

Northwest Paddleboards

Alternative & Endurance Paddling

There are a multitude of fantastic 3, 5 & 8 km races in the UK and being a set distance they are a great way to improve your paddling as you can train over the set distance, benchmark your performance & quantify the improvements over time. They are time efficient distances that can be slotted into any part of the day be it an early morning session to get going or squeezed in after work and generally you can be on & back off the water all in an hour.

The races themselves are as much about the social side as the time on the water – a great opportunity to catch up as friends new & old come together from all corners of the UK

However – there is more out there.....

- Longer distance social paddles (often multi day)
- Races involving thought, planning & navigation
- Endurance races
- Point to point races
- Challenge loops
- Lifestyle events & much much more

Longer distance social paddles (often multi day)

These include informal paddle & pitch events where a group of you get together & paddle (usually river or canal) carrying all you kit. At the end of the day pull off the water, set up camp & chill around the fire/BBQ before a night under canvas ready for the next day. Once you reach your destination it is either public transport back to the start or car shuttle

There are several active groups of paddlers running these paddle & pitch trips mostly on the river Severn & Wye

If this appeals but you want more luxury or less hassle then the [Trent100](#) is well worth a look – 100km over 2 days down the River Trent. All food, entertainment & transport is laid on – fantastic social event which is definitely not a race but there are times out there to beat ;-) but beware, other teams may try to sabotage your performance by forcing you to party till the early hours!!

Races involving thought, planning & navigation

Normally held in late spring there is [Seaquest](#). A 3 hour canoe/kayak water based orienteering race.

30 minutes before the start you get your map (of the three estuaries that meet at Ravensglass) showing where the checkpoints are and the points score for each. Its then up to you to work out how many you will try to get too, in which order & what the tides are going to be doing as some of the estuaries dry up at low water. Making sure that you are back in time as you get penalised for going over the 3 hour limit

Although tidal this is in enclosed water and with lots of other paddlers around so nice & safe

A little further afield is the [Seventy48](#). Starting in Tacoma you have 48 hours to paddle the seventy miles north to Port Townsend. Starting at 7pm you paddle into the night navigating the islands of the Puget Sound, see the sunrise behind Seattle & hopefully see a few Orca on the way. Towards the end of the race there is a narrow channel to get through so tidal planning is crucial.



Endurance races

Following the demise of the UK endurance series (hopefully to be resurrected for 2022) there are few options to race

A good starting point is the annual Windermere canoe & kayak Summer Solstice race. Full length of Windermere (16km ish) racing against SUP's, surfski, canoe, kayak & dragonboats

Still time to enter to [2021 Norfolk Ultra](#). This is 70km either split over 2 days or non stop. 90% sups in this one and a nice sheltered safe environment.

The vast majority of endurance races are overseas but include –

[Sup11 City tour 220km over 5 days](#) – the classic multi day endurance event & touted as the ultimate SUP challenge

[SUP11 City tour 220km non stop](#) – the ultimate SUP challenge but made harder!

[California River Quest](#) – 25, 50, 75 or 100 miles non stop on the Sacramento river starting in Redding, CA. (&the prize giving is held in a brewery!)

[Seventy48](#) – 70 miles past Seattle navigating islands & tide gates

[Race to Alaska](#) – don't even look at this if you are of sane mind!!

[Chattajack](#) – 31 miles downriver from Chattanooga Tennessee. An iconic race held in the autumn so weather generally plays a part

[Massive Murray Marathon](#) – 404km down the Murray River in Australia from Yarrowonga to Swan Hill. Over 5 days

[Yukon River Quest](#) – 715km down the mighty Yukon River

[New River Quest](#) in Belize

[Texas Water Safari](#) 260 miles down the San Marcos & Guadalupe Rivers, TX

[Alabama 650](#)



Point to Point races

These are mostly canoe/kayak marathon events but we find they are a friendly accepting bunch & welcome SUP's.

