



PHOTOGRAPHY ESSENTIALS

# FULL FRAME



DAVID NOTON

Press escape to return to normal view



# Morocco

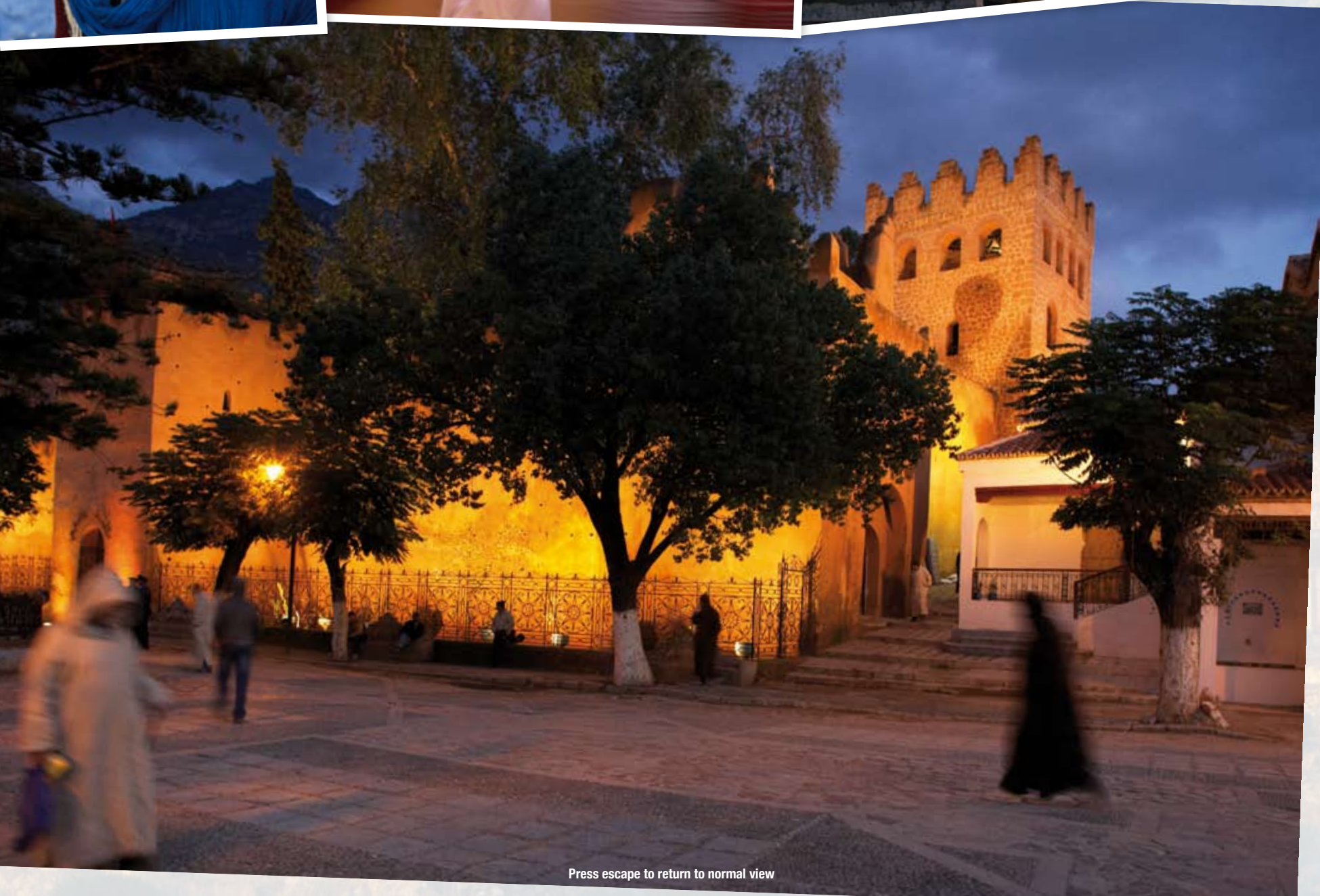
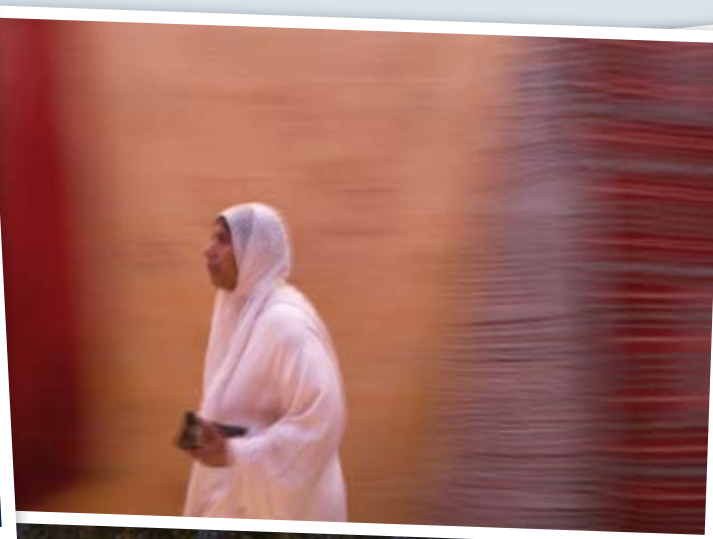
## 1.Colour

