



Sea Kayaking in the Tropics

The experience of kayaking in one of the most biologically intense regions of the world both above and under the water is guaranteed to stir your soul. Paddle above vibrant coral reefs, or drift quietly under the backdrop of lush rainforests.

Weather permitting, the kayaking activity is normally available anytime the other expeditioners go out.

Rather than travelling large distances, our aim is to see as much as possible. We paddle anywhere between 5-15 km / 3-9 mi. (2 to 4 hours) per outing, sometimes taking a snack and a cool drink to enjoy on our excursion.

Each group of up to 10 kayakers (per guide) generally visit the same wildlife sites as our fellow expeditioners. However, the size of our kayaks means that we also have the opportunity to access areas that are often not accessible by Zodiacs.

The warm aqua blue waters are perfect for spotting manta rays, dolphins, turtles and whales. The elements play an important role in any paddle outing so it is important to understand that our kayaking time may be affected by the weather that we experience.



Required experience

For our tropical trips you should have some prior paddling experience, be active in the outdoors and have an adventurous spirit. We may encounter wind on these trips, however the water is fairly protected.

You do not need to be an expert or know how to roll. However, you are required to be able to swim and you should have experience in a wet exit and assisted re-entry. You should also be proficient at putting on a spray skirt by yourself, and be comfortable paddling on seas with up to half a metre swell. It is also important that you gain some practice getting into a kayak from a pier, wharf, or deep shoreline where you can't step into the kayak from standing position. All this can easily be practiced at home before your trip. You should paddle in a variety of weather conditions to prepare for your tropical adventure.

Our guides do not offer instructional classes for beginners. Therefore, the kayaking option is not recommended for complete novices. If your experience is limited, we'd encourage you to call us to discuss your suitability. There is often ample time to gain the required experience before you depart. We may be able to recommend a reputable sea kayak operator in your area for some tuition prior to the trip.

Please note: Your guide will assess your ability on the initial paddle, and if you have insufficient experience, he or she reserves the right to restrict your participation in rougher conditions.

Fitness requirements

You should be fit enough to paddle for up to three hours at a time, and climb between moving Zodiacs on the water. Regular exercise is recommended, as the fitter you are the more you will enjoy the experience. The more paddles you can do before the trip, the better (we recommend at least 3 to 4 outings prior to your voyage).

Number of outings per voyage

Sea kayaking is offered in place of regular shore excursions. We aim to paddle as frequently as shore landings, or Zodiac-cruises, are offered to all other passengers, sometimes more. Depending on the itinerary, this is generally twice per day.

Group size

Our guide to paddler ratio is 1:10 and we provide a safety zodiac in the area.

There are up to 20 places available for kayaking.

Age limit

Kayakers should be aged 14 or over.

Booking allocation:

Each kayaking place is for one person only.

Passengers are unable to 'share' a kayaking place as the kayaks are customised for each individual at the beginning of each voyage.



Our Guides

Our guides have many years of kayaking experience in our destinations. The guide will lead the group on each excursion, explaining facts about the wildlife and other highlights as we come across them.

The Kayaks

We primarily use Point 65 plastic kayaks. 5.2 metre long doubles and Whiskey 16 Tour and Sea Cruiser singles.

Single kayak use will be at the guide's discretion, depending on group numbers and individual experience. They are all a sit-in style, well-suited for day trips and launching quickly from the ship.

The kayaks are quite stable and we generally launch in deep water from our specially designed floating kayak platform behind the ship. We will always paddle back to the ship in deep water unless conditions are too rough and we return to the ship by Zodiac.

In the unlikely event of a capsize, the guide will assist by righting the kayak and stabilising and pumping it out. Paddlers will re-enter with the guide's help, or with a support Zodiac.

Note that the kayaks have separate compartments with bulkheads, so they float after a capsize.

Equipment included

The equipment included in the price of your kayak option:

- Rudder and skeg kayaks
- Werner paddles
- Male and female PFDs
- 15-litre dry bag
- Neoprene boots (available sizes 4-14)

What to bring

We recommend:

