



How to Do an Easy Kayak Camping Trip

What's an “Easy” Kayak Camping Trip?

- Not a solo trip.
- Half a day or less to drive to launch site.
- Overnight parking near the launch site.
- Two to four nights camping.
- One campsite used as a base for day paddling trips.
- Less than 10 miles from launch site to base campsite.
- Return to launch point at end of paddling trip.

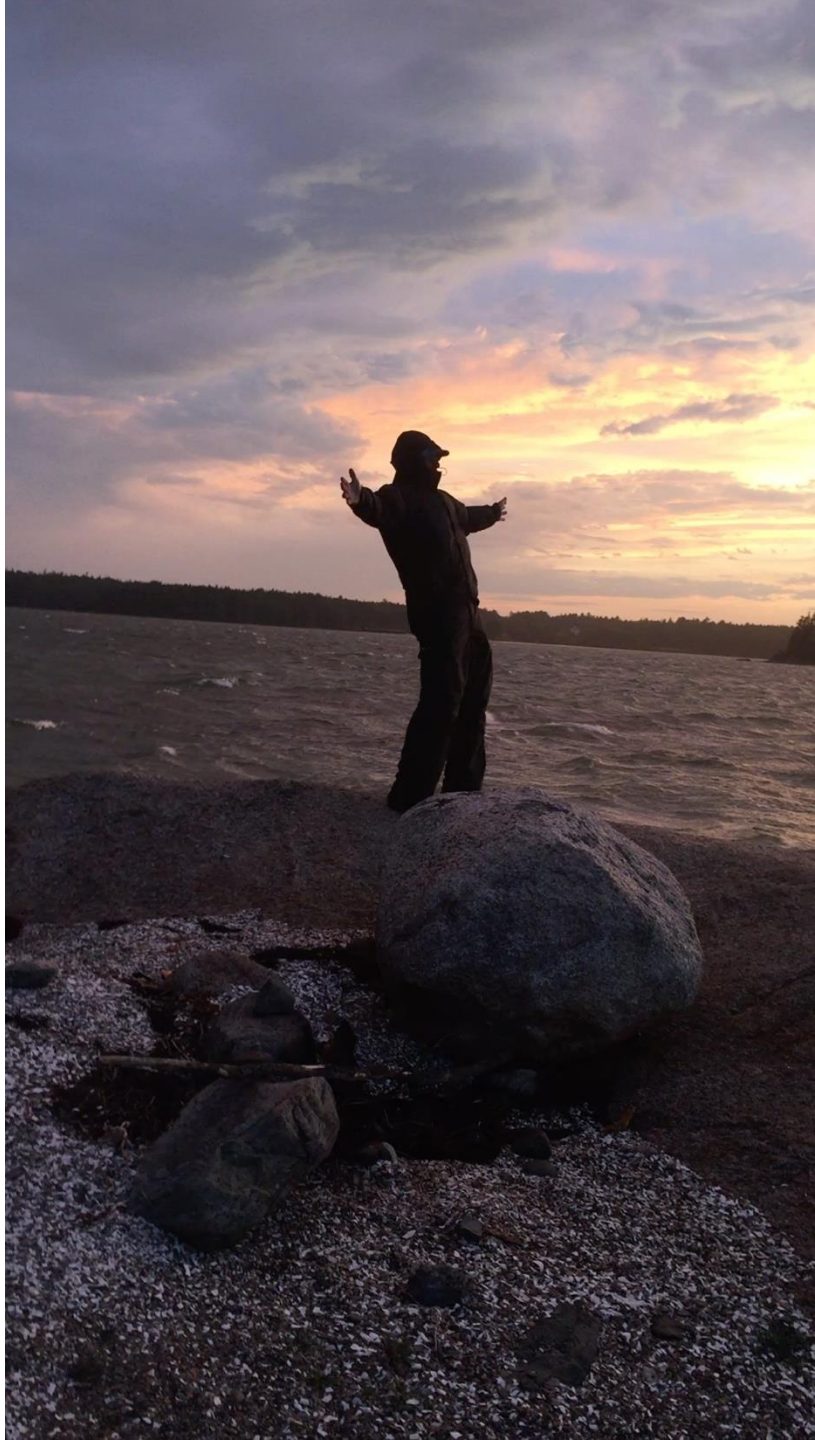
Initial Planning

- Pick a target time frame.
- Recruit paddlers.
- Decide on meal preparation.
- Decide on shared vs. individual equipment.

Planning your route

- Pick a campsite that opens up many day trip possibilities.
- Come up with a variety of options – weather and wind can require last minute changes.
- Resources:
 - ✓ MITA Guidebook
 - ✓ Maine Coast Heritage Trust website
 - ✓ Maine Land Trust Network listing of regional land trusts:
<https://www.mltn.org/trusts/alphabetical/>





Planning your route

- Pick a campsite that opens up many day trip possibilities.
- Come up with a variety of options – weather and wind can require last minute changes.
- Resources:
 - ✓ MITA Guidebook
 - ✓ Maine Coast Heritage Trust website
 - ✓ Maine Land Trust Network listing of regional land trusts:
<https://www.mltn.org/trusts/alphabetical/>

Packing



- Individual – do a trial pack of your boat ahead of time under unrushed conditions. Everything should fit without straining, so that the boat is balanced (fore and aft, side to side). Practice it until you can fit everything in again and again.
- Group - a group discussion on packing or a group packing session ahead of time can save time and hassle when you actually get to the launch site.



