

Kayaking

(Guidelines & Regulations)

The Department of Tourism,
The Administration of Union Territory of
Ladakh



KAYAKING IN LADAKH

Kayaking is a fun and thrilling adventure water sport, which is being loved by every adventure seeker globally. Kayaking was originally invented for hunting purposes, but later it was used for fishing, transportation, and other recreational purposes globally. Kayaking allows its users to experience and enjoy nature in various forms like Recreational Kayaking, Sport kayaking, Sea Kayaking, White-water kayaking, Surf Kayaking, Kayak Fishing, and Playboating.

In Ladakh's' context, White Water Kayaking is emerging as one of the major attractions among National and International tourists, especially in the Zaskar region. It can become one of the most appreciated and adventurous water sport activity in the region.

BACKGROUND

The Department of Tourism, Administration of Union Territory of Ladakh to streamline and promote adventure activities in Ladakh in a regulated manner is issuing the Guidelines & Regulations for carrying out Kayaking. These guidelines shall extend to the whole of the Union Territory of Ladakh and come into force from the date of its notification.

The Department of Tourism, Administration of Union Territory of Ladakh recommends following the guidelines & regulations for Kayaking, issued by the Adventure Tour Operators Associations of India (ATOAI) and endorsed by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

These guidelines will act as a defining force with respect to the procedures to be followed, mandatory trainings for guides/instructors, equipment to be used, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), necessary documentation, risk mitigation processes, addressing medical concerns, emergencies, rescue operations, safety briefing, etc. All Adventure Tour Operators (ATOs) shall follow these guidelines while conducting Kayaking in the Union Territory of Ladakh.

VALIDITY

The 'Guidelines & Regulation for Kayaking' will remain valid for five (5) years, from the date of its notification. All Adventure Tour Operators (ATOs) are advised to strictly adhere to the terms and conditions of these guidelines and follow its best implementation for the sustainable development of the adventure tourism ecosystem in the Union Territory of Ladakh.

ENCLOSURES

- Annexure 1 – Guidelines & Regulations for Kayaking in the Union Territory of Ladakh
- Annexure 2 – Implementation Framework for the Union Territory of Ladakh

ANNEXURE 1 GUIDELINES & REGULATIONS FOR KAYAKING

1. INTRODUCTION

Kayaking is amongst the most popular water sports activities globally. Negotiating rapids and paddling in open water, lakes, or the sea is an exhilarating experience requiring skill and stamina. Kayaks are normally decked and paddled with two-bladed paddles by paddlers sitting inside an enclosed cockpit. Spray decks are used to minimize water in the cockpit, providing better protection for paddlers and reducing the likelihood of hypothermia on cold water rivers. Safe use of spray decks requires training. Training in rescue procedures is required for all kayaks and techniques vary according to craft type and environment.

Since it is a dynamic sport, instructors and guides must be highly qualified and the equipment used should be of the highest standard. There are several types of kayaks:

1. **Recreational Kayaks:** Short (about 3 m for singles) and wide, with large open cockpits. They are suited to flat, sheltered waters only.
2. **Touring Kayaks:** 3.5 to 4.5 m in length, often have bulkheads and hatches. They are suited to open waters such as estuaries and bays, but not the open sea.
3. **Sea Kayaks:** 4.5 to 6 m in length, with bulkheads and hatches, hands-free pump systems, and other equipment and are intended for open sea conditions.
4. **Whitewater Kayaks:** There are several types of whitewater kayaks, mainly river runner, creek, and freestyle - all with spray decks.
5. **Sit on top (SOT) Craft:** SOT kayaks are a popular choice among recreational paddlers. Recovery after a capsize is easy, right the boat and re-board. On the other hand, paddlers are more exposed to the elements and more care is needed to minimize sunburn and hypothermia. Damaged or loose fittings and hatch covers, or hull damage may allow the entry of water: these crafts are not unsinkable:
 - I. Recreational types single and double, are fairly short and wide. Being susceptible to wind, they are suitable only for flat-sheltered water.
 - II. Touring SOTs are longer and able to cope with estuary and bay conditions. They are favored by the kayak fishing community.
 - III. Seagoing SOTs have performance and feature similar to sea kayaks but without the enclosed cockpit.
 - IV. Specialist SOTs for Whitewater and surf use are available. On open water, tethers can prevent the separation of craft and paddler after capsizing. There is the danger of entanglement.
6. **Inflatable Kayaks:** Inflatable kayaks range from little more than toys to kayaks for use on serious Whitewater.

