

Finding David Sneddon: Executive Report

October 27, 2004

To: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People's Republic of China
The U.S. Department of State

From: The following family members of David Louis Sneddon, who has been missing in China since August 2004:

Roy V. Sneddon (father)
Michael V. Sneddon (brother)
James H. Sneddon (brother)

Executive Summary

On Wednesday morning, August 11, 2004, David L. Sneddon, a 24 year-old student traveling in western China after a term of language study in Beijing, sent the following e-mail message to his mother, Kathleen Sneddon:

“I’m in Lijiang now in western Yunnan province. I will take a bus to hike Tiger Leaping George [sic] in about half an hour . . . I am having a great time hear [sic] but nonetheless am excited to come home.”

David’s family and friends have not heard from him since.

Chinese authorities and officials at the U.S. embassy in China have suspected that David Sneddon lost his way while hiking through the Tiger Leaping Gorge and died in a fall or drowned in the Jinshajiang River. Other officials have supposed that even if he did not come to harm in the gorge, he may have chosen to go into hiding. Because of these theories, China’s official search for David has focused on the gorge and has lost momentum.

We three, members of his family, traveled to China in September 2004 to look for David. After our own investigation, we submit this document to disprove both of these theories. In this document, we assert that:

- David Sneddon traveled safely through Tiger Leaping Gorge.
- Multiple witnesses encountered David between August 11 and 14 and positively establish that he left the Gorge and traveled to Shangri-La (formerly Zhongdian).
- David was last seen in Shangri-La around noon on Saturday, August 14, 2004.
- David is missing involuntarily, perhaps kidnapped or kept against his will by some persons or organization.

This document explains our findings. We conclude that David Louis Sneddon disappeared involuntarily in Shangri-La sometime between 12:00 noon and 3:00 PM on Saturday, August 14, 2004.

We submit this document to encourage the governments of the People’s Republic of China and the United States to continue the search for David. We request that you focus the search in Shangri-La, the geographical area where he was last seen. We also request that you focus on peoples or organizations that may have an interest in detaining an American who has unique language skills.

Finding David Sneddon: Executive Report



David Louis Sneddon
Born May 3, 1980
Student: Brigham Young University
Part-Time Employee: MultiLing Corporation
Missing: August 14, 2004
Yunnan Province China

YOUR KIND ASSISTANCE IS APPRECIATED

If you have information regarding the whereabouts of David Sneddon, please contact:

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For more information or copies of this report, please go to:

www.helpfindDavid.com

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Section 1: Background

David's Educational and Family Background

David Sneddon is a student at Brigham Young University (BYU) in Provo, Utah. BYU is a religious university, owned and administered by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the “Church of Jesus Christ”). David was taught and lives by the teachings of Jesus Christ. (For a more detailed explanation of David’s core beliefs and values, see Appendix A on page 33.) David took a two-year leave of absence from his university studies to serve a voluntary religious mission in South Korea for the Church of Jesus Christ. He learned to speak Korean fluently, and upon returning home, decided to continue studying languages. He chose to major in Chinese, with a minor in Korean.

As part of his studies, he lived in the Chinese House on the BYU campus. BYU has several language “houses.” These are separate apartments for men and women in which students live for one or two semesters with others who speak only the designated language, including a head resident who is a native speaker of that language. This experience improved David’s ability to speak Mandarin Chinese beyond the normal university classroom experience. David enjoyed his experience in the Chinese house so much that he planned to live in the Spanish House in the fall semester of 2004.

David had a goal to finish his degree at BYU by spring 2005. He wanted to work one year before starting graduate school in the fall of 2006, studying law and business administration. To earn sufficient credits to graduate on time, David decided to further his study of Mandarin in Beijing in the summer of 2004. Although David had previously worked as a missionary in Korea, his trip to China was purely for educational purposes.

Based on his family background, it was not unusual that David Sneddon would choose to study in Beijing and then travel alone in China. Most of David's siblings served two-year religious missions in other nations, including Germany, Japan, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland. Several siblings have studied abroad, one brother worked in Japan for five years, and his mother has taught English to international students for seventeen years.¹

Furthermore, David had worked in Asia the previous summer. David's older brother, Michael, is president and principal owner of MultiLing Corporation, a language translation company. While a student at BYU, David worked as a part-time employee for MultiLing. During the summer of 2003, MultiLing sent David to Seoul, South Korea, where he worked alone as a full-time employee, researching the market for translation in Korea and soliciting customers.

David's Plans for His Trip to China

Before leaving in April 2004 for his summer classes in Beijing, David and his brother Michael made plans to meet in Seoul, South Korea at the end of the summer. They scheduled two days of business meetings with potential customers to be held in Seoul on August 26 and 27.² In exchange, MultiLing paid half of David's airfare to Asia.

David planned to attend summer school in Beijing and then spend part of August traveling through China. He would then meet his brother in South Korea before returning to the United States. David also made plans to return to BYU in the fall of 2004 to complete his undergraduate education. He paid a down payment for his student housing for the fall semester and scheduled to take the LSAT, a test that is a requirement for attending law school.



Map 1 — China

Language Studies in Beijing

On April 25, 2004, David Sneddon arrived in China to study in the Department of Chinese Languages at Beijing's University of International Relations.³ From the time of his arrival in Beijing to his completion of summer classes, David kept in contact with his family, friends, and business associates via e-mail. David's roommate in Beijing was George Bailey, a fellow BYU student.

Even before arriving in Beijing, David began preparing for a trip through China. During the summer, David continued his planning and encouraged George to join him for sightseeing throughout Western and Southern China. David had time for nearly three weeks of sightseeing. George's return flight to the United States was earlier than David's, so he planned to accompany David on only the first part of his journey. According to George, for over five weeks David reviewed different itineraries, places of interest, and means of travel, using the *Lonely Planet China* as his guide. Just before completing his classes the first week of August, David finalized his itinerary and purchased his plane and train tickets.

David discussed his plans in an e-mail message that he sent to his mother Kathleen on August 3:

“Things are going well here. I did well on all my exams and today is my last day of school. I am SO excited to go travel. I will go to Guilin-Kunming-Hainandao-Guangdong-Anhui. I will go to lots of places with really neat-sounding names, like Tiger-Leaping Gorge and Jade Dragon Pool.” ⁴

The school issued David a certificate of completion dated August 6, 2004 and mailed the certificate to David's parents.

It is of interest to note that during David's stay in Beijing, Justin Richmond, a friend of David's who served with him as a missionary in South Korea, was also studying in China. Justin studied at Yangian University in Yangi, a city near the North Korean border.⁵ Justin is an undergraduate student at Duke University and received a research grant through the Institute for Asian Pacific Studies. While in China, Justin was studying Korean minorities living along the Chinese border with North Korea. He also attempted to do research in North Korea but was denied the entrance visa and could not enter. For reasons that are not clear to Justin, he was told by the university to leave. Justin needed to leave China and stayed with David in Beijing for five days before finding a flight home to the United States.

Sightseeing in China

On August 5, David Sneddon and George Bailey checked out of their dormitory room and left most of their belongings with a friend. David and George were “trekkers,” traveling light and carrying a backpack of necessities as they traveled from youth hostel to youth hostel by bus, train, or on foot.⁶

On August 5, they took a night train and traveled for 27 hours to Guilin. On August 9, the two separated as they had planned when George took a different route, traveled north to Zibo in Shangdong province, and later returned to Beijing.

According to George, David continued traveling alone toward the Yunnan province. The Yunnan Province is located in the Southwest part of China, bordering Vietnam, Laos, and Burma. Neighboring provinces include Sichuan and Xizang (Tibet). Most of the estimated population of 45 million persons consists of ethnic minorities such as Naxi, Yi, and Tibetan, many of whom live in remote, rural areas. The province’s economy is based primarily on agriculture and tourism.

On Wednesday morning, August 11, 2004, David sent the following e-mail message to his mother, Kathleen Sneddon:

“I won’t go into detail since I plan to write a much longer, detailed email to everyone [family] about this [trip]. I’m in Lijiang now in western Yunnan province. I will take a bus to hike Tiger Leaping George [sic] in about half an hour . . . I am having a great time hear [sic] but nonetheless am excited to come home.”⁷

David’s family, friends, and business associates did not receive further communication from him. At first, a lapse in communication was expected, as he was traveling in a remote area. However, we all became increasingly concerned as the days passed and we did not hear from David. Michael Sneddon, who was scheduled to meet David in Seoul, South Korea, was especially uneasy as weeks passed and David still had not e-mailed or phoned to confirm their plans.

David Is Missing

When David missed his business meeting in Seoul, scheduled for August 26, 2004, his parents, Roy and Kathleen Sneddon, alerted U.S. authorities. David's parents contacted the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, which alerted local Chinese officials.

As the days passed there was no further contact from David. Bank records show that he has not withdrawn any funds from his bank account since August 5, 2004. The last amount withdrawn was 300 U.S. dollars. With the exchange rate and purchasing power in rural China, this was enough for David to travel only a few weeks, staying at inexpensive youth hostels, sleeping on planes and trains, taking a few bus trips, and eating frugally.

In his last e-mail to his mother, David mentioned Lijiang and Tiger Leaping Gorge, so the Embassy began coordinating search efforts with police agencies in the Diqing and Lijiang prefectures that form the two sides of Tiger Leaping Gorge. Because the "High Trail" taken by trekkers begins in Qiaotou, a small village located 2 ½ hours north of Lijiang, search efforts began there. Police placed missing person posters in prominent locations in Qiaotou and in hostels located along the "High Trail." ⁸

East side of Diqing
prefecture (see
Map 3 — Diqing
Prefecture for detail)



Map 2 — Yunnan Province

The Qiaotou police found David's large backpack at Jane's Guest House, a youth hostel located a few hundred yards before the entrance gate and ticket booth for the High Trail through the Gorge. U.S. Embassy staff inventoried the backpack. Its contents included clothing, undeveloped film, and airline tickets. The backpack's detachable "fanny pack" was missing. From this evidence, we concluded that David left his large backpack at the guest house on August 10th, planning to retrieve it after hiking through the gorge, carrying only his small "fanny pack" with him.

