

WILDERNESS SYSTEMS TEMPEST 165 PRO AND 170 PRO



SPECIFICATIONS

TEMPEST 165 PRO
 LENGTH: 503 CM
 WIDTH: 55 CM
 MAXIMUM CAPACITY: 136 KG
 DECK HEIGHT: 32 CM
 WEIGHT: 22 KG
 COCKPIT LENGTH: 86 CM
 COCKPIT WIDTH: 46 CM
 RRP: £1,999.95

TEMPEST 170 PRO
 LENGTH: 518 CM
 WIDTH: 56 CM
 MAXIMUM CAPACITY: 147 KG
 DECK HEIGHT: 34 CM
 WEIGHT: 23 KG
 COCKPIT LENGTH: 86 CM
 COCKPIT WIDTH: 46 CM
 RRP: £1,999.95

First, they look great from the outside with nice lines and a smooth finish – really eye-catching. They feel light to carry (the bigger paddlers comfortably carried the 170 on the shoulder), yet stiff when on the water. When weighed on scales, the 165 was 21 kg (including hatch covers and hip pads) and the 170 weighed in at 23 kg. While we had the scales out, we also weighed other dry boats available. The Tempest 165 in polyethylene was 28.5 kg, the composite Necky Chatham 16 was 24 kg and a Tiderace Xplore Classic was 28.5 kg i.e. you are getting a big weight advantage for your money.

Both models are fitted with the standard and very comfortable and adjustable Wilderness Systems outfitting.

The footrest is a slide lock foot brace, which is very easy to adjust while in the boat. There is enough room for a pair of size 10 Wellington boots on someone who is 6 feet tall. Some chunky size 11 wetsuit boots that were lying around were tried inside the 170 and fitted at 6' 2" height with room to spare. The footrest will extend to cater for someone who is about 6' 4-5" and the bulkhead is 2" further still. Our 16.5-stone paddler fitted comfortably in the kayak, but commented he would prefer a higher deck. The 13.5 stone paddler fitted very comfortably and was able to adjust the thigh braces to give an almost river kayak level of grip and control. He also commented that being able to raise the front of the flexible seat with the two handy straps really enhanced the comfort further. The 7.5-stone paddler felt that raising the front of the seat was key to her using the boat. On a morning where the temperature had dropped to -9 degrees the paddlers commented that when sitting in the boat their backsides were instantly warm: a real novelty in a sea kayak.

Both models are very manoeuvrable. Primary stability is excellent and the secondary stability is also very good. Getting the kayaks on edge is easy, with minimal edging required for tight, smooth turns.

Unladen, the fitted skeg helped with tracking (although the most experienced paddler didn't find the skeg necessary). With light loads, the kayaks rose to meet the northerly chop off the island of Kerrera. Tracking is excellent when the kayaks are loaded. The skegs had the lightest control which any of the test paddlers had ever used and yet remained in position when not in use.

When the 13.5-stone paddler in the 165 paddled into considerable chop, the waves did come across the deck but didn't dramatically affect its performance. Downwind, the boats surfed along nicely and maintained good stability. Surprisingly, even the smaller paddler was able to cope with the big boat in F 3-4 winds (but wouldn't recommend it). The 13.5-stone paddler in the 165 was comfortable with the hip pads removed and had room for the feet, but felt the 170 was a better size. It was felt that an 11-stone person might have difficulty deciding which boat to paddle. The 7.5-stone paddler revelled in the 165 and, as someone who often gets numb legs, was comfortable all day. This was felt to be partly due to the support offered by raising the front of the seat.

The arrangement of decklines suited the various paddlers and all agreed that the elasticated toggles that pulled them onto the end of the boat when not in use showed considerable thought. The Neoprene spraydecks were easy to fit and remove and kept the boats dry inside, even when rolling. The dry compartments stayed just that in the 170 Pro, but there may have been a small leakage into the 165 rear compartment on one occasion. The hatches are the standard Kajak Sport versions with ovals at the back, round at the front and the offset rear day hatch.

The 2009 Wilderness Systems product guide doesn't appear to be accurate as different hatch covers are shown and the boat weights are actually lower than stated in the guide. The information plate attached to the inside of the kayaks states that construction is fibreglass and not kevlar. (A kevlar model would be even lighter still.)

The testers felt that both kayaks were reasonably fast and, when they picked up speed and paddled harder, the Tempests continued to accelerate smoothly. With predominantly northerlies and easterlies, the test conditions didn't include big swell but it was rough enough for most tastes.