2. GUIDES / INSTRUCTORS

1. Lead instructors for water sports activities should, as a minimum, hold the following:
 - I. A minimum 16-hour (2-day) first aid certificate provided by a recognized and qualified provider including CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation).
 - II. Qualification from a Recognized National or International body for the particular kayaking activity and a certificate from the operator that the individual "has experience of 2 years in assisting in the particular activity and is independently capable of guiding groups and carrying out rescue operations".
 - III. A logbook containing authenticated records of kayaking experience.
2. Other guides accompanying the trip should be skilled to a high level in conducting the activity, rescue and life-saving techniques, and First Aid/C.P.R.
3. All Instructors and Guides should have the ability to carry out the following and ensure that this is done before/ during the trip:
 - I. The ability to communicate clearly and deliver a comprehensive safety briefing before starting the activity is mandatory.
 - II. Gauge participants' ability to participate in kayaking activity and their ability to do the specific stretch that they are being taken on.
 - III. Ask participants for relevant medical history.
 - IV. Check environmental conditions (weather, tide, river levels).
 - V. Conduct systematic hazard management checks to ensure that hazards (sources of harm) are identified, assessed, and either eliminated, isolated, or minimized on an ongoing basis.
 - VI. Headcount of all participants before, during, and at the end of the trip.
 - VII. Be vigilant for changes in the physical or psychological state of participants.
 - VIII. Set an appropriate pace for the group and take rest as necessary.

3. EQUIPMENT

1. Kayaks (should be a good quality stable craft, able to withstand all foreseeable forces, allow for easy exit upon capsizing, footrests should not allow feet to become entrapped, should not sink if swamped and appropriate for the activity).
2. Paddles (appropriate for the type of kayak and the skill level of participants, should be able to withstand all forces associated with activity such as impact with rocks).
3. Helmets are mandatory for all kayaking trips taking place on a river (should be made of strong lightweight material like carbon fiber or plastic, provide protection and coverage to the forehead, temple, and back of the head and have a good system to absorb shock from impacts).
4. Life jackets or Personal Floatation Devices (PFDs) (must meet the minimum buoyancy requirement, be appropriate for the intended activity, and be certified/approved by BIS (Bureau of Indian Standards), US coastguard, British Canoe Union, or equivalent).
5. Throwable rescue devices must be available for immediate use.
6. Safety Kayaks must be available in the immediate vicinity (within visual distance) for prompt rescue with personnel duly qualified to operate/ carry out rescue operations.
7. During cold weather operations, wetsuits and spray jackets are recommended.
8. Instructors must all carry rescue bags, knives, and whistles.
9. Each trip must carry a first aid kit.

4. OPERATIONS

All kayaking activities must begin with a thorough safety briefing. The briefing must highlight the equipment used, do's and don'ts, demarcation of the boundary for the activity, and rescue and emergency procedures. A liability waiver form highlighting the risk involved must be signed by all participants before the commencement of the activity. Participants with any medical condition making them unfit for participation in the activity must be informed before the commencement of the activity and not allowed to participate.

