



Angkor Wat, Cambodia

There comes a time on every trip when I question what on earth I'm doing here. At 2am I'm lying sleepless and sweaty in a windowless prison cell of a room in Siem Riep, swatting mosquitoes, jet lagged, and with churning bowels. Every traveller will know the mental roller-coaster of this game – moments of near despair followed by peaks of exhilaration. Fortunately I've been through so many such low points that I know they're transitory, and the next day I'm exposing the warm evening tropical light bathing the ancient temples of Angkor Wat.

Fuji GX617, 105mm lens

Swayambhunath Temple, Kathmandu, Nepal

The best shots always come from planning. I'd previsualized this image after our first visit in the heat of the day. Now it's just a case of spending a long hour craning upward, waiting for the pigeons to fly in the right spot on a late afternoon at Swayambhunath Temple. They're fluttering everywhere but where I want them. I keep stamping and clapping, trying to get them to simultaneously burst forth. There are monkeys scampering over the roof of the temple, eyeing me up suspiciously: they've seen it all before. My neck and arms are feeling the strain of peering up through the camera. Modern pro cameras have certainly put on weight.

Canon EOS-1Ds MKII DSLR, 17–40mm lens



Tea plantation in the Matele region of the central highlands, near Kandy, Sri Lanka

Elvis is our taxi driver. He's explaining his take on some aspects of his Buddhist faith as he drives us at some speed up into the hills. Apparently it doesn't matter what you do, our fates are preordained, so how he drives around this blind corner is of no consequence because of our karma. Clearly it was our karma to reach this tea estate high in the hills of central Sri Lanka, as I'm now looking out over this verdant green scene. It's like the landscape is coated in velvet. Look closer and they're tea plants, and in amongst them are women with baskets on their backs, picking the leaves. The light's dropping and I'm busy with the camera. The manager of the estate comes to offer me a cup of tea. Later we sit on our veranda, watching the dusk settle over the receding planes of the hills to the north, sensing the heartbeat of Asia. Sri Lanka gets under your skin, given half a chance.

Fuji GX617, 105mm lens



Women in a paddy field, Ben Tre Province, Mekong Delta, Vietnam

Vietnam. Just the name gives me a buzz. I'm in the Mekong Delta, about 100km south of Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon). It's a region of rice paddies bisected by a bewildering network of tributaries, flat as a pancake, and is pretty much untouched by the outside world. I shoot this image of women rice picking as my entourage sits in a farmer's hut sipping Mekong whisky (only marginally preferable to lighter fluid). I'm standing with the muddy water trickling over the tops of my boots clutching the camera and 70–200 mm zoom, trying to coax the ladies to raise their heads. It's a strange way to earn a living.

Nikon F5, 70–200 mm lens