

**The Journal of the RPS Travel Group**  
Issue 91 | Winter/Spring 2024

# TRAVEL LOG



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## Travel Log



### The Journal of the RPS Travel Group

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## A note from the Editorial Team

Welcome to the Winter/Spring 2024 issue of Travel Log.

It seems like no time since we published Winter 2023, and it isn't. We have just altered our publishing schedule so that the twice yearly publication time-scale is more effective. Summer 2024 will be published in July/August.

I had thought that this issue, coming so quickly after issue 90, would be a little smaller than previous issues. But thanks to all the offers of articles I received, it is a fairly hefty read that should keep you suitably entertained. I have already received offers of articles for issue 92 which will be distributed at the end of the Summer. Please, please keep these offers of content coming. They are very much appreciated.

As with previous issues I have been able to include articles from some regular contributors as well as some new names. I know if you are newer to the group, or the RPS, it can seem daunting offering to produce something for the Travel Journal. As a newish member myself (of about two years) I understand that some members may feel shy about writing and showing their photos. The process of submitting an article is very simple. Just send an e-mail to editortravel@rps.org with information on what you would like to write about. This could be an article on a country, travel experience or even a short piece on something related to travel photography. We are open and willing to consider all suggestions for articles.

I am always looking out for the next cover image. The main criterion for a cover image is that it needs to be in portrait format and have some space for the text that will overlay it. It also needs to be 300 dpi at A4+ to ensure a high quality print. Suggestions can be e-mailed at any time. I look forward to you clogging my inbox with both article suggestions and cover images.

I hope you enjoy issue 91.

Regards from the  
Travel Log Editor  
Winter/Spring 2024



Cover photo by  
Andy Pinch

Lady walking in front of St.  
Michael's Golden-Domed  
Monastery in Kyiv, Ukraine.



## A note from our Chair



Another great issue of Travel Log showcasing the work and interests of our members - some with long-standing Travel Group connections and some first-time contributors to the publication. Thank you all for enabling us to produce such an inspiring and thought-provoking edition. I wonder how many readers will take steps towards a Distinction or think about sending an article for inclusion in the next edition - due in the late Summer - as a result of what you read?

The importance of Group community and identity was highlighted for me on a recent trip to Venice. On a grey, windy afternoon as we were walking past the Academy of Fine Arts I saw a lady carrying a camera on a tripod and smiled: I may even have waved my camera, which was at my side on a wrist-strap. A few seconds later a distinguished looking gentleman walked by - he was carrying the bags. I simply had to comment 'Porter, eh?' and smiled, receiving a smile in return. I thought that was it but later that evening the couple sitting at the table next to us in the hotel restaurant looked familiar. We exchanged pleasantries: it was the same couple and we were all on a mission to get good images of Venice. Asked where we were from I said 'the UK' and the immediate question was 'Are you members of the RPS?'. When I said 'Yes', I discovered that I was speaking with a fellow Travel Group member - a lady from Greece. What a pleasant surprise for both of us! And what a coincidence!

It is moments like this and occasions when we come together more formally at face-to-face events like workshops and meetings that build community. I would love that community to be

closer: to have more members know each other and be able to support one another. Recently, for example, one of our members asked for advice about photographers who know the Dolomites well and could suggest places to visit when she's there at the end of February. Another member helpfully suggested an app she could use.

- Is there a place for building an information bank as a resource for all?
- How would you each feel about being contacted because another member is coming to your area and would like ideas?
- Would our overseas members be encouraged to plan their visit to the UK at a time when they could join one of our activities if we made suggestions for activities around the event?
- And how about members offering activities in their own area /country if a small number of us were to be there at the same time?

That's what we'd like to arrange in the UK and there's no reason why we shouldn't offer it for Greece, Holland, Belgium, India.... Wherever we have members able to put some suggestions together.....offers and ideas by email please to [travel@rps.org](mailto:travel@rps.org).

**BUT FIRST - do plan to be with us on April 20th!!**

*Kath*

Kathryn Phillips ARPS  
Chair RPS Travel Group  
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# Georgia: An ex-Soviet Republic

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
George Pearson ARPS

I have had a long interest in urban exploration travel and knew the work of James Kerwin a renowned architectural photographer. So I joined September's Hidden Georgia tour with him and Greg Snell, an expert photographer/videographer. Given the opportunity, who would not jump at the chance of visiting places where Stalin, a Georgian, called a premature end to millions of his countrymen during the purges?

A couple of days in Tbilisi were spent walking around gaining access to many 'off the beaten track' buildings by virtue of the fact that James had spent all Covid lockdown here. Inhabited at various times by Persians, Tatars, Jews and Armenians the heart of the capital is an intriguing mix of styles. There are some good modern buildings notably the Peace Bridge 2010 and the giant tubes of Saakashvili's performing arts centre. Increasingly many of the older buildings are being locked possibly a result of property price increases or just too many nosy tourists. Many Russians came here to avoid the call up to fight the Ukraine war, pushing prices up. There is a long-term issue with Russia's attempt to impose itself over centuries and signs requesting, less than politely, for them to go home are common. I found the decay in the staircases fascinating to photograph but I suspect residents might wish for something better.



Heading north we stopped briefly at the Gigantic Chronicle Monument and later the church and fortress at Ananari. Religious faith retains more than a toehold via the Orthodox Church but many of the older monasteries were formed under the doctrine of the Armenian Church. They contain frescoes in various states of disrepair, some unsurprisingly of St George their, and our, patron saint. Saint George, however, has nothing to do with the name Georgia which comes from Gurj an ancient Arabic name.

The view from our hotel in Septantsminda (Kazbegi) was great and in the evening we drove up to get a sunset view on the famous Gergeti Abbey framed against the Russian Caucasus mountains. Even in small groups there is the temptation to choose the same tripod holes but on occasions I went elsewhere for alternative views. At one point the next morning at sunrise 4/5 drones were despatched to get a view that no-one could get of the light hitting the church from the east. Leaving most of the tourists behind we moved toward the high mountains near Juta, not without a major issue. The access road had suffered a landslip which necessitated for some a 4 km hike with gear up very steep tracks. Others managed to employ horses or 4 x 4 trucks. In the afternoon, after lunch, a few recovered sufficient energy to walk further for landscape images, but clouds rolled in too soon and remained, spoiling dawn photography the next day.

IMAGES

Opposite page clockwise from Top Left:  
Interior detail semi preserved house;  
Inside the church; Coloured Tbilisi  
staircase;  
Top: Gergeti Abbey  
Bottom: A Georgian valley Juta





We travelled west staying overnight at Gori, the birthplace of Georgia's most infamous son, Stalin. Statues to him were finally removed in 2010 but the cult of personality remains in the smaller busts. Stalin mugs and key rings are available in the museum which has a very positive stance on him largely skipping over the Terror and the gulags. Outside is Stalin's private railway carriage on six axles to bear the enormous weight of the armour plating. We spent a morning photographing the interior of a splendid semi-preserved house. It had many rooms decorated in various styles, but the Persian room was extraordinarily beautiful although really hard to photograph well.

Rain and punctures interrupted a long journey on the M27, a Chinese investment project, toward Kutasi where we stayed, rather splendidly, near Tskalturbo. This was a spa town whose mildly radioactive waters at 35 degrees were used to treat arthritis etc. Numerous huge sanatoriums were built in Stalinist Neoclassical styles and Russians were transported in huge numbers to rest here.

#### IMAGES

*Clockwise from Top Left:  
Georgian Theatre; Persian room; Stalin's railway carriage*





*Left: Sunburst dog and columns; Right: Stalin's Dining room*

Following the fall of the Soviet Union and internal civil wars Abkhazia refugees moved into these bath houses and slowly over time they have been eroded into the kind of decay beloved by photographers. So, under the guidance of James and Greg we spent 3 days accessing many of these sites. They were so huge that you could lose the group at times and getting individual shots was not difficult. The dining room where Stalin held conferences was difficult to get right but others with morning sunlight were less problematic. We were also allowed into a colourful theatre, bath houses and schools in the surrounding areas, all decaying gently. There is some movement towards preservation and the rich are buying up these buildings in what some locals thought was a land grab. Access to these buildings will become harder and one group of 4 were escorted out by a guard after a few minutes spoiling a morning shoot.

Returning to Tbilisi we rested before going out for a final 'Supra'. Our hosts were traditional wine producers, and we sampled their (no preservative) white wines before an endless meal. We were joined by elderly local musicians and listened to stories of friendship and loyalty interspersed with excellent Georgian choral songs with complex polyphony. There was an element of theatre about it but none of us could doubt the sincerity and strength of their belief in traditional values. Hidden Photo Tours are planning to develop this approach and journey to Armenia in September 2024.



*Polyphony choir*

# Bangladesh a Land of Rivers

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
Mike Whittle

If any country could be described as a land of rivers it must be Bangladesh. Three great river systems and their tributaries flow through the delta country into the Bay of Bengal. The Ganges known in Bangladesh as the Padma, Brahmaputra known as the Jamuna and Meghna are by any measure three of the world's great rivers, the latter spreading 12 km wide in the monsoon. Seven hundred lesser rivers and canals form a network across the country.

One of the world's lowest lying countries, Bangladesh is subject to annual floods due to summer snow melt in the Himalayas to the north swelling the rivers flowing into Bangladesh; and the annual monsoon sweeping up the Bay of Bengal from June, when travel by roads and railways can be disrupted.

Bangladesh's 165 million people have adapted their lives to this land of rivers. Millions make their living from the country's rivers, estuaries, lakes and wetlands. It is estimated that if sea levels rise as predicted, 20% of the country will be inundated by 2050 displacing 30 million people, with the loss of much rice-growing land.

Many live in the cities of Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and other large towns, but most live in over 68,000 villages, practising small acre cultivation of rice, vegetables and cash crops, such as tea, cotton, indigo and jute. Jute was once the nation's major foreign exchange earner but is declining due to synthetic substitutes. Jute is still used as a backing for quality carpet and has found a niche market for handbags and sacks, in boutiques and health food speciality shops in the west.

## Tourism

Bangladesh has three UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The Mosque City of Bagerhat, Paharpur Buddhist Ruins, and the Sundarbans national park. Tourism activities include fishing, water skiing, river cruising, hiking, beaches and wildlife tours. The tourist industry contributes only 4% of GDP, mainly domestic tourism. Bangladesh receives about 125,000 foreign tourists a year.

Beach resorts include the world's longest continuous sea beach from Cox's Bazaar to Teknaf on the Burma border. A 125km stretch of sand, that, after a short walk, you will have to yourself. I once walked 5km south. I saw no one and heard no sound but the wind-whipped surf of the Bay of Bengal rolling across the shining sand – bring sunglasses.



IMAGES

Top: Family after their home destroyed by floods; Bottom: Ferry





The other beach of note is Kuakata in Patuakhali district, not as accessible as Cox's Bazaar, requiring several ferry crossings from Dhaka. Its claim to fame (as every motorcycle taxi rider tells you when offering a pre-dawn pickup from your hotel for a ride along the beach to its southern most point) is to see the sun rise over the Bay of Bengal. Returning you to your hotel for breakfast, he offers to pick you up in the evening to take you to the same place to watch the sun set from whence it rose 12 hours earlier, to witness both sun rise and set at the same place on the same day. Claiming it is the only place in the world you can experience this.



