

Baidarka

by Zegul

The word “baidarka” is actually a Russian word. It is the diminutive form of “baidar” which means “boat,” so “baidarka” means “small boat.” Long waterline length and a multi-chine hull make this a fast boat which will handle well in rough water. These boats track well and are little affected by wind due to their low profile. The kayakers made by the Aleuts were unique in form and construction. The most obvious feature is a “bifurcated” bow. There has been a lot of speculation regarding the function of this bow form. The advantage of this shape is at the waterline; the lower “jaw” can be narrow and sharp, giving a fine entry into the water for good efficiency, while higher up the upper “jaw” can be full and wide for high buoyancy to lift the bow over waves. The Baidarka is designed for the paddler who wants a unique looking boat with performance and lightweight beauty.

—Zegul Team

REVIEWERS

SR: 5' 11", 160-pound male. Day trip. Wind 12 to 15 knots, with occasional gusts over 20. One trial with 50 lbs. cargo, one without cargo.

GL: 5' 11", 165-pound male. Day paddle, wind to 15 knots, wind waves to 2 feet. Cargo 55 lbs.

TW: 6' 1", 180-pound male. Day paddles. Winds to 20 knots. Wind waves to 2 foot. Trials with boat empty and with 45 lbs. of cargo.

Length overall	17" 11 3/8"
Beam	21 3/4"
Volume	14.0 cu. ft.
Cockpit size	15 3/4" x 28 3/4"
Cockpit coaming height:	
Forward	12"
Aft	9 1/8"
Height of seat	1 1/4"
Weight	57 lbs.

THE REVIEW

First Glance

“The unique, Swede-form Baidarka mimics the lines of traditional baidarkas with its upswept bow. It will definitely turn some heads” (GL). It “exemplifies a very fine production process, and shows no flaws in workmanship. The gelcoat and the finish inside are very smooth.” (TW); “a well-built boat” (SR).

It has a “moderate weight for its length and is not a difficult carry, but the balance point is toward the front of the cockpit” (GL). There are no carry toggles “but for a tandem carry it’s easy to grab the bow and stern. Recessed teak strips anchor numerous shock cords. A pair of lines at the bow can serve to hold one end of a Greenland paddle. The grab lines cover a couple of feet only near the bow and stern. The shock cords can hold a spare breakdown paddle aft” (GL).

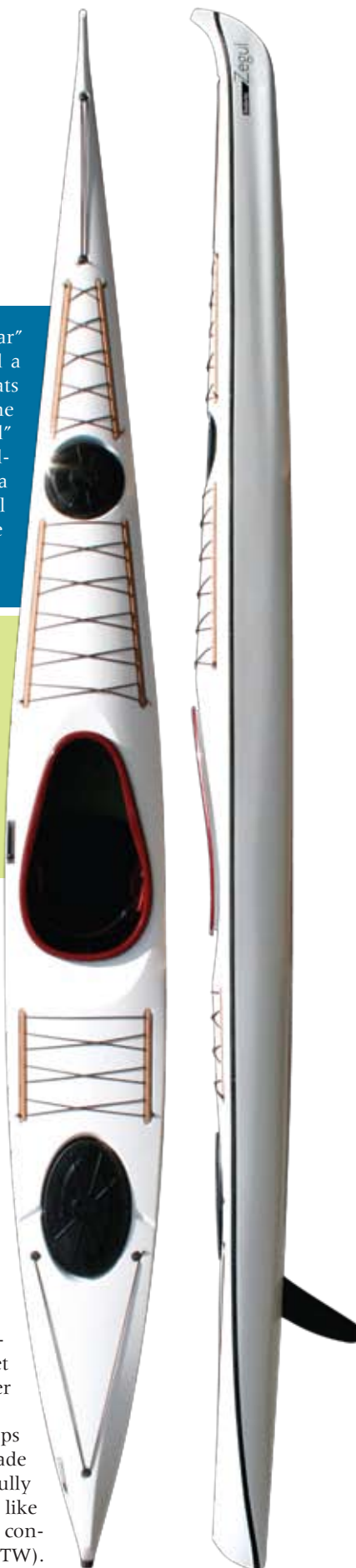
Fit and Outfitting

“The cockpit opening is short. If I sat down first, I could bring my legs in one at a time if I leaned back. Leg room was otherwise good. I had no problems with my size-10 booties. My size-12 mukluks fit, with the toes bent over a bit by the underside of the deck, but not uncomfortably so” (GL). “The foredeck is nice and low for easy strokes” (SR).

