Around Vancouver Island in a Sea Kayak

May 18 - June 21, 2019



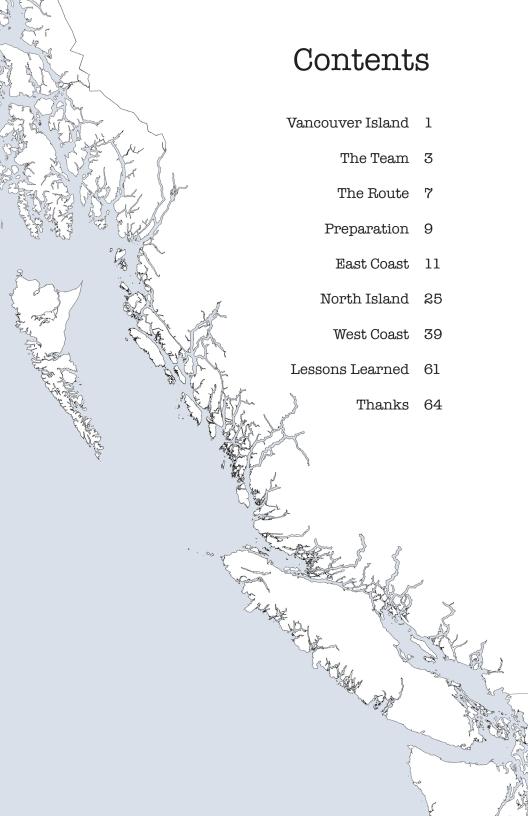
@alittlepaddle

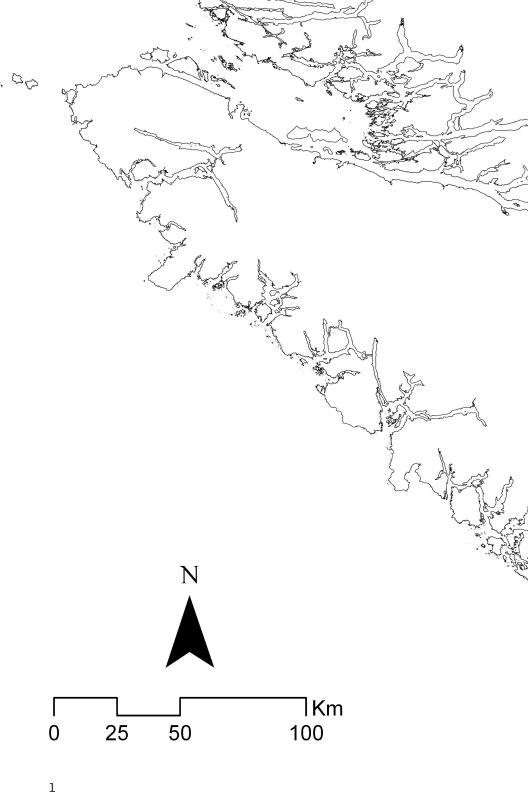
Nathan Slater, Cody Lai, Sarah Parolin, Armarn Roland

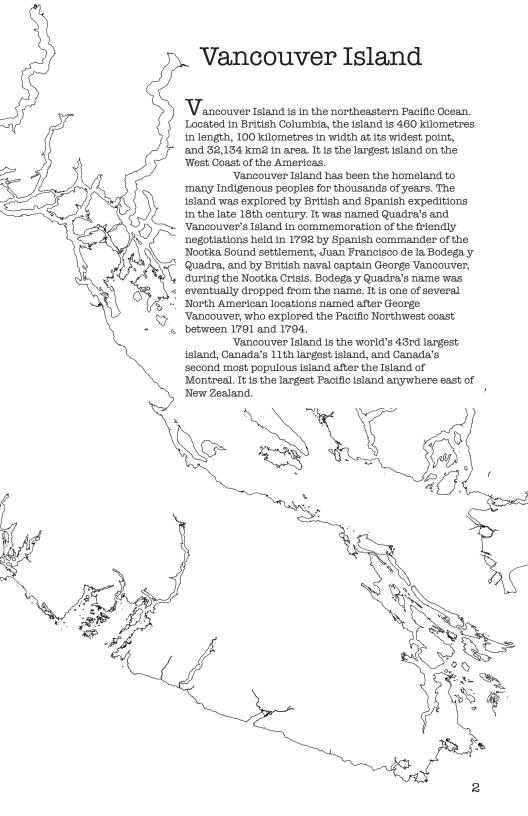
On May 18, 2019 four friends set out on a monthlong sea kayak trip around Vancouver Island. Their journey was recorded in photos and videos posted on Instagram on the @alittlepaddle account.

