Paddling With the Ghost of the Giver

An expedition by Canoe

Down the Mekong Delta

Submitted in partial completion

By Matthew Smith
“Then something Tookish woke up inside him, and he wished to go and see the great mountains, and hear the pine-trees and the waterfalls, and explore the caves, and wear a sword instead of a walking-stick.”

- J.R.R Tolkien

Special thanks to,

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for constant support in shaping my views intellectually, philosophically and spiritually.
Preface

Escapism ultimately is a comfort. Accepting this truth was tied to my childhood. However, even after this I find myself still day dreaming of adventures and heroic legends. It was after reflecting on a hiking trip in the Snowdonia mountain range birth place of the King Arthur legends, these dreams were reawakened. I realized, walking among ancient ruins, dunking into the water of Lyn Agwyn and standing on Snowden’s peak where King Arthur had defeated the king slayer, that true adventure transcends fiction and is built into the core of every daydreamer.

Actualization of adventure must be done by realistic means. This is the mindset of the expedition planner. The completion of my proposed expedition on the Mekong Delta will be the culmination and proof of my mastery of the expedition planner’s mindset. What will follow in this proposal is an argument to prove my mastery is this field of study.

This document is research into both the Cambodian and Vietnamese sections of the “Dragon’s Mouth” expedition seen at www.cprexpedition.weebly.com. This document features research about the entire route but focuses on the section of river within the Mekong Delta.
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Purpose and Standards I

Purpose

For myself, there is not a great reason to take an expedition besides “I must.” “I must” is an unexplainable force that motivates adventurous people. Something inherent in these people cries out to see the world first hand. It is the reason Magellan circled the globe or astronauts stepped on the moon. Advances in human history were only a side effect of “I must.” It is this force that now drives me down the Mekong.

Ultimately it will be up to the spirit of the expedition to determine what I am able to learn. Until this I must remain open to the expedition. I can foster this by being aware of thematic value. I must remain open and aware of the Culture and history around me. This expedition is ultimately cultural rather than highly technical. It is now my task to heighten my awareness of these themes.

Inherent in the challenge will be personal milestones and validation. Successful completion will be evidence of my growth as a paddler and adventurer. A personal milestone will be the completion of my expedition. It will symbolize my ability to independently organize and execute an expedition to remote places.


Standards

This is an outline of the standards at which I will hold my expedition and the goals I have set in those standards. My Expedition will demonstrate my professional goals in style, ambition and technical challenge.

Expedition style reflects the ethical, creative and intellectual standard. The standard I am expressing in this expedition is a standard of preparedness. I will fully plan out my expedition to maximize success and minimize failure. This means I will enter my expedition in Vietnam and Cambodia prepared with all necessary cultural, scientific, physical and technical information and research. In addition my expedition is also based on the ethical standard of leave no trace ethics.

The choice to propose an expedition in a remote area rather than an easily accessible area is evidence that I strive for a high standard of ambition. It would be simpler and easier for me to plan a low distance expedition in an area closer to home. However, I want to communicate through my expedition this ambition. This expedition in the Mekong Delta is remote. It is remote in the sense that I will be in what is considered a third world country with a language barrier, and hundreds of miles from adequate medical attention or rescue. This expedition is on the other side of the world opposed from the east coast of the USA. It is remote in that I will have no sense of safe haven.

I have selected the Mekong Delta to demonstrate the standard I strive for in technical ability. The challenge presented will be that of high volume river features. It will almost seem as if I am dealing with tidal environments due to the wideness and deepness of the river.
My expedition as a thesis is a pivotal point in which to demonstrate the standards at which I choose to operate in the outdoors. Through setting goals of style, Ambition, and technical challenge I have the opportunity to construct a base for my professional career.

**Standards Related**

This section is an outline of the minimum standard of expedition parameters set by the Expeditionary Studies program and a description of how I have met them. It will stand as the technical half of my defined purpose and standards. The purpose of these guidelines is to achieve legitimacy within the standards of the Expeditionary Studies Degree.

- Follow leave no trace ethics:
  - The expedition will follow leave no trace ethics. In the section on standards this is mentioned.
  - Minimize camp fire: My expedition will not use camp fires more than needed to scare off animals. Most often we will use low impact wood gasifying stoves. As a backup we will use an alcohol burning stove.
  - Dispose of waste: My expedition we practice the carry-in-carry-out principle and bring all waste with us as the expedition moves. We will carry garbage with us.
  - Camp on durable surfaces: My expedition will use hammocks and therefore be off the ground entirely.
  - Leave what you find: this expedition will seek to trample or disturb the forests a minimal amount. By practicing Mindful awareness and using hammock shelters that are suspended off the ground.
  - Respect wildlife: my expedition incorporates research about wildlife and the natural world. The awareness of this information will help my expedition be sensitive to the wildlife of
Vietnam. Giving animals distance in the expedition is also crucial to our safety.

- Minimalist equipment ethics:
  - Packing efficiently is key to the success of this expedition. Evidence of efficient packing is seen in my section on equipment. We will cut down on luxury items. We will not bring camp chairs, or other unnecessary items. Every item will have special consideration while packing.

- Unsupported:
  - The chapter on the route and itinerary will show that I am unsupported during the expedition. We will be living out of the canoe every day.
  - I will not use assistance from others mid trip to resupply or provide equipment. I will not have a safety net of being followed by car or power boat. The expedition will be a product of my planning alone.

- Advancement of skill:
  - The Mekong Delta is a technically challenging environment that will require me to perform on a high technical level of skill. My section on training, “Appendix C” and my section on “Expedition Partners” will show that this expedition will require more training for technical skill and present a high level of challenge. This expedition presents the challenges of high volume river reading and advanced navigation.

- Time required to establish self-reliance:
  - The itinerary in the route section defines at least 20 days. Self-reliance is fairly subjected to interpretation but I believe 10 days of paddling is long enough to establish what I consider self-reliance.

- Minimum guidance from other sources and planned/executed by students:
  - I will use expedition reports and local knowledge from other sources but the planning, implication and thinking will be produced from students.
This expedition will be sponsored by many companies and sources but the it is a mutual exchange of funding and discounts for promotion.

