

# ***Coastbusters***

**The Cross Currents Newsletter for Mid-Atlantic Paddlers**

November 2022



## **Some Bad-Ass Women in Croatia**

***Jill Allbritton, Gail daMota, May Win Liu,  
Gail Davidson, Kendra Sieber Tuck***

The beauty of Croatia and the opportunity to kayak the Adriatic Sea has been on the bucket list of many of the sea kayakers in the Maryland/Virginia area. The planning began during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it was a challenge to find an outfitter that would customize the trip - we did not want the traditional tourist experience. Thankfully, the world of sea kayakers is small; through word of mouth, we

were lucky enough to find Peak and Paddle Croatia owned and operated by Mladen Hanzir. Mladen is an ACA Level-3 Instructor, a Level-3 Trip Leader, a Wilderness First Responder, and he holds other outdoor activity certifications. His gear and equipment are top notch: his kayaks are P&H (high, medium, and low volume); the paddles are Werner and Lendal; the PFDs are NRS and Peak.



*Croatia and the paddling area*

## The Plan

We told Mladen who we were and what we wanted: all participants would be at least a BCU Level-3 or ACA Level-3, and several have higher certifications including trip leaders and instructors. We desired long distances in a single day, challenging conditions, and to embrace the culture of the country. We wanted to go to the places most tourists don't go. On top of all of that, we wanted to be able to hike at least one of Croatia's beautiful national parks. He delivered.

Mladen chose two areas for the group home base, the island of Zlarin and the island of Murter – 5 days at each location. These islands are in the most island-dense area of the archipelago in Croatia, they offer diverse and at times challenging kayaking conditions, and are close to Krka National Park for hiking. Some islands are uninhabited, others have small quaint towns or cities with unique

museums, restaurants, and the opportunity to experience the beautiful Croatian culture. We chose to go in late September to be outside peak tourist season – a wise choice.

Mladen was wonderful to work with throughout the planning process, handling all the questions, special requests and ever-changing group size with grace and patience. Once in Croatia he proved to be an incredible guide. The weather and conditions required the group to be flexible with our itinerary as on most days the winds were much higher (20-30 mph) than normal and thunderstorms were forecasted. The group was well aware of this, and all agreed to go with the flow and trust in the knowledge, skill, and expertise of Mladen. He did not disappoint – Mladen and the trip far exceeded our expectations and what follows are some excerpts of the trip highlights.



Photo: Gail daMota

### Kayak in the Wind / The Islands

Most days the group faced strong headwinds and wind gusts - in kayaks we weren't used to. We zigged and zagged as we fought the weather cocking. The first few days, the waves built to two-three feet and our kayaks crashed as they leapt up and over the waves. The solution for a few of the group was to load logs and boulders in the front and/or back hatches. It worked, and they remained in the kayaks for the entire trip.

The coastline was beautiful with small trees, rocky landscape, and sparkling clear sapphire waters. Looking down, we could see sea urchins and a few starfish feeding on them. They were at least 15 feet down, but the water was so clear they deceptively seemed closer. The clarity of the water allowed you to see the contour of the sea bottom that at times created the strange sensation of paddling uphill.

Despite their proximity, each island has its own character. Most are uninhabited and some are used only for farming. We paddled past islands with terraced landscapes where olive trees were once (and some still are) cultivated. The islands had very little rainfall and no irrigation, ideal for olives. Olive oil from the mid-Dalmatian islands is reportedly as good if not better than from Italy (according to the Croatians). One island was once home to donkeys that were used on a nearby island

for their annual donkey races that are still held today. Other small islands have free-roaming sheep. Each and every one beautiful in its own way.

### A Land Rich in History

Croatia has passed between kingdoms, empires, and republics for centuries. The result is a rich cultural legacy that has Ottoman, Venetian, Napoleonic, Roman, Slavic, and Viennese influences. In 1991, it declared its independence to become the Republic of Croatia and in 2013, a member of the European Union. Gail Davidson was reading the history of Croatia and regaled us with history lessons each morning. One of our many memorable paddles took us to the city of Šibenik where we encountered Hitler's Eyes and St. Nicholas Fortress.

We paddled through Hitler's Eyes, a 200-meter-long sea tunnel excavated in rock. The Germans began building the tunnel during WWII but never used it. It was finished in the 1950s to hide and protect warships from air raids, and to defend the city of Šibenik from enemy ships. The two openings of the tunnel look ominous, so the locals named it Hitler's Eyes. There is a secret passage in the rock face that allows one to enter the tunnel by foot, and above it, built into the cliff wall, is a structure that we were told was once used as a secret Catholic chapel.



Photo: Gail daMota



*The Fortress. Photo courtesy of inyourpocket.com.*

Just passed Hitler's Eyes sits a UNESCO World Heritage Site, St. Nicholas Fortress, designed by Venetian architect Hyeronimus di San Michaela. It was built at the entrance of St. Anthony Channel in 1540 to defend Šibenik port from the Turks. While it had been fortified by numerous cannons (no longer there), it was never really put to use in war. The Croatian military kept maintaining it for arms development until 1979 when it was abandoned. We were lucky enough to be passing the Fortress when the caretaker was outside, and he allowed us to dock our kayaks and gave us a private tour allowing us into chambers and areas that are not open to the public. It was creepy and beautiful at the same time and a wonderful opportunity for the group.

### **A Paddling Day to Remember!**

The day began with a simple plan to leave Zlarin and move to our second home-base in Murter. We were to load our luggage, six kayaks (logs and boulders included), and ourselves onto a 25-foot motorboat, ride two hours to Kornati National Park to launch for our day's paddle, paddle 10 miles to a restaurant on an island for a late lunch/early dinner, meet the boat, reload the kayaks, and ride another two hours to Murter. Best laid plans...

We successfully launched our kayaks in a calm cove in the national park and as we paddled through the park, we could feel the winds building. For the initial part of the journey, the winds blew hard once again, creating the sense of paddling uphill. We had to paddle around an island with large cliffs on one side and the open Adriatic Sea on the other.

Coming around the first corner, we were met with stiff headwinds of 20+ mph and waves of three to four feet. Around the next corner, the waves were coming from the open sea, and now were four to five feet. But once hitting the steep cliff wall, the rebounding waves were five to seven feet!

