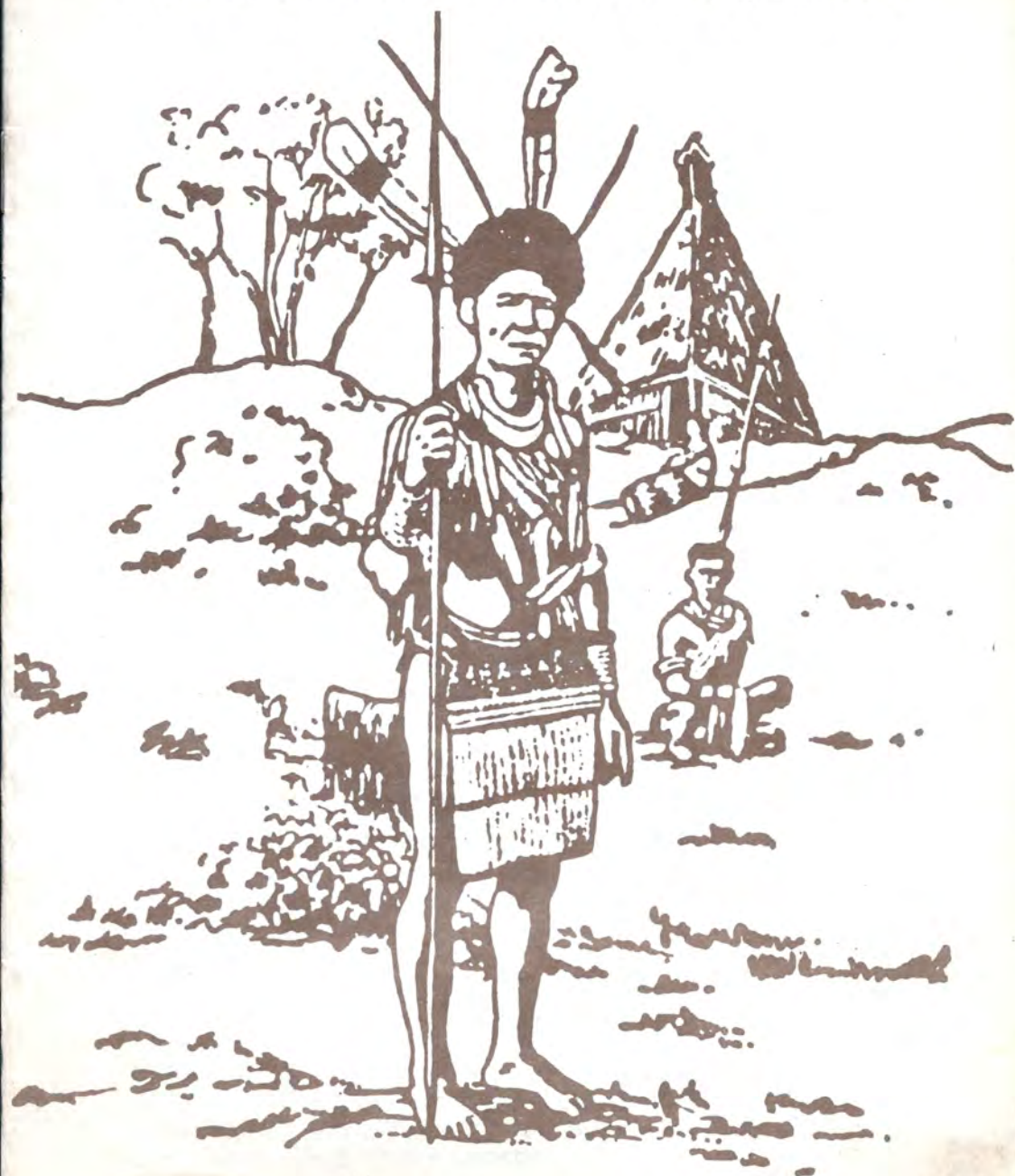


3 WEEKS IN SIKKIM + ASSAM



ENCOUNTER OVERLAND

THREE WEEKS IN :

S I K K I M, A S S A M A N D B A N G L A D E S H

Including Darjeeling, the Bramaputra and Happy Valley (Shillong), and perhaps the Naga Hills and Manipur, before crossing Bangla Desh from Sylhet to Benapol and so entering Calcutta.

