

Best Day/Weekend Touring Kayak

Tempest by Wilderness Systems

The Tempest 170 is the middle child of a family of three Tempests that includes a 165 and a 180 (all available in plastic or "Pro" composite versions). The Tempest 170 is 17' long and 22" wide. The designers intended the Tempest line to be well suited to paddlers from the "entry-level enthusiast up to the advanced paddler looking for a seaworthy rough-conditions boat." The cockpit offers solid connection with the boat through adjustable thigh braces with a good hook to them, snug hip bracing, a seat that can be adjusted to provide good leg support, solid foot braces and a back band that sits low where it doesn't restrict the paddler's range of motion. The deck around the cockpit is well clear of paddling and low in the back to provide clearance for laybacks. The stability of the Tempest 170 is very good and the secondary stability is excellent, providing solid support for edging. The Tempest moves along nicely at a cruising pace: I could sustain 4.5 knots with ease. A retractable skeg tunes the Tempest for windy conditions.

The Tempest 170 has three cargo compartments sealed with KajakSport hatches. It has more than enough room for a weekend's worth of gear. On those outings where you're just out for the day, the fit and maneuverability of the Tempest 170 make it a pleasure to paddle.

\$3,200 (fiberglass) or \$1,600 (plastic) or \$3,750 (Kevlar)

Wilderness Systems

www.wildernesssystems.com



5th
READERS
CHOICE
Sea Kayaker

Best Roughwater Playboat

Romany by Nigel Dennis Kayaks



Designed in 1993, the Romany was meant for kayaking in rough water. At 16 feet long with moderately raked bow and stern, it has a fairly short waterline for good maneuverability. On flat water it topped out at 5 knots, a respectable speed for a boat of its length, and slipped along at nearly 4 knots with little effort.

The Romany has good initial stability that even novice paddlers should find comforting, and the secondary stability is very solid for aggressive kayakers who'll edge the boat for quick maneuvering. The keyhole cockpit has good clearance for getting in and out and the molded thigh-brace flanges make for good control of the kayak. The cockpit sits low around the waist and has a very solid connection to the boat, with great freedom of movement from the hips up. The low aft deck is perfect for doing a full layback.

With the skeg retracted, the Romany tracks well and carves tight turns when edged. The bulkhead aft of the seat is placed at the aft edge of the coaming for easy and complete emptying of the cockpit after a wet exit. The impression I had of the Romany was that it was a kayak that had no idiosyncrasies I'd have to get used to. It was ready for whatever I'd paddle it into.

The Romany is available in two alternate configurations: The Romany S for larger paddlers and the Romany LV for smaller paddlers.

\$3,395

Nigel Dennis Kayaks

www.seakayakinguk.com