

Stereo-Photography

(do-it yourself)

Having got used to looking at stereoscopic air-photos, you might like to make your own stereo photos. This can be done at all scales - distant scenes from a moving aeroplane or helicopter to close-up views of formations within a cave.

It is just a matter of taking two photos of the same subject from slightly different positions. The formula is to move the camera sideways between photos by about 1/50th of the distance to the subject. So, for a formation 10m away you would move 20 cm. The eye is fairly forgiving, so it does not have to be exactly that ratio (some photographers prefer to use 1/40). With time you will get used to estimating the distance by looking through the viewfinder as you move and noting the parallax effect.

To view the photos, use a pocket stereoscope (for prints) or, for slides, buy two cheap hand viewers and tape them together. Or train your eyes to look through the two photos towards infinity, so the images fuse into one blurry one, then focus back while keeping the pair fused. Wearing pair of cheap reading glasses may help.

A stereo image can add a lot of extra information on the shapes of a landform or outcrop.

Warnings: for best results

- 1: If doing this in a cave - do **not** have the flash mounted on the camera or the shadows will also move and give funny effects. Sit the flash on a tripod (connected to the camera by a cable) or have someone hold it for you.
- 2: Be careful of moving shadows from branches on a windy day - these can cause odd effects.
- 3: If you have someone in the photo for scale, ensure that they do not move between photos - or you may end up with double-headed monsters!
- 4: When photographing subjects in the middle to far distance, avoid including objects in the close foreground - these may not 'fuse' and will make it harder to view the rest of the scene.
- 5: Note a feature near the centre of view and use that to ensure the second photo is framed similar to the first. Take care not to twist the camera, or move it up or down between shots - that will make it hard to 'fuse' the two images.
- 6: If using print film rather than slides, a vertical format is easier to view than horizontal.