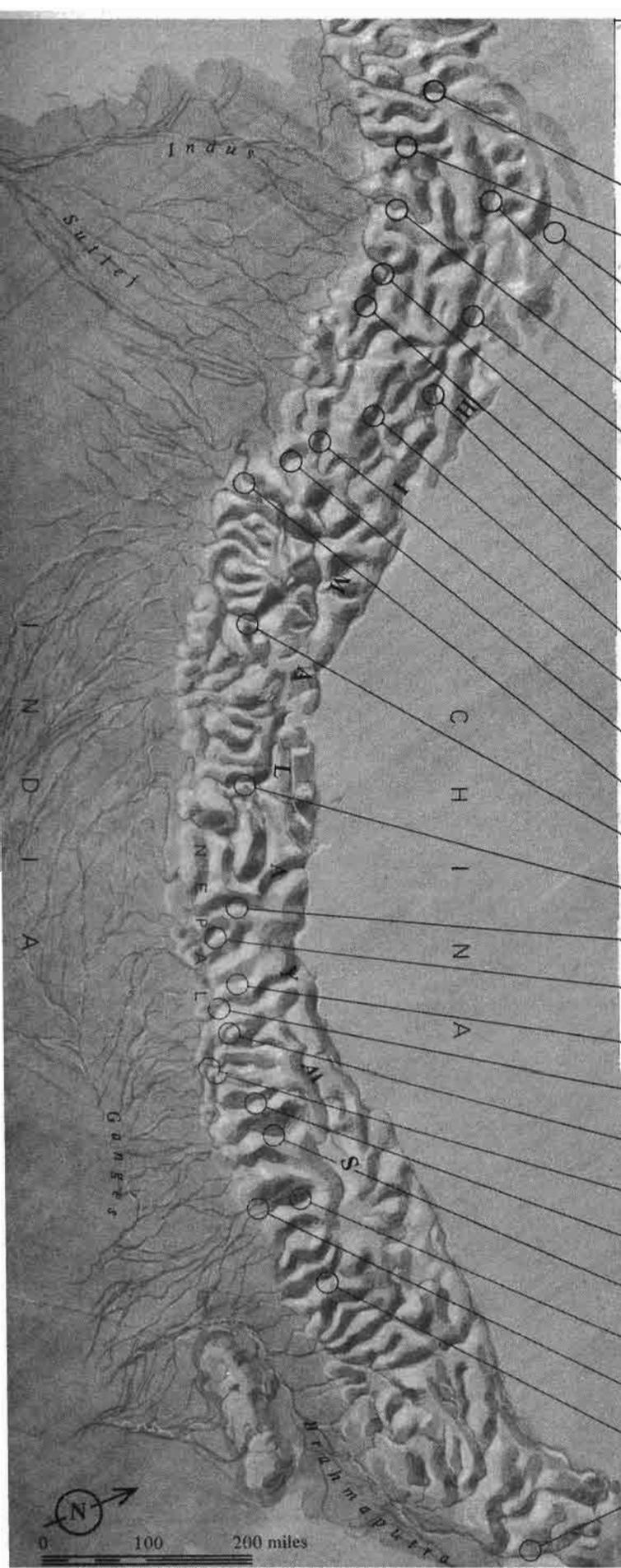


Below is a list of valleys I am familiar with, with notes. From west to east.



1. Chitmal — \$10 plane ride, jeeps, populated, easy food/lodging, opium, pagan, no in winter
2. Swat — bus, very populated, easy food, archeology center, woodworking, hot in summer
3. Gilgit — \$18 plane, jeeps in summer, boomtown, easy food/lodging, Muslims, polo
4. Hunza — jeeps, easy food, famous apricots and old people, restricted areas
5. Kangan — bus, populated, seasonal nomads, food, Muslims
6. Skardu — \$15 plane, jeeps, porters, mountaineering center near K2, desolate countryside
7. Srinagar — bus, capital city of Kashmir, o.k. year-round, houseboats, handicrafts
8. Kashmir — bus, ponies, walk, footpaths, DAK rest-houses, spring wildflowers, gardens
9. Ladakh — bus, jeeps, trekking, summer only, easy food, monasteries, Tibetans
10. Zaskar — jeep, ponies, bring food, moonscape, Tibetan/Muslim, no connection with Kulu
11. Lahul-Spiti — bus, summer only, o.k. food, Tibetan monasteries, no permit to Leh
12. Kulu-Mauuli — bus, year-round, easy food, trekking, hash, orchards, pagan festivals
13. Simla — bus, very populated, developed, British summer capital, restricted areas
14. Garhwal — bus, trek, many holy sites, source of Ganges, Hindu festivals, food, restricted
15. Karhali — ponies, walk, forest wilderness, animal life, winter good, bring food
16. Kali-Gandaki — ponies, walk, most popular trek, ecological variety, fancy food
17. Pokhara — bus, plane, trekking, superb food and housing, hippie resort
18. Mahang — trekking, recently opened, high pass, requires food
19. Gorkha — short walk from road, easy food, old Nepal capital, easy trek, winter good
20. Langtang — walk, easy food, cheese factory, Sherpa-Tibetans, pass closed in winter
21. Katmandu — bus, plane, year-round, medieval metropolis, easy food, bazaars, equipment
22. Solu-Khumbu — \$35 plane, classic trek, expeditions, Sherpas, Mount Everest, easy food
23. Arun — \$15 plane, walk, easy food, ecological variety, restricted in north
24. Sikkim — \$15 jeep, bus, walk, need complicated permit, Buddhists, Mount Kanchenjunga
25. Darjeeling — small train, bus, populated, good short treks, tea plantations, Tibetans
26. Bhutan — jeep, ponies, visa expensive, treks not encouraged, traditional Buddhists, jungle
27. Arunachal Pradesh — off limits



