

Magical alpine meadows

A MID-SUMMER MACRO
AND LANDSCAPE
PHOTOGRAPHY RETREAT
IN THE AUSTRIAN TYROL

15 - 22ND JUNE, 2019. £2400

12 - 19TH JUNE, 2020. £2475

FOOD AND TM
PHOTOGRAPHY
RETREATS

with the Benvies





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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.

Niall and Charlotte Benvie's seven day Photo Retreat in the Austrian Tyrol offers guests the chance to learn new skills and deepen their knowledge of photography while enjoying first class hospitality in a delightful alpine setting.

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. Rather than make vague promises to "improve your photography", we teach particular skills and ways of thinking that guests can use long after the retreat has finished. This, combined with tutorials and feed-back sessions, can help photographers to make substantial progress in their creative lives, all the while enjoying themselves in an inspiring setting.

On this Retreat, we reserve the evenings and early mornings for our landscape work, using the day time to learn new macro photography skills that aren't dependent on nice light.



What's on offer

The Kaunergrat Nature Park, at the meeting of the Kaunertal, Pitztal and Inntal valleys, is one of the biological hotspots of central Europe, hosting over 1100 species of moths and butterflies alone - including the dramatic apollo - as well as an extraordinary range of alpine flowers. The Park also contains 84 three-thousand-metre peaks and lots of alpine farms: there is plenty to keep macro and landscape photographers busy.

During the Retreat, you will learn how to:

- shoot field studio photographs, against backlit, white backgrounds;
- composite these images into finished works;
- create Colour Transects, to add to your landscape repertoire.

These techniques open doors to creative avenues that you'll be able to explore for years after - the same techniques that have earned Niall his reputation as an innovator.

Our discussion sessions will centre around how we can engage the viewer's interest in our work using the novel approaches you are learning during the Retreat. Niall guides these but everyone is encouraged to contribute their own ideas.

The photography, of course, is just one part of the Retreat. Charlotte belongs to the nothing-is-too-much -trouble school of hospitality and relishes the chance to create a delightful space and lovely meals for you.



Skills

Shooting field studio photographs on white.

What started in 2007 with two flash guns and two pieces of plastic has evolved into a worldwide photographic initiative, *Meet Your Neighbours*, now with several hundred participants. Niall has been instrumental in describing and sharing the technique in print, at conferences and on-line. You will learn how to make these striking, backlit images, on location with wild subjects.

You will start off by mastering the technique with flowers before moving on to some of the Nature Park's huge range of insects. We provide the plastics you will need for this work. We have one extra flash set to lend. You'll also be supplied with Niall's comprehensive e-book on the technique. You are, of course, welcome to photograph using more conventional techniques, too, and we will review and compare that work alongside the rest.



Skills

Processing and compositing white background pictures.

A large part of the fun of field studio photography is the freedom it gives you to create beautiful composite illustrations. Photographers around the world have found novel applications for the technique, from illustrating biodiversity to representing a life-cycle in a single image. We will show you the skills you need to create you own.



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.

Colour Transects provide an opportunity to re-interpret familiar themes and to put your personal stamp on them, be it in the meadows, mountains or villages.



47.1205° N
colour transect #41

KAUNERGRAT NATURE PARK

AND OUR VENUE



The Fließer Sonnenhänge and Naturpark Kaunergrat

Ten years ago, when he was working on assignments for [Wild Wonders of Europe](#), Niall was dispatched to the Fließer Sonnenhänge in the Landeck district of the Austrian Tyrol, to photograph its amazing biodiversity. Indeed, these traditional hay meadows in the Kaunergrat Naturepark are considered one of Europe's natural crown jewels on account of their rich flora and insect life. High levels of solar radiation that can lift the temperature at soil level to 70 degrees C, lime-rich soils and less than 60 cm of annual rainfall, create the ideal conditions for many species to flourish. On this Retreat, close cooperation with the staff of the Naturepark will help to ensure that we get to the best places at the right time.



Leaving the protected “sunny slopes” around the village, we steadily climb up past old Norway spruces and Arolla pines, skirt past bogs, then enter the high alpine pastures, silent except for the clanking of cow bells. This is the sort of destination that allows us to be productive without having to spend a lot of time driving around between locations. But we also give you time to relax amongst wild nature. Sometimes, just sitting and watching is what it takes to make good work.



