

MENU

NUMBER 18 • JULY 2022

FOOD AND
PHOTOGRAPHY
RETREATS™
with the Benvis

NEW DESTINATIONS FOR 2023

BEAUTIFUL FLASH FOR
OUTDOOR PORTRAITS

NOW, THAT'S A HILL!
Austria's Hohe Tauern N.P.

CHARLOTTE MAKES
ROSEMARY-STUFFED SIDE OF SALMON

also:

IN THE LIGHT
OF THE SEA -
Wenche Dahl

50 Objects | **Ralph Gräf**

THE BEST FRAMING SOLUTION

The Morvan

Chez Valadon, Saint-Seine




Hello from Charlotte and Niall

WHEN WE BOUGHT OUR LITTLE HOUSE in the Morvan seven years ago, the grounds for choosing it were, by any standards, eccentric. As we left the viewing, a golden oriole began to sing his mellifluous song at the foot of our *prairie*. That (as well as a water-tight roof, no signs of subsidence nor potential for flooding) sealed it. Houses are not expensive in this part of rural France, after all, and anywhere good enough for golden orioles would do us just fine. We would work out the rest as we went along.

What we couldn't know at that time was how a changing climate would determine who else we had as neighbours. Then, cattle egrets (right) were very scarce. Now we see them routinely in the area, usually in the company of the local Charolais cattle as well as when grass is being mowed for hay. According to our neighbour, Guillaume, white storks were unknown around here 15 years ago (and he's lived in the parish his whole life) yet now they follow his hay mower every summer, feasting on the crickets and small rodents that are disturbed (page 5). We've seen 30 in the air at one time and they have started to nest on artificial nesting platforms provided for them over by Decize.

The biodiversity of this *bocage* landscape (small parcels of permanent pasture hemmed in by old hedges, with ponds and large solitary oaks for shade) owes a lot to traditional methods of livestock rearing. There is no top-dressing with inorganic fertilisers nor pesticides applied to the



A blue tit is perched on a tree trunk, facing right. The bird has a blue head and back, a white breast, and a reddish-brown belly. The tree trunk is covered in lichen and has a rough, textured bark. The background is a soft-focus forest with bare trees and some autumn leaves.

fields (although the animals themselves receive what pharmaceuticals they need to remain parasite and disease-free). The seasonally waterlogged clay, in agricultural terms, is unproductive and certainly wouldn't produce much in the way of crops for people to eat. But it does grow very good grass. The patchwork of edge-rich [sic] habitats and easy transit across the landscape for animals via the dense network of hedges is demonstrably more diverse than if the landscape was allowed to rewild. In this part of France that would result in even more closed-canopy oak, birch and chestnut forest, of which there is no shortage already.

The point is this: in some places, the best use of land *is* for livestock production because it is unsuitable for food crops and allowing it to revert to a wild state would diminish its diversity, especially in the short term. When we buy beef, though, we think its cost should reflect that of production to high welfare and environmental standards. It's probably why, on the rare occasions we buy it for ourselves, it feels like we're also paying compensation to the whole herd for the loss of their mate. So, we just don't buy it very often.

Fortunately, since we've stopped trying to grow food crops in the ground and have started using raised beds instead, our garden's productivity has grown steeply. Onions no longer rot in their rows. Potatoes grow enthusiastically in the free, dung-enriched soil of the raised beds. Where last year we attempted a vegetable patch, now borage, sunflowers and buckwheat have taken over, to the delight of great green bush crickets, honey bees and a myriad of other insects.



Growing food is only one part of our plans for Les Saumais. We want to make our *prairie*, beyond the garden, a destination for macro and bird photographers. This summer, we are installing a drinking and bathing pool with hide, nest boxes for hoopoes and a feeding platform to try to bring in red and black kites. We will also build upon the success of last winter's feeding station that attracted, amongst others, hawfinch, brambling, nuthatch and jay. It can take a long time to assure close encounters with wild subjects but the work at least has begun.

In the autumn, Charlotte will start offering "cook-along" Zoom sessions where every month, participants have her "at their elbow" as she guides them through preparing a delicious dish. More on that in her up-coming MENUette in September.

We're glad in this issue of MENU to announce some of our Retreats for 2023. We've not been able to create the final brochures just yet (they will come in August) but if something catches your eye in the meantime, be sure to let us know and we'll put you on the "interested" list.

Wherever you are, we hope you enjoy your summer - or winter.

Best wishes from *Charlotte and Niall*

CROSS - LIGHTING

YOUR KNOW ABOUT THIS ALREADY, even if you don't know that you know. Think about the last rays of sun playing over a sandy beach. You know that as the sun gets lower, the more the ripples on it show. And you also know that if you'd been there in the mid-day sun, the scene would have looked as flat as a pancake. Well, that's cross lighting. But it's not just that the lighting comes from the side.

Have a look at the picture here. Rather than pointing the light source directly at our subjects, Nicola is directing it to skim across the front of them. This is cross lighting. The further to her left she moves, without changing the light's direction relative to the subjects, the more the light will be able to reach around them. The further to her right, the more the sides of their faces away from the light will be shaded.

Cross lighting offers three main benefits:

- As we've seen, it can be used to give subjects form.
- It creates very gentle, feathered light on the subject as it is only the edge of the light source that is being used, rather than the more concentrated beam in the centre.
- It avoids unsightly reflections and hotspots thanks to the angle of inflection=the angle of reflection law. If you point a light directly at a subject, that light bounces straight back at you. The further the light moves round to one side, the further it is reflected by a corresponding angle to the other.

If this lighting style was good enough for Rembrandt, I think it's probably good enough for us! It has lots of applications.



HALBE MAGNETIC FRAMES

ONE OF THE REASONS I PUT OFF MAKING PRINTS for so many years was that I had no good way to present them. I made things difficult for myself, too, by cropping pictures to all sorts of irregular dimensions. On the rare occasions I did make prints, they either disappeared into ill-fitting portfolio boxes never to be looked at again, or hung around the office collecting dust and creases.

Our colleague and friend, [Willi Rolfes](#), introduced me to what may well be the perfect framing solution- the magnetic frames made by the German company, [Halbe](#). The frame consists of a deep base-board contained in a thin steel box, whose edges are raised some millimetres above its surface. You lay the print on the baseboard, then add the window mount and the glass, which fit snugly within the metal box's edges. It's then simply a matter of pressing the wooden frame containing magnetic strips on to the box and everything is held in place.

Now, these frames aren't cheap. Mine are a custom size (380 x 500 mm) which accommodates my A3 prints with 50 mm window mount with extra deep, 3 mm, window mounts. They cost to around €95 per piece. Ouch. Standard sizes are somewhat less expensive. But the big difference with these frames compared to others is that they are reusable, time after time, without any degradation. Just make sure you're happy with the format of your prints before starting your collection. No longer will you have to look at the same picture year after year because the thought of *another* framer's bill is a bit too much to bear.



