

Another world first by Klepper

Over one hundred years ago, the Klepper Folding Kayaks manufacturer launched a trend with the first commercial foldable kayaks. Now, after years of development, design modelling, and testing, and following a long line of Klepper firsts, Klepper has launched the Klepper BACKYAK. Eye-catching thanks to its futuristic design and the use of carbon, the BACKYAK represents an ingenious and unique idea: one piece of gear, two back-packs, five configurations for year round fun on water and snow. You can set-up the easy-to-carry BACKYAK in one of five configurations: a comfortable tandem KAYAK (for two adults and one child), two FUN boats, a RELAXing raft, a catamaran with mast and SAIL as well as a SNOW toboggan in winter.

Klepper has a legendary reputation among folding boat enthusiasts. Folding boat history is fascinating in itself: the first workable folding kayak is said to have been built in 1905 by Alfred Heurich, a German architectural student. Heurich paddled his creation on the Isar River near Munich and took

out a patent on the design, called the Delphin, the following year. Commercial production in Europe commenced in 1907, however, and is attributed to German tailor Johann Klepper who was approached by a Munich architect who had designed a folding kayak and needed someone to

sew a skin to cover it. The original Klepper folding kayak design was based on the idea of a skin and frame Eskimo kayak for seaworthiness but with a larger body for roominess. The boat's shape was a cross between a kayak and canoe, folding by means of ingenious fastenings in several sections. What set this design apart from its predecessors was the principle that the framework be pushed into a ready-made hull or kayak skin, whereas most previous attempts were limited to attaching canvas in one form or another to the outside of a framework. The new 'Kleppers' were also designed to be carried easily in bags and allow their users to journey by train. And so the folding kayak was born.

To this day many folding kayaks still share some of these basic Klepper design and assembly features and are still carried in bags or backpacks, some weighing less than 20 lbs. And Klepper continues to be a world leader in this space. The company is headquartered in Rosenheim, Bavaria, Germany, where, following a devastating fire, the Klepper Museum and manufacturing facilities had to be re-built some years ago. Partly thanks to the generosity of paddlers, the museum once again displays Kleppers dating back to the first folding kayaks produced in 1907. If you can read in German, you might also be interested in a book called 'Das Klepper Buch', literally translated as The Klepper Book.

But while Klepper has a global and loyal following as well as a rich history, the company is far from stuck in the past. The company has been owned and operated by the Isbruch family, led by Dr. Isbruch, since 1996. Dr. Isbruch is



described as a man who's always full of ideas for product innovations, and the latest Klepper product, the BACKYAK, underlines his reputation as a marvel of German engineering and ingenuity.

The beauty of the BACKYAK is that it offers five different leisure pursuits that can be packed away and carried in two backpacks. For whichever function you're going to use it, it assembles in only 5 minutes, and there are no tools required. It can be used as a tandem KAYAK, divided into two FUN boats (the solid backpack covers become the endcaps), a RELAX raft that can be enjoyed by the whole family, a catamaran SAIL and in winter your BACKYAK converts into a TOBOGGAN.

The BACKYAK owes its light weight to the use of carbon material, which also explains its futuristic look. Mrs. Ilfat el Keilany-Braun, responsible for PR at Klepper, explains that this signifies that

the company is appealing to a new market. "Our traditional product, the folding kayak, appeals to adventurers, to people who love nature, and who love boats in natural materials. They also love our folding kayaks because they're hand-made. The BACKYAK is much more of a lifestyle product. It is made of carbon, and has a very spacey design, which Dr. Isbruch engineered in a partnership with design students of the University of Munich." The functionality of the design, Mrs. El Keilany-Braun adds, works similar to that of the Russian matryoshka, a set of wooden dolls of decreasing size placed one inside the other. "Both the ingenuity of the BACKYAK and its futuristic look seems to appeal to a great many people. We've only just introduced it but have received enquiries from all over the world. We will be selling it through our existing, global distribution network, as well as online. Compared to our traditional

folding kayaks we can manufacture the BACKYAK much quicker so we're not worried about keeping up with demand. We will have to wait and see of course how many people will actually buy the BACKYAK. But we are confident that there is a big market out there, full of people who buy into the lifestyle concept of the BACKYAK. The BACKYAK fits in with other sophisticated lifestyle products such as the water scooter. It simply is a great deal of fun in two backpacks!"



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