

White sand and turquoise sea.

A WINTER RETREAT TO SCOTLAND'S OUTER HEBRIDES
BASED ON THE ISLE OF HARRIS

15 - 22ND FEBRUARY, 2020

FOOD AND
PHOTOGRAPHY
RETREATS

TM

with the Bennies

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Food and Photography Retreats Ltd.
Niall and Charlotte Benvie 2018

The Retreat

Food and Photography Retreats are for people who enjoy a house-party style holiday in a lovely setting where they can immerse themselves totally in photography - and eat very well too.

The concept of a Photo Retreat is a little different from a tour or workshop. The Retreat has elements of both but the tuition is more structured, the outcomes are more focused and a lot of emphasis is put on creating a relaxing atmosphere in which conversation can flow and ideas emerge.

We know that many photographers who regularly join photo tours are getting weary of shooting the same views in similar ways as everyone else and want to produce something a bit more personal and distinctive. Well, that's what we're all about - as Niall's 26 year track record as a professional photographer and instructor demonstrates. We don't think it's good enough just to say, "we will improve your photography" (which is a bit presumptuous!); we set out here what we will teach you and the skills you will then be able to apply to your photography in future.

To give you the sort of service we would want ourselves, we don't use hotels. We need to occupy a space for a week, make it our own and operate to our own time schedule. So we book out self-catering houses with good, modern facilities - then do the catering for you.



What's on offer

The shell sand beaches and ancient gneiss landscapes of Harris provide photographers with the raw material for their creative work during the Retreat. But there are also old buildings and saltmarshes, Atlantic breakers and dark, dark night skies. We will make a day trip too, to Lewis, for a different sort of coastal experience - and some ancient standing stones.

Our time is divided between the field and studio to take advantage of the best light. Since the days are quite short, we will spend most of the daylight hours in the field then, after dark, gather round our screens to practise new-found production skills and evaluate our work.

During the Retreat, you will learn:

- How to determine the optimal exposure for any given situation, learned in the field;
- Post-production techniques to bring out a particular mood;
- How to create and print Colour Transects;
- How to assemble Chocolate Bar composites.

