

weather would be most cooperative. A three-day window would allow them to wait for the best possible conditions.

Once the plan was finalized, a 'float plan' had to be filed with the Canadian Coast Guard. A float plan is used to tell the Coast Guard where you are starting and finishing, day and time, what type of boats, their colour and design, and the ways they can contact you. On the day of the trip, your group would check in periodically to ensure everything was running smoothly. If anything seems awry, the Coast Guard will mobilize and be able to locate the group based on the information provided. With all these details ironed out, the only thing left was the excursion itself.

After a long day of preparation a trailer full of kayaks, each packed with required gear, was attached to the single van that would transport the crew to Lion's Head. The trip would begin on the evening of July 30.

"We were very pumped on the drive," said Owan. "As we drove through Collingwood, we could see the bay. It got us even more excited."

After a short stop in Owen Sound for some dinner, they arrived at a hotel near their launch point around 10 p.m. By 11:30 p.m., they were finally asleep.

Unfortunately, due to their late arrival time, the crew only managed four hours of sleep. Everyone was up and moving at 3:30 a.m., with hopes of being on the water by 5 a.m.

Fortunately, however, Owan learned after calling in for the weather report from a meteorologist that they would be able to set forth that day. With virtually no chance of rain, it was a perfect day for the trip.

Morning preparation was minimal. The kayaks were taken to the launch point, drinks and snacks were arranged in easy-to-reach places, and a call to the Coast Guard was placed. On the water by 5:15 a.m., the team only missed their targeted time by 15 minutes.

The first few hours were a breeze. Time went by quickly, and a break took place once an hour, stopping for no more than 15 minutes at a time. The biggest challenge turned out to be using the bathroom. Of course, the men had an easier time, while the women had to maneuver a Javex bottle around the boat to relieve themselves.

The traveling pace was also what was expected, roughly six to 7 kilometres per hour. If only tandems had been used, the trip would take about 14 hours, but having a single involved meant the estimated arrival time at Snug Harbour was about 16 hours. There was a point, however, when more than one participant thought they were moving at slower than projected speeds.

"About eight hours in, we could still see the Limestone Cliffs at Lion's Head," said Owan. "They are about 200 feet high, and we weren't used to that sort of thing on our side of the Bay. We assumed that we were probably moving too slow. Every so often, the cliffs would disappear over the horizon due to waves, and we would get very excited, only to realize we could still see them."

Fortunately, the GPS they'd packed came in handy. After a short break to check their whereabouts, they realized that, indeed, the cliffs are just very high. A short time later, the cliffs were out of sight, and for the first time for any of them, they could not see land while in anything other than a motorized boat.

"We were without land for about four hours," said Aleesha. "It was pretty disorienting. You just have to put all your trust in the compass and keep going. You can't really rely on anything else, since the clouds and wind keep moving, you feel like you are spinning in a circle."

"You really have to get over the fact that there is nothing to look at. It is pretty jarring being only surrounded by water," said Owan.

Unfortunately, the lack of land caused a problem for one individual.

"John doesn't paddle very often, and once you get out with no land in site, there is nothing to focus your eyes on that doesn't move," said Owan, referring to the movement of the kayaks and the motion in the waves. "He just didn't look well. I was traveling with him, and we paddled up next to Aleesha and Ashley. 'I am kind of sick' he said, 'Can I just throw up?' When given the OK, he just leaned over and vomited over the side of the boat."

After plenty of gravol and water, and two hours of seasickness, the feeling finally passed.

"To his credit, John never stopped paddling," explained Owan. "For a few hours, it went paddle, be sick, repeat. He

definitely did 'awesome' for being fairly inexperienced."

The next obstacle faced was the exhaustion setting in. Since Kaitlin was travelling in the single, she was the first to tire, and eventually had to be towed by her brother's boat for a period of time.

"She 'did fantastic', and it really wasn't fair to her to be all by herself, especially when we got into waves that reached three metres," said Owan. "If we were to do a trip like this again, I would make sure we used all tandems."

dling as hard as you can, your head just gets tired. It never seems like you are getting anywhere."

Seeing the lighthouse at Red Rock was a point in the trip the crew looked forward to. It was a symbol that Snug Harbour was getting close. Unfortunately, like the Limestone Cliffs, the lighthouse is also very high.

"When we first saw the lighthouse, everyone let out a scream, it was pretty exciting," said Owan. "Except you realize that the lighthouse is about 60 to 80



Crossing Georgian Bay required losing sight of any land, causing sea sickness for some and a reliance on navigational aids to guide the kayakers.

"I am pretty sure there were moments when I fell asleep while paddling," said Aleesha.

Physical exhaustion wasn't the only problem. Mental fatigue was the bigger issue.

"Being in a kayak for all that time is just tiring," said Aleesha. "You end up relying on each other a lot to break the monotony. Owan is the king of corny jokes, so he kept spirits high. Singing songs, and just talking to each other, helped a lot. We are all fortunate to be such good friends. It made the trip a lot easier. A bad leg of the trip meant we were getting slower, so it was important to break and boost each other back up."

"After the trip, some admitted that if there had been a place to get out, they would have stopped," Owan said. "Sitting in a kayak for all those hours, pad-

feet high, and there ended up being three hours of paddling left."

Fortunately, the compass didn't lie. They ended up at their destination shortly after 9 p.m., just as expected. Parents were there to greet them, and help them offload their equipment after a very long day. After four hours of sleep the night before, and 16 hours of paddling, it was safe to say that a comfortable bed was a welcome thought.

"I actually fell asleep on the car ride home," said Aleesha. "But it was one of the most fun things I have ever done. I was out there with some of my best friends, and there are so many funny memories I can look back on."

"The biggest thrill for me was just finishing it," said Owan. "It is a cool feeling, being able to look out on the bay and think, 'Yeah, I crossed that. Sweet.'"

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