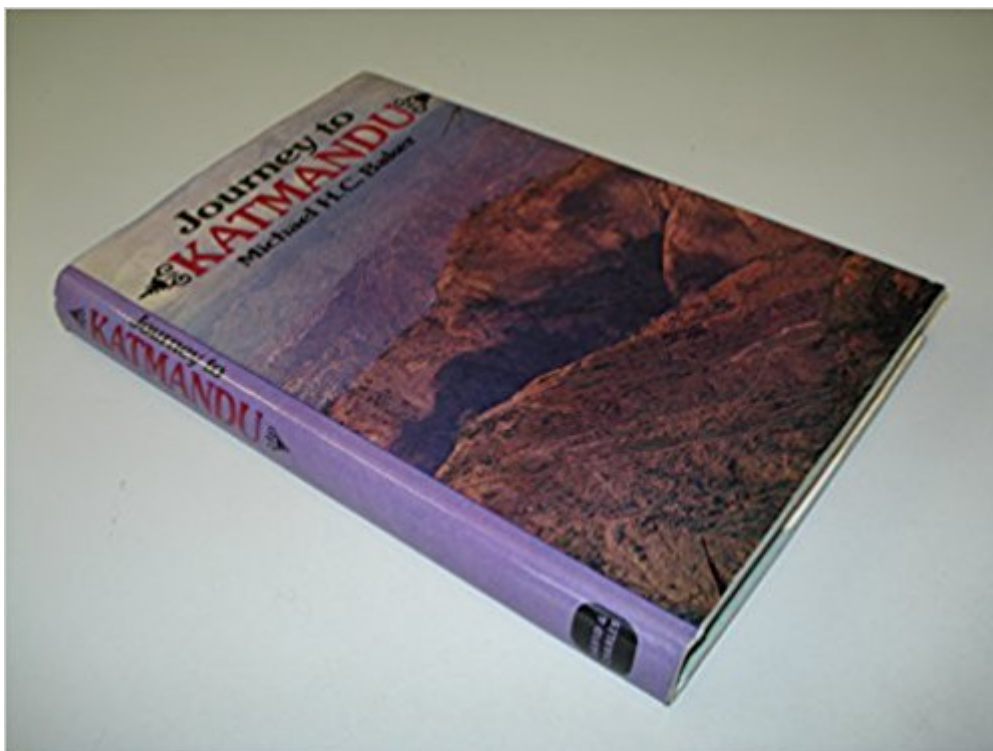


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Journey To Kathmandu



Book Information

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Customer Reviews

While the overland route from Istanbul to Kathmandu in the 1960s and early 1970s is mainly remembered as the "hippie trail", Michael H.C. Baker's travelogue *JOURNEY TO KATMANDU* represents what was in fact a more typical demographic among English-speaking travellers: fairly conventional young people trying to get to and from Australia cheaply. In March 1967, Baker set out as a driver in a convoy of three covered lorries (trucks) that formerly belonged to the army. Carrying 46 passengers, they travelled for several weeks through France, Italy, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Baker's text is accompanied by several black and white photographs, a few somewhat crude drawings based on photographs, as well as maps of Europe and the Middle East/South Asia with the convoy's route. Perhaps the best aspect of Baker's book is its depiction of Afghanistan as a slowly modernising state under Russian, West German and American investment, and he even tells something of the aborted reforms of Amanullah Khan in the 1920s. While other accounts of the overland trail tend to focus on how suddenly exotic and alien Afghanistan was, Baker speaks mainly of the new roads, cinemas, hotels and the new generation of businessmen who had travelled abroad and spoke English. One therefore gets a feeling of the enormous tragedy that befell Afghanistan with the Soviet invasion, the subsequent rise of the Taliban and then the American invasion. Otherwise, this is not my favourite of Istanbul-Kathmandu travelogues. Baker's prose style is extremely dry and formal, reminiscent more of a Victorian officer's account of travels in the Raj than a publication from the early Seventies. Incidentally, nowhere in the book is the year of the journey specified (my guess of 1967 is based on the author's website), which is frustrating for readers who want to get an idea of how the overland trail changed over time. There are also a small number of misunderstandings of local culture and history, though

the fact that Baker is so interested in these matters sets his book apart from more hedonistic accounts.

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