

LET'S EXPLORE RIVERS IN SIX FOLDING MAPS

ATLAS OF RIVERS

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B4U PUBLISHING

THE SACRED RIVER GANGES

The Ganges is India's largest river. The Bhagirathi and the Alakananda – the two rivers which come together to form the Ganges – rise in the Himalayas. The Ganges ends its 2500-kilometre-long journey in the Bay of Bengal.

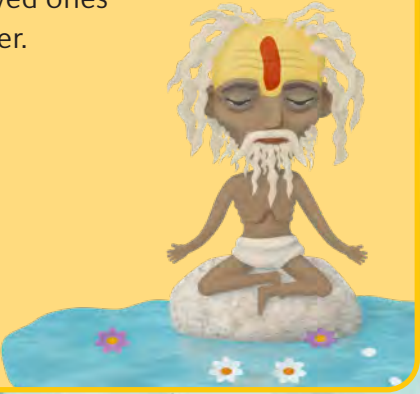
KUMBH MELA

Bearing in mind that the River Ganges is a goddess, it's no wonder that believers bathe in its every stretch. The biggest religious event is Kumbh Mela, a festival held four times over twelve years at four sites in India, where millions of Hindus come together to pray, meditate and take ceremonial baths.



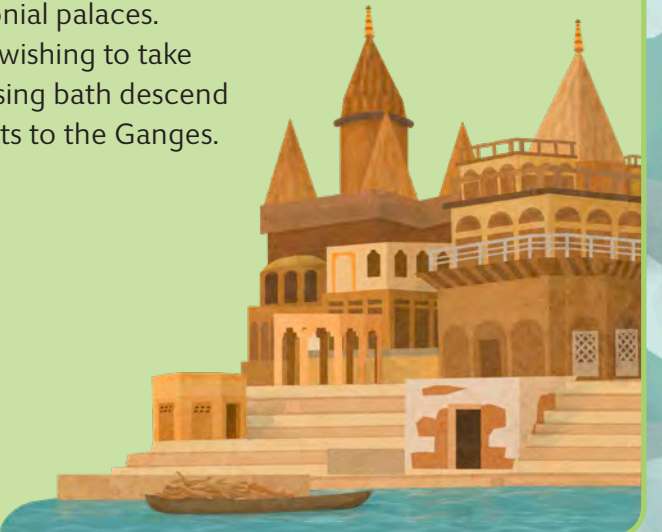
TO DIE ON THE BANKS OF THE GANGES

As well as going to the Ganges to bathe and cleanse themselves, orthodox Hindus go there to die – so ensuring that their souls will not return to Earth and re-enter the cycle of life. For the same reason, mourners perform a ritual of pouring the ashes of departed loved ones into the water.



VARANASI

Not only the Ganges is sacred – so, too, is a city situated on its banks. Varanasi is one of the world's oldest human settlements and a very important destination for pilgrims. It is a place of many temples and long flights of steps known as ghats, which are attached to ceremonial palaces. People wishing to take a cleansing bath descend the ghats to the Ganges.



SHIVA IN HARIDWAR



RISHIKESH



GANGES

DO YOUR LAUNDRY

The Ganges has a wide range of abilities. Not only will it wash sin, it will do laundry for the whole family, as Indian women will testify. The problem is, the water of the river goddess is very polluted – an alarming thought when you bear in mind that it is also a source of drinking water.

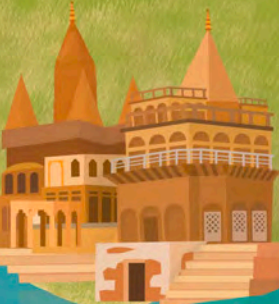


I HAVE RIGHTS TOO!

The Ganges is such an exceptional river that it has the same rights as a human being. How does this work? Well, should anyone pollute the river or damage it in any other way and be caught in the act, they will be tried and punished as if they had injured a human. The Yamuna, another Indian river, has the same privilege.



