

TRAVEL LOG

THE **RPS**
ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

TRAVEL

The Journal
of the
RPS Travel Group
Issue 83 February 2020



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Dear John,

What a pleasant surprise when I opened the September issue of Travel Log to find a high-quality publication full of interesting articles and good pictures as well. Reflecting on a discussion at the 2018 Spring Weekend at Staines, the probability of reverting back to electronic versions seemed to carry favour. I was against this option as I do like to read a publication, not sit glued in front of a computer screen. So, what has happened?

I liked John Minter's editorial which evoked many memories and discussions on the subject of what constitutes a travel picture and panel submission.

Some years ago, I attended an assessment day at Bath for a pending submission of my Fellowship panel. During the discussion of my panel, the two assessors could not agree with each other of what constitutes a travel image. The discussion rolled on with many members of the audience seeking clarification from the two assessors. The result of the discussion was inconclusive, and the meeting closed with many questions unanswered.

In general, I agree with John Minter's comments. I look at the Digital Imaging Group and think, this is also a good source of travel images. I feel the advisory board at RPS headquarters needs another look at the subject of travel and where it fits in with the other groups.

Well done for producing one of the best issues of Travel Log I have read for a long time.

Best wishes.

Michael Huggan ARPS

Thank you, Michael

As usual it is a combination of skills and inputs. The quality of the content comes from our members. The presentation is perhaps my remit, but I could not do it without the sharp eyes of John Minter.

In short it is Teamwork.

John Riley - Editor

TRAVEL LOG



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The Journal of the RPS Travel Group

PARKCameras



Many thanks to Park Cameras for the use of their studio in Rathbone Place, London for our Committee Meetings. They are also offering our members a discount of 15% off any of their School of Photography workshops / courses which are held in London, Burgess Hill and occasionally Brighton.

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Contributing to Travel Log - Travel Log is published three times a year around February, June and October. Please send your submissions to the Editor. editortravel@rps.org. All aspects of travel photography are welcomed from articles of adventures, both home and abroad, to reports of events or exhibitions and individual images of note.

A View from the Bridge

Trip to North East Brazil



RPS Travel Group

Natural Treasures of Nairobi



Safeena Chaudhry

The Cold and the Beautiful



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Kathmandu, Nepal



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Woreda



Dr Tim Rubidge LRPS

Miami Vice



Valerie Mather LRPS

RPS Travel Group visit to
Helsinki



Richard Lewis ARPS

It has been a very busy year for the committee and many activities have taken place or will be happening in 2020.

Safeena Chaudhry kicked things off with her series of Regents Canal walks. In the true spirit of the aims of the RPS she opened her photography treks up to the public.

Our opening article is a report from the Trip organised by our Treasurer, Bob Akester. An exhilarating eleven days in Brazil by planes, minibuses, 4x4s, quad bikes, motorboats, a ferry and they even paddled their own canoes.

There is more to come. A weekend of photography in Mid and North Wales (Gareth Hughes), Camargue White Horses and Gypsy Festival Workshop (Keith Pointon) Summer in Helsinki (Richard Lewis)

We maintained and increased our competitive spirit with our Projected Images Competition (Keith Pointon), Bring a Print Completion (Me) and our new Monthly Image (Competitions Co-ordinator Steve Day)

Our social event of the year is 20/20 Vision being held in RPS House Bristol. It promises to be an exciting and busy weekend with presentation by amazing Travel photographers, two photo-shoots, two competitions and our Annual Dinner.

This year's dinner is being held in the Kiln Restaurant in the Hilton Double Tree Hotel, Bristol Centre, where rooms are available for you to book at a very favourable RPS rate. The Kiln Restaurant is a truly historic and unique dining space. It is an original 17th Century glass kiln which is a listed building that has now been transformed into an atmospheric dining area.

Nature Group invited us to take space at their annual exhibition at Wingfield. We displayed several successful panels for Associate distinction in Travel. Look out for more later in the year. (John Speller – Richard Lewis)

You can access all the above on our new Web Site with online booking links to all events and activities.

This is where the biggest thanks must be said to our Digital Communications Manager, Kath Phillips. She has worked her socks off to get all the information together whilst having to learn the new web site protocol. Thank you, Kath. In fact, a big thank you to all the committee for all their hard work. As Chair I feel redundant as each one of them has just got on and done their bit.



John Riley LRPS

Cover Photo - Tony Smith APRS

Flower Hmong Girl at Can Cau Market, Lao Cai Province, North West Vietnam.

Weekly markets are held throughout the mountain provinces where villagers buy, sell and socialise. The women from the Hmong, Dao and Thai ethnic groups are distinguishable by their distinctive traditional dress. Here mostly Flower Hmong.

Can Cau market is the largest buffalo market in the north-west of Vietnam. Each Saturday hundreds of buffalos are transported here before sunrise and at first light trading commences. By midday it's over. Many of the market traders will now make their way to Bac Ha for the Sunday Market.

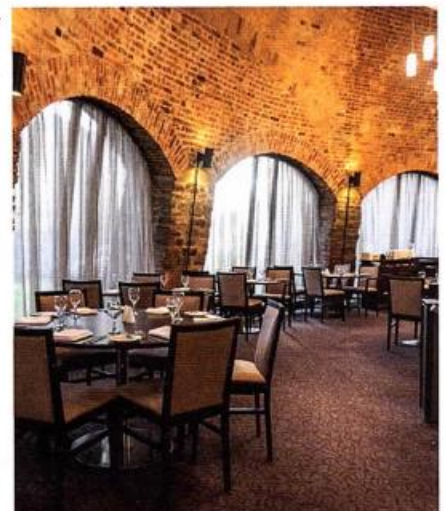
Travel Group Annual Dinner

The Kiln Restaurant is a truly historic and unique dining space. It is an original 17th Century glass kiln which is a listed building that has now been transformed into an atmospheric dining area.



DOUBLETREE
BY HILTON™

BRISTOL CITY CENTRE





RPS Travel Group

TRIP TO NORTH EAST BRAZIL

Pamela Jones LRPS

Arriving - Liz Bugg



Sand Lines - Pamela Jones

Seven of us - all RPS members - recently undertook a trip along the "Route of Emotions" covering three different states in North East Brazil. It was a remarkable time and our journeys were sometimes long and varied. We travelled in 4WDs, speed boats, ferries, quad bikes and the occasional luxury of a regular mini bus.

Brazil is a vast country - larger than Europe - and the regions

we visited covered only a very small part of the North. Our route was mainly coastal but towards the end the final two days were spent further inland.

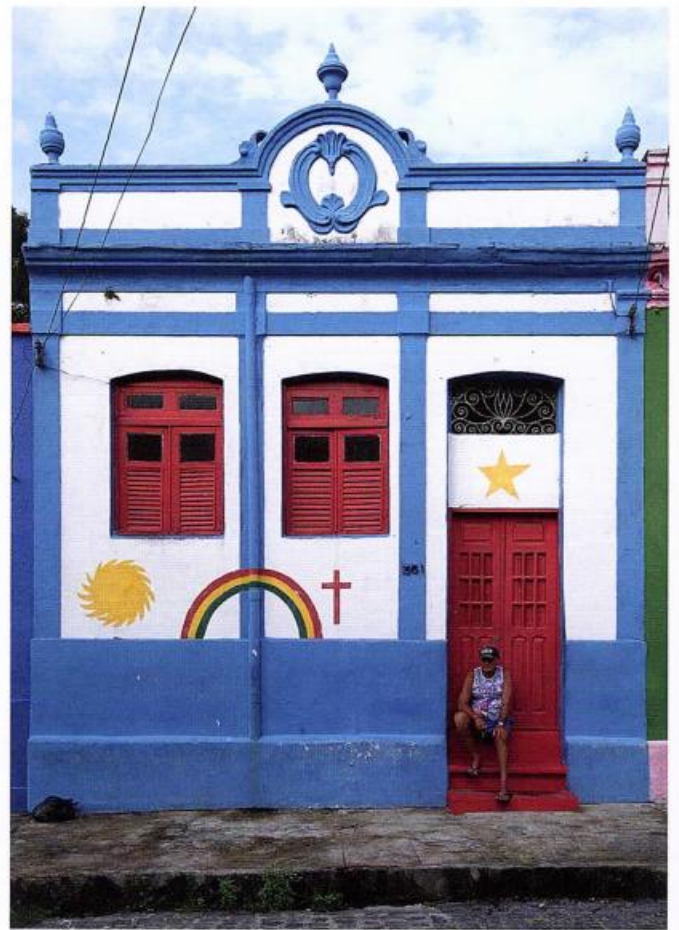
We started in Recife and Olinda - the latter is a World Heritage Site and reminiscent of some Cuban towns for its colourful houses and architecture. Music seems to spill out from every second house and while we were there we experienced a birthday celebration which closed the

streets and created a carnival atmosphere with dancing and music parading slowly down the main street. It certainly quickly launched us into the mood and culture of the country.

We flew on to Sao Luis - a city which was founded by France and is currently a communist-run city. Sao Luis, like the rest of the North East, is a poor city and clearly doesn't benefit from the tourist trade which is abundant in the South of the country.

