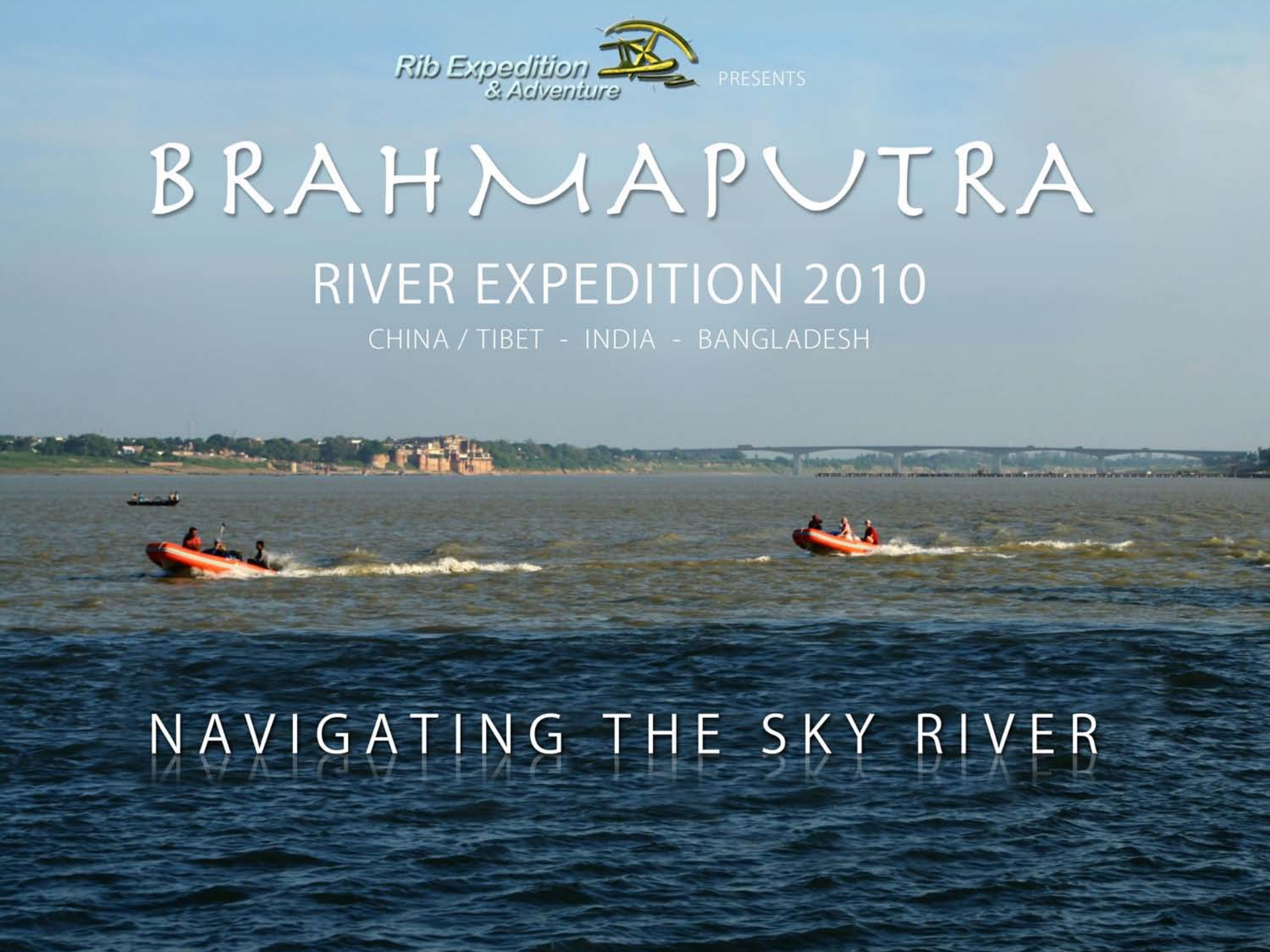
Rib Expedition & Adventure PRESENTS

BRAHMAPUTRA

RIVER EXPEDITION 2010

CHINA / TIBET - INDIA - BANGLADESH



NAVIGATING THE SKY RIVER

The Tsangpo-Brahmaputra River –

- Flows through China, India and Bangladesh into the Bay of Bengal
- It is one of the **highest** and **most challenging** rivers in the world and is referred to as the ***"Sky River"***
- Our Team will be the first in the world to travel the 2800 kms that makes up the total length of this mighty river

