

## Safe sea kayaking



### Group paddling responsibilities

- Maximise your safety and enjoyment by paddling in a group; suggested minimum size of four kayakers.
- Stay together by paddling at the pace of the slowest paddler.
- Stay within communicable distance of your pod members.
- Look out for the other paddlers in the group.
- Learn how to communicate with paddle signals.

### Make sure you are visible

- As sea kayakers are low in the water, other boats may not see you. Obey the laws of the sea, be vigilant about your route, avoid shipping and boating lanes. Choose a PFD with reflective tape and wear bright coloured clothing.
- At night you must carry a white light easily visible to approaching vessels.
- Add reflective tape to your kayak and paddle.
- Fluoro paint your paddle blades.

### Learning more

- Join the VSKC to learn from experienced paddlers [victorianseakayak.club](http://victorianseakayak.club)
- Contact kayaking business operators offering trips and instruction.
- For further boating safety information, visit [transportsafety.vic.gov.au/msv](http://transportsafety.vic.gov.au/msv) or call 1800 223 022.



### Pre trip checklist

- ✓ Plan your trip – let someone know before leaving and when your journey finishes (off the water)
- ✓ Check the latest wind and weather forecast for the area
- ✓ Make sure your skills and fitness are adequate
- ✓ Wear suitable clothing in the event of capsize — dress for immersion
- ✓ Ensure your kayak is seaworthy and safety equipment is carried
- ✓ Make sure your personal gear is adequate for the trip
- ✓ Establish group cohesion and pre-determined roles
- ✓ Learn about potential safety hazards in the area
- ✓ Know about rescue and safe haven options prior to launching



### Let someone know before you go

Always let someone (land support) know where you are going, your point of departure and when you plan to return. Include details such as points along the way, how many are in your party, boat colours and descriptions, communications equipment carried, car registrations, mobile phone and other contact details. If your plans change, let them know.

As soon as you are off the water, inform them of your safe return.



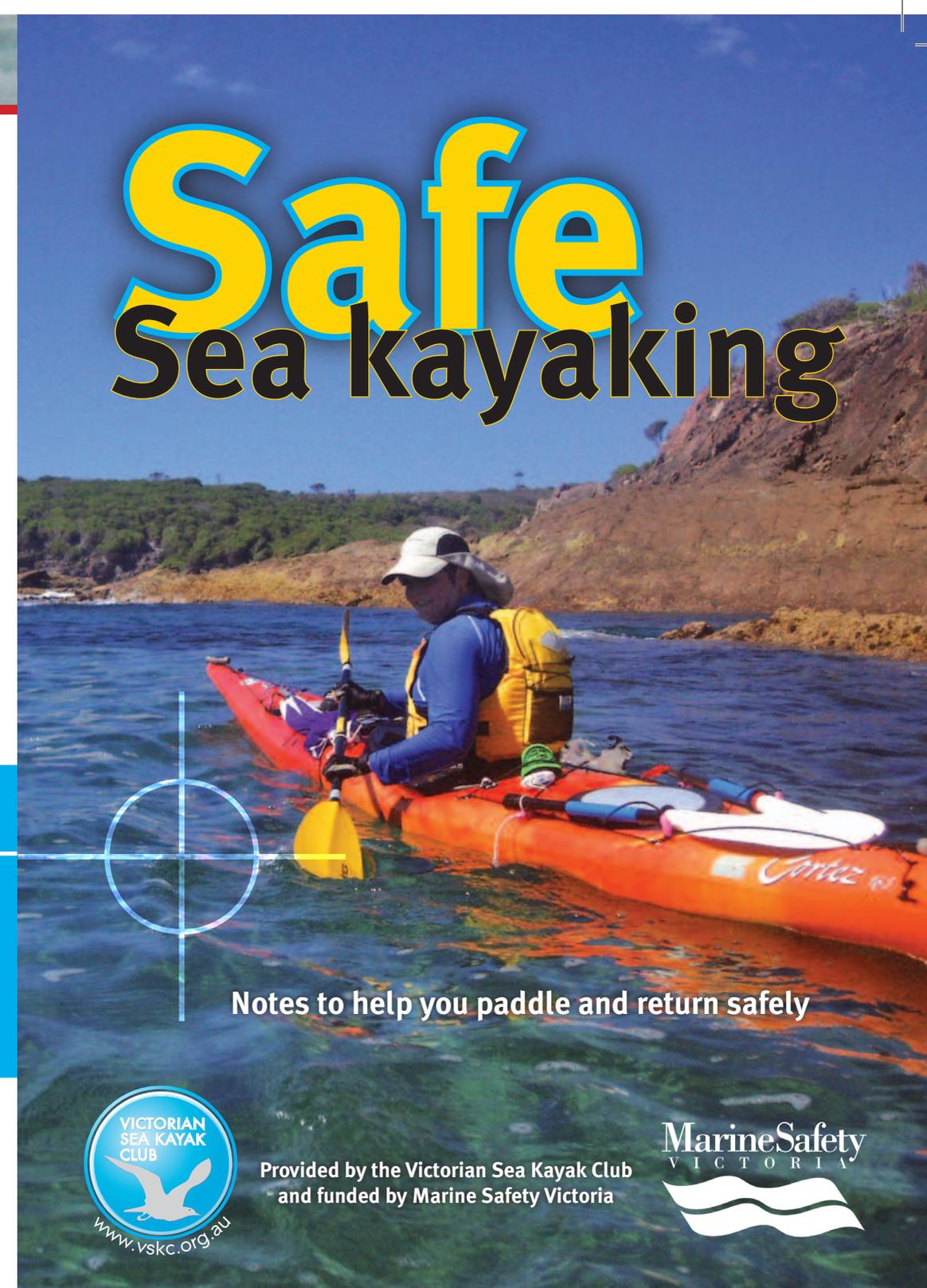
All information is current at the time of printing (February 2007) and is provided as a guide only by the Victorian Sea Kayak Club and Marine Safety Victoria. For full details refer to the Marine Act 1988 and the Marine Regulations 1999.