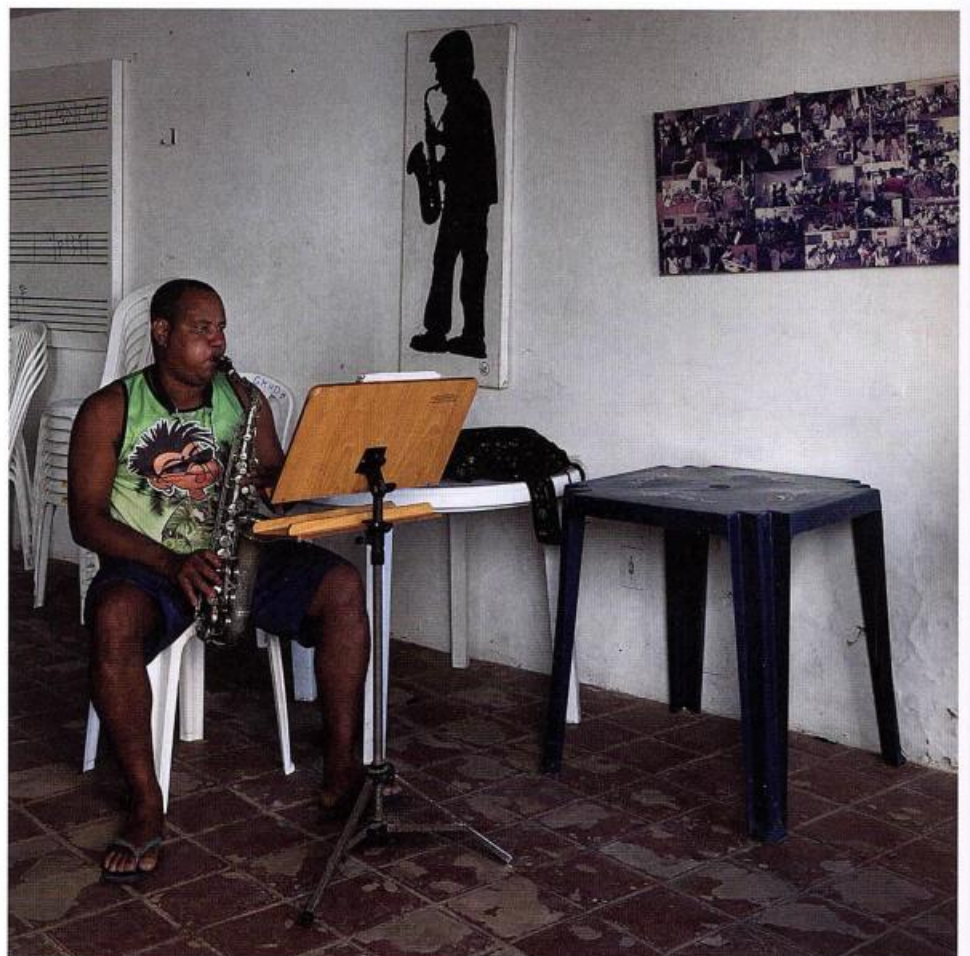


Street musician in Olinda - Deborah Brown



Doorway - Richard Lewis

Local music - Richard Lewis





Carnival Figures - Robert Akester

Birthday Celebrations- Robert Akester





Sand Dunes - Liz Bugg

We then had a four-and-a-half-hour drive to Barreirinhas followed by a two-hour speed boat journey down the River Preguicas to Atins where we stayed for a few nights. This location was chosen for its proximity to an extensive area of sand dunes in the Lençóis Maranhenses. We went to about eight of these dunes and walked up and down the soft, hot sand (at times in fierce wind) photographing the black internal lakes. A black and white photographer's paradise.

To move to our next location, we again left by speed boat and then rode in 4WDs along a very long beach. Travelling along the beaches appears to be the preferred mode of travel; the long flat beaches are used as highways and provide quick access to towns. This clearly

saves on building additional asphalt roads, which on the whole are pot holed and not that easy to drive on anyway. A big feature of this coast is the kite surfing schools which take full advantage of the wind!

One of the highlights of the trip was travelling on the Parnaíba Delta to see the Red Guara birds (Scarlet Ibis) arrive for roosting. They start arriving at exactly five pm, and for an hour we experienced watching hundreds and hundreds of birds arriving in flocks from all directions to settle on about five trees on an island which has been named Scarlet Island. If they can, Scarlet Ibises often nest and roost on islands in order to be safe from predators.

During our time in this area we canoed through mangrove trees to see Howler Monkeys (which

were very shy) and some other braver monkeys who came closer to us. I think we saw Muriqui monkeys as well but I'm not sure.

As a finale we spent two days in the National Park of Seven Cities (Sete Cidades) - a mythical city complex of seven lost cities - the myths are based on an old Iberian legend. The geological structures took millennia to form and the few man-made sections have primitive rock paintings which are 3,000 to 5,000 years old. Each "city" is very separate and has its own distinct atmosphere: some of the rocks are truly exceptional and resemble surrealist sculptures.

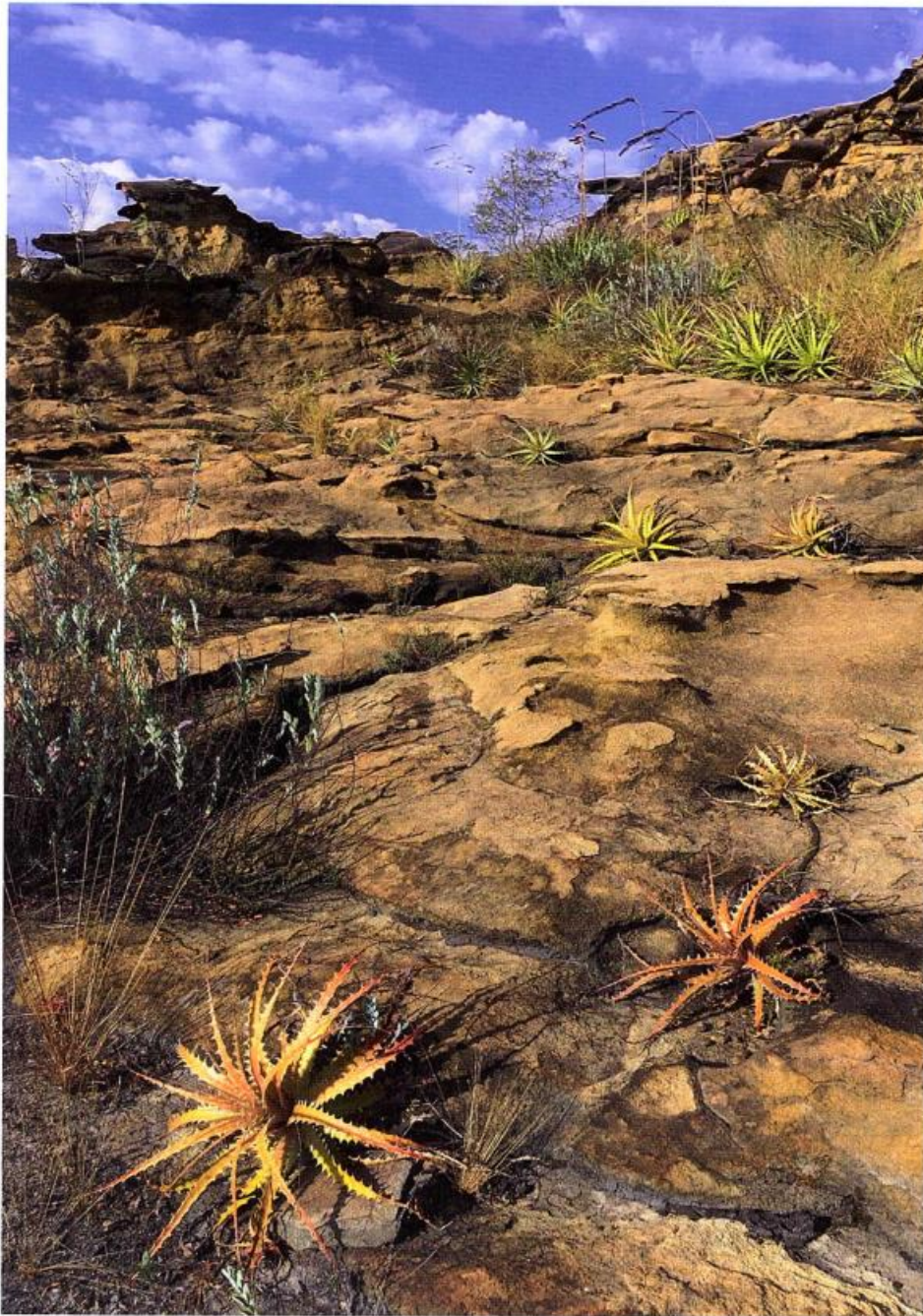
We finished up in Jericoacoara - a charming Brazilian tourist resort where we appeared to be the only non-Brazilians in the town.



