



The Guideline on the Operation and Monitoring of Commercial Rafting, 2022



Ministry of Home Affairs
Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources
Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Employment
Royal Bhutan Police
Department of Tourism

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CHAPTER 1

PRELIMINARY

Title

1. This guideline shall:
 - 1) be called The Guideline on the Operation and Monitoring of Commercial Rafting, 2022.

Commencement

2. This Guideline comes into force on April 2023

Application

3. This Guideline shall apply to:
 - 1) Licensed operator providing commercial rafting service; and
 - 2) Safety rafter guide.

Supersession

4. The Guideline supersedes any other existing guidelines, rules, circulars, which are inconsistent with this Guideline. However, the boating will be governed by the Boating Guidelines 2015.

CHAPTER 2

LICENSING and REGISTRATION

Applying for a licence

5. A person shall be allowed to carry out a rafting business only after obtaining a licence from the licensing authority.
6. An applicant desiring to apply for rafting licence shall submit a proposal through online (<https://ibls.moea.gov.bt/>)
7. Upon receipt of an application, DoT shall review the proposal and review if the proposed river stretch falls within the River Survey Report 2020

Sector clearances

8. If the proposed stretch falls within the River Survey Report 2020, DoT shall issue sector clearance addressing to Cottage and Small Industry Promotion Division, MoICE for issuance of business licence
9. If the proposed stretch is not mentioned in the River Survey Report, DoT shall forward the application to the relevant agencies for the sector clearances
10. The relevant agencies shall provide the sector clearances based on the

OR

11. criteria provided in this guideline within three-five working days from the date of receipt of proposal from the licensing authority.

Issuing of licence

12. The licence based on the location may be issued by the licensing authority after receiving the sector clearance from the relevant agencies. Where a licensee intends to change the location of the establishment, the licensee

shall obtain location clearance from the respective Dzongkhag or Local authority and submit an application to the nearest Regional Trade and Industry Office.

13. The licence holder shall ensure leased out terms and conditions stipulated under chapter V, section 74, clause 1-4 and 75, clause 1-15 in Tourism Rules and Regulation 2022.

14. The licensee will need to be registered with relevant authority including Dzongkhag Administration where operation is held.

Licence validity and Renewal

15. Each licence shall be valid for one year from the date of its issue. The renewal of a licence will be subject to approval of the inspection and record review.

CHAPTER 3 GENERAL OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

River rafting equipment

16. A licensee shall have equipment (Annexure II).

Log book for river rafting equipment

17. A licensee shall maintain a log book for equipment (Annexure IV).

Log book for river rafting guides

18. A licensee shall maintain a log book for river rafting guide (Annexure VIII).

CHAPTER 4

OPERATION AND MONITORING

Operation

19. For the purpose of providing safety for rafters, following operation guidelines shall be observed.

Time of operation

20. Rafting shall be operated as per the following timings:

- 1) Summer (1st April to 31st October: 8am to 5pm (last departure)
- 2) Winter: (1st November to 31st March): 8am to 4pm (last departure)

21. Rafting operators shall ensure that all the clients signed the liability waiver form for river rafting (Annexed VI). Rafting companies shall be liable for claims submitted by the client if no liability waiver form is executed.

22. Rafting operators shall operate the rafting services only in the river stretches approved as per the River Survey Report 2020 (Annexure VII).

23. The maximum number of operators allowed for every stretch of river shall be as per carrying capacity determined by the Government from time to time.

Pricing

24. The operator shall charge a minimum of Ten Thousand Ngultrum per raft per trip. The rate shall be revised on an annual basis in consultation with the stakeholders.
25. Any operators operating below agreed price will be deemed to have violated the provision of this guideline, and shall be liable for penalty as prescribed in this guideline.

Transportation of raft

26. The Raft shall be transported in adherence to the existing Road Safety and Transport Regulations or any other existing laws.

Prohibited activities

27. While rafting on any rivers, the following activities shall be prohibited
- 1) Any activity that undermines personal safety or the safety of other rafters while on the raft;
 - 2) Fishing while on the raft or while stopping at the designed area, unless in conformity to relevant regulations pertaining to fishing.
 - 3) Causing disturbance/harm to wildlife and its habitat;
 - 4) Creating public nuisance; or
 - 5) Throwing trash.
 - 6) Stopping of rafts at undesignated areas.

