

Expedition Kayaks

Review of the Tahe Marine Wind 585, by Mark Sundin
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The Wind 585, Blowing through a change of thinking.



Wind 585

OK, so where do I start on this one without it sounding biased....?

From the outset, we chose the Wind 585 in the Tahe range because it had all the hallmarks of a top notch, high-speed fitness tourer. The waterline length is something that regular paddlers on Sydney Harbour, Moreton Bay, Port Phillip Bay & other waterways where there are distances to be covered efficiently can instantly relate to. The boat has pedigree having won the last four annual races across the 85km Helsinki Straits, and we have seen the rise & rise of designs like the Rapier 20, Epic 18 & other so called 'fitness' boats. From the outset I was expecting this 585 to be a fast sea kayak, with moderate initial stability as you would expect from a boat of this modest beam, and also something capable of holding a load for experienced paddlers looking to tour offshore. I certainly wasn't expecting any of the responsive 'British' handling that I've come to love in the Valley & Rockpool designs.

So, with an ideal bunny to measure myself against in super fit adventure racer Sharn, who was testing the Epic V10 Sport, I put the 585 on the roof for it's maiden paddle yesterday. I planted the boat in the calm water at Clontarf, hopped in, sealed up the spray deck & then instinctively dropped an edge to turn. I was expecting a twitchy secondary stability, but got a great surprise when the edge bounced back at me, not unlike the way the secondary stability of the NDK Explorer performs given the same degree of heel. I was even more surprised when it spun 90 degrees in the water on my stationary edge turn. Clearly this was a boat with a little more to offer than straight-line speed.

OK, so a nice surprise, not the non-existent secondary stability of most boats of this length & beam, but surely that would mean a lower terminal hull speed? Sharn & I set off on the calm water of middle harbour for Grotto Point, and I made sure I cranked the boat up to a good clip to see where exactly I would feel the 'wall' of terminal hull speed. I gradually started to blow out a few big ones as my cadence rose & rose, it became apparent from the lack of hull resistance that this boat is damn fast. A glance behind at Sharn in the 6m surf ski showed that he was pushing pretty hard to keep up with me, and although the V10 Sport isn't an out & out greyhound on flat water like the Rapier or V12, it can still move along faster than any production sea kayak. Speed credentials confirmed.

We got past Grotto Point where there was a solid 1.5-2m swell running, & I suggested we paddle across to North Head so Sharn could get a feel for the ski in what were very real downwind conditions on the return leg. Into the head sea the 585 showed no signs of stalling or slamming over the steep waves, and maintained a hot cruising speed. The

initial stability of the boat is embarrassingly solid. While Sharn had a couple of short unplanned swims on the ski, I purred through the confused water in absolute comfort. With all the ski paddling I've been doing lately, it was almost too easy to ride through the swell in the 585 without a brace or wobble. Perhaps I have become a poor judge of a boats' stability, but to me this seemed Rockpool GT-like in it's rock solid feel on the water.

Last but not least I had to see how the boat performed in following conditions. We turned just short of North Head & ran back to Grotto Point with steepening seas behind us. I was again expecting some sea kayak-endemic terminal broaching as the steeper ones picked me up & surfed me along, but the boat tracked straight & true. Sharn on the ski was picking up long runs in the near perfect conditions, and I had to work a bit harder to get the boat to stay with the ride, but clearly 5.85m combined with a narrow beam is enough to give you a superb hydrodynamic run on following waves. We crossed the 3km back to Grotto Point in 13 minutes; an absolute blast, and the most fun I've had at high speed in a sea kayak by miles. Best of all, the 585 gives you feedback in these sorts of conditions. I've heard it described brilliantly as a 'tap on the shoulder', that split second before it's time to accelerate onto a wave where the boat just gives you a hint of when to put on the power. It's a hard thing to put in words but I'm sure everyone who's experienced it, and is reading this, will know what I mean.

In conclusion, while I'm loathe to jump to any huge conclusions about any boat after just one 2 hour paddle, there were enough signs in what were excellent, at times reasonably technical water, to suggest that the Wind 585 may be about to re-define what we should expect from a long waterline sea kayak. A combination of really impressive upper end speed, rough water handling, down sea stability & tracking & terrific bouncy and highly defined secondary stability, which of course allow to really drop your edges & turn sharp if you need to, make it something completely unexpected. The build quality is superb, with a seam inside & out all the way to ends, a skeg and a SmartTrack rudder, a glove box forward hatch & day hatch, all-rubber KayakSport hatches, and integrated ergonomic thigh braces which give you awesome boat fit. At just \$2990, those 80kg+ paddlers lusting after a sub 11hr Hawkesbury Classic, or the big load-hauling Bass Strait aspirants now have a real contender to consider.

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