The trip took place in the traditional and unceded territories of: Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group, Te'mexw Treaty Association, Snuneymuxw First Nation, Sechelt Indian Band, Tla'amin Nation, K'ómoks First Nation, Wei Wai Kum Kwiakah First Nation, Homalco First Nation, Tlowitsis Nation, 'Namgis Nation, Gwa'Sala"Nakwaxda'xw Nation, Tlatlasikwala Nation, Quatsino First Nation, Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k'tles'7et'h' First Nations, kwakwaka'wakw Nation, Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council, Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation, Ahousat First Nation, Hesquiaht First Nation.

This zine was assembled by Nathan Slater with photos and words from Cody Lai, Sarah Parolin, and Armarn Roland.







Sarah Parolin





Liked by sarahparolin_ and others

alittlepaddle Meet Sarah Parolin. Is trying to figure out where to put the sail on the kayak. Calls every hill a mountain (they're not) and has no self control around chocolate (ate both bars meant to last the trip on day 1). Has gradually turned to a bright shade of lobster. #BCislikeNS

Armarn Roland-Khosravi













N liked by **sadidrahimi** and **others**

alittlepaddle Meet Armarn Roland. Has trouble pulling off a cowboy hat and WILL fat shame seals (beware!). Will only wear his crocs in four wheel drive (strap down always). Special talent: can point out every single oyster farm from here to Haida Gwaii #bathingincoconutoil

Nathan Slater













Liked by emhenji and others

alittlepaddle Meet Nathan Slater. Doesn't believe in competition but will definitely try his hardest to beat you. Is the self appointed leave no trace enforcer, yet has been caught peeing above the high tide line (he was deeply ashamed). Has not had feeling in his left leg since day one. (@jaymichaelslater don't worry, he says he's fine) #letmepaddle2k19

