

Speaker 1 ([00:00](#)):

Welcome to the Hair of the Dog podcast. I'm Nicole Begley and today we have pet photographer, natural light, extraordinary Charlotte Reeves from Brisbane, Australia. And we are going to be talking all about location scouting, how to find the best locations, some little secrets we have up our sleeves. It's really a great episode and we can't wait for you to dive in.

Speaker 2 ([00:23](#)):

Welcome to the Hair of the Dog podcast. If you're a pet photographer, ready to make more money and start living a life by your design, you've come to the right place. And now your host, pet photographer, travel addict, chocolate martini connoisseur, Nicole Begley.

Speaker 1 ([00:42](#)):

Hey everybody. Nicole here from Hair of the Dog and I am here with the one and only Charlotte Reeves from Charlotte Reeves Photography and Learn Pet Photography down in Brisbane, Australia. Hey Charlotte, thanks for joining us today. Hey Nicole. Awesomely happy to be here. Great. So Charlotte and I are good friends. We've been teaching um, the Barka series, so Barkalona, Barklander, Bark Zealand, all the Barka is me, her and Kaylee Greer. It started those, it's been four years. Can you believe it's been four years? I don't believe it's been that long. It's crazy since the first one, but I'm nuts. And we're actually supposed to be in Scotland right now, which is very, very sad.

Speaker 1 ([01:28](#)):

We'll get there eventually. Yes. Yes. So, yeah, so Charlotte and I, um, yeah, I've been teaching together and then we work together a lot in Hair of the Dog. She is a coach in our elevate program and also in the Academy, does the critique corners, um, every month where people get feedback on their images. And so, yeah. So I work really closely with Charlotte and she is, I must say, a master of the art of pet photography, um, when especially harnessing natural light and really any situation. Um, yeah. You're so welcome. So beautiful and dreamy and warm. Yeah. So I guess Charlotte, tell us a little bit about your background and how you stumbled into this whole pet photography world. Okay, sure.

Speaker 3 ([02:15](#)):

Well, it was, uh, 13 years ago now. Um, so it was sort of 2007 and I, I'd studied photography after I left high school. So I actually did a two year diploma of photography at college when I left high school and I couldn't really decide what I wanted to specialize in. So I, you know, I did landscape photography and I photographed cars cause I was into cars back then. And um, it never really dawned on me to photograph, you know, pets or animals or anything like that. At the time I knew I didn't want to be a wedding photographer. I knew I didn't want to photograph people and so I just couldn't really settle on what I wanted to do at the time. So I ended up going on to further study in graphic design and website design. And so I didn't know the three years at college?

Speaker 3 ([02:56](#)):

So in total, I did five years at and I ended up working as a website designer and also as a graphic designer. And it wasn't until I actually got my first dog, um, which is I think is the story for so many people actually. Um, I got my first dog and she was a Great Dane, uh, called Cair and I started taking photos of her to document her first year. So as you know, Great Dane start out kind of, well even that actually start out quite large as well for puppies. But they started know that first year for sure. Yeah. And I really wanted to document that as she grew from a smallish kind of puppy into like this very, very large

dog. Um, so I started a photo blog for her and I actually submitted some photos to the Daily Puppy, which I don't know if it exists anymore.

Speaker 3 ([03:43](#)):

It was a website blog. Yeah, it was a blog. Okay. Yep. Um, and so I started getting a lot of followers through, through that blog to my blog and I ended up, then I ended up sort of wanting to, I guess delve back into photography a little bit more. So I started doing a photo a day project in 2007 so I did one photo every day for that entire year. A lot of the photos ended up being of her, but I tried to kind of like keep it separate I guess. Um, so I could kind of try and expand my photography skills, uh, get back, get back into the swing of things with photography. But I eventually just ended up taking lots of photos of her and I thought, Oh, I dunno, I wonder if I can do something with this. So at the time there was a photographer in Seattle called Erin Vey and she also had a fawn great Dane and she was a pet photographer and I found her online and I was like, wow, this is actually a thing.

Speaker 3 ([04:39](#)):

There are people doing this, you know, cause it never really occurred to me before at least one other person. It's so funny. Back then it was so few. That's right. And she was in America too, so she wasn't even in Australia. Um, I couldn't really find anyone who was doing it in Australia other than people who were doing it in studio. And even not like only pets in studio kind of pets in studio, in addition to other things like people in the studio as well. So many way I figured if she was doing it I could do it. So I ended up just, uh, starting a business of, of being a, an a, I've mainly just called it dog photography back then, being a dog photographer, and then I've got my second Great Dane and then it just kind of all built from there. But it was, it was kind of, it felt like a bit of a pioneering thing at the time because there was no one else doing it.

Speaker 3 ([05:25](#)):

And I feel like I had to do so much education of people that this was actually a thing. You know, I think a lot of people, it's funny because depending on their perspective, they could look at, okay, I'm in a city with a whole bunch of other pet photographers as, Oh my gosh, there's so many pet photographers, I'm never going to get any work. Or Oh my gosh, look at all these other pet photographers. That means there's a lot of work here. Or they are like letting the market know that this is a thing because I think it's still, it's, it's better now in 2020 than it used to be that people are not totally flabbergasted that pet photography is a thing. People know of it now. People know of it. Obviously still some people that are like, you're a what? Right, right. But you had that when you started, I mean you had to educate the entire marketplace, but this was the thing.

