

This is an attempt to consolidate numerous records and accounts of sea kayak expeditions throughout the history of the sport of sea kayaking.

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If you know of a worthy sea kayak expedition that is not included please do contact me. I have only included sea KAYAK expeditions but it is worth noting that whilst he paddled a canoe not a kayak, [Verlen Kruger](#) has his own unique place in Expedition Sea paddling history.



The qayaq or qajaq or kayak is the skin covered sea-going craft used by the Eskimos of the Arctic – dating back to before AD500 there is speculation that they were used as far back as 2000BC. Eskimo or Esquimaux was the name given to the Indians who occupied the Far North of the American continent by their southern neighbours. In fact there were several diverse Native peoples of the Arctic who went by different names: the Inuit of Canada and Greenland, the Inupiat of Alaska, the Inuvialuit of the Mackenzie River delta and the Aleuts of Northern Siberia. They used kayaks of specific design unique to each tribe. Dutch whalers, plying the waters around Greenland in the 1600s brought back kayaks along with many other artefacts including hunting equipment, skins and ivory. Some of these kayaks still exist today in Dutch museums. These early kayaks were made of driftwood and bone pegged and lashed together to make a light rigid frame. Sewn onto the frame were the skins of five caribou or nine sealskins. Seal oil was used as waterproofing. These elegant craft were used to hunt walrus and seal. They were seaworthy, fast and silent; the perfect boat for a hunter.

The Inuit continued to build and use kayaks until the mid-nineteenth century, when cultural disruption and the availability of commercially made canoes and other boats took the place of traditional skin-covered kayaks. More recently the Inuit have attempted to revive their ancient culture. Qaanat Kattuffiat, the Greenland Kayak Association is evidence of this. Those who remember the old ways have helped the new generations of Inuit preserve the traditional techniques of construction of kayaks and associated equipment. Historians and scholars from both sides of the Atlantic have sought to preserve and record these skills. There are some beautiful examples of replica kayaks, built using wood and canvas (instead of sealskin).

Most modern kayaks are produced in a mould, from plastic, or laminated in fibreglass and diolen and polyester resin or the more expensive hybrids of Kevlar and carbon fibre using vinylester or epoxy resins. Kayak manufacturers have tried to incorporate the lines of the Eskimo kayak into their modern designs. Many Inuit consider these new 'plastic' kayaks to be ugly and for the most part remain loyal to their traditionally built craft. Ugly or not the modern sea kayak is incredibly sea worthy, and in the right hands is capable of undertaking long voyages in extreme conditions.

Derek Hutchinson describes the potential of the sea kayak most eloquently in his book (1) 'The Complete Book of Sea Kayaking':

“Sea kayaking gives a person the opportunity to venture on to a wild, unpredictable expanse in a craft that moves solely by the strength of their arm, directed by their experience and knowledge. Facing the challenge of the sea in this way causes a paddler to journey into the genuine unknown – the unknown and untried areas of his own soul. The sea kayaker depends on neither wind nor engine; he shares his craft and responsibility with no-one. The kayak man challenges the sea in what appears to be the most diminutive and delicate of crafts, even more fragile in appearance than the smallest of sailing dinghy.

Nevertheless, the man who paddles the kayak well is the master of one of the finest, most seaworthy crafts in the world. It can lay beam on to a breaking sea many times its own height. The fastest and most dangerous of waters, which are treacherous terrors for even the largest sailing boat or motor craft, can be conquered by the shallow-drafted kayak. It can hop from bay to bay seeking shelter and passages where no other boat can or dare go, and it can avoid the roughest water by hugging the shore. It can capsize and be righted by a dextrous paddler without him ever having to leave the security of the kayak.”

