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Sea Trek



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VICTORIAN SEA KAYAK CLUB

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EDITORIAL



In this issue of Sea Trek, we focus on expedition paddles during Victoria's winter months. Escaping Victoria's winter, a number of VSKCers took advantage of warmer temperatures a little closer to the equator. Terry Barry led a team of six through the islands of the Whitsundays on the coast of far North Queensland over twenty one days. Then there were five other groups who headed much further north to the UK, Indonesia, Vanuatu and Canada for a taste of some fantastic paddling destinations and cultures. Some used their own one-piece boats while others travelled with various fold-up sea kayaks and/or hired boats upon arrival at their international destinations. Tina Rowley shares insights from her trip with John to Vanuatu where they tested out their new three-piece Valley Etains through the rigors of international air travel. This issue also includes a couple of very interesting tales of more local trips that had some rather interesting moments. I'm sure you will enjoy the read.

Don't forget to keep new articles rolling in. The deadline for the next issue of Sea Trek is Friday December 14th.
Cheers, Bob



Here we are once again heading into summer and peak paddle season. The Paddle Fest and AGM will soon be upon us. I sincerely hope most of you will support this event with your presence. It will be a great weekend for all things Sea Kayaking and of course a fantastic social event. You can find details for registration elsewhere in Sea Trek as well as on the web. Hope to see you there!

I'm very pleased to announce that we are hosting international sea



kayaking guru Nigel Foster in February 2013. Nigel's visit continues the tradition of importing sea kayaking talent from around the world for the benefit of club members. Nigel will hold training for club members on Saturday 9th, Sunday 10th and Friday 15th Feb. Cost will be \$65 per person for half a day with a group size of six participants.

We will have bookings open for this great opportunity to learn from one of the best in the world at the AGM. Nigel will also host an illustrated talk featuring one of his many adventures on Friday the 8th February. The venue and details are still being worked out but it is worth

putting this night in your diaries now. While Nigel is here he will also run a 'train the trainer day' meaning that the club instructors will get the opportunity to pick up new skills and coaching techniques which we will then be able to pass on to club members.

In what I believe is a first for the VSKC the committee held a 'Strategic Planning Meeting' recently where we spent quite a few hours looking at the where the VSKC has come from, where we are at now and future directions. This was a valuable exercise that enabled us to clarify future directions and decision making for the VSKC.



Following a hard look at the club finances and liabilities, a motion will be presented at the AGM for a modest increase in membership fees (the first for quite a few years). Members who renew their membership prior to the AGM will be charged the existing fee. A once only chance to secure a discount by registering early and paying your membership!

It is our intention to present at the AGM a full yearly monthly calendar of trips and training. This along with impromptu trips posted throughout the year will ensure a vibrant trip calendar for 2013. Hope you all support the VSKC through your attendance.

Safe paddling, see you at the AGM

Terry Barry
VSKC President

Phillip Island PADDLE FEST 2012
not to missed annual gathering of the VSKC

Gap Conference Centre
(The Shearing Shed)
116 Gap Rd., Phillip Island

Friday 9th to Sunday 11th November

Featuring:
Paddles for all abilities,
fantastic fun,
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Trip presentations,
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The trip

Our aim was to leisurely island-hop through the Whitsunday Island group, from Mackay north to Shute Harbour, near Airlie Beach, over 21 days in June/July, visiting 23 islands (mostly uninhabited) with paddle days no longer than 35km. Trip Leader Terry sold the trip to us gullible winter bound Victorians as days short on easy calm water paddling between islands and days long on leisure - snorkeling, snoozing, reading, eating, chatting and exploring under tropical sunny blue skies in aqua-marine waters and golden beaches littered with bikini clad cuties. And to think we believed him.

The Group

Our pod comprised of six paddlers; Terry Barry (trip leader and treasured VSKC President), Bob Fergie (wooden paddle promoter, trip punching bag), Robin Boundy (wooden paddle sceptic, chief puncher), his son Tom Boundy (my bloody shoulder hurts still), Jeannine Strohbeck (promoted to honorary bloke and rescue simulator) and Pete Dingle (I'd hate to offend by refusing).

There was considerable big-trip and paddling experience in the group, even though sense of humor, apparently, was not a selection criteria, unlike gullibility.

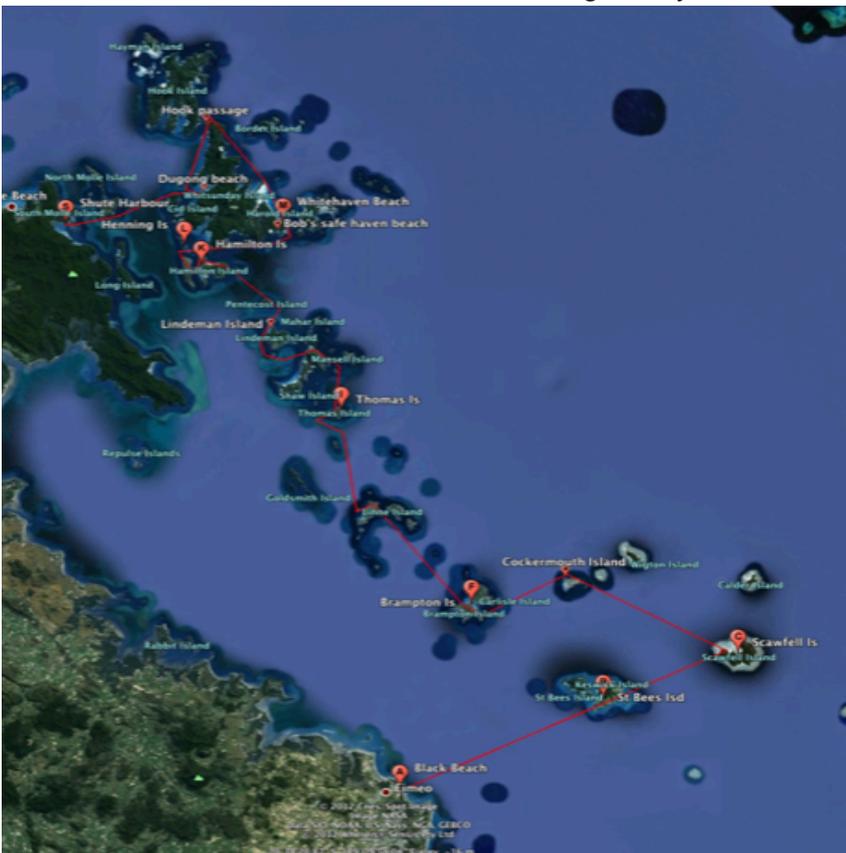
Getting Organised

Both before and during the trip, for the keen observer in safety, group management and leadership, Terry dropped hints on how to be a professional in the field. Clearly he believed that trip safety starts before you get on the water and decisions that could be made early should be made early; all boats required to have sails, boat trailer (kindly loaned by Greg Murray) had new bearings and tyres fitted and electrics checked. Terry's car was serviced prior to towing up boats and gear on the 5000km round trip (Thanks to Terry for the long solo drive). Emails were circulated on menus for dehydrated meals, details on logistics (food and water drops, costs, transport to and from) and responsibility areas volunteered for or delegated in areas of repair and first aid kit contents, navigation, communication, weather and safety.

Why Whitsundays?

Terry had paddled here many times before and was keen to share his experience of the area. Another reliable resource for us was David Colfelt's book, "100 Magic Miles of the Great Barrier Reef – the Whitsunday Islands". Colfelt indicated that trip timing was critical on several levels:

a) **Time of Year:** June and July were the two months of the year where the wind strength is the least (90% of winds < 16 knots) with wind direction S-SE-E (80% likelihood). So, paddling from south to north and the use of sails made a lot of sense. June and July were



also, statistically, the driest months of the year (Ha Ha).

b) **Time of Month:** Just south of our start point, Mackay, is the biggest tidal range of anywhere on the east coast of Australia (10m), and around Mackay, up to 7m (Gulp!). The tidal range decreased the further north you went, to a reduction of about 50% on the north end of Hook Island. Strong spring tidal streams happily coincided with our trip start and were to prove to be a challenge to us.

c) **Time of Day:** Flood tides came from the north, ebb tides from the south, twice daily. Daily route planning strategies in the Whitsundays hinged on two basic fundamentals, getting the winds and tides right. More on this later.

We were to find that getting these three to work in our favour was not always possible.

A new perspective to the trip Right from the start of our preparation, Terry had said that Bob WAS coming and WE were going to make it possible for him to do so with his health challenges; diabetes and sleep apnea. To make this possible, we each had to carry a 6kg dry cell battery for him to sleep with an air-pump at night. Terry indicated that the batteries would need recharging every 6-7 days (we could do this at island resorts without needing to return to the mainland), which suited us ideally for getting water.

Trip Start

On our arrival at Mackay airport on June 18, Robin hired a van which took us and our gear north to Blacks Beach, where we met Terry



at the caravan park. After some trial packing of the boats, Terry took the empty car and trailer to Airlie Beach for us to collect at trip end, and then caught a bus back.