Monitoring

28. The concerned Forest Range Office shall be responsible for regular monitoring of rafting and authorised to stop the operation if the necessary safety measures are not met or provisions of the Guidelines are not complied with. If necessary, in order to enforce compliance, the support of the Dzongkhag Administration and Royal Bhutan Police will be sought.
29. In addition, the Dzongkhag Administration shall mobilize a team consisting of officials from concerned Dzongkhag Administration, the Royal Bhutan Police, Department of Forests and Park Services, Regional Trade and Industry Office and any other relevant agencies to conduct joint monitoring visits as and when deemed necessary.

CHAPTER 5

OBLIGATION OF LICENSEE

Responsibility of licensee

30. A licensee shall:
- 1) Not sublet the business;
 - 2) Provide rafting services only in rivers designated and shall not be carried out in the cultural and biodiversity sensitive areas;
 - 3) Provide rafting services as per the timing provided in the Guideline;
 - 4) Employ minimum of four certified safety rafter guides including himself(if certified), with the following requirements:
 - a) Who has attained an age of 18 years;
 - b) Has valid medical fitness certificate; and
 - c) Who has undergone training on rafting and obtained safety rafter guide certificate from internationally/nationally recognized institutions.
 - 5) Maintain record of safety rafter guides' qualifications, training and

- experience and record shall be made available during the monitoring;
- 6) Ensure that all passengers are briefed on the safety before the departure and all passenger shall be provided with safety equipment;
 - 7) Ensure no children below the age of seven years are allowed to raft;
 - 8) Ensure children above the age of 7 and below age of 17 years are allowed to raft only when accompanied by parents or guardian and with their consent;
 - 9) Ensure proper management of waste in accordance with the Waste Management Act 2009;
 - 10) Display identification of the company on the rafts and ensure all raft guides display their identification card at all time of operation;
 - 11) Strictly ensure maximum of six passenger for raft size of 14 ft and above and safety rafter guides as follows:
 - a) For Class 3 minus River (e.g Mochu),Ensure:
 - i. 1 guide and 1 safety kayak in case of lone raft; and
 - ii. 1 guide for each raft when there are more than one raft moving together. No safety kayak required.
 - b) For Class 3 Plus River (e.g Phochu), Ensure:
 - i. 1 safety rafter guides and 2 safety kayak in case of lone raft; and
 - ii. 1 safety rafter guides for each raft when there are more than one raft moving together and 1 safety kayak required.
 - 12) Ensure to abide by all existing laws relating to employment including insuring their employee/rafting guides; and
 - 13) Neither operate himself nor let the safety rafter guide carry out the rafting:
 - a) Under the influence of alcohol; or
 - b) Under the influence of controlled/psychotropic substances.

CHAPTER 6

OBLIGATION OF SAFETY RAFTER GUIDE

Responsibility of Safety Rafter Guide

31. The safety rafter guide shall:

- (a) Update and renew their certificate every after three years;
- (b) Not consume alcohol or psychotropic/controlled substances, smoke, and chew *doma* while on duty;
- (c) Not indulge in any activity prohibited by law;
- (d) Not be reckless and negligent, whereby risking the safety of the clients;
and
- (e) Ensure proper decorum with clients while on duty.

Certification

32. The safety rafter guide shall have the training on rafting and obtained safety rafter guide certificate from international or national recognized institutions

33. The certificate shall be valid for three years and should be renewed after the date.

CHAPTER 7

EXPEDITION

Permit for Expedition

34. An application must be submitted using the prescribed format (attached here) or online well in advance to the Department of Forests and Park

Services, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources to avail the expedition permit.

35. Commercial rafting and expeditions shall not be permitted when high-end recreational fishing expeditions are underway on mahseer water. The list of high-end recreational fishing sites on Mahseer water is annexed as Annexure III (Delineation of High-end Recreational Fishing Site on Mahseer water in Bhutan).

CHAPTER 8

ACCIDENT

Reporting Accident

36. If an accident occurs on a commercial river rafting trip and the incident involves serious injury or loss of life, the rafting operator must immediately report the incident verbally and in detail using the form (annexed) within two days after the incident, to the officer of Royal Bhutan Police and to Dzongkhag Administration.

