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# KAYALU GEAR KAYALITE



As a regular solo night paddler in the extremely busy Solent, I have experimented with a range of cheap and not-so-cheap LED torches, head-torches and light sticks in an effort to create a simple, robust system for lighting my kayak at night.

To date, the most cost-effective and reliable system for showing a white light at the rear of the kayak was a simple LED pencil torch lifted from the deck by a rolled-up paddle float and held fast under the deck lines. This provides a continuous white light from the rear of the kayak; this system has two main issues; the torch is swamped with water in rougher seas and is prone to failure, and the torch sits low down and is single directional.

Enter the Kayalu Gear Kayalite, a high-visibility LED stern light.



## DESCRIPTION

The Kayalite features a Tektite Mark III light built into an 18" mast with a large round base. The base of the unit has foam padding with two grooves cut through it. The mast has a cleat on one side and a length of bungee cord running through the hollow mast. This exits at the base where it is attached to a clip and at the side of the mast where it can be fastened around the cleat.

To fix the Kayalite to your kayak, attach the clip to any suitable point (eyelet, deck loop, pad eye, topside drain plug or other fixed point of attachment) then pull the bungee tight and fasten it off on the cleat. The tension causes the light to sit firmly on the deck with the foam base padding adapting to the contours of the deck. Kayalu provide an eyelet bolt should you wish to fit a permanent fixing location.

The Kayalite is switched on by rotating the top of the light to provide a 360 degree bright white LED light, designed to run for 200 hours on one set of batteries.

## IN USE

The Kayalite arrived fully assembled so all I had to do was fit it to the kayak. I paddle a P&H Cetus and decided to utilise deck lines where they fit through a centrally mounted point just in front of my rear oval hatch. Although an ideal location, attaching to deck lines does mean that I am attaching bungee to bungee, potentially lessening the overall stability. However, I was able to create a solid attachment with only minor 'wobble'. Attaching to a more secure point would allow you to create a very stable attachment with virtually no movement in the Kayalite. Whether I would be prepared to permanently attach an eyelet to the Cetus needs further consideration.

The build quality of the unit seems very robust. The black textured ABS that makes up the bulk of the mast is chunky and substantial and does not give the impression it would snap or break if manhandled. The use of marine-grade stainless steel on the small but sturdy clip is a reassuring sign of careful design.

Switching the light on and off is simple, as is removing the top of the light to replace batteries/bulbs if required. Once positioned on the rear deck of the kayak, your ability to operate the light single-handed will rely on the mounting position you have chosen. I experimented before setting out on my first trip and worked out that I could switch the light on and off with a bit of effort. I'm not the most flexible paddler, so others will find this easier than I did. However, I was happy that with my chosen mounting location this would not be a 'set it and forget it' piece of kit.

Out on the water, the Kayalite instantly proved worth its weight in gold. The height of the unit has been carefully chosen to strike a good balance between visibility and not impairing your night vision. I found that my body shielded the front of the kayak from the majority of the light thrown out by the Kayalite. The light thrown out to the sides and under your arms does take a little getting used to – that dark shape in the water was actually my own shadow and not something ominous beneath the surface!

During my first paddle I switched between my old method of lighting and the Kayalite and found that while there was no loss of night vision with the torch, there was a very small amount from the Kayalite. However, the much improved visibility offered by the Kayalite compared to the torch makes this a vastly preferable system.

One aspect to consider should be stowage: the round base is not removable. Although this offers a sturdier design, if you were using this on a multi-day/night trip it would be easier to stow inside the boat if it had a removable base. Now the nights are getting lighter, I tend to clip the Kayalite on, tuck it under the rear deck lines then mount it properly when the light fades.

I found that my chosen mounting location meant that the Kayalite did not impede my roll; despite being attached to the deck lines rather than a fixed eyelet, it was not displaced while rolling. Each time I came up, the light was still shining brightly.

## SUMMARY

The Solent is a very busy section of the UK coastline with an amazing amount of traffic at all times of the year and all times of the night. Lights are a must even if only switched on when required. Combined with an LED head torch for the front light (which I switch on when I need to be seen), the Kayalite offers incredible visibility and therefore safety. If paddling close together in a group, I would suggest the Kayalite only be used by the rear boat due to the affect on night vision for the other paddlers.

The unit has so far proven to be very durable and well made. I have now been using the Kayalite since February, averaging 2–3 short night paddles a week; the unit looks as good as new with the original battery going strong. Would I paddle at night without one? The answer is a very definite no! ■

## FROM THE MANUFACTURER

Mast material: ABS black, textured  
 Base cushion material: EVA foam  
 Fastener: plated steel breech clip  
 Mast hardware: marine-grade stainless steel  
 Bungee cable: saltwater-resistant nylon coated  
 Bungee rings: marine-grade stainless steel  
 Locking mechanism: jam cleat  
 Switch: twist on/off  
 Depth rating: 1000 feet (300 m)  
 Lamp: 1 LED  
 Lamp life: 10,000+ hours  
 Burn time: 200+ hours  
 Batteries: 3 AA Alkaline (included)  
 Materials: ABS and LEXAN US Patent #6,168,288

Height: 18 in (45.72 cm)  
 Weight: 10 oz (285 g)  
 Cost: £34.95 / \$39.99  
 Further Details can be found at: [www.kayalu.com](http://www.kayalu.com)  
 For UK orders go to: [www.poolebaycanoes.co.uk](http://www.poolebaycanoes.co.uk)