

# WHICH BOAT FOR YOU?

## INTRODUCTION

The Kayak Share Club “fleet” currently stands at twenty craft: five are sit-on-top style (SOT) of which three are at Neutral Bay and two are at Pearl Bay; three entry-level “skis” (all at Neutral Bay); and twelve sit-in style kayaks (they can loosely be described as sea kayaks). There are six sit-ins each at Neutral Bay and Pearl Bay.

Each style of craft has its pros and cons as outlined below.

### **Sit-on-tops**

Generally speaking, the SOTs present less of a hassle getting you on to the water. No fitting adjustments are required to accommodate paddlers of different sizes. You just hop on, find the moulded foot well that suits your leg length (remembering the importance of your posture; and the ability to get leg drive and torso rotation happening) and off you go.

These kayaks suit those wanting to go out for a short paddle, say a 5km circuit of the KSC Level 1 boundaries or a dash over to the Flying Bear for a coffee fix before returning to base. An upside when using the SOTs is that they are generally easier to get back into without assistance in the event of an inadvertent capsize (regular practice at capsize recovery is strongly recommended). Although the seating position is higher on the SOTs, they are more stable than the other style of craft in the KSC fleet.

When compared with the sit-in kayaks within the fleet, you are

likely to find the SOTs sluggish, particularly when paddling into a stiff headwind. Being rudderless, the SOTs can be more difficult to keep on a straight track with a stiff breeze on the beam or from behind.

Also, when paddling a SOT you have little protection from the natural elements of sun, wind and rain so it is important that you wear the appropriate protective clothing suited to the weather conditions in which you are paddling.

### **Sit-in kayaks**

The sit-ins are best suited for longer paddles – giving you a reward for the time you have taken to set the kayak up to suit you.

Generally speaking, the sit-ins will give you better value for your stroke (i.e. they will go faster than a SOT). Another upside is their “cargo” carrying capacity making them more suitable for picnic paddles or overnight trips such as camping on Cockatoo Island.

A downside of the sit-ins is that they present more of a problem in the event of capsize. A self-rescue either requires the ability to “Eskimo” roll or remount the kayak (with water likely to be sloshing around inside the cockpit) which involves a fair degree of athleticism and know-how. Even an assisted rescue requires know-how on the part of the rescuer in order to be effective (i.e. to be performed quickly and without injury to person or damage to kayaks).

The sit-ins are definitely the better craft for you to advance your kayaking skills such as your forward stroke (likely 95% plus of what we do when paddling), boat control and self-rescues. They provide you with the best opportunities to broaden your kayaking horizons and allow you to capitalise on the wide range of wonderful experiences these little boats can offer.

### **Entry-level skis**

These craft provide the best opportunity to develop a technically-sound forward stroke – a must for those wanting to go fast. Thus, they represent a good starting point to those who want to graduate to paddling ocean skis (which a number of KSC members have!). Because they have no back support, they rely on good core strength to maintain correct posture, essential for balance as well as efficient and injury-free paddling.

**A cautionary note:** some of the kayaks in fleet, both sit-on-top and sit-ins, have below deck storage hatches. These hatches are sealed in different ways. Regardless of the method of sealing, do not assume that anything stored in the hatches will stay dry. Anything you want to keep dry should be stored in a dry bag. Double bagging electronic items such as car keys, mobile phones, non-waterproof cameras is a prudent practice. Hatch covers need to be fully secured before getting on the water.

