



Kayak



Borneo

2013

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Introduction

Kayak Borneo was an innovative rolling expedition exploring rivers of the world's oldest rainforest in Borneo. With a wealth of experience, on some of the hardest, most remote white water on the planet, the team had an opportunity to get a unique view of one of the world's few remaining true wildernesses.

During the expedition, the team completed a number of first descents with their sights firmly set on some of the most remote and challenging multi day rivers and exciting waterfalls.

The rainforest in Borneo has undergone significant deforestation due to heavy logging for the Malaysian plywood industry and forest fires started in order to clear the forest to provide farmland. Whilst in Borneo the team collaborated with an award winning charity, Heart of Borneo to help combat the loss of this great wilderness and further their goal of conserving the rainforests of Borneo through Exploration, Research, Education and Empowerment.

One of the unique aspects of this expedition was its "rolling" nature. Being both large and unexplored, we were certain that Borneo had plenty to offer us and the rolling expedition was our novel way to capitalise on this. At any one point in time there were 4 members of the team in Borneo, exploring and kayaking. When the inevitable happened and a member of the team had to return home for work/study, another team member replaced them. In this way the team were able to pass on contacts, knowledge, maps and equipment so that the expedition could continue through the rainy and less rainy seasons allowing exploration of larger and smaller rivers. To the team's knowledge, this is a unique approach to an expedition which has never been used before.



The Full Team



Dave Burne

Dave virtually grew up in a boat. After many family kayaking trips to the French Alps he tagged along with his older brothers trip to British Colombia aged 16, which really opened his eyes to what was possible in kayaking. Dave has enjoyed more exotic trips with a playboat to Zambia and Uganda, and high water descents of the classics were made in India and Nepal before starting University. He was a member of the 2007 British Universities Kayaking Expedition completing first descents in Siberia and Mongolia and has also lead an expedition to Tajikistan in 2010. His last big expedition was exploring the rivers of the Sri Lankan jungle in 2011.

Rob Moffatt

Rob began kayaking when his local rugby pitch flooded and the old slalom kayaks came out of the garage; 12 years on whitewater kayaking has become a central part of his life. Rob brings experience as the leader of the 2011 British Universities Kayaking Expedition to Venezuela, alongside expedition paddling in Nepal and India as well as kayaking throughout Europe, Turkey and Chile.

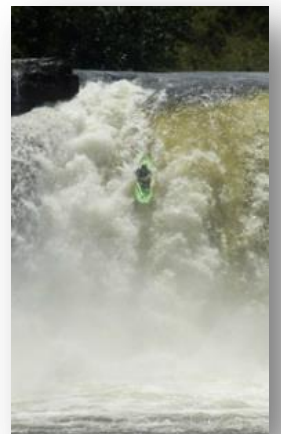


Dom Burrow

Dom, another veteran of a University club veteran, was a patron of Edinburgh University. Having kayaked since the age of 14, he already had a solid grounding in the sport and three trips to the Alps under his belt. Once at University he stepped it up a gear and headed to the Alps, Norway, Uganda, Corsica and exploring the highlands of Scotland. These trips have led to him developing a "committed" leadership style both on and off the river, keen to explore the next horizon line without delay.

Jonny Hawkins

Jonny spent 4 years kayaking with the University of St Andrews paddling all over Europe and was lucky enough to spend 2 months kayaking in Venezuela on the British Universities Kayak Expedition. The next summer he combined his loves for kayaking, adventure and Scotland, by sea kayaking around it in 40 days. Now he is very excited to get back in the jungle and onto the white stuff in the beautiful country of Borneo.





Tom Haywood

Tom first started kayaking at the age of 11 and hasn't looked back since. Over the years, Tom has paddled extensively throughout Europe bringing a wealth of experience to the team from expeditions including Montenegro, India, Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Iceland. As expedition kayaking is a huge passion, the more challenging the destination and exciting the adventure the better.

Patrick Clissold

Patrick started kayaking at the age of 9, being lucky enough to grow up in mid wales. Patrick has paddled all over Europe but his real love is for expeditions. He has paddled in Nepal, India and the USA before the BUKE 07 expedition to Siberia, Mongolia and Kazakhstan. In 2008 Patrick led an expedition to the Spiti valley in the Indian Himalayas where several first descents were made. He looks forward to exploring one of the most challenging and remote environments to date.



Nick Bennett

Nick started kayaking at age 14 in the pool in Sheffield but moved onto white water four years ago in Scotland. He now has experienced paddling all over Scotland and further afield in France, Corsica, Norway, Uganda, Canada and the USA. This experience is combined with a burning desire for challenge and adventure which has seen him summit Africa's tallest mountain, run a marathon and paddle with some of the best in the world.

Sean Ziehm-Stephen

Sean is an experienced kayaker and general outdoor nut from the Hebrides of Scotland. Sean started kayaking in the sea and surf of the Atlantic ocean before moving on to challenging expeditions and trips to Norway, Siberia, Mongolia, India, Nepal, New Zealand and Sri Lanka. He currently works back in the Hebrides putting his experience to use in teaching outdoor and physical education to a wide range of young people and children. Sean is also Depute team leader of his local mountain rescue team.



Dominic Pipe

Dominic loves the outdoors and the people it brings together. He began kayaking on the river Dee weirs with school. Manchester university rounded him off ready for more adventure. Happiest living by a river or in a van, he has kayaked in the UK, Norway, Portugal, the European alps, British Colombia and New Zeland.



As described above the nature of the rolling expedition meant that 3 teams would explore the island for its white water over 3 months.

Date	05-11 /08	12-18 /08	19-25 /08	26-01 /09	02-08 /09	09-15 /09	16-22 /09	23-29 /09	30-06 /10	07-13 /10	14-20 /10	21-27 /10	28-09 /11
Dave Burne													
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Sean Ziehm													
Dom Pipe													

About Borneo

Borneo is the 3rd largest island in the world split into 3 countries: Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia. The rivers in Borneo are surrounded by dense jungle are extremely steep with plenty of waterfalls for us to explore. The dense rainforest in the country is thought to be one of the largest in the world and is home to the endangered Bornean Orangutan, the word Orang-utan translates as 'man of the forest'. The rainforest is also the oldest rainforest in the world and has been aged at 130 million years old. It homes about 15,000 species of flowering plants, 3,000 species of trees, 221 species of mammals and 420 species of resident birds, including the Dayak fruit bats who are endemic to Borneo and are not found anywhere-else in the world. In 1975 Borneo was around 73.7% covered by rainforest whilst in 2005 due to deforestation it was only 50.4% rainforest covered. Half of the annual global acquisition of tropical timber wood comes from Borneo rainforests; palm oil plantations are also rapidly diminishing the Bornean rainforests.

Borneo covers an area of 287,000 square miles which is slightly more than twice the size of Germany. It is the only island in the world to be administered by three countries. There are Indonesian provinces of East, South, West and Central Kalimantan, the Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak and the independent country of Brunei. Indigenous people in Borneo are known as the Dayak people, but the term Dayak actually refers to over 200 ethnic subgroups within Borneo, each with its own dialect, customs, law, territory and culture.

Partnerships

During our time in Borneo and much of our pre planning we worked with 2 companies based there. Riverbugs, who were a rafting company which worked on Kiulu and Pads rivers helped us hugely, in particular Marcello, an employee of Riverbugs and also a keen kayaker himself. We were able to use Marcello's house as a base while in Sabah and he was also an invaluable guide for the 1st leg.

We're also working together with the award winning Heart of Borneo charity, and the money that comes from the sale of our boats at the end of the trip will go direct to them. Check out the awesome work they're doing exploring and the rainforest and protecting the species and lifestyles of the nomadic tribes who live off it.

Bornean Whitewater

To the best of our knowledge there has been no organised kayaking expedition to the island of Borneo. A number of rafting companies operated on a couple of the rivers on the island, but other than that everything out there was awaiting a first descent. This is an extreme rarity with few places like this existing on our planet.

