

Lazy-like Kayaking

Filed under: [Travel](#) — Red @ 7:04 am

I've been accused recently of participating in adventurous activities that require lesser degrees of physical exertion. Guilty as charged!

For those like me who love a little adventure, but may be allergic to physical exertion and perspiration, or otherwise have physical conditions that limit certain activities, a new opportunity presents itself to explore the world's waterways via kayak.

It's an electric kayak. No paddling, no fighting river currents or stiff breezes that send you zigzagging around the lake like a drunken sailor.

We recently encountered our first electric kayak at Palmetto Dunes Outfitters on Hilton Head Island. Frank Gaston has operated the business there for three years, and the general store across the street for 20 years. Most of his business revolves around renting the 1500 bicycles he has on hand for families to cruise the hundreds of miles of bike paths around Hilton Head.

But since the Outfitters is located on the Palmetto Dunes lagoon system, roughly three miles of brackish water that weaves through this plantation, Gaston also has about 60 canoes and kayaks available for rent.

Two of those are considered electric kayaks. Manufactured by Escape Watercraft, they are also called electric touring boats. With a wide, stable hull and big enough for three people – or two people and a big cooler filled with refreshments – the electric kayaks travel through the water at about three mph with greater ease and even less noise than a traditional paddle-powered kayak.

We were able to glide right up to within two yards of a magnificent blue heron, a wildlife symbol of Hilton Head. The volume of egrets, wood storks and other waterfowl we came across in our two-hour ride was innumerable. And considering the flip-flopping of other critters in the bushes and fish that all but jumped over our kayak, our hearts were pounding enough from the excitement. Who needed the cardio workout of paddling a canoe? Plus our hands were free for cameras and beverages.

Our self-guided tour took us past the Arthur Hills and the George Fazio golf courses, under pedestrian bridges and around some of the magnificent private homes on Hilton Head. I sat in the back, simply flipping a switch to make us go forward or backwards, with my hand on a small tiller that moved as



silently as the motor.

I've kayaked in the Sea of Cortez, the waters around Maui and a little lake in Wisconsin, so I'm far from an accomplished kayaker, exiting each of those outings with sore shoulders and a wet rear-end. But I thoroughly enjoyed exploring the waterways around Hilton Head and having such a quiet interaction with the elements of nature that so many overlook on this pristine island. With an electric kayak, I'm ready to take on bigger challenges. Sign me up for the summer Olympics in 2008!

—Diana Lambdin Meyer, RED Travel Writer

Photo by Bruce N. Meyer