

# TRAVEL LOG

NEWSLETTER FOR THE TRAVEL GROUP  
SEPTEMBER 2014 / ISSUE 68

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Cover photo: "End of Time" by  
Peter Lee Pui Weng ARPS

I would like to thank Liz Rhodes and Colin Howard for all their help in producing this issue of Travel Log. Without their advice, patience and support it wouldn't have been possible. I am also grateful to Aline Hopkins for her articles and for proof reading the drafts; to Carole Lewis, editor of DIGIT, and her husband John, for their invaluable help, 'geeky' advice and practical tips on setting up the new layout; to Michael Pritchard and Liz Williams in Bath HQ for their assistance with the new branding, layout and software. I would also like to thank all the contributors for the excellent material provided. Travel Log is for the members by the members - we rely on your contributions, and we want to know what you want! So don't be afraid or shy, contact me if you would like to submit an article, or if you would like a particular topic to be covered.

I am relatively new to the RPS and the Travel Group, I've been a member for under a year. So it was a huge honour to be appointed Editor of the newsletter. I have always been fascinated by photography and in the last six years it has become a central part of my life. Travel is my passion and I am very fortunate that my family circumstances take me to many corners of the world, so I can witness first-hand different cultures, landscapes and traditions. What fascinates me most is that people all over the world can be so different - and yet, we all share the same common emotions and feelings about our loved ones, our fears, our work and the world around us; and that is, essentially, what brings us together.

There is an ongoing debate about what is Travel Photography and everybody has their own concept of it: "Do not confuse 'travel photography' with your holiday snapshots". Or: "If you've manipulated the photograph in Photoshop, it's

not 'travel' anymore"... Although Travel Photography can overlap with many other genres: landscape, street, portrait, documentary, record or nature photography - its main characteristic is that Travel Photography is about capturing *A Sense Of Place*. But you don't need to go on exotic trips to faraway lands, travel photography can be captured close to home. We'll be exploring this topic during the Field Trip to Rye on 12 October, I hope I will see many of you there. And I would also like to know what Travel Photography means to *You*, please let me know by email: editortravel@rps.org.

In this issue we have excellent articles covering a vast array of destinations, activities and ways of life - each one of them has its own personal imprint. From Finland to Japan and beyond; a Distinctions panel shot in India, reports on activities and trips organised by the travel group and even more events coming up. The back cover shows one of the winning images from the RPS website Monthly Competition (July) themed "Travel". I am delighted to see that one of the winners is a member of the Travel Group and contributor to this issue, "From the Balloon, Cappadocia, Turkey" by Andrew Barrow.

I've also included the Photographer's Manifesto, by David Duchemin, because when I am stuck in a rut, overwhelmed by the daily noise, it reminds me that I am a photographer for the love of it and I, too, want to make "those few magic frames".

I hope this issue will encourage you to visit new places and rediscover old ones, whether near or far, to take photographs and to share your stories!

**Chelin Miller**  
Editor

### Travel Log information

Travel Log is published by the RPS Travel Group three times a year: January, May and September (contribution deadlines are 1st Nov, 1st Mar and 1st Jul, respectively). All contributions should be submitted to the Editor. Items covering any aspect of travel photography are welcome, including inspirational stories, technique, reviews of equipment, exhibitions, books, etc. Copy should be sent as .txt or .doc files by email. Digital images (portrait or landscape orientation) should be supplied by email or through a file sharing platform (such as dropbox or similar) or CD rom. Please rename your photos: YournameSurname\_PHOTONAME, CMYK or sRGB colour mode, high resolution (300dpi) jpgs or tifs, file size approx 6MB. For more information, please contact the Editor at editortravel@rps.org.

## CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER



Welcome to the new look 'Travel Log' which brings us in line with the new RPS branding. This is also the first issue put together by our new editor, Chelin Miller, and I am grateful to her for taking it on. At the same time, I would like to thank Colin Howard for being editor over the past four years: Colin made changes, subtle or otherwise, which greatly enhanced the publication.

Along with the new look I have also been given to understand that membership of the Travel Group has been rising steadily. This is good news, but it does raise the question, however, of what members expect from the Group and what can we be doing that will encourage more members to take part in our activities. You will see that we have a number of trips in the pipeline but we are always open to new ideas.

Our section of the new RPS website is taking shape and is the best place to keep up with events and activities. I also hope you will add some of your photos to the gallery [www.rps.org-special-interest-groups/travel/galleries](http://www.rps.org-special-interest-groups/travel/galleries) as this presents an opportunity to show your

work. When you visit the site, login. If you have not done so before you will need to register. Once you are logged in, you will find a the button for "MY RPS", where you can add an Album under the "My Profile" tag. In the blog section you will see a masterclass by Julian Comrie, FRPS, who has a lifetime of experience in taking great pictures. Don't miss this if you are thinking of preparing a distinction panel or simply looking for ideas to improve your photos on your next trip.

There are other blog articles of interest to Travel Group members. In addition to the website we have a Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/rpstravelgroup](https://www.facebook.com/rpstravelgroup). You can upload images and ask for comments, post ideas that might help others and make contact with other group members, together with other advantages of this popular platform. Please contact me if there is anything else you would like to see or hear about on these sites. You can do so via the Committee page on our section of the website.

Happy Travelling!

**Liz Rhodes**  
**Chair**

## DIGITAL FORUM

The Digital Forum is a space for like-minded photographers, members of the Travel Group. The aim is to share our images and receive constructive criticism. The Forum is only accessible to its members through a digital blog.



Once a quarter each Forum member uploads one image to the digital blog. Everyone then comments on the images on the blog, and scores are awarded. The image with the highest marks, or a selection of images is then published in Travel Log. The photo above is the winner of Round 28: "A Young Boy" by James Frost.

Currently there are approximately 22 members of the Forum. Images must have a Travel theme. All members of the RPS Travel Group are welcome to join the Forum, if you are interested in joining, please send an email to Hazel, [hazel.mason39@btinternet.com](mailto:hazel.mason39@btinternet.com), who will be happy to answer any questions.

