

# Wisper

by Feathercraft Folding Kayaks

Our Wisper model is a true touring kayak that can be transported anywhere: whether 10 miles or 10,000. Our touring boats share some things that we've developed over the last 30 years: a low-maintenance aluminum frame; watertight, tough, welded skin; redundant flotation (integral sponsons, sea sock and available float bags); no deck zippers (they leak and can break); and a quality backpack that can be stored easily in the kayak (necessary for one-way trips). The Wisper is a smaller cousin to our Khatsalano and shares its Greenlandic lines. Its upturned ends handle waves easily, and it turns well with a lean. It's designed for small- to medium-sized paddlers, although long legs are fine. With planning, one- to two-week trips are quite feasible. We've tried to keep the weight down, so practically anyone can carry it, and we've tried to keep the cost down too.

—Doug Simpson  
Feathercraft Folding Kayaks

## REVIEWERS

LJ: 5' 1", 150-pound female. Day paddles, winds to 15 knots with higher gusts, waves to 2 feet. No cargo.

CA: 5' 5", 150-pound female. Day paddles, winds to 10 knots with a light chop. 15 pounds of cargo.

GL: 5' 11", 165-pound male. Day paddles, winds to 15 knots, waves to 2 feet. 60 pounds of cargo.

Length overall	15' 6"
Beam	23 7/8"
Volume	10.01 cu. ft.
Cockpit size	16 1/4" x 32"
Cockpit coaming height	
Forward	12 7/8"
Aft	10 1/4"
Height of seat	2"
Weight	38 lbs.

## THE REVIEW

### First Glance

"The Wisper is a very nice-looking boat with a sleek and seaworthy appearance. It is well thought out, designed and constructed" (CA). "Nothing in assembly was frustrating, and everything went together without a lot of pushing and shoving, and with no chance of scraped knuckles. The lever system of tensioning is easy to do, and any looseness is taken up when the sponsons are inflated" (GL).

The Wisper is "extremely light and very easy to carry solo" (CA). There are "no straps or toggles for a tandem carry. You just grab the point of the bow and stern for an easy tandem carry of the cargo-laden kayak. You can pack the kayak and a few miscellaneous items in the supplied backpack and keep it under 50 pounds so you won't have to pay extra airline fees" (GL).

### Fit

"The cockpit was large enough for easy entry and exit" (CA). GL "could sit down in the seat and bring my legs in afterward, but only if the inflatable seat-back had little air in it." The Wisper's "padded seat and back support are very comfortable; both can be inflated to alter the fit, although I found no air necessary for either. There is little sway to the seat and it works OK for bracing" (GL). "The seat and back support can be adjusted by webbing straps attached to the framework and tweaked to the best fit" (CA). Aluminum tubes

serve as thigh braces. The arrangement "felt secure for leaning and bracing" (LJ). GL suggested the thigh bracing "could be improved, perhaps with padded, shaped plastic pieces that slip over the tubes." A webbing-supported panel of stiff plastic serves as the foot brace. With paddling pressure applied, it "flexed, but allowed for infinite adjustment, and made it easy to pack the front hatch" (CA).

The deck has full perimeter grab lines, and bungees for a chart forward and a spare paddle aft. The deck fittings are plastic rings and webbing that are sewn to tabs of hull material, projecting from the welded seam. "The kayak tested had no rigging for a paddle float and few bungees, but there were additional attachment points that could be utilized" (CA).

"Feathercraft supplies a strap-on skeg that you put on ashore or perhaps un-



# KAYAK REVIEWS

derway with a paddling partner. I tested it only in a light breeze; turning was slowed a bit, and tracking was good with or without it" (GL).

## Stability and Maneuverability

The Wisper's initial stability was rated "very good" (LJ) to "excellent" (CA and GL). Secondary stability as "good" (GL) and "very good" (LJ). CA noted that "it was so stable, it was not all that easy to edge the boat without some aggressive leaning." In waves, the Wisper flexes and "cushions the ride, and you feel small waves passing under the hull. The hull tends to ride over waves and is less likely to bore into them as sometimes happens in a hard-shell. It tracks very well with little yaw and turns slowly with a bit of lean and sweep strokes. It's not a quick turner" (GL). CA noted that "with a slight tilt, the boat responded to sweeps and rudder strokes."

## Speed

For LJ, the Wisper "accelerated satisfactorily when empty, but I had difficulty maintaining 3 knots with it loaded, even in relatively mild conditions. This would not be a problem on many casual kayaking trips, although it would be a problem on a long trip when trying to maintain a rapid pace." CA "could push to 4 knots but comfortably paddled at 3.5 knots. When conditions were rough, this boat would just ride through it—perhaps not fast, but with great stability." GL found the Wisper had "good speed and will keep up in a group paddle without problems. It's as fast as most hard-shells of similar length and beam." The ridged deck "shed the water well" (LJ), and "there are no deck fittings that would cause any spray" (CA). The Wisper is "reasonably well balanced for wind with very little weathercocking. I didn't find that much correction was needed in any wind direction. Turning downwind took some time but wasn't difficult, especially with sweeps timed to

## BEST FEATURES

- Light weight and portability

## TO IMPROVE

- Thigh bracing comfort



The strap-on skeg is a modern version of a traditional skeg used in Greenland.

the waves. Two-foot wakes were fairly easy to catch. The kayak had good acceleration but some tendency to broach" (GL). CA "was able to catch a few small boat wakes, and the boat tracked fairly straight on them without much effort."

