

## **New to Kayaking? Here's Some Information for You.**

As you paddle around Crystal River's many warm-water springs, you may wonder how kayaks came about.

Kayaks have a rich history. Native Aleut, Eskimo and other Native American peoples of the United States and Canada's far northwest used them for centuries as transportation and for hunting. They are different than canoes in that the user paddles the craft with a double-bladed paddle. The kayak also often has a deck covered by what is known as a "spraydeck" or "skirt." This serves to help keep the person in the kayak from getting wet.

Kayaks are great for getting exercise in the great outdoors. A kayaker's shoulders and arms get a terrific workout, of course, but so do the person's back, stomach muscles and even legs, as all these muscles work to keep the kayaker sitting upright. In other words, don't be surprised if your legs are sore the day after a several hours' kayaking expedition.

Kayaking takes no real special skill. Just about anyone can sit down in a kayak, be shown in one minute how to use the kayak's paddles and be off exploring Florida's many inlets, creeks and springs.

Kayaks allow people to get much closer to marine life than they would in a sailboat, powerboat or even canoe. One-person kayaks in particular are very maneuverable in small spots and sit just inches above the water. Kayaks are a terrific way to visit with manatees without getting wet! Manatees, naturally curious creatures that they are, often swim up to kayaks to get a better look. They may gently nudge your craft. It's perfectly fine to reach down and touch this gentle giant, if it appears to be OK with the manatee.

When you head to a kayak rental facility, decide with your party if you will each have individual kayaks or if two or even three of you will use one larger kayak. Going solo has its perks -- you can head over to a particular mangrove tree any time you like, even when your companions are busy making new friends with manatees or watching river otters play on the shore. Doubling or tripling up means you may be able to rest from time to time while your kayak partners take up the slack, but you'll have to start again soon because the larger kayaks are harder to paddle if just one person is doing all the work.

The type of kayak you will rent with us generally are quite stable. The chances of the kayak rolling and giving you a dunk in Crystal River's waters are very slim (unless you really, really want to, of course). We do recommend that you wear a life vest, particularly if you consider yourself a weak swimmer. Children especially should wear the vests.