# CAMERA NOT INCLUDED

The Photography Zine by Ewen Bell



Edition #1
December 2025

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# PHOBJIKHA VALLEY

Bhutan / Himalayas

# THE COVER

Lamp room of a nunnery in Phobjikha Valley, Bhutan.

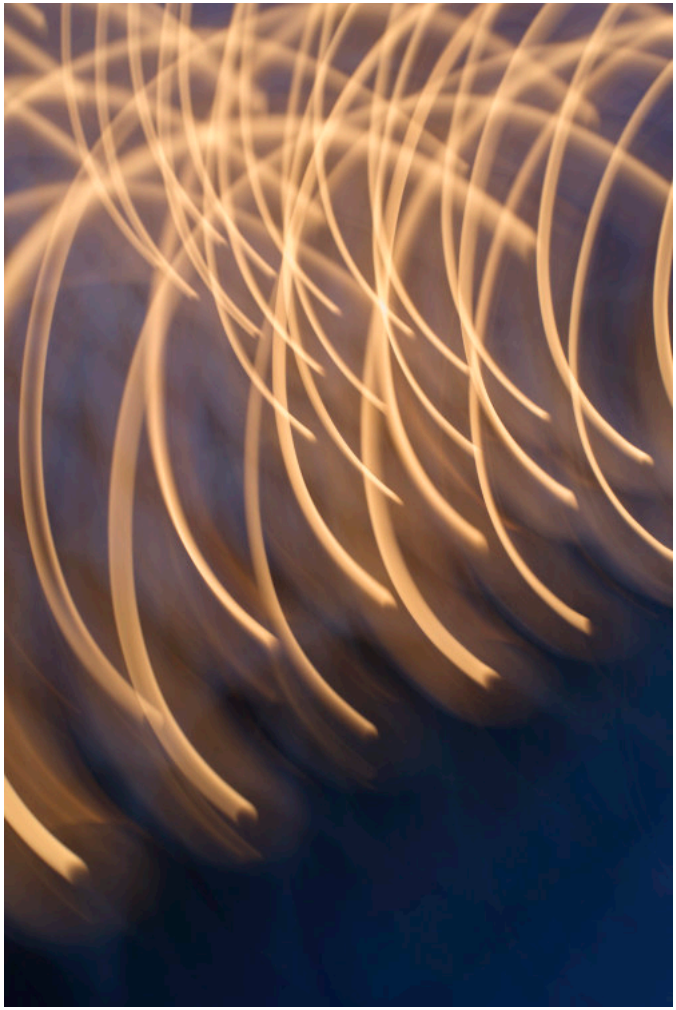
This was easily the greyest day of our journey. Every other day was filled with sunlight from dawn to dusk, but on this afternoon the clouds rolled in to steal the light. We made one more stop at a nunnery, at the distant end of the valley. It was very quiet, with only a few nuns in residence.

In the dim light each butter lamp shined with intensity and warmth. We took turns to light a few more. And then more again. And of course we take some photos. The cool light of the afternoon contrasts with the warmth of the lamps. The blend of hues was enticing.

My previous visit to Bhutan I had immersed myself in the art of ICM (Intentional Camera Movement) but today I would just dip my toe. I had my 40mm lens handy and set my shutter to go as slow as the light would allow. One second. I took a few dozen frames, twisting and spinning the camera in a variety of movements. Part of the joy with ICM is not quite knowing what will appear in the frame, even though you are the one in control of the process.

Serendipity.













# THIS EDITION

Morning Walk

Gangtey Gompa

The Cranes

40mm F2 AF

Go Slower

**December 2025**

I have been publishing my photos for three decades now, in one form or another. It's important for me to share what I capture. I don't want to keep things locked away and hidden. Photos are made of light, and so they need to shine.

This will be a regular publication, a place to place my thoughts alongside the captures that matter to me.

It's been five years since launching my book called ReIMAGINE and I wasn't ready for another one. A book is a serious undertaking. It's a drawn out process that feels like a series of minor failures. Books are cumbersome and heavy and they feel very final. They feel like something has ended, yet I am of a mood for beginnings.

Zines are whimsy – A small scale folly that can afford to fail and nobody gets hurt. Zines are about possibility and experimentation. Zines are just having a go. Above all, zines are shareable. And I do encourage you to share this widely with anyone and everyone who might enjoy it.

A zine shared is a zine enjoyed.

**A quick word of thanks to the sponsors who make this publication possible.**

As an ambassador for Lumix Australia I enjoy the privilege of using their cameras and lenses for the vast majority of my photography. We have also worked on a few special projects together, often with a view to donating camera equipment to organisations in Asia and the Himalayas.

I also want to thank Peak Design who have been very generous with my projects. I've bought a fair number of their bags over the years, but Peak Design have reached out a few times to let me road test some of their new models. I love their 10L sling especially, as it fits a pair of S9 camera bodies and three lenses, while still leaving room for a water bottle and extras

Also need to say a word of thankyou to Angelbird, who have been my go-to brand when buying SD cards for so many years now. I have more to say about that later in the zine!

