RISK ASSESSMENT WIZARD



CANOEING

Safety Guide

Outdoor Activity Provider

6	32	21
Key Benefits	Control Measures	Checklist Items

KEY BENEFITS

Upper Body & Core Strength

Strengthens upper body and core muscles through consistent paddling and manoeuvring of the canoe.

Teamwork & Coordination

Improves coordination and teamwork as canoeists work together to steer and propel the canoe effectively.

Cardiovascular Fitness

Low-impact aerobic workout that improves heart health and builds endurance over extended paddles.

Nature Connection

Unique access to waterways, wildlife habitats, and scenic locations inaccessible by other means.

Mental Wellbeing

Time on water reduces stress, promotes mindfulness, and supports overall mental health.

Navigation Skills

Develops practical navigation, map reading, and environmental awareness skills.

KEY HAZARDS & CONTROL MEASURES

Capsizing

- ✔ Comprehensive training on canoe handling and balance
- ✔ Use canoes with adequate stability features
- ✔ All paddlers wear buoyancy aids at all times
- ✔ Regular capsize recovery drills

Rapid Water Flow

- ✔ Assess water flow rates and hazards in planned route
- ✔ Train guides in swift water rescue techniques
- ✔ Brief all participants on navigating currents
- ✔ Use equipment designed for high-flow environments

Collisions with Rocks

- ✔ Conduct reconnaissance to identify hazardous areas
- ✔ Equip canoes with protective gear and rock guards
- ✔ Train participants in manoeuvring techniques
- ✔ Establish communication signals for coordination

Weather & Conditions

- ✔ Monitor weather forecasts before and during trips
- ✔ Clear criteria for postponing/cancelling activities
- ✔ Appropriate layered and waterproof clothing
- ✔ Quick access to warm shelters and emergency gear

Sun Exposure

- ✔ Provide sun-protective clothing and hats
- ✔ Apply high-SPF water-resistant sunscreen
- ✔ Schedule to minimise peak sun hours
- ✔ Ensure adequate hydration breaks

Entanglement Hazards

- ✔ Avoid areas with overhanging branches
- ✔ Ensure ropes and gear are securely fastened
- ✔ Train on safe navigation through obstacles
- ✔ Know how to free yourself if entangled

Navigation Errors

- ✔ Use detailed maps and GPS devices
- ✔ Train guides in advanced navigation skills
- ✔ Conduct pre-trip briefings on planned route
- ✔ Implement waypoint checks and contingency routes

Improper Load Distribution

- ✔ Train participants on proper packing and balance
- ✔ Use straps and bungees to secure gear
- ✔ Conduct pre-trip checks for even weight distribution
- ✔ Prevent shifting that could destabilise canoe

PRE-SESSION SAFETY CHECKLIST

Risk Assessment

- [ ] Complete and review risk assessment for this activity
- [ ] Ensure all identified hazards have control measures in place
- [ ] Brief all staff on key risks and emergency procedures

Conditions Check

- [ ] Weather forecast checked
- [ ] Water levels and flow rates checked
- [ ] Route suitable for group ability
- [ ] Hazards identified and briefed
- [ ] Egress/escape points identified
- [ ] Float plan filed with contact

Equipment Check

- [ ] Buoyancy aids fitted correctly
- [ ] Canoes checked for damage
- [ ] Paddles matched to paddlers
- [ ] Gear securely loaded and balanced
- [ ] Appropriate clothing worn
- [ ] Bailer/sponge in each canoe

Safety Readiness

- [ ] First aid kit packed
- [ ] Rescue equipment ready
- [ ] Communication device charged
- [ ] Group briefed on route and signals
- [ ] Emergency procedures understood
- [ ] Spare paddle and repair kit

RISK ASSESSMENT WIZARD

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390+

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