
A Texas Nature Kayaking Guide

Kayak Camping – An Introduction

Some years ago I was asked to participate in an over-night kayaking trip with several other people. To ensure we did not forget anything, I decided to compile what I knew and gather some additional information. A quick search of various chat lines concerning camping and kayaking showed that there were diverse opinions. One camping kayaker maintains that the good and simple life is to live on Dr. Pepper, potato chips, and ham/cheese sandwiches, and roll up in a tarp to sleep on the bare ground. He has a friend who insists on a good and luxurious life of pork chops, T-bone steaks, fantastic breakfast burritos, etc., and curling up in a tent with a thick air mattress. For most of us there is a happy medium in there somewhere. The lighter and smaller the gear, the more expensive it becomes.

I went to a retired Army Sgt. Major who spent many years involved in group camping and since his retirement has become an avid backpacker. He has ideas about space, weight, and comfort that made a lot of sense. He stresses that while each person is responsible for his own food, clothing, and equipment, the planning should be done with the entire group. In this way the group can leverage assets so items can be carried which will improve the trip for everyone. Taking a Dutch oven isn't overly practical for a solo or double trip because of its weight, but sure makes sense for a group overnighter. Rather than everyone taking a one-burner propane stove, maybe the group needs one for every four people. Adding a canoe to a kayak fleet might expand horizons even further.

Kayak camping can be defined as loading all needed gear in a kayak and setting off to another location. The trip may be meandering down a sandbar-filled river, or paddling to a more remote area. Climate and time of year have a lot to do with selecting camping gear. Kayak camping in the Inland Passage of Canada during the early spring requires a much different set of gear than camping out on the banks of a south Texas bay during the middle of summer. Take time to think about what you need and ask questions to prepare yourself.

Gear and supplies can be classified in a number of different ways. Following is one way:

- Sleeping,
- Clothing,

Copyright © 2010 by Nordmeyer, LLC. Permission is granted to reproduce as long as this document is reproduced in its entirety without modification and it is not sold.

Find Texas Nature Kayaking Guides at www.TxNatureKayaking.com

- Nourishment,
- Nourishment gear,
- Safeguards & personal hygiene,
- Lighting,
- Transportation, and
- Comfort.

Remember you do not need to get one of everything, but pick and choose what is appropriate for your situation. If you always camp where there are trees, a hammock may replace a tent, but if you are going to be in Boquillas Canyon on the Rio Grande, or on the Lower Pecos River, you may not find the shrubs are tall enough to support a hammock. A tent may be a better choice.

Rope is never plentiful. Throw in 100 feet of 5/16" or 3/8" rope. Can openers have been known to disappear, add another can opener to your gear.

Backpacking gear works wonderfully but can be expensive. If you have it, use it. If you do not have it, weigh its cost against its benefits. Freeze-dry backpacking meals take up little space and weight, but they tend to be a little pricey.