Cody Lai







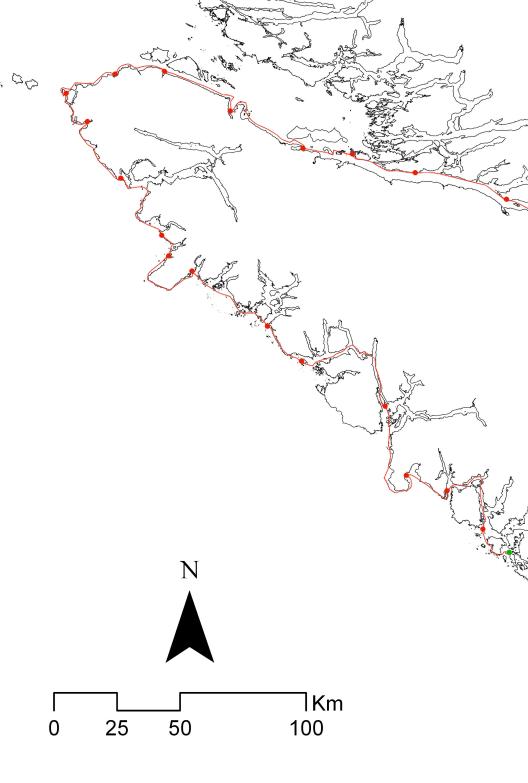


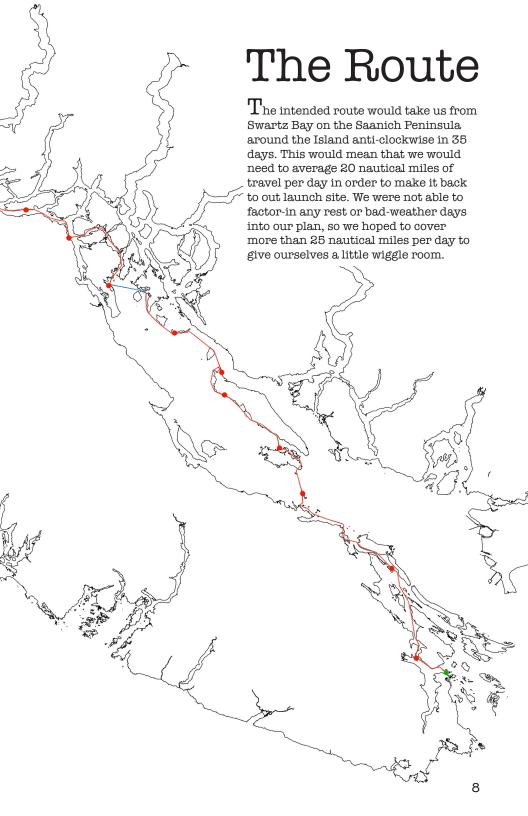




Liked by theflannelelk and others

alittlepaddle Meet Cody Lai. Really takes pleasure in the small things. Thoroughly enjoys his agua dumps (averaging 2 a day, which is more than the rest of the team combined). Prefers not to rub sunscreen in and instead applies it like it's face paint (see eyebrows for residue). Complains the most about how sore his mussels are even though he is obviously the most muscular one of us all, #seaweedoverTP

















Preparations

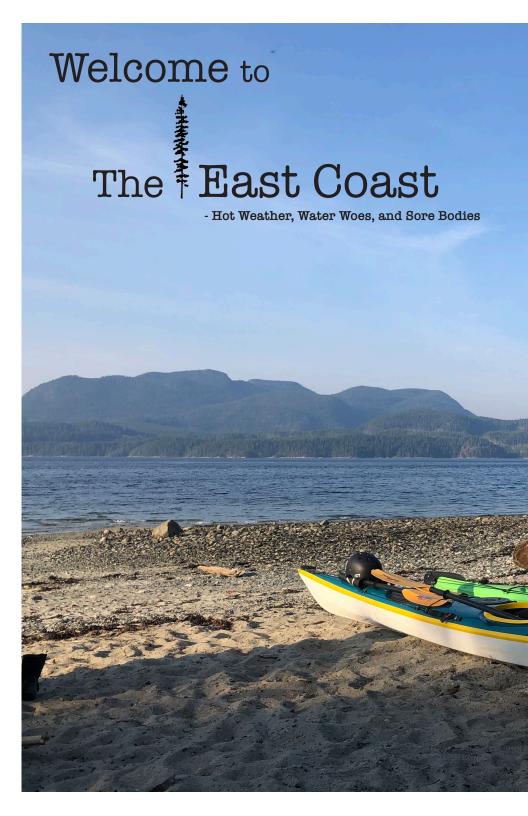
We didn't have much time to prepare as a group, but we tried our best nonetheless! After a few video calls in the winter and early spring, we set out to get ourselves (and the group gear) organized. Armarn and Nathan went on a mass grocery shopping spree and prepared 35 days' worth of meals (which Cody diligently dehydrated on a constantly running set of three dehydrators). Sarah was in charge of assembling the necessary charts and guidebooks for the adventure.

The day before we set off, Armarn, Cody, and Nathan drove all the equipment across to Nanaimo, bought the last few supplies, and made their way down to Victoria for the night.

The morning of the departure, we grabbed the boats and paddling equipment we'd need, strapped them to the roof of a borrowed truck, and set off for the airport! We grabbed sarah and her bags from the Airport, had a quick lunch (and celebratory beer) and headed for the launch... And thus our adventure began!







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m T}$ he inside coast of the island is protected from the open ocean. It has lots of islands that provide protection from wind and long. narrow channels that funnel (and increase) winds. The large mass of Vancouver Island also funnels the flood and ebb of the daily tides into strong currents that flow North and South along the length of the coast. There are cities, towns, and villages pretty often and tons of paddlers, sailboats, and speedboats around. Our routine in this section was pretty heavily influenced by currents. Most days, there was a channel or set of tidal rapids that needed to be paddled at slack tide for safety, or with the current running our direction of travel for a helping push. That could mean getting on the water as early as 3am or as late as 11am, depending on when slack tide was and how far it was from our campsite. Though it was only late spring, this section of the trip blessed us with extremely warm and sunny weather. We drank though our daily water allowance much quicker than we anticipated often and struggled to have enough water on a few occasions. The necessity of sunscreen and moistuizer on a kayak trip was very clearly demonstrated on the East Coast. This section took us through the territories of: Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group, Te'mexw Treaty Association, Snuneymuxw First Nation, Sechelt Indian Band, Tla'amin Nation, K'ómoks First Nation, Wei Wai Kum Kwiakah First Nation, and Homalco First Nation.

Boats







Our noble steeds! Delilah, Green Tabasco, and Baby Beluga. Each with their quirks, each with their faults, but all champions in their own right.





