

Mountain Masterclass



Nature's Light
Photography Tours and Workshops

A photographic journey and
masterclass with Emil von Maltitz
and Nick van de Wiel

26th February - 1st March 2016

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Summary

The Drakensberg stands like a formidable rocky barrier between the lush green foothills of Kwazulu-Natal and the mountainous kingdom of Lesotho. It has inspired poets and exhilarated climbers for the last two centuries. The indigenous population of San, followed by Zulu and Sotho peoples have made homes and sacred sites of the red-hued sandstone cliffs. The Zulu have given the appropriate name of uKhahlamba, 'barrier of spears', to this incredible Basalt range.

Now the 'Dragon's Mountain' inspires photographers! Join Nature's Light to photograph the craggy spires as wet clouds drift from peak to peak. Learn to photograph the stars as they spin over the Berg Escarpment and its sentinels of rock. Become enchanted with the magical streams of water that perpetually gush from the mountainside.

We select only two primary locations for this mountain masterclass so that there is a minimum of travel and a maximum of shooting time. We also opt for two very diverse locations in terms of the geology of the mountains; so photographers get to experience the heights of the Drakensberg as well as the valleys and their enchanting forests.

Please note that this tour is not a traditional relaxing holiday! It is

a serious photographic workshop with teaching sessions/lectures at locations, and photography guidance in the field. It is for those photographers/photography enthusiasts who want to take their photography to the next level, with a steep learning curve, visiting iconic destinations with a tutor on hand to help create masterful images.

The emphasis is very strongly on landscape photography, and teaching sessions covering both creative, technical and editing aspects. Participants can choose which topics they would like to cover during the workshop. In doing so, teaching requirements can be assessed during the workshop and tailor made to suit individuals needs. Therefore, this workshop is suitable for both beginners and experienced photographers. When required the group can be split so that the two instructors can each teach different topics or for different abilities.

As an added bonus at the end of the workshop we print each photographers favourite image as an A3+ Fine Art inkjet print on an Epson fine art printer (on occasions when we can't transport the printer we courier the image back to the photographers).

Read on to see why we are confident that you will want to book this workshop with us!





Key Highlights:

Photograph:

- The Amphitheatre - one of South Africa's most iconic mountain faces.
- See the sun rise from 2400m above sea-level and half way up the Drakensberg
- Explore the Tunnel and its exquisite sandstone curves.
- Capture one of the most iconic views of the Drakensberg, seemingly only 'discovered' by experienced photographers.

Enjoy:

- Probably the world's best instructor to participant ratio, maximizing your learning while on tour.
- Having highly experienced tutors watching over your shoulders and helping you on the spot as you craft your images of the amazing Drakensberg and its beautiful valleys and peaks.



Learn about:

- Creative Composition: The basics and beyond, such as The Element Approach, Balancing Composition etc.
- Basics to advanced techniques in digital landscape photography. With two instructors (depending on group size) all levels of ability can be catered for.
- Workflow & digital asset management.
- How to create awe-inspiring astrophotography and star trail images.
- How to create panoramic images.
- How to create time lapses (optional)
- Post-production using Lightroom and Photo Shop

Emil regularly runs workshops and classes on Lightroom, Photoshop layers and masking and luminosity masking. These sessions will be included in the travel itinerary for those who want to spend more time on these aspects.



Reasons to Join Us

It is not by chance that the Nature's Light Logo is reminiscent of a peak in the Drakensberg. The founders of Nature's Light, Emil and Nick are both avid enthusiasts of South Africa's longest and most prominent mountain range. Over the years the two have led dozens of photography groups and workshops across the length of the Drakensberg. Emil has personally summited the Amphitheatre more than 50 times and has broad experience of the Central and Northern Drakensberg regions. Nick has been leading groups through the foothills of the Berg through Tailor Made Safaris since its inception.

The knowledge and indeed love of these mountains translates into an incredible photographic adventure for those who want to join the Mountain Masterclass. The workshop is not intended as a hiking or mountaineering tour, but still engages sufficiently with the mountain and its steep basalt flanks to satisfy both sofa adventurers and mountain goats.

Nature's Light prides itself on 'deep-instruction'. This is a term we use to describe how we teach photographers to understand the mechanics of the camera and light as well as the subtle art of photographic composition. The goal is not just to take you to a great location and produce a great image. Our goal is that you understand how to create that image so that you can do it again, and again, and again.