It's the first morning out on patrol and Morocco seems so colourful and exotic. When I first arrive somewhere new everything is fresh and unfamiliar. Even after a lifetime of travel the culture shock can still be daunting but this is a golden time, as all the visual novelties of a new destination stand out in vivid relief. The longer I stay, the more comfortable I get and the more the icons become the norm until I stop even noticing them. It's that fresh visual stimulus that I love about travel – the rebooting of my photographic vision. I respect photographers and artists who stick with one subject in a lifetime's exploration of its creative possibilities, but that's not for me – I think I'd stagnate. I need the shot in the arm of new and exciting destinations.

Coming from the muted hues of England in winter to vibrant Morocco assaults the senses. Blue-walled towns, tanneries, bustling markets full of bright textiles, tajines, riads, lemons, souks, goats in trees, mosques, Berbers ... We've only come over the water from Spain but Europe already seems a world away. This is definitely Africa and the sights, sounds and smells are intoxicating. I can't wait to start exploring the photographic potential with rejuvenated and invigorated eyes. This is why I travel – for this buzz – but it's not just about the visual appeal. Every trip throws up a different set of possibilities, pitfalls and challenges. The potential is huge, but Morocco will not be an easy place to work in. I will need to evolve a working practice here that suits the environment, as I do with every trip. The name of the game is constant evolution, and that's what this book is all about.







Press escape to return to normal view



# Road to Marrakech

We arrive in the dark after the long journey from Andalusia. Actually the physical distance isn't far, one that you could eat up on a lonely French autoroute in a few hours, but that's not reckoning on the ferry across the Straits of Gibraltar and an African border crossing. Bringing our motor into Morocco is an adventure but the paperwork needed to leave from Ceuta, a Spanish enclave in North Africa, is daunting. One thing that winds me up more than anything else on our travels is dealing with petty officialdom and here it is chaos, with a mass of people and cars all queue jumping while vying to gain the attention of aloof officials in various cubicles. I have to keep reminding myself that this is Africa.

On this adventure we've teamed up with Dave Waterman, my former mentor. Many years ago when I was a photography student in Gloucester, I knocked on Dave's studio door and during the summer of 1983 carried his bags and pestered him with questions. In the latest twist of his long and varied career he now runs photographic safaris to Morocco from his base in Andalusia, so we're blatantly using his local knowledge for our own ends on this jaunt. We've got two weeks to roam around Morocco in his 4x4, listening to Frank Sinatra and George Formby. Hmmm. Even given Dave's musical foibles it's not enough time - it never is. Thankfully Dave's an old hand at this and none of it fazes him. Just as we proceed with a sheaf of stamped papers through customs, our last hurdle, we notice a flat tyre. So in amongst all the hooting and mayhem Dave and I are down in the dust, changing the wheel. Hot, sweaty and covered in grime we finally enter Morocco.







