



FOCUS ON

*Wilperna
Pound*

Learn how to capture
your holiday highlights

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What is one of the best things about visiting beautiful places? Remembering them.

Taking photos to capture what we see so we can reminisce later.

What if I told you there is a way to visit a spectacular part of South Australia and hone your photographic skills at the same time? Cue 'photography weekends' like the one I am joining in SA's Flinders Ranges.

Photographer Steve Huddy and Wilpena Pound have combined their considerable assets and talents to let you enjoy your surroundings and capture the moments.

Firstly, you're in a part of Australia where it's hard to take a bad photo. Secondly, you're with a photographer who, after spending years working for Canon, is branching out to share his knowledge and passion with all sorts of camera buffs from experienced snappers to the accidental photographers like me.

We're in for three days of learning how to use those camera gizmos like aperture, shutter priority and ISO to get the best pictures possible.

What could go wrong? The weather.



Clockwise from above: Ranges silhouetted against the night sky; Steve giving the low-down on some gear choices; Class is in session; Clouds aren't always a bad thing; An opportune moment

PLANS DISRUPTED

It's September, the days are warm, nights cold, but the crisp air and clear skies make for some wonderful scenes — except when Mother Nature decides to bless the Outback with heavy rainfall and the biggest storm the Flinders Ranges has seen in decades.

The Ranges have suffered drought conditions for years so you can imagine the smiles on everyone's faces. Except for our guide, Steve, it's a bit of a nightmare.

On our first night, the plan is to take sunset shots overlooking the Chace Range. The view from Pugilist Hill is hard to beat. You're surrounded by ranges so no matter which mountainscape is highlighted by the sun's rays, you are bound to get a good photo.

Instead dark clouds set in, it starts to rain, and we have to run for cover. The sun set without a ray of hope poking through.

Plan B though is a delicious alternative — dinner at the Wilpena Pound Resort.

STARSTRUCK

How about some astrophotography at the Cazneau's Tree?

I didn't know astrophotography was a thing, especially not on my old Pentax K3. But if you get the right training, guidance and assistance, it is possible to capture the Milky Way as it lights up the sky.

That is, unless dark clouds continue to block evidence of a star or planet ever existing.

"This calls for Plan C," says Steve, as he sets up an impromptu workshop in the Wilpena Pound Resort dining room.

He takes advantage of the spare time to talk all things photographic, from making the most of the equipment you have, to taking advantage of the latest technology to make your photographic endeavours easier and much more fun.

His No. 1 tip for a great shoot is 'planning', and the best way to plan is to use all the information available to you.

For example, if it's the Milky Way you want to capture, there are phone apps, like TPE (The Photographer's Ephemeris) and Photopills, which can pinpoint the best time to shoot your pics from particular destinations.

You can see when a full moon might disrupt your shoot with too much light, or when a new moon might offer the best opportunity - with the least light - to grab that perfect pic.

The direction of sunrises and sunsets can be predicted so you know where it will be and where the best light will be shed on to the scenery behind.

WHEN ALL THE RIVERS RUN

Day two was meant to start with sunrise aerial shots over Wilpena Pound.

But at 4am the real storm hit, flooding the Flinders with more than 50mm of rain, so I guessed it might be off.

The views of flowing rivers instead of dry creek beds would have been



spectacular from the air, but there was no way planes were taking off from the muddy runway. Plus conditions were described as “uncomfortable up there.”

So we go to Plan D and swap sunrise to check out the flood damage. It may not have been planned, but the opportunity to take photos of this rare sight feels like a privilege.

At 10am we file back into the resort dining room for a Lightroom Classic basics workshop — despite a flooded Ikara Safari Tent, muddy sludge having to be scooped out of the resort kitchen and a partially collapsed ceiling in the reception area (it really was a huge storm).

Lightroom is a downloading, sorting, archiving and editing

system for your photos. To put it in basic terms, you download it (there is a free trial version or a \$15/month permanent version), use it to download pics from your camera (via SD card in my case) and then you can sort them into collections, for example, ‘Flinders Ranges’.

From here, there are all sorts of editing options which you can use to enhance your photos until you get the best possible outcome.

The key seems to be if a photo is slightly darker (underexposed) it can be saved. If it’s over-exposed, there’s not much you can do.

GETTING SOME GREAT SHOTS

The devastated look on Steve’s face after a quick lunch is a clear indication that Plan E is about to

unfold.

“Our afternoon drive through Brachina and Bunyerroo gorges is off,” he says.

“But, we do have another plan and let’s face it, there are so many beautiful places to photograph, we won’t be short of good photos. And the bonus is that I’ll be able to show you how to take some great pics in ‘trying’ conditions.”

So, off we go in a convoy to Moralana Scenic Drive which is still open.

I’m lucky to be in Steve’s car so I use the time to pick his brain about my camera — more precisely about my dislike of it. It’s heavy and I’ve never really understood it.

To be honest, words are my focus, so I need a camera I can point and

From left: Windmills against a classic Flinders Ranges backdrop; Sunset light show

shoot to give me great photos with the least input on my part. The Auto button is my best friend, and there is actually nothing wrong with my camera — it’s a user problem.