The seat was a poor fit for SR because its “raised pads were right under my sit bones,” but GL was “comfortable” as was TW: “very comfortable with just the

right amount of padding.” The back support is a padded flexible plastic sheet that “bends nicely with the body, rotating around a pair of seat bolts” (GL). It can be adjusted by removing the bolts. “Over an hour-long paddle I found no reason to fidget with it—a good sign” (TW). There’s no special outfitting for thigh bracing: “Knees directly contact the underside of the deck. My wetsuit prevented painful direct contact with the knee on the underside of the deck. Padding would be easy to glue in” (GL). “Integrating thigh braces would greatly enhance the maneuverability and security in rough waters” (TW). The foot braces are set with a notched rod, felt bomber enough and didn’t flex. (SR).

The skeg blade is “broad and drops deep. Deploying just a bit of it made a huge difference for tracking. Fully set, it keeps you on your course like you’re on rails” (GL). “The skeg control was easy to reach and slide” (TW).



Stability and Maneuverability

The Baidarka's initial stability is "low, a little dicey" (GL). "It wants to go to its secondary and does so quickly—not a beginner-friendly boat. Its secondary is fairly solid but it does want to roll faster than most boats past a stable edge position. Expert paddlers will be able to find its strong points" (SR). "The Baidarka felt tender at first but I quickly became comfortable. Its secondary stability is very reassuring. Adding 45 pounds of gear provided stability that would make even a nervous paddler comfortable in a chop" (TW). With 55 pounds aboard, the Baidarka "settled in a bit with an initial stability I'd call medium-low; secondary stability became high and secure sitting on the edge" (GL).

SR found the Baidarka "tracks like a dream" but TW and GL thought it "would sometimes drift off-course, especially at speed, and need a lean and sweep to get back on course. With just a bit of skeg, tracking was excellent" (GL). While TW thought the Baidarka "does not turn or maneuver briskly," SR found it "surprisingly spry for an 18-foot boat and quick to respond to turning strokes when flat, and very nice when on edge. I did not expect this long speedster of a boat to be as fun as it was when maneuvering." "Steering with a bit of lean is quick. It turns faster and with less sweep than any long boat in memory" (GL).

Speed

"This boat had great speed. I was able to hold over 4 knots without exertion and sprint at 7 knots—a great boat for workouts or serious mileage" (SR). For GL the Baidarka was "very fast, even surprisingly so. It just keeps going faster and faster with increased effort." TW noted "the Baidarka takes a bit of effort to get up to speed but once moving it will eat the miles away."

In wind and waves "the deck shed the water well before the cockpit and the bow kept above the waves surprisingly well. This boat is less bothered by wind and weathercocking than most" (SR). GL found "some weathercocking in 15 knots of wind." TW found "the Baidarka

BEST FEATURES

- Speed
- Large, dry storage compartments

TO IMPROVE

- Thigh Bracing

challenging in brisk winds without the skeg deployed but a balanced course is possible using the skeg."

"Its speed made the Baidarka race out in front of wind waves. In downwind conditions with moderate waves I could really cover ground fast. The Baidarka will broach quickly, so it took some experimentation to determine how much skeg was required" (TW). "The quick response to ruddering make this boat fun when surfing wind waves. The speed made catching waves of all sizes a breeze" (SR).

Rescue and Rolling

"The cockpit coaming curves downward, so a spray skirt with a tight bungee has an extra lip to go over before coming off. During a wet exit I couldn't remove my skirt with the grab loop so I had to reach under the lip with both hands to peel it off. Once it's off, getting out is easy. Getting back in isn't terrible but the initial stability problem makes it twitchy for cowboy entry" (SR). TW and GL didn't report any difficulty removing their spray skirts. "By holding the paddle shaft to the back of the coaming I was able to perform a paddle float reentry. Additional rigging, specific to a paddle-float rescue would make the task much easier" (TW). GL was "one for two attempting a cowboy reentry. It's not to be counted on. Reentry and roll was pretty easy, with little effort sliding in upside down to get in position."

"The lack of thigh braces made rolling the Baidarka challenging" (TW). SR found rolling "not difficult. The hardest part is getting back to initial stability without twitch." For GL the Baidarka was "fairly easy to roll. The rear deck is too high for laybacks."