Gail daMota and May Win Liu paddled closer to the cliff wall. We soared to the top of the waves and then disappeared completely from sight when we dropped into the trough, surrounded by a wall of sapphire water. May Win kept smiling as she loved riding the waves. She foolishly tried to use her camera and nearly lost her paddle! Kendra Tuck and Jill Allbritton wisely chose to paddle further away from the cliffs but were still in big water and very challenging conditions. Gail Davidson was in a Leo kayak that weather cocked like crazy even filled with logs, and she was grateful that she was able to keep her boat from going to Venice!

In spite of the conditions, we felt safe as Mladen positioned himself amongst us, trying to catch a glimpse of a hat or paddle, evidence that we were still in our kayaks, and he remained within reach of us should disaster strike. After a nerve-wracking two miles of this, we rounded the island (with no casualties) into stiff quartering winds, but just two-to-three-foot waves. Made it!



*Photo: Gail daMota*

We took a break on this cool island where we climbed to the top of the cliff to what we thought were ancient ruins of some sort of fortress. We later learned the ruins were actually the remnants of a 1950's German movie set – but it was still fun to explore and see the amazing views and expanse of the Adriatic. We ended the kayak portion of the day by changing into dry clothes and enjoying a fine meal and loading our kayaks back onto the motorboat for what we thought would be a two-hour ride to Murter.

### There we were ....

The ride started out as fun. Kendra, Jill, and May Win were on one side of the boat with feet on the kayaks. Gail Davidson was riding on top of the kayaks, and Gail daMota was on the wettest side of the boat, behind the captain. We were all getting wet as the waves splashed us and we broke into spontaneous song to blues music singing “The Adriatic Blues.”

The laughter at getting wet from the bounce, and the adrenaline rush from the day turned to fear as the weather conditions deteriorated and the waves grew dangerously large. Our captain, Nino, had to slow down significantly as the waves were now crashing over the wheelhouse, we were rocking from side to side, and waves were coming over the side as well. Thunderstorms were visible on three sides of us, and it was now pitch black with no moon or stars. You could not see the islands or cliffs that were all around us. Some of the group, who will remain nameless, started thinking that this trip may be written up in Coastbusters as we were not prepared for the storm. We had foolishly stored our PFDs in the cockpits of our stacked kayaks, they were unreachable, we did not have cold weather gear on, we were soaked to the bone, and the temperatures were dropping.

Thankfully, Nino is a very skillful captain, and he and Mladen kept a watchful eye on doppler radar, tracking the thunderstorms and adjusting our navigation to avoid them. They also relied on a depth finder to ensure we did not run into an island or hit a rock reef below the water line, and they used a GPS to navigate through the blackness of the



### Coastbusters

**Bad Ass Women are Unprepared:  
Get their “Bad Asses” Kicked!**

*Injuries Avoided; Pride Wounded*

*By Captain Croatian*

*It has been reported that early last week, a group of American women who were on a sea kayaking holiday were caught unawares when they encountered strong winds and high seas off the Dalmatian coast. They*

*The alternative story if things had gone south*

night. When we reached Murter four hours after we had launched, we jumped onto solid land as fast as possible and profusely thanked Nino and Mladen for getting us safely home. We were relieved that we did not end up as a Coastbusters disaster story!

Shortly after we were tucked away in our apartments, severe thunderstorms hit Murter, and we were once again reminded of what a dangerous journey we had just been through and grateful to be safe and warm.



Photo: Gail daMota

### When Bugs Attack!

It is the third day in Croatia, the second day on the quaint island of Zlarin. Walking down the narrow path to our apartment, we are greeted by the town dogs and cats, all well-fed and (most) friendly. Pomegranates are turning pinkish red nearing ripeness, green olives and figs hang from trees, green grapes ripen on the vines in our apartment yard and line the walking path.

We are tired after the second day of kayaking in the wind, in unfamiliar kayaks, and the unresolved jet lag. We walk up the two flights of stairs to the apartment. We groan, squeeze through the narrow entrance door sideways so we can enter holding our dry bags. Finally, up the inside flight of stairs, looking forward to rest.

This apartment holds two bedrooms and one community room. Mind you, these are European sized rooms - the entire apartment is smaller than most U.S. living rooms. May Win and I (Jill) are sharing a college dormitory-sized bedroom. The ends of our twin beds touch and there is a narrow path that one uses to fall into bed. Of course, this is Europe, meaning no AC, but they do have a window without a screen to open for ventilation.

We sweltered from the heat the first night, so we agreed to open the window the second night. I sleep soundly but there is one mosquito that keeps buzzing in my ear waking me up over and over. I am too fatigued to get up plus I can't turn on the light to battle the beast as I have a roommate. I think I trick the mosquito by hiding under the European duvet which is hot but safe from the pest.

The next morning, I am startled as I look in the mirror and see the 15 plus bites on my forehead, and 15 or so on each arm. The day before I was stung by a yellow jacket, so I also had a hot swollen left upper arm with a serpiginous red border. May Win successfully protected her face, but her legs stuck out from the blanket so that one mosquito, really swarms of pests, have feasted on her legs. My fellow kayakers cheer me up by telling me it just looks like I have teenage acne!

We are on our way to hike at the Krka National Park with its majestic waterfalls. The crowds of people clear away when they see my face and my and May Win's arms. They apparently fear we have Monkey Pox or some other dreaded disease.

We are at our wits end. We want to cry and scream. We can't spend another night in that room...bake all night or be a mosquito's feast. Mladen to the rescue - an electric plug-in odorless mosquito repellent! It works like a charm. The mosquitoes congregate on the ceiling but no buzzing or biting us. Lesson of the story: Even in the fall take electric plug mosquito repellent to Europe! P.S. having multiple red spots on your face clears the crowds near you!!



### Lilly's Cozy Cove – A Slice of Heaven

One highlight of the trip was Lilly's Cozy Cove, a bed and breakfast on the island of Tiso. The B&B is owned by Mladen's friends Joe and Laura Lilly. Joe is an American and U.S. culinary school-trained chef, while Laura is a native Croatian. It is located on a hill overlooking the bay with a lunch spot in a covered outdoor dining room surrounded by pomegranate and fig trees.

