

CANADA IN A NUTSHELL

Aside from the coastline, sea kayaking is also done on freshwater, on small and large lakes, and on sections of rivers where the water is calm. Possibilities for kayaking in Canada are thus immense and could hardly be listed in a few pages.

Yet rather than a field guide, this brochure focuses on safety and aims to draw the readers' attention to conditions that are specific to each region in Canada. To establish his/her itinerary, the kayaker will have to consult maps and guidebooks of the region in addition to asking accredited associations for expert advice.

Boundaries here taken for demarcating Canadian territory correspond to the realities dictated by the ocean and by the great waterways of the country.

To help the reader assess a region's level of difficulty with more accuracy, we apply the concept of "zones". A particular zone refers to the difficulties that can generally be expected in this type of region. In the following pages you will be familiarized with the dangers specific to a particular region.

There are no zones that are free of difficulties. It is in your best interest to get informed about the difficulties of a given zone and to learn how to evaluate and anticipate the risks that it presents. This means that you should set up an itinerary that is in keeping with your level of technique, the difficulty of the territory, and anticipated weather conditions.

Above all, never overestimate your capacities nor underestimate the difficulty of an area, especially if you've never been there before. And, remember that when kayaking with others, the group has to adapt the level of difficulty to the least experienced kayaker.

KIM CROSBY, KAYAKBC.COM

6 ZONES

This chapter describes the specific characteristics of an area that present difficulty for kayaking. A very brief overview, this chapter cannot replace a deeper understanding of these difficulties, nor the command of techniques required to challenge them.

A zone, as conceived for the purposes of this brochure, is an area characterized by a certain number of difficulties. The more numerous and the greater these difficulties, the higher the level of the zone and the higher the risks associated with it. Remember that the risk level can only be reduced through knowledge of the area, through command of techniques, and through professional training where applicable.

An area includes those characteristics that are generally constant or predictable: size of the body of water, water temperature, speed of the current, height of the tides, and possibilities to find shelter quickly. These elements, among others, determine the level of difficulty of a zone.

Weather conditions constitute a further factor for determining difficulty. As weather is unpredictable, however, we will treat it separately for each zone. An identified level of difficulty is only valid for its defined weather conditions. A kayaker should know



MIKE BEEDELL

current weather conditions, be informed about weather forecasts before starting the trip, and be attentive to weather conditions throughout the entire trip. When weather conditions surpass those defined in the zone, the trip should be postponed or another region for kayaking should be chosen.

The level of difficulty assigned to each zone applies to the summer season, meaning generally the months of June through August.



MIKE BEEDELL

Outside of this period, changing conditions make for a higher level of difficulty.

The classification of areas into four zones of difficulty is a common approach and practiced worldwide. However, other organizations or guidebooks may well have different scales for measuring difficulty. In any case, zones should be studied with care to determine if your level of knowledge and mastery of technique correspond to the difficulty of the area in question. When in doubt, contact local sources of the area you wish to explore.

In conclusion, one word on itineraries: An itinerary represents your choice of the journey and a somewhat subjective slicing-up of an area. The level of difficulty of an itinerary is not related to the area but rather to your personal choices. If you foresee to cover a few kilometres in one afternoon, calculating for time to rest, we are dealing with an easy itinerary. However, if you plan for 30-kilometre sections or sections lasting 8 hours or longer, we are dealing with a very challenging itinerary.

A medium pace for recreational sea kayaking is considered to be around 3 kilometres per hour. We advise to plan for five-hour days,

allowing you to cover 15 kilometres per day. Naturally, this also depends on your physical condition, your level of technique, and the level of your chosen zone.

ZONE I - LOW level of difficulty

Small lake or a stream of water with a low flow-rate. Topography does not present obstacles for orientation. Many possibilities to find shelter. Easy landing: numerous and easy sites, beaches.

Freshwater body of water. Water temperature is acceptable, generally above 18°C and even higher during summer. Current varies from 0 to 2 knots. As the area is usually sheltered, the fetch is limited and the wind rarely causes problems.

Civilization/isolation, assistance: easy access to refresh supplies, communication, emergency care or other help.

Corresponding weather conditions: light wind (less than 15 km/h), perfect visibility, no precipitation.

ZONE II - MODERATE level of difficulty

Large freshwater lakes and reservoirs. Numerous islands and bays: difficult orientation.

Possibility of wind blasts. Coast exposed to average wind yet with many possibilities to find shelter: islands, bays, ports. Ease of landing: numerous and generally easy sites.