PRICE : £115 (includes several modest hotels and accommodation on the arrival night in Calcutta).

DATES :	<u>Departure</u>	<u>Arrival</u> (approx)
	21 Nov 75	12 Dec 75
	12 Dec 75	2 Jan 76

BACKGROUND

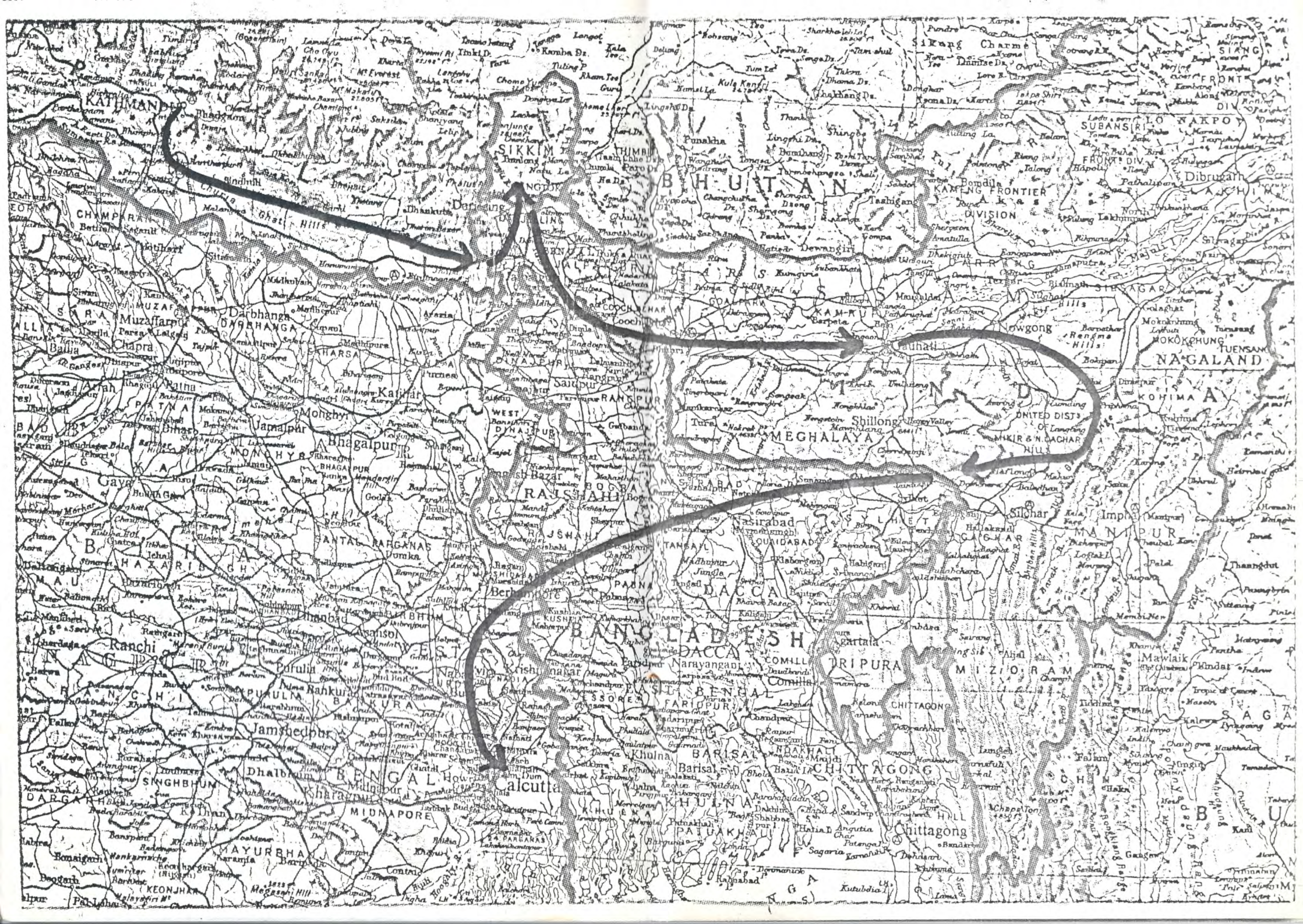
On arrival in Kathmandu towards the beautiful, end of the year, the India we have travelled through slides into retrospect while the sweet air and magnificent mountains of Nepal pervade our mood and we, on our part, are becoming aware that the peoples who live on the fringes on that vast land-mass behind us, are really very different indeed.