We were treated to a private, gourmet lunch immersing ourselves in local culture. Traditionally Croatians roast their fish whole, without seasoning so it is fresh but bland. However, Joe knew Kendra was a pescatarian and prepared a flavorful fish and vegetable meal for her - one of the best she says she ever had. The rest of the group had their meal of roasted chicken, potatoes, and vegetables cooked on a "bell" in an outside fireplace. The food is in a cast-iron roasting dish placed on the hot bricks of the fireplace, the bell is placed over it, and the hot fire embers are placed on top of the bell and kept hot for hours while the food is slowly roasted in a delicious sauce.

We ended with a dessert of rožata, the Croatian version of flan. Joe added a pomegranate (freshly picked from his yard) gastrique that Kendra went crazy over – to the point of (yes - literally), licking her plate clean! We all cheered when Mladen joined in licking his plate too.

Kendra will be in Croatia in July and plans on spending time with Joe and Laura for cooking classes at their unique little spot.

### Conclusion

Throughout the trip, we all laughed and chattered and entertained Mladen with our often-off-color conversation. We watched out for each other, both on water and on land. Even on this scariest, toughest, sea crossing, no one whined or complained, and all stayed calm. Mladen said he was impressed with our skills and while he initially referred to us as "senior women," he quickly started referring to us as "Bad Ass Women." This trip was outstanding in so many ways, not the least of which was the company. We all agreed, we would be more than happy to travel anywhere again with this group of Bad Ass Women!



*In This Issue*

Bad Ass Women in Croatia – *Jill Allbritton, Gail daMota, et al* ..... 1

My Romany’s Birthplace – *Mike Labelle* ..... 9

Wrecking in the VA Barrier Islands – *Rick Wiebush* ..... 11

The Great Storm at Hog Island – *Charles Sterling* .....13

Photos of the Month ..... 14

(Unsolicited) Kiptopeke Feedback – *Rick Wiebush* ..... 17

Paddling the Douro – *Kathy Ellwood* ..... 20

Sea Kayaking Book Launch and Blackmail – *Paul Caffyn* ..... 24

Direction Determines Destination – *Debbie Anderson* ..... 27

Contributors ..... 28



*Inquisitive sea lion at Espiritu Santo, Baja. Photo: Rick Wiebush*

## My Romany's Birthplace

*Mike Labelle*



*Finished boats await wrapping. Photo: Mike Labelle*

While paddling in Anglesey, Wales in September (2022), I had a chance to tour the birthplace of my Romany kayak. (Mine is so classic that it was made before they were labeled as being “Classic”.)

The company was formed as Nigel Dennis Kayaks (NDK) but is now “Sea Kayaking UK”. It has always operated in Holyhead, not far from Wales shipping port, the ferry to Ireland and a huge array of beautiful paddling coves, peninsulas, rocky shorelines, and changeable weather with huge tidal races. Even my non-paddling wife and friend loved the tour.

I was thrilled to get a tour from (and to paddle with) Mirco Goldhausen, one of Sea Kayaking UK’s sponsored paddlers who has circumnavigated Ireland. And, I was even more thrilled to be able to meet Nigel Dennis at the end of the tour.

Talk about a kid in a candy store! Even though I already own my Romany and a couple of other

boats, it was hard not to covet another one. Bright colors, creative graphics, lighter materials! The entrance is where the final finishing is completed, and finished boats are stored. So the immediate impact of walking in the door was impressive – colorful boats stored vertically with some wrapped and ready to ship around the world. I was equally tempted by Celtic paddles, which they started making about a decade ago.

### The Process

Each boat is made separately and custom built by hand. We went to the start of the process where various choices of resin (e.g., for regular or heavy or Kevlar lay-up) are poured into separate reusable top and bottom forms. There were many of these



*Photo: Mike Labelle*



molds as they included all the various Romany models (Surf, Classic, Excel, Expedition, etc.) and other NDK boats (Latitude, Pilgrim, Pilgrim, Expedition etc.).

After one night of setting up, the next and colorful process is the use of the amazing collection of paints and graphic tools that make each of the boats unique. The third major process is joining the hull and the top of the boat together and setting up overnight. Then the various additions are added such as the cockpit coaming and skeg and control areas, foot pegs, hold covers, bulkheads, lines, and the like. I think that each of these processes had specialists that worked only in their areas of expertise but didn't actually ask that question. (The original Romany boat developed by Nigel Dennis introduced keyhole cockpits, day hatches, and skegs to North American market.)

I was aware that Romany's are made with fiberglass and Kevlar. I had not been aware that the boat is also made in a plastic model in the same factory. We saw all these processes. I later paddled a plastic Romany in Brittany France on a rough shoreline and was very happy that it felt just like a glass boat

and also very happy in the rocky coves and inlets that it was plastic.

The high quality of the finishing was apparent when watching the workers' final polishing and cleaning process.

There is some variation with Kevlar, but the process of making these great kayaks takes essentially one week. Each boat is being actively worked on for most of the time during the day as the two times the boats need to set up are timed to match overnight hours.

The factory is not a museum, although a modest version of that can be found in the café at nearby "Anglesey Outdoors" a location with camping, glamping, hostel, and motel types of accommodations that Nigel started a few decades ago. But, hanging on a wall near the entrance, the factory does have arguably the first English-style glass kayak. It was made by Valley Kayaks in 1976 using carefully copied Greenland dimensions.

I'm certainly thinking about which spectacular graphics and colors I need for my new Romany – since like all of us, there is always a "need" for one more boat in one's quiver!



*Nigel Dennis and Mike Labelle*

## Wrecking in the Virginia Barrier Islands

*Rick Wiebush*

Those of you who have had the good fortune to paddle in the Virginia barrier islands are familiar with the many offshore shoals. They often change position and shape, but they nonetheless provide a lot of surfing fun for sea kayakers.

“Fun” was not the term used by coastal mariners in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, when hundreds of sailing and steam vessels ran aground off the Atlantic coast of Maryland and Virginia (not to mention the Outer Banks). The winter months were particularly dangerous because storms would change the size and location of existing shoals and create new ones. In addition, those storms and their attendant rain, fog and wind could cause ships to go off course and get blown in toward the dangerous shoals. Once aground, the ships could be battered to pieces in a matter of days by huge, relentless waves.

