



The Pandozer

IN BRIEF

- A mysterious incident occurred off Cape Hawke. After 5 hours in the saddle without landing I felt the telltale hairy legs of a Huntsman spider tickling my ear. At first disbelieving, I ignored it. This reaction became unsustainable after it crawled around onto the front of my sunglasses! I whacked it away along with half my face. Where did it hide for so long? Why didn't it just hold tight? I was only moments from landings. Hmm.**

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Mormon Yachts

Pat and her husband bought a yacht in Brisbane to sail around the world. Sell the business, pull up stumps and chase the sunshine. Bringing the boat down the coast after purchase they entered the ocean outside Jumpinpin, north of the Gold Coast. The swell hit them broadside and they went right over sideways before popping back up. A little shaken they wondered why their new craft behaved so poorly, the hull seemed to be on the light side. Piecing the story together they discovered that the yacht had been commissioned by a Mormon group preparing for the end

of world. As the millennium approached they loaded their boat with enough flour, sugar and supplies to see out the apocalypse on the Pacific Ocean. Hence it was more of a cargo ship than a cruising yacht. A brilliant design to witness eternal night fall but poorly equipped to sail into retirement. Pat and her husband are considering a trade-in.

Broadly speaking the NSW coast is divided into the south coast (south of Sydney to the Victorian border), the central coast (Sydney to Newcastle), and the north coast (from Newcastle to

the Queensland border). This fortnight I've come through the central coast and have bitten a decent chunk out of the north coast. The names behind me now include Newcastle, Port Stephens and Forster/Tuncurry. Names shuffling to the fore are Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour, Ballina and Byron Bay. A big low pressure system spun up the coast over the weekend but I dodged it by eating caramel slices in Forster. The swell will continue to decay over the coming week and the wind has lost its kick already. Life on the move becomes more normalised every week that passes.

Day to Day

- Sydney R&R
- Sydney R&R
- Sydney R&R
- Sydney R&R
- Sydney to Box Head, Broken Bay, 40km
- Box Head to Norah Head, 39km
- Norah Head to Newcastle, 44km
- Newcastle to Hawks Nest, 50km
- Hawks Nest to Broughton Island, 14km
- Broughton Island to Charlotte Head, 44km
- Charlotte Head to Forster, 22km
- Forster R&R
- Forster R&R
- Forster to Crowdy Head, 46km

Krusty Economics

“It looks like, ah...”, I struggled to find the right match. “A mini Gold Coast, that’s what it looks like.” Chris added helpfully. We’re chatting in the camp kitchen of the Forster caravan park and I’m about to hear a familiar story. A mini Gold Coast, by the way, is not a good thing to Chris. It’s less a case of building bonanza and rocketing local economy and more a sign of rampant, ill-considered development and no parking spaces left down the main street.

Forster, like most coastal towns I’ve seen lately, is booming. I base this assertion on the Krusty VAT (vibe about town) test. Included in this assessment are a series of key town health indicators, namely; shop-front vacancies, fresh paint odour, correct spelling ratio on sidewalk signs, number of visible palm trees, real estate agent perkiness, the hustle factor and more. It’s the Krusty VAT in reference to Krusty the Clown from The Simpsons TV show. A friend once noted that my faltering hairline gave me the ap-

pearance of said clown under certain conditions. Longer than usual, unwashed, salt encrusted tassels in a fresh sou’wester are precisely the conditions required apparently. So as I wandered around town frightening dogs and small children I could only conclude that Forster was booming. The only slight concern came upon entering the bakery to ascertain the caramel slice price index. On the counter was a stack of business cards for the bakery in a per-spex card holder display device. In a 100% booming town I would expect the cards to be printed on high gloss cardboard, have a background aerial photo of the river entrance, and include phone, fax, email and website details. This is standard for any business in a boom town. What I found, however, was a pile of individually handwritten slips of pink writing paper, all cut out, I judged, with scissors! Imagine. My key indicators were in a flurry of confusion until I created a ‘local charm’ category and revised my rating down to 97% booming.

But back to Chris at the camp kitchen. The story plays out like this; moved here 10 years ago, loved the VAT, everyone else moved here, lost the VAT, the council are incompetent, city folk don’t understand the VAT and the kids are turning feral. I’m moving to Broom’s Head. Different town, different person, same old story. What about the locals at Broom’s Head I asked? Where’s it going to end? Why do we even like to live on the coast? Most of us don’t even use it for anything. Some surf or fish or walk but most don’t. Ocean views mean salty windows, and what’s so great about the ocean anyway? It’s like a liquid desert as far as I can tell, all the way to the horizon. Nothing but water. It’s not as if the clan needs to post a lookout for sabre-toothed tigers anymore, or watch for the storm to appear on the horizon to signal the migration of the wildebeest. Maybe there’s an element of the feudal lord peering down on his dominion? I’ve veered off course now haven’t I. I’m stopping.

