

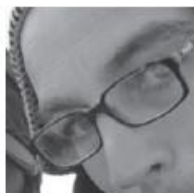
# OCEAN PADDLER

THE SEA KAYAKING MAGAZINE



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## INTERVIEW WITH **MARCUS DEMUTH**



**Name** Marcus Anton Christian Demuth

**Sponsors** Valley Sea Kayaks, Kokatat, The North Face, Werner, Snap Dragon

**Hometown** Brooklyn, NY/ Cemaes Bay, Anglesey (from 2011)

**Occupation** Distribution of MBHO microphones in the US



**Forty-one-year-old Marcus Anton Christian Demuth is an ocean paddler with an infectious enthusiasm for paddling and life. Although he's only been paddling for seven years, his expeditions and experiences are undoubtedly worth sharing.**

**Marcus circumnavigated Ireland in 2007 and completed the first circumnavigation of the Falkland Islands in 2009. Just a few months ago, Marcus completed a record-equalling circumnavigation of the UK.**

**Uncompleted circumnavigations of Iceland in 2009 and Tierra Del Fuego in 2010 as well as winning the NY Mayor's Cup (sea kayaking class) no less than four times complete Marcus' major paddling achievements.**

**With the help of some of his friends, we sat Marcus down and threw some questions at him. His replies are the first in a series of interviews to be published in Ocean Paddler over the next 12 months.**

### ABOUT MARCUS

**Who has inspired you in both your paddling and non-paddling life?**

My friend Stephan in Germany, who I met from playing in bands 25 years ago, is my greatest non-paddling inspiration. We toured Germany together as a cover band for almost 10 years and became close friends during endless hours spent in a Volkswagen van on the German Autobahns. He is the closest I have ever been to a person; to say we are brothers would be an understatement. Then there are drummers: drummers have always been a huge inspiration to me, especially the drummers Joe Jackson uses on his records, Keith Carlock and Nathan Followill of Kings of Leon who has raw talent which just jumps at you.

Paddling-wise there is Barry Shaw for great form, Paul Caffyn for being who he is and Eric Stiller for teaching me my first strokes and for encouraging me to go out and make trips. Every one of these kayakers (or drummers) seems to have a great stroke from which I want to learn.

**Do you prefer cold weather expeditions or warm ones?**

I enjoy warm weather expeditions better than cold ones, or at least I think I would. Actually, I've never been on a warm water expedition because of the problems they bring. In the book *The Happy Isles of Oceania* Paul Theroux recounts the difficulties he experienced while paddling

with his Feathercraft in Polynesia and Indonesia. The people there did not seem to be familiar with the concept of camping and assumed that Paul Theroux had put up his tent to stay forever and was planning to invade! This misunderstanding triggered all sorts of fears and resentment among the locals. The author wrote many times of his several, hour-long conversations with the locals after landing, and none of them sounded pleasant, especially after a long day on the water of peace and harmony.

Considering other warm-water locations; the east and north coast of Sri Lanka is full of badly documented mine fields. The Lonely Planet guide recommends that you should not visit beaches which are not used by the locals, due to the risk of stepping on a mine left from decades of civil war. This is pretty unwelcome advice after 12 hours of paddling along cliffs or after a crossing when you finally spot the first and only landing opportunity of the day. Cuba also looks great on the map, but the travel guide informs us that "Foreign visitors may find it useful to know that in Cuba camping and sleeping on the beach, or in areas not specifically used as a camping site, is strictly forbidden."

Colder climates seem to attract a lot less red tape because you have to share the land with fewer or no people.

**How do your home waters of New York compare to more exotic waters?**

The waters around New York City are very mellow since they are all rivers. Even after leaving the Inner NY Harbour, the waters on the East Coast are always very tame. It is hardly sea kayaking despite paddling on the Atlantic, since it never seems to have any swell even when we have long periods of strong winds. The first time this really hit me was when I paddled on the South and West Coast of Australia in huge swell and big surf. I managed to break the 3-piece kayak twice during the trip when surfing in and landing. I had a similar mishap in Iceland and a capsized offshore in the Falklands during a crossing because the waters were just bigger and more dynamic. At the same time, they were way more interesting and challenging than here on the East Coast. During the UK trip I realised for the first time that these are the waters a sea kayak is designed for.

**Your passion for paddling causes you to lead a cosmopolitan life. Do you identify with a nation? I am unable to identify with a nation. I can only identify with people, landscapes, cultures, my**

family and friends and neighbours here in New York or Cemaes Bay. The idea of identifying with a nation makes me uncomfortable. "God bless America" implies an unspoken "... and f\*ck the rest of the world". It just sounds like a variation of "Deutschland, Deutschland über alles", the lyrics of the third verse of the German National anthem which was outlawed after WWII. I find it really difficult to identify with the US after eight years of Bush, the civilian casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan during the past 10 years and Colin Powell lying in front of the UN assembly about Iraq's non-existent Weapons of Mass Destruction. The thought that the US could afford free health care if it would just scrap one of its eight aircraft carriers makes me sick (no pun intended). I feel the same about Germany and the UK.

**You successfully compete in paddling races and share the current record for the circumnavigation of Britain. Do you see expedition paddling as a competitive sport? How does your attitude in competition paddling differ from your expedition-paddling attitude?**

The UK record was a combination of luck, having exceptionally good weather and my fear that I wouldn't make it round if I didn't hurry. I had just returned from a failed attempt to go around Tierra Del Fuego, so didn't want to fail twice within one year. I don't see expeditions as a competitive sport at all, since you are doing it for your own sake. Paddling races are a good excuse to go paddling 4-5 times a week in order to stay fit and to prepare for the races and for expeditions. In NYC I paddle on a surf ski, and the NYC and New England surf ski community is so much fun to hang out and race with. I also like how the surf ski and the wing paddle forces you to focus and work on your forward stroke. And yes, you are competing against other kayakers in races, but at the end of the day you only want to be faster than last year and to see some sort of progress in your stroke and speed. You are racing more against yourself than against other kayakers. It can, however, be very gratifying to overtake someone at a surf ski race you lost against last year.

