

CPA Paddler Profile ~ Mike Thomas

Interview by Rick Wiebush

Name: Mike Thomas

Lives in: Parkton, Maryland

Real job: Edwards Project Solutions; Project management consulting, training and enterprise-level management tools implementation

Member of a Piracy? Baltimore

Paddling Buddies: Jay Gitomer, Tom Malone, Hank McComas, Glen Schlippert, Mike Ward, and Rick Wiebush

Number years paddling: 5

Boat usually paddled: Necky Chatham 17

Type paddle used: Euro

How did you get involved in sea kayaking? I was camping and hiking in Acadia National Park and after observing a few sea kayakers, it just struck me as great fun and a wonderful way to take in the natural beauty of the place. As anyone that has kayaked there will testify, I was right.

How did you learn to sea kayak? I came back from that trip to Acadia, immediately took a basic lesson from Ultimate Water Sports, then joined CPA Pirates of Baltimore, and took more advanced training with Rick Wiebush (Cross Currents Sea Kayaking).

Do you do any other type of paddling besides sea kayaking? Occasional canoeing

Do you regularly do any other outdoor activities? Skiing, biking

How often (per week or month) do you paddle in summer? Once or twice a week on average

In winter? None

Go to pool sessions? Where? University of Maryland, Fairlands, Catonsville

Favorite local paddling location within 1-2 hours of your house: Waters around Assateague Island

Favorite non-local location: Maine

Best paddling trip/experience ever and why: A 90 nm self-supported trip to Baja Mexico last spring lead by Cross Currents Sea Kayaking. The scenery was starkly beautiful with jagged mountain ranges dropping straight into azure waters. The weather was perfect with conditions (wind) just challenging enough to make the trip more interesting. I especially enjoyed this trip because of the total remoteness of the place, the complete change of pace from modern daily life, the expeditionary feel of stopping at a different beach to camp every night, and paddling with a great group of folks.

Scariest/most dangerous trip/experience and why: This past summer I was paddling alone in the northern part of Chincoteague Bay on a 100+ degree day, crossing the bay for a little navigation practice. The water was so warm at the surface that it provided little relief from the heat. I enjoy paddling in hot weather; it rarely bothers me. I made the mistake of only bringing as much water as I thought I would need. The trip turned out to be longer than I planned, and before I could return to the put-in I began to suffer from hyperthermia: reduced sweating, severe back/shoulder cramps, nausea, and light-headedness. I was seriously concerned I might not be able to make it back under my own power but I made it to SouthPoint where I felt comfortable getting out of the boat and into the water which helped me recover enough to make it the last half-mile to the put-in.

Bucket list trips: Bahamas/Caribbean, Nova Scotia, San Juan Islands, and Alaska

Three things you like most about paddling? 1) Just being on the water and more generally being surrounded by the natural environment; 2) Challenging myself in various conditions; 3) Everything else.

What do you like best about CPA? Especially as a beginning paddler, it was a great way to meet paddlers of all skill levels, providing opportunities to learn new skills and share the struggles of skills development with those at a similar point in their progression. I think I paddle more frequently than I otherwise might without an organization like CPA, and it helps us all stay informed about kayaking events, shared interests, locations, etc.

One thing other people find interesting about me: Most people I know find it interesting that I went kayaking in Baja for a week last year. It may not seem that "out-there" for many kayakers, but most of my non-kayaking friends and family thought I was nuts.



Mike Thomas paddling Baltimore's Inner Harbor