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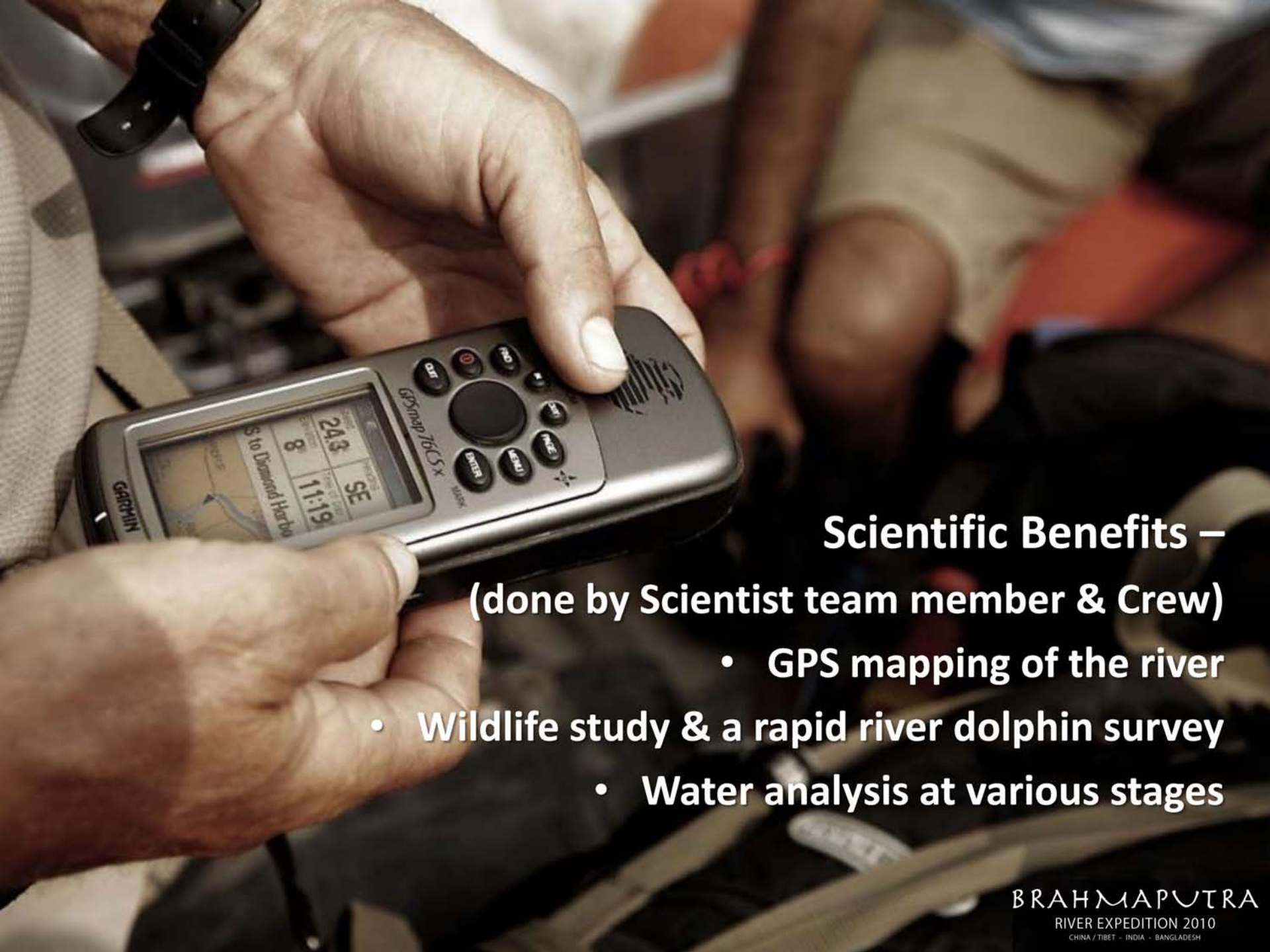
The Aim of the Project –

- Improve **environmental awareness** of the **Brahmaputra**
- Showcase potential for sustainable **eco-tourism**
- To **monitor & showcase** the **unique biodiversity** along the riverbanks
- To **reach out** to the people living by the river



Scientific Benefits –

(done by Scientist team member & Crew)

- GPS mapping of the river
- Wildlife study & a rapid river dolphin survey
- Water analysis at various stages

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Rib Expedition & Adventure – Company Profile

- **Rib Expedition & Adventure**, founded by **Andy Leemann** in 2004 is based in Palma de Majorca, Spain
- Andy Leemann has many **years of experience** as a professional skipper on **traditional** and **modern sailing vessels** and accomplished more than **100,000 nautical miles**
- In a world that is **running out of adventures**, **river expeditions** are the desire to find **uniqueness and unlimited horizons**
- Previously completed river expeditions were on the **Zambezi, Orinoco, Ganga, Mekong & Amazon**

The Expedition Team –

- Andy Leemann, Switzerland – Expedition leader
- Apal, India – Adventure & wildlife cameraman, Co-leader
- Leo Fahey, New Zealand – Boat Expert
- Andrew Weinberg , South Africa- Boat Expert
- Jed Weinberg, USA - River expert, logistics, photography
- Nishant Purohit, India – Media, communication
- Zorba Laloo, India – Logistics, media
- Dushyant Parasher, India - Nature &wildlife photographer

