

# A guide for photographers to the Isles of Harris and Lewis

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Dedication

To Susan, Rachel and Ben  
with love

A guide for photographers to the Isles of Harris and Lewis

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## Acknowledgements

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- Garry Brannigan for his introduction to the Outer Hebrides on a Digital Dawn photographic course and for subsequent really enjoyable trips to this amazing place.
- Will Thompson, Gordon Gibbons, Mike Lloyd, John Higgs, John Day and Nigel Ladkin for sharing their photographic expertise on our trips to the islands.
- My wife, Susan, for her unconditional support and help through this project.

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## **Introduction**

The islands of Harris and Lewis are, for me, one of the foremost photographic locations for coastal landscape photography in the world. Their geography incorporates towering cliffs, craggy coves, sea stacks and sandy beaches. Climatically the islands have a maritime climate where there is the possibility of snow in winter and the northern lights make an occasional appearance. This variety coupled with the compact nature of the location means that there is always an exciting location to access in virtually every weather condition.

Located in the Atlantic Ocean, winter storms bring large rollers crashing onto the shore and give rise to a never-ending change to the structure and shape of the beaches. The storms can strip a beach of sand exposing new rock structures or bury existing rocks under a mountain of sand. It is this dynamism which makes it such a fascinating location to photograph.

I hope you enjoy your visit.

Richard

Ascot - May 2024

## **How to use this guide**

The guide is set up assuming you will use a satellite navigation system and use latitude and longitude coordinates to access the locations. I have included postcodes for completeness.

The guide is divided into sections based around the road network. This will minimise your travel time and give you a variety of options in close proximity.

## **Safety first**



- Check the tide times before you go.
- Ensure you have a safe route out to dry land at all times. This is especially important if you are shooting with sea defences or rock structures behind you so you do not get cut off. If you go round a headland ensure you can get back safely.
- The beaches here are subject to the Atlantic swell and large waves can unexpectedly crash onto the shore.
- Be careful not to get too close to the water's edge and watch the waves for some time from a safe distance before you approach the water. This will help you to gauge the behaviour of the waves and avoid a soaking or worse.
- Some of the cliffs are very high so look out for drop offs if you go on them. Stay clear of crumbling edges.

## **Planning - 5 P's**

**P**erfect

**P**lanning

**P**revents

**P**oor

**P**erformance



Before you rush off and get started, some planning will really help with your trip and enable you to get the maximum out of your time

in the field. There are many factors which will determine if you have a successful trip, some within your control and some not. Planning will help you minimise the variance in the events within your control.

The first thing to ensure is that you are familiar with your camera and that you have an understanding of the type of images you want to create. If you want to create black and white images do you know how to set the picture controls on your camera to display black and white images?

Do you understand how to display the histogram for your images and what to do if your image is not correctly exposed? Is your tripod serviced and working? If you cannot answer yes to these kinds of questions then spend some time and sort the issues out. A wet and windy cliff top is not a great place to be looking at your camera manual.

Basic camera craft is beyond the scope of this guide but if you want this information then "The Art of Landscape Photography" by Mark Bauer and Ross Hoddinott will really help you to get started.

The sea along this stretch of coastline has some amazing colours of blue and green which will really help to lift your images. To get some sense of motion in the water many of the images here are long exposures ( exposure > 1/60 s). This requires its own set of techniques which will be covered next.

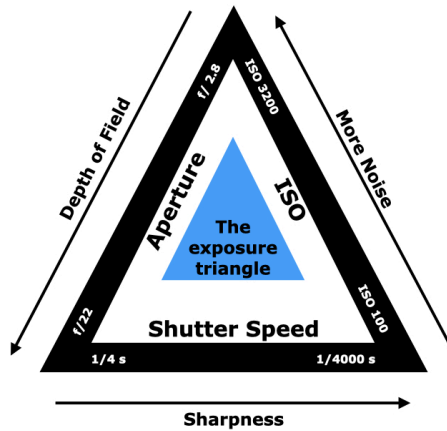
### **Long exposure**

Long exposure is a technique to enable you to slow down the motion of an object and not render it in sharp focus. Imagine a person running, shot at 1/2000s, the runner will be in focus and sharp as they will only have moved 0.5cm in the exposure time. If you were to expose for 0.5s they would have moved 5m and thus be rendered as a blur. The above example assumes the runner is Usain Bolt!

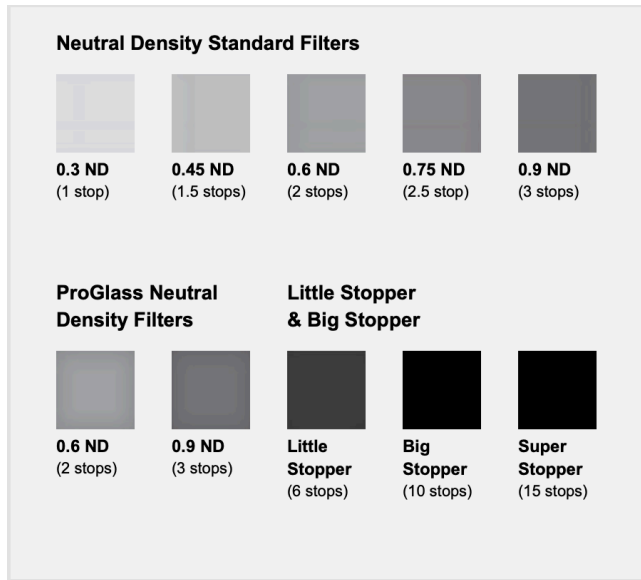
It is a similar story for water in motion, at 1/2000s a wave will be sharp with detail in all the droplets, at 0.5s it will be a series of lengthy streaks.

So how do you go about achieving this effect. There are only three variables to play with when taking a photograph:

- Exposure which determines how long the shutter is open
- Aperture which determines how much light enters the camera
- ISO which determines how responsive the camera is to the light.



Given normal lighting it will not be possible to get a long exposure time and thus slow the subject down so you will need to stop the light reaching the sensor by the use of a neutral density filter. These block light from reaching the sensor without altering the image. Use of such a filter enables you to reduce the light entering the camera and thus lengthen the time the shutter is open.



