

# [French regulations explained](#)

Posted on [December 3, 2011](#) by [admin](#)

I am frequently asked questions regarding the regulations for paddling on the sea in France. Unfortunately it is not always clear, often completely unknown, and occasionally when known completely ignored.

I have created a page "Paddling French Waters" that lays out in simple terms how you can comply with the French regulations, and concentrate on paddling without concern that you may be doing something wrong. A couple of sample declarations are available at the end of the text, use them/ modify them as suits your personal circumstances.

Most visitors will find the information given sufficient, however, if you paddle something other than a typically modern, professionally constructed sea kayak then other restrictions come into force. At a future time I'll add to this document to include information relative to home built Ceder Strip/ Skin on Frame kayaks.

In the meantime please read the disclaimer, interpretation of the law is not always the same from one Region to another, indeed I have been refused registration of my boat in St Nazaire because of incorrect paperwork but later approved for Registration at Vannes using exactly the same papers.

As a foreign visitor in France you should always carry identification, (Passport or National ID card) it is a requirement for the French also, and the requirement is the same whilst on the water ! ( I carry a photocopy of my passport )

I will of course be interested in your experiences, particularly when stopped by Gendarme Maritime. If you discover any discrepancies with the text please let me know, it will help make paddling in France easier for all.

Finally, regulated quite separately from these Registration rules is the ban on Night paddling. This ban is not aimed solely at kayakers, but at ALL craft propelled by human power (it also includes Jet Skis in the definition)

## **Paddling in French Waters**

### **Paddling in French Territorial waters**

UK paddlers will be very used to jumping in their kayaks and paddling off on their journey generally unregulated. Many paddlers will be aware of 'Local' regulations and byelaws such as those on the Tidal Thames, and will have made themselves familiar with them when necessary

However in France there are regulations which affect everybody navigating on French territorial waters, and this page details those requirements and suggests ways to comply

### **Status**

It is worth mentioning International law at sea.

All vessels have authority and right of passage through the territorial waters of another country from the *United Nations Convention of the law of the sea*

(You must be complying with the laws of the UK and other relevant international conventions SOLAS, COLREGS etc )

At first sight then it appears that there is no requirement to comply with the host Nation regulations.

However, the '**right of passage**' referred to is clearly defined in the convention as meaning a "**continuous and expeditious passage through territorial waters**" If you are visiting or touring the coast then you come within the jurisdiction of the coastal state, and will have to comply with their regulations

### **There are three aspects of the regulations that affect Kayakers**

1. *Registration*
2. Construction and fitness for purpose
3. Zones of navigation and required equipment

1. **Registration** is only possible for residents in France, (a proof of address is a required submission). There are no requirements to register the Kayak under UK law, but you may wish to voluntarily register your Kayak on the MCA *Small Ships Register*. (A fee is charged £25 ) This gives you a SSR number that must be displayed on the kayak, a Registration card from the MCA and is proof the kayak is from UK. In any case a "Red Ensign" should be displayed prominently on the kayak. If you decide not to register on the SSR, then some document to prove ownership should be carried, the original bill will be good, but if you have no original document a formal "Attestation sur l'honneur" detailing your ownership will 'probably' be acceptable (eg for a 10year old boat where original docs have been lost, see sample at end)

2. **Construction and fitness for purpose** is established in the registration process usually with certificates issued by the manufacturer. There is a 'floatability' test which involves flooding the cockpit with a 50kg weight on the seat, the cockpit combing should remain 2cms above the water. Current UK built sea kayaks will conform with this requirement. It is acceptable to 'self certificate' in this case using an "Attestation sur l'honneur" (sample at end) Again nothing of real concern in this section

3. **Zones of Navigation** are defined in the regulations, they are;

- a) "**Basique**" Up to 2 Nmiles from a '*safe landing place*'
- b) "**Côtier**" From 2 Nmiles up to 6 Nmiles from a '*safe landing place*'
- c) "**Hauturier**" Over 6 Nmiles This zone is forbidden for Kayaks

Additionally, all other "**Beach craft and craft not registered**" are restricted to the area from the shore out to 300 meters. This highlights the necessity of registration for French Kayaks

Whilst this appears a bit restrictive, in fact it means that you can make an open crossing of up to 12 Nautical miles (ie 6 miles from either coast) This offers some of the best paddling in Europe

a) **Basique.** The regulations require the following ‘minimal ‘ items of equipment to be carried.

- i PDF with minimum 50N, and CE marked
- ii A Torch
- iii A ‘means’ of getting back into the kayak  
(commonly seen in France are paddle floats with spare paddle , but full decklines on the boat will satisfy )
- iv The boat must be self emptying (ie SOT) or a Pump is required, for Sit In Kayaks, a spraydeck must be used)
- v A fixed towing point ( eye plate screwed to deck) and Tow line

b) **Côtier.** In addition to the above list you must also carry;

- vi 3 x Red hand flares
- vii Signal mirror ( A mini CD disc does the job )
- viii A Sound signal ( a good loud whistle or locals carry an air horn without the canister )
- ix Magnetic Compass ( not electronic)
- x Chart of the area you’re paddling
- xi A sticker on the boat with a resumé of the COLREGS
- xii A sticker on the boat identifying IALA buoyage

**To summarise:**

**Carry proof of ownership, declare your kayak is seaworthy, and be in possession of the right kit for the zone you are in.**

The last two items (stickers) have been printed up by ‘Pagayeurs Marins’ and can be seen here [http://www.pagayeursmarins.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=20:autocollantripam&catid=67:artreglementation&Itemid=63](http://www.pagayeursmarins.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=20:autocollantripam&catid=67:artreglementation&Itemid=63)

click [SPECIMEN](#) for the Bouyage,

click [Règles de barre et de route](#) for COLREGS

As a developing project I will create English versions that can be downloaded, laminated and stuck under the decklines.

#### **Disclaimer**

**This account relates to kayaks professionally built, with hatches and bulkheads constructed in a glass reinforced plastic or moulded polyethylene. If you are considering taking a home built boat, Strip built, skin on frame, or a folding boat, you will need to carry out more research to establish you and your kayak comply with the regulations.**

**These are only guidelines, and can not represent the full regulations in force, you need to use your own judgement and seek further advice to ensure you comply with the law. The law is subject to change, and while the author believes this text reflects the current law in place, he can not guarantee this**

“Attestation sur l’honneur” = A formal written declaration, often demanded in France when other paperwork has been lost/ does not exist

### **ATTESTATION DE PROPRIETE**

Je, soussigné *Joe Brown*

Demeurant au *(Your address )*

Déclare sur l’honneur être le propriétaire du kayak

“ *P&H Sirius Sea Kayak*” Numéro de Série : *07543. (make model and serial no.)*

J’ai acheté le Sirius Kayak chez

*BROOKBANK Canoes Kayak environ 2006. (original place & date of purchase)*

La facture originale est perdue *(original bill is lost )*

Fait à *Lassay-les-Châteaux*, le *14 Juillet 2011 (date declaration signed)*

*Your signature here*

### **Déclaration de conformité d’un navaire de plaisance non immatriculé en France**

Je soussigné *M ( Add your name)*

né(e) le *(add date of birth)* Demeurant au *(Your address )*

Certifie sur l’honneur que le kayak répondant à la description suivante:

Marque *(Enter manufacturer )* Modèle *(enter model )*

Numéro de série *(Enter serial number)*

Est conforme aux dispositions du chapitre 2 de la division 240 en vigueur

Signature du déclarant