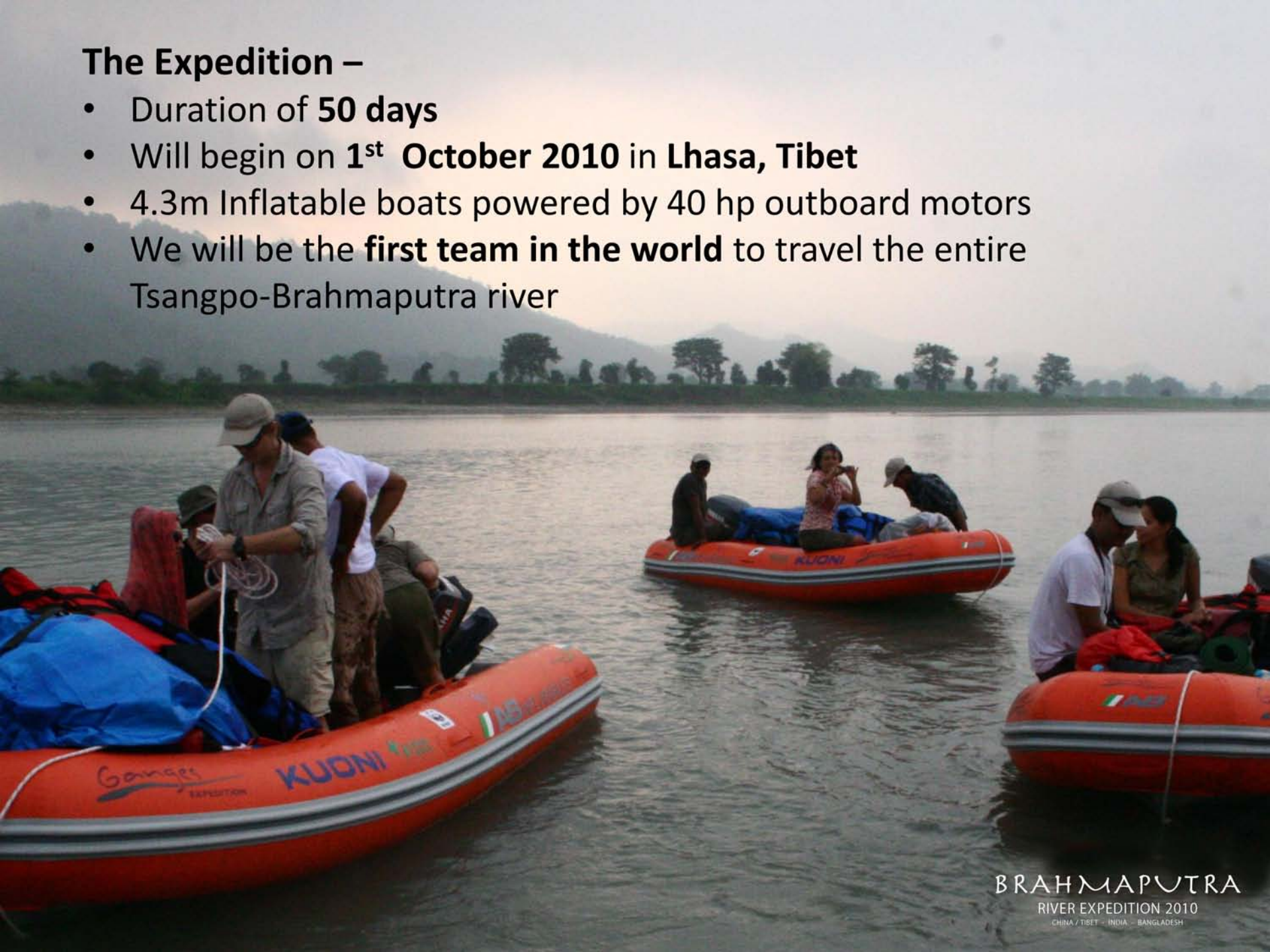
Previous Media Coverage

- **BBC World** features hour long film, on Zambezi Expedition which had repeat telecast on popular demand and seen in more then 150 countries

- **NDTV Special** – 24 hours. The story of the Ganga through the eyes of a unique river expedition that journeys from its source in the Himalayas to the Bay of Bengal

The Expedition –

- Duration of **50 days**
- Will begin on **1st October 2010** in **Lhasa, Tibet**
- 4.3m Inflatable boats powered by 40 hp outboard motors
- We will be the **first team in the world** to travel the entire Tsangpo-Brahmaputra river



Media Coverage for the Brahmaputra Expedition 2010

- **NDTV**
  - Travels with the Expedition to do a full feature.
  - Will probably be a Media Partner.
- **International & National journalists**
  - Travels with the Expedition to cover it first hand.
  - Exotica (Luxury Travel mag for 5 star hotels), The Pioneer, Dainik Jagran (3rd largest Indian newspaper in circulation, 17th in the world).
  - Coverage from maximum national print and TV media.
- **Large online following on Expedition website**
  - Daily photo's.
  - Video uploads.
  - Write-ups as the Team journey's down river for enthusiasts to live the experience with the crew.

Media Coverage for the Brahmaputra Expedition 2010

- **Press Conference at the beginning and end of the Expedition.**

  Example - Last year's Ganga Expedition Press Con. In Delhi & Kolkata
  - Was attended and reported extensively by major newspapers and television channels.
  - **Hindu, Hindustan times, Times Of India, Telegraph, Dainik Jagran, Outlook Traveller, Pioneer, PTI, NDTV, IBN, TV Today, and Sahara and India TV, Asian Age, Statesman, Indian Express, Aajkaal, Anandabazar Patrika, Bangalok, Akash Bangla, ATN Bangla, Zee Bangla, Kolkata TV, etc. International media like BBC World, CNN, El Paris, Das Magazin, Zurich were also present for both events.**

- **On the success of the last Expeditions and relevance of this Project, extensive International & National media attention is assured.**

Partner Benefits

VISIBILITY

- Organisation name and logo visible on –
  - Boats, support cars and crew clothing.
  - All Press releases for the Brahmaputra Expedition.
  - Banners for Press conferences and events.
  - Name, logo and webpage link prominently positioned on website.
  - Organisation recognition and acknowledgement in news letter and website.
- Organisation can give its name to the whole Expedition.
- Organisation recognition and acknowledgement in news letter and website.
- Organisation statement/ presentation included in online, printed press kits.
- Organisation can use Brahmaputra name/ logo in promotions/ campaigns.

Partner Benefits

MEDIA

- Events
- Leading international & national media coverage. (TV, print, online)
- Media coordinator to ensure coverage pre-, during and post-Expedition.
- Own Film/Photo team provides Footage & Photos for external/internal relations, film production and exhibitions.

MANAGEMENT

- CEO or Organisation Rep -
  - Delivers statements at Press Conferences.
  - Can be interviewed by leading National & International media.
  - Joins river crew for a period of time.

Partner Benefits

EMPLOYEES

- Designated employees
  - Can become part of Expedition team.
  - Can join the river crew for a period of time

FURTHER ACTIVITIES

- Expedition leaders and affiliates make presentations and speeches at the Partner's functions, tradeshows, meetings,conferences.
- The Expedition Team will stop for Media/ Community/ VIP events for the Partner.

Media Coverage in past Expeditions

Ganges EXPEDITION

2009

- Kuoni Group – 8th Oct. '09
- Green Cross España
- Times of India – 20th Oct. '09
- World News – 21st Oct. '09
- The Telegraph – 22nd Oct. '09
- Financial Express – 25th Oct.'09
- Thaindian News – 19th Oct.'09
- Bym News – 10th Aug. '09
- The Hindu – 19th Oct. '09
- Lakeland Boating – 12th Aug. '09
- Sourcews – 10th Oct. '09
- NDTV – Feature-"24 Hours"

Zambezi Expedition

2008

- Zambezi Expedition Highlighted at World Economic Forum
- VII Photo Agency Documents Zambezi Expedition - Photographers of world renowned photo agency VII document the Roll Back Malaria Zambezi Expedition.
- International Media Highlights Fight Against Malaria – (Al Jazeera International, AFP, ARD German TV, ARD German Radio, BBC World Service, Channel Africa, DW TV, dpa, Reuters TV, SABC Africa, SABC and Xinhua.)

*Please note that all reports from the various Media have not been mentioned here as they too numerous to list in detail.