Rafting accident involving death of foreign National

37. In the event of death of foreign national during a rafting accident, the licensed rafting operator shall comply with the standard operating procedure as contained in the standard operating procedure issued by the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs as Annexed.

CHAPTER 9

PENALTIES

38. Where a rafting operator fails to adhere to this guideline or any other laws in force, the relevant agency may impose a penalty as per the relevant laws.
39. An operator who fails to arrange a rafter guide will be liable for a penalty equal to that imposed on a tour operator who fails to arrange a guide under the Tourism Rules and Regulations 2022 or any amendment thereto.
40. The operator breaching the other provision of the guideline and if penalty for such action are not provided under any relevant laws, shall be imposed a penalty equivalent to the minimum rate prescribed for one raft per trip.
41. Repeated offenders under this clause will lead to cancellation of the rafting licence of the operators and the river guides shall be barred from conducting the activity.

Definition

For the purpose of this Guideline, unless the context otherwise requires

- (1) **“Class 3 River”** means rapids with moderate, irregular waves which may be difficult to avoid and which can swamp an open canoe. Complex manoeuvres in fast current and good boat control in tight passages or around ledges are often required; large waves or strainers may be present but are easily avoided. Strong eddies and powerful current effects can be found, particularly on large-volume Rivers. Scouting is advisable for inexperienced parties. Injuries while swimming are rare; self-rescue is

usually easy but group assistance may be required to avoid long swims. Rapids that are at the lower or upper end of this difficulty range are designated Class III- or Class III+ respectively.

- (2) **“Expedition”** means an organised trip undertaken along the river stretches by a group of expert kayak or rafting guides using a kayak, raft and other logistics support facilitated by tour operators.
- (3) **“Licensee”** means a person to whom a rafting operator licence has been issued by the Ministry of Economic Affairs.
- (4) **“Raft”** means a soft-bodied, inflatable watercraft especially constructed and designed to be manoeuvred through white water rapids.
- (5) **“Rafting”** means a competitive, social, and recreational activity that is accessible to the general public, and can be enjoyed by people through sport and recreation. Rafting requires specialized equipment and instruction to participate safely, and may require considerable skill by the participant(s) depending upon the grade of difficulty of the waterway.
- (6) **“Rafting accident” includes:** Collision, capsizing and disappearance of a raft other than theft.
- (7) **“Safety Kayak”** means a white water kayak that has been specifically designated to provide on-river safety coverage during a raft trip. A Safety Kayak must be of a type and design that is capable of performing swimmer rescue and equipment recovery, and should never be used for other purposes (such as trip photography, etc). Safety Kayakers must always be trained and experienced in providing kayak safety support.

- (8) **“Safety Rafter guide”** means a person who has demonstrated that they have the additional skills, knowledge and experience necessary to safely and competently provide on-river safety support from a raft that is primarily controlled by fixed oars.

ANNEXURE II

LIST OF RAFTING EQUIPMENT

- (a) A minimum of two inflatable rafts capable of self- bailing water and two safety kayaks;
- (b) Raft and safety Kayaks must be in good condition;
- (c) Each Raft must be equipped with;
 - i. Helmets;
 - ii. Life jackets (Personal floatation device);
 - iii. Adequate Paddles;
 - iv. A first aid box;
 - v. Bowlines; and
 - vi. Throw bags of 60 feet or more per raft.
- (d) Each Safety kayak must be equipped as follows:
 - i. float bags
 - ii. paddle and one spare paddle,
 - iii. a throw bag; and
 - iv. a first aid kit

ANNEXURE III

List of High-end Recreational Fishing Sites on Mahseer water in Bhutan

Classified High-end recreational fishing sites in Mahseer water

1. Zone I: Manas River

- 1.1.** The Manas River starting from the confluence of Drangmechhu and Mangdechhu until the Indo-Bhutan international boundary is being classified as a High-end recreational fishing site throughout the year.

Start point (Higher elevation): **26.837839°; 90.949272°**

End point (Lower elevation): **26.783858°; 90.957922°**

2. Zone 2

2.1. Basin I: Drangme chhu

The upper stretch of Drangmechhu starting from the confluence of Sherichhu and Drangmechhu until the confluence of Drangmechhu and Mangdechhu; and 1 km upstreams from the confluence on Sherichhu and Kurichhu shall be classified as Mahseer water High-end recreational fishing sites on the Drangmechhu Basin.

