

Earthbound Expeditions

# Kali Gandaki River Rafting

3 days, from US$247 per person

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|---|---|---|
| Duration<br>**3 days** | Grade<br>**Class III to IV** | Altitude<br>**1,070 m** |
| Start and end<br>**Pokhara** | On the water<br>**4 to 5 hours a day** | Best season<br>**Mar to Apr, Oct to Nov** |
| Accommodation<br>**Beach camping** | Meals<br>**All meals** | Group size<br>**Up to 8** |

# Kali Gandaki River Rafting Overview

Raft the sacred Kali Gandaki through the world's deepest gorge, with large rapids, riverside camps and stops at remote villages.

### Tour overview

This is a three-day rafting trip on the river that drains the deepest gorge on earth. You put in near Nayapul below the Annapurnas and paddle south through a steep, forested canyon, with Class III and IV rapids on the first two days. You camp on white sand beaches, with a campfire in the evenings. It offers the best whitewater in Nepal on a trip of less than a week.

### The sacred river

The Kali Gandaki is holy to Hindus. It is where saligram are found: black ammonite fossils, worshipped as a form of Vishnu, washed out of marine rock that was lifted five kilometres by the collision that formed the Himalaya. You will see shrines above the water and pilgrims at the confluences, and your guides treat these sites with respect.

### Who this trip is for

Anyone who can swim and is prepared to fall out of the raft. You do not need rafting experience, because you paddle under instruction while the guide steers. You do need to be comfortable in moving water: on Class IV rapids you are very likely to end up in the river at some point, and the safety kayaker will pick you up. The trip is not suitable for non-swimmers or small children.

## Key highlights of the Kali Gandaki River Rafting

- Class III to IV whitewater rapids
- Camping on white-sand beaches
- The world's deepest river gorge
- Remote villages & temples en route

## Itinerary

| Day | Route | Hours | Distance | Altitude |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Drive to Maldhunga, put in, raft to below Modi Beni | 4–5 hrs on the water | 2 hrs driving | 1,070 m |
| 2 | Modi Beni to Purti Ghat | 5 hrs on the water | - | 700 m |
| 3 | Purti Ghat to Mirmi, then Pokhara | 3 hrs on the water | - | 500 m |

Day 1

### Drive from Pokhara to Maldhunga and start rafting

An early drive of three to three and a half hours from Pokhara, past Kusma, to the put-in at Maldhunga on the Kali Gandaki. After a safety briefing the afternoon runs Class III rapids down a narrowing valley, past the confluence with the Modi Khola at Modi Beni, to a beach camp just below it.

Altitude: 620 m  On foot: None, 3 hr drive, then rafting  Night: Tented camp, Modi Beni  Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 2

### Raft from Modi Beni to Purti Ghat

This is the longest day on the river. You run Class III and IV rapids through a deepening gorge, past Brahmin and Magar villages, riverside temples and waterfalls running down the rock, to a remote beach camp near Purti Ghat.

Altitude: 450 m  On foot: None, rafting day  Night: Tented camp, Purti Ghat  Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 3

### Raft from Purti Ghat to Mirmi and drive to Pokhara

A shorter morning on easier water as the gorge opens out, to the take-out at Mirmi, above the Kali Gandaki dam. After lunch by the river, you drive back to Pokhara through farmland and Gurung villages.

Altitude: 820 m  On foot: None, rafting, then drive  Night: Hotel, Pokhara  Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## What's included

- Airport transfers & ground transport
- Licensed English-speaking guide
- Accommodation throughout the trip
- All permits & national park fees
- Meals as per the itinerary

### Not included

- International flights
- Travel & rescue insurance
- Personal trekking gear
- Tips & personal expenses
- Nepal entry visa (on arrival)

## Permits and other costs

| Permit | Fee | Issued by |
|---|---|---|
| River permit. Rafting operators are licensed by the Department of Tourism. The permit is held by the operator, not by you. | Inside the trip price | Arranged by the operator |

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|---|---|---|
| Travel insurance. Check that your policy covers whitewater rafting to Class IV by name. Many standard policies exclude it, and this is the trip in our programme where that exclusion is most likely to matter. | Your own | - |

| Other cost | Amount | Note |
|---|---|---|
| Raft, guide and safety kayaker | $110–160 a head | The core of the trip, and where lower-priced quotes usually cut costs |
| Tourist bus, Pokhara and back | $20–35 | Included. A private jeep is extra |
| Camping, two nights | $40–60 | Tents, mats, and a kitchen carried on the raft |
| All meals and a campfire | $35–50 | Cooked on the beach |
| Helmet, jacket, paddle, dry bag | Included | Check that the helmet fits before you board the bus |
| Tips, guides and kitchen crew | $25–40 | Per person, at the take-out |

## Packing list

**Packing for the river**

We provide a helmet, a life jacket, a paddle and a dry bag. The contents of the dry bag are all you have for three days, so limit them to one change of clothes for camp, something warm for the evening and your wash kit. Leave everything else at your hotel in Pokhara. Do not bring anything on the raft that you cannot afford to lose to the river, including good sunglasses without a strap.

