

Flippin' not slippin'



Being a Queenslander and leaving my old worn out sandals near Bronte Lagoon in early 2020 (some may remember my gluing article), when I was offered the idea of getting some sandals for Christmas last year, I started a bit of a hunt. I was soon browsing through stores, trying to find the best balance of both arch support and grip on slimy boatramps. I wanted something good to walk in, easy to put on and off, and what I could drive in and launch the boat or kayak without having to swap footwear. Then, I remembered looking at ET's fishing shows liking the idea of the Fliprocks Sandals, and how they reminded me of the multi-sole Korkers wading boots. A quick check in November saw the sales had a discount for the Black Friday sales, which I think continued towards Christmas as well. I put my order in for a pair, and a second tread pattern to give me both hiking and studs (and I figured studs on fibreglass doesn't go too well). Of note when it says 'felt pad', this was the backing part of the tread and the felt is quite dense, not the kind of softer felt found on wading boots.

The home of Fliprocks in Australia is in Sydney, and they arrived pretty quick with free shipping. I've never seen them in stores, but Hamish and the rest of the store were quite responsive in recommendations on sizing. I did notice though that whilst I thought I had ordered a size 12 sandal, that a 12/13 size arrived. To their credit, the team quickly sent me another pair. Looking at the original pair, it looks like someone accidentally put the half size larger sandals in the wrong box (both boxes are Size 12), and it was an honest mistake quickly corrected.

I took advantage of our Jindabyne outing to test them out. My challenge was to see if for the weekend I could get by with 2 pairs of shoes – the Fliprocks outside, and my thongs inside the lodge to save cleaning up the lake sand etc.



Wearing them in, with a couple of supplies stops on the way out of Canberra, I found they gripped well and the toe protector – being available in a range of sizes – fitted well and didn't catch much in my typical dragging the feet style, compared to when I have taken advantage of a larger sandal in a clearance bin. Driving they were quite good, getting me down to the lodge.

I found they were quite good on the sandy shores, and it was relatively easy to shed the sand in the shallows. I added the River Master studded (felt) pads, which gave great grip over the sandstone boulders below the lodge and out on the point, and helped me navigate the speargrass. I recall my ankle was able to stay at an obtuse angle, with my toes pointing down to the water as I stood on the lakeside of rocks, casting out, without slipping.

Early the next morning I made good use of the slightly damp sandals to go for an early morning fish. Although a little damp in the straps, they were fine and I enjoyed the pre breakfast stroll and wet wading.

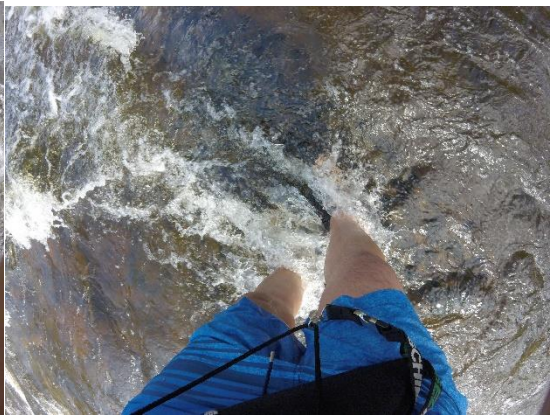
Stephen and I decided to fish the Thredbo River, which I saw as a great opportunity to try the Fliprocks out. Hiking above the hatchery, the sandals were comfortable (even as someone who has flat feet), and a good grip. Once up into the fishing area, I found a good spot to wade across the rocks to an island and fish from the middle, being a lefthander, whilst Stephen worked on his casting from the bank.

It is worth noting here that I have found (and I think the website tips may even recommend) that it is useful at times to tighten the straps, much as I have with other sandals. In addition to straps getting wet, I find it good to brace your foot in the sandal and reduce movement (and chafing from dirt and sand) but when driving etc it is generally too tight and you need to ease the pressure. The adjustments on the Fliprocks was great – and numerous, but I found that only two need to be adjusted – the others you can use to tidy up the straps, a bit like evening the loops in your shoelaces. I have noted however that given the range of shoe sizes, and the common sized middle strap (a replaceable item), making the toes straps about 5-10mm shorter would still give enough range of adjustment, but save the small amount of bounce of the strap. To be honest though, I didn't really notice it underwater, only a little bit whilst walking on dry land (a bit like the plastic ends on pull-tight cycling shoes for people who use them). I rarely caught fly line in them on land.

