

Star Holiday

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Kayaking on Shangu

DURING the long awaited vacation of our Independence Day, we were dying to do some water sports in the Bandarban hills. Since long we have seen the mystic water of the river Shangu during every trekking we made to this area. So, we planned to start trip from Thanchi to Bandarban town.

But after reaching Thanchi we were forced to change our trip course. Our trusted guide and friend Angsui Marma explained the resent security situation. According to him, before and after Ruma Bazar there are a few places which can be dangerous for our first ever kayaking in Bangladesh.

After his suggestion we



decided to follow the opposite route from Thanchi to Remakri (Yongrai). This route was short and it would take a day to paddle up and another day to return.

On a bright sunny morning, we kicked off kayaking from Thanchi. It is a common route for Modok Mohal-- the farthest south-eastern part of Bangladesh bordering with Burma and India. Remakri can also be reached by trekking.

We spent the first night

the bank watching us curiously. Some were laughing after seeing the shape of our Kayak as it was quite uncommon. They were concerned about our safety and thought it would be a fatal journey as the route is not so smooth for this kind of soft-shelled boat. There were actually many rough alluvial stones, dead trees, and other objects in the river, which could damage the boat and make it flat. So we had to be very careful if not for our boats

Kewkradong Bangladesh-- an adventure-based youth community that seeks adventure in every way, but this time it was more than adventure for us as paddling was new to us. We had some practice of paddling boats for a short period of time but such a long duration was completely something new. Only two of our six-member team had proper knowledge of paddling. But after some time we got used to this new adventure.

which we had never experienced before. It was amazing! It was very interesting to find that people have given names to these rocks. Some names were funny, for example, Raja Pathar (King stone), Bara Pathar (Big stone).

Water was calm but it was difficult to maneuver. Sometimes those boulders were so close to each other that we had to cross them very carefully. It took a few hours to cross the rocky region. Finally, we reached Remakri Bazar. Local people helped us bring our luggage and kayaks to the Bazar area. Everyone of the bazaar was curious about us. We were asked to report our names to the adjacent BDR camp. Actually we did it at Thanchi Bazar too.

The local BDR personnel suggested us not to camp anywhere other than the free lawn in front of the Ramkri Bazar rest house. We pitched our tents and fixed our stove to cook dinner. We brought canned foods like roasted beans, sausage, potato and macaroni, and that actually saved our time. A clear moonlit night was a bonus on such a trip.

Next morning we inflated our boats again and started paddling back to Thanchi. We thought going downstream would be easier. Later, we found that the stream was not going down always. At some places we had to paddle against it. It was quite tiring for us and talking longer than we had expected. We paddled throughout the day. In the afternoon, the sky turned dark, showing an ominous sign of a storm. We paddled faster to reach Thanchi before the storm could hit us in the middle

of the river. But we could not avoid it. Rain struck us and we had to stop and deflate our boats and dump them on our support boat. After a couple of hours in the storm, we reached Thanchi Bazar when it was already dark. Our friend Angsui Marma already left for home as he thought we won't be coming to Thanchi, but when we knocked at his door he was excited to see us back again.

He arranged delicious food even though it was very late. Next morning

we would be leaving Thanchi for Bandarban, then to Dhaka.

We waved our friend from the window of our bus and promised him to get back to Thanchi again for even a bigger trip. He smiled and waved at us. We knew he meant 'welcome', not a 'good bye'!

Story: MUNTASIR MAMUN IMRAN

Photo: SAAD BIN HOSSAIN, SALMAN SAEED

For more info: www.kewkradong.com



at our friend's place in Headman Para, a location close to Thanchi Bazar. We woke up very early in the morning and inflated our two kayaks for the final go. We had to hire another country boat as a rescue and support team. Even at this early morning hour we saw some people near

but for ourselves.

River Shangu has always been a beauty but it is getting polluted especially near the human settlements like Ruma and Thanchi Bazar. Despite that it is most probably the cleanliest flowing water body of Bangladesh.

We were from

On our first day, we stopped at Thidu around noon. We cooked our lunch there. Tonmoy found a Banyan tree where we could take rest under its shade and then started again. After some time we suddenly found ourselves in a rock garden! It was rocky all around