Speaker 3 ([06:18](#)):

Plus then get them to, you know, see the value in it. Exactly. Yeah. And it was, it was a bit of a struggle really. Um, but I think also people, because it was such a new thing, it was, it kind of captured people and engaged them and they were kind of like, Oh, that's really cool. I haven't heard of that before. Wow. Right. So it was such a new thing that it kind of had that edge over other things or other styles of photography I suppose. But eventually got there and then more, you know, it became more popular over the years and more pet photographers started sort of popping up. And I guess I kind of started calling myself a pet photographer as well because I wanted to, um, wanted to let people know that I could do, you know, cats and horses and all that sort of thing as well.

Speaker 3 ([06:59](#)):

Right. It's funny because kind of now I've gone back to pretty much just dogs. I've done the full circle. I started out as a dog photographer and then went through pets and now I'm like, no, I'm just going to kind of specialize in what I, what I know and what I'm really good at and what I enjoy. And that's just dogs. So, um, that's really good to say today to actually, um, there's a lot of people that are just doing, you know, courses or, cause even if you put this out there who are just doing cats, you know, crazy people niching down within a niche. And I think that also gives people an edge as well. Yeah, absolutely. I just spoke with them. I just did a podcast with Shelley Paulson is, yeah, an amazing equine photographer and yeah, and it just, I think comes down to following your heart and your passion and what you really love to photograph.

Speaker 3 ([07:49](#)):

And you know, you can make a niche in any of those spots and if you've got the passion for it and the more that you do it actually the more knowledge and skills you have in that particular tiny little niche and the better you get at it rather than sort of specializing in a number of things. You've got truly specialize in one big advantage actually. Yeah, absolutely. And then you can have all your marketing, all your websites, all your images, all your messaging, all go towards that one thing. It just makes life so much easier. Exactly. Yeah. It's actually, it's amazing the number of times you see, you know, you hear about, uh, like a new pet photographer joins the group or contacts you and you go to their website or you go to their Instagram or whatever. And there are a few dogs and stuff there, but it's all mixed in with babies and kids.

Speaker 3 ([08:33](#)):

And weddings and all that sort of thing. And you're like, Oh man, that's just like such a mixed messaging kind of thing, writing on there because all the target markets are so different. Like if I'm abroad, I don't want to see babies and you know, find a newborn. I don't want, you know, or a mom of a newborn, I don't want to see someone's cat or dog. So yeah, definitely want to be able to separate that experience. Yeah. And I think that's also how some people fail to get the followers, the social media followers that they really want to get right is because their, their Instagram account or whatever isn't specialized enough and people don't follow cause they're like, Oh I really like their dog photos but I don't really want to see babies all the time as well. And they won't bother following them, you know? So the more specialized you are and your social media as well, the more likely people will follow you because it's that one particular thing that they're really interested in.

Speaker 1 ([09:20](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. Nice. Yeah. So when you, so you've started with about 13 years ago and then you had your graphic design and web design, which by the way are like the most, um, just fantastic commingling of skills to run a photography business because it's super handy. I know, I know I am not, um, graphically gifted, so I definitely hire out for all of that. But what a great skill to have for, for all of those things.

Speaker 3 ([09:54](#)):

Oh, I, it comes, it really comes in handy being able to do all that. It really does. It's the best combination, especially when it comes to like creating learning resources and even my books that I did pals at Brisbane, like I designed all that and wrote all that and laid it all out. Um, and so my graphic design

background really came in handy there. And then, yeah, I guess with anything marketing related or anything like that, yeah, it's good to have that knowledge, I suppose.

Speaker 1 ([10:19](#)):

Yup. Yup. If you don't have that knowledge out there, you can always outsource it like I do. That's exactly right. Yes, definitely. I always like to say things either cost time or money that's going to either cost you money to have someone do it or a lot of time to figure it out. But like when I started, I didn't know anything about web design, so I made my own website was the most beautiful thing though. It did a job. Yes. You learn more and you yeah. And you tweak it and then eventually have enough money to invest to have somebody's actual professional. That makes sense. That makes all the difference too. Yeah, for sure. Absolutely. Um, so yeah, so you are in like one of the sunniest places on the planet. I used to live in Pittsburgh, which um, I've seen, I've seen conflicting reports, but the most recent one I saw, which was the cloudiest city in the United States, we have more cloudy days than Seattle.

Speaker 1 ([11:17](#)):

Um, I mean cause it literally becomes cloudy around early November and you don't really see the sun again. Even now, my mom's back up there now and she's like, Oh my God, it's raining almost every day where it's just like cloudy cloudy cloudy until like June. So you have a couple of months of intermittent sun, not every day where now I live in Charlotte and it's sunny here a lot. So I almost finding that, oh my gosh, my, my style is almost changing here. And you and I have had conversations about where you live and how that might affect your style because I mean your, your style, so

Speaker 3 ([11:54](#)):

backlit and sun drenched and beautiful and mine has become like more like, I really love to use the architecture and like the city vibes and it's like kind of monochromatic and yeah. And that's definitely a product. There's a sort of light that you have to work with. It's a huge contributor. Like I often think if I, cause I love Scotland, if I would have somehow grown up in Scotland and started in Scotland, I think my style would be completely different. I think it would be quite, you know, moody and dark and dramatic. And I might be using, you know, off-camera flash more to create some, um, some life and interest in my images, whereas I don't use it at all. Uh, where I live here because I don't need to it, I feel I don't need to. Right. You have so much light to work with.

