



Briefing Sheet

Buoyancy aids and helmets are to be worn at all times.

What to do if you go in the river

- Take care of people first, equipment last.
- Hang onto the paddle as they can be useful for reaching out to others and bracing yourself in the water.
- Dry barrels will usually float if they are sealed properly and depending on how much are in them, but can usually be found later.
- Canoes full of water weigh more than 1 tonne so best to move it to shallow water, one person to lift edge of canoe out of the water to break seal and slowly rotate the canoe over rather than try to lift it out of the water.
- Stay up-stream of the canoe in flowing water to avoid being pinned against rocks or trees by the canoe.
- Never swim in front of canoes/kayaks
- All losses and unreasonable damage must be paid for (see T&C's).

Travelling along the river

- Stay away from trees and branches. You could get pinned against them. They may conceal broken branches that can cause you injury (there is also the possibility that other obstacle will lie beneath the water that could cause damage to the boat or impede it). If avoiding overhanging obstacles lean forward and down. If you lean to one side you increase the likelihood of tipping the boat over.
- Do not grab hold of branches, you risk injury and tipping by pressure of water against your resistance.
- Do not grab hold of gunnels (edges of canoes) if boat wobbles (sit upright with backs straight)
- Always canoe in the centre of the river (typically it's the deeper and safer channel)
- Do not cut off bends; take the long way through them.

Bridges

- Do not try to pass between a bridge upright and the river bank.
- Choose a centre opening with the least obstruction and smoothest flow of water.
- Avoid debris that may have accumulated against bridge supports.
- Choose your line of approach early – avoid last minute turns and positioning movements.

Islands and choice of route

- It is not possible to give precise instructions for each part of the river (see route notes for specific hazards) as river levels vary from day to day. Avoid fast flowing water that takes you under overhanging trees/bushes.
- If you run aground consider getting out of the boat and pulling it over the river bed to a point where it will float with occupants in it (less than 6 inches or 150mm). Do not wait until you are up to your knees.
- Choose your line of travel early. Avoid making last minute route changes.

Steering

- Paddling on one side causes the boat to steer in the opposite direction. To steer the boat quicker the rear person can place the paddle in the water and hold it. (J stroke) That causes the boat to steer to the same side. Paddling backwards by the rear person causes the boat to change direction quicker. This causes the boat to slow or stop, others must continue paddling so that the boat goes in the direction it is facing.
- The person at the rear should instruct others on which side to paddle when necessary.
- When you have three people in a boat avoid having all three people paddling on the one side. This can lead to the boat capsizing if the boat becomes unbalanced.

Stopping and starting/embarking and disembarking from a canoe

- On a bank let one person off the boat while the others improve stability by holding on to the bank
- For people out of the boat, hold it by the gunnels/edges while others get out.
- If landing on a beach where the boat has run aground remember let one person out before the rest of you stand up. The person that gets out first should then pull the boat further ashore (the the boat is likely to float again when one person gets out).
- Take care when getting into a boat that it does not rest on something in the river bottom and then pivot around it causing you to be tipped into the river.
- Take all kit with you do not leave it in the boat.
- Pull the boat up out of the water (otherwise you may find it has been dislodged by others).
- Do not stand on the side of the boat (Gunnels).

Swans

- Avoid getting between swans and their nests or young. Paddle away from aggressive swans, do not antagonise them.

Anglers

- Respect other river users including anglers. When asked if you can see their line, answer the question. Thin filament lines can be invisible to you.

Return

Let us know when you're back. (Report to member of staff) If you think you are going to be late i.e. later than requested, you will need to contact the hire centre ASAP; otherwise we may initiate our emergency response procedure. You need to log back in and hand over all hired kit. If you have any problems call us on 01600 890470