- Danger avoidance and level of challenge:
  - The Mekong Delta is a navigational nightmare with thousands of side channels ending in strainers or dead ends that change annually due to vegetation growth. The challenge however will be cultural. The language barrier will be difficult to say the least. In addition the wildlife will be a large concern alongside the various diseases and poor sanitation/medical standards.

- Not an areas already traveled to:
  - I have never been to Vietnam or Cambodia. Therefore this expedition will not violate this guideline.

- 100 miles outside of Plattsburgh and home:
  - Cambodia and Vietnam is a few thousand miles from Plattsburgh and home. Therefore this expedition will not violate this guideline.

- Justifiable outcome for concerns:
  - See the chapter on Risk and the section on Purpose.
  - The expedition has concerns of safety, but I have minimized this with my risk assessment chapter. The outcome for me will be graduating from the program and the start of an outdoor career along with personal gratification.

- Exceed 300 level course in difficulty:
  - This expedition will be highly challenging and require commitment to increase skill beyond 300 level standards. See section on training, expedition partners. No 300 level classes are as remote or deal with as many dangerous animals. Also reading a large river filled with boils reversing currents, and whirlpools will surpass 300 level classes.

Add value to your professional esteem:
An expedition in the Vietnam Cambodian Mekong Delta area demonstrates a high level of ambition. It demonstrates my ability to plan logistics preparation and training. The result will be a substantial amount of days added to my logbook that are unlike any other days logged thus far. Also all the writing and planning and expedition reports will be documented online in the digital commons database. When my name is searched for online this expedition planning and the report that follows will be shown.

Being recognized by companies through sponsorship will get my name more recognition in the professional community. Seeking publication will also greatly boost my name’s notability in the industry.

See section on standards.

Presentation:

The presentation for this expedition will be completed upon return from the expedition. Also a website/blog will follow the expedition.

Evidence of training for conditions that will be encountered.

The training for this expedition will be documented in a separate logbook as proof. If evidence of training needs to be presented these logbooks will show details of the type, scope, and timing of the training.

See appendix C, expedition partners, and the section on training.

6 or more hours of on water paddling a day.

See the Section on Itinerary and Route.

In order to complete this expedition I will need to paddle at least 6 hours daily. The average mile day for this expedition will be 20 miles.

Ten nights

This expedition is 20 days long and will easily cover 10 nights of camping outside.
• The expedition is planned to be well over 10 days long. (See itinerary.)

• Planned Flexibility

  o My expedition has wiggle room built into it in case of failure or modification. (see contingency plan and Itinerary.)

  o The plane ticket will be booked with 1 week either side of the expedition. Also I have written contingency plans in case my expedition is completely blocked out by weather conditions.

  **Expedition Partner**

  The only person I could imagine as a partner on this expedition is Garrett Cooper. He is a competent canoeist, an expert traveler, and above all an adventurer at heart. Garrett has been a peer in education and guide in discovering my own view, towards adventure.

  Garrett and I have worked together in the outdoors before. We have worked in low stress and high stress situations as well as a variety of environments and disciplines. This mutual experience is crucial for the expedition. These experiences give me an idea of how our dynamics will play out during the expedition. This experience also gives me a basis on which we can place a logical trust.
Context II

Human Context

Cambodia, Khmer and the Mekong Delta

Cambodia is the middle child of the Southeast countries of Asia surrounding the Mekong (less popular than its’ neighbors and usually overlooked and lumped into a unfitting category.) Cambodia is purely Indochina. Cambodia is on the clearest cultural border of China and India. Chinese influence is likely seen in government and politics while Indian Culture is deeply rooted in Cambodia’s Art and traditions (Ray).

In general Cambodian people are described as very friendly people. A sort of signature of the Cambodian people is the “Cambodian smile.” One of the claims about Cambodian people is that they have a very noticeable and constant smile. In fact, unlike many other cultures Cambodian people will smile through embarrassing or uncomfortable moments. Cambodians might even smile through anger or sadness. Without being forewarned a foreigner could be easily confused or offended (Hill).

The ethnic landscape of Cambodia is comprised of Khmer, Cham, Chinese, Vietnamese, and “hill tribal” people. The Khmer are the official popular majority although in recent years that majority is starting to wane. The Khmer of Cambodia and people who consider themselves
native Cambodians have been misunderstood and do not appreciate being compared to their neighbors, especially if it’s a comparison not in their favor (Ray).

The Khmer rouge is a large piece of Cambodian history and it is still a very fresh wound. As a lasting effect Cambodia is largely corrupt. Laws are made very differently in Cambodia rather than in the Western World. In America it is said that laws are made to protect the rights of the people, in Cambodia laws are made almost officially to protect the rich and powerful. There is a very blurry line between the police and the military. In addition, corruption is not just in the most powerful but also within many police and government officials. Bribes are a regular part of Cambodian life and should be expected on the expedition (Ray).

Until the 1800’s The Mekong Delta basin was part of the Khmer Kingdom and then it was settled by the Vietnamese. Cambodians remember the region used to be theirs and still refer to it as Lower Cambodia. Obviously the area is Vietnamese but there is still a strong culturally Khmer presence. The Khmer Rouge led a campaign to retake the Basin. The Vietnamese army retaliated and eventually this lead to the downfall of the Khmer Rouge (Hill).

Paddling on the Mekong

The Khmer culture developed in the Mekong river basin area. The largest market area of the Mekong Delta is literally floating in the middle of the Delta. As such paddling to the Khmer people has developed very differently than both the typically notable paddling cultures of Greenland and Europe. To Europe and the Western world paddling has developed as a recreational sport. In Greenland paddling developed as a tool and skill used to enable and protect hunters in a technical ocean environment. The Khmer and other cultures of the Mekong
developed paddle craft to maneuver the mellow waters of the basin. The Khmer use round baskets with a thin paddle to skull their way through the crowded floating markets of the Mekong Delta (Hill).

Cambodia has a holiday that does embrace the sporting side of paddling however. The festival of Bon Um Tuk is celebrated at the end of the Rainy season in November. The festival features dragon boat races. The Cambodian Dragon boat is a long dugout canoe style boat mounted by as many as 30 people at once. The festival celebrates a Khmer Naval victory over the Cham people in the Tonle Sap Lake (Hill).