Speaker 3 ([12:41](#)):

We have a lot of sunny day, so I actually don't even shoot on a cloudy day. So if I have a client session scheduled, I watch the weather forecast and if there's more than say 70% cloud forecast for that afternoon, I will reschedule. Um, and it's just basically I don't have a cloud, honestly. I love it. You guys have a cloud forecast, these things. I actually, I'm a massive, probably like most photographers that work at those. I'm a massive weather nerd as well. So I pay, I pay extra for a subscription for a weather website that actually gives me all this data that I used to decide. Whether it's a go ahead with a session or not. Um, but I also, I have, I think I have seven weather apps on my phone, hopefully unloaded in a, when we were in New Zealand because we had some rain, we were trying to dodge. Um, so I downloaded one down there. It's still in Celsius. So that one's my one that I'm learning what Celsius mean. I go there. That's helpful.

Speaker 3 ([13:44](#)):

But I'm still not real great on the Fahrenheit thing. There's a couple of reference temperatures like on of understand, but yeah. And then you estimate everything else. Yeah. This guests basically. Yeah. I love it. I love it. But um, yeah, no, I, I really educate my clients too, that that is something that I really need to have in my, in my sessions to be able to create the style that they see on my website. Right. So it's not a surprise for them if we need to reschedule cause it's cloudy because I've, I've told them at multiple points up until the day that, you know, if there's more than 70% cloud on the forecast, we're going to have to reschedule to a sunny day. So I think that communication, like being open with your communication with that sort of thing is really important as well. Just manage managing people's expectations I suppose. So you're not just lots of things on them and they're like, what are you kidding me? Why can't you show me? Right. Yeah, no, for sure. I think that that is 100%. Such an important part of our process is to make sure our clients know what's coming next and what the possibilities are and what our expectations are. And my kind of rule of thumb is anytime I have contact with the client, always let them know

Speaker 1 ([14:52](#)):

when they'll hear from me again and what they can expect next, which is kind of an easy way to, to keep them in the loop. Definitely.

Speaker 3 ([14:58](#)):

So the night terrors, they never left wondering as to what the next point of contact or task or meeting or whatever is.

Speaker 1 ([15:05](#)):

Yep, for sure. For sure. Definitely. So when you started, did you always start with products or did you start with the shoot and burn? What was that? What was your beginning years like? Well, I actually never did shoot and burn. I always

Speaker 3 ([15:18](#)):

did products. I think that's because I'm not sure why that is. I think, I think it's because when I did, uh, when I studied photography, it was actually before digital. Um, so it was just before digital. So we had a couple of digital cameras when I was at college, but they were like two megapixel toys, like they weren't a serious thing. So I guess I kind of right from the very start of my photography journey, like I always had products in mind. Like I always had, you know, prints and wall art and all that sort of thing in my mind. And I guess when I started my business it was just natural to want to offer that to people. Um, I guess because I'd come from right at the very start come from a film background where you don't really just hand over the negatives to people.

Speaker 3 ([16:00](#)):

Right. I still felt like the equivalent of like moving into digital, I still wanted to be able to offer people's tangible products. So I had a price list and it was just a single-page price list. I had prints, I used to sell just loose prints. Um, I've always sold canvases. I think I used to sell things like a box set of prints and things like that. Um, I've kept all my old price lists and they're always interesting to look back on. Yeah. But um, I've also always offered people digital files as well because I know that that's something that I value highly and I like to have. So I figured that something that, that people like to have as well. So it's always been right from the very start. I've always offered both.

Speaker 1 ([16:37](#)):

Yup. Yeah, no, I've loved offering digitals and as long as they're priced appropriately, like I think I've had in over 10 years, one client who purchased just the digitals, maybe two. And that one I know is moving out of the country so they get a pass, that's fine. But it's priced in that, you know, if they purchase just the digital, so I'm pretty happy. And then the digital is, it becomes a no brainer to like, Oh, but I could spend really the same amount and get this beautiful product and add on some digitals and it just, they get what they want. I'm selling them what I want to sell them and what I know they're going to enjoy for the long term because my biggest fear is I'll get those digitals and they'll sit in a, in a drawer forever and they won't actually get to enjoy them. So yeah, I feel like they, they work hand in hand so well.

Speaker 3 ([17:25](#)):

Exactly. Yeah. And you can have the best of both worlds and it's kind of a win win for everyone I suppose. Yeah. I did actually used to do as I had a bunch of different packages or used to offer, I've been through so many different types of pricing. It's crazy. Right? I did actually have, and this is a really good lesson for me to learn. I did actually have a package that was just the shoot and digitals and it was priced way too low. I think it was like four or 500 bucks, something like that. Yeah. It wasn't all the digitals. I think it was 20 digitals. Um, and the session. Yeah. And I was so busy, like I got so many bookings, I was so busy. And then I realized at some point that I just wasn't making any money out of it. I was just putting way too many hours into doing these sessions and people was walking away with the digitals and not buying anything.

Speaker 3 ([18:08](#)):

Cause my, it was always my aim to think, Oh okay, well I'll include the digitals in the session and then they can also, you know, have the option to buy prints and stuff. And I didn't have things set up in such a way that made that easy for people. So, and that was another mistake I guess. So that was, I actually learned quite a lot doing that and it was, I felt like it was something I needed to actually go through to learn and to understand why that didn't work. So in a way it was kind of a good thing, I guess at the time. I think it's hard to realize because you look at it on the surface and you're like, Oh, it's definitely profitable. I have like no cost of goods and you know, it's a couple hundred dollars and I just shoot and I edit.

