

# Canoe Camping in a Treehouse

By: canoekayakmag | Friday, March 2, 2007

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A treehouse just may offer one of the most civilized canoe camping experiences a paddler can possible find. And, it seems only fitting that it's in the genteel state of South Carolina, where paddling has a distinctively southern-and civil-accent.

The two treehouses on the Edisto River were the brainchild of Scott Kennedy, founder of Carolina Heritage Outfitters—a long-time paddler's paradise that he recently sold to Coastal Expeditions. The new owners, also veteran South Carolina operators are committed to keeping the treehouse experience the same or even better.



The bearded Kennedy built a quiet canoe and kayak outpost right on the Edisto, from where paddlers can pursue a wide variety of trips, shuttles, rentals, river wisdom-and treehouse overnights. "Quite simply, paddlers love these treehouses," said Kennedy, who added that Coastal Expeditions plan to build a third treehouse to keep up with demand.

The treehouse experience starts with a shuttle up the Edisto River to one of several put-ins that can provide a first day of paddling ranging anywhere from three to six hours or so. Canoe rental is included in the treehouse package, so many paddlers use their boats instead of hauling in their own canoe or kayak. They also provide a list of limited gear to bring (in dry bags), including food (treehouse veterans pack gourmet feasts), favorite beverages (and ice, if needed), appropriate clothes, a basic "dopp" kit (there's no running water), books or other reading, a sleeping bag, and an adventurous mind.

## The tin-roofed wooden structures are perched about 15 feet above the ground

Depending on rain upriver, the Edisto generally flows at about two miles an hour, making for easy paddling or drifting conditions down to the first takeout at the treehouses. On the way, there are lots of wildlife spotting opportunities, including egret, great blue heron, river otter, alligator, and more. There are also many sandy banks for back stretching or maybe a picnic lunch.

The river-left island where the treehouses are located is marked by a bright yellow paddle. The island was created by a small gurgling creek, which can typically be heard from the larger of the two treehouses.

Both treehouses are tucked into the woods and can barely be seen from the river (or from one another). The tin-roofed wooden structures are perched about 15 feet above the ground and feature small decks at the top of the steps. Rustic amenities in each of the treehouses include: a kitchen with basic eating and cooking utensils (including a propane stove); an outdoor gas grill; a propane lamp and lots of oil lanterns; handmade musical instruments (much more entertaining than a TV); a guest book with an array of canoe camper comments; and varied board games. A full breakfast of eggs and sausage is also typically provided for the first morning in the treehouse.



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The smaller treehouse sleeps two to four paddlers, while the larger one can sleep four to eight. Sleeping options in each include large sleeping lofts reached by ladder, as well as futons on the main floor. The larger treehouse also features a “dining platform” underneath it, which is a great place to grill and hang out in the evening.

Across the stream by way of relatively stable swinging bridges, two traditional “outhouses” provide a true backwoods experience. The surrounding woods (including lots of old-growth cypress) also provide some great hiking opportunities.

Evening time around the treehouses is definitely a highlight. Along with a grilled dinner, campfire, and conversation, the loudest sounds likely heard will be from numerous nearby night owls.

Whether paddlers choose to stay one night or a week, departure day brings different some serious melancholy at the put-in. From the treehouses, it’s a short three- or four-hour paddle (or drift) downstream to the takeout at the Carolina Heritage Outfitters outpost, where the treehouse experience started.



Most first-time “Edistotel” visitors stay just one night, but repeat paddlers often stay two or more nights. The company also offers shuttles further up the river, where veteran paddlers can combine more traditional Edisto River camping with one or more nights at the treehouses on the tail end of the trip.

The treehouse experience includes the use of a canoe, a shuttle to the put-in, and breakfast on the first morning. It’s \$125 per person, per night, though it wouldn’t hurt to ask about discounts on extra nights if

they’re not already booked.

For more information:  
Carolina Heritage Outfitters,  
843-563-5051

[www.canoesc.com](http://www.canoesc.com)

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