Far too many photography workshops and instructors bark out settings and instruction on how to replicate an image they, the instructor, are creating. We differ in that we strive to get the photographers to create their own works by assisting with the pre-visualization and creation of those images. We firmly believe that this approach improves the skill and workflow of the photographers that join us.

Natures Light always looks for the best possible locations with accomodation that allows for easy access to great photo opportunities. This does sometimes mean that we have to opt for slightly more rustic accomodation. The Mountain Masterclass takes place at the community owned and run Witsieshoek Mountain Chalet and the Kwazulu-Natal Parksboard (Ezemvelo) Thendele Hutted Camp. These two locations are in our opinion the best possible loactions for mixing loaction shooting time and classroom based editing time.

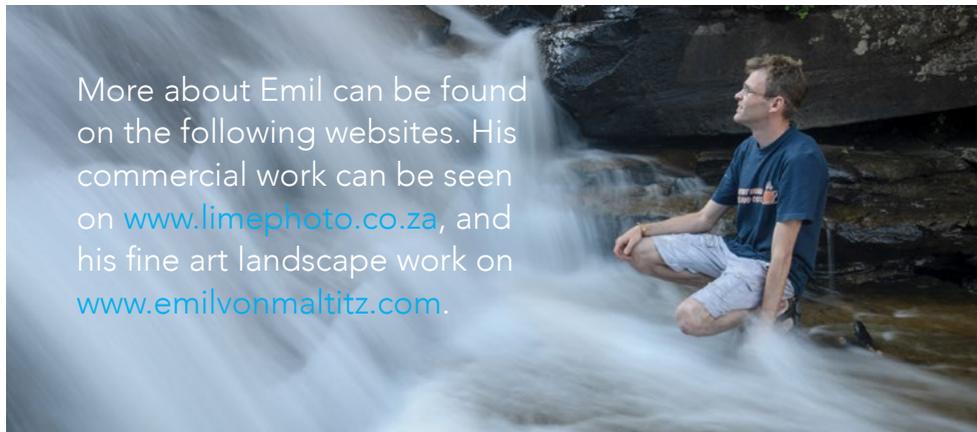
core understanding, pre-visualization, and technical (deep) knowledge are the key components to the nature's light ethos of 'deep-instruction'.



Mountain Masterclass

About us, description of tour leaders

Emil von Maltitz is an internationally recognized South African landscape photographer and member of the International Environmental Photographers Association. He has been involved in photography for the better part of the last two decades. After completing his post graduate degree in Anthropology, he opted to pursue his dream and turn his passion for photography into his career. Along with freelance commercial and assignment photography, Emil spends time running a number of photographic workshops. Well-versed and knowledgeable in the Adobe suites, Emil will be able to help and guide in photo-editing and several advanced photographic techniques during the workshop. A particular interest of Emil's is the theory and practical application of advanced composition in landscape photography, which will be discussed at length during the workshop.



More about Emil can be found on the following websites. His commercial work can be seen on www.limephoto.co.za, and his fine art landscape work on www.emilvonmaltitz.com.

Nick van de Wiel Nick is a specialist nature and photographic guide based in St. Lucia, South Africa. Trained as a biologist as well as safari guide, Nick revels being in the bush, and if possible, with a camera in hand! Although he started off as a Wildlife Photographer, as his photography matured he moved more and more towards Landscape Photography. Although technically very able, both 'in camera' as well as with post processing, Nick is very focussed on the creative as well as meditative aspect of photography. Especially with landscape work, it is all about 'seeing & recognising beauty' and the only way one will 'find it', is by being in the present moment. Then 'crafting the image', trying to capture the emotion of the moment in the available light, in order to create a most beautiful still photograph that speaks for itself, and that has the eyes of viewers linger on for a while. As a teacher, he is well known for his inventive teaching methods and ways of explaining difficult or abstract concepts in layman's terms, so that they are easier to understand.



More about Nick on www.nickvandewiel.com and www.tailormadesafaris.co.za.