# TRAVEL REPORT

Spring Weekend May 2014 - by Colin Howard ARPS

Some 50 or so members convened in the Shropshire market town of Ludlow for this year's Spring Meeting. Despite the competition with the annual Ludlow food festival for hotel space, Ludlow proved to be an excellent venue, with much to offer the casual visitor and those who brought a camera. As well, of course, the opportunity to sneak out of the Assembly Rooms for a quick sampling of the many and varied local foods on offer in the nearby market.

The main meeting was preceded on the Friday afternoon by a session led by Peter Hayes FRPS, on guidance about obtaining an Associateship in travel photography. Others enjoyed a guided tour around the market town, revelling in Ludlow's colourful history.

Saturday was largely devoted to presentations by two invited speakers, with intervening sessions on "How to obtain an Associateship" and reports of travel group trips. Our first invited speaker was Claire Carter, who gave a talk entitled "Perpetually in Motion". Claire, an artist by training, enthralled us all with her perspective on seeing into a landscape beyond the first glance to appreciate the individual contributions of the elements that make a landscape picture worth a second look. Starting from one of her favourite locations, Cley Hill, Claire progressed through pictures depicting the effects of wind, waves and clouds. But the best was yet to come: Claire had us all spellbound by her audio-visual of the Aurora Borealis taken largely in Iceland and Norway. There was nearly a mad rush for the next flight to the Arctic, her pictures were so stunning!

During the session on associateship preparation, Richard Lewis and

myself gave complementary talks as to our experience in obtaining our ARPS last year. Peter Hayes talked us through some successful panels that he brought along following this.



After lunch, we heard reports from Richard Lewis on the group trip to Helsinki last August and from Keith Pointon on the very popular trips to Burma earlier this year.

Kimberley Coole, a successful professional travel photographer who has spent a considerable amount of time in the Far East building up a stock library collection, brought the afternoon session to a very successful conclusion. Many of us have debated recently as to what is travel photography: Kimberley's definition was refreshing – "Whatever sells!" Kimberley showed us the merits of waiting and preparing for just the right light and taking time over shots, especially of people. How often have we heard that the difference between serious amateurs and professionals is the amount of time taken in getting the right pictures? Kimberley's work was an excellent example of this old adage, although few of us felt like emulating some of her shoots where she would photograph for up to 24 hours at a time if the conditions were right.

By tradition, the weekend included a number of ten-minute presentations on the Sunday by members. As always these proved to be both diverse and popular: we had offerings from

Margaret Hocking (South Georgia), Andrew Gasson (Kamchatka), Pamela Jackson (What makes a travel picture?), Robert Akester (Mongolia) and John Cucksey (East Africa).

Our final presentation on the Sunday was given by our Secretary, Keith Pointon, who magnificently stepped in at the last minute as our previously expected speaker was unable to come. We discovered that Keith is a secret cruise addict despite having to endure regular trips home by boat during his formative years.

Finally our usual competition had a record number of entries. Judged by Peter Hayes, the winner of the Joan Wakelin Trophy and Gold Medal this year was Dennis Anguige with his picture of "Prayer Meeting, Kolkata". Dennis also secured the Silver Medal ("Laos Boy") and the Bronze was won by Neil Harris ("Hamar Girl at Initiation Ceremony").

All in all, many of us concluded this was one of the best Spring Weekends in recent times. Our thanks are due to Keith Pointon, who bore the brunt of the organisation, Peter Hayes for giving so much attention to aspiring distinction applicants, and to the RPS President, Derek Birch, who joined us on the Sunday. If you were not able to manage to come this year, why not make a note now in your diary of May 16th and May 17th 2015 for the next Spring Meeting? We shall be in Ludlow once more so a second chance to visit this quintessential market town as well as sample some good food!

**Colin Howard**

Above: Derek Birch and Denis Anguige  
Photo by Colin Howard

## OBITUARY

**Hilary Hammond**

Hilary was the wife of Chris Hammond ARPS, Treasurer of the Travel Group for years and went with him on many trips organised by the Group. She was an enthusiastic traveller, good company and was always ready to help out at events when needed. She will be greatly missed.



## FOR THE LOVE OF THE PHOTOGRAPH

I am a photographer. I make photographs. I do not take them, shoot them, capture them or snap them. I do what I do to see the world differently and to show others what I see and feel. And yes, it really did look like that when seen through my eyes, mind and heart. Professional or not, I would rather make a photograph like an amateur does: for the sheer love of it.

The tools of my craft are a camera and lens, but the tools of my art are my passion and vision. Film or digital, it's not how we make our photographs that matters, but *that* we make them. The gear I have is good enough. My camera doesn't have to be made recently for me to photograph the present moment. The brand of my camera is irrelevant to the pursuit of beauty and authenticity in my work. Megapixels are no way to measure a photograph. I want deeper photographs: honest photographs that are alive, not merely really big or really sharp.

I hope the legacy I create with my work will be judged not by how many photographs I made in this lifetime, but what those few magic frames do in the hearts and minds of others. Comparing myself to others, or them to me, is a waste of my creative efforts and makes it harder to see the light, chase the wonder and do my work. There is too much to see and create to waste these too-few moments.

Art is not a competition, but a gift. I believe photographs can change the world because they have done so for me. I believe photography opens my eyes to a deeper life. One that recognises moments and lives them deeper for being present in them.

David Duchemin  
[craftandvision.com/pages/manifesto](http://craftandvision.com/pages/manifesto)

## TRAVEL REPORT

Myanmar, a Photographic Gem  
Text and photo by Keith Pointon LRPS

Myanmar/ Burma's relative isolation following the decades old tourism boycott has kept this culturally rich and beautiful gem largely unspoiled. Ang San Suu Kyi's announcement that the country would welcome "responsible tourism" has resulted in rapidly increasing visitors and the country embracing change. Already tourist numbers are outstripping available beds and the infrastructure has not yet caught up. Burma is poised on the brink of modernisation and right now is probably the perfect time to visit. With this in mind three separate groups of RPS Travel Group members visited the country early in the new year and enjoyed an exceptional two weeks travelling the country.



