



paddle perfect

Aquatic Adventures in a Kayak

The world is experiencing a renaissance in appreciating the outdoors. If you are looking to get away from the crowds, see a familiar place through new eyes, and get closer to wildlife, kayaking is just the ticket. Not only is kayaking a watersport with many health benefits, but it is an easy one to start. Ready, set, paddle!

Health Benefits.

To improve or maintain your fitness, it is important to be active; however, as we age or experience injury, many of us seek low-impact exercise. Kayaking is an ideal solution for cardiovascular exercise with low impact to sensitive joints such as knees and hips. Plus, paddling a kayak is an excellent way to gain upper body and core strength.

Being on the water, away from the busyness of everyday life and closer to nature, is a stress reliever. Find your zen with flatwater kayaking, which you can do on lakes, rivers, and the sea. This type of kayaking can be meditative as you listen to the paddle strokes coupled with the songs of local birds. If you are more adventurous and your skills are honed, you may opt for a rushing river or an open-water sea kayaking experience, both of which can be exhilarating. Regardless of what type of kayaking you select, make sure you are a competent swimmer. Not all, but most kayak trips include at least one spill. For safety, many recreation areas require every kayaker and boater to wear personal floatation devices (PFD).

Best Basics.

Although you can watch how-to videos, nothing beats learning by holding a paddle in your hand. Learning to kayak is easy, but best done in person. If you don't know a family member or friend who can show you the ropes, learn the basics by renting a kayak from an outfitter. Your rental or tour may include a lesson or a guide who can give you pointers along the way. Another popular way to acquire skills is to join a local club. You can learn the basics with another paddler in a tandem kayak or jump right in with a solo kayak.

The Right Types.

In either case, you will be trying different models of kayaks depending on your skill and the water source. Some river and sea kayaks are built for the paddler to sit inside. To prevent water from coming into the kayak, a skirt is placed around the paddler to seal the cockpit. If you are claustrophobic, opt for the sit-on-top kayaks, which are popular for rentals and ideal for daytrips and beaching. All types come in solo and tandem models. Your ideal purchase should depend on two things: if you will be going alone or with another paddler and the weight of the kayak. Solo versions are lighter and easier to transport and store than tandems.

Extra Gear.

For transport, you will need a vehicle roof rack. Visit a local outdoor recreation store for helpful tips, as there are many brands and price ranges to choose from. Other gear will prepare you for the inevitable capsizing occurrence. This means you will want to purchase a life vest, water shoes, and a waterproof drysack for valuables. Water and snacks are key to enjoying any adventure. Flatwater kayaking or beaching the kayak can make for a great picnic experience.

It's time to explore the outdoors via kayak. Whether you choose a scenic water trip close to home or somewhere new, enjoy the journey one paddle stroke at a time.

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Where to Go for What.

Flatwater River Kayaking:

Crystal River, Florida
Wailua River, Kauai, Hawaii

Flatwater Lake Kayaking:

Lake Tahoe, California/Nevada
Pitt Lake, Grants Narrows Regional Park, British Columbia

Sea Kayaking:

Strait of Georgia, British Columbia
Everglades National Park, Florida

How to Store Your Kayak.

Storage can be tricky when it comes to outdoor recreational gear. Before you purchase your own kayak, consider these three popular methods for stowing it.

Rental Rack: If you are a member of a kayak or canoe club, you may have the option to rent space on the group's rack.

Home Rack: Keeping your kayak at home is convenient and safe. Purchase or build a simple ceiling mount to keep your kayak out of the way in your garage or add a weather-resistant rack made of wood or plastic in an outdoor space.

Vehicle Rack: If you kayak regularly but don't have a club near you for regular rack access, this is an excellent seasonal option. Use a durable roof rack, lock, and straps to keep the kayak secure.