Range of filters © Lee Filters

## Calculating long exposure times

Calculating a long exposure can be done by two methods. One method is trial and error. Start with an exposure which experience teaches you is roughly correct and use the histogram to fine tune it. Whilst some professional photographers do use this method it is not one I recommend as I find it time consuming and frustrating. If you want to go down this route for a day-time scene start with a 10 stop filter and 30s at f11. Look at the histogram, if it is too much to the right decrease the ISO or aperture (higher f stop) or exposure time. If it is underexposed increase the aperture, exposure time or ISO. Each line on your histogram is one stop of exposure so if you use the example above and want to increase by 1 stop you can either expose for 60s, or move to f8 or increase ISO to 200. You should only do one of these at once. If you do all 3 you will have increased by 3 stops of exposure from an exposure without filters.

For a more scientific approach start by assessing the exposure without your filter in place. For example the normal without filter

exposure may be 1/60s. If you want water that is streaky you would need about 1s exposure so would use a 6 stop filter. If you want water that is milky then use a 10 stop to get an exposure of about 15 s. There are three main ways of calculating the new exposure time:

Use a table which you print [out](#).

Little Stopper		Big Stopper		Super Stopper	
Normal Shutter Speed	Little Stopper +6 stops	Normal Shutter Speed	Big Stopper +10 stops	Normal Shutter Speed	Super Stopper +15 stops
1/1000	1/15	1/1000	1 second	1/1000	30 seconds
1/500	1/8	1/500	2 seconds	1/500	1 minute
1/250	1/4	1/250	4 seconds	1/250	2 minutes
1/125	1/2	1/125	8 seconds	1/125	4 minutes
1/60	1 second	1/60	15 seconds	1/60	8 minutes
1/30	2 seconds	1/30	30 seconds	1/30	16 minutes
1/15	4 seconds	1/15	1 minute	1/15	32 minutes
1/8	8 seconds	1/8	2 minutes	1/8	1hr 4mins
1/4	15 seconds	1/4	4 minutes	1/4	2hrs 8mins
1/2	30 seconds	1/2	8 minutes	1/2	4hrs 16mins
1 second	1 minute	1 second	16 minutes	1 second	8hrs 32mins
2 seconds	2 minutes	2 seconds	32 minutes	2 seconds	17hrs 4mins

Calculate the exposure (time in seconds) arithmetically:

- **3 stop = exposure x 8**
- **6 stop = exposure x 64**
- **10 stop = exposure x 1064**
- **15 stop = exposure x 32768**

However the easiest way to calculate the exposure time is to use an app. Lee filters have one which you can download free of charge and it works on your smart phone. A screenshot is shown below.





## Impact of shutter speed on the image

Shutter speed will determine how sharply water is rendered. At shutter speeds greater than 1/1000s most water will be rendered sharply with individual droplets visible. At shutter speeds still in the fractions of a second the overall shape of the water will be clearly defined but individual droplets will not be visible. At shutter speeds of 1-2s the water will appear streaky with lines of flow in it. At shutter speeds in the 10's of seconds the water will appear milky. The above are guidelines as it depends how fast the water is flowing, for example water in a vertical falling cascade moves considerably quicker than a gently lapping wave. The above general guidelines will help you to start to create the effect you want which can then be further refined.



*Images shot at 1/80s, 0.6s, 2s and 10s (viewed top left clockwise)*

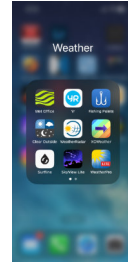
## Weather and tides

Weather is something you cannot control but will be critical for ensuring the success of your photography trip. The island is relatively small with a decent road network so you will always be able to find a location on the lee side. It should be noted that sometimes the weather is very wild and can be too wild to venture outdoors. There are many weather apps available but three I like are:

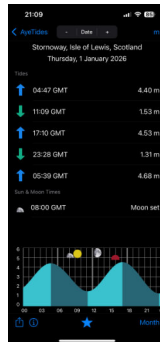
*Met office*

*Yr.no* the Norwegian weather service

*Clear outside* which gives a forecast of cloud cover



“Tide and time waits for no man” is a famous quote. To ensure you are fully informed about tides I recommend a tide timetable App. The two I use are *AyeTides* and *Nautide*. *AyeTides* is a one off subscription and very good value. *Nautide* is more comprehensive but requires an annual payment.

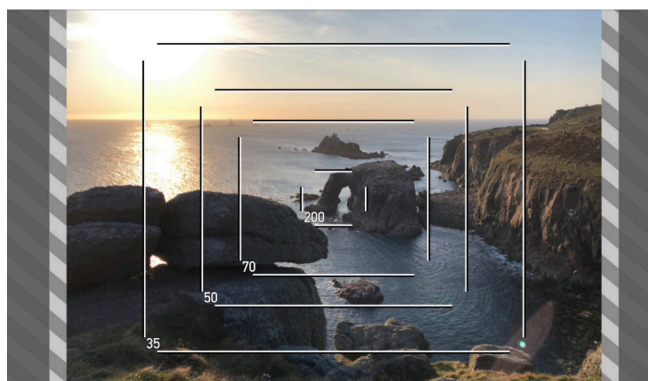


## **Protecting your camera**

To ensure your equipment is protected you will need a good quality waterproof camera bag. Set up away from the water's edge. You can use your body as a shield but do not turn your back on the sea if it can come close to you. To protect your gear whilst in use I find a shower cap is useful. Put over the front of the filters it can stop

spray landing on the lens and filters whilst you finalise your composition. Rain hoods are also available commercially and are relatively low cost.

To make the set up of your camera easier you can use an App which shows you the images at various focal lengths. This can save you getting lenses out of your bag that are not needed. Two good ones are *Alpa eFinder II* or *Magic Canonic Viewfinder*. The *Alpa eFinder II* is a paid for App and you need to purchase data for your camera, the *Magic Canonic Viewfinder* app is free but only covers Canon cameras so you will need to match your camera to the nearest Canon one in order to get the correct field of view.