The only major “recreational” expedition style paddling attempt at the Mekong was by Mick O’Shea. O’shea writes about his successful solo source to sea expedition down the Mekong via Kayak in his book *In the Naga’s Wake*. It’s difficult to sum up O’Shea journey in a paragraph, but in short it was incredible yet for some reason not given an appropriate amount of credit (O’shea).

**Natural Context**

**Climate**

The Climate in Southeast Asia is notable for being extremely hot and humid. The humidity in Southeast Asia is due to the large monsoon season. The Monsoon Season is from June until November. During this time monsoon rains take countries like Cambodia and puts them at their peak of humidity. Naturally during these months in the summer time the temperatures in Southeast Asia reach their highest. From November to June the rains stop and the dry season begins. In this time the humidity drops and so does the temperature. In addition to
dropping temperatures, the mosquito season ends. There are still mosquitoes during this time but they are significantly fewer than in peak season.

The choice to go during the dry season seems obvious however; the largest concern is not mosquitoes but water levels. If we waited until the end of the dry season then we would risk the drying out of the river especially in the Srepok. By going just as the monsoon season ends the river should hold onto some of its water and allow for the insects to dissipate.

Flooding will not be a problem during the time that we are going. The dry season does not experience any major fluctuations in precipitation enough to flood a river to dangerous levels.

The way we will get information about weather during this expedition is by getting an extended forecast at every stop point along the way. We will record the weather as far into the future as possible at every city and town. There is likely to be points where we are unable to have weather updates that are totally accurate and some days we will simply not have that information. However, we will practice now-casting and record the weather patterns and conditions of the days. In addition we know that it is the dry season and we will know the general pattern of weather.

Animals

The Mekong River is the 3rd most bio-diverse river in the world. The river is filled with many species of fish and other river life that is unique to the Mekong. Possibly the most notable non-fish animal in the Mekong is the Irrawaddy dolphin of the fresh water dolphin. Currently the Irrawaddy Dolphin is endangered likely from fishing. The river is Cambodia’s main source of animal protein and fishing is a way of life for most people living on the river. Therefore,
overfishing has caused the fresh water dolphin to get trapped in nets or killed/disrupted by
dynamite fishing.

Cambodia is also home to the Asian Elephant. These rare animals are also endangered
and worse suffer from constant injuries from undetonated landmines. These landmines are
scattered through the forests of Vietnam and Cambodia. Elephants are too large to fully die from
“toe-popper” landmines and instead lose a leg. These injured Elephants are rescued by the World
Wildlife Federation stationed along the Srepok. In this station the WWF has worked with these
elephants and fitted them with prosthetic limbs (WWF).

The list of venomous snakes is long however here are a few worth mentioning. Cambodia
is in the top 5 countries listed as having the highest concentration of venomous snakes in the
world. The rest of the top 5 are its’ neighboring countries. Cambodia is home to a snake called
the Spitting Pit Viper. It is a snake that spits venom into the eyes of its’ victim rather than biting
it. The second snake on the do not disturb list is the Krait. The Krait is a striped snake that is
simply one of the most venomous snakes in the world. The Krait is mostly found in the ocean
hunting in packs but there are land varieties that behave differently (Cooper). The last notable
venomous snake it the King Cobra. The King cobra is in the top 10 most venomous snakes on
land. The King Cobra is the longest venomous snake in the world. A King Cobra can get to be 18
ft in length if fully grown. The king Cobra’s venom is a neurotoxin and destroys the tissues on
the body quickly and effectively by traveling through the central nervous system. A bite from
any of these snakes if untreated by professionals immediately is a guaranteed fatality with in at
most 20 minutes. Another snake that is notable which does not use venom is the reticulated
python. The reticulated python is the largest snake in the world. The reticulated Python can grow
to be 22ft long and weight up to 166 pounds. These snakes kill their victims by first biting and
holding onto their victims and the wrapping their bodies around their victim and constricting. The result is that the snake suffocates the victim while also breaking apart its’ skeleton in order to swallow it easier (Campbell).

**Environment**

The Mekong Delta is largely composed of wetlands and flood plains. The flora and fauna of the delta largely depend on which part of the monsoon season Cambodia and Vietnam are in. Just above the delta is a Lake called the Tonle Sap. This lake is also strongly affected by flooding. Every year the Tonle Sap reverses direction along with the flood. This is one of the only inland rivers in the world that reverses like this (Campbell).

The northern sections of Cambodia are covered with forest. It may be misunderstood that Cambodia features jungle. Like most of the Cambodian environment, the forests change according to the monsoon and flood season. The forest for most of the time is lush and covered with dense green vegetation. However, during the dry season these forests dry up and become less humid. These forests are largely Old growth and are protected by the Cambodia government. Illegal logging is becoming a major problem in forest areas that are still protected like the Ratanakiri province.

**Itinerary**

**Travel Itinerary**

Garrett arrives in Phnom Penh December 9th. I will meet him on the 9th at the Golden Boat 2 guest house. The golden Boat 2 is down the road from the Pontoon club. I will take a tuktuk to the Golden Boat 2. Email through internet will be our main form of communication
Once joined in Phnom Penh we will spend 3 days getting adjusted to culture, language and food. We will also use these 3 days to buy our food for the first leg of the expedition and any extra supplies we may need. We will also solidify our transport to the river.

From Phnom Penh it will be 1 day of travel to Strung Tren by bus. The bus with either be a charter or a mini-bus. From Strung Tren we will travel 1 day by bus to Ban luag, we will spend the rest of the day in Ban Luag. The next day we will travel the short distance to Merauch to then put in on the water. This period of travel is to adjust to Cambodian culture, food and environment. Along the way we will stop for sightseeing. In country travel will be slow paced so that we have time to adjust and somewhat recover from jet lag.

Directions to the Golden Boat 2

1. Head southwest on Runway
   800 m
2. Take the 1st right
   280 m
3. Take the 2nd right toward Confederation de la Russie
   450 m
4. Take the 1st left toward Confederation de la Russie/
   280 m
5. Take the 1st right onto Confederation de la Russie/
   9.1 km
6. Continue onto Jok Dimitrov Blvd
   140 m
7. Slight right onto 120
   350 m
8. Turn right toward Neayok Souk
   300 m
9. Slight right onto Neayok Souk
   120 m
10. Take the 2nd right onto 51/Pasteur
    400 m
11. Take the 2nd right onto
    Destination will be on the left
Route Plan Map Day by Day

Strategy

The plan for the proposed section and all contingency routes is a general 20 mile day.