The first lesson in mountain travel is that you go like a river, with the grain of the land, along valleys, where you find food, shelter and character. The passes are gates, and the peaks beckon on.

Sunrise at Periche Sherpa settlement in Everest National Park, Nepal



# LOW-RENT HIMALAYAS

*Text and Photographs  
by Kevin Kelly*

**T**HIS STUPENDOUS MOUNTAIN SYSTEM, from Afghanistan's Hindu Kush to the edge of Burma, is more accessible to low-key individual exploration than most lesser ranges.

These mountains ooze lessons and education that justify as a pilgrim's goal. A matrix of native settlements enables one to come into the presence of the hills without a tent, without carrying food, without kitchen gear, without the bondage of equipment that would normally hinder entry. But the support of the local culture also eases a reach into the remoter ranges, so if you need to scale peaks, things are often simplified for those with a casual approach. The message is this: for the price of an airline ticket and little else, a flexible person, couple, or (if you're crazy) group can be roaming toward Everest or a neglected alpine flower meadow. I offer guidance through local bureaucratic paper mazes and how to avoid them if possible, tips on what areas are suited for strolling, which high-altitude regions are open to cheap investigation, where to borrow equipment there, the availability of food, and sources of information — biological guides, geological histories, cultural readings, and guides to the trails and mountains, along with maps, some easy to find, some not.

*From New Jersey, Kevin Kelly's meticulous, bold, cheap traveling has led to the "Traveling in Asia" survey in The Next Whole Earth Catalog (p. 400) and "Bicycle Haiku — Ride across America" in the Winter 1980 CQ.*  
—SB

Once, I squatted on a high windy Himalayan pass, picked on the ground and filled my coat pockets with deep ocean fossils, large ancient spirals of ammonites that littered the ridge. Something big and mysterious has been happening.

Big and mysterious, these heaps and humps of rock attract pilgrims either by the gravity of their huge masses, or by the electricity of human lives. The Himalayas are unique as mountains because a circuit of valley cultures enables one to step lightly in these hills without a ball and chain of baggage. For the most part the Himals are accessible in sneakers. I've used them up to 18,000 feet and have gone months with a sleeping bag and map alone, gliding along footpaths that connect one mountain village inn to another. That's traveling as any native Himalayan would.

There are small cities in the Himalayas, tucked into valleys, crowded with people. NO Sierra wilderness here. Roads thread to meet the towns, so it's easy to begin by coming in on wheels, then going on foot to villages beyond. Where people are, there's food; where people aren't, you've got to bring your own, but that's nearing the edge of low-rent access. It's hard to say exactly, yet an enormous area of the Himalayan range is within a day's walk of someone's house, and perhaps a meal.

### FOOD

Near Mount Everest so many expeditions have unloaded leftover supplies to villagers (cheaper than portering it back down) that the zaniest goods can be purchased in lone shepherds' huts at 16,000 feet. The Koreans had just been up before me, so I was offered hot peppered eels in cans. Last year it was Swiss freeze-dried peaches, in pouches. Strange, but welcomed, manna.

Outside of this unusual area and throughout the central Himals, meals are dished in a customary way. For about 25 cents you get all the rice, boiled lentils and dollops of greens you can eat in one sitting. Mountain porters, who do beastlike work, will nonchalantly gobble up mounds of this grub for their 25 cents' worth, making whatever little piles you wolf down seem dainty. Tea with meals is dangerously sweet and costs three cents extra. In the north expect lots of potatoes instead of lots of rice. A meal in Ladakh or northern Pakistan, where barley meal and unleavened bread are staples, will go for 50 cents. The only hints of variety are eggs and milk, occasional glimpses of yak or goat meat, and pieces of fruit. After a month, grumbling starts about food boredom and nutrition, but this is what those little barefoot men who carry 70 pounds up rocky slopes eat. Studies have shown this diet to be sufficient for a healthy visitor. For excite-

ment, and for stoking up for mean hills, we bring treats, fanatically rationed. If you need or want to bring food, the best way is to buy staples from the last village or bazaar to support you until the next one. Kerosene for fueling cookstoves is available in the boondocks. Recently dehydrated foods made locally are selling in Katmandu (Trekking Foods, G.P.O. Box 304, Katmandu, Nepal). Ordinarily we bring no other supplies save a bag of treats and a day's worth of emergency meals.