Swartz Bay -> Sansom Point, Vancouver Island



Voyageur start. Current push. Long day. Hot sun. What a way to begin our journey!





Swartz Bay, Vancouver Island -> Pirates Cove, De Courcey Island





Cold and wet. Southerly winds and swell in the afternoon. 13.5 hours paddling!





Pirates Cove, De Courcey Island -> Belinas Island







Cody's Log -

"The days have been tough, my body aches at every paddle stroke. The last 2 days have been 2 am wake ups and paddling till 3 or 4in the afternoon. I don't know how long I can keep this up for. This is only the 4th day out of the 34 days and there are no plans to rest..."



Belinas Island -> West Point, Lasqueti Island

Shoe for sale!

left one only, limited edition Kobe "Beach Collection".

Cody for size reference.

DM us to make an offer!

#beachshoeisbestshoe





West Point, Lasqueti Island -> Half Way Up Texada Island









Rounding the North tip of Texada Island (Blubber Bay)





This was our most prominent encounter with water scarcity. As we approached Savory Island, we had completely run out of drinking water. After a cliff climb up a big sand dune, some nice locals filled our water!



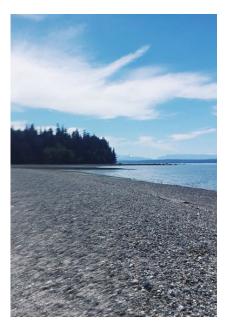


Blubber Bay, Texada Island -> Savory Island

Took a wrong turn and ended up in the Caribbean. A day full of tropical waters and sandy spits. We also cheated a bit... Tried to take a short cut and ended up taking a long cut. Turns out carrying fully loaded boats on a ferry requires way more effort than an 8km paddle would have.









Savory Island -> Cortez Island (And a cheeky ferry ride...)





Rest Day!! (Quadra Island)





Quadra Island -> Elk Bay, Vancouver Island



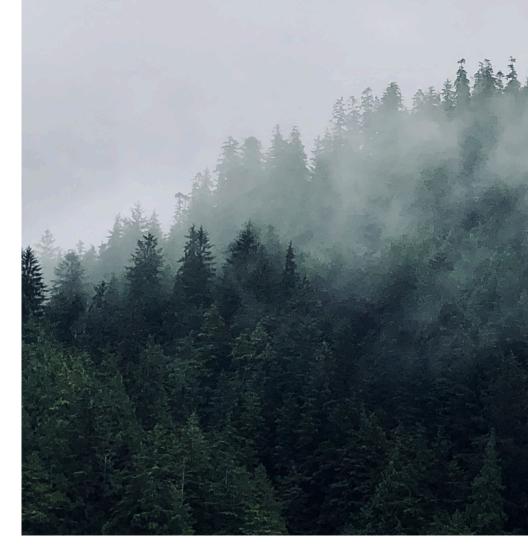




Elk Bay, Vancouver Island -> East Thurlow Island

Welcome to The North Island

- Stunning Coastlines, Wet Days, and Strong Winds



Winds on the BC Coast are predominantly from the Northwest or the Southeast. In the summer, the systems are mainly high-pressure and so create mostly Northwesterleys. These enter the channels on the Northeast coast of the Island and are funneled into narrow stretches of water, picking up speed. The worst of this is in the Johnstone Strait. We experienced about a week of strong Northwesterleys in this section leading to quite a few short, difficult, paddling days.

We arrived in Port Hardy on Day 16, ate a burger at the local A&W and prepared ourselves to be away from civilization for a while. Until this point, we had eating occasional meals at local restaurants and resupplying food as needed, but now we were on our own.

Heading West out of Port Hardy, there's about 20 nautical miles of paddling along a channel, and then you lose the protection of the last islands to the North. Within about 30–45 minutes of passing Shushartie Bay, everything shifts from currents and funneling winds, to exposed open water, swell, and surf. This is how the conditions remain for the entirety of the North and West Coast.

On day 18, it began to rain... It didn't stop for the following 5 days which pushed us into a new routine of keeping ourselves moving all day for warmth then huddling around a campfire and steaming out our clothes for roughly an hour (sometimes two) every evening.

This section took us through the territories of: Tlowitsis Nation, 'Namgis Nation, Gwa'Sala"Nakwaxda'xw Nation, Tlatlasikwala Nation, Quatsino First Nation, Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k'tles'7et'h' First Nations, kwakwaka'wakw Nation.







