

Title: **Kayaks of Greenland**

Subtitle: *The History and Development of the Greenlandic Hunting Kayak, 1600-2000*

Author: Harvey Golden

Publisher: White House Grocery Press (author)

Date: 2006

Content: 580 pp, illustrated; 400+ figures and photos, 106 scale drawings of kayaks, 79 scale drawings of paddles

Cover: softcover

Size: portrait format, 217 x279 mm

RRP: US\$69 + US\$36 postage

Availability: author's website -

<http://www.traditionalkayaks.com/KOG.html>

Reviewed by: Grant Glazer

THUMP! That was the sound from the phone book sized *Kayaks of Greenland* hitting my coffee table while I made myself comfortable to quickly browse through my latest acquisition. That quick browse turned into three days of almost solid reading while I found myself immersed in the fascinating history of traditional Greenland kayak use and construction.

The author, Harvey Golden, makes no bones about the book being a reference instead of a 'how too' and has written it in a scholastic manner, concentrating on the design and construction of the Greenland kayak. But amongst it all are fascinating nuggets of information about how a fitting was used or why a hull is a particular shape, thus exposing the reader to the Greenlandic way of life and how the kayak was used as a tool of survival.

Harvey has personally surveyed the 104 kayaks and 78 paddles (included in the book) from examples preserved in museums. As part of the survey he has included scale drawings detailed enough for the building of a replica, as well as detailed information and drawings on any unique design or construction aspects of the kayaks. In fact for 18 of the designs, he has gone a step further and built replicas of the original museum artefacts which has enabled him to discover why a kayak was built a certain way and how it performs on the water. As one of the first foreigners who was welcomed to participate in the modern Greenland Kayak Championships in 2000, Harvey is more than qualified to judge the characteristics of the surveyed or replicated kayaks. Interspersed amongst all this, are historical and modern photos of the type of kayak being made or used on the sea. Most of these photos allow the reader to have a rare glimpse of the Greenlandic lifestyle from the age that a particular design of kayak was paddled.

For the Greenlanders, the kayak was a way of harvesting food from the sea and travelling in a hostile environment. *Kayaks of Greenland* highlights the ingenuity in using available materials to build vessels as advanced as today's modern Kevlar and fibreglass kayaks. 400 years later than the first kayak surveyed in the book, we are using similar hull shapes and concepts for pleasure rather than survival. With *Kayaks of Greenland*, Harvey has shown us the roots of our sport and the history behind the craft you will be out paddling in next weekend.

At a hefty 2 kg and 580 pages, there is no way it can be described as 'light reading' but *Kayaks of Greenland* is a book that has taken a place of honour on my shelves, and one I find myself returning to again and again.