Prior research into the rivers proved challenging from the onset. Very few detailed maps are available with the most recent being from the 1960s, therefore despite the rivers not changing too much the roads were almost certainly incorrect, which proves problematic when trying to work out access and egress points to the river. Much of our pre planning therefore involved Google earth, which is an incredibly useful tool for calculating gradients and river length, this however was not without its faults, as much of the satellite imagery was too poor to make out all but the largest rivers, particularly in Kalimantan (the Indonesian side of Borneo).

However after a few months of trying to match blue lines on questionable maps to fuzzy lines on Google earth, we had 4 key areas in Malasia to explore; around Mt Kinibalu, the Padas drainage, the Lawas region and Mulu national park as well as a handful of rivers in Kalimantan, although with not much idea how to get there.



Expedition diary

First Leg

Before Tom, Patrick and Nick arrived the first team, Dave, Dom B Rob and Jonny had spent most of their time exploring the rivers around the Mt Kinabalu area and a number of others in the Sabah region.

Below is a roundup of the first leg

After a successful start, Hari Raya celebrations for the end of Ramadan caused a delayed start to the trip as a 4 day public holiday made organising transport impossible but with invites to lots of local parties providing copious amounts of delicious food and rice wine we ensured we weren't wasting our time! We soon managed to negotiate a good deal on transport for 3 months and were ready to hit the road!



In the first week we paddled a good number of rivers , using Marcello's house near Tamparuli as a base. During that time we established another partnership with Sabah Parks which was a brilliant deal lasting the entire duration of the expedition. They allowed us free reign of national parks, gave us a shuttle driver in return for our suggestions on how they can establish environmentally friendly outdoor activities.

Unfortunately, despite being in the rain forest, it didn't really rain much...if at all! There were some incredible rapids which hinted at the delights Borneo holds, but the phrase that was



constantly repeated was “Another foot higher”. These rivers really would be perfect continuous boulder garden fun with more water, but we’ll have to wait until the 3rd leg hits the monsoon season before the expedition catches these rivers at their full potential.

Eventually we realised we needed a change of tack and find some rivers with a better catchment.

That’s when Marcelo’s tip off came good. At his suggestion we had the upper reaches of the Padas river in mind. And Padas in Malay means ‘Spicy’...so we had high expectations for this river!

There are no roads heading to this part of the Padas, and the only way to get there is on the only train in Borneo. The Padas is actually another river that Riverbugs raft. It is big volume, dam release, and actually isn’t too dissimilar to some of the rapids on the Nile. But the

big draw for us was actually the Upper reaches of the Padas, from directly below the dam down to the rafting get on. A section that has been inspected many times but never taken on.

Expeditions generally make you creative with transport, but this next 48 hours were some of the most surreal journeys I’ve made.

We ended up missing the passenger train, but fortunately we were able to jump on a small engine transporting sand down the valley where some building work was being completed...

This was fairly rushed mind you, after negotiating this transport we only had 5 minutes to unload our truck, grab all our kit and get it on board.

The next morning there were more interesting transport methods. We had to punt on ‘trolley’s 8km back upstream – turns out this is actually very hard work!





Jonny having a surf on the raft run the next day while coaching some of the Riverbugs raft guides

The Padas river was unlike any the team had paddled before. We'd all paddled big volume, and we'd all paddled boulder garden. But the combination of the 2 was something new to us, and exciting. ...and scary. It was very easy to get carried away eddy hopping downstream only to find yourself in the middle of the river with a terminal hole on one side and a huge strainer on the other.



Big volume boulder garden – a new style of boating for the team

We changed tactic and chose one side of the river at each horizon line in the knowledge that we'd be able to then walk upstream and ferry glide across to the other side of the river if that was the only line down.

Marcelo eventually got on the river and joined us when he felt he was more in his comfort zone, and on we went. More big volume boulder garden eventually turning into simply big volume wave trains with some huge holes to avoid – something we were all more accustomed to and something we all know and love.

Curiosity soon got the better of us and we found ourselves asking ourselves where the Padas got its water from. This led us checking out our maps and Google earth and our eyes were soon focused on the Crocker Mountain range.



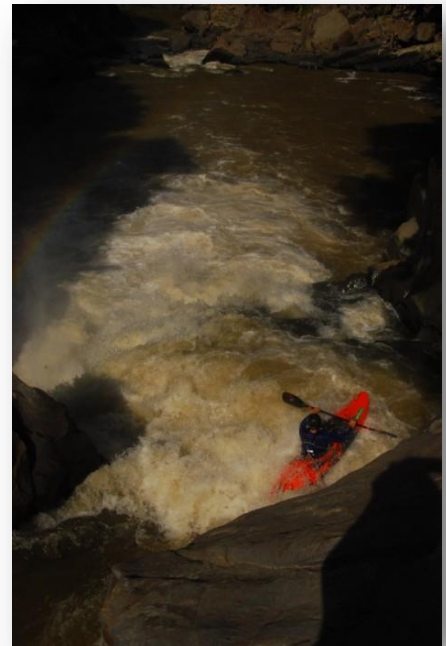
The Ulu Padas and Tolokoson river in particular captured our interest. We got a bit of local knowledge on the Tolokoson which really got our ears buzzing. “Air Terjun” was commonly repeated – waterfall. Marcelo, acting as our translator soon confirmed this. A 20 footer and a 25 footer apparently awaited our descent. We couldn’t wait!

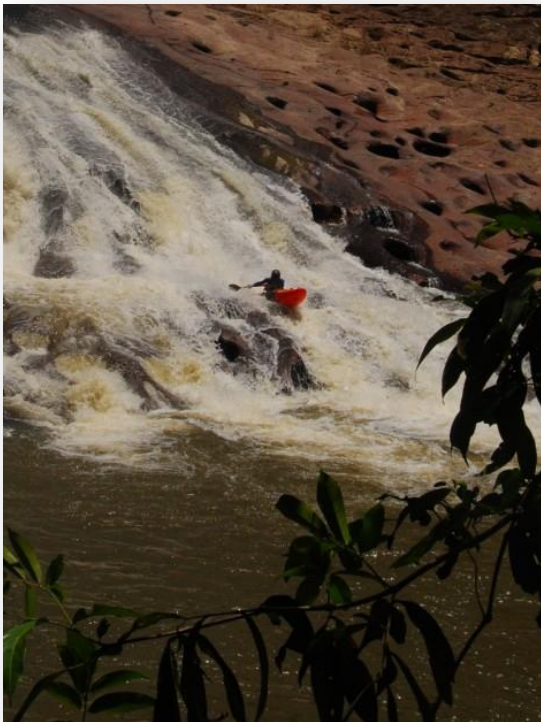
We weren’t disappointed. 16km of continuous portageless grade 4/5 river with some awesome rapids and a bit of freefall thrown in. A non-stop world class day run that wouldn’t be out of place in Norway. ...except the thick jungle surrounding us offering no chance of escape.

The past week and a half had settled our expedition nerves. We’d found some absolute peaches that we were quite sure would go in most river levels. By this stage we’d paddled well over 10 first descents and marked out many more that had a great gradient but decided to leave for a wetter day.

We were satisfied...but with only a few days left there was still time for another!

It was marked CM18 on our Google Earth system, locals know it as the Kanayah, we simply refer to it as the Mission River...