Saltwater. Water temperature: cold, on average between 12 and 18°C. Tide below 1.5 metres. Consistent winds and a current between 2 and 4 knots.

Civilisation/isolation, assistance: relatively populated, inconsistent levels of assistance. Means of communication other than VHF (cellular telephones) are less reliable.

Maritime recreational boating.

Corresponding weather conditions: Surface or ocean calm and light winds below 15 km/h.

ZONE III – HIGH level of difficulty

Coastline exposed to wind: very few places to find shelter. Ocean currents complicated by the tides. Considerable fetch can generate surges and surf zones that make landing difficult. Rough ocean: waves, choppy sea, surges, spray, surf. Ease of landing: sufficient yet sometimes difficult, beaches, pebbles and rocks.

Water temperature: on average between 8 and 12°C. Water is permanently very cold and can be life-threatening in case of capsizing. Currents above 4 knots.

Civilization/isolation, assistance: coastal region not very populated. Help in case of an emergency may take a certain amount of time even if VHF radio communication functions. Presence of maritime pleasure boating. Considerable presence of commercial vessels.

Corresponding weather conditions: moderate wind below 25 km/h. Abrupt change of weather possible.

ZONE IV – VERY HIGH level of difficulty

Isolated region, subjected to severe climate. Tumultuous sea with

very strong currents. Zone likely to get very powerful winds that generate a considerable surge and obliging to surf in order to reach land or to start off. Currents above 4 knots, choppy sea, standing waves, etc.

Ease of landing: very few possibilities, uneven coast that is difficult to access. Cliffs.

Water temperature: below 5°C, a major risk heightened by the possible presence of icebergs or floating ice.

Civilization/isolation, assistance: almost non-existent outside help. Uninhabited coastal region. Only satellite communication is reliable. Presence of maritime pleasure boating. Almost no maritime traffic.

Corresponding weather conditions: Expect the worst!

The following is a very general presentation of zones of various levels as they occur within regions throughout Canada. As the territory covered within one zone is vast, some parts of this zone may be less difficult. This is why it is important to obtain solid information from local sources.

7 NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR REGION

Befitting a place with its very own time zone, Newfoundland and Labrador offers something out of the ordinary. Carved by glaciers that retreated about 10,000 years ago, the land continues to be shaped by ocean waves; sea ice, the weather characteristic of maritime climate. With almost 10,000 km of coastline, the Island offers endless opportunity for novice and expert paddlers alike. The coast of Labrador adds another 7,000 km for the more proficient kayaker. From sea stacks to secluded coves, from whale pods to bird colonies expect a drama of varied scenery and marine life from this rugged coastline.

And come prepared. Surface water temperatures in summer average 12°C inshore on the Atlantic side, and are only marginally warmer on the Gulf side. Newfoundland's large lakes, such as the Grand, Red Indian, and Gander, are ocean-like bodies of water and are also very cold even in summer. Sea kayakers should have appropriate thermal protection – either wet or dry suits – for all paddling excursions.

Other factors also unite to produce paddling environment which in many areas of the province qualifies as a Zone III or IV. These include a sparse population, rugged landforms, and changeable weather. The

prevailing winds are westerlies, but squalls can come unexpectedly from any direction. Characteristically strong winds can create rough ocean conditions and impede landing opportunities. Fjords and sounds are subject to wind funneling. Tidal currents seldom achieve rates greater than about 1 knot/h in Newfoundland waters, although rates up to about 4 knots/h occur in certain conditions among islands.

Paddlers should choose areas that do not exceed skill level. Novice and intermediate paddlers should consider sheltered bays and archipelagos. Long stretches of exposed coastline should only be explored by advanced paddlers. Local advice on landing sites, navigational hazards, weather forecasts, and communications (cell phone, VHF coverage) should be obtained by all paddlers considering an unfamiliar coastline.

Finally, because of the nature of the coastline and local weather, the paddler can encounter **Zones I through IV in any one of the regions listed below. Paddlers should be aware that within one area, all Zones might be encountered.** One such popular kayaking destination is Cape



DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM, CULTURE AND RECREATION

Broyle. Protected from all but easterly winds, the novice may enjoy a Zone I paddle at the head of the bay, within reach of the community and easy landings. Paddling toward the mouth of the bay, conditions could deteriorate to a Zone IV: few landing options, steep cliffs with rebound waves, significant swells, and hazardous offshore winds.