What you will learn

You don't become a better photographer by buying more and more equipment, better cameras or bigger lenses. That you probably know. Better equipment doesn't mean better technique! There is no better way to improve your photography skills than to be taught by someone that has more experience than you. And there is certainly no more fun way than to do just that at some of the world's most iconic landscapes, together with a bunch of like-minded fellows! Moreover, technique and equipment can only get you so far, after that it is 'creativity' that will set you apart. Creativity is what allows someone to create captivating images, rather than an ordinary photo of a beautiful landscape. It is hard to learn to be creative yourself, and you don't learn to think out of the box from an online course. Creativity develops when someone pushes you out of your comfort zone, while giving you practical tips and hints as to what options you have from a compositional point of view. And this is exactly what we do with you in the field. We wish to inspire you so you go home with great images and better photographic knowledge!

Not only do we try to develop your creativity, (pre)visualisation skills and composition whilst in the field, we also spend time in 'classroom sessions' where we are able to view images and discuss the philosophy and technique behind the image. At the start of the workshop the tutors will sit with each participant to find out

individual wishes and expectations, and to see at what level they are. In between the morning, afternoon and evening/night shoots there will be lectures on topics of the participants' choice. There will also be guided photo-editing sessions, and we have frequent informal comment & critique presentations where we discuss each other's photos in a constructive and fun manner.

On The Mountain Masterclass we concentrate on:

- Landscape Composition and its pre-visualization
- Use of filters in landscape photography
- Star trail photography and astro-photography (weather permitting)
- Long Exposure water/stream photography
- Optimizing digital exposure
- Natural looking exposure blending



Daily Itinerary

Once again, this tour is not a traditional, relaxed, holiday. Although joining photo shoots and/or teaching sessions is of course optional and you may skip some of them if you want, be prepared for some early mornings and some late nights. A typical daily itinerary looks like:

Wake up between 4:00 and 5:00am for a do a sunrise shoot (Being summer means that the days are long!)

Return for breakfast around 8:00am

Four options (or a combination of them) depending on the day:

- A few hours private time where you can relax, get a nap, download photos
- Lessons or guided editing time
- Comment & Critique sessions
- Traveling to the next destination if a traveling day.

Lunch around 13:00

Three options depending on the day:

- A few hours private time where you can relax, get a nap, download photos
- Lessons or guided editing time
- Comment & Critique sessions

Afternoons shoot from 15:30 to about 19:00 (depending on location)

Dinner around 19:30 for 20:00

Possible night shoot from 21:00 onwards.

We cannot stress enough that this is not a typical lazy holiday. Some days are very long, but the rewards of joining this workshop are phenomenal. Incredible locations, wonderful camaraderie, excellent photographic guidance and unique photography opportunities make for a sensational 4 nights in the mountains that you will be talking about for years to come.





