



The complete yak fishing solution

Andy Benham, our expert when it comes to yaks, tests the much talked about Ocean Ultra 4.7, a craft brimming with features that makes the whole yakking experience a fun-filled dream

Any minute now... Andy gets to grips with the Pacific Action 1.5m sail...before his soaking.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

Basic price is **£999**, Prowler Ultra Angler XT version is **£1,299**.
Length: 15ft 4½in (4.7m)
Width: 29in (73.7cm)
Weight: 77lb (34.9kg)
Maximum Capacity: 550lb+ (250kg+)
Website: www.johnsonoutdoors.co.uk

"With the wind hitting Force 5 it promised some fun on our run down the Norfolk coast"



For the last few months one subject dominated the world of kayak fishing...the launch of Ocean Kayak's super yak, the Ultra 4.7.

Billed as the ultimate out-of-the-box fishing kayak, the offer of a test was too good to turn down and so I found myself approaching Great Yarmouth, and Ocean Kayak's UK headquarters.

The previous night I'd had a chat with OK's Mark Crane, who was bringing the bait for a lazy afternoon's cod fishing off Hopton and who had also fitted out the new kayak with one of Humminbird's latest side imaging sonars, so I was being really spoilt with so many new toys.

Unfortunately, by the time we'd got over to the warehouse, and contrary to the previous day's forecast, it was obvious we weren't going to be able to go fishing; the sea was getting up, the wind was a Force 5 and rising, and there was a decent swell running.

Having driven all that way it seemed a shame not to take the kayak out for a spin so we decided to rig it with one of Pacific Action's new sails and take her out for a really good test paddle in demanding conditions. The first thing you notice about the 4.7 is the length; not only does the yak seem far longer than she actually is, but the rear tank well seems to go on forever.

Looking at her fully rigged on Great Yarmouth beach it was easy to see what all the fuss was about. Standout features are the rod pod, livebait tank and fish box, but the closer I looked, the more there was to get excited about.

The most talked-about feature of this yak is the rod pod, which occupies the central area between your legs when you are sitting down. On previous OK designs this

was an opening into the main hull, and was used to pass your rods into the hull to protect them during surf landings. The idea has been taken a lot further with the Ultra, and the rod pod now comes with a sealed base, giving you access to what can only be described as a decent sized locker. The test boat was fitted with an optional rod tube, which provides a circular hatch to a tube running inside the hull, and forms an ideal place to stow rods out of the way for difficult landings.

Hatching some great ideas

It is the hatch cover itself that is the really clever bit, as it is hinged at the bow end and in such a way that the cover can rotate through 180 degrees.

It is designed so that you fit your fish-finder to one side of the hatch, where it is usefully positioned for fishing. However, by simply rotating the hatch, the fish-finder disappears inside the hull, out of harm's way. Even better, the actual tubular stainless steel hinge also doubles as a cable conduit, making it an ideal place to route a

cable for the fish-finder, so preventing any need for drilling the hull.

Finder installation is made even easier by the provision of OK's modified scupper holes, where the transducer can be fitted simply to the scupper hole and the cable and plug run up through the hole, again avoiding any drilling of the hull.

The combination of the rotating hatch cover, modified scupper hole and the clever hinge arrangement make this kayak as easy to set up as a fishing platform, and, as if that wasn't enough, the scupper hole is a slightly different design from previous kayaks in that it will also take the transducer from Humminbird's very latest side imaging sonars.

Fitting other accessories to the rod pod top will be incredibly easy, as the top is peppered with brass inserts in a variety of patterns. Fitting rod holders, any kind of electronics or other goodies will be possible with no drilling. I can see a cutting block being screwed down on to many a kayak, as it is such an obvious place to fit one.

It is not just the hatch cover that has numerous attachment points - there appear to be brass inserts all over this yak, making fitting out a dream, with fitting points for anchor trolleys and rod holders being provided in abundance. Not that you are likely to be fitting that

TOP TIP
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The Ocean Ultra 4.7 ready for action



The rod pod is a superb feature

many rod holders yourself, as the standard fit-out for this yak already comes with four flush mounts fitted, two in the traditional position behind the seat, but with a further pair being fitted in the gunnels either side of the seat, and facing forwards so they can be used for fishing at anchor.

Behind the seat is another major design alternative. This is the facility to fit a hand pump powered livebait tank, complete with cover, in the front portion of the rear tank well, making it easy to keep baits such as sandeels alive, and having them easily to hand for baiting up.

Behind the livebait well is the massive rear tank well, which on the test boat was fitted with another item from the impressive options list - an insulated fish box that will be perfect for ensuring your catch makes it back to the shore in superb condition.

The final item of interest on the test boat was a rudder, again on the options list, and not supplied with the boat in its basic £999 configuration, but fitted as standard if you buy the boat in Prowler Ultra Angler XT trim level. This will set you back a not inconsiderable £1,299 but it also gets you the rudder, and the rod tube inside the rod pod.

Another useful change became apparent when I started to lug the yak towards the surf, and that's a radical redesign of the handles, which are now far more substantial and moulded into recesses both fore and aft and on both sides. They are a huge improvement on earlier OK designs, although it has to be said they are needed, as the weight of the basic fully equipped model has jumped to a not inconsiderable 35kg.

Lugging the yak over the sand also showed up yet another new design feature, a removable skeg plate at the stern, so that as you drag the yak along, you wear out the replaceable plate, and not the stern of the yak.



"The hull rides over even breaking waves with ease and is phenomenally stable"

Nine knots under sail

Completing the outfitting of the test yak was a Pacific Action 1.5m sail, attached at the bow, and with the wind hitting Force 5 it promised some fun on our run down the coast.

Once through the surf, my first thoughts were buoyancy and stability. With the extra volume in the hull, particularly in front of you, the hull rides over even breaking waves with ease, and despite being thrown around in the surf, the hull, being that bit longer and wider, is phenomenally stable.

The yak was easy to paddle, in that it was faster than nearly any other fishing sit on top. The only plastic yak that I know of that is going to come close to this for speed is OK's Scupper Pro. Fortunately our camera yak was a Scupper Pro, and it was rigged with exactly the same sail, so testosterone got the better of both of us and it was time for a race.

Considering that Mark Crane is younger than me, fitter and better on a kayak, there could be only one result, which was that I briefly passed him, but had to practise a deep water re-entry. I had the sail too full, and when I went over I was doing the best part of nine knots.

Righting the hull was easy - the moulded grab handles are perfectly placed to reach underwater, and considering the weight and the sail, the hull was easy to flip over. Its stability was also apparent getting back on the kayak, which was simple, with no tendency to tip me back in the water.



The livebait tank is behind the seat

TOP FEATURES AT A GLANCE



The seat contributes to the boat's comfort



One of the fitting points for an anchor trolley



The seal is so good that the hull interior stays dry



Rotating hatch cover holds the fish-finder