Zones III and IV

East Coast

Bonavista Bay and the north shore of Trinity Bay offer a diversity of short and multi-day paddling trips. Both are sparsely inhabited. Bonavista Bay has considerable pleasure boat traffic. It is studded with islands, which present navigational challenges. Its channels are exposed to open seas and rough conditions with strong easterlies. Newman Sound, in Terra Nova National Park, can be subject to

strong southwesterly winds but numerous coves offer shelter, warmer water temperatures, and backcountry campsites. Rough seas can develop nearer the open ocean from strong northeasterlies.

The relatively populated south shore of Trinity Bay is exposed to an extended westerly fetch. Conception Bay is the most populated within the area and offers shelter, particularly at the head. Moderate swells and choppy conditions can result from strong northeasterlies.

The East Coast of the Avalon Peninsula offers the possibility of calm inner harbours, such as Cape Broyle, Aquaforte, and Calvert. Several outfitters operate along this coastline. Sea caves can be dangerous and should be explored only under ideal conditions, avoid heavy swells. Numerous whales can be seen feeding and must be granted a respectful distance. However, the exposed coastline open to the North Atlantic should be explored by advanced paddlers only, as any easterly winds bring potentially dangerous conditions: swells, choppy seas and rebound near cliffs. Overall the areas are comprised of steep cliffs with few landing sites, and are practically uninhabited.

North Coast

Notre Dame Bay offers hundreds of islands to explore. The area is accessible by many side roads, has numerous landing spots and

small outports. Some shallow waterways are warm enough to permit swimming comfortably. Winds from the north and south-west can create whitecaps between islands and choppy paddling conditions within moments. Northern tips of some larger islands can be subject to rebound waves. Outer reaches in particular are exposed to the glacial Labrador Current and open to swells. Sea ice may linger through June in the western part and are often present until late June in the inner Bay of Exploits. It should be noted by all that at this stage, icebergs are unstable and can roll without warning.

A steeply sloped, thickly forested and uninhabited coastline with up to 20 km between landing sites characterizes the East Coast of the Northern Peninsula.

South Coast

West of the Burin Peninsula, the area is remote, has steep cliffs with long stretches between landing sites, and is exposed to prevailing southwesterlies. Numerous Fjords offer shelter, but their configuration often creates a wind-funneling hazard.

Fog is more common along this coast. Although the fog is accompanied by strong winds, it is frequently too dense and widespread for winds to have much clearing effect. The Burgeo archipelago

presents an exception. Accessible by road, the multiple island and sandy beach complex offers a haven for paddlers during big seas.

The inner reaches of St. Mary's Bay and Placentia Bay, as well as the Merasheen archipelago, offer good paddling. Waters are exposed to strong southerly and easterly winds with associated fetch and rough seas. While landing spots are numerous, the areas are largely uninhabited. Fog can be a serious problem in summer.

West Coast

The Bay of Islands and Bonne Bay (within Gros Morne National Park) offer paddling variety. The outer coastline has continuous vertical cliffs exposed to the prevailing southwesterlies which frequently create very chaotic seas near shore. The Inner Arms, with numerous landing sites and small outports, is recommended for the novice. In both bays, sudden winds and funneling can create large waves. Katabatic winds can funnel down from the mountains producing immediate paddling hazards. The West Coast of the Northern Peninsula is a mainly low-lying rocky shore fully exposed to the prevailing winds. Ice may still be present in Strait of Belle Isle in early July. The frequency of fog during humid southwesterly airstreams increases along this Strait, and in the Bay St. George area to the south.

Labrador Coast

Compared to the mountainous, isolated and near inaccessible north coast, the south coast offers a scattering of communities along rolling, barren shores. The entire coastline is subject to sudden storms and very high winds. Winds channeling through bays and fjords can be particularly hazardous. Polar bears and icebergs present additional hazards. These elements, together with the frigid waters of the Labrador Sea, demand detailed planning; preparation and prudence by experienced kayakers.

GENERAL INFORMATION ON NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR REGION

The Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation

www.gov.nf.ca • info@tourism.gov.nf.ca or (800) 563-NFLD

Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador

www.hospitality.nf.ca or (800) 563-0700

Adventure Tourism Association of Newfoundland and Labrador

(709) 722-2000

Kayak Newfoundland and Labrador (KNL)

www.kayakers.nf.ca/

Canoe Newfoundland

www.canoenfld.ca

Guide Books

Jim Price, Kevin Redmond and Dan Murphy, *Canyons, Coves and Coastal Waters*, Breakwater Books, 1996

Kevin Redmond, Dan Murphy, *Sea Kayaking Newfoundland and Labrador*, Nimbus Publishers, 2003

WEATHER

Channels 21B, 25B and 83B.

