

ADVICE FOR STAND-UP-PADDLEBOARDERS

New for 2024 – we have added this guidance for safe paddleboarding on the Broads in response to the rapid rise in its popularity in the last couple of years. These notes are aimed especially at beginners and novices of all ages.

Suitable areas for getting started

Some areas of the Broads' waterways are more suitable for novices and casual SUP boarding, these include the Broads (the lakes of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads) and the upper reaches of the rivers Ant, Chet, Bure, Thurne, Waveney and Yare. Suitable Broads include Barton, Bargate Bridge Broad Wroxham, Hickling, Oulton Broad, Malthouse, South Walsham, Lighthouse, and Wroxham Broad. Some launching sites are listed on pages 119 to 122, and there may be others. Car parking may be by arrangement with a private boatyard, and some sites have 'pay and display' parking.

Unsuitable areas for novices and casual SUP boarding include the busy waterways near centres with hire boat yards including Wroxham village centre, Horning, Potter Heigham, the narrow river Ant downstream of Barton Broad, and all of the fast flowing rivers downstream of Reedham, Stokesby and St Olaves. In between there are wide rivers with gentle tidal currents at most times, however they can be difficult in high winds and when there is a lot of boat traffic: typically in summer at weekends and where sailing regattas and boating rallies are taking place.

When you go afloat make sure to take these precautions, and ensure that any young people in your care do so too:

1. Wear a buoyancy aid

A buoyancy aid, a type of Personal Floatation Device (PFD), will provide extra floatation in the water to help keep you afloat, but it will also help give you time to recover should you fall in – and chances are you will. Buoyancy aids come in different sizes and it is important that you have the correct size as this will help when getting back on to the board; a common problem when learning. Make sure you check the

weight range and chest size when buying a buoyancy aid as well as choosing one that is comfortable and allows plenty of movement so you can paddle freely.

2. Carry a phone in waterproof pouch

As well as being able to take photos, you can use your mobile phone in an emergency to raise the alarm. Make sure you carry this on you (e.g. in a buoyancy aid pocket or around your neck) so you can get at it easily if you get into trouble. **If you are in an inland emergency, call 999 and ask for the Coastguard.**

3. Wear the correct leash – ankle or waist

There's nothing more frustrating than having to swim after your board if you fall off. The leash will also help you stay connected to your board if you get into trouble, and will prevent the board floating away and into the path of other craft. Choosing the correct leash is really important – most boards come with an ankle leash, however if you are paddling in tidal or flowing waters such as rivers where there is a risk of entrapment or being caught on an object then wear a quick release waist leash.

4. Finally...

Please paddle courteously and with respect to other waterway users, and remember that boating on the Broads is very popular, so the waterways can be very busy with boats of all shapes, sizes and types of propulsion. Consider taking early avoiding action with other boats to avoid collisions. The 'rules of the road' are that you should give way to less manoeuvrable craft. In simple terms, the larger the boat, the less easily it can change direction or stop, and at various times the rivers and some Broads are busy with sailing wherries, trip boats, hire cruisers up to 45 feet long, day boats with inexperienced helms, and yachts with huge sails set on tall masts. That said, with a bit of consideration, there is room on the Broads for everyone, so go out there and enjoy it.



Photo – Sue Hines