Speaker 3 ([18:45](#)):

But then you start to look at how much time you're spending, which I know you, you are like a spreadsheet numbers nerd as much as I am, like we both geek out over productivity stuff. So you track your time. Have you always been tracking your time for your clients? I think maybe not right at the start. Yeah. I'm pretty sure around the same time as I was doing these digital packages, I started thinking, okay, I really need to start keeping track of the hours that I'm spending. Cause it feels like a lot. Um, and so I use a little app called harvest and just sits up in your menu bar at the top and you have jobs set up for each client and you just record the time that you spend. And from then on, I've always recorded the time that I spent for every single client just to make sure that I'm being profitable.

Speaker 3 ([19:27](#)):

That's so important. It's like your hours is, it's, you can't ignore that information. You know, it's vital to actually working out if you're profitable and working out, you know how much you should charge as well. Yup. Yeah, absolutely. And then you can see your, you know, how many hours you spent, how much your sale was, what your cost of goods sold were. You can see your actual cost of goods sold like

percentage wise and then you can break down that profit into how many hours and see what your actual hourly rate you earned from that client was the important figure. And that's a really important one. And then yeah, good. No go ahead. You finish and then average data over a number of clients. And I guess that is more like your true hourly rate as well. So cause it obviously varies between clients but yeah. Yeah I was going to say you have to add in, make sure you add in some time for like the admin tasks and things like that that you're not really, you know, but if you're tracking those two as a separate thing, then you could really even look at a month or two of data, add up all the hours you've worked for your business and then all the profits that you have and get a true rate of your hourly rate. I think of a lot of people did that they'd be not pleasantly surprised.

Speaker 3 ([20:34](#)):

Shocked. Yeah. Amazing. The time that you spend on all these little things that you don't, I mean I'll, I can spend the whole day just answering emails. Yeah. It's hard cause I love, yeah. We love our business. So like, I mean, I love my business, but I also want to enjoy things outside of my business. So you know, it, it's so important to be able to, to keep an eye on that. There's another app too, there's harvest that you use and there's um, toggle T, O, G, G, L, which I know togggl's free. I think harvest has different levels, but, um, yeah, both great, great things to track time with. So we definitely recommend that. Anything that makes it easy. So, yeah, for sure. Yeah. Whatever works into your workflow. Absolutely. Yep. So where, I know you shoot all over and you have the, um, beautiful, wonderful beaches and gorgeous areas that are just open and lovely.

Speaker 3 ([21:33](#)):

Where's your favorite session location? Oh, I'd say probably debate, but just because it's like the beach on a sunny afternoon. There's just, I, I feel there's so many possibilities for different ways you can use the light and the variety that you can get and using different lenses to create variety. And, and the other thing is, is people and dogs just seem to be happy and carefree at the beach. It's not as stressful. It's like a completely the opposite of a stressful place to be. It's a deep, what's the word? It's a very relaxing place. Yeah. So people can feel a little bit pressured or something or a little bit out of their comfort zone and if they just feel a little bit off, then that can kind of show in the photos and it can pass to the dogs as well. Right. Whereas if people are relaxed and the dogs are having fun, you'd get a lot more, um, a lot more chance of getting really nice expressions and, and those sorts of things, which are really important for creating great photos as well.

Speaker 3 ([22:30](#)):

So I guess for number of reasons, I love the beach. Yeah. Nice. My second favorite location would definitely be the forest though. Yeah, we have, we have plants. We don't actually have native pine forest here in Australia, but we have plantation pine forests and uh, kind of the next best thing. So I just, it's the person that likes, you know, the, the repetitive like lined up things. I imagine those are pretty straight aligned and like you're like cool, look at the repeating patterns. Yeah, they definitely can. Yeah, they often are. And then they have like a road through the middle often as well because they're a forestry, like they've got to all be accessible. So there's a lot of rows all through them and they're not always lined up with the sunset either. So I've gotten to know like which roads through the forest line up at particular times of year, um, which is really handy to know.

Speaker 3 ([23:22](#)):

And also use that sun seeker app, which is a main thing. Is it argumented reality? Is that how you say it? I have no idea. That's a ton for it. I think it's that pronounced that incorrectly. I'm not sure. Anyway, it's where it's, where you hold your phone up and it uses the phone's camera and doesn't overlay where the sun will be, the path of the sun through the sky and all that sort of stuff. And you can also change it to different months as well. So if you're there in June and you want to know where the sun sets in December, you can switch it and it'll show you exactly. So you'd be like, okay, well this, this particular view isn't working at the moment, but in another four months it will be lined up perfect. Um, yeah. So yeah, I love, I use that a lot and it's, I mean, it's not so important that places like the beach, but definitely in the forest where you really need to get the sun in the right spot.

Speaker 3 ([24:10](#)):

Otherwise you're dealing with like dappled shade and sidelight and all that sort of stuff. It's invaluable. I love it. I, yeah, I love that app. I use it a lot too. And um, I didn't realize because, you know, I don't, I don't live in the big giant like rocky beautiful mountains. So when I was out in Colorado with Terran Bayer, we were teaching a hair of the dog workshop a couple of years ago. We were like, okay, do your two, two years, two hours before sunset this time. This is when we'll start shooting. And we went out to scope and then we picked up my Sunseeker. I'm like, Oh man, we're going to lose light behind that mountain like four in the afternoon. Yeah, exactly. And that's just, sorry. It's such vital information to have on those sorts of locations. I found the same thing in New Zealand as well.