Partners in past Expeditions

Ganges Expedition

Zambezi Expedition

KUONI

United Nations Foundation

Sumitomo Chemical Olyset Net

Novartis

Green Cross International

NetsForLife — A partnership for Malaria prevention in Africa

PermaNet

AB Inflatables

ExxonMobil

Medicines for Malaria Venture

WWF for a living planet

The Coca-Cola Africa Foundation

RBM Roll Back Malaria Partnership

malaria NO MORE

BRAHMAPUTRA
RIVER EXPEDITION 2010
CHINA / TIBET - INDIA - BANGLADESH
Partner Opportunities
BRAHMAPUTRA
RIVER EXPEDITION 2010

PARTNER OPPORTUNITIES

- Expedition naming rights
- Planning and realisation of a boat trip on the Brahmaputra river China – Tibet – India – Bangladesh (Source – Delta)
- Two Logos (25x12cm) on each boat and support car
- Partner can send journalists/ staff members/ VIPs at any given time to join.
- Expedition will stop for media/ community/ VIP events.
- Media outreach before, during and after the Expedition
- Media/ journalist management at event stops.
- Participation in kick-off and final press conference.
- Professional photographer produces images for media, exhibition, book use.
- Professional film team to produce HD material on the Brahmaputra.

BRAHMAPUTRA
RIVER EXPEDITION 2010
CHINA / TIBET - INDIA - BANGLADESH

Participation Costs	100,000 Euro	50,000 Euro	25,000 Euro
Expedition Naming Rights	Yes	-	-
Planning & Realisation of Expedition	Yes	Yes	Yes
Two Logos (25x12 cm)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Journalists/Staff/VIPS join river crew	4 people	2 people	1 person
Stops for Events/Media/Community	Max possible	Fewer	1
Media outreach before/during/after	Max possible	Fewer	1
Media management at event stops	Yes	Yes	-
Kick off & Final press con. participation	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pro - Photographer produces images	Yes	Yes	-
Professional Film team	Yes	Yes	-
Professional HD video on the river	NA	NA	-
Has priority rights to buy film/photo	NA	NA	Yes

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www.ribexpedition.com

The Telegraph
calcutta, india

Today's Edition | Thursday , October 22 , 2009 | Shopping

Voyage propels river tourism - Global team sails the Ganges

A STAFF REPORTER

Andy Leemann with Czech team member Jaja Vondruskova in Calcutta. (Bishwarup Dutta)

A 2,500km voyage down the Ganga on inflatable boats by a Swiss explorer and his team has culminated in a river tourism drive by the state government and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

Andy Leemann led 12 crew members from various countries who embarked on the journey at Gangotri, the source of the river, on September 14 and made their way to Calcutta on Monday, documenting climactic and ecological changes along the way.

"There is great scope for soft tourism on the Ganga. By soft tourism, I don't mean thousands of people but small groups of travellers who can be taken downstream to see nature at its best. Plus, there are river dolphins, rare species of turtles and birds, which we saw," said Leemann.

The 55-year-old stressed the need to encourage river tourism and highlighted its potential benefits for those who live along the banks.

More such tours will be undertaken if the CII has its way. "The Ganga passes through only three states — West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The CII and the Centre have great plans for tourism on the river. While Bihar has come on board, we are in talks with the UP authorities. Trade and investment is bound to follow. Foreign investors have shown great interest," said Manab Pal, the chairman of tourism for CII, eastern India.

On September 24, an MoU was signed between river cruise company Pandaw Cruises India and the state tourism department. The *RV Bengal Pandaw*, designed like a colonial river steamer, left Calcutta on September 28 on its maiden trip down the Ganga to Varanasi, touching Howrah, Hooghly, Nadia and Murshidabad.

BRAHMAPUTRA
RIVER EXPEDITION 2010
INDIA - BANGLADESH

THE HINDU
Online edition of India's National Newspaper
Wednesday, Oct 21, 2009
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'Ganga is sick, not dying'

Ananya Dutta

KOLKATA: Heaving three boats that weigh nearly a thousand kilograms over dried river beds, suddenly walking into a fair in an obscure village, a crewmember down for a week with a mild form of typhoid — such are the stories that members of the 35-day expedition along the length of the Ganga had to tell here on Tuesday. "The river is not dying, it is full of life," said Andy Leemann, the Swiss boating expert who led the expedition that ended at Gangasagar in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district on October 17.

Birds and dolphins

Mr. Leeman's crewmember Apal Singh claimed they saw thousands of birds and numerous dolphins on the 2,521-kilometre route from Gaumukh to Gangasagar.

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- Raja seeks Pranab's help in auction of 3G spectrum
- "Tribals bear the brunt of police excesses"
- Second accused in Margao explosion case dies
- Quit or face action, party may tell Vasundhara Raje
- West Bengal seeks help from Jharkhand, Orissa
- "India, China should focus on economic issues"
- "Device did sense explosives at Bangalore stadium"
- UPA Ministers speaking without thinking: BJP
- Shahnawaz gets U.S. visa
- "IDPs from LTTE areas to return"
- Strike halts work in Gurgaon firms
- Let India-EU openly discuss child labour, environment: European Commission
- SAARC to make statement in Copenhagen
- Emergency landing at Jodhpur
- "Naxalite leaders, cadres are also Indian citizens"
- Data on 'water challenges' collected at 110 sites
- Prevent spread of unrest: industry

BRAHMAPUTRA
RIVER EXPEDITION 2010
CHINA / TIBET - INDIA

KOLKATA, October 19, 2009

Ganga expedition ends

ANANYA DUTTA

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Swiss explorer on Ganga voyage

TNN, Oct 20, 2009, 03.53am IST

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Tags: Ganga voyage | Swiss explorer

KOLKATA: Swiss adventurer Andy Leemann has led expeditions on the Amazon, Mekong, Orinoco and Zambezi. But his experiences of the last 35 days seem to have left him spellbound.

