



PROJECT DOSSIER

SUN KOSI : RIVER of GOLD

KATHMANDU TO KATHMANDU

10 days

400kms by road

272kms on river

Nepal - Eastern Region

Itinerary Guideline

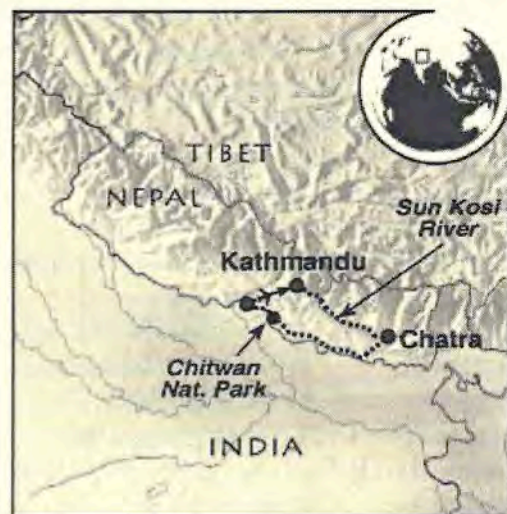
FROM KATHMANDU

Day 1 Drive to Dolalghat on the confluence of the Sun Kosi & Indrawatti Rivers to start on the river. After approx. 4 hrs we reach our first river bank camp.

Days 2-7 On river, approx. 6 hrs rafting each day incl. stops/breaks. Days 1 & 2 on easier water, then at least one section of major rapids each day. Otherwise frequent white-water alternating with flat, calm stretches. Camp on river banks.

Day 8 Afternoon - reach Chatra in eastern Nepal, where Sun Kosi spills out of the hills onto the plains. We then drive west to Hetauda.
Basic hotel.

Days 9 & 10 Drive to Chitwan National Park. Elephant-back safari & guided walks. Fly back to Kathmandu.



Highlights & Route

The Sun Kosi River rises near Shisha Pangma in Tibet, rushing violently through falls and gorges into Nepal. Its power in the upper mountain valleys is awesome. Recent deforestation in the hills has caused more water to reach the river faster, and every summer massive landslips slice the only road link between Nepal & Tibet.

A few years ago the river tore out massive steel sluice gates from an ill-fated Chinese dam project near Tatopani and flung them, rusted & mangled, a full 3 kms downriver. Near Bharabise the Sun-Kosi is joined by the Indrawatti River flowing from the snows of the Langtang Himalaya. Free now from the constricting gorges, but just as wild, the river turns east to course through the remote lateral valleys of Nepal before tumbling onto the Indian plains at Chatra. Attempts were made in 1973 to travel up river by hovercraft, with about as much success as the Titanic. It is rumoured that at about the same time an unknown German made

the descent in an old truck tyre-tube, with a small bag of food and a few ounces of pipe tobacco.

We could never match such aplomb, but in 1978 Encounter with a team from the USA & Canada made the first raft descent of the Sun Kosi. We went back again later that year with two larger, more suitable boats-and a few very enterprising paying project members. And we have all enjoyed going back every year since. Film crews, inflated commentaries and grim-jawed TV "explorers" have since come and gone from the Sun-Kosi. At peace with itself and its ways the river is, to many, still one of the best 10 rafting rivers in the world.

We put our rafts in at the river's highest navigable point near its junction with the Indrawatti. From here to Chatra, eight days downriver, there are no roads and no towns. Just untouched countryside and small villages. Through terraced farmland and arid semi-desert scrub, steep gorges and subtropical jungle this is hill country of Nepal rarely seen by outsiders. River travel gives a different perspective on valley life, and our 8-kilometer-an-hour glide through the warmth of the changing landscapes is well punctuated with rapids. They have a growl and a kick to them, wild rushes of churning water as the river decides that we, and it, have rested enough. Minor and median white water are frequent, and there are at least 6 individual or strings of severe rapids.

Our Avon rafts are built to withstand the heaviest of punishment while comfortably accommodating both ourselves and the supplies and equipment. An experienced helmsman pilots from the stern but paddle-power is needed from everyone to position the boat in the correct line for rapids. The 16-foot inflatables take a maximum of 8 people and operate in pairs to provide support, there is always a safety/equipment raft to follow up. Lifejackets are worn and safety helmets are also used through the major rapids. It can still happen, through changing river levels and the monsoonal shift of giant boulders, that our senior helmsman may decide that a particular rapid is just too severe for safety; and we may have to carry gear and haul the boats to a point below the maelstrom. But days are usually leisurely. We are under way after breakfast as the sun warms and the morning mists clear.

