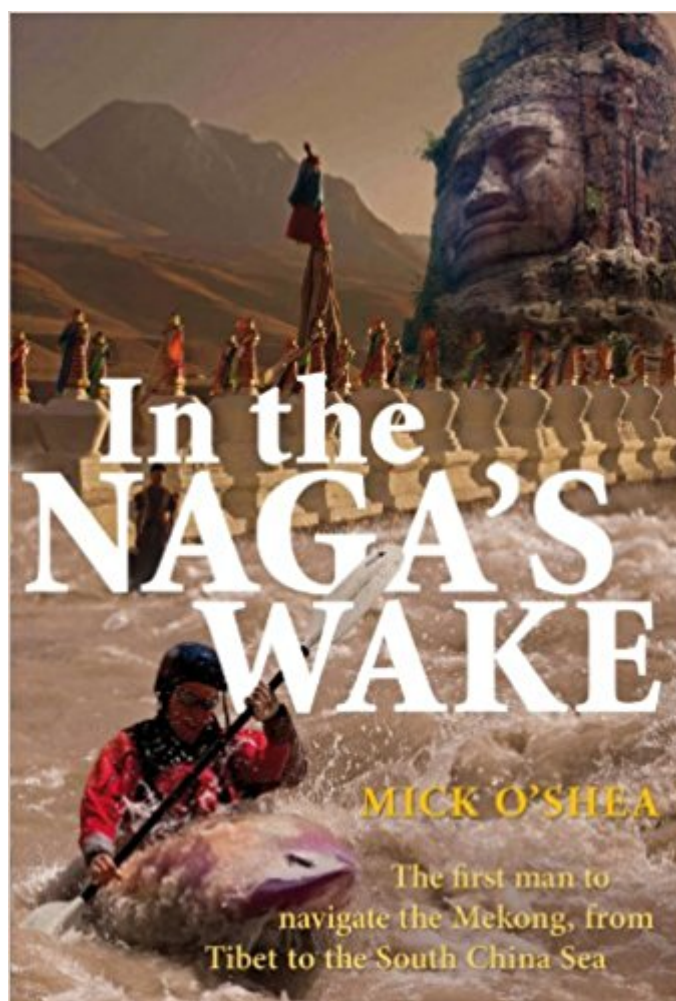


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In The Naga's Wake: The First Man To Navigate The Mekong, From Tibet To The South China Sea



Synopsis

Upon first seeing its unforgiving rapids, a 20-year-old traveler Mick O'Shea began dreaming of a solo expedition down the Mekong River, from its source in Tibet to the South China Sea. This exhilarating travel novel captures O'Shea's extremely dangerous kayak adventure into the unknown through remote gorges, terrifying rapids, and deadly whirlpools, past floating headless bodies, looming dams and terrifying Chinese soldiers. Always seeking adventure and adrenaline, this explorer was immediately attracted to the Mekong's power as well as to its spiritual and cultural significance and exotic beauty. This extraordinary true story of one man's wild ride down one of the fastest and most dangerous rivers in the world is a compelling read for armchair travelers, extreme-sports fans, environmentalists, and Southeast Asia enthusiasts.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Mick O'Shea's book is a remarkable story of a great adventure that is, at the same time, a heartfelt plea for wider awareness of the challenges facing the Mekong River's delicate ecology." Milton Osborne, author, *The Mekong: Turbulent Past, Uncertain Future*

Mick O'Shea is the first person to successfully navigate the Mekong River. He is an expert adventurer who enjoys white-water rafting, trekking, kayaking, and camping. He is the cofounder and CEO of Wildside Eco Tours, which specializes in travel and eco-tourism in Laos.