Day 1 started with great anticipation and excitement with a 4.00am rise and was to prove a bit of an epic. We were prepared for our 38km paddle day from Blacks Beach to St Bees Island; what we weren't prepared for was the long hard slog to get our boats to the water at spring low tide. We were at a new moon and unfortunately our pre-dawn start coincided exactly with a spring low; this equated to a 400m boat carry x 6, with the heaviest the boats were going to be, including 30 litres of water each.

Six people proved to be an ideal number to carry boats (no need for trolleys), but we didn't twig that this 2.5km heavy boat carry would rob Bob of valuable energy when he most needed it when battling to stay upright in rough seas. To get out to our island chain, we needed to paddle east from the mainland.

We launched at slack water, but we needed to paddle across the tidal stream. This wasn't a problem until the wind picked up with the building flood tide; it produced wind against tide effects that produced increasingly rougher water; a bit of a shock to the system on day 1.

It was unsettling to see Bob capsize, but a joy to witness the casual roll back up again in the rough water; a delight to witness a man so comfortable in his boat. This was a lesson for us to; to see how fluctuating blood sugar levels affect performance. We soon learnt to raft up to Bob every so often to assist him with taking a nibble and a drink. (We were also very thankful of having a functioning pancreas.)

We arrived a bit battered and shagged. We met the resident caretaker (while fishing of course) and he kindly offered us some tank water and a tour of his historical work shed before we headed north to our campsites.

The beginning of the magic. The next day we headed further ENE to the beautiful Scawfell Island. On arrival, we were all a bit agog at beach drag marks.... we were not that comfortable with sharing a beach with a crocodile. A kindly yachty gave us 20 litres of water to top us up, and claimed responsibility for the drag marks on the eastern end of the beach. We were not overly convinced. The place was that beautiful that we wanted to stay so we decided to take a rest and repair day.





This was what sea kayaking was for us, to visit beautiful tropical islands and be immersed in the amazing world of nature. Here we started with butterflies by the score, turtles, eagles, fishing and snorkeling. Tom held Jeannine and I spellbound on a coastal rock wander with his amazing knowledge of marine life; the bloke is a walking encyclopedia. And, we were to later discover, he was the same with what was under the water as well. Tom saw some huge sting rays... and we were only up to day 3.

Each evening we would listen to the weather and the shortwave radio weather forecast was not looking good. Our intention of heading to Calder (xkm) and then Wigton Island (xkm) over 2 days was cancelled, and we decided to instead head straight for Cockermouth Island (35km). (Love that name !!) We were forecast 15-20 knots in the morning, increasing to 20-25 later in the day. It was comforting to see Robin and Terry bouncing around ideas on trip planning; what a powerful and experienced team these two were.

Drama with wind against tide Day 4 and an early morning start again. We could already see from our sheltered campsite that the wind was up; the trees on the surrounding spur lines were waving and whistling. With sails up we took off for our 35km crossing. This day turned out to be the biggest challenge of the trip. The wind was up, maybe 20-25kn at

the outset. This was fine as it was a SE tailwind, but with the steadily increasing flood tide from the north, the wind against tide effect soon turned from 'yippee' to 'O bother'. Our quick trip became a battle to stay upright. The steadily worsening wind against tide produced a sea of whitecaps and large steep waves, the bigger ones breaking over 3m. We had sail failures, multiple capsizes, roll and support stroke failures. It was our third paddle day, and Bob did a magnificent job of cranking up out of his sugar-lows during the challenging trip and earned himself the title of master-roller, with 5 out of 5 capsizes with successful rolls. Our gear was certainly being tested.... and sails certainly got a hammering. Robin's sail needed on-water guy rope adjusting as did the failing plastic flexing base

of Bob's mast. Tom's sail mast sheared off, right where a drill hole had been put to attach a bolt for a guy fitting (interesting that those of us whose rigs used pop rivets had no such issues).

This meant we had to stop and/or slow down every-so-often in order to repair or adjust failing gear in wild raft-ups in order to keep the group together, at a time when the longer we stayed out there the worse the conditions were getting. Robin, in a great show of compassion and solidarity, dropped his sail to stay with his now mast-less son. They both paddled superbly in order to keep up. A very impressive and moving action by Robin.

What did you say the name of that island was? One of our better decisions was to approach Cockermouth Island via the east side rather than through the island gap on the islands west side. As we were to later discover, the honeycomb rocks there would shred you grotesquely if you capsized.

In the lee of the island, being out of the wind was a huge relief in the shadow of the high northern cliffs. Finding a wind-free campsite proved a challenge, but we agreed that some wind was beneficial in that it meant little to no sandfly activity.

We had some contemplative chats over dinner that night. Us





Victorians are not used to strong tidal streams and hence we never experience the dramatic effects that wind against tide has. Depending upon when you got on the water, you could have from good paddling conditions when the wind was blowing in the same direction as the tide, the worst paddling conditions when the tide was going in the reverse direction to the wind. We all agreed though that the best thing about the day was the way the group consistently worked to stay together and keeping an eye on each other.

We spent 3 days on Cockermouth Island, repairing our gear (this was to become a daily common theme) and waiting for the wind to subside. Thank goodness for the repair kits we brought. We were back in mobile phone range now, so could phone home and Robin could update the Whitsundays 2012 blog. At low tide we explored a different island each day by foot. The razor sharp honeycomb rock was scary from a sea landing perspective, as scary as the many oyster shells. Terry found a huge, now rusted, outboard motor wedged high among the rocks. Oops. Robin found a ball and we started a game of improvised baseball. And we had a great climb to the hilltop above camp, followed by a quick retreat; a verification of why the day was a rest day.

Young Tom was an impressive lad. He was an excellent paddler, was a font of knowledge on all things under the water, had a great sense of humour (must have got it from his mother), had the wisdom and social skills of someone beyond his years (mother again we suspect) and an enormous capacity to withstand pain over long periods of time. He had a sore shoulder, cause unknown, that stopped him from being horizontal for more than 30 minutes before the pain kicked in. Hence, sleep deprivation was an issue. Tom had this from Day 1 to trip end, and only talked about it when prodded. An impressive lad.

We were yet to have good weather for snorkeling, but we found

alternative joy in exploring by foot the coral flats, the accessible at low tide islands and our sheltering hill tops. The incredibly rich beach fossicking findings were explained when Colfelt; as there is no safe anchorage for yachts, they stay away. There was just so much beach marine life to see that we never saw on any of the other islands. The profound implications of the damage caused by unthinking humans was here right in your face. Thank goodness for unsafe anchorages.

A devastated resort

On day 7 the forecast was average, but the early morning sea looked good, and we needed to charge those batteries. A quick pack up and we were off to Brampton Island, only a short distance away. We were a bit gun-shy after the last paddle, but we all managed okay.



We had a jaw-dropping experience upon arrival. This huge luxury resort, with massive luxury apartments, air strip, outside pool, coconut palm lined beaches was deserted. This just shouldn't be;



not at the height of the tourist season with tens of millions of investment dollars just sitting there, abandoned.



The word is that it was a combination of the 2011 Cyclone and the GFC. To us, it looked as though the call had come through for (the staff at least) to ‘abandon ship’, presumably with an approaching cyclone, and everything was just dropped where it was; huge front end loaders, 4WD’s, jet skis, tools, workshops all looking as though someone walked out and left them just lying there. Terry had teed-up weeks before with the Resort manager to charge Bob’s batteries and that’s why we were there.

The next morning we collected the fully charged batteries while carefully avoiding walking under the coconut palms, (is it true that falling coconuts is the greatest cause of death in the tropics?)

We then headed north for Goldsmith Island in the Smith Island group. The forecast was still marginal....15-20kn SE, building to 25 in the afternoon, but by now we could get at least 4 hrs of wind-with-tide paddling conditions before 11.00am. What a joy this difference was.

Each paddling day we were getting gear failures and today was no

exception; the stresses on our sailing gear was substantial and Tom’s sailing rig was still struggling to perform. This time Tom’s flexible plastic mast base deformed to the point of inability to perform. The word “.....useless” was among the adjectives used to describe these plastic hinged fold down mast steps. On-water re-tensioning of the mast guys marginally helped.

Whales and dolphins

To our great delight, sharp-eyed Terry spotted a whale-blow as we approached the gap between Goldsmith and Linne Island. We all took chase to get a closer look and with some meandering, we managed to get within 100m and spent some time with them. I think there were 2-3 of them and they were massive. What a great experience.

The campsite on Goldsmith was a beauty; rest and repair time again. The next day, with an early start, we arrived at our next island, Thomas.

Terry had indeed been accurate in describing it as a beautiful island; time for a rest day. Finally some nice sunny and calm days. Lazing on beaches, in the shade, going

snorkeling (finally), was just great. Robin went with Jeannine on a training paddle to assist Jeannine in her quest for a Level 2 award. Robin spent hours and hours teaching Jeannine. It is said the greatest gift you can give someone is your time.

Boat repairs were again on the agenda: Bob and Tom’s sails and now my skeg was failing to deploy. Master repairer Terry once again provided valuable advice and technique.

Jeannine was a great seeker of competence. A newcomer to the sport, she constantly sought to understand and improve. She could paddle hard and fast when needed and would be tapping into the teachings of Bob, Robin and Tom frequently. Dolphins with sunset, again; how nice is this.