Provided by the Victorian Sea Kayak Club  
and funded by Marine Safety Victoria



# Safe Sea kayaking



# Safe sea kayaking



**DON'T LET YOUR JOURNEY START LIKE THIS ...**



**... AND END LIKE THIS**

Sea kayaking is a magnificent recreation that can take you to many wild and pristine places along our coast. However, paddling a small craft involves risks that may prevent return to shore.

Conditions change quickly at sea and your training and equipment are your greatest aids to survival. The following information will help you commit to learning how to avoid serious difficulties and enjoy the benefits and challenges of sea kayaking.

## Weather and water information

Your ability to understand and respond appropriately to weather is vital for safety and will influence your gear requirements, choice of clothing and route plans.

- **Wind:** slows paddling down and can exhaust you quickly. Learn about the dangers of cold fronts and offshore winds.
- **Waves:** can be large, unpredictable and cause capsize. Learn how they affect paddling, including the effect of wind against tide.
- **Tidal streams:** can be stronger than you can paddle against. Learn about where they occur, their potential risks and how to use them to advantage.
- **Surf:** launches and landings can cause serious injury and damage boats. Learn and practice surf skills in mild conditions first.
- **Cold water:** affects your ability to survive if capsized. Victorian winter waters can be below 10° Celsius. The effects of cold water immersion and hypothermia impact on your ability to think and act clearly. Wear a lifejacket and suitable warm clothing. Never wear cotton. Ensure that the outer layer of clothing is watertight. If you do fall out, hold onto your kayak for support until your breathing settles down.

Get the latest weather forecasts from the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) and learn to interpret them.

### Internet

Visit [www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au) for weather forecasts, marine forecasts, weather maps and links to tidal information.

### Telephone

For the latest forecasts and warnings dial **1196**, anywhere in Australia.

