

# A Perfect Day of Kayaking on Tomales Bay



Photo by Joel Williams

BY JOEL WILLIAMS

I moved to the Bay Area in 2000, and over the last 14 years have experienced many unique Bay Area adventures—from hiking

on Angel Island to sailing on the Bay. Recently I was able to add to this list by visiting Tomales Bay and learning to kayak, both at the same time!

Tomales Bay is 15 miles long and averages about a mile wide. The southern end is about 40 miles north of

San Francisco, and Tomales Bay is well known as one of the premier kayaking sites in the Bay Area. This narrow body of water separates Point Reyes Peninsula from Marin County, with the northern end leading to Bodega Bay and the Pacific Ocean. It is one of the largest

protected bay and coastal areas in California.

I booked a five-hour kayaking tour through the local outdoor guide service, Outback Adventures, and headed for Nick's Cove in Marshall, about halfway up the bay on the east side. There, I



Photo by Joel Williams

Paddling in the shallow waters close to the shore allows kayakers to observe abundant marine life just below the surface of the water.



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Halfway through the five-hour tour of Tomales Bay, we stopped on a secluded beach only accessible by small watercraft.

found the public boat and watercraft launch.

The tour uses two-person kayaks due to their stability and ease of use. Luckily, since I had never kayaked before, the tour was designed with beginners in mind. After a brief lesson on how to use the gear and correct paddling techniques from our friendly and helpful guide, Josh Porter, we were off and on our way.

Almost immediately we were greeted by some curious sea lions, although we steered clear of them as we were told by our guide to leave 200 feet between the kayak and any wildlife. If they approached us, that was fine, but we were instructed not to approach them. We paddled past Hog Island and along the coast, passing several jellyfish, starfish and lots of crabs in the clear shallow waters close to shore. We also spotted countless herons, egrets and pelicans both on the water and in the sky all around us. After about an hour and a half, we pulled out at a secluded beach that was only accessible by small watercraft.

Here we relaxed for a while and enjoyed our lunch while a seal just off the shore stopped by to see what was happening. Then, a few of us joined our guide for a short hike inland. After a brief stroll through a canopy of eucalyptus and cypress trees, we came to an open area of rolling hills that we climbed, providing us with spectacular views of a large portion of the bay and surrounding areas.

We worked our way back down to our private beach and headed back out on the water. On the return trip to Nick's Cove we paddled over some shallow oyster beds—the area is also famous for its oysters—and we encountered a couple of bat rays obscuring the waters underneath us.

All and all it was a breathtaking day, from the picture-perfect weather to the abundance of wildlife we encountered in one of nature's most spectacular environments. If you are interested in taking advantage of some of the wonderful paddling opportunities available in Tomales Bay or closer to home in San Francisco Bay or the Oakland Estuary, check out the Waterfront Adventures section in *Bay Crossings* every month (pages 22-23). That's how I found my trip!

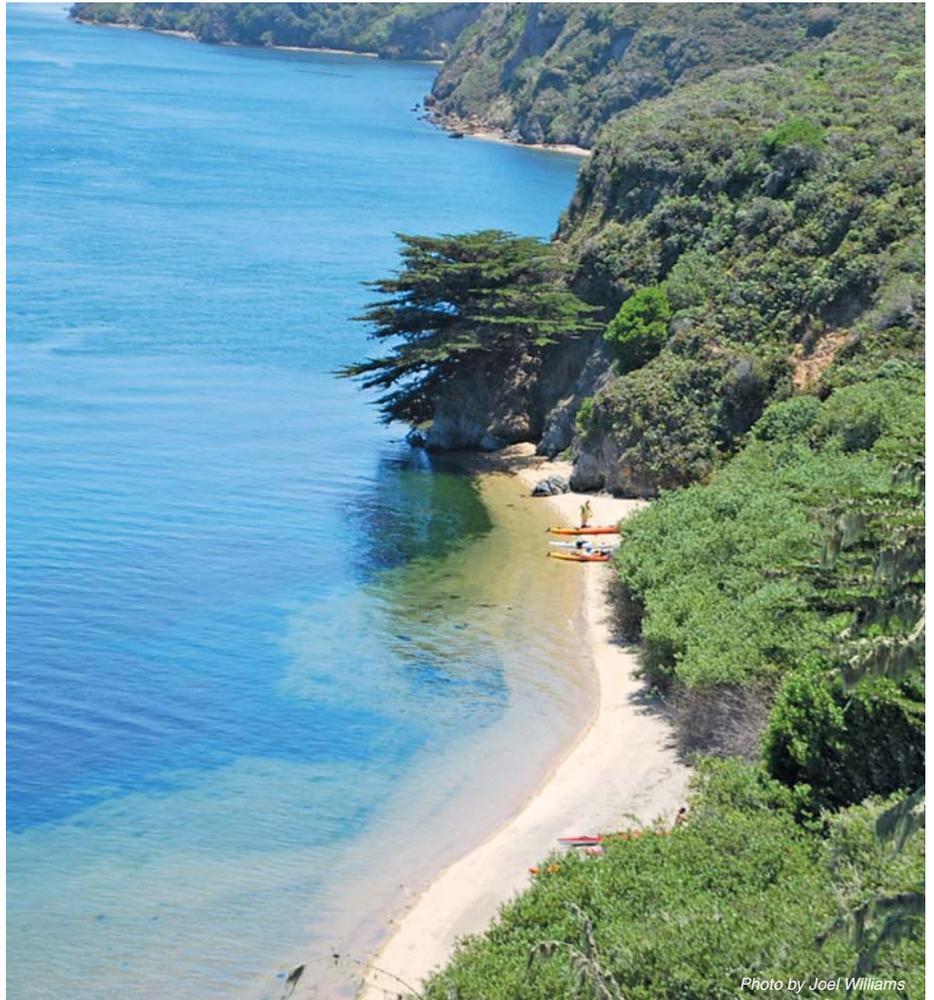


Photo by Joel Williams

During our lunch break, several people from our group took a short hike up to an area with spectacular views of Tomales Bay and our "private beach" for the day.



Photo by Joel Williams

Our friendly guide, Josh Porter, uses a single kayak to be able to quickly assist anyone if necessary.



Photo by Joel Williams

Stable two-person kayaks are perfect for those with little or no paddling experience.