

HASTINGS & THE EAST SUSSEX COAST



photoFUN beside the seaside



11-15 APRIL, 2024
4 NIGHTS £1500

FOOD AND
PHOTOGRAPHY
RETREATS

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photos © Lesley Colyer, except for flower
composite and kaleidoscopes





THE RETREAT

THIS SHORT RETREAT ON THE ENGLISH south coast is a bit of a departure for us in terms of duration and location but one that allows you to enjoy an intensive few days of image-make and discussion as we explore this quirky seaside town, the adjacent coastline and the farm where we will be based. As usual, our special brand of hospitality is at the heart of what we do, freeing us of hotel schedules and making a home-from-home for you for the duration of the Retreat.

This is your opportunity to kick-back, creatively, to experiment in the company of like-minded photo-adventurers and to receive informed feedback. We will have fun with our photography and Niall will demonstrate some of the many ideas he has developed over the years so that you may incorporate one or two into your own practice. And if you fancy leaving "the big camera" behind for once you'll find that this is an iPhone-friendly environment, in respect of shooting and processing Apple Pro RAW files.

We will photograph boats and beaches and, possibly, our breakfast. You will learn about flash, flower photography and fiddling about in Photoshop and Lightroom as we work a variety of seaside subjects. And Charlotte, as always, will feed us with fine, fresh food. Our base is a delightful two-hundred-year-old farm house set in 100 acres of pasture and ancient woodland, in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty just outside Hastings.





WHAT'S ON OFFER

If you're interested in learning some of Niall's signature techniques, such as colour sampling (Transects), collage (Chocolate Bars), white background photography (Field Studio) or indeed, page layout, you may want to take an [eLearning course](#) before the Retreat then practise what you've learned with him in the field.

Here are some of the possibilities open to us during the Retreat:

- Fascinating old buildings and facades in Hastings old town
- Beach-launched fishing boats (largest fleet in Europe)
- Fishing industry paraphernalia
- Rye Harbour nature reserve including its famous hut (cover), old sea wall, shingle beach and lifeboat station
- Winchelsea church, dating from 1290
- Woodland plants on the farm
- Learning to use flash to light lay-flats, plants and outdoor portraits
- Seascape photography of the English Channel.



ACCOMMODATION AND MEALS

WE WILL BE STAYING AT NEW COGHURST FARM, just to the north-east of Hastings. Not only is it positioned within easy reach of our main destinations but is a very interesting venue in its own right. In the owners' own words, "Our vision is to create a space where nature can thrive and people who share a similar passion can come and be immersed in the experience". So, there is a lot of landscape rewilding taking place, the ancient woodland shaws (boundary strips of woodland) are managed to encourage biodiversity rather than for timber production and a herd of horses grazes on extensive pastures, living in a social structure akin to that of their wild relatives. These horses are central to the therapeutic practice the farm is known for. More recently, an archaeological dig of a Bronze Age settlement has begun too.

The accommodation comprises four double bedrooms and a single in the main farmhouse and a double bedroom in the courtyard (with a separate bathroom nearby) There is a south-facing kitchen with an outdoor terrace, a large lounge and a snug. As always, there is no single room supplement.

Charlotte uses local ingredients whenever possible so you can expect seafood and fish to feature once or twice on the menu. If, however, this isn't your thing, just let us know on the booking form. Her dishes that are delicious and imaginative without being fussy. Food allergies and intolerances are catered for sensitively when notified in advance. Expect to eat well, for breakfast, lunch and dinner. And in between times too.









HASTINGS AND SURROUNDINGS

IN SPITE OF ITS NOTORIETY as the setting for a major turning point in English history, Hastings downplays "The Battle" and instead attracts us with a dazzling mix of colour, eccentricity, the traditional and the chaotic. The town is

as energetic and surprising as the English Channel it skirts. Although it has a sizeable population - just over 90 000 - there is little hint of that as we wander through the streets of the old town or look over to the restored Pier. It is assuredly *not* just another tired seaside resort and has developed a vibrant art scene in recent years as artists relocate here from London.

There is, nevertheless, an undertow of nostalgia - and not just in the numerous vintage shops - that lures us towards motifs found by the edge of the sea: old boats; decaying wooden buildings; brightly-coloured lobster pots and stake-spiked beaches. This theme continues along the coast.

On Rye nature reserve - a sprawling complex of brackish pools, shingle beach, saltmarsh and grasslands 12 miles to the east of Hastings - stands the Mary Stanford life-

boat station. It was abandoned immediately after a tragedy in 1928 that robbed Rye of the 17 men who had crewed the boat during a wild November morning. The building is slowly decaying, adding to the poignancy of the location.

