

# WA Seakayaker



Rod Coogan at Sugarloaf, north of Yallingup (photo Wayne Stocker)

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE SEA KAYAK CLUB WA INC. – Issue No. 66 May-Jun 2007

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The club seems to be moving along steadily with membership gradually increasing. I know I promised many females would be joining the club but I am afraid that has not happened and all of our new members are of the male variety BUT it is very nice to have some younger, helpful, well mannered males interested in joining. No offence intended to our older members but how refreshing to have young men eager to lift boats and enquire about our health!!!

On a serious note I would like to thank the members of the committee for their great work in keeping the club together. It is great that everyone is prepared to take an active role in trip planning, training, trip leading and social activities. We welcome Martin Burgoyne to the committee and appreciate his willingness to help out in a variety of ways.

Russell Hobbs has been doing a great job with our website but has found it restrictive being attached to the Australian canoeing website so at the meeting last week it was decided to investigate new servers which would enable us to have the freedom of an independent site.

A trip leader is still required for the Ningaloo trip in August so hopefully sea leaders will apply to the committee. This is a great way to improve your sea leading skills.

Les Allen is running Sunday morning training from Pt. Peron every fortnight during winter. The last one was on the 27 May and the next is 10 June. These sessions are geared toward training sea leaders and instructors.

Phil Evans and other club instructors will be running a course for new members and other club members interested in gaining the skills toward certification for Sea Skills Award. These are starting on Saturday morning 9 June.

Please contribute with ideas or articles for the club magazine. It is so much better if a variety of people express their views.

**Judy Blight**

### **COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND OFFICE BEARERS – 2006/07**

President	Judy Blight	9433 3719	<a href="mailto:carita@iinet.net.au">carita@iinet.net.au</a>
Vice President	Phil Evans	9383 7190	<a href="mailto:pevans_2@bigpond.net.au">pevans_2@bigpond.net.au</a>
Treasurer	Rod Coogan	9535 4515	<a href="mailto:rodneycoogan@optusnet.com.au">rodneycoogan@optusnet.com.au</a>
Secretary	Wayne Stocker	9433 5588	<a href="mailto:wds1@bigpond.com">wds1@bigpond.com</a>
Programme	John Radovich	9242 3529	<a href="mailto:jrado_7@hotmail.com">jrado_7@hotmail.com</a>
Training	Phil Evans	9383 7190	<a href="mailto:pevans_2@bigpond.net.au">pevans_2@bigpond.net.au</a>
Web Site	Russell Hobbs	9335 5182	<a href="mailto:sueandruss@bigpond.com">sueandruss@bigpond.com</a>
Newsletter	Judy Blight	9433 3719	<a href="mailto:carita@iinet.net.au">carita@iinet.net.au</a>
Social	Sue Harrington	9335 5182	<a href="mailto:sueandruss@bigpond.com">sueandruss@bigpond.com</a>
Committee	Martin Burgoyne	9525 9280	<a href="mailto:madburg@westnet.com.au">madburg@westnet.com.au</a>
Committee	Dave Oakley	9331 8446	<a href="mailto:daveoakley54@gmail.com">daveoakley54@gmail.com</a>

## NOTICEBOARD

### Duck for cover award

**Martin Burgoyne**—no he wasn't sleeping in. He was sitting at City Beach wondering where everyone was, ready for a paddle. Why didn't the penny click?? He's never early so why would he think he was the first one there? Finally, an out of breath Martin arrives at the correct departure point at South Beach.

### Sightings of past members.

Paddling on the river one Thursday I met up with **Wolfgang**. I knew it was him as I had heard so much about him over the years. He was a club member before he took up dancing, bushwalking and indoor climbing. He is a fit looking man and was paddling a Mirage 580 so I thought he must have been involved with the club at some stage.

Everyone ends up running into **Don Kinsett** around Garden Island or up along the northern beaches. It's a shame that these people have left the club but it is great to see them around and perhaps with a bit of encouragement they will return to us. Not that we always have to agree with them or appreciate their jokes!!

**Megan and John** have returned from their stint at Groote Eylandt and are working at Alcoa. It was great to see them at South Beach, even if they gave up early on their paddle and opted for the cappuccino.

**Bill Reynolds** (one of our Poms) has been here for a few months and has been paddling with other past members and present members. Why doesn't he rejoin the club?? Perhaps after the trip to Lancelin he will relent and rejoin.

**Eric Pyatt** was seen with wife Jo walking along South Beach looking a picture of health. Perhaps it's the lack of stress these days after relinquishing the newsletter and control of the club. It was great to see them both.