VARANASI



COTTON FIELD



RAJAHMUNDRI



MOTHER RIVER

The Ganges is much more than a large Indian river; she is the 'mother river' – according to Hindus, her sacred waters cleanse the human body and soul of sin. Every day, tens of thousands of pilgrims perform the ritual of washing in her waves, in the firm belief that the current will carry away all that is wicked and wrong.



LARGEST DELTA

Far from denying its divine nature, the delta of the River Ganges proclaims it far and wide: its extensive network of branches covers over 105,000 square kilometres, making it the largest delta in the world. No wonder, then, that in 1997 it was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List.



BAY OF BENAL



GANGES AS GODDESS

Hindus consider the sacred Ganges to be Ganga, the goddess daughter of Shiva and Parvati. She is depicted as a woman of great beauty who wears a white crown. Legend tells us that Ganga the merciful mother came from the heavens to Gangotri, where she became a river that will cleanse the faithful of their sin and sow seeds of divine Love in the hearts of pilgrims.



MY FOUNDATIONS ARE IN THE RIVER

Every pilgrim in the ancient city of Varanasi seeks out the Ratneshwar Mahadev Madir temple, whose deity is Shiva. When you find out that some of it is underwater, there is no need to panic. The builders didn't do a very good job. A century and a half ago, part of the temple simply dropped a few metres.



FAUNA

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FLORA

ASiA

Asia, the largest continent on our planet, covers an area of 43,540,000 square kilometres. As Asia is quite mountainous, no one is surprised to learn that it contains the world's highest peak, Mount Everest. Asia's rivers, on the other hand, are not among the world's longest. Large parts of Asia are endorheic – meaning that the rivers passing through the region tend to dry out, disappear into the ground or flow into the lake, not an ocean.



1. GANGES, 2. BRAHMAPUTRA, 3. MEKONG, 4. YANGTZE, 5. HUANG (YELLOW), 6. INDUS

YELLOW RIVER

At 5463 kilometres, it is the world's fifth largest river. In the third millennium BCE, its importance was such that the first humans settled around its central stretch, laying there the foundations of Chinese civilization. Later, farmers used the waters of the Yellow River to irrigate their rice fields, expressing their gratitude and respect by calling it the River of the Gods or the Heavenly River.



THAT'S RIGHT, I'M YELLOW

The Yellow River is called 'yellow' with good reason. But don't think that its colour has anything to do with magic or godly intervention. The sun-like colour is caused by the soil of the riverbed as conducted by the water.



CLEANEST OF THE CLEAN

Japan's Niyodo River is famous for its spotlessness. Indeed, it can truthfully claim to be the cleanest river in Japan. It gleams in shades of blue and dark green that people refer to as Niyodo blue. The river's banks are lined with magnificent rock formations and statues of the seven gods of luck and good fortune.



THREE GORGES

The 'Long River' is home to the world's largest hydroelectric power station. Called Three Gorges, it has the highest performance as well as being the biggest. Not only does it generate electricity, it has a very important function in defence against flooding. Just imagine what would happen if the Long River were to burst its banks!



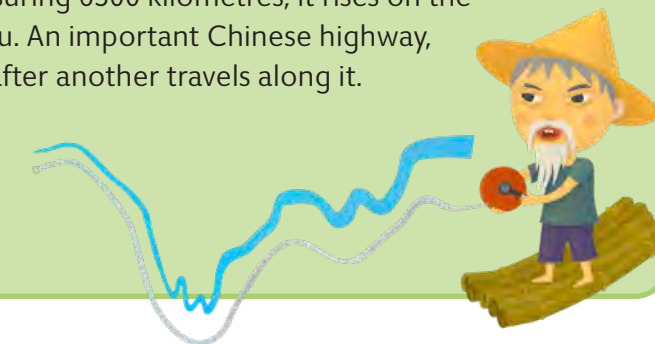
HOUSES ON STILTS

The banks of Mekong are densely populated. The land thereabouts is subject to frequent flooding. But local people know how to manage the rising river – to ensure that houses on the banks of the Mekong are not carried away on the torrent, they built them on stilts.