On a brighter note, early spring flowers and colourful vegetation will enliven the shingle that glints with flint, providing the elements for assembling more complex images, the best one of which we will print for you at the end of the week.

The farm's woodlands provide a tranquil and private setting to practise some advanced techniques, such as white background photography and making kaleidoscopes, as well as more conventional approaches to macro photography. We can guarantee you one more thing; you'll be left wishing for just another couple of days...





GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE RETREAT

Price: GBP 1500, 11 - 15 April, 2024, per person.

What's included:

- 4 nights' accommodation at New Coghurst Farm, Hastings, East Sussex, England
- Transfers from and to Hastings Railway Station (HGS). Alternatively, you can drive straight to our accommodation
- All meals during the Retreat from dinner on Thursday 11th April until breakfast on Monday 15th April
- Tuition from Niall.

What's not included:

- Your travel to and from Hastings
- Alcoholic drinks
- Travel insurance

- Admissions
- Online learning before the Retreat.

Travelling to and from the Retreat

You can drive directly to New Coghurst Farm or you can arrange in advance with us to be collected (by late afternoon on Thursday 11th April) from Hastings railway station. We will notify you closer to the time of the pick-up time. The Retreat starts with dinner on the 11th and finishes after breakfast on the 15th at which point we return you to the railway station. Drivers are free to leave later if they wish but rooms need to be vacated by 10:00 hrs.

Where we will go

We've detailed earlier in this brochure some of the locations we have available to choose from. We avoid hopping from location to location, preferring instead to work a good one thoroughly and give it the time it needs. Good photography is often

more time than location dependent and locations often deserve a second visit to refine what you did the first time. Most of our locations are within a 30 minute drive of the farm.

The daily routine

Whatever we are shooting, it tends to look more attractive in the early morning or late afternoon when low-angled light shows relief and colours better. That's the case when we use flash outdoors too. With dawn at around 06:10 hrs and dusk around 19:54, it's a long day but there will be time to rest in the middle of it when we avoid the unattractive light. Normally, we take a snack and coffee or tea before heading out and eat breakfast on return from a dawn shoot. We will eat dinner early before leaving for an evening session. We have plenty of alternatives up our sleeves if the weather or light is unfavourable, such as our flash classes and woodland photography.

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 things 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. This lets you participate fully in our "in-room-Zoom" meetings that make it easier to share pictures and follow demonstrations. While the emphasis is on review, Niall will advise on post-production too. We have a follow-up Zoom meeting a couple of weeks after the Retreat, saving the last minute rush to prepare images for an end of Retreat show.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE RETREAT

Safety

We take your safety seriously during our Retreats. At locations with known risks—such as drop-offs, tree-roots, muddy shores, 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 guests 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 overnight. We can accommodate various levels of fitness as most of the terrain is flat.

COVID

At the time of writing, the threat from COVID has receded. Nevertheless, if there is a resurgence, we will require guests to conform to the

statutory guidelines pertaining at the time.

Spending money

There are plenty of cash machines in Hastings - and some tempting shops eager to take your money.

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.

Passport and visa requirements

A passport valid for at least six months beyond the length of the stay is required for non-UK visitors. EU citizens should check on the latest requirements for travelling to

the UK, including the possibility of an international driving permit. You should check your insurance in respect of COVID-related claims.

Language

English is spoken here.

Climate

Since we'll never be far from the sea, temperatures may be a little lower than inland. Expect temperature in the low teens during the day and chillier early and late, especially if there is an on-shore breeze. It could even rain.

Clothing

Prepare for the possibility of a warm spell - or a cold snap. The weather has become too unpredictable to call. You should have: proper walking boots; waterproof trousers; a waterproof shell jacket. A windproof hat and fold-down mitt/ liners combination will keep head and hands

warm, if it turns cold. The longest walk we anticipate is out to St Mary's lifeboat station (c3.5 km from where we park) although most of our forays will be much shorter. If you're travelling by car, pack rubber boots. You might not need them but they could be useful. You may want something smarter for the evenings. We ask that guests wear slippers or indoor shoes at the accommodation.

Equipment

If you are travelling from overseas 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. Equipment you'll need during the Retreat:

- If possible, please bring a laptop with Lightroom/PS /Affinity Photo

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE RETREAT

- 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
- You'll need a tripod, especially for work at dusk
- Please pack a head torch, for safety and navigation
- A walking pole or staff is useful on longer walks or where we cross pebbles
- 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

About us

After many years leading tours and workshops for other companies at home and abroad, Niall and Charlotte Benvie established Food

and Photography Retreats in 2018. Our offer combines cultivating your photography in attractive locations with great hospitality, conversation and food.

Niall has been a professional photographer, writer designer and guide for 30 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 15 years, 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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