## **Harris and Lewis**

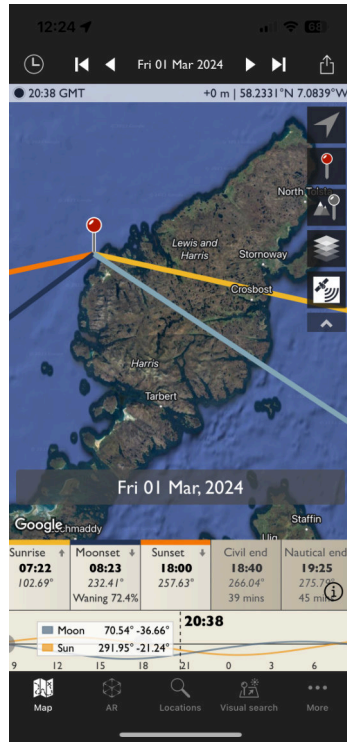
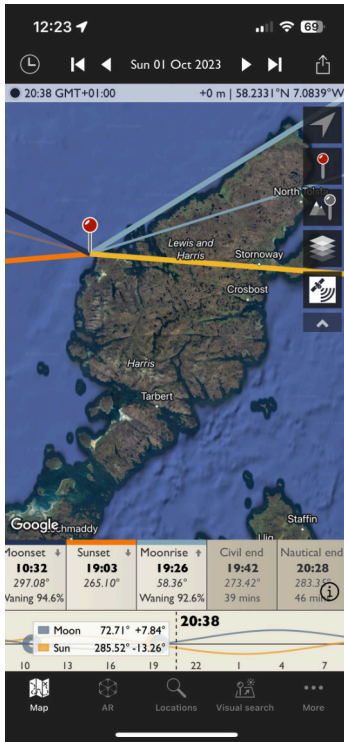
Although the name implies two islands they are in fact one island geographically speaking with a land border between the two "islands" north of Tarbert. The island measures 59 miles north to south and 28 miles across. This is not a vast distance but due to the nature of the road network, much of which is single track, the Butt of Lewis (near Eoropaidh) to Leverburgh is a two hour drive. It is thus best to pick a region and focus on it for the day. This will enable you to spend more time photographing and less time driving.



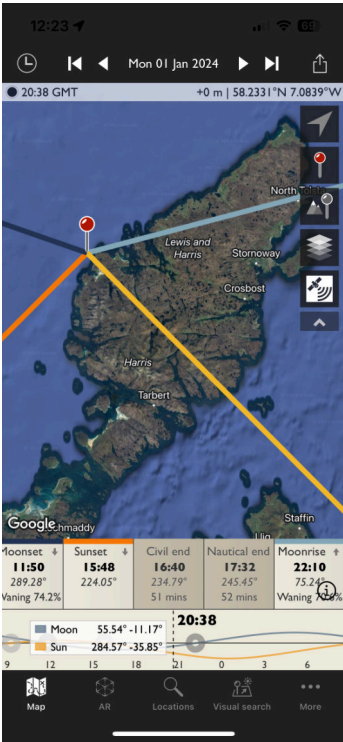
The prevailing winds are from the south-west which is fortunate as it means the lee shore is never very far away. The islands are battered by winter gales (and summer ones) and so it is important to keep an eye on the weather and be prepared to retreat to the safety and comfort of indoors.

## Time of the year to visit

It is often said that if you do not like the weather on Harris and Lewis then wait thirty minutes and it will change. With strong prevailing westerly winds the climate is very changeable. It is a destination that can be photographed at any time of the year but my favourite is to come between October and March. This gives reasonable times for sunrise, lots of variety in the weather and the chance of snow or the Northern Lights.



*Track of sunrise and sunset in October and March - sunrise is yellow and sunset is orange*



*Track of sunrise and sunset in January - sunrise is yellow and sunset in orange*

The above screen shots from the Photographer’s Ephemeris show how the light changes over autumn and winter from almost due east and west for sunrise and sunset in October to much closer to south-easterly and south-westerly direction in mid winter. This will radically alter the composition of your images as well as the position of your shadow in any images with close foreground so it is worth reviewing the direction of the light before venturing out.

## **Location codes**

To help you decide if a location is for you I have graded them in terms of ease of access and photographic potential.

### **Ease of access**

A - a short walk and easily accessible from the parking place

B - a short walk but with some slippery rocks or uneven terrain

C - a longer walk or with a steep descent and/or scramble

### **Photographic potential**


A - lots of variety and you could spend several hours here













B - some nice locations and you will be finished in 1-2 hours

C - not great potential and you will soon be ready to move on







	Rodel	57.74111,-6.96231
	Northton	57.79906,-7.06098
	Scarista	57.82529,-7.04342
	Small Beach	57.83419,-7.02441
	Borve	57.84568,-6.99836
	West Harris Camping	57.85477,-7.00013
	Traigh Iar	57.86035,-6.99163
	Traigh Niosaboist	57.86326,-6.98025
	The Cliff	57.86749,-6.96456
	Traigh Sheileboist	57.86889,-6.95397
	Luskentyre	57.89145,-6.95157
	Golden Road	57.80085,-6.86970

## Rodel Church



Rodel church is located at the southern tip of the Isle of Harris and will be the starting point for our tour of the islands. The church is a skeleton inside and so is best photographically from the exterior. That said in very inclement weather it provides a sanctuary and has some photographic potential. The church is more formally known as St Clement's and is late 15<sup>th</sup> or early 16<sup>th</sup> century. It is built of Lewisian gneiss and stands on a hilltop.

The location on top of a hill gives rise to a variety of photographic options. It can be tackled from within the church grounds getting down low and

giving the church a dominance in the frame. Alternatively the photographer can find a nearby hill and shoot the church set in the landscape.

### ***How to get there***

Parking for the church is located at 57.74111, -6.96231. From the car park, the church can be clearly seen to the south. Walk back along the road and enter the churchyard. For hill top views walk away from the church on the main road and climb the hill on the left.

Photographic potential C

Ease of access A

## Northton Saltings



The Northton saltings are one of the classic views of the Isle of Harris. A series of small grass islands at the end of a salt water lake. The islands provide an interesting foreground with views across the lake towards Toe Head. Compositionally the image is cleaner if you avoid putting the housing of Northton in the frame. With some care most of the buildings can be avoided.

### ***How to get there***

Parking is located at 57.79906, -7.06098. Find a safe place to pull off the road and the grass islands can be seen below you. It is then a case of scrambling



down the bank and working your way across the islands to gain a suitable composition for the foreground.

Photographic potential C

Ease of access B

## Scarista Beach



Scarista beach is located on the western side of Harris and is a fabulous beach for photography. The southern end of the beach sweeps along towards Toe Head and is backed by dunes. The northern end of the beach has a stream coming in which depending on the state of the beach can give rise to a very dramatic foreground. The beach is sandy and therefore prone to change as storms shift vast quantities of sand.

