Making a book of your photos

Why photo-books?

When we used film we created albums of prints or slideshows. Slideshows were a pain to set up every time you wanted to look at them and albums were, and still are, expensive for high quality prints. In the end, who re-visited their slide shows more than a few times, and prints can fade over time too.

To-day we can look at our images on our devices, whether or not they are processed and we can develop virtual albums, shows and make prints. Some people like virtual albums, they can be re-visited and shared, shows are a bit like slideshows in that you have to connect your computer to your television or projector etc, and you can, at some cost, produce print albums to share.

Photo-books enable you to re-visit your photos in hard copy but in a cost effective way. I reckon on less than £1.00 a page for a book of 40 pages or more. It sounds a lot but you can get more than one image on a page and you can add your own text.

Three examples:

My Tour du Mt Blanc (TMB) book is hardback and has 96 pages 13"x11" with 180 images and another will cost about £90 including P&P

My Dolomites book is also hardback has 74 pages 10"x8" with one image per page (my choice) and will cost about £42.00 for another copy.

For about £26.00 I'll get another copy of my Cafe Culture book, 10"x8" 26 pages and 40 or so images.

As you can see, the more pages there are the relatively less expensive it is.

Blurb amongst others offers discount to encourage you to create a new book. I usually wait until I see an offer of 30% or 40% discount and then upload (see below). When I created the TMB book i got 30% discount so it cost me something in the mid £60s or a bit over 20p an image. The economics are so worthwhile, and if you order a number of copies you can get volume discount, but usually that means ten copies so not necessarily appropriate.

How?

- **Choose your subject**. This sounds obvious, but there are several ways of looking at this:

  - A sequence - The TMB book is a good example. It follows my walk around Mt Blanc in the order I did it, but I have got a couple of out of sequence sections so that the main narrative flows.

  - About a place. The "In Search of the Tiger" book is an example. Here I took photos over several visits to the village of Ranthambhore and to the reserve. Then I split the book by subject leaving the tigers to the back of the book so that there was some anticipation and a chance to see the surroundings and other wildlife.

- About a subject. Here the Cafe Culture book is an example, with pages for each cafe grouped by town.

- **Tell a story**. Order your photographs to tell the story you want. We take lots of photos in a place and the order can be quite random. You may take a photo late in a visit that becomes the opening shot for that part if your book.

- **Try using photojournalistic techniques**. The great illustrated magazines such as *Life* and *Picture Post* used a formula for each photo essay. *National Geographic* still does this. The sequence is

  - a strong opening shot to set the scene

  - the meat of the piece with a narrative

  - a closing shot to bring down the curtain

- Because you're producing a book, try to make your cover invite the reader in. Some covers can be image wrap - that is the image flows from the back of the book, across the spine and onto the front. This can be attractive, but sometimes you can use different images.

Choose Your Software

There are many companies that you can use. I will concentrate on Blurb (blurb.co.uk) but also consider, Bob Books, Canon (https://www.canon.co.uk/hdbook/), CEWE and others - many others.

Some suppliers let you can either work on line on their website or download the software, and other require you to download. I prefer to work on the stand alone software because I don't have to be connected to the internet to create the book.

Process your photographs

- Run through your photos and decide which ones to use.

- Make sure that they are processed as you want them to appear in your book. (Make sure your monitor is properly profiled so that the book looks like what you've produced on screen).

- Order them into sections for each part of the book. In Lightroom I create a "Collection Set" for each book and then for each chapter I create a "Collection." There are many ways to do this but this is simple.

- Export them as full size jpegs in order and into a directory for the book.

Open your software

- Click "**Create**"

- **Choose your format** (you can change it at any time)

- Choose a **title** (Editable)

- Choose a directory and file name for the book

- **Start work**.

  - Choose templates

    - Front and back covers (what can be on the cover will depend on the format you've chosen).

    - Chapter titles

    - Photo pages

    - Text pages

  - Drag and drop your photos

  - Create and save your own layouts

  - Add text

- **When you think you're finished**

  - Inspect the book and re-order any pages and photos you may think would sit better in a different order

  - Fix any issues the software throws up (there are warnings that appear and which you should address).

  - Spell-check everything

  - Proof read, proof read, pause for a day then proof read and proof read again. You can usually download and print low quality pdf for this.

  - Gets someone who can spell to proof read.

  - Do it yourself again.

- **When you are finished**

  - Confirm your format and paper choice

  - Upload the book - this will take a while - several cups of tea.

  - Ensure you have a discount code (you will get one automatically for your first book, and the website will show one in the banner - at the moment it's 35%) and then order. Best to order as many as you will want as you can use the discount code for all you order.

Good luck