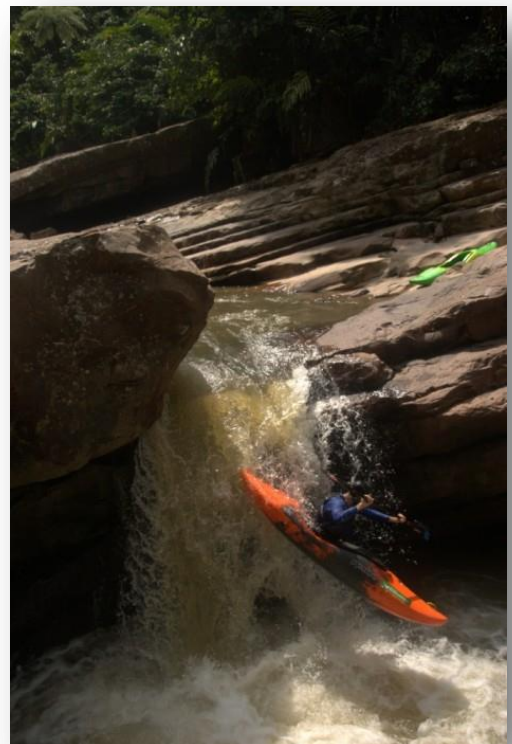
To sum it up it was a mission of a river. There were some super smooth bedrock slides miles away from anywhere with only the sounds of the jungle to accompany us.

There were some intimidating horizon lines. One of which hosted one of the most bizarre bits of geology any of us had ever seen, unfortunately meaning our hopes of paddling the 20m fall were put to rest and the steep dense surrounding jungle meant we had to put our rope skills to good use. Fortunately the palm BAs and throw rope stood up to the challenge.

The great rapids continued for a few kilometres before the good times came to an end, and so we spend a lot of time with our boats on our shoulders. But that's what you sign up for with exploration! All in all, an awesome river – just a shame it ended in a siphon filled mess.

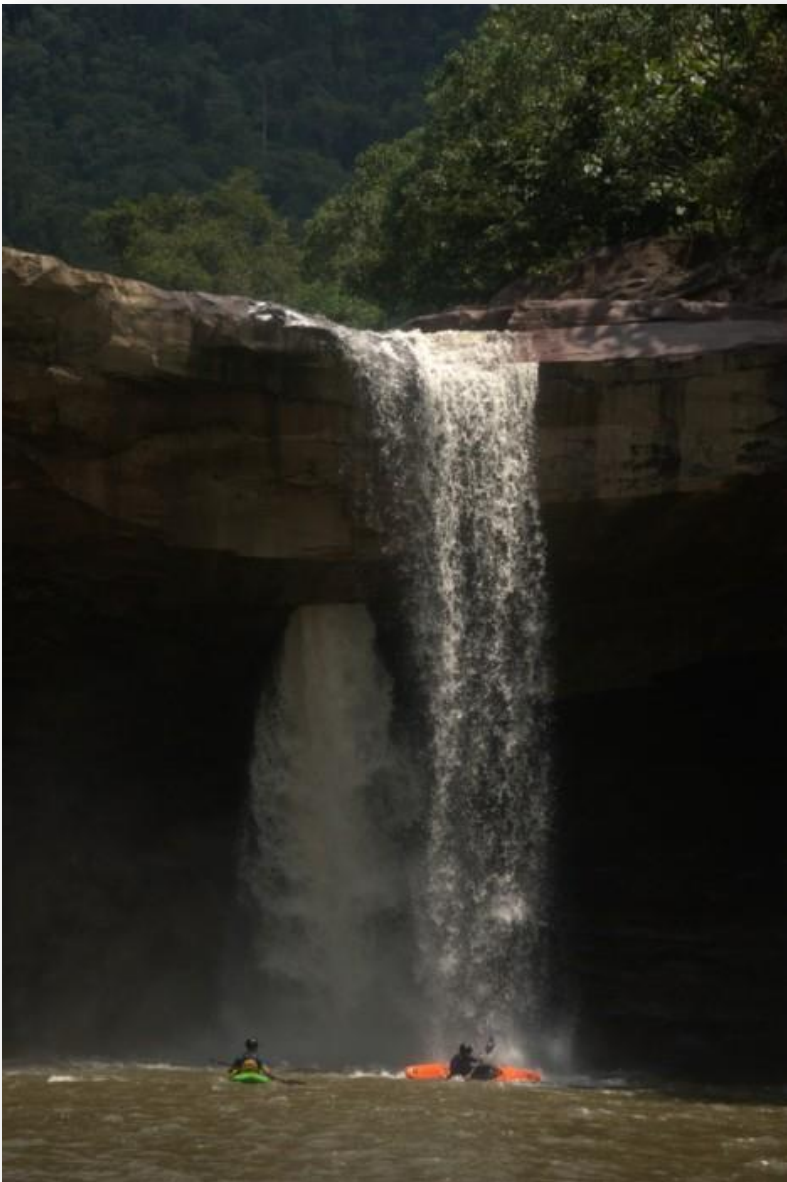
Dom sums it up:

“The Kanayah was a truly epic river, not to be undertaken lightly, it requires a long day, good equipment and knowledge and most importantly a good mental state. The total time on the river was 10 hours, with stunning views, amazing rapids, tricky



portages, annoying portages, fun slides and a real sense of exploration.”

We finished on a high coaching the raft guides at Riverbugs how to put their understanding of the river into use from a kayak. These will be on going coaching sessions for the 3 months also providing tips on safety technique. Most of the people we taught have a good understanding of the river and aren't scared of water, they're also fit and strong so they learn fast!

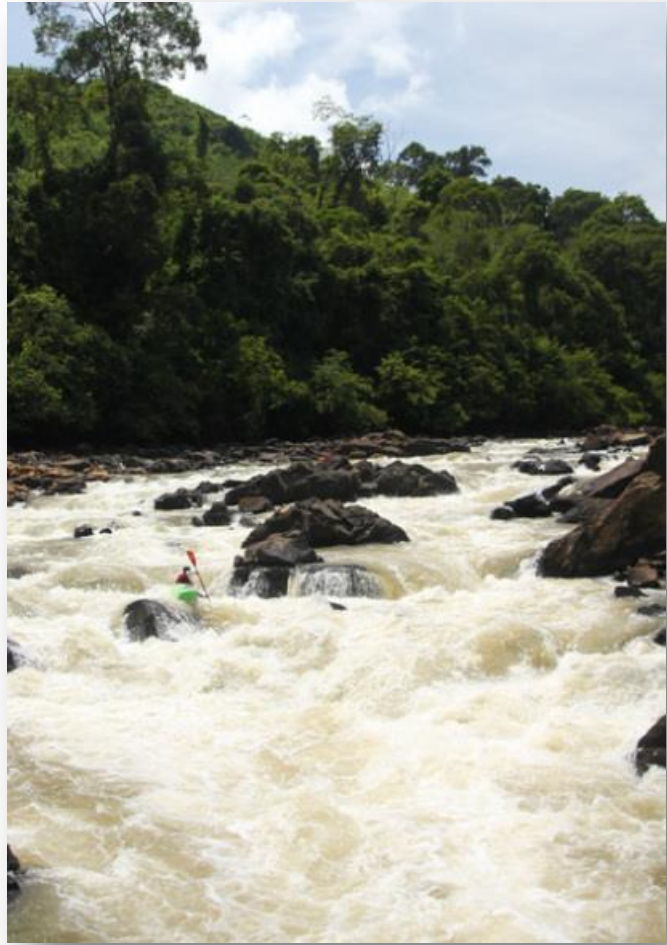


Hopefully by the end of our 3 months in Borneo Marcelo will have more people to go exploring with, and hopefully at some point it will be the Local boaters exploring first descents in their own country.

Second Leg

Soon after touching down in Kota Kinabalu Tom and Nick were met by Patrick who had arrived a few days previously as well as Dom B, Dave and Jonny from the first leg. Rob had flown home a few days earlier.

After a smooth change over between the 1st and 2nd leg; which involved a fair amount of rice wine. The second leg headed out into the jungle to warm up on some of the better runs the 1st team had found. On our way to these runs we managed to get spectacularly lost for the first but definitely not the last time. Aiming to get to the Tolokosang river we followed some rather dubious local direction up a somewhat treacherous logging road through a rubber plantation. After many hours of driving on very unnerving roads we arrived at a huge metal gate where the road ended. It turned out that we had driven to a saw mill just a few kilometres from the Kalimantan border, a long way from where we wanted to be. The manager of the camp invited us in, gave us a fantastic meal and then gave us some better directions and a hand drawn map directing us back towards civilisation. A few more hours driving we found a clearing off the side of the road to set up camp and spend our first night sleeping in the jungle.