With a down river wind flushing out towards the ocean during the day combined with our canoe sail and some current pushing us along the 20 mile days will well within our ability range. To give these miles some reference points, Garrett paddled 16 miles daily in a leaky, unwieldy wooden boat with a pole solo. Garrett considered the days of 16 miles by himself “easy” with “plenty of time at camp.”
The 20 miles is a guide, a general amount of distance to strive for in a day. The fact of the matter is that there will be many places we cannot land due to thick cover of territorial wildlife, or of agriculture.

**Route Plan**

The General idea is travel 20 Miles daily on average. Traffic and river offshoots are obviously the largest concerns.

- **Day 1 Phnom Penh**
  - 20 miles to unnamed Island
  - Watch out for traffic near Phnom Penh
- **Day 2 unnamed Island**
  - 20 miles to Kaoh Kantheay Island
- **Day 3 Kaoh Kantheay island**
  - 20 miles to Kaam Samnor Border Crossing
  - This is a crux move. The border crossing has potential for delays, confusion with police and possible drug smugglers.
- **Day 4 Border Crossing**
  - 20 miles to Tan Long
- **Day 5 Tan Long**
  - 20 miles to Cao Lanh
- **Day 6 Cao Lanh**
  - 20 miles to An Binh
- **Day 7 An Binh**
- Stay Right and proceed 20 miles downriver.
  
- Day 8
  - 20 miles to stay right go past My tho to Cu lap Tam Heip

- Day 9 Cu Lap Heip
  - 20 miles to coast Cua Tiea

- Day 10 Cua Tiea
  - 20 miles down coast to Song Dong Tranh

- Day 11 Song Dong Tranh
  - 12 miles to Vung Tau

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**Termination Standards**

**Severely elevated political unrest.**

Political unrest is common in Cambodia, as an emerging country it’s expected. However, once foreigners are being harmed then evacuation is necessary. In the case of evacuation due to political unrest the nearest embassy will be located. In addition, crossing the border to a new country will also be considered. However, a border at the time of political unrest will be difficult.

Political unrest is not certain but is very possible. The Typhoon of November 2013 has passed through that area and will put pressure on a people system that is already weak. The political situation in Cambodia will be monitored leading to the expedition.

**Natural (or otherwise) disaster**
The remote parts of the Mekong are subject to releasing dams. If a dam releases too much water upstream and causes severe flooding in a certain area we will be forced to skip that area and possibly the entire river.

**Emergency evacuation**

If either Garret or I need to be evacuated for medical reasons then the expedition will be terminated if one of us cannot recover. There will be no planned solo attempts. This also includes deadly sickness however sudden or gradual.

**Veto**

Garrett and I both have an agreed upon Veto we can use if we are concerned for our safety with a given challenge. If one of us vetoes a section, certain challenge, or the entire expedition then termination is reasonable.

**Crux Points**

The Crux points of this expedition are difficult to pinpoint due to the unknown factor. For instance, a likely crux point will be rapids or strong conflicting currents. So called “recreational paddlers” do not paddle the Delta. Instead much of the delta is a community of agriculture. Therefore, the information on rapids and rough water is not from the same perspective as a paddler. So rapids are either ignored or unidentified. Information on rapids will have to be gleaned from locals.
In place of a “crux point” this expedition has “crux aspects” or a crux point that spans the entire expedition. The major crux of this expedition will be navigation. There are many unmapped false channels within the delta and Mekong. These channels change with seasons and can only be avoided by practicing mindfulness and good judgment.

Appendix A: Risk Management

Cultural Considerations

Camouflage

While on our expedition we are not hiding from anyone but we are not trying to be seen by anyone either. As two tall white skinned Americans in a 3rd world Southeast Asian country we will always stick out no matter what. This however does not mean that we have to choose to look more conspicuous. To plan for this we will socially camouflage ourselves. We will aim to dress plainly and non-descript. We will hide the fact that we have valuable items with plain even possible slightly dirty clothes. Bright colors and logos will be avoided. Our sources of currency will be kept secure and out of the way of pick-pockets (Ray). Any devices that are “shiny” or expensive looking will be kept out of site and stored. Hats are also a way to draw less attention. A covered head does not reveal uncommon hair color and patterns (Hill).
Theft

Theft is a large threat. Our gear is vital to our success and survival. The areas we are travelling through will have many people who are living in poverty. Our gear to some of these people will look like an easy way to make money and so some people will try and take our gear. On the Mekong delta there will be a large number of people and despite our best efforts two westerns in a canoe will stick out of the busy waterways of the floating market (Ray).

We will less likely be robbed during the day and more likely at night. during the day we will practice street smarts and not leave of gear or put ourselves in an obviously high risk areas. At night we will work out a system of surveillance. At night we may need to take shifts staying awake (Ray).

While traveling the market we will keep our passports, cash and important items hidden from pickpockets (Ray). We will seek out positive, safe cultural interactions while being mindful and vigilant. This means we will monitor interactions and make sure we are not being cornered or taken anywhere we don't want to go.

Playing Dumb

The difference between acting dumb and playing dumb is expansive and for the sake of our safety must be distinguished. “Playing Dumb” is a useful tool for negotiating sensitive cultural situations. For instance, many law enforcement individuals in Cambodia and Vietnam our corrupt and expect bribes. Playing dumb in the right situation at the right time can mean that the individual expecting a bribe might get frustrated that you aren't picking up on idea of bribes and forget the transaction altogether.
Playing dumb is a kind of tool used to end transactions and interactions. The act is possible due to the language barrier and cultural differences. The key to playing dumb is not actually being dumb. The key is to be mindful and aware of the situation as it changes and what the situation actually is. Is the use of this technique I will follow Garret's lead. Garret has cultural experience in the third world and is practiced in the use of this technique. Until I am confident in its use I will not make drastic changes to sensitive situations until signaled by Garrett’s lead.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a skill. Mindfulness is a general awareness and an active critique of my own decisions and thinking, while also a recording of red flags and signs of a changing situation. Mindfulness is a skill that I will practice at all times. Going to sleep, buying food, talking to people, walking the city, paddling, are all times crucial for mindfulness. Mindfulness is going to be one of the largest and most effective tools for combating failure and risky behavior (Hill).