“Never eat more than you can lift.”

Miss Piggy

“I like rice. Rice is great if you're hungry and want 2000 of something.”

**Mitch Hedberg
(1968 - 2005)**

Recurring Themes

Ken Eastwood from Australian Geographic had just received a call informing him that Everest climber Lincoln Hall had died on the mountain. This sobering news turned out to be premature as I’m sure you’ve heard. We’d met for a chat while I loitered in Sydney last week, and so began a wide ranging conversation about the conduct and motivations of adventure seeking people. Quite a can-

of worms if you’ve ever ventured into the territory. The seeds for many a hypothetical living room discussion were no doubt planted around the country. Would I or wouldn’t I? Should we or shouldn’t we? As a society we have some striking contradictions about how we treat some of these high risk takers. Take Tony Bullimore for example. Rescued by the Navy from his overturned

yacht while racing around the world. From survival hero to ‘shouldn’t have been out there’ to ungrateful media opportunist in no time at all. There is a seemingly limitless supply of ‘factors’ to be considered while we sit back and pass judgement on these people. Let me suggest that these same people are very much like you, perhaps not in expression, but in all the ways that count.

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What should I do? If I keep advertising for adventure stories and don't receive any it looks silly. I could give it one more go or I could pretend it never happened and move on. Maybe a prize for the best submission would ignite the creative juices? It works for the Archibald. No, that would be too much like rewarding the poor response up until now. Besides, it smacks of desperation and there's nothing uglier than that. Who would want a rat chewed water bottle anyway?

1806 Km

Simply Lazy Food

The first article I wrote for outdoor magazine Wild I called 'Porridge and Dry Biscuits'. The editors wisely changed it because it was a rubbish title, but it does highlight the importance of food on a journey. There are obvious differences between bushwalking and the type of kayak touring I'm currently doing. If pressed I could probably eat fish and chips every second night, carry fresh bread and fruit, and have a generally balanced diet. That I don't can best be explained in one word— simplicity. Some would also say convenience or perhaps laziness.

I want the simplicity of camping where I choose, independent of nearness to shops. I want the simplicity of quick preparation time so I can eat without having to think about it beforehand. And I want the simplicity of dealing with a minimum of rubbish. If I can't make it in a small saucepan over a methylated spirits flame and eat it with a spoon then I'm not interested. If it produces juicy or otherwise messy refuse and I'm not near a bin, again, not going there. Sometimes I carry rubbish for up to a week (not so much here on the NSW coast), and I will not tolerate stink drippings in the holds.

As far as nutrition goes I have no hard and fast rules. If it's high in saturated fat, it's good, unsaturated fat— good (I don't know the difference), high protein— good, high carbohydrates— good, high volume— good. I pop a multi-vitamin supplement every now and then in case scurvy is

creeping up. If I'm hungry at 10pm I eat something.

WARNING: I followed these guidelines in the lead up to departure and, in my mother's own words, put on fat like a wintering seal pup. This is not intended as dietary advice.

A typical daily menu looks like this;

Breakfast: Boil a full pot of water. Pour off a cup of tea. Add milk powder to remaining water. Add 1-2 handfuls of rolled oats and a pile of sultanas. Eat and sip immediately. I like the oats a bit chewy. This method is also very quick, it's easy to clean the pot and it allows the burner to cool conveniently.

Lunch: No specific lunch but I carry 5-7 muesli bars in the camera hatch for consumption through the paddling day. Yoghurt tops and muffin bars are popular at the moment but my tastes fluctuate. Sometimes I get a good batch of Homebrand fruit filled bars, sometimes not.

Dinner: Boil a pot of water. Pour off a cup-of-soup. Add milk powder to remaining water. Add packet pasta (four cheeses, macaroni cheese, chicken curry etc.) for a quick soak. Add a handful of nuts or a sachet of tuna and boil rapidly. Let cool with lid on and eat.

Extras: Chocolate, apricot bites, bags of lollies, dried fruit. Scoff at leisure. In Sydney my sister-in-law Bec sent up a heap of beef jerky. Jerky for the Turkey were the words used I believe. Scoffed it.