

# A Day Out On The River

By Peter Marsh

Recently I met the challenge kayaking on the Tully and scared myself a bit, but what a great river!

It was big water and the rapids breaking waves hitting the kayak from the left, then from the right, then a big one in the face just when you are trying to see how to avoid the next big hole downstream - I Could barely see where I was going.

I went into the first big rapid called the Double D cup without a plan and realized too late that I was heading for a nasty big hole where a rock was hiding deep under the swollen waters, a wave hit me and I capsized just before it. Luckily I washed through near the edge and wasn't sucked in. I hit a rock with my shoulder as the water tumbled me upside down and I tried to roll up, but the water was too turbulent and I couldn't get the paddle in position so I decided to bail out. I ripped at the spray skirt quick release toggle and it tore off in my hand, desperately I tried to force my way out and couldn't, then suddenly I guess adrenalin kicked in and something inside my head said "look, get this together Pete or you are going to drown". So I calmly scrunched the tight neoprene deck up in my hands and pulled. I was probably under for only 20 seconds, but my confidence was shot and I was a little shaken, but continued. I put my throw bag strap out so when I pulled it it would quickly release the deck. Once I had done that I felt much better. The Sharks tooth rapid was coming up soon and it scared me. I was considering chicken chuting it, as it had a big diagonal wave that if one

wasn't careful it would funnel the kayak straight into a huge hole, so one had to punch through it. The first attempt deflected me back towards the hole, then at the last minute I got through with my heart racing as I rose up and plunged down beside the gaping turbulent hole. I did not want to swim any part of this section as it culminated in the rapid called the Zig Zag and at that level it was full of holes just behind where a number of rocks are normally jutting 2-3metres out of the water. One towering rock stood in the middle of the rapid like the bow of a battleship plowing through the water. I stopped and noticed my heart pounding uncomfortably fast. I rested a minute for it to slow down a bit, then I punched through the waves, barely able to see where to go over the crests, then at a crucial move to miss battle ship rock, a big wave hit me in the face and I couldn't see where to go, I half capsized, but with a flick of the paddle I righted myself and busted through the last hole only to be washed into a boiling eddy between two rocks, but free of the main section. Once I got through to the pool below, my confidence soared and the rest of the river was a breeze - lots of big waves and very fast moving, but nothing as technical as the Sharks Tooth, Zig Zag section. The lookout, Junction, Sweeper Rapid and Double decker were a blast and I finished the day exhausted, but feeling very much alive.