This is not only true of the Nepalis, Gurkhas and Sherpas of Nepal and Sikkim - and other Tibetan types of Bhutan too for that matter - it is also true of the peoples who inhabit the eastern Himalayan foothills north of the Bramaputra and the great, green jungle, hill-tracks of eastern Assam.

The Government of India has been relaxing its restrictions for visiting these regions (including the new Indian State of Sikkim) to the extent that Encounter Overland has now been advised that if we would like to make applications these would be welcomed, that the applications would be attended to in New Delhi, that no serious problems are envisaged, but that the applications (en group) should be presented as soon as possible.

What follows is a brief description of what is planned. It is most important that all who are interested realise that Encounter Overland has no first-hand experience of the regions, that the information here is from careful research only, and that an atmosphere of reconnaissance is called for.

From the Shillong region of Assam we shall enter Bangla Desh as the most practical way of reaching Calcutta. The formalities involved are not unduly complicated and the four day journey through Bangla Desh should prove interesting. The project will end in Calcutta and thus save slightly on most connecting travel costs.



SIKKIM

Gangtok, the main town of Sikkim is a mere 50 miles northeast of Darjeeling on the other side of the Ranjit and Tista Valleys. The road is via Kalimpong, the amazing town of pedlars of every description. From Gangtok the Ingh Mountains are as beautiful and even closer than from Darjeeling and the lower hills too contain much of beauty : butterflies and birds, orchids, palms and bamboo ('and the wildest dreams of Kew and the facts of Kathmandu!'). And along the way are many 'chortens' or Buddhist shrines and 'mendongs' containing the mystic remark of Tibetans 'our mani padme hum'.

Gangtok owes its prominence to earlier days when it was the centre at which 3 passes, all important to the direct trade between Lhasha and Bengal, converged. Today, a metalled road goes all the way to Lhasha over the border pass of Natu La not 20 miles from Gangtok.

ASSAM

At this point we shall not so much turn our backs on the Himalayas as keep them on our left as we travel through the Duars - the lowland region of many streams and rivers coming down from the Bhuta Hills and the Himalayas behind.

We shall reach the Bramaputra River and cross over to Gauhati on the southern bank. Gauhati was the capital of the Shan kings who held sway over the hill peoples between here and Mandalay for two centuries before the arrival of the British. The Bramaputra here resembles a lake with wooded shores and a temple island and the famous temple of Kamakhya on the Nilachal Hill 2 miles below the town from where a magnificent view of the river repays a visit.

The centre of the Assam tea industry lies 63 miles to the south at Shillong in 'The Happy Valley' at 4,900 feet. A visit to a tea estate and factory can no doubt be arranged.

In the Khasis and Jaintia Hills around are Khasi peoples, whose features and language most resemble those of the peoples of Cambodia and Annam. The women are very beautiful, festivals include much dancing and society is somewhat matriarchal - including the inheritance of property.

It is also worth observing that the region has about the highest annual rainfall in the world ! - however our visit is in the dry season and we are unlikely to have any rain at all.

Either before or after reaching 'The Happy Valley' we shall want to journey towards the hills of Manipur taking one of several routes to include Kohima, Imphal and Silchar ; roads are reasonable - as these days for the most part are the officials.

BANGLA DESH

Crossing the delta that is the alluvial flats of Bangla Desh in the dry season will present no particular problems. There are however many ferries and the Moslem Bengalese are a striking contrast to the reserved peoples of the hills.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Over and above the documentation etc, that is necessary for the overland journey to India (see EO details 'To the Roof of the World') only a few extra preparations are required.

