

RAID100 Northern Rivers 2022 RACE REPORT

Team 37 KangRacing

We arrived late & after-dark into the CP at the end of the packrafting stage. [Liam St Pierre](#) was there and all he said was "I look forward to reading all about it in your race report" before he took off into the night. So, here it is.... The race report from the team who took inflatable kayaks from MacPac down the Cataract River!

BACKGROUND: KangRacing is [Andrew Scott](#) and [Steve Amor](#). We are a very relaxed, very part-time, 2-person Adventure Team. We were there for RAID100 in 2019, however we finished Short-coursed as we never finished the MTB ride from hell and were collected on-course before the 100 hours were up. So, our goal for 2022 was simply to finish full-course under our own steam.



This event was 2 years in the planning and back at the start we had seen with interest Liam's original post about some pack rafting. Since we didn't own any rafts we did try to rent one, and we also scoped out prices to buy one. However, the "Intex Challenger Inflatable Kayak" from Macpac for a special price of \$199 (INCLUDING THE PADDLE AND PUMP!) was hard to ignore! (<https://www.marpac.com.au/intex.../117104-NON00-OS.html>).

To be fair, our intent was always to do the bare minimum packrafting possible during the race and we were sure Liam was planning some optional PACKING to go RAFTING and that we wouldn't need to do any serious rapids. We even planned a trip down the Brisbane River as part of our training to make sure these kayaks were up to it. We drove to Fernvale, parked the car, hiked the rafts along the highway (what a sight late on a Friday night) to Wivenhoe Dam (the weekend before the Brisbane floods) and set off at first light below the spillway to "whitewater raft" back to Fernvale (for a pie). It all went very well. We were able to fine tune the packing aspect and only 1 of the 2 kayaks burst when we went over a tiny rapid!!! (50% success rate!) From that training we learned that we needed bailers and the largest patch repair kits we could find!!! Fast forward to map handout for the event in Grafton, and the reality emerged that we had a whole day's paddling up to grade 3 rapids, with no obvious option to avoid this stage! To make matters worse, my (Steve) bike threw it's chain as I left the first TA and it continued to get worse to the point where my chain almost ate through my derailleur. Andrew's front brake pads fell apart shortly after, and so we had no choice but to minimise time on the bikes and so we decided we may as well "Stay busy" on the packraft leg.



So here it is - a Review of the mighty Challenger Inflatable raft (I hope Liam add's this to his previous reviews).

We set off late on the Tuesday - even stopping for an optional CP on the way. We planned to get to CP60 in time for the dark zone at 6pm. However.... about an hour in when we arrived at the second (and unmarked rapid) we didn't like the look of it, so stopped above to take a closer look. Noticing another team through the bushes I investigated and found one team rolling up their deflated raft, their gear strewn all across the bank, another team preparing to setoff, missing a paddle, and most disturbing a deflated raft wedged in a tree in

the middle of the river! Happy to have avoided certain doom, we were very willing to portage around and we felt confident that was what we were mostly going to do from then on. Back on the water, we came across another team that had setup camp and lit a great looking fire. We called out to check they were ok, and they pointed to a pile of FIVE deflated packrafts they had collected!!! OMG, now the situation was changing on us... we had about 30 minutes until dark, most teams around us that we'd seen had met disaster and we were on \$199 kayaks with one practice run to Fernvale for pies! It was obvious we were not getting to CP60 before dark.... So, we pulled over close to CP57. There were no paths near us and a large OOB on our side of the river. Cold and wet we quickly changed and lit a fire then sat down and made meat, cheese and guacamole and bacon bits wraps. We laughed that we didn't have any wine! We were now 60 hours into the race and had only slept 3 hours, we thought we were trapped until daylight (we never considered crossing the river and hiking down) and so we flipped the kayaks over, crawled into the SOL Bivvy and slept for 9 hours straight! (I have NEVER slept that much during a race!).



