

# SUPPM

Stand Up Paddle Mag UK

## **DOGS ON SUPS:**

How to by Stephanie Barnicoat

## **SUP THE WORLD... Q&A**

By John McFadzean

## **CHRIS PARKER Q&A**

By Sarah Thornely

## **SUP MUM Q&A**

With Emily McDonald

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## **GEAR SHED**

Tons of stuff reviewed



## **#ShePaddles chats part 1**

Emma Love speaks to Emy Mcleod & Charlotte Ditchburn  
SUPJunkie GBSUP Reports by Sarah Thornely;  
SUP Scotty technique: trimming your board  
The North Channel prone by James Fletcher





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## Ed's note

# Find your path



**Pic: Oli Lane-Peirce**  
I've paddled a lot this winter – more than I've done for years. More than I've ever done full stop. Those who know me will be aware of my penchant for a wave or two, and I tend to seek out waves for personal paddle time around the general SUP kit testing I do for SUP Mag UK. Although these days, that's mainly done with a dangly thing protruding out of my board.

I'm not suggesting foiling is for everyone. But it's an available tool to enhance those weak to average wave conditions you can get when out riding. Hydrofoils suit my home paddling grounds, the style of riding I err towards and my general progressive outlook on stand up paddleboarding. Don't get me wrong. I love a flat, glassy calm day for mooching about as much as the next paddler. But when you start talking 'performance paddling', I'm often to be found foiling – only switching to fins when the conditions really ramp up. And that's happened as well. Just not as often as we'd like this off-season.

My point is SUP's a diverse beast with many avenues to head off down and discover your perfect niche. This may be recreational paddling – which everyone does. But with such versatility available (and all without having to change your gear, at first), it'd be a shame not to investigate just what this diverse sport can deliver.

You may get bitten by the SUP race bug. Like me, waves could end up being your thing. Or perhaps a spot of adventuring will flick your switch. After all is said and done, it could still be recreational paddling with mates that gets you out of bed in the morning, which is great. However you paddle, and wherever you paddle, it's all good. But as I say, I'd definitely recommend investigating the wider world of SUP and what it offers.

If you're reading this as a progressing newbie, you may not have even considered some aspects of what SUP is (or can be). Take it from me, after 15+ years involved with SUP; there's plenty to immerse yourself in. And to reiterate once more: you don't (in most cases) have to switch up upgrade your gear. That 10'6 inflatable you purchased during Lockdown is perfectly applicable for some white water river paddling. Of course, when the bug bites, it might be time to get some more performance orientated gear. Possibly. Not at first, though.

With 2022's summer of SUP just about to kick off, now's the time to dust down your SUP kit and put a plan of action into place. Do a little research to find out precisely what you might be able to accomplish over the next few months. If you feel some additional or refresher coaching could be worth it, take that option. And then it's green lightsville. Find your SUP path and reap even more rewards from one of the broadest and most accessible watersports around.

## SUPM 2022

With the weather getting warmer and more spring-like, the incentive to get out there and paddle is tangible. And if you're looking for SUP inspiration – across all areas – then you only need to peruse this issue to find something that gets your frothing.

Enjoy the first SUPM of 2022 and stay with us for all that SUP goodness this season and beyond.

**Tez Plavenieks – February 2022**



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**Cover photo:** Stephanie Barnicoat

**Photo:** Dave Hudson

**Thanks to:** Adrian Soper, John Baldry, Graham Woollven, Neil Wilson, Gemma Scope Photography, Jon Ditchburn, Kelli Surritte, Trevor Tunnington, Christopher Parker, the Reichmann family, Wissanu Wisetputtasat, P3T Photography, Jade Rogers, Geoff Mather, Oli Lane-Pierce

Not all contributors are professional writers and photographers, so don't be put off writing because you have no experience! **Next issue is June 2022 with a deadline of submissions on April 5th 2022.** Technical Information: Contributions preferably as a Microsoft Word file with 800-1200 words, emailed to [tez@supmaguk.co.uk](mailto:tez@supmaguk.co.uk). Images should be hi-resolution. SUP Mag UK encourages contributions of any nature but reserves the right to edit to the space available. Opinions expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the publishing parent company, 2b Graphic Design Ltd. The publishing of an advertisement in SUP Mag UK does not necessarily mean that the parent company, 2b Graphic Design Ltd, endorses the company, item or service advertised. All material in SUP Mag UK is strictly copyright and all rights are reserved. Reproduction without prior permission from the publisher is forbidden.



### Publisher

2b Graphic Design Ltd  
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# SUPJUNKIE REPORTING:



## PADDLERS – ARE YOU READY?

**Questions:** Sarah Thornely **Answers:** Adrian Soper

**Photos:** Supjunkie and John Baldry

From the very start of the National Race Series, all of those involved have invested their time and ideas into growing what has become a credible series of great races over the years, despite having had a few interruptions lately! Being a volunteer and stepping up to the plate is not only a wonderful thing to do, but it's also time-consuming and can take over your life – but it pays off in bucket loads! There have been some major changes to GBSUP over the last six months, and I managed to catch up with one of those volunteers and now a director, Adrian Soper, to check on all the latest news, of which there is plenty.

### **I asked Adrian about the races series in general and what changes have been made:**

We have worked hard on the back of the 2021 series, and a couple of changes we have already made to the series are that distance means distance, be that on a river/lake or the ocean. Similarly, the same will be true of the technical series. In the future, we will not differentiate the water type – as we move things forward, we could introduce other options to make it more exciting and enhance participation.

We visit some of the best places in the UK from south to north, east to west. We start the year in Cardiff before heading up to Beadnell Bay in Northumberland and then back down to Bournemouth, London and Cornwall. In September, we bring you the British National Championships in Nottingham before wrapping up the year in Norfolk.

### **Adrian, for those who don't know, can you explain who the race series is for?**

Our goal for 2022 is to bring a welcoming, exciting and fun racing series for all. It doesn't matter if you are just taking your first racing steps or are coming back once more to compete. Our categories make it very accessible no matter what board you ride with options for 14' and 12'6" fleet racing, N1SCO One Design, Prone and Juniors. We also have our Challenge Tour, which brings a fun, non-competitive option across shorter distances.

### **I know you originally volunteered to help with the website Adrian – can you let us know the developments made to that recently?**

As we continue to redevelop GBSUP under the new executive board, one area we identified for attention was our existing website. Whilst the previous site had





plenty of information past and present, it wasn't a hub for all things GBSUP. The new site has been developed with two angles in mind, bringing in all our elements under one roof and being a single location for competitors to interact with GBSUP and our activities. Some critical feedback from the last few years has been the disparate nature of finding entry links and results, which has been a significant factor with the new site. Alongside a dedicated events calendar, you will find all the details about GBSUP and our regional, national and sanctioned events, plus our store, rules and regulations and more.

**One of the most exciting things to come out of GBSUP recently is the launch of 'Race From A Box' - can you tell us more about that Adrian?**

With the growth of SUP popularity and the increase in market size, we felt the time was right to take GBSUP to a place it's been desperately lacking in recent years... out to the masses! Our Race From A Box initiative brings together a set of tools and standard practices with a regional series model to help clubs, schools and SUP enthusiasts run GBSUP sanctioned races without the admin burden of setting up a race event. The Race From A Box contains everything you need from risk assessments, course layouts, entry templates to added bolt-ons such as operational plans and race-specific insurance. This initiative is already helping us hit our goal of establishing a full regional competitive model to support the national series and bring SUP racing in the UK together in an organised and standardised way.



**The Regional Race Series has been talked about for a few years, with many believing it is the future of racing in the UK – can you let us know how you plan to support this idea?**

One of our first goals when redeveloping GBSUP was to build a new model that included supporting regional competition. It's a short-term goal with several pilot series already in place for 2022, including Wales, Norfolk and Kent. Soon we hope to introduce Scotland to the regional race scene. Our Race From A Box initiative supports the Regional Series, with the primary goals to test new systems and crown regional champions.

A crucial part of this initial pilot is developing a competitive model that moves away from solely rewarding the fastest paddlers. We want to push progression through the fleet and make it easier for newcomers to get into racing without needing years of training or the latest 14' race board to be competitive. Within the Regional Series, we are piloting a divisional system whereby paddlers enter according to their time over a 2km distance







If you have any queries on the changes or want to get involved, please reach out to Adrian, Phil or Scott directly or email [info@gsup.co.uk](mailto:info@gsup.co.uk).



Photo: John Baldry



regardless of their board. This way, they are competing directly against paddlers of similar ability, and we have already seen a positive uptake on this model throughout our regional and test events.

**We hear GBSUP have an exciting collaboration with benefits for our top paddlers! Can you tell us more about the Pro APP London Race qualifiers?**

This year, we have teamed up with the APP, taking the top two ladies and men from our distance series and handing them a wildcard entry into the Pro APP London race. This is a fantastic event and allows some of our amazing GB paddlers the chance to shine on the international stage.

**Last year, GBSUP fully supported the RNLI with some great fundraising – are you planning to support them through 2022?**

The upsurge in people taking up SUP over the last few years has not slowed; more and more people are taking to the water and enjoying our wonderful sport. The RNLI has continued attending more and more

paddleboarders, and plenty of other water users in difficulty. So, as we said last year, we all need to work together and do our bit to help this great organisation keep us safe.

So, we have decided to continue our support of the RNLI. Last year we had a few people taking on challenges to raise money for our cause, and over 50% of our support was raised by these incredible people completing those challenges. If you are interested in taking on your own fundraiser, please reach out to one of the GBSUP team, and we can help you.

This year, we will be holding raffles for some awesome kit at some of our races, so please look out for the ticket sellers at our events. If you have any prizes you would like to donate; please reach out to our GBSUP team.

**Last word from Sarah**

*Thank you, Adrian, this all sounds promising for yet another excellent season for all the paddlers, and we certainly remember all those great prizes kindly donated for the fundraising raffle.*

*Having personally been volunteering for over four years, I see these new ideas as forward-thinking and refreshing. GBSUP have been aware of certain shortcomings over the last couple of years and are willing to change and give the paddlers what they want. For 2022 there are some great races, from the traditional and well-loved Battle of the Thames to two new and exciting venues in Northumberland and Norfolk. So please get involved, be it on the water flat out racing or cruising in the Challenge Tour, and there are always opportunities for volunteering – many hands and all that! Keep your eyes peeled on all social media channels and the new website for all the latest news. See you on the water.*







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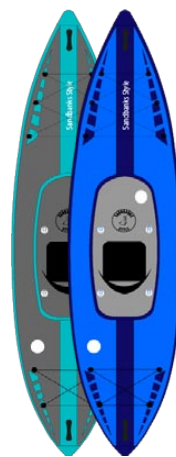
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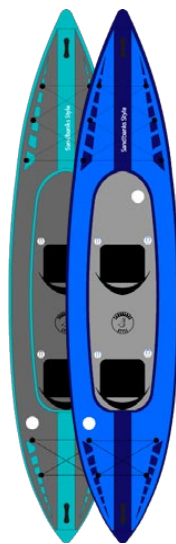
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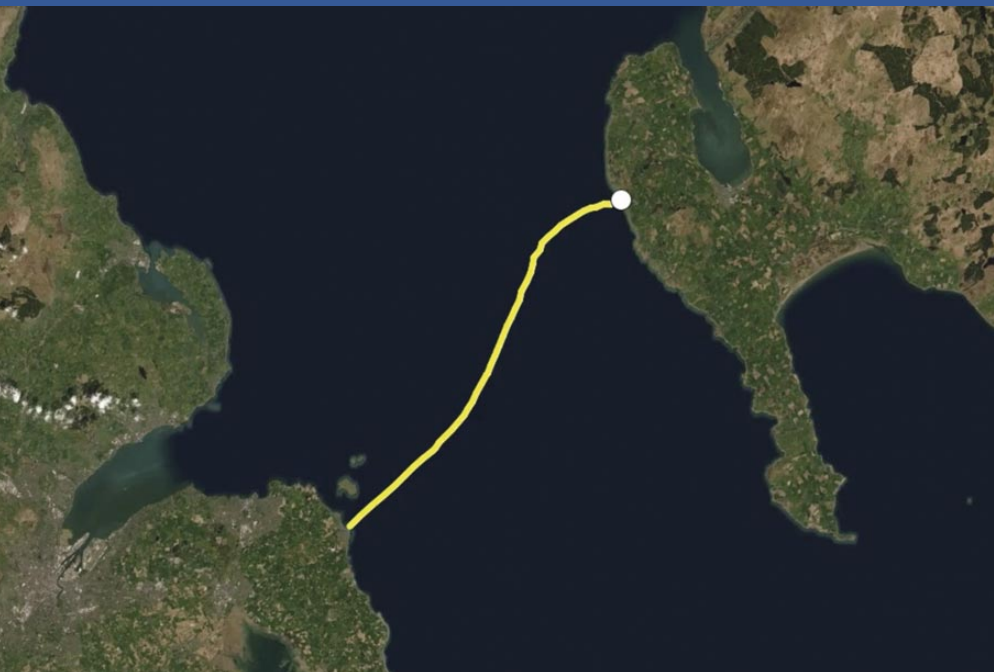


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# ROCKING AND

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## What was your challenge?

**Words & pics:** James Fletcher

Ever keen to use his prone paddleboard skills for good use, James Fletcher took on a new challenge last year to raise money for the Highland Hospice charity. Over to James for the lowdown.

In August 2021, I took on a prone paddleboard crossing of the North Channel (or 'Sheuch') to raise funds for the palliative care charity Highland Hospice. This narrow sea strait is sandwiched between Northern Ireland and Scotland, where the Atlantic Ocean meets the Irish Sea.

I'm no stranger to prone endurance adventures, but this was my first open sea crossing. I hoped for idyllic, calm and pristine waters. Or good downwind conditions. But I've done enough sea paddles to know perfect conditions are rarely the reality.

My route would take me over 35km of open sea from Donaghadee to Portpatrick and present some challenges. Namely, strong tides were squeezing huge volumes of water through the narrow gap. It's well known for erratic, unpredictable waters with endless combinations of the tide, currents, swell, and Atlantic weather systems what endurance adventure paddles are made of!

In the words of Jacqueline of Infinity Support Boats, "We have every app going, and none of them tells us the same story!" Even for experts, conditions are notoriously difficult to predict. We gambled on a potential downwind day in an otherwise adverse weather week. My prep had gone as well, but deep down, you know the sea is in charge!

## How did the paddle go?

Initially, very well! The first hour from Donaghadee was quick and reasonably calm with an easterly pushing current. Alas, I was lulled into a false sense of security!

The North Channel bit back. The following six hours were my toughest ever on a prone board. Strong winds south-east of us turned the sea into a washing machine – waves at all angles with no consistency of direction. I'd liken it to paddling over the surface of boiling water for several hours minus the warmth! In summary, nothing to ride or use in our favour.







# ROLLING OVER NORTH CHANNEL







These conditions completely sapped momentum. Constantly re-accelerating the board after being stopped dead by waves, fighting for balance, repeatedly correcting direction after being twisted off course by side swipe waves or the current. The downwind conditions - didn't materialise!

Out in deeper waters, over the Beauforts Dyke trench, the messy swell built up nicely for me in deeper waters. Unfortunately, from the south east, against our paddle direction (so lots more fun!). Add in the strong spring tide; this phase of the paddle turned into a physical and mental dog fight. Painfully slow progress towards Scotland compared to a 'normal' paddling speed for me.

In a nutshell, the North Channel handed me my backside. I got beaten up, bounced all over the place and turned the contents of my stomach into fish food (numerous times). Thoughts flipped between *"Get back onto the boat, you idiot, come back a better day,"* and *"own the challenge, deal with it, finish the crossing."* Thankfully the positive thoughts won out in the end, but it took a lot of energy to stick at it and keep moving.



Deep down, though, I was loving the challenge of it and edging myself closer to Scotland even if it felt like inch by inch at times! Stroke by stroke. Random wave after wave in the face. The Scottish coastline gradually got larger. I made it with one final push through the strong north pushing tide.

Having laboured through hours of harsh conditions, seasickness and a far longer paddle duration than anticipated, the elation of finally landing at Cranberry Point beach in Scotland (7 hours and 21 minutes and 38km after starting) was something I can't describe in words.