1. Heavy-duty embossing seal to validate print.
2. 315 g/sq m print.
3. Baseboard, with metal sides to contain print, window mount and glass.
4. My template to help position the print.
5. 3 mm deep window mount.
6. Plain glass.
7. Solid ash frame.

[Halbe Rahmen's website.](#)

The Story of our Retreats in 50 Objects

HAND-PAINTED BOWL, MONASTÈRE DE BETHLÉEM

WE LOVE DESTINATIONS ON THE MAINLAND WHERE we can take along our own equipment—about 400 kg of it—packed into our box trailer. We enjoy being able to put our mark on the place we are staying with our own plates, water bottles, bowls, cutlery, tablecloths, napkins, books and a thousand and one other things. And of course it means that Charlotte's most important kitchen tools—the Magimix, the Kitchenaid, the ice-maker and...the mushroom brush—can come along too.

When we travel by car, there is space too for a splendid 40 cm wide bowl we bought here in Burgundy. Made by white-cowled nuns from the Monastère de Bethléem at Epinac, it is richly decorated in traditional motifs, its imperfections heightening the sense of something that is certainly not mass-produced.

France, it seems, has a *fête* for every day of the year and it was during the Rose Festival in the village of La Celle-en-Morvan, that we came across the stand selling this lovely pottery.

There is always a bowl of fresh fruit set out for guests to help themselves to during a Retreat and this new addition to our travelling collection fits the bill perfectly—so long as we're not flying.



on Retreat

HOHE TAUERN NP., AUSTRIA





HOHE TAUERN NP., AUSTRIA

THIS WAS OUR SECOND RETREAT IN AUSTRIA but the first to the Hohe Tauern National Park. We chose it on the recommendation of our partner on this Retreat, Willi Rolfes, who already knew the area well from previous visits. Famed for its habituated alpine marmots as much as Austria's highest peak, *Großglockner* (3798 m), the area provided us with a non-stop feast of photography, from waterfalls and alpine peaks, to rare flowers and even the owners of the farm where we stayed.

Looking north-west from our accommodation high above Heiligenblut, we had a front-row view of *Großglockner*; the photo on the cover of this MENU was taken at 05:15 from the house with a telephoto. The 40 minute drive to the marmots along the high alpine road (*Hochalpenstraße*) took us through some of the most spectacular scenery in the Alps, which just kept getting more jaw-dropping as we climbed.

The Park authorities are surprisingly relaxed about people being around the marmots and feeding them (although bread is forbidden). This is one of the most intensively studied groups in Europe, though, and its robust health is attributed, in part, to supplementary feeding, especially when it is highly nutritious food like the shelled hazelnuts we offered. The alpine choughs found here too have become equally confident with people and come in very close to see what's on offer.

