

The Downtown Boathouse runs a free public kayaking program in New York City between mid-May and mid-October. Any adult who shows up, and who knows how to swim, can go kayaking in the Hudson - in the embayment next to one of the Boathouse docks. Children can also go kayaking, in a double kayak with an adult.

The kayaks used are broad, slow, sit-on-top kayaks (mostly Drifters by Ocean Kayak) so the kayaking experience is decidedly limited. But the boats are safe, and stable, and easy to control, so very suitable for a public kayaking program. We also run 3 hour harbor trips every weekend and holiday morning for more experienced paddlers in faster, thinner boats as well as outreach programs at other locations.

Every participant has to sign a waiver, which is good for the season. At the end of the season the waivers are counted to get an estimate of how many people went kayaking during the year. Below are the numbers for 2007:

KAYAKING LOCATION	SEASON DURATION	WAIVERS	%
Pier 40, West Village	May 15 – Oct 15	5,232	24%
Pier 96, Clinton Cove	May 15 – Oct 15	6,149	28%
72nd St. Riverside Park	May 15 – Oct 15	9,529	43%
Hoboken – Sinatra Park	Four days	865	4%
Jersey City Reservoir	Three days	278	1%
Riverbank Park pool	Winter weekends	47	0%
Total		22,100	100%

For comparison, below are the numbers for prior years:

YEAR	Pier26	Pier40	Pier66	Pier96	72ndSt	Other	TOTAL
2007		5,232		6,149	9,529	1,190	22,100
2006		1,387		5,920	7,365	1,252	15,924
2005	12,417		735		8,945	856	22,953
2004	9,670		1,082		6,951	185	17,880
2003	8,666		995		3,829	103	13,480
2002	11,141		889				12,030
2001	10,200						10,200
2000	7,600						7,600
1999	6,700						6,700
1998	5,400						5,400
1997	2,800						2,800
1996	1,200						1,200
1995	100						100
Total =>							138,367

Because of repeat visits, the total number of kayaks launched is more than two times the number of waivers signed. Thus we have put on the water more than quarter of a million kayakers since we started.

In the two years since our main Pier 26 location closed for reconstruction our numbers have declined. This is probably because both of our two new locations lack decent signage, are not on a popular walkway. Many local residents complain that they have trouble finding us.

USAGE DEMOGRAPHICS

To get an admittedly very rough idea of where the kayakers using Pier 96 are coming from, approximately 300 randomly-chosen waivers were counted by the address given on the waiver:

LOCATION KAYAKER FROM	%Waivers
=====	=====
NYC Manhattan above 42nd St	45%
NYC Manhattan below 42nd St	16%
Other NYC	17%
Other NY State	4%
New Jersey	7%
Other USA	10%
Overseas	1%
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Total	100%

Three nearby zip codes stood out with 23% of our users:

ZIPCODE	%Kayakers	Boundaries
=====	=====	=====
10023	6.7%	W60th to W76th * Central Park West
10019	11.3%	W49th to W59th * 5th Avenue
10036	5.0%	W41st to W48st * 5th Avenue

We can compare our usage numbers to the population of these zip codes to determine what fraction of the people in each locality went kayaking at Pier 96:

ZIPCODE	POPULATION	#KAYAKING	%KAYAKING	%IN-2006
=====	=====	=====	=====	=====
10023	62,206	410	0.7%	0.4%
10019	36,012	697	1.9%	1.2%
10036	18,751	307	1.6%	0.5%

As a percentage of the total population, the numbers are still small, but they are also much better than what they were the year before. We hope to have improved signage next season so that even more members of the local community get to go out on the water.

DOWNTOWN BOATHOUSE PROGRAMS

All of the Downtown Boathouse activities are free and open to anyone who can swim. Below is a list of the programs offered:

WALK-UP EMBAYMENT KAYAKING: This is our main program. Adults can go kayaking in the water next to the dock. Children can also go for a paddle, in a double kayak with a suitable adult.

DEMO-DAY EMBAYMENT KAYAKING: This is the same as our main walk-up kayaking program, except that we take some boats elsewhere for a day in order to demonstrate the concept, and to encourage safe kayaking. In 2007 we ran demo-days in Hoboken and Jersey City.

WEDNESDAY EVENING CLASSES: Every Wednesday evening we run a public class at our Pier 96 boathouse on a kayaking or a kayaking-related topic (e.g. turning strokes, kayak safety, NYC harbor navigation).

WEEKEND MORNING TRIPS: On weekend and holiday mornings we run short escorted tours out on the harbor proper.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH EVENTS: On weekday days we run organized events at our Pier 96 boathouse for local school groups and other non-profit community organizations. The event almost always includes everybody who wants to going out in a kayak.

WINTER POOL PROGRAM: On the weekends during the winter we run introductory kayaking classes in the pool at Riverbank State Park.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

On behalf of the many thousands of people who went kayaking this past season, I would like to thank the (hundreds of) volunteers that helped out. Without them, none of this could have happened. Thanks again.

Happy and safe kayaking.