

Warm, Dry and Happy

Summer now seems a distant memory, its time to think about cold weather paddling and how to stay comfortably and warm and enjoy yourself.

Dressing appropriately

In Winter, the weather is generally colder (and potentially wetter) so we need to be prepared. If you plan your clothing, you will enjoy the trip. Wear lots of layers, this enables you to vary your temperature by adding or removing layers.

Wear a swimming costume, or ensure you have packed a change of underwear!. Think where you will be getting changed, you may be changing in a public car park so you need to remain decent!

Thermal tops and bottoms make a good base layer follow this with fleece or jogging bottoms. **NEVER wear jeans** to go paddling they shrink and become heavy when wet, they also take forever to dry and retain no heat.

Another option is to invest in (or borrow) a wetsuit, but remember they are porous and the wind whistles through so you'll still need a jacket that's windproof and waterproof

Lightweight waterproof jacket and trousers help to keep you warm by reducing wind-chill. Dry top, dry trousers or a dry suit will also reduce the chance of your base layer getting wet.

Footwear is vital for warmth and protection. Wearing socks will help to keep your feet warm. The footwear needs to be securely attached.

On the Water

The leader will brief the group before launching, introducing who is who, identifying front and back markers and explaining any signals that will be used will be during the paddle.

On the water, everyone should paddle as a group, looking out for each other, as well as themselves. The front and back markers should keep the group together so that they can always see the other marker. You should try and stay within easy calling distance of the paddlers nearest to you.

The leader is responsible for you, if you disappear, they will assume that you have gotten into trouble.

To get the most out of your trip, use the time to work on your skills. Watch what other people do and ask questions. Sharing maps and river information with group members can add further interest to the trip.

Equipment

Ensure you are properly equipped, your first responsibility is to yourself, and each paddler should carry as a minimum the following items in a waterproof container or bag:

- food (packed lunch plus spare chocolate bars etc),
- drink (hot in a flask, or cold),
- hat and gloves
- a complete set of spare clothing (just in case... top / trousers / socks / small towel)
- a simple first aid kit for personal use... (plasters).

The list is applicable for all types of river trips. Only the weather would change the type of spare clothing you would take. Extra emergency equipment needs to be taken when on white water, open water, or the sea

- Emergency food
- Whistle
- Torch + spare batteries & bulb
- Exposure bag

If you own extra safety equipment like a throw line, sling and karabiner they are more use with you than left at home.

Coaches Equipment

The coach on the day should also be carrying equipment for the group:

Spare food, to help keep moral going, a full flask for the end, if everyone has finished their own flasks it goes down well on a cold day (Not everyone likes coffee or tea. Try hot orange, honey & lemon or blackcurrant.)

Extra tops, sweat shirts, fleeces, fibre pile, woollen jumpers, as swimmer might need dry clothes to keep warm

A more substantial first aid kit including dressings. NO LOTIONS, POTIONS, TABLETS OR PILLS. Some people keep plasters and one wound dressing wrapped in waterproof covering in the pocket of their B/Aids.

End of the Day

If the finish point is separate from the start, a shuttle will need to be organised. Check that your dry clothes are left in the vehicle that will be at the get out, and the keys are carried in the group!

Remember, you may be changing in a public car park so you need to remain decent!

but most importantly.....enjoy yourself!