### SHELTER

For buying a meal you get to sleep free in your own sleeping bag wherever there is room — on a floor, a loft, or the porch outside. On popular paths there is a 30-cent charge for a string bed. In high altitudes look for empty shepherd huts. Once free, Tibetan monasteries are now 50 cents. Accommodations around Pokhara and the houseboats of Dal Lake, Kashmir, are classed "hippy-deluxe," relatively extravagant. Long-term leases are often made there. On the move in the hills, time your journey to arrive at a village with a shop or inn by evening, buy a meal, sleep wherever they put you, and head off in the morning. Second best, ask at any prosperous-looking farmhouse for lodging and a meal.

### WHEELS

Cruise into the mountains on a local bus. For a couple of dollars, you're there. Your luggage goes on top, so don't leave valuables within easy reach of a sly hand. If you stop over, the cheapest inns are found around the bus station. Keep in mind trucks hauling freight in the hills, often more frequent than buses. For two-thirds the bus fare

you sit in the cab (grand view, horribly bumpy). For half-fare you float over the cargo in back.

Jeeps begin where the paved road ends and continue way beyond where a sensible person would halt them. No one drives them unless they are imaginatively overloaded with rice bags and pajama-clad passengers. Rates are fixed by the price of petrol, about half again the cost of the same distance in a bus. If I wanted to get someplace very different, real quick, I'd look for a jeep.

**Millers waiting for wheat to be milled, Kulu Valley, India**

### PLANES

Himalayan planes are a great deal. Apparently locals think so too, as they are heavily booked. Not chartered planes, but scheduled runs of small craft to remote airstrips. Sample fares:

Katmandu to Jomson — \$20  
Rawalpindi to Chitral — \$10  
Rawalpindi to Gilgit — \$18

They can save you weeks of walking and the money spent on the way. Due to unpredictable mountain weather, reservations are a lie. To fly in and commence walking is dangerous because of altitude sickness. How much sweeter to fly out after a long march to a far corner by climbing aboard a STOL craft, rising above the tiny clearing and zooming over passes you so quietly just crossed. I'd ride these planes for the view even if I had no business going there.

### WALKING

Walking is the swiftest way to see it all.

**Monks from Tiske Monastery  
at 11,000 feet in Ladakh. Called  
"Little Tibet," it's now a part  
of India**

A walker who sweats up and over a ridge will win respect from mountain folk for sharing the same toil they must. Use the familiar art of backpacking as elsewhere, except no more than a handful of items are needed: needle and thread, pocketknife, a bit of soap, plastic bags, and medicines. In a dark land without electricity, candles are the most economical light. One candle should last three days. Also bring a small plastic flashlight. Candles and spare batteries are available in bazaars.

Up high in the snow you must have eye protection just to discern your way. When I need them I make Eskimo-style slit goggles out of cardboard, though sufficiently opaque sunglasses will work, too. The only essential possessions are a sleeping bag and warm coat. One way to travel light, yet high, is to trek around simply and then rent the fancy gear for peak assaults. Tents, down garments, stoves, ice crampons, and other equipment are for rent in Darjeeling, Katmandu, Srinagar, Pokhara, and Namche Bazaar.

#### PORTERS

Porters are not eager to do the work of beasts, but they are desperate. Unless you enjoy dealing with desperate men, I say have nothing to do with porters. Situations may arise when you need one. Agree unambiguously beforehand: 1) how far the porter is to go; 2) how many days (how fast) he is to travel; 3) whether he needs to return (you're obliged to pay one-half return wages); and 4) how much he is to be paid. The current rate is about \$2.50-\$3 per day, with a load of 70 pounds. Be ridiculously clear about the agreement. Arrange so that porters secure their own food, or you will soon need additional porters to carry porters' food, ad infinitum. They can be hired in towns with the help of trekking agencies, restaurant owners, hotel managers, or hired on the spot.

#### BEASTS OF BURDEN

Pack animals carry more, complain less. Unless you buy an animal outright, the owner comes along. Naturally he prefers to lead his animals along routes of known provisions, so fierce negotiation is required to get him to go where you need his animals the most — places without provisions. Fifteen dollars per day is not uncommon. They make the best sense with two or more travelers. When loading, balance is more critical than weight. Retain fragiles and valuables with you — stuff is forever slipping off cliffs.



#### GUIDANCE

Guides cost about \$5 per day. They do not carry loads — they only guide and translate. Instead, use the cost of a guide for two days to purchase this book:

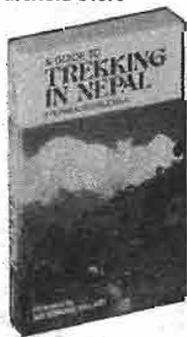
#### **A Guide to Trekking in Nepal**

by Stephen Bezruczka  
1972, 1981; 256 pp.  
4th Edition

**\$8.95** postpaid from:

The Mountaineers  
719 Pike Street  
Seattle, WA 98101

or Whole Earth  
Household Store



For as long as you wish, Bezruczka will

guide you with a steady hand, accurate details, and clear instructions. Specific trailways are annotated station by station, distances reckoned as hours walked. He has expanded information on hiring porters and guides and finding Nepal maps, and hopes to release you from these. His background info on the hills and trekking is unsurpassed, and applicable to the rest of the Himalayas. As I can attest from my own travels and research, what's crammed into this volume is not available elsewhere, not even in Nepal. You'd be foolish not to take him along.

