

Chesapeake Paddler



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CPA, Camping and Your Kayak

By Ralph Heimlich

Reading the popular sea kayaking and paddle magazines could leave you with the impression that camping and kayaks involve multi-day expeditions in the Canadian Arctic, the jungles of Belize, or beyond Patagonia to the end of the earth. Camping with kayaks in Chesapeake country isn't such a strenuous undertaking and can really increase your paddling time. This article surveys the local camping waterfront, including car camping and kayak "kamping". It draws on trips organized by our active campers, but any inaccuracies are strictly my own. This survey is necessarily incomplete, so I invite CPA campers to point out opportunities I've neglected on the email ListServe.

Why Camp?

If you are willing to limit yourself to waters within a half day's drive, have lots of scattered relatives or friends, are the heir to a hotel chain, or just rich, you really don't need to camp. The rest of us find that camping can extend our paddling time, get us on waters a bit farther afield, save money compared to motels, and is just plain fun and good fellowship. Done right, camping can be nearly as comfortable as



Photo by Bill Walsek Near-waterfront camping at Shad Landing State Park, Pocomoke River and Nassawango Creek

sleeping in your own bed, lets you enjoy the outdoors in a more intimate way and experience the evening, night and early dawn in ways that are difficult to do on day trips. It also brings out your culinary arts and allows you to enjoy paddling opportunities denied the less adventurous. Kayak camping is easy to learn and fun to do.

Where To Camp

CPA trips involving camping range in degrees of "civilization" and geography from West Virginia to Assateague Island and from Elk Neck to the Outer Banks. State

and county parks and national parks and seashores are natural choices, and there are many good ones near prime paddling spots. CPA trips have gone to destinations such as Maryland's Point Lookout, Elk Neck and Shad Landing, while Virginia's Belle Isle and Westmoreland State Parks have also hosted us. A favorite in Delaware is Cape Henlopen State Park, with its large sand dunes and access to Delaware Bay. Car camping tends to be the rule in state and national parks. Organizers need to make reservations well in advance and pay heed to

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restrictions on the number of campers, tents and especially cars permitted on each site. Sometimes group campsites can be reserved, although they are often reserved for youth groups (we're more the geriatric crowd, but you would think we were the equivalent of Hell's Paddlers based on some reactions for an adult group campsite). My personal favorite for paddler-friendly parks is Maryland's Shad Landing, offering hospitality and near-waterfront sites on the Pocomoke River and Nassawango Creek. Some trip leaders have developed good relationships with private campgrounds at good launch areas. Bill Dodge's favorite is the New Point Campground in Mathews County, Virginia, near New Point Comfort Lighthouse. Another excellent campground found by Greg and Jenny Welker is Tall Pines Campground on the eastern shore just south of the mouth of

the Pocomoke. Both public and private campgrounds tend to be for car camping and range in cost from \$20 to \$40 per night per site. See web links below.

Kayak kamping is more limited, but there are several interesting destinations that can only be approached from the water. One of the most venerable is Saint Clements Island, at the mouth of Maryland's Wicomico River in the Potomac. Bill Dodge has arranged with Maryland DNR for CPA to do an annual "work" trip to Saint Clements in exchange for overnight camping privileges. Saint Clements is marked with a huge white cross commemorating the landing in 1634 of Maryland's first English settlers under Lord Baltimore's proprietorship on the Ark and the Dove. The 40-acre park is a brief half-mile paddle from Colton Point. Assateague

Island National Seashore, accessible from Ocean City, has four primitive campsites accessible by kayak from the Ferry Landing launch site. Another opportunity is Janes Island State Park, with car camping, but also several primitive paddle-in sites along the marked water trail. North on the Bay is Hart-Miller Island State Park, accessible by water from a launch at Rocky Point Park. While Saint Clements Island is one of the Bay's first island campsites and is eroding with time, Hart-Miller is one of the most recent, and is growing as sediment dredged from the channel is added to it over time by the Corps of Engineers.

Another set of opportunities are the Chesapeake River Sojourns organized by the Chesapeake Bay Alliance. These are multi-day trips on major tributaries of the Bay (Susquehanna, Patuxent,

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2005 CPA Pool Sessions*

Saturdays, now through spring at the Fairland Aquatic Center, Burtonsville, Maryland
4-5:50 pm and 5:50-7:45 pm; \$7 per person. Pay at FAC.

Required:

1. Boats and gear clear of leaves, mud, grass.
2. A reservation; please email Joan at Jspinner2@peoplepc.com (preferred) or call 301-559-3345 by the Thursday before the session. Leave a message and the following information:
 - a. your name and phone number
 - c. date of session
 - d. time slot
 - e. number and type of boats (WW or sea kayak)

You will receive a reservation number. If you do not receive a reservation number, you do NOT have a

reservation. Reservations will not be accepted more than 2 weeks in advance.

Directions: Take your best route to I-95 between Baltimore and Washington. Exit at MD-198 West. Turn left at 2nd light, Old Gunpowder Road. The pool is about a half mile down on the right. Enter through the patio.

*These are open sessions, not lessons. You must bring your own boat and gear. In case of inclement weather, call the center to see if it is open: 301-206-2359.

