers free food to all visitors.



Visitors cover all age groups, however the reverence displayed is common to all

As the sun sets the lights of the temple and buildings illuminate, creating a feast for the eyes. In the evening the mood appears to be somewhat more relaxed, but the spiritualism remains



A family comes together to worship



Pilgrims will travel from across India to the Golden Temple



Worship is often mixed with some play



There are steps down to the sunken pool and the entrances to the surrounding buildings, unlike Hindu temples which are on raised platforms



Everyone is welcome to prepare and serve food or to help clean up in the dining rooms and in the kitchens. Dishes are washed and inspected to ensure the highest level of hygiene



The Golden Temple welcomes people of all religions and this reinforces the Sikh belief in equality. However, more than just offering a welcome the Sikhs at the temple go beyond this and offer each visitor free food and drink.

This allows the travellers and pilgrims to remain inside the Golden Temple for longer periods and extends the opportunity for worship or just to provide more time to include some relaxation. The community kitchen also provides some much sought-after shade and cooler air away from what is often a blistering Punjabi heat.

The Community Kitchen or Langar has served the community and visitors throughout the temple's history. It provides an important role for the local population of volunteers to ensure the well-being by feeding all attending. Those helping in the community kitchen are also teaching the etiquette of sitting and eating in a community situation, which has played an important part in upholding the virtue of sameness of all human beings.



There is incredible pride in those who work in the kitchens, preparing food for the hungry visitors. The food is vegetarian, comprising rotis, pickle, daal and rice

Photographing inside the kitchen and dining areas can be a challenge as sunlight is blocked out in an attempt to maintain cooler temperatures. Scenes can have a very high contrast where daylight is often visible, streaming in through windows, doors and shutters.



***The kitchen generally serves 50,000 - 60,000 meals a day
and can serve up to 100,000 visitors a day during the festivals***



The workers and volunteers are often keen to chat about their work and have their pictures taken. There is incredible pride displayed by all and rightly so.

I still don't know if getting under the skin impacts or even improves my work. In the few days I spent here I really did feel that I was discovering things I didn't know about the history and the people, but felt I should.

The glimpses I got of the culture and the short exchanges I had with people I met, especially our guide, did give me a deeper understanding of not just the Sikh culture, but also of India. What I can be certain of is that I get more personal pleasure in making and viewing these photographs because I got under the skin and for that they carry more emotion for me than many others I have taken.



THE RPS
ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

TRAVEL

Roads Less Travelled

11-12 October 2025

**Woodland Grange Conference Centre
Royal Leamington Spa**

A mix of inspiring speakers and activities has been brought together to mark the 55th anniversary of the formation of the RPS Travel Group. At a time when journeying to 'off the beaten track' places was much less easy than it is now, one of the Group's primary purposes was to enable travel to unusual destinations. We do that much more independently now and perhaps put more emphasis on sharing the stories of our travels.

This weekend brings together a range of speakers and skills that will help each of us move forward on our photographic journey and have fun following our chosen paths.

**Ash Bhardwaj Peter Brisley Nat Coalson
Sue O'Connell Leigh Preston Chris Roche
and Prof. Lindsay Stringer**

Each will each share their unique 'take' on 'Roads Less Travelled' whether near to home or further afield; whether about photographic style or skill or about the effect of our travel on the places we visit and its importance to communities about whose cultures we learn.

There will also be opportunities to share your ideas both formally and informally and plenty of time to get to know other participants. There will be representatives from a small number of photographic suppliers to demonstrate their products and the popular Bring a Print competition with a prize awarded by Fotospeed.

Royal Leamington Spa is easy to reach by rail, road and air and is very near the historic heart of England, just a short distance from Stratford-upon-Avon and Warwick.

If you are not based in the UK and are planning to come, it would be easy to put a programme together for a longer stay.

OUR SPEAKERS



Ash Bhardwaj

An award-winning journalist, broadcaster, and author, whose work sits at the intersection of travel, culture, and current affairs. He has reported from over 50 countries for outlets including BBC Radio 4, The World Service, The Telegraph,

Times, Guardian, Condé Nast Traveller, and Huffington Post, and he appears as a travel expert on BBC One's Morning Live, Channel 5 and Sky News.



Peter Brisley ARPS EFIAP DPAGB BPE2*

Extensive travelling over the past twenty years to countries including Libya, Ethiopia, Japan and Mongolia has provided Peter with a wide range of subject matter for his graphic and 'fine art' approach to photography.

People, architectural details, landscapes, botanical subjects, and abstracts are all sources for stand-alone images or small panels of work. From darkroom to Lightroom, his special passion is still for monochrome images.

**Nat Coalson ARPS**

Owner of Photiq Gallery in Royal Leamington Spa, Nat Coalson is an internationally recognised artist and trainer who has spent his entire adult life working in the visual arts. Since 2003 he has focused on the photographic arts, initially with a passion for

landscape and nature photography, evolving into pure abstraction.

He has been teaching all aspects of photography and digital imaging for several decades and loves coaching photographers to perfect their craft.

**Sue O'Connell FIPF
MPSA EFIAP/d3 DPAGB
ABPE**

Sue has been a keen traveller all her life - the further and more remote the better - Colombia, Angola and Bangladesh being recent destinations. She enjoys a wide range of genres including

landscapes, documentary, wildlife and abstracts, but above all, loves photographing people.

She regularly enters salons and competitions, finding them a useful touchstone for her work. She is also lucky enough to have won numerous medals as well as having been awarded in "Travel Photographer of the Year" (four times), "Food Photographer of the Year" and "USA Landscape Photographer of the Year".

**Leigh Preston FRPS
EFIAP MPAGB**

Leigh has been taking pictures for over forty years. His work has been mainly thematic, making images as a series. He has a relatively specific approach to what he chooses to make pictures of, and relies heavily on

atmospherics, dramatic lighting and strong storylines to convey an individual style. A lot of his work is monochrome, using both digital and darkroom processes, depending on the 'feel' he wants from the finished print.



Christopher Roche was born in Quebec, Canada to Irish parents. He has since lived in Africa and several cities around Europe. Dividing his time between working as a filmmaker and a photographer he is now based between London and Bath.

He has won many awards internationally and his photographs have been published in international journals, exhibited at Royal Geographical Society in London and at United Nations Office at Geneva.



Prof. Lindsay Stringer is Professor in Environment and Development at the University of York and Director of the York Environmental Sustainability Institute, an interdisciplinary research centre that brings together people across disciplines and sectors to tackle some

of the world's big sustainability challenges. Lindsay has travelled extensively across all continents both for work and pleasure, and is always trying to find new ways to balance travel with sustainability.

Accommodation

Accommodation will be booked directly with the hotel. **Please call 01926 310507 and quote 216231 to obtain the preferential rates.** Full prepayment is required at the time of booking, with cancellation 48 hours prior to arrival.

Bed and Breakfast Package:

Single Occupancy £102.00 per room

Double Occupancy £117.00 per room

Dinner, Bed and Breakfast Package:

Single Occupancy £132.00 per room

Double Occupancy £172.00 per room

Rates include VAT and car parking.

**PLEASE NOTE THIS RATE IS
GUARANTEED ONLY UNTIL JULY 31st.**

Bookings after that may be at a higher cost and availability cannot be guaranteed.

How much will it cost?

Having been able to negotiate a very favourable day rate to include a three course lunch and free-flowing snacks and drinks in these very pleasant surroundings and due to the generosity of our speakers we are able to offer the full two day programme as follows:

Travel Group member (Early Bird - booked before May 18th)	£95
Travel Group member (Regular - booked after May 18th)	£105
RPS member (booked at any time)	£110
Non-RPS member (booked at any time)	£125

**For more information on our speakers,
programme and accommodation please
visit RPS website**

MY ARPS JOURNEY

BY KAREN BRINDLEY ARPS



PHOTOGRAPHED BY Harri Morris LRPS

Back in 2022 when I was awarded my Licentiate Distinction, I knew it wouldn't be long before I would start thinking about working towards an Associate Level. It was on my return from a trip to Naples in April 2023, that I began to wonder if I might have enough material for a panel in the Travel genre. Naples is one of the most remarkable cities I've ever been to – teeming with life, quintessentially Italian, with cameos at every turn. It had got under my skin, and I felt a connection that I wanted to explore further.

I am a member of Sidmouth Photographic Club and we are fortunate to have a Distinctions Special Interest Group (SIG) to help members work towards their RPS Distinctions. I re-joined the group in October 2023 (having been part of it for my L journey), to give me support on the road ahead. At the first meeting I showed a suggested layout to see what people thought and attempted a Statement of Intent (SOI).

They were well received as a concept, but there was a lot of feedback on both the SOI and images selected. It's funny looking back at the origins of the panel now with hindsight, as it shows I really didn't have a clue what would work in this genre! The SOI talked about capturing the character of the city, but it was felt I should be focusing on the character of the people instead. Speeding mopeds were mentioned in the SOI – but not shown in the images...a rookie error! And as for the images themselves many did not really convey a sense of place and could have been taken anywhere. And if I'm mentioning colour in the SOI, maybe I needed to include more vibrant images...and all the images should include people. Thankfully I was booked on another trip to Naples later that month, so I could keep all these inputs in mind when shooting more material. I took it so seriously that I even learned Italian for a month in the run up to the trip, in order to ask to take people's pictures!!





I had 4 full days in Naples to take photos and spent my time wandering about the oldest areas of the city, up and down the narrow streets looking for inspiration – and finding it! I even walked past the same old guy I'd seen leaning out of his green shuttered window in April – no movement in 6 months!! I started to get braver by day 3 and approached people "Posso fare una photo?" ...and no-one refused, although many were rather bemused. I was asked a couple of times if I was a photojournalist, and in reply learnt "Non, è la mia passione" – "it's my passion", as being Italian, they understood this more than "it's my hobby"! Back in the UK I began looking through my hundreds of images to construct a new panel and as a side project, I put together a short black & white Ezine about the men of Naples, which made me wonder if I should perhaps do this as a panel in black and white. I'd also spent some time taking pictures around Garibaldi station and wondered if they might make an interesting Fine Art panel. So, I decided to put together 3 different panels to see which one had the most possibilities, before committing to just one direction. Back to the Distinctions SIG for feedback!

At this stage, I must admit that I couldn't see the wood for the trees – too many ideas / directions / possibilities! After talking through my ideas with the group, I realised that I kept being drawn back to the colour images and that should be the way forward, which meant that I could concentrate now on forming the best combination of images and fine-tuning my SOI. I even dragged my dad into the process and

he helped me word-smith the first part of the SOI, finding the Paul Hollywood quote! At the beginning of January 2024, when the RPS released the assessment dates (there were only 2 per year per category), I panicked and booked the one in September, as I couldn't face waiting until 2025 to complete it! Now I had a fixed deadline to work towards...

I can't possibly mention all the various panel layouts I went through since – needless to say - there were many (poor Distinctions SIG, critiquing all these different options!). The next milestone was to attend an Advisory Day in Bristol, to show my prospective panel + SOI and receive feedback. On 20th May 2024 I headed up there to attend the Advisory Day in person and to learn what it is the assessors are looking for, what a successful panel looks like, listen to advice on other panels and have feedback on my own. It was a very enjoyable day – I learnt an awful lot, and in fact berated myself for not having attended one before going on my second Naples visit.

