UK explorer achieves THIRD ‘world first’ - completes amazing year-long feat at end of 4,000-mile Yangtze River on 10 August

Tuesday 30 July, 2019

- **Ash Dykes (28) arrives in Shanghai on the 10th of August having traversed Yangtze River in China in what is his third world first**
- **At 24 traversed 1,500-mile length of Mongolia, with 18 stone survival trailer, solo and unsupported, in just 78 days**
- **At 26 trekked 1,600-mile through Madagascar, summiting the eight highest mountains along the way. Contracted deadliest strain of Malaria, held up at gun point, avoided bandits, crossed crocodile-infested waters on self-built rafts and hacked way through near-impenetrable jungle**
- **At 28, traversed Yangtze River – the third longest in the world -where he was followed for two days by a pack of wolves, walked at 5,100m altitude in temperatures dropping to -20°C**
- **Partnered with World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) and Water To Go in conservation efforts**

British explorer, Ash Dykes (28), is set complete his third ‘world first’ on the 10th of August 2019 when he arrives in Shanghai, having been the first person ever to traverse the 4,000-mile Yangtze River in China on foot.

The expedition has not only been a huge personal achievement, but has also seen Ash get involved in several important conservation projects along the way including initiatives for World Wildlife Foundation and Water To Go.

Ash has overcome many difficult and extreme physical and mental challenges to achieve this third world first. At the very beginning, the source of the Yangtze River (at 5,100m almost the same height as Mount Everest base camp) was difficult to reach and four of his team left the expedition before it even began due to altitude sickness and the very real possibility of bear and wolf attacks. It wasn’t long after they left that Ash was followed for two days by a pack of wolves, which had killed someone only 24 hours previously.

In addition, Ash faced extreme weather conditions and at the start of his trek, he tackled blizzards and temperatures as low as -20°C while at the end of his journey he endured extreme heat of up to 40°C.

Commenting on his latest expedition, Ash said: “This is more than a personal achievement; it is unlocking human potential and showcasing that in a world where every corner of the planet is occupied by people, there are still things that haven’t been done. I’ve shared my journeys with millions around the world, with the message ‘if I can, then you can too’. We must enjoy this world we live in, but also highlight issues, showcase the positives and most importantly, protect it.

“Of course, this is far from just a challenging journey, it’s a cultural one. I’ve been extremely fortunate to experience the wonderful hospitality, traditions and cultures of the people of China, both rural and urban, in all its diversity. China has really taken me to its heart and I’m overwhelmed by the support I’ve received across the country.

“I’ve worked with the Green Development Foundation, WWF and many other organisations and it’s been a privilege to capture and share their work.

“Throughout my journey, I’ve also been able to take note of the amount of plastics and pollution that I’ve seen from source to sea. The good news is that I’ve also seen a huge increase in knowledge and understanding within the communities, towns and cities along the way. People are aware of the damage being caused to their water sources and are now actively changing their ways for the better - it’s inspiring to see.

“Having had huge support from the Chinese media and people, this has not only been one of my most ambitious journeys, but also most enjoyable. It’s been amazing to be able to share the whole journey on

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my social media, including Instagram and Facebook, as one of the most interactive world firsts."

Ash's world first along the Yangtze River follows world firsts in Mongolia and Madagascar.

In 2014, aged just 24, Ash became the first recorded person to walk the length of Mongolia from west to east, solo and unsupported. He trekked 1,500 miles over the Altai Mountains, through the Gobi Desert and across the Mongolian Steppe, while pulling 120kg/18st of survival supplies on a homemade trailer - in just 78 days!

Two years later in 2016, he became the first recorded person to traverse the length of inland Madagascar, trekking 1,600 miles in just 155 days and climbing eight of the country's highest mountains. Here, he contracted the deadliest strain of Malaria, was held up by the military, avoided bandits, received spider bites, built rafts to cross dangerous, crocodile-infested waters and hacked his way through near-impenetrable jungle to achieve his goal.

Ash concludes: "This trip was extremely challenging but truly incredible and the people I met along the way have spurred me on and made it all worthwhile.

"We've captured the whole journey, as it was professionally filmed and we are preparing for an international TV commission. I'd also like to thank all those who joined me along the way and my teams for showing such immense support. I will be sad to leave the country, but I'll be returning to China in September for an Asia wide speaking tour.

"When I return to the UK again I'll start working on some exciting new projects – so watch this space!"

To find out more about Ash Dykes visit www.ashdykes.com
or Instagram @ash_dykes

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Notes to Editors:

Conservation Efforts

China

- Partnered with the China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation (CBCGDF), who help to protect the water sources of China.
- Showcased the work of WWF and its work along the Yangtze River (https://www.wwf.org.uk/where-we-work/places/yangtze)
- Yibin Fishery Department, who help protect the species living in the Yangtze, like the finless porpoise dolphin, Yangtze sturgeon and Chinese sturgeon.
- Water-To-Go.. used bottles on all expeditions, to have access to fresh drinking water, with the 3 in 1 built in water filtration system and to reduce my use of plastic, whilst educating and encouraging others to do the same.

Mongolia

Helped to raise awareness of climate change and the effect it has on the nomadic way of life, while raising funds for the Red Cross, who help to supply the nomads livestock with shelter and the locals with Ger insulation, through the very difficult and harsh winters.

Madagascar

Partnered with the Lemur Conservation Network, which has 60 organisations on the ground, helping to protect and preserve the unique biodiversity.

Bringing lemurs back from the brink of extinction, planting more trees, expanding national parks, providing locals with good means of work and the younger generation with good education.

UK

Ash is UK Ambassador for Malaria No More UK and Madagascar Tourism

Danger Points

China

- 10 of 16 people leaving the mission due to altitude sickness/fear of wildlife
- Source of Yangtze so isolated
- Altitude
- Freezing temperatures
- Bears: lots of warning from locals and Ash was shown photos and videos of horrific attacks. The bears were now coming down from the mountains, because it was too cold for them and they were searching for food before they go into hibernation.
- Wolves: followed Ash for two days right after killing a local lady.
- Wild yak: had to set off Chinese firecrackers to keep them away
- Landslides
- Floods
- Police
- River crossings
- Hot season

Mongolia:

- Three weeks over the Altai mountains (3,000 meters), five weeks across the Gobi Desert and three weeks over the Mongolian Steppe.
- Nicknamed by the locals “The Lonely Snow Leopard”, due to the wolves keeping a respectful distance from Ash, as they do the snow leopards.
- Snow blizzards
- Isolation
- Loneliness
- Wolves
- Sandstorms
- Almost died in the Gobi Desert, running low on water and suffering severely with heat exhaustion (heat stroke too, which is usually fatal).
- Had to break down goals and only manage what he could visualise, which 100 meters. 100 meters walking, then five minutes under his trailer hiding from the sun, repetitively for four days, until he made it to a small community. *Only just made it and took eight days painful recovery before pushing on.

Madagascar

- Bandits
- Held at gun point by the military
- Had the deadliest strain of malaria with only three hours to go, before slipping into a coma. Pushed on and just made it to medical help.
- Leeches
- Spiders

- Crossing croc infested rivers
- Hunting and gathering in the jungle
- Cyclone season
- Hacking through almost impenetrable jungle
- Building rafts using natural resources
- Crossing rivers in cyclone season and almost losing my photographer during a night-time river crossing

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