

# Canoeing basics and trails offered

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You say you're thinking about taking up canoeing this summer? Don't think twice! The feeling of exhilaration a canoeist experiences as the canoe slices through the water in response to the paddling strokes will certainly lessen any landlubber desires.

As a veteran of over 2,000 water-miles in various canoes, I feel qualified in saying that canoeing is one of the closest ways to get close to nature. How else can one listen to the river's song? How else can one observe nature's creatures undisturbed in their native haunts?

Having decided you're ready to give canoeing a whirl, the first piece of equipment you'll be needing, obviously, is a canoe. There are basically four ways to obtain this needed vehicle (five, if your conscience will allow you to steal one).

The majority of novice canoeers will choose to buy their first canoe. This is a choice depending entirely upon your financial status and the amount of time you wish to devote to this sport. Prices for a suitable aluminum canoe will begin near \$100.

One alternative to a store-bought canoe (especially if you're a purist) is to build your own. Canoe kits are available at sporting-goods distributors or you may wish to learn about building a canoe from scratch by inquiring at your local library.

A third choice in selecting a canoe is one that I would recommend and consists of simply renting a canoe. There are few canoe liveries in Oregon so I suggest you try a rental equipment dealer. Until you have a solid background of canoeing experience there's no sense in rushing out and buying a new canoe.

If you have neither the desire to buy, make or rent a canoe, borrow one from a friend. If you find that person attractive, invite him/her along, the ice is bound to break as you cruise across the water.

One other piece of equipment you'll be needing is a paddle. The rule of thumb is to find a paddle which will extend from the ground to your chin. This is usually the best length of wood to choose for your strokes.

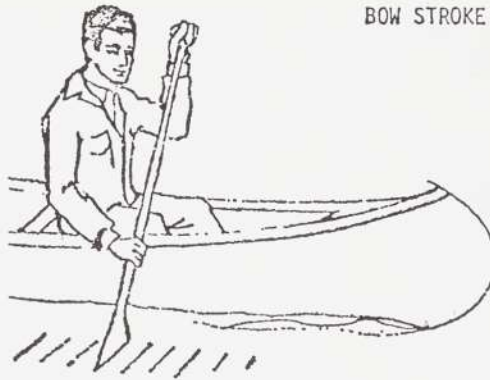
Having obtained your canoe, it's time for some basics, especially if you're planning an extended trip. Find a lake or slow-flowing river near your home and put your canoe in the water. The edge of the canoe should barely be touching the shore as you board the canoe. The reason for this precaution is that if the canoe extends too far onto land, an air space is present beneath the canoe. Should you step above this pocket you may find your foot continuing through the canoe's bottom. Make sure the canoe is always secured by the last person boarding it.

As you acquaint yourself with the long piece of metal beneath you, don't worry if the canoe appears shaky, it will stop rocking as soon as you obtain proper balance and confidence. I'm sure even Lewis and Clark felt nervous upon boarding their first canoe.

Two nautical terms you must acquaint yourself with at this time are bow and stern. Stern refers to the part of the canoe with the seat nearest to the end of the canoe. The bow end of the canoe is the part with the seat furthest from the end. These terms are important because they signify which part of the canoe you will be controlling. Each end uses a different stroke in guiding the canoe.

The bowman will usually be paddling in a straight line while the sternman uses a J-stroke. Sternmen concentrate mainly on

guiding the canoe while bowmen are the muscle power and usually paddle six strokes to every one of the sternman's strokes. (For this reason I always like to sit in the back of the canoe. If the bowman doesn't turn around, you hardly ever have to paddle).



BOW STROKE



J STROKE

Another stroke both canoeists should learn is the jam stroke. This stroke is done simply by firmly keeping the paddle vertical to the canoe and is used as a braking action when slowing or turning the canoe. There are various other strokes which can be executed but these three (straight-line, J, and jam) are enough to guide a novice.



JAM STROKE

A necessary skill you must learn before embarking on your first canoe trip is how to upright a capsized canoe. Making sure to wear life jackets, guide your canoe to a shallow area of water and try to sink it, you can't, but the canoe will fill with water. Remember this if you ever capsize in deep water and can't swim to shore.

To empty the canoe of water have its bottom face the surface of the water. Your partner should be on the other end and the

two of you easily will be able to flip the canoe to your chests and flip it to its bottom again. It's as simple as that.

I've given you the basic tools you need to keep a canoe afloat and the basic canoeing knowledge will come with experience. However there are a few things that may lessen any difficulties you may encounter.

When choosing camping equipment for extended trips, try to keep your food as light as possible. Bulky canned goods should be abandoned for lightweight packaged dried foods.

All perishable items subject to damage should be kept in airtight bags. This not only keeps them fresh but makes it easier to retrieve them should you capsize, (I remember capsizing one day after spending two hours searching the bottom for cameras, knapsacks and other gear).

When mapping a canoe trip remember that one land mile equals about four miles. Sometimes you may paddle an hour only to come around a bend that you were earlier.

During those occasions and when you confront whitewater, it is best to stay on land in the interests of safety and saving time. In spite of its heavy appearance a canoe can be carried without too much difficulty.

Never underestimate rapids, especially if you're tired and think you'll save time by shooting them. After spending a few hours retrieving sunken gear and drying out, you'll wish you'd taken that brief shortcut.

Besides rapids, obstacles to beware of are whirlpools (if you find yourself in one, fight it -- it'll eventually spit you out) and deadheads (sunken logs and branches) and large rocks protruding from the riverbed.

It is the responsibility of the canoeist to watch for these dangers and avoid them when they are seen.

When approaching a turn in the river, always stay to the opposite bank if the turn is directed. The reason for this maneuver is that the water is deeper and faster on the widest side.

You should always wear tennis shoes or sandals while canoeing. Many canoe trips have been interrupted by feet stepping on glass or sharp rocks.

Before you board your canoe for an extended trip, make sure you have consulted your maps and given your route and location to a parent, friend and/or local official. Although canoeing may not seem as great an element of danger as mountaineering, the risk of being stranded and help is still there.

There are several rivers in Oregon suitable for canoeing. Most of them rise in the Cascades and drain to the Pacific Ocean. The Columbia River. Oregon has designated several streams as part of a Scenic Waterway Program. Some of them are: The Rogue River, its tributary, the Illinois; the Deschutes River for 100 miles above the Columbia; the entire Minam River; and a 147-mile segment of the John Day River. White water canoeists will appreciate the challenges of the McKenzie and North Santiam Rivers.

Closer to home are the Clackamas and Molalla Rivers. For more information on the popular float streams in Oregon contact the Oregon State Highway Division, Highway Building, Salem, Oregon 97310.