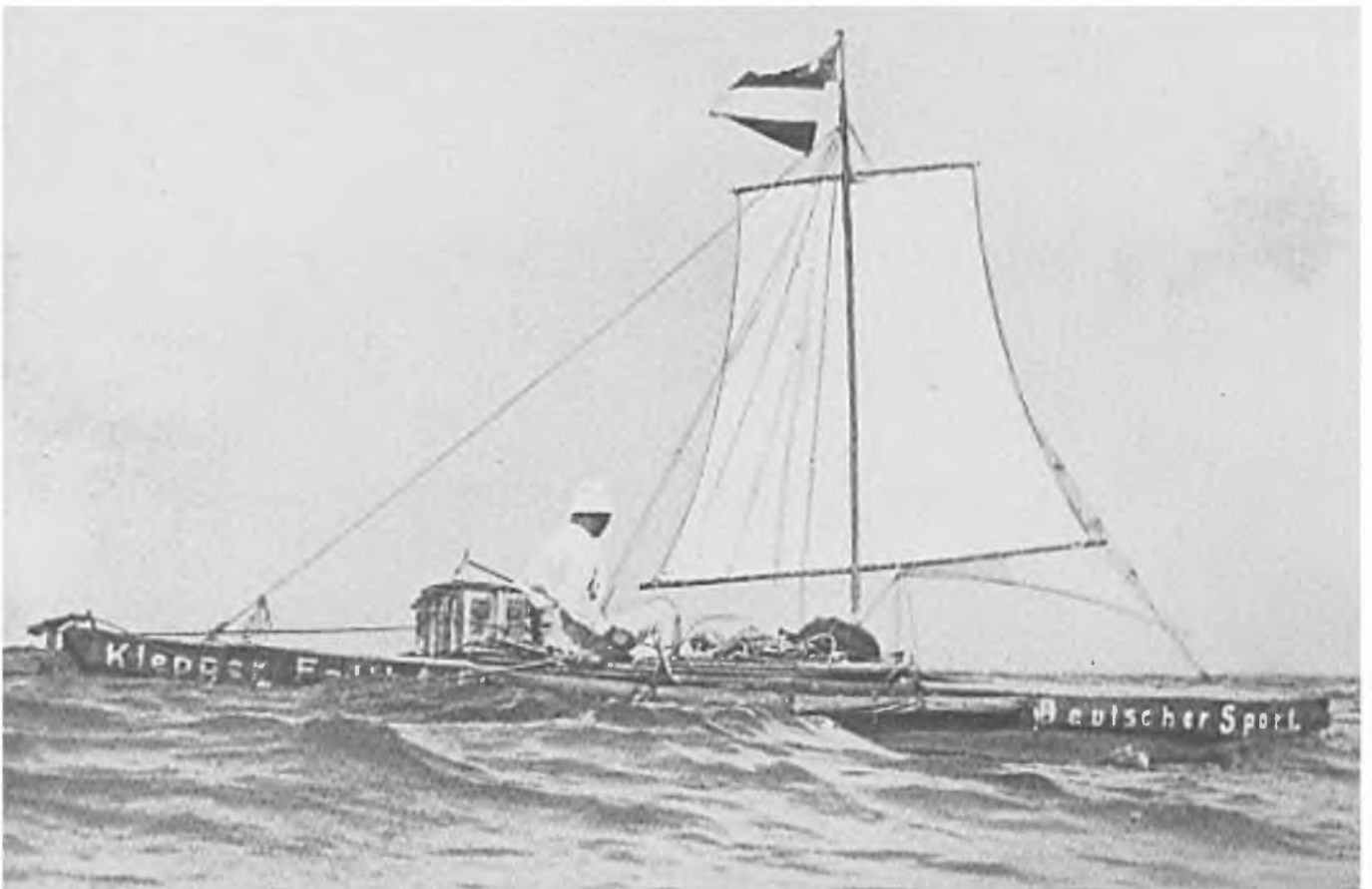


"VICKI FINE'S ROY CANOE"

The British can probably legitimately claim to have invented the 'sport' of expedition kayaking in the Victorian era with the journeying of [John MacGregor](#) (3) in his beloved Rob Roy, a craft far removed in design from the Eskimo kayak. While John MacGregor is also claimed by the canoe crowd, he was the first to take the traditional form of a native kayak and turn it into a recreation tool. And while MacGregor navigated his famed craft Rob Roy down rivers and open waters alike, the boat's form influenced modern sea kayaks and their use as a recreational craft. MacGregor made several journeys in his custom-built, cedar-and-oak kayaks in the 1860s.

In **1865** he began by paddling down the Thames, ferrying across the English Channel, and then paddling the rivers and lakes of Europe. In 1868 one of his most famous

expeditions took him through the Middle East. Despite several modifications to his boat's design, such as sail riggings and a canopy that opened to a mosquito net-covered sleeping bay, the Rob Roy bore measurements common to modern-day sea kayaks: 15 feet long, 28 inches wide, nine inches deep, and 80 pounds in weight. MacGregor was a hundred years ahead of his time. Were it not for MacGregor and his Rob Roy, it might not have occurred to anyone to pick up traditionally structured boats and paddle them for fun.



Franz Romer

On March 31, **1928**, German-born **Franz Romer** (3) set out alone from Lisbon, Portugal, to make the first recorded crossing of the **Atlantic** in a sea kayak. The 29-year-old World War I veteran travelled almost 4,000 miles and spent 58 unbroken days at sea between the Canary Islands and St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, before finally making land in Puerto Rico.

Romer filled Deutscher Sport, his 21'6" modified Klepper, end-to-end with food and slept in his seated position under a homemade spray skirt that covered everything except for a small breathing tube. He progressed with his paddle as needed, but mostly moved under a deck-mounted sail to which he attached a guide line that held his rudder true regardless of whether he was awake, asleep, taking latitude and longitude readings or simply hallucinating. He had to eat his way through his food stores before he could stretch out, and suffered from boils and atrophy. Remember that in 1928, the only navigation technology available included his compass, sextant, binoculars and a barometer.

In mid-September, after about six weeks' recovery on St. Thomas and then a brief sail over to San Juan Harbor in Puerto Rico, Romer again took to sea with the goal of making his way up the American coastline to New York. Having survived one hurricane after his departure from Lisbon and another after departing from Las Palmas, he met his fate at the outset of the third and final leg. Romer missed a hurricane warning by one hour and steered straight into

the storm. No trace of him was ever found. Despite his death, and despite no written record of his experience, Franz Romer's Atlantic crossing remains inarguably the greatest sea kayaking expedition of the modern era.

You can be forgiven for not knowing about [Oskar Speck](#). His [story](#) went untold for many years but remains one of the longest journeys (30,000miles) ever undertaken by kayak. He left Ulm, Germany in 1932 and paddled to Australia, arriving in September 1939, unbeknown to him two weeks after the start of World War II. He was met by two policemen who congratulated him and then told him he would be interned until after the War had ended. Thus for years there was little known of his incredible journey in a wood frame and canvas folding [Pioneer Faltboot](#) double kayak.