East Thurlow Island -> Nichols Bay, Hardwick Island

"Out of all the modes of transportation, we choose the slowest one."





Cody's Log -

"Even the mundane activities such as showering have been so pleasurable. Having no fresh water for 9 days makes you realize the comfort of being in the city. Hedonic adaptation settles in quickly when you get into a habit of any sort. Having this long stretch of time in the wild and living primitively resets your baseline standard of good living. It is painful but a second degree of fun!"

Nathan slept on a rock

Nichols Bay, Hardwick Island -> Friendly Bay, Cracroft Island





We met some of Nathan's friends working to set-up the **Sprit of the**West basecamp for the season. They were just draining the hot tub
as we arrived so no warm soak for us... They did let us camp for
the night at their satellite site on the North end of Hansen Island
though, so we got the luxury of tent pads and running water!



Friendly Bay, Cracroft Island -> Hanson Island









Hanson Island -> Port McNeil, Vancouver Island

Four becomes Three



What a blast! 16 days of paddling 426km from Victoria to Port McNeill. It's bitter sweet to be posting this but sometimes stuff happens. After paddling with a sprained wrist and a burning salt rash since day 4, the tweaked lower back was the last straw. I've decided to call the trip and take the last exit I can before the group commits to the 18 day west cost stretch of the trip. Rather than holding the group back and not fully enjoying myself my amazing girlfriend @kelsey_wallace is going to come and grab me! I have no doubt those guys will crush it and hopefully keep their spirts high on the last stretch! Catch you on the main island!

-Armarn











Cody's Log -

"We had an uncomfortable sleep camping on the side of the road in Port Hardy. Felt as if we were urban nomads. Even worse was when pedestrians walked by & stared at me washing the dishes in the stream running into the ocean."

Port McNeil, Vancouver Island -> Port Hardy, Vancouver Island







Port Hardy, Vancouver Island -> Shushartie Bay, Vancouver Island







"Valentina's Spill in aisle 7!" - Nathan

Shushartie Bay -> Shuttleworth Bight, Vancouver Island

We rounded Cape Scott! Our first "crux" of the trip was challenging but super rewarding! Although it was heavy rain and not ideal visibility, the wind and swell were at ok levels to make the rounding! The day ended with a late afternoon hike to the Cape Scott lighthouse where we met the wonderful light keepers!



Shuttleworth Bight -> Guise Bay, Vancouver Island





Cody's Log -

"Rough seas when rounding the other end of Guise Bay. It was the 2nd day of torrential rain and it wore me down. My hands went numb and were so white and pruney that you could peel my skin off like an over cooked tomato.

The storm died after we lit a fire and cooked dinner. It took forever to collect firewood. We took a walk through the old growth forest around Sanjosef. It was humbling walking among the giant Sitkas and Cedars."



Guise Bay -> San Joseph Bay, Vancouver Island



Cody's Log -

"Haven't showered in 2 weeks. I wonder if I smell. I'm going to try to rinse off in-the adjacent river at 4 am tomorrow. Don't think I have ever been without a shower for this long. I can definitely smell the stench of my co-kayaker...

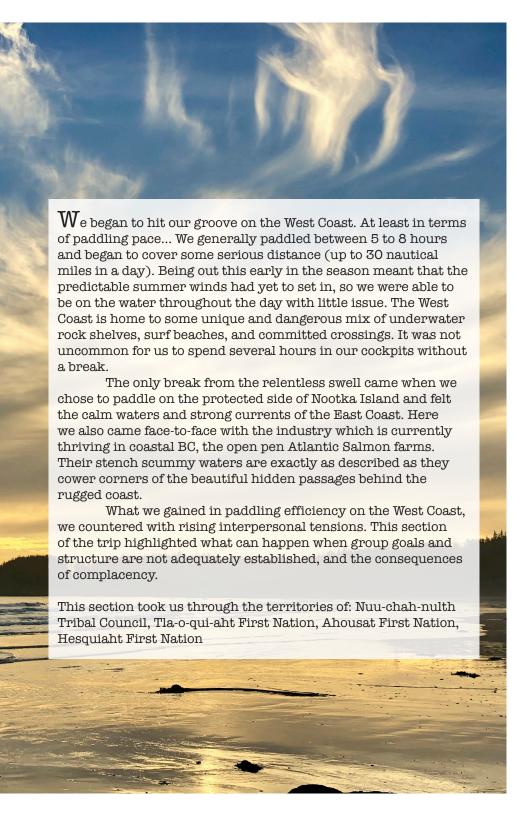
First sunny beach day. The day started soggy but the clouds burned off. We encountered another group of sea lions but this time there was an army. I almost peed my pants when roughly 30 seals started bluff charging us."





