

Sea Kayaking Scenario 1

You and a group of friends plan to visit a tide race venue, part of a day of dynamic water skills. In fresh onshore winds during the previous day, you paddled at the mouth of a nearby bay. Everyone was happy in conditions - you all surfed a few waves at the beach; some good rides, a few rolls, a couple of swims.

Today you launch and paddle towards your chosen tide race.

The wind forecast is 8 knots onshore, with early afternoon HW slack - half-springs with a max. flood stream of 4 knots.

There is an underlying sea state from yesterday's winds, with a playful sea state against the rocky coastline en route to the headland.

The group arrive upstream of the tide race. There's a nervous anticipation in the group; the view of the dynamic water has got everyone's attention.

Most of the team don't paddle tide races every weekend and although the waves don't appear larger than yesterday, there is some fast-moving water to negotiate.

It's hard to view the inner race, rocky reefs blocking your view of the route ahead.

The middle race has occasionally breaking wave crests; downstream conditions are hidden from view. The outer race looks big, with surging breakers over the shallow reef beyond the main rocks.

You look at each other while considering the situation. There's a range of experience in the group, but no formal leader. It was a simple decision to launch and paddle to this point - what do you do next?

Sea Kayaking Scenario 2

You and group of friends have kayaked to a group of small rocky islands, 1.5 miles offshore. It's your second day together; you paddled a coastal trip on day one - in light winds and friendly conditions, through small tide races without trouble.

You have decided to paddle to the islands on the ebb tide, and have launched 5km further along the coast. LW slack in this area is not until 18:00, and so you've left vehicles at a bay where you plan to end the trip, 10km from your launch.

The forecast is 10-12 knots onshore, the tidal range is half-springs - maximum ebb around the islands will be approx. 3.5 knots. You depart for the islands at 13:00 UTC (early November).

The crossing to the islands goes well, although one group member is a little slower than yesterday and unexpectedly swims as you cross the eddy lines close to the islands. You land and enjoy a break - your swimmer is warm, well-dressed and seems OK. However, the wind is a little stronger than forecast - approx. 12 knots, gusting 15 onshore.

By 15:30 you need to depart - there's only 2 hours of daylight left, and it will take about 90 minutes to reach your destination. The tidal stream is approx. 3 knots, with some standing waves in the sound. It looks OK for the level of the group, but your swimmer is now rather anxious and seems tired.

The team don't have overnight camping kit, and no one has paddled an unfamiliar coastline in the dark before today. Waiting on the islands feels like a bad idea.

You are the more experienced group member, having visited the area in the past.

What do you do?

Review Questions

Scenario 1:

What commitment have you already made, before the decision to enter / avoid the tide race?

What choices do you have?

What are the implications of continuing into the tide race?

Scenario 2:

What commitments have you already made, before the return crossing from the island?

What choices / decisions were made up to this point?

What options / choices do you have, upon arriving at the island?

What are the implications of departing the island immediately (15:30)?

What are the implications of delaying departure (16:30)?