

# Endless Summers

## Big wave kayak school

### Day 5

We awoke to a clear blue sky with the sun already evaporating the dew from the thermals left out from the previous session. Another gorgeous day on the Ottawa River. We had a fairly slow start to the day, letting our pancakes settle a little before hitting the river. We all warmed up slowly then hiked up river the top of McCoy's rapid for another hit of Phil's hole to wake us all up. A few of us hit right side of Phil's for a good old wake up call whilst Louis hit the tongue and Jack got some air of the corner of left side. We realised we got down the wave a little too late in the day as all we could see was wall to wall rafts from four different companies all waiting to have a ride in baby face. We spent most of the time either surfing up at corner wave or sprawled out over the hot rocks beside baby face. The temperature was peaking 30 degrees, it was a hot one for sure.

Lunch was waiting for us back at Dales, just a 2-minute paddle from the wave. We all headed back in dribs and drabs after we had had enough of waiting in line, for me it was a couple of big rides then a nice float back for food, the others were not too far behind. We had a good few hours of chilling at the house before another afternoon Garb & push button session to be followed by Taco's that the students had prepared. Cooking & cleaning is a big part of the lifestyle development. In the evening, the guys were pretty exhausted and after an hour of boating movies they all peeled off to bed.

One thing this river does is to take it out of you if you're not used to it. The water is powerful and makes you paddle hard against the flows to either avoid big holes or to catch the waves. A routine of warming up and warming down after each session is imperative to have a full on enjoyable session without pulling any muscles. There is not much point coming here, not warming up and injuring yourself in the first few days preventing you from paddling for the rest of the trip.

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## Day 6

Saturday morning's initial plan was to session baby face then go for breakfast. Tyler and myself arrived early to Dales at 7.30am to be greeted by no one. Everyone was still asleep and need some gentle encouragement to surface. A serious case of phaffing took away our opportunity to paddle before eating so we just all piled in the waggon and drove to Beachburg to ling lings for a Canadian style fry up with pancakes and bottomless coffee's. The experience is a must for those who are travelling to Canada for the first time.

After an hour or so, we headed out to Garb and push button for a nice long session trying to avoid losing any more paddles. The speed at which the boys were developing was phenomenal. Watching them advance from flat spinning on Garb to pulling off air blunts in just a few days is exactly the reason why I absolutely love taking juniors to these places. When people had enough up at garb, they drifted downstream to push button for a nice warm down session. It is amazing how hungry you get after paddling this river; we had to make sure there was always a good amount of food ready and waiting for our return from the river. Tonight, Maria and Myself had earlier prepared a nice chilli that we warmed up; Hannah had also prepared some cheesy garlic bread. We set the table and all sat down to eat the feast.

As soon as the dinner was partially digested, we all quickly geared up and paddled the five-minute dash over to baby face to catch the last moments of the sunset glowing bright red on the horizon upstream of McCoy's. Thirty minutes later, it was dark. Elliott, Nathan and Jack had paddled over with glow sticks on themselves, making them easy to spot in twilight and made for interesting wave visuals. It was black with zero visibility by the time we all headed in followed by a well-deserved rest.

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### Day 7

Sunday morning. Despite the nostalgia and mild fatigue, I decided it was a good morning to have an intensive session at corner wave. This wave is the most technical wave on the Ottawa at summer levels. The wave makes you work harder than anywhere else on the river, when you flush off the wave it is a frantic sprint back up the eddy otherwise you will flush down and have to walk back up from horse shoe hole. It was an exhausting session but imperative to learn wave edging and space awareness. After two hours at corner wave, the boys had a nice mellow warm down at baby face before cruising back to the house.

That afternoon, the group hung out with Dale for a good while to rest, clean up the house and do their laundry whilst Tyler and Myself cruised back to Tyler's to do some paperwork, emails and most importantly to have a much needed few hours rest bite. By the time we had got back to Dales, Hannah had already taken the eager beavers back out to have a paddle. We extended our rest, got some more jobs done then took a little time to just sit on the couch and do nothing for a while. Martin had sorted diner for chicken drumsticks, gammon, fries and us. There had been a storm brewing all day but by the time we had finished diner, the clouds were swirling above us looking angry and ready to let out their wrath on local area. We decided to make a quick dash home to take in the washing and close the windows, we were a few minuets too late as the rain had already arrived, bouncing of the bonnet of the truck almost making dents in it. We were drenched just running from the car to the door. That night the heavens continued to drain all the way through the night, giving way to a glorious morning as if there had not even been a storm.

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## Day 8

Monday morning was a fairly late start for the boys who decided to have a lie-in. We got into another long warm up after breakfast before heading out to corner wave again to beat the crowds at baby face. By the time we had a nice 2hr session there, baby face was empty for a nice quality warm down. Dale had prepared lunch for us all back at his house. We paddled until we were starving and needed to head in for some sustenance. Once we had eaten, Tyler drove us all down to Garb for a session there. That place is just so much fun. One of the easier waves to get huge air, still quite technical to catch but you get a good launch down the wave face, it is an incredible feeling going air born and hearing the boom when your hull slams down back on the green. A wave you could easily spend the whole day sessioning. We stayed at garb and push button until 6.30 then drove back for diner.

We had decided to have a day in Pembroke on day 9 so after diner, the boys went out for another paddle until dark. The students were really responsible and capable giving then quality time to go out and session the waves without us. Dales house is just a 2-minute paddle to baby face. After receiving the methods of surfing during the day's instruction, the evenings for the boys were spent surfing without us and mixing with other paddlers and hammering out the wave time to get the tricks dialled. The extra hours really pushed their development forward.