Local Fishermen - Liz Bugg

Red Guara - Robert Akester





Siete Ciudades - Jeremy Fraser- Mitchell

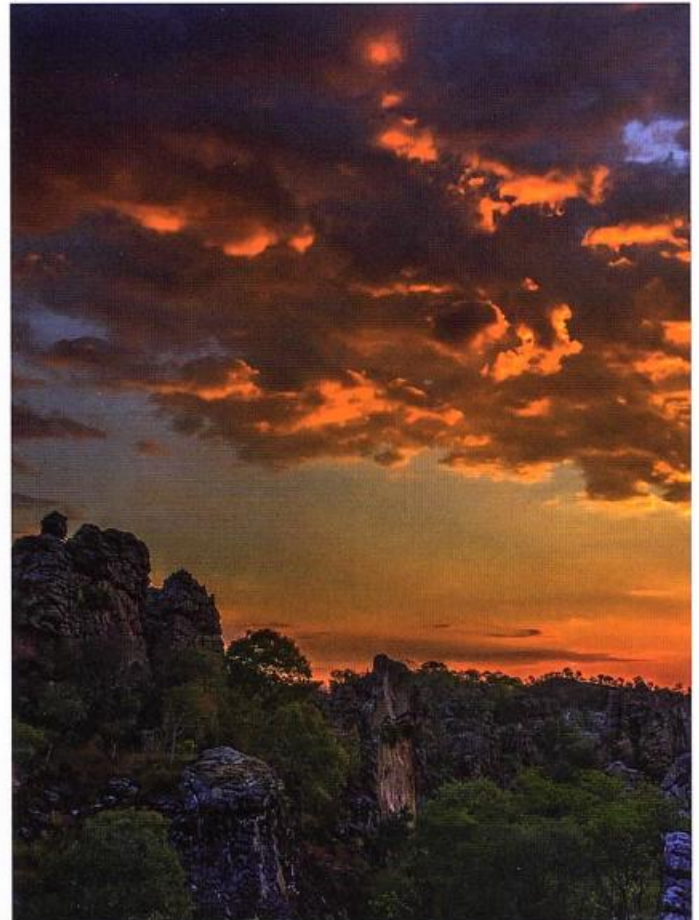
Dunes and turbines - Peter Highton





Brazil Map - Jeremy Fraser-Mitchell

Kite Surfer - Robert Akester

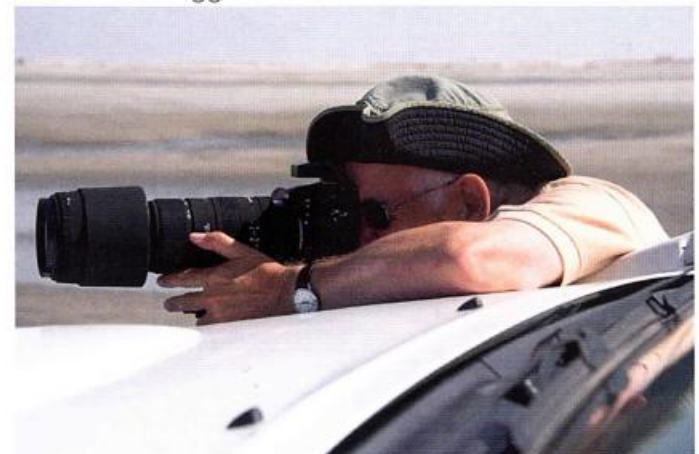


Sunset in Siete Citades - Jeremy Fraser-Mitchell

A local - Richard Lewis

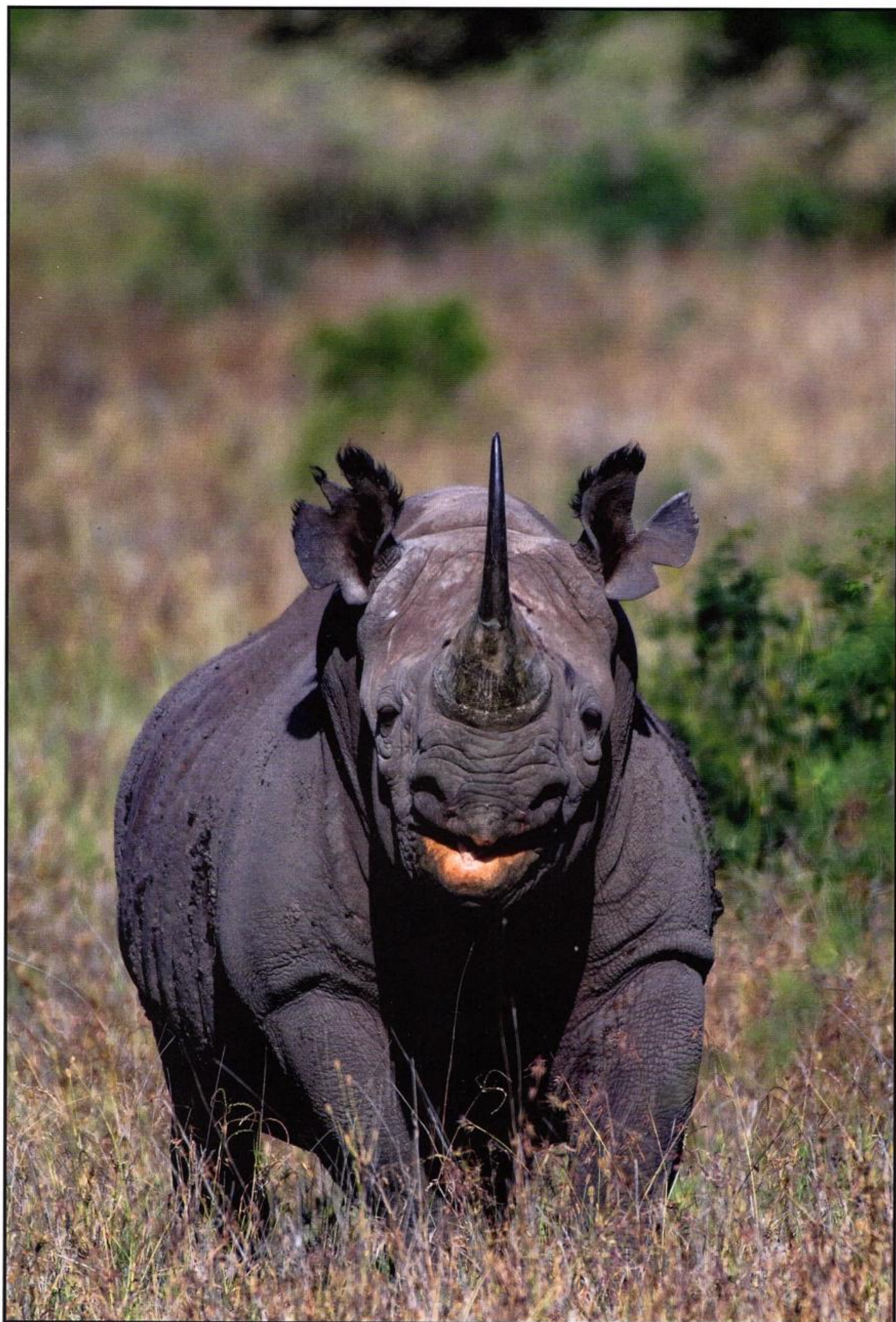


Got Ya - Liz Bugg



Again - even though it is a tourist resort - there are no metal roads; all roads are sand and sometimes hard work to walk.

It was a lovely gentle end to our trip and thank you to Robert Akester for his inspiration for the trip in the first place.



Natural Treasures of Nairobi

Safeena Chaudhry is a London based photographer. Her first solo exhibition 'Women Against Crimes' took place in the summer of 2018 and featured a series of portraits of women from Nepal and South Africa who campaign and work against human and wildlife trafficking. Continuing on her quest to explore conservation through the lens, she met with world-renowned photographer, Gurcharan Roopra for a mentoring session in Kenya.



Safeena Chaudhry

Lions, buffalo, impala, giraffe, zebras and the endangered rhino are just a few of the residents of Nairobi National Park - the first national park in Kenya and the only one in the world that is within a city's limits. It was established in 1946 as a game reserve for colonialists and is now the main attraction for tourists in Nairobi.

During my game drives in Kenya, I loved seeing giraffes, which are often taken for granted in Africa. But what is lesser-known is that they are facing a silent extinction. As well as being hunted for their skin, bones and head, they are also being affected by habitat destruction and most surreptitiously, by the illegal bushmeat trade. This is something that is being addressed by campaigners and conservationists. I would urge travellers to think twice before buying trinkets, skins and cushion covers.

On the more well known front, rhinos are being poached to extinction for their horn. The keratin-based horn is being misused in Traditional Chinese Medicine to allegedly cure hangovers, erectile dysfunction and cancer. The demand is so great that, gramme for gramme rhino horn is reported to be worth more than cocaine or gold. As well as being used as medicine, it is also crushed and consumed at parties in the Far East as a show of status. More and more tourists are being educated about rhinos and it was a great privilege to encounter a few in Nairobi National Park.

I met the award winning photographer, Gurcharan Roopra, at the gates of the park. As well as being the recipient of various awards, he is also a passionate supporter of conservation and has worked with some of Kenya's national trusts to create some unforgettable imagery from the ground, his 'Landy' (a silver Landrover) and the skies. I had been trying to get a photography mentor session since I interned with Nat Geo Magazine in London a couple of years ago but I had not found one willing to give up their afternoon until I contacted Gurcharan before I left London.

I had been to Nairobi National Park twice before but as I used a local company, both times, the drivers rushed through the park and did not stop long enough for me to spend any time to admire and capture its denizens.

I had come to Kenya equipped with my Nikon D850 and a 200-400 mm lens, thinking that I was good to go. But little did I know.

Gurcharan has mentored and supported many emerging and established photographers from around the world and it was very generous of him to give me a tour of the park. I was open to improving my photography, especially as I plan to do more wildlife portraits in the future. I knew there was something missing from my

photographs of animals and as someone who has spent time with anti-poaching units; I wanted to develop this as a skill.

Gurcharan's expert eye pointed out the recurring error in my composition - I was slicing my subject in half with the sky or the ground. As soon as he said it, it was an epiphany. Even if I followed the rule of thirds, slicing the subject left me feeling uneasy and it took an outside view to see it.

There is something moody and evocative about Gurcharan's work and many of his portraits are taken from the ground level. He has also taken some stunning shots of dramatic skies and attributes this to being so close to the park and being able to see when a storm is approaching. The other tip, which is easier said than done is to get as close as possible. I experienced this first hand as we drove slowly up to a herd of zebras and waited for one of them to turn round. With Gurcharan's guidance, I managed to get more creative shots of the zebra.

