

River notes for the Upper Ganga and Tons drainages - N. India

This area has a great range of rivers for a class 3/4 paddler who has done a few Alps trips and is wanting to paddling in a slightly more exotic location. We travelled by bus as it was cheaper than jeep but we had the time. You could tick off lots of these runs during a two week holiday flying into Deli and hiring a jeep and driver for the duration.

This was written after a trip from end of May start of June 2015 where levels are quite low so grades and descriptions will be quite different to other times of the year. A reasonable map of Uttarakhand can be bought from most descent book shops or street sellers (see picture) in local towns.

Getting to Rishikesh

From Nepal

Get bus to Mehendrannagar (sometimes called Bhimdatta) then horse and cart across boarder for 500 INR to Bus Park (which is a road). We caught a direct night bus from here straight to Rishikesh at 1930h. Alternatively get a bus via Haridwar (see map) or a jeep for around 8000 IRP. Outside Rishikesh bus station a motorised rickshaw will take you to Laxman Jhula (hub of rafting) for 200-300 IRP.

From Deli

We didn't take this route but regular busses run from Deli to Rishikesh alternatively a jeep will probably cost around 7000ish IRP.

In Laxman Jhula

Accommodation – Lonely planet has loads of options. We stayed west if the river for ease at Hotel Classic which was quite nice and kayak friendly next to the very helpful 'Wet and Wild' raft company.

Food – Lots of awesome places to get cheap grub. Try the thali set down past the Wet and Wild office at the first corner on the left.

Paddling – Pop in and chat to Dinesh or Chotal from Wet and Wild, they will give you some good river info and invite you on a raft run to warm up if there is one going.

Yoga – We didn't, but when in Rome...

The Rivers

River Name - Ganga

Get on – Marine Drive

Get off – Laxman Jhula, river right after the bridge

River Length – 20km

Grade – 3 (4-)

Chat – One of the raft runs that the 300 or so raft companies in the area offer. There are 4 different get ons depending on duration of trip. You can probably jump on a raft shuttle, alternatively a jeep will cost around 2000 IRP. Nice and fun play run with possibly one harder (4-) rapid. This would be great in playboats if you can hire them.





River Name - Bhagairathi

Get on – Koteswar Dam

Get off – Devaprayag, river left after the confluence.

River Length – 30km

Grade – 3 (4)

Chat – This section is also rafted but we hired a jeep (7000 IRP) and combined it with heading up to [Shalabh Gahlaut](#) (India's best kayaker?) place. Again this is a run packed with playwaves so playboats would be great. This beautiful section ends at the start of the Ganga river which is also quite cool.

River Name - Alaknanda

Get on – Chamoli

Get off – Shivanandi River Lodge

River Length – 50km

Grade – 3/4+

Chat – You can get a bus to Chamoli from Karanprayag without too much hassle. We paddled it in two sections so I will describe it as such. You could do it in a one or take two days over it and spend the night in Karanprayag.

Chamoli to Karanprayag – Big volume 3/4+ down to Nandprayag then eases to 3 (4). A lovely glacial grey, read and run river with a couple of photogenic set pieces that would be worth getting out to have a look at.

Karanprayag to Shivanandi River Lodge – Big volume grade 3+ with one 4 easily seen from the road on the drive up. Great section with plenty of rapids to keep you on your toes. Busses run regularly up the road to get a shuttle.

It is possible to get on 9km higher up at Bhari giving more 3/4+ whitewater and get off lower down but we didn't. Shalabh Gahlaut has some info on these sections [here](#) as well.

Kayak Dreams India paddled the Upper Alaknander with info [here](#).



River Name - Pindar

Get on – Dewal

Get off – Karanprayag

River Length – 60km

Grade – 3/4

Chat – It may be possible to get a bus from Karanprayag to Dewal but we hired a jeep for 2500 IRP. The river is a super nice bouldery run through a stunning gorge. You could take your time and spend two days on the river stopping at a village half way down. Chilled out start 2/3 to Tharli, then 3/4 to Karanprayag.

This river has been paddled from higher up including Darren Clarkson-King who got on 1km from the glacier and describes it as harder than the Aran Gorge in Nepal.

Shalabh Gahlaut has some info on these sections [here](#) as well.



River Name - Mandakini

Get on – Rampur

Get off – Rudraprayag

River Length – 70km

Grade – 4 (5)

Chat – This low to medium volume river cuts through a stunning valley. There is a landslide early on that we had to portage. After that, lots of steep read and run 4+ creaking is to be had with a couple of harder drops to hop out have a look at. There is a dam under construction where the road crosses the river which we could still sneak through. Between Syalsaur to Thavali is quite flat with a few class 4s then it picks up again to super fun 3/4 down to Rudraprayag.

Shalabh Gahlaut has some good info [on his website](#).



Also check out –

The Nandakini – We didn't paddle this as it was too low but it gets good reviews if it has enough water in. Here is a link to the [1st descent 2014?](#) They paddled from "Sutol to Siteli. Volume- low, Class- IV-IV+, Distance- 10 km."

The Yamuna – Again we didn't paddle this but it is apparently good above Yamuna Bridge.

Upper Bhagirathi – Apparently worth a look above the big reservoir.

Tons drainage

River Name - Tons

Get on – Netwar

Get off – R. left at gravelly beach 3km along reservoir (15km below Kuanu)

River Length – 120km

Grade – 3/4(5)

Chat – It is possible to get a bus from Dehradun to Mori from outside the train station at 0900h then we then got a jeep up to Netwar for 500 IRP. We put on at the confluence of the Supin and Rupin both of which are paddleable with forestry permits. From Netwar to Mori the crystal blue river drops through stunning pine forests at class 3/4 (5). The river then relents to an easier 3(4) until it ramps up again just after Hanol down to Tiuni. We passed many raft camps on this beautiful section.



The Tons from Tiuni down to the reservoir gently eases from 3/4 to 2/3 with one 4+ sting in its tail. The section travels through stunning gorges and feels really remote as the road leads up and away from the river for the final section. The end is near when you reach the reservoir, where a 2-3km flat paddle leads you to the get out at a gravel beach on the left where the road re-joins the riverside. There is a handy food shack here and we caught a bus at 3pm from here back to Dehradun. We opted to not take multiday kit and stay in Tiuni which worked well. If you are short on time you can avoid the flatter end by getting out where a road crosses from r right to left at Minus.

Also check out-

Rupin and Supin – Both need forestry permits

This is by no means an exhaustive list of rivers in the area, there are plenty, more qualified people out there to write river notes. These notes are written with regard to the river levels we experienced at the end of June 2015. Water levels and grade will vary significantly at other times of the year.

Enjoy your trip and I am happy to answer any questions you have about paddling in the area via Facebook.

Jonny Hawkins

June 2015