

Epic 18X Review from Boyan Zlatarev

Hi all,

I have just signed up for this forum after reading the interesting discussion about Epic 18x. I have to be honest and say straight away that I will be representing Epic in Europe and you have the right to doubt what I have written below.

First I would like to let you know that I am a passionate Surfski paddler and also am one of the co-founders of Dubai Paddling School. I love kayaking and I love helping people to get better experience from their time on the water. I am currently in China on a visit at Epic factory learning about the manufacturing process and testing the various boats in production. Today it was turn for myself and Oscar Chalupski to test Epic 18x and Epic 18 X Sport (a bit more stable than 18x). I was a bit skeptic about our training session this afternoon as I only paddle surfski and K1 boats. The only time I tried a sea kayak was in Dubai couple of years ago. I sat in a Coleman Sea Kayak, made couple of strokes and felt absolutely uncomfortable, the boat started turning and I didn't resist, I let it get back to the beach and never tried to sit in a sea kayak again (I paddle every day for the past 7 years).

I will not say much about the finishing on the boat but just that it is done with a lot of patience to the tiniest detail.

[b]The performance:[/b] I sat in the 18x and felt a bit wobbly at first as there was quite a strong wind to our beam and I still had to adjust the leg length on my foot paddles. After I did that and I could finally seat comfortably I took the first couple of strokes expecting the resistance of the seemingly beamy flat hull...what a surprise...the boat just glided ahead trough the water as if I was in one of those old K1s that we have at the moment in Bulgaria, just a lot more stable. I really couldn't believe that the boat moved with such ease without much effort from my side. The session we had was Interval leader 10, 20, 30....up to 100 strokes with the same rest in between against the wind and a hard steady downwind run. You could see the info from Oscar's GPS [<http://trail.motionbased.com/trail/episode/view.do?episodePk.pkValue=5254288>]

[b]Rudder System:[/b] I have to say that for a long time I have been watching Epic website and the rudder system they have on their sea kayaks and didn't think that it would work, especially in the choppy water we were paddling in. That was my second surprise...the boat held its direction and I had full control all the time. Couple of times I made sharp turns to chase the odd wind chop and then I quickly turned back to our heading around the island. It was obvious that the rudder worked well and I could see Oscar laughing from the side, telling me "You see, we don't make s..t boats".

[b]Forward Stroke:[/b] This seems to be the biggest discussion among the sea kayakers in UK (after visiting the Canoe Expo in Coventry this year). I personally enjoy my stroke with full body rotation, using my hips and legs to achieve powerful long stroke that allows me to glide fast trough the water. Practicing my stroke takes my paddling to another dimension. It could be hard paddling with constant challenge of my control over mind and body or just easy cruising where I could go for hours and it feels like meditation, only the sound of the boat slicing the water and the entry of my blades. This is where my passion for paddling comes in and that is why I want people to experience this way of paddling that will only add more ways to enjoy their kayaking. I also wish the water in Fuyang River wasn't so dirty so I could give it a try for an Eskimo roll...maybe next time. The boat allows for a traditional style of paddling with knees tuck in on the side and leaning to the side if someone wanted not to use the rudder...it is not my type of paddling but I will definitely use the side leg position to learn how to do those rolls.

[b]Weigh:[/b] It does matter. After we finished our paddle, roughly 1h 10min we headed back to the side of the river where our van was. The boat was the cheapest make in the range and felt quite heavy with its 18 kg (completely assembled). I struggled a bit to get it alone on the roof racks without scratching it as the wind kept blowing. I don't want to think how much heavier it would have been if the weight was 25-30 kg.

[b]Storage Space:[/b] I guess there is also a lot of storage space for touring with one hatch forward and one aft but I can't comment on this besides the fact that they were dry after the paddle.

Downside: From surfski paddler perspective, the boat is a bit slow. We managed to go with 14 km/h during the intervals against the wind and then 15-17 km/h downwind chasing the chop but I still prefer my surfski for those kind of conditions where paddlers record 25+ km/h in downwind conditions.

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