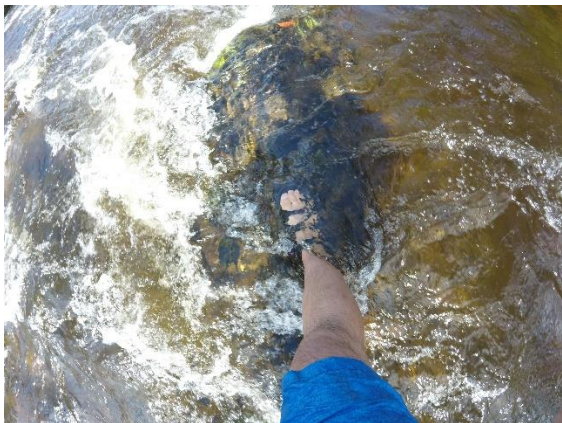


Worst case of the tag, but I was able to reduce it a bit with other straps

Anyway, back to the fishing.....



Confidence checking across slickrock, granite rock, some slime, and in fast water, including rock hopping



Well, I found the grip reassuring, and I was able to wet wade confidently, and even did a couple of leaps across boulders. They cut through the slime really well, and the only movement I had was when one rock rolled a bit, but the sandals held firm and I got across. Back at the car, I changed out the tread back to the regular tread.

With Stephen still untangling his leader and the day getting longer, we considered going up towards Thredbo. I was able to wear the sandals in for a distillery purchase, and after deciding half an hour's fishing wasn't worth a day pass at that point, we headed back to High Country Outfitter for some final flies and then driving back to Canberra.

Back home, I took the sandals off, I think for the first time since heading out from the lodge mid morning. They went quite well, and met my desire for a single sandal I didn't need to keep swapping out. I did note that the main sandal tread & outer rubber might be a little softer than other similarly priced sandal brands. The rocking of my heel on the clutch or accelerator, and my general tendency to drag my heels a little, identified some wear on the back of these after that solid weekend of wearing them. As such, I wouldn't recommend them for regular, all-day all-year wear as you would probably wear out part of the tread in less than a year. I have noticed some of the studs aren't as perpendicular



However, if saving them for fishing trips, or heading out for hikes and camps, they could easily serve as a single footwear that you can adapt and whether it be hiking, wading, or a late night dash to a tree, they can easily serve the purpose (and don't need pausing for a few minutes on cold nights to get your feet and laces sorted). I note they do also make a sandal with an optional heel strap, which

I haven't tried, but you can squash down the heel strap on these sandals if you want a short trip from your tent or the fire circle.

I didn't have these in time for my saltwater trip to Tuross, but I would probably have used the plastic hiking (non-studded) pads, which should give enough grip walking on the trailer and boatramp. I did however use them on the lakes with my Hobie kayak, and found them to be quite good. In fact, you can also pedal the kayak in them, provided you make the foot straps large enough. I think I noticed ET takes his off, but I found even with the studs on, the Mirage Drive worked fine. As such, not only do you not need worry about losing your footwear, but if you need to land quickly to get your big fish ashore, or try to time the rolling waves, you can confidently leap off the kayak and have good grip to navigate the shallow obstacles that would injure your bare feet. I ended up driving home in these sandals that time as well – I have also found them great at shedding water, so you don't get much onto your mud mats in the car. I also wore them from the camp, setting up and kayaking on Tantangara, one an 11 degree day, before walking the shore casting and landing my nice brown trout.



I'm sure I will get even more use out of them this summer, and especially next year on my trip north. The ability to put regular tread on will suit things like my inflatable boat, whilst I can quickly switch to the four studded pads for shore wading. I have even been using a 50/50 combination, allowing me to be like a mountain bike shoe which have soccer boot studs on the toe and flat heels – or setup the sandals the other way around.

With my flat feet, they provided good support, and the softer inner rubber creates a comfortable yet confident support. Yes, I ended up buying some other similarly priced sandals for more casual wear (slipped into the Christmas present), but these will be my go-to sandals outside of Canberra's winter to get near the rivers or heading to the coast. If you like wet wading, or rock or boat fishing, I can recommend a pair, and you might even find them on sale. You will need to order an additional tread, as they only come with a blank and regular plastic tread inserts.

(PS – going snowshoeing in late October, having contemplated adding them to try on the ice, I found myself wanting them to cross the aptly named Snowy River, and went barefoot instead. Next time will be wading socks and Fliprocks to help carry my fellow hiker across the river and ferry the gear)