Environment Canada

Newfoundland Marine Forecast

www.weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca/natmarine/ATLANTIC

Transport Canada, Marine Safety

Office of Boating Safety: (709) 772-6915

www.boatingsafety.gc.ca/

Canadian Coast Guard

Marine Pollution Reporting: (800) 563-2444

MARINE/AIR SEARCH AND RESCUE (SAR)

(800) 563-2444 (709) 772-5151

8 ATLANTIC REGION

NOVA SCOTIA, NEW BRUNSWICK AND PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

The entire coastline of the Maritime Provinces is very accessible through roads and a vast network of ferries. Through Confederation Bridge, the longest bridge in the world that stretches over saltwater, Prince Edward Island is now linked with New Brunswick.

Zone 1

Inland waters of New Brunswick

Waters feeding the head of the Saint John River form a lake system linked by portages that are very accessible and suitable for family outings. The Saint John River, feeding into the ocean, is long and large: beginning in northwestern New Brunswick, where it functions as the border to the United-States, it ends in the Bay of Fundy. For those not thrown off by the idea of portaging at each weir, the river lends itself to a one-week trip. The sections between the weirs allow for one-day excursions. New Brunswick also has a number of lake systems as well as rivers with rising tides. The beginning of the St Croix River also leads to a lake system.

The Miramichi River is known for poling and for salmon fishing. The area by the mouth of the river, close to the town of Miramichi, is very suitable for sea kayaking.

Zone 2

The Baie des Chaleurs

The northern coastline of New Brunswick is very inhabited and offers many services. A series of splendid beaches await in the bay of the Nepisiguit River. The region of Miscou Island is somewhat more exposed to winds and the water there is colder.

Northumberland Strait and the northern coast of Prince Edward Island

This region includes coastlines of each of the three Maritime Provinces and is known for its extremely mild maritime climate. With water temperatures rising above 20°C at some sheltered points, the area is professed to have the warmest waters on the east coast north of the Carolinas. The coastline offers endless beaches and sand dunes and is not very foggy. While clearly at the ocean, the region receives heat from the mainland through

prevailing southwest winds. Tides stay below one metre. In the Northumberland Strait, a weak current flows from west to east. The region is very inhabited.

Though more exposed to the gulf wind, the northern coast of Prince Edward Island does not present more difficulty for kayakers.

Bras d'Or Lake

Situated on mainland Cape Breton, this immense saltwater lake is protected from the fog and storms of the Atlantic Ocean. Nevertheless, due to its great size, it can be subjected to very strong winds. We may think of Bras d'Or Lake as an inland ocean with numerous channels that link it to the sea. On the coastlines of its warm waters we find many towns, marinas, and a rural landscape. The region is very inhabited.

Grand Lake and Spednic Lake in New Brunswick are also of interest to kayakers, though these should be wary of the winds that may appear abruptly on the lakes' relatively shallow waters.



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Nova Scotia's Kejimikujik National Park region also offers great opportunity for lake kayaking and also has a very interesting coastline.

Zone 3 Eastern and southern coastline

The eastern and southern coastline of Nova Scotia is very exposed to Atlantic winds. However, along the entire stretch of this coastline kayakers can find numerous ports, creeks, islets and islands that offer refuge in case of difficulty. The water is warm enough for bathing in the summer, though still too cold for longer swims. This is the region of the Maritimes with the most frequent fog, especially from May through July. Prevailing winds are from east to southwest wind and storms are short. Tides vary from 1.5 to 2.5 m and the current is negligible.

The southern part of the coastline up until Shelburne is influenced by the Bay of Fundy, meaning that tides can reach 4 m, followed by considerable currents. This region is also very foggy and water temperature varies from 13 to 18°C.

Cape Breton

The northern part of Cape Breton is continually exposed to heavy winds (NW and SE). Not very many islands line the shore. Shoals, sandbars as well as strong currents are common and make for difficult access to the ports. There are not many good places to land. Water temperature often rises above 16°C in summer and the region is not very foggy. Tides vary from 1 m on the gulf side to 2 m on the Atlantic side.

The coastline is savage and not very inhabited. Yet the landscape is overwhelming, offering views to astonishing heights. People are welcoming and outside help is accessible.

