

12 PLANNING AND PREPARING THE TRIP

Sea kayaking is the ideal sport for getting off the beaten track. However, your choice of destination could take you to a remote location exposed to high winds, rapidly changing weather conditions or water that stays icy cold all year round. In such areas, the consequences of an oversight or accident can be compounded tenfold. So whether you are just going out for a short paddle or off on an expedition that will last many days, **careful planning and preparation is essential**. It could make all the difference in ensuring an enjoyable and memorable trip.

THREE-STEP PLANNING

1. **Assessing your needs and deciding on a destination**

- What are your requirements?
 - Experience and number of kayakers' skill level of least experienced member of group
 - Type of route agreeable to everyone in the group (lake, river, large body of water, coastal waters, environment, length, duration) and taking the least experienced into

account. An average of 10 nautical miles per day is reasonable for a group

- Rental of required equipment
- Transportation required
- Choosing a destination
- Time of year
- Remoteness
- Specific tourist region
- Service centre (parks, reserves, rentals, transportation)

2. **Finding information and resources**

- What documents and information do you need?
 - Charts, topographical maps, indexed maps
 - Tide table and sailing directions
 - Service centre business hours
 - Required authorizations, reservations, and/or contracts
 - Camping and accommodations
 - Equipment and gear needed
 - Personal gear (individual and group)

- Rental equipment and gear
- How much food and water do you need?
 - Drawing up a menu (food allergies, vegetarians)
 - Nutritional value per weight and volume
 - Carrying and keeping food
- Do you need to be accompanied?
 - Finding a qualified guide or outfitter

3. Putting it all together

- Plan a route and possible alternatives
- Draw up a contingency plan
- Select a group leader
- Draw up a list of equipment required
- Draw up a list of equipment available
- Assign tasks

PREPARATION REQUIRES CLEARLY IDENTIFIED TASKS

- Food: purchase, divide up, wrap and protect, label. Don't forget drinking water
- Group gear and equipment: equipment available, equipment required (purchase or rental), check condition of equipment

- Personal gear: as per checklist
- Kayaks and accessories: equipment available, load capacity, rental equipment, check condition of equipment
- Navigation and safety equipment: maps, spherical or conventional compass, tide and current table, chart ruler, radio, flares, foghorn, first aid kit, repair kit, GPS
- Transportation, authorizations, contracts: transporting a kayak measuring 6 meters (19' 8") or longer requires certain equipment and preparation. Entry fees and/or reservations are required in parks and wildlife reserves. If you are dealing with a third party (guide or outfitter), check the guide's qualifications, the services offered, and the insurance coverage provided
- Information specific to the chosen location: local weather, direction and strength of prevailing winds, currents and tides, coastal geography, shipping traffic, distance between possible put-ins, availability of drinking water, campsites, and applicable regulations.

13 BEFORE SETTING OUT

Whether you are setting out for a few hours or a few days or more, **preparation is essential**. It can make all the difference between an enjoyable trip and a perilous exercise in survival. **Chapter 12 (Planning and Preparing an Excursion)** lists the steps for planning and preparing an excursion.

On a **longer trip**, you often need to be completely self-sufficient. Make sure you haven't forgotten anything **before setting out**. Mother Nature can be very unpredictable!

The checklist should help you avoid forgetting anything important.

The following list will help you ensure that everything is in good working order.

- Check the following before setting out:
 - Kayak: Watertightness of hull and compartments. Watertightness of compartment hatches. Lifting

toggles at bow and stern. Throwbag and/or floating throw line at least 15 meters long. Rudder or centreboard in good condition. Screws and bolts tight. Sprayskirt and pedals adjusted. PFD WORN

- Pump well attached
- Spare paddle in good condition (it's like a spare tire for your group)
- Paddle float functional and within easy reach
- Compass well attached (removable models)
- Map and watertight case within easy reach and well attached
- Foghorn in good condition (new gas cartridge and/or spare cartridge if necessary)
- Small watertight sack with extra clothing and paddle food within easy reach
- Radio in good working order (new and/or spare batteries)
- Distress flares in good working order (check expiry date) within easy reach



MIKE BEEDELL

- Working watertight flashlight with spare batteries
- First aid kit suitable for the number of people and length of the excursion
- Tide and current tables
- Camping stove with appropriate fuel
- Drinking water
- Make sure you leave a copy of your route plan and contingency plan with a third party
- Listen to the latest weather and marine forecasts
- Make sure everyone knows their safety precautions
- Establish a clear operating framework for group members (group leader, last paddler, etc.). If you are not sure of your abilities, call on professional guides or outfitters.