**You're fiercely competitive in training and during races. Do you feel a similar sense of competition with others who complete epic solo journeys or are those motivations driven by something else? Am I really that competitive? Yes, I am trying to "give it all" and paddle as hard as I can during a practice run or during a race in order to become faster and fitter. Since I paddle a lot by myself, I am motivated by others chasing me or me chasing them. What is the point of not racing**

as fast as you can when you are at a race? I also like the feeling of being completely worn out after a race or after a long day of paddling during an expedition.

**What's your greatest triumph (personal and paddling), disappointment and regret?**

In my paddling life, my greatest triumph was paddling back into Stanley on the last day of the Falkland Islands circumnavigation. My greatest disappointment was the failed Tierra Del Fuego trip. While on that trip, I deeply regret rushing past the inlet of Seno Garibaldi, which would have brought us to the most amazing glaciers calving into the ocean in Tierra Del Fuego. Since we were in a rush to make good time around Tierra Del Fuego and be successful, we unbelievably passed Seno Garibaldi knowing we might never have the chance to see it again!

Outside paddling, my greatest triumph is to experience, almost daily, that I have friends. In 1980, the German national soccer goalie Tony Schuhmacher wrote a very controversial book about doping in the Bundesliga. In an interview he described how every one of his friends turned away from him after the book came out. I was 11 then, and thought this would be like a death sentence for me. My biggest disappointment was realising that I wasn't smart enough to become an engineer. I studied engineering for two weeks, and fell so far behind that it was hopeless to continue. The main regret I have is that I wish I had started playing the drums way before I was 17.

**How do any relationships survive your lifestyle? (Or don't they?)**

My friends are actually happy when I disappear for trips and, knowing me, I don't blame them. But I guess you mean girlfriends. Most of my past girlfriends are paddlers themselves or they worked in theatre or art, and had a similar urge to follow their own passion and professions. This often involved travelling and being away from one another for long periods of time. I've been the one left behind at home more than once, but I always found these periods positive (even if a bit painful).

**When an expedition enters the phase where it becomes physically and mentally challenging to keep going, what strategies or thoughts do you use to push on?**

I think at this stage of an expedition your brain is already so primed with the goal and the overall mission that you are already on autopilot; "I must finish, I must finish!". ▶

## FEATURE | MARCUS DEMUTH INTERVIEW

This phase usually appears after 3–4 weeks of paddling, or later. Giving up at that point, so late in the trip, would mean that the efforts you had already put in, the pain you endured, the logistical challenges to make the expedition happen, etc. were all for nothing. What a horrible thought.

**How important is finishing the entire trip (achieving your goal) compared to the overall experience of seeing new, exciting and challenging terrain?**

I sometimes imagine just going to Iceland to paddle a little in the West Fjords, but I know that I would miss not having an overall goal or mission; it would feel like the roof was missing from a building. Having a goal adds an important dimension to the experience. Nigel Dennis said something along the lines of “When you set out for a trip, why not set yourself a goal?” I think having a goal also helps to keep things together, gives you a perspective and makes it easier to get through rough times and setbacks. The fifth dimension of a trip is that you see a new coastline every day, which I think is the most rewarding experience for a kayaker. Not knowing what is behind the next headland or the potential implications of the weather in this new area and climate gets me out of the sleeping bag in the morning.

**What does your training program look like?**

I paddle 2–3 times a week for eight miles on the surf ski at race speed, 1–2 times a week at other intervals and do some sort of rolling practice once a week to stay current.

**Is paddling sexy?**

Not at all. Quite the opposite in fact. Paddling is the maritime equivalent of bingo. It still seems that 99% of paddlers are of an advanced age, male, bald, mumble all day about hull designs of kayak models which have been discontinued for at least a decade and sport oversized beards and thick glasses. As scientific proof that I am right, I fit this description completely.

## EXPEDITION PRACTICALITIES

**How do you keep costs down?**

Earn air miles, and use them when flying. Avoid B&Bs, hostels, etc and by staying away from towns when landing. There are more opportunities to find a camping spot out of town, or ask if you can pitch your tent behind the RNLI station house or within a sailing club’s grounds. Buy only quality gear which will last longer and/or is covered by the generous manufacturer’s warranty; this means you don’t have to buy anything for your following trip.

Make many, many expeditions in your lifetime. The ‘economies of scale’ is a well-known concept and refers to reductions in unit cost as the size of a facility and the usage levels of other inputs increase. According to economies of scale, a \$4000 kayak becomes cheaper if you use it on 40

expeditions during its (and your) lifetime. That’s only \$100 per expedition, rather than if you only use it on two expeditions in its lifetime.

**How do you attract sponsors?**

Do something that does not sound like it will be fun!

It is hard to get a sponsorship for your very first expedition, since in the eyes of the manufacturer you might only be a one-hit wonder, which is a difficult thing to market for a company. The main question for someone looking for a sponsor would be what you can do for this company? What can you offer or do for them which may justify the investment? It can be little things like providing photos or a video, having their products and logo on your website and talking positively about the gear you are using at talks you are doing. I’m fortunate in that my sponsors provide all the gear, but most do way more than just that. Even after a blown expedition where you manage to lose or destroy half of their gear and you assume that you are now on their ‘shit list’, they still support your next trip and remain friendly. Peter of Valley for example invited me to stay at his house when I came to the UK last summer, and drove me all the way to Skegness so I could start my trip.