I preferred walking back along the beach watching the morning's activities. Young and not so young alike wading through the surf hauling shrimping nets. Children do this before school, to pay the fees. Others launch fishing boats into the bay, returning with the tide hopefully with a catch to sell.



#### IMAGES

*Opposite Page From Top to Bottom: Shrimper; Rice Crop  
This Page: Storyteller - The story teller on the ferry in blue shirt was a school teacher, who on becoming blind now makes a living reciting folk tales, and political satire, on ferry crossings; Water sellers - Girl water sellers on ferries or bus stations whose parents are too poor to send them to school face dangers working in pairs for safety;  
Off to School*



Most travellers to Bangladesh do not come for archaeological ruins or famous architectural sites, though there are some worth seeing. Bangladesh is a very beautiful green scenic land, a landscape and village life photographers' paradise. Whatever type of photography you prefer you will find a wide variety of subjects everywhere in Bangladesh.

Streetscape photographers and portraitists are well rewarded, people even cross the street hoping to be in your picture. This will inevitably lead to a conversation; everyone speaks some English. In the villages you will be asked to take tea or 'Tiffin' a small morning meal like a tea break. I soon learned the useful phrase 'Amar pet borte' ami khiate parbo na' - I cannot eat more my stomach is full.' Another rhyme if you find local milk tea too sweet is 'Dudh chai chini na' - white tea with no sugar - Dudh is milk, Chini sugar.

Along with the Indian state of West Bengal, Bangladesh is home to the Sundarbans national park, the largest mangrove forest on earth, with an area of 6,000 square kilometres. 'Sundar means beautiful, Ban a forest'. The world's biggest mangrove forest is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Wildlife and Bird photographers are well catered for from squabbling Myhna birds and raucous crows that wake you early in the towns to elusive white bellied

sea eagles, Buffy fishing owl and hawk eagle. Some of the many species found in the Sundarbans. There are 628 species of birds throughout Bangladesh.

The northeast Sylhet region is home to the haor wetlands, a unique important ecosystem where thousands of birds stopover on migrations. Fifty other wildlife reserves dot the country including dwindling areas of tropical and subtropical coniferous forests, freshwater swamp forest, and mixed deciduous forests.

Bangladesh has fertile alluvial soil due to flooding, when its large rivers, carrying silt and minerals, deposit these natural fertilizers on the land from as far away as the mountains of Nepal. The country is dominated by green vegetation, villages are set in groves of mango, jackfruit, bamboo, betel nut, coconut, and date palms, connected to each other by footpaths, rivers or canals.

With about 6000 species of plant life, Bangladesh is a land of greenery, that includes over 5000 flowering plants. Wetlands provide a habitat for scarce aquatic plants. Water lilies and lotuses grow spectacularly, and the introduced water hyacinth often chokes the waterways and has become a problem to navigation and inland fisheries.

The southeastern Chittagong region has evergreen jungles and ethnic minority peoples who are mostly Buddhist. In central Bangladesh are the Sal forests of Gazipur, Tangail, and Mymensingh, a region that is home to the Christian Garo ethnicity people; whose Christmas celebrations are worth seeing if here then. Bangladesh has wildlife in plenty in its forests, marshes, woodlands, and hills. Bengal tigers, once widely spread, are today found only in the Sundarbans where forest people are sometimes taken by them. Clouded leopard, saltwater crocodile, panther and fishing cat are other Sundarbans predators.

Northern and Eastern Bangladesh are home to Asian elephant, hoolock gibbon, Asian black bear and oriental pied hornbill. Chital and spotted deer are common in southwestern woodlands and Sundarbans. St. Martin's Island has Bangladesh's only coral reef ecosystem.

Other animals include black giant squirrel, capped langur, Bengal fox, sambar deer, jungle cat, king cobra, wild boar, mongoose, pangolins, pythons and water monitors. In the villages, you will almost certainly be woken by the howling of jackals.

Bangladesh has one of the largest populations of the endangered Irrawaddy and Ganges dolphins, plus other species of amphibians, and marine reptiles including saltwater crocodile known to take unwary fishermen.

Countryside excursions are the way to see people going about their daily occupations. Express buses connect main towns, slower country buses feed smaller towns and villages. People leave the bus anywhere walking down tracks to their villages or take a cycle rickshaw into the hinterland. It is a country suited more to backpacking travel than static holiday tourism. Or as I have, bicycle touring on quiet country lanes: main highways are too crowded with trucks and buses for safe cycling.

Finding a meal in Bangladesh is never difficult, small eateries abound in every village and town, with better restaurants in larger towns and cities. The food as you would expect includes mostly fish and prawn dishes, accompanied by rice, and chapati.

Bengalis have a sweet tooth. My favourite is Payesh, Bengali rice pudding made with rice, pistachios, almonds, cashew, raisins, and cardamom, as it was before the British came. Bengali Payesh is a world away from the school dinner staple some will remember. If you are in Tangail the chom chom is the choice, but only if you're not diabetic.

IMAGES

*Opposite Page Top: Hauling in  
This Page Bottom: Shrimpers*









## The Bede River Gypsies

The Bede are nomadic river gypsies living on small boats earning their living on rivers; an estimated one million spread throughout Bangladesh, travelling in groups and never staying in one place more than a few weeks. They spend up to ten months a year moving from one location to another. They are a marginalized group, living below the poverty line and, 95% of Bede children do not attend school. Bedes were unable to vote till 2008, nor could they apply for microcredit loans.

Bedes traditionally practise snake charming and trading, selling lucky charms and herbal medicines. Other occupations are monkey shows, magic shows, and musical entertainment. Many rural villagers once believed in the power of Bedes to make evil spirits depart someone's body by magic. But with more education rural villagers have lost their belief in illness caused by malevolent spirits. Income loss has caused many of the river gypsies to turn to begging on the streets of cities.

### IMAGES

*Opposite Page from Top to Bottom: The morning catch; Preparing the catch for drying - Fish are air dried at Kuakata beach due to unreliability of electric supply.*

*This Page from Top to Bottom: Friends; Bede River gypsies community; Typical river gypsy family*







# *Bewitched in Salamanca*

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
Dr Colin Howard FRPS

Spain is a country with a culture that rapidly permeates the soul of all who visit. I read James A. Michener's *Iberia* as a teenager and have been fascinated by the Hispanic world ever since. It remains an essential read for anyone contemplating a vacation to Spain. My wife and I have visited most parts of the country over the past few years and have never failed to appreciate its rich diversity and historical heritage. Our last visit to Salamanca was in February when the weather is much cooler but with the inevitable possibility of rain. We had been some years before in July, but on that occasion, with the temperature hovering around 41°C, it proved almost impossible to walk on the hot cobbles: everyone was trying to escape the heat.



**View towards the city across the River Tormes**

Salamanca is situated in the northwest of Spain close to the border with Portugal. The city has been at the heart and core of Spanish culture through the centuries. Its convents, university, library and chapels give an immediate sense of what it must have been like to have lived in the city during the heady days of the late renaissance, a time when fertile minds flourished, and ideas reverberated around the walls of its great university. We wandered around its ancient corridors for hours, peeping into lecture rooms and halls unchanged for hundreds of years and seemingly just vacated by students of centuries past. Many on graduation would paint their names on the outside walls in bull's blood, traces of which are still clearly visible today.



**Nighttime 'Tuna'**



**ANATOMIE DE LA GRENOUILLE (BATRACIEN ANOURE)**  
Le bébé dit têtard est visible à gauche. L'animal de la droite est dit têtard adulte.

1. Cerveau	17. Vessie	33. Vessie
2. Cervelet	18. Ovary	34. Vessie
3. Cervelet	19. Ovary	35. Vessie
4. Cervelet	20. Ovary	36. Vessie
5. Cervelet	21. Ovary	37. Vessie
6. Cervelet	22. Ovary	38. Vessie
7. Cervelet	23. Ovary	39. Vessie
8. Cervelet	24. Ovary	40. Vessie
9. Cervelet	25. Ovary	41. Vessie
10. Cervelet	26. Ovary	42. Vessie
11. Cervelet	27. Ovary	43. Vessie
12. Cervelet	28. Ovary	44. Vessie
13. Cervelet	29. Ovary	45. Vessie
14. Cervelet	30. Ovary	46. Vessie
15. Cervelet	31. Ovary	47. Vessie
16. Cervelet	32. Ovary	48. Vessie

Corridor, Escuelas Mayores



The beating heart of all the great and ancient cities of Spain is the Plaza Mayor, and Salamanca is no exception. It is perhaps the finest and grandest in the whole of the country. The buildings are architectural masterpieces and a coffee, or a glass of cool beer can be enjoyed drinking in the detail of this magnificent square. In the late afternoon and evening groups of musical students can be heard carousing the customers of cafes and restaurants; these 'tuna' groups often tour city to city in order to earn some ready money to pursue their studies.

A visit to the Dominican Convent of San Estaban is a must. The Dominican friars of Salamanca played an important role in the colonisation of the New World during Spain's golden age and its chapel is magnificent. Equally fascinating is the Palacio de Monterrey, the ancestral home of the Alba family who have played such a prominent role in Spain's turbulent history of domestic politics.



**Nighttime singing, Salamanca students and staff.**



But there is a darker side to Salamanca's more recent past. It was the headquarters of the nationalists during the Spanish Civil War and Franco set up his office within the walls of the Bishop's Palace. The Museo Unamuno close by reflects the local tension between Franco and the university: Miguel de Unamuno was removed from his post as Rector of the university in 1936 for his pro-republican sympathies. His residence has been preserved from the 1930s and still contains many of his belongings.

Relatively unvisited by tourists, Salamanca is a delight for any photographer interested in both street and architectural photography. For this particular trip, I chose to shoot entirely in monochrome to capture the emotion of its streets and buildings. Other cities close by and worthy of exploration include Zamora and Ourense.



**Corridors of the University**

Salamanca is easily reached by public transport. One of Spain's great assets is its modern railroad network, now one of the finest in Europe. It is now our preferred method of journeying between cities in Spain. The train from Madrid's Chamartin Station to Salamanca takes less than 2 hours, passing as it does through the Guadalajara Mountains across the central plain via Medina del Campo. Chamartin Station is easily reached by the local Metro or a short taxi ride from Madrid's airport.

Salamanca is a city that rewards frequent visits. The words of Miguel de Cervantes resonate: 'Salamanca bewitches and enchants you with the wish to return to all that which is gentle and serene'. ¡Hasta la vista!



## Biblioteca Pública



Museo Unamuno, Calle Libreros

# Are we travelling in the right direction?

Words By James Scipioni



James is the founder of a sustainable travel platform, Otherlands Travel, and has been involved in several tourism development projects. When travelling, James enjoys exploring wilderness areas and lesser-visited places whilst connecting with creatives and experimenting with local cuisine. James is one of the speakers at the RPS Travel Group's "Travel Photography - the Future" April 2024 event.