Speaker 3 ([24:55](#)):

Yes, because, because Craig and I went to scout in Queenstown before the actual workshop and it was like we spent, was it four days, three or four days driving so many Ks. We walked so far just to find locations where that wasn't going to be an issue. It wasn't going to be as much of an issue, I suppose. Yes, it's a real thing now. Mountains just, it wrecks everything! They're really hard to shoot in and exactly. Yeah. Yeah. And then for the workshops too you're adding, the extra added challenge of it needs to be close to roads. We can't have people walking too far. We can't have models walking too far. It can't be too crowded, needs to be enough room. Yeah, it's a tall order. I'm so glad we location scouted there beforehand just because if we would have just turned up and gone to places that we'd kind of thought we Googled about a lot of the places that we thought were at an absolute ringing, weren't.

Speaker 3 ([25:48](#)):

Sorry. Right, right. Yeah, it was handy. I think that's true with um, actual photo shoot locations for your clients as well. Because sometimes like that's why I like to have a location guide that I sent through to people that has locations, tried and tested locations that I know who work at particular times of year. If you start doing shoots at locations that the clients recommended because they think it's a pretty place, they're not looking for the same things as you are. So what they think is a great location. Yeah. There's going to be beautiful, completely open, manicured park with no interest. You're like, no, no, no. Or their backyard. I thought, yeah, we'll just do it in my backyard. And so I always Google before we have that conversation, I usually have their address. So I Google that first. So to see, Oh you live on 10 acres of like natural land. Okay, we could probably make that work.

Speaker 1 ([26:44](#)):

Or Oh, you're in a subdivision on a third of an acre with a white fence in your backyard.

Speaker 3 ([26:50](#)):

Exactly. Yeah. But I'm alternatively like I've actually had a few locations at clients and I'm always super skeptical when clients recommend locations because nine times out of 10 they're not suitable. Um, but I've actually had a couple of locations that I've found because a client has recommended them as well. So, um, it does help also to keep an open mind and not just discount locations straight away. Cause you're like, okay, what would they know? Um, yeah, because sometimes I actually managed to get a good spot like this. There's one spot that I really love that I shoot at. It's kind of on the other side of town for me, which is also good because it's not a place I would have found by myself. Yeah. Because I didn't normally go there, but they take their dog every, they're out there every afternoon and it's an off leash park, but you can walk sort of further up the creek and there's not as many people and dogs and it's really pretty and it's often really green because it's in a Valley. So yeah, finding locations is huge. A huge part I think of of being an outdoors natural life photographer.

Speaker 1 ([27:47](#)):

Absolutely. And I remember by, well my brother got married last spring, thankfully not this spring, last May where he got married. It was an outdoor venue and it was beautiful and it had all this acreage and beautiful trees and some flowers and gorgeous light and fields and old barns. And I'm like, Oh my God, this is awesome. I want to shoot here. And I was thinking to myself, no chance they're going to let dogs here. And I almost didn't even ask. And then I had a client really right around that time, um, they contacted me like a week or two after my brother got married and we were talking and we were trying to figure out where to go. And their dogs were a little reactive and you know, they wanted someplace private. And so I was like, hold on, let me get back tomorrow, let me find out.

Speaker 1 ([28:29](#)):

So I emailed the people and I'm just like, you know, I'm a pet photographer. I know you guys, you know, cause you'd look on the website and it says they do rent the land for photography, but they have cats, they have a dog. I'm like, there's no way they're gonna let me bring dogs onto here. So I just emailed them and said, Hey, I'm a pet photographer. Would I be able to hold a session there too? They're like, sure. Absolutely. Like, Oh wow. Okay. So that's awesome. It doesn't hurt to ask. Yeah. If you guys have locations. I find sometimes Googling when I first moved to Charlotte, I mean I had been here like twice before. And then you had to what cut out for you? Finding locations? Yeah. Yeah. And it's weird here a bit too cause it's very like just green trees, flat-ish, but not real hilly. Like in Pittsburgh you can get up on things here, there's like kind of hills, but the trees are so big you can't ever see over the trees. Um, so it's just like, I don't know. Oh it was a whole different kind of scouting and the city was totally different too because Pittsburgh has amazing old architecture and incredible doors and like I could go shoot around the city. I had like probably 10 different city locations that I love to shoot out. And here I'm like,

Speaker 3 ([29:42](#)):

Oh here they knock everything down if it's more than 20 years old to build something new. So I've started to find some, but finding it was a little bit more challenging to start to find where I wanted to go. So what I actually did when I was going to move was I Googled, you know, wedding photography and came up some really good spots to kind of check out and go see. And um, definitely a really good thing to look for. Yeah. Cause you know it's going to be photogenic. Yeah. I actually did a really similar thing. Um, this is a place, uh, in, actually I live right. I've just moved that just before Christmas and it's just down the road for me now. It's called Old Petri town and it's a weird little place. It's like Brisbane is pretty bad for retaining heritage areas and heritage buildings and they tend to knock things down and stuff.

Speaker 3 ([30:34](#)):

So there's not a lot of old buildings, but this Old Petri town, they've actually moved a lot of the old buildings, even an entire railway station building. Oh wow. And put them in this little village to like create this little old timer, you know, old in Australia in terms of only like this, this little village, um, with lots of these cute little cottagey buildings and the old railway station with a little section of track and all these really cool places. Anyway, so I was actually looking at it as a wedding. Similar story to yours, is that I was looking at it as a wedding location for myself and this is beautiful, big old fig trees like 350 year old Morton Bay fig trees, big buttress roots and yeah, so I ended up, ended up getting married there. Um, but I did the same thing. I just asked him the question like, do you allow dogs here?

