

Some of the finest cliff scenery awaits you from the Giant's Causeway to Dunseverick Harbour, with layers of dark basalt interspersed with red layers of iron-rich laterite, but beware of reflected waves and downdraughts close to the shore in strong offshore winds. The amazing regular basalt columns of the Giant's Causeway and cliffs, the Chimneys standing above the Amphitheatre and the long tain of Lacada Point in Port-na-Spannagh are highlights. The latter claimed the Spanish Armada treasures ship Ghiona in a storm in 1588 with few survivors from the hundreds of souls on board. Belfast's Continue past headlands and bays to the restored fishermen's bothy at Portmoon, where it is possible to stay by prior arrangement with the Causeway Coast Kayak Association. From here, it's a short journey to **Dunseverick Harbour**, once a busy fishing port, whose history is displayed in the small privately owned museum above the pier.

The route to the Causeway takes you past the mouth of the River Bush. The tongue of freshwater is a good indicator of tidal movement in the bay. 3km upstream is the famous whiskey distillery, and at the far end of the strand is a distinctive landmark of Runkerry House. The former Black-rock salmon fishery bothy perches on the rocks below. Watch out for the Millie stone and a tide race rounding Runkerry Point. There are three caves in these cliffs, the first one - Runkerry Cave - being quite extensive.

Ahead are the romantic ruins of Dunluce Castle. Its 700 year history and the views alone make it well worth a visit - landing is possible in the narrow channel just east of the spectacular cave that penetrates the sea stack on which the castle is perched. The salt and pepper effect of white limestone or chalk and black basalt is a regular feature of the coastline from here to Rathlin, a geological mix unique in Ireland. Binnare Cave, one of the longest on the coast, with its entrance facing north east, is worth exploring.

The **White Rocks** eroded limestone cliffs feature The Giant's Head, The Wishing Arch and a variety of stacks, caves and wave-cut platforms. In springtime, these cliffs are home to Black Guillemot colonies and salt-tolerant wild flowers. Ahead are the romantic ruins of Dunluce Castle. Its 700 year history and the views alone make it well worth a visit - landing is possible in the narrow channel just east of the spectacular cave that penetrates the sea stack on which the castle is perched. The salt and pepper effect of white limestone or chalk and black basalt is a regular feature of the coastline from here to Rathlin, a geological mix unique in Ireland. Binnare Cave, one of the longest on the coast, with its entrance facing north east, is worth exploring.

The former fishing settlement of **Portballintrae** is now a mix of apartments and holiday homes but offers a welcome break before the rugged cliffs of the Giant's Causeway World Heritage Site are encountered. The Blind Rock or 'Blind' guards the east side of the entrance to the bay and should be given a wide berth.

The Causeway Coast is a blend of rocky shores and headlands interspersed with golden sandy beaches. The tides offshore flood east and the rate increases as it is forced between Ireland and Scotland with Rathlin Island at the entrance to the Irish Sea. There are a number of currents and counter currents experienced closer inshore eddies often running between these. Care should be taken when wind is in opposition to tide given that this coast is exposed to the Atlantic swell. When planning a trip reference should be made to the Irish Coast Pilot, Irish Cruising Club Sailing Directions for the East and North Coasts of Ireland, Admiralty Tidal Stream Atlas NP218 and relevant Admiralty Charts.

The most powerful tides on the Causeway Coast are to be found in the vicinity of Torr Head and Fair Head where large overfalls can be expected and conditions are particularly dangerous in conditions of wind against tide. A more detailed synopsis of tidal information for the North Coast Canoe Trail is available at www.canoeing.com



White Rocks

A magnificent cave opens past the east side of the islands and a little further on is the amazing chasm known as the Giant's Cut. At the chalk headland of Kinnabeg with its ruined castle and abandoned fishery it is possible to kayak through a tunnel in the headland at certain states of the tide. Beware of the reef and swirl around Carrickmannon Rock, where Ireland's Neptune Manannan Mac Lir and his horse Eibar ruled the waves. A short paddle past the hidden wood of Fortakillaw, a regular haunt for buzzards, takes you to a section of fine cliffs and caves finishing in Ballycastle Harbour.

Today, tourists can be thrilled or scared crossing the bridge, once used by salmon fishermen whose cottages remains tucked under the eastern cliff. Breeding razorbill, guillemot, Kittiwake and fulmar are noisy as you pass their colonies and, given enough water, kayak under the bridge.

Beyond the harbour there is a sand bank that breaks in seaward side of Sheep Island. A partial reef between the island and the former chalk quarry of Larrbane is best passed through the gap close to the sea stack. A spectacular staircase cave can be found midway along the limestone shore leading to the tiny archipelago of Carrick-a-Rède and its famous rope bridge.

