

STRAHAN TO HOBART (NEARLY ANYWAY)

By Lawrence Geoghegan with comments by the other two on the trip

In January this year Andrew McAuley, Paul Loker and myself paddled our kayaks from Strahan on the West Coast of Tasmania and were trying to reach our destination of Hobart in the south.

Myself in my Pittarak, Andrew in his Nadgee and Paul in his Mirage 530

The trip started as an idea of mine. I lived as a child in Zeehan on the West Coast of Tassie and Geeveston in the South. I thought the idea of paddling around the outside to link the two was a great idea for a trip. I put feelers out on the NSW sea kayak club's chat line and in the magazine, I had asked for people who had the skill and fortitude to take a trip like this on.

Personally I started training seriously for the trip about 5 months before leaving with regular paddles, a night time paddle from Jervis Bay to Ulladulla with Andrew and swimming, running and bike riding to make sure that I was fit enough. Fitness is the key for doing a long trip and was a big part of the trip for us all. -----Anyway on with the story.

The trip started with Paul and me meeting in Sydney and driving through the night to Melbourne to catch the ferry first thing next morning. Good old Andrew had somehow managed to get out of this by meeting us in Launceston. Lucky really as Paul's little Corolla with three boats, 20 days of food each, clothing, paddles etc made for a very cramped car and SLOW. We had to drive at about 90 km/h the whole way down. WHAT A TRIP!!!! The ferry trip over was fantastic taking no time, (the ferry flies over at 28-30 knots).

After getting in to Devonport late afternoon Paul and I drove to Launceston to spend the night at a pub before picking up Andrew at the Airport the next day. We spent the day walking around Launceston with me reminiscing about all the places I used to hang out as a kid growing up and going to school in Launceston. At one shop, the Backpack n' Kayak, we ran into a Tasmanian kayaking legend Jeff Jennings who gave us a run down of the area we were about to paddle sounded great !!!

We picked up Andrew about 2.00pm and squeezed him into the car and I mean squeeze him into the car and did the 4hour drive to Strahan arriving about 8.00pm. We went straight to the pub to load up on carbo's . We later drove to Macquarie Heads and organised to leave the car with the care taker before sleeping the night away. What a way spend New Years evening went to bed about 11.30 and slept soundly for the night, can't wait for the trip to really start!!!

DAY ONE

Up at 5.00am and getting all our gear in our boats with Paul telling us that he couldn't get all his gear in but somehow managing to cram it all in, my Pittarak was so loaded the back end was almost in the water (must have been the 6 pack of beer I had stashed in the rear compartment)!!! We launched early to head out through Hells Gates, this little entrance had me in awe of the sailors of old and how they sailed their tall ships in thru this small passage is amazing. I believe there are lots of wrecks about, what a sight for the convicts it must have been. We stopped at Pilots Bay for Andrew and Paul to try last minute phone calls. Andrew almost lost his hat after leaving it on his back deck thru the small surf, luckily he had a float attached and he went back and found it floating in the shallows. We departed the sea wall that protects Hells Gates and finally made our way around Cape Sorell with our first real taste of the West Coast as we were probably a bit close to the Cape as I copped one wave in the face

as did Andrew. After rounding Cape Sorell I noticed that my new skeg wouldn't go down, I think I kinked the cable trying too hard to deploy it and asked the guys for some help (something they were going to get used to in the next few weeks) but we had no luck getting it down ----Bugger I really wanted it in these conditions. We had about a 3 mtr swell running with us as was the wind from the NW; we actually made such good time on our first leg that we passed our lunch break at Gorge Pt by about 5 km before realising. This is where Andrews's navigation skills came out, finding where we were and where to go for a lunch break. Andrew noticed a small gap in some reefs and we paddled through these to land at Birthday Bay to have some lunch and hopefully fix my skeg. We were all excited about finally being in the wilderness of the West Coast sitting back about to enjoy our lunch when Lo and Behold three motorbikes come over the dunes and roared up the beach, shattering our dream of an isolated lunch break. The skeg cable was definitely kinked and would have to wait till evening camp before I could pull it apart and hopefully fix it. After lunch it was back onto the water to Hibbs Lagoon for the night, we still had the wind and swell at our backs which was going to be the norm for our trip. Hibbs Lagoon was an easy landing even though I had read of the nasty surf that can pump into this small bay. We set up camp on the beach only to find a better camp in the lagoon on nice soft grass and fresh water as well and to even make it worse we found a table and chairs to sit on -- pity we were too lazy to move camp-- next time maybe! We spent the night sitting around the fire finally spending our first night of our trip in the wilderness until the rain sent us off to bed-----Weather for the day was a strong wind warning and 3-3.5mtr swell WHAT A FIRST DAY

