

Nightquest by Seattle Sports

If you paddle at night in waters unfamiliar to you or not well marked by shoreside lights, you need an illuminated compass. Illuminated compasses are common on larger vessels, but paddlers have had to improvise with red flashlights or chemical lightsticks to make their deck compasses readable at night. Some turn their headlamp on, a really bad choice as the bright white light kills night vision.

Enter Seattle Sports' Nightquest. It is a compact LED-illuminated compass designed to be mounted to your kayak deck. The mounting is a suction cup with a couple of bungees and clips for security. At 3 ½ inches, it is taller than the usual removable compass.

The suction cup is strong enough to hold the compass upside down on a smooth surface. I had to lift the edge of the suction cup to be able to pull the compass off the deck. I didn't do a rough water test—this time of year in Maine, if it's blowing hard enough to get waves over your boat, you will be dealing with a fully iced deck. Instead, I stuck it to a bathtub bottom and directed a full flow of water at it, which it survived. In fact, it sticks to a wet surface better than a dry one.

When the compass is turned on using its waterproof switch, it will automatically light up as it gets dark. The switch needs a hard, precise fingernail press to work. This keeps the switch from being triggered by accident, but with gloves on I could not operate it. You will hear and feel a loud click when it's triggered. Whether the compass is on or off can be checked by putting a finger in front of the photo sensor in front of the unit—the light will go on if the switch is in the on po-



The compass is secured to the deck by a rubber suction cup clipped into the deck lines with a pair of bungees and hooks. Photo: Ben Fuller.

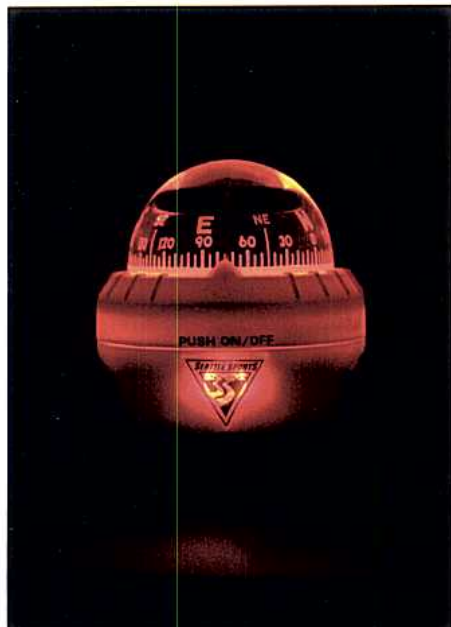
sition. The compass should be turned off when not in use. I taped over the photosensor and the battery lasted about 20 hours. That should be ample for a season's use. Exposure to 15-degree cold ran the battery down in a few hours. (Shorter operating time in cold weather is a common characteristic of batteries.) The battery, a CR2477, is not available in the usual coin battery displays.

On the boat, you will want to set the compass up closer at night than you might have it for day paddling. It should be within reach, about 3 ½ feet from your eyes to be legible. I set it just ahead of my chart. Spray or con-

At last, a compass for kayakers that has built-in, automatic illumination.

densation on a compass at night makes it hard to read. The ability to wipe off the compass from time to time really helps.

Degrees are marked every 30 degrees, which seems to be the case in most compasses, although I find degree notations every 20 degrees easier



When the compass is on, a pair of LEDs illuminate the compass globe. A built-in sensor turns the LEDs off when there is enough ambient light to read the compass without illumination.
Photo: Seattle Sports.

to read. In the dark, the illumination was adequate, but numbers were dim. The sides of the compass were more brightly lit. I opened the compass and I could see why: the two LEDs are on either side, not aimed at the lubber line. I would be tempted to turn the compass 90 degrees. Fortunately the compass dome can be rotated, which gives the user the option of putting the lubber line on the side above one of the LEDs.

I immersed the compass for several minutes and found a few drops of water had worked their way into it. I would rate its waterproofing as splash proof and roll proof.

Seattle Sports has done a nice job of creating a navigation tool that will be highly useful for anyone even considering night paddling. Aside from the added benefit of a night light, the Nightquest works as well as any of the removable compasses on the market and is small enough to be used as a spare or auxiliary compass on kayaks that have a fixed mount compass. **SK**

Nightquest Deck Compass \$39.95
Seattle Sports
contact@seattlesportsco.com
www.seattlesportsco.com

Ben Fuller has been sea kayaking since 1978 and is a Maine Guide and ACA instructor. He served as the curator of Mystic Seaport Museum for 13 years and is a board member of Qajaq USA.



Seaward Kayaks in Thermoform



Proudly Canadian

(InfinitiTM)
175

CHINOOKTM

OSMATM

(InfinitiTM)
155

Intrigue



1-800-595-9755 www.Seawardkayaks.com

2009 Reader 2010 Survey



16 Foot



17 Foot



18 Foot

Sea Kayaker
Magazine

NECKY KAYAKS

Go to seakayakermag.com and fill out our online Readers' Survey and you'll be entered in a drawing to win a **Necky® Chatham™**.

Winner chooses the length of Chatham™, color is determined by Necky® Kayaks.