



Choosing a Whitewater kayak

The range of white water kayaks on the market today is huge and can be confusing whether you are a newcomer to the sport or an old hand.

At Brookbank Canoes and UK Canoes we are very experienced in being able to help people narrow down the search for a white water kayak. (Although we can't actually make the final decision for you).

So how do you go about choosing a WW kayak?

Follow the advice below and you should easily be able to narrow your search down to a few models.

WHAT TYPE OF WHITE WATER PADDLING DO YOU INTEND DOING MOST OF?

White water kayaking and the boat designs generally fall into 1 of the 3 following categories.

FREESTYLE / PARK AND PLAY.

Riding a wave or hole, spinning, surfing, blunts, etc. are all moves performed on a playspot or feature.

These kayaks are, as the name suggests designed to allow the paddler to perform these moves and tricks on water features such as waves, holes, weirs, eddy lines or even flat water. They tend to be very short and low in volume and allow rapid changes of direction in all dimensions. There are a bewildering number of playboats on the market. Your size and weight will be two of the most important factors in choosing a playboat and they are often designed in several sizes for different paddler sizes to get the best performance out of the design.

Comfort and performance are the two other factors that will help you narrow down your choice.

The shorter stubbier style of playboats will perform some moves better than others such as aerial moves, while the slightly longer boats with sliceier ends will be better at vertical moves such as cart wheeling, bow stalling, etc.

Some designs will also behave on a wave differently depending on the hull length amongst other things.

Most Playboats are not suitable for running anything but the rivers you are totally confident of your ability on. They lack speed and volume that help you get where you want to be on a river as well as some of the important safety features found on All Round river kayaks and creek boats.

Most of the playboats will do most of the moves. Sitting in one first or even trying one out is highly recommended if at all possible.

ALL ROUND RIVER KAYAKS

Kayaks in this class are designed to have some of the performance and fun of a playboat with a more forgiving and predictable nature of a river runner.

They are the most popular type of white water kayak as it is "The Jack of all trades".

They will not perform all of the most radical moves of playboats but are generally a lot of fun. They will typically have more safety features designed in and fitted as standard than playboats and can be used by people with the right experience on virtually all grades of water.

Slightly longer than playboats to give extra speed with slightly more volume to give a balanced ride down the river All rounders or River/Play boats offer the most versatile option for the white water paddler. Designs vary from the playful to the forgiving and most models come in 2 or 3 sizes to get the best fit for your size.

CREEKING AND RIVER RUNNING BOATS

For serious steep rivers with tight technical lines and big drops you need the right boat.

Creek boats are high volume, short to medium in length and packed full of good safety design features to allow paddlers to explore more difficult runs.

Full plate footrest, end handles, rescue points, large cockpits, etc. etc. are all aspects important to a creek boater.

They will not perform play moves like a freestyle boat or all round river kayak as getting down the river on the line you want and catching the eddies you need are exactly what they are designed to do.

For more general river running some people will prefer a more forgiving design of boat than a river/play boat. There are designs of river running kayak that have more volume than an all round river boat but are not as specialist in their design as some creeking models. They will have medium to high of volume and enough length for good speed and a predictable hull design.

SUMMARY

There is obviously some cross over between these categories and with ever changing boat designs the lines between say a creek boat and forging river runner are not always clear.

Paddler ability, locations to be paddled, budget, etc. will all have a bearing on your choice.

Speak to other paddlers, speak to us, try them or at least sit in them and you will soon be happy in making an informed choice.