



Every issue we arrange for a pro photographer to take one of our readers out for a one-on-one masterclass

**READER SHOOTING SCHOOL**

# Improve my skills

DP reader Paul Gavin spent four days in the south of France to improve his photography skills with Create Away courses

## Meet the reader

Amateur photographer and DP reader Paul wanted to further his photography skills



### Paul Gavin

"Photography has been a part of my life ever since I got my first camera at the age of 13. It wasn't long before I built my own darkroom, processing black-and-white film and prints up until five years ago when I succumbed to the digital age. I lead a stressful life and photography is a great distraction. I'm thinking about images all the time and, as a keen amateur, photography is my escape."

**As you watch the majestic wild white horses galloping towards you across marshlands, there is just enough time to catch your breath, compose your capture and shoot.** This is part of the incredible photographic experience that DP reader and amateur photographer Paul Gavin embarked upon with Create Away courses in the Camargue region of the south of France.

Paul took part in Create Away's popular Wild White Horses course, a complete four-day workshop that includes three nights in a three-star bed and breakfast. Paul was keen to improve his photography with the help of director and course team leader Serge Krouglikoff, while looking to pick up some new shooting techniques and photo skills.

A well-planned itinerary for the course saw Paul and the other group members up early at dawn, making use of the best possible light before returning at dusk to capture a different mood-lit sky. In between shooting the mesmerising white horses, Paul and the group were able to explore and

photograph the stunning Camargue region and put all they had learnt during the morning sessions into practice.

Whether you are a horse lover or not, this course not only provides you with the experience to photograph animals, it also teaches you how compose captures, work with light and shoot action images. Create Away aims to offer something for everyone with courses suited to beginners, intermediates and professionals. Whether you're a confident enthusiast or amateur, Serge and the team are dedicated to helping members develop and expand upon their photographic abilities. By sharing their wealth of knowledge and experience with course participants, Create Away guarantees that photographers return home having learnt something new.

Create Away also provides plenty of other photography and non-photo-related courses in the south of France if you're looking for exciting holiday options. For further information and more details on pricing and availability, please visit the website at [www.create-away.com](http://www.create-away.com).

## ◀ THE HORSE WHISPERER

**Serge's critique:** "Always be observant and ready to shoot. Here Paul stole an intimate moment between our 'horse whisperer' and one of his horses. It is simple and extremely effective in black and white."

**Paul's comment:** "The Horse Whisperer, so named by the group for his love for and connection with the horses."

## ▶▶ FLAMINGO LANDING

**Serge's critique:** "It's really hard to get a great shot of a bird in flight, but Paul has kept this crisp by shooting with a telephoto lens and quick shutter speed. He could also try experimenting with slower shutter speeds and panning to blur the background."

**Paul's comment:** "After an early start, we visited a local bird sanctuary for sunrise and the arrival of the flamingo."

## ▼ KNEE DEEP

**Serge's critique:** "A very clever use of light here. The setting sun seems to appear out of the gloomy sky like a spotlight, making the rider seem as if he is on a stage, which immediately draws your eye in."

**Paul's comment:** "The gentle late afternoon light helped set the event in context with the lone rider almost statuesque in the shallow water."



## Meet the pro

Serge is the director and course leader for Create Away courses



### Serge Krouglikoff

"After a successful 30-year international career in fashion photography, I have now returned to live in the Camargue region of the South of France and specialise in photography workshops. The carefully designed itineraries for the Create Away courses are just as exciting and creative for participating photographers as well as their non-photography partners and I aim take my groups to the best locations, at the ideal times, to capture the perfect light and achieve stunning results."

**Website:** [www.create-away.com](http://www.create-away.com)

**Contact:** Jane (bookings manager) 01206 241 421

## Behind the scenes

A look at how the workshop progressed over four days



### ▲ DAY 1

After leaving the airport, Paul and the group were taken to their hotel in Aigues-Mortes. After exploring and photographing their surroundings, the group got together and talked through the planned itinerary with Serge.