"Leg Rower, Lake Inle"

Considered a photographer's paradise, mythical landscapes, ancient treasures, wondrous archaeological sites and the friendliest of people all contribute to making

this a most photogenic region. There is a plethora of photographic opportunities: from the faded Victorian splendour of colonial architecture and the breathtaking Golden Pagodas of Shwedagon and Sula Paya in Yangon, to the magical ruined temples of Bagan, Mandalay and its colonial hill stations, the picturesque Shan Plateau, the beautiful Lake Inle with its distinctive leg rowing fishermen, stilt villages and floating gardens and markets; and not forgetting, of course, the myriad traditional hill-tribes and friendly peoples. Our exploration involved journeys by local train, rickshaw, horse and cart, canoe, bicycle and a notably relaxing transfer from Mandalay to Bagan on a "luxury" river cruiser.

All Points East very ably organised our visits, providing a varied itinerary, local guides and a patient tour leader who appreciated the specific needs of photographers. Several members were disappointed that they were unable to go on the tours available and so two further trips have been arranged: 27th November-10th December 2014 and 22nd May-4th June 2015. Both trips are open to all members of the RPS, not just the Travel Group.

For further details and booking forms contact Keith Pointon, as soon as possible - places are limited - at: [bagpoint@aol.com](mailto:bagpoint@aol.com), or: Temple Cottage, Whitcott Keysett, Craven Arms, Shropshire, SY7 8QE.

## TRAVEL REPORT

### NORTHUMBRIA

Group Field Trip - by Aline Hopkins LRPS



Dunstanburgh Castle by Allan Hartley

Several members of the Travel Group spent a week in Northumbria in June, and others visited for varying numbers of days during the week. The weather was unexpectedly good, which meant that boat trips to the Farne Islands could be undertaken without too much difficulty.

June is a good time to visit the Farne Islands, as at this time of year Puffins are flying in with sand eels for their young, and Terns are also nesting. Visitors find that Terns protect their nests aggressively, pecking at the head of anyone who ventures into their territory – hats are essential.

The Northumbrian coastline offers some marvellous beaches, and a surprising number of castles, some in ruins, others occupied and open to visitors. Bamburgh must be one of the most photographed castles along this coast, but Dunstanburgh, Warkworth, and Alnwick Castles are equally photogenic, the latter having very interesting gardens, including a 'poison garden' – only accessible with a guide.

On the last day, I was fortunate that on a visit to Alnwick Castle, I just happened upon the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland being presented with the Queen's Baton, as part of its journey through Northumbria on its way to Glasgow. An unexpected end to a very good week!

#### Aline Hopkins

Photos this page from top: Tern, by Aline Hopkins; Poppies and Bamburgh Castle, by Allan Hartley. Opposite page, from top right, clockwise; Bucket and Spade, by Allan Hartley; Puffin Landing by Aline Hopkins; Bamburgh, by Denis Durack; Sunset at Alnwick Yacht Club, by Denis Durack





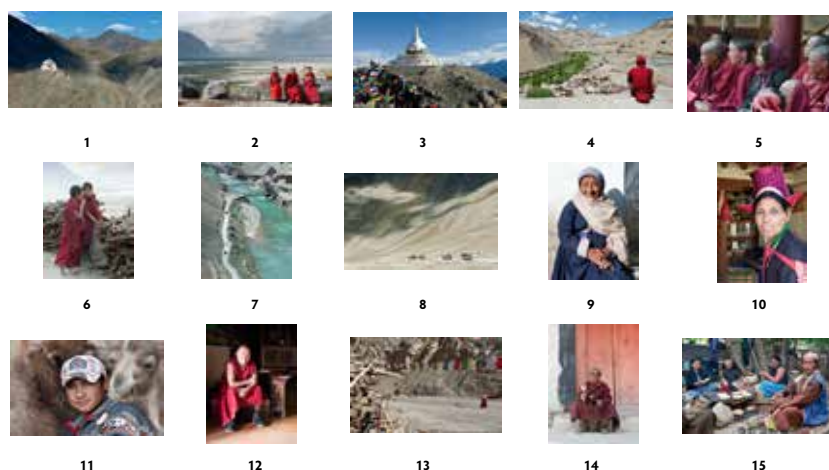
## DISTINCTIONS

How I Obtained My "A" by Richard Lewis ARPS

When I obtained my "L" at the end of 2008, I decided I did want to progress toward an "A" but felt I had a way to go before making a credible submission. So I took some time learning as much as I could through reading, visiting exhibitions and attending specialist courses to improve both my aesthetic and technical skills, as I was still comparatively new to the world of digital photography. This I found very helpful, as it saved so much time over my previous approach which was "life experience" (essentially trial and error.)

In Spring 2009 I felt the wanderlust draw me to the Himalayas, when I saw a TV program on Bhutan; but at that time there was nothing going in the foreseeable future except an American tour which was very expensive. Then I came across the trip to Ladakh with Roger Reynolds' PhotoVentures. It was his first time there, and I must confess that I hadn't heard of Ladakh before but the sample images seemed interesting and pretty much what I expected to get out of Bhutan – and this trip was available and a lot cheaper than Bhutan. I went for it.

[rps.org/special-interest-groups/travel](http://rps.org/special-interest-groups/travel)



It gave me everything I wanted and more. It was not a photo workshop – there was no tuition and clearly it was every man/woman for themselves when it came to getting images. I was inspired. Ladakh was unspoiled. We saw some incredible sights, met some amazing people, travelled extensively and I responded to all that with more photographs than I had even taken in any two week period before. It does seem to me, still, that I respond best to first impressions and that going back somewhere is never the same.

When I got home I went through everything I had taken, but convinced myself I did not have a panel. So I went off on other trips - to new locations and to revisit places that had been successful for me before. But the new places didn't inspire me, and for the revisits the "first impressions" rule kicked in and I never could rekindle the magic that had entranced me first time. I also think I was creating a rod for my own back by going out specifically to create an A panel.