### On your head

- Sunglasses with a strap
- Water-resistant sunscreen, SPF 50, and lip balm
- A sun hat for camp. You wear a helmet on the river

### On the river

- Swimwear or quick-drying shorts
- A rash vest or synthetic long-sleeved top, no cotton
- A light fleece or thermal top for cool mornings in March and November
- A spray jacket if you have one

### On your feet

- River sandals with a heel strap, or old trainers you do not mind getting wet. Flip-flops come off in rapids
- Dry shoes or sandals for camp

### At camp

- A dry change of clothes and something warm for the evening
- A light sleeping bag or liner. Ask us if you need one
- A headtorch
- A small towel that dries quickly

### Health

- Any medicine you take routinely, in a waterproof bag
- Plasters and antiseptic cream for small cuts
- Insect repellent for the evenings
- Biodegradable soap

### Water

- A refillable bottle you can clip to the raft
- Purification tablets as a backup

### Camera

- A waterproof camera, or a phone in a waterproof pouch, on a lanyard
- A power bank. There are no charging facilities

### Papers and money

- A photocopy of your passport. Leave the original at your hotel in Pokhara
- Travel insurance details, naming whitewater rafting
- A little cash for drinks and tips, in the dry bag

## Accommodation

| Where | Nights | Type | Room | Bathroom |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Beach camp below Modi Beni | 1 | Tent on a riverside beach | Two-person tent, shared, with a foam mat | None. A toilet tent at camp, and the river to wash in |
| Beach camp at Purti Ghat | 1 | Tent on a riverside beach | Two-person tent, shared, with a foam mat | None. A toilet tent at camp, and the river to wash in |

**Tents**
Two people to a tent, with a foam mat each. The crew sets up the tents while you swim.

**Toilet**
A toilet tent at each camp, set back from the water. Nothing is left on the beach when we go.

**Washing**
In the river, with biodegradable soap. There is no shower until you are back in Pokhara.

**Charging**
No charging facilities. Bring a power bank and keep your phone in the dry bag.

**Phone signal**
Patchy in the gorge and often unavailable at camp. Let people know you will be out of contact for two days.

**Water**
Boiled or filtered water from the kitchen for refilling your bottle. Do not drink river water.

**Campfire**
Most evenings, with driftwood from the beach.

**Safety kit**
Helmet, life jacket, paddle and dry bag provided, with a first aid kit and a safety kayaker on every trip.

## Meals

| Meal | Time | What it is like |
|---|---|---|
| Breakfast | 7:00 to 7:30 | Porridge, eggs, toast, pancakes, fruit, tea or coffee, cooked at camp |
| Lunch | 12:00 to 13:00 | On a beach: bread, salad, tinned fish, cheese, vegetables, fruit and biscuits |
| Tea | On arrival at camp | Tea, coffee, biscuits and popcorn while the tents are set up |
| Dinner | 19:00 to 20:00 | Soup to start, then dal bhat, pasta or curry, and a pudding, cooked over the stove at camp |

| Diet | How we manage it |
|---|---|
| Vegetarian | Straightforward. Most of the food the crew cooks is already vegetarian. |
| Vegan | Manageable with notice. The food is bought in Pokhara before we leave, so tell us when you book. |
| Gluten free | Rice, dal, potatoes, eggs and vegetables are safe. Tell us in advance so we pack enough of them. |
| Allergies | Tell us at booking. Once on the river we are several hours from a hospital, so bring any medication you need, including an adrenaline pen if prescribed. |

## A typical day

| Time | What happens |
|---|---|
| 6:30 | Tea served at your tent |
| 7:00 | Breakfast on the beach |
| 8:00 | Pack your dry bag and take down the tent while the crew loads the rafts |
| 8:30 | Safety briefing, then on the water |
| 12:00 | One-hour lunch stop on a beach |
| 13:00 | Two to three more hours on the river |
| 15:30 | Arrive at camp for tea, with time for a swim if you wish |
| 19:00 | Dinner, and a campfire if there is driftwood |

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| 21:00 | Bedtime. It is dark by seven, and most people are tired after the day |

## Difficulty and preparation

**Difficulty 3 of 5**

Physically moderate, but demanding on the water. You need to be able to swim and be willing to end up in the river.

- Three to five hours of paddling a day, under instruction from the guide, who steers.
- Class III and IV rapids on the first two days. Most people fall in at least once, and the safety kayaker picks you up.
- No rafting experience is needed, but you must be a confident swimmer.
- Two nights camping on beaches, with a toilet tent and the river to wash in.
- About three to three and a half hours by road from Pokhara to the put-in at Maldhunga, and a similar drive back.

### Getting ready

**8 weeks before: Swimming**

Swim twice a week in a pool. Aim to swim 200 m without stopping and to float calmly on your back. Being relaxed in the water matters more than speed, because a swim in a Class IV rapid is short and disorientating.

**6 weeks before: Arms, shoulders and core**

Add two short strength sessions a week, such as rows, planks and rotation exercises. Paddling uses your back and core more than your arms, and three to five hours of it is tiring if you have not done it before.