DAY TWO

After a good night's sleep we packed in the morning, Paul doing his best to be on the water at the same time as Andrew and I (actually beating me to the task) Before leaving we listened to the weather report on Andrew's short wave radio which was the most useful piece of safety equipment we took --to be able to receive daily weather reports twice daily at 7.00am and again in the evening was fantastic, down this way paddling can be marginal at the best of times, so having this safety device made our decisions that much easier, impressed by it so much I plan to buy one myself. We played tourist for a while and poked into Sanctuary Cove which was another known landing but it wasn't as good as Hibbs Lagoon, beautiful just the same. Just off Hibbs Lagoon you can see Hibbs Pyramid which looking at from our direction north to south was quite a contrast, on the northern side it was green and lush but on the prevailing weather side was all rock and weather beaten, typical of the coast down this way. We had an excellent day with following seas and wind pushing us along. Around Point Hibbs Paul (Captain Gauntlet) tried his luck thru a small gauntlet, leaving Andrew and me to go around the outside rather than risk it. Andrew and I learnt that whatever way Paul went it was safer to go the opposite and also if Paul waved you over it really meant that it was dangerous and you should go the other way!!!!!!!

Around the corner from Pt Hibbs the seas totally calmed revealing the most beautiful big bay with two cray boats at anchor their crews asleep, we were tempted to wake them and ask for a cray fish but opted to let them sleep. We paddled over to the Spero River with its easy access thru a small tidal opening and paddled up river. These rivers were a highlight for me as seeing this part of the coast with its treeless mountains and windswept coast was breathtaking in its beauty, steep and rugged just what I imagined FANTASTIC!!! We had a lunch break up the river at a pebbly rapid trying to get as much food into us as possible. Watching Andrew trying to get as much food as possible in is almost as amazing as watching a lion eat after not eating

for a month but Andrew does the same after only a few short hours with no food -- what an eater!! After lunch we decided to make Wanderer River our destination for the day which was only a short 12 k's further. At first we were speeding along, then for the last 20 minutes the sea and wind built up slightly too about 3.5-4 meters and 25-30 knots. The weather was definitely getting more and more exciting each day. As we rounded the corner into Wanderer River it opened up into a small bay with the odd breaking wave breaking across the reefs that are scattered around the entrance, once passed these it was flat and calm, quite different to the story from Doug Fraser who tells of the huge 6mtr waves breaking across the entrance --thank god it wasn't like that! The only trouble we had was getting our boats up through the rapid at the entrance of the river. We looked around for a campsite and found one but looked around for a better site not satisfied with the one we had found, we had paddled 5kms before giving up on another site as this place is really wild with its bush near impossible to walk thru. Another night of drizzle before the rain really set in sending us to an early night in bed; at least sleep came easy after the day in the kayak!

DAY THREE

The forecast for the day was for NW winds (following winds again!!!) with the swell from the SW.

We left the Wanderer River early, planning to make Nye Bay that afternoon. We all shot the rapid at the entrance of the Wanderer before entering the sea with its tannin stained colour from the fresh water, not even a small wave to wet us ---great way to start the day NO SURF EXIT!!!

Had an easy morning, paddling up to Montgomery rocks for a look, these rocks are just off High Rocky Pt which was the start of the "the trouble spot" on the West Coast but we paddled on heading for the Mainwaring River. Andrew with his navigational skills found the entrance, with its coloured stained fresh water leading us in to a nice sheltered lunch break; we were all feeling the cold and warmed up with cooked meals. After lunch it was onto the renowned area called "The Shank" with its reefed area covering about 8 kms of coast with white water and reefs everywhere, you could actually hear the reefs breaking about 2 kms out to sea, quite intimidating to see the water literally boiling in areas. One minute you were paddling thru a calm 4 mtr swell then the next it had built up to 6mtrs threatening to break over you, I was definitely a little bit wary of the whole area and it seemed to get worse the closer we came to Low Rocky Pt. I saw Andrew brace hard into a 6mtr breaking wave just off Low Rocky Pt; to say I was glad to leave this area behind was an understatement indeed. After Low Rocky Pt and having passed the infamous Shank we had the wind and swell directly at our backs with some good 6 mtr swells pushing us onwards, this for me was just awesome as my Pittarak just had a skeg fitted before leaving and without it this part of the trip would have been near impossible, without it the kayak would surf off into a brace, with it, it was possible for me to have long surfing rides of more than 100 mtrs just so satisfying to have 6 mtr swells surfing you along ---UNREAL--- I was tricked into believing that we only had 7 kms to go but then ten minutes later I had Andrew tell me we had 17kms to go, Paul had forgotten that there is a small bit of map we had not bought and he had figured this into his kilometre count for the day. Strange how you can build yourself up to one thing but then crushed when you find out the real distance!!!!