### Everything happens to me

How about **Steve Foreman** at Lancelin the other weekend. Sea sickness in the big swells, capsizes in big seas, a broken rudder and a bad case of sea sickness **but he still** managed to eat a large bowl of noodles. **Good on you Steve!!! And congratulations on being our most improved paddler.**

### Sandy Robson

Sandy has paddled a massive number of kilometers and is presently north of Cooktown in Queensland. To have paddled over 3000 kilometres is absolutely amazing and she deserves our support in any way we can give it. Please check her

position on her website and read the great descriptions she gives of the places she has visited. Website is: <https://netstorage.penrhos.wa.edu.au/slap>.

Will she survive the croc.country? On the website you will read a great article talking about how to minimize the dangers in croc. country.

## **Club training programme**

Please take advantage of the training sessions that will be taking place on Saturday mornings from 9 June. These will be run by Phil Evans and Roger Lloyd and are aimed at all of those who wish to improve their skills and gain the Sea Skills certification. The sea Skills Award is necessary to participate in some of the long trips.

## **Sea kayak recipes**

Each magazine will from now on include a recipe that can be used on kayak trips. This issue contains a recipe from Sue Harrington. I for one will be trying some new ones after being bored to death by my own meals up at Dirk Hartog.

### **Kayak Cuisine - Malaysian Curried Eggs (Serves 2)**

4 eggs  
1 cup rice  
Surprise peas (4 servings)  
1 tablespoon margarine or oil  
1 onion  
1 clove garlic  
50g sachet of solid creamed coconut  
1/2 tspn turmeric  
1 tspn ground coriander  
1/2 tspn ground cumin  
1/2 tspn ground cardamon  
1/4 tspn ground ginger  
1/4 tspn ground chilli  
1/2 tspn ground fenugreek  
2 daun salam (Indonesian bay leaves)  
Salt

At home - Hard boil eggs, leave in shells. Pack spices in small plastic container.

At camp - Peel eggs. Chop onion, garlic. Fry onion, garlic, spices, coconut cream. Add rice, 2 cups water, peas. Cover and cook, adding eggs 5 minutes before ready. Extra water may need to be added if rice becomes dry during cooking.



# GENTLEMAN'S HOURS

by Wayne Stocker



Photos by Rod Coogan

I joined the SKCWA around November 2005. During 2006 the number of times I heard Club members say "I really want to do a Cape to Cape" was noteworthy. It was on my list of things to do, too.

As my experience and skills built up I found myself and Rod Coogan paddling together a lot, both on club trips and independently. Sure enough the C2C thing came up. Rod to his credit drew on a deep well and said "the only way this will happen is to say OK we are doing it and this is when we are doing it!". Folk familiar with the military world will know about P.P.P.P.P.P. (Prior Preparation and Planning Prevents Piss Poor Performance). Famous old sayings like "chance favours the prepared" and "good luck is for the ill prepared" sprung to mind. So it was off to the planning room to get stuck into it.

The decision having been made to "just do it" (apologies to NIKE), the next question was when? RKC and I have always been of a mind that trips on exposed coasts are weather dependant, so setting aside just enough days to complete the trip is fraught with danger. Our approach is to set aside a window about twice the size of the time required and then fit in the paddle

with the weather conditions. So a check of our diaries and our social calendar managers (read wives/ girlfriends) revealed a couple of weeks early in December 2006 that were free. Done!.

At this stage we hit rewind and went to planning from big picture stuff down to minute detail. So...What is the objective of our trip? To paddle C2C!. Yep got that. What else? To paddle at a leisurely pace as close to the coast as possible taking in the sights and with an eye to leading others on this trip. Hmmm? Leisurely pace? After our Dirk Hartog trip in 2006 we reckoned around 20 km per day, departing after breakfast and before morning tea and being off the water after lunch in time for an afternoon nap fitted the leisurely pace criteria. This was when "Gentleman's Hours" was consolidated into the well defined genre of adventure paddling.

