

Buzzing Shangu

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2009

Where the water is not so calm, but the camping is great – introductory kayaking takes you to the world of beautiful hills of Chittagong Hill Tracts.

All most at the end of Bandarban Hills - south-eastern part of Bangladesh, just nearly 90 km apart from district heart, a tranquil realm of beauty, strands of small hills, nearly deserted piece of land where birds, wildlife and tribal inhabitants thrive, and where, in early summer's cooler temperatures, you'd be crazy not to launch a kayak even for the first time!

In the month of March, during our independence day's vacation, just not hopping in typical tourist places, we have found a decorous river under the banner of lush green hills of Bandarban– the River Shangu (also known as Shankha).

Set out from Dhaka, the capital, you can easily reach most thinly populated place of the delta by bus or any other private transport. Nothing but one tiny inhabited hill town "Thanchi" commingle with a smorgasbord of river, drinks, green vegetables, fruits and the colorful tribal life. Paddle across south-east is fun, it's fairly uninhabited, pure smell of mud, sings of birds and even pit vipers can easily be seen; they're the place to embrace a quintessential tropical forest along with a beautiful river.

The point of kayaking in Shangu isn't to paddle over it, but to paddle into the whole area. Lot much to see and do. As the river originated from some where in Burma, which has higher elevation than Bangladesh, so paddling up towards the source of the river requires more energy and time, and also to walk many times as it shallow and not paddle-able with our soft shell inflatable kayaks. Hard rocky river bed, almost like white water, twist-n-turns, dead trees and every elements of nature makes the journey more enlightened and challenging.

We have stated from Thanchi, which is bordering Burma and India, due to that, some security tension works round the year. Though the place is seems so pleasant and calm. More over the 4WD drive from Bandarban town following "Chimbuk" gives some extra fruit to the juice! This is the highest motor able pass of this plain and it takes almost 5 hours.

After logging in our friend's home at Head Man Para of Thanchi, we have started dealing with our inflatable kayaks and have to consider another country boat as support to kickoff this new adventure in Bangladesh.

It was a huge attraction among the locals and tons of quires, how it works, don't you think it will sink and many others, even it was very early in the morning. We launched it near to the Head Man Para, some kilometer apart from Thnchi and keep going on with against the flow of Shangu.

First Pit stop was Thindo, we have heard about a place which is full of Rocks after few hours paddle from this area. We prepared our lunch under a banyan tree with our self-contained food though Thindo Bazar was there just to cross the river.

The place which we couldn't imagine to face in here. Full of rock boulders, tall trees, birds- all together makes it so enjoyable couldn't resist us to not to make a stop-over and swim. Shangu is not so vigorous

in this dry season, having gentle depth all through so we did some 'jump-off the cliff to cold water' to cherish our enjoyment and some red watery water melon under the sizzling sun!

More some hours, it was late afternoon, have touched the ground of Remakri, the place we wanted to be. Pitched our tent on a hill top ground to see the majestic blue of evening sky, greenery of the forest, darken river water in the low light and more over the fumes coming from distant huts makes the whole scenario more dramatic. Baked beans, green peas, soup, brown potato and pasta were in the menu for the moon lit feast with brewed local drinks!

For the very next morning, we went out of our tent so early not to miss the first light of misty morning, fixed our kayaks and started our journey back to Thanchi again. No sooner had we started, we were confused, the River Shangu is acting so mysterious, even now we are still paddling against the flow (on our way back)! That doubled our hurdle. Additionally hill storm caught us just in the middle of nowhere while we were boarded on our tiny kayaks. It becomes furious within a very short. And it was too hard to float our kayak in Shangu. So we decided to deflate it and pack to our support boat. To reach Thanchi we kept paddling on our support supporting boat. Because it was getting dark around and it is too risky to paddle in night. It was 8 pm, we felt like traveling the whole world within every short time span as we were so tired to paddle anymore!

After completing every successful trip we just wanted to say, like all time, whatever awaits, don't stuck on there...you think, you GO (up to your limit :D)

Location :

Remakri, Thanchi periphery, Bandarban (map of Thanchi will be added here)

Distance from Dhaka: 550km apx

Latitude: 22° 12' 0" N Longitude: 92° 13' 0" E

Access:

Restricted. Permission required for foreign nationals. Bangladeshi nationals have to report on Army/BDR camps to enlist their trip plan and names.

Trip type:

Outdoor camping, home stay, budget

Nearest town:

Thanchi, Bandarban Shadar

Transport:

Public | Daily buses from Dhaka (Important note: reservation must be done few days before the trip) and private

Road:

National highway from Dhaka to Bandarban. Bandarban to Thanchi District paved road

Need to know:

Malaria prone area

Time to go:

All the year, but rainy season is difficult for travel through river Shangu.

Special attraction:

Tribal culture, local drinks, nature and lifestyle