# A tanner laying out his hides to dry

The tanneries, Fes, Morocco  
 Canon EOS-1Ds MKII,  
 24–70mm f/2.8 lens, ISO 160,  
 1/125sec at f/9

## MOROCCO 6/12 – A TANNER

**BEFORE** Two professional photographers with the combined experience of some 70 years, and we're lost. We're relying on 11-year-old Abdul to guide us through the maze of the medina to the tanneries. We were here, or rather there, yesterday, checking out the location and picking our vantage points but this morning,

in the half-light before sunrise, it all looks very different. I challenge anybody to find their way through the narrow, twisted alleys of Fes. I hit on the bright idea of following the donkeys laden with hides – they must be heading for the tannery. Wrong tannery. So, a few dirhams in Abdul's hand and we're back on track, just in time as the sun is up and the first stalls overlooking the rows of pots open.

If you ever get downhearted in life just consider these tanners. They spend all day up to their waists in pots of noxious chemicals working stinking animal hides with their legs. It's hot, smelly, and as for health and safety, forget it. We've negotiated our way on to a balcony overlooking this scene and are hurriedly rummaging in our Lowepro.

**DURING** The light is getting harsher, but as time passes the activity below intensifies. A tanner starts laying out his hides in a wonderfully colourful, graphic display. The bright wall below us acts as a reflector, bouncing the light back into the scene and dropping the contrast. We work the view methodically for several hours – if a situation is a good one it's best to stick with it and explore every possible composition in pursuit of the definitive image. I've got my lens trained on the evolving vista below, eyeballs darting around all the visual elements, concentrating, waiting, exposing as the tanner slaps the wet hides down, muttering, watching the exposure displays, occasionally checking for 'blinkys' (highlight alerts, see page 68) on the monitor. Dave is crouching nearby, like most ex-Fleet Street wallahs he's a Nikon devotee. Generally I hate sharing a scene with another photographer, but in this case, I let him off. Eventually, with a couple of full 4GB cards, the light is just too harsh. Now then, how do we find our way back?

**AFTER** With a situation like this it's easy to take a lot of exposures as the situation develops. Usually the pictures get better as you get 'zoned in' to the shoot. That was true here, despite the fact that the light was getting increasingly harsh as time passed. Trying to sift through the shoot to pick out the best image is a daunting challenge. Clearly, unless you want to spend the rest of your life in front of a computer, just concentrating on a few of the very best saves processing hundreds of similar shots. Start with the best and work backwards. Be ruthless. If one shot isn't as good as another, delete it. What's the point of keeping the also-rans?



### Boats on the Nam Song river

Vang Vieng, Laos

Canon EOS-1Ds MKIII, 14mm  
f/2.8 lens, ISO 100, 1/10sec  
at f/11

## LAOS 9/12 – BOATS ON NAM SONG RIVER

**BEFORE** The view at Vang Vieng is spectacular. There's just one problem; we can barely see it. An inconvenient truth has crept up on us since we arrived – the air quality is absolutely appalling. Thick heavy smog lies over northern Laos and this time I'm not rueing Mother Nature's contrariness – this is all the work of man. Laos farmers to point the finger of blame; their practice of 'slash and burn' established over generations to stimulate new growth leaves whole swathes of countryside looking post-apocalyptic and dumps huge amounts of ash into the atmosphere. It seems an incredible act of short-sighted eco-vandalism but it is happening across vast tracts of Asia. Quite apart from the rape of the countryside this was bad news for us, any shots with distant views would be impossible under this layer of airborne grot.

**DURING** It's the first evening here and I'm composing a shot using these boats as graphic shapes in the foreground with the river and Karst mountain landscape at dusk beyond. I've got the super-wide 14mm f/2.8 lens on and as the sun settles into the murk I make a series of exposures. This lens is fully corrected so unlike my 15mm

fish-eye lens it doesn't distort at the edges of the frame.

It is so wide though that using filters with it is impossible; the front element is a bulging sensuous curve. So I do two exposures about 3 stops apart, one for the landscape and one for the sky. I'll merge them subsequently in Photoshop.

But as I'm exposing I know that this isn't really working. The shot could be strong with the last light filtering through a dramatic evening sky, but if this is the norm we've got to think again.