### Wreck of the *Despatch*

On October 10, 1891, President Benjamin Harrison’s official yacht, the steamship the *Despatch*, ran aground on the shoals off the southern end of Assateague Island in Virginia. An account in the Baltimore Sun described the scene the next day:

“It was a remarkable sight to see the ship roll, slow and graceful, so near shore as she lies, listing toward the sea, apparently endeavoring with each surge to reach the shore, but old Neptune holds her in a tight grasp. Now and then, a crash is heard in the high wind and sea, a davit loosens its hold on shattered planks, (and) mouldings, chairs, tables, boxes, etc. spread themselves over the watery surface.”



*The Virginia Barrier Islands*

“The whole beach for over three miles is strewn with wreckage and it looks as though hundreds of people are along to observe every new object of interest which floats ashore. One man rushes down to clutch a box of cigars, another a box of candles, another one a can of ham. Then here dashes a handsome chair, large refrigerator tosses about and with one high surge lands high and dry with the hinges broken.”

“..... Just as we (were) leaving, the ship made another list. The ship's launch disappeared when her davit and the yardarms reached the water. The sea was rolling with increased anger, the wind (was) blowing from the northeast at twenty miles an hour, and it was the opinion of all hands that by daylight tomorrow morning nothing would be seen of the *Despatch* but the strewn wreckage on the beach.” (Unsigned letter to The Sun, likely from a Chincoteague resident.)

## Wrecking

Similar incidents had been going on in coastal waters for the previous 150 years. During most of that time, the fate of the shipwrecked crew and cargo depended on whether any of the residents in those sparsely populated areas spotted the ship in time to do anything about it. If someone did, and local people had the boats, skill, and courage to go into stormy waters, they would attempt to rescue the crew. If they were successful, residents could negotiate some portion of the cargo for themselves. If they didn't succeed in saving the crew, the locals might just take the contents of the ship or report the wreck to the county Commissioner of Wrecks.

In the Virginia barrier islands, the occupation of "wrecking" was informal (individuals taking advantage of wrecks to grab cargo, as in the *Despatch* incident), but also included formal businesses. One such business was run by Nathan Cobb (owner of Cobb Island) and his sons. It was big business.

In an 1896 interview with the Richmond Dispatch, Cobb estimated that 40 – 50 ships had been wrecked on the shoals between 1839 and 1871. After saving the captain and crew, Cobb would negotiate with the vessel's captain regarding payment for saving the vessel and cargo. During that period, the Cobb's wrecking business salvaged 37 ships for fees ranging from 35% - 60% of the value of the cargo. Records show that Cobb realized \$19,000 – worth \$430,000 in today's dollars - from the salvage of just three of those ships alone!



Drawing/Photo courtesy of istock

## The U.S. Life Saving Service

On the day the *Despatch* foundered, the Assateague branch of the U.S. Life Saving Service (forerunner of the Coast Guard) made several trips in surf boats and successfully rescued the entire crew. (On that same day, a boat from a wrecking business in Chincoteague went out to the *Despatch* not to save anyone, but to ask about wrecking fees.)

The USLSS had its start in the 1870's. Coastal shipwrecks all along the east coast had become a significant public issue in the U.S. after the Civil War. Increasing levels of commerce meant more sailing ships, more shipwrecks and increasing costs in terms of lives and cargo. A particularly brutal storm in 1870 resulted in congressional funding to expand and professionalize the previous all-volunteer life-saving service. Over the next few years, USLSS stations were established up and down the east coast, including in the Virginia barrier islands. As a result, many of the wrecking businesses, such as those run by the Cobbs, were put out of business.

In the 40 years between 1875 and 1915, the USLSS in the barrier islands responded to 383 wrecks. The methods they used to rescue mariners, and the dangers they encountered in doing so, were quite dramatic and will be the focus of a subsequent article.

---

### Sources

Badger, C. J. & Kellam, R. (1989). *The barrier islands: A photographic history of life on Hog, Cobb, Smith, Cedar, Parramore, Metompkin, & Assateague*. Stackpole Books.

Barnes, B. M. & Truitt, B. R. (1997). *A short history of the Virginia barrier islands*. In B. M. Barnes & B. R. Truitt, *Seaside chronicles: Three centuries of the Virginia barrier islands*. University Press of Virginia.

National Park Service (2021, June 6). *The Wreck of the Despatch*. <https://www.nps.gov/asis/learn/historyculture/the-wreck-of-the-despatch.htm>

## THE GREAT STORM AT HOG ISLAND

Charles Sterling

On October 10, 1903, Hog Island had an experience that has never occurred since the sea cast it up from the bowels of the deep. Tradition tells of high tides, and tidal waves like the one in 1888, which engulfed Cobb's Island but a few miles away; but never before has the whole of Hog Island disappeared from view as it did in October, leaving not one inch of natural land visible.

The storm began in the morning and lasted four days, with the wind blowing a gale from the northeast, and the tide rising steadily. The booming of the surf, the pounding, beating, and dashing of the great billows, striking the shore with terrific force, seemed as if the island must be shivered, shattered, and disintegrated by the impact. The ocean, the islanders' staunch friend, which had ever yielded them a bountiful support, now arose in its wrath, and like a hungry lion, sought to devour them. Slowly, hour by hour the sea advanced, and the white-capped waves, like lines of cavalry, followed each other in wild charges across the sea-meadows, then attacking the island, they scaled the banks and advanced inland, each line coming with a rush and scream, and then going to pieces on the solid ground; but the reserves follow behind each line, making some advance until they reach the high ground in the center of the island, where the lighthouse stands; and now the ocean sends its heaviest cohorts, and they dash upon this spot, as the phalanx of Moslem upon the high hill of Acre; or Pickett upon the heights of Gettysburg.

As the waves leap forward they enter the rooms of the houses, they drown the stock, and the terrorized people hurry into their boats, and fly to the light tower for safety, Then with one mighty effort, the sea bursts its bounds, and closes on the island, and its waters roll across; Hog Island is out of sight, the water being a foot deep at its highest point. Fortunately no lives were lost, there was no panic, and the clear-headed, steady-nerved islanders acted coolly and carefully, and when the storm had exhausted itself, and the waters receded, it was found that no great damage had been done, only much stock had been lost.