When he set off, without a farewell from anyone, down the River Danube towards the Mediterranean, his original goal was Cyprus where he hoped to find work in the copper mines. But en route he decided to 'see the world' and continue to Australia. He had the kayak shipped from Larnaka to the Syrian coast then took a bus across Syria to Meskene on the Upper Euphrates River thus avoiding the busy Suez Canal. His kayak was replaced four times during the 7 year journey. He capsized 10 times and was arrested, shot at and had his kayak stolen. It was remarkable that he survived at all considering. It could be argued that such a journey now would be just as challenging for entirely different (political) reasons.

The legendary trip by which all open-water expedition kayakers measure themselves is probably Hannes Lindemann's Atlantic crossing of the Atlantic in 1956. While he wasn't the first to cross the Atlantic by kayak, the German's expedition has gained the greatest notoriety among contemporary paddlers because he published a written record of his epic crossing (2), *Alone at Sea*. Lasting over 72 days, from Oct. 20 to Dec. 30, 1956, he traveled between Las Palmas in the Canary Islands and St. Martin's, the Bahamas, in a 17'1" folding Klepper, the *Liberia III*. Lindemann subsisted mostly on evaporated milk, cans of beer, rainwater and the sea life he could spear from his seat. Being a physician helped him anticipate and treat his ailments, and he approached them with mainstream medicine and a sort of pre-New Age philosophy mind training. Nonetheless, Lindemann suffered from atrophy in the legs, skin boils and infections from alternating dry and wet conditions, and sleep deprivation. He had to eat his way through his supplies before he could stretch out comfortably for a reasonable four-hour's sleep. Ironically, by the time he created enough sleeping room, the weather turned so sour that he had to remain largely awake. Lindemann made use of a double sail rig and an outrigger constructed of half an automobile tire tube. The journey was surprisingly smooth for the first month, and Lindemann took advantage of the warming trade winds. But in late November things grew tumultuous, and in mid-December he spent a day and a half

clinging to the side of his capsized boat. On several occasions, he climbed onto his kayak's overturned hull, but the air temperature was so much colder, and his drenched wax-cloth attire so un-insulating, that he slipped back into the water to wait out the storm. He confesses that his mantra kept him alive: "West...Never give up, never give up, I'll make it."

In 1969, John Dowd, the New Zealand-born founder of Sea Kayaker magazine and author of the classic instructional book *Sea Kayaking; A Manual For Long Distance Touring* attempted to retrace the escape route of some of the commandos involved in Operation Rimau. Few people know the stories of Operations Jaywick and Rimau, WWII missions of Australian Z-Group commandos who paddled into Singapore to blow up Japanese ships.

Dowd and a friend paddled a Klepper across the South China and Java seas and down the Sumatran coast in the wake of those early fugitives. Jaywick was a completely successful raid (from the perspective of the Allies), but because there were no survivors of Operation Rimau, the route's details were sketchy and based upon Japanese interrogation reports. Nevertheless, following the account in Ronald McKie's book *The Heroes*, Dowd was able to locate a cache of the group's corroded limpet mines in a cave on Pulau Panjang, Z-group's base for attacking Singapore. It was the trip's highlight.

“We were eventually run out of Indonesia at gunpoint,” says Dowd. “It was quite an adventure.”

While Dowd only made it 500 of his target 3,000 miles in the six weeks of his expedition before becoming side tracked by other adventures, it remains an important trip for its effect on subsequent paddlers.

The first person to document an attempt to circumnavigate the mainland of Great Britain was Geoffrey Hunter (4) in 1970 in a home-made wooden sea kayak. Geoff was forced to cut short his voyage by going through the Crinan and Caledonian Canals, thus avoiding the most exposed coasts of the West and North of Scotland. The blurb on the back of his book gives some idea of the challenges he faced:

“The duration of the journey was estimated to take three months—the reality lasted from May to November. The canoeist, Geoffrey Hunter, was acutely short of funds and this obliged him to survive by his wits when ashore, just as his survival at sea depended on his great skill as a canoeist. Geoff narrowly escaped death when he was shipwrecked in the Solway Firth. His kayak was a write-off, but he borrowed another Angmagssalik and continued on his way. Not until he reached the West Country did Geoff begin to get the organised shore-based support that he sorely needed.”

It is a remarkable account of an adventure in the ‘old fashioned’ style. Whilst his level of expertise as a paddler is without question, the suitability of his kit and the lack of real

planning and experience meant that Geoffrey was perhaps fortunate to get as far as he did and return home safely. In 1973, John Dowd and Anna Rutherford kayaked from Punta Arenas, Chile to Puerto Montt using a Klepper double spreading the trip over 5 months as they were stopping to take pictures for a National Geographic article that was sadly never published. “The main epic was crossing the Golfo de Penas” says John, “and early in the trip when, in the middle of the Magellan Straits, we were attacked by a wounded sea lion that resisted becoming dinner”. An article did appear in the UK magazine “Expedition” Vol VII No 3. In **1975, Derek Hutchinson** (1) and a crew of friends including **John Ramwell** made a first and failed attempt to cross the **North Sea** between England and Belgium. “It was 100 miles of the most unpredictable sea in the world,” explains Hutchinson. “No part of it’s more than 100 fathoms deep, so the slightest barometric alterations give huge seas, and the winds are dreadful.” Without electronic navigating equipment, Hutchinson and his team got so lost they ended up eight miles off the coast of Dunkirk, France, rather than the small coastal town they had originally targeted in Belgium. After 34 hours of open-sea paddling, they faced hallucinations, vomiting, nausea, hypothermia and dehydration. After tying themselves together to keep from capsizing in an exhausted stupor, they finally sent up a signal flare and were retrieved by a passing ferry. Hutchinson wasn’t deterred. The next year,

with better planning and experience, he and a new team successfully made the crossing from Felizstowe to Ostend in 31 hours.