**What are your top 10 tips for expedition paddling?**

1. Paddle every day, all year. The drummer Alex Van Halen was asked how he prepares for a tour, “I play every day for 8–10 hours and have done for the past 25 years. That’s my preparation.”
2. Pack light, and leave everything at home which prohibits you from waking up to launching within 25 minutes. During a trip around the UK, for example, every piece of gear you do not need has to be unpacked 80 times and carried 300 feet above the high waterline 80 times, and then all over again in reverse the next morning. In addition, it is very empowering to realise what few things you can live with.
3. Paddle towards fishing boats you see (if the detour is not too far off) and ask for the updated weather forecast, for information about landings and for general advice. The detour will not be in vain and the rewards will be plenty (some in the form of fish, beer and invitations).
4. Always wear a 406 MHz EPIRB and a VHF radio tied to your PFD.
5. Pack a jar of Sudocrem. (My Sudocrem jar was a gift from the Pole-Evans family.) It cures sores and chaffing wounds almost as fast as the glowing finger of ET.
6. “Whether you think you can, or you think you can’t, you’re right” was Andrew McAuley’s mantra to Vicki McAuley on a climbing trip. It is OK not to do the Lundy Island to Pembrokeshire crossing even if others have done it.
7. Have a sectional kayak.
8. Read *The Canoe Boys*, a book about Alastair Dunnett and Seumas Adams who travel in the

first-known 3-piece kayaks along the Scottish West Coast in autumn 1934. ‘Real men’, as Joe Jackson would call them.

9. Have a blog and website. A website outlining your trip can motivate people to contact you, people who you cannot contact as you do not know of them. We received a lot of help from Kiko in Punta Arenas (so much help that the trip would have been almost impossible without him) and we became very good friends in the process. Kiko and some other kayakers we met in Tierra Del Fuego got in touch with us because he saw our website, and invited us to contact him if we needed help or if we just wanted to meet him for a beer.

10. Have a solid forward stroke with lots of legwork involved and a variety of rolls (to impress both yourself and the Chilean Coast Guard officer who will process your permit).

**What physical problems have you experienced during multi-month expeditions?**

Since I paddle 4–5 times a week and ride my bike every day for 1–2 hours, I don’t think my body changes very much even during an 80-day trip. The only difference is my butt, where I seem to lose some fat; it becomes very uncomfortable to sit in a chair until the fat reserves have been restored and increasingly painful to be in the kayak all day. For the first time I experienced strong back pain and pain in my wrists during the UK trip. For weeks I relied on high doses of paracetamol and ibuprofen in order to keep going or even to fall asleep. When Paul Caffyn said in *Justine’s TITS 3* “I wish I had gone on a trip every year,” I think he was referring to the pains which seem to increase with age. Then again, Icelandic kayaker Gisli has just circumnavigated Iceland at the tender age of 63.

**How does your sleeping, paddling and rest/break schedule fit in with the tidal cycle?**

On the UK trip when currents were strong and the timing of the currents would allow it, I paddled an AM and a PM shift. This often meant getting up somewhere around 3:30 AM, then paddling from 4 AM to 10 AM, crashing somewhere on the beach, having lunch then paddling again from approximately 4 PM to 10 PM. The advantage is that you have two 6-hour sessions of current-supported paddling; the disadvantage is you only have short periods of sleep and recovery. I also had to set the alarm for 00:48 for the weather broadcast on BBC 4. It became very tiresome after a few weeks, but I felt I had to press on and use every bit of daylight and current support in order to make it around.

**How do you deal with long stretches where you can’t land?**

Swearing at the elements helps (“F\*cking cliffs!”). Or self-pity (“I bet Paul Caffyn is sitting in an armchair watching TV right now, while I am paddling hard all day.”). Long stretches of coast without landing places, be it high surf

or cliffs, can create similar problems to that of long crossings. Although you are close to land (a psychological plus), you are in the same tight spot as if on a crossing if something goes wrong. The winds can pick up to gale-force strength or worse, you can get injured (pull a muscle, a back spasm) and since you are solo there is no-one to tow you. And maybe you don't have VHF reception because you are too close to the (high) cliffs. I barely slept the day before I left Sennen Cove, because I was so worried about the section of cliffs towards St Ives.

#### What tricks do you use to keep your gear weight and volume to a minimum?

I downgraded to the degree that it became an obsession, such as shortening the aluminium MSR pot holder by one inch, buying small lighters, leaving spare land clothing at home (just one set of land clothing) and not taking whiskey with me. In Iceland I bought two litre bottles of Jameson's but gave them away a few days into the trip. There I was, cutting the handle off the toothbrush to save weight, but lugging around four lbs of whiskey contained in two lbs of heavy glass bottles!

#### What luxuries do you carry?

An Ipod Nano, a diary and a small camera.

#### What tricks do you use to keep food and gear dry?

Make sure you paddle a quality sea kayak and prevent it from being damaged while landing. Don't drag it over sand, pebbles or concrete slips, etc. (easier said than done, I know).

#### On returning after a big trip away, how do you find getting back to normal daily life?

I find this very difficult, especially coming home after the Tierra Del Fuego and UK trips which were so immensely gratifying. I think the UK trip was my way of dealing with the transition from Tierra Del Fuego to normal life, i.e. avoiding the transition entirely. The stimulation during a trip, seeing new places and meeting new people daily is incredibly satisfying and captures me entirely. The daily planning, the constant revisions of your decisions, the food, the landings, the endless question of should-I-go-or-not and the dependency on the weather all become such an important part of your life. And I also like paddling – I like how the kayak glides and I can stare at the bow wake or work on my forward stroke for hours without getting bored. I also enjoy being in my tent, especially in strong winds and rain. I take photos during the trip and I do drawings, things I don't do at home. Although I look forward to seeing my friends again when coming back home, I miss the overall sense of daily accomplishment, challenge and the sense of beauty and nature.