The following morning after receiving directions from Marcello over the phone we had a much better idea of how to get to the put on and take off. After a bit more driving and a lift from a local up another very dubious 'road' which was clearly very rarely used, we found ourselves at the top of the Tolokosang river. As Jonny had paddled the river the week earlier we knew to expect about 10km of world class grade IV/V with a couple of waterfalls thrown in for good measure, the only difference being that the river was roughly 6" higher due to recent rain.

The river gradually got going with beautiful grade III rapids surrounded by lush jungle and the ever present buzz from lurking creatures. Gradually the gradient ramped up and we found ourselves eddy hopping down incredible, steep, bouldery rapids with little rest in between.

A horizon line loomed as we approach our first waterfall, with Jonny's hazy memory trying to remember if this was the first fall. Far from the road, deep in the jungle, this tight lined 8ft drop with an intricate lead in put the team on edge. One by one we sized up our lines, charged through the lead in, and boofed with all of our might, hard right to avoid the recirculating hole beneath us.



The river continued to delight with big holes, tight lines, horizon line after horizon line. The river absorbed our concentration and rewards us with incredible rapid after incredible rapid. Again the walls of the gorge loomed high and the thunder of another drop forces us to hop out and scout.

On first impressions that twenty footer posed an impassable barrier however Jonny assured us otherwise. The river folds off the sides into a deep pounding slot, however, Tom went first hitting the entry with as much speed as possible, charging hard right, he passed the fine slot and flew onward down a ramp into the fizzing pool. Arms in the air celebrating and inviting us to take up the challenge to which we obliged.



We pushed on, elated after such a great drop and the promise of an ever steeping river. The rapids kept on coming, with similar characteristics to the Norwegian classics; the Skjerva and Finna. Eating up the fantastic rapids one after another, hunger and weariness started to take hold of the team, on the final rapid of any significance Tom limply slid over a drop to quickly find himself upside down with no paddles and getting pummelled by rocks, pulling his deck he came out of his boat, which is almost always a bad idea. A few more rocky drops boatless left a few bruises but nothing major before the team were able to get him and all of his kit to the side.

The river slowly flattened. We removed our helmets, as huge smiles grew and finally the glint of our truck through the riverbank bamboos marked the end of the incredible day.

Whilst getting changed, we reflected upon the day's success. For most, the

best river paddled in years and the fact that it is a second decent (the first by the first leg), in Borneo, with such a great team makes it taste even sweeter. This truly got us excited about the other gems that lay waiting in the jungle filled valleys.

With our spirits high from the Tolokosang we headed downstream to try the lower sections of the Padas as a final warm up before the exploration truly got underway. We headed into Tenom and got the train down to the Riverbugs rafting camp where we unloaded our stuff and headed downstream, giving safety support to the rafts in exchange for a free lunch.

We stayed the night in the rafting base aiming to punt back up the railway on carts to paddle the upper section of the Padas as the previous leg had done. Finally arriving at the put in, quite exhausted we found that the river was empty as the dam had not yet released. Undeterred we decided to be patient in hope that the dam would be opened later. After 2 hours and all stone throwing games exhausted we decided to call it a day and get on anyway. As tempting as it was to go back down on the punting carts we opted for the river. This was probably the wrong choice! The water was very low and some 'rapids' were like paddling through a maze, with boulders so big you couldn't see around and didn't know if you were paddling into a dead end or way out. After a frustrating few hours we arrived at the confluence where the water from the dam was put back in to the river, making life much easier. 15 minutes later we were back at the rafting base, just in time for the rafts putting on, so we decided to follow them down again in hope of another free lunch. Frustratingly, after 10 minutes we noticed a sharp rise in the river level, indicating that the dam had in fact been opened. Had we waited at the base we could have gone back up stream to paddle, but now we were committed to the lower section, with the only way back up being by train. Over lunch we debated spending another night here so we could paddle the upper section the following day but decided we could easily find ourselves in the same situation tomorrow and the time could be better spent truly starting our exploration. After lunch we hopped on the train which took us all the way back up to Tenom where we had left our truck. And then back to Marcello's to plan the next leg of our trip.



The team began by travelling down from Sabah to Sarawak taking you through Brunei. We met up with kayaker and helicopter pilot Mike Price, an expat working in Brunei who gave us a good insight into the interior and gave us some good contacts to chase up for more info. After talking to more pilots we decided the best option was to try for the Tutoh river which flows through the Mulu National Park.

To get to Mulu you can either fly, not an option with the kayaks, or try and take a boat into the interior and try your luck with the maze of logging roads. We drove to the town of Mauradi on the Baram river (which the Tutoh flows into) to try and get a boat upstream. After negotiations we met a man called Hamilton from a village upstream who offered to take 2 days off work to guide us up to his village in our 4x4 from where we could get a boat, one of the many extremely generous gestures

we came across. We took a motorised long boat with our kayaks upstream to another village called Long Iman where we arranged another 4x4 to take us up the logging roads to the top of the river.



The river was obviously high as the rainy season had started and we timidly proceeded

downstream, after a few hours of paddling the rain started and we suspected it was going to be in for a while. Big volume in nature, but with rapids that weren't too hard brought us to the end of the first day on the river. We pitched our tarps and hammocks a good distance from the river as it was still raining heavily and turned in for the night. An hour later the river had risen to almost our camp and we were at risk of getting washed away. We quickly jumped out our hammocks and ran with all our equipment further up the steep hill in the jungle, the only other spot we could pitch out tarps. In the process Nick nearly put his hand on a very aggressive snake, apparently Patrick poking it with a stick only angers it further. We were at least 10m higher than the river. Another hour later we heard Jonny shouting for our assistance, he had originally put his hammock at least 7m above the water level so we assumed he was safe where he was, "surely the river can't rise that much" Wrong! We helped move Jonny up further through the difficult terrain before he got too wet. Luckily the rain



stopped and it began to recede and we could get a few hours' sleep. The next morning the river had dropped dramatically but was still high, we estimated that the river had risen about 7-8m in total, our original hammock position was about 2m underwater.

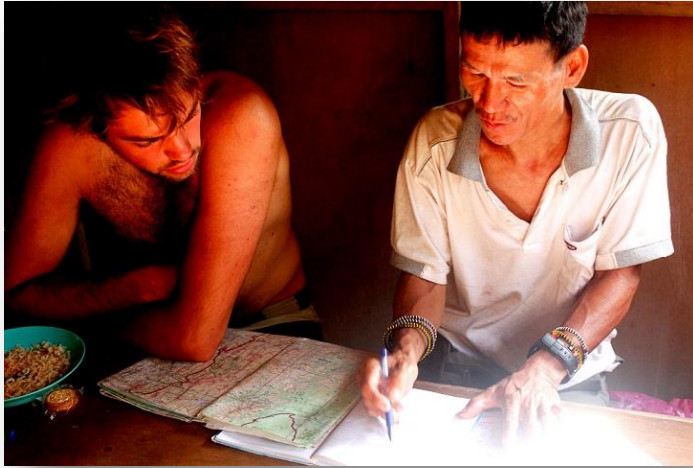


We put on the now incredibly swollen river and paddled downstream through huge boils, waves and whirlpools. Suddenly a horizon line appeared and we quickly eddied out. The whole river (about 20m wide) constricted to about 3m and dropped around 2m, not a huge drop however the boils and whirlpools below it were so large they would have

swallowed a boat whole and no one wanted to proceed. To portage was impossible and walk out improbable, the only option was to wait for the river to drop. After waiting for 4 hours the river had dropped, however it was still uncertain whether we could get down the rapid safely. After weighing up the option of walking out through thick, steep jungle to a disused logging road we decided that the least dangerous option was to run the rapid. 4 hours of built up fear was gone in 30 seconds and we found ourselves safely in the flat water below.