Founded in 1970 by **Frank Goodman**, Valley Canoe Products became one of the very first companies to commercially produce a specialist sea kayak in glass fibre when it launched the Anas Acuta in 1972. This kayak was developed from a native Greenland kayak brought back from the Western region. So successful was this kayak that it is still in production today. Perhaps the most famous expedition kayak design is Valley's Nordkapp, produced for the British **Norway** expedition in **1975**. Four members of the British Kayak Expedition completed a journey from Bodo to Nordkapp in Northern Norway, Europe's most northerly point. The 480 mile journey, which took a month to complete, was undertaken through the worst summer in Norway since records began, but the kayaks performed excellently in the difficult conditions. The design principles adopted in the Nordkapp, i.e. a moderately V'd keel, softer chines and the distinct Greenland side profile became so widespread that these characteristics are known worldwide as "The British Style".

The first successful circumnavigation of **Cape Horn** was made by Goodman (3), who led three others on a successful **1977** mission. Goodman and crew shipped their Nordkapps to the southern tip of South America and then made their way from the U.K. only to arrive and find their kayaks damaged. Patching the kayaks and drying the fiberglass over a stove, Goodman then waited out a two-day gale before starting out from Hershall Island at 5 a.m. on Dec. 22, 1977.

Despite 16-foot swells and 50-foot-high spray blocking visibility, Goodman became the first to paddle one of the most infamous and feared stretches of water on the planet. Ironically, it was his discovery of Cape Horn Island's unrecorded lake—which had not appeared on any of the maps or charts the team used in their planning—that proved to be the most cherished element of the voyage for Goodman.



Nigel Foster and Geoff Hunter

Nigel Foster and **Geoff Hunter** were the first to circumnavigate **Iceland** in **1977**. An excerpt of their journey appears in the book 'Raging Rivers, Stormy Seas'(5). The stormy **Caribbean Sea** was crossed by **John Dowd** and his wife **Beatrice** in a Klepper double in **1977-78**. They were accompanied by **Ken Beard** and **Stephen Benson**. Stephen became ill and was replaced by **Richard Gillet** part way through. John describes the crossing which was sponsored by Guinness as a 'sustained epic'.

“The Caribbean trip took eight months. It was far and away the most serious kayak trip I have done due to the open crossings, strong currents and strong winds”.

(check out John’s article in Adventure kayak magazine:

http://www.adventurekayakmag.com/adventurekayakmag_fall08/)

New Zealander **Paul Caffyn** has become a true expedition sea kayaking legend in his own lifetime. In **1977/8** Paul completed the first circumnavigation of the **South Island of New Zealand** in a Nordkapp built under licence by Grahame Sisson, a New Zealand kayak manufacturer. Paul’s groundbreaking journey is chronicled in his first book, ‘Obscured by Waves’.

The summer of **1978** also saw **Derek Hutchinson’s Aleutian Islands** expedition from Dutch Harbor on Unalaska 250-miles to Nikolski on Umnak.

In **Paul Caffyn’s** second book ‘Cresting the Restless Wave’ he describes his 1,700mile circumnavigation of **New Zealand’s North Island** in **1979** which finished with a solo crossing of Cook Strait. Again in 1979 he joined up with Max Reynolds to make a crossing of Foveaux Strait and a circumnavigation of Stewart Island off the southern tip of the South Island which led to his third book, ‘Obscured by Waves’.

Still down under, the first sea kayak circumnavigation of **Tasmania** was undertaken by **John Brewster** and **Earle Bloomfield** in **1978(9)**.

In **1980** the Scottish Kayak Expedition to **North West Norway** was the first formal and sponsored Scottish sea kayak expedition supported by the Scottish Canoe Association and a very large number of suppliers and bodies. It received extensive TV and media coverage in Scotland and Norway at the time. As well as kayaking around the Lofoten and Vesteralen Island group, it involved a double crossing of the Maelstrom (Moskenstraumen) one of the largest whirlpool areas in the world, and was the first crossing ever undertaken by kayak. The four team members were Jim Breen (Leader), Gus Mathieson, Bill Turnbull and Peter Wilson. They used Baidarka Explorers which at that time were made (and sponsored) by McNulty Seaglass in South Shields before Derek Hutchison the designer moved to P&H who made them latterly.

Paul Caffyn joined Englishman **Nigel Dennis** in a first complete circumnavigation of **Great Britain** in **1980** after just 85 days of paddling.



