FAQs

Q: How durable are SOF (skin-on-frame) canoes and kayaks?
The ballistic nylon fabric coated with 2-part polyurethane is very durable. We have taken apprentices and adults on many urban and wilderness trips since 2003 and have never had a failure in the field. Like any quality boat however, we do recommend you practice “wet entry/exit”.

Pictured here are two apprentices approaching a typical BWCA beaver dam. Wilderness Travelers have an external wooden keel to protect the bottom in shallow waters.

Q: What kind of maintenance does a SOF boat need?
These boats require minimal maintenance. After a trip it is recommended that you hose off the inside and outside with a garden hose. Once a year you can coat the wood with tung oil to restore the natural luster.

Q: What is the capacity of the canoes?
Using the industry standard of 6” of free board, the Wilderness Traveler (17’6”) has a capacity of 700# and the Urban Traveler (15’ 2”) has a capacity of 550#. Shown here is the WT-17 loaded with two apprentices and all their gear for a week long BWCA trip. You can see that the WT-17 has lots of capacity for a wilderness trip.

Q: Does the sun hurt the SOF boat?
The nylon skin and 2-part poly are UV resistant. The poly does yellow when exposed to UV but it remains strong and flexible.

Q: Where should I store my boat?
These are wooden boats so they should be stored in a clean dry environment, ideally out of the sun or inside.

Q: We are looking for a canoe to use both on the city lakes and also bring to the Boundary Waters this summer, do you think a Wilderness Traveler is up to the task?
Yes, these are great boats for around town and Boundary Waters adventures. We take the boats up to the BWCA with our youth each summer and they handle great and are very durable.

Q: How many more years do you think one might get from a skin on frame canoe or kayak?
The short answer is - many years. If properly cared for these boats will last a lifetime. We have been making them for over a decade and some of our very first boats are still out there in regular use.

Q: What is the difference between a brand new Wilderness Traveler and a gently used one?
Used Wilderness Travelers have typically been on one trip. They are generally in great shape. The only difference is that they may have a little dirt rubbed into the wood below the seats where feet would go (this would happen to a new canoe as soon as you used it as well.) There may be minor scratches, but nothing that would be even noticeable without very close inspection. The skin also yellows a bit when it is out in the sun, so the gently used boats are a bit yellow. Again, this would happen with the new boats as well.
Q: Are skin on frame boats repairable in the case of abrasions or punctures?
These boats are very hard to puncture and very abrasion resistant. We have never had any failures during use around here or in the BWCA. If for some reason there was some abrasion or puncture, they are repairable with a bit of duct tape. You can also make a permanent patch with a little bit of the nylon and some epoxy (like a bicycle tube patch). We can help you if this happens.

Q: How stable is the Wilderness Traveler canoe?
Stability is a complex issue and generally subjective. The Wilderness Travelers are designed to be tripping canoes for lakes and gentle rivers (not rapids). They have good initial stability and very good secondary stability. They are especially stable (like most canoes) when loaded.

Q: How would you rate the stability of the Loon kayak?
The Loon is designed as a recreational kayak. It has great initial stability and excellent speed for it’s length. Since it is a recreational kayak it is not designed for “big water” or for rolling like a sea kayak.

Q: What is the capacity of the Loon?
The capacity of kayaks are measured differently from canoes. Assuming 4” of freeboard from the top of the coaming, the loon has a maximum capacity of 220#.