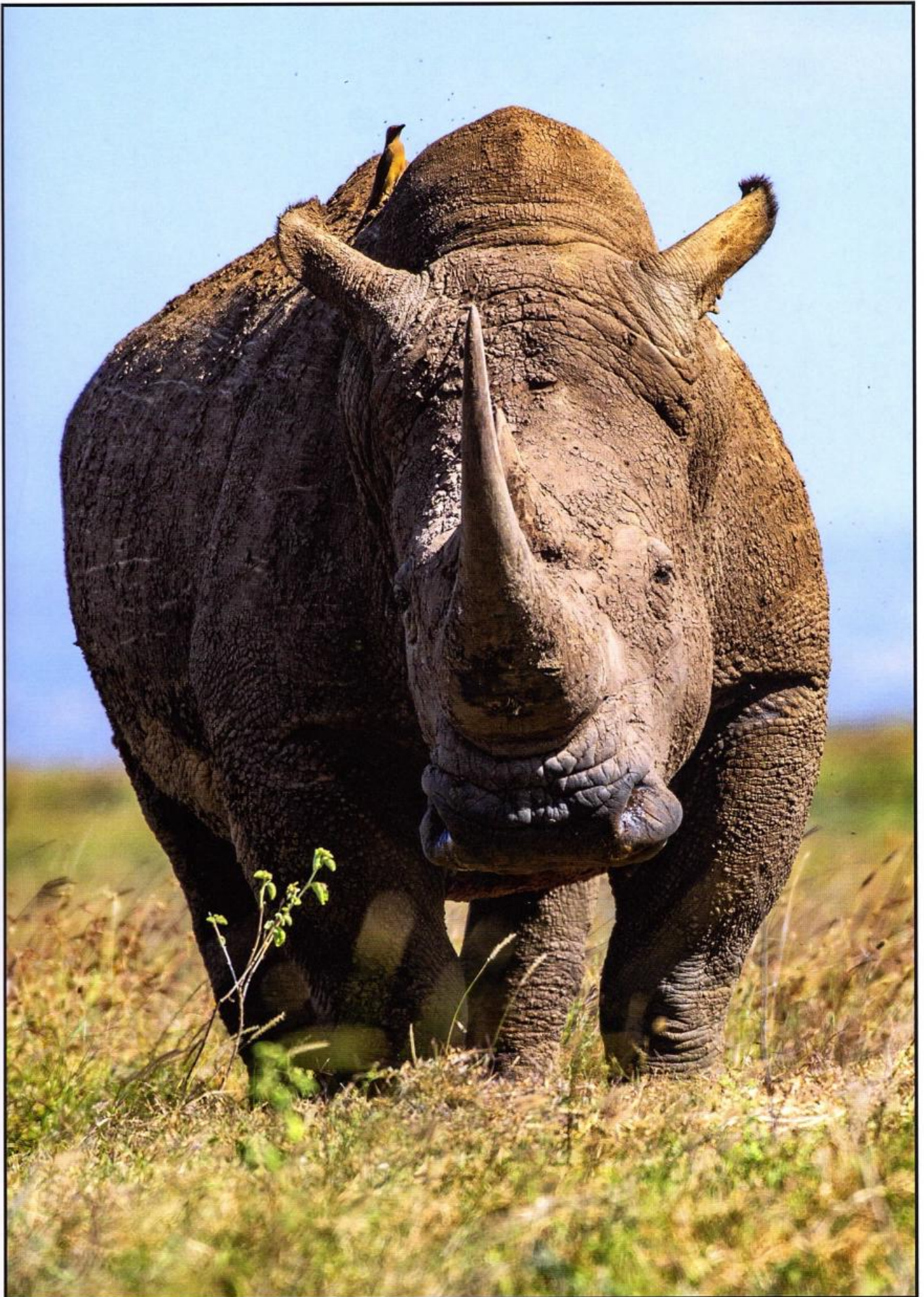
When I first began taking photographs of animals, as I didn't have a zoom lens, I would concentrate on the anatomy as a whole. These are great for practice but they're not portraits. I have taken photographs of the eyes of elephants before but having Gurcharan advise me through getting the photo of the zebra's eyelash, was a lesson in patience, focus and composition.

After an incredible afternoon of being mentored by one of Kenya's top photographers, I learned that I need a lot more practice and a lot more patience if I am to pursue this fascinating and mesmerizing aspect of photography. I also learned how invaluable it is to have an experienced photographer casting a critical eye on the photographs and the technique that cannot be experienced on a regular safari. I cannot wait until the next trip to explore more natural treasures.





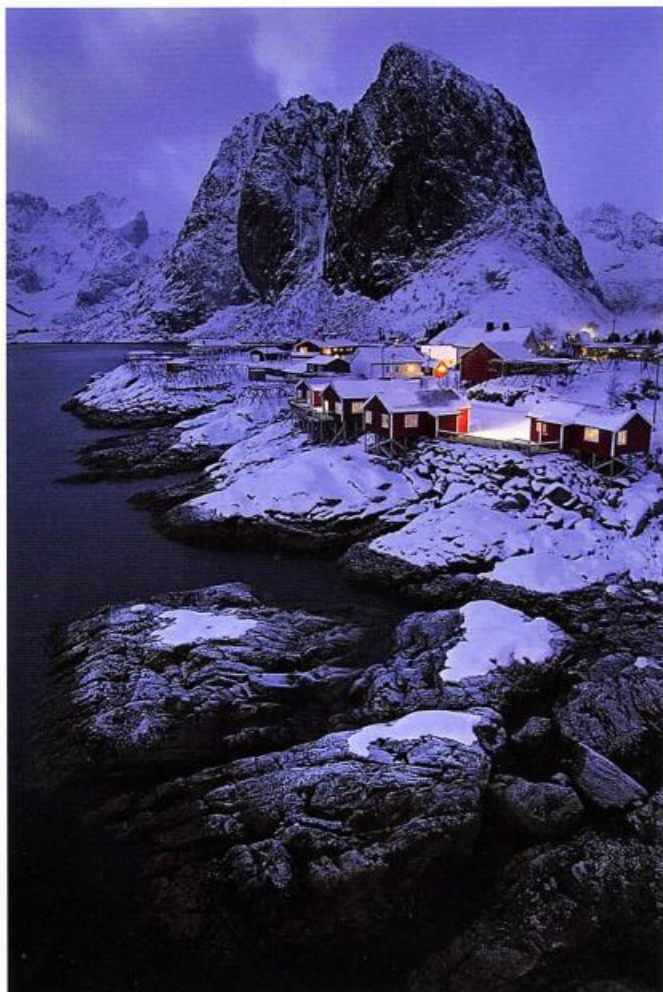




The Cold and the Beautiful

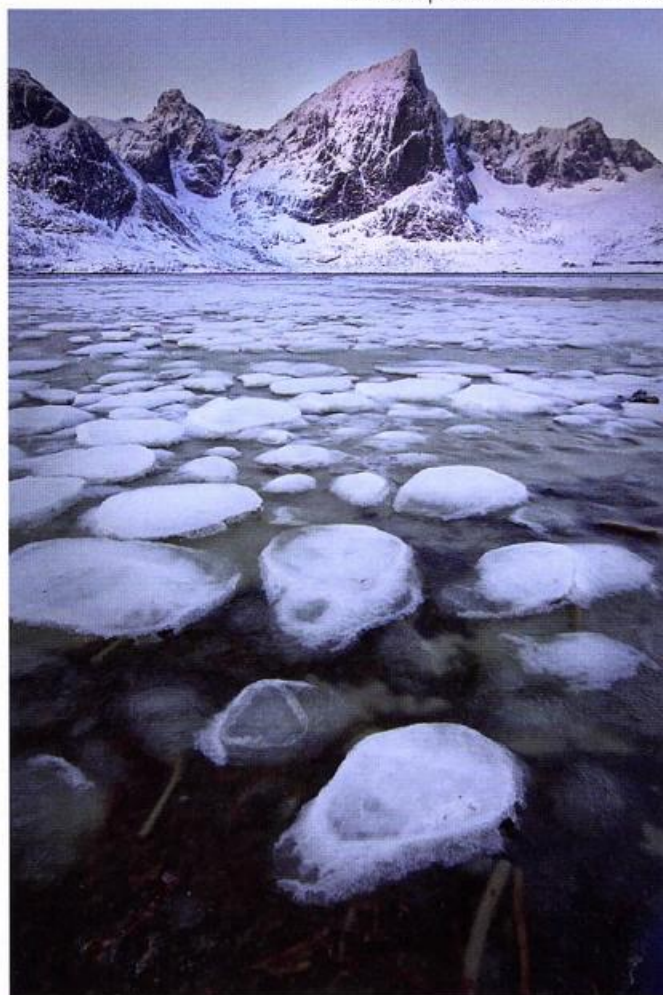


Rob Morgan ARPS



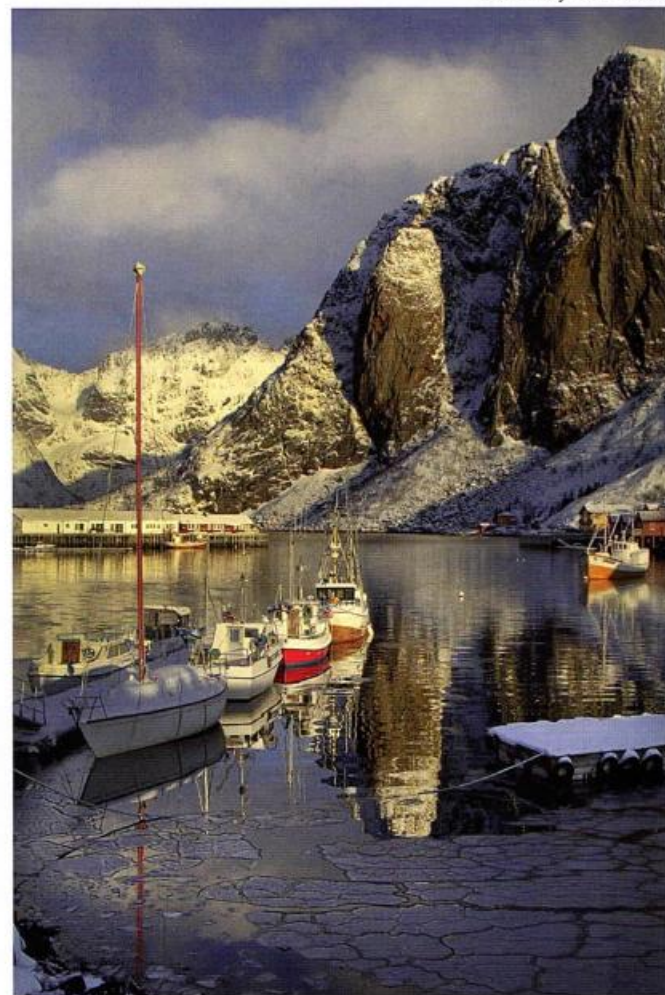
Hamnøy.

