

How to load a sea kayak

Waves, wind, kayak hull, paddler height, paddler weight, all must be consider when loading a sea kayak properly for an expedition to the Greek islands and of course else where and of course a proper weather forecast check.

Loading kayak can be tricky and unfortunately on many basic courses they don't show you anything about it. The rule of thumb is to pack the heaviest items as low as possible, centered along the keel line, and closest to the cockpit and the lighter items towards the ends of the kayak and/or higher.

The goal is to have the kayak trim, equally balanced fore and aft. Look at a side view of your empty kayak floating in the water.

The loaded kayak will look the same in terms of balance front to rear only it will be sitting lower in the water due to the added weight.

Too much weight forward will make the kayak "down by the bow" or the bow being more immersed than the stern.

The kayak will tend to weather cock or turn into the wind (some less like Valley and NDK boats). This could be an advantage if you are paddling upwind, but this will make the kayak more difficult to control.

Too much weight aft may cause the kayak to leecock or turn downwind. This may have its advantage if you are paddling downwind, but again this will make control a problem.



A trim kayak is best for all round performance. Remember you may have to turn around and go the other way or the weather can change rapidly. Some times when close to land you might have the

option to stop and re-load the kayak but when doing an open crossing that is impossible.

Not only do we want our kayak to be trim fore and aft but also trim side to side. If heavy gear is packed on one side of the keel line the boat will list or lean to that side. This again will cause control issues, as the kayak will want to carve turns in the opposite direction to the list. So not only do you want to pack the heavy items low along the keel line and closest to the cockpit, but also you want to wedge these items into place so they don't shift to one side in wave action or when you lean your kayak to turn or brace into a wave.

Now that you got an idea about how to load a sea kayak try planning your next adventure!