### ***How to get there***

Parking for the southern end of the beach is at 57.81877, - 7.05443. Park on the road side and then walk for 100 yards

along the road in a southerly direction and then turn across the sand towards the sea.

Parking for the northern end of the beach is outside the cemetery at 57.82529, - 7.04342. Walk in a north-easterly direction past the entrance to Scarista House. Then, take the footpath towards the beach just before some houses on the sea side of the road. A five minute walk in a northerly direction will bring you to the stream and the beach.

Photographic potential A

Ease of access A

## **Small Beach or Bagh Steinigidh**

This is a truly amazing location. The beach is only about 100 yards wide yet it incorporates rocks, a sandy beach and inspiring distant views. It is a true microcosm of all that Harris has to offer.

### ***How to get there***

The parking area is at 57.83419, -7.02441 and has hard standing supported by plastic matting. The beach is below you about 10 yards from the car and there is also a picnic table. At the eastern end are rock ledges, a sandy beach in the centre and rock structures on the western side. Good images can be created

from the road above the beach.

Photographic potential A

Ease of access A



## **Borve**

A small beach with a sandy area and lots of rocks. It provides another location as you explore the Harris coast and can easily be combined with Traigh Iar.

### ***How to get there***

Park at 57.84568, -6.99836.  
Find a safe place to pull off the road and then walk down onto the beach following the river. You can explore the sandy beach and the headland area.

Photographic potential B

Ease of access B





## **West Harris Trust camping spot**

This is a small pullout alongside the road which gives access to a rocky headland. Be careful in high winds as the waves break high over the headland and can soak you. To the north is a rock window giving views up to Taransay and the Harris hills. To the south are rock pools giving views to Toe Head.



The rocks are slippery and the fall to the ocean is several yards so care needs to be taken at this location.



### ***How to get there***

This is easily accessed from the A859 and parking is at 57.85477, -7.00013. The pullout has hard standing and a bin. The surface is very poor so be careful if you have a car with low ground clearance. After parking simply walk out towards the headland. The rock window is on your right.

Photographic potential A

Ease of access B

## Traigh Iar or Nisabost



Be careful of the names here as it is easy to confuse this beach with the next one north which is Niosaboist. Very strong riptides have been reported at the beach so be very careful especially with an onshore wind and big waves.

The beach is sandy with rock structures at either end. The structure at the northern end of the beach makes for an excellent foreground with views over to Toe Head. There is also a standing stone for the McCleod's at the northern end of the beach.

The rocks at the southern end also have good structure and give rise to interesting foregrounds.

### ***How to get there***

Find a marked parking spot close to 57.86035, -6.99163. From here you simply walk down onto the beach.



Photographic potential B

Ease of access A



## **Traigh Niosaboist at Horgabost campsite**

This beach has great views north towards Taransay and the north Harris hills. Due to some streams entering the beach it is also a great place to shoot sand patterns or to use the flow of water as an element in the foreground. The beach is well sheltered in a south-westerly and so has potential during inclement weather. In winter the sun sets behind you so there is the possibility of light on the distant hills.

### ***How to get there***

From the A859 turn towards the parking area and toilets at 57.86326, -6.98025. From here it is a short walk northwards towards the beach. The main



stream is on your left and the sand patterns, if present, will be at the far end of the beach. These are only visible at low tide.

Photographic potential B

Ease of access A



## **The Cliff (Murray's viewpoint on google maps)**

I have been unable to ascertain the origin of Murray's view point and which Murray it was named after. Local knowledge suggests it is a made up name and that locally it is known as The Cliff.

The view across Luskentyre estuary is really beautiful and sets out the topography of the island giving a sense of scale. The sand is only visible at low tide.

### ***How to get there***

This is a drive by location in the literal sense. Pull into the lay-by at 57.86749, -6.96456 and the view unfolds below you. This is

next to a Seilebost sign.

Photographic potential C

Ease of access A



## **Traigh Seilebost**

This contains some amazing geology with slabs of hard packed sand visible at low tide. The gentle slope of the beach allows these to be used as underwater foregrounds. The beach is backed by high dunes which give many opportunities for different perspectives as well as use of the movement of the marram grasses to give a unique type of foreground.

This beach works at all states of the tide but if you want the sand structures then a visit at low tide is necessary.

If you walk away from the beach the view of the saltings contain some grass islands which can make a good subject for abstract style photographs.

### ***How to get there***

Turn off the A859 in the direction of the school and parking will be found at 57.86889, -6.95397. The school is no longer in use so you can park at anytime. From the school head towards the sea across the dunes. Heading north-east will get you to a low point in the dunes to access the

beach. The sand structures will be found in the middle of the beach.

Photographic potential A

Ease of access A





*Seilebost dunes*

## Luskentyre

The first thing to clear up here is the naming. Amongst most photographers Luskentyre refers to the whole area north of the river Luskentyre although strictly speaking it is only the actual river estuary and the beach at the mouth is Rosamol. I have followed the photographic convention and stuck with one name.

The beach at Luskentyre is one of the most beautiful in the UK and a regular feature in polls of 'Top 10 Beaches'. The estuary provides a lot of photographic interest especially at low tide. The dunes give great views to Taransay and the Harris hills.

### ***How to get there.***

From the A859 pull off onto the road to Luskentyre. After just over a mile you will find some matting on the side of the road. Park here and use this as a base to shoot the estuary. Coordinates are 57.87775, - 6.92971. Going further along the road you will come to a cemetery. If it is not in use for a service you can park outside and walk across the dunes to

the beach. The cemetery will be found at 57.88487, -6.94622.

Continue along until you reach a dead end and park by the toilet block at 57.89145, - 6.95157. From here follow the stream to the beach. This is the best location of the three. At the beach you have the choice of using the stream as a foreground or exploring the dunes.

Photographic potential A

Ease of access A









*Views of Luskentyre on this page and previous*

## The Golden Road

The Golden Road takes you down the eastern side of south Harris with views over the Little Minch and to the mainland. This is an area where you can explore and just stop where the fancy takes you. There are numerous lochans on the western side of the road and sea views and little creeks all the way along. The sea views are better at high tide as the foreshore has a lot of seaweed which tends to give a large expanse of black in your images.

A popular location is around the old post office at Manais. Here you will find many



derelict structures as well as the old post office recognisable by its tin roof.

