

How to choose your ideal kayak



This is a question that can be answered in so many ways, depending on personality, paddling experience, technical understanding of kayak hull design, construction materials and industry expertise. From my experience, the approach on getting out there with the most suitable craft for your personalised needs to enjoy your time on the water is based on making an informed choice. So I hope the following helps.

We are so lucky to have so many kayak options, paddling styles and locations to relax, test our skills, enjoy time exercising, fishing or having fun with family, friends and pets.

You may like to paddle recreationally down your local creek and drop in the crab pots, ride waves in the ocean, go fishing in the dam, get the heart pumping shooting down rapids, paddle along the coast, launch off a remote bank to chase bass or just getting out on the water to take some photos. Whatever your kayak passion, it is important that the craft is matched to your requirements.

When the kayak is selected correctly it will enable you to enjoy the great outdoors, time and time again. There are many great products and brands on the market. So, let's break it down into 5 simple steps to assist you with your choice of kayak.

Where do you want to paddle? What type of paddling do you wish to do? What are your physical requirements? What storage and transport options do you have or need? What accessories do you require to make sure your kayaking experience is as enjoyable and safe as possible?

Step 1: Where do you want to paddle?

In selecting a kayak, it is important to go for a make and model that matches the location and type of water course you will paddle most times. Yes, there are kayaks available that are all-rounders but you `do not` want to try a white-water rapid in your new fibreglass ocean fisher!

Do you mainly wish to paddle flatwater, tidal flats, rivers, dams, creeks, white-water or in the ocean? Think about the type of waterway and location types you wish to explore and this will be the first step in selecting your type of new kayak.

Step 2: What type of paddling do you wish to do?

The next step is to select the type of paddling you will be focused on. You might be training for a race and therefore need a fast, sleek fitness training Ski. You may want to paddle in flatwater with the dog and take photos? You might want a small lightweight craft to launch down the bank in remote locations. You may need a kayak that is comfortable to paddle distance and can carry your camping gear. Your kayak may be for Sunday morning exercise. You may want to trek into remote locations and inflate your kayak. You may have a desire to fish in tournaments and therefore require a kayak with plenty of mounting and storage options. Or you may wish to peddle your kayak. Do you want the option of mounting an electric motor? Or outboard motor? *Thinking about your paddling type is a critical factor in kayak selection.*

Step 3: What are your physical requirements?

Other key aspects to consider are your individual physical size, weight, height and fitness levels. What kayak weight are you comfortable in lifting? Kayaking should encourage physical activity and enjoyment. You need to ensure the craft is within your physical limits. You don't want a 30kg double kayak if you can only lift 15kg and want a single seater.

Step 4: What storage and transport options do you have or need?

Consider the storage and transport of your kayak. Do you have roof racks, trailer, trolley, ute for the transportation of your kayak? This is imperative to enable you to pick up your new kayak and enable you to get it to the launching site. What about at home? Is there room for your kayak to be securely stored when not in use. Can you mount kayak racks on the wall? Do you have a spot for a kayak sling? You want to make sure that your kayak is easy to access and load so when you decide to go it is easy to load, transport and launch. If this is appropriately established, you get to maximise your time on the water and not waste your time with the logistics. Good quality tie down straps are also required to secure your load for transport. There are lockable and non-lockable available. Please do not use straps that can be overtightened and cause damage to your kayak. Also, think of your kayak if left on the roof of your car in summer, make sure you unscrew the bung to release the heat and pressure.

Step 5: What accessories do you require?

Now you have selected your ideal kayak what accessories do you need? If you are paddling in flat water on a sit on top recreational kayak you may only need your water bottle. But if you are going out to chase Mackerel or Tuna in your ocean fisher you will need, fishing gear and safety equipment. If you are touring overnight you will need your camping gear, food and water. Carefully select your accessories for your specific kayak needs. Don't take anything you don't need. Other accessories include water proof case for your mobile phone, dry bags to keep your belongings secure and dry, paddle floats, helmets, booties, gloves, anchor, manual bilge pump, sounder, camera mounts, rod holders, batteries for electronics or electric motor, hand held radio and maybe a EPIRB. These are only an example as there are plenty more products.



Upgrade options from standard accessories are also key features to improve your comfort whilst paddling. These include deluxe seat with additional support, high quality paddle (lighter, stronger) and properly fitted PFD (life jacket). If your life jacket rides up under your chin it is either the wrong PFD for your body shape and size or is not fitted correctly. Personnel comfort will only enable you to spend longer on the water and enjoy your kayak a little more.

Quick - `Ideal Kayak` Checklist: This checklist is only a guide and all aspects can be easily processed with consultation with a specialised kayak professional. Let them take the hard work out of it for you. More time for you on the water.

1. Where am, I going to paddle?
2. What type of paddler am I?
3. My physical requirements are?
4. Do I have transport and storage?
5. Do I need any accessories?

Most importantly of all is safety on the water. So, ensure all your kayaking equipment is in good working order, your PFD is adjusted correctly, you have comfortable sun protective clothing, suitable lighting if required, water and have checked the local water levels, weather and tide conditions.

Do your research, invest wisely in quality products and seek professional advice in selecting your ideal Kayak!

What are you waiting for? Get out there and enjoy the fun and friendship of kayaking.

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