

‘Young Men, Old Mountains’



A Kayak Adventure In Tibet

Chris Eastabrook



Contents

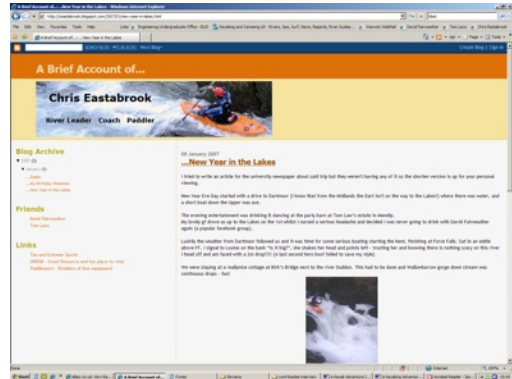
The Report.....	3
About Me	4
Expedition Team Members	7
Tibet.....	8
Political Situation	8
Geography.....	9
Food.....	10
The Expedition.....	11
24th – 31st August	11
1st – 3rd September	11
4th – 8th September	12
9th – 24th September	12
25th – 27th September	12
Rivers	12
Training & Preparation.....	14
1st Aid Training	14
PYB Expedition Weekend.....	14
White Water Training & Team Cohesion	15
Switzerland.....	16
Personal Training	17
More Detailed Cost Break down.....	18
Summary.....	20



The Report

The report for this expedition will take the form of several different commentaries:

- Blog entries from pre 12th January 07, keeping an up-to-date record of the planning, execution and follow up relating to this expedition.
- A written article aimed at the paddling press & could be used on campus to advertise sport at Warwick, will be produced.
- A written guide for the rivers that we do, as nothing like this currently exists and this would be extremely useful for anyone else thinking of heading to Tibet. Would be available on www.ukriversguidebook.co.uk as well as my coaching website.
- A well made video of the expedition. Showing all sides of the trip including Tibetan culture, top notch kayaking on remote rivers & gorges and expedition life, about 20minutes in length
- A lecture – This again could be used on campus for open day presentations, but will be used at paddling events such as the Tyne Tour, Adventure Paddler weekend in Dartmoor and other canoe club events for fund raising etc. The lecture will have 3 main sections to it:
 - Tibet as a country
 - Stories, photo & videos of the rivers
 - More general expedition planning and implementation



The lecture could be fairly long, but entertaining to listen to and will be adaptive to the audience i.e. if at Warwick keeping the river section shorter as it would be of less interest to the general public however to a paddling community this section would be more interested in the rivers and therefore the sections would be about equal.



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I have a great deal of experience in giving lectures and standing in front of a lecture room of 300 people doesn't bother me too much as it will be topic I am knowledgeable in and feeling passionately about!

About Me

My name is Chris Eastabrook and I am a 3rd year Civil Engineering student and I will be graduating in the summer of 2008 with a MEng. I have been kayaking for the last 10 years, over 5 of which have been on white water. Since arriving at university I've paddling more serious water and found a passion for Paddlesport in general.



I am currently a Level 4 Inland Kayak Coach, 4 Star Canoe and a qualified Raft Guide, qualifications which prove my experience in all areas of personal skill and instructing Paddlesport. I have paddled all over the UK from Devon to Scotland enjoying nearly all disciplines. Since the start of term I have paddled in Dartmoor, the Lake District and many times in Mid & North Wales all at the highest level and pushing myself further each time. As I am always looking for new ways to challenge myself have many more trips planned for this term, including a trip to Scotland to coach other university students on a governing body (BCU) organised course, a personal expedition to Switzerland at the end of Easter and I am leading a canoe club trip to Slovenia at the start of the summer holidays.

Paddling in Tibet would take my boating to another level, one well beyond anything in Europe and to a place that very few other people have seen. This would truly be a fantastic opportunity for me to see first hand a culture and a way of life that most people only read about and would be a spiritual journey to the heart Buddhism.