### ***How to get there***

Park at 57.80085, -6.86970 and carefully descend from the road to find a view point.

Photographic potential A

Ease of access C




*Images of lochans from the golden road on next page.*














# North Harris





	Eagle Observatory	57.95099,-6.90291
	Huisinish	57.99564,-7.09197
	Scaladale	57.98908,-6.76853
	Orasaigh	58.01852,-6.46947
	Cromor	58.10400,-6.41525
	Gerraidh Bhaird	58.09033,-6.47554
	Marbhig	58.08645,-6.38705
	Loch an Daimh	58.07786,-6.41354
	Scalpay	57.85945,-6.66737

## **Huisinish**

Huisinish refers to the village at the end of this single track road. For the purposes of this guide we will take it to mean the whole road and find locations on the way. There are two main areas of interest - the track up to the eagle observatory and the village itself.

The eagle observatory is about one mile up a track which has a river running alongside it and provides views of the river and surrounding hills. Just beyond the observatory is a lake with views to the hills. The observatory is open all the time and has a log book of eagle sightings.

At the end of the road you reach Huisinish village and there is a car park and toilet block. There are two photographic options here. The beach directly below the car park is sandy and good to shoot at any state of the tide. The beach on the north shore which is rocky and best shot mid to high tide.

## ***How to get there***

Take the B887 just north of Tarbert. This is a 12 mile twisty drive. First stop is the observatory car park at 57.95099, -6.90291. Park here and take the track north signed to the observatory where you will find photographic opportunities on the way. The other stop is the car park at Huisinish at 57.99564, -7.09197. Park here and drop directly to access the southern beach. For the north facing beach turn right out of the car park and at the next junction take the sandy track on your right. A short walk will bring you to the jetty and the beach.

Photographic potential A

Ease of access Observatory B, Huisinish A







*View from the observatory track above and from the beaches below*



## **Scaladale and Loch Seafort**

This is a great dawn location. As the sun rises it illuminates the mountains. The river running down from the mountains to the loch provides a great deal of big vista and intimate landscape possibilities. The horseshoe of mountains gives a real feel of being in the Harris hills despite the proximity to the road. On the other side of the road the river tumbles down to the loch beyond and provides an alternative viewpoint. The river runs south-west to north-east therefore in winter there is always something to shoot.



## ***How to get there***

This could not be easier to access. Leaving Tarbert on the A859 towards Stornaway descend to the valley floor and park on the roadside at 57.98908, -6.76853 just after crossing the Scaladale river. Walk back to the river and cross via the disused bridge or descend to the river from the side where you have parked. To shoot down to the Loch cross the main road and work your way along either side of the river.

Photographic potential B

Ease of access A



## Orasaigh

Orasaigh provides a mixture of derelict building and coastal views out to The Shiants. The Shiants were immortalised in Adam Nicolson's book "Sea Room". This is well worth a read if you have an interest in the history and geography of the area.

This is an area best tackled at high tide to give the best chance of capturing all the location has to offer as some of the foreshore is a bit bleak at low tide due to dense seaweed.



### ***How to get there***

From the A859 turn on to the B8060 and drive towards

Orasaigh. Park considerably by the cattle grid at 58.01852, - 6.46947. Either walk down to the headland below in a south-easterly direction taking care to avoid the immediate area surrounding the house or alternatively walk back towards the village and shoot from the hill overlooking the foreshore.



Photographic potential C

Ease of access A

## Locations off the B8060

There are a number of locations off the B8060 as you drive to Orinsay which can provide some interest in terms of intimate landscape studies and abstracts of fishing paraphernalia.

**Cromor** 58.10400, -6.41525 and **Marbhig** 58.08645, -6.38705 are small coastal settlements with some derelict buildings. **Calbost** 58.06674, -6.38468 has a small lochan with views to the sea and some derelict structures. **Loch an Daimh** 58.07786, -6.41354 provides reed beds with a variety of opportunities for intimate landscapes.

None of these locations merit a trip in their own right in my experience but they can provide a welcome distraction or specific subject material as detailed above.

Photographic potential C

Ease of access A

## Gerraidh Bhaird

This is a drive by spot on the way to Orinsay. It does not have huge potential but gives another interesting diversion. There are some moored boats and fishing paraphernalia which make for an interesting small abstract study. The highlight of the visit is a derelict yacht which can either be shot in its surroundings or used as a source of abstracts.



### *How to get there*

Take the B8060 and turn into Gerraidh Bhaird towards the jetty. There is parking at



58.09033, -6.47554 and the yacht will be found in the creek.

Photographic potential C

Ease of access A

### **Scalpay**

Scalpay lighthouse is one of the iconic landscapes of the Outer Hebrides with the red and white lighthouse contrasting against dramatic skies. The location is accessed by a walk of about one mile and is only worth doing at high tide with some cloud detail. Shots are possible from a distance or close up around the bay of the lighthouse.