## Rolling and Rescue

"The cockpit allowed for an easy wet exit" (CA), and although "there is no place for a paddle-float outrigger, with good balance and some body strength, it's not difficult to reenter solo without it. Reentry in a loaded boat was even easier" (GL). "As always with a sea sock, there is some fiddling to be done to reenter the cockpit, but pumping out was very easy, as there was so little water in the cockpit due to the sea sock" (CA). After rolling, "there were a few tablespoons in the kayak and a couple cups or more in the sock. Kudos for the sea sock—an excellent safety feature" (GL).

CA thought the Wisper was "not the easiest to roll. I had to finish the roll by sculling forward." "The seat sides give some hip support, which, along with the foot plate and a bit of thigh bracing, give enough support to make rolling pretty routine. Laybacks are not an option—the rear cross rib sticks up too high" (GL). Feathercraft offers a "rolling rib" that makes the aft deck much lower.

## Cruising

"The lack of bulkheads make packing this boat a dream" (LJ). "The hatch openings are conveniently located for

moving gear around. Under the hatch cover is a sleeve attached to the deck that rolls down like a dry bag" (CA). "Storage volume is enough for a week or more. With a load of 60 pounds aboard, the Wisper had a very stable feel, tracked well and turned slowly but wasn't hard to turn especially if timed with wave crests. With a load, it rolls as easily as without—maybe easier" (GL).

## The Bottom Line

"This is a great kayak for traveling to exotic locations or for those who live where they cannot easily store a full-size kayak. Its light weight can't be beat in the bag or on the car. The quality of materials and manufacturing are excellent. This kayak would be among the top choices for anyone seeking a high-quality folding kayak at an affordable price" (CA). "The boat is not advertised as a high-performance boat, and I would agree with that. But it's a fun boat for a small to medium paddler in easy-to-intermediate conditions. I would also highly recommend it to a person who intends to move or visit overseas" (LJ). The Wisper is "a beautiful, nice-handling boat-in-a-bag with easy assembly and easy transport. Here is a boat sure to keep your dreams—and your food dehydrator—engaged all winter, and then make that two-week Alaskan floatplane adventure a reality" (GL).

## MANUFACTURER'S RESPONSE

Thank you for reviewing our Wisper kayak. We have been delighted by the response to this boat. With its internal air sponsons, the Wisper is really stable when leaned. Paddlers soon learn that by leaning the Wisper, they can carve nice tight turns. What might you call a boat that is beautiful; handles well; can hold gear for over a

week; weighs less than 40 pounds; is strong, watertight and speedy; and folds down into a pretty small pack? We would call that "high performance." Again, thank you for the fine review.

—Doug Simpson  
Feathercraft Folding Kayaks

**WISPER  
MANUFACTURING DATA**

**Designed:** 2005

**Standard construction:** 6061 T6 alloy frame, Duratek urethane-coated nylon hull, Polytek urethane-coated nylon deck, welded seams

**Standard features:** Travel-style backpack, nylon spray skirt, sea sock, perimeter deck lines and cross-deck rigging, stern access hatch, strap-on skeg, repair kit, assembly video and written instructions

**Options:** Bow access hatch, lightweight skin (saves 4.5 lbs.)

**Weight:** 37.5 lbs. (17 kg) for standard model; 33 lbs. (15 kg) for optional lightweight model

**Price:** \$3,600 (Cdn.) with no bow hatch; \$3,745 (Cdn.) with bow hatch, as tested (see website for U.S. pricing)

**Availability:** See website for a list of dealers

**Manufacturer:** Feathercraft Products Ltd., 888-681-8437 (Canada and U.S.) or 604-681-8437; info@feathercraft.com; www.feathercraft.com



**SPEED VS. RESISTANCE**

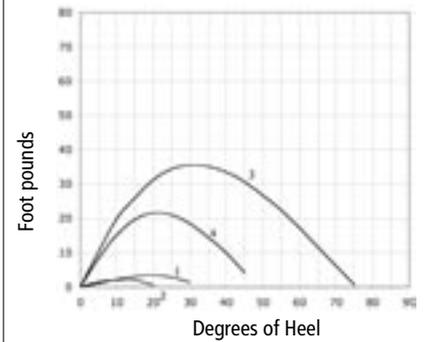
Resistance in pounds.

Speed	Winters/KAPER	Broze/Taylor
2 knots	0.94	0.90
3 knots	2.00	1.96
4 knots	3.84	3.77
4.5 knots	5.54	5.57
5 knots	8.40	8.99
6 knots	13.37	15.42

**HYDROSTATICS**

Waterline length	13' 11.1"
Waterline beam	21.9"
Draft	6.4"
Prismatic coefficient	0.55
Wetted surface in sq. ft.	21.20
Center of buoyancy	52%

**Righting/Heeling Moments (Fixed-weight)**



**Stability Curves**

- 150 lb. paddler, no cargo
- 200 lb. paddler, no cargo
- 150 lb. paddler, 100 lb. cargo
- 200 lb. paddler, 100 lb. cargo

**TECH TALK**

Readers interested in the full set of hydrostatics can find them posted on our website at [www.seakayakermag.com](http://www.seakayakermag.com) along with additional data. An explanation of the terms and procedures used in the kayak test program is also available on the site.