The airline tickets show that David planned to fly on August 15th at 10:15 PM from Kunming to Haiko and then take another flight on August 21st at 7:45 AM from Guangzhou, Guangdong province to Hefei, Anhui province. The date of the first airline ticket indicates that David had to leave Lijiang by bus the morning of August 15th to arrive on time in Kunming for his evening flight. Therefore, David planned to travel with his fanny pack no more than three to four days before stopping briefly to retrieve his large backpack in Qiaotou and continuing to Lijiang.⁹

Through telephone and e-mail conversations, it became clear to the Sneddon family that Chinese authorities and U.S. State Department officials had concluded that David Sneddon had likely lost his way while hiking through the gorge and died in a fall or by drowning in the Jinshajiang River, a branch of the Yangtze River. However, because of David's extensive backpacking experience (16 years), the family did not share this point of view. David, an Eagle Scout and expert backpacker, was well trained in hiking through difficult terrain and wilderness areas.¹⁰

Family Begins Search

On Friday September 3, 2004, we (Roy Sneddon and two sons, Michael and James), began plans to travel to China's Yunnan Province and search for David. We prepared for the trip as we would for any backpacking trip, selecting normal gear, except we lightened our load by not taking stoves and freeze-dried food. Our research indicated that we would be traveling in populated area in which we could purchase meals and probably lodging. As a family, we already owned most of the necessary equipment and were familiar with the requirements of backpacking in high country wilderness areas. We located the most recent photo of David that we could find, a black and white photo that

was included on the certificate of completion that the Beijing University of International Relations had sent home to his parents. We used this photo to create several placards, or signs, to wear during our search. The placards included the words “Missing Trekker” in English and in Mandarin.

After completing our preparations, we left the United States on Thursday, September 9. We arrived at Kunming International Airport Friday night, September 10, where we met Mr. Gavin Sundwall and Ms. Anny Ho of the U.S. Embassy, and our native Chinese interpreter, Mr. Charlie Chen. Saturday all of us flew to Lijiang, where Mr. Sundwall introduced us to Mr. Kevin Xi, our Foreign Affairs Officer, and to police officers from the Lijiang prefecture. On Sunday, September 12, we drove 2½ hours to the Qiaotou police station, where we met with police officers from the Diqing prefecture. The Embassy officials returned to Beijing that afternoon.

The U.S. Embassy staff had developed the film found in David’s backpack. The photos included recent shots of David, his roommate George, and landscapes captured on film during their travels in China. After examining these photos, considering the contents of David’s backpack, and interviewing George Bailey over the phone, we had a good idea of the articles of clothing David wore when he left to hike Tiger Leaping Gorge. We concluded that David carried only a small load in his fanny pack, including a toothbrush, a *Book of Mormon*,¹¹ and a *Lonely Planet China*.

To help us with identification purposes, we also selected four photos of David that were developed from the film found in his backpack. After we returned from China, George Bailey viewed the photos and confirmed that he took them on August 7 and 8 while David and he were in Yangshuo. Therefore, we have established that these are the most recent known photos of David, taken soon before his departure for Lijiang on August 9. We liked these more recent photos of David better than the photo on our placard, which was a bit distorted after increasing its size and not a good likeness of David. Furthermore, the more recent photos showed David wearing the same type of clothing he was wearing during his travels.¹²

We hired a Tibetan guide named Sean, who works in the area and owns a guest house in Walnut Grove, located 22 kilometers from Qiaotou and on a paved section of the road that goes through Tiger Leaping Gorge. Sean has over twenty years experience as a guide and leader of expeditions. He also has extensive inter-personal and extended family connections along the entire loop from Qiaotou, through the gorge, Haba, Shangri-La (formerly Zhongdian), and back to Qiaotou.

Wearing our “Missing Trekker” placards bearing David’s picture with captions in Mandarin, the five of us (the three Sneddon, our interpreter, and our Tibetan guide) set out from Qiaotou on Monday, September 13, 2004, hiking along the High Trail through the Tiger Leaping Gorge. We planned a journey of at least four to five days to trace David’s route and gain information regarding his disappearance.

-
1. David’s family has a strong tradition for higher education. His mother has an M.A. and his father has a Ph.D. in Engineering Mechanics (Civil Engineering). Of David’s 10 siblings, there is one Ph.D., two M.A.’s, two MBA’s, one Juris Doctor, and eight Bachelor’s degrees.
 2. E-mail sent to K. Sneddon on 6 April 2004. See Appendix C: Sample E-mails from David Sneddon.
 3. This date conflicts with the date David wrote in his e-mail dated April 6, 2004. Classes began on April 28, 2004. David must have made a mistake when he wrote to his mother to explain his summer plans.
 4. E-mail sent to K. Sneddon on 3 August 2004. See Appendix C: Sample E-mails from David Sneddon.
 5. Yangi is approximately 25 kilometers from border with North Korea. See Map 6, Appendix F: Maps.
 6. See Appendix H: The Culture of Trekking.
 7. E-mail sent to K. Sneddon on 5 August 2004. See Appendix C: Sample E-mails from David Sneddon.
 8. Note that the “Low Trail,” which lies close to the river, is now a paved road. See Map 4, Appendix F. For a picture of a missing person poster placed on the “High Trail,” see Appendix E: Selected Photographs from Our Journey.
 9. See Appendix B: Details of David’s Trip and Itinerary.
 10. David first went backpacking with his family at age six in the Wind River mountain range of Wyoming, USA. Backpacking is a Sneddon family tradition that they have enjoyed together nearly every year for over thirty years.
 11. The *Book of Mormon* is a set of religious scriptures and like the Bible is another testament of the Divinity of Jesus Christ. It is a part of David’s religious beliefs to study the scriptures daily .
 12. See Appendix D: The Three Recent Photos of David Sneddon to examine photos we used to verify sightings and Appendix E: Selected Photographs from Our Journey, for a photo of our placard.

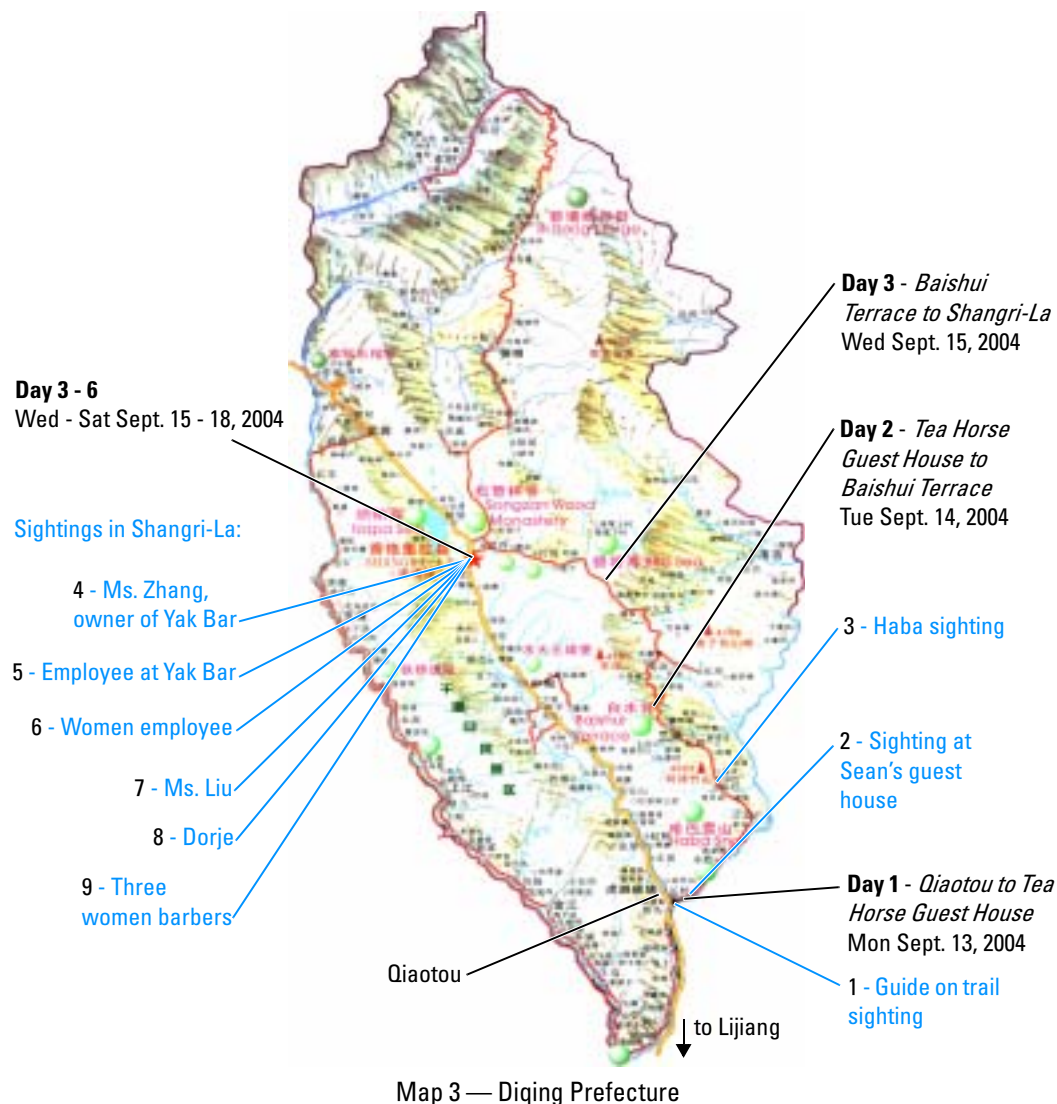
Section 2: David Traveled Safely Through Tiger Leaping Gorge



Starting on the “High Trail”: Left to Right: Sean (Tibetan guide), Charlie Chen (Chinese interpreter), Michael Sneddon, & Roy Sneddon

As we began our search in Tiger Leaping Gorge, we did not expect, as had the Chinese government and the U.S. Embassy officials, that David had been injured or killed in the Gorge. What we found as we searched led us to conclude that David had indeed made it through the Gorge safely. Even with some mud on the trail, based on our backpacking experience, we found the trail only slightly above average in terms of difficulty. The elevation was not unduly high, and the switchbacks along the trail were reasonable. The trail is a main thoroughfare used by the local people, who live in small villages along the gorge and walk to and from shops and the school in Qiaotou.

Over the course of our six-day journey we found nine people who had met David Sneddon and conversed with him between August 11 and 14, 2004. (We call each of these encounters a “sighting.”) Based on information from these witnesses, we know that David walked through the Gorge safely and traveled to Shangri-La. Starting on Monday, September 13, 2004, we retraced David’s path from Qiaotou, along the High Trail out of the Gorge to Sean’s Guest House, northward to Haba, and on to Shangri-La.



