

What to put on your Christmas List (Kit Ideas!)

Depending on where you are with your paddling will affect what you want to consider for your paddling goals. However paddling clothing is more important than other equipment to start with.

To really extend your paddling and to test your paddling you need to get out and paddle when the weather is not so pretty. Once you have a few pieces of appropriate kit you will be surprised how enjoyable winter paddling can be. You get gorgeous crisp clear days with great tree colours and generally better water conditions.

To get you started you really need to have a top (cag) and trousers (dry trousers) that keep the majority of wind and water out. It can be false economy to buy the cheapest item available. For your cag and dry trousers it's important to get something that fits you well and is designed specifically for men or women and allows room for layers underneath but also breaths / wicks moisture away. Unfortunately there is less choice for cags and trousers designed specifically for women so you will have to shop around. More expensive items are harder wearing as well. However don't lose sight of the fact that you can damage your clothing on a single trip if you are not careful.

The same gear can be worn in the summer with no layers depending on temperatures. If you buy overly cheap items you will end up wet and cold as you will sweat and then get cold. As a paid up club member you should be able to get about 15% discount (or more) in various local canoe and kayak stores if you mention us. If you have any problems then let us know.

Semi Dry Cag Example – Approximate price for members with club discount £65

Palm Vertigo Cag Information

The Palm Vertigo is an approach level semi dry paddle top that looks as if it should be at the top level. Using the XP50 2 layer fabric ensures a waterproof and breathable top. The latex wrist seals with easily adjustable neoprene outer cuffs prevent any water ingress through the sleeves. The ultra soft neoprene neck provides an excellent seal without the discomfort that some feel with latex. A Velcro closed twin seal waist makes the top fitting entry/exit easy. The Palm Vertigo Semi Dry is a good choice for paddlers looking to buy their first cag for white water and surf kayaking.

Note you can buy a spray top for under £20 but it will not breathe so you may get the best protection.



A good example of a breathable dry trouser are the Palm Viper Paddling Pants feature a single seam leg cut, latex ankle seals with protectors & an adjustable Velcro mesh neoprene waistband. The Viper Pants from Palm are constructed from breathable XP2.5 Nylon with reinforced seat & knees.

- Seamless crouch and articulated, reinforced knees provide comfort for kayakers and open boaters alike.
- Adjustable high backed, mesh lined neoprene waistband.
- Latex ankle cuffs with protective adjustable neoprene cuffs.
- Hard wearing Rip Stop Cordura® fabric on seat and knee patches.
- Combine with a jacket or used independently.
- Fabrics: XP12.5 breathable nylon shell.
- Rip Stop Cordura.® reinforcement
- Colour: Black & Grey.

Palm Viper Paddling Pants



Unfortunately you will need to pay around £70 to £80 for some reasonable dry trousers as described here. If that is too much for now you can try something like the Palm Dart Dry pants which I reckon we can negotiate these for just over £40 at some sources. They are a good step up from walking trousers as they are breathable and have neoprene ankle cuffs but they will not keep out all the water if you are submersed for long.

For spring/summer paddling you may end up using your cag with layers and compromising with shorts for temperature regulation.

The next most important items are base layers. Buy and use as many thin base layers as you can afford. It's important that the ones that you wear next to your skin 'wick' (carry moisture away from your skin if you sweat). Secondary layers can be thin fleece or ordinary thermals. The important thing is to not just limit your shopping to canoe and kayak shops. Good base layers are important for various sports e.g. running, cycling, football so look in shops/online for good deals.

Try www.sportsdirect.com e.g. Karrimor Ladies Cycle Tights reduced from £34 to £8 (in black below) and <http://www.decathlon.co.uk> Ladies running top in various colours for £7.99 (in lilac below). Quite often Lidl and Aldi have items in store so look out locally. Synthetic materials work well but will hold odours so will need washing or if you have a bit more money buy something made of mainly merino wool (e.g. some Helly Hansen layers) as it will not hold odours, so on a multi-day paddle you can wear them for a few days.



Other top simple items are dry bags. Despite their name they are not always totally dry under extreme pressure so buying 2 so you can put one inside the other makes a big difference. Again you often find these in non kayaking shops e.g. camping, sportsdirect etc. You can keep your snacks, spare base layers, keys etc in these while on a paddle. These come in various materials. Buy ones that will fit in your boat.

It's always a good idea to carry a small first aid kit suitable for kayaking/canoeing and keep it in a dry bag.