After dolphins for breakfast (again), we departed up the east side of Shaw Island and squeezing through the narrow 10m island gap with the Maher Island complex to the north and then crossing of the strong tidal stream over to Lindeman Island before landing at Lindeman Island resort under the



watchful eye of a pair of sea eagles. As with Brampton Resort, this magnificent complex was closed; millions and millions of dollars just lying idle; very strange indeed. One of the caretaking personnel said it had been bought by a Chinese investor and would be opened in September.

Terry: Turtle Tamer

We couldn't stay long due to the threat of the rapidly departing tide over coral reefs. On arrival at our campsite on the north end of Linde-



mann island we lacked enthusiasm for a long low tide boat carry, so we settled on camping at Coconut Beach on the NW of Lindeman. Negotiating the coral reef guarding our intended campsite required patience, so we had lunch sitting out in the water on the reef some 100m from shore. What a marvelous place for lunch, with the incoming inundation-cycle of reef life happening before our eyes. Terry found a young turtle trapped by the low tide, caught it and brought it over to us to see, before releasing it in deeper water. Being still, we saw black tip reef sharks coming in with the tide, one being over 2m and just 5m away--just magic!

Beach camping is such a luxury

and a joy. We loved the open ocean views, looking out of the headland bordered bay with the changing state of the sea surface with the tide and wind and the changing colours with the receding sun. This, and the special company of our group meant each day we felt blessed indeed. At each campsite, Bob and I would battle it out as to who got the best beach-side campsite for our quests were similar; a bit of wind (reduces sand fly risk), close to the water (not far to drag the boats), and a good ocean view. Often, we both won.

By observing Bob you could learn much about grace, joy, acceptance, determination, humour and humility. Despite his ill health, he was always happy. The daily struggle with the challenging paddling and getting his blood sugar levels under control, was something he never let get him down. It was humbling for us to witness Bob dealing with the energy in = energy out chemical equation that our own pancreas did automatically. We learnt to be thankful for our own good health. We learnt a lot from the ol' bugger; mentoring is a powerful teaching tool.

The joy of Hamilton Island

The next morning, day 12, July 1st, we departed for the delightful campsite on Henning Island. But we were also booked into Hamilton Island, for the second round of charging Bob's batteries. But, we all agreed, we had to go past the majestic Pentecost Island, the only island in the Whitsundays named by Captain Cook. The weather

was beautiful, though strangely, no wind to assist us today. After many Pentecostal oohs and aahs, we headed for Hamilton Island boat harbour via Perverserance Island and through the infamous Fitzalan Passage (more on this later).

Terry had organized with the harbour master for us to moor our boats, free of charge (we were surrounded by boats, with price tags in the \$millions), free battery charging service, and free access to showers and a launderette (The lessons on group care just kept coming from Terry). After topping up at the bakery, take-away shops and grocery store, we departed NW for Henning Island some 5 km away.

Fitzalan Passage fright

Our intentions for day 13 were to pick up the overnight-charged batteries from Hamilton Island, paddle through Fitzalan Passage to the famous Whitehaven Beach. Things don't always go to plan; another epic was being planned for us! We woke to a stiff 15-20kn SE head wind and we had to claw our way forward, re-grouping and sheltering behind Plum Pudding Island to catch our breath.

Batteries collected, with enormous thanks to the harbour master, we departed for Fitzalan Passage right on the change of tide, believing we would have the start of the tide with us (this was not to be the first time the tidal flow would be counter-intuitive). However, as it turned out, we were in for a surprise; we



were met with a substantial river flow going against us not with us. Colfelt mentions nothing of this in his book. I made a mental not to arrive at the passage right on slack water next time, not some 30minutes after high water slack.

Jeannine and I were together, paddling up a midstream eddy. After a few minutes, I remember glancing over to shore, some 50m away, twice, then thrice, thinking, despite our efforts, we're not moving forward at all. A quick glance revealed the others to our side or behind. I could see that there was a shallow shelf reef causing the water to move rapidly over it, but some 40m behind it was slack water and safety.

The sound of the water roaring over the rocks meant communication was awkward, but I yelled to Jeannine some 3m away that if we paddled hard, we could bridge the gap; we could do it. She yelled okay and she said she'd follow me. It was here that things went wrong: I made some assumptions instead of asking questions. I powered forward to the distant cross and upstream eddy, adjusting my boat angle and edging to facilitate this; it was hard work. As it turned out, it appeared that Jeannine did not know about edges and angles when crossing fast moving water, and she did a ferry glide 90 deg. to our intended course, right into the rough water and the rocks. Bugger. I heard her calling out as she was heading for disaster, but I was powerless to do anything until I got to the eddy. On reaching the eddy, I turned to see Janine looking at

me, thankfully still sitting upright in her boat, wedged in between rocks amidst floundering white water. The others were still some distance away, out of hearing range with rough water. I looked for and found a 'soft spot' amongst the rocks (rounded boulders with water washing over, no oyster shells visible, ...) to go in and help (it looked simple enough....ha ha).

I paddled in on the back of a wave, released my spray deck just before landing, in anticipation of a very quick exit, and promptly stuffed it up. A wave clobbered me as I was getting out, filling the cockpit. I knew I had to get to the back of the boat (more control) to push the boat forward to higher and safer ground and that it would be a race between me and the waves as to who got to maneuver the boat first. I lost. The next wave slammed my boat into the rocks, despite me pulling grimly on the cockpit and deck lines. You know the sound of breaking fiberglass, and its not a pretty sound. Bugger. After stowing the boat safely, I went deeper and floated and bobbed my way down to Janine. Fortunately, she was still sitting in her boat, high on the rocks, looking out to sea.

The rescue option of hauling her further up on shore, and doing a shore recovery looked horrendous. It would take all of us many hours to do it. Launching back out to sea looked so much easier. For a scary situation, Janine was very composed. She was one impressive lass; and despite my words to the contrary, very apologetic. After a quick check that she was okay,

a check for boat damage (none... phew), we chatted about how we'd get her out and what she'd then do. With the incoming waves I then dragged her boat out to deeper water until she was eventually floating. Chatting as we went I swam with her out into the current and launched her downstream to the safety of calmer water and the others.

When teamwork was needed, it came

I had been so engrossed with this that I hadn't noticed Terry and Robin arrive....and in fact I think they arrived right on Janine-launch time. I can't remember much here... but both were out of their boats, in the water next to me; very impressive. Had they seal-landed their boats also? I can remember Terry and/or Robin getting into their boats (reenter and roll?), and then Bob suddenly appeared as my guardian angel, waiting for me to retrieve my quietly sleeping boat (it floated) and being there while I thrashed my way through a two-attempt reenter and roll.

We all gathered in the big eddy downstream, and then headed for the nearest beach to check out our boats and our bodies, in that order. As it turned out, we had landed on THE most luxurious resort beach in Australia (so the staff told us, as they herded us gently to the out-of-sight end of the beach; their customers had paid a lot for privacy we were told). The team rallied and boats were checked. I sent up a silent prayer to my boat maker, Dave Winkworth, for his





carbon-kevlar constructed Nadgee; the gelcoat was chipped and shattered but structural damage was not apparent. Duct tape fixed the problem. Robin and I had some minor shin and hand damage, and the Wilderness First Aid trained team quickly fixed us up. We resolved that we couldn't paddle through Fitzalan Passage against the current (der) and that we'd have to wait until the change of tide at 1500hr; before trying for a closer campsite at Chance Bay, just short of Whitehaven Beach. With four hours to kill, we were transported out of the resort in golf buggies (we all felt it resembled Jurassic Park while we waited for the giant gates to be opened) so we could walk back into Hamilton Island shopping complex. This was some resort; the most expensive units were \$4000/night! (How could you sleep for 8 hours and feel as though you got your moneys worth?). Heading into town, we peered over the cliff into Fitzalan Passage and saw a huge power launch (120'?) struggling to negotiate the passage at an absolute crawl. Fascinating.

Fitzalan Passage – second attempt Low tide departures are always entertaining over coral reefs, but we all paddled briskly away, wondering what effect the 15-20kn SE would be doing with the soon-to-be wind-against-tide. Fitzalan was a breeze this time (mental note to self; Fitzalan Passage on low tide slack water is paddleable). My skeg was not deploying, and with a beam wind, I could not sail effectively without it. With the

already tight timeline in the fading sunlight, it was frustrating with me slowing the group down. Terry and Robin were quick to pick up on my problem, and after a quick discussion, I very graciously accepted Robin's offer of a tow under sail. I couldn't have done it without him. What a team I was in!

We had some interesting tidal races and rough water to battle through around the headland entering Chance Bay and we finally landed on Whitsunday Island, in the fading light, with much relief.