LUMIX









# MORNING WALK

Phobjikha Valley, Bhutan.

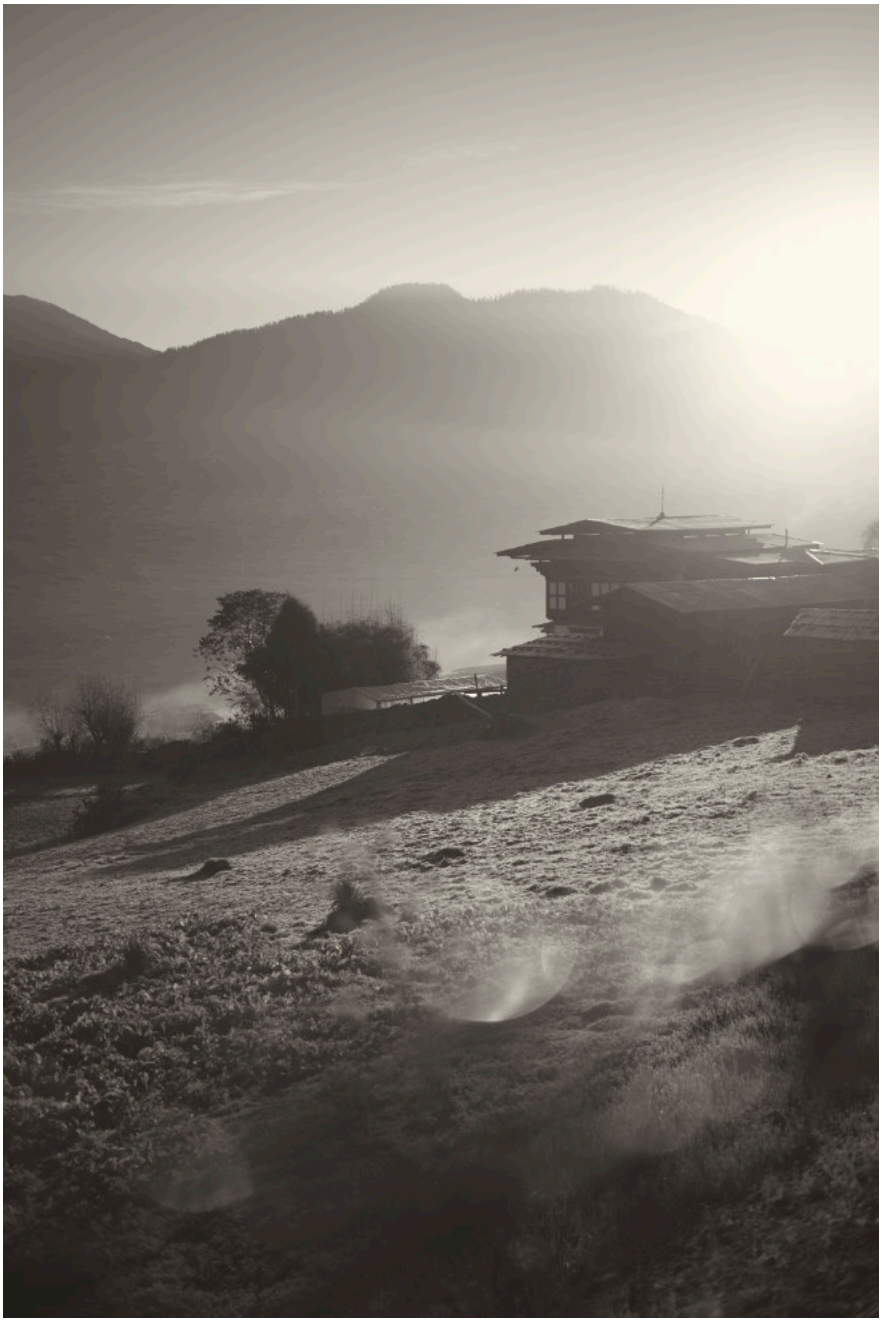
Some places will forever be a vision of B+W photography in my brain. Once you step into the monochromatic flow, it's hard to step away. Every time I return to Phobjikha I end up reverting to my B+W captures.

Phobjikha is a high elevation valley in Bhutan, graced by migratory cranes in the winter and home to farmers who grow turnips and potatoes. Most of the valley are very poor, although tourism is changing that for some. There's more money in hotels than potatoes.

