

University of Alabama in Huntsville

LOUIS

Honors Capstone Projects and Theses

Honors College

4-28-2024

Creation, Design, and Development of a Professional Blog for Orange Rose Photography

Briana Renee Moore

University of Alabama in Huntsville

Follow this and additional works at: <https://louis.uah.edu/honors-capstones>

Recommended Citation

Moore, Briana Renee, "Creation, Design, and Development of a Professional Blog for Orange Rose Photography" (2024). *Honors Capstone Projects and Theses*. 903.

<https://louis.uah.edu/honors-capstones/903>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors College at LOUIS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Capstone Projects and Theses by an authorized administrator of LOUIS.

Creation, Design, and Development of a Professional Blog for Orange Rose Photography

by

Briana Renee Moore

An Honors Capstone

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Honors Diploma

to

The Honors College

of

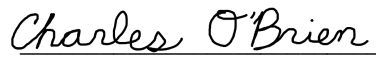
The University of Alabama in Huntsville

April 28, 2024


Honors Capstone Project Director: Dr. Charles O'Brien

 April 25, 2024

Student (signature) Date

 April 25, 2024

Project Director (signature) Date

 4/25/24

Department Chair (signature) Date

Honors College Dean (signature) Date



Honors College

Frank Franz Hall

+1 (256) 824-6450 (voice)

+1 (256) 824-7339 (fax)

honors@uah.edu

Honors Thesis Copyright Permission

This form must be signed by the student and submitted with the final manuscript.

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors Diploma or Certificate from The University of Alabama in Huntsville, I agree that the Library of this University shall make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for extensive copying for scholarly purposes may be granted by my advisor or, in his/her absence, by the Chair of the Department, Director of the Program, or the Dean of the Honors College. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to The University of Alabama in Huntsville in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in this thesis.

Briana R. Moore

Student Name (printed)

Student Signature

April 25, 2024

Date

Table of Contents

Dedication	1
Abstract.....	2
Introduction.....	3
Summary of the Process	4
Project Self-Assessment.....	11
Appendix.....	16

Dedication

I dedicate this Honors Capstone Project to my family, my support system, the people who kept me calm, cool, and collected throughout my last semester. Each and every person played a role in my successes, big and small, and I have nothing but gratitude and love for all of them. Blood or not, the people I call my family have held me down like no one else has. Thank you.

Abstract

Orange Rose Photography is a local photography business here in North Alabama owned by Morgan McLaney. Morgan has a great business but not as much online presence a business, especially a small business, should have in today's society. Morgan is my friend and when I made the decision to create a website for my capstone, I knew she was the first person I was going to contact. The process to creating and designing her website was a semester-long effort. The process included gathering all the necessary elements (e.g. logos, business colors, images, etc.), designing the layout and color scheme, setting up the blog, creating the mobile version of the site, among other things. I am really proud of how the final website turned out and I learned a lot while working on it throughout this whole semester.

Introduction

The internet is everywhere, whether you are streaming a movie, using GPS, researching a question, or even searching for a business, you need internet. Due to this, it is important for businesses, big and small, to have a presence online to engage with new and old clientele. Websites are the main portal between a business and their target audience; it is their portfolio, scheduler, shop, plus much more, depending on the industry of said business. I believe it is important for every business to have a website that exudes who they are and what their business can do for the general public, like a digital business card. That is why I chose this topic as my Honors Capstone Project, I wanted to help a business, preferably small, achieve a greater internet presence by having a website that they are proud of in every aspect.

Luckily, I knew someone close to me that had a small business but did not really have their own website, Morgan McLaney, the owner of Orange Rose Photography, a local photography business here in North Alabama. Not only is she the owner of this great business, she is my friend as well; so, it only made sense to help her design her website while also achieving such a great milestone, which is my Honors Degree. We worked diligently together throughout this semester creating a beautiful website that she can now call her own. The goal was to design a website using ShowIt, a content management system, that included a home page, about me page, a contact us page, and most importantly, a blog. We have future plans in mind, as I am not going anywhere, but we decided that what has been implemented so far is a huge step forward for her business and she could not be more excited.