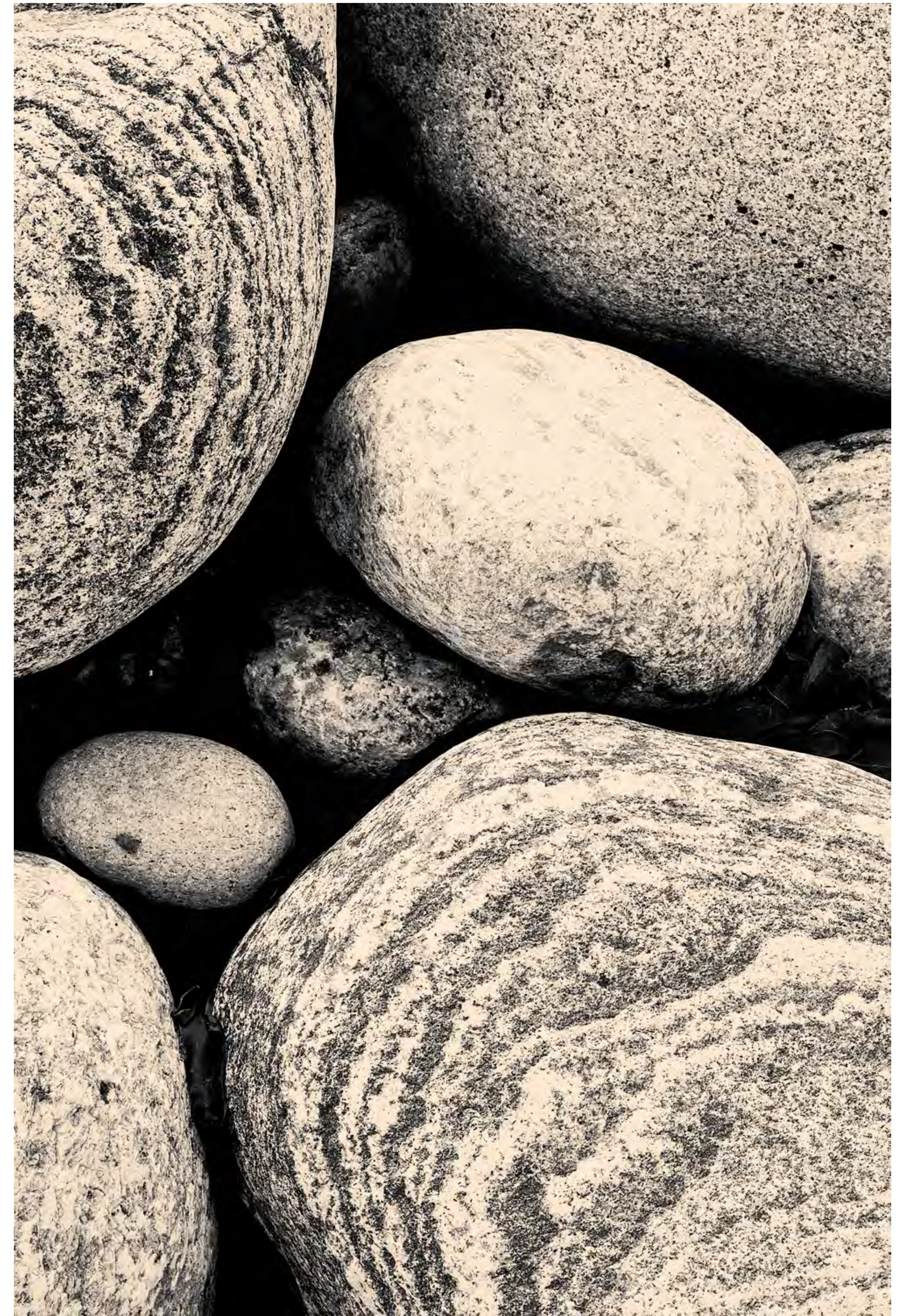
As well as joining us in the field some days and sharing her experience of the area, Charlotte will also be producing lovely meals for you to enjoy throughout your stay. A pre-Retreat diet is suggested!



Skills

Post-production for mood and feeling

The right post-production is essential for projecting the mood you are aiming for in your work and is standard practice in commercial work. So, we'll go beyond simple image development and explore the tools available to create an image more personal to you. It will help if you are already familiar with Lightroom and Photoshop, even at a basic level. You'll also be introduced to AlienSkin Exposure X - arguably the leading software for this kind of work.



Skills

Colour Transects

Niall started to create this style of image in 2017 and they have been widely published since. A “Colour Transect” consists of a photograph and colour swatches presented as a single piece of work. The 27 swatches are sampled from the photograph, sometimes highlighting the diversity of colours in the image, sometimes the variety of different hues of the one colour. The object is to simplify and clarify the image’s colour content for the viewer.

The concept of the transect is borrowed from ecological sampling. A line is defined through a habitat and samples taken or records made at regular intervals along that line. The exercise can be repeated at different times on the same transect to introduce consistency to the sampling process. In a Colour Transect, lines are drawn across the image at the post production stage and colours sampled to create the swatches.

We will also show you how to make prints with a home printer that faithfully represent the characteristics of the original image.



Skills

Chocolate bar composites

These images are all about diversity where people expect there to be uniformity. It's a highly versatile technique that is effective at holding the viewer's attention and encouraging closer examination of the subject, whether natural or man-made. Typically, we work with details we find in harbours as well as lichens, ferns or mosses. Harris is especially rich in corrosion!

We now provide Photoshop templates with accompanying notes to take the pain out of the process for anyone not so familiar with Photoshop, giving you more time to explore your ideas.