The appetite for travel is back! Following the near halt of movement during the pandemic, air travel demand in November 2023 reached 99% of 2019 levels, according to the International Air Transport Association (IATA). Meanwhile, despite the current challenges of economic uncertainty and high inflation, survey data points to continued consumer prioritisation of travel over other discretionary spend (Tourism Economics 2023). The rapid pandemic recovery demonstrates just how important flying is to people, business, and livelihoods.

Tourism has been both a lifeline and a game-changer in many destinations, providing opportunities for economic diversification and renewal, particularly in rural and marginalised communities. According to the UN World Tourism Organization, tourism in some countries has almost twice as many women employers as other sectors, and it has been critical in the conservation of habitats and species. However, if not strategically planned or managed well, tourism is not without cost to locals – issues of overcrowding, resource use, overburdened infrastructure, pollution, housing market distortion, heritage loss, exploitative work conditions, and corruption have all emerged in many popular destinations. These have been further exacerbated by the fast-changing nature of destinations resulting from ever-growing transport connections, digital platforms, and social media. Communities shape the fabric of a destination, and it is often the connection with local people on our journeys that make it a memorable experience - the places that we enjoy to visit are, after all, their home. In hotspots where over-tourism is having a detrimental impact on local inhabitants, communities are increasingly calling for balanced tourism models and better management. With the bounce-back of tourism and the prediction that global tourism numbers will double by 2050, how can we ensure a sustainable and inclusive tourism industry that protects local communities and their environment?

There is increased awareness and demand for sustainable tourism practices and market evidence suggests it is becoming a significant factor in the consumer decision-making process. Tourists are now demanding greener tourism. As visitors, we can take simple steps to ensure that our travels have a positive impact on a destination. Selecting sustainably operated accommodation and locally owned experience providers has become an easier task thanks to several certification labels. Waste, particularly plastic, is an increasing concern for travellers and many hotels are beginning to eliminate plastic use, which can be further encouraged by guest feedback. Evidence indicates that travellers are increasingly turning towards travel advisors to connect them with more authentic experiences (Tourism Economics 2023), helping them filter through marketing greenwash and identify responsible operators.

Avoiding tourism hotspots and discovering new regions can support communities in less-visited areas, effectively spreading tourist expenditure. Off-peak travel provides a more enjoyable and crowd-free experience whilst preventing communities being over-whelmed by peak season crowds, in addition to providing year-round income. Tourism in rural and natural areas has become increasingly popular and been one of the recent post-pandemic trends, with travellers wishing to avoid overcrowded spaces and have more unique experiences. Travel and tourism is one of only six economic sectors with more than 80% of the value of its goods and services highly dependent on nature (Nature Positive Travel & Tourism Report). In 2023, experiential activities such as wellness, nature, and food tourism increased by over 10% compared with 2019 (Mabrian 2023). Indigenous communities are the gateway to 20% of the Earth's land, where 80% of biodiversity can be found. Being aware of their fragile environments and being mindful of our behaviour, particularly regarding culturally

sensitive sites and norms, helps create a healthy and welcoming relationship between tourists and local hosts. Ultimately, visitors and locals share places and cultures, and both benefit from an emotive and caring relationship rather than simply an economical interaction. Orphanage visits and elephant rides are now removed from many operator itineraries due to unethical practices. If animal or human welfare is a concern, report it to the destination's Ministry of Tourism, campaigning organisations, and on social media – travellers can pressure policy change through education and boycotts. Travellers can additionally choose to support social and environmental projects which protect the destination's natural and social heritage.

Domestic travel boomed during the pandemic, with travellers being pleasantly surprised by locations closer to their home. There has also been a rediscovery of the enjoyment of train travel, which is the most environmentally friendly form of transport in Europe in terms of emissions. Using public transport not only makes a journey more sustainable but also connects travellers with locals and their everyday life. The European train network is continually improving with more cross border and sleeper services connecting major hubs. There is an expected increased trend of 'slow travel' as consumers undertake longer duration but fewer trips. With international flights being the larger share of a traveller's carbon footprint in most cases, reducing the number of international flights and staying longer in a destination not only helps reduce emissions but

additionally maximises spend in the destination. France has taken the step to stop domestic flights where a journey can be travelled by train within 2.5 hours, whilst the Dutch government is capping the capacity of its airports. Travellers can actively choose operators that have signed up to the Glasgow Declaration, a catalyst for increased urgency to accelerate climate action and secure commitments to support the global goal of reaching net zero carbon emissions before 2050. Climate change will have a profound effect on destinations, particularly island nations. The changing climate is already beginning to influence seasonality and shift behaviour – in recent summers, there has been a recorded upsurge in the demand for northern European destinations with travellers wishing to avoid the extreme heat experienced in the Mediterranean region.

The interpretation and understanding of sustainability across cultures varies hugely, which represents a challenge, but the industry can help consumers make informed decisions and support them in purchasing sustainable and satisfying experiences. Tourism's size and reach make it critically important in the pathway to a greener and prosperous society by supporting local, resilient economies and reducing poverty. Investing in a more sustainable tourism industry can reduce the cost of energy, water and waste and enhance the value of biodiversity and cultural heritage. From travellers to tourism planners and businesses, we can all help contribute to the future of tourism and protect the places we have the fortunate pleasure to visit and live in.

# Travel Photography The Future

THE RPS  
ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

TRAVEL

Saturday April 20th 2024 - 10am - 5pm  
RPS House, Bristol



This full day event provides Travel Group members an opportunity to consider the impact on their art of current trends in tourism and photography, bringing together some of the recognised experts in both areas with others who enjoy both travel and photography.

For more information, and to book your place, please visit [rps.org/groups/travel/](https://rps.org/groups/travel/)

# Crossing the Chalbi Desert from Marsabit to North Horr



Grete with Abdi (her guide) and John (her driver)

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
Grete Howard ARPS

When the receptionist at Marsabit Lodge asks where we are going from here, my heart sinks a little. "You have security with you? With gun?" he asks. "We have an escort" I reply diplomatically. "With gun?" he persists. We try to sidestep the question: "Our driver is arranging it all...." Thankfully he changes the subject and enquires if we would like a drink. Good man.

The security guard later catches us as we leave the table to take coffee on the terrace: "You must take guard to North Horr. I come with you. I have gun" The next morning as we check out, the manager

insists: "You need security for North Horr. Many bandits. You need gun." Sigh. Here we go again... How to make foreign visitors feel safe. Not.

In Marsabit Town we pick up our (non-armed) guard. The instantly likeable Abdi is a quiet man of slight build and gentle nature who is going to be our facilitator and translator on the journey across the Chalbi desert to North Horr. No guns. As John (our driver) explains: "If bandits stop you and they see a gun, the first thing they will do is shoot. You have better chance of survival with no gun" That's OK then.

Abdi our non-armed guide






Crossing the Chalbi Desert

Tracks in the Chalbi Desert





The jumbled nondescript town of Marsabit, with a population of around 5,000, is a dishevelled outpost of urban civilisation in the vast surrounding desert.

Urban civilisation African style, that is.

As soon as we exit the town, we leave the sealed highway and relative civilisation behind. Initially the surroundings are dreary and uninspiring as we head for the desert on empty gravel tracks. After many miles we meet our first vehicle: a truck carrying dried fish from Lake Turkana. We can smell it before we see it!

A huge area of virtually flat desert, Chalbi is an endless wasteland of clay and white salt, where the horizon dissolves into a mirage.

Throughout the morning, the under-wheel surface changes from almost-smooth concrete sections, to shifting soft sand, to hard compacted dirt rutted into a bone-rattling washboard effect.

While there is a (sort of) cooling breeze created by having all the car windows open, the relentless sun is inflating the already smouldering heat of the desert making it 'somewhat warm'!

We soon enter a sea of red hot lava rocks: large boulders everywhere, fiery rocks of death. Uneven doesn't even begin to describe the surface. We bounce and bump along in this cocktail shaker they call a Landcruiser, crumbling and crunching on the ridged and jerky track. This is not the 'Rocky Road' of my dreams.

Here in the desert wilderness there are no road markings, no street signs, no landmarks. You have to know your way. Do we turn left or right at this 'junction'? Having driven this route more times than he cares to remember, John fortunately knows the way.





Crossing the Chalbi Desert - the concrete section

The sinister ocean of volcanic sand and lava rocks commands respect and yet seduces with its own brand of beauty and harmony. It is a seemingly extraterrestrial landscape where only the toughest species survive. Looking carefully we see that far from being devoid of all life, the flat and far reaching desert floor is in fact home to a rich habitat with an abundance of plants that have adapted to the harsh environment here, overcoming a life of thirst and deprivation.

For miles and miles and miles and miles (you get the picture?), the track and surrounding terrain is just loose sand. The car acts as a whisk and the sand gets everywhere. I eat dust, I breathe dust, I feel dust, I blink dust, I hear dust. I am dust.

The name 'Chalbi' comes from the local Gabbra language, and means 'bare and salty'. This is one of the hottest and most arid regions in the world, a barren salty pan surrounded by volcanic craters and lava flows. Long ago this was in fact part of a lake and even now, during periods of particularly heavy rainfall, large areas flood. Being such a flat area, expansive shallows of standing water and mud form, causing the desert crossing to become impossible. Today, however, the pan is an immense spread of salty, cracked earth.

The desert is restless and unpredictable, nothing is constant. Even the road is transitional: when John came this way three weeks ago, the track took a different route across the desert to where it is today, making for challenging navigation!

As we continue our journey, the temperature in the car becomes stifling. Having the windows open is akin to being assaulted by an industrial strength fan heater with a sandblaster attachment. Keeping the windows closed is not an option. Having read horror stories on the internet before we left home about how the temperatures regularly reach a blistering 60 °C here, I am grateful the thermometer shows 'only' 51 °C ! It is feverishly hot with the brutal sun relentlessly blazing down on the already scorched and bleak ground, cremating it further to a despairing sizzle.

In the midst of this dystopia, a young boy herds his cattle to the waterhole, which is likely to be at least a day's walk away.

The top layer of the salty earth is caked to a crusty skin, much like you'd find on snow after rain, making a delightful crunch as you step on it! Gabbra nomads collect salt here, which they then sell in Marsabit.

The stark and austere beauty about this bare and forsaken landscape captivates me, despite not being at all like the romantic images conjured up by common (mis)conceptions of what a desert should look like. This region of Northern Kenya is the most barren and desolated area we have ever been to, which is quite a claim to fame considering all the travel we have done and the places we've been over the years.

Ostriches





Truck with dried fish

Salty crust



This region is one of the poorest in the country, with the poverty level measured at 92%. The main causes of the poverty are: low agricultural production due to harsh climatic conditions, frequent and severe droughts, inadequate water supplies, lack of reliable and lucrative market for livestock products, few employment opportunities, over dependency on relief food and livestock economy, underutilised resources, illiteracy, poor infrastructures that are hardly maintained, insecurity and conflicts, which of course include ethnic clashes and cattle rustling. There is not much going for the region then.

