

## 'The Forgotten France' – About the Workshops

The Autumn and Spring Programmes will be concentrating on photographing landscapes, village-scapes, rural buildings, ruins, nature subjects and close-ups. Since all of us love the exquisite countryside, castles and villages of France, we will spend as much time as possible in the field under guidance taking spectacular images. This program is a blend, combining the best of a workshop and a photo tour.

The workshops are carefully planned to take you to scenic places where you are sure to find subjects to photograph. Jeff will show you how to select exciting photo prospects from the chaos of nature. He will demonstrate how to shoot great images of the subject using techniques that anyone can learn and master. Jeff's intention is to spend all of his time helping you take pictures with your equipment and answering your questions. On occasion, he will demonstrate certain techniques like HDRI, tilt-shift fill-flash, main flash, servo-focus and live view shooting strategies.

Jeff will spend some of the workshop presenting instructional programs that have been carefully prepared to maximise learning. The material contained in the programs is suitable for beginners through to professionals. He will be working with you processing and reviewing the images you capture, so you can learn and improve as the week progresses.

There will be a showing of your best images captured during the week in the workshop on the Friday night when Jeff will give a kind and constructive critique.

Participating in the photography workshop is not only a super way to improve your photographs and to learn about your camera controls, it's a wonderful "learning vacation" as well. There will be a field trip most mornings (weather dependent), and optionally a few of times during the week we will leave very early, one or two hours or more before sunrise! Getting up for those early mornings isn't as tough as it sounds since in September sunrise is about 7:30 am.

Hopefully a few evening field trips when the light is good, will begin straight after dinner before sunset, and weather permitting you will stay out for the sun going down and till darkness falls.

Optionally during the week we will be offering a couple of day trips to the more interesting/distant locations in the area.

## 'The Forgotten France' – Instructional time

Most of the instructional programs – which cover technique, compositions and processing – are held mostly during inclement weather, in the middle of the day or afternoon since the light isn't normally the best for photography. We will also make use of this time for processing, showing and critiquing of your own images. The mornings and evenings are best reserved for field trips unless the weather is unreasonable for photography.

There are many subjects we are comfortable with and prepared to give you instruction on, unfortunately there are many more than we could cover properly within a week. Please request any of these topics you would like to see included in the instructional time - preferably before the workshop: time lapse, star trails, photographing the Milky Way, light painting, HDRI, panoramas, birds in flight, flash, studio lights, macro, macro ring light, focus stacking, architectural, infrared, tablet control of camera, remote viewing and triggering.

## Field Trips

Are normally between 2 and 4 hours and we will transport you by minibus to places of historical interest or natural beauty. There will be plenty of opportunity to capture lots of memorable images. Here are a few below to whet your appetite! We are planning to visit these locations, please refer to the images on the web site here: <http://www.elmstudio.com/workshops/elm/fra/index.htm>

### Crozant Castle (images 1 & 12)

The rocky peninsula between the Rivers Creuse and Sedelle is highly defensible, and has been occupied since pre-historic times. The picturesque ruins are the remains of a strong fortification started in the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD and at its best in the 13<sup>th</sup>, when it was occupied by Isabella of Angouleme, second wife of King John of England. The castle was destroyed by an earthquake in 1604, and subsequently robbed by local people for building materials (some of which you can see in the gîte where you are staying!). The panoramic view of the castle from the high cliffs on the other side of the river is best enjoyed at day-break and sunset.

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### The Chateau de Theyret (images 2 & 11)

Nestled in forest at 600 metres above sea-level, the Chateau de Theyret was built to control and tax the passage of salt to the Loire Valley and Paris, and considerably extended during the reign of Louis 14<sup>th</sup>. It is reached on foot down a long drive flanked by dry stone walls, and surrounded by a moat, giving the impression that you are leaving the 21<sup>st</sup> century behind as you approach. It is currently in private hands, being slowly and authentically restored with a view to opening to the public "eventually". The nearby wolf-park provides a reminder that this area was inhabited by wild wolves as recently as 1901, when the last was trapped at Theyret.

### The Moulin de la Folie (image 3)

The turbulent River Sedelle carries the meltwaters of the Massif Centrale down to join the rather more placid River Creuse at Crozant. If we take a pleasant walk along the Sedelle, we pass the "Madman's Mill", an ancient water mill with a footbridge and a high weir, providing plenty of opportunity for shooting fast-moving water, moss-covered rocks, and dappled sunlight. A little further on, the path rises to give a superb over-view of the Crozant castle ruins, then we turn back through the village with its 12<sup>th</sup> century church. These views were much-loved and much painted by the Impressionist school, who found the light conditions particularly favourable.

### Oradour-sur-Glane (images 5, 6, 7, 8 & 13)

The prosperous little town of Oradour became notorious in June 1944 as the site of a horrendous and unprovoked massacre of 642 residents by the 2<sup>nd</sup> SS Panzer Division moving North on its way to counter the allied landings in Normandy. General de Gaulle decreed that the burnt-out town be left exactly as it was, to serve as a memorial and a reminder of the brutality of the Nazis. The tram tracks, old cars, bicycles, sewing machines and general detritus of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century life stopped at a moment in time provide an evocative scene to stir the emotions and the photographer's imagination.