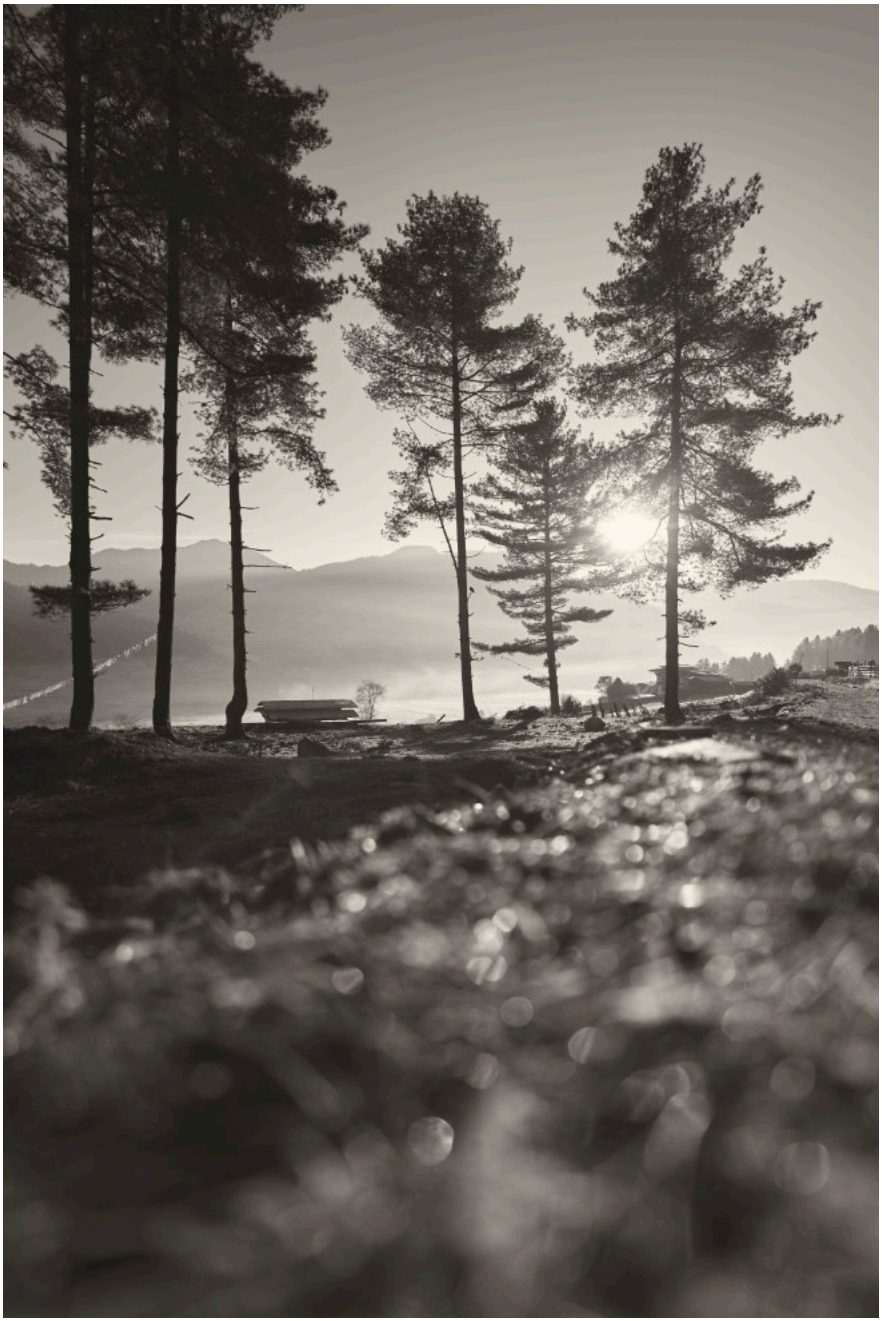
The valley is edged by forests of pine and in the middle of valley are impenetrable wetlands. It's good for cranes but not for humans. In between are small villages, making the most of the gentle slopes.

In the early light we walk through villages and pine forest, looking for where the light gives us some love.

[ Images in this series were captured on the Lumix S9
+ Lumix S 18mm F1.8 and TT Artisan 40mm F2 ]









You may notice that I like to **shoot into the sun**. A lot. I love the way incident light creates a sense of depth. I so rarely want the sun behind me, it should always be to the side or coming at me. Sometimes a little at me, sometimes a lot. I use a wide-open aperture when shooting into the sun like this. This makes lens flare softer and less distracting. The effect of flooding the frame with light pleases me greatly.