The evening was a quiet one, a touch of local cable tv and off to bed for the boys. They were really starting to show their fatigue, shattered by 9pm every night and not wanting to wake up until after 9am in the mornings. It does take a while to adjust to paddling that intensively every day in hot climates.

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## Day 9

We were going to go to Pembroke early but the boys wanted a lie-in and a paddle first so we had a leisurely breakfast and put some kayaking dvd's on. Some of the guys were super keen and paddled down to Garb and the others just went over to McCoy's for a play. Tyler went out with the group and I stayed at Dales to catch up with the edit and the diary. It was a refreshing to be able to set some tasks and let the guys practice and mingle allowing time to work. I find I cant do that for long though when im at the Ottawa because all I want to do is paddle myself. How often do Pommies get to session places like that!

We drove to big town of Pembroke around 30 minutes from where we were staying. Pembroke is initially a long stretch of industrial units and take away restaurants eventually getting to Canadian Tyre and the shopping mall. We spent a while at the Mall, a chance for everyone to spend their spare cash. It was nice to have a change of scenery for a bit too. There was a boston pizza place on site too that we hit after shopping. This place was a bit like a TGI Fridays but super sized. We all filled our boots with a bill ending up topping \$220, a nice one off treat to eat out during the trip.

The boys decided to check out the local movie theatre in the mall after diner, we waited for them outside and were there just in case there was a riot. ☺.

By the time we got home, it was strait to bed the gang, myself & Tyler cruised back for some guitar and editing followed by an early night, ready for another full day on the river.

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## Day 10

We were going to do a river trip today but didn't get that far. We were having so much fun at Garb that we just stayed there until six. Was nice to hang out there for the best part of the day after a warm up session at Phil's and baby face. Garb gets quite busy at times but if your there for a good while, its well worth sitting it out whilst the keeners are there and observe, swim in the pour over and just generally chill out on the hot rocks until it gets quiet again.

The guys were really starting to show their development by now. It was so nice to see everyone achieve his or her goals set at the start of the trip. They had all smashed their goals and were doing things they never thought possible. Was like watching a child removing their bike stabilizers and riding solo for the first time, progressing to little jumps and then to 20ft drop offs. So proud. It gave me an opportunity to really do some good work, tweaking the bad habits that were starting to form and also a chance to film all their rides and gather footage for their training and for their movie.

We had a BBQ back at Dales. Tyler's mum, Debbie had provided the sausages and some amazing pasta salads. We again, filled ourselves up, had some time to relax and some of the group decided to head back out to baby face for a quiet evening session working on their individual session plans. Out here, practice definitely makes perfect and it was showing.

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### Day 11

Morning came after a well needed sleep. The coffee was bubbling away in the machine, got showered and got ready to pop round to Dales to meet the group and see what they were keen to do for the day. Out time on the Ottawa was almost over so we thought they would be up and mad keen to get out. We arrived late, around 9.30am and there was no one to be seen over at Dales, they were all shattered. We had another leisurely breakfast and asked what sort of day they wanted. They all decided to chill for the morning then head to garb and push button for the rest of the day until diner. It was an awesome day on the rock beside garb. The Mexicans were there which provided a truly entertaining afternoon. It also helped that it was topping 30c. ☺.

Earlier on in the week, we had all decided to host a BBQ at Dales place and invite some more kayakers over and have a wee shindig, a good chance to get everyone together and socialize off the water before we had to leave. We got back from garb at 6.30 and there were already some people there. We had gone a bit mad on the food, Tyler had bought a whole salmon and we had a selection of meats and salads. After an hour or so, there were around 40 odd people there, it was Ben Marr's birthday too so we had a little sing song for him with candles and everything. There were so many people on the deck; we just assumed he was there. He wasn't. We had to sing it all over again after someone had gone to find him, funny.

The boys had constructed a monster fire down by the water that seemed to attract everyone there once it had grown to a healthy size, around 15ft. In the photos, you can see how far people have had to sit away from the heat coming off it. Good work boys. By around ten or so, people headed out. It was a nice opportunity for the gang to hang out with some of the international paddlers and socialize a bit off the water before heading home.

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## Day 12

Sadly today is our last day on the Ottawa River. Everyone looked sad to be leaving after a relatively short stay in such an amazing place for an up and coming kayaker. It leaves you yearning for more Sun and big, warm water. We made sure everyone was packed, ish before heading out for the last paddle. The guys spent all day down at Garb until Tyler and myself picked them up around 15.30. We had lots of finishing up to do during the day, people to thank and money to sort out so we left them to it. After I had done all my admin, I just lay out on Tyler's deck and soaked up the last of the sun I would be seeing for a few months. Was the worst day to be leaving, was so hot and so beautiful.

We got the gang off the water and back to Dales to give the kit a chance to dry before heading to Ottawa. Again, we had about an hour and a half to kill so we all sprawled out on Dales deck and attempted to get some last tints of colour on our pasty white bodies.

Tyler drove us all to Ottawa, stopping for a dirty Wendy's burger. Honestly, I don't know what we were thinking, the burger I had was called the 'baconator', I have never felt so bad after eating before that. If I was to live on that crap, I have no-doubt id be dead in a matter of weeks. Louis however, went back for 2<sup>nd</sup>s.

We visited a few more places, spent the last of our dollars and got ourselves checked in and settled waiting for our plane. Everything went smoothly, was just a bit sad to be saying goodbye again until next summer.

Mike was there waiting for us in Heathrow with a big smile on his face, welcoming us home and ready to drive us all back up to Bala. Was an awesome trip with some awesome clients. Could not have asked for a better trip. I hope next year I can run these camps all summer long.

Peace. Cookie ☺