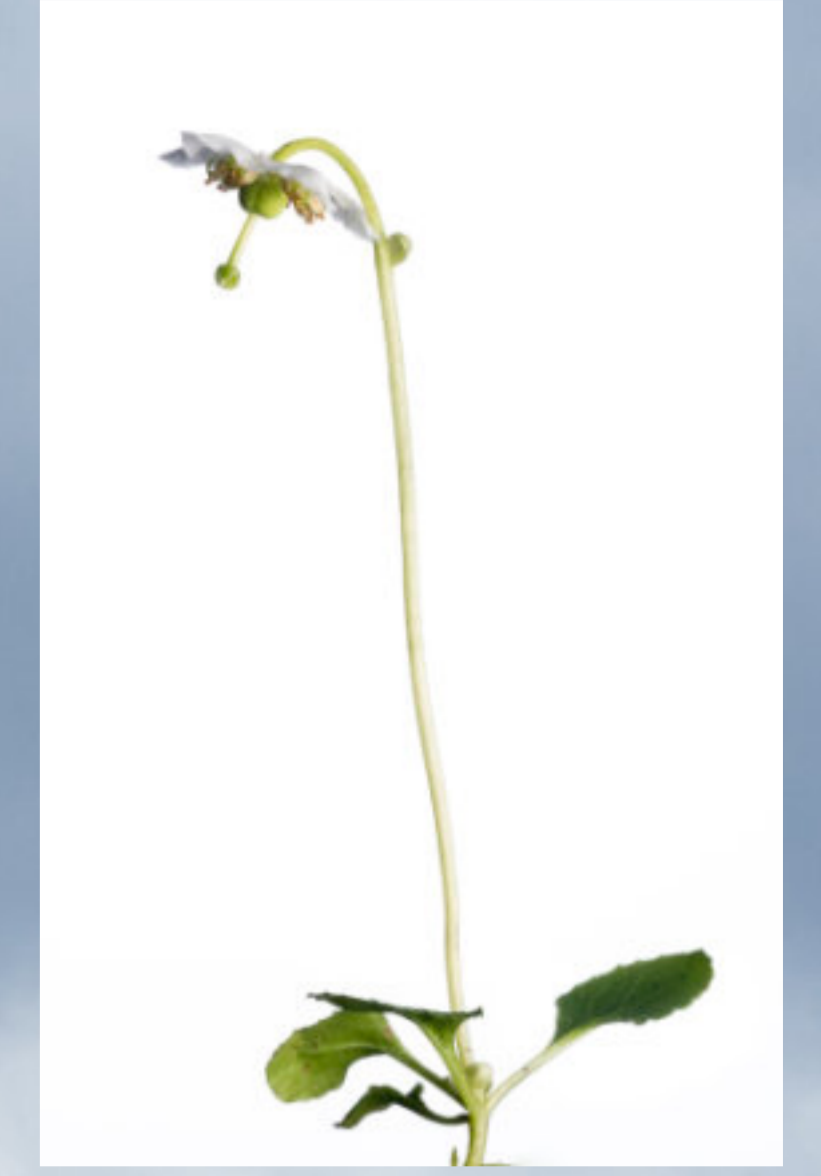
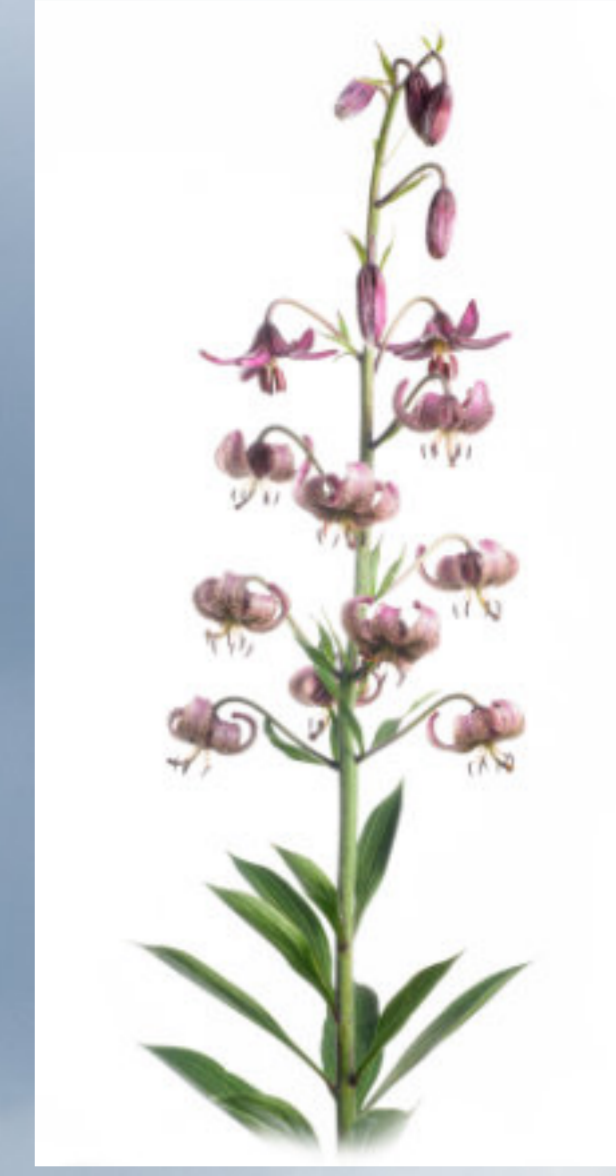
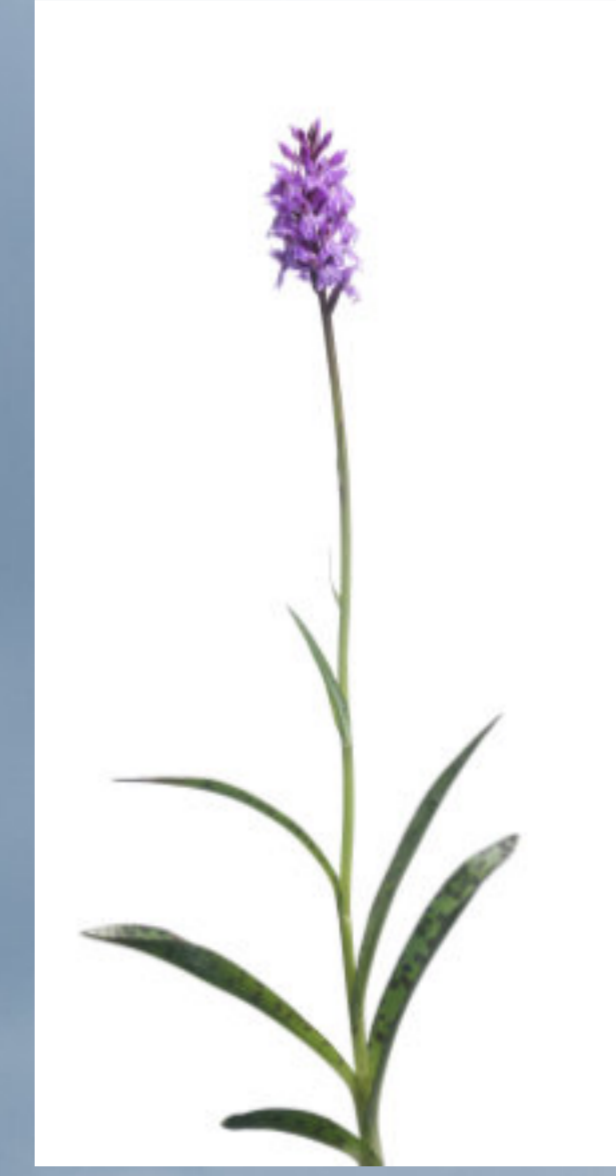
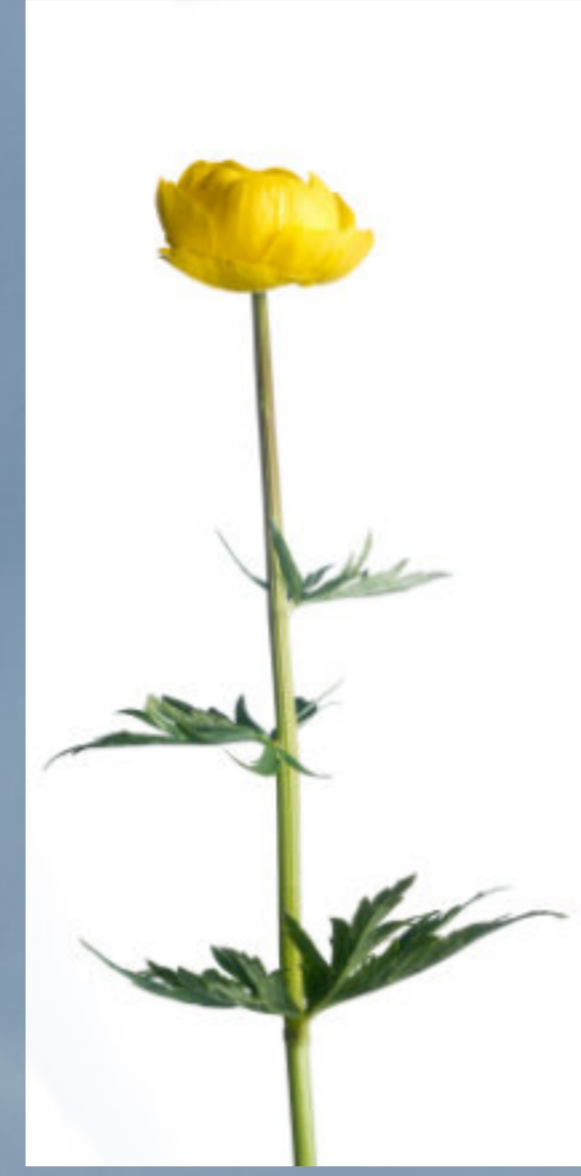
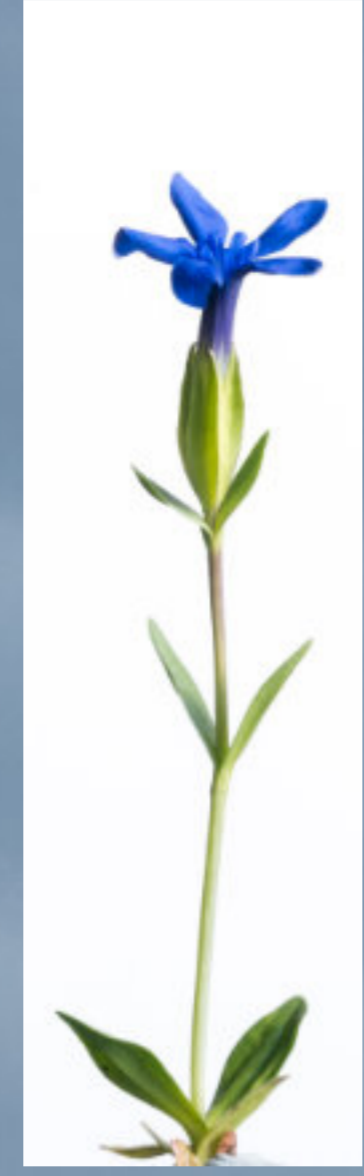
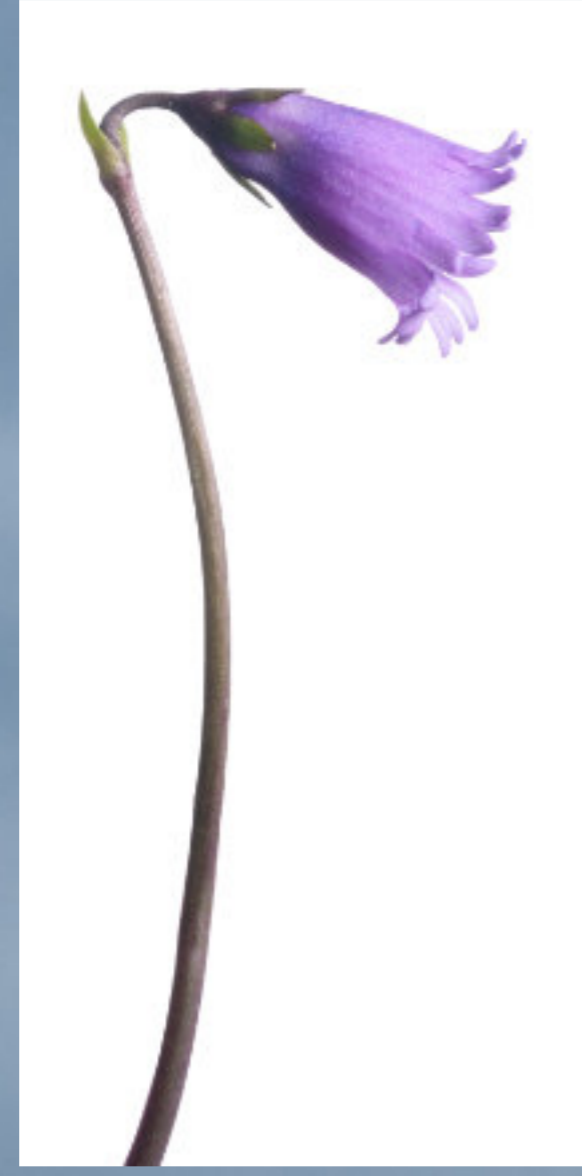


