

oceanpaddler

the sea kayaking magazine

ISSUE 46

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P&H Custom Sea Kayaks Code Zero is a battened sail design that is perfectly matched to today's performance sea kayaks. The Scorpio 2 is the first kayak to be sail ready for a 4 stay rig, with captive nuts to take the mast foot and perfectly positioned RDF's

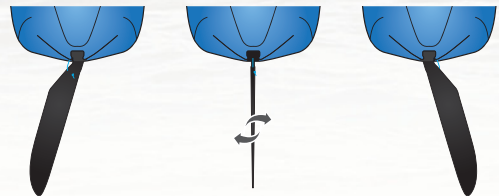
"After testing the standard sail, I said I was blown away by it. After testing the Code Zero, it would take a hurricane to get it out of my hands. It has become such an integral part of my paddling, I cannot now imagine sea kayaking without it."

- Douglas Wilcox, Seakayakphoto.com

The sail can be raised or lowered on the water, one handed in a second or two.

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Photo: Douglas Wilcox Paddler: David Crawford (70 years young)

Designed and built in Britain, paddled Worldwide

Welcome to Issue #46 of Ocean Paddler; 84 pages of the very best salty goodness your hard-earned cash can buy!

The sun is shining and if I can get this (insert swear word of choice, but it has to be a really good one) roof rack on the new (but old) car I'm heading out for a paddle – maybe I'll see you out there, or perhaps you might see us at a show or symposium over the next few months, please come and say hello if you do.

We are already hard at work on Issue #47; look for that towards the end of June.

Don't forget that we always need articles, photographs, suggestions and your (polite) thoughts on how to improve OP!

I'll finish by sending our condolences to the family and friends of Stephen Taylor, aged 54 from Gosport who passed away recently.

On 18 April, Mr Taylor, an experienced paddler, set out from Lee-on-Solent to paddle to Lepe beach near Southampton but sadly never made it home.

Please be careful.

Rich

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Cover photo:

Dr Douglas Wilcox – seakayakphoto.com
Leaving East Loch Tarbert, Firth of Clyde

Contents photo: Justine Curgenven

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Photographer: Frode Wiggen

Senja; another perfect, if cold day.
Wivian and Trude enjoy a hot meal in their kayaks.
20 February, 2015. GoPro Hero 3+. Temperature -5 degrees celsius.



LONDON KAYAKATHON 2015

On the 19th of April 2015, 50 enthusiastic sea kayakers completed a 26.2-mile Kayakathon on the river Thames, successfully raising over £15,000 for a whole host of charities in the process. The six-hour London Kayakathon started under Tower Bridge and then proceeded up the River Thames to Chiswick Bridge, the halfway point, before turning around.

The River Thames is an incredible and vibrant waterway to paddle, with many of the best sights of London to be experienced along the banks of the river. The London Eye, the Houses of Parliament, the Tower of London and many more iconic landmarks acted as waypoints on this most memorable of fund raising events. The river is a dynamic environment, with tidal flow of up to 3 knots at the narrowest points and a lot of commercial traffic sharing the water throughout the city.

London Kayakathon founder Simon Osborne began the event 'Kayaking for Cancer' in 2002 when he successfully raised £30,000 for Leukaemia Research; this was in memory of his brother Mark who died from the disease in 1988. It was during his circumnavigation of Britain that Simon came up with the idea for the London Kayakathon.

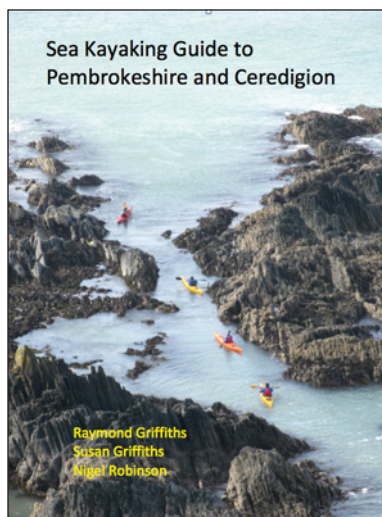
He wanted to give people without the resources or the opportunity to take part in large-scale expeditions the chance to use kayaking as a means to raise money for causes that are close to their hearts. After many years of thought, planning and struggling to gain the necessary permission, the inaugural London Kayakathon took place on 25 April 2010.

The London Kayakathon has gone from strength to strength raising in excess of £100,000 over the last 5 years.

Simon is expanding the concept of charity paddling and is organising new events around the UK (there will be further Kayakathons in Falmouth and Newcastle this year) and in Europe. Simon has set up a community interest company to help develop these new events and has the ambition to help paddlers raise £2 Million for charity.

For more information and to book onto the events visit www.kayakathons.com

SEA KAYAKING GUIDE TO PEMBROKESHIRE AND CEREDIGION



Updated and now in colour, this guide gives you the essential information needed to paddle the coastline of west Wales. The book distils the experience and knowledge of three local paddlers who between them have over 120 years experience of paddling these, their local waters!

Access and tidal stream information, transport and camping details, together with background on wildlife, geology, legends and local history make this an essential guide for anyone planning day trips or longer expeditions along this coast.

For information and ordering, please email: nige@seakayakguides.co.uk

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Let Your Adventures Begin...

MORE PEAK UK PRODUCTS FOR 2015



TOURLITE JACKETS

For 2015 Peak UK have updated their best selling Tourlite Short jacket and have introduced two new pieces, the Tourlite Long and Tourlite Storm. All three are constructed from Peak UK's breathable and durable X2.5 recycled polyester and are available in orange or green with cool new logos. The Tourlite Long features Aquaout neck, wrist and waist seals and the same easy access side zip pocket as its short-sleeved sibling. The Tourlite Storm has a longer cut in the body with a dropped seat, making it perfect for kayakers and canoeists alike, whether on the water or in camp. When sized up this jacket will easily fit over a PFD, making it a great all round piece that no serious touring paddler should be without. The large adjustable hood now features an easy stow toggle, so no more flapping in the wind! All three jackets are available in XS, S, M, L, XL and XXL and are out now.

The Short, Long and Storm are £89, £99 and £125 respectively.

NEOSKIN

Peak UK has updated their best selling Neoskin range. The ever popular Shorts, Strides and Pants have had a makeover and now feature black stitching and cool new graphics making them even more stylish. Each model features a mix of 1.5mm and 2.5mm neoprene making them tougher where you need it and lighter where you don't. All three models are now available in XXS right through to XXL.

The Shorts, Strides and Pants are available now and are £36, £40 and £45 respectively.

THERMAL RASHY

Peak UK's much loved and super toasty Thermal Rashy range has been given a new look for 2015. The range has a cool new look but is the same warm fleecy lycra that has been keeping paddlers operating in even the coldest of weather. The Short Sleeve, Long Sleeve and Pants are essential additions to your kitbag: especially if you live in the UK!

All three are available in sizes XS, S, M, L and XL and cost £36, £45 and £49 respectively.

LYCRA RASHY

For 2015 Peak UK have a new range of colours in their popular Lycra Rashy range, and new lower prices! Constructed from quick drying nylon lycra with UV50 protection, the Lycra Rashys are essential wear for warm weather kayaking.

The Short Sleeve will be available in Orange or Blue and will have an RRP of just £20.

The Long Sleeve will come in Grey or Blue and will cost £25.

Both versions will come in sizes XS, S, M, L and XL.

For more information and to check out the whole updated Peak UK range including gloves, 'head cases', jackets, socks and more, get down to your nearest Peak UK dealer or check out www.peakuk.com





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Jen Chirimes, Dorset. Image: Pete Astles

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ARCADIA - VENTILATED TOURING JACKET

Palm Equipment's new Arcadia Jacket is in shops now. A simple yet functional touring jacket, the Arcadia features a twin waist, Exoskin Gaskets and a volume adjustable zip off hood. The asymmetric 1/4 zipped neck closure can be zipped up tight in the rain, or be opened wide for ventilation, making this a perfect inland touring jacket for variable weather.

Colours: Men's - Green / Sherbet, Women's - Red

Sizes: Men's S-XXL / Women's S-XL

Price: £149.95, €199.95

For more information on these and the rest of the Palm range, see www.palmequipmenteurope.com



PALM GRADIENT - BOOT AND SHOE

After the success of their original Gradient boot, Palm is excited to release the Gradient mark 2; newly improved with a wider foot shape, the Gradient is now available in either a shoe version for ankle freedom, or a boot for support. Both feature Vibram's Multitendos Sole, developed with Palm specifically for the needs of paddlers. Its open tread pattern will shed grit and dirt to keep gripping in the mud, whilst Vibram's super sticky HydroGrip rubber compound offers the best possible grip on smooth, wet rock. The upper is tough, protected by a layer of durable scratch rubber, and the boot version has a cut away heel design to make it easy to put on and take off again.

Available in shops now, the Gradient sets a new benchmark for paddling footwear.

Prices: £79.95 / €105.95 (shoe), £89.95 / €119.95 (boot)

SEA KAYAK ARISAIG HAS A GROWING TEAM!

Sea Kayak Arisaig are delighted to announce that Lizzy and Tristan Benwell, who have worked in the 'outdoor' world for over 12 years, have joined their team. Having worked in Britain and Europe the keen sea kayakers, with a huge sense of adventure, are looking forward to a busy season in the Sound of Arisaig.

Lizzy and Tristan will be running a number of introductory courses along with more advanced coaching opportunities using a fleet of Tiderace kayaks. They will also be guiding some multi-day expeditions where they will be exploring the area of Arisaig, Moidart and the Small Isles.

Later in the season they are planning to take small groups over to Mallorca to paddle in the crystal clear waters and explore its stunning and unspoiled island coastline.

Come and join us!

www.seakayakarisaig.co.uk paddle@seakayakarisaig.co.uk



ARCTIC NOMADS

Arctic Nomads will be running a series of winter expeditions to the far Arctic north; these five and ten day trips will combine various methods of traditional Arctic travel (dog sledding, sea kayaking, snow shoe treks and cross country skiing) to create the activity holiday of a lifetime. Tore Albrigtsen, Bjorn Eines, Peter Bray, Nick Arding and Jeff Allen are the guides working on these amazing adventures, which for now will be centered around the north of Norway.

For more information, see www.arctic-nomads.com

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What's on dates for your diary



Skyak Adventures Greenland skills courses 15–19 May

Do you have a Greenland-style paddle? Do you want to learn how to use it to its potential? If your answer is yes to either of these questions, then you have to come to Skyak Adventures for our exclusive course. The course is being delivered in association with Rowland Woollven, who is not only the oldest person to have paddled around Britain but who also used a 'stick' for the complete journey (and wrote a book about it). This is not just about rolling, but if that is an area you feel you would like to work on then that will be accommodated within the course. Gordon is no stranger to the delights of the stick either, having made many and given demonstrations at symposia over 20 years before many even knew what the piece of wood was.

www.skyakadventures.com

10th South West Canoe Show 16 May

The UK's Biggest Free Entry Paddlesports show is back! Following a break in 2014 the new date of May 16th will bring warmer weather and water, bigger and better stands, more variety and more to see. This year the show is all about the South West. The South West is home to some of the UK's most amazing paddling, whether it is on the sea, rivers, lakes, canals or estuaries. So come and see all the latest kayaks, paddles and equipment you need to get out there and enjoy what we think is the UK's best all round paddling destination. <http://swcanoeshow.co.uk>

Seapoint and South East Sea Kayak Symposium 16-17 May

On the 16–17 May 2015 Seapoint Canoe Centre based in Seabrook, Hythe in the southeast of England will be hosting the fourth Seapoint and South East Sea Kayak Symposium. Howard Jeffs will be attending as our guest coach, running advanced paddling skills and rescue workshops; other workshops include a rolling session in local school swimming pool, fundamental skills and efficient forward paddling. During the week following the symposium, the centre will be running a sea kayaker development week in association with Howard Jeffs. The week will include 3 star training and assessment and coastal navigation and 4 star training.

www.seapointcanoeandkayakcentre.co.uk

9th Ravenglass Seaquest 17 May

A canoe/kayak orienteering event within the three estuaries of Ravenglass, Cumbria; the Seaquest combines tidal planning, strategy and tactics and raises money for local charities. www.copelandcanoe.org.uk/seaquest.html

Lismore Kayak Challenge – to the lighthouse and back! 23 May

Welcome to the west coast's newest sea kayak race - the Lismore Kayak Challenge; 18km of adrenaline from Ganavan Beach, Oban, out to Lismore Lighthouse and back. With a successful trial race in 2014, organiser Gus Brydon is looking to attract even more sea kayak racers to this year's Lismore Kayak Challenge. The race starts at Ganavan Sands (just north of Oban town) and goes out to the iconic Stevenson built lighthouse on Eilean Musdile at the southern tip of the island of Lismore and back. As with August's Oban Sea Kayak Race, funds raised from the Lismore Kayak Challenge are to support Oban Lifeboat. www.obanseakayakrace.org/lkc.html

'Every Mile Matters' Falmouth Kayakathon 14th June

The INAUGURAL Falmouth Kayakathon will take place on Sunday the 14th of June 2015, the event will consist of two exciting events both starting and finishing at the popular Gyllyngvase beach. The first is a competitive 18-mile circular route to Gul Rock on which competitors will pass beautiful and historical stretches of the Cornish coastline. The second event is a non-competitive 'fun' event allowing a variety of paddling craft and participants to be part of this wonderful charity paddle day. Craft included in this event will include sit-on-tops, sea kayaks and stand up paddleboards. The route will take participants towards the iconic Helford River, with a rest and halfway stop at Trebah beach, returning to Gyllyngvase Beach, a paddling distance of 10 miles. Our goal would be to have one hundred participants; our aim is to raise a total of £30,000 for charity, with each participant choosing and raising money for their own charity. www.kayakathons.com

Arctic Sea Kayak Race 19-25 July

ASKR – The annual meet for ocean paddlers from all around the world; where competition paddlers, leisure paddlers and novices gather for a pleasurable week of paddling that combines both socialising and learning in breathtaking natural surroundings. The event Takes place in the beautiful Vesterålen, Northern Norway. 68 degrees north! <http://askr.no/en/>

Women's Sea Kayak Festival, South Devon, 22-24 August

Welcoming women sea kayakers to one of the UK's most beautiful and exciting coastlines. Our base will be near Salcombe, giving easy access to the varied paddling that the Devon coast has to offer. We have a great selection of inspiring female coaches leading three days of trips and workshops from four star training, trip planning and paddle skills, to marine safaris, surfing, Greenland skills and early morning yoga for the very keen! Guest speakers, including Justine Curgenvin and Eila Wilkinson will make evening presentations. The cost of just £210 includes camping from Friday to Sunday night, all coached/guided sessions, two hot evening meals, event T-shirt and tea and coffee.

There is an option to stay on at the campsite after the festival and join informal local paddling trips. Justine Curgenvin will also be running a 'mini expedition' for anyone wishing to try kayak camping.

<http://womensseakayakfestival.co.uk/southcoast/>

Oban Sea Kayak Race 29 August

The 2015 Oban Sea Kayak Race, racing around the island of Kerrera, off Oban Bay, will take place on Saturday 29 August 2015 and not the 22nd as previously advertised. All proceeds from Oban Sea Kayak Race are in aid of Oban Lifeboat. The 2014 Race raised a magnificent £2500 - many thanks to all who helped raise this fantastic sum. www.obanseakayakrace.org



A brief clearing in the dense fog on Unalaska Island.

Kayaking the Aleutians

by Justine Curgenvén



Steller sea lion.



I felt slightly sick and my face flushed red as I stared at the GPS track. Seven hours into a 30-mile crossing, we were going the wrong way. When I stopped paddling our speed was between 3.5 and 4.5 knots, backwards. The safety of land lay nine miles to our east but a strong current was sweeping us to the southwest and it was faster than we were. Panicking, I started putting in stronger strokes and methodically changed my bearing by increments to try to find a magic trajectory that would see us making progress east. Huddled over the GPS, trying to find a way out of our situation, I pulled away from Sarah. After a 05:30 am start and a bad night's sleep, being left behind was the last thing she needed but I struggled to balance the responsibility I felt to navigate us to land safely with the need to wait. Having rowed solo across the Indian and Pacific Oceans, Sarah is one of the strongest people I have ever met, mentally and physically. At times I trusted she could find her own motivation to keep going while my brain was occupied with trying to keep us moving towards land and my own mind games. Finally, I waited and Sarah passed me with a reddened face that suggested she had been crying. Sarah always smiles, and her lack of a greeting sent a shot of guilt through me like a fire in my stomach. And we were still going backwards.

Human power only

It was an accident that we were in the Aleutian Islands; Sarah was rowing the Pacific Ocean as part of her round-the-world human-powered journey

which started in London, UK. She'd set off from Japan and was aiming for Canada. Winds and currents played with her, sweeping her tiny craft around in circles, teasing her with progress towards North America then snatching it back in subsequent days. After four months she was less than half-way to Canada and realised she'd be reaching Vancouver during boat-munching winter storms. A safer alternative was to head north to the Aleutian Island chain, which stretches from Russia to Alaska and was 'only' 500 miles away.

In September 2013, she rowed ashore at Adak towards the western end of the Aleutian Islands after 150 days alone at sea. Her only hope for continuing her human-powered journey was to kayak east along the virtually uninhabited island chain to the Alaskan mainland. This would be a formidable challenge as more than 20 long, open water crossings separated her from the nearest road in Homer 1500 miles (2500 km) away. The islands are known as the 'birthplace of the winds', with notoriously terrible weather.

Sarah is clearly no stranger to adventure, challenge and motivation, but she had very limited experience of kayaking in strong tides, rough conditions or strong winds and she didn't have a reliable roll. I agreed to join her on the kayaking journey on the understanding that we would train for five months over the winter in Wales and that we'd take sails which would make us faster and therefore safer.



A fearless fox steals our discarded fish head.



It was always exciting and nerve wracking to see magnificent brown bears.

What lies ahead

Excited school children and concerned adults waved us off from Adak in early May 2014. As we nervously took our first paddle strokes, I tried not to think of the coastal pilot which warned of 10 foot tidal rips, frequent storms, incessant fog and currents of up to 12 knots between islands. We had flares, EPIRBs, VHF radios and satellite phones, but we were headed into a swathe of wilderness and 95% of the time help would be too far away to reach us in an emergency.

Our initial crossings between islands were calm with only gentle currents, but on day two the smooth sea erupted into a mile of steep breaking waves which had us bracing and breathing hard for 20 minutes before the chaos disappeared as quickly as it had reared up. Looking more closely at the chart, I noticed the words 'tidal rips' on the stretch of ocean we had just crossed and vowed to take more notice of the precise positioning of future 'tidal rips' and try to skirt around them where possible.

After 100 miles we reached the first of nine small communities scattered along our route. Most have between 17 and 100 residents and the only way in and out is by plane (or rarely, by boat). We shipped food ahead to these safe havens, but as they were several hundred miles apart we carried food for up to a month.