Mountain Masterclass

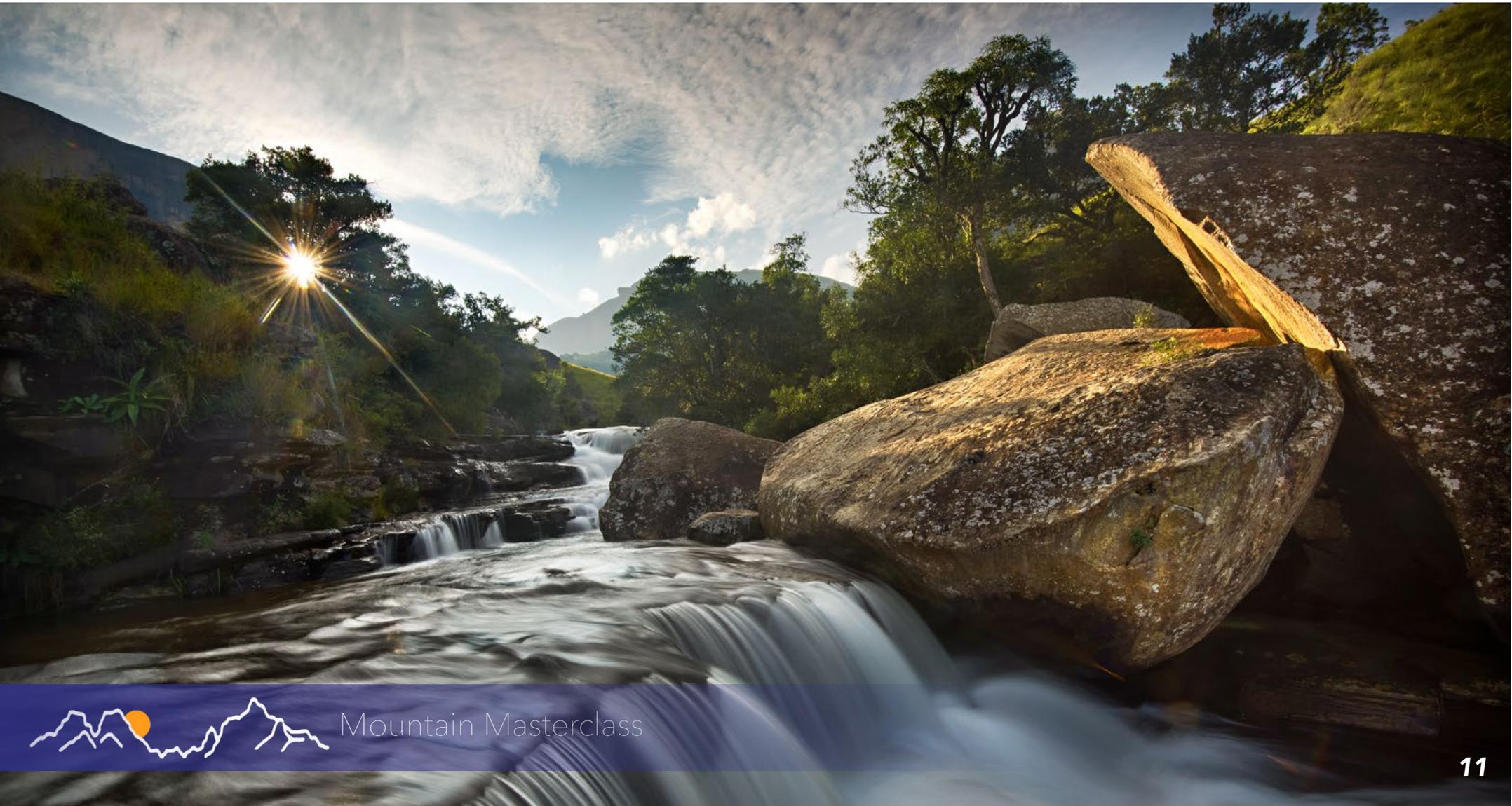
Itinerary in full

Day 1 – All guests arrive at Thendele - 26th February

Whether photographers decide to travel on their own or join Nature's Light in traveling, we all arrive just after lunch at Thendele in the Royal Natal Section of the uKhahlamba Drakensberg National Park (detailed travel directions given to participants

opting to travel in their own vehicles). Nature's Light can provide transport from King Shaka International Airport in Durban.

After a short rest and introduction to the workshop the group leaves for a shoot. After the days to the Cascades to photograph waterfalls and flowing streams. From there we make our way to a restaurant for some of the best pizza in the country.



Day 2 - Exploring The Tunnel.

After breakfast the group starts out on the walk to the fascinating 'Tunnel' at the base of the Tugela Falls. This is a narrow sandstone gorge through which the Tugela River flows. The rocks form amazing abstract patterns that are a photographers delight.

The walk is a moderately strenuous 14km in total (combined there and back). the group walk through lush yellow-wood forests and gets incredible views of the Amphitheatre massif as we gradually move closer to the wall of the Drakensberg escarpment.

On return we relax in the lodge while downloading and editing images. Dinner is 'in house' as we have a braai while setting up cameras for star-trails over the Sentinel Peak.

Day 3 – Dawn Photo-shoots, Critique and Witsieshoek

An early morning start sees us on the boulder-strewn Tugela River with the awesome Amphitheatre as backdrop. There is very little in the way of walking, so the day is a restful one in this regard.

After breakfast we spend some time looking at Photoshop and the processing of star trails before leaving for Witsieshoek.

On the journey to Witsieshoek we stop at several locations for landscape composition exercises and a shoot amongst the sandstone boulders of Retiefsklip.

After arrival at Witsieshoek and a short rest we reconvene for a seminar and critique session on the images that were processed in the morning.

Day 4 – The Witches Viewpoint

Day 4 starts with a very early departure for Sentinel car park. Our goal on this morning is to reach the Witches Viewpoint, half way up



the path to the Chain Ladder. This phenomenal viewpoint affords one of the most spectacular sunrise points in the Drakensberg. It is a fairly strenuous walk, especially as most of it is done in the dark (head torches are compulsory), but the view itself has meant that to date it has been the highlight for most of our photographer guests

We return shortly after sunrise to have a full breakfast at Witsieshoek.

Seminars, guided editing and a critique session follow breakfast. In the late afternoon we once more head out for a shoot before dinner. After dinner we do another star-shoot (preferably with glass of wine in hand ;-)).