Flakstadpollen Ice Formations



Frozen Stream at Haukeland Beach

Hamnøy Harbour



The Lofoten ('LOO-ft'n') Islands in arctic Norway are dramatic at any time of year, with jagged mountains towering out of the sea and picturesque fishing towns, villages and huts around the coast. But in winter they are simply spectacular. Since glimpsing these islands on a Hurtigruten shipping run down the Norwegian coast in 2006, I've longed to get back. In March 2019 I made it. One of the drawcards of a winter visit is the chance to see the northern lights, Aurora Borealis. Looking back at the past few years of Travel Log, it's evident that seeking out the northern lights is a popular pastime. Yet the Lofotens in winter offer so much more, especially for a landscape photographer – or anyone who likes fish for breakfast, lunch and tea! (Just joking).

I was on a photography tour with a USA-based company. I didn't mention the cricket and they didn't mention Donald Trump. One of our

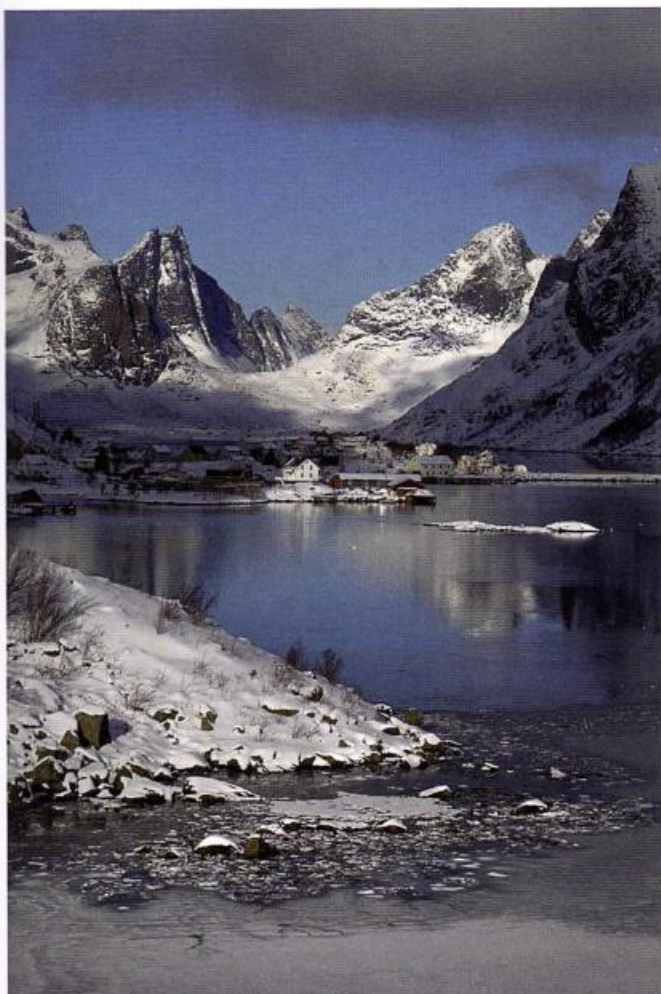
two guides was a local, so we got to some great locations at the right time for the light. After that it was a case of taking control of my own photography – settling myself, then looking around and pre-visualising images, rather than following others. We were not alone: it is a popular tripod destination. I met a young Melbourne tram driver, Nigel (and his tripod) three times.

There are two things the Norwegians do well (apart from preserving oil revenue for future generations). They do 'snow' very well and they do 'absolutely freezing cold' even better. Minus 16 degrees in the Lofotens has to be colder than minus 16 anywhere else! I quickly worked out my six layers of upper-body clothing were not going to be enough. The sound of my knees knocking together in the freezing cold further suggested a complete wardrobe makeover might be in order. A quick trip to a

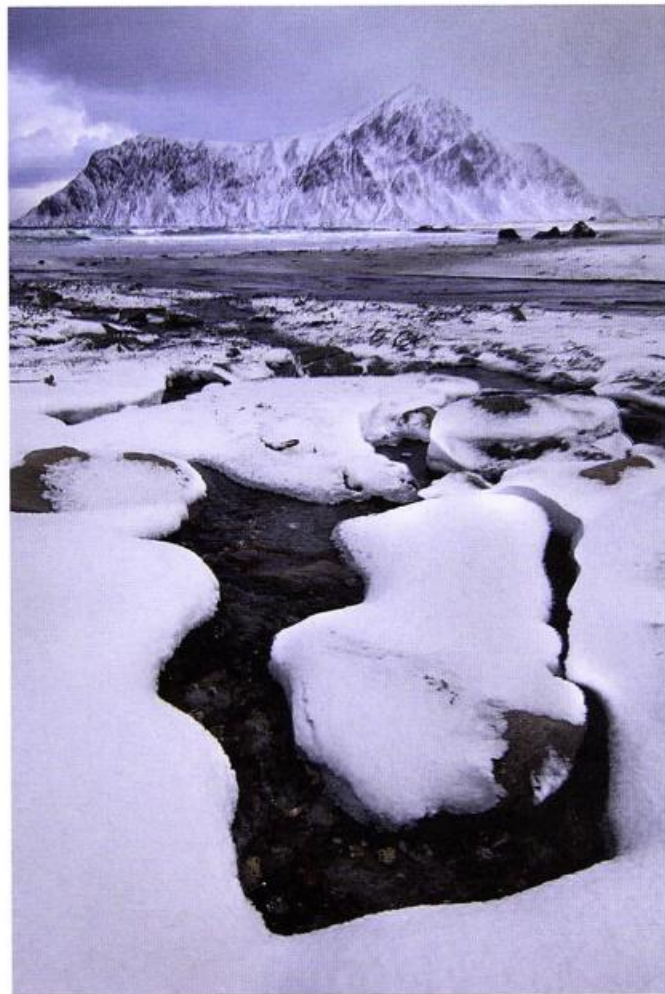
local outdoors clothing shop sorted all that out – and gave the local economy a major boost. It was a win-win! At least my home-purchased lined 'arctic' wellies, with their pull-on 'walk anywhere' micro-spikes worked a treat.

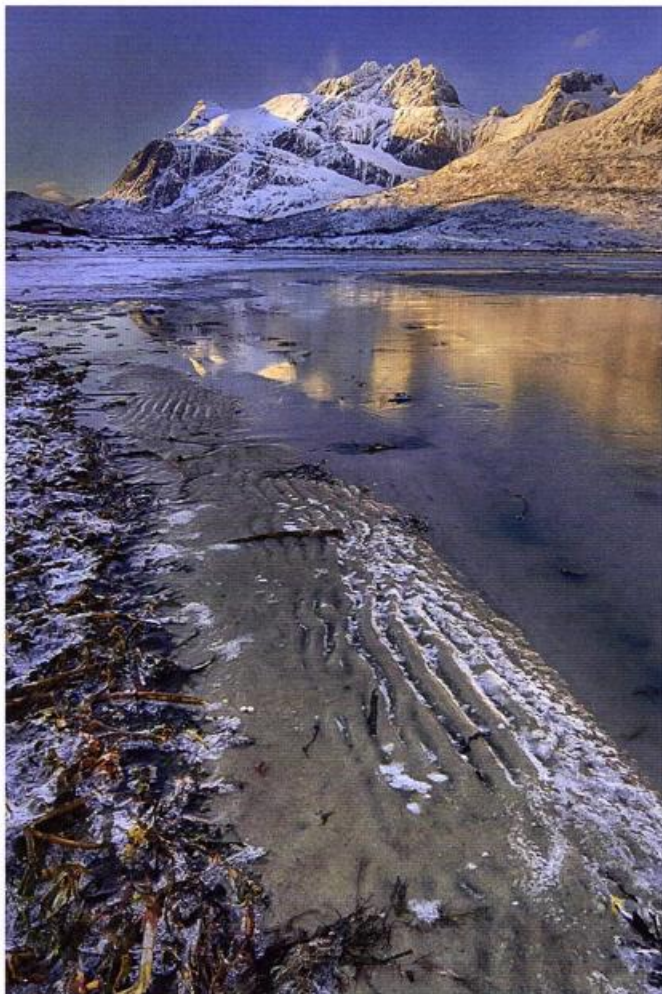
We spent three nights at Hamnøy ('Hum-nay'), near the west end of the islands. Even further west, at the end of the road is the hamlet of Å (like a short 'Or'). The letter å is at the end of the Norwegian alphabet (the 27th letter) and the story is that Å was so named as it's at the end of the islands. Around this western area were the most dramatic scenes, with coastal villages and frozen harbours. Later we spent four nights near Leknes and headed out to numerous frozen fjords, snow-covered beaches and other cool delights. And on one night (and only one) we were lucky enough to be treated to a dazzling display of northern lights for ninety minutes.

