

BlogBooker

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Chapter 1

2006

1.1 December

1.1.1 About (2006-12-04 17:25)



Welcome to the blog for Ireland 2007.

What is Ireland 2007? In short, it is a paddle around Ireland by sea kayak in the summer of 2007. This blog allows you to follow Sam Crowley of Marquette, MI USA on this solo journey.

Check out the [1]website for more specific information.

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1. <http://www.seakayakspecialists.com/Ireland2007>

1.1.2 Hello world! (2006-12-04 18:00)

Well here goes, my first blog ever posted!

In this web log I plan to share progress on the Ireland 2007 trip. Pre-trip preparation, updates once the paddling starts and post trip notes will be posted here. Information on the trip can be found on the main [1]website.

From previous trips, I realize there is lots of information that remains unknown due to limited time during a slide show/telling stories or worse still, fades with time. This web log allows for those details to be saved.

All this is new to me. I have no idea how frequent or infrequent postings will occur. Feedback is welcomed as is your patience as the kinks get worked out.

sam

1. <http://www.SeaKayakSpecialists.com/Ireland2007>

1.1.3 shamrock-2.jpg (2006-12-04 19:06)

1.1.4 Email Updates (2006-12-04 21:39)

1.1.5 Just Checking My Access.....12-29-06 (2006-12-29 08:19)

Trial posting - I'll be posting updates for Sam as he progresses around the "Emerald Isle". Just making sure I can get on to the Blog.

Carl

Chapter 2

2007

2.1 January

2.1.1 McCarthy's Bar - book review (2007-01-07 12:44)

The title made me think that the book was going to be about drunk Irish people written from an Englishmans point of view. Being a #1 bestseller in Ireland, England and Australia made me give it a try. Well I wasn't far off.

Pete McCarthy wrote the book called McCarthys Bar as a travelog and guide to Ireland. The title and one of his rules of travel - "Never pass a bar that has your name on it" - implies there is time spent in pubs around Ireland. Descriptions of how Guinness is poured and the traditional Irish pub scene are alongside the occasional night spent exploring the unexpected (ie drinking heavily). But there are also interactions with the people he meets and a delve into Ireland of yesterday and today with a wit seldom seen in travel guides. Some highlights:

- A couple of years ago, a local (Cobh) unemployed man won the Irish lottery. One of his first acts was to buy the premises occupied by the dole (government unemployment) office, and double their rent.
- The author asking the question: Could you tell me how to find him? He said it was a bit complicated. Answer: Sure it is I suppose. But I'd say it's easy to find him once you know where he is.
- Its no coincidence that the style of writing known as stream of consciousness was pioneered by Irish authors.
- Asked by an US tourist: Are the signs in miles or kilometers? His answer: They're in both. Either. It varies.

He spends a lot of time in the south and west of Ireland wandering from town to town recounting the changes he has seen over the years and trying to find a reasonable price for a plate of Singapore noodles while driving an old Volvo he thought had a bird stuck in its tail pipe. That earned him the moniker 'birdman' at the local garage and gave locals at the pub something to ask him about.

This isn't your typical guide where everything is great. The tourist trade is really changing some areas and he bluntly gives his opinion: "There is a worrying number of shops displaying kitsch souvenirs - lep-rechaunalia, shamrockovia and other assorted paddlewackory". He explains with examples of how catering to

the tourist trade has changed what use to be fine examples of Irish culture into venues that could be located anywhere outside of Ireland. He endeavors to find the treasures that still exist such as the first McCarthys bar he found. Mentioning to the bartender that his name was McCarthy, he spent the whole night eating and drinking on the house as part of the owners birthday party. The evening is an example of what he later states: "I notice, watching the different nationalities on the mountain, the fluidity of interaction the Irish people have with visitors, and with each other. It's a skill less developed in other nationalities, and its so instinctive it doesn't even look like a skill."

This book offers a view of Ireland today and yesterday while offering an enjoyable read, even if your not going to Ireland looking for a plate of singapore noodles.

2.1.2 Charts & Maps (2007-01-07 16:19)

One of the more popular questions asked is how is preparation going for the trip. A big relief was to sort out maps, charts and tidal information.

Last winter I figured out a chart source. Buying individual charts was looking like a formidable challenge. At \$30 a pop for Admiralty chart, it wasn't looking cheap nor did it look easy to do. How was I to know how useful a chart would be until seeing it? Fortunately Maptech has charts on 4 different CDs for all of Irish waters with around 100 charts included. This solved that challenge.

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Next on the list was topo maps (called ordinace survey maps over there). I was able to figure out what maps I needed but pricing and shipping from Ireland was looking expensive. Thanks to the Irish Genalogical Society located in Golden Valley Minnesota (I guess they are not all Swedes!), I was able to find affordable shipping and a very reasonable price per map.

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Next on the to do list was prepping the charts and maps. Altogether I printed out 50+ chart sections and received 40 topo maps. Using the excellent guidebook Oileain by David Walsh, I was able to find a significant amount of information on tides, campsites, landing sites, scenic areas, etc. Sitting down and going page by page, I transferred information found in the book onto the chart sections and charts. Additionally each chart section was prepped with magnetic variation information in addition to the chart name and lat/long information already present.

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This is significant progress. After laminating the charts (the topo maps will be carried in a map case), one of the most important areas of preparation will be completed.

sam

2.1.3 Current Conditions (2007-01-11 19:52)

One of the great things about the internet is the ability to watch weather conditions just about anywhere in the world. The following are links to buoys off of Irelands west coast:

http://www.ndbc.noaa.gov/station_page.php?station=62093

http://www.ndbc.noaa.gov/station_page.php?station=62092

I got a bit of a shock when I checked the first one which is near Donegal in the northwest. It recorded wave heights from 24-32 feet over a 14 hour period. Checking the forecast at:

<http://www.met.ie/forecasts/sea-area.asp>

Brought up the following:

Gale warning: in operation

Small craft warning: see gale warning

Meteorological situation at 2100: A very strong unstable westerly airflow over the area continues to moderate slowly. A warm front approaches from the Atlantic and will cross the country overnight introducing a very strong southwesterly airflow.

Forecast for coasts from: Mizen Head to Erris Head to Fair Head

Wind: Southwesterly force 7 or gale force 8 imminent, and occasionally reaching strong gale force 9 and gusty north of Slyne Head during the morning and early afternoon. Winds veering westerly Friday evening, and decreasing gradually to force 6 or 7.

In Ireland, they use the Beaufort wind scale (Beaufort was in the British Navy). A rough rule of thumb is to multiple the force number by 5 to get the wind speed in knots. Force 9 has winds speeds to 45 knots. What is bringing that about is the following weather pattern:

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Note the pressure difference between the High and Low pressure systems - a 79 millibar difference! - that is the cause for the high wind speeds.

Checking all this via the internet is giving me an idea of where places like Slyne Head, Fair Head, etc are located and gets me use to wind forecasts using forces. It also got me to thinking about the what ifs. What if I was here and those buoy conditions occurred? What if I was here and heard that forecast?

Thank goodness I never saw 30' waves this past summer when I checked the sites. Fortunately the usual storm conditions this past summer was around 10' seas - it seems small compared to 30' but it is still big. Well actually that is huge if they are reflecting or breaking anywhere close.

During storms, I 've already got the what ifs figured out. I plan on being in the local pub with a good stout Guinness in hand. That should keep me secure no matter the forces!

sam

2.1.4 Books on paddling Ireland (2007-01-12 09:00)

I've been able to find several books on paddling in Ireland. They are:

On Celtic Tides by Chris Duff

Dances with Waves by Brian Wilson

Commitments and Open Crossing by Bill Taylor

On Celtic Tides is the most well known and the only one still in print. It is a combination of two tales: paddling around Ireland and what is going on in his head. Chris's descriptions of the land and paddling there are an inspiration to me. His sharing of his emotions and inner thoughts really lets you know what a long solo trip is like. To be honest his second book, Southern Exposure, about going around one of the New Zealand Islands, shows his maturing as a writer. For me, this books speaks as much to the inner journey as to the external journey.

Dances with Waves is an entertaining book written by Scotsman Brian Wilson. He circumnavigated Ireland in 1990 and brings in a lot of the local culture and history into his paddling. He also encountered some significant conditions as well including several waterspouts in the northwest. His youth and his judo background figure into his attitude towards paddling. His sense of humor is also evident throughout. The movie Dances with Wolves was released around the same time and the title was an irresistable pun for him.

Commitments and Open Crossings is about the first circumnavigation of Great Britian and Ireland in 1986 - a 2600+ mile journey - by a team of three English paddlers. This was during a time when many didn't think it was possible, these guys powered through it. It is a dry book as it mostly focuses on the miles covered and events that occurred. Little description is spent on local history, landmarks, etc. It is worth a read though for the technical descriptions of the paddling are probably the best of the three books.

Initially these books inspired and showed me what was possible. Then they became teachers. Wilson describes paddling with a friend who got hit by a boomer (a wave that breaks irregularly). Checking the charts for the area it became obvious why, the sea floor is highly irregular - perfect for forming boomers. It also helped with campsites, places to restock on food as well as the weather - Taylor talks about how the amount of rain in the northwest began to affect their attitude.

I hope to have the time to go over them once more in the months before the trip begins.

sam

2.1.5 Food (2007-01-17 10:25)

My favorite time of day?

Lunch.

Breakfast too.

And of course dinner. So I've got three favorite times of day.

My first trip longer than 7-8 days was to Michopicotin Island and lasted 12-13 days. A few weeks afterwards, I got a bladder infection and boy do they ask some embarrassing questions about your sex life when a guy gets one... It would have made a better story if that was the case but a friend who is a Naturopath figured out the problem. My diet on the trip missed an important item, dairy products, ie no cheese, powdered milk, etc. It was also low on protein. This weakened my immune system. I was lucky the trip didn't last longer.

One of my current projects is coming up with a menu. Linda Daniels in Kayak Cookery suggests that the food prep should start the trip length ahead of time. Good advice that has worked out well on other trips. Given my instructing schedule in april and may this year, I decided to start this important project early.

One of the niceties is in preparing food drops. Initially I was planning on purchasing all my food there which meant resupplying along the way. Given the exchange rate and the price of food in Europe, this is an expensive option. It also means my favorite foods (there are many) wouldn't be there. Fortunately Kevin Lehner from near Milwaukee and Nancy Uschold of Marquette are planning to travel to Ireland and bring along a food drop. This is a really generous offer and will help out a lot. (It will also be a big morale boost to see them.)

So the past few weeks I have thought through a menu. It looks like about half of my dinners and breakfasts will be in food drops. The other half I will purchase in grocery stores along the way. This way I can enjoy also dine out and sample the Irish cuisine I have heard so much about - one version of hell is staffed by Europeans and has the Irish as cooks! :)

I will also be forwarding information to Donna at Endurance Sports Nutrition (www.DonnaMarlor.com) so she can start crunching numbers for the research she is doing on the trip.

Speaking of food, it is time for lunch, my favorite!

sam

2.1.6 Sports Bars & Drinks (2007-01-20 11:39)

I remember scoffing at the first sports bars, especially those with a name that sounds like you can use them to recharge your phone. Instead I continued to rely on my trusty gorp or good old raisins & peanuts.

Now I regularly use sports bars, particularly the bars from Balance and Clif. They are calorie dense. On a trip, I generally have a Balance bar mid-morning. The balance comes from having carbos, proteins and fats together and I find this combination helps keep me satiated and able to have a later lunch if needed. The Clif bar is generally a mid afternoon kicker, ie to have the energy to find a campsite and open up a food bag. It is mostly complex carbs. Both brands add vitamins and minerals that are designed with an athlete in mind.

Sports drinks are something I ignored figuring Gatorade was just hype but that changed. In my sports massage practice I have two long distance endurance athletes. Their muscles were often rock hard. One time, I saw the two of them within a week of each other as they were recovering from some 50 or 100 mile running race. I noticed their muscles were different, much more pliable and healthy in general. Asking what was different, they both said Cytomax, a sports drink. Curious, I tried some out and immediately noticed a subtle difference, I was better hydrated. Over time I also noticed my hunger pangs had a reduced intensity. It has been with me ever since.

Several friends of mine have gone through the local graduate program in exercise science. Talking to them about my experience, they said similar results can be found in research. Products like Cytomax have the ingredients that have been proven to help the muscles during both exercise and recovery.

A practical advantage on a long trip is the sports bars are individually packaged and waterproof. This avoids the swear word opera after spilling or dropping your gorp bag for the trip in the water. Being processed, they last a long time skipping the difficult quandry a hungry paddler faces with mouldy food in their dry bag. The sports drink is more of a challenge. Being a powder, it can make clums that even Bam Bam from the Flintstones would have trouble breaking apart. Packaging it is important, especially for wet climates.

I have to be honest, on trips I still carry gorp and drink plain water. These sports nutrition products are a supplement to a good meal plan. Eating only sports bars would make McDonalds seem like a 5 star place after even a short trip.

The nutrition research is always continuing, adding to the knowledge base that can make a paddlers life easier. No doubt there will be new supplements coming to market as well as realizing the importance of traditional foods. Last I heard B vitamins are important for recovery in athletes. Fortunately Ireland is rich in a food source for B vitamins, Guinness Beer. Perhaps they make a sports drink...

sam

2.1.7 Food Preservation (2007-01-24 10:09)

An ex-girlfriend told me my place stinks. Not quite sure what she meant but I think it had something to do with odors. Currently, I notice smells greeting me as I walk in the door. For example, earlier this week it was oriental veggies, now it is bananas. Last week it was beef. A food dryer has been running as I prepare food for the trip. Perhaps this is what she meant?

So far I have about 8 pounds of meat dried for the trip. I've got about 5.5 pounds of beef steak dried into Teriyaki jerky and dried about 2.5 pounds of ground beef. On the vegetable front, there are 4 pounds of stir fry veggies and for fruit, 4 pounds of bananas. More is to come as 3 jars of spaghetti sauce patiently await their turn.

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Additionally this week, I purchased around \$400 worth of food for my food drops. A pile of boxes is sitting on the floor. These are all shelf stable foods from the grocery store: meats such as canned chicken and tuna, instant brown rice, pasta, spice packets, tuna helper, instant oatmeal. Repackaging everything is

next on the agenda. I always comtemplate purchasing stock in the company that makes ziplock bags at this point.

The Back-Country Kitchen by Teresa Marrone does a good job of going through the food drying process as well as providing practical and tasty recipes. It seems to be a little known book, but it is the best I've come across being far more complete than Kayak Cookery by Linda Daniel.

sam

2.1.8 Noque Fever (2007-01-26 17:44)

It is evening and all through Marquette, a quiet anticipation is building. Many folks from out of town as well as many locals, around 1400 altogether, are getting ready for the Noquemanon Ski Marathon (www.Noquemanon.com) tomorrow. My role is to organize massage for the event as a fundraiser for the Hiawatha Water Trail (www.HiawathaWaterTrail.org). For myself and the other therapists, it is a massage marathon but a marathon of fun as the participant's enthusiasm is highly contagious.

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Noque Fever is a recognizeable energy - in some folks it makes you wonder just how long they have been out of a strait jacket. I see a similar enthusiasm by writers when it comes to Ireland. One of the more grounded books I have read is 'The Irish Mystique' by Max Caulfield. An Irishman, he wrote the book in 1973 because "I thought a lot of people would like to know the truth about the Irish". Witty, it felt familiar, as if I was reading my own genes. It avoids embellishment quite easily as seen by Sean O'Faolain's comment: "My God, is there an Irish Mystique? You know the very idea scares me".

Exploring the term Irish mystique, one person said to him "Couldn't it be that we are such a lovely people?". He responds to such a remark with "But what about Joe McCarthy?" referring to the Irish American Senator behind the term McCarthyism. The answer "Every race produces its head cases", demonstrates his point as said so well elsewhere - "The Irish are really much like everybody else - perhaps even a little more so."

Delving into more thought on the Irish Mystique, the comment "The way we take life nice and easy?" brought the following deeper response. "Yes, but that is our trouble you know. The things that have kept Ireland as she is - the old folk values - will no longer work in the modern world. And that puts us in a dilemma. Today we're absolutely torn between wanting to produce fellows with cold, clear, rational type minds and a people who value the old easygoing, delightful society - a people who believe leisure and companionship are more important than 'success' - whatever that is - or money".

That I think sums up this books far ranging plunge into Irish geography, climate, history, literature, music, social customs, psychology and religion. Written before the current economic boom, it talks about an Ireland that is becoming more elusive. An Ireland that recent travel journals like 'McCarthy's Bar' by Pete McCarthy make a point of seeking out. This in a country now nicknamed the Celtic Tiger by those in a fever about its growing economy.

sam

2.1.9 Harlow Lake (2007-01-31 14:56)

Harlow Lake is in a state forest area about 15 minutes from my house. During most winters it is my primary off trail skiing area. Yesterday was the second ski there this season. I made first tracks and enjoyed all it has to offer. One particular spot I could hear the waves on the Lake Superior shoreline a mile away while also hearing the waters of a creek nearby. Times like this, I am glad people go to the warm climes to get away as it leaves the northwoods a peaceful place.

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The above photo is from Top of The World looking out at Lake Superior. Click on it to see a larger view.

Food prep is continuing. The third jar of spaghetti sauce finished yesterday. Four pounds of bananas are currently drying and peas go in after another three pounds of bananas. Today, my bulk order arrives at the local co-op. Repackaging will start in earnest later this week. Food still has tasks to complete but a plan is in place.

February is equipment month. Fortunately I have a good idea of what gear to bring from previous trips. Now it is time to figure out the specifics: does it all fit into two duffle bags for the flight over? ; first aid kit needs a once over and most likely additional stocking; what specific clothing am I bringing (how many layers, etc). There are some of the details to sort out.

A big item on the list is electronics. Figuring out what electronics are coming then how to work out recharging batteries. Solar panels are not going to work for me as they are slow to recharge batteries and a cloudy environment embraces most of Ireland. Alternatives and possibly leaving electronics behind need to be sorted out. Definitely bringing a cell phone, 2 VHF radios and 2 digital cameras as they are key pieces of gear for my plan. GPS and video are in question. Need to research the issues for them.

sam

2.2 February

2.2.1 Software Update (2007-02-03 12:19)

I've just updated the software for the blog. So far so good, but this is a scary enterprise, much akin to walking on thin ice. A very unpleasant experience could be lurking in the next step taken...

If you notice something not quite right, please email me at sam@SeaKayakSpecialists.com and let me know.

Word Press, www.wordpress.com is the software behind this blog. It is free software and some of the easiest to install. Thanks to the Word Press community!

sam

2.2.2 Equipment Update (2007-02-03 14:07)

The boat for the trip is an Explorer by Nigel Dennis. Since 1995 I've paddled the boat and it has done everything asked. I've stuffed gear & food in it for a 3 week unsupported trip into it. The photo below (click on it to enlarge it) shows it can handle rough water - it is a high performance design that can handle the conditions on a trip to exposed coastlines. It is durable - it took me 10 years to wear out my first boat.

It will be waiting for me when I arrive in Dublin which is just across the Irish Sea from the manufacturing plant in Wales. Nigel has been kind enough to 'loan' me one for the trip.

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It looks like Nigel is also going to loan Nancy a boat when she comes over as well. His support is tremendous. To paraphrase Nancy, I can't imagine being in any other boat in conditions and/or on a trip except an Explorer.

This week the final package from Lendal was delivered. Lendal is sponsoring the trip by contributing a couple of paddles to it.

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My reasons for going with Lendal are simple. Their paddles, in this case, the Nordkapp and Kinetic blades, move water. Important in rough water, windy conditions, surf, etc. They also flow through the water. Very few paddles I've tried flow so smoothly no matter the stroke done (most paddles just work well for a forward stroke, sculling is quite different). Finally, reliability - you can abuse them. They are a bit heavy but light paddles comes at a cost in durability - I've seen a very lightweight paddle break while doing a high brace in a 3-4 shore break (a warranty doesn't help you upside down in the surf). They made the right trade-offs in my experience.

Talking to Bill at Down Wind Sports, he has been a busy guy. Besides preparing for this weekends Ice Fest in Munising (single digit temperatures causing him to dig out his fleece thong - his words not mine), he has been lining up equipment for the trip. A tent, sleeping bag, dry bags, sandals, sunglasses and more. Down Winds support and advice has been greatly appreciated for the trip.

I know what your thinking, wow, Sam gets to keep all this free gear. From previous experience, the equipment will be quite worn after 90 days of use. Just stuffing a sleeping bag in & out of a dry bag takes a big toll on it's loft let alone to think about the olfactory disaster my paddling clothing will be.

Without the sponsors support, trip expenses would make the trip near impossible. I've already spent over \$2300 in maps/charts, airline tickets, books and food. This is not considering yet my expenses (rent, utilities, etc) while I am away from home and 3 months with no income. Add in food and other expenses while on the trip, the sponsors support becomes critical.

sam

2.2.3 Equipment Ramblings (2007-02-07 09:36)

Here is an offering from my gear geek side. Being a geek means there is no discernible rhyme, reason, logic or sense.

A list of known gear going (more specific paddling gear to be covered later):

Stove - Trangia alcohol. After years with a reliable white gas stove, its replacement died the first day its first time with me on a solo trip. It was field repairable, except for how it broke - that was the last time I took a white gas stove with me paddling. Alcohol stoves may not be the fastest to boil water, but they are quiet and have bomber reliability. I've found alcohol fuel readily available around harbors as sailboats use it for cooking fuel as well.

Cookkit - MSR pots. Stainless steel and very durable. My set is 14+ years old and replaced a lightweight aluminum pot. Scouring them with sand easily cleans the cooking disasters. I bring along the 1L and 2L pots. The Trangia nests into the pots for easy packing.

Water purifier - First Need. Many types out there but this is the only purifier that eliminates the bad stuff by filtration only. Others use iodine and charcoal stages - the first is not suppose to be harmful, the second changes the taste of the water. The Apostle Islands has some sweet tasting water...

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Water bags - MSR Dromedary. Tough bags for carrying fresh water on a salt water trip. Carrying at least two avoids problems if one punctures, cap leaks etc. I plan to carry 4-5 gallons of water with me which will last 2-3 days.