Speaker 3 ([31:19](#)):

And it had actually just changed management. So, and the reason, the reason I assumed it didn't before is they were actually sign there that said no dogs, but they just changed management and they're just like, Oh no, we're letting people have photography permits for shooting here now. And yes, we allowed dogs. So that's a really favorite spot of mine to shoot. And again, it's like a similar kind of reason as you think is it's not crowded and it's a really great place to take reactive dogs because there's never anyone else there. There are no other dogs there. And if I've got a, you have to have a photography pass to shoot there to be there. I mean just always ask the question, never be shy about asking like what's the worst thing that's going to happen? They're going to say no. Yeah, for sure. And I'm not scared to like pay for places and my clients understand that especially if they have a reactive dog and say, Hey, we can go here and it's private and there is a fee to shoot there. They're always like, okay, that's fine. You know, as an owner of a reactive dog myself, I mean I would pay in a second to know that I'm not going to have like Zoe barking and spinning and screaming and you know, so it's stressful for all of us.

Speaker 3 ([32:24](#)):

Definitely. Private properties as well. Actually in my real shoot series, episode seven, I actually shoot on in the country on a private property. Yup. And I actually put a, an ad up on Facebook looking for a suitable property in the area that I wanted that had certain features, finding the property to shoot on and that's where I shot in episode seven or Phil shoots. So also that's another way to find locations is you can actually, you can even just drive around the area that you like. If it's a country area or something and see like a beautiful paddock or a really nice creek or you know, some rolling hills or something or a field of flowers or crops or whatever looks good, and just leave a note in their letterbox like, and, and if you actually offered to pay, people will take you seriously as well and tell them you have insurance.

Speaker 3 ([33:14](#)):

Yes, exactly. You know like actually, you know, send them a link, give them a business card and tell them that you're like a legitimate sort of business and that you are happy to pay to be able to shoot there. And it's always worth it. Yeah. Always. Yeah, absolutely. And you can find usually their names too. Um, you know, that's all County, County public, uh, knowledge that you can look on your County website to find out who owns it. You can send letters, you know, whatever. However to reach them. That's a, that's a great way to do that. What were you looking for on the private land? It was more, I guess it was also what I wasn't looking for as well, so I wasn't looking for a cluttered type place that had lots of, you know, old cars lying around or um, you know, ugly fences and things like that.

Speaker 3 ([33:55](#)):

So I think in my list, I actually in Real Shoots, episode seven, I actually have a screenshot of the exact ad that I posted on Facebook looking for it. And so it was, um, I think I listed old farm buildings with a rustic look, um, paddocks that hadn't been mowed with natural long grasses. Yeah. Tracks treed areas. I forget what else was in the list, but it was a list of things I did want and I listed things I didn't want. And I was also very specific that I wasn't shooting at their house. Right. Um, so we wouldn't be in their house in and around their house, their house, yard or anything like that. It was only on their land, only on their property. And I also tried to find some example photos of what I was looking for and post those in the ad as well.

Speaker 3 ([34:39](#)):

Smart. Local groups? Yeah, just a community Facebook group but to Sydney and I had so many responses. I reckon I had about 10 responses and I went out to about four properties I think. Yeah. And ended up choosing this one that I used for the real treats episode. Nice. Only thing is he was just about to sell it. Can you put in the contract that stipulated that I have to get access to it? No, I actually only shot there once because it changed owners and they weren't interested. Um, yeah. All right. Let me call number two that was on my list and there was one that I would love to go out to still. I just haven't found the perfect shoot to do it with yet. But yeah, a good way of finding locations to shoot if you're really struggling. And also for people who struggle, they might live in an area where the laws are quite tight on that's Florida. Oh my God. You cannot have dogs like anywhere. It's so frustrating. It's really hard. That is frustrating. I think Sydney's a little bit the same as well. It's definitely a lot more, um, tightly restricted I guess. It's completely dog prohibited. I found that actually about the inner city parks of Brisbane, like right in the city too - no dogs. Um, which is, which is kind of annoying, which is crazy too. Cause so many dogs live in the city.

Speaker 3 ([36:08](#)):

They're just supposed to stay in their apartments full time and then one day have issues cause they're not socialized well enough. But anyway, that's another topic. Oh yes. Yeah. Um, what are some other ways that you, I know when I moved down I did some, some armchair Googling, um, looking for green spaces. That's a great way to do it, just scrolling around the map. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And then every time I go driving somewhere, I'm always always looking around for where I am. And I actually will take, if I'm like in the city and I see, Oh my gosh, here's this beautiful like red garage door that I could shoot at. I take a picture on my phone and drop a little pin where it is and I put it in a specific folder. So I kind of have this little folder of cool spots. Yeah, that's a good idea.

Speaker 3 ([37:00](#)):

Yeah. Well I have a question for you. So when you're looking for like a session location for a full session, like how many different kinds of vignettes or areas do you want to see to be able to get enough variety for the session you want? Oh, okay. Like so there's variety within the one location? Yeah. Yeah. Like, cause I know there's some places that I've done mini sessions at, but sometimes it's a little bit harder to do a full session at. I feel like it depends on how you, I mean I've got, I mean I've got a location guide and I think I've got about 18 different locations in there and I think only one of them, I specify that I'll only do a short session there. Also mainly because of the light and it's only a morning location, then you lose a light really quickly so you don't actually have a lot of time to shoot there.