There came near being a tragedy nearby, however, for the three-mast schooner, "Benjamin Russell," loaded with lumber, was lost on Pig Island, near Hog Island, during the storm. The vessel took a cargo of lumber from Coke Inlet, N. C., and was bound to New York, when the storm came down on her. When twenty miles off Sandy Hook, N. Y. (*sic*), the captain, seeing that his vessel could not enter the port of New York, had to scud southward for sixty-four hours. He was on the sea with wind blowing fifty miles an hour, and the sea rolling mountain-height, without anything to eat, or any sleep.

At eleven o'clock on the second day out, he reached the coast of Hog Island, mistaking it for Chincoteague Island, and knowing that there was a good harbor in Thomas Cove, thought that he might reach it and save his vessel; but to his great surprise, when the fog lifted, he found that he had entered Hog Island Inlet and before he could put his vessel about, he ran ashore on Pig Island. Although the storm was raging its worst, Capt. J. E. Johnson, of the Life Saving Station, immediately launched the life-boat, and with his crew of stalwart surfmen, in less than half an hour, was alongside of the stranded vessel to save its crew from a watery grave.

Source: Sterling, C. M. (1903). *Hog Island Virginia*. The countryside transformed: The railroad and the eastern shore of Virginia, 1870-1935. <http://eshore.iath.virginia.edu/node/2095>

**Photos of the Month**



**Lofoten Islands, Norway**

*Photo: Jeff Allen*

**Photos of the Month**



**Sullivan's Falls, Maine**

*Photo: Jimmy McArdle*

**Photos of the Month**



**Nehalem Bay, OR**

*Photo: Bill Vonnegut*

## **(Unsolicited) Kiptopeke Feedback**

***Rick Wiebush***



*A big crew on Cedar Island. Photo; Rick Stewart*

*Thank you for another fantastic Kiptopeke Symposium. The instructors are the best. All three of my courses were successful and worthwhile despite the weather challenges. First class instructors and training. Fun, friendly people, a great experience. I learned new skills and ways to think as a better paddler. I appreciate the time and effort you and your helpers devote to making it happen.*

*What a fantastic vacation in Cape Charles VA at Surf camp and the Kiptopeke Sea Kayak Symposium — everything from surfing 4 ft waves and big wave trains; learning and hitting my offside “learning side” roll; hitting some “rolls in the wild”; backwards surfing with Jeff, going around the concrete ships and feeling the bump; making new friends and seeing old sea kayak friends; and even seeing a UFO! Another peak 2022 kayaking experience. I am still buzzing with the joy! Thank you Rick Wiebush for all your hard work to make Kiptopeke happen!!!*



*Surfing the wave train. Photo: Ashley Brown*



*The Saturday night dinner. Photo: Jo Jo Hollern*

*... once again you put on a stellar event! Kudos to all the students who embraced the challenging wind and flexing coach roster and brought their willingness to challenge themselves with a smile. Good fun and great company.*



*Intro to Surf (on the Bay!) Photo: Rick Wiebush*

*Wow. I survived Kiptopeke and all that wind!*

*It was so much fun and I learned some valuable skills.*

*The Mex food was yummy*

*Thank you again. Hope to come back next year*



Cowboy. Photo: Rick Stewart



Bill Burnham. Photo: Rick Wiebush



T Rescue. Photo: Rick Stewart



Apparent Vilings on Smith Island. Photo: Ashley Brown

*The surfing class on Saturday stood out hands down. It was a combination of spilling surf that we don't get up here. Slower non-threatening surf that didn't catapult you (2, occasional 3-footers). Small class size (there were 3 students including me).*

*Ashley is just a ton of fun to be with. I even nailed a combat roll in front of her (made me look good). And if that wasn't enough, we were surrounded by dolphins all morning. When the surf died down after lunch, we got into the wave train for more fun.*

*Friday and Sunday were challenging for both the students and the instructors. The classes had to be modified (downward) due to conditions and to keep some students reasonably inside their comfort zones and their abilities.*

*Lastly, don't discount the entire social aspect. Staying in the cabins and socializing with like-minded folks.*



Overlooking the Douro at Pinhao. Photo: Kathy Ellwood.

## Padding the Douro

*Kathy Ellwood*

Steep granite cliffs rising more than 600 feet in some places surround you. The hillsides are rocky and consist of prickly pears and a variety of oak species, including the cork oak, the primary source of cork for wine bottle stoppers. The hillsides are filled with vineyards and olive groves. There are almond orchards and orange trees, not to mention wild boar skulls and paleolithic rock art.

We were on the Douro River, which for 70 miles forms part of the international border between Portugal and Spain. It is one of the major rivers of the Iberian Peninsula and runs through spectacular

wine country. The Douro Valley has been classified as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. It is the only place authentic Port wine is made. The world's first demarcated wine region was established here in 1756.

We, 12 paddlers plus a young German guide and two wonderful Portuguese assistant guides, were part of a kayaking tour that included multiple paddling days, stays in historic hotels and houses, gourmet meals consisting of several courses with a regional wine paired with every course. And always more wine. Really nice after a day of paddling.

Surprisingly I never had a headache or trouble getting up in the morning for another paddle. The only meal that wine and/or beer wasn't served was breakfast.

### **Douro Natural Park**

Our first launch site, Lagoaca, is in the International Douro Natural Park, on the Portuguese side. Across the river on the Spanish side the park is called Arribes del Duero Natural Park. As we entered the river we were struck by its beauty and how isolated it is. The Park is part of the last pristine forests in southwestern Europe. The area is known for nesting birds, such as the protected Griffon vulture, which we saw frequently. It was fun to traverse the river and paddle between Portugal and Spain. The Natural Park area does not allow commercial motor traffic, so we had the river all to ourselves.

### **Headwinds and the white cooler**

That first day on the water proved challenging as the winds hit us straight on. At times the winds were up to 15 mph, which caused white caps on the river. Then the winds would calm down, only to start up again with big gusts. Everyone was quite pleased to take out for lunch after about three-four hours of fighting the wind. We were met by our two Portuguese assistant guides with a cooler of beer and a table set for a scrumptious lunch.