For alpine plant enthusiasts, the Hohe Tauern is endlessly exciting. Many species that are extremely rare in the UK—Snowdon lily, purple coltsfoot, yellow oxytropis and others—are common here (albeit genetically distinctive). While most of these are small and hard to photograph well, in the forest we met a stately Martagon lily in full flower (lock up your cats; even the pollen is toxic to them); tall, yellow-flowered wolfsbane (highly toxic to us) and that most elusive of plants in Scotland, whorled Solomon's seal. There, it grows only in a few darkly shaded ravines in Perthshire and Angus. Here, it was at the side of the footpath.

While there were a lot of visitors about—the *Hochalpenstraße* is one of *Grand Routes* of Europe for bikers and sports car drivers after all—it was easy to get away from the crowds and immerse ourselves in pursuit of ibex, hang out with some marmots, or lose ourselves in composing abstract images along the side of an old barn or river.

We count ourselves lucky that, once again, we had a splendid group to work with—interesting, imaginative people with interesting stories to tell. You're all welcome again, anytime.





TEAM LOBSTER

IN SOME BANDS, the line up changes over time but the essential spirit and drive provided by the lead singer remains constant. So it is with our kitchen band of sisters, Team Lobster (on account of their aprons' motif). Charlotte leads the band (but has never as much as smashed up a broom or hurled a soufflé at the wall), backed over the years by Lydia, Emely, Linda, Lisa, Beth, Fran, Emily, Freddie, and here in Austria, Iona and Cati.

After a couple of Retreats, returning guests are sometimes quite candid about the fact that the food and hospitality is at least as important to them as the photography. Sometimes more so. I'm relaxed with that. Really. Because while I do my best to provide the photographic opportunities, the weather sometimes works against us. It's reassuring to know that if I've not been able to deliver, we can always depend on Team Lobster to do so.

If the truth be told, the real graft on these Retreats happens in the kitchen. Typically the working days are 14 - 16 hours long with only occasional escapes. But Team Lobster's flexibility means that we can be shooting at the best times of day. On summer Retreats now, we sometimes have dinner as early as 17:00 hrs so that we can be out shooting until dusk –and not have to have our main meal at midnight. Even Team Lobster has its limits.



Team Lobster: Charlotte and Iona, with Cati Klotz, beneath Großglockner in June 2022. Photo © Willi Rolfes.

Charlotte makes

ROSEMARY-STUFFED SIDE OF SALMON



ROSEMARY-STUFFED SIDE OF SALMON

EARLIER THIS YEAR, I FOUND MYSELF ON TWO RETREATS without any help in the kitchen. On one of those I was also a driver, so you can imagine that there were some days when I was like a duck-calm on the surface but paddling like fury underneath to get everything done. Now, while I *can* work alone, after the second trip I decided that *wouldn't* do so again. Niall knows when I'm serious! And so, once again we turned to our pool of creative, talented and, fingers crossed, available "youngsters" to create a new Team Lobster line up. We have lost previous members to politics, RADA, primary school teaching, the British Antarctic Survey, university and PhD studies. Emily took a week out from her PhD to help me on our Mull Retreat in May, and Iona and Cati joined us in Austria. They were all truly brilliant. What a difference it makes for me and for Niall because he no longer needs to be on dishwasher duty! We haven't managed to prise Eliot away from his busy work life in Paris yet, but I can vouch for his cocktail making skills and maybe one day he will join us too.

Iona introduced me to this recipe from a new book by Jamie Oliver and it really is delicious. We served it during the Mull and Austrian Retreats and there were clean plates all round. The recipe serves eight people and requires a side of salmon, but if you can't get a whole side or just want to make a smaller portion, salmon fillets work just as well. For a vegetarian option, you can stuff a big portobello mushroom instead. The flavours work very well but just remember to omit the anchovies. It's

a perfect dish when we have all been out for the day and Team Lobster has to get dinner on the table quickly.

Served with buttered new potatoes, some oven-roasted vine tomatoes and a side dish of dressed green beans, it makes a perfect celebratory dinner or summer lunch. A glass of chilled Sauvignon Blanc or Chablis is a good accompaniment or, if you prefer a non-alcoholic drink, try sparkling elderflower instead. And for dessert...why not prepare a strawberry tiramisu—the recipe is in the May 2021 issue of [MENU?](#)

As we head into high summer and a break from Retreat work, I will be trying out and creating new recipes and will also have the privilege of gaining some real French cooking skills from a dear neighbour, in readiness for our French Retreat in October. There is always so much more to learn and practice and this year we also have fresh vegetables growing in the garden. There's nothing better!

