

# Kayak Safety

U.S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore



## Weather and Lake Superior

Lake Superior can become hazardous for any size vessel even in moderate weather. The weather can suddenly change, exposing you to cold temperatures, wind, fog, lightning and rough seas. Except for shallow beaches, Lake Superior's temperatures rarely reach above 55 degrees. Hypothermia can happen in as little as 15 minutes. Before you go, check the marine forecast. **PFD's (personal flotation devices) should be worn at all times on Lake Superior.**

## Pictured Rocks Cliffs

Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore has 15 miles of cliffs including sheer walls all the way to the water line offering no escape from the elements and the wake from other vessels. Boat tours leave Munising on a regular basis during the summer months. They run fairly close to the shoreline with a turnaround point at Chapel Beach. Give them plenty of room and be prepared for their wake.



Kayak rescue

## Sea Kayaks vs. Recreational Kayaks

Sea kayaks with a spray skirt are recommended because they are safer on Lake Superior. Recreational are designed for inland waters and can be dangerous in high winds and big waves. Sea kayaks for single person use are generally 16 to 19 feet long, with hatches and bulkheads providing flotation in the front and back. Recreational kayaks are usually 10 to 14 feet long with a large open cockpit and at most one hatch & bulkhead.



Sea kayak



Recreational kayak

## Instruction and Trip Planning

Instruction and competence on proper techniques including rescues or using a guide are recommended for beginners or those who have never kayaked on Lake Superior. Refer to our website [www.nps.gov/piro/planyourvisit/commercial-services.htm](http://www.nps.gov/piro/planyourvisit/commercial-services.htm) for further information. A backcountry permit is required to stay overnight in Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore [www.nps.gov/piro/planyourvisit/backcountry.htm](http://www.nps.gov/piro/planyourvisit/backcountry.htm).

## Leave a Float Plan

A float plan contains important information such as your name and address, vessel description, number of people in your group, safety equipment, planned route, length of trip and return date. Leave your float plan with a friend or family member and tell them who to call if you are overdue or an emergency arises. A blank U.S. Coast Guard Float Plan is provided on the back of this brochure.

## U.S. Coast Guard Equipment Requirements

All vessels on Lake Superior are required to have a wearable Personal Flotation Device per person on board and a sound providing device that is audible for one half mile for 4 to 6 seconds (such as a horn or whistle). When operating from sunset to sunrise and in or near areas of reduced visibility, use navigational lights that may be seen by others and be equipped with a visual distress signal.

### Preparation Checklist

- |  |                                       |  |  |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Flotation Device (PFD) | <input type="checkbox"/> Marine radio | <input type="checkbox"/> Fill out Float Plan | <input type="checkbox"/> Paddle float              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Whistle                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Wet suit     | <input type="checkbox"/> Check forecast      | <input type="checkbox"/> Too rough: go another day |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bilge pump                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Sprayskirt   | <input type="checkbox"/> Bring a partner     | <input type="checkbox"/> Lighting device           |

# KAYAK FLOAT PLAN

Remember: **Do not file this plan with the U.S. Coast Guard or National Park Service.**  
**Contact your friend in case of a delay, and always when you return.**

## 1. Operator of Boat

Name	Age	Health
Phone	Address	
Operator's Experience		

## 2. Description of Boat

Make	Type
Registration/Documentation	No. Length
Color	Distinguishing Features

## 3. Survival Equipment

# PFD's	Flares	Mirror	Smoke signal
Flashlight	Water	Food	EPIRB
Other			

## 4. Communication

Marine radio	Yes	No	Cell phone
Other			

## 5. Trip Expectations

Depart from	Departure date	Time
Going to	Arrival date	Time
If operator has not arrived/returned by:	Date	Time

Call the Coast Guard or local authority at the following number: 906-226-3312

## 6. Vehicle Description

License no	Make	Model
Color	Where is vehicle parked?	

## 7. Other person on board?

Name	Age
Phone	Medical conditions

## 8. Additional information