SOUTHERN MAINE SEA KAYAKING NETWORK

May 2008



Reflections on the Physics and Philosophy of Packing a Kayak

It seems to me that at the beginning of a multi-day trip, the packing of the kayaks usually involves some fairly typical actions at the launch site. There is spreading the gear around the boat; trying to force bags into spaces or through hatches that are just a little too small and then unpacking the boat to try for some better arrangement. At some point there is the traditional standing and staring at the boat and gear contemplating the space-time continuum trying to discover some application of it that would produce a greater volume inside the boat than would normally result from the product of the exterior dimensions using Newtonian physics. In the end the decision must be made whether to bungee a bag on deck, put a bag in the cockpit between ones knees, cull some gear to leave in the car, or all of the above. This is all being done under the pressure of wanting not to be the last one loading his or her boat while everyone else has finished packing and is standing around watching you and making helpful suggestions about your gear.

A couple of years ago I participated in a 10 day trip to Newfoundland where we did not anticipate being able to procure additional provender along the way. My boat is an Impex Outer Island which is a very low volume boat and it has an eight inch diameter forward hatch. I was apprehensive about obtaining a gear-to-boat volume ratio of one-to-one or less and of also getting most of my cargo through the eight inch forward hatch. I was sufficiently apprehensive about this to cause me to deviate from my normal approach to the packing conundrum (see the previous paragraph) and try something logical for a change.

What I ended up doing was dragging my kayak into my living room a couple of days before the trip and packing it under benign conditions (no time constraints, a rug to kneel on, calming music and a glass of wine.) Not being rushed I had time to think about convenient access, consolidating things that would be used together and not cramming things into the very bow or stern that I would want during a rest or

lunch break. I tied lines to the containers that went into the furthest recesses so I could recover them without having to stand the boat up on end and bang it on the ground to release the securely stowed objects. I tried to locate metal gear and canned food in the stern away from the compass.

When I ran into a condition where I could not fit everything in, being at home I could rummage around for a different piece of gear or a different container. One thing that is helpful for me is to use several small dry bags in place of a single large one; I have a good collection of small dry bags in as many colors as I could find. They pack in the boat better and I don't have to pull a lot of stuff out of a bag to find the article I need.

When the packing was complete I had the time to reflect on the logic of how things were arranged and impress the arrangement on my memory (as much as possible.) This was facilitated by the multiple colors of my dry bags. As a result, during the trip I was able to repack my boat quickly because everything had a place and I knew where everything was supposed to go.

My sense of smug superiority was enhanced on this trip by the presence of a fellow paddler for whom this was his first multi-day kayak trip. He had purchased a relatively small kayak and had apparently emptied his house of everything that could conceivably be of any possible use to him on the trip, and he had all of it spread out on the beach at our initial launch site. In the rush to pack, he inadvertently culled some essential gear and left it behind. He packed a folding camp table that he never used. He had gear bungeed on his decks and so much crammed in the cockpit around his legs that a wet exit was only a theoretical possibility. Packing his storage compartments every day involved him sitting on his boat and putting his foot into the hatch and pushing with all his might to compress the gear into the ends of the boat. It was the contrast between his daily packing frustration and the relative ease with which I stowed my gear every day that made me appreciate the value of spending a little extra time before the trip to avoid unnecessary packing aggravation during the trip.

Gerrish Island Paddle

The primary appeal of this trip is variety. In one 14.5 NM paddle you travel along an exposed coast with ledge breaks, through one small working harbor, through a wandering salt marsh, over a narrow harbor entrance bar with breaking surf, views of old fortifications and a lighthouse, and a few nice beaches for stops.

The launch site is located just south of the bridge across York Harbor on 103. While parking is limited, it's free and the beach is broad and nice. The basic route is out of York Harbor, down the coast to Brave Boat Harbor, into that harbor and a wander through the salt marsh to Chauncey Creek, out into Portsmouth Harbor, then around Gerrish

Food Planning



- Individual or shared meals?
- Have some fun and variety.
- Freeze a main dish for first night.
- Water – at least two liters per person per day.
- Bring extras for contingencies.

Final Preparations

- Meeting as a group can be fun and productive.
- Touch base frequently on weather and paddling conditions as you get closer to launch day.
- Rain doesn't have to be a spoiler if you take the right equipment.
- Leave a float plan with family/friends.

Getting to Camp and Setting Up



- Launching Tip: Use lines or straps with toggles, pair up front and back to carry boats into and out of the water.
- Give yourself plenty of time to get to base camp in daylight.
- Take care in tent site selection.
- Use caution in food storage (even if there are no bears).
- Handling waste.

In Camp and On the Water



- Look for interesting non-paddling activities.

In Camp and On the Water



- Have some fun on the water.

In Camp and On the Water



- Day trips from base.

In Camp and On the Water



- Fire - a great mood enhancer if permitted.

In Camp and On the Water



- Breaking camp.

Some Great Destinations for Easy Trips

Casco Bay

- Jewell Island
- Little Whaleboat or Whaleboat Island (MCHT)

Muscongus Bay

- Crow Island
- Gay Island
- Black Island

Penobscot Bay

- Campbell Island
- Calderwood Island
- Butter Island
- Many options out of Stonington

Resources for planning and outfitting

- The Very Basics: MLTN Presents: Amanda Goes Camping
<https://vimeo.com/586795035>
- SMSKN website links (smskn.net)
 - ✓ Trip planning guidelines and gear lists
 - ✓ Weather and tides
- Useful Apps:
 - ✓ Windy
 - ✓ Tides
 - ✓ Navionics Boating (requires subscription)
 - ✓ Storm Radar
- Where to find:
 - ✓ **Wag Bags:** REI, Amazon, Cabela's, Backcountry, and many local outdoor retail shops. A single wag bag runs around \$2.95, but you can save by purchasing a case of 12 for \$34.