Speaker 3 ([37:41](#)):

And also there isn't a lot of variety. So there's basically just a creek and then like a field and it's all very same, same. You're not going to get a lot of variety there. I don't know. I suppose I look for three or four or five different kind of areas, but it's also how you use them as well, right? So you can get a completely different look from exactly the same spot just by changing your lens and changing your focal length and your perspective and angle. Yeah, absolutely. So it kind of really depends, I suppose. Yeah. I mean I would rarely shoot, I would really go to a location because there's like a building there that I like and just use that building in the background. That's just not really my style I suppose. But it's also just doesn't give you quite enough variety asoposed to different colored backgrounds and stuff. Yeah. My favorite places to shoot. I love the city. I still love the city and like to go with buildings and color, texture and everything and it's funny cause people are

Speaker 1 ([38:35](#)):

always like, man, I want to do the city. But I love the natural stuff too. And I'm like, well, but we can do both because you know with, that trusty 70 to 200 at 200 millimeters, you're like, Oh, here's a couple of grasses. Oh, it looks like in the middle of wherever. Like you have no idea it's in the city. Yeah, absolutely. Hone down on those tiny little patches of something to make it look a little bit different. Yeah. Yeah. I think, um, a really fun exercise. I do it in one of my Behind the Lens episodes in the Academy that basically was in front of the door, that little town, I love that little town, it was like 10 minutes from my house. It's like a little kind of historic-ish, historical town, but there's just really like this little town square that's kind of historical. And then otherwise it's just normal houses and like a restaurant and really you would drive right through and be like, there's nothing really special here.

Speaker 1 ([39:28](#)):

But like there was plenty, and there was never anybody there and it was close and it was great. You could shoot in the morning but you didn't have to get there at sunrise. You could like start an hour after sunshine. It was amazing. But anyway, I did, I digress. I did a uh, uh, a little exercise at a door and those like, all right, let's see how many different images we can create like right here in this spot, not at this building, like right here at this door. So I always feel like that's a really good way for, yeah, you do that. Like explore your creativity and start to see some things and how many different ways can I use this with different lenses and different perspectives and all that good stuff.

Speaker 3 ([40:08](#)):

Yeah. I did a similar thing in real shoots, episode six with Nico the Husky was basically the garden bed and the difference in the images that you can get. She was standing in the garden bed and I was kind of shooting from a long way away with a 200 millimeter lens and I've got her kind of, you know, side on standing there and then I switched to a super wide angle lens and I shot over the top of her looking down and she was pretty much exactly the same position she had. She didn't move at all and it looked like it was like a completely different photo. Completely different look and it's just amazing what you can do just by mixing it up a little bit. I think people sometimes get stuck using their favorite lens.

Speaker 3 ([40:48](#)):

I'm guilty! 70-200, I mean it's a good lens. I mean, I've done my camera most of the time if I'm getting a bit stuck and I'm like, I think to myself, Oh, what lens am I using? How long has it been okay? I've been using it for the last 15 minutes. Let me just switch and I can't see anything that I want to do with this lens, but let me just put it on and have a look. And then often when you put it on, you start looking through, you know, looking through the viewfinder and look like you get a set of fresh eyes, I guess, on

the same scene. So just active switching to a different lens, just, um, it can give you a bit of inspiration and sort of help you work through it and, and use your creativity to create something different.

Speaker 1 ([41:25](#)):

Yup. Yeah. And don't be afraid to tell, you know, tell your client like to test something different. And if it's not working, like to say, Oh, all, hold on, let's go do it this way. I'm going to switch my lens. Like your client's not going to judge you if you're like trying something and you're like, mm, I don't really like that. I'm going to come over here. Like I, when I first started I was terrified that a one, if I wasn't constantly moving and shooting that they were going to realize that I didn't know what the heck I was doing and B, if I like, you know, pause for a second or told them, Oh wait, this isn't working, that that'd be like, Oh, see who? Why? Why are you calling yourself a professional? I think we all have that like through the back of our head, especially when we're starting. Yeah, but then I realized that, Oh, that was totally okay to say, Hey, just hang out here for one second. I'm going to walk over here and see if there's anything interesting. I want to go check the light here. I tell them, hold on, I'm going to change these settings. I take a couple of test shots. I'll sometimes say, Oh, I don't really like it with that lens. Hold on. I'm going to switch to this. Like they, they don't care. This is

Speaker 3 ([42:31](#)):

part of the, it's, it's all part of the creative process and people really appreciate that sometimes too. I think because you're trying to do something a bit different from them for them, you're not just taking them to the same spot you take every single client to and taking the same photo. Um, I find the, especially the Old Petri town that I shoot at with the little village, there's so many different nooks and crannies of that place that I'm always finding new spots and I will say to a client, look, I shoot here all the time, but I've never shot just over there. Let's go try that out and see how that looks. And they're always like, Oh, okay, cool. We're doing something a bit different. Like we might get something really cool out of this, and if it doesn't work, they're like, Oh, well that's okay.

Speaker 3 ([43:09](#)):

Well let's try this other spot. You know? I think it, it gives you time to regroup your thoughts and stuff as well if you just, that's it. That's one of the tips I give often is if you're feeling a little bit overwhelmed during a session, um, cause there's so much to think about, so much to think about. And a lot of the time it does start to come more naturally the more shoots that you do. But when you're first starting out, like I mean you've got to talk to them, you got to make conversation with people often that's the hardest thing, right?