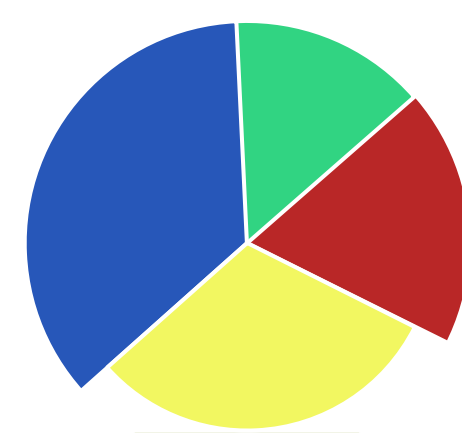
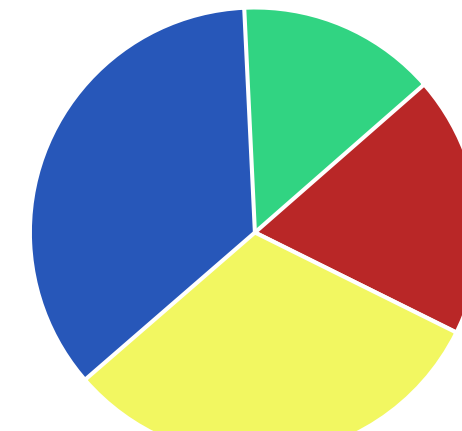
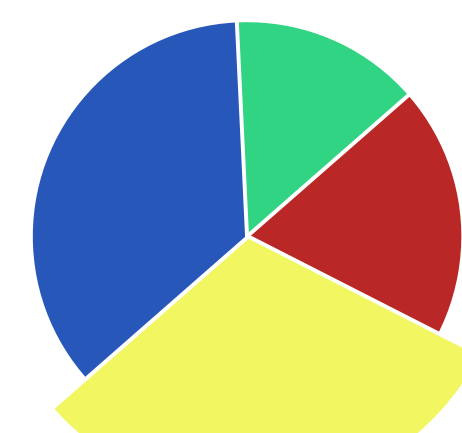


Skills: photography

Optimal exposure

Getting a "good" exposure isn't very difficult but many less experienced photographers struggle to know the best combination of settings in any given circumstances to get an optimal one. Understanding the histogram lets you know if you've captured as much data as you can but knowing how far you can push the ISO, what the action-stopping speeds for different pixel-counts are and which is the best aperture for the look you are trying to achieve, are all vital skills too. You will master exposure with us - through a combination of practice, review and repetition.

EXPOSURE

AVAILABLE LIGHT

ISO DETERMINES HOW SENSITIVE TO LIGHT THE CAMERA'S SENSOR IS.

A HIGHER ISO VALUE (eg 800) MAKES THE SENSOR MORE SENSITIVE THAN A LOWER ONE (eg 100).

THE WIDER THE PIE SLICE, THE HIGHER THE ISO VALUE - AND MORE SENSITIVE THE SENSOR IS MADE.

APERTURE DETERMINES HOW MUCH LIGHT THE LENS LETS THROUGH ON TO THE SENSOR.

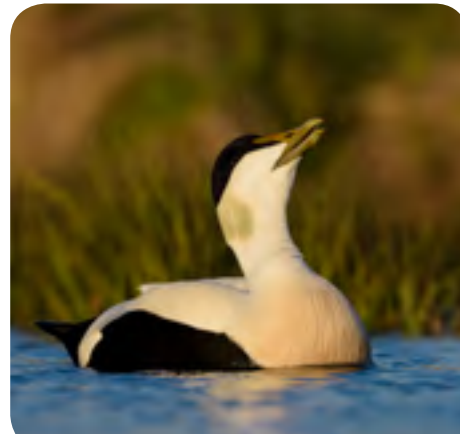
A SMALL NUMBER FOR THE APERTURE VALUE (eg f/2.8) LETS MORE LIGHT THROUGH THAN A HIGH ONE (eg f/16).

THE WIDER THE PIE SLICE, THE SMALLER THE APERTURE NUMBER - THE MORE LIGHT IS ALLOWED THROUGH THE APERTURE.


SHUTTER TIME DETERMINES HOW MUCH LIGHT COMING THROUGH THE APERTURE IS ALLOWED THROUGH THE SHUTTER ON TO THE SENSOR.