Mindfulness will begin at the in my research. Building a database of cultural knowledge is a key component of mindfulness during the expedition. This data in addition with “common sense” and traveling considerations will complete mindfulness (Hill).

Another piece of mindfulness is a checklist. This mental checklist will check things like location of valuables, standards of safety, cultural manners, and other things important for daily function.
Emergency Call-Out Plan

In a developing country evacuation options is scarce. Due to the threat of venomous animals, disease, injury or robbery this need for possible evacuation is increased even further.

The main idea for our emergency call-out plan is to be aware of the closest safe havens while keeping in mind the closest friendly contact. We will have a spot track device for emergency contacts, the number for local contacts, the police help number and plenty of bribe money for police who need convincing to help us. We will always attempt to self-evacuate before calling out for help. We will always try to self-evacuate because not only is it unethical to call for rescue when it’s not necessary, but depending on who rescues us it may be safer to self-evacuate.

In case of evacuation we will signal the spot track company and or emergency contacts using the spot track device. We will also use our cell phones to call local emergency services. In some cases it may be faster to hail a passing boat for help.

There will be parts of this expedition that will have a less likely chance of successful evacuation. This means that some sections will require extra awareness because rescue is less possible.

Official Traveler’s Concerns

United States

“Land mines and unexploded ordnance are found in rural areas throughout Cambodia, and especially in Battambang, Banteay Meanchey, Pursat, Siem Reap, and Kampong Thom provinces. Travelers in these regions should never walk in forested areas or even in dry rice paddies without a local guide.” I will not be in these provinces as part of my expedition. “Areas
around small bridges on secondary roads are particularly dangerous. Travelers should not touch anything that resembles a mine or unexploded ordnance;”

*Travel.State.Gov*

- These land-mines will not be a problem for us. Most landmines are placed around the border with Thailand which is the other side of the country. Also the Mekong and Srepok flood and then recede dramatically each year. If for some reason there were land mines in this section of Cambodia they would have been washed away through years of seasonal flooding.

*Australia*

“Banditry and extortion, including by military and police personnel, continue in some rural areas, particularly at night in areas between Snoul, Kratie and Stoeng Treng in the north-eastern provinces.”

“Piracy occurs in the coastal areas of Cambodia. Armed gangs have robbed boats in recent times.” I won’t be on the coast. This is relevant because there is no mention of the river.

“Landmines remain a danger in many parts of Cambodia, especially along the border with Thailand. Large areas of rural Cambodia are still contaminated with unexploded ordnance. Visitors to the north and northwest of Cambodia should not stray from clearly marked pathways. Exercise caution if travelling beyond the Angkor Wat temple complex to outlying temples in Siem Reap.”

“We advise you to exercise normal safety precautions.” This means to “Exercise common sense and look out for suspicious behavior, as you would in Australia.”

*Smartraveller: The Australian Government's Travel Advisory and Consular Assistance Service*

- Our response to banditry has already been mentioned in my section about Cultural camouflage.

   By not drawing attention to ourselves and practicing smart traveling practices the risk my robber is minimized.
Canada

“Cambodia remains one of the most heavily mined countries in the world. Landmines can be found in rural areas, especially in Banteay Meanchey, Siem Reap (except in the town of Siem Reap and the Angkor temples which are safe), Battambang, Kampong Thom, and Pursat provinces. The border area with Thailand is especially dangerous. Do not walk in forested areas or in dry rice paddies without a local guide. Areas around small bridges or secondary roads are dangerous. Do not visit outlying temples, particularly in the areas of Phnom Kulen and the River of a Thousand Lingas, as they are heavily mined. Strictly observe warning signs and do not handle any unknown object.”

“Pirate attacks occur in coastal waters, and in some cases, further out at sea. Mariners should take appropriate precautions.”

Travel.gc.ca

• We will not be very far off the coast in pirate territory. Even if we were we would be such a strange if not worthless target.

“Banditry continues, largely at night, in rural areas and on routes between Snoul, Kratie and Stung Treng in the northeastern provinces.”

• Again we will practice common sense and not travel around high risk areas at night.

U.K.

“Cambodia remains heavily affected by landmines and unexploded ordnance. Mined areas are frequently unmarked. Do not stray off main routes in rural areas, including around temple complexes.”
• Again Land-mines are likely to be washed away through the flooding of the river. In addition we will be away from the heavily mined areas. Secondly mining the areas we are traveling through even if it were an area of conflict would strategically illogical.

A thought on Land-mines

Land-mines are a low-risk hazard, here is why. Land-mines in Cambodia are central to the border of Thailand and Cambodia. This is due to the political tensions between the two countries. The area I will be traveling through is either a main road (to get the put-in) or at the border of the Vietnamese/Cambodian border at the very northeast corner or main border of southern Cambodia to Vietnam. This area is remote and largely left uninvolved in conflicts between the two countries. I will be far away from the high risk zones.

It is unlikely that people placing land-mines would place them directly on remote river banks. First of all, that type of area would not see much foot traffic. Secondly, Land-mines placed directly on river banks are likely to get washed away with the wild fluctuation of the river flooding and drying.

In addition, Garrett has a military background and has training in recognizing land-mines. This is not a skill to rely on however it is yet another risk mitigating factor. The one area we will want to avoid is the entrance to rural bridges. This is an area of some strategic value to those placing land-mines. It is this way because a bridge is more likely to receive foot traffic than a river bank or random location. We will watch locals crossing bridges and cross only in places that obviously receive lots of foot traffic (Cooper).
Local Contacts
  ○ Cambodian-Expeditions (Zamond)

Safe hospitals and Embassies, Cambodia

  ● Phnom Penh
    ○ International SOS Phnom Penh Clinic
    ○ House 161 Street 51, Sangkat Boeung Reng, Khan Daun Penh, Phnom Penh
      Phnom Penh 12211
    ○ Phone #: 855 23 216 911
    ○ Email: pncashier2@internationalsos.com
  ● United States Embassy
  ● 1, Street 96, Sangkat Phnom; Phnom Penh, Cambodia
  ● Phone #: +855 23 728000
  ● http://cambodia.usembassy.gov/index.html