One answer to this lack of fulfilment is to prepare for the next trip, which seems to be the most logical cure. But there is more to life than expeditions! It would be unwise to completely

write off the time between trips simply as preparation for the next trip, hence focusing on a place where you are not.

I talked with my friend Randy (New York Kayak Co.) about some adventurers and their restlessness, their priorities (or lack of) and their willingness to go from one high-adrenaline trip to the next. Randy refers to it as a sort of brain malfunction, similar to that which a drug addict may experience. He describes it as the brain's inability to live with a lack of continuous stimulation and/or with reality, as opposed to looking for the next big shot in the arm. Although I think that kayaking is not really a high-adrenaline trip (but a very healthy, slow and peaceful way of travelling), Randy has a point. There is also the total freedom while being on these trips. In Patagonia or the Falklands there was no cell phone signal and no emails to answer. You are immersed in nature with sea lions and penguins screaming around you, and experience a complete sense of freedom. You are responsible for nothing but yourself. It is really hard not to become addicted to this amazing way of life, brain damage or not. And there are the words of Paul Caffyn following me, who wishes he had gone on a trip every year. I wonder why he said that.

## EXPERIENCES

One of the most frustrating and difficult events I have faced when paddling is a day I stopped for lunch in big seas. I couldn't get back out through the surf to finish the trip. We decided to try and paddle along the coast between the outer sand bar and the shore, but after 15 minutes I broke a very expensive paddle in the white water and we gave up.

#### What has been your most difficult launch through the surf and how many attempts did it take to get through?

Surf does not even have to be huge (or look huge) in order to cause problems. You're lucky that you only broke your paddle. My most difficult surf launch was in Iceland, but unfortunately I cannot answer the part of your question of how I got out and through the surf because I did not make it out. At all. While paddling out, a wave which appeared out of nowhere threw me and the kayak back on the beach, which was littered with boulders. The kayak got holed eight times, and suffered a large crack on the hull. The damage was too great to repair with my flimsy fibreglass repair kit. I read the blog of Rotem Ron who circumnavigated Iceland two years before I attempted it, and she wrote about the very same stretch of coast and seeing the dumping surf. Rotem decided to paddle another three hours in order to land safely in a protected cove. I guess Rotem and I were at this very same crossroad: we were both

tired and hungry and we both wanted to land to set up camp for the night. I chose to land, but Rotem chose to continue paddling to a safe landing spot, even though she was also tired. I will never ever land again in dumping, or high, surf with a fully loaded kayak unless I absolutely have to and my life depends on it. I also did not appreciate that a difficult surf landing may lead to an even more difficult surf launch the following morning. I think experienced kayakers avoid surf landings with a fully loaded kayak by any means.

#### You've mentioned lots of great people experiences, but were there any bad, or not so good, people experiences?

There is only one, and it is extra bad. After we finished our trip in Tierra Del Fuego, we spent three days in Rio Grande where we met a person who seemed to be very interested in our well being. This person was even more interested in recovering our kayaks which we had to leave behind in a very remote area at the southeast tip of Tierra Del Fuego. After returning home to NYC, Leiv Poncet, a kayaker and sailor from the Falkland Islands, heard about the kayaks left behind and offered to collect them for us with his sailboat. Great! However, in the meantime, the other said gentleman from Rio Grande stole my kayak with a modified ATV to accommodate the kayak. He has since refused to return it to me or to hand it to a friend of mine in Rio Grande. This guy is one of the richest people in this otherwise impoverished town. Thankfully, he is the one and only rotten apple I have experienced on all my trips.

#### What is the scariest/riskiest situation you've experienced while paddling, and how did you get through the experience? How could other paddlers learn from this?

The scariest experience was my crossing of King Arthur Bay in the Falkland Islands, and I do not know what I really could have learned from it. I learned little things such as tying everything to your boat which you find necessary for your trip (including yourself). I capsized in a huge, almost vertical, deep black wave during the 20 mile crossing of King Arthur Bay. I was right in the middle of the crossing when the winds picked up, which were measured at 50 miles/hr by a FIGAS pilot 15 miles away on land. It was very chaotic on the water, I remember the wind being very loud, screaming, and the noise of it stressing me out, and then this large wave came. I could see the wave from a distance and I knew that bracing into it would not be enough: it was too large and too steep. When the wave came and rolled me over I waited for as long as I could before attempting to roll, but I was unable to get up to the surface. I felt I was rolling inside the wave, or somewhere under the water. I had no idea where I was in relation to the surface. I wet-exited 10 miles offshore in huge breaking swell in severe gale force winds, which was ►



very humbling. I was able to get back into the boat and paddled downwind to a small island; the experience left a scar for a good year. I am still very afraid of crossings because of this experience, and this is why I paddled way into the Bristol Channel in order to cut down the crossing to only 15 miles.

**What is the most rewarding situation you've experienced while paddling?**

The friendship I encountered on Saunders Island during my trip around the Falkland Islands was one of many highlights. There I met the Pole-Evans family, Biffo and Ant, two days after my traumatic capsizing during the gale in King Arthur Bay. I stayed two days on Saunders Island where they fixed my skag, fed me, drove me in their Land Rover to an Albatross colony and provided me with a new outlook on the trip.

**What is the most breath-taking situation you've experienced while paddling?**

Either surfing up the west coast of Scotland in a strong southerly breeze or setting up a tent among thousands of penguins at Death Head in the Falkland Islands.

## UK CIRCUMNAVIGATION

**How did you plan for the circumnavigation of the UK? What charts and pilot's information did you use for the different sections of coast?**

The nautical charts were provided by Barry Shaw who paddled around the UK with Phil Clegg and Harry Whelan in 2005; he lent me all his IMRAY charts (a good 30 or so). All IMRAY charts have the tidal stream information (the diamonds on the chart itself, the tidal stream diagrams on the back) on it. In the end, you have to watch what the currents do at the buoys of the lobster pots, and ask as many fishermen along the way as possible. There are a lot of local current variations along the UK coast and sometimes the IMRAY chart current information was just plain off (sometimes by as much as three hours).

