

TSCC Guidelines for Trip Participation

Introduction

Sea kayaking is a great sport to be involved in; it can produce joy, fitness, mental stimulation, self-reliance, an appreciation and first-hand experience of nature and wilderness, and of spiritual peace.

However, our paddling involves an element of risk that in a worst-case scenario may be life threatening. Having suitable gear, a good level of skills, building a wide paddling experience and displaying a positive mental attitude will greatly enhance your enjoyment of and safety in the sport.

Experienced sea kayakers will always have a personal view on the value of a particular piece of equipment, a particular kayaking skill, or some aspect of the way a trip should be undertaken. The value of being in our club is that you are able to gain valuable knowledge from other members, as well as contributing your own views and viewpoints. Given the common aim of paddling enjoyably within a group and minimising risk, yet also allowing sufficient freedom as a sense of adventure requires, experienced members of the Tasmanian Sea Canoeing Club have attempted to find common ground on what they view as the essential ingredients for participating in our trips.

- Becoming an effective sea kayaker requires commitment to developing the appropriate levels of fitness, skills and equipment for the level at which you participate.
- You have decided to paddle with the group. Act responsibly towards the group, keep its best interest in mind, and accept group decisions.
- In joining the TSCC you have accepted and should be aware of both the 'Club Philosophy', a copy of which was supplied with your membership application and is on the TSCC website, and the 'Disclaimer' risk warning which accompanies each TSCC programme.
- Consider what level of risk you are willing to take and what you can do to minimise or avoid that risk.
- Be able to accept responsibility for yourself and do not ultimately rely on the group to get you out of trouble.
- Have the equipment and level of preparation listed below and as covered by TSCC Basic Skills Training.
- Ensure that you are able to meet requirements for the proposed trip such as equipment, skill, stamina and paddling speed.
- If there are insufficient trips on the club program of the sort you like then discuss additional possibilities with TSCC members and then put your suggestions forward to the trip program coordinator or to the bi-monthly TSCC General Meeting.

Visitor Policy

The Club has a policy for visitors on Club trips and training. Members have some responsibilities if they wish to invite visitors on Club trips or training activities.

- Visitors will only be permitted on Club trips if agreed to by the Trip Coordinator.
- Visitors on Club trips will be by invitation only from a financial Club member.
- The Club member shall take responsibility for the visitor during the Club trip.
- The Club member shall ensure that the visitor meets the TSCC Guidelines for Trip Participants.
- Visitors will not be permitted to receive training on Club training days without prior approval of the training day coordinator.
- Visitors will not be permitted to provide training on Club training days unless approved by the TSCC committee.
- Visitors will be limited to participating in 3 Club trips.

- Family members under 18 year olds may participate in club activities if accompanied by an adult member who is responsible for them and if agreeable by the relevant trip coordinator.

Required Gear

- Buoyancy vest i.e. PFD (Personal Flotation Device) Type 2 or Type 3 that must be worn at all times on the water.
- Clothing that is comfortable, warm and safe to paddle in. Dress for immersion in the water and appropriately to the current water temperature. In winter and spring a 'Farmer John' style wetsuit or dry-suit is recommended. Essential items are a spray-proof jacket and appropriate footwear, such as wetsuit booties.
- Trip worthy kayak with all-round deck lines and bulkheads. Unused space taken up with enough flotation at both ends to ensure the kayak floats horizontally if the hull is punctured. On a longer trip this may be camping gear e.g. a sleeping bag or clothes bags sealed in plastic, empty plastic bottles or on a day trip with an emptier boat some inflatable devices such as a beach ball or swimming life-ring.
- Spray deck.
- Paddle
- Spare breakdown paddle that is accessible on deck.
- Equipment or skill to steer the kayak.
- A means of stabilizing the boat, such as a paddle float, for re-entry after capsize and a wet exit.
- Large sponge and a failsafe means of emptying large volumes of water out of the boat (hand pump and optionally electric or foot pump).
- Water and food accessible whilst on the water.
- Waterproof bag with a dry set of warm clothes and waterproof layer securely stored inside the kayak.
- Spare shoes. These are very important if you have to abandon your boat and walk out from a trip.
- Sun protection such as sunscreen, sunglasses and hat.
- Tow line that is immediately usable and can be quickly attached to another boat.
- Personal First Aid kit in a waterproof container.
- Additional food and drink, allowing some in excess of the trip requirements.
- Relevant map or maps for the trip, waterproofed by lamination or a plastic case.
- Compass.
- Basic repair kit appropriate to your boat and gear, at least a roll of duct tape, spare cord and a small knife. Longer trips might require a more comprehensive 'group repair kit' for fibre-glassing work.
- Torch with white light (preferably waterproof, such as a diver's torch) if you expect to paddle between sunset and sunrise when legally you must have one available. Additional lighting, such as bike lights, may be useful.
- Whistle, worn on PFD.
- Current weather forecast from Bureau of Meteorology.

Required boat handling and navigational skills

- Paddling forward in a straight line.
- Paddling backward in a straight line.

- Emergency stopping.
- Turning the boat within its own length using forward and reverse sweep strokes.
- Effective support (i.e. bracing) strokes.
- After Basic Skills training, continued paddling, application and development of skill levels in “real” sea kayaking environments, for example, paddling in waves and in significant sea swell (i.e. at least a metre), making exposed crossings into strong headwinds, making surf landings and departures.
- Know how to read your map and use your compass.

Required rescue skills

- Recovering unassisted from a capsize event and wet exit without going ashore.
- Assisting other kayakers to re-enter their boat after a wet exit.
- Experience of club rescue training sessions.