Zone 4

The Bay of Fundy

The first advice to a kayaker venturing into this region is to purchase a tide table for the Bay of Fundy. Varying from 6 m (Grand Manan Island) to 18 m (Minas Basin), these tides hold the world record for amplitude and result in strong currents that can reach up to 8 knots. Moreover, the ocean is often deceptive. Feeling assured upon leaving shore at high tide when everything is calm, you may come to feel as if in a giant whirlpool only three hours later. Long stretches of mud whirled up after at low tide are also very unappealing. Or, glitchy pebbles hidden under

the grass may complicate landing or setting camp.

Wind may rise abruptly within minutes, and when counter-current, may create standing waves that make it difficult to manoeuvre. Moreover, this inhospitable coast has the highest cliffs of the Maritime coastline. In general, there is no place to find shelter. However, the Bay of Passamaquoddy and its islands are protected from the Atlantic winds and present one of the most beautiful wildlife areas of the Maritimes.

Water in this region is also very cold, rising rarely above 13°C. Even in summer campers have to wear hats and mittens. Fog is often so dense that kayakers cannot see the tip of their own kayak. (People of the region say that the fog is so dense that you can lean against it).

Sea traffic is very dense at the entrance and exits of ports and commercial fishing vessels move very quickly.

The water movement, however, whirls up many nutrients, making for a rich environment for marine and bird wildlife.

We will conclude with an advice to all kayakers who plan to visit these waters for a first time: make use of services offered by experienced guides.

GENERAL INFORMATION ON ATLANTIC REGION

Nova Scotia

Canoe Kayak Nova Scotia

canoens@sportns.ns.ca

www.ckns.ca

Nova Scotia Tourism

www.gov.ns.ca/tourism.htm

Nova Scotia Adventure Tourism Association

www.adventurenovascotia.com

New Brunswick

Canoe New Brunswick

president@canoenb.org

www.canoekayaknb.org

New Brunswick Tourism

www.tourismnewbrunswick.ca

Prince Edward Island

Prince Edward Island Information Centre

www.gov.pe.ca

Tourism Industry Association of Prince Edward Island

www.tiapei.pe.ca • tiapel@pei.sympatico.ca

Guide books

Scott Cunningham, *Sea Kayaking in Nova Scotia*, Nimbus Publishing, 1996

Alison Hughes, *Paddling in Paradise*, Goose Lane Editions, 2002

WEATHER

Channels 21B, 25B and 83B.

Transport Canada, Marine Safety

Office of Boating Safety : (902) 426-7729

www.boatingsafety.gc.ca

Canadian Coast Guard

Marine Pollution Reporting: (800) 565-1633

MARINE/AIR SEARCH AND RESCUE (SAR)

(800) 565-1582 (902) 427-8200

9 QUÉBEC REGION

THE PROVINCE OF QUÉBEC

The province of Québec has abundant sea kayaking possibilities for all levels of difficulty. These include closed inland lakes, from smaller lakes to huge reservoirs, certain longer and calmer stretches of rivers, as well as the maritime and coastal portions in Saguenay, the St. Lawrence River and the Gulf.

Zone 1

Inland lakes: small and medium-size lakes, rivers with low currents

The entire province is dotted with small lakes, the water of which is not cold in summer. The lake systems are linked by portage paths, allowing for longer excursions. Although these portage paths usually do not present major difficulties, we point out that sea kayaks are not designed to be carried or transported on one's back over long distances.

Some rivers have longer calm sections and low currents such as the Outaouais, the Richelieu and the Saint-Maurice rivers. Lakes and

parts of rivers may belong to regulated zones such as parks, wildlife reserves and Zones d'exploitation contrôlée, ZEC (controlled harvesting zones). Kayakers should thus get information about regulations and fees that may apply to their chosen area.

Zone 2

Great lakes and reservoirs, such as the Cabonga and Gouin Reservoirs, Lake Champlain, Lake Memphremagog, Lake Saint-Jean

Great bodies of water, either natural lakes or artificially created reservoirs, are dispersed throughout the territory of Québec. With no tides and currents, with warmer water in summer, and strewn with a multitude of islands, these waters make for exceptional kayaking. They also lend themselves to multi-day excursions and have yet to be fully exploited to this effect. The many islands and deep bays, however, are bound to challenge your navigational skills. On the larger waters, long stretches without obstacles favour wind acceleration (fetch), which can create enormous waves within minutes, causing the kayak to drift very far from the shore.



PARKS CANADA / JEAN AUDET

Large medium-current streams

The St. Lawrence River upstream from Québec and the Saguenay River-Fjord (with the exception of the river mouth).

The main difficulty in this region arises from high-traffic pleasure boating, especially during summer. Kayakers should know and follow the navigation regulations in effect. Many shores are private, reducing possibilities for landing and camping.

