



Sea-kayaking education

ANDREW HUGHES hit on a novel way of learning to sea kayak: he paddled the length of Australia's east coast, from Hobart to the Torres Strait Islands. The Tasmanian scientist and teacher has form as an adventurer. In 2002, aged 24, he traversed his home State from north to south on foot. The kayak journey presented considerably more of a challenge. "The time frame was the key," Andrew explains. "I planned to creep up the coast at a pace dictated by my inexperience. Big waves, no worries: I'd sit on the beach until they

passed. Fitness would build and skills develop, I figured." Perhaps Andrew's greatest challenge – because it came early in the journey – was crossing Bass Strait via the Furneaux Group. Some experienced paddlers he spoke to bluntly told him that he wouldn't make it, but he did – and continued up the Victorian and NSW coasts, taking his share of dunkings, learning on the move. In 100 days he'd covered 2300 km and reached Queensland waters. Then he accelerated, and stroked through the last 2600 km in just

90 days, completing the marathon at Thursday Island. "The experience taught me a lot about what you can and can't do," says the AG Society-sponsored paddler. "These things aren't all that set in stone." Andrew has plans for a long journey in Papua New Guinea waters in 2008.