A SMALL SHUTTER NUMBER (eg 1/8 sec) ALLOWS MORE LIGHT THROUGH THAN A LARGE ONE (eg 1/250 sec).

THE WIDER THE PIE SLICE, THE SMALLER THE SHUTTER NUMBER - THE LONGER THE SHUTTER IS OPEN.





This picture is too dark - it is under-exposed. The histogram is pushed over to the left. The settings don't fit the amount of light available.






This picture has the best detail in highlights and shadows - it is well exposed. The histogram is evenly distributed. The settings fit the amount of light available.



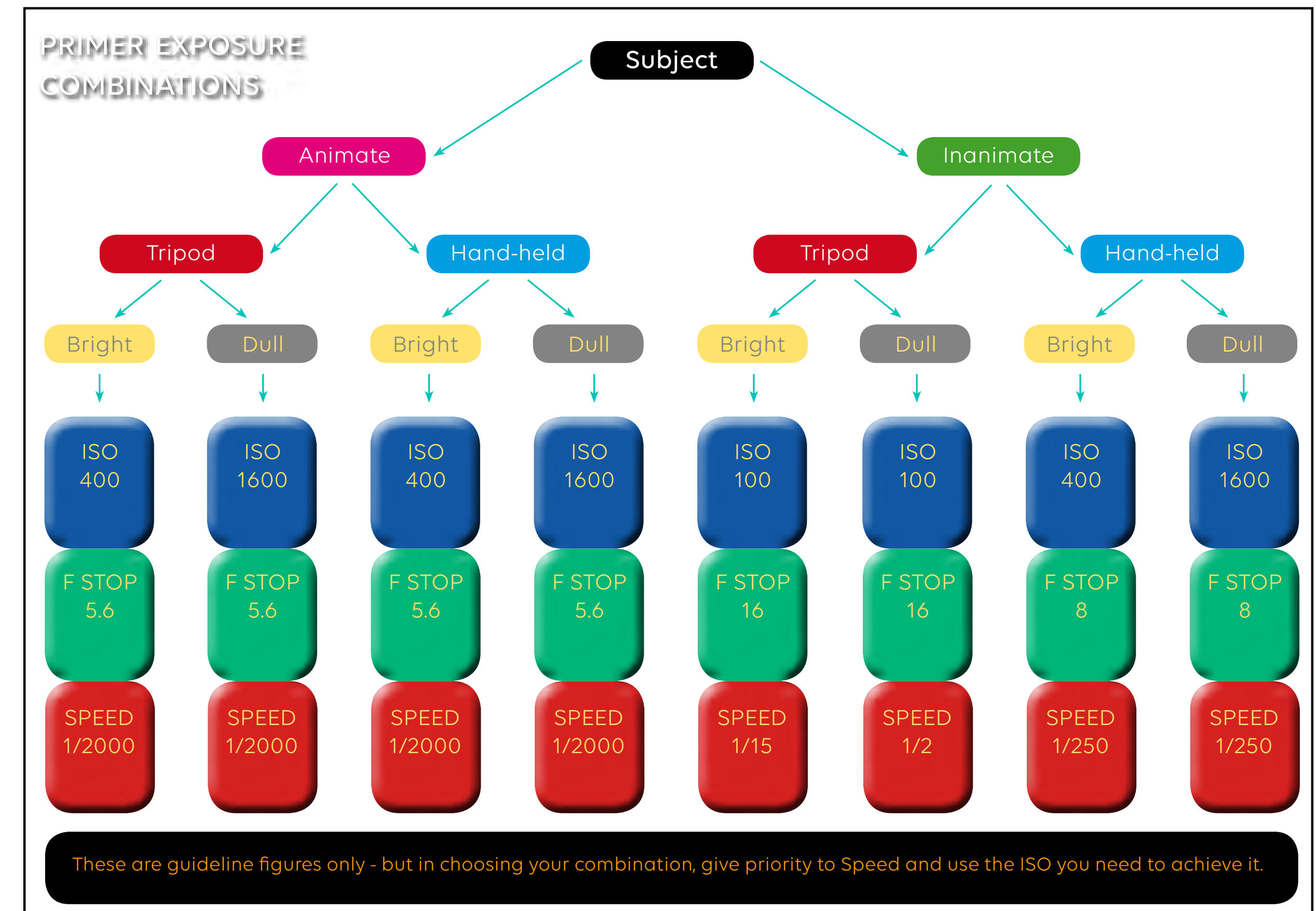


This picture is too light - it is over-exposed. The histogram is pushed too far to the right. The settings don't fit the amount of light available.



Change the angle of any pie slice and it is balanced by those either side of it.

© Niall Benvie 2018



ISLE OF HARRIS

AND OUR VENUE

Harris and its neighbours

The three-billion-year-old Lewisian gneiss that comprises South Harris is some of the most ancient rock in the world, resisting erosion as if its pacing itself for eternity. When they were formed, modern-day Harris and Lewis were part of the North American landmass, Laurentia, and the same rocks comprise the Canadian Shield and parts of Greenland today. It was only when Laurentia began to break up 65 million years ago that this area became isolated, eventually to join up with

today's Scotland. This truly is a land apart, and it feels like it. Away from the beguiling white and turquoise beaches bare rock extends for mile after mile, with the flimsiest cover of vegetation. It is intractable, appalling, yet mesmerising. In spite of this, people have made a mark on these islands, creating ancient monoliths such as Callanish (below) on Lewis and taking whatever meagre bounty the land provides. Evidence of hardship abounds: it is clear that Nature holds the upper hand.



Our venue