It was felt that my SOI needed tightening up slightly, but I was generally on the right track. However, if the focus was on everyday lives, then certain images didn't really fit. The addition of static portraits didn't provide a sense of place (no environmental details) and there were rather too many mopeds in the panel. But the assessors' appreciated the style of photography and careful placement of images to form a cohesive body of work.











I went back and completely reworked the panel again, focusing on the inputs received. But I just had to keep the old man with the green shutters, and it seemed fitting he should be the focal point in the middle of the panel – somehow his image was the beginning of my decision to use Naples for my A panel. It was at this stage I realised just how few images I had with the correct people to environment ratio – I either had close/staged portraits or environmental shots without people! So, it was becoming harder to fill the spaces! I booked a 1-2-1 session with the RPS and was lucky enough to be matched with Hazel Frost FRPS, Chair of the Travel category.

The 1-2-1 went well and Hazel could see that I was now moving in the right direction. Image 8 had to be removed due to borderline quality issues – and 7 was also potentially dodgy. Image 11 was too static and 5 not interesting enough. Hazel also suggested I mentioned the shutters in the SOI, seeing as I felt they were a key part of Neapolitan life.

Back to work again, because removing 5, 7, 8 and 11 had opened 4 gaps to fill – being mindful of the dimensions of the images to ensure balance across the panel, as well as the colours used. I submitted 4 versions back to Hazel, with 3 out of the 4 being acceptable...and my gut chose the final version! The Assessment Day itself on 11th September 2024

was nerve wracking, but it was so much better to be there in person. I asked a friend from my photographic club to join me on the day, as he had waded through literally hundreds of my images for quality control and given feedback on all my panel versions and was as invested in my success as I!

Whilst waiting for the day to start, I spotted Martin Parr going into his workplace opposite, which struck me as a very good omen! The first 2 print submissions were beautiful and no surprise that they both passed. Then it was on to digitals and mine was first up. The first assessor's comments were all positive. Then came a couple of criticisms – the whites in image 4 were far too bright (and to be fair they did look terrible – nothing like they did at home) and one area in image 13 looked as if it may have been amended...so I really wasn't sure which way it was going to go.

But thankfully it went my way, and I passed...oh the relief!! Out of 7 submissions that day only 3 passed – the other 4 clearly hadn't attended a 1-2-1 session, otherwise the issues would have been identified at an earlier stage. I managed to embarrass myself (and probably my friend) on the way out, by walking up to the assessors to thank them and because I was a tad giddy, dancing about and gushing my appreciation... oh well, just couldn't help myself after 18 months of hard work!



Panel Submitted to Advisory Day
on 20th May 2024



Panel Submitted to One-2-One session
on 3rd July 2024

STATEMENT OF INTENT

All cities have their own atmosphere, personality and flavour, and Napoli is no exception. Paul Hollywood felt that it "certainly has a lived-in look...a little bit dirty, but I love it". And so do I. I got a real feel for the city as I wandered around its narrow cobbled streets and engaged with the locals.

Life is lived at a slower pace here, no doubt due to the hot climate, where friends have time to stop and chat, and residents often while away the hours gazing out over their neighbourhood. With most apartments having their doors and shuttered windows to just one side of the property, these openings are in regular use, as they provide valuable light and a way to interact with passers-by.

My panel aims to celebrate the character of the Neapolitan people as they go about their everyday lives, the beating heart of this remarkable city.

Successful Submission 11th September 2024



TRAVEL TRIPS

SAFARI TO KENYA - JUNE 2024

Four members of the Travel Group, Joaquim Capitaio, Sarah Newton, Denis Rigg and Maureen Rigg joined Alison Mees for a trip to Kenya



ALISON MEES

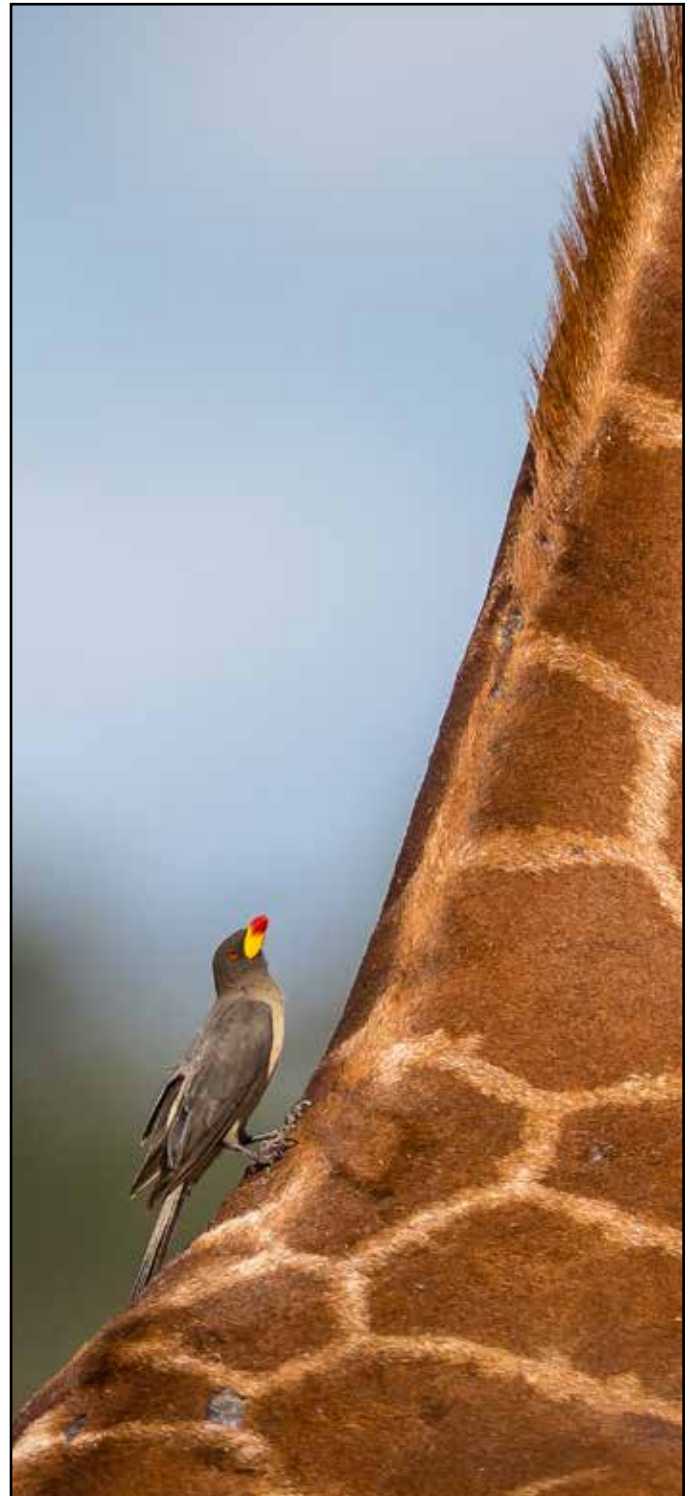
Africa has been my special place since I was a child - those wild open plains and variety of wildlife never stop giving.

Mid June and the RPS Travel Group travelled to Kenya for an 8 night wildlife photographic safari led by me.

We spent 4 nights in Ol Pejeta Conservancy, which has the largest population of rhinos in East Africa. But also getting the opportunity to photograph the resident lion pride in golden light, elephants, zebra, giraffe, hyena and jackals. The camp had a waterhole so down time was spent there watching the variety of wildlife come to drink.

After 4 nights we headed to the Mara, spending 4 nights in Olare Motorogi Conservancy, where we were fortunate to spend a few hours watching a cheetah & her cub interacting and also a couple of hunts.

We would depart from camp whilst it was still dark, to ensure we made the best opportunities of the golden hour, returning to camp for lunch, then back out late afternoon until it was dark.



Bull Elephant. Our breakfast was a hamper out in the bush every morning. This particular morning, this bull elephant was walking across the plains towards us. At a safe distance, we walked closer and got down low. What an experience, on foot, watching this elephant walk along the horizon. You certainly realise his size and how quietly he moved.



Cheetah Stalking. We were lucky on our trip to come across this cheetah mum and her 8-month-old cub a few times. First time was just as we landed at the airstrip. We got to watch her hunt a couple of times - twice with no luck, and once she succeeded - at a very fast speed! Just watching her interact with her cub, teaching it skills that it will need once older, also makes you realise how vulnerable cheetahs are with other predators around.



Jackal mum and pup. Jackals are very shy, so early in the morning when we came across a den - what a joy to sit and watch. A 500mm lens or even longer was needed for this den. When a parent comes back from hunting or scavenging the pup would greet the adult.



Giraffe & Oxpecker (left) - it was not just about photographing a portrait or the animal in the landscape - but also getting in close and looking at patterns, textures and how different species interact with each other. Oxpeckers are often seen on other species of animals and have a symbiotic relationship. The oxpecker feeds off ticks and parasites.

DENIS RIGG LRPS

The safari to Kenya with Alison was a tremendous experience. It was amazing to be up so close to the animals, seeing them in their natural habitat. Not only the photo opportunities that were created, but just sitting quietly watching the animals was a real treat. There were many memorable moments such as watching the baby jackals playing with their mother or the elephants drinking from and crossing the river, but for me what was really special was being up close to the cheetahs and lions. I am a "Big Cat" lover and being so close watching them playing, learning to hunt and actually hunting were for me the most memorable moments of the safari. Cheetahs are such beautiful animals and you can see the "built for speed" power as they walk through the grass, and with lions, it is quite disturbing for one to be walking towards you looking you in the eye.





SARAH NEWTON ARPS, MA PHOTOGRAPHY

Among the many moments on safari with Alison and indeed, whenever photographing wildlife, are those which reach into your soul and make you hold your breath for a nanosecond. These include the apparent time-stopping direct eye contact (I say apparent as what the animal or bird is looking at and what they are perceiving is an open question). Small adjustments to cropping, exposure, highlights and shadows in some images, such as the giraffe, can reveal its beauty in greater detail. I appreciate this may not be to everyone's taste as the image may transform from an accurate record of a natural encounter to an artistic creation. At the end of the day it is about personal preferences and also, for my part, learning more about the creatures we share our planet with.

