

Fossil Fuel Free Multisport #3

Christchurch to Quail Island via Dyers Pass

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It's been a bad year for snow, so other adventures have taken the place of skiing over the winter. This trip to Quail Island has been a couple of years in the planning, so it was the perfect time to give it a go. My kayak towing technique has improved dramatically from the first two Fossil Fuel Free Multisport events in 2011 and 2013 where we generally lashed the front handle of the kayaks to an extension off the pannier rack. It worked for flat courses, but the 'jiggle factor' would have been dangerous going down hill at speed and unpleasant on the up hills. The new design has a strong tow bar extension, a brace for the nose of the kayak, and quick release ball joint hitch, which have all worked very well for stabilising the towing experience even with very heavy kayaks. Finding people willing to tow a kayak over the Port Hills was more difficult, but Jonathon Kitt recently purchased one of my new trolleys and was keen to give it a go on his relatively new cyclo-cross bike. I was riding my mountain bike with slicks which gave me good brakes & gears.

We set off at 8:10am on a frosty day with polypro and balaclavas, and it was pretty easy towing the kayaks over the flat. After ditching some layers of clothes we began the grunt up Dyers Pass and it soon became clear Jono's cyclocross bike wasn't geared low enough to tow kayaks up steep hills so he ended up walking the steep sections. Towing a kayak up a hill is a great way to initiate conversations with strangers, and a number of people helpfully pointed out the closest water was in the other direction.





We made it to the top of Dyers Pass around 10am then had a very enjoyable descent into Governor's Bay, taking it quietly on the speed due to the frosty conditions and reached a maximum of around 30 km/hr. We arrived at Cass Bay and got ready to kayak, hitting the water around 10:40am with lovely, still conditions. Jonathon's river kayak was unfortunately a bit hard to steer in a straight line with the lack of a river current, so after a number of 360 degree spins he decided it would be a bit risky heading out into the middle of the harbour, so staying exploring around the shoreline. Steve continued across to the Island, explored the caves and went around to the swimmers beach. We were thinking of a walk on the Island but Steve opted for a speedy return and only got to stretch his legs walking across the mudflats by King Billy Island.



A strong southerly suddenly blew in which was a bit of a surprise so it was a choppy kayak back with a tail wind, past the Ship's Graveyard to Cass bay, getting a few splashes but no other problems for the stable sea kayak. Jono was pleased with his decision to stay close to the shore. After loading the kayaks back on to the trolleys around 12:30 pm, we proceeded back to Governor's Bay feeling the extra wind drag on the kayaks going into the southerly, but it turned tail wind for the slog back up Dyers Pass, so that was appreciated. Steve managed to bike the whole way back up to the top with three breaks to rest his legs, eat muesli slice and wait for Jono to catch up walking. It took 50 minutes to reach the top, then there was another very enjoyable descent going back into Christchurch and a good tail wind to finish off the flat section, arriving back home at 3pm.

It was a very good trip with a couple of lessons learnt regarding the need for low gears on a bike and stable kayaks for the harbour, and we are both keen to try it again, maybe in summer and add a sea-swim leg as well as the walk on the Island. Traffic was generally very courteous to us on the roads with only one "slightly close" car passing experience.