The people that would be undertaking this expedition with me would be from outside this university. This is because no current Warwick student has the necessary skills and experience to accompany me on such a trip. I am the most experienced white water coach within the university club and have organised many trips to various parts of the UK & Europe, but something on this scale is pushing even my limits, and so I feel that during such a new personal challenge I would be unable to sufficiently support



Photograph: Angie Hurd

lesser experienced paddlers below me. The people that I am choosing to go with have more experience than me, all with previous expeditions under their belt. Despite this I am playing a central role in the organisation and planning for the trip and I have a lot to offer the team.

I am a very organised person, and take great care in the administration and planning for all activities I undertake, from a day coaching at a local centre to being in overall responsibility for up to 60 novices on multi-day trips in the South of France. I feel that the skills I developed leading multi-day trips in France (as a river leader in the Ardeche last summer), although only a single night at a time, can easily be used as a frame work to plan more challenging multi night stops. I have often been called upon to make hasty leadership decision to change the tone of the trip for the safety or enjoyment of the participants.

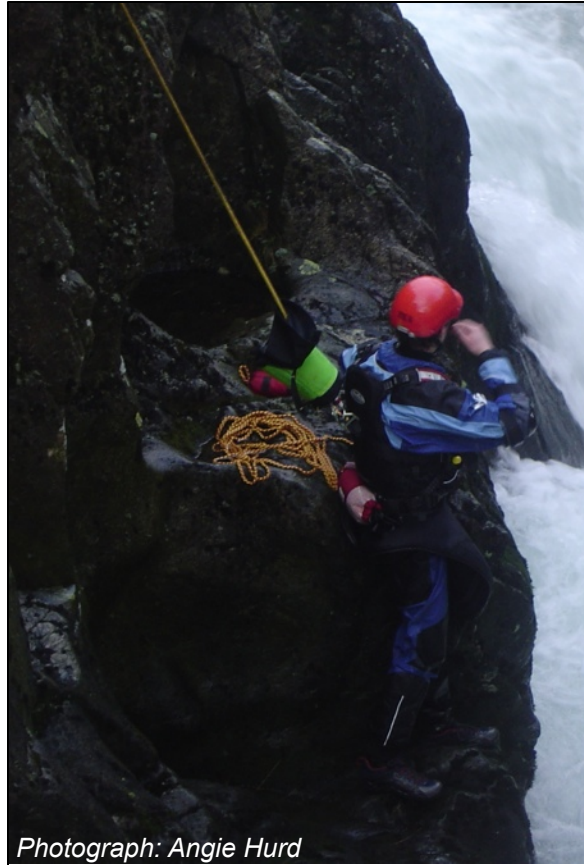
I have had training in wilderness survival techniques in the UK prior to undertaking an expedition in the Arctic with leading instructors headed by Ray



Mears, during this I learnt that I am able to maintain a clear head and work as a member of a team in extreme circumstances. I am trained to MTQ2 in the Officer Training Corp demonstrating that I am prepared to work myself well beyond normal limits and that I know I can still perform exhausted and under pressure.

From extensive training on white water safety and rescue courses, raft guide training and experience I have developed sound rope work and have often used them in situations on and off the water. I hold valid first aid certificates and have had training and experience in wilderness 1st aid.

During my university course and work as a coach I have had to address several large audiences, which I have not been phased by so would be more than happy giving the presentations before and after this expedition. I use oral skills weekly on the university radio station



Photograph: Angie Hurd

where I have just been awarded the privilege of a prime time slot, attracting the most listeners per day to the station. This gives me a great opportunity to make a large number of Warwick students aware of the expedition that is being undertaken and the Lord Rootes Fund. In addition to this I have written an article in the university newspaper and in the monthly glossy magazine promoting Paddlesport done at Warwick University. Through this I have built a good relationship with the University and Warwick Sport.