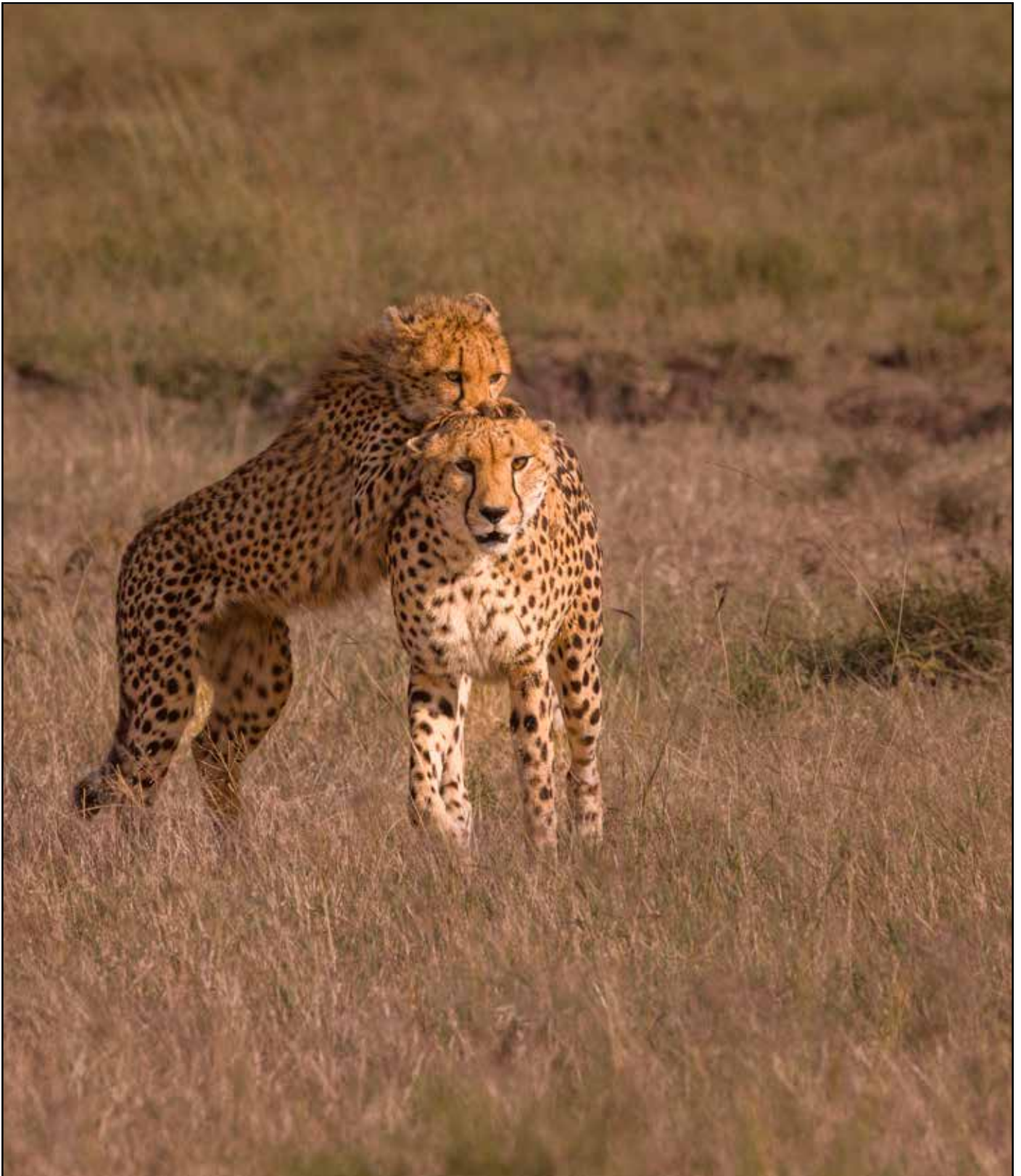




RPS Travel Group Trips - 2024

JOAQUIM CAPITAO

Photographing animals such as lions, cheetahs, elephants, giraffes, etc, sometimes from a short distance, is an unforgettable experience. But my favourite part of the photo safari to Kenya with Alison Mees in June/July of 2024 was the opportunity to witness and photograph the bond between a mother and her offspring. The playfulness of the young cubs and the tenderness between the mother and the cub are something I ended up filling a good part of my memory cards with.





MAUREEN RIGG

Watching elephants at Ol Pejeta Conservancy

Prior to this trip I admit that elephants were fairly low down my list of what I hoped to see. I expected to see them; they're big and quite hard to miss so I was more excited at the prospect of rhinos and big cats. But this was the visit when I watched and learned and became fascinated by the family interactions - thank you Alison!

The most memorable experience of elephants was the chance to watch a sizeable group gathering near the river, following the leader down to drink and cross over, seeing the youngest one drinking water but still wanting milk from its mother, watching the older ones keeping an eye on the younger ones, leading the way across and up the other side, seeing the egrets hitching a lift. I'd never before noticed that the way they rest their trunk on their tusks at times, nor the way parents would demonstrate to youngsters the best way to loosen the grass to eat (which is more suited to video than still photography). I began to understand how the best photographers can spend hours in one place with one subject.





TRAVEL TRIPS

ELAN VALLEY, MID WALES - OCTOBER 2024

A group of RPS travellers spent an extremely productive and enjoyable week in mid Wales at the beginning of October. The event was superbly organised by Ian Foster.

A few of us met the day before and were treated to the spectacular Red Kites feeding at Gigrin Farm. Such a thrilling experience as the birds swooped and dived above us to feed. The farm explained that they don't actually "feed" them enough, so the birds have to get most of their diet from the wild. In the 1930's there were 2 breeding pairs in Britain - both in Wales and then in the 1990's there were 100 but now there are between 2000 and 2500 breeding pairs in Wales. Amazing! Ian had managed to get our entrance fees sponsored by London Camera Exchange (who also sponsor my club - Bath Photographic Society) so a big thankyou to them as well as Ian for sorting it out.

In fact, Ian sorted out a lot for us - he had obviously worked really hard behind the scenes and created a fantastic photo trip (including a "goody bag" and a display of photographic gear from Benro (tripods) and Shimoda photographic bags).

We stayed at Elan Valley Hotel, with excellent accommodation and superb food. The owners and the staff were really welcoming, and they even had a resident dog Rufus who was a real hit with some of us.

We then met the rest of the group and had dinner with them whilst hearing how the future days might develop. What a success those days were! The weather didn't hold up all the time and it did rain but the advantage of that was the sun breaking through the clouds creating that gorgeous light. So although we had a few dismal sunrises we also had a few exceptional golden hours - which for me is preferable anyway. Anyway, the sunrise shoots were not hard work as sunrise in mid Wales in October is about 7.00am. Perfect!

Elan Valley has five and half dams (the half being one which hadn't quite made it to a dam and is not functioning). Each dam has its own character and geography - for example, one is very isolated (well they all are really) another does not have a road right around it but has footpaths; another, believe it or not, is popular for weddings and at that particular one we had the opportunity of going inside and walking down its tunnels. Again, sorted by Ian who had organised a tour for us with one of the Visitor Centre staff - who looked like Ed Sheeran.



Pam Jones



Liz Bugg



Liz Bugg



Alan Platt



Pam Jones



Andy Beel



Ian Foster

RPS Travel Group Trips - 2024



Alan Platt



Andy Beel



Andy Beel



Jane Tearle



Alan Platt



Andy Beel



Ian Foster



John Speller



John Speller



Jane Tearle

Wales is famous for its mines and one of the days we went to the desolate Cwmystwyth Mines and had a good couple of hours plodding about this amazing place set in the Welsh mountains with waterfall backdrops. It's a potential black and white feast! We all loved it.

One evening we had a truly fascinating talk by Sam Price, who is one of the managers of the Dark Sky Reserve (an accolade recently granted to the Elan Valley skies). Her enthusiasm and knowledge were infectious and placed us perfectly for the following night of October 10th.

Now, we know the aurora was widely visible on Thursday night 10th October - BUT we had the opportunity of going up to Claerwen to experience the Dark Sky view at a lakeside with mountains in the background. The excitement of it was palpable in the air - the whole thing moved around us - and as our cameras caught the show we could see some of it with our naked eyes. Truly amazing - I have no idea how Ian sorted that out - and he was generous enough to allow the rest of the UK to see it as well.

It was an amazing week and a lovely group to experience it with. Thank you all.



Geoff Huges

Words by Pam Jones

FAMILIARITY BREEDS CONTEMPT – OR DOES IT?

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY PETER MUDD ARPS CPAGB

INTRODUCTION

I was encouraged to express these views following my response to a question raised by Kathryn Phillips, the Travel Group Chair in her Notes of the Summer Travel Log - she asked why do members join the Group? My reply to Kathryn was along the lines that initially I thought I might consider entering a Fellowship Distinction panel within the Travel genre but after joining I was uncertain about participating in the Group's activities because most of the contributions and competition entries I had seen related to travel outside of the UK. I find this restrictive for reasons I will divulge later.

Three recent magazine articles have also influenced my thoughts as I will now elaborate.

ARTICLE 1

The first one which 'got me going' appeared in the Summer edition of the RPS Travel Journal entitled Travel Photography or Holiday Snaps written by Peter Walmsley. Peter wrote:

"a sense of place can be seen as easily at home as it can on exotic overseas tours " however he qualified this later by stating "one's home country is too familiar. It doesn't excite in the same way as finding and experiencing new landscapes and cultures. The familiar is pushed to the back of the brain where it is processed subconsciously".

I 'get it' – it's exciting to explore pastures new – new countries, new places, new cultures, new people and new architecture. Peter went on to propose that:

"for an image to be classified as a travel image, it not only has to capture a sense of place but those elements are going to be unfamiliar to the photographer, i.e. the photographer has travelled outside of their home territory".

I strongly disagree.

I acknowledge that the remainder of Peter's article, which is informative and articulately written, goes on extensively to identify useful concepts and techniques of how you can produce quality photographs as opposed to mere snapshots. This latter approach in my opinion can and should be applied regardless of whether you are a photographer in your own country or elsewhere in the world.

ARTICLE 2

The second article I refer to is the editorial introduction of the August 2024 edition of the BLACK + WHITE PHOTOGRAPHY magazine written by Mark Bentley. Mark wrote:

"Today it's much easier to visit far away places, but much harder to take original pictures when so many have visited before. The challenge is to find a fresh perspective, to go beyond the familiar and find new ways of telling the story of the location. That might come from looking around when you get there, listening to your senses and thinking about mood, atmosphere, shape and light".

Just like Peter's article I agree with most of what Mark wrote but I certainly don't agree that it is easy to visit faraway places – now allow me to refer to my own personal circumstances. Until my wife sustained a brain injury in 2008 we travelled regularly to other European countries on our annual holidays or weekend breaks, and in particular we loved everything Italian. Now that she is confined to a wheelchair, travel, especially by air as well as by sea, is not so easy. I guess that for others also, whether for health, physical, mental, financial, family, age related reasons or whatever, far away travel is not easier than staying at home – some simply might feel happier and safer at home.

Does all of this mean we can't take travel photographs – **ABSOLUTELY NOT**, it isn't compulsory or essential to get out of the 'comfort zone' and wander off to a new country or territory.

ARTICLE 3 - HOME THOUGHTS

A third quite separate article, which also appeared in the same August BLACK + WHITE Photography magazine, unintentionally provides a possible solution. Steve Gosling, who thinks that "you don't need to stray far to find inspiration and meaning" suggested:

1. Don't ignore the obvious but look beyond it – for example seek out unusual angles, move in close, concentrate on selected elements (hands, skin, eyes) or use limited depth of field to isolate subjects.
2. Use the sun to create shadows and patterns – look for shapes and textures.
3. Embrace the mundane, don't create any boundaries or restrictions on what is or isn't a suitable subject
4. Play, experiment, have fun.
5. Take photos with an idea or concept in mind that could be classified as a metaphor for something else or are symbolic.
6. Look for previously unseen details.

