



PANDOZ 2006
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IN BRIEF

I promised my hosts on the Gold Coast (sisters and flatmates, Sarah and Jess) that I wouldn't mention their plans to adopt an orphaned Sudanese baby and live out their lives in organised spinsterhood, so I will have to think of something else to write here.

In maintenance news, I will be replacing a rudder cable and tidying up the eyelet that is causing the friction in the next day or two. This will be the first maintenance on the kayak for the whole trip.

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Fashion Faux Pas

Up until now I have been wearing a grey long sleeved thermal for paddling. It's always been on the smelly side, as you'd expect, but recently it has become downright offensive. More like vomit than week old BO. Strong language to describe a strong pong. That and the anticipated warmer conditions coming up have prompted me to buy a rash vest to replace the thermal. It will also dry faster and cover my forearms better. I went to a discount surf shop here in Maroochydore to make the purchase. Black, white, red and blue were the choices. Black too hot, white too white, red too much like my

speedos, blue it had to be. I then went to the movies with Adam and Jenny, the friends I'm staying with here, to watch Superman Returns. Leaving the cinema Adam noted that with my red speedos and blue rash vest I'd look like a wanna-be Superman. Oh calamity! Lex Luther was much more stylish.

It's been a strange fortnight with a long stop-over here and also at the Gold Coast. Somewhere in between I passed the nominated half way point of Brisbane. As far as milestones go, that's a big one. Psychologically I'm getting closer to home rather

than further away from it. There is less to do than has already been done. With that feeling I'm keen to keep moving but also aware that from now on I don't have any more excuses for long stops. My friends run out here. With the south-east trade winds kicking in, longer daylight hours and protection from the reef, the probability of a much faster back half seems to be overwhelming. But on the other hand I would like to use the remaining three and a half months I've planned for fully. It will be interesting to see if I can temper the forward urge. History would suggest it will be difficult.

Day to Day

99. Ballina to near Byron Bay, 33km.
100. Byron Bay to Tweed Heads, 50km.
101. Tweed Heads to Broadwater (Gold Coast), 31km.
102. Gold Coast R&R
103. Gold Coast R&R
104. Gold Coast R&R
105. Gold Coast R&R
106. Gold Coast to North Stradbroke Island (south end), 30km.
107. North Straddie to Moreton Island (south end), 41km.
108. Moreton Island to Bribie Island (middle-south), 47km.
109. Bribie Island to Mooloolaba, 35km.
110. Mooloolaba R&R
111. Mooloolaba R&R
112. Mooloolaba R&R (Brisbane by train)

Kayak Prejudice

The word prejudice, literally pre-judging something, is often used to describe harmful discrimination and intolerance. In its most disturbing forms it leads to racism and sexism based on misapplied or misunderstood generalisations and just plain false assumptions. Speaking to a wide range of people as I do when I'm travelling I hear plenty of prejudice. If it's said with ignorance, as it usually is, I merely feel melancholy, but if it's said with a venomous seed of violence, then I feel scared. Even more frightening is the knowledge that we are all easily capable of prejudice in one form or another. It requires vigilance and thought to identify and temper it with rational and reasoned rebuttals.

I myself am the receiver of a few subtle prejudices. Not the sinister ones above mind you,

more what we might call misconceptions or mistaken beliefs. I blame Arnold Schwazenegger for the most common one I encounter. Paddling for a steady 8-10 hours will not produce bulging biceps! When the conversation turns to where I've come from the listener will often divert their eyes to look at my arms. On a few occasions complete strangers have actually reached out and grabbed me as if appraising a plump goose. "From Tasmania you reckon, mmm....doesn't look like it." If I can be bothered I might point out that most endurance athletes, long distance runners for example, are usually lean. Arnold's body shape would not be ideal for continuous paddling. He would get terrible chafe under his armpits at the very least. So big arms for long distance paddling

are a common misconception. They're not needed and therefore my body has decided not to give them to me.

Another pre-judgement I take for granted now is that many people I meet think I'm a 'nutter' or a 'crazy fool'. I don't even try to discourage this fallacy because I've found that it can work in my favour. People's expectations for a crazy fool are lower than that for a respectable citizen.