*The author on the Douro. Photo: Mike Ellwood*



*Douro vineyards. Photo: Kathy Ellwood*

When we set out on the river after lunch the headwinds greeted us yet again, but it didn't detract from the beauty of the area. We were the only ones on the river. After another few hours of paddling, we met our trusty Portuguese "brothers" waiting to help us off the river at Congida, with yet another cooler of beer. We were getting conditioned to look for the white cooler when we got off the river. That evening we enjoyed local cuisine and naturally, wine from the region with every course. There are more than Port wines in the Douro region. However, we usually ended our meals with a good, well-aged Tawny Port.

Our second day on the river, we left the Natural Park behind and started to get into private lands where the hillsides were covered with vineyards, groves of olive trees, and old stone structures. It was a sunny, warm day and birds filled the shores and the sky.

After lunch (for some reason no white beer cooler here?) the wind had picked up. Headwinds? Of course. Is there any other kind? After a challenging paddle of a couple of hours, we saw one of the Portuguese guides coming towards us in a kayak, as though looking for us. We weren't that late; he just wanted to be sure that we found the correct take-out location at Casa do Rio. (At least that's what he said.) Thankfully, we were once again greeted by the white cooler. Our accommodation for the night was a magnificent place surrounded by vineyards, with river views from every room.



*Yum! Photo: Kathy Ellwood*

### Paleolithic drawings

Paleolithic drawings were discovered near Vila Nova de Foz Coa in the late 1980's, and the area was subsequently designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Engraved drawings of horses, cows, other animals, and human and abstract figures have been dated from 22,000 to 10,000 B.C. We had a day off the water to explore the region and go to the Coa museum that featured the rock art. We even got a chance to help with the harvest of grapes.

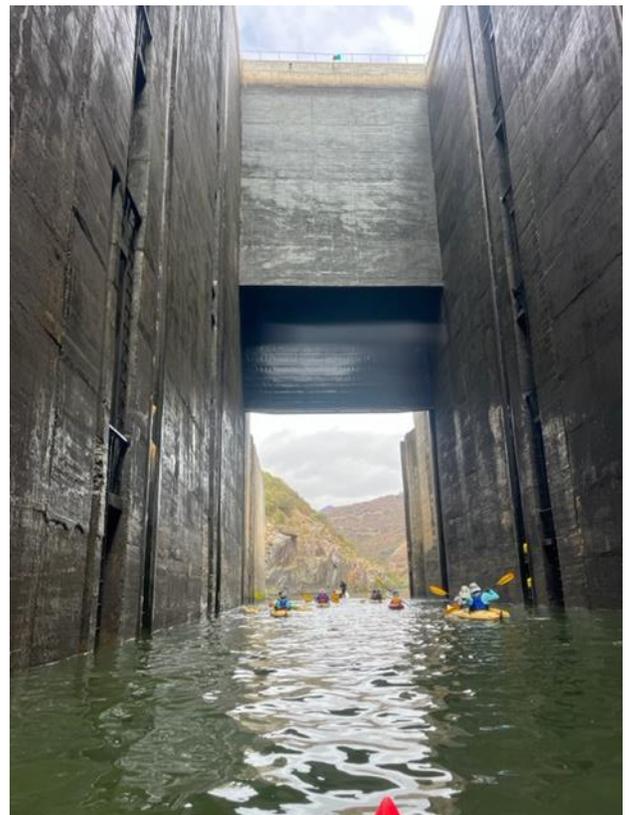
After another good night's sleep, we had a relaxing day of paddling without the strong headwinds. Without having to battle, we could more easily take in the hillsides filled with vineyards, olive groves, almond orchards, and orange trees, which were ready for picking. It was a nice bonus when fruit trees were nearby at some of our stops along the river. There is nothing like picking fresh oranges from a tree after a couple hours of paddling.

One of our potty break stops ("Go find a shrub") along the river was back in a cove. While there, we happened to find two wild boar skulls. One of them became my mascot, which I mounted on the bow of my kayak.

### Through the lock

One of the highlights of the trip, was when we came upon one of the dams and a lock. Dams and a system of locks were built along the river in the 1950s and 1960s. These dams made the flow of water more uniform, providing easier navigation. They also fueled a series of hydroelectric power plants along the river.

We entered the lock. Not being one for taking riverboat rides or for cruise ships, I had not gone through a lock before, never mind in a kayak. It really is amazing. We rafted up and our guide draped a line around one of the movable parts in the lock so the group could descend together. And down we went; more than 100 ft. The sounds as we descended sounded like deep sea creatures. You are completely enclosed by the lock walls, and you look up at the sky from far down. Once the water level in the lock was the same as the next section of the river, the large metal door opened slowly. When we were given the green light, we paddled out and continued down river to the town of Foz do Tua, where we took out.



*The lock opens. Photo: Kathy Ellwood*



*Overnight at the Casa do Rio. Photo: Kathy Ellwood*

After a relaxing night at an 18<sup>th</sup> century manor house that was high on a mountain overlooking the Douro River far below, we launched our kayaks for our last day on the river. We were in the heart of the Douro Valley wine-producing region and passed many quintas (i.e., a country estate) and vineyards that have been family owned and operated for centuries. We ended the trip at the town of Pinhao, a major destination for tourists, including Portuguese families. It's a busy place - riverboats line the docks and there are pleasure boats everywhere. But it was time to say "tchau" to the river and then back to Porto.



*Boats with wine barrels, City of Porto. Photo: Kathy Ellwood*

### Fabulous!

What made this trip so enjoyable was the camaraderie of the people, and the friendly and generous Portuguese people. The food was outstanding, and I got a taste of local delicacies such as pork cheeks, wild boar, and octopus. Meals always included local olives and olive oil served with fresh baked bread. What drew me to this tour was the opportunity to paddle in a region very few do, especially in the National Park. Lots of people on the big riverboats, but to get close to the water and nature, one has to paddle. The highlight was going through the lock. How many experience this in a kayak? One is so dwarfed. A secondary focus of the trip was to explore the wines of Portugal. While Port is what this region is famous for, the variety of table wines are expanding, but rarely shipped to United States. This was an unforgettable trip and one of the best places I've kayaked.



