

Putney Bridge Club – Thames guidelines



Cost for kayak and equipment use

Members – free. Included in your Membership Subscription fee

Guests – £5 day fee

Fee include use of kayak, paddle, buoyancy aid and spray deck.

Please add your name and pay your fee before paddling to the session organiser. Guests also need to leave an ICE 'in case of emergency' telephone number .

The Club has kayaks ranging from short white water kayaks, general purpose Dancers' for the Thames and longer sea kayaks. You can also bring your own boat along. Facilities are somewhat basic... so be prepared to change in the open.

Thames paddling sessions

Open to all paddlers who have completed at least 2 pool sessions with safety drills for exiting a capsized kayak and rescue.

Please reply to the invitation email sent each week. If you are a newcomer to the Club please give a short summary of your paddling experience.

Newcomers on the Thames require prior approval by the Trip Leader. That will be subject to the forecast weather and river conditions, along with necessary safety cover from experienced paddlers. A Trip Leader's decision is final.

Guests

Guests are allowed 2 trips on the Thames to try out kayaking and meet the Club. After this our insurance requires you to become a full Member. Annual membership is £50. Please note you also need to be a paid up member to join any organised Club trips.

Preparation

Be aware of the PLA Tideway Code for paddlers. Our website has links to current Thames information.

Dress correctly. See our advice on what to wear. A cotton T-shirt and running shorts are not acceptable in cold conditions and you will be denied a paddle trip.

<http://www.putneybridgecc.co.uk/thames>

<http://www.putneybridgecc.co.uk/faq>

Lights for night-time paddling

The River Thames area is covered by the International Sea Regulations. (ColRegs) and is enforced by the Port of London Authority (PLA). Consequently we must be clearly visible **front and back with 2 white lights**. Sorry: no lights, no paddle.

Thames – Trip procedures

An experienced Trip Leader will organise Thames trips

- Ensure trip members have enough experience to complete the journey safely. Nominate deputy leaders.
- Check the tides before arriving; direction, time and strength. For weekend paddles check for any river closures on the PLA website. Note the wind direction and take this into account when deciding how far and long the evening paddle should be for the group. Strong winds are always more difficult for newcomers than the river current. Trips in F5 and above need to be reviewed.
- Leaders to take towlines, mobile phones (waterproofed) and whistle to attract attention, and a powerful torch in winter
- Members should cover any cuts, sores or scratches with waterproof plasters
- Inexperienced paddlers and race boats are only allowed on the river with an accessible shore.

Briefing

A safety briefing is given to all paddlers, including the route to be taken upriver or down. Downriver has more sea like conditions and requires greater attention and skills from the group.

Everyone is responsible for their own safety, and looking out for other paddlers. Be aware of rivers users such as rowers and Thames clippers. **Any paddler at the front of the group must check behind them regularly** and stop if necessary to allow paddlers to regroup.

Newcomers

- Try the kayak while at the lockup; adjusting footrests and spray deck as necessary. Please leave your emergency contact details on the whiteboard
- The combination of High Water and fast Spring tides at Barns Elms increases the potential hazards for beginners; more difficult launching, overhanging branches and strong currents.
- Nominate an experienced paddler to 'buddy up' with a newcomer

Highlight the paddling risks on the Thames

- Double-up to carry kayaks whenever possible
- Fixed obstructions; overhanging trees, buoys & moored boats, especially after floods
- The pontoon 'black spots' at Dove Pier, Chiswick Pier and Battersea railway bridge areas
- Rowers and other users such as river taxis and their wash, particularly in the shallows
- Fast currents and swirling eddies around moored barges, bridges, pontoons, buoys
- If there is a risk of collision with rowers then their verbal conventions are useful:
'Ahead rower' - imminent risk of collision, **'Hold it up'** – Precautionary stop.
'Hold it hard' – emergency stop
- Decide what group control is needed e.g. for newcomers in the group, busy Thames
- In strong currents allow much more space between other paddlers and fixed objects

On the water

- Navigate in a correct manner to avoid collisions or causing a collision.
- Review progress from time to time of other paddlers, stop and regularly regroup. Maintain a pace to suit slower paddlers. Turn around in good time, especially with new paddlers
- Pay particular attention to 'black spots' mentioned above. Experienced paddlers must act as 'traffic islands' to warn & guide paddlers away from dangers
- For emergencies on the Thames **dial 999**, and ask for the **Coastguard**

After the water...

Please drain kayaks as much as possible before storing them to reduce condensation in the lockup. Hang up all wet gear to dry. Carefully return all boats to the racks as appropriate, taking special care of fibreglass boats. Switch the lights OFF. Ensure the lockup and side gates are locked when the last person leaves.

Health Do wash your hands after paddling, especially before eating food. Clean and disinfect any wounds that may have occurred.

Weil's Disease. While the risk of contracting Weil's disease (Leptospirosis) from recreational water is small, the serious nature of the disease means we must be aware of the dangers and should take simple precautions to reduce the risk of infection. Weils disease is not thought to survive in salt water on the tidal Thames, and the Club has not had an incident in 25 years. If you develop persistent flu like symptoms tell you doctor that you may have been exposed to Weil's (Leptospirosis) so that they can consider it in their diagnosis.

Do join us post paddle Thursday evenings at The Rocket pub, behind St Mary's Church, Putney Bridge.