



# Klepper Kayaks

KLEPPER KAYAKS ARE STABLE, BALANCED AND UNSINKABLE.

## The original, go anywhere folding kayak.

BY PAT SAUNDERS

Arthur Vollmer wants everyone to know just how great Klepper folding kayaks really are. The retired mechanical engineer who calls West Arichat, Cape Breton, home has been kayaking all of his life. As a boy growing up in Germany, he was an avid paddler, kayaking the Rhine and Mosel rivers with his sister, a hobby he continued when he moved to Nova Scotia. He has photos of kayaking with his parents when he was just five years old, and photos of kayaking with his wife Maria and son Ingo using a Klepper kayak that was purchased by his family in 1935.

"The Klepper is a beautiful boat, and kayaking is good for the body and the mind," says the still fit Arthur, who runs Vollmer's Island Paradise with Maria. He himself has a Klepper that is 56 years old and another that is near 25

years old, yet looks as good as new, the hull colour still vibrant, the boat in excellent condition. How's that for a testament to these quality, custom-crafted folding kayaks that have been manufactured in southern Germany since 1907.

The original folding kayak was developed by Johann Klepper, a tailor from Rosenheim, Bavaria. Today, Klepper is still manufactured in Rosenheim using mainly natural materials and mostly produced by hand. "Klepper would not be Klepper if the company would not have adhered to the same production standards which made the company world famous for its quality and design," says the company brochure. (There's even a Klepper museum in Rosenheim dedicated to the "world's most famous folding kayak.") Arthur and Ingo



have visited the facility to see how these kayaks are constructed first hand, and Ingo's company, Marlin Marine, is the authorized Klepper dealer for

Eastern Canada.

So what makes a Klepper kayak so special? First of all, it is the original folding kayak, and offers the ultimate in portability. Store it in your closet. Carry it in the trunk of your car. Check it as luggage on your next kayaking vacation south. The kayak consists of a frame and a flexible skin that fit into carrying bags. Manufacturer Klepper Faltbootwerft AG says a beginner can assemble a kayak in around 30 minutes, and claims that their professionals can put one together in under eight minutes. We watched Arthur disassemble one in less than 10 and within five minutes, he had it folded and packed in the

carrying cases. "It's easier for me to put it together than take it apart," says Arthur. "Everything snaps together. It's so easy. When you're packing it, remember to put the ribs in the case first." Watching him, you can tell he's done this a few times; he does make it look very easy.

Constructed of white ash and birch, the frame of the kayak is a work of art in itself, showing clean lines, quality workmanship and a most effective design. Arthur explains that only eight-year-old dried wood is used for the frame, making it extremely durable, and it is salt-water resistant. There are no bolts or parts to lose or break, as the kayak goes together using ingenious snap-lock fasteners made of treated aluminum that assure a fast, easy assembly every time. All components are numbered, making it easy to locate corresponding pieces. Stern and bow pieces are also colour coded,

while arrows indicate the correct way to snap the pieces together. The deck of the hull is made of 100-percent cotton, which is water tight, yet can breathe in hot conditions, while the hull bottom is constructed of durable Hypalon, a synthetic rubber that is resistant to temperature extremes and ultraviolet light. So if you find yourself kayaking in Arctic cold or tropical heat, the Klepper is up to the challenge.

The simplistic design of the kayak is also quite remarkable in terms of function and form. There's ample leg and arm room - the seats are length and height adjustable - and lots of room for gear. And the boats are unmatched when it comes to seaworthiness. Not only are they extremely stable and balanced,

the use of integrated airspoons (air tubes) makes them unsinkable. The boat is easy to paddle, no matter your skill



ARTHUR, MARIA AND INGO PADDLING THE WALENSEE LAKE IN SWITZERLAND IN 1966 ABOARD A KLEPPER PURCHASED IN 1935.

INSET: ARTHUR PADDLING WITH HIS PARENTS IN 1935.



"IT'S AS EASY AS 1, 2, 3," SAYS ARTHUR, ON TAKING APART A KLEPPER FOLDING KAYAK.

water, no matter the conditions. These boats are built to handle almost any type of water: lakes, rivers, bays, coastlines, be it fresh or salt water.

There are several makes and models to choose from (including a military version, complete with camouflage), depending on how you spend your time kayaking. The 12.5-foot Tramp is lightweight, easy to handle and manoeuvre, while the 19-foot Aeriux XXL Expedition can handle three or four people and luggage making it perfect for families or longer trips. All are durable, easy to assemble and care for, and come in a variety of colours. Some of the models can even be fitted with a hand tiller, mast and sails, turning your kayak into a day sailer, or you can opt for a sideboard motor. Numerous extras are also available, from boat carts and belt bags to lumbar supports. The boats are guaranteed for five years, and Klepper says it's not unusual for the frames to last 40 years, with the hulls lasting 20. Arthur's kayaks are a testament to this, showing the quality materials and construction.

So whether you're a serious kayaker into long trips who wishes you could take your kayak with you on your next vacation south, or a city dweller living in a condo who enjoys getting out for an afternoon paddle, check out the Klepper folding kayaks. Easy to store, assemble and paddle, just grab your Klepper and go. As Arthur puts it, "It's not just a boat, it's a philosophy."



ARTHUR AND MARIA VOLLMER AT THE HALIFAX INTERNATIONAL BOAT SHOW.

For more information and to see the Klepper folding kayak firsthand, visit Marlin Marine at the Halifax International Boat Show, Feb 21-24 at Exhibition Park.



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