We finished the day at a very remote village where as usual they welcomed us with open arms. This was the most traditional village we had encountered yet. They still hunted with blow pipes in traditional dress, and the chief gave us a good demonstration





on this still deadly weapon. The chief also had bad news for us, the gorge that we were aiming for was described to us as walled in limestone gorge and flowing underground, a big red flag as the river was still in spate.

The next day after playing at an awesome playwave, we headed down to another village just before the gorge where our fears were confirmed. They told us that there was no way out of this

10km terrorfest once you were in and that the river flowed under large rocks. They also told us that 2 locals had drowned in the gorge the day before. With this in mind and with a heavy heart we decided that the gorge would be just too dangerous considering everything we had gone through. We managed to arrange transport to below the gorge and the next day paddled the 15km flat stretch through the jungle to the village where had started, Long Panai, which had since flooded and was now knee deep in water. Luckily the villagers we had left our 4x4 with had moved it up the hill and we were able to drive it out back to civilisation.

The drive back was nothing but interesting as we met a 15ft black King Cobra in the middle of the road. Luckily cobras consider themselves lower down the food chain than a Toyota Hilux and it slithered off.

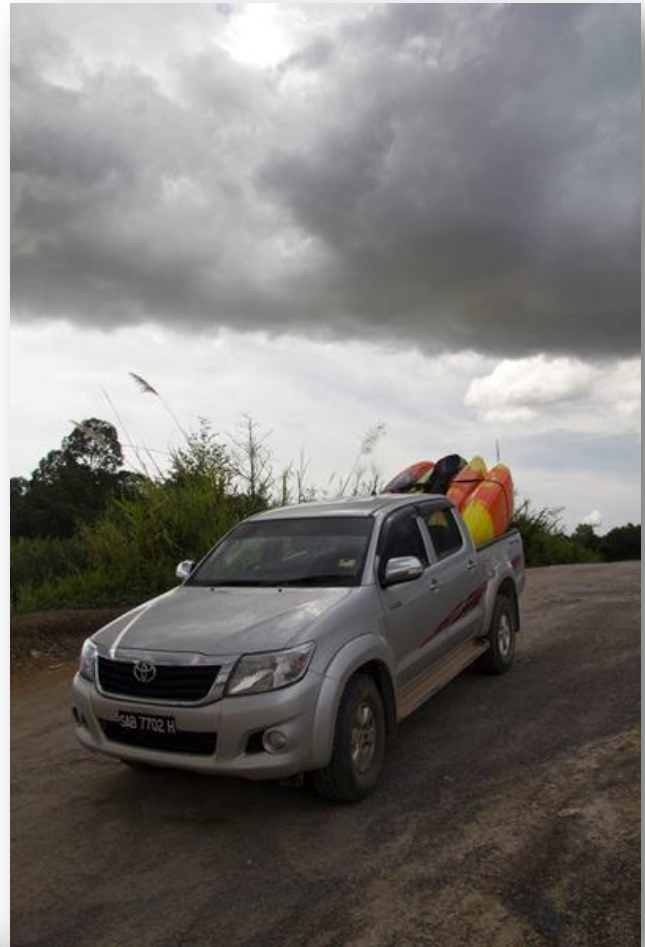
The river was a lot of hard work for a lot of fear and tribulations, but this is expedition kayaking on unknown rivers and we have to take what comes. While the river was hard we got a good sense of accomplishment and the experiences with the wildlife and locals we will never forget. We also learned some valuable lessons; chiefly, camp as high above the river as possible.



We arrived in Marudi on the coast which is an oil workers and backpackers town, so plenty of bars! We decided to celebrate our recent adventure on the Tutoh by visiting these bars.

With rather sore heads, our next plan was to head to the hills of northern Sarawak near the small, reputedly ex-cowboy town of Lawas. Whilst continuing to be amazed by the Malaysian hospitality we also managed to squeeze in some paddling. This did however mean driving back through Breuni and its 8 border checkpoints! 1 day and 9 passport stamps later we found ourselves at our next destination.

On the way up into the hills we found that the Tengoa river, which the previous team had looked at, was in condition. What at first glance looked like a decent class II/III run turned out to be more III+/IV and was a good introduction to the area. Adding to the excitement was the



large (and growing) hole in one of the bridges on the shuttle road which, by the time Jonny hitched back to our car, had a full sized logging truck stuck in it.....

After escaping the heavy rain in an uninhabited roadside hut, we set out to run the Luping river the next morning. The Luping finishes in a really nice village which bears the same name. Unfortunately this is just about its only redeeming feature. Not unlike the Onde in France in low flows, it is a rocky tree infested ditch. Having claimed a first decent before 10 am we then set off searching for a put on for the larger Trusan river. We drove an awful road for four hours in total and in the end got on almost exactly where we started. It



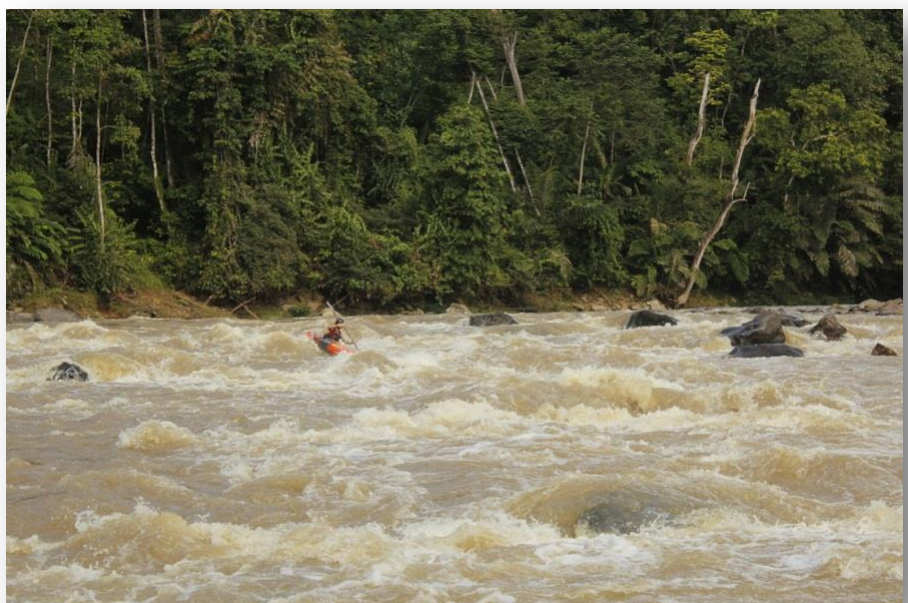
was late in the day and we weren't too hopeful but it was nice to be on a river where you could easily get the whole paddle blade in the water.

The lower section of the Trusan turned out to be awesome. In the high flows we caught it in the river slowly ramped up until a series of large long pool drop rapids which had us grinning from ear to ear. Patrick had volunteered to do the shuttle and had therefore missed out. As a "favour" to him Tom and Nick volunteered to run the whole section again in the two hours we had left before dark while this time Jonny did the shuttle.

Taking out from the second run we were greeted with a beautiful sunset in the bizarre surroundings of a major logging camp. Running low on fuel and planning on attempting a multiday decent of the upper river we decided

to try and buy some fuel from the camp. In the end and in true Malaysian style we came away with a full tank courtesy of the 'Goodwill account'.

Repeating our drive back towards the Indonesian boarder the next morning we put on a small side stream of the Trusan called the Kelalan. The river started as a flat ditch filled with trees which sometimes required portaging. After an hour of paddling we saw what we thought and Tom still swears was a Crocodile, the locals assure us it was a large monitor lizard but they are not known for running into the river and swimming underwater. For the next hour we paddled in close formation banging regularly on our boats. We can only assume this is some sort of defence against crocks.....