Speaker 3 ([43:36](#)):

So many people are drawn to pet photography because they're introverts and they don't necessarily love talking to people. But unfortunately dogs aren't their own free agents and you still, people have the purse strings. So you're thinking about talking, making conversation with and talking to the owner. You're thinking about the dog, what's it doing? Is it happy? Is it behaving? Is there any like extra training you need to do with the dog? And then you're thinking about the light, which is another huge, huge thing thinking about how to use the location. You're thinking about settings on your camera, right? I'm shooting with manual. You're constantly thinking about, Oh do I need to adjust the ISO to account for the light. So many different things you're thinking about and it's really easy to get overwhelmed and that's normal. That's like totally normal. Um, one of the little tips that I give to people is often if you get, if you're feeling a bit overwhelmed, if you're a bit over talking for a minute, you can just get people to

hang out in a particular little spot and go, okay, I'm just going to walk you guys, stay here just hanging out for a sec.

Speaker 3 ([44:32](#)):

Give your dog a drink, whatever. I'm just going to have a walk over here and see what this spot over here looks like cause I haven't shot there before. I just want to go in, line it up. You can actually do that as a little break for yourself to like regroup and calm down and just center yourself a little bit. And you might walk over there for just a couple of minutes and it's just enough to feed to reset yourself and get into better frame of mind. And then by the time you come back, regardless of whether that spot that you checked out is going to work or not, by the time you come back, you're just a little bit more calm. Yeah. That is like a reset button in the middle of a session. Yeah, no, that's good. You know, and the dogs can usually use a little break and the people like everyone, everyone appreciates a little break here and there.

Speaker 3 ([45:13](#)):

So don't be afraid to do that. Oh my gosh, I'm think we could go on on this conversation for like three more hours. We could talk all day. Nicole. We were like, Hey everybody, this is like our seven-hour podcast episode, it's now 4 in the morning, you must listen all in one sitting. Anyway. Um, yeah. Well I'm sure I'll have you on the podcast again because we have so many awesome things to talk about and thank you for being here with us. Why don't you let everybody know you know, where to find you and all that good stuff. Cool. Okay. Um, so if you'd like to follow my actual photography business that's called Charlotte Reeves photography and that the URL, the website is just Charlotte reeves.com.edu. Uh, and then I have the teaching side of things, so I do quite a lot of teaching these days. And by website for that is learn pet photography.com.

Speaker 3 ([46:09](#)):

So on that teaching side of things, I do in-person mentoring. Obviously can't really do in person right now, but I also do online mentoring and I've been doing a lot of that lately and that's a really good way to connect with me online. I do portfolio reviews and we can even just have a bit of a chat about any issues that you're facing and want to just talk through with someone. I've also got my real shoots course, which is 10 episodes, so 10 real shoots with actual dog photography clients. Uh, so there's like a shooting for each episode. There's a shooting video, there's two editing tutorials, there's a PDF guide, there's the full client gallery and there's a quiz. So that times ten. It's an amazing course. Thanks for the call. Yeah, that's a huge, huge course. But what I recommend people always start with is I do have a free daily tips series that you can sign up to via email, and that's basically one tip every day for 90 days.

Speaker 3 ([47:04](#)):

So that's three months worth of daily tips and they're just nice little bite sized, easily digestible tips that just turn up in your email inbox every day. And a lot of people find that it's really helpful. They're good little snippets of information. So I always recommend people start with that. I've also got a blog that's got a bunch of different information on there about all manner of things. I've got a really popular posts on there about shooting action, which is something that a lot of people are really interested in doing and also something that a lot of people struggle with for various reasons. So that's 10 tips for action that's on my blog and what I recommend people actually start with in terms of courses, I have an awesome course called working with natural light and I'd felt that developed this course because I feel

that people's ability to work with natural light during pet photography sessions especially is absolutely fundamental in your success.

Speaker 3 ([47:54](#)):

The ability to be able to just instantly understand what the light is doing, the quality of the light, um, finding spots to shoot at because of the light. So saying, okay, I can't shoot over there because the light's not good, I'll come back there later. It sort of helps to guide the flow of your session almost. Um, depending on which spots are good to shoot at as the light changes throughout the afternoon. Um, so your understanding of light basically underpins everything else. I think if you're an outdoors, natural light pet photographer, and also the way that the light interacts with your pet subjects as well, it's a little bit different than working with people because you're working with all manner of different shapes and sizes and colors of subject as well. So that light aspect of your photography is so important. So my course working with natural light, I recommend people do that actually before they dive into Real Shoots because it forms a really good foundation though.

Speaker 3 ([48:46](#)):

I've actually got a discount code for you guys to use. If you'd like to invest in Working with Natural Light, so it's usually \$99, but I've got a 50% off discount code you can use. And I think, Oh yeah, I've made it until the end of June this year. The end of June, 2020. Yup. And so that code is HODpodcast, the hair of the dog podcast. Um, and so that's 50% off working with natural light. And it also is a really good little introduction to I guess my teaching style as well. Um, so you kind of understand what to expect in if you decide to jump into Real Shoots, if you kind of enjoy the way that I present the information working with natural light. Well, there's definitely more of that in Real Shoots as well as video, which is awesome in Real Shoots. So yeah, that's the rundown.

Speaker 1 ([49:32](#)):

Awesome. I love it. And they can't get rid of you that easily too because you're also in the Academy, the Hair of the Dog Academy giving critiques there and a coach in Elevate, which is our higher-level group coaching program, in Hair of the Dog to help people, you know, really just start to scale their business and move their business forward. And um, in record time, even in COVID life, our students are rocking it. They, they do so well and so proud of them. So yeah, so good. Good. Lots of places to keep up with new Charlotte and um, thank you again for being here with us and I'm sure we'll talk to you again soon. Awesome. And thanks so much for having me on the call. Of course, talk to you soon.

Speaker 3 ([50:16](#)):

Thanks for listening to this episode of hair of the dog

Speaker 2 ([50:19](#)):

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