Camera - Pentax W20. Great little camera. Waterproof enough for most paddling outside of a surf zone. I got it figured out enough so I can take a reasonable photo once and a while. Small enough to be carried inside my PFD for quick on water shots. Has reasonable video. Two will be brought along in case one fails (the brand new Canon in a diving case died 30 hours into a 25 day Queen Charlotte trip).

VHF radios. Two are coming. My Standard Horizon (forget the exact model) has a great long endurance ni-cad battery and can take a AA battery pack to replace it. Downside: it needs to be discharged fully before taking 12 hours to recharge. Will be used only for emergencies or necessary communication with other boats. Not carrying the charger for it as it cannot handle the voltage found in Europe. Also coming is a West Marine VHF250. It has lots of nice features: Li-ion battery, a charger that can handle European voltages, AA battery pack, reception in the AM & FM radio bands and more. I've always carried an AM/FM/Shortwave radio with me on extended trips ever since 911 when some folks in the wilds wondered why their pick up was late. It is hugely useful for rain bound days and hearing shore based forecasts when the weather band forecasts are not received. Recently purchased so Ireland will be the first time I will carry two VHF's. Kinda feel it is overkill but the AM/FM bands, the AA battery pack and the compatible charger makes it useful for that alone.

Camp pad - ensolite. Oh boy will I get laughed at for this one. Everyone I know has a thermarest camp pad. I've used ensolite for 15+ years. As a space savings, I put mine in a dry bag and use it as a knee roll locked in place by the thigh pads I've installed. It fills unused space and on a long trip the space saved inside

the hatches gets filled with close to a weeks worth of food. The knee roll adds significantly to the ability to control the boat.

sam

2.2.4 Food Pack (2007-02-07 10:40)

Here are my food pack contents. Altogether there will be 3 for the trip: 1 I will carry over with me, 1 Kevin Lehner will bring in late june and 1 Nancy Uschold will bring mid july. These food packs are to be supplemented with fresh food purchased along the way and represents about two weeks worth of food by itself. The final part of the trip will have no food packs as I should have gone native by then.

Having food packs gives me time to figure out the local food that works for me. I also know the fuel consumption and storage space this food requires. Finally, it provides me with something familiar in an unfamiliar land.

One of my goals with food is to have a variety regarding flavors, textures, and contents. This variety (ie proteins: tuna, beef & chicken and carbos: rice, pasta, & stuffing) is more nutritious and provides food you want to eat at the end of a day irregardless of how many days into the trip (I can tell some stories about food that use to be on this list).

While paddling from Finland to Sweden, we restocked midway. Biting into dinner that night, there were some distinctive crunches that I figured as fish vertebrae. Thinking it was local custom and not wanting to be insulting, I continued eating. Jukka, from Helsinki, after he took a bite turned to me and said, 'we bought cheap canned fish'. Fortunately we only had two meals planned with this fish...

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sam

Breakfast

- powdered eggs (2-3 meals worth)
- dried salsa
- hash browns (dried)
- oil 6 oz

- powdered milk 3 packs :
- instant oatmeal - 20 packs (10 meals)
- seeds (poppy, sunflower, sesame)

Lunch

tortillas (2/day)
peanut butter (16 oz)
jelly (4 oz)
instant soups (4)

Dinners

Cuban rice & beans (3)
tuna helper (3)
spaghetti with beef (3)
oriental rice w/chicken & rice (3)
tuna, pasta & peas (1)
chicken w/stuffing gravy & veggies (1)
instant brown rice (to supplement 3 meals)
pasta (to supplement 3 meals)

Snacks

Balance bar (1/day)
Clif bar (1/day)
cytomax sports drink (1qt/day)
gorp (16 oz)
misc dried fruit (12 oz)
almonds & cashews (12 oz)
beef jerky (equivalent to a couple of pounds of beef)
chocolate bars (3)
snickers (3)

nathan (2007-02-09 07:47:48)

Only three chocolate bars? How 'bout chocolate bars 1/day and 3 total of those balance bars.... Thanks for posting all the information about the trip! It's great to get a behind-the-scenes look, particularly for the food prep. Are you worried at all about spoilage with dehydrating food so early? Are you just doing Ziplocs or are you vacuum sealing too? I was wondering if you anticipated problems with that or had them in the past, particularly with the meats, since a lot of books recommend 1-2 month storage times if you're not refrigerating or vacuum sealing. Hope things are well! Nathan

sam (2007-02-09 12:56:21)

Hey der Nathan! One 2 week long trip I did not bring ANY chocolate. No chocolate bars, no snickers, no m & m's in the gorp. Sometimes traveling solo is pretty hard... All my dried food goes into ziplocks then the freezer. As you noted, dried veggies & fruit seem to last quite awhile. The meat, both jerky and ground beef, I do worry about and so their dried till crunchy for long trips. Plus those are usually eaten within the first 2 weeks on the water. For the 25 day trip in the Queen Charlottes, there was an additional week of travel to get there. I kept some jerky and it was mold free to the end. The climate helped with most days being around 65 degrees and half of it cloudy. Watching where the dry bag with the dried food sits on a sunny, hot day helps. Commercially available jerky (the stuff you find in the gas stations and grocery stores) will be coming along as well as that has the longest endurance unopened. I purchased some jerky made in the local butcher shop and it turned moldy within a week. Talking to them, they don't

dry theirs much to keep it soft. That is another advantage of canned meats/fish, you can keep them till later and eat the dried meats earlier. Haven't had to look into vacuum sealing yet. sam

2.2.5 Andrew McAuley (2007-02-11 08:13)

As some of you may have heard, Andrew McAuley is attempting a solo crossing of the Tasman Sea that separates Australia and New Zealand.

A garbled distress message brought rescuers out looking and they found McAuley's kayak but not him. Searching is currently suspended for the night.

I hope he is found soon.

Andrew McAuley's website: www.andrewmcauley.com

Coverage on Derrick Mayolet's KayakQuixotica blog has been following events as they unfold: www.kayakquixotica.com/2007/02/update-weather.html

I was once asked if I get scared when I paddle. There are times but I get focused and drop into a place where there is little else but the moment. A decision making process exists there that I instinctively trust. So far that has worked to kept me safe but a moment haunts me.

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I was standing at the lighthouse looking across Michipicoten Bay to the mouth of the Michipicoten River and where the end of the trip lay. It had been 20 days and 295+ miles. Those 20 days were challenging in several ways. Conditions during the trip saw 5 small craft advisories (25+ knot wind) and 3 of those turn into gales (35+ knot winds). Thanks to paddling hard, I was currently one day ahead of schedule. Altogether I saw 24 people and talked to 12, none of them longer than 5 minutes. This was not by my choice and it left me disquieted. That morning I woke up with the express goal of being in my bed at home by the end of the day.

Paddling around the point, I saw the conditions had built into the 4-6' range. The landing at the lighthouse was protected so I landed to eat lunch and suss out the conditions. The bay was streaked with whitecaps and the far shore was being painted white by breaking waves.

The crux was going to be at the rivers mouth where the river current meets the surf. My thoughts ran in two directions. The more predominate was to go for it as I had seen bigger conditions and I did want to get home today. The minority was to hold off and wait. I was on a hair trigger to go but something held me back. I ate lunch and dinner in my wetsuit. The tent was setup at sunset.

The next day I paddled 45 minutes to finish the trip as another small craft advisory, the 6th, was getting going. Local paddlers said the surf the day before at the mouth was the wildest they had seen in years.

I made the right decision but barely. I had wandered over the edge into a place I didn't know ex-

isted. When am I going to be there again? will I be lucky again?

No one paddles to be rescued. McAuley planned and worked hard to get everything setup for a successful crossing. To get within 40 miles, in my opinion, is a huge success. Reading his website, he planned well and endured unbelievable conditions.

I do not see myself ever attempting such a crossing. But I do know there was a day when paddling around Ireland was also considered all the things said about McAuley's trip: reckless, dangerous, etc. Thanks to previous paddlers, my summer trip is now considered common place.

What McAuley did was to take kayaking into a new place. Much like the heroes our society admires, Columbus, Lindberg and others, he had a vision of something and set about doing it. His gone missing gives a greater voice to the those who say don't do it. But McAuley gave us a gift. One that will expand the horizons.

sam

silbs6521 (2007-02-12 06:38:05)

Well said. How delicate that sense of balance between taking a well thought our risk and being foolish. Sometimes, me thinks, it is not possible to know the difference until I look back and see what a stupid thing I've gotten away with. Andrew, on the other hand, did it right...and it still went wrong somewhere. And that is the reality we all face when we chance out onto the water.

sam (2007-02-13 13:15:39)

As you may already know, the search for Andrew McAuley has been called off. He is presumed lost. Family, friends and those following the trip are grieving at the loss. sam

2.2.6 The Moment (2007-02-14 11:29)

The passing of Andrew McAuley reminds us that we suffer from a common fallacy, that we are in control. We live in a fickle world, we paddle in a fickle environment. Places where death can embrace us in a moment. All the planning and doing the right things cannot avoid that.

266 [Click the photo to read about it](#)

Being Irish, I grew up with the infamous 'Irish wake'. I didn't know anything different. The time spent at the funeral home was somber. But afterwards, the family went to a relative's home and there were stories of the deceased, lots of laughter and whiskey. I grew up looking at someone's passing as both a loss and a celebration.

It is the celebration that I believe matters the most - it celebrates the person for who they were and it makes us feel blessed to have known them. Perhaps this is why they say the Irish laugh so much, because otherwise, we would be crying.

There are no guarantees in life, no promises of tomorrow or even for the next moment. It is as Nietzsche said "Live as though the day were here".

Here's to the moment.

sam

2.2.7 Equipment Ramblings II (2007-02-14 11:48)

Word came that my Explorer has been manufactured. Good news indeed.

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Here are the options I ordered:

Foot pump - a Henderson foot pump will be installed on the front bulkhead. The bulkhead has been moved to the appropriate distance away from my feet (this will also give me more storage space as well). Henderson pumps are the best out there as they move more water faster than other manual pumps.

Compass - A deck mounted compass is installed. Explorers have a compass recess. A deck mounted compass is like my foot pump, always there.

Rope skag - I know the latest trend is towards cable skegs. Cable skegs adjust very easily but they need replacement if the cable gets kinked (such as when a rock gets caught and the skag is forced). To repair in the field, one must have a spare cable. Rope skegs are easily fixed with rope or bungie but more importantly, rarely fail.

Standard features on the boat: day hatch, full deck lines, one piece hatch covers, back band, keyhole cockpit. Additionally the boat is tough. I know I can land it loaded with gear onto a cobble beach or hit a rock while on the water and not puncture it. There are advantages to a heavy boat...

Once in Dublin:

I'll foam out the boat so it fits better.

Fix up a mount to store the hand pump.

Tie the hatch covers to the boat.

Add extra bungie to secure the spare paddles.

Put on reflective tape.

Write my name & home address inside the cockpit.

Why foam it? Initially I did this to improve my rolling but in rough water, it pays a bigger dividend. Out in the Queen Charlotte Islands Carl Mather had to brace more often and in general felt more unsteady in rough water than I did. One difference was the foam. (click on the photo below to enlarge it)

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In addition to hip and thigh pads on the side of the boat, I also add foam to the deck for additional contact with my thighs. Combined with my foam pad (in a dry bag) as a knee roll, I can use both legs to edge the boat. I'll be making these pads out of mini-cell foam to bring over.

Why a foot pump? To pump out water without having to open your skirt or take your hands off your paddle. Obviously useful during rescues. Recent experience also says when you have a leaky spray skirt such as the two Snap Dragon skirts I had that their customer service said didn't leak but couldn't explain why I didn't have to pump every hour with another companies skirt. Yes I am miffed at them...

Also carried is a hand pump as a backup to the foot pump and for use in case a friend needs help pumping out. Here are a couple of photos of how it is stored:

260263

sam

silbs6521 (2007-02-14 11:56:48)

Things seem to be coming together nicely. I am not clear, however, how moving the forward bulkhead even further forward (for the pump) increases storage as it would make the forward compartment smaller.

sam (2007-02-14 13:08:08)

The bulkhead would move towards me about 4". Older model Explorers fit perfectly with a foot pump but changes since around 2000 or so pushed the bulkhead further out. sam

tom heineman (2007-02-14 20:12:08)

I like the way you attached the hand pump. What did you use to glue the straps and PVC to the deck? Did you consider the Nordkapp for this circumnavigation?

sam (2007-02-15 07:17:57)

I have used marine goop. Using this it eventually becomes undone after several years. I have also seen other ways (John B?) with using bungie instead of the strap. Haven't tried it yet to see how it works for me. Nordkapps are great boats and darn fast, definitely a legend in the sport. Unfortunately I don't have a comfortable fit (butt & back) in one, or I should say I didn't 10 years ago (before the newer versions - Jubilee, etc) when I was seriously trying out boats. sam

tom heineman (2007-02-17 16:14:30)

The Latest Nordkapp (which they are now back to just calling the Nordkapp... it is all very confusing) is fairly comfortable, but I would like the deck to be a tiny bit higher. The boat does not track as well as the Explorer and is definitely not as stable or forgiving. It does seem a little faster. If I were doing Ireland coast I would probably opt for the Explorer to give me a safety/stability edge.

2.2.8 Equipment Ramblings III (2007-02-17 10:54)

The UP 200 Sled Dog race started last night. They stage for the start right outside my massage office and run through downtown. During the last appointment for the day, my client fell asleep but woke during the last 15 minutes to dogs barking.

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The above shows a musher getting his team and sled ready to go. Arctic peoples developed mushing and the kayak as a means of survival. Their ingenuity in a harsh environment provides us now with activities we pursue for recreation.

There is an allure of thinking of those people as living in a simpler time. Thinking about how to manage electronics on my trip, I almost agree. There was a time when the only electronics I had with me was a weather radio. Power for it was one battery that lasted all summer long. Now the amount of electronics one can bring seems limitless, as does the challenges.

Three factors affect electronics to bring along:

reliability/waterproofness - electronics are fragile and most are designed to work within a certain environment (ie moisture, temperature, etc). Coastal environments as well as a tent on a rainy day let alone exposed on a kayak deck can overwhelm any water/weather proofing. Storage is important as I once stowed an electronic device in a dry bag. It failed and it did get crushed as it was shoved into the boat. Pelican boxes are great but can be tough to store.

271On a 16 day trip, this 'waterproof' GPS unit became unuseable after internal moisture fogged the screen.

power - what type of batteries; if rechargeable, how long does it take and is the recharger compatible with European electricity?

usefulness - what is the payoff for bringing it.

Electronic items coming along:

Cameras - Two cameras are being carried because in the Queen Charlottes both Carl and I had our cameras fail. By using the duplicate cameras, the same batteries and memory chips work for both. Right now I have six batteries with each battery good for 300 shots. I also have seven 1 gig memory chips which can hold 300 shots each. Photo storage is an issue, using memory cards seems an expensive but simple solution so more memory cards are likely.

In the digital age, 1800 pictures isn't all that much. Instead of taking just one shot, now multiple shots are taken to get the best setting, angle, etc. This effectively cuts it to 600 pictures, about 50 per week. When considering places like Skellig Michael, 50 unique shots could easily be shot there.

VHF - as mentioned elsewhere, two are going. One will have a recharger along to recharge its Li-on battery. AA batteries, which can be purchased along the way, will also be used as both have spare battery trays.

Cell phone - As mentioned elsewhere, a cell phone will be used to report progress reports to Carl Mather to post here as well as coordinate rendezvous with friends dropping off food bags. A spare battery for it may go along.[1]

GPS - after considering it, I am not bringing a GPS unit. Logistics such as batteries and the fact that I just don't use one, kaboshed it.

Battery recharging: Practical considerations say it will be best to stop in towns and top off the batteries. Technology is developing and there are some interesting possibilities.

Solar panels - everyone asks if they are going, no they are not. In my opinion, it's still a maturing technology as they are slow to recharge and sensitive to the angle of the sun. Ireland will be a cloudy/rainy place and taking off a sunny day to recharge batteries is out of the question. Mounting them on the deck is out as well given the issues of securing them, how/where to run the power line, etc.

274A flexible solar panel recharging a cell phone.

Fuel cells - a developing technology. A company is working to develop a disposable unit that would recharge your phone and other electronics and hopes to have it out this spring. Interestingly enough, they are being manufactured in Ireland. Check out the [2]Medis website.

Portable recharging units - there are two units out on the market: [3]Recharge4 and [4]Powersource. These are probably the more practical in the short term though I am still unsure at this point. Powersource does not appear compatible with European voltages.

As can be seen there are no easy answers with electronics. Just keep remembering those slogans from the 60's: power to the people, more power to you and whatever turns you on.

Enough!

Feel free to post comments or email with your ideas on batteries/recharging as well as photo storage. Things are changing quickly out there.

sam

1. <http://www.recharge4.com/>
2. <http://www.medistechnologies.com/content.php?id=3>
3. <http://www.recharge4.com/>
4. <http://www.xantrex.com/web/id/233/p/2285/pt/5/product.asp>

sam (2007-02-17 10:58:03)

It looks like links to the Medis and Powersource websites didn't work. Here they are: Powersource: <http://www.xantrex.com/web/id/233/p/2285/pt/5/product.asp>
Medis: <http://www.medistechnologies.com/content.php?id=3> There are reasons I left the computer field... sam

tom heineman (2007-02-17 15:54:25)

On my Lake Michigan circumnavigation I brought along AA lithium batteries they are lighter and last at least twice as long. I used them in my GPS and they were good for 4+ days. I had a Brunton Solar Roll 9 that unrolled to 12 x 40" and put out up to 9 watts... enough to charge my cell phone and VHF radio. I also had a small battery pack that could be recharged (it contained several rechargeable NMH AA bats). This battery pack could then charge my cell phone when the sun went down. As you say, the solar and rechargeable battery technology is not very proven... the rechargeable batteries didn't get recharged fully, but in an emergency, I could get by and use them in flashlights and in the pack as a charger for my cell phone. I spent a lot of time before the trip finding out what and how to get various stuff to charge with the solar panel. I can't imagine not having a GPS on a long trip, but that is me. I like to know how fast I am going and how far I have gone... not to mention how far to where I am going. Mine was not usually in a pelican case and survived my 49 day trip. Ditto for my VHF. The GPS was a Magellan Etrex Legend and the VHF was a UNIDEN Voyageur. I was happy with both products.

sam (2007-02-18 10:08:48)

Thanks for the info Tom. Sounds like you have a system that worked well for you. I am curious about the battery pack you used to recharge your cell phone, can you provide a link? I've got a lot of experience using map/chart and compass for navigating on my trips (as well as day trips) and can tell location, speed, distance to go, etc. Piloting is an activity used to keep my mind occupied productively while paddling. For whatever reason, range lines provide the biggest muse. Certainly there are places that make piloting challenging such as some of the shoreline you paddled on Lake Michigan (straight, flat and few features) or when the charts/maps don't have a lot of detail. These places can be similar to paddling in fog or at night and is where my speed, location and such are estimated using dead reckoning.

silbs6521 (2007-02-20 05:34:13)

I have found that the new Lithium batteries hold a longer charge than the "house brand" that comes with the camera. For storage, a stick or small USB plug in takes up no room and can hold a ton of stuff. You do need a connector to transfer data from the camera itself. There are many small storage devices on the market and you can see most of them at B &H's web site. For coastal navigation (most of which I've done on a sailboat) I prefer a good chart and compass. I have always found piloting one of the best joys of being on the water.

2.2.9 Sample Menu (2007-02-21 14:16)

A friend said that I eat better on my trips than I do at home. Possibly true but I certainly do better meal planning for trips, especially wilderness ones. There is nothing like being in the middle of the wilderness and finding yourself sans a meal...

A friend and I paddled down the Green River in Utah. I can tell you that a bar is not a good place to meal plan and that shopping for your trip food after midnight after drinking in a bar for several hours is also not a good idea. About midway into the trip, the realization that we had one less dinner than needed thundered into our heads. As our only option was to keep paddling to the pickup spot, we were lucky our only hardship was to consider having oatmeal for dinner. As part of our fuzzy thinking, we also brought along too much for other meals.

One book on wilderness travel says to keep your traveling companions well fed, you never know when you may need to eat them.

277Here is a photo of almost all the food that comprises the food I am taking over and the two food drops before it has been repackaged. Food not shown includes dried food that is sitting in the freezer and food that is not shelf stable that will be purchased in May.

Been working with Donna Marlor of Endurance Sports Nutrition (www.DonnaMarlor.com) on my meal plan. The following is a sample 3 day menu drawn up for her use. This information is idealized in several different ways. For example, fresh fruit will be eaten instead of dried fruit when possible. It also doesn't take into account daily variations of what is eaten as snacks (ie nuts, sunflower seeds, etc). Finally, the schedule is for a typical day and to accommodate tides, weather, etc, the schedule will get moved around. The schedule does reflect what I feel is important, time for the body to recover from the days paddling. Hence the reason for the big meal, sleeptime including a nap and free time that facilitates writing, relaxing, stretching, hiking, gear repair/modification, etc at the end of the day.

Paddling schedule: 9am to 4pm

Breaks for 5 minutes every hour (on water) and 15 minutes every 2-3 hours (off water)

Lunch break about 60 minutes

Sleep: nap from 4:30-5pm, overnight from 10:30pm to 7am

Day 1

Breakfast

2 servings Oatmeal
1 serving milk
4 Oz h2o

Mid morning

1 balance bar

Lunch

2 servings tortillas
2 servings peanut butter
2 servings jelly
1 serving dried fruit
1 serving sunflower seeds

Mid afternoon

1 Clif bar

Dinner

1 serving Chex mix
6 Oz h2o
Tuna helper
1 serving almonds & cashews
1 serving dried fruit
1 serving chocolate
1 serving herbal tea

Day 2

Breakfast

2 servings granola
1 serving milk
4 Oz h2o

Mid morning

1 balance bar

Lunch

2 servings tortillas
1 serving sausage
1 serving cheese
1 serving dried fruit
1 serving sunflower seeds

Mid afternoon

1 Clif bar

Dinner

1 serving Chex mix
6 Oz h2o
Chicken stir fry with veggies
1 serving almonds & cashews
1 oz of dried fruit
1 serving chocolate
1 serving herbal tea

Day 3 (rest/weather day)

3 powdered eggs
1 serving salsa
2 servings hash browns

10 Oz h2o

Lunch

2 servings tortillas
1 serving sausage
1 serving cheese
1 serving dried fruit
1 serving sunflower seeds

Dinner

1 serving Chex mix
6 Oz h2o
Spaghetti dinner with ground beef
1 serving almonds & cashews
1 serving dried fruit
1 serving chocolate
1 serving herbal tea

2.2.10 Watch Out, You Might Get What You're After (2007-02-24 11:31)

With the unusual winter and preparation for Ireland, I saw an opportunity to do something I haven't done before, paddle every month in a year on Lake Superior. Two challenges occur in winter. The ice on the lake and/or shore can make launching & landing difficult or impossible. Secondly, living in Marquette, skiing is more comfortable temperature wise and you get a great aerobic workout. In the winter, XC-skiing just makes more sense.