Paul undertook perhaps the ultimate kayak circumnavigation, a 9,420-mile journey around Australia in 1981/2 which took 360 days to complete. 'The Dreamtime Voyage' is his account of this odyssey which is acknowledged as one of the most remarkable journeys ever undertaken by kayak. Paul had to contend with a tropical cyclone which nearly swept him off a small offshore islet in the Coral Sea, raging surf, tiger sharks which frequently bumped into the kayak in the Gulf of Carpentaria, crocodiles, sea snakes and three sections of sheer limestone cliffs. To overcome the three 100+mile plus long sections of cliffs, Paul used Nodoz tablets to stay awake and Lomotil to keep his bowels dormant during these overnight paddles. The longest stint along the awesome Zuytdorp Cliffs in Western Australia, took 34 hours of continuous paddling.

In 1981, Nigel Foster paddled a Vyneck kayak of his own design from Baffin Island to Labrador, a solo expedition that nearly killed him and left him with minor frostbite after a crossing of Hudson Strait.

In 1985, Paul Caffyn completed a solo, 4,400 mile 112 day paddle around the four main islands of Japan.

Greg Blanchette did a 1200 mile circumnavigation of the Hawaiian Islands in 1985.

Wayne Haack completed a first solo circumnavigation of both the Queen Charlotte Islands of British Columbia in 1984. He used a Dan Ruska-made Polaris non-ruddered kayak.

The first circumnavigation of the mainland of both the UK and Ireland was accomplished by a team of three paddlers from Gillingham Canoe Club in 1986. Bill Taylor, Mick Wibrew and Richard Elliott completed the 2,612 mile journey in 155 days averaging 27 miles a day. At the end of Bill Taylor's book about the journey 'Commitment and Open Crossings', he asks; "Who will paddle around Britain and Ireland but taking in the Channel Islands, the Scillies, St Kilda and the Shetlands?"

American Chris Duff claimed the first solo circumnavigation of mainland Great Britain in 1986 however, like Geoff Hunter he used the Crinan Canal to bypass the Mull of Kintyre during bad weather. Purists would argue that this makes his circumnavigation incomplete. For Chris it is always more about the journey and the spiritual experience than setting

any record. Ten years later (1996) he went on to complete a circumnavigation of Ireland and wrote the beautiful and much acclaimed book 'On Celtic Tides'.

On June 25, 1987, Ed Gillet (3) departed alone from Monterey, California in a production Necky Tofino double laden with 600 pounds of food and gear with the intention of mostly sailing his way to Hawaii. However, it was an El Nino year and the anticipated trade winds and currents failed him. Gillet spent less time using his parafoil sail than actually paddling the 'Bananafish'.

He carried desalinization equipment to ensure a fresh water supply. But when he lost his radio on week two, with it went all contact with the outside world for the remaining eight weeks. When Gillet failed to appear by his predicted arrival window his family flew into a frenzy. They unsuccessfully lobbied the Coast Guard to search for him. Sixty-three days after his departure and four days after he ran out of food, suffering from 40 hours of sleep deprivation and subject to winds and currents driving him north, past the islands, Gillet steered in a hallucinatory dawn into Kahului Harbor and landed on Maui Beach.

Gillet lost a mere 25 pounds. Legend has it he survived at least partially on toothpaste. Gillet calls it;

"...a life raft experience. It amazes me, when I think back on it, that I didn't die," he says. "It doesn't amaze me that I paddled to Hawaii—that's more or less a straightforward thing to do. You make the mileage, you paddle your boat,

you get there. It's benign at that time of year: You don't have hurricanes at the latitudes I was traveling at. But physically, I'm still amazed I was able to withstand that kind of punishment."

Despite advances in technology, Gillet's 2,200-mile Pacific journey remains so epic none have ever tried to match it. A few kayakers have achieved greater mileage, but not on an open-water crossing of the Pacific.

In July 1989 a British Expedition, *Kayaks Across The Bering Strait*, completed the first sea kayak crossing of the Bering Strait from Wales, in Alaska, to Cape Dezhneva, Siberia.

The four expedition members, Robert Egelstaff, Trevor Potts, Greg Barton and Peter Clark, kayaked from Nome up the Alaskan coast, round Cape Prince of Wales before crossing the Strait via the Diomedede Islands. Having completed the crossing they continued north to Uelen, where they were welcomed by the Soviet Sports Committee and eventually returned to the UK via Moscow. This journey has been described as "The Everest of the Canoeing World" and was recorded in the film "Kayaking Into Tomorrow" (1989). There was a film called "Curtain of Ice" that recorded part of the crossing.

From 13. july to 28. august 1990 Rikard Ripman Hansen, Ivar Olsen, Bengt Flygel, Nilsfors and Aart Verhage completed a 1300 kilometer, unsupported expedition around Spitsbergen, the biggest island in the Svalbard-

group, which includes some 8 – 10 islands up to 81 degrees north.

Joe Weight paddled a double kayak from **Grenada** to **Puerto Rico** in **1990**.

A 12,000 mile canoe trip from Winnipeg to the Amazon won **Don Starkell** a place in the Guinness Book of Records. For an encore he decided to head north on a 3,000-mile journey through the **Northwest Passage** by kayak and sled during the brief Arctic summers of **1990, 91 & 92**. He was accompanied by **Victoria Jason** during the '91 and first half of the '92 expeditions. Reading their separate accounts makes an interesting comparison of their volatile relationship and how the rigors of the journey are not the only challenges a team faces on an expedition.

