

QAJAQ ISLAND OF SARDINIA

For this review, the Island of Sardinia was paddled unloaded and in varied conditions. They ranged from 5 feet surf to 6 feet swell in following and quartering seas of sea state 5, as well as choppy conditions close to cliffs.

Qajaq is a prominent sea kayak brand in Italy who promote the Sardinia as an advanced kayak for paddlers of small to medium size. However, at 17' 1.5" in length and with a beam of 21.65" it suited both a large paddler of 6' 2" as well as a smaller paddler of 5' 6.9". Both paddlers agreed that the kayak could be enjoyed by intermediate as well as by advanced paddlers, while being a reasonably stable boat for paddlers new to the sport.

At first sight, the Sardinia draws the attention for the flared bow and stern. However, the hull shows little rocker. The midsection is quite flat with slightly rounded chines with little sheer and deadrise, and a gentle keel line. At three-fifths of its length, the hull narrows fore and aft in a thin "V" shape while the bow rises in a striking curved overhang.

The cockpit has a high knee area. The kayak used in the test had the large cockpit with positive thigh braces that

offered good contact when the knees were braced against them. However, Qajaq has five different choices combining two cockpit sizes and three seats. The large seat of the test kayak was not padded, but was felt to be very comfortable for the larger paddler. The seat band is firm enough to give support and contact when it is needed; the seat band is adjusted by a ratchet in precise increments and, once fitted during the tests, it stayed in place and never loosened.

The fibreglass thigh braces are integrated in the cockpit rim and padded with foam. However, they were too thin* and our larger tester broke one during the tests. That could well have been caused by a combination of weight and repeated stress impacts during rolls performed in surf.

*The test Sardinia was a slightly older model, the new Sardinia has thicker thigh braces; this strengthening is a wise move for a kayak marketed as a playboat.



The Sardinia handles easily and has a confident feel. The long water line makes it considerably fast for a boat of medium length and it accelerates with ease. The flat midsection and the little sheer at the beams offers an instant feeling of stability, and the boat planes well in following seas. The kayak was easily edged for turns. Perhaps the design of more rounded chines would improve the secondary stability and result in the edge kept with even more confidence, without any considerable loss to initial stability.

The Sardinia tracks very well even in beam winds. Although during the tests it was never paddled in over force 7 winds or in calm seas in strong winds, it just weathercocked gently in spite of the overhung bow, leaving the impression of being well trimmed. The need to deploy the skeg was never felt. The kayak was not paddled in tidal races but, by the way it performed in breaking surf, its bow volume and hull shape,

the Sardinia suggests the ability for nimble performance.

The deck of the Island of Sardinia is well rounded and sheds off the water well, while the high bow gives dry rides. The afterdeck is low and flat and the configuration of seat and back band allows for complete laybacks while keeping good contact in the cockpit. Rolling forward and aft was easy, and leaning well over the deck was never impeded.

The overall quality of the boat is impressive. Qajaq takes pride in the fibreglass and resins used and in the craftsmanship of the layout. Under the deck, the smooth woven threads of the cloth can be seen perfectly laid out without any resin excess; individual strands can be distinguished one from another, as if vacuumed.

The Sardinia MV can have two large oval hatches (or one oval hatch in the back ▶

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SPECIFICATION

LENGTH: 513 CM
WIDTH: 55 CM
COCKPIT: 41 x 81 CM
FRONT HATCH VOLUME: 48 LT
BACK HATCH VOLUME: 55 LT
THIRD HATCH VOLUME: 28 LT
COCKPIT VOLUME: 159 LT
TOTAL VOLUME: 290 LT
WEIGHT: 25-26 KG
RRP: €2400-€2800

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and one round hatch in the front) and an 8" round day hatch, all with Valley covers and rims. There is 3.94" round Kajak Sport hatch in front of the cockpit that is placed where the recess for the underdeck pump was in the previous version. The configuration of the day hatch could be improved by either fitting the round hatch in an offset position to starboard, allowing for the option of a deck-mounted towline system. With the current configuration, the hatch cover leaves little space behind the

cockpit to attach a cleat and towline bag. In addition, the moulded surface fitting for elasticized cords placed behind the hatch impedes the fitting of a fairlead and would graze a deck-mounted towline.

