

## LAKES ENTRANCE CAMP

3 to 11 February 2015



Having safely navigated our way from Melbourne we now approached our camp site with anticipation. Ray called out that it was on the right but Jim determined it was straight ahead. Trying to stop Jim when his mind was made up is like trying to stop a bull elephant with a fly swatter. So onwards we went. Straight to a dead end with soft sand, a non – existent turning circle and quicksand on all sides. Did this deter our intrepid driver. Not Charlie, with one elbow out the window and chomping his trademark cigar (a very good Clint Eastwood impersonation), he spun the wheel like he was at Le Mans, most passengers were now in the brace position, some praying, some phoning family to say goodbye, but Charlie eventually got all the wheels on the ground and with not a bead of perspiration on his forehead, made the turn.

We knew straight away that this was going to be a camp with a difference. Fast women, hard liquor and slow kayaks.

At camp we met up with the caravanners and it is a testament to the camaraderie of the club that although we had all seen each other about 2 days ago we fell into each other's arms like long lost relatives.

The first night Jim allocated paddling partners and things got a bit rowdy with a couple of the younger rabble rousers-no names (Terri, Ray, Vivienne) trying to have their say but Jim with his usual good humour managed to keep proceedings under control.

From then on it was paddling, eating and more eating. We were blessed with wonderful weather and took advantage of it. So what were the highlights. Clearly this is a subjective call and others are welcome to add theirs. In no order:

- The food. Up until now Chris has borne the brunt of the cooking (of course with all the ladies assisting) but now we had a new kid on the block. Margaret. Would the sisters work together or would there be tears. Of course they did a fantastic job and our waistlines are proof of that.
- Thanks heaps to Margaret and Derek for getting up early every morning to provide a bountiful breakfast to set us up for the coming day.
- Paddling through the canal system on the first day and most importantly, finding a bakery at morning tea (thanks to Brett).
- Jim appointing Brett leader then going off in a totally different direction leaving Brett bemused but we knew the drill and followed Jim and it must be said he did get us out of the shallows.



- Not long after that seeing the seal which was as interested in us as we were in it. Max has some good photos which you can see on Vivienne's slide show.
- Jim's decision to pair women with women and men with men. Initially we thought Jim was getting into some form of adult entertainment but our hopes were soon dashed. This was on the day of our hardest paddle, coming home across the lake with 60km an hour winds and 10ft waves. However, the fact that we all made it was character building (we think). Thanks to those who stayed behind to shepherd the slower paddlers in eg Jim, Dave, Miro and Chris.
- Our traditional camp dinner at a local Thai Restaurant.
- The Silt Jetties paddle, second largest in the world next to the Silt Jetties in the mighty Mississippi river, the Mitchell River only a small river in comparison.
- Our day off (and thanks here to Lindsay who collected the information). We had a good walk and then lunch and some fine beers at the Bullant Brewery and dinner at Lakes Entrance.
- Charlie's driving. We always knew we were in safe hands and even on the day he did not paddle he was there waiting for us.
- The wildlife. We had our five resident kangaroos who could be relied on to come out at sunset, echidnas and wombats. There was a variety of birds, kookaburras, blue tits, grey crested warblers and blue winged egrets (three of those are made up. If you can't work them out you should seriously consider whether independent living is right for you).
- After sunset, after dinner, after lights dimmed, The Lodge became Party Central. Sensible conversation about paddles and paddling styles descended to the Blackest Feet Competition, then a Who Can Roll Their Tongues demonstration, among other topics.
- Dave's work as a bouncer. We had a couple of the younger hoons partying at the lodge. No names (Chris, Max, Graeme, Ray) but at 10pm Dave put his head around the door and in no uncertain terms announced last drinks and that was that. Blissful peace reigned.
- The plane is about to take off. The pilot is drumming his fingers in frustration. Ground staff are scurrying around trying to find the elusive Mr Thomas Blyth. We thought, what a coincidence, could he be related to Jim. And then, when all hope was lost, on walks Jim, totally unconcerned. The elusive Mr Thomas Blyth had boarded.
- Jim for all his organisation. Sharing accommodation we could see the amount of work involved and that does not include the preparation before the camp.
- Vivienne arranging a slide show of photos before the end of the camp and there are some fantastic photos of a sunset, the seal and the kayaking. It is well worth seeing and, we understand, a compilation of her and Max's photos.

It was then just a matter of cleaning up, saying goodbye to the caravanners including Marg and Garth who were heading back to Bundaberg and heading home.

Thanks to all the helpers – the cutter-uppers, the washer-uppers, the cleaner-uppers and the loaders of heavy kayaks.

And so ends another brilliantly organised, completely successful and totally enjoyable SSKRC Camp.