Later the track traverses glaringly white salt pans before hitting soft dunes of shifting sand and continuing amidst clumps of lifeless palm trees pretending that they hide a refreshing oasis.

Adorned with 50 shades of brown, and a severe and sombre beauty, Chalbi Desert is spellbinding in a bleak and dismal way. An absolute highlight of this trip for sure!

### **North Horr**

Built around a natural oasis, 'town' is a gross exaggeration for this vague agglomeration of grass- or mud-huts and tin shacks; sprinkled with a few permanent concrete structures. With the smaller, outlying settlements, North Horr numbers around 5,000 inhabitants.

Looking at these dwellings as we make our way through town, I reflect on the fact that inside each and every one of those homes there is one or more person(s) whose life revolves around them in the same way as my life revolves around me. The enormity of this extraordinary perception is overwhelming: fantastic, mystifying, scary and magical, all at the same time. Or as some youngsters of today might say: "That's mental!"

### **Catholic Mission**

Our home for the night is the Catholic Mission in North Horr where we are greeted warmly by Father John. Aimed at visiting missionaries, rather than foreign tourists, the room is nevertheless comfortable with an en suite bathroom.

Catholic Mission





Poverty

North Horr



Skin caked with dirt and grime; hair matted into a knotted, twisted tangle by grit and dust whipped up by the prevailing wind; I take my filthy self straight to the bathroom. Having a shower has never felt so good! Although the temptation to stand under the deliciously cool water for hours is almost overwhelming, I am mindful of the fact that water is a scarce commodity around here. My modest effort at preserving water by turning it off while soaping / shampooing and back on again for rinsing, makes me feel a little less guilty about the fact that this is a luxury that most of the local population may never experience.

Father John returns and his next sentence comes as a huge surprise: "Would you like a beer?" Resisting the temptation to answer: "Is the Pope Catholic?", we are even more delighted when the drinks arrive cold! The situation strikes us as rather surreal: sitting in a Catholic Mission in an oasis in the middle of a desert in Africa, drinking cold beer.

### **Welcome to North Horr**





North Horr

# Hampi the Vijayanagara Empire

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
Ashok Viswanathan FFIP, EFIAP, PPSA

Hampi, once an ancient civilisation, existed in the southern state of Karnataka. It was, in its peak one of the most prosperous settlements on the banks of River Tungabhadra and was ruled by the Vijayanagara Empire for over 200 years.. It was once the capital in the 14th century with several temples, trading posts and farming. In 1565 it was defeated by Muslim raiders from north India who left the area in ruin. The area was largely unknown until 1856 when a photographer Alexander Greenlaw photographed the site and created 60 calotypes of monuments that were standing in 1856. These images remained in a private collection and were not published until 1980....The road to Hampi is littered with rocks, banana plantations, paddy fields and small villages. Today it is a UNESCO site spread over 16 sq km with 1600 monuments and a popular visitor destination, It's still an active religious center. There exist also six Jain temples.

Getting to Hampi is easy as it is connected by air to Hubli airport 160 km away and train from major cities such as Chennai, Bangalore, Mumbai etc. However local transport is a necessity as the monuments are scattered. Options include hired taxis, auto rickshaws and mini buses for small groups. Most visitors use budget hotels or home stays, though there are some 3 & 4 star hotels within driving distance that are much more comfortable. The town of Hampi does not serve alcohol or non-vegetarian food, though these are available in surrounding towns and hotels some distance away. The summer months are very hot and best avoided. Plan for 2-3 days between October to March for more pleasant weather and good light. The important locations are approachable by car and the landscape here is mostly flat with easy walking. Many photographers make more than one visit as the light varies depending on the season and there is so much to explore.







*Stone carving showing elephants, camels and warriors*



*Caves - Hampi landscape*

The sun shines so forget your flash and tripod. It's best to visit early morning and late afternoon when the light is good and the temperature lower. A digital camera with a 18~55mm or 24~70mm is the way to go unless you are one of those still in the analogue era.. A wide angle such as a 10~24 for the mirrorless will be useful. You can walk up as close as you want to the monuments, so forget that 70~210mm zoom.. These images are shot with a Fuji Xpro1 processed in Affinity and NIK.

The Hampi landscape is hilly with monuments scattered around in various stage of decay. A number of caves carved into rocks were used as homes for the locals. The walls of the monuments are carved stone depicting scenes of daily life. The wall here shows a battle scene with elephants, soldiers armed with bows & arrows, horses and camels. Most of the temples have water tanks, and step wells built to enable inhabitants to walk down to the water level which varies between summer and winter. Over the centuries, many of these have run dry as the springs supplying them no longer have water.

Virupaksha temple is an active meeting place for Hindus and has been frequented by pilgrims since the destruction of Hampi in 1565. Every temple that has the space and money has a temple elephant that is well cared for and used for ceremonial occasions. The elephant at Hampi walks down to the river for a daily ritual bath and then back. The elephant is trained to stop by the temple diety and raise its trunk while bowing its head as a mark of respect before heading off to its shelter for the rest of the day.

*Lotus Mahal temple*





*Carved temple entrance Vithala temple*



*Ganesha temple*



One of the main attractions is the Vijaya Vittala Temple with its pillars that seem to be playing music. In front is a large stone-carved chariot. The architecture goes back to the Dravidian era. A popular selfie spot. This area was once filled with local shops but the government has relocated them and the area is open for easy walking to the temple.

Lotus Mahal or Kamal Mahal exhibits the shape of a lotus flower. The roof is multi-layered and 24 pillars provide support to the heavy structure. The elephant stable nearby is a long row of 12 high roof dome-shaped shelters. It's one of the structures that has almost no damage over the last several hundred years.

Badavilinga Temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva and is a popular visitor destination. It has a large linga, 3 metres high carved out of black stone and dating back to the Vijayanagara period. One of the religious statues in Hampi, Lakshmi Narasimha Temple is one of the places to visit. Here, the figure of Lord Narasimha sits in a yoga position on a coil of a snake with seven heads.

Hemakuta Hill in the city centre is a large area with several ruins, temples and archways. Visitors often climb to the top to view the sunrise and sunset. There are lots of possibilities at Hampi to do silhouettes.

#### IMAGES

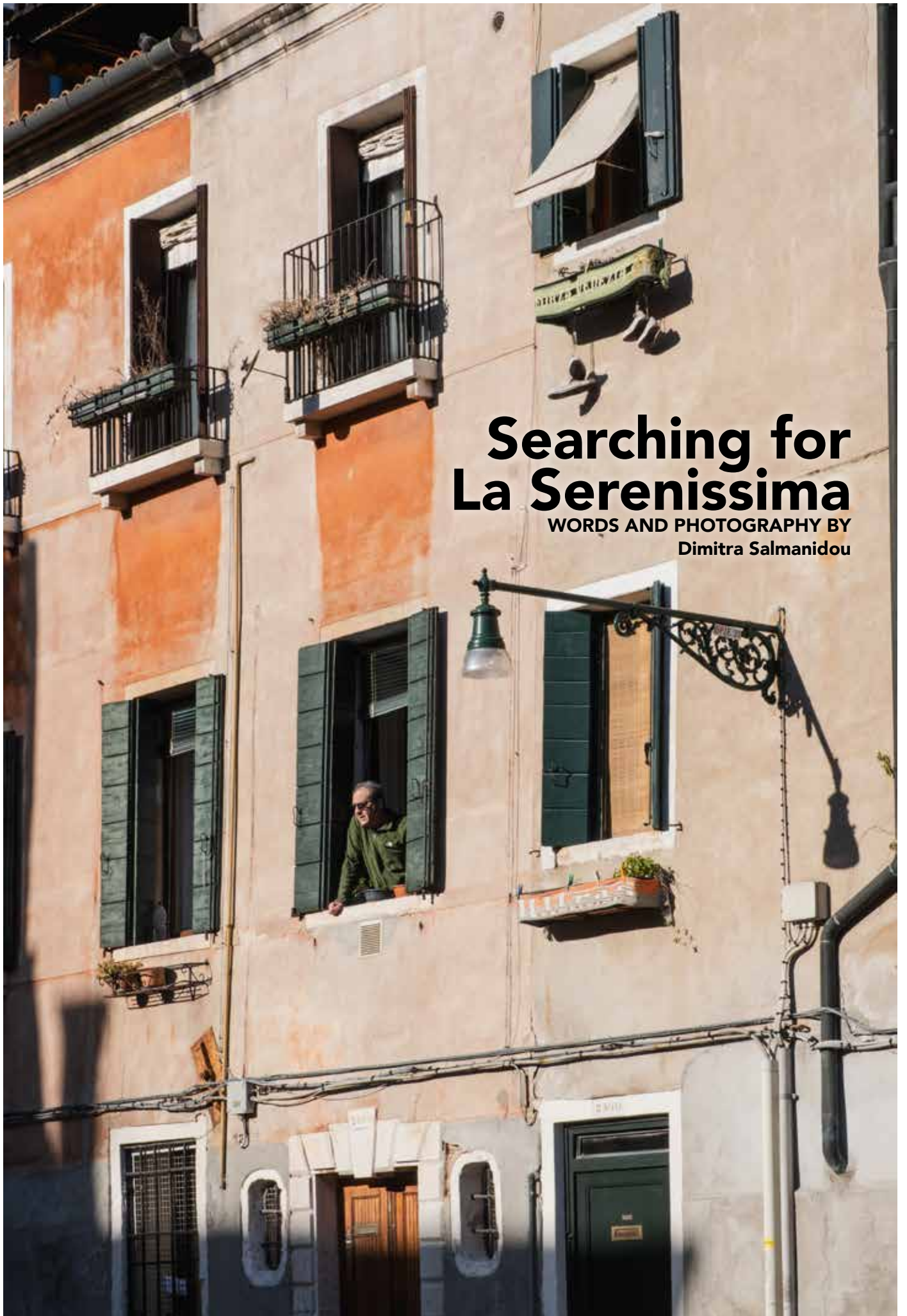
*This page clockwise from Top Left: Sree Virupaksha temple; Stone chariot; Base of one of the pillars.*

*Opposite page clockwise from Top Left: Temple elephant; Stone carvings inside the temple courtyard; Vitala temple; Musical pillars*









# Searching for La Serenissima

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
Dimitra Salmanidou



Traditionally known as La Serenissima, a day in modern Venice seems far from serene. Before visiting the Italian city, I knew that climate change and rising sea levels would likely destroy a large part of its magnificent Renaissance architecture. While there, I learned that Venice may die much faster, the largest risk being over-tourism, which gradually transforms the city into a museum like Disneyland. During the peak season, Venice can receive up to 110,000 tourists in a day, far exceeding the circa 50,000 permanent residents. Over-tourism and the high cost of living are driving Venetians away; the few remaining ones have proclaimed themselves “residenti resistenti” (resistant residents) fighting a battle to keep Venice alive.

