

PACKING SEA KAYAKS

With the season for multi-day trips upon us I thought it might be useful to reflect on some sea kayak packing basics. I think the most important step towards quick and efficient packing and unpacking of sea kayaks, particularly for extended trips, is to work out and refine a system of packing and then stick to (if you don't do a lot of extended trips it may be worth keeping a list of what goes where). This means you will be able to pack quickly and effectively, have realistic expectations about what you can fit in and, once under way, you will know where to find things. An important goal to strive for is to have a well balanced (front to back and side to side) kayak so as not to upset its handling. It may also be beneficial to strive to have heavier items closer to the cockpit.

I am fairly confident of the dryness of my hatches so I do not use drysacks inside them – instead I stuff items such as my clothes and sleeping bag directly into the kayak into the heavier weight garden type plastic sacks with the sack already on the inside. Once stuffed I screw up the open end of the sack and tuck it in against the underside of the deck. I suggest that a good general principal is not to put stove fuel in the same hatch as food (I did have a major petrol leak in a boat once while out in the wilds, which thankfully, was not too disastrous), or else store the food or the fuel in a drysack to reduce the chance of contamination. I find that I can get things like my sleeping roll, tent pegs and poles or bivi bag right in the stern of the boat to either side of the skeg box. The rest of the tent, cooking equipment, fuel etc then use up most of the rest of this stern compartment. I keep food in the small compartment behind the seat (not all sea kayaks have them but they are quite common now). This leaves the fore hatch for my sleeping bag and clothes, sandals, cag (if I am not wearing it), etc. I also carry some of my drinking water in the bow so as to counter balance some of the heavier items in the stern.