Expedition Team Members

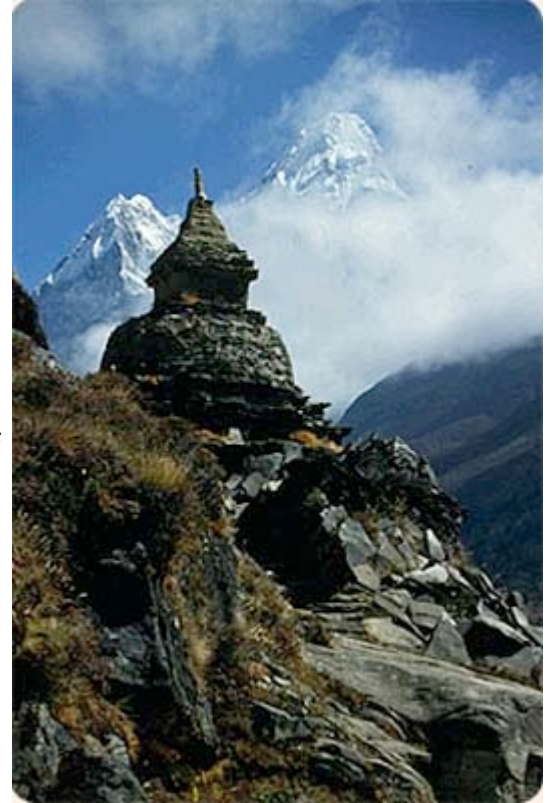
At current this is the mostly form up for the team for Tibet, if any of the following drop out we have a few people that we would invite to take their place, all equally as qualified and experienced.

The other members of the team are Rich Brimfield, Stuart Martindale and Danny Young.



Tibet

Tibet is a country rich in history and culture, with some amazing mountains and rivers. This country not only has the largest mountain in the world close by but the rivers are some of the most remote in the world. If this isn't reason enough, Tibet is the home of the Buddhism – a religion; a way of life that is so completely different from anything in the Western World; I feel I just have to see it for myself.



Political Situation

The People's Republic of China recognise Tibet as another county in its state, but the Dali Lama claims otherwise and that Tibet is and should be it's own country once again. In 1950 China invaded Tibet with minimal resistance from a poorly equipped Tibetan army. China managed to capture the Panchen Lama, who is the second highest ranking member of the Tibetan Government, and although he was a prisoner China used him to stake their claim to Tibet.

Interestingly the nearby British Army in 1904 made a short visit to Tibet from India and managed to kill over 1300 Tibetans, because it was worried that Russia was using Tibet to get a further reach over the 'world' – which turned out to be true and with the signing of a treaty in 1906 with China for better trade the British was not to interfere with Tibet.

There are many stories and news reports regarding the Republic Army and clashes with the Tibetan people, those fleeing across the mountain pass to India.



Foreign visitors are welcome and encouraged with the new infrastructure in the south created by the Chinese for this reason, as long as the correct permits are obtained and rules followed. The main ones for us to be aware of are, visitors to Tibet must be tied to an agency, in our case Windhorse Adventures and we must have permits to paddle the rivers, again Windhorse is the only company that can obtain and issue these.

I do not believe that the political situation in Tibet will stop the expedition doing anything we want to i.e. paddle uncharted rivers and see the cultural sites, as all the necessary permits will have been taken care of before we arrive.

Geography

Tibet can be divided into three main areas – North, South & East. The North is the home of the yaks and nomads with the vast grasslands and this area in size is about $\frac{1}{2}$ that of the whole of Tibet. The South and central region are



about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the total land area and has most of the larger cities in, including the capital Lhasa & Gyantse and is the cultural centre of Tibet. The East makes up the rest of Tibet and is mainly forest.