#### MONEY

Here's a curious game — no one will take your honest local money if it's ripped, torn, or patched, so neither should you accept it from another. For best results bring crisp new money from the bank. Nor should you bring large denominations into the hills; as a courtesy take the smallest ones you can stand to carry. If you travel simply, without porters or guides, it should cost about \$3 a day. Riding buses and jeeps, \$5 to \$10 minimum.

No time to afford cheap thrills? Then pay your dues to an adventure broker



and have a wonderful sojourn to the identical places we go. The 1981 edition of the **Worldwide Adventure Travel Guide** (544 pp., \$10.95 postpaid from Ziff-Davis Books, 1 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10016) publishes descriptions and synopses of a dozen companies specializing in Himalayan journeys. Of these, Mountain Travel (1398 Solano Avenue, Albany, CA 94706; catalog \$2) seeks the most interesting places. They provide you with all. Trips average three to four weeks. The going rate is \$50 to \$90 per day [also reviewed NWECC p. 430].

Friend of mine, veteran Himal freak, plans his \$10 per day excursions thusly: from the Mountain Travel catalog he picks a juicy trek, spies out the itinerary, then follows it, figuring if they can move a group of 40 along it, he can do it with a companion. Organized groups receive no special invitations into restricted areas — they are allowed if and when everyone is, so reading the catalog is also a clever way to learn what places have just been "opened."

### MAPS

There is only one perfect map, and you live on it. The rest approximates it, in degrees. Concerning the Himalayas, there's nothing but approximation, some sections worse than others. Foreign grants produce a few maps of famous Nepal. Pakistan and India would prefer no one have maps of their touchy border areas, the Himals. So the best maps are alien. The **U.S. Army Map Series U502** covers the range at a scale of one inch = four miles. These were once available by mail from the Defense Mapping Agency, but are now out of print. Xerox them by going to a map depository, asking for the index, and locating the group of sheets you'll need, usually NG 44 or NG 45 for Nepal. Besides the Library of Congress, most state universities are map depositories.

The most accurate maps of the more fabulous regions of Nepal are gorgeous masterpieces known as Schneider maps, printed with perfection (one inch = 0.4 miles) by Geographische Buchhandlung, Rosenthal G, D-8000 München 2, West Germany. They are exquisite and expensive. You don't fold them: you roll them carefully. Mountain Travel sells six Schneider maps of various parts of Nepal for \$10 each postpaid. Price list free.

Smaller-scale (one inch = 12.3 miles), more affordable maps for general use in Nepal are sold for \$7 postpaid (24" x 44") by the American-Nepal Map Project,

Mundu, near Vale of  
Kashmir, Banihal Pass

c/o M.S. Holloway, 5831 Hampton Court, San Diego, CA 92120.

The best bargains are Mandala Maps (one inch = 2.0 miles) cheaply reproduced on blueprint paper, sold everywhere on Freak Street, Katmandu, for \$1.50. Not available (to our knowledge) in the United States. They are more than adequate for hiking along the popular routes they cover.

A tourist map of Himachal Pradesh (one inch = 5.8 miles) and a trekking guide map for the Darjeeling region (both free) are put out by the Indian Tourist Bureau, Jan Path, New Delhi, India. A blatantly crude yet informative (no scale) map of trekking footpaths and bridle routes in Kashmir and Ladakh is available from Nest and Wings, P.O. Box 4531, New Delhi, India, 110016, for 50 cents, and is also available in Srinagar. The Pakistan Tourist Information Center, 12 East 65th Street, New York, NY 10021, publishes free, dinky tourist "maps" of the following areas which show jeep routes and rest bungalows: the Skardu, Swat, Gilgit, Hunza, and Kashaan Valleys.

For the whole detailed sweep of the Himals in one glance, I constantly refer to the common **Bartholomew's Physical Map of the Indian Subcontinent** (one inch = 75 miles). It indicates contoured elevation, major pack animal and jeep trails, and many secondary hill roads (\$6.85 postpaid from American Map Company, 1926 Broadway, New York, NY 10023). [The American Map Company is also reviewed in NWECC 2nd Edition, p. 398.]

Better than any are the maps and guides published by the Japanese, often by **Rock and Snow** magazine, in Japanese.

### WHEN?

In the fall farmers have surplus from their recent harvest to sell you food — but they may run low by spring. Most expeditions schedule climbs in the fall — old snow is gone, new snow comes later, and every valley has perfect weather. You can go at times other than fall, at your own loss.

