

ON THE SCENE
NEWQUAY

New wave photography

Snapping moving objects is tricky enough, but how about doing it in the sea? We headed to Cornwall for a masterclass

IT'S A CHILLY MORNING and I'm standing waist deep in the icy Atlantic, covered head to toe in neoprene with thousands of pounds of photography equipment strapped to my hand.

In front of me, Becky waits, poised on her surfboard, white water buffeting her on both sides. As the board lifts over the swell of a wave, she pops up and heads in my direction. I pull the camera out of the sea, take aim and press the trigger as many times as my fingers can manage. The trick, I've learned, is to get as close to her as possible. Out of the 100 shots snapped off, there might be five half-decent ones and – if luck's with us – one good one. Still, if it was easy, I wouldn't need to be here.

The here in question is Fistral Beach in Newquay, Cornwall, where professional photographer Lucia Griggi is teaching us the art of surf photography. From shooting in the water to editing back in the classroom, her workshop runs through everything you need to know – including advice on getting your photos published. You don't have to be a surfer or an expert to sign up, as long as you've got a digital SLR camera and strong swimming ability.

Griggi has run courses sporadically over the summers since 2008, giving back to the community she started in as a surf coach, a skill that has taken her around the world. "It was travelling that brought me into photography," she says. "I kept going to all these great places, but all I had was my dad's point-and-shoot camera."

Ten years on, she's now one of only five full-time female surf photographers in the world. She's spent the past decade diving over rocky lava reefs and trekking through jungles to shoot world-famous surf breaks in the Maldives, Alaska, Sri Lanka, Puerto Rico and Hawaii.

Since the 1960s, surf photography has played a crucial part in providing the sport with international recognition. LeRoy Grannis's early images of VW camper vans and



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INTO THE BLUE

- 01 A surfer dives clear of the rolling waves
- 02 Photographer Lucia Griggi
- 03 Demonstrating good technique
- 04 Snapped in a tube
- 05 Griggi leads a warm-up during a workshop

Californian beach babes cruising on 9ft longboards along glassy waves became iconic images of the 60s. This fascination with peeling waves and the laid-back surfing lifestyle has never quite worn off and, today, advances in technology have led to an explosion of amateur photographers taking to the ocean.

With waterproof cameras now available for under £100, those looking to take underwater photos on a budget don't have to rely on disposable cameras or, like me, borrow one. I'm using Griggi's rig – a Canon 5D Mark III with an SPL waterhousing – to film others, though an increasing number of surfers are also capturing their own water sessions with a GoPro – a tough, waterproof, mini video



camera – strapped to the front of their board for a prime view. Indeed, more than 2.3m of these hardy gadgets were sold in 2012 alone. It's just the next step in a sport that is increasingly documented. Greg Martin, editor of *Wavelength* surfing magazine, reveals it's now rare for a good surfer to ride a wave without it being shot in some way. "The only real negative side is that images become devalued," he says. "Professional photographers now have to push themselves to stay ahead of a new breed of hungry, imaginative amateurs."

Griggi, however, is not so concerned. One of only a few in her profession willing to divulge their trade secrets so openly, she believes her lessons can only boost interest in surfing as a whole. "The more you share with others," she says, "the better the industry will be."

For information on courses, visit luciagriggi.com



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