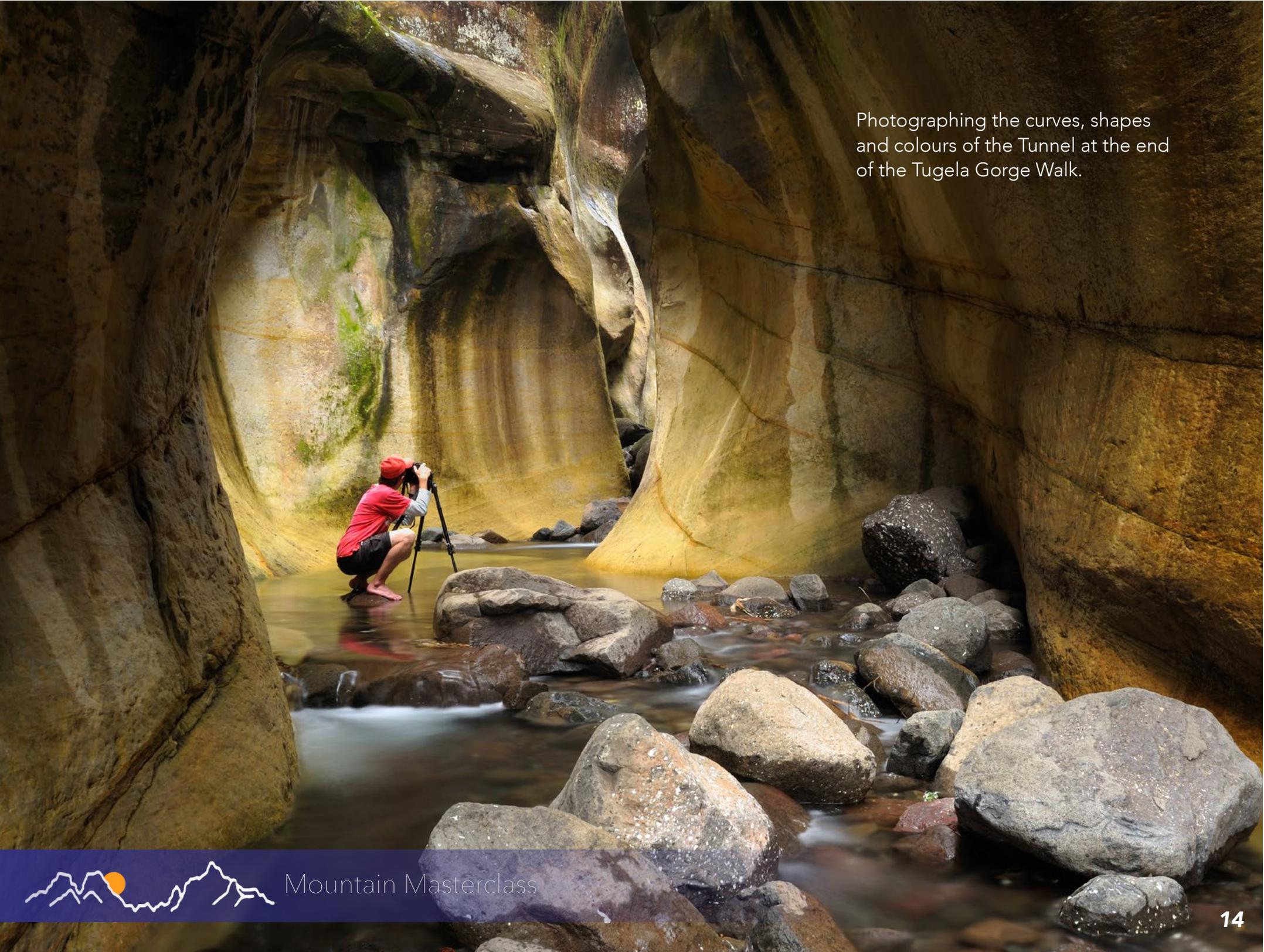
Day 5 Dawn Photo-shoot of the Amphitheatre end of workshop

A final optional dawn shoot is the perfect way to begin our final day in the mountains. We are able to watch the sun slide up the mountains from the edge of the 'Little Berg' as it looks down over Royal Natal and the Tugela River.

