

Inspired Vision

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CLAIRE LAWRENCE



## 9 Of My Favourite Photos and The Stories Behind Them

[www.inspiredvisionphoto.com](http://www.inspiredvisionphoto.com)

# Welcome!

Thank you for signing up and joining me on my journey! It is great that you have taken this step and given me a chance to share my work and development as a photographer with you. Inside this e-book, I am going to tell you about some of my all-time (so far!) favourite images and how each one came into existence. These 9 photos all have special meaning to me and I hope that when you read the stories, you can also find special meaning in them too. I hope you enjoy learning about the stories behind the pictures!

## My Story

Photography, for me, is not just about creating a pleasing or interesting picture.

Through my camera, I have discovered a way to disengage, relax and escape the pressures and worries of everyday life. Photography gives you a chance to get out in the fresh air, in the countryside, to appreciate the environment around you, and most importantly to be creative and take time for yourself!

I have been drawn to taking photos for a long time, but it is only in recent years that I truly discovered the pleasure I could get from photography. I found myself often saying "I'd really like to learn photography properly". Then the opportunity arose to work abroad in The Hague, in The Netherlands. The decision of whether to take the job or not was an excruciating one for me – while I knew I was at a point where I needed a change and a challenge, I feared the consequences of making a mistake. To help me cope with the new environment, my father bought me the Sony A58 DSLR camera and some lenses to give me something to learn and focus on in those difficult moments of aloneness in a new city.

And for a while, I did exactly that. Anyone who knows me, knows I love to travel and I lived my first months almost as a tourist, visiting all the museums and highlights of the city and beyond. But grasping how to use the camera was a challenge, and other activities and eventually some work-related studies got in the way. Then, a couple of years ago, I started an online course which completely gripped me and I realised I had a true passion for photography that had been hiding and just waiting to get out!

I love light, colours and warmth but also serenity, peace and tranquillity and moments of reflection. I hope that when you look at my landscapes, that they create those kinds of feelings for you. It's all about escape and a moment of relaxation; exactly what I get from being out and about taking them. My photographs are also about observing the environment and, whilst I consider myself very early on my photographic journey, I hope to develop my style more and more as I go along. I would love for you to take that journey with me and share with me your thoughts and ideas on the results!

My collection of photos from the wonderful city of The Hague hopefully bring alive this interesting and beautiful place, and I'll continue to develop the collection as and when I can. I have been very fortunate to call it my home for a number of years and I know it will always be my spiritual home and a place I will constantly return to and continue to enjoy. Whether you know the city or not, I hope you will appreciate my perspectives of it. Another lifelong spiritual home of mine is Spain, and you will see a lot of images from this incredible place (particularly the Alicante area) in my photos. The language, culture, music and history have

captivated me all my life. And as I travel, which hopefully I will continue to do, I will share the inspired visions I capture along the way from the variety of places I visit!

I am simply an enthusiast who has discovered a passion and a medium of expression. I hope you enjoy my work and I also encourage you to seek out your own passions and ways to relax in this hectic world. I also encourage you to reach out and share your own perspectives on the photos, and I hope they inspire you the way they inspire me when I capture them. Embrace the things you love to do, and if I can inspire you to travel, take photos or just relax more, then I will be delighted to do that.

# 'Dutch Escape'



This photo is one of my most cherished, because I took it very early on in my photographic journey. I wanted to find a nice location with windmills to practice some composition and landscape work, and was very excited to find this place on Google (known as Molendriegang) not too far outside The Hague. So, one Saturday afternoon in October, I set off with my kit to find it!

I was a little apprehensive about the trip, as I had to get 3 different trams, and then I knew there would be a walk out into the countryside after that – would I even manage to find it? Would it be too far, and would I have to give up? When I finally got off the last tram, I set off on foot following the map on my phone. As I left the urban landscape for open fields, and wandered out along a country road where the pavement eventually disappeared in front of me, I really began to wonder if it had really been worth it. I continued, stepping onto the grass and mud each time a vehicle passed me by. Should I turn around and go back? Shouldn't I be there by now? Then, suddenly, I turned a bend, the line of trees and bushes ended and there across the vast flat landscape stood three windmills in a row – I found it!

Delighted and with a sense of pride at my success, I headed towards the mills. A narrow, still canal ran beside me parallel to the road with swans gliding along it, and there was nothing but a peaceful silence in the air; a real sense that city life was left behind me. A Labrador barked from the garden of a small house. There was a distant hum of the highway way off in the distance, somewhere to my left.