Start point (High elevation) on Drangmechhu: **27.252845°;**

91.410231° End point (Low elevation) on Drangmechhu:

26.837839°; 90.949272°

2.2. Basin II: Mangde chhu

The upper stretch of Mangdechhu Mahseer water starting from below the Tingtibi prohibited fishing site until the confluence of Drangmechhu and Mangdechhu; and Mahseer water stretch on Chamkhar chhu from Bortegang confluence till the Mangdechhu confluence shall be classified as Mahseer High-end recreational fishing sites on the Mangdechhu Basin.

Start point (Higher elevation) on Mangdechhu: **27.149413°;**

90.698255° Start point (Higher elevation) on Chamkharchhu:

27.064480°; 90.943715° End point (Lower elevation) on

Mangdechhu: **26.837839°; 90.949272°**

2.3. Basin III: Punatshangchhu

The upper stretch of Punatshangchhu starting just below the Dekchhu Fishing Prohibited Site and down till Hurdung Bridge (bridge connecting Nichula Gewog and Karmaling Gewog) and inclusive of Harachhu Mahseer water shall be classified as Mahseer High-end recreational fishing sites on Punatshangchhu.

Start point (Higher elevation) on Punathangchhu: **27.251616°;**

90.047539° Start point (Higher elevation) on Harachhu:

27.192075°; 90.085140° End point (Lower elevation) on

Punatshangchhu: **26.739444° 89.879153°**

2.4. Basin IV: Wangchhu

The upper stretch of Wangchhu Mahseer water starting from Badina bridge (Below Badina Village under Bongo Gewog) and down till 1 km below the Jigme chhu bridge shall be classified as Mahseer High-end recreational fishing site on Wangchhu.

Start point (Higher elevation): **26.854624°; 89.590659°**

End point (Lower elevation): **26.747160°; 89.734544°**

3. Zone 3

3.1. Basin I: Amochhu

The stretch of delineated Mahseer water on Amochhu river starting from above the Somchhu-Amochhu confluence and extending down till confluence of Amochhu and the stream 1 km below the bridge shall be classified as Mahseer High-end recreational fishing site on Amochhu.

Start point (Higher elevation): **27.027313°; 89.214677°**

End point (Lower elevation): **26.876891°; 89.329255°**

3.2. Basin II. Lower Nyera Amachhu

The stretch of delineated mahseer water of Nyera Amachhu starting from Hyla bridge under Wangphu Gewog, until Khatoethang under Phuntshothang gewog, Samdrup Jongkhar shall be classified as Mahseer High-end recreational fishing site on Nyera Amachhu.

Start point (Higher elevation): **26.960172°; 91.607712°**

End point (Lower elevation): **26.900196°; 91.688352°**

3.3. Basin II. Upper Nyera Amachhu

This stretch is on the upper part of Nyera Amachhu Mahseer water. It starts from 100 meters below the Gomdhar school and ends below the Goenpa Tenzin Dawa, with a stretch of around 5.5 kms. Identifying campsites are necessary in the locality as there are no hotels nearby.

Start point (Higher elevation): 26.988517°N, 91.552878°E

End point (Lower elevation): 26.964237°N, 91.594856°E

3.4. Basin III. Jomochhu

A short stretch of delineated mahseer water of Nyera Amachhu starting from Serashingthang until Jampani Langchenphu gewog, Samdrup Jongkhar shall be classified as Mahseer High-end recreational fishing site on Nyera Amachhu.