I agree with Steve's comments.

FAMILIAR TERRITORY

One of my favourite pastimes is walking along canal towpaths, enjoying the outdoors, peace and quiet whilst taking photos of anything I find interesting along the way. I would think most people are familiar with canals as they are dotted around many parts of the UK. So how do I make my canal photos a little different? Some of my offerings can be over the page.

PHOTO 1

A canal bridge on the Peak Forest Canal at Marple, Cheshire (30 miles away) – by using a Fisheye lens the image is distorted to produce a tunnel-like effect including patterns and a strong textural feel which suits monochrome photography.

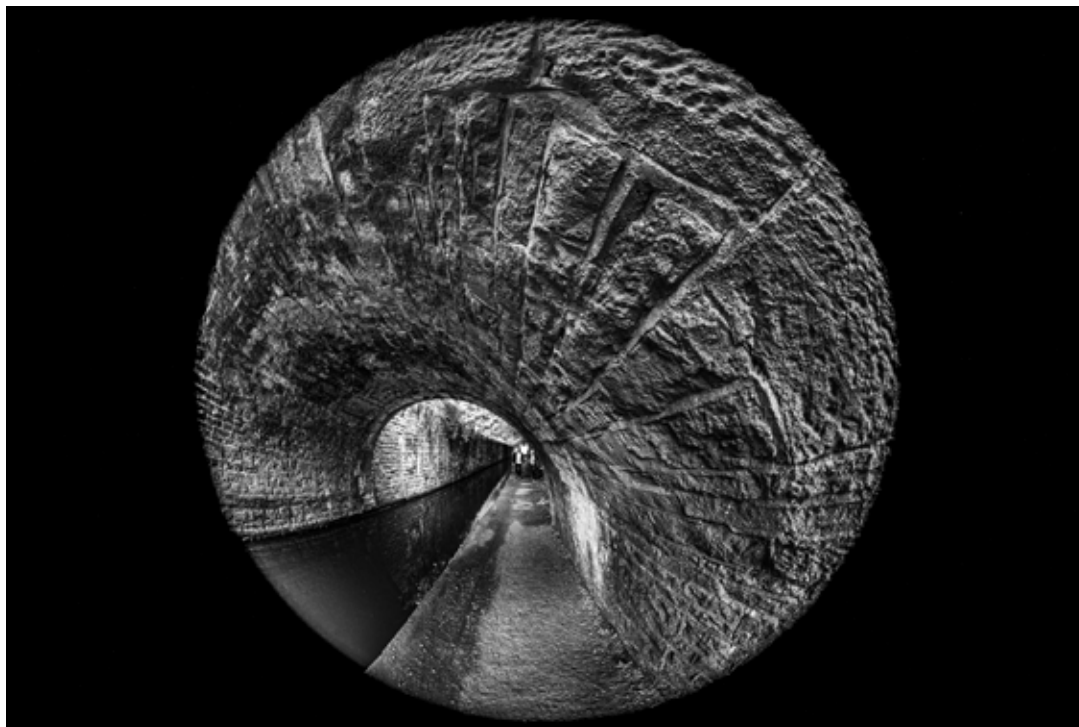


PHOTO 2

This man was enjoying a peaceful rest on the towpath of the Shropshire Union Canal at Audlem, Cheshire (70 miles away). Sharp focus was carefully fixed on his eyes and a wide aperture was used to create a narrow depth of field thus softening the background boat and its reflection in the water.



PHOTO 3

By shooting on a late afternoon in January a bit more atmosphere was created. This photo was taken on the Leeds Liverpool canal close to Granary Wharf in Leeds (30 miles away) using whatever natural light was left in the day (the blue hour) as well as a little artificial light from inside the bridge.



PHOTO 4

Not only does this photograph contain a silhouette of a dog walker it uses the framework of a canal bridge to provide context and place him in his environment with yet another bridge in the distance framing a canal boat – this was my favourite photo of about 300 images taken on a day trip to Birmingham, just over a one-hour train ride away



PHOTO 5

A residential apartment block in Victoria Quays on the Sheffield Canal (7 miles away) might make someone wonder what this photo is about as it borders on the edge of something abstract. This image uses the sun to display reflections, unusual shapes and pattern.



PHOTO 6

Ok it might not be as sensational as a sunset over the Taj Mahal but let's end with one taken on the backend of a January afternoon over the Sheffield Canal (7 miles from where I live). This urban scene might look flat at other times of the day but the fading light I think enhances the picture.

These are just a few attempts from me at trying to be creative and I might use these kinds of techniques no matter where I am.



CONCLUSION

Of course Peter (Walmsley) was right in his assertion that it is exciting to photograph the unfamiliar but I reiterate this ought not to be a prerequisite for participating in travel photography – distance from home should not matter. Being disabled is not nice so instead of restricting those that are or have other impediments from enjoying Travel Photography we should be looking for ways to make it more accessible – let's encourage participation by taking a more inclusive approach and by promoting our home territory.

POSTSCRIPT

– WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Maybe some uncertainty exists because of the name given to this Special Interest RPS Group – i.e. TRAVEL. An old Concise Oxford Dictionary that I have defines 'travel' as:

- *go from one place to another*
- *make a journey along or through a country*
- *move or proceed in a specified manner or a specified rate*
- *pass in a deliberate or systematic manner from point to point – the photographer's eye travelled over the scene*
- *move or operate in a specified way*
- *the act of travelling*
- *etc etc – there are several more by the way.*

I rather like the first definition in this list – that travel is about going from one place to another. In other words it's about a journey and not what you do when you arrive – which more significantly in our case is to take photographs relating to a place (wherever that might be).

So is 'travel' a misnomer?

Discuss – especially for the insomniacs amongst us.

Comment from the editor ...

When Peter contacted the Travel Group Chair to express his thoughts on 'Travel Photography' he very quickly agreed to write something to be published in Travel Log. The Editorial Team welcome his submission and the expression of an alternative viewpoint. Travel Log is a journal that exists because of the contribution of Travel Group Members and it is heartening to know that members think about the articles they read and that we are able to give people the opportunity to express their opinion.

Does anyone else want to express their opinion on the meaning of 'travel photography'?

Bryher: A Fortunate Isle



Standing at Land's End on a clear day it is possible to make out to the southwest a group of islands just above the horizon. These are the Isles of Scilly located at the apex of the Cornish peninsula. Although only 28 miles distant, the islands are a world away from the hustle and bustle of the mainland. Those with brave stomachs can face the three-hour ferry ride on the *Scillonian* ferry across the swelling waters where the English Channel meets the Irish Sea. Visitors of a more sensitive disposition can use the regular Skybus aircraft to and from the main island of Saint Mary's.



Bryher is the smallest inhabited of the 'off-islands'. It can be reached in around 20 minutes by taking one of the small boats from the harbour of Saint Mary's. As you approach Bryher, small groups of cottages hove to view as if stuck precariously on the low hills which give the island its name derived from the Cornish for 'small hills'. Life on the island is tidal. Spring low tides mean that Bryher can become completely isolated from the rest of the world. In the 1990 program Challenge Aneka, aired on the BBC, we saw a group of hardy volunteers construct a second jetty to mitigate the effects of low tides. Ever since, 'Aneka's quay' has allowed passengers and cargo once the main church quay becomes inaccessible.



Away from the eastern slopes of the island, winter winds and storms have etched a rocky landscape of cliffs and creamy sand bays along the western edge. These face the full force of the Atlantic winds. In the winter months, Hell Bay lives up to its name. Many vessels over the years have come to grief on the rock ledges just offshore. All are guarded by the Bishop's Rock lighthouse whose light is visible at night shining above the menacing reefs.





The weather may turn in the flick of an eyelid. This makes for dramatic changes in light across the landscape as the clouds, born out in the Atlantic, scud overhead. The skies are broad, the waters around the islands appear infinite. The skies can be truly blue, giving the sea deep tones of azure and turquoise hues. Islanders in times gone by would race across these waters in gigs, competing to provide pilotage to passing ships as they navigate the waters around Scilly and Land's End. Nowadays gig teams from the islands compete against each other during the summer months in the roads between Bryher and St Mary's.



Small fields cosseted by wind-proof tall hedges burst full of flowers in the spring. The hedgerows are a paradise for numerous bird species, especially sparrows. They swarm out of bushes at the slightest suggestion of any crumbs dropped by visitors enjoying a quiet coffee and cake. In the autumn, birdwatchers descend onto the island in almost the same numbers.



Not for nothing are these islands called the 'fortunate isles'. As with all island communities, times are changing the way of life. Technology means these fragments of the British Isles such as Bryher are becoming more accessible. Yet the island remains an oasis of calm and peace. One can indulge in photography of all genres as much or as little as gives pleasure. Take coffee on the terrace of Hell Bay Hotel, indulge in fish and chips at the Fraggie Rock Café, or treat yourself to crab chowder at Island Fish. Discover Bryher for yourself - but not too many of you at once, please!



Tibet



Potala Palace from Potala Square

Dystopia in Shangri-La



WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY BY Michael Bamford LRPS



Kiang, wild asses Lake Dong Tso

Visiting Tibet is an uphill struggle in both senses. A Chinese visa is required, and a Tibetan permit once you arrive. A detailed itinerary and authorized guides are required and an extensive grilling from immigration officers is to be expected. Internal permits are required, and police checkpoints are frequent at tourist sites and between districts. The average altitude of the country is over 4,500m and Lhasa lies at 3,500m, requiring a couple of days' acclimatization before moving on. Travel often takes you across mountain passes over 5,000m high.

Tibet is not regarded as a country, but the 'Xizang 'autonomous region' of China. In truth it is anything but autonomous. The Tibetan flag must not be shown, and the Chinese flag is flown everywhere, sometimes compulsorily. Everywhere, even in the remotest, most beautiful areas there are the large red and gold billboards proclaiming the wisdom of President Xi Jinping and promoting Chinese identity and unity. The language of education is Mandarin, and the Tibetan language and the Buddhist religion are discouraged.



Mountain pass at 5200m



Housefront, Gyantse



Mount Kailash - the mountain sacred to four religions



Potala Palace, Lhasa

With all that said, it is a vast and beautiful region, with extraordinary mountain views of some of the highest snow-capped mountains of the Himalayas - Mount Everest (Chomolungma) Shishapangma, and

the holy Mt. Kailash, which is sacred to four religions, with others on or over the Indian border. There are many large and sacred lakes, spectacular and vast plateau landscapes, and, if lucky, a chance to see rare endemic wildlife.



Making a point - Monk's debate, Sera Monastery

Opposite page: Sera Monastery, Lhasa; The face of wisdom; Yellow hat monks at Cham Festival



The most famous tourist sites include the impressive Potala palace in Lhasa, built in the 17th century, the former home of the Dalai Lamas, and some of the larger monasteries at Drepung and Sera, which are now reduced to a token population of monks. Everest Base Camp is sited at 5200 m. and there we were lucky enough to get cloud-free summit views. Mount Kailash – in Tibetan, Kangri Rinpoche - and the nearby Lake Manasarovar are sacred to Buddhist, Hindu, Jain and the ancient Tibetan Bon religion, and local and Indian visitors come to undertake their Koras or walking circumnavigations of the sites. All these sites are busy with Chinese tourists, who were surprised

to see us as Western visitors are rare. At some of the monasteries we were able to see and feel the reverence for the Buddhist religion and tradition, still held by the Tibetan indigenous people.