Summary of the Process

Fortunately, like I stated previously, the owner of Orange Rose Photography, Morgan McLaney, is my friend meaning when I was thinking about who my client could possibly be for this website, my mind immediately went to her. I discussed with her what an Honors Capstone Project was, what I needed to do for it, and what the scope of this project would intel. She was very excited about the opportunity as it meant that she would be receiving a fully functioning website within about 4 months for the low cost of free.

Since Orange Rose Photography is obviously a photography business, I started doing research on what content management system (CMS) would best suit Morgan's needs for her business and for ease of use. A CMS is software that is used to manage digital content; examples of different CMSs are: Squarespace, WordPress, Wix, Showit, etc. There were many aspects to consider when choosing a CMS like cost, functionality, ease of use, etc. Morgan wanted something that would handle her photos well but also had the functionality to have a blog; with all the information in mind, we decided to move forward using the "Showit & Basic Starter Blog" monthly plan from Showit. We chose ShowIt because it is the leading CMS for photographers and had a price within Morgan's budget that gave us the tools we needed (e.g. blog storage, secure certificate, daily blog backups, etc.).

Next steps for me as the designer was collecting all the design elements from her business. This included her business colors, logos, watermarks, and the fonts she wanted to use. As you can see in figure 1, her business colors have an earthy tone; her logos and watermarks, shown on figure 2, reflect the same. This was crucial to start with as I could piece together the best main, background, and accent colors for the website.



Figure 1 – Business Colors



Figure 2 – Logo and Watermark

Having the website colors were great but I could not put anything on the site until I knew the exact layout of my pages; this is where a sitemap is important when it comes to the expectations and communication between a designer and a client. I drafted a sitemap for Morgan to see what pages were going to be implemented and what the pages were going to contain. As you can see in figure 3, the sitemap highlights which pages were going to be in the scope of my Honors Capstone Project and which pages would be focused on afterwards. The blog was the main goal, as the title implies, but we cannot have a blog for a photographer without some kind of contact page or about page, that is why I made those a requirement for my project.

