

Canoes and Kayaks

Thousands of years ago, thousands of miles apart, two groups of early man 'invented' canoeing – although there were some key differences. From these early days when simple, slender boats were designed as a form of transport, canoes and kayaks have developed into the two types of craft we know today.

Canoes were the first boats constructed by man and are one of the oldest forms of transport. The word "canoe" originates from the Carib word "canoa" or "cenu" meaning dugout.

According to the 'Out of Africa' theory, dugouts first appeared 40,000 years ago. A 7,000 year old dugout has been discovered in Ireland and a slender dugout dated 8,000 years ago was found in Nigeria.

North American Indians are responsible for creating the more well-known version of the canoe - a frame of wooden ribs covered with the lightweight bark of birch trees, and sometimes elm or cedar trees.

The canoeist or canoeists use a paddle with a single blade and traditionally kneel in the boat.

"**Kayak**" is the Inuit word for a canoe.

They originate from the Arctic and were primarily used for hunting. Kayaks were made from a driftwood or whalebone framework with sealskins stretched across it and waterproofed with whale fat. Evidence has been found of kayaks being used 4000 years ago.

The sport and recreation of canoeing in Europe and the United States was popularised by John MacGregor (1825 – 1892), a Scottish barrister. He designed a series of sailing canoes, all named "Rob Roy", which he sailed and paddled throughout Europe and the Middle East in the 1860's.

In 1866 he published a book "A Thousand miles in the Rob Roy Canoe" which became internationally successful and promoted the concept of canoeing.

MacGregor founded the Royal Canoe Club in 1866 and the American Canoe Association in 1880.

A Kayak is propelled by a single paddle with a blade at either end. The paddler sits in the boat.