To ensure that there is no question that David made it out of the Gorge alive and traveled to Shangri-La, this section gives in depth information about our search. We explain the methodology of our search, summarize the nine sightings, and share the significant details of four key sightings. Detailed accounts of all sightings can be found at www.helpfindDavid.com.

Methodology of Our Search

As we searched, our “Missing Trekker” placards drew interest and it was easy to approach and question people wherever we went. They could immediately perceive that we had a problem and needed help. When questioning a person, we never asked leading questions to achieve a particular result, such as “Did he wear a small backpack?” Instead, we began our interview by asking if the person had seen a male westerner who spoke Chinese well. Then we would ask the person to describe the westerner’s appearance and clothing. Then we would ask the person if he or she had observed a backpack and, if so, to describe its size and appearance. At this point we asked many other questions such as time of day, mannerisms, and circumstances. Many of the questions asked could only be formulated and answers evaluated by family members. If the sighting seemed reasonable, we produced the four recent photos of David. Both our interpreter and our guide spoke Chinese and English; therefore, we had two persons assisting and verifying the accuracy of the interpretation.



Women from a remote Tibetan village outside Shangri-La question Roy Sneddon and Charlie Chen

We established criteria to verify that a sighting was valid. For example, the person reporting a sighting of David Sneddon would need sufficient interaction to:

- Identify that the male westerner spoke Chinese reasonably well.
- Give an accurate description of his height and build. (Usually they selected Michael Sneddon as a model, saying that the westerner they met and who spoke Chinese was slightly taller, thinner, and younger than Michael.)
- Describe his clothing.
- Give an accurate time frame.
- Give a location of the sighting that was consistent with other key sightings and fit the required time frame of three to four days.
- Describe other characteristics personal to David, such as personality traits, ability to speak Korean, mannerisms, and known tendencies, such as the fact that David was traveling on a very modest budget.

Summary of Sightings

All three of us (Roy, Michael, and James) were present with our guide and interpreter and jointly witnessed the discussion and interview of each person who reported having contact with David. The three of us have jointly rated the authenticity of these sightings on a scale from 1-10.

- 1 = No sighting with no additional description or detail of David.
- 5 = A possible sighting based upon some description of David, but not as detailed.
- 7 = A positive sighting.
- 10 = Absolutely positive sighting with David, based on the appropriate date/time of sighting, consistent with other sightings, detailed description of David's physical and personal characteristics, including clothing, language skills, mannerisms, personality, baggage, associations, conversations, and so forth.

In chronological order, these are the nine reported sightings of and interactions with David:

Table 1 — Reported Sightings of David

#	Date of Our Interview(s)	Person who experienced a sighting of David	Location	Probable Time & Date of Sighting	Rating of Authenticity
1	13 Sept 2004	Guide	High Trail, Tiger Leaping Gorge	7:00 – 10:00 PM 11 Aug 2004	9.0
2	14 Sept 2004	Women employees	Sean's Guest House, Walnut Grove, 2 KM after end of High Trail	10:00 AM 12 Aug 2004	8.0
3	14 Sept 2004	Store owner	Haba	4:00 PM 12 Aug 2004	7.0
4	16-18 Sept 2004	Ms. Zhang Xiao Fen, the owner of a Korean Café (Yak Bar)	Shangri-La	13 Aug 2004 and 12:00 – 1:00 PM 14 Aug 2004	9.5
5	16 Sept 2004	Employee at Yak Bar ¹	Shangri-La	13 Aug 2004 and 12:00 – 1:00 PM 14 Aug 2004	8.0
6	16 Sept 2004	Woman employee in store next door to Yak Bar	Shangri-La	13 Aug 2004	8.0
7	17-18 Sept 2004	Ms. Liu Miao, at the Tibetan International guest house ²	Shangri-La	PM 13 Aug 2004 and AM 14 Aug 2004	8.0
8	18 Sept 2004	Dorje, an English speaking guide at Snowland Restaurant	Shangri-La	PM 13 Aug 2004 and AM 14 Aug 2004	9.0
9	18 Sept 2004	Three women barbers in a barber shop near Snowland Restaurant	Shangri-La	13 or 14 Aug 2004	7.0

1. This employee's sighting was ranked lower than Ms. Zhang's sighting since she did not interact with David as much as the owner.

2. When we met Ms. Miao, she was working at Snowland Restaurant; however, she was working at the Tibetan International guest house in August when she met David.

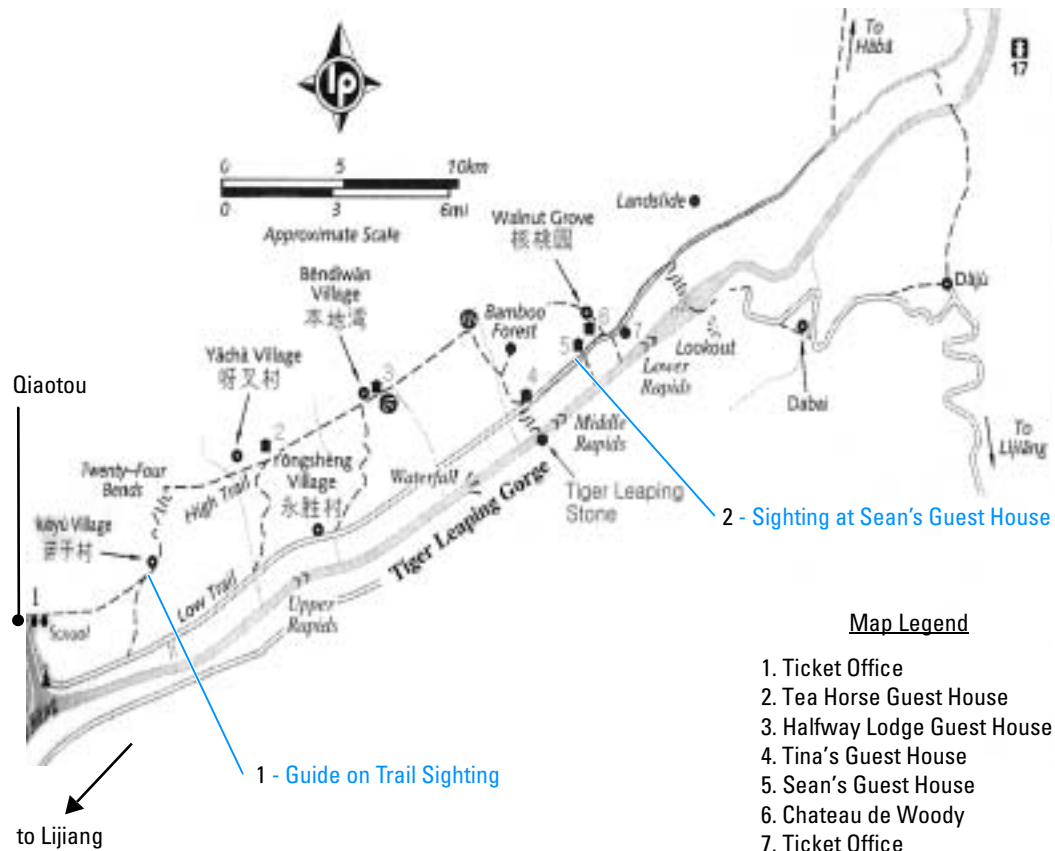
Table 2 — Details of Key Sightings

#	Person who experienced a sighting of David	Details										
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	Guide											
2	Women employees											
3	Store owner											
4	Ms. Zhang Xiao Fen, the owner of a Korean Café (Yak Bar)											
5	Employee at Yak Bar											
6	Woman employee in store next door to Yak Bar											
7	Ms. Liu Miao, at the Tibetan International guest house											
8	Dorje, an English speaking guide at Snowland Restaurant											
9	Three women barbers in a barber shop near Snowland Restaurant											

Key to Report Details:

During our interview, the person who had an encounter with David gave an accurate report that included the following details:

1. A westerner who spoke Chinese well.
2. David’s correct physical height, weight, and physical appearance.
3. The right time frame for the encounter.
4. A description of David’s clothing, typically his pants or his hat. (See picture on page 51.)
5. A correct description of the size of his pack (a “fanny pack”). (See picture on page 51.)
6. A correct description of the color of his pack.
7. A description that David had a receding hairline or had a widow’s peak.
8. A confirmation that the most recent photos from David’s pack matched the westerner they encountered.
9. Information regarding his care to spend money very frugally.
10. An accurate description of some personality traits (for example, he likes to joke and tease).
11. Unique information regarding his linguistic ability and training (that either he studied Chinese in the U.S. and recently in China or that he spoke Korean).



Map 4 — Sightings in Tiger Leaping Gorge



Map 5 — Sightings in Shangri-La

Details of Key Sightings

Space does not permit a detailed review of all sightings; therefore we include details about four important sightings, Sighting 1, Sighting 4, Sighting 7, and Sighting 8. These key sightings and our own experience, coupled with our knowledge of David's timeline, give us the following important information:

- David traveled safely out of the Gorge the late evening of August 11, 2004.
- David would need at least one full day, most likely a day and a half, to travel from the end of the Gorge at Walnut Grove to Shangri-La.
- David spent time in Shangri-La around August 13 through 14.
- He intended to leave Shangri-La on August 14, 2004.
- David planned to go to Lijiang immediately after leaving Shangri-La. (Lijiang is the town from which he last e-mailed his mother; on his way there, he planned to stop at Qiaotou to retrieve his large backpack.)

Key Sighting 1. On Monday, September 13, 2004, within two hours of beginning our hike up the High Trail we met a guide that approached us with his mule and clients. The guide knew our Tibetan guide, Sean, and stopped to talk. Sean explained our mission and asked if the guide had seen a westerner who spoke Chinese. Because the guide knew Sean, he shared what he knew and recounted his experience. Four weeks earlier and farther up the trail, the guide met a westerner who spoke Chinese well and had *caught up with the guide's pack train* as they were hiking late in the day. The guide reported that the young westerner had studied Chinese recently at a Beijing university and previously in the U.S. The young man joined the guide's group and continued hiking together for about three hours until all arrived safely at about 10:00 p.m. at Tina's Guest House at kilometer 20, on the far side of the Gorge. While hiking with this group, the westerner spoke Chinese with the guide's clients. The guide reported that while they were hiking, David practiced Chinese and taught English to the guide's clients. The guide gave an unequivocal positive

identification that the westerner with whom he met and hiked for approximately three hours was David Sneddon. The guide confirmed that David Sneddon transited successfully through the gorge and stayed the night with his group at Tina's guesthouse. Tina's guesthouse is where the paved road meets with the High Trail. Sean's guesthouse at Walnut Grove, where we found our second sighting, is only an effortless walk of two kilometers down a flat paved road.



