

Sunday Times Travel Photograph of the Year



OVERALL WINNER:
A LITTLE PIECE OF HAVANA
by Larry Kreuter

Kreuter, from Bryanston, Johannesburg, was inspired to visit Cuba before its long-predicted change. "Once President Raúl Castro goes, the high-rise buildings will go up and Cuba may lose its charm. We went to Cuba for eight days. We stayed in the old part of Havana, which is a time warp. You're back in the '50s: the old, broken cars painted bright colours, cigars, spaghetti cables spanning the alleyways ... there's so much history there. And yet we didn't really see any dirty or down-and-out people. I wish I could spend more time there. It was one of the highlights of my life."

Kreuter took this single frame to capture Havana's quaint essence: "A typical afternoon thunderstorm came down as we were walking the streets, and we found shelter in a passage next to a nursery school. Then I spotted this lady walking towards me and the beautiful reflections on the road, and those pastel colours so typical of Cuba."

Of the rain-soaked woman, Kreuter says, "There was a powerful, sensual aura to her. I walked into the centre of the street, quickly took the picture and got out of the rain before I damaged my camera. It was a spontaneous picture of a surreal scene. That's the kind of photographer I am — I like to be unobtrusive. I don't think this woman even realised I took the photograph. She was more concerned about the rain."



FIRST RUNNER-UP:
VARANASI OVAL by Adam Rabinowitz

"When taking travel photos, you must be opportunistic — notice a good photo when it's in front of you," says Rabinowitz, from Sea Point in Cape Town. "While visiting Varanasi, India, I saw a game of cricket unfolding between a group of young Hindu monks. Then one stood up to bat and I got a nice shot."

"What I like about this image is that the viewer doesn't necessarily realise that the stripes in the background are the colourful ghats (stairs) leading down to the Ganges, so the stairs create something of an optical illusion in the photograph. And I think I got the shutter speed just perfect. There is enough blur to see the movement, but the image is still sharp enough."

The batsman knocked the ball into the river — along with Rabinowitz's last opportunity to capture the scene. "The monks ran down to the river and, although they knew exactly where the ball was, no one really wanted to dive in and get their clothes wet. The signs that they were going to get the ball back didn't seem promising — I left while they were holding court on who should retrieve it."

SECOND RUNNER-UP:
REFLECTING BORDEAUX
by Francisca Buys

Clarens-based Buys was working as a social-events photographer on a cruise ship when she docked at Bordeaux, France, and had a little time to explore the city. Sitting next to the Garonne River, she was captivated by an impromptu summer celebration on Place de la Bourse, the town's square. "It was a hot afternoon and every half hour or so a sprinkler system erupted across the square, luring flocks of locals, mostly kids, who stripped down and charged into the mist to cool themselves down. I wanted to get the reflection of the buildings on the wet square, so I crouched down really low." The "sprinkler system" is Miroir d'Eau (water mirror), a 2 700m² reflecting pool, installed in 2006 by French water-feature specialist Jean-Max Llorca as part of a project to revitalise Bordeaux's waterfront.



Canon

The winner of the Sunday Times Travel Photograph of the Year wins photographic gear worth R100 000, consisting of an EOS 5D Mark III and 24-105 L lens kit, an EF 70-200mm f2.8 L IS USM Mark II lens and an EF 8-15mm f4.0 L fish-eye USM lens. The first runner-up receives gear worth R65 000, featuring an EOS 6D and 24-70 f4 L lens kit, and an EF 100-400mm f4.5-5.6 L IS USM lens. The second runner-up wins photographic gear worth R46 000, featuring an EOS 70D body and 18-135 IS STM kit, and an EF 70-300mm f4-5.6 L IS USM lens. Each winner also bags a Pixma Pro-1 photo printer worth R11 600. All prizes courtesy of Canon: canon.co.za

Sunday Times Wildlife Photograph of the Year



OVERALL WINNER:
QUELEA'S QUANDARY by Johan Greyling

In a game reserve filled with big game, all Greyling of Pretoria could think of during his two-week trip to Etosha National Park, Namibia, was photographing this goshawk's formidable hunting techniques. "I spent about 35 hours at Kalkheuwel waterhole shooting the bird — not because it was easy but because it was hard. I used a slow camera that only gave me four frames a second, which meant that I had to time this image perfectly: when the bird's eye was open — with just a glint of light reflecting in it."

Greyling also had to anticipate the goshawk's cryptic behaviour. "It stowed away, camouflaged, in a shady spot on a branch near the waterhole — and gave only one clue that it was about to attack — shaking its head from side to side."

He knew he needed to capture the hunter just before it struck.

"That implied tension is much more interesting. It was one of those perfect moments."

Greyling has photographed Africa's wildlife for 46 years — yet he saw the goshawk kill seven red-headed queleas, and attempted more than 100 images, before he finally captured the Sunday Times Wildlife Photograph of the Year. "Wildlife photography is my great love. I've been practising it for most of my life, but you know what? I think this is it. Of all the images I've taken, this is my favourite. I don't think I can top this."

And the little bird? "It got away," Greyling laughs.

See the best of 2014's top wildlife and travel photographs in our dramatic competition gallery: www.facebook.com/suntimesphoto or www.timeslive.co.za/scitech

Wild Eye
Change The Way You See The World
www.wild-eye.co.za

The winner of the Sunday Times Wildlife Photograph of the Year and a partner will jet off to the Masai Mara in September 2015 to watch the great migration on an all-expenses paid, seven-day luxury photo safari worth R120 000. The first runner-up will also experience the Masai Mara on a seven-day luxury photo safari, worth R60 000. The second runner-up will visit the Chobe River on a five-day luxury photo safari, worth R30 000. All prizes courtesy of Wild Eye — Change the Way You See the World.

FIRST RUNNER-UP:
PRAYING FOR RAIN by Jacqui Hemphill

Breaking the rules was key to creating Hemphill's winning portrait of a lone giraffe dwarfed by a storm looming over the parched Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. Johannesburg-based Hemphill huddled under her jacket to protect her camera against the unfolding storm and positioned her subject at the extreme right of the image. "The giraffe was separated from its herd by about 50m. I isolated it by zooming in. The rules of photography state that an animal should gaze into space, but I wanted my subject to gaze at the edge of the frame to create mystery around what it might be looking at. With the storm rolling in, this technique produced a moody effect that mirrored the scene's brooding conditions, especially since the viewer could not be sure why the giraffe was all on its own."



SECOND RUNNER-UP:
DEADLY CROSSING by Tania Cholwich

Cholwich from Little Falls in Johannesburg drove to Kenya's Masai Mara to experience her first great migration. Her photograph of the Mara River crossing paints the dark side of this East African natural wonderland. "The river was teeming with crocodiles as a herd of about 300 zebra moved into it. We witnessed many killings. The foal in this picture did not make it. Another could not follow its mother up the steep bank on the opposite side, and was dragged under by a crocodile. Its mother went back into the river to look for it, and swam around for what seemed like forever, calling after her foal. Downriver, there was a mounting pile of carcasses that couldn't be consumed by crocodiles that had literally bitten off more than they could chew. It was traumatic ... but this is nature's way."

We'll announce details of the 2015 competition — with exciting new prizes — in Travel Weekly's January 11 edition. Be sure not to miss out! You can also stay abreast of competition matters by finding us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/suntimesphoto, and clicking the LIKE button at the top of the page.