



Frequently asked questions

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Do I have to do all the days?

Not really.. but... we assure you that you would prefer to be involved for the whole trip! The extra sense of achievement felt is well worth it. However, you can join us for any number of days you like with just one condition....see the next FAQ.

Can I do just the last day?

Sorry, no. With the extra levels of skills and experience required for canoeing on the first tidal stretches of the Thames and into the city we need to make sure that all paddlers are going to be safe. If you wish to do the last day you must paddle at least the 5th day too.

Do I have to raise a certain amount of money?

No, however, this is our biggest regular fundraising event for *Adventure Plus* and because it involves a significant amount of time to organise we ask that you try hard to meet the below targets. The funds you raise for us enable us to provide our life changing *Adventure* youthwork to more and more young people. We manage this event on as low a budget as we can through the generosity of many people. We have costs that we need to cover which is why we ask you to attempt to raise sponsorship as shown on the registration form and below:

- 1 day - £250
- 2 days - £450
- 3 days - £550
- 4 days - £700
- 5 days - £850
- 6 days - £1,000

We love the event but we also do not want to run it at a loss as this would not be good management of charitable resources.

For those that are walking or cycling please chat with us about sponsorship targets.

Do I need to have prior canoeing/kayaking experience?

Not at all. We have the full range of paddlers sign up. From gnarly wizened qualified veterans of the sport to complete beginners. For all but the well qualified you need to attend 2 training days with us prior to the event – and if you fall in on both your training days you will not be the first to do so. In 2017 this happened for 2 of our paddlers and they both successfully completed the full trip without falling out of a boat.

How do I get home at the end?

We have plenty of seats in our A+ vehicles to get you back to the start or to Windmill Farm or to drop you at a convenient other location. The logistics do get complicated with around 30 people to transport so that was a good question to ask.

Where do we sleep each night?

Incredibly generous churches or sporting/scout clubs let us bed down in halls or rooms they are not using for the night. For some nights we may have billeting arrangements with members of the local church whereby you and possibly one or two other paddlers will be invited into our friends' homes for the night. None of these are 5 star hotels but you will almost certainly sleep very well!

What do I need to bring with me?

We have a handy checklist available on the event page on our website.

What training would be good to do prior to the trip?

We run 3 training days prior to the event where you will gain all the skills you will need. Boosting your own fitness levels is rarely a bad idea and your doctor should be encouraging you to do so. You will be "on the move" and outside on the river for up to 11 hours each day so anything you do to prepare will be beneficial. Going for long walks or long bike rides in the months before hand to build fitness as well as look for other simple exercises to help build core strength and shoulder and back strength are good ideas.

What training do I need to attend?

Unless you have proven qualifications and experience you will need to attend either of the first two training days and the last one. These days give you important experience and skills, allow us to all get to know each other and provide excellent opportunities to test your equipment and to share and receive great advice.

Is there a minimum age of participant?

Yes. The minimum age is 10yrs old for all but the last day when it is 14. All those under 18 must be accompanied by an adult known to them (e.g. a parent) or join as part of a supervised group.

Can I drop out half way through?

Yes – we would be sad of course but it is far wiser to stop at your limit than to try to push through it and cause yourself damage or put yourself or others at risk.

What insurance cover do you have?

We are fully licensed by AALA and also have public liability insurance cover up to £5m. We are happy to send you a certificate of cover if you wish.

What qualifications and experience do those in charge have?

Safety is our number 1 priority throughout the event. The Event Leader has the following canoeing qualifications: L4 Coach Inland, L3 Coach Sea, Senior Instructor Land & Sea 5*. Other team members on the trip hold Foundation Safety and Rescue Training Qualification, 3* and BC Coach L1 and 3* touring award. We have run this event biennially since 2009 and as an organisation we are inspected by AALA every 2 years.

Can I participate in any way other than in a canoe?