Looking from Reine to Kjerkfjorden



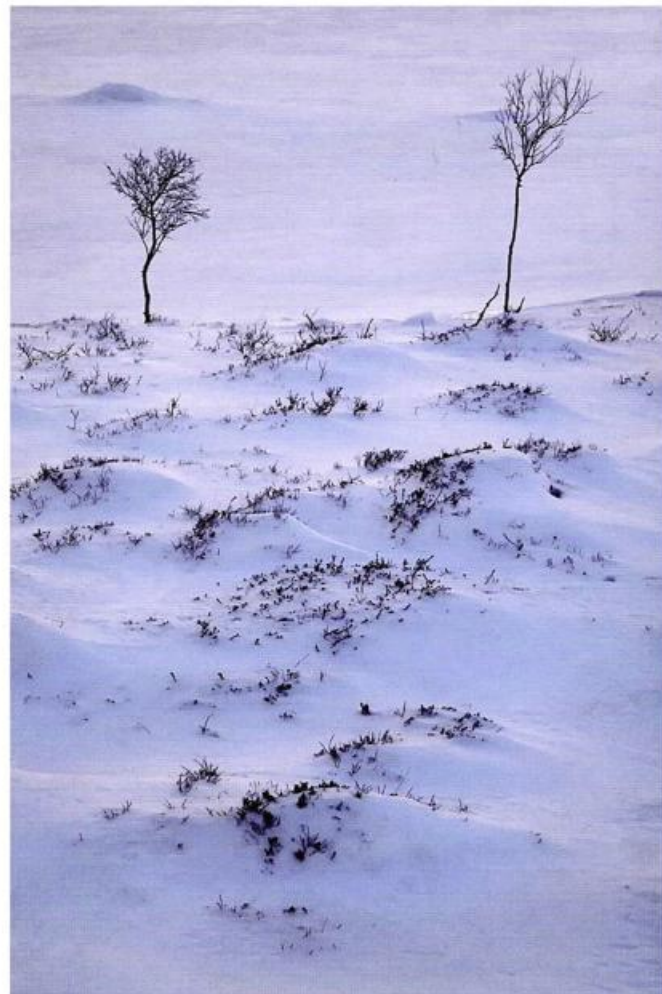
Rivulet at Skagsanden





Shoreline Patterns at Flakstadpollen

Uttakleiv Beach



Vikvatnet

Sakrisøy Cod Heads





Hamnøy Harbour at Dawn

Sunset at Unstad Beach





Skagsanden Beach

Sakrisøy





Aurora Borealis

GAI JATRA IN KIRTIPUR

Kathmandu, Nepal
16 August, 2019

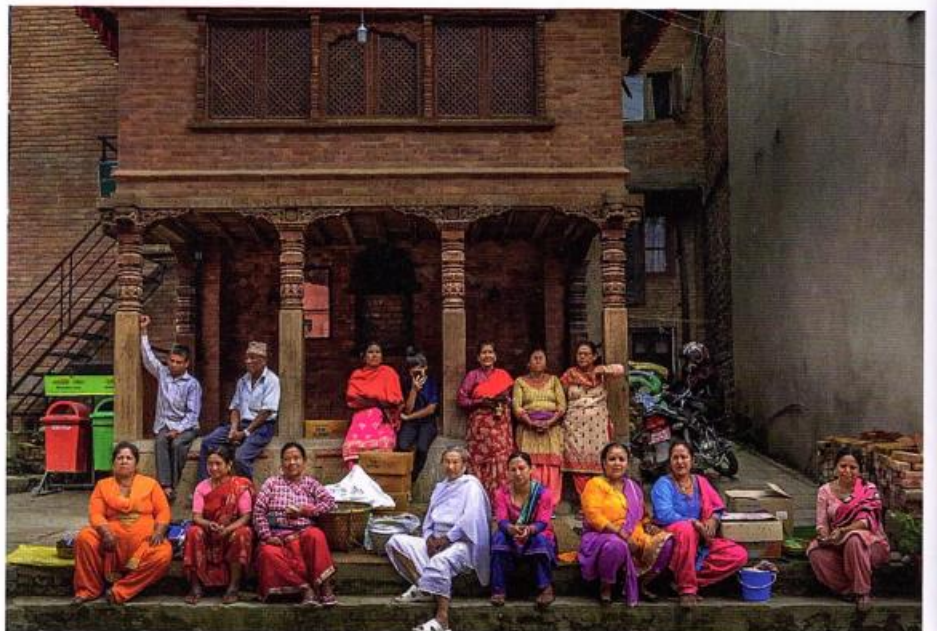
Nepal is a multi-cultural nation and a land of diverse ethnic groups. There are more than 126 ethnic groups and each community has its own language and culture. Nepal celebrates more than 50 festivals every year which are different from one another.

Nepalese festivals and celebrations are religious, traditional and social connecting one community to another. Most of the festivals are observed according to the Nepalese lunar calendar and do not match with the English solar calendar.

The people of Kathmandu valley, especially the "Newar community" observe more festivals than any other city in Nepal. Among these colourful fairs and festivals, Gai Jatra is one of them. Gai Jatra is celebrated in all the major cities of Kathmandu, Patan, Bhaktapur and Kirtipur for seven days.

Gai Jatra is one of the biggest festivals of the Newar community in Kathmandu valley celebrated to commemorate the demise of the loved ones as an annual festival and public holiday. Gai Jatra, which is also called the Festival of Cows, falls in the month of August- September. The day of festival includes rituals and a procession around the city in the memory of the demised members. It is also the day of celebration of humour, songs and dances as a happy carnival.

As far as history goes, Gai Jatra fundamentally began in the ancient days when people used to fear and worship "Yamaraj" the god of death. However, the modern era tradition of celebrating Gai Jatra began after the death of a prince called Chakrabartendra during the Malla Era.





The origin of the modern form of celebration goes back to medieval period in the 17th century when King Pratap Malla ruled Kantipur (now called Kathmandu). He was the most renowned Malla king who was responsible for building many monuments in Kantipur including the statue of Hanuman (monkey god) at the royal palace gate and his tall column statue.

King Pratap Malla being an enlightened soul, with his new concept in mind, wanted each of his five sons to have experience in the administration of the country for a year in turn, even during his lifetime. Unfortunately, his second eldest son, Chakrabartendra Malla died on the second day of his reign. The death of the prince led the queen to fall into serious depression which inspired the king to organise a parade, where every family who had suffered a loss that year would participate in the procession and would wear colourful, funny and crazy dresses. He also authorised "freedom of speech" where one could crack jokes about anything to make his queen smile.



During the procession of people passing by the palace, the king explained to the queen about the huge mass experiencing the same grief as she was going through which made the queen realise that she was not the only one who had lost her loved one. The people cracked some silly jokes while passing by the palace that made the queen burst into laughter.

Then the king was relieved and commenced the tradition of Gai Jatra celebration annually and also decided to include jokes and sarcasm as a part of the festival which is still in practice today in Kathmandu valley.

People celebrate Gai Jatra mainly to pay tribute to the departed soul and believe that the cow is a holy animal and holding its tail



would lead the wandering spirits of the departed soul to Heaven without any difficulty. This is also the festival to reconcile with the descendants, loved in both sorrow and joy.

Early morning on the day of the festival starts with typical rituals and worship of the cow by bathing it, offering tika and garlands. On completion of this ritual, the cow procession begins to parade around the town. If a cow is not available then young children dressed as cows, which is considered a fair substitute, participate in the procession. People offer foods and coins to the cows and to the young children dressed as cows. By doing so, people believe that this will bring good fortune, peace and harmony; not only to them but also their family and the city itself.

My photographic journey to understand this festival started since I have come close in contact with a "Maharjan" Newari family in Kirtipur whom I got know through my cousin brother (Gurung). During my early childhood days, being from a Gurung family, I would curiously look into this festival and wonder what kind of festival the Newar people celebrate with fancy clothes and strange procession along the road; demonstrating and leading cows and the implication of the festival. The Newar community had kept this festival within themselves, being a communal society for a long time, but now, this has become a national affair, fair and festival.

It is my privilege to know the Maharjan family of this old town where this family have been living for many generations and also meeting Mrs Punyamaya Maharjan, grandmother of the family. Unfortunately, I only had a chance to meet her once as she passed away a couple of months after I met her. I was very





intrigued, wanted to know and understand about Kiritipur town and the festival itself. Since the death of their grandmother, the family was involved in the festival this year as a customary rule to revere her soul.

On the day of Gai Jatra (16 August 2019), I asked the family for permission to join them in their ritual and to take photographs of the rituals and festival. We started with the typical morning family ritual and prepared for the Gai Jatra procession.

Two grandsons; Suraj (elder), who wore his grandmother's dress and belongings and Prabhath (younger) dressed as a cow, were involved to pay their respect for the family. The family from old to young was very passionate about the festival. I was very impressed to see that even the youngest member of the family was so eager to learn and get involved in the celebration.



My photographic experience and knowledge of the religion, culture and participation with the Maharjan Family turned out to be not just educational but a life-time experience as well. I would like to thank the Maharjan family for making the journey possible.

Bijen Gurung LRPS



I also run photography tours in Nepal. For more detail please visit my web-site: nirvanaphotographytour.com or e-mail: bijenirvani829@gmail.com. Visit Nepal Year 2020.