**AFTER** Exposure blending is a handy technique to learn that is actually very simple. With both images open in Photoshop I just roughly select the sky from one shot using the Lasso tool, feather the selection over, say, 250 pixels and then drag and drop the selection into place as a layer on the other image. That's one very simple and fast way; but you can make the process as complicated as you like with all sorts of tricks using masking and erasing to really confuse the issue. I'll stick with the simple speedy solution. It works for me.



## LAOS 10/12 – CYCLISTS AT DAWN

**BEFORE** The mountainous countryside I was photographing from the riverbank on the first night needs exploring, so the next day we're trundling through it on a pair of motorbikes looking for locations. I'm still hopeful the haze is a temporary factor so when we come to a crossing of a small river surrounded by the enticing Karst landscape, I'm optimistic of being able to explore its potential for a strong landscape.

**DURING** Next morning at dawn we're back at our spot. The sun will soon be up but the sky is a featureless hazy nonentity. This shot just isn't going to work as I originally conceived in this light. But despite that I set up the tripod and camera anyway – what else can I do? On goes the body, the cable release, the 24–70mm lens, hot shoe-mounted spirit level, wide-angle adapter ring, filter holder and lastly a 0.9 ND graduated filter; all the bits and pieces. I have spares of all of these. Every trip there's likely to be one hardware

glitch, either by loss or damage. On one trip I mislaid the spirit level and really missed it – I'm useless at judging level horizons by eye. I now carry three in reserve. Caps and rings are always mysteriously going walkabout. Far more serious would be a lens or camera failure. It happens, particularly when they're getting banged about in dusty environments. That's why a bit of overlap in zoom coverage is no bad thing – if a lens is dropped I can still carry on. I've carried a back-up body on every trip for over 20 years and never needed it, but you can bet the moment I stopped doing so I would.

It's rush hour in rural Laos and the school run is well underway as the sun appears in the murky sky. Lao children don't get driven to school in 4x4s. Every single one of them cycles, and there's a constant stream of them passing us. The weak sun is softly backlighting the scene with warm light. As a landscape it's hopeless, but with the cyclists reflected in the water salvation has come.

**AFTER** The amount of kit I carry on a trip depends on what sort of a trip it is and how we're going to be getting around. But the major factor is Wendy. On a solo trip I am limited in what I can take and difficult compromises have to be made. Now that I am only using one Canon DSLR camera system life is simpler; I used to travel carrying a large panoramic film camera with lenses and a 35mm system plus hundreds of rolls of film. How I can't recall. But if Wendy is with me, two Lowepro bags as carry-on will hold all I need; laptop, two bodies, eight lenses plus all the filters, cables, chargers etc. Of course she can't take any of her stuff but that's reasonable, isn't it? Photographers' partners are a unique breed.

### Cyclists at dawn, rush hour in the countryside

Near Vang Vieng, Laos  
Canon EOS-1Ds MKIII, 24–70mm lens, 0.9 ND grad filter, ISO 250, 1/50 sec at f/8





# FULL FRAME



## SPECIFICATIONS:

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Category: **Photography**

BIC Code 1: **AJG** Photographic equipment &  
techniques

BIC Code 2: **AJC** Photographs: collections

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## DESCRIPTION:

*Full Frame* sees top travel and landscape photographer David Noton set about achieving 'the perfect shoot'. Taking ten varying locations, from snowy mountain peaks to coastline, bustling Asian markets to idyllic paradise islands, Noton reveals invaluable photography tips on how he sets about capturing the essence of a location. He explains his creative process and reveals the secrets that make his work so widely admired.

The highest quality printing showcases Noton's peerless photography techniques and his entertaining and informative text and captions give an invaluable insight into his photographic art.

This high quality edition is supported by a major London exhibition.

## MARKETING POINTS:

- David Noton is one of the world's most highly regarded landscape photographers
- Supported by an accompanying DVD and an extensive lecture tour.
- Noton's first book *Waiting for the Light* has sold 8,000 copies in hardback

## THE AUTHOR:

**David Noton** is one of the world's most renowned landscape photographers, and runs his own highly successful freelance photography company.

For many years he has worked for the UK's National Trust on countless commissions and he co-authored the NT publication *Coast*. For the last few years David has written a regular column for *Practical Photography*. David lives in Sherborne, Dorset, UK.