

Kayaks and Canoes in Hudson River Park

General Policy

Users of kayaks or canoes are responsible for the safety of all those in his or her craft. **Operation of the kayak or canoe is solely at the operator's own risk.**

Users should be strong, experienced swimmers. The drowning rate, in canoeing and kayaking accidents, is higher than in other boats. Think safety first. Don't overestimate your swimming ability. It is recommended that users be able to sustain themselves fully clothed for ten minutes in deep water; swim two body-lengths underwater at a depth of six feet; and tow a "victim" fifteen feet.

Users must be familiar with and **obey all federal, state and local boating rules and regulations.**

Environmental conditions such as rip tides and other strong currents can overwhelm even the most adept swimmers. **Users should know the water and weather conditions before going out.** Tide tables are available through a variety of sources, including e.g., Eldridge Tide and Pilot book, Coastal Pilot Magazine, and nyweather.com. Wind is a powerful factor in kayaking and canoeing. Remember that if you start paddling with the wind, the return will take much more time and effort. Be sure to conserve enough energy for the return leg. Canoes and kayaks are often swamped by rough seas on windy days. Prepare for sudden wind and weather changes at any time.

All persons using a kayak or canoe must wear a Personal Flotation Device (PFD). Your PFD must be in good serviceable condition and be the proper size to fit/support your body. Wear your life jacket at all times and tie in your spare gear.

Choose your gear carefully . Make sure your kayak and/or canoe are in good condition. Properly dress for the prevailing conditions and include extra clothing and provisions to allow for changes in weather, no matter how nice the day appears. Make sure you've prepared for emergency situations by including safety equipment (pumps, sponges, paddle float, and, of course, a personal flotation device).

Because **the waters can be polluted**, boaters should avoid water contact to the greatest degree possible, particularly following a heavy rain event.

Hudson River Park Trust strongly **discourages immersion escape techniques** unless under the supervision or guidance of experienced kayakers or kayak organizations; such activity may be regulated by the Trust.

Enjoy the diverse wildlife, but **do not disturb wildlife or natural land features**. Do not approach wildlife so closely that it interrupts their natural behavior. Do not feed wildlife.

The Trust strongly encourages kayakers and canoeists to **limit their paddling to daylight hours**. A kayaker or canoeist who wishes to paddle before sunrise or after sunset should be equipped with appropriate navigational lighting. The Trust reserves the right to regulate night paddling that is not properly illuminated.

Kayaks or canoes can be launched and used only at designated areas within Hudson River Park. Kayakers and canoeists may not use any boat-launching site or any adjacent waters within 100 feet from the shore of a launch area, including offshore and inshore approaches, for any purpose other than launching boats or removing boats from the water, unless a written permit is obtained from the Trust or its duly authorized designee.

Launch sites will be open from May 1st to October 31st. There is an increased risk of hypothermia during winter months. Kayakers and canoeists who wish to paddle during colder months are strongly encouraged to wear appropriate cold weather gear, e.g., wet suits or dry suits.

Obey all posted signs regarding closures, hours of use, etc.

Bring all trash off your vessel and dispose of trash at an appropriate upland location.

Guard against sunburn and sunstroke. Wear a hat and light clothing. Use a sunscreen with a high rating.

Bring an adequate water supply. Drinking water is only available at limited sites. Do not drink river water.

Kayakers and canoeists **may not** enter a launch site, or operate or ride as a passenger in a canoe or kayak, **under the influence of drugs or alcohol**.

Kayakers and canoeists **may not use or otherwise operate** a kayak, canoe or other non-motorized vessel **within ferry terminal, commercial use, municipal use or posted sanctuary water areas** within Hudson River Park.

Canoeists and kayakers *will* encounter motorboats. Angle into the wake of a boat to minimize the chance of overturning.

Kayakers and canoeists are **strongly encouraged to purchase and use radios** for monitoring and communicating with other craft on the water.

Emergency Procedures

If you are in trouble, stay with your vessel as close to a navigational marker as possible. Try to attract the attention of other boaters. If you capsize, **DO NOT PANIC**:

- Stay with your canoe or kayak – even a swamped vessel will support you.
- Keep on the upstream side of the canoe or kayak to avoid being pinned against a rock, buoy or other obstacle;
- If you lose your canoe, float on your back, pointed feet first downstream.
- Save people first. Rescue boats and equipment only if it can be done safely.

Emergency Communications:

At least one kayak or canoe in a group should carry an electronic communications device, preferably a VHF marine radio or cellular phone. All kayaks should carry a whistle or air horn, signal mirror, and strobe light.

VHF radio Channel 16 is for emergencies. You can make bridge to bridge contact with another ship, and have a brief safety related conversation here. Channel 11 is the US Coast Guard Vessel Traffic service initial call channel for New York.

The US Coast Guard has an extensive system of cameras and radios around the southern ends of the east and Hudson Rivers. If you are in distress in this area, we recommend calling the USCG “Traffic” on 11 first. If you are around blind turns or piers, monitoring this channel can help give you warning of big vessel’s entry and exit. Particularly for groups, you can also call the USCG and let them know to inform large vessels of your presence.

VHF Channels 68, 69, and 71 are primarily for non commercial kayak-to-kayak or kayak-to-shore use. Also, you can use these channels after making a distress call on channel 16.

“MAYDAY” is used for immediate distress only. Misuse of MAYDAY is a felony. If you are in trouble, but not in immediate danger, use the term “PAN.”

Take a cell phone along if you have one. Put it in a waterproof zipped freezer bag.

Notify someone of your trip plans so they will know to organize a search or notify authorities if you haven’t checked in by an agreed upon time.

KNOW YOUR LIMITATIONS: You alone are the best judge of your own physical limitations, the capabilities of your vessel and most importantly, your ability to operate

your craft and gear. Respect the indiscriminate power of the sea along the exposed coast and carefully avoid operating in restricted visibility areas.