This is a very interesting book and the adventure it portrays is colossal! Mick O'Shea tells us at the very beginning that he is going to include his perception-bias of the entire trip as to the best of his ability warts and all. How fortunate that he did this because how else could we as readers get inside the mind of a person who is the first to descend the entire Mekong? This is the closest most of us average folks will ever get to this type of an adventure. Mick had to cut corners on equipment, bureaucracy, money, support staff, timing, weather, personal relationships...and had to muster a single minded concentration and focus on the objective of successfully navigating the Mekong or he would have failed like so many others. O'Shea's river rat mentality, ego, slap stick genius, genuine interest in people and ability to think in the moment facilitated his one of a kind achievement. This is not only a river adventure but a chance to peek in the mind of a super achiever. I looked up the coordinates of the source of the Mekong and focused in with Google Earth to follow the entire trip as I read the book right to the mouth of the Mekong. If one does this the whole book comes alive as if one were following the whole adventure from about 1000 feet above. A wealth of photographs all along the route allows one to see the terrain, people, many of the rapids, some history, rock slides, canyons, fauna, Chinese dams...all along the route. My suggestion to Mike for his future adventure books is to include GPS coordinates all along the route which lends the entire visual surroundings as a backdrop to the mainstream of his adventure story. One has to love those river rats because they are indeed free spirits and they live in another world. The variables are never ideal for a great adventure and there are only a few rare individuals who have the courage, wit, intuition of the moment and focus to dare to plunge in, succeed and still be alive at the end. Thanks for the great adventure and my hat is off to Mick O'Shea! May the Naga always travel with you!

Behind the 70s-looking action/retro cover is the tale of old-fashioned exploration and discovery detailing the author's trials and tribulations in becoming the first man to navigate the Mekong river from its source in Tibet to the South China Sea. This first-hand account of what is quite an incredible journey takes awhile to heat up, although the extract from O'Shea's journal at a dangerous and critical point of the expedition, given at the start of the book and set in italics gives a compelling and personal introduction to the journey. O'Shea's account includes the quest for funds, battles and fallouts with his team, as well as descriptions of the challenges he faced on the water as he kayaked the length of the Mekong. While it is a personal account, in many ways it reads more like a sequence of events rather than evoking a response from the reader - you are told it's cold, rather than feeling it. However, the book does not intended to be a literary masterpiece. It tells the tale of the impressive journey and includes interesting geological and cultural facts. It also introduces

kayaking terminology such as 'fat bastards' and 'boils' as well as invites the reader to consider environmental ecology from a different point of view. While it is not a 'must read' it is a worthwhile read. Once I had accepted that it was the book's intention to document the trip first and foremost, as opposed to giving voice to the interesting people he met along the way, I was able to enjoy the book for what it is. SJ Fay

What would you do if you were to take a shower but the water is only trickling? Then you found out that your neighbor was controlling the water flow for his own use and discretion. Just because he is closer to the water supply?! That was the first thing that came to mind after reading this book. Common sense alone will tell you what the Chinese are doing by building not just one dam but a series of dams will have serious negative effects on the life of people in the countries downstream who barely have enough to eat. This is injustice on a grand scale. Very good accounts of geography, culture, different people and way of life through the six countries that the Mekong flows through. Both eye opening and humorous. Not to mention an amazing adventure that would make sailing around the globe solo pale by comparison.

A friend gave me this book, because I live in Laos, where the Mekong is indeed the Mother of Waters. But it took six months before I opened it. Kayaking down the Mekong is surely exciting... but would a book about the trip really be interesting? Fortunately, Mick O'Shea knows how to keep his story moving. He deftly weaves history, interesting characters, politics, and culture into his narrative. Each element adds to his account, but none get in the way. There are spots where a stronger editorial hand would have helped. Statements like "The dolphins will certainly be negatively impacted upon [by] China's mega dams" is more suited to a UN study than to adventure writing. But those were minor eddies on a thoroughly enjoyable voyage. Every day, I looked forward to sitting down again with this story.

Knowing the author and some of the participants it was an amazing achievement and I enjoyed reading of this great achievement.

This could have been a fine book, on the model of Joe Kane's *Running the*. It's not. O'Shea is no writer. His narration is boastful and humorless, the bragging of a classic alpha male, made even worse with progressive cant. I couldn't finish it. Mick may be a great paddler, but I'd hate to spend any time with him, on the water or off.

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