Bon appétit.

Charlotte

ROSEMARY-STUFFED SIDE OF SALMON

Serves 8

Ingredients

A 2 kg side of salmon, skin on and pin-boned

1 heaped tablespoon of capers- drained and roughly chopped

10 anchovy fillets- roughly torn

2 long sprigs of fresh rosemary, with some leaves stripped off and finely chopped and enough sprigs left for stuffing into the salmon, whole

10 mixed-colour olives- de-stoned and roughly chopped

1 fresh red chilli- finely sliced

1 lemon- zest and juice

2 tablespoons of olive oil.

To serve alongside

New potatoes

Cherry vine tomatoes (enough on a vine for about 5 small tomatoes per serving).

For the beans

1 kg of green beans- topped and tailed and sliced to your choice of size

2 cloves of garlic- peeled and finely minced

2 tablespoons of olive oil

2 tablespoons of red wine vinegar

A pinch of sea salt and a good grind of black pepper.

How -to

Pre heat your oven to 180°C

Firstly, prepare the cherry tomatoes by placing them in a roasting tin (complete with the vine stem), adding a good glug of olive oil, a drizzle of balsamic vinegar if you have it, a crunch of sea salt and a tiny sprinkle of sugar. Put it all into the pre-heated oven. They take 30-45 minutes to roast, so time them to go in about 20 minutes before the salmon.

Boil the potatoes for as long as they need, depending on their size, then drain, butter and season.

The beans can also be prepped in advance. Place the minced garlic into a small bowl with the vinegar, olive oil and seasoning and mix well. Set aside. The beans will take about 7 minutes to cook in boiling water (or steamer). Drain, then stir in the garlic, oil and vinegar. Place on a nice serving platter along with the potatoes.

For the salmon, start by preparing all the marinading ingredients either the day before, and putting them in the fridge, or on the day itself. Put the prepared capers, anchovies, the finely chopped rosemary, olives and chilli, lemon zest and juice in a bowl and mix well with the 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Set aside while you prepare the salmon. Place it, skin side down, in a large roasting tray and, with the tip of a small sharp knife, make deep cuts into the flesh at about 3 - 4 cm intervals, all over. Now stuff the cuts with the mix, using the knife to help you. Make sure to get a bit of each element of the marinade into every cut. Finish by stuffing a short sprig of rosemary into each cut. Spoon any excess juices around the salmon.

Pre-heat the oven to 180°C and roast the salmon in the bottom of the oven for about 20 minutes. Once it is cooked, let it rest for 10 minutes before serving.

Serve a slice of the salmon with the roasted vine tomatoes placed along side or just over the top, and invite your guests to help themselves to the fresh vegetables.

Wenche Dahle

IN THE LIGHT OF THE SEA

IN THE LIGHT OF THE SEA

I WAS BORN IN 1969 and live with my husband, Ole Martin Dahle, in the small coastal community of Flatanger in central Norway. That much about my life is simple to tell.

When I was a young person, though, I suffered a lot of illness and spent long periods absent from school. I didn't feel good about myself and I carried that anxiety into my adult life. You could say that I was tuned in a minor key from early on.

Then, on Christmas Eve in 2014, my life changed profoundly– and in an unexpected way. Ole Martin gave me a camera. It was not something I had particularly wanted and although I'd seen thousands of pictures by the photographers who visit us, it had never occurred to me to make my own. But after Ole Martin showed me how to adjust its settings, my camera and I became firm friends before the year was out.

I have a creative background and from the start wanted to make my own pictures rather than copy other people's. I knew nothing about "the rules" or "the right way to do things" and instead set out to play. I felt a wonderful sense of freedom, a loss of inhibition. This new world of possibilities lifted a heavy weight from me.

We live in a wonderful place to make pictures. Our little community is sheltered from the open ocean by an archipelago and behind it, the forested mountains dip down to numerous fjords and inlets. Sometimes these are glassy calm, but on other occasions hurricane-force winds whip up the water's surface, terrifyingly. Behind the small beaches, there

are ponds and lakes in the woods, fringed with flowers and teeming with insects. When the camera and I are together in these places, anxiety and difficult thoughts melt away as nature takes me to a better place.



In the Light of the Sea came about by chance. In 2017, Ole Martin and I had a visit from the German photographer, Willi Rolfes. He liked my work enough to invite me to speak at a conference he organises each year in Cloppenburg the following February. It was my first talk abroad and when I met Charlotte and Niall. I was moved by the response from the audience. I think that being open about the struggles I've had in my life, but also talking about the healing that photography can provide, struck a chord with quite a few people. Perhaps this was recognised by the publisher, Martin Breutmann of Bildperlen, who was there, as he offered me a contract to produce a book of my work. Of course, I was delighted—if a little surprised. I was determined, though, that the text should be relatable to other people in my situation, not just about me, and therefore a more lyrical, less direct approach was needed. And while many of my photographs in the book may appear melancholic, I think these are balanced by uplifting ones. This has been my story after all; sometimes staying in a dark corner waiting for the hurricane to pass, sometimes filled with the light sparkling on the surface of the fjord.

I worked with Sandra Bartocha and my close friend, Hilde Lovise Fossvik, on the layout of the book and our joint efforts were recognised when **In the Light of the Sea** won the Award of Excellence in the Art Book category of the 2020 *International Creative Media Awards*. Producing a book of photographs has been a delight for me, as has been receiving this award.

But most of all, I am touched by the sense of fellowship and support I receive when I have presented the work publicly. I know am not alone.



Images © Wenche Dahle, 2022.

Buy Wenche's book, in English, German or Norwegian :

www.wenchedahle.no

Learn about Wenche and Ole Martin's business, Norway Nature, [here](#).

