

Paddling Lake Huron's Southern Georgian Bay

By Matt Lutkus

(Photos by Matt also unless otherwise noted)



Cove Island

My six week paddle adventure last summer included four days with members of the Canadian Great Lake Sea Kayak Club (GLSKC). When planning my trip, I located the Club via the Internet, sent in my membership dues and found a trip that would sync with my plans to drive from Maine through southern Quebec and Ontario Provinces to the Michigan Upper Peninsula. The long Labor Day weekend outing with GLSKC members fit the bill perfectly.

The enjoyable time that I was having with friends near Stonington, Maine caused me to extend my visit there a few more days than I had planned. I had to skip kayaking in the New York Adirondacks and forego a climb up Mount Washington to meet up with the Canadian group on time. Even on a month and a half vacation – life is filled with tradeoffs!

I met Wolfgang, the trip leader and his friend Bob at the Tobermory Campground shortly after noon on Friday. We decided that rather than wait until the rest of the group arrived we would spend a few hours on the water. We drove to Dunk's Bay, unloaded the gear and quickly paddled out from the protection of the cove into some of the liveliest

conditions I've yet to paddle. (I learned later that the tour boats cancelled their excursions on account of the conditions.) Confused seas with waves 2.5-to-3 feet

and gusty winds made for an exhilarating adventure. It felt more like a dance than a paddle trip as we maneuvered through the white caps. The only times I felt like I came close to capsizing were when I gave into the urge to stow my paddle under the deck bungee and snap a photo or two. During our two to three mile crossing, Wolfgang and I stayed pretty close together while Bob cut back to the shelter of the relatively mellow leeward side of the bay. I noticed that Bob had opted for the comfort of leaving his PFD unzipped – which dumbfounded me given the conditions that we were in and the fact that he was a paddler with a fair amount of experience.

The fact that you can be in bodies of water this big without the salt spray still amazes me. The scenery is one of white and brown sandstone, well-forested cliffs and pleasant sand beaches. As with most of my paddling experiences, in a very short time, you are away from the hustle and bustle of the tourist civilization. The Bruce Peninsula is renowned for its hiking trail. (Ask Paul Eckart about the bears!) The waters off of the northern portion of the 500 mile peninsula have the most spectacular shoreline on the Bay with several islands, white sandstone caves and more than twenty ship-

wrecks that date back from the 1850's to the 1890's when sailing vessels were replaced with commercial motorized craft and the area was charted. The shipwrecks are a magnet for the SCUBA crowd, making this area one of the most popular inland dives in North America.

The wrecks are cordoned off with buoys and, depending on how accommodating the dive boat captains are, one can paddle over the wrecks and make out the outline of the hulls through the icy clear water.

Back at our campsite we met up with most of the rest of our group and several of us headed into the village of Tobermory for a great feast of fish and chips. Tobermory is the port for the Che-Chemaun. Its name – a native term for big canoe – becomes a huge understatement when you watch the 143 vehicle, 638 passenger ferry out on the water from your kayak. The ferry which I was to board on Labor Day takes passengers to the northern



Che-Chemaun (Big Canoe)

side of Huron's Georgian Bay.

The group with whom I kayaked and socialized for the better part of two days varied in their ability, but we thoroughly enjoyed each others' company. The boats were as varied

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as the people – from a wonderfully hand crafted wooden kayak to a roto-milled tandem and a variety of solo boats. I was the only non-Canadian – Paul E. kayaked with the other half of the group.

The first full day consisted of a 17



Matt near 'flower pot' on Flower Pot Island
FathomFive Park (photo by Mary Goldsmith)

mile circumnavigation of Cove and Russell Islands and Tobermory Harbor. During our picnic lunch on Russell we were fascinated by two snakes that I later identified as poi-

sonous Water Moccasins. The area where we paddled is called FathomFive National Park. It was the first area to be named a marine park by the Canadian Government.

A highlight of the third day was seeing the "flower pots" on Flower Pot Island. These are two sandstone towers that stand 22 and 39 feet tall.

They are a very popular tourist sight and the feisty tour boat captains occasionally came by us a little too close and a little too fast. But it was still a kick to paddle in the shadows of these monoliths and take a short hike around them.

I left the group in the early morning hours on Labor Day, boarded the



Flower pots on Flowerpot Island

ferry, and picked out some other great future paddling spots on northern side of the Bay. Then it was on to Mackinac Island and some phenomenal paddling at Pictured Rocks and Apostle Islands National Lakeshores on Superior.

Look For Our Survey

By Larry Kline

Our club aims to please. We would like to be sure we are on the right track with meeting our members' needs. To do this, we need to know what your needs are. Therefore, the EC will be conducting a survey by e-mail and telephone in the next few weeks. We will be asking you the following questions so that we can develop paddling programs and events that **You** want. We want to hear from you so please call or email any officer and express yourself. We can accept the bad with the good.

Survey questions..

- How long have you been a member?
- What do you want from club?
- What keeps you from signing up for a day trip? A weekend trip?
- Would you lead a day trip - a weekend trip?
- What keeps you from leading such a trip?
- What do you like about the club?
- How would you suggest the club improve?
- What would you be willing to do to help the club?
- What do you think the club goals should be?
- Would you be interested in attending a social event such as a potluck?
- Would you be interested in hosting a potluck or get-together?