### How would you sum up the experience?

Many challenging moments but amazing. Full of unknowns, challenges and adventure. Having completed the crossing, the sense of achievement and awe-inspiring feeling of paddling in the open sea will live with me for a long time. In that exposed environment, I learnt a lot about myself. Had all been in my favour, maybe it wouldn't have been as satisfying. Tough moments like that can make you feel a better version of yourself!

Having reflected on my adventure, what struck me most is that open sea crossings are a truly unique experience. Occupying a physical and mental space, you can't replicate in day-to-day life. Once you leave the shore, you are locked in, fully exposed to what the sea throws at you, totally immersed and reliant on your abilities.

It wasn't quick, and if I'm honest with myself, there's a tinge of disappointment at that. In hindsight, though, that was never possible in the conditions that

greeted me. That's the lottery with sea crossings, but I'd still like to try one day again with more favourable conditions.

Ultimately, I learned patience, resilience and sticking at it. It was more a rough, gritty, 'salt in your face' and 'grind it out' style paddle. A duel – rocking and rolling over the Sheuch. On reflection, technique or speed didn't matter. I got across! So a life goal was completed, joining only a handful of prone paddleboarders to have made this crossing. Along with raising around £1,800 for Highland Hospice, I am hugely proud of that.

I got to add my successful prone paddleboard crossing to the North Channel 'glory wall' in Donaghadee's Pier 36 bar. Until recently, a tradition mostly for swimmers but expanding out. Any SUPers out there with the similar ambition to mine plenty of wall space for more paddleboard crossings!

If you do, I hope unpredictable conditions are in your favour and not in your face!

Thanks to Infinity Channel Swimming Support Boats for seeing me safely across, along with the individuals and organisations who helped me fund the safety support boat (Huunuu, Personal Best and Fletcher Sport Science). A special thanks to my family, friends and colleagues that donated to Highland Hospice sent words of encouragement and support. But mostly just wanted to know how many times I puked!

Life's a series of journey's, so I'm hugely grateful for the help I received to complete one of mine!



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# REBEL SUP



## Words and pics: Dave Ludgate

Dave Ludgate, aka Subowti, talks us through his love of SUP in and around the waterways of Cork. Over to Dave...

I'm fortunate to be from Cork; some Irish people not from Cork say that Corkonians suffer from a 'superiority complex'; I don't know what they mean by that, but I'm happy I live in the greatest county in Ireland. Cork City (the real capital of Ireland) is located on the north-western edge of Cork Harbour – the second biggest natural harbour in the world. Known as the Rebel County, Cork has a long history of challenging authority; Cork is Ireland's largest and most southern county.

Depending on how you look at it, Cork is the starting point or the finishing point for the Wild Atlantic Way and, with nearly 1,200 km of stunning coastline shaped by the raw Atlantic Ocean, Cork has one of the longest coastlines in Ireland. Cork borders two bodies of water – the Celtic Sea to the south and the Atlantic Ocean to the west.

Running east to west, three rivers; the Bandon, the Lee, and the Blackwater – and their tributaries and valleys – dominate central Cork. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, there are 125 rivers and 32 lakes in County Cork. So it's fair to say Cork is a haven for SUP of all disciplines, I will run through a few locations I have personally experienced below, but this list is by no means comprehensive. Safety first: I would advise gaining more in-depth, local knowledge for these locations and never paddle alone; it's more fun with others.



## Locations

### East Cork

I admit that I don't have much paddleboarding experience in East Cork, but I have SUP surfed on Inch beach, which was great. The break is relatively narrow with rocks on both sides, but I had the waves to myself on a Saturday in June, which was nice.

From Youghal heading West to Ballycotton, there is roughly 40km of coastline. The visiting paddleboarder is spoilt for choice; this could be for novices right up to coastline explorers and surfers.

### Inniscarra Reservoir

Located 11km to the west of Cork City on the River Lee is Inniscarra Reservoir, formed in the 1950s when Inniscarra Dam was constructed. A designated site for water-skiing is located where the Dripsey River joins the reservoir. The reservoir is also the site of the National Rowing Centre, and the Irish National Rowing Championships and other regattas are hosted here. There are endless places for flatwater exploring. The guys at Ballyhass Adventure Group, Coachford, will be able to sort you out with gear and local advice.









## Cork Harbour

A rough estimate of Cork Harbour's area is about 70km<sup>2</sup> – a lot of area to play in! The harbour has been a working port and a strategic defensive hub for centuries and, with a dedicated shipping channel up to Cork City, care needs to be taken. Cork Harbour contains several islands of various sizes, each with its history visible through the many still or mostly standing structures. A SUP friend exploring the harbour around Corkbeg Island recently was amazed to stumble across a tidal swimming pool from a previous era.

Fota Island, Fota Island with its Wildlife Park and House & Gardens is one of the larger Islands in the harbour. Next to Fota Island is Great Island, with the town of Cobh, the location from where the Titanic left for its ill-fated transatlantic crossing. A 23km circumnavigation of Great Island is possible with correct timing and tides.

Attractions include a newly installed pontoon at Paddy's Point in Ringaskiddy, which has opened up to paddlers; Haulbowline Island – the Irish Naval Service headquarters, and an 18th-century bastion fort, which dominates Spike Island, Fort Mitchel, later used as a prison and is now a top-notch tourist attraction.

Further upstream, a put-in at Blackrock Village allows you to paddle west towards the city. You will pass Tivoli Docks – a working container terminal on the north bank and Páirc Uí Chaoimh – home to Cork GAA on the south bank. The River Lee that flows through Cork City splits in two on the city's western side and comes together again on the eastern side, creating a city centre island that can be paddled around in the right conditions. I have seen seals, otters, herons and a lot more here. Cork City SUP runs year-round tours of the city, offering a truly unique and stunning

perspective. The city lights also allow for night paddles, which add another SUP experience that must be sampled – I love the startled looks you get from the people on the quays who spot you.

Cork Harbour even has a few gems of beaches tucked away. Not far from the mouth of the harbour are Lough Beg (or Luck) beach on the west and White Bay beach on the east. Outside the harbour, heading west, is Fountainstown Beach, where Paddy from Funkytown will be able to sort you out with your rental needs and guided tours, moonlight paddles and summer camps. The 'Paddle the Owenabue' group also organise group paddles around this area, but you will need your own craft. If you are stuck for a stick, the guys at Ocean Crew can sort you out with long term rentals and can even courier the board to you.





### Kinsale

If coming to Cork, visiting Kinsale – Ireland’s culinary capital – is a must. In terms of getting on the water, there is plenty to see. The dock beach is a great starting point, paddling around to James’ Fort, up to the bridge, back down through the marina and into the town (if the tide is in), a look at some of the amazing waterfront properties brings you to Charles’ Fort which is fantastic from the water – there are even a few small caves/tunnels under the fort. Jon at Kinsale Outdoor Education knows the place like the back of his hand and will be able to sort you out. Just East of Kinsale is Oysterhaven, where the guys at the Oysterhaven Activity Centre offer everything from SUP to Windsurfing and may be able to advise on a paddle out and around the Sovereign Islands, just outside the bay.

### Courtmacsherry

Courtmacsherry is a sheltered harbour West of the Old Head of Kinsale. It is ideal for learning, flatwater exploring and even some SUP surfing – with some of the longest wave rides I have experienced locally. Gecko Adventures are an outdoor activity, adventure and training centre that offer kayak, windsurf and SUP rental and tuition.

### Rosscarbery

Further West in Rosscarbery, The Lagoon Activity Centre offers a safe, family-friendly location where you will be able to rent a kayak, take the kids pedal boating, or rent a SUP. There are plenty of beaches and open water options like The Warren Beach, Owenahincha and Long Strand – the latter two can get the raw Atlantic bringing in some sizeable waves.

### Lough Hyne

Continuing West, Lough Hyne is Ireland’s first Marine Nature Reserve and is a unique sea-water lake. Just 1km long and 3/4km

wide, the lake is connected to the ocean by a narrow tidal channel known as the rapids. Tidal flows from the Atlantic fill Lough Hyne twice a day, running over the rapids at up to 16km per hour. Jim Kennedy from Atlantic Sea Kayaking runs tours in late summer by night to witness the fantastic bioluminescence on the lake.

### West Cork

Ireland’s most South-Westerly point is Mizen Head, and the nearest village is Crookhaven. I am biased to this area as we have spent our summers here as far back as I can remember. There is a sheltered harbour and sandy beach perfect for families, novices and exploring and I have seen seals and dolphins there. Muirti from Summer SUP Cork can supply boards and lessons here during the summer season and will even take the kids on a week-long camp. The little more adventurous can venture outside the harbour to discover cliffs, caves and coves.

Nearly all the way West, Bantry Bay and Glengarriff harbour have an abundance of wildlife to see, from Atlantic Grey Seals and Common Seals to a wide variety of birdlife, including Oyster Catchers, Curlews, Grey Herons, Egrets, and Cormorants. If you are lucky, you might even see Glengarriff’s White-Tailed Sea Eagle flying overhead. Glengarriff Bay is a tranquil sheltered inlet, and Glengarriff has several islands dotted in its bay, and a trip to and around Garnish Island is a must.

### Expeditions Circumnavigation

The central island of Cork city can be navigated when the tides and dam release levels are in sync. You need enough water to get over the city’s eight weirs but not too much that you can’t get under its 31 bridges, thus circumnavigating the city – CORKUMNAVIGATION! Check out the Corkumnavigation Facebook page, where trips are organised almost monthly.







### River Blackwater – Youghal to Villierstown

The River Blackwater flows through counties Kerry, Cork, and Waterford providing the border between the counties in places. In total, the Blackwater is 169 km long. We started at the old bridge in Youghal and paddled under the new Youghal bridge. Further upstream is the glorious Ballynatray Estate, which has human activity dating back to the Bronze Age. You can feel the history in the air, with ruins of castles and churches dotted along the banks. The nature is stunning; also, we saw swans, herons and even an otter. The river's flow was gentle, and we had timed the tide to be flooding, helping us along.

### River Bandon – Inishannon to Kinsale

The River Bandon is 72km long and drains into Kinsale Harbour. We started this trip at the village of Inishannon; anywhere south of the bridge is advised as there is a weir below the bridge; upriver of this would be very suitable for white water paddlers. After Kilmacsimon, a little downriver, you will notice a ruin of a castle on the right with a derelict jetty. This is Kilgobbin Castle, but it is on private property, to my knowledge. After the next turn to the right, you will start to see the town of Kinsale and the main bridge of the R600 road, which is the first and only bridge you will pass under. Just after the bridge on the right is



The Dock Bar and Marina. This is a great place to land as there is reasonable parking. The river is tidal right up to Inishannon, so starting as close to high tide on a falling tide would be advisable.

### Old Head of Kinsale

About 15 km to the southwest of Kinsale is a stunning and unique headland reaching out over two miles into the Atlantic Ocean, the Old Head of Kinsale. The headland can be paddled around, with stunning views of the lighthouse from the water. Even better, though, are the sea caves and tunnels believed to have been used by everybody from pirates and smugglers of the Elizabethan era to fishermen looking for a shortcut in more modern times. Please note that the headland can be hit by swell, strong tides and currents, and this trip is best made with an experienced guide. Aileen from Atlantic Offshore Adventures or Jon at the Kinsale Outdoor Education Centre will help here.

### SUP surf

For anyone who prefers their SUP to be a bit bumpier, you're in luck. There is no end to the number of beaches along the Cork coast. From the beaches previously mentioned in East Cork to the guys at Funkytown in Fountainstown, the mobile crew at Kinsale Surf Adventures, Gtown surf school at Garretstown, and SurfnsUP at The Warren beach, you can't go wrong.

## Events

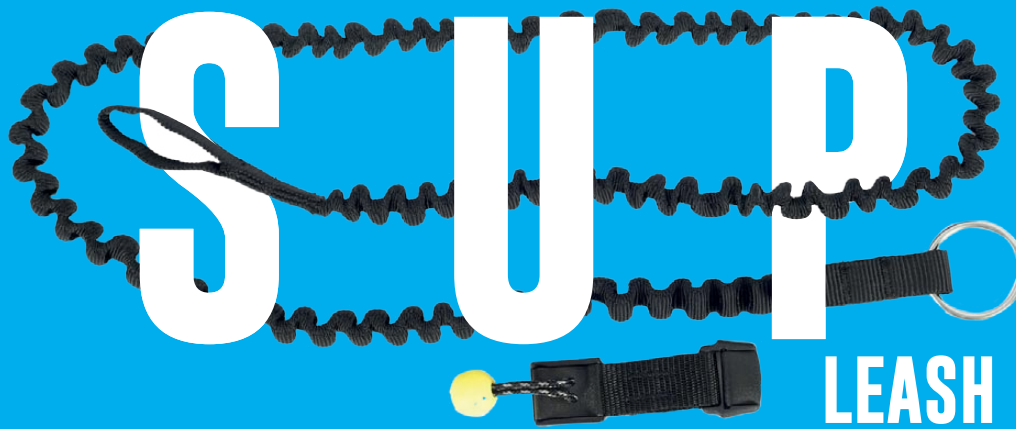
### Ocean to City Race

The annual (COVID restrictions permitting) Ocean to City – An Rás Mor is Ireland's premier, all-inclusive, traditional rowing and paddling multi-craft race and is run in conjunction with Cork Harbour Festival – one of the biggest annual events in Cork every summer. The course for the larger craft goes from the mouth of the harbour right up to the city centre, a massive 15 nautical miles. The SUP course is run concurrently from Monkstown to the city, approximately seven nautical miles.

### Middle Harbour Race

An annual rowing and paddling event organised by Passage West Rowing Club (PWRC) accepted SUPs for the first time last September on the 5km Fr Con Memorial Challenge. Money raised from the event is donated to the RNLI and to support 9 PWRC members who are travelling to Portugal to represent Ireland in the World Coastal Rowing Championships.





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# Q&A

## SUP mum...

# EMILY MCDONALD



**Words & pics:** Emily McDonald & Oli Lane-Peirce

SUP time does take a hit when you're a parent – even living close to the water. Add to the mix of work and everyday life responsibilities, and it's tricky to score a sesh. We caught up with SUP mum and Hayling Island SUP Girls Facebook group founder Emily McDonald, to learn how she juggles life and paddling.

**How did you get into the sport? What appealed, and what still does about SUP?**

I first wanted to learn how to SUP to get myself on the water with the idea of progressing to surfing/SUP surfing. I was very cautious of the sea but had the desire to learn and overcome this fear. I love the feeling of freedom that SUPing/surfing brings and being on the ocean.

**Do you still have/use the same board?**

Yes! I use my first board, a Fatstick pink foamie. Occasionally I use my friends' boards as I would like to progress to a specific SUP surfboard.

**Where's your local paddling spot?**

West Beach Hayling - ideally low tide, on the sand bar, with a sunny day! But there are other locations in the area, depending on how far I fancy travelling.

**Tell us about your dream SUP destination and why it flicks your switch?**

I'd love to go to Kefalonia for flatwater turtle spotting and Bali for some tropical waves. My all-time dream would be Hawaii for SUP and surf! It looks fantastic, and as the birthplace of paddling, I feel I need to get out there one day.









### **What about places you fancy hitting up - what are your top three and why?**

1. Durdle Door – to get that photo of the rocks – it’s a beautiful spot.
2. Mexico – for a long ride, warm water and sea life.
3. An aqueduct anywhere – something different, a good explore, looks cool and a little scary going over those big bridges!

### **What do you love about SUP?**

The things I love about paddleboarding are that it’s free! Once you have your kit anyway! You can go whenever the conditions are good. It’s a great family activity. It can be social, meeting up with friends for a SUP, and making new like-minded friends at the beach, but time on the water alone is one of my favourite things. Great for the mind-body and soul. Having the freedom to escape and get on the open ocean.

### **And what don’t you like so much and why?**

There is not much to not like in my experience. Apart from too much wind to stop me from getting out. Or general horrible weather which we can get in winter. Sea breezes in summer can also be a pain if you don’t get out early.

### **Who do you SUP with most?**

Friends I have made through SUP. We arrange to get out together. I have a few mates that SUP, and we try to get out as often as possible. I have two children. But we get to the beach as much as we can for family time. I often take the SUP board to mess about with them on. Other days I SUP alone but getting spare time can be tricky, so I go whenever possible. And whoever’s around at the time tends to be my chosen paddle group for the day in question.