Bob gets special treatment from above

The designated campsite is up high, with quite a gear carry. As we were rapidly running out of light, we decided to camp high on the beach, thinking we could escape the 2200hr high tide. But worry set in with the rapidly advancing tide being propelled by the strong SE wind. We were all shagged and wanted to get to sleep, but none of us wanted to suffer the indignation of sharing our tent with froth, float-

ing debris and pounding waves. All of us, bar Bob, decided the only way to lower our anxiety was to move our tents to higher ground. We had forgotten that Bob pulled weight with the bloke upstairs; in the morning the evidence before our eyes spoke volumes. All our former tent sites had been inundated at high tide. While Bob had been happily snoring away, a massive pile of driftwood gathered on the beach in front of his tent, softening the force of the waves, and the water stopped 30cm from his tent. The driftwood pile occurred at no other site on the 900m beach. (Mental note to self: if caught in electrical storm, stand next to Bob)

For July 4, we wanted to go through Solway Passage, the gap between Whitsunday and Haslewood Islands, on slack water. It too had a fierce reputation for dangerous waters, but we snuck through and landed on Whitehaven Beach, rated as one of the top 10 beaches of the world (according to the tourist brochures). There were half a dozen yachts and cruise boats and two float planes. We had



a great swim and laze about. I wondered at why tourists would pay so much money to visit Whitehaven Beach, then get transported ashore by dingy, strip to their swimwear, lay down on a towel on the beach, and close their eyes. Rarely did they venture into the rainforest behind them or into the beautiful water in front of them. Some would play beach cricket, soccer or just chat. We humans are strange.

We only stayed an hour or so, then set off north, up the east side of Whitsunday Island, under sail to Hill Inlet where we watched the many sting rays in the water, walked to the lookout (spectacular), had lunch, got a bit wet on our surf launches and then north again to Hook Passage, the gap between Whitsunday Island and Hook Island. We intended to camp at the Hook Island Resort, but this time we were refused entry. The tidal stream was strong in the passage, and constantly changing as we watched; not only in ferocity, but also with multiple directions, and changing eddy lines. Spectacular, and once again, counter-intuitive. We soon found a beach to camp on but unfortunately, we were at low tide and so a careful and lengthy boat carry over easily damaged soft corals was cautiously completed. What a fantastic place this is. Watching boats negotiate the rough waters of Hook Passage under the setting sun was beautiful.

Tom made a lovely coral candle

stand to illuminate our evening meal while beach cooking.

As I shall explain shortly, we had now reached the end of our big trip phase. We had worked well together in keeping the team functional and effective; I was very thankful for being invited onto such a trip with a great bunch of people.

Our group suddenly grows

We had now entered into the third week of our trip, and the team had earlier graciously agreed to a request for my wife and friends to join us for this last week. However, the weather forecast failed to meet our expectations. Our timetable had to be changed. Our guests, my wife Karoline, a visiting 14yr old German lad Johann, a good friend Regina and her 14yr old daughter Grace, had all intended to be delivered, with 2 double sea kayaks, to northern Hook Island. Now, with forecast in mind, we all opted for some R&R at Dugong Beach, on the sheltered west side of Whitsunday Island, in Cid Harbour.

We paddled to Dugong Beach (yep, Dugongs were sighted, tripped over actually). You can always tell when the weather is going to deteriorate by the number of yachts that were seeking shelter in Cid Harbour. There were about 25 of them.... and this was to grow to some 35 in the coming days. The next day, the Island Delivery service boat, Scamper, brought out our addition-

al party of 4, 2 double sea kayaks, and 100l of water for us.

Our party had grown from 6 to 10 now, and we all enjoyed the concept of base camping; a huge relief from the early starts and the constant daily moving of campsites. During our time here we saw many dugongs, sting rays, mud crabs, nesting sea eagles with young and heard stories from the yachties on the whales they had go past their boat just yesterday. We walked to the summit of Whitsunday Peak (great views over much owwwwwf our journey) and exploratory paddles with the new foursome.

Bob excelled himself by teaching Grace to roll; it is great to observe a patient, gifted teacher at work.

Grace's reflections

Learning to roll. What an experience! It all began when Bob convinced me that learning to roll was a good idea. Little did I know how hard it was going to be! The water temperature was less than desirable, but still we went on. Of course, because the rest of the



kayaking group had nothing to do, they decided to watch me! Bob started off by trying to familiarize me and to feel comfortable the water. "The water is your friend," Bob would say.

Sitting in the boat, he tipped me to the side so that my head was in the water. I used Bob's special wooden paddle, as it was apparently easier to use, and practiced using the paddle to try and get myself up. There were many things to think about when coming up from the water. My knee had to push against the side of the kayak, I had to keep my back, shoulders and head as close to the kayak as possible, despite my instinct to sit up in the boat. Bob would tip me to the side and I would have to, with the paddle, get myself back up by myself. After much practice, I was able to flatten myself on top of the water and float there, with my legs still in the kayak. After all that, I was tired and cold, so we called it a day.

The next day it was the real deal. It was time to roll! It was time to put on my snorkelling goggles and time to make friends with the water once and for all! We practiced the things I had done the day before, and then it was time! Bob began to tip me upside down. He had already told me what I had to do. Keep your body close to the boat, keep one end of the paddle close to your chin, push on the kayak with your knee, and so on. It was all in my head, but something about being upside down in the water disorientated me. Many fails later, I finally did it! It wasn't a 360 degree roll, but it was still a roll. That time underwater putting the paddle in the water, seemed like a lifetime, but coming up from the water was

the best feeling. Not every fourteen year old can say that they can roll in a kayak!



Tom and Johann enjoyed sharing time with the 10 Latrobe University (Bendigo) Outdoor Education students who were also sheltering from the poor weather on their 16 day sea kayaking trip around the Whitsunday Islands. One evening, our crew were asked by Sean, the leader of the Bendigo Outdoor Education crew, to talk about their sea kayaking experiences to the uni. students. Under one of the picnic shelters at Dugong Beach, Robin and Tom told an inspiring story of their numerous Bass Strait crossings and Terry on his amazing solo trip from Sydney to Victoria.

At another time, Robin, Tom and Bob took part in a coaching roll fest with the students off the beach. It perhaps should be noted that, while at Dugong Beach campsite, Pete exceeded all records by having his tent pole snap for the 4th time on the trip, running out of pole sleeves. As our final day drew near, our day 21, the university groups day 16 and no sign of weather improvement, we all caught Scamper back to Shute Har-

bour. We were disappointed not to have explored Hook Island, but, that can be done next time.

What a journey !

We all agreed it had been a great trip that will be remembered for

- the wonderful feeling of 'team' that was generated both on and off water;
- the amount of gear failure (tent poles, sails, rudders, skegs, paddles) and having the foresight to bring repair kits that were able to deal with most of it;
- for the way the group constantly strived to stay together and be there for each other, often under difficult conditions, when it mattered most on the water;
- for the amazing wildlife, stunning scenery and beauty that just blows your mind away, both on, off and under the water;
- for seeing Robin keep the Trip Blog going daily as well as using solar power to keep our electrical needs met;
- for Bob to lose so much weight and that despite his health issues;
- through a lot of preparation, good gear and a good team, to overcome amazing obstacles and succeed in an inspiring way;
- to witness the wonderful father-son team of Robin and Tom, two amazing paddlers, leaders and great team people;
- to see the way the experienced team members worked well together and;
- the amazing 5000km solo drive by Terry to get our boats and gear to Queensland and back, and how with his great leadership at all stages of the trip, he contributed so much to making this journey memorable.



Adventures on the Canadian West Coast & Tidal Rapid Surfing

For our first major overseas paddling holiday we decided we wanted to be able to keep a fairly flexible itinerary, as we were in late spring early summer and weren't too sure what the weather would do. Aside from a week driving in the Rockies with Neil's sister and the last week and a half where we were meeting up with Brian Roberts and Rohan Klopfer, we left it pretty open. We had an idea of some areas we wanted to visit on the west coast of Vancouver Island. We had our own Trak folding kayaks with us and hired a car.

We settled on Nootka Sound for the abundant sea otters and ease of driving access to launch points, as well as it being comparatively remote.

Nootka Sound South

From the ferry terminal in Nanaimo, we drive up the main highway to Campbell River, then headed off to the west coast to Nootka Sound, via Gold River. We set up camp at Cougar Creek and we paddled in the afternoon up Hisnit Inlet, spotting our first sea otter.



Next day we packed up and headed out to Bligh Island Marine Provincial Park. The weather forecast sounded distinctly dodgy - basically a gale warning for most of northern Vancouver Island, and yet people in the camping ground were saying that it was quite flat out in the ocean outside the sound. The weather was misty and the low cloud sat on the hills pretty much obscuring the scenery. So we paddled in the 'lee' of what were the expected SE winds and down the side of Bligh Island in Fidalgo Passage, seeing plenty of Bald eagles perched in the tree tops. We had lunch at Vernaci Island at the camping site and saw a couple more sea otters, which nearly tempted us to stay, but it was a bit damp & had

rather a lot of mosquitoes.

We decided we'd try the campsite at Charlie's Beach on the SW corner of Bligh Island, but it was still a bit early so we explored the Spanish Pilot Group and out to Pantoja Island. These are the outermost islands of the group so if there were any wind or swell you'd expect it to be here - nothing! The swell was about 20cm. Harbour seals undulated off their little outcrop, popping up behind us. They'd duck under if you looked at them then reappeared as you turned away.

Arriving at Charlie's Beach, we found another kayaking couple from Seattle, who had paddled from Tuta Marina. They had the big site with the views but it wasn't very flat. We pitched camp in a smaller, but sheltered site - should be pretty protected if the gales ever arrived. There was a small amount of wind overnight but hardly a gale, and fairly constant drizzly rain.