These mills are a recognised tourist attraction. People still own them and live in them, but it is perfectly ok to come and visit them. A small car park sat at the start of the lane running alongside them, but there were no cars today. I had the place to myself. Setting up my tripod, I felt such a sense of excitement – I knew I had a chance for a great shot here. I wandered along the road, taking photos from all angles, watched in silence by the sheep across the canal – they'd seen it all before! The sun was starting to get lower in the sky and, as I snapped this shot, I just knew it would be the best of the bunch – the composition, the lighting, the clouds, the stillness of the water. The tranquility of the scene is perfectly captured in this shot.

A car rode softly past on the narrow lane behind me. The sun was going down. It was time to get going. I packed up the kit and started the long journey home – first I had to walk back to civilisation and the tram stop. As I turned and glanced back at the mills across the fields as I trudged back along the main road in the fading light, I felt a sense of accomplishment and gratitude for a worthwhile trip.

If you like this photo, you can buy it in digital, print or as another photo product here: <http://www.inspiredvisionphoto.com/dutch-landscapes>

You may also like 'Reflective Moment', another photo that I took during this adventure.

# 'January Dunes'



This photo is a clear favourite of mine. I took this during a walk through the dunes that are a short bus ride from my apartment in The Hague. It was a cold, January Sunday afternoon (only about 3°C as I remember). But the air was still and the sun was low but bright. After getting off the bus, you have to walk through a small gate and along a sandy path amongst blackberry bushes until you come to an open, sandy wilderness that surrounds you with patches of grasses and shrubbery. Nearer the sea, another small gate brings you to the paths that run parallel to the sea (one for walking and one for cycling) and where you can access the open beaches.

It was a beautiful day for a walk, and numerous other people had the same idea. I love this area – it has a special quality about it. It's a wonderful place to relax, walk or cycle. I started to amble around with my camera, looking for inspiration. The sunlight was the magical factor on this afternoon, but I hadn't really anticipated it. I just intended to go and see what I could come up with. I walked along the path where it inclined and swept away from the bike parking area. After strolling along for a while, I turned around to look behind me, and that's when I saw this scene and its potential.

I quickly set up my tripod and camera, hands beginning to freeze without my gloves on – but I was captivated by the sweeping path, the shadows of the fence posts and the low sun on the horizon. The path seemed to lead to the sun, and there seemed to almost be a direct connection between the sun beams and the fence posts, as if nothing else in the world existed at that moment. Despite the cold temperature, the golden light somehow gives a feeling of warmth in this picture. It was just a very peaceful setting and a moment of escape. The very calm sea on the horizon adds to the serenity of this photo for me.

When I got back home and finally warmed my hands, I didn't imagine that this would be the first photo that I would sell. I entered it into the PhotoOp exhibition in The Hague (a great exhibition for anyone who wants to display their photos, with no need to be a professional). I still love the calm feel I get whenever I look at this photo.

If you like this photo, you can buy it in digital, print or as another photo product here: <http://www.inspiredvisionphoto.com/sea-beach-dunes>

In my Sea, Beach and Dunes gallery, you can see other photos from this area and other sandy places!

# 'Lakeside Calm'



This photo, for me, is a great example of how something simple can be beautiful.

One Saturday in early December, I decided to use an hour or so to take some photos near to my apartment. I recalled an open grassy park area just behind the Crowne Plaza hotel, only about 10 mins walk away. I found the path alongside the hotel that lead towards the park and started to wander. The area was incredibly bleak – leafless tree branches, no flowers and no humanity besides the occasional dog walker. The walk was taking me a lot longer than I had expected and I started to believe I may have gone the wrong way somewhere. I was seriously contemplating giving up, as I couldn't see any decent photo opportunities. Eventually, I came across the park area I remembered – it just hadn't been quite as straightforward as I expected!

Feeling rather disappointed with the environment, I continued to stroll around. I then came across the tree by the lake that you see in the picture. Something drew me to the scene and the way the branches reached down to the water. The weather was fine and blue sky was creeping through the clouds. I set up my camera to take several shots of a big old tree next to the lake, in various compositions. Realising there weren't many more opportunities, I started to head along a path beside the lake, roughly back in the direction I came. After stopping to empty the stones from my boots, I realised I had no idea where the path was taking me! Quite some time later, I emerged from the park much further along the main road and quite a long way from the hotel where I originally started!