We are based at [Tarasaigh House](#) on the Borve Estate for this Retreat, about 52 miles from the airport at Stornoway and 12 miles from the ferry terminal at Tarbert. The house is perfectly situated for quick access to Harris's "star" beaches and overlooks Seilebost. We have sole occupancy of the house during our stay and make it our own. All the bedrooms are en-suite and there is a spacious lounge to hold tutorials and reviews, even once we've set up our 55 inch OLED screen! In this setting, we enjoy the sort of freedom to set our own timetable that is impossible in hotels. There is wifi throughout.

Meals

Good food, prepared by Charlotte, is at the heart of our Retreats, from breakfast through to after-dinner chocolate. You can see some sample menus at the end of this document. She uses local ingredients, when they are available, in meals that are delicious and imaginative without being fussy. And that goes for her vegetarian dishes too. 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. Charlotte holds three Great Taste Awards (The Guild of Fine Foods) for different chocolates - the UK's most respected food accolade.





General information

Retreat Price: £2150

What is included in the price of the Retreat?

Transfers to and from Tarbert, Harris, the starting point of the Retreat; all meals during the Retreat from dinner on Saturday 15th February, until breakfast on Saturday 22nd February, 2020; tuition from Niall; transport during the Retreats; paper and ink for printing.

What is not included in the price of the Retreat?

Travel between your home and Tarbert, Harris; alcoholic drinks; insurance for you and your possessions during the Retreat; additional entrance fees we may incur. You should bring your own toiletries, but towels are provided.

Travelling to and from the Retreat

You can drive directly to the Calmac Ferry Terminal at Uig on the Isle of Skye and park your car there. Travelling as a foot passenger on the Calmac ferry, you will be met by us at the Tarbert ferry terminal on Harris. Alternatively, you can fly from Edinburgh or Glasgow to Stornoway with Flybe or Loganair and take a scheduled bus to Tarbert. It's important to understand that travel is sometimes disrupted by bad weather in the Outer Hebrides - at any time of year - and to plan accordingly. We will discuss your travel plans at the time of booking and offer what assistance we can.

