

CANOES  
"WA"



4. CANOE (large)

Canoes were essential to the life of the early Marshallese because they were intimately dependent on the sea for survival. The small, flat coral atolls, surrounded by vast areas of ocean, had limited land and few resources. By necessity, the islanders needed to be linked to the other islands and the outrigger canoes became their sole means of transportation. Over thousands of years the Marshallese perfected the technology and design of their outrigger canoes and today they are considered some of the finest in the Pacific.

The men carved the outrigger canoes from the breadfruit tree (“MA”) and tied the wooden pieces together with coconut sennit (“KKWAL”). The traditional triangular sails (“WŌJLĀ”) were woven by the women out of pandanus leaves (“MAAN”). Cloth is used today.

There are three types of outrigger canoes. The first, the “KŌRKŌR”, is an outrigger paddle canoe 10 – 15 feet long that was used for sailing or fishing within the lagoon. It holds up to three people and are still in use today.

The second type, the “TIPNOL”, is a sailing canoe 18 – 30 feet long that was used for open ocean and lagoon fishing. It holds up to 10 people and is also still used today.

The third type, the “WALAP”, was a large 100 foot long sailing canoe that was used for sailing long distances. It could hold up to 50 people and is thought to be the type of boat that originally brought the Marshallese to the islands.

Outrigger canoe building skills continue to be taught and small models are crafted for sale to the tourist.



5. CANOES - a, b (medium & small)