Most tourists visit Venice on a day trip, hence the route from the train station to Piazza San Marco can easily become overcrowded and asphyxiating. Finding oneself on this route is like being in Oxford Circus or Covent Garden approaching Christmas. When we visited last Spring, we decided to take our time and stayed for five nights in Cannaregio. Located in the northern side of Venice the neighbourhood emits a local vibe and is full of restaurants, cafes and gelaterias. We enjoyed tasting the local cuisine on the side of Rio della Misericordia, where fish is the star of the menu, and we indulged in hefty scoops of gelato and pistachio croissants.

From Cannaregio, it is also very easy to take the waterbuses and visit the nearby islands of Murano and Burano with their colourful houses and the lace museum. Staying in the neighbourhood one can really see how life unfolds in a city without cars where the police, ambulance, waste collection and even the hearse arrive by boat!

Walking tours form a great way to explore hidden corners of a city and to learn more about its history. In Venice we joined the Secret and Mysterious Venice: San Marco and the Silk Road tour that took us from Chiesa della Madonna dell’Orto to the Bridge of Sighs through paths rarely frequented by tourists. We crossed a plethora of bridges that connect the small islets and learnt about the canning industry and merchandising spirit of Venetians. Chiesa di Santa Maria dei Miracoli and Campo Santa Maria Formosa were some of the lesser-known gems of Venice where the few tourists manage to merge with everyday life.

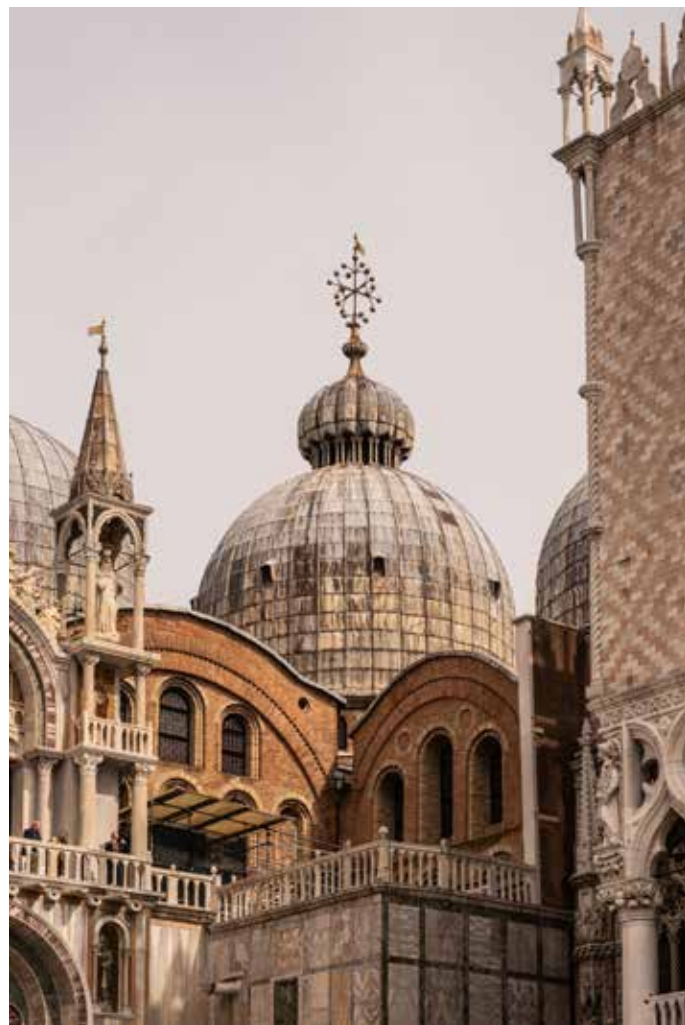
#### IMAGES

*Previous Pages Left: Gondolier; Right: A residente resistente in Dorsoduro*

*Top: Tourists and locals merge in Campo Santa Maria Formosa across the church of Santa Maria dei Miracoli  
Opposite Page Clockwise from Top Left: The “quiet” square of Campo Santa Maria Nova; A plethora of restaurants occupy the quays of Rio della Misericordia, Cannaregio; Taking the ferry boat to the nearby islands from Fondamente Nove*







Another highlight of our stay was taking the Vaporetto line 1 from Ferrovia train station to Salute. The waterbus crosses the Grand Canal, offering magnificent vistas of the Venetian architecture from a different viewpoint. From Salute we strolled to Zattere and had a leisurely walk in the Dorsoduro neighbourhood. Walking the streets of Dorsoduro was like being transported to a very different Venice. Remote from the crowds of San Marco, the neighbourhood emanates a mystical tranquillity.

Seeing clothes hung to dry and residents engaging in conversation with their neighbours from the windows of their houses brought back a lot of nostalgia for the Italy I had visited before.

A newly introduced entrance ticket is supposed to reduce the number of day trippers. It's not certain whether this will rectify the everyday life of the city or consolidate the fact that it is turning into a large museum. However, one thing is sure: to really appreciate Venice for what it is, one must allow the time to get lost in it.

#### IMAGES

*Clockwise from Top Left: The church Santa Maria dei Miracoli; One of the domes of San Marco; The famous Bridge of Sighs  
Opposite Page: The quiet neighbourhood of Dorsoduro.*



*The Grand Canal and the dome of Basilica di Santa Maria della Salute as seen from Vaporetto No 1.*





# TRAVEL TRIPS

## VIETNAM - TERRACES OF GOLD - SEPTEMBER 2023

*Four members of the Travel Group, Liz Bugg, Laura Morgan, John Speller and Penny Westmoreland joined Paul Sansome for a trip to Northern Vietnam.*



Penny Westmoreland

This page top left - Flower Hmong tribe boy; top right - Flower Hmong tribe women buying clothes; bottom - Boys sheltering North West of Hanoi.

Opposite page - Autumn Festival in rice fields North West of Hanoi







Liz Bugg

This page top - Stall holder; right - Shredding chopsticks.

Opposite page top - View of the rice terraces;  
bottom - Exercise time











Laura Morgan  
Opposite page - Hmong girl making skirts in a tribal  
village market

This page top - Late night shopping in Hanoi  
Middle - Boatman crossing moored boats at Tam  
Coc River where rowers use their feet to row  
Bottom - Hairdressing at home in small village



## RPS Travel Group Trips - 2023



John Speller  
Top left - Trudging to school in the rain, Yen Bai Province; Top right - Ceremony in Orange Temple, Hanoi; Middle right - Night around Ho Tay Lake, Hanoi; Bottom - Burning rice stubble, Yen Bai Province



# Focus on RPS Travel Distinctions

Since becoming involved with the Travel Group ten years ago I have wondered how best the Group can work with the RPS House Distinctions staff and the Travel Assessors to support members on their journey through Travel Distinctions. Of course, not all group members are seeking distinctions, but for many that is the prime reason for joining the Society and I believe that as we are a group enjoying a form of photography that is a genre separately identified within the Distinctions process, we should be offering something.

It seemed obvious that we should be organising articles and events which might encourage members to participate in the Distinctions process and that we should support the development of skills associated with 'sense of place' photography: defining (as far as one can) - helping to interpret at least - and sharing examples of successful work which might inspire.

We are fortunate that Hazel Frost FRPS, Chair of the Assessment Panel for Travel Associate and Fellowship and a Licentiate assessor is a supportive member of the group and in 2021 she and her husband James, also FRPS, a member of the Documentary and Applied Panel, and also a Licentiate assessor, made a presentation over Zoom based on their experience of the RPS processes. This was the start of a process by which we hoped to encourage more group members to 'take the plunge' into Distinctions.

In October 2022, at our first face-to-face meeting after COVID, Janey Devine FRPS, an assessor for both Travel and Documentary as well as Licentiate, outlined clearly the three levels of Distinction, providing some insight into the standards expected while Justin Cliffe and I, who had both successfully submitted Associate panels in 2019 described our different yet similar journeys. Our panels were very different but the processes we went through - rejecting favourite images because they didn't fit the panel as well as others and changing the order of images as we gained a greater feel for what was needed, for example - were very similar.

As a committee we felt that the time had come to do more and in May 2023 with huge support from Hazel Frost, Andy Moore and his team, we were able to offer an advisory day, providing targeted individual advice to those preparing to submit. Because of the inevitable vulnerability of those seeking advice we did not offer remote access except to those who were submitting work and were unable to be at RPS House in person. Unusually, two Zoomed in from India.

Each of the successful submissions you see in this edition of Travel Log was seen and, I believe, adapted slightly because of the advice given on that day. These candidates were, I thought, enormously brave: willing to have their work seen and critiqued by everyone who attended - about 50 people in all.

We had expected to continue these days on a fairly regular basis, maybe working with Documentary so that we could have two advisors working together, thus taking some pressure off the lone assessor as it's a very full and challenging day for them, too. With the similarity of these two genres, it's also useful to see how they differ. Does the panel tell a story or does it demonstrate a 'sense of place'? However, the Distinctions department has now published a programme of Advisory Days linked to the schedule of Assessment Days for each genre. The Travel Advisory Day for Associate and Fellowship will be held on 24 May 2024 and is already open for booking on the RPS website. If you think you're not quite ready for assessment, you might want to consider attending as an observer (by Zoom if you wish). A second Advisory Day is planned for 10th September, so there's plenty of time to start getting your submission together for advice.

Congratulations to Dan and Patricia. Thank you for sharing your distinctions journey with us. Who will be next?

# SOHO AT NIGHT



# ARPS PROJECT BY DAN WALLER



Soho is an area that has always intrigued me, ever since I first visited as a boy. As an aspiring child actor, I was often wide-eyed as I was hurried through the dodgier red-light areas by a chaperone, on the way to an audition in one of Soho's media offices. Of course, it has changed a great deal over the years and the seedier aspects have receded but there are still glimmers of its less salubrious past. Whilst it is still an interesting place to photograph during the day, I feel that Soho really comes alive at night. I decided that, for my ARPS project, I wanted to capture something of Soho's strange neon-soaked beauty. Thus, the starting point for my project was simply 'Soho at night', with a fairly loose statement of intent, which I intended to refine as themes emerged.

Ordinarily, black and white street photography is my *métier* of choice, so I deliberately chose a project that would push me out of my comfort zone, since Soho's neons seemed to demand colour photography. If you're going to commit to a long-term photography project, I think that it's a good idea to add a few personal challenges, in order to stave off the inevitable over-familiarity with your subject matter. Thus, colour and night photography were my in-built hurdles. The Soho neons also encouraged me to submit a digital portfolio. I had enjoyed the process of creating a print collection for my LRPS but I thought that Soho at night lent itself particularly well to projected images in a darkened room.





I cursed the hurdles I had set sometimes, particularly the choice of night photography. Shooting wide open, at one point I feared that I would never get photographs that were sharp enough to be Associate-standard. There was a fair bit of experimentation and learning to be a moth - I had to actively seek out interesting sources of light! Another barrier to success was that Soho is not always the friendliest place to visit. As a former City of London Police Detective, I like to feel that I

am reasonably street-wise but there were a couple of occasions on my trips to Soho after dark where I made a quick exit from people who were clearly seeking a confrontation. It's a hazard of street photography that not everybody is happy having their photo taken! I suppose that I am also drawn to the dark and the dangerous in my photography, or I would not have picked a location such as Soho in the first place. I did sometimes have to remind myself that I was no longer wearing body armour.