In **1993**, Steph Dutton paddled 1,600 miles from British Columbia to Mexico's Baja California and became the first kayaker to complete the "B.C. to B.C." route.

(12) Mr. Dutton's 54 days of paddling is even more remarkable at second glance. Mr. Dutton wears an artificial leg, the result of a 1978 car accident.

His record-setting trip was sponsored in part by National Handicapped Sports. He was met along the way by kayaks paddled by other disabled athletes, including Mark Wellman, a paraplegic who in 1989 scaled Yosemite's El Capitan.

Mr. Dutton launched his kayak Aug. 3 in Victoria, British Columbia, and arrived in Ensenada, Mexico, 64 days later.. Along the route he marked his 43rd birthday near Oregon's

Cape Blanco Aug. 21 and celebrated his wedding anniversary at Pismo Beach on the central California coast Sept. 22. His wife, Due, was able to share those events as a member of the road crew that met him on shore every night to set up camp. He paddled an average of 30 nautical miles a day, excluding 4 rest/weather days he took off during the voyage.

The Oregon stretch was the toughest, with 17-foot swells and 28-knot winds caused by a hurricane that had blown through Hawaii several days earlier.

“Every day I set out I was just firmly determined I was going to make it to my destination. At times it gets scary out there,” Mr. Dutton said.



Steph Dutton's Eddyline Raven

One of Mr. Dutton's sponsors built two orange-and-yellow kayaks for the journey. The 18-foot "Sea Star" was for speedy travel through relatively calm waters, while the wider, 16-foot-9-inch "Raven" was for conditions such as he encountered in Oregon.

The Oregon leg of the voyage consisted of "whole days of concentrated effort of not capsizing," he said.

"One day it hit me so hard it tore the spare paddles off my boat and tore the helmet off my head and the charts off the boat," Mr. Dutton said.

Mr. Dutton calculated his voyage required more than two million paddle strokes. "I was in good shape; I trained for 18 months," he said. "I'm still in good shape, although I've lost 10 or 12 pounds, and my shoulders have been bothering me considerably."

The Pacific coast of **Baja, Mexico** was paddled by **Jan Richards** and **John Reseck** in **1993** using double kayaks. "Detached from civilisation in double kayaks, paddling nine hours a day for 34 days straight, this 1200 mile voyage from San Diego, California to Cabo San Lucas, Mexico was a true man against nature adventure. The rough water and rocky coastline had been anticipated, but the rats, mice, ants, crabs, coyotes, mosquitoes and wild pigs that either ate our food, stole our gear or tried to sleep in our sleeping bags with us we had not anticipated. We learned that the

human mind and spirit can endure, create, and problem solve better than we ever imagined.”

The account of their journey is described in “We Survived Yesterday: Kayaking from San Diego to Cabo San Lucas” by John Reseck.

In April **1996**, **Ed Darack** did a solo **Sea of Cortez/Eastern Baja Peninsula** 850 mile kayak trip starting at the mouth of the Colorado River, finishing at Cabo Pulmo. This journey is documented wonderfully in *Wind . Water . Sun, A Solo Kayak Journey Along Baja California’s Desert Coastline*, by Ed Darack.

The list of British circumnavigators increased in **1996** when **Steve Macdonald** and **Peter Bray** paddled around the mainland of **Great Britain** in a double kayak. What makes this achievement truly remarkable is that Steve is partially sighted.

In **1997**, **Scott McGuire** and **Kurt Rinehart** put on the Sea of Cortes at San Felipe and paddled the full length of the **East Coast of the Baja Peninsular** to Cabo San Lucas. **Scott McGuire** paddled with **Jon Bowermaster**, **Barry Tessman** and **Sean Farrell** to the **Islands of the Four Moutains**, in the **Aleutian Islands** chain in **1999**. The story of their journey is told in Jon Bowermaster’s book and DVD; *Birthplace of the Winds*.

In **1999**, **Stan Chadlek** and **Nigel Dennis** circumnavigated Easter Island, the world’s most remote island. A tiny spec in the South Pacific, with a coastline of just 50 miles it is still a

significant kayaking challenge with uninterrupted swell pounding volcanic cliffs and only two beaches to land on.



Peter Bray

While the Atlantic had already been crossed in sea kayaks twice, **Peter Bray** was the first to paddle west to east, without the tropical trade winds to ease his passage, and without the safety of the southerly east-to-west route's warm waters. "It's one of only a handful of transoceanic crossings by kayak," says Chris Cunningham, editor of *Sea Kayaker*. "He's in very good company. When I first looked at it I thought it was a strange idea: lots of times these transoceanic things turn out to be just drifting events, riding the currents. Bray actually set out to paddle...I think it's a remarkable achievement."

His first attempt in 2000 almost ended in disaster. He launched from St. Johns, Newfoundland, in June with

100days worth of food. He made fair headway during the first day and then bedded down for the night. When Bray awoke, he found his cockpit three-quarters filled with water and his electronic pumping system inoperable due to a faulty outlet valve. Forced to use a hand pump, he was unable to keep the water from rising and was washed out into the open water twice. Seeing that the boat was lost, he inflated an emergency raft, which was torn by the foundering kayak upon inflation. Bray survived 32 hours submerged in 36-degree seas. After being picked up by the Coast Guard, the former British Special Forces soldier spent the next four months learning to walk again.