I felt like my journey could have been wasted, until I viewed my lake pictures on the big screen. Then I was surprised at just how well the photo had worked at capturing an intriguing scene. The twisted branches and the way the sky reflects in the calm waters reminds me of the beauty in that bleak and dormant landscape – a place that is buzzing with people and greenery during the good weather, but silently waiting for the better temperatures to return. I could imagine sitting down by this tree, gazing into the water and at the reflections and taking some time out to hear my own thoughts. The rustic bark and textures of the tree also have their own beauty, that so often goes unnoticed – how often do people walk past this tree without taking the time to appreciate it?

If you like this photo, you can buy it in digital, print or as another photo product here:

<http://www.inspiredvisionphoto.com/woodlands>

# 'Escape to the Mountains'



Whilst the Alicante region of Spain is generally quite desert-like, dusty and dry, if you head inland there are some very green places that contrast with the dust and cacti of much of the hilly landscape (although that indeed has its own beauty). For quite a few years I wanted to return to the Fuentes del Algar (or Les Fonts de l'Algar in Catalan), especially now I had my mind on the kinds of photos I would like to take there. It's a mountain area of waterfalls, where you can swim if you want to or just have a walk and relax for a while with a drink in the riverside café. It's quite a drive from my favourite coastal place to stay, but very worthwhile.

You reach the waterfalls by following some winding mountain roads upwards through lush greenery and terraced mountainsides of citrus groves. Small wooden bridges and walkways lead you across the river to stony (but easily walkable) pathways. It was a bright mid-afternoon and, whilst clouds hid the sun a little, there was still a heavy, warm August air, making a dip in the clear, cool waters rather appealing. I set up my camera on a slightly rickety, damp bridge to take this scene, waiting for people to pass by before I took the shot (passing people caused the wooden planks beneath my feet to move, that would in turn cause the camera to move during the long exposure). I took many shots, but this was my favourite of the bunch.

I hope when you look at the photo, that you also can imagine the warm and humid air, the gentle sound of the gushing water, the cheerful sound of people and children playing in the river some distance away and maybe imagine the damp smell of the trees and plants on that hot summer afternoon. The occasional lizard could be spotted darting across the rocks and away. If you look closely, you can see some coloured flowers amongst the tough, rubbery trees and plants. Just strolling in this place is sure to make your stresses and worries vanish somewhere, carried away in the flowing streams. It's a place to just sit for a while, embracing the atmosphere and disconnecting from reality.

I love this photo because of the colours and the way it captures the warmth and natural beauty of the location!

If you like this photo, you can buy it in digital, print or as another photo product here: <http://www.inspiredvisionphoto.com/spain>

# 'Emerging Spring at The Peace Palace'



The Hague is well-known as the City of Peace and Justice. It's especially known internationally as the place where cases are brought against states for all manner of breaches of international law. This building, The Peace Palace, is where a lot of those trials unfold. It's a grand building, built for the purpose and is set in some very attractive and well-kept gardens. When I first arrived in The Hague, I did a tour here and really enjoyed learning about the Palace and how it came about.

I had long wanted to capture some photos of the building, but ideally wanted to wait for the right lighting and weather conditions to do so. It is not located far from where I live – just a few minutes by tram. In fact, I pass it most days on the way to and from my gym. Just before the coronavirus shut-down, I decided to take a trip there with the camera – it was not only to take photos, but also for the fresh air. I was not feeling at my best around this time, facing the meaning of my recent decision to return to the UK and feeling very much like I needed to move on from my current job. Unlike most days, there was hardly a soul around the Palace, where tourists and visitors normally gather to take photos. No sign of the usual ice-cream cart that sits outside the front gates. I had the place to myself. There was a peaceful silence, very fitting for the location.

Although unable to enter the grounds themselves, I strolled around taking some different shots. The sky had a special quality that day – it was cloudy but the sun was creeping through, onto the many bright daffodils around the perimeter walls. Several workers were inside the grounds, maintaining the flower beds. I stepped over a few daffodils to get close enough to take this picture. It was a cool, early spring day but the blossom was appearing on the trees. Bluebells and other pretty plants were just beginning to emerge from the stormy winter. Perhaps it was a reflection of the new start and future filled with possibilities that lay ahead of me, and the atmosphere provided a sense of comfort and positivity. In the same way that this place resolves divisions between societies, perhaps it helped my mind to begin to resolve its own conflicts too. Feeling refreshed from the tranquility, sunlight and fresh air, I crossed the quiet road to the tram, that would carry me the short journey home.

