

Easter Trip on Chowilla/RalRal creeks

Our day started out with sunny weather and a meet and greet in Paringa. Charlie, Marina, Peter M, Peter D, Don and Catherine were joined by new members, couple Dee and Kev. After a bit of a car shuffle later and being warned about Suder's Creek aka 'The Chute' from Canoe the Riverland we made our way to the car park and launch site at Customs House Houseboats, Chowilla Game Reserve, at around 12 pm. It was getting quite warm after packing so we were keen to get into the creeks and find a bit of shade, although the prospect of paddling 'the chute' was a bit unnerving for a few of us. As it turns out it didn't disappoint. Fast water, big logs, branches, tight turns and one huge stinking dead kangaroo was just the start. I hit a few logs and as I came around a bend I saw Marina's head above the water floating down river. She was as calm and cool as a cucumber, waiting for her capsized kayak to catch up with her. Peter Mackenzie went ahead to help out. While helping release Marina's snagged kayak from a branch, I became snagged myself, then Peter D became snagged trying to help me, and in the end Charlie had to bounce my kayak's snagged rudder out of the fork of the branch. The Chute was a bit scary but an exciting experience. I was very relieved to find out later Peter Mackenzie was only kidding when he told me all the creeks were going to be like 'the Chute'! After around 10.8 km, we found a lovely campsite looking down the river where members of the group made a decent fire.



Evening around the campfire

Day two was quite warm and sunny as we set out at 8:45 am making our way down Chowilla creek for the next 23 km to our campsite. The paddling was relatively easy and quick as we went with the current. We paddled through the Chowilla regulator and into the Murry river. We arrived at around 3pm on our second day where most of the group took dips in the cool water. A large monitor lizard visited our campsite, and climbed the tree above our tents. Later that evening the group sat under a huge old gum in the balmy evening in the light of a full moon.



The goanna investigating the kayaks

Day three brought us cooler weather as we paddled down Hunchee and RalRal creeks. The current had eased, but it was still easy going. As usual, we had a few stops throughout the day to stretch and eat. We paddled past the pump station and some lovely old willows.



Willow trees on RalRal creek

After making our way for 21.5 km we found another lovely campsite in Nelbuck creek after leaving Ral Ral. We enjoyed another wonderful group evening with conversation, food, drinks and a fire.

Day four involved a short paddle 10.8 km taking us from Nelbuck creek into the Murray River and a quick stop over at the abandoned Japanese Internment Camp. A few plaques tell the story of a different time and it's worth checking out if you're ever up that way. The weather was sunny and the paddling easy as we paddled through Horeshoe lagoon, surrounded by tall reeds, beds of duckweed, and saw a greater number of birds.



Navigating through the reeds

We finished at Canoe the Riverland where Don had kindly left his car to shuttle us back to Customs House to collect our cars and head back to load up our gear and kayaks for the journey home.

Overall the trip was beautifully organised with achievable distances set for each day and the choice of route by our illustrious leader Charlie Walker.



Morning on Chowilla creek



Catherine navigating the fallen trees



Marina enjoying a well deserved lunch break