A life jacket should be worn at all times. It is extremely difficult to put on a life jacket in the water. When you need it, you need it on.

If you do not know how to use any of the following equipment, get instruction—before you set out.

- Kayak appropriate for conditions, with flotation bag or bulkheads  
- Clothing appropriate for conditions, with extra layers  
- Because of Maine’s cold water temperatures, a shortie wetsuit is recommended even in the warmest months  
- Life jacket/personal flotation device (PFD) with whistle  
- Emergency strobe light and signal mirror attached  
- Spray skirt  
- Paddle  
- Spare paddle  
- Paddle float  
- Bilge pump or bailer  
- Food and water  
- Sun hat  
- Sunglasses and safety strap  
- Rain gear and hat  
- Dry bags  
- Flares  
- Foghorn  
- VHF marine radio  
- Weather radio  
- Flash light/headlamp  
- First aid kit  
- Kayak repair kit  
- Multifunction repair tool  
- Local charts  
- Deck compass  
- Card compass and parallel rules  
- Tide charts  
- Opt: Vacuum bottle (hot drink)

Gear List

Wear your Life Jacket!

The Coast Guard encourages citizens to participate in the national effort to protect our shores. Those who use our coasts can be valuable contributors to the protection of our nation. You know what is or is not ordinary activity on our shores. By reporting suspicious maritime activity, you will play a vital role in ensuring the safety and prosperity of our country. Please report any unusual or suspicious activity to your local Coast Guard unit or to toll free 1-866-455-8238.
Checklist for Sea Kayak Safety

Kayaking is an enjoyable sport with inherent dangers. Use this list to plan a trip and manage risk. Remember that no list can keep you safe. You must be familiar with and practice safety and rescue techniques. Guides, instructors, and clubs can provide this training. (See back panels for contact information).

Before You Leave the House

- Plan a route appropriate for the experience level of your group; use navigational charts; identify possible danger zones; and emergency evacuation options.
- Find out what land, if any, is open to the public. (See Kayaking the Maine Coast, which lists these public areas as well as wilderness areas closed to visitors, or contact the Maine Island Trail Association or the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands.)
- In cold-water climates, dress for water temperature rather than air temperature; consider wearing wet suit or dry suit.
- Know your group’s medical needs, abilities, and expectations.
- Agree on your group’s method for making decisions.
- Write down emergency phone numbers and VHF radio channels.
- Coast Guard emergency info: VHF Radio (CG monitors Channel 16); Cell phone (*CG works in some areas).
- Listen to the local marine forecast and note paddling conditions such as water temperature, wind, tide range and currents.

- Review Leave No Trace policies. (See LNT on reverse.)
- Complete a float plan. (See plan on reverse.)

Before You Launch

- All group members should gather near the launch site and review these questions together (avoid tying up the ramp):
  - Basic packing: Does everyone know the intended route, break locations, emergency bailouts, campsites, distance to be covered, contingency plans, and safety and navigation?
  - Leadership and decision-making: Is someone in charge in case of danger? Who will make decisions about course changes?
  - Safety: Does everyone know about staying together, how to communicate with others on the water, what to do if someone capsizes?
  - Procedures: Do trip members know how to avoid getting lost or separated?
- Assure that everyone is familiar with the local tides and how they will affect conditions, and what to do if someone else gets lost or separated?
- Outfitting: Is each kayak equipped with standard safety gear? (See Gear List, on back of brochure.)
- Visibility: Are search and rescue vessels close enough to see you? Stay out of well traveled areas, keep your group tight. Use brightly colored boats and life jackets, and wave your paddles in the air to increase visibility.
- Communication: Use a VHF radio, a handheld marine radio, or a whistle to communicate with other vessels.
- Navigation: Use a chart, compass, and other navigation tools to predict danger areas and keep track of your course. (See Resource on reverse.)
- Group ability: Paddle only to the ability of your slowest member, if necessary, change your course.
- Weather: Because weather can change quickly, watch for incoming storms, changes in weather patterns, and cloud formations.
- Ocean conditions: Keep track of wind-driven waves, rebounding and/or refracting waves, tidal currents, and the effects of sea bottom on the surface.
- Hydration: To avoid dehydration, drink enough fluids: plan on at least three quarts for a full-day trip.
- The elements: Protect yourself from the sun, cold, and the water.
- Medical needs: Remain attentive to any medical issues that might arise on the water (nausea, hypothermia, blisters, sunburn, heat exhaustion, and so on).
- Shoreline: Most land on the coast is private. Land only on public property or where you have permission.
- Leave No Trace Always.

Leave No Trace on Maine's Islands

The ideal guests in the wilderness leave no trace of their passage.

- Plan ahead and prepare:
  - Know the island regulations and guidelines for the area you plan to visit (including capacity limits) and land only where you have permission.
  - Consider shoreline campgrounds and bivouacs overnight options.
  - Keep your group size as small as possible; six or fewer is ideal.
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces:
  - Travel on sand, stone, resilient grass and established trails.
  - Locate tents on the beach, on granite, or in the intertidal zone.
  - Camp only in established campsites. If the campsites are already in use, squeeze into an existing site or bivouac on smooth granite, sand, or gravel.
  - Limit your stay to two nights. Natural is the site where you leave.
  - Do not cut or clear vegetation, dead or alive, for any purpose.
- Dispose of waste properly:
  - Carry all solid human waste and toilet paper to the mainland and for proper disposal. (See www.mita.org for carry-off techniques and pump out stations.)
  - Carry all trash—your own and any that you find.
- Leave what you find:
  - Preserve archaeological sites.
  - Avoid campsite alterations.
  - Leave flowers, plants and other natural objects where you found them.
- Minimize campfire impacts—kind no fires:
  - Fire is dangerous. MITA requests open fires.
  - Use a campfire below the high tide line.
  - The Maine Forest Service and MITA recommend that you carry a permit for campfires. (See Resource on reverse.)
  - If you must build a fire, use a campfire below the high tide line to prevent fires. Burn only driftwood and keep fires small and safe.
- Respect wildlife:
  - Enjoy wildlife from a distance; give wide berth to nesting seabirds, eagles, ospreys, rafting eiders, and seals.
  - Please leave pets at home.
- Be considerate of others:
  - Help protect the experience of all visitors by developing an ethic of sharing. Preserve the peace and quiet on the island.
  - Be considerate of others who live and work in the area.

For more information about low-impact practices, contact the Maine Island Trail Association.

Sea Kayaking Float Plan

The ideal guests in the wilderness leave no trace of their passage.

- Copy and complete this float plan and give a copy to a trustworthy individual. Place a second copy on the dashboard of the vehicle you leave at the launch site. File a plan for every trip, no matter the length.

- What happens if you don’t return from a day trip or overnight trip within a reasonable period? Nothing, unless you let someone know the details of your trip and tell that person how to assure help.

- Name, age, paddling experience (beginner, intermediate, advanced), type and color of kayak, color of life jacket, and pertinent medical information for each person in your group:
  - ____________________________
  - ____________________________
  - ____________________________
  - ____________________________

- Emergency contacts:
  - ____________________________
  - ____________________________
  - ____________________________

- Launch time and location:
  - ____________________________

- Take out time and location with latest expected return date:
  - ____________________________

- Intended route:
  - ____________________________

- Safety equipment you have with you (include tent color and style): ____________________________

- Safety on islands:
  - ____________________________

- Plan of action if not back by latest expected return date:
  - ____________________________

- Vehicle type:
  - ____________________________

- License Plate:
  - ____________________________

- Location:
  - ____________________________

- Print a full-size copy from www.MaineKayakGuides.com