**In the past you've announced your trips with a bit of a PR send off. This year few, if any, knew you were going on such an ambitious trip. Why so low-key this time?**

The decision to paddle round the UK was made pretty quickly. In April I realised I did not want to stay all summer in NYC, racing on the ski every day on the Hudson River in the bloody heat. By the time I made up my mind to go, it was already mid-April. I knew I had to leave within two weeks in order to have enough of the season and good weather left to have a chance of making it round. I also felt embarrassed about the Tierra Del Fuego trip. We left with such a huge fanfare, even with a Pre-trip talk at our local boathouse, and two months later I felt we had to explain ourselves to the whole world. Even Barry and Justine, who hosted me in Anglesey at my half-mark point and helped me out with trip preparations, did

not know of my attempt to go around the UK. I told Barry I was only paddling from Skegness to Anglesey and, in order not to blow my cover, I only asked him to send the charts for this section. Later in Anglesey I asked him for the remaining charts around Scotland and back to Skegness. But Barry and Justine are smart – they suspected I was trying to go around right from the start. (They would have made excellent engineers.)

**Did having less PR have any affect on the pressure you felt paddling around the UK?**

Yes. I felt liberated not having to blog about every seagull sh\*tting on my tent, capsizing or wind speeds. To have the freedom to stop the trip at any point without a single soul knowing what I was attempting also felt great. This may sound trivial, but it completely changed the way I experienced the trip.

**I heard that you could easily have beaten the record for the circumnavigation, but decided to stop for a day. Is this true?**

Yes and no. Yes, I wasted some days in the Bristol Channel because I paddled way in to make a small and safe crossing rather than doing a 40 mile crossing, and later I lost some days in the very friendly town of Dunbeath to watch the soccer world cup semi-finals. My goal was not the record, just finishing the circumnavigation. Since the Tierra Del Fuego trip ended in a sort of 'Into The Wild' situation (albeit with a better outcome than the book due to the helicopter spotting us) and also as all attempts to go around the UK in the past five years had failed, my only goal was – for a change – just to finish an expedition successfully. My eye was never on the record. The funny thing about the record is that I thought I made it around in 81 days but Barry Shaw, the 80-day record holder who helped me a lot and who watched my progress, said my maths was fuzzy and that I finished (just like he did) in 80 days. We went through the calendar five times together, counting days, and he was right. The 80-day thing is nice as it matches the 'Around the World in 80 Days' book title but otherwise, who cares! My incentive to paddle fast was only to make it within the season, to finish successfully and to get as quickly as possible out of my smelly and dirty underwear which I wore for 80 days continuously.

**What were the tricks you used to avoid weight loss and stay healthy on the UK circumnavigation?**

My friend's wife Maggie is a nutritionist. After I lost some weight during the Ireland trip and felt very tired and beaten in the last third of the circumnavigation, I asked Maggie to look through my food purchases and meals I ate during this trip. Maggie calculated that I did not even eat half of the calories I had burned each day, which resulted in weight loss, decreased performance and a constant crappy mood (no wonder I met so few nice people during my Ireland trip). Maggie thinks that paddling in high winds burns

approximately 400 calories per hour. If you paddle 10 hours, and you add your basal metabolic rate of approximately 2000 calories/day, you burn 6000 calories a day. This does not include the endless trips onshore to get the kayak and gear above the high watermark, which can be a workout on its own, then setting up the tent, etc. As you burn approximately three times as much as opposed to staying at home, you also have to eat three times as much in order to compensate for the higher energy output. This means six bagels instead of two in the morning and three plates of spaghetti with pesto instead of one, etc. Eating this much is almost impossible, so you have to eat many times throughout the day and always a little bit more than you think you need or want.

Although I thought I had eaten plenty during my first three weeks, I again felt weak and lost some weight. I remembered Maggie's advice to eat and drink every hour, so started eating a big chunk of cheese and bread and maybe half a Mars or granola bar. It not only divided up the day into more manageable portions, but I also felt stronger and felt I could paddle longer. Maggie also recommends eating within 30 minutes of ending your paddling day, when your muscles are more receptive to being replenished. The first thing I therefore did on landing was to fire up the camping stove and put water on to boil. By the time I had my kayak and gear on the grass, the water was boiling and I threw the spaghetti in. By the time the tent was up and I was dressed in land clothing, the spaghetti was cooked. I usually had dinner within 30 minutes of paddling my last stroke.

**How much water did you carry?**

Way too much. 'Water management' on previous expeditions meant carrying as much water as possible. There were stretches with no possibilities of replenishing water during the Falklands and Tierra Del Fuego trip; with this in mind, I carried way too much water with me around the UK. I am not aware of anyone ever dying of thirst while circumnavigating the UK, and I doubt this will ever happen.

## GEAR

**Were there any issues with the gear capacity of the Valley Nordkapp compared to the NDK Explorer that you used prior to your last few expeditions?**

I remember looking into the hatches of a Valley Nordkapp for the first time and thinking although this is the only kayak with three day hatches, they are so tiny! Owners of the 308 Ferrari were complaining the trunk was not large enough to accommodate a case of wine, and now I really feel for them. I would guess a Nordkapp has 25–33% less storage capacity compared to an Explorer, or at least it feels this way, and I always had trouble getting all my kit into an Explorer. There was always this extra dry bag which appeared behind me after I thought I'd packed the kayak. I downgraded my kit only a little, such as taking a ►

smaller tent (which is still a 2-person tent, a North Face Spectrum 23). Everything fits in the Nordkapp just as good (or bad) as everything used to fit into the Explorer.