Good news! A guide on the trail reports to Sean that a month earlier David Sneddon caught up with his group and traveled together for about three hours on the “High Trail” before stopping for the night at Tina’s Guest House.

Key Sighting 4. In Shangri-La, the owner of a Korean Café (Yak Bar), Ms. Zhang Xiao Fen, reported that David visited her restaurant on three occasions over a two-day period. She said that she and David conversed with each other in Korean. Ms. Zhang’s detailed description of David’s appearance and personality was phenomenal. She described his mannerisms in detail and how he joked with her and her employees. Ms. Zhang reported that on the second day David came and ate around lunch time; he then told Ms. Zhang good-bye, as in “good-bye, I am leaving.” Ms. Zhang concluded that David was leaving the city.



Ms. Zhang Xiao Fen, owner of the Yak Bar in Shangri-La, talks on the telephone to Mr. Gavin Sundwall of the U.S. Embassy and reports that David Sneddon visited her Korean restaurant two to three times over a period of two days. Ms. Zhang’s interaction with David is unique in her specificity of David’s personality traits and use of the Korean language.

Key Sightings 7-8. Another key sighting was with a male, Chinese guide, Dorje, at the Snowland Restaurant and Coffee Shop in Shangri-La. Dorje also had reasonable English-speaking skills and spoke directly to us in English. Dorje reported that David spoke to him in Chinese, inquired about guided treks, and had several conversations with Dorje over a two-day period. The guide Dorje explained that David decided not to take a guided tour, as the cost was prohibitive for a person like David traveling alone with limited funds. We asked Dorje if he could remember a specific date. Dorje was not sure, but estimated the meeting was around the 14th or 15th of August, dates within a day of David's timeline.

Finally, Ms. Liu Miao, who had worked for the Diqing Tibetan Area International Guest House in August 2004, remembered David and reported to us that David had stayed one night before leaving the next day. While leaving the guesthouse, David told Ms. Liu that he was traveling that same day to Lijiang.



Snowland Restaurant of Shangri-La, Dorje and Ms. Liu Miao report their interaction with David Sneddon. These two met David separately, but gave similar descriptions of his size, appearance, clothing, and intentions.

Key Results

David's itinerary gives us insight to the circumstances of his disappearance. Ms. Zhang, the owner of the Korean Café (Yak Bar), reported that David told her goodbye and left her café around 12:00 noon or shortly thereafter in the early afternoon. Because David would need to pick up his large backpack in Qiaotou and then continue with the next bus for Lijiang, he would need approximately six (6) hours to travel from Shangri-La to Lijiang. Therefore, in order for David to arrive in Lijiang by the late evening of August 14th and still have enough time to check into a youth hostel and eat a meal, David would need to leave Shangri-La no later than 3:00 or 4:00 PM.

As David left the Yak Café the afternoon of August 14, 2004, it is very likely that he was heading directly for the bus terminal located less than two kilometers away. Taking a 2:00 PM bus would put him into Lijiang around 8:00 PM. The next day, Sunday August 15, 2004, David could take an early bus from Lijiang to Kunming and arrive at the airport by 8:30 PM, allowing adequate time to catch his 10:15 PM flight to Haikou on the island of Hainan. Of course, David never picked up his large backpack in Qiaotou, which suggests that he never took the bus traveling from Shangri-La to Qiaotou.

Section 3: David Disappeared Involuntarily

Many of the obvious questions and fears we faced as we began our search were satisfactorily resolved (such as “Did David fall and hurt himself while hiking through the Gorge?” or “Did he become sick and unable to continue his trip?”). Numerous very credible sightings established that David had completed the hike and continued on to Shangri-La. In Shangri-La we visited hospitals and met with the Shangri-La police chief and his staff. The U.S. Embassy had also checked mental hospitals. We are satisfied that David is not in a hospital or police station in Shangri-La. We are also satisfied that if David had been hurt somewhere in Shangri-La (or if by chance he were able to take the bus for Quotou/Lijiang and was hurt before picking up his backpack) that the friendly people of that region would have helped him to a hospital.

Although during our search we were able to answer many questions, new questions arose. As we discussed David’s situation with government officials, the media, and friends back home, some wondered whether David chose to disappear voluntarily. Some conjectured, “Could he have met someone, perhaps a woman, who induced him to leave his former life?” “Did he choose to extend his visit in Asia, because he is young and is seeking adventure?” But those questions, only brought up further questions:

- “Why would David abandon his personal goal to finish his degree at Brigham Young University by spring 2005 after working so hard to get to this point?”
- “Why would David forfeit his final year at college (after he had paid BYU housing for the fall semester and took out a student loan), lose his job at MultiLing, miss taking his scheduled LSAT test, delay starting graduate school, *and not tell anyone anything?*”¹
- “Why would he voluntarily go into hiding, abandon his clothing stored in his backpack located only two and one half hours away, and not withdraw additional funds from his savings account?”
- “How could a young American like David—noticed by many because of his unusual command of both Mandarin and Korean, and who was conspicuous by his consistent interest in conversing with the local people—vanish without anyone noticing?”

Interview with George Bailey

To help answer these questions we interviewed² George Bailey, David's roommate in Beijing, who gave four reasons why he believes that David did not disappear voluntarily:

- 1 On August 9 when David left George to travel alone from Guilin to Lijiang, the last words the two said were “See you later in Provo.”** George reports that every indication was that a few weeks later the two would meet up again at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah at the start of the new school year.
- 2 David had planned out in meticulous detail his sightseeing trip in China.** George does not believe that under any circumstance David would have abruptly abandoned his dream trip through China and gone underground. When George and David separated, David's trip was really just getting started.
- 3 While in China, David pestered his professor of Chinese at BYU to make a grade change.** George notes that David repeatedly e-mailed his professor of Chinese, Matt Christiansen, to change a grade with which David did not agree. Such interest in maintaining a grade point average (GPA) would not be of a concern to a young man who intended to go underground.
- 4 Before George left the U.S. to travel to Beijing and become David's roommate, the two discussed David's plans to live in the BYU Spanish House during the coming school year.** At David's request, George looked for Spanish language instructional materials that he could bring with him to China to help David prepare for living in the BYU Spanish House. His large backpack contained a Spanish primer. David also requested that his mother make arrangements for him to live in the Spanish House.

In addition to these reasons as to why David did not go underground, George discounts any notion that David would have found a Chinese or Asian woman and is hiding out with her somewhere in China. First, as George explained, this is entirely against the moral principles David believed from his youth, taught while serving as missionary in South Korea, and lived while a student at BYU. Second, George reported that although David did meet and was friendly with many Asian women, David did not show any romantic interest in women in China, including Asian women. All discussions the two had on the subject of dating or romance dealt only with David's desire to return to BYU and date women there.³

David enjoyed his time in China and sought to make the most of it, but clearly he had every intention to finish his sightseeing and return home. Indeed, in his last e-mail sent to his mother on August 11, 2004, David wrote:

“I won’t go into detail since I plan on writing a much longer, detailed email to everyone [family] about this. . . . I am having a great time hear [sic] but nonetheless am excited to come home.” ⁴

David's Values and Relevant Character Traits

Most importantly, disappearing voluntarily is completely inconsistent with David’s core values of fidelity to God, family, and his established personal goals.

As a life-long member of the Church of Jesus Christ, David was taught and lives by a strict code of behavior: do not drink alcohol, take drugs, or have premarital sexual relations. Members of the Church also believe in obeying the [constitutional] laws of the land, telling the truth, and being honest in all their dealings with their fellow man. To be qualified to attend Brigham Young University, all students must follow this code of behavior, both during school semesters and during vacations from the university. David’s mission in South Korea also demonstrates his commitment to his religion. Furthermore, George Bailey confirms that David continued to live according to his religious values while in China. It is difficult, even impossible, to believe that David would suddenly act against the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ, break Chinese law, change his lifestyle, and abandon his family.⁵

Examining David’s relevant character traits also helps answer the question of whether David disappeared involuntarily or voluntarily. His parents and siblings agree that from a young age David Sneddon demonstrated unusual self-discipline that enabled him to achieve his personal goals, often only after great individual effort. For example, David worked his way through college, paying for his own tuition and his living expenses, supplemented by an occasional loan from his parents. When David changed his major to Chinese with a Korean minor, he did so with the goal of graduating on time in order to start a four-year professional program in law and business administration.

Over time with perseverance and daily effort, David achieved his goals. David's talent to work hard in a systematic fashion enabled him to develop skills and abilities well beyond his natural gifts. For example, as a teenager David worked outdoors in the heat and summer humidity of Lincoln, Nebraska as a maintenance person for city parks; after work he would also run five to six miles each afternoon to prepare for the fall cross country season at his high school. Though he had limited experience as a runner, David's hard work resulted in his being awarded the "Most Improved Runner" on his team.

Socially David had many friends, he was stable in his family relationships, and he was known for his good humor and likable personality. He had good relationships with his siblings and parents, particularly his younger sister Jenny and his father Roy. For example, David spent the summer of 2002 working with his father as they built a new home together, developing a closeness with his father that few of his siblings share.

Conclusion about Character Traits

Does the above description of David suggest an individual who would avoid responsibility, abandon his warm relationships with family and friends, and hide far away from home? We think not. Most compelling for us is our absolute conviction that, even in the unlikely event that David had changed his plans and decided not to return home, David would have done everything in his power to assure his family of his safety in order to avoid what he knew would be and was our response to his not contacting us—an all out search in China. We believe that it is reasonable to conclude that David disappeared against his own volition.

-
1. See Appendix I: David's Educational Loan.
 2. Interviews with G. Bailey on October 11, 2004 and October 19, 2004.
 3. David Sneddon, with his missionary service and commitment to serving in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, would seek to marry for time and eternity in a temple of the Church of Jesus Christ. For David, seeking a suitable marriage partner is an issue of personal worthiness on the part of the couple to receive the saving ordinances of the temple. He would, therefore, seek to marry a woman of his same religion with similar faith and commitment.
 4. E-mail sent to K. Sneddon on August 11th, 2004. See Appendix C: Sample e-mails from David Sneddon.
 5. See the Appendix A: David Sneddon's Core Beliefs and Values.

Section 4: Conclusion

We have proven that David made it out of Tiger Leaping Gorge alive. We have proven that it was not in his character to go into hiding voluntarily. **We, therefore, conclude that David Louis Sneddon disappeared involuntarily in Shangri-La, sometime between 12:00 noon and 3:00 PM on Saturday, August 14, 2004.** We feel that it is reasonable to assume that some individual, group, or even an organization knows more about David's whereabouts than we were able to discover.