The hardest crossing

The crux of the trip was a 250 nautical mile section where small islands were separated by much longer stretches of sea. We had to make five crossings of 15 nautical miles or more, with the longest being 37 nautical miles. The coastal pilot told us of 4–7 knot currents that ran perpendicular to our course, but there were no predictions for when it turned or its strength at any given day or time. It did generalize that the current heads north between the islands when the tide is rising and south when it is dropping. We used this as a guideline but never relied on it. Sometimes it was correct within a couple of hours; other times it was totally the opposite to what we expected. Our strategy was to pick a bearing that allowed us to make the quickest possible progress towards the next island as long as the GPS track showed us arriving within about two miles to the north or south of the island. We usually changed bearing several times as the current shifted. It wasn't unusual to expect to arrive on the north coast only to have the current change and end up landing on the south coast.

Our final 30 mile crossing to the community of Nikolski turned out to be the most challenging when we found ourselves being swept to the southwest faster than we could paddle east. We resigned ourselves to paddling on a treadmill, limiting the damage and hoping that the tide would turn and start to help us. For over two hours we went backwards, trying not to get stressed by our inability to reach land. Finally the current ►



Justine excited to find drinking water in the islands of Four mountains.



Campsite on Unimak island with active mount Shishalden in the background.



A stunning morning on Unalaska Island.

relinquished and allowed us to inch towards the shore, but an un-forecast 20 knot headwind had our bows crashing into oncoming waves, reducing our progress to less than two nautical miles an hour. After 16 hours on the water we crawled to safety as the mist and rain turned to dusk.

Getting close and personal

Our route was primarily a large swathe of untouched wilderness and we saw very few boats or evidence of man, apart from brightly coloured fishing floats littering the beaches. Craggy volcanoes rose from the sea, jagged black lava flows spilled into the ocean and on the peninsula, glaciers swept down from grey peaks. Our companions were Steller sea lions hauled out on pointy rocks in pungent, boisterous colonies and curious otters treading water, craning their necks up from a safe distance with babies clutched to their chests. A silky column of air and loud exhale gave away the presence of whales, while seals appeared just inches offshore at almost every campsite, watching us watching them, watching us.

On one campsite, two hulking sea lions dragged themselves ashore beside our camp, snorting loudly and defiantly. Our tent felt very fragile next to a tonne of rippling muscle. They thought better of sharing the beach in daylight, but returned at 04:00 am, punctuating the still dark air with the occasional gruff grunt and causing us to peer into the blackness to see if they were coming any closer.

Once we reached the last of the Aleutian Islands, brown bears were added to our worries. Our pot banging, shouting and swearing failed to impress a large male who nonchalantly walked past our camp on our second night in bear country. He merely climbed on a log to get a better look before slowly sauntering past, watching our strange dance with

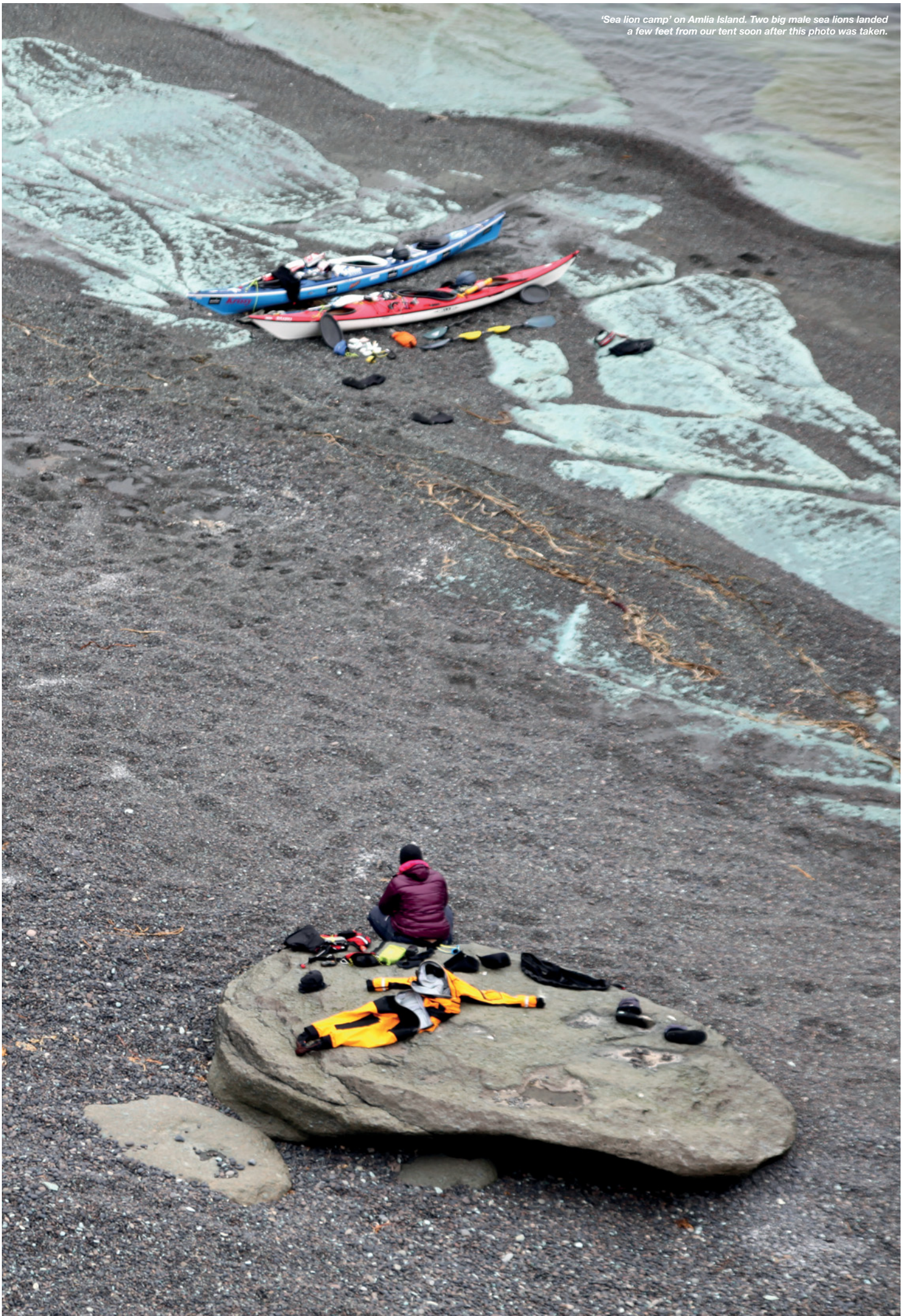
interest, not fear. Sarah got up twice that night to add more logs to the fire and only tiredness prevented her from doing this every night.

Our most memorable bear encounter came when Sarah was taking a wash in what we later found out was a salmon stream. Looking up after rinsing her hair, a naked Sarah found herself eye to eye with a young bear that was heading towards her with great interest. She shouted to me before leaping from the river and rushing back to the tent. I walked to the riverbank with my camera and was shocked to see the bear was less than 50 m away and was coming straight towards me. I'm embarrassed that my reaction was to shout all the swear words I could think of at the bear, who was actually heading for Sarah's discarded clothes for a sniff. Sarah started throwing rocks into the river and the bear turned and ran away.

Bitter sweet finish

After 101 days we pulled our kayaks ashore on Homer Spit, excited to have completed a wild and beautiful journey that challenged and excited us in equal measure. Memories flicked through my mind: bush planes buzzing inches over our head; a mother bear and cub feeding on a beach beside our kayaks; Sarah and I foraging for sea urchin eggs on the beach with locals from one of the villages; offshore winds picking up from nowhere on a 15 mile crossing; and Sarah's kayak almost falling apart. It was bitter sweet to step out of my kayak for the last time, the sweet cold champagne on my lips, the warm shower and home-cooked food, and heading home to family and friends. Seven months later, the trip memories are still fresh inside me. These give me perspective when small things go wrong, helping me be calm in the face of surprises. I do miss the wild open spaces filled with wildlife, but it's fantastic to know it's there. ►


'Sea lion camp' on Amlia Island. Two big male sea lions landed a few feet from our tent soon after this photo was taken.



What happened next

After the kayaking, Sarah cycled North America through the winter, and will set off to row the Atlantic back to the UK in May 2015. Catch up with her at www.sarahouten.com

Kayaking the Aleutians

Justine released a film of the Aleutian island journey, *Kayaking the Aleutians*, which won four awards including 'Best Film' at its world premiere in Germany. You can see the trailer at <http://youtu.be/6gYn0-QDH0E>. National Geographic Adventurer of the year, Colin Angus, gave the film 5 out of 5 stars. "Superb filming to go with a superb adventure! Justine and Sarah are kayaking alone through one of the most challenging and dangerous environments in the world. It is incredible that not only did they make it, but that they were able to create a high-quality documentary without a film crew following along. Their film not only communicates the hardships and dangers of the expedition, but also conveys the rich backdrop of wildlife and culture in this region." The DVD and download are available for order through some shops and via Justine's website. See www.cackletv.com/sea-kayaking-dvds/kayaking-the-aleutians/ 

Tombolo campsite on the Alaskan Peninsula.





Mike looks at the distant Paps of Jura from Sgeir Fhiacail, Gigha.

The Mull of Kintyre to the Clyde

Part 3: Gigha to the Clyde via the Tarbert portage

by Dr Douglas Wilcox seakayakphoto.com



It had been hot, hard work portaging our loaded kayaks across the isthmus on the Kintyre peninsula between the West and East Lochs Tarbert. We had rushed to catch the tide and by the time we arrived at the Tarbert village quayside we were out of breath and sweating. We were dismayed to watch as the harbour rapidly emptied of water. An old fisherman eyed us up and down. He drew deeply on his rollup cigarette then, before saying anything, sent a well-aimed spit at a seagull eating a crab on the mud below. After some further consideration of our situation, he very slowly said: "Aye, when the tide's in at the west loch, it's oot at the east loch. If ye dinna ken afore, ye ken the noo!" ►

Delayed breakfast

We awoke on the fifth day of our expedition to a beautiful morning on the Hebridean island of Gigha. There was not a breath of wind and the Paps of Jura were perfectly reflected on the still waters of the Sound of Jura. Unfortunately we were not alone; we had been joined by billions of midges who enjoyed breakfasting on us. We decided to miss our own breakfasts and hurriedly broke camp and loaded the kayaks. It was such a relief to be out on the cool, midge-free water. In the early morning sunshine, we paddled through the skerries to the north end of Gigha where we caught sight of a large dog otter crunching a crab. Our breakfast would need to wait until we crossed the Sound of Gigha to the mouth of West Loch Tarbert on the west coast of the Kintyre peninsula.

The Sound of Gigha was glassy calm but it is not always so idyllic. Strong tides, shallow seas and wind-against-tide conditions can soon rustle up some very rough conditions. It is not only the weather conditions you need to watch on this crossing; Islay has such a large whisky, farming and tourist economy that it needs two ferries. They leave West Loch Tarbert and pass very close to the north end of Gigha. The MV Finlaggan passed on her way out to Islay and the MV Hebridean Isles passed us on her way in to Kennacraig in West Loch Tarbert. We kept well to the south of the ferries and, after a 10 km crossing, found ourselves on the mainland again for the first time in three days. We made landfall at Dunskeig Bay just to the south of the mouth of West Loch Tarbert. Dun Skeig hill towers above the bay and on its summit lay the

remains of three Iron Age hill forts or duns. As we unpacked our breakfast, the MV Hebridean Isles rumbled its way back out of the narrow entrance to West Loch Tarbert. Tourists on her observation deck waved cheerily, then she was gone and we were left in silence.

It was just after 9:30 am when we arrived on the fair strand of Dunskeig Bay so we took time to set our stoves up on the rocks at the edge of the beach and cooked up a three-course first breakfast. Favourite course was bacon, egg, tomato and Edam cheese in a tortilla wrap. While we sat and enjoyed some post-prandial sunshine, Jennifer went scavenging along the shoreline. She returned with a sting winkle, a periwinkle, a cowrie, a bit of an oyster shell, a variety of weathered pottery fragments and a marble! After breakfast I enjoyed a stroll on the daisy-flecked machair that backs the shore and enjoyed the now-distant view back to Gigha and Cara.

West Loch Tarbert

No sooner had we entered West Loch Tarbert than we came across a long stone pier. This once served Portachoilan ferry, which was a passenger service across the mouth of the loch to Ardpatrik on the northwest side. It was operated by a rowing boat from at least the nineteenth century until it ceased in the 1930s. After leaving Portachoilan, we left the open sea behind us and entered the verdant, wooded confines of West Loch Tarbert. We chose to paddle in very shallow water as the loch is narrow and another rumble of engines behind us announced the return of the MV Finlaggan. We knew we



Isle of Arran from Ardlamont Point.

were safe in the shallow water. Although the loch is 700 m wide at this point, the deep-water channel is only 130 m wide so the ferries do not have much room to manoeuvre. Although West Loch Tarbert is sometimes busy with ferry traffic, the main road to Campbeltown does not follow the shore so it is mostly a quiet and very beautiful location for sea kayaking. We passed the ancient walls of Dunsmore Castle on the north side of the loch. The tower house is now a ruin but it was the seat of the McMillan clan chiefs in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The weather forecast had been for a force 3–4 NE wind, which would have been a most unwelcome headwind in West Loch Tarbert. However, we were pleasantly surprised when a delightful SW tailwind picked up. I was especially pleased, as my left shoulder was now clicking painfully with every stroke. It was a relief to hoist the sails and let them take some of the strain. We soon left the open sea and Gigha far in our wakes. The enclosed nature of West Loch Tarbert was in complete contrast to the exposure we had experienced off the Mull of Kintyre earlier in the trip. As the shores of the loch closed around us, we came across enchanting coves, islands and beaches backed by wooded slopes. We trailed our fingers in the warm, clear waters as the sails carried us on towards the only sign of human activity: the Kennacraig ferry terminal. Once past Kennacraig, we still had to keep a lookout for other maritime traffic such as scallop dredgers that were heading out from the West Tarbert fishing quay at the head of the loch.

A tale of two islands

We lingered past Eilean Eoghainn, a delightful small island that is guarded by rocky ramparts with its interior of a lovely wooded glade carpeted with bluebells. The trees make an ideal roost for the local heronry while herring gulls were nesting on the rocks among sea pinks and red campions. Beyond the island the grounds of Rhu House stretch to the shore. This would make an excellent B&B base to explore the beaches and islands of this lovely loch. The next island, Eilean da Ghallagain, has its own small beach. In 1960, the Islay ferry, the MV Locheil, sank just north of the island. She had struck a rock further down the loch and was attempting to get to West Loch Tarbert pier near the head of the loch before sinking. When it was clear she would not get as far as the pier, the captain steered her to rest on a mudbank, which prevented her sinking fully. There was no loss of life and the crew even rescued the entire stock from the bar! The Locheil was salvaged and repaired and she continued on the Islay run for another ten years with a new captain.

A sharp exit at West Loch Tarbert Pier

We hoped to reach the head of West Loch Tarbert near high water as we intended to exit the loch near its muddy head and portage our kayaks over the isthmus to East Loch Tarbert on the Clyde. I had originally planned to exit 1 km from the end of the loch at West Loch Tarbert pier where there is a public slipway. However, a friend (who had come this way the previous year) had persuaded me that there was a much better exit 850 m further up the loch in front of the West Loch Hotel at the loch head. I will come to that but, ►



Leaving Gigha for the mouth of West Loch Tarbert; the distant ferry is our guide.



in the meantime, let me just say that if you come this way and plan to portage the isthmus to East Loch Tarbert, exit at the pier. As it was, we paddled past the busy pier towards the head of the loch. West Tarbert is the home port for a number of trawlers and there was a bustle round the pier. Beyond the pier we came across a graveyard of decaying wooden fishing boats. Their days of harvesting the oceans' bounty had long gone and they had seen better days.

We came to where my friend had suggested we exit the loch and begin our portage. The West Loch Hotel and the road to Tarbert lay a short distance over a gently sloping grassy bank. It looked ideal; an easy exit with the prospect of a refreshing pint in the bar. The illusion was shattered however when we paddled into a lagoon of raw sewage, which was bubbling out of the end of a pipe. We made a sharp exit towards the head of the loch.

The portage at Tarbert

We found ourselves close to the main road to Tarbert, but a surprisingly steep bank rose up from the high water mark. To get there we had to wade through particularly soft and sticky mud. Then we discovered the 'grassy' bank was actually a thicket of nettles and brambles. It took four of us to man-handle each loaded kayak diagonally up the slope. In the 30 minutes it took to get the kayaks to the road the tide had disappeared, leaving a huge expanse of oozing mud. My advice for this portage is to exit 800 m further back down the loch at the slipway by West Tarbert pier.

The summit of the 1.6 km portage is 22 m above sea level, and it was on this slope that I realised I would need to see a surgeon for my increasingly sore left shoulder. It was a great relief to start the descent into Tarbert and the Firth of Clyde. Tarbert was busy with holiday-makers, but there was room to park our kayaks along the quayside beside the old slipway. This is blocked off by a plastic barrier (easily moved) as it is in poor repair. On seeing Tarbert harbour, Jennifer said "Oh no, the tide is out!" and we caught the attention of the old fisherman. We were nearly 4 hours after HW. Fortunately the bottom of Tarbert harbour was firm enough for our trolley wheels, but if the tide had dropped much further then it would have been soft mud. The total portage from afloat to afloat had taken 2 hours and 9 minutes. Given our 30-minute struggle to get the boats up the bank from the head of the loch, it would probably have taken the same time to trolley the kayaks the extra 0.8 km from the West Tarbert slipway and its easier exit.

What's in a name

There are many places in Scotland called Tarbert or Tarbet. The name comes from the Gaelic word Tairbeart. In modern Gaelic this means isthmus, but its Norse origin lies in 'over carry' or 'draw boat'. Sea kayakers were not the first to portage their craft over the isthmus at Tarbert. In about 1093 Magnus Barefoot, King of Norway, had made a truce with the King of Scotland that allowed him to claim possession of any land he could 'sail' round. Of course he didn't necessarily use his own Vikings as labour, he probably 'recruited' the unfortunate locals. Unlike the Vikings, we had come

unarmed and had to draw our own kayaks across the isthmus, but we were now back in the Firth of Clyde.

East Loch Tarbert

We had now reached the most northerly point in our rather circuitous return trip from Campbeltown to Ardrrossan. After the sweat and aching muscles of the portage it was such a relief to be floating weightlessly past the fishing fleet on the cool water of East Loch Tarbert harbour. The Tarbert fishing fleet can use either the fish quay in the East Loch or the quay in the West Loch. This can save a long voyage round the Mull of Kintyre or through the Crinan Canal. As we left the inner harbour, the beauty of Tarbert's situation was revealed. Its natural harbour protected by islets is surrounded by hills and overlooked by a ruined castle. It is open to the public and is a wonderful vantage point from which to view the village and its loch. The castle is ancient but was greatly reinforced by King Robert the Bruce in 1325. It was too nice to leave Tarbert, so we landed for an extended luncheon in the bay at Port Ban opposite the town.