The back band can be adjusted by removing the bolts that attach it to the seat hangers.

Cruising

The Baidarka's "stowage volume is huge, with a deep stern that will hold everything but the bulkiest items" (GL). "A week or more shouldn't be a problem for the economic packer" (SR). The only water reported in the storage compartments was less than a tablespoon after GL's roll and rescue practice. The recess is a close fit against the edge of the hatch cover, "requiring a bit of fiddling to get the cover secure" (TW).

The carbon/aramid bulkheads were well placed and maximized the dry storage. Installation was very clean" (GL). The aft bulkhead is "located close behind seat and facilitates easy water removal with a lift of the bow" (GL).

The Bottom Line

The Baidarka is "a fast boat with bomber tracking and minimal windage; very efficient through the water and more playful than anticipated. The bifurcated bow works as described. Its strength leans toward the expert expedition paddler that likes going a long ways fast" (SR). GL thought the Baidarka is "a kayak for the mid-sized or larger paddler and intermediate skill level, who wants a speedy kayak that can carry a big gear load and has the maneuverability of a much smaller craft." For TW, the Baidarka "blends high-tech composites and old world design. In wind the skeg is necessary. With the addition of thigh braces, the Baidarka's large volume and stable nature with cargo loaded would make it well suited for touring for paddlers with the strength to manage a large kayak."

MANUFACTURER'S RESPONSE

We very much appreciate the review of the *Sea Kayaker* testers. We are delighted that the review confirmed that we have achieved the level of quality that we aimed for with Zegul kayaks, especially the finishing quality. This confirms that we have successfully reached our target. Of course we are constantly improving our products' functional features, among them the paddler's comfort, what the testers have brought out to improve. It is very rewarding to us that the test

paddlers summarized in the "Bottom Line" many key elements that we aim for in Zegul kayaks' brand positioning and target group. Thank You!

—Marek Pohla
Zegul Kayaks Team

KAYAK REVIEWS

BAIDARKA

MANUFACTURING DATA

Designed: 2011

Standard construction: Vacuumed carbon/aramid lay-up with extra reinforced keel strip area (reviewed)

Optional construction: Vacuum infused carbon fiber lay-up

Standard Features: Lightweight Click-on hatches, thigh pads, aramid seam, rubber deck beads, teak deck rigging

Optional Features: Aramid reinforced keel strip, clear aramid deck design sections, retractable skeg

Weight: Carbon/aramid: 53–57 lbs. (24–26 kg); carbon: 44–48lbs. (20–22 kg)

Price: US \$3,764

Availability: See website (under "contact") for a list of dealers worldwide

Manufacturer: Tahe Kayaks, +372 600 89 69; janek@tahemarine.com; www.zegulmarine.com

SPEED VS. RESISTANCE

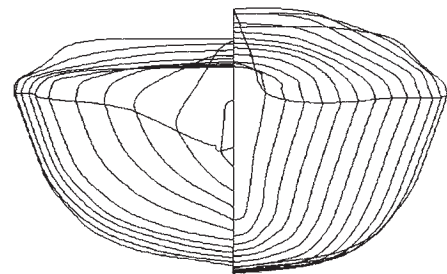
Resistance in pounds.

Speed	Winters/KAPER	Broze/Taylor
2 knots	0.96	0.95
3 knots	2.01	2.00
4 knots	3.48	3.67
4.5 knots	4.61	4.68
5 knots	6.31	6.25
6 knots	11.29	10.85

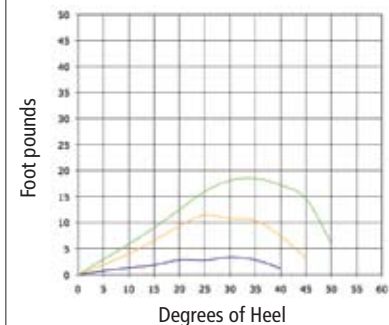
HYDROSTATICS

Waterline length	17' 5.9"
Waterline beam	19"
Draft	5.1"
Prismatic coefficient	0.56
Wetted surface in sq. ft.	23.16
Center of buoyancy	53%

(Hydrostatics calculated with a 250-pound load.)



Righting/Heeling Moments (Fixed-weight)



Stability Curves*

- 150 lb. paddler, no cargo
- 200 lb. paddler, no cargo (all values negative)
- 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.

Sea Kayaker Magazine

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www.seakayakermag.com