Start point (Higher elevation): **26.943189°; 92.102346°**

End point (Lower elevation): **26.928645°; 92.107615°**

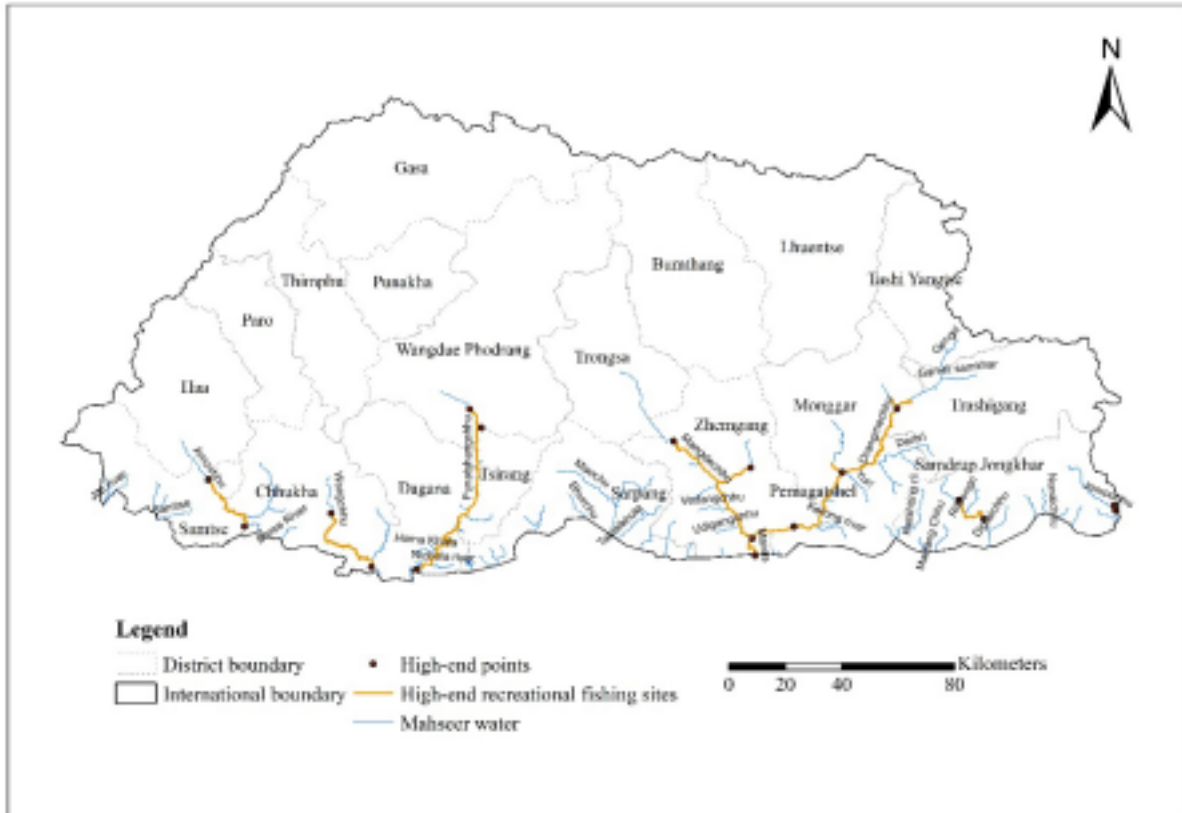


Figure II. Map of delineated High-end recreational fishing sites on Mahseer water in Bhutan.

ANNEXURE IV

LOG BOOK FOR RIVER RAFTING EQUIPMENT

Company Details

1.Name of the company	
2. Licence Number	
3. Name of the owner	
4.CID number	
5. Contact Person/ Contact Number	
6. Email Address	
7. Company website	

Sl.no	Name of Equipment	Procuring Date and year	Lifespan of the equipment	Total number of equipment	Remarks if any
1.	Rafts				
2.	Kayaks				

3.	Boats		The lifespan of the equipment will be determined based on the inspection report		
4.	Life Jacket				
5.	Raft pump (Manual and electric)				
6.	Inflatable kayaks				
7.	Catarafts				
8.	River board				
9.	SUP board				
10.	River Tubes				
11.	Paddle				
12.	Rescue bag				

ANNEXURE V

LOG BOOK FOR RIVER RAFTING GUIDE

DETAILS OF RAFTING GUIDES

(Need to maintain personal file for all the rafting guides employed in a company)

1.Name			
2.CID No			
3. Gender	Male	Female	
4.Contact Number			
5. Email Address			
6.Certificate Number		5.Certification Institute	
7. Medical training for a wilderness (Wilderness First Aid or wilderness First Responder)			
8. Others			

ANNEXURE VI
LIABILITY WAIVER FORM FOR RIVER RAFTING

(Insert the name of the Company)
Please Read Carefully Before Signing

Location of Trip:_____Date of Trip:_____ Time of
Trip:_____

I understand and acknowledge that river rafting involves risks, which may include, but are not limited to personal injury, disability, or death. By signing this form, I hereby agree that:

1. I have been briefed about the safety tips before the trip;
2. I am participating voluntarily in this activity at my own risk;
3. I shall not claim reimbursement from the Rafting Company for medical treatment and related expenses in the event of accidents that may result in personal injury, disability or death;
4. I shall take complete responsibility for any loss or damage that may occur to my personal belonging while undertaking this activity ; and
5. I am physically and mentally sound to undertake this activity.

