

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

PG. 2

Beginner, intermediate or advanced

PG. 3

New vs. 2nd hand + Sizing

PG. 4

Materials

PG. 5

Purchasing checklist



CHOOSING THE RIGHT KAYAK

THE IN'S AND OUT'S OF MULTISPORT KAYAKS

Multisport kayaking is typically a whole new experience for most people. Paddling a lightweight, fast kayak, through grade 2 rapids is not an easy skill to master.

In this info sheet my aim to cover the basics of choosing the right kayak for you. It's a good read for anyone who's gearing up for the Coast to Coast or any other multisport race!.



GOOD KAYAK CHOICES...

Having coached a lot of grade 2 athletes, I've seen just about every scenario you could imagine. The most common problem that coaches face has been coined "over boating". This is when someone has brought a kayak that is far too advanced for their ability level thinking they will grow into it. Please don't be this person...you won't enjoy your kayaking. If you're in doubt about your kayak choice, talk to an experienced paddler, manufacturer, or coach before purchasing.

Here's a quick list to help you with your buying choices.



BEGINNER - KAYAKS SUITABLE FOR 1ST TIMERS

- Ruahine Intrigue
- Ruahine Swallow
- Ruahine Gladiator
- JKK 5.2
- JKK 5.7
- Barracuda Beachcomber
- Barracuda Enigma
- Flow Aspire
- Sisson Esprit

INTERMEDIATE - SUITABLE FOR UP AND COMERS

- Ruahine Firebolt
- Ruahine Opus
- Flow Rockstar
- JKK Total Eclipse
- JKK Meteor

ADVANCED - ONLY FOR THE PRO'S

- Ruahine F1
- Ruahine Rebel
- Flow Rush
- Flow Sharp 6 and 6.5
- JKK UFO
- JKK U2
- Sisson Evo Classic





NEW VS. 2ND HAND

WHAT DO I CHOOSE?

So you've just decided to Coast and you realise that you need to buy a kayak. You take a quick look on TradeMe and then a few websites; you learn that it might not be as simple as you imagine. What to buy? What's good for me? Do I trust a 2nd hand boat or should I buy new? These are all questions you might be struggling with.

On Page 5 of this info pack I've written up a checklist so refer to that for all the niggly questions, but right now we're talking new vs. 2nd hand.

2nd hand kayaks can have obvious problems, but they can be a great way of getting you started, and they may be all you ever need. The general rule of thumb is you pay for what you get.

2ND HAND PRICE CATEGORIES

< \$500: do you self a favor and burn your money... you'll get more enjoyment from the fire than you will from this kayak!

\$500 - \$1000: repairs are likely but good to learn in. You'll probably want a better yak closer to the race but destroy this one first.

\$1000 - \$2000: the normal price range for a pre-loved yak. The closer you get to \$2K the better the quality should be

\$2000 plus: likely to have only been used for one major race or very well cared for.

Tim's note: at certain times of the year 2nd hand kayaks demand astronomical amounts (roughly mid-winter when everyone is getting organized for Coast). Desperation is a common trap and many people end up spending far more than they should on a rubbish kayak. If the price is getting up over \$2000 then consider buying new as you'll get a better yak and it will have better resale when you choose to sell it.

BUYING NEW

I always find it interesting when people baulk at the price of a new kayak. I ask them "are you buying a new road bike for Coast?" They typically answer yes, so I reply "you're prepared to spend \$5-\$10K on a new bike but you won't spend half that on a new yak?"

A new kayak has many advantages over 2nd hand...

- The manufacturer should have demo boats for you to try so they'll be able to work with you to help choose the correct model and build that suits your needs.
- You will get to choose the colour you like
- You will have the comfort of knowing the yak hasn't been thrashed, then cunningly repaired to conceal the damage.
- You will have the backup of the manufacturer if something goes wrong
- You're supporting a great NZ industry...we're the only country that makes multisport kayaks!



MATERIALS

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE

Plastic

Only sea kayaks will be made in plastic.

Pros: excellent abrasion resistance and unlikely to crack.

Cons: heavier than composite materials, hard to repair if damaged.

Fiberglass

The most common composite material used in multisport kayak manufacturing.

Pros: cheap, easy to fix, far lighter than plastic.

Cons: is the heaviest of all composite construction types, prone to catastrophic breakage if you have a heavy crash (i.e. holes)

Carbon Kevlar

An extremely popular composite material. Usually shown-off under a clear coat so look for the yellow and black fibers.

Pros: the yellow Kevlar strands allow a large amount of flex before they break while the black carbon fiber strands provide strength. This makes it flexible yet strong, so perfectly suited for whitewater kayaks. Also very light!

Cons: difficult/expensive to fix so doesn't like rough treatment.

Carbon Fiber

One of the strongest and lightest composite materials but not commonly used to build entire multisport kayaks.

Pros: lightweight, incredibly strong, ideal for providing stiffness in flexible areas.

Cons: prone to shattering during crashes so full carbon kayaks should only be used by experienced paddlers.



PURCHASING CHECKLIST

- ☐ **Is this kayak a suitable ability level for me?**
Beginner, Intermediate or Advanced
- ☐ **Is this kayak a suitable size for me?**
Both my current size and what I hope to be on race day
- ☐ **Can I take it for a paddle before I buy?**
If they won't let you paddle it assume there's something wrong with it
- ☐ **Have I talked with others about this kayak – grade 2 coach, experienced friends?**
Just because you think you can paddle doesn't mean you can. Ask more experienced people for their opinions so you can make an informed choice.
- ☐ **Is it well priced?**
Check TradeMe for examples or ask a kayak retailer.
- ☐ **Are there any repairs - if so are they professionally done or will they need work?**
Common places are the nose, under the seat, and tail.
- ☐ **Is everything working?**
Rudder, drinking tubes, bilge pump
- ☐ **Does it come with accessories – if so, are they in good condition or will I need to replace them?**
Be wary of old helmets and lifejackets – these protect you so don't compromise.
- ☐ **What other equipment will I need? Check the Coast to Coast handbooks for mandatory equipment.**
Do a budget so you don't get any nasty surprises.
- ☐ **How will I transport it?**
Roof racks with cradles are the most common so be prepared to spend several hundred dollars for a decent set.



I hope this quick guide helps you with your fledgling career as a multisport kayaker. I've only touched on a few of the many topics that you'll encounter so if you need any more help or advice, please feel free to contact me at any time. I simply love to talk kayaks!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Taylor', is centered on the page.

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