


INFLATABLE KAYAKS vs TRADITIONAL KAYAKS



A man with a beard, wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt, is sitting in a blue and white inflatable kayak on a calm lake. The background shows a forested shoreline with green grass and trees. The image is dimmed to serve as a background for the text.

Why Choose an Inflatable Kayak vs. a Hardshell Kayak

Are you thinking of buying an inflatable kayak or
hard-shelled kayak?

Breaking Down the Differences: Inflatable Kayak vs. Hard Shell Kayak



Let's begin by breaking down the main differences between inflatable and hardshell kayaks.

Kayak Materials

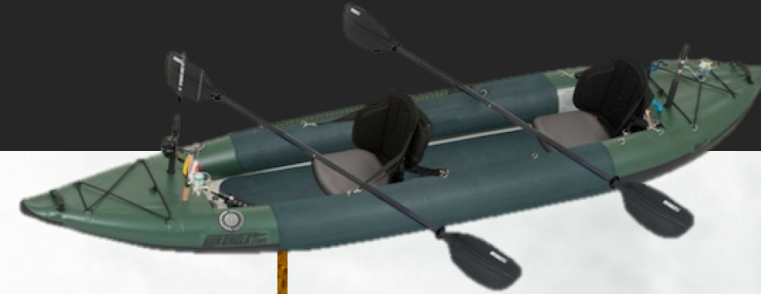
1.



When you picture a kayak, it's probably a hard shell version that comes to mind.

They're rigid and constructed out of hard materials including polyethylene plastic, fiberglass, kevlar, and thermoformed ABS.

You may also find a wooden hard shell kayak, which may not be quite as popular, but are not hard to build on your own with the right knowledge or instructions.



Because of the solid material, hardshell kayaks are heavy — weighing an average of 50-60 pounds.

Inflatable kayaks are much lighter, less than half the weight at an average of 25 pounds.

The main reason, of course, is because inflatables are made out of PVC, Hypalon, or Nitrulon and they gain their rigidity through air pressure.

They also feature woven layers of high-quality fabrics such as neoprene, the first successfully created synthetic rubber.

Durability

2.



Hard shell kayaks are the most suitable for very rough water as they can smash against rocks and debris and keep going.

With new advancements in inflatable kayaks, though, you can find yourself a tough and sturdy inflatable that is resilient and can handle some of those same tough conditions.



The best inflatable kayaks are incredibly durable as you can see in this amazing inflatable kayak torture test. It is doubtful that a hard shell kayak could get through that test unscathed.

They are designed to handle getting knocked around. The same is true for an inflatable fishing kayak that is built to withstand sharp points, hooks, knives, and tools.



It comes down to the type of material. While hard shell kayaks are quite durable regardless of the material, the most durable inflatable kayaks are constructed out of Hypalon and high-quality PVC.

Both kinds of kayaks can endure abrasions from rocks and debris if they are high quality.



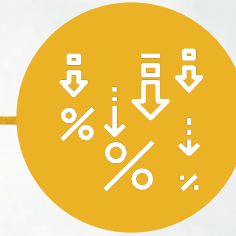
Cost of a Kayak



A huge benefit of inflatable kayaks is that they are much more affordable than hardshell kayaks.

You can find inflatable kayaks at many different price points with many different options.

For similar quality, inflatables go for almost half the price!



Hardshell kayaks can be expensive, up to thousands of dollars, making the hobby inaccessible for a lot of people.

You can find an amazing, high-quality inflatable kayak for much cheaper than a high-quality hardshell.

Is there a Weight Capacity Difference?

4.



Weight capacity will differ depending on the size and specifications of both inflatable and hard shell kayaks.

You will normally find that kayaks will have maximum weight capacities of 200-750 pounds.

Both traditional and inflatable kayaks can hold similar weights, so there isn't really an advantage one way or the other.

Just make sure that you double check the capacity before getting on the water.

Most kayakers will tell you that an inflatable kayak is more stable with changes in weight distribution or when standing up.



Kayaks Portability and Storage

5.



THIS IS WHERE INFLATABLE KAYAKS SHINE.

It's unlikely that you live somewhere where you can pop your kayak into the water without transporting it.

Even if you are, inflatables will normally provide more options for adventure.



INFLATABLES ARE EASY TO TRANSPORT

without the added hassle of roof racks and complicated maneuvering to load and unload the kayak.

In terms of flying, you can just add your inflatable kayak to your checked-in baggage allowance; you don't get that luxury with a hard shell kayak.

If you are hiking or camping and want to bring a kayak, inflatables are incredibly convenient.

Kayaks Performance on the Water

6.

HARDSHELL KAYAKS ARE FAMOUS

for being much easier to maneuver and providing better tracking on the water.

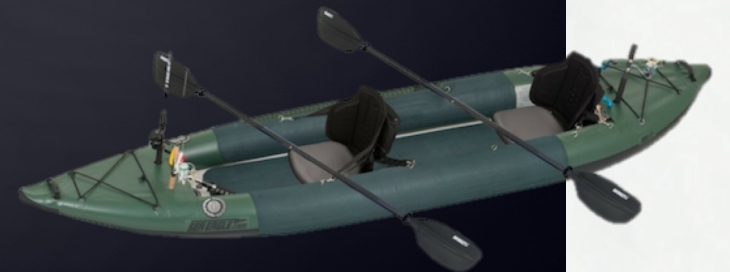
They're much more stable and easier to control in rough waters. They sit lower on the water and the heavy weight means that it doesn't get thrown around easily.

Hard-shell kayaks will also perform better than most inflatables in windy conditions.



However, as mentioned above, investing in a good quality inflatable kayak will still give you excellent performance on the water.

They have skegs on the bottom and some models have extra attachments to improve performance.



How Comfortable are Kayaks?

7.

LASTLY, IT'S IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER YOUR COMFORT WHEN CHOOSING A KAYAK.

If you're going to be spending hours or consecutive days in the kayak, you don't want to have a wonderful experience ruined by uncomfortable kayaks.

Hard shell kayaks can take a bit of a toll on your backside, as sitting on a hard surface for hours can do.

Inflatables are much more comfortable in this regard as you're sitting on a soft, inflatable cushion.

If your kayak seat has a hard surface we strongly recommend using some type of cushion. Back support is another important aspect to consider.



Do You Need More Information or Have Any Questions?

We look forward to the opportunity to help you find the best kayak to maximize your kayaking experiences.

If we can help you with any additional questions, just let us know here. Kayaking offers incredible ways to experience life and create lasting memories.

We will help you get your adventure started!

Let us know if you have any questions or we can help you find the best kayak for you!

Resources:

[View Accompanying Article \(download\)](#)

[View Inflatable Kayaks for Sale](#)

[View Modular Kayaks for Sale](#)



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