So by mid-2012 I looked again at my Ladakh images and, cutting a long story short, did feel I had a good enough set of 15 with about another 10 for back-up, and signed up for the next available Assessment Day in Bath, which was the following March. In the meantime, I went to a Travel Advisory day at the Railway Museum in York – a very appropriate location I thought for a travel photography event. It was run by the chair of the Travel Panel, and turned out to be a very fruitful day. I got some very good advice. My personal statement was fine apparently but in reviewing my submitted prints we covered such diverse matters as the trend favouring smaller (i.e. A4) prints within the standard size mounts ("more card is good"), the use of higher quality printing paper to enhance my images, the acceptability of techniques I had previously thought unacceptable in formal travel photography, and creating a balanced set of images drawn from my original draft panel and back-up print sets. I came away feeling optimistic about my chances. And of course you also learn a lot from the critique of other candidates' submissions. All in all, it was a very worthwhile day and I cannot recommend too strongly the time/money invested (and actually saved

in the long term) in attending an Advisory Day.

The Assessment day in March 2013 itself went reasonably smoothly – there were some comments and discussions among the panel on one or two of the images, but reference was made back to consistency with my statement and all turned out well.

More recently, I was asked by the Distinctions department in Bath to provide digital copies of my images, hanging plan and personal statement for inclusion in the Distinctions pages of the RPS website. I was also asked to provide some "Author's Comments" on my personal thoughts on working toward becoming an Associate. They essentially reflect this article, but if you are interested, they are still available for consultation on the site.

#### Author's Comments

These represent my own conclusions based on my experiences – everybody is different so you may have different ideas, but they worked for me:

- Do go to an Advisory day for your specialist category - this is key - you will learn so much about current thinking on everything from

allowable editing techniques to preferred print sizes and print media. You will get good current direct advice on your proposed panel, and learn a lot from the critique of others.

- Do try to attend an Assessment day in your specialist category - again you will learn a lot and get a feel for what's successful and what's not and why.
- Work from the latest information - make sure you are reading the latest relevant version of the Distinction Handbook.
- Don't be afraid to ask for clarification of anything that isn't clear to you or seems to be contradictory.
- Don't depend on advice from experts previously associated with assessments - things change.
- Don't set out specifically to shoot a panel – you'll be a lot more creative when you're relaxed and better able to portray your real capabilities.
- Don't rush into deciding that you have or have not got the basis of a successful panel - give yourself time to digest what you've created.
- Do have confidence in your own judgement.

#### Richard Lewis

For more information and Richard's Statement of Intent, visit <http://rps.org/distinctions/distinction-successes/arps-galleries>







## WINERY WATCH

Text and photos by Andrew Barrow LRPS

## DESTINATIONS

I guess I'm lucky. One of my jobs involves a fair amount of travel to the wine growing regions of Europe, and sometimes further afield. Scratch that. I know I'm lucky! Over the last few months I've jetted off to Navarra in Northern Spain, explored Sicily and Rome, cycled round Tuscany and explored the western edge of Slovenia.

I should add that there are some negative aspects to these trips – the itinerary is set by other people, I have little say in where and when to go. There is often little time to wander the vineyards (winemakers usually prefer to show off their stationary bottling line or expensive stainless steel tanks, and trust me, once you have seen one stainless steel tank you have seen them all!) and carrying a tripod is practically impossible. While being wined and dined is often an exceptional joy it can be gruelling to visit four or more vineyards in a day, be jovial and ask all the right

journalistic type questions AND taste twenty wines at 9am before being whisked off to the next visit and repeat the exercise before a long lunch. The post-lunch visits are often the most arduous; all you really want is a doze...

While having little input on what to see, these trips do give a unique opportunity to experience the countries and regions from a non-tourist angle. There are occasionally a few cultural highlights to add variety but asking the bus driver to stop half way up a hillside for a photo-op is seldom successful.

I never take a tripod on these trips; they just get in the way. By the time I've unfolded a leg the tour has moved on through the really, really dark and atmospheric underground cellar, passed the tanks crying out for some HDR treatment through to the tasting room where there is hardly a chance to snap a picture of the bottle.

If all this makes it sound like I hate such visits you are wrong. They are absolutely bloody fantastic! Yes there are some dull or poor quality wines to taste, yes the annoyance of missing a fantastic sunset while stuck in the bus or having to cope with full mid-day sun light in the scant ten minutes allocated to a vineyard stroll... but the discovery of new locations, new wines, delicious foods, often local, usually of supreme quality (although I'll ignore the terrible slop served in a road side restaurant under a swarm of flies in Sicily... one thinks a back-hander was involved...) and the access to places 'normal' people seldom get to see is an added bonus too.

I've included a selection of photos from such trips. I hope you enjoy them.

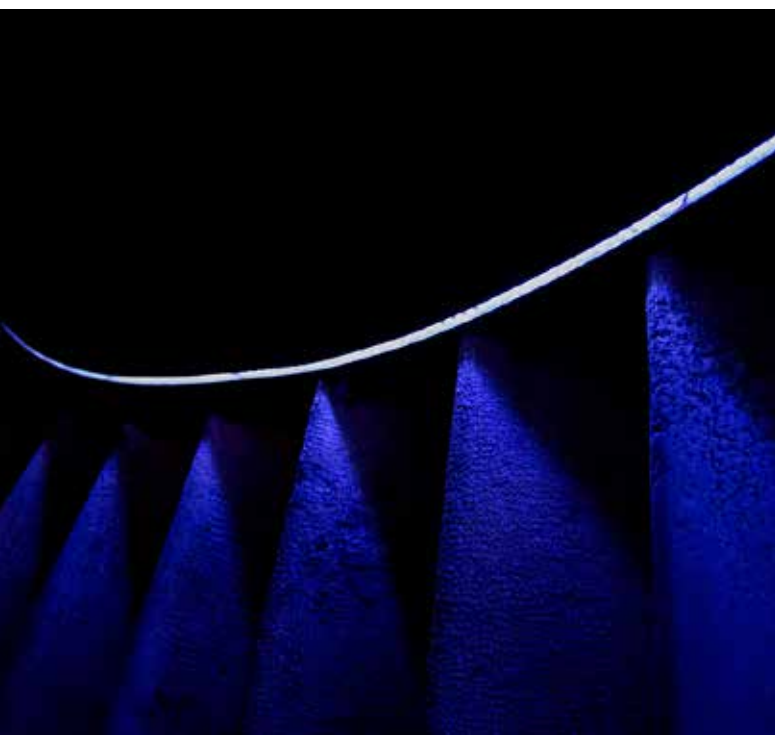
**Andrew Barrow**

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[rps.org/special-interest-groups/travel](http://rps.org/special-interest-groups/travel)