Leemann was leading the 15-member Ganges Expedition from Gangotri to the Bay of Bengal. The team traversed 2,521 km from Hardwar downstream in three 4.3 metre rigid inflatable boats. According to him, this is the first time such lightweight boats have been used for a Ganga expedition.

"The Ganga is a surprising river. For the first 500 km, its a narrow stream. It turns huge after its confluence with the Yamuna. The wildlife is wonderful and the natural beauty breathtaking. The forgotten' people living on the banks are excellent," Leemann said after finishing his expedition in Kolkata on Monday.

The explorer and his teammates spent the nights in tents on the riverbank or in temples where they interacted with people. Leemann did not sound very happy with the way the river has been dammed up. He believes that a large number of people are being deprived of their share of the

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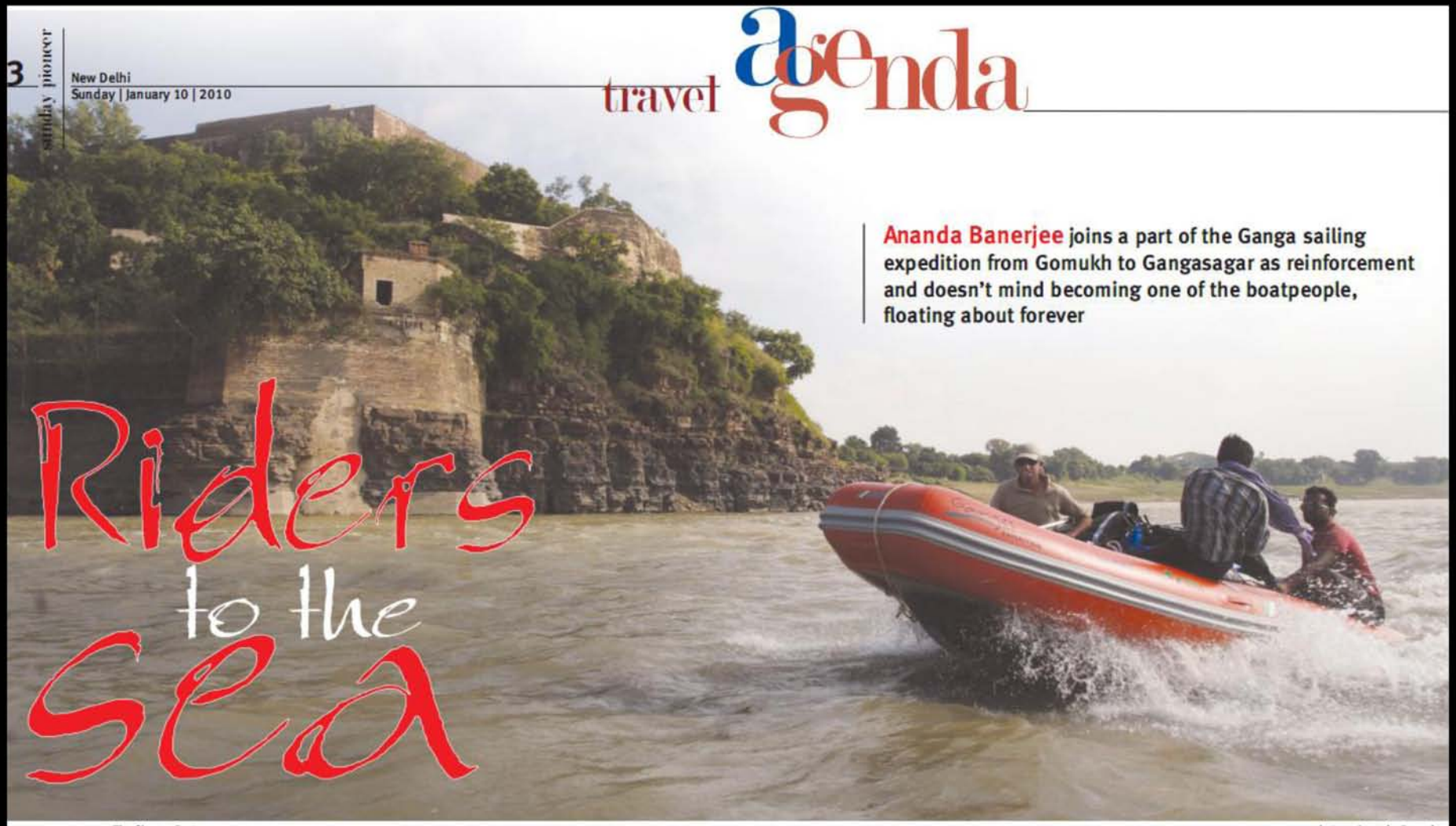
Excerpt from “Exotica” – Travel Magazine from The Pioneer Group

Ganges EXPEDITION

travel agenda

Riders to the Sea

Ananda Banerjee joins a part of the Ganga sailing expedition from Gomukh to Gangasagar as reinforcement and doesn't mind becoming one of the boatpeople, floating about forever



The Chunar Fort

photos: Ananda Banerjee

Excerpt from "Exotica" – Travel Magazine from The Pioneer Group

Ganges EXPEDITION

ghats with glassfuls of almond milk going around. This motley composition, too, seems to have been pre-destined. Apparently, Apal was assisting Andy during an expedition in Zambezi and happened to mention the Ganga as part of casual conversation. So taken in was Andy with its historical, mythical and spiritual context that he decided he had to ride the waters, if only to be part of their greatness.

Two new members join me as reinforcements, Gabriel and Jaja, while we bid farewell to the injured Lisa. Among a modest gathering of curious onlookers, the 12 of us set off roaring down the Ganga on three AB inflatable boats, each propelled by 40 horse power Yamaha engines. Andy leads with boat number one followed by our boat with Helge as captain while behind us is Leo helming his team on boat number three.

We are lucky to get a bright, sunny day as we zip ahead, knifing through the placid waters, the surf trailing us. Our fluorescent orange boats become the subject of much attention and curiosity as they have never been seen in these waters, used to more modest means of transport. People gather on the banks while children run along and wave out to us, hoping we could carry their dreams forward.