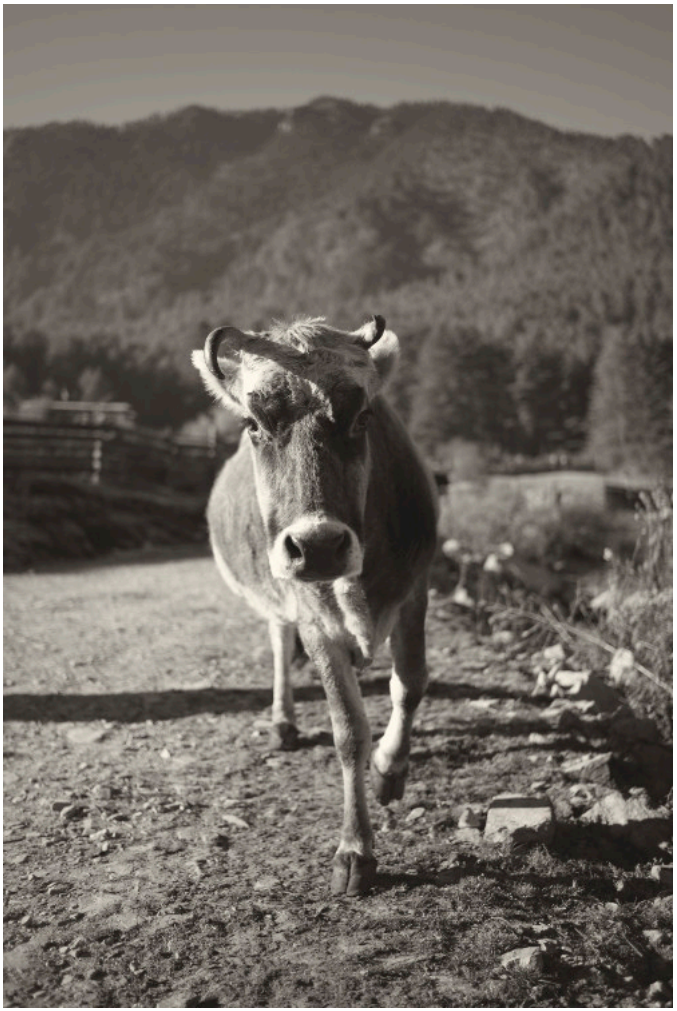


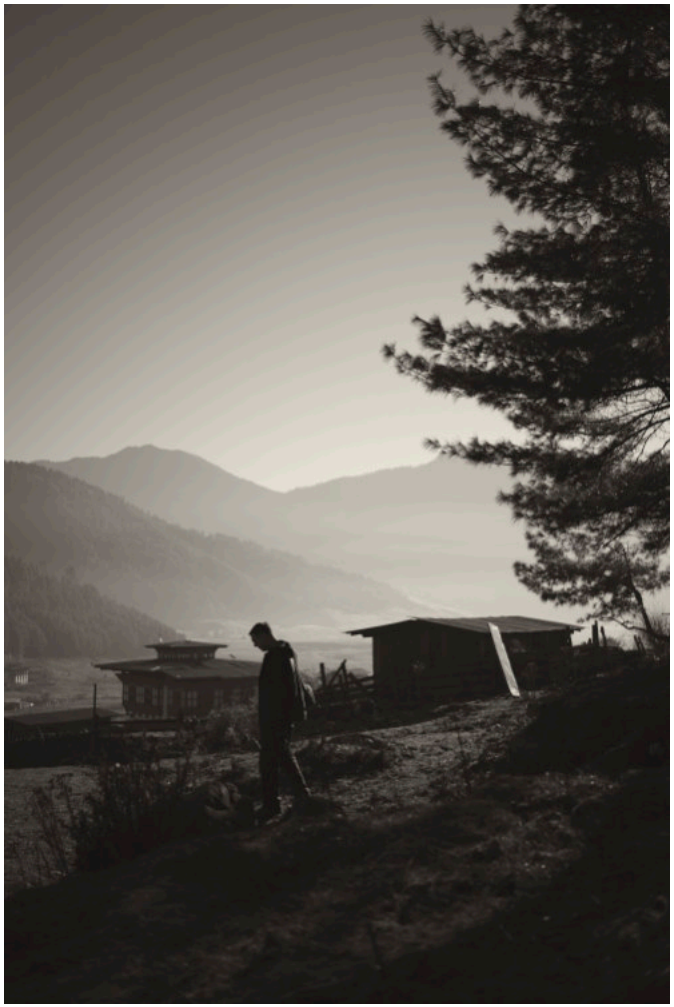


Flocks of **Mountain Finch** circle the fields in the morning light. The scale of these flocks is impressive, like a snow-storm with wings. Moments like this with nature make me feel alive. We think of places like Bhutan as a cultural experience, but for me it's also about that feeling of connecting with nature. Connecting with who we are as humans who live within the bounds of nature.











I have a soft spot for the **rough edges**. I don't enjoy seeing photography that is perfect and pristine and touched-up so much that nothing is out of place. Life is not perfect. Reality is far from perfect. I want my photos to reflect reality, even though it's only my version of it. So that means "rough edges". Celebrating the imperfect.







I can walk past a scene a dozen times and **not see the shot**. And then I walk past again but the light is doing something a little different, a little bit special. Suddenly the scene is a different scene. Suddenly it's compelling. Suddenly I'm taking a dozen photos of that scene looking for which composition is going to satisfy me the most.





# GANGTEY GOMPA

Phobjikha Valley, Bhutan.

Sitting high above the valley and overlooking the fields below, this is a beautiful and elegant gompa. The monastic curriculum is very active here, with lots of young monks engaged in study. The warmth of the winter sun spills into the inner courtyard, where the novice monks are studying.