### **What do they bring to your overall paddling enjoyment?**

I love getting down to the beach with my kids and friends. It’s a great way to spend our free time in and on the water. Sharing my favourite activity with my favourite people - cheesy, I know! And a little beach BBQ and sunset to top it off. Perfect!







### **Got any paddling heroes or heroines?**

Nick Kingston (local SUP instructor and legend) took me out on my first paddle lesson. I was so keen to learn to SUP but feared the sea. He made the whole experience easy and fun, and I became hooked. Without his encouragement, I'd never of taken to SUP. Sadly he's no longer with us – RIP. Mandy and Steve West – local heroes with years of experience and knowledge. I also follow Kristen Kyler (from Florida) on Instagram and love watching her videos of SUP surfing – especially when the dolphins appear.

### **Ever met any of them?**

Obviously, I met Nick, and I have met Mandy and Steve at the Round the Island Race (Hayling Island). Not managed to get to Florida to say hi to Kristen yet.

### **Which area (or areas) of SUP do you gravitate to most and why?**

I like flat water ocean paddles and learning to SUP surf. I started as a flatwater paddler but always with the mind to learn to surf. The idea was to gain confidence on a SUP to learn to surf. I have now developed my confidence and love to catch some waves on the SUP and my surfboard. Mostly falling off, but there is no feeling like it when I catch a wave.

### **You're a mum of two. How does that impact your SUP time?**

It can be tricky to find time between working and taking care of my gorgeous kiddies. I have one day off work a week, so always I'm super keen to get out on the water come rain or shine, wind allowing, on those days.

### **Do your kids paddle?**

We often take the paddleboards and body boards to the beach. The kids like to have a play around with them, but at this moment, they prefer playing and swimming in the sea and occasionally being towed to the tropical sand island (sandbar on Hayling) at low tide. They both love the water, and I'm sure one day will start to enjoy getting onboard themselves.

### **Tell us about the female-specific SUP FB group you run.**

When I started paddleboarding, I realised there were few females out there enjoying it locally, and when I did see ladies out, they mostly were alone. The group was created with the idea local ladies could meet up and get out together, share skills and ideas and have some like-minded

company. The Facebook group is called Hayling Island Sup Girls, with nearly 900 members – all female. We have run free SUP clinics on the beach, with the late Nick Kingston, Andrea Richardson, Sadie Bedford, Sam Rogers, Paul Amey and been supported by Fatstick/Sandbar SUP: Andy Warner and Mistal: Rory Ellis.

In March 2020, Sand Bar SUP arranged a free SUP clinic at Trafalgar Wharf, Portchester for the Hayling Island SUP Girls. This sadly was our last event before Covid. We have linked up with the local pub The Inn on the Beach and The Final Straw for a beach clean which was very successful. The group has grown, and it is still active through the last two years, although we have been unable to arrange events. I'd love to continue arranging more clinics, demos and meet ups in the future.

### **What's your opinion about female SUP in general?**

It's great to see women getting involved and on the water! And each year, we see more ladies paddling.

### **Is there anything you'd change within the industry to make it more attractive to ladies?**

I think SUP is very inclusive and accessible for most and very appealing! Wearing a wetsuit can be off-putting for some ladies, but there are loads of different options for SUP wear these days.

### **Got any SUP specific goals in 2022?**

Get out as much as possible and try out some new locations. Improve my SUP surfing! I'd also like to complete a paddle around Hayling Island.

### **What about other activities? Anything you're looking to tick off?**

Continue to learn to surf, keep on running, cycling, and anything else that comes my way that gets me outdoors and active.

### **Final thoughts on SUP, being a SUP mum and your paddling?**

Keep on SUPing! Getting to the beach with my family and friends and riding those waves.

### **Thanks and praise?**

Special thanks to the late Nick Kingston! Fatstick for giving me the opportunity to be an ambassador and having my own SUP. North Coast Wetsuits for keeping me warm in the water! All the locals and the SUP girls out there.



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# Q&A

## SUP the World...

# JOHN MCFADZEAN



### **Interview:** SUPM **Pics:** John McFadzean

John McFadzean had a goal soon after he discovered SUP. With the possibilities of discovery endless, it became a target of John's to SUP in as many different counties as possible. Quick as a flash, 'SUP the World' was born, and John continues his quest to discover and investigate different parts of the globe from his trusty SUP. We caught up with John to find out more.

#### **Tell us when you first discovered SUP and why it appealed?**

My SUP adventures began with a remarkable coincidence. My apartment looks out over Southport Marine Lake, and if you look out of my window on a clear day, you can see why I love living here. If you look to the right, you can see the fells of the Lake District in the distance and, in the foreground, the resort town of Blackpool with its famous Tower and rollercoaster. To the left are the mountains of north Wales. And in the foreground, the Marine Lake.

One Saturday in June 2014, I looked out of my window and saw something I had never seen before. There were three people out in the middle of the lake, each standing on some enlarged surfboard – using paddles to propel themselves across the surface of the water. "They must be crazy," I remember thinking, "if they fall off, they are going to get wet!"

I didn't give it a second thought until later that same day when I took my two youngest daughters to The Fitness Factory for their dancing class. And as I was signing them in, I saw a poster on the wall advertising lessons for: 'Stand Up Paddleboarding.'

Amy, the dance studio owner, encouraged me to book a lesson. The next thing I knew, one rainy Monday evening, I had that very first SUP session with Lucy, an instructor from SUP North. The rest, as they say, is history.







Lago di Tenno,  
Italy



### **When did you realise it was a plenty for adventure and discovery?**

I fell in love with SUP immediately. And it's a love affair that has grown and grown over the years. Initially, because of the sense of calm and serenity it gave me, and the fact that almost everyone I have met through SUP is generous and welcoming. Over the years, I have pushed myself further and further, taking on bigger and bigger challenges such as the Great Glen in Scotland. In September 2021, I paddled 360 km on the Danube from Passau in Germany to Bratislava in Slovakia over eight days. I still consider myself to be an ordinary paddler, though. I'm not the fastest or the most skilled. But I have a big dream.

### **How did 'SUP the World' come about?**

My quest to SUP the World evolved rather than being born. My first few overseas paddles were just add-ons to existing trips. To Australia to attend a friend's wedding. To Portugal to participate in a training course and on family holidays to Italy and France. Visiting a friend in Spain. Gradually the idea formed in my head that I might paddle in every country in the world. It's a pretty big challenge, maybe I won't even succeed, but I'm sure I will have fun finding out.

### **Which countries have you paddled?**

I've paddled in 45 countries so far, which I think is pretty special, but I still have a long way to go. Albania, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malta, Mexico, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Caledonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Scotland, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Transnistria, Northern Cyprus, Turkey, Ukraine, Wales.

### **And which was your favourite and why?**

I've been fortunate to paddle in so many unique places that I find it very difficult to answer that question. But if you were to put me on the spot, I think I would plump for Italy. I've had many SUP expeditions in Italy — from exploring the canals of Venice to a trip down the Tiber through central Rome and a windswept paddle along the River Arno at Florence. A mad-crazy one day trip along the Ligurian coast

at the UNESCO Cultural Landscape of Cinque Terre. Lago di Como, Lago di Garda and countless other exquisite lakes in northern Italy. The fact that I love pizza, pasta and Italian wine is just a bonus!

### **If you could paddle anywhere, which spot would it be and why?**

That's probably the most challenging question of all. There are so many special places I would love to paddle, but there is never enough time or money. I would love to spend three or four months touring South America, trying to learn some Spanish whilst SUPing the 12 countries there. It would be even better to go during the UK winter and get some winter sunshine.

### **Where do you most want to tick off that you haven't been to yet?**

I've been told that Afghanistan is a beautiful country populated by beautiful people. There is a lake on the outskirts of Kabul called Qargha, which looks ripe for SUP. Right

now might not be the best time to visit, but I hope to go there one day.

### **How do you think your local stacks up against further-flung SUP destinations?**

I've had a wonderful time exploring some exotic and wondrous places, but I love paddling on Southport Marine Lake, my local lake. Less than five minutes' walk from my home, it's ideally situated and a lovely spot to paddle. I enjoy sharing the water with my many local SUP friends, and, living here, we are often blessed with some of the most exquisite sunsets imaginable. I love SUP-ing the world, but sometimes the saying is true, there's no place like home.

### **Is it just adventure/touring SUP for you, or do other areas attract?**

Adventure and touring are my favourites. I'm not a particularly fast paddler, but I can go all day and get up the following day and go again. I occasionally participate in SUP racing, but it's more for the experience than for any expectation of a podium finish! I recently took part in the Paris Nautic — an eleven-kilometre race through the French capital. I finished in 511th place out of 1000 paddlers, so there was no gold medal for me! But the chance to paddle the Seine through central Paris, passing the Eiffel Tower and Notre Dame, was the opportunity of a lifetime.

I would love to spend three or four months touring South America, trying to learn some Spanish

Turkey



Syria







Temple of Poseidon,  
Greece





**Who would you most like to share a SUP adventure with and why?**

Three years ago, I saw a photograph on social media of Mohamed Salah on a SUP board. I messaged him through Twitter to invite him to come through to Southport Marine Lake to paddle with me. I haven't heard back from him. Not yet anyway. Perhaps he's been too busy winning the Premier League and the Champions League and the World Club Championship with Liverpool and generally becoming the best player in the world of football. If you're reading this, Mo, the offer is still open.

**What's your favourite gear to date?**

I own two Red Paddleboards, an 11'0 Sport and a 13'2 Voyager. Between them, they take care of most of my SUP needs. I prefer to take my board with me when I travel. I often paddle alone and sometimes in far-out locations, so I need to have equipment that I can rely on.

I've recently purchased a Prolimit SUP suit which I hope will keep me warm and dry, primarily through the winter months. Having a decent winter kit is vital for confidence, safety, and comfort.

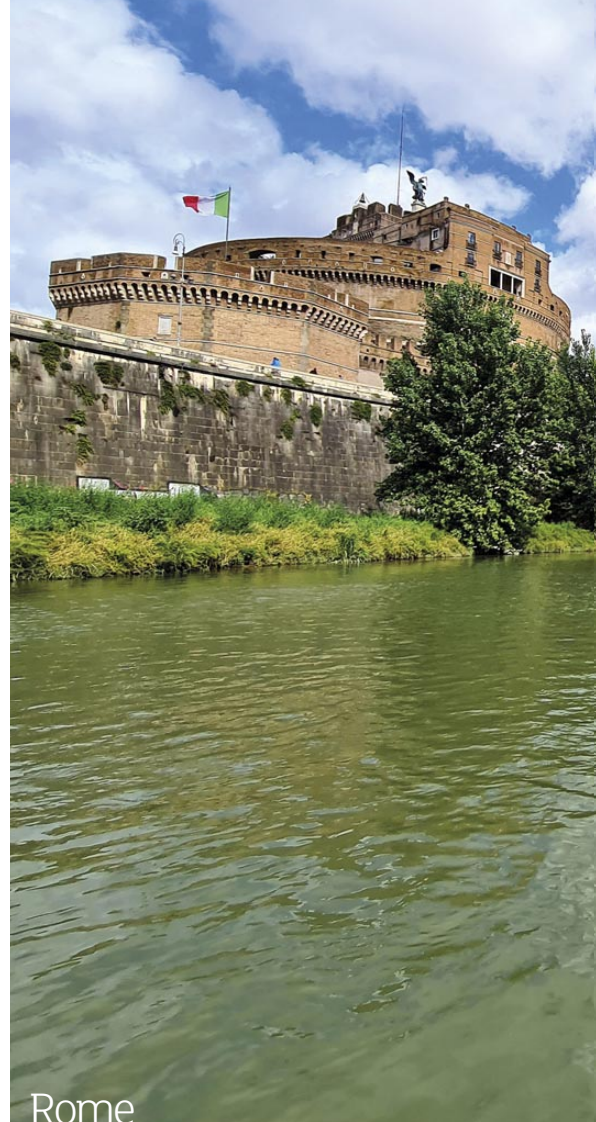
For me, social media is a big part of SUP. I love to take quality photographs of my

adventures and log my trips with a tracking app. I didn't quite realise how much I relied on my mobile phone until I dropped it into the Danube during a multi-day adventure in 2021! A mobile phone inside a waterproof case also provides an important safety function.

**How's COVID impacted your journeys?**

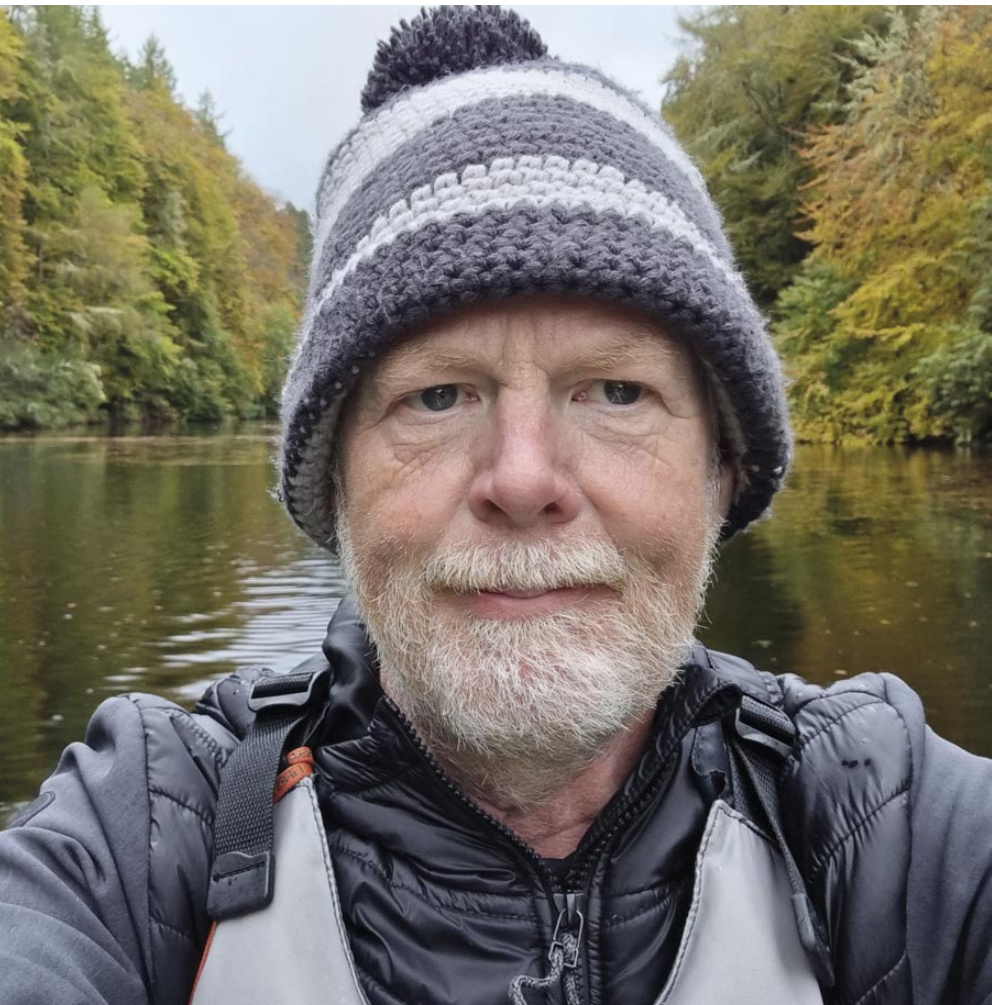
Any thoughts of international travel came to a sudden halt for us all in early 2020. I found those first few months of lockdown challenging to deal with, especially in terms of mental health. However, COVID travel restrictions gave me time to explore closer to home. During July, August and September of that year, I became the first paddler to SUP around the perimeter of all twelve SUP-able lakes in the English Lake District.\* I haven't ventured too far from home in the last two years, mainly because of travel restrictions. But I have managed to revisit a few favourite European countries.