280The launch site for the paddling this past week. The ice pack blew out and the shore ice at the dog beach in Marquette was only two feet high.

241The typical ice pack at Middle Bay in Marquette that extends out for a mile or more from shore.

But when does making sense have a place in life?

Paddling this past week means I have paddled in each of the last twelve months on Lake Superior. But before you think that is an accomplishment, there are those who have swam in Lake Superior every month of the year. In case you are wondering, yes, they lived to tell about it. :)

One of the great things about living in the upper midwest is the mania that builds as spring approaches. Earlier this week, with abundant sunshine and warm temperatures, it first emerged. Usual signs include hearing a specific Chickadee song and passing young women from the local university who smile warmly & say hello to me. It is a mania that celebrates being alive.

Paddling during the winter was thought to be part of getting ready for Ireland. But as I paddled this past week, instead of thinking about the future, my thoughts focused on the past twelve months and the images from that time. What stood out was the people - the friends, co-instructors and students that shared time on the water with me. As an obsessive planner as well as a frequent and unrepentant solo paddler, these are crazy thoughts indeed.

Here's your ticket, pack your bag, time for jumpin' overboard
The transportation is here
Close enough but not too far, Maybe you know where you are
Fighting fire with fire

Burning Down the House, Talking Heads

sam

2.2.11 Redundancy (2007-02-28 13:39)

283Ice covered Picnic Rocks in Marquette. Last week one needed to paddle there, this week one can once again walk there over ice covered Lake Superior.

Winter has returned. Last week in the spring like conditions, one could almost see people dancing as they walked. This week, after one snowstorm and a big one on the way, those same people seem to be plotting something bad. One of the things paddling has taught me, there are some things you can't do much about.

Thanks to Tom's comments, I was able to track down a cell phone charger that runs off of AA batteries. Here is a link to the charger: [1]<http://turbocellcharge.com/v2/cart.php?flashOk=no>

Several things I like about it:

AA batteries are readily accessible in Europe and will fit well with having AA battery packs for my VHF radios.

It is small and relatively inexpensive. This means bringing two is easy storage space wise and financially.

I've already ordered it and used it to charge my cell phone. Seems to work well for a partial charge - enough to make a few calls. It will be used to compliment a second cell phone battery.

One of the areas studied in computer engineering grad school was reliability. An interesting topic for those inclined as it touches the exotic such as the space shuttle to the everyday such as cash machines. A couple of principles:

- 1) The more the hardware, the lower the reliability.
- 2) Single points of failure should be avoided in a critical item.
- 3) The effect of failure should be minimal.

With point 1, this means the more complex (gross translation - the bigger the item), the greater the chance it will fail. Point 2 was relearned on my last long trip, my new digital camera failed only to be followed by my disk drive used to store the photos - neither had a suitable backup. Point 3 was reinforced on that trip as I lost about 100 shots including traveling up the Inside Passage that were stored on my disk drive.

What this means is redundancy is a good thing. I'll have two digital cameras, two chargers for the camera batteries and two cell phone chargers. In addition there will be numerous extra camera batteries and memory chips.

Of course redundancy makes sense to a point. Storage space, cost and the return on bringing it is important.

I've decided to do video - it will be fun to play with it as it can really enhance a slide show. Redundancy though, will be non existent. The payback isn't there given the financial costs. This means the equipment can turn into a 'hockey puck' (technical term) at any point ending the chance to shoot video. Important thing is, it doesn't matter. My digital cameras can shoot a crude video if needed.

I can still remember sitting in a wet tent on the 2nd day of a 25 day trip coming to the realization my only decent camera had failed. Makes the weather seem reasonable, at least it is predictable...

sam

1. <http://turbocharge.com/v2/cart.php?flash0k=no>

2.3 March

2.3.1 Menu Data (2007-03-02 05:55)

This posting is going out a bit early as weather permitting, should be in the Porkies, a state park in the western UP this weekend. Some friends have rented a yurt there. A winter storm could make back country skiing a lot of fun there.

288Photo by Aaron Peterson, [1]www.AaronPeterson.net. Tele-skiing in AuSable Dunes of Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. Don't be fooled, in action, I am not that good of a tele-skier.

The following is from Donna Marlor at Endurance Sports Nutrition (www.DonnaMarlor.com). She is starting to plug in the menu information into assorted software packages and producing data such as the following. Interesting to have the calories broken down this way.

Food item, portion - Calories
Breakfast

oatmeal instant, 2 pkts - 320
milk, skim, fat free 8 fluid ounce - 86

Lunch

tortillas flour, 6" diameter 2 - 225
peanut butter, w/salt 4 tablespoon - 380
jam, 2 tablespoon - 102
fruit mixed dried, 1/4 cup - 100
sunflower seeds, oil roasted w/salt 1 ounce - 174

Dinner

Tuna Helper 5 cup - 1500
almonds, oil roasted w/salt 2 ounce - 344
fruit mixed dried, 1/4 cup - 100
chocolate - 47

Snacks

cytomax 16 ounce - 90
balance bar - 200
clif bar - 240

Total Calories - 3908

1. <http://www.AaronPeterson.net/>

2.3.2 Equipment Ramblings IV (2007-03-07 21:13)

294 West Vista Yurt in Porcupine Mountains State Park.
Chart case

Fun was had last weekend back country skiing with Aaron and Kristin Peterson who rented the above and invited me along. Getting to the yurt offered the choice of a long ski with gradual elevation gains or a shorter but steep run up the ski hill. Aaron & Kristin were game for the run up the ski hill. With a full size backpack on and going up the steeper sections, the infamous phrase, 'all life is sorrowful' came to mind. That had to have been a backpacker who said that.

291 On Saturday, we did a day trip. Photo from an overview on the Escarpment in the Porkies of shore ice on Lake Superior. Backcountry skiing at it's finest.

Paddling a sea kayak is great because no matter how much you bring, you don't suffer much physically. Two areas that gear affects is weight and storage space. Balancing gear and the storage space it takes up is necessary on long trips where space is needed to carry food. Weight matters when paddling in tidal areas as one needs to get the boat and everything in it, above the high tide line. Depending on the slope of the beach and the state of the tide, this can be an overwhelming distance away. Suffering from bringing too much stuff when backpacking pays off as you develop a critical eye for selecting gear.

The gear below is selected with the following in mind:

Minimize gear for weight and volume reasons

Have redundancy for critical items

Below is the equipment list for paddling gear - gear used on water. A later posting will break down the contents of some of the kits.

Paddling Clothing worn

PFD

Paddling jacket
Hat & sunglasses with wipes
Wetsuit
Midweight top
Shorts
Wetsuit booties

PFD attachment points and pockets contain:

Hydration pack

Spare compass
Whistle
Strobe
Knife
Flares
Mirror
Stirrup

Hand pump
Paddle float
Spare nylon sprayskirt
Spare paddle
Chart case
VHF radio
Flare kit
Repair kit (on & off water)
1st aid kit
Belt & contact tow
Skull cap
Paddling mittens
Sun tan lotion (2) & lip balm (2)
Deck watch
Water bottle with spare watch attached
Spare hydration pack
Camera (2) with enough memory & batteries
Spare paddling clothes (also used around camp)

Lightweight: 2 tops & bottoms, socks, shorts
Midweight: 1 top & bottom, shorts, socks
Solomon amphibian wet shoes
Hat & sun glasses

sam

2.3.3 Even Keel (2007-03-10 10:27)

Reading Chris Duff's and Brian Wilson's books about their solo circumnavigations of Ireland, one realizes that they both faced adversity in the northwest. Even in Bill Taylor's book titled Commitment and Open

Crossings about the first circumnavigation of the UK and Ireland, the team of three paddlers struggled in the northwest of Ireland as well.

What is going on in the northwest? From the looks of it several things. First off, there has been a lot of open water paddling to get there. So there is a physical and emotional fatigue component present. Second is the weather. Looking at the rainfall pattern and days of sunshine in Ireland, the northwest has the most rain and the least sun in all of Ireland. This adds to the emotional fatigue by introducing an added stress. Finally, the technical challenges of the sea and tide are probably the greatest on the trip. The ocean bottom in the area is shallow and uneven, perfect conditions for boomers, waves that break irregularly, sometimes violently. In 5-10' waves, it is an understatement to say this creates stress as one works hard and prays a lot to avoid being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Added to all of this are some of the strongest and definitely most unpredictable tidal streams of the trip.

298Slyne Head on the Northwest coast of Ireland. Note the uneven ocean bottom, a place where one can expect boomers - waves that break unexpectedly.

Put together, I expect the northwest to be the biggest challenge and the crux of the trip. Figuring out how to handle that has been on my mind for about a year. Initially my thoughts ran along the lines of seeking out youth hostels to stay for a few nights given there are some located right on the water in several locations. A dry place with people around would help a great deal with the stresses and help me to restore my physical and emotional energies while preparing for the next stretch.

This started to change though thanks to friends. Jukka Linnonmaa of Helsinki, Finland has always expressed his interest in joining for part of the trip. Given he is married to Anna and has three kids who would visit as well, it will be a reunion with good friends. Nancy Uschold, a frequent paddling partner and a friend of the Linnonmaa's as well, plans to join then as well with a food drop. Kevin Lehner of Lake Mills, WI surprised me one day by saying, 'if you need any help, even delivery of a food bag, let me know'. I quickly accepted his generous offer and now as an added bonus he will be paddling for a bit as well. Now a third friend, Stew Joseph of Marquette is seriously asking questions about joining for a bit.

301The Linnonmaa Family and Nancy Uschold.

307Kevin Lehner.

304Stew Joseph.

What all this means is that I will have a vacation of sorts and a chance to restore my energies when these friends visit. A welcomed respite from the daily grind while being able to share a pint, go over the days paddle and commiserate about life with wet feet. But an interesting plan is coming together for this trip, something I never sought out or considered. If things work out for Stew to join, every three weeks or so a friend (or groups of friends) will join for some paddling. What this means is I will have solo segments but then segments with friends. As a stranger in a strange land, seeing a familiar face and a chance to share experiences will help keep me on an even keel through the challenging areas.

sam

silbs6521 (2007-03-10 11:20:53)

I'm happy for you and the way things are coming together. You were missed and frequently mentioned (in good ways) yesterday at canoecopia. Keep the good new coming. Dick

2.3.4 (2007-03-14 09:38)

Talked with Donna Marlor [1](www.DonnaMarlor.com) yesterday. She has looked over my menu plans and gave them her approval. She has also added some items to my menu and reinforced other things I do.

Great thing about Donna, as a nutritionist she can talk the talk but as an athlete she can then describe in understandable concepts why it is important.

First off, a recovery drink is a good idea. There are those days that one is wiped out after paddling. She recommends to use it then along with a short nap. There is a lot of research to back up its effectiveness in aiding recovery. Dog mushers have started using it locally with good results as well.

Secondly, get smoked wild salmon. It's expensive but even just once a week will add meal variety and then she used some sort of nutrition mumbo jumbo to describe it. When I asked her what that meant she said: "It provides some of the most complete protein available so your body will absorb it faster. It's also what mushers feed the sled dogs".

Finally, ingest carbs every 90 minutes at least to keep the muscles fed. She was concerned during rough water paddling that it is not possible to eat. "It will make you stupid if you don't eat for that long. You have to be thinking straight to make good decisions in rough water" she said. I have already figured that one out and carry extra sports bars in my PFD pockets. This enables me to eat a snack in all but the roughest water.

She also asked if I use a hydration pack...

One fall, Nancy Uschold and I camped by the North Beach on Grand Island. We were looking at a perfect situation. Around midnight, a northwest gale was to blow in. After 1-2 miles fully exposed, we could turn and have protection from the full force of the gale as we run down the island's east side. If things looked bad, instead of launching we could hike out, take the ferry back to our car and come back later for our boats. At 10pm the calm was broken by wind gusts, the gale was approaching.

309Swash marks on Grand Island's North Beach during calm conditions.

Waking up the next morning, there was howling wind, a constant roar from breaking waves and a rainbow over a lake covered with big waves and whitecaps - the gale had developed as forecasted. After talking over conditions, we decided to launch. Hours later we arrived at a small beach on the south side of the island, our first break from paddling in conditions since launching.

I felt horrible. After about 20 minutes of drinking and eating snacks, I rebounded. All the time out there I didn't drink or eat anything - it took 30+ hours to feel 100 % again. Within a week I had my first hydration pack.

I was lucky not to have crashed sooner...

sam

1. <http://www.DonnaMarlor.com/>

2.3.5 St Patrick's Day (2007-03-17 09:43)

Being Irish, St Patrick's Day brings back many memories. The oldest are of my mother pinning on me a four leaf clover and making sure I wore something green. Growing up in Chicago, I also remember the Chicago River being dyed green (I thought it was always green back then?) and Mayor Daley, the current mayor's father, being in the big parade.

Reading about Ireland, I've come across various pieces of trivia about Patrick:

Patrick was never canonized by a pope, meaning he is not recognized as a saint by Roman Catholics. In the early church, saints were declared by local churches and not Rome.

He originally came to Ireland as a captured slave and spent his days tending sheep. Some think he is from Wales. He eventually escaped and returned home.

Patrick returned to Ireland as a missionary and bishop. Part of his conversion attempts included paying the various rulers to convert to Christianity.

It is thought he was a practical missionary and made compromises to gain converts. Some think the Celtic Cross came out of his efforts as it is a combination of a cross (Catholic symbol) and the sun (Pagan symbol). [1]wikipedia.org/wiki/Celtic_cross

From his efforts, Christianity secured a foot hold in Ireland and eventually replaced its spiritual competitors from the Druids and Pagans as the dominate belief system.

Mt St Patrick is located near the water in the west and climbing it barefoot today is considered a pilgrimage.

He was known for chasing all the snakes out of Ireland. Historically this is not true as Ireland has never had snakes even though they are found in nearby places like Scotland. Nonetheless that didn't stop the legal system from using the legend to solve a territorial dispute involving Rathlin Island between (Northern) Ireland and Scotland. The presiding judge made the ownership depend on if there are snakes present on the island. Since there are no snakes on Rathlin Island, Ireland now possesses it.

What type of Irishman would I be without sharing some jokes to celebrate the day. Enjoy.

sam

Paddy was driving down the street in a sweat because he had an important meeting and couldn't

find a parking place. Looking up to heaven he said, "Lord take pity on me. If you find me a parking place I will go to Mass every Sunday for the rest of me life and give up me Irish Whiskey!"

Miraculously, a parking place appeared.

Paddy looked up again and said, "Never mind, I found one."

Father Murphy walks into a pub in Donegal, and says to the first man he meets, "Do you want to go to heaven?"

The man said, "I do, Father."

The priest said, "Then stand over there against the wall."

Then the priest asked the second man, "Do you want to go to heaven?"

"Certainly, Father," was the man's reply.

"Then stand over there against the wall," said the priest.

Then Father Murphy walked up to O'Toole and said, "Do you want to go to heaven?"

O'Toole said, "No, I don't Father."

The priest said, "I don't believe this. You mean to tell me that when you die you don't want to go to heaven?"

O'Toole said, "Oh, when I die, yes. I thought you were getting a group together to go right now."

Gallagher opened the morning newspaper and was dumbfounded to read in the obituary column that he had died. He quickly phoned his best friend, Finney.

"Did you see the paper?" asked Gallagher. "They say I died!!"

"Yes, I saw it!" replied Finney. "Where are ye callin' from?"

An Irish priest is driving down to New York and gets stopped for speeding in Connecticut. The state trooper smells alcohol on the priest's breath and then sees an empty wine bottle on the floor of the car.

He says, "Sir, have you been drinking?"

"Just water," says the priest.

The trooper says, "Then why do I smell wine?"

The priest looks at the bottle and says, "Good Lord! He's done it again!"

Walking into the bar, Mike said to Charlie the bartender, "Pour me a stiff one - just had another fight with the little woman."

"Oh yeah?" said Charlie, "And how did this one end?"

"When it was over," Mike replied, "She came to me on her hands and knees.

"Really," said Charles, "Now that's a switch! What did she say?"

She said, "Come out from under the bed, you little chicken."

1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celtic_cross

2.3.6 Cell Phones & Health Insurance (2007-03-21 15:52)

Weather in Marquette has been very dynamic - sub zero some nights, snow, sun, rain, 50+ degrees on some days. Very much an upper midwest kinda spring. Days getting longer a well.

Paddled on a few days when the ice pack cleared out. Here are some shots from then:

317Meltwater coming off the ice in streams at Middle Island Point

320Ice covered cliffs on Partridge Island

Worked on two areas this past week. One involved cell phones and the other health insurance.

Friends from Helsinki who will be visiting in July, the Linnonmaas, have sold me a cell phone. I ended up purchasing another used cell phone of the same model on ebay. This gives me a second phone to have as a backup. Given its size and weight, it doesn't hurt to carry a second phone. Both phones are going to run around \$100.

Also researched what are called 'sim cards' (sim is subscriber identity module) that plug into phones and are required for service. These are also found with some services in North America but seems common place in the rest of the world. These have 'pay as you go' plans which allows me to avoid signing a contract for phone service. Several additional benefits are: incoming calls, even from the US, are free; adding minutes is easy; the card can be easily transferred between different phones.

An interesting quirk is that Northern Ireland is considered part of the UK. Since pay as you go sim cards are country specific, this means one purchased for Ireland (aka Republic of Ireland) won't fully work in Northern Ireland (it is common for no outgoing calls but incoming calls and voicemail work). After some searching

around, found that Vodaphone has a sim card that fully works in Northern Ireland for a small additional fee.

Finally there is health insurance. Since most plans don't cover things such as medical transport back to the states, a supplemental plan is needed. Nancy Moore, a friend who guides for Explorers Corner and does trips all over the world, recommended a company. For about \$220 I can get the additional coverage I needed for the trip.

sam

2.3.7 Stages To Ireland (2007-03-24 08:11)

Deciding to go to Ireland was easy. Having the confidence in my skills to be there is another story, it has taken several stages.

3262004 Surf Fest, Wawa, ONT. Wind gusts to 30 knots, waves 4+'. Photo courtesy of Naturally Superior Adventures.

At a 5 Star training run by Nigel Dennis in 1996, he told me during the assessment to get more experience. I disagreed but kept silent. I did after all paddle, performed rescues and even rolled up twice after getting knocked over in the Force 8-9 conditions. What could he have possible meant?

It took 3-4 years, but I eventually started to understand it. It was experience. I hadn't paddled in those conditions before and it showed. Sure I could roll & surf but looking back on it I remember that boat control in high winds was a definite challenge and group awareness was none existent. I assume there was more.

I started exploring the idea of going to Ireland in 2001 or so but knew I didn't have the necessary experience especially in tidal conditions or long trips outside of the Great Lakes. So I setup a series of trips to gain that experience.

First off were trips to tidal areas, San Juan Islands ([1]click here) and Tofino, BC ([2]click here). These trips reacquainted me with tidal conditions and the experience of paddling in a different region.

Next was a trip to Europe in 2004. Paddling friends were moving back home to Helsinki from the UP. Jukka extended an invite to come over and paddle but I was a bit unsure given my unfamiliarity with the region. When he said we could paddle from Helsinki, Finland to Stockholm, Sweden, I immediately agreed. [3]Click here to see photos. This was a great way to learn about getting around in a foreign country as well as traveling to a paddling trip by airplane.

In 2005, I spent 25 days paddling around Moresby Island with Carl Mather out in British Columbia ([4]click here for photos). A goal for the trip was to paddle in conditions that would be similar to Ireland's west coast. For 10 days on the west coast, seas were usually 6' and there was 6+ days of continuous rain. This answered my question, can I paddle on a long trip in those conditions?

This came after 10 years of paddling that built a foundation.

Trips on Lake Superior's north shore gave me experience planning, navigating as well as paddling and making decision in conditions. Campcraft skills (site selection, when to guy out a tent, etc) started developing then as well. A list of trips are included [5]here.

Playing in surf built my rough water skills as well as my comfort level. There is nothing like surf to increase your boat control, bracing and rolling skills.

All that time on water has given me a chance to develop some basic weather predicting skills.

The assessment by Nigel was 'spot on' as they like to say over there. As a paddler, Nigel taught me the value of time on the water, paddling in conditions and practicing skills in conditions to build experience.

This experience came in stages and built the path to Ireland for me.

sam

1. http://seakayakspecialists.com/html/san_juan.htm
2. http://seakayakspecialists.com/html/clayoquot_sound.htm
3. http://seakayakspecialists.com/html/helsinki_to_stockholm.htm
4. http://seakayakspecialists.com/html/gwaih_hanaas.htm
5. <http://seakayakspecialists.com/html/sam.htm>

silbs6521 (2007-03-28 05:52:07)

I looked up your last name in a book on the derivation of Irish names. Turns out, your name comes from an old Irish phrase that roughly translates, "The lad is ready."

2.3.8 The Omnivores Dilemma (2007-03-28 11:47)

It looks like paddling season has sprung here in the UP as the last of the ice is rapidly disappearing thanks to a warm rain sunday night. Here is a shot from a weekend paddle before we the rain, click on it to enlarge it.

