

THE WORLD OF PADDLESPORE

'Something for everyone' might be an over used phrase but it couldn't be more aptly used to describe paddlesport. Paddling can be relaxing – a once or twice a year tour on a local canal. Paddling can be adventurous - a trip or expedition on the thousands of miles of waterways in the United Kingdom and the Continent.

Paddling can be competitive – the thrill or the nerves of the start line.

Choose the level of challenge to suit. Paddle for enjoyment, to keep fit or, if you have children, paddle as a family and enjoy the experience together.

An interest in paddlesports can be an all-consuming hobby, exciting, challenging and testing, on white water, on the sea or through the numerous competitive disciplines.

HAVE FUN IN A KAYAK OR CANOE

Canoe or kayak? Yet another of the sport's versatility. Here in Britain the word "canoeing" has always been used as an umbrella term for our sport, regardless of boat style. However; a 'kayak' generally has a closed deck, save for a cockpit in which the paddler sits and uses a double bladed paddle.

A 'canoe' is a boat in which the paddler traditionally kneels using a single bladed paddle. An open canoe does not have a deck.

Collectively the myriad of activities that take place on the water and where the means of propulsion is predominantly the 'paddlers' themselves by means of a paddle are now referred to as paddlesports.

Not everyone views paddlesport as a "wet" sport. Not for them, the closed deck and low water line of the kayak. Not everyone hopes to progress to whitewater or choppy seas. What better way to appreciate the slow pace of placid water touring, taking in the scenery and wildlife than in an open canoe?

Paddlesport activity can be divided into three areas: 'placid water', 'white water', and 'sea and surf'. These three areas of the sport overlap in many ways. They

are more similar than they are different, involve the same fundamental skills and provide the same fundamental pleasures.

Placid Water – day tripping or short trips and touring on lakes, canals and low gradient rivers. Or even self-supported multi-day trips. For some the challenge of competition is met by an interest in sprint or marathon racing. For those enthused by a team sport environment canoe polo offers a game as fast, technical and physical as football.

White Water – running higher gradient rivers and rapids. Rapids are graded according to difficulty from Grade 1 to Grade 6. Grade 1 being the easiest level while Grade 6 is the most difficult and only for those pushing the edge of possibility. For those with an interest in playing the river, white water opportunities can lead to a competitive interest in slalom and freestyle or simply in white water river-running.

Sea and Surf – day tripping, touring and expeditions on the sea. This can involve additional skills and knowledge specific to navigation, tides and the weather. Also included in this area is the thrill of surfing on wave skis and composite surf kayaks, whether competitively or for fun.