

latest sea kayaking NEWS

British Isles Canoe Journey 2008/2009

Over 2008 & 2009, Chris Cooper intends to paddle around the UK in his spirit dancer canoe, a 42 foot open canoe capable of supporting 12 paddlers on extended trips.

Chris Cooper resident of Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows for the past 49 years and originally from Yorkshire, England has been in the Adventure travel business for the past 30 years in the province of British Columbia, Canada.

Chris comes with a huge appetite for adventure travel which has allowed him to travel to the most remote and wild places on this planet, with over 5000 journeys he brings a wealth of knowledge and experience from the outdoors, his interest and background includes Mountaineering, Back country Skiing, Whitewater Canoeing and long distance marathon ocean Canoe journeys.

Many of these journeys have been documented on television and magazines, newspapers from around the world, including in 2005 of a marathon ski journey from Ellesmere Island to Coburg Island in Canada's High Arctic, also the same year a Canoe journey from Prince Rupert to Rivers Inlet.

Chris for the past 30 years has worked with young people generally teens from ages 13 to 19 and provided expert wilderness experiences that would give them hands on life skills and would provide them with the necessary skills to become great leaders for the future.

Chris has sponsored aboriginal youth for many years and in particular, a Canoe journey on the Fraser River, a rediscovery of Culture and protocol and a journey called Pulling Together for youth on the River.

Last year Chris sponsored an aboriginal youth from Gibsons, British Columbia to travel with him from Bella Bella to Rivers Inlet to learn about the Grandfathers Canoe journey and also to develop skills that he would need to know to travel safely on the BC Coast, some of these skills would be responsibilities on navigation, chart reading, tides and currents, weather, camp placements, surf landings and most of all safety.

For the years 2008 / 2009 Chris is organizing his most challenging adventure around the British Isles by Canoe. This canoe is the one he had built in 2004 to paddle the Alaska and BC Coasts a journey of 2000km in length and took 105 days to complete.

THE FOCUS OF THIS JOURNEY AS FOLLOWS:

To involve youth and adults from Canada and the UK in an amazing Canoe Journey and to have the opportunity to learn about the Culture, History, People, Environment and most of all the Challenge of paddling it's unique coastline.

The exposure and profile of this journey will be immense; the Canoe which has travelled the Alaska and BC Coast will warm the hearts of everyone in the UK, as it has here in Canada.

The Canoe: is a 42ft replica of the Canadian 'Montreal Canoe' The chosen canoe for the 'Great Lakes' and an integral part of Canadian History which is coming to the UK.

ABOUT THE SPIRIT DANCER CANOE

The name Spirit Dancer has both depth and meaning, being blessed by the Katzie First Nation on the West Coast of Canada.

The canoe is made from fibre glass and wood and measures a total of 42 feet long with a beam of 67 inches. It was made in Canada and is the largest Eastern Canadian canoe. The decorative painting is by Roberta Lindsay and aims to replicate

the style of an original birch bark canoe. Artist Mairi Budreau painted the motif on the Bow and Stern of the Canoe.

PRACTICALITY

In terms of its construction the Spirit Dancer canoe is incredibly strong. Two bulkheads provide structural strength to the hull whilst a heavily reinforced base gives extra safety. A number of custom modifications have been incorporated into the design, the most important being the outrigger system. This utilizes two standard double kayaks as outriggers which traditionally came from French Polynesia. The frame is attached to the canoe bulkheads via a quick release system. There are three main travel modes depending on the severity of the sea conditions. In calmer waters the double kayaks sit completely out of the water on top of the outrigger frame. Stage two gives more stability by connecting the kayaks underneath the frame in the water.

THE SPIRIT DANCER'S RACK SYSTEM WITH KAYAKS IN PLACE FOR OUTRIGGERS

Full stability is gained by extending the outriggers to provide two double kayaks at full reach. This system showed excellent results when tested in Alaskan and BC waters two years ago. The vessel is an extremely sturdy craft to paddle. It is quite acceptable to walk up and down the outrigger system to gain access to either end of the canoe and remain incredibly stable.

EXPEDITIONS

In terms of expedition capability the canoe comes into its own. A large equipment bay is situated in the centre of the canoe proving adequate room for 12 paddlers, belongings and food for 8 weeks out alone on the water. A full spray deck encases the paddlers with individual portholes as in a standard kayak. This provides good resistance to wave action and rain. However, the canoe is currently undergoing considerable modification with the addition of a Kevlar / carbon fibre hard deck cover. Paddlers will then enter individual portholes and seal themselves in with a conventional spray deck as used on kayaks. This is primarily to withstand a rougher sea as is expected in some of the more open waters of the British Isles.

At this time, Chris is actively looking for a major Canadian corporate sponsor to help offset some of the costs for this endeavour; he has commitment from six sponsors to date.

