

The sea kayaker's Trident



we are all paddlers

“kayak towed back by fishing boat?”
Little understanding of currents.

“A paddler on a tandem kayak injured his
head when a swell capsized the pair in a cave?”
NOT wearing a helmet.

“kayak with two children on board
rescued off a headland in rough seas.”
poor choice of venue.

“while kayak fishing 50m from shore in
an offshore wind, he was swept round the
breakwater into overfalls?” “I thought I was OK
as the tide was coming in.” he said.



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All reflect a lack of knowledge, experience and skills. A common theme: all were using sit on tops.

Sots are the new kids on the block and sea kayaking is trying to ignore them. Like a pesky little kid they hope will go away. Sots might be a passing fashion. They said that about snowboards.

There are some retailers who have little experience or knowledge of paddle sport and spotted a market opportunity. When one south coast marine chandler sells over 200 sots it indicates the size of the market. They market how stable/safe sots are and forget that most promotional images are of warm water kayaking. If trends continue closed cockpit sea kayaking could become an endangered species.

Print a safety disclaimer on the kayak: "Buyer beware". Not much use if you cannot get advice and training. I asked a retailer how he would respond if a paddler bought a sot on Friday and drowned on Saturday. He now promotes courses and safety training.

Most sit on top kayakers enter paddle sport from outside of traditional kayaking. Many were put off closed cockpit kayaks when faced with wet exits, which remain etched in their memory. Others do not consider decked kayaks meet their needs e.g. for fishing. Often they do not learn skills or paddle in clubs because some clubs are perceived as unwelcome to sot users. As for courses, try finding one just for sots.

I often fish clients out of the water who believed the marketing images and thought you cannot capsized a sot.

Many sit on top paddlers want to improve skills and seamanship. A quick look at sot forums soon proves people want to learn. There is just not much support in the traditional sea-kayaking world to meet the needs of sots.



Maybe it does not matter. However, of the 5 incidents only two became Coast guard statistics. Imagine if all 5 led to rescue operations. Calls to slap controls on how far and where we can paddle would appear. That will impact on every sea kayaker.

Next time you encounter sot paddlers, take time to share tips and knowledge. Consider how to draw in sit on top paddlers. You might even learn a few things, gain some paddling pals and help promote sea kayaking. After all we're all paddlers.

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His company, Jersey Kayak Adventures Ltd offers guided tours and courses for sit on tops and closed cockpit sea kayaks. He is the author of Sit on Top kayak, a beginner's manual, published by Pesda press

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