### ***How to get there***

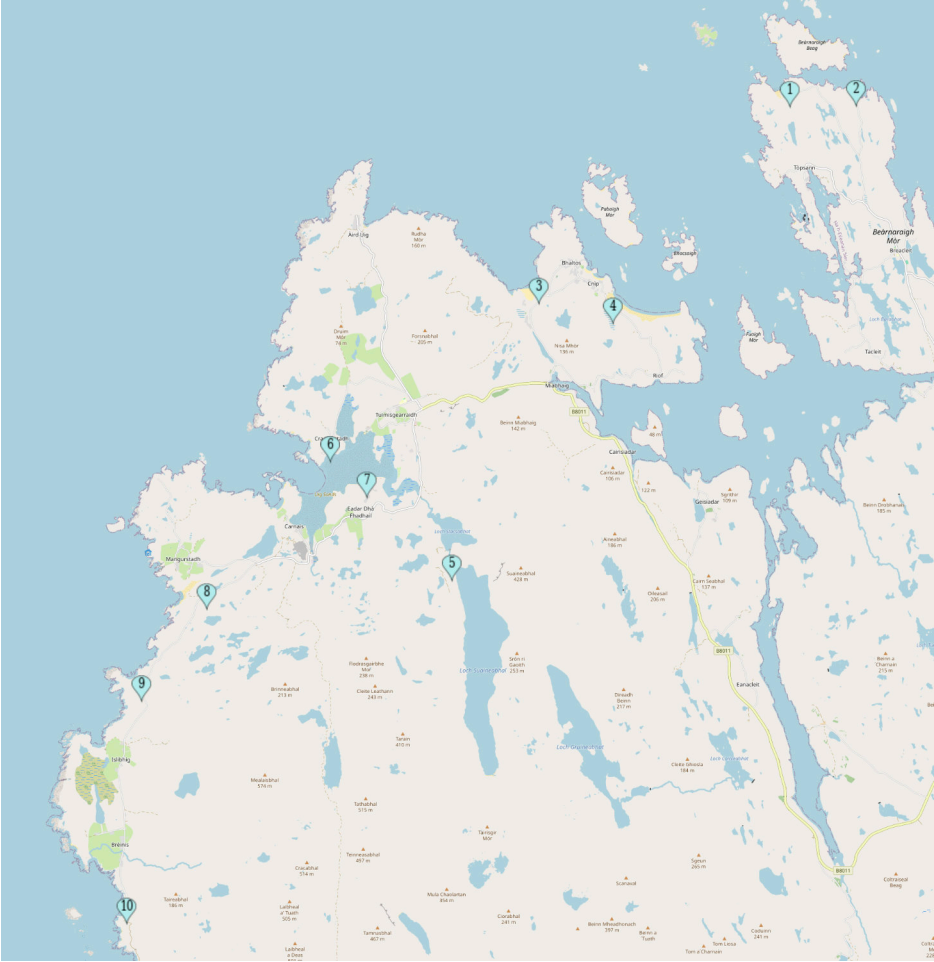
Take the road out of Tarbert towards Scalpay and park at Outend car park near Kennavay at 57.85945, -6.66737. Walk up the hill for a few yards and the track to the lighthouse is sign-posted to the left. The track is easy for the first part and then goes over slightly rougher ground. It is about a 20 minute walk.

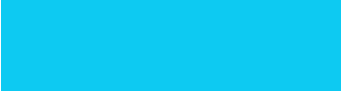
Photographic potential C











Ease of access C



# South West Lewis





	Bostadh	58.25606,-6.87881
	Crothair	58.25627,-6.85581
	Cliobh	58.22013,-6.96615
	Traigh na Beirigh	58.21640,-6.94021
	Loch Suaineabhal	58.16936,-6.99609
	Traigh Uige (north)	58.19107,-7.03841
	Traigh Uige (east)	58.18458,-7.02574
	Traigh Mhangarstaidh	58.16422,-7.08139
	View of the stacks	58.14729,-7.10395
	Mealasta	58.10660,-7.10904

## **Bearnaraigh**

Bearnaraigh is an island off the coast of Lewis separated by a short bridge. The only trans-Atlantic bridge in the world!!

The island is five miles long and has a couple of worthwhile locations at the northern end. These are close together and can be easily combined in one trip. The beaches here are rugged and rocky and best visited at mid to high tide.

## **Bostadh**

This beach provides a mixture of sandy foreshore and rocky structures and can be tackled at any state of the tide. It has the added attraction of the Bosta bell, a sculpture installed in June 2010 as part of a series of 12 around the UK. The bell rings when the tide rises and the waves cause the clapper to



strike the bell. It was designed by Marcus Vergette who is a sculptor and musician.

## ***How to get there***

Park at 58.25606, -6.87881 and walk from the car park northwards towards the beach along the track by the cemetery. There are often Highland cattle around here so take care. They provide a nice subject. If the tide is low you can go around the headland in a westerly direction to a sandy beach with a river at the western edge. The beach looks out towards Little Bearnaraigh and several other islands.

Photographic potential B

Ease of access A

## **Crothair**

Crothair is a very small settlement with a lovely rocky cove at the end. It gives the opportunity for wide vista or intimate landscapes. Due to the rocky nature of the shoreline it is best tackled towards high tide.

## ***How to get there***

From Bostadh retrace your steps for a couple of miles and then turn left towards Crothair. Park at 58.25627, -6.85581 and the beach is directly in front of you. Go through the gate and explore the land either side of the cove. Walking out along the western side gives the opportunity to find some lovely rocks to use as foreground anchors.



Photographic potential B

Ease of access A

## **Cliobh**

Cliobh translates to cliff in English which is appropriate as the beach has a high cliff to the side. The geography of the beach means that there are often high roller waves coming ashore. This beach faces north-west and so can offer shelter in a southerly wind. It is backed with sand dunes and has a river on the easterly side giving plenty of material. The beach can be sandy or rocky depending on winter storms and this is not predictable.



It is not uncommon for beaches in this area to lose or gain vast quantities of sand after a storm. At the time of writing it is all sandy.

## ***How to get there***

From the B8011 turn off towards Cliobh and take a left at the junction. Park at 58.22013, -6.96615. The beach is below you and can be accessed via the dunes.

Photographic potential B

Ease of access B

## **Traigh na Beirigh**

A long sweeping expanse of sandy beach backed by dunes with a river and sand structures



make this a very versatile location. The western end gives views over to the island of Pabaigh Mor and the eastern end has a lovely sweep of sand

and dunes. The shallow shelving of the beach means the sea colour is a beautiful blue most often associated with the Caribbean.

***How to get there***

From Cliobh carry on round the island in a clockwise direction. Parking is at 58.21640, -6.94021. From here it is a short walk to the beach.

Photographic potential B

Ease of access A

**Loch Suaineabhal** (*Photo below*)

This narrow loch surrounded by dramatic hills provides a welcome break from the coastal locations. There is a small



fishing hut which can provide a muse for those wishing to shoot man-made structures in the natural landscape.

***How to get there***

From the B8011 drive to 58.16936, -6.99609 and park. The loch is in front of you and as there is not a very well made path, just work your way carefully along the rocky shore. The shore of either the western or eastern side is productive but if you are pushed for time focus on walking up the eastern shore.

Photographic potential B

Ease of access B

**Traigh Uige**

This vast expanse of sand can be photographed from the northern side or the eastern side giving the opportunity to change location depending on the light and the wind. The northern side provides views over marsh and farmland whereas the eastern side facilitates easier access to the beach and some individual rocks.



## ***How to get there***

From the end of the B8011 turn right for the northern viewpoint and left for the eastern one. The parking for the northern viewpoint is at 58.19107, -7.03841 and for the eastern viewpoint is at 58.18458, -7.02574. The eastern viewpoint parking is in the campsite car park and from there it is a short walk over the dunes to Ardroll beach.