*\* In 2020, we were allowed to SUP on 12 lakes. Sadly paddling has recently been banned SUP on Thirlmere and Ennerdale. We are hoping to have this decision reversed, but there are only ten SUP-able lakes at this time.*

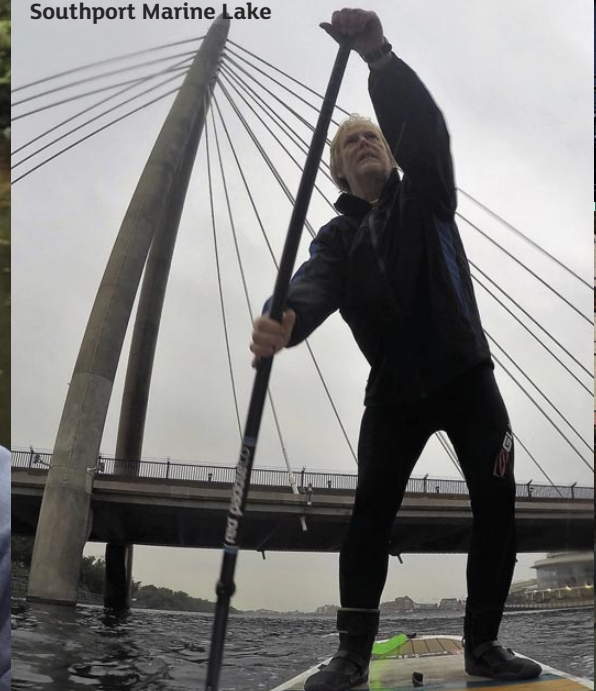


Rome

I became the first paddler to SUP around the perimeter of all twelve SUP-able lakes in the English Lake District



Southport Marine Lake







**Are you getting back to travelling to SUP, though? Or still on hold?**

I paddled in Italy in 2020 and Germany, France, Italy, Austria and Slovakia in 2021. As well as Scotland, England and Wales. So life hasn't been entirely on hold. I'm just taking things as they come at the moment. I don't plan to venture too far afield just yet. I describe my challenge as a lifetime quest to SUP in every country in the world. Hopefully, I still have a good few years of that lifetime left in me.

**Any other paddling plans in the pipeline?**

I hope to share some fun by organising a few SUP tours and adventures in 2022. In the UK and Europe. I am also working on a book (two books) that I hope to publish in 2022.

**Got any specific SUP goals for 2022?**

The world of COVID we have lived through recently has made it difficult to plan too far ahead. But on the other hand, I don't want to sit indoors waiting to see what will or will not happen. If you lived your life like that, you would never do anything. I have one or two exciting overseas adventures up my sleeve, but I don't want to say too much at this stage.



Southport Marine Lake

Northern Cyprus



The White Drin Canyon, Kosovo





The Danube, Vienna

**LINKS TO FOLLOW JOHN:**

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**Final thoughts on SUP?**

In the UK, the popularity of SUP has exploded in the last two or three years. It's terrific to see so many new people coming into our sport and enjoying the physical and mental health benefits. But I believe that SUP needs to do as much as we can to educate people to enjoy the activity in safety.

**Thanks and praise?**

So many people have helped me out over the years – it's not practical to name them all – you know who you are – online and the real world. Those who paddled with me on some of my trips and showed me their country:

I'm thinking of the crazy gang at Surf Agency in Aarhus, Denmark. Martin and Marina took me around the Malmo canal system, and Chris Jones of SUP My Race fame also paddled with me in Sweden. Andris Green gave me a bed for the night in Latvia and a guided tour of Riga. Sergiu Iliescu of SUP Moldova paddled with me in Chisinau and gave me a massive bag of shiny red apples from his garden. Alain from SUP Rosport in Luxembourg allowed me to launch from his pontoon and had a beer with me after my paddle along the River Sauer. Roberto Discesa and everyone else who made me so welcome in Rome. And many others.

Also, I seem to bump into Allison and Alistair from Northwest Paddleboards in random parts of the world.

**I can't forget the kindness of strangers:**

- The German couple hiking in Austria who allowed me to use their mobile after dropping my phone into the Danube.
- The Indonesian guy in Vienna who helped carry my gear up a steep hill.
- The driver who stopped to help me when my car broke down on a remote and freezing mountainside in Albania.
- The early morning jogger who volunteered to pump up my board on the beach in Larnaca.
- A fisherman at the harbour's side in Beirut who helped translate a conversation from Arabic to English.
- The French man who picked me up hitchhiking at the side of the road in New Caledonia
- A young man in Austria who helped carry my fully laden board over a tricky portage.
- Lawrie, a taxi driver from Mallaig in Scotland who rearranged his schedule to save me from a long walk.

And I mustn't forget Radwan and Wassim who looked after me so well during my 2019 visit to Syria.

But really, I must thank Lucy Pearce for that first sup lesson back in 2014 and all the support I have had from Lucy and Alan at SUP North since that rainy beginning.

**Lago di Garda, Italy**





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Emma in action



Photographer: Graham Woollven

# #ShePaddles

# INTERVIEWS

**Interviews:** Emma Love

After receiving over 150 applications from around the country, British Canoeing, Canoe Wales and the Scottish Canoe Association were excited to announce the #ShePaddles Ambassadors for 2022. Sixteen inspirational women chosen to promote paddling and encourage more women and girls to get on the water. In this series of interviews, Emma Love chats with eight of the ambassadors about all things SUP!

[www.wotbikinipaddleboarding.co.uk](http://www.wotbikinipaddleboarding.co.uk)







# Emy Mcleod

Based in Aviemore, Emy is an accomplished paddler, coach and runs her own successful paddle boarding club and business, Strathspey SUP. We chat about why she feels it is so important for children to be able to experience the outdoors, what continues to excite her about coaching and her plans to complete some incredible endurance paddling trips.

**Pics:** Neil Wilson

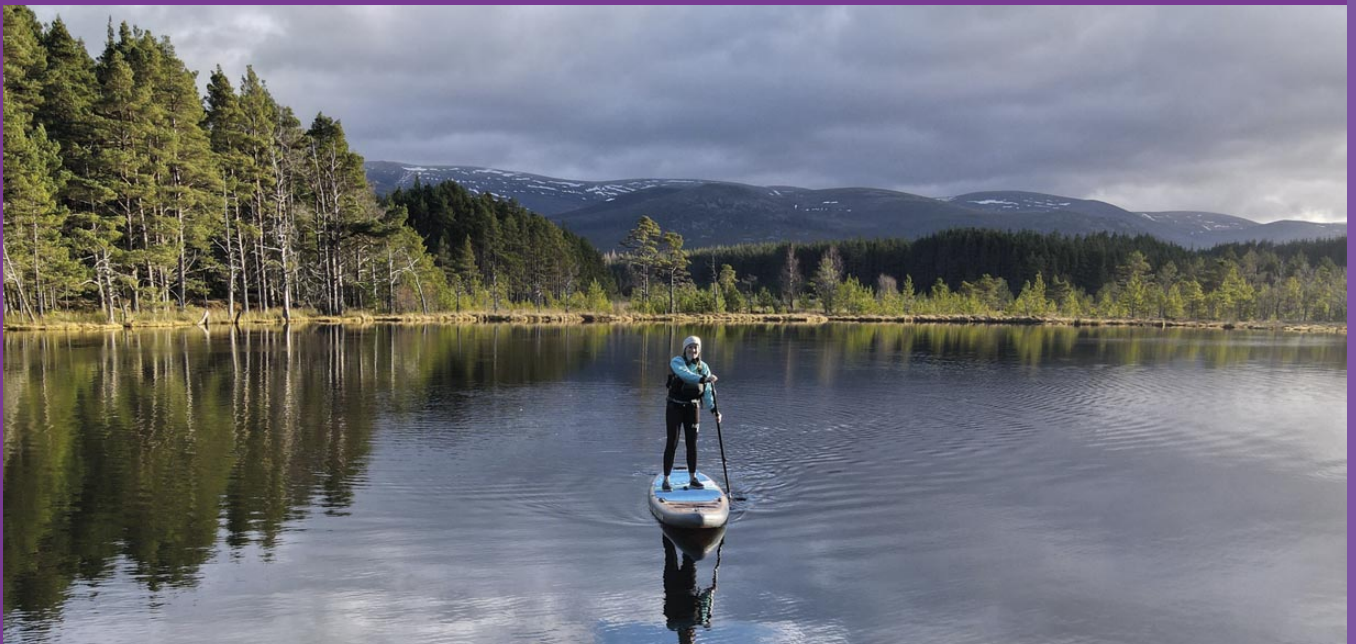
[www.facebook.com/StrathspeySUP](https://www.facebook.com/StrathspeySUP)  
[@strathspey.sup](https://www.instagram.com/strathspey.sup)

## Tell me about the start of your paddling journey?

I still remember my primary and secondary school camps - we would go on little residential where we would be away for a couple of nights and take part in a whole host of activities, including canoeing. It was your basic 'get in a canoe', play some games, fall out and swim. It was great! I did a little bit of club paddling while at university, and this was then followed by a business career (in the music industry), but it wasn't my passion - I felt something was missing.

## What led you to change from working in the music industry to becoming an outdoor instructor?

Before and for the first couple of years at university, I spent my summers volunteering for the Rotary Clubs. They ran a programme to promote leadership called the Rotary Youth Leadership Award on Loch Tay with the Abernethy Trust. I worked as a camp leader and mentor. I would watch their outdoor instructors, and I was like, this is what I want to do - I belong outside! So, I did an intensive six-month outdoor instructor training in the Highlands just near Aviemore. The course covered paddle sports, summer Mountain Leader, skiing, climbing, biking and rafting. It was awesome - I wouldn't be where I am today without going through that training. I now have my own paddleboard business, Strathspey SUP, I work as a freelance coach, and I am excited to be currently going down the British Canoeing Provider route.







**Looking back on how formative your early outdoor experiences were, how important do you think it is for children and young people to be able to access outdoor residentials?**

I think it is a really important part of children's education, even if it's for one or two days or even just an activity day. These experiences can plant a little seed, and each child is always going to have that memory of going to camp for the first time (and being away from home) or paddling down a loch or river in a canoe. With the pandemic, some residentials have shut down, and I know funding is an issue, but I hope this will be resolved – I think every kid should experience the outdoors.

**Do you think there are now more outdoor industry opportunities than when you left school?**

Yes, I think there are. I knew I wanted to do something outdoors, but unfortunately, I remember being told, "There is not really a job there, and why don't you do something else?" There now seem to be lots more courses and outdoor degrees – it's becoming more openly accepted as a career.





### **What is it that drives and inspires you to coach?**

Seeing individuals progress is rewarding, and equally, I find their progress inspires me. If I can help them on their journeys, offer them some coaching and introduce them to something new, that's awesome! To see individuals grow, achieve goals, excel and go way beyond my ability is amazing to see.

### **I know you have a real passion for white water SUP – how did this come about?**

Matt Gambles (Paddle Surf Scotland) got me into SUP years ago when he took me on a coastal paddle. We had a great time, getting to go places only accessible by paddleboards. But I think the 'spark' really came from going on white water. Jim Gibson introduced and has played a big part in my WW SUP development. I kept seeing Jim going out on rivers, and I was like, well, I will give this a try, and I loved it! It's good times with Jim; he has definitely helped and pushed me to get better. Now I coach alongside him, which is fantastic – we have been coaching every Sunday throughout the winter up on the River Spey. We have trainee coaches attending, people on their pathway to becoming WW coaches, some

who are now ready for their assessment, as well as people wanting to go for their training; it is a great community we have established.

### **I understand you have a keen interest in endurance paddling?**

I like challenging myself, seeing how much the body can take, not just physically – I think it's a challenge mentally. I completed a trip with Jessica Phillip in October (2021) on the River Tay – we did 81.5 kilometres in a day totalling 11.5 hours. It was a mix of flat, white and moving water – we started at Kenmore on Loch Tay, at Grandtully, we paddled the Grade 2(3) white water sections. The water picked up again towards Campsie Linn and down the Stanley area, and then finally it went pretty flat towards Perth, where we hit a headwind, so that was pretty hard. We were lucky to have a good water level that day, which helped us a lot – if it had been lower, I think we would have bailed. We were careful to plan our trip with a backup crew and cut off points. We knew if we were not at these points at specific times, we would not finish the trip, and we would have to get off the water. It was a fantastic trip!

I completed a trip with Jessica Phillip in October (2021) on the River Tay – we did 81.5 kilometres in a day, totalling 11.5 hours

### **Any trips planned for this year and beyond?**

This year, I hope to paddle 'all' the Scottish canal waterways. Anyone can sign up on the website <https://www.scottishcanals.co.uk/canal-challenge-200-2/> to take part – just select the canal you would like to paddle. I've also got quite a few plans for the future – I want to see how long I can paddle for (again in a day), whether it's linking lochs together, making river descents or circumnavigating some of the Scottish islands. It's going to be awesome!



# Charlotte Ditchburn

Based in Cumbria, Charlotte took up SUP just 18 months ago. We caught up over zoom to talk about her paddling journey, why she is keen to encourage more people to get involved in improving and campaigning for access to the outdoors and what steps we can all take to support this important cause.

**Pics:** Gemma Scope Photography and Jon Ditchburn

**Instagram:** @publicrightsofwayexplorer  
<https://prowexplorer.com> #BigPaddleCleanup

## What was your first paddling experience?

My family and I have always lived in the Lake District, so we have always been pretty outdoorsy, including paddling on the lakes. But our first canoeing experience wasn't the best. We set off, the wind picked up, and we went down to the other end of the lake pretty rapidly! At that point, my mum and I said, "We're not paddling back against those (scary) waves," and sent my poor dad back on foot for the car whilst we sat and had a coffee!

## How did you discover SUP?

My first attempt was just over a year ago. I had moved to Suffolk (for work), and my immediate thought was, 'I can't paddle down here! There is nowhere to paddle – where are the lakes? Where do I go?' I then discovered a group called the Outdoorsy Type – they organise walks and get-togethers. I mustered up the courage to join them and enjoyed myself. They organised some SUP lessons, and I decided I would give it a go – most of our group had never been on a SUP, so we were all a bit wobbly jelly legged. Within the first two minutes of my being on a board, I ended up in the water! By the end of the session, I had managed to stand up and paddle, but my legs the next day! I hadn't realised just how many muscles I do not use, plus I couldn't lift my arms above my shoulders!







## Why did you decide to apply for the role of British Canoeing #ShePaddles Ambassador?

I watched last year's Ambassadors being super inspiring and amazing, but I didn't see someone I related to, who did what I was doing. I sent my application explaining how I wanted to represent the everyday person who paddles. Plus, my passion for encouraging more people to get involved in improving and campaigning for access to the outdoors - both on the water and the land. Much to my surprise, I was offered the role!



## I understand you are supporting the British Canoeing Clear Access Clear Waters Campaign.

Yes, I am really excited to be supporting this campaign. In England and Wales, we legally have access to only 4% per cent of our rivers. The Countryside and Rights of way Act 2000 opened up lots of land, but it didn't do the same with our waterways. The campaign wants to change this so that we will all have water navigational rights – this would align us with Scotland, where you can pretty much paddle wherever you like. The campaign also encourages everyone to do their bit by picking up any rubbish they see on the water. Sadly, 80% of our marine rubbish comes from our inland waterways. Just think, if everyone picked something up, can you imagine how much litter we would prevent from entering the sea?



## It is extraordinary that we only have a legal right to access 4% of our waterways in England. What do you think the current effect of this is?

In England, it either creates a barrier - people are just too afraid to use blue spaces because they are confused about the rules and which permits or licences they need. Alternatively, people jump on the water, which means they can get fined. Wouldn't it be great if one day we all had the right to get on any water with the confidence of knowing that we are allowed to be here and can take our family and friends without worrying about a landowner appearing or a big company slapping a fine on us?





### **Who do you think needs to take the lead in making this change?**

I think it's got to come from those prominent voices, including Natural England and British Canoeing. I am pleased to see how both these organisations recently promoted the Countryside Code and how this applies to us on the water. As paddlers, we need to make sure we use public rights of way and not just tramping over peoples' fields. We also need to know how to deal calmly with confrontational situations when they arise. Some landowners will never be happy, but if you know your legal rights and explain them, it may help you carry on along your route without getting into a fight.

### **At ground level, how can we help?**

Clubs, instructors and coaches can help by introducing the Countryside Code to individuals at the beginning of their paddling journey. This would promote a collective understanding of the use and protection of the environment around us.

### **Will there be any national campaigns that everyone can get involved in?**

Yes! British Canoeing is launching the #BigPaddleCleanup on March 12th. This will run from Sunday, June 5th (World Environment Day) to June 12th. The aim is to highlight the current state of our inland and coastal waters, add pressure on our government and large organisations to curb continued pollution and strengthen regulations around single-use plastics, effluent releases etc. I am excited to be getting involved and promoting this at a local level here in the Lake District.