Major geological faulting created the tilted rock stacks on the approach to **Ballingtoy Harbour**. This picturesque haven with its lime kilns was once a lively place where burnt lime was exported and fishing boats were busy. Note the extraordinary structure of Bendoo House on a corner above the harbour, where Cornish artist Newton Penrose (died 1978) laboured single-handed for forty years to create an eccentric home.

Whitepark Bay, with surf and tide rips, is dominated by the island's 7,000 years of human history is peppered with invasions, massacres and emigrations. Today's resident remains such as the bones of the now extinct great auk. Stone Age settlement where excavations revealed food gyphaea ("Devil's toenails", an ancient bivalve shell. Exposed beds of soft flss clay contain fossils, such as the

Rock stacks, small bays and banks of seaweed washed up typify the coast to White Park Bay. From the eighteenth century to the 1300s, this was a busy shore, the white smoke of kelp burners marking small kilns where the dried seaweed was melted down to produce kelp, rich in useful salts.

The pier at Portbraddan (Port of the Salmon) is private, with the smallest church in Ireland tucked in at the south end of the white and blue Millhouse. Others occasionally visit the shore below the holiday homes.

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Kinnabeg Castle Kinnabeg Head



By Carrick-a-Rède

The North Coast Sea Kayak Trail can be followed in either direction, but travelling with the flood tide, this guide takes you west to east, from Magilligan Point in County Londonderry to Torr Head in County Antrim, then south to Waterfoot at the mouth of Glenariff, Queen of the Glens of Antrim. You can choose to paddle any one of the six sections, each offering something different. For the experienced sea kayaker there are tide races, overfalls, exciting Atlantic swells, hidden reefs to keep you alert, and a challenging but rewarding circuit of Rathlin Island. You will also find plenty of more moderate paddling to enable enjoyment of the varieties of scenery, wildlife and local history.

Ancient castles, the Giant's Causeway and a dramatic rope bridge are just a few of the tourist attractions. There is a good range of access points, from tiny and forgotten fishing piers to beaches of sand and cobbles and several lively harbours.

Wildlife treats include clamouring seabird colonies, inquisitive seals and the chance of sighting porpoise, dolphin and perhaps a whale (cetaceans). Landing places and their facilities are marked on the map and this information is not repeated in the text. Paddlers can extend their journey by continuing on the adjoining Foyle Canoe Trail or East Coast Canoe Trail.

Magilligan to Portrush (12NM)

The imposing defensive structure of the Martello Tower, built in the early 1800s, marks the launching place to start you on this north coast trail. Launch from the beach just below the Point Bar. Keep clear of the pier and its ferry boat crossing the narrows to Greencastle in County Donegal, and be aware of the military presence and security patrols when parking.

Between **Magilligan** and **Benone** there is a military firing range extending almost 3 nautical miles out to sea. When planning your journey it is essential to contact Belfast Coastguard for details of when firing is scheduled and plan to paddle outside of these times. If the firing range is in use, red flags (daytime) or red lights (night) are visible on hoisted flagstaffs on the beach. There are no buoys marking the range out to sea.

Ballycastle has a busy marina and harbour with a regular ferry service to Rathlin Island. Canoeists should stay clear of the ferry slip and marina entrance and use the public slip closest to the marina only after contacting the Harbour Master. The huge profile of Fair Head (190 metres), just over 600 feet) with its massive boulder field below dominates this eastern corner. Layers of sandstone below the dark dolerite (a hard basalt belovd by rock climbers) glow warm in the evening sun, and the carboniferous rocks in this area are riddled with the adits of old coal and iron ore mines. The level site of the workings at Carrickmore feature falcons may be heard nearby.

Ballycastle to Waterfoot (16NM)

Tens of thousands of seabirds – chiefly guillemot, razorbill, puffin, kittiwake and fulmar – come and go from their breeding colonies on the western and northern cliffs from May to August, and Atlantic grey seals haul out on isolated rocks. There are some spectacular sea caves along the north side. The eastern shore is more low-lying and very rocky, beginning at the cave and castle where Scottish king-to-be Robert the Bruce was said to have found sanctuary in 1307 and been inspired by a determined web-spinning spider. Heading for Rue Point, enjoy the fantastic rock columns at Doon Point, elder duck and seals station at Ushet Port. Paddling back to the harbour, you will find more seals hauled out at Mill Bay. Keep a respectful distance – they need to rest, dry out and digest their latest fishy feast.

Heading west from the harbour under the white cliffs takes you past numerous narrow caves and chalk pillars. At Cooragh Bay, an old pier and ramp mark the landing site for building materials used in the construction of the West Seabird Centre.