“It doesn’t really matter which brand of camera you have,” Steve says, sporting impressive Canon gear. “What is important is that you get the most out of whatever equipment you have.”

And that’s where his expertise comes in very handy.

With a flick of a few buttons, and an enormous amount of patience, he has set me up to get the best possible landscape pics from my Pentax.

TAKING CONTROL

It’s a nervous moment as I flick from auto to manual.

Don’t laugh. I’ve always figured that if you buy an expensive camera and it has an automatic choice, why wouldn’t you let it do all the hard work.

However, while there is nothing wrong with the auto option, it always pays to understand why it makes the selections that it does, and it’s quite liberating to know how to be in charge.

ISO is first. Put it on 100 for most shots.

But what is ISO? It’s a setting that will brighten or darken a photo. As you increase your ISO number, your photos will grow progressively brighter because you are making your

camera’s sensor more sensitive to light. But, a photo taken at too high of an ISO will show a lot of grain, also known as noise, and might not be usable.

Aperture is next. Pick F11 for landscapes. Why? Because in Steve’s experience that’s the best choice. It gives a greater depth of field or depth of focus, so more of the foreground and background will be sharper.

Now, does the camera do the rest? Not in manual mode.

We have to select the correct shutter speed. But before I can get “good grief” out of my frustrated mouth, Steve is pointing out a built-in meter which, when I adjust the shutter speed dial (I didn’t even know it was there) it hits the middle mark and voila, I have the perfect combination.



Clockwise from left: The Cazneau Tree at night; Arkaba Creek in flood; Steve's photo showing how to blur the movement of the water; The windmill obsession continues; A sign of the times; Concentrating; The Ikara Safari Tent at Wilpena Pound

GETTING THERE

What: The photography weekends are run by Wilpena Pound Resort with the collaboration of professional photographers like Steve Huddy.

Where: Wilpena Pound Resort, Flinders Ranges, South Australia, usually in winter months as the conditions are better. We covered the 450km drive in a Maui Ultima motorhome from THL maui-rentals.com.

Cost: \$395pp plus accommodation (a range is available including 'glamping' safari tents, powered and unpowered sites and lodge rooms).

Contact: wilpenapound.com.au/events/ photography-weekends/ or Steve Huddy at shu25185@bigpond.com



PUTTING IT TO THE TEST

Now back to Moralana Scenic Drive.

"Damn," says Steve as we pull up to a raging torrent which has replaced yesterday's dry creek bed.

But the rest of us are out of that car quick smart, cameras and tripods in hand to capture what we think is the best view we have seen in days. Muddy water pours over the concrete causeway that usually stands high and dry over Arkaba Creek.

We can't cross, but we don't care. You don't often see water in these parts, let alone a running river.

SHUTTER PRIORITY

Just when I thought I had landscape photography under control, Steve steps it up with a lesson in shutter priority and how to add 'blur' so

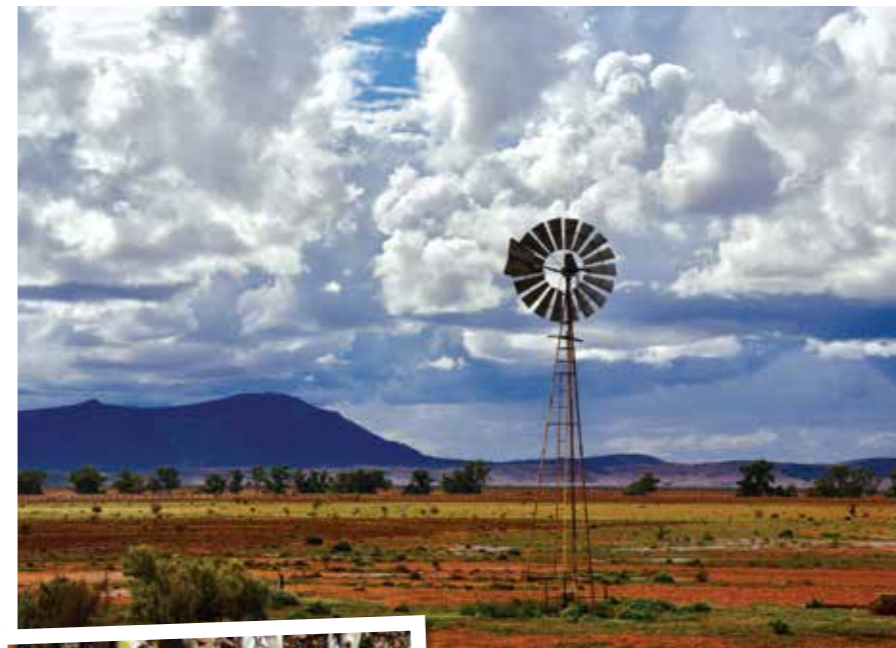
there is a sense of motion and movement. You know those gorgeous photos of running streams where waterfalls and ripples appear like smooth folds? It's not hard to do – if you have a tripod, use shutter priority and open the aperture to let in more light. And, if you have more experience than I do.