Phone
  ● Country Code: 855
  ● International direct dialing: 00
  ● National Direct dialing: 0
  ● Police: 117
  ● Ambulance: 119

Safe Hospitals and Embassies, Vietnam

  ● Ha Noi
    ○ Hanoi French Hospital,
      ■ 01 Phuong Mai Street, Hanoi Hanoi (0)4
- Phone #: 84 (0)4 3577 1100 (operator)

- International SOS Clinic Hanoi
  - 51 Xuan Dieu, Tay Ho District (behind Fraser Suites), Ha Noi  Hanoi (0)4
  - Phone #: 84 (0)4 3934 0666
  - Email: HAN.SUPPORT@INTERNATIONALSOS.COM

- United States Embassy in Hanoi
  - 7 Lang Ha Street, Ba Dinh District; Hanoi Vietnam
  - Phone #: +84 4 38505000
  - Email: acshanoi@state.gov

- Ho Chi Minh
  - Franco Vietnamese Hospital
    - 6 Nguyen Luong Bang, Tan Phu Ward, District 7, District 7, Ho Chi Minh
      Ho Chi Minh (0)8
    - 84 (0)8 5411 3333
    - Email: insurance@fvhospital.com

  - International SOS Clinic Ho Chi Minh City
    - 167A Nam Ky Khoi Nghia St, Dist 03, Ho Chi Minh (0)8
    - Phone #: 84 (0)8 3829 8424
    - Email: RECEPT.HCM@INTERNATIONALSOS.COM

Phone

- Country Code: 84
- International direct dial: North America 01
- National Direct dialing: 0
Contingency Plan

An expedition in a country that is as far away as Cambodia do not totally allow for a solid contingency plan. If there is a reason to stop the expedition it is likely that no alternative could be undertaken.

A contingency plan will appear as an alternative choice or rather an alteration to the original plan as opposed to an entirely new one. The Mekong Delta is also known as the Nine Dragons. It is called this because the Delta splits the Mekong into 9 different channels flowing to the ocean. The easiest and most likely answer to being unable to paddle a certain section for whatever reason will be to choose the next channel (O’Shea).

The current plan is to take the northernmost route through the delta in order to have the least distance between Phnom Penh and the end point. This Route travels by the town of My Tho. A possible reason for not being able to take this route is that relief efforts From the November Typhoon will restrict entrance to this area. It might also possible that leftover debris from the same typhoon will block us from this area or at least slow us down. The typhoon may have also contaminated the water and make it unsafe around cities and towns. However, each of these scenarios is unlikely.

In order to make the decision to avoid the northern branch of the river we will have to collect local information as we go. We can try talking to locals for information be the language barrier is probably too large to communicate the actual dangers down river. We can collect information about down river by paying attention to the flow of boats to a certain area. For instance is there a
many police and emergency boats headed south to My Tho then it may be a clue as to the state of towns down river.

Another contingency plan will be a descent of the Srepok River. The planning for the Srepok River will be the same in terms of gear, nutrition, training and risk assessment however the strip of river will change. The Srepok River is located in the Northern reaches of the Cambodia in the Ratanakiri province. The breakdown of the contingency plan for the Srepok can be seen in the appendix.

If neither the Delta nor the Srepok are runnable then the last option will be from Strong Tren to Phnom Penh along the Mekong. Like the other two plans this section will have the same concerns for risk assessment, nutrition training and gear. The Itinerary and break down for this will be seen in the appendix.

Realistically if the Mekong cannot work then the expedition will turn into a long vacation. An international expedition involving this much commitment to one major river in cannot recover from losing that river.
Mekong River Contingency

Like the other sections this lower section of the Mekong shares the same concerns about risk. The risk assessment, gear, training, nutrition and culture remain the same. Like the other routes this section is based on a comfortable 20 mile day. This section will be a very wide open section of mostly calm water. The only water features that are to be expected are large boils and the occasional whirlpool. It is also mentioned in the risk assessment that strainers are a likelihood and should be awarded extra caution.
Srepok River Contingency

This map outlines the route for the Srepok river contingency plan. This route is not complex. The idea is that the average distance per day is 20 miles. The fact of the matter is that camp can only be decided based on availability of clear ground. It’s expected that most of the route will have impenetrable jungle cover. If need be Garret and I can set up camp from the canoe via hammocks.
Appendix B: Budget

This expedition has a particularly high budget cost. The breakdown listed is only my personal costs. It does not include the shared costs between Garrett and I or his costs. This expedition is made possible by donations and sponsorships. Garrett and I have raised 1,325 dollars in donations and roughly 3000 dollars in discounts and sponsorships. Without the support of these people and these companies our expedition would not be possible. Our sponsors are listed on our website.

Retail:
Pro-purchase
Purchased X
not Purchased O

Gear

- Clothing
  - Smart Wool socks x3
    - $36 O
  - Pants
    - $45 X
  - Shirt
    - $60-70 O
  - Medium layer fleece
    - $35 X
  - Drainable shoes
    - $55 O
  - Jungle boots
    - $25-35 O

- Camping
  - Hammock
    - $150 O
  - Machete
    - $25-35 O
  - Knife/multi tool
    - $25-35 O

- Dry sack

Total: $261
Sharpening stone $55
Bowl $10
Dromedary bag x 3 $108 Total $661

Paddling
Paddle Bending branches $75 Total $986
Aqua bound $75
PFD $150
Throw Rope $25

Logistics
Plane ticket $1600 - 2500
Checked bags $100 - 150
Vaccinations $75 $150 $300
Insurance $100
Travel costs $500 Total $3,236
Appendix C: Nutrition

Under normal circumstances I would build a menu with macro and micro nutrient counts of each ingredient, however on this expedition I will not have the luxury of knowing which foods will be available to me. What I do know is the principles of planning for nutrition on an expedition.

My menu will be based on an intake of at least 3000 calories per day. To efficiently metabolize energy I need to burn mostly carbohydrates. 70% of the daily 3000 will be carbohydrates. This will supply the bulk of my daily energy. I will need to supplement that supply with fats and sugars. The fats will replenish energy reserves and the sugars will initiate my metabolism and begin the burning of carbohydrates. Protein will be added in as about 15% of the total daily intake of calories. Protein is like fats and sugars in that they are inefficient to burn. Therefore, protein is a recovery macronutrient. Protein will be necessary for long term paddling to repair muscles (Twight).