[ Images in this series were captured on the
Lumix S9 + TT Artisan 40mm F2 ]

















**Winter in the Himalayas** is not what most people expect. The nights are cold but in the daytime when the sun shines it's so very warm. The sun is stronger at the higher elevations.

In the courtyard we meet a group of monks who are sunning themselves like cats. Along with their actual cat.

The monks are trying to study, but are easily distracted. They all want to cuddle that cat, but the cat has its favourites.













# EWEN'S WORKSHOPS

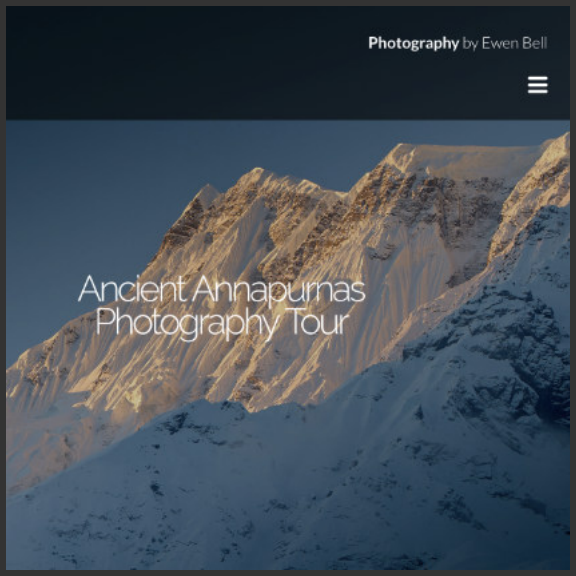
Intimate photographic experiences with Ewen Bell

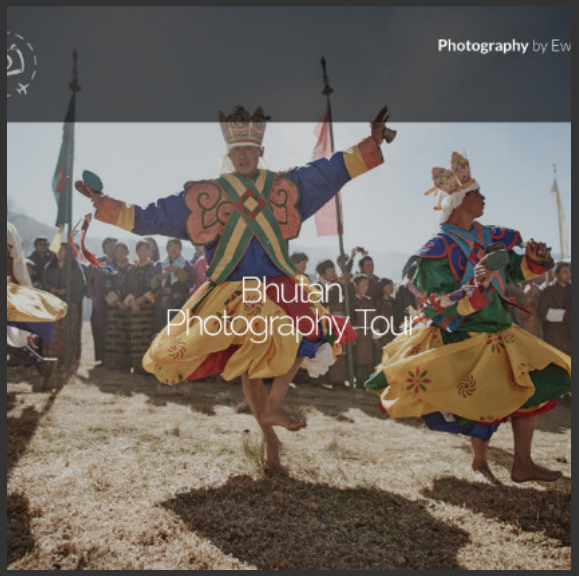
Every year I run a handful of workshops and photo tours in various parts of the world.  I have been doing this for twenty years now, and every year I try to find ways to make each experience more rewarding. It's never the same workshop twice.

I run my tours in places I know very very well. I don't outsource my expertise. I care about these places and believe they offer something special to my companions. We learn about the cultures and landscapes, as much as we do photography.

Visit the website for more details.

**ewenbell.com/tours**


Photography by Ewen Bell
Ancient Annapurnas
Photography Tour


Photography by Ew
Bhutan
Photography Tour


Photography by Ew
Food Photography Workshop
Make Your Captures Delicious


Photograp
Aurora Residency
Photographic Workshop in Arctic Norway

# THIS PAGE IS SPONSORED

Thank You Angelbird

Angelbird make a bunch of high performance memory card, and now also some excellent USB/Thunderbolt cables. My journey with this brand began in 2020 when we started making recipe videos at home. Shellie did the recipe development and styling, and I did the video and editing. We quickly realised that “sustained data rate” was way more important than any maximum speed a card night claim to offer. The max speeds you see on the labels tend to drop off after a minute of shunting data onto the laptop.

Anyway, back then I scored a killer deal on some 256gb micro SD cards by Angelbird, and I've been buying their stuff ever since. My minimum spec for SD cards now is V60, which means 60MBytes/sec (480mbps). This gives me enough grunt for shooting 6K 10bit video, or for high speed continuous burst when shooting birds or festivals. And it's fast to download at the end of the day. That matters when you're on the road.

Angelbird also supported us on the Tashi documentary project, with their affordable yet impressive SE range of CFExpress cards. I'm still using these in my Lumix S1RII, and still using my Angelbird SD cards in my other cameras. So I'm super happy to have them as a sponsor of this publication.


AV PRO SE
CFexpress B
512GB
3700MB/s





# THE CRANES

Phobjikha Valley, Bhutan.

Every winter the Black-necked Cranes make their journey from the Tibetan Plateau to spend winter in the milder conditions of Bhutan. Hundreds end up in Phobjikha Valley.

You hear them all over the valley. In the night they chatter and call, the noise of the honkering travelling easily from one side of the valley to the other in the cool night air. We were staying in a tented camp on the edge of the forest, and as you drift off to sleep the occasional huddle of honks would mingle with your thoughts.