Steadily the river ramped up in volume and culminated in a very steep technical gorge offering fantastic and challenging rapids. After the gorge the river settled down into many kilometres of class II/III and after 7 hours paddling we settled down for an enjoyable night by the river with a fantastic fire. The next morning we were left with an enjoyable paddle out back to Long Luping.

That evening we headed back to Lawas for the night before Tom had to head back to the UK. The following day Tom got the bus back to Kota Kinabalu to fly home while the others planned to head into the Maliau basin, a very protected area of the Malaysian rainforest with plenty of waterfalls.



Unfortunately several bouts of illness left the remaining team somewhat immobilised for the next few days, with just a few days remaining before Patrick and Nick flew home any more paddling looked unlikely. Therefore, the next target was the huge mountain we had been driving round and paddling

off for the past two months. Mount Kinabalu, the highest mountain in Borneo, stands 4095m above sea level and dominates the surrounding UNESCO World Heritage site. The area hosts many



incredible species including the endangered Orangutan making it “among the most important biological sites in the world”.

The tactic was a two day assault, including a night in a mountain hut and a sunrise summit. Nick and Jonny set off late on Thursday (Patrick was unfortunately still ill), confidently striding past fellow mountaineers reaching our luxurious mountain hut

after three hours. They gorged themselves on the enormous buffet, until they couldn't fit in any more mee goreng (fried noodles) or banana fritters in and staggered to bed ready for our summit bid.

They donned headlights with Marcello and started off into the dark. Soon enough, they reached the line of other summiteers and added our head torches to the chain, snaking its way up 825m to the summit. Passing the tree line Nick, Jonny and Marcello began eating up the kilometres over the incredible smooth granite bedrock covering the mountain.

The summit came into view as the wind battered their unprepared, equatorial accustomed bodies. Donning the bedding that had been 'liberated' from the mountain hut Nick and Jonny felt very inadequate next to the hundred or so others kitted out in duvet jackets which wouldn't have looked out of place in the Arctic. Kit aside, they had made it and witnessed a stunning sunrise from the summit. Cloud filled the valleys below as they soaked up the incredibly barren summit finding time for a couple of obligatory summit poses.



It was great to have climbed Mount Kinabalu and in doing so met lots of other travellers from around the world. Hearing all of their stories was great and makes our trip feel even more special. We experienced so much more of Borneo than the typical tourist, solely because we like sitting in big plastic pointy things.



Third Leg

A few days before Patrick and Jonny from the second leg were due to leave saw the arrival of Sean, Dom P and Jackub (a very late addition to the team) to continue the expedition into the first leg with Nick. Having built up a significant amount of experience and knowledge of Borneo it was time to venture over the border from Malaysia into Kalimantan, the Indonesian side of Borneo, which is far more wild and has far less infrastructure than Malaysia.



Below is an extract from the 3rd leg's adventures.

I must begin by saying that I do not think I can do justice to the experience that the last two weeks have been. I will however endeavour to give you a flavour for it. I am now sat back in hotel Losmen Handauani in the Indonesian river town of Malinau. Over the last seven days we have been on a journey into the wilds of northeast Kalimantan deep into an area known as the Heart of Borneo. However the story truly began a week before, following the departure of the second team.



After Jonny and Patrick had headed home Sean, Dom and I set off from Kota Kinabalu heading South to Lawas hoping to be able to cross over the land border near the remote town of Ba Kalalan. The first night we stayed with See-now who lives in the small and beautiful village of Long Luping on the Trusan river. After a random evening of playing electric guitar and listening to Shania Twain we paddled the lower Trusan as a warm up before heading for the

border. With See-now as a guide we hoped to cross the border and then make use of the roads which were clearly marked on all our maps and which conveniently linked several very promising looking rivers. Everything so far had been suspiciously easy.

As we approached the border the condition of the road steadily and ominously worsened, but we were all confident and had driven much worse before. At the Malaysian boarder post we were jovially greeted and assured we didn't need out passports 'Chopped' (Stamped) for our casual 20 day stay in a totally different country. A little bemused we carried on... The next road sign read 'AWAS CONSTRUCTION SITE ENTER OWN RISK. Knowing that 'awas' is Malay for 'caution' was not all that helpful! After roughly ten stressful minutes on little more than a dirt track the road appeared to end. This, See-now assured us, was not a problem. "They will make one" he said gesturing at the three bulldozers working on the hill ahead of us. Gradually, bizarrely a path became clear and we carried on.



We arrived in Long Bawan on the Indonesian side of the border having only passed through a military checkpoint and having seen nothing of any real immigration services. Keen to become 'legal' we drove around town looking for the relevant people, only to find that like all good public offices they closed at 3pm. So instead we were taken to a photocopier where copies of our passports were taken and then assured we were good to

go for our 20 day stay. Now call me cynical but I don't expect that would go down too well with a law enforcement official: "excuse me sir can I see your visa and entry stamp please"..... "err well, in a village high in the mountains there is a woman who has a photocopy of my passport... does that count?"..... So after spending a night with See-now's cousin we headed back on our immigration quest the next day. Finally we found the right man. We knew he was the right man because he told us we were absolutely NOT allowed to stay and that we must leave within the next 12 hours...

Now under normal circumstances we would have been totally gutted. However the night before it had become painfully clear that the roads on our map were little more than lines on a map. Every place we asked directions for was either totally impossible or several days walk. We were helpfully assured that the problem was not that the roads weren't there but that the bridges were not yet finished. See-now told us we should come back in a year or maybe two when the work was done. One thing had become clear: every time we mentioned the river we intended on paddling the locals stopped telling us how impossible the road was and instead told us we would die because of the numerous serious rapids and waterfalls!



Undeterred and encouraged by the locals' concern for our safety we hatched a new plan on a more manageable time scale than See-now's two years. This time we would go in via the front door with visas and everything. To save time we drove through the night back into Sarawak, across the whole of Sabah and to the eastern port town of Tawau. This is similar in distance to driving from Aberdeen to Bristol, except there are no motorways and the first 100 km is a pretty bad dirt track. In Tawau we were able to obtain legitimate visas from the Indonesian consulate and after an epic night out which is a story in its self, we caught the 11am (departs at 1pm) ferry to the Indonesian island of Tarakan.

From Tarakan we chartered a small speedboat and made our way up river to Malinau. This is where the usefulness of the Lonely Planet ended. Clearly few tourists make it to Malinau. Thankfully we were able to make contact with the local WWF office which we used as a base to plan our journey upriver. After two days sweating in the oppressive heat we negotiated a ride upstream with Mentarang local, Mr Pengrang. The price of 7,000,000 Rupia (£400) included a guide from the end of the river at Semamu to the final destination of Benuang a casual four-day walk with loaded boats. There is a road but as Mr Pengerang joked the only way up it was by bulldozer!

So the WWF office is where our seven day journey began. The next morning we were greeted by a twin engine, 80 hp, pink and blue wooden long boat and a grinning Mr Pengerang. After picking up fuel we set off, four guides, three kayaks and three scruffy, smelly, sweaty white guys. The river started off mellow enough with only a few shingle rapids to negotiate but after a couple of hours we reached the confluence with the Tubu. From here I knew that our 1972 pilotage charts had rapids marked on. Rapids which pilots can navigate by are rarely insignificant and soon enough the first big volume grade 3 came into sight. Mr Pengerang skilfully eddy-hopped his way to the bottom of the drop before opening up full throttle and firing the boat upstream straight through the crashing waves and holes.

After several more rapids we arrived at a more serious cataract and five of us got out on the bank to walk around it. This left Mr Perngerag and a navigator to negotiate the complex series of waves and rocks. We continued in this manner, portaging and running class 3 upstream for the next two hours. At one last even more significant rapid we all got out and totally emptied the boat. Then with the help of many locals the boat was dragged upstream at the side of the rapid using a long mooring rope. Keen to see what we could do with our strange plastic boats Mr Pengrang encouraged us to run the rapid. We willingly obliged, much to the delight of all the onlookers. Just being in a kayak felt great and the first drop washed away the stress of a week sorting near impossible logistics. The whole team was grinning, feeling relaxed and confident for the challenge ahead.



