

Why Choose an Inflatable Kayak vs. a Hardshell Kayak



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Are you thinking of buying a kayak but aren't sure if you should go for an inflatable kayak or hard-shelled kayak? We are going to breakdown the features and benefits of both so that you can make the best decision.

The kayaking bug has bitten you and you can't wait to get your own so you can explore the wilderness on the water. But which kayak is best for you? Your first inclination might be to look at a traditional hardshell kayak, even though they're generally more expensive.

Before you take a leap into the unknown, you should know the amazing advantages of an inflatable kayak. If you're looking for a lightweight, price-efficient, and portable option, then an inflatable kayak is going to suit you well.

Our guide breaks down the differences between inflatable and hardshell kayaks to show you which is superior and the best choice for you. Hard-shell kayaks have been the most popular kayak choice going back over the years; heck, they've been the only option most of the time!

However, advancements in technology have led to very high-quality inflatable kayaks that are becoming the go-to choice.

Breaking Down the Differences: Inflatable Kayak vs. Hardshell Kayak

Let's begin by breaking down the main differences between inflatable and hardshell kayaks. After reading this, you will be better equipped to make the best decision for your excursions. If you have any follow up questions after reading through this article, please don't hesitate to [drop us a line here](#).

Kayak Materials

When you picture a kayak, it's probably a hardshell 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 hardshell 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 Ñ 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 Nitrylon 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

At this point, you're probably certain that the solid materials of a hardshell kayak mean that it's much more durable. While hardshell kayaks are known to be sturdier and longer-lasting, modern inflatable kayaks are stepping up their game.

Hardshell 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 hardshell 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 hardshell 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?

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

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.

The portability of inflatable kayaks means that you can explore far and wide with your kayak and it's easy and fuss-free. Anyone, even children, can carry an inflatable kayak. And when it's packed up, it fits easily into your car or a bag to take with you anywhere that you want to go.

The same goes for storage. If you have a hardshell kayak you'll need a fair amount of space to store it. You want to have indoor storage space for security but you might need to get creative if you don't have a ton of space.

Storing inflatable kayaks, on the other hand, couldn't be easier. You can store your inflatable anywhere in your home. Once it's packed in the storage bag, you can pop it in a convenient and safe place that's out of your way. You just have to make sure to allow it to air dry before packing away.

Kayaks Performance on the Water

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.

Recently, kayak engineers have dedicated themselves to creating inflatable kayaks that can handle [class III and IV water](#) with strong currents. Inflatable whitewater kayaks will give you a thrill on your adventure.

If you want a top-performing inflatable kayak when choosing your kayak make sure you know what it was designed for and the type of material it's made out of. Inflatable kayaks can be designed for more specific purposes, such as kayak fishing and whitewater kayaking, and these will give you better performance.

How Comfortable are Kayaks?

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.

Hardshell 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.

With inflatable kayaks you may have options for what type of seat you want. Inflatable kayak seats are normally comfortable and will give you good lumbar support. There are also clip in seats that attach to the d-rings which will provide you with additional back support.. These kayak seats are normally made from a quality padded material such as the previously mentioned neoprene. Some of these seats are available with taller backrests for additional support.

Taking some time to consider seat options may help you make a decision. If you have back or joint problems you may find that an inflatable kayak is more comfortable.

Adventure With an Inflatable Kayak

While there are certainly benefits for both a hard-shell and inflatable kayak, hopefully, you're feeling a bit more confident about your choice after reading this. After considering all of the options and looking at trends over the years, we are more inclined to buy an inflatable kayak for pretty much any kayaking adventure.

The [benefits of inflatable kayaks](#) are immense, offering you the opportunity to head off on any adventure with your durable, lightweight, and high performing kayak. For us, the ability to easily store your kayak and to be able to easily go on an adventure at a moment's notice break any ties in the hard-shell versus inflatable kayak debate.

So what are you waiting for? If you're looking to buy an inflatable kayak for sale, Splashy McFun has you covered. We have a wide range of top-quality kayaks to choose from, including 1 person and 2 person inflatable kayaks. Check out our [extensive collection here](#).

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!

Other Resources to Expand Your Knowledge:

- [6 Advantages of Inflatable Kayaks Blog](#) ([Download](#))([Infographic](#))
- [7 Things to Know when Buying an Inflatable Kayak](#) ([Download](#))
- [5 Important Kayaking Tips for Beginners](#) ([Download](#))([Infographic](#))

- [How to Choose the Best Inflatable Kayak for Your Needs \(Download\)](#)
- [Best Inflatable Fishing Kayak Buyers Guide \(Download\)](#)
- [Inflatable Fishing Kayak Information Graphic](#)
- [Stand Up Paddle Boarding: A Beginners Guide \(Download\)](#)
- [9 Best Water Sport Activities to Enjoy This Summer \(Download\)](#)
- [Do Inflatable Fishing Boats Live Up To The Hype? \(Download\)](#)
- [8 Best Things to do at The Lake or Beach \(Download\)](#)