

User Testimonial: **The Oar Saddle™**

The Oar Saddle™, a lightweight portable rowing frame by Rocking R Designs, has improved several aspects of our performance in wilderness settings, and we are happy to offer this product as an accessory item on our site. The Oar Saddle (the Back Water weighs just under seven pounds) is designed for rugged use in normal to extreme river conditions and environments. It is the smallest and lightest rowing frame on the market and works with a variety of inflatable boat sizes and styles.

We thought our customers would appreciate reading about our experiences with the Oar Saddle and how it has enhanced our river and wilderness travel here in Alaska.

“The first set of Oar Saddles that I received went straight from the cardboard shipping box to my personal watercraft: a Pro Pioneer. The owner of Rocking R Designs (Kent Rotchy) rushed us a set for field trials, just in time to board a bush plane en route to a backcountry stream in south-central Alaska.

Unfortunately, I wasn't able to fully test the product until this particular adventure. I was really hoping Kent had his design wired tight, because this river was no meandering stream. In fact, it started off as a shallow Class II with gradient drops of 25 ft/mi, and within 5 miles it began dropping a steady 100 ft/mi through a narrow canyon-like valley floor with brittle walls. The geology is unique on this stream because over time, these walls have exfoliated thousands of boulders, some the size of small cars, which litter the valley floor and present themselves as river obstacles along technical routes that are negotiated by paddlers.

The difficulty rating for this small, clear torrent is Class II-IV. River speeds range from 4-12 mph on most stretches, with a flow volume of 1100-5000 cfs. (cubic feet per second) during normal conditions. Needless to say, the pucker factor was rated a little higher than the above description reads, so I was counting on the Oar Saddle in more ways than one. I was extremely impressed with how the rowing frame performed, on and off the river, and on many different levels.

This product withstood extremely adverse river conditions, including high-impact maneuvers and forceful striking against obstacles (namely boulders at high speeds) and came thru unscathed while delivering peak performance. In addition, it made remote logistical transport in small bush planes a breeze.

A few ways the Oar Saddle has continued to improve my field performance include:

- The lightweight feature lowered my once-standard cargo shipment weights by 10 lbs for canoes and 18 lbs for raft packages, which is saying a lot for one item on a wilderness packing list.

- The Oar Saddle is so compact that my entire canoe, with the complete rowing system, easily fits into one duffel bag for efficient stowage and handling during logistical legs, and when combined with the gear-weight savings, the total benefits cannot be measured at face value. Our pilots have all appreciated this design because the Oar Saddles stow much easier inside small areas within bush planes. Huge bonus here!
- The unique Oar Saddle design allows for versatile body movement within the watercraft, offering speedy exits (sometimes required to physically combat hazards).
- No-frills assembly saves time and hassle during initial gear assembly, which helps as much physically as mentally on exhausting travel days.
- No maintenance is required once you are underway, which allows the user to mentally relax and center their focus on river hazards instead of gear problems.
- Its stable construction hugs the side tubes and redirects every stroke with the greatest of proficiency matched only by the best large traditional rowing frames. I've tried in vain to find a weakness in this designs' performance, and I'm one hard dude on outdoor gear! So far, I've only managed to find failure in the components used to support the rowing operation itself, such as oars and brass oar locks.
- Last, but certainly not least, the Oar Saddle is simply a sweet-looking product when applied to an inflatable watercraft. The mere sight of this gear conveys a certain level of quality that I've never found with other rowing assemblies. For my line of work, presentation is a key element to our confidence and success, and products with those benefits help us form solid first impressions. I'm sold!

Since we've started using the Oar Saddles on our watercraft, I have stopped using traditional rowing frames altogether. The cost of this product is negligible when a boater finds himself in need of reliable gear, and in the places we go to pursue river adventures; there is no time for "woulda, shoulda, coulda" with gear selection. From my experience, the more you need it when you don't have it, the worse the personal regret and the performance.

I give this product a 10+ rating on the **Wilderness X-stream™** scale. We carry it on our site because the Oar Saddle compliments our inflatable designs and helps us maintain a quality edge."

—Larry Bartlett