Photographic potential B

Ease of access A



## **Traigh Mhangarstaidh**

This beach is very small in comparison with Traigh Uige but this in no way diminishes its photographic interest. The beach itself has dramatic high cliffs but perhaps a better viewpoint is obtained by heading down the track from the parking spot and then going south along the top of the cliff to look northwards onto the beach and cliffs. Facing in a southerly direction allows images of rock stacks, to be captured.

## ***How to get there***

Park at 58.16422, -7.08139 and head down the track, the beach is below you and to the right. For better viewpoints, head south-west across the cliffs to a headland that faces the Mangesta cliff with the beach in the distance on your right. Shooting in a northerly direction from the headland or descending to the pebble beach on the south side will give the potential for great images.

Photographic potential A

Ease of access C





*Mhangarstaidh images taken to the north (above)*



*Image of the Witch's Hat looking southwards*

## **View of the stacks**

This is a bit of a one shot wonder location since coastal erosion made the path to the beach very precarious. Nevertheless, the location gives a superb view of the sea stacks of Lewis and it is a very inspiring view. It can be very windy on the headland so take care to secure your tripod.

to get views of the stacks. This location works best at high tide as the stacks have their bases covered and thus there is less overlap. It is not necessary to go far on the headland of Aird Feinis as further out the stacks blend in with the cliffs and each other.

Photographic potential C

Ease of access A



## ***How to get there***

Park at 58.14729, -7.10395. You will need to find a dry(ish) piece of ground and pull off the road as there is no pull out close by. Ensure your car is not blocking anyone and then head westwards out on the headland

## **Mealasta**

Almost at the end of the southwest coast road of Lewis is Mealasta. It is a spread out settlement with few houses. The road runs along the beach and from here there are excellent views to the north, west and south and this is a place where you can easily spend several hours. The beach needs mid to high tide for best results but apart from that constraint it is a very versatile location.

## ***How to get there***

Park at 58.10660, -7.10904. The sandy beach is to the north and the pebbled beach is to the south. You can easily walk round to either end of the beach and explore the headlands.

Photographic potential A

Ease of access A

Continuing south on the road will get you to other nice coves before the road ends, where there is an interesting bay and stream.






















*Images taken at Mealasta  
(above and previous page)*





	Callanish	58.19539,-6.74413
	Callanish II	58.19549, -6.72908
	Dalmore	58.30495,-6.75242
	Dalbeg	58.31315,-6.73570
	Stac a Phris	58.31564, -6.70865
	Shawbost	58.33076,-6.69409
	Loch Urghag	58.34368,-6.57529
	Eorpie	58.50036,-6.26236
	Butt of Lewis	58.51523,-6.26044
	Port Nis	58.49238,-6.23014
	Traigh Ghearadha	58.36791,-6.22136
	New Tolsta Beach	58.36117,-6.21595



## Callanish Stones

Probably one of the most famous locations on the islands and certainly a great photographic location. The stones are neolithic and made from Lewisian Gneiss. This stone has a layered structure which lends itself to close up shots as there are fascinating shapes and details. For a more pictorial shot concentrate on a few stones and be wary of the background. In some directions you will end up with housing in the background. This can detract from the remote feel of the stones. There are further circles of stones close by and Callanish II is worthy of a visit though it is not as large as the main Callanish stones

### ***How to get there***

The main visitor centre is well sign posted off the A858 at Calanais and is located at 58.19539, -6.74413. The second circle is located close by with parking off the A858 at 58.19549, -6.72908.

Photographic potential B

Ease of access A



## Dalmore

This is an easily accessed beach with a small stream flowing onto it and big boulders which make a great foreground subject. The beach is harder to walk on the further north you go and the quantity of boulders on the beach depends on the amount of sand removed or deposited by storms. At the northern end of the beach is a stack which makes a good subject with waves breaking against it.

***How to get there***

The beach is well sign-posted off the A858 and there is a toilet and car park. The car park is for the cemetery so please be respectful if it is in use. The car park is located at 58.30495, -6.75242.

Photographic potential A

Ease of access A



## Dalbeg

This is another easily accessed beach with a stream flowing onto it. The beach is more like a cove with cliffs on both sides and much more sand than Dalmore. It is good to photograph at mid to high tide.

A short walk in a southerly direction will bring you to the next bay and this has a bouldered foreshore and good opportunities to photograph waves breaking on the rocky headland.

### *How to get there*

The beach is well sign-posted off the A858. Parking is located at 58.31315, -6.73570

Photographic potential B

Ease of access A



## Natural Arch - Stac a'Phris

The stack is a great geological feature and well worth exploring. It is best at high tide around sunset. The shoot involves a walk over rough ground. The arch is shot from a high exposed location so care is needed in accessing this location.

### *How to get there*

Park at 58.31564, -6.70865, this is the car park for the Norse mill and kiln. Take the track out of the car park towards Loch na Muilne. When the loch comes into view strike out across the heather along the left hand side of it. At the far end of the loch follow the stream on your left up hill towards the coast. Once you are close to the coast, walk in a south-westerly direction and the stack will come into view. To get back to your car head towards the turbine by the car park.

Photographic potential B

Ease of access C



## Shawbost

There are two locations close by here. The first is a rocky foreshore with views south towards high cliffs. The second is along the shore of the loch which has a mixture of sand and rocky foreshore.

### ***How to get there***

The sea loch can be accessed from 58.33076, -6.69409. Park here and walk in an easterly direction along the foreshore. To access the rocky headland walk north along the fence.

Photographic potential B

Ease of access C



### **Loch Urhag**

This is a "one shot" location but its proximity to the A858 makes it a worthwhile drive by location. There are some stones on the foreshore but the location works best on a still

day with an interesting sky.

### ***How to get there***

Pull off the A858 north-west of Arnol at 58.34368, -6.57529 and the loch is directly south of the road.

Photographic potential C

Ease of access A



## Eoropie

This is a fantastic beach location with great sand dunes, a rocky headland and Cunndal beach is a short distance to the north. At the southern end of Eoropie are bare sand dunes which are constantly sculptured by the wind. These can be shot in colour or black and white. At low tide shots from the beach



picking out the sculptured shapes are possible.

Moving further north along the sandy shore shots towards the headland or with the dunes are a possibility.

