

ENGLAND

HASTINGS



close-up photography masterclass
in nature and in town | including
Niall's signature techniques

4 nights, GBP 1500

April 11 - 15, 2025

CONTENTS

our formula

the location

what's on offer

our venue

specifics



our formula

FOOD AND PHOTOGRAPHY RETREATS combines a high standard of hospitality with the sharing of professional photographic experience accumulated over 30 years. We create a home-from-home for you in the large comfortable houses we rent for the Retreats, freeing you of the restrictions of hotels. Over the course of the week, this space and our field locations become the settings for learning, sharing and enjoying good food and conversation with like-minded people.

Maybe it helps that we enjoy our work with guests. We take a lot of pleasure in seeing the lights go on in the eyes of someone who realises they have just made something special. Or who has understood a setting properly for the first time. Or whose expression is pure delight as a plate is set down before them.

We enjoy sharing because, in one way or another, it always rewards. We know how ideas go out into the world from our Retreats, grow and develop with other guardians only to return to us later, mature and fully-formed. And how recipes are taken home and meals recreated for the enjoyment of friends and families we will never meet.

We hope you will join us to make some new stories together.



Charlotte and Niall Benvie, your hosts and directors of Food and Photography Retreats Ltd.

the location



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, chaos, eccentricity and tradition. The town is as energetic and surprising as the English Channel it sprawls alongside. 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 creative 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.

Based on an organic farm dedicated to nature restoration and horse-based therapy, its 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’ll be left wishing for *just* another couple of days...

Along the coast, too, 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.







*This House was Built about the 15th Century.
It was the reputed Residence of ye Mother of
Admiral Sir CLOUDESLEY SHOVELL.
A View of it appears in the SUSSEX ARCH COLLECTION, VOL. XIV.*

125



THE FOCUS DURING THIS SHORT RETREAT is on teaching you novel techniques to help expand your creative repertoire - and increase the fun you have with your photography. This will include how to make [field studio](#) photos of natural subjects, shooting and assembling [Chocolate Bars](#), creating [Colour Transects](#) and [Kalidoscopes](#) and post-production colour grading. We will gather the "RAW material" for this work in the farm's woodlands and other nearby locations:

- Fascinating old buildings and facades in Hastings old town
- Beach-launched fishing boats (largest fleet in Europe)
- Fishing industry paraphernalia
- Rye Harbour nature reserve for its shingle beach, plants and lifeboat station
- Winchelsea church, dating from 1290
- Seascape photography of the English Channel.

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.

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.





Price: GBP 1500 per person

starts: 17:00, 11th April, finishes 09:00, 15th April 2025

What's included:

- 4 nights' accommodation at New Coghurst Farm, Hastings, East Sussex
- All meals during the Retreat from dinner on Friday 11th April until breakfast on Tuesday 15th April, 2025
- Transfers from and to Hastings railway station
- Transportation during the Retreat.
- Tuiiton from Niall

What's not included:

- Your travel to and from Hastings, from home
- Alcoholic drinks
- Travel insurance
- Additional excursions and entry fees

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 Friday 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 working with flash 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.

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, but no tiaras please. 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
- 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 polarising 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 incorporated Food and Photography Retreats in 2018. Our offer combines the cultivation of your creativity in attractive locations with great hospitality, conversation and food.

Niall has been a professional photographer, writer designer and guide for 31 years with a massive publication record including seven 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. She is a trained chocolatiere.

specifics

Contact Niall and Charlotte

Les Saumais, 193 Chemin de Sensué, 58250 SAINT-SEINE, France

Telephone: +33 7 52 62 06 00

e-mail: office@foodandphotographyretreats.com

Food and Photography Retreats Ltd is a private company limited by guarantee, registered in Scotland: SC596219.



with the Benvies



**NIALL
BENVIE**
artwork