

To carry a camera or not? Every adventurer inevitably asks themselves this question. Ultimately it's a matter of preference. Some would rather 'soak it up' and experience the beauty of nature without distraction. Others feel a pang of regret if not armed with a DSLR when the cloud cover suddenly lifts, the light intensifies, or the wildlife comes out in force.

For those in the latter camp, photography actually enriches the experience of nature. Not only at the time, but forever afterwards as well, because the photographer's aim is to capture the moment and preserve it forever. That way it can be re-experienced or shared with others. So explains Alex de Kieffe, who for the last seven years has guided Walking and Photography Weeks on Lord Howe Island, along with Luke Hanson of Pinetrees and local photographer Ken Lees.

"If I have a camera, I enjoy the moment even more," Alex explains. "Us photographers try to capture the feeling we experience and then, hopefully, using the capabilities of the camera, share that emotional response with our viewers."

"Because there's really always two people involved in any photograph – the person who took it and the person who views it. If you persist and take a lot of photos, using proper technique and forethought, you can truly produce the intended emotional response from the viewer."

That takes more than simply pointing and clicking, Alex explains. The intention of the weeks is not only to send everyone away with a mixed bag of stunning images, but to help participants reach their full potential as photographers.

To achieve this, participants head out on walks around the island, sometimes with the guides and sometimes independently, to capture its amazing scenery and finer details. On each individual outing, participants are briefed with specific goals and focuses (known as 'themes') set by the guides.

Over the course of the week, the quality of each individual's output shows marked improvement. Progress is evident at the nightly show and tell; photographers pick what they view as their best photo for the day, guides make their own selection, and one photographer wins the daily 'best photo' competition.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Ready with tripods as sunset arrives; a night shot from the boatshed looking back down the path to the Pinetrees dining area (Credit: Alex de Kieffe).

CAPTURING *the Moment*

A beautiful scene can live forever if you are armed with a good camera and photographic expertise. Walking and photography weeks with Pinetrees on Lord Howe Island are designed to help you immortalise those fleeting moments, by developing your skills in a World Heritage setting with the aid of expert guides

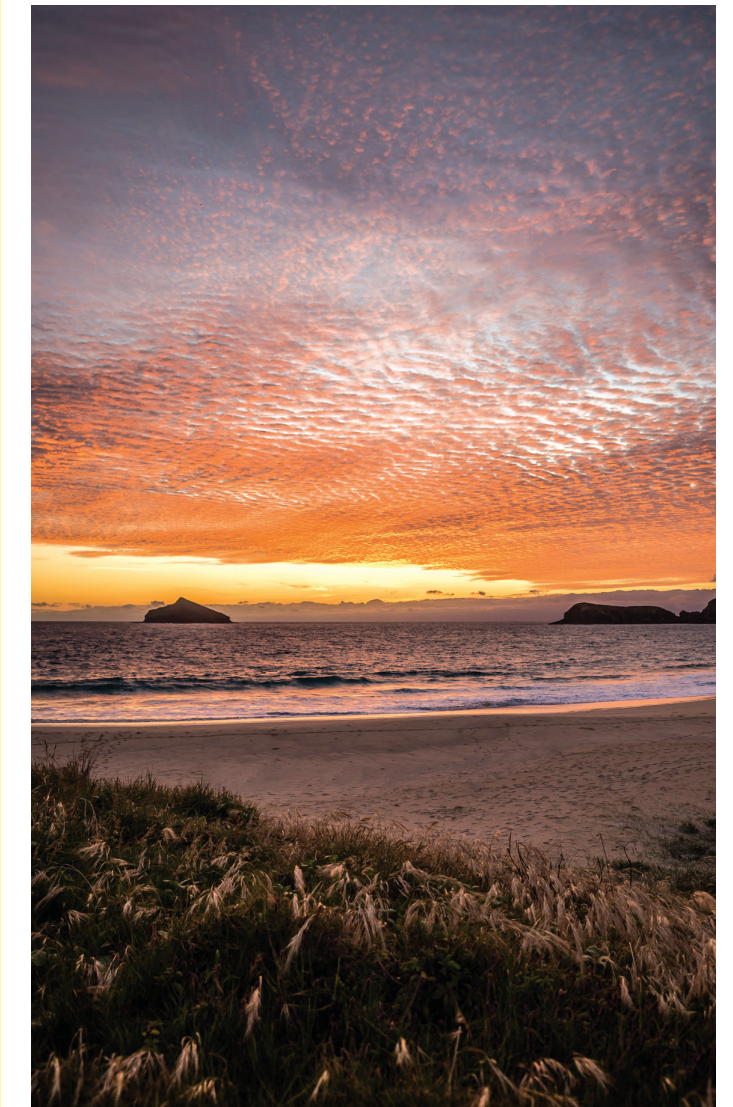


Developing your skills

Pinetrees' Walking and Photography Weeks offer practical learning in an outdoor setting. The guides were kind enough to offer a few of the tips they often share during the week:

- Be out in the landscape at the right time of day. Often, but not always, conditions are best one hour after sunrise and one hour before sunset, when the light is intense and the air clean.
- Consider how you lead the viewer's eye through the image. Remember, the eye is drawn to brightness, colour and sharpness.
- Think of your body like a tripod. Don't be afraid to get low and incorporate some foreground framing.
- Attempt to introduce scale into your images. Scale the subject against another item of known size to add another dimension to your shots.
- Be creative and try to tell a story with your image. You can tell if an image has properly told a story and introduced drama if people react to it at the nightly showings!

LEFT TO RIGHT: Not only is taking a brilliant photograph about going to the right destination, it's about knowing what to do when you arrive; a glorious Lord Howe sunset.



WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Six nights' accommodation, with use of all lodge facilities.
- Guided walks to Mt Eliza, Boat Harbour and Kims Lookout, with expert interpretation of Lord Howe's ecosystems and expert photography advice.
- Guided walks to rarely visited parts of the island.
- A daily 'best photo' competition with prizes.
- Full breakfasts, lunches, afternoon teas and four course dinners.
- Island airport transfers.


 If a holiday like this appeals to you, find out more at pinetrees.com.au

Luke Hanson from Pinetrees elaborated on this perspective. "What we try and do in the photography weeks is take people on a journey," Luke says.

"We love to see people evolving. Each day, we send everyone off with a brief. We set particular themes and ask everyone to produce images dealing with these themes."

"The teaching isn't, for the most part, your traditional teacher-pupil mode of learning. Everybody is learning from everybody. Participants learn just as much from other participants as from us. You're rubbing shoulders with other photographers, comparing what you're doing, looking at each other's photos."

And what better place to take images than on Lord Howe Island, which has World Heritage recognition for its beauty? Participants have ample opportunity to capture the iconic views (eg. the lagoon and mountains), but sometimes it's the smaller details and finer textures that end up as favourites. As do people's shots of the stars. Lord Howe Island is 600km from the mainland, completely without light pollution, after all.

"Everywhere you look there's something beautiful," Alex concludes. "Lord Howe is an island to come back to. And in fact, I really enjoy seeing repeat guests. Many people come back on a second occasion, and in some cases for a third week." 

Detail shots by photography week participants