Micronutrients are important for staying healthy and staying supplied with electrolytes. Micronutrients are required by the body in much smaller amounts than macronutrients. However, while much less of these nutrients are required they are no less important. In addition there is no one food that supplies all micronutrients and many micronutrients appear in trace amount in particular foods. Therefore to maintain a balanced intake of micronutrients I must diversify my menu for a long term expedition. This means I will eat a variety of foods alongside a daily multivitamin.

The benefits of an effective nutrition plan are crucial to an expedition. A properly fed body is more resilient to medical issues and performs at a higher level of activity. A properly fed
person will be able to regulate body temperature. This means the body will stand a better chance against hypothermia and heat stroke. In addition, proper nutrition will give the body a stronger defense against common illnesses. Performance also benefits from quality nutrition. Sufficient micronutrients allows for proper hydration. This allows for maximum flexibility and circulation. Quality macro nutrients allow for consistent energy levels. A consistent energy level creates a consistent mood and psyche. Decision making is impaired with a poor mental state (Draper).

Eating local food in Cambodia will be slightly risky for expedition standards. Local food, which my body is not accustomed too, will disrupt digestion. Therefore, wherever I can I will seek packaged food. Rice is a staple of the Cambodian diet and is safer because rice must be boiled in order to eat it. Rice is an effective source of carbohydrates and will likely be the bulk of my diet during the expedition (Hill).

Hydration

In particular this expedition will require me to be above all over biophysical states, hydrated. Staying hydrated will have benefits but mainly hydration will prevent a cycle of side effects that will build upon each other. More so than in other environments dehydration will have a higher consequence. The benefits of hydration will help combat sickness, the risk of sickness, overuse injuries, heat control, nutrition, performance, and physiological state (Trillo).

Dehydration will cause my body to overheat. This overheating will cause me to expend more calories. Expending more calories will interrupt an efficient burn of carbohydrates. If I am unable to efficiently burn carbohydrates and must burn fats instead I will receive little help from my intake of food energy. Also if I am working harder and burn all of my glycogen I will not be
able to access the efficient burn of carbohydrates. When I am not able to regain that burn my body will begin to synthesize glucose in an new and much less efficient way as compensation. This new method creates ammonia as a result and will negatively affect muscles and recovery time (Twight).

The main physical concern of this expedition is preventing overuse injuries. The second largest concern is regulating temperature in a hot environment. Therefore, avoiding an inefficient burning process and avoiding overheating by staying hydrated is crucial.

**Hydration Plan**

When Garrett and I are putting in miles while paddling, we will maintain hydration by consuming a sip of water every 15 minutes. Consuming water in this style will allow for the most efficient intake of water. Hydration gained in this way will allow all consumed water to be absorbed. If daily water was consumed at once a small amount of that water would actually be put to use and the rest would be wasted taking precious nutrients and electrolytes with it (Twight).

Clean water is going to be difficult to get while in Cambodia. The water we be paddling in the delta is toxic or otherwise filled with parasites, sometimes both. We are likely to see that most of the water is polluted but if we have the chance to not drink polluted water we will. We will be mainly using a carbon filtration system built into our bottles. The filter filters “99.99%” of all viruses, bacteria, parasites and chemicals. We will filter the sediment out through a thin cloth and coffee filter and then through our bottle filters and if we are still not convinced we will boil it. The Carbon in the filter will filter out 99.99% of fatal chemicals left by pollution (Campbell.)
Our main source of water will actually be bottled water. This water is going to be free of local pathogens. At every stop where there is bottle water we will resupply. Bottled water is available at every major town and city. It is a common item due to churning stomachs of tourists.

**Appendix D: Training**

I have found that Training is the best way to stay motivated and committed to an expedition. Taking time out of every day to work towards your expedition is invaluable. Training has taught me the value compromise, discipline and fortitude. This section is a brief overview of the principle by which I train.

All of this training must be planned in a healthy long term style while including peak performance. Below are the principles of training I will use to build this training program as a safe and healthy project.

**Functional stability**

- The way functional stability works within a training program is that it is more of a thought process that can be applied to training and movement. Within this principle of functional stability there are other principles like upper and lower control zones, planes of movement and controlled fluid motion.

- Functional stability also works on a system of analysis and reform. Every two weeks functional stability training requires for the athlete to reevaluate the quality of his or her
movement. From there the athlete introduces the next phases of functional stability movements and exercises (Elphinston).

- Functional stability is meant to create and then correct movement. Functional stability also is used to create core strength and core control.

Strength

- Expeditions do not require high levels of aerobic strength and rather they require long term endurance. This means that in a training program for an expedition the initial phase is the time to build the strength necessary for endurance and then the later phases of the program is used to taper strength building. Altogether strength building lasts about 4 weeks.

- An important aspect of training for expeditions and where efficient travel is based on athletic form is fluid motion. A body builder will build one muscle separate for the others so that it looks larger and more clearly defined. An expedition athlete wants the opposite, mindset for training. In order for muscles to work efficiently they must be trained all together so that they can withstand long term repetitive movement. This means that weight training in the gym is not the type of exercise that is needed for this training program. Instead when strength is being built it needs to be in the form of controlled body weight training or functional strength training (Twight).

Endurance

- Cardiovascular training when being composed throughout a program can be approached in many different ways and set at different styles for example, aerobic, anaerobic, Endurance, and short term (Walter).
Expedition training wants to be set even lower than aerobic training for the most part in terms of heart rate. Training above aerobic levels will make the athlete lose endurance and rather only have the ability to produce a short burst of energy with a long recovery period. Because the expedition member is a long term athlete their training program will focus on a target heart rate of around 120 (below the aerobic zone) and 150 (aerobic zone). From there the athlete will approach all cardiovascular activities maintaining this heart rate and eventually will train this level of respiration and metabolism to deal high demands and longer distances (Friel).

Neuromuscular

- In order to train effectively at a specific activity, healthy neurological pathways need to be reinforced. This is achieved by first training with the goal of endurance, so that the stamina of neuromuscular output can be increased and the correct motions can be reformed for efficient movement (Elphinston).