The lower foothills are delightful in winter. Summer in the eastern half of the Himals is spoiled by monsoon rain. Trekking ceases because: 1) paths are muddy, slippery and treacherous; 2) vital bridges vanish into swollen rivers; 3) the trailsides brim with bloodsucking leeches waiting to crawl through your clothes and sink their fangs into your blood. As any school kid knows, you then need cigarettes to burn them off.

The Vale of Kashmir is okay year round. Its alpine meadows and wildflower valleys are best in spring. For Ladakh and Lahoul-Spiti, summer is the only sane season, since the passes close the rest of the year. Pakistan's highlands have summers that are warm but bearable, winters that are cold but passable in the valleys: The mountains, ordinarily desolate, are Saturnian in winter.

### MOUNTAINEERING

One twilight in the Khumbu Glacier region a skimpily outfitted fellow passed me on his way to a solo overnight ascent of a 20,000 foot snow peak. Why and how he did this is described expertly in the vast array of mountaineering literature (every climber seems to be a writer). The Eastern Mountain Sports catalog (Vose Farm Road, Peterborough, NH 03458) peddles appropriate tools for the job and includes a condensed book list. The bibliography in Bezruchka's



**A Guide to Trekking in Nepal** references all the classics of Himalayan climbing. The most astounding tale told is by Maurice Herzog in his book **Annapurna** (1952; out of print from Popular Library).

Permits are required for expeditionary ventures onto the highest mountains. Contact the Ministry of Tourism in the particular host country. If ever granted, these permits will set you back \$1000-\$2000.

In Nepal, a set of peaks under 20,000 feet has been delegated for trekkers, who must technically get a permit by applying to the Nepal Mountaineering Association, G.P.O. Box 1435, Ram Shah Path, Katmandu. Permits are good for a month, cost about \$50 minimum for each member, and require paper work and observance of agreed rules.

Realistically, who's to know? The only ones who would know or care whether you have a permit might be the border soldiers. Keep 20 miles away. As long as you keep a low profile (don't bring 25 porters), stay clear of the dotted boundary line, and don't die, no one will bother you. You will still need ground permits, where required, to get there and back.

## PERMISSION

Visas are obviously needed for each country. Don't let them run out while you're in the sticks, even by one day, or havoc erupts. When doing the paper routes remember: every other day is a holiday, so allow time. Suspicious neighbors make lots of red tape. From west to east:

**Pakistan** — Technically, permits are required to cross between Chitral and Gilgit, Swat and Gilgit, but this is not enforced. Same for Hunza, Kashmir, and Ladakh. No permits are required within, but one is needed to cross into Himachal Pradesh. Apply at Tourist Officer, Srinagar.

**Garhwal, Himachal Pradesh** — No permits needed. No foreigners allowed at Gangotri, source of the Ganges River, or near international borders.

**Nepal** — Look at your map, then decide your route exactly. Apply at the Central Immigration Office, Ram Shah Path, Katmandu. Immediately request a visa extension. To do so you need proof of exchanging \$5 per day into Nepal rupees for every day requested. Therefore you should bring: 1) a receipt from a Nepal bank showing proof of

currency change; 2) your passport; 3) three passport photos; 4) itinerary of your trek (naming major towns, final destination point, and duration in days); 5) **Nepal rupees for permit fee**, about 50 cents per day of permit. Do this before eleven in the morning. Return a few days later, after 2 pm, to pick up your papers. Congratulations! You've just organized your first trek!

**Darjeeling** — It's ridiculous, but a general permit is required from Calcutta, New Delhi (Foreigners Registration Office) or the Indian embassy. In addition, trekking in that area requires permission from the Foreigners Registration Office, Darjeeling, though you can get by without it.

**Sikkim** — In India, apply at the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, two months in advance. Bring two photos, fill out forms. Ask to pick up permit, which is for three days, valid for two weeks, in Darjeeling. You also need a Darjeeling permit (see above). Arrive in Darjeeling, pick up permit at Inner Line Office. Immediately get extension of Darjeeling permit at Foreigners Registration Office, and proceed to Sikkim. In Sikkim, immediately get extension of Sikkim permit to ten days at Inner Line Office. Trekking is a legitimate reason for extension. There are no fees. Check posts are frequent. On your way out, hope your India visa, Darjeeling permit, and Sikkim permit are all still good, or havoc erupts.

**Bhutan** — If you pay \$100 per day you get a visa and an arranged jeep tour of the country. No other way.

**Arunachal Pradesh** — Off limits.

## SOURCES OF FURTHER INFO

A free booklet called **Trekking in Nepal** is available by writing the Royal Nepalese Embassy, 2131 Leroy Place N.W., Washington DC 20008. Also see **Trekking in the Himalayas**, by Stan Armington (1979, 1982, 95 pp., new edition to be available in 1982 at \$9.95 postpaid from Hypocryne Books, 171 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016).