The areas the expedition will be heading to will be the South and then towards the Eastern region. The South has the most infrastructure and will be easiest to get about and experience the culture of Tibet and then heading to the Eastern areas a little way into the expedition. The rivers in the South are starting to be used for recreation, in the last few years a raft company has set up (Windhorse) offering day and multiday trips local to Lhasa. There has been two high profile expeditions from the UK and US to the area in recent years to explore the Eastern side of the country. The East still offers an uncountable number of rivers never before paddled and although even further from the help of the South – is an attractive drive.

Food

Rice doesn't grow in the high altitudes of Tibet, so unlike many of its neighbouring countries rice isn't the staple diet. Barley grows and is turned into flour then into dough called tsampa. Meat we could expect to eat would be yak or goat and they eat lots of yoghurt & cheese. The barley is also turned into a beer which I am looking forward to sampling, if barley beer in this country is anything to go by it's going to be strong!



The Expedition

This plan is not set completely in stone and due to the nature of the sport with changing water levels due to weather, what rivers we actually do in Tibet may not be certain until we get there and spend a few days with our guide and discuss logistics while we get used to the altitude. What we can and will do in the UK is plan for about twice as many rivers than we can actually paddle with the foresight to know some will not happen due to water level or access. I believe that this plan detailed below will form the foundation of the trip and will work.

24th – 31st August

Fly out of London on the 24th of August, arrive in Beijing 25th and fly to Lhasa on the 26th arriving the same day. Set up camp in our accommodation and meet with our translator / jeep driver and discuss plans for the next few weeks. During this time visit some of the cultural sites of Tibet while we spend time getting used to the oxygen level, gather food and equipment for the coming trips.

We shall paddle at least one river during this time, a low altitude river that isn't too hard to get a feel for the rivers here. A suggested river would be Duelung Chu as it is close to Lhasa and fairly easy about class III to IV.

1st – 3rd September

Moving around the South area paddling some of the rivers close to hand stepping up the grade of river each day, keeping close to Lhasa and our base camp coming back to it each night to plan & recover with that barely beer! Some suggested rivers would be the Tsangpo and Drigung Chu for this period of time.



4th – 8th September

First multiday trip in Tibet, heading to a suitable river for a 3 – 4 day that isn't very technical but offers sights of Tibet paddling passed some places of special interest such as temples.

9th – 24th September

Heading east to explore rivers that have never before been paddled and doing some harder multiday trip, this would be main aim of the trip to find some classic rivers that have never been done. This would require moving base camp and taking all our supplies from Lhasa before we leave, so a large amount of planning can be done in the UK with help via help from Windhorse but some will some will be done in the first few days as we develop our confidence. Ending the trip on high!

25th – 27th September

The journey home to capital of China and then back to London

Rivers

"Tibet is known as Khawachen, "Land of Snows," From most descriptions of Tibet it is hard to believe that it is home to a large number of spectacular rivers. Mt Kailash, in the west of Tibet is the source of the subcontinent's four greatest rivers: the Ganges, Indus, Sutlej and Bramaputra. In the east, the forested land of Kham is home to the source of the Mekong and the Yangtse, the 2 largest rivers in East Asia. In the summer months regular rains swell Tibet's



rivers and the result is a surprising number of world class rafting and kayaking rivers." – Windhorse

From speaking to the members of the last big expedition that took place last September, there is some information on a few rivers in Tibet. There are also maps available from WH Smiths of the area for basic planning before get there and when we arrive, our driver will be able to tell us how good some of the roads in the area are and whether trips we've talked about in the UK have suitable access. This is an area more research needs to be done and an idea of the rivers we could paddle in the South can be obtained from Windhorse, but the Rivers in the East will need to be done with a map and visiting the access points of the river and seeing for ourselves



Training & Preparation

1st Aid Training

In order to be a British Canoe Union Coach, I must hold a current first aid certificate. This only needs to be an 8hr appointed person's course, however due to the nature of the environment and the increased risk of injury during this sport I have completed a water specific course that deals with situations I am likely to experience on the water.

