

Tasmania Expedition Report

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1. AIM AND CONCLUSION

We completed the expedition's two primary aims. We successfully completed the first female continuous circumnavigation of Tasmania by sea kayak, and we remain friends.

We allowed 42 days for the expedition which we completed in 37 days – 5 of which were rest days.

Distance paddled:	1,350km.
Number of days on trip:	37
Paddling days:	32
Average km/day on days paddled:	42.2
Average km/day including days off:	36.5

2. TRIP SUMMARY

Tasmania is a beautiful place with a varied and stunning coastline. It is nearly always possible to land in a remote and wild camp. The most populated section is the north coast with many small towns 5 or 10 km apart. There are also frequent towns on the northern part of the East coast. These can be visited or avoided.

The biggest challenge we faced was the wind and we had more than our fair share of head winds. This was particularly bad on the north coast where our morale was beaten to it's lowest by day after day of battling into strong winds. We constantly got up in the dark at 4am, to try to be on the water at first light at 5.30am. That way we usually had about 2 hours paddling in calm conditions before the wind picked up. One of the lowest moments was on day 16 when we forced ourselves out of bed and onto the water at 5.30am. The wind was already up and it felt like we would never be able to make any progress. Fortunately later on that day the wind dropped and we managed to

paddle over 50km. We then had good weather with very little wind for about a week.

The tidal range is only about 1.5 metres around most of Tasmania but increases to about 3 metres on the NE and NW tips. Near the NW tips, 4km wide sandbars are exposed at low tide so it is important to get your navigation right. We failed to look at our detailed chart of one section of coastline and ended up trying to paddle over a sand bar as it was getting dark. The 400 metre portage that resulted ensured that we didn't make the same mistake again.

We were all apprehensive about the South West coast where there are few roads and people and where the swells regularly reach over 10 metres. We were lucky to round the NW tip on a calm day with a 2 metre swell and very little wind. The good weather continued with us for most of this coastline – we even had mirror calm seas on one day. However we did have 3 very challenging days. We paddled to Bluffhill in a Force 6/7 following sea, and stopped there because the coastline bent around and we would have been committed to another 15km in an offshore wind. We paddled to Straun with an average swell of over 6 metres from the SW, with a Force 4 wind from the NW and rebounding clappotis to contend with. When we left Straun after 2 days off, the swell was still 4 metres and we were battling into a Force 4/5 headwind (on a dropping forecast). We had to paddle a long way around the many reefs which were surrounded by white water. Fortunately we were able to find a safe protected beach to land at Birthday Creek.

We all breathed a sigh of relief when we rounded the SW cape and were on the stunning south coast. This 150km section is incredibly beautiful with jagged mountains covered in trees rising from the sea and some lovely beaches and coves. The weather turned again and we had another week of headwinds where we crawled our way along the coast cursing the wind. Due to the cliffs and surf beaches this section is still committing with limited landing spots. We had a bit of excitement leaving through surf at Surprise Bay – Trys was knocked over by a wave and rolled back up, then caught air over a series of large waves.

Once back at Cockle Creek and the road we expected the coastline to be more populated and less beautiful, but it continued to be impressive all the way to our starting point (and finish point) at Eaglehawk neck. Countless dolerite columns rise from the water forming shapes such as "The Totem pole".

The trip was the most sustained trip ever undertaken by all of the team and the longest undertaken by Justine and Gemma. We all learnt a great deal and had a fantastic time.