The Tibetan people are friendly, hospitable and welcoming. Apart from the marquee sites, on a 16-day visit I was able to see some of the remoter areas of the country, and encounter the nomad population of Yak and Sheep herders and horse riders, to visit the ancient Guga kingdom in the West of the country and appreciate some of wonderful landscapes and the pure air and lakes of the 'Roof of the World'.



Taking ponies to a Horse Fair



Guardian demons at temple entrance



Everest from Rongbuk Monastery



Chinese public information at Lake Manasarovar

The Chinese presence in the region has vastly changed and improved the infrastructure. The roads are remarkably good compared with other mountain kingdoms, and mobile phone and internet coverage almost universal. All the towns we visited seem like perpetual building sites, with little evidence of older housing. Many of the historic sites were heavily damaged in

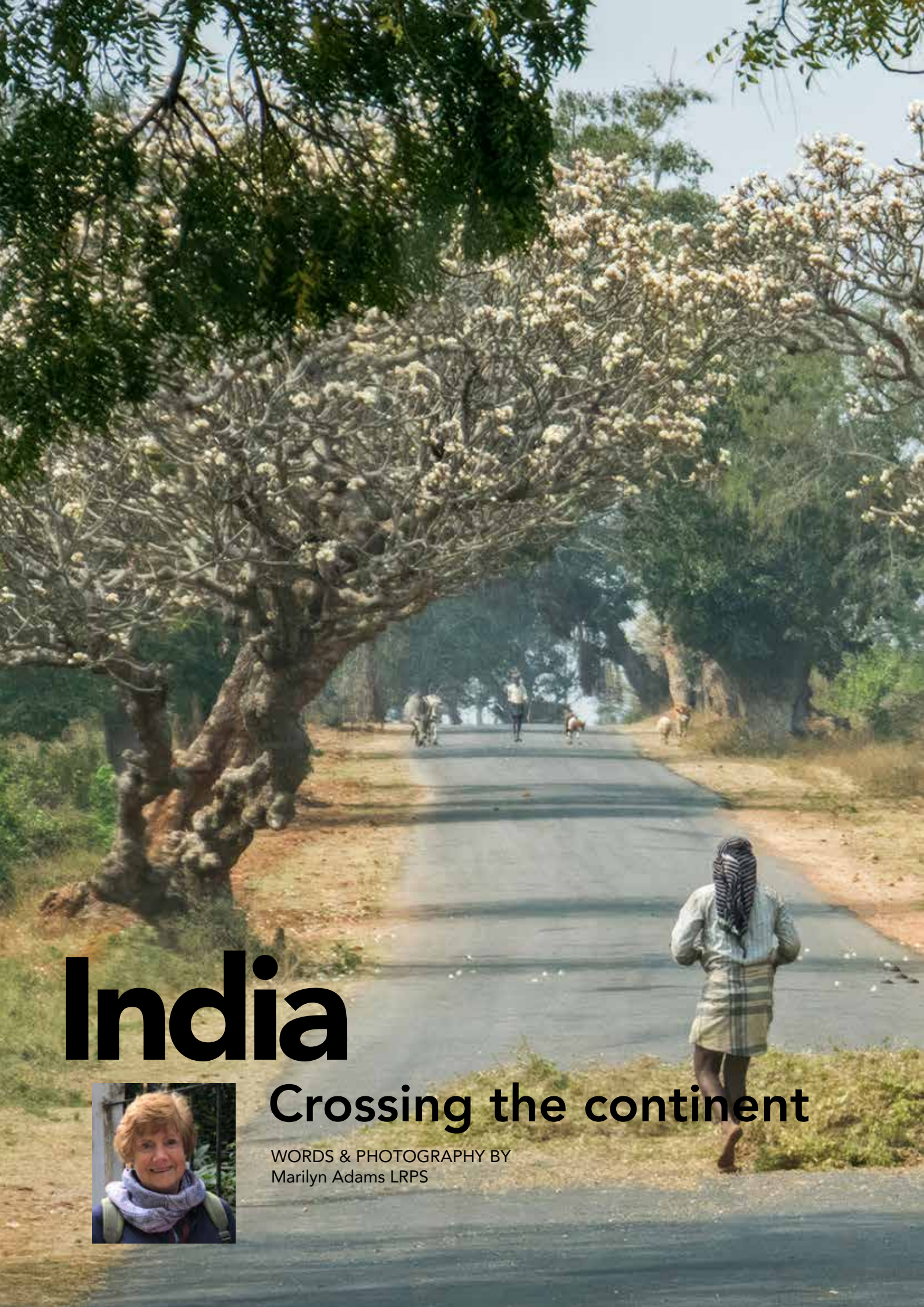
the Cultural Revolution of the 1950's and only a few restored.

A visit to Tibet is a multifaceted experience. A beautiful country with a remarkable and mysterious history but the experience is tinged with anxiety for the preservation of the identity and deeply ingrained traditions of its delightful people.

India

Crossing the continent

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY BY
Marilyn Adams LRPS



The phrase "from sea to shining sea" is one usually applied to North America, and in particular to the USA. It seems a fitting description though of a journey I undertook with my husband travelling from Chennai on the Bay of Bengal in the east to northern Kerala and the Indian Ocean in the west.

We have visited India many times and have wandered widely in the north through the Himalayas, across the north west plains to Amritsar and Rajasthan and the wonderful temple sites at Orcha and Khajuraho. We have explored Delhi and Agra and travelled along part of the route of the great north road through Bodghaya where Buddha achieved enlightenment, to Varanasi and Kolkata. However, until this trip, the south of India remained unexplored territory. As we discovered, away from the coastal areas it is an area little visited by westerners but of huge significance for the Indian people themselves.





So, a few years ago in 2018, we flew into Chennai in mid-January ready for three weeks of exploration and discovery. We had taken the option of travelling alone with a driver with occasional additional local guides providing some additional expert input. This had the advantage of flexibility in our itinerary – our guide added a few extra sites to the agreed itinerary that he thought we would enjoy. Knowing of my interest in photography he happily stopped the car and introduced us to local people along the way if he spotted something he thought would interest us.

India is a hugely varied country in terms of its landscapes, cultures and people and this trip included all those elements. Such variety makes it challenging to characterise – so this is my personal interpretation! From day one there was a huge variety of photographic possibilities. Chennai with its population of over 12 million, is a thriving Indian city and life on the streets is vibrant and full of colour so there are many opportunities for street photography. On our first afternoon and before jet lag set in, we got into a tuk-tuk and braved local traffic for a visit to the sea. A tuk-tuk ride can be “interesting” although as road rage is rarely seen in the country it’s pretty safe, and a great way to get around. On the beach, families, many of them Indian tourists from inland, dipped their toes into the water near the fishing boats which were beached for the day.

Images opposite page

Top: Tuk tuk ride

Bottom: Fishing boats on Chennai Beach

Images this page

Top: At the beach

Bottom: Temple entrance at Gangaikondacholapuram









One of the underlying themes of the trip was the impact of history on the landscape and nowhere is this more evident than on the east coast. Over hundreds of years the area was a melting pot of different outside influences. From the early 1500's there were settlements by the Portuguese, British, Armenians and French. A struggle for power subsequently took place but by the end of the eighteenth century, the British were in control. Despite the British takeover, all these nationalities left their mark on what you see today. Chennai and Pondicherry still bear major witness to those interventions.

In Chennai, the calmness and architecture of the Christian churches is in complete contrast to the vernacular architecture. One of these, St Mary's Church, which is within the area of Fort St. George, is reputed to be the oldest British building in India. Another, the Armenian Church was first built in 1712 and then rebuilt in 1772 after destruction during a siege by the French. Compare these buildings to the Shiva temple at Kapaleeshwarar in Chennai where the high relief of the coloured statuary offers a different challenge to the photographer – where to look and what to focus on!



It was a relief to leave the noise of the city behind as we drove south to Mahabalipuram. This UNESCO World Heritage site was founded by the Pallava kings in the 7th and 8th centuries AD and is known for its complex of shore temples, the Krishna Mandapam (a pillared hall or pavilion) and the giant open-air relief, the Descent of the Ganges. The scale and carvings are amazing, and the site is a must on any itinerary in southeast India.



Images opposite page
Shiva Temple at Kapaleeshwarar in Chennai

Images this page
Top: St Mary's Church
Middle: The Armenian Church
Right: Picnic at Mahabalipuram



Images this page

Top: In the shade of Krishna's Butterball

Bottom left: Brahmin priests

Bottom right: Devout Hindus, followers of Vishnu, entering the temple at Trichy

Images opposite page

Top: Temple at Thanjavur

Bottom left: At the temple - Palani pilgrims

Bottom right: Pilgrims walking to Palani





Mahabalipuram was also a great place for people watching and making friends – albeit transitory ones. A large group, who seemed to be from the same village, were having much fun and all were happy to have their photos taken. Complete with their pots and pans they were pilgrims travelling to a sacred site, but they were enjoying their rest and the shade of the enormous granite boulder known as Krishna’s Butterball.

Travelling south again, Pondicherry is a city of two halves. It was a French colonial settlement until 1954, and today the legacy of those times is visible in the planned road grid of the old French settlement which sits surrounded by the more organic growth of the Indian town. The wide promenade is a much-loved location enjoyed for the evening stroll by the many visitors, including us, who come to the town. It was a lovely time of day for a walk by the sea and for people watching with balmy temperatures and warm light as the sun went down.

Leaving the coast and turning inland, our route took us to some of the great temples in south India. Starting at Chidambaram, we also visited three major temples in Thanjavur, and temples in Trichy, Madurai and Mysore. In Madurai, the old city is laid out in the shape of a lotus and the Sri Meenakshi Temple covers an area of six hectares incorporating twelve gopurams (towers) with intricate carvings of animals and flowers. It is one of the finest Shiva temples in southern India. The architecture and statuary are wonderful and it is impossible to do them justice in a short article. I loved the warm hues of the honey-coloured stone, the colourful statuary, and the ancient craftsmanship on show. All these temples are significant sites for the monks and for the devotees who visit them in their thousands, and for whom they are a vital part of their lives.





Images this page

Top: Spinning rope from coconut fibre

Bottom left: Woman harvesting

Bottom right: Brahmin priest at Amma Mandapani

Images opposite page

Top: Ritual head shaving ceremony

Middle left: Chettinad horses

Bottom right: Potter making tiles





We witnessed rituals and ceremonial cleansing at the Amma Mandapani at Srirangam carried out by Brahmin priests to commemorate the dead.

The ceremonial head shaving of a young girl was an unusual sight we were lucky to witness. The girl and her family considered this a joyous occasion, and were welcoming and happy for me to record the events. The hair is given as an offering to the gods. Similarly, the ear-piercing we saw being carried out on a young child by the temple jeweller was a cause for celebration, and the family invited me to record it.