# BLUEDOG IN THE OUTBACK

Text and photos by Margaret Hocking ARPS



## DESTINATIONS

I love outback Australia and have travelled there many times over the years. In October 2013 I went on a week's photographic safari, run by BlueDog Photography, to far west Queensland. We stayed in motels and travelled in a comfortable vehicle where we were guaranteed two seats each so we had room for our equipment. There was also a screen so we could have tutorials while we travelled – distances in Australia are vast! There were 12 of us, all women except for one husband! Our leader, Danielle, knew the area well, having lived there for years and she was

Middleton, where there is a pub with a publican who is a bush poet, but nothing else except a disused community hall, solar powered phone box and a basic campsite.

The Lilyvale Hills which are mesa-like outcrops which glow red in the sun.

Boulia where the windmill at the end of the main street is ideally placed for sunset shots.

Views of the Channel Country, a vast flat area with numerous channels which fill with water when it rains.

evening the views from one of the dunes, Little Red, were spectacular and we had the added bonus of there still being water there after the 2011 rains. Unfortunately as the tourist season had ended we were unable to get a flight over Lake Eyre to see the water remaining there.

Betoota, population zero, has a race meeting just before Birdsville's. The pub there was abandoned in 1997 and the bottles still stand on and behind the bar and the contents of kitchen cupboards escape onto the floor. The cemetery, like those we



supported by two assistants. Our driver, Mim, was excellent and very interested in photography too.

We started and ended at Longreach, a town on the Tropic of Capricorn, renowned for being the birthplace of QANTAS. Our itinerary took us from Longreach to Winton, Middleton and Boulia; down to Birdsville for 3 nights and then on to Windorah and back to Longreach. Some may think the countryside must be boring, but for me there is always something new to see and the vegetation changes with the geology. Roos, galahs, little corellas, emus, wedge-tailed eagles and bustards are common too.

There is no time here to go into details of what we saw or where we went. However highlights included:

Arno's wall in Winton – still being built and incorporating loos, motorcycles, and anything else he fancies! (Winton is better known for its dinosaur fossils and being near the billabong where Banjo Paterson wrote *Waltzing Matilda*!)

This is cattle country and huge road trains with three (or sometimes 4) trailers ply the roads taking cattle to market; you get out of the way when one approaches as they just keep on coming.

Birdsville, well known to all Australians for the race meeting held in September when the population grows from 350 to 6,000 or more. The race track is accessible to visitors at other times of the year. Birdsville has a geothermal power station using nearly boiling water from the Great Artesian Basin, which comes to the surface in many areas nearby. We photographed star trails at an abandoned property some 50km away; I keep intending to try them again at home when we get good weather. We also went to the South Australian Border where a single sign notified you that you were entering South Australia. In the other direction there were about 8 for Queensland!! Birdsville is on the edge of the Simpson Desert, 61,800 square miles of it and the largest area of parallel sand dunes in the world. In the

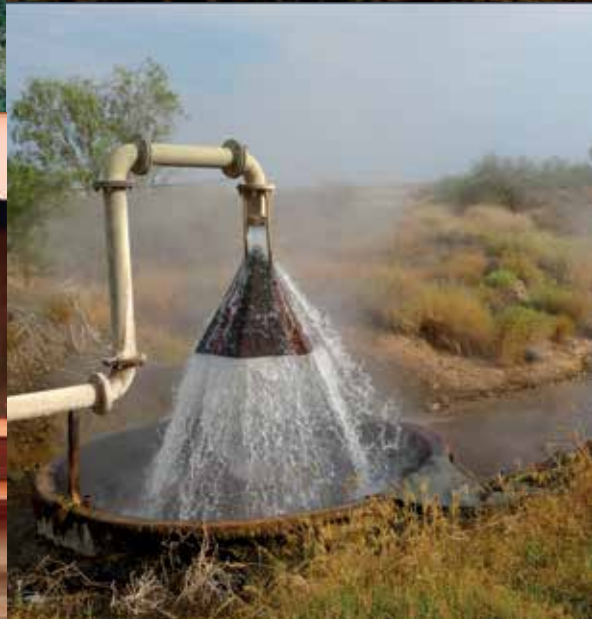
saw elsewhere, was very poignant. Windorah has a solar farm, which powers the whole town, and outside there are more red dunes. Our sun-downers there coincided with a sand storm! However the colours were still amazing. Cooper Creek nearby is well known as a good birding area.

Jundah and Stonehenge, small settlements with good pubs were on our drive back to Longreach.

Our journey had ended but several of us visited the Stockman's Hall of Fame, a superb museum of outback life, before leaving and were lucky enough to see a great show by Luke and his dogs, camels, horses and cattle. He skilfully demonstrated what useful tasks they could be trained to do.

I will be back, under my own steam, now I know how good the roads are! And I may well book on another BlueDog Safari.

**Margaret Hocking**





FINLAND  
MORE THAN LAKES AND FORESTS  
Text and photos by Adrian Hough LRPS

## DESTINATIONS

**F**inland, situated to the west of the Gulf of Bothnia, is covered in lakes and forests. Across the water to the west lies Sweden whilst its eastern border is with Russia. To the south of its capital, Helsinki, Tallinn in Estonia is only a short ferry journey away. It is only in the far north-west near to its border with Sweden and Norway that the land rises significantly. The north also forms part of what has traditionally been known as Lapland, the area inhabited by the Sami peoples of northern Scandinavia. Yet down in the lakes and forests there is a great deal of variety and interest even if it is possible to undertake a seven hour rail journey and see almost nothing but trees. If you are in search of the unusual, then the World Air Guitar Championships and World Wife Carrying Championships are both worthy of note.