Day		Dist.	Wind speed & direction
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1.	Eaglehawk Neck – Lagoon Bay	23km	SE 10 Knots
2	Lagoon Bay – Darlington, Maria Island	42km	SE 10 Knots
3	Maria Island – Schouten Island hut	37km	NE 5-10knots
4	Schouten Island – Sleepy Bay, Freycinet Peninsula	26km	NE 15-25knots
5		0	NE 20-30
6	Sleepy Bay – Piccalily Point	55km	NE 5
7	Piccalily Point - St Helens Point	49km	NE 5-15
8	St Helens Pt – Baileys Rocks	37km	NE 5-25
9	Baileys Rocks – Cod Point	15km	NE 10 inc to 30knots
10	Cod Point - Little Musclerowe Bay	29km	Calm
11	Little Musclerowe – Waterhouse Pt	42km	NE 5
12	Waterhouse Point - Bridport	35km	W 20-30
13	Bridport, 2km north and back!	0	W 10-15
14	Bridport – Stony Head	40km	W 15-25
15	Stony Head – West Point	32km	
16	West Point – Ulverston	52km	W 10 – calm
17	Ulverston – Boat Harbour	54km	SW Light
18	Boat Harbour – Shipwreck Pt	65km	Light
19	Shipwreck Pt – Calm Bay	55km	NE –W 5-10
20	Calm Bay – Bluffhill	25km	NE 20-25
21	Bluffhill – Sandy Cape	54km	Calm
22	Sandy Cape – Granville Harbour	55km	NW 5-10
23	Granville Harbour – Strahan	50km	W 5-15
24		0	NW 10-20
25		0	W 15, 4m swell
26	Strahan – Birthday Creek	40km	WSW 15-25 dropping
27	Birthday Creek – The Shanks	60km	WSW
28	The Shanks – Alfhild Bight	51km	NW 10
29	Alfhild Bight – Normal Cove	25km	SE 5-15
30	Norman Cove – Anchorage Cove	56km	Variable 5-10
31		0	SE 15-25 increasing
32	Anchorage Cove – Surprise Bay	33km	E 15-20
33	Surprise Bay – Cackle Creek	35km	NE 10-15
34	Cackle Creek – Lighthouse Bay	30km	E 10 –25
35	Lighthouse Bay – Adventure Bay	50km	NE 10-25
36	Adventure Bay – Crescent Bay	52km	NE 10-15
37	Crescent Bay - FINISH	40km	SW 5-10
	TOTAL	1349km	Lots of headwinds!

3. COMMUNICATIONS

Mobile phones were invaluable. We carried an Australian mobile phone with an Australian simm card (nokia telstra CDMA 2880). This was generously lent to us by Matt and worked everywhere except from Straun to Cockle Creek. We also each had our personal UK mobile phones. Gemmas O2 network phone worked almost everywhere that the Telstra phone did, but Vodaphone and T-mobile only worked in Hobart and near the biggest towns on the north coast.

We borrowed matt's **Satellite phone** for the section of coastline where the mobiles didn't work (approx 350km). Matt was able to text us daily forecasts and we were able to text him brief daily updates.

Our VHF radio was of very limited use because the fishermen mainly use their mobile phones and there is no universal channel that everyone monitors (like Channel 16 in the UK). The channel used varied often as we got nearer to different ports. Near the NW tip they used 74 and 81, near Straun it was channel 10.

World wide radio – in theory we could have got a weather forecast most days from ABC local radio but in practice it was hard to tune in the radio in remote regions and we relied instead on our daily text forecasts from Matt, and from updates from fishermen that we passed.

4. WEATHER

Throughout all of the expedition baring the SW section between Strahan and Cockle Creek forecasts were given to us by a mobile phone from Matt. He took them from www.bom.gov.au, the bureau of meteorology. The direction of wind was generally pretty accurate but the speed usually was less than forecasted, except in Bridport when it was higher than forecasted and when we had to turn back.

We carried our own meteorological equipment, consisting of a Silva alba windwatch (barometer, anenometer) and a casio pro-tek triple sensor watch (barometer, compass, altimeter, thermometer). The actual weather was noted daily and compared to the forecast. This allowed us to rely on our own barometers and weather observations before setting off each day. Our barometers were a vital piece of equipment that allowed us to judge the weather and sometimes push on even when forecasted windspeeds may have caused us to get off the water. Whenever there was doubt and distances to the next safe landing spot were great, we erred on the side of caution.

We were unfortunate on the East coast and NE corner to be constantly pushing into headwinds. It was immensely demoralising, but we had some relief in the middle and our trip from West Beach (near Launceston) to Straun was much faster – 8 days of 50km or more a day with mostly fantastic favourable weather.