Many of the people we saw were pilgrims and our driver diverted from our planned route to take us to Palani, a major pilgrim destination to which people walk barefoot for hundreds of kilometres. The temple is on the top of a steep hill accessed by a small carriage which creeps up what feels like an almost vertical slope. Once at their destination, pilgrims rest in the shade and wait for the processions to begin.



But our route was not just about temples! At Chettinad, the terracotta horses used in local festivals were a striking sight. Rural life was much in evidence with roads largely deserted. Our driver introduced us to women working in the fields who were totally bemused – and amused – by my request to take their photos, to drinks sellers by the roadside, women making rope from coconut fibre, and tile makers.

Travelling west, we gradually descended through the Western Ghats from the Deccan Plateau and after a few diversions along the way, the northern Keralan Backwaters and the Indian Ocean came into sight. As the sun rose the following morning, we enjoyed dipping our feet into the sea – we had crossed the continent!



It was a memorable journey. Sites – and sights – followed quickly on from one another and the challenge, as always when travelling, was how to encapsulate what I saw into a photographic story. We were lucky that we had the flexibility of travelling alone with a driver/guide who was very enthusiastic and who was keen to ensure that we saw as much as possible based on the enthusiasm that we showed. In the end I concluded there were many stories to tell, interwoven together with strands of religion, history and landscape. It was a great trip!

Adventures in China 1990

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY BY
Pia Thommes



Think back to what we knew of China in 1990. It was one year after the Tiananmen uprising, there were hardly any flight connections from Europe and the embassies warned about any travels to China. At the same time my then-partner Kurt, Hai-Xin, a Chinese graduate student of his and I started planning a trip to China. Our route was largely determined by universities to which Kurt, a professor of Plant Pathology, had received invitations to lecture. The flights to and from Beijing were pre-booked, but everything else was arranged by Hai-Xin once we arrived at our various university cities. In the four weeks of our journey, we visited Yinchuan, the capital of the Muslim Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region on the Yellow River, and Xi'An, the capital of the Chinese province of Shaanxi and home of the Terracotta Army. We also travelled to Taiyuan, an industrial city in Shanxi Province and finally spent some time in Beijing. Most of the journeys between our destinations were made using steam powered trains, which allowed us to watch the world go by at a comfortable pace while drinking green tea. Only the connection between Yinchuan and Xi'An was covered by

plane. Most of the time we stayed in guest houses of the universities, which provided simple, but comfortable, accommodation and allowed us to experience normal Chinese life as well as being able to move about on our own in the cities.

Hai-Xin's language knowledge was tested to the full, particularly when he was translating our scientific presentations. Interestingly, few of the scientists spoke anything but Chinese, but discussions in the universities were helped by the presence of staff from the English department. However, during our travels we found that some of the shopkeepers had picked up the odd English phrases and were eager to use them. The ubiquitous presence of party officials who accompanied us did not prevent anybody from questioning us about life in the west and, despite the scrambled radio signals of the BBC World Service, we found most people well-informed and interested. In particular, they wanted to know about re-unification in Germany, which was in full swing at the time. They had heard that people were unemployed and could not imagine the state not taking care of them.



Image opposite: Two different modes of transportation

This page top: Rush hour in Beijing

This page bottom: Crossing the Yellow River on rafts floating on inflated pig skin





Images this page:

Top left : Start of the pilgrim's way in the Huashan Mountains

Top right: Can it weigh a little more?

Bottom: Dragon boat on lake in Imperial Summer Palace

Images opposite page:

Top: Bactrian camels in the sand dunes near the Yellow River

Middle left: Making dumplings in Taiyuan

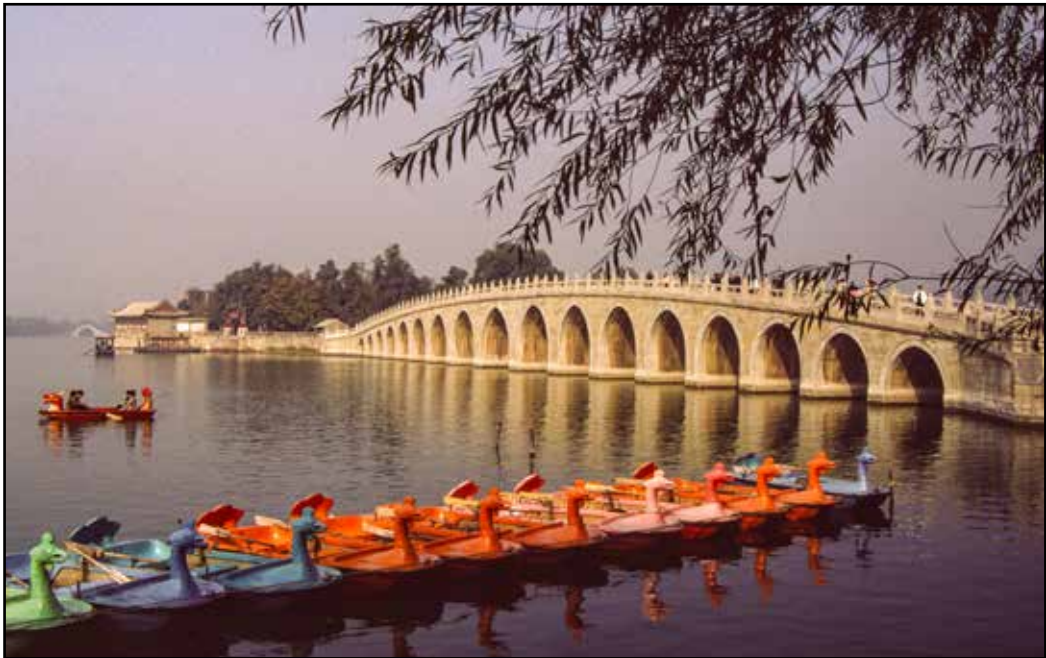
Middle right: Production of Chinese lanterns

Bottom left: Terracotta Army in Xi'An

Bottom right: Badaling sector of the Great Wall near Beijing at sunrise







One thing we immediately learned was that Chinese people had little understanding of what we call privacy. They showed much interest in these foreigners who were travelling in China on their own and on the trains they piled into our compartments and wanted to know all about where we had come from. When we were taking photos of people in the street we found ourselves as the target of their interest, and they were so delighted if we agreed to pose with them. There must be many photographs that captured us together with various family circles at one or other of the attractions.

Because our schedule was quite relaxed, we had opportunities to explore local sites and attractions either on our own or accompanied by university staff. A number of highlights are especially memorable. On an excursion to the Yellow River and the outskirts of the Gobi Desert, we crossed the river on rafts that floated on inflated pig skins and we rode on Bactrian camels through the sand dunes. In the emptiness of the arid mountains we found stretches of the Great Wall of China that had not been restored but were still recognisable after thousands of years. We visited the Terracotta Army in Xi'An, which then was relatively undiscovered. Photographing the Terracotta Army was not allowed, but a few dollar notes solved that problem (although not the problem of very difficult light!). On a walking tour of a pilgrim route high up in the Huashan Mountains near Xi'An we followed the local custom of spending the night in a mountain cabin to be at the summit for sunrise, but unfortunately it was too foggy. In Beijing we were treated to the privilege of exploring the Chinese Wall at sunrise, before anybody else was there. We also wandered the Sacred Road to the Ming tombs and visited the Imperial Summer Palace on the outskirts of the city. We were taken to many local temples and palaces; fascinating locations that we could discover. Most of these trips were arranged with the one car that belonged to the university. In general, we found that cars were few and far between and most people travelled by bike or train. While in Beijing, I was taken on a sightseeing tour around the walls of the Imperial City, the Temple of Heaven and the Old City on a push-bike. Here the biggest challenge was finding the rental bike amongst the thousands that were left in the bike parking area! The dichotomy of the country showed in larger department stores, where calculators could be bought, but the prices were calculated on an abacus.

The attractions were well maintained, clean and carefully organized. It was clear that after the cultural revolution, the pride of heritage and culture had been rediscovered and big renovations had taken place. Traditional creative crafts were abundantly represented; red paper lanterns, black lacquer boxes, silk paintings and Cloisonne enamel work could be found in stores. In the Qiao Family Compound near Taiyuan, one of the finest remaining examples of imposing private residences in northern China, we observed the filming of the period drama 'Raise the Red Lantern', that we later watched in a cinema back at home.

Another interesting experience was the food. While travelling we ate in the dining cars of the trains, which were simple and not quite comparable to European standards, however the food was freshly prepared and very tasty. Each area we visited had its local specialties, although I didn't manage to find a spring roll! We tested Mongolian hot pot several times while we were in Yinchuan, Taiyuan was known for its noodle and dumpling dishes and of course there was an abundance of Beijing duck. We frequently were taken out by university staff to banquets. Here we sat around huge circular tables with turntables in the middle, from which we had to serve ourselves with chopsticks. While we refrained from tasting duck's feet, our hosts were delighted that we left these for them. Eating was always with chop sticks and our skills were critically observed; eating of some dishes like red bean soup was quite challenging. We also went out to sample street food in the local markets, which gave us additional opportunities to interact with local people and also observe street performances like puppet theatres that were presented on makeshift stages.

It's been close to 35 years since our trip to China, and the world has changed. China was then a charming country, where everything went at a much slower pace. Trains were steam driven, airplanes rare, the density of cars was low. It was a great experience to join the cycling crowds in Beijing and experience the old areas of the capital that way.

This photo project started off during lockdown when I scanned my slide collection and converted everything to digital. The slides were scanned with a Reflecta Digitdia 4000 slide scanner and the resulting files further processed in Lightroom, mainly to retouch dust specks and change the white balance, as the slides had developed a colour cast over time.

Images opposite page:

Top left: Chinese puppet Theatre

Top right: Encounter on the train

Middle: Boating lake in Imperial Summer Palace in Beijing

Bottom: Brick making in Ningxia, in the background the West line of the Great Wall

The Orkneys - more than just puffins

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY
Mike Longhurst FRPS



View towards Rackwick Bay Hoy



St Magnus Cathedral

A family gathering finally took me to the far north, to Orkney, somewhere I had always planned to visit in summer for the rolling hills of heather in bloom and stunning coastline, but thanks to Covid, had not managed to get to. However, this was early April, very cold and rainy, with hills still black and brown from last year's vegetation.

I had added on a few days to see the islands, but what was I going to shoot? I have wildlife photographer friends who go there for the sea birds, but not so early in the year and I had a brief from ArtUK.org to snap some artistic and historical items for them in passing. In passing soon turned out to be a full-time occupation, as my family members took me on a fascinating tour of historic relics and memorials, which made the visit fully rewarding for me. I'm neither a wildlifer, nor a real landscaper, so a travel / documentary approach was ideal, and Orkney's history made a perfect out of season subject area for me.

As I flew into Kirkwall I looked out of the window and knew this was going to be a mono assignment, so viewed everything from then on through black and white eyes, welcoming the clouds and greyness, but perhaps not the 3°C temperatures and biting wind. But at least having a few things to find got me up and out and soon the photographic opportunities multiplied over and over.

