

NIGHT SKY PHOTOGRAPHY

WEEKEND WORKSHOP INFORMATION PACK

INTRODUCTION

Thanks for booking your place on a Night Sky Photography Workshop with Phil Hart. The information below explains how the workshop will be run and what you need to bring to get the most out of it.

The course will go ahead whatever the weather, but I run the course over three nights to increase our chances of getting some clear sky during the weekend. The program will be adapted to make the best of whatever clear sky we get, so please come ready to be patient when the skies are cloudy and flexible when they're clear 😊.

ACCOMMODATION - LAKE EPPALOCK RETREAT

We are staying at the Lake Eppalock Retreat, 67 Dunlop Road, Eppalock 3551.

http://www.bendigoretreats.com.au/lake_eppalock_retreat.html

The 25 acre site is on the west shore of Lake Eppalock. We will have the site to ourselves for the weekend.

Please print both the Google map and driving directions below to make sure you can find your way there - your phone/navigator will likely not perform very well on these roads!

Driving Directions from Melbourne

- Turn off at the Calder Highway at Heathcote/Eppalock sign C326 just before Kyneton.
- Drive Approx 26kms along C326.
- Come to Redesdale township.
- Just past pub take Bendigo/Eppalock C327 Turn left.
- Travel 3 kms to roundabout.
- Take Eppalock / Bendigo turnoff C327 Travel approx 11kms.
- Turn right into Twin Rivers Road (clearly signed). There is a small signpost with Eppalock Retreat.
- Drive to bottom approx 5kms.
- Turn right into Coliban Pool Road. There is a small signpost for Eppalock Retreat.
- Travel 500 metres then turn left into Dunlop Road. Then a further 600 metres to property.
- Big sign on property, enter through high brick entrance.

Google Maps Link: <http://maps.google.com.au/>

There are five bedrooms, two bathrooms, kitchen, family and living area and outside bbq area. Bed linen is provided but you need to **bring your own towels**.

MEALS

All meals are self-catering with one large kitchen for the whole group. Simple meals or leftovers that you can reheat are ideal as things can get a little crowded at dinner time. There is an outside bbq too. You can also drive 30 minutes into Bendigo or Heathcote. I will provide basic milk, tea and coffee provisions but you are welcome to bring your own as well.

The kitchen is equipped with basic cutlery, crockery and saucepans etc., but has little by way of microwave containers. Anything special you need or would like to prepare your meals is generally worth bringing.

SCHEDULE

The course 'officially' starts at ~8:30pm on Friday and checkout is by 10am on Monday morning. The start time is flexible and arriving later is no problem, but if there are clear skies on the Friday night, we try to run through some basic topics and start taking photos at a reasonable hour. If you are not constrained by weekday working hours, you are welcome to arrive any time after 5:30pm (it is easier to find while it is still light).

We will find four hours after lunch on Saturday and Sunday for the instructional sessions listed below. There are no formal activities during the morning, aside from catching up on sleep. You are welcome to explore the area or just relax.

The instructional sessions finish on Sunday afternoon, but we stay on site that third night to have another night to take more photos (bearing in mind that it may be our first and last chance if the previous two nights have been cloudy). If you need to return to work on Monday morning, you can leave anytime Sunday evening, or catch some sleep during the night before getting up early on Monday and driving back to Melbourne.

INSTRUCTIONAL SESSIONS

Let me know if you have not already downloaded your free copy of my Shooting Stars eBook as this forms the basis for the workshop. It will help if you can bring a laptop or iPad with the ebook but it is not essential. I will provide printed copies of the field guide.

We will aim to cover most of the topics below on Saturday, with the image processing and further questions left for Sunday afternoon.

INTRODUCTION TO ASTRONOMY

- The Sky through the Seasons
- Bright Stars, Constellations and the Milky Way
- The Moon (rises ~2am)
- Twilight
- Deep Sky Objects

YOUR CAMERA AT NIGHT

- Lenses (Focal Length & Field of View)
- Focus

- Aperture
- Exposure Time
- ISO
- Noise Reduction & Other Settings
- Equipment & Accessories

IMAGE PROCESSING

- Basic Lightroom processing of night sky images
- Noise Reduction
- Stacking star trail images
- Rendering timelapse video

PRACTICAL SESSIONS

Depending on how much clear sky we get during the three nights, we will attempt some or all of the following types of night sky photography:

- Twilight Landscapes
- Night Sky Scenes: Short exposures on a fixed tripod
- Star Trails: Long exposures on a fixed tripod
- The Moon
- Timelapse Video

WHAT TO BRING

In addition to the items below which you should bring, I will loan each participant a 'Night Sky Photography Starter Pack' for the weekend, which includes a red LED head torch and a dew heater plus lithium battery and charger. You can purchase these items afterwards if you wish.

CAMERA GEAR

- Digital SLR camera
- All the lenses you own (primarily wide angle lenses but long focal length also good for the Moon and wildlife!)
- Batteries (spares if you have them) and battery chargers
- Tripod(s)
- Memory cards (as many as you have)
- Instruction manual for your camera (if you can find it!)

If you do not have any of the items listed above, please contact Phil to see what can be arranged.

OTHER ITEMS

- AAA Batteries (to suit the red LED head torch I provide you for the weekend)
- Extra torch (head torch is ideal) plus spare batteries
- Notebook and pens
- Thermals, *lots* of warm clothes, thick socks and warm shoes.
- Warm jumpers, jackets and eg. ski pants (or whatever you have).
- Gloves, scarf and beanie.
- Mosquito repellent

- Lots of snacks to keep you going during the night
- Towel(s)
- Warm outdoor shoes. Ideally ones that are easy to slip on and off to keep inside the house clean. Moon boots/snow boots are great in the colder months.

In the colder months, dress as though you are going to the snow!

USEFUL BUT NOT ESSENTIAL ITEMS

- Remote release/Self-timer cable (I will have some to suit most cameras)
- Binoculars
- Laptop and cables required for downloading pictures from your camera and processing your own images

If you have a telescope of any kind, please feel free to bring it along. We can help you make best use of it for visual observations and if you have all the required adaptors etc. we can experiment a little with astrophotography as well.

A NOTE ON SAFETY

There will be no outdoor lights on at the Lake Eppalock Retreat, which is perfect for taking photos of the night sky but takes some getting used to if you are not an astronomer.

You will be able to use a torch at times, but I recommend and will provide red LED torches. Using a dim red light does not affect your night vision, so that you can use the torch when required to arrange or adjust equipment, but when turned off your dark adapted eyes will still be able to see your surroundings.

Please familiarise yourself with the surroundings during daylight and take care moving around at night. This is a risk associated with night photography but it's worth it for great photos!

The accommodation units are located on the shores of Lake Eppalock. Please also bear this in mind if you are bringing children along.