

What is a Kayaking Drysuit?



Mythic Gear's Taruba kayaking drysuit

Since Mythic Gear introduced the Taruba drysuit last month, several paddlers have asked us what a kayaking drysuit is and whether it's appropriate for non-kayaking paddlers like rafters, canoeists, and stand up paddleboarders.



The bottom edge of the tunnel on the Taruba drysuit is fastened with hook-and-loop tape

The primary difference between a drysuit designed for kayaking and one made for general paddlesports is the tunnel or overskirt. The tunnel is a tube of fabric sewn to the outside of the drysuit: the top of the tube is sewn around the chest of the suit, and the bottom of the tube is open.

Most kayakers wear sprayskirts, which connect them to their kayak and prevent water from entering the cockpit. The sprayskirt has two main components: the deck, which fits around the cockpit rim to cover the cockpit opening, and the tunnel, which fits tightly around the paddler's waist and chest. (Yes, there are two "tunnels" in the discussion: one is part of the sprayskirt; the other is part of the drysuit. That's why we prefer the term "overskirt" for the drysuit feature, but "tunnel" is the more commonly accepted term.)

After a kayaker puts on the sprayskirt, the tunnel of the drysuit is pulled down over the sprayskirt's tunnel. The bottom edge of the drysuit tunnel is made tight over the sprayskirt tunnel with hook-and-loop tapes (e.g., Velcro), elastics, or both. With the drysuit tunnel in place, water can not reach the top of the sprayskirt tunnel to enter the cockpit of the kayak.

This is of most concern to whitewater kayakers, whose maneuvers frequently push the top edge of the sprayskirt tunnel below the surface of the water. Sea kayakers who play in rock gardens, surf, practice rolling, or paddle in rough conditions also benefit from the presence of a tunnel.

For non-kayakers and kayakers who do not wear a sprayskirt, the drysuit tunnel provides no advantages, and a few disadvantages. On front-entry drysuits (most drysuits are front-entry designs, with the zipper diagonally across the chest), the entry zipper must pass through the tunnel, so pulling the zipper open or closed is a two-step process: you pull it as far as the little



The drysuit's tunnel prevents water from sneaking through the sprayskirt tunnel during rolls and other underwater moves.

opening through the tunnel, then you stop, grab it on the other side of the tunnel, and pull it the rest of the way. It's not a big deal, but it is a small inconvenience. The extra fabric also represents extra weight, and of course it adds to the cost of the drysuit.

Kayakers who rarely paddle in rough conditions must weigh the tunnel's advantages and disadvantages for themselves. It should be said that most sea kayakers and almost all recreational kayakers do fine without it. Most whitewater kayakers insist upon a tunnel on their drysuit, but some consider it "nice to have but nonessential," and for them, a tunnel-less drysuit may be a reasonable way to save money.



Fastening the bottom edge of the drysuit tunnel over the top of the sprayskirt tunnel.



Many kayakers use drysuits without tunnels, even for activities like surfing.

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Visit Mythic Gear for more information about the [Taruba kayaking drysuit](http://www.MythicDrysuits.com): www.MythicDrysuits.com