### ▲ DAY 2

After an early start, the group had their first experience photographing the wild horses running in the marsh. Serge was also on hand, giving the group some great camera settings and shooting advice.



### ▲ DAY 3

Putting into practice all the pointers they were given the day before, the group began photographing the white horses up close. Paul also got some great shots of the 'Gardians' (Camargue cowboys) working with the horses.



### ▲ DAY 4

After photographing stallions running through the lake at dawn, Serge spent time going over image improvements in Lightroom. As a fantastic extra, Create Away also took the group to a vineyard for a tour and wine-tasting session.



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“Prepare your camera, lenses, equipment and settings before you arrive on location – you don’t want to miss the best light”

» Serge’s thoughts on the course

**How do you feel the course went?**  
**SK:** I feel fortunate as I tend to have like-minded people with great enthusiasm on my courses, which makes for a great atmosphere. As we incorporate some social activities as part of the course, participants tend to bond and become friends so everyone is relaxed but, at the same time, egging each other on to do well on the course.

As this particular course was post-summer, the light was even better, which makes taking good photos much easier and gives a greater variety of tones and emotions. We did our shoots at dawn and dusk to get the best conditions. Les Gardians (The Cowboys of the Camargue) did a great job – they are really flexible and ‘direct’ the horses according to our various needs for each shot. The results were amazing.

**What was your personal highlight of the day?**

**SK:** Seeing people totally absorbed in their own world as they became inspired – it doesn’t get much better than that.

**What are your top three tips for your client?**

**1** Have a clear plan of what you want to achieve before you set off. However, don’t be afraid to be creative and take spontaneous shots that can produce unique images.

**2** Always prepare your camera, lenses, equipment and settings before you arrive on location to ensure you don’t leave anything behind or waste time when you get there. You don’t want to miss the best light.

**3** Framing – what you think you have in the frame can sometimes be disappointing in reality, so practising finding ‘the eye for the photo’ is very important.



▲ **UP CLOSE & PERSONAL**

**Serge’s critique:** “Explore perspectives. Paul created this dramatic shot by crouching down in the water so the horses running through the marsh look more powerful.”  
**Paul’s comment:** “This is my favourite picture from the trip. It captures some of the drama of the experience.”

▲ **THE HERD**

**Serge’s critique:** “Paul captured a peaceful moment brilliantly of Les Gardians and the horses. The panoramic crop suits his composition very well.”  
**Paul’s comment:** “Rest time for the horses and riders before the next gallop through the marsh.”



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Paul’s thoughts on the course

**What was the best piece of advice you received on the course?**

**PG:** The advantages of filters. Especially the graduation filter, I found it essential for landscape work and bringing out the details in the clouds and sky while retaining detail in the foreground.

**How do you feel the course has improved your photography?**

**PG:** Thanks to the team, I was instructed in the use of a telephoto lens and photographing wildlife, especially birds in flight. Never easy, but when you have expert advice close at hand, success is achievable!

**What was your favourite part of the course?**

**PG:** Getting up close and personal with the wild Camargue horses. Knee-deep in water with the herd and their charges galloping towards me is an experience I will never forget. I feel privileged to have witnessed this spectacle.

**Who do you think this course is best suited to?**

**PG:** This course is great for relative newcomers to those who are very experienced photographers. You have the freedom to do your own thing with access to the team’s vast amount of expertise and knowledge, if you require it. Regardless of your ability, you will no doubt come away from the experience a better photographer.

◀ **MARSHLANDS**

**Serge’s critique:** “To increase the depth of field in this shot, Paul used a wide-angle lens with a smaller aperture. If needed, he could use a tripod for a longer exposure and ND graduated filters to improve skies by limiting the dynamic range.”

**Paul’s comment:** “The gentle rise and fall of the water levels create beautiful textures in the dried earth.”



▲ **FLAMINGO PORTRAIT**

**Serge’s critique:** “Paul has used a telephoto lens to blur the background and make the subject stand out using a wide aperture.”

**Paul’s comment:** “Isolating one bird in the flock made for a good study of its most unusual features.”

DP