We believe in our hearts that David is alive but not in a position to leave or communicate with his family. We believe that David intended to leave Shangri-La the afternoon of August 14, 2004, travel to Qiaotou, retrieve his backpack, and continue to Lijiang for the night. He would have just enough time the next day, August 15, 2004 to travel by bus to Kunming and make his 10:15 PM flight for Haiko. David did not retrieve his large back pack and plane tickets from the guest house in Qiaotou. Therefore, we conclude that something happened to David after he left the Korean Café (Yak Bar) in Shangri-La, but before he reached the guest house in Qiaotou.

There are several possible reasons for David's disappearance. David could have been injured in an accident, murdered, or taken against his will. We, as well as the U.S. Embassy, contacted hospitals and mental institutions and concluded that David is not in a hospital. We find it difficult to believe that David was murdered in broad daylight in Qiaotou or Shangri-La. Neither the local Chinese police or government authorities have offered evidence or even suggested that David was murdered. This remote region in China solicits foreign tourists and urban Chinese alike as a source of badly needed revenue. Indeed, our own experience gained over three days as we walked the streets and met the kind-hearted people of Shangri-La tell us the possibility that David was murdered is very, very remote.

At this point, we are left assuming that David was taken against his will. What motive would someone have for doing this? We have not received a ransom note, so it is difficult to conclude that he was kidnapped by someone interested in gaining a reward. We visited police stations, spoke on

multiple occasions with police officials, and are satisfied that he is not being detained by the local police for an infraction of local laws. We have no information to indicate that David inadvertently broke a national law or intruded into an area closed to foreigners. If this were the case, we would have no difficulty paying a reasonable fine or penalty.

We have no proof of any motive. However, we have wondered whether David's skill with multiple languages (especially his fluency with both Chinese and Korean) may have caused an organization or group to have more of an interest in David than they would have had in most other western tourists. We note that in this part of China where David was traveling, it is unusual to see any westerners, particularly Americans. (While we Sneddons were in Shangri-La, we met no Americans. The only western trekkers we met during our three and one half days in Shangri-La were a couple from Belgium and two young men from Europe.) We *never* met a westerner who was traveling alone. We wonder if a young American traveling on his own might have caused some group or persons to question his purpose for being there.

We have shown earlier that David's interest in languages, originally spurred through his two-year missionary service in South Korea, was purely educational and part of his family's background. David's own e-mails state that he was traveling China for the experience of travel itself. He writes to his mother about his excitement to do "some hard-core traveling" and to take "fun trips to various parts of China" and see "lots of places with really neat-sounding names."¹ However, those who may have been observing him would not have known his situation. They may have had reason to suspect that a young American traveling alone in this part of China, speaking well both Korean and Mandarin, could have been doing so for suspicious reasons.

Further, although there may be no connection, we have wondered about the visit that David had with his friend Justin Richmond in Beijing in the summer. His friend had been studying North Koreans living in China. Shortly after he requested a visa to visit North Korea, he was asked to leave the university and return home. He stayed with David while he arranged for his return trip.² If Justin was asked to leave for some reason connected to Korea, it is reasonable to wonder whether David, who also is fluent in Korean, might have come under some suspicion by association.

While in China we consulted on numerous occasions with local police, hospitals, and local government officials, all of whom were most gracious, sincere, helpful, and concerned about David's well being. We are grateful for their kind efforts. However we believe that an agency or organization with broader power or more resources at their disposal would be able to do more than we are able.

We respectfully request the assistance and full support of the Provincial and National Government of the Peoples Republic of China and the U.S. Department of State in furthering the search for David Sneddon.

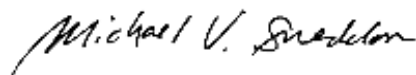
The local Chinese police and U.S. Embassy officials have spent most of their search efforts in Qiaotou and the Gorge. Based on the information that we have obtained through our nine sightings, detailed above, David safely exited the Gorge and made his way to Shangri-La before disappearing. Therefore, further search efforts in Qiaotou and the Gorge are unwarranted. We request that the officials of the U.S. and Chinese governments continue to search for David, starting in Shangri-La.

We further request that the officials of the U.S. and Chinese governments interview peoples, groups, and organizations that may have an interest in detaining a young American with language skills.

Respectfully submitted,



Roy V. Sneddon



Michael V. Sneddon



James H. Sneddon

-
1. E-mail to K. Sneddon, August 3, 2004. See Appendix C: Sample e-mails from David Sneddon.
 2. While at Yangian University in Yangi, a city near the North Korean border (see Map 6, Appendix F: Maps) Justin Richmond was studying Korean minorities. We have no knowledge of any connection, but during a telephone interview on October 6, 2004, Justin did confirm to Kathleen and Roy Sneddon that he (Justin) is being evaluated for employment with the CIA.

Appendix A: David Sneddon's Core Beliefs and Values

- 1 David believes in a personal God, the Father of his spirit and of all men and women, who communicates to His children personally through prayer and by revelation to living prophets for all mankind.
- 2 David is a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, and believes Him to be the mortal Son of God, the Father. David is a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, sometimes referred to as the Mormon Church. Through the teachings of the Church, David believes in the eternal nature of man:
 - Each man lived with God prior to his personal life on this earth.
 - Each man's mortal life on earth is but a continuation of that pre-earth life and is a probationary state.
 - Each man may have an abundant, personal life that supplants death following the universal resurrection of all mankind.
- 3 As earthly children are accountable to their earthly fathers, David believes in personal accountability to God with respect to the teachings of Jesus Christ. David's own actions while living on earth will be judged by God.
- 4 David believes all men have divine potential for doing good on an individual basis.
- 5 David believes in the divinity of the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Savior, who lived a perfect life free of sin, took upon him the sins of all mankind, died on the cross, was resurrected, and in all things complied with the will of the Father. Through the atonement that Jesus Christ wrought, all mankind will be resurrected and all mankind may be saved, through obedience to the laws and ordinances of His gospel.

With these core values, David strives to be honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men. In that spirit at age nineteen he served as a missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Seoul, Korea for two years at his own expense. He cherishes his religion, family, and personal growth and development through education and service to others.

Appendix B: Details of David's Trip and Itinerary

David planned all summer for his trip. George Bailey, David's roommate in Beijing, reports that David's planning was careful and meticulous as he mapped out different places to visit, timelines, sights to see, and things to do.

David finalized his travel plans only a few days before the two left Beijing. On August 2, 2004 David paid 730 RMB to purchase an airline ticket to fly from Kunming to Haikou, the main city on the island of Hainan in the South China Sea. On August 4, 2004 David paid 520 RMB to purchase a second airline ticket to fly from Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong province, to Hefei, the capital of Anhui province. George says that one cannot purchase train tickets too far in advance, so he and David planned to buy these as they traveled.

Based upon information from George Bailey, Shange Petrini (a friend David met in Beijing), and persons who had sightings, this is David's planned itinerary:¹

Thursday, August 5, 2004

At 9:30 PM, David and George left Beijing.

They traveled by "hard sleeper" train to Guilin. Their trip lasted 27 hours.²

Friday, August 6

They were still traveling on the train to Guilin.

Saturday, August 7

At 1:00 A.M, David and George arrived in Guilin.

At 5:30 A.M., they took a bus to Yangshuo. This is a 1 hour trip.

In Yangshuo, David and George rented bicycles and took a day trip south of Yangshuo. George took at least one photo of David. (See Appendix D: The Three Recent Photos of David Sneddon.) They spent the night in a hotel in Yangshuo.

Sunday, August 8

David and George spent another day traveling on bicycles near Yangshou. This time they traveled south of Yangshuo and took a trip on a raft. (See photos in Appendix D: The Three Recent Photos of David Sneddon.) They spent another night in the hotel in Yangshuo.

Monday, August 9

This is the morning that David and George separated. David left the hotel room early, around 7:00 AM or 7:30 AM, and traveled by bus back to Guilin.

At 8:30 AM or 9:00 AM, David took a train to Kunming. This trip lasted approximately 24 hours.

Later in the day, George returned to Yangshuo, and traveled by train and bus to Zibo in Shangdong province, arriving on August 11, 2004. (George stayed in Zibo a few days with friends before returning to Beijing on August 16th and flying home a few days later.)

Tuesday, August 10

At about 9:00 AM, David arrived in Kunming.

Sometime during this day, he traveled by bus to Lijiang. This is a trip of 5 to 8 hours.

David spent the night in Lijiang.

Wednesday, August 11

At 9:32 AM, David sent his mother his last e-mail message, in which he says he intended to leave Lijiang “in about half an hour” and go to Tiger Leaping Gorge.³

Around 10:00 AM, David left Lijiang to travel to Qiaotou. This is a trip of about 2 ½ hours.

Around 12:30 PM, David arrived in Qiaotou. David dropped off his large backpack at Jane’s guest house in Qiaotou that afternoon. He probably found a place to eat lunch.

Around 2:30 or 3:00 PM, David started hiking the trail in Tiger Leaping Gorge. If David averaged 4 to 5 kilometers per hour, this was a 5 to 7 hour hike.

Around 7:00 PM, David caught up with a group of hikers probably somewhere between the Yongsheng Village and the Bendiwan Village/Half Way guesthouse. He hiked with this group for about three hours. (For more information about this sighting, see “Details of Key Sightings” on page 19.)

Around 10:00 PM, David and the group arrived at Tina’s guesthouse, located at kilometer 20 outside of the gorge. They spent the night there.

Thursday, August 12

Around 9:30 AM or 10:00 AM, David visited Sean’s guesthouse, which is 2 kilometers past Tina’s guesthouse.⁴

From Sean’s guest house, we assume that David traveled north toward Haba.⁵ The trip from Sean’s guesthouse to Haba is over two hours, traveling by car. We doubt that David hiked all the way from Sean’s to Haba; most likely he walked several kilometers before he hitched a ride or paid someone to drive him further.

Around 4:00 PM, we assume that David arrived in Haba. (A shopkeeper in Haba reported a westerner matching David’s description arriving in the late afternoon, around 4:00 PM.)

David would likely have spent the night of August 12, 2004 somewhere in Haba, Samba, or Baishui Terrace.

