

# ROCKPOOL GT



## SPECIFICATIONS

- LENGTH: 17 FT 10 INCHES
- WIDTH: 21 INCHES
- VOLUME: 380 LTR
- DECK HEIGHT: 12.25 INCHES
- WEIGHT: 26 KG STANDARD CONSTRUCTION  
20 KG CARBON KEVLAR EPOXY
- COCKPIT LENGTH: 30.25 INCHES (INSIDE)
- COCKPIT WIDTH: 16.5 INCHES (INSIDE)
- RRP: £2295 STANDARD CONSTRUCTION

FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE  
WWW.ROCKPOOLKAYAKS.COM

## ABOUT THE TEST PADDLING CONDITIONS AND PADDLER

Having first paddled a Rockpool Kayak when they initially came onto the market with the Alaw Bach, I was keen to get out and try the GT. What improvements could they possibly make to what I have previously classed as some of the most ergonomically perfect boats I have ever paddled? The GT was paddled in moderately breezy conditions of force 3 and in tidal flow of up to 4 knots, with a few standing waves thrown in for good measure. The paddler was 60 kg in weight (a little light for the craft) and 176 cm in height. The boat was due at a symposium a few days after testing, hence the short-term test time. This is therefore a snapshot of the GT as a boat. Ideally, it would have been great to take it out into the elements for an expedition or multi-day mini-break to test its full working and load carrying potential.

## DESIGN

Originality and futuristic thoughts are two of the mainstays of the Rockpool design ethos. The GT is no exception to this and is marketed as a speedier sea boat than other designs of boat currently on the market. It is designed to track easily while retaining the agility, sporty feel and performance of a shorter or smaller boat, yet have good forward speed for longer journeys. This is achieved via the hull cross-section profile, which changes. There is a V at the water entry point of the bow, rounded through the front section followed by a flattened-U beneath the cockpit, then rounded again under the stern hatch to a gentle blend into a short keel section at the stern. There are no chines present on the GT throughout its profiles.

It is designed as a high-volume expedition and touring boat to be fast, comfortable, manoeuvrable and seaworthy in rough

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water. It has a long water line, yet the bow hull is slightly raised and there is an integral skeg to the stern.

Under the stern there is a unique drop-down skeg, utilising the traditional cable and blade, which is simple and effective to use when required. However, as with the other crafts from Rockpool, the GT also has an integral skeg design built into the hull shape which to some extent negates the need for the drop-down skeg. For those with plenty of dollars in their pocket, Rockpool say that a hydro skeg can be added (obviously at extra cost).

Above the waterline, raising the deck height and making the bow and stern more voluminous brings the benefit of a drier ride through any waves. The GT also surfs quite well which, if I am honest, surprised me for such a big boat.

The boat's beam is 53 cm; however, the visual lines and impression of the GT is that it is quite large in the deck area around the cockpit. This provides a comfortable paddling position and cockpit area which would allow an extremely pleasurable paddle on a longer haul trip.

In profile, the boat has a long keel line with a distinctive deep stern which looks like it would make the boat track too hard if it were not combined with generous rocker and enough midsection volume to allow the ends to release when edged.

## CONSTRUCTION, FINISH, FITTINGS AND ERGONOMICS

As with all Rockpool boats, there are a number of construction and manufacturing processes available to suit both pocket and weight requirements. In addition, there are a few options for seat size and fit. This is a fantastic bespoke option, given that most sea paddlers are very lazy when it comes to fitting out the seat of the boat (considering they spend a lot of time in it and it is the main area of transfer of power and balance). The seat and the footrest plate are both adjustable for longitudinal position in the cockpit and, as is standard in the Rockpool crafts, this is done via a number of wing-nuts. The footplate itself is angled with the heel contact area being closer than the toe contact area, allowing a natural foot position (in the same way as footrest under a desk).

The unique construction of the rails that house the seat and footrest provide for macro- and micro-adjustments, allowing

the best possible fit to be achieved. Easy to adjust and position, these are all internally fitted and housed. There are no visibly external fittings or holes through the boat for bolt positions, making the hull completely watertight. An excellent idea, this is really just common sense!

The attention to detail and overall finish of the GT is outstanding, with thought given to every piece of equipment. Fixtures and fitting have been thoroughly considered for position, use, function and form.

For larger paddlers with longer legs or thicker thighs the GT has a raised cockpit area and rim for an extremely comfortable knees-up paddling position. This gives excellent control while edging. Rockpool boats have relatively aggressive thigh braces and the choice of the seat widths adds to the personal fit and increased performance.

As mentioned earlier the skeg system is unique; it works in the opposite direction to other boats, that is, the slider is moved forward to lower the blade. This takes a little getting used to, but is extremely effective and functional and virtually maintenance-free. The skeg box itself takes up very little room inside the hull and has very narrow clearances when looking at the blade in the hull. This is excellent in that it reduces the chances of trapping pebbles and rendering the skeg useless or even broken. The actual mechanics make the handling of this skeg system particularly smooth and easy to use. It has been designed to be relatively more kink-proof than the standard cable-based skeg systems of most other boats. The only down side to this is that there is a finite amount of vertical range of the blade, giving less scope for adjustment. This is negated by the previously mentioned integral skeg design of the GT's aft shape, however.

The GT comes with four hatches, all kayaksport, including the fore day hatch for all those essential goodies while still allowing a clean deck. The other hatches allow access to the seemingly never-ending caves that are the fore and aft hatches. You might want to consider taking a friend with some long arms to reach that last food bag down the end of the kayak!

## DIMENSIONS

Slightly shorter than the previous expedition boat from the Rockpool camp (the Menai) the GT's length is 17'10" or 5.5 m and the beam is 21" or 53 cm. It comes in at a voluminous 380 litres in capacity.

This is more than enough to be a serious contender for major expeditions.

## CONCLUSION

This Rockpool boat, like any of the Rockpool stud, proved to be an outstanding paddle in the limited time the boat was available for a test. I had high expectations of what I hoped it would feel like, having paddled the Alaw Bach many years ago, and I was not disappointed by the GT.

In summary, the GT has echoing amounts of volume and buoyancy and is stable and responsive. As a light paddler (too light for this boat to work perfectly) it did trim well and responsively and the overall performance would probably have been even greater if I was heavier. That said, if you were heavier and you like the boat when it is lightly loaded, I am sure you would gain even more pleasure from it when utilising its load-carrying capacity.

The outfitting, ergonomics and comfort are Rolls Royce, while the possible speed, handling characteristics and pleasure are Ferrari.

Overall, with its advanced hull design, ergonomic fittings, high level of comfort and its response and connection to the paddler, this is the next generation of sea kayak that many a paddler will enjoy and develop in. The GT sets a high standard for other manufacturers to attempt to follow.

## MANUFACTURER'S RESPONSE

We are pleased to see that the reviewer enjoyed his time in the Rockpool GT. From the outset we wanted to design a kayak that was large enough for expedition work but, at the same time, would have lively and sporty handling – a big boat in a small boat's clothing! The GT is a sea kayak that we always enjoy paddling ourselves.

We would like to elaborate a little on the skeg function. As the reviewer points out, the skeg slider is designed to function in reverse to what may be seen as the norm on most sea kayaks. This is so that the skeg cable is under tension rather than compression when the skeg is deployed. This prevents kinking of the cable if the kayak is beached while the skeg is still deployed.

At Rockpool, we pride ourselves on our attention to detail and on the innovation we bring to our kayak designs. We dedicate a great deal of thought to the form, function and use of our kayaks – take a look at the new Taran! ■