

The outfitter

H2O Crystal Paddle

The Crystal Paddle is the newest sea kayak paddle from Canadian maverick, H2O Paddle.

The first thing you notice about this paddle are the translucent blades, which are made of a proprietary polymer. It is not Lexan™, so you need not worry about BPA if you inadvertently lick your paddle blade. This polymer has high weather-

ability, good scuff resistance and is UV stable. In theory, the Crystal blades should stay gorgeous for years. My experience was that the blades got scratched a little, but still looked sharp.

By playing with the thickness of the polymer and running the shaft deep into the blade, H2O was able to get a nice flex pattern on the blade. It gives a little upon insertion so all-day paddling is easier on

my older body, but it is not so flexy that I feel I am needlessly dumping water.

The ferrule system on the Crystal, which they call the multi-adjustable centre joint, is unique and a real benefit of this paddle. The trick is that adjusting the feather and taking it apart are two separate mechanisms. This feature means that you won't drop half your paddle into the sea if you need to adjust the feather and



it accidentally comes apart (it happens more often than I would think). To adjust your paddle's feather, push the yellow button and push the two paddle halves together. (Yes, that is the opposite of normal.) Then, just twist one shaft until the feather you want appears through the little window, and pull the two halves apart again, whereupon it locks. The pull and push movements are small, about a quarter inch, but is enough to disengage the teeth that lock the feather for you. You can choose any feather between 0 and 90 degrees, either left-hand or right-hand control, in 15 degree increments.

Actually, you can't choose 15 degrees left-hand control. You see, that spot on the dial is the only place where you can separate the paddle into two pieces. It is the only place where there is a gap in the teeth so the paddle can be pulled apart. So to separate, do as above, but dial in 15 degrees left-hand control and pull. Instead of a number, the word "open" appears in the window.

Apparently, early editions of the Crystal had a breakage problem at the centre joint. H2O tells me the centre joint has been completely redesigned for durability and with a new, more appropriate plastic. The new joint has been

doing great in testing, exceeding many competing paddles.

The Crystal Paddle that H2O sent me was the bent carbon shaft, however it also comes in a straight carbon shaft. The bent shaft is stiff and light. The grip areas have a nice ergonomic shape for my average-sized hands, as well as moulded-in grooves to help with grip.

All in all, the Crystal is a very nice paddle at a competitive price from one of the last remaining Canadian paddle manufacturers.

www.H2Opaddles.com

MSRP \$329