

KAYAK REVIEWS

Xcape

by Tiderace

Can an expedition sea kayak really be your best friend? That's the brief for the Xcape; make a boat that's high performance and efficient, but not too demanding to paddle. Just like a best friend, it looks after you when the going gets a bit bumpy, it urges you to run faster when the going is good and be bold when it's safe to do so, it holds a straight line through the chaos, you can lean on it and its stability supports you, it smooths out the twists and turns, it's reassuring and supportive when conditions get tense, and when you're tired and just want to get home it takes you there immediately, without fuss. The Xcape has cutting-edge performance and delivers it without drama or aggression—is this the thinking person's expedition boat?

How was this achieved and what's different from the Xplore? The Xcape employs a symmetrical and elliptical waterplane, a little more width, a little more V in the hull, a little less rocker, a little more skeg and the same comfortable and dynamic paddling position as all the other Tiderace boats. The Xcape and Xplore share one characteristic: each is as fast as the other. The Xcape is suited for paddlers ranging from 5' 5" to 6' 2", and weighing up to 15 stone (210 pounds).

—Dave Felton, Tiderace Sea Kayaks

REVIEWERS

GL: 5' 11", 165-pound male. Day paddles. Wind 12-20 knots, waves to 2 feet. Cargo, 45 pounds.

MC: 6' 1", 160-pound male. Day paddles and playing in surf over four days. Winds 5-25 knots, waves and surf irregular to 3 feet. No cargo.

BP: 5' 11", 165 lbs. Day paddle, wind to 10 knots, waves 1 foot or less. Swift current up to 7.4 knots. Cargo, 20 pounds.

Length overall	17' 8 5/8"
Beam	21 5/8"
Volume	12.3 cu. ft.
Cockpit size	16 3/4" x 30 1/2"
Cockpit coaming height	
Forward	11 7/8"
Aft	7 1/2"
Height of seat	1 1/4"
Weight	51 3/4 lbs.

THE REVIEW

First Glance

Tiderace's Xcape "is distinctive and sharp looking in red and white, with nice detailing and a smooth finish. The Intro layup looks great. It feels a little thin in spots but the kayak is reinforced in strategic places. Inside seam glassed the length of the kayak except for about 18 inches at the bow and stern" (GL). "There weren't any blemishes in the gelcoat" (BP). "Carrying the Xcape was a breeze. It balanced nicely on my shoulder and was easy to put on and take off my car" (BP). "The kayak has large, comfortable, ergonomically shaped hand grips for carrying, and a clever bungee system to keep these retracted when not in use" (MC).

Fit and Outfitting

"The keyhole cockpit has a moderate length and I just was able to sit down in the seat and then bring my legs in one at a time. I did, however, hit my shin on the underside of the deck hatch. The seat can also be slid back some by re-bolting through any of a series of bolt holes on the seat side. This would probably alleviate the shin problem to better fit the long-legged." For BP the cockpit "was fairly easy to get in and out of" but also "found that my legs bumped the day hatch housing. Once I was all set up and seated though, the day hatch issue was of little concern." For MC "the forward day hatch did not get in the way."

"The seat is comfortable and holds you nicely in

place, and appears very solidly constructed to withstand even the most aggressive paddler. It uses a nonslip surface to help keep you well rooted, and is molded for a nice fit" (MC). "The thin foam on very slightly contoured seat felt hard but comfortable" (GL). "The back band was positioned perfectly" (BP) and "flexed just enough to work well and allow laybacks" (GL). BP "was comfortable when pressed against the thigh braces. This level of comfort led to immediate confidence." "The foot braces were comfortable, secure and easily adjustable, though it is necessary to open the spray skirt to adjust them. There was ample space for my size-10.5 feet with booties" (MC).

The deck fittings are "very well thought out" (GL). "The safety lines were solid and easy to grab, the bungees were minimal yet held my spare paddle and chart securely. There weren't any extra unnecessary fittings that can get in the way during rescues" (BP).

For GL "the skeg deploys easily and smoothly and had no jamming problems." MC noted "the skeg was initially very easy to engage or disengage even with gloved fingers, but after an encounter with a sandy shoreline, the



mechanism became stuck and was difficult even out of the water to work free. This brief malfunction aside, the skeg worked very well and was a pleasure to operate.”