San Joseph Bay -> Grant Bay, Vancouver Island







Cody's Log -

"As we entered mystery Bay, a helicopter flew into the adjacent bay. By fluke I decided to follow the heli by trekking across to the other bay. Found a Heli tour guide showing an enormous cave to tourists from Barcelona. The Barcelona tourist were fascinated by our presences in such a remote location"





Grant Bay -> Secret Cave, Vancouver Island





Secret Cave -> Guilliam's Bay, Vancouver Island

Morning Ritual

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Every morning we listened to the weather on the VHF radio and recorded it to our log if things were sounding spicy (for recording trends). We also planned our route on the chart to prepare for what the paddling day ahead.





Brooks Peninsula, spanning Quatsino and Ka:'yu:'k'th'/ Chek'tles'7et'h' Territories, is basically a 8km x 13km rectangle sticking off the side of Northwest Vancouver Island. Totally missed in the last glaciation, it is covered in spectacularly tall and rugged peaks. The paddling is mostly exposed coastline and it's prone to high winds, so there's no good place to pull-off until you're around. We sat in our boats for 4 hours straight that day!



Around Brooks Peninsula (Guilliam's Bay -> Paradise Beach)



Cody's Log -

"Right now, there is sand absolutely everywhere. Between the toe nails, finger nails, in my hair and even in my mouth. I'm glad it stopped raining, the wet sand is the worst. It is just clumpy sticky sand instead. Pie was damn good!"





Paradise Beach -> Rugged Point, Vancouver Island

Fish Farms





Photos from: livingoceans.org



We paddled around several open-net pen fish farms during our adventure. They were often hidden from view up inlets and near the mouth of streams.

The most immediate thing we noticed about these floating contraptions was their intense smell. They reeked of fishy scum! Then we noticed changes in the colour and clarity of the water – clearly the excess concentration of nutrients from food and manure were too much for the tide to flush away.

There's no denying that aquaculture has an important role to play in feeding Earth's growing population, but the impact of the few farms we saw didn't instil confidence in the sustainability of the current approach.

We wanted to dedicate some space in this zine to a discussion of open-net pen fish farms not because we are experts on the subject (far from it...), but rather because we feel it's important to shine a light on the industries that operate 'below the radar' on our coast. Love them or hate them, they are a current fixture of BC's coastal waters and their impacts will be felt by our ecosystems forever.



Flipping a fully loaded 500 pound boat onto a rocky reef was a scary moment. Luckily we all got out ok, and an in depth debrief followed in effort to improve our group dynamics and communication skills.

Some things we learned: On a trip this long, it's important to keep structure in terms of daily briefs, debriefs so feelings don't pile up and important decisions are a collaborative effort.

We came out of that day on the brighter side and paddled on to better days!



Rugged Point, Vancouver Island -> Catala Island





Catala Island -> Strange Island



After a challenging day paddling arounf Estevan Point, Nathan sleeps in his most creative position yet!

*Side note: we saw a very cool humpback whale!



Strange Island -> Hesquiat Harbour, Vancouver Island



Cody's Log -

"We're nearing the end of this journey. We just passed the last crux of paddling 30 nautical miles to pass Estevan point.

Even though there are 6 more nights ahead I expect them not to be very leisurely."





Hesquiat Harbour -> Hot Springs Cove, Vancouver Island



alittlepaddle Hot Springs Cove, British Colum...



alittlepaddle "I'm shouting myself out" -Nathan







Rest Day!!! Hot Springs Cove, Vancouver Island









What a day this was! We left the comforts of the cabin at Hot Springs Cove and made took the long way around Flores Island (and Obstruction Island) to the sandy shores of Whaler Island. Little did we know that this would be our final backcountry night of the trip.



Hot Springs Cove, Vancouver Island -> Whaler Island

Complacency kills. RIP soaked clothes, first aid kit, sleeping bag, lost booties, wet power bank and a hole through the boat. The only bruise was our ego.









