

Vertical challenge

Gilbert Park combines business and pleasure when he travels with his Hasselblad XPan in search of panoramics, taking advantage of the vertical format. **Sarah Jackson** reports

IF YOU thought panoramic cameras should be confined to horizontal compositions, Gilbert Park's wonderful travel shots will make you think again. They have all been taken on his much-used Hasselblad XPan.

'It's shot at least 6,000 pictures,' he says. 'It gets used a lot!' A consultant at Addenbrookes Hospital in Cambridge, Gilbert, 54, travels overseas extensively to give lectures to medical professionals. The shots we show were taken mainly during snatched free time on his whirlwind business trips.

'I got fed up with being in a hotel,' explains Gilbert, 'so I thought, "Why not combine my hobby with my job?"' Often visiting locations on the other side of the equator or across the Atlantic, Gilbert found that jet lag on arriving at his destination meant he would be awake hours before anyone else and thus perfectly placed to shoot the sunrise.

Referring to the XPan, Gilbert, who also owns two digital cameras (a Nikon D70 and a Nikon Coolpix 8700), says, 'I like its tactile quality. There's something about the feel of that camera which is different to any other.' On his travels he carries his XPan and a Metz flashgun in a Lowepro Photo Trekker bag, which he describes as 'my excuse for a handbag,' along with a lightweight tripod. XPan owners who have saved up for the camera and standard lens will be very envious to hear that he owns the full complement of lenses: the wideangle 30mm, standard 45mm and telephoto 90mm (although Gilbert would love Hasselblad to bring out an even longer lens for it).

He has an 81A and polarising filter sized for the 30mm lens and can fit these on his other lenses with the aid of a step-down ring. If he's using the 30mm or 45mm lenses, Gilbert will fit the special centre spot filter recommended by Hasselblad, to ensure even exposure across the whole frame. He has combined two filters together on the XPan with the aid of a Cokin filter holder with one of the set of guides removed. He normally sets the smallest aperture of f/22 unless he has to handhold, necessitating a wider aperture to quicken the shutter speed.