A year later, Bray launched again from St. Johns on June 22, 2001 in a kayak designed by Rob Feloy and constructed by Kirton Kayaks. Instead of a hung keel to make it self-righting, this version used an ingenious system of water tanks to provide the necessary ballast. With a sleeping compartment and ultra-high tech systems, including satellite phone and tracking system, GPS, desalinization units and electric bilge pump, all powered by solar panels, the kayak was the most advanced transoceanic kayak ever built. This time, Bray encountered a storm that pushed him 60 miles off course, a broken rudder, a broken hatch, insufficient sun to charge his solar panels, a close call with a killer whale and an Icelandic current that swept him so far north that he risked missing Ireland altogether. But after 76 continuous days of paddling, Bray dodged the scattered boats of the

Irish fishing fleet and made land at Beldereg, Ireland, on Sept. 3.

“He certainly took a technological advantage wherever possible-which is really the only smart thing to do,” Cunningham says. “It may seem easy to discount his trip in comparison to earlier open boat trips, but it shouldn’t downplay the achievement, which is a remarkable one that only two or three other people have ever attempted.”

American **Lonnie Dupre** and Australian **John Hoelscher**, became the first to circumnavigate **Greenland**, traversing more than 6,500 miles of coastline using sleds and sea kayaks. The circumnavigation stretched over three separate visits, from **1997 to 2001**, with Dupre and Hoelscher covering 3,442 miles by dogsled and 3,075 miles by kayak. **Jon Turk’s** crowning achievement was his trip from **Japan to Alaska** which was completed in two legs, over the summers of 1999 and 2000. In 1999, Jon and Franz Helfenstein paddled and sailed 16 foot WindRiders, (kayak-style trimarans), 1000 miles from northern Japan, across the Kuril Islands, to the Russian port city of Petropavlovsk Kamchatsky on the Kamchatka Peninsula. Turk says. “Our longest crossing in the Kurils was 180 miles (three nights at sea) and altogether, we spent nine nights at sea making crossings.”

From May to September of the following year, Jon joined with Russian adventurer **Misha Petrov** to paddle their 17-

foot Prijon Kodiaks, north along Kamchatka and eventually crossing to St. Lawrence Island, in Alaska.

“In northeast Siberia we saw a number of people on the land, but rescue would have been very difficult and food was hard to find,” Facing zero-visibility fog for days at a time, several days of sea ice crashing in the surf, 20-foot breaking waves, little cover from bays and no coastal islands whatsoever, Jon and Misha eventually made their way across the Bering Sea and into Alaskan territory, completing over 2,000 miles of paddling in 120 days.

Down in the southern hemisphere in **2000**, **Tom Bergh**, **Stan Chadlek** and **Nigel Dennis** went to the **South Shetland Islands**, successfully circumnavigating Nelson Island before having their trip cut by a few days due to the logistics of working with the Chilean navy.

Mike Falconeri took the long way from **Washington to Maine** by following the Pacific, Gulf and Atlantic coastline for over 4500 miles in **2001**. He called it the Sea America Expedition and his goal was to take an in-depth look at the condition of the country’s oceans and coastline, and to promote their protection.



Antarctic Peninsular Expedition

The [Adventure Philosophy](#) crew of **Graham Charles**, **Mark Jones** and **Marcus Walters** (11) have been pushing the limits of expedition sea kayaking in recent years. In **2001** they went further south than any previous expedition. They paddled 800km down the **Antarctic Peninsular** to be the

first to cross the Antarctic Circle and produced an expedition sea kayak classic book, 'The Frozen Coast' which contains some extraordinary images and beautiful writing.

In **2003** they undertook a world-first sea kayak/mountaineering expedition to one of the wildest places on the planet.

“Never before had the Southern Andes been approached and traversed from so far by Sea Kayak. In January 2003 the **Southern Andes** Sea Kayak – Mountaineering Expedition retraced the steps of two eminent adventurers by following Darwin’s path down the Beagle Channel to the roaring Pacific ocean, then gaining the footsteps of Eric Shipton to traverse the high mountains of the Darwin range to Ushuaia (Argentina). Unlike the sailing vessel used by Darwin this expedition paddled Sea kayaks covering a distance of over 500km into the Chilean fjords and the Canal Magdelanas. The expedition then switched paddles for ice axe and crampons weaving a route through the glaciers and ice fields of the Darwin range pioneering a new route from west to east back to the Beagle channel. The expedition took 40 days during which an 8 day storm was weathered. The entire traverse had never been attempted.”



Sean Morley, leaving St Abbs, Scotland

In **2004**, **Sean Morley** completed the first solo circumnavigation of the **UK and Ireland** and picking up the gauntlet thrown down by Bill Taylor, was the first to attempt to include all the inhabited islands of the British Isles. His six month 4,500 mile journey remains the longest journey ever undertaken in British waters. Whilst he completed a circumnavigation of all the inhabited islands of the UK and Ireland he was unable to include the Channel Islands and thus the whole of the British Isles remains as a record to be attained.

In **2004**, **Jeff Allen** (U.K.) and **Hadas Feldman** (Israel), completed a full circumnavigation of the four main Islands of Japan, in 139 days on the ocean, spread over a six month period.

