



Kit for Paddling

An Outdoor Gear Salesman will tell you that your kit must comprise of several layers. Today, I shall describe 4, and I shall call them: base layer, mid layer, wetsuit and outer shell. An Outdoor Gear Salesmen will also tell you all about how to spend all your money on the latest layering fabrics and how this will help you to climb mountains quicker and look good in field and trek catalogues.

However, none of this matters. What is important is that you are warm and comfortable, and still have some money left for a beer.

Base Layer

Man-made fabrics are best for this as they "wick" moisture away from the skin, helping to keep you warm. Millets will sell you a pair of Peter Storm thermals for not a lot of pounds, but the more you spend the warmer you will be.

Helly Hanson are very popular and relatively inexpensive. Whatever you do, don't wear cotton next to your skin. It has a cooling effect when it's wet, and will make you feel super chilly. If you're on a budget, look for t-shirts made from 100% polyester, or the lycra rash vests worn by surfers.

Mid layer

Polar fleece is the best solution to your mid layer. I'm reliably informed that you can get very cheap fleece jumpers from Matalan, and a couple of those you do you just fine in the very coldest of conditions. Drawback is, it gets quite heavy when it's wet, so don't pile on too much or you'll sink. Jogging bottoms are also very good, just beware of %100 cotton ones, they're not so hot.

Hi-tech super light-weight paddling tops and trousers with designer labels on are also available from most canoe shops and are a very nice addition to your birthday present list. Don't even think about wearing jeans, for watersports they have no redeeming features. When wet they will make you cold and chafe where you don't want chafing.

The Wetsuit

Most people wear a wetsuit of some kind when they paddle. Whilst you are dry, they keep you warm simply by being thick and rubbery and tightfitting. But it is when they are wet that they come into their own, trapping a layer of water between it and you, and then heating it up with your hot emissions, if you'll excuse the phrase. They come in every shape and size imaginable so you'll need to go shopping and pick, which you prefer.

All I will say is, avoid full upper body suits as they restrict your arm movement quite a lot, and separate bits for upper and lower body are handy as they allow for easy bladder evacuation. There isn't really a substitute for a wetsuit, so unless you can stand to wear layers and layers of tracksuits in winter, you're probably going to have to buy one. There is some debate as



to whether your wetsuit should go next to the skin, or on top of your base a mid layers or between the 2.

The Outer Shell

Remember, sharks will only attack you if you are wet, so it's important to keep as much water out as possible. A piece of kit known to the canoeing world as a "cag" is some very waterproof clothing, with some untrendy looking seals at the neck, wrists and waist. They keep the wind, water and cold out and I could go on all day about the many and varied designs of cags, and probably will if left unattended, but basically there are 3 types. Dry, semi-dry and splashproof.

Dry cags are exactly that. They have latex seals and several layers of fabric, and keep the water well and truly out of there. They will also set you back about £80-200, but for serious winter paddling, they are essential. Semi-dry cags have neoprene seals, and fewer layers of fabric. They will do for most UK paddling from March to September and will cost about £40-70, but the good news is that the club owns several of these, so that'll save you a few quid! Splash-proof cags are not worth the £20 they will charge you for the pleasure of owning one.

Generally, our club partakes in the wetter forms of canoeing, so splashproof isn't really enough. Dry-trousers are also available at a hefty price from canoe shops, but if you have a pair of waterproof walking trousers, these will keep the wind off during breaks on the bank and lengthy portages.

Extras

Most of the heat you lose is from your head so it's not a bad idea to cover it up whilst it's submerged upside down in icy waters. Scull caps can be purchased from as little as £3 for a neoprene one, or £10-15 for a thermal one. A woolly hat will make do in the event of not living near any surf shops.

Gloves are not very popular with canoeists as many people find they reduce control of the paddle, but if you do like to wear gloves while paddling, wetsuit gloves are readily available from surf, canoe and sailing outlets. Sailing gloves tend not to be as thick as surf gloves and offer more contact with the paddle, but less warmth. Alternatively steal your mum's marigolds, or some latex gloves from your local hospital.

Footwear

On rivers this is so very important as those rocks can be really spiky. Wetsuit boots are again very easy to get hold of. Try and get the most discrete style you are comfortable with as today's kayaks are notoriously harsh on foot room. Wear them with a pair of football socks for extra luxury.

Aquashoes are very cheap these days and are available at most beach/surf/scuba outlets and will suffice for less extreme paddling. Trainers



will do, but may restrict the size of boat you are able to squeeze into.

Things to have handy in your boat (optional for weekly paddling, but necessary for day trips)

Drink

High Energy food - chocolate, banana, cereal bars

Small First Aid kit (trip leaders usually have a big one)*

Personal medication - inhalers etc

Dry bag with some extra kit in (jumper + hat)

Torch*

Survival Bag*

Pen knife/River knife*

*not essential but very useful

Don't Forget

Enough dry towels to last the trip

As much kit as you can so that some might be dry for day 2

Extra bits you may prefer to have like nose clips and earplugs

Some very, very, very warm things for post paddling

Shoes that you don't mind getting muddy

Underwear

So to Summarise the good and bad things to wear:

What to wear:

Thermals/man-made fabric clothing/lycra rash vest

Fleece

Wetsuit trousers/shorts/long johns

Dry/semi-dry cags/ Dry trousers/waterproof walking trousers

Cag (the club has some)

Wetsuit (one piece or separates)

Thermals/Man-made fibre t-shirts/lycra rash vest

Jogging bottoms

Fleece/Woolly Jumper

Football/hiking socks

Waterproof trousers

Wetsuit boots/Trainers

Hat/Scullcap

Wetsuit gloves/marigolds

Jogging bottoms

Wetsuit boots/trainers/aquashoes

Warm socks

What not to wear:

Cotton things (T-Shirts)

Very absorbant things



Blackwater Valley Canoe Club Kit List



Jeans
Heavy shoes

Check List:

Item	Packed?
Essentials	
Alcohol	
Towels x2	
Personal Medication	
Helmet	
Paddle	
Boat (make sure it is comfy as you will be in it for some time)	
Spraydeck	
Buoyancy Aid	
Waterproof Top (Cag of some sort)	
Thermal Top	
Thermal Bottoms	
Shoes (wetsuit boots)	
Waterproof Bottoms	
Water Bottle	
Dry Bag/ Container for Lunch	
Energy food/ Bars	
Airbags max 2 (if you do go for a swim, it helps the people retrieving your boat emptying it quicker and finding it better!)	
Camping Gear	
First Aid Kit	
Big Kit bag (to put everything in)	
Sleeping Bag	
Tent	
Pegs	
Torch	
Underwear x2 (just encase)	
Socks x2 (just encase)	
Trousers	
Jumpers (especially if we go to Scotland)	
T-Shirts	
Wooly Hat	
Roll Mat	
Stove & Gas (if you intend to not go to the pub)	
Food & Drink	
Toiletries - shampoo, tooth paste, brush, etc	
Sun Cream	
Sunglasses	
Rescue Gear	
(for Coaches, people who know how to use them and river leaders)	
First Aid Kit	



Blackwater Valley Canoe Club Kit List



Paddle Splits & The Key	
Knife	
Throwlines	
Sling	
Krab	
Pulley	
Repair Kit (useful for repairing wing mirrors too!)	
Chest Harness	
Mobile Phone (in waterproof dry bag)	
Cork (Drain Bung)	
Don't forget: Money for the Pub	