Personally assess your suitability for the proposed trip

- Clarify your own trip expectations.
- What are your current limitations, such as paddling speed, maximum time in boat without landing, paddling hours in boat per day, and the worst sea and wind conditions you are prepared to cope with?
- Check the proposed trip on a map and consider the likely hazards and extreme case scenarios for the trip.
- Have you been doing sufficient paddling recently to cope with the likely trip speed and distance?
- If necessary, discuss with the trip coordinator your experience and current skill, readiness of gear and current paddling fitness and preparedness against requirements for the proposed trip.

The role of the trip coordinator

- Trip coordinators are members volunteering their time to organise trips. They are people who have paddled with the Club, are known to at least some members of the Executive Committee, and are believed by them to be competent in organising the trip. However, they are not formally required to be in any way trained, certified, or qualified as kayakers or as trip coordinators by TSCC.
- They organise trip logistics and generally facilitate the trip.
- They are not responsible for your safety. This is individually the responsibility of each participant.
- They are not responsible for providing or carrying safety or first aid equipment for participants.
- They do not accept responsibility for accidents or damage to person or property as a result of a TSCC trip.
- The trip coordinator has the right to determine a range of trip variables including standard of participant experience, skills, fitness and trip paddling speed.

Booking with trip coordinator

- Contact the coordinator as early as possible in advance of the trip, certainly a minimum of two days before the trip.
- Confirm with coordinator that your expectations and their expectations are compatible with each other.
- If required, discuss your current level of experience, skill, gear and fitness with the coordinator and obtain confirmation that this appears sufficient for the proposed trip.
- Check food, drink, map and additional gear requirements.
- Inform the trip co-ordinator of anything that may limit your full participation in the proposed trip before commencement of the trip eg how much paddling you are doing,

any injuries/sickness etc from which you are recovering or pre-existing medical conditions/constraints.

- Confirm meeting time and place and transport arrangements.
- Confirm your contact details.
- Be prepared to accept the trip co-ordinator's assessment of your suitability for the trip and their judgement if they decline to accept your joining the trip on this occasion. They are fully entitled to make a personal judgement on this matter. There will always be alternative trips on which to increase your experience and fitness and to prove your capability. The trip will often be repeated in a later programme.

Immediately prior to departing from home

- Check your boat for trip readiness. Is that battery recharged, that rudder reliable?
- Are you in good enough physical condition to undertake the trip without strain?
- Check through a list of your gear (even if just mental checklist).
- Have it packed in waterproof bags ready to be packed into your kayak.
- Check the current weather forecast and assess whether the predicted conditions are still appropriate for your skills. Often you will be contacted by phone on the night previous to departure if there is doubt about the trip proceeding due to poor weather conditions.
- Let someone close to you know what you are doing and provide an expected return time and contact phone number to be rung in the event of your return being overdue. Return from a trip may be overdue by several hours. This should generally not be a reason for alarm. Contact numbers are provided on this website in case the club needs to be alerted. Alternatively, Police Search and Rescue have experience of most emergency situations a club trip may encounter and should be contacted directly.
- Allow plenty of time to get to the meeting time and place.

Pre-launch meeting

- You are expected to have previously booked for the trip with its coordinator.
- Turn up on time.
- Recheck gear for yourself and possibly for the trip coordinator.
- Your inclusion on a trip may be declined at the launching site by the trip coordinator if your gear is inadequate for the trip.
- Dress in such a way that your body and mind will remain functional for 15 minutes of full body immersion.
- Be aware of and have input into any group decisions and be clear about the trip coordinator's plan for the trip. This may involve staying together or being in groups for parts of the trip, regrouping plans, rest or lunch stops, emergency plans, expected trip speed, and expected time between landings.
- Be sure about the trip plan, understanding its geography, risks and safety options.
- Be aware of foreseeable hazards, such as exposed crossings, currents, reefs, surf or busy boat channels.
- Express now any concerns you have about the trip plan.
- Be aware of who is carrying any group emergency gear.
- Assess possible weak points of the group.

During the Trip

- Look after the safety, welfare and enjoyment of all members of the group, without jeopardising your own safety.
- Be familiar with and observe MISK (minimal impact sea kayaking) guidelines including minimal disturbance to wildlife. This may be found on the internet at www.parks.tas.gov.au/recreational/misk/.
- Stay within communication distance with the co-ordinator unless previously arranged otherwise.
- Maintain awareness of the location of every group member.

- If you are a beginning paddler or new to the club, maintain a position in the middle of the group. Ask a more experienced paddler to paddle closely to you if you feel nervous about handling the conditions you encounter.
- In larger groups, stay ahead of the 'sweep' (a paddler at the back of the group who makes sure nobody drops behind).
- When regrouping at rendezvous points, join the group so that everyone can comfortably make eye and voice contact with you.
- Be aware of changing weather and sea conditions
- Assist regrouping whenever indicated by the coordinator by other group members or by circumstances. Especially watch for a paddle held vertically which signals a request to meet around that paddler. This may be at the lee of a headland, because of a hazard ahead or in response to indications that a group member has a significant problem with gear or fitness.
- Communicate information about any significant problems that you are having. Ask for assistance if you require it.
- You have chosen to be with a group. The rate of travel is that of the slowest paddler though slower paddlers need to work at keeping up.
- Never leave a group without informing the coordinator.
- Do not encourage any paddler into actions beyond their abilities.

Post-trip Discussion

- Participate honestly and constructively in post-trip discussion and debriefing. We can all learn from each other's observations and experiences, from mistakes and misjudgements evident on the trip, and from what individuals particularly enjoyed and appreciated about the trip.
- Discussion helps build trust, good practice, better trips and a strong club. A visit to a pub or bakery on the way home is also a great stimulus to this.
- We get out of the club in proportion to what we put in.