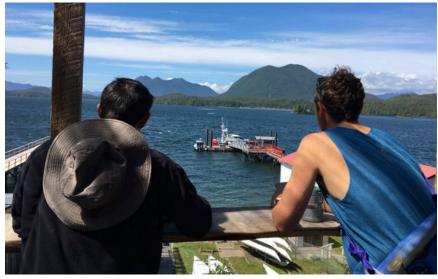
Daye to the rescue! We couldn't stay at the boat launch forever and couldn't paddle with the wind and boats looking the way they were... in swoops Daye Cooper to share a meal and give us a ride to a campground. Thanks so much!

Whaler Island -> Tofino, Vancouver Island



alittlepaddleTofino, British Columbia

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Re-entry into society (Tofino, Vancouver Island)

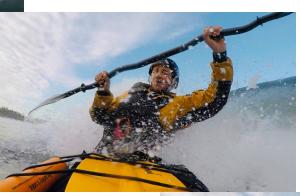








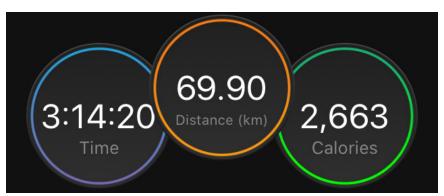
"I can totally surf a sea kayak" -Nathan, 2019











Made the final push South the hard way! Rented bikes and stretched our legs for the first time in a month (then rewarded ourselves with pie and ice cream... duh!)

Tofino -> Uclulet -> Tofino (All on Vancouver Island)













Repure 1 Liked by **swaggymc3** and **others**

alittlepaddle Day 35: Jay and Sylvia swoopin and retrieve the team from the wilderness of the @bellapacificacampground and escort them to Victoria for a short night in a bed.

View 1 comment

Bella Pacifica, Tofino -> 360 Hazlitt Creek Road, Victoria

Lessons Learned

This expedition gave us immeasurable experience practicing hard-skills such as navigation, weather judgement, meal preparation, managing surf, and overall preparedness. Don't even get us started on the pros and cons of plastic vs. fiberglass boats and single vs. double kayaks. However, the major takeaway from this expedition was about group dynamics and managing goals/expectations.

We didn't plan this adventure super well; we didn't have adequate time to prepare as a group and we started the trip with wildly different expectations about the outcome. This made for some difficult dynamics within the group: some wanted to paddle hard every day, and others wanted the opportunity to take rests and enjoy the scenery. Managing these differing expectations was one of the greatest challenges we faced throughout the journey. The other was the issue of group leadership. As a group of friends, we were all used to being equals in decision-making, but on the water a different leadership structure was required. Deciding who had the final say regarding on-water safety was an uncomfortable challenge, and one which we struggled with throughout the trip.

Next time we go adventuring, we will take the time required to prepare as a group and ensure that we are all on the same page about our expectations.



Wildlife

Sea Lions:

Without a doubt, some of the scariest moments of the trip were suddenly having 100 sea lions appear from an exposed piece of rock and charge us. They would all bark and dive in unison. Each time (and luckily, there were only a few) we paddled as quickly as we could directly away from them.

Sea Otters:

"Cute as heck, but they'll rape and kill your puppy"

-Hotel Manager from Kyuquot

Wolves:

Sarah saw a wolf. She nearly crapped her pants, and rightfully so. Those things are scary!

Bears:

We saw quite a few black bears along the coast. Most were foraging for intertidal food and all were very cute! We spent many wonderful moments staring athe these powerful animals as they fed.

Eagles:

"Eagles out here are like pidgeons in the city" - Cody Lai

Whales:

We saw many feeding greys, a few transiting minkes and orcas, and a humpback scratching itself on a shallow section of coastal shelf.

People:

We saw people on most days of the trip. Some were curious, some were concerned, and all were friendly.

Total days: 35

Total paddling days: 31

Total distanced paddled: 525 nautical miles

Total distance cycled: 70km

Total distance hiked: 10km

Total meal portions: 354

Total granola bars consumed: 420

Thank You

A sincere and heartfelt thank you to everyone who helped make this trip possible. As the sun has set on our expedition, we wanted to recognize those who helped to make it possible. Whether through resources, physical help, emotional support, or concern for afar; every one of you helped us to realize our goal of spending a month paddling and exploring.

Thanks!

Jay and Sylvia
Linda and Chung
Saskia and Sharuk
Peter Carson
Tess horner-Bourassa
Joanne and Craig
Daye Cooper
Sylvie Macfarlane
Sarah Sadler
Kelsey Wallace

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