The photographs here were all taken in August 2013. Oulu is a coastal city and the largest place in northern Finland, known for its relaxed way of life, open air dining (in summer) and those World Air Guitar Championships. Kuopio lies at the heart of the Finnish Lakeland and offers a variety of water-sports (as well as local fruit liquors) whilst Helsinki is situated on the south coast. Helsinki is notable not only for its modern fashions and art galleries but also for the island fortress of Suomenlinna, built by then ruling Swedes who feared Russian invasion, but which was captured first by the Russians and then the British, on both occasions without a shot being fired.

Nowadays it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and reached via a twenty to twenty-five minute boat trip from the centre of Helsinki.

Flights to Helsinki from Heathrow take a little under three hours and travel through Finland is possible by trains which are relatively cheap or by regional airline. I entered across the Swedish Border whilst travelling from Stockholm to Helsinki by train. Interestingly, although train travel throughout both countries is efficient and the railway crosses the border, the traveller has to use two coaches and an amount of guess-work to connect from one national rail network to the other.

Finland has only been a truly independent nation since 1917, having been ruled in turn by Sweden and Russia, although its national identity goes back much further. Today it is part of the EU and its currency is the Euro. In the summer the temperature is very similar to Britain even though Finland lies rather further north. English is widely spoken and it offers a fascinating blend of cultures as well as unexpected photographic opportunities. For the British visitor it is far less familiar and visited than its other Scandinavian neighbours of Norway and Sweden. Whether for a short break in Helsinki or a longer visit to travel more widely, Finland is well worth a visit.

**Adrian Hough**





JAPAN  
IMAGES OF TOKYO - HOKKAIDO  
Text and photos by Sheila Wilder

Most travellers have a wish list. My ambition was to cover the five continents of the northern hemisphere, starting with the small northern town, Churchill, in Hudson Bay, Canada. After trips in Europe, Africa, and India, I finally chose Japan in February 2010.

### Tokyo

I was met by the group leader in Shagawama District, where we checked into the hotel. The weather on that day was dull and grey and looked as if it was going to snow.

The following day the main group arrived from London and when they had settled into the hotel, we all went to visit a Shinto Shrine. According to Japanese tradition, Saturday is wedding day and all the Brides and Grooms dress in their traditional costumes – quite a spectacle to witness. Trying to capture this on camera was quite difficult as the bride and groom were preceded by the priest and other members of their Order and behind the bride and groom, holding a large red canopy, was another member of the procession, followed by the guests.

On leaving the Shrine we passed a large number of painted prayer-wheels with images of the Red-crowned Cranes, signifying longevity. Outside the Shrine we saw a group of teenagers dressed in 'punk costumes', this was a photographic opportunity not to be missed. In the evening we were taken to a restaurant to have a traditional Japanese dinner.

### Red-crowned cranes

The next day the group prepared to leave for the Northern Island of Hokkaido, the flight would take about one hour. When we arrived the temperature was minus 20c, a notable difference from Tokyo temperatures. On our way to Tsurui Village, the home of the Japanese red-crowned cranes, we visited a breeding station where they have pairs of cranes in a captive breeding programme. It is interesting to note, that the cranes migrate in the late spring to the plains of Siberia and

then return to Hokkaido in January. They travel the same migration route, across the high Himalayas, together with their young, who follow the adults showing them the annual migratory route. Unfortunately, as there are eagles and other raptors waiting for the weak ones, some do not make it to their breeding grounds. About a thousand of these birds are resident in the Hokkaido villages of Tsurui and Akan.

An early start the next day: we get our positions on a narrow bridge to see the sunrise and to wait for the cranes to wake up from the roosts in the frozen river. The colours of the sunrise were quite stunning: shades of purple, pink and a bright red ball. The temperature on that morning was minus 25c. We were not the only photographers here, photographers from all over the world were jostling for the best position on a very small bridge. In order to see a repeat of the previous day's spectacular sunrise, we rose at 3.30 a.m.

Having arisen so early that morning, we returned for a late, welcoming breakfast. We were then taken to the village of Tsurui, one of two locations where we would be able to see the enormous red-crowned cranes displaying, dancing or jumping with wings outstretched trying to attract a mate. This display was quite amazing, as you will see in the photo.

Another location was the village of Akan and here the locals feed the cranes. We also saw white tailed eagles, whooper swans and kestrels all hoping to get scraps of the remains of the fish missed by the cranes.

### Whooper swans on Lake Kussharo

Leaving the cranes behind, the next day we travelled by coach to our next destination, Kussharo. Once settled into our hotel, in the afternoon we were taken to Lake Kussharo where as many as 300-400 Whooper Swans return every winter. The swans travel across the high Himalayas from the

plains of Siberia to Hokkaido flying at a height of 40,000 feet, higher than a jet aircraft – 'an incredible feat'. The surface of the lake freezes in the winter, but along its sandy beach, geothermal springs prevent any ice from forming. There you will find whooper swans. They spend winter here and enjoy the warm thermal water together as they rest their pure white wings amid the snow-covered winter wonderland with spectacular mountains in the distance.

To watch the swans on this frozen lake with hot thermal springs is quite amazing, particularly watching them thaw out from their roosting mounds. Overnight, their feathers had frozen with thick frost. During the day, we watched them land with feet turned up, just like an airplane, sliding on the frozen lake and doing a sort of reverse thrust! On our last afternoon at the lake we captured the last images before leaving for our next destination. At around about 5 pm one of the local shop-keepers came out to feed the swans, they all congregated along the shore line jostling for fish and other morsels. Each pecking at one another, fighting their way through to the front, until the shop-keeper's bucket was empty. We waited for sunset.

### Steller's Sea eagles and white tailed eagles

Moving on from Lake Kussharo, we travelled to the Shiretoko peninsula, located at the northeastern end of Hokkaido, a World Heritage site. We arrived at our hotel in the small town of Rausu, on the shores of the Sea of Okhotsk near Russia, with coastlines on the Sea of Japan and the Pacific Ocean.