As we approached Straun the swell increased to 6 metres and we saw a front was approaching. The winds arrived the next day and 2 day rest which was greatly appreciated.

We left Straun in still strong winds and a 4 metre swell but the forecast was for decreasing winds and we knew there were sheltered places to land further down the coast. We had one of our most challenging days paddling around the many waves breaking over shallow reefs. The map showed a sheltered corner of beach at Birthday Creek, we really hoped that we could land there safely in reality as we wouldn't reach the next sheltered landing spot before dark. Fortunately, a protective headland and a rip current provided an almost pancake calm landing despite the breaking waves raging elsewhere. We were all very glad to be on land that evening.

Next day the wind and swell were much lower and we enjoyed a few days of good weather down to Port Davey. We even had a following sea one day.

Once we rounded the SW cape the headwinds came back to haunt us. We had a day off at Anchorage Cove then decided to battle against them for at least a bit every day. The wind was typically force 4-5 so we could make slow and laboured progress against it. Finally, on our last day the wind turned and we had a following sea back to Eaglehawk neck. Unfortunately we were early to meet our friends and the Tassie TV crew so we had to try not to surf too many waves and arrive to an empty slipway!

Wind doesn't necessarily mean rain in Tasmania. Thankfully we had very little rain and this mostly occurred when we were on days off staying in a house. The only day it rained when we were camping was at Birthday Creek.

5. FOOD

All three of us are well aware of how food, or rather the lack of it, affects us individually. We were adamant that food would not be an issue on this expedition and create unnecessary strain. There were also considerable dietary requirements to be taken into account. Gemma has a food allergy to any cow products (beef, milk, cheese and tragically chocolate and icecream), Trys is a vegetarian but thankfully Justine ate anything and everything. Between the three kayaks we were able to carry 14 days food supply that included fresh and dried fruit and veg for each of those days.

During the expedition life concerned itself wholly with eating, paddling, sleeping and whether or not good bowel movements were achieved for the day! Believing whole heartedly in the importance of a meal prepared with care, free of sand and served up soon after landing makes a huge difference to morale.

“Having a designated cook who will take responsibility for most of the cooking, food selection, meal options, cooker maintenance and general food hygiene

of expedition members as well as broad shoulders for any criticism is necessary very early on ... for the tiredness and fatigue of the days paddle is no excuse for poor meals” Brewster and Bloomfield 1st Tasmanian Circumnavigation 1979.

This philosophy we felt was very important. When we landed, Trys did most of the cooking while Justine and Gemma put the tent up and filled it with the sleeping bags and mats, then helped Trys chop vegetables.

Meals cooked from scratch were preferred to dried ready made meals, which were kept only for emergency use (e.g. on landing close to dark). Cooking from scratch meant we were able to use whole foods that had undergone little or no processing and so contained much of the natural goodness. These included lentils, dried fruit and nuts, raisins, apples, fresh veg and an enormous amount of fresh garlic, to name but a few. The menu varied from vegetarian shepherds pie with lentils, peas and polenta to fried potatoes and burritos to Thai green curry with fresh veg and peanuts (and not enough coconut milk to counter the heat – Justine will never be allowed near the evening meal again!) Peanut oil was used over olive or vegetable oil to cook all our dishes in as its fat, energy and protein content is far higher than any other oil. This varied menu with much fresh produce ensured none of us were ill from food and none of us were tetchy from lack of food (although definitely from other things!)

At lunch, flat breads e.g. chapattis, burritos and crackers plus cheese (for Trys and Justine), salami (for Gemma and Justine), peanut butter and jam etc were used and took up very little space. We had many treats including museli bars, chocolate raisins, peanuts & dried fruit.

Finally, listening to our bodies dictated what we ate. If it craved sweetness we ate chocolate, salt or protein we ate peanuts and carbohydrates we ate more pasta. Apparently taste buds reflect the bodies needs so if you eat a sweet food and do not feel satisfied or don't enjoy it try peanuts, maybe you need protein, not carbohydrate.