I certify that I have read the document and fully accept the terms and conditions stated above.

Sl no.	Name of participants:	Nationality:	Passport/Cid no:	Signature ¹
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				

Signature of parents or Guardian of children aged between seven to seventeen

¹

ANNEXURE VII

List of RIVER STRETCHES surveyed and recommended for rafting as per the River Survey Report 2020

Sl. no	Name of the rivers	Dzongkhag (Location)	Put in	Take out	Difficulty level	craft	Remarks
1	Amo Chhu	Starts Haa and end Phuntsholing	Shey-chhu bridge, Haa	Toorsa, Phuntsholing	Class III - IV	Both raft and kayak	3 Night and four days expedition trip. Night halt at campsite
2	Lower Thimphu Chhu	Thimphu	Khariphu bridge	Above crematorium ground, Charkilo	Class III+	Both raft and kayak	Day excursion
3	Upper Paro Chhu	Paro	Tsentog	Taktshang Motor Bridge	Class III+IV	Kayak	Day excursion
4	Lower Paro Chhu	Paro	Isuna, Cable line	Bailey bridge located below Tamcho	Class III+IV	Both raft and kayak	Day excursion
5	Lower Paro Chhu	Paro	Bondey	Isuna cable line	Class II	Both raft and kayak	Day excursion (The team from DoC and TCB undertook the study)
6	Upper Pho Chhu	Punakha	Wolathang	Samdingkha bridge	Class III and IV+	Both raft and kayak	Day excursion
7	Lower Pho Chhu	Punakha	Samdingkha bridge	Dzomi Gewog	Class III and IV	Both raft and kayak	Day excursion
8	Upper Mo Chhu	Punakha	Rimchhu	Khamsum Bridge	Class III-IV	Both raft and kayak	Day excursion

9	Lower Mo Chhu	Punakha	Khamsum Bridge	Zomlingthang	Class II	Both raft and kayak	Day excursion
10	Dang Chhu	Wangduephodrang	Below kichu resort	Before reaching Tsami Zampa	Class III-IV	Kayak	Day excursion
11	Lower PunatsangChhu Expedition (Sunkosh)	Tisrang/Dagana/Sarpang	Sunkosh bridge	Karmaling, Lhamoizingkha,	Class III-IV	Both raft and kayak	3 Night and 4 days expedition trip. Night halt at campsite
12	Upper Mangde Chhu	Trongsa	Kakaling	Bjizam	Class III-IV	Both raft and kayak	Day excursion
13	Lower Mangde Chhu (Ema Datshi Canyon)	Trongsa	Langthel	Jangbi Zam	Class III-IV	Both raft and kayak	Day excursion
14	Upper Chamkhar	Bumthang	Chokhor Toe	Kurji Zam	Class III & IV	Both raft and kayak	Day excursion
15	Lower Chamkhar	Bumthang	Chamkhar bridge	Confluence of Tand and Chamkhar Chhu	Class III - IV	Both raft and Kayak	Day excursion
16	Kuri Chhu	Lhuentse	Fawan	Before reaching the crematorium area (near Autsho town)	Class III - IV	Both raft and kayak	Day excursion
18	Kholongchu	Trashiyangtse	Bumdeling	Bumdeling bridge	Class III - IV	Both raft and kayak	Day excursion
19	Ganri Chhu	Trashigang	Below Rangjung town	Lungten zam (Small town)	Class III - IV	Kayak	Day excursion
20	Drangme Chhu Expedition	Trashigang-Mongar-Pemagatshel - Zhemgang	Sherichu, Mongar	Pangbang Bridge, Zhemgang	Class III - IV	Both raft and Kayak	6 nights and 7 days expedition trip. Night halt at campsite

21	Panbang Chhu	Zhemgang	Rendeybii	Twin waterfall	Class III-IV	Both raft and kayak	Day excursion
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