  - In layman's terms, I need to practice paddling to get better at paddling.

Structure

- My training plan will be based on a simple training structure to achieve “peak performance.” The general trend is that the beginning of my schedule will build strength. The second half of my program will take that strength and add endurance. I will Decide how strong I want to be and then I will begin to train myself to last at that level, simple (Twight).

- Base- this is the first stage of my training. It is 4 weeks long and is meant to prepare my body for a training program. A 4 week long warm-up. This phase features easy training
with low demands. Base building requires activity in all areas of training that will come, Strength (Functional, weight power and endurance.) Cardio (power and endurance) (Twight).

- **Build-** This section of the training program adds strength to the athlete. This is where the bar is set for the rest of the program. In this phase the athlete establishes speed and power. This means low reps and high resistance in the weight room, speed in functional training and anaerobic style cardiovascular training. The end of this 4 weeks is the level of power and speed the athlete will hold the rest of the training program (Twight).

- **Endurance building-** The athlete is now concerned with endurance. When the I pick up a weight I will aim to do at least 16 to 50 reps at the highest possible weight I can practically use (meaning that I can reasonably control and that will not cause injury). When I return to the weight room I will train at this weight for the duration of the program and try to push 16 reps further towards 50 each time. For functional training I will no longer seek speed, but rather endurance. Example, instead of doing 20 pushes in the shortest time I will try to do as many pushes as I can in 1 minute without stopping (Elphinston).

- **Extensive cardio endurance and maintain strength-** The goal of this phase is to maximize the endurance of my cardio capability. Distances and time will be increase for cardio training. Secondly the muscles have stopped undergoing changes and the strength level simply needs to be maintained. Weight room activities that put high stress on the joints and muscles will be reduced and functional strength training will have a greater emphasis (Twoght).
• Taper- In order to achieve peak performance a tapering period is necessary. During this time I will do less distance and less depending workouts. I will do only enough strength training to warm up muscles so they do not get tight (Twight).

**Appendix E: Equipment**

The gear I selected for this expedition is based on a number of factors, weather, portability, emergency and wildlife.

It is Cambodia’s dry season during the proposed dates of this expedition. This is a factor of heat. My clothing choices will have to allow for proper ventilation prevention of rub rash.

The Srepok is a remote river. Everything we need we will have to bring with us. Every piece of equipment will have to be portable, even our canoe. This is why we have sought sponsorship from Pakboat. Having a folding canoe will allow us to portage easily if need be and get the boat to the river. This will also influence our 4 essential list. Since we will have to be our own advocates, we will have to bring a large kit including all necessary medical and repair supplies for the canoe, our gear and ourselves.

This expedition is technically challenging due to the environment, not the paddling features. Wildlife is the main challenge of this environment. Mosquitoes carry disease. Our equipment will be coated in mosquito resistant spray. In addition our shelters will offer bug netting.
Adaptive Systems Checklist

This proposed expedition is unlike the typically proposed expedition for expeditionary studies. As a result I will need to adapt new systems. These systems will reflect the threat of disease, heat sickness, skin rash, over use injury, travel complications and dehydration.

Overuse injury treatment kit.

Overuse injuries are a major concern. A developing injury can halt progress. An overuse injury can remain a problem even into other expeditions in the future and potentially disrupt an athlete’s career if mistreated. This new system i am adapting due to the long term nature of my expedition.

The following list is what will be the gear I will use in my system for dealing with overuse injuries.

- Ibuprofen
- Ace Bandages
- Icy Hot pads
- Aleve
- Paddle wax

The first piece of this system will be to hydrate every 15 mins with a sip of water. During the day I will monitor my body and feel for any developing problems. at the first sign of a problem I will increase breaks and change dominate paddling sides. I will use Icy-hot to minimize swelling initially and then wrap it. If the injury is major I will use Aleve and Ibuprofen (Friel).
Sanitation Kit.

Sanitation is extremely important in this environment to protect against rash, infection and disease. This system will involve body sanitation along with a utensil sanitation strategy. The following is a list of items on the list of sanitation items I will use.

- Hand sanitizer
- Sanitizing wipes
- Packtowl
- Biodegradable Soap
- Collapsible washbowl

Foot Kit.

As the body part that is interacting with the environment most the feet are especially susceptible to rot and rash. The heat and the humidity will be a catalyst for bacteria growth and will swarm the feet if the feet are not properly ventilated, sanitized and treated. The following is a list of items I will use in a foot maintenance system.

- Baby powder
- Anti-fungal powder
- Sanitary Wipes
- Sandals
- Drainable shoes
- Vinegar
- Body-glide Anti-chafing lubricant
- Calamine lotion
Traveler’s diarrhea Kit.

Traveler’s diarrhea is a major concern not because of the discomfort but because of the risk of dehydration and hypernatremia (Friel). The process the body uses to empty waste quickly skips the systems that extract water from waste. Therefore, quickly evacuated waste can cause dehydration fast.

To maintain a positive mental state and hydration diarrhea will be treated and prevented. The first step in prevention is not to not drinking unpurified local water, even if locals are drinking it. Secondly if diarrhea happens then I will respond with the following kit of medications and supplies.

Rehydrating will require a replenishment of electrolytes. Electrolytes serve as the necessary ion conductors in certain cellular processes, without them basic cellular processes would fail. Electrolytes can be mixed into drinks easily and often come with a tasty sugary powder to cover the taste of raw electrolyte. The basic sugared drink like gator-aid mix would work however, in this environment we want to not eat sugar due to bacterial growth. Bacteria use sugar and simple glucose energy to reproduce quickly. this is particularly unhelpful when fighting an infection, or sickness. To combat this, the electrolyte mix we are using is a rice based powder instead of a sugar based hydration powder.

- Sanitary Wipes
- Diarrhea medication. (Bring more than one brand to “cover all based”.)
- Stool hardener
- Toilet paper
- hand sanitizer
Works Sited


"Smartraveller: The Australian Government's Travel Advisory and Consular Assistance Service."


Trillo, Sandra. Informal Interview. 11/11/13 nutritionist.


Walter. Training for Endurance: Guide for Endurance Athletes of All Levels. Stamford, NY: