

PADDLE EXPERIENCE LEARN WHITEWATER GUIDE
INSTRUCTION NANTAHALA GUIDE CANOE YOUTH
KAYAKING SWIFTWATER PADDLE EXPERIENCE



NANTAHALA OUTDOOR CENTER
PADDLING SCHOOL

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PADDLE WITH THE BEST

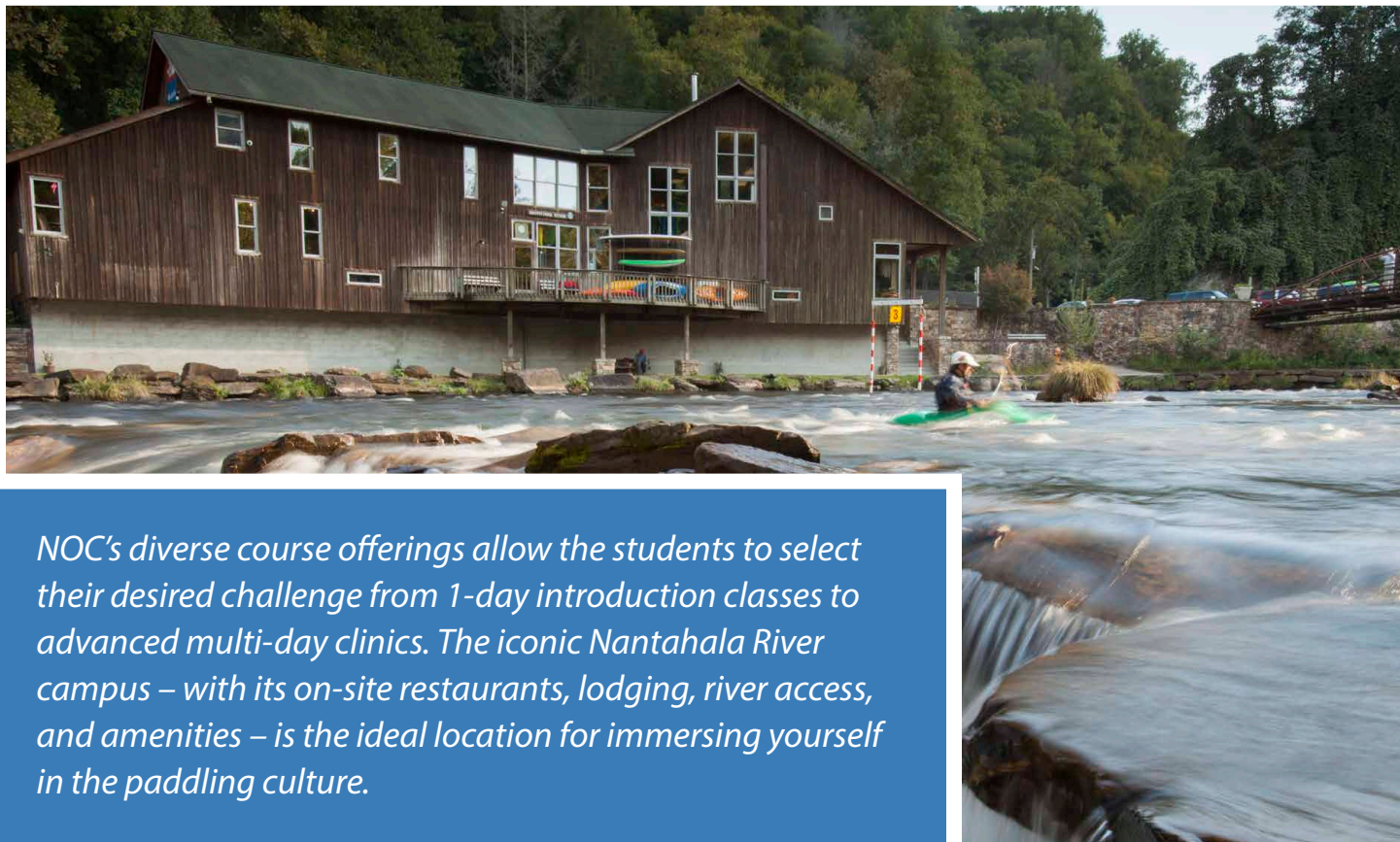
NANTAHALA OUTDOOR CENTER (NOC) CREATED THE FIRST WHITEWATER PADDLING CURRICULUM OVER 50 YEARS AGO.