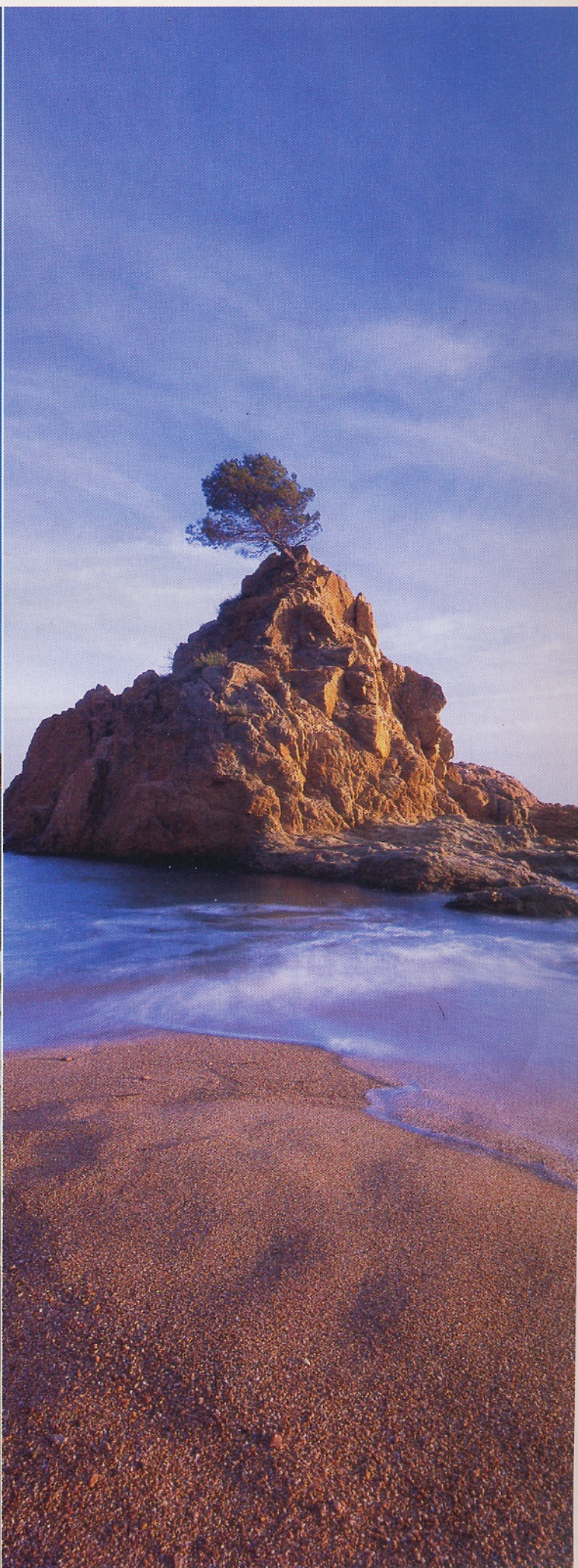
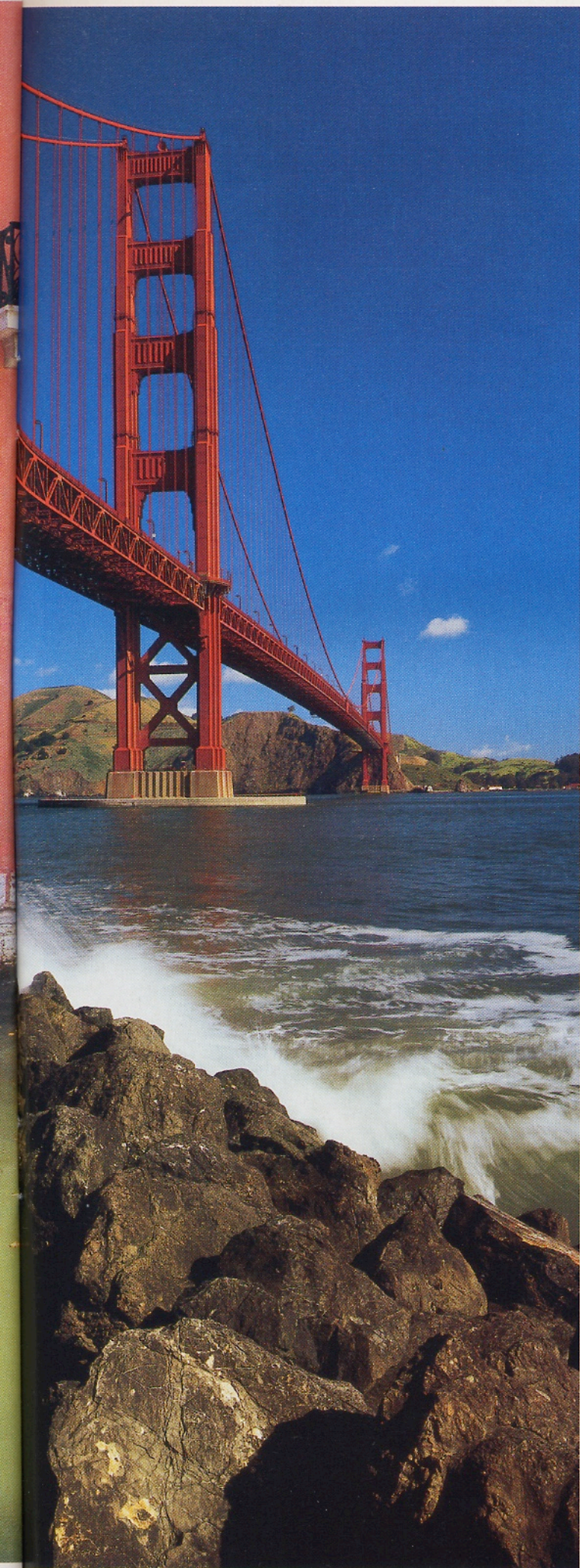
RIGHT Gilbert's favourite shot – it could only be Venice 90mm