329

A bestseller The Omnivores Dilemma by Michael Pollen, exposes the public to a little known side of industrial farming. The title though, refers to the problem omnivores face, the selection of food. Compared to an animal like a cow who can eat only grass and get all the nutrition it needs, we humans have many sources of food to choose from. The question is what do we eat to get the nutrition we need.

This provides interesting thought when coming up with a menu for a wilderness paddling trip, one where

the food you bring along is the only choice of food for you to eat. I look at this problem from another perspective as well, varying the food texture, meats, vegetables, etc to keep the meals interesting. Here are some examples:

- Dinners
 - Carbohydrates - rice, pasta, stuffing
 - Meats - beef jerky, canned tuna, canned chicken, dried ground beef
 - Veggies - dried mashed potatoes, dried peas, carrots, dried mixed veggies
- Breakfasts
 - oatmeal
 - granola
 - scrambled (dried) eggs with hash browns
- Lunches
 - sausage & cheese with bread
 - peanut butter & jelly on bread
 - tuna on bread
 - (bread can be tortillas, bagels, crackers, etc)

Over many trips I have developed a distaste for certain foods brought along. There are instant cheesecake mixes, potato soups and bean dishes that have sat ignored at the bottom of a dry bag. Either they made it back home to get thrown out or I grudgingly ate them because I had no choice.

—

One friend only ate oatmeal for breakfast and tuna fish salad for lunch on a multi week long trip as they were so easy to pack & prepare. I think it took 6 months before they could consider eating either again. And for the first breakfast out of the wilds, he spent around \$20 on a 'Fishermans Breakfast' that had every breakfast item you could think of along with a double portion of his favorite items.

sam

2.3.9 Navigation Practice (2007-03-31 13:20)

Off of the northeast of Marquette's Presque Isle Park lies the Presque Isle rocks. They are about two statute miles from two different launch sites. Yesterday and today I made runs out to and around those rocks. Yesterday conditions were 4-5' and today the waves were 2-3' while the wind was less than 10 knots both days. Spring conditions often have wind and waves making this a good place to train.

348

Every year these runs are part of my spring training paddles. The following is what I watch as part of navigation practice: time & course. These are basic navigation tools that I will be using heavily in Ireland and practice in these conditions is useful in the following ways:

Given it is four miles out and back, this trip should take about an hour. Watching the time and noting my location helps me to measure my speed at points along the way. For example: the marina to the breakwall light; the light to the rocks; the rocks to the light; the light to the marina. This also helps to estimate speed based on perceived effort. Estimating speed accurately is important for ded reckoning - useful for paddling in fog or where landmarks are few.

Primary tools for the course is my deck compass and range lines. Using the compass to paddle a heading while watching for drift using range lines gives me practice using the tools needed for crossings of which there is will be many.

Every year the early season paddles are a celebration of the start of another season. It is also a great time to shake the rust off of some critical skills.

sam

2.4 April

2.4.1 Training - Paddles and Yogafit (2007-04-04 10:17)

Training has gone well for the last several days. Yesterday was one of the calmer wind & wave days in about a week. It was the first in a while with snow though...

351 Training paddle in the snow & fog. Good weather if you are a duck!

Things changed last night though. Here is the Open Water forecast for east Lake Superior:

TODAY N GALES TO 45 KT INCREASING TO STORM FORCE WINDS TO 50 KT BY
LATE MORNING. FREEZING SPRAY. SNOW SHOWERS. WAVES 15 TO 20 FT BUILDING
TO 20 TO 25 FT.

Here is the near shore forecast for Marquette area:

TODAY...N WIND TO 30 KT EARLY IN THE MORNING BECOMING GALES TO 35 KT
BY LATE MORNING. FREEZING SPRAY. SNOW SHOWERS. WAVES 12 TO 17 FT
BUILDING TO 20 TO 25 FT.

It is rare to have this strong of a storm in the spring. Combined with a blizzard warning on land, it is a good time to take a rest from training...

A friend, Don Goss of Marquette, custom made me an Inuit Paddle as a gift. Inuit paddling is something that has interested me and his gift has enabled me to play around with it a bit. After using it, I noticed in using my euro paddle, my stroke cadence increased.

I mentioned this to Jim Tibensky of the Chicago area, a former shalom racer. He said he changes paddle blades as part of his training regime even changing paddles from Inuit to Wing to Euro. He believes this helps to train different muscle groups giving a sort of cross training effect.

This season that is what I have been doing. Changing up between my Lendal Nordkapp and Kinetic blades as well as the Inuit paddle Don made for me. Going back to my usual blade, the Nordkapp, after two days of different paddles/blades, I did notice a higher cadence.

If you are wondering what a higher cadence can do for you, watch the "This is the Sea 2" segments with Sean Morley paddling in a tide race. Wow, give him a propeller and he could fly!

Another bit of training I've been doing is yoga. I've always believed yoga was good for flexibility but Mary Connors Yogafit (email Marymarq5@aol.com) of Marquette has taught me something else about yoga, it can help your core strength. Mary is a tri-athlete and is one of those aerobic machines one sees out riding her bike, x-c skiing, running and other assorted ways of feeding her fitness obsession. Recent years, Mary has started running yoga classes based on Hatha and Iyengar styles. She runs her sessions with the experience of a long distance athlete and it has me hooked on the yoga benefits of combining strengthening, flexibility and relaxation.

Using an athlete's ball does help with core strength as detailed in Rick Jemmett's "The Athlete's Ball" and over the winter I played around with some of the exercises. After attending sessions with Mary though, I am convinced the book is a small portion of what a good yoga teacher like Mary has in her toolbox.

sam

silbs6521 (2007-04-07 05:05:46)

I love the Greenland "stick", but it does require a cadence of almost x2 to stay with those using the euro paddles. The benefit is a lower profile to wind resistance, a lower angle can be used for paddling and the slower onset of force as the stroke begins. It is easier on the muscles.

sam (2007-04-07 07:18:54)

Good points Dick. Thats the reason for using the 'stick', getting different muscles involved as well as using muscles differently all helps with training. sam

2.4.2 Welcome (2007-04-04 10:22)

This past week I received equipment from Mountain Hardware and Chaco for the trip.

Why Mountain hardware? Two critical pieces of equipment are a tent and sleeping bag. I've spent many a night in a tent getting rocked around in sites I thought were protected. In Ireland, many of the sites will be exposed which makes a sturdy tent important. Last summer I tried out several and never found one I liked until I came across the Spire 2 from Mountain Hardware. With internal and external guying, this tent is built to withstand rough weather. It also packs small and has great head room inside. Regarding a sleeping bag, ever slept cold on a trip? I have and for two weeks it wasn't fun. Mountain Hardware's Lamina 20 bag is designed to keep me warm. It is also synthetic so it dries fast but packs up small.

Why Chaco? I never understood why people spent so much money on sandals until mine fell apart when I needed them the most - someone was hurt and they needed help a mile+ away. Running there my sandals fell apart on the rough ground. After that I walked into Down Wind and said what was the best sandal, they brought out the Chaco ZX2. That was close to eight years ago and I haven't needed to even look at another pair of sandals. An incredibly comfortable fit, a secure fit that lets you climb around on rocks and high quality are what these sandals mean to me.

Thanks to Bill at Down Wind for his efforts and Troy, the rep, for his time and advice. The equipment support from Mountain Hardware and Chaco is greatly appreciated.

sam

2.4.3 Off Season Training (2007-04-07 07:56)

Well one can never be sure about spring in the UP and the previous storm I mentioned is still blowing hard keeping me off water. From watching the winds at Stannard Rock ([1]click here), sustained winds never reached the forecasted 50 knots (more like 46) so I doubt we got the forecasted 20-25' waves. Last snow total I heard friday morning was 36" with more falling. In any case, this is one of the strongest and the longest lasting spring storms I have seen in the 10 years of living here.

It is interesting to note that the recent conditions around Ireland's coast ([2]click here) was the calmest I've seen it in the year+ I've been watching.

So what does one do about training in such a wintery place? Pool sessions are a big part. Every week the 'W' at the old airbase out near Gwinn opens up its pool to kayaks. Practice there focuses on strokes and rolls. With a near empty pool hanging draws, bow rudders, edging and stopping strokes get practiced since they take the most room. Once others get in then the focus becomes draws (all three types), sweeps and braces. After 30-45 minutes of this I am well warmed up and ready to start rolling practice. Rolling practice varies but usually includes: different rolls with a paddle; throwing the paddle capsizing then swimming to the paddle and rolling up with it; hand rolling. After a while one gets tired so then it is on to playing with some different things such as some balance games with solo re-entries when there is no balance.

354A scene from a pool session at the 'W'.

Another interesting aspect of off season training comes from my massage practice. After the first spring paddles before becoming a massage therapist I would be sore. Now that doesn't happen so I assume massage prepares my muscles for paddling.

Of course the trade off is that I cannot control my workload and there are times that rest becomes more important than paddling, skiing, etc (or perhaps the only thing possible to do).

This winter storm reminds me that one of the things about paddling is the inability to control the weather. There has been many a trip where I've spent days on shore waiting for a storm to pass and this summer in Ireland will be no different. Guess I am getting some training I didn't think I needed...

sam

1. http://www.ndbc.noaa.gov/station_page.php?station=stdm4
2. <http://www.met.ie/forecasts/sea-area.asp>

2.4.4 Preparation Break (2007-04-11 04:40)

The winter storm finally blew itself out here after dumping 4' of snow near Marquette (6' elsewhere). The lake also has new shore ice as well as ice floating around. [1]Click here for a link to an article from the local paper with all the gory details on the storm.

Training continued when possible. Saturday the winds dropped enough to paddle along a protected shore. By Sunday the storm had blown itself out. Both Sunday and Monday had a warm sun with sub-freezing temperatures. Here are some photos from those paddles. Sure will be nice to get back to paddling without pogies again!

357 Paddling while the winter storm was still going. Sitting in the lee watching the snow blow off of the dock.

360 After the storm, paddling through an ice pack to Black Rock Point.

Today I am off to Geneva, IL (outside of Chicago) to run a pair of three-day instructor workshops at the Geneva Kayak Center. Ryan (the owner) has a good crew of participants lined up. It looks like I will be driving through a yet another winter storm to get there...

Some may have wondered why I did so much preparation ahead of time. Along with these workshops in Geneva, I am also doing two other instructor workshops at Rutabaga in Madison. To tally it up, there are six weekends left until I leave for Ireland and five of those weekends are busy with instructor workshops or involve prepping for the next weekend's workshop.

Crazy in a way but it also gives me a break from all the thinking about Ireland as well as helps pay some of the bills (rent, utilities, etc) when I am gone for the summer.

sam

1. <http://miningjournal.net/stories/articles.asp?articleID=13479>

sam (2007-04-25 11:03:17)

That is pancake ice. When the ice breaks up and waves are running or wind is blowing, the ice floes get rounded by grinding against other ice. The grinding produces the slush. When I paddled back from Black Rock Point that day, the ice pack had moved a mile+ away due to the wind and waves. It moved far enough that I didn't paddled through it on the way back in. sam

silbs6521 (2007-04-25 09:10:45)

Nice pics (although they give me chills this late in April). I'm wondering what accounts for the circular slush or openings in the ice. I would half expect a seal to pop up through one of them :)

2.4.5 Marquette 51 (2007-04-21 08:26)

Back from running the instructor workshops in the Chicago area with some fun, passionate and very serious paddlers who were great people as well. There was snow flying at times, water temps around 40 degrees F and air temps in the 40s at times. Being born and raised in the area and having moved away in '86, I have come to realize Chicagoans are different. These folks willingly did rescues and endured the cold without so much as a mutter...

I immensely enjoyed sharing time with these paddlers, working with Ryan Rushton (owner of the Geneva Kayak Center) & Jim Tibensky and most of all, staying at the 'Tibensky Hilton' with Jim & his wife Gail. But I do have to admit, I am a UP boy. Just north of Escanaba & Gladstone, MI is a mileage sign that says 'Marquette 51' but to me, it says almost home. There is less than an hour of driving before seeing Lake Superior and parking under the big red pine outside my place.

363Michigan highway map of the Upper Peninsula (UP). Escanaba is on northwestern Lake Michigan and Marquette is to the north on the south shore of Lake Superior.

It is just 5 weeks to the start of the trip and as things warm up training is looming larger. Jim shared with me some training tips which are included below. Thanks Jim!

To me it is more evidence of just how tough these Chicago paddlers are. Need to get me some more Chicago style hotdogs and pizza! :)

sam

All my racing career I used very simple training plans. Lots of aerobic work in the Spring with a strength/speed (I think they are the same) session once a week or so. By late Spring, more lactic stuff with more speed stuff and aerobic fading to once or twice a week. Summer, racing season, would be lots of lactic work, which for me has always been interval training, with some speed and a little aerobic when I could fit it in. Fall is aerobic again with lactic work once or twice a week. Winter is catch as catch can. I have always lived where the water is too dirty to freeze [one of the few joys or water pollution!], so I would do almost all aerobic work in the Winter with the occasional lactic workout on really nice days.

When I moved into slalom from marathon and sprint racing, I emphasized the lactic because slalom

races were, in The Stone Age, four minutes or less. But I found that interval training kept me in terrific aerobic shape, so I now consider it to be The Gold Standard of workouts.

All that translates into:

SPEED - very fast, intense bursts of paddling for ten seconds and resting for fifty seconds. Easy to time with a countdown and repeat mode digital watch. Set it for 60 seconds and watch the countdown, taking off at 10 seconds left and stopping on the beep. Twenty of these in a row will be a great muscle workout and will keep your pulse rate above 120 for twenty minutes - which is the definition of an aerobic workout. Two for the agony of one!

AEROBIC - any workout that gets the heart rate up to 120 (or, I think, 80 % of your max) for twenty minutes or more.

DISTANCE - any paddle of 30 minutes or more at a moderate pace, always being able to talk, sing or whistle as a measure of not going too fast.

LACTIC (INTERVALS) - by far my favorite and, I think, the most productive. I had a number of different ones and would mix them up for variety.

The favorite is the simplest: Set the countdown and repeat timer to thirty seconds. When it goes off, paddle as hard as possible until it sounds again and then fall into a very slow, comfortable pace but do not stop. Take off again the next time the beep sounds. and so on This results in paddling at maximum effort for thirty seconds and then minimum effort for thirty seconds. I do 20 reps, which gets me back to the 20 minutes of more than 120 pulse rate needed for aerobic capacity building.

Another good interval is a pyramid: paddle one minute hard, rest one minute. "Rest" means active rest- paddling slowly. Then paddle two minutes hard, rest one minute. The three minutes hard, rest one minute. Then four minutes hard, rest one minute. then three, two, and one again. This is a 45 minute character-builder. I did it by measuring off four one minute segments on the banks of the river I paddled on and used the markers as my guide without using the watch. So I would paddle from the stone house to the iron railing hard and rest from the iron railing to the bench and so on. I would turn around at the end of the course. Another way I did it when not on my home course was to set the watch for one minute intervals and try to keep track of which set I was on.

If you know anyone masochistic enough to train with you, two others is better, do the "follow the leader", which is really hard: everyone paddles SLOWLY in a line. Who ever is at the end of the line has to drop out to the side, sprint like crazy until he/she is in front, and then drop into the head of the line. As soon as that person is in place, the new tail sprints up to be the leader and so on. No matter how slowly the group is paddling, this one is a killer.

I generally trained no more than four days a week in the boat. I would get on a bicycle or cross country skis on those rare occasions when it would snow here, to cross-train and always, religiously, take one day a week off from any exercise. The older I got, the less training I needed to stay fit, training only three days a week. Keeping the aerobic base is the key, I think.

2.4.6 Training Time (2007-04-25 19:24)

One month to go before driving to Chicago to catch an Aer Lingus flight to Dublin...

This weekend is another instructor workshop this time with Rutabaga in Madison, WI. My boss there , Nancy (are all women who paddle named Nancy? :), has a full class signed up. I'm looking forward to working with John Browning from Milwaukee again.

This is the time for training. As much as I wanted to do some interval training this past week, I ended up in windy conditions. Twice I paddled for 2 hours into the 20+ knot wind and made it back in an hour. Great for building strength, practicing correction strokes in a following sea as well as paddling range lines when ferrying across the wind. Not so good for interval work.

This evening I paddled in flat calm conditions and enjoyed it. There was barely a ripple and the wind was soft. With a smaller paddle blade, I played with some 'spinning' (higher cadence, lower resistance work) over a set distance. This felt good for my tired muscles.

365 Training run out to Presque Ilse rocks in calm conditions.

Balancing massage work and training this time of the season is a challenge. Two things I focus on is sleep and food for they assist in recovery. Sleeping 8 hours a night with an afternoon nap is a good target. Eating three meals a day with snacks in between is another target.

When paddling on monday conditions built and I put off stopping for a needed snack. I noticed my concentration started to drift and my paddling rhythm became difficult to maintain. Things were catching up to me for skipping a meal on sunday. Bonking, even slightly, is never fun.

sam

seakayakerjb (2007-04-25 20:54:39)

8 hours of sleep and an afternoon nap, I'll see what I can do with the schedule this weekend. See ya in about 15 hours—drive safely! JohnB

silbs6521 (2007-05-01 05:32:32)

It was good seeing you and JB on the water teaching and doing what you do best. I am particularly happy that Greg has taken the class as he and I often paddle together. I think he will be a great addition to the teaching group. On another note, even I am starting to get excited about your upcoming adventure. Good things going on, hey?

2.5 May

2.5.1 Paddling Cheeseland (2007-05-02 08:47)

Back from running an instructor workshop in Madison for Rutabaga. As usual, a great group of participants who made it fun to share time on the water (and off as well). Also great to work with John Browning of Milwaukee again.

368John Browning at the 2006 ICE.

We spent sunday training in Milwaukee and ran into Dick Silberman, of blog fame 'Silbs says', with the local paddlers. He has some words & photos ([1]click here) from sunday. Can't beat paddling in MLK, where else can you encounter an accordion player or an employee of Sprecher Brewing Company ([2]click here), my favorite US beer and root beer. I was half expecting someone to show up with some bratwurst. (I know, I know, that would have been more appropriate further north around Sheboygan).

As can be expected not a lot happened towards Ireland this weekend. Around this workshop with the help of Bill from Down Wind Sports ([3]click here), I did manage to secure a couple more sponsors who are providing some needed gear, more on that later. Also, Darren Bush, long time friend and co-owner of Rutabaga ([4]click here), gave me a Suunto t6 heart rate monitor for the trip. Heart rate data both during training and the trip will help Donna Marlor of Endurance Sports Nutrition ([5]click here) generate nutrition data. Something that is lacking for a trip like this.

Less than 4 weeks to arriving in Dublin!

sam

1. <http://silbs.blogspot.com/2007/04/busy-weekend-been-busy-this-past-few.html>
2. <http://www.sprecherbrewery.com/>
3. <http://www.DownWindSports.com/>
4. <http://www.Rutabaga.com/>
5. <http://www.DonnaMarlor.com/>

Weathermaker (2007-05-02 16:07:37)

Cheese -that's what was missing this past weekend! I'll leave the donuts at home for the ICE and bring some Wisconsin string cheese, some made-in-Wisconsin sausage and beef jerky, and a bottle of red wine, fresh off the vineyards near Stangelville where they've opened a new winery. By then I figure a guy who has paddled all the way around Ireland will be needing some 'insulation' put back on his bones, right? I've put an order in for good paddling weather around Ireland this summer. Enough the adventure!

2.5.2 Website downtime (2007-05-16 12:49)

As you have noticed, there have been some significant problems with the blog and Sea Kayak Specialists website. Thanks to a botched update from our hosting service, Ipowerweb.com, the total downtime ran somewhere around 8 out of 10 days.

Once things settle here, I will try to post some updates. There maybe some more downtime coming...

The power of incompetents using computers is not to be underestimated.

sam

2.5.3 Grand Time (2007-05-16 18:36)

(This was originally meant to be posted Sunday May 6th but was not because of the website being down.)

The work week has been one focused on catching up on sleep and doing massage. My clients are signing up for extra appointments in the time before the trip. Their support is great and gave me a busier than expected week massage wise. On the days I allotted paddling time, I ended up using it for sleep (2 hours worth of naps one day) or rest. Managing fatigue and having effective training time is one of the challenges early in the season for me.

Grand Island National Recreation Area ([1]click here) lies 40 miles east of Marquette off of a town called Munising and next to Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. Three of the last four years I have managed to do my last overnight trip of the season going around it. On Saturday, looking for a distance paddle, I paddled around it. Depending on how one follows the shoreline, it can be a 25-40 mile trip. I ended up with around 25 miles, the longest for the season so far. With east winds around 15 knots, seas were a bit lumpy on the east side. Rounding the northeast point put me in a shallow area with 3-4' seas breaking in sets. Fun to be picking ones way through but also a bit nerve wracking because of how random and dumping the breaks seemed.

371 Cliff face at Grand Island National Recreation area.

Of course, the interesting part was the ice still to be seen on the east and north facing beaches. Life in the northwoods does mimic the saying: there are two seasons, winter and the 4th of July.

sam

1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Island_National_Recreation_Area

2.5.4 Immersion Research (2007-05-16 18:44)

Immersion Research ([1]click here) has become an equipment sponsor for the trip, many thanks to them for their support. IR is a small company of paddlers designing equipment for other paddlers. I met Roger, one of their reps, on the water at a symposium. Not always do you see reps getting wet, obviously a sign of someone serious about paddling. Also, who else but fanatics would sponsor a paddling trip called 'Vacation to Hell'?

I love IR paddling jackets. The Zephyr jacket is coming along with me to Ireland. With the conditions and rain I'll encounter, it is the jacket to have and an important piece of equipment. Before going, I have the X dry top to train in the icy waters of Lake Superior in the spring. Both jackets represent the IR's philosophy towards their products: quality and innovation.

sam

1. <http://www.immersionresearch.com/>

2.5.5 Busy Weekend, Again (2007-05-16 19:33)

One of the frustrations last week (and into this week) was having the website go down. Despite calling, mashing teeth and setting up an alternative site, not much was going to change the situation. Of course it came up just as I arrived in Madison for yet another instructor workshop with the good folks at [1]Rutabaga. Well it mostly came up, the blog wasn't up and there wasn't time to look into it. As it happened, that was probably a good thing as it eventually came up on its own.

