

# Camp it UP

KAYAK CAMPING SHOULD  
BE FUN. DOING A LITTLE  
PLANNING AND  
FOLLOWING PROPER CAMP  
ETIQUETTE WILL MAKE IT SO.

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You set out along a wild coastline where you can hear no sounds but those made by nature, and see no lights but those cast by the sun, moon, and stars. For days, you and your friends will live off only what you can carry in your kayaks.

When you first learn to kayak, day trips may satisfy your quest for adventure. As your skills increase, the dream will come, as it comes to us all, of multi-day sea touring excursions. Kayak camping without pain requires that you be organized and develop an outdoor ethic. Every minute of pre-trip planning and organization will be repaid immeasurably. Traveling without trashing the wilderness will assure that those who follow enjoy the same experience as you.

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**By Peter Stekel**



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The basics for camping without pain are simple. Every camper is interested in three things: to remain dry, warm, and well-fed.

### STAYING DRY

There are few places where sea kayakers will view tents as superfluous. Besides shedding the rain, they serve to deflect the sun and provide privacy in large groups or different cultures. A good tent is probably one of the most important camping investments you'll ever make, so don't skimp. Forget the discount-store variety and shop for a quality brand and model that will meet, or even exceed, your needs.

In deciding on a tent, it is often best to think in terms of worst-case scenarios. Have you ever been confined to a bivy sack for two days while it rained outside? Do you realize how easy it is for that six-foot-tall canvas wall tent to blow away during 40-mph winds? Have you ever tried to pound a tent stake into solid rock, sand, or gravel?

To minimize the chance of leaks, look for tents with full-coverage rain flies and taped seams. Measure the hatch cover of your boat, and don't buy a tent so big or bulky that it won't fit in.

Find a shelter that will be comfortable for sitting, just in case it does rain a lot. Get something with a vestibule where wet gear can be stored.

A freestanding tent is essential for camping on rocky beaches that won't accept stakes. And speaking of stakes, leave those pathetic aluminum skewers at home and invest in something longer and more heavy-duty.

Take a waterproof tarp to put below the tent and another one to put over it. The tarp below you will protect the tent floor. The tarp above will provide shade on sunny days and also give you a dry place to erect your tent in the rain. Better to pack a wet tarp than a wet

tent. Just in case, take extra garbage-compactor bags for both.

Invest in quality rain gear. Some people swear by Gore-Tex, while others say it's fine until it gets dirty. Whether you decide on Gore-Tex or coated nylon, get rain gear that has the fewest seams because that's where water is most likely to leak through. Avoid spending large



A kayaker loads up in the Sea of Cortez, in Baja California, Mexico.

sums for frilly features like liners or inside pockets. Rain gear is for rain, not style. With that in mind, your rain gear should be oversized so you can wear bulky (i.e., warm) clothing underneath.

Finally, take a waterproof hat, something that will stick out from the hood of your rain jacket. If you wear glasses, you'll be grateful for anything that keeps the storm out of your face.

### STAYING WARM

Skimping on sleeping bags is probably as silly as buying a cheap tent. Most sea touring trips are made in moderate weather, so unless you plan an Arctic trek, buy a bag with a reasonable temperature rating. Find