

Wilson's Prom & Snake Island - Kayak Tour Reccie

Vigor Kayaking likes to lead social but challenging paddle tours for our regular paddlers. For this to happen, the coaches do a reconnaissance paddle for each venue prior to the tour. The weekend just before Christmas presented a perfect opportunity for Liam and Rachel to check out the Corner Inlet with paddling north of Wilson's Prom and around Snake Island and Little Snake Island.

The weekend started well with one night camping at the Port Welshpool Long Jetty Caravan Park and a good feed at the Port Welshpool Pub.



View from Port Welshpool the night before take-off, oh so calm

We launched our sea kayaks next to the Long Jetty and aimed for the west end of Little Snake Island. The island protected us from the north easterly up till that point. From there, we saw land straight ahead with mountains in the distance behind and assumed the land straight ahead was Snake Island. It wasn't long before the north-easterly wind made progress tough going with uncomfortably large swell. With our land in sight, we paddled hard for over an hour. We were very relieved to land on a nice beach after a tough start to the reccie. We had salmon wraps for lunch and climbed the nearby cliff to get a view – at this point realising that we were probably already on Wilson's Prom and not on Snake Island. To make sure, we headed back to the boats to check the map. As Liam reached for the hatch, he very nearly stepped on a snake, he jumped but did not squeal. The snake slowly moved away from the kayak as we checked the maps and confirmed Snake Island was further west than we had thought, and given we were paddling for over an hour, we had to be on the Prom.

The snake (not on Snake Island!) taking off after Liam almost stepped on it



We paddled along the coastline of the Prom to Tin Mine Cove and campsite. We discovered the campsite in a bad way from the 2011 flood damage so we set up camp on the beach. We enjoyed the serenity for a short while before being invaded by 10 native bogans who arrived by speed boat and proceeded to unload a large esky, a BBQ and a beach cricket set. To minimise the inconvenience to our serenity, we went for a walk to explore the tracks (which didn't last long as they were too over-grown), so back to the beach to rock hop along the coast. We noticed a couple of fishing boats and thought fishing would be a good idea, so back to camp. As we set up our kayaks with the fishing gear a second boat load of bogans arrived right in front of our camp! Determined not to let it worry us we jumped in the kayaks and headed around the cove to where the fishing boats were to fish. It wasn't long paddling that we forgot what was behind us with the magnificent red rocks lining the coast. Chinaman's Long Beach was just ahead so we pulled in and went to explore. We found some tracks and followed them a little too far, as when we returned to the beach Liam's boat was heading out to sea! Fortunately he can run fast and had to, catching it just before it got blown away in the current. After that excitement we tried fishing for what Liam thought was forever but in reality was about 5 minutes... so we headed back to camp with no fish to discover we were alone...phew.



The serenity before the bogan invasion

The Sunset was magic and the camp food tasted great to end an eventful first day paddling. The next day we followed the Wilsons Prom coastline until Snake Island was as close as we could get in sheltered waters. The north easterly was still blowing but fortunately the swell was not quite as big and we made the channel crossing without too much trouble. We headed straight into the wind for about halfway across then turned and paddled with the waves to the western point of Snake island. Along the way Liam had three dolphins join him surfing the waves, magic!

Reaching Snake Island the water was calm and protected, after a break and refuelling we headed between Little Snake Island and Snake Island. We tried our luck fishing but again failed, although we did see some schools of fish and many stingrays. We found a pier which had a basic campsite and sign to some huts we had heard of. The huts were 6.7km away on the bush track so we decided to paddle

some more and find them later. So we paddled another hour and then stopped for lunch on a remote beach, watching the boats carefully we could see the tide was going out this time. Another half hour paddling we realized we were not going to reach the furthest point and decided to turn. With the tide going out fast we fought the current and realized we had nowhere to go ... we needed to be on the other side of a smaller island for the deep water.

We were stranded! We found a stream just deep enough to paddle in and followed that wherever it went ... until it went the wrong way just a little too much and we decided we were going to have to carry the boats. Portage of fully loaded sea kayaks was hard work, they were super heavy and we could only go about 100 steps at a time. After what seemed like an eternity, but in actual fact was probably about 500m, we reached another place deep enough to paddle through to where we wanted to be. The pier where we swam earlier was now just on sand so we carried the boats again. Phew, we had finally made it to where we would camp for the night.

The last bit of portage for the day from the pier where we swam earlier up to the bank (so the boats wouldn't float away)



Rachel was exhausted but Liam was up for more adventure so he thought he would run the 6.7km to the huts and back. After 3km of running, Liam came across a dam – this was the local wildlife hangout. Before Liam realised he was right in the middle of a pack of kangaroos. He stood frozen, clapped his hands twice and all the kangaroos and the wild pig ran away... or so he thought. As he started running again, one of the kangaroos decided to chase him. Liam looked back and the kangaroo growled at him. After a couple hundred meters, Liam was running at 3 min km pace (this is very fast for all you non runners). He turned back to see the kangaroo at cruising speed and again it growled. He went for another couple hundred meters, deciding what to do and when he saw another pack of kangaroos ahead, he didn't want to get ambushed or attacked and turned directly to the chasing kangaroo. Fortunately the kangaroo veered off the track and Liam ran for home. As he passed the dam, the wild pig ran across the road again. He ran fast all the way back to camp. Rachel was shocked to see him so soon, sweaty and gasping for air as he recounted the story.

Next morning we woke early to a strong north wind. It was hot. We decided to paddle straight for Port Welshpool and started at 7:30am for what should have been a one hour paddle. The first 500m was partly sheltered by Little Snake Island but once we rounded the Island we were hit with the full force of the north wind. The boats rudders and our paddling strength was at maximum test against the force of the wind and the waves. Rachel tried to stay behind Liam but got swept into some bushes at the edge of Little Snake Island. Liam had seen something go slightly wrong

behind him but he couldn't turn to help or he would have got stuck too. All Rachel could hear was "Do your best". So ... she did her best and paddled her way around and out of the bushes. Finally she was back behind Liam again, and the paddle test against the north wind was on. It was very hard to keep the kayaks nose going straight into the waves but we soldiered on for about another half hour covering about one kilometre. At this point the nose of Rachel's kayak got pushed too far to the right and she couldn't correct it. Before Liam knew it she was off towards Tasmania. Liam turned to join her and they decided to try and turn the other way but they ended up paddling parallel to Little Snake Island. Unable to turn the kayaks back towards Port Welshpool, Liam and Rachel were washed up on to Little Snake Island. After regrouping on land, they left their boats on high ground and walked along the island to see if portage of the boats closer to Port Welshpool was an option. Portage on land was not an option with the dense bush. So, one boat at a time, they walked in waist deep water along the coast of Little Snake Island. They found an inlet which would be a good place to launch from. While they got organised to go, the north wind stopped. There was a brief moment of calm which was a relief. This was short lived as a strong westerly started as soon as they started paddling again. They paddled along Little Snake Island a little way and then turned and headed into the wind again. Rachel veered off to the right again and Liam was concerned that they would never make it. It was hard work but they both made it to the Port Welshpool pier to be greeted by cheers from a random Chinese couple. What a trip!



Liam – pretty happy to finally be back!

As the weather is so unpredictable, can change in an instant and the tides make it difficult to paddle, the coaches have decided not to do the kayak tour at Wilson's Prom this year and instead head to the remote and stunning Lake Dartmouth. The reccie of Lake Dartmouth was much more successful with some of the best flat water paddling conditions and stunning scenery we've ever encountered. March long weekend, lock it in!

VIGOR KAYAK TOUR 2013

LAKE DARTMOUTH
MARCH 9-11

