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# A Texas Nature Kayaking Guide

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## Dress for Success – Warm Weather

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In the business world, we know that we need to dress for success. The kayaking world is no different. The clothes that are mandated for a paddle when the air temperature is 45 degrees F are much different than the clothes that are mandated for a paddle when the air temperature is 95 degrees F. This guide lays out guidelines for dressing for warm weather kayaking. In general, one should dress as if you were going to turtle (turn over). That having been said, during the warmer months of the year most people do not have any problems with taking an unplanned swim.

As a minimum, when paddling in the heat of summer, one should wear:

- A hat,
- Sunglasses,
- Foot protection,
- Sunscreen,
- Sufficient clothes to protect one's modesty and not shock fellow paddlers,
- A properly fitted PFD (life preserver).

Caps are commonly worn by kayakers, but most do not protect the back of the neck or the ears. When around fishermen, I especially like to wear a hat to protect my ears from treble hooks. There are caps with material to drape over the ears and back of the neck that provide as much or more protection than a hat. Then there are buffs. These are tubes of cloth that can be worn as head bands, as neck protectors, or adjusted so the face, except for the eyes, is covered and protected from sun light. I'm told that one does not end up with sunscreen running down one's face and getting in the eyes when wearing a buff.



Figure 1 She is dressed for success for warm water kayaking – cell phone and earrings optional

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Plenty has been said about sunglasses protecting the eyes from ultra-violet radiation so we do not need to repeat it. Remember, on the water you have both the sun and the reflection of the sun to contend with.

Do you plan to have someone carry you to your kayak and carry you back to your vehicle afterwards? If that is not in the plan, you need to seriously consider footwear. One must get into a kayak, possibly get out portaging, and for sure get out at the end of the trip. A pair of shoes or boots will protect your feet from sharp objects and stone bruises. Wearing fashionable high-heels should not be an option, but I did have one client who did. Wearing flip-flops is not recommended, but some people do it. Probably more flip-flops are lost on the water than any other type of foot wear. Most people wear something more substantial. Consider the hazards that you may encounter. If you are on the coast and going to pull out on oyster reefs, or you plan to wade where sting rays are common, more substantial foot gear is very important. If you are going to launch from a limestone shore and paddle in a lake, then lighter footwear may be appropriate.

Now we will address the area between your sunglasses and your shoes. Regularly I see people from the northern tier of states come down to Texas, shed all of their clothes that the law will allow (photo not included) because of high temperature, and get severe sunburns. Many of us who grew up with the Texas heat and sun prefer to wear long-sleeved shirts and pants during the summer, as protection from the sun and insects. With the advent of modern sunscreens, if they are applied regularly, either method of dress can be used. With warm weather, dress comfortably with loose-fitting clothing.

In warm climates, cotton has an advantage. It holds water and can provide evaporative cooling. Not something you would want when the temperature is 70 degrees or less, but at 85 degrees and up, it is wonderful.

A properly fitted PFD (life preserver) needs to be available for each person in a kayak. Since one never knows when it will be needed, wearing it whenever you are on the water makes sense. Besides providing flotation if you end up in the water, it provides protection from trees and rocks you may run



Figure 2 he said he was wearing sunscreen

into. Running into trees and rocks happens more often with white water kayaking, but we have seen it on more calm waters.

The final piece of required clothing is sunscreen. While it may not be seen when it is being worn, the next day the results of not wearing it often become very noticeable.

Gloves are not on the mandatory list, but protect your skin from ultraviolet rays and can protect your hands from chafing while paddling.

If you wear glasses, consider a glasses keeper. Losing a \$300 pair of glasses does not cause a person to have a happy feeling. Another option is to wear a pair of low cost over the counter glasses.

What you do not want to wear are your cell phone, your wallet, and the smart keys to your vehicle. Stow those items in a dry bag except when needed, since water can damage them. Are your hearing aids waterproof? Probably not, so they need to go into the same dry bag.

So dress for success and enjoy your time kayaking.