It was nearly 5 pm before we left East Loch Tarbert. As we left, two local boys in a boat were scouring the coastline and collecting lost fishing buoys. We paddled out towards the mouth of East Loch Tarbert but had to keep clear of the ferry from Portavadie, which was making its way in. The Tarbert to Portavadie route is one of the more recent of the Scottish west coast ferries, only established in 1994. The new MV Lochinvar was built at Ferguson Shipbuilders at Port Glasgow on the Clyde, and is powered by diesel electric hybrid technology with Lion batteries. It is one of the most efficient ferries in the fleet.

As we left the mouth of East Loch Tarbert the mountains of Arran soared into view. The air was crystal clear and we prepared for a wonderful crossing. Once we left the shelter of East Loch Tarbert we entered the wide mouth of Loch Fyne. This is the longest sea loch in the Firth of Clyde and indeed the whole of Scotland. The view out of the loch across the expanse of the Sound of Bute to the rocky ridges of the Arran mountains was stunning. As we entered open waters a breeze picked up and we hoisted our sails. We were bound for Skate Island some 6 km away. After some exhilarating paddle sailing we regrouped below the Skate Island (Sgat Mor) lighthouse.

Saved by a sun-downer

From Skate Island we enjoyed a fast reach eastwards along the Ardlamont peninsula, which divides Loch Fyne from the Kyles of Bute. The cool clear air of the north wind and the low evening sun gave a wonderful quality to the light. We passed dolphins, porpoises, otters, puffins and diving gannets. It was difficult to believe that this glorious natural wilderness was in the Firth of Clyde, in the catchment area of which 60% of Scotland's population live. Many sea kayaking visitors to Scotland (and also many Scottish sea kayakers) tend to shun the Firth of Clyde and head north to honeypot destinations like Arisaig and the Summer Isles. Maybe the photos in this article might cause some wilderness seekers to think again.

The Ardlamont peninsula holds a glorious little-visited beach that you can only visit by walking in or by using a boat. It is called Kilbride Bay, and has a huge crescent of sand backed by dunes and machair. Quiet though Kilbride Bay now appears, it was heavily used in WW2 for army, air force and naval training exercises.

We had been travelling for 40 km since we had left Gigha earlier in the day and there were still several kilometres to go. My left shoulder was now hurting quite a bit, so it was a great relief when a northerly sun-downer wind got up and blew us straight out of Kilbride Bay. It is amazing how the small Flat Earth kayak sail can take the load of a heavily laden kayak off tired shoulders. We left the long strand in our wakes and enjoyed a brisk broad reach down the Ardlamont peninsula to our intended camp.

Wilderness found so close to home

We had travelled for 12 hours since we had left Gigha which lies off the exposed Atlantic west coast of Scotland. We were now deep within the Firth

of Clyde, some 80 km from the Mull of Kintyre at the mouth of the Firth. We looked out over the Sound of Bute to low-lying Inchmarnock and Arran. Between them, the distant south Ayrshire coast was out of sight below the horizon. Only the summits of the Galloway hills were just visible some 90 km away to the southeast. A raised beach provided an ideal base to set up camp. From my tent door I spotted an otter diving for crabs – we could quite clearly hear it crunching the shells. The only building visible on our entire horizon was the small, unoccupied cottage on the Arran shore at Laggan. As dusk fell, the wind dropped and, unfortunately, that was the signal for the arrival of the midges. Luckily, they soon dispersed as darkness fell. We toasted our toes by a bonfire on the beach, with potatoes in tin foil baking in the embers.

As we chatted long into the summer night, we could scarcely believe that so much wilderness existed so close to home and that the majority of the wildlife we had spotted was here in the Clyde and not in the Hebridean waters to the west of Kintyre! ☺

Essential Information

The Tarbert portage, local facilities, launch/landing sites

This is the third article of a series of four describing a week-long trip. Please see OP issues 44, 45 and 47 for our full route. This article describes the passage from the west coast of Kintyre to the Clyde via West Loch Tarbert. This is an excellent bad-weather alternative to the exposure of the Mull of Kintyre. With loaded kayaks, I find it preferable to the Crinan Canal some 17 km north of Tarbert. The best launch/landing site in West Loch Tarbert is the slipway at NR 843 672 (water at pier). From here there is a 0.8 km portage along the quiet dead end B8026 to the main A83 Campbeltown to Tarbert road. The A83 has a 1.5 m wide painted cycle/walkway on its southeast side and extends a further 1.8 km to Tarbert. If two lorries pass each other in opposite directions there is very little room, so it is essential to make sure your trolley wheels are correctly aligned to prevent the kayak wandering out into the road behind you. The total portage is 2.6 km with 22 m of ascent. Once in town there is a raised pavement with kerbs at road junctions. The launch/landing site in Tarbert is the old slipway (NR 864 686) right in the centre of town. Tarbert has a supermarket just behind the harbour and there are several hotels and restaurants. There is a chandlery and showers at the marina.

Alternative routes round/across Kintyre

The Kintyre peninsula presents a significant barrier to navigation between the Firth of Clyde to the west coast. Rounding the Mull of Kintyre is a serious undertaking in a sea kayak (see OP #44). The Crinan canal (which runs from Crinan to Ardrishaig) is not yet set up for sea kayaks, which are not allowed to be lined through the frequent locks. They need to be hauled up steep banks to portage round them. In practice, it is better to portage the long central section at Cairnbaan where the locks are closer together.

Weather forecast

BBC Radio Scotland (94–95 FM, 810 MW). Outdoors conditions forecasts 19:04 Monday–Friday; 07:04 and 22:04 on Saturday and 07:04 and 20:04 on Sunday. www.xcweather.co.uk/forecast/tarbert

Tidal information

Tidal predictions in this area are complex, being affected both by the presence of an amphidrome and by meteorological conditions. Please don't expect the tides to run like a train timetable!

Tidal streams

Sound of Gigha: North-going flood +04:30 HW Oban, south-going ebb –01:55 HW Oban. Spring rate is officially 1.5 knots, but some old pilots give 3 knots and several times we have measured 2.5 knots with GPS. West Loch Tarbert entrance: NE-going flood approx. +05:30 HW Oban, SW-going ebb approx. –0030 HW Oban. Spring rate 1–3 knots.

High water times

Ardminish Bay, Gigha: Springs –04:50 HW Oban, neaps –02:10 HW Oban. Head of West Loch Tarbert: high water timing is very variable as the loch opens into the sea in an area affected by the amphidrome between Gigha and Islay. The timing of high water at the head of the loch often appears to bear little relation to the timing or direction of the flow at the entrance of the loch! As a very rough guide, local HW is –02:00 HW Oban at springs and –05:00 HW Oban at neaps. HW East Loch Tarbert is –00:05 HW Greenock. The tidal constant between West Loch Tarbert and East Loch Tarbert (which is a recognised secondary tidal port with tide tables freely available) is approximately +1 hour neaps and +3 hours springs. Do not be confused by Internet tide times for the West Loch Tarbert in the Outer Hebrides!

Maps and Books

OS Landranger 1:50,000 sheet 62
Imray Chart 1:150,000 sheet C64, C63
Kintyre to Ardnamurchan, Clyde Cruising Club, Firth of Clyde,
Clyde Cruising Club



**Mid channel, the Sound of Gigha.*

BE SEEN

By Derek Hairon

"When the rescue boat or helicopter approaches they'll head for the one they see first or in the most danger."

Source: Sea Survival Trainer

Technology to help sea kayakers to be more visible has advanced. Improved design and lower costs have made many items more accessible to paddlers. Before spending time and money to improve your ability to be seen, it's worth considering who you need to be seen by? How you answer this question will influence your choice of kit. If your goal is to improve your visibility and enable better group control, for example during a night paddle or coastal trip, your choices may be different to a trip in an area with a high level of shipping movements. ►



Solas tape on the PFD.





EF 10A LED strobe See Streamer Odeo and Adventurelight.

Reflective tape

Probably the most common marine reflective tape is Solas tape (also known as T-ISS retro reflective tape). It reflects light very well and you can see a good example during the night rescues sequence in Gordon Brown's video *Sea Kayak Volume 3*. Look for the 'Wheelmark' Bureau Veritas certification; this is the genuine product. We found cheap copies soon fell off and some did not reflect light as well as the certified product.

Photo-luminescent and retro-reflective tape

Cyfect has taken Solas tape a step further by both reflecting light and glowing in the dark. We found this very useful in dark sea caves; stick reflective tape on both sides of a paddle because 'paddle flash' is often the first indication of your presence. If you have ever had a paddle drift away in poor light, this small investment may help recovery.

Protect reflective tapes from unsticking and water ingress by rounding off the corners; damage can also be reduced by adding a layer of clear protective vinyl. However, in the case of Cyfect, this may reduce its glow in the dark properties.

Glo tapes are a reflective vinyl you can stick on to kayaks, paddles and helmets. Mirror tape (sold as Paddle Reflectors; see www.tieyak.com) works well on paddles. Buy quality branded products (usually sold by canoe/kayak shops) as we found that some low-cost versions are of poor quality.

Light sticks and patches

Chemical lights are activated by breaking the inner capsule, which induces a chemical reaction to produce light. Some cheap light sticks are perhaps only useful at parties. Remember, most light sticks come with a use-by date.

There is a big variation in both the intensity and duration of the glow, for example 12 hours, 8 hours, 30 minutes and just 5 minutes. Five- and 30-minute glow sticks produce an intense light for the stated time and then continue glowing at a lower brightness for some time. Sold in a range of colours, light sticks are useful aids when maintaining group control in poor visibility. Many paddlers put a light stick into a PFD pocket, but this usually gives a limited field of visibility. Swing these round on a piece of string and you can be seen even better. Clipping or taping light sticks onto a hat or helmet will increase visibility.

CyPads, also called VisiPad (11 x 6.5 cm stick-on patches), are activated in the same way as light sticks. Peel off the paper backing and they stick to many dry surfaces. However, the paper backing is hard to peel off when wet or damp. We tested these on helmets, paddle gear and kayaks and found they were easy to see and use to maintain group control. The yellow and red patches were much brighter. They are very compact, so it's easy to carry a few in case you end up paddling in darkness. The advertised glow time of 10 hours seems to be correct.

See Rescue Streamer

Once deployed, this device consists of a long bright-orange plastic sheet fitted with Solas and infra-red tape plus light sticks. It is designed to aid with position location, especially if you are in the water and separated from your kayak. The manufacturers suggest it can also be used on land. However, an orange survival bag cut open to its full size will also produce a bright locator. Although the use of a survival bag might be a workable option on the water, this might require some method of attaching it to allow hands-free operation.

The See Streamer was visible when viewed from above and easy to deploy and clip to the swimmer. An alternative is to remain attached to your kayak, but the streamer does create a larger marker.

Lights

There has been a huge improvement in light technology with the arrival of affordable LED lights. Many are water resistant or waterproof and small cycle lamps offer both high output and compact size. Units with 'O'-rings seem to be better at keeping water out because they allow even pressure to be maintained around the components. It helps if the units can float and be easily attached to the paddler or kayak. Head torches are an effective signalling device, but tend to emit a beam of light rather than an all-round light which can result in blind spots. You may want to attach your head torch or light in case it falls overboard (carry a spare).

Adventure Lights produce a small and easy-to-wear expedition light; rated as waterproof to 100 m, it can be attached to PFDs and clothing. By flipping the battery around you can select a flashing or steady light. For night paddling I clip this onto the top of my head torch strap so it will give a 360° light which is visible from a distance of a mile!

The larger NaviSafe lights can be programmed to emit red, green, white and flashing options and use both a magnetic and cord fastening. Although bright it seems more suitable as a deck-mounted light, which may not be as easy to see on the deck of a kayak. There may be a considerable difference in brightness when held horizontally or vertically, depending on where the bulbs are located.

Strobes

The word 'strobe' is often used to describe a very bright intermittently flashing light. Modern technology means the power and intensity of these small units has increased dramatically, so some older models now seem very weak. Strobes can be an effective means of indicating your location or alerting someone of your presence. How an observer responds will depend on what they think the flashing light means, so these units are very much aids to position location.

Some designs are marketed as a 'flare' and even as a possible replacement for pyrotechnic flares. Personally, I'd describe a strobe as an intense and ►





See rescue streamer.

repeated flash whereas pyrotechnic flares (e.g. a red hand flare) emit a very intense and short-duration flare, after which another must be ignited.

A strobe is worth considering as a location device if you have already alerted others of your presence by VHF. They are relatively easy to use, safer to store, transport and do not have an expiry date. Their size makes it easy to carry them clipped to your PFD. Unlike conventional flares they will not burn you (see Gordon Brown's Sea Kayak Volume 3 DVD).

Testing some strobes at night, a mile from shore, the difference in the intensity of some strobes was surprising and two models stood out. The North American Survival Systems LED flare-strobe torch gave a strong flash and was easily spotted (the manufacturers report a 7-mile range). Its small size and 12-hour battery life make it easy to carry it on your person or clipped onto your PFD with an Elasto-lok buckle; however, it does not float. The MK3 Odeo (Omni Directional Electrical Optical signal) flare is larger than the North American Survival Systems unit, which may make it harder to carry in a PFD pocket, but it is similar in size to some conventional flares. There are a number of online reviews comparing the Odeo with pyrotechnic flares. The Odeo floats and emits red flashes in an SOS sequence. The manufacturers suggest this will attract attention because the sequence looks unlike conventional marine lights. It was also visible at a mile and was easy to hold, although you may wish to attach it to a lanyard.

Rescue Lasers

Produced by Greatland Laser, these are waterproof to 24 m with a minimum 5-hour battery life; after 8 months of centre use they are still functioning and are available with red or green beams. The green laser has a longer range and is probably the best option, although it is more expensive. The laser can be clipped onto a PFD, but it will not float and might slip out of cold hands.

According to the manufacturers, unlike a conventional laser pointer the beam becomes broader further away from the source. At 8 miles, a narrow beam 3000 feet high is produced. One concern relates to the use of lasers when pointed at others, especially aircraft. In the United States the use of a Rescue Laser is permitted in an emergency (US Congress HR658 p56). Other reviewers note this is a Class 3 laser which is designed for consumer use. The manufacturers say the laser is eye-safe at distances of 13 feet (4 m) or more. Some might argue that pyrotechnic flares are also dangerous in the wrong hands. Like many devices, lasers should be used with care.

At night the beam was clearly visible 1 mile away, and it was impossible to ignore the beam as it scanned the area. In daylight the range is considerably less and the observer will see a bright flash of light. One reviewer notes a 30 mile range, as long as people know what to look for. It's worth spending

a bit of time getting used to aiming with the sight ring, and this can be tested by using a small piece of retro-reflective tape as a target at short range.

Flares verses strobes and lasers

Remember, traditional pyrotechnic flares are internationally recognised distress signals and must be carried by law in some countries.

Location and communication

Most of these aids may enhance position location providing you also have communication, for example a marine VHF radio to tell others you are there. This is equally applicable within a paddle group, because group separation makes both visibility and communication difficult.

Your ability to be seen often requires others to know you are out there; only then will would-be-rescuers know what to look for and where. Skippers may be more alert for kayakers when sailing along a coastline than offshore; if they are not looking or fail to recognise what they are looking at, you'll remain invisible. Larger vessels have been involved in collisions due to the failure of the crew to spot other boats. File a passage plan with the Coastguard so they'll know who is in the area and will be better equipped to respond or alert others.

Remember, the kayaker is likely to spot other craft before being seen themselves. All safety equipment is complementary and no single device, electronic or otherwise, covers all bases in a true emergency. ☒

Acknowledgements

Special thanks must go to William Wilson for safety equipment and sea survival advice. Part 2 in Ocean Paddler #47 will look at other ways to increase your visibility.

About the author

Derek Hairon is a BCU Level 5 sea kayak coach who has paddled foggy and dark places as well as offshore trips for more than 41 years. Based on Jersey, he sometimes needs to watch out for high-speed ferries travelling at 35 knots. He owns Jersey Kayak Adventures (www.jerseykayakadventures.co.uk) and organises sea kayak tours and courses around the coastline of Jersey and to the offshore islands. He is co-author of the Channel Islands Sea Kayaking Guide Book (published by Pesda Press in summer 2015).

Links

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Pete Astles. Dorset. Image: Paul Ramsdale

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Dandelions.



BUSHCRAFT SPRING WILD FOOD FORAGING

By Rhoda McGivern

Spring is my favourite time of the year. I love to explore the countryside as the sun shines on the unfurling leaves and the emerging flowers light up the hedgerows. As the frost melts and the stark bareness of winter gives way to fresh, bright and vibrant colour, nature's kitchen begins to offer us an abundance of wild foods.

If you are new to foraging you may be surprised at how many of our native plant species are edible, maybe even more so at how great they taste. With a little bit of knowledge you can discover plenty of wonderful wild ingredients that are full of nutrients, completely fresh and – best of all – free! In this article I cover my top ten and include a little information on any medicinal uses, but I highly recommend you research the subject further as it is a vast and fascinating one.

***Taraxacum officinale* (dandelions)**

The quintessential garden weed, dandelions are more often than not seen as a nuisance in an other wise perfect lawn. However, not only is every part of this common weed edible, but it is also really tasty!

Dandelion leaves can be picked and eaten at any time during the growing season, but the smaller young leaves are much less bitter if eaten raw. Bigger leaves lose some of the bitterness if you steam them first. You can use dandelion leaves as a delicious ingredient in a salad, sandwich, soup or stir-fry.

The distinctive yellow flowers are sweet and crunchy and can also be eaten raw, are fantastic breaded and fried or can be used to make wine. The root can be used as a vegetable or can be dried and roasted as a coffee substitute.

If you need more convincing that this versatile plant is considerably more than just a pesky weed, you need only look at the medicinal properties of dandelions. They are chock-full of vitamins A, B, C and D and minerals such as iron, potassium and zinc. The roots are used to stimulate appetite and for liver and gallbladder problems and the leaves are a well-known diuretic.

Maybe next time you see dandelions in your lawn, maybe you'll be tempted to harvest them instead of destroying them? ►



***Urtica dioica* (stinging nettles)**

Often avoided and somewhat the villain of the hedgerow, the humble stinging nettle is in fact a fantastic wild food. A useful ingredient in a variety of dishes, stinging nettles are delicious in soups, teas and as a simple cooked vegetable. Often used as a replacement for spinach, as the flavours are very similar, nettles are also used in cheese making (Cornish Yarg and some varieties of Gouda) and make a popular ingredient in pesto and purées. Wear gloves when foraging to gather the young leaves at the tip of the plants. Cooking removes the sting so you won't need to worry about that when eating.

