

# Pilgrim Expedition test report



Jukka Linnonmaa, 23.9.2009

# 1. Introduction

Sea Kayaking UK (SKUK) brought a newly designed Romany Low Volume to their model offering in spring 2009. This is a narrow, low volume kayak, but with knee raises, so even a taller but slender paddler will fit in.

As the New Romany LV became very successful summer 2009, SKUK decided to design also a longer boat based on the same cockpit and concept. At the same time the new style kayak family got the name Pilgrim. The longer kayak is called Pilgrim Expedition, and the shorter one simply Pilgrim.

In order to understand the new Pilgrim Expedition's behavior vs. the shorter Pilgrim and a regular Explorer, the Pilgrim Expedition was test paddled during the SKUK Dealer's meet in varying conditions and testing different techniques with it.

## 2. Testing

### 2.1 Conditions

There were several good paddlers testing the Pilgrim Expedition during the SKUK's annual Dealer's meet 21.-23.9.2009.

Here we refer to four paddler's experiences during these days: Bobbie, Rene and Jukka.

There was a strong SW wind (10 m/s+) and moderate/rough sea state (2+ m waves) on the 21<sup>st</sup>, when Rene was paddling the Pilgrim Expedition.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> the wind was somewhat down, (7 m/s) but the swell was still up. There was a tidal flow at all the headlands during the tests, making waves quite rough and chaotic. Jukka and Bobbie tested the kayak on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> Jukka paddled/surfed the Pilgrim Expedition for two hours at the Rhoscolyn outer tidal race at peak flow.

Bobbie had additionally made a longer trip with the kayak in milder conditions before the Dealer's Meet started.

For testing the kayak in Surf, we used Treaddur bay beach. However, the surf was quite small, so a better idea of the kayak's surfing characteristics was actually obtained surfing down the large waves formed at the headlands with current and wind and especially at the Rhoscolyn tidal race.

## 2.2 Paddler data

Bobbie Gilmore, female, 61 kg (135 lb), 165 cm (5ft 5 in).

Clothing: wetsuit Neo Boots size 7. ACA Open Water Instructor.

Rene Schellenberg, male, 80 kg (176 lb), 183 cm (6 ft). Wears size 34 inch jeans. Paddling Clothing: wetsuit, Neo Boots size 10. BCU 5 Star Sea / Coach L 3 Sea.

Jukka Linnonmaa, 74 kg (163 lb), 176 cm (5 ft 8in). Wears size 32 inch jeans. Paddling Clothing: wetsuit and Kokatat Seeker Neo Boots (very thin sole). BCU 5 Star Sea / Coach L 3 Sea.

## 2.3 Kayak data

Pilgrim Explorer with a narrow model of SKUK's side-mounted seat. Standard layup, standard bulkhead. All paddlers had their typical gear for a day paddle with them, including some food, spare clothes, safety equipment, etc.

# 3. Results

## 3.1 Kayak build and fit

Overall lines of the Pilgrim Expedition are narrower than a standard Explorer's lines. It looks like a very pretty, sleek boat.



*Figure 1: Standard Explorer (left) and Pilgrim Explorer (right) side by side.*

As can be seen in Fig 1, the Pilgrim Explorer is clearly narrower, but equally long kayak as the standard Explorer. It is also almost as high from the ground at the paddler's knees, but then the deck is quickly dropping down. The cross section shape at the cockpit is a shallow V-shaped bottom with fairly tall vertical sides.



*Figure 2: Two standard Explorers and a Pilgrim Expedition being packed for a daytrip on the 21<sup>st</sup>. The waves can be seen crashing on the headlands in the background, even if the nearest bay is calm.*

Cockpit size is the same as in a regular Pilgrim. A comparison to an Explorer can be seen in figure 3.



*Figure 3: Pilgrim Expedition vs. standard Explore cockpits from above.*

Pilgrim Expedition's cockpit is shorter. Jukka's (176 cm tall) experience was that a surf launch by sitting in the kayak first and then pulling the legs in one by one was still borderline

possible, although tighter than in a standard Explore or Romany. Bobbie could pull her legs in last no problem.

There are two seat options: standard side-mounted seat or a newly designed narrower side-mounted seat. The boat we were paddling was fitted with the narrower side-mounted seat.



*Figure 4: Narrow seat mounted in the Pilgrim Expedition. Note more spacers between the hull and the seat than in a standard side-mounted seat.*

Bobbie found the fit into the seat and cockpit to be perfect for her. Jukka liked the seat - only seat that fits him snugly without extra hip padding (size 32 inch jeans). However, the Footrests with the standard bulkhead placing were beyond the last notch and actually footrest pedal was against the mounting screw. For Jukka's length it would have been better to move the front bulkhead 5 cm forward or move the seat backwards. There is about +/-25 mm of effective adjustment on the seat, that can be used.

### 3.2 Handling etc. comments

Bobbie:

*Beautiful boat*

*Very nice fit*

*More responsive than the Explorer LV*

*Able to keep up with the fast paddlers that I normally cannot.*

*Rides lower - easier to control in wind than a regular Explorer*

*Regular Explorer felt huge compared to the Pilgrim Expedition test.*

Rene:

*Very tight fit*

*More tippy than a standard Explorer*

*Great boat for someone to build up skills with*

*Would order the bulkhead further forward for myself*

**Jukka:**

*Very nice fit widthwise. Normally I paddle an Explorer with hip padding, and this felt the same or better*

*Footpegs should have been mounted a little further (1-2 notches), which would require a custom bulkhead position*

*Surprisingly not much more tippy than a standard Explorer. Actually better to paddle in the big stuff than a standard Explorer with no hip pads.*

*Capsized once at Rhoscolyn Outer Race. Rolled up easy. No problem staying in the kayak upside down in chaotic water due to the snug fit.*

*Very little weathercocking skeg up. No need to use the skeg.*

*The feel was almost that of a Romany, but with a faster kayak.*

*Will gladly order some of these for my fleet in the pre-season.*

*This has a potential of becoming my personal long-haul workhorse kayak for Baltic crossings & such.*

Additional comment:

*I love the cockpit fit. I normally paddle an Explorer LV, and my knees are quite far apart since the cockpit is low and wide.*

*Pilgrim feels very much better - no fatigue in legs after several hours of paddling.*

4. Further data

[www.seakayakinguk.com](http://www.seakayakinguk.com)