### **Do you think we will have the right to paddle all of our waterways in both England and Wales one day?**

I'm hopeful - Wales might well lead the way. They are doing lots with land access at the moment – for example, opening up footpaths to cyclists and horse riders. I predict they will go in the same direction as Scotland. I think there is hope for the future, it might take a few more years, but we should get there in the end.



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# Sandbanks Style

**Brand profile**

Since its launch in 2014, Sandbanks Style has been making a fantastic name for itself across the UK SUP market. It has become one of the most recommended brands by individuals and clubs across the internet with sales of 20,000 boards and is the current choice of over 170 rental schools all over the UK. It has also won favour with some of the most respected retailers in the industry including Ann's Cottage.





**The mission of Sandbanks Style has been to create a range of inflatable SUP boards which rival the very best from the most famous brands but, for a much more competitive price, delivered with exceptional customer service and the best five-year warranty in the market. The company has also become recognised for boards that look stylish with a wide choice of artistic graphic designs and have leading performance and quality.**

The tremendous growth of Sandbanks Style over the past few years has been all the more remarkable since the company has, until recently, shunned traditional advertising and funding search platforms like Google. It has depended simply on word of mouth, customers' rave reviews shared across social media and, of course, the benefits that come from being the choice of so many rental schools. However, in their next phase to become one of the most prominent players, they are now joining the advertisers, but unlike most, they are not increasing their SUP prices this year.

Founder Andy Belcher initially set up Sandbanks Style due to his frustrations in trying to buy a high-quality SUP back in 2014. The only choices seemed to be good but very expensive brands around £850 or proliferation of cheap internet brands from around £250, none of which appeared to be worth buying. He determined that it should be possible to make a top-quality board and bring it to market for a lot less by keeping low overheads and avoiding corporate greed.

Andy explained his goals in setting up the business were different to typical corporations. It is a small family business with no external shareholders or investors

to impress; the focus is simply on customers and the market. Andy claims to have partly set the business up to show his son Jordan how to run a good business, with a focus on being strong on ethics, being charitable, green and environmentally sound, but most importantly on exceeding the expectations of customers, leaving no stone unturned in efforts to impress every single customer. The company planted around 28,000 trees in 2021, and for the past seven years, Andy's salary has been shared between several charities.

## Spectacular designs

Multiple specialist magazine reviews have confirmed that Sandbanks are achieving their ambitions, gaining results in stiffness, glide speed, stability and durability to not only match but exceed many of the most expensive brands. Graphics and style are, of course, always down to personal taste, but Sandbanks offer a wide range of spectacular designs for their highly successful and popular all-rounder models, named 'Ultimate'.

The philosophy behind the Ultimate board is to leverage the very best in materials and construction techniques to deliver a board that is so stiff that it can be shaped more like a Touring board, to provide class-leading speed for a 10'6 x 32" board whilst still having exceptional stability. Hence providing a board that is ideal for beginners but with features and performance to impress intermediates, light enough to be used by a child and strong enough to carry two heavy adults together. Sandbanks also make a 4.75" version of this board called Elite for those who prefer a thinner profile.

Sandbanks welcome and have very special terms for clubs and rental outlets and even have a particular model for schools, which has helped them become one of the fastest-growing providers to the rental market in the UK and gain incredible referrals and comparisons from professionals who previously used the more expensive famous top brands.

For those individuals looking to upgrade to high-performance boards suitable for going further and faster, Sandbanks produce two exceptional Touring boards, which are so good that they even have several race wins, yet are still very stable and easy to ride for those with even modest SUP experience. New to the range this year is the speedy Elite Sports Pro, which is an ideal choice for those wanting to replace a budget board with a significant performance upgrade but without investing much more money.

In addition, the range includes specific; kids, teens, wave, surf, extra stable cruisers, yoga boards, and giant six and 12-person models. In each case, the boards are built with top-quality, shaped for excellent performance, and all are of exceptional value.

## Canoes/kayaks

For 2022, Sandbanks also have created two distinct lines of canoes/kayaks made from high-end drop stitch, which rival their fibreglass counterparts for performance, whilst having all the convenience associated with inflatable SUPS miles away from historic inflatable canoes, which had such terrible limitations. For those who have yet to experience a high-end drop stitch kayak, you need to have a go. For the same effort, you go twice as far/fast as a comparable SUP, you have the comfort of sitting down, and there is almost no risk of falling in. The two sports are similar but different/complementary, and an increasing number of SUP users are getting seduced by the speed and extended exploring range of kayaks.

Like most brands, Sandbanks Style sells via the internet, but they have a team of experts to advise any customer by phone and a physical shop just outside Sandbanks in Lilliput Poole. The aim is always to provide value and service that is second to none, and they even provide 0% finance on all SUPs and Kayaks. They also sell through a range of specialist retailers spread throughout the country, and the boards can be tried at an extensive list of rental locations in nearly every area of the UK.

**See [sandbanksstyle.com](https://sandbanksstyle.com) for details.**





In it for the long game

Q&A

CHRIS

PARKER aka  
SUP Racer



Above: Ultra camaraderie – Yukon River Quest, 2019.  
Photo: Kelli Surritte (@perfectnegatives)

**Q&As:** by Sarah Thomely (Supjunkie)

**Pics:** Kelli Surritte, Trevor Tunnington, Christopher Parker, the Reichmann family and Wissanu Wisetputtasat

If you love SUP racing and have not heard of Chris Parker or SUP Racer, then where have you been for the last TEN years? Chris has been instrumental in bringing us all the race news and live coverage of some of the biggest and most exciting SUP races in the world almost since the birth of this great sport.





An avid numbers and stats geek, he also produced the infamous Paddle League, a series platform way ahead of its time for the sport. Chris was also one of the founders of The Euro Tour, quite possibly the most exciting set of races in beautiful iconic locations. Got the picture? What this man doesn't know about SUP racing and the athletes taking part isn't worth talking about.

He also greatly inspired us here at Supjunkie, and having followed him for many years, we were lucky to meet and interview him on the island of Jersey for the Round Jersey Challenge, a gnarly 33-mile endurance race. Having personally never been interested in endurance racing whilst seeing its appeal to many, the irony is this is what I

would like to chat to him about. Chris is smitten by endurance brought about by the infamous Yukon River Quest, a 715 km race starting in the wilderness of Canada, in which he also took part. He recently mentioned that he believed the endurance races had interesting and incredible stories attached to them in a live Facebook show.

It was this that would capture the media's attention to SUP and not necessarily the winners of the 10km flatwater races. It may be controversial, but Chris has always spoken his mind – he's a bit 'marmite' because of this outspokenness that is not for everybody, but we love it and so do many others. So here we go, let's chat with him about endurance racing!





**Above:** Jamie Mitchell – Dubai ‘Paddle Around The World’ 2013 – claiming the island of Eastern Australia

**Below:** Chris and Jamie in Dubai



When I started SUP Racer a decade ago, the 11 Cities ‘was’ endurance racing. It stood alone as ‘that crazy race in Holland’ that competitors either loved or hated

**Chris, when did you first start to notice endurance racing and was there one particular event that caught your eye?**

I’m certainly not alone in saying my introduction to the ultras came via the SUP11 City Tour, a very special ‘race’ held in the quaint Dutch province of Friesland every September. When I started SUP Racer a decade ago, the 11 Cities ‘was’ endurance racing. It stood alone as ‘that crazy race in Holland’ that competitors either loved or hated, a week-long odyssey that pushed your mind and body to the limit. This event single-handedly made ultra-marathon paddling a legit discipline in the SUP world. It was ahead of its time (it’s now the longest-running race in our sport), but I’m happy to say it no longer stands alone on the international calendar.

**Can you tell us about your first ever personal experience of endurance racing?**

In terms of racing, the 2014 11 Cities was my first ultra. I’d made a deal with Mistral to promote their fancy new inflatable that was supposed to keep up with the hard boards, and we decided that if I cracked the top 10 on any stage, it would pass the test (the race wasn’t quite as competitive back then – I’d be struggling for top 40 these days). Alas, my best stage finish was 11th, and that board never made it to production.

However, my first experience of simply paddling way too far came in early 2013 when Jamie Mitchell and I found ourselves in Dubai, of all places.

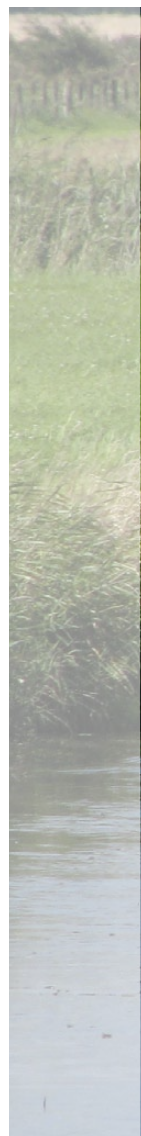
Jamie is famous for surfing big waves and winning the traditional Molokai race ten years in a row, so when we travelled together, we were always looking for new ocean adventures. I’d long been fascinated by Dubai’s man-made islands known as ‘The

World’ – an ostentatious project that ran out of money and left a literal desert sitting five kilometres off the coast. We thought it might be a laugh to ‘paddle around the world’ and thus began one of the most physically demanding days of my life.

Under the 40-degree midday sun of the UAE (why we didn’t start earlier in the day, I will never know), we naively set off from the beach beside the iconic Burj al Arab. We quickly reached the southern edge of the islands that looked more like a dystopian oasis than a high-end development project. We landed on ‘Eastern Australia’ island and symbolically planted our Quickblade paddles as if they were flags and we were claiming new territory. We had aimed to reach the North Pole, but Dubai had other ideas.

There was nobody else for miles, so we knew it wasn’t a good sign when a large boat emblazoned with ‘security’ sped our way. The water police informed us, rather sternly, that we were breaking several laws by accessing forbidden waters (understandably, Dubai doesn’t want anyone sharing their failed megaproject with the outside world). After taking Jamie’s lead of providing a false name and nationality, we were escorted into the open ocean, beyond The World’s protective rockwall – a monolith so high it obscured our view of both the islands and the distant shore of the mainland. But we’d come this far, so we figured if we paddled around this outside barrier, it would still count as going ‘around the world.’

That wall seemed to never end. Jamie was swearing his head off each time we turned a corner, only to see the labyrinth continue. We finally reached the north-western corner late afternoon before paddling back to the mainland without speaking a word.



The SUP Soldiers (Mike Procter, Stuart Croxford, Ben Ashwell) Yukon River Quest, 2019. Photo: Trevor Tunnington, Ultra Paddle League



Christopher Parker  
Iceland, 2017.  
Photo: Christopher Parker





Anne-Marie Reichmann  
SUP11 City Tour 2008 solo expedition.  
Photo: Reichmann family

Dangerously sunburnt and deliriously dehydrated, we completed our mission just before sunset, finally cracked a smile and decided to never, ever paddle that far again. If only I knew.

**Do you have any evidence to show how this side of SUP racing is growing?**

The sheer number of events in the 'ultra' category is probably the best growth metric. When I started working on The Ultra Paddle League, I created a list of 53 potential events. Not all of those are SUP – we owe a lot of credit to the North American canoeing community, where ultra-marathon events have existed longer than our sport. However, even these canoe races are beginning to embrace SUP. For example, the Yukon River Quest expanded their team entries from 125 to 150 slots this year, and quite symbolically, we have 25 stand up paddlers signed on for the mission.

**Have you found the paddlers who take on these longer challenges have a different mindset?**

Absolutely. It takes a special kind of paddler to 'want' something like this. Paddlers looking for an adventure and not just a race are inherently attracted to the ultras. Those who wish to push their mental limits should also apply.

For me, the contrast between your average 10k race and an ultra is that the former is a competition against others while the latter is an internal battle – you're primarily competing against your own body and mind when you paddle that far. Your ego grows more defensive as it becomes weaker, and as the miles drag on, your inner voice starts trying to justify why you should just quit and go

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home. I imagine army boot camp is similar: You'll have been broken down and built back up in a stronger form if you reach the end. An ultra will probably change your life without getting too spiritual, especially one of the multi-day odysseys such as Yukon or the 11 Cities.

Most paddlers do these races just to finish, and it's like a bucket list on steroids. I completed the Yukon River Quest dead last (and barely within the cut-off time), yet I felt like a hero. And that's why I love the ultras: It doesn't matter if there are 10 or 500 paddlers on the start line; it's still an interesting race because every paddler brings their own story to the adventure.

But while the personal achievement is something epic, I feel the real bonus of doing an ultra is the camaraderie. If you paddle that far with a group of fellow fanatics, you're bound to make some lifelong friends. The ultras do have a special atmosphere, especially in the 11 Cities!

### **Are there particular paddlers who deserve special mention as having 'that story' behind them?**

You can't write any story about the ultras without mentioning Bart de Zwart. He was the pioneer in so many ways. Not just racing – he's won the 11 Cities four times along with the Yukon, Great Glen and several others – but also that whole other side of ultra-marathon paddling: solo adventures and crossings. Years ago, Bart paddled the length of the Hawaiian Islands (unsupported) without touching land. He carried a week's worth of food and water and slept on his board at night. It was so intense that I believe nobody has attempted it since. He also paddled across the Tahitian islands, along the

coast of Greenland and did a full 'non-stop' version of the 11 City Tour before that was an official race. Bart also showed that endurance racing is more about true mental stamina than peak physical fitness – he would paddle away from guys half his age without breaking a sweat.

Special mention goes to Anne-Marie Reichmann, who founded the 11 City Tour in 2009 after completing a solo test-run in late 2008. That was just a month after the first-ever Battle of the Paddle ('year zero' in terms of our sport) – to say she was ahead of her time would be a massive understatement. Women have been eternally under-represented in our sport (I'm as guilty as anyone), so I think it's a great storyline that ultra-marathon SUP racing was essentially invented by 'a girl'.

There are so many paddlers that deserve special mention, but I think it's interesting the only time stand up paddling has been in every major media outlet was when Chris British completed his transatlantic SUP crossing. Similarly, Casper Steinfath's adventures (such as paddling Denmark-Norway) have received far more recognition than his world titles. I believe the ultras transcend the boundaries of storytelling and can break through the ceiling that niche sports such as SUP often face in their quest for exposure.

### **What would be your go-to first endurance race for those new to this if travel and expense was no issue to them?**

I'd start with a one- or two-day race and see if you catch the bug or not (I think you will!). The Great Glen Challenge up in Scotland is worthy of any bucket list for its location alone. However, any half-decent paddler could finish something



Bart de Zwart – Yukon River Quest, 2019.

Photo: Kelli Surritte (@perfectnegatives)



Bruno and Daniel Hasulyo – SUP11 Islands, 2019.  
Photo: Christopher Parker





Christopher Parker  
Yukon River Quest, 2019.  
Photo: Trevor Tunnington,  
Ultra Paddle League

like the 11 Cities as their first ultra—paddling 200km in five days is more about having a strong mind than superhuman fitness. The British ‘SUP Soldiers’ that I paddled the Yukon with had never done a race over 10k when they took on that 715km mind-bender (granted, those guys are next level).

I’d also highly recommend just doing your own solo or small-group adventure paddle on an interesting stretch of water wherever you live, whether that’s paddling around an island or conquering the length of your local river. Take a tent onboard and turn it into an overnight adventure. For me, some of the most interesting stories in the world of paddling happen outside of any official race.

**We see you have upgraded The Paddle League to The Ultra Paddle League - what do you hope to achieve with this new platform?**

The simple goal is to give the ultras a dedicated platform to promote the events and paddlers. ‘Showcasing the paddling world’s longest races, biggest adventures and grandest stories’ is our one-line summary. Hopefully, by sharing these stories, we can help grow this side of the sport.

The Ultra Paddle League will feature 14 events in 2022 and hopefully expand to double that in the next few years. I’m not promoting it as an ‘ultra-world tour’ or anything like that (good luck if you can do every ultra in one season, haha); it’s more about raising the profile of the events to get more paddlers on the start line, definitely give them more media attention and make them more sustainable. I believe the way to do that is by telling interesting stories.

