

My favourite kit

Emma Stokes

Emma tells AP why her fast telephoto zoom has fast become a favourite for her landscape photography



Emma Stokes has been a photographer for 5 years and lives in Tonbridge, Kent. See more of her work at www.emmastokesphotography.co.uk and on Instagram @[emmastokesphotography](https://www.instagram.com/emmastokesphotography)

AP: Tell us about your photography background.

ES: My love of landscape photography started following a redundancy in 2017, when I was given an opportunity to retrain. I have always loved the outdoors and enjoyed photography, so it felt like a natural step to go on some landscape photography workshops. I went on the first with my trusty second-hand Canon EOS 550D and was instantly hooked. I soon upgraded my kit and travelled to Iceland and Croatia as well as a few workshops in the UK. As well as opening my eyes to a new passion, the escapism provided some much-needed therapy after what had been a stressful time. Upon my return from Iceland, I was very fortunate to win the Telegraph Travel Big Picture award with one of my images from Jökulsárlón beach. Since then I have continued photographing part-time, offering tuition, and selling prints and calendars. I have had a few more competition successes as well as features online and in print. I have explored other genres, but always come back to landscape photography.

AP: What would we find in your camera bag?

ES: My rucksack contains my Canon EOS 5D Mark IV, EF 16-35mm f/4,

EF 24-70mm f/2.8, EF 70-200mm f/2.8, Three-Legged Thing tripod and a selection of filters from Lee Filters. I will often take a pair of wellies too for my coastal adventures.

AP: Which single item of kit couldn't you live without?

ES: Landscape photography is often associated with wide angles and big vistas, but I find myself drawn more to intimate scenes and simple compositions, for which elimination is key. The Canon EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS II USM is ideal for this, allowing the photographer to declutter the scene, or to zone in on the most interesting part of the view. This can help enormously for coastal photography where too much sky or foreground can often dilute a scene. Combined with the use of ND filters for long exposures, the composition can be simplified even further giving some beautiful minimalist results. It's also ideal for nature portraits such as flower close ups or wildlife.

AP: Did you buy it new, and what made you purchase it?

ES: I bought the lens second-hand in excellent condition at a decent price. The lens is well known and used amongst portrait photographers, and I originally bought it to photograph weddings. But I soon realized its benefits for landscape and nature



A murmuration of starlings at sunset over Brighton pier. Canon EOS 5D Mark IV, 140mm, 1/5000sec at f/5, ISO 2500

photography and now it stays in my camera bag for all my outdoor trips.

AP: Can you elaborate about how it performs in use?

ES: The clarity of the lens is second to none and it is quick to focus, but what makes it stand out is the softness of bokeh at its widest apertures. This is also a great benefit when shooting hand-held in low light, giving it the edge over the f/4 equivalent. The hood is useful in inclement weather, but I mostly use it to eliminate lens flare when shooting into the sun.



Left: Emma's favourite lens, the Canon EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS II USM

AP: Tell us about a standout shot you've taken using it?

ES: One of my favourite images taken with this lens was of the starling murmuration at Brighton pier earlier this year. It was a beautiful clear winter's sunset, with

the pastel tones in the sky providing the perfect backdrop for the silhouetted birds. The 70-200mm focal length was just right for focusing in on the end of the pier and the murmuration itself. It really is an incredible spectacle and one which I felt fortunate to capture.

AP: Have you identified any weaknesses or disadvantages?

ES: It is hard to fault this lens when seeing the image quality. However, to achieve the wide aperture it is necessarily heavy. The combined weight of the lens and my full frame

body comes to over 2.3kg, which is certainly not for the faint-hearted.

AP: What would you say to people considering buying one?

ES: This is a top-quality lens which is popular amongst professional photographers with good reason. But its price and weight mean that it's important people research it before buying. They should ask whether they really need its wide aperture; if not, consider the f/4 version. But if the f/2.8 version is a must-have then invest in a camera shoulder harness and a rucksack with proper support to spread the weight.

AP: Do you have any plans to replace or upgrade your kit?

ES: I have considered changing this lens for a 100-400mm zoom as I occasionally find myself hindered by the 200mm focal length.

AP: What do you think your kit will look like in the future?

ES: I don't have any current plans to change out my kit just yet, however in the future I will be looking to upgrade to a mirrorless system with a hopefully smaller suite of lenses to reduce the weight of my camera bag.