If you like this photo, you can buy it in digital, print or as another photo product here: <http://www.inspiredvisionphoto.com/the-hague>

Also, check out another photo I took at this location, 'Peace at the Palace'.



# 'Summer Horizons'



Torre Vieja is a large town in the Alicante province of Spain that's a very popular holiday destination for Spaniards and Europeans alike. Most of those who visit own or rent apartments here. Although it has grown and expanded over the years, it maintains its traditional Spanish charm. One of my favourite visits here was during a hot Sunday August afternoon during siesta time, when the streets were quiet, but the local 'chocolatería' was open and it was possible to sit at a small street table eating churros and drinking coffee!

On the day I took this photo, I was visiting the town with my parents. We parked the car in a car park alongside the harbour (the town is famous for 'Habaneras', songs that were sang on the ships that used to sail between this harbour and Havana, Cuba). All year long, there is a market set up along the seafront selling all manner of items, such as jewellery, bags and t-shirts. Those who know me, know that I love bracelets and so this is my kind of place to hang out and explore for a while! Wandering in and out of shade and sun, it's a wonderful way to spend a relaxed holiday morning – just admiring what is on offer, taking in the colours and sounds and mingling with locals and other holidaymakers alike. At the end of the market, an open promenade alongside the sea opens up, with many street cafes and restaurants.

As we sat down in a shaded spot at a restaurant table to cool down and have a drink under the palm trees, I looked up and saw this view in front of me. Luckily, my camera was at my side, and I quickly captured this scene of a beautiful yacht gliding smoothly past along the horizon. There is something so calming about a turquoise sea on a sunny day, and this picture brings back the same relaxed feeling I felt while I sat there. It was as if all worries were so far away, melted by the warm sun, vanished somewhere over the horizon. Sipping my drink and beginning to cool, we talked about where the boat might be going (and had a look at the souvenirs we had bought!). I look forward to visiting Torre Vieja again, and will hopefully capture more images that convey the culture and atmosphere of this town.

If you like this photo, you can buy it in digital, print or as another photo product here: <http://www.inspiredvisionphoto.com/spain>

# 'Scheveningen Winter'



Whilst I love colours (in life as in my photos!), there are also times when only black and white can really draw out the meaning and detail in a shot. Scheveningen is the seaside part of The Hague – it attracts visitors from all over The Netherlands but also from Germany and can be a lively place in the nice weather, with many bars and restaurants along its promenade. One of its icons is the pier, which sat empty for a considerable amount of time until a buyer renovated it and brought it back to life again, opening shops and restaurants inside and painting the base legs in bright colours.

On this particular Saturday afternoon, I was excited to get out with my camera. The morning started bright with fluffy clouds and I had a number of shots in mind to take that day. But when I finally left my home, I simply stood on the street looking up – I could not believe how the sky had changed from blue to completely overcast! Disappointed and amazed (despite knowing that this is how the weather often works in The Hague!), I decided to go anyway and see what I could come up with.

I ventured across the promenade and up the wooden steps at the pier entrance to reach the top deck. I had in mind to capture the detail of the pier and the way that local people still enjoy the environment, no matter what the weather. It was cold, but not too windy. I felt the light breeze against my face as I stood for a moment to admire the scene. Brave people still attempted the zip line, and occasionally I was taken by surprise by the whizzing sound as they passed over my head. Seagulls circled and shrieked while groups of people laughed and enjoyed themselves. Families strolled along the beach, making the most of the fresh air. As usual, cargo boats waited out at sea before they could enter Rotterdam port further along the coast. Occasionally brightness seeped through the white sky. Waves gently rolled in and lapped around the base of the pier. Taking a big breath of fresh air and noting the familiar seaside smell of French fries, I soaked in the atmosphere, strolled along the wooden planks and felt glad I made the decision to come and enjoy the pier anyway.

If you like this photo, you can buy it in digital, print or as another photo product here: <http://www.inspiredvisionphoto.com/the-hague>

# 'Golden Amble'



Every photographer of landscapes looks forward to the autumn colours for some great photo opportunities, but this photo was a very unexpected success. The Clingandael estate is a vast park area that is mostly famous for its small Japanese garden that only opens for a few short weeks of the year during Spring and Autumn. Although it was quite a journey by public transport, I really wanted to go and photograph the garden and its highly-lauded autumn colours.

Arriving at the garden, it was clear that taking photos amongst the crowds would be challenging, but there was no denying its beauty and the array of plants, colours and water features. I spent a considerable amount of time there taking photos, but overall it was not very successful due to the large numbers of visitors getting into my frame. I decided, however, that I would take a wander around the expansive park and see what else I could find of interest. Grass, sheep, ducks...wonderful to walk among on that bright autumn day.