Friday, August 13

We assume that David traveled from Haba, Samba, or Baishui Terrace to Shangri-La. Traveling by bus, this is 4 ½ to 5 hour trip.⁶

We have evidence that David spent this day in Shangri-La. He considered taking a guided tour, but did not have enough money to do so. He ate at the Korean Café (Yak Bar).⁷

David spent that night at the Diqing Tibetan Area International guest house, which is a little over a block from the Korean Café.

Saturday, August 14

In the morning as he left the Diqing Tibetan Area International guest house, David told Ms. Liu that he was traveling that same day to Lijiang.⁸

Around noon, David ate again at the Korean Café. He told Ms. Zhang, owner of the Korean Café, that he planned to leave Shangri-La in the afternoon.⁹

NOTE: The remainder of this itinerary explains what David planned to do. David never picked up his backpack in Qiaotou, so we know that he did not continue his trip past that point.

Between 1:00 PM and 3:00 PM, David planned to take a bus to Qiaotou. He would have picked up his large backpack from Jane's guest house in Qiaotou, and then taken the next bus to Lijiang. Because of the stopover in Qiaotou, David would have needed approximately six hours to travel from Shangri-La to Lijiang.¹⁰

Sunday, August 15

David would have traveled most of this day from Lijiang to Kunming.

At 10:15 PM, he was scheduled to fly from Kunming to Haikou on the island of Hainan.

Monday, August 16

In the early morning, David would have arrived in Haikou.

Tuesday, August 17 through Thursday, August 19

We are not certain what David planned to do these days. We know that he planned to be in Guangzhou by Friday, August 20.

There are several ferries and boats that travel from Hainan Island to Hong Kong or to Guangzhou, just north of Macau and Hong Kong. Perhaps David intended to take a ferry from Hainan to Zhanjiang and continue via bus to Guangzhou. Allowing 24 hours for this journey, it seems that David would have plenty of time on the island of Hainan before leaving on the evening of August 18th or the morning of August 19th for Guangzhou.

Friday, August 20

David was scheduled to spend this day in Guangzhou with Shange Petrini, a friend that he met in Beijing. They planned to stay that night with one of Shange's friends.¹¹

Saturday, August 21

At 7:15 AM, David planned to fly from Guangzhou to Hefei, Anhui province.

Near Hefei is the beautiful and famed Yellow Mountain, perhaps China's most famous landscape attraction. George Bailey reports that David "had every intention of going to see the Yellow Mountain."¹²

Sunday, August 22 through Tuesday, August 24, 2004

David had time to spend a day or two in Hefei. After his time in Hefei, he could have planned to take a train directly from Hefei to Beijing. Or, perhaps, he went from Hefei to Shanghai, and then to Beijing.

In Beijing, David would have picked up the luggage that he left with his friend Naoki before he and George left on their sight-seeing trip.

Wednesday, August 25, 2004

David planned to fly from Beijing to Seoul, South Korea.

Thursday, August 26, 2004

That evening David should have met his brother Michael in Seoul, prior to their business meetings scheduled for Friday, August 27, 2004. At this point the family's suspicions were confirmed—their son and brother was missing in China.

On Saturday, August 28, 2004 David had planned to return to the United States.

HAIRLINE
不得登机
SNEDDON/LOUIS DAVID
昆明 KMG
海口 HAK
VOID
CHY 730.00
5159
1 880 5478525159 6

海南航空
不得登机
DAVID/LOUIS SNEDDON
广州 CAN
合肥 HFE
VOID
CHY 520.00
6256
1 784 5482866268 2

David's unused airline tickets were found in his backpack that he had left in Qiaotou.

1. All dates and times in this Appendix B are in the China time zone.
2. A "hard sleeper" is a train with sleeping in a compartment, but little privacy.
3. The date time stamp of the e-mail says August 10, 2004 at 7:32 PM Mountain time. This means that David sent this message on August 11, 2004 at 9:32 AM China time.
4. Two employees at Sean's guesthouse reported that David Sneddon stopped by around 9:30 AM to 10:00 AM, just after most of Sean's guests had left. It might make sense for David, after lots of travel in a few days, to relax and not leave Tina's until after 9:00 AM. See details in Section 2 of the report.

5. After exiting the Gorge, David had the choice of turning north or south. If David were to turn right and head south, he would cross the river via the “Old Ferry” near Heka, then return to Lijiang via bus, and retrace his previous bus trip north to Qioutou to fetch his backpack. If David were to turn left and head north, this would take him past the interesting villages of Haba, Samba, and Baishui Terrace before arriving in Shangri-La, a traditional Tibetan community. We decided that David most likely would prefer having a cultural experience in Shangri-La compared to returning directly to Lijiang, so we turned North during our search for David. This proved a correct choice as we found one sighting in Haba and six (6) sightings in Shangri-La.
6. In the morning there are several early buses into Shangri-La. Our bus left from Baishui Terrace at 8:30 AM and arrived 4 ½ hours later in Shangri-La.
7. For more information on sightings 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8, see Section 2 page 15.
8. For more information on sighting 7 see Section 2 page 15.
9. For more information on sighting 4 see Section 2 page 15.
10. We do not think that David took the bus to Qiaotou. But we really don’t know. Possibly David disappeared in Qiaotou, but this seems highly unlikely because this small town has been a focus of police investigative work. We would think that someone would have seen something and would let authorities know. Either way, David never picked up his backpack in Qiaotou.
11. Shange says that the two talked this over in Beijing in general terms and that David told Shange that he would e-mail Shange later with specific details for the trip. Shange reported that as the 20th approached he still had not heard from David but assumed that perhaps David’s had a change of plans.
12. M. Sneddon interview with G. Bailey on October 11, 2004.

Appendix C: Sample E-mails from David Sneddon

Before and during David's stay in Beijing, correspondence between David Sneddon and his mother, Kathleen Sneddon, was frequent and detailed. The following sample of messages, selected from scores of e-mails, give useful insight to David's thoughts, character, and intentions. For space considerations, we have included only paragraphs that are relevant to David's travel plans and his plans for when he returned from China. Spelling and punctuation errors in David's e-mails have not been corrected.

Note that the date time stamps on these e-mails reflect the date and time of Kathleen Sneddon's computer, set on Mountain Time in the western United States. There is a fourteen (14) hour difference between the clock in Kathleen's computer and the time zone in China. Therefore, the dates in these e-mails are generally one day before the dates given in the other sections of this report.

6 April 2004

Note: This message, sent while David was enrolled at Brigham Young University (BYU) during Winter semester 2004, illustrates the depth of his planning for his trip to China. It also references David's meeting in Seoul, Korea for his employer, MultiLing Corporation, and his plans to visit his orthodontist, Dr. Noble, in Colorado after his trip to China. David's appointment with his orthodontist was scheduled for August 30, 2004.

Do not Distribute

From: "David L Sneddon" <dls66@email.byu.edu>
To: <ksneddon@bridgernet.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 06, 2004 11:23 AM
Subject: Re: Your China trip/end of school

Here's the deal. I have put a lot of thought into planning this so that I don't waste any time or money. School starts in Beijing on Wednesday April 27th. I will go for 8 weeks until late June, then have 5 days off before I go to Beijing University for the next 6 weeks until August 8. Then I will have about 2 week to do some hard-core travelling. I want to go to several places (Xian, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Guilin, etc.) and that will give me just enough time to do so, stop by Korea for 2 days on my way home for MultiLing, and be in Colorado Springs on August 28. It's crazy and packed, but it's the best way I could manage to get in a lot of hours in the classroom as well as some fun trips to various parts of China. I think it's a pretty darn good plan myself and I give myself Kudos for planning so well!

Love,
David

20 May 2004

Note: This message, sent from China, references his plans for returning to Brigham Young University (BYU) for fall semester 2004.

From: "David Sneddon" <dls_chucko@hotmail.com>
To: <ksneddon@bridgernet.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 20, 2004 8:02 PM
Subject: Re: link to UHEAA

Mom,

... Good news from BYU is that I qualified for a \$1250 Pell Grant each of my last semesters. That way, I won't have to go into very much debt at all. Yeah. My old roommate George Bailey should be sending you a check in the mail. He is going to live with me in July here in China and I told him he could send the check to you and you could deposit in my checking account, okay? No need to rush. I need it there in about 1 month or so so no worries. Also, it looks like instead of the Italian house I'm going to live in the Spanish house. They found a place for me and sent me an email. As much as I would like to learn Italian, Spanish is also cool and VERY VERY useful. So that's the way it looks. Talk to you later.

David

27 June 2004

Note: This message discusses David's plans to take the LSAT, an exam required for entrance to law school. It proves that David planned to return to the United States and continue his education.

From: "David Sneddon" <dls_chucko@hotmail.com>

To: <ksneddon@bridgernet.com>

Sent: Sunday, June 27, 2004 5:16 AM

Subject: Re: New Stuff again

Mom,

...[T]he light at the end of the tunnel, a.k.a. graduation in less than a year, is starting to hit me. I'm not at the point any more that I can fool around with decisions and try new things. I really need to become decisive with my future. Which leads me harbor the following two major trains of thought: 1. I really, really, really need to study hard for the LSAT, and 2. As soon as I come back to the States, I have to start looking at post-graduation jobs (good luck with my degree.)

3 August 2004

Note: This message gives the names of places he planned to travel on his sight-seeing trip. He includes a joke about what to do if he doesn't return home. David often used this kind of humor when conversing with his family and friends. Kathleen says that he wrote the same joke to his sister Jenny and his good friend Will Dabbert in Lincoln. We are certain that when David says "Just kidding" that he is, indeed, joking. All other messages assure us that David was planning to return home.

From: "David Sneddon" <dls_chucko@hotmail.com>

To: <ksneddon@bridgernet.com>

Sent: Tuesday, August 03, 2004 8:04 PM

Subject: Re: discussion -- I #11 mom's # 12

Mom,

... Things are going well here. I did well on all my exams and today is my last day of school. I am SO excited to go travel. I will go to Guilin-Kunming-Hainandao-Guangdong-Anhui. I will go to lots of places with really neat-sounding names, like Tiger-Leaping Gorge and Jade Dragon Pool. So if you never hear

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from me again, look for my body in the western Yunnan Province of China or the Yellow Mountains of Anhui. Just kidding. No, I'm really so excited. I got some really cheap airfare too (like \$60) that is helping me to go all these places.

Oh, did get your letter a while ago. I know I mentioned it, maybe in a letter that got lost. The plane ticket is a great price (SLC to Denver) but I have to go round trip within the month, instead of the 8 weeks that I need. Anyway, I think that's all I have to say. Will chat later.

