

Another look at Navigation

Plans are nothing, planning is everything.

Dwight D Eisenhower

Clearly you need some sort of plan in order to undertake a journey, but it is – as Eisenhower understood, preparation that matters. Plans rapidly become obsolete when circumstances change, to which it is important to be able to adapt intelligently, which is what planning is all about. Much the same applies to navigating a kayak on the sea where circumstances also change or plans just turn out to be wrong.

Things to consider about navigation:

- Navigation is at the heart of decision making on any sea trip. Knowing where you are, how to go in the right direction to reach your destination, and for how long – avoiding danger on the way is what navigation is all about.
- Know where you are – always if at all possible from a fix, GPS etc, and if not through an estimation based on dead reckoning. It is worth keeping a log like sailors do.
- Know the forces (wind, tide, condition of the party etc) acting on you where you are now, and are expected where you are going.
- Be prepared to decide where you want to go each time you reach a decision point. Obviously the destination is where you want to go at the beginning of the trip, but this may change with circumstances; the party may decide through changing conditions for example, on an alternative destination or turning back for example.
- Get a GPS to remove some uncertainty, to supplement your existing skills.
- Ask for help if you don't know something important, particularly if you don't know where you are.
- Be very, very honest with yourself and with the other people in your party. I know that I can be careless in making calculations, for example, so I need to double check or get someone to do so for me.