At least we had the wind and swell at our backs!!!

From about 7 km's out from Nye Bay the swell definitely building into a 5-6mtr wave threatening to break in a few areas, trying to scare us (and succeeding)

We all were glad to see Nye Bay but it looked like a huge wall of green water was breaking all around until we were closer enough to see that the white water was to one side of the bay and found a nice easy entrance to the Giblin River. Cold and tired and couldn't find the camp site talked about in the old trip reports of the area but we paddled around trying to find one out of the wind eventually giving up and settling on one on the sand, it turned out to be a good camp site sheltered from the wind and with lots of drift wood around for a fire.

55 kms for the day not bad.

DAY FOUR

We woke to listen to the weather report, finding out that there was a gale force wind warning with big seas forecast as well, they weren't wrong, so we sat the day out at Nye Bay. We started our beach day by climbing a big dune to have a look at the ocean and WOW what a sight breaking waves that were so big they would have smashed any kayak brave enough to have given it a go, it really was an awesome sight sitting on that dune watching the biggest waves that most had seen before rolling and rolling along, 2-3 kms out to sea--- glad to sit this day out that's for sure –

Back at camp it was the beginning to an event that was to be a highlight of our evenings “damper making”. I at first tried the old scout trick of trying to bake it on a stick (that didn't work). Paul had brought along bread mix instead of self raising flour and all the trying in the world just didn't help, every time he attempted to bake bread it turned to a flat kind of mess that looks something your dog might do!!!

Andrew won this day's (and inspiring the damper world championships) --just-- with me coming second and well Paul just gave up. We paddled up the river for a look in the afternoon and generally rested, we listened to the weather report that night and the max wave height at Cape Sorrell was a whopping 8.90 mtrs. Hoping for calmer weather tomorrow!!

DAY FIVE

The sea had definitely calmed but the wind was still up. We decided to try for Wreck Bay for lunch. We had an easy break out thru small surf with no mishaps except for me rolling over in small surf – (really only practising my rolls!!) For the first time we had a head wind until we passed all the reefs off Elliot Pt then it was back to tail winds and the swell behind us again!---**This is unbelievable no head wind**---We were all feeling pretty good after the day on the beach resting.

Finally the sun was out and for the first time warming us up. We had a look at Wreck Bay but decided not to enter after watching huge swells breaking a good kilometre off the beach, so kept on paddling to Alfhild Bight eventually finding a nice sunny sheltered beach to land on. It was so good having the sun out that Andrew did a roll and Paul tried his luck on a wave for a surf.

After lunch we pushed on to Pt Davey but not before tackling another stretch of reefs. You either paddled out to sea and around these or judged your way through. These reefs extend out for a good 2-3kms and 5kms long. We tried our luck thru the numerous reefs that were in our way in fact just after leaving Alfhild Bight we were paddling along with the occasional big one rolling in when I noticed Paul and Andrew turn their boats into an incoming swell but because of the skeg which was all the way down I couldn't turn fast enough so I set up to brace the biggest wave I had seen but fortunately it rolled under me instead of breaking over me thank God!!! On with the show – to say I didn't shit myself was an understatement, something that I was getting used to on this trip. Still a few miles off North Head of Pt Davey we were nearly thru all the reefs but had to tackle the last little bit when all of a sudden we saw a huge swell break over where we were just about to paddle we regrouped and said lets do it

with Andrew timing the first wave well, Paul was next but I said bugger waiting and also went with him paddling like I had never paddled before, flat out. As fast as Alan Whiteman, this is bloody fast if you know Alan. It was such a sense of relief to finish this West Coast bit that Andrew and I said that we really felt like we had completed the hard section of the trip --it really was a sense of relief to leave the reefs behind--that's for sure. Just off North Head we spoke to a cray fisherman and asked him the weather hoping he would throw us a cray at the same time, no cray but we got the weather which was looking good for the next few days so trucked onto Spain Bay looking forward to camp and a day to explore Pt Davey