At the end of the test period, our 7.5-stone tester wants a composite 165 because her legs didn't go numb, her bum stayed warm and the boat was light, stable, manoeuvrable and exactly the right size. The 13.5-stone paddler thought a 23 kg boat was great to carry and that its performance was impossible to dislike. The

16.5-stone paddler said they would happily use the boat anytime, but preferred his existing very high deck boat. The 9.5-stone paddler already has a tempest 165 in polyethylene, and would love to upgrade to the composite.

According to Bob McDonough and Steve Scherrer (joint designers): "The Tempest family of sea kayaks are designed to be friendly, forgiving, balanced boats capable of handling wind, waves and current. The goal was to design a series of boats in 3 sizes that would be well suited to the aspiring, entry-level enthusiast up to the advanced paddler looking for a seaworthy, rough conditions boat. The 165 is the smallest member of the family. Wilderness Systems was the first kayak manufacturer to incorporate whitewater style outfitting in the cockpit of a sea boat. Blended with our popular Phase 3 outfitting, we are able to provide a high level of comfort and adjustment. Our design team spent considerable time testing these boats in some of the most extreme conditions before the final editions were released. The proof is in the paddling - enjoy the boat!" ■

MANUFACTURER'S RESPONSE

Wow! Thanks so much for the glowing review of the Tempest! Since 2002, the year the T-170 was first introduced, the Tempest family of sea kayaks has been getting a lot of praise. When we went to the drawing board on the Tempest, we wanted to build a well balanced, performance oriented boat that was FUN to paddle. It needed to be able to take paddlers into whatever condition the sea might dish out and bring them home safely. We spent over a year and a half testing the original proto-types in all kinds of conditions. We're pleased that it delivered on our vision.

The weight differences you found are due to a change in manufacturing techniques and the lower weights are closer to what we have seen coming out of the factory. Don't forget for the larger paddler there is the Tempest 180. It has all the same performance characteristics of the other two in a larger package.

Glad you had so much fun paddling the boats! Now for some warmer weather maybe?

Wilderness Systems Design Team

CONDITIONS OF TEST

SIX DAYS OF PADDLING IN CONDITIONS RANGING FROM CALM TO F 5-6.

IT WAS WITH GREAT RELISH WE COLLECTED THE AWARD-WINNING COMPOSITE WILDERNESS SYSTEMS TEMPEST 165 AND 170. THE POLYETHYLENE VERSIONS ARE WELL KNOWN IN THE UK AND WELL LOVED BY THE BEGINNER AND INTERMEDIATE PADDLERS WHO TEND TO FAVOUR THEM. WITH A NEW UK DISTRIBUTOR LOOKING TO PUSH THE HIGHER-END MODELS AND A PHONE CALL FROM OCEAN PADDLER REGARDING TESTING, AN OPPORTUNITY TO PADDLE THE COMPOSITE VERSIONS WAS NOT TO BE MISSED. WITH THE SCOTTISH SNOW STILL DEEP ON THE MOUNTAINTOPS ALL AROUND US AND WITH THE TEMPERATURE RARELY ABOVE FREEZING, WE MANAGED HALF A DOZEN WONDERFUL COLD, BUT SUNNY DAYS IN THESE KAYAKS.

TO REALLY GET A FEEL FOR THE KAYAKS AND THEIR SUITABILITY FOR A MIX OF ABILITIES, A TOTAL OF FOUR VOLUNTEERS WERE ROUNDED UP. THE TEMPEST PRO 170 WAS PADDLED BY A 16.5-STONE FORMER RIVER PADDLER WHO IS RELATIVELY NEW TO SEA KAYAKING, A 13.5 STONE EXPERIENCED PADDLER AND A 7.5 STONE INTERMEDIATE PADDLER. THE 165 MODEL WAS PADDLED BY THE SAME 'FORMER RIVER PADDLER' AND THE INTERMEDIATE PADDLER PLUS AN ADDITIONAL 9.5 STONE INTERMEDIATE.

FEATURES

- ADJUSTABLE PADDED THIGH BRACES
- HEIGHT ADJUSTABLE DROP SKEG
- BOW, MIDSHIP AND STERN BULKHEADS
- 10-INCH DOMED BOW, 8-INCH DOMED MIDSHIP AND OVAL DOMED STERN HATCHES
- BACKBAND
- PHASE 3XP OUTFITTING
- SOFT TOUCH HANDLES
- DECK RIGGING
- FIBERGLASS (OPTIONAL)
- SLIDELOCK FOOT BRACE SYSTEM

'BEAUTIFUL AESTHETIC AND ENHANCED PERFORMANCE FROM COMPOSITE CONSTRUCTION MAKE THIS ONE OF THE MOST ACCLAIMED SEA KAYAKS ON THE MARKET.'

WWW.WILDERNESSYSTEMS.COM