It was a progression-based approach for learning the skills used by the world's best competitive paddlers and remains a state-of-the-art program in today's industry. NOC's instructors are not only proven paddlers teaching world-class techniques – they are also trained educators. They recognize different learning styles, and they use hands-on teaching strategies to create efficient and engaging learning experiences.

NOC's course offerings and private instruction classes take place on the most exciting and beautiful whitewater rivers in the Southeastern U.S., where reliable water and mild weather create excellent paddling conditions throughout much of the year.

We hope you'll consider joining us on the water. This guide explains more about who we are, the courses we offer, and how to make a reservation. NOC instructors are dedicated to building the skills and confidence of our students, and we're eager to share the amazing experience of paddling whitewater rivers with you.

**"The nation's premier
paddling school."
– The New York Times**



NOC's diverse course offerings allow the students to select their desired challenge from 1-day introduction classes to advanced multi-day clinics. The iconic Nantahala River campus – with its on-site restaurants, lodging, river access, and amenities – is the ideal location for immersing yourself in the paddling culture.

CHOOSING A COURSE

WHITEWATER KAYAKING

NOC separates students into three skill levels for most of our kayak clinics: Fundamentals, Intermediate and Advanced. Students in our fundamentals courses will learn skills and techniques to be comfortable and capable in easy whitewater. Students in Intermediate and Advanced courses will refine skills and advance proficiency for navigating and paddling in more complex whitewater.

The guidelines below will help you determine which skill level is right for you, as well as, offer course suggestions. If you have any questions, call us at **828.785.5030** and we'll assist you in making your decision.

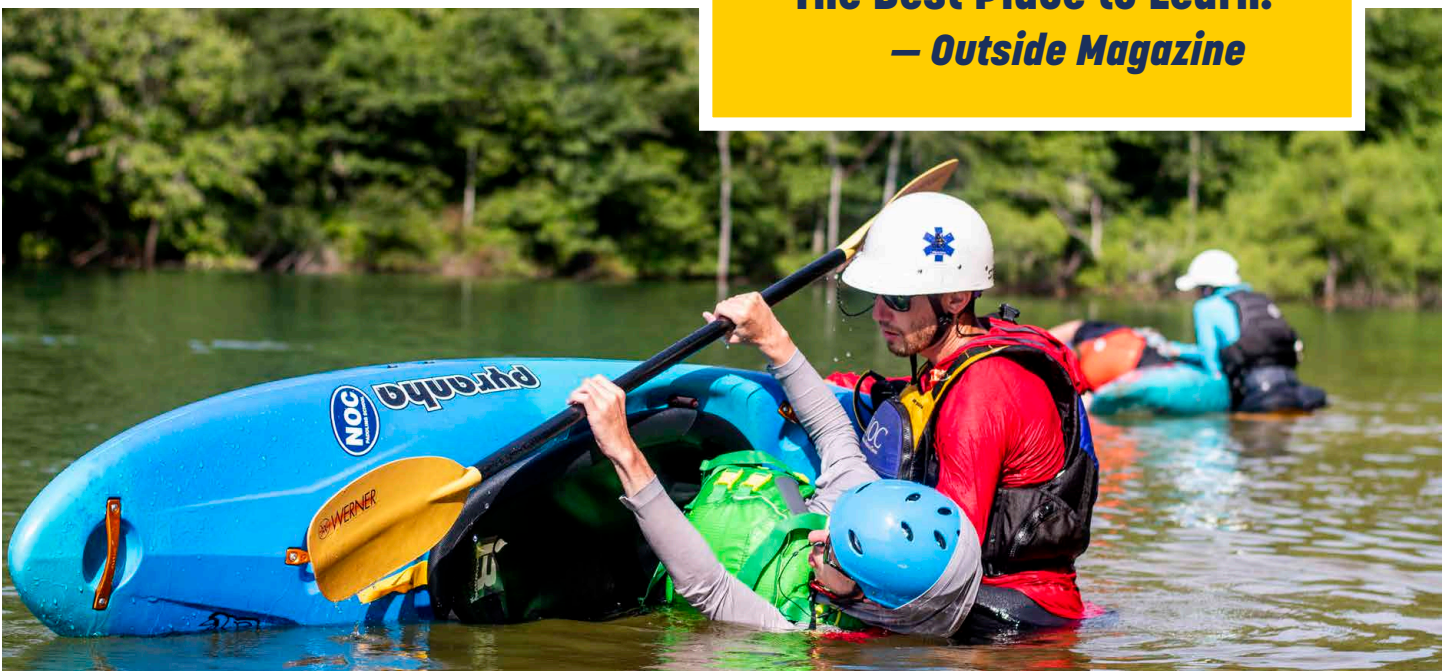
BEGINNER PADDLERS (Class I-II):