**Tell us about the three-piece kayaks you've used lately and what system you prefer.**

The Nordkapp 3-piece is a bolt-only connection (as opposed to having bolts on the bottom and clips on top). Each piece is exactly the same length which makes it easier to navigate the disassembled kayak through airports, or to pack it into a crate. The kayak has foam pads on the front bulkhead instead of foot pegs. Foot pegs can really hurt your feet if you paddle long days, and day after day. The surface of the YAKIMA foot pegs which most kayak manufacturers use is just too small if you push with your feet against it day after day. The large surface of the rigid foam pad allows you to vary your foot position in many ways in order to get relief from minor cramps or from just feeling uncomfortable after being in one position for too long. Installed foot pegs do not give you this freedom and flexibility, they are just a pain. Literally. And they are simply one more thing which can break during a trip. The new 3-piece has a keel strip and I was able to witness it being built, allowing me to learn more about the kayak. It is my most valuable and beloved material possession.

**Do you take any water treatment equipment?**

No. When I did my first expedition in Patagonia, I put water treatment tablets in the water. I then met some hikers who said such tablets were not necessary as there are very few people, no cattle and no industry in south Patagonia who could possibly spoil the water. I have not used any water treatment tablets anywhere since then, and have been fine.

**Do you carry a spare paddle? Tether? Drogue? Or other safety contraption?**

A spare paddle is a must, even on a 5-minute paddle in the bay. I carried a tether in the Falklands. I've never used a drogue. Other safety kit which I carry includes a PFD, a 406 MHz EPIRB, flares and a VHF.

**What weather prediction tools do you use?**

In Ireland and in the UK I used a regular AM/FM radio; BBC R4 (UK) or RTE (Ireland) transmit the maritime weather forecast twice a day. In Iceland and Tierra Del Fuego, Karel Vissel of kayakweather.com text the forecasts to the satellite phone (TdF) or satellite pager (Iceland). In the Falklands, however, I neglected to plan this part of the expedition (which might have been useful in my decision to cross King Arthur Bay).

**Why did you switch from SKUK to Valley?**

I paddled a second-hand 3-piece Nordkapp on my first trip in Patagonia. I fell totally in love with the kayak, but it also drove me mad as hell since it did not have a skeg. I therefore switched to a kayak with a skeg, which happened to be a

used Explorer. Since then I've always paddled Explorers. I've always thought about paddling a Nordkapp again, but shied away from it because of my Patagonia Nordkapp without a skeg; this kayak caused a lot of swearing on my part due to its weather-cocking. I think the Explorer is a fantastic kayak. It was my companion through some very important trips and experiences. The Nordkapp is not better, and definitely not worse, than the Explorer; it is just an entirely different kayak. I find the fully loaded Nordkapp behaves more like an empty boat in terms of agility, and it performs better in stronger winds. I also found that the Nordkapp is faster than an Explorer. It not only felt faster, but I was also able to pick up smaller waves. My daily mileage around the UK was higher than going around Ireland, although they have similar currents. Most importantly, people think it looks good. I got so many comments from strangers (kayakers and non-kayakers alike), commenting on the beautiful lines of the Nordkapp. Did I say kayaking is not sexy?

## THE FUTURE

**If someone wanted to start paddling what would be your best recommendations? What lessons should they take? Which boat should they start with and which gear should they invest in?**

The best introduction to paddling is a good mix of instruction and paddling, regularly, with others, be it in a club or with newly found paddling friends. I was lucky that my first lesson and kayak experience was with Eric Stiller, which was a 4-hour forward stroke lesson. Eric focuses like a mad scientist on the mechanics of the forward stroke, and I liked his intense focus on legwork. I learned a lot from other paddlers, who rolled in front of me like mating sea otters, and who encouraged me to go to rolling class shortly after I started kayaking. I think it is important to have your own quality fibreglass boat right away, otherwise you waste a lot of energy getting used to the ever-changing boat types you are forced to paddle in when you go with a commercial outfitter.

**What would you do differently if you went back to Tierra del Fuego and what advice would you offer to other paddlers planning a trip there?**

We made the mistake of going counter-clockwise around Tierra Del Fuego, which was one of the reasons we got stuck at Caleta Falsa; even if the winds had eased we would only have made marginal progress. We cannot really blame ourselves since no-one else had ever tried or even thought about going around Tierra Del Fuego before. Our plans all made sense to the Chilean and Argentinean Coast Guard whose permission we needed and all kayakers (except one) said we were going in the right direction. So for anyone who wants to give it a crack: go clockwise. There are currently two kayakers attempting to go around Tierra Del Fuego (Justine and Barry). Biff and I helped them as best as we could with their preparations: we recommended going clockwise

and sent them our charts. We wish them the best of luck and hope they will be successful.

**Who would be included in your ideal expedition line-up?**

I am just home from a night out with Biff (Wruszek), so have to say that my ideal expedition line-up would be Biff and me going around Tierra Del Fuego in 2012 or 2013. Biff and I are very close friends; she is a good kayaker and we paddle a lot around NYC. We always seemed like compatible candidates, both on water and on land. However, compatibility on the tame waters around NYC did not translate to compatibility on the more lively and challenging waters around Tierra Del Fuego. The apparent rift in skills and experience and the consequences on the water were very, very hard for each of us. It seemed impossible to do anything about it at that point. The ideal line-up would be Wruszek/Demuth: but with a Wruszek who had completed an Ireland trip solo or something comparable. And have I mentioned that Biff can yodel?

