

15 piranhas a day! Text A

Ed Stafford, a former soldier from England, has recently completed an incredible journey. He is the first man to walk the whole length of the Amazon River from source to sea with just a backpack, crossing from Peru to Brazil via Columbia.

Ed decided to do the trip to raise money and awareness for different causes, including cancer research and the environment. Ed admitted that he also made the trip for a more personal reason: to get into the record books. He was told the journey was impossible to complete, but this only made him more determined to reach the end. He was described as 'crazy', which is understandable, given the dangers and the distance involved.

Ed set off from the source of the River Amazon in Peru, in April 2008 and completed his amazing journey in early August 2010, although he had originally thought it only would take him a year. The expedition took him 859 days: this means that on average he walked about 5.5 km per hour per day. It is not surprising that he went through nine pairs of shoes!

The river is about 6,500 km long, but he was often forced to walk further because of flooding, and so actually trekked nearly 10,000 km. However, it was not just the distance that makes this journey incredible, it is the dangers that Ed faced along the way. The jungle is full of swamps, poisonous snakes and insects, as well as the risks of disease. Surprisingly, the biggest danger in the Peruvian part of the journey was from tribespeople, who are afraid of outsiders because they think they will harm them.

1 Which of these you would find most frightening about a trip through the Amazon Rainforest? Select the three most frightening aspects. Discuss with your partner.

- the dangerous animals
- the insects and scorpions
- your own abilities
- the loneliness / missing home
- the distance
- falling ill
- being hungry
- the local tribal people
- the Amazon and the swamps
- the uncertainty of the situation / the future

2 Read Text A and fill in the table. Then ask your partner questions to complete Text B.

	Text A	Text B
1 Who is Ed Stafford?		
2 What dangers / problems did he have to face?		
3 Did he travel alone?		
4 Why did he do this trek?		
5 How long did he walk for?		
6 How did he stay in contact with the outside world?		
7 What surprised Ed on his journey?		

15 piranhas a day! Text B

Ed was bitten and stung on countless occasions by different insects (it is estimated that he had 50,000 mosquito bites). He contracted a skin disease and on parts of the journey he was sometimes also desperately hungry: he actually lost 7 kg in weight. He saw many dangerous animals, such as snakes, electric eels, jaguars and anacondas. When travelling through Peru, Ed was chased and also held prisoner by local tribespeople who were suspicious of strangers; he thought he was going to be killed.

Like many great adventurers, Ed had a reliable travelling companion. After five months he was joined by a local Peruvian man called Gadiel 'Cho' Rivera, who intended to accompany him for just a few days, to help him pass through particularly dangerous areas. However, Cho decided to carry on and the pair grew to be great friends.

They lived mainly on rice, fish, beans and grain, but also ate strange food such as wild cat and even tortoise. However, despite their situation, Ed kept in touch with the outside world through Twitter and also through weekly blogs, to help raise awareness of the Amazon rainforest. He also relied on a satnav to direct him, because the pair soon discovered the local maps were out of date: they sometimes reached a village to find that the whole area had been cleared by loggers, and the entire community (and their food source) had disappeared.

Despite all the dangers, Stafford declared that he was 'in love' with the jungle and it felt 'like home'. Even so, running into the sea at the mouth of the River Amazon in Brazil, was an unforgettable moment for both men.

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2 Read Text B and fill in the table. Then ask your partner questions to complete Text A.

	Text A	Text B
1 Who is Ed Stafford?		
2 What dangers / problems did he have to face?		
3 Did he travel alone?		
4 Why did he do this trek?		
5 How long did he walk for?		
6 How did he stay in contact with the outside world?		
7 What surprised Ed on his journey?		

3 Exchange your information. Take notes to complete the table.

4 Cover the text and with your partner decide what these numbers refer to.

7 kg April 2008 10,000 km 9 50,000 859 1 year 5.5 km 15

5 Underline all the regular past simple / past participle endings and then put them into the correct sound group: /t/ /d/ /ɪd/.

/t/	/d/	/ɪd/
walked	involved	completed

6 Discuss the following questions.

- 1 What do you find the most surprising element about this adventure?
- 2 What sort of person does a trip like this? Would you like to do something of this sort?
- 3 Do you think the trip managed to raise awareness of the Amazon and environmental issues such as logging (cutting down all the trees and clearing the area)? How?
- 4 Do you think it is possible to do a trip like this alone?

Glossary

awareness (*noun*) – knowledge of a subject or situation

backpack (*noun*) – a bag that you carry on your back when walking long distances, which contains clothing, food and drink, etc.

cause (*noun*) – an idea, organisation or aim that you support or work for

clear (*verb*) – to remove people or things from a place where they are not wanted

logger (*noun*) – someone whose job is to cut down trees

out-of-date (*adj*) – containing information which is no longer correct because it is old

satnav (*noun*) – satellite navigation: a system for route finding using information from satellites

source (*noun*) – the beginning of a river or stream; a place, thing or person which provides something that you want: *oranges are a good source of vitamin*

suspicious (*adj*) – feeling that someone or something cannot be trusted

swamp (*noun*) – an area of land covered by water where trees and plants grow

trek (*verb*) (*noun*) – to go on a long and difficult journey on foot

tribe (*noun*) – a large group of related families who live in the same area and share a common language, religion and customs. **tribal** (*adj*)