We pick our campsites on sandy riverbanks towards late afternoon, when there is day light

still to build camp and have time to relax in our always new surroundings. When possible we make a driftwood fire for good cheer & good company. Cooking, in which members of the group participate is done by gas. On our last day we merge with the Arun and Tamur Rivers that flows from the snowfields of Everest. One more turn, one more surprise of churning water as the river vents its final temper, and we glide into the flat dusty plains that stretch unbroken as far as the eye can see. This is Chatra where a road connects with the mule tracks & trading routes up the Arun to Tibet. From here we are met by our mini-bus to travel by road via Hetauda to Chitwan National Park.

THE TERAI LOWLANDS

To the Royal Chitwan National Park in the low hills along the border with India. This wildlife reserve of tall shaded forests, hidden clearings, and high elephant grass sits astride the sandy & slow moving Rapti River. All the Terai lowlands were forest & jungles until the eradication of malaria in the 1950's. Tiger hunts of the aristocracy & the British Raj during the early part of the century frequently killed more of the animals in one day than the total now surviving in Nepal. With malaria gone, hill people moved in to cultivate the rich, flat soil – and wildlife came under further pressure. The 1,000 square kilometre park & reserve was declared a wildlife sanctuary by the King in 1973, and the animal numbers are now growing strongly again. It is a beautiful haven for the great Asian rhinoceros, elephant, sloth bear, deer, gharial crocodile, langur monkeys, wild pig, several hundred bird species, and the elusive leopard & Bengal tiger. There are now estimated to be 80 tigers and some 400 rhino here. From our Safari Lodge at Sauraha we travel through the Park on elephant back, on foot with a local guide & in dug-out canoes along the banks of the Rapti River. The project arrangements end after the flight back to Kathmandu.

PLEASE NOTE:

Himalayan Encounters who are our appointed Nepal trekking and white water rafting operator operate the ground arrangements for this project. They are one of the most experienced local operators in Nepal and their services are provided to the highest standard.

GROUP SIZE

10-18 project members plus rafting crew (1 crew, 6-7 project members per boat). Rafting crews are normally mixed, Nepalis & Westerners.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

This is an exacting and adventurous project operating far from roads and communication lines. It requires a strong disposition, good stamina & the ability to function well on minimum "comforts". Rafts are propelled by group paddle power, not by a helmsman with sweep oars. No previous rafting experience is needed but you **must** be a competent swimmer and unafraid of the water. We cannot accept bookings from non-swimmers.

THE LOCAL PAYMENT (as in the brochure)

This is the payment made to Himalayan Encounters at the point of departure. This payment must be made paid in US\$ dollars, either in cash notes or recognised Travellers Cheques. This payment completes the total inclusive price of the project. This amount will be utilised by the organisation to cover a proportion but not all of the 'on the ground' running costs of this project. There are no hidden extra payments.

INCLUDED IN PROJECT COST

All transport including the domestic flight back to Kathmandu, food - 3 meals a day, accommodation & activities as detailed from Day 1 until return to Kathmandu on evening of Day 10. Safety, cooking & domestic equipment & gear bags on river, services of staff throughout. There are no kitties or en route payments.

PROJECT COST DOES NOT COVER

Local Payment made payable in Kathmandu. International flights between home & Kathmandu, transfers to/from Kathmandu airport and airport taxes. Vaccinations, visas, personal insurance, malaria prophylaxis, laundry, snacks, drinks, personal clothing/equipment & items of a personal nature. Accommodation in Kathmandu on Day 10

EQUIPMENT SUPPLIED

Buoyancy aids, helmets, waterproof spray jackets & gear bags, bivouac tents, domestic & cooking equipment on river. Waterproof cargo barrels for

all equipment and baggage. (Waterproof packets to accommodate standard 35mm cameras are also supplied to put inside the cargo barrels. It has always been highly effective but we make no guarantees under extended immersion). 2 person tents, insulated sleeping mats, field first aid kits.

WHAT YOU NEED TO BRING

A warm sleeping bag, warm outer jacket, disposable footwear (old sneakers/tennis shoes) water bottle, personal clothing, medicines & toiletries. (A suitable sleeping bag, cold weather jacket & water bottle can be hired from local suppliers in Kathmandu at approx. US\$5-7 total per day). Personal gear & clothing on the river needs to be kept to a minimum. (Your spare clothing & luggage can rejoin you in Chatra). A recommended list is supplied in the Pre-departure Information pack on booking.

