

Xplore

by Tiderace Sea Kayaks

Xplore—a proven expedition kayak with a performance edge, a balance between load carrying, speed and seaworthiness. This kayak is capable of multi-week expeditions in the toughest conditions. The dynamic paddling position gives paddlers all the feedback they need to tackle challenging seas. Its computer-honed hull shape squeezes away residual drag at a fast cruising pace, making this the leanest touring kayak in the Tiderace range. This hull is designed to give a reactive and responsive ride—it rewards the paddler who enjoys edging through the turns and catching waves while paddling downwind. The Xplore is suited to paddlers ranging between 5' 6" and 6' 3", and weighing up to 238 lbs. (17 stone/108 kg).

—Aled Williams, designer

REVIEWERS

GL: 5' 11", 165-pound male. Day paddles, wind to 10 knots, 1-foot chop. 45 pounds of cargo.

RG: 6' 2", 220-pound male. Day trip, wind at 15 knots, gusting to 18–20, waves to 2 ½ feet. No cargo.

TW: 6' 1", 180-pound male. Day trip, Winds to 25+ knots. Wind waves to 4 feet. No cargo.

Length overall	17' 11 ½"
Beam	20 7/8"
Volume	12.8 cu. ft.
Cockpit size	16 ½" × 30"
Cockpit coaming height:	
Forward	12 ½"
Aft	7 ⅞"
Height of seat	1 ¾"
Weight	60 ¼ lbs.

THE REVIEW

First Glance

The Xplore is a “great-looking long and lean kayak, with nice lines and a smooth finish. It feels rock solid—absolutely no oil-canning. The inside seam is glassed except for the last foot or so of the bow and stern. There is excellent reinforcing fiberglass in all the right places. It is solidly constructed overall” (GL). TW “expected the Xplore to be heavy but I was pleasantly surprised to find that I could hoist it on one shoulder without any extra effort. It even felt a bit lighter than comparable designs.”

Recessed deck fittings anchor “stout perimeter lines and shock cord. A couple of loops of shock cord provided spare paddle storage; a nice touch. The rigging was sparse immediately behind the cockpit making a paddle float reentry challenging” (TW). RG didn’t miss the outrigger deck lines: “There is a generous area immediately behind the cockpit rim to grasp while securing one’s paddle-and-float combination to remount the boat. That’s my preference, anyway.”

Fit and Outfitting

The keyhole cockpit is “fairly long and it was easy for me to sit down in the seat and bring the legs in afterward one at a time. The cockpit volume is fairly low, without a lot of space behind the seat or in front of the foot pedals. Overall the fit was excellent for function” (GL). “The cockpit opening was adequate but not large, a nice compromise for my size. I found the width to be just right” (TW). RG’s size-13 feet were “completely comfortable.” The foot braces had “control rods for quick and easy adjustment. They felt quite solid and provided excellent energy transfer for aggressive paddling” (TW).

The seat is bolted to coaming flanges and can be adjusted fore and aft. “It is short, allowing easy entry and exit from the cockpit without catching a heel, and while it was a little steep at the front for my taste, it was comfortable” (TW). The backrest, a padded plastic band that pivots on the seat hangers, is adjustable by undoing the pivot bolts. It “flexes just enough to allow laybacks” (GL) and “provided support to my lower back without pinching or binding” (TW). The padded thigh-brace flanges offer “excellent control and comfort, with pressure spread across a broad area of the thigh” (GL). The thigh braces “contacted my legs a little too close to my hips and my legs were forced a little straighter than I would prefer. For shorter legs the fit would be excellent” (TW). “The thigh braces bit into my thighs a bit, but held me well when I was upside down” (RG).

RG reported “the skeg jammed on a pebbly beach, but I’ve never seen a skeg not jam on pebbles. At least the cable didn’t kink.” Neither GL nor TW had trouble with the skeg: “I found the control easy to slide and the skeg did not chatter or flutter while I was paddling” (TW).



Stability and Maneuverability

The Xplore's initial stability was rated as "low—it feels tippy" (GL), "light" (RG) and "a tad bit more tender than some expedition kayaks; it isn't a kayak that I would select for bird-watching or photography" (TW). Secondary stability was, respectively, "moderate—you lean up against a pretty secure edge," "moderate—the kayak can be edged securely with the spray deck edge in the water" and "predictable—in high winds and rough seas the Xplore provides constant feedback letting you quickly respond to the waves."