## FIRST ATTEMPT

Despite having worked on the project for more than a year, it was still a bit of a rush for the deadline and I did not finalise my choice of images in time to seek formal advice or a one-to-one. I think I knew in my heart that some images were not up to scratch but, as the deadline loomed, I thought it was worth a shot. When this first ARPS project was unsuccessful, however, I found it tough to accept. All those cold, dark nights seemed to have come to nothing. But, of course, it was not for nothing. The judging panel had liked my statement, the central concept and a few of the photos - I just needed to do better! Once I'd re-framed the failure as a challenge, I got back out there, determined to make stronger images.

Themes emerged more clearly this time. I found that when I analysed the strongest images from my first panel, single people looked lonely and couples looked happy. Thus, I began to actively seek out those particular permutations when out on the street.

I'm a little reluctant to admit this but there was an upgrade in equipment between projects. I exchanged my beloved Fuji X-T30 for Fuji's X-T5 and my 50mm f2 lens for the 56mm f1.2. I had been on a workshop with the street photographer 'Mr Whisper' who used that particular combination of equipment. Since I admired his night photography, I felt this upgrade would help me capture better low light images and I have to admit that it did.



I also thought that a change of perspective might help stir things up a bit, so I decided to change my standard aspect ratio to 16:9. Having made the decision to submit a digital project, I thought that completely filling the RPS's 16:9 projector screen might be a good move and I knew that it would lend the images a more cinematic appeal. In addition, the original project had mixed landscape and portrait photographs and I thought that all images being landscape would add to the coherence of the group. I also tried out some different photographic techniques (e.g. some long exposures).

The key bit of the original ARPS panel's advice, however, had been to seek out decisive moments and, ultimately, I realised that this just meant getting out there and taking more photographs. There is no getting around the fact that you are going to have to take hundreds of photographs to find those that are ARPS project-worthy. I would return to the same spots time after time, knowing that the right person just happening to come along, or a subtle change in lighting, would make all the difference.



## RPS SUPPORT

The support of the RPS Travel Group in refining my new project was vital. This time I made sure to allow enough time before the deadline to seek advice. I attended the Travel genre Advisory Day and a one-to-one with a panel member. Both these occasions were key in improving my project and in guiding my thoughts on what worked and, indeed, what did not.

I would like to pay tribute to an additional and brilliant photography tutor, Simon Ellingworth. My association with him began with his online RPS workshop 'Fuji Magic' and was followed up with multiple in-person street photography workshops.

I am also a member of the 'Street Ghosts' group, who are alumni of Simon's 3x RPS 'Artist Development in Street Photography' courses, and who are a constant source of encouragement and inspiration.



I have appreciated the camaraderie of the regular photographic walks organised by the RPS London Landscape group (led by Julian Rouse). Also, the sterling work done by the RPS London Region organisers (David and Judy Hicks), who have given me the chance to see my work exhibited and who have inspired me to join long-term photographic projects, such as the recent 'Magnificent 7+1'.

Success, however, was never a foregone conclusion and I watched the proceedings online, just as wracked with nerves as I was when I had watched my first assessment. There were debates by panel members about several of my images, which left me on tenterhooks. The comments were largely about the cohesiveness of the photographs as a group. Was the single long exposure image too much of a departure in style? Was the final image too jarring a shift in colour palette? Ultimately, however, I was absolutely delighted when it was announced that I had been successful.



## FELLOWSHIP

I've just returned from a monochrome photography workshop in Venice with the street photographer, Brian Lloyd Duckett. It was my first visit to Venice and I was in absolute awe - I cannot wait to go back and make more pictures! I thought I was adequately prepared, after previous visits to Florence and Rome and with the familiarity I felt with Venice from

TV and films. The reality, however, was so much more thrilling. I have thoughts of developing a Venice panel for an attempt at the Fellowship but I know that I will have to evolve as a photographer and continue to develop my personal style. As ever, I am looking forward to the challenge.



WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
Dan Waller ARPS  
17/12/2023



# MY DISTINCTIONS JOURNEY

PATRICIA MACKEY ARPS



Patricia is the editor of Travel Log and since 2021 has been a member of the Travel Group Committee. On 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023 she was awarded her ARPS in the genre of Travel Photography.

Creating panels and applying for distinctions were never part of my plan. Since joining Ards Camera Club in 2011, I have actively participated in competitions, with increasing levels of success, but distinctions were not on my radar. Then lockdown happened and a persuasive friend insisted that we needed a project to focus on something positive. We both ended up going for, and achieving, our LRPS distinctions. At the time, I thought 'that is enough, never again'.

But I liked having a project to focus on, and after joining the Travel Group I was inspired to explore the idea of developing a travel panel. Although I travel frequently, I realised it was possible to create a panel focusing on an area closer to home. This would make it easier for repeat visits in search of the right image in the right location.

Speaking honestly, it took me a while to understand the RPS definition of travel photography. I took a long time researching 'sense of place', and scrutinised every other panel I could find that had been successful in this genre. I trawled the RPS website for videos of people discussing the travel genre. My biggest challenge was trying to understand the difference between travel and documentary. Some of the panels I looked at could have fallen into either category.

I took advantage of the support available from the RPS, including an early one-to-one. I was fortunate to attend the May 2023 Advisory Day organised by the RPS Travel Group. If it hadn't been for these support mechanisms, I am not sure I would have had the confidence to apply.







When I started to seriously consider a travel panel featuring a location in Northern Ireland I did have concerns that it would become a bit stereotypical and take a direction I was not comfortable with. I am aware of people's knowledge of Northern Ireland often being based on the stories that reach the national and international news - the Troubles and more often than not a non-functioning government.

This is part of our story. But I don't feel that narrative is a true reflection of our sense of place. That part of our identity does not need to dominate how the mundane normality that exists is portrayed. I consciously took a decision that if my panel was to feature a Northern Irish location, then it needed to be authentic to my own experience and connection.

I love Northern Ireland, and I love the people - most of the time! We are friendly and welcoming - most of the time! We say hello to strangers we pass on the street, we make eye contact on public transport, and when we strike up a conversation with a complete stranger we will eventually identify a mutual acquaintance we have in common.

A travel panel for Northern Ireland needed to convey the warmth that exists between friends, family and strangers.

I settled on the new City of Bangor (Co Down), as it is only 10 minutes from where I live so very accessible for repeat visits: there were many repeat visits over the course of 18 months.

It is fair to say that my first attempt at collating images resulted in a collection of images with no people. My friend (the persuasive one) who I had told about this project very diplomatically critiqued the images and suggested I might need to consider including some people.

I revisited the locations and 'hung around' waiting for people to enter the frame. I developed a technique to try and blend in so people would think I was waiting for them to pass before taking my shot. The most frustrating thing about trying to include Northern Irish folk in your shots is they are so polite and considerate that you end up with multiple images of people bobbing their heads and trying to scuttle past you apologising that they have got in your way.

Long lenses, shooting from the hip and using a tripod with a shutter release while glancing anywhere but at the subject were all used to try and bypass this issue.



After about six months of seemingly going around in circles I booked a one-to-one. I felt I was slightly stuck as I was not sure if the images I was capturing matched the genre. Janey Devine FRPS helped me to refocus on what I needed to achieve. Her critique was firm but fair and, most importantly, constructive and encouraging.

She explained the difference between travel and documentary and said that my panel was at a stage where I could go in either direction.

She critiqued all 20 images I had supplied and told me that I had too many that were essentially the same, and not always that attractive. It is not enough to have people within the frame: they

need to be interesting; not just walking or cycling through the image.

She advised me to get into the location in more depth. The images I had shared only focused on the area beside the sea and she felt did not necessarily convey the sense of place of the location. I needed to think more about the people and how they interact with each other.

She said that for a travel panel I needed to keep asking myself 'why is this location interesting' and 'how can I make Bangor interesting to others?'



The images above were all taken following my one-to-one. I went wider than my initial coastal location and looked for people within interesting grubbier backdrops.





The Advisory Day in May 2023 was perfectly timed and gave me the push I needed to pull an evolved version of my panel together. I was not convinced about all the images I put forward, but I felt I had made it to a stage where it would be useful to hear feedback on the 15 images plus the extra 5. I knew that an assessment was possible in September. I needed the Advisory Day to help me decide whether I was anywhere near the standard needed to consider applying.

I am grateful that Kath Phillips, Chair of the Travel Group, kept subtly mentioning the Advisory Day. I still had doubts about the images I had collated. But the only way to address those

doubts was to get feedback from people who understand the genre. Most importantly, I had to be willing to listen to what they said and act on it.

Following the Advisory Day feedback received from Hazel Frost FRPS I knew I still had work to do, but I also knew I was ready to apply for the assessment in September.



Hazel said that my draft panel showed good familiarity with the area, was well laid out and was a cohesive body of work. She also commented that the Statement of Intent was well illustrated. She then went through each image pointing out what worked, as well as areas of concern. She explained why she preferred some of my additional images rather than the ones I had included.

She said I was well on my way, but that I needed to go back and loiter on a dull day and to look for the ordinary.

A useful piece of advice she gave was for me to use the images I had included on the top row as the benchmark for the rest of the panel. She advised me these were the strongest images that I had included.

Hazel's critique of my draft panel was so worthwhile. I was also helped by listening to her critique of the other panels. I found myself eventually being able to correctly pre-empt what her critique was going to be. The final piece of the jigsaw that I needed in order to understand 'Sense of Place' was finally slotting into place.

Hazel mentioned how, within a travel panel, images of people interacting are normally stronger than those of people looking straight at the camera. The Statement of Intent needs to be about what and where, not how. And that any

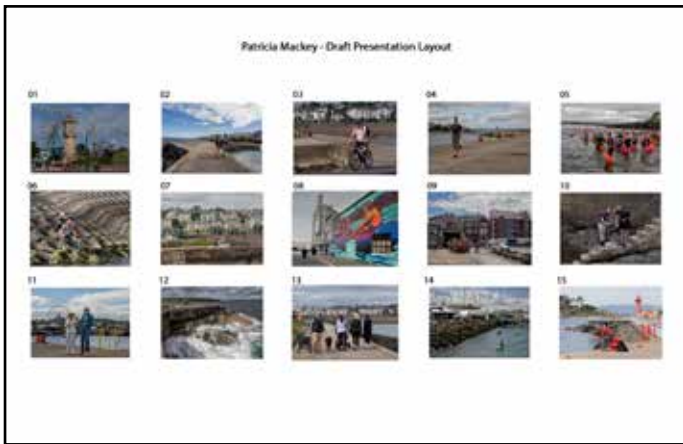
crop needs to be deliberate. The most important advice I took from the day was how Hazel talked about waiting for the decisive moment. I kept this advice in mind when I actively went out and sought the last image I needed to complete my panel.