So drawing on many resources (Kelvin Lewis, Les Allen, Dave Oakley, and others) all we could see was long days at sea, early morning departures, late afternoon arrivals and no afternoon nap. Dividing the C2C into about 20 km days we came up with Hamelin



Photos by Rod Coogan

Bay, Contos, Cowaramup Bay, Injinup Point as our camping spots. Apart from Contos, we were confident we could get into all of these spots in 'most' weather conditions. More research was needed. Cunningly convincing wives and girlfriends that a camping trip to Hamelin Bay was needed, off we went on a reconnaissance mission. Contos? pretty gnarly even with a small swell, rocks, surf, etc. Redgate Beach?, the day we saw it a giant wave was breaking in about a foot of water. That same day the Cape Naturalist wave rider buoy was reading 4 metres. We immediately crossed Redgate off the list. Just down the beach a bit is Bob's Hollow. Again rocks, surf, etc. Grrrr. Walking further south we came upon a small beach area and even though Redgate was deadly this spot was protected by offshore reefs that provided a fairly easy landing together with a OK-ish camping site. Yippee!. The grid reference for that beach area is for sale .....just kiddin'. If any member would like detail, just speak to myself or RKC.

Rod and I then decided we needed a point of contact for scheduled contacts from ourselves and an "actions on" plan if we failed to make our scheduled contact times. This done a transport plan was finalised and it was down to

the usual food, water, tent blah, blah, blah planning.

How was the trip? Basically we had good paddling conditions all the way and our landings and overnights worked a treat. All in all it was a great trip. It was our first attempt at the C2C and our planning definitely paid dividends, particularly identifying the right weather pattern. Some might think not very adventurous?. I say anyone can get themselves into trouble, the real skill is staying out of trouble and being comfortable and relaxed.

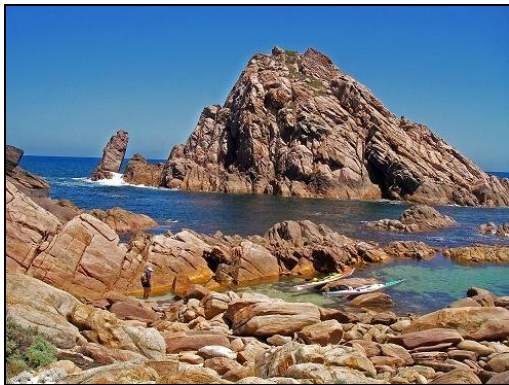
**Highlights:** Spooky bombie waters just north of Cape Leeuwin, tricky seas where the SE wind wave met with the SW swell, seeing a snake on a track at night at Hamelin Bay, squeezing past Cape Freycinet in rough rebound conditions, paddling past Margaret River surf break with no swell, the next day paddling past giant breakers called "Guillotine, Gallows, Widows and Wildcat", finding an error in the Cape to Cape walk guide book at Cape Clairault the hard way, finding the best camping spot just around the corner at Injinup Point, some very weird stuff where giant depressions appeared in the waters at Canal Rocks and Sugarloaf Rock, having a "Discovery Channel" moment at Sugarloaf (i.e.

just us, our boats and the sea), the "we did it" vibe rounding Cape Naturalist and personal reflections over the last few kilometers.

It was now back to reality after being self-contained in a different world paddling the iconic C2C.

There is a very special sense of satisfaction when you complete a trip that you have organized from scratch. Research, planning,

implementation. (obviously drawing on those who have traveled the path before, many thanks to those folk). I do encourage club members to do the whole thing themselves. If assistance is needed, there are quite a few skilled and experienced people in our little club, access them, pick their brains, draw on their wells. The first step however is "OK I am doing this and this is when I am doing it".



Photos by Rod Coogan

## Lancelin Larks

by Helen Cooksey



I joined Phil, our leader, Dave, Bill, Steve and John Rado at the caravan park at Lancelin at 8.15am Saturday 21 April to see the last of the

bacon and eggs and baked beans being consumed for breakfast and discuss the plan for the days paddle. I had a feeling we could be in for a rough day as I could hear the waves pounding on the surf beach nearby on the other side of the sand dune and the sea breeze seemed to be starting already. It was decided we would paddle to Lancelin Island then north to where we figured we would be able to make a safe

landing on the beach. A small reef close to shore was marked on the chart which should protect the beach from the dumping waves.

My level of apprehension rose when we got to the Point to launch. The surfers were standing in groups on the sandhills or on their vehicles observing the waves on the outer reefs where the 3 metre swells were pounding. The forecast said the sea breeze would be 18 knots at 3 pm. That's OK we should be home by then said Phil. It felt like it was well on the way to that already at 9am. As we approached the island a large Sea Eagle or Osprey kept an eye on us as it circled over head.