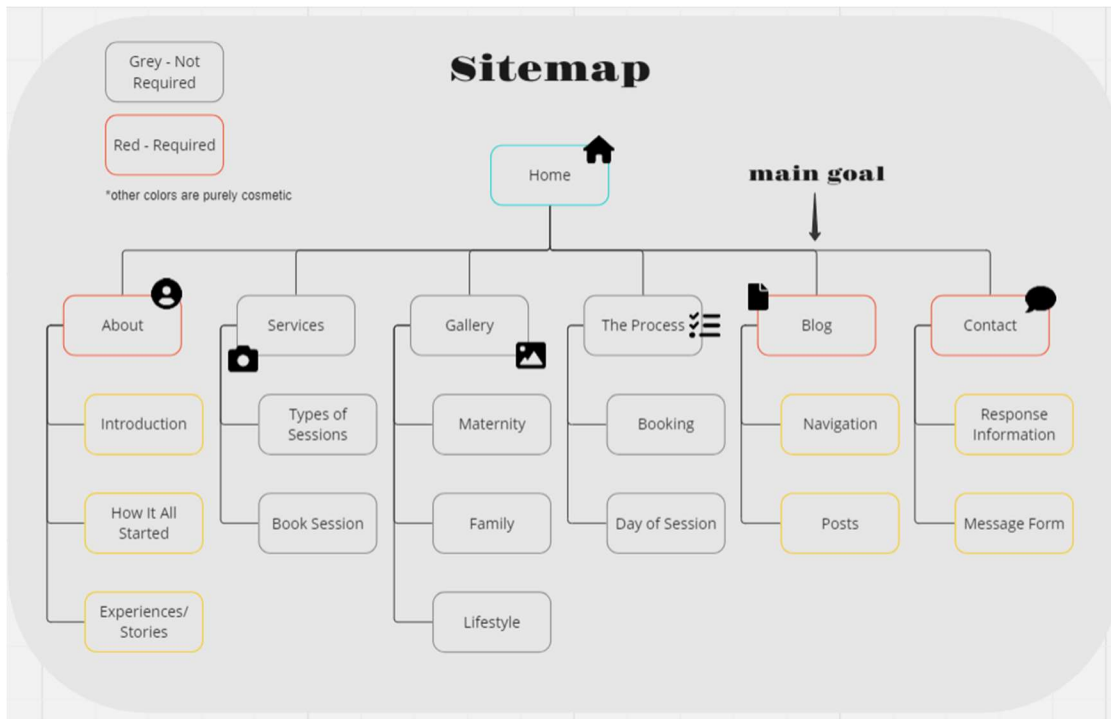


Figure 3 – Sitemap

Once the sitemap was approved by Morgan, I started working on the website. I first created a template for where everything was going to go within the pages (i.e. header, footer, content, images, buttons, etc.) and filled it with generic stock photos and a bunch of “Lorem ipsum...”; this was the most time-consuming process as I had to make all the puzzle pieces fit and flow together. My next step was figuring out what types of photos I needed and relaying that information to Morgan because depending on where the image was located, I needed different sized images. As you can see in figure 4 and 5, the header needed a wider landscape photo while other sections needed more portrait style photos. Once all the photos were in place, I started on the most important part, the blog.

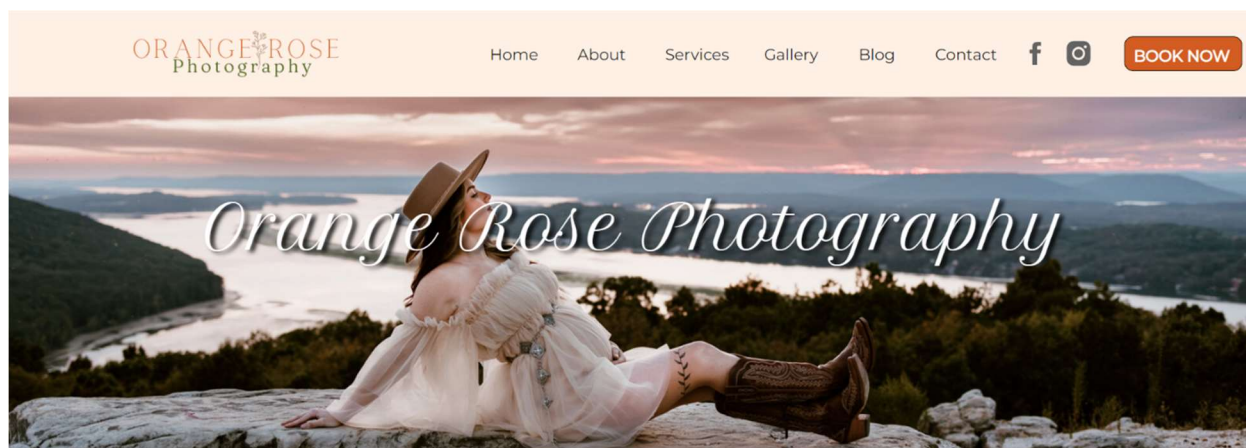


Figure 4 – Home Page Header



Figure 5 – Section of Home Page

Since we were using ShowIt, it was pretty simple to create a beautiful and functional layout for Morgan's blog. There were a couple preset layouts that fit the look Morgan was going for, so we went with those and added all of her business colors. Before I could start writing blog posts, I had to setup the WordPress blog dashboard; WordPress is another CMS that is mainly used to publish blogs, which is what we are using it for within this website. Figure 6 shows what the blog dashboard looks like, it may seem confusing at first, but WordPress is highly organized and efficient. To setup the blog dashboard, I had to contact a ShowIt representative to connect all the moving pieces and enable access to the WordPress account; this made the process much

easier as I could work on other things around the website while waiting for the WordPress account to be connected.

