

Makah Bay

August 21–25

By Tom Plank

I arrived at Hobuck Beach Campground at 12:10 PM with a fresh, warm chunk of smoked salmon. Before setting up camp and securing an area for my fellow adventurers I watched my hand deliver the salmon to my mouth. A great lunch it was.

Dan Youst arrived around 2:00 PM on the 22nd. He and I met the incoming tide with our boats and went to work. This was Dan's first time in the surf zone. He caught on quickly with only a couple of upside-down encounters.

Tom and Marianne Banks checked in the evening with tales of their four hour trip from the Keystone Ferry Dock. We filled them in on the surf, weather and tides and discussed plans for the following day.

Around 9:00 AM we left camp for the Shi Shi Beach trail head with Dan at the wheel of his new four door pickup. The 1.8 mile hike to the beach was enhanced with fresh berries found at arms length from the board walk. Giant spruce, cedar and Douglas fir kept the sun at bay making the hike cool.

On the way back to camp we stopped in Neah Bay for some more of that great smoked salmon. At camp we rested for awhile before making some more waves in the surf.

Friday morning, 8:00 AM, found us departing Hobuck Beach Campground via the water. Cape Flattery was the goal. After an hour of swell paddling we arrived at the first set of pillars and rock gardens to find the low tide had made the exposed rocks rife with breaking waves. We snuck passed the more exposed ones and bounced passed the reflected waves.

The crossing to Tatosh Island was not a smooth ride. Our class 5 skill level made it do-

able. At Tatosh we rested briefly before attempting a narrow channel that was just filling with the incoming tide. A blind corner with white water pouring in from the unseen side made us reverse course and take the longer way around to the west side. We shot through the channel there with sea lions and gulls cheering us on. Curious sea otters and sea lions in the water stared as we went by. We watched the Murres, Guillemots, Cormorants and other water birds swirl around and leap from their rocky nests. More sea lions on an exposed rock bellowed our departure as we made our way for the mainland.

The sea was running at a good clip making a straight course shift to an angled one as we arrived in a in a sheltered bay. Land felt stable after a long ride in turbulent waters. Lunch, photos and beach combing occupied 45 minutes ashore. We continued along the mainland exploring sea caves, paddling through arches, watching eagles and a puffin.

Time to head back found our attention focused on the water that was trying to upset us. Prevailing over the turbulence we found smoother water on the way to camp. A huge spout of water off the starboard bows of our boats alerted us to a gray whale. We watched several spouts before he bed us farewell with a flip of his enormous tale.

We arrived back at the beach at low tide with an un eventful landing. After the haul out, clean up and spruce up we headed into town for some street fare at the Makah Days celebration. Meat on a stick, chocolate covered straw berries and fry bread were our reward for an eventful day.



Tom and Marianne surfing off Hobuck Beach



Photos by Dan Youst