David

5 August 2004

Note: David sent this message the day he started on his sight-seeing trip. He mentions thoughts on his family, a desire to be in the United States the following summer, and asks his mother to follow his travels as he reports of his journey through China. David is excited to begin his travels.

From: "David Sneddon" <dls_chucko@hotmail.com>

To: <ksneddon@bridgernet.com>

Sent: Thursday, August 05, 2004 12:32 AM

Subject: Re: discussion -- I #11 mom's # 12, # 15

Mom,

Nice to get your letter on the reunion and such. It sounds like it would have been quite a good occasion to be home with the family. I guess I can't do everything huh? I'm sure we'll have another on in a few years. I think next summer most likely I will just stay in the States like a normal person. I can't say that for sure, but I would like to.

... Anyway...I'm off this evening. Pull out your map and follow my adventures. It is so good to be finished with school and ready to get on the road!!! I'm really, really, really excited.

Love,

David

10 August 2004

Note: This is the last e-mail Kathleen received from David. When writing this e-mail, David was probably influenced by his reading of the *Lonely Planet China*, which discusses Zhongdian (now Shangri-La) and states on page 741: “Zhongdian, 198 m north-west of Lijiang marks the start of the Tibetan world.” Certainly, after hiking through the gorge, David was close to the borders of the Tibetan world and certainly he was correct in his assessment that he was traveling in an interesting, unique part of the world with many minorities.

Some persons have suggested that David may have tried to visit Tibet. As shown in Appendix A, David itinerary did not allow him time for such an adventure. Traveling to Tibet is not easy. Our driver, a Naxi from Lijiang, said that he had taken groups from Lijiang to Lhasa, Tibet, a drive of over five (5) days. One needs a special guide, a special permit, be one of a group of at least five (5) persons, and, assuming a start in Shangri-La, one must be willing to travel by bus over difficult mountain roads for least another twelve (12) hours before crossing over into Tibet.

From: “David Sneddon” <dls_chucko@hotmail.com>

To: <ksneddon@bridgernet.com>

Sent: Tuesday, August 10, 2004 7:32 PM

Subject: Re: discussion -- #17

Mom

About the hard sitter-- I was actually able to get it switched to a sleeper for a little commission. Apparently guys come in and buy out all the tickets so that they can resell them at a higher price later. Anyway I'm glad I did.

Guiling (Yangshuo actually) was nothing short of amazing. The topography, the farms, animals, locals we talked with, the river ride, it was all amazing. I won't go into detail since I plan on writing a much longer, detailed email to everyone about this. I'm in Lijiang now in western Yunnan province. I will take a bus to hike Tiger Leaping George in about half an hour. There are so many minorities here, I feel like I'm in Tibet or something like that already. I will go really, really close to the Tibetan border tonight after I hike. I am certain it will be an adventure and as it has already been. Just seeing the old houses and the way these people live...

Anyway, I'm doing fine and all it well. I bit of a sore throat, hope that goes away soon. I'm still not sure about flights. All the good deals are such that I have to return within 30 days, when really I want to return in 8 weeks. Not sure what to do. Um...anything else...I read all your other letters and enjoyed them. I am having a great time hear but nonetheless am excited to come home. That is all.

Love,

David

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Appendix D: The Three Recent Photos of David Sneddon

David and George stayed in Yangshuo for two days. They rented bicycles and took day trips south and north of Yangshuo. On these two days, George took several photos of David. These photos were on the undeveloped film that was found in David's backpack. We used these photos during our search for David. This means that the photos we used in our search were taken only a week before David's disappearance from Shangri-La on August 14th. Multiple people recognized and positively identified David from looking at these photos.



George Bailey took this photo of David Sneddon on August 7th as the two headed south out of Yangshuo on bikes.

George reports: “We biked past some irrigation pipes. David said that [his] father would be interested in seeing the irrigation systems in China and took a picture of those pipes in the background.” David’s father, Roy Sneddon, has a Ph.D in Civil Engineering, so David thought that he would be interested in seeing the work of Chinese engineers. The fact that David asked George to take this picture is further evidence that David planned to return home to share this picture with his father.



George Bailey took this second photo of David Sneddon on August 8th.¹

George reports: “David and I biked north from Yangshuo up in the direction of Guilin on Sunday [August 8]. We reached a little village and took a bamboo raft (this is what the picture is of) back down the river along which we biked. We only took the raft part of the way back down. I’m almost certain the second picture is our continuation of biking back down to Yangshuo on the same date.”²

In this photo, you can see David’s hairline, which clearly shows the “widows peak”³ as described by the two employees in Sean’s guesthouse when they reported their interaction and sighting of David Sneddon. David never smiled enough to show his teeth because he is wearing braces. He had an appointment with his orthodontist in Colorado Springs on the morning of Monday, August 30, 2004 and intended to fly to Salt Lake City, Utah that afternoon.

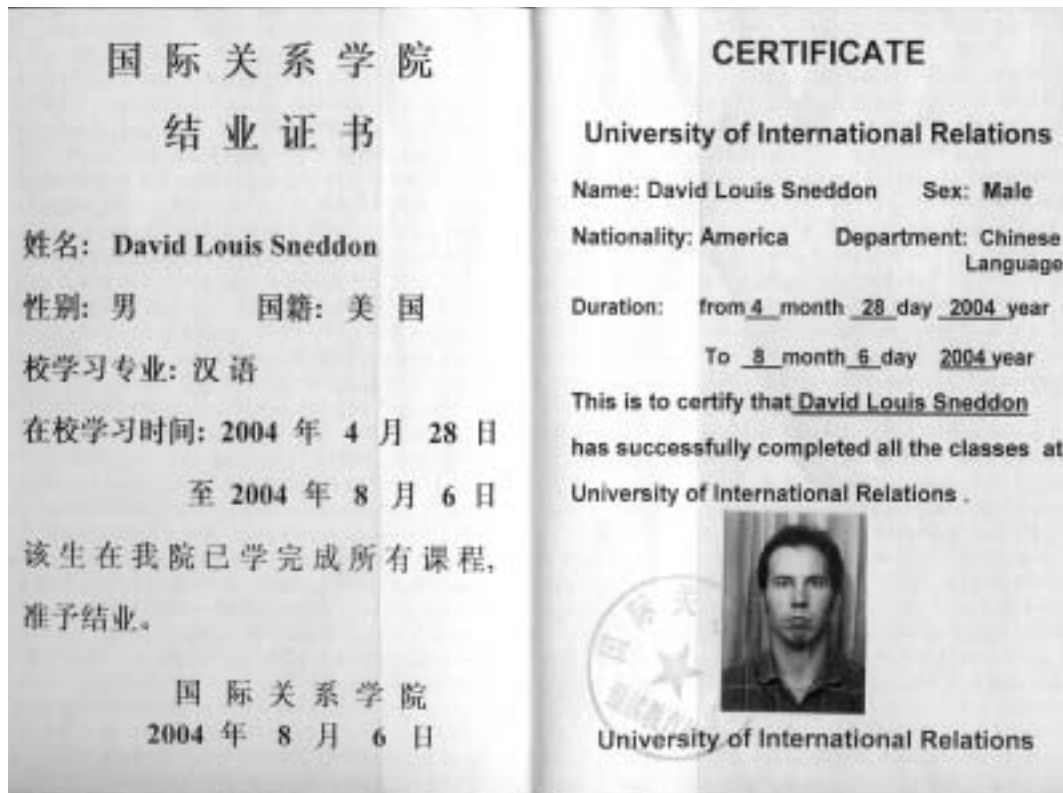


The most recent photo we have was taken on August 8th, after the ride in the raft, as David and George were bicycling back to Yangshuo. Note in the foreground David's "fanny pack", which he took with him when he left his large packpack in Qiaotou and started hiking up the "High Trail" of Tiger Leaping Gorge on August 11, 2004.

-
1. The date time stamp of David's camera is clearly wrong.
 2. M. Sneddon interview with G. Bailey on October 11, 2004.
 3. A "widows peak" is a V-shaped point formed by the hair near the top of the human forehead.

Appendix E: Selected Photographs from Our Journey

While we searched for David in the Yunnan Province in September 2004, we took scores of photos. We include the following selection of photos to give the reader some insight into the persons, places, and experiences we shared during our search for David. For space considerations, we have included only photos relevant to our journey from Qiaotou to Shangri-La and our finding that David disappeared in Shangri-La on August 14, 2004.



David's Diploma from the Beijing University of International Relations.

美国游客失踪 Missing Trekker



Copy of one of the placards we wore. We used the photo from David's Diploma to create these placards before leaving for China.



Jane's Guest House where Jane reported to police from Diqing prefecture that David's backpack was found.
Left to Right, our interpreter Charlie Chen, Jane, James Sneddon, & Michael Sneddon.



On the "High Trail." With our thirty years of backpacking experience we found the trail to be only slightly above average in difficulty. We met young school children walking to school, men herding livestock, and women carrying bundles for the marketplace in Qiaotou.



This view from the "High Trail" looks Southwest, back toward Qiaotou, a small village hidden behind the ridge and situated by the confluence of two rivers. This is not a primitive area without humans. Several villages are scattered along the trail and their inhabitants cultivate by hand the terraced fields up and down the mountain.



Two employees of our Tibetan Guide, Sean, report talking with David around 10:00 AM the month before our visit.



The local police had placed “missing” posters in strategic places along the trail. The posters show the most recent photo of David we had before we left the States—the picture from his Beijing Diploma.



Walking the streets of Shangri-La. Wherever we went, adults and children saw our placards and came to talk or walk with us.



Shangri-La, looking east along Tuan Jie Jie Street. On the far corner across the street to the left is the Korean Restaurant, the Yak Bar. Continuing east scarcely 100 meters beyond the Yak Bar is the Diqing Tibetan Area International Youth Hostel where Ms. Liu Miao reported David stayed one night. From the hostel one can travel another 40 meters to the Snowland Restaurant, where Dorje, a local guide, reported having met and talked extensively with David.



Shangri-La: close up of Yak Bar, a restaurant that served Korean food.



Ms. Zhang Xiao Fen, owner of the Yak Bar in Shangri-La, and one of her employees review photos of David and discuss their encounter with David.



In the Snowland Restaurant of Shangri-La, a local guide, Dorje, and Ms. Liu Miao report their interaction with David Sneddon. Dorje discussed at great length David's desire to visit a remote village but David's decision to not go due to the expense for a single person to hire a guide.



Shangri-La: Snowland Restaurant and Coffee Shop.