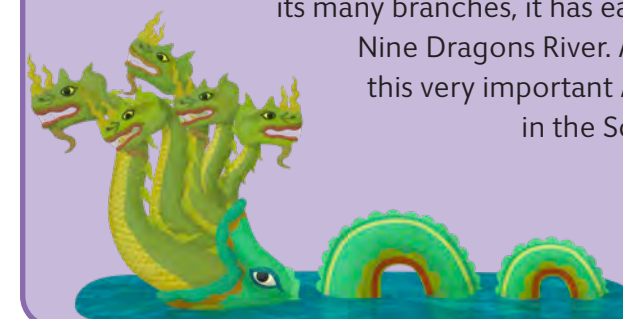
THIS IS SOME LONG RIVER!

I kid you not, 'chang jiang' means 'long', and the Chang Jiang is a stretch of the Yangtze River, China's longest and the third longest in the world. Measuring 6300 kilometres, it rises on the Tibet Plateau. An important Chinese highway, one vessel after another travels along it.



MEKONG - NINE DRAGONS RIVER

Mekong flows through China, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and also Vietnam, where it divides into two larger branches and dozens of distributaries. Because of its many branches, it has earned the name Nine Dragons River. A journey along this very important Asian river ends in the South China Sea.



FLOATING MARKETS

As life at the Mekong is conducted mostly on the river or its banks, no one will be surprised to learn that things are bought and sold there. In place of a supermarket, you will be welcomed by traders in boats that show the relative size of their business. Believe it or not, a Mekong market is everybit as busy as a city centre.





FAUNA

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FLORA

GANGES SHARK

This grey-brown, rather stocky shark ploughs its way up the River Ganges. Its strikingly small eyes are perfectly adapted to murky waters.

A predator with very sharp teeth, this legend of the Ganges is a critically endangered species, sad to say.



SOUTH ASIAN RIVER DOLPHIN

Another inhabitant of the murky River Ganges is the South Asian river dolphin, a cetacean which is almost blind. There's no need to feel sorry for it, though, for it has little need of sight – it makes do perfectly with sound waves.



IRRAWADDY DOLPHIN

The Ganges goddess is also home to the enormous Irrawaddy dolphin, a very rare creature. Almost two metres long, it can change its facial expression, like a human. The Irrawaddy's head is rounded, unlike the heads of other dolphins.



COMMON HILL MYNAH

Many bird species fly above the banks of the Ganges. One of them, the common hill mynah, is an accomplished flyer and skilful imitator of the human voice. What's more, with its jet-black feathers, yellow legs and orange beak, it is a true avian beauty.



MANGROVE

The extensive Ganges Delta is home to special vegetation called the mangrove. Mangroves are amphibious shrubs and trees which grow where land and water join. They flourish in the warm conditions of waterlogged mud.



ATLAS OF RIVERS

LET'S EXPLORE RIVERS IN SIX FOLDING MAPS

Written by Štěpánka Sekaninová

Illustrated by Tomáš Tůma

If you were to look at our planet from above, you would see that it is interwoven with rivers like so many ribbons. Some of these rivers are wild, some long, fast-flowing, deep or shallow. Water-lovers and reluctant swimmers alike are sure to be fascinated by characteristics of the world's rivers. What do they look like? Who makes a home in them? What do they flow past? Which rivers are of vital importance to humanity? Which are crystal clear, and which gleam with all colours? Which are considered sacred? Open this book and unfold its six maps to embark on a grand expedition along the world's most interesting rivers, by kayak, dinghy and other boats besides.

In the atlas you'll find:

- 6 foldout maps with rivers,
- interesting facts about the importance of rivers,
- buildings on the rivers,
- natural environment around rivers,
- 5 supplementary booklets about the fauna and flora of the rivers.

booklets
with additional
information

LEARN AND HAVE FUN

big
folding
maps

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Illustrator: Tomáš Tůma
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WARNING:
Choking hazard.
Not suitable for
children under
36 months.

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