- Have never paddled watercraft on a lake or moving water
- Have experience in flatwater kayak or sea kayak and want to try whitewater kayaking
- Have some experience in whitewater kayak
- Have ability to get on and off, or in and out of a paddlecraft independently or with reasonable amount of assistance
- Do not have a whitewater kayak roll, or are working on a solid flatwater roll

FUNDAMENTALS COURSES:

- Introduction to Whitewater Kayaking
- Fundamentals of Whitewater Kayaking
- Summer Kayak Day Camps (Ages 9-17)
- Women's Weekend Kayak Retreats

**"The Best Place to Learn."
— *Outside Magazine***



CHOOSING A COURSE

WHITewater KAYAKING CONT.

INTERMEDIATE PADDLERS (Class II-III):

- Have experience paddling Class I-II whitewater in a decked whitewater kayak using a spray skirt
- Have the ability to catch eddies, peel out, ferry, and self rescue in mild current
- Understand paddling terms as well as the following fundamentals: wet exit, boat-based rescues, carving and edging, catching eddies, peel outs, and ferries
- Have experience with flatwater roll in a kayak

INTERMEDIATE COURSES:

- Flow & Progression Whitewater Kayaking
- Summer Day Camp (Ages 9-17)
- Women's Weekend Kayak Retreats

ADVANCED PADDLERS (Class III-IV):

- Currently paddle kayak in Class III-IV
- Can competently navigate Class II rapids
- Have a reliable roll in Class II whitewater

ADVANCED COURSES:

- Nantahala Playboat Workshop
- 3 Days, 3 Rivers
- Ocoee and Chattooga Based Clinics
- Teen Advanced Kayak Day Camp (Ages 13-17)

Clinics on **multiple** southeastern rivers



CHOOSING A COURSE

WHITEWATER CANOE

NOC's Paddling School has been teaching canoe instruction since the beginning. For paddlers new to the sport or looking to brush up on the basics, we offer multi-day courses and private instruction on area lakes and rivers.

If you have any questions, call us at **828.785.5030** and we'll assist you in making your decision.

2-DAY RIVER CANOE TOURING FUNDAMENTALS - Tandem & Solo (Class I-II)

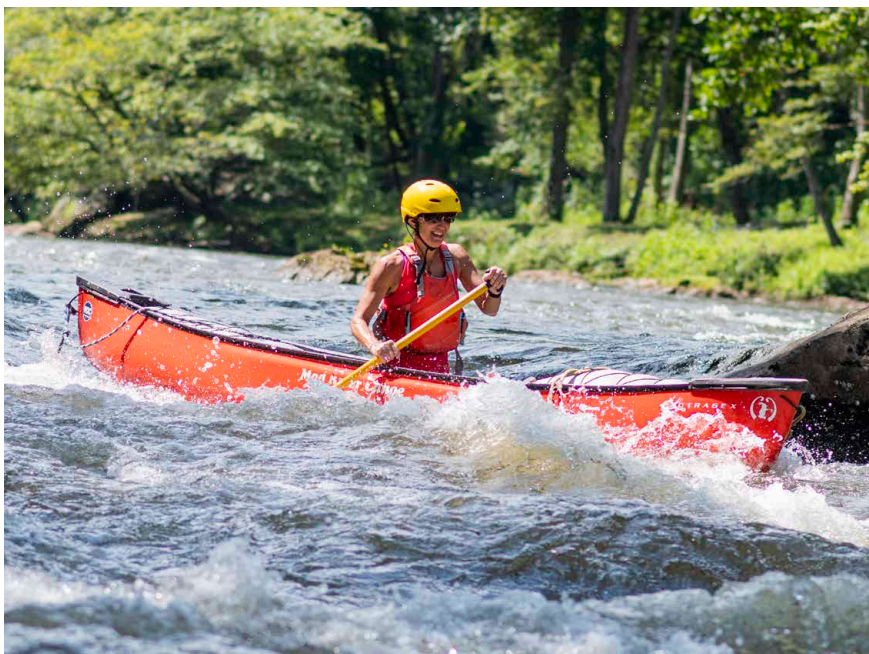
Preparing for a multi-day river trip? Looking to become proficient at paddling a touring canoe? Then this is the course for you! Whether solo or tandem, beginner to those with previous experience, we will go over the essentials of paddling a touring canoe.

2-DAY SOLO WHITEWATER CANOE FLOW & PROGRESSION (Class II+)

This canoe clinic is the next step in our solo whitewater canoe progression. We take the fundamental skill set you have been building and begin applying it to accelerated and more dynamic whitewater, increasing the challenge for effective, efficient strokes and faster decision making.

2-DAY OR 3-DAY SOLO WHITEWATER CANOE FUNDAMENTALS (Class I-II)

Learn how to paddle whitewater in a canoe or improve your techniques in this 2-day or 3-day course. Professionally trained instructors tailor the experience to fit the needs of the group, offering skill development and practice time on area lakes and rivers.



3-DAY SOLO WHITEWATER CANOE FLOW & PROGRESSION (Class II+)

This course takes place in more dynamic Class II+ whitewater, increasing the challenge for effective, efficient strokes and faster decision making.

CHOOSING A COURSE

PACKRAFTING

EXPLORE MORE WATER. CARRY LESS GEAR. Packrafting blends paddling and backcountry travel into one flexible adventure. Using lightweight, inflatable boats that fit into a backpack, packrafting makes it possible to hike to remote put-ins, link waterways together, and explore rivers beyond the roadside access points. Many paddlers find packrafts easier to manage than traditional kayaks and less intimidating, making them an inviting way to experience moving water.

NOC's Packrafting Courses are designed to be approachable, hands-on, and confidence-building. Instruction focuses on practical skills, river awareness, and real-world application, making packrafting an inviting entry point into whitewater while opening new possibilities for experienced outdoor travelers.

Courses take place on calm lakes and flowing rivers throughout the Southeast, where reliable water and varied terrain create an ideal learning environment.

1-DAY INTRODUCTION TO PACKRAFTING - (Class I-II)

This full-day course is designed for first-time packrafters and paddlers with little to no whitewater experience. Participants begin by getting familiar with packrafts and micro-inflatables, learning how different designs handle and how to select the right boat for various trips.

2-DAY FUNDAMENTALS OF PACKRAFTING - (Class I-II)

The two-day Fundamentals course allows more time on the water and exposure to multiple river environments. Building on the one-day introduction, this clinic emphasizes refining techniques, reading water, and becoming more comfortable in flowing current. Participants work on efficient paddling, eddy turns, ferries, and trip-planning considerations specific to packrafting in the Southeast.

WHO IT'S BEST FOR:

- First-time paddlers
- Hikers and backpackers interested in combining trail and water travel
- Adventure travelers seeking versatile river skills
- Families with active kids (ages 9+)
- Kayakers and canoeists curious about packrafting
- No prior whitewater experience required. Participants should be comfortable swimming and ready for a moderately active day outdoors.



CHOOSING A COURSE

BY GROUP SIZE

Because paddlers learn at different rates and in different ways, NOC allows students to choose their preferred learning environment.

GROUP COURSES

Sometimes the most important benefit of taking an NOC instruction course is meeting other paddlers and making new friends with similar interests. That's why people love learning in groups– it's often just more fun. Group learning provides many advantages besides camaraderie: other students ask good questions, they encourage you to try new skills, they provide additional encouragement, and you learn from watching them learn. That's what it's all about learning and having fun. Our average group courses run with 1 instructor per 4 students.

