For years they’d dreamt of packing in their day jobs and paddling one of the world’s great rivers, so long as it was somewhere warm and sunny. Siberia seemed liked the obvious choice…

Starting from high in the mountains of northern Mongolia, Paul Grogan and travelling companion Richard Boddington set out to make the first source-to-sea journey of Siberia’s 4,400km Amur River. Never sure if they’ll be able to continue around the next corner, the pair face guns, gunboats and arrest at every turn.

But beyond this façade of military might, they find a generous, warm-hearted people with a wicked sense of humour and an unhealthy predilection for poetry, pig fat and home-made vodka. With sun, saunas and dancing girls also high on the agenda, they soon find themselves swept along by the life of the river – and the occasional 4 a.m. flood.