I hope to see these adventures featured not just in the dedicated paddling media but in major

For me, some of the most interesting stories in the world of paddling happen outside of any official race.



outlets like the NY Times or Nat Geo. I don't want to promise too much, but I believe we can elevate the paddling world to a new level. The motto of the Ultra Paddle League is 'More than a race', and that's what I hope to get across.

It's also about more than just SUP – the canoe world pioneered the ultra-format, and I want to highlight those disciplines as well. Most events will feature everything from paddleboards to traditional canoes and kayaks – solo, tandem and teams – and it's this blend of various craft tied together by a "paddle in hand" that adds another special piece to the puzzle.

**You and I (and others) are constantly striving to get SUP onto more mainstream media outlets – why do you believe the endurance SUP racing could help this perhaps better than the more regular racing? What does it have that is so appealing?**

It's that human-interest story that can connect with your average joe, who probably doesn't know SUP racing is even a real sport. Significant elite race results are exciting to us but don't get much attention from the outside world. We're not Formula 1; we're a niche sport. When you add that human element, when you add an almighty challenge and a 'quest' of proportions so epic that anyone can appreciate how difficult it must be, then suddenly paddling becomes something a wider audience could understand and engage with.

Suddenly, these stories aren't even about paddling – that's just the 'vehicle' that we use – they're about the people, the adventures, the psychological challenges we face and the barriers we break while we're out on those long, lonely rivers. If we look at surfing for comparison: it's not the

pro contests that make the news, it's the big-wave moments, and in the world of paddling, I feel our 'big waves' are these ultra-marathon events. The average person can appreciate how difficult it must be to paddle 700km down a river even if they've never stepped on a paddleboard.

**I guess you hope to bring endurance racing to many more paddlers – how are you hoping to achieve this, and do you have some helpful collaborations you can share with us?**

That's a major goal of the Ultra Paddle League and something that motivates me personally. Not just to tell stories that connect with a non-paddling audience but to motivate existing paddlers to go further (literally). I feel like many paddlers who've been around for a while and are perhaps a little tired of the same old 10k races are the ones who will embrace the ultras.

But I don't want to become too obsessed with the crazy, week-long adventures that require massive logistical and financial undertakings. The Ultra Paddle League is going to focus just as much on the one-day events – the 'baby ultras' around 50km – that can either be a stepping-stone to a multi-day race or simply a final frontier on someone's more modest bucket list. These baby ultras are far more accessible, logistically, but still present an epic challenge – they can actually be 'more' challenging on your body because you might paddle six or seven hours at 90% effort compared with a few days of 70 or 80%.

The League will also tell stories beyond the finish line: Solo crossings and adventures. I'd love to create my own events that can spread the word and get people out in the wild in the future. I want to inspire others to get on the water and experience and appreciate the natural world around us.

**Can you let us know some of your favourite SUP endurance races and why? What should we particularly be looking out for in 2022 and beyond race wise?**

Is there a word limit on this article? Haha . The 11 City Tour will always hold a special place in my heart – it's not only a great challenge on the water, the 11 Cities is a fantastic week on land, too (school camp for adults). I've made lifelong friends at that race and not just among the paddlers – there are nearly 100 volunteers that bring their personalities to help make the 11 Cities such a festival atmosphere. The 2022 edition will be bigger than ever as it goes back-to-back with the ICF Worlds in Poland. We'll have the most competitive field of all time for sure, which isn't the most important thing but helps in creating the 'Tour de France on water' concept that I've been dreaming of.

As an extension of the 11 Cities, I encourage everyone to add one of the new SUP11x getaways to their bucket list. These are more exotic versions of the original, where you still paddle five days but in much warmer locations. The postcard-perfect '11 Islands' tour of Thailand returns this November, and we're also working on an Aussie edition ('11 Dreams'). There are new events in Germany and Croatia, while Panama is another potential host. I can see SUP11x turning into an unofficial world tour of adventure paddling holidays, which is a thought that keeps me motivated to stick around. It's hard to describe just how incredible these events are – 11 Islands was the funniest paddling experience of my life (and I think the other participants all agreed). These aren't races – no times are recorded; you simply receive a medal if you finish the entire course – they're adventures. SUP11x takes 'school camp for adults' to a whole new level.

Christopher and Sarah Thornely



Christopher Parker and 11 Cities organiser Ritske Merkus having fun during stage 3 of the 2019 SUP11 Islands tour of Thailand. Photo: Wissanu Wisetputtasat





The Yukon River Quest is a special one for me and many others. It's been running for more than two decades and has a dedicated community of eccentric paddlers who may look normal on the outside but possess an exceptional level of internal strength. The northwest of Canada is a remote, raw and ridiculously beautiful part of the world. If you wish to disconnect from modern society, then here's your chance: The Yukon River has almost zero internet access, and you'll see very little civilisation. The finishing 'city' of Dawson – home of the infamous 'Sourtoe Cocktail' – has a population of just 1,300, and that's the second-largest town in the entire province...

There are two ultras on the Yukon, the other being the 'Yukon 1000' that is precisely that: you paddle 1,000 miles down the river (as opposed to 'only' 440 miles for the quest). The cut-off time is ten days, and even the great Bart de Zwart said it was the hardest thing he's ever done.

The Yukon 1000 is the craziest race in terms of length, but a close second would be the Alabama 650, which also features a 10-day cut-off and blurs the line between 'race' and 'journey' so that it becomes hard to classify. Is it a race or an adventure? Competition or a quest? That's what I love about the ultras – they're something else entirely.



The postcard-perfect '11 Islands' tour of Thailand returns this November, and we're also working on an Aussie edition



SUP11 Islands, Thailand,  
2019. Photo: Wissanu  
Wisetputtasat



**You can follow Chris**  
on [www.supracer.com](http://www.supracer.com)  
[www.facebook.com/supracer](https://www.facebook.com/supracer)  
[www.facebook.com/ultrapaddleleague](https://www.facebook.com/ultrapaddleleague)  
Instagram - @supracer, @ultrapaddleleague  
and @wheresbossman

### Check out these three UK Ultra events:

The Great Glen Challenge:  
[paddlefast.co.uk](http://paddlefast.co.uk)  
Norfolk Broads Ultra and the  
Paddle Skedaddle:  
[www.norfolkoutdooradventures](http://www.norfolkoutdooradventures)

Australia interests me because its location (Australia is home to so many good paddlers) and format make it a mini-Tour de France. Australia is famous for being an ocean paddling mecca, but we have so many crazy-long rivers that ultra-marathon paddling could become a big thing down here.

I'm also really excited about a new event called 'Last Paddler Standing' that will debut in Florida at the end of 2022. Paddlers have to complete a 6km loop within the hour every hour until they give up (I can see a few stubborn paddlers going 24 hours plus). This is a different format from anything I've ever seen in paddling, and for that reason alone, it's worth paying attention to this event – we

need more innovation in our sport. The Last Paddler was inspired by an ultra-marathon running race, highlighting that we have so much to learn from other sports if we simply open our minds to what a SUP race can be. Our sport is young, we've only just scratched the surface, and I think there's a bright future if we keep going deeper!

**WELL, if that doesn't get your juices flowing for endurance racing, what will! BIG THANKS to Chris for his time, knowledge and enthusiasm, and we look forward to seeing and hearing his coverage for many years to come – thank you for all that you have done for SUP racing Chris over the years!**



Christopher Parker  
Yukon River Quest, 2019 finish line.  
Photo: Kelli Surritte  
(@perfectnegatives)

Hands after finishing  
the 11 City Tour in  
2015 without  
proper training





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# How to get your dog on a **PADDLE BOARD**

**Words:** Stephanie Barnicoat

**Pics:** Stephanie Barnicoat, Jo Moseley, Sophie Smith, Dave Hudson, Ant Barrett and Peter Tranter

Many of us paddleboarders wish to share our SUP experience with our dogs which can be very rewarding and can be very daunting at the same time depending on our dog's character.

**Taking my dog Percy out paddleboarding for the first time was scary. I had only had him for two months; however, I was desperate to share my love of paddleboarding with him. He also howled every time I left him home alone, which was another excellent reason to introduce him to SUP. Percy is a retired working dog meaning he is very obedient.**

My biggest fears were Percy not liking SUP or not wanting to stay on the board, something bad happening to him, and me falling in! To overcome these fears, I ensured I was dressed appropriately to fall in, wearing an appropriate wetsuit thick enough for the time of year and a buoyancy aid. Percy had his buoyancy aid on as I would never feel comfortable taking him out without one. I had dog treats plus his travel towel. As it was a short paddle, I didn't need to take too much equipment for Percy. I also had a paddling friend with me in case I needed assistance.

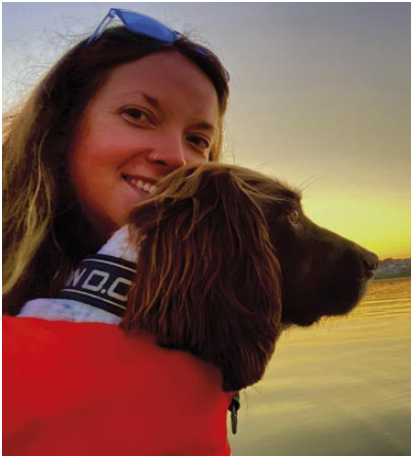
Launching can be the trickiest part of your adventure. The ISUPs I use all have a big fin towards the board's tail, and when Percy jumps on top of it, it can cause damage to the fin or, on some boards, make the fin pop out, making your paddle very unstable therefore unenjoyable. I have learned to launch from an easy spot like a slipway, attach the leash to you never to your dog, and walk your board in tail first (be prepared to get wet legs). On the colder days, I wear my dry trousers. I point the nose of the board towards the land and call Percy onto the board (he hates getting his paws wet when paddleboarding).

The first time around, if your dog doesn't step onto the board, you can lure your pup in with treats. A helpful tip is to get your dog used to the board at home, pump it up and try to get your dog to sit and walk around on it so they can get used to the texture and being on the board. Once Percy is on the board, he tends to walk towards the tail end (because that is where I am standing and he is a needy boy) hence why this end must be in deeper water to prevent any damage to the fin. It can be a bit of a palaver to get Percy in the correct position towards the front of the board. Once he is in position, it gives me plenty of room to get on at the centre of the board. This is where dog treats come in handy!









### Nose of the board

When Percy is in a good position towards the nose of the board, I jump on the board and start paddling on my knees. I like Percy to be ahead of me towards the nose of the board so I can constantly watch over him. Remember, I have my leash attached, and Percy is not attached to the board. It would be extremely dangerous to attach your dog to the board if they fall off and becomes entangled with the leash or lead.

### Buoyancy aid

Percy has a buoyancy aid with a grab handle on his back. I find this extremely useful if he does slip off; I can grab the handle and safely lift him back onto the board. Percy is not a typical springer spaniel for water and never experienced water until starting living his best life with me. Percy enjoys the occasional swim, but he hates getting his paws wet when paddleboarding.

When I feel it safe to do, and Percy and myself are conformable, I stand up and paddle. As Percy lies still, it is an enjoyable paddle; he isn't one to jump off and back on again. Many dogs have been known to not stay on the board. If your dog wishes to swim, the best thing to do is allow it to



happen and take care. A couple I am friends with have just started SUP; they have a Labrador Hugo who jumps from one board to another, causing everyone to get wet.

### Watch his confidence grow

When I first took Percy out, he laid still on the board, probably too nervous about moving. (It's selfishly my favourite position of his). The more we went out, the more comfortable he became. He started sitting and eventually started standing up (it is called stand up paddleboarding after all), now he walks around the board. It is wonderful to watch his confidence grow. We stick to paddling on rivers and estuaries rather than the ocean during our two years of paddling together.

A common question I get asked is whether we have fallen in? The answer is yes! Percy has fallen in maybe five times and is more prone to fall off my touring board as it is narrower at the front. Occasionally and especially during his first SUP experiences when we got close to land, he would make a jump for it! Another tip is not to get too close to land as your little pooch might be thinking I will make a swim for it.

If your dog wishes to swim, the best thing to do is allow it to happen







There have been a few instances where I can't explain what happened where Percy fell off the board. It was the first time it caused me to fall flat face down on my board. I was ok! The second time I fell completely in the water. On this paddle, I took Percy to a new place, a larger estuary, more sea-like, so I planned the paddle with caution. I wore my wetsuit and buoyancy aid. When Percy was in the water, he was swimming to land, so I swam after him to get him on the board. He was then shaking a lot; this is where a travel towel comes in useful. It is best to be aware that your dog may act a bit nervous when taking them to a new location or for the first time. Planning with caution is essential and going with a paddle buddy for support and safety.

### **The pandemic**

During the pandemic, it was Percy and me, and we were fortunate enough to paddle on the Gannel almost every day. The Gannel is a tidal river/estuary between Newquay and Crantock. I didn't get much opportunity to go out on my own as every time I got kitted up, Percy knew precisely where I was going and chased after me. Percy and I have learned to work together during our paddles on the Gannel, and I have learnt to read and predict his next movement; I now generally feel pretty comfortable on the board when he moves around.







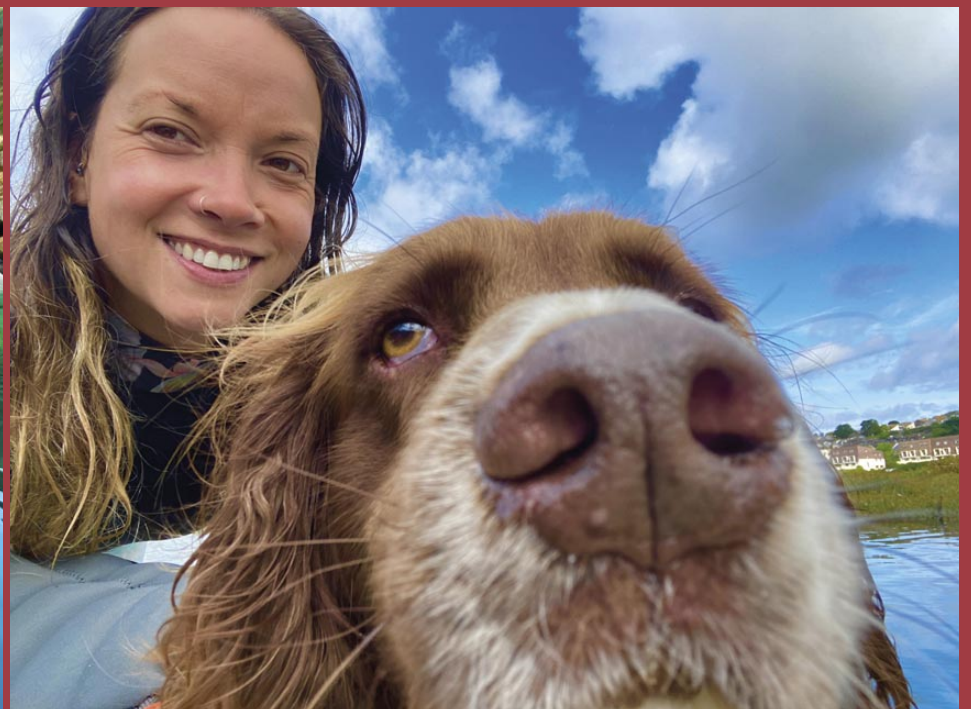
I was ecstatically happy and so proud of my Percy. He is finally a sea dog!

### Sea paddling

I recently decided it was time to take Percy out for sea paddle as paddleboarding in the ocean is the best, and in Cornwall, we are spoilt for choice. (I also hate leaving Percy at home). I tried last summer (2020), and he was having none of it, running away from me on the beach. Making me look like the worst dog owner on the planet, I am surprised no one called the RSPCA. We aborted the paddle as it was clear he was not ready for the ocean, and I respected that.

A year later, in October 2021, Percy did it to my amazement during some glorious weather! We went to my favourite beach for paddle boarding, and Percy was happy to get on board. The conditions were perfect, glassy sea state like it was when I tried last summer, and I was ecstatically happy and so proud of my Percy. He is finally a sea dog! We are looking forward to more adventures along the Cornish coast.