### Gargillesse-Dampierre (image 14)

Another of the "most beautiful villages", Gargillesse is built on a steep escarpment overlooking a stream, and is dominated by a 12<sup>th</sup> century church with an unusual crypt, in that it is only partly underground and is lit by a stained glass window. The vaulted ceilings are covered with magnificent ancient frescoes of religious scenes, posing a challenge to the photographer – no flash allowed! Gargillesse around 1900 was the country play-ground of authoress George Sand and her socialite friends including composer Frederick Chopin, the poet Maurice Rollinat, and many of the Impressionists. Today it is very much a living artistic community.

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### Noth (image 15)

The village of Noth lies close to the "Grand Etang", or big lake, of La Cazine, across which we can see in the distance the grandiosely named Chateau de la Cazine, actually an early 20<sup>th</sup> century copy of a belle-epoch chateau, and now a 4-star hotel. Noth itself is rather more humble, with some odd little corners and quirky old houses, a collection of modernist stone statues, and a perfectly formed small fortified 13<sup>th</sup> century church, which is floodlit at night.

As time allows we are also planning to visit the picturesque towns of:

### Argenton-sur-Creuse

Dating back to Roman times, and in more recent years the centre of the French shirt-making industry, the picturesque town of Argenton lies on a lazy bend of the River Creuse. The town centre holds many little architectural gems, including the long crescent weir, the old mills, the old bridge, houses with their upper floors precariously balanced over the water, and a complex old-fashioned roof line. Above it all, a massive golden statue of the Virgin Mary dominates the town. By day or night, Argenton provides interest for the eye.

### The Chateau de Courbat du Pechereau

On the way to Argenton-sur-Creuse, we can take a short diversion to the Chateau de Courbat, built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as a lightly fortified mansion house in the style of a miniature chateau of the Loire. Surrounded by a moat which originally had a drawbridge, it boasts circular fairy-tale castle towers, a large round dove-cot, geometrically placed plantings of lime trees, and a beautifully crafted double spiral wooden staircase. It is currently used as the "Mairie" (town hall/mayor's office) of nearby Le Pechereau.

### St. Benoît du Sault

This old medieval settlement is situated at the crossroads of Berry and Limousin, and has been officially designated "one of the most beautiful villages in France". It was built on a granite rock around a Benedictine priory and overlooks a small lake formed by the monks damming the river. We can enjoy a charming stroll through its steep streets and discover 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century houses, the remains of the fortified wall and gateway, and the large priory church with its stained glass windows, bell tower and high vaulted timber ceiling.

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### La Celle Dunoise

With its ancient stone bridge and green flood plains on both sides of the River Creuse, La Celle Dunoise is a perfect spot to appreciate the juxtaposition of architecture and nature. There is a panoramic view from the high ground at the top of the village, while the church, bridge, and abandoned mill are best seen from the gardens of the Auberge des Pêcheurs – which has the added advantage of being a friendly “Irish pub”! The interior of the church is worthy of note, with some beautiful stained glass, sunlit from the South.

### Limoges (possibly for a night shoot?)

The regional capital of Limoges was an important Roman city, making use of the fine white kaolin deposits along the banks of the River Vienne to make clayware, and later the fine porcelain for which it is now renowned. The city boasts a grand late medieval cathedral and what is claimed to be the most beautiful train station in Europe – a copper-covered dome structure built over 10 railway lines. The Town Hall is one of the finest in France, bearing a striking resemblance to the Hôtel de Ville in Paris. It is best viewed at nightfall when its cream-coloured stone, its midnight-blue slate, and the enchanting fountain dedicated to the craft of enamel-working are all illuminated to translucent effect.

### Around Les Marronniers

The property you are staying in is surrounded by undulating farmland, much of it wooded, where the main activity is the breeding of the world-famous Limousin cattle. These solid buff-coloured creatures make a wonderful photographic subject, as do the abundance of wild creatures to be seen all around. Wherever you look, you will find pretty ponds, old stone barns and farmhouses, many of them now disused and overgrown with ivy, and dilapidated farm machinery. A short distance away, the lake formed by the hydro-electric dam at Eguzon, once the largest in France, is still impressive and evocative of the optimistic mood between the two world wars.

### Within the gardens

The grounds at Les Marronniers consist of two acres of cultivated gardens and a 5-acre sloping meadow with a stream running through it. The meadow has been largely left wild, and is home to many wild-flowers, insects, small mammals and birds, as well as creatures you might not expect to see: Argentinian coypu and Louisiana crayfish. Closer to the house are two large stone barns, the old village wash-house, and an interesting chicken shed combined with the former outside toilet. Don't worry, the sanitary facilities you will be using are modern, but the gîtes and their immediate surroundings provide an atmospheric background for portraiture and close-up studies.

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### Your Photography

We use a digital projector for viewing your images. Just give Jeff a copy of your images on a CD, a USB stick, or CF card to let us view them. Bringing a laptop computer is highly encouraged so that you may edit, prepare and share your images.

Jeff has asked that you bring some digital images or prints from home to share with the group. Although this is optional, it's a great way of sharing and becoming better acquainted on the first evening as we talk about some of our photographic work.

One of the first things we will do is sit down and schedule an itinerary and goals for the rest of the week. Where would you like to visit and based on the weather forecast the best day/time for us to go there.

Since it is such a small group there will be plenty of time to answer all your questions and help you develop your photographic style. Please think about the areas you would like to study and improve on.

From your tutor: - "We eat, breathe, and sleep photography at each workshop. That doesn't mean it's all work and no play. We take our field trips at a leisurely pace, so there is time to relax and enjoy the beautiful surroundings. We may even get a little silly at times, but then laughter and humour add to the workshop experience!"