TRANSPORT

Avon inflatable river rafts (paddled mode) with 1 crew, 6-7 project members per raft; minibus from Kathmandu to river put-in, plane to Kathmandu.

ACCOMMODATION

Camping (2 person lightweight tents), 1 night at basic hotel in Hetauda, 1 night at Safari Lodge in Chitwan. No shower facilities but frequent opportunity for river bathing & basic hygiene. Your involvement is needed in camp set up, meal preparation, cooking & hygiene while on the river. Accommodation on night 10 in Kathmandu is not included. Reservations at Kathmandu hotels before Day 1 may be made through Encounter, with payment by you directly to hotel on arrival.

MEALS, COOKING & FOOD

Restaurant meals in Hetauda and at Safari Lodge in Chitwan. Camp cooked breakfasts & dinners, picnic style lunches whilst on river. Your assistance is needed in cooking & meal preparation. We carry a good variety of local fresh vegetables, fruit, meat, eggs, cereals, bread, cheese, preserves, hot drinks, biscuits, canned & dried goods - **BUT**: there is no refrigeration on the river and frozen meat will only last for the first 2 days, most fresh fruit & veg. for the first 5 to 6 days. We therefore have to rely heavily on cereals, canned, dehydrated, preserved & dried goods for the last 2-3 days on the river to Chatra when fresh supplies are again available.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

You will need a passport that is valid for not less than **6 months** after the end of the project, and which contains not less than **2 blank pages**. All nationalities require visas for Nepal which should preferably be obtained before you leave home. Their costs vary according to your nationality. Encounter or your agent can advise you of up to date visa details & their costs applicable to you. We can also help you in obtaining one.

INSURANCE

You must have personal Travel Insurance to cover Adventure Travel and white water rafting as well as all the aspects described on p60 of the brochure. Please bring a copy of your policy with you to the pre-departure meeting. If your policy does not cover this minimum level then Encounter will not accept responsibility for the consequences.

MEDICAL & VACCINATIONS

All vaccination requirements and medical recommendations are detailed in the pre-departure information pack at the time of booking.

PERSONAL SPENDING MONEY

There is practically no need or use for money on the river other than a very occasional stop at a village tea house, or perhaps a cold beer at our take-out in Chatra. Otherwise to cover personal day to day expenditure-drinks, snacks, some small souvenirs in Kathmandu. Credit cards accepted by most hotels & well-established merchants in Kathmandu only. Other than the above, Encounter has no hidden expenses, funds or kitties to surprise your spending money.

ARRIVING AT START OF THE PROJECT

There will be a pre-departure meeting at our Kathmandu office at 18.00hrs the evening before Day 1. This meeting is also your latest arrival time. If you are arriving earlier there is plenty to see & do in the Kathmandu valley: shopping & city bazaars; palaces & museums; lively cafes, restaurants & bars; hill top Swayambhunath temple (20 mins bicycle), great Bodhnath Stupa (30 mins bicycle), nature reserve (45 mins bicycle), ancient city of Bhaktapur (30 mins bus, 1 hr bicycle), overnight at Nagarkot (45 mins bus)

- spectacular sunrise/sunset views across Himalayas. Simple bicycles may be hired at small cost from most Kathmandu hotels.

LEAVING AT END OF THE PROJECT

Arrangements end on after breakfast on day 10 at our Kathmandu hotel. You could make onward flight arrangements for this same evening. International flights are often overbooked, and late or un-reconfirmed check-ins will be denied boarding with little prospect of another flight out for several days.

COMBINATIONS & CONNECTING PROJECTS

Days 1-8 inclusive of the "Sun Kosi : River of Gold" can also be days 1-8 of the "Himalayan Challenge" project that continues on foot from Chatra up the Arun, trekking into the glaciers & Sherpa villages of the Everest region before flying from Lukla back to Kathmandu. You may therefore be travelling with some group members who are continuing further in Nepal, the maximum group size remains the same.

INTERESTING READING

The Wildest Dreams of Kew (Jeremy Bernstein), The Waiting Land (Dervla Murphy), Tiger for Breakfast (Michel Peissel). A full list of recommended reading in history, guidebooks and fiction is given in our pre-departure information.

OTHER COSTS/EXPENSES

Local Payment
Return international flights.....
Visas.....
Vaccinations.....
Insurance.....
Personal spending money.....

Total _____

The information in this dossier has been compiled with care and is provided in good faith. However, it is subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the client and Encounter Overland Ltd.