

FREYA HOFFMEISTER ROUND AUSTRALIA VOYAGE 2009



DEPARTURE

January 18, 2009

Supported by members of the Victorian Sea Kayak Club and local residents, Freya left from the cove below Shortlands Bluff where Paul Caffyn commenced his round Australia voyage 27 years previously. Her expected return date was 12 months from departure.

Preparing to launch



Launching



On the way...

Freya paddles on in spectacular tropical waters.

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ARRIVAL

December 15, 2009

Accompanied by the Coastguard and kayak club members, Freya rounded Shortlands Bluff after 11 months circumnavigation of Australia.



Finally there ... Freya through the banner with Kayak club members and the Pilot Jetty in the background.

The Mayor of Queenscliffe officially welcomed Freya back and presented a certificate and gift in recognition of her achievement.



Rest at last

Freya's kayak is now in the Queenscliffe Maritime Museum, alongside the kayaks used by Earl de Blonville in 1979 and Paul Caffyn in 1981/2.

Freya's website is at
<http://qajaqunderground.com>

CROCODILES AND SHARKS NO MATCH FOR FREYA

Adventure, danger, romance.... Freya Hoffmeister's epic journey around the coast of Australia has all the hallmarks of a best seller.

The 42-year-old German mother of one arrived back in Queenscliff last month (Tuesday 15th), 332 days after she left our shores, aiming to be the first woman to circumnavigate the mainland by sea kayak.

Hoffmeister, an ice cream store owner from the town of Husum, finished the gruelling paddle 29 days faster than Paul Caffyn, the only other person to have completed the journey, back in 1982.

Along the way she fended off crocodiles with her paddle, encountered sea snakes and even had a shark take a bite out of her vessel.

During one stretch of the journey, across the Gulf of Carpentaria, she paddled for eight days and seven nights straight.

"She deserves all the kudos she gets," said Greg Bethune, the boyfriend she met along the way. "This is not something any of us would ever contemplate doing, she's a

remarkable woman."

The charter boat operator met Hoffmeister in a remote indigenous community off Cape York. "I thought here's another nutter."

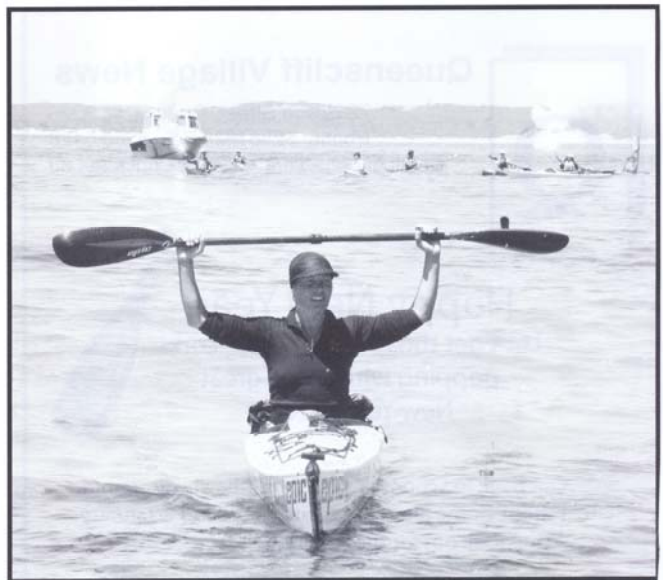
Bethune drove across the Nullarbor, one of the hardest legs of her journey, as a support for the kayaker and was at Queenscliff's Pilot Beach to greet her as she crossed the finish line.

In welcoming Hoffmeister back on dry land, Queenscliff Mayor Bob Merriman said her achievement was inspirational.

"It's an indication of strength of character, of perseverance that must be a trait of all sea kayakers. It's also noteworthy that both

successful solo trips around the Australian mainland had started and finished in Queenscliff, a seaside town with a long maritime history.

"It's not only an outstanding achievement but she's set the record for others to try and take on," Cr Merriman said.



FREYA'S FAIRYTALE

Queenscliff celebrates record

JANE HARPER

FROM shark attacks to a budding romance, one woman's incredible adventure story came to a fairytale finish at Queenscliff.

German national Freya Hoffmeister became the first woman to kayak around the Australian coastline after crossing the finish line on Tuesday morning.

She completing the 13,790km journey in

332 days, well ahead of the 360 days taken by the only other successful attempt, by New Zealander Paul Caffyn 27 years ago.

"I feel fine," Ms Hoffmeister said as she was cheered ashore.

"A bit wet and chilly. I saw some beautiful creatures including a lot of crocodiles, but they didn't bite thankfully."

A shark near Broome wasn't as shy, puncturing the kayak with a collection of toothmarks.

"I noticed the kayak had bumped a bit,

but didn't realise it had been bitten," Ms Hoffmeister said. "When I realised a shark had bitten, I wasn't very happy."

The tale of adventure also included a love story subplot, when Ms Hoffmeister met boyfriend Greg Bethune during a stop in the Northern Territory.

The charter boat operator drove along the western coast, providing supplies and support at rest stops, and was there to welcome her into shore at Queenscliff.

Ms Hoffmeister set off from Queenscliff

on January 18, and paddled an average of 60km a day, carrying up to 100kg of equipment in the kayak. Most nights were spent camping or staying with supporters, but many were spent at sea, snatching a few hours of sleep before continuing along treacherous stretches.

"Because it's there," she said, when asked why she had taken on the challenge.

"To anyone with a dream of their own I say, go and do it. Just simply go and do it."