Sea Kayak

Coastal Sea Kayak Award

Award Description

This award is designed to progress your ability in appropriate decision making and personal paddling skills for an enjoyable and safe day out on the sea.

Extended Award Description

Your Coastal Sea Kayak Award endorses your judgment, decision making and expertise and requires a good understanding of paddling on the sea. You should be confident planning and undertaking journeys on the sea in winds up to and including force 4 and/or tides up to 2 Knots, in a sea kayak or specific sit on tops in tidal or non-tidal environments. Your confidence should be based upon both proficiency in skills and a broad appreciation of surroundings and environmental context. Your award should be seen as a sound basis for independently building the experience and expertise we associate with Advanced Sea Kayak Award holders.

Award Content

1. Location

To have an enjoyable day out on the sea we need to make some key decisions to ensure we are in the right place at the right time.

Key factors influencing our decisions include swell, the weather, the tide and features of the location we choose. We can take each of these factors into consideration and ask ourselves some questions to ensure the correct decisions are made:

Factor: Waves

We may need to observe: How can we find out the sea conditions in the area we are travelling? How are the waves being generated?

Factor: Weather conditions

We may need to know: How will we find an accurate forecast? Which direction and how strong is the wind? Is it due to increase or decrease? Is it going to change direction? How will the forecast wind speed impact on the locations we can choose from? How might the profile of the coastline affect the forecast conditions?

Factor: The tide - In tidal environments, some locations are best when the tide is high or low and understanding this will give us a better and more enjoyable day on the sea.

We may need to know: What time is high water? What time is low water? What directions are the tides flowing? How will this impact on the locations that we can choose from? How can the tidal movements help us in our day?

Factor: Access and environment

We may need to determine: What restrictions might there be on the water we are paddling on? Is this a managed or supervised venue? How would we find this information? How can we reduce our impact on the environment and animals around us? Which areas have more potential dangers? How many access points are there in the area we are paddling? How might the coastline profile and conditions affect our decisions on where to launch and paddle?

2. Getting Ready

Before getting to the water we must choose suitable kit and equipment and have the correct knowledge to use it. Key points we may consider are:

What will we wear?

What are the clothing options available to us as sea kayakers? Why might we choose one over another? Are we confident in the use of our chosen personal safety equipment?

What will we use?

What are the different equipment and boat options available and why might we choose one over the other? What different features might we consider when choosing our craft? What features of our paddle might affect our choice?

What will we take?

What additional equipment might be useful to carry on the sea with us? What safety kit would it be useful to have with us or available on the shore? Do we have the equipment we will need to look after ourselves and help others during the trip? How will we store it to make sure it is accessible when needed? How will we deal with broken or lost equipment or carry out a simple repair? Can we access a VHF radio and GPS and are we confident in the use of these?

What plans will we make?

Are we able to make a navigational plan for our day journey using a map, chart and compass? How can we monitor times and distances to understand where specific access and landing points are throughout our day? How can we use our plan to follow the coastline and identify our location throughout the day?

3. At the Water

Before we set out on our journey we need to be confident in our ability to deal with the complications it might bring. The sea is usually a shared space; we must also be aware of other users and consider how we will safely get on the water.

Consideration: Other users - we sometimes launch and paddle in busy areas. We may need to share the water with swimmers other kayakers and anglers, amongst others. To do this safely, an 'etiquette' amongst these users has developed to minimise conflict and help everyone enjoy the environment. It is also important to know something about the others we are paddling with.

We may need to consider: Who else is in the area? What is the etiquette here? Who else is paddling with us? What is their current ability? Are we aware

of their motivations? What communication strategies can we agree upon to be used throughout the trip and in case of an incident?

