

ADVANCED ELEMENTS CONVERTIBLE KAYAK
FIRST IMPRESSIONS ON
INITIAL TRIPS OUT IN SCOTLAND & WALES (SOLO & TANDEM)



Like most people who opt for an inflatable kayak, storage space and transit are main factors in their decision. Living in an apartment does not afford me the luxury of having oodles of space in which to store large outdoor leisure items such as rigid shell kayaks so an inflatable was, pretty much, the only choice I had. The word “inflatable” conjures up images of kiddies lilos and the playthings one sees at the beach on family days out – my research therefore was focused on finding a high quality inflatable craft that would be a credible alternative to a hard shell kayak.

Once you start looking, the options are quite varied – ranging from the budget priced open style Sevylors right through to the skin-on-frame collapsible Feathercrafts costing several thousand pounds. My budget was no more than £1000 so, the Advanced Elements models complete with a few accessories and a half-decent paddle fitted the bill. After perusing the website several times over and reading the reviews, all of which were very positive, I decided on the Advanced Frame Convertible. I liked the idea of having some flexibility, particularly with using it solo or tandem. There are a good number of accessories available too and it seemed to me that the backbone was “must have” which improved the stability and performance of the kayak.

Delivery from Vortex in Bangor was swift accompanied by a friendly little note from Nick offering his advice at any time. The materials used in the construction of this boat are all high quality and it certainly doesn't give the impression that you've just bought a beach toy that will only last a few outings before something



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goes wrong. In fact, you get the firm impression that, with a little care, this could last you a very long time. Very easy to put up and looks the business when it is.

The first try-out would be a holiday in the far north west of Scotland with a friend and his family. The weather is always a lottery in this part of the UK but we were lucky – sunshine and showers dominated the week with one dismal day and one glorious day. However, the wind was a persistent feature and the sea was not as calm as it could have been. It wasn't long though before the kayak had been inflated and we were ready for its maiden voyage.

The first thing that struck me was how stable the boat was. It rode the waves with aplomb and handled the swell without any feeling of a chance this was going to tip over. There wasn't a single moment I felt uncomfortable with the situation. One shouldn't expect this craft to track and glide through the water as easily as a rigid sea kayak – it doesn't. What it does do is track moderately well, it doesn't get blown around at all and can make reasonable progress, especially with two paddlers on board.

I'm not an experienced kayaker, nor is my mate Tony, but after a few trips out in the confines of the bay, we were confident enough to consider venturing further out and around the headland. If the sea had been a little calmer, I think we would have done but we decided against it this time.



We had four trips out in the kayak in total and the general consensus of opinion was; this vessel gets a thumbs up. I was asked by my friend, on the return home, not to get rid of the boat so he obviously enjoyed it and has designs on a few more trips in the future.

The second trip was a weekend in mid-Wales with some other friends. The idea was to take the kayak and my friend's Canadian canoe for a day out on Lake Bala. This time, I'd be trying the Convertible out solo as my friends and their young family would be in the Canadian canoe. We were blessed with a gloriously

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sunny, warm day and the lake was mirror smooth. I was looking forward to an easier time paddling, even though I'd be on my own. Being in the middle of a lake, in a kayak on a quiet, balmy late afternoon is such a chill-out experience – one of life's little treats.



I can't really think of anything bad to say about the Advanced Frame Convertible – I'm trying to think of something but I can't. I even love the way it can be stripped down for any maintenance or just to be washed down and dried out. You have the shell, the inner and the floor, that's it. Easy to pack away too in a bag that's big enough to get it all inside without too much difficulty.

I'm of the mind now that, even if I did have the space to store a hard shell kayak, I just might stick with an Advanced Elements Inflatable.



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