



BANGLADESH

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Bangladesh is a photographer's paradise. Tourism has not really taken off yet, and as such the locals pay no mind to being photographed. The Bangladeshi people are welcoming towards Westerners, and they are intrigued, often having not met anyone from the West before. In Dhaka, the capital city, where mobile phones are more common, our small group was the recipient of frequent requests for selfies when we were the only Westerners at the annual Spring Festival. Whilst fun it can make stealth street photography more challenging!

With a population of over 171 million within an area of only 57,320 square miles, manual labour, including child labour, with very little mechanisation, aims to keep this large population of people employed.

The focus of my trip was the working lives of the Bangladeshi people. I visited shipyards, brick

fields, aluminium and plastic recycling factories, and working villages where everyone was involved in either rice drying, red chili drying, leather and batik dyeing, fishing or fish drying. This involved a great deal of travelling around much of the country. Travel is slow and tedious, and frequently terrifying as lorries, buses, carts, tuk tuks and rickshaws seek to pass each other on overcrowded roads. In Dhaka simply crossing the road as a Western pedestrian required an act of faith, and often the helping hands of locals who strode confidently into the chaos.

Many Bangladeshi jobs involved whole families living and working on site, in hot, dusty and often dangerous or hazardous environments. Bangladesh is one of the most polluted countries in the world and a number of our group felt the ill-effects of the lack of breathable clean air, including myself. Still, I would consider returning for another opportunity to photograph a country still mainly unaffected by tourism.



Opposite page and this page top right: Child labourers aluminium factory, Chittagong.

This page bottom: Drying fields, red pepper & chilli villages, North Bengal.



*This page top and middle: Dyeing fabrics and Hand-painting fabrics
Batik village,
Northeast City.*

*This page bottom:
Spring festival,
Dhaka.*



This page top: Batik village, Northeast City.

This page bottom left and right: Brick fields, Dhaka.





Opposite page top and bottom and this page top and middle: Traditional Shutki palli (dry fish village), Cox's Bazar.

This page bottom: Moon boats' unique design allows them to handle rough seas off the coast of Cox's Bazar.





Opposite page top: Early morning poultry market, Dhaka.

Opposite page bottom: Rice drying, Sylhet.

This page top, middle and bottom: Village life is modest and traditional compared to life in the capital city of Dhaka.





The images chosen for this article reflect, I hope, the hard-working stoicism of the good-natured people that I was privileged to meet on my journey. I sensed from many of the local people an acceptance of their lives, some even bordering on contentment, despite the shockingly harsh working and living conditions. Even the children at work, with no prospects of an education in their future, were bright eyed, exuding a sense of optimism. Surprisingly so in a country with a young but violent history of unrest and corruption. The clear exception to this was from those unfortunates working at a garbage dump near Dhaka. If there is a hell on earth, for me, this was it. A timely reminder that if we ignore the impact of human activity on the environment then there will be no hope for the planet, or for the generations who will inherit it.

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Opposite page top: Curd & yogurt factory, North Bengal.

Opposite page bottom and this page bottom left: Shipyard, Old Dhaka.

This page top and bottom right: Garbage field, Dhaka.

