



Know Before You Go

Preparing to Visit a National Forest

Canoeing

Canoeing is a great recreational activity, but it can also be a dangerous one. Safety is important on calm water as well as on whitewater streams. Canoeing rules and regulations will help you enjoying this activity while keeping yourself and others safe.



Safety Checklist

- Wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket at all times. Even gentle stretches of water can have strong undercurrents. Even good swimmers need to wear one.
- Scout the rapids and make plans for possible rescues. Be aware that on some sections of river, land access may be difficult and help is far away.
- Learn basic water rescue techniques and first aid. Learn to recognize the symptoms and treatment for hypothermia.
- Know your limits; do not attempt to navigate a section of river beyond your skill level.
- Always bring along extra clothing and a first-aid kit in a waterproof container. Store all extra gear in a secure, watertight container.
- If your canoe tips over, don't panic. Stay with your canoe. In a river, stay upstream from the canoe so it does not pin you against a rock.
- If your canoe tips over in whitewater, float on your back with feet together and pointed downstream. Let the current take you to shore or to calm water. If you are carried over a ledge or a dropoff, tuck into a ball.
- If your canoe tips over in calm water, paddle or push your canoe to shore. Once you reach shallow water, you can flip the canoe over to empty it and get back in. A canoe will float even if it's full of water, so you may be able to paddle it to shore to empty it.

Climbing into a Canoe Safely

- Have someone hold the canoe steady. You don't want to tip the canoe before you even get out on the water.
- Crouch low, keep your knees bent and grab the sides of the canoe for balance as you walk to your seat.
- Always walk in the center of a canoe. Keeping your feet on the center line will minimize side-to-side rocking motions.