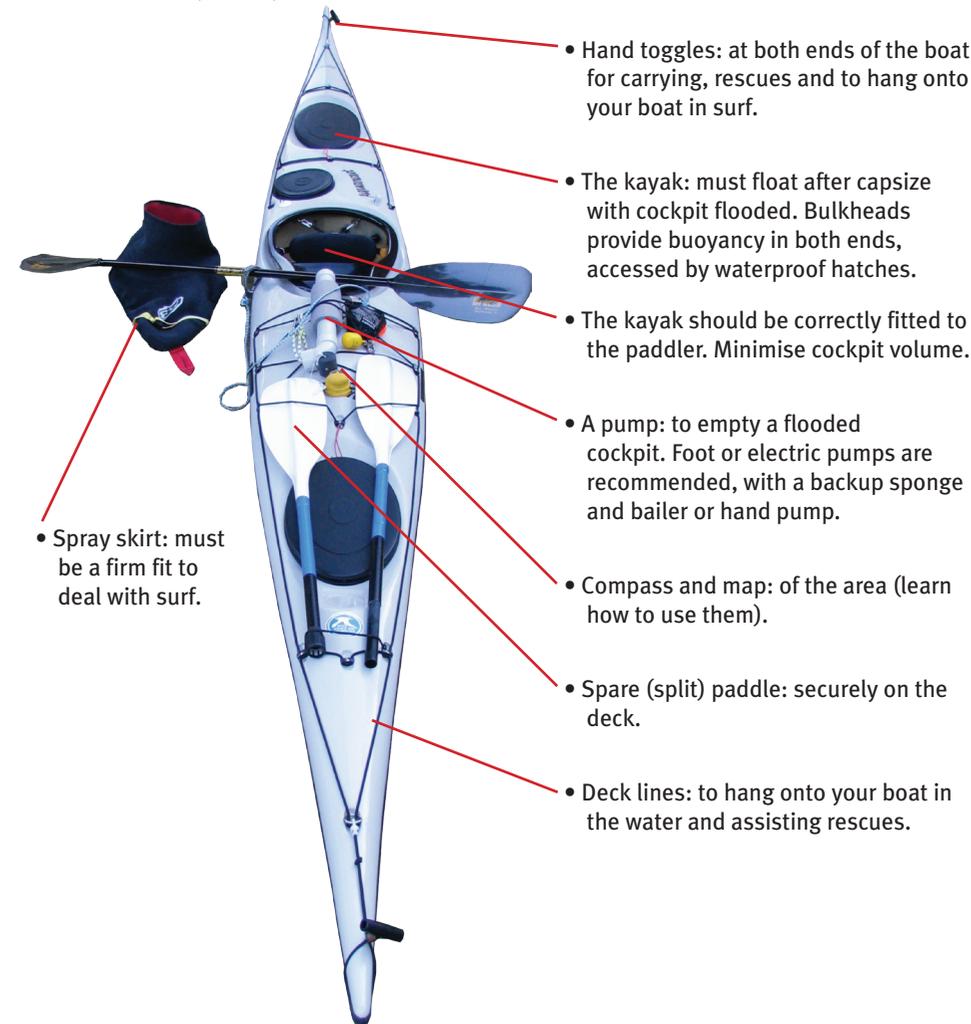
## Fitness

Fitness is critical for enjoyment and survival. If weather or sea conditions worsen, you may need energy in reserve to complete your journey. Be conservative in your plans until you have suitable fitness and experience.

## Choice of sea kayak

Choose a seaworthy craft suited to you and the conditions you are likely to experience and be aware of the limitations of the sea kayak you are paddling, tempered by the commitment you are willing to make to learn to be safe and proficient. Learn from kayak owners and retailers about the pros and cons and trial different boats.

## Seaworthy kayak



- Hand toggles: at both ends of the boat for carrying, rescues and to hang onto your boat in surf.
- The kayak: must float after capsize with cockpit flooded. Bulkheads provide buoyancy in both ends, accessed by waterproof hatches.
- The kayak should be correctly fitted to the paddler. Minimise cockpit volume.
- A pump: to empty a flooded cockpit. Foot or electric pumps are recommended, with a backup sponge and bailer or hand pump.
- Spray skirt: must be a firm fit to deal with surf.
- Compass and map: of the area (learn how to use them).
- Spare (split) paddle: securely on the deck.
- Deck lines: to hang onto your boat in the water and assisting rescues.

## Safety equipment for offshore paddling

- Ensure your kayak is equipped with the minimum requirements and recommended equipment in the tables below.
- First-aid kit — have the skills to use it.
- Water and food — accessible and extra for emergencies.
- Warm dry clothing in a dry bag.
- Repair kit suited to the boat and the trip.

## Capsize and self rescue

- To minimize capsize risk, learn support and bracing strokes.
- If you fall out, stay with the kayak. A kayak is a lot easier to spot than a swimmer.
- Learn the paddle float rescue, paddle float roll, or re-enter and roll.
- If overturned, the best self-rescue is the eskimo roll. Learn how to do this.



## Assisted rescue

- Carry a 15 metre tow rope and know when and when not to use it.
- Seek instruction on, then practice, the various methods of rescuing and being rescued. These are essential skills.

### Special equipment for travel offshore

Icon	Item	Quantity
	PFD (per person on board/towed)	Type 1, 2 or 3
	Waterproof bouyant torch	1
	Electric or manual bilge pumping system	1
	Bailer (as backup to electric or manual bilge pumping system)	1
	Hand held orange smoke signals	2
	Hand held red distress flares	2
	Compass	1
	Spare paddle	1
	Approved EPIRB	1

### Recommended

	A marine radio	1
	Red star parachute distress rocket	1
	Dye markers and V-sheets can help make you visible	1
	Satellite phones can be hired for remote area communications	1
	Carry a mobile phone, preferably CDMA network or similar in a waterproof container	1