Our venue

Our base will be in the village of Arzl im Pitztal in fully-appointed **apartments** that were renovated to a very high standard in 2018. They are just 20 minutes from the Naturepark headquarters. Each guest room has its own bathroom and there is wifi, if you need it. It's a great place to relax, to eat, to review your work and to enjoy fabulous mountain vistas.

Meals

Good food is at the heart of our Retreats, from breakfast through to after-dinner chocolates, all made by Charlotte. You can see some sample menus at the end of this document. She 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.





General information

Retreat Price: 2019: £2400 ; 2020: £2475

What is included in the price of the Retreat?

Seven night's accommodation in apartments in Arzl im Pitztal; dinner on day one until breakfast on the last day; travel between locations by mini-bus; transfers between Innsbruck airport (INN) and our accommodation at the pre-arranged time; and tuition from Niall.

What is not included in the price of the Retreat?

Travel between your home and Innsbruck airport (INN); transfers at times other than those specified; alcoholic drinks; insurance for you and your possessions during the Retreat; additional entrance fees we may incur.

Travelling to and from the Retreat

The Retreat starts at the Innsbruck airport (INN) where Niall will meet you at Arrivals. At the end of the Retreat, you will be taken back to Innsbruck airport. If you choose to drive, you can go straight to our accommodation in Arzl im Pitztal. We will provide directions.

Daily routine

Each evening at dinner we outline the goals for the next day and where we plan to take you. If the weather is changeable, we may alter those plans to make the most of the conditions we find. The sun rises at about 0520 hrs and sets a little after 2100 hrs, so we will spend the hottest part of the day indoors working with our images. We believe it's important to strike a good balance between field and studio time so that you can work with, and receive feed-back on, your photographs. And we need time to eat and relax too!

Your safety during the Retreat

We treat your safety seriously on our Retreats. While most of the locations we visit present few difficulties to those with even just average fitness, where particular hazards - such as slippery surfaces, boggy ground or drop-offs - present themselves, you will be properly briefed first so that you can make a decision about how to proceed. Most of the walks we do will be limited, potentially, by the heat and the weight of the equipment Niall needs to move on your behalf when we're doing field studio work. Walks for purely landscape will not exceed 5 km and will normally be a lot shorter.

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.

Weather

The average June temperature in this part of the Tirol is 22 degrees C but as we saw in 2018, heatwaves can lift this considerably. June is the third wettest month of the year, and when it rains the temperature drops noticeably, especially as we climb past the 1000 metre mark.

Clothing

Expect it to be warm during the day and cool in the evening. And it could be wet in between times. Regardless, waterproof trousers are useful when you kneel, especially if there is dew. A lightweight waterproof jacket is recommended too. Walking boots will keep your feet dry, regardless, although some people prefer lighter hiking shoes if it is hot. You should also have slippers/indoor shoes for the apartments. We strongly recommend a sun hat and high factor sunscreen.

Equipment

If you are travelling by air, you will be able to bring more into the cabin if you carry it in a photographer's vest with large pockets, in addition to your carry-on bag. With regards to equipment you'll need during the Retreat:

- If possible, please bring a laptop loaded with Adobe Lightroom (or your preferred RAW converter) and Photoshop/Elements. We find processing on iPads with Lightroom CC is too limiting.
- If you'd like to participate fully in the field studio photography, you will need two flashguns (these can be of any sort so long as the manual power output can be adjusted on each) and a cheap radio trigger, such as the Phottix Strato II, to fire two flashes remotely from your camera. Ensure that your trigger is compatible with the flashes. We will provide the plastics you need for this work.
- A macro lens, a mid-range zoom and a moderate wide-angle will get most use.
- However inconvenient it seems, a tripod is a must.
- A head torch or hand-held one, for navigation and safety.
- All the chargers, cards, batteries and backup media you need, plus European power adaptor if you're travelling from the UK.
- A polarizing filter and graduated ND's, only if you have them.

General information

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 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 chocolatier and has won several Great Taste Awards (The Guild of Fine Food) for her work.

Contact us

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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 Whiskey 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 croute
red with baby potatoes and green beans



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 fraiche



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