

# THE WISPER

by Feathercraft



### specs

length:	15 ft 7 in
width:	23.5 in
weight:	37.5 lb standard 33 lb lightweight
cockpit:	15.5 x 29 in
rear hatch:	16 x 9 in, 85 litres
front hatch:	9.5 in, 47 litres
max payload:	250 lb
MSRP:	\$3,450 Cdn \$2,933 US

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

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*The hard and stiff will be broken  
The soft and supple will prevail*

—Lao Tzu

THE FEATHERCRAFT WISPER is as light as FC's popular Kahuna, but longer, narrower and faster. It's closer to FC's Greenlandesque, high-performance Khatsalano. With narrow upturned ends and low rear deck its Arctic hunting provenance is clear.

The jury's out on the performance merits of folding versus hard hulls. Prevailing wisdom says, the rougher the weather, soft shells do better. Because they absorb wave energy like a full-suspension mountain bike licks up the lumps on rocky trails—you can pedal faster and get better control if your wheels stay on the ground—you may spend less energy bracing and more on forward paddling.

However, unless you regularly start your paddles at the airline check-in or in your condo's storage closet, the folding advantage is largely philosophical. Prices are getting closer all the time and FC's welded urethane Sealskin is as waterproof and durable as the fanciest composites, lasting 20 to 30 years. The question is, Grasshopper, do you want to pierce the waves or flow over them?

Paddling the Wisper on a rough day feels like steamrolling your tent partner through a sleeping bag. Aircraft aluminum, flexible joints and plastic crossribs translate everything into muffled bumps. We experienced a dry ride through four-foot wind chop, while feeling the ocean poking at us in playful intimacy. "You are not separate from the water, but joined," could be a line from Lao Tzu but is actually from FC's homepage.

The Wisper comes in two skin weights for the same price: standard for rough and tumble multi-day trips, and lightweight for careful users who want a 20 per cent weight savings.

We had to work a bit to keep up to a longer, narrower hardshell kayak at high speeds. But with its flat rocker and relatively long waterline, our Wisper cruised at a reasonable speed for its size and had no problem catching and riding waves. Remember Lao Tzu: "Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished."

The Wisper is fairly wide and flat-bottomed with integrated air sponsons. Initial stability is excellent right through to a moderate tilt, which is all that's needed to initiate a carving turn. There's comfort for beginners and a satisfying balance of tracking and manoeuvrability for paddlers of all levels. To quote further, "She who is centered in the Tao can go where she wishes, without danger."

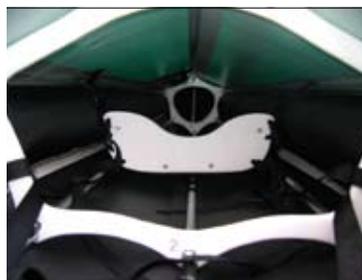
The Wisper is an excellent all-around light-touring boat for small to medium-sized paddlers, beginners and up, who want ultimate portability or have Taoist inclinations.

—TS



### Stay centered within the Tao

Ultimate comfort: FC's hammock-like seat is suspended from the frame and air-padded. Full length deck lines run past the cockpit. High bracing bars on either side of the cockpit can be left out for a roomier feel. Standard equipment includes sea sock and sprayskirt.



### Like the eternal void, filled with possibilities

Multi-day gear fits with careful packing. A medium stern hatch with FC's trademark roll-down closure is standard. Access the bow through an optional small hatch (\$145 Cdn, \$124 US) or via the cockpit. The flat foot brace shown here has a mushier feel than standard pegs but is infinitely adjustable and unclips easily for sliding large items into the bow.



PHOTOS: TIM SHUFF

### I blow as aimless as the wind [not]

There's no rudder option, but this ingenious strap-on skeg reduces the tendency to weathercock in stiff beam or stern winds. Decide before you leave shore unless you've got a friend who doesn't mind fiddling with buckles on the high seas. The skeg clips onto two sewn-in straps, which provide a place to tuck spare paddles and the like.