



Great Lakes Sea Kayaking Association

Guidelines & Suggestions for Trip Organizers

GLSKA provides an opportunity for open water kayakers to share experiences, promote safe kayaking activities and enjoy the waters and coastal areas in an environmentally responsible manner.

The following information is provided to help make your trip as convenient, safe and enjoyable as possible.

A) *Before you go*

1. Ensure the planned trip is within your capabilities and that you have described the route and risks fully to the participants.
2. Develop a flexible trip plan containing the following:
 - Point and time of departure
 - Parking or vehicle supervision
 - Destination
 - Estimated time en route
 - Possible rest, lunch and comfort stops
 - Equipment and supplies needed
3. Pack a rescue/safety/comfort kit (possible list)
 - VHF marine radio
 - Cellular phone
 - GPS, compass or other navigation aids
 - Emergency contacts - Coast Guard, police number, hospital location
 - First aid kit
 - Signal devices - flares, sea dye, strobe light, mirror
 - Stove and/or fuel (some means of ignition), small pot and/or metal cups
 - Beverages (Water filter?)
 - Emergency shelter- nylon tent, tarp, space blanket
 - Rope or high strength cord and knife
 - Duct tape
 - Equipment repair kits
4. Leave a float plan with a responsible person with instructions on what to do if you do not return as planned. A float plan should contain at least names and phone numbers of everyone on the trip, medical information, destinations, estimated arrival times, and boat colours. You can expand on that if you feel it necessary. A GLSKA approved Float Plan is available from the GLSKA web site.
5. Advise participants about suitable personal items to pack. Such things as a hat, sunglasses, sun block, water bottle and suitable footwear in warm conditions and a wet/dry suit, boots, pogies and extra dry warm clothes in colder conditions will increase the comfort and safety levels. Participants should be advised to “dress for immersion”.
6. Ensure the skill level, physical condition and equipment of the participants are appropriate for the trip.
7. Ensure that all participants are either GLSKA members in good standing or guests as per the guest policy outlined in section H. If any guests are included in the group, ensure that they have signed and understood the GLSKA waiver form, in advance.

8. Have a safety and rescue plan including, but not necessarily limited to, what you will do in the event of:
 - Illness
 - Injury
 - Lost or damaged boat or equipment
 - Severe weather
9. Be prepared to submit an incident report in case of either personal injury, loss of or damage to equipment, or actions that created unnecessary risk to the group, which might have caused injury or damage (near-misses). See Section G for additional information.

B) *At the put-in.*

1. Check to make sure every participant has all legally required equipment (life jacket, sound device, bailer, throw rope, reboarding device, watertight flashlight, and navigation lights if applicable) and that gear is properly stowed.
2. Confirm suitability of weather conditions.
3. Review on-water communication signals with all participants.
4. Designate a leader and a sweep. Ensure that participants understand that they are not to paddle ahead of the leader; and that the leader and sweep know how to communicate with each other. If the conditions necessitate, utilize a buddy system; make sure that participants understand who they are buddied up with.
5. You should be able to do a self-rescue and be able to assist others.
6. Ensure that all equipment, food and safety items been packed and secured, and that participants are aware of their location.
7. Designate an on-water staging area for people to wait until everyone has launched.

C) *During the trip*

1. Maintain an appropriate pace for the slowest paddler and keep the group together.
2. Make whatever changes to the trip plan as may be necessary to ensure the safety and comfort of the group.
3. Keep an eye on the weather and water conditions. Be aware of your fellow paddlers. Has anyone become tired, frightened, or having problems controlling their boat?
4. Don't hesitate to terminate the trip or to exclude a paddler if personalities and conditions don't seem compatible.
5. Employ the concept that everyone has a veto. Should participants not want to put themselves into a situation – don't push them.
6. If conditions (including loss of daylight) are deteriorating, consider getting off the water to wait for an improvement.
7. At completion of the trip, check in with the person holding your Float Plan, to let them know that you have returned safely.

D) *Some suggested questions to ask potential participants when they call about your planned trip*

1. What sea kayaking experiences have you had?
2. How long have you been paddling?
3. Under what conditions?
4. Where?
5. Comfort or skill level?
6. Instruction or training?
7. What equipment do you have, boat type, flotation, deck rigging, rescue devices, pump, tow rope, navigation equipment, camping gear?

8. Do you have any allergies, or physical problems that might require special actions or treatments during the trip?
9. Have you been on previous GLSKA trips? What were the highlights and low points? Who were the organizers? Have you paddled with other GLSKA members?

Verify the information supplied by contacting any references given. For longer trips, you may want to demand that new members sign up for day trips or special new member trips in order to gain a reputation.

E) *What to do in the event of a capsize*

1. Quickly assess the situation. (Why did the capsize occur, is there any immediate danger?)
2. Give directions to the group. (Raft up or assist as required.)
3. You or another designated person should proceed with the necessary rescue procedure. It is imperative that you avoid an all in situation.
4. Get the victim and the group to safety and apply whatever treatment may be required (even if it is just a change of clothes and reassurance).
5. Determine whether the trip should continue or an alternative plan be implemented.

F) *Share your experience*

Other kayakers would love to hear about your trip. You are encouraged to send a brief account of the trip for posting on the website. The following are some points you might like to include:

- Location of the trip
- Launch site
- Parking
- Motels
- Distance ~ time
- Highlights
- Camping sites
- Hazards or things to be avoided
- Names of participants
- Personal anecdotes
- Pictures
- Useful equipment to take along

Since you have made the time and effort to organize the trip, perhaps someone in the group would be good enough to do the write-up.

G) *Accident or Mishap*

In the event of an accident or mishap (either on the water or on land) during your trip please advise the GLSKA President by email or phone and by means of a completed incident report form as soon as convenient. Contact any other Director if the President is unavailable. This is important from the standpoint of Club liability and it may help others to avoid similar problems in the future.

The Incident Report Form is available on the GLSKA web site. Your report should include:

- The nature of the incident
- Person(s) involved
- Injuries or damages
- Treatment or actions taken at the time
- Follow up or subsequent steps taken

H) *Guest Policy*

1. The trips and events organized and offered by the club members are designed primarily for the benefit of fellow members. Guests are allowed on official trips of one day or less, and at all club events provided they a) are present as the guest, or on the introduction of, a member; b) sign the waiver; and c) pay any fee normally charged for such a trip or event. In addition, a guest premium may be added to the fee, the amount to be determined by the organizers of the event.
2. An individual will normally be allowed to participate as a guest on a maximum of two occasions. Organizers of trips or events who believe that an individual is attempting to participate as a guest more than twice may, at their discretion, refuse to grant admission to such an individual.
3. Guests are not allowed on multi-day trips except when an exemption to this rule is requested by the trip's organizer, and agreed to by the Trips Coordinator or his or her designate, on the grounds of special circumstances.
4. All guests on official trips of any type or events involving on-water activities must sign the Waiver Form, whether or not a charge or fee is made for the event or trip. Event and trip organizers have no discretion to set aside this requirement.

Enjoy Your Trip