

FAQ's about the kayak leg

(For practical tips on Kayaking technique please refer to the Canoe page on this site.)

Requests for kayak hire

To clear up a common misconception, the Katherine Multi-sport Club does not have a regular kayak hiring service. We do try to assist competitors particularly those from further afield to source a kayak for the event if they can't find one to use. Some of these kayaks belong to the club, others to private individuals in Katherine or to a local student hostel. There are only about 20 kayaks available in total so we are not able to satisfy all requests. Preference will be given to competitors travelling from further away and those from Katherine. Competitors from Darwin in particular should be aware that there are many more kayaks in Darwin than in Katherine.

Kayaks will be allocated from emailed requests. Please email your request to kmsclub@gmail.com . If then offered a kayak for the event, the sum of \$25 needs to be paid by the 10th of July. Any kayaks remaining after the 17th of July will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

Competitors hiring kayaks from the club will need to come to the club shed on the day before the race to get fitted out with a kayak and paddle. Times for pick up are 11:00am - 12:30pm and 2:30pm - 4:30pm. Anyone not able to make those times or who wants to collect a boat early must contact the kayak organiser.

Those who are then able to take the boat away on their car are welcome to do so. If you don't have a roof rack we can deliver them to the river (Knott's Crossing) on race day.

The club trailer will be at the High Level at the end of the kayak leg. All those who borrowed boats must load them on the trailer. We will tie them on but it is too much work for one person to load all the boats.

Although in most cases it is one size fits all, there are some boats and paddles that are more suitable for tall, heavy or small people so we ask you to give your approximate dimensions when you book a boat.

We also try to match kayak to competitor's skill and seriousness.

Types of kayak

- **TK1** (about 10) – these are relatively fast and comfortable river boats but they are very unstable for those who are not used to them. It is pointless trying to navigate the ultra-challenge course in a TK1 without previous experience or practice.
- **General purpose** (6). These are slow and uncomfortable but stable.
- There are also one or two **K1** kayaks available but they are extremely unstable and only suited to those with substantial experience in that type of boat.

We do also allow teams to use double kayaks (and even double canoes) if necessary. With two paddlers you are not eligible for the prize of fastest competitor on the kayak leg but otherwise this is a good option for some teams. The club has a couple of two man kayaks (TK2s) and a couple of double canoes (TC2s).

We are continually dismayed by the number of competitors who attempt the kayak leg of the Ultra-challenge without any practice. This causes the competitor a lot of frustration and leads to damage to the kayaks that is hard to repair. We strongly urge all competitors to try out the kayak course beforehand.

The Multisport Club canoe section is prepared to help any competitor to learn to paddle or to practice before the race. Read also Kayaking 101 – kayak notes for beginners located on the Canoe page of this site.

What is the course like? The course we are now using for the Ultra-challenge kayak leg is through the middle of town from Knott's Crossing to Low Level and then back up to the High Level Bridge (11 km). That means your team will be able to see you and check your progress as you pass the High Level Bridge the first time (that is about the 6 km mark). The course varies each year depending on the wet season. The first kilometre or two weaves through trees and there are some tight turns and faster water. The biggest problems are the shallow sandy patches. These vary in location and severity each year, but are mostly they are between the 2km and 4km marks. Once the High Level Bridge is in sight you should have clear water from then on.

Are there rapids? No not really. There are faster bits towards the beginning, in the first two kilometres, but no real rapids.

What about crocodiles? Nobody is ever going to guarantee that there are no crocodiles but by that time in the dry season the river has been very well patrolled, and the rangers wouldn't sanction us to do the event if they thought there were any crocodiles in that section of the river.

Do competitors have to wear life jackets? We do not supply lifejackets, nor do we insist on competitors using them. Anyone who is not a strong swimmer or who is not confident paddling without one, should wear a lifejacket. Competitors not wearing a lifejacket need to sign a waiver with their application.

How long should the paddle take? A competent paddler should take about 1.5 hours to cover the 11 km course but some will take longer.

What if I get into trouble and can't continue? The best thing to do is to stay on the river bank and tell one of the other competitors to pass on the message that you need help. With the finish in the central position of the High level Bridge it shouldn't take long for the message to reach the marshal and

for help to be on its way. If for some reason you do leave the river and walk up the eastern bank into town, you must immediately come and tell the marshal at the High Level, or else we will be out looking for you.

Will my sea kayak or surf ski be suitable? The best boat to use is the one you are most comfortable in. Competitors have managed well in sea kayaks and surf skis in the past. However if your boat has an under-stern rudder or any form of dagger board then you are likely to have problems in the shallow sections. You will have to assess the course beforehand.

Can my support crew help me to get my kayak in and out of the water? Yes then can, but they must not block the river access by holding the boat in the water as they wait for their competitor to finish the previous leg. Also to make it fair, in the team event the kayak paddler must wait on the bank for their team member to tag them, no sitting ready in the boat. At the end of the kayak leg so the boat ramp is not blocked, the kayak must be completely clear of the water before the competitor can set off up the hill. After that the support crew can carry the kayak up to their car or trailer.

I don't have a suitable vehicle. Can I get help to get my kayak down to the start of the kayak leg and up again at the end? Yes, the club trailer will be taking club boats up and down so we can assist.

Please note: kayakers will be given preference to both Katherine people and those travelling from afar. We encourage people from Darwin to exhaust all options before contacting us. Multiple seated kayakers will be allowed for teams however, doing so will exclude you from winning the kayak's fastest leg award.

The 2015 edition was the 16th year of competition and as usual, we experienced the fun and excitement that only a long distance endurance event can contain.

In previous years the event attracted more than 200 competitors and their supporters from Katherine, Darwin, Gove, Brisbane, Adelaide, Melbourne and beyond! It's an event attracting juniors, adults, families, friends and colleagues and requires dedication and training to participate. It is widely considered extremely unique and well supported by the Katherine community and national adventure race community.