374The May 2007 IK Instructor workshop participants and staff.

These workshops as I have already noted, allow me to share time on the water with good folks. Interesting too. One of them paddled in the Cork area in southern Ireland last year. Another walked across Spain. All of them have interesting stories and share a passion for the sport. Just doesn't get any better.

A popular question for me is: Are you getting excited about the trip? With the instructor workshops to do, the answer was no. They take a lot of time and energy as well as 100 % concentration. Now there are no more workshops. I walked away from this workshop knowing Ireland is the next stop. I still have some days working doing massage, but now there is nothing between me and arriving in Dublin. Arrival is set for Sunday May 27th. On May 25th I'll drive away from Marquette for Chicago and my May 26th Aer Lingus flight. Yes, I am getting excited.

Tentative plans are to be in the Dun Laoghaire area (by the harbour - [2]click here), a suburb of Dublin. At the harbor I'll pick up my Nigel Dennis Explorer and spend a few days customizing/testing it. June 1st is the start date for the trip. Things are getting real!

Now if the website would continue to cooperate...

sam

1. <http://www.rutabaga.com/>
 2. <http://www.nyc.ie/images/NYC-Location%20Map.jpg>
-

2.5.6 North Water (2007-05-17 14:36)

Jukka swung by Marquette on a business trip and dropped off a used cell phone for the trip. He is a friend from Helsinki Finland who will be travelling with his family to the west of Ireland to paddle for a week or so with me. In the business of selling paper machines, he travels the world and has interesting stories such as paddling in Japan and encountering drift bamboo. He is also always game for ice cream as well as Mexican food.

377Jukka Linnonmaa paddling with his wife Anna (left) and Nancy Uschold on the Baltic Sea.

One of the recently added sponsors for the trip is North Water ([1]click here). One of the products I noticed from them is their tow belts, in particular their Sea Tec tow belt. These belts are well designed and can also be used as a deck tow. Thanks to their sponsorship, Jukka, Nancy, Stew and I will have Sea Tec towbelts and stirrups when we paddle together. Designed by BCU 5 Star paddlers, this safety equipment is the best around and will help us significantly if needed.

Jukka tends to be blunt in his comments. Saying what he thinks is characteristic of Finns and it makes

him a good paddling partner as well - no guessing if he is mad at you or just being nice. He said the following about their belts: "It is truly the first well thought of towbelt I have ever seen." High praise indeed.

In addition, North Water is also providing gear including net bags and duffel bags. The bags are incredibly useful for keeping together all the gear and food while traveling and are as well built as their tow belts.

sam

1. <http://www.northwater.com/>

2.5.7 Skibberreen (2007-05-17 14:36)

Got in a good paddle today. Gorgeous day today, sunny, warm temps and calm seas - seems so different than most of my other training runs. Felt good not to be on the computer typing and muttering.

380Shoreline on Little Presque Isle during today's paddle.

Altogether I have prepared three food packs. One I will take over, one Kevin Lehner of Lake Mills, WI will drop with me and one that Nancy Uschold of Marquette will bring over. This past week I bought the last bit of items such as nuts, cooking oil, etc to top off the packs.

Food packs are being used a bit differently than previous trips. In a wilderness trip, these packs are critical as there is no chance to resupply at a store. Paddling in Ireland is obviously a lot different as there will be many chances to resupply. However the food packs are useful for a couple of reasons. One is money, food is less expensive here in the states. The other reason is that I know this food. I know how much fuel it takes to cook it, how much space it takes to pack and most importantly how much for a filling meal.

I will be buying food to supplement the food packs along the way until they run out. The food packs account for about half the meals I will eat over there. By the 9th week I will be totally resupplying from local towns. Going native some may say. :)

In Madison, Kevin assisted with the instructor workshop and also picked up the food pack. We'll be meeting up in the southwest of Ireland in late June. He left with the words, "See you in Skibberreen" (which is a small town where he has a room reserved).

sam

silbs6521 (2007-05-17 15:24:47)

Getting close. In case I don't get the chance before you go, paddle safe and wind at your back. I look forward to your safe return and Irish stories. Dick

Henry (2007-05-18 07:43:11)

Glad to see that the site is back up. Have a good trip and I hope one day to hear about your adventures. Henry

2.5.8 Email Problems (2007-05-18 07:58)

Ipowerweb.com has done it again. Email does not to work for SeaKayakSpecialists.com. If sam@SeaKayakSpecialists.com bounces email back to you, or you get no response, try samcrowley@hotmail.com. Thanks.

sam

2.5.9 Comet McNaught (2007-05-18 13:57)

In one week I'll be leaving Marquette. In two weeks, will be my first day paddling. The pace is picking up!

The following was written over the winter.

Late in January just after sunset, I caught sight of Comet McNaught. A comet that put on a great show for those in the southern hemisphere (check out spaceweather.com for photos). An unusual comet, it has been seen in some places even when the sun is out. The brightest comet in a couple of thousand years, its next trip around the sun is in 58,000 years.

A comet's appearance was filled with superstition historically. They were thought to be a punishment from the gods. Kings & priests were sacrificed in the world's first city-states as an appeasement. Later civilizations thought death and disease rained down from their tails. These civilizations watched the sky assuming the sky was how the gods communicated. We now like to think we know better (or is it we think the gods don't communicate anymore?).

Another notable comet I saw was Hyakutake in the winter of 95-96 while I was living in northern Minnesota. I distinctly remember one night after a pool session snowshoeing back to the cabin dragging my boat and gazing up at the comet. It was an unusual winter, unusually cold and snowy. Because of the snow, I had to park 2/3 of a mile away from the cabin all winter long. Because of the cold, I had to find extra firewood in the nearby woods every couple of days. That night, my hair had froze in the 20 minutes I was outside.

Winter is a time most people dread, thanks partially to the media's bias towards warm places. After spending 14 months in the San Francisco area, I returned to the Midwest to live in all four seasons. I enjoy skiing, being able to put the kayak away and star gazing. Orion, the constellation, is my winter companion. Fall paddling trips are graced by Orion rising in the east. Spring trips see Orion setting in the west.

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Looking up at McNaught, I was moved by the beauty and felt a benevolent presence. During the winter season 11 years ago, the seeds of my current life were germinating under Hyakutake. Those 11 years have been some of the most challenging as well as some of the most rewarding. Now my dreams for Ireland are germinating under McNaught during another unusual winter. What all this means for my trip, I have no idea but I view it as a good omen.

sam

2.5.10 Weekend Update (2007-05-21 04:54)

Ipowerweb continues its struggles. In fixing the email problem, the photo gallery does not work now. Am hoping to get that fixed soon.

Paddled over the last several days. A couple of 3+ hour paddles and sunday was 2 hours of surfing in 3-4' in some swells that were fading out. No wind, lots of sun although early spring weather returned with temperatures in the low 40's (F). Fun to be catching rides. Definitely a break from doing miles.

Worked on paying bills. Utility bills and rent are all paid up for the three months I am gone (that hurt!). This way a friend who is watching over my mail doesn't have to worry about paying my bills too. Called and let the credit card companies know I was traveling overseas so their fraud alert doesn't shut down the cards. Started packing the two duffle bags I am taking over.

This friday is the day I drive away from Marquette.

sam

2.5.11 Seals Sprayskirts (2007-05-21 05:29)

I don't know why, but making a quality sprayskirt that doesn't leak seems to be difficult to do. For me, most skirts leak either at the tube or at the coaming - some even leak in both places. Having to pump every hour in rough conditions is bad, finishing the day sopping wet from the waist down is worse. Two neoprene skirts (out of six) have not leaked in the last 10 years for me. I was sorry to sell one of them but I am happy to have discovered Seals sprayskirts ([1]click here). Their Pro Shocker neoprene sprayskirt has yet to leak in 2+ seasons of use. Seals recently became a sponsor for the trip and has supplied their quality products.

Another thing noticed about Seals is service. Many companies throw product at you and expect you to be happy with it. At Seals, they work hard to make you happy, even after the sale. As some retail friends say, 'they get it'.

Thanks to Seals for their support.

sam

1. <http://www.sealsskirts.com/>

2.5.12 Blog Updates While Paddling (2007-05-21 05:30)

Several folks have wondered if there will be blog updates while the trip is underway in Ireland. I am happy to say, yes. Phone calls back to the States will allow a friend to post where I am at as well as any interesting stories. Plans are for at least a once a week update. Since I will be using a cell phone, it will depend on several factors including battery charge and tower access. Two cell phones and three batteries should help

keep things working (I hope!).

Dean Juntunen of Mass City, MI will be the person I call with updates. Dean is a 'gonzo' paddler - someone who is on the water quite a bit and in general eats, drinks and breathes kayaking. He owns somewhere around six kayaks and is usually test paddling looking for more.

It should be noted that Carl Mather of Detroit, MI was originally going to do this. Given the challenges that Carls employer Chrysler is facing, he felt it best if someone else did it.

Thanks to Dean for his help with the updates.

sam

2.5.13 Updates in Case of a Dead Blog (2007-05-21 18:55)

One of the possibilities that website host Ipower is making clear with its instability right now is that the blog may go down while I am paddling in Ireland. If that should happen, email Dean Juntunen directly at deanjunt@jamadots.com as he will then send out updates via email.

sam

2.5.14 Gaia Paddle Sports (2007-05-22 15:28)

Gaia ([1]click here) is providing their Tortuga line of dry bags for the trip. These are heavy duty bags that will handle the wear and tear that 1200 miles and 3 months of use will throw their way. I've had a dry bag leak on me and ruined a 1st aid kit because the seams failed. Gaia knows how to design long lasting bag, these are doubly reinforced at the seam. With the different sizes they offer, there is a bag for every need.

With all the packing going on, their support is welcomed and very timely!

sam

1. <http://www.gaiasports.com/>

2.5.15 Packing! (2007-05-22 15:28)

North Water duffel bags are getting stuffed with gear, food, charts, etc. It is also time to be running out and getting that last piece of must have gear. Thank goodness a place like Down Wind Sports is nearby. I have been stopping by there daily getting stuff lip balm, small bottles (for cooking oil, etc), dry boxes, etc. I found the perfect sized Otter Box that will protect some of the assorted electronic gear that is being stuffed in about four dry boxes. Bill and Bonnie at Down Wind have been seeing a lot of me recently - good thing they like me!

Today and tomorrow are work days as well. These are the last messages for me till the end of august. Wednesday is especially busy.

Talked with Ipower, they are working on the photo gallery. Cross your fingers they get the fix right!

sam

2.5.16 Nutrition Article (2007-05-23 07:25)

Busy (and last) day of work for me. Even still, running errands and getting some loose ends tied off when possible.

Donna Marlor of Endurance Sports Nutrition wrote an article about the trip and the meal plan. [1]Click here to see the article from Silent Sports Magazine.

Donna also provided a wide range of Clif Bar products that are coming in handy for the training paddles. These include Clif Bars, Shot Blocks, Z Bars, Mojo Bars, Builders Bars and Clif Shot Recovery drinks. A great feature about Clif Bar products is the amount of organic content, the variety is helping prevent taste fatigue and the Recovery Shots & Builder bars are helping to manage physical fatigue.

Thanks Donna!

sam

1. http://www.silentsports.net/nutrition_for_endurance_paddli.html

silbs6521 (2007-05-24 05:13:14)

Must be an Irish thing...getting even your nutrition from bars :)

2.5.17 Busy Bill (2007-05-23 07:29)

Bill Thompson from Down Wind ([1]click here) has been working hard lining up equipment sponsors for the trip. This isn't the first time for Bill building support for a trip as he has his own sponsored trips (that I know of) to Tibet and Mt Everest. With his experience, he has provided great support, help & advice in the sponsorship process. His efforts are much appreciated and what does he ask in return? Some beer called Milwaukee's Finest. (What a great guy, you'll never have to worry about him drinking your good beer!)

Thanks to his efforts, the following companies have recently provided equipment to sponsor the trip:

[2]Seal Line - dry bags. Their heavy duty Baja series is some of the toughest and longest lasting dry-bags I have encountered.

[3]Native Eyewear - polarized sunglasses. A great pair of glasses with three different lenses for varying light conditions.

[4]Teko Socks - wool socks. Three pairs made from their EcoMerino wool that is 'beyond organic'.

sam

1. <http://www.downwindsports.com/>
 2. <http://www.seallinegear.com/>
 3. <http://www.nativeeyewear.com/>
 4. <http://www.tekosocks.com/>
-

2.5.18 Sam's Off (2007-05-24 15:55)

Hello Sam Friends and Fans,

I am Dean Juntunen, an enthusiastic paddler Yuper living in the boonies back of Mass City, and I will be updating Sam's blog while he's in Ireland. This is just a test to verify that I know the blog system. While he's in the vicinity of Ireland, Sam and I will communicate by phone and I'll put the progress reports into the blog.

Sam will be shoving off tomorrow (Friday, May 25) on his flight to Ireland, and tonight friends are seeing him off in proper fashion, putting paddles to the water. Tune in next week for the continuing Saga of Sam as he tours the country of his progenitors, finding great meaning in life.

Dean

seakayakerjb (2007-05-24 18:18:55)

Wishing a bit of luck, good health, and no equipment failures. I, as well as many, will have you in our thoughts this summer. Looking forward to the posts, and the stories you will return with. See ya in September. . . All the Best!!!
JohnB

2.5.19 A Day of Doing Many Things (2007-05-24 18:57)

There are two large packed duffel bags sitting in my living room. My sea kayak has been put into a friends garage, the kayak racks are off my car and my to-do list has shrunk considerable. Equipment lists are currently being double checked. Tomorrow is a drive to Chicago after getting the refrigerator shutdown, dishes washed and the final ends either taken care of or ignored.

Dean mentioned an appropriate send off, paddles in the water. Well, it didn't quite happen that way but was appropriate none the less. First wind then the threat of a thunder storm and finally rain kept us off the water. We left Middle Bay and went for ice cream. On the way I couldn't help but think of how many more times wind and rain will be mixed together with paddling this summer. Perhaps ice cream will be a part of the mix then as well.

The pressure of being gone for three months and facing the challenge of this circumnavigation has been at times frighteningly stressful. Rick, who owns the Sports Rack ([\[1\]click here](#)), said yesterday that I looked like I had an edge. I've felt that way for a week or more. Today, while spending 15 minutes watching an ore boat back out of the dock and turn in the high winds, I found the first calm spot in a while. It was discovered after I realized my bags are packed.

The to-do list is getting smaller. Soon it will say: paddle, keep land on the right.

sam

1. <http://www.skiguys.com/>

2.5.20 Thank You (2007-05-25 06:24)

George Dyson, author of Baidarka, wrote about walking into his workshop while he was building the worlds largest baidarka and finding an anonymous note. It said "I would like to help you with your insanity".

There have been numerous offers of support & help for the trip. A few of you have helped even more by donating cash, another with laminated song sheets for my deck. With the trip about to start, there has been email, cards, voicemail and more expressing best wishes. The phrase 'a gathering of friends' has been in my thoughts because this trip hasn't felt like a solo one so far.

All I can offer is a humble thank you.

And yes, sanity, has not been a personal trait...

sam

Coach Lisa (2007-06-28 02:22:51)

Actually, you are one of the few sane people I know. Paddle on Sam!

silbs6521 (2007-05-29 03:16:13)

Sanity is vastly ove rated :)

2.5.21 Our boy is in Ireland (2007-05-28 04:36)

Sam arrived in Ireland at 10:00 a.m. local time yesterday. Today he's getting over jet lag in Dun Laoghaire, a suburb of Dublin. His boat will come in tomorrow – it's a Romany Explorer of course – lent to Sam by Nigel Dennis. Sam has always been in love with his Brit boat. In meeting his Irish goals for food and drink, Sam polished off some fish and chips yesterday, and today he's getting into some Guinness. Planned launch date is Friday, June 1. However, Irish lodging is more than our parsimonious Yuper friend expected, so he may be launching on Thursday and camping out.

By the way, if anyone reading this blog would like to get automatic notifications of new blog entries, just register yourself on the blog site. I expect to hear from Sam again on his launch date. Dean

2.5.22 Sam On the Sea (2007-05-31 19:33)

Yesterday Sam went to Holy Head in Wales, where he met Nigel Dennis and picked up a boat. Sam says, "It's kinda funky-looking." It's a turquoise Romany Explorer, hull and deck, with some interesting white in the mix. Sam toured the factory where the boats are made, and got some help from boat builders Peter and Scott.

Sam also met Peter Bray. Peter Bray and Nigel Dennis had circumnavigated South Georgia Island in November of 2005. The island is located east of the tip of South America, way out in the South Atlantic Ocean. It's extreme paddling. That's not unusual for Peter Bray, who had also paddled across the Atlantic Ocean in a modified kayak.

Sam met all kinds of interesting, world class paddlers. Last but not least was Bill Cleg, who works for Nigel Dennis, and told Sam about paddling in Greenland last summer. His claim to fame is that he has paddled around the entire UK.

After meeting the hardcore kayakers, Sam and his boat rode a ferry back to Dun Laoghaire. He checked his funky-looking boat with the baggage handlers, who raised their eyebrows about the kayak, but they handled it well.

Last night, Sam customized his cockpit with foam. This morning he ran around getting final supplies, followed by two hours of boat packing. Sam launched at 1:30 p.m. and paddled almost 4 miles to Dalkey Island.

Our man Sam is on the sea, and all of Ireland awaits.

2.6 June

2.6.1 Dalkey Island (2007-06-02 08:31)

Sam set up camp on Dalkey Island on Thursday evening, May 31, after his first short paddling outing in Ireland. History in Ireland goes back centuries of course, and Dalkey Island sports a Celtic church ruin from the 6th-9th century. The Island also has a slightly newer fort and tower, built to repel any invasion by Napoleon.

After Sam enjoyed the inaugural dinner of his journey, 10-14 paddlers pulled up on the beach. They were a group from Deep Blue Seakayaking, with guides Dave, Stacey, and Marie. Several of the paddlers were aware of Sam's journey and were tickled to have met him. He's out there charming the Irish. Sam sends thanks to Deep Blue Seakayaking for helping him outfit his boat. Among other things, they're facilitating the installation of a foot pump in the near future. Sam says "They're going out of their way, and I am a grateful Yuper."

On Dalkey Island, Sam checked out nesting sites of various birds, and learned that the island has seen 6,000 years of human inhabitation. It saw Vikings back when Sam's Norse forbears were marauding in the British Isles, and it was used as a place for ships to offload before the establishment of Dublin's Port on the River Liffey.

As for Irish weather, the forecast for Thursday had been thundershowers and sunshine, and it was mostly sunshine. Beyond that, it's either rain or sun, they're not quite sure.

2.6.2 What a ride! (2007-06-04 14:35)

Sam paddled three of the last four days. On Friday, June 1, he covered 14 miles to Wicklow and then the wind came up in his face at 25-30 mph, force 5 or 6. So he stopped. The wind blew through Saturday. So he waited.

On Sunday, he launched in the rain and had a fantastic day. Sam did 24 miles in 4 hours of paddling, thanks to favorable tidal currents. One nice tidal race at Wicklow Head had current at 3-4 knots going his way for about a mile with waves at 3-4 feet. What a ride!

The rain stopped by Monday, though an overcast kept the skies grey. Sam paddled another 20 miles to a town called Cahore, and the skies finally turned sunny in the evening. The next several days look good with a high pressure system. Sam said, "I hope to get long mileage and make some progress down the east coast."

If you're following Sam's progress on a map of Ireland, you'll see Dublin on the east coast in the middle area, from where Sam is heading south on his clockwise circumnavigation.

So far, all gear is working well, though cell phone service is iffy, as is the battery. The eastern coast is the easy one in Ireland. The western coast will be challenging.

2.6.3 Fair weather and lots of people (2007-06-07 21:06)

Sam has been blessed with very favorable weather conditions. He's stayed put for only one weather day so far. And, he's had steady tailwinds. From Cahore, Sam paddled 24 miles one day to Rosslare Point, which is just north of Rosslare Harbour, which is a busy ferry point to Wales. The next day, just past Rosslare Harbour, Sam rounded Carnsore Point to enter the southern coastal area. After a 28-mile day, he beached it at the town of Kilmore Quay where he resupplied and enjoyed cod dinner and chips (French fries). The forecast for the next few days is nice weather and easterly tailwinds.

Before beaching it at the town of Kilmore Quay, Sam had paddled out to the Saltee Islands, where he planned to camp. However, the landing at low tide wasn't very inviting – too rocky.

By the way, when Sam had that weather day back at Wicklow Point, he enjoyed the day immensely. He ran into some wardens who were protecting a population of terns. One of the wardens was Blanaid, an Irish lass who was born in Houston. The second warden was from Canada, and the third was from Poland – all women. Sam hung out with them all day, looking at birds, drinking tea, and dining. Life was good.

Since Dalkey Island, Sam has camped on beaches and seen lots of fishermen. In general, Sam says, "Quite a lot of people around. I've run into Australians on vacation and everything. The Irish people like to walk on the beaches in the evenings. And, I ran into three South African immigrants at Rosslare Point and they invited me in for a prawn fry and South African sausage, which they had actually bought in Ireland. They were also Cognac drinkers."

Sam had given me a calling card to use for communicating with him, but in re-supplying the minutes, I learned that the cost is perilously close to a dollar a minute, so I'm going to use my cell phone instead. Alltel offered twenty cents a minute for calls to Europe, including Ireland.

I expect to talk with Sam again in three days.

silbs6521 (2007-06-08 06:00:42)

Wish Sam continued fair winds and more "birds" with which to hang out :) Dick Silberman

2.6.4 The plot thickens (2007-06-11 21:03)

Following Kilmore Quay, Sam progressed nicely to Hook Head, and then Bun Mahon, and as of Monday evening, he was in Whiting Bay, 20 miles east of Cork.

On Friday, Des and Sonya from Deep Blue Seakayaking showed up and they installed Sam's foot pump. Sam says, "It's working well," and he is deeply thankful for their efforts.

The boat is flawless now, and all is well on the southern coast, save a couple of paddling blisters on his hands and some peeling on his ears (paddler error).