We climbed up to the highest point and checked out our route to the north. The whole bay seemed to be lines of breakers. We could visualise a channel through the outer reef breakers, breakers in the middle of the bay and dumping waves all along the beach. We set off keeping together and keeping an eye on each other. About half way across Steve seemed to be having difficulty. It turned out the poor guy was having a bad case of sea sickness and feeling really weak. I empathise with him being a fellow sufferer at times. Phil swung into action and organised John to tow Steve and Bill to hold the side of Steve's boat and give him support verbally and physically until we were almost to our landing point. Everyone landed safely except me who managed to tip over when a wave rolled off the reef and caught me sideways. It was no drama. I was able to push my boat the few metres to the beach. We found a sheltered hollow in the sand hills and enjoyed our elevenses. Steve took a Quells then downed a packet of 2 minute noodles to settle his sea sickness.

By the time we launched again it was nearly 12 noon and the wind must have been 18 knots by then. We hadn't paddled far when Steve's rudder broke and was hanging to one side of his boat. Once again the rescue team swung into action. John attached his tow rope and towed Steve so he was facing into the waves while Dave and Bill retrieved his shackle key from his repair kit in his hatch, undid the rudder shackles and tucked it in under the grab lines.

Off we set again. There was a line of breakers that were rolling in and dissipating on the right and a line building up to break on the left. There seemed to be a channel between them.

Someone started to enter the gap. Then it was my turn. In I went. I looked to my right. Oh no! A dirty big breaking wave was coming at me. It hit me side on. I leaned into it and stayed upright for a while then I went over. First instinct took over. I pulled the skirt handle and got out and hung onto the kayak and looked around. More waves hit me. I hung onto my paddle and boat for dear life. I thought I've got to get out of this on my own. I can't expect anyone to come in and rescue me because they will go over also. We were about 2 kilometres from shore so it was too far away to get washed in. Ok I thought. I'll do a re entry roll. I tipped my boat upside down, took a big breath, went under and threaded my legs into the cock pit. I rushed it, didn't get my legs into position properly and didn't get my paddle out of the water before I started the roll and it failed. I caught my breath for a while and tried again. The same thing happened. The third time I took my time and set myself up properly and it worked. I was up right. No time for celebrations. My boat was full of water sloshing around making it unstable. I remember Steve yelling out congratulations but I was too busy concentrating on pulling the cork out of the pump hole and getting the pump on and facing my boat into the next wave to take the time to look around. All I could think of was if I got knocked over again I didn't know if I would have the strength to get up again so I just kept paddling head on out through wave after wave riding up the crests and thumping down the other side. It was a fair while before I could stop and get my skirt back on. I looked around and couldn't see the others. It was so rough I had to keep paddling to keep stable. Eventually I could see the others silhouetted on the waves behind me. I waved my paddle for a while but then had to paddle to keep up right. I



repeated this several times. We were still a long way from home and the wind and current were so strong if you stopped paddling you were going backwards so I just kept paddling forwards slowly hoping they could see me and would catch up to me. I eventually made it to the island and stopped to recover my strength on the sheltered beach. I could see 3 boats over near the beach and 2 further out. I saw one paddler land and drag his boat up on the beach. I presumed rightly this would be Steve. The rest of us eventually made it back to our starting point and Phil went back to pick up Steve. When his rudder was disconnected the cables slacked and he lost the tension that holds the foot pedals up so had nothing to push against with his legs to get power into his stroke so he was exhausted.

It transpired that while I was busy saving myself Bill had also tipped over.

The force of the wave had sucked him out of his kayak and when the next

wave hit him he lost his boat.

Fortunately Phil was able to retrieve it and held it steady while he got back in.

We were all pretty tired when we gathered at the pub for dinner that night but happy with the way we coped with the challenges that came before us. All the training we had done for just such eventualities paid off. Phil calmly handled each situation as it arose. We are fortunate to have people in our club like Phil who encourage us out of our comfort zone and to extend ourselves and are prepared to take the responsibility of leading trips for us. My new resolution is that next time I must do an Eskimo roll **before** I get out of the boat not **after**. Also I must go down to Port Beach and practice in the waves.

On Sunday Phil, Dave and I had a pleasant relaxing paddle from Ledge to Lancelin along the coast with the wind behind us. The others had gone home, to rest I suspect.