*Photo: Kathy Ellwood*

## A Sea Kayak Book Launch and Blatant Blackmail

*Paul Caffyn*

*A true tale of a sea kayaking book launch,  
a blackmail letter for photos taken,  
and how on the high seas,  
the book launcher got his revenge on the blackmailer.*

Back in April 1995, when the annual KASK (Kiwi Assn. of Sea Kayakers) symposium was held at the Picton Yacht Club, I mounted an undercover operation to launch the very first edition of *The Dreamtime Voyage*, the story of my year-long paddle around Australia. Bringing the book into print as a self-publish had taken a power of time with nigh on \$30,000 alone for the printing, thus I felt an auspicious occasion was warranted for opening the first box of books. (Picton is at the top end of the South Island of NZ where the cross-Cook Strait ferries commence their voyages to Wellington, North Island).

The Saturday had been a busy day for forum paddlers on Queen Charlotte Sound. After a scrumptious catered evening meal by a local service club, the room was full of damp kayakers, with a rather noisy hubbub of salty tales. Clobber (clothing) was still much of the damp poly pro variety, with narry a hint of auspiciousness.

The rear of the yacht club had a set of double opening doors. Stealthily, I unbolted the doors, and skulked out silently into the darkness, where I met a young lass who I had hired from the local drama society. She was wearing a floor-length red and white dress, as would have been worn in the 1800s on sailing vessels entering Picton Harbour.

Outside the doors, I had already stashed *Lalaguli*, the kayak used for the 1982 Around Aussie paddle.



*Paul impeccably attired in a suit and tie for his book launch at the Picton Yacht Club. First box of the Aussie circumnavigation book with a red ribbon, in the kayak cockpit. This led to JKA sending Paul a blackmail note of 'A million dollars for the negatives.' Photo: John Kirk-Anderson*

Outside the doors, I had already stashed *Lalaguli*, the kayak used for the 1982 Around Aussie paddle. I changed into a very sharp grey suit, with fresh white shirt and tie, and tan leather boots. Then placed a box of the books in the cockpit, replete with a big red bow.

Without any fanfare, I pulled open the double doors, and the young lass and I carried *Lalaguli* into the yacht club, placing her on two chairs, which I had cunningly pre-arranged.

As I had never before been seen dressed up in a suit and tie, you could hear a pin drop. Stunned silence ensued. Two ladies swooned and at least one bloke looked very pale. For a mob of noisy kayakers after a beer or two, the silence was profound.

I gave a short launch speech, then we cut the red ribbon and displayed the first book. At the time I wasn't aware that Christchurch paddler and press photographer John Kirk-Anderson had quickly got over my 'suit-able' attire shock and was rather busy taking a whole roll of colour negative pics.

It ended up a great night, and all of those first copies were sold on the night.

### The Blackmail Commences

Barely two weeks later, a plain brown A4 envelope was delivered by the rural postie. Along with a proof sheet showing the photos of a bloke in a suit, this message was scrawled on a solid piece of cardboard:

***'Paul - Please send by return post \$1,000,000 in cash as payment for negs'.***

My goodness, I thought that was a bit blatant and excessive, despite the incriminating (but rather good) colour photos on the proof sheet.

### Milford Sound Revenge

The story then moves a year later to Milford Sound in May 1996. John and I had driven down south for a mix of both paddling and some mountaineering



instruction in the Darren Mountains. (Milford Sound is the biggest tourist attraction in Fiordland, at the bottom of the South Island of NZ, with the only road access to the massive fjords carved by glaciers back the Pleistocene era).

During our paddle out to the Milford Sound entrance, we were trying to land at high tide on a very steep gravel beach at Anita Bay. Apart from Harrison Cove, and a tiny scrap of sand sometimes under the vertiginous walls of Mitre Peak, the only decent landing is on a reasonable length of gravel beach at Anita Bay. An old stone cottage, with stacked slabs of stone, built by early gold miners at the back of the beach was on our list to view and photograph.

At low tide, Anita Bay has a wide length of exposed gravel (see page 61 of *Obscured by Waves*), with no drama with landings. However, the top of the gravel beach steepens considerably towards the berm (or gravel crest), thus making landings more difficult at the top of the tide, especially with a spring tide. Perhaps a destroyer shaped kayak bow, could be rammed in to wedge into the gravel berm, but our lovely curved West Greenland-style kayaks bows just wanted to slide up and then back on the steep gravel face.



*John endeavouring to wedge his kayak bow on a steep face of the gravel beach at Anita Bay, using the surge of a broken wave for momentum. Photo: Paul Caffyn*

