

What to bring?

(for an adventure in Maryland.)

Remember the phrase is “adventure”. I aim to take you where you haven’t been before so bear with me if the list sounds like two suitcases for an overnigher at a friend’s house. And also, guys and girls have different ideas as to what is important. After thirty years of marriage you can call me on that, till then check with the lady in the group to see if you need to pack, if she is going. Women are usually right about these things. These are suggestions we use all the time.

1. **Sunglasses**- The reflection off the water can make your eyes sting even on cloudy days.
2. **Chap stick & Sun Screen**- We get a lot of wind on the water and your lips will get dry. All day on the boat, even with clouds, will burn the face, arms, legs and feet. Please, “Take care of you” as the southern saying goes.
3. **Hat or Bandana**- On cloudy or sunny days the rays can give you a headache. Sports caps are only second best as a good gust of wind might make it fly. You should have a chinstrap.
4. **Whistle (or better yet, a LOUD child’s Bike Horn)**- In crowded harbors full of big ego boy toys, kayaks are almost invisible. Play it safe, plus folks will wave back at the bike horn and smile. On the open water sounds travel and folks will help if you get their attention for an emergency.
5. **Sponge**-Even the best paddlers get a bit of water inside the boat now and again when the wind stirs and blows it off the paddle. Also launching off muddy shorelines does not mean sitting in dirt the whole day.
6. **Water Shoes**- Going to get out of the boat along the unknown shoreline? Mud Flats, broken glass, prickly pine nuts, sea barnacles, slippery- slimy cement ramps. Need more reasons?
7. **Rope**- A 6ft pier tie up and a 25ft tug line with clamps (to pull you off the boulders or mud flats) is a recommended must have for some eastern shore adventures. When the tide starts running low, paddle faster and stay to the middle.
8. **Cable & padlock**- When life is good, and the situation says let’s walk around town play it safe, LOCK IT UP. When life is an emergency and you need the first restroom you can paddle to on the shoreline LOCK IT UP.
9. **Map**- Photocopy a page out of an ADC book, or blow up a folding map section in the area you are going. Have something written down and put it in a ziplock baggie. A GPS is a wonderful gadget but it works off a battery and shuts its self down just when you need it.

10. Camera-Take even a cheap one for the fun of it. Most of my adventures are CAMERA TIME! Could be cute ducks or geese, could be Washington Monuments that are bragging rights, could be getting that shot of a vision that makes you smile forever, or could be just your friend that you made a little happier.

11. Waterproof Bag- They come different sizes but all fold over and snap shut. This is a highly recommended tool for clothes and valuables. It floats even if you do not. (*For boaters not ready to buy an excellent waterproof bag, at least bring small and large food baggies that seal tight).

12. A Multi Use Tool- Bikers have one, fishermen have one, the Swiss Army had one, so too should kayakers. I have a tool with pliers, a knife, a pick, and a mini saw. Never thought I'd ever use it- till a support rope on my kayak chair broke.

13. Spring Float- This ingenious swimming gadget that has a spring coil inside that shoots out when unfolded into a blow up that is a flat or sitting upright flotation device. The blow up is a skinny ring that supports a cool mesh. What makes this great for kayaking is in the summer when you'd like to take a dip but are unsure of the water's bottom and swimming is not planned, this device will allow you to float in water of only a few inches deep and cool your whole backside. Lots of models and shapes. Folds flat again for storage. (Holds fully grown men and women if you follow my drift)

14. Rain Poncho- Buy a cheap "full length" plastic poncho for late afternoon rain showers. In our area if the weatherman says cloudy with chance of rain- it might not actually rain till nightfall or it might down pour for 10 to 15 minutes right after lunch and the sun will come out. Weekends are precious- how much fun can you afford to lose?

15. Rubber Boots & Fleece socks-In the summer you go bare footing, in the spring and fall you wear sandals that can get wet or boat shoes that can be dipped in the water to wash off the mud. But in the cooler-colder months we suggest heavy rubber boots to wear in the freezing water while launching, then remove the boots and put on thick fleece socks once you're in the boat. Fleece will keep you warm the entire day and are water resistant unlike wool or cotton.

16. Personal Flotation Device- The Coast Guard does not just recommend it- they require it in all boats per person. The penalty is not just a warning, but can be an expensive ticket. However there are "other" PFDs that are also approved other than the bulky life jackets. Look at fisherman catalogs and see the skinny over the neck to the waist type or get real lucky and find the belt type that uses a CO2 cartridge that blows up with a tug of a tiny handle. These cost a bit more but you will feel cool and forget it's there most times.

17. Napkins or TP- Most women are smarter than men in knowing not to drink coffee and tea (especially beer) before getting into a tiny boat for the day. But just in case Mother Nature calls, having a baggie of dinner napkins or a handful of toilet paper is always a great idea. Port-i-potties are random and not always well serviced, and trees are everywhere.

18. Spare Paddles and Cords-In the last couple of years we have noticed more boaters carrying two sets of paddles. Sometimes the extra is strapped in the front or rear with bungee cords, or tucked away under the bow. The excuse is always the same-it's just a good precaution especially if you go paddling alone. We bought a cord that Velcro's round the paddle handle midway and attaches to the inside of the boat. It drives you crazy the first day, and then you forget it. By the end of the season you will be glad as you "almost" lose your paddle in the mud or it's being dropped in the water while fidgeting around.

19. Wind/Rain Jacket- The day is sunny, there is a slight breeze and the water is calm. By two to three o'clock the wind picks up and the water becomes choppy. That cotton shirt you're wearing that says "Paddle faster I hear banjos" becomes a little thin. The afternoon breeze is always going to be there year round. Roll out the jacket and smile. A rain jacket is waterproof and is a better year round piece of standard equipment.

20. Pants- It's hard to imagine in the heat, wearing anything but a swimsuit while paddling. True enough if you are out for just a couple of hours. But for long distance boaters, both men and women, will come back home in the evening. When the sun sets it can get cool. Convertibles that zip at the knee are an excellent idea. In the cooler months try pant shells-water proof or water resistant pants that shed the drips of water from paddling. Look at rain gear pants or snow ski shells and order a size smaller.

21. Gloves-In the cooler months, by the second hour of paddling your fingers get a little blue. We found Fagan gloves (cutting the top fingers off at the gloves at the knuckles) will give you a much better grip while holding the paddle.

22. Towels-My beautiful wife and kayak companion is only 5ft tall. I tease her about needing to sit on phone books at the dinner table and receive well-earned shin kicks. But with sit in kayaks, her height did cause a paddling problem. She didn't get good deep strokes and got paddle drippings. So we bought beach towels that match her kayak for comfort cushions on the molded plastic chair. I liked them also for the comfort till I bought an upgraded fishing kayak with an overstuffed pullout chair. Towels don't work so well on these. We also recommend hand towels for sweat and wiping off suntan lotion from the hands, for a better paddle grip.

22. Baking Powder-Most books advocate taking a first aid kit. Got a broken nail or a popped bluster? You know enough to bring a spare band aide. The first aid I want you to bring is a homemade remedy for summer time jellyfish stings. We call them Sea Nettles and their long tentacles have chemicals that when brushed on our skin leaves bright red welts and hurts like the dickens. Baking powder relieves the pain slowly but surely. The welts go away but the lash marks on your pride will last for a few hours. Its ok for girls to scream, guys bite your tongue and kick something hard- the pain is more inside the head than the arm or leg. Be brave, and a kiss on the forehead helps too. Yes you can keep on paddling.