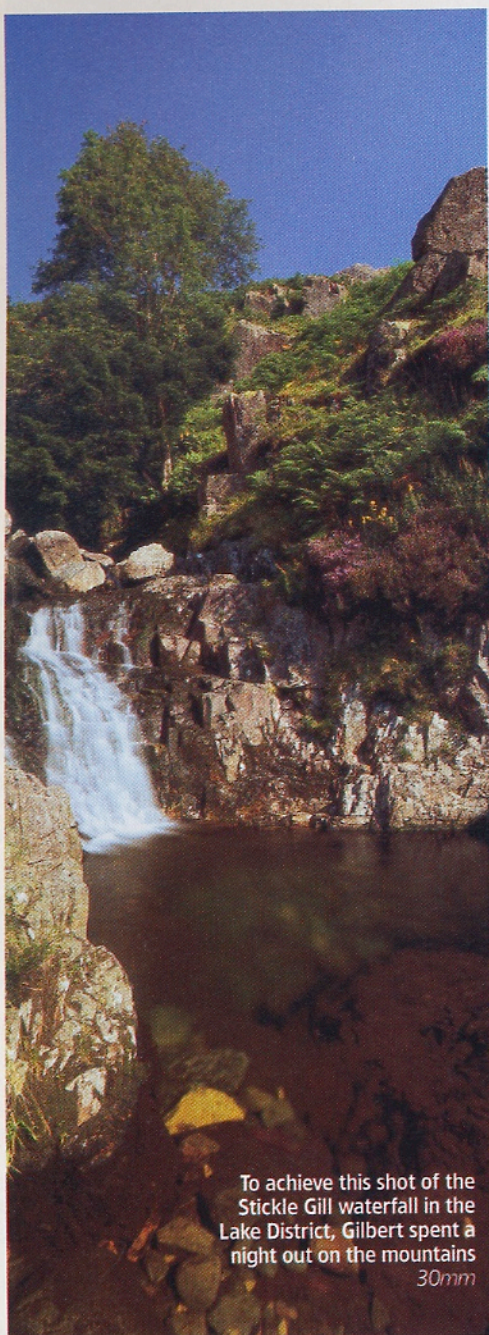
CENTRE RIGHT San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge is perfect for the vertical format 45mm

FAR RIGHT Bereft of visitors, Tossa de Mar on the Costa Brava, Spain 30mm, polariser