Yes. In the past people have walked, run and cycled the route. If you wish to use a different form of boat we simply need you to be able to keep up with the canoeing group and not be a danger in any way to the event. Kayaking the trip requires a surprisingly significant extra amount of effort so we do not recommend this unless you can keep up with the canoes all day each day. The event is predominantly a canoeing event.

Can my family and friends join us overnight if they have not paddled?

Yes. If they wish to stay over we may ask they offer to donate to the very generous organisations that accommodate and feed us.

If I can only do a couple of days how do I get back to my car/home?

Our target is to reunite all paddlers with their vehicles or to get them to a place where they can get home simply. This will involve some communication regarding your preferred logistics well prior to the event and bespoke solutions for different people. We have many approved drivers who might be the people taking you back to your start point. For those who complete the trip to Westminster we have sufficient vehicles and drivers to return everyone back to our base.

What if my hands/back/knees get sore?

Haha! They will get sore. "What do I do?" is a better question... On the trip we carefully manage the paddlers so that those who are finding it easier support those who are not. This will involve swapping around boats so that the general speed of the flotilla is maintained. The kit list notes items that you may find useful and the training days will let you know more. When paddling a canoe there are a few different positions one can take and you will always be in a canoe with one other paddler so you can arrange yourself in ways to rest some muscles when using others.

Can I do the whole paddle with a friend?

Yes and this would be great, not unusual and a real bonus to A+. Do note though (and as mentioned above) you will almost certainly be moved around the boats at points during the trip in order to support any of the other paddlers. If you are feeling and looking strong then you may be asked to be joined by someone who is in need of help – like loving your neighbour.

How are my belongings kept safe while I am paddling?

They are looked after by the support crew with everyone else's items in the back of one of the 9-seater vehicles until being deposited safely at the end destination for that day. These items are only ever left unsupervised while locked at the night's destination prior to your arrival or in the locked vehicles at supporter points where the ground support crew are at the river. It is best not to bring expensive items.

What does each day look like?

Each day is different and timings depend on many factors e.g. speed of river flow, strength and direction of wind, situation of best supporter points, distance between the river and the accommodation (which we try to minimise). Roughly, the timings are as follows:

0730: Wake and get dressed

0800: Breakfast including notices and a "Morning Christian Thought for the Day"

0845: Pack up, load belongings into vehicles and ensure you are "paddle ready"

0900: Head to the boats to warm up and start paddling

~1030: Short rest at a planned supporter point and replenishing of snacks and drinks

1230: Stop for lunch

1400: Recommencement paddling

1530: Short rest at a planned supporter point and replenishing of snacks and drinks

1700: Arrive at day's end point

1730: Arrive at overnight accommodation and get settled

1830: Dinner time

1930: Free time, fun and games

2130: Start to head to bed...until

2200: Lights out please for the sake of others in your room!!

Frequently we do not stop at normal break times but eat in a lock and on the first 3 days it may well be 1900hrs or later when we get to the stopping point at the end of the day.

Do we have to stay in the group when paddling?

Yes. With safety being paramount all boats will remain in site of at least one other boat at all times. In rare cases, paddlers with sufficient skill and qualifications may be allowed to venture ahead at their own pace.

How do you keep in contact with the shore team?

We have mobile phones as well as walkie-talkies for when phone reception is not strong. However, the river group will be able to be self-supporting.

Can I stay with friends' or local establishments and not with the group during the trip?

Yes of course. However, for the sake of togetherness and a more enjoyable event overall we prefer and strongly welcome you to be with the group on the trip. It also helps with the logistics and communication if everyone is together. We will need you to commit to being where you need to be, ready to paddle (with your day sack etc of lunch), in good time at the start of each day and be picked up or arrange independent transport at the end of the day.

What washing facilities are available each night?

We are blessed enormously by our host churches each trip however you should not expect to be able to shower each evening. There are always basins and hot running water and sometimes our hosts arrange home showering in their parish or we find other options such as local leisure centres or sports clubs who allow us to come in as a group. However, please consider this as one of the aspects of the trip that make it a marathon!

