

Skills

There are risks associated with Sea kayaking. The best way to learn good paddling skills is in a “controlled” setting such as a class. Good judgment and common sense are also essential for safe paddling, **it is always safer to paddle with a partner or a group**. The following are general guidelines:

For Sheltered Water Paddling:

- Previous basic instruction
- Ability to perform basic strokes with reasonably good boat control
- Working knowledge of assisted rescues

For Exposed Water Paddling:

THE ABOVE SKILLS PLUS:

- Ability to paddle comfortably in any direction with 2-3 foot chop and brisk wind
- Knowledge of local tidal currents, wind and weather conditions
- Ability to hold a course during a crossing, even against wind and current, including use of ranges and/or a compass
- Ability to paddle several miles without becoming totally exhausted
- Knowledge of the “Rules of the Road” for safe passage in shipping lanes and boat traffic
- Competent self-rescue skills in rough water

San Francisco Bay Area Sea Kayakers

BASK is a recreational club dedicated to the safe enjoyment of the sport of sea kayaking. Whether your idea is an easy bay paddle, an adventure playing under the Golden Gate Bridge on a big ebb tide, birding from your boat, or exploring the California coast, you’ll find willing partners among the BASK membership.

BASK has published this brochure in response to concern for the ever increasing numbers of novice kayakers, as well as for visiting paddlers requiring knowledge of our unique environment. Besides, some of us can remember back to the days when we were “paddling out there without a clue”. A pamphlet like this would have been very helpful. This is only a brief survey of considerations and concerns and is not intended to cover all aspects of Bay Area sea kayaking.

For information on a variety of Sea Kayaking topics including:

- Safety issues
- Environmental /wildlife issues
- Kayaking in the San Francisco Bay area
- Membership in BASK

visit our website at: www.BASK.org



Welcome
to
San Francisco
Bay Area
Sea Kayaking



Important Considerations Before Launching

Hypothermia

Cold water can kill you in as little as 30 minutes. Water in the SF Bay area varies from 45° - 60° F. Kayaking is a water sport, dress for the water temperature – not just the air temperature.

Wear a wet suit year round!

Tides & Currents

The dominant SF Bay currents are tide generated. At several locations in the Bay, currents can get as high as six knots during extreme tides. As a recreational kayaker you paddle about three knots per hour – four if terrified or racing. Use caution when paddling in strong current. You could lose control of your boat and get sucked out the Golden Gate. Learn to read tide tables and find out about local conditions! You'll enjoy yourself more if you are prepared.

Equipment

Prepare appropriately for your adventure. Know what equipment you'll need, especially safety equipment, and make sure everything is in working order prior to launching. **The Coast Guard requires all boaters to carry lifejackets.** Get a comfortable one and wear it!



Photo courtesy of the Marine Mammal Center

Wind & Weather

Our SF Bay Area weather is famous for changing quickly. Some areas within the bay have gusty winds when the rest of the bay is blessed with moderate breezes. Wind funneling through the Golden Gate opposing an ebb tide creates steep, chaotic standing waves that require advanced paddling skills. Long fetches on windy days create rough conditions that have caused many deaths among boaters.

In the summer, fog banks roar through the Golden Gate spreading over large areas fast – faster than you can paddle. Use weather reports and local information prior to launching to determine the probable conditions in the areas you intend to kayak. Conditions vary around the Bay and can change suddenly, so be prepared.

Wildlife

The Bay Area includes several **National Parks**, numerous **State and County Parks** and **wildlife preserves**. Many animals and birds are protected – it is against the law to disturb them. Ask park rangers how to avoid disturbing local flora and fauna. And please, remember to leave nature as you found it, dispose of personal waste and garbage appropriately. Be conscientious – there are many more and more of us sharing the same space – let's keep it unspoiled

Ship Traffic

San Francisco Bay is one of the busiest ports in the world.

- Ships cannot maneuver easily and have no chance to avoid you, assuming they can even see you.
- The average paddler, moving about 3 knots has no chance of outrunning a ship traveling at up to 15 knots.
- Prior to launching, find out where the shipping lanes are and stay out of them. Use extreme caution when a crossing is necessary.
- Watch out for ferry boats, which can travel up to 26 knots, as well as pleasure boats.
- All these vessels leave large wakes and they may not notice kayakers.