

Topic:

Buying a Kayak

QC-1702

Resource:

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Basics: There are a myriad of boat designs available to the paddler with more being offered each day. It becomes increasingly confusing and difficult to make a choice, especially for that first boat. Cost is always a consideration, but on the other hand, there are important tradeoffs when investing in a cheaper boat and gear. How can we make a decision? What issues are important to consider?

Question: *What are some safety features to look for in a kayak?*

Answer: No one plans to capsize, but if you do, you want your boat to offer you support until you are rescued. Will your boat float if overturned? Bulkheads fore and aft with hatch covers offer positive flotation. Does it have lifeline around the perimeter to hold onto so you don't lose the boat in wind? A boat that has no lifelines and no bulkheads is potentially a dangerous investment. Consider where you can mount a deck compass to help find your way home.

Question: *What are some convenience features to look for in a kayak?*

Answer: There is typically an inverse relationship between weight and cost. A boat that is easy to carry and load is usually going to cost you more. Rudders cost extra, but a trained paddler is usually better off with a skeg. A big high-backed seat may look comfortable, but it actually makes rescues harder and inhibits torso rotation which is essential to efficient paddling. A day hatch is a nice feature for quick access items but may make self-rescue more difficult.

Advanced Concepts: You may want to get more information on the following:

- What is the relation between boat length and maximum speed?
- How easy is it build your own boat? ...modify an existing boat?
- Should a boat fit tightly to my waist? ...cramp my feet? ...feel tippy?
- What boat features are important in wind?

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