November 2026 Safety Piece

Carrying a Heavy Kayak? Try Carry Straps!

By Sybil Seitzinger with input from Gary Jacek and Lynn Baier



Photo credit: https://gnarlydognews.blogspot.com/2009/10/kayak-carry-straps.html

Last month, we discussed how to carry your kayak safely to and from the water. This month, we follow up with some practical tips on using **carry straps for heavy kayaks**, including two homemade designs from SISKA members Gary Jacek and Lynn Baier.

A heavy or loaded sea kayak can be awkward to carry—and hard on your back. Carry straps help distribute the weight, making it easier, safer, and more comfortable for four people to share the load.

Using Carry Straps

- **Position the straps:** Place one strap around the front third of the hull and another around the rear third, roughly equal distances from the kayak's centre balance point (usually near the cockpit). Pass the straps underneath the hull, with the loose ends threaded between the deck lines and hull to prevent them from slipping toward the bow or stern during the carry. This is particularly important when carrying the kayak up or down hills.
- **Adjust the handles:** The straps should allow carriers to stand reasonably upright, without bending or twisting to keep the kayak off the ground.
- **Lift together:** Bend your knees, keep your back straight, and lift with your legs on a coordinated command.
- **Walk together:** Keep the kayak level, communicate clearly, and maintain a steady pace, particularly on uneven ground or slopes.

Remember: Remove heavy gear, water, and other items whenever practical before carrying your kayak. Even with straps, a lighter boat is easier and safer to handle.

Carry Strap Designs

Carry straps can be purchased commercially, but SISKA members Gary Jacek and Lynn Baier have come up with their own practical designs.

Gary Jacek's Design

Gary uses wide webbing (such as seatbelt material) with a handle sewn onto each end. The handles can be made from Schedule 40 white plastic water supply PVC pipe.

Gary carries three straps so that up to six people can share the load. This provides an extra measure of safety: if someone loses their footing, others can temporarily take up the weight.

Making the straps requires some sturdy stitching. Gary assembled his using needles to hold the webbing in place, then took them to a shoemaker to have them sewn. He notes that there is a

shoe repair shop near the McDonald's at Shelbourne Street and Cedar Hill Cross Road in Saanich.



Photo credit: G. Jacek

Lynn Baier's Design

Lynn uses a different approach: a continuous loop of narrower webbing threaded through two lengths of PVC plastic pipe. Her loop design doesn't require any sewing….just a knot slipped into the PVC.



Photo credit: L. Baier

Both designs offer simple, inexpensive ways to make carrying a heavy kayak easier and safer.

Safety matters off the water, too!