Nettles are a good source of iron, calcium and vitamins A and C. They have been used for centuries as a medicinal plant in the treatment of many ailments, from kidney stones to arthritis. A recent study by the University of Warwick even found that the formic acid found in stinging nettles increases the effectiveness of certain cancer treatments by 50%. Definitely more of a hero than a villain in my opinion!

***Allium ursinum* (wild garlic)**

Wild garlic, also known as ramsons, buckrams or wood garlic, fills the woodlands with a distinctive smell at the start of spring. It grows near or among bluebells and is identifiable by its lush, long leaves as well as the strong garlicky aroma. Towards the end of the season it bursts into bloom with small white flowers.

Unlike domestic garlic, the leaves of wild garlic are most often used. The bulbs are also edible but are much smaller than the version found in the shops. The flavour of wild garlic is much the same as that of domestic garlic, although it is milder. The flowers are also edible and make a delicious treat added to salads. Wild garlic leaves can be eaten raw or cooked and work well in soups.

Garlic is well known for its effectiveness in reducing blood pressure and hence the risk of heart disease and stroke. All garlic has this medicinal property, but wild garlic has a greater effect on lowering blood pressure than any other variety. It is also antibacterial, antibiotic and antiseptic.

***Umbilicus rupestris* (wall pennywort)**

Wall pennywort, or navelwort, is a fascinating edible wild plant that is very easily identifiable. It grows, as the name suggests, in stone walls and crevices in rocks and has unmistakable round leaves, hence the

name. The plant is succulent and fleshy as it is adapted for survival in dry conditions and the leaves grow in rosettes, flowering in spring with spikes of green/pink flowers.

Wall pennywort leaves are best foraged when growing in moist conditions or after rain, as they lose their fleshy quality when dry. The flavour can be likened to crisp lettuce and is perfect in salads. Take care when foraging as these plants are shallow-rooted and can easily be pulled out of the wall in their entirety.

Wall pennywort has been used as a homeopathic medicine and contains vitamins B and K as well as magnesium and zinc. It is thought to be beneficial for the central nervous system and effective in protecting the body from toxins.

***Primula vulgaris* (Primrose)**

It is surprising how many flowers growing in our hedgerows and gardens are edible. The Chinese are reported to have been the first to experiment with flowers as food, and their many and varied recipes can be traced as far back as 3000 BC.

One of the first flowers of early springtime, primroses grow in abundance in the British countryside. Both the leaves and the delicately scented flowers are edible, with a flavour ranging between mild lettuce and bitter greens. These pretty little blooms are one of my favourite salad ingredients. The leaves can be made into a tea and the young flowers are sometimes used for primrose wine.

In the early days of medicine, primrose was considered an important remedy in muscular rheumatism and gout. The whole plant is sedative and in modern days a tincture has been used with some success for the treatment of insomnia and restlessness. The entire plant also has somewhat expectorant properties.

***Beta vulgaris* subsp. (sea beet)**

Sea beet grows in coastal places at tide lines, on shingle beaches, cliffs and seawalls and in salt marshes. It is a favourite among foragers, described as magnificent, ever reliable and even aristocratic! Sea beet grows year-round but is at its best in the spring; its rich, luscious leaves are the ancestor of many of our modern vegetable garden staples, including perpetual garden spinach, sugar beet, Swiss chard and beetroot.



Sea beet.



Elderflower. ©iStock.com / Felinda.



Hawthorne.

All parts of the plant are edible, including the flowers in summer and the roots, but it is the leaves that are most commonly used. They behave very much like garden spinach when cooked but can taste a little stronger, especially the larger, older leaves; any bitterness can be mellowed by cooking and sea beet can be used as a replacement in any recipe that calls for spinach or chard.

Sea beet is scarcely used in modern times for medicinal purposes, although it is said it can clear dandruff when mixed with vinegar!

***Sambucus nigra* (elderflower)**

Summer wouldn't be the same without cordials and champagnes made from the wonderfully aromatic elderflower.

As spring gets into full bloom, the elder trees become heavy with fragrant white flower heads which just cry out to be picked and made into a truly delicious drink. Elderflower cordial is sold commercially all over Europe and many a larder across the land contains homemade elderflower wine as a perfect summer tippie.

Elderflower heads can also be dipped in a light batter and made into fritters. It is worth noting that all green parts of the tree are highly poisonous; only the flowers and the berries can be consumed.

The elder tree has a long history in herbalism by the Greeks and Romans among others, and was revered as a magical plant. The berries have been proven to be effective in treating Influenza B in a placebo-controlled, double-blind study. The flowers can be made into a tea for relief of congestion in coughs and colds. For me, elderflowers mark the transition from spring into the long hazy days of summer and I pick them every single year.

***Crataegus monogyna* (hawthorn)**

Referred to in the UK as the 'bread and cheese tree', most likely due to its abundance in the hedgerows making it a common foodstuff, hawthorn leaves have long been eaten by those living in the countryside. The leaves are at their best in the springtime before they get too much sun and have a rich, nutty flavour. You can eat them straight from the tree, in a salad or chopped up and sprinkled as a parsley substitute.

A mix of dried leaves and blossom (which usually appears in May) make a lovely tea and the berries (haws) make great wine and jelly. The berries don't usually make an appearance until early autumn.

Hawthorn is an extremely valuable medicinal herb, used mainly for treating disorders of the heart and circulatory system (especially angina). ►

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Morel. ©iStock.com / Tomasztc.



Wood sorrel.

Strongly antioxidant bioflavonoids in the fruit are said to reduce or prevent degeneration of the blood vessels, and much modern research has been inspired by the hawthorn's traditional use as a heart tonic.

***Morchella esculenta* (morel)**

One of the most recognisable species of fungus and highly sought after, the morel is a mushroom which sparks much excitement among foragers in the spring.

A versatile ingredient, the morel can be fried or stuffed with meats or vegetables and baked. It should not be eaten raw as morels contain a gastrointestinal irritant, which is only removed by cooking (parboiling or blanching will suffice).

These wonderfully tasty mushrooms can also be dried (by threading them onto string and hanging them in the sun), which intensifies the flavour and allows them to be kept for longer periods.

There is some suggestion from laboratory studies that morels have several medicinal properties, including anti-tumour, antiviral and immuno-regulatory effects. Extracts have also shown antioxidant activity and the fungus is listed in the IUCN National Register of Medicinal Plants in Nepal.

***Oxalis acetosella* (wood sorrel)**

I have saved my absolute favourite wild food for last! The remarkably zingy, deliciously sour wood sorrel grows along trails and in hedgerows. With a taste reminiscent of apple skins or lemons, this lovely little plant is perfect as a refreshing mid-hike snack or an ingredient in a variety of meals.

The French used to make lemon-free lemonade from a mixture of dried wood sorrel powder and sugar, and it can be added to soups and made into sauces and seasoning. Traditionally an excellent accompaniment to fish, it makes a great stuffing for your 'catch of the day' cooked on the camp-fire.

A word of warning though: wood sorrel should not be consumed in excess raw as it can cause a nasty dose of the runs. The high quantity of oxalic acid can also cause problems for people with kidney disease,

kidney stones, rheumatoid arthritis and gout. Cooking reportedly renders the oxalic acid harmless, so these issues can be avoided.

Wood sorrel has a range of medicinal uses being diuretic, antiscorbutic (treats scurvy) and cooling. It is soothing to the stomach and can relieve indigestion; sorrels are commonly used by cancer patients because of their blood-cleansing properties.

Go forage!

That completes my top ten wild edibles, and I hope that you are now inspired to go out and forage for some new ingredients to use. Be aware that many edible plants are easily confused with species that are poisonous, and you should always consult a local wild food expert before picking or eating anything if you are unsure about identification. Take care not to forage in places that may be polluted by traffic, industry, chemical fertilisers, pesticides or even dog pee!

Always forage with respect for the plants and your environment. Never pick a plant that is endangered or the only one of its kind in an area. As a rule I never take more than 10% of what is growing. It is also worth pointing out that it is illegal to take any entire plant (dig up by the roots) without the landowner's permission.

To use plants medicinally I would always seek the advice of a qualified herbalist. Herbal medicine is a holistic practice, which aims to help the body to heal itself and requires expert knowledge to use to good effect. Always consult your doctor to make sure that what you are taking has a positive impact on your health and will not interfere with any other medications that you are taking. Happy foraging! 🍄

About the author

Rhoda McGivern is an adventure traveller, nature lover and mum to two mini-explorers. She is passionate about wildlife, indigenous cultures and discovering the most remote environments on Earth. When not travelling she takes every opportunity to spend time in the great outdoors, honing her tracking, foraging and bushcraft skills. If you would like to join Rhoda on an expedition go to www.worldwildadventure.com



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PUFFING PIGS

by Dr Lou Luddington

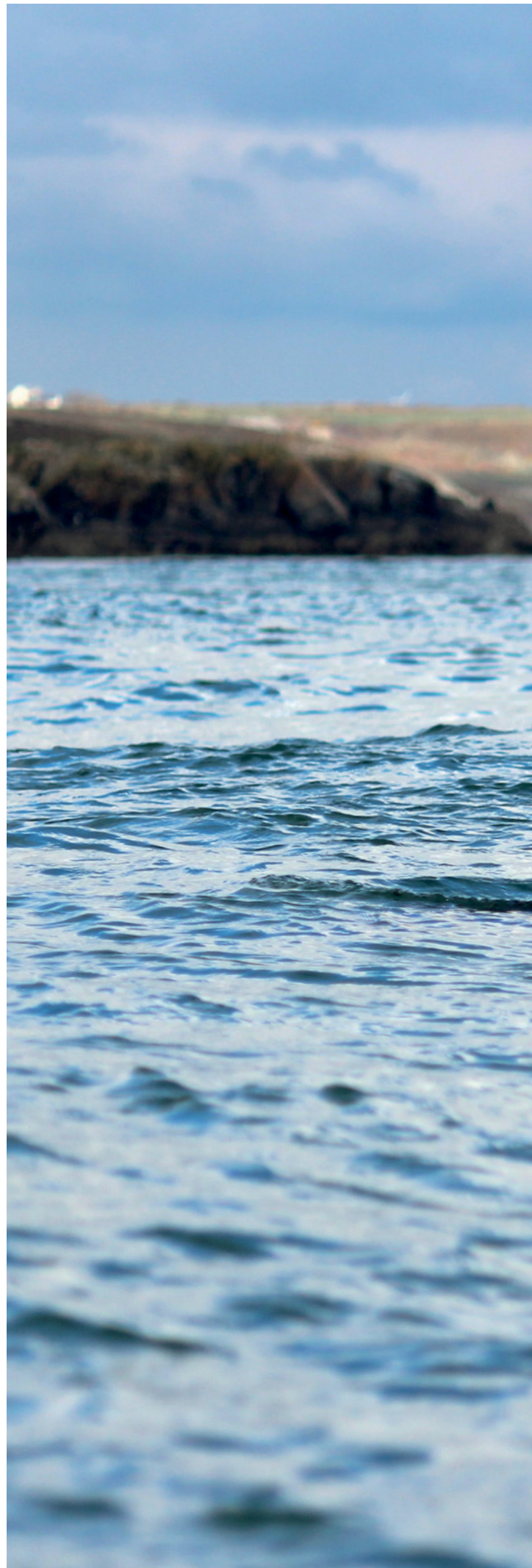
I arrive at Whitesands beach on a mid-summer morning, and stop to take in the view of the islands beyond. Scattered across the horizon to the west are the Bishops and Clerks; towards the south the summits of nearby Ramsey Island glow in the soft light. My plan is to launch from the beach and head northwest to St David's Head, a rocky headland that reaches out into the tide. I know this to be a good spot for Harbour porpoise given a certain state of the tide. The conditions are ideal, with barely a breath of wind and the tide still running north for an hour or so. I aim to drift north with the tide until it slackens then turn-tail and drift back with the ebb. It is at this state of the tide that the local porpoise tend to head south to their favoured feeding area at the south end of Ramsey Sound. All being well I should catch them on their daily migration as they pass St David's Head.

I launch through small waves, resisting the temptation to surf as my heart is set on seeing porpoise. After fifteen minutes of easy paddling I reach St David's Head and allow myself to drift in the slackening northwards flow of the tide. I sit and take a few deep inhalations, in awe of my surroundings. The landscape behind me is peppered with barrows and capstone burial chambers, a sign that others have revered this place too. One by one, gannets begin to gather nearby, circling over the water. Like smoke above fire, they herald fish and fellow hunters beneath the water and I become alert for signs of porpoise, scanning the water for small black fins breaking the surface. As the tide begins to ebb south, it draws patterns in the water before me, swirling and stretching milky plumes of sediment up from the seabed and into fingers that point the direction of flow. Billowing eddies mushroom upwards, glass-capped and trimmed with ever-morphing shapes.

With gusto, a porpoise bursts through a clear patch 30 feet away, moving fast. Two more join the fray, pursuing fish at speed with rapid pumps of their broad tails. Pale bellies flash in the sunlight as they chase their agile prey. Each time they surface the snout arrives first, followed by an exhalation of air from the blow hole, a blast that brings audible energy to the action.

This is what the gannets have been waiting for. The fish are forced closer to the surface by the porpoise bringing them within range of an aerial attack. As the birds arrow into the water and vanish, white columns of bubbles begin to rise from which the gannets are fired back to the surface looking crumpled and untidy. They shake themselves back to order with the fishy prize discernible as a bulge in the throat. The commotion moves away from me, then as suddenly as it began it is over and the porpoise vanish from sight. All that are left are a few gannets bobbing on the water digesting, and me speechless with my heart pumping a little faster.

The Harbour porpoise, *Phocoena phocoena*, is the smallest member of the Odontocetes, the tooth-bearing dolphins, with adults measuring up to 2 m in length and weighing up to 70 kg. Their short beak and small, rather portly physique topped with a dark triangular dorsal fin make them easy to distinguish from other species. Combine these features ►







with their generally mild behaviour, and the way they roll from beak to tail fluke when surfacing for air, and their identity becomes unmistakable. In common with many other cetaceans, female porpoise are larger than males due to the greater energy demands of pregnancy and lactation. Single calves are born in spring and are cared for by their mothers for up to two years. Initially they are sustained by their mother's fat-rich milk, but they soon learn to catch fish.

The English word porpoise comes from the French *pourpois*, which is from Medieval Latin *porcopiscus*, a compound of *porcus* (pig) and *piscus* (fish). In Danish it is *marsvin* and Dutch *mereswijn*, sea swine. Fishermen in New England and eastern Canada also call them puffers or puffing pigs, a fitting description you will realise when one surfaces close-by.

Their global population of 700,000 or so prevails in the cooler waters of the northern hemisphere with a discontinuous distribution from West Greenland to Cape Hatteras and from the Barents Sea to West Africa. In the North Pacific, they are found from Japan north to the Chukchi Sea and from Monterey Bay to the Beaufort Sea. I have seen them for myself along the western seaboard of Scotland and off the tidal headlands and islands of Pembrokeshire, and revelled in their company while journeying by sea kayak among the islands of northeast Vancouver Island. Being coastal in their habits they are the UK's most familiar cetacean and one you are most likely to see from your sea kayak.

Threats to their welfare and survival centre on human activities and include marine pollution, acoustic disturbance, habitat degradation, ship collisions and, most significantly, incidental catch by entanglement in fishing gear, so-called bycatch. Every year thousands of whales, dolphins and porpoises fall victim to bycatch, drowning because they cannot reach the surface for a breath of air. Legislative agreements have been set up in their favour to help protect the harbour porpoise and mitigate against some of these threats.

Hearing is the primary sense for porpoise and their fellow toothed whales due to sound being transmitted far better than light underwater. Over millennia, evolution has modified the ear structure and honed special organs to aid echo-location and communication with other porpoise. By contracting air sacs in the nasal passages they produce high-powered

clicks that are focused and directed by a mass of tissue in the forehead called the melon. The echoes reflected back at their ears are then used to create a detailed sound picture, enabling them to go about their business in complete darkness or murky water.

The sounds emanating from an echo-locating porpoise are of extremely high frequency and well beyond perception by the human ear. Such ultrasonic sound is highly beneficial for micro-navigation and accurate location of prey, but is only audible at close quarters; studies have estimated that in order to hear one another, porpoise must remain within a 1 km range. This contrasts with some of the larger whale species, such as the humpback whale whose low-frequency vocalisations travel thousands of miles through oceans to be heard by whales on the other side of the planet.

St David's Head and Ramsey Sound is considered a hotspot for the harbour porpoise. They are present in small groups of up to 15 individuals throughout the year, and are often seen with young calves suggesting that it may also be a nursery ground for giving birth and nursing their young. Porpoise spend a large percentage of their time foraging so they need to frequent prey-rich waters. The strong tidal currents that funnel through Ramsey Sound and squeeze around nearby headlands bring a plentiful supply of food for the porpoise. I have often seen them hunting by facing into the tide to catch fish as they are brought to them in the flow. Each fish is swallowed whole, allowing several fish to be caught in quick succession.

Although the harbour porpoise is small and understated in its behaviour, the thrill of glimpsing this tiny cetacean never dims for me. That fact that they are often observed in the tide races of exposed headlands, narrowing sounds and offshore islands heightens the buzz and is one I recommend you seek out at any opportunity. 🐬

About the author

Lou is running a series of wildlife-focused sea kayaking weekends in Wales this summer called Sea Kayak Sea Life. Please visit www.luddingtonmarine.co.uk for more information. She is also available as a wildlife guide through Sea Kayak Guides (<http://seakayakguides.co.uk>) and to run marine life workshops and talks at events and symposia.

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Skye

Part 7: Loch Pooltiel to Loch Greshornish

By Gordon Brown

in association with Skyak Adventures

From Loch Pooltiel the cliffs become increasingly higher until you reach Geodhanan Each (the Inlet of the Horse), where the tallest cliffs on Skye (313 m) lead towards Dunvegan Head. Heading south after rounding Dunvegan Head, and paddling through an arch, we head towards the village of Borreraig and the 'Piping Museum', otherwise known as the Borreraig Piping Heritage Centre where the MacCrimmons, hereditary pipers to the MacLeod's, had their piping school. On a nearby cairn a Gaelic inscription reads:

The memorial cairn of the MacCrimmons of whom ten generations were the hereditary pipers of MacLeod and who were renowned as Composers, Performers and Instructors of the classical music of the bagpipe. Near to this cairn stood the MacCrimmons School of Music, 1500 – 1800. ►





Coral Beach and Lampay Island.
Photo by Janice Sellers.



Maerl moth.



Sea slug on Maerl.



Ascribs. Photo by Alan Jones.

Many tunes and perhaps even the genre of Pibroch (or Ceòl Mòr, meaning Big Music) were developed and composed here. One of the more famous tunes is MacCrimmon's Lament (and is well worth a listen).

Further south we head into Loch Dunvegan and towards the small village of Colbost. This is the home of the world-renowned The Three Chimneys restaurant, which has won awards for the 'Scottishness' of the food it produces; most of the ingredients come from the island, with seafood particularly high on the ingredients list.

