

IAATO Guidelines for Sea Kayaking

Prior to conducting the activity, please ensure that sea kayaking is included in your operators permit/ authorization conditions (Advance Notification and EIA).

Introduction

Sea kayaking provides opportunities for visitors to appreciate the wilderness value of Antarctica from a different perspective. The spread of activities across different experience platforms may also decrease pressure on landing sites. Sea kayaking tends to take place concurrently with small boat cruising or landings in daylight hours under the supervision of an experienced cold-water sea kayak guide/s.

Sea kayaking has become an increasingly popular activity in Antarctica and opportunities exist for the activity at most landing sites in the Antarctic Peninsula, South Shetland Islands and South Georgia. Operators have been offering it as an activity for many years. The scope and scale of sea kayaking offered by operators varies.

Site selection

- Weather, sea and ice conditions determine which site is favourable at any specific time, following your companies operating procedures.
- The sea kayak guide with the EL and ship's master are to make an on-site decision on a case-by-case basis.
- Any sea kayaking activities that take place within a protected or managed area will be done in accordance with the relevant ATCM management plan provisions.

Clothing and equipment

- Sea kayakers are to wear suitable clothing for polar waters.
- Equipment should be regularly inspected and maintained.
- Safety equipment should be carried by the sea kayak guides, and/or safety boat(s).
- Sea kayakers are to wear personal flotation devices with sufficient buoyancy at all times.
- All kayaking equipment should go through bio-security checks prior to landing in Antarctica and if any equipment is landed it should go through biosecurity measures between excursions.

Briefing

- Experienced and appropriately trained cold water sea kayak guide(s) will lead the activity.
- A designated authorized person should provide a pre-activity briefing at the start of the voyage, site specific briefings should also take place prior to launching at each site.
- Briefings should include:
 - Overview of operation procedures from client perspective
 - Advice on appropriate dress
 - Safety practices for changes in weather conditions and ice conditions
 - Familiarization of communication strategies between the guide and clients
 - Wildlife awareness
- Passenger ability to perform the minimum standard skill level should be assessed so the guide can ensure the passenger can safely participate in the activity.

Deployment

- Time limits should be established for the activity.
- Boundaries should be set to limit the range of paddling.
- Guide to kayak ratio must be specified and justified in your operating procedures and risk assessments
- The sea kayak group should stay together at all times and in sight of the guide.
- There should be at least one sea kayak guide on the water and/or a safety boat driver.
- Sea kayakers should adhere to IAATO wildlife watching guidelines at all times.
- Sea kayakers should observe the Guidelines for Small Boat Operations in the Vicinity of Ice.

*Consideration to other vessels should be given if sea kayaking in main shipping / transit channels (e.g. Lemaire channel, Errera Channel)

Ship

- Communication should be continuously maintained between the bridge, safety boat and sea kayak guide for the duration of the activity. The bridge officer should monitor the weather and vessel traffic during the activity and notify the sea kayak guide and/or boat driver of any adverse changes.
- An activity log should be kept for the activity, and the activity should be recorded in Post-Visit Reports.