

Kayaking Trip Tips

Here are a few tips for making overnight kayak trips. These are not in any particular order and are certainly not a complete list.

- Packing
 - Practice loading your boat with all gear prior to the trip, and if you haven't in the past, paddle with it fully loaded to get a feel for how it handles. (You can use gallon milk jugs full of water to simulate the weight – 8 pounds per gallon)
 - Loading items in the same place each time makes load/unload easier
 - Placement
 - Load light items in the front and back
 - Load heavy items as close to the center as possible
 - Do not load metal items (cook stove, cookware, etc.) close to your compass
 - Utilize the space in front of your foot rests
 - Make sure the item is secure and will not get in the way of your feet, especially in the event of a capsize
 - [I put my sleeping bag in a dry bag and load it inside the cockpit, in front of the foot rests; it takes away a lot of bulk from the main hatches]
 - If you have the opportunity, float your loaded boat in the water to check its trim (I.e. that it floats level)
 - Small/light items can be placed in a bag with a rope tied to it; the bag may be stuffed into the way-front and way-back peaks of the boat and the rope is then used to pull it back out. Or consider purchasing a tapered dry bag to fit into the ends of your kayak. (<https://www.rei.com/product/114730/sealline-bulkhead-tapered-dry-bag-20-liters>)
 - Bigger items could be disassembled for easier loading and placement, ex. Pack the tent poles separate from the rest of the tent. These fit particularly well alongside a skeg box into the back of the kayak.
 - Avoid loading too much (anything) on top of the deck as that makes the boat top heavy and susceptible to side winds
- Waterproof or not
 - Anything you want to stay dry should be in a waterproof bag (assume your hatches will leak)
 - If you bring a tarp, it could be placed on the bottom of the storage compartment; if the hatch leaks, the tarp can get wet and it gives a little extra height to keep other stuff (sort-of) dry
 - Speaking of tarps – don't forget ropes to hang the tarp and use as a clothes line
- On the water access
 - Make sure your rescue gear is accessible in the event of a capsize (paddle float; pump, etc.)
 - Make sure you pack water and it is accessible throughout the paddle (Stay hydrated!)
 - It is also helpful to stow a food bar or other snack in your PFD pocket or day hatch for easy access on the water
- First night in a hotel (before kayaking the next morning)

- Pack an overnight bag with everything you will need for the night and next morning (toiletries, change of clothes, wallet, etc.)
- If the overnight bag items are not needed for the kayak/camping portion of the trip, the bag can be left in the car.
- Pack this overnight bag into the car LAST so it is easily accessible at the hotel without having to unpack the rest of the car or your gear
- Trip home
 - Pack a set of dry clothes for the trip home; you can put these on after loading the boats and gear for the drive home (your carpool partners will appreciate this)
 - This extra set of clothes can be left in the car during the trip, possible part of your first night overnight bag
- Misc.
 - Pack extra batteries (for VHF radios; flashlights; etc.)
 - Bring cash in the event restaurants may not accept credit cards (during the drive to and from)
 - There is VERY limited cell phone reception on the islands; consider turning off your cell phone to save the batteries for emergencies and the trip home. If you use an app on your cellphone to track your paddle outing, it will likely still work in Airplane Mode, and greatly extend your battery life.