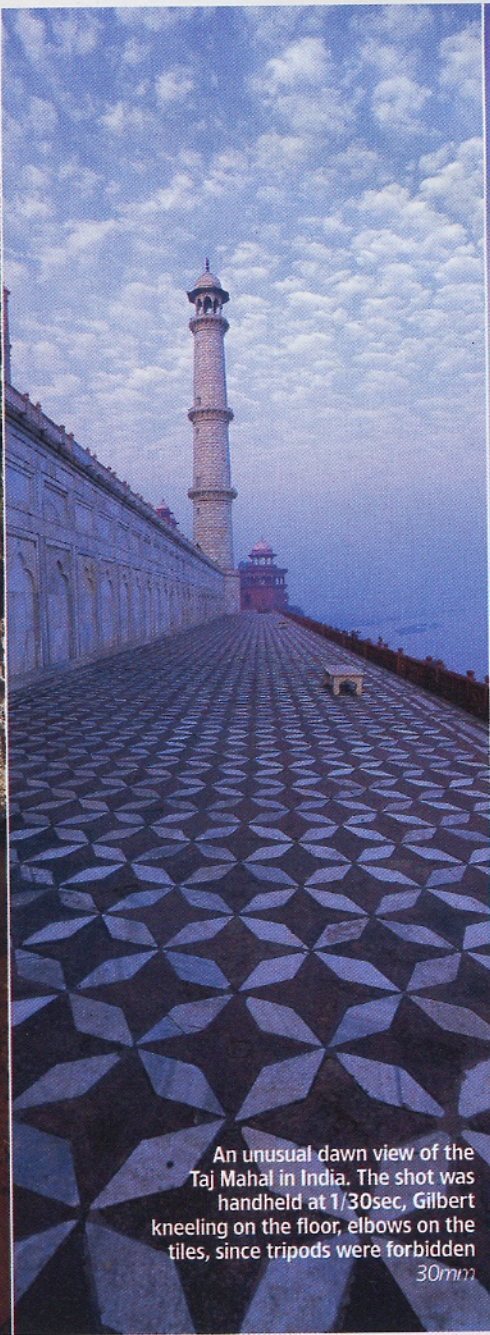
All pics: Hasselblad XPan, Fuji Velvia



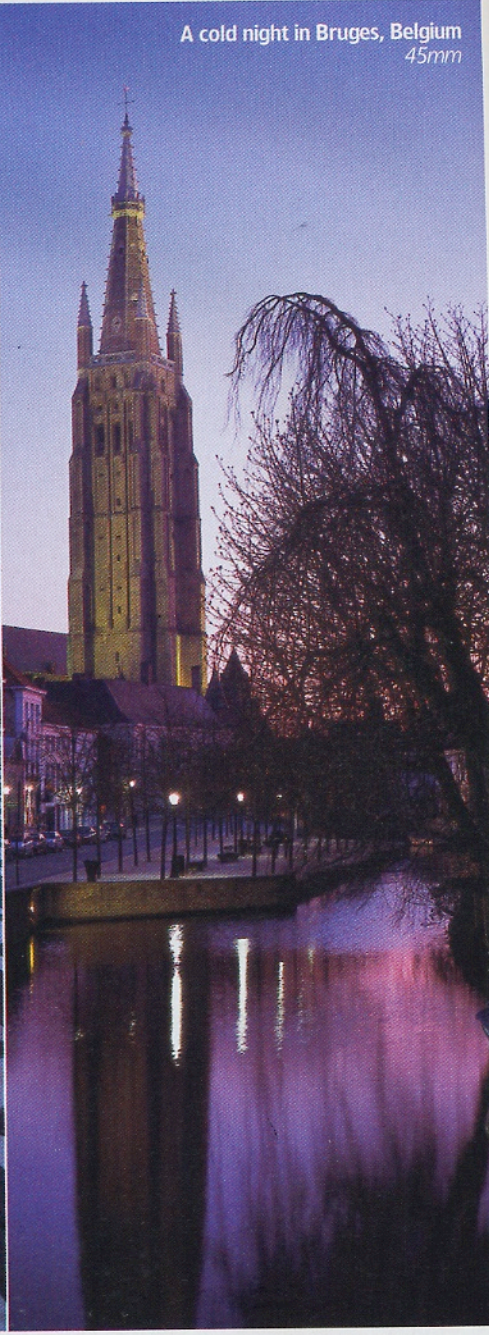




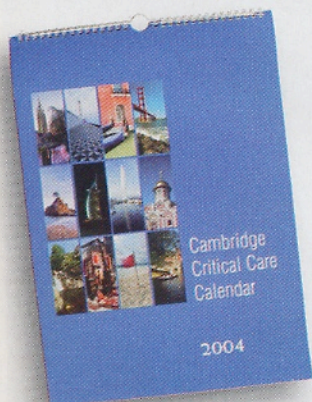
To achieve this shot of the Stickle Gill waterfall in the Lake District, Gilbert spent a night out on the mountains
30mm



An unusual dawn view of the Taj Mahal in India. The shot was handheld at 1/30sec, Gilbert kneeling on the floor, elbows on the tiles, since tripods were forbidden
30mm



A cold night in Bruges, Belgium
45mm



Gilbert's 2004 calendar, sent out to health professionals worldwide, featured 12 vertical panoramas

When it comes to composing shots, Gilbert admits, 'It's astonishingly difficult finding compositions with suitable foreground interest [for vertical panoramas]! He will use a tripod where possible, but sometimes it is not practical or simply prohibited (as in the Taj Mahal shot, above).

Gilbert casually says that he has been 'arrested a few times' while trying to take pictures. In the Sudan, for instance, he was arrested for photographing a woman selling tea in a marketplace. Thankfully, politely negotiating with the officials has so far saved him from being incarcerated for more than a few hours.

Another tricky moment occurred while he was photographing San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge in the US (see previous page). Getting the shot meant he nearly missed his plane back to the UK because he'd cut it fine and, when he needed to get to the airport, there wasn't a taxi in sight by the bridge. Then in Quito, Ecuador's capital, he was mugged while photographing a Pepsi-Cola stand. Luckily, his Rohan trousers contained

an inner security pocket where he had stashed most of his funds, so the robbers got away with just \$20.

Closer to home in the Lake District, Gilbert camped out on a mountain overnight in temperatures of -3°C to capture the waterfall shot (above left). Like that image, most of Gilbert's pictures are captured in the two or three hours at and just after dawn, when the sky displays rich tones and the light is not too blinding. Sunset and dusk are usually out of bounds because he will be at a business dinner. Gilbert says, 'I'm there to do a lecture and I mustn't lose sight of that... photography's there to stop me getting bored.'

Like most of us, he likes an appreciative audience for his pictures. Unlike most of us, he has a potential audience of at least 28,000 people! These are the recipients of his business calendar, which is sent out free to doctors and nurses in 90 countries. He can afford to print it because it's sponsored by the pharmaceutical industry. The 2004 calendar featured 12 vertical panoramas, including several of the shots published here; Gilbert likes to vary the format so the 2005 calendar is totally different. **AP**