These are libraries within the Himalayas holding books in English about the Himalayas:

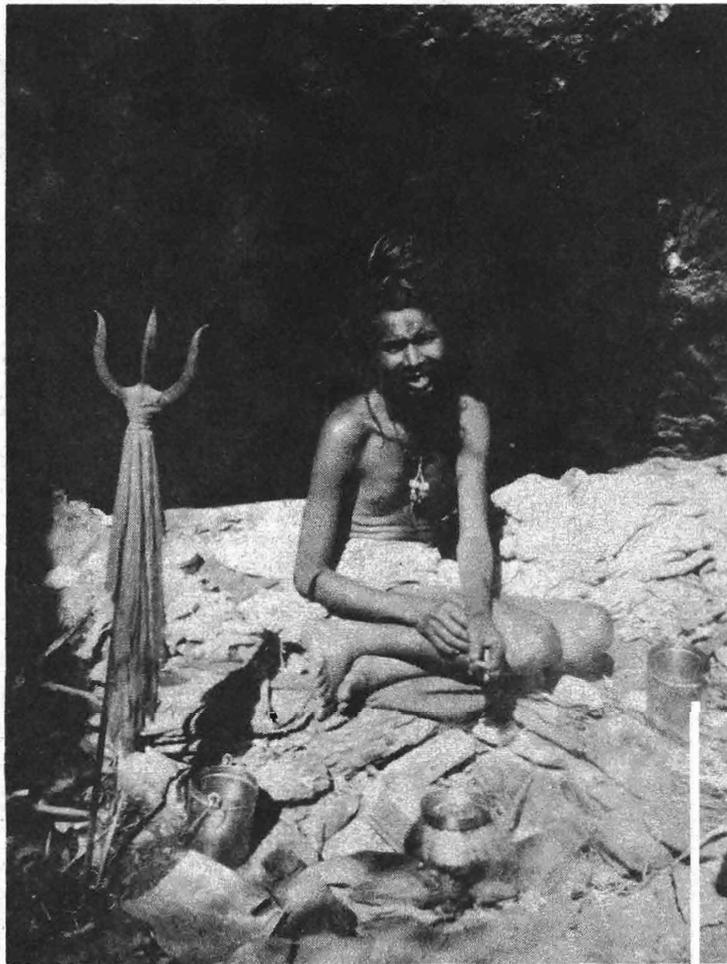
Numgyal Institute of Tibetology,  
Gangtok, Sikkim

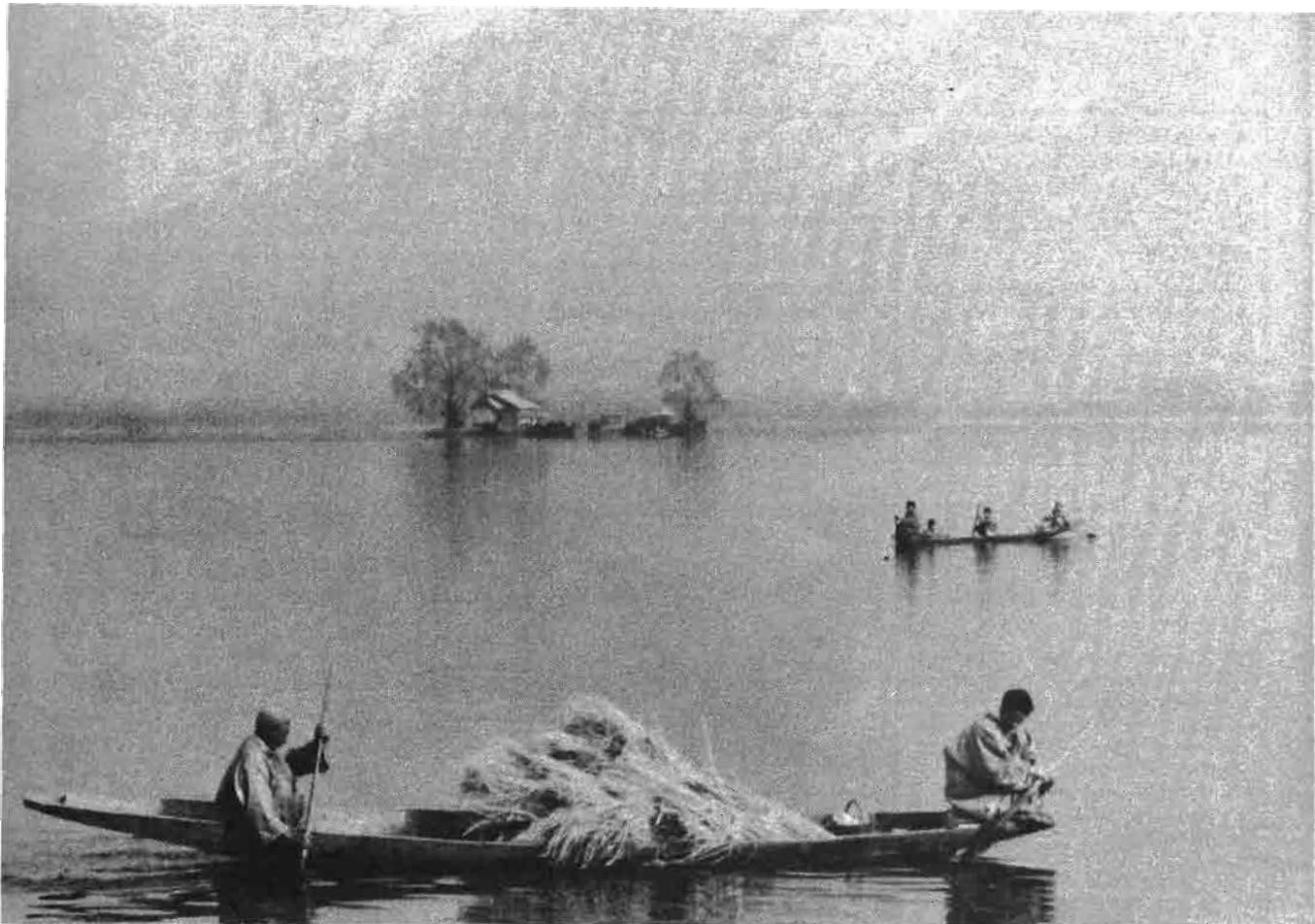
The Mountaineering Institute,  
Darjeeling, India