COMING OF AGE IN THE HAMER WOREDA

The Hamer Woreda is in the remote south of Ethiopia, hard on the Kenyan border. In 2018, I travelled there with just a driver, a 4x4 Landcruiser and a local interpreter with the objective of photographing some of the 90 distinct cultures that people Ethiopia. The Hamer live in a remote corner of the country with their herds of cattle and goats, growing what crops will survive the hot, arid conditions. Extended Hamer families live in isolated family kraals where their stock can be driven in at night protected by branches and thorns against roaming hyenas and baboons. On market days they walk in from miles around to gather at the markets of Turmi and Key Afar, selling their produce, buying supplies and catching up on the local gossip. The markets are also where the traders and craftsmen conduct their business, whether it is cutting hair into elaborate and characteristic styles, or sharpening and re-fashioning knives where the heat of the smith's coals adds to the burning sun.

Marriages amongst the Hamer are arranged within the tribe between families, and a man may have several wives. But the coming-of-age rituals provide ample opportunities for young women and men to show their relatives where their preferences lie.

When there is to be a family ritual, groups of young (and not so young) women begin gathering together at the Turmi market around noon jangling loudly as they walk, from the iron and heavy brass bells tied around their calves. The older ones will have their tops rolled up to their shoulders and under their breasts revealing long-healed horizontal scars across their backs. They sit in groups, gossiping and laughing loudly as Africans seem to do everywhere, and drinking the local fermented sorghum beer. Eventually, they amble away to a broad, dried-up river bed several kilometres distant. Meanwhile, young men gather in their own

groups, each carrying two-metre-long flexible switches broad as a thumb and cut fresh from the trees. At the river bed when the drinking is done, the woman begin dancing in a tight circle egged on by the ear-shattering clatter of the bells, short blaring trumpets and loud singing and ululating. In time to the rhythm of the song they jump in unison after each rotation of the circle, stamping out a heavy drum-beat on the beaten sand before rotating in the opposite direction.

When the young men arrive, a young woman will peel off and pull a selected young man into the open, challenging him to whip her back and stomach. The soon-to-be man shows no timidity or restraint and the switch whistles through the air, landing with a loud crack and often breaking the skin of the unflinching young woman. Alien to our eyes, what is happening is the girl showing her strength and determination to the boy. His whipping creates a bond between them: he now has an obligation to her if she subsequently calls upon him for help. Living in a harsh and isolated countryside, strong bonds within and between families strengthen a resilient community. Perhaps this is something we have lost with our tidy nuclear families and scattered kindred.

After many hours of dancing and singing to the deafening accompaniment of bells and trumpets, a family group will walk further into the bush where there is an amphitheatre of trampled sand amongst the thorn bushes and stunted trees. Several dozen cows are milling within the crowd and gradually six or so are lined up side-by-side and head-to-tail, held securely by men grasping tails and horns. The boy about to be initiated into manhood has stripped naked and, plucking up his courage and screwing up his nerves like a high-jumping athlete at the top of his run, he starts off and leaps onto the back of the first bull. His object now is to run across

the backs of the animals and land safely on the far side. His test is to accomplish this three times without humiliating disaster. Should he fall his undignified descent will be met with hoots of laughter and derision. He tries again.

The most difficult thing for the photographer is that these ceremonies are held in the searing heat and brightness of the midday and afternoon sun amidst a jovial but dense, jostling crowd. The ceremony, though, is not some regular archaic practice reinvigorated for the benefit of tourists but a real family occasion. The celebrations will go on into the night back home. Visitors are welcome to watch at the river bed, provided they don't get in the way, of course. It is expected, and only proper, that one makes a small donation to the family. It helps being an individual photographer with a Hamer-speaking guide rather than one of a coach-load. It has become the norm for there to be a small donation to take photographs of individuals but, for someone wielding a hugely expensive camera amidst a poor but hospitable rural community, the sums are trivial. Ten birr (28p) seemed meagre to me! On a small number of occasions I was politely refused with a smile and only once was my request met with a rejection.....but she was a surly teenager distracted from her texting. We are all pretty much the same all over the world!

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Blacksmith refashioning knives

Teenagers checking their texts





Waiting your turn at the barber's

Dancing before the bull jumping





Unflinching young woman whipped by her chosen

Making it safely over the final bull



I am cruising, top down, along Miami's famous Ocean Drive, on the wrong side of the road (well it is for me, in my jet-lagged state), only 11 miles from MIA (Miami International Airport) at the heart of Miami's famous Art Deco centre, wind in my hair: the epitome of cool. Well I would be, if our luggage wasn't too large to go in the trunk (that's boot to you and me) of our Mustang convertible. Propped precariously in the back seat of this rolling armchair, I am aware that my husband (as always) is right: we are moving so slowly in traffic that any passer-by could simply help themselves to our bags before we have even begun our road trip!

Miami is pastels on steroids. Everywhere I look there are art deco buildings (mostly saved from demolition by just one woman - Barbara Baer Capitman); white painted concrete blockwork splashed with bands of tropical colour. I see yellows, orange and even a mint green, all framed by street-lined palm trees.

Time has stopped here, which is why it has been the location of choice for so many movies: comedies like *Something About Mary*, gangster movies like *Scarface* and of course *Miami Vice* - I haven't seen any flamingos yet but I can hear that 80s theme tune in my head, so much so that I have unconsciously rolled up the sleeves of my jacket!

Checking in to The Setai, a five-star, high rise hotel, situated on the famous South Beach, we deposit our (still with us) bags and set off on foot to explore. Sun drenched is an understatement: a thermometer outside the hotel stops at 110 degrees Fahrenheit, but the needle is well beyond that and it is only June, not yet the height of summer!

Parallel to Ocean Drive is a mosaic-tiled pedestrian walkway, which runs for several miles alongside the wide expanse of dazzling white sand. This is where the hip, cool folks like to roller-skate (in impossibly short shorts), skateboard (long hair blowing hazardously in their eyes), or cycle, (with pocket-sized dogs in tiny handbags, peeking out in surprise). Strolling towards the bright blue ocean I soon understand why no-one else is walking: the humidity is so much worse than the 100-plus temperature, and without wheels of some sort to create a breeze, we are quickly dripping wet: the ocean still so far off it seems like a heat-induced mirage.

To escape the heat, and the smell of melting tarmac, we duck inside the nearest museum. This turns out to be the World Erotic Art Museum; a collection of more than 4,000 objects dating from 200 BC until today. The highlight being the penis collection.

Enough said!

Back at the hotel, we decide to chill beside the pool and settle with our cocktails on comfortable loungers laid out with luxurious soft towels. Nearby, a group of tanned muscular middle-aged, gold-necklace-wearing men are standing waist deep in the pool, sipping beers, and discussing their Friday night out. We are too close to avoid eavesdropping, or so I tell myself, when it quickly transpires that they are not tourists like ourselves, but locals, real wise guys in fact, discussing how enjoyable was the fight that they got into last night with some rivals who ended up in hospital! One stocky man wades over to us, removes the fat cigar from between his teeth and politely asks if we can pass him his towel. After obliging without risking eye contact, we quickly slip away, preferring to watch the mafia on the big screen rather than meet them in person!

Dinner is a serene affair at *Jaya*, a modern Asian fusion restaurant that serves Miami Spice (yes really) dishes followed by a sharp Hibiscus sorbet to cleanse the pallet. We (being British and therefore unable to turn down the chance of outdoor dining even if it meant suffering 100% humidity) chose to dine alone at the outdoor seating around Japanese still ponds designed to create a cooling breeze, followed by cocktails back on Ocean Drive. At night illuminated palm trees and buildings turn this strip into an upmarket Blackpool, where locals drive their supercars in circuits just to hear the engines growl and whine.

Back at the hotel we retire early to bed, hoping the jet lag will mean we sleep well, given our road trip to Florida Keys begins tomorrow. I already have a holiday's worth of photographs and it is only day one!