After breakfast photographers get the opportunity to print their favourite image that they have created as an A3+ fine art print on a dedicated Epson large format printer that we bring expressly for this purpose.

We depart around 10 or 11 in the morning, either traveling back together to Durban (King Shaka airport or accommodation in the area) or separately.





Photographing the curves, shapes and colours of the Tunnel at the end of the Tugela Gorge Walk.



Day	Date	Plan of Day	Accommodation
1	26 February 2016	Photographers arrive after lunch at Thendele Hutted Camp. After a short introduction we depart for a photo shoot on the Mahai River. After photographing the water we return to freshen up before departing for dinner outside the National Park.	Thendele Hutted Camp
2	27 February 2016	An optional early morning start nearby the Lodge to photograph the morning light on the Amphitheatre and Sentinel Mountains. After breakfast we depart on the 14km round trip walk to the Tunnel. After a long day we have a restful evening braai while photographing star-trails from the Lodge.	Thendele Hutted Camp
3	28 February 2016	Early morning start in order to reach a viewpoint on the Tugela River. Here we work with long exposures to capture moving water while the Amphitheatre lights up orange in the background. After breakfast we depart on the 2 hour drive to Witsieshoek, stopping along the way to photograph the landscape. After arrival we set off for a late afternoon shoot amongst the sandstone formations below Witsieshoek. In the evening we shoot star-trails over Sentinel Peak.	Witsieshoek Lodge
4	29 February 2016	An extremely early start to the morning to walk to the incredible Witches viewpoint for Sunrise. Depending on the group (to be determined before the trip) we either return for breakfast and editing or continue on to the summit of the Amphitheatre.	Witsieshoek Lodge
5	1 March 2016	After a leisurely breakfast (optional dawn shoot for those wanting to lie in) photographers get together for a critique session and printing of favourite images from the workshop. We depart around 11h00.	Depart

Note: As mentioned, the daily plan is flexible and will be tailor made around clients' needs and wishes. Estimated times are rough estimates taking into account stopping along the way for taking photos. Topics for teaching sessions will be determined during the tour after consultation with the participants, so you get to learn what you want to learn about.



Accommodation and Logistics

All accommodation, park fees and meals on the workshop are included in the fee.

The table below describes the accommodation at each location:

Thendele Hutted Camp	Thendele Hutted Camp lies at the end of the Tugela River Valley with a commanding view of the Amphitheatre. Accommodation is clean and comfortable in thatched self-catering cottages. Rooms are shared (unless otherwise requested). We use a one of the large 3 bedroom cottages which have the best 'living area' in which to run informal seminars and do guided editing. One of the meals is outside of the Royal Natal National Park, otherwise the rest are packed and eaten on location or catered by Nature's Light.
Witsieshoek	Witsieshoek lays claim to being the highest resort in the country. At 2200m above sea-level this is probably accurate. The lodge is community owned but run by Trans-frontier Park Destinations. The newly refitted rooms are luxurious and warm. However, situated at the top of the mountain means that occasionally things don't go exactly as planned (power outages, waylaid food deliveries and such), so come with a sense of humour and patience and you will be richly rewarded.



Price

R10,930 per person (approximately US\$690 as of December 2015). Minimum 4 participants, maximum 6 participants. (If under 4 participants, only one photographic leader with an assistant will conduct the tour)

Single Supplement: R1.400, subject to availability

Why so expensive?

Admittedly, R10,930 (which for 4 nights comes to R2730 per night), is for many a lot of money. But, albeit a lot of money, it is not expensive if you look at other photography workshops. The Drakensberg as a destination is not cheap if you are not camping. Restaurant prices are often comparable to European prices, and the accommodation facilities that we use in this tour are of 3-4 star calibre, charging about R650-850 per person per night. Add the vehicles, fuel, food (and we include drinks) and the salaries (3 guests 1 instructor, 4 guest and more 2 instructors) and transport for the instructors as well as their food and accommodation during the tour, and it is easy to see why the basic costs of running the workshop are in fact quite high.

Why so affordable?

We indeed feel the tour is very competitively priced. Just Google "South African photographic workshop" and see what prices you get, and what you get for those prices. Cheaper options are few, and they invariably use cheap accommodation that may not be the best location for your photo shoot, or exclude transport for

example. We are confident in our best value for money approach, where we don't cut on quality, offer a pretty much all-inclusive tour at a fair price. Given that the tour leaders are South Africans and that South African salaries and taxes are considerably lower than their European counterparts, we are able to pass this saving on as a rather more competitive price.