5. RISK MITIGATION

1. **Lifejackets:** No kayaking activity should be undertaken without wearing a lifejacket throughout the time spent on the water. The life jacket must have adequate buoyancy and should be fastened properly and checked by the instructor before the commencement of the water sports activity. The lifejacket must be the appropriate size for the intended user.
2. **Guides:** No kayaking activity should be conducted without the presence of trained guide/s.
3. Only competent swimmers should participate in Whitewater kayaking.
4. **Helmets:** Helmets are mandatory for Whitewater kayaking. Helmets should be a good fit, tight to not move but not uncomfortable with an effective fastener to keep the helmet in place.
5. **Instructor-to-Client Ratio:** Due to the technical nature of the sport, it is advised that the company ensure the instructor-to-client ratio is always 1:4 in white water kayaking. There should always be at least two qualified instructors on any trip.
6. **Number of Kayaks:** There should be at least three kayaks for a trip to occur, no single kayak trips are allowed.
7. **Alcohol/Drugs** during the activity and at least six hours before the activity is strictly prohibited.
8. **Client Ability:** Clients should not be taken on stretches that the instructor deems above their ability level. Their fitness should be assessed, and they should be taken on an appropriate stretch.
9. **Sign Boards:** For properties/operators that have access to the water/river. Sign boards should be present beside the water/river with rules mentioning that no water sports activity is to be undertaken unless supervised.
10. No kayaking activity should be conducted in the dark and preferably finish at least one hour before dark.
11. **Age Limit:**
 - I. Children below the age of 12 are not allowed to kayak on rapids in a river
 - II. Children 12+ can only kayak on Grade II rapids
 - III. Children 14+ can kayak on Grade III rapids and above
 - IV. For recreational kayaking and canoeing in lakes, the age limit is 10 years. It must be ensured that risk is mitigated by not venturing far from the shore (maximum 50 meters) and by going out in good weather conditions only

6. SOPs & OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

1. All Kayaking Operators must maintain and update a Standard Operating Procedure for their operations.
2. Besides covering the methodologies that are adopted by the agency in organizing the activity, such as assessing member's medical condition and experience, procedures for the conduct of the activity, avoidance of injury, safety precautions, communication, weather, the procedure for emergencies, casualty evacuation, incident and accident reporting, feedback mechanism the following must be included in the SOPs:
 - An Emergency Action Plan including rescues, evacuations, and medical assistance must be in position. Staff/ guides/drivers must be trained in all aspects of the Emergency Action Plan periodically.

- Advertising must give a true picture of the difficulties and risks involved and clients briefed accordingly. Information about guides and their experience should be sent to the clients for multi-day kayaking expeditions.

7. DOCUMENTATION

The tour operator must maintain, at the minimum the following documentation:

1. Details of all Guides and Instructors including, copies of certifications, a record of experience, and feedback from clients.
2. Copies of all Permits, Permissions, and Insurance required for operations.
3. Copies of identification documents, insurance cover, medical concerns, and details of next of kin for all participants, guides, and instructors.
4. Copy of SOP.
5. Current list of emergency contact numbers.

8. EMERGENCIES & RESCUES

1. Adequate first aid medical equipment must be available with the kayaking trip.
2. Evacuation routes must be identified and known to participants, guides, and instructors.
3. A detailed and documented evacuation/ emergency procedure must be available with the party along with the closest available emergency services which can be called upon as required.

9. SAFETY BRIEFING

All instructors and guides should be able to give a thorough safety briefing that covers all safety aspects and detailed instructions about a safe kayaking tour. This briefing must be clear and given in English, Hindi, or the local language that the passenger can understand.

10. MEDICAL CONCERNS

All instructors and guides must be able to ensure that a question regarding medical issues is asked before the activity is conducted. It is recommended that heart patients, those with spinal issues, recent surgery, or any other medical issue of concern, expecting mothers, and underage children do not participate in the activity. It is also recommended to check for epilepsy and asthmatic patients, on the extent of the ailment. Asthma inhalers must be carried by clients and preferably handed over to the guide.

11. BASIC MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR GRANT OF RECOGNITION TO OPERATORS

It is highly recommended that any outfit, entity, establishment, or company seeking a grant of recognition must fulfill these desirable criteria:

1. The entity must own specialized equipment commensurate with the needs of undertaking and running such an operation.
2. The entity must have qualified personnel (minimum two full-time qualified staff) on their payroll. These personnel must carry the requisite experience in the activity and have valid First Aid & CPR certification.
3. The entity must operate with the required permits/licenses.
4. The entity must have at least one certified and experienced person on its Board.
5. It is recommended that the entity is registered with the State/UT Tourism Department /recognized by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.
6. The entity must have a registered office.
7. The kayaking company must follow a strict 'leave no trace policy and conform to high sustainability standards.