Zone 3

The reservoirs of the Manicouagan-Outarde ecological complex and Lake Mistassini. The river mouth of the Saguenay River, and the St. Lawrence River between Québec and Pointe-des-Monts (north shore) and Québec and Matane (south shore)

This maritime region influenced by the tides corresponds to the St. Lawrence River downstream from the Québec Bridge, to Saguenay and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Though it is the largest accessible area, it may also pose the greatest difficulties.

The apparent proximity of the banks often gives a false impression of security. An unexpected, forced swim in cold water or the sudden appearance of strong waves remind us that these spots are not meant for beginners. On the larger waters, long stretches without obstacles favour wind acceleration (fetch), which can create enormous waves within minutes, causing the kayak to drift very far from shore.

Zone 4

The North Shore from Pointe-des-Monts to Natashquan, the Gaspé Peninsula of Matane at the Chaleurs Bay, James Bay, Hudson Bay and the entire territory above the 51st parallel

The Gulf of St. Lawrence is known worldwide for its rigorous climate and its navigational challenges. Cold currents and tides prevail and warm and cold winds can collide to provoke storms that are as sudden as they are violent. Fog can arise at any moment and traffic of large tankers and vessels is also very intense.

GENERAL INFORMATION ON QUEBEC REGION

Fédération québécoise du canot et du kayak

(514) 252-3001 ou info@canot-kayak.qc.ca

www.canot-kayak.qc.ca

Guide book

Guide des parcours canotables, tomes I et II, pour les plans d'eau intérieurs et rivières.

Parcs Canada

Information: (800) 463-6769

Sépaq : parcs et réserves du Québec

Information: (800) 665-6527 or www.sepaq.com

Tourisme Quebec - Quebec Tourism Information

<http://www.tourisme.gouv.qc.ca>

Information: (877) 266-5687

WEATHER

Environnement Canada

Weatheradio: (162,475 Mhz, 162,55 Mhz or 162,40Mhz)

VHF Radio: Channels 21B (161,65 Mhz), 83B (161,775 Mhz) and 25B (161,85 Mhz)

<http://lavoieverte.qc.ec.gc.ca/meteo/>

Information: (800) 463-4311

Transport Canada, Marine Safety

Office of Boating Safety: (418) 648-5331

www.boatingsafety.gc.ca

Canadian Coast Guard

Marine Pollution Reporting:s: (800) 363- 4735

MARINE/AIR SEARCH AND RESCUE (SAR)

(800) 463-4393

(418) 648-3599

SÛRETE DU QUÉBEC

Inland Waters

Telephone: 911, cellular * 4141

10 ONTARIO, PRAIRIE AND NORTHERN REGIONS

ONTARIO, MANITOBA, SASKATCHEWAN, ALBERTA, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES AND NUNAVUT

Central Canada, which covers four provinces and two territories, may not seem very suitable for sea kayaking apart from the Great Lakes region and some other large waters. We forget, however, that Central Canada borders an ocean, namely the Arctic Ocean. Naturally, this ocean calls for extraordinary precautions due to the challenges it presents.

Zone 1

Typical rivers of the prairies and small lake systems in the plains

The prairies have many large rivers that flow pleasantly through terrains that are sometimes inhabited, sometimes barren. The Lower Red Deer River and the Milk River, for example, strike almost as lakes in their calmness and pose few technical difficulties apart from certain sections that can be very rocky. Some other rivers have a higher flow and demand a more developed command of kayaking techniques. Wave trains can also be encountered. The water of these rivers is generally cold.

Zone 2

Georgian Bay

The Georgian Bay is a very large body of water and thus subjected to winds. The east part of the bay has many islands and is relatively sheltered. The prevailing wind goes towards the shore and the water is warm in summer. Pleasure boat traffic in this area is quite heavy.

Mountain lakes

The water of the mountain lakes is very cold and does not favour swimming, even in summer. These lakes are often situated at the base of deep valleys into which forceful winds culminate. Weather can change very rapidly, provoking storms.

Zone 3

Great Lakes

The North Channel and the western part of the Bruce Peninsula are more exposed to strong winds. The east coast of the Bruce Peninsula and the southern part of the bay, although more protected, have few islands and few sheltered landing sites. Their

rocky shores are very difficult for landing, especially when the wind blows toward the shore, producing strong waves.

Other very large lakes: Lake Winnipeg, Reindeer Lake, Lake Athabaska

Even though these lakes are not always very cold, their large size makes them vulnerable to violent storms. Navigation is difficult; often their shores are not very inhabited and immediate assistance is almost non-existent.

