

Sea Kayaking in Lanzarote

Hear from Juan, who's been running the Sea Kayak Award



I was a bit unsure of how to plan the new awards the first time I ran them, as they are so different from the Star Award scheme. However, **the new flexible style of the awards makes it easier, not harder, as you can plan around each candidate's needs.** They tell me their experience and what they want to improve and I can plan around that.

Running the awards has been a really good experience for me and for the clients. I structure the award so that we do theory and planning in the morning and then go to the water to put things into practice, with some more theory at lunchtime on the beach. **The atmosphere is very relaxed and fun, which makes it easier for everyone to learn. The candidates end the course still full of enthusiasm and wanting to progress more.**



Candidates have come with a range of experiences. Some have minimal paddling experience and some have more advanced personal skills than are required for the Sea Kayak Award, but need to learn more about the planning side of things. I also notice that people from different countries have different skills and experience according to the conditions they're used to paddling in, for example some have no experience of tidal currents and most have no experience of deep water ocean swells. In Lanzarote we have the opportunity to practice in all different environments (except cold water!) and see all the different things that need to be taken into account to plan a trip. We're lucky to have such a great variety of factors that affect trips here.



Compared to other courses I have done, it feels more complete than the old star system, as **I can tailor to each paddler and help them become better all-round paddlers rather than just focus on set criteria.** For example, when I ran the Paddle Explore Award, one candidate wanted to learn enough so that he could go paddling with more experienced friends who go out frequently. We focused on helping him to become an independent paddler, able to self-rescue and plan his own trips, so he can have the confidence to join his friends and be a helpful member of the group.

The response to the new awards has been very positive. Candidates have enjoyed the new format and the move away from the set criteria. **There is more opportunity to make the course fun, and the candidates have plenty of opportunity to practice, get things wrong and to see why and how they need to correct what went wrong, which I think is a very good way to reinforce learning.**

We continue to support paddlers in their learning even after they have been on our courses. For example, when they come back to do day trips with us, we tell them where we'll be paddling on which dates and get them to check the map and forecast, see what the conditions are going to be like on the trip, and then compare their expectations with the reality on the day. If the conditions don't match what they expected, we go over why it turned out differently.

