

WHAT'S NEW IN PACKABLES

INCREASED PERFORMANCE: These days, packable boats include a lot more than just inflatable "ducky" kayaks. Between lightweight, inflatable tubes and breakdown carbon frames, designers are getting closer to giving packables the same sleek performance as hardshells—in a package that fits in your closet. Inflatables take less time to set up but are bulkier; foldable skin-and-frame boats are more maneuverable but often less beginner-friendly. Both travel-ready types stepped up their designs for 2011. Leading the charge for recreational inflatable sit-on-top kayaks is **Sea Eagle**. Its 35-pound, **385 FastTrack** is whitewater capable and includes a drop-stitch construction and a patent-pending retractable skeg to improve tracking on a boat style with a tendency to drift. **Pakboats XT-17** is a solo 17-foot, folding-frame touring kayak that, packed away, is slightly larger than your average suitcase. **AIRE** adds the versatile, tandem **15-foot Power Traveler** canoe, below, to its vaunted lineup of high-performing, long-lasting inflatables ([\\$2,150, aire.com](#)).



THE URETHANE VEIN: Klepper America released the biggest breakthrough in foldable boats. Its 16-foot **Expedition 490**, designed for multi-day flat-water trips, features a high-tech (and requisite high-cost) carbon frame and polyurethane hull (\$7,285, klepperamerica.com). The abrasion-resistant polyurethane decreases the risk of puncturing, and the carbon frame, which cuts 40 percent off the weight of traditional wood and Hypalon models, makes lugging the 46-pound boat through Boundary Waters-style portages less of a grunt. "We wanted to make something lighter and stiffer," says Klepper America's Gerald Grace. "Carbon and polyurethane was the natural progression."



Raft companies are pushing toward lighter and faster boats as well. **NRS's** new **Osprey** raft, which comes in three sizes, also uses urethane tubes, making the raft 15 percent lighter than similarly sized Hypalon boats. It also added continuously curved tubes (think AIRE Puma series) and increased the rocker to make the Osprey more maneuverable and faster in whitewater (starting at \$3,295. nrsweb.com).



Our kayak
at a very
roof rack
a remote
foot pump