Taken from NSW Sea Kayak Club website



# Trips 2007

Date	Description	Contact: ( Sea Leader)
<b>March:</b> Jurien Bay Fri 2 <sup>nd</sup> – Mon 5th	<b>Jurien Bay Caravan Park</b> Staying here in tentland for first night and camping out for Fri. and Sat.	Rod Coogan
<b>May:</b> Dirk Hartog Thurs 10 <sup>th</sup> – Thurs 17th	<b>Blue Dolphin Caravan Park</b> Chalet booked for Thurs.10 and 17 <sup>th</sup> . Will be out for 6 days.	Kevin Piper
<b>June:</b> Augusta Fri 1 <sup>st</sup> -4 th. Long weekend	<b>Turners Caravan Park</b> Various options depending on weather. Unpowered sites on the river. Options upriver or Hamelin bay	Rod Coogan Wayne Stocker
<b>June</b> Hamelin Bay June 23-24	<b>Hamelin bay</b> caravan park. Day trips based from the caravan park.	Wayne Stocker
<b>July:</b> Bunker Bay Fri 27 <sup>th</sup> – Sun 29th	<b>Holiday Home Accomodation.</b> Plenty of option for exploring	Rod Coogan
<b>August:</b> Ningaloo Mon.13-19 August	Camping along the coast inside the reef. starting point not yet decided.	To be selected
<b>September:</b> Walpole Fri 7th—mon.10th	Stay at <b>Coalmine caravan park</b> on shores of Nornalup inlet.	Wayne Stocker
<b>November:</b> Rottneest Fri 9 <sup>th</sup> – Sat 10th	<b>House 152:</b> Meet at Beach Street groyne 8.00am start. First day paddle over. Second day paddle around island. Third day paddle home. May change according to weather	Judy Blight

The Sea Kayak Club of WA is looking for expression of interest for a major trip in 2008.

Destinations and time of travel are yet to be announced but ideas include Tasmania, New Zealand, Queensland and Thailand. Forward ideas and interest

# **Nepal White Water Kayak/Rafting Trip – Sun Khosi**

## **October 2007 Part 2 (continued from previous issue)**

**Martin Burgoyne**

### **Phuktal to Padam**

On our way again, the next 5 km gave us the most technical water so far, probably class IV+, as the Tsarap flowed round huge granite boulders on its way to the confluence with the Zanskar River. The path on river right gave us our first sight of a Zanskari pony train, the whole areas main mode of transport, if you discount the heli-pad at Phuktal! We stopped a few kilometers after the confluence just before the river entered another narrow gorge. Carrying our gear up to a grassed area we could see high up on valley side we were surprised to find it was the local municipal trekker's campsite. We shared the site and a pleasant evening with two French trekkers, their guides and their six ponies!

Disaster struck the next day! I left my Tevas on the beach and was resigned to wearing my wet suite booties for the remainder of the trip.

We thought we had a good chance of reaching Padam the next day so we left early. It was cool in the shadows of the gorge, but hot once we got into the sun. We were now paddling the Zanskar, and the volume of water had gone up considerably from the Tsarap. It had also turned a milky grey due to the large amounts of glacial silt it was now carrying. This was interesting, as all the information, we had gathered before our trip indicated that the river was clear blue all the way to the Indus. It must therefore have more snowmelt – and a bigger volume, than previous trips had encountered. We knew a



potential second portage was waiting ahead, so looked eagerly for it. It was soon obvious, a sheer rock wall on river right and an avalanche slope of big loose looking boulders on river right and a horizon line. We inspected and quickly made the decision to portage, though the akademick did suggest a line down the middle. We had seen it run on the video, but that was with empty boats, plenty of bank support, 1 – 2 meters lower and clear blue water – not the milky grey we were encountering.

Undoubtedly there was a line but, well, err, no, not today! We scraped down close to the bank to save a bit of the portage with the bimbo giving us all a heart-stopper when she was washed the wrong side of a boulder and looked like she was off on the route down the middle! Some frantic windmilling and

yells of encouragement from the bank thankfully got her close enough so we could grab her bow and haul her in. Hmmm!

The portage was dire, hot exhausting and enough to put us all in a bad mood. Back on the water we knew it wouldn't be long before Ruru Falls, a long IV+ we had been told to expect. They came up quickly enough and our view from the left avalanche slop suggested two possible lines round some rather large stoppers close to each bank. A sneak route close to the left bank with a final blast down the middle through the haystacks below the stoppers or a dash across to the right bank with either an easier looking portage round the stoppers or a sprint for the middle line between the stoppers.

Being in stubborn mood I disagreed with the akademicks left bank sneak route and opted for a dash and blast. The dwarf and bimbo opted to come with me. We got to the right bank, looked again, and decided the blast to the middle across the top of the stoppers wasn't on with such heavy boats. So we had a horrendous portage round the stoppers that wasn't helped by the akademick getting easily down his sneak route. I then blasted down the middle to meet up with the akademick, while the dwarf and bimbo kept on hugging the boulder-strewn bank all the way to the bottom. It had been a shambles with every one doing something different! WE re-grouped somewhat exhausted and at least agreed that had there been a little less water the blast all the way down the middle would have been a cracker!