I knew the location I wanted to include so I made myself comfortable and tried to blend into a comfortable rock. I needed an image with people connected to water. I waited, photographed and then had a few options to choose from. I settled on the image above as I liked the interaction between the two men. For me this felt like the 'decisive moment' I had been advised to wait for. It was the last image I needed to complete my panel. It was taken 13th July 2023 at Brompton Bay.

My panel was ready to be submitted.

To show the evolution of this project I have included the panels I submitted for my one-to-one and the Advisory Day. Also included is the final presentation of the submitted panel.

It would be remiss of me not to thank my friend Sian for making me apply for my LRPS in the first place, Kath Phillips for her encouragement and finally Janey Devine and Hazel Frost for their constructive and encouraging feedback.



One-2-One Panel (Oct 2022)



Advisory Day Panel (May 2023)

### STATEMENT OF INTENT

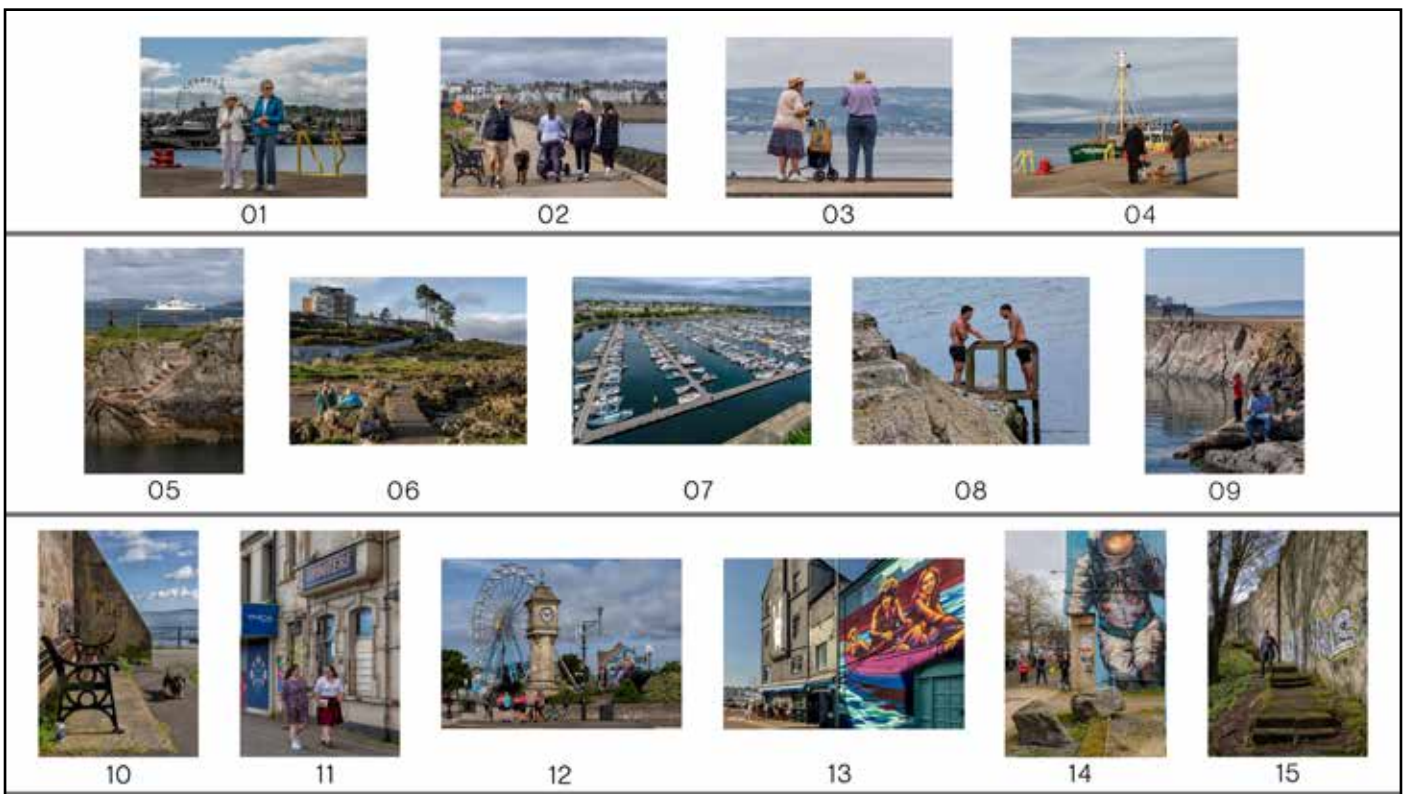
*Bangor (NI), on the shores of Belfast Lough, is overlooked by elegant Victorian terraces often connected to the sea via steep steps.*

*A gentle path hugs the coast before merging into concrete pavements demarcating the harbour and marina. The proximity to the water provides a year-round haven for people to walk dogs, meet friends, and if feeling adventurous, partake in sea bathing.*

*Set back from the coastline, the built infrastructure, made grubby by the elements and damp climate, is no longer pristine. However, symbols of Bangor's Victorian heritage and recent street murals reflecting a love of music and art brighten neglected spaces and suggest an eclectic identity.*

*New apartments show Bangor on the verge of change. After 20 years of missed opportunities, a plan is finally underway to address the boarded-up buildings and empty space of Queen's Parade. This is a city in transition.*

### Successful submission 13th September 2023 - ARPS in Travel



# The Essential Rome

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
Mike Longhurst FRPS







A good while ago, I was invited to attend a photographic event at Westminster University. A supposedly prominent photographer was giving a talk on Prague, a place I know quite well – except I didn't. What I saw was not any Prague I knew and loved, but a rather grotty, ill-kept pile of streets and buildings. The sort of place you wouldn't want to walk through at night.

At the end I questioned him on whether he thought this a fair reflection of Prague and he basically said he didn't care whether it was or wasn't, if he went somewhere, that's what he looked for in pictures, so that's what the place looked like.

And of course, if that's what you look for, that's what you see. I went home and thought about my recent week photographing in Rome and realised I was just as guilty of failing to get to the essence of a place. I had been working on a project in Lisbon for some time and had become sensitised to all I saw there: the grand avenues, bordered by wiggly streets, the statuary, architectural splendour matched by dilapidation and I realised that I had seen and shot all those things in Rome. So, Rome looked like Lisbon.

But I realised, Rome isn't Lisbon. I had entirely missed the point. Rome had a vibe that Lisbon didn't have. It had a lifestyle and ambience all its own. Where was that in my shots? Nowhere.

So I'm writing this to myself as a warning the day before (air traffic control willing) I set off for another week in Rome, nearly 20 years on. Don't come back with anything that isn't uniquely Rome. And that doesn't mean the Spanish Steps, Trevi fountain, Sistine Chapel, Coliseum etc. Yes, I'll have the non-photographer with me who doesn't know those places, so I'll do them, but try to find something other than just what they are in them. And in the city where the competition each day seems to be to see who can drive the biggest vehicle through the narrowest street, fastest, I'll try to look beyond the tourist attractions and find the essence of Rome.

#### IMAGES

*Previous Page:*

*Trevi is now more cultural experience than big fountain*

*This page from Top to Bottom:*

*The once-iconic Vespas and Lambrettas can sometimes still be found; The iconic Lambrettas and Vespas have given way to more powerful bikes;*

*From early morning onwards, much of Rome becomes a massive catering facility*

*Opposite Page from Top to Bottom:*

*A street vendor sells pictures of the old iconic Rome;*

*The Pantheon now charges admission*







**IMAGES**

*Left: It is entirely possible to shoot all of Rome in tourists' selfies (from Top to Bottom) - The Pantheon; The Spanish Steps; The Vatican from Castel Sant' Angelo; The Fountain of Trevi x 2*

*Right: The modern way at Trevi is to swipe a credit card in the water*

Well, what to say? Back now and I realise what folly it is to try to find something that existed way back. Either get it then, or just look at it with new eyes. That "Rome" in my head simply isn't there anymore. Locals say you can find it further out in places like Trastevere, but the centre has been given over to tourists and their lifestyles. There were always plenty of tourists of course, but somehow the balance has gone over a tipping point and that's really all there is. No more do young Romans zoom through the narrow streets on their Lambrettas and Vespas – there are still plenty of motorbikes, but modern versions of the scooters, including the e-versions, seem to be mostly for tourists. If Marcello Mastroianni and Anita Ekberg wanted to get wet in the Fountain of Trevi now, they'd have to fight their way through probably two thousand people at any given time to get there.

For me, you can't ignore those tourist attractions I vowed to look past. They have changed. They are no longer things to see on an itinerary, to check off on a list. They are experiences in their own right. The Trevi fountain and Spanish Steps especially are now cultural meeting places. Vast crowds gather just to be there. To be part of something that is more than just historical marble. It is hard to explain and even harder to capture through the lens what they are getting from being there, but is it not just seeing somewhere very famous. When I first saw Trevi in 1969, a few people strolled past and most threw three coins over the shoulder. They stopped for a picture, then moved on. Now they hang there and if anything goes into the water, it is far more likely to be a credit card swiped over the surface. In 2004, there were plenty of people, but still there to see the edifice, not to play a role themselves in some vast cultural experience.

Large vehicles still plough through the narrow streets, but they are now far more likely to be delivering the essentials of life to hotels and restaurants, or to the thousands of souvenir shops than engaged in Roman life. So, wipe the memory, what is today's vibe all about? Is it just swept away by mass tourism, or does that have its own vibe?



I had not really intended to spend much time photographing the tourist hotspots, but soon realised that not to do so would miss the essential point of Rome, just as I had missed it before. Trying to shoot these edifices without crowds all over them would not only be almost impossible, but misleading too. Even at 6am you can count the tourists in hundreds at these places, so I determined to shoot them with the tourists. In fact, I shot every one of them in tourist's selfies, but I'll only bore you with a couple of those.

Sites like the Colosseum and Sistine Chapel still seem to have that tick-box point to them – places you have to see, but entirely as viewer, rather than participant. You buy your “Skip the line” tickets to stand in vast lines of other skip the liners in their parties, slowly shuffling through. It is not clear what you skipped at all, but you paid through the nose, so there must have been something.

#### IMAGES

*Top: Skip the line groups jostle with each other to get into and round the Colosseum*

*Left: The charm is still there, but now tourists cruise the streets on e-scooters*





Of course, the tourists do spread out and the more dedicated find their way to excellent sites like Castel Sant' Angelo on the Tiber and into many of the wonderful (even for a pagan) basilicas and churches, but none as popular as the Pantheon, which now charges admission. Sadly, after you have seen a half a dozen church ceilings, Michaelangelo's Sistine Chapel can seem quite ordinary, so best to go there first.

From about 9am onwards, the area north of the Corso Vittorio Emanuele / Via Nazionale becomes one vast catering facility, with streets that scooters once weaved through, blocked by outdoor restaurants, but sanity still prevails on the more relaxed south side, especially round the Campo de Fiori market area. One gem overlooked by many is Michelangelo's Moses, regarded by many as the equal or better than his David. It sits in the church of San Pietro in Vincoli, just off the Via Cavour and free for all to see. Another to my mind is the Jesuits' HQ, the Church of Gesu, right on Vittorio Emanuele, it is simply an amazing contender in the battle that went on between the sects to be if not holier than thou, more magnificent. I have a feeling that in Rome, magnificence equates very literally to holiness.