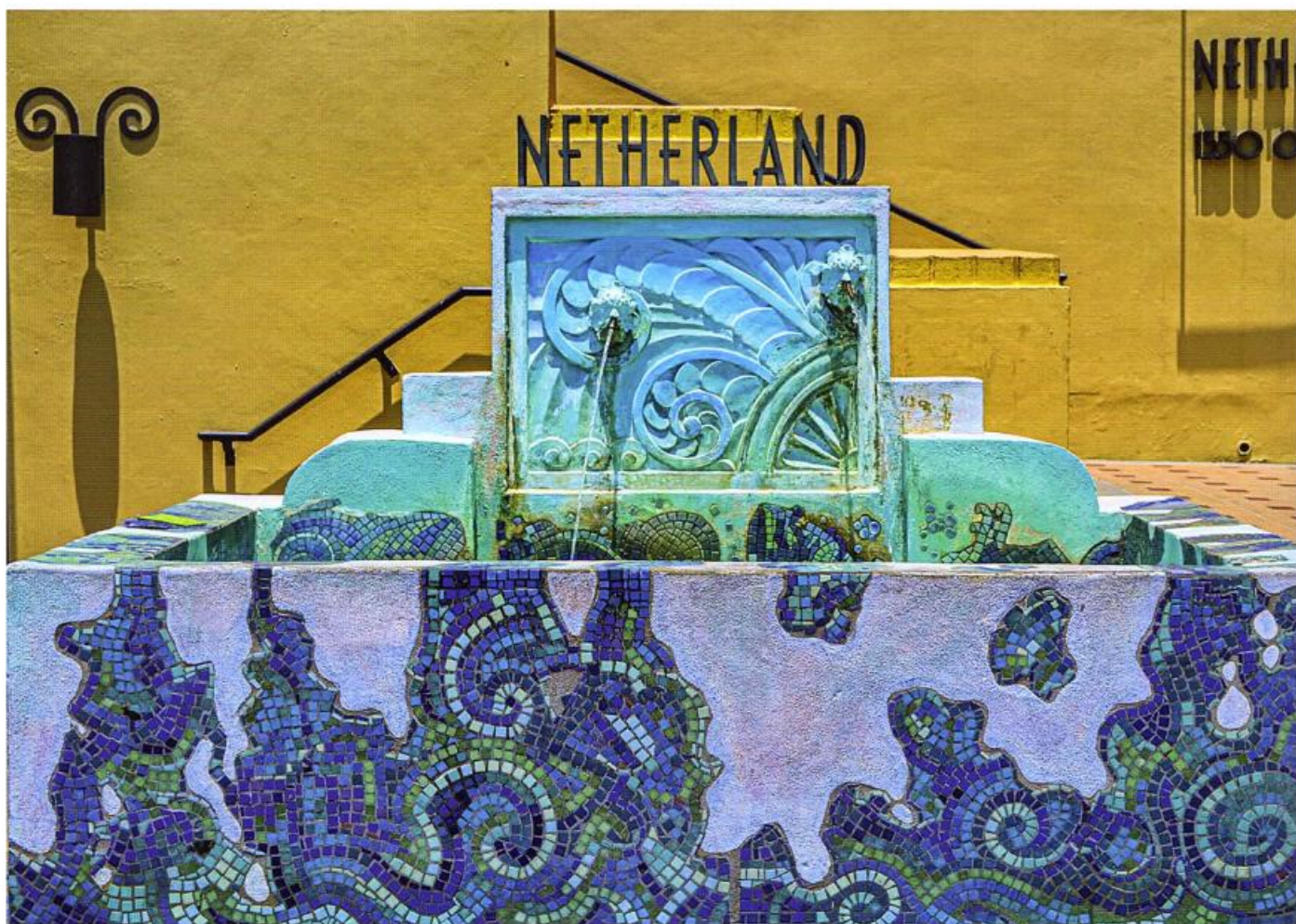




MIAMI VICE

Valerie Mather LRPS takes to the open road in a Mustang convertible.









RPS Travel Group visit to Helsinki: July 5 – 11, 2020

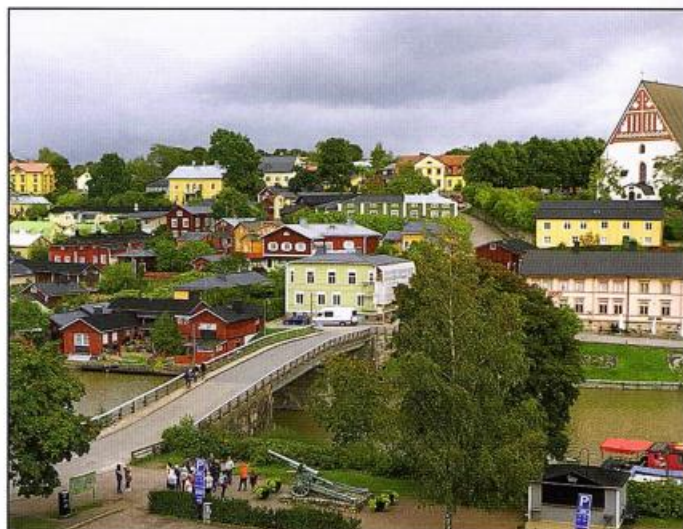
Helsinki is a comfortable city - big enough to have all the trappings of a capital but small enough for everything to be close at hand, within walking distance. This is backed up by an excellent public transport system that's properly integrated – a network of buses, trams, trains and ferries.

It's a Nordic city, so is clean and has the designer feel about it, while seamlessly blending the new with the old. In summer, much city life is centred around the water. (Helsinki has the largest archipelago in the world.) It has a wide range of quality architecture, from stark modernism through classical romantic. It has museums and public art in abundance and lots of events, as well as public parks and country houses to enjoy nearby.



As the visit will take place before the main summer tourist season starts, locations will be less crowded, but most key venues and activities will be available, and the weather should be good.

The plan is to provide an informal event – one with a core itinerary covering this very photogenic city and its islands, surrounding locations and even the historic centre of Tallinn in neighbouring Estonia. Participants will make their own travel and accommodation reservations and join together under an umbrella of events according to their interests. They can choose to spend as many or as few days engaged in the trip as they wish, and can mix and match their choices of following the itinerary or enjoying their own self-led travel/exploration. The aim is to provide a framework of activities that enables like-minded enthusiasts of travel photography to meet together and share photographic experiences.



Proposed core itinerary

Suomenlinna Island: An old naval fortress spread over several islands just outside Helsinki's East harbour, and now an UNESCO World Heritage Site and a living community. Sights include a traditional boat building and repair yard, a dry dock, military barracks, a church/lighthouse and traditional homes as well as coast and city views.



Architecture: For those interested in architecture, the city offers rich pickings - the Lutheran and Orthodox Cathedrals, the Parliament building, Finlandia Hall, the Fish Market, the Church in the Rock, Helsinki Market Hall, and the National Museum to name but a few. Add in the Neoclassical and Art Nouveau quarters, and the city gives great opportunities for street and architectural photography.

Esplanadi: A tree lined boulevard dropping down from the city centre to the harbour. With its pavement cafés and parks, it's the place to people watch. At the harbour end is the colourful daily outdoor market.

National Museum of Photography: There is always a major exhibition with supporting shows, featuring Finnish or well known international photographers.

Canals and Harbours: Another photographic opportunity is offered exploring by boat the islands and canals through the city suburbs.

Day trip to Tallinn: Across the Baltic, Tallinn with its largely unspoilt old quarter is an easy day trip by comfortable ferry. It is another UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Seurasaari Island and Open Air Museum: On an island within the city, you'll find old buildings gathered from around Finland in unspoiled rural woodland settings. Many are staffed by interpreters, often in costume.

Old Porvoo: Founded nearly 800 years ago, Porvoo is the second oldest city in Finland and about 50 mins away by bus (or it may be possible to travel by boat). The old town, on the river Porvoo close to the Gulf of Finland, is a proposed UNESCO World Heritage Site that retains its colourful traditional wooden buildings and cobbled streets and cathedral. A living town, it is widely recognised for its photogenic attractions.

Other Photographic Attractions

Söderskär. A two-hour boat trip to this island in Helsinki's outer archipelago, with its old lighthouse, flora, and birds. So peaceful, so photogenic, but only in summer as a full day trip.

Hvittraski. A lakeside country house, just outside Helsinki, formerly the studio/home (and now museum) of Finnish architects Gesellius, Lindberg & Saarinen.

Hanko Another photogenic old town, to the west, with traditional wooden buildings.

Saimaa The heart of Finland's lake district to the north east of Helsinki, where Russian traditions remain strong and can be seen in its architecture.

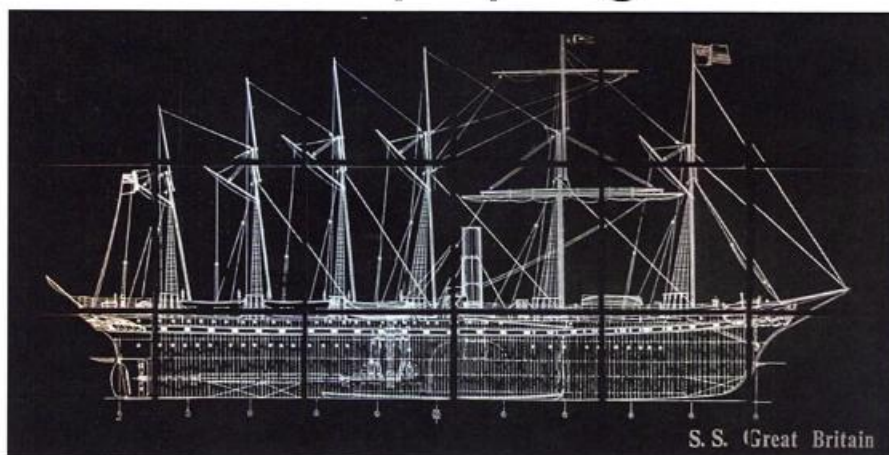
The Helsinki tourism website is an excellent resource for visitors on all aspects of the city. www.myhelsinki.fi

Travel Information & Reservations

For those travelling from the UK, direct flights are available from Heathrow (BA, Finnair), Gatwick (Norwegian), Manchester (Finnair) and Edinburgh (Finnair) For more information visit the RPS Travel Group Events website



RPS Travel Group Spring 2020 Event



Bristol @ RPS House
Friday 17/Saturday 18/Sunday 19 April 2020

A weekend of

Meeting People - Talks - Photoshoots
Bring a Print Competition & Projected Images Competition

20/20 Vision

Saturday



Travels Towards the Edge

Sue O'Connell
EFIAP/d1, ARPS, DPAGB, BPE 5*

Peter Brisley
ARPS, AFIAP, DPAGB, BPE 2*



Affinity

Safeena Chaudhry

Saturday Evening



Travel Group Annual Dinner

Double Tree Hotel, Bristol Centre,

Rooms available at RPS rates

Sunday

'The World through my Lens'



Will Cheung FRPS

Lessons from History



Debbie Ireland FRGS

'Little did I think.....'



Kath Phillips ARPS -

RPS Travel Group AGM

Friday Afternoon



Photoshoots

with

Liz Bugg APRS

and friends

Pamela Jones LRPS

&

Suzanne Johnson LRPS.

Sunday Afternoon