Our sketch map suggested we still had 15 km of big bouncy class III- VI+ before we would get to Padam. It was going to be a long slog,

particularly as the clouds had rolled in complete with driving rain. We managed to sneak by a couple of biggies without getting out and then just kept our heads down and paddled into another energy sapping afternoon head wind and rain. Our only consolation was the big and bouncy nature of the water, which at least made it fun; otherwise, I think we would have called it a day long before Padam.

We reached Padam cold and exhausted but pleased to have done the section from the put in four days. Another slog up to the path by the main footbridge, and on into the 'town' almost finished us off. But a 250 rupee pig-out for four, comprising two dozen somosas, six omelets, and gallons of chai at the Snowland Restaurant brought us all round. Numerous bottles of disgustingly sweet Indian Pepsi, Limca, Mahindra and Canada Dry were also gulped down as we tried to re-hydrate, though we never did find where to get the Kingfisher Beer! The akademick and the bimbo even talked about bussing out at one stage, but sight of the lone wreck of a bus parked in the square didn't generate any enthusiasm for what would be at least two days of bone shaking purgatory just to get to Khargil!

Padam was a relief from the dull grey's and browns of the last few days. Colour's were enriched by the remnants of the population explosion made up of monks and villagers from the surrounding mountain wilderness what had made the trek to see his holiness, the Dali Lama. Unfortunately, we missed him by one day though we did stay in the same Hotel Chorala (the only hotel) as the great man.





It was good to have a real bed and to be sleeping inside, though we still used our sleeping bags as protection against the inevitable voracious bed bugs! Nonetheless, we all had a good nights sleep and some of us even managed a shower that helped to reduce the stink of my feet from their confinement in my wet suite booties for the last two days. It would have been good to stay longer but there was a sense of urgency for us to press on having lost so many days at the start of the trip.

### **The Grand Canyon of Asia**

We made an early start after feasting on a breakfast of fried eggs, toast and chai. It was going to be a long slow slog to start with as we crossed the central Zanskari plain, before the river plunged into the Zaskar gorge – the Grand Canyon of Asia.

The day started fine, sunny, and pleasantly warm as we paddled down a braided section to the confluence with the Doda. The view across the moonscape of the Zaskar plain, backed by white snowy peaks and whitewashed mountain villages made the time pass quickly. It was slow going never the less, and when the inevitable headwind got up around mid morning it became hard work again. The wind got stronger and picked up

huge dust clouds that swirled up the valley and into our eyes. We kept our heads down and made the best of it, but became quite spread out as we battled on, each of us wrapped in our thoughts of easier paddling we had done!

We eventually passed Zongla, a green oasis in the barren brown landscape, complete with the King of Zaskar's palace. It signaled that we were getting close to the gorge and hopefully some respite from the wind. The current picked up as the river narrowed and we had fun on the next few kilometers, which helped to take our minds of the incessant wind, and sped us on towards the gorge. As the mountains began to close in, we had some respite from the wind but then it started to rain. So much for the idyllic hot sunny summer weather, we had all expected. We paddled on through an increasingly amazing landscape and finally entered the gorge. Beaches became non-existent as the walls of the gorge rose dramatically straight up from the river on either side. The remnants of the wind which continued to drive into our by now sore faces, and the dark and foreboding nature of our surroundings made us thankful that we were able to paddle everything on sight. A forced inspection would have been difficult with the lack of beaches.

We had been in the water without a break for almost eight hours when at around 4.00pm we came across a small boulder beach with a cave about 30 meters above it. We were cold wet weary and hungry. Struggling out of our wet gear and into dry cloths with frozen figures, seemed more like a winter trip in Scotland than a summer jaunt down the Zaskar. But fortunately the rain stopped and we were able to spread the wet gear out to dry. Our cave, which had obviously been used before, was just big enough for the four of us, though the akademick slept with his head out of the cave as the earth and pebble roof was rather loose. We steeled down to a cozy night hoped it wouldn't collapse on us.

Breakfast the next morning was the best we had on the river, custard, biscuits and chai. Although we were unsure of our exact position, we thought we might make it to the Indus in one final push. The weather was much brighter, and the rain had thankfully stopped, but weaving our way through the dark depths of the gorge meant we didn't get much benefit from the warmth of the sun. After an hour or so of paddling, a clear stream joined on river left, and we were able to refill our water bottles. Soon after the river narrowed right down, to thread its way through a tight and very boily little gorge where the walls of the main gorge had collapsed. The bridge over this tight little gorge gave some clue to our position. There were only five bridges marked on our sketch map and this was the third we had come across.

