

ZEGUL MARINE 530

SPECIFICATIONS

LENGTH: 530 cm WIDTH: 52 cm COCKPIT: 83 x 45 cm WEIGHT: CARBON / ARAMIDE 25 kg CAPACITY: 130 kg FRONT STORAGE: 10 cm REAR STORAGE: 44 x 26 cm DECK STORAGE: 15 cm RRP: FROM £2225.00 FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE: WWW.ZEGULMARINE.COM



ABOUT THE TEST, PADDLING CONDITIONS AND PADDLERS

The Zegul 530 has been paddled over a 6-week period in predominantly windy conditions of F4–6 with sea states in the range 2–4. It has been paddled by two paddlers, the primary reviewer standing at 5'9", 89kg with the other reviewer at 5'11, 83kg.

MANUFACTURER'S SUMMARY

The ZEGUL 530 is definitely not for beginners, but rather for advanced and dedicated paddlers. The Zegul 530 is easy to turn and manoeuvre, fast, easy to roll and enjoyable to paddle, just like the other Zegul kayaks. This is the kayak for those who want to feel safe while paddling but still want to have fun and enjoy the speed.

DESIGN

The Zegul 530 is the smaller sibling (or LV version) of the Zegul 550. At 530cm (17'4) in length it is a low-profile Swede-form design with a hard-chined flatter bottomed hull. The 530 has a low rocker and, viewed in profile, exhibits a shorter curved bow and squared stern giving maximum waterline length. Viewed from the front, the smooth, sleek lines are obvious with minimal flare to the bow. The smooth lines flow nicely into the hard chines which run from mid-footrest to mid-stern before giving way to the smoother stern. The bow deck is a rounded (somewhat domed) design from start to finish, while the stern is flat and exceptionally low profile. A narrow but long cockpit sits with a wide rear, quickly narrowing to a pronounced point at the front with large thigh grips.

CONSTRUCTION: FINISH, FITTINGS AND ERGONOMICS

The review kayak was a carbon-hulled aramide deck version and was blemish-free and beautifully finished. Yellow deck and hull were offset by black seam, cockpit coaming and decklines. The Zegul 530 is a 3-hatch layout. A round front hatch and an oval rear hatch provide access to their respective compartments. Interestingly, there is no day hatch on the 530; instead a deck hatch provides access to a small compartment forward of the cockpit. The stern hatch is a Kajaksport rubber design while the deck and front hatch use Kajaksport 'click-on' hatch covers. The rear

and front hatches remained dry throughout the test; however, there was water ingress into the deck hatch during a heavy session of rolling and self-rescue practice. All three covers were easy to remove or replace, even with cold hands.

In terms of load-carrying, the boat took a decent amount of kit onboard without fuss although would struggle to carry large expedition loads. It would be most suited to trips of a few days as opposed to longer expeditions. I did miss having a day hatch, which the larger 550 has. I've become used to carrying less kit on my buoyancy aid/deck and having a carefully packed and accessible day hatch set up in an ordered fashion. The deck hatch will take a small amount of on-the-water essentials, but I reverted to carrying kit on my PFD and under the decklines or taking a deck bag out on the water to keep kit easily to hand.

Decklines run the full length of the bow and stern of the Zegul 530 with ample deck bungees for securing splits, chart cases and the like. The recessed fittings are neatly arranged and also offer opportunities to add further deck bungees if desired. The 530 also offers protection to the deck from split paddles scratching the surface in the form of carbon-fibre panels on both bow and stern where the paddles would sit.

On the back deck, a drainage channel runs from the rear of the cockpit to the rear deck hatch. This has two security bars fitted across it for locking down the kayak during storage or transit; they could also be used as attachment points for equipment carried on the stern.

The long and narrow keyhole cockpit is wide enough at the rear to make entry and exit easy enough, with enough length to lift legs in without hindrance. The seat is a fibreglass base with thin padding attached, which is nice and low in the kayak. It has a padded back band with a very wide plastic band behind it that is bolted to either side of the seat/cockpit. Adjustment requires the bolts to be removed and refitted in one of the various adjustment holes provided in the plastic band. This limits the adjustment possibilities slightly; however, it does provide secure back support that did not

demonstrate any loosening or tucking under during entry/re-entry into the kayak. The coaming was reassuringly sturdy, thicker than on boats such as the Tahe Marine Reval or Greenland T but thinner than on something like a Valley Etain or P&H Cetus.

Footrests are adjustable using a long-arm locking system which can be utilised while on the water. The pedals were comfortable enough, although felt a little on the small side compared to Yakima footrests fitted in Valley Boats or the P&H adjustable footrest system.

The skeg is a wired version with a control unit utilising a bar mechanism to avoid kinked cables. The operation was smooth, although I am not a fan of the pronounced handle on the skeg control (preferring those which are flush to the deck).

PERFORMANCE

The Zegul 530 is a very different kayak to many I have paddled. On the water, it has a solid initial stability (more than expected with a hard-chined hull). Secondary stability is also nice and reassuring. Once on the move, the Zegul is quick to get up to cruising speed – an impressive speed it is too! The 530 is definitely faster than the style of boats I usually paddle (British-style expedition boats with good rocker such as the Valley Etain and P&H Cetus). Its sleek design, long waterline and sharp bow really aid its speed through the water, slicing through small chop and waves.

The hull design when combined with the very low profile stern also means that the Zegul 530 tracks superbly well – I would argue better than almost all the boats I have reviewed to date. The skeg was utilised to test it out. As the review progressed, however, I realised how little I was deploying the skeg and only bringing it into play in the windiest of conditions.

The obvious payoff to such good speed and tracking is manoeuvrability. The Zegul 530 is significantly less manoeuvrable than the higher-rocker British-style boats. That said, I was impressed with its relative manoeuvrability for such a straight, long

waterline kayak. You really need to crank the 530 up on its edge to assist turning, and at this point you appreciate its positive secondary stability.

The 530 handles swell and waves well, particularly the more tricky conditions such as beam and rear quartering seas. The low windage and positive tracking helps keep the kayak running true without a huge amount of input from the paddler. While surfing in small waves, it ran straight on the waves without broaching but was harder work to try and turn on a wave.

Rolling was nice and positive: the flat, low back deck assists you all the way. Straddle re-entries are nice and straightforward with the initial stability aiding the manoeuvre.

CONCLUSION

For me, the Zegul 530 was a surprise package. From looking along its lines I expected it to be a reasonably swift kayak, but was surprised at just how fast a cruising speed it could hold. I was also very impressed by how well it tracked and coped with the recent high winds that the UK has seen. I'm a stockier paddler, so its narrower design led me to anticipate an uncomfortable cockpit. However, with a more straight-legged paddling position I remained comfortable on long day paddles. Finally, the initial stability was higher than expected for a hard-chined kayak.

For paddlers looking for something a bit different to the highly manoeuvrable/playful British-style kayaks, the Zegul 530 is one to take a look at. It will reward paddlers by hard tracking and eating up the miles. ■

MANUFACTURER'S RESPONSE

We very much appreciate the review of the testers. Of course it makes us tremendously happy that the Zegul 530's good initial stability and the positive response on speed and tracking showed that the hull design received excellent feedback. We truly appreciate that the testers found the Zegul 530 to be a fast and comfortable kayak on a long day's paddle – one boat can make many demanding kayakers happy. Thank You!

Marek Pohla, Zegul Kayaks Team.