There is not much human habitation as we head towards Dalmau. While the respective captains try to find the right water channels for a smooth passage, for me it becomes a great learning experience of how a river flows. In its onward journey, it steadily cuts along one side of the bank and then heavy with mud and sand, is too tired to lug it, simply depositing it on the other side with the relief of a distressed porter. I see the various layers of top soil as the mud cliffs break, crumble and melt into the current. The river literally batters rocky cliffs but they stand unperturbed except getting pockmarked with a hole here, a crevice there. These are now the nesting sites of swallows, martins and bee-eaters. Joining them on the waterfront are kingfishers that dive

anchor and look for an isolated spot to set up camp. We do find a wooded stretch that's hidden away from human intervention. On expeditions such as these, the rule is to unload everything from the boat and we get busy in the tedious task of unpacking and dismantling our boats. We haul up the empty vessels, tie them up together and put up tents. The best part about sailing expeditions like these is you feel very much like a band of gypsies, settling down wherever you fancy, giving up whenever you are bored, life a constant chase towards the unattainable. Soon we get a temporary kitchen going and stew up a broth of our different culinary traditions. As the golden dusk melts into darkness, we shed our tiredness over generous helpings of coffee and snacks. I realise I am badly sunburnt. Nishant shows me a photo of his taken before embarking on this expedition just to show how his entire complexion has changed drastically since he set out at Gomukh. Zeno cracks a joke that he won't be recognised once he returns home. And just when we have warmed up to knowing each other, we get a couple of visitors from a nearby village. They warn us of snakes, saying we are near a pit and how three *sadhus* had recently died of snake bites. Hearing this, we flame up our torches to light up the area like an amphitheatre and indeed find gaping holes all around our tents. With more *mashaals* and a bonfire in place, we go back to our small talk over a sumptuous meal of pasta and corn cooked by Monu with a bit of assistance from Jaja.

It's not the snakes but the howling jackals that give us an uncomfortable night but we are too tired to pay heed and lapse into a few good hours of blissful sleep. We switch back into drill mode in the morning, repack, load and leave. But the sky is overcast and the wind picks up, making the waters choppy. It seems we are sailing on sea rather than a river as the boat repeatedly bounces and waddles on the waves.

From this stretch onwards, dolphins spring in and out, sometimes in twos, sometimes in fours. Or is it that the acrobat duo is changing its positions to befuddle us? Whatever. These lovely blithe creatures leap up, bottle-shiny in a flash of brilliance. Sometimes an entire school surfaces, a splish-splosh by about 10 dolphins, probably gurgling after a meal. The locals revere dolphin as a mythical

ride out with the tide. At about 4:30 in the afternoon we have Allahabad in sight. We resume replenishing our supplies under the bridge and move towards Prayag, the holy confluence of the Ganga, the Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati. Being one of the holiest places in the country, there is always a fair number of devotees offering prayers and feeding the gulls which swoop and flap around and over us. Sangam is the perfect microcosm of the continuity of the universe, life giving way to death which in turn births new life. In fact, life and death are like the two rivers here, conjoined twins with a different purpose, preserved by the Saraswati, the trinity as we know it. Celebratory pujas to cremation rites, everything is on in full swing as we tackle the strong currents of the two river systems that often have us in a mad tousle. The cross currents take a toll on Andy's engine and we park ourselves on one of the sand banks to check if everything is alright.

This sand bank is massive, a mini island if you wish, with a beach. The river gets so voluminous with all the silt from the higher reaches that it just lets itself go, unburdening itself in a gush and rolling wide, languid and flat.

The next day there's a change in plan. We realise that instead of the scheduled night halt at Mirzapur, we would be able to reach Varanasi by the end of the day. So we begin the marathon home run without too many diversions, not even the dolphins. There is significant increase in human density as we negotiate small fishing and ferry boats. Our eddies swamp the water buffaloes who step out of the waters rather reluctantly. But it's a heap of ancient ruins that grinds us to a halt. We discover Akbarpur. Not the Akbarpur where a meteorite fell

pillars, and continues to service a local economy here.

By 5 pm, we have the historic ghats of Varanasi in sight, a good nine-hour ride. Before entering the ghats, we slow down to have a good view of the impressive Ramnagar fort and palace, the ancestral home of the Kashi Naresh. Built by Maharaja Balwant Singh in the 18th century, the impressive red sandstone structure has a temple dedicated to Vyasa and a museum showcasing vintage cars, royal palanquins, an armoury of swords, old guns and antique clocks. The good part about viewing it from the river side is that you get to see the private residence of the scions complete with pavilions, cupolas and sitouts.

We grab quite a few eyeballs as we dock at Tulsi Ghat, adjoining the famous Assi Ghat. It is apt that we end this leg of our journey on hallowed ground, where the goddess Durga had cast away her sword after vanquishing the demons, spouting out a stream called Assi that mixed with the Ganga. They say a dip in the waters here is the pilgrimage of a lifetime. It is where mystics are often believed to be eccentrics. Tulsidas was considered an erratic householder. As is Prof Veer Bhadra Mishra, who hopes to clean the river by using algae, and who sings his heart out to Hanuman as *mahant* of the Sankatmochan Temple. You could call us eccentric too but then would we have felt so deeply about the river?

Sadly my stretch of the marathon ends here. Just five days back I heard from Helge that everyone had made it safely to Sagar Island where the river meets the sea. On his GPS, it was 2,521 km from Haridwar. And Andy wrote back. "In the end, the face of the river is the same everywhere, be it the Ganga, the Mekong or the Zambezi."

This is an abridged version of a piece from *Exotica*, the wellness and lifestyle magazine from The Pioneer Group, available in all rooms of select five-star hotel chains across the country

GANGES EXPEDITION 2009 JOURNAL

by Andy Leemann

In the late summer of 2009, experienced expeditionary Andy Leemann led an inspired and intrepid team on a truly memorable 'Ganges Expedition'. His account of the events, along with his own personal reflections, is contained in this, his journal…

06.09.09 Delhi

On arrival in Delhi, my co-expedition leader Apal was not at the airport as he had promised – he had overslept. Apal and the team had been working day and night to turn what seemed like an almost impossible dream into a reality – the Ganges Expedition.