The paddling is uneventful though the coastline has changed from sand beaches and dunes to 200-foot rock cliffs, with lots of caves. Sam's been enjoying some enormous arches, and said, "They're bigger than anything I've seen in the Apostle Islands."

While cave paddling, Sam ran into three fellow seakayakers – Tom, George, and Eamonn – who gave Sam pointers to a pub in Helvick Head. Sam said these were the first paddlers he has found on the water, and he had great conversation, not that he isn't good at talking to himself on the solitary days. The three kayakers actually sought Sam out on the water, pulled up and asked, "So are you the guy going around then?" They had been reading Sam's blog.

Monday was a day of rest for Sam, and he saw rain for the first time in a week. He has 180 miles of Ireland under his boat so far. He wants to be well-rested for tomorrow, because he has a long day to get past Cork – the harbour entrance and the motorized boat traffic. And the forecast is calling for his first headwind, coming up at 10-20 mph. The plot thickens.

Of special note, Sam would like to send thanks to Bart from South Shore Barbershop in Marquette, MI. Bart gave Sam some Guinness.

Weathermaker (2007-06-13 19:36:59)

Ireland 180 Oh, Sam Crowley, the joy Of boat tossed like a toy As paddle does he round a nation; He's prowling about Heads While most others touch beds - It's Guinness fills him with elation!

South Shore Barber (2007-06-13 03:21:16)

As far as Guinness I wonder if Sam finds it better "over there." I did. The peeling of the ears may have been because he wanted a haircut that lasted awhile. That's what happens when you expose skin the hasn't seen sun in the six years I've known him. Small price to pay to be the best looking on the H2O. Paddle on Sam

sue nutty (2007-06-13 14:52:31)

WOW - how exciting to be underway and on the water!!!! I'm thinking about you while I fight through the pond scum in Madison!!!! Cherish every moment. :)

2.6.5 Sitting Sam (2007-06-14 20:29)

Sam charged into his first headwind and put in a hard 15 miles, from Whiting Bay to Bally Cotton. The Cork Harbour was no problem. He didn't even see a ship. He did, however, fight reflected waves 2-3 feet high along some cliffs.

The next day was good, and Sam paddled 24 miles to Oyster Haven Inlet. This morning he tried to proceed, but "stuff was coming in from the southeast." Sam thought he'd try to get around Old Head of Kinsale, which would have taken at least two hours, but waves were 4-6 feet and getting steep, looking like they'd start breaking, and rain was pouring down.

Sam opted to go back to Oyster Haven Inlet for safety. Once camp was set up again, the wind picked up even more. Sam said, "It would have been crazy out there."

Counting today's out and back he's got 224 miles. He did have one minor equipment failure. The foot pump hose fell apart. Sam plugged the through-hole for now.

Next week, Kevin Lehner will bring a food drop and Sam hopes to fix his hose then.

2.6.6 Rabbit Island (2007-06-17 20:42)

In our last episode, Sam had been turned back by nasty weather at the Old Head of Kinsale. On Friday morning, the wind had shifted to the northeast and the swells dropped. Rain still fell though – all day long and into the evening. Sam says, "I generally mutter a few curse words as I'm setting up or taking down in the rain."

With a gentle 3 to 4-foot swell from the southwest and wind driven chop of 1-foot from the northeast, Sam left Oyster Haven for the second time on the crossing to the Old Head of Kinsale, with the wind at his back. Sam hit the head a half hour before tidal slackwater, so all went well. He paddled 20 miles without landing – crossing first to the head, then paddling along cliffs. He camped at Dunworly Bay on a pocket beach. Sam says, "It was nothing but cobbles and rotting seaweed."

Sam was plagued by bugs in the morning, which he figures was due to the rotting seaweed. On a positive note, he saw his first puffin on the crossing to the head.

Sam put in 20 miles on Saturday, doing some more crossings. Once he rounded Galley Head, he crossed to Rabbit Island, outside of Glandore Harbor and set up camp. It was his first island camping since Dalkey Island, and also his first grassy campsite since Dalkey. On Rabbit Island, Sam camped beside a house ruin. The thatched roof is long gone, but the solid rock walls remain.

Sam slept 10 hours, then rested on Rabbit Island on Sunday, catching a nap in the afternoon. The weatherman is calling for rain through tomorrow afternoon, but with a few preparatory curse words, Sam will paddle on.

2.6.7 Meeting up with friends (2007-06-19 21:16)

Sam is reprovisioning this week. Kevin Lehner and his wife Leann flew into Shannon on Monday, and on Tuesday they were scheduled to meet Sam in Baltimore. They've got four days planned. Sam will offload some stuff and reload other provisions – charge batteries, food drop, etc.

As an example of superfluous gear, Sam won't need his spare water filter cartridge. The Irish have a UP-like social atmosphere, such that if a public water fountain isn't present, you simply walk up to a home and ask for a water refill.

Sam is also giving up his teacup. He was not able to find any Irish tea without caffeine in it, and since Sam sips tea in the evening, he figures caffeine is not a good plan since it may interfere with his sleep.

Sam plans to contact me again on Saturday, by which time he figures he'll have paddled some more. He's in the southwestern corner of Ireland now. The coastline gets very rugged, and the place names sound ominous. Between Baltimore and Skibereen, he'll have to cross Roaringwater Bay. Let's hope that the bay doesn't live up to its name.

2.6.8 Irish driving (2007-06-23 20:23)

Here's some Sam gear trivia for you. He brought 6 batteries along for his little waterproof camera. He also brought 3 cell phone batteries plus a little AA battery-powered cell phone charger. He had been running okay so far.

From whence I last blogged, Sam paddled to Baltimore with a 20mph tailwind, which was a raucous ride, though not too hard on the effort level scale. In Baltimore, Sam hooked up with friends Kevin and Leann. Sam recharged his batteries, literally, in their hotel room. Sam also had the opportunity to access the internet for a short period on another night, so he uploaded some photos to his website. Look in the June Album in the photo gallery.

Also in Baltimore, Sam enjoyed another Irish fish and chips dinner with Guinness and friends, at Algiers. Why Algiers? There were some Algerian pirates back in history who raided Baltimore and took 100 prisoners back to Algeria and sold them as slaves. I'm still not sure how that translates to having a pub named Algiers, but such it is.

Sam was happy to take a shower, too, so he was presentable for Kevin and Leann. The next day they drove to Skibbereen and found a piece of hose to repair Sam's foot pump system. They hung out, had dinner, and more Guinness. The next day they drove to Mizen Head. It was windy and the seas were big. They toured the lighthouse and watched foam spray off the ocean's surface and up to them on the lighthouse. Sam estimates the foam was lifting off the ocean and flying 300 feet to get to them. Roaringwater Bay would have lived up to its name had Sam paddled it in that wind.

Sam and friends drove around the countryside (on the wrong side of the road) and saw a stone circle, along the lines of Stonehenge. Then it was back to Skibbereen to the hotel. They tried to find a Laundromat, to no avail. They were told that the city of Cork had the nearest one. Sam said, "Oh well, I got to experience Irish roads – they're very narrow with tight turns, and there's no room for parking in the city, so people just park in the way. Once you get off the main road you're driving on what would be a bike path in the states, and when you meet a car, someone has to back up to a wide spot to allow for a pass."

Tune in tomorrow for more on Sam's journey. I couldn't fit all the stuff he gave me today into one blog entry.

Joel (2007-06-24 18:53:24)

Thanks for the updates. I had to do some searching to find the June photo gallery, so I thought I might save someone else the trouble. Go Sam, Go! http://www.seakayakspecialists.com/Ireland2007/blog/wp-gallery2.php?g2_itemId=386

2.6.9 Well-oiled Sam (2007-06-24 17:13)

Sam started paddling again on Friday, from Baltimore to Crookhaven. The sea was "pretty mellow with light headwinds and chop." Sam pulled up to camp on a sand beach and the winds climbed. By the time he got to putting up his tent, the wind grabbed it and blew it away from him, toward the water. He sprinted after the tent and got it at the water's edge. Then, in wrestling with his tent in the Irish wind, he broke a pole. But, he managed to repair it with a splint.

Meanwhile, Kevin and Leann in their rental car had moved from Skibbereen to Schull. They picked up Sam in Crookhaven and took him back to their hotel for another shower and fine dining.

I'm not clear on which night this happened, but Sam, Kevin, and Leann were in Skibbereen at the Horse and Hound pub, and they ran into Melvin, a Scottish lad from Edinburgh who is a surfer. While Leann comported herself well, all three boys drank way too much. Our man Sam was well-oiled in Ireland.

On Saturday, Sam launched from Crookhaven and paddled around Mizen Head. He had light headwinds with seas at 2.5 feet, but once he rounded the head, everything calmed down. He spent the night in Dunmanus Bay. Sam is on the west coast now. He says, "My compass is pointing north."

Sam will be heading north on the west coast for the foreseeable future, and all is well. While the young Scottish surfer boy got him drunk, Jerry O'Mahoney, a local farmer near Dunmanus Bay, ran into Sam and gave him 5 eggs and some fresh milk.

2.6.10 Windbound (2007-06-26 19:22)

Sam is in Blackball Harbor on the Beara Peninsula – only 16 miles and one paddling day since he left Dunmanus Bay. He's been windbound, with northerlies from 20 to 35 knots with higher gusts.

He left Dunmanus with headwind at 10-12 mph, but the wind built to 25 mph, at which point any forward progress was a lot of work. So Sam pulled into Blackball Harbor and started setting up his tent. While doing so, a sailboat came in and moored in the little fishing harbor. The guy from the sailboat came to Sam and said, "So you're going around, are ya?" The sailor is Brendan, who is staying in a house on the harbor, built by his parents, who grew up in the area. During WWII they went to London to work, got married, and raised a family. And now they spend time on Blackball Harbor again.

Brendan, who is sailing around Ireland, sort of adopted Sam, which was convenient for the windbound days. First off was an invitation to town for a couple of pints. Sam and Brendan went into the town of Allihies to the Bull Rock Pub for dinner and drinks. While he's thoroughly enjoying himself, Sam is having

a hard time deciphering the quick speech of the locals who have a very heavy accent. Sam says, "I can only pick up about one in three words."

The next day Brendan invited Sam up to his parents house for a shower. Then Sam and Brendan went to Castletownbere across from Bear Island, where they did a bit of shopping. They also admired the fishing fleet there. Sam says, "It's probably the biggest fishing fleet I've seen, and it was tied up in the smallest area." At the dock, boats were three across.

Brendan's mother, Eileen, is in her 80's, and her younger sister and brother, Margret and Paddy, septuagenarians both, were visiting. Paddy is a retired sailor. He informed Sam that he had sailed on oreboats on the Great Lakes for a couple of seasons. Margret is a storyteller in the Irish tradition. Sam has been enchanted with the older Irish people and their interactions, particularly Margret's lyrical storytelling. And the old folks keep feeding Sam.

During his land time, Sam also hiked up to a signal tower built for Napoleon's invasion. From that vantage point, he could see back to Mizen Head and forward to Skellig Michael, an island to the north. It sports a 6th century monastery built by Celtic monks.

The forecast for tomorrow looks bad, too, but Thursday and Friday look like good paddling days. Sam and I will talk again on Friday, then once more on Sunday, prior to my departure for the Pukaskwa National Park in Ontario, where two buddies and I will be kayaking for about a week, during which time the blog will be inactive.

2.6.11 Ya Hey Der! (2007-06-28 03:31)

Hello from Castletownbere on the Beara Peninsula County Cork. Once again am sitting on land waiting out the winds. Force 6-7 winds are forecasted in some areas and it seems this is the area. This morning there seemed to be an opportunity to launch so I packed up the boat. When it was time to take down the tent, Jerome a local fisherman, came by and talked. 'Yer a tough man to go out today' he said. By this time a rain squall moved in with its associated increase in winds and was enough to put things off for the day, or at least now. Edgy to get going but when the local fishing fleet stays in that is a sign.

Perhaps tomorrow as the forecast sounds better but the low pressure systems are lining up off the coast and things look pessimistic for a bit. 'Maybe next week' was Jeromes comment. Fortunately Brendans family, the Hartnets (and Murphys), are gracious hosts and are more than happy to have me around. There are many memories of growing up in an American Irish family coming back in watching and listening to this Irish family. Brendan and his sister Carmel came by and offered the ride into town. Nice to have the break. Can't say how much I appreciate their generosity and how much that is helping my sanity during this time.

sam

2.6.12 Take Cover Sam! (2007-06-29 08:57)

There is a massive low pressure tracking straight for Sam at this writing. Based on the sources of weather information I observed Sam getting during our visit with him last week I am sure he is aware that something big is about to happen in his neck of the woods. I tried to reach him last night by phone to check his

awareness but just got his voice mail. Here is a link to a site where you can see what is about to happen.
[1]<http://www.oceanweather.com/data/NATL-Northern/index.html>

As we enjoy what is shaping up to be a great paddling weekend around the Midwest hopefully Sam has taken cover to wait this one out.

Posted by Kevin Lehner

1. <http://www.oceanweather.com/data/NATL-Northern/index.html>

2.7 July

2.7.1 Going nowhere fast (2007-07-01 21:56)

Sam is still in Blackball Harbor. The wind has been unrelenting. Yesterday saw a gale come through from the south – force 8 winds with rain. According to the newspaper, this June was the wettest in Ireland’s history. And when Sam got back to his tent on the really windy day, his tent pole had broken.

Meanwhile, Sam is still hanging out with his impromptu Irish host family. Sam says, ”They’ve been wonderful.”

On Friday night, Sam, Brendan, and Uncle Paddy went out for an evening in Castetownbere, where folk music was playing and the locals were doing some ”set dancing.” It’s sort of an Irish square dance.

Also, Sam has done a bit of hiking. He saw an old copper mining area in the hills outside of Allihies. The last mine was running in the 1860’s or so.

On Sunday the winds switched to the Northwest with a quick transition, but they’re still force 5 to force 7. And, the whole week looks bad according to the current forecast – northerly and westerly winds. Sam has been hoping for light winds so he can paddle out to Skellig Michael, which is about a ten-mile crossing. The poor landing sites there require light waves. Sam may have to resort to seeing it from a motorized tour boat instead.

Meanwhile, here in the UP we’ve had light winds the past few days with temps in the low 70’s. It’s perfect weather for a nice, safe paddling expedition, and Monday morning I leave for a week or so to paddle the Pukaskwa National Park coastline on Lake Superior with Jim Waters and Al Koivunen. I’ll be back at Sam’s blog upon my return.

2.7.2 Sitting Still (2007-07-03 04:46)

Another day and another day of winds at least Beaufort f6 (30 mph) and another gale due tonight. Yesterday saw winds f6-7 (30-35 mph). Winds this past week has been at least f5 (25 mph). The only south winds, which is a tail wind, have been gale force (40+ mph) which despite the forecast, quickly switched to w-nw f6-7 which is a head wind. This unstable weather is difficult to predict as even the latest forecast doesn’t match the current conditions. The bright spot is that there is forecasted light and southerly winds for thursday.

One can check out the Atlantic pressure charts - [1]click here. There is a high pressure building in that I believe accounts for the light winds and hopefully more stable weather.

Brendan in his boat, Nomad, launched yesterday. He claimed a few swells were in the 12'+ range and that things were 'a bit lumpy'. Watching from a nearby headland, one could see only his mast at times in the seas. He also reported something curious, a search by customs agents when he anchored. After they were satisfied, they let him know what was up. There was a rescue of some folks from a sunken boat in the am with a search going on for a missing person. Turns out it was Irelands largest drug bust. They were running drugs ashore in a zodiac when it sank in the heavy seas, dumping 110 million euro worth of cocaine into the waters. They haven't found the mother boat yet, hence the customs visit to Brendans boat. More [2]here.

Eileen said that my ancestors from Co Cork are holding me here to get to know the land and the people more. It is an interesting perspective from a wise person. Last night was an evening in the Castletownbere pubs with Eileen and her family (I've learned not to try to keep up with a 70+ year old drinking Irishmen, even if they had a head start!). Each day it seems I meet more people born and raised here thru Eileen and her family. Part of me is going crazy to go, part of me is content to be here, especially looking at the conditions but primarily because of these generous and gracious people. Looking at the calendar, time is slipping but it is not desperate yet. Planning, I made sure to allocate time in case of weather, though I never anticipated a situation like this one. Which makes me think Eileen is right, my ancestors are involved...

sam

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/coast/pressure/>
2. <http://www.rte.ie/news/2007/0703/drugs.html>

george (2007-07-04 03:51:02)

Crikey Sam! If you got your hands on some of that coke you'd get around Ireland in a week, and still have enough in the tank for a lap of honour!

2.7.3 Back in the saddle (2007-07-09 14:45)

Sam finally got to paddle on Thursday, July 5th, launching out of Blackball Harbor at last. The forecast said a gale was coming in the evening. Sam was 4 to 5 miles out from Blackball when the wind came up prematurely, though it wasn't gale strength yet. Still, progress was slow and difficult for the next three miles to Dursey Sound. Sam paddled through Dursey Sound in protected water, then turned east (downwind) to a town called Garnish.

Sam paddled up to the dock at Garnish for a lunch break. A man named Michael McNally introduced himself and after light conversation, Michael leaned over and said to Sam, "You poor, crazy bastard." He said that the Irish take care of the madmen, and he insisted on feeding Sam breakfast (lunch). By the time lunch had finished, the wind had built.

The wind got to force 9. Sam says, "You couldn't stand without leaning into the wind, and the gusts would knock you off-balance."

Michael McNally offered lodging at his house. Sam could see an island near Garnish about 30 feet high, and waves were breaking over it. He accepted Michael's offer. The wind blew out over night, but the seas were

still running high, so Sam spent two nights at Michael McNally's. Sam says, "In talking to locals, they say that nobody can remember seeing such a stretch of wind."

Sam returned to an old haunt when he and Michael walked into the Bullrock Pub in Allihies. The bartender's eyes lit up when he recognized Sam, and he said, "Well you haven't gotten very far."

Sam's long winded days ended on the 7th of July when he launched from Garnish and paddled 30 miles to St. Finan's Bay. He left his tent set up there as a base camp, and on the 8th of July he paddled out to Skellig Michael to see the 9th century monastery on the rock island 10 miles offshore. He needed an empty boat to land there because he had to hoist his kayak up a staircase. Sam found stone beehive huts on the island, and the old church, and spectacular views of Little Skellig and the mainland coast. Sam was living high. Skellig Michael had been one of his goals.

Puffins are everywhere on Skellig Michael, and right next door on Little Skellig, there's a gannet rookery. As he paddled to it, instead of the usual wind and wave sounds, Sam heard bird wings flapping all around him as they circled overhead. Sam reports, "I can tell you that they have better aim than the seagulls on Lake Superior."

Today, July 9th, was supposed to see northwest winds with a small craft advisory. Sam hoped to make small progress into a protected area, and the next day he hopes to make a 12-mile crossing to the Dingle Peninsula.

Kevin Lehner (2007-07-10 08:28:00)

He is. He even has a video camera that mounts to the back of his kayak to document the adventure. He entrusted the images of the first part of his trip to me and if the rest of his images are as good as those we will be in for a treat upon his return. Paddle on Sam! I am bringing Sams old leaking sprayskirt to DCSCS. We brought him a new one from USA when we visited. I think we should burn it in the fire pit (along with a splash of Jamisons) as an offering to the gods of wind to appeas them and allow Sam a speedy voyage to Gallway where he plans to meet Jukka and Nancy soon.

silbs6521 (2007-07-09 14:55:21)

I sure as hell hope he's taking pictures. Dick S.

2.7.4 Jasper, Sheep, and Sharks (2007-07-13 22:03)

Sam had come back from his side trip to Skellig Michael, and on Monday, July 9th, he paddled to an island called Beginish (in Irish it means small island) off a town called Knightstown in the Portemagee Channel by Valentia Island. It wasn't easy to get there.

Sam had to paddle some open water, so he left early to avoid higher winds. It wasn't long before he was in Force 5 winds with swells 3 to 4 feet, and building. Clapotis near some cliffs was up to 5 feet tall, but thankfully there was only 3 miles of that. Sam says, "I had some clapotis wash over me, but it was okay because it wasn't trying to knock me down."

Once into the channel, the wind picked up to Force 6, but it was a tailwind, which blew him to his destination, and Sam says, "There weren't any waves in the channel."

Beginish Island was peaceful, and home to a large flock of sheep. When Sam landed, the whole

flock migrated to the far side, away from Sam. When Sam woke up the next day, the sheep were all about his campsite, but as soon as they saw him move, they all ran away again. Perhaps the sheep saw the madman in Sam, and they were sore afraid.

The sheep abandoned Sam, but the wind didn't. July 10th was another wind day with northerlies (headwinds) at Force 5.

July 11th had mostly tailwinds at Force 4 to 5. Sam paddled across Dingle Bay, a 14-mile crossing to the Dingle Peninsula. He had initially planned to camp on the Blasket Islands at the peninsula's tip, but by the time he finished the crossing, the winds were force 5 and rain was falling. Fog had rolled in, too. It looked miserable for setting up camp, so Sam decided to paddle on.

He progressed to Brandon Creek on the north side of the Dingle Peninsula. This was the same place from which the Brendan Voyage started. A guy named Tim Severin built a replica of a 6th or 9th century sailing craft called a "currach" which gets anglicized to "curragh." It's a skin on frame craft, which Severin sailed to Newfoundland in 1978 to prove that Saint Brendan could have done the same back in his day.

When Sam arrived at Brandon Creek, another kayak was already there. Sam quickly learned that the boat belonged to none other than Jasper Winn, who is also circumnavigating Ireland by kayak ([1]www.jasperwinn.com and [2]www.jasperwinn.com/blog). Since it was raining, Sam and Jasper went up to a pub for some dinner, Guinness, and Murphy's. Murphy's is another famed Irish drink. Jasper and Sam decided to paddle together for a bit.

On the 12th they advanced to Scraggane Bay. While paddling, they encountered a pod of Basking Sharks and spent about a half hour watching four or five of them. The biggest one was about 18 feet long. The gentle Basking Sharks seemed to pay no mind to the kayaks, and Sam says, "I've got some great pictures of shark fins."

Sam and Jasper found another pub for dinner and drinks on Scraggane Bay. Today, July 13th was another wind day. Sam says, "The forecast changes every couple hours, but the current forecast looks good for tomorrow."