We arrived at Spain Bay and were expecting an existing camp (this was starting to be a kind of problem trying to find camps that no longer existed) but couldn't find it even after paddling from one end to the other and then looking in every nook and cranny so again opted to camp on the beach but out of the wind. We had a fire on the beach that evening and even stayed up late knowing we weren't paddling big distances the next day. We even kept the big challenge going to see who could make the best damper and the contest was getting harder and harder, even went as far to put our names on top of the damper trying to impress the judge??? Mine was definitely better than Andrew's with Paul still trying to make something that resembled bread!!!

The stars that night were amazing to look at. I had never seen the night sky so bright; it doesn't get dark down here until way past 10.0'clock. Really made me feel very special being down this way, a very beautiful and amazing place indeed.

DAY SIX

A rest day at Pt Davey was a good call as the weather was calm and the sun was out. A perfect day for exploring, first off we went over to Breaksea Is which is the island that protects the entrance to Bathurst Harbour and because it gets hit from the ongoing elements, the ocean and wind, there are numerous caves. Out came Capt Cave man (Paul) and what a cave dweller he is keeping Andrew and I amused with his antics of going thru every nook and cranny we could find. Then it was a short paddle over to Mt Stokes which we were planning to climb after lunch. On the way over we ran into a few fishermen lazing around in their boats soaking up the sun. It was here that I ran into an AB diver who just happened to go to school with my elder brother and made us feel right at home on his well kept boat (name forgotten). I drank lots of beer and generally relaxed while Andrew and Paul climbed Mt Stokes making sure they got some good photo shots for me. While I kept Peter Gain and his partner Eleanor company getting pissed and showered in the process, when the other two came back. Bozo (Peter) was so kind enough to feed us, to top it off they let us call home on their Sat phone. Tassie hospitality at its best that's for sure, I never have driven drunk before but that evening I think I paddled drunk back to camp to sleep it all off. Port Davey and Bathurst Harbour is a place I would like to spend about 2 weeks exploring.

DAY SEVEN

Up early and on the water at 7 o'clock. Leaving Spain Bay with a headwind that stayed with us until we had rounded Hilliard Head. Big Caroline Rock just off this headland makes a very imposing sight and then those bloody tailwinds were at us again, unbelievable they just won't leave us alone!!! At Mutton Bird Is we hid from the wind and swell for a quick break before heading off towards South West Cape which we could see for miles. It's imposing cliffs leading all the way down the coast as far as we could see. It was here that we were heading for our next break McKay's Gulch which is just a few kms from the southern end of SW Cape and were told by Jeff Jennings that it's really beautiful and crays everywhere and we were all keen to have a break and a look-see of this area. On the way down the weather changed from

sunny and warm to cold and grey and the further south we went the lumpier the ocean became. We went past McKay's Gulch by a smidgen and decided we were all keen for a break so decided to paddle back and have a look at this so called spot. WELL Weren't we let down, for up in the gulch we found literally 1000's of blue bottles, no camp spot and no grass to sit on, we did find the waterfall that we were told about. So it was a quick bite and then don cags and then back on the water. With the last little bit of ocean off the Cape really starting to come up with wind and rebound, paddling in it was quite hard compared to St Georges Head (where I had experienced bad rebound before). SW Cape was really bad with a good 4 to 4.5 mtr swell bouncing off it, leaving you paddling in mid air where there used to be water to stick your paddle in. Finally the Cape came to an end with a big Gauntlet just off the headland where we rounded to get out of the wind and swell. As this is one of the big capes of the world we thought it appropriate to start a new club SWCRC (South West Cape Rolling Club) which we all become members of. It was quite surreal after paddling down one side of the cape in wind waves and rebound only to go around the other side to find no wind or swell.

Just down from the end of the Cape we found a herd of NZ fur seals resting on rocks so we put our goggles on and let loose rolling with the seals, if you ever get the chance to Eskimo roll with seals I highly recommend this as they are awesome to watch under water coming right up to your mask for a look at you.