Stability and Maneuverability

The initial stability was rated “moderate” (GL), “comfortable in chop, rolling waves, breaking waves and surf” (MC) and “rock solid; I was confident the moment I sat in the kayak” (BP). Secondary stability was, respectively, “secure unless way up on edge, then a bit dicey.” “Comfortable on edge” and “very stable and comfortable—it allowed me to edge the kayak until the deck was well into the water.”

MC was “impressed with the tracking of the Xcape in conditions ranging from relatively flat to large waves.” “Even when paddling at strange angles through tidal races and wind waves, the Xcape held its course and cut through the crud” (BP). It “responds well to steering strokes both on edge and level” (MC). GL noted “a bit of weathercocking at 12 knots, enough to consider dropping the skeg a bit. Fairly high weathercocking in 20-knot blow and 2-foot chop. For a crosswind at 15-20 knots, I needed to drop the skeg about two-thirds. That said, the skeg worked perfectly to correct weathercocking and facilitated a downwind turn by creating a slight leecocking. Since the seat is adjustable, the weathercocking tendency might be largely addressed by moving the seat an inch or so rearward.” MC found the Xcape “held its course well at various angles to the wind. It delivered a dry ride. The front hatch is angled to not kick up spray which comes over the deck.”

Speed and Surf

The Xcape had “decent cruising speed for group paddles, only fair sprint speed but very good acceleration” (GL). “The Xcape felt very fast in all conditions and it seemed to hold a long glide well after each last paddle stroke” (BP).

“Wind waves were easy to catch and ride, but recovery from a couple of broaches was slow” (GL). “Rudder strokes were necessary to stay on a wave, but

BEST FEATURES

- Speed
- Cockpit comfort

TO IMPROVE

- Leg clearance around deck storage compartment

the kayak handled this comfortably and I was able to make great time downwind and riding surf” (MC). “Surfing the Xcape was a lot of fun. The kayak caught

waves easily and on one small tide race was able to sit on the wave with little effort to keep straight and in position” (BP).

Rolling and Rescue

“Thigh braces and solid foot pegs made rolling easy, though I came well out of the seat for laybacks” (GL). “The low aft deck, width and my points of contact allowed me to brace and roll very easily. Rolling the Xcape was a blast!” (BP).

During wet exits GL “had a bit of interference from the keyhole and therefore they should be practiced. I could exit by keeping both legs straight or by a somersault one leg at a time. Reentry and roll was quite easy, sliding in with straight legs to enter the cockpit, and then easy to get a grip and roll up” (GL). For BP “getting out was very easy; however, reentering could be challenging when my feet hit the day compartment. That said, I loved the convenience of the day hatch and would feel comfortable adjusting my reentry.” “The deck lines are helpful when in the water—a great safety feature—and the seat-back stays completely out of the way during reentry” (MC).

Cruising

The Xcape has “very good stowage for weeklong or longer trips. Four KajakSport hatches, including the deck hatch, and the large oval bow and stern openings make packing a breeze and make toting long, slender items or large, roundish items



The accommodations are simple but comfortable and secure.

easy” (GL). BP “loved the oval hatches. They allowed for easy packing of larger pieces of gear and the hatches smoothly popped on and off.” GL reported “about a tablespoon of water in the bow and stern compartments, a teaspoon in the deck hatch and a few drops in the day hatch after roll and rescue practice.” MC similarly reported “all the hatches leaked a very small amount after numerous inversions and playing in rough water.” The glassed-in bulkheads “were reinforced and very secure. The bulkhead aft of the seat is angled, making it easy to empty the water from the cockpit” (BP).

With a load of 45 pounds aboard, GL “felt the kayak retained its moderate initial and final stability, and the lively feel that I liked.”

The Bottom Line

The Xcape is “a forgiving kayak with a lively feel. It was fun to paddle, and easy to roll with a good compromise between tracking and turning. It has an adequate cruise pace and easy packing and gear stowage” (GL). “Xcape is well built and well designed, with significant attention to detail. It delivers a solid performance in a broad range of paddling conditions” (MC). “The Xcape was a great kayak to paddle. It performed well in all conditions I faced. I would primarily use it for long day paddles and expeditions. My favorite aspects were the speed, the versatility and the smart deck fittings” (BP).