To the south of The Three Chimneys is the Colbost Croft Museum. Established in 1969, the museum gives visitors the chance to experience a way of life that was very common on Skye in the 1800s. Dunvegan, complete with campsite and shops, stands deeper into the loch.

Just to the north lies Dunvegan Castle (NG 242 507), the ancestral home of the Clan MacLeod. Dunvegan Castle has been the ancestral home of the Chiefs of Clan MacLeod for 800 years, and is the oldest continuously inhabited castle in Scotland. MacLeod Estates run seal-watching trips from the castle, so paddling among the islands there can become fraught! Please, if you see seals, keep well away from them; the local canoe club have received numerous complaints due to visiting paddlers not being sensitive enough to these wonderful marine animals.

Heading northwards you will soon pass Dùn Fìadhairt Broch (NG 239 508), a well-preserved iron-aged settlement that stands on a low, rocky knoll in the midst of moorland.

Four kilometres further north brings you to the famous coral beaches. Like the coral island in Loch Eishort, the coral is composed of maerl, a coralline red algae which was once commercially harvested as a soil improver. Sadly, the cattle and high visitor numbers that visit here regularly can detract from the beauty.

The Island of Isay, which is old Norse for 'Porpoise Island', lies 1 km to the north; the 60-hectare, uninhabited island is certainly worth a visit. The 'Big House', once inhabited by Roderick MacLeod of Lewis, was the scene of

a massacre which ensured that his grandson would inherit Raasay and Gairloch. There was a large community on the island in the early 1800s, but, as is the case in much of the Highlands, the clearances took the people off the land and put sheep in their place. The singer Donovan owned Isay and several other islands close by in the 1960s.

Loch Bay lies to the southeast and there is easy road access here, as well as a pub (but don't bother looking forward to good service). There is also the seasonal Lochbay Seafood Restaurant which serves, unsurprisingly, seafood, although not all of it is local to Skye.

Heading northwest now you come to Trumpan, just inside Ardmøre Point. In the cemetery at Trumpan you can visit one of the graves of Lady Grange, the other being in Edinburgh. The story of this and its tragedy was described previously in Loch Bracadale (OP#43).

Trumpan was also the scene of yet another clan massacre; following the suffocation of 395 MacDonalds on the Island of Eigg in 1577 in the 'Massacre Cave', a group of MacDonalds travelled to Trumpan and, under cover of a thick mist, set fire to a church, trapping and killing all the congregation except for one young girl who managed to escape. The survivor ran the 16 km to Dunvegan Castle and raised the alarm. The enraged MacLeods went to Ardmøre Bay, killing any and all MacDonalds they came across. The bodies were gathered and placed below a drystone dyke (stone wall), which was then pushed over on top of the deceased. This 'skirmish' became known as 'The Battle of The Spoiling Dyke'.

At Ardmøre there are small arches that can be paddled through. Here we leave the road behind and paddle along a steep coastline until Waternish Point (NG 224 613), complete with lighthouse, is turned. Tides which run at up to 3 knots at springs off the headland can provide a bit of sport, especially when there is opposing swell.

Coming south into Loch Snizort landing opportunities are scarce, but rock-hopping awaits at anything above half tide. Corncrakes breed on top of the moorland here. These birds were once common throughout



the Western Isles, but now remain in only a few isolated areas. Their downfall has been linked to the removal of their preferred habitat.

The Ascrib Islands just offshore are home to many seabirds and are a designated SAC (Special Area of Conservation) due to the breeding colonies of common seals (also the case in Loch Dunvegan and on Isay). Puffin nest here and are just fantastic to be around. There is a house on South Ascrib, complete with helipad, so camping here is best avoided.

The steep coastline of the Greshornish Peninsula has caves, and you can find Greshornish House Hotel and also a campsite in Loch Greshornish. It is often much easier to land at the campsite rather than trying to get out at the end of the loch at Edinbane, especially at low water, as it dries out for about a kilometre. 📶

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About the author

Gordon believes that everyone has the potential to achieve more and that a creative and supportive environment can lay the foundations for the greatest advances in personal development. He values the importance of taking time to reflect and learn from the experience, something we could all do more of, and some of his most rewarding experiences are when helping someone else to achieve their potential. He has a lifetime's experience on the sea and rivers around the globe.

Essential Information for Skye

Weather forecast

Visit the XCWeather website (www.xcweather.co.uk) then mouse over Benbecula, South Uist, Stornoway and Aultbea. Check Skye Lusa also, as this gives more accurate Northerly wind strength.

Windfinder (www.windfinder.com) gives good indication of direction and strength, and sometimes swell information.

Magic Seaweed (magicseaweed.com) also gives a reasonable forecast but, perhaps more importantly, a swell forecast for Talisker bay and Staffin Bay.

Listen on VHF Ch 16 for Stornoway Coastguard marine safety information (Met Office, Inshore Waters) every 3 hours (01:10, 04:10, 07:10, 10:10, 13:10, 16:10, 19:10 and 22:10).

Tidal information

Constant for the area described: -00:45 Ullapool (-05:05 Dover). North-going stream in the area begins at -04:05 Ullapool; south-going stream in the area begins at +02:20 Ullapool. Off Waternish Point, the north-going stream begins at -03:50 Ullapool and the south-going stream at +02:35 Ullapool, and reaches 3 knots.

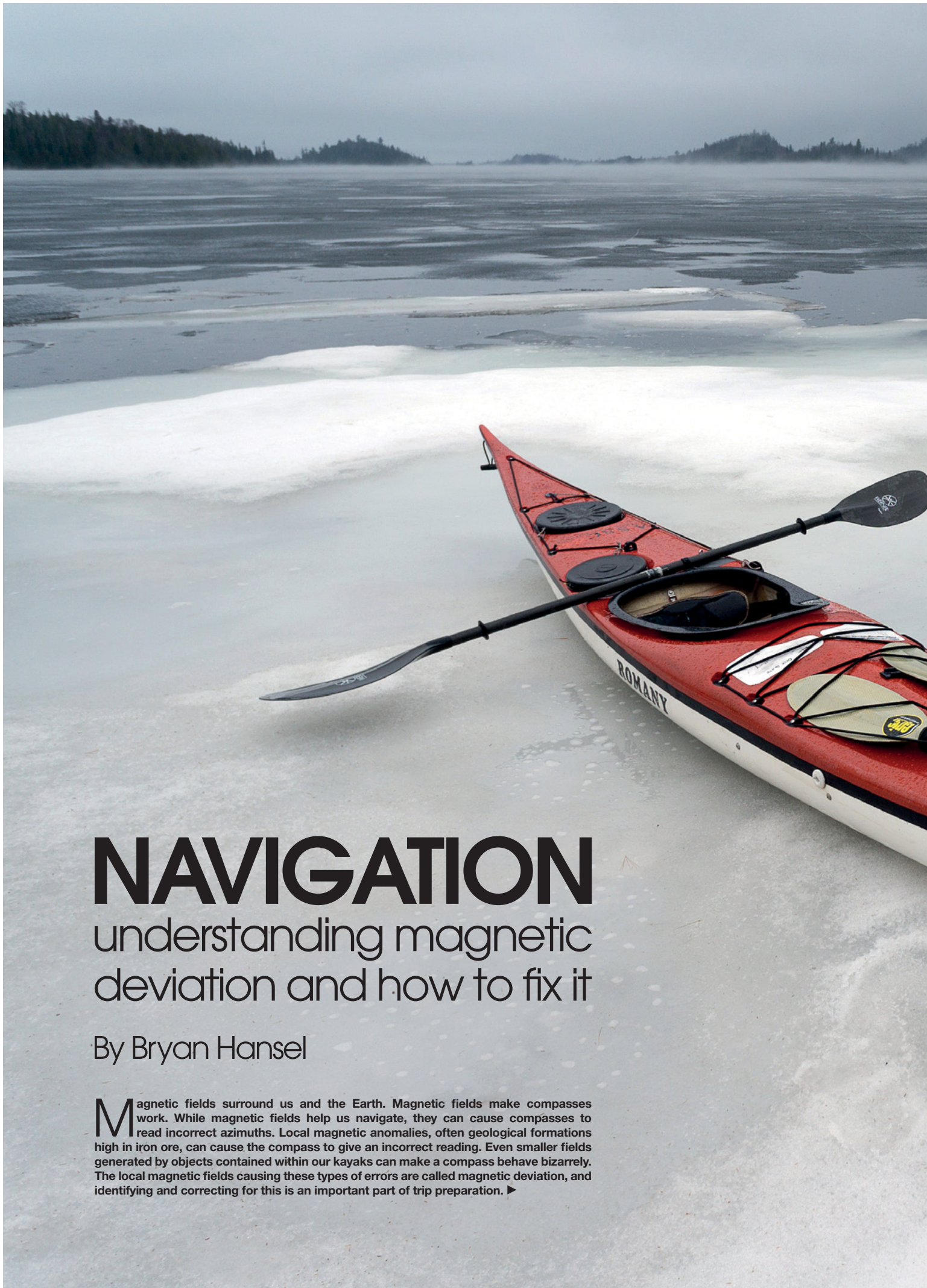
In the lochs there is very little in the way of tidal streams, perhaps reaching half a knot between the islands in Loch Dunvegan.

Maps

OS Landranger 1:50,000 sheet 23 North Skye
OS Explorer 1:25,000 sheet 407 Skye – Dunvegan (Waternish & MacLeod's Tables)
OS Explorer 1:25,000 sheet 408 Skye – Trotternish and The Storr
Imray Chart 1:150,000 sheet C66 Mallaig to Rudha Reidh & Sound of Harris
Admiralty Chart 1:100,000 sheet 1795 The Little Minch Southern Part

Books

NP66 Scottish West Coast Pilot, Admiralty
The Yachtsman's Pilot, Skye and Northwest Scotland, Martin Lawrence
Ardnamurchan to Cape Wrath, Clyde Cruising Club



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deviation and how to fix it

By Bryan Hansel

Magnetic fields surround us and the Earth. Magnetic fields make compasses work. While magnetic fields help us navigate, they can cause compasses to read incorrect azimuths. Local magnetic anomalies, often geological formations high in iron ore, can cause the compass to give an incorrect reading. Even smaller fields generated by objects contained within our kayaks can make a compass behave bizarrely. The local magnetic fields causing these types of errors are called magnetic deviation, and identifying and correcting for this is an important part of trip preparation. ►







The problem of magnetic deviation can be significant. Paddling a mile with a 1 degree compass error means you'll miss your destination by approximately 92 feet. While 1 degree is within the error tolerances that we have in kayak navigation, if your deviation is extreme as shown in the image (10 degrees), you could completely miss your target by over 1.8 miles on a 10 mile crossing. That 10 degree deviation was caused by putting a pocket knife next to the compass. It's easy to imagine packing a small pocket knife in a dry bag that ends up packed against the bottom of the compass.

Worse still, deviation varies as you turn your kayak. For example, you might have a -10 degree error when pointing northwest, but that might change to a +3 when pointing southwest. Making a chart showing the deviation error at each point of the compass rose is the only way to know. Those charts are a pain to use when on the water, so it's best to correct the error before paddling.

Deviation Formula

To calculate your ground error, you need to know your deviation and the distance to your destination. Run those numbers through this formula:

Ground error = tangent(degrees off) × distance to destination

This formula is also handy for calculating distance from destination when 'aiming off', a technique where you purposefully set your bearing a few degrees off of your destination because then you'll know which side of your destination you're on if you miss it. For example, if your destination is due east at 90 degrees, you'd paddle on a bearing of 91 or 92 degrees. Then once you hit the shore, you'd turn left (or north) and paddle to the destination. Using the formula allows you to estimate how far off you'll be from the destination when you hit the shore. If that destination is 3 miles away and you aim-off 2 degrees, you'll be about 550 feet south of your target destination.

Avoiding and fixing deviation

Luckily, magnetic deviation isn't common in kayaks. Our kayaks are made from plastic and composites that don't generate magnetic fields. Usually fixing deviation is as simple as adjusting a dry bag or piece of equipment packed inside the kayak, but it's frustrating when you experience it. Eliminating deviation removes the headache of trying to correct for it. Deviation in sea kayaks is usually caused by one of two issues: the screws you used to install the compass, or magnetically charged gear packed near the compass.

Before installing a compass, check to see if the hardware affects the reading by holding all the screws and nuts next to the compass. Move the hardware around the compass to check for rotation of the compass dial. Usually stainless steel hardware won't affect a compass, but depending on the quality of the hardware it may. If the dial turns, get different hardware.


After you install the compass, check it for accuracy at all compass points. To do this, set the kayak on a flat surface and level the kayak. First, align the kayak to the north by spinning the kayak until the compass's lubber line aligns with 0 degrees on the compass, and then check the alignment using a compass that you know to be accurate. Don't hold the compasses too close to each other, because you'll experience deviation caused by the magnetic forces in the compasses. Make sure you remove everything from the inside of the kayak and move any tools you used to install the compass away from the kayak before checking the accuracy.

If you notice any deviation, try to figure out what is causing it. Usually it's the screws you used, but sometimes it could be a nearby fitting. If you run into these problems, change the screws. If you can't figure out what's causing the problem, see if your compass has any adjustment mechanism. The Brunton 70P has an optional adjustment part, but it's unlikely to be useful in a kayak. If you can't correct the deviation and it is less than 5 degrees, making a chart that lists the inaccuracy at each compass heading is probably your best option. When on the water, you adjust your readings based on the chart.

This is extremely rare however; if it happens and you can't figure out what hardware is causing the problem, exchange the compass. There are so few metal parts in a kayak that finding the culprit is usually simple.

After you correct for initial deviation, you'll only need to check for deviation when you load your front hatch. Pack any gear that creates magnetic fields, such as knives, tent poles, electronics, camera gear or other metal items, away from the compass. After you pack the kayak, check for deviation using a separate handheld compass. Make sure the handheld compass reading is the same as your kayak's compass.

If you notice deviation, figure out what's causing it and pack it far away from the compass. For example, in the picture, a knife caused a -10 degree deviation. Once moved, even to the bilge just below, the deviation disappeared.

The hardest deviation to correct for is naturally occurring, local magnetic anomalies caused by any number of reasons such as iron-ore-containing rocks or geological features. Usually magnetic anomalies large enough to affect navigation are noted on the chart or guidebooks. When planning a trip, good practice is to highlight these areas on the chart. When paddling there, it's best to navigate by topographical or other features instead of relying completely on the compass. 

About the author

Bryan Hansel is a freelance writer, award-winning photographer and an American Canoe Association L4 Open Water Coastal Kayaking Instructor. His home port is on Lake Superior in Grand Marais, Minnesota. He blogs at www.paddlinglight.com and you can see his photography at www.bryanhansel.com

Next articles

This navigation series continues in the next issues with articles on dead reckoning, piloting and more. If you collect all the articles in the series, it will form a compact navigation book covering most of the techniques that you'd use for sea kayak navigation.

Greenland Paddler

Paddling in Skinny Jeans

By Christopher Crowhurst

Image courtesy of Monkey Brain Photography <http://monkeybrainphotography.com>

The qajaq was developed by the Inuit to allow them to move among the sea mammals and hunt for their family and village's survival. The qajaq is not a boat; it would be more accurate to describe it as a prosthesis, an extension of the hunter's body enabling them to swiftly and silently approach, harpoon and recover their prey. Qajaqs fit the hunter just like a prosthetic limb is custom-made for its owner. The width, length, height are all custom-made to envelope the hunter and allow them to move the qajaq as if it was a part of their body, literally swimming with their qajaq.



Rolling is one example of an activity where this connection between hunter (now paddler) and their qajaq suddenly becomes obvious. The qajaq follows the movements of the paddler's body, it responds to the pressures applied and muscles moved. Any disconnect between the body and qajaq quickly inhibits the motion and ease of rolling.

Turning is the same. The methods by which many modern paddlers use their paddle and arms to move their qajariaq (kayak) are the antithesis of how the Inuit move their qajaq through the water. Graceful extended paddle turns, leveraging one's body in the water, moving the qajaq with the lower torso and pressure applied through the legs and feet all require a connection and fit that seems alien to many modern paddlers. This should not come as a surprise when the shapes and sizes of most modern-day kayaks are considered.

Many modern kayaks are built with cockpits large enough to allow a butt-first, legs-second approach to boarding. The cockpits are large enough and the decks are high enough to allow a large range of different-sized paddlers to sit in luxurious repose. Unfortunately, few if any paddlers will actually fit the kayak. Even with the best custom foaming and adjustment of seat and foot pegs, the voluminous kayak cockpit inhibits that connection between body and kayak that is the essence of qajaq design.

If getting into your kayak feels like pulling on a pair of skinny jeans, then there is a good chance you are paddling a well-fitting qajaq.

If it is made to fit you, or simply happens to fit you then, it will be comfortable all day. A snug connection between paddler and qajaq does not necessitate discomfort. A great connection enhances efficiency both in forward stroke and turning, allowing a seamless transfer of force from the paddler to the qajaq.

It would be easy for traditional paddlers to become upset by uninformed water-cooler talk describing our beloved activities as boating or rowing. Rather than responding negatively, perhaps we need to reflect and use these opportunities positively to delicately educate people of the historical significance of the qajaq and the Inuit hunters who made them.

Learning the traditional methods of powering, turning, rolling and harpooning with a qajaq makes one appreciate how important this connection between paddler and qajaq truly is. It is only by sharing this experience that we are going to make people understand why a qajaq is so much more than a polyethylene shop-bought kayak or qajariaq. As a board adviser for Qajaq USA, it is my role to help ensure people continue to get the opportunity to experience the entire collective qajaq culture and be given the chance to appreciate the difference between a modern kayak and its predecessor the qajaq. You can find out more about the qajaq and the events where you can experience them by visiting the Qajaq USA website: <http://qajaqusa.org>

I hope to see you afloat this year in a qajaq. ☺

About the author

Christopher Crowhurst, an ex-pat Brit now living in Minnesota, USA is slightly obsessed with Greenland rolling. In 2010 he founded Qajaq Rolls, a philanthropic business that promotes the passing on of the traditional art of Greenland style kayak (qajaq) rolling. Christopher has developed video, diagrams and written instruction to help paddlers learn the traditional Greenland rolls. During 2010 he self-published *Rolling with Sticks*, a waterproof guide book of 25 Greenland-style rolls, and follows to establish and fund a program of free rolling clinics, providing hands-on training for paddlers looking to develop their Greenland-style kayak rolls. You can contact Christopher through his website: <http://qajaqrolls.com>





International Sea Kayak
Guide Association

ISKGA Profile

Peter Bray, ISKGA Advanced Guide



The International Sea Kayak Guide Association (ISKGA), an association representing the needs of commercial sea kayak guides, was launched in August 2013. ISKGA members are professional, dedicated and enthusiastic about their sport and the need to have a fair, uncomplicated and inclusive system within which they can operate effectively and with purpose. ISKGA aims to be an inclusive community of like-minded individuals banded together through a common medium: guiding others on the ocean.