Next day was wet and the clouds had come down to meet the water, so we had another rest day, as did the other kayakers, and spent it chatting and reading. No sign of the wolf that they'd seen a couple of days earlier - I thought I heard it in the distance a couple of times but it could have been the wind... Plenty of cute hummingbirds (they sound like really big blowflies) and squirrels chasing through the trees. The other couple departed in the



afternoon, so I took the opportunity for a swim. The water temperature is about the same as Port Phillip Bay at this time of year but doesn't change in temperature much. It was cold but refreshing! This is summer after all!

The whole area is very peaceful and beautiful. There is a lot of moss and lichen over pretty much everything - it has a rather Fangorn Forest feel to it I am sure (but no Ents!). The only sounds are the birds and squirrels, dripping rain and the occasional powerboat. The rain started to ease to a heavy mist and we had enough dry wood for a fire - a very pleasant evening. I heated up some giant oysters we'd collected along the way. The shells were bigger than my hand and two



were almost a meal in themselves. The camping gear was pretty damp by this stage so we decided to come back to the east coast to dry out a bit, so the next morning we packed up and paddled back.

Nootka Sound North

After a couple of days back in

Campbell River drying everything out, restocking and enjoying the Canada Day festivities, we headed back across the island to the west coast, arriving in Tahsis just before lunch time. Tahsis was a bit bigger than we expected for a town that once depended on the logging industry. There is a big space where the mill used to be but the town carries on around it and has a focus on boating/fishing and tourism. It has three sea kayak businesses - one at the main wharf and two more at the boat ramp.

We checked out the launching possibilities and had a big burger early lunch at the diner/supermarket/gas station. We got back to the launch site and unpacked and discovered that we had a broken join in the frame. The best temporary fix at the time was to hire a kayak and carry on... Jude at Tahsis Dive Charters (they also are a kayak shop) was very helpful above & beyond and we were soon on the water. The broken part was replaced by Trak and was at Tofino when we arrived there a few days later.

The weather forecast was for improving conditions - the rain had stopped but it was still quite grey and overcast and the afternoon winds had come in by then. We hugged the side of the inlet and escaped most of it and it eventually dropped off for the evening.

The BC Marine Trails website and the recently published The BC Coast Explorer & Marine Trails Guide lists a few campsites within a couple of hours paddling of Tahsis but they are not as good as the ones further out. The terrain is

vertical and there is not what we would think of as beaches.

The first one, Lord Waterfall is a small ledge, but it was a bit overgrown with prickly bushes. Across Hecate Channel is Haven, which offers a choice of a scramble up a rocky shelf or a one-tent space back off the rocky beach. We spent a bit of time debating these options - the rocky shelf was doable but the camping was a bit confined and there was nowhere to go if the bear that had been snacking on berries there returned (he had left a couple of large deposits to announce his very recent presence). The other site was okay. It had a discarded snake skin next to it which we were contemplating when I just missed stepping on the actual snake... It disappeared into the bush right next to where the tent was going to go. We paddled on around the corner into Esperanza Inlet, to Saltery Creek, but couldn't find anything sufficiently above high tide and the areas behind the beach were either completely overgrown or were streambed.

So we went on the Garden Point, which is accessed by beaches either side of a sandy spit connected to an island at high tide - an idyllic spot and the one I had been intending to get to anyway before we were delayed. The campsite area is big with multiple tent sites, a central area with a driftwood table and a rather dodgy outhouse set back in the woods. As we came in to the beach we were greeted by a family curious sea otters. These were the first of many we saw here and in Nuchatiltz Marine Provincial Park.

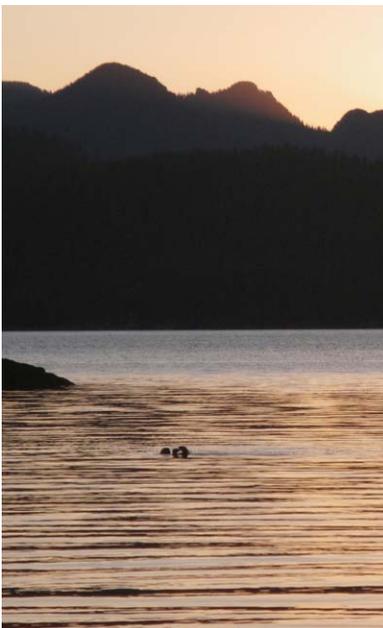




Next day we encountered the other inhabitant of this beach - a large black bear! Startled, he initially ran away, but later resumed his patrol of the edge of beach watching me as I stood eating my breakfast - fortunately some distance away as the tide was out!

We paddled to Nuchatilitz Marine Provincial Park (keeping a eye out for our furry neighbour as we launched) and spent the day around the islands. Most of the larger ones have campsites - there was a big group of paddlers already on Wy-Ash island. We saw many sea otters playing in the kelp beds, bald eagles, interesting marine life on the rocks and some nice caves and gauntlets.

Back at Garden Point - after dinner I watched the sun set behind the hills and the sea turned a burnished bronze colour. As I watched the light gently fade a family of sea otters emerged and swam in the bay,



feeding on clams. The adults could clearly be heard tapping a rock on the clam balanced on their bellies as they floated on the surface. Then crunching as they devoured the meat through the cracked shell and the mewling of the youngster as it demanded food. I watched them for a while as the light dimmed and later when it was dark (around 11pm) they could still clearly be heard.

We paddled back to Tahsis the next day. Brilliant sunshine - the locals declared summer has arrived. We saw more bears on various beaches in Esperanza Inlet and lots of different starfish in the shallows and on rocks. The water was clear over the kelp forests and fish could be seen swimming in the shallows. Three days doesn't do the area justice - there is a lot more to see in the area both north at Catala Island and south along Nootka Island as well as a walking trail along the ocean side of the Island.

Clayoquat Sound

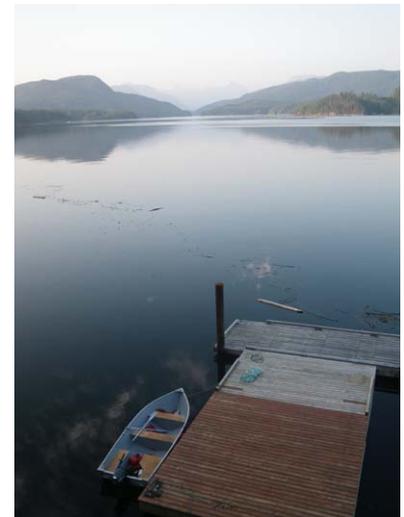
We spent the morning browsing the shops and galleries before meeting up with Roh and Brian. We headed out to Hot Springs Cove on the Tofino Water Taxi, a slightly damp journey in an open boat of an hour and a half. Along the way we saw some more sea otters and a black bear with two tiny little cubs.

At Hot Springs Cove we disembarked onto Innchanter, a floating B&B and unpacked our gear into some very comfy cabins. Proprietor Shaun, assisted by Robin, provided a lovely cheese fondue (dipping pieces of vegetables as well as bread) into a delicious mix

of cheeses (swiss, gruyere, emmental). Back to the 70's!

After dinner we motored over to the jetty in the runabout and walked up the boardwalk (a couple of km's) in the dusk to the Hot Springs, which we had all to ourselves - this is a major tourist destination so the evening is definitely the time to go!

Next day, after another trip to the springs, we collected the kayaks Brian & Roh had hired (they'd come in by boat while we were at the springs - with some complementary beers). After a delicious



breakfast of papaw & camembert fritatta, fruit salad (with local berries), yoghurt and english muffins, we packed and reluctantly said goodbye to Innchanter.

Paddling the outer route across to Flores Island, we followed the coast around to Siwash Cove, checked out some hut ruins, before opting to travel a few more km's to the more developed campsites



in Cow Bay. This was a fairly busy spot with a number of kayaking groups and a group of guys there for a boys-own getway, but the beach was big and there was plenty of room for everyone. We spent two nights there, going for a wander and generally relaxing (and swimming - the sun is out!).

Departing Cow Bay, we stopped to look at the humpback whales that were in the bay, then paddled on around the Flores Island coast, past some very nice sandy beaches (Whitesand Beach being one of them) and up into the Sound to Millar Passage. We contoured the coast, looking at eagles and staying out of the way of boats, arriving at Atleo River mid afternoon. We were hoping to see some bears browsing the intertidal zone but the tide was coming in and the bears were elsewhere. On a tip from a guy involved in a survey on the affects of logging on the river, we continued on to another (secret) campsite, which had some lovely clearings in the forest, a beautiful little waterfall that we could paddle right up to, and a wide gravelly beach (more swimming).

Next morning dawned foggy, which lent a rather spooky cast to the scenery. The fog patches drifted in and out as we paddled back down Millar Passage. When we arrived on Vargas Island for lunch at Dick & Janes Beach for lunch, the steam was rising from the sand, one end of the beach was foggy and the other clear! After lunch we paddled around to the ocean side and crossed out to Blunden Island.

This is a really scenic little island though mostly obscured by the fog, but it lifted in the afternoon to give a great view back to Vargas Island.

Our last morning dawned foggy again and we followed our GPS track back to Vargas Island and back around to the inlet side, for the paddle back into Tofino. The tide was running against us so we tucked in close to the coast, arriving back at Tofino early in the afternoon.

