



the big picture

Tip



The idea of using an aircraft as a photographic platform is thrilling. It alters your conventional viewpoint and reveals unexpected patterns. Don Pinnock found the reality is more daunting.

'Deep in Gabon's Loango Park, I boarded the little Pilates bush-hopper which bounded into the air from the bumpy runway. Once airborne, the pilot asked me to slide open the side doors. The wall of air that hit me had me grabbing cameras and lenses – although the plane was slow-moving, the prop was ripping up a typhoon.' Don hoped his lap strap would hold.

The rain forest, mangroves and lagoons required no polariser or Photoshop – the colours were breathtaking, especially the near-black water stained by jungle tannins. To get this shot, Don leaned back out of the wind, trying to shield the camera from the buffeting, and used a Nikon D300 with a 24 to 85 mm lens.

'Because of the movement and lack of tripod stability, I set the ISO at 400 and the aperture on 4. I wasn't sure whether that would do the job, but there was lots of light around and I needed some depth of field.

'The shots I took with a 200mm lens weren't that great, but the ones with my 'standard' came out pin sharp and clear. You can even see the hippo paths through the reed beds on the left and the mangrove's "legs",' says Don.