- One long sleeve lightweight synthetic shirt. This is highly recommended for sun protection while paddling. Cotton is not very suitable for paddling as it gets stiff with salt and can irritate the skin. A light-weight capilene or polypropylene top may be suitable.
- A lycra sun top is useful for snorkeling
- Light-weight rain jacket or spray jacket
- Headgear: a wide brimmed hat for protection from the sun is essential. Visors are inadequate. A hat with a stiff brim that will hold rigid in a breeze, e.g. straw hat with a strap to put under your chin is good. A light scarf for your neck can be useful.
- Gloves: cycling or paddling gloves for sun protection and blisters
- Sarong - useful for covering your legs or sitting whilst on sandy beaches.
- Two pairs of water shorts and swimwear
- One pair of reef shoes for paddling or a good fitting pair of sandals that attach solidly. The neoprene booties we have on board are quite heavy.
- Waterproof sunscreen blockout and lip balm
- Sunglasses with side visors and tie or string for attaching them to prevent loss
- Water bottle: 1 to 2 litre capacity. Note: complementary water bottles available upon request.
- Talcum powder to prevent salt water rash.
- Waterproof binoculars: Highly recommended for wildlife viewing from the kayak
- Drybags, waterproof bag or Pelicase for camera or phone.

Weather

In Costa Rica and Panama, April is the end of the dry season. The shoulder season begins in May, bringing increased humidity. Afternoon rain showers are possible in May with temperatures ranging from 26–36 °C (80–96 °F). Winds are generally light at this time of year. The water temperature ranges from 27–29 °C. Surf landings are not likely, but be prepared to paddle in a small swell or wind chop, with winds up to 15 knots. Again, we will not paddle if wind conditions are too strong and there is no sheltered area for paddling.

In Indonesia and Borneo, October and November mark the shoulder period between the dry and wet seasons. You can expect warm, humid conditions with daytime temperatures typically ranging from 27–33 °C (80–91 °F) and occasional rain showers, especially in the afternoons. Sea conditions are generally calm with light to moderate winds, making it suitable for paddling. Water temperatures remain warm, usually between 28–30 °C. As always, kayaking activities will be assessed daily based on weather and sea conditions to ensure safety.

Surf landings are not likely, but be prepared to paddle in a small swell or wind chop, with winds up to 15 knots. We will not paddle if wind conditions are too strong and there is no sheltered area for paddling.

If the weather changes during our outing we will head back to the ship and perhaps join a shore excursion. The ship's captain, expedition leader and kayak guide always maintain close contact to ensure a safe paddling experience.

Paddling amongst the wildlife

The astonishing biodiversity in the nature reserves of the tropical places we visit ensure superb wildlife-viewing opportunities, both above and below the water. Kayaks offer a unique opportunity to view marine and land mammals, coral reefs, tropical fish, sea birds and an astonishing range of rainforest birds. We will bring our snorkeling gear with us during our paddles and take advantage of any opportunities to view the marine life up close.

Frequently asked questions

Can I carry anything in the kayak?

Yes, you will be supplied with a drybag for extra clothing, binoculars and anything that needs to be kept dry. You

should also carry a water bottle. You are also welcome to bring along your own 5-10 litre dry bag for personal items.

Can I bring my camera?

Yes, but we highly recommend a waterproof camera or phone, or a good quality waterproof case. Pelican cases are highly recommended for good cameras. The kayak hatches are not large and will not take a Pelican case larger than the 1400 model. A 1300 model is better suited if your camera and lens combination fit. However, you may be able to strap a larger case onto the back deck of the kayak.

What if the weather changes during an outing?

We do not attempt to paddle too far away from the ship - the emphasis is on experiencing the destination rather than travelling long distances. Your guide will be in constant radio contact with our ship captain and expedition leader and if we need to return to the ship a Zodiac can be called.

What about paddling in swell?

The kayaks are stable, made with a hard plastic and are easily paddled in swell and conducting our shore landings.

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance including emergency evacuation coverage, is mandatory on all Aurora Expeditions voyages. You will need to ensure that your insurance policy covers you for your activity and any related equipment. An additional policy or premium may be required to ensure you have adequate coverage. Please contact Aurora Expeditions if you need assistance with your insurance policy.

What if I decide I don't want to paddle?

Outings are not mandatory and you are given the opportunity to paddle as much or as little as you like. However, we do encourage you to get out as much as you can! Please note that the activity surcharge is non-refundable and we are unable to assist you if change your mind once on board. If you decide to fully cancel your participation in the activity during the voyage, please be aware that you will not be entitled to a refund - neither partially nor fully. Contact our team for further details on our kayaking cancellation policy.

Activity Surcharge

The Sea Kayaking activity is available for an additional surcharge and includes guided excursions and kayaking equipment. Please refer to our website for the cost of kayaking on your chosen voyage.

For more information please contact your travel agent, or Aurora Expeditions on:

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