The boys hope to make the crossing of the River Shannon – Jasper says that it's Ireland's largest river – to Loop Head, which is the end of the large peninsulas for a while.

An equipment note of interest is that on the wind day on July 10th, another of Sam's tent poles broke. Irish winds have been very hard on Sam's tent poles. He noted that the tips of the poles start to split, and shortly thereafter the pole fails entirely. So, Sam put duct tape on all the tent pole tips to prevent future breakage, and then he contacted Mountain Hardwear, who is sending new tent poles to meet Sam in Galway.

Another interesting note is that Sam has encountered currachs actually being used in both Beginish and Scraggane Bays. Also, last weekend was the all-Ireland curragh championship races. Half of the boats are 1 or 2-person oar-powered craft, and the rest are 3 or 4-person units. These are wood-frame boats with a type of canvas skin. Currachs can be either oar-powered or sail-powered.

Next week, Sam will meet paddling friends – Jukka Linnonmaa and his Finnish family, and also Nancy Uschold, Sam's business partner in "Sea Kayak Specialists." This group had paddled from Finland to Sweden a couple years ago.

1. <http://www.jasperwinn.com/>
 2. <http://www.jasperwinn.com/blog>
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2.7.5 Baby Boy Blue (2007-07-17 19:31)

Sam and Jasper launched on July 14th and both made it across the River Shannon and around Loop Head. The boys paddled separately since they have different paddling paces. They had force 3 tailwinds with gentle swells at 3 to 4 feet. Sam says, "It was a perfect day." He and Jasper wound up camping in two different bays within a half mile of each other, though they didn't know it until later. Sam had progressed 24 miles for the day.

Sam reports that he found Wisconsin on top of Loop Head. That is, the farms and rolling hills reminded him of Wisconsin, even though Wisconsin has more trees.

On July 15th, the wind was from the east (off the land), with swells dropping as low as 2 feet. This allowed for some cave exploration. After a glorious 26-mile day, Sam landed on Mutton Island. The island has both sheep and rats. These were the first rats Sam has seen, and he was happy that they left him, his tent, and his kayak alone. He said they seem to come out at night and work the tide lines.

Sam coordinated with Finnish friend Jukka, and American friend Nancy, who launched from Doolin and paddled south to meet Sam. Their rendezvous on July 16th was under the cliffs of Moher, on a phenomenal day. Winds were very light with swells at maybe one foot, and waves six inches or less. Sam hadn't seen such calm seas since early on in his trip. The fair seas allowed for arch and cave exploration. The southern part of the cliffs start at Hag's Head, where the crew paddled through a tunnel. The Cliffs of Moher are the highest in Ireland at around 600 feet, rising vertically from the sea.

The crew paddled to Doolin, where Jukka's wife Anna and children Antti, Lauri, and Anni awaited. A commercial campground is conveniently located right next to the boat landing.

A couple hours later at the campground, none other than the now world famous Jasper Winn walked in. He set up a tent next to Sam's crew, so altogether the group has 5 tents and 5 sea kayaks with one van sitting in the campground (Jukka and Anna's rental vehicle).

The group went to Doolin for dinner at a pub. Doolin is renowned for its folk music, so Sam's crew took in some fiddle and accordion numbers. Doolin is busy with tourism and has an international flavor.

Today, July 17th, Anna, Nancy, Anni, Jasper, and Sam went into the big city of Galway, where Sam picked up a couple new tent poles from Mountain Hardware, which had been shipped to a Galway Post Office; and, the Americans did some shopping. Nancy hadn't been able to bring the full food pack with her on the plane due to weight restrictions, so they stocked up at supermarkets. That pretty much used up the whole day.

While shopping, Nancy noticed Sam was looking at the Penny Flutes, though she couldn't imagine why. Sam looked at Nancy, and said, "This would be perfect as a tent-repair sleeve." Sure enough, the Penny Flutes fit the poles perfectly.

Jukka and Nancy will paddle with Sam through the 23rd of July. The coming section of coast offers

some protected paddling, so they hope to make good progress.

Tomorrow, it's ten or twelve miles to the Aran Islands for Sam, Nancy, and Jukka. Anna and the kids will come out on the ferry, and they'll all take in some of the sights out there.

Sam appreciates talking to some people wherein he doesn't have to decipher an Irish accent, though he says, "I have to decipher a Finnish accent now."

Sam can't tell what color his boat is, because Sam is color blind. When Jukka saw the boat, he said, "Sam, I think you should name it, 'It's a Boy.'" The boat is an excellent shade of baby boy blue. If you look back to when I started blogging for him, and I had asked the color of his boat, Sam said, "It's kinda funky-looking."

When Sam and his boat met Anna, without any prompting, she said, "Your boat is like the color of a birth announcement for baby boys." So that's it. Sam has a baby boy blue boat.

In other tidbits, Jukka reports that driving Irish roads takes twice as long as he had planned. Though the speed limit is 100K everywhere, he seldom manages to get that high.

Nancy relayed a little story about her experience in Dublin. She was supposed to meet a friend of her sister in Dublin, but couldn't get ahold of her, so Nancy went to the tourist information booth and asked about finding a room. She was told that there was not a room available in all of Dublin. Barbara Streisand, Rod Stewart, and a soccer match were in town. The bus for Galway was leaving in ten minutes, so Nancy made a flash decision and took the bus to Galway. Nancy struck up a conversation with a woman on the bus, and it turns out that Galway might not have had any rooms available, either. Nancy says, "The woman on the bus took pity on me and put me up in her house. It was especially nice since we arrived in Galway at 11:30 p.m." Jukka picked up Nancy the next day and took her for a wild Irish ride.

Sam is about halfway through his trip in both time and distance. He says, "The ten days of wind-bound were tedious, but otherwise it's a great adventure."

2.7.6 Dun Aengus and Galway Hookers (2007-07-21 17:27)

Sam, Nancy, and Jukka were eager to paddle, but alas, strong northerly winds said otherwise, so July 18th was a weather day. July 19th looked good though, so our three adventurers paddled out to the Aran Islands. They landed on Inishmore, the largest, and set up camp after a 19-mile day. From camp, they took a hike to see Dun Aengus.

Dun Aengus is a megalithic ring fort. It's a prehistoric structure with a series of concentric stone rings around it. This particular fort is backed up to a precipice about 300 feet tall, dropping into the ocean. Sam says, "It was pretty spectacular." He figures Dun Aengus is the best example of a ring fort in Europe.

On July 20th the crew headed back toward the mainland and landed on an island called Mac Daras, which is uninhabited but is home to a stone church from the 12th century. Saint Mac Dara is the patron saint of the Galway Hooker.

Just in case your mind is wandering down the wrong path, the Galway Hooker is a type of ship used in the area to transport goods between the islands and the mainland. As for the Mac Daras church, every July

16th the Irish hold mass there, and this year they had over 3000 people. Not everyone could fit into the church of course, so it was an open-air mass for many.

Our intrepid trio paddled on to another island to camp, arriving in sync with pouring rain after another 19-mile day. Then the rain quit, but when they woke, everything was soaked both inside and outside of the tents. It was so wet that Sam reports, "The ground was like a sponge."

Today, July 21st, two Yupers and a Finn got up early to catch the tide and were on the water at 7:00 a.m. Slyne Head was before them. The head is renowned for treachery. Due to the sea's substructure there, boomers often rise up and spank paddlers.

However, our charmed trio got around Slyne Head with a nice current boost from a tide going their way. They hadn't seen much swell in the past two days, and today the seas were less than 6 inches. The poor boomers had no chance of materializing in these conditions. Sam said, "We were really glad to get through so easily."

Sam and crew paddled happily for 31 miles and landed on an island called Inishbofin (inish means island in Gaelic). They pulled out their wet stuff and had a gorgeous sunny day for drying tents and gear. They're in a very protected harbor, which includes a small town with a small fishing fleet. There is ferry service to the mainland. They're camped right next to a star-shaped stone fort with unknown history.

Jukka is looking at pulling out either tomorrow or the next day to rejoin his family. Nancy will paddle on for a few more days. She had dislocated a shoulder last fall and was a little worried about having issues on this trip, but even today's 31 miles were not a problem.

Sam says, "We're in an area called Connemara. The mainland has two thousand-foot mountains reminiscent of Scotland."

Sam closed by saying that a low pressure system is moving in, so wind will be present tomorrow. They've seen nothing more than force 4 in recent days, and mostly less than that. The forecast says they'll have force 6 quartering following winds in the first part of the day tomorrow. After that the forecast is tenuous, but if headwinds come up, forward progress will be difficult. It won't be another 31-mile day.

2.7.7 Solo Sam (2007-07-25 19:57)

On July 22, Sam, Nancy, and Jukka enjoyed spectacular scenery and light headwinds. In their view were islands 1500 feet tall, and the mainland with mountains over 2000 feet. As they paddled they came upon a rarity. It looked like a dolphin's flipper or something waving around in the air. Upon closer inspection, they found that it was a sunfish, which has the strange habit of waving part of its oddly shaped body in the air. Our paddlers actually saw a sunfish two days in a row, which is extremely rare. The fish probably drifted over from the Bahamas.

Our trio made a stop on Caher Island, about ten miles off the mainland. It's the purported resting place of Saint Patrick, and there is a monastery site there. The church walls are still standing, and Prayer Rocks are out in the field.

From Caher they paddled to Clare Island, making a stop at a harbor. The locals were holding a Galway Hooker race. Sails were all over the place. Just to make things really interesting, at another place

in the harbor, they were holding a currach race (essentially skin-on-frame row boats). Then our paddlers pressed on to Achillbeg and set camp after a 24-mile day. Jukka pulled out here to camp with his family on a nearby island.

A fellow with children came up to talk with Sam and Nancy on the beach at Achillbeg. He appeared to be in his late 40's. It turns out he was the first Irishman to sail around the world solo. You just never know whom you'll meet.

The next two days, the winds and the currents were present. On the 23rd, Sam and Nancy traveled in the Channel between Achill Island and the Mainland. They had favorable current up to the north side of the island, but a force 5 headwind cancelled out the benefit and then some.

They saw a school group in canoes who were using their tents as sails, and just flying toward them. Sam and Nancy made only 12 miles that day, due to the strong headwind. They camped on the northeast side of Achill Island.

They were camping in an area of peat bogs. The Irish have used peat for fuel for centuries, and they're still harvesting it in this area today.

On the 24th, the wind had shifted and our paddlers had force 4 tailwinds as they paddled between Belmullet Island and the mainland (Blacksod Bay area). They also had a current in their favor, so it was very light paddling. Sam says, "It was probably the easiest 24 miles of the trip." They went to Broadhaven, and pulled out at a boat launch at Binroe Point.

Jukka met them here and picked up Nancy, so Sam is solo again. Jukka and Nancy will return to Wales and paddle a bit before heading for home – Jukka to Finland, and Nancy back to the UP.

An ill wind blew as Jukka and Nancy left, picking up to force 7 in the evening. This morning, the forecast was force 5 to 7, and Sam took a rest day. There's a small fishing fleet at Binroe Point, and they stayed in today, too. The fishermen are saying to Sam, "You won't be moving for a couple of days." Tomorrow's forecast is for WSW winds at force 5 to 6, which will push up big waves coming off the North Atlantic.

Sam reports that he has over 600 miles for the trip now. He'll be Solo Sam until August 5th or 6th when he meets another Yuper paddler, Stewart Joseph, at Malin Head.

Before that, Sam faces the most technical part of his journey, with large cliffs and strong tidal currents in a remote area exposed to the North Atlantic winds. Sam says, "I feel that I'm in a good place for that. It was rejuvenating to paddle with Nancy and Jukka."

Last, Sam relates that when Kevin Lehner and his wife Leann were in Ireland, they took pity on Sam and washed his shoes – not only in soap but also in disinfectant. Kevin predicted that Sam's shoes would not stink again until the Aran Islands. He's now past that point, and his shoes still do not stink. Sam says, "Thank you, and what you did really works."

The name "Sam" is prone to pick up adjective nicknames. Stinky Sam? Not good. Kevin and Leann saved him on that one.

Solo Sam? Not so bad.

Tune in on the weekend for the next exciting episode in "The Saga of Solo Sam."

2.7.8 The UP in Ireland (2007-07-29 19:26)

Sam was fortunate in that the force 6 or 7 westerly winds for July 26th didn't materialize as forecasted. Instead, winds were force 5 from the southwest. Sam decided to paddle.

It was wavy and windy until he got around Benwee Point, after which everything was protected and calm for a while. He enjoyed caves and sea stacks and spectacular scenery in general. The unlandable Stag Islands were looking good offshore.

Conditions started building again around the next point. Sam saw another sunfish. Even in the rough water, it was at the surface, flopping back and forth. Then Sam entered a very tall protected slot canyon, from where he watched a small rain squall proceed across the bay, though the sky was still blue overhead. Following the squall, gusty winds came in and the sun slipped behind some clouds. Sam landed for lunch on a cobble beach, next to a friendly waterfalls spilling off the land.

Sam noted that he's seeing fewer and fewer house ruins, and the people seem to be getting friendlier and friendlier as he goes, which is kind of amazing because they've been friendly all along. Sam says, "Now they're UP-friendly."

Back on the water, the winds calmed again. Sam paddled to a town called Ballycastle, found a boat landing, and set up camp for the night.

The next day he paddled to a nearby head call Downpatrick. Sam noted that the cliffs are lower – about 100 feet – but caves are still all over the place. A large seastack about 150 feet tall sits just off Downpatrick Head. Sam marvelled at the horizontal layers of shale, staggered at at the edge, zigzagging all the way up.

Killala Bay was next, and it was a 2-hour crossing. As he crossed, the winds came up – force 4 to 5 from the west. Sam saw a lot of surf on the east side of the bay. He stayed about mile offshore to stay out of the surf. For the rest of the day, the coast was one big surf line, and the land became low, maybe 20 feet high.

Sam hoped to stop at Easky for lunch. An old castle sits right on the shoreline next to the pier. When Sam paddled behind the pier, he found that the boat ramp was getting hit by 2 to 3-footers. However, behind the pier were some steps next to calm water. So, sam slipped out of his boat and onto the steps, tied off his boat with his towline, and had lunch.

Back on the water, Sam found that the seas had built again. Everywhere he looked, the horizon was nothing but waves. He was in 4 to 6-footers with light white caps. A tailwind was pushing him smartly along. Then he rounded Aughris Head in Sligo Bay. The head made protected water, and a boat ramp was handy, so Sam landed. People were all around. Turns out it was a water safety course, and the people were happy to hear Sam's story. He logged a 31-mile day in all.

The next day, the forecast was good for a crossing from Sligo Bay to Donegal Bay. Halfway across (13 miles) is an island called Inishmurray, which sports a Celtic Christian monastery dating back to 550 AD. It's built inside of a bronze age ring fort. The water safety leader from the day before had told Sam

that to land there he'd have to dump out of his boat and swim to shore.

However, he found a little slot on the edge of the island with calm water in it. He was able to get out of his boat and enjoy lunch. Sam continued the crossing to Teelin. There's a Teelin Point, a Teelin Bay, and a town of Teelin. After a 26-mile day, Sam used another boat landing and set up camp.

He's still camped there for today, July 29th, which is another wind day. The forecast called for force 6 headwinds, and they came right on schedule. It's also colder. Sam has had to zip up his sleeping bag the past two nights. The locals say it's unusually cold. Rain is still falling on a regular basis. Sam says, "It's rained 8 times already today, and I swear, sometimes the sky overhead is blue, but it's still raining."

Sam plans to paddle the Slieve League Cliffs tomorrow if all goes well. "Slieve" is Gaelic for "mountain." The Slieve Leagues are purported to be the highest sea cliffs in Europe – this according to a local boat tour organizer.

Over the last three days, Sam covered 83 miles. He's at 720 miles for the trip at this point, with about 400 to go. He was glad to rest up a bit today – went into town for a few supplies, picked up dinner for the evening, and went into a pub for a pint. Again, it feels like the UP in terms of the people. Sam says, "Everybody is happy to talk, they love their land, and they're very friendly."

Sam is feeling very much at home. He went all the way to Ireland to find the UP.

2.7.9 Scenery, Sue, and Ian (2007-07-31 20:04)

On July 30, Sam found good conditions for the Slieve League – swell at 3-4 feet with force 4 headwinds, but the cliffs mitigated the winds, and then they dropped to force 2. Sam says, "You know, the paddling was just spectacular yesterday. It's like your neck hurts from looking up."

Everything towers overhead. The Slieve Leagues are about 2,000 feet of vertical precipices.

Sam rounded a head on the north side of the Slieve Leagues, and found scenery just as spectacular. The cliffs were much lower at 200-300 feet, but just as vertical. Plus, there were more sea stacks.

Then he turned and headed to Rossbeg, and offshore from there he met Ian Harvey and his wife Sue. They had been looking for Sam. Here's the story.

Ian had rowed across Lake Superior as a fundraiser two years ago. During that outing, he met Nancy Cihak, who is from Au Train in the UP. Nancy connected Sam with Ian. Ian in turn had connected Sam with Rob Henshall, who was the first person to paddle anticlockwise around Ireland, solo in a kayak, back in 1978 or 1979. Rob was instrumental in helping Sam with planning. And Ian's family has a summer home in Rossbeg. Both Rob and Ian had invited Sam to stop in at Rossbeg.

So, last night Sam had the luxury of a shower in Rossbeg, and he says, "Sue fixed up a great dinner, and we finished the night off at a local pub over a pint of Guinness."

Sam got a late start this morning due to the late night last night. Sea conditions had built, and a small craft warning was in effect.

Ian suggested Sam visit a local ring fort called Doon Fort. It dates back to 3,000 BC. The guys checked it out in the afternoon. It's one of four complete ring forts in Ireland, and it's perched on an island in an inland lake. Sam and Ian used a wooden rowboat to get to Doon Fort. Sam reports, "The walls were about 12 feet high and 10 feet thick, and there are passages inside the walls, which you can crawl through." Those ancient Irishmen knew how to make forts.

Ian gave Sam a tour of the Rossbeg area. Sam says, "Several ships of the Spanish Armada had wrecked around here." Ian knew the stories and locations of the Spanish figurative footprints on the area.

Sam enjoyed his wind day very much, and the forecast looks okay for more paddling tomorrow.

2.8 August

2.8.1 Heading East (2007-08-03 18:20)

On August 1st, Sam said goodbye to Ian and Sue. They had sent Sam off with lots of heavy food. Mind you, they had been feeding him heavily all along – burgers and sausages and such. A recharged Sam paddled off with winds at force 4 and enjoyed a good day, ending at an island called Inishmeane. The island sports a group of houses next to the beach on which Sam camped. From this vantage point, Sam could see Bloody Foreland in the distance, which is the northwest corner of Ireland. Sam said, "Tides run pretty strong here."

Sam got up at 5:00 a.m. so he could catch the tide going his way. He noticed the swell had increased overnight, though not the winds. As is so often the case when rounding a point, the seas changed when Sam rounded Bloody Foreland. The swell was 8 to 10 feet. Sam says, "It's the biggest I've seen so far on this trip – about a 12-14 second frequency – not very steep, but when they get near shore, they rise up high and dump when they break. You do not want to be in there. Another problem is that the reflected waves go a couple of miles offshore."

Once he rounded the point, Sam was tickled to see his compass pointing east – another milestone accomplishment. Sam landed at about 9:30 a.m. on an Island called Inishbofin (this is the second Inishbofin – the first was with Nancy and Jukka). People are on this island, too, and also ferry service for the many summer residents and vacationers.

Three folks came up at the slip to chat with Sam. They were from one family, grandfather, father (about Sam's age), and son. Sam was going to push on, but the men told him the tide and currents will change around 3:00 p.m. to become favorable. Meanwhile, the middle-aged Martin asked, "Would you like a cup of tea?" Sam has learned to never refuse a cup o' tea. As the conversation went on, Sam learned that grandfather John had grown up on the island, and he fished from a currach back in the day of all manual power to pull nets and such – no electric motors. He gave Sam expert advice on currents in this part of Ireland and what route to take.

Martin's girlfriend, Suzy, joined the group for tea. Sam reports that Martin's house was perched where the view of Ireland was fantastic, including the second tallest mountain in Ireland. The home used to be a hostel, and it's being converted to a rental place for people on holiday. Sam learned a lot about this Inishbofin. Pretty much everyone on the island walks for health and recreation. Walkers were everywhere. And, the people who had grown up on the island spoke Gaelic. Also, none of the people Sam talked to could swim. It's odd, but many fishermen do not know how to swim.

Martin was fun. He looked at Sam with a twinkle in his eye and said, "You used to weigh twenty-five stone," and then he started pumping food into Sam. Suzy was a good cook, and Sam ate heavily. Irishmen everywhere are probably thinking, "Boy, these Yupers eat a lot." After feeding him, Martin offered Sam a bed for a nice nap, which Sam accepted for a couple hours. Upon waking, Suzy offered more tea, which meant baked beans and buttered bread, too.

There were a couple vehicles on the island. Sam asked if the ferry brought them out. They said no. There are three or four drastically low tides per year, and during this time you can drive a vehicle about a mile along a sandbar to the mainland. During a low tide last year, a troupe of musicians drove out in 4WD's and serenaded the islanders with music.

Sam also learned that socially, Ireland is changing rather dramatically in the rural areas. Salmon fishing is no longer allowed due to depletion of stock. Crabbing is dwindling, too. Also, in this area, potatoes are no longer grown locally. Meanwhile, housing prices are going up, and the number of holiday homes is increasing, such that the locals can't afford them. Sam had noticed that many homes in rural Ireland did not have lights on in them at night. They're holiday homes.

Grandfather John offered Sam some crab toes before he left. There's no market for the crab legs in Ireland, just the bodies. So, the fisherman eat the legs, which they call "crab toes." Sam stuffed them into his food bag. Extremely well-fed and happy, Sam set off paddling with tailwinds and favorable current.