**4 weeks before: Time on the water**

If you can, spend an afternoon in a kayak or canoe, or on a short guided raft trip nearer home. This is useful but not essential. The guide teaches the paddle commands at the put-in.

**2 weeks before: Check your insurance**

This is not training, but it is more important than any of the above. Make sure your policy names whitewater rafting to Class IV. Many standard policies exclude it.

## Weather by month

Typical conditions on this route in each month, including the months we do not run this trip.

| Month | Daytime on the river | Night at camp | The water | Conditions | Note |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| January | 22°C | 9°C | 12°C | Hard | Low, clear and cold water, with chilly nights at camp. The river can be run, but you need a warm layer on the water. |
| February | 24°C | 10°C | 12°C | Hard | The water is still low and cold. It is warm in the sun and cool once the sun has gone. |

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| March | 29°C | 14°C | 13°C | Good | Warm days and lower water. The rapids are one grade easier than in autumn. |
| April | 32°C | 18°C | 15°C | Good | Hot and clear, and the water is a comfortable temperature for swimming. There is some haze in the valley. |
| May | 33°C | 21°C | 16°C | Good | Hot. The river starts to rise with snowmelt late in the month. |
| June | 32°C | 23°C | 16°C | We do not run it | The monsoon arrives and the river rises quickly. We do not run the river. |
| July | 31°C | 23°C | 17°C | We do not run it | Monsoon floods. The water is brown and carries fallen trees. We do not run the river. |
| August | 31°C | 23°C | 17°C | We do not run it | Conditions are as in July. We do not run the river. |
| September | 30°C | 22°C | 17°C | Hard | The water is still high after the monsoon. We run trips late in the month only if the river level has dropped. |
| October | 29°C | 18°C | 16°C | Best | The most popular month. High, clear water, the rapids at their best, and settled weather. |
| November | 26°C | 13°C | 14°C | Best | The water level drops through the month. Clear skies and cool nights on the beach. |
| December | 23°C | 10°C | 12°C | Good | Lower and colder water, and quiet beaches. Bring a warm layer for the evenings at camp. |

Approximate air temperatures from Department of Hydrology and Meteorology records for the Pokhara and Kusma area. Water temperatures are rough guides; the river is snow-fed and runs colder after rain in the hills.

## Booking and payment

### How to book

Email us or send a message on WhatsApp, and tell us roughly when you would like to travel. You will receive a personal reply from someone who has been on this trip. Nothing is payable at this stage, and there is no obligation until you pay a deposit.

### Deposit

A deposit of 30 per cent holds your dates, and the balance is paid when you arrive in Kathmandu, in cash or by card. At the same time, we ask for a copy of your passport, your insurance certificate and any dietary or medical information.

### Payment

You can pay by bank transfer, or by card through a secure link. Card payments carry the bank's fee of about 4 per cent, which we show you before you pay. The balance in Kathmandu can be paid in US dollars, pounds, euros or Nepali rupees.

### Cancellation

If you cancel more than 30 days before departure, the deposit can be transferred to any other date or trip we run, with no time limit. Within 30 days of departure the deposit is retained, because the permits, flights and crew are booked by then. If we cancel for any reason other than weather, you receive a full refund.

### Private and group departures

Both cost the same for a party of five or more. A private departure runs on your dates at your pace and can be arranged for one person. A group departure runs on the dates in the table above. Most travellers book privately, at no extra cost.

### Late bookings

We need at least five days' notice, or two weeks in late October. No permit is required, so the only constraint is filling a raft, since a raft of four costs less per person than a raft of two.

## Frequently asked questions

Answers to the 6 questions travellers ask us most often. If your question is not here, contact us and we will answer it.

#### How hard is this trip?

We grade it Class III to IV. Rest days are built in to help you adjust, and a good level of everyday fitness is enough to enjoy it. Tell us about your experience when you enquire and we will give you an honest assessment of whether the trip suits you.

#### When is the best time to go?

The best time to go is autumn and spring (September to December, and March to May), when the weather is most settled and the views are clearest. We also run the trip outside these months on request. Ask us and we will tell you what to expect.

#### How big are the groups?

Groups are small. Many of our trips run for just one or two people, and we keep group sizes low so that the pace suits you and your guide has time for everyone. You can also book the whole trip privately.

#### What do I need to pay to book?

A 30% deposit, about $74 on this trip, holds your place, and the balance is due before you travel. You can change your dates free of charge up to 60 days before departure.

#### Do I need permits, and are they included?

Yes. We arrange all national park fees and trekking permits for this route, and they are included in the price. You need a valid passport and a Nepal entry visa, which you can obtain on arrival.

#### Can you tailor the itinerary?

Every itinerary can be adjusted to suit your dates, your pace and the time you have. If you would like extra rest days, a different start, or to add another region, tell us and we will plan the trip around you.

Photos, videos and reviews of this trip: earthbound.rajansimkhada.com/kali-gandaki-river-rafting-3-days