Booking : Send us the enclosed booking forms completed with a cheque for £25 made payable to Encounter Overland Limited, Assam Account. This money and balances will not be touched until the project arrangements are finalised. The balance is due before you leave London.

Insurance : Make sure that your personal accident insurance covers the extra period. If necessary we can arrange the extension.

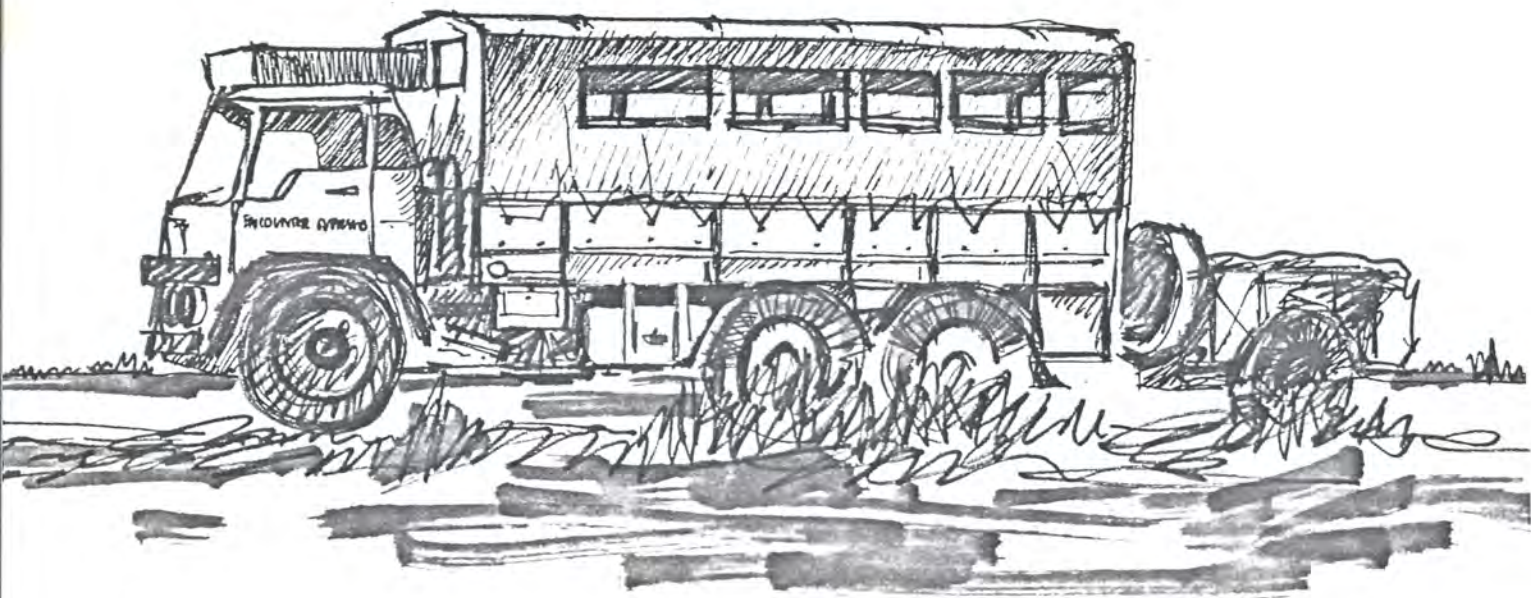
Special Permits for Sikkim & Assam : These two permits are applied for separately to the Indian authorities. We have been asked to make our applications en-group and as soon as possible.

Bangla Dosh : Visas are not required. Our chosen points of entry and exit are permitted to land travellers.

Nivaquin against Malaria : as supplied by EO must be continued during and for three weeks after the Assam project.

Calcutta Mailing Address : will be supplied at a later date.

Any Queries Please Direct To : ENCOUNTER OVERLAND LTD
01 370 6951/2.



THE TRUCK WE WILL PROBABLY BE USING



ENCOUNTER OVERLAND LTD.

271 OLD BROMPTON ROAD LONDON SW5 01-370 6845