



MUSKOKA • ALGONQUIN PARK • HALIBURTON

Kayaking Safety

Kayaking can be a safe and enjoyable activity on the water. I often tell people that a canoe is the mule, great for carrying your gear and portaging over land. While a kayak is the cheetah, the fastest thing on the water. Like any activity a little formal training can go a long way with increasing your enjoyment.

Instruction

AO Boatwerks offers on the water instruction in recreational, touring and even whitewater kayaking. To book one of our scheduled classes or have arrange a private lesson all you have to do is call them at 1-866-kayaks-0 or visit their website www.boatwerks.net

Where your Life Jacket!

I say this over and over again, it is important to wear your Life Jacket. By law you are required to have one flotation device for each person but they really do little good if you do not have them on. Each year here in Muskoka we hear the tragic news of someone who had died just because they didn't have their Life Jacket on. They cost as little as \$30 to \$50 and they can save your life.

Where Appropriate Clothing

With nearly 90% of all boating accidents contributed to the lack of proper clothing this is one area that you can easily make sure you do it right. From sun hats, and sun screen on bright sunny days to rain jackets and proper layering on not so good days to even full dry suits when the water is cold in the spring or even early summer. Remember in most areas early in the summer all that high water is caused by melting snow and ice leaving the water very cold.

Understand your abilities

Every paddler is different and what one paddler is able to accomplish can be different than others. Paddle within your ability and only push your envelope when others are around to lend a hand if you get into trouble. Improve your ability with some on the water instruction.

Know the weather

Always check the weather condition before heading out onto the water. It doesn't matter if your just going out for the afternoon on one of the Muskoka lakes or if you heading out on a 2 week canoe trip, checking the weather before hand and being able to read the weather patterns while your out on the water is critical to safe travel. Often winds are the most dangerous weather to look out for.

Know your route

Believe it or not I have come across countless paddlers who are helplessly lost in Algonquin Park just because they neglected to pack a map or saved themselves the \$5 for an Algonquin Park map by printing one on their ink jet printer that has now gotten wet and unreadable. Know where your going and where you've come from. Look back often so you know landmarks on your return trip and always let others know when to expect you back.

Here is a summary of what you are required to have by law in any canoe or kayak less than 6m (19'8") in length.

Canadian Boating Safety Gear

- One (1) Canadian-approved personal flotation device or life jacket of appropriate size for each person on board**
- One (1) buoyant heaving line no less than 15 m (49'3") in length**
- One (1) manual propelling device (paddle or hand powered crank-drive propeller OR an anchor with no less than 15 m (49'3") of cable, rope or chain in any combination**
- One (1) bailer OR One (1) manual water pump fitted with or accompanied by sufficient hose to enable a person using the pump to discharge water from the bilge of the vessel over the side of the vessel**
- A sound signalling device (bead-less whistle) or a sound-signalling appliance**
- Navigation lights that meet the applicable standards set out in the Collision Regulations if the pleasure craft is operated after sunset and before sunrise or in periods of restricted visibility**

Extra suggested gear

- Kayak Skirt** (to keep water out while you paddle, making your kayak safer, you should also look into a short lesson on wet exits to practice proper ways to get out of your kayak with a skirt on. You don't have to know how to roll but you should know how to exit.
- Cockpit Cover** - to keep water and critters out of your kayak when your not paddling
- Bilge Pump** - a good one will make getting water out of the cockpit of your kayak much quicker and easier, a must for kayak touring
- An extra throw-line** (for emergencies)
- Attach a whistle** to your Life Jacket so you can locate it easily
- A **first aid kit** in a water tight case that will float
- Ductape** can be your best friend as temporary repair material for canoe or paddles
- Change of cloths** in a dry bag in case you get wet