This is a favourite wintering grounds of the magnificent Steller's sea eagles and white tailed eagles and jungle crows. For the next two days, we had the opportunity to take photos of them from the ground or from the comfort of a chartered boat. The boat took us to the ice floes and allowed us to approach very close to the eagles, which were encouraged by a few tossed fish! The eagles roost on the

ice floes. If the ice drifts into Russian water, the boats will not of course follow. More than 260 bird species have been recorded in the area too, and winter is a great season to see many sea birds such as the harlequin duck, golden-eye and red-breasted merganser. Other wildlife present in Hokkaido are: sika deer, red fox, Russian flying squirrel, red squirrel, jungle crows, snowshoe hare, ribbon seal and the rare cicada.

After the early morning boat trips, we spent the afternoon, photographing the coastal landscape including the sea eagles roosting in the trees, many sea birds including slaty backed gulls and sika deer in the snow. After our second boat trip, we took a flight back to the hotel in Tokyo for the evening.

### Japanese macaques – Snow monkeys

We made an early start the next day for a long drive to the Shiga Heights arriving in the afternoon and settling into our hotel. The next morning we were collected from our hotel to go to the Jigokudani Park where we spent a full day. To see the monkeys, we walked about 1.5km through a peaceful pine forest. At the end of the walk we came across a steaming geyser. The park is located on the Yokoyu River Valley, which flows down from Shiga Kogen. Here we found the macaques either bathing in the hot springs, playing in the snow, grooming each other, or relaxing on the side of the pools. Many of us are familiar with images of monkeys soaking up the watery warmth of a hot spring in the midst of a bone chilling, wintery landscape.

These are known as the snow monkeys, or Japanese macaques of Japan. They are the only monkeys in the world to live that far north.

Our journey was nearly coming to an end. We returned to Tokyo for the last day to spend our time in Old Tokyo and visited the Temple of Asakussa, one of the largest Buddhist Temples in Japan. Some of us happily wandered around the narrow streets of the Old City while others did some last minute shopping.

she liked to travel. I asked her where she had been on her travels? She said that she had been to the Arctic and Antarctica. My next question was: Have you been to Japan? Her answer was no. About thirty minutes later she came up to me and told me she would like to introduce a fellow passenger who had been to Japan. It turned out to be a photographer that had been on the same trip as myself and my companion! What a small world this is!

**Sheila Wilder**



### The end of my story

An extraordinary incident happened to me whilst I was away in Northumberland on the Travel Group week, I was travelling with a friend I had met through the Japan holiday. We took an evening cruise around the Farne Islands. I just happened to get into conversation with another passenger, who told me that she was a keen wildlife photographer, and





## SWEDEN

Text and photos by Grahame Soden ARPS

It's a sad fact that most of us live our lives conforming to society's expectations; we "conform" from a sense of duty, loyalty, or to avoid the censure of others, and then reward ourselves by the acquisition of possessions. The sad consequence is that many of us reach the end of our journey unfulfilled.

I've always had itchy feet, and thought RAF service might scratch it, but even in later life my eye has usually been on some far horizon ... When I met Katharina, I recognised a kindred spirit as her "pursuit of pleasure" involved people & places rather than possessions too, so we decided to journey through life (and as many countries as possible) together.

We were in a nice flat in a nice area of Berlin with a nice income when the "itch" struck again, so we smiled, shrugged our shoulders and gave it all up, setting off in the car on our "No Fixed Abode Tour" in July, 2013.

It's a cathartic experience downsizing your possessions to fit into a 20 cu/m storage space and a car, [rps.org/special-interest-groups/travel](http://rps.org/special-interest-groups/travel)

but what excitement! Our vague plans were to take a year or two in Scandinavia, Spitsbergen Iceland, and The Faroes before sticking a pin in a map to see where next. Our first stop was to be with friends in Edsbyn, central Sweden, for the summer then we would head North for the autumn and winter.

Sweden is vast – good wide roads sweeping through mile after mile of forests – and the Swedes travel enormous distances as a matter of course. They have invented "Swedish miles" to make the distances seem less – another 100 miles to go really means 1,000 kilometres. The monotony can be relieved by a chance encounter with a wandering elk, reindeer or deer. There are thousands of such "encounters" a year, and one with a full-grown elk (which can weigh around 800 kilos) can be fatal for you, the elk and your car.

### Summer 2013

Sweden isn't noted for its long hot summers, but that of 2013 was pretty good! Huge skies, fluffy clouds, daylight till midnight, and a real

chance to relax after the hustle and bustle of city life. Edsbyn is similar to many semi-rural locations here – clean, friendly and safe. They respect their traditional culture and enjoy family life. The annual Festival has a juggler, a fancy-dress competition, a soap-box derby and little else. We spent three nights in a bear-hide. No bears visited, but it was three days and nights of perfect solitude, an almost Zen-like experience. Talking in whispers, reading, thinking. When was the last time you did nothing for 3 days? By contrast, I was also introduced to the sport of Bandy and had a pass to photograph the world club championships. Bandy is like ice-hockey without the violence. It is very fast, and the mediocre indoor lighting meant I was shooting at ISO 12800! (Thank you Canon for the 6d)

### Autumn 2013

So, as the birds were heading south for the winter, we set off north for Lapland. We had rented a little flat in the tiny village of Vormsele, set on the banks of the Vindelälven – I can see the frozen river from my window as I type this ... On its banks there are

## DESTINATIONS

summer and weekend cottages, but in truth the village is dying. There are only around 80 permanent residents, most of whom are in their autumn years, and there are many empty houses ... The village has no shop or amenities. It is beautiful. Idyllic. Peaceful. The river is unspoilt by power stations and provides world-class salmon and trout fishing. You can gather enough summer berries to last you the winter, plus fresh mushrooms in the autumn. If you hunt, then elk and deer provide your meat, and there is local timber for your warmth. We've bought a tiny, wooden, cottage here - our Base Camp to explore from and return to.

### Winter 2013/14

The winters this far north can be cold, -30C is common, but for me, cold, bright, snowy days are easier than the grey dampness of Berlin or London. There's no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothes - to which I'd add "or a badly-prepared car".

