

Gypsy Life Put into Focus By Photographs;
by Barbara Hodgson
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A New Exhibition in Newcastle Offers a Revealing Glimpse into the Private Lives of Romany Gypsies

Danish photographer Joakim Eskildsen spent six years travelling through seven countries to gain an insight into the little-known lives of Roma people. When he finally collected together his images for a book, *The Roma Journeys* which was published last year, it opened a door into a fascinating world. The Roma, often referred to as Romany Gypsies, have their origins in India but are now widely dispersed across the world, in America and the Middle East as well as southern and eastern Europe.

While many are living in permanent housing, they are still thought of as wandering nomads. The reality behind their romantic image is captured by Eskildsen in remarkably honest images which are going on display at Side Photographic Gallery on Newcastle quayside. *The Roma Journeys* is the result of the photographer's work on his travels through India, Romania, Russia, Hungary, Greece, Finland and France between 2000 and 2006, accompanied by writer Cia Rinne. His scenes of everyday life have already been shown in Helsinki and will also go on show in Berlin. He says: "I undertook travels in seven different countries with a view to gaining an insight into the life of the Roma people and the conditions they face. "We always tried to spend a considerable length of time among the people who we wanted to learn about and, if possible, to live with them for a while." He says the journeys were largely unplanned and he just tried to communicate directly with the Roma wherever possible. He adds: "In most countries this was possible and while we were in Russia and India we were accompanied on our travels, and thus had willing assistance."