

Paddleboard trip around British coast aims to raise the profile of water safety



Brendon Price arrives at John O'Groats on his stand-up paddleboard.

Picture: DGS

LAST month, lifeguard Brendon Prince reached the north of Scotland by paddleboarding through the sea along the west coast of Britain from Devon, where he lives.

The ambitious paddleboarder made it up to John O'Groats after 74 days and 12 hours, claiming the world first of stand-up paddleboarding (SUP) Land's End to John O'Groats via the coast.

After that first victory, they wound their way around Duncansby Head toward Freswick and eventually into the bay and onto Freswick beach. Brendon and two friends (his support land crew) spent the day at the castle to rest and reboot. Brendon was so pleased to be able to take a hot shower!

They drank coffee, strummed on the guitar in the lounge, and shared some of their story so far, especially of their journey around mainland UK. It



Northern Drift

By Monique Sliedrecht



The problem with city dwellers, not used to the sea or the deep lochs of Scotland, is that appearances can be very deceptive.

was very heartwarming to hear of the complete family solidarity and support for Brendon's journey which is taking him away from his wife and teenage children for months at a time.

'Time and tide wait for no man' and Brendon has been living out this proverb every day, studying the tidal charts and choosing the best moment to leave. We said our goodbyes and Brendon embarked from Skirza Harbour, continuing on down to Lybster. I watched and waved from the rocks in the bay at low tide, as the speck of a man in a black wetsuit, with board and paddle, moved his way across the expanse of sea before vanishing behind the cliffs.

I had no idea about their campaign or the

background before they arrived, but I've been following their journey since. As I write they have just reached North Berwick near Edinburgh.

Brendon started out on April 27 and paddles an average of 32km a day. Some days it's too rough to go out and a few times they've been forced to wait out the weather before being able to set off again. He shared an experience, near Bettyhill, when he was suddenly aware of orcas swimming around him. The shock caused him to fall off his board into the water. Thank goodness orcas generally prefer seals to sailors!

Prince is a very experienced lifeguard and has undertaken this paddleboarding challenge around Britain to raise water safety awareness in the UK. Seven years ago he tried to save some surfers that got caught in the riptide and swelling seas near Cornwall. Sadly, three never made it. Since

then, and having seen the devastating impact on the families of those who died, he has been committed to getting the word out.

Just recently it was announced that within the timespan of a week, seven people had drowned in Scotland. Seven too many. A few extra precautions taken before going into the water might have helped stop some of those deaths. Being an island country surrounded by water makes knowledge of safety so important.

I don't swim so much these days, but I used to quite often, and had swimming lessons when I was younger. Talking to a friend of mine, he was reminiscing about doing lifesaving training when he was a schoolboy and wished he had kept this up.

More people should be trained this way. The problem with city dwellers,

not used to the sea or the deep lochs of Scotland, is that appearances can be very deceptive.

Respecting the sea, and preparing for any risks or dangers should be a priority in our education. But trouble can strike anyone, at any time.

I once went out for a 'day's adventure', fell off a white water raft and disappeared beneath the surging waters. Only the quick thinking of friends saved me.

Brendon Prince has a message for everyone. Safety and strong support go together. His campaign is powerful and more relevant than ever.

You can read more about it at: <https://thelongpaddle.co.uk>

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