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KAYAKING IS A FUN ALTERNATIVE TO HIGH GAS PRICES, LOW WATER LEVELS

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With the big lakes low, gas prices high and cash tight, an alternative for boating getaways and lake-based vacations is to find a cheaper, simpler way to have your fun.

A new inflatable called the Airis, made by Walker Bay, is built in four sizes ranging from 8 to 12 feet and comes with an air pump and a backpack. The craft weighs 15 to 30 pounds, depending on size, so you can backpack into remote lakes and then have a boat to fish, explore and swim from.

In addition, these new boats are made from a material that allows you to pump four times the air pressure (seven pounds) of typical inflatable kayaks (under two pounds). This one handles and feels more like a hard-shell boat, that is, fast and maneuverable. Yet it has the ease of transport and storage that you only get with an inflatable. They are priced at about \$800 to \$1,200. Info at walkerbay.com.

The advantages of an inflatable or car-top boat is that it's easy to store and transport, and can be hand-launched at the state's 190 lakes that do not have boat ramps. These lakes provide great value for those with SUVs and car-top boats such as kayaks and canoes or inflatables.

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