



WHITE WATER CANOE CLUB (Inc.)

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SEA KAYAK HIRE – TRIP PLANNING - SAFETY TIPS - OPEN WATER

This safety guide assumes that the person hiring the WWCC sea kayaks is a competent whitewater kayaker. Often whitewater paddlers invite their family and friends on sea kayak trips, and often some of these people are absolute novices.

These notes are designed to help you in planning a safe, enjoyable trip.

You will need to consider the following;

All members of the party

- Reasonably confident around water – if they are fearful of water, sea kayaking will expose this very quickly
- Some experience of camping out in adverse weather – more people get into trouble through trying to get home in bad conditions than any other cause.
- An agreement before the trip on the trip's objectives, how to communicate individual discomfort, and when to get off the water

The Trip Leader (often a WWCC paddler)

- Experience in leading a group of two or more people in the outdoors
- Ability to gauge what people are capable of on the water
- Knowledge of the weather and conditions in the area they are visiting
- Where the escape routes are
- Can effect a deep water rescue competently in rough weather
- Good judgement – matching peoples' ability to the planned outing and

DEEP WATER RESCUES

The most effective rescue for a novice paddler or a failed attempt to roll, is an assisted (ie. rafted up) rescue where the paddlers climb back in the kayak and then either pump it out, or paddle to the nearest shore.

1. Get the kayak upright and tell the paddler to hold on to the kayak.
2. Grab their paddle and secure it under a deckline.
3. Empty as much water out of their kayak as practicable – rolling it over, T-rescue etc.
4. Place your kayak top and tail with the rescuing kayak, and hold onto the cockpit rim.
5. Park your own paddle across both boats under a bungy cord.
6. The paddler in the water should be facing the stern (rudder end) of their kayak.
7. Get the paddler to crawl onto their kayak face down towards the rudder end until their feet are past the end of the cockpit. Assist them and provide reassurance.
8. Guide their feet into their boat until their bum is over the cockpit and then help them turn over without sitting up.
9. Now - get them to sit up. They will be facing you. Eye contact!

If it's rough, try and cover as much of the cockpit as possible and start pumping the water out with the bilge pump. Its hard work, but it will warm you and them up. Get sufficient water out to allow the paddler to paddle to somewhere sheltered. You may have to remain rafted up if they are likely to capsize again.



**NOTE: the two kayaks are "top and tail".
Face down – body low – towards the rudder – feet in cockpit – slide legs into boat – bum over cockpit – turn over - sit up facing rescuer.**

Double Kayaks

1. Get the boat upright with **one paddler on each side** hanging onto their cockpit rim.
2. The **front paddler gets in first** by sliding face down towards the rudder end then wriggling back to get their feet, then their legs and bum back in the cockpit. Then sit up. The paddler in the water (plus rescuers) stabilises the kayak.
3. The rear paddler crawls in face down etc as above.
4. Start paddling to shelter asap.
5. One paddler can keep paddling while the other pumps their cockpit out.

The key to deep water rescues is to maintain a low body position – hug the boat. This keeps the centre of gravity low and minimises windage.



Bilge pump – keep it where you can see it.

A few safety considerations specific to sea kayaking...

1. THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IF SOMEONE CAPSIZES ON OPEN WATER IS TO GET THEM OUT OF COLD WATER QUICKLY. Practice those rescues before you go. It will build confidence too.
2. Wind is worse than waves. Don't paddle across bays in offshore winds – follow the shoreline.
3. If you are the strongest paddler, can you tow the rest of the party the distance you intend to paddle? Set the objective at the weakest paddler's ability.
4. Collision avoidance. Many power boaters don't know the Rules and they can't see you either. Keep clear.
5. Keep together as a group. Minor mishaps can become disasters when groups separate.

EQUIPMENT CHECKLIST (essential items marked *)

1. *Bilge pump – 1 per kayak supplied with kayak.
2. *Paddles – whitewater paddles are generally too short for sea kayaking. The double will have two 220cm paddles supplied. Racing paddles are OK for single sea kayaks, and are OK in doubles if both paddlers are fit.
3. *Spare paddles – 1 split paddle per boat, secured to the deck lines.
4. *Whistle on bouyancy aid. You will not be heard on a windy day otherwise.
5. Flares – if you are going off shore you need current flares which you can purchase from marine dealers. Don't paddle at night in shipping lanes or popular fishing areas, even with strobe lights.
6. VHF radio/mobile phone – check the coverage charts on the Vodafone and Telecom websites. In the Marlborough Sounds and Banks Peninsula you will probably have to climb a hill to get coverage. Although they can be useful, don't rely on mobile phones as they are susceptible to moisture and the batteries can go flat. Same applies to PDAs etc. Store the radio or phone in a Pelican or similar waterproof case. VHF requires an Operator's Licence, but is the best comms device as boats bigger than sea kayaks are listening.
7. Compass/GPS – if you take them, know how to use them.
8. Maps/charts – laminate the the maps for the area you are paddling in.
9. *Tools – sea kayaks have rudders and many fittings. Take a minimum of a multi-tool or similar.
10. EPIRB – if you are going to remote areas, take an EPIRB.
11. *Rope – floating is best. Used for towing at sea, and many uses in camp.
12. *Knife – on your buoyancy aid or in a pocket. Tie it on.
13. Dry bags – the hatches will let a small amount of water in.
14. Small AM radio – listen to the marine weather forecasts on National Radio. Times, frequency in the Listener.
15. Tide Tables – available at most boat dealers. Essential trip planning data, especially around Cook Strait, Sounds, Nelson region where tides exceed 4m.
16. *Duct tape – mends everything except a broken heart.