

**Cape Times: 11 January 2007: Escape Times – Sea Kayaking
Barry Washkansky**

While the Atlantic Ocean may be a bit chilly to spend extended amounts of time in without a wetsuit, spending a few hours just above the surface in a kayak is the perfect way to enjoy a sunset or sunrise.

So I hooked up with Coastal Kayaks and guide, Arthur Fincham for an exhilarating, relaxing and fun way to end the day. Arthur, after many years in the business world and having lived in a variety of places from Johannesburg, Durban and San Diego, decided he was tired of being office bound; so he and his wife, Tracy took the decision to make their passion their business.

They bought their first Kayak about seven years ago and have been regular paddlers ever since. Last year they realised a dream and bought the kayaking business as well as the manufacturing side of it (They have a factory in Epping and produce Kaskazi Kayaks for the local and export markets) and the rest has been plain paddling, well maybe not quite but you get the picture.

It's really quite simple, arrive at their Mouille Point office, at 179 Beach Road next to the Shell Garage (it's best to call first to check availability and conditions), sign up, get your buoyancy aid, (a smallish, comfortable life jacket), cross the road (probably the most dangerous part of the trip) and next thing you know you're on the water. Now the fun begins. While the sea often looks flat from the promenade this is not always the case, but that's part of the excitement.

There were six of us in the group including Arthur, all on doubles; he doesn't take singles out on tours. After five minutes we had left the beach behind and were bouncing over fairly large swells, well they seemed large to us beginners. Arthur won't take beginners out in too rough conditions; and on our double kayaks I never felt threatened by the swell and was impressed by the stability of our craft. Arthur explained how after living in Durban and regularly traveling to Mozambique as a kid on holiday, when he settled in Cape Town he just found the water too cold to play in. Then he discovered kayaking was the perfect answer to enjoy the Cape's cold waters without freezing your b***s off.

We headed in the direction of Clifton, keeping one eye on the weather and the other on the superb view of the Atlantic coastline and the unusual but stunning picture of the mountains as a backdrop as seen from the sea. We soon spotted a couple of penguins, probably doing a sunset swim from Robben Island, who had stopped for a feed. At Bantry Bay we turned back to avoid the wind and headed in the direction of Mouille Point, we watched other kayakers more proficient than us wizzing around on their singles. Being a few hundred meters off-shore we stayed within the wind line but still enjoyed the wind at our back for a while. A curious seal joined us for a while checking us out and effortlessly keeping up with our best efforts before racing off.

Then with the sun slowly setting behind the cloud bank forming on the horizon we paddled into a flock of what seemed like thousands of seagulls, feeding off the surface. With the luxury yachts and catamarans now out enjoying the sunset and surrounded on all sides by thousands of birds, Robben Island to our left and the dramatic cloud covered mountains to our right, it felt like we were paddling in a post card. As the sun disappeared, prematurely behind the cloud, a false sunset as Arthur called it, we reluctantly headed back to shore, where very quickly the swell turned into calmer waters and the wind disappeared. I slept well that night with visions of penguins, seals, waves and mermaids flowing through my head, but that's another story. A perfect way to enjoy our oceans, get close to nature and get some exercise.

Call him on 021 439 1134 or check out www.kayak.co.za.