



## **Saimaa Canoeing Safety Instructions**

When we paddle, we move on waterways and there are many safety aspects to consider. To paddle safely and have an enjoyable journey, you must prepare well, you need enough knowledge and skills about paddling and the environment, but also the right attitude towards nature, forces of nature and other people.

The right attitude is the most important safety aspect. If you are curious, eager to learn and play, think humbly about your environment, your skills and other people, you will adventure successfully. Safety is a serious issue, but it is not too difficult to understand. Mapping out risks is not about generating fear but securing safety. Below some safety tips that we consider most important, and we recommend you to respect them, particularly if you wish to go on a canoeing trip independently. If you are uncertain about your skills, you can join a guided trip or take a paddling course and start your canoeing adventures with ease.

### **CANOEING SKILLS**

- Swimming skills

Swimming is an obligatory basic skill for a paddler. You should not be afraid of water, otherwise you panic, if you keel over.

- Canoeing skills

If you have no prior canoeing experience, a short course will already help and make your trip safer and more fun. Do not go canoeing alone without prior experience. We do not rent single kayaks to people, who wish to go out alone, if they do not have any experience on canoeing. Guided trips and canoeing courses provide good basic skills for you.

- Navigation skills

Canoes and kayaks do not leave tracks on water, so even if you follow a mapped route, there are no marked paths to follow. Hence, only go paddling without a guide, if you and your fellow paddler have orienteering skills and know how to navigate on waterways.

- Outdoor skills

If you plan a longer expedition, make sure that you have basic outdoor survival skills. You need to keep yourself dry, carry sufficient nutrition, plan enough resting breaks, and stay physically well. In

our wilderness canoeing courses, we provide specific information on how to correctly pack your paddling equipment in different canoes and kayaks.

## **BEFORE YOU HEAD OFF**

- Choosing your route

Consider your skills, physical condition and environment, other waterway traffic and weather conditions before you plan your journey. Find information about landownership, potential landing prohibitions and the location of permitted sites for camping and taking breaks.

- Weather

Check the weather forecast before you go and during your journey as needed. Observe the local weather when planning your routes. Check potential wind and forest fire warnings also at [www.ilmatieteenlaitos.fi](http://www.ilmatieteenlaitos.fi)

- Fellow paddlers

It is always safer to paddle together with others. Discuss safety together beforehand and consider the skills of each person in your group when planning the trip.

- Inform somebody about your route plan and time-table.

## **EQUIPMENT AND GEAR**

- Paddling equipment that fulfil safety criteria
- Personal flotation devices (PFDs)
- Food and drinks for the entire journey
- Navigation gear in a waterproof package (map, compass, GPS, cell phone)
- Appropriate clothing and footwear for local weather, a change of clothes in a waterproof package
- Safety colours, lights or signalling devices that make you visible to others
- Outdoor equipment depending on the duration of your trip and the season (our guidebook provides a provisory list of equipment for each route)
- Get information about potential places for assistance in case of an emergency

## **DURING YOUR TRIP**

- Respect nature whilst canoeing (see Guidebook for Sustainable Travel)
- Always keep your PFD on as appropriate
- Follow the weather forecast and prepare for the coming weather
- Estimate your stamina and skills according to the prevailing weather
- Do not use alcohol on waterways
- Keep your phone in a waterproof package, easily available in emergencies

## **IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY**

- Ask help early enough, from your canoe rental place, for example
- **If you are in danger, call immediately 112, the emergency number in Finland**