



WEEKEND SCHEDULE (subject to updates)

and paddler instructions

IMPORTANT - Please read STR blog post [“2025 Blazing Paddles Paddlefest Same Day check-in and Nautica Parking Instructions”](#). Thank you for your understanding and cooperation!

Please refer to the [Blazing Paddles Paddlefest website](#) for course maps and additional detail

Friday, July 18, 2025

4 p.m. Gates open at Nautica Waterfront District 2398 Sycamore St. Cleveland OH 44113, ([Get map](#)). On-site packet pickup & boat & board early drop off in our secured storage zone. NOTE: You will drive in, be greeted at our check-in tents, get your shirt, and bib number (your bib will have a tear off strip that’s good for any draft beer at [Collision Bend Brewing Co.](#) during the Blazing Paddles Paddlefest weekend (7-18-7/21.25)). Our volunteers will help you offload your vessel and place it on-site in our secured storage area. You will then park your car on-site to enjoy the Pre-Paddle expo and Lady Caroline happy hour or depart the venue. **NAUTICA PARKING IS FREE!**

If you are local to Cleveland, it is strongly recommended you take advantage of today's early check-in & secure board/board drop-off. The Great Lakes Watersports waiver is a **MUST SIGN**. Doing this will ensure 1) your Saturday morning preparation will be much more relaxed and 2) our put-in process at Great Lakes Watersports will go more smoothly.

4 p.m. Happy Hour at the [Lady Caroline](#) begins (no admission charge).
Paddlers and general public are invited!

5 p.m. Pre-Paddle expo opens.

9 p.m. packet pick-up and boat board drop-off closes

Saturday, July 19, 2025

7th Annual Blazing Paddles Paddlefest check-in, boat & board drop off.
Post-Paddle Stakeholder Expo. **It is strongly suggested you arrive on-site by 9:00 a.m!**

Parking: Parking on site is \$3 until 5pm. Additional free and paid street parking is available in the surrounding area.

7:00 a.m. Gates open. Walk-in on-site packet pickup & boat & board drop off. Kayak rental pick-up. **There is no same-day registration.**

NOTE: You will park in the Nautica parking lot, walk up to "the pad", be greeted at our check-in tents, get your shirt, sticker, and bib number. **Drive-in service is only available on Friday (7/18/25).**

Walk back to your vehicle, and transport your boat to “the pad” staging area. Our volunteers will help you transport your vessel and place it on-site.

8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. - Pre-Paddle and After Paddle Expo begins with Cleveland waterfront and greenspace stakeholders.

9:45 am: Walk-up check-in and boat/board drop-off closes

9:45 am: Deadline to claim rental boats, Rental boats distribution by [Great Lakes Watersports](#).

9:50 a.m. Safety meeting (mandatory) for racers .

10:00 a.m. Safety meeting (mandatory) for recreational paddlers).

10:15 a.m. Blazing Paddles racers begin entering the water. **Racers will put in at the river dock at [Great Lakes Watersports \(get map\)](#).**

RACERS NOTE: Bib/timing chips have to be outside of your vest/PFD. Bib placement should be on left thigh (for SUPs) or on upper chest (over the vest/PFD if sitting in a kayak. A second bib will be provided for your boat to assist identification at the finish line.

10:30 a.m. Blazing Paddles recreational paddlers begin entering the water. **Dave Vasarhely Memorial Recreational Paddle & Float participants will put in at the river dock at [Great Lakes Watersports \(get map\)](#).**

After put-in

Racers and recreational paddlers should respect the buffer zone ([map](#)) between the two events. All racers and recreational paddlers need to stay “**river right**” during their paddle. River right is similar to a divided two lane road. As you paddle, divide the river ahead of you in the middle and stay to the right half upstream and again, on your downstream paddle. Stay right buoys will provide a visual mark for you through the Cuyahoga River’s infamous curves.

All paddlers should review & memorize the course map (print it out right NOW and review it for a couple of days) for your respective event. A safe and smooth day for everyone on the river depends upon you taking this simple precautionary step.

Check out this “[ten tips for kayaking in hot weather](#)” blog post!. **Bring at least two water bottles** for your paddle!

All paddlers need to pass river right of the buoys located at:

- Stay right buoy at Superior Bend/Jacobs Pavilion
- Stay right buoy at Columbus Rd (green) bridge
- 3.75 mile stay right and turnaround race buoy at Collision Bend
- stay right buoy at I-90 bridge
- The u-turn buoy at Marathon Bend. (for 6 mile, 12 mile race and for Dave Vasarhelyi Memorial)

Blazing Paddles race divisions will depart in flights ahead of the recreation paddle (there will NOT be a mass start). Racers and recreational paddlers will be e-mailed a complete set of race and rec paddler instructions by Friday morning (July 18).

10:30 a.m. - Start for high performance kayak, fast sea kayak, solo canoe (includes outrigger), tandem kayak, and tandem canoe (includes OC-2)

10:35 a.m. - Start for SUP 14' and under, kayak, and sea kayak. When finishing, after rounding the stay right buoy at Superior Bend/Jacobs Pavilion, racers may take a straight line to the finish line tent on the Nautica boardwalk.

Racers should finish within 15 feet of the edge of the Nautica boardwalk (behind the Lady Caroline), making it easier for RFID equipment to capture your tag and for our spotters to properly identify you. Our timing tent will be located on the Nautica boardwalk (across from Collision Bend Brewing Co.) ([see map](#))

Note: Recreational Paddlers (Dave Vasarhelyi Memorial) will hold their position in the buffer zone/staging area until the racers have started. Once the racers have started, and a majority of rec paddlers have put-in on the river, the Dave Vasarhelyi Memorial will begin, heading upriver.

11:00 a.m.: [Dave Vasarhelyi Memorial Recreational Paddle & Float](#) departs. Paddlers will be called up from green staging area ([see map](#)) (between the Main Ave. Bridge (blue) and the “start line” at Collision Bend Brewing. Paddlers may not head downriver of Great Lakes Watersports. The DVM paddle & float will be started with a megaphone/siren.

Paddlers have the option to paddle the entire 6/12 mile course or turnaround at one of two suggested locations (3.75 and 6 mile race turnaround buoys). Paddlers can also choose to turnaround anywhere that suits their tastes.

11:15 a.m: Put-in closes

12 noon - Music Box Supper Club doors and boardwalk patio open

TBD: Presentation of race awards (or as soon as results are available).

2 p.m. - Live reggae music ([Jah Messengers](#)) at Music Box Super Club begins (**free**)

2:30 p.m.: Deadline for all Blazing Paddles Paddlefest/[Dave Vasarhelyi Memorial Recreational Paddle & Float](#) participants to take out at dock.

This is especially applicable to paddlers renting a kayak from one of our livery partners. **Per our marine event permit with the U.S. Coast**

Guard, the safety zone will open up to motorized boat traffic at 3:-00 pm. Paddlers may still use the Cuyahoga River but be mindful after **3:00 p.m.** you will be sharing the river with other recreational boaters (like a normal day on the river).

3:30 pm - After Paddle Expo wraps for the day.

7:30 p.m. - [Turn the Page - Bob Seger Tribute at Music Box Supper Club](#) (**ticketed**)

9:30 p.m. - [Whiskey Island Boat Club Parade of Lights](#)