

SUCIA II by Ron Oberst

For our annual Hole In The Wall Paddling Club trip to Sucia and surrounding islands, eleven members boarded the accommodating 42' MV LuJac's Quest on 16 June, 2006. After stowing our gear and bringing aboard our kayaks we still had adequate space for a comfortable 2 1/2 hour trip from Anacortes' Skyline Marina to Sucia Island's Echo Bay. It was fair steaming with skippers Phil and Judy Jensen who once again proved to be great "mother ship" hosts. After a very light shower on arrival, the weather just kept getting better for the next 3 days, until it reached perfection on 18 June, our last day out.

On reaching our disembarkation point **Tom Banks**, trip organizer and dinghy towing burro, led the shore party by ferrying our gear to the beach, followed by ten other happy campers anxious to stake claim and make camp of their choice from the variety of good sites available. The campground offered fresh water and a composting toilet, plus beach sites, elevated view sites, and forest hideaways, all with tables and fire pits. **Alan** and **Susie Paxman** were quick to choose an enchanted forest site with trees to accommodate Alan's hammock and conveniently located close to everything. On the 1st night the happiest campers turned out to be Tom B. and **Marianne Majerus**, who announced around the group campfire their pending marriage. We had the area to ourselves until a tour group of 8 showed up on a boat the second night to misappropriate our imported firewood. Our camp enforcer Alan Paxman set that straight real quick so we had toasted marshmallows two nights in a row and no more camp intruders, except the ubiquitous crows. The tour group were double kayakers who turned out to be good neighbors.

Not wasting our early arrival, Tom B., Marianne M., **Rembrandt Smith**, **Bob Bryan**, and **Ron Oberst** set off for Matia Island as soon as camp was set up. The rest of the group paddled in the beautiful Echo Bay environs. The Matia venture was 7.75 nautical miles and a circumnavigation revealing sculpted sandstone all the way. What a pleasant small bay, beach and campground on the west end at Rolfe Cove, plus a geo-cache for Rem S. On return to the northeastern reaches of Sucia, Marianne M. was pointing out the large, out-of-place, granite boulders glacially deposited on the sandstone islands.

On the day the same Matia group launched for Patos Island with SKII all the way. Bob B. Tom B. Marianne M. enjoyed hiking the ancient forest while Rem S. and Ron O. checked out the pristine beach. We communicated our return crossing by VHF with **Dean Scott** at base camp. It turned out to be an 8+ nautical mile trip including a circle of the north wing of Sucia. The other paddlers explored the spectacular south wings of Sucia. **Calista Scott's** highlight was the mother otter's treatment of her 2 young. Marianne M. was greeted by a curious herd of seals in the rip east of Patos. There were dolphins on the crossing back to Sucia, ducks dressed as harlequins, white anemones hanging as stalactites in a tide-exposed cave, the usual watchful eagles, and sea plants acting as refracting prisms to display rainbow colors in the water. New member **Judy Bekker** brought balance to her kayaking adventure by hiking the extensive trail system on Sucia. Again the day closed around the old camp fire with toasted marshmallows (a John McKean legacy), tales of past trips, and good humor all around. Mast lights on moored sail boats created bright stars on the east horizon.

On our 3rd and final day the Matia group, minus Tom B., coasted the south side of Sucia, passing by Little Sucia and into Fossil Bay, where the motor boats live. We stopped for a moment to talk with LuJac's Quest. The others circled the scenic north wing of Sucia transiting Ewing Cove. No wind, no current, no fetch; just sunshine.

The narrow neck at the top of Echo Bay where we camped allows easy, short portage across the island to Shallow Bay, allowing sandy beach launching and recovery either on the east or west side of Sucia for paddling around north or south wings. Since Sucia's horseshoe configuration provides a lot of interesting shoreline, this permits doing it in increments and facilitates going east to Matia and/or west to Patos.

Some of us had broken camp and packed up early so after a leisurely lunch and last minute practice sessions by some still in drysuits, we started the reluctant departure in stages. Ron O. got to be the dinghy burro with Rem S. Bob B. and **Terry Gowler** successively performing beachmaster duties. With LuJac's Quest mooring out right on time, the water ballet of eleven embarking kayaks and one towed, gear toting dinghy making five trips to shore completed our departure.

It was teamwork all the way. Chart, compass, cell phone, VHF, GPS, and digital photo technology was used and shared. Campsites were checked for left gear, trash consolidated, firewood shared, barges towed, bails lifted, and all those small, but important things that help make a kayak camping trip successful were done by all. Individually, each member had the appropriate gear, and used it. Tom B.'s Washburne's Tables kept currents going our way, Ron O.'s weather control kept skies fair, and we all kept the wind to our backs (most of the time).

Eleven kayakers started the adventure, eleven returned with nothing but superlatives. A good time was had by all. What a great trip! **Ron Oberst**

Judy Bekker-- I hadn't been to Sucia for about 12 years, and it was every bit as beautiful as I remembered. It was wonderful getting to know some of the club members - they're a fun group to be around and awesome paddlers too. I'm looking forward to more trips, day paddles and kayak training with HITW.

Rem Smith-- Last weekend was the best time - destined for my memory hall of fame. Thanks for the great company.

Terry Gowler-- The sandstone sides of parts of the island are as if from another world. Like a modern artists sculpture, the waters have created deep texture and subtle color changes often showing strata layers flowing in large wave like patterns all combined with supple curves and crevices. Some areas are spattered with dozens of holes the size of golf balls and then followed by hollowed out areas you could fit a half a dozen people into. The mesmerizing beauty of this is hard to describe, but it's just one of the many wonders to enjoy on this jewel of an island.

The greater difficulty, the more glory in surmounting it. Skillful pilots gain their reputation from storms and tempests. - Epicures (BC 341-270)

September on Sucia

By Calista Scott

*A spell of charm and delight,
The Lu-Lac and seven kayakers
Leave Skyline Marina
For an autumn sejour on Sucia.*



*Mothership, skipper, first mate;
Stove, hot coffee, muffins;
Salty air, smooth water, sun;
High spirits on our way to Sucia.*



*Land in sight;
Skiff dropped onto the sea
Stuffed with sacks and paddles;
Several trips back and forth to
Sucia.*



*Tents and campers secure,
Ship leaves the shore.
More friends arrive from far places.
All safe and sound on Sucia.*



*Winds and rain drops as we sleep;
Up to the sun in the morning.
Gliding, sliding, spearing, surfing;
Kayaking the waters around Sucia.*

*Sparkling, splashing water;
Rose hips, snow berries;
Gulls, Terns, Loons;*