Fold Dry Bags Brightly Coloured - Exped
From £3.99

Next on the list is your own buoyancy aid/ PFD (personal flotation device). The most important thing here is that it fits well with all of your layers or without layers for summer paddling. When you go to try one wear a few thick layers/jumper/hoodie to simulate the thickness of your paddling gear. To start with you don't need anything fancy with loads of pockets or with harnesses. Although these are useful they are not essential and you need to be trained on how to use them.

Don't be afraid to buy second hand but don't forget that over time buoyancy aids lose buoyancy which is why we test them regularly. Look on eBay / ukriversguide but don't pay too much. You may be able to buy new with a club discount. The ones below will cost about £28.



Another great investment, especially for any water that moves is a neoprene spray deck. They keep out loads more water than the standard nylon decks. You need to find out what deck size you need for your boat but a majority of boats use the big deck size now. A great value deck supplier is Lomo at <http://www.ewetsuits.com/> with a deck from £25 but please see what you can get locally. They also have many of the other items at good prices.

For any kayaking or moving water we recommend you wear a helmet. You only get one head so don't wear it out. It's important that you buy a helmet that fits or can be adjusted to fit well. You want it to be comfortable as you may be wearing it for a whole day. Try to find one that has straps across the back or supports the back of your head as this all helps to keep it on. Ideally a hard shell is best. Here are a couple of good examples. I recommend a brightly coloured or light coloured helmet to aid visibility.



Shred Ready Standard Full Cut Helmet - Shred Ready



Shred Ready Standard Half Cut Helmet - Shred Ready

Another great value helmet I've found is the Osprey OSX Canoe Kayak Helmet. I cannot vouch for it but it looks like a good design and it's available for under £20 if you look around.



Paddles – Paddles can be expensive but there are plenty of reasonable paddles around. Don't be tempted to buy the cheapest around as they are generally heavy and the blade design is not the most efficient. If you are buying your own then you should be looking to go to a level slightly up from out club paddles. Try to see and feel the type of paddle you want to buy before ordering so you are sure it's right for you.

Paddle Length

Paddle length varies based on the type of kayaking you will do, your height, and the type of kayak you paddle. Most people in our club will need paddles in the 190cm to 198cm range unless you are very tall.

Shaft Type: Straight or Bent Shaft. Straight shafts are more common, lighter, and cheaper. Bent Shaft paddles put less stress on your joints, promote proper stroke alignment, and are more comfortable.

Shaft Size: Most people don't know that there are different shaft diameters. As hand size increases so does the thickness of the needed paddle shaft. The choice here is primarily based primarily on comfort. Here is a hand sizing chart.

http://www.nrsweb.com/global/hand_chart.pdf guide your decision.

Paddle Blade

The blade is the part of the paddle that enters the water and propels the boat. Similar to the paddle shaft, the design features related to the paddle blade are important.

Blade Shape: Symmetrical or Assymetrical. An assymetrical shape provides for a smooth entry into the water. A symmetrically shaped blade is able to be paddled with either hand since the blades are exactly the same on both sides.

Feather: The feather of a paddle refers to the angle that each blade is offset from each other. The feather of one blade to another is usually measured in 15 degree increments with the most common being a 45 degree feather.

Construction

Blade and Shaft Materials: There are many materials that paddles are made from such as: aluminum, plastic, carbon, fiberglass, reinforced nylon. The materials determine the weight, durability, performance, and ultimately the price of the paddle.

Detailed Information: Here is a more detailed guide to paddle construction http://www.nrsweb.com/Shop/werner_design.asp that may help you

Look around on the web and your local shops but I would advise speaking to one of your coaches for advice before you buy as each person will be different. If you can afford to get some paddles valued around £100 new price (possibly buy second hand) then you will get something that will see you through many years of paddling.

Buying second hand is an option but ebay prices can go high and you may be able to buy new with a discount for the same money.

Other items to start thinking about:

- If you cannot stand the cold look for neoprene gloves, poggies, buffalo mitts.
- Throw lines – Please speak to people who have been trained to use lines for advice on what to buy and what not to buy.
- Waterproof shoes/boots
- First aid kit – sometimes it's cheaper to buy a 10 person refill pack from Screwfix <http://www.screwfix.com/prods/77709/Workplace-Safety/First-Aid/Mezzo-10-Person-First-Aid-Refill> at a cost of £6.29 and then share it out amongst your colleagues. Keep your kit in a sandwich box and dry bag.
- Head torch
- Compass
- Survival bag
- Flask
- Water bottle
- Karabiners
- Knife
- Spare paddles
- Skull Caps/Hoods
- Instruction Books – Ask for some advice from coaches as to what's good and best places to buy them.