Rathlin is a challenging excursion, even for experienced paddlers. Crossing the sound from any departure point is best timed as close as possible to slack water. Two notorious tide races and overfalls are Slough-na-More on the SNM route from Ballycastle to **Church Bay** harbour, and the McDonnell Race off the East Lighthouse. There are other turbulent areas at all major headlands, notably along the north side. Nevertheless, a circuit of the island best done clockwise to take advantage of the island's complex tides, is memorable trip. Porpoise, dolphin and whales are increasingly being sighted around Rathlin.

Rathlin Island (20NM)



Puffins Image courtesy of NIEA



Experience adventure, beauty and nature on Northern Ireland's

North Coast Sea Kayak Trail

This 70 nautical mile route around Ireland's north-east corner offers varieties of rugged scenery and wildlife that are unique. There is something for all kayaking abilities.Go for it!



Giant's Causeway

The Causeway Coast is a blend of rocky shores and headlands interspersed with golden sandy beaches. The tides offshore flood east and the rate increases as it is forced between Ireland and Scotland with Rathlin Island at the entrance to the Irish Sea. There are a number of currents and counter currents experienced closer inshore eddies often running between these. Care should be taken when wind is in opposition to tide given that this coast is exposed to the Atlantic swell. When planning a trip reference should be made to the Irish Coast Pilot, Irish Cruising Club Sailing Directions for the East and North Coasts of Ireland, Admiralty Tidal Stream Atlas NP218 and relevant Admiralty Charts.

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Fair Head

The impressive dolerite escarpment of Fair Head is bisected by the legendary Grey Man's Path capped by a lintel of columnar basalt. Take care negotiating the fierce tide races around Fair Head and Torr Head - this journey is only suitable for suitably experienced and prepared canoeists. Between these two promontories is the wooded and geologically varied Murlough Bay, with its remote cottage (pige) set by another old fishing site. The harbour and slip at Torr offer welcome shelter and the opportunity to rest having rounded the spectacular headlands.

Cliffs give way to steep sheep-grazed slopes from Torr Head south to **Cushendun**. The narrow channel between Torr and the Mull of Kintyre opposite is worth watching for porpoise and minke whale. The only surviving salmon bag nets are fished in summer at Torr Head and Cushendun. The latter's distinctive architecture was the creation of Welshman Clough Williams Ellis and most of the village is owned by the National Trust.

Ancient river cobbles known as the "puddingstones" can be seen in the cliffs near Cave House south of Cushendun. Moorlands and sheep pastures lie above the rugged shore on the way to **Cushendall**. Continuing south, the sandstones of Red Bay come into view. Your journey ends (or begins) at the beach of **Waterfoot**, welcomed by the magnificent glacial valley of Glenariff, one of the nine Glens of Antrim.