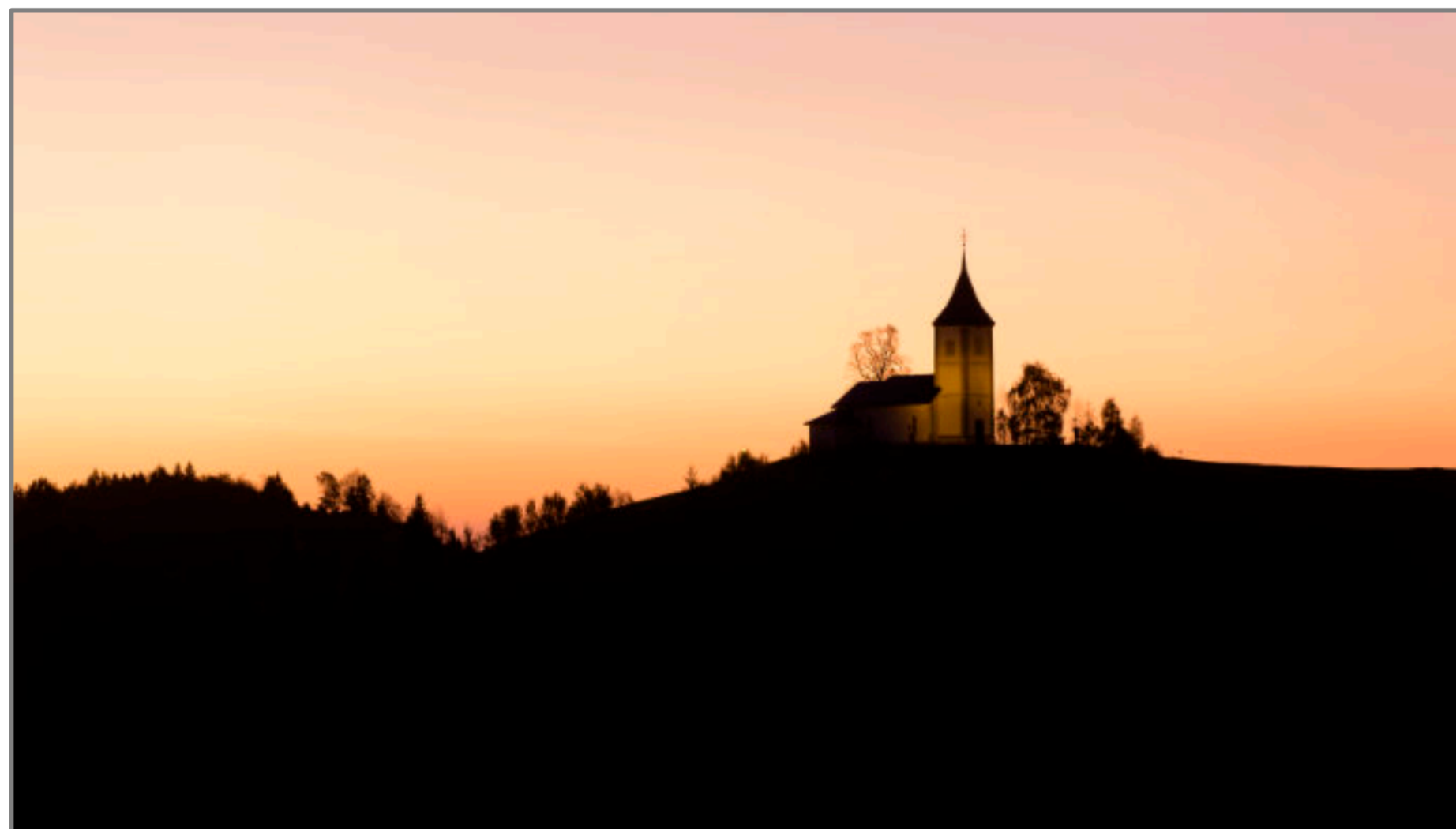
“ *Sorrow and despair are difficult to endure, while joy is like the miracle of light and brings relief to the aching soul.*

*If I do not love myself,
I cannot be open to light and love.* ”

RETREATS PROGRAMME

Winter in the Lake Bohinji region, Slovenia

11 - 18 February, 2023, £2700



For a change from our usual autumn Retreat in Slovenia, we want to take you to our favourite locations, only this time under the guise of winter. Gorges with turquoise rivers that are shaded in summer and autumn are once again open to the light while lively waterfalls reform into intricate ice sculptures. It's not unreasonable to expect some snow, either!

Isles of Jura and Islay, Scotland

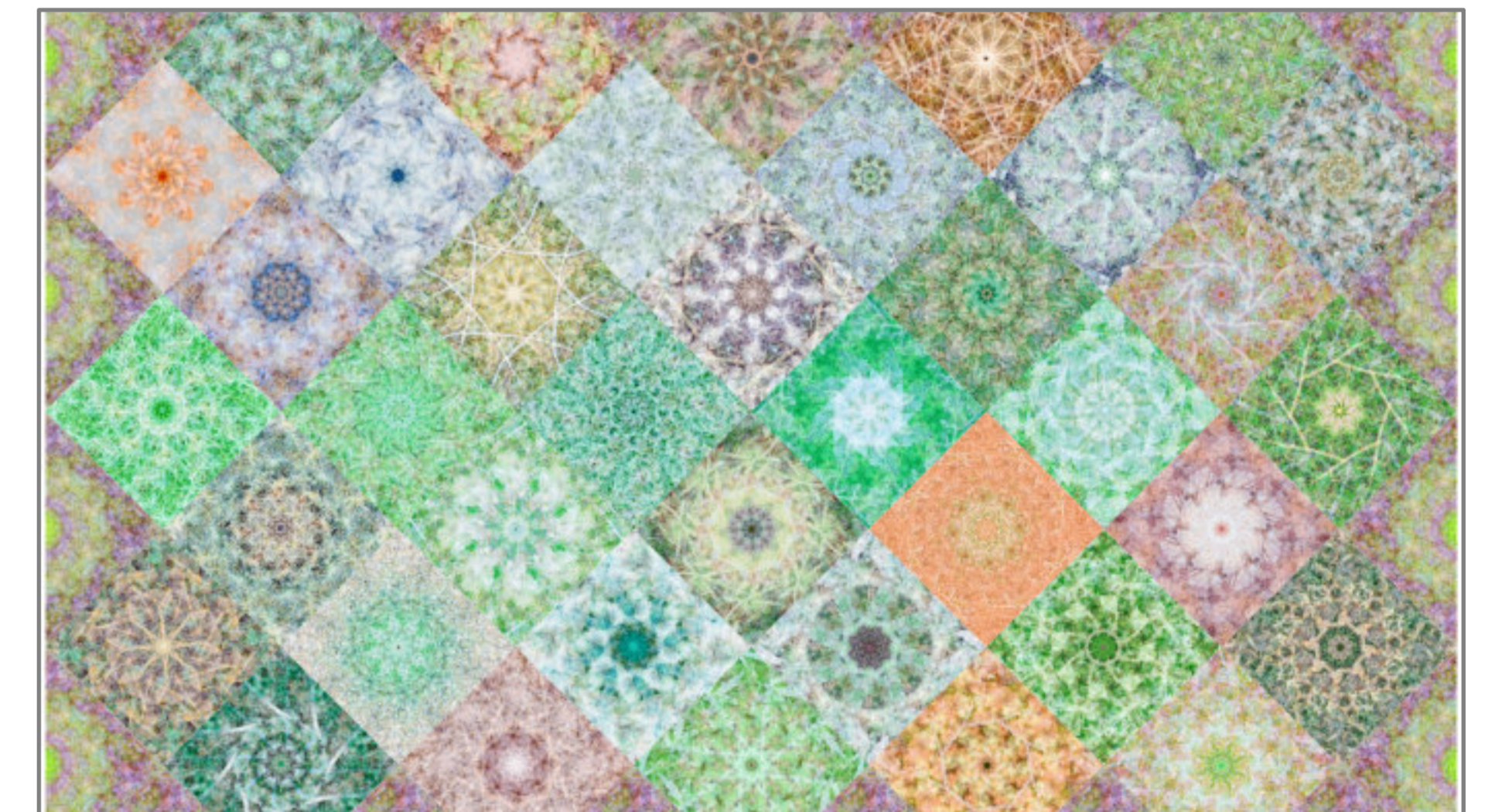
11 - 18 March, 2023, £2650



We return to our favourite Scottish islands at our favourite time of year, but with a spin this time- an overnight stay on Jura to give us time to explore some remote areas with the help of a local estate. Islay, as usual will serve up its unique blend of magical shore lines and lighthouses, eccentric geology and whisky distilleries- with thousands of barnacle geese thrown into the mix.