We went to the Sami Winter Market

at Jokkmokk, which is just inside the Arctic Circle and has hosted the market for some 400 years. The sheer excitement of being in the Arctic Circle was immense.

The Sami earn their living from reindeer-herds and making exquisite handicrafts. They have the quiet confidence and charm of those who still live in nature, and move with the seasons.

Tourists come from all over the world for a unique, lifetime experience.

Last week I went to photograph the Vindelälvsdraget, an annual 4 day/400km dog-sleigh and skiing race, along the river from the hills of Ammarnäs to Vännäsby on the coast. This year though, the race was cut to 200km, as the weather was too mild. It was incredibly hard work for the competitors, human & canine, ploughing through slush & ice - but wonderfully photogenic for me!

So what's next?

Well, our plans for Spitsbergen, Iceland & the Faroes have been put on hold for at least a year. You learn

to move to a different, more relaxed, rhythm. Base Camp needs work, and there are so many places here to discover! Plus, I think that bee-keeping may be a new skill to learn.

We do have photographic projects, of which Kiruna is one. It is a mining town and, because of subsidence, they are planning to move the whole of the Old Town a few miles away from the danger zone. That should be something to see!

I've brought some elderly analogue cameras with me and a developing tank, so some black & white film might be on the cards too, and I really should learn how to take videos with my digital camera. There's so much to do ...

I read of a nurse who worked with the terminally ill. She did a survey of her "near death" patients. Their most common regrets were "having worked too long/too hard", "not enough ME time" ...

**Grahame Soden**

[photograhame.zenfolio.com](http://photograhame.zenfolio.com)



## TRAVEL CALENDAR

By Aline Hopkins LRPS

Next year looks like being a very exciting year for the Travel Group, but first there are some more events to come this year, details of which can be found on the Travel Group website.

In September, the 26th to the 28th, there will be a Travel Group weekend in **Conwy** in North Wales, which is being organised by Allan Hartley ARPS, his e-mail address is HartleyAlmal@aol.com. Conwy Castle and wall are World Heritage Sites, and should make for an interesting weekend. On October 12th there will be a field trip in **Rye**, in conjunction with South East Region. For details see the website or contact Liz Rhodes, lizrh@tiscali.co.uk.

From November 27th to December 10th, there will be a trip to Burma/**Myanmar**, for those people who were unable to make the previous trips and anyone else who might be interested. The cost of this trip is £1750. Details can be obtained from Keith Pointon, his e-mail address is bagpoint@aol.com. This trip will also be available in May 2015. Around thirty members went on the earlier trips and we were all very impressed, coming back with many thousands of images between us! There will be a reunion for those of us who went on these trips, and anyone else who might be interested, in **Bath** on Sunday September 21st. For further details contact John Cucksey, cucksey@btinternet.com.

We have a busy year in plan for 2015. Some of us will be heading 'In Search of the Aurora Borealis' in January in Tromsø, **Norway**. This will take place from the 14th-17th January, the cost is provisionally £550 single, £952 couple, for three nights, or £770 single, £1234 couple for six nights, including flights from Heathrow. Evening/night-time excursions with Guide Gunnar will cost an additional £135. Other excursions, such as dog sledding or snow-shoeing are available. Please get in touch with me as soon as possible if you are interested.

At Easter, from the 31st March to the 7th April, Colin Howard has arranged a trip to **Jerez** in Spain for Holy Week, anyone interested should contact Colin, his e-mail address is colin.howard@me.com. You can also find more detailed information on the website. In May there will be the **Spring Weekend in Ludlow**, and provisionally in July, Liz Rhodes is looking into the possibility of a trip to **Zambia** in association with ShutterSpeed Travel, who were featured in the last issue of Travel Log.

In August we plan to spend time at the **Edinburgh Festival** with the Visual Art Group and Scotland Region, watch the website for details. From 29th August – 12th September there will be a trip to **Western Canada**, starting in Calgary and

heading west to Vancouver Island, taking in some of the incredible scenery of this part of the country. There will be opportunities to take various excursions including whale and bear watching. Prices will depend on the number of people going, the trip will not run unless we have 6 participants, and there will be a maximum of 10 people. Approximate cost if only 6 people go will be £2210, not including flights. Please contact me as soon as possible if you are interested in going. If there are between 12 and 20 people interested in this trip, it may be possible to run two trips, Calgary to Vancouver and then Vancouver to Calgary.

In October there will be a weekend in **Cornwall**, organised by Margaret Hocking, details will appear on the website once finalised.

Your committee has also been giving thought to where to go in 2016 and 2017. Two tours to **Cambodia** are in place for May and November 2016 and details can be obtained from Keith Pointon. Other proposals include tours to Portugal, Cuba, Japan, Denmark and Yellowstone. If you would like to register your interest in any of these places, or suggest a place for a tour, or if you are willing to organise a tour, do contact me at alinehopkins@btinternet.com.

## EDITOR'S PICKS

Before a trip I always like to do some research, and what better way to get a feel for the place than to read books, watch films and listen to music (which I might later use for slideshows). I often get audiobooks, too, so I can listen to them on the road. And there's also some useful travel/photo apps. What are your travel picks?

### Books

**The Gentleman in the Parlour**, by W Somerset Maugham

**The River of Lost Footsteps: A Personal History of Burma**, by Thant Myint-U

**Burmese Days**, by George Orwell

**Letters from Burma**, by Aung San Suu Kyi

### Film

**The Lady**, directed by Luc Besson - and great music by Eric Serra, too

### Five Fave Apps

**Snapseed**: The best photo editing app, fun and easy to use.

**Slow Shutter Cam**: newly redesigned photo app that captures amazing long exposure shots that the iPhone camera can't take on its own.

**Flipagram**: Create beautiful short video stories using your Facebook, Instagram and Camera Roll photos, set to music you love.

**Triplt**: A trip planner that keeps all of your travel plans in one spot. Create a master travel itinerary and access your itinerary planner online or on your mobile.

**XE Currency**: The best currency converter on the market. View exchange rates and calculate prices on the go.

# *A Sense of Place*



Photo: From the Balloon, Cappadocia, Turkey By Andrew Barrows

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