Tidal surfing at Quadra Islands

We departed Tofino and returned to the east coast, driving up to Campbell River again, and taking the ferry across to Quadra Island. On the east side of the island at the end of a road is Discovery Islands Lodge - a kayaker B&B.

This is a great place for kayaking in the Discovery Islands - accommodation, tours and kayak hire. We were staying there 5 nights and hiring from the Nigel Dennis range - NDK Romany, Romany HV and Explorer kayaks, for our independent trips out to the tidal rapids. I used the Romany, which was the smallest of the three and found it very responsive and easy to roll (just as well!).

The wave forms in restricted passages where the water is running at several knots over shallow shelves. It is at its best for about an hour either side of peak flow, but during the time leading up to this Roh took us through the basics of negotiating eddies and applying appropriate leaning, bracing, steering strokes and ferry gliding across the rapidly increasing flow.

We spent 3 days at Surge Narrows





training on what is essentially white water kayaking on the sea. Very exhilarating! I did get on the wave from time to time but most often would get flicked out over the end or not quite get far enough forward - the trick is to get in from the eddy at the right spot and get the stern rudder / paddle like mad combo exactly right. Once flung off the wave I found I'd either be in the smooth water beyond the eddyline, or right in amongst all the turbulent water. When I got a bit better at coming off the wave (or from near



the wave) I was better able to exit near where I'd entered it - much better use of energy rather than having to negotiate the turbulence. Number one lesson here is DO NOT ATTEMPT TO BRACE ON OR NEAR THE CENTRE OF WHIRLPOOLS! The paddle gets sucked in and I follow! I know this should be obvious but it's one of those things where you look at something and end up going there... All that rolling training with Cheri and Turner has really paid off - in confidence if not in technique at least.

This of course is the training ground - the real deal is the Okisollo wave.

For our last day at Discovery Lodge we were dropped off near the northern end of the island at Hole-in-the-wall, location of one of two sets of waves formed in the Okisollo Channel. These tidal rapids are different from Surge Narrows in that they form over deeper water (there is a bar but it has more water over it) and can get up to 3m high. We were expecting up to a 2m high wave, as it was not quite a spring tide (when flow can get to 12-13 knots), with the maximum current that day of 8.6 knots. We arrived not long after slack

water and the area of the wave was flat and innocuous looking. This soon changed as the current picked up...

The wave built up over a couple of hours into a series of topping waves with the front being a big green pillow with a deep trough in front of it. From the staging eddy you ferry glide out into position and then turn up-current, sliding into the trough backwards.

By the end of the session I had got into the correct position twice but hadn't stayed on the wave very long - one I side broached and got whacked by the second line of waves (rolled right over the top of me). The second time (my last run) was the best and no-one noticed... I wasn't there all that long but it was totally awesome. The feeling of sliding backwards into the trough - you glide back knowing that you are wholly in the grip of nature!

For more photos see raiawall.blogspot.com.au

A WEEKEND AT THE PROM by Terry Barry



Friday 20th July saw the start of a long awaited rebirth of a club favourite- A weekend at Baldwin Spencer Lodge, Tidal River, Wilson's Promontory.

The 'Prom' has had a hard time of late. Fires swept through most parts in 2011. This was followed by a "once in 300 year flood" of epic proportions which washed out road access and lots of infrastructure at the Tidal River camp grounds. So it has been a while since we were able to book the lodge for our winter escape.

This year around 25 members attended what was a great weekend with good paddle conditions. Most arrived on Friday night and the lodge was abuzz with tall tales and true of recent paddle adventures, the usual kayak talk and anticipation of the weekends paddles, all washed down with appropriate amounts of various liquids.

Saturday morning the group assembled on the beach for a 9 am start. The plan was to paddle out and around Great Glennie Island. We split into two pods to make things simpler and headed off. This saw the first challenge of the weekend. Breaking out through the small surf of Norman Bay (0.5-1m). A piece of cake for most but for the less experienced adrenalin levels rose as we observed the break. A few words of wisdom enabled most to achieve their first successful surf entry (although one or two had a swim).

The paddle across to the island was around 9 km in a slightly confused

sea with a 1 meter swell. Winds were SW at 5-10 knots. Both groups arrived at Glennie Island at the same time and proceeded to pull up on the sheltered side of the island. However the tide was rising and what little beach there was, was disappearing fast!

With a bit of team work we all managed to get ashore with kayaks placed up on rocks and any other spare ground to be found. It was decided we needed to have lunch early as we wouldn't be able to stop there later on. We then decided to circumnavigate the island before heading back. A few paddlers were not up to this task from a combination of paddle fitness and competency so they waited in the lee of the island while the rest of us set off.



The more exposed SW side of the island made for quite an exciting paddle. A confused sea with lots of rebound and the odd clapotis kept the group on its toes. One paddler ended up having a swim but was quickly back in his kayak with the assistance of Peter Costello. The scenery was superb with nature putting on a show of wave energy pounding the granite cliffs.

Once back in the lee we met up with the others and headed back to Norman Bay. With the tide now high it meant a much shorter carry from the beach. It also meant the surf was a bit bigger and for some a big challenge to get ashore in one piece.

Most less experienced paddlers made a good job of waiting for a lull and going for it, inevitably followed by a broach and swim! For those more experienced it was just a good ride in and a chuckle at the others. I couldn't help but think how many times I had dragged a flooded kayak ashore in the past. With the paddle over we all retreated to the lodge for pre dinner snacks and drinks followed by various culinary delights and more tall stories, drinks and laughter.

At first light on Sunday morning there was little wind, a glassy sea with perfect surf breaking up to a meter. The problem was that some had over indulged the night before, some were still recovering from the previous day's efforts and some made all sorts of excuses. The drizzle didn't help the enthusiasm either, and the thought of putting on wet gear. But for the 6-7 few who overcame these excuses a great morning was had playing in the surf. The sets were coming through producing a nice long ride and it felt good to be alive.

Personally I was disappointed that none who were on the water really needed to practice. There were at least 3 great instructors there ready and willing to give instruction in perfect beginner conditions and not one person who needed it was willing to take advantage. We all showered, packed up and departed for home around lunchtime after a very good weekend. We intend to book a smaller lodge next year unless of course there is a surge (as there should be) in attendance. It truly is a magic weekend opportunity.

INDONESIAN KOMODO KAYAK TOUR by Ann Sharp



Les and Helen Doyle, Tony Cusack, Peter and I went on a 10day Komodo kayak trip with a local company “NO ROADS EXPEDITIONS”.

All the details such as itinerary, what to expect and what to bring is all to be found on their website if you are interested in checking out.

We all added a couple of days on to the beginning of the tour in Tuban, south of Kuta and another couple at the end in Sanur. During this time we shopped, massaged, had fish nibble our feet and travelled into the rural areas away from the tourist traps to soak up some culture and stunning scenery.

Flying from Bali to Labuan Bajo on the island of Flores and being transported to our Eco-lodge was the start of our kayaking adventure. Single kayakers are available if you wish to manoeuvre easily into the mangroves but I can recommend the double as a fast and sturdy boat. The kayakers are Australis Komodo kayakers, a plastic three piece design at 5.85 meters long and 62 centimeters wide they are very stable

kayakers that can be converted to a double by adding an extra cockpit pod that takes the weight from 40 to 55 kilos.

There is no need to carry anything except water (water bottle provided), sunscreen and lollies. Everything goes on the support boat which follows. It will even tow your kayak if you want to relax on board. Pure luxury, great lunches, dinners and snacks. BYO alcohol.

Some of the highlights of the trip were paddling in a warm climate, in clear water with lots of bird and sea life and to camp on remote uninhabited islands. Fantastic snorkelling in warm water, thousands of fish, turtles, coral not quite as colourful as the Great Barrier Reef, but could stay in longer with no wetsuit.

Tents were set up every night with comfy stretchers(singles). Pit toilet and tent provided at a discrete distance from camp. Dinner, cooked on the boat but served at a table on the beach, consisted of local food, sometimes fresh fish and deli-

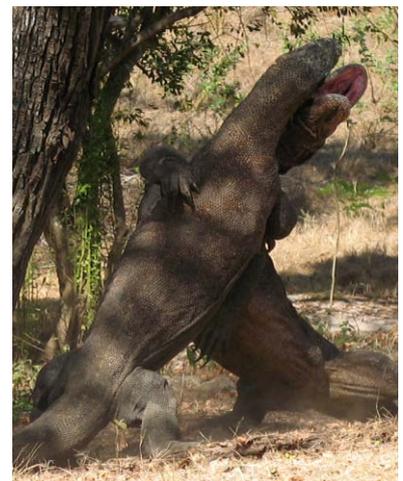
icious Flores coffee by the glow of romantic lamplight.

Being experienced kayakers, we could basically choose when and where we wanted to paddle. Les had liaised with ‘No Roads’ staff so that we had an exclusive trip with only the five of us, all VSKC members.

Another bonus was our guide Matias who was a very good story teller (not quite as good as Les) and quite an able kayaker, lots of fun. His assistant trainee, Rofinus could not paddle but was very keen to learn from us and very keen to teach us about his culture and country while practising his English. He was always ready to help.