Lake of the Woods at Kenora has a tentacular network of bays that are dotted with thousands of islands. Winds can be very violent at the larger mouths and navigation is difficult due to the great number of channels. Heavy maritime traffic.

Zone 4

Great Slave Lake, Great Bear Lake

Water temperature is very cold and weather conditions are harsh.

Lake Superior

Lake Superior is as vast as an ocean and its water is equally cold. It is essentially an ocean without the tide. Its surface is very exposed and in fall, waves often reach 6 metres or more. The eastern shoreline is more populated than the other shores.

Hudson Bay and James Bay

On these shores, tides spread lengthwise rather than upward. At low tide, long stretches of muddy water sometimes force kayakers to distance themselves up to 15 kilometres from the coast before being able to paddle with ease. Polar bears can be spotted on the west coast of the bay and further north, toward the Northwest Territories, temperature becomes extremely cold. Moreover, landing can be difficult.

MacKenzie River

This very long river reaches the Arctic Ocean. Heavy commercial traffic and abundant floating debris make navigation hazardous. Very cold water.

The Sub-arctic and Arctic

Northwest Territories, Nunavut

(These aspects also apply to Labrador and to northern British Columbia) Many kayakers arrive in the Great North and, though equipped with arms and gear, are not adequately prepared for tackling the glacial waters of the Arctic. This territory, also referred to as "the North", is an isolated region. Communication networks, whether VHF, e-mail or landline telephones, are limited and do not always function. Floodlights will be of little help as there is generally no one to see them.



PARKS CANADA/M. BOULLANNE

The cold is another factor that few travellers from warmer climates are capable of coping with. Some travellers arrive at the airport dressed inappropriately for the cold weather conditions. With water temperatures averaging at 5°C even in the middle of summer (in the southern part of the NWT), an immersion of only four minutes can cause severe hypothermia. People who are very sensitive to the cold have been witnessed to suffer strokes merely by putting their feet in the water. Additional replacement clothing has to be planned for and kept in watertight bags. A combination of protective measures as well as PFDs with increased protection against the cold should also be arranged for.

Wildlife, terrestrial as well as marine, also present an elevated risk factor. Campers must therefore keep in mind: a polar bear is a predator that attacks humans. Food odours can attract bears, wolves and foxes, even over long distances. Walruses, especially solitary ones, are known to be aggressive and do not hesitate to attack humans in order to protect their territory and their offspring. Whales are curious species and pose a major threat when they come too close to the kayaks.

These breathtaking regions should only be explored under the guidance of experts who take charge of all aspects from equipment

to navigation. When choosing a tour operator, make sure their guides know the region you wish to visit and that they have the required safety equipment.

GENERAL INFORMATION ON ONTARIO, PRAIRIE AND NORTHERN REGIONS

Ontario

Ontario Recreational Canoeing Association

info@orca.on.ca • www.orca.on.ca

Manitoba

Manitoba Recreational Canoeing Association :

www.paddle.mb.ca

Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan Canoe Association

1870 Lorne St, Regina SK S4P 2L7

Alberta

Alberta Recreational Canoeing Association

www.abcanoekayak.org • info@abcanoekayak.org

NUNAVUT

Nunavut Paddling Association

dkreuger@hotmail.com

Sport North

www.sportnorth.com

WEATHER

Great Lakes: channels 21B, 25B and 83B.

Transport Canada, Marine Safety

Office of Boating Safety: 1-877-281-8824

www.boatingsafety.gc.ca

Canadian Coast Guard

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11 PACIFIC REGION

BRITISH COLUMBIA AND YUKON

In British Columbia, the ocean is easily accessible and sea kayaking figures as a good way of discovering the natural and cultural attractions of the coastline. Eager to explore these numerous, close-by points of interest, many kayakers tend to underestimate the region's difficulties. Powerful currents, strong winds and cold water are the main risk factors. Some pleasure boaters, having traded their motorboat for a sea kayak, forget that they have no recourse anymore to a motor for their return trip or for when storm strikes.

On the west coast, kayakers can go out to sea almost throughout the entire year. The following zone rankings, however, apply only to the summer season, meaning the beginning of May through the end of September. At any other time during the year, the level of difficulty for these areas rises by one rank; for example, a zone 2 becomes a zone 3. Here as elsewhere, knowledge of the area and a sense of respect for the ocean are the chief safety guards.