Daily routine

At this time of year in the Highlands the days are short so we will spend most of the daylight hours on location (we'll take out a picnic lunch) and use the long nights to do our studio work, focusing on post-production, discussion and evaluation. We will visit a variety of locations on Harris, Lewis and North Uist to gather the "raw material" for our work. Once we know the composition and interest of the group, the itinerary can be refined accordingly. There may, on occasion, be the possibility of splitting the group for work on Harris with Charlotte as second driver. The prevailing weather conditions will play a large role in Niall's decisions about where to take the photographers with regards to opportunities and safety. We want you to come away from the Retreat having learned new skills - and had fun. But everything is elective and if you want to miss out any "module", you're quite entitled to do so.

Your safety during the Retreat

We take your safety seriously and make it our priority when planning the daily routine, especially in regards to road conditions and wind strength and direction on cliff tops. We ask you to respect our judgement in respect of managing risk. We lend guests two way radios for ease of communication.

General information

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. Please read our [Terms and Conditions](#) before booking.

Weather and clothing

Prepare for changeable weather that will be cool and probably wet between times. And usually windy. You should have: proper walking boots; waterproof trousers; a waterproof shell; a down jacket or fleeces; and thermals. A windproof hat and fold-down mitt/ liners combination will keep head and hands warm.

The longest walk we anticipate would be about three miles, but a lot will be on flat on beaches. If you're travelling by car, pack rubber boots. You might not need them but they could be useful. You'll probably want something smarter for the evenings. Out of respect to the houses's owners, we ask that guests wear slippers or indoor shoes when inside.

Equipment

If you are travelling by air, you may be concerned about carry-on luggage restrictions. The way round this Niall has used for many years is to pack as much gear as you reasonably can into a photographer's waistcoat. This counts as a garment, not hand luggage and you can still take your carry-on allowance in to the cabin. That will just about cover your notebooks, laptop, drives and power cable. With regards to equipment you'll need during the Retreat:

- If possible, please bring a laptop loaded with Adobe Lightroom and Photoshop/Elements. A flash drive is useful for getting the documents we'll give you onto your computer.
- You could use any lens between 16 mm and 500 mm but a macro lens, a mid-range zoom and a moderate wide-angle will get most use.
- We have a spare tripod but would urge you to bring your own.
- Please pack a head torch or hand-held one, for safety and navigation.
- Bring all the chargers, cards, batteries and backup media you need, plus UK power adaptor if you're travelling from abroad.
- A polarizing filter and graduated ND's, only if you have them.
- Hand warmers - which help to prolong your battery's life
- A tough plastic bag to put your gear inside on the beach.

General information

About us

After many years leading tours and workshops for other companies at home and abroad we incorporated Food and Photography Retreats Ltd. in 2018. Our offer combines the teaching of particular skills in attractive locations with great hospitality, conversation and food.

Niall has been a professional photographer, writer designer and guide for over 25 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.

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 warmth. She has a keen eye for a picture too and can also assist with Lightroom processing. She is a trained chocolatiere.