In fact, the tour started in the airport arrivals hall, where, waiting for my bag, I was surrounded by lovely murals depicting local scenes, scenes I was to recognise again in real life in the coming week. Passing through Kirkwall, I made a stop in the rain at the site of a monument on a small green where in 1629 at least one suspected witch was burned. The 2019 tablet on the site is sadly neglected and almost unreadable. Then on to see the imposing St Magnus Cathedral known as the 'Light in the North', which was founded in 1137 by the Viking, Earl Rognvald, in honour of his uncle St Magnus who was martyred in Orkney.



John Raes house



But the tour really started for me in Stromness, where the Arctic explorer John Rae is commemorated. His house stands empty not far away, awaiting funds for restoration. In Stromness, I immediately started to recognise scenes from the airport in the little traditional main street, paved with granite slabs. I found the lines and angles fascinating and the heavy skies and drizzle seemed to complement the cold hardness of the stone. I soon found that everywhere you go in the Orkney islands, you are constantly reminded of the closeness of the sea and its history as a living for many local people. Boats, nets, lobster pots, buoys and all the impedimenta of a seafaring life are littered around. Almost at the end of the town, you come to Login's Well, where Captain Cook and Sir John Franklin watered their ships before polar expeditions. The well has been sealed for many years.

Being of a certain age, I was well aware of the inland sea, Scapa Flow's history as a home for the fleet during both world wars and of the sinking by a U boat of the old battleship Royal Oak in 1939, with loss of 835 sailors, so a visit to the little memorial park at Scapa was on our route. Pushing on southeast across the causeways that link islands like Lamb Holm and Glimps Holm to the mainland – causeways that, along with sunken vessels were known as Churchill Barriers to seal off the Flow

following that shocking event - we stopped off at the lovely Italian Chapel. Built by homesick Italian prisoners of war in 1944, originally in a Nissen hut, it stands beside a monument that the Italians had already built to commemorate their presence. If the exterior of the chapel is attractive, the interior, lovingly maintained to this day is simply stunning and all created by the prisoners themselves.

Turning to the northeast, almost at the furthest extremity of the mainland, we came to the blustery headland of Deerness where, above steep cliffs, stands the Covenanter's Memorial. This tall monument commemorates the loss in 1679 of 279 people, sentenced to banishment as slaves in America for religious unconformity. Locked below decks in the Crown of London, the ship foundered off this headland. Thanks to Historic Scotland and others, all the sites in Orkney are well explained with signs and plaques.

I was also aware of the scuttling of the surrendered German High Seas Fleet in Scapa Flow in 1919 and despite all salvage efforts over a century, some skeletons of ships still exist, if not of some of the over 50 German ships, then of merchant ships sunk to protect the routes into the Flow; it is hard to tell the difference. That event is commemorated in the Scapa Flow Museum on Hoy, which I was to reach in a few days.



*Opposite page clockwise from left:
Stromness street scene; Seafaring relics
Stromness; Lobster pots Longhope*

*This page top to bottom:
The Italian Chapel; Italian Chapel interior;
A block ship*





One of the most significant recent developments in Orkney is the revelation of its importance in Neolithic times. Turning northwest from our base at Houghton, ferry port for several islands, we visited the Standing Stones of Stenness and then on across another of the many causeways, passing many other upright liths, to the Ring of Brodgar – Scotland’s very own Stonehenge. The stones stood out dramatically against the backdrop of wild weather and as with most places I visited, standing steady to take shots was difficult. My sturdy tripod quickly proved to be less useful than my own muscles against the wind.

On to the very northernmost point of the mainland at Birsay, we passed the famous signpost to Twatt, which I obediently stood beside for a photo in tearing wind. From the little Brough of Birsay car park, we were able to look across to the lovely island with its lighthouse and outlines of neolithic dwellings.

Backtracking, we reached the ruins of the Birsay Earl’s Palace, the residence of Robert Stewart, half-brother of Mary Queen of Scots, who became Earl of Orkney in the late 1500s. The palace was abandoned and roofless by the time Oliver Cromwell’s soldiers reached it. In fact, ruins, domestic, military, historical or otherwise were a

feature of my whole tour of Orkney, as evidence of changing times, lifestyles, or economics. I clambered into several to take pictures of places that were once home or workplace to someone. I was told that if they didn’t have a roof, rates were not payable, so many just stand roofless decaying away.

But it was just to the south that we came to possibly the greatest Neolithic site, one covered by TV programmes and news reports in the recent past –Skara Brae, Europe’s most complete Neolithic village. The interiors of the houses, with stone shelves, sleeping areas etc are amazingly well preserved and you can see that, with roofs in place, it was almost an underground existence against the weather outside. Nearby Skail House is also a tourist attraction, and the nearby beach must be wonderful in the short summer.

At the southernmost tip of the mainland, we visited remains of The Earl’s Bu (drinking hall) and round church at Orphir, relics of the Viking earls who ruled the islands for some hundreds of years and have left their marks all over in ruins and place names.

*Opposite page top to bottom:
Neolithic Ring of Brodgar;
Earls Palace Birsay
This page left to right:
Once a home to somebody;
Ferry Port at Houghton*





Abandoned houses and buildings are everywhere

From nearby Houghton we took the ferry to Lyness on Hoy and drove on southeast via another causeway to Longhope. Opposite the Lyness ferry stop is the very nice Scapa Flow Visitors Centre and Museum and beside that a Russian memorial to those who sailed from Scapa on the Arctic convoys of WW2. The whole area is an ex-military one with buildings now mostly in ruins. Hoy has all of the higher hills in Orkney, mostly to the north and it was in this area that we stopped to visit the Dwarfie Stene, the megalithic chambered tomb. A very long planking path about 30cm wide led off into the distance, but after a few hundred meters it had sunk into the bog. The surrounding heathery ground looked OK so I stepped off.....wrong! I began to sink in immediately and hopped quickly back onto the planking – a warning to stay on defined pathways. A nice café at Linksness marked just about the furthest north we could reach on the road and the hike to the Old Man of Hoy was further than we wanted to venture in the rain and wind.

Heading to the eastern end of the island on which Longhope sits, we came to the site of the memorial to the eight crew who perished in the Longhope Lifeboat disaster of 1969. Like many other cemeteries, it overlooked the loch and contained a military section from the wars. Due north from there, on the farthest tip of the island, we found the well-preserved Napoleonic era Martello Tower and the remains of what had been the Hackness Battery, defending that inlet to the Flow and one of many around the islands.

I have to say, I didn't see a puffin in all the time I was in the islands, but what I did see made the extra days more than worthwhile. Yes, you can see places like that in perfect weather if you are lucky, but what you are seeing is not the real place as most people experience it most of the time. I'm more interested in capturing that feel of the place than something idealised at sunrise or sunset and I was almost sorry when the sun occasionally popped its head out a few times in the last day or so. As I left Kirkwall on the little turboprop island-hopper aircraft in an absolutely beautiful morning, I really wouldn't have changed my dates to experience a different Orkney at all.



Skara Brea



The Earls Bu and Round Church

God's own Country

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY
Ashok Viswanathan FFIP, EFIAP, EPSA

Kerala... One of the southern most- states of India, on the west coast. A land often referred to as God's own country. It offers natural beauty, sandy beaches, photogenic canals and waterways, miles of palm trees, tea, coffee and spice estates and not forgetting a culture that dates back a thousand years. Also known for its Ayurveda healing centres, religious festivals such as "Theyyam", yoga centres and wildlife forests. It's also a state with the highest literacy in the country. To say Kerala is prosperous is putting it mildly. During the days of the Gulf boom in the 70's every family had at least one member working in well-paid jobs in the Middle East sending home savings that were reinvested locally. The villages in Kerala have some beautiful homes, often with a high-end car parked in the driveway. People are welcoming and hospitable, and none are in a hurry.

For the photographer it's a destination that offers opportunity for wildlife, landscapes, seascapes, culture and exploration of the backwaters. Additional attractions are some fine hotels and the variety of fresh seafood on offer. Having heard a lot about the backwaters, I decided to spend a weekend exploring. A local friend kindly drove me around and made the arrangements. The location is Alleppey (also known as Alappuzha), a small town an hour's drive from Cochin where the many miles of paddyfields and backwater canals wind their way around the villages.

*Left:
Alleppey landscape*



The best way is to spend a weekend on a houseboat and cruise the canals, starting mid-morning and returning after lunch the next day. Extended stays can be arranged. The house boats are unlike anything else in the world. They come in different sizes from small one bedroom to three or more and cater to a high standard of luxury with food cooked on board to suit your taste. At night they anchor at a small village where you can explore village life. If you don't wish to splurge then you can hire a motorboat for a few hours or a day trip on the canals.

The photography is easy. A mid-range zoom of 24~70 mm full frame or 18~55mm APS is the way to go. A 70~210mm or a 50~140mm f2.8 (APS) is useful. There is plenty of light, so forget the tripod and flash. With ISO set to 400 you are ready to sit on deck and make your images. The boatman will be happy to position the boat for you to get the best angles for your image. A shutter speed of 1/250- 1/1000 will ensure sharp images. The winter months are a good time to visit as the temperature is cooler and if lucky you will get a light mist on the water. Sunrise and sunset yield wonderful images of the landscape with surrounding boats and fishermen in the water.



*Opposite page top to bottom:
Lone boat - Alleppey Canal;
Anamalai hills
This page top to bottom:
Heading home - Alleppey backwater;
Manicured Tea Estate - Valparai*







Top:
Lone estate in Munnar
Bottom:
Foggy morning in Munnar village





While in Kerala take the opportunity to visit the hill station of Munnar 5000 feet above sea level, famed for its misty tea estates. If you are willing to drive a little beyond the state border to the town of Valparai you will be treated to some lovely landscapes among the tea gardens. There are almost no hotels here and few visitors. However, the tea estates offer some very nice bungalows to stay, fully catered and furnished in the English style including a fireplace. These were in the old days used by the Englishmen sent to India to manage the estates, which are now owned by large Indian corporates.





Theyyam entering the temple

For a very unusual photo opportunity take a flight to Kannur to view the "Theyyam". It's the dance festival in North Kerala, often referred to as the "Dance of the Gods". It's performed between November & April in small village temples and ancestral homes deep in the villages. These festivities are usually not accessible to the general public. The people consider Theyyam as God and seek his blessings and also advice on matters bothering them. There are about 400 forms of Theyyam each with its own rituals, costumes, make up and style. The body painting and costumes vary. This dance form goes back to the Dravidian age and is said to be a part of ancient tribal culture. Most performances are held late in the night in the village temple courtyard or in ancestral homes where they have been held for generations. Being in remote interior locations there are few outsiders present. The audience is mainly local residents who attend with their families. There is no stage or curtain, and devotees stand or sit on steps around the temple courtyard. It's an open theatre and performances last between 12-24 hours with breaks. The dancer, along with fire and the playing of musical instruments describes the myths and legends of the deity of the shrine. The costume is based on the deity and made of cotton and natural materials such as leaves, bark and stems. The dancer is accompanied by wind instruments and the loud beat of drums. It's during this time he "metamorphosises" into "God". Many of the performances take place late at night with low light levels and fast action.