In this and future issues of *Ocean Paddler* we'll be introducing ISKGA's guides and registered centres.

**ISKGA Advanced Guide, accomplished adventurer and former Special Air Service soldier,
Peter Bray was one of ISKGA's first members...**

Peter first started paddling at the age of 11, his first sea kayak was a canvas double, which he paddled from Torpoint to Cawsands and back; not an auspicious start to his sea kayaking career as it resulted in him being arrested by the MOD police in Plymouth Navy dockyards for being a threat to H.M.S Ark Royal! It's safe to say that things have improved since then.

Peter is a BCU Level 4 coach, in both inland and sea disciplines and has been teaching and guiding professionally in countries including Nepal, New Zealand and North America for the last 25 years.

In 1996 Peter circumnavigated Great Britain in a double sea kayak, a first. Even more impressive is the fact that Peter was leading a partially sighted man on his journey of a lifetime; a feat many said would not be possible. Other challenges that just 'couldn't be done' followed...

Though the first attempt was a failure and became a fight for survival (when bilge pumps reversed the flow of water and left him stranded

in the Labrador Current, clinging to a life raft for 32 hours), in 2001 Peter became the first person to kayak across the North Atlantic, from Newfoundland to the Republic of Ireland.

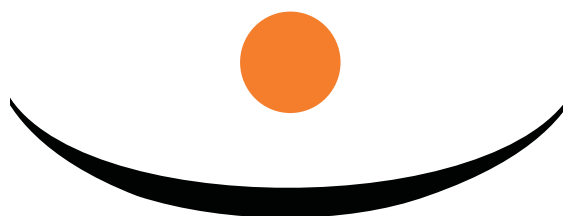
In 2003 he circumnavigated Newfoundland, alone, unsupported and living from his kayak, just as he was for the North Atlantic crossing,

In 2004 Peter led a group of military paddlers and crossed the English Channel in Kleppers and in 2005 he captained the first British team to circumnavigate the remote Antarctic Island of South Georgia, setting a record time of 13 days and ten hours.

Peter now runs Kernow Coaching in beautiful Cornwall. 

For more information on ISKGA, see www.iskga.com

For more information on Peter and Kernow Coaching, see www.kernowcoaching.com



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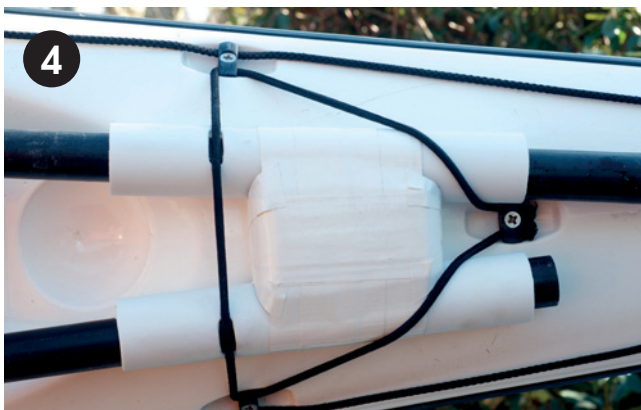
by Tony Hammock

In article #3, Level 5 coach, engineer and life-long paddling addict, Tony Hammock further explores the philosophy of Kaizen and demonstrates how to develop more ideas to optimize your sea kayak...

Kaizen: The Japanese art of small-step low-cost improvement.

Harada-san is the best factory manager that I have ever met. The place runs like clockwork at high levels of efficiency and virtually perfect quality. Unlike most factory managers (including me), he seemed relaxed and happy. It struck me that the place seemed a bit 'DIY'. Where Western companies would have had powered conveyors, they had slides made of plastic guttering. When I commented on this he said 'Ah, Toni-san, if I give them money, they won't think!' What he meant was: it is easy to reach for an industrial catalogue and pick a ready-made solution, but keep the budget to a minimum and people get creative with cheaper stuff. Many factories in the UK have a graveyard of conveyors that turned out to be a bit too long or a bit too short.

If you spend a load of money on something and it isn't quite right, you are stuck with it. Most of us have a box of paddling accessories that are in the same category. So Harada-san's teams reach first for their equivalent of the Screwfix catalogue. Sometimes they wander round DIY stores looking for inspiration, knock up something quick and cheap, try it out, then have another go and make something even better. This is the cyclic nature of Kaizen. Crushingly obvious? Probably, but let's have a closer look.



The Splits Stash Story

Most production sea kayaks come with deck elastics configured to hold a spare paddle (splits). With the exception of a few designs that have recesses in the deck for the spare paddle, they tend to share four problems:

- (1) In wild water, surf or a tide race, for example, the paddles can get blasted out from under the elastics (figure 1).
- (2) The paddle shafts tend to scratch the deck of the kayak.
- (3) If you mount the paddles on the rear deck, they tend to snag on a deployed tow line. (If you put them on the front, there can be other problems.)
- (4) If you want to put your splits back again while you are on the water, you can't do it without help from other paddlers.

When I switched from managing factories as a day job and paddling part time to the other way round, items (1) and (4) above became high priority so I made Version 1 (figure 2).

This is absolutely bombproof in extreme rough water, prevents tow line snagging and makes it easy for me to access and replace the paddle on my own, even when upside down (a nifty trick, but why you'd bother escapes me). It is made entirely from ABS plumbing tube, glued together. It cost about £6.00 to make and it is now over 12 years old.

Problems? It took over 4 hours to make and only fits my North Shore Fuego. More thought led to Version 2 (figure 3), which fits all of my kayaks well enough. The shorter tubes provide greater latitude for different paddle shaft angles. It is also bombproof and doesn't snag the towline, as long as you remember to load the paddles concave side down. However it still took a couple of hours to make and it needs care and skill to get the alignment right.

Hence, Version 3 (figure 4): the example shown has been made for front location. The cross pieces have been replaced with a chunk of carved closed-cell foam held together with quite a lot of duct tape. You can use any old bit of plumbing tube rather than ABS. It took half an hour to make and I built it from scraps, so the cost was almost zero. It works just as well, though I doubt it will last as long as the other versions. It's doing OK so far. ►



Kaizen meets innovation

Then I met Niall Skinner. Niall is a keen sea paddler, has a 3D printer and a flare for developing a process. We shared our experience and now we have Version 4 (figure 5). Back to ABS tubing and glue, but the cross-pieces are now 3D printed components. Two sizes fit all.

It's easy to make a V4 split stash in well under an hour. The cost is higher at roughly £16, but it is strong, effective and fits all the kayaks in the Seafreedom fleet. I like this one best.

Other options

I've seen a number of kayaks fitted with plumbing tube sections tie-fastened to the deck lines instead of connected to each other. This version is very quick and cheap to make. I find that they are a bit harder to use, and they can flop about; but this solution is well worth considering.

Of course, you can reach for the kayak accessories catalogue and your credit card and buy something ready-made: it's your choice.

Stuff you will need

For the most basic V3 (quick and cheap) all you need is:

- 50 cm of 40 mm diameter plastic waste pipe,
- a chunk of closed cell foam about 10 x 10 x 6 cm; the size isn't critical but the denser the better (polystyrene or wood would probably work as well, although I've never tried), and
- a roll of duct tape.

For the V2 version (strong and cheap, but taking skill to make):

- 75–100 cm of ABS 40 mm pipe (also known as 'solvent weld pipe'), (figure 6)
- a tube of PVC pipe weld cement.

For the V4 (strong, easy to do, looks snazzy): (figure 7)

- 50 cm of ABS 40mm pipe,
- a tube of PVC pipe weld cement,
- elastic bands can be helpful during assembly, and
- two of Niall's bridge pieces.

Werner paddles fit the 32 mm waste pipe and look very neat, but you have to get the tube angle spot-on to avoid jamming and it's quite hard to get the paddles back into the tubes unaided, which defeats the objective.

Tools you will need

- a steel tape measure,
- some cardboard and a pencil,
- a stiff saw to cut the pipe (a tenon saw works well),
- a craft knife to cut the tape and/or trim the pipe,
- a half-round or D-section 'rough bastard' file (honest, that's what they're called!) to chamfer the tubes and, for V2 only, shape the ends of the bridge pieces; size isn't important, and
- if you want to cut slots for the deck elastics, a drill with a 6 mm bit and round file.

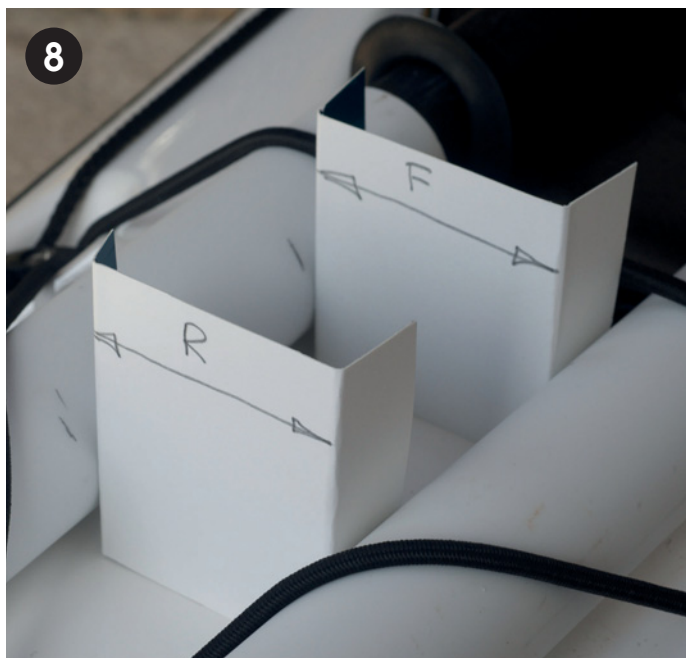
Other bits and pieces can make it easier, but this is all you really need.



6



7



Here we go!

The initial part of the method is the same for all versions. I'm not going into details for V2 as it would take too long. Anyway, if you have enough skill to do it, you can probably figure it out from the pictures.

Step 1: Measure

- Put your split paddles on the deck in their normal position under the elastics.
- Cut two 25 cm lengths of pipe (I'll call them 'tubes' from now on) and feed them onto the shafts, under the elastics.
- Make sure that the shafts are running down the centre line of the tubes.
- For the V4 version with the 3D printed bridge pieces, all you have to do is juggle them into position so that they fit neatly while maintaining the tube/paddle shaft alignment, and then mark their position or temporarily fix them with tape.
- For all the other versions, cut/bend two pieces of cardboard as templates and mark their assembly position on the tubes. (figure 8)

Step 2: Preparing the tubes

- Use the round side of your file to take off the inside edge of the tubes at the ends that will be facing you. This is also known as 'putting on a chamfer or bevel'. This seems like a minor point, but it is amazing how much easier it makes it to put the paddles shafts back in when on the water. (figure 9)
- Clean and prep the outside of the tubes. I find that bathroom sink cream works well on ABS, wash off and dry.

Step 3: The bridge piece(s)

For V3, get stuck into a bit of whittling with your saw, craft knife and file, and carve yourself a thing that looks like the one in the image (figure 10) with parallel V-shaped grooves on each side to keep the tubes parallel. I know that sounds vague, but the shape and dimensions aren't important as long as it fills the space between the tubes and keeps them in line.

For V2, you will additionally need a bench vice. Cut two lengths of pipe, each the length of your cardboard template plus 20 mm each end. Use the file to carve the mating U-shapes into the extra 20 mm, (figure 11) taking care to keep the alignment. It helps to carve the first U-shape by eye and then use it to make a template for the others. For V4, there is nothing to do apart from select the right size.

Step 4: Assembly

Place the tubes on a flat surface either side of the bridge pieces and lash it all together with tape or elastic bands. Check that you've got everything lined up and matching at any marks that you made at Step 1.

For V3, get busy with the duct tape and craft knife and bind the assembly together. That's about all there is to say!

For V2 and V4, I find it best to use the nozzle of the glue gun like a welding torch or mastic sealing gun and lay a fillet of cement along the joints. The cement is quite runny, so do all the upward facing joints first, then, when it has set, turn over and do the other side. The filler will shrink as it sets, so sometimes you will see that you need to strengthen the joint with a second coat of cement. ►



Step 5: Finishing touches

There is not much left to do. For all versions, it's a good idea to attach a cord as a leash to attach to your kayak. The only time it might come off is when you re-load the paddles, but it's a worthwhile precaution.

If you have been brave and built the V2, you might have to file some material off the underside of the cross-pieces so that it sits on the deck ridge comfortably. In any case, you should drill a small hole in the cross tubes to prevent big changes in temperature pressurising them and straining the seams.

For all types, you have the option of adding slots for the deck elastics to sit in. These are not essential, but they make the location even more solid and, if you get the depth just right, the elastics grip the paddle shafts even more firmly. Images (figure 12-14) should give you the idea.

Now get on the water and practise using them. Check for glitches and enjoy being able to whip your splits out and put them back by yourself. (figure 15)

Finally

So now we have developed several options that we can test and discuss. This will generate new ideas. Then we get 'expansion', which means realizing more opportunities for using the skills and techniques that we have tried. Kaizen... it's addictive! (figure 16)

Postscript

I've had several excellent suggestions for further improvements from OP readers. Please keep them coming. In the future I hope to write an update to some of the ideas and include reader's contributions. Thank you!

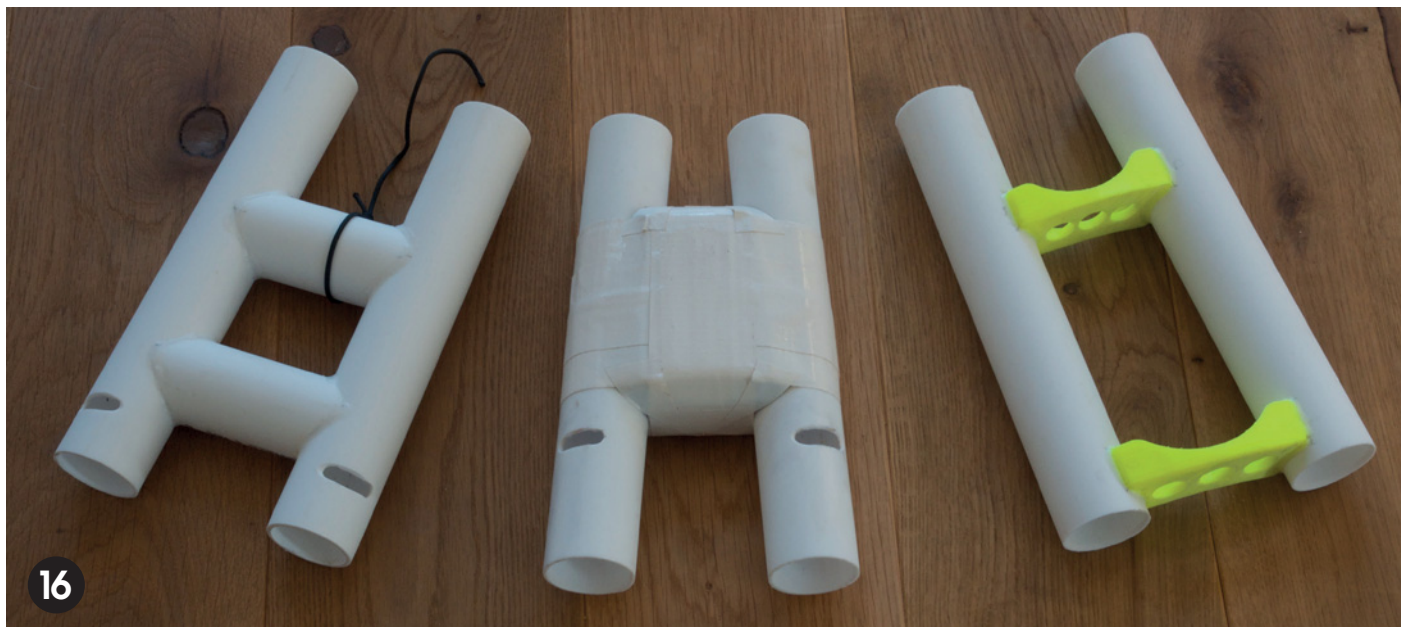
More

For more detailed instructions or for more information about Kaizen, ask Tony for a free information sheet (tony@seafreedomkayak.co.uk).

For more information about Niall's brilliant 3D printed Bridge Pieces, email outsideengineering@googlemail.com

About the author

Tony worked in the Japanese auto industry for many years and became expert (by Western standards) in their manufacturing methodologies. As you'd probably expect, he managed to log quite a few miles paddling the Japanese coast too. As well as running Seafreedom Kayak based near Oban, Scotland, he still does bits of training and consultancy in Quality and Kaizen.



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ISKGA EXPEDITION SKILLS MODULE



Looking out from beneath a low slung tarp in Alaska.

SHELTER

By Jeff Allen

One of the ISKGA modules which forms part of the Guide syllabus is the *Expedition Skills* module. This module is designed to ensure that ISKGA guides working within the commercial sea kayaking community are fully prepared to look after their clientele when leading them on multi-day wilderness expeditions. The module is not designed to turn the guide into a bushcraft master or a survival expert, but goes a long way to improving the chances of both the guides and their groups enjoying the expedition and surviving the wilderness environment, especially after having encountered problems ashore.

Off-the-water responsibilities

As an ISKGA sea kayak guide, your role and responsibility goes beyond on-the-water activities. Most sea kayaking expeditions are for a multi-day period and, at times, you may have to spend many hours on land through inadvertent weather hold-ups, other activity arrangements such as hiking or skiing or, in the worst-case scenario, due to some unplanned event which has left you stranded, albeit temporarily (hopefully), in a remote area.

Because sea kayak guides often operate in wilderness environments, which can be every bit as hostile as the marine environment, the guide needs to have a set of skills which will enable him or her to look after their clients on land as well as on water. To this end, as an ISKGA guide it is expected that you will have developed certain skills which will support you and your group in this area of responsibility.

It might be that you just have to deal with clients who have little or no experience of journeying through and camping in a remote area which is devoid of those niceties you might find in other more tourist-orientated campsites. You might also have to respond to incidents which could involve the loss of valuable equipment such as tents, food and other such necessities to keep your group safe and comfortable. The ISKGA guide needs to have the ability to: create emergency protection for his or her clients from the elements; alert others or, if necessary, co-ordinate a rescue to get the group back into a safe environment; and provide life-nourishing hydration and food, which might involve not only finding water but also neutralizing any harmful effects of drinking water straight from the environment through which you are journeying.

As a guide you will need to be able to care for your group and also care for yourself. If a serious incident occurs your leadership might be placed under strain as you will also be suffering from the effects of that same environment.

However, from realistic training and thorough preparation, you will be better equipped to maintain a high level of competency and confidence in this situation than your clients. It might also be fair to say that, through your experience and exposure to this environment, you will also find yourself being more comfortable than many of your clientele.

Creating fire is a skill that not only offers warmth and protection and the ability to cook, it also offers your group a very healthy 'wilderness TV' which can keep your clients mesmerized for hours at a time, raise morale and create a group focal point where paddlers can unwind and relax.