What is included	What is not included
All lodging (based upon sharing)	Airfares to and from Durban International Airport*
Pickup and drop off from Durban International Airport*	Single room supplement R1.400,-
Dinner day 1, breakfast, lunch, dinner day 2-4, breakfast & lunch day 5 - including most drinks	Non-meal time snacks (we do cater for snacks but occasionally guests prefer additional snacks)
Local tips for guides and for restaurants	Possible extra excursions/ activities and/or additional days
Photography guidance by experienced professional photographers	Travel insurances (mandatory!)
All tuition including teaching material and hand-outs	Photographic gear rental (if required)
All entrance fees and photography permits	
All toll and parking fees	
* If you choose to fly to Durban and join Nature's Light at the King Shaka Airport	



What to bring

Upon booking, we will send you a detailed list of what to bring, but below we list the essentials in terms of photographic equipment.

Photography Equipment

- A digital SLR camera, Emil and Nick both shoot with Full-Frame cameras, but any interchangeable lens camera will work perfectly on the workshop including, crop-sensor DSLRs, the new breed of mirrorless cameras and Micro Four Thirds cameras will also work perfectly well. We don't recommend using compact cameras because of their serious limitations or the 1" sensor cameras which don't have the same tolerances for landscape photography that M4/3s and larger sensor cameras have.
- A good quality tripod, preferably one not made of plastic. We can help you choose a suitable one if you don't already have a tripod.
- A wide angle lens (Emil and Nick use wide and ultra-wide angle lens as a matter of preference).
- A telephoto zoom lens, such as a 70-200 or 70-300.
- A camera remote (cable release) or intervalometer.
- For anyone serious about getting into landscape photography, a filter set consisting out of graduated Neutral Density filters and a polarizer, is indispensable. We strongly recommend investing in a set before arrival. Let us know if you need help choosing the right set.
- A camera backpack to carry equipment, water and a decent jacket with.
- A laptop with editing software already loaded. Emil and Nick personally use Lightroom and Adobe Photoshop with Nik plugins.
- A backup hard-drive for backing up images (it would be terrible to travel to the Drakensberg Mountains only to lose all the images if a laptop hard-drive crashes).



Frequently asked questions

- **Do I have to do anything?** Yes please! We do count on (some of) you to help with some camp chores. Camp chores are very limited as we have organised catering pretty much everywhere. Your help with packing and unloading vehicles etc. every now and again will be much appreciated! In our experience, running the logistics of a workshop as a team effort is fun and keeps the spirits high!
- **Do I get a discount if I bring my own vehicle?** Participants on the Mountain Masterclass have the option to bring their own vehicle if they prefer, but the fee has been calculated to be as low as possible and anyone opting to drive with Nature's Light is essentially receiving an added value to the fee. So, on this particular workshop a discount is not provided if you bring your own vehicle as it is priced assuming that most guests will drive their own transport in the first place.
- **Can I have a room to myself?** Yes. However, this workshop and its price is based upon sharing accommodation with other participants of the same sex or as couples. If you would like a room to yourself there is a single supplement of R3.900, subject to availability.
- **Can you cater for special dietary requirements?** To a limited degree, yes. Please do let us know of any dietary requirement you have and we can see what we can do. Please note that Witsieshoek is relatively far off the beaten track and fresh vegetables or meat substitutes are occasionally hard to get, so if you are vegetarian we can cater for you, but meals might be rather 'plain'.

You are welcome to suggest options during the workshop or before, to ensure we can cater properly for your needs.

