

ANOTHER DIMENSION

The transportable touring kayak is emerging as a popular trend, but expedition boats are still a mainstay of the market. Our reviewers tested some of both



PERFECT-WEATHER PADDLER

Veronica Knight, 27, 5-foot-5; 132 pounds; four years very casual sea kayaking, and three years whitewater kayaking; preferred ride: Looksha IV.

I thought I was pretty familiar with kayaking until a date introduced me to whitewater six years ago. I realized pretty quickly that I knew very little about paddling altogether. I spent the next three years developing my rolls, duffeks, and ferries on Class II-III rivers. Occasionally I would venture into the inner San Juans, where I could relax a bit more and enjoy the scenery. Then motherhood snuck up on me, and my paddling priorities reversed.



THE KAYAK COMMUTER

Sherri Cassuto, 52, 5-foot-8; 150 pounds, 25 years kayaking, preferred ride: Epic 18x.

I see water not only as a way of life, but as life itself. To get more time on it, I travel back and forth to work by kayak, all year long. Kayaking is like being in the water in a hard drysuit. Cruising below the surface of the water, one is truly within it, feeling its movement, becoming it and going along for the ride. The rhythmic component and the sensory aspect of gliding along are both compelling. Added bonus: once offshore, you can go just about anywhere in the world.



THE SAGE OF SAFETY

Stephen Bennett, 62, 5-foot-11, 180 pounds, 14 years kayaking, preferred ride: Current Designs Solstice GTS. If I have learned anything of value in my 14 years of kayaking, it is this: For safety and efficiency, a good forward stroke easily trumps the Eskimo roll. And a rudder easily

trumps a skeg—despite what some gurus will tell you. Skirting away from trouble quickly is better than the ability to hunker down and let nature beat you up. And yet designers continue to feed us boats designed for the dubious “bomb-proof roll.” They seem to know nothing about designing a cockpit to support an efficient forward stroke that all kayakers are able to master.



FATHOM (LOW VOLUME), EDDYLINE

Veronica: The Fathom was small enough for me to handle very easily both on the water and off. Although, it was the least stable of all the boats I tested, I adapted to the edges quickly. I really liked this boat but it's too unstable and has too little storage to be my ideal multi-day trip boat.

Sherri: Clever hull design, combining partial chines and rocker for a responsive ride. It carves very well when laid on its side. The deck shape sheds water and allows for an upright stroke. Molded thigh braces limit leg positions on long paddles, while making rolls easier. Good choice for a small- to medium-sized experienced paddler who isn't interested in long trips.

Steve: The Fathom was responsive and pretty speedy too. It tracked well. The cockpit was roomy and the seat was comfortable. At rest the initial stability was only fair, but the secondary stability allowed for good turning. It will feel a little twitchy at first for some paddlers, but it steadies right out when it's moving forward.

SPECIFICATIONS

Company Line:

Designed for paddlers who prefer smaller, high-performance, open-water kayaks

Length: 15'6"

Width: 21"

Weight: 47 lbs

Burden: 300 lbs

Price: \$2,629

www.eddyline.com

Performance: A

Speed: A-

Stability: C+

Comfort: B+

Tracking: B+

Made in: Burlington, Washington

Warranty:

Three years for workmanship/defects