The Xplore "tracks very well with just a tiny bit of yaw. Though it is not a quick turner, steering with leaned turns was very good" (GL). "Highly edged, aggressive turns require attention to balance. Minor course corrections require minor input that the Xplore responds to wonderfully" (TW).

GL noted "moderate weathercocking in a 10-knot breeze and one-foot chop, enough that I felt the need to drop the skeg. Without skeg help it was hard work turning downwind, but the skeg worked perfectly to eliminate weathercocking when partly deployed, and it leecocked to aid downwind turning when fully deployed." For TW "the handling was excellent and manageable in moderate winds. The Xplore had a tendency to weathercock with beam winds but that was manageable using the skeg. With winds of 25 knots or so the Xplore tended to point 15 degrees to either side of a head-on course. It did not want to go straight into the wind. The Xplore was a relatively dry ride. The bow was buoyant and did not pearl when surfing wind waves, and waves splashing onto the foredeck shed quickly and cleanly."

Speed

For RG the Xplore was "highly efficient at getting to speed for a typical touring pace." GL noted it had "OK acceleration,

very good sprint speed and excellent cruising speed." The Xplore "feels fast. Acceleration is effortless. I was able to cruise at 3.5 knots without putting forth a significant exertion. It was fast to accelerate, making surfing large wind waves a blast" (TW).

Rescue and Rolling

The Xplore's "thigh braces, solid foot pegs and low back deck made performing a variety of rolls easy" (GL). "It required little effort to roll, but the lack of secondary stability meant I needed to be sure I was fully upright and balanced. It was not conducive to lazy technique. The Xplore is well suited for reentry and rolling techniques" (TW). Wet exiting "should be practiced because the narrow keyhole demands a summersault-type exit or one leg at a time. Reentry and roll was easy sliding in with straight legs to enter the cockpit. I did a cowboy reentry in moderately rough waves without much difficulty. Most water drains from the cockpit with a single lift from the bow" (GL).

Cruising

RG thought he "could get a week to ten days' worth of gear aboard." "The small compartment on the foredeck was my favorite feature. I was able to stash safety gear, cell phone and lunch in an immediately accessible location without upsetting my balance or risking flooding a compartment" (TW). The KajakSport hatch covers are tethered and "kept the interior bone-dry, despite being awash for several miles" (RG). GL also noted all compartments were dry after trials. TW found "about a half-cup of water in the day hatch after paddling in storm conditions and practicing rolls and rescues." The composite bulkheads are glassed in

BEST FEATURES

- Speed
 - Tracking
- ### TO IMPROVE
- Thigh-brace fit



The accommodations aboard the Xplore

place. With a load of 45 pounds aboard, the Xplore "turns easily with no noticeable effect on speed once the kayak got up to cruising" (GL).

Bottom Line

GL thought the Xplore "favors the long haul, with nothing left out. Easy to roll, it has great tracking, fast cruising speed and ample and easy gear stowage. Expedition paddlers, put it on your short list." RG noted "the design is meant for fast touring but it is still agile, responsive and quick. The finish and attention to detail is exceptional. Its speed for a good touring pace or quick acceleration to play in features is quite useful. A versatile craft, for a one-boat quiver." For TW, "though the fit was a little uncomfortable, the Xplore was fun to paddle and has all the traits of an outstanding touring kayak. It would be better suited for advanced kayakers who are comfortable with their skill set or for aggressive intermediate paddlers who are enjoying the challenge of acquiring new skills."

MANUFACTURER'S RESPONSE

We would like to thank *Sea Kayaker* and the reviewing paddlers for their assessment of the Xplore. The design specification we set ourselves for the Xplore was ambitious. Our aim was to build a boat that bettered the competition. It had to: go faster and turn quicker, be more stable and respond quickly to paddler input, be tough for expedition abuse yet light to carry, and be comfortable for hours on end yet fitted for precise control. A tough challenge!