The common element among people who display these quirky little prejudices is that they don't bother asking about what really might be, they are content with their ill-founded ideas based not on direct experience but on assumption. These people are you and me. It's one of the ways we make sense of the world, but a surprisingly inaccurate one.

"I base my fashion taste on what doesn't itch."

***Gilda Radner
(1946 – 1989)***

Down to Cape York

"It's a lot bigger than those ones." said the young observer motioning towards the wave skis down the beach. "Yep," I replied, "that's because all these bags have to go inside it."

"Where are you going? All the way over there?" the questions kept coming as I looked up to see his finger pointing over the Broadwater, 500 meters away. "Even further than that, all the way to the top of Australia if I'm lucky."

"Nah, I don't believe you." was the definite reply before he was distracted by his comrades finding a dead fish on the foreshore. I liked his blunt honesty.

Returning to watch me pack I asked where he'd come from. "Which state?" No reply. "North or south?" Too confusing. "Up or down?" Getting closer. "Warmer or colder weather?" "Up,

warmer." came the eventual reply. "We're from Melbourne." "Well in that case I'm going down to Cape York." Glad to have that sorted out I said my goodbye's to Sarah and Chris who'd helped me with the carrying, and prepared to ease into water. I wasn't easing as fluently as hoped and turned around to find two stowaways draped across the stern. "You'll sink me fellas, off you get." Laughter, as if sinking me would be about the best entertainment they could think of. "No, really, I can't leave with you there, get off." More determined laughter from the little pirates. "SHARK" I yelled, pointing to the shallows. That got them moving, but I had to be quick, my deception wouldn't last long. Not quite quick enough. Sterner words from Chris eventually penetrated their 'give me an inch, I'll take a mile' attitude and I scrambled to freedom and deep, safe water.

AAAaargghhhhhh...Night Lights by Jeannie Marie-Leroi

We were going to camp out on a old house site in our paddock, down the hill about 500 meters from the house. There was my younger sister, my younger cousin and me (all aged between 12 - 15). We packed up all our gear for the night - tents, food, sleeping bags, pillows (well, it was just like camping in the back yard)- into a wheelbarrow, said goodbye to the folks, and set off, pushing the wheelbarrow across the paddock and down the hill. It was getting dark, and quite misty, but we weren't going to let a bit of rain deter us. The old house site had a flat area, just big enough for our two tents, and by the time they were up, it was out with the torches for a quick game of spotlight. It really was quite foggy and getting wetter so we decided to retreat to our tents - when all of a sudden we saw a strange glow in the mist across the paddock. We really had no idea what it was. It was moving and seemed to get brighter, then dimmer, but

never quite went away. We stood and watched it for a while, feeling quite worried (Ok that's putting it mildly), especially as it wasn't going away. It was eerily quiet. What to do? We considered retreating home but that would mean walking up the hill towards the light. (By the way, this was in the days before everyone had a mobile phone - so we had no way of contacting our family.) We stood watching, getting more panicky by the minute, trying to work out what it was, what we could do - when suddenly, very faintly, we heard a sound. The sound of a car engine - and we realised, with relief, that it was a car on the road coming down the hill. Because of the foggy night we had been able to see its lights long before we could hear its engine. Once we knew what it was, we weren't scared any more - but it was a while before we finally turned off the torches that night.

"I never cease being dumbfounded by the unbelievable things people believe."

Leo Rosten
(1908 -)

Editor's Note: The unknown is always the frightening part, or in the case I experienced a few years ago, the deeply ridiculous. On a wet and rugged Bass Strait night I watched in wonder as a flotilla of flashing lights hovered above the sea. From the verandah they appeared to be outlining a craft of some unknown type. The very definition of an unidentified flying object. A UFO! It was changing shape, coming closer, drifting away. Are the cameras on me now? Is the alien probe being readied as I watch? Then going, going...gone. Down the coast towards Burnie by my reckoning. I grabbed the camera and a reluctant Sarah, jumped in the car and chased. The rain smearing across the windows made it impossible to track. We persevered for 15 kilometers but nothing showed up on my radar. Sitting at Blythe Heads a few stars finally appeared. Maybe the craft had punched a hole through the atmosphere and was speeding home. Sarah was mocking but my eyes told me the truth. Someone else would have seen it, the paper will surely report it tomorrow. Back on the verandah I was lost in thought. What was that? Where does it fit in my scheme of the world? Then a few flashes caught my attention. It's back! With a clearer sky I might get a better look at it. I did, it was the transformer on the power pole near the gate. In the rain it had been sparking. I should have felt like a fool but I was more just disappointed that a malfunctioning transformer doesn't come equipped with the promised probe.

