

FOOD AND
PHOTOGRAPHY
RETREATS

with the Bennies



Rural Burgundy

25th September-2nd October

2021. 7 nights. £2200.



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THE RETREAT

FOOD AND PHOTOGRAPHY RETREATS are for people who enjoy a house-party style of holiday in a lovely setting where they can immerse themselves totally in photography, mix with like-minded guests—and eat very well too. We're free of the restrictions of hotels and work mealtimes around photography, rather than vice-versa. If you're weary of being herded from one "photo-opportunity" to another and want the time and space to make your own work, then our Retreats are for you.

This seven day Retreat is based in the tiny village of Saint Seine in the southern Burgundy, just a kilometre from our home. This is a rolling, traditional landscape of small fields and dense hedgerows, scattered orange-tiled buildings and winding green lanes, a landscape that has largely disappeared in western Europe. A wander down any of the lanes feels like a step back in time. Whether your interest is in macro photography or the landscape, details of old buildings or night-time photography, our close knowledge of this area will make sure we get you to the best place at the best time. But we also make plenty of time to look at and discuss your work, encourage you to lose yourself in our impressive library of photography books and help you to find ways to expand your creative practice after the Retreat is over. If you would like to come with someone who is not a photographer, but is a "foodie", then Charlotte will arrange a programme of tuition and market visits for them to enjoy.



WHAT'S ON OFFER

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED in learning one of the [particular skills](#) Niall is known for, take an eLearning class before the Retreat and have a chance to practise what you've learned in the field with him. During the Retreat, Niall will suggest and demonstrate edits on some of your photographs. Subjects we can work with include:

- Old buildings in local villages;
- Hardwood forests in early autumn, possibly with fog;
- Rolling landscape with hedgerows and large isolated trees ideal for light painting;
- Big night skies with negligible light pollution;
- Grasshoppers and other insects, late flowers, hedgerow berries;
- "Local characters" in the landscape;
- A day-visit to the UNESCO World Heritage site of the Hospice de Beaune and nearby vineyards.
- And for those interested, food styling and lighting.



BURGUNDY

THE HISTORICAL REALM of the Dukes of Burgundy is now part of a much larger administrative area in central France, a diverse region that encompasses some of France's most celebrated vineyards, traditional *bocage* landscapes, France's third city, Dijon, and the Morvan Natural Regional Park. We are located in the Nièvre department whose historical backwardness has allowed the preservation of extensive forests, small hedged fields—*bocage*—and plentiful wildlife. In the adjacent Park, the hills rise a little higher, the forest is denser and the population even sparser. The huge range of butterflies, amphibians and birds is a testament to the

low levels of agro-chemicals in the environment here. The landscape may lack the obvious drama of the Alps or the Pyrenees, but is lush and attractive with a powerful sense of nostalgia. It prompts a more introspective approach to your work, where you can craft your own unique images, compared to more obvious, "over-exposed" locations.

The climate is very agreeable, with autumn temperatures typically in the upper teens (often higher) with mist in the valleys when a cool night is followed by a sunny morning. A lifetime of working in Scotland and other northerly places means that I have a wealth of ideas and techniques to bring into play if the weather is against us.

We have found the country people very similar to those we knew from back in Scotland; initially sometimes a little guarded, but without any airs and once familiar with you, welcoming and kind...especially when you show some interest in livestock. Be in no doubt; in this region, the cow is king (or queen).



ACCOMMODATION AND MEALS

YOUR ACCOMMODATION WILL BE in the comfortable *gîte* (holiday home), [Le Domaine des Bresses](#), on the outskirts of Saint Seine, about 1.5



kilometres from our house, Les Saumais. Check out the link to see a gallery of photos. It is secluded, with a fabulous outlook over the rolling countryside below. There is wifi and good mobile reception. We don't make a charge for single occupancy of the rooms and we will be the only people using the property.