Big food shops were made at Hobart, Bridport and Strahan. Occasional extra treats/supplies were picked up elsewhere. Our larder consisted (more or less) of the following (14 day supply for 3 big appetites):

1kg	sugar
1kg	dried milk
2 x 30ml	cartons of goat's milk
1lt	UHT cow's milk
80	tea bags
7 pkts	'Tang'
1 sm jar	coffee
1 pkt	hot chocolate
1 pkt	marshmallows
3kg	peanuts/mixed nuts
6kg	dried fruit (sultanas, apricots, dried dates)

3kg	sweets (Haribos/sour snakes)
7pkts	biscuits
6pkts	crackers
9pkts	flat bread
2kg	Salami
2kg	Cheese
1 large pot	nutella
1 large pot	peanut butter
1 jar	jam
3 kg	porridge
1 jar	honey
1 bottle	peanut oil
2kg	mixed fruit
72	museli bars
6	apples
1kg	pasta swirls (2meals)
2 packets	spaghetti (4meals)
2 packets	rice (4 meals)
1 packet	smash (1 meal)
1 packet	Polenta (2 meals)
6 packets	noodles (2 meals)
14	various sauces
12	oxo vegetable stock cubes
2 cloves	garlic
10	small onions
vegetables	including corgettes, peppers, beans.
3 packets	instant custard powder
2 packets	semolina (desert)

All boxes were discarded and food distributed amongst the 3 of us. On the first shop, a list of each persons food bag was left with Trys (cookie) so we could find each item easily. This got wet after day 2. No vitamins were thought necessary because so much fresh food was available. Occasionally our diet was supplemented by seafood given to us by local fishermen, or wine, beer and meals given by local residents. We ate at restaurants or pubs whenever we landed in towns.

Trys and Justine put on weight during the trip (we'd like to think it was due to the extra muscles but it was probably due to 5 days of eating at the end of the trip (and lots of peanut oil).

6. EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT

6 cyclumes (light sticks)
Drogue
20 metre throwbag for extra rope
3 towlines
3 sets of split paddles
1 parachute flare, 4 smoke flares

- A whistle on each buoyancy aid
- Kayak mounted compasses
- Hand held compasses in our buoyancy aid
- Fibreglass repair kit (see below)
- Garmin GPS
- VHS radio
- Emergency putty for kayak repairs
- Gaffa tape
- EPERB

7. FIRST AID

Trys carried a comprehensive first aid kit in an easily accessible dry bag in her kayak. There were no injuries and illnesses, except Justine had really itchy and slightly red feet for a few days – perhaps due to them being wet in her boots most of the day and then drying out quickly in the sun. We treated her feet with cream and she put her socks and shoes on as soon as she landed. The problem got much better in a few days.

8. KAYAK REPAIR KIT

Gemma was in charge of kayak repairs and she learnt how to make repairs in Wales before the trip. We took with us enough material to make 3 separate small repairs.

- 3 individual units of resin and catalyst (pre measured quantities)
- 3 units of fibreglass matting
- 3 units gelcoat / catalyst
- sandpaper
- packet stanley knife blades
- 3 paintbrushes
- wooden spatulas
- duct tape
- skeg rope
- wire (for feeding through rope to repair skeg)
- epoxy putty
- hacksaw blade
- thingy rubber kinda gloves
- spare nuts and bolts for the 3-piece kayak

Gemma's new skills were needed early on when Justine's seat broke from it's attachment on one side and a pebble trapped under the seat made a hole. We used emergency putty initially but the same thing happened again before we realised what the cause was. In Bridport Gemma fixed the kayak properly with fibreglass, reinforcing the seat and mending the holes. It didn't give any further problems. We visited a local kayak builders in Penguin to replenish stocks and Penguin Fibreglass kindly gave us some new matting and resin.

9. THANKS TO:

The North Face for lots of fantastic clothing, a brilliant lightweight and bombproof tent, and financial support.

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Matt Watton for all his support in Tasmania before, during and after the trip. He made life so much easier and more pleasant for us – he is really the 4th member of the team

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Lendal for 3 great padlock system paddles

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