



GIGA PANORAMA

Nikon digital helps create ultimate panorama

The world's largest panorama – and at 2.5 Gigapixels one of its biggest ever image files – has been created by Dutch scientists in Delft, Holland. It shows the view from the Electrical Engineering department at the city's University of Technology.

The experiment, inspired by Max Lyons' 1.09GP image of Bryce Canyon National Park and conducted by TNO research labs, used a Nikon D1x plus VR 80-400mm lens mounted on a computer-controlled pan-tilt head.

The camera was operated via Nikon Capture Control to allow remote control and direct downloading of RAW files to the tethered laptop. Avoiding accidental movement, when changing cards for example, was paramount. The 600 resulting shots were

positioned to overlap with the surrounding frames, ensuring very accurate meshing and allowing the automatic stitching program to produce near-seamless results in record time. Lyons' famous canyon image was stitched frame-by-frame.

The final 7.5Gb image contains 2,487,227,305 pixels and took just 72 minutes to shoot, while final output took another five days to stitch and perfect using five high-end PCs.

The picture may appear visually unexciting, but it's the scale and detail that are impressive. When printed at 300dpi it's almost seven metres wide, making the technique obviously useful for industries such as tourism and surveillance. You can see the image itself at: www.tpd.tno.nl/smartsite966.html

RØRSLETT ON THE VR300

Bokeh, ghosting and flare under the spotlight

NikonPro's favourite Norwegian contributor, Bjørn Rørslett, was among the first to test the new AF-S VR 300mm f/2.8G IF-ED lens.

'I have always been keen on using 300mm lenses because they fit right into my visual approach for nature photography,' he says. 'In terms of its optical performance, it's excellent – possibly even better than the AF-S non-VR model.

'High image sharpness and contrast are found even when the lens is wide open, and colours are vividly saturated. When combined with the AF-S-compatible teleconverters, the VR300 continues to yield

images of high quality. All the controls are laid out similarly to the VR200, so shooting with them concurrently is simple.

'The VR feature means you can extend the versatility of the lens and do away with the tripod in some situations. It's very effective when the lens is used handheld or on a monopod. It behaves noticeably better than its predecessors in terms of bokeh. In fact, it is among the very best of any lens. Flare rarely poses a problem and the VR300 is a marked improvement on previous lenses. Resistance to ghosting also is much better.'

VR300 in action, p24-29