The first topics covered in a first aid course are the main aims, which are the three P's; preserve life, prevent deterioration & promote recovery. In the UK and Europe help is a mobile phone call away via helicopter, so the wait would be a matter of hours. In Tibet help could be days walk away with no support from outside the group.

For this reason, the team will be attending a specific wilderness first aid course to deal with situation beyond that found in the UK. This course has been put on just for us by www.extremecare.co.uk and a gentleman called David Hepworth but the dates have not yet been decided, but likely to be after Scotland and before Switzerland.

PYB Expedition Weekend

This is the first time that a course like this has been run by PYB. PYB is considered to deliver some of the best coaches running the most up to date courses in the county. I am fully aware that this will be my first kayak trip outside of Europe and will be rather different from anything I have done before. The whole concept of multi day trips is exciting but new.

I have decided to attend the course, to learn a few hints and tips that I would otherwise learn with experience, this will hopefully save me from making any silly mistakes on and off the water once in Tibet.



The course is over the weekend before the interview, on both mornings there will be indoor sessions and in the afternoon outdoor sessions. The four sessions I am interested in are: Staying healthy, local customs and loading boats, portaging.

White Water Training & Team Cohesion

We have 2 dates before Easter plus the Paddlesport Expedition, to work together as a team before we head to Tibet.

These weekends will be the just for us to go boating together and make sure that we can work together, learn each other strengths and weaknesses so we can perform well as a team.

The first weekend will be the Paddlesport Expedition weekend, where we won't be heading onto the water but will be there to learn but will give us a great opportunity for all of us to be in the same place at once and just to bond. The



benefits of the course are described in relevant section above.

The next time we are planning to head to the Lake District on Sunday the 18th March and coming back on the Wednesday evening. We will be staying at a bunk house at Birk's Bridge

right in the middle of the mountainous area! The site has some class IV, V white water 5minutes walk away and a large living room where we will be spending the evenings discussing rivers in Tibet and the plan in even greater detail. During

o: Angie Hurd



the day we will go kayaking in some remote steep areas to paddle together as a team.

The next trip together will be in Scotland after the BCU student safety course where 3 of the team will be coaching other university canoe club members how to safely lead down white water. We will be staying at Roy bridge and have a similar trip to that of the Lakes. We have again chosen an area that isn't our usual kayaking area (Wales) so that we can paddle river we have not done before. At this point we wish to have all of the fine details done, as during the 3rd term we all have exams to do.

These trips are really important for the group to get to know each other on mass. I have paddled with everyone on the team and know they are currently capable but it is important that the team interacts in both a social and river environment as not only will we be paddling together trusting each other with our lives at many points but also living with each other for a month, often with little food and sleep. These conditions can find one's self in the worst of moods and an important part of the team dynamics is that we can get each other through safely.

Switzerland

Tom, Graham & I will be heading to Switzerland on the last weekend in the Easter holidays along with David Fairweather and Tom Parker.

David is another student at Manchester and had already been in expeditions to Kyranstan & India, with a trip to Nepal with some of the top sponsored paddlers in the country in early Easter and an expedition to Tibet planned for 2008. I have been



boating with David many times, and know I still have a lot to learn from him. He



has been on many multiday rivers and will be able to give good advice and give us tips for packing our kayaks with all the kit required.

Tom Parker is one of the leading kayak coaches in the country and has his own company www.tomparkercoaching.co.uk. I have been on coach training courses with Tom and I have also been boating with him, I know from these casual trips before I will improve by just boating with Tom.

This trip will be really good fun, I will improve as a result of this trip and will be another place I have paddled. This gives me more experience before I head to Tibet, for multiday trips and remote access but also has the safety cover that doesn't exist in Tibet if something was to go wrong, giving an ideal pre expedition trip.

