

The Fitzies Biggest Adventure

The Fitzies biggest Adventure yet. They call it the Everest of Kayaking - 720 km Yukon Canada "Race to the Midnight Sun" 20th anniversary - 27th to 30th June 2018

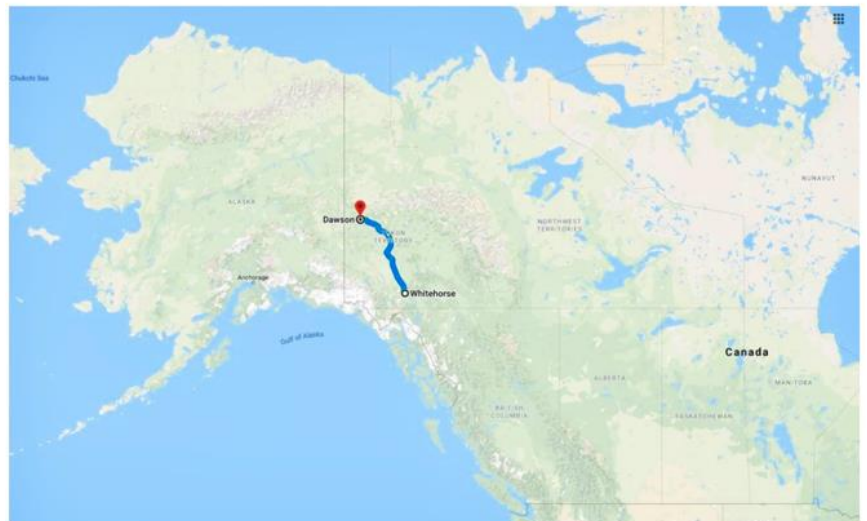
The hardest thing my brother John one of my older much, much lighter brothers – 65 kg – I mean he is older than his weight ! (me I will nearly get a letter from the Queen when weight = age !!)

Both agreed the hardest thing we have EVER done & never ever again! Yukon 720 km in 54 hrs racing - 5 hrs rest - sleep deprivation and hallucinations !!



The Race

The YRQ is a **RACE**, not a trip down the river.



A bit about the race : (Poor brother John trapped 4 days in kayak with me !)

- 720 km Yukon River Canada “Race to the Midnight Sun” 20th anniversary - Whitehorse to Dawson through remote Northern wilderness – yep it doesn't really get dark !
- A race invented by Buckwheat Donohue tracking the Klondike gold rush
- Flowing river - 2 decent rapids – 80 hours to complete...10 hours mandated stops with 22 hours of sunlight !
- 115 teams from 15 countries **represented** - The Yukon River Quest is not your typical adventure trip down the river – it's a race.



Above: Pre-start test paddles



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- Bear and moose encounters are possible; necessary precautions should be taken. There are 6 official race checkpoints including Dawson.
- It is a wilderness paddling race. Paddlers should anticipate that they may spend many hours at a time out of sight of any other boat or living person. The Yukon River has very few road access points & people.
- Teams should be equipped so they are self-sufficient for a couple of days if necessary for rescue. Hypothermia blisters and injuries are the main reason that teams scratch and have to be rescued off the river.
- It's a 'LeMans' style start at Rotary Park and run approximately 300 metres to their canoes and kayaks on the riverbank.
- Five Finger Rapids is monitored by a safety boat working in the river just beyond the rapid. It is there to assist team and boat to shore in the event of a capsize.
- Somewhat complex icy cold river system to navigate with 2 rapids - hard-arse fun group people challenging themselves -Africans, Estonians, Russians & lotsa locals

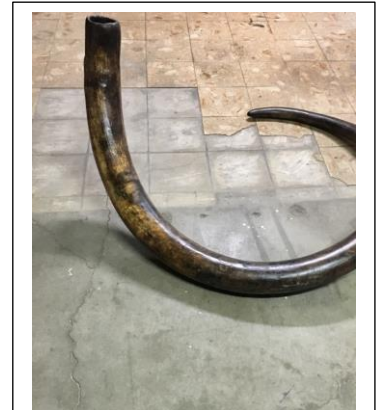


Prob should've read this first - top 10 Toughest Endurance Races in the World

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/kensington-explorersinresidence/toughest-races_b_4123737.html