**If time and money were not an issue, what expedition would you undertake?**

I would go to the Kerguelen Islands, which are right in the middle of the Indian Ocean, about 600 miles north of Antarctica. It is almost impossible to get there as there is no landing strip on the island and it is 2500 miles southwest of Cape Town. A French research vessel goes there only once or twice a year, and one of the few berths available to charter on this vessel costs \$20,000 and is sold out until 2016. Anyway, they only moor in Kerguelen for 3-5 days which is way too short for a circumnavigation. It looks like the only way to realise this trip would be to hire one of those sailboats that are based in Ushuaia and take tourists around Cape Horn, South Georgia or to Antarctica. They run at about US\$ 1000 a day, and this expedition would last at least 150 days.

**What's next?**

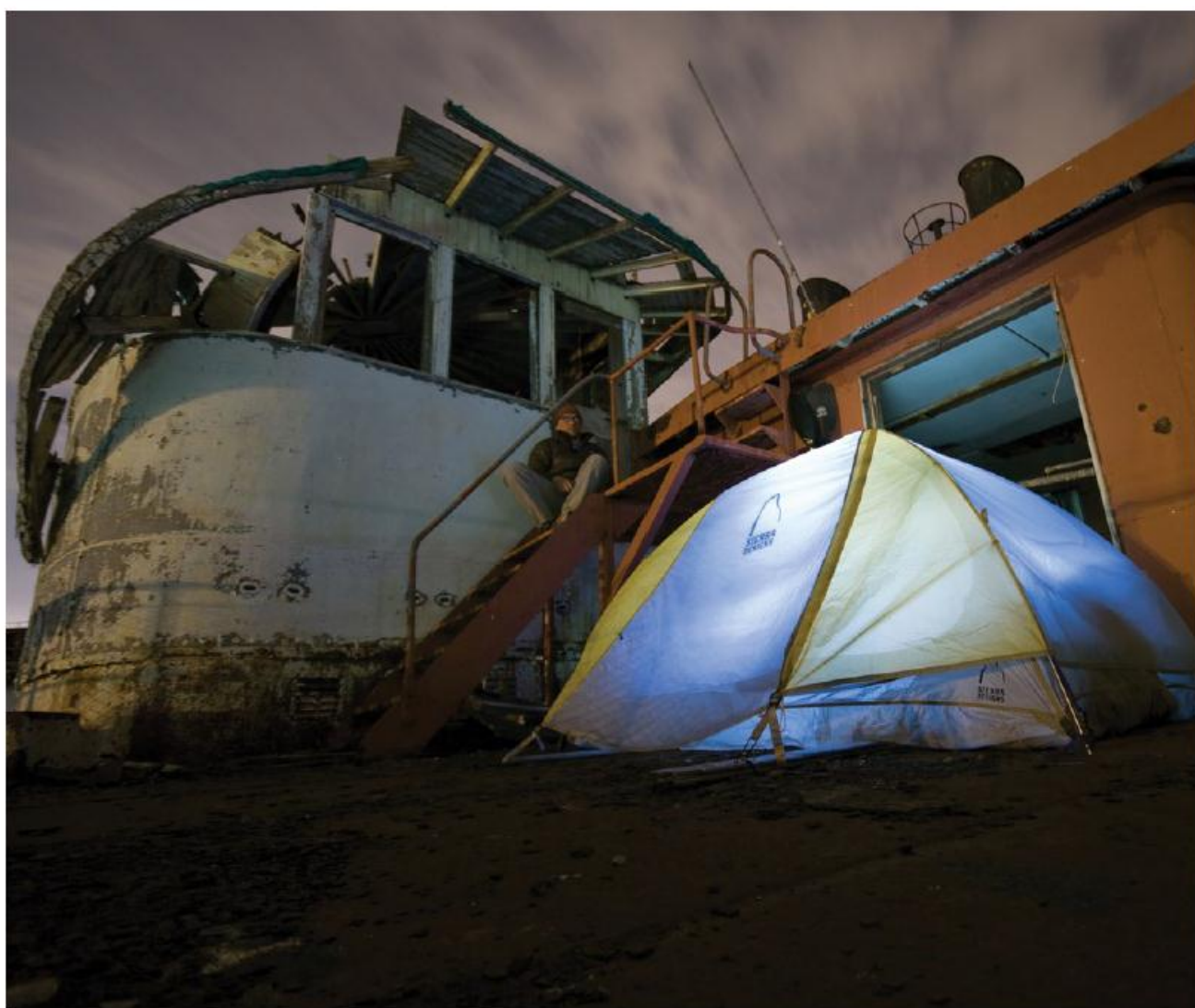
Misha Hoichman and I are thinking about doing a trip together. We are not sure where we will go, but we both have 3-piece kayaks and Misha speaks Russian. Due to the challenges most warm weather countries provide (camping restrictions, civil war, land mines, pirates, alligators, dictators wearing sweat suits – you name it!) it will most likely be a cold weather place. There is Sakhalin Island on the East Coast of Russia which looks like an ideal place to kayak, except that when you Google 'Sakhalin Island' you get a worrying number of photographs showing people whose left side of the body was devoured by a grizzly bear and whose right side still holds a shotgun. I guess this is the reason why many kayak expeditions are to places such as Iceland, Tasmania, Patagonia, the UK, Ireland, etc.

At the end of the day, there are not too many places on our planet which offer a good night's sleep and a friendly chat with a local after a long day on the water. ■

FEATURE | HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

# HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

We asked Marcus to recommend some of his favourite paddles in his local waters around New York. Below, he describes trips that are full of character and represent different aspects of New York.



## THE CLASSIC

No circumnavigation of Manhattan is like the previous one, and they come in at least as many flavours as bagels from the City Bakery. The 29 mile trip around Manhattan in a sea kayak takes between 4 and 9 hours (4 hours when you race – or 3 hours and 17 minutes if your name is Sean Rice – during the NY Mayor's Cup or 7–9 hours at a leisurely touring pace with lunch breaks). We start the trip usually 2 hours before high water at the Battery (the southernmost tip of Manhattan) from our Pier 66 boathouse, and then go anticlockwise around the island of Manhattan. With a strategic stop on Mill Rock to wait for the tides to turn in the Harlem River, the currents speed you up by 1–3 mph (and for a short time up to 5 mph on the East River) and, on a good day, are with you the entire way around the island.