Happy kayaking!

14 CHECKLIST

	Day Outings On Lakes and Rivers	For Excursions in Coastal Waters ADD	Overnight Excursions and Longer Add
<u>Material</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sea kayak • Paddle • Sprayskirt • One appropriately sized PFD per person • Whistle or foghorn • Throwline or throwbag (15 m or 50 ft.) • Paddle floater • Pump or bailer • Small watertight bag • Drinking water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kayak at least 4 meters or 13 feet long • Take-apart emergency paddle • Distress flares • Compass • Binoculars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tent • Ground sheet • Sleeping bag • Camp stove and fuel • Pots and pans • Plates, cups, and utensils • Kitchen kit (salt, pepper, tongs, biodegradable soap, matches, can opener, etc.) • Food • Toilet paper • Small shovel • Tarp
<u>Clothing</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoes or sandals • Wool socks • Shorts or pants • Polyester T-shirt • Long-sleeved synthetic fiber jacket • Wool or polar fleece sweater • Hat or cap with chin strap • Raingear • Change of clothing in watertight bag • Cycling gloves <p>Beginning and end of season:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wetsuit • Neoprene boots and gloves • Toque or balaclava 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic list, as well as warm clothing • Even in the summer, the water is colder and weather conditions can change without warning. 	<p>Extra Clothing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underwear • Warm socks • Pants • T-shirt • Shirt • Sweater • Shoes • Extra toque • Towel • Rain pants
<u>Safety</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunglasses with cord • Sunscreen • Water bottle or thermos • Topographical map or guide in watertight case • First aid kit • Watertight flashlight and batteries • Insect repellent or mosquito net • Rations (e.g., dehydrated fruit) • Knife 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weather or VHF radio • Marine chart • Tide table • Marine weather forecast • Extra drinking water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal medication • Extra pair of glasses or contact lenses • Emergency rations • Extra copies of maps • Repair kit • Sewing kit • Water filter or extra drinking water • Narrow line 3 mm x 20 m • Extra batteries and candle • Waterproof bags

15 NAVIGATION

During preparations, use your maps to draw up a route plan. It should include your departure and arrival points as well as stop-over points en route. It should also include a **contingency plan** that allows you to cut short your trip in the event of bad weather or for medical reasons. Plan on **one extra day** for every four days of traveling. You can use the extra days to rest, explore a particular site or to make up for delays. **Leave a**

copy of your detailed route plan with a family member or friend and keep them advised of delays and route changes. If you are overdue, this person will be able to provide valuable information for organizing a search & rescue operation.

A standard route plan should include the following: description of group; number, colour, and type of kayaks (solo, double); safety equipment carried; dates of calls to confirm positions; date and place of arrival; contingency plan, etc.

It is very important to notify the person who has your route plan of your safe arrival. This will avoid costly and unnecessary searches by search & rescue organizations.

Once on the water, a good map will be your most reliable tool if you know how to use it (orientation course). While it's true that most navigation is generally done visually, **the map will be your main source of information** (direction, currents, landmarks, local phenomena) and your primary reference for what you see. Keep it in a watertight, transparent case on the deck for **easy consultation**.



KIM CROSBY, KAYAKBC.COM

Copies of your maps should be kept in another kayak. Experience in map reading takes practice. Get into the habit of checking your position regularly. You should **know your position at all times** or you run the risk of getting lost. Get used to locating coastal features, points of reference (landmarks), and navigational aids (buoys, lighthouses) to keep track of your progress. That way you'll move from one point of reference to the next.

In the event of reduced visibility, you should put ashore. In these conditions, you need a radar reflector and good knowledge of navigating with a compass. A spherical glass marine compass is more useful than a conventional compass. Don't take any risks. Stay as close as possible to shore.

If tides are a factor on your route, make sure you know their schedule, amplitude, and consequences (currents). Tide tables will provide all this information.

If you must absolutely cross a shipping lane, do so quickly and by the shortest possible route.

