**Floating Kayaks**

This year's new kayaks are all about a refreshing purity of purpose. The new trend in whitewater is a return to the simple pleasures of river running, so sea-kayak companies are unabashedly specializing their wares. Whether you're into whitewater, or day-tripping to a local coastline, there's a boat for you. And if you're into speed, may we direct you to this year's Gear of the Year winner, KayakPro's Nemo. It's the fastest and most comfortable sit-on-top kayak we've ever tested... 

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**KayakPro Nemo**

(35 lbs. 17'11 1/2" x 21 1/2") $3,700 kayakpro.com

1. Developed by five-time Olympian and world champion Lawson Koon, the Nemo is the ultimate fusion of race and touring readiness. After weeks on the water, the Nemo has proved that it has the optimum mix of speed and comfort for everything from high-intensity racing to all-day touring.

2. Unlike most mass-market boats, which are designed for slower speeds, the Nemo's knife-edge bow is a testament to its focus on speed. Its hull is built for speed, with a long, narrow shape that keeps the boat fast and maneuverable.

3. The flat cockpit rim and deck allow total freedom of movement, whether you're paddling, or touring. The cockpit is designed to be comfortable, with a generous amount of legroom and a high backrest for support.

4. The prototype tracked so straight that it was difficult to turn back toward home. KayakPro improved production models by adding a longer rudder, which proved effective but intermediate paddlers won't be able to use. It's not reconfigurable, but will give if it hits a rock.

LEARNING CURVE

In the water, know where you want to paddle and for how long. For running around Social or backwater, think simplicity. For touring the coasts of Maine or Greenland, think simplicity and lots of internal gear storage. Whether you're buying a kayak or a seat, make it comfortable—enjoying the ride, but not stressing. Ask about accessories; from fishing to exploration, there are countless accessories to help you customize your kayak.

On the water: Grease hand-hold hatches with a touch of Vaseline, and practice opening and sealing them before you're on the water. Water water-cooler. Check your fittings. Loose screws and poorly seated scupper drainages make for a wet ride. If you're stillmarried, wet, try a new spray skirt. Skirts with a European-style pre-snap flange tend to leak.

At homes: String webbing under the hull and hang your boat right side up out of the sun. This keeps the pressure off the hull and prevents UV rays from weakening the plastic or glass.