

Up the Mekong to Tibet

I've been off adventuring again, this time exploring the world's twelfth longest river from the South China Sea to Tibet and beyond. The Mekong has long been associated with mystery and opium-smuggling, but I hadn't expected the excitement and dangers that I'd face in its upper reaches.

The trip began easily enough. From the ricefields of Vietnam I walked, hitch-hiked and commandeered boats through Cambodia, Thailand, Laos and Burma to the gorges of China's Yunnan province, meeting countless river-people including minorities such as the Akha, Naxi and Bai.



In Tibet the river passed through areas closed to foreigners, and I made wide detours to avoid the many Chinese checkpoints. Luckily the police I met were kind, one platoon even putting me up in their encampment. Tibetan dogs were another matter. In a remote compound the trip (and I) nearly came to an end when I got severely bitten.

The source of the Mekong has inspired a raging debate between explorers and Chinese officials over the last few years. By 2003 the possible true sources had narrowed to two, just a few miles apart, at over 17,000 feet in the vast Qinghai province north of Tibet. With two Tibetans I managed to reach and map both of them – the first British person to do so.

As always I took lots of photographs, and I've put the best of them together with my sound recordings and some wonderful local music into a new presentation.

The slide/sound show *Up the Mekong to Tibet* lasts an hour, and includes stereo recordings and slides using a twin-projector dissolve system. My fee for this talk is £425 plus travelling expenses.

If you'd like to make a booking please get in touch. My contact details are:

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Details of this and other talks and books are at <http://www.pilk.net>.