

Tried & tested

MBM's tough taskmasters put some clever new boating kit through its paces. The result? You can buy with confidence



Too cool for school: it's easy to look good in a big yellow canoe

Paddle-free kayaking **Jet-powered canoe**

One of humanity's most appealing traits is its capacity for invention. The wheel, sliced bread and the combustion engine – all great moments in mankind's progress from ape to upright. But now there's a new kid on the block that is vying for similar seminal status – the jet-powered canoe.

The **Mokai** is so brilliant in its simplicity that it begs the question: why has no one thought of it before? It's made up of a 12ft-long plastic hull and 6hp petrol engine that powers a water jet. Or, if you ask the manufacturers, they would tell you it has "a rotomoulded

polyethylene monocoque design with an axial flow jet pump."

It's light (100lb without engine), is assembled and disassembled with ease and can be strapped to the roof of a car. The four-stroke Honda engine is transported separately, as is the plastic fuel tank. It takes about five minutes to attach the three-gallon fuel tank and hook up the engine, and then it's just a matter of sliding her into the water.

The Mokai is controlled with a motorbike-like throttle that also steers the craft. Push forward to turn right, and pull towards you to turn left. After a second or two in the

water, steering becomes as instinctive as breathing and the throttle gives you the impression of great power – even though you'll only get 15mph out of the Mokai. But when you're so close to the water, 15mph seems like light speed.

MBM tested the boat – which is what its importer, Waterlines, is keen

for it to be classed as – at Windsor. After a moment or two getting to grips with the controls, the fun started. The chug chug of the engine wasn't noisy enough to ruin the tranquillity of the river, and, in fact, it provided enough throb to have a massage-like quality.

The boat is responsive and offers a quick turn of pace. On a quiet stretch of the Thames with not a soul nor boat in sight, my hand slipped and I found myself up on the plane, but I soon corrected the error and returned to a sedate four knots. My mistake, however, had proven that the boat does nip along quite nicely.

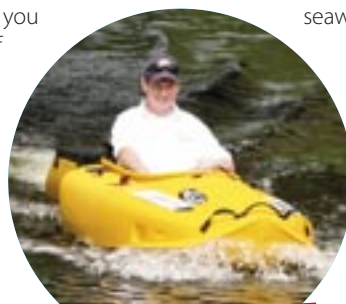
A full tank of fuel will give you eight hours of use, and there's enough room down by your feet to fit a small tent and some provisions, meaning you really can explore with a Mokai. You can even select the Mokai in a military green colour for that true frontier feeling!

Dave Burgess, importer of the American-made Mokai, has taken the boat out into the Solent, and assured me of her seaworthiness.

On a wind-swept Thames, I certainly had no problems, and a streaming video on the Mokai website shows the craft making mincemeat of some white water.

In fact, the only real drawback to the Mokai

is its price. At £2696 (inc VAT), it's one expensive Christmas present, and when you factor in all the possible extras – including anchor, trailer and so on – you're looking at over £3000. But for messing about on the river or canal, and even some light coastal cruising, you won't find much that is as fun as the Mokai. **Stewart**



MOTOR BOATS TESTED



The 6hp engine and petrol tank are easily installed



Easy peasy: Push forward to go right, pull down to go left

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Price: £2696
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www.mokai.co.uk