

Introduction to Whitewater Kayaking

(& Canoe)

Course Information

April (20th*) 21-24, 2025



Paddling whitewater is a very fun way to challenge yourself. Although it can seem intimidating, following a few basic safety guidelines makes it one of the safer outdoor movement sports. (Compared to mountain biking, rock climbing, or alpine skiing, for example.) It's one of the few sports that I do that puts me in the 'flow' state where my mind is totally present.

It's also a great cross training activity for sea kayakers. In sea kayaking we are rarely challenged unless playing in the 'whitewater' of the surf zone. Paddling rivers adds the right amount of challenge to increase our confidence in rougher conditions.

Who is this course for?

The ideal student already has some existing paddling experience, (Sea kayak, canoe, etc) including familiarity with the 'wet exit' (capsizing) and self-rescue, as well as general comfort with swimming.

This course is designed to provide a **foundation** in paddling skills. Practicing the basics on flat water first, then applying these skills to moving water, with the goal of running **class 2** comfortably. There will be some opportunities for running class 3.

River classification system

Moving water is usually graded on a scale of class 1 through 6.

- ❖ Class 1 is moving current with little to no obstacles.
- ❖ Class 2 is generally stronger current, with a couple of moves to avoid obstacles, or maybe to negotiate waves that could swamp or tip a boat more easily.
- ❖ Class 3 requires more maneuvering to avoid obstacles and hazards, with swift current.
- ❖ Class 4 is more technical and pushy rapids with 'must-make' moves closer together. Solid river running and rescue skills are required.
- ❖ Class 5 is expert only
- ❖ Class 6 was once considered the 'unrunnable' rapid, but is run at the expert level at times.

Your Instructors

Greg Weiss has been an ACA whitewater kayaking instructor for 20 years, and has been teaching introductory and advanced whitewater kayaking and canoeing since 1998. He is certified in swiftwater rescue and has been a Wilderness First Responder since 1992. He is the owner of Lost Creek Adventures.

Other guest instructors may be joining us depending upon need.

Curriculum

See the [ACA Whitewater Kayaking Course Outline](#) for details on course curriculum. As an additional bonus this course will offer participants the opportunity to gain a level 2, 3 or 4 ACA River Kayak [Skills Assessment](#), great for those working towards an instructor certification.

Paddling Equipment

Springtime is great for finding flowing water, but it's very cold water! The more comfortable you are the more you will learn, so it's worth having the right gear.

Unless you are bringing your own, we will provide a **kayak, sprayskirt, PFD, helmet, float bags, wetsuit* and paddle**. We will also have group paddling equipment such as a first aid kit, throw ropes, etc.

*For wetsuits we will need to get your size. Better than a wetsuit would be a **drysuit**, or at minimum a wetsuit with a dryTOP combination.

If interested in renting a drysuit you can web search for the best deal. Here's an example <https://immersionresearch.com/pages/dry-suit-rentals> To purchase a drysuit <https://www.nrs.com/dry-suits/c5624> usually has the best deals. For drytops <https://www.nrs.com/nrs-mens-flux-dry-top/plek> is a good example.

You will also need neoprene booties. <https://www.nrs.com/nrs-mens-paddle-wetshoe/p67s> is a nice option. You can go cheaper. A 7mm bootie will keep your feet toasty, but 5mm is fine, and 3mm is the minimum.

For your hands I recommend pogies <https://www.nrs.com/nrs-clutch-pogies/p79c> rather than gloves. If you wear gloves they need to be paddling specific. (They have a curl to the fingers to help with grip)

For your head <https://www.nrs.com/nrs-storm-cap/pks2> especially if you want to try a roll or two.

If the booties, pogies/gloves, drytop/drysuit, headwear combo is going to break your piggybank please [contact us](#) as we often have options and ideas on substitutes, loaners, etc.

Other Course Logistics

- **Lodging** will be at the [Boy Scout Camp Gardner Dam](#). It's a heated bunkhouse with a kitchen & showers. You have the option to bring your own tent if you prefer to sleep outside. (I do) We hope everyone can meet the evening before the course begins, **April 20th around 7pm**. This will be a good time to ask last minute questions, get to know each other, etc.
- **Transportation:** Our van will be leaving Cornucopia at 3pm on Sunday the 20th. On the final day we will pack up, run a section of river, and then begin the drive back to Cornucopia around 3pm, arriving around 8pm if we stop for dinner.
 - Transportation from Cornucopia to the camp is provided. If you live elsewhere you will have to either get to Cornucopia or meet us at the camp.
 - We will need an additional shuttle vehicle for the river. If someone is driving their own car and is ok with volunteering to drive the shuttle each day, great! This saves us a lot of time. Otherwise the instructor will bring a bike to do the river shuttles each day.
- **Paddling location:** Our aim is the Wolf River, a National Scenic Waterway, or another nearby river if conditions are better there. (Oconto, Pine, Pike, Peshtigo, etc)
- **Food** is provided from breakfast Day 1 through lunch Day 4. This includes snacks for on the river, vacuum bottles with hot drinks, etc. Help with meal prep and clean up will be appreciated. We will be in touch to create a group menu after registration. You are also welcome to bring any of your favorite snacks. This is car camping at its finest! If you are driving down with us you are responsible for your evening meals April 20th and 24th. We will plan to stop at restaurants along the way.

Equipment List - Things To Bring

In addition to the cold-weather paddling wear mentioned above...

- ☐ Insulating layers for when we're on the water. This will depend upon what your main insulation system will be; wetsuit, drysuit, or drytop. *No cotton anything.*
 - ☐ For drysuits you will want expedition weight/fleece onesie or top and bottom long underwear, a fleece jacket and/or vest. Wool socks of varied thickness. Booties & Warm hat
 - ☐ For wetsuits I wear a bathing suit under the wetsuit, booties, then pack fleece layers for my upper body, followed by a waterproof shell. A paddling dry top is ideal, but you can also get a less expensive 'paddling jacket' or even a rainjacket will be better than no wind/waterproof layer.

- ☐ Warm clothing for off the river/camping
 - ☐ Multiple layers that you will keep dry for camping
 - ☐ Rain jacket
 - ☐ Warm hat
 - ☐ Extra socks
- ☐ Toiletries, towel
- ☐ 2 water bottles or 1 and a thermos
- ☐ Insulated mug
- ☐ Sleeping System - If sleeping outside a sleeping pad & bag combo good down to 20f. If sleeping inside, bring bedding for the bunkbeds, pillow, etc.
- ☐ Optional Items
 - ☐ Tent if you want to sleep outside the bunkhouse. We will have items drying inside and people may stay up later than you like. Your choice!
 - ☐ Sleeping cot for tenting
 - ☐ Extra favorite snacks. We'll have plenty, but if something feels good...
 - ☐ Dry bags that will fit in the kayak. (10 liter or so) We will provide enough for the group but feel free to bring your own.
 - ☐ Throw rope. We will provide also.
 - ☐ Personal First Aid Kit. We will provide a group first aid kit.
 - ☐ Yoga mat, exercise bands, etc to help you warm up and stretch out each day
 - ☐ Camp chair
 - ☐ Anything else to make you comfortable at camp.

Registrants will receive an email check-in/update prior where we can share cell numbers to connect when needed.