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Take to the skies, head bush, or paddle down the river for different takes on our diverse State. **Katie Hampson** meets some West Australians leading the way.

WATER

“When you paddle down a river you don’t even leave footprints. As soon as you’ve gone by and your wake settles, it looks like nobody has ever been there.”

Alwyn Duke was about nine years old and living in Exmouth when he and his father made his first kayak out of wood. His dad, an electrician on the naval base, used to build his own racing yachts. Alwyn got hold of one of the old hulls and decided that it was going to become a kayak. They worked on it together, and the now 44-year-old is still caught by the wonder of paddling down a river.

“When you do the Bibbulmun Track or something, 16 million people have walked in front of you and you can see it’s a well-worn path and everyone has done it and it’s like the life has been sucked out of it by everyone before you. But when you go down the river, it is like you are the very first person to have ever done it and that is really an incredible sensation.”

Once a decorated competitive kayaker, Alwyn is now better known as the founder of Finn Kayaks. When he was 14, he used to paddle his way a kilometre or so down to the river in a stormwater drain that passed near his Bayswater home. “Looking back it’s a toxic sort of thing but I loved it. I had my little canoe and little trolley and could get on the water easily from my house.”

Training six to eight hours a day for competitive

WAY TO GO

PICTURES ROB DUNCAN