Diqing Tibetan Area International Youth Hostel where David probably slept Friday night, August 13, 2004 before disappearing the following day. Youth from all over the world travel inexpensively as "trekkers" from hostel to hostel, seeing sights, meeting people, and making new friends. Information posted on the Internet allows them to locate and compare different options.



Shangri-La: these women barbers from a shop on Ha Ping Lu, just a block north of the Diqing Tibetan Area International Youth Hostel, reported meeting David when he came to get his hair cut.

Appendix F: Maps

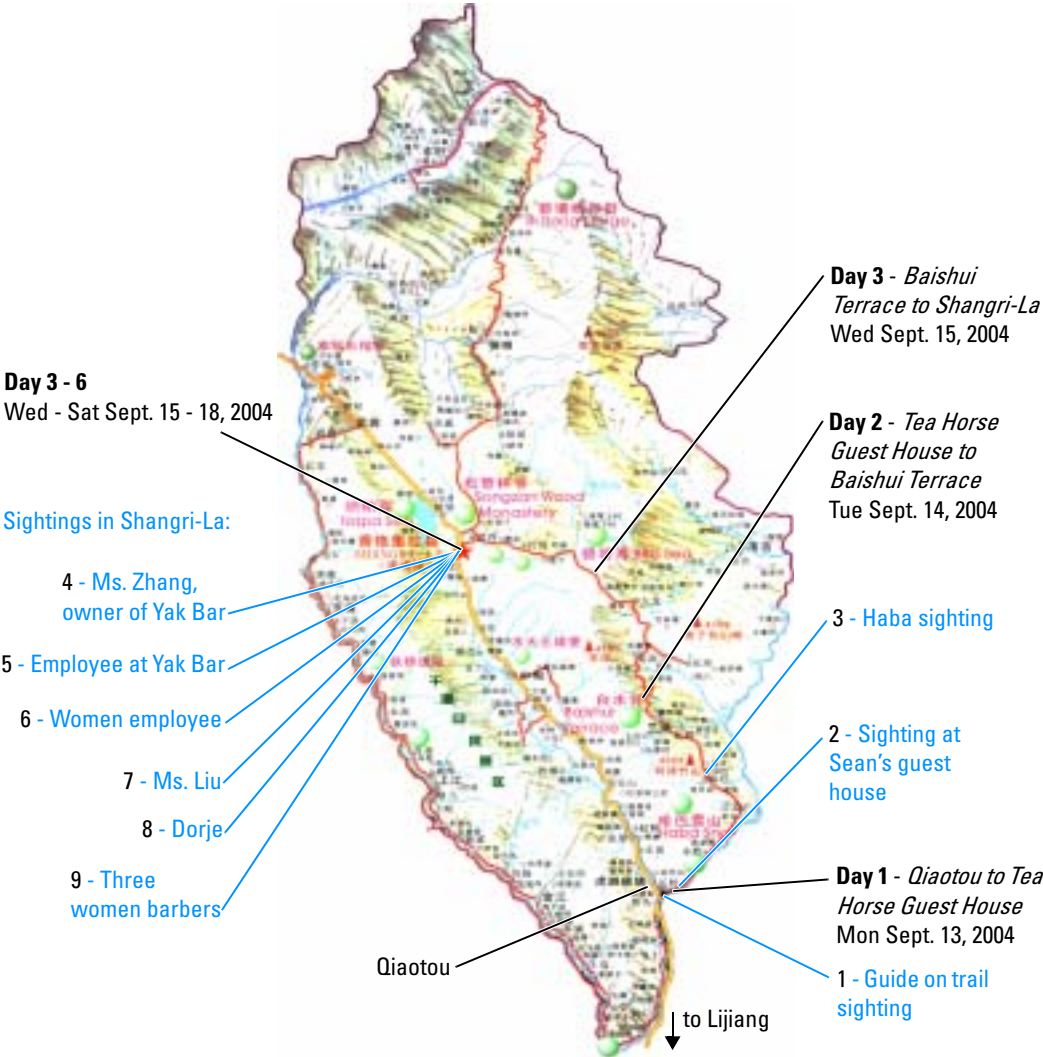


Map 1 — China

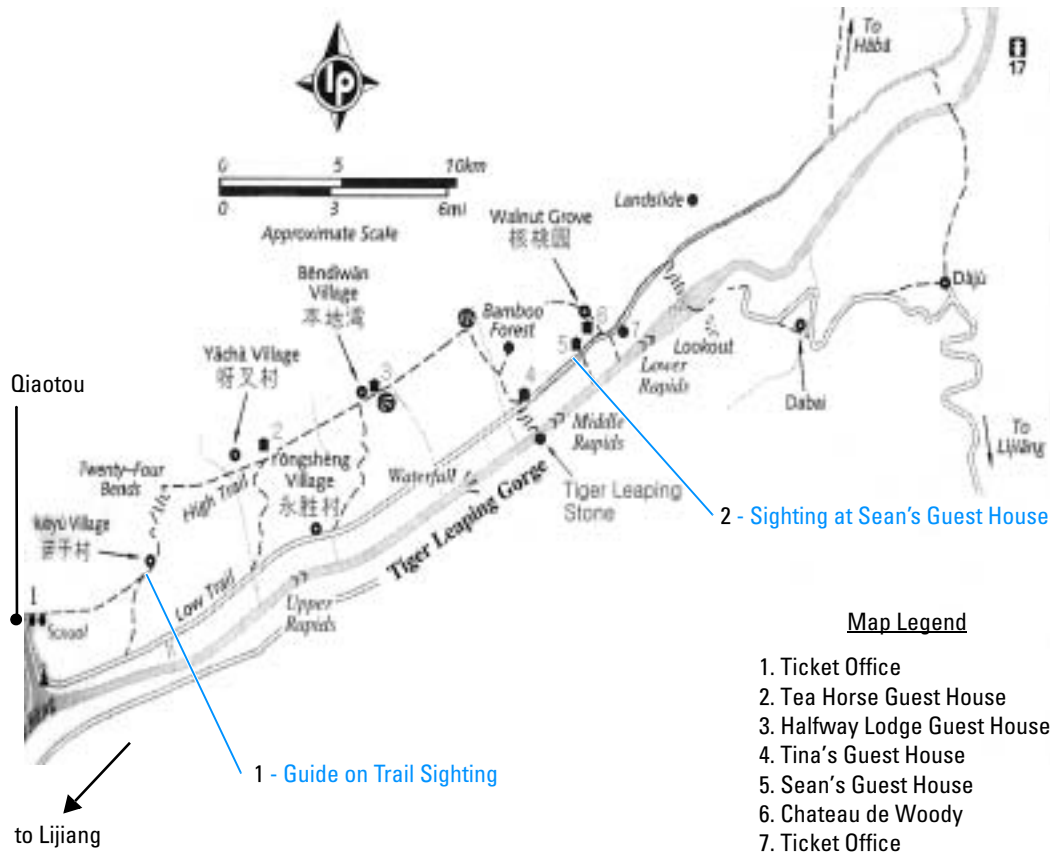
East side of Diqing
prefecture (see
Map 3 — Diqing
Prefecture for detail)



Map 2 — Yunnan Province



Map 3 — Diqing Prefecture



Map 4 — Sightings in Tiger Leaping Gorge



Map 5 — Sightings in Shangri-La



Map 6 — Yangi and part of Jilin Province



Day 1 - Qiaotou to Tea Horse Guest House
Mon Sept. 13, 2004

Map 7 — Tiger Leaping Gorge

Day 2 - Tea Horse Guest House to Baishui Terrace
Tue Sept. 14, 2004

Appendix G: The Yunnan Province

Yunnan Province is a largely mountainous province bordering on Burma, Laos, and Vietnam. It is home to the richest variety of ethnic groups in China. Some of the ethnic groups include the Naxi, Yi, Bai, Zhuang, Dai, and Tibetan. Yunnan's 24 registered minorities account for 34% of the population and a high concentration of these groups is in the mountains of Northwest Yunnan province. For example, the city of Lijiang was originally Naxi and Shangri-La, estimated population of 120,000, has a famous Tibetan Buddhist monastery. Many of the villages surrounding Shangri-La are Tibetan.

Yunnan is rich in flora and fauna, and is home to half of all of China's plant and animal species. It has the nation's richest deposits of non-ferrous metals such as lead, zinc, and germanium and also the largest phosphorous reserves. Agricultural products include sugarcane, rubber, tobacco, and bananas. The capital of the Yunnan province is Kunming, nicknamed the "Spring City," with weather perhaps the best in China.

Appendix H: The Culture of Trekking

Trekking is a popular activity throughout Europe and Asia but is not widely known or understood in the United States. Consider Trekking as a cross between backpacking and motor touring because it involves elements of both. Like backpackers, Trekkers take all their gear in a backpack. But rather than hiking in the wilderness environment of the mountains or forests and camping out in tents and cooking food, Trekkers move from place to place, sometimes on foot but often on train or bus or hired automobile, all depending on the geography, sights, and distances between points of interest. Unlike backpacking, Trekkers generally stay overnight in specialized youth hostels or guest houses, which serve this group of travelers with inexpensive lodging and food. Trekkers are generally younger and often single because they eschew comfort for adventure, flexibility, and economy of travel.

One advantage of Trekking over other forms of tourism is that a Trekker can easily modify his or her itinerary based on information received from other Trekkers, a trekker hostel, or local people. Often a Trekker will combine efforts with fellow travelers as they meet in hostels and travel together short distances to a common point, sharing costs of transportation, meals, stories, and language skills.

Associations come and go, changing frequently according to common goals, such as choice of destination, an interest in a particular culture, sightseeing, and one's physical capacity. Trekkers help each other and often pool resources and skills to assist each other along the way. Gender differences have little impact in the selection of short term—often only one to two days—travel mates. For example, English speakers that find themselves in a remote part of rural China would likely share their common language skills to help each other in an environment very, very different than life in western Europe or the United States.

Many Trekkers travel single. Indeed, this frequent meeting of new people, fellow Trekkers, from different nations and cultures gives Trekking a unique appeal to young travelers who seek to learn more about the world.

Trekking is full of ad hoc encounters and joint experiences with many fun, but transitory friendships. This is one of the great appeals to younger travelers seeking adventure on a limited budget.



Appendix I: David's Educational Loan

David had plans to start fall semester at Brigham Young University. To fund his way through his final year of school, David needed to take out a Stafford Loan. David's actual loan was \$5,500.00 for the 2004-2005 school year. Of this, \$2,667.50 was allocated for the fall 2004 semester and deposited in David's bank account. His parents returned the \$2,667.50 when he disappeared.