Most of our paddles are short, but there have been occasions where we have





## Top tips for taking your dog out paddleboarding

1. Make sure you are well trained, experienced and in complete control of your board.
2. Ensure your dog is well trained, has good recall etc.
3. Let the dog get used to the board on land.
4. Check weather conditions: check the wind and swell, I don't like to take Percy out in the wind stronger than 10mph, and I look for flat water. If it is raining, I might leave him at home, and I plan to try a dog raincoat for him.
5. Ensure the dog is wearing a buoyancy aid; I got a good one for Percy from Terrain Dog: [www.terraindog.com/](http://www.terraindog.com/).
6. Paddle in a location you know well, perhaps a river, lake, or canal rather than the sea.
7. Plan a small paddle first.
8. Go with another well trained, experienced paddler.
9. Stock up on dog treats
10. Never attach your dog to you or the board because of the risk of entanglement.
11. Wear appropriate clothing and equipment – be prepared to fall in.
12. If your dog doesn't settle, abort, try another day.



## OK, so what could go wrong!

### Drowning...

Drowning can come in several guises; even the strongest swimmer can run into difficulty. A dog can become entangled in foliage or discarded items on a riverbed; snort in water whilst swimming, which may present issues immediately or later. This is known as secondary drowning, where the lungs are irritated, and the body tries to compensate by producing fluid (this fluid causes secondary drowning).

### What to look out for...

Obviously, suppose your dog is struggling in the water. In that case, early signs of an issue your dog is suffering could also be that their breathing is laboured or irregular, coughing, or adopting an odd posture (a sign of discomfort). If you see any of these signs, check for the pulse and colour of the gums. A weak pulse and pale gums are indications your dog is in trouble. If not dealt with, difficulty breathing could lead to collapse and loss of consciousness.

### What to do...

Small dogs can be picked up above the ankles and swung between the legs, or you could use the 'coupage' technique taught on courses to try and expel the water. If the dog has become unresponsive, then be prepared to give CPR. Keep the dog warm and call the vet to let them know you're on the way. Even if your dog appears to make a full recovery, you should still have him checked by a vet.

### Water intoxication...

Drinking too much water – could be unintentionally drinking or swallowing whilst swimming. Symptoms include lack of coordination, lethargy, nausea, bloating, vomiting, dilated pupils, glazed eyes, pale gums, and excessive salivation. Advanced symptoms include difficulty breathing, collapsing, loss of consciousness, and even seizures. So be prepared to give CPR; call the vet to let them know you're on the way.





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For more tips on taking your dog paddle boarding, please visit **GLOBAL SUP PUP COMMUNITY**

<https://www.instagram.com/suppupofficial/guides/>

---

completed longer paddles, the longest being 15 km. For a longer adventure like this, I pack more things for Percy; snacks for him, enough water for us, his travel water bowl and his travel towel.

If you take your dog or a friend's dog, you must know the dog that you are taking out and whether you need to take extra precautions for them. For example, Percy hates waves, so when a boat passes by and

causes waves, I now tend to get on my knees to gently hold Percy or sometimes he will sit between my knees. We remain like this until the waves pass; I think this makes him feel safe. We then resume our normal position. Think about whether anything startles your dog, and then think about the location and suitability for you and your dog.

The key point is to check the weather conditions. Percy hates having spray from waves in his face, and I imagine most dogs would feel the same. This will make it unpleasant for them, making it uncomfortable for the paddler. One time I got caught out with wind and swell, and I allowed Percy to sit behind me for the first time, keeping him dry. This worked and was ok, but I feared he would fall off and I wouldn't notice hence why I like him to always be in my view.

Below are some tips for getting your dogs on the paddleboard, and by following these top tips, I hope you and your pup have the best experience. Remember, if it doesn't work the first time, don't give up!







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# SUP4 COACHING:

## Power to the paddle

### Words & photos:

SUP4 coaching

We caught up with SUP4 coaching, who are doing great things with SUP in and around London. Not only this, SUPM will be featuring a regular series of beginner-friendly articles from Rachel over the coming issues to help inspire and get you moving on up. To start with, though, we thought we'd find out more about SUP4 Coaching and Rachel herself.

### Where to begin?

SUP4 started from a love of being out on the water, whether the ocean, rivers, lakes, you name it. I just craved being in the outdoors, in or on the water. I spent most days travelling with my previous career and would always make the most of getting out and about, either surfing or SUPing when away from home and exploring different areas and bodies of water.

Adventure has always been in my blood, it runs in the family, but that is another story for another day. Taking my first ever stand on a SUP board was when visiting Bournemouth beach; I was intrigued, and ten years on, the intrigue is still very much there. It's not all about fitness for me; it's the ability to be close to nature and wildlife that draws me and so many to the sport. Having access up close to all of this is appealing and magical at times. Not to mention calming of the mind from being out on the water.

A move to Denmark helped me better understand SUP in a sea environment. I was hooked! I was invited to help and support SURF CLUB AARHUS HARBOUR, which helped me gain knowledge and experience of how to SUP in all kinds of conditions and assist with coaching sessions. I loved the escape from being stuck on planes, trains and inside office spaces to the open water with people who understood me. From DK, I moved to London and chose the South West corner to set up camp as it's pretty much on the river.

I joined a local SUP club in Kew and quickly gained confidence and skills by helping the school out with coached sessions at weekends. I spent a lot of time observing and helping at any opportunity. Qualifying as a coach through the club, I just knew this was the direction I had to take my life into.

### THE Pandemic hits, and I lose my job

Many would say it was a blessing, and I couldn't agree more. I had a job that I did because it was a brilliant paycheck at the end of the month, but that had slowly killed my enthusiasm inside over time. I explored options of going back to my design career with some amazing opportunities in London. Still, ultimately all I could think about was being outdoors and out on the water. I set up a plan, and SUP4 was born.

Using the little amount of savings I had to fund the business start-up, it was scary not knowing if my passion would turn into a career or if this was just another dream that wouldn't amount to anything. 18 months on, we are striving for much more.

It's been an adventure and journey so far, having met so many wonderful, inspiring people along the way to help build SUP4 into what it is today.

### Where are we now?

Having coached over 1400 people, a membership club of 50 members, a network of around 1800 and 25k raised for various charities this year; I feel like we're heading in the right direction. This isn't just a business for me; it's been really important to make a statement on the Kingston Community where we are based. By opening up to charities such as London's Air Ambulance, Mind, Red January, RNLI, and Surfers Against Sewage, we allow a mix of interests to join the club.

We place a huge emphasis on mental health and the power of SUP and movement on this subject, and we like to call it the POWER OF THE PADDLE. When I first set out on the SUP4 journey, it was with a big heart and a mindset to be as inclusive as possible to as many different kinds of people from all walks of life.









**Contact:**

Web: <https://sup4.co.uk>

Instagram: @sup4coach

I feel like we have only made a small dent and have so much more to offer. Inclusivity is an essential part of my business. I was bullied badly at my school, and if there is one thing I want to exclude from my business, it's the feeling of people feeling like they're not good enough or welcome in any way.

I place a lot of energy on ensuring that the balance in both the business, the Sup Club and the charity work that we do is sensitive towards this. Next year, we're hoping to work with some exciting partners and charities to reach more people and make SUP more accessible to a much bigger audience. Watch this space...

**2022, what's the plan?**

We want to grow and reach new parts of London (or even other parts of the country!). This is year three, we will see; we

have lots of ideas, with some exciting charities and partners is on the cards, but we can't say too much yet. The team will be growing, which will help us expand and coach more enthusiastic SUP goers. We're going to be moving into our new home, more to follow on this, but we will still be based primarily in Kingston Upon Thames.

We will also be a testing centre for the wonderful brand of McConks SUP. We love their brand ethos, and their equipment is fantastic out on the water. There are so many more projects, but you will have to follow us (@SUP4Coach on Instagram and <https://sup4.co.uk>) to find out what and when they will happen. Stay tuned for incoming SUP4 articles right here.

Stay active and only do movement that makes you smile inside out; otherwise, what's the point?



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# FIND YOUR FREEDOM

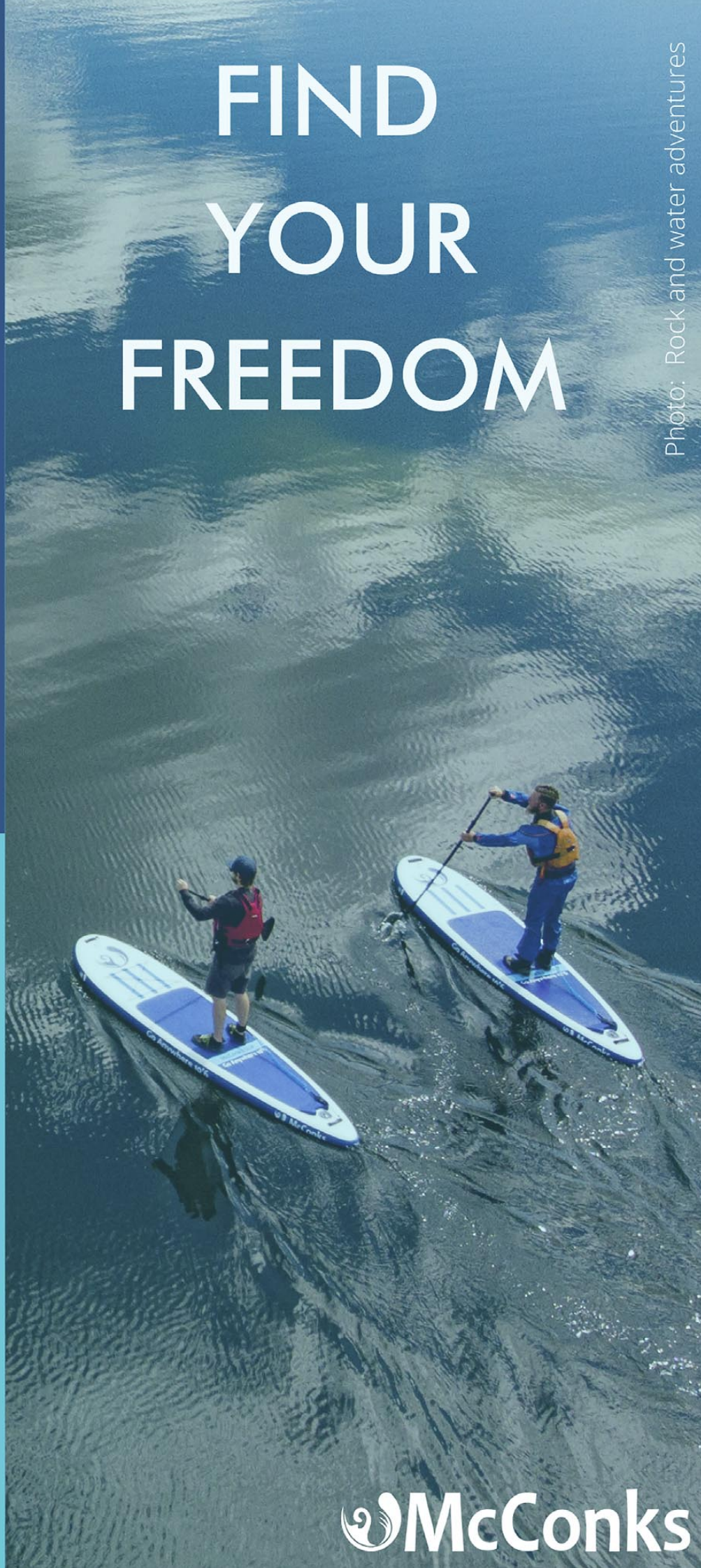
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Words:  
Scott Warren  
Pics:  
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# Trimming your BOARD

## **Introduction**

Trimming your board is a vital skill set to maximise your stability and control in various conditions. By correctly trimming your board, you can gain speed, keep the board from tipping over, catch waves easier and even turn corners quicker.

All too often, the skill of trimming your board is not taught beyond the basics of foot steering to beginners, but there are techniques you can do with your paddle as well. It's only when you get to more focused and specialised coaching that you see Trimming skills being taught, leaving the recreational paddler to carry on fighting for balance and control in anything but flat calm conditions. Welcome to the school of less is more.

## **What is trimming?**

Trimming your board can be defined as controlling your board to best react to your paddling conditions. There are three ways you can Trim your board by moving forwards and backwards, side to side pressure, and using the paddle. If we extend that, the ways or skills of trimming your board are almost endless and will become second nature with practice and time.



## Wave riding



### A practical example

One of the best examples of someone trimming their board is watching a good SUP Surfer. They will be trimming their board almost constantly as they manage the conditions and the waves they ride.

If we follow a surfer along their ride right from catching the wave to when they finish, it will show us just how many times they trim their board.

### Catching a wave

As the surfer gets into position, they will control the board with their feet and paddle, which might be choppy from the previous wave or the conditions. As they begin to paddle, they might adjust their feet to keep the board stabilised, and just before take-off, they will have made further adjustments, potentially even weighting the front foot to push the board into the wave.

### Take off

As they pick up speed, a surfer will want to angle their take off more often than not. They are usually done with the feet placing pressure on their heels or toes to set their line, which keeps them in the right place to start manoeuvres.

### The first turn

The paddle now comes into play as they lean on it or even drag it to control the board better. While this also has stability elements, the paddle is an effective tool to help control a board's speed and angle;

As they begin their first turn, the surfer will have already trimmed the board up and down the wave to set their line, and now they are set to turn as they need.

### Finishing the ride

Once all the turns are done, the paddler will try to exit cleanly, staying on the board. Again the paddle and foot pressure will help control the board with shifts in weight to help guide the board out of the wave. As the momentum stalls, the surfer will again trim the board to begin paddling back out, which may include going over broken waves. This will also need trimming skills to set the board up to climb the wave, and the surfer can continue paddling out before starting all over again.

### Summing it up

As you can see, a surfer is constantly trimming the board to set their line, make turns and control the board as they catch, ride and finish their wave. Trimming, though, isn't just limited to the extremes such as surfing, so next, we will explore other areas where trimming can help you.

### Choppy conditions

Paddling in chop, be it boat wake, wind chop, or just messy water, can be a real challenge, especially if you plough on through it and remain standing in the same place on your board. What you can do here is stand slightly further back than normal to lift the board's nose slightly;

## Paddle through chop

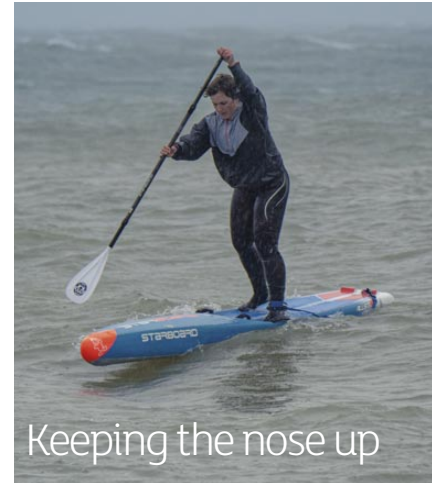




In trim



Trimming, though, isn't just limited to the extremes such as surfing, so next, we will explore other areas



Keeping the nose up



Backside turn



Land practise





### Trim turn



this is especially effective with flatwater boards. This only needs to be six inches or so, and you will find a sweet spot for your board where it almost starts to skim over the bumps rather than bash into them. As the bumps get bigger, standing a little further back still or even adopting a split stance with one foot slightly further back than the other will help you trim the board as it moves up and down.

### Catching waves or bumps downwind

Once you're comfortable in chop, catching bumps becomes a breeze. As you can see, you stand a little further back initially to stop the board's nose catching, and this works especially well when the bumps or waves are steep. If they are flatter and you want to catch them sooner, then you can move forwards slightly using the split stance, perhaps even opening it up a little, allowing you to push the board down into the bump or wave.

### Controlled step back

#### Buoy turns

If you have ever tried doing a step back turn and found them wobbly, a simple trick with trimming the board could be all you need. All too often, you're told to adopt a full surf stance to do a step back turn where each foot is placed right down the board's centreline. Whilst this makes moving back and forwards easy when you try to turn, your weight will typically be either on one side or the other, with the result usually being a big wobble or even a swim. Instead, just before you make your turn, place your feet slightly wider off the centreline, with your front foot being towards its heel and the back towards its toes. This way, you spread your weight to both sides of the board, allowing you to trim and control its balance.

#### Steering your board

Whilst you might be familiar with foot steering to help you turn your board without moving back on your board, the same techniques can be used to control your board when coming into a pontoon or avoiding objects. Using the paddle and adding pressure to one foot or the other will tilt the board to that side, making it turn that way. It's an effective way to bring your board to a controlled stop and works a treat when doing cross-bow turns around buoys.

#### How to practice your trimming techniques

The best way to learn about trimming is to head out on your board and play. Move your feet about, change what you're doing with the paddle and see what happens. If you want to try something specific like moving on your board, practice the routine on land first so when you get out on the water, it's already familiar.

Another great way is to jump out on the biggest board you can find. Using an oversized board should give you loads of confidence to try new skills out, and anything you learn on this big board will translate to your regular board.

Finally, don't forget the power of vision. If you spend time watching good paddlers across various disciplines, you will see similar techniques in use. If you're watching videos online, try muting the audio and focus on all the small details, where the paddler is placing their feet, what the paddle is doing, what's their body position and so on. An even bigger insight can be gained by watching videos back in slow motion of yourself and good paddlers doing similar skills.

Trimming your board – a vital and very underrated skill





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# SUP

## standards

**Words:** Chris Kenyon

**Pics:** Chris Kenyon, auremar – stock.adobe.com



The Stand Up Paddleboarding industry has been growing for several years now; coined initially 'the world's fastest-growing water

sport', it certainly has lived up to its expectations. Back in 2010, SUP was still relatively in its infancy; having been around a few years in the UK, inflatable paddleboards were still a bit of a novelty, and most paddlers seemed to be picking up the sport as an alternative to their usual water sport.

SUP was still predominantly an enthusiast's pastime, not one for the masses, however, if we fast forwards ten years, then the landscape is entirely different. You only have to walk down to your local beach on a pleasant summer's day, and you will most likely see a fair few paddleboards out on the water. SUP is frequently shown in television adverts, and it's not uncommon to pick up a board along with your weekly shop.





### So what happened?

Well, it was probably a combination of factors. SUP, by its very nature, is accessible. It's often deemed 'easy' – you just stand and go. Of course, there is some truth in that, but it's not that easy, and not if it's done correctly anyway. Any instructor will tell you the best ways to stand and fall, how to understand the conditions and how to use the equipment safely.

There also seemed to be a bit of a shift in our culture towards more outdoor activity and using nature to support our mental health. Fuelled by the COVID pandemic, there was definitely a sharp increase of people on the water and boards being sold. Most brands would agree it was a bumper year for board sales, even if it was a struggle to get hold of them. In the UK, we had the hottest spring on record when the lockdown started, and all of a sudden, the local river or lake looked very appealing.

With the SUP boom in full swing, it would only be a matter of time before there would be a tragedy of some sort. Unfortunately, water, by its very nature, can be a dangerous thing, and it is inevitable accidents and worse will follow. So, where do we go from here?

### Key areas

There are probably some key areas to consider when looking at SUP safety. The first and foremost is your ability to read the weather and water conditions.

- How fast is the wind blowing?
- What direction?
- How fast is the water flowing?
- Is it a tidal location?

It doesn't matter what equipment you have, if you go out in water and weather conditions that are outside safe paddling guidelines, you are potentially putting yourself at risk. Every location is different. SUP standards provides guidelines. E.g, the river flow should be no more than four knots, however, that also depends on your paddling ability. Blog posts also provide information on how to identify safety paddling conditions.

### Country-specific

One of the unique things about SUP standards is that country-specific sections allow stand-up paddlers to check for any specific standards, safety, and reference links in their own country. The SUP standards committee is a dedicated team of experts worldwide who regularly contributes to a wide range of topics. The committee





members all have a specific area of expertise they focus on; this could be anything from SUP safety to mental health to foiling.

The sup standards website provides the user with different areas to choose from, so the information will be there if they want to know about paddling on a lake or the ocean. This doesn't just apply to the recreational paddler who wants to get out and enjoy the sport. SUP standards can be used by SUP schools and centres and even athletes who want to find more specific information about their chosen discipline.

We hope that SUP standards will prove a helpful resource and hope to watch it grow over the next few years.

### More information

If you would like to know more or become involved in being part of SUP standards, then please visit the <https://supstandards.com> or head over to our Facebook group SUP standards <https://www.facebook.com/groups/supstandards>

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# Here we go again!

## 12'6 versus 14' (Sorry)

Words: **Samantha Rutt** Photos: **SUPjunkie, Jade Rogers**  
[www.jaderogersphotography.com](http://www.jaderogersphotography.com) & **Geoff Mather**  
<http://suptog.sphericalvisions.co.uk>

OK, before you roll your eyes and say, “*Not this AGAIN!*” please bear with me. This all started out quite innocently, and anyone who’s been a part of the SUP race community for some years will know that the debate has been fiercely argued around the world for years and still goes on in pockets here and there!

However, what if you’re new to SUP racing, and don’t know the intricacies of the board classes? We have seen an influx of new recreational paddlers, and that’s slowly starting to spill over into the racing scene (hurray!). Some of the questions new racers asked me last year, “*Why two categories*”, “*do I have to have a 14’ board to be competitive*”, and “*who decides the classes?*” Just a few, so I set off to explore the answers and think the best place to start for new racers is with a brief history lesson.





## History

So the 'why' we have two categories, courtesy of the awesome Chris Parker (aka Sup Racer). During his recent 10th anniversary podcast, I got a much deeper understanding of the origins of the debate. So let's go back to 2008 and an iconic surf race in Californian called Battle of the Paddle (BOP). This was the first time any restriction over what board you could use to race on was brought in and was designed to stop people turning up on huge unlimited boards and kicking the butts of those on shorter boards. So why 12'6? The short answer is that at the time, the longest stock foam blanks you could get were 12'1 for prone paddling. So they rounded up board categories to 12'6 and under, and so the 12'6 category was born!

Meanwhile, over in Europe, people were starting to use 14' boards, as the 12'6 wasn't considered as fast on flat water, although it was easier to use in a surf race. The Euro Tour (a bucket list of sup races) took the step that anyone wanting to form part of this series would need to make the board class 14' and under to simplify things (Checkout Sup Racer's podcast...1hr 15mins in).

So what was going on in the UK at that time, and why are fewer people racing 12'6 these days? Looking at race numbers, more people were entering the 14' category last year? What changed here?







Scott Warren

**I caught up with the fantastic Scott Warren; he's been a racer of both 12'6 and 14', worked in distribution and is now one of the Directors of our GB SUP National Series.**

*"I started paddling in 2009, and I first got on a race board in 2010. Back then, a race board was typically 12'6 by 28" and a big heavy shape at that. It was a slogfest and a real shoulder killer for a 70kg paddler as I was then with minimal skill. Compared to what we have now, these shapes were monstrous to paddle for lighter paddlers, that's for sure! Interestingly, my first proper race season was on a 14' back in 2012 on a 14' x 25" Starboard Ace Pro. 25", which was very narrow at the time. Still, the board was extremely light, so it was easy enough to handle until it got too choppy.*

*"2015 the 12'6 class was full of the lighter paddlers, so I jumped ship for two years, and we had some great racing. Some of the longer distances were a slog. Still, overall, it was competitive, and the boards were easy to handle in all conditions.*

*"2017 saw a shift to 14' boards and the brands responded with lighter, lower volume options, with my race board being 21.5" wide at the time. It was a joy to paddle and is still the quickest board I've been on; it just worked everywhere despite being flat water-focused. For the most part, the other 14' boards I tried at that time were easy enough to use as well. Sure the 12'6 was still an excellent option for tech and beach racing, but with some practice, I felt quicker everywhere on a 14' at this point. I've been on 14' boards ever since and would only really consider a 12'6 for fun paddling now, personally."*





**Keen to investigate what distributors thought of the debate, I was fortunate enough to catch up with one of the UK's early pioneers of the sport and UK SUP legend Paul Simmons who is also the Brand Manager for Starboard SUP UK. This was his take on the debate and an explanation as to why we might not see many second-hand 12'6" on the market!**

*"Distributors react to demand and invest in stock based on anticipated trends.*

*Starboard in the UK has only had a solitary enquiry for a 12'6" raceboard in the last two years, justifying the brand's decision not to continue developing within this sector and the distributor not holding stock.*

*"Recreationally we recognise that a 14' board is more technical and challenging than a 12'6", such as maintaining course*

*in side-winds and ease of turning. Therefore the 12'6" touring board remains a very relevant model. However, where serious racing is concerned, the skills required to paddle a 14' board effectively should not be an issue for riders of sufficient skill. There are plenty of petite paddlers racing in the 14' divisions across the globe and even piloting massive unlimited 18ft+ downwind boards in events like the Molokai Challenge.*

*It was an industry mistake to be running with both 12'6" and 14'0" raceboards for many years, making it challenging to stock the right numbers across different sizes. The width and, to some extent, the board's volume are the main factors determining its suitability for a certain weight and racer's ability. Of course, there are entry-level 'weekend' racers who like to be part of the scene and maybe aren't at a skill level to extract the best performance out of a 14' board. We welcome race organisers providing novice or 'leisure' categories that are less competitive and intimidating for those looking to have a go at racing, whether on the remnants of older second hand 12'6" boards still in circulation or inflatable 12'6" touring boards that offer a practical way into the scene.*

*"12'6" is less efficient and simply slower than 14', which is why many recreational paddlers of all sizes, shapes and abilities are choosing to paddle the faster, more efficient 14' boards, both recreationally and in racing."*



**Paul Simmons**

**Finally, you can't write an article on the debate without speaking to someone loyal to 12'6", and there is no one more so than Emily King winning the 12'6" National Champ title a few times; here's what she had to say...**

*"I never felt the need to migrate across to 14' race board classes as it felt very much like the brands were pushing us to buy higher-priced boards (incidentally, it only cost a few extra hundred pounds to produce a 14', but the profit margin is thousands higher).*

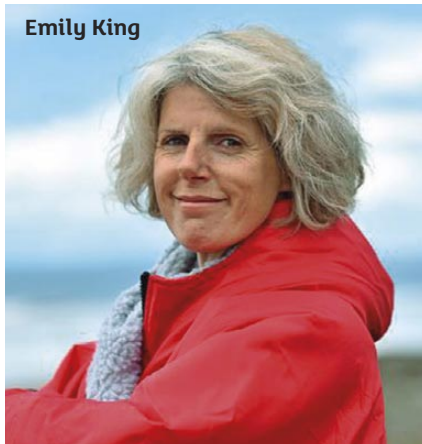
*"Smaller or youth paddlers who are still growing and developing can paddle them without causing less strain or injury. That being said, my 6'5" husband loves paddling my 12'6" and does so without any problems, as do the sick guys on the racing circuit... so they're still great boards for the bigger riders as we saw in the early days of sup comps."*







**Emily King**



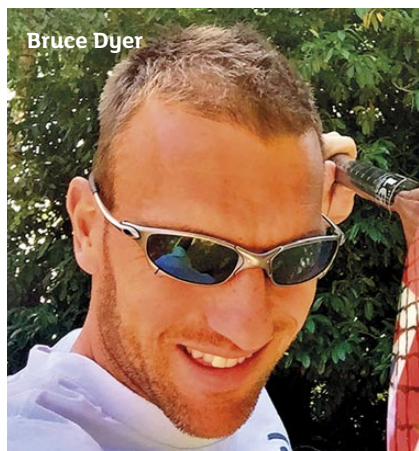
So what is the future for 12'6 in the UK? Funnily enough, when researching this topic, I stumbled across an insightful article by Dr Bryce Dyer from 2015. Bryce is someone who's been a part of the sport since 2014 and is an Associate Professor at Bournemouth University in product development, more specifically technology in sport (it's his day job!). He puts forward some valid arguments about where the sport may go in the future with board class.

The most viable one was the phasing out of one category, which appears to be what has happened; after speaking to racers in Italy, France, Spain, Canada and Australia. Their National Series are 14' and under one class, one group all racing together with individuals choosing what board they want to race on... he was way ahead of the game!

So really the final word on this topic needs to go to the people influencing the development of the sport here in the UK, the directors of the GB SUP National Series, and for us as racers, to understand how difficult it can be from their point of view to negotiate the categories and keep as many racers happy and doing what we all love most – racing no matter what board!

*“When the directors discuss the paddler categories, we have to consider all options, including market trends, paddler feedback, our own experiences and other options coming from outside the sport. It's certainly not an easy task to find compromises, and our job would be much easier if we had one class, that's for sure.*”

**Bryce Dyer**





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*"The 12'6 and 14' debate is always an interesting and tricky one, especially now as more paddlers take up the sport and get into competitive paddling. While it might be a personal goal for many, we have to consider options to promote longevity in the sport. The last thing we want is to scare newcomers away with an intimidating startline and category list. We also have to find a balance for our competitive paddlers pushing for podiums and top placings; so much goes into every category discussion.*

*"One significant headache recently has been the explosion of SUP, which is truly impressive on the one hand, but from a race organiser's POV, it's an absolute nightmare. How can you accommodate the variety of boards in quite open historical categories of surf shapes under 12'6, 12'6 and 14'? Now, of course, if paddlers want to be competitive at the sharper end, then the simple answer is to buy a narrow 14' board, and away you go. But for many, it is not a viable option with many factors included and too many to start listing here.*

*So how do you convince paddlers on the range of boards now to stick with it? "Suppose you just think about the variety of boards on a startline in today's events. In that case, you see the challenge of accommodating and supporting everyone. You could have 12'6 touring boards, 13'2" touring boards, 12'6 Hybrids, 11' hybrids, 11' touring shapes, 11'6, 11'2, 12'2, and 10'6 lengths. iSUPs, hardboards, race boards, and that's just style and lengths, never mind the considerable differences in widths you see now.*

*"It's just not feasible to expect paddlers on such a variety of boards to feel they are achieving something (as a whole speaking here) and stick with racing. In some cases, you can have the leading paddlers finished, changed and fully packed away up to an hour ahead before the newcomers have even finished.*

*"We are fully behind and support one possible answer: moving to a divisional system where the board length and style are removed from the equation. In divisions, the paddlers are categorised against their time over a given distance regardless of what board they paddle. This means that whilst competitive paddlers at the front of the fleet are always there, the remaining 95% of paddlers on the startline have something achievable to aim for. No*

*longer are they finishing an hour behind the leader; they are now competing for a podium in their division.*

*"Suppose they change boards and perhaps upgrade to a faster or even a race board. In that case, they change divisions if they fit that time bracket, are again competitive with similar level paddlers, and have realistic and achievable aims. Back to the 12'6 v 14' debate and division structure puts these paddlers on the same startline, whereas today's board categories keep them separate. If we want to see competitive paddling develop at a regional and national level, pushing all our paddlers to improve, then perhaps Divisions is the way to go. After all, 99% of the market comprises recreational and enthusiast paddlers."*







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## One in ten –

### Aqua Planet All Round 10' x 31" x 5"

#### Review & pics: Tez Plavenieks

This is the first time I've stepped aboard an Aqua Planet SUP. Which is a little odd considering it's a brand which has been everywhere during the last few years. The biggest reason for that being Aqua Planet's keen price point.



**Price:**  
 £399

**Info:**  
[www.aquaplanetsports.com/shop/aquaplanet-allround-ten-sup-package-stand-up-inflatable-paddle-board/](http://www.aquaplanetsports.com/shop/aquaplanet-allround-ten-sup-package-stand-up-inflatable-paddle-board/)

Out of the box the All Round 10' feels super light, is easy to inflate and assembles without too much issue. The slide and lock fin was a little stiff but that also made for a secure fit.

Aqua Planet's All Round 10' is 5" thick and 31" wide. It looks narrower than some with a drawn out, elongated shape. Bigger bine riders would be better with something more voluminous and wide. Aqua Planet state the All Round 10' is suitable for riders up to 90kg. So even though I'm that I'm right on the cusp as far as the brand's concerned.

Out afloat, however, I didn't have any trouble with stability. It's

certainly a more fair weather, calmer water board. During testing the weather was favourable but with chop and flotsam in the mix some riders would perhaps find it tricky to pilot. It's an inflatable aimed at beginners after all.

The Aqua Planet's drawn out shape delivers good glide and tracking, relative to its 10'

length. It also keeps momentum meaning cruise control can be engaged. Less paddle strokes for maximum return is a good thing. Riders won't need to hammer down to get the most out of the board.

Manoeuvres and pivot turns are achievable for anyone with a degree of experience. It efficiently and gives an admirable amount of get out of jail performance. Therefore any progressing paddlers can practice and learn plenty with AP.



#### CONCLUSION

All in Aqua Planet's All Round 10' is exactly as you'd expect from such a board. It'