The rest of the crew of three, the captain, the cook and the deckhand all relaxed a bit after the first day and showed off their balancing ability by standing in the kayakers.

The biggest buzz and highlight of the trip was the reason we went ~ to see Komodo Dragons. Luckily for us it was the mating season so we saw two large males fighting over a female. Mating is only once a year so our timing could not have been better.



Our guide planned it well with us sleeping on the top deck of the boat, under a tarp, to get an early start in the morning when the dragons are most active. The



effort of getting up at 6am was well worthwhile.

They are really scary beasts, left to fend for themselves by eating animals such as buffalo and deer. They are no longer fed by the rangers. Evidence of this are the animal skulls lying around.



The rangers did a very good job of keeping us safe. They reacted very quickly when a dragon quietly came up behind us while we were watching the two dragons fighting and cleared us out of the way.



Other highlights were seeing the small villages, visiting the school and handing out exercise books and pens to the friendly kids with great smiles. Helen attracted kids wherever she went. Buying the goods from the local market put money back into their economy. But we hope to send some basic English picture books from Australia as most of the kids learn English.



Experiencing some of the culture like Caci whip fighting and traditional dance in rural areas gave us an opportunity to see the real village lifestyle and had a good laugh trying to join in.



On one visit to a fishing village accessed only by boat, Tony stepped on the end of a loose plank on the jetty and was smashed in the face, nearly toppling into the water, saved by Helen. Lots of blood but after first aid and a relax on board he went on to kayak, snorkel and enjoy the rest of the trip as much as we did.



We highly recommend Sanur as the place to stay if you like a less touristy holiday as it is more family and push bike friendly. Cheap bike and paddle board hire on a nice golden beach inside a reef. If you want up market luxury the Emerald Villas where Les and Helen stayed provided a maid, gardener and pool cleaner to your own pool. We gate crashed their pad a couple of times. Why not who wouldn't.

We had easy access to the mountains so we went on a cycle tour with HALOBIKE.COM Our guide Yoga took Tony, Pete and I to the volcano area for breakfast, toured a coffee and chocolate plantation for tastings then a bike ride mostly downhill to finish with a lunch cooked by his wife at his home. All for approx \$35 per head.

We enjoyed everything we did. It was hard to put shoes back on after two weeks of bare feet or sandals.Using an asian toilet on a rocking boat was fun...not

There are so many things to write about. You should see the hundreds of photos.

Flores Island and Komodo National Park is known to divers but is still being opened up to kayakers and will become a popular spot in years to come.

We highly recommend No Roads Expeditions who covered just about everything with a little more luxury than we are used to.



VANUATU WITH THREE-PIECE EXPEDITION KAYAKS by Tina Rowley



Travelling with a three piece kayak
Our recent planned sea kayaking trip overseas with a three piece kayak was a bit of a trial to see how easy or difficult it would be and potentially open up many future paddle trip possibilities to overseas destinations. Our research into sectional kayaks was done through talking to Paul Caffyn, expedition kayakers and on the web. We decided on a three piece kayak that used bolts not clips because we had read of some incidents in surf that the clips on a three piece had bent and we preferred bolts, feeling more confident that the kayak would be stronger in heavy paddling conditions.

John and I flew up to Sydney one weekend and were taken out by Rob Mercer from expeditions kayakers and tried a few kayakers that were available as a three piece kayak. Having paddled a few kayakers we both settled on a Valley Etain LV. A three piece kayak is a bit heavier than a one piece kayak, because each piece has its own bulkhead that is approximately

15mm thick of fibreglass. A standard kayak has only three bulkheads and a three piece kayak has five bulkheads, which adds to the whole kayak weight. Joining the pieces together is easy as each piece has a male and female locator. Each join has four bolts (10mm stainless steel), a total of eight bolts for the whole kayak. With practice, bolting the kayak together can take one person approximately 20 mins to do. The kayak joined together weighs approximately 33 kgs. This

may seem heavy to some, however once in the water, the weight of the kayak loaded for an expedition, plus the weight of the paddler seems to always level itself out. I have been told that a fold up kayak in the bag also weighs similar to the three piece kayak.

Travelling with a kayak that weighs approximately 33 kgs, camping gear, safety gear, paddles and paddle clothing overseas needs time and thought into how much in total





weight am I taking overseas. It is important to continually question “is what I am taking absolutely necessary?” Our planned destination to Vanuatu had a few airlines that flew into Port Villa. Having discussed our travel plans with Grant Kelly and his team who were also travelling to Vanuatu with folding kayaks our decision was made to each buy a premium economy airline ticket. This allowed us both to have 69kgs of luggage flying Virgin Pacific. Airlines allow oversized baggage as long as it does not exceed 3 metres long. The longest of the kayak pieces is 1.8 mts, decreasing to 1.56mts.

Preparing our kayaks to fly, we decided to pack each piece with our camping and safety gear, paddles, food making sure that everything we had fit into our kayaks, having no other luggage to carry. Being our first trip, we were unsure how

the kayaks would hold up in transit, having seen staff at airlines drag and chuck bags in the past I had visions of my kayak being treated poorly. We spent a bit of time at Clark Rubber and settled on some dense foam to use on each end of the kayak as a protector, plus bubble wrap covering the kayak entirely, followed by industrial clear wrap.

We arrived at the airport a bit earlier to beat the crowds and to ensure that we did not have to be stuck in a queue, shuffling 6 pieces of luggage. Our experience with the airline was a breeze, as the staff ensured that our luggage was labelled correctly and we were given a larger trolley to transport all of the luggage to the oversized baggage counter.

Arriving in Vanuatu went smoothly, the customs officer soon gathered his mates to look in amazement what the pieces made up as well as appeared excited and gob smacked to where we were intending to paddle the kayaks to. Travelling in a minivan with 6 pieces of kayak fit as well as us in the back. Having accommodation on the water ready to paddle on the trip was a huge bonus as it saved time and effort. Once assembled the kayak becomes even easier to travel with. We found in Vanuatu there are no real obstacles, finding the whole

trip user friendly. Things that we would do differently or rethink and improve on would be;

1. Book international flights that return directly to Melbourne to save time collecting baggage and going through customs in another state and then checking in through domestic.
2. When packing gear, really consider if the item needs to be taken or not to save weight.
3. When booking flights, research airline baggage allowance, as I found that it varies. Also research into the price of buying extra baggage packages or upgrading to premium economy seats which give you a bigger allowance.
4. Make bags for kayaks to make it easier to carry for airline staff as well as yourself. We intend to make bags to ensure that two pieces can be put on the standard trolley and one piece can be carried on your back.
5. A travel agent gave us a tip for our next trip to contact the service Jetta express to take our excess baggage. Jetta express rates vary depending on the total amount of baggage taken. The more weight the less the cost. Jetta do pick up from your home and will deliver it to the airport overseas. This service is significantly less than what the airline charges. If going through this service, baggage needs to be booked in and collected five to seven days before you depart.



Or how many stuff-ups can you jam in 15km?

When Tony Chick posted a paddle from Lorne to Kennet River and return over two days it immediately got my interest. Having never paddled this piece of coast I had been looking forward to this paddle for a while.

The forecast was not too bad either 10 -20 knot SE winds forecast for Saturday and similar strength winds from the SW the following day. Swell 2+ meters and dropping.

So it was that after for some a very early morning start ten of us assembled at the Lorne pier car park at the designated 9.30am meeting. There we were greeted with the sight of a large whale hanging around in the bay just off Lorne, a good omen I thought. There was the usual flurry of activ-



ity as we all packed the kayaks and changed into paddle gear. The swell came in sets some quite large at least two meters peeling around the western most point of the bay into Lorne.

After a briefing from Tony showing us the route on his imaginary map (he had a map of the coast further west than our paddle area!) we launched without incident into the bay. Last words from Tony were *“don’t cut the corner too close or you will end up on the rocks when a swell comes through--there is 15km of flat water to the left, keep in that.”*



Off we went, as we headed out a few kayaks were well to the right of me, cutting the corner a bit close I thought- and you guessed it- here comes a set.

David Naylor was first in line, followed by Wim and George . I narrowly cleared a breaker which cleaned up Robin behind me, although he recovered well with a roll. Not so David who was wiped out and wet exited. This left his kayak floating upside down. Next wave picked it up and barrelled it into George who was busy being backwards pitch polled at the time. I hear a loud crunch as the two came together.

The set finished leaving David some distance from his kayak. Wim appeared and quickly got David on the rear deck and back to his kayak. George had rolled and recovered. My first look at David’s kayak upside down revealed obvious damage. Once back in his kayak we headed back to the launch spot and on further inspec-



tion David’s paddle was over. Fracture marks near the centre on both sides indicating the kayak being near broken in half and a large section of the outer shell badly damaged further forward.

1. Pay attention to the briefing and don’t blindly follow others.

Leaving David behind we set off once again, this time everyone gave the corner the respect it deserved and we kept out to sea as we paddled westwards following the coast. Apart from the swell, conditions were quite good. Even so, a SW wind of less than 10 knots made the kayaks seem heavy as we progressed.

Our intended lunch spot was Artillery Rocks / Jamison Creek a small beach a couple of kilometres before Wye River. This spot was slightly protected from the SW swell and we were hopeful of a landing as we approached.