This is a photo opportunity for the travel photographer. However, bear in mind that you need to plan this in some detail especially if you are a foreigner in Kerala. The temples are in remote villages in North Kerala around the city of Kannur. There are few hotels, and your best option is a home stay. A copy of the Theyyam programme for the season will tell you the village, date and temples where it is being performed. The programme is in Malayalam, the local language and a guide will be the best option to escort you around and assist with stay and transport. Being with a local will also ease entry to the temple but bear in mind that you need to leave your footwear at the entrance and be respectfully dressed. Be prepared for a series of very late nights and early morning shoots. It will be well worth it.

BIO

A retired company executive with a passion for travel, landscape & portraits. A dedicated Nikon user from the early 70s and has now gone mirrorless with two Fuji X-E3 bodies and four lenses. However, he still shoots film, mainly FP4 and HP5, on a Rollefex and Hasselblad 500 CM systems. Ashok is a long-time exhibitor with several awards and considerable published work in print and on the web. He is also interested in alternative techniques of Cyanotypes, Bromoil, Van Dyke etc., using large format internegatives. Lives in Chennai, India.

www.pbase.com/ashok_viswanathan



Fire dance



Theyyam in progress



Theyyam portrait



Theyyam procession



A trip on the mighty Mekong



Siem Reap by night

**WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY
John Cavana ARPS**

Readers of Travel Log will have seen many articles about southeast Asia, particularly Vietnam and Cambodia. It appears to be a well trodden path so I am hoping that my contribution will bring a slightly different viewpoint. I should say at the start that my trip was not a photographic one. I was on a quest for winter warmth and daylight in places I had not visited before.

My wife and I booked a Riviera Travel holiday, described as 'A journey on the Mekong'. It was a two week trip beginning in Siem Reap, Cambodia and ending in Ho Chi Min City in Vietnam. Only a week was spent on the river, the remaining time in very nice hotels. We were in a party of 20 people and the idea of the holiday was to eat good food, go to interesting places, learn new things and generally relax. We were subjected to a programme crammed full of action, so much of my photographic activity was done in a hurry and often through a coach window.

I travelled light, taking only my Leica Q2 and a Sony NEX-7 converted for infrared.



Images: Above - Classic view of Angkor Wat in infrared; Below left - Musician at a rest stop on the east-west Cambodian highway; Below right - Tourists receiving the blessing at the temple along the Mekong; Opposite page - Selfie Central



Our trip began in Siem Reap, about 16 hours after leaving Heathrow. This is a city about the size of Oxford and is the base for people who want to visit the ancient temple sites of Angkor Wat, which is where we began after a day's rest in the city. Steve McCurry books lead you to believe that all pictures at the temple sites will contain some Buddhist monks but no tourists, we found the complete opposite to be true. Even after a very early start to the day we found hordes of people everywhere, many of them looking for that much valued 'Angkor Wat selfie'. A few days were spent in this area before we were taken on a six hour trip through the Cambodian countryside to Kampong Cham, a town on the Mekong where we boarded 'La Marguerite', our home for the seven days.





*Images: Above - At a Cambodian silk factory; Opposite top - At the Royal Palace Phnom Penh;
Opposite bottom - Waiting for a fare*

As we proceeded downstream we stopped and visited villages, temples, more temples, schools, palaces and silk factories. We travelled by river ship, coach, minibus, rickshaws and tuk-tuks. As we travelled south, the river became more and more busy. By the time we passed Phnom Penh and reached the Vietnam border it was like being on a very big river version of the M1 in England. The range of shipping was vast and many of the vessels looked as if they were about to sink with the weight of cargo.

Being in Vietnam was quite a buzz, everyone is so busy and there is so much traffic. I did hear that the population of Ho Chi Minh City (referred to as Saigon by just about everyone we met) is about 11 million and that they own and use more than 8 million motor bikes and scooters! I think we saw them all. The traffic, both on the river and on the roads, flows in an almost organic way. It seems that everyone somehow senses what everyone else is about to do. We were advised that when crossing a road you should decide your route and stick to it no matter what, drivers will find a way to miss you. This was a nerve racking theory to test.





Images: Above - At the market in Sa Dec; Below - Down on the riverside; Opposite - Children playing







We enjoyed the towns, markets and islands of the Mekong delta and the lovely, modern 30 story hotel we stayed in Saigon. The War Remnants museum in Saigon was interesting, full of information and exhibits giving the Vietnamese view of what they refer to as the American War.

No visit to the area is complete without a trip to the Cu Chi Tunnels, some miles north of Saigon. Around 250 Km of tunnels were used by the Viet Cong during the war to fight the US Army. Some of the tunnel network remains, and elderly photographers are sometimes persuaded to fold themselves double and see what it would have been like. It would have been hot, really hard on the knees and joints, and exhausting.

Visiting these two countries was fun, educational and something really different for us. My work before retirement had taken us to many places around the world but never this region, so it was a worthwhile experience that we enjoyed greatly. The Mekong is 2,705 miles long, we saw only about 12% of it, so maybe another trip is indicated.

John Cavana ARPS



Images: Opposite - Some of the 8 million; This page top - Caution wide-load; middle - Passengers under 6 years old don't have to wear a crash helmet!; Below - Walkies - Saigon style



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ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

TRAVEL

RPS Travel Group Trips 2025

Northern Ireland

Monday 16 June 2025 - 4+ nights

Organised by the RPS Travel Group

More detailed information on this trip can be found on the RPS Website rps.org/groups/travel

Cost

Direct payment of hotel (approx £500 for 4 nights) and flights, plus all food and subsistence. Pre trip costs payable to the travel group will be for a Black Taxi Murals Tour and to hire of a mini bus for two excursions outside of Belfast (to the City of Derry and the Kingdom of Down area).

Activities will be suggested for the days spent in Belfast. Group dinners can be arranged.

Belfast and Beyond

Draft Itinerary

Day 1: Belfast murals, entries & pubs (Black Taxi Tour*)

Day 2: Kingdom of Down area (Mini Bus*)

Day 3: Derry - Walls and Bogside (Train/Bus)

Day 4: Titanic and maritime Belfast

Day 5: St George's Market

More spaces added - ONLY TWO remaining

PHOTO CREDIT: PATRICIA MACKEY

PHOTO CREDIT: PATRICIA MACKEY

Connect with Travel Group Members

e-news

e-news is e-mailed to members to keep Travel Group members up-to-date with members' achievements and activities and is published on the website.

If you have information to be shared please e-mail travel@rps.org

Share and Chat

These are live online informal gatherings to enable members to connect and share their experiences and inspire each other. Members sharing images of favourite locations, often off the beaten track, is a popular feature as well as updates on what's happening in the Travel Group and what members would like to happen. These sessions depend very much on Group member involvement.

Please keep an eye on your e-mail, Facebook and the RPS website for the 2024/25 dates for Share and Chat. These are via Zoom and start at 14:30 (UK Time).

If you can offer an item, please contact David Short by e-mailing travelevents@rps.org

Follow our Instagram Page

The Royal Photographic Society Travel Group is on Instagram. Follow us to help us develop and share a sense of place.

Tag us [#travelgroupprps](#) [#rps](#)
[#asenseofplace](#)

www.instagram.com/travelgroupprps/



Join our Facebook Community

All members have access to the Travel Group Facebook page and are encouraged to take part in lively discussions. Information on upcoming events and competition reminders are also posted here.

www.facebook.com/groups/RPSTr



RPS Travel Group on YouTube



Online events/talks/presentation run by the RPS Travel Group can be accessed via the Travel Group's section of the RPS website. Click on the link and access a variety of content that can be viewed on YouTube. This helps our members, who live across various timezones, benefit from these events at a time that suits them.

<https://rps.org/groups/travel/recent-travel-group-events/>

Monthly Travel Image Competition

Travel Group members have the opportunity to enter their travel photography images into our monthly competition. Submissions are of a single photograph that you feel defines a sense of place.

There are no restrictions on the age of the photograph you submit, but it must not have previously been submitted into an RPS competition. The submitted JPEG image can be any height but it MUST be 1000px wide and 72dpi.

The closing date for submissions is the last day of each month before they are judged and a winner chosen.

The winning shot will be added to the Travel Image of the Month page on the website, with the overall monthly winners competing to be the Group's annual 'Best of the Best' winner. All entries and the winning monthly image can be viewed on rps.org/groups/travel/

Submit your entries to Sue Hutton by e-mailing travelcompetitions@rps.org

The RPS Travel Group & You

Forthcoming events

Events are advertised on the website, e-news, Facebook and via specific broadcasts from the Travel Group.

**TRIP 2025 - Granada (March 2025)
SOLD OUT**

Travel Group AGM - 17 May 2025

Day TRIP - Oxford (18 May)

**TRIP 2025 - Northern Ireland (June 2025)
LIMITED SPACE LEFT**

Day TRIP - Liverpool (Date TBC)

Roads Less Travelled
11-12 October 2025
Travel Group Autumn **EVENT**

Find out about upcoming events
[rps.org/groups/travel/
future-travel-group-events/](https://rps.org/groups/travel/future-travel-group-events/)

Travel Log

Travel Log is a much valued publication of the Travel Group. It provides one way in which we are able to reflect our members' interests and showcase our travel photography and be inspired by other people's interpretation of the genre.

If you have a story to tell, images to share or the perfect cover photo please contact the Editor. There is no set format and we are happy to work with you to help tell your story or write about your images.

Our main requirements for images that we print is that their **resolution MUST be 300DPI** at the size we use them. **A cover image MUST be 300DPI plus slightly more than 3508px high x 2480px wide to ensure high quality printing.**

To tie in with our Roads Less Travelled event we would like to feature some 'off the beaten track' locations. Please get in touch if you have been somewhere that members of the Travel Group may not have been to.

E-mail article suggestions and potential cover images to
editortravel@rps.org

Roads Less Travelled

11-12 October 2025

**Woodland Grange Conference Centre
Royal Leamington Spa**

A mix of inspiring speakers and activities has been brought together to mark the 55th anniversary of the formation of the RPS Travel Group. At a time when journeying to 'off the beaten track' places was much less easy than it is now, one of the Group's primary purposes was to enable travel to unusual destinations. We do that much more independently now and perhaps put more emphasis on sharing the stories of our travels.

This weekend brings together a range of speakers and skills that will help each of us move forward on our photographic journey and have fun following our chosen paths. The speakers are Ash Bhardwaj, Peter Brisley, Nat Coalson, Sue O'Connell, Leigh Preston, Chris Roche and Dr. Lindsay Stringer.

Details of location, cost and booking deadlines are on the RPS Website (Travel Group).

Please note Early Booking discount!

RPS Travel Group - AGM

10am, 17 May 2025 (Online)

The Travel Group AGM provides an opportunity for members not only to reflect on what has been achieved in the previous year through receiving the Officers' reports, but also to contribute ideas for the Group moving forward.

This year we have chosen to go online so that the Group's overseas members can participate. We value international involvement.

As part of the event, Nat Coalson ARPS, owner of Photiq Gallery in Leamington Spa, will announce the awards in this year's Annual Competition. Nat works with a number of photographic companies and will be contributing to our October weekend in conjunction with Epson, who are sponsoring his involvement.

Get tickets via RPS Website (Travel Group)