To reach Semamu we needed to take a side stream. However, as this side stream was low we stayed the night in what can only be described as the Indonesian equivalent of a Scottish bothy. An enjoyable night was passed utilising the Malay phrase book to chat to the group. After our kayaking display the feeling was one of mutual respect for those who use the river. We also had a map session where Mr Pengerang told us our maps were wrong (not surprising as they themselves say “map sources irreconcilable”) and also informed us with great concern that there was a 50 meter waterfall to be navigated.

In the morning we were treated to one of the best meals of my life. Piles of rice and a huge, barely dead, catfish. Following breakfast we loaded the kayaks in to a ting-



ting (a smaller river boat where the propeller is on a long drive shaft) and started walking. After three hours of river scrambling we were welcomed into Semamu with the traditional cup of hot sweet tea. The most amazing thing then happened: Mr Pengerang brought over a guy he described as the 'boss' and proceeded to sort out a ride on a bulldozer to Benuang. After several meals, a swim, and a snooze we loaded the boats on to the top of the dozer and set off.

The first 30 minutes on top of bulldozer were fantastic. They were also spent in the light. The remaining six and a half hours were dark, scary and really really uncomfortable. They were, however, infinitely better than a 4-day walk over a 1100 meter mountain pass. That night we stayed at the roadbuilders' camp before moving the boats to a tractor for the final three hours of the "6 hour" journey. We had finally reached the river!

After getting our stuff together we started the downstream journey. Initially the river was pretty flat and we began to worry that there wouldn't be any rapids. Our topological pilotage maps were (and these are Dom's words) about as much use as "getting your three year old nephew to give you instructions on how to make a martini". They tried but in reality knew nothing. So despite knowing that we had 700 meters to drop we had no idea when we would lose the gradient. After several hours of flat river the rapids began to pick up and gradually class three became class four and then we arrived at a steep and manky class five. It was at this point (well, roughly 15 meters into inspecting from the bank)



that I was overcome with fatigue and only a short while later that I was hit hard by dysentery. So with a possible 50 meter waterfall looming, and me 'dropping it like it's hot' we decided to call it a day and Dom and Sean made camp.

The next morning after a full 14 hours rest I managed to keep down 2 Malaysian hot chocolates. Following a scouting mission it became clear that we were going to have to portage high on the left bank. Three hours of battling through the jungle later we were rewarded with the first clean grade five drop of the river: 'diddy dozer'. Some more interesting grade three and four followed before the Pa Kerajan (pak-rayan) was joined by the Pa Kemaluh. After the confluence the river changed in nature. The flow increased and countless classic

grade IV rapids followed. Five hours of fantastic white water later we stopped in an eddy in the middle of a rapid and camped. We had huge grins plastered on our faces, knowing that we had found what we came looking for! We cooked dinner sitting on a rock above the river while we contemplated how much longer the rapids would continue.



Settling into our routine we woke up with first light at 6 am the next day. The river continued to deliver read and run class IV but it was clearly steepening with the occasional class V ledge thrown in for good measure. Eventually we arrived at a big slide which fell into a horrible slot. There was a line but nobody wanted anything to do with it. Portage number one of the day took us through a bat cave. Back on the water the river was now getting really steep and clearly gorging up. This culminated in a big horizon line. Scouting required a half hour walk through the jungle but we were rewarded with the sight of a clean 30ft waterfall. After a further battle through the jungle we were able to see that the lead in, although not straightforward, was runnable. However the drop before definitely was not. So we dropped a line to

allow us to get out on the cliffs above the drop and headed back to our boats. After portaging around the bolder choked top drop we then had to make a pushy ferry glide into a 10 foot technical drop, stop in the eddy with the rope and climb out.

We set safety, sorted out the camera and played rock paper scissors to decide who was going to go first. Sean then got in his boat. The technical part was the lead in where a 10 ft drop/slide led into a pocket and a surging boil. Sean cleared the pocket but got flipped on the boil. A super snappy roll and a big boof and he was through; clearing the hole at the bottom of the falls with ease. My turn. Having seen

Sean flip I adjusted my technique and came through clean, getting a nice late boof and whoop! The most remote drop I have ever run, what a feeling.





Exhausted we stopped for some lunch and realised that not only were we now out of the gorge but we had also been watched by some very impressed locals. These were the first people we had seen since the start of the white water and they exclaimed “Air Trajun, Air Trajun...Bagus!!!”

(Waterfall, Waterfall....Good!). We shared our lunch of biscuits and peanut butter with them before finishing the day with a few more hours of classic class IV. That night it was Dom’s turn to get ill....

After two days of classic white water we could tell the river was easing off. Sure enough, after a couple of hours in the morning sun, the difficulty dropped to class two and three and was even a bit scrapey in places. By 4pm in the pouring rain we had passed the confluence with the Kinajo and we were safely back at the bothy. At that stage, in the rain, that small wooden hut felt like the best kayaking hostel in the world. After a meal of rice (with salt from the bothy!!) and sweetcorn we all hit the rattan and slept.

Day five on the river started slow. Dom was still clearly quite ill and needed some extra sleep. We knew we had a big day ahead with a lot of ground to cover but we also needed some time to remove the thousands of biting fire ants from all of our kit. Simply drowning them did not work, and they had colonised deep within all of the crevices of our helmets and buoyancy aids. So



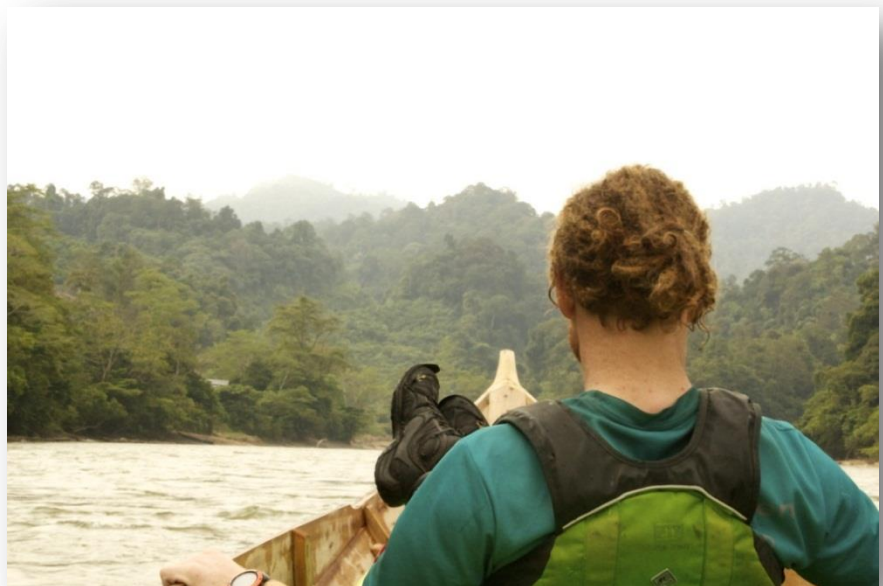


we resorted to picking them out one by one and squishing them. The paddle out to the confluence with the Tubu was filled with big volume class III in a stunning bedrock gorge. The rapids were easy enough to be stress free but still really good fun, with one big hole even dishing out a beating! By the time we reached the Tubu it was 3pm and we were facing the prospect of paddling 35-40 km of flat water to Malinau. Thankfully the river was now busy with ting-tings and long boats and several of the boats were so interested in us that they were circling and taking photos. We got chatting to them and managed to get ourselves a free ride almost all the way back to town!