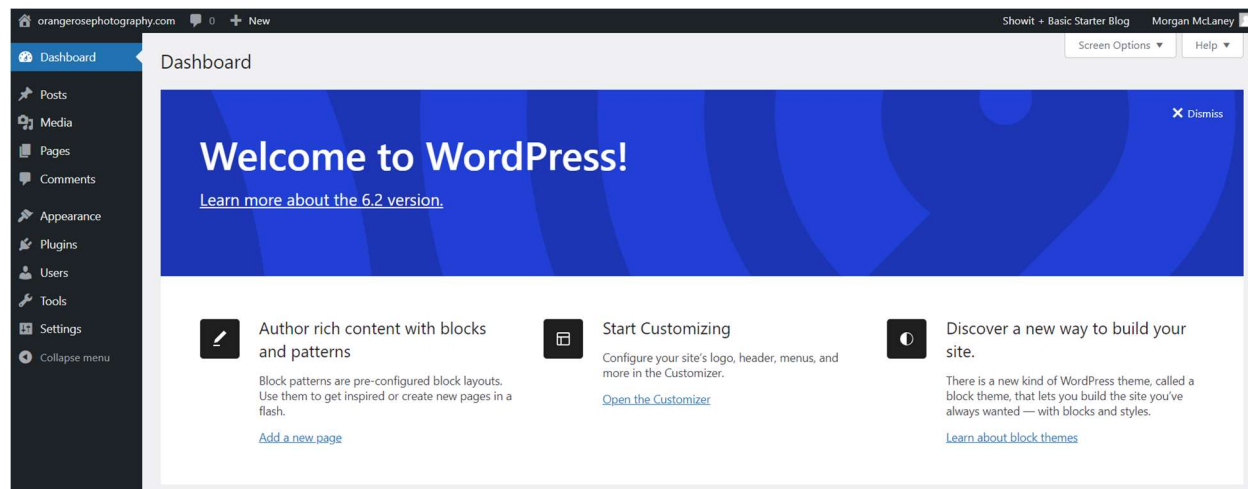


Figure 6 – WordPress Dashboard

Usually, website designers do not write blog posts for their clients, but since I also had a class assignment to make a blog, I expanded my tasks outside the normal scope of designers. To make sure my blogs came out efficiently and on time and because I had to knowledge of the photography business, I used AI to help craft the posts that were made to the blog. The purpose of the posts is to act as a placeholder for my assignment, and then when the semester is over, Morgan can start creating her own posts that will start reaching more people in North Alabama. In my class, ARS 432: Graphic Design – Senior Project Management, we had an assignment that required us to create a blog using CMS and post on that blog 10 times throughout the semester, preferably one blog post every week or so. Because of this assignment, I wrote up 10 blog posts all within the photography realm and scheduled them to post every week on Saturday. Scheduling is a cool feature of WordPress, and you can even set the date of a blog post to a date that has already passed. The final product of the blog can be seen in figure 7, as you can see the images are designed to look like polaroid photos. I did this because Morgan loves taking Polaroid

photos during special occasions; I mean even her “About” photo is her holding up a polaroid camera (figure 8).

