

LSKC Menorca Trip September 20th-29th September 2019

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1 Introduction

Six paddlers from LSKC ¹ went to Menorca in September 2019. The trip was self organised using a local outfitter. The trip was enjoyable and we'd recommend it. The trip report is elsewhere, but the following information may prove useful to anyone considering a similar trip in future.

2 Kit Hire

We hired boats from Menorca en Kayak in Es Grau. Boat hire for the 8 days was around €160 each, as we went in Menorca en Kayak's low season. The boats came with a paddle, buoyancy aid, spray deck and 1 dry bag and the group was supplied with a tow rope and pump and 2 sets of splits.

Boats A mixture of Wilderness systems Tempest 170s, and Perception Essence 16.5 and Perception Essence 17 all with skegs. Hatches were not at all dry and frequently needed to be sponged or pumped out. Everything needed to be placed in dry bags, we took our own dry bags from home, but the single bag provided would have been inadequate. Skegs were generally quite stiff but usable.

Paddles The default paddles were metal shafted with a 60 degree feather. Single piece Werner tybees with a fixed 45 degree feather were available for an additional €20 on request.

Spray Decks Nylon peak decks which were generally watertight and appropriate for the conditions.

Buoyancy Aids Peak centre buoyancy aids without pockets.

Tow Rope Deck mounted and attached to the deck lines using a slip knot for the quick release. No cleat, large float attached and not clean line. Heavy duty rope likely to be extremely difficult to cut in a hurry. Useful for tying up boats, but very glad not to have needed to use it for towing. If you want a waist mounted tow with a clean line and a quick release - bring your own.

¹Clare Eadie, Catherine Francis, Graham Bailey, Pat Smith, Fiona McLay and Rob Burgess

3 Maps and Local Information

3.1 Maps

Menorca en Kayak provided a map by e-mail prior to the trip. The map showed campsites, shops, restaurants and locations where they could arrange a pick up. They also provided additional information on good campsites when we collected the boats. Maps are available for download free of charge from the Spanish national mapping agency, however we opted to buy “Menorca Tour & Trail Super-Durable Maps” which were very good and probably cheaper than laminating multiple sheets.

3.2 Weather

Mobile coverage was good and we were able to get weather forecasts at all places we camped. Menorca en Kayak recommended windguru for the weather. Magic seaweed has predictions for a number of sites along the north and south coasts.

3.3 Environment

Menorca en Kayak sent environmental guidelines prior to the trip including rules for going to the toilet, washing dishes and people without detergents and avoiding damaging sensitive dune ecosystems. Protecting the environment is clearly important for the local tourism industry, the beaches were very clean and the state employs people to clean plastic from the beaches twice a week.

One of the group had a local guide book which provided interesting historical information. There were lots of birds, and a bird book may also have been useful.

4 Trip Conditions

Circumnavigation of the island was around 166km and the maximum distance we paddled in a day was around 30km. Menorca en Kayak recommended a minimum of 8 days to circumnavigate the island and we allowed 8 days. We met a commercial group on the first day who were allowing 11 days for the trip. Despite the relatively short distance over 8 days, and the generally good weather, timings were rather tight as:

- Menorca has a large number of caves to explore.
- Stops took longer to allow for swimming and because no one was getting cold hanging about.
- Heat and, on the first couple of days swell and clapotis meant we were paddling at less than 6km an hour.

The trip was graded B according to the club grading system, and our initial aim was not paddle in conditions which a solid 3* paddler would find uncomfortable/or would be out of remit for a 4* leader. We were lucky with the weather generally had light winds and flat seas. Our start on the first day was delayed until late afternoon due to F5-7

winds and thunderstorms, and the 2nd and 3rd days along the east and north coast had 1.5-2m northerly swell and clapotis, with bigger conditions around the headlands. The group coped fine, conditions were slightly beyond what we'd originally agreed to paddle in, but given the water temperatures the main concern was visibility to larger craft.

It should be noted that there are cliffs along much of the coast, and there are some fairly long stretches with no get outs, the longest being a 15km section along the north west coast - so as a whole the trip would not be within 4* remit.

Based on the conditions we encountered we'd recommend that anyone contemplating this trip would be capable of paddling 30km in a day and in winds of up to F4/F5. Tides in the Mediterranean can be ignored!

5 Camping

Camping is illegal in Menorca but sleeping under tarps or bivvy bags is allowed outside of the national park around Es Grau. We opted for tarps which were much more faff than tents. On sand we used the boats to anchor the tarps. Most mornings there was a heavy dew and it was cold enough some nights to require a 3 season sleeping bag. We hung mosquito nets from the tarps, and although the mosquitos were not as annoying, numerous or hungry as the biting midge, the nets were required.

The campsites we used were generally sandy beaches (it got everywhere) however at Cala Morrell we camped on a concrete bathing platform and Alcaufar we camped on rock ledge. We decided to paddle on from one site which was a pebbly storm beach. A good carry mat and a groundsheet to protect it from rough ground (and keep some of the sand off) is recommended especially for those with little in built padding. Some of the campsites suggested by Menorca en Kayak were near busy tourist beaches, we generally avoided these but although using tarps at these may have been possible but bivvy bags would have given more flexibility. A group of 6 meant that we were able to fit on some sites which would have been difficult given a larger group and still get some privacy.

We cooked as a group, which was sociable given the warm weather. This also reduced the number of stoves we needed to take and the amount of gas we needed to buy. We used a 3l pot and 2 frying pans. Gas consumption was lower than it would have been in Scotland due to higher temperatures - and we used 3.5 c300 canisters for the 8 days.

We shopped at a supermarket in Mahon but bought water in Es grau. There were no accessible shops for paddlers between Fornell on the North Coast and Son Xoriguer on the south coast. This meant that we had to carry a minimum of 3-4 days supplies of food and water for the north and west coasts. Elsewhere it was possible to stop everyday for food and water. As we generally avoided camping at beaches with road access there were few opportunities to eat out.

General local advice was that the tap water was not suitable for drinking so we only used bottled water. Most of us took electrolyte tablets to add to the water.

6 Personal Paddling Kit

We were all paddling in shorts and t-shirts. There were some issues with clothing chapping, which didn't heal easily in salt water.

In addition to the usual kit required for paddling in Scotland - a mask and snorkel or as a minimum goggles are recommended.

7 Getting There

We flew from Edinburgh to Mahon with Jet2 and back with Vueling via Barcelona. Direct flights tended to be with package tour operators and worked with their change over times i.e. Friday to Friday with Jet2.

We all stayed in a budget hotel/hostel Posada orsi Paspertu in Mahon which was clean, friendly and helpful and the cheapest accommodation we could find for 6 people in Mahon. We used taxis to get from the airport to Mahon around €15 and from Mahon to Es Grau €20. There is a bus from Mahon to Es Grau, but that doesn't run outside of high season.