Crossing the stream at the northern end of the beach leads to Cunndal which is a fabulous cove with cliffs on each side. The descent is via a short zig zag path which requires care and your full attention. The beach floods at high tide so it is best photographed on a falling tide.

***How to get there***

The beach is located just off the A858 with parking at 58.50036, -6.26236. From the car park head west along the dunes following the fence line. The dunes will be to your left once on the beach and Cunndal beach across the headland to your right.

Photographic potential A

Ease of access A (Cunndal beach B)



*Images from Eoropie beach*



## **Butt of Lewis**

This is the northerly-most point of the islands and is topped by the iconic brick coloured lighthouse. The lighthouse was built in 1862 and originally manned by three keepers. It is now controlled automatically from Edinburgh. The lighthouse photographs well in stormy weather with a dramatic sky. There are plenty of rocky inlets and cliff structures to keep you entertained.

### ***How to get there***

From Port Nis take the B8014 and follow the signs to the lighthouse. Park at 58.51523, -6.26044 and the lighthouse will be north of the car park. You really cannot miss it!

Photographic potential B

Ease of access A



## **Port Nis/Ness**

This location is easily combined with a visit to the Butt of Lewis lighthouse. The harbour is not particularly photogenic but the beach is long and sandy with some nice rocks at mid tide and views across the Minch. This is a good location to shelter from a south-westerly wind.

### ***How to get there***

Park in Port Nis on the A858 at 58.49238, -6.23014 in a suitable location ensuring your vehicle does not block any access. Walk along to the northern end of the A858 and descend to the harbour and the beach.

Photographic potential C

Ease of access A



## Traigh Ghearadha and New Tolsta beach

Two locations in close proximity which are great for sunrise. Traigh Ghearadha has stacks, a river flowing in and rocky headlands at each end. This coupled with high cliffs make it the one to choose if time is short.

New Tolsta is a sandy beach backed by dunes with a small river flowing in at the northern end. It is a good place to explore particularly if you like intimate landscapes.

### ***How to get there***

Take the B895 from Stornoway and drive to the end parking on the rough ground. Traigh Ghearadha is in front of you. Parking is at 58.36791, -6.22136. For New Tolsta beach retrace your steps and turn off the road to your left after about one mile. You will see the beach below you from the road. Park at 58.36117, -6.21595.

Photographic potential A

Ease of access A




## Location Summary

<b>Harris and Lewis Locations</b>	<b>Latitude</b>	<b>Longitude</b>	<b>Postcode</b>
Rodel Church	57.741111	-6.96231	HS5 3TW
Northton Saltings	57.79906	-7.06098	HS3 3JA
Scarista Beach	57.82529	7.04342	HS3 3HX
Small Beach	57.83419	-7.02441	HS3 3HX
Traigh Mhor	57.83684	-7.01222	HS3 3HX
Borve	57.84568	-6.99836	HS3 3HT
West Harris Trust Camping	57.85477	-7.00013	HS3 3AE
Traigh Iar	57.86035	-6.99163	HS3 3AE
Traigh Niosaboist	57.86326	-6.98025	HS3 3HR
Murray's Viewpoint	57.86749	-6.96456	HS3 3HP
Traigh Seilebost	57.86889	-6.95397	HS3 3HP
Luskentyre	57.89145	-6.95157	HS3 3HL
Golden Road	57.80085	-6.86970	HS3 3EZ
Huisinish	57.99564	-7.09197	HS3 3AX
Scaladale	57.98908	-6.76853	HS3 3AB
Orasaigh	58.01852	-6.46947	HS2 9RG
Cromor	58.10400	-6.41525	HS2 9QH
Marbhigh	58.08645	-6.38705	HS2 9QP
Calbost	58.06674	-6.38468	HS2 9QR
Loch an Daimh	58.07786	-6.41354	HS2 9LQ
Gerraidh Bhaird	58.09033	-6.47554	HS2 9QD
Scalpay	57.85945	-6.66737	HS4 3YH
Bostadh	58.25606	-6.87881	HS2 9LZ
Crothair	58.25627	-6.85581	HS2 0SP
Cliobh	58.22013	-6.96615	HS2 9HP
Traigh na Beirigh	58.21640	-6.94021	HS2 9HS
Loch Suaineabhal	58.16936	-6.99609	HS2 9EU
Traigh Uige - Ardoil	58.18458	-7.02574	HS2 9EU
Traigh Mhangarstaidh	58.16422	-7.08139	HS2 9EY
View of the stacks	58.14729	-7.10395	HS2 9HB
Mealasta	58.10660	-7.10904	HS2 9HB

Photographic potential	Ease of access
C	A
C	B
A	A
A	A
B	A
B	B
A	B
B	A
B	A
C	A
A	A
A	A
A	C
A	A
B	A
C	A
C	A
C	A
C	A
C	A
C	A
C	C
B	A
B	A
B	B
B	A
B	B
B	B
A	C
C	A
A	A

<b>Harris and Lewis Locations</b>	<b>Latitude</b>	<b>Longitude</b>	<b>Postcode</b>
Callanish stones	58.1959	-6.74413	HS2 9DY
Dalmore	58.30495	-6.75242	HS2 9AD
Dalbeg	58.31315	-6.73570	HS2 9AE
Natural arch	58.31564	-6.70865	HS2 9BJ
Shawbost	58.33056	-6.70909	HS2 9BJ
Loch Urghag	58.34368	-6.57529	HS2 9DB
Eoropie	58.50036	-6.26236	HS2 0XH
Butt of Lewis	58.51523	-6.26044	HS2 0XH
Port Nis	58.49238	-6.23014	HS2 0XA
Traigh Ghearadha	58.36791	-6.22136	HS2 0NN
New Tolsta Beach	58.36117	-6.21595	HS2 0NN



<b>Photographic potential</b>	<b>Ease of access</b>
B	A
A	A
B	A
B	C
A	B
C	A
A	A
B	A
C	A
A	A
A	A



## **Notes**









## About the author



Richard Ellis is an enthusiastic amateur photographer based in Ascot, Berkshire. His main interest is landscape photography and he has a passion for coastal and island locations.

His work has featured in exhibitions throughout the UK (Edinburgh, York, London, Bristol and Windsor) as well as in Croatia at Foto Klub Split. He was a contributing author to the 2023 European-Chinese Photographic Art book.

Richard is an Associate of the Royal Photographic Society and a former chair of the RPS Landscape Group.

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