

Delta Kayaks – 14.5 Expedition

Delta is a new kayak manufacturer located (logically enough) in Delta, BC. Their line currently comprises four models, ranging in size from 12'10" to 18'5", with two more designs coming soon.

All Delta kayaks are built from vacuum-formed acrylic-capped ABS plastic. This thermoforming process uses a vacuum to draw a pre-heated sheet of plastic onto a mold to form the components of a boat. The deck, hull, bulkheads, coaming and seat are all thermoformed.

Our Delta 14.5 test boat looks very smart. The kayak is crisply molded and the finish is glossy. The color of the boat's red deck is really vibrant and rich – very eye-catching.

Despite its shorter length, the 14.5 is a "full-feature" kayak. Equipped with a complete complement of deck lines, there are perimeter lines as well as bungs for stashing a spare paddle and securing deck charts, and straps for rigging a paddle float re-entry. Most lines are secured by recessed deck fittings, and even some of the lines themselves are recessed into channels molded into the boat's deck. Carrying handles are also inset. All of these recess and channels look very slick, and help stiffen the deck. In addition, there are several structural pieces bonded into the boat at key locations: pieces located either side of the seat support, the underside of the coaming, and a rib bonded under the foredeck further stiffen the structure.

The Delta 14.5 has two bulkheads for waterproof storage compartments in the bow stern, and its storage capacity is absolutely huge for just about any kayak, regardless of length. This boat swallows gear. Access through the two-part hatches (rigid shell covers over neoprene gaskets) is excellent, and the flush hatch covers snug into the deck nicely.

On the water, the Delta's pronounced V shaped hull is very stable, but the boat can be rolled up on edge by more confident paddlers. While the boat is quite manoeuvrable, it holds a course well. Deploying the

BOAT REVIEW



by Alex Matthews

rudder is easy, as the controls are conveniently located in a recess to the left of the cockpit. Once deployed however, the rudder doesn't reach very far into the water because the stern rides so high above the water's surface. Still, in the moderate conditions I encountered, the rudder worked well.

The cockpit is spacious, and the seat itself can easily be moved forward or backward to trim the boat. The backrest adjusts up and down. The seat is comfy but doesn't have any lateral support, so I found my butt had a tendency to slide out to the side when putting the boat on an extreme lean. I also wished for a more defined knee pocket for better contact with the boat, but these are minor criticisms and I could comfortably spend long periods in the kayak.

At 52 lbs. the sample boat is just a shade over the manufacturer's specified weight (49 lbs.), but still light and very manageable.

The mandate for the Delta 14.5 appears to have been to get as much storage capacity into a friendly, easy-to-use kayak with good stability, reasonable spend, and plenty of shelf appeal. They have succeeded. To draw an automotive analogy, this kayak puts me in mind of a minivan: it's a vehicle that is immensely practical, has very few vices and gets on with the job of comfortably transporting us and a massive amount of our stuff wherever we want to go. And all for a very reasonable price. As the success of the minivan attests, it's a winning formula.

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