If we were right then it looked as if we had about 60 – 70 km before we would meet the Indus and our take out. More to the point it would be about 40 Km before we reached Chilling and the one

BIG rapid in the whole gorge. I didn't think we would make it in the day but the dwarf thought we had a chance as the river was really moving quickly by now. Our sketch map suggested mainly class III with an occasional IV/IV+ until Chilling.

The river was now big volume, bouncy and very fast flowing and for a change, we seemed to be making good progress for very little effort. The gorge became even more impressive as the sun got higher in the sky and picked out the shadows of the twisted strata, and the ever-changing colours of the rocks. The number of smoke stained caves and small beaches increased, though at the time we were unaware of their use; surely there hadn't been that many kayakers down the river! We later discovered that the Zaskar is frozen-over for six or seven months of the year, when it is used as the main 'highway' for the four-day trek from Padam to Leh the capital of Ladakh. The caves then come into their own providing overnight five star accommodation!

The odd surf wave added a little variety but we were pleased just to sit back and enjoy the spectacle of our surroundings and let the river do the work. We eventually passed the spectacular waterfall beach that Al had told me about, and then what must have been Lama Guru appeared on the left bank complete with Chortons, a bridge and green trees. We were therefore making excellent time and getting closer to Chilling. The gorge began to open out a little, and Chilling appeared on our left, a lush green oasis and a relief from the browns, reds, greys, and at times almost purple rocks we had seen for the past two days.

For the first time on the trip, we actually stopped for a lunch break and

broke open our last tin of processed cheese. It would be around another 20 km before we reached the Indus and our planned take out at Nimu. In between there was a supposedly big class V to negotiate.

It came up some enough, though we doubt that it warranted a class V. It was certainly nothing like the falls we had portaged above Padam. The river was possibly 40 meters wide at this point, with a long fast narrow glassy ramp in the middle. This lead down into three of four big exploding waves at the bottom and if you went too far left or right you were going to be eaten by some rather large stoppers. Lining up for the narrow central ramp was the key, and there was little in the way of markers to help. We paddled out to where we thought the line was and hoped that once over the horizon line we were right. No epics but we all had to do some rapid adjustments on the map to make sure we stayed clear for the stoppers waiting for us at the bottom.

We were almost done! We now knew we would make the take out before nightfall and hopeful get a lift back to Leh and a real bed for the night. With sun on our backs, we drifted the last 10 – 15 km down to the Indus. More spectacular scenery, as we approached the wide-open Indus valley, helped to take our minds of our aching muscles. However, we were surprised at the confluence, as the Zaskar seemed to be the major river and not the tributary, its milky silt laden waters soiling the bluer clearer waters of the Indus. In the afternoon sun, we all managed a victory role, the first roll that any of us had done on the trip. We had made it, now all we had to do was get back to Delhi!

High above us on the right bank was the main road to Leh, while a little further down river we could see the village of Nimu. To our surprise and delight, a rafting party was just packing up on a small beach; we thought our luck was really in. A lift back to Leh? The rafters had done a short section of the Indus down from Leh as a day trip. Yes, they would give us a lift back to Leh but only at a price! Their driver wanted 300 rupees for each of us! It had only cost 350 rupees for all four of us on the epic bus journey from Manali to Whiskey Bridge. Being in no mood to be ripped-off, even at this stage, we carried our boats and gear up to the road and flagged down a passing lorry. We agreed on 300 rupees for all of us for the journey back to Leh. However, what should have been an hour's drive became much longer, as the driver and his mate stopped to cook their evening meal. Still we made it to Leh well before nightfall and found some superb accommodation in the shape of the Bimla Guest House. Hot water, electricity, carpets, a flushing toilet and clean crisp sheets on the beds, heaven and we even found some beer that never tasted so good! We spent the a few days in Leh, eating, drinking, sleeping and watching the world go by. The cricket and polo matches on the same ground on the Saturday afternoon provided a memorable spectacle, as did our day visiting some of the colourful ancient gompas in the Indus valley. But, it was time to start back.

