BRITISH CANOEING

You, your canoe and the environment

You, your canoe and the environment

England and Wales have a wonderful network of inland and coastal water that are amongst the best in Europe. This leaflet provides guidance on good practice for using these waters in a responsible and appropriate manner. Canoeists should be able to enjoy their sport and recreation in harmony with the natural environment and share the resource with other water-users.

To get the best canoeing experience, try to be considerate and respectful; treat others as you would wish to be treated, respect the freshwater and marine environment, follow safety recommendations and be seen as welcomed visitor.

Observe and Countryside Code.
For information visit:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code

For information on where to canoe on inland and coastal waters, including information on access arrangements that may be in place, contact the British Canoeing Waterways Advisors, navigation or port authority. Contact details can be found on the British Canoeing website:

www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/guidance-resources/waterways-environment/access/access-arrangements/

Consideration for others

Canoeists will meet a variety of land and water users on their journeys. Common sense, polite behaviour and conversations can help to promote a mutual understanding.

On Land

- Stay away from houses and private gardens
- Change discreetly, using public facilities where possible
- Drive sensibly at all times
- Car Parking - do not obstruct roads or entrances to building or farm property
- Ensure your kit does not cause an obstruction when unloading
- Leave gates positioned and property as you find them
- Avoid damage to fences and walls

On Water

- Follow the general rules of navigation, any local bye-laws and navigation notices issued by waterway authorities. Arrange for any necessary licenses or other payments such as harbour dues
- Respect and do not obstruct other water users
- Keep a look out and be aware that larger vessels may not see you and are less manoeuvrable. In confined waters keep to the edge of the deep water navigation channel
- Keep the numbers in your party consistent with safety, the nature of the stretch of river and the impact on your surroundings
- When offering assistance to those in need, on or off the water, do not put yourself or fellow canoeists at risk
- Show consideration to organised bank side activities, and give way as required to on-water events.

Anglers

- Keep a look out for anglers whilst paddling, anglers can be hard to spot on banks
- Co-operate to avoid lines, nets and swims
- If it is unclear where to pass lines or swims, then quietly attract the attention of the angler and agree a route to follow
- When an angler is playing a fish from the bank or wading, stop some way off and await their acknowledgement to proceed
- Do not linger in pools or swims occupied by an angler

Invasive non-native species – Stop the Spread

Check, Clean and Dry canoes & wet equipment after use. Always take these bio-security measures to minimise the risk or prevent the spread and environmental damage from invasive non native aquatic species and diseases. (Note 4)

Check your equipment and clothing for live organisms, plant fragments etc - particularly in areas that are damp or hard to inspect.

Clean and wash all equipment, footwear and clothing thoroughly. If you do come across any organisms, leave them at the water body where you found them.

Dry all equipment and clothing - some species can live for up to 16 days in moist conditions. Make sure you don't transfer water elsewhere.

NB. Current research has found that soaking small items at 45deg C or above for 5-10 minutes is an effective method of killing most invasive species.

Take responsibility for your actions

The outdoors is a fantastic place for sport and recreation, but it is also a natural environment which needs to be treated with respect.

- Be aware of information/hazards for your chosen journey and ensure you are confident in the ability of your party to cope with the conditions expected
- Take account of water flows, levels, weather and forecasted conditions
- Leave details of your trip with a responsible person and advise a safe arrival
- Ensure your equipment is in good condition. Use and wear it correctly
- It is recommended to take advantage of British Canoeing's advice and courses offered in canoe skills and safety for all levels of ability
- Be aware of health, water quality and other safety information (Note 1)
- Permission may be required to cross private land
- It is your assessment of conditions/factors whether to go on the water

For more information

For more information about canoeing in England and Wales go to:
www.britishcanoeing.org.uk
www.canoewales.com

For more information about canoeing elsewhere in the UK visit the following websites:
www.canoescotland.com
www.cani.org.uk

Caring for the environment

Your canoe is a traditional craft used throughout the world for exploring wilderness areas and quietly observing wildlife and flora.

It causes no erosion, noise or pollution and leaves no trace of its passing. Canoeing at appropriate water levels is an environmentally benign activity (Note2) and causes no damage to fish stocks (Note 3)

By following the simple steps below you can ensure your presence is not detrimental to the freshwater and marine environment, it can help to minimise and avoid accidentally disturbing wildlife and their habitats.