I spent the next three days with Apal, Monu and Nishant buying all the necessary equipment, food supplies etc, and getting the Yamaha outboard 40 hp engines serviced and running.

Press conference in Delhi Professor Mohan Muansinghe, Andy Leemann, Helge Bendl, Lucia Tallo, Dipak Deva, Adam

main sponsors Kuoni, was held in Delhi. The conference was led by Helge Bendl, and also present were Lucia Tallo representing Kuoni, Adam Koniuszewski from Green Cross International, and me, Andy Leemann, as expedition leader representing the team. Green Cross International envoy and Nobel Prize winner Professor Mohan Muansinghe gave a speech on the environmental problems of the rivers originating in the Himalayan region. It was a great success. More than 30 journalists were there, despite the heavy rain and local flooding.

13.09.09 Delhi–Rishikesh

At 5am the expedition crew left Delhi in two cars arranged by Distant Frontiers-Kuoni India, and headed for Rishikesh, the holy city for Hindus and a famous pilgrimage centre. We drove for the next two days, admiring the lower Himalayas

Expedition crew at the source. N30 55.732 E79 04.675 – 3965 metres

15.09.09 Gangotri

We reached Gangotri where we met our porters, and the next day we set off towards Gaumukh, the source of the Ganges. We enjoyed beautiful weather as we tracked along the Bhagirathi river valley, but unfortunately the whole team started to suffer

18.09.09 Gaumukh

Proudly we reached the source of the Ganges, 4000 metres above sea level, on 18th September. The ice-cold water from the Gangotri Glacier inspired us to take a dip; Leo and I led the way, and

Ganges EXPEDITION

Excerpt from –
"RIB International"

To do this exercise 100 times a day is not easy, but it toughens you up and makes you realise that you should never underestimate a river.

The next 60 kilometres were hard going in the shallow water, and this proved to be by far the hardest day of pushing and pulling.

30.09.09 Farrukabad–Kanpur

In Farrukabad we met our support car with Zorba and the driver – our golden boys! – who brought all the essential goodies, like water, food, veggies, wood for cooking, and the much needed gasoline.

Most of the time Zorba came with us to our camp, helping and enjoying the company of the expedition team. The stories around the fire, and just being together in deepest India, gave everyone a sense of freedom and fulfilment.

At Kanpur Lisa, our wonderful Swiss crewmember, would have to go back to Switzerland. Gabriela and Iaia were set to join us here.

After travelling through the whole day and night, we arrived at the Kanpur Dam. Sadly the channel around the dam was dry and we had to camp there for the night with a very unhappy crew, half of them suffering from sore feet, diarrhoea, and various infections. For a while I was definitely persona non grata and realised, not for the first time in my expeditionary life, how lonely a leader can feel.

But Apal, my good friend and co-leader, took off to find some cold beers and the support car. When he arrived two hours later with the goodies, the mood changed rapidly and an air of positivity returned – funny how little it takes…!

The next morning we manoeuvred the RIBs around the dam and travelled the last 15 kilometres to Massacre Ghat, where we camped. Gabriela and Iaia joined us here and Lisa had to visit the doctor for treatment on an infected finger.

Garmukteswar – a busy port.

The WWF received us with great enthusiasm, and we were informed that the expedition crew were invited for a typical Kanpur lunch, and that afterwards we would have time to look at their work.

Lunch break

That night the police appeared and told us that it was unsafe for us to sleep here – all whites had to go to a hotel! Two hours later, against our wishes and after several unsuccessful phonecalls, we moved to a nearby hotel. However, the Indian members of the team stayed in the camp to watch over our equipment.

A wrestling champion from Kanpur and the security chief for the expedition team

02.10.09 Kanpur–Allahabad
Today was Gandhi's and Jaja's birthday.

The Ramganga was the next big river to flow into the Ganges. The water was high here and easier to navigate, with little pushing needed over the sandbanks. Klaus travelled with the car a few days just to help his feet heal. We had all suffered with infections and sore feet because of having to push the boats over the mud

> **"That night** the police appeared and told us that it was unsafe for us to sleep here – all whites had to go **to a hotel!"**

and sand.

The campsites on the river and its islands were one of the most memorable parts of our trip. We stayed away from the villages and made the most of our natural surroundings.

Shailendre invited us to visit a turtle sanctuary

03.10.09 Allahabad–Mirzapur–Varanasi

We navigated on a full river and had the current in our favour. It was easy to cover 150 kilometres a day with the wonderful AB inflatables. The Yamaha outboard 40 hp Enduros worked perfectly after they had taken such a beating over the first 800 kilometres. We enjoyed a great, comfortable ride to the holy city of Varanasi.

05.10.09 Varanasi

Lots of our friends were waiting for us and we were made to feel very welcome in Kashi's house. Kashi and his family did everything they could to make us

BRAHMAPUTRA
RIVER EXPEDITION 2010

ZAMBEZI ADVENTURE

This is the story of a specialised medical team from Roll Back Malaria, a group of worldwide reporters and two experienced river explorers who undertook a unique and unprecedented project to bring hope and aid to forgotten peoples dangerously exposed to malaria.

Logistics and financial support for this extraordinary adventure came from six countries, development agencies, private companies and preventive solutions. Two years of strenuously coordinated efforts and fantastic support made the Zambezi Expedition a reality, proving that properly planned and coordinated action from whilst the international reporters following this unique adventure gave a voice and an eye to the world. Experienced explorers were also needed to plan the expedition, as the quest required metres (4,900 feet) above sea level, the river drifts for about 3,000 kilometres before splitting into a huge delta and finally reaching the ocean. It descends from central to south-east Africa,

Zambezi Expedition

Excerpt from – "RIB International"

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buffaloes and hyenas, is abundant both in and along the river. The area includes several national parks and Victoria Falls, the largest sheet of falling water in the world. However, development and tourism in the area are held back by malaria, a disease that kills over one million people a year – most of them in Africa, and most of them children and pregnant women – at an average of one death every 30 seconds.