Consideration: Safety and rescue

We may need to know: How can we protect ourselves and others from any potential hazards? What damage to our health might repeated immersion in cold water cause? How can we help prevent this becoming an issue? What would we do if someone we are paddling with gets really cold or overheats? What potential illness or injuries might we need to treat? How might we do this? What additional safety equipment might be useful to carry and have access to? How will we summon help if it is needed? Do we have the equipment we need to look after ourselves and help others during the trip? How will we ensure it is accessible when we need it?

Consideration: Getting to the water

We may need to determine: What are the different launch sites available to us? What are the advantages and disadvantages of these? Which launching sites are appropriate for our skill level and that of the others we are paddling with? How are we going to get to the access point and do we need to organise a shuttle? What is the best way to carry, load and secure our craft to protect ourselves or others from injury and prevent unnecessary damage? How will we get our craft and additional equipment to the water? Are the conditions and weather as expected? Do we need to adjust our plans?

4. Coastal Sea Kayak Skills

When sea kayaking we should be in control. Key features of being in control include us staying relaxed, using effective positioning and keeping our actions within our abilities.

Skill: Effective forward paddling

We may need to know: Using a paddle of your choice, understand the advantages and limitations. How can we use different parts of our body for an efficient forward paddling technique? How can we maintain our technique over

long periods? Which environmental conditions might have an effect on our forward paddling? How can we adapt our forward paddling technique for different conditions? How can we adapt our paddling style for continual and efficient forward paddling?

Skill: Negotiating confined spaces

We may need to know: How we are going to manoeuvre in the most effective and efficient manner, using conditions to aid our boat's movements? How does our boat design aid or hinder our ability to manoeuvre? What techniques and tactics can we use to get in and around rocks? Are we able to move forwards, backwards and hold our position to negotiate a confined space? How can we use our positioning in a confined space to ensure our safety and help others? Can we use different speeds and approaches to help our manoeuvring? How can we read the water to help our manoeuvring? Can we use timing and communication with others to help us?

Skill: Maintaining and changing direction

We may need to know: What techniques and tactics can we use to maintain our direction? What water features might we need to take into consideration when doing this? How can we use the water and environment to help us maintain or change direction? How can we use our edge and paddle position to help maintain direction?

Skill: Working as a group

We may need to know: How can we monitor and maintain our own well-being and performance and help other people to maintain theirs? How can we respond to this? Are we, and the people we are paddling with, coping with the conditions and expected future conditions? Are we attending to our needs and the needs of others we are paddling with? Are the methods of communication we set up working effectively?

Skill: Dealing with mishaps

We may need to know: How can we support ourselves on both sides when off balance? Can we roll in this environment (if paddling a closed cockpit sea kayak or using thigh straps). Can we perform a self-rescue? Can we remain with our craft and paddle in the event of capsize? What would we do if we, or somebody else, is separated from their craft? How would we safely get ourselves or others back into the craft? Can we help to rescue an injured fellow paddler? How would we deal with loose kit? How can we be proactive when being rescued or rescuing others? What strategies can we use to work with others to prevent or deal with incidents?

Skill: Towing

Considerations: What different tows can we use? What is the best use of a towing or anchoring technique in various situations? How can we release from a tow? What are the dangers with towing?

5. After the Sea Kayak Session

Every sea kayak trip is an opportunity for learning and improving. We can create a positive impact on our future experiences by performing a good post-trip assessment.

Look around: When we're back on the sea or on land we can look around. Has anything changed whilst we've been out? Are there any environment clues?

Watching what others do: It might be useful to spend some time watching any other paddlers. How are they using the environment to get the best from their boats? Do they seem to be paddling more effectively than we were? Can we see why?

Consider what you will take away: What have we learnt today? What can we focus on next time?

6. Future Development

Each day we spend sea kayaking further expands our skills and knowledge, creating a more enjoyable experience on the water. With no trip experiences ever the same, we never stop learning.

Continually evaluating the choices we make creates a natural evolution of decision making ability. When we reach a certain point in this, it may be worth considering moving onto the Advanced Sea Kayak Award.