



LEFT: Merrimack makes several models of canoes. **ABOVE:** Randy grew up on lakes and rivers near Crossville.

Merrimack Canoes

Randy Pew's coveted handcrafted boats take 100 hours of man power and generations of know-how

The Craftsmen:

Just a few miles from the rivers where his grandfather first taught him how to fish, Randy Pew continues the family tradition of Merrimack Canoes. Using the original design developed by his grandfather Lem Beach in 1954, Randy and fellow craftsman Scott Hale create handcrafted heirlooms that appeal to

paddlers looking for an artisan alternative to mass-produced canoes.

This month the Crossville, Tennessee, company is introducing a new line that uses eco-friendly woods from around the world. They also offer canoes made with native woods from a local family-run mill that specializes in sustainable harvesting. "My grandfather and

father taught me the importance of taking care of the environment, which is why we only use sustainable materials," Randy says. Once they've selected the woods, Randy and Scott get to work. (Each canoe takes about 100 man-hours to build.) First they form a composite hull from lightweight fiberglass and strong Kevlar carbon fiber, then reinforce and trim the hull with woods such as

cherry and white ash and hand-stitch each canoe seat. Although a typical order can take several weeks to fill, most customers don't mind the wait. And even though Merrimack Canoes are shipped around the world, many new owners come to Tennessee to see where their boat was made. "People feel a connection to one of our canoes because they know we made it just for them," Randy says.

Hoping to keep the business in the family, Randy now takes his own grandchildren on canoeing adventures. "I'd love for them to continue Merrimack as a small company dedicated to American craftsmanship," he says. 

The Canoes:

Of Merrimack's six canoe styles, these are the most popular.

THE OSPREY, a lightweight but stable model designed for families, fishermen, and hunters

THE BABOOSIC, a one-seater built for the solo paddler who's eager to navigate tight river spots

THE SOUHEGAN, a large model designed to accommodate several passengers and gear for camping trips

Merrimack Canoes start at \$3,100. For more information, visit merrimackcanoes.com or call 888/396-7267.