- Find out about the area before you go, noting its sensitive places, protected areas, species and breeding seasons (Note 6)
- Take your litter home with you, leave no trace of your visit
- When clearing litter left by others, handle it with care
- Leave the environment as you find it
- Keep noise to a minimum
- Do not 'seal' launch or drag boats to avoid wearing away natural banks. Float your canoe for launching or landing
- Where possible keep to any designated paths or launching points
- Take care not to disturb bank side nesting species. Constantly assess wildlife and if you see signs of disturbance move away quickly
- On rivers, avoid paddling over gravel banks in low water conditions - they may contain fish spawn
- On marine waters take care on shingle beaches - they may be nesting grounds e.g. Terns. Avoid dragging canoes across rocky inter-tidal areas, through sand dunes and their grasses
- Keep a safe distance away from wildlife to avoid causing disturbance and stress to otters, seal colonies - especially with pups present, rafts of wildfowl and sea birds as well as their nesting, shelter and feeding areas e.g. mudflats, marshes and cliffs. Remember, basking sharks, dolphins and whales can also be a danger to you. For more advice and information refer to You, your canoe and the marine environment (Note 5)

Report pollution, incidents, damage and invasive species to the relevant authorities.

Environment Agency
Call: 0800 80 70 60 (24 hours)
(In Wales please contact Natural Resources Wales on: 0800 80 70 60)

Canal & River Trust
Urgent event. Call: 0800 47 999 47
Non urgent. Call: 0303 040 4040 (Monday to Friday 0800-1800) or email customer.services@canalrivertrust.org.uk

RSPCA for wildlife and animals in distress
Telephone Call: 0990 55 59 99 (24 hours)

For Coastguard and other emergency services call 999

British Canoeing
Membership

National Governing Body Membership – British Canoeing (in England) or Canoe Wales (in Wales) offers a huge range of benefit including:

- License to paddle on 4,500km of Britain's navigations and canals
- Civil liability insurance up to £10 million
- Canoe Focus magazine
- Discounts on event, equipment, clothing, travel and boat insurance and coaching supplies
- Access to information, resources, course and competitions

Telephone: **0845 370 9500** or visit: **www.britishcanoeing.org.uk**
Telephone: **01678 521 199** or visit: **www.canoewales.com**

Notes

Canoeing is the generic term used to describe canoe, kayak and paddlesports.

1. For health and safety, and water quality (Weil's Disease) information visit *www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/about/health-and-safety.* Also refer to information provided by local agencies, navigation and port authorities for pollution incidents such as blue green algae blooms.

2. British Canoeing has a Memorandum of Understanding with English Nature (now formed as Natural England) that states "English Nature and British Canoeing agree that there is unlikely to be any significant impact on or lasting disturbance to wildlife and the water environment from the passing of canoes."

3. An Environment Agency report entitled "W266 - The effects of Canoeing on Fish Stocks and Angling" concluded that there is no empirical evidence linking canoeing with damage to fish spawning grounds or damage to fish stocks.

4. All forms of water recreation in the UK or abroad could potentially transfer invasive species between waters on wet or damp equipment to result in seriously damaging our native species and ecosystems - by spreading disease, competing for habitats, direct predation and plants blocking waterways. Check Clean Dry and invasive species information is detailed at: *www.nonnativespecies.org/checkcleandry* and *www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/guidance-resources/waterways-environment/environmental-good-practice/stop-the-spread*. Also, the fish parasite (Gyrodactylus Salaris) is a threat to UK salmon stocks. After returning from abroad and before re-use in the UK, thoroughly dry for 48 hours or disinfect all equipment by immersing equipment in seawater or a 3% salt water solution for a minimum of ten minutes, then rinse in tap water.

5. You, your canoe and the marine environment - Advice for sustainable and good environmental practice, see: *www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/guidance-resources/waterways-environment/environmental-good-practice and www.canoescotland.org/faq/sea-kayaking-environmental-guidelines*.

6. Protected Area designations - Special Sites of Scientific interest (SSSi's), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's) Special Protection Areas (SPA's apply to rare and vulnerable species of birds), National Nature Reserves and Marine Nature Reserves (to be known as Marine Conservation Zones). Visit *www.natural-england.org.uk* for further information.

Canal & River Trust · National Trust · Stop the Spread Invasive Aquatic Species Check Clean Dry · The Green Blue · THAMES21 · The Inland Waterways Association · Surrey Wildlife Trust · Broads Authority The Broads - a member of the National Park family · Port of London Authority · Environment Agency · Natural England · Forestry Commission England · The Rivers Trust