Good food is at the heart of our Retreats, from breakfast through to after-dinner chocolates, all made by Charlotte. We take the view that even a good day is made better by the prospect of a lovely meal at the end of it. We eat mainly vegetarian food at home but the range broadens to encompass all tastes on Retreat. Charlotte uses local ingredients, when they are available, in dishes that are delicious and imaginative without being fussy. Food allergies and intolerances are catered for sensitively when notified in advance on the booking form. Expect to eat well, for breakfast, lunch and dinner. And in between times too.

Most of your evening meals will be taken in our *salon* at Les Saumais, or in our garden if the weather is warm enough (which it often is at this time of year). Eating outside in a comfortable temperature is one of the pleasures of being in France and we do so whenever we can. We'll also take you to eat out at the village's restaurant one evening where the Belgian chef will lay on something special for us.

If we're out for an early morning shoot, we can arrange with Charlotte for breakfast to come to us, useful if we're working a little further afield.

While we don't provide wine, there is no shortage of choice in the local stores and we'll make sure you have an opportunity to stock up.





from the kitchen of
Charlotte

— — — — —
Locally-grown heritage tomato salad

— — — — —
Chicken and tarragon served with
hasselback potatoes and Vichy carrots

or

Goat's cheese and fig tartlets (v)

— — — — —
Strawberry tiramisu with Montbazillac

— — — — —
Charlotte's chocolates and tea or coffee



GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE RETREAT

Price: GBP 2200 (2021)

What's included:

- 7 nights' accommodation at Le Domaine des Bresses, Saint Seine;
- All meals;
- Transfer to and from Gare du Creusot TGV, 71210, Écuisses, where the Retreat begins and ends;
- Transportation during the Retreat;
- Printing materials.

What's not included:

- Your travel to and from Gare du Creusot TGV;
- Alcoholic drinks;
- Travel insurance;
- Admission at the Hospice de Beaune.

Where we will go

Most of our photography will be done within a 20 kilometre (12 miles) radius of Saint Seine, much of it a lot closer. There will be a combination of short drives and relatively easy walking, generally of less than two miles, although much longer trails exist. Here the focus is on the rolling landscape in its late-summer hues, lush green lanes and local villages, some prosperous, others decaying;

- Depending on the season, we may run into early colour in the sweet chestnut woodlands in the Morvan hills;
- We will visit a street market where you can photograph vendors and their produce;
- While the grape harvest may be past, we will take you to some good view-points over the vineyards around Beaune—the centre of fine Burgundy wines. The town itself, while popular with tourists, has many photogenic

corners and side streets in which to gather the “raw material” for your creative work. And of course, we will visit the UNESCO World Heritage site at the heart of the town, the magnificent Hospices de Beaune that dates back to the 15th century.

The daily routine

Whatever we are shooting, it tends to look better in the early morning or late afternoon when low angled light shows relief and colours better. With dawn at around 07:30 and dusk 12 hours later, it's not a punishing schedule. Sometimes, we'll eat breakfast in, sometimes Charlotte will bring it to us in the field, depending how far we are from our base on the edge of the village.

The plan for the next day is published at dinner, outlining the weather forecast, the locations and ideas for the next day, drive times, walking distances, where and when

we'll eat and what gear you'll probably need. Experience has taught that it's more productive, and satisfactory for you, to have a plan to follow than make it up as we go along.

We've learned over the years, too, just how much guests value being able to discuss the work they are creating, with Niall and other guests and to this end, we'd urge you to bring a laptop. We use a super-sharp, naturally-coloured 55" Sony Bravia screen for sharing everyone's pictures during these sessions. When we hold processing tutorials, we do so over Zoom, with everyone in the one room. This makes it much easier for Niall to help you as you share your screen with him—and for you to see the techniques he applies in his post-production work. Some evenings, conditions permitting, we'll head back out after dinner to shoot the starry skies.

Safety

We take your safety seriously during our Retreats. At locations with known risks - such as drop-offs, tree-roots, busy roads etc., we will draw your attention to them before we leave the vehicle. Thereafter, you are responsible for your own safety. We provide guests with a hi.-vis.- vest to attach to their camera pack—it makes you, and it, easier to locate. We also issue each guest with a two-way radio in order that we all may keep in touch in town or in other areas where the group scatters. This also makes it easier to access help or guidance from Niall. We do not recommend leaving any equipment in our vehicle when parked in the larger towns. There is only a moderate amount of walking involved so even if you are only averagely fit, you won't find this Retreat too taxing.