South Morvan, France, fast-forward creative week

23 - 29 April 2023, £2500



We want to share the peak week of spring here in the Morvan with you and use it to advance your "creative practice". Each day we work on a single technique or idea - including white background photography (and all the transferrable skills that come from it), multiple exposures and using Affinity Publisher to make your own collages and "transects". This all happens in a rural setting that has scarcely changed for generations with an abundance of animals and plants.

RETREATS PROGRAMME

Queyras Natural Regional Park, France

13 - 20 May 2023, £2650



At last... our earlier attempts to run a Retreat in the Queyras were thwarted by COVID so we are delighted to offer a holiday now in this enchanting area of the Hautes-Alpes in south-eastern France. Marmots, orchids, Europe's highest village and France's own hoodoo rock formations, the Queyras offers a rich photographic diet (not to mention nice weather).

Heligoland, Germany

10 - 17 June 2023, £2700



We've once again tapped into the knowledge of our German friend and colleague, Willi Rolfes, to create an exciting programme of wildlife photography on the North Sea islands of Heligoland. Relatively unknown to photographers outside Germany and the Netherlands, you will have outstanding opportunities to photograph grey and harbour seals, gannets, eider ducks, oystercatchers and other sea birds from dawn until dusk.

Hoge Veluwe National Park, the Netherlands

16 - 23 September 2023, £2650



The Hoge Veluwe National Park in central Netherlands is the number one location to photograph Continental red deer in a moorland setting- and where they are used to people. Although they are the same species as the red deer found in the UK, these animals have a better diet, grow bigger and develop much more impressive heads. We will be visiting when the heather is blooming and the animals in prime condition.

RETREATS PROGRAMME

YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED A SUBTLE SHIFT in our programme, from Retreats with a heavy landscape and macro focus, to ones where we spend a little more time on wildlife. But even when we work well-known locations, we believe that our particular blend of hospitality and photographic imagination sets us apart.

We are evolving in other ways too. As we ramp up the number of creatures that visit our *prairie*, with its drinking pool and feeding stations, so we will be open to two guests at a time to stay and eat with us, in our home, and to use the hides daily as well as driving out to other photographic opportunities in the area. We will be working closely with the local tourism authority in the months ahead to develop the considerable opportunities for eco-tourism in the area. We plan to offer our five day stays from January 2023 onwards.

We're a little behind with the publication of our brochures for next year's Retreats but these should be available in August. We will also be adding more Retreats for the back end of 2023 in due course. Since the pandemic, we have noticed that, understandably, people are sometimes reluctant to book very far in advance. For most of the time, that's not a problem with us but in order to secure accommodation, we will be starting to introduce "book before" dates for some of our Retreats.