South Georgia Island lying deep in the Southern Ocean was one of the last few unconquered but highly sought after circumnavigations. Two teams had made serious attempts; The Royal Anglian South Georgia Expedition in **1991**, who reached as far as Cape Disappointment from Brandt Cove in a clockwise route but were unable to re-launch due to poor sea state, and in December **1996** when **Wade Fairley** and **Angus Finney** were forced by sea conditions to undertake a portage across the Shackleton Gap.

The south coast remained un-kayaked by anyone, ever. In **2005** two teams competed to be the first to claim this coveted prize. The 'British' team of **Peter Bray, Nigel Dennis, Hadas Feldman** (from Israel) and **Jeff Allen** announced to the world that they would begin their attempt in the month of November. The **Adventure Philosophy** crew had kept secret their plans to do the same journey later in the same year. In true Kiwi competitive spirit they brought forward their expedition to ensure they would be the first and audaciously set out in October in frigid weather to complete the circumnavigation in great style.



Adventure Philosophy team on South Georgia

The 'British' team successfully completed their expedition and claimed a record in making a faster circumnavigation than the Kiwis.

Rotem Ron (6) was the first to circumnavigate **Iceland** solo in 53 days in the summer of **2006**.

In **2005/6** [Renata Chlumska](#) completed an 18,200km circumnavigation of the **United States** by kayak and bicycle, towing her kayak on a trailer over the Great Divide.

Andrew McCauley (7) has completed three crossings of Australia's notorious **Bass Strait**, including the first ever direct, non-stop crossing in 35 hours in **2003**. This was a committing 220km solo paddle across some of Australia's most treacherous waters. While it was pushing the limit at the time, Andrew took it one step further with an incredible

530km crossing of the **Gulf of Carpentaria** in **2004**, which took almost seven days – sleeping in his kayak on a rough ocean each night. In October **2007** he attempted to be the first to cross the **Tasman Sea** from Australia to New Zealand but was tragically lost at sea just 40-miles short of his destination.

Australian duo **James Castrission** and **Justin James** (10) and their kayak Lot 41 designed by renowned kayak designer Rob Feloy (designer of the kayak used in Peter Bray's second and successful Atlantic crossing) departed Forster, Australia on November 13 **2007**. 62 days later they arrived in New Plymouth New Zealand. They had kayaked 3318km, braved 10 metre swells, faced howling winds of over 50 knots, endured severe food and sleep deprivation, wasting muscles and adverse winds and currents to become the first kayak expedition across the Tasman Sea as well as become the longest trans-oceanic kayaking expedition undertaken by two expeditioners.

In **2008/9** South African adventurer [Riaan Manser](#) became the first person to circumnavigate **Madagascar**, 5000km in 12 months.

After a failed attempt in 2008, [Patrick Winterton](#) and **Mick Berwick** paddled unsupported from the Butt of Lewis on the west coast of **Scotland** to the **Faroes** in **2009**. They completed the 240 mile crossing successfully in 95 hours in single kayaks, using the small island of North Rhona as a stepping stone.

[Freya Hoffmeister](#) became only the second person to circumnavigate **Australia**. She set out on January 18th **2009** with the sole intent of breaking Paul Caffyn's 'record' of 360 days. She is adamant that it was never an "attempt" and only those that didn't know her were sceptical that she could do it. She completed the 8,565 mile circuit in 332 days, making an audacious 350 mile crossing of the Gulf of Carpentaria; in Paul Caffyn's words, a "short-cut" missing out 1,175 miles of crocodile and shark-infested coastline. Freya spent a total of 13 nights afloat, she averaged 35 miles a day and successfully completed her solo and largely un-supported journey on December 15th 2009.

[Marcus Demuth](#) completed the first recorded circumnavigation of the **Falkland Islands** in **2009**. He took 22 days to complete the 615 mile loop.



Jon Turk hauling his kayak across the ice

In 2011 **Jon Turk** and **Erik Boomer** successfully completed the first circumnavigation of **Ellesmere Island** by hauling their 13ft touring kayaks across sea ice using skis until it became too broken up. Then they would hop from one piece of unstable ice to another dragging the 300lb loads until eventually they were able to paddle.



Erik Boomer fighting his way through broken sea ice

They completed this treacherous 1485 mile journey in 104 days.



Erik Boomer

In **2011**, **Jeff Allen** and **Harry Whelan** put the Rockpool Taran on the map as a serious expedition kayak after completing their record breaking 25 day circumnavigation of **Ireland**.

In **2012** [John Willacy](#) took this to a new level, paddling his Taran to break the long-standing 80 day record for the circumnavigation of the **Great Britain**. John covered the 2000 miles in 72 days. But just two weeks later this record was broken once again, this time by [Joe Leach](#) – in an impressive 67 days! In fact **2012** proved to be an exceptional year for circumnavigations of Great Britain with no less than 12 individuals completing the loop.

On Wednesday the 29th February **2012** **Tim Taylor** finished a 15 month, 5,529km trip around North and South Island of **New Zealand**. Completing this adventure made him only the second person ever to achieve the feat. He is also the youngest person to have done it and he did in record time.



He spent a total of 112 days on the water for the entire expedition, covering an average of 49.4km per day. His

longest day was 95.8km and the total distance paddled was 5529.3km.

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