We arrived back in Malinau just as the sun was setting and decided to paddle the last section to our hotel. This turned out to be a bit further than expected and the water was minging so we got out and got a taxi. We turned up at the hotel still in full boating kit with huge grins on our faces. Knackered we got changed and headed out to find Jackub and eat barbecued fish.

Dom and I are now on our way home with too little time for another Indonesian style logistical challenge. Jackub and Sean have headed south to Tanjesselor following rumours of an un-runnable gorge on the Sugai Kajan.

Nick



Photos:

Rob Moffatt, Dave Burne, Jonny Hawkins, Patrick Clissold, Nick Bennett, Sean Ziemh-Stephen

Food

During our time in Borneo we ate a wide variety of meals from a range of sources.

While on the road traveling we would rely on street food vendors or small restaurants selling snacks such as banana fritters or chicken satay sticks, to larger meals consisting of rice or egg noodles.

Whilst in a home stay or visiting local villages we would usually be beckoned to the kitchen to eat unknowing that they had been preparing food for us, another example of the incredible generosity we encountered on many occasions. These meals would usually be rice based with wild boar cooked in a variety of different ways, along with fish and vegetables. Each similar yet unique, but always fantastic.

On the river things were less tasty. The most important factors were low weight, high density and high calorific content. Our breakfast consisted of 2 packs of instant noodles with flavour sachets. We rarely stopped for lunch but had 6-8 biscuits in our buoyancy aid pockets to snack on during the day. Our dinner was usually rice, tinned sauce (baked beans/chopped tomatoes) with tinned luncheon meat/corned beef. Before setting off on any trip we would fill water bottles so we had a minimum of 2 litres each. Once empty we would fill these from fresh side springs and add iodine drops. If none was available we would filter river water with a Milbank bag and add iodine or boil if for cooking.

Transport

Our original plan while planning the expedition was to hire a vehicle through River Bugs whilst one of their raft guides (Marcello) would come along as a driver and translator as well as a local guide. However upon the arrival of the first leg it seemed that there had been some confusion over email communications. River Bugs expected us to be fully guided by them with Marcello choosing rivers and guiding us down them. This was obviously not what we wanted. Therefore the first leg came to an agreement with River Bugs that we would hire our own vehicle and Marcello would come along as a driver when possible. The team found a company willing to hire us an automatic Toyota Hilux for the full 3 month period at a reasonable price.

During the first leg, with most of the exploration being carried out around Mount Kinabalu and the Saba region Marcello spent most of the time with the team, with his local knowledge proving invaluable.

During the second leg with the aim of heading down into Sarawak Marcello decided not to join us due to other work commitments. This left the team to drive ourselves. The driving itself proved no problem with roads being quiet and the traffic calm. One problem that we did encounter on a number of occasions however was navigation, there are very few road signs off of the main roads. Due to this we made the best efforts to hire a local person to act as a guide when possible whether it be a couple of hours or a few days.

Equipment

Group

Kayaking Equipment

2 x Emergency split paddles
1 x Paddle bags
Assorted spare plastic for welding
Aquasure neoprene glue
First aid kit (1x off-river, 2 x on-river)
Tools (1 x Leatherman, 1 x Gerber)
Duct tape

Camping Equipment

2 x Milbank Bag
1 x MSR Whispalite stove with wind shield
1 x MSR Dragonfly stove with wind shield
1 x 1l Fuel bottle
1 x 750 mL Fuel bottle
4 x Lighters
2 x Lightweight aluminium cooking pots
1x Iodine solution Water purification bottle

Navigation

1 x GPS
1 x Satellite phone (with inbuilt GPS)
1 x Topographic maps of each region
1 x Compass
1 x Laptop with google earth downloaded
2 x Smartphones with local maps downloaded

General Expedition Equipment

1 x Malay phrase book
1 x Borneo guide book
3 x DSLR Camera
1 x GoPro Hero 2 waterproof video camera
Toilet roll
Sun cream
Insect repellent

Personal

Kayaking Equipment

1x Buoyancy aid
1x Helmet
1x River shoes
1x Spraydeck
1 x Rash vest
1 x Paddles
1 x Board shorts
2 x Dry Bags
1 x Throw line (15-25m)
3-4 x Locking karabiners
1 x Sling
1 x Knife
2 x Prussic
1 x Pulley
1 x Whistle

Camping Equipment on River

1 x DD Hammock
1 x Tarp
1 x Sleeping bag
1 x Mess tin or tupaware box
1 x Spoon, Fork and Knife

General Expedition Equipment

1 x Large rucksack/duffel bag
3 x Assorted drybags

Clothing

1 x Trousers
1 x Sandals
3 x T-shirt
1 x Jumper/lightweight fleece
5 x Underwear
5 x Socks
1 x Towel
1 x Waterproof jacket
1 x Hat

Toiletries

Anti-malarials
Toothbrush
Toothpaste
Sunglasses
Soap

Documentation

Passport
Wallet
Insurance Dogtag
Emergency contact numbers card

First Aid

Prior to the trip all Team members received the following vaccination courses

- Hepatitis A
- Typhoid
- Hepatitis B
- Tetanus
- Diphtheria
- Rabies

During the expedition all members of the team took Doxycycline daily in order to prevent malaria.

Contents for first aid kit:

Dressings

Gauze swabs	4 pkts	Cleaning wounds or sticking on with tape
Easifix bandage	3	Keeping wounds clean/supporting dressing
Tubigrip	1	Supporting sprains
Plasters	Asstd	Ordinary Sticking plasters
N/A (non adhesive)	4	Doesn't stick to drying wound. Put under easifix bandage or tape on
Primapore	3	Absorbent pad with sticky surround
Micropore tape	2 roll	Taping down other dressings
Duoderm	2	Cut to right size – leave on for up to a week. ?tape edges to keep for longer
Crepe Bandage	1	Support other dressings or joint
Triangular bandage	1	Supporting broken arm

Tablets

Paracetamol	24	Painkiller & brings temperature down. Max 8/day. Can combine with ibuprofen or aspirin.
Ibuprofen 400mg	24	Painkiller & brings temperature down. Max 3 per day. Can combine with paracetamol but not aspirin
Cetirizine (Benadryl)	21	One per – hay fever, allergies, itching due to bites
Loperamide (Imodium)	20	Diarrhoea – up to 8 per day if need to stop diarrhoea, but best treatment = clear fluids
Ciprofloxacin 500mg	20	Emergency use for urinary tract infections when one twice per day for 3-5 days. For travellers diarrhoea one per day for 3-5 days.
Aspirin 300mg soluble	16	Painkiller. Good for toothache (swill round mouth then swallow) and muscle aches. Brings temperature down. Use with paracetamol but not with aspirin. Max 8 per day
Amoxicillin 500mg	21	Take one three times per day for chest infection or for persistent sore throat

Creams

Lamisil	1	Fungal infections eg athletes foot or itchy rash in groin. Use once or twice per day
Savlon	1	Antiseptic ointment if a wound looks dirty – but always wash with soap & water or steripod saline if possible first
Eumovate	1	Steroid cream for eczema like rashes and itchy insect bites. Use once or twice per day
Bactroban	1	Anti bacterial cream
Chloramphenicol eye ointment	1	Antibiotic eye ointment – only use if confident that this is simple infection. Use 4 times per day for a week.

Other

Tic Tweezers	1	For ticks
Safety pins	4	For holding bandage in place
Steripod	2	Sterile saline for cleaning wounds or washing eye out
Gloves	2 pr	To put on if handling others blood / faeces, provides 'clean' hands for dressings
Steristrips	2 pack	To hold gaping wound together
Otomize ear spray	1	Steroid ear spray for otitis externa (itchy eczema of ear canal – otitis externa)
Ear calm	1	Ear spray for mild otitis externa
Ethilon suture	1	To use yourself or to use by hospital staff if needed
Finger bandage&applicator	1	For finger injuries – could apply steristrips or N/A dressing beneath

Thanks To

Imperial College
London



We Are
GLOBALLY CERTIFIED
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