PRIVATE INSTRUCTION

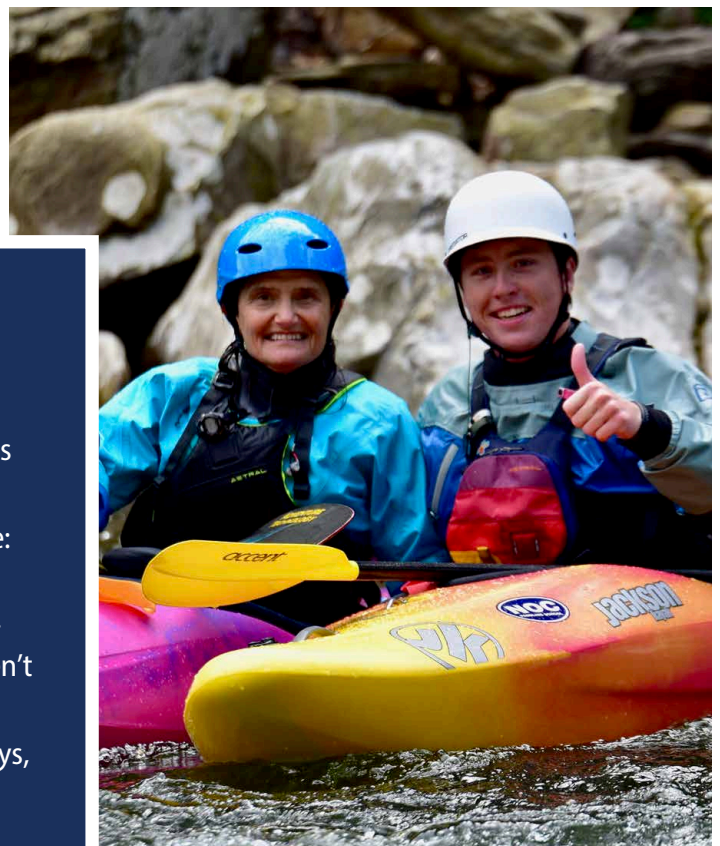
Students looking to develop specific skills or those on a tight schedule generally prefer private instruction sessions. With this option, paddlers get the undivided attention of their instructor, and they can custom-build the day's itinerary on any river, in any watercraft. Guests can build their "P.I." experience with as many as 5 total participants, making it possible to get the focus of private instruction and the shared experience of group paddling simultaneously.

CUSTOM INSTRUCTION

Have a larger group and want something custom or private? Contact the Paddling School at paddlingschool@noc.com or contact our Specialist at **828.488.7288**

HELPFUL TIPS

- Determine your goals and make selections accordingly. Remember we're just a phone call away!
- Paddlers looking to develop overall skills and run new rivers should select a standard clinic offering.
- Paddlers with unique needs may enjoy a specialized course: We offer exclusive programs for youth paddlers, outdoor professionals, and boaters interested in specific disciplines.
- Ask us for a custom curriculum if the options presented aren't exactly right for you – we'll make it work.
- If your time is limited to a few hours or extends to a few days, we have options! Consider course lengths as you plan.



CHOOSING A COURSE

BY COURSE LENGTH

COURSES RANGE FROM ONE TO FOUR DAYS. Since much of skill development is in practice and repetition, students tend to develop confidence in longer courses with plenty of river time. Below is a breakdown of available course lengths.

1-DAY COURSES

- Introduction to Whitewater Kayaking
- Introduction to Packrafting
- Nantahala Playboat Workshop
- Private Instruction

2-DAY COURSES

- Fundamentals of Whitewater Kayaking (Class I-II)
- Fundamentals of Packrafting (Class I-II)
- Flow & Progression Whitewater Kayaking (Class II-III)
- Chattooga Intensive (Class III-IV)
- Ocoee Step-Up & Ocoee Intensive (Class III-IV)
- Whitewater Canoe Courses
- Women's Weekend Kayak Retreats

3-DAY COURSES

- Whitewater Canoe Course
- 3 Days, 3 Rivers (Kayak – Class III-IV)

4-DAY COURSES

- Fundamentals of Whitewater Kayaking (Class I-II)
- Flow & Progression Whitewater Kayaking (Class II-III)
- Ocoee Immersion Week (Class III-IV)



The best learning scenario means different things to different people: Group interaction, one-on-one, focus on fun, or a more serious approach – it's up to you!

YOUTH COURSES

Kayak Summer Camps have been a favorite of NOC guests since 1980. Our elite instructors provide top-level whitewater kayaking lessons and all of the latest equipment to learn with, while maintaining a supportive and FUN environment on the water.

SUMMER KAYAK DAY CAMP (5 DAYS)

Summer Kayak Day Camp is a great option for kids ages 9-17 with any skill level to learn and practice on the iconic rivers and lakes of Western North Carolina. Paddlers from beginner to advanced will receive high-quality instruction from our team while having fun and making friends.

Course includes professional instruction, transportation, gear, lunch each day, and a t-shirt.