As a photographic subject they are challenging. We have to keep our distance and avoid sending flocks into the air. They are big birds but they won't tolerate any intimacy with humans. In the morning light we pull out the long lenses, only to find heat-haze sends a ripple of distortion across the image. The sharper images happen when the sun is not casting across the landscape.

[ Images in this set were captured on the Lumix S1RII + 100-500mm F4.5-7.1 ]



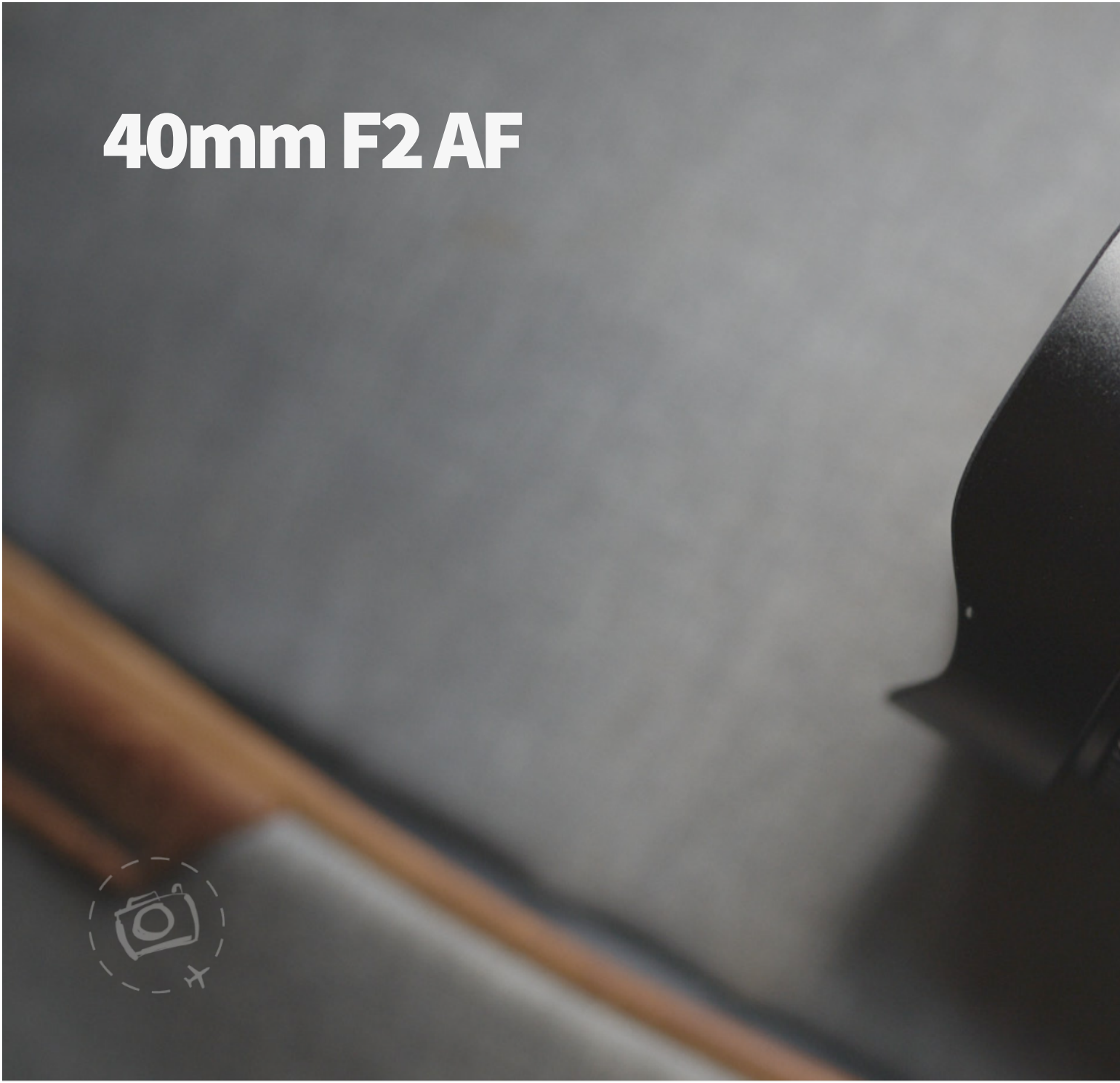








# 40mm F2 AF




A
16
11
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AF 40/2
P
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C2
C1
SCN

# MY NEW FAVIE LENS

40mm F2 AF (Full Frame) from TT Artisan

I bought this lens on a whim, as a bit of a treat for myself. It was cheap, just US$169 including delivery. I had no idea at the time it would be so good, I just figured for the price it was worth a crack.

I love my Lumix S9. It's the right camera for almost everything I do. But it's sooooo very small and most lenses look silly big on this camera. Even the ones that I used to think were small. When I finally got my hands on this lens I was amazed at the size. It looks the part with the S9, but does it deliver?

