



Laura Ventura in the San Juan Islands, Washington, August 2012. Photograph by Kerry Kirk Pflugh

CPA Paddler Profile ~ Laura Ventura

by Rick Wiebush

Lives in: Kennett Square, Pennsylvania and Chestertown, Maryland (Tolchester)

Real job: Self-employed carpenter/home repair work

Member of a Piracy? Eastern Shore Piracy

Paddling buddies: Sue Byerly, Melinda Bookwalter, Lizzie O'Donoghue, Kerry Kirk Pflugh, Jay Gitomer, Paula Hubbard, Rich P., Rich Hagerty, and Brian Scarborough

Number years paddling: About 10

How did you get involved in kayaking? I love the water so I got a canoe, thinking it would involve the family and dog. Well, that didn't happen, and therefore I just had a big canoe to lug around by myself, so I sold it and bought a small Dagger Bayou kayak. I still remember my first solo journey down the Brandywine River, smiling ear to ear and talking out loud about how great it was! That progressed to a fiberglass sea kayak, and I joined up with some races sponsored by Delmarva Paddlers so I could meet other paddlers. I met Chris Beckman and so the journey began!

How did you learn to kayak? I have sought out training classes, such as strokes, rescues and surf, attended symposiums, both

Greenlandic and other, challenged my endurance and skill levels on journeys and in conditions and learned from the company of other skilled paddlers. **Any formal training or ACA/BCU certifications:** Classes but no formal certifications

Boat usually paddled: I rotate, but favorite....Tahe Marine, Greenland OC, 17-foot 10 inches, ivory/red

Type paddle used: Greenland Paddle, Aleutian Paddle

Do you do any other type of paddling besides sea kayaking? Not regularly

Do you regularly do any other outdoor activities? I regularly trail hike and neighborhood bike with occasional trail and urban rides. I am currently training for the NYC Five Boro ride in May! Cross country skiing in the winter (well, when there was snow).

How often do you paddle in summer? Usually once or twice per week. **Do any winter paddling?** I paddle during the winter but much less frequently. I love winter paddling, however.

Go to pool sessions? I love pool sessions but local offerings are minimal. I have been to Fairlands, Big Vanilla, Pottstown, Pennsylvania YMCA, Bridgewater in New Jersey and one year we were lucky enough to have use of a private health club pool in Chestertown. The Newark, Delaware YMCA has pool sessions sponsored by Wilmington Trail Club.

Favorite local paddling location within 1-2 hours of your house: I love to paddle the East Langford and Chester River when in Tolchester. My new favorite spot on the Susquehanna is just below the Holtwood Dam, Rt. 372. I also love Cape Henlopen area and Strathmere in Southern New Jersey (near Wildwood).

Favorite non-local location: Pacific Northwest, Manzanita, Oregon coast and San Juan Islands, Washington. New England coastline, Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island

Best paddling trip/experience ever and why? My most recent paddling excursion was to the Pacific Northwest, and proved to be a trip of a lifetime. The journey took us from the dynamic Manzanita, Oregon coast with its exaggerated rocky and sea cave exploring opportunities, the majestic Columbia River, the San Juan Islands, to include primitive overnight kayak camping on Patos Island, a midnight sojourn through magical bioluminescent filled waters and daily exploration amongst the beautiful island scenery and finally an experience in the famed Deception Pass on Whitby Island. The experience was made complete because it was shared with an amazing travel partner, Kerry Kirk Pflugh and included a visit to Cape Falcon Kayak (Brian Schulz) where we enjoyed his lifestyle on the organic farm. Seth Albanese and Body Boat Blade of Orcas Island also contributed greatly to our trip with their generosity and guiding. It was not only the places, but the people that made this trip so spectacular.

Scariest/most dangerous trip/experience and why? I haven't had one single experience that stands out as dangerous and scary. Fear has happened at times when I push my limits, whether it be in ocean surf or challenging sea conditions. Sometimes it occurs because my mental or physical equilibrium is just off balance. I think it has been important to listen to my inner voices and act accordingly. When we entered Canoe Pass (part of Deception Pass), there were two speed boats that came barreling through the narrow pass. It was scary and dangerous, but we quickly made the decision to retreat to a safer area to play in the eddies.

Bucket list trips: Maine Coast, Georgian Bay or somewhere in the Great Lakes, Tybee Island, Georgia, Adirondacks

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