COVID

Each guest is required to have completed a course of vaccinations at

least two weeks before the start of the Retreat. Depending on the progression of the pandemic at that time, we may ask you to wear a mask when we are travelling in the vehicle. We will provide hand sanitiser at entry points to our accommodation.

Travel

Our pick up and return point for guests who are not driving is the Gare du Creusot TGV, 71210 Écuisses, about 1 ¼ hours from Saint Seine. Drivers should put "Le Bourg, 58250 Saint-Seine" - the centre of the village, into their sat. nav. and give us a call on arrival there. We'll meet you and take you up to the *gite*. Beware that there are several Saint Seine's in France!

Spending money

You can use your credit card to withdraw €'s in the local towns should you need to buy extra props, pay for admissions - or even to buy wine.

Insurance

It is a requirement of booking that guests provide evidence of personal travel insurance to cover cancellation and curtailment, medical and emergency expenses (including repatriation), personal accident, injury and death in addition to loss of/damage to luggage and possessions, personal possessions and flight cancellations/ delays. We recommend you speak to your travel insurer to determine what COVID-related cover they provide.

Passport and visa requirements
A passport valid for at least six months beyond the length of stay is required. No visa necessary for EEA/ Swiss citizens. UK citizens should check on the latest requirements for travelling to mainland Europe. If you are a British driver, you may need an international driving permit.

Language

The French owner of the *gite* speaks

good English, but it is not so widely spoken in this rural area. Niall and Charlotte can assist you with translation, should you need it.

Climate

The climate here is continental so days can be warm - into the high teens - and nights cool. Regardless of the weather we will be busy, in or outdoors - even if it is wet.

Clothing

Generally we would hope that the weather will be warm and sunny, but in the early morning and in the woods it can be cooler so bring an extra layer. In addition to your normal casual clothes:

- Lightweight trousers;
- Long sleeved shirt/tee-shirt;
- Light wool jumper;
- Lightweight waterproof jacket

and trousers;

- Walking boots in addition to street shoes;
- Sun hat;
- Light-weight warm hat;
- Pair of light gloves;
- Light scarf to protect your neck from the sun;
- Slippers for the gite;
- You might like to pack something a little smarter to wear in the evenings but no tiaras, please.

Photographic equipment

Bring as much of your photographic equipment as practical. You could end up using any of it, although realistically, a wide-angle, a macro lens and mid-range zoom will receive most use.

In addition, you will need:

- A laptop with Lightroom/PS or CaptureOne or Exposure X;
- A tripod: there's no avoiding it!
- A remote release;
- A means of backing up your images, such as a large capacity memory stick;
- A head torch for night work.

We will provide a tube for you to take the print of your favourite photograph home with you.

Partners

We can create an alternative programme for friends, partners or spouses centred on chocolate work and patisserie. The cost is the same for non-photographers as photographers.

About us

After many years leading tours and workshops for other companies in the UK and abroad, we established Food and Photography Retreats in 2018. Our offer combines cultivating your photography in attractive locations with great hospitality, conversation and food. On a number of Retreats, we cooperate with other, renowned, photographers to offer our guests an even fuller experience.

Niall has been a professional photographer, writer designer and guide for 28 years with a massive publication record including six books and hundreds of articles. He has been involved in founding and running several of the biggest outdoor photographic initiatives of the last decade, including **Meet Your Neighbours**, **Wild Wonders of Europe** and **2020VISION** and is widely recognised for the innovative nature of his work and capacity for re-invention.

For 28 years, Charlotte combined a career in the Civil Service with freelance catering and hosting roles before coming to work with husband, Niall. Guests value not only her expertise in the kitchen and dining room but her attention to detail and her warmth. She has a keen eye for a picture too and can also assist with Lightroom processing. She is a trained chocolatiere.

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See you there!