I wandered into an area with trees and very turquoise canals (from the summer algae) – you can see one of these to the right of the shot. A wedding photographer was taking photos of a couple a distance away in the woods. Autumn leaves covered the ground and birds sang somewhere off in the treetops. An elderly Dutch man passed me by. And then, no one. Just me, the birds and the golden sunlight in this meditative scene. I snapped this shot, capturing the moment as best I could.

After admiring the golden light bathing the leaves and the silence for a while, and the warm sunlight on my face, it was time to go home before it got dark. I set off, and soon realised I was quite lost amongst the woods and, as the light started to fade, I had to use my phone to find my way back to the entrance of the park.

It was a long journey home, but ever since when I look at this photo, I recall that moment of calm, tranquility and peace. It goes to show that sometimes a wander into the unknown brings about the most unexpected photos that you never imagined.

If you like this photo, you can buy it in digital, print or as another photo product here:

<http://www.inspiredvisionphoto.com/woodlands>

# 'Intrepid Journey'



Early last summer, I booked myself onto a trip to take in the sights of central Europe, crossing Austria, Slovakia and Poland. As a lover of travel, discovering culture and of course taking photos, I knew it would include some wonderful sights and experiences. A highlight of the trip was a stay in a spa retreat in a mountain town, including a day of hiking in the Low Tatras mountains of Slovakia.

I am not a morning person, and getting up at 4am for the day of hiking was a fear of mine. But, a bit like when there is a prospect of a good photo, it was remarkably easier than getting up for work! Kitted out in hiking gear, I got off the bus in the early morning light with my tour mates. We headed out of the car park and along a dusty, steep, rocky path that led up into the trees. It was going to be a long hike and challenging morning. As we walked upwards along winding tracks, through pine trees and past trickling streams, I switched back and forth from carrying my camera around my neck to placing it back in its bag. The day was cool but sunny, but this did not matter as the walk soon warmed me up and I was able to remove some layers of clothing!

Now, whilst I am very active in the gym, participating in classes such as spinning and Pilates, mobility is not my strongest point. Whilst attempting a high step up in a small stream, I somehow managed to fall, hitting my leg on landing. Getting myself back together, I decided it was best not to look at the damage and plough on. At the highest point of the walk, I sat down, drank some water and admired the snow-capped hilltops around me. Breathtaking! It was now time to descend the mountain again and head back with three other tour mates who, like me, did not want to brave the steeper climbs ahead.

The walk back down seemed to take a long time, but was easier and less strenuous. With less people around, there was more time to take in the silence and beauty of the mountainscape. As we walked and quietly chatted, keeping an eye out for marker posts that guided the way home, we passed fallen trees that lay across trickling brooks. Tired and struggling a little with my leg, and not too far from the end of the walk, I looked up and saw this scene. Seizing the opportunity, I captured the view with my camera of the winding path ahead of us, twisting down through the pine forest. It was a moment to catch my breath, drink some water and silently admire the view. Who lives in that house in the distance, I wonder? And how many travellers had walked this path before us? The daily grind could not have felt further away.

Back at the hotel, I relaxed on my balcony with ice on my bruised leg, drinking a tea and revisiting the photographs in my camera.

If you like this photo, you can buy it in digital, print or as another photo product here: <http://www.inspiredvisionphoto.com/woodlands>

# Thank You!

So those were 9 of my most favourite photos so far! I hope you've enjoyed reading about them. Every photo has a story behind it – an adventure, a thought, an inspiration – and I will continue to share them with you via my newsletter and blog, so do keep an eye out for them. I'll also keep you updated on my progress as a photographer and on new photos and any new photo projects. Most of all, I hope we all have fun along the way and I am excited to grow the community!

In the meantime, I invite you to browse the galleries on my website and explore the other images there. The photos are all organised by themes, so pick the theme you feel interested in! Are there any you would particularly like to hear the story behind? Get in touch and let me know!

Thank you again for signing up and becoming part of my online family. Your support means a great deal to me. If you have any questions or want to contact me, you can do so via emailing me at the address below or contacting me via social media (links on my website). And if you really like something you see, please share it on social media so that others can enjoy it too! I very much want to interact with you all and looking forward to getting to know you all. And of course, if there is anything you would particularly like to see, then let me know about that as well.

Until next time, take care and keep doing whatever inspires you!

Claire

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