On to Ketchem Bay for the night but not before the wind really kicked up to 30 knots making our last 5 kms especially the last two into a headwind (really) but unperturbed we plugged on wanting to see this next Bay that we had read so much about.

Landing at Ketchem Bay we quickly found the correct camp site something we had become used to not finding!! After making camp we all went for a walk **up** a mountain and it was really up and up and up just what I really wanted to do after 45 kms in the boat but I found great relief for my back and bum after this walk and highly recommend this sort of exercise after along day in the kayak as it is much like a massage for your back- it really gets a workout. After getting back we had a surprise with two tired campers sitting in their tents absolutely knackered from walking in with their packs on their backs. They ate and then they slept not being very sociable at all really.

We were planning to head out to Maatsuyker Is the next day weather permitting so went to bed early in case we could have a go of it.

DAY EIGHT

No luck today, weather not quite right so spent the day exploring resting and basically farting around Ketchem Bay, went for a short paddle where I found that my left wrist was playing up a bit, probably from plugging into the headwind a little bit too hard, so a rest day was a good idea before heading out to the Island .Well didn't I get my bushwalkers to talk to that night we had about 11 bushwalkers that night at (our) camp. People every where and to prove that sea kayakers are damn nice people I saw Paul give his runners to a girl who couldn't walk in her boots from the blisters on her feet and then to make it even a more surprise I saw Andrew (yes Andrew) give some food away to some bushwalkers who were running low on food. At first I couldn't believe what I was seeing I thought I was in some drug induced state when I saw this but my eyes did not deceive me. This man can eat cheese 10 days (un-refrigerated) old because he is hungry but could manage to give away fresh cooked damper (probably because mine was better than his) I have now seen everything in life. My

children being born and Andrew McAuley giving food away I could die right now, I've seen everything!!!! Wow.

Prospects look good for a crossing to Maatsuyker Is tomorrow.

DAY NINE

Well today has started early, on the water about seven thirty to make the 22km trip to the Island with a forecast of 5.5mtr swell and 25-30 knots not sounding too bad. **IF** we had known the whole forecast (Andrew was so keen to go that he thought it wasn't important to give us the whole forecast). The trip over wasn't too bad. On the way over we saw what this southern ocean was really like, 6mtr rolling swells are just amazing to paddle on they were like mountain's, up and down all the way, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way across the wind was slowly increasing and the closer we got to the Island the bigger the sea's became, I was starting to get a little concerned, about 2-3 kms off the Island the wind really came up and so did the seas breaking all around us. We were heading to the eastern end of the Island where there is lee shelter but to do this we had to shoot the gap between Maatsuyker Is and Walker Is, all we could see was white water. It really looked grim but we were out here and we had to get to our destination as there was no use turning back now and by this stage the adrenalin was really pumping we looked at going around Walker Is but couldn't as the wind and seas were getting to big and this is where Paul's ability to read the ocean came into force he read this small gap perfectly and saw a chance of going through it so we put our faith in him and went for it and can I say my kayak seat and shorts are still covered in this brown goo (work it out for yourself) I had to brace off about 5 waves before being thrown thru this wall of white water, it was a great relief to get through

With us all yelling and screaming about getting thru I felt more like a white water paddler than a sea kayaker. It really made for a memorable crossing to this Island that we had heard and read so much about down this way We were so stoked about paddling thru this that there were three cray boats at anchor and we really wanted to wake them and tell them what we had just paddled through totally awesome!!! The adrenaline was fair pumping and it was a huge release for me to see the sheltered landing just around the corner from all this wind and water that had been scaring the crap out of me! The wind was really shooting around like bullets near this lee shelter in fact I put my paddle up to use as a sail and by putting my paddle in the air had the nose of the Pittarak burying itself in the water ---really incredible.

After all the excitement of this we still had to land amongst New Zealand Fur seals that have a haul out right were we wanted to land, there must have been close to five hundred in the water and on the landing area looking at us like we were idiots (I almost had to agree after paddling thru the wind and waves to get there).

We had to work out where to land, as its all rock and thank God the Pittarak is built strong making landing for me a drier affair compared to my paddling mates who had to step out on to rocks in waist high freezing water .Still pumped from the crossing we captured the moment on film WE HAD MADE IT!!!!