ANNEXURE 2 IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK FOR THE UNION TERRITORY OF LADAKH

1. CONSTITUTION OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

The Department of Tourism, Administration of Union Territory of Ladakh shall, by notification/ order will constitute a 'Technical Committee' for Kayaking with the following members:

Composition of the Technical Committee	
Director (Tourism), UT Ladakh	Chairperson
Chief Wildlife Warden / Representative, Wildlife Department	Member
Principal ISM, Kargil Branch	Member
Principal FCI/ IHM, Leh	Member
Representative of the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF)	Member
Representative of the Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI) for Kayaking	Member
Representative of the Ladakh Association for Kayaking	Member
Assistant Director (Tourism), Concerned	Convening Member

2. FUNCTIONS OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

The Technical Committee shall meet once every year before the start of the tourist season in the Union Territory of Ladakh, and shall be responsible for the following:

- Inspect and certify the equipment with the operator from a safety point of view.
- Scrutinize the credential of the personnel responsible for conducting Kayaking, the medical fitness of the guide, and conduct their physical test to ascertain their expertise.
- Ensure that the operator and the guide shall follow all safety procedures indicated in their rules.
- Identify new areas/ routes/ tracks for Kayaking in the Union Territory of Ladakh.
- Notify the exact stretches on the identified areas/ routes/ tracks where the operation can be safely conducted, considering the area's environmental sensitivity, critical wildlife hotspots and fragile water systems.
- Formulate a plan for containing the environmental impact strictly inside the designated activity area.
- Forecast the potential ecological impacts and ensure a plan for eco-conditioning to minimize the impact and offsetting the potential environmental impact.
- Ensure preparation and implementation of a Risk Management Matrix, and Emergency & Evacuation plan.
- Ensure preparation of a plan for tourist awareness and education.
- Determine the capacity of each track every year before the start of any operation.

3. CONSTITUTION OF THE REGULATORY COMMITTEE

The Department of Tourism, Administration of Union Territory of Ladakh shall, by notification/ order will constitute a 'Regulatory Committee' for Kayaking with the following members:

Composition of the Regulatory Committee	
Assistant Director (Tourism), Concerned	Chairperson
Wildlife Warden or Representative, Wildlife Department	Member
Representative of the District Disaster Response Force (DDRF)	Member
Representative of the Chief Medical Officer (CMO)	Member
SHO/Choki of the Concerned Area	Member
Representative of the Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI) for Kayaking	Member
Representative of the Ladakh Association for Kayaking	Member
Officer in-charge of the Department of Tourism, UT Ladakh at Sub-Division and Tehsils	Convening Member

4. FUNCTIONS OF THE REGULATORY COMMITTEE

The Regulatory Committee shall meet once every year before the start of the tourist season in the Union Territory of Ladakh, and shall be responsible for the following:

- Overall control for regulating the Kayaking operations, in coordination with the concerned stakeholders and associations.
- Surprise inspections during the Kayaking operations to ascertain adherence of the guidelines, assess the quality & condition of equipment being used and assess the ecological impact, to help develop adaptive management strategies. The Regulatory Committee shall constitute a joint inspection or verification team with the Department of Youth Services & Sports, UT Ladakh and Adventure Sports Association, if any.

- Establish a mechanism for receiving and addressing complaints, concerns, and feedback from local communities, tourists, and stakeholders.
- Any other functions concerning Kayaking operations in the Union Territory of Ladakh.

5. CLAIM ON ACCOUNT OF ANY MISHAP

The Department of Tourism, or any other Department/ Authority of the Administration of Union Territory of Ladakh shall, in no way be responsible for any claims on account of any mishap.

6. SHOW CAUSE NOTICE

If any operator, guide, or personnel responsible for conducting Kayaking operations is found to be violating these Guidelines & Regulations for Kayaking, appropriate action shall be taken by the Department of Tourism, Administration of Union Territory of Ladakh.

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