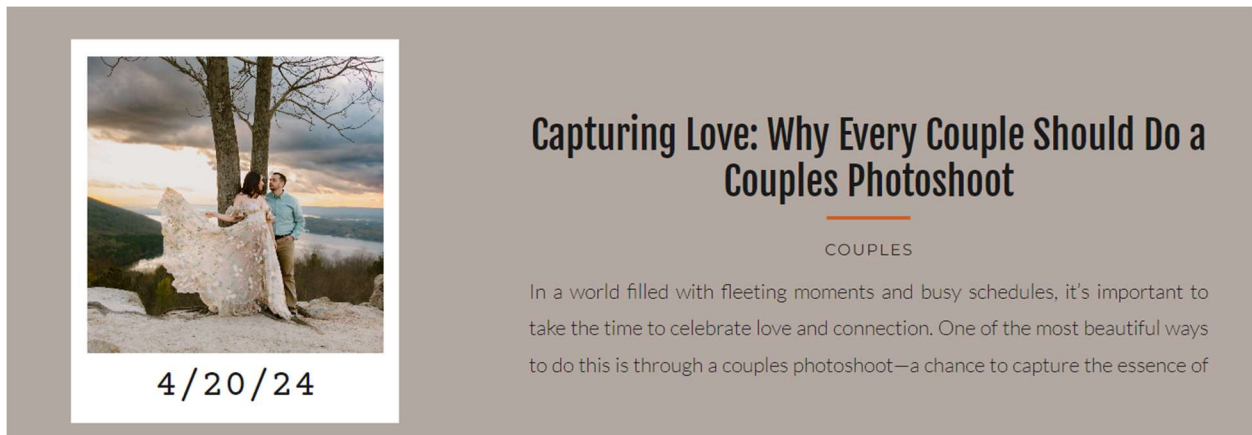


Figure 7 – Screenshot of Blog

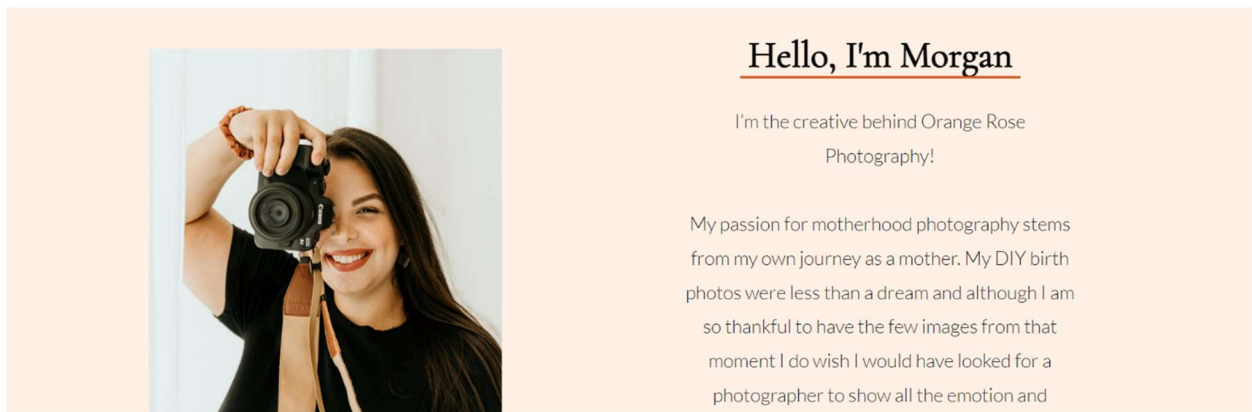


Figure 8 – About Page

Once the blog layout was finalized, the dashboard was setup, and the posts were made and scheduled, it was time for the final touches of the website. The last couples of things on the to-do list were design mobile version of site, make sure site looks correct on different screen sizes, and receive Morgan’s approval to call the site done, at least within the scope of this capstone project. Creating the mobile version was pretty simple as well since ShowIt lets you look at both the mobile and desktop version at the same time and change elements as needed. As shown in figure 9, the mobile version has a different header photo since the screen size is vastly

different than a desktop. Once I did my final check of the site, I contacted Morgan to get her thoughts and she said, “I love the website!!!” I think that is more than enough for the seal of approval, so I officially called this capstone...finished.



Figure 9 – Mobile Version of Home Page Header

Project Self-Assessment

As I looked back on my journey creating this capstone, I did a self-assessment on how I felt about my performance, how the project turned out, and any lessons I learned along the way. Before I go deeper into my assessment, I want to discuss my goals for this project because they had an impact on what I produced and what you see in this paper. When starting this project, I originally thought I was going to do a whole website, but, unfortunately, that did not entirely happen. This was due to the fact that between Morgan and my lives, we did not really have as much time to focus on creating a full website with all the bells and whistles. The scope of my project changed multiple times before I even got started on it; it went from a whole website, to just a blog, and to what it is now, and I could not be happier it did since I was still able to give Morgan what she needs most, a starter website and a blog where she can communicate to the community. Although it does not have a functioning gallery page or services page, I am still proud of the work I put in as it is still one step toward having a full website for Morgan. I am also excited that I can continue working and molding the website to be amazing and will ultimately meet all of Morgan's business needs.

Moving on, I am very glad that I did this capstone after taking course ARS 332 as it gave me the much-needed experience to understand what web design is. I am also grateful that I was able to take course ARS 432 in conjunction with doing my capstone as it showed me how to communicate with clients and how to use CMS to create different types of websites/blogs. ARS 432 also showed me how to work with clients who were not as communicative and engaged with the process of designing and crafting their website. This showed me a lot, and in a way, I dealt with the same issues for this project but for an entirely different reason. Although Morgan was my friend, we did not have great communication when it came to the project because of her busy

life with her kids. I cannot blame her for that, but it did hinder the project in ways; it slowed down the process because she was not able to provide content and images for the website in a timely manner. However, I made it work and the project is finished. I think the experiences I was facing in ARS 432 helped me navigate these issues and finish with a great product for my client, no matter how busy life was during the time. Those two courses ARS 332 and ARS 432 really did help me complete this project; if it was not for me completing those courses and Dr. Charles O'Brien teaching them the way he did, I do not think I would have had the knowledge and understanding to do well on this project, or even complete it at all.