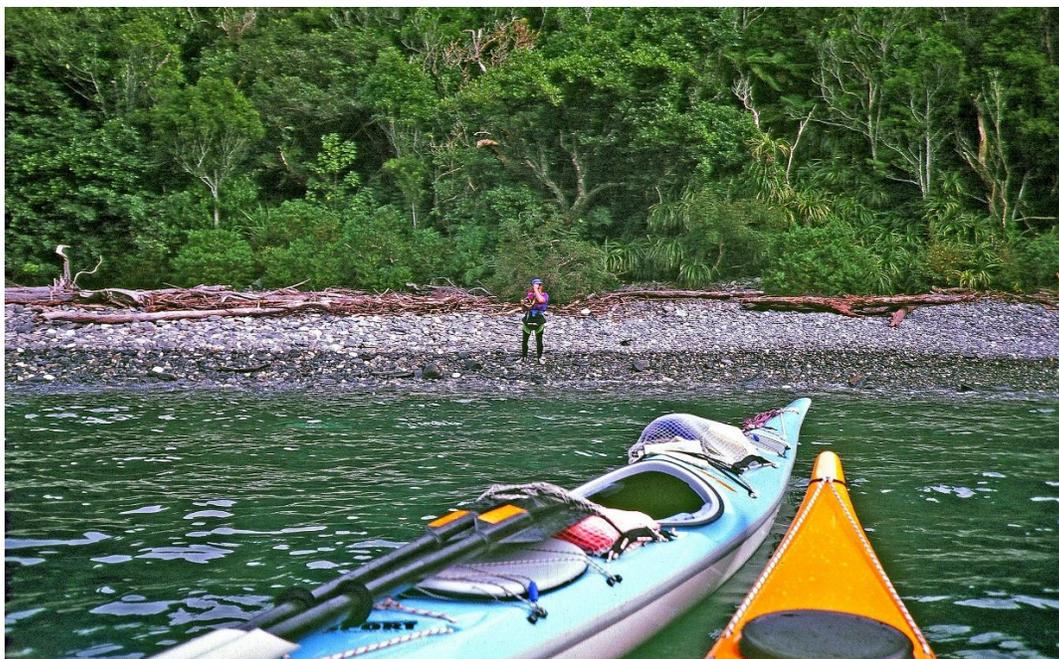
### Payback

John, after a few good ramming attempts, got sufficient friction on the gravel, without the kayak sliding backwards, to exit his *Arluk 1.8* cockpit and drag it to the top of the berm, where it was delicately poised on the crest with both bow and stern in mid-air.

John scrambled along the gravel berm and signalled for me to come in behind a small breaker. As he was about to catch my bow, a grating or graunching noise led us both to look where his kayak had been. Under its own steam, it had gracefully slid down into the sea and was slowly drifting out into Milford Sound. The poor bugger was distraught. Almost in tears. Such an embarrassing incident for our most well qualified and skilled sea kayaking instructor.

Taking my time - and relishing the moment - I paddled out and cornered his kayak, nosing the two bows back towards the single line of surf. I took a photo of John standing plaintively on the gravel with our two kayak bows in the foreground.

Then I called out, "A millions dollars for the negatives!"



*John, wiping tears away from his eyes (or it might be the clouds of sandflies), stands distraught on the beach berm at Anita Bay, willing his kayak to drift back into the beach. This photo led to Paul's shout of, "A million dollars for the negatives!" Photo: Paul Caffyn*

## “Direction Determines Destination”: A Transformational Summer

*Debbie Anderson*



*Rhode Island rocks. Photo: Debbie Anderson*

A simple three-word quote: “direction determines destination” (from Jim Rohn), coupled with an online kayaking navigation course, has changed my life. This year I graduated from being a follower to being an active leader planning and taking trips with my circle of experienced kayaking friends. I now have more self-confidence and presence of mind. Ask me where I’ve been; now I can actually tell you.

Everyone learns in a different way and after three years of trying to make sense of trip planning, the ah ha moment for me came during the final presentations on the last day of my navigation class. Someone did an integrated spreadsheet of a route charted for a day’s paddle. I thought hey, I was an accountant, I can do this. I purchased some guidebooks, learned how to print out excerpts of charts, and was on my way.

Among my first trips this year was a kayak camping trip to the Adirondacks. It was spent relaxing on crystal clear waters and included a memorable encounter with a bear cub.

An excursion to Long Island found me in a luxurious cabin where I wrestled with the decision to run out of the shower when the smoke alarm sounded and the cabin filled with smoke.

I ran aground on the rocks in Rhode Island, where I found my incident management training invaluable along with a steadfast group of friends who came to the rescue.

Not all trips were successful in their initial purpose - like the fossil hunting trip to Virginia where I found a total of exactly one shark’s tooth, or the trip to see the swallow murmuration where the birds were too far away to see clearly.

But along the route of transitioning from follower to leader, I have found invaluable friendships, seen incredible things, and have become more independent. I entice the reader to branch out and try a new direction. You may be amazed where you will end up.



*Long Island duck. Photo: A random passerby*

## Contributors

*Jill Allbritton* – has been paddling for 10 years, mostly on the Chesapeake Bay, and loves the challenge of rough water. Jill lives in Maryland.

*Debbie Anderson* - commonly found on multiday kayak camping paddles, Debbie enjoys exploring the coasts of Rhode Island and Maine. Seeking to expand her horizons, she has her compass needle set for Georgian Bay, Desolation Sound, and Picture Rocks National Seashore.

*Paul Caffyn* - lives on the west coast of New Zealand's South Island. In addition to being the first person to circumnavigate Australia in a sea kayak, he has circumnavigated the British Isles, New Zealand, New Caledonia and Japan and has done major expeditions in Alaska (the whole coast) and Greenland. Check out his website at <http://paulcaffyn.co.nz/>

*Gail daMota* - is an ACA L3 and BC 3\* paddler who lives in Virginia. She often paddles the Chesapeake Bay, Potomac River, and the MD and VA Eastern Shores. Now incorporating kayaking in her vacations, she has paddled in Portugal, Croatia, and Nova Scotia and hopes to discover other destinations in coming trips.

*Kathy Ellwood* – has been paddling for 20 years and lives in southern Maryland on the Chesapeake Bay. She frequently kayaks the Bay and has led canoe and kayak trips up Parker's Creek, the most pristine creek on the western shore. In addition to kayaking throughout the U.S., she has kayaked in Alaska, Galapagos, and Canada.

*Mike Labelle* – has been paddling for 30 years, mostly in the Chesapeake Bay area, but also up and down the east coast, and internationally in challenging conditions in Vancouver, Iceland, Wales, Cornwall, and Brittany, France.

*May Win Liu* – has been seriously kayaking for over 12 years and is an ACA L3 and BC 3\* paddler. May Win's new favorite kayaking area is Croatia. She enjoys kayaking internationally and has kayaked in 5 of the 7 continents. She hopes to add the last 2 eventually.

*Charles Sterling* – was the lighthouse keeper on Hog Island. He wrote book about Hog in 1903, from which this account was taken. Amazon advises that the book isn't in stock and doesn't know if it ever will be!

*Rick Wiebush* - runs *Cross Currents Sea Kayaking* and is the editor of *Coastbusters*. He is an ACA L3 IT who lives in Baltimore.

*Coastbusters* welcomes submissions of trip reports, incident descriptions and analyses, skills and "how-to" articles, boat and gear reviews, book and video reviews, and sea kayaking-related photographs. We are interested in receiving submissions from all paddlers. Articles should be limited to about 2,000 words and submitted in Word. Photos should be submitted in .jpg format. Please send your submissions to Rick Wiebush at: [crosscurrentsseakayaking@gmail.com](mailto:crosscurrentsseakayaking@gmail.com)