I 'borrowed' one of Steve's photos to show you the full effect.

WINDMILLS

I have always had a fascination with windmills. You don't tend to see many of them anymore. But it seems I'm not the only one who likes them.

We stop a few times on our afternoon travels to focus on their rotating blades, with the ranges and those pesky clouds creating dramatic backdrops.



HOOKINA CREEK

The road to Lyndhurst is blocked and there's a line-up of locals waiting for the water to drop so they can cross and get home.

As a journalist and travel writer, a photo of this rare flood and line-up is a great pic, regardless of whether the light is perfect, or if we can blur the movement of the water or not.

While we wait and take more photos, we notice a dirt road running up the side of the creek towards Mt Little Homestead. The owner lets us venture a little further up it to try and get some sunset shots.

This is where the planning comes in again. Steve has checked his apps and knows that with the sun setting behind us, the mountain range in front should light up - if the clouds clear. This has been Plan F and it's a winner.

REMEMBER TO TURN AROUND

There's a rule that goes with sunset photography. As you watch the sun lower in the sky to eventually dip over the horizon, don't forget to turn around and see what it's like behind you.

We find ourselves doing 360s with the bright red and orange rays reflecting on the creek one way, then turning clouds a soft apricot and lighting up ochre-coloured cliffs directly behind. Meanwhile the whole sky turns bright pink with the wind whisking fluffy balls into strawberry-coloured fairy floss.

ASTROPHOTOGRAPHY

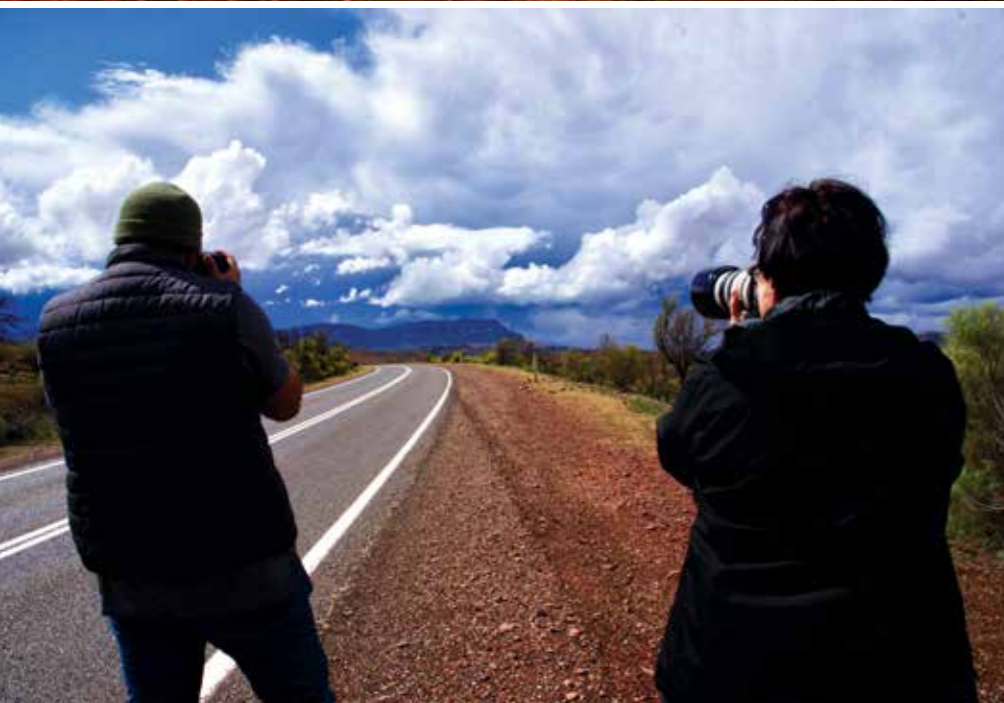
Our final shot at astrophotography is at the Cazneau Tree but the bridge leading to the perfect angle has been wiped out so all the planning of where the Milky Way will be is wasted.

However, we set up as best we can (Plan G) and get our lesson.

The instructions: ISO 3200, 30-second exposure, manual focus.

Steve shines a torch on the base of the tree for about four seconds. It's just enough light to register on the long exposure but not long enough to turn the pic into a white blob.

Do I get the Milky Way? No. But I do get enough to pique my interest and maybe come back one day to try it again. I manage a starry sky backdrop to this famous tree that pays homage to endurance.



From top: A gorgeous sunset; Photography takes both planning and adaptability

LAST DAY

We're up to Plan H. Morning flights are cancelled again but we head out to Wood Duck Dam for some wildlife photography.

Debris on the roads has us stopping for more action shots. The damage is unbelievable — massive logs have been lifted and dumped across roads by the heavy rains.

Tripods are needed at the dam for those trying to capture hovering dragon flies.

I'm happy to zoom in on a few ducks and my favourite subjects — the people around me.

It doesn't matter whether you're a professional or an accidental photographer like me. We have all learnt something this weekend. And what better way to show that than by snapping the happy photographers. 📷

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