I did a full review of this 40mm F2 on my YouTube channel at the end of three weeks in Nepal. It was a peach. Totally surprised me. It's not perfect, but neither am I. This is easily my favourite lens for the S9 right now. It suits me and my style of photography.

Check out my video review of this lens, linked at my blog below…

**ewenbell.com/blog/Full_Frame_40mm_F2_AF**


5.6 4 2.8 2


AF 40/2
16 11 8


AF 40/2
Panasonic

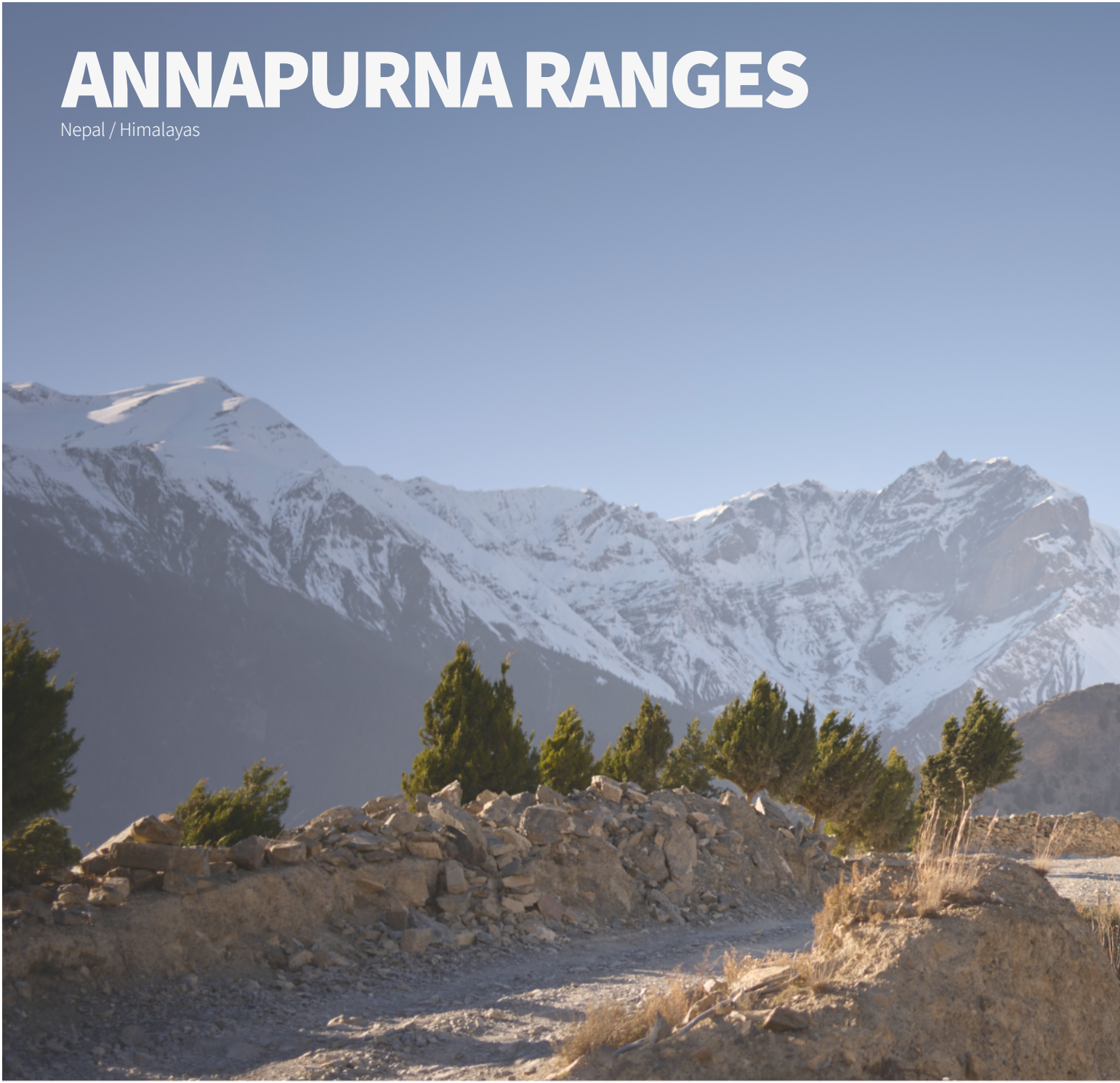

AF 40/2


LUMIX
TTARTISAN
AF 40/2 ED ASPH.
0.4M/1.3ft ⌀52mm


A
16
11
AF 40/2

# ANNAPURNA RANGES

Nepal / Himalayas





# GO SLOWER

The path to finding more joy and success in your photography does not begin with simply doing more, rather it begins with doing things more slowly.

In the lower reaches of Nepal's Mustang region, where the Annapurna Ranges look to the west, there's a small hill that overlooks the town of Syang to one side, and the apple orchards of Marpha to the other. We're standing on the highest ridge, watching the sun about to disappear behind the glaciers atop Dhaulagiri.