After unloading some gear and making sure we had stowed our kayaks out of the way of the big fat seals. It was off to seek out other humans who inhabit the Island. The walk up the hill which was steep and surreal as we kept stopping to look at the sea we had just paddled on, looking out to sea and realising that it was messy out there. Once we had ditched our gear and decided to try our luck with staying on the Island for the night we headed off in search of the keepers of the Island and we found them snug and warm inside the Main Light House keeper's house. It was here that we were delighted to find the friendliest people we could have imagined to meet Jason Whitehead and Fiona Taylor who (were amazed that we had paddled out on a day like

this) invited us in out of the cold and offered us a warm drink and then Fiona made us fresh Muffin's to nibble on –FANTASTIC HOSPITALITY

After chatting for a while we decided on making our way back to the camp site and set up camp and also went for another look at the seals which were a pleasure to watch at play on the rocks and in the water .After finishing playing tourist it was back to Jason and Fiona's house for an evening of Veggie Lasagne (just for me the Veggie) and wine and talk of the Island and Tasmania. Jason had to be the most knowledgeable person we could have hoped to meet. Actually they both were, with Jason a geologist who had worked for the NPWS as a Ranger, also down in Antarctica and Fiona who had worked down there as well but she was a Botanist. I learnt more about Tasmanian Aboriginals from Jason than from an encyclopaedia, fascinating people indeed. After dinner we ventured out side for a look at the Mutton Birds that were returning from finding food for the day, these little birds are master of flight but they sure can't land well and as Jason said its more a controlled crash than a landing which kept us amused for a while. We had thoroughly enjoyed our evening and day on this Island and it was a pleasure to walk back to our tents listening to the night noises that reverberated around this island lulling us to sleep. I think this had been a highlight of the trip both in the sense of reaching the Island and then meeting friendly people who respected our sense of adventure.

DAY TEN

We rose fairly early to a completely different day. Sun and fairly calm seas. Jason came down to see us off and to make sure we didn't scare the seals too much on our way down to the landing stage where our boats were stored, packing quickly and putting our kayaks in the water and with Andrew showing Jason how to roll and then doing a few more to look at the seals in the water. This place showed us some of its magic that's for sure with memorable moments in the boat getting there and meeting both Jason and Fiona with their information on the Island and generally Tasmania - this had to be the highlight of the whole trip so far.

As we paddled off, the sun was out and warming us up. We paddled off across the gap between De Witt Is and Maatsuyker Is. Leaving us wondering how hardy these Tasmanians Aboriginal were with their efforts to paddle their bark canoes out to these Islands almost 20 kms off the coast. I wonder if they paddled in 6-7 mtr seas and 40 knot winds!!!

We were definitely on our way again, past De Witt Is we had the wind on our bow quarter wanting to push us further down the coast than what we wanted but instead made our way to Deadman's Cove which was a really sheltered little cove out of the wind and this inspired Andrew to enter the water and retrieve an Abalone that they cooked and ate leaving a bit for bait that we would use later on in the hope of catching a fish! After lunch we had a short paddle to Rocky Boat Inlet, this was a fast trip with the wind behind gusting up to 30 knots .Once we arrived Paul, who must have seen a few gnarly waves before Andrew and I had seen any, signalled us to go to the left hand side of the entrance thankfully as waves were breaking 90% of the way across leaving a little bit of the entrance un-broken for us to enter, actually it was a little bit of a shock(again) to see these big waves form up and look like breaking but then just rolling underneath you, a typical South Coast landing down this way but leaving us safe and dry again.

We had heard that this wasn't the best camp site but to us getting there early and with the sun out warming us up it was magic. We all rested and caught a few ZZZZ'S .At dusk I had the bright idea of trying to catch a fish with our trawling rigs. It worked with me landing one in a few seconds of throwing the line in .Andrew and Paul both

tried but failed miserably in the fish killer stakes. I won the fish killer awards for this trip!!!

It was a late night with us talking and cooking our dampers for the last time as the next day we had decided to try for Cockle Creek which was basically our last day in this beautiful South Coast Zone.

