



CANOEING

Safety Guide

Outdoor Activity Provider

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Key Benefits

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Control Measures

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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
- ✓ All paddlers wear buoyancy aids at all times
- ✓ Use canoes with adequate stability features
- ✓ Regular capsize recovery drills

Rapid Water Flow

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

Collisions with Rocks

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

Weather & Conditions

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

Sun Exposure

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

Entanglement Hazards

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

Navigation Errors

- ✓ Use detailed maps and GPS devices
- ✓ Conduct pre-trip briefings on planned route
- ✓ Train guides in advanced navigation skills
- ✓ 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
- Brief all staff on key risks and emergency procedures
- Ensure all identified hazards have control measures in place

Conditions Check

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

Equipment Check

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

Safety Readiness

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



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