First thing next day, it was cold and foggy but up we got and off we went to CP60. First rapid, BANG, over I flipped - WOW - that wakes you up! Once you go over, the kayak (and you) just wants to stay in the fastest part of the rapid and so i went with it - holding onto the kayak with one hand and my paddle with the other. Eventually, I got wedged onto the pointy bit of an island, and I was able to get back in, pump put the water and climb back into my kayak. Steve 1 - Andrew 0. Next Rapid - over goes Andrew! Next Rapid, it was me again 2 - 1. We arrived at CP60 in time for heavy rain. At least it didn't matter if we fell in or not. [Neil Tah](#)i was an absolute legend and cooked us some sausages. I was shivering at that CP and cowering over his BBQ for heat. Those sausages saved my life mate! After about half an hour off we went. Neil (and likely Liam) felt that we should probably pair up with another team. So off we went in a big group and eventually our old mates Team #24 Desk Jockeys

from RAID100 2019 joined us (well, actually they mostly waited for us as we portaged around, or fell into half the rapids). Again, to be fair we had re-arranged the bags to lower the centre of gravity and were getting much better at controlling the kayaks, however you all need to realise that every single swirling whirlpool or standing wave became a potential catastrophe for both of us!

There was rarely 60 seconds where we weren't paddling to avoid something. Each rapid started to become a demonstration of our ever-improving paddling skill! Team #24 Troy & Scott wanted to get a side CP76 - we agreed, it was a mistake, we messed up the nav and took too long - but at least I wasn't shivering anymore! Not long after that we arrived at "Demolition Derby Grade 3 - portage pending levels". Troy and Scott successfully got through but we watched them bounce over 2 standing waves. I called out to Andrew that this was the Grade 3, but he didn't believe me and off he went. He bounced over the first wave and wiped out on the second. I watched him disappear out of sight and decided there was no way I was going down this one. Then, from nowhere the safety/sweep boat arrived. I had pushed my kayak down the rapid empty so those below could catch it and I quickly hopped over the rocks to meet them all below. God only knows what Jarad thought in the sweep boat - 1 upturned kayak and 1 empty one and 3 people all at the bottom of the rapids! I distinctly remember his disapproval of our kayaks! He read the safety notice carefully, I'm pretty sure he was looking for a reason to pull us off course! But, nope, the kayaks are legit even after Jarad checked at least twice I'm sure.

So, now off we go with the sweep boat.... The Desk Jockeys were sent on their way downstream alone and we now had our own personal rafting guide and first aid attendant. Coincidentally, there were 2 other guys in the raft - the same volunteers who pulled us from the course in 2019! We were determined to finish this time - they weren't driving us home! We actually got slowed down by the 3 lead teams at Bridal Veil Falls as we had to wait for them to collect the side CP and I witnessed them scramble along the portage and take off down the river just minutes apart. Our speed was a little less hectic and we got as far as NZ falls - by now I wasn't falling in - however I lost all confidence as the night fell and I almost couldn't see anything. We decided with the sweep boat that we were going to hike from here as there was a path marked on the map on the right hand bank. The crew told us there were landowners with guns on the left bank, so we felt safer on this side as we watched the sweep boat disappear down river and straight into a tree!

By now it was dark, we were soaked and the best thing was to keep walking. The path didn't really exist as per the map but we navigated our way by one headlamp (Andrew's had gone flat!) to a road and eventually just an hour late into the CP. We were just happy not to be short coursed, we got changed had a hot meal and chatted to Neil again! Damn! We didn't realise the time penalty continued until we handed in the bike boxes otherwise we would have gone an hour earlier! We were the only team to get a negative score on any stage!!!! From there on, we finished the race and made it to the finish line 3 minutes late.

The rest of our race was probably much like the teams around us and I'm sure every team has their own adventures to tell. It was another great experience and can't wait to do the next one!



This event proved that all the outdoor experience we've gained over the years pays off. At no point were we too worried or felt in danger. We were prepared to camp another night on the river bank if needed. We had food, clothes and fire. Our night sleeping on the riverbank is without doubt the highlight for me of our race - one that won't ever be forgotten.

FINALLY, THE KAYAK REVIEW: Intex Challenger Inflatable Kayak \$199 WITH PADDLE AND PUMP!

Smooth Water ★★★★★ Comfortable, tracks straight

Grade 1 Rapid ★★★★★ Good, exciting, will get wet

Grade 2 Rapid ★★ Very exciting, likely to get dunked

Grade 3 Rapid ★ Forget it

Grade 4 + No way!

Sleeping Bed ★★★★★ Unbeatable comfort!

IN SUMMARY: Use this inflatable kayak if you've mastered pack rafting, and you want to make everything seem like a grade 4 adventure! Or, if you need to quickly improve your kayaking skills. Alternatively, use them as an extremely comfortable bed.

FINAL SCORE: Steve 2 - Andrew 2. Full-time.