MANUFACTURER’S RESPONSE

We would like to thank *Sea Kayaker* and the reviewing paddlers for their assessment of the Xcape. The Xcape was originally marketed as an introductory sea kayak for newcomers to expedition sea kayaking. Its stable and forgiving nature lends itself well to this purpose, as reinforced by the reviewers in this article. Over time, we sensed a growing unease in the feedback we received from experienced and skilled expedition paddlers who had purchased an Xcape. They questioned its classification as a beginner’s boat. On further questioning and analyzing this feedback, we found that the Xcape not only fit the requirements as an introductory expedition sea kayak but also fit the requirements of experienced expedition kayakers who needed a dependable, seaworthy, comfortable, efficient

and all-around competent expedition boat. We particularly welcome the reviewers’ comments on the boat’s molded and nice-fitting cockpit, well-thought-out deck layout, confident and secure stability, easy tracking through choppy conditions, adjustability in the wind, efficient cruising speed, ability to surf waves easily and very ample stowage.

All these reviews and feedback have forced us to change our views and our marketing of the Xcape. We now realize that the Xcape not only fits the bill for paddlers new to expedition sea kayaking, but also fulfills the requirements of experienced and discerning paddlers who demand a well-behaved, efficient and refined sea kayak with a lively and fun nature.

-Dave Felton, Tiderace Sea Kayaks

KAYAK REVIEWS

XCAPE MANUFACTURING DATA

Designed: 2011

Standard construction: Classic (formerly Intro): Hand-laid woven glass with epoxy resin and a core in the flatter hull and deck sections. Localized reinforcing.

Optional construction: Hardcore: Vacuum-bagged deck and hull. Glass on the outside of the laminate for easy repairs. Inside, a high-tensile layer of carbon/Kevlar to resist deformation and impact. Fine glass cloth to resist foot abrasion inside the cockpit.

Standard features: Retractable skeg, adjustable backrest, reflective deck cords, compass recess, curved bulkhead, SmartTrack foot braces

Weight: Classic, 24 kg (52.9 lbs), Hardcore, 25 kg (55.1 lbs)

Price: \$3,599 Classic, \$4,449 Hardcore

Availability: See website for a complete list

Manufacturer: Tiderace Sea Kayaks, +44 (0)

1768 840179, info@tideraceseekayaks.co.uk, www.tideraceseekayaks.com

SPEED VS. RESISTANCE

Resistance in pounds.

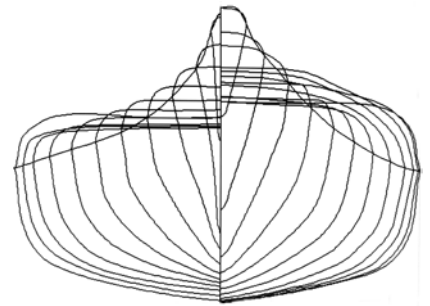
Speed	Winters/KAPER	Broze/Taylor*
2 knots	0.91	0.90
3 knots	1.91	1.92
4 knots	3.52	3.59
4.5 knots	5.20	5.09
5 knots	7.99	7.85
6 knots	14.14	14.44

*Automated with the Gertler program by Robert Livingston

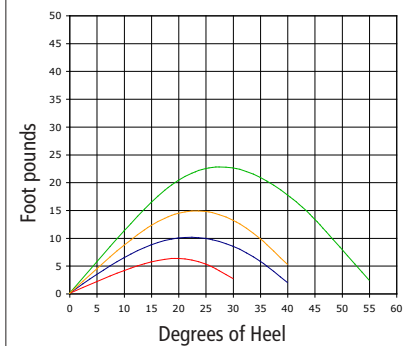
HYDROSTATICS

Waterline length	15' 5.7"
Waterline beam	21.2"
Draft	5.3"
Prismatic coefficient	0.49
Wetted surface in sq. ft.	21.56
Center of buoyancy	47%

(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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