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

March 28. Finally, the expedition starts. More than 200 villagers are gathered on a small bridge 40km from the source to watch us drop the Avon 4.2m RIBs, driven by Yamaha outboard 40hp 2-strokes, into the river. There are only five of us in two boats for the first stretch, as it is too risky for the rest of the team; they'll join us later. But now we're off!

For a couple of kilometres we drift along the small river, ducking low beneath some branches, but for most parts we have to wriggle and push the Avon RIBs through the maze of branches and submerged logs. The river is uncharted and rough, so there's no way of knowing what's around the next corner. Soon we are into some heavy rapids and waterfalls; here and there we have to control the boats with ropes or swim alongside and push them. The boats are getting badly damaged

river surface is a minefield of pointed branches and sharp rocks. More and more often we must portage or swim with the boats.

At certain points the course gets so rough that we have to portage the boats through the bush, clearing our way through with machetes across the heavy vegetation, while carrying 700kg of material. Villages are away from the river to avoid crocs, so there's no population around, and most times it's just us five carrying boats and equipment. It takes us about two to four hours to clear up one kilometre and carry everything through and keep going. We have to keep going.

We've been navigating for three days when we come across the first waterfalls. We portage the boats again, find a camping area, set up our tents and try to get some rest. To our dismay, we suddenly spot millions of legs crawling over our tents and we realise we have come under attack from killer ants. They're crawling all over the place: the tents, the food, the equipment, the boats. Everything is being eaten and destroyed by the ants – it's like nothing we have ever seen before. We shiver and realise that, at this rate, these tiny creatures will leave no trace of us at all by early morning. We end up spending the night sitting by the lit fire on aluminium chairs, our feet up to avoid the bites. Meanwhile, they continue to eat almost everything they can, and eventually we are left without any food.

Next morning we put the boats in the water and get out of there. We go along for some 400 metres and then lose sight of the river in front of us. We're puzzled and don't know which way to go... but not for long. As we edge

Sensing the danger, we decide to pull the boats and ourselves out of the water, and we stay here, stranded in this gorge, for two days, with no way out and no food. We communicate with the shore base by satellite telephone; communication is good but the response is negative – they can't provide any help for four days. We contact embassies, we contact everybody we can, but to no avail – no help is forthcoming. We are on our own and have to decide what to do... It takes us two days to find a village, where we are welcomed, and people give us food and offer to help. Bless African solidarity! But soon we're surprised again, this time by a mechanical roar above our heads: at the last minute, the Angolan army has sent a Russian troop-carrying helicopter to rescue us! We pull the RIBs and the equipment up into the back, and off we go again...

They leave us in Cazombo, where we join the rest of the crew, have a decent meal, fix the damaged boats overnight and get ready to set off again the following morning, still reeling somewhat from the shocks of the previous few

Excerpt from – "RIB International"

Zambezi Expedition

Zambezi Expedition. Team into his domain...and wants us all to remember just who is the boss!

BACK ON THE RIVER AGAIN

It's day 6. The Expedition Team is back on the river and reunited with the rest of the crew, ready to face the challenges of the next 2500km. We have to run the rapids, navigate in very difficult waters, carry the boats around waterfalls; and the daily grind, roughing it in the African bush, has already become the accepted norm. But morale is high and the team is operating as a great unit. We will prevail!

GOOD MORNING, AFRICA

We have established a daily routine for the ten weeks of our expedition. As our leader, it's Andy's duty to get up at 5:45a.m. light the fire and put the kettle on for coffee. At 6:00 he calls the crew from their sleeping bags. As we enjoy the most amazing sunrises each morning, our days start with a basic breakfast: a bowl of cereal, a couple of dry bones (dry bread), coffee or tea. Our daily lunch consists of light snacks: canned tuna, crackers and energy bars. Dinner, seven days a week, is made from a choice of rice, pasta or a soy-based imitation of meat, mixed with dehydrated vegetables. Luckily, our inspired cook, Helge Modrow, always manages to keep us happy with a tasty surprise.

Our food supplies are brought to us by two 4x4 Isuzus and a truck, which meet us in pre-arranged locations. Whilst we did 3,000km down the river, these trucks had to drive 16,000km to follow the expedition – which shows how important this river is for Africa, and its huge potential, given the lack of roads and infrastructure in the area. Despite some difficulties in reaching the riverbanks in certain areas, the logistics are working wonderfully

row, during which time we had to survive on our own.

Daylight lasts from 6:00 to 6:00, and in Africa you just don't go anywhere at all when it gets dark. Therefore, navigation stops at around 4:00 or 5:00pm in order to start setting up camp. Camping means setting up tents for 9–14 people; pulling out the boats and securing them; checking the equipment; cooking; washing up after dinner and storing everything, sometimes hanging things in bags from high branches to keep them away from the sight or smell of the beautiful wild creatures around us; and collecting firewood from the bush (home to snakes, scorpions, bees and other deadly creatures) for the whole night, to prevent equally dangerous inhabitants (including lions, wild cats, and hyenas) from coming over. We also choose to camp away from villages to avoid the curious from coming up, fiddling around, staring at us, stealing petty things etc. We prefer to pitch camp on islands. Monkeys, however, are all over the place and we have to throw sticks to them. We have to be on guard 24/24 over

"Legendary Scottish explorer David Livingstone, a victim of malaria himself, would certainly have been very proud of them all"

locals, the team, the equipment, the food...

Having to do all this on a daily basis over ten weeks is quite a task! In between we have to repair boats, and maintain equipment and engines. Getting the group to move in the mornings is also a tough call: getting them out of the tents, having breakfast, washing up after breakfast, loading all the equipment into the four boats, getting the boats ready with gasoline and safety equipment, and cleaning up the whole campsite in two hours, sometimes less. Even getting back in the water is a daily challenge. We're travelling with brave, daring doctors and reporters, not with an experienced crew of expeditioners. 'Everybody, life vest!' It's a routine call. 'Please, stay on the boat: no jumping over, no hands in the water, no refreshing your faces...' and so on. Day after day for two and a half months.

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