I elected to go in first to check out the landing while the others waited safely being the break. As I paddled in I managed to avoid the big sets till past the impact zone but was picked up and broached by a larger wave as I got further in. I could see rocks all over the place and managed to regain control of the kayak enough to navigate my way to the beach avoiding the rocks, with a roll in shallow water.

While I quickly surveyed the area I could not find any sweet spot for a landing and was about to relaunch and abandon this as a safe landing when I saw two kayaks very much committed and rapidly approaching the beach, Bugger --too late now I guess they are coming in!

2. Good communication is essential so you know what the plan is!

Wim and Grant safely made it to the beach with a few directions from me and were followed by four others as we shepherded each other in the shallows, which resembled a minefield of rocks as the waves ebbed and flowed up the beach. Two kayaks (Robin and Steve)

elected wisely to stay at sea while the rest of us quickly gobbled down some lunch.

It was obvious that relaunching was going to be a matter of waiting in the white water for a lull before breaking through the impact zone. Any mishap here would result in the kayak and paddler being swept towards rocks. This was one place you didn't want to stuff it up!

One by one we launched, waiting for the right moment and go out. Unfortunately, Grant miss timed his break out and paddled out to greet the start of a set. He was pushed backwards, his kayak rear-ending the bottom and he wet exiting in an area where assistance would not be forthcoming!

After a fair while he eventually got



washed in, narrowly avoiding rocks and was assisted ashore by the two remaining paddlers- Tom and Tony.

Meanwhile the rest of us waited offshore. Then the signal went up to come back in. BUGGER!

Once again we waited for the right moment and took our chances all making it to shore without incident except for me. At the very last moment with skirt pulled and Tom holding the front of the kayak I was swept sideways, cockpit filled with water and wrapped around a rock. – Result small crack in the hull and broken bulk head from the impact force. Yes, this was a real pain but



it faded into insignificance when it became clear why we'd been called in. Grant had sustained a nasty deep cut at the base of his right hand. This was quickly bandaged but it was obvious he wasn't going to be able to paddle and needed medical attention. His hand had been cut by something on his kayak as he held onto it in the water.

3. Make sure you don't have anything sharp on or around your kayaks.

It was also quickly discovered that no mobile reception was available. Fortunately we were able to get assistance from some passers-by (plenty of cars stopping to watch these silly buggers trying to kill themselves). Soon we had Grant on his way back to Lorne hospital. Jill Chick made her way from Torquay to pick up some drivers and we all changed into dry clothes and started to plan our next move.

It was decided to return to the Chicks residence for the night and do a day paddle at Torquay the next day. We all stopped at Lorne for a drink and were rejoined by Grant who by now had four stitches to show for his efforts.

A few of us including me then decided to give Sunday a miss and head home, the rest enjoying some R & R at the Chicks.

The last word by TC

The remaining pod at my place went seamlessly from expedition mode to beer and BBQ mode. Dehi



food and powdered milk were replaced by more weighty food and beverages, sourced on the return

drive from Lorne. Sympathy and kindness was lavished on Grant with his stitches. He was even being given the seat closest to the wood heater.

Pubic humiliation and ridicule was mercilessly directed at the host and trip leader, until the remaining pod eventually wobbled into their tents.

Two paddle options were avail on Sunday, join a solid 45km training paddle with Tina or a lazy float out of Torquay with me. The combo of furry tongues, wet paddle gear and the sound of surf rumbling all night swung the decision. The overwhelming consensus was, "stuff it, might go home and see what my wife is doing"

International kayak gun Wim decided to end the weekend in style, driving into an open drain on my nature strip, leaving his car wheels off the ground. After a bit of helpful advice that we usually drive on the road in Aust, Steve yanked him out with the 4WD before heading back to E Gippsland.



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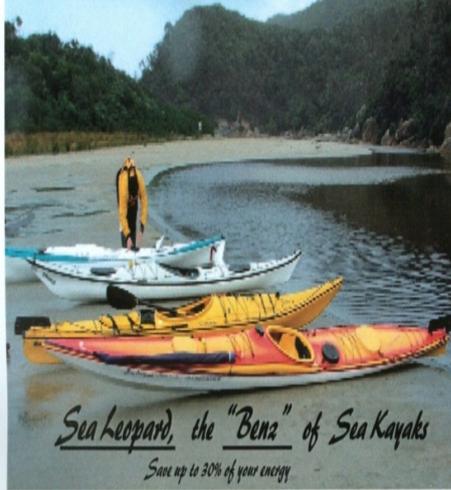
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in conjunction with Out-Trade Germany are pleased to announce that the **Nortik range of folding sea kayaks** will be available early 2013.

Flat earth sails are working with Nortik kayaks at present to develop a sailing rig dedicated to folding kayaks. We are working towards supplying folding kayaks that are "sail ready". Flat earth kayaks are expecting the first boats to arrive in February 2013.

Nortik are sending over their new Argo, (currently used by Sandy Robson following Osca Spek trek).

We are also expecting the Navigator, a beautifully made wooden framed folder newly re-designed for 2013 with: a stronger frame making it a little stiffer; new hip fit pads and stronger "D" rings.

The introductory prices of the new range of quality kayaks will be very competitive with their rivals! Flat earth sails are taking pre-delivery orders now.

Specs:

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The ARGO

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The LADOGA2,

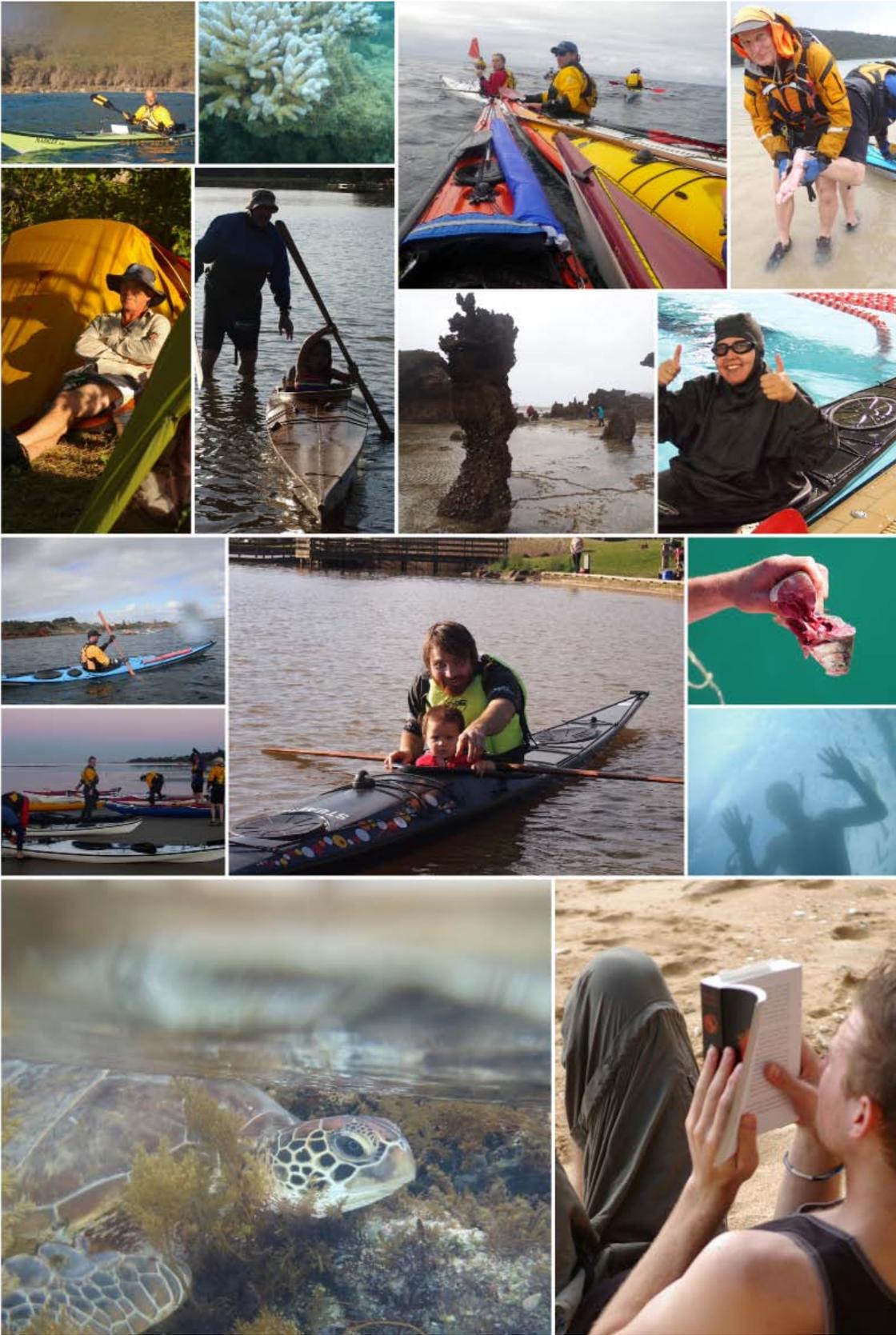
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'do not attempt to brace on or near the centre of whirlpools..it sucks' (Raia Wall on Surge Narrows, Vancouver)