

# Renato Granieri

London-based Renato Granieri is a comparative newcomer to the world of professional travel and wildlife photography. His distinctive style is a result of an irrepressible enthusiasm for the great outdoors, a willingness to experiment and a dynamic sense of ambition. Nick Smith puts him in the spotlight



**NS: How did you become a photographer?**

**Renato Granieri:** I used to have office jobs working for big companies such as EMI Music and the BBC in market research, but started to realise that my hobby could turn into a potential opportunity. I have an unusual story, because I hadn't touched a camera until buying my first DSLR in 2008. My partner is a travel editor and we were travelling a lot, and after a while she started to use my photos for publication.

**NS: That seems like the dream break in photography?**

**RG:** It was an opportunity that got me thinking that if I practised and developed my own style, there might be a chance to move away from my office job. The opportunity came in 2014 when I took voluntary redundancy and decided to start my freelance career. This marked the beginning of my professional life in photography. Soon after that I started working on ships in Antarctica and the Arctic, and I return to these places on a regular basis.

**NS: You were quite inexperienced when you turned pro?**

**RG:** That's right. And everybody used to ask me why I wanted to photograph animals when there are established people doing it. I was told that it was incredibly competitive and there wasn't much money. I had very little experience, but I like a challenge and have the ambition to create something. I understand that other people are better, but I use them as inspiration to carry on doing my own stuff. I maybe jumped the queue in some respects, which adds to the pressure to improve.

*Left (top)*  
King penguins, South Georgia.  
Nikon D4S with 80-400mm f/4.5-5.6 lens at 260mm, ISO 800, 1/1600sec at f/9

*Left (bottom)*  
West coast of Svalbard, Norway.  
Nikon D4S with 24-70mm f/2.8 lens at 24mm, ISO 250, 1/250sec at f/13

**NS: What is the essence of your photography?**

**RG:** The beauty of photography is the amount you learn from the environment. Most people think that you become a photographer because you want to take a great photo, but for me, every time I sit in front of a subject I discover new things I never thought of before. A good example of this is animal behaviour. The camera is much faster than your brain; it helps you freeze a moment and allows you to see something you wouldn't see otherwise. When a cat jumps, your brain misses everything apart from when it takes off and lands, but a camera gives you the opportunity to observe every single aspect of the movement.

**NS: How does this apply to your landscapes?**

**RG:** You don't need a fast shutter speed, but you notice different things. On a trip to Burma I went to the exact same spot four days in a row at sunrise until I got the shot I wanted. I believe that every day there will be something different, so the more you maximise your stay in the landscape, the more likely you are to capture something that you didn't see the first time. My personality is obsessive and so I fight hard to get perfection in every picture.

**NS: What are your style-markers?**

**RG:** I don't normally like portraits of animals, so I tend to look for interesting behaviour. In most of my wildlife pictures there is something happening. Then, from a creative point of view, to make my work look a little different I will often play with the exposure. In the polar regions I tend to overexpose deliberately - I've done some crazy stuff by overexposing penguins - but when I go to Africa I do the opposite and underexpose a lot. These are the boundaries I'm pushing. I want to experiment with my own techniques.

**NS: What's next for Renato Granieri?**

**RG:** I'm a people person and sometimes find working alone a bit difficult. I want to spend more time with other photographers, as a guide sharing my



*Top*  
Gentoo penguins, Antarctic Peninsula.  
Nikon D4S with 80-400mm lens at 350mm, ISO 800, 1/800sec at f/10

*Above*  
Giant petrels, South Georgia.  
Nikon D4S with 80-400mm lens at 220mm, ISO 800, 1/1000sec at f/10

knowledge. When I had an office job I had plenty of money and no time, whereas now that I'm a photographer I have plenty of time and no money. But I enjoy life more now.

### Renato's top tips

**One thing I never go on a shoot without is...** a goal. I want to get a cracking shot, planned carefully according to the weather, location, subject and light.

**My one piece of advice would be to...** experiment as much as you can. Push the boundaries of techniques and be bold and creative.

**Something I try to avoid is...** shooting in beautiful sunshine. Dramatic skies and challenging weather often result in the most interesting pictures.

To see more of Renato's work visit [renatogranieri.com](http://renatogranieri.com).

### Renato's critical moments

2008 Bought first DSLR (Nikon D40).

2010 Worked on travel assignments for the Press Association.

2014 Left the security of an office job to become a professional photographer.

2015 Embarked on first Antarctic voyage as a tour photographer.

2018 Won the National Geographic *Traveler* photography Grand Prize.

2018 Set up the travel company Photography Holidays to offer tours.