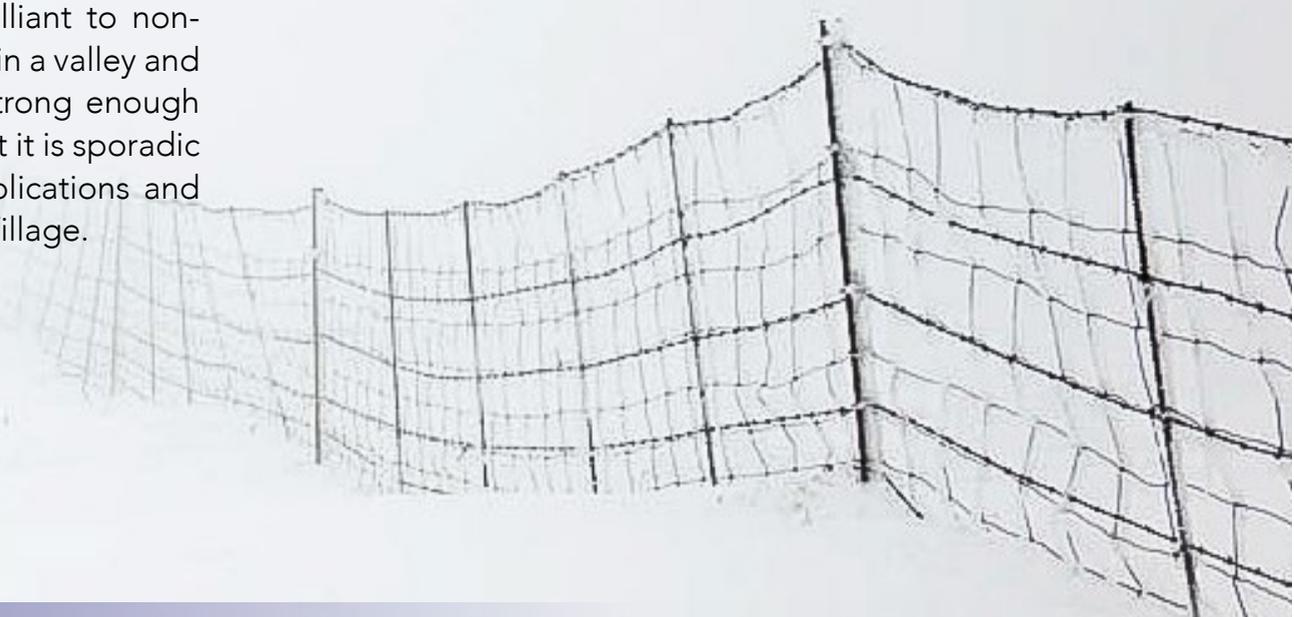
- **Is the Drakensberg safe?** Namibia is one of the most stable and safe countries on the African continent. Although crime exists, it is comparable to any first world country in Europe or North America. We have traveled throughout Namibia and have yet to experience any issues. Still, a basic awareness of your valuables is still required.
- **Do the tour leaders take photos themselves?** Yes they do. However, the emphasis is on teaching and guiding you throughout the workshop. Our experience has taught us that most participants enjoy teaching sessions interspersed with 'try-out-alone' time, where they put the taught techniques into practice. Moreover, landscape photography is all about seeing the beauty in the land, which for each individual is different, and then to be creative with it. To have a teacher talking you through every step along the way in the field will hinder the development of your creativity, as you are not 'pushed' to try things for yourself. Hence, our teachers will be there when you need them in the field, give tips and directions, regularly checking on each individual participant to see if they need advise, but don't be surprised if you see them taking photos themselves in between helping other participants - Also, there are two dedicated instructors on the workshop and a maximum of six participants; you are guaranteed to get assistance with your photography when you need it!
- **How fit do I have to be?** Relatively fit. Physical difficulty for this tour is rated as moderate. There are two walks involved: the first is a relatively moderate walk of 14km in total where we



head towards the Tunnel through several small forests and along a contour. There is a some bouldering towards the end as well. The second walk is less distance but on the top of a mountain in the dark (with head torches). The going is steep but certainly do-able.

- **Should I be concerned about the water or any other health issues?** The water is potable almost everywhere in the Drakensberg. Where it isn't we will provide bottled water for consumption. Most of the lodges in the area draw their water directly from the mountain streams and treat it on site. As it is, the Drakensberg is considered the most important watershed in the country with the Lesotho side being responsible for South Africa's longest River (the Orange) and 90% of the water provision to Gauteng Province through the Lesotho Highlands Water Project.

- **Is there Internet Access?** We are in the mountains which means internet and cell reception goes from brilliant to non-existent within several paces distance. Thendele is in a valley and while there is cell reception, it sometimes isn't strong enough for internet connectivity. Witsieshoek has wifi, but it is sporadic as to when it works or not due to weather complications and electricity shortages lower down in Phudahitjaba Village.



Contact and Bookings

If you would like to join the Mountain Masterclass, you can make a booking by contacting Nature's Light at:

email: info@naureslight.co.za

phone: +27(0)845849959

Fax: +27(0)865631530

Terms and Conditions are available on:

www.natureslight.co.za/termsandconditions



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