

PACKING YOUR KAYAK FOR OVERNIGHT TRIPS

By Rob Bowen – April 2012

What to take (in addition to normal 'Equipment List' paddling items)

- Only bring items that are absolutely necessary for day to day use.
- One pair of wet shoes and one pair of dry shoes (avoid hiking boots as they are usually bulky and take up too much space.)
- Remove all excess packaging from food where possible. Place as much as possible in snap-lock bags. More often than not you'll be carrying all garbage until the end of your trip.
- Avoid heavy food where possible eg. canned food, glass containers, milks and liquid soups etc.
- Bring some fresh foods that will last the first few days.
- Variety of meals high in carbohydrates. There's lots of dehydrated meals that just require water to be added when meal time comes, eg. Uncle Bens rice meals.
- Bring lots of snack foods, eg. nuts, muesli/choc bars.
- Water – work on 3 litres per day (covers drinking, cooking and washing) and allow for more/less depending on conditions and availability of water en-route. Carry excess water in (preferably) collapsible containers - ie. water bladders - rather than hard plastic bottles.

How to package it all up

- What are the sizes of hatch openings on your boat? For sea kayaks lots of smaller bags are better than a few large ones – for white water boats and canoes it's often better to have a couple of large bags only.
- Segregate your gear into its function as it makes it easier to identify what's where when in camp, ie. camp/cooking gear from clothing from food etc. Either colour code bags or label as appropriate.
- Pack food and clothing into small parcels about the size of an AFL football. The largest bag should be your sleeping bag.
- Clothes should be packed according to function, eg. gloves, socks, beanie together as they are items that will get/keep you warm; or separate top half of body clothing from bottom half.
- Food can be divided up a number of ways, eg. Day 1 food, Day 2 food, Day 3 food and so on or you may wish to do it as Day 1 breakfast, Day 1 snacks, Day 1 lunch, Day 1 tea etc – you'll find what best works for you.
- Keep hard foods (cans) separate from soft foods (eggs, tomatoes.)

Water proof your gear

- All items should be water proofed. Generally by using a number of (different sized) dry bags or by using garbage bags. There are lots of different dry bags out there in the market, from the transparent 'plastic' ones to various fabrics - I find the Sea to Summit fabric dry bags are durable and work well (and are more 'dry proof' than some others) and not as bulky as the plastic style ones. If using garbage bags (say for your sleeping bag) then double bag it with double elastic bands to seal it. These can also be placed inside a pillow case to help protect from tearing when packing.
- I also use 2 or 3 plastic containers (the Goulburn Valley peaches in juice 1kg screw top ones) to hold things like my camp stove, matches, head torch, repair kit and spare parts.) Gas bottles and cooking pots are packed loose as is.
- Sleeping bag – I use a synthetic/polyester sleeping bag which should still keep me warm if it does happen to get wet. I stuff it into a 13 litre dry bag just to be safe.
- Some foods won't have to be water proofed, eg. apples, oranges, sealed packet foods...
- Take spare garbage and snap-lock bags.
- Always work on the theory that you will capsize and it will rain – there's nothing worse than setting up camp with wet gear and soggy food (and maybe the inability to dry it out.)

PACKING YOUR KAYAK FOR OVERNIGHT TRIPS

By Rob Bowen – April 2012

Packing your kayak

- You need to balance your kayak; weight should be distributed evenly from bow (front) to stern (back) and from side to side. Keep the weight low and centred as much as possible.
- Generally speaking pack small heavy gear up the bow and bulkier gear up the stern, heavier items as near to the bulkheads as possible.
- Pack your gear into the storage compartments according to need, eg. pack a paddle bag at top of day hatch so it's accessible while on the water if conditions become windy/wet. Your tent would be one of the last things you need at camp so is one of the first things packed into your boat. On the other hand, lunch should be easy to get to.
- The narrow ends of the bow and stern should not be wasted – use these areas for things like tent poles, tent pegs, parts of your kayak trolley if yours comes apart into multiple pieces, folding stool, etc.
- Feel around the compartments as you pack and fill up empty spots with small items.
- All the gear should be secured against movement and loss.
- Any remaining space in the compartments may be filled by inflating empty water/wine bladders (which serve as added buoyancy and would normally be fully inflated when paddling your kayak 'empty' while on a short day paddle.)
- Water containers may be able to go in front of your feet in the cockpit and held in by your foot pegs. If so, ensure they will remain in place in the event of a capsize so they do not: 1) fall out and get lost, and 2) interfere with any rescues. Alternatively, there is usually room behind the seat/backrest to strap them in or you could also place in your day hatch (which is considered a 'wet area'.)
- Don't pack too much gear under your kayak deck netting on top of the cockpit as it may get washed away, interfere with rescues and/or cause instability.
- Ensure you have items like snacks and sun screen handy when paddling (refer paddling Equipment List.)
- Make sure your hatches are on straight and fitted properly before hitting the water.

The above is an extension on points contained in the April 2006 Splash article by Ross Winters "Packing Your Kayak For Overnight Trips" and an article from SeaKayak Australia "How To Pack Your Double Pittarak Sea Kayak"