He came upon Horn Head, which is about 600 feet tall, and it sticks out from the mainland about 3 miles. There are many heads to get around in this area. The 8 to 10 foot swell was still running, but it wasn't a big deal until Nelmore Head, which has some shoals on which the swells were breaking. Sam had an adrenaline run navigating to Mulroy Bay. He paddled a mile and a half into the bay so that he'd be protected from the morrow's gale. He got in about 8:30 p.m., enjoyed some crab toes, and then slept.

Today the wind is at 40 mph with gusts to 50. Sam spent the day sleeping and eating. He knows he's lost weight by the way his clothing fits. He was hoping for only a 1-day gale, but it appears now that the winds will continue through Sunday.

Sam's got a couple more headlands in front of him, including Malin Head, which is the largest. Malin Head has vicious currents, with only a 2-hour tidal window of reasonable conditions for getting around it.

Sam was going to meet Stewart Joseph, a Yuper paddling friend, at Malin Head, but now they've changed the plan and will meet in Belfast. Stew has been in the British Isles for a while now, and had paddled some tidal races with Nancy and Jukka near Anglesey. Now Stew is on the Isle of Man, paddling more tidal races with an outfitter.

As I took the data for this blog entry, Sam was unusually talkative. Perhaps it's food. Put in a pile of food and the words come flying out of Sam. Or, maybe it's because Inishbofin felt like the UP to Sam again. At any rate, Sam feels he'll comfortably make it to Dublin. In closing, he said, "It's great to be on the north coast heading east."

2.8.2 Almost Malin (2007-08-08 11:53)

Saturday, August 4th was another wind day – force 6 with swell over 12 feet. Sam stayed put. On Sunday, August 5th, the "heavy swell warning" was lifted, though the swell was still 10 to 12 feet. The wind was only force 3 though, so Sam went for it. He had to work hard to get out of the bay, but once on the open sea, all was well, and he had an early start. 22 miles later and not much past noon, he made it to just south of Malin Head. Due to the timing, however, he was not able to round the head. He pulled into Port Ronan instead. At the slip he found a group of scuba divers. Turns out they were the Dalkey Divers from Dublin, and they often dive off Dalkey Island (Sam's first campsite). The divers were checking out the Malin Head area. Sam says, "There are quite a few WW II shipwrecks around here, including German U-boats, so there are lots of good places to dive." The divers invited sam to lunch and later dinner at a pub.

On Monday, August 6th, Sam packed up for an attempt to get around Malin Head. The wind forecast was okay for the morning, but force 8 was in the forecast for the afternoon. Sam paddled out to the head to scout conditions, but it looked pretty bad – inconsistent breaking waves. Then three waves broke around him. Sam decided it was a sign to bail out. He paddled a half hour back to the slip.

It was raining, so instead of setting up camp he went to the divers' hostel, the Sandrocks, and got a bed there. He watched wind and rain for the rest of the afternoon. Sam took his 7th shower of the trip. He said, "That was a very nice shower." In the evening, several folks headed to the nearby pub for a pint.

Sam was still at the hostel on Tuesday, August 7th with winds at force 6 and 7 from the northwest, though it was a beautiful, clear day. The forecast for today was force 3 from the southwest, so Sam hopes to successfully negotiate Malin Head. He was shooting for an early morning window. Sam had made progress only one of the last five days, but he's well-rested and well-fed now, with a bright future.

seakayakerjb (2007-08-08 13:02:27)

"well-rested and well-fed", not to mention showered and a few pints under his belt! Doesn't get much better than that!!!

irishlenny (2007-08-09 02:44:31)

Great blogging I've been following the progress to date. Spent a windy time paddling down on the Beara peninsula. I feel the pain !

2.8.3 Robin and the Giant's Causeway (2007-08-10 18:49)

On August 8th, Sam launched at 0730 and caught a good window to get around Malin Head. The big swell from the previous days had subsided, and conditions were comparatively calm. Sam stayed in close and cruised around the head, enjoying random currents popping up either for him or against him.

He had an easy time of it, slipping into Northern Ireland. (Technically, Northern Ireland is an independent country from Ireland.) After 26 miles for the day, Sam plowed through some surf and landed on Magilligan Beach. It's a big, long beach. Many fisherman were surf casting from shore. The sand was firm enough that Sam was able to use his kayak wheels to haul his boat inland.

August 9th was both tough and fun. The tough part was the quartering headwind from the south-east, up to force 5.

Here's the fun part. Sam met a guy on the shore who asked, "Are you going around?" Sam answered in the affirmative. The guy said he wanted to talk with Sam, and they agreed to meet at Portrush.

Turns out the guy was Robin Ruddock, who is a friend of Des from Deep Blue Seakayaking, the guy who had installed Sam's foot pump.

Robin said, "You need food," and bought Sam lunch at a fine local restaurant. Robin had lived in this area for 30 years, and he's been doing outdoor programs for those 30 years, including sea kayaking. He gave Sam a lot of expert advice for navigating the area. Robin had just returned from three weeks of sailing in Scotland, so his meeting Sam was quite fortuitous.

Robin confirmed that the big swell west of Malin Head was atypical for this time of year. In light of the crappy weather this summer, Robin sent Sam on his way rather than offering a place to stay for the night – gotta paddle while the sun shines.

Leaving Portrush, Sam paddled past the Giant's Causeway, which is a unique rock formation that runs along the shoreline for several miles, during which time the headwinds dropped off.

However, crossing to the next headland, the winds revived and now they were direct headwinds. Fortunately, Sam had current going his way to counteract the wind a bit.

Sam made it to an island called Carrickarede. What's unique about it is that it's very close to the mainland, and both the island and the mainland have cliffs, and there is a rope bridge between the two. Tidal currents rip through the channel. The bridge is about 70 feet high, and the people walking across it moved gingerly. Originally, this was a salmon fishermans' bridge.

After Carrickarede, the headwind picked up to force 6 or 7. Sam struggled on for a couple miles to Ballycastle, where the winds dropped to force 5. Sam continued on to a campsite billed as the most secluded in Northern Ireland, next to Fair Head.

Today Sam went around Fair Head and continued on past Torr Head, where Sam says, "That put me back onto the east coast for the first time since June." Conditions were flat with light winds for most of the day.

Sam is currently camped just north of Carnlough. He says, "It's one of the more interesting campsites." He's on a rocky beach about 20 feet from the road and 20 feet from the water. The campsite is on a river, so there's a viaduct under the road. It's private, but noisy from the car traffic.

Depending on weather, Sam says, "I hope to make the Belfast area either tomorrow or the next day." Sam hopes to meet Stewart Joseph, a fellow Yuper paddler, near Belfast, depending when Stew catches a ferry ride.

Sam is at 900 miles total for the trip. He has about one week of paddling to complete his mission. Given reasonable weather, all looks well. Sam is an excellent planner.

2.8.4 International Relations (2007-08-14 17:51)

On Saturday, August 11th, Sam paddled alongside a road all day – the same road which had sandwiched him by the sea the previous night. Due to the lack of privacy while paddling next to the road, Sam concluded that he had to pee at sea. He didn't see any cars on the road, so he quickly popped his skirt and commenced tending to business – an act that required all of his attention. Of course, Sam looked up and a car had suddenly appeared. He hoped that the car's occupants weren't paying attention to him, but then he saw a face pressed up against the window, staring at him. He was caught – in a foreign nation with his knickers down. I'm pretty sure this isn't considered good international relations.

Sam had mostly beam winds all day at force 4 or 5, with the occasional headwind. The winds were off-shore, so the seas were not big. However, the wind was a grinder, slowly wearing Sam down.

Sam had to get past the City of Larne. He had a two-mile crossing to get across the harbor, and he had to dodge high-speed ferries blasting to and fro. Sam was about 10 minutes into the crossing when he spotted a ferry. He stopped. About a minute later, another ferry came. Sam waited a minute for them to pass and then crossed uneventfully.

He paddled on to Port Muck, which is next to the Isle of Muck, which sports a castle – no doubt the Castle of Muck. Sam says, "I assume there was once a King of Muck – every boy's dream."

On Sunday, Sam met up with Stewart Joseph, fellow Yuper, in the Belfast area. The rendezvous with Stew was to be at Copeland Island, across Belfast Lough (pronounced "lock"). While paddling across the Lough, Sam had beam winds at force 4. Belfast is also served by high-speed ferries. About two thirds of the way across, Sam glanced over his shoulder to see a ferry bearing down on him. According to Stew, the ferries fly at 30 knots even in the Lough. Sam assumes they saw him, because they veered off course a bit to give him a half-mile berth.

Copeland Island is southeast of Belfast Lough. Sam arrived safely, and within a half-hour Stew came paddling in, with a beautiful boat, custom made by Nigel Dennis. It's an orange over white Explorer with a red seam. Sam says, "It's really good to see Stew."

The next day they paddled to Kearney, landed, and started to set up their tents when a young lady came along with her dogs. She was on holiday with her family at a nearby house. After a short conversation, she left.

Ten minutes later she came back and asked our boys to dinner and offered to let them camp near the house, which was a better site. It was an offer that Sam and Stew couldn't refuse. The house belonged to Neil and Jane McClure, and the young woman was their daughter Alice. Sam and Stew got showers, washed clothes, sipped tea, ate cookies, and enjoyed a lamb dinner. Other relatives of the McClures were there, too.

As the conversation went on, an interesting connection was uncovered. That is, Ian and Sue Harvey and Rob Henshaw (whom Sam was with in Rossbeg) are related to the McClures. One of the McClures had said that a relative of theirs had gone around Ireland once – Rob Henshaw. Sam said, "Hey, I know that guy!" It's a small Ireland. Plus, Sam redeemed the reputation of Yupers after that urinary indiscretion while solo. It's also important to note that Stew is upholding the reputation of Yupers well – he gets good marks in international relations.

An interesting tidbit is that the McClure's holiday home is an old castle that was later turned into

lightkeeper's quarters for a lighthouse a mile or two offshore. Sam says, "We really appreciated the hospitality there."

This morning our boys launched early and had to cross Strangford Lough. They crossed at the flood, with water going into the lough at 3.5 knots. They boys had to ferry across the tidal current. Now they're camped north of a town called Ardglass, on a nice sandy beach in a valley next to the water. Stew will stay with Sam until the trip is complete. Prior to the rendezvous with Sam, Stewart had been having fun paddling famous tidal races, such as at Anglessey and the Isle of Man.

As for tomorrow, Sam says, "I'm a bit worried about the weather." A major, widespread storm is coming, but the winds should be off-shore. Sam and Stew plan to paddle tomorrow, with one hundred miles to go.

Nancy Moore (2007-08-20 15:59:15)

Hey Crow - Bravo to you as you complete this fantastic journey! Have enjoyed the read all summer. Little Irish buggy is awaiting your return but you forgot to tell it what flight you are on... Aer Lingus appears to have 2 flights to Chicago daily?? If I don't hear from you I'll give you a jingle over the next couple of days in hopes that your cell phone isn't waterlogged. see ya soon! Mo

silbs6521 (2007-08-20 05:24:06)

Lamb dinner and hot showers. Sam is living large :-)

Ekij (2008-05-22 09:58:42)

"Lough pronounced 'lock'" Oh no it isn't! I tried to explain to an American that Lough is pronounced the same way "Bach" is pronounced. Except I discovered that Americans don't pronounce Bach properly either :(As far as crossing Belfast Lough is concerned it's easier to cross at the channel mark as that acts as a sort of traffic island in the middle of the channel where you can safely wait to let the ships past. The high speed catamaran comes in so fast (and a kayak is so low) that if one is leaving Belfast and one is coming over the horizon the one on the horizon will be on you before the one leaving the harbour.

2.8.5 Elvis Lives, and Sam Succeeds (2007-08-20 20:04)

Sam took a rest day on August 15th, sleeping as many hours as he could manage. Then he and Stew wandered off in search of drinking water. They found a hiking trail and followed it. It brought them to the town of Ballyhoran. Naturally, they found a pub, where they enjoyed – you guessed it, it wasn't water – a pint o' Guinness. The locals were watching horse races on TV and the table at which our boys sat had guns resting on it. Our Yuper duo decided to seek greener pastures, and found a restaurant called Turrans for dinner. Then they wandered back to the tent, feeling content, packing fresh water from Ballyhoran.

On the 16th they paddled into force 4 to 5 headwinds most of the day. They passed a bay called Dundrum as they slogged into whitecaps. A rain squall came along, bringing winds up to force 7. The raindrops were stinging their faces for 20 minutes or so, whereupon the squall thankfully moved on. The headwinds were lighter then, and our duo picked up speed. The next rain squall was force 5 or 6 and it lasted only 15 minutes. After that, conditions were quite reasonable. Our Yupers landed on a rocky beach near Annalong, where the Mourne Mountains come down to the sea. In the evening it rained at least five times. Temps were cool, too, at less than 50 degrees F.

By the way, the 16th of August marked 30 years since Elvis had died. For some reason, this was a

momentous occasion in Ireland. Plus, Sam and Stew swear they saw Elvis in one of the squalls. He was paddling a gold-plated kayak with tail fins and he was wearing a cape. I've not read that paddling into headwinds can cause hallucinations, but who knows?

August 17th started out calm. However as the boys paddled along, the headwinds came up again at force 4, enough to cause the boats to plunge and stall as they slogged along. For lunch they pulled into the harbor of Kilkeel, which is a major fishing harbor with the biggest fleet Sam saw on his journey. After lunch, the wind dropped to force 3 as they crossed Carlingford Lough. This crossing took them out of Northern Ireland and back into the Republic of Ireland. They landed near Cooley Point for camping on the beach. In camp conversation, Stew pointed out that Sam had headwinds all the way through Northern Ireland – that's 8 days and over 150 miles. We have no idea what this means.

As for the Cooley Point beach, Sam said, "It was a very interesting night." He woke up at 1:00 a.m. and noticed that the wind had picked up and waves were coming up pretty close to the tents on the beach. By 2:00 a.m. high tide was near, and the waves said it was definitely time to move the tents and boats. The wind was at 25 mph, accompanied by rain of course.

The next morning the high water marks showed that our campers would have been awash. Due to a long haul to the water at low tide, the boys waited for high tide and launched around 3:00 p.m. While crossing the bay Sam enjoyed a lack of headwind. Granted, it was a beam wind at force 5, but at least it wasn't headwind. Once across the bay, they were able to turn and run with the wind, flying along. They landed at Clogher Head in a small harbor. Our guys found a little stone beach and set their tents as high as they could.

On August 19th they launched around noon and played in the wind yet again. It was offshore at force 5 to 7. However, it was a tailwind, and they got blown along, following sandy beaches. Their day ended at a commercial campground in a town called Rush, which is very close to Dublin. Our Yupers enjoyed hot showers, then went to the Harbor Bar (the local pub) for a pint and what Sam described as "a tremendous meal."

The Irish go-round paddler Jasper Winn had asked a meteorologist, "What's up with the weather this year." The answer was that it's a winter weather pattern in the summer. The temps are warmer, and the winds aren't quite as intense, but the pattern is the same.

This morning, August 20th, our Yuper duo went back into town for a hot breakfast. Sam says, "For me, that was a real luxury." Our boys launched at noon, again taking advantage of the tides, and once again they had force 5 tailwinds. They came up to the Head of Howth, which is the north side of Dublin Bay. As they started crossing Dublin Bay, three ferries promptly appeared heading in, with two ferries heading out. Seas had been running at about 2 feet, but once on the bay, 3-footers ruled, with the occasional 4-footer. However, our Yupers were flying before the wind, with favorable currents to boot. They dodged ferries and had a grand old time, cruising along at over 5 mph.

After the crossing, the wind climbed to force 6 or 7. Our boys landed on Dalkey Island. As you may recall, Sam camped here at the beginning of his trip, the better part of three months ago. Our intrepid paddler succeeding in circumnavigating the land of his forbears, spreading good Yuper cheer along the way, enjoying the charm of Irish pubs, and finishing on a glorious note. It wasn't easy though. Sam says, "It's a relief to have completed the journey."

Sam also says, "It seems appropriate that on my last camping night of my trip, my tent is rocking in the wind." And, Sam said he saw a large seal wailing on the rocks today (the proverbial singer signaling

the end of the opera). Last, he added, "I really want to thank Stew for paddling with me here at the end. It was nice to have someone motivating me in the headwinds, not to mention having help carrying my boat up from the water and back."

Tomorrow our guys will work on getting boats shipped back to Wales on a ferry. Sam's flight back to Chicago is Saturday. So, this is my last blog entry on behalf of Sam. It's been a pleasure writing this blog for you. I almost don't want to quit, because it means the adventure ends. I hope you've enjoyed the vicarious adventure as much as I have.

Joel (2007-08-21 08:07:51)

Congratulations and well done! Looking forward to seeing some more photos and reading firsthand accounts. Not that the substitute blogger hasn't been great... Joel F Marquette

tom heineman (2007-08-21 09:57:45)

Congratulations! I am sure you will never regret taking on this challenge. As Amelia Earhart says: "adventure is worthwhile in itself"

Henry (2007-08-20 20:32:06)

Congrats Sam!! It has been fun following along from this side of the computer screen. It has been a great adventure.
henry

silbs6521 (2007-08-21 05:17:58)

Done...and well done. Congradulations on fulfilling a dream and a plan. Now comes the dangerous part of your journey. Come home.

seakayakerjb (2007-08-21 05:20:03)

Well done Sam!!! See you in a few weeks--now comes the hard part (at least it would be for me)--reentry. Safe journey home. JohnB

2.8.6 From Swerve of Shore to Bend of Bay (2007-08-28 16:16)

428

The final landing, Coliemore Harbor, with Dalkey Island in the background.

Arrived in Marquette last night, it is good to be back home on the shores of Lake Superior. The trip is now a memory but there are three parts of it that will not be forgotten.

First off, people. From friends who traveled there to folks met along the way, people made it as the Irish like to say, grand. The warmth and generosity of the Irish people still amazes me. So many people were willing to pass time talking while others were willing to go out of their way to help. The Irish are rich in this respect.

Secondly, the places. You can read about it and see photos but actually being on the Irish coast makes one realize the word spectacular doesn't do it justice. From places like the Celtic Christian monastery site on Skellig Michael to the Conne Mara coastline to the slipway at Brandon Creek, these and other places had

me in awe. Getting to see it from a canoe, err I mean kayak, is in my opinion the best way to see it.

Finally, the weather. This part I would not willingly do again. There were two periods of relatively stable/calm conditions that totaled about three to four weeks, the rest was often unstable with wind speeds 20-35 mph or higher. At one point in a 3 week period, I counted 5 days that if I hadn't made the day's mileage, I would have had to wait an additional 10 days for the conditions to do a crossing, round a headland, etc.

So the question I have been asked multiple times already, 'where next?'. There will be future trips but right now I am enjoying what this trip has brought me.

But I do have to admit to thinking about a place without wind...

sam

seakayakerjb (2007-08-29 05:12:33)
Well done lad!

sam (2007-08-29 08:40:09)
Thanks guys. Tom, body held up well. No injuries or anything chronic experienced. sam

tom heineman (2007-08-28 19:30:43)
Congrats, Sam. Wind is a killer, for sure. How did your body hold up?

2.9 September

2.9.1 Trip Wrap Up (2007-09-08 17:52)

It is good to be home. Having ready access to indoor plumbing, Ben and Jerry's ice cream and my bed almost makes up for the lack of local access to Guinness on tap. Must say the rain has followed me though. The drought that has affected the UP over the summer seems to have dissipated in the two weeks I've been home. More annoyingly, the winds in Ireland are whispers of what they were. Winds below 12-15 mph have been typical recently. Jasper, the last man paddling ([\[1\]click here for his blog](#)), was last heard from leaving Dublin and closing in on Cork where he started. Of course, he is placing full blame onto me for being the cause of the winds and is quite happy I have left.

A thousand thanks to Dean for the outstanding job on the blog. Many a phone call seemed that I was just rambling into the phone while he typed (being it was around 9-10pm my time, I was often asleep shortly after we talked). He took those ramblings and turned them into something worth reading. I heard about how well he was doing while I was paddling over there and his writing even earned a mention in a UK sea kayaking magazine.

Dean is the guy sitting in the kayak between Nancy Uschold and I. Many thanks to him for his great job on the writing the blog.

Been working on some things such as:

More photos are in the June album and photos from July and August have been added. [2][Click here for the photo gallery.](#)

A slide show is being put together. First showing has been scheduled with Down Wind Sports tentatively for Friday November 2, 2007. More to follow.

A new harddrive is being installed into my home computer to handle all the photos taken. Figure somewhere around 12 gigabytes total adding up over a couple of thousand photos (I really don't want to know the actual number).

One of things about being an engineer type, numbers tend to become playthings. Below are some of the numbers for the trip.

Starting weight: 162 Ending Weight: 157

Total days: 83

Paddling days: 54

Of paddling days, 8 were shorten by weather, 2 of which caused me to turnaround back to the launch site.

Rest days: 8

Weather days: 21

Total (statute) miles: 1050

Daily average: 12.6 miles

Paddling day average: 19.4 miles

Initial plans were for 1200 total miles. The shorter distance takes into account fewer paddling days due to the weather. Also reflects a shortening of the route by doing longer crossings and avoiding crossing out to some islands such as Bull Rock, Tory and Rathlin. These choices were made due to the unstable weather patterns.

The last two weeks I have managed to transition back to my 'normal' life. Despite the daily distractions of going back to work, it seems I am always thinking of someone I met over there. There seems to be so many stories, I am amazed that it all could have happened in three months.

Commonly asked questions:

Would I do it again? Absolutely. I would go right now if I could be with the same people.

So does Guinness taste the same in Ireland as in the US? Nope, major difference but more research is necessary to pinpoint the differences. :)

sam

1. <http://www.jasperwinn.com/blog>

2. http://www.seakayakspecialists.com/Ireland2007/blog/gallery2/main.php?g2_itemId=22

Ekij (2008-05-22 10:10:14)

> So does Guinness taste the same in Ireland as in the US The generally held opinion is that Guinness doesn't travel well. People who drink it in Dublin don't like it elsewhere in Ireland, people who drink it in Ireland don't like it in mainland Britain. By the time it makes it to the USA it's a shadow of what it tastes like in Dublin.

gads

Gad's BlogBook v0.1,
L^AT_EX 2_ε & GNU/Linux.
<http://www.blogbooker.com>

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