Ranger Danger on Bribie Island

The ranger's 4WD pulled up as I emerged from under the tent fly with the rolled up inner in hand. They weren't smiling so I hit them with a chummy "Hello boys, how are we today?" No, we weren't going to friends. "You didn't camp here last night, did you?" I glanced over my shoulder at the obviously erect tent, then down at the kayak lying at my feet. "Ahhhm...", was he asking me to lie to help me, or to trap me? "...yes, I

suppose that I did." Wrong answer. "Can't camp here, three hundred and seventy five dollar fine. Might be an expensive holiday." I nodded my defeat, offering no excuses. "The campsite is only eighteen kilometers down there. It's four dollars a night." Enough of the guilt trip I thought, just give me the ticket. And you obviously don't know how fast I travel. Eighteen kilometers is like driving from Ulverstone to Hobart

to set up a tent.

But they were never going to give me a ticket. They hopped back in their 4WD and drove away, leaving me perplexed. Everything they did, from their hands on hips to their thin lipped shake of the head, was perfect. But if they weren't going to follow through with the penalty they should have just been friendly. Why be grumpy unless you're about to do something horrible?

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!! ANYONE!!

The Ball Is Now Rolling

We're finally up and running with contributions. I think you'll agree that new voices give The Pandozer a fresher feel. With your help we can make it positively minty. By the way we're all students now. Life-long learning is all the rage.

Send it as a Word attachment with your name and school for publication. Get your teacher to check it because I'm a sloppy editor. Keep it shortish (100-200 words).



Islands

Maria, Schouten, Clarke, Flinders, Erith, Deal, Hogan, Boulee, Preservation, North Stradbroke, Moreton, and Bribie. All of the islands I've camped on so far. I don't count Tasmania because although it's surrounded by water it isn't called Tasmania Island.

There is a sense of safety camping on an island that is impossible to replicate on the populated mainland. The smaller and more isolated the better. Many people I talk to assume that the opposite would be true. The thought of being alone on an island for them is akin to submitting to slow paper cuts on the tongue. Even writing that makes me shudder. I suppose this stems from a view that there is safety in numbers. If disaster strikes someone will be there to lend a hand, or at least suffer alongside you. That might be logical if you live on the slopes of a volcano or in the hunting grounds of a rabid, giant, man-eating pig, but let's look at where the dangers actually lie. What are the circumstances where my physical well-being might be in jeopardy?

1. Drowning— doesn't generally happen on land unless there has been an exceedingly thick frost.
2. Snake/spider/animal attack— unlikely anywhere but even less likely on an island. Although, the cows on Hogan looked menacing and the wallabies on Deal could possibly smother you to death

if properly led and organised. And I should also exclude those islands with known high densities of snakes.

3. Flood— it would have to be of biblical proportions.

The list could go on but the overall trend is the same. Properly prepared with food, water, basic camping skills and a means of departure, a small island is the safest of havens. What is missing from such places is the main source of danger to a solo traveller, or at least the source of perceived danger. Other people. More particularly, unknown other people. When you live in a small tent, in unfamiliar terrain, often near towns or roads, you become attuned to the potential threat from others. Drunks, thieves, opportunistic vandals, however unlikely (I can't even report a single problem), are always in the back of your mind. On an island with no others, or where you know everyone, that threat is gone. The sense of peace and safety is unique. Maybe it's why tropical island holidays are so idealised in many people's minds? Be warned though, for all the unburdened hours of snooze on offer there is often an equally unburdened list of things to do. That's alright for me, sleep being high on my list of favourite hobbies, but it's not everyone's goblet of good times.