The final day of camp is “Family Fun Friday” where parents are invited to watch their kids show off their new moves and skills on a

section of the Nantahala. Parents that have their own equipment (boat and gear) and have the skills to paddle the Nantahala are welcome to be on the water with the group. There are many riverside road pull-offs for parents that aren’t on the water to follow along to take photos. A riverside lunch and closing ceremony will cap off the end of a successful week.



TEEN ADVANCED KAYAK DAY CAMP

Teenage kayakers ages 13-17 can take their paddling to the next level with our all-inclusive Advanced Teen Travel Camp. NOC’s award-winning Instruction Team will lead campers on more advanced Southeastern rivers to learn and practice Class III+ skills!

Teens will experience five days of thrilling adventure; paddling in multiple rivers across the region.



ACA COURSES

ACA instructor courses are designed for individuals who have prior paddling experience and a solid understanding of paddle stroke choice and terminology. Instructor Candidates should have an understanding of basic teaching methodology, presenting topics and group management. You should not take these courses if you are new to paddlesports. A skills assessment is required prior to participation. Course completion does not guarantee certification.

LEVEL 1:

Introduction to Kayaking (ACA L1) Course length 2 days. This course covers basic safety and instruction on a lake or other flatwater sites. This course prepares Instructor Candidates with the foundation on flatwater to build on strokes, concepts, and how to facilitate an environment of learning.

LEVEL 2:

Essentials of River Kayak (ACA L2) Course length 3 days. This course covers basic safety and instruction on moving water (Class I water). Instructor Candidates need to show leadership and group management skills; they must also model paddling strokes and show they can teach strokes and concepts effectively in Class I water.

LEVEL 3:

River Kayaking (ACA L3) Course length is 4-5 days. This course covers safety and instruction on whitewater (Class I-II water). This course will emphasize safety & rescue, strokes, paddling concepts, and being an effective teacher. Instructor Candidates must be comfortable with paddling, teaching concepts, and performing rescues on Class II as well as be able to perform a reliable kayak roll.



ACA Certification Update or Upgrade

Already a kayak ACA Instructor and need your update or upgrade? Contact us to set up a private session with an ACA Instructor Trainer or ACA Instructor Trainer Educator at paddlingschool@noc.com.



PADDLESPORTS LEADER – RIVER LEADER COURSE

This 3-day ACA course is designed for individuals looking to enhance their leadership skills. This program targets paddle club leaders, camp and outdoor organization guides, and university trip coordinators who want to lead groups on river day trips. Participants will learn intermediate paddling techniques, group management, planning, navigation, and respond to various paddling incidents while engaging in fun outdoor experiences.

The course is conducted in locations featuring moving water, specifically on rivers with Class I-II sections. It accommodates various watercraft, including river kayaks, canoes, paddle rafts, oar rafts, packrafts, and river stand-up paddleboards (SUPs).

Upon successfully completing the program, your skill level will dictate the conditions and environments in which you are certified to lead. Skills assessments are required prior to participation.



SWIFTWATER RESCUE COURSES

SWIFTWATER READINESS AND RESPONSE TRAINING

This course draws from a range of progressive techniques commonly taught in higher-level, multi-day rescue programs and incorporates them into the Swiftwater Readiness and Response Training curriculum. The program addresses the core criteria typically associated with an ACA Level 4 2-day Swiftwater course while also introducing additional concepts and skills often found in more advanced, multi-day training formats. Instruction emphasizes judgment, situational awareness, and the management of rescue scenarios commonly encountered in moving water, using techniques that can be performed with minimal equipment.

Certificates of completion are issued based on demonstrated participation and skill development and are not guaranteed at any level. This course is intended for individuals who work or recreate in and around moving water.

FUNDAMENTALS OF BOAT BASED RESCUE

This 1-day course is for intermediate paddlers who want to become better prepared on the river and more effective in assisting swimmers and getting their boats to shore with efficiency. We will equip you with tools for implementing rescues, risk mitigation, and decision-making through skill presentations applied to on-river scenarios.

Prior to signing up, participants should have experience paddling Class II whitewater in a whitewater kayak, solo whitewater canoe, or packraft.

Our ACA certified instructors have years of experience and take our courses beyond the requirements to best prepare students to become instructors, guides, and skilled in swiftwater situations.



CONTACT

NOC PADDLING SCHOOL

13077 Highway 19 W
Bryson City, NC 2871

CALL 828.785.5030

EMAIL paddlingschool@noc.com

VISIT noc.com/paddling-school

