



Putney Bridge CC – Racing and race boat guide

Racing will help to develop your fitness, technique and self-confidence. It is a very social branch of the sport and provides the opportunity to develop a strong camaraderie within the Putney group and other kayaking clubs across London and beyond.

Entry Criteria

To minimise the amount of effort in supporting the group we have a number of pre-requisites that need to be in place. These include:

- You must be a member of the Club and agree to join British Canoeing.
- Have a reasonable level of fitness ie. be able to paddle between Putney and Barnes Bridge and back without stopping.
- Willing to participate in races across London and the region.
- Willing to participate in regular training sessions.

Newcomers introduction to the Race group is via an Open day which is run twice a year (in early Spring). These sessions will be coached by several of our experienced paddlers and will provide the learner with the opportunity to 'play' in a K1, K2 or Surf Ski and to see if 'Racing' is really for them. If the newcomer wants to continue they can have access to the Racing WhatsApp group which will provide details of forthcoming training sessions.

If a new member to the club is interested in joining the group and has missed one of the Open days they should contact the Race Leader directly. Similarly experienced racers are able to join but this will typically be arranged with direct liaison with the Race Lead.

Using the race kayaks: K1, K2 and surfskis

Unlike the Club's other kayaks for whitewater and sea kayaking, these fast kayaks are made of lightweight fibreglass which require extra precautions when using them. They vary in their 'wobble' factor from 1 (impossible) to 10 (stable)

Adjusting the K1 and K2

Please be very careful how you adjust and sit in the kayaks before getting on the water. Check the rudder and particularly the 'under stern' rudder is not 'sitting' on the ground. Ask if you are not sure!

Racing paddles - 'wings'

The club has some racing paddles which if used properly in the right kayak are estimated to give a 5% gain in performance. However they are expensive and quite fragile, so only to be used for racing kayaks.

Starting off

Please remember that the boat needs to be fully afloat while getting in and out; ideally in 25 - 30cms of water to clear the rudder from hitting the ground. If you get in and find your weight has caused the boat to ground then you shouldn't just push the boat off, you need to get back out of the kayak, and move it into deeper water before starting off.

Returning to the shore

You need to get a leg out and stop the boat before it hits the ground. If you don't feel stable enough to do this then use the paddle to steady yourself while getting a leg down.

While paddling

Please stay far enough away from the shore that you can avoid running into bricks and other debris that might be on the shore. This may mean that you need assistance to steady the boat while launching and recovering. Don't be shy, do ask. It might also mean that you have the occasional unplanned dunking in the river, and you will certainly get wet legs.

Take care

Please do take care of the race boats, they're not cheap but will with careful treatment last many years. We also recognize that they may get scratched in normal use and don't want people to be scared of this, but they do need much more care than our plastic boats.

Post paddle...

Please drain kayaks as much as possible before storing them *upside down* to reduce condensation in the lockup. Carefully return all boats onto the racks. Hang up all wet gear to dry. Switch off the lights. Ensure the lockup is locked.

Training Sessions

The following sessions are run: -

1. Repetition (skills based).
2. Interval training.
3. Time Trials.

These sessions will take part in the Barn Elms area – between Putney and Hammersmith Bridges. On a weekly basis a longer journey is run upriver to Barnes, Chiswick and beyond.

Training procedures

Training sessions will be arranged by the Training Lead/Coach. The Lead will also ensure that there is a sufficient number of 'experienced' paddlers able to support the session. If there is a newcomer to the group the 'experienced' paddler will 'Buddy up' to ensure that the session runs smoothly.

Before each session the Training Lead/Coach should complete a risk assessment. They will;

- Check the tides before arriving; direction, time and strength and take account of the wind direction. The tide and wind will dictate the type of training session that is to be run.
- Ensure that the PLA Tideway Code is complied with. Our Thames website page has multiple sources of information for organizing trips on the river.
- For weekend paddles check for any river closures on the PLA website.
- Leaders to take a waterproofed phone, a whistle to attract attention, and a powerful torch in winter. For longer trips consider spare paddles, a VHF radio, first aid kit and spare clothing
- Race boats are only generally allowed on the river with an accessible shore (ie not 2 hours either side of high tide). High Water and Spring tides at Barns Elms increases the potential hazards; difficult launching, overhanging branches and strong currents.
- Crossing the river, in race boats, is only allowed if at least one other experience paddler is in attendance.

For emergencies on the Thames dial 999, and ask for the Coastguard

You must to inform London VTS - 0203 2607711 or VHF Ch14 if...

you intend to paddle beyond: Wandsworth Bridge at night or *all* trips beyond Chelsea Bridge.

The Race group *will not* generally paddle below Putney Bridge. Downriver conditions may be quieter but that must be seen against very few get outs, more sea like conditions and FastCat ferries. In short trips need more attention and a group with much higher skillset.

Briefing

A briefing will take place at the start of every session. This will involve explaining the nature of the session and trip route highlighting any particular areas of concern. Everyone is responsible for their own safety and has a duty of care towards other paddlers and river users. Members should cover any cuts, sores or scratches with waterproof plasters.

Thames paddling 'black spots'

- Fixed obstructions; overhanging trees, buoys & moored boats, especially after floods
- Pontoon 'black spots', for example: Dove Pier and Chiswick Pier
- 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 use their verbal conventions:
 - **'Ahead rower'** – imminent risk of collision.
 - **'Hold it up'** – Precautionary stop.
 - **'Hold it hard'** – emergency stop
- In strong currents allow much more space between other paddlers and fixed objects

On the water

- Navigate in a correct manner to avoid or cause 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 well away from dangers

Race Day

The Race Lead will have a list of races the club enters. Members will be encouraged to take part in as many races as possible.

Health

Do wash your hands after paddling, especially before eating food. Clean and disinfect any wounds that may have occurred. Shower facilities in Barn Elms are available to club members.

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. 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 disease so that they can consider it in their diagnosis.