It is hard to go to Rome and not be overwhelmed by the scale of tourism, but there is plenty more to see that is not saturated and I hope I managed to put the tourist phenomenon into a new context. It is not just passive voyeurism, but a participatory cultural thing that I had not seen before.

#### IMAGES

*Top Left: Michelangelo's Moses sits waiting in the church of San Pietro in Vincoli for the few that find their way there*

*Top Right: The magnificent Chiesa del Gesu*

*Opposite page clockwise from Top Left : Away from the tourist hotspots, you can still find the charm of Rome; Not every street and alley is jammed with tourists;*

*The Castel Sant' Angelo has hidden beauty within*



# Patterns of Central Australia

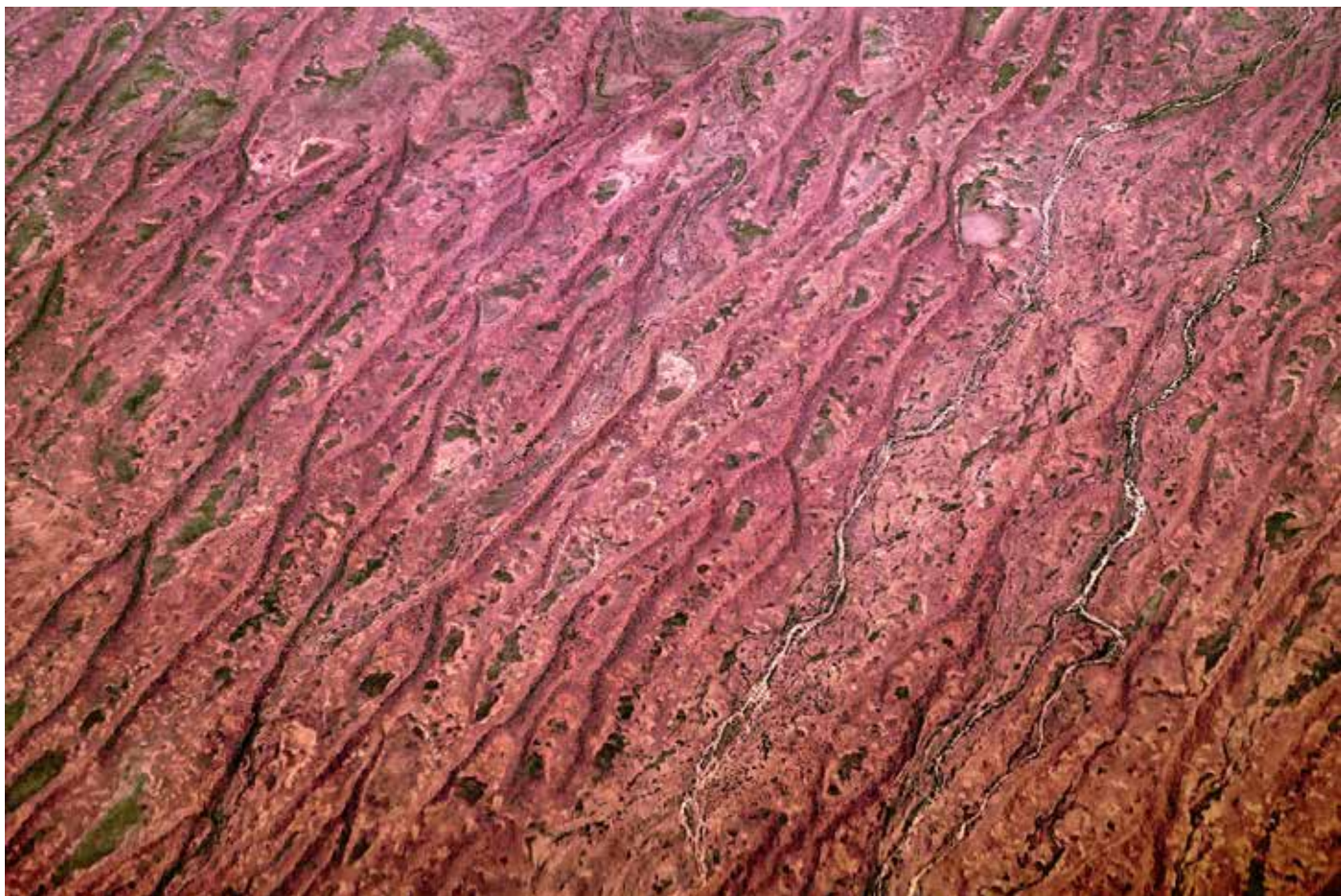
by Rob Morgan ARPS

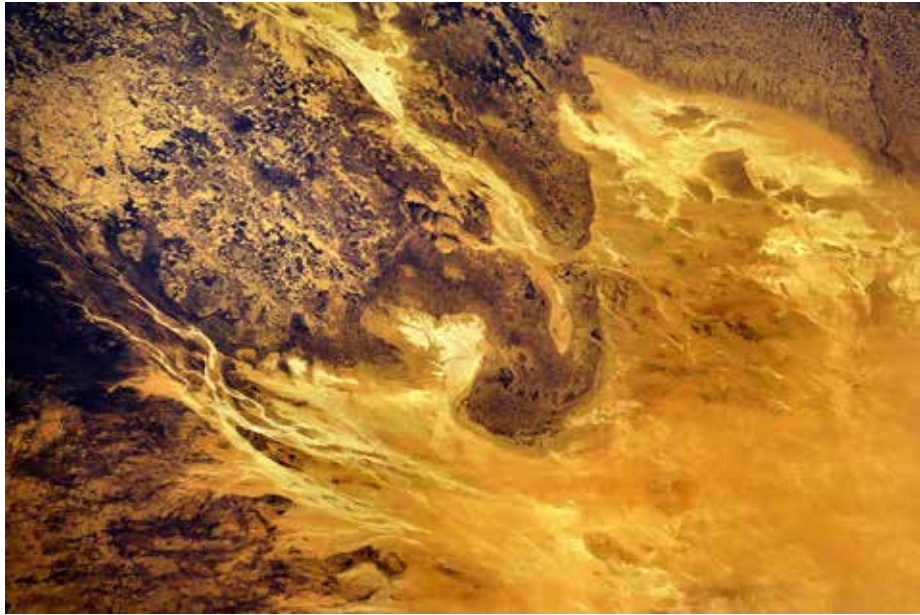






After a recent short break at Uluru (Ayers Rock) in central Australia, my wife and I flew via Sydney, before heading back to Melbourne. On the three hour flight to Sydney there was an ever-changing series of landscape patterns to be seen below us. Here are a few of them.





# RPS Travel Group Trips 2024

## Safari to Kenya

22 June 2024 - 9 nights

Organised for the RPS Travel Group by Alison Mees Photography

Join Alison in June 2024 to experience a Kenyan safari staying at small tented camps in the conservancies Alison knows well.

Starting in Nairobi for 1 night, heading to Ol Pejeta Conservancy for 4 nights where you will get the chance to see White & Black Rhino. This conservancy has the largest population of rhino in East Africa. Here you will also have the chance to see elephants, reticulated giraffe, zebras, lions and a variety of birds. After 4 nights you will fly down to the Mara - well known for the Big Cats. Each day will start early to get the most from the best light, the itinerary all depends on what the wildlife brings to us!

The safari is a small / personal group led by Alison, using an open vehicle for the best game viewing opportunities.

More detailed information on this trip can be found on the RPS Website [rps.org/groups/travel](https://rps.org/groups/travel)

### Cost

\$5935 pp sharing a tent (single supplement available upon request otherwise single travellers will be paired with another single traveller of the same gender)

To reserve your spot in this amazing safari please email Richard Lewis [traveltrips@rps.org](mailto:traveltrips@rps.org)

# The RPS Travel Group and YOU

There are a number of ways you can contribute to the RPS Travel Group by understanding and participating in the diverse selection of communications and activities organised by the RPS Travel Group Committee.

The best way to find out what is happening is to visit the Travel Group's section on the RPS website [rps.org/groups/travel/](https://rps.org/groups/travel/)

We also communicate with our members via e-news, Share and Chat, Facebook, Instagram, Travel Log and by e-mail.

A highlight of the group is our in-person trips, photo walks and weekends.

## Connect Online

### Follow our Instagram Page

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



Tag us #travelgroupprps #rps #asenseofplace

[www.instagram.com/travelgroupprps/](https://www.instagram.com/travelgroupprps/)

### Share and Chat

These are live online informal gatherings to enable members to connect and share their experiences and inspire each other.

Members sharing images of favourite locations, often off the beaten track, is a popular feature as well as updates on what's happening in the Travel Group and what members would like to happen. These sessions depend very much on Group member involvement.

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

If you can offer an item, please contact Richard Lewis by e-mailing [traveltrips@rps.org](mailto:traveltrips@rps.org)

### Join our Facebook Community

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



[www.facebook.com/groups/RPSTr](https://www.facebook.com/groups/RPSTr)

### e-news

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

If you have information to be shared please e-mail [travelweb@rps.org](mailto:travelweb@rps.org)

## Meet In-person

This year's RPS Travel Group Spring Event is focusing on "Travel Photography - the Future".

This full day event provides Travel Group members an opportunity to consider the impact on their art of current trends in tourism and photography, bringing together some of the recognised experts in both areas.

During the day you will hear a series of presentations and panel discussions with an opportunity to think through the issues, share your ideas and benefit from some very special opportunities.

Booking is now open via <https://rps.org/groups/travel/>

### Travel Photography - The Future

Saturday April 20th 2024 10am - 5pm  
RPS House, Bristol



# Inspire & Be Inspired

## Forthcoming events

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

**WEEKEND 20 April 2024** - Travel Photography - The Future - RPS House, Bristol - **BOOK NOW**

**SHARE & CHAT with AGM 19 May 2024 (10:30am) Online**

**TRIP 22 June 2024** (9 nights) - African Safari with Alison Mees

**SHARE & CHAT** - 15 September 2024

**EVENT 28 October 2024** - Savernake Forest with Jeremy Walker

**SHARE & CHAT** - 17 November 2024

**TRIP 2025** - Northern Ireland (TBD)

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

## Monthly Travel Image Competition

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

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

The closing date for submissions is the last day of each month before they are judged and a winner chosen. The winning shot will be added to the Travel Image of the Month page on the website, with the overall monthly winners competing to be the Group's annual 'Best of the Best' winner. All entries and the winning monthly image can be viewed on [rps.org/groups/travel/](https://rps.org/groups/travel/)

Submit your entries to [travelcompetitions@rps.org](mailto:travelcompetitions@rps.org)

## Travel Log

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

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

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

E-mail article suggestions and potential cover images to [editortravel@rps.org](mailto:editortravel@rps.org)

## RPS Travel Group on YouTube



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

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