To that end, we have a mnemonic which helps us to remember and prioritise what needs to be done:

Please Remember What Comes First

where PRWCF stands for: protection; rescue; water (and food); care; and fire.

In this article we look at the protection element. When we think of protecting ourselves we must first think to the elements which we will need to protect ourselves from. The Expedition Skills module we are referring to involves the application of skills on the land rather than from within the sea kayak.

Protection:

The sea kayak guide must know how to construct shelter

As with so many things, preparation is key; hopefully you will have gone prepared with an element of ancillary equipment such as tarps and cordage with which you can construct an emergency shelter, as well as knowledge of how to construct these shelters quickly and efficiently. The kind of situation where you have to construct such a shelter might include when a client's tent has not proved to be robust enough or has sustained damage or become lost. ►

Insulation provided from the moss covering a dead fall made for a soft and warm bed for the night.



In terms of protection also consider the maintenance of shelter. If this is your clients' first expedition, they may have purchased a cheap tent from a local budget store and, come the first blow, it fails on numerous fronts: tent poles snapping and piercing fabric is a common enough theme on any trip, and a quick and effective repair will most certainly be welcome.

Location

In terms of constructing the shelter you will need to think of placement. Consider the following:

- Is the pitch free of threats from above (e.g. rock fall from cliffs, especially in the spring when ice melts)?
- Is it free from threats from below (e.g. rising tide, rising river levels after heavy downpours, or pooling of rainwater)?
- Are you out of the wind? The wind can reduce core body temperature rapidly; maybe there is a natural wind break such as a bank, a screen of trees or shrubs to shelter behind.
- Will your location help to keep out the rain? Wind can project rain onto your shelter from all angles, so protection from the sides is also necessary. You may be able to use natural folds in the land to create wind breaks, but also consider the nature of what is below the pitch. Will rain water drain naturally away or do you need to create a drainage channel to redirect running water away from your pitch?
- Protection from heat-absorbing entities below us: can you create insulation from the ground if your client's therm-a-rest has blown away, been left behind or is damaged beyond repair? In an emergency, adequate insulation can be achieved by cutting moss from fallen trees or using seaweed layered out beneath a tarp. Be aware that what you use may contain bugs so shake it out first.

Using a tarp as shelter

When using a tarp, scout out the area first. Having considered all of the above, it might be that there are numerous trees to which you can set out your supporting guy lines. If camping on a beach, I might tie off my guys to two sea kayaks, using split paddles as support poles. Tying off to rocks and burying these rocks a foot down into the sand also works well. There are numerous ways of constructing a shelter from a tarp.

- **Wing tarp.** A higher-pitched tarp such as the wing tarp will catch more wind but provides more room for clients, creating shelter from above or providing shade from direct sunlight. You also have a fire below a wing tarp. Quite often I will use this set-up on expedition, providing protection for the group until late in the evening. When they depart to their tents, I can lower the position of the tarp to sleep beneath.

- **Wedge tarp.** Because the tarp is pinned down low to the ground, this provides good protection from the wind but reduces space below.

- **Vietnam roll or tarp burrito.** A very quick and effective means of creating individual shelter is to simply roll yourself up like a Swiss roll or create folds like a burrito (beneath the body) to create shelter from both the wind and the rain. This is a very minimal shelter with no room for equipment storage; it is simply protection for you from the wind and rain. However, this shelter suffers from an accumulation of moisture caused by condensation and there is every chance that you may end up wet from the inside out.

- **Tipi tarp.** This can be configured in several ways, utilizing body shapes beneath (think emergency bothy-bag-type shelter) or possibly using paddles/split paddles to create a peak and fold the tarp around the apex.

- **A-frame tarp.** An effective apex shelter can be rigged utilizing a ridge edge. Use your towline strung taught between two points, or even a pole or paddle, which the tarp can be folded over, pegging out the corners to the desired height.

- **Tarp hammock.** A tarp hammock can be created by folding the tarp inwards to form a pocket, tying off a knot in both ends of the tarp and then using your tow-rope to tie off to the ends. Suspend between two strong points to escape the wet or a bug infested area. Another tarp can also be pitched above the hammock for protection from the wind and rain. It is advisable to put your therm-a-rest (if that's what you are using) below your body for added insulation and to prevent too much bending of the back.

Other tarp uses

A tarp is a piece of equipment which every guide should possess and there should be several carried within a large group. They can create temporary shelter during a meal break or a longer-term living space. A tarp can also be utilized for many other tasks such as creating a stretcher for a



casualty, a water pool, for collecting rain water or a sail for a down-wind run. When using a tent, I will often fold up a tarp to the same shape and size of my tent base and place it on the inside of my tent. This provides extra insulation and protects against the ingress of water caused by holes in the groundsheet.

Tarp material

A good tarp should be constructed of a lightweight, strong, water/windproof material that sheds water easily, rather than absorbs. Because you are probably going to be stringing it up among trees regularly, it needs to be of a rip-stop fabric where the eyes or loops are strong and reinforced. Having a few loops along the centre line is also advisable so that the tarp can be peaked up to direct rainwater in the desired direction. You may want your tarp to be high visibility to aid attraction or you might prefer it to blend in with the surroundings; that's your call.

When I first started serving with the military we were issued with a cape which, when buttoned to another soldier's cape, would create a temporary shelter for two. This was then replaced by a poncho (called a 'basher') which could double up as a tarp shelter. The head hole would be drawn up using the neck tie string to prevent leaks, or strung up to create an apex point. Whatever camouflage was used added to the insulation.

Campsite considerations

When setting up camp at the end of the day, the footprint size of the group as a whole will need to be considered; the larger the group, the larger the campsite.

There are all sorts of tent repair kits you could bring, but a pole can be easily repaired using a strip of aluminium. This is easily formed from an empty coke can and stored in your equipment, and can then be wrapped around the break and cable-tied off or gaffer-taped in place to act as a flexible splint.

When leading a commercial expedition I will often taken two two-season sleeping bags with me instead of one four-season bag. This way, if one of my clients loses their sleeping bag, I can share one of mine. My camp clothing normally consists of 'Buffalo' gear, which is great for sleeping in, but extra warmth can also be added to a sleeping bag by using an internal liner or an external bivvy bag. Combined, these will increase your temperature by about an extra 10 degrees.

In some areas you will have to create separate living areas from eating and cooking areas. Creating a safe food storage area is obviously a must when it comes to 'bear country', but bears are not the only animals which will raid your tents or food stores.

Wildlife threats

Smaller animals and birds will also prove to be a problem if you do not choose your campsite wisely; last year in Alaska I shared my tent with a small rodent which looked like a healthy dormouse. When circumnavigating Japan with Hadas, we were paid a visit by a small black bear one night which we mistook at the time for a large black pig (it was dark and we didn't realise that there were bears in the south of Kyushu). We were also paid a visit by a very large grizzly in the north of Hokkaido.

Although related, these animals are very, very different. A black bear will climb the tree to get at your food, but the grizzly will just pull the tree down. Having seen bear-paw prints the size of dinner plates, this is not difficult to imagine. Hang your bear bag high and as far from the camp as is reasonably possible. Also consider the direction of the wind, as bears have a very good sense of smell. To that end, it is imperative that none of your group takes any food into their tents at night (or anything else that has an attractive odour to a bear, such as toothpaste).

Other wildlife threats can include seals, sea lions, crocodiles and a whole variety of insects and small animals; some of these may not be deadly, but could inflict an incapacitating or unpleasant experience. These aspects of wildlife protection are a specialist field which the guide would need to familiarize themselves with prior to visiting an area, and is too vast to go into detail here. Needless to say, prior preparation prevents pretty poor performance and if you are about to head off and lead an expedition to Borneo or Belize, it would be well worth your time to research early and prepare yourself for what is in store.

Conclusion

To conclude this article on Expedition Skills, ISKGA guides are not expected to be survival or bushcraft experts. It is however expected that you have enough knowledge and skill to look after your group in terms of providing adequate shelter for the duration of the journey. If you cannot do this, you are failing in your ability as a guide. Although you may not have been tested on this yet, there might come a day when you will. Preparing yourself prior to that occasion will pay dividends in terms of the high esteem in which your clientele will hold you. 📸



Shop talk

Sea Kayaking Cornwall

Sea Kayaking Cornwall has long been associated with top end training courses for the sea kayaking community, but not many people realise that they also have a retail aspect to their business too. Well there's a good reason that they don't blow too loudly in this direction and that is because they don't really deal in mass sales or bulk buying, and with the rapid turn around of designs and gear, they also don't want to carry large amounts of stock equipment to support a high turnover of trade. They would in fact rather adopt the term of being a 'Sea Kayaking Outfitter,' rather than a sea kayak retail outlet. This is because it goes hand in hand with their teaching ethos of finding out exactly what the client is after achieving, rather than just selling him or her, an item that they happen to have in stock.

Most of the brands which they developed early working relationships with, came from a historical sponsor orientated relationship, a relationship where there has developed a solid working synergy of trust and reliance. The last thing they would want is a piece of equipment to fail them on expedition and to this end they have always pursued the best.

'We only sell what we can honestly endorse, this brand was tried and tested in South Georgia', or 'I used this piece of equipment in Madagascar' are comments which will often be heard when discussing a piece of equipment that a student is looking to purchase.

'We like to guide our students into purchasing the right kayak, the right paddle and the right dry suit, for their paddling aspirations, rather than guiding them towards a higher profit margin, or towards an end of season sale item that did not sell too well in 2014'.

So if you are looking for a piece of sea kayaking equipment that will be right for you, then it might be worth you picking up the phone and chatting directly to the guys down in sunny Kernow for some sound advice and guidance on what is out there, and remember that all of their students get an automatic 10% discount on most items purchased through them. ☺

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LONG-TERM TESTS



P&H Aries 155 fitted with forward fin.

Paddle-sailing the P&H Aries 155

In the long-term test of the P&H Aries 155 in OP#44, I hinted at its paddle-sailing performance with the Flat Earth kayak sail designed by Mick McRobb. I have fitted to and paddled many of the common production kayaks available in the UK. The Aries 155 has proven the most versatile and fun for paddle-sailing that our group of paddle-sailors have tried. Four of us have been regularly paddle-sailing Aries kayaks together since May 2013. We have paddle-sailed the Aries 155 in the Firth of Clyde and in waters with strong tidal streams such as the Solway Firth, the Sound of Jura, the Firth of Lorn. We have paddle-sailed it on exposed crossings such as the 32 km trip out to Ailsa Craig and back, and on the 25 km crossing of Luce Bay via the Scares. We have also paddle sailed it fully loaded for camping in Loch Shiel and the Sound of Arisaig.

Despite its short length, the Aries 155 shows a remarkable ability to pick up speed on a wave and plane in following seas. Adding a sail and even relatively light winds gives you the ability to enjoy planing over considerable distances. Many people stop paddling (and trail their paddle in an extended low brace) when there is enough wind for the sail to drive a kayak at its displacement speed. However, using the drive from wind, paddle and wave, the Aries 155 will rise onto the plane, then considerably exceed its theoretical maximum displacement speed. The maximum burst speed I have seen in both the Aries 155 and similar P&H Delphin was 24.5 km/hr when planing on a wave in deep water. Not only should you continue paddling but, in marginal planing conditions, you should paddle as hard as you can to encourage the kayak up onto the plane and keep it there. Going downwind in stronger winds you will also find that travelling as fast as possible by continuing to paddle reduces the force of the apparent wind on the sail. This paradoxically means paddling hard when there is a lot of wind makes it easier to survive and enjoy difficult conditions. Don't hang back! Paddle-sailing a kayak well is hard work. The idea is to maximise planing time, as this is such fun.

Many kayakers enjoy catching waves in shallow water near the shore where the waves slow down, but are frustrated when they can't catch the swells on the open sea (which usually travels much faster). When paddling normally most of these swells just pass under the Aries (and other kayaks) and carry on over the horizon. However, in a decent breeze, the sail helps you paddle-sail fast enough to catch them. I also think that downward pressure exerted by the sail and mast helps to un-weight the stern by just the right amount to facilitate catching the swell.

I have tried paddle-sailing a wide variety of sea kayaks with the FE sail, and the only one that comes close to the fun that the Aries provides is the Taran 16. In the right hands, the Taran 16 paddle-sails like a scalded cat and is possibly even faster downwind than the Aries 155. However, it is very skittish and is much more of a handful in extreme conditions (which for me is top of F5 with rough water); it becomes a nerve-wracking white-knuckle ride while the Aries remains controllable and encourages you to go for it even harder.

To give some idea of the difference that paddle-sailing makes, I recently carried out some experiments using a GPS (with WAAS/EGNOS-enabled and battery-saver mode switched off for accuracy) to measure our performance. We were on a four-day winter expedition in the Firth of Lorn area. Two of us had Aries 155s with identical Flat Earth sails. The third paddler had a Cetus MV with an FE sail but, as he had never paddle-sailed before, he did not use it in the stronger winds. My friend in the Aries paddled with him on several legs while I paddle-sailed out front.

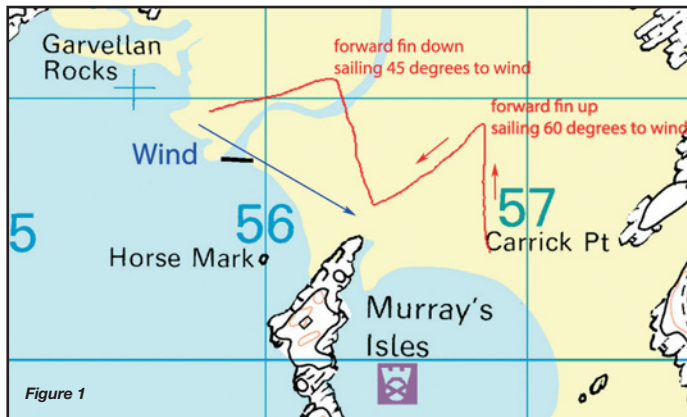
On a trip of 1.1 km in a force 5 gusting 6 cross-offshore wind, on a broad reach at right angles to a 3 km/hr tide, I paddle-sailed and my friends in the Aries 155 and Cetus MV paddled only. I paddle-sailed in 5 minutes 7 seconds and averaged 12.9 km/hr and my friend in the Aries paddled in 9 minutes 55 seconds and averaged 6.7 km/hr. My Aries was only planing for short distances as the waves were rather short and confused (as we were padding across where two tidal streams merged at right angles). However, the power of the sail helped me catch just about any wave available, even if only for a short ride. I think the speed difference would have been even greater if we had had more even following seas.

Many people say that it is pointless paddle-sailing upwind as the kayak won't plane upwind. It is therefore limited by its displacement speed, which can be reached by paddling on its own. I decided to test this on a 1.5 km crossing between two islands in the Firth of Lorn. It was a close reach in a F4-5 cross-offshore wind and I did not use the forward fin in the Aries 155. My friends in an Aries 155 and a Cetus MV paddled and did not use their sails. We were also paddling into a flood tide of 2 km/hr. I paddle-sailed the 1.5 km in 14 minutes 49 seconds, an average of 6.1 km/hr. My friend paddling the Aries 155 without a sail took 19 minutes 31 seconds, an average of 4.6 km/hr. I rest my case.

A short kayak like the Aries will not be such a good performer upwind as a longer kayak. When paddle-sailing, the paddling action and the long waterline length make up for the lack of centre board that a dinghy has. A long kayak such as a Cetus MV will actually paddle-sail nearly as close to the wind as a Laser dinghy. A shorter kayak like the Aries appears to point as high, but is actually crabbing sideways more and quickly loses ground downwind from longer kayaks and dinghies. Using a GPS and analysing its track, I have found that the Aries actually points to about 60 degrees off the wind compared to a Cetus MV and Laser dinghy, which point to about 50 and 45 degrees off the wind. Despite this difference I would still choose the Aries 155 for a fun day on the water, based on its fantastic downwind performance. We never go paddle-sailing round the buoys anyway, we are always going somewhere. The FE sails are designed to be expedition sails. ☞

For more information, see www.phseakayaks.com

P&H Aries 155 with forward fin



Construction and fittings

Please see OP44 for full description of the Aries 155. Both P&H and Kari-tek have developed forward fins to help the upwind performance of kayaks. Longer kayaks will paddle sail closer to the wind than shorter kayaks like the Aries 155 and so will have less need for a forward fin. When I was asked to test a kayak with a P&H forward fin I was very interested in trying it out an Aries 155 as I thought it would make a greater difference.

The kayak arrived in beautiful condition; P&H really seem to have quality control nailed these days. The kayak came with a nice pre-shaped base for the mast foot to fit on the peaked Aries foredeck. All P&H sea kayaks now come with fore decks reinforced for the mast foot whether you order a sail or not. The installation of the forward fin was very professional and neat; you would think they had been making them for years, yet this was one of the very first production kayaks. The forward fin is much bigger than a skeg and is very stiff, being made of a flat section of carbon fibre composite. (I do wish P&H would offer a stiffer skeg!) It sits in a moulded GRP box which is mounted through the forward bulkhead, making the whole thing very stiff. I have used this particular kayak for a 3 night, 4 day winter camping trip and found that the forward fin box had little effect on the camping gear capacity (the test kayak had a custom bulkhead which was set further back than standard).

The fin is 30 cm long and measures 11 cm fore and aft at its mid-length point. It is pulled down by elastic and raised by the cord on deck. The fin is pulled up by a line which exits on the midline of the foredeck between the mini-hatch and the fore-hatch. The line runs back to a cleat just in front of the mini-hatch. The mechanism works well and the forward fin will auto-retract if you hit an obstruction. The cleat is a bit far forward, especially if you use a deck bag, so I run the line back to a cleat at the side of the front of the cockpit. I actually use the same cleat that I use for the sail sheet. The forward fin line is very thin and it fits into the open-jawed ClamCleet "fineline cleat" first and the thicker sail sheet fits in second.

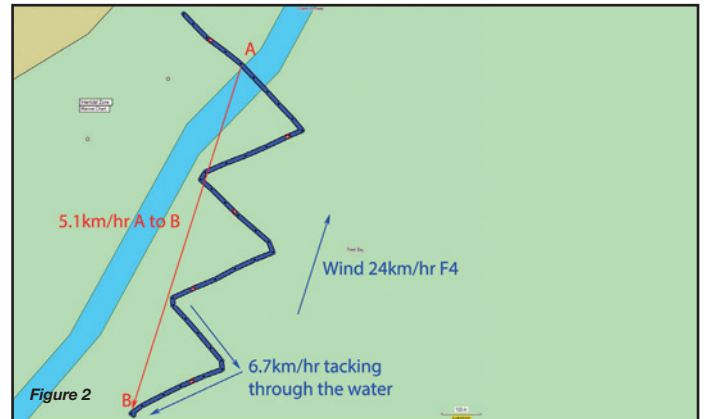
The fin box slot is 49 cm long and will obviously increase turbulence, but in day-to-day paddling I can't say I have noticed any difference paddling alongside and switching between a normal Aries 155. The forward fin and box clearly add weight to the kayak, but I can't say exactly how much as the kayak on test is of heavier expedition build and our other Aries kayaks are performance-glass/diolen construction. On the water the extra weight is not noticeable. I have bad shoulders and either use a kayak trailer or a Kari-Tek easy-lift roof rack, and I have no bother handling the boat on my own.

