

Darjeeling Tea Plantation

Oct 27 – Nov 5, 2011

Tuition: \$3495

A workshop for photographers wishing to learn how to document field programs for non-governmental organizations (NGO).



Thatcher Cook

The workshop takes place in remote villages in northeast India, nestled along the Himalayan Mountains. Students have the opportunity to work directly with a humanitarian development organization to document projects that provide infrastructure and promote fair trade to villages located in the tea gardens.

Participants learn documentary field techniques and then put them into practice on rural tea plantations and farming communities in northeast India's Darjeeling district. Participants spend the first two days in Darjeeling, learning from morning lectures and afternoon shooting assignments. Then participants spend two nights in a rural agricultural village, staying with a family and photographing daily life. From there, participants will travel to a remote tea plantation and photograph the tea harvest while staying with local families for four days. The final two days are spent editing photographs and attending follow-up lectures. Student photographs are used to promote development programs on Darjeeling's tea plantations and to raise money through printing and selling postcards and calendars at shops in Darjeeling. Additionally, money from student tuition is used to support development programs in Darjeeling.

The Darjeeling Tea Plantation workshop is intended for photographers, aid workers, anthropologists or university students with a passion for documentary photography. This workshop covers such topics as approaching and gaining access to beneficiaries, working with interpreters, ethics and workflow. Students leave the

workshop with a working foundation of documentary field techniques as well as a small, completed portfolio.

This workshop is not a place to learn new cameras or computer software. Students are expected to be familiar with all their photographic gear, including their computers and software. Additionally, Darjeeling is a rugged and remote area where unexpected delays and changes of schedule happen. For this reason, students are encouraged to be flexible, patient and, most importantly, adventurous.

Accommodations in Darjeeling City are of a high standard. Participants stay in a house with a view of Kanchenjunga, the third highest peak in the world. Food is prepared at the house by local staff and all laundry and house cleaning is taken care of as well. This is to encourage a family-style environment among participants and to accommodate late night critiques and discussion. Accommodation on the plantation is humble. To ensure an authentic experience and great photographs, participants stay with local families in their spare bedrooms and share meals and facilities. There are daily midday discussions among participants and intermittent one-on-one critiques with the instructor while in the village.

Tuition includes meals, lodging, emergency evacuation insurance and four-wheel drive ground transportation to and around Darjeeling. Tipping, souvenirs and airfare to and from Bagdogra Airport (IXB) is the responsibility of the student.

instructor

Thatcher Cook is a documentary photographer based in Maine and South Carolina. His clients are primarily humanitarian aid and development organizations that work with refugees and other people affected by war, economic upheaval and natural disasters. His clients include international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which have sent him on assignment to over sixty countries.



photo by Corbin Gurkin

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