Behind us, the opposing peaks of Nilgiri catch the last rays of the sun. We're photographing a handful of chorten, some of which have been here for over 400 years. We are in no rush for the light to leave us.

As we explore the carvings, stones and offerings at this sacred site we contemplate new ways to photograph each moment. Sometimes we focus on the detail, like Tibetan carvings placed around the chorten. Sometimes we step back and embrace the bigger picture, with snow capped peaks rising above this ancient scene.

We take our time. With each click of the shutter we see possibilities for the next composition. We see things we did not see the first time.

My mantra for chasing photography over the past 25 years has been "Go Slow. Get Closer. Look for the Light." But everything begins with "Go Slow". It's a powerful foundation that has always rewarded my spirit and art.

In Nepal the local phrase for "slowly slowly" is "bistari bistari". We use it a lot here. Sometimes to express that moment when we realise our travel plans are derailed and we'll have to be patient for bit. Or to explain to our driver that we're going to be waiting a while as half a dozen of us take photos along the banks of a river. Or when breathing in the last light of the day an the edge of the Mustang.

Bistari Bistari... That feeling of wanting this moment to last a little longer.

"Go Slow" is the foundation of my entire career, and also the foundation for twenty years of running photo tours. I plan my itineraries to go slow and avoid being rushed from place to place. We have time to immerse and connect with nature and the locals. I slow down my travels to take the mountain road instead of the airplane where possible, so we get to see the terrain up close and watch the changes with each mile.



Slower still to get out of the jeeps and walk a stretch of the road on foot, listening to the bird calls and the sound of wind in the trees. Even walking can be too fast, so one morning when photographing Bhaktapur's Durbar Square we sat down on ancient stones and just watched the residents hustle from one temple to another in the morning light.

I don't just want to go slow. I want to go slower. At every level of a journey, if there's a chance to do less, but do it better, then I'm all for it.

When we slow down we see so much more. We understand so much more. We connect not only with the places and people around us, but with ourselves. We have room inside our heads to continue the process of learning, and creating. We find time to appreciate the art of photography and feel the joy of it. "Go Slow" gives us time to find our own path with the camera. Not to follow others, but to lead ourselves.

Not everyone who carries a camera wants to be a photographer of course. Some folks just want to take photos. We are all on our own journey. For those who do want to learn more, to find new ways to use the camera and new ways to see the light, then "Go Slow" is a gift. It opens the door to experiencing photography on a deeper level. When you spend twice the time, you find double the joy.

On a personal level photography has been my gateway to connecting to the world and all the treasures it contains. It gets me out and about, and lets me experience things that I would not have otherwise comprehended. "Go slow" is not just about the photography, but the experience itself. Being there is just as important as taking the photo. Indeed, we often confuse the order of things, and forget that having the experience first is precisely what leads to the photograph next – Those who rush to capture the moment are often failing to even have the moment.

Photography for me is both an inspiration to get out into the world, but also a consequence of having done so. Without doubt my best photography happens when I am taking it slow. When I embrace my limitations, and make the most of what is right in front me. I try to avoid chasing after the photo, and instead let them come to me. It helps to be in the right place at the right time, but what defines "the right time" often comes down to your appreciation of time itself.

Do we see time as a finite resource that can never be regained once lost? Or do we see time as a guiding hand that leads us to richer and more meaningful experiences?

The online world is full of pressures that make us feel that time is running out. Makes us feel that we must act now. We have to hurry. We have to tick the box. We have to keep moving forward. But forward towards what exactly?

"Go Slow" is a wonderful foundation to bring peace to the mind, and consider what is really important. Does it matter if you come to Nepal and capture absolutely everything there is to see? Is that even possible really? Do you need to capture EVERY photo? Or maybe you will find more joy in taking it slow and capturing just a handful of your best photos.

Bistari Bistari.










“I think of photography as a form of meditation. You can focus on the big picture, or enjoy quiet moments with the little details. The little things really do matter.”

# WHO MADE THIS?

Meet The Author

My name is Ewen Bell and I'm a photographer based in Melbourne, Australia. I've been very lucky in life to had the opportunity to make a career from photography.

For over two decades I've been travelling and shooting, which is why I have this photo of me in Bhutan when I was MUCH younger and better looking than I am now :) You can tell it's an old photo because I'm holding a DSLR camera.

Photography has changed my world, so I want to help others find their voice with the camera as well. I love sharing my photos, but also love sharing my knowledge about taking photos. That's why I'm making a zine, in addition to my blog and my YouTube channel.

**ewenbell.com**



# #EWENTUBE

I share a bunch of photos and ideas on my YouTube channel. You can also watch them on the Fediverse via PeerTube for those who prefer ad-free viewing

**ewenbell.com/ewentube**


"AURORA LENS
BUT FUN"


"ADHD IS A
SUPERPOWER"

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