Tribhuvan University Library,  
Kirtipur, Katmandu

Dharamsala Institute of Tibetan  
Studies, Dharamsala, India  
Manali Himalayan Center,  
Manali, India

**Indian sadhu in  
Himalayan cave near  
source of the Ganges**





Ladakh Public Library, Leh, Ladakh  
The absolute most up-to-date information about roaming the Nepal Himalayas is generously supplied by Peace Corps volunteers who live in the hills. Check the bulletin boards at the Peace Corps headquarters, or the Katmandu Guest House, where they congregate while in town.

#### LANGUAGE

Language here is fluid. It shifts from valley to valley. If you try a phrase you learned and mispronounce it, they just think you're from another valley. I would not head into Nepali-speaking territory without this booklet: **Pocket-Pal** (Summer Institute of Linguistics, Katmandu, \$1.25 postpaid from Mountain Travel, 1398 Solano Avenue, Albany, CA 94706). It is one phrase book which is honestly useful, and specifically designed for trekkers. It vocalizes "Can I buy food here?", "Am I on the trail to \_\_\_\_\_?", "How far is the next village?" Traveling shrinks your horizons, rather than broadening them. Your urgent needs become babyish — food, sleep, hurt — and soberingly simple to convey in sign language and baby talk. A hundred or so thoughts cover all you have to say. Deeper conversations and sanity can be kept in a journal.

Trouble is rare. ~~SAFETY~~ Insurance is to

ok intelligent but poor. If something truly unpleasant should occur, at once notify whoever looks like they have authority or influence: the oldest person in a village, a government clerk, an innkeeper. Make clear your good intentions — in a misunderstanding, ten to one you're the one who goofed, in their world. As a woman you can go alone, and some do, but the bias of the host cultures is against you.

#### ALTITUDE SICKNESS

This is a significant, though poorly understood, bad thing that can waylay persons of any age or physical condition. That means you. The illness is preventable. It is triggered by a rapid change to the dilute air of very high altitudes. Symptoms begin with headaches and dizziness and finish with coma and death. Rare air itself can apparently be tolerated, as the recent ascents of Everest without auxiliary oxygen prove. Moral: ascend slowly; the higher, the slower. If you feel dizzy, stop and go back down to where you didn't. Experience has shown that constant intake of fluids is vital. Drink enough to keep your urine clear — if it yellows, drink more. A good appetite is an indication of acclimatization. The only cure is rapid descent. One medicine is helpful: Diamox. It's a diuretic, so once again ceaseless fluid intake is vital. Diamox is available without prescription in Asia. You really don't need to worry about this horribleness until you reach

#### Farmers on the way to market, Dal Lake, Kashmir

16,000 feet. For a deeper explanation see **Mountain Medicine** by Michael Ward (1975, 250 pp., \$30 postpaid from Beekman Publications, 38 Hicks Street, Brooklyn Heights, NY 11201), or the excellent **Medicine for Mountaineering** by James Wilkerson [NWEC p. 422].

#### HEPATITIS

I don't know what to say about hepatitis other than I hope you don't get it. A few years back it was the scourge of Nepal. It's a virus, like a cold, and like colds blooms on a body in stress, say a tired trekking body. Filtering water does no good, neither do chemicals. Boiling helps and so does care in where you drink. Gamma globulin injections lessen the risk. You need one every three or four months. There is a new vaccine being perfected. Get protection if you can. The cure is two months flat on your back, as many trekkers can tell you.

#### DIARRHEA

Impure water is usually blamed for diarrhea, a serious problem for visitors. In towns, be choosy about what you drink; in the highlands when you're thirsty you often have little choice. Water offered as boiled usually isn't. Boiling your own is a supreme nuisance.

We drink iodine. Just squirt an eye-dropper full of tincture of iodine into a canteen, shake, and wait at least fifteen minutes. Halazone or chlorine tablets seem to take a day to dissolve and are not as effective. Caution: iodine can stain a mess in your pack if spilled. After a while water doesn't taste right unless it's pinked with iodine.