When reflecting on my performance, I think it was good given that this was my first project one-on-one with a client and meeting their needs. I feel that my performance could've been better when it came to communication. As I said before, Morgan is my friend which meant we basically did not discuss the project that much and only talked about it when it came to big milestones (i.e. setting up the blog, business colors, final touches, etc.). There was no professional standard between us as client and designer and I think that hindered us and slowed the project down by not having clear boundaries on what needed to get done including sending over content, forwarding an email sent by ShowIt, emailing images, etc. If this was a client that I had never met before, I feel like I should've been giving updates weekly to keep them in the loop as much as possible as well as being transparent in my expectations of them as my client, but again, she is my friend, and I was not thinking that way. Besides that, I think my performance exceeded my expectations; I am not much of a talkative person as I am more of a developer rather than a designer, but I pushed against that and tried something new. I would rather sit at a desk and develop a website (i.e. code a website) than communicating with a client and design a website but I am glad that I dipped my toes in this pond. I think my communication skills grew

because of it and I think my overall knowledge of the web design/development industry expanded due to it. I was able to achieve my set out goals while also making plans/goals for further development of this website in the future. I am truly proud of myself for the work I put into this website and the work that I will put in, in due time. I honestly think that this website put more work into me than I did it which can also be shown in the lessons that I learned throughout this semester.

Not only was this project fun to do, but it was also very enlightening as well because I learned a couple of lessons along the way. One lesson that I learned while creating the website is to have deadlines with clients when it comes to things you need from them and to have timelines for when you, the designer, will have specific items done. This ties into the communication aspect I mentioned before since having deadlines from a contract or something else makes sure your expectations of the client are clear. I feel like having these sorts of deadlines eases the communication “burden” on the client as well as giving the client clear milestones and goals for the product enables them to know exactly what is needed of them and when and what they can expect from you as the designer.

Something else that I learned is about using CMS, be aware of their process for connecting your domain, setting up your blog, and anything where they need to intervene. Basically, do research on the CMS before starting the project; read up on articles written by the company, watch YouTube videos on the reviews of the CMS, anything you can read or watch to help you understand how the CMS works will be a great benefit when you are further along in your design. I did not research before using ShowIt, so I found myself waiting 72 hours that I was not prepared to wait as they set up the blog. However, that did make it easier for me in some

ways; I was able to focus on other schoolwork and other things I needed to get done while the ShowIt team did what they needed to do on the backend.

Lastly, if you need help, do not be afraid to use customer support for the CMS you are using. It is there for a reason and the people on the other side are trained to know and understand your problems and how to fix them. I am glad that I used customer support the times I could not figure out why something was not working properly, or this project may not have been done. When I was having troubles, the DNS servers were not working properly, and I tried all the troubleshooting tips possible and still came up unsuccessful. I turned to ShowIt customer support for help, and they were able to fix something on their side that resolved the problem. Even though I had to learn these lessons the hard way, and at the time they were annoying, I am grateful for the lessons that I learned as they've shaped me into a better web designer/developer because this now opens doors for more lessons to be learned and knowledge to be gained.

Overall, the project turned out great and Morgan loved it. As I said previously, I plan to continue working on the site until it fully satisfies Morgan's business needs by adding a photo gallery and a way for clients to browse and book services. At the moment, clients can learn more about Morgan and her business but can only contact her through the contact form. I am excited for my next endeavor in a one-on-one client relationship because there are a couple of things I would do differently, no matter if it is for a project or not. One, I will have a client contract that illustrates to them what they can expect out of me and what my expectations are for them to ensure clear communication. Two, I will create a more professional relationship with my client; it is fine to be friends and to have great conversations, but when it comes down to it, the product is more important and having the professional relationship holds discussions about the product to a higher standard. Last but not least, three, I will do more extensive research on the CMS that my

client and I decided to use to ensure a smooth design process, one with minimal bumps in the road. To sum it all up, I really enjoyed this project and how it turned out and I will only get better with practice, time, and patience. Like I said before, I am proud of myself for doing something “not in my realm” of coding and I believe I can do nothing but go up from here.

Appendix

Link to Website

The link to the website is *orangerosephotography.com*. Be mindful that the contents of the link will most likely change as work is still being done on it.