

# The Round Japan Kayak Expedition

In the April 1986 issue we carried the article *Red lining off Japan* on Paul's circumnavigation of Japan. We did not have space to give more than a brief summary and there were no pictures. Here we offer four pages from his trip diary with photographs to give more of a flavour of that outstanding journey.



## A day from Nihon Nikki to Wakasawan, Honshu, 30/6/85 From Tamagawa to Wadahama

The night had been our worst since the trip started. It seemed like the height of the tsuyu (rainy season) with torrential rain bucketing down. We had camped in an empty garage on a floor of damp, smelly carpet. The mosquitos were so bad we'd erected a tent inside the garage at 11:30pm but, alas, it was so hot and humid I found sleep difficult to come by. To make matters worse, at 3:30am we were joined by a television crew who were planning to spend the next three days making a documentary of the trip.

Bleary eyed, I launched at 5:00am and paddled onto a choppy sea with a fresh southerly wind right on the nose. I hugged a rocky shore to escape the worst of the wind and chop, resting briefly in the lee of each headland before plugging around into the full force of the blustery weather. I was not looking forward to crossing Tsuruga Wan (bay) since the deep bay was orientated in a north-south direction; the wind was funnelling straight out of the bay.

After three hours and only nine miles, I pulled into a small gyoko (fishing harbour) where Lesley was waiting with a warming bowl of kocha (tea).

The day was bleak with a dark threatening sky to the south but the wind appeared to have eased a little as I launched for the crossing of Tsuruga Wan to Tatesishi Hanto. After an hour on a bouncy sea I set the compass on a bearing for Tateishi Misaki as the first rain squall lowered visibility to under a mile but was relieved to reach calm water in the lee of the hanto. A bright light flashed from a small fishing boat, the prearranged signal with the television crew, and I wearily paddled towards them.

The coastal scenery east to Kottoi Saki was superb, granite bluffs towering out of the sea scored by arches, caves, chasms and small coves. Hardy matsu and Nihon cedar clung to tiny ledges and ramps and from the cliff top the forest climbed steeply to the skyline. However, this day the forest was hidden by grey drizzle clouds. The television crew stopped filming with the onset of heavy rain and returned to a nearby harbour while I paddled into the shelter of a magnificent archway some 30 metres high to pull on my parka.

The sea took on a misty ethereal appearance with the teeming rain and the cliffs became a wall of thundering waterfalls. Heavy rain has never been a worry in my voyages. In fact,

quite the reverse applied. When a wind was blowing and stirring up a whitecapped chop, heavy rain was welcome for it flattened the chop dramatically and usually the wind eased.

Visibility was down to 400 metres when I turned out on a compass bearing for a 10 mile crossing to Tsunekami Misaki. After an hour the rain eased and I caught a glimpse of the tall cliffs of the misaki on the horizon, a relief from the strain of concentrating on the compass.

After two and half hours I reached the misaki and followed the cliff line around to Tsunekami Ura, passing through the narrow gap inside Ogami Shima. Fishermen were hard at work hauling nets. I wondered if this coast, with its numerous waterfalls and tall forest trees leaning over the sea, was still beautiful in their eyes or had it become mundane? At the heart of the picturesque cove Lesley was waiting and I landed by a small fishing harbour.

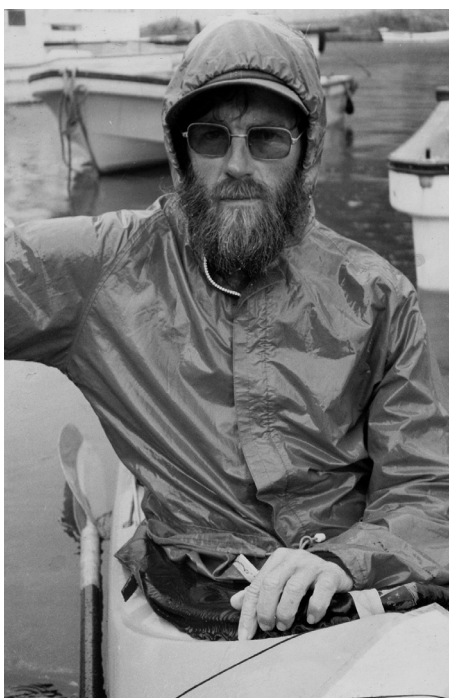
Waiting for my bowl of kocha to cool, I watched the antics of the amateur fishermen who were clustered together on a concrete breakwater. Japanese fishermen are very gregarious, amateur and professional alike. Where one fisherman is standing, the next to arrive will start fishing only a few metres away and the next will do the same. On occasions I have seen a single rock crowded with fishermen while the surrounding reefs were bare/deserted.

One chap seemed rather new at the sport. With this first cast he nearly hurled the rod into the sea; the drag hadn't been released. His powerful second cast sent the hook, line and sinker high into the air above him, so high, in fact, he was staring seawards and waiting for the splash when it nearly crowned him. By this time both the watching fishermen and gaijin (foreigners) were in fits of laughter. He made the sea near the breakwater with this third cast but tangled his line with that of the adjacent fishermen. When, finally, he made a successful cast we all clapped and cheered.

Lesley and I agreed to meet at Nokogiri Saki where the map showed road access but we set an alternative rendezvous in the harbour at Wadahama. I left at 3:30pm for a six mile crossing to Naga Saki and, clear of the cove, met a fresh southeasterly wind. Small fishing boats were moving into position in preparation for a night of squid fishing. The 100 metre high granite cliffs and luxuriant green forest between Naga Saki and Matsuga Saki reminded me of tropical north Queensland and its beautiful Coral Coast but the view across to Nokogiri Saki wasn't encouraging. Judging by the shape of the buildings and the tall smokestack it was yet another nuclear power station. From our previous experience, there would be very tight security surrounding the area and no way that Lesley would gain access to our rendezvous at the saki. This was



*A monstrous archway with a tiny human stick figure in the distance for scale.*



*Battered down for the rainy season.*