

Advanced Elements Expedition Inflatable Kayak Review



After a lot of research and soul searching, I decided upon an inflatable kayak. When I mention this to friends and family, it is often met with a frown. This is due to the general picture people have in their minds-eye that an inflatable is one of those rubber dinghies that are reported every summer as having been blown out to sea with a couple of children on board.

But I had very good reasons to look into inflatables; cost, storage space and a need to be able to pack up the kayak and transport it home on a train (or other public transport) home after I finish longer expeditions.

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I spent a lot of time researching web reviews and performance specs for different types of inflatable until I settled upon the **Advanced Elements Expedition** as it seemed the best all rounder and had the best design when it came to carry handles, deck straps and fastening points.

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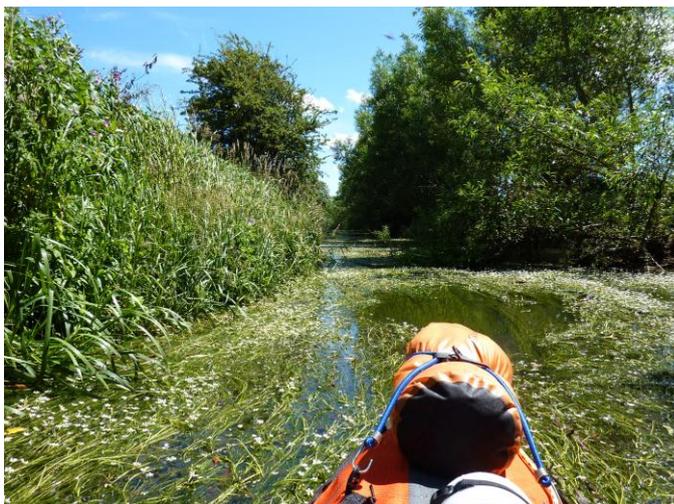
Let's start with the packaging – important in the days of internet shopping and home delivery..... The kayak comes in a box which has multiple layers of tough cardboard – all important to protect in transit.

Putting it all together was very quick. I spent twenty minutes the first time and then had another run and it took ten minutes (familiarity).

I took the kayak on a six day trip down the Thames River with all the gear required to be fully self sufficient (except for water – carrying a two day supply).

So how'd it go?

Storage space is a major issue on a trip this long. The inflatable loses a lot of space to the air chambers, so being fully self-sufficient required carrying dry bags on the front and rear decks in addition to the internal compartments. That said, the Expedition holds a remarkable amount of gear inside.



Stability. I have spent all my years in hard shell sea kayaks on expeditions around New Zealand and Canada. Hard shell sea kayaks are designed to compromise between initial stability (how stable – or tippy – they are on flat water) and secondary stability (how stable they are in rough water). One is at the expense of the other.

The **Expedition** is designed for relatively calm waters, with a relatively flat bottom which

gives it excellent stability and is therefore well suited to the not-so-experienced. This is absolutely fine for the many docile rivers and canals around the UK. This stability really paid dividends when getting in and out of the kayak at berths and high river banks. This is very much a bonus around Britain's in-land waterways.

Tracking was surprisingly good; certainly better than expected and excellent for an inflatable - I found it pretty capable in this respect. During my trip, the winds became very strong. With dry bags on the deck, this further increased the windage of the kayak. Remarkably, it coped very well and was very easy to keep on course.

Speed; the width and length ratio, combined with the fabric skin of kayak don't allow for a high speed. So long as water speed is not highly important to you then this is not an issue.



Comfort; this is simply the most comfortable kayak I have sat in. The seat and back support is superb. The kayak has an air bladder as a floor, so this is very comfortable to sit on. I fitted the backbone into the kayak, which sits under the inflatable floor. This was fine, except after a day-and-a-half of kayaking, the floor needed a single half pump of air to re-pressurise – otherwise the kayak's backbone starts to dig into the bottom of yours.

Overall, this is a very well designed, well thought out vessel. I recommend it for anyone who wishes to kayak on relatively calm waters or who is new to the pastime. I can certainly recommend it both for the day tripper and multi-day expeditions.

Just one final note; the guidance, help and service that I received from Nick at Vortex was fantastic and very much appreciated. I suggest you look no further....

A huge thank you to Jason for taking time to send this feedback along with some great images!

Nick.