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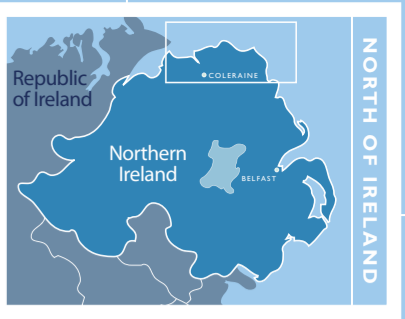
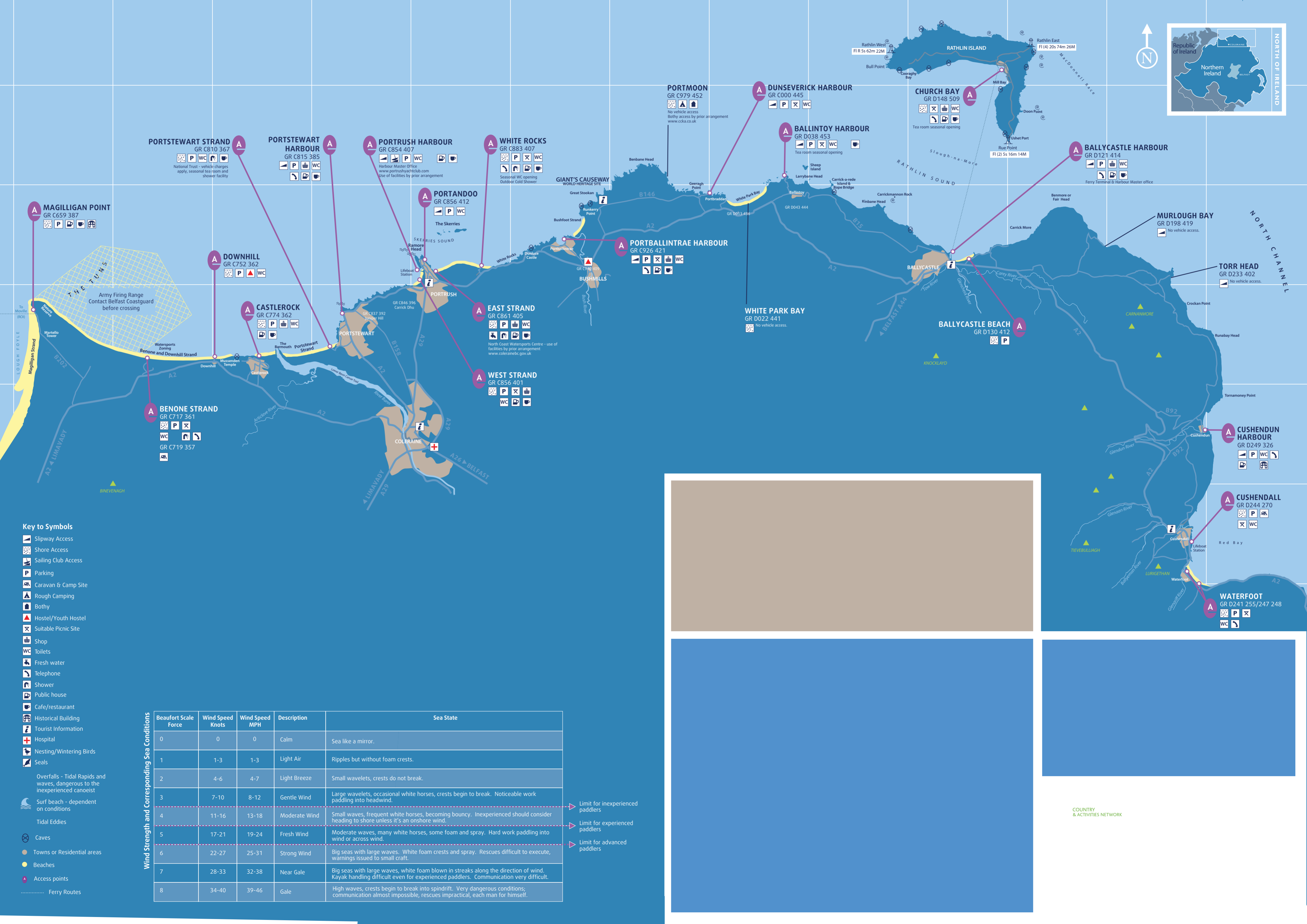
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Key to Symbols

- Slipway Access
- Shore Access
- Sailing Club Access
- Parking
- Caravan & Camp Site
- Rough Camping
- Bothy
- Hostel/Youth Hostel
- Suitable Picnic Site
- Shop
- Toilets
- Fresh water
- Telephone
- Shower
- Public house
- Cafe/restaurant
- Historical Building
- Tourist Information
- Hospital
- Nesting/Wintering Birds
- Seals
- Overfalls - Tidal Rapids and waves, dangerous to the inexperienced canoeist
- Surf beach - dependent on conditions
- Tidal Eddies
- Caves
- Towns or Residential areas
- Beaches
- Access points
- Ferry Routes

Wind Strength and Corresponding Sea Conditions

Beaufort Scale Force	Wind Speed Knots	Wind Speed MPH	Description	Sea State
0	0	0	Calm	Sea like a mirror.
1	1-3	1-3	Light Air	Ripples but without foam crests.
2	4-6	4-7	Light Breeze	Small wavelets, crests do not break.
3	7-10	8-12	Gentle Wind	Large wavelets, occasional white horses, crests begin to break. Noticeable work paddling into headwind.
4	11-16	13-18	Moderate Wind	Small waves, frequent white horses, becoming bouncy. Inexperienced should consider heading to shore unless it's an onshore wind.
5	17-21	19-24	Fresh Wind	Moderate waves, many white horses, some foam and spray. Hard work paddling into wind or across wind.
6	22-27	25-31	Strong Wind	Big seas with large waves. White foam crests and spray. Rescues difficult to execute, warnings issued to small craft.
7	28-33	32-38	Near Gale	Big seas with large waves, white foam blown in streaks along the direction of wind. Kayak handling difficult even for experienced paddlers. Communication very difficult.
8	34-40	39-46	Gale	High waves, crests begin to break into spindrift. Very dangerous conditions; communication almost impossible, rescues impractical, each man for himself.

- Limit for inexperienced paddlers
- Limit for experienced paddlers
- Limit for advanced paddlers

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