Personal Training

If all goes according to plan on the multiday trip we may be paddling for 4 - 6 days in a row, and if something were to go wrong, we could be walking out after 1 day's paddling for a 7 day walk. At current my physical condition is above average and good for a kayaker but I want it to be higher for this trip. The conditions are likely to be demanding in high altitude with little oxygen and for that reason I will be following a training program during term 3. This will be an ideal term as the training will be an escape from the revision and exam hell. I plan to run twice a week running slightly further each week starting at 1mile and running 5 miles in week 10. This will increase my lung capacity and I will therefore be able to perform better in the low oxygen environment. I also want to improve my core stability, posture and balance by use of a Swiss ball as well as improving upper body strength with press ups and sits ups; increasing the number I do again by week. Upper body training will take place 3 times a week not on running days leaving 2 rest days.

I also will be paddling once a week on a straight line on a flat river trying to clock up the miles and will therefore pushing the muscles that I am not using during the above training and improving my ability to keep going.



More Detailed Cost Break down

These details have changed slightly from the original projection in the application; these cost projections are maximums.

Item	Description	Cost
Flights	Return flights to Beijing including extra for kayaks is £550 plus internal flight from Beijing to Lhasa £200	£750
Permits	Visa for China including travel permit to Tibet and river permits	£300
Transport	Hire of Windhorse's 6 person green 4x4 vehicle is £125 per day for 24, between 6 people	£500
Driver	Wages of driver, translator & local knowledge in one, £30 per day for 24 days between 6 people	£120
Accommodation	House in Lhasa for 6 people for 13days	£50
Food	We will eat out, especially whilst travelling there, local food to eat in our rented house and the cost of the supplies we will need to take with us for the section of the trip when we head East.	£120
Equipment	Hiring camping equipment for 14 days whilst away from Lhasa.	£70



Equipment	<p>Personal Paddling gear, I will need a larger version of the boat I paddle to carry all the extra kit on multiday trips and will need to take spares of most my kit. I have a certain level of sponsorship from a paddling shop so all kit comes in cheaper.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boat - £650 (RRP £800) • Paddles - £150 • Personal Clothing - £250 • BA - £75 • Spray Deck - £50 • Helmet - £80 • Safety kit - £20 • Lightweight camping equipment (sleeping bag roll, matt, bivi bag) - £100 	£1,375
Insurance & health	Jabs in UK £150, BMC insurance world wide £180	£330
Training	First Aid £100 and PYB training £100	£200
Contingency	In case...	£100
Total		£3,815

I am planning to put my savings of £1000 towards the cost of the trip, meaning that I am asking for £2,815 which is about £500 more than I asked for originally mainly due to extra personal kit that has been recommended that I take. After talking to members of the recent trip last September, my boat will not be large enough and I can expect my paddling kit to be destroyed from the amount of transportation undertaken. If the extra funding is not available from the original cost analysis I will have to work to that budget for my kit.

The actual costs are likely to be lower and if the trip were to take place with me on it I am sure there would be spare change left at the end. This is the absolute maximum it would cost.



Summary

The personal cost to me is much more than I can afford and this trip for me will only take place with some funding. I have some savings and am planning to put this all towards this proving that I am not just after a free holiday and this trip has lots of value in turns of return.

This trip will be fantastic and would mean everything to me to be one of only a few people in the world to experience the white water to Tibet. I have a lot to gain from this; the university also has a lot to gain. The expedition write up will appear in a number of white water kayaking monthly magazines hence the Warwick name will be used in such and the write up will form the bases of my report. This will also be a lecture with photo's & video, covering aspects of Tibetan cultural experiences, the process of planning a long expedition & white water kayaking stories. I aim to provide an entertaining lecture that if not used on campus will be used at adventure paddling weekends and such over the country for up to a year after the expedition takes place.

The trip will also give me the experience I need to start leading trips to other such countries and take other able members of the canoe club and paddling community a step that many others in the sport wish to progress to.

I am not sure if this document has conveyed my excitement but during many nights planning, writing this report and looking at my map of Tibet I can barely sit still with anticipation!

Many thanks for considering my application again (!) and seeing me for an interview.