The core employed in the hull and deck laminates prevents oil-canning. Our hull and deck moldings overlap at the seam, this join is bonded, then tapes are glassed both inside and out to give quadruple thickness—bombproof! This construction method also allows us to bond and glass in the composite bulkheads for maximum strength. The four-hatch layout maximizes internal storage space. The rear deck is kept clear so

that suitable deck mounted tow systems may be fitted easily.

The Xplore family of expedition boats comprises three model sizes: Xplore S, Xplore and Xplore X. The S and X are scaled to suit smaller and larger paddlers respectively. The Xplore tested was an early model and adjustments were made to subsequent production with attention paid to the seat/thigh brace dimension. Primarily designed as a load-carrying expedition kayak, the Xplore was also designed to be responsive and agile when paddled empty. The Xplore benefits from a computer designed hull which is shaped to provide maximum efficiency at a fast cruising pace of 4 knots and above, a feature noticed by all testers.

Tiderace wishes to thank the testers for appreciating the Xplore as a high-performance expedition kayak. We set our sights high when designing this boat; we're proud that it delivers.

—Tiderace Design Team

KAYAK REVIEWS

XPLORE MANUFACTURING DATA

Designed: 2007 (2011 model year tested)
Standard construction: Classic: TCT laminate with unidirectional fiberglass and epoxy.
Optional construction: Hardcore: woven fibreglass deck and hybrid of fiberglass and Kevlar/carbon hull. **Hardcore PRO:** Vacuum infused fiberglass deck and fiberglass/Kevlar/carbon fabrics and core in the hull.
Standard Features: Thigh braces, composite seat and adjustable foot braces, four-hatch layout with lightweight covers, reflective deck lines, compass recess, and skeg.
Weight: Classic 58.4 lbs. (26.5 kg) Hardcore 56.2 lbs. (25.5 kg) Hardcore Pro 51.8 lbs. (23.5 kg)
Price: Classic, \$3,749 U.S.; Hardcore, \$4,199 U.S.; Hardcore Pro, \$4,649 U.S.
Availability: See website for dealers
Manufacturer: Tiderace Sea Kayaks, +44 1768-840-179, info@tideraceaskayaks.co.uk, www.tideraceaskayaks.co.uk

SPEED VS. RESISTANCE

Resistance in pounds.

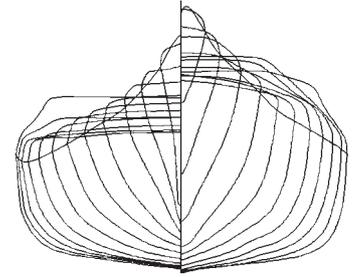
Speed	Winters/KAPER	Broze/Taylor*
2 knots	0.93	0.91
3 knots	1.94	1.94
4 knots	3.53	3.59
4.5 knots	5.07	5.00
5 knots	7.65	7.57
6 knots	13.63	13.75

*automated with the Gertler program by Robert Livingston

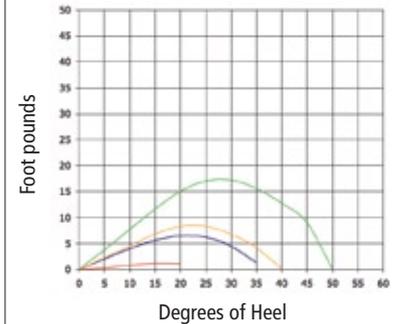
HYDROSTATICS

Waterline length	15' 8.2"
Waterline beam	20.1"
Draft	5.5"
Prismatic coefficient	0.50
Wetted surface in sq. ft.	21.90
Center of buoyancy	46.5%

(Hydrostatics calculated with a 250-pound load.)



Righting/Heeling Moments (Fixed-weight)



Stability Curves*

- 150 lb. paddler, no cargo
- 200 lb. paddler, no cargo
- 150 lb. paddler, 100 lb. cargo
- 200 lb. paddler, 100 lb. cargo

*Formula revised December 2009. (Not comparable with stability graphs generated prior to December 2009.)

TECH TALK: Readers interested in the full set of hydrostatics can find them posted on our website at www.seakayakermag.com along

with additional data. An explanation of the terms and procedures used in the kayak test program is also available on the site.

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