Zone 1

Inland waters in central and southern British Columbia

Small lakes and gentle rivers not greatly affected by wind, and

protected bays. The areas are generally inhabited. Examples: Wood Lake, Elk Lake and Williams Lake.

Zone 2 (with exceptions)

Mountain lakes and large rivers

Large lakes and rivers located throughout British Columbia and the Yukon. The main challenge of these waters is caused by high winds rushing into precipitous valleys, provoking steep waves of up to 1 metre on the large lakes. Some of these zones have very cold water, strong currents, low reliability communication channels, and sometimes considerable commercial shipping. Among these are Okanagan Lake, Kamloops Lake, Columbia River and Thompson River,

Inside Passage: between Vancouver Island and the mainland

The east coast of Vancouver Island, from Victoria to Port Hardy; and the west coast of British Columbia, from Vancouver to the Broughton Islands.

This is the region where most kayakers take their first lessons, conditions there being good throughout the summer season. However, water temperature stays between 7 and 11°C even in summer, as the turbulent current pushes cold water from the depths

of the waters up to the surface. Moreover, wind generally blows against the current, making for a rough sea. The greatest challenge of this zone rests in the very strong currents that can exceed 10 knots.

Inside Passage: exceptions

Even though this region is largely a zone 2, some sites qualify as a zone 3. Among these exceptions are: Skoukumchuck, where the current reaches 12 knots; and Seymour Narrows, which, with a current above 16 knots, is known for having the second fastest tide in the world. At some other spots, such as Discovery Passage, the tide creates very violent currents (these are well known and well-marked on the navigational charts). These moving masses of water can ruthlessly propel a kayak 1 kilometre away within only a few minutes; their force should thus never be underestimated! The Johnstone Strait is also a difficult region due to its strong and variable winds. Close to Victoria, the region of Southern Gulf Island also has many currents.

Zone 3 (with exceptions)

The West Coast of Vancouver Island

Although numerous fjords and coves offer shelter, this coastline is very exposed to winds that create surf, steep waves and a large swell. Significant maritime traffic in some areas, cold water and fog also characterize this coastline that has limited starting and landing sites. As the region is in large part uninhabited, services, search and rescue resources,

and communication channels are limited, if not non-existent.

One outfitter tells of a six-day excursion having lasted ten days. The group was forced to remain in one place longer than planned due to poor weather conditions. They arrived at shore in dire need of food and several had missed their return flights home.

Exceptions: very few, select sites on the west coast of Vancouver Island

Although this coast is in large part a zone 3, certain places qualify as a zone 4. Among these are the north of the island from Port Hardy to Brooks Peninsula, surroundings of Pachena Point, Nootka Island, Estevan Point, Tatchu Point, and the stretch from Victoria to Bamfield. These sites are exposed to surf and are almost inaccessible for landing.

Zone 4

The central part of the coast of British Columbia

FROM BELLA BELLA TO PRINCE-RUPERT.

This region is very isolated, offers few possibilities for landing, and VHF communication is unreliable and random. The coast is very exposed and often inaccessible. Currents of numerous channels reach 3 to 6 knots. The Hecate Strait is a very shallow body of water; when the wind rises, the sea becomes rough very quickly.



KIM CROSBY, KAYAKBC.COM

The west coast and east coast of the Queen Charlotte Archipelago

The coast of the Queen Charlotte Archipelago is unforgiving, remote from all services, exposed, and offers few landing sites, because the continental shelf protrudes directly into the ocean. Considerable surf zones. Kayakers venturing into these corners must be very independent and experienced outdoor enthusiasts. Although better protected than some other sites, the coastline is also very isolated.

GENERAL INFORMATION ON PACIFIC REGION

British Columbia

Recreational Canoeing Association of British Columbia

www.bccanoe.ca • info@bccanoe.com

British Columbia Tourism

www.hellobc.com • www.britishcolumbia.com

Yukon

Yukon Paddling Association

gjmorgan@yt.sympatico.ca

Yukon Tourism

www.yukonweb.com/tourism

Guide Books

McGee, Pete Ed. *Kayak Routes of the Pacific Northwest Coast*, Greystone Books, Vancouver, 1998.

Snowden, Maryann. *Island Paddling: A Paddlers Guide to the Gulf Islands and Barkley Sound*. Orca Book Publishers, Victoria, 1997

WEATHER

Channels 21B and Wx1, 2, 3.

Transport Canada, Marine Safety

Office of Boating Safety: (250) 480-2792

www.boatingsafety.gc.ca

Canadian Coast Guard

Marine Pollution Reporting: (800) 889-8852

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