In the first hour you will pass by almost all the NYC landmarks (the Statue of Liberty, the skyscrapers of the financial district, the Brooklyn Bridge etc.) before the scenery changes slowly from postcard Manhattan to Telly Savalas' Kojak. It feels like looking at a movie studio film set from behind: the parts of Upper Manhattan, the Bronx, the more polluted waters, industrial sites and homeless people fishing from makeshift tents along the Northern tip of Manhattan.

A circumnavigation of Manhattan by kayak provides a realistic and compressed snapshot of NYC for both visitors and locals. My very first Manhattan circumnavigation was a night circumnavigation with a group of paddlers from Manhattan Kayak Co., a trip which made me declare "I am a kayaker!" There is also our annual 'Season Opening' circumnavigation in early spring, the first after only doing short winter paddles for months, with a long lunch stop and warming bonfire on South Brothers Island. This is followed by circumnavigations in the summer with visitors, or training runs for the Mayor's Cup ([www.nymayorscup.com](http://www.nymayorscup.com)) which is held in August of each year. Although a Manhattan circumnavigation seems to be straightforward, I recommend going with a guide or friend especially for the first time. The ship and ferry traffic around the southern half of Manhattan can be quite intense, not unlike kayaking through the busy Solent (thankfully minus the hovercrafts). Although there are landing possibilities around Manhattan, they are few and hard to find between many miles of sea walls.

## GRAVEYARD OF SHIPS

For many years old tugboats and ferries beyond repair were driven at maximum speed up the sandbank of the Arthur Kill in Staten Island. The practice ended many decades ago, when all wooden tugboats were dismissed and the new generations of vessels were sold after their service time had elapsed to scrap yards (since they were mostly built of recyclable steel). What is left at Arthur Kill is a 'Graveyard of Ships' with approximately 20–30 ships in various states of disrepair, eaten up by the elements, time and rust.

For a half-day trip to the graveyard which involves very little kayaking other than paddling through the graveyard (and through some of the ships), use the boat launch next to the waterfront park in Cateret, NJ, a 45 minute drive from New York and a 10 minute paddle from the graveyard. A more ambitious experience, which requires a Tetanus shot and some stamina, is to paddle to the graveyard from Manhattan by circumnavigating Staten Island clockwise and choosing the former Governor's Island car ferry John A. Lynch, half-sunk and tilted at 30 degrees, as your campsite. It will be a small challenge to hoist the kayaks onto the ferry, to clear areas of debris on the slowly dying ship and to get a good night's sleep (the ferry will squeak and tremble loudly during the night from the wakes of passing tugboats or oil tankers). Before heading off for the 4–6 hour paddle back to Manhattan you can spend hours in the graveyard itself, which lies approximately half a mile northeast from the John A. Lynch. You can climb onto ships, paddle through the now half-submersed car holds of former ferries, and be mesmerised by the difference in decay of the ships. Some of them look like they still carried loads, crew and passengers until 5 or 10 years ago with the glass panes still intact in the windows of the captain's bridge; others look as if they had been there for centuries.

## CAMPING

Real camping, without the risk of falling through the rusty paper-thin floors of a decayed ship, can be done after paddling with the current for 6 hours either south or north from NYC (starting again from Pier 66 on the West side of Manhattan). Going south, the first legal and peaceful setting for camping is Butter Island. This tiny island does not officially exist, and is located

in the Navesink River area in New Jersey 10 miles south of Sandy Hook. If you leave the dock at Pier 66 at the beginning of the ebb current, which is approximately 3 hours before high water at the Battery, the southbound current of about 2–3 mph will wash you all the way out of the inner harbour, through the narrows and the outer harbour and to the tip of Sandy Hook in 3–4 hours. Do not stop here too long to stretch your legs, since by then the flood which you will need for your final leg of the trip will be underway. The flood first flows at a slow pace along the rows of old coastguard buildings on the western side of Sandy Hook (still southbound), then increases to about 5–7 mph through the bottleneck underneath the new Highlands Bridge and past the fishing docks of commercial clam fishermen. Butter Island is the western-most of the four islands lying in the Navesink River delta. It is the smallest of the four islands, shrinking from about 1 square kilometre to only 200 square metres at high tide, but is the only island of the group without poison ivy.

Leaving NYC northbound on the Hudson River (which Henry Hudson sailed up 400 years ago hoping it might be the Northwest Passage), the first campsite of the Hudson River Water Trail lies on the Croton Point peninsula on your right. Like the southbound trip, it is 34 miles in 6 hour bursts of tidal-assisted paddling. Situated in a lush setting on a wide gravel beach, looking towards the cliffs of the Palisades and over the 2-mile wide Hudson, it doesn't exactly feel like the Outer Hebrides but is not like New York City either. It is a fantastic spot where we paddled to many times to christen a new kayak, to test out new camping gear or simply to escape from the stifling summer heat in Manhattan for a day. North from this point, the Hudson River Water Trail ([hrwa.org](http://hrwa.org)) offers many more legal and free campsites every 20–30 miles all the way up to Albany (NY's capital), the place where Henry Hudson realised this wasn't the Northwest Passage and turned his ship around. ■

## RESOURCES

[www.nymayorscup.com](http://www.nymayorscup.com)  
[www.hrwa.org](http://www.hrwa.org)  
[www.sebagocanooclub.org](http://www.sebagocanooclub.org)  
[www.manhattankayak.com](http://www.manhattankayak.com)  
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