Can anyone do it?

Yes, subject to skills, successful training and age requirements this is a completely open event. You certainly do not need to attend a church to join in. You will spend time in one or two churches during the week but only as accommodation.

Do I need to attend a church?

You certainly do not need to attend a church to join in. You will spend time in several churches during the week but only as accommodation.

Can my company enter a team?

Yes, we have corporate packages and you could even have your name/advertising on a boat or two.

I would like an option of somewhere to stay the night before/night at the end.

We may have rooms available in Windmill Farm or in the Adventure *Base* yurts. You may be happy to stay with a local paddler or staff member (by mutual consent of course!). In the past some have also stayed at The Rose Revived where we start the great event. We have many options available to us to care for you for a night before and/or after the event. Simply ask us when registering.

What about food/energy snacks during the day?

If there are foods that you really enjoy while exercising then by all means bring that along. The kit list mentions bringing a cake or similar that will be shared with all the other paddlers over the course of the event. The Ground Support Crew will select items for each day and we will also have other supplies available. If you wish to be eating snacks on the go and not wait until the support team meet at a supporter point then you are welcome to bring your own.

How are we fed each morning and night and what if I have a special dietary requirement?

Incredibly we are fed by teams of people from the churches and locations that we visit each evening. Every night of every trip their generosity blows us away. They offer this food for free and it is very gratefully accepted. If you have an unusual special diet (e.g. not vegetarian or gluten free) our kind friends in each location struggle but please do not decide not to paddle for this reason and so they are unable to cater for anything other than simple dietary requirements such as vegetarian. For other dietary wishes please bring your own food to supplement that which is so generously given.. Here is an idea of what is served:

Baked potatoes with a range of filling options: coleslaw, cheese, beef chilli

Ranges of salad – green, potato, rice, bean

Lasagne

Crumble with custard, cream etc

Fruit

Porridge

Fried breakfast (if we are very blessed)

Cereals

Toast

What's for lunch?

In the mornings after breakfast we have a fun time making up packed lunches from supplies we supply on the trip of that are very generously given by our hosts. There are sandwiches with a range of spreads, crisps, fruit, and cakes. We do not have refrigeration facilities during the day so food items that do not travel well (e.g. cold meat) may not be available every morning.

Will you be live tracking the paddlers?

We successfully managed this on our own website in 2019 with free technology with a few hiccoughs here and there. Occasionally the tracking devices will appear to show the group stationary in one location as signals to and from satellites are lost and found however it was very useful for supporters and enjoyable to watch the progress.

What times will paddlers arrive at each supporter point each day?

We have a limited idea based on past events and we will publish expected times however with wind speed and direction and river flow rates we will almost certainly be estimating the expected arrival times. The live feed mentioned above will give clearer information on the day.

Will I get wet?

Do you mean: When will I get wet? The answer is – any time it rains and also at other times!! In the 2017 and 2019 events nobody got wet falling out of a boat accidentally but it can get particularly wet being outdoors all day. Even without the rain your feet will certainly get a bit damp in the canoe and your hands will also get wet.

What is the fundraising for?

Your support could help fund an Assisted Place on an A+ event, help us build an affordable activity centre where the welcome will always be warm, or help us provide up to activity equipment. Your efforts will inspire and transform the lives of 1,000s of children and young people.

May I raise funds for other charities as well as Adventure *Plus*?

It is great that you want to support us in this event. We have shared the funds raised with other like-minded organisations in the past so this is possible however A+ is incurring the costs of the event and, as mentioned above, we need to make sure we are not running the event at a loss. Please do chat with us about any charities you wish to share funds raised with.

Is it worth it?

What sort of question is that!?! Of course it is. The event is a highlight in our organisation's life and brings much needed funds. But just as importantly it is a wonderful way to experience some beautiful scenery and times and complete quite a decent challenge.