Highlights and notables

- Finishing – The crew boat name that summed the race up for most : Death before DNF
- Doing hardest thing of my life with my great easy going brother
- From where the Yukon confluence occurs the flow gives you a boost but then the hallucinations start around this time of exhaustion...false bear, kayak sightings and cliffs carvings and much more imagined !
- We did actually see a bear a beaver and some eagles – these were early on so not hallucinations – and wonderful classic Canadian scenery
- Whitehorse and Dawson local communities support and celebration of race fantastic...Whitehorse beer and burgers a great way to prepare and some local country music – chat to the locals
- Support Crew at Carmacks and Coffee tree awesome people and sense of community - a Doctor from Lane Cove helped lots at Carmacks with blisters etc etc etc etc !!!
- At the end Roland a Dawson local **we randomly met** helped us – drove us to our hotel and then dinner with his friends - wonderful hospitality and Canadian whisky !!
- Meeting more Awesome Dawson’s people - invited for dinner next night at their house after the race – whisky, ribs, corn and stories of the Yukon from local miners.
- Mammoth event ! :) Found out gold miners find and sell 10 – 20,000 year old Mammoth tusks...as well as alluvial gold – I want one! Some go south for winter to Whitehorse and minus 40 C too cold !
- At Dawson met Canadian Prime Minister at Canada Day celebrations – great community in a tough environment
- Only way into town with no vehicle is to hitch hike so we did lady Ice trucker picked us up in her pickup ... told us she is working gold sluices this year and excited as apparently “trucking fcked !!”
- Ice trucker lady hoping to find 10-20,000 year old mammoth tusks when mining in or around the permafrost...
- Thomas who we hired from won the event for 2nd year in a voyageur 6 man canoe - lotsa canoes in race
- Spot tracker meant people back here watched us on the tracking site and thought it was cool that they could see us progressing down the river and also see when we stopped
- Garmin says 700 km & 52,000 calories ! Torture-Speechless and collapsed exhaustion at end ...kayak loaded with tents etc / food weighed about 60 kgs !!



Above: Mammoth Tusk



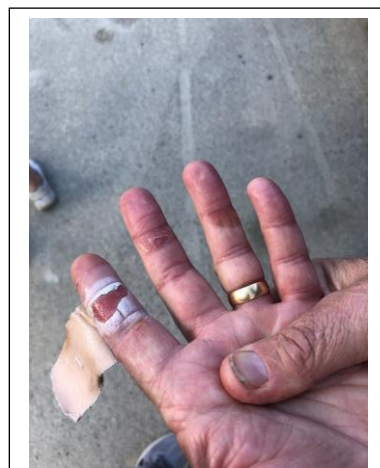
Above: Justin Trudeau - PM

What we got right

- Finishing !
- Doing hardest thing of my life with my easy going great brother
- Scenery beautiful – trees, cliffs, flowing rivers – of course its great and different why else would we want to do it !!
- Deciding to do and preparing – Tony briefing us - GPS maps a must !!
- Matt great help re warmer clothes / gloves and of course general advice...
- Got type / amount food, drinks and drugs right (def needed Red bulls ...caffeine tablets and Panadol / neurofen gel !)
- Hired from a good boat company Thomas is the most energetic kayak shop owner - recommend him - quality kayaks & equipment
- Got colder than even we thought - wore all out reserve clothes – but had enough to get thru - gloves & pogies worked
- “Fun” paddling fully laden 60 kg kayak with flowing river at speeds 16-20 km/hr
- Carmacks great locals helping out - No ground crew didn’t really impact us - but we enjoyed the company of Alanna and her team in Whitehorse
- Meeting Awesome Dawson’s people
- Finishing !

What went wrong

- Be much better if you could train in craft you know / hire...
- Steering / foot pedals relatively hard and our feet were unusually sore.
- Nasty rashes from too many layers and friction and John's blisters.
- Coffee creek prehistoric insects nibbling my legs - stop too short to reenergise !
- Locals can read river like we would surf / tides - so we have to learn as we go...
- Brother found it really tough after Carmacks with comfort / back / injury
- Not much to do 4 am Dawson ! Needed coffee and food and beer !



Above: Blisters...

Ok Ive been told always to NEVER say NEVER....so I'm "UNLIKELY TO EVER DO AGAIN UNLESS..."



Above: That's us in the centre back.



Above: Awesome Dawson!



Above: More awesome Dawson!



Above: Pulled over by the Mounties?