Performance

First of all the addition of the forward fin has no discernible effect on the fantastic downwind performance of the Aries (when the forward fin is retracted). Going upwind as close to the wind as possible in the Aries 155 without the forward fin, you will be pointing at 60 degrees to the wind. The skeg will be fully up. To point higher, the forward fin needs to be let fully down. In a short kayak like the Aries 155 the kayak will immediately start to luff up (weathercock) and this can be controlled by putting the rear skeg fully (or nearly fully) down. You will now be pointing at 45 degrees off the wind and in F3-4 you will have no difficulty keeping alongside a Laser dinghy when paddle-sailing. See Figure 1.

The proof of the pudding is in the GPS track. It was slack water at high tide and wind was WNW F4-5. The sea was relatively flat due to being downwind of the shelter of Ringdoo Point and Garvellan rocks. I was paddle-sailing upwind from Carrick Point to Ringdoo Point. I paddled four approximate 500 m tacks. The first two tacks were with both the forward fin up and the skeg up. I was able to point about 60 degrees from the wind with a tacking angle of about 120 degrees. I then put the forward fin and skeg fully down for the third and fourth tacks. I found I was paddling 45 degrees to the wind with a 90 degrees tacking angle. This is the same as a Laser dinghy, which was tacking alongside. Despite pointing 15 degrees higher into the wind, my forward speed remained the same at a steady 7.8 km/hr. I also found it was easier to balance against the F4-5 wind with the forward fin down, with less strain on my core muscles. Above about F3 the forward fin starts to hum in the box, which adds to the fun!

A recent paddle sailing camping trip further emphasised the worth of the forward fin. We were crossing Loch Moidart, I was in the Aries 155 with forward fin, Mike was in a Cetus MV without a forward fin. We both had 0.8 sqm Flat earth sails. A



force 3 to 4 wind was blowing straight along the loch with a flood tide. We set off at the same time and both reached the north side of the loch at the same time after 15.5 minutes but I was 750m further upwind and tide, the way we wanted to go! Without the forward fin Mike in the Cetus MV can point higher than me in the Aries 155 without the forward fin.

Is it worth tacking upwind?

Is it worth tacking upwind or are you better dropping the sail and paddling into the wind? Being able to sail closer to the wind is still a benefit, even if you would never consider tacking back and forward to go upwind. For example, two of us in Aries 155s with FE sails set off on the 3 km crossing to the Isles of Fleet in a F3-4 wind. We were close hauled to get round the Isles' outer end. Not long after we set off, it was obvious we were not going to get round. I dropped the forward fin and the skeg and, within minutes, the other Aries was 200 m downwind. We were paddle-sailing at the same speed and both our kayak bows were pointing at the same angle to the wind, but the kayak without the forward fin was making much more leeway. I successfully paddle-sailed round the island in one and waited nearly 5 minutes for the other kayak to drop the sail then paddle round into the wind.

Sometimes your intended route might be straight into the wind however, and this is where you may consider tacking. Figure 2 shows a test that might help you decide.

This shows an Aries fitted with a forward fin and skeg both fully down. I was paddle-sailing and tacking 1 km upwind from a buoy at point A to a buoy at point B. The wind was F4 with a fetch of about 50 km and there were short, steep waves. I used the Garmin Mapsource program to analyse the data from my GPS track log. The first thing to notice is that the angle between each tack is about 90 degrees, which means that the Aries was sailing at about 45 degrees to the wind.

The speed through the water was 6.7 km/hr (including time lost for tacking) and the velocity from point A to point B was 5.1 km/hr. I then paddled directly from A to B (without the sail) and my speed was 4.9 km/hr. In lighter winds I could have paddled the Aries at about 7-8 km/hr into the wind, and so it would not have been worth hoisting the sail and tacking. This experiment (and others I have done) shows that in a good F4 on open water, tacking upwind with a sail is marginally faster than just getting your head down and paddling directly into the wind and waves. What the figures don't however show is how much more fun paddle-sailing is. Also in this experiment I lost speed each time I tacked (which was five times). I could have gone from A to B using two longer legs and only one tack, which would have further increased my speed.

Pros and cons of the forward fin fitted to the P&H Aries 155

First of all, you don't need to fit a forward fin to enjoy paddle-sailing the Aries 155, which is already such a good kayak for downwind paddle-sailing. However, the P&H forward fin is highly effective in improving the short kayak's upwind performance to that found in longer kayaks and dinghies. It is very easy to deploy and retract and, when fully down, the sailing angle can be easily controlled by varying how much skeg is deployed at the stern. I found it easier to balance and control the sail upwind when using the forward fin in F4-5 winds. An unexpected bonus of the forward fin is for kayak photography. Although the Aries paddles with just a hint of weather-cocking, it does start to lee-cock when you stop paddling. This can be frustrating if taking photos. Dropping the forward fin causes it to drift to rest in a satisfyingly straight line. On the downside, it adds cost, weight, increased drag (probably not very significant) and another control line.

P&H can now supply their kayaks with a forward fin as an option at the time of ordering. If you want to add a forward fin to an existing kayak, then Kari-Tek can supply/fit their version, which I tested in a Cetus and found to work well.

Conclusion

I found the P&H Aries 155 with forward fin to be the most versatile and fun sea kayak for paddle-sailing which I have yet tried. It combines unrivalled downwind paddle-sailing performance with upwind performance that matches much longer kayaks and performance dinghies such as the Laser. ☺

For more information, see www.phseakayaks.com




Kari-Tek and P&H-branded Flat Earth Code Zero 0.8 m² kayak sail comparison

P&H can also supply a kayak ready to sail with a P&H branded Flat Earth manufactured sail. There are some differences between the P&H branded sail and that supplied by Kari-Tek the main European distributor of Flat Earth kayak sails. The most obvious is that the P&H sail lacks a window. This was at my suggestion, as I like the long mast that comes as standard with both P&H and Kari-Tek brands. This keeps both sails high and as the P&H sail has a shorter mast sleeve, all but exceptionally tall kayakers can see the horizon under the sail.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there are already conflicting camps of paddle-sailors, each convinced that one brand is superior. I spent a day in F4-5 flat-water conditions comparing them. Both are made of Code Zero dacron/mylar laminate cloth, but with different-coloured reinforcement threads. The Kari-Tek branded sail has a slightly longer luff and a smaller roach, which basically means the P&H brand carries more of its area near the top of the sail. Since both are supplied with the same length mast, the area of the P&H sail sits higher and its boom is about 7.5 cm further above the deck.

In theory the Kari-Tek branded sail might give marginally better performance upwind and the P&H branded sail might give marginally better performance downwind, but neither I nor the GPS could tell the difference. They do have different fitting kits and I think that preference for

one or the other kit would be more likely to persuade me to buy a particular brand. As it happens, I prefer to use my own rigging method and fittings, but both Kari-Tek and P&H kits are highly suitable for newcomers to paddle-sailing. The fittings for the mast stays supplied by Kari-Tek are particularly good for newcomers because they will break before the deck if you get trashed in the shallows with the sail up. Which sail is best? I declare a draw! 

For more information, see:
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www.karitek.co.uk
www.phseakayaks.com
www.seakayakphoto.blogspot.co.uk/p/sea-kayak-paddle-sailing.html

Acknowledgements

These three tests would not have been possible without the considerable help of others. First of all I am particularly grateful to Mick MacRobb of Flat Earth Kayak Sails for introducing me to expedition paddle sailing. I am also very grateful to Geoff Turner of Kari-Tek and Graham Mackereth of P&H for lending me prototype and production kayaks fitted with forward fins, to West Coast Paddlers for the use of a P&H-branded Flat Earth sail and to David Crawford, Ian Johnston, Mike Connor, Phil Toman, Tony Page and David Findlay in the Laser, without whose patience and help this test would not have been possible.

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Who: Luddington Marine, Jonny Eldridge Coaching and Guiding, Pembrokeshire and in association with Sea Kayak Guide's 'Play the Sea' event

When: 23–24 May, 6–7 June, 27–28 June, 11–12 July

How much: £190

www.luddingtonmarine.co.uk/www.seakayakguides.co.uk

Paddle Arctic Greenland with Greenlanders

Ever had a seal meatball? In 2013 we paddled a 100-mile loop with Maligiaq and Jenna Padilla out of Sisimiut with a fine group of paddlers from the US. It was one of the very best things I've ever done. In fact, it changed how I plan all trips to destinations like this; cultural immersion by kayak is how we think of it. The depth of our experience was enhanced tenfold because we were paddling with Greenlanders. Jenna is joining us once again to further enhance a new adventure we have planned in Disko Bay, Greenland, where we'll be paddling among sea ice well above the Arctic Circle. If Greenland has ever been on your bucket list, this is a unique opportunity to be immersed in local culture while exploring one of the last great wildernesses by sea kayak.

This trip is planned at a 3 star minimum skill level and we have two remaining team member openings for this six-participant trip, which is done expedition-style once we are into the backcountry. The price includes round-trip flights from Iceland to Ilulissat, and 3 nights guesthouse accommodation as well as full catering.

Who: Uncommon Adventures

When: 4–14 July

How much: \$5100 person from Reykjavik, Iceland

www.uncommonadv.com

The Isles of Scilly

The Isles of Scilly, a paddler's paradise, have to be one of the world's premier sea kayaking destinations; the unique low-lying group of islands that are steeped in mystery and legend are just a short crossing from Land's End. On a bad day you can seek the shelter of the amazing Eastern Isles, ancient Neolithic burial grounds that are now home to the island's many seals, some of which have been tagged and followed as far a-field as the Monarch Isles on the west coast of Scotland. This is one of my favourite areas of exploration paddling. Out to the west lies the Western Rocks and the Bishop's Rock Lighthouse, the scene of one of the worst naval disasters in British history where, in 1707, Sir Cloudeley Shovell put the Realm's fleet on the rocks.

Why not spoil yourself this summer and book onto Sea Kayaking Cornwall's series of INTROmediate-, Intermediate- and Advanced-level summer expeditions to the islands? We've been doing it longer than any other commercial operator and you are guaranteed an amazing adventure.

Who: Sea Kayaking Cornwall

When: July–August

How much: £495

www.seakayakingcornwall.com

West of Mull

A full on, west coast multi-day camping trip; we will meet up on Mull and who knows, with a good weather forecast we could get to Staffa, the Treshnish Isles and even to Tiree. The trip distances each day will be about 20km to 30km and we will take at least one break out of the kayaks to stretch our legs. Coaching sessions can be integrated into your weeks paddling, if you wish. We will use a mixture of commercial and wild campsites. It's preferred that paddlers have their own kayak, paddle and kayaking clothing. But if you need any kit or if you wish advice on how to prepare for packing your sea kayak for the trip please get in touch, via info@kayakbute.co.uk

Who: Kayak Bute
When: 1-8 August
How much: From £455
www.kayakbute.co.uk

BCU 4 Star Sea kayak Assessment

Explore the superb coastline of Jersey by sea kayak on your BCU 4 star assessment. Jersey has large tides and a coastline ranging from cliffs, surf beaches, caves, rock gardens and offshore sea kayaking opportunities. This makes the island ideal for the sea kayaker who wants to pack a range of paddling experiences into their 4 star assessments.

Fly from regional airports to get more time on the water. There is a huge range of travel and accommodation options available. Sea kayaks available at no extra charge.

Who: Jersey Kayak Adventures Ltd
When: September 26 & 27
How much: £190
www.jerseykayakadventures.co.uk

Expedition Skills

This expedition skills weekend with Sea Kayaking Cornwall is all you need to get you set up for serious sea kayak adventures. Packing kayaks, planning, fishing, cooking, shelter building and fire skills; a perfect course to get you ready for one of SKC's main expeditions.

Who: Sea Kayaking Cornwall
When: 30-31 May, 15-16 August
How much: £195
www.seakayakingcornwall.com

Alaska

Alaska is one of the last true wildernesses on Earth; discover it with Sea Kayaking Cornwall...

Who: Sea Kayaking Cornwall
When: 8-17 June
How much: £1495
www.seakayakingcornwall.com

Explore Milos, Greece

Milos day trips are the perfect way to combine kayaking with a Greek island holiday. Logistically simple, day trips require minimal equipment and preparation. A different trip is guaranteed every day, with 12 very different trips to choose from. Beginners are most welcome; experienced paddlers will be accommodated with longer trips and more challenging conditions. Rod Feldtmann will guide all trips. Rod is a UKCC level 3 sea kayak coach with 12 years experience running kayaking trips around Milos and to other parts of Greece.

Who: Sea Kayak Milos
When: any 8-day period
How much: €580
www.seakayakgreece.com

Jersey Kayak Trail

Jersey's dramatic coastline of cliffs, caves and secluded bays enables sea kayakers of all abilities to develop their skills and explore. Add a 12m tidal range and you can paddle over places that within a few hours will be dry land. For the more experienced – or those wanting expert coaching – paddle tide races or offshore to Les Ecréhous. Fly from regional airports to quickly get paddling without the hassle of a long drive. All equipment and sea kayaks supplied. Jersey is more than just a kayaking destination. There is a wide choice of accommodation, restaurants and things to do.

Who: Jersey Kayak Adventures Ltd
When: 1-5 June, 6-10 July, 7-11 September 2015
How much: From £95 day tours, 5 days £475
www.jerseykayakadventures.co.uk

The Sound of Arisaig

The sound of Arisaig offers a wonderful area to explore by sea kayak. On this 4-day trip we will aim to see as much of it as possible – packing all the gear we need into our kayaks. The area is rich in wildlife and has a winding coastline that lends itself perfectly to exploring. We will remain flexible to take advantage of the conditions and the groups need; we could explore Loch Ailort with our sea kayaks before paddling on to Eilean Shona or Glenuig. The sound of Arisaig is almost tailor-made for sea kayaking trips.

Who: Arisaig Sea Kayak Centre
When: 22-26 June, 10-14 August
How much: £390
www.arisaigseakayakcentre.co.uk


Iceland's Northwest Fjords

This is the westernmost tip of Europe! Located near the Arctic Circle on the Greenland Sea, Hornstrandir nature reserve is one of the wildest places left on Iceland. This is the most rugged part of Iceland, well beyond the reaches of the ring road and nestled below the Drangajökull Icecap; it is home to Arctic fox and huge cliff faces dotted with fulmars, guillemots, kittiwakes, puffins and razorbills. If we are very lucky we may even see one of the few remaining pairs of white-tailed sea eagles on the planet.

This trip is expedition style at a minimum 3 star level and is led by Michael Gray who has over 30 years of guiding experience in North, Central and South America, as well as in Alaska, Greenland and Iceland. Travel will be from 20–40 km/day with access to some very fine kayaks including those from Valley and NDK. The trip is fully catered and group size is limited to just 6.

Who: Uncommon Adventures
When: 26 June–3 July
How much: \$2495 per person from Reykjavik, Iceland
www.uncommonadv.com



A black and white photograph of a beach. In the foreground, there is a red tent on the left and a kayak on the right. The beach is covered in dark sand and some driftwood. The ocean is visible in the background with waves breaking. The text "Ocean Paddler Issue #47 on sale 29 June" is overlaid in the top right corner.

Ocean Paddler Issue #47 on sale 29 June



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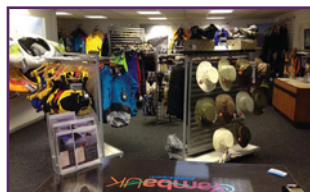
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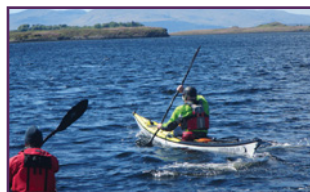
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Win a Kokatat Poseidon PFD and Poseidon Expedition Kit

Kokatat Poseidon PFD

The Kokatat Poseidon PFD features a modular outfitting system that can be customised with a myriad of accessories to meet paddlers' changing needs. The Poseidon comes stock with the Full Chest Pocket Accessory that has three zippered compartments and a lash tab on the back for knife storage. Via a series of slick clips and webbing straps additional pockets and accessories, sold separately, can be added to the PFD for multiple personalised configurations, including the Poseidon Quick Release Belt, Belly Pocket, single Chest Pocket and Tactic Pack Accessories.



In addition to multiple pocket and accessory options, the Poseidon offers multiple ways to carry drinking water. Paddlers can use the main pocket of the Tactic Pack Accessory to carry a reservoir, attach a Tributary Hydration System or use the hidden sleeve in the PFD's back panel designed to fit a Hydrapak 1.5 litre reservoir. For unsurpassed comfort, fit, and mobility the Poseidon features articulated shell and foam panels, eight front and center webbing adjustments and wide, contoured neoprene shoulder straps.

Poseidon Expedition Kit

The Poseidon Expedition Kit includes the Tactic Pack, Belly Pocket, Hydrapak® Elite 1.5 liter Reservoir, and Poseidon Quick Release Belt accessories.

The hydration reservoir compatible Tactic Pack gives paddlers quick access to additional carrying capacity. The pack attaches to the back of PFDs like a backpack, but with the pockets hidden inside or against the paddler's back. Quick release points allow paddlers to quickly flip the pack to the front of the PFD to access the pockets while wearing the pack.

We'll be running a detailed review of the Kokatat Poseidon in a future issue of OP – in the mean time, our friends at System X (www.systemxeurope.com) have agreed to let one of your lucky so-and-sos grab one for yourself in this issue's fantastic competition.



How to enter? Simple – answer this question...

Which actress played Belle in the 1972 epic disaster movie The Poseidon Adventure?

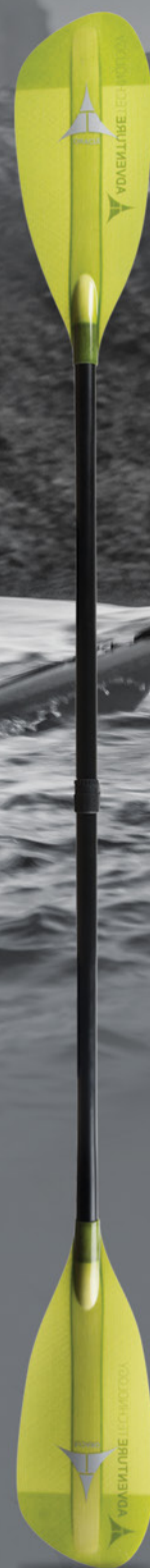
... then with 'Kokatat Poseidon competition' as the subject, email your answer, name and address to: competition@paddlepressmedia.com and we'll select a winning entry on 1 June.

Good luck!

Please note that the closing date is 31 May and that multiple entries will be deleted.




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