

Oak Island September 9 - 12

Thursday 9/9/10

It was truly a perfect day to begin a 4 day trip onto the sparkling waters of Lake Superior.

By 12:30 we had all met and were ready to paddle. The waves were a bit of a challenge for those of us that are new to this enticing sport, but surprisingly by the time we gathered as a pod to make the crossing to Oak Island the seas had calmed.

We all arrived upon the sandy beach of Oak Island at 2:45 after paddling 5 miles. Then we began to set up tents in the large group site. The campsite is beautiful, high up off the water offering spectacular views of Superior and many flat places to pitch a tent. Dana didn't need a flat spot, just found 2 perfect trees and tied up a hammock to swing in during slumber. Pete and Bernie set about to hang a tarp near the bear box.

The rest of the day was spent in lively conversation and a variety of foods, many of them shared. The spectrum ran from Fred's freeze dried macaroni, to Michael & Theresa's foil delights, to Dana's chunk of beef. The evening was topped off with Tom's quick wit, Aimee's monster bars and Linda's fantastic drinks for all.

Friday 9/10/10

The day began with a brisk wind, perfectly cool temperatures and sunny skies. Three groups quickly emerged with different desires for their paddling day.

Sandy & Theresa stayed "home" to watch over our tents and be close in case we needed help when we returned.

The group of Pete, Bernie, Fred, Sharell, Mike, Scott, Aimee and Dana chose to circumnavigate the island, knowing that they would be paddling in some potentially high waves heading up the east side of the island. They encountered very high seas and said that turning was a challenge at times. Sharell wins the title as the toughest paddler. She confronted motion sickness and yet continued. Pete was able to get some medication into her, but her paddling partners were certainly impressed with her strength. This group paddled 11.68 miles!

The other group, consisting of Michael, Rhett, Linda, Tom and Gae went west staying on the lee side of the island where the waves were much more gentle. We paddled and visited with each other while admiring the beautiful shore of Oak Island. When this group reach the point it was evident that the waves had been building on the north side of the island, so they turned and stopped at camp site #3 for lunch. This group paddled a total of 9 miles.

With lunch complete the two groups found each other and blended together into a bigger pod to finish the paddle together. During the trip the Park Patrol stopped to ask if

we knew anything about the owner of an orange kayak with a rope attached to the bow which was found.

Once back to our home for the weekend the kayak fairies swept the beautiful boats to the tree line in preparation for a night of storms. I wonder who those kind people could be.? Later in camp Mike and Gae traveled to the woods again in search of wood to keep the home fires burning. Theresa and Sandy had made sure we were welcomed by a crackling fire, which was so appreciated. The rest of the afternoon was spent drying out various wet items and swapping stories from the day.

Dinner was another wonderful event. Lots of taste testing happened, with Sandy as our official taster. Michael & Theresa were the gourmet chefs this evening with fresh veggies and spices cooking merrily in their cast iron fry pan. Cast Iron in a kayak?

As the evening progressed we began to listen of the plight of a fellow paddler that had been reported missing to the Coast Guard. We listened in horror as the news became more dire. Sadness for another human who shared our joy of the great lake weighed on us all.

Saturday 9/11/10

The night was filled with storms, rain and a helicopter searching.....

Breakfast was a little late, combined with pleasant and easy conversation. After breakfast it was decided that it would be fun to have a short hike to the Ranger station which was just 1.5 miles down an easy trail. This would also give the seas some time to subside. The floor of the woods was still green, but there was a look of summer waning in the plants and gentle leaves occasionally falling. Rhett, Michael and Fred had decided to stay in camp and moved a table under the tarp when the rain began again.

During the day a lone paddler approached our island home. He came unprepared for any rescue in high seas, and stated he had been quite fearful of the high wind and waves. Once he arrived he was helped to shore, fed and encouraged to join ISK to learn more about safety on the water.

After lunch a group decided to paddle north and east a bit to explore the shoreline. They surfed the large waves for a while and then one person took Dana's earlier advice to speak up when they believed they needed to return. We turned and began a long slow paddle in very high waves and wind back to camp. As we neared camp the viewers congratulated Scott on having the absolute best rotation and paddling form. Perhaps that is why he streaks over the water so quickly. The pod traveled 3.5 miles in 90 minutes.

Sandy has misplaced her camera during the morning hike, so set about to find it. When she returned she said that indeed she had found, along with a bear sighting!!

Dinner Saturday night was a free for all with everyone sharing and commenting on degrees of delightful flavors. The smoked fish was a hit, as was homemade bars, good wine and beer. The lively conversation and new friends capped off a delightful day.

Sunday 9/12/10

Our final morning dawned with progressively increasing wind and waves. We all prepared our final breakfast, packed up our gear, and picked up the campsite. Sadly, the time had come to head back to home and jobs and responsibilities. The decision was made to cross early, stay very close together and quarter the waves since they had intensified. This meant our trip would be longer, but far safer. With Sharell and Dana as our leaders we headed out into the enjoyable waves. The crossing back to the mainland was much more of a challenge, but it also brought smiles and whoops of joy. The return was 5.65 miles in sparkling sunshine and gave people the chance to investigate caves and take another look at the sunken ship.

The four days flew by, sprinkled with laughter, food and good company. It was a success from start to finish, thanks to good planning by Mike and cheerful, flexible paddlers. So now the question is. Where do we go next?