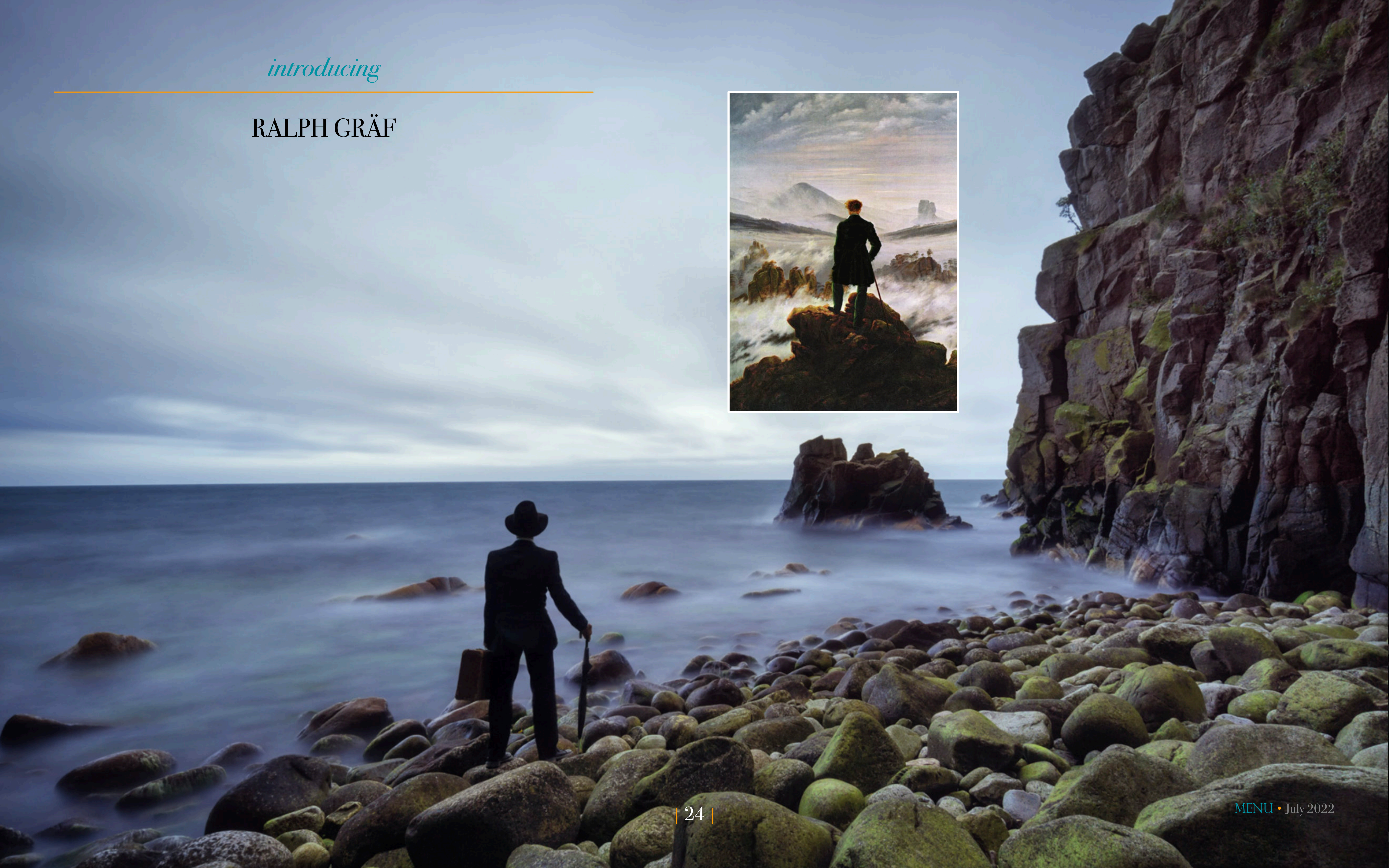
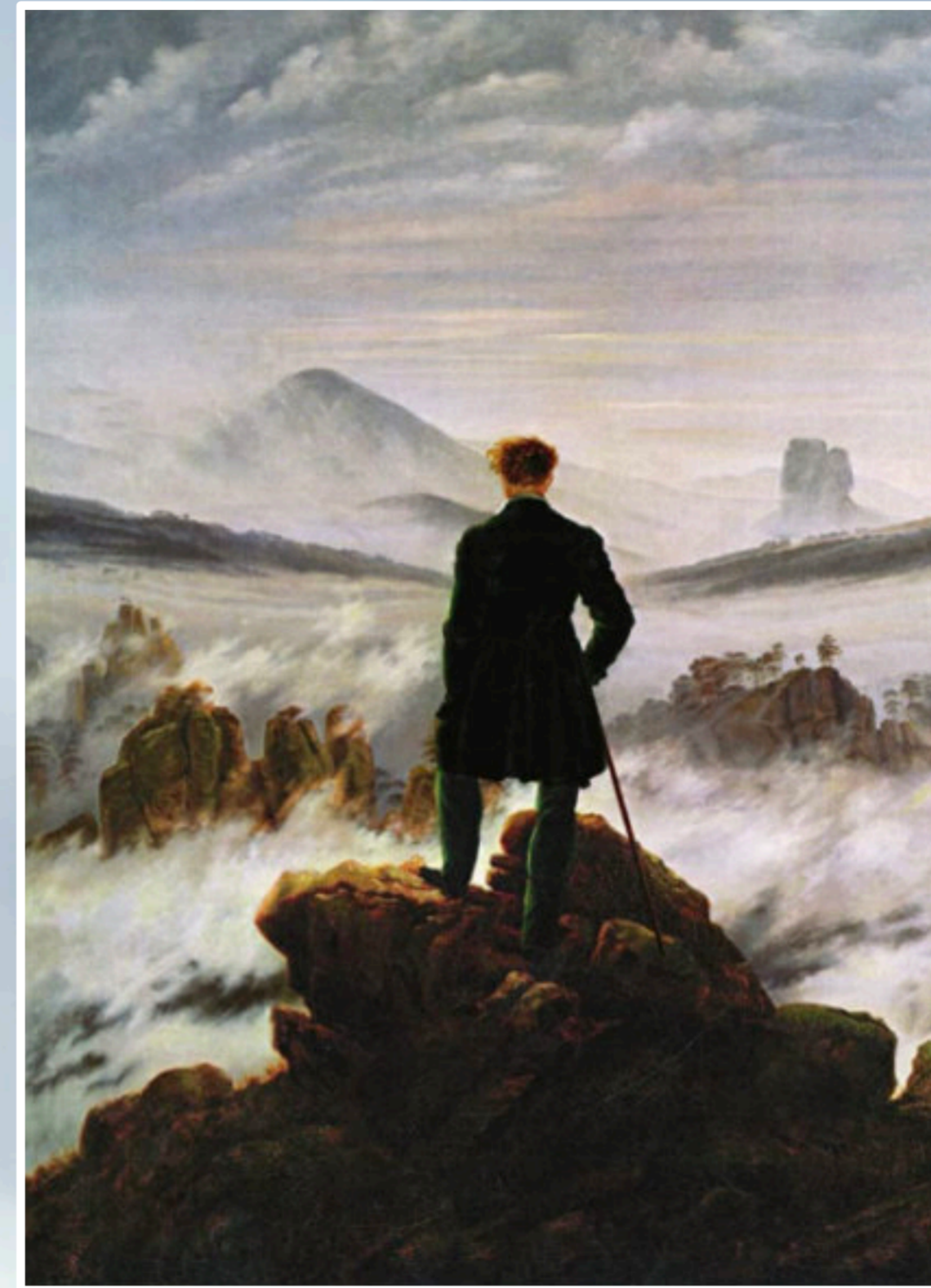
We look forward to you travelling with us and remember, we can always set up a Zoom meeting with you to discuss any questions you may have.



Iona with marmot and alpine chough at Franz Josefs Hohe, taken on Charlotte's flippin' iPhone!

introducing

RALPH GRÄF



RALPH GRÄF

WHEN I FIRST SAW GERMAN PHOTOGRAPHER, Ralph Gräf's project, *The Traveller*, I was put in mind of Caspar David Friedrich's paintings, none more so than *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818) (inset on p 24). Amongst the Romantic painters, Friedrich's work is held in particular affection by many photographers as it can be enjoyed on the pictorial, as well as a metaphorical, level. It is accessible, but also encourages the viewer to look beneath the surface and work out what might be going on.

And so it is with Gräf's pictures. The figure—himself as it transpires—appears not only in sublime landscapes associated with Romanticism but also in post-industrial ones. Sometimes we see his face, sometimes he is a *Rückenfigur*. But he strikes a consistent and instantly recognisable presence with the combination of a battered old suitcase, an umbrella and a black fedora hat. These props not only create an identity but also occupy the hands (as the cane does in *Wanderer*). If you've ever done any full-length figure photography, you'll appreciate how important this is. Even a hat, depending on where it is placed on the model's head, is suggestive. The props, together, identify him as a traveller. Yet he often seems highly dislocated. I want to know how he's ended up there and if he will reach his destination, wherever that is.

I think there is a lesson for landscape photographers in this work. I often see people struggle to find a composition they like and more often than not I respond that the landscape is like an empty stage set; it may be interesting enough in its own right but it's only really once an "actor" appears that it comes to life. That could be an animal or a person—actu-

ally, *anything* that focuses the viewer's attention. Most people are less curious about the stage than the actors performing on it. Once they are in place, the landscape assumes a more natural role as a place of intrigue, a setting for drama as it did in the pre-Romantic era. Who will your character be?



Images © Ralph Gräf, 2022.

<https://graef-photography.de/>

TORRIDONIAN STAG



YOU'VE READ in this issue about using cross lighting and how it shows shape, with gently feathered shadows. Now while it's easy to do this sort of lighting with people and plants, it's not very often you can take control of the lighting with a wild animal, in nature.

On our Torridon Retreat last March, we came across just one such fellow, a red deer who has become a bit of a fixture in the glen. Over the years I've known him he has grown from a scrawny wee pricket (whose antlers hadn't started to branch) into something looking like it might grow into a half-way decent stag. And that is in no small part thanks to all the extra feeding he gets from visitors.

It was a gloomy morning when we took this shot, the flash in a Deep Octa soft-box just out of frame to the right and the exposure set to darken his surroundings. He'd seen worse and wasn't troubled by us or our gear.

MENU

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with the Benvies

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