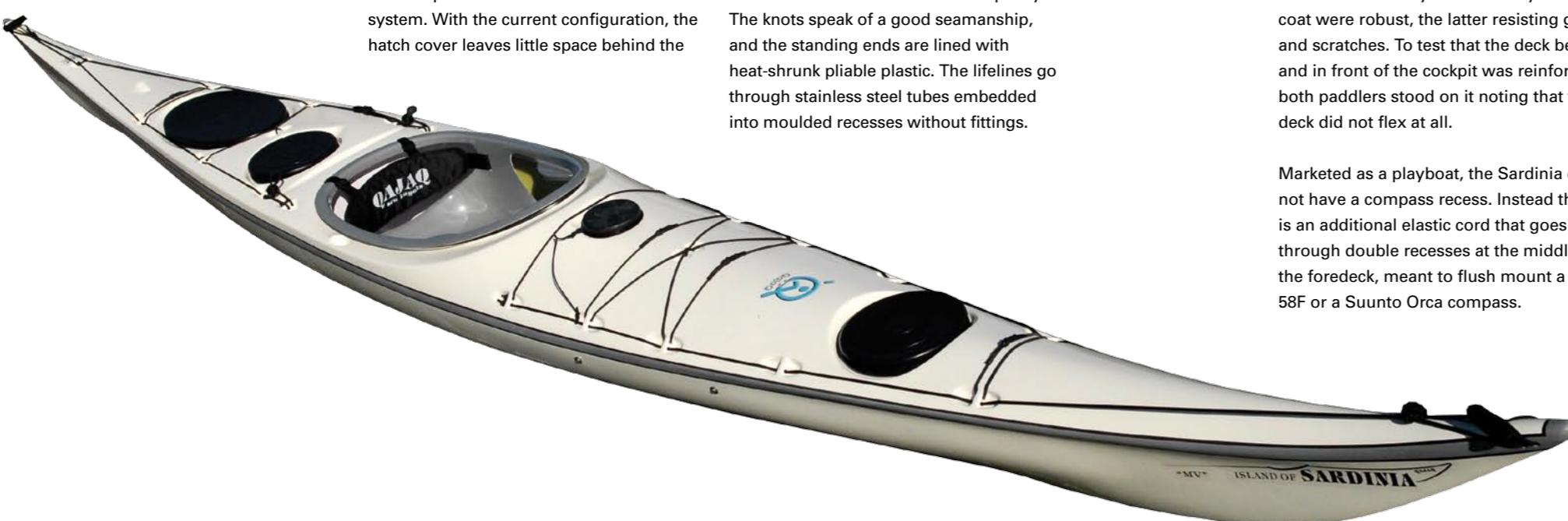
The skeg slider is placed at the thighs and can be operated at ease, keeping a straight line of sight. The elasticized cords and lifelines are thick and of excellent quality. The knots speak of a good seamanship, and the standing ends are lined with heat-shrunk pliable plastic. The lifelines go through stainless steel tubes embedded into moulded recesses without fittings.

Bulkheads are solid and compartments are indeed watertight: not a drop of water was found after paddling the boat for three weeks. The rear bulkhead has a curved contour but not a sloping angle. However, being placed very close to the edge of the cockpit rim (1.5" away), the kayak is easily emptied in rescues as the area that can collect water is indeed reduced. Both the structure of the kayak and the layer of gel coat were robust, the latter resisting grazes and scratches. To test that the deck behind and in front of the cockpit was reinforced, both paddlers stood on it noting that the deck did not flex at all.

Marketed as a playboat, the Sardinia does not have a compass recess. Instead there is an additional elastic cord that goes through double recesses at the middle of the foredeck, meant to flush mount a Silva 58F or a Suunto Orca compass.

The Island of Sardinia has enough storage capacity for the supplies and kit needed for a week-long journey. The Italian coast was, in fact, first circumnavigated using a Sardinia. The unit tested is the MV (medium volume) version of the Standard Sardinia which has a narrower beam of 20.8" inches and the same length.

To conclude, the Island of Sardinia is a sea kayak that may suit paddlers of average size, while being a fun playboat for larger paddlers. While the Sardinia does not have the carrying capacity of an expedition boat, it has been used as such. Extended trips may be undertaken confidently without any need to reduce the load to a minimum. Being manoeuvrable enough for a tracking hull, the design is a good compromise of the most-needed features. Since the kayak is strong and the quality of the finish is close to splendid, the Sardinia deserves to become a welcome addition to the range of kayaks of British Greenland design. ■



'THE OVERALL QUALITY OF THE BOAT IS IMPRESSIVE. QAJAQ TAKES PRIDE IN THE FIBREGLASS AND RESINS USED AND IN THE CRAFTSMANSHIP OF THE LAYOUT.'