In rare instances when diarrhea strikes, the treatment is to wait a day to see if it disappears, then plug it up if it doesn't. Tincture of opium or Lomotil do the trick. Both are sold in Asia without prescription. We call any diarrhea with fever and vomiting dysentery, and in the mountains it should be treated with antibiotics immediately, though ordinarily that might be rash. Tetracycline, penicillin and other medicines can be bought cheaply over the counter in towns.

Good dry socks keep away blisters, but I'd bring some blister pads in case. And a dozen aspirin tablets. Please do not give pills to hill people who ask. It's irresponsible medicine.

### OTHER DRUGS

Ganja, opium, and hash are prevalent throughout the range. Wild marijuana carpets sections of the foothills and warmer valleys. Not too long ago it was hardly considered valuable. The moderate use by some locals is in contrast to the frenzied covetousness shown by troops of western youths. For many, dope is a big attraction of the Himalayas. Kulu Valley has famous handrubbed hash, shaped by shepherd boys and exchanged for chocolate. Chitral Valley specializes in fancy pressed stuff — little cakes embossed with a gold logo. I have also seen baseball-size lumps of hash come out of the Solo-Khumbu region in Nepal. The legality of these drugs is a hazy point, but they are discouraged by each of the governments and a few users are busted.

### NATURALLY

Curiously, the crest line of the Himalayas does not delineate a watershed. Both the front and back sides of the Himals shed water into the same sea. Some rivers, like the Brahmaputra, run a quarterback sneak around the end of the range. Others, like the Kali Gandaki, bore clean through the middle in terrific canyons, four miles deep, a world extreme. The actual subcontinental divide is traced along the edge of the Tibetan plateau 100 miles to the north, and, on the average, 10,000 feet lower. Other geological surprises are

contemplated by Toni Hagen, a Swiss geologist who spent several decades mapping Nepal on foot, and recounted in his fine, lyrical book, *Nepal* (1961, out of print from Kummerly and Frey, Berne, Switzerland).

The resident ecologist is Robert Fleming, Jr. (Box 229, Katmandu, Nepal), author of *The General Ecology, Flora and Fauna of Midland Nepal* (1978, Tribhuvan University Press; not available in the United States; write Fleming for price). Zoologist George Schaller (*Stones of Silence*, 1980, \$16) and Master Writer Peter Matthiessen (*The Snow Leopard*, 1978, \$14) dazzle the reader with finely tuned observations of men intertwined with wild animals. (Both prices postpaid from The Viking Press, 299 Murray Hill Parkway, East Rutherford, NJ 07073 or Whole Earth Household Store.) None can compare with Jim Corbetts' classic, *Man Eaters of Kumoan* (1944, out of print from Oxford University Press), a bouquet of supreme, loving, and bewitching stories of man-eating tigers, told in a fierce beauty that would shame Jack London.

The same Robert Fleming, Jr., co-authored with his father, Robert Fleming, Sr., a wonderfully solid field guide to the birds of Nepal, Sikkim, and Kashmir. It's a fine book, practical and with extensive coverage, called *Birds of Nepal* (1979, 349 pp., \$22.50 postpaid from Mountain Travel). Migration flyways skimming the mountains and the contracted climate zones created by altitude in the tropics provide room for over 700 species of birds, nearly 400 of which are found in the Katmandu Valley alone.

Two other natural-history guides written for Nepal but useful throughout the

Himalayas are: *Himalayan Flowers and Trees* by Dorothy Mierow (1978, Sahayogi Prakashan, Katmandu), and *Commoner Butterflies of Nepal* by Colin Smith (1976, Katmandu Natural History Museum). (Neither is available in the United States, to our knowledge.)

Official maps indicate four national parks in Nepal (Chitwan, Everest, RaRa, and Langtang) and two in the Indian Himalayas (Corbett and Manas). In fact, all this really means is that an attempt has been made to accommodate visiting naturalists, tourists, and dignitaries, guiding (herding) them along limited routes within the parks' arbitrary boundaries. All the while firewood gathering, deforestation, and poaching go on as usual. There is about a two-dollar entrance fee at most of them, and little encouragement to camp on your own, but it's not difficult to do so in nearly the same style as trekking.

Would you like to explore a genuine Himalayan wilderness, so wild that both maps and libraries are silent about the region? So distant that not even legends have returned from it? It's called Arunachal Pradesh (Province), the caboose of the Himalayan train, the easternmost portion of India, where the Himalayas peter out into Tibet and Burma. As far as anyone knows there is one road, nightmarish sweeps of tropical rain forests, headhunters with bows and arrows, and untrod icy peaks biting like holy fangs above the jungle. Naturally, you're not allowed to visit.

Mountains, even nearby ones, are made remote by chopped ridges of gravity, and demand an intelligent energy to move in their presence. Faraway ones demand more. Go pilgrim. Step brightly. ■

Shandur Pass, near Chitral, Pakistan