Our Favourite is the [Glasgow to Edinburgh race](#) over 2 days (24&31miles)

Plenty of non-competition options too on the [British Canoeing site](#)

Challenge Loops

Again, mostly canoe/kayak events and include the [Worcester Ring](#) & [Trent Loop](#). These can be done without support as you finish back at the start and generally include portages & tunnels for a bit of variety (portaging the locks is much easier on a sup so a good chance to make some time back on the kayaks)

Plenty of non-competition options too on the [British Canoeing site](#)

Lifestyle events - Fancy combining a SUP event with a holiday in the sun or city break?

[Corinth Canal SUP Crossing](#)

[Paris SUP Crossing](#)

SurfinVenice – paddle through the normally closed Grand Canal in Venice

[Volgalonga](#) – another Venice one

Or just get out a map, dream big & make plans



More rambling on.....

One of the most common things we hear is – “I’m not fit enough to paddle endurance events”

There is a simple answer to this – once you have a good base level of fitness you can stop worrying. It’s not about strength & power, 90% is mental strength, stubbornness & calories.

Sure to consistently get on the podium you have to be an athlete but endurance is more about personal goals & challenging yourself as well as little mini races going on all through the pack

Lots of events have early starts – get organised the night before. Have everything lined up ready so there is as little to do as possible on race day – it is all too easy to run out of time and have you don’t want to have to choose between filling your last 5 minutes with either sorting your nutrition or a last minute trip to the facilities to empty the tanks!

Speaking of emptying the tanks – you will be surprised how little you need to pee, even when drinking lots – however..... When you need to go – go. Your body uses a lot of energy keeping your bladder warm and you may often find that when you need to pee you feel a bit cold & shivery. How and where you go is up to you & what/where is available but I guarantee that you will feel warmer (& lighter + more supple) once you have. Also – when you are desperate you are not concentrating on your paddling & probably not drinking enough either. Don’t put it off

Know the course – no point paddling fast in the wrong direction. There have been countless incidents of paddlers shooting off in the wrong direction or missing a turn and just as many where they have been followed by others.

On long paddles you will have low points – it’s perfectly normal – take a look at how far you have come already, take another 10 paddle strokes, then another 10 and you will soon realise that with each stroke you are getting closer to the finish. It’s not supposed to be easy – you will be drained & exhausted at the finish but you will feel great

You need to drink – your fluid intake needs to contain electrolyte tablets as the more you drink (plain water) & sweat the more diluted your bodies nutrient stores get – they need to be replaced

As for food – this is a very personal thing we avoid sugar as it creates energy peaks & troughs where you require a more steady & sustained release of energy (though a packet of Haribo or Jelly Babies can pick you fight up for the last 5km and are something to look forward to

I have been through all diets and settled on the following 2

- If it’s solid food then I like Dates, squeeze packets of peanut butter, pickled eggs or cooked chicken breast, salami & mini pork pies. We are also experimenting too with buttery cheesy mashed potato in squeeze baby food pouches
- For liquid food we use Tailwind nutrition as it covers all your nutrition & hydration so technically you don’t need to stop (though we do like something solid to supplement it) – and they do caffeinated powders too to keep you alert

Kit wise – you do not need (or necessarily want) a super skinny carbon race board as if you are spending energy staying upright & not wobbling then its energy you don’t have to paddle.

On long trips you will be doing a lot of paddle strokes so make sure your paddle is a comfortable length (adjustable is good too so you can alter your stroke to rest aching muscles) and not too large a blade as it’s all about maintaining pace rather than accelerating from start lines, buoy turns etc

If you have a watch or tracker – don’t forget to turn it on & stop it at the finish

Once you have finished your long paddle there is still work to do.....

Get plenty of protein into your body wither though food or a specialist shake (we swear by SIS Rego Recovery powder). This will help your muscles to repair & rebuild

Continue to drink – make sure you stay well hydrated in the following days

Pack your board away or get it strapped onto the roof rack before you stiffen up & realise you can’t lift your arms above your head anymore!!!

Any questions, comments tips etc please do not hesitate to get in touch

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