

WILD RIVER OUTFITTERS

PADDLING TIPS

Before you go canoeing or kayaking this summer, there are some important things you should know. (Keep in mind that when we say kayak, we mean recreational kayaks, designed for recreational use and inexperienced kayakers. They have a low center of gravity, a flat bottom and a large cockpit. All of our kayaks are what the manufacturers call “touring” or “recreational” kayaks. They track well, have larger cockpits for “easy getting in and out” and are made for the recreational paddler.) Canoeing/kayaking is a lot of fun, but if you don’t know the dangers, you could get into trouble on the water. Here are some tips for keeping dry and steering clear of danger:

- **TO GET INTO YOUR CANOE:**
 - ***HAVE SOMEONE HOLD THE CANOE/KAYAK STEADY** – you don’t want to tip before you even get out on the water.
 - ***CROUCH LOW** – keep your knees bent and your center of gravity low
 - ***GRAB THE GUNNELS (the sides) OF THE CANOE FOR BALANCE** as you walk to your seat
 - ***WALK ALONG THE CENTER** – keeping your feet near the centerline – this helps keep the canoe/kayak from rocking.
- **STAY LOW AT ALL TIMES:** do not stand up or walk in your canoe/kayak when on the water
- **ALWAYS WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET:** you never know when you might fall out or tip over (It has happened to the best of them)
- **AVOID SUDDEN OR JERKY MOVEMENTS:** rocking from side to side could cause the canoe to tip over. Recreational kayaks are much harder to tip by rocking. – Why? Because your center of gravity is low in a kayak. (White water kayaks however are designed to roll giving the paddler the ability to negotiate through white water with – class 3+ rapids.)
- **BE AWARE OF THE CURRENT, LOW HANGING BRANCHES, ROCKS:** all of which can present problems
- **ALWAYS SIT ON THE SEATS OR IN THE CENTER OF THE CANOE:** sitting on the gunnels or the thwarts can cause you to tip.
- **DO NOT CANOE IN BAD WEATHER:** if it is warm, you can paddle in the rain as long as there is no lightening.
- **AVOID LETTING BIG WAVES HIT YOU BROADSIDE:** you are much more likely to be tipped going sideways down the river. Keep your canoe/kayak pointing straight down the river.
- **IF YOUR CANOE TIPS – DON’T PANIC -- STAY WITH YOUR CANOE – BUT-**
 - ***STAY ON THE UPSTREAM SIDE OF YOUR CANOE** – you don’t want to get pinned between your canoe and any obstacles that might be present in the river
 - ***PADDLE OR PUSH YOUR CANOE/KAYAK TO SHORE:** This area of the St. Croix and the Namekagon Rivers is relatively shallow. In many areas you can touch the bottom – which helps to get your craft to shore.
 - ***ONCE ON SHORE YOU CAN FLIP THE CANOE/KAYAK TO DUMP OUT THE WATER AND CLIMB IN:** your canoe or kayak has floatation and will still float when full of water until you can get to shore to empty it.
- **ALWAYS BRING DRY CLOTHING ALONG IN WATERPROOF BAGS OR CONTAINERS** – especially in spring and fall when air and water temperatures are usually cooler.
- **BE SURE TO BRING THE PROPER EQUIPMENT ALONG:** see our [Paddler’s Recreational Checklist](#)
- **TIE ALL YOUR EQUIPMENT TO THE CANOE:** put your equipment into a waterproof bag to keep it dry and tie it to one of the thwarts (center beams) in the canoe.
- **BE AWARE OF HYPOTHERMIA CONDITIONS:** **If the air temperature + the water temperature add up to less than 100 degrees – it is hypothermia conditions:** symptoms are uncontrolled shivering, poor muscle control, and exhaustion. This is where having set of dry clothes and some kind of wind breaker is a necessity. **COME PREPARED!!**