Because of their shallow draft, kayaks are the best way to get to certain sites. Enjoy them without abusing them—respect private



PARKS CANADA / JEAN AUDET

property as well as plants and wildlife. **Chapter 16 on the environment gives useful advice on this subject.**

For your safety and that of other users, learn the strict regulations governing commercial ships and pleasure craft. Only by complying with these regulations will sea kayakers earn the respect of the marine community (**see Chapter 5, Regulations**).

16 ENVIRONMENT

The main appeal of sea kayaks is their ability to bring people into close contact with nature. With their shallow draft, kayaks move through the water quickly and quietly, enabling you to blend into the environment and making it easier to observe wildlife. Their carrying capacity also makes it possible to travel long distances, providing access to countless offshore islands.

While generally well-intentioned, kayakers may unknowingly have a severe negative impact on the environment. Certain sectors in parks and wildlife reserves classified as conservation or exclusion areas may be subject to specific regulations and/or codes of ethics. Find out what they are.

If you get too close to animals, you may disturb them. Repeated disturbances upset animals and may cause them to leave their habitats. This creates a stress to which pregnant females and young animals are particularly sensitive and may even lead them to abandon what may be one of the few suitable habitats available to them. **Don't get any closer than 200 meters.**

It is best to keep your distance and use a good pair of **watertight** binoculars. **Try to avoid abrupt changes in direction, shouting, and other noises.** Don't forget that kayaks move silently, which many animals interpret as the sign of a predator.

Make sure the animals can see you.

In Canada, some animals are in danger of becoming extinct. **Never chase them or seek them out.** If you run into some by chance, keep your distance. Go around them if they stay put or calmly continue on your way if they are moving.

Wetlands, riverbanks, and shorelines are often very fragile ecosystems. The wide variety of aquatic plants in marshes provides a perfect environment for a diverse animal population where larva, amphibians, fish, and waterfowl all have vital roles to play. Repeated visits by watercraft can very quickly upset the delicate balance.

Islands are often perceived as miniature oases far from civilization and thus undisturbed. This image, while very poetic, hides a little known truth—**small islands are very fragile**. Colonies of seabirds occasionally nest on them and **nesting areas are especially sensitive to disturbances**. Observe them from a distance and then continue on.

When **camping**, always treat the environment with the utmost respect. Since wastewater and latrine pits must be at least 30 meters from a water source, **islands less than 60 meters in diameter are unsuitable for camping**. Sloped riverbanks and shorelines are also fragile. Repeat visits can destroy the vegetation, create a depression and leave the ground bare. In heavy rain, water will run down the depression, causing severe erosion.

In coastal areas, tides can rise over five meters. Make sure your **campsite is above the high-water mark**. For the same reason, your kayaks should be hauled out of the water and tied up above the high-water mark. To protect the environment, you are strongly encouraged to **use a camping stove** rather than an open fire. If you must light a fire, try to do so in the inter-tidal zone. That way, there is no risk of the fire smouldering in the ground. The incoming tide will douse it and remove all traces.

Never leave a fire unattended and **thoroughly douse it with water** (not sand) before leaving. In order to diminish the environmental impact, try to avoid staying more than one night at the same site. Only serviced campsites or less sensitive areas like beaches and rocks can endure repeated use. Cover latrine and wastewater pits. Pack out all your garbage so that you leave nothing behind but your footprints and ripples.

Fin whales
in the
St. Lawrence
estuary

PARKS CANADA / JEAN AUDET



ETHICAL CODE

- **You** are the best person to ensure your safety. Plan your trips carefully.
- Remain courteous at all times and respect other users. Offer assistance to anyone who appears to be in trouble.
- Find out about and follow applicable regulations. Respect private property.
- Avoid abrupt changes in direction. They can disturb wildlife and may surprise other boaters using the body of water.
- Never camp on islands that are less than 60 meters in diameter or home to colonies of birds and seals. On land, avoid nesting areas and seal haul-outs.
- Never go within 200 meters of wild animals.
- Cut noise and speed near animals. Never circle or chase them.
- Move away if you see signs of nervousness or panic in wild animals you are observing.
- Never wash anything directly in a river or lake. Do all washing (dishes, clothing, and yourself!) on land using biodegradable soap. This ensures the ground will fulfill its role as a filter.
- Use a camp stove rather than an open fire for preparing meals.
- Pack out all your garbage and make sure you don't leave any trace of your passage behind.
- Make sure everyone knows this code of ethics.