

Mercantour Diary

mountains, marmots
& markets



Day 1, Sunday, late April

Up early – Via Ferrata near to La Colmiane this morning. Often dubbed the easy way to rock climb, this proved no mean feat for the faint-hearted. Some were more game than others to harness themselves up, using the iron rungs and cable to climb otherwise serious rock faces. Dave Willis, our climbing photographer, hung off the face to get his shots. Vasco and 3rd Element jackets in their element!

Picnic lunch in the sunshine, then let Mel make the scrambling look easy, before heading up above the snowline to hone our snowshoeing technique. Much hilarity had by all as feet sunk into the spring snow. The warm, sunny morning became a greyer, colder afternoon but the perspiration-removing qualities of Paramo were thoroughly put to the test as we tried to control the snowshoes.

Finally, photo opportunities crossing the fast flowing snow melt streams and in among the lower valley trees.

Evening: Choral concert in St Martin Desubie's atmospheric church – another talent of Mel's revealed.

Day 2, Monday

After playing at horse rustlers in the morning for a few shots, we headed upwards to enjoy some serious scrambling sporting the newest 'Opal Fruit' colours of Fuera Smocks. The non-scamblers watched the marmots sunbathing and listened to their whistling, while photographer Dave sought to capture the landscape, the activity and the garments.

After lunch in the Madone des Fenêtres valley a rare but heavy downpour gave us the perfect chance to portray Paramo hiking in the rain as we tramped the mountain trails.

Sun reappeared briefly so the afternoon ended well in the hanging village of Venanson providing the setting for the trek & travel wear – complicated by the arrival of a friendly village dog auditioning for a starring role!

Day 3, Tuesday

Some lovely early morning lake-side walking shots, showing off the new Zamson Taiga on Liz among others.

Up we went once more and split into two groups – snowholing lesson for one lot, birdwatching for the other. The snowholers worked hard, snug in their Torres insulator smocks and gilets. The fauna lovers enjoyed a quiet hour scanning the skies for often seen golden eagles and lammergeiers. Pitched a tent by the river to capture the Torres in a camping scene.

Revitalised by lunch, off to the Alpha Wolf Park at Le Boréon to watch the once native wolves roam the forested reserve, emerging to be fed and photographed.

Late afternoon, headed coastwards for an experience which couldn't have been more of a contrast. Sitting enjoying an apéro on a jasmine scented terrace, the magnificent Mercantour National Park seemed much more than just an hour away.

Day 4, Wednesday

Nice – a complete contrast. Perfect for photographing the Trek and Travel range amid the jewel-like colours of the flower market, the tempting trays of marzipan fruits, the glorious palette of basketed herbs and spices. We explored the cobbled alleys of the old town, drank coffee in the sunlit squares and finally matched the azure of the Med to the blue Saba shirt.

By tea-time, we were back in England – marvelling! Many thanks Mel & Liz – long may you continue! Can we go to the Vallée des Merveilles next time please?

The Mercantour National Park and the well-named Alpes-Maritimes – an undiscovered gem nestling behind the French Riviera where precipitous rocks and wildflower meadows open up huge possibilities in terms of activities and adventures.



Guided photography tour to the Mercantour

A fantastic opportunity to explore the fabulous Mercantour National Park in the Alps Maritimes, in southern France with Dave Willis of Mountainsport Workshops Photography Tours.

Flying to Nice, we'll stay at an authentic French gîte at Berthemont les Bains, a picturesque mountain village, with friendly British hosts, Liz Lord and Mel Jones. Landscape and outdoor photography tuition is combined with walking, snow-shoeing and

sightseeing. We'll explore the spectacular alpine valleys, visit traditional "hanging" or "perched" villages and spend a day at the famous Alpha Wolf Park, to photograph these stunning animals from just a few feet away.

To find out more about this fully catered, 5 day guided tour and reserve your place, contact **Dave Willis, Mountain Sport Photography**
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