We were down to three as the akademick intent on getting back to Delhi early to get him self measured for a three-piece suite for his first day as a teacher. The 4 am start for the first leg of the bus to Sarchu required some drastic action – we spent the night sleeping on the roof of the bus in the bus station. Though we didn't get

too much sleep due to all the mad, howling dogs in Ladakh, we did get a seat. It was a relief when the bus set off and rattled its way up the Indus in the gathering morning light. With views of the odd distant snow peak bathed in the crimson colours of the sun rise it was good to be going home.

At Upshi, we stopped far early morning chai, before heading up into the Zaskar range and the Taglang La, which at 5368 meters is the second highest motorable road in the world. The bus rattled on across a vast wind swept plateau over the 5060 meter Lachlung La, and then descended back to the Tsarap valley where we had been 10 days before. The river had changed in that time its murky grey waters were now verging towards the

clear sky blue we had expected. Over-nighters at Sarchu and Keylong, and a long wait while the road was rebuilt around an over-turned bus on the descent from the Rohtang Pass, and we were back in the fleshpots of Manali. Excellent accommodation, good company, food and beer, and the hairiest paddle of the whole trip when we decided on a short blast down the Beas below town. One final haunting experience was being asked by the police to recover a body of a young man. He had been washed onto a small island in the middle of a particularly nasty section of the Beas in town. It reminded us how venerable we were to the whims of the river gods even in our plastic kayaks.







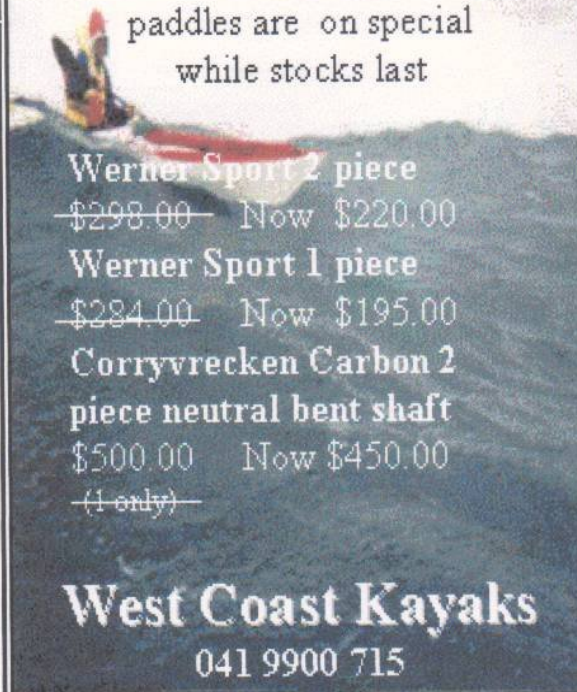
Finn Kayaks are pleased to offer an extensive range of sea kayaks, racing kayaks, sit on kayaks and surf skis. Included in this range are the Salamander expedition sea kayak, Gecko sea kayak, Fantasea double fiberglass sea kayak and new for production in 2005, an exciting 5.2 metre multisport kayak (name TBA). We also offer a full range of paddling accessories and advice to ensure your enjoyment and safety on the water.

Call in and see us at  
17 Sainsbury Road, O'Connor.

Phone (08) 9314 3109  
e mail [info@finkayaks.com](mailto:info@finkayaks.com)  
Web [www.finkayaks.com](http://www.finkayaks.com)

## Introductory Special

Werner the worlds best  
paddles are on special  
while stocks last



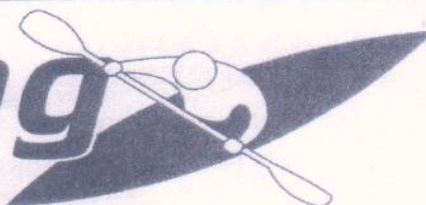
Werner Sport 2 piece  
~~\$298.00~~ Now \$220.00

Werner Sport 1 piece  
~~\$284.00~~ Now \$195.00

Corryvreckan Carbon 2  
piece neutral bent shaft  
~~\$500.00~~ Now \$450.00  
(1 only)

**West Coast Kayaks**  
041 9900 715

## Canoeing DOWN UNDER



Paddling Store.  
144 Railway Parade, Bassendean.  
Phone 9378 1333  
[www.canoeingdownunder.com.au](http://www.canoeingdownunder.com.au)

**If you want the best advice on sea kayaks and equipment.**

Just talk to Terry Bolland who has over 25 years of sea kayaking experience in all different conditions and environments.

Sea kayaks, Paddles, PFDs, Cags, Spraycovers, Booties, Paddle floats, Paddle leashes, Pumps, GPS's, Radios, Dry sacs, Water carriers, Lights, Flares and much more.