Contact us

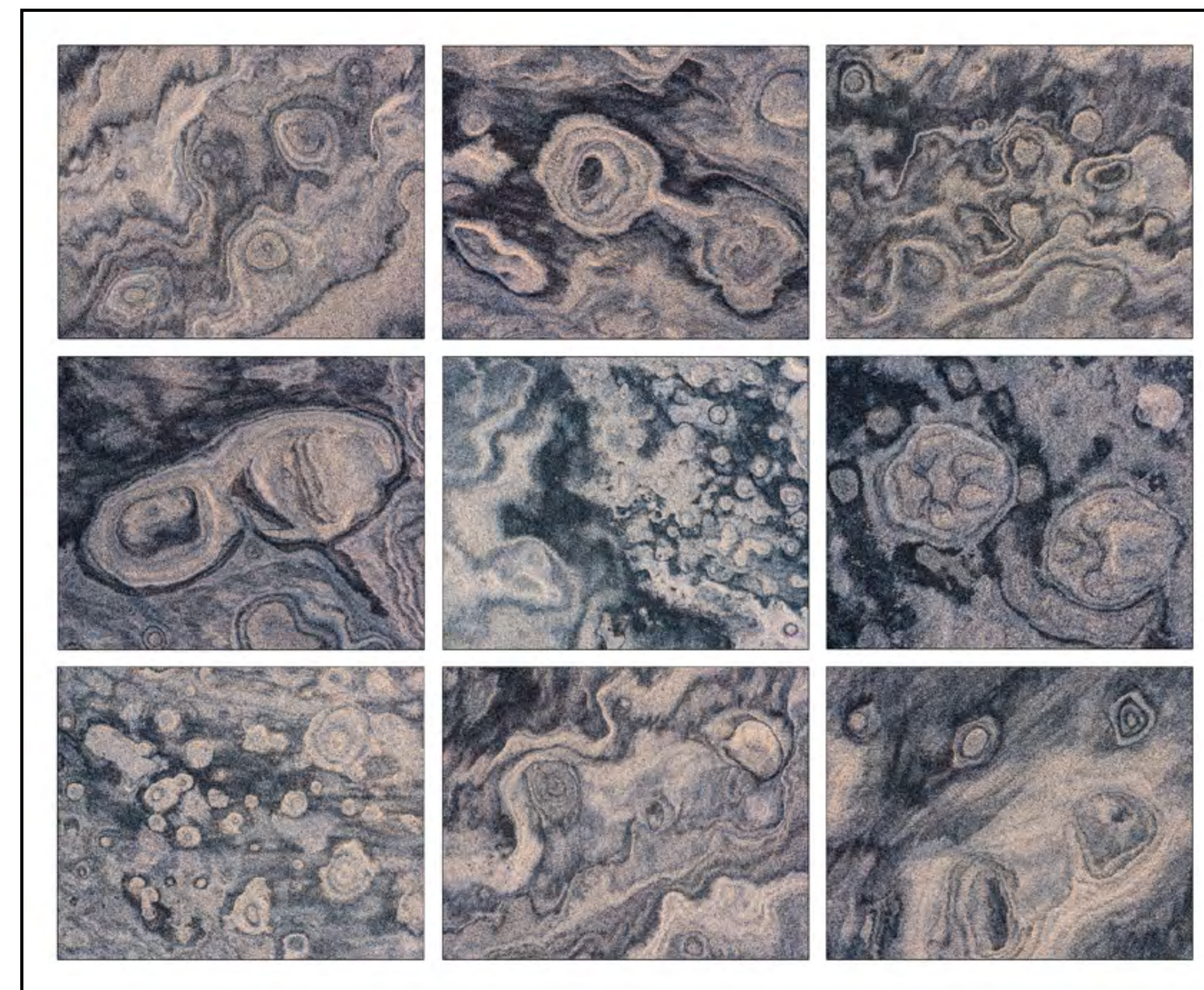
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Food and Photography Retreats Ltd is a Scottish private company, limited by guarantee, number SC596219. Its registered office is: 10 Murray Lane, Montrose Angus DD10 8LF, SCOTLAND.



Sample menus

from the kitchen of
Charlotte

Dinner

Tuesday 30th January, 2018

Icelandic lamb goulash
served with couscous

Carlotta's Chocolate mousse
served with home made snowflake

Coffee and Carlotta's Chocolates
Kilchoman Whisky bonbon

from the kitchen of
Charlotte

Dinner

Saturday 14th February, 2015

Roasted figs with goat's cheese
and Parma ham
served on a bed of leaf salad

Salmon salsa verde en croûte
served with baby potatoes and green bean

Carlotta's Chocolate pots
served with fresh berries

from the kitchen of
Charlotte

Dinner

Sunday 17th May, 2017

Venison pie with sweet chestnuts
and banana shallots
served with clapshot, braised cavolo nero
and oven roasted potatoes

Apricot brioche pudding
with crème fraîche

Coffee and Carlotta's Chocolates
dark chocolate bonbon

from the kitchen of
Charlotte

Dinner

Wednesday 27th January, 2018

Chicken and chorizo casserole
served with oven roasted potatoes
and green vegetables

Assiette of miniature desserts
with a lemon theme

Coffee and Carlotta's Chocolates
truffles