DAY ELEVEN

We left Rocky Boat inlet with 45kms of coast to paddle. What a day it was, not much swell not much wind and the most breathtaking scenery before us. First off South Cape then South East Cape which was not as thrilling as SW Cape to round on a day like this. All three of us separated on this part of the trip, reflecting on our trip down this way it had given us all a trip to remember with great paddling and scenery and good friendship to boot. It was a long stretch in the boat but before long we rounded Whale Head and we finally entered waters of the Derwent River area (Storm Bay). One funny moment that happened was we hadn't caught any crayfish and were keen to do so and thought that we could nick a cray out of a pot (we had to feed Andrew!) – so we found one and pulled it up revealing a fishing net “what are these people doing?”. Andrew exclaimed “lets tell fisheries,” “these people catching fish in nets it must be illegal”

But lo and behold after rounding Cockle Cr we saw nets every where it seems that in Tassie it's still legal (why!!!) to catch fish in nets

After seeing this we kept on paddling around to Cockle Creek camp site where lots of Tasmanians seem to like to camp as there were people there who had wood stacks enough to last them a month and camps to match .It was a shock to see and hear campers and cars and phone boxes after living by ourselves for 10 days in the wilderness .It was with much grumbling from Paul and Andrew that we stayed here for the night and the only reason I refused to move was I had put my tent up and unpacked as well.

We still had half of the day to waste so we sat around watching the day pass us, I was enjoying this seeing how the real world operates especially after not including myself in it for 10 days. We planned to paddle the outside of Bruny Is but I was sure that they don't call Storm Bay Storm Bay for no reason and we all decided to wait for the weather report before making any decisions and in the end the weather made it for us “NOT GOOD” we had a forecast that gave us our first headwinds of the trip so opted to take the inside channel instead. So we retired to bed with plans to go as far as we could the next day.

DAY TWELVE

The sun was out and so was the wind, within 3kms of Cockle Creek we had the wind in our faces YUCK!! And didn't it blow we pushed on hugging the rocks trying to gain some shelter and make it a bit easier on ourselves. I did some damage to my wrist as it was hurting from the strain of not only paddling the last eleven days but now having to paddle even harder into the wind, about 18kms of this we decided to have an early lunch out of the wind and as the sun was shining it was a good idea. Lunch turned out to be an afternoon siesta that we all enjoyed with full stomachs. We pressed on making for Dover for the night with the wind getting stronger that afternoon but we all put our heads down and paddled on and finally we rounded a corner and the sight of Dover in the distance greeted us. As we paddled over to Dover Paul turned around for some reason and saw this great campsite which we immediately went over to, not the best landing but a great camp site as it had a fire place and old car seats and lots of wood around for us to burn and it was out of that bloody wind. Later that night we learnt that the wind had been up to 30knots that day

with a severe wind warning for the next day –Our Strahan to Hobart trip ended here!!!!!!

We were all a bit relieved to finish this day. We all but realised that this was the end of our trip so to speak and we ate all the left over food we had and a celebration kind of thing that I won't go into right now (for the risk of being arrested!!!)

We had a late night that night talking and sleeping around the fire before finally retiring to our tents knowing that we had paddled around the SW Coast of Tasmania It really was quite satisfying to know we had done it without mishap!!!

DAY THIRTEEN

A late start for our last 5 kms to Dover checking out the Salmon farms on the way over. A slow paddle soaking up the last strokes to what could only be described as an exciting well planned enjoyable trip!!!!

STRAHAN TO HOBART -----WELL ALMOST ANYWAY

I would lastly like to thank Andrew and Paul for coming with me but most importantly making this the most fun excitable holiday I have ever had. I now have two extra mates that will forever be in my thoughts as I dream about that day we paddled out to Maatsuyker Is -----cheers

DAY FOURTEEN -----DAY SIXTEEN

These were the days spent getting the car back dropping Andrew off at Stanley to paddle back across Bass Strait and finally catching the ferry back to the mainland.

Paddlers involved

Lawrence (MY Pittarak is better than your boat) Geoghegan--Pittarak

Andrew (paddle faster) McAuley-----Nadgee

Paul (Capt cave man) (and I can't cook bread) Loker-----Mirage 530

p.s. This area really is a dangerous place to paddle if you don't do the training and planning first. We sought out all kinds of information, Tasmanian local knowledge and old trip reports of the area. We had maps 1:25 000 and 1:100 000 to help in decision making, we all carried EPIRBs and we shared a sat phone rental, a VHF Radio (that Paul speaks really nice into just ask him) and Andrew had his short wave radio that was the best piece of equipment that could be carried. We all trained hard for this doing lots of paddling and generally lots of fitness work and it paid off with lots of memorable moments and great laughs.