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Potomac, James) that help you experience the ecology of the river in a communal camping experience. See <http://www.acb-online.org/project.cfm?vid=236>.

Camping Gear

Campers are almost as big “gearheads” as kayakers, but you can get by with some pretty basic stuff, especially car camping. Some kind of shelter is a must. A basic tent is handy and more comfortable with a floor and bug netting, but a simple plastic tarp rigged alongside your car can suffice in the warmer summer months. A sleeping bag is a good idea from October through May, but blankets or an old quilt could work in summer months. An air mattress, pad or cot is a must to insulate you from the cold and damp of the ground, and pad the old bones. Most sites have a fire ring or grill, but a simple propane or butane cooking stove or a small hibachi are easier to cook over. With the capacity of your car, you can really get comfortable with folding chairs, a screen tent for dining sans *les bugs*, and even a T.V. or laptop. Some CPA “campers” have gone the RV route, and have more comfortable places than my house.

Kayak Kamping

“Kamping” is more challenging because of weight, space, and packability issues, and because essentials, like your sleeping bag, need to be kept absolutely waterproof. Waterproof compression sacks can not only protect your bed, but mush it down enough to get inside your hatch. Another innovation that some use (including this BatKamper) are lightweight camping hammocks

that combine your bed, roof and bugproofing in a small, lightweight package. For safety’s sake, pack everything *inside* your boat and don’t load up your deck. One essential idea is to think multi-purpose when considering any item of gear. Your sun shower can double as a water bag, and that pot lid can double as a fry pan. Gear tied on top raises your center of gravity and can interfere with self-rescue if you get in a fix.

What’s For Dinner?

When I led camping trips for the Boy Scouts, we had to cook every meal in the outdoors, usually over a wood fire. Camping with adults is a lot easier. On many car camping trips, CPA paddlers jump in the car and head for the bright lights. There are some really nice restaurants near paddling waters—and some good beer.

However, one aspect of the fellowship of camping is sharing your culinary skills. I like to organize group feeds on my camping trips, with everyone bringing a dish for “pot luck”. Make sure to tell your campers to bring enough for only half the people on the trip, or less, or you will be buried in food. Some memorable dishes from group feeds includes chicken “stoup” (real thick soup), grilled maple-glaze salmon, some really creative and delicious salads, and Mrs. Rock’s Brownies (Dick took the credit, but we all knew who cooked them). Breakfasts are often another excuse for culinary excess, although I like to limit it to Sunday morning or we

never get on the water. Don’t forget the libations—those water bladders work just as efficiently with wine, as well.

Again, kayak “kooking” takes more thought and effort. Consider the wide variety of prepared, dried, or dehydrated foods now available in your local grocery store. A home food dryer can also be useful for reducing the bulk, weight, and perishability of fruits, vegetables, and some meats for meals in more primitive settings. Fresh meat can be frozen and wrapped in insulating material (like your sleeping bag) and will usually survive until dinner time, even on the warmest days. Remember to leave room in your boat for plenty of water (seem counterintuitive), especially on Bay sites where there is usually none available.

So, extend your horizons and consider kayak camping. There are 7 kayak camping events on the CPA calendar this year from April through November. Greg Welker is once again offering his kayak camping classes on May 4 (where to camp) and June 22 (camp cooking), and you can get OJT from any of the camping trip leaders. Once you get comfortable with an overnight on the Bay, you can start dreaming about a month in Patagonia or Hudson’s Bay!

See Page 10 for web links to kayak camping.

THE GREAT CHESAPEAKE BAY SWIM June 12, 2005

Support the swim from your kayak!

We need kayakers to support the open water swimmers as they cross the Bay for the 4.4-mile swim and the 1-mile swim.

This year the CPA will hold an **optional swim support instructional clinic at Truxton Park on May 22, 2005**. We will have speakers educating us on topics such as the safety and coordination efforts that go into the Great Chesapeake Bay Swim and what the swimmers expect of kayak support teams.

- Learn about how to help the swimmers
- Practice towing a swimmer in the water
- Brush up on your open water safety and rescue skills in the water

More information is available on the online CPA Calendar or through the coordinators. If you wish to come to either/both events, please contact one of the following coordinators:

Dave Biss: bissd@erols; 703-241-0036
Cyndi Janetzko: janetzko@hotmail.com; 703-241-0036

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Kayak Camping Links

Maryland DNR State Parks <http://www.dnr.state.md.us/publiclands/>
Virginia State Parks <http://www.dcr.state.va.us/parks/>

Greg Welker's Workshops:
http://www.cpakayaker.com/events.html?event_id=268
http://www.cpakayaker.com/events.html?event_id=269

Various kayak camping pages:
<http://www.sdkc.org/camping/>
<http://www.sit-on-topkayaking.com/Articles/Touring/>
<http://students.washington.edu/~ukc/sea/kayakcamping.html>
http://www.extremekayaker.com/Kayak_Camping.htm
<http://www.seakayak.ws/kayak/kayak.nsf/NavigationList/NT000015AA>



Photo by Scott Brody. In camp at Green Run campsite, Assateague Island