

# MILLSIDE CANOE HIRE

## RIVER SAFETY

Your safety is paramount to us at Millside Canoe Hire and you will be given a full safety briefing at the riverside before you start your canoe trip.

The River Great Ouse is a fantastic river and is very gentle but as with any river there are dangers or potential hazards you should familiarise yourself with and some easy do's and don'ts.

1. On entering your canoe it makes sense that the heaviest person get in first, they will make the canoe more stable for the rest of the party as they start to get in.
2. The heaviest person will be expected to sit at the back, with the next heaviest to sit at the front.
3. Step into the canoe with one foot on the centre line, holding onto the sides of the canoe with both hands, pivot and slowly lower yourself onto your seat.
4. If you have to move along the canoe, keep as low as possible and move along the centre line, don't stand up in the canoe.
5. To exit the canoe allow the adult in the front to get out first to make sure the canoe is stable, then the children seated in the middle of the canoe can be supervised exiting the canoe.
6. Be aware of other users of the river, give way where necessary to larger craft, when passing turn straight into the larger crafts wake, try not to take the trailing water side on.
7. Raise your hand to approaching craft to indicate you are there, if they wave back they have seen you and will give you a wide berth, it's polite to acknowledge other travellers on the river anyway.
8. You can paddle down the centre of the river if there are no oncoming craft approaching or faster craft coming up behind you, but generally travelling on the right-hand side of any river is the norm.
9. For additional safety paddling within 10ft of the river bank is advisable, should you capsize in most cases an adult will be able to stand up in the water.
10. Avoid standing upright in the canoe whilst on the water, this increases instability and increases a capsize situation. If you have to move about the canoe, move along an imaginary centre line, crouching down as comfort will allow (one person at a time) keeping three points of contact on the canoe at all times (two hands and one foot, two feet one hand, and so on).
11. If you do capsize don't panic, your bouyancy aids will help with floatation as will the paddle and canoe. The canoe won't sink but may take on a little water, hold on to the side of the canoe and make your way to the river bank, here using the bailer provided take out any excess water in the canoe and continue your journey.
12. Whilst paddling the river avoid grabbling overhanging branches, duck down and pass through them, grabbing anything outside the parameters of the canoe increases instability and potential to capsize.
13. Be aware of fallen trees, they may have further branches below the water line, again give them a wide berth when passing.

14. Canoeing can be hard work, be prepared bring water and light refreshments to keep energy levels up.
15. Be prepared for unexpected changes in weather, a fresh wind on a moderate day can increase the wind chill factor and you will quickly get cold if you've not considered wearing clothes to suit the conditions. On hot days take extra water and sunblock, or you will get burnt and dehydrated.
16. Dogs are more than welcome in our canoes, whilst in the canoe NEVER tether your pet up, if you capsize they will not escape so easily.
17. When on land if you're stopping for a picnic, break etc ... don't let your pet run freely along the riverside or on farmland, this is potentially private property with livestock as well as wildfowl and inhabiting mammals along the riverside, everything you hope to see in it's natural habitat.
18. Respect the river, the riverbank, fields and meadows along your route, don't disturb the wildlife and please bring back all your rubbish with you, and we will dispose of it on your return.
19. And again, please don't arrive for your journey under the influence of either drugs or alcohol, you will not be permitted to use the canoes.
20. Please don't bring alcohol on your trip, you will not be permitted to use the canoes (see CONDITIONS OF HIRE)
21. Respect other users of the river, keep your noise levels to a minimum, remember canoeing the river is supposed to be a relaxing enjoyable experience for all.

## LOCKS

22. It is advisable to portage (carry) your canoe where possible around a Lock. If there are no portage points available to you, which will be indicated at your safety briefing, then the following course of action is an option to be considered to minimise any potential issues.
23. If travelling with a young family, prior to entering the lock allow your family to exit the canoe and meet the canoe on the other side of the lock once you've passed through, this may have to happen if you have to operate the lock system yourself with the provided keys.
24. If there are other boats waiting to enter the lock try and be the last one to enter staying as far away from where the water will enter the lock, reducing turbulence and water movement. Ask politely if you can support yourself by holding on to the side of a boat.
25. When in a lock, don't tie up your canoe, let the rope run through or around any tying up points.
26. Sluices and Weirs are danger points as water will flow over and or under these structures, if you get too close there is a risk of getting caught up in the flow or current.
27. Again, keep clear of moving parts near water, ie water wheels at a mill, there is potential to get caught up in the strong flow of water.