



INTRODUCTION TO LILOING

WELCOME TO LILOING

Liloing ... “ *the art of enjoying oneself paddling down a river on an inflatable rubber mattress, shooting the odd friendly rapid*”.

This introduction provides a guide as to how to go about entering this cheap activity. It includes -

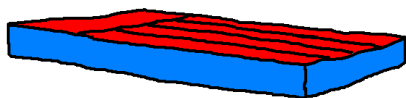
- equipment
- techniques
- Liloing conditions
- Shops
- places to go

You won't find an entry in the dictionary for liloing as it is a rather obscure past-time. However, those who have tried this form of locomotion usually find it good fun, and a really great way to see the bush.

EQUIPMENT

You will need the following -

Lilo the most basic thing of course. Lilos aren't in fact made for taking down rivers, so there is a fair bit of compromising done, and few choices.



A square-sided lilo

To start with get the sturdiest one that you can. There are some rubber types that are fairly good and only cost about \$30. Also get one with as many baffles (bits inside that hold the top and bottom together) as possible. One of the problems with lilos is that the baffles can separate and if they all go all that you are left with is a big sausage!

Make sure that you get one with square sides (see illustration). They are more stable and you will take on less water.

It is also worth taking a spare lilo for emergencies, especially if you can handle the extra weight. (A good quality lilo will weigh about 2.8kg). It can save a lot of time if holes need repairing.

Paddle. You will need a double bladed paddle as this makes paddling much less work, and give you much better manoeuvrability. It's best to get a collapsible one as they are easier to transport. Avoid those with plastic shafts as they tend to bend and break.

The positioning of the blades is very important. They need to be slightly out of alignment in order to naturally meet your natural paddling stroke. Some paddles are easily adjustable while others may need to be repositioned with more forceful means. Make sure that you have them right before you leave home.

Be aware that there can be a difference between left and right handed paddles.

You can hire one from the club or a canoe shop.

Repair Kit Another essential item. Because lilos aren't built for paddling down rivers, and depending on how careful you are, the chances are that you will have to fix holes more than once.

It's actually not hard to do, and a good repair will last the life of a lilo. You will need - large tube of rubber glue (Selley's Kwik Grip or similar are good), and some large patches (a cut up old lilo is ideal). A small pair of scissors may also be useful.

Fixing holes is basically a matter of following the gluing instructions. Dry the area, cut a

patch to fit, put the glue on, wait a few minutes, and fix the patch on, pressing firmly. Ensure that you have a good amount of coverage around the hole or tear, and within a reasonable time you can be on your way.

However, because patching does take some time, it is often best done during a normal break, and hence a spare lilo can be very handy, just to let you keep moving.

Lilos actually come with a tiny repair kit, but it is next to useless.

Helmet An important safety item. While most of your liloing will be spent leisurely paddling down the lazy river, there will probably be times when you meet some rapids. Most of these are very navigable, and not only will you have no trouble, they are great fun if you can run them (see later section).

However, you can never be totally sure of how you will go and it is very wise to have a helmet in case of hitting any rocks. It is also essential for insurance cover.

A bicycle helmet is ideal, although others will do just as well. As long as they are strong and light.

Buoyancy vest. Also an important safety item. Even a friendly rapid can unexpectedly tip you out and even a strong swimmer will find it a lot easier with one on. Required for insurance cover as well, one will set you back \$60 - \$100 or more, depending on the quality. Or you can hire one from the club or a canoe shop.

One thing to look for is a vest that has large arm holes (leaves you free to paddle) and one with a low neckline. (When you sit with your back to your pack, there can be a tendency for the vest to ride up).

Pump Not an essential item, but very useful none the less. There are some very good hand pumps available from camping stores that are

very small and light and not expensive. Well worth the investment.

Sunhat, Sunscreen and long clothes. Even on a cloudy day you can get sunburnt, because the sun reflects off the water. So apply the sunscreen, and wear a hat and long pants and shirt. Thermal top and pants are good, especially if the water is cold. Pyjamas are also good. If the water is especially cold you may consider using a wet suit if you have one.

Spare clothes. To change into when you get to camp.

Plastic Bags. Good quality large ones, and some smaller ones. A good technique is to put your important items, like clothes, into smaller bags, and then everything into three larger garbage bags, inside your pack. Seal them all by twisting the top and holding with rubber bands. Then

everything will be dry no matter what.

TECHNIQUES



As you will learn very quickly, the best way to lilo is to put your backpack at one end of the lilo, and sit upright with your back to the pack, and legs along the lilo.

You will find that this gives you a quite comfortable and relaxed position that leaves your arms free to paddle. Find yourself a steady rhythm that will propel you along the river with minimal effort. Just like walking, really!

Rapids: Always check a rapid before you get too close to it. If necessary, paddle to the side and get off and have a look. While liloing is usually a pleasant and relaxing pastime, rapids can be dangerous. It is therefore very important to be sure of the safety of any rapids before you enter them.

Once you are satisfied of the safety, and have checked out a route through, shooting a rapid

on your little craft is a fun and exhilarating experience.

If tipped off your lilo - if you can't gain your feet or the shore, it is often easiest to ride out the rapid by allowing yourself to float feet first downstream to the end of the rapid. Your lilo, pack and paddle will usually follow you down, or even beat you there!

If you get marooned on a rock, or find yourself in water that is too shallow, it is usually better to get off your lilo. You can sometimes rock yourself out of the situation, but this does create extra wear on your craft.

Never paddle over a weir, or any conditions that you are not sure of. Avoid paddling near trees. It is quite easy to get sucked underneath them with the water flow, and they have a habit of ripping lilos on sharp snags.

LILONG CONDITIONS

Before you even leave home, check out the conditions on your proposed river. The local rangers, and the Bureau of Meteorology can usually help you if you are unsure. Basically, if a river is swollen or unusually high, DON'T GO as the river will be too dangerous. Go somewhere else, or go for a walk!



However, if the river is normal, or low, it should be fine. For that reason, the best time of year is usually December through to March. It is the warmest months as well, the snow melts are past, and the water is warmer. In fact some rivers, where the water has had time to warm up on its path, the water can be surprisingly warm

You can find out about river conditions from:

<http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/warnings/>

For specific local conditions ring Parks Victoria (131963). Ask to be put 'through to the most appropriate regional office and ask to speak to the Park Ranger

SHOPS

There are unfortunately no Lilo shops - we have to get our gear where we can!

Lilo's can be bought from camping stores and disposals although the box-sided lilos can be harder to find.

Oz Camping & Disposals at 664 High St Thornbury normally have them and there will be other outlets as well.

Canoe shops are good for buoyancy vests, paddles, helmets, etc. – try Canoes Plus at 773 High St East Kew. Boating shops such as Whitworths Marine & Leisure at 556 Elizabeth St should have collapsible paddles as well as buoyancy vests.

You will find plastic pumps in places like K Mart and Rays Outdoors.

Also the Anaconda stores have a range of equipment you may find useful.



PLACES TO GO

Anywhere where there is a river with at least a foot depth, with a minimum of rocks, plenty of scenery, and a reasonable flow. Known good rivers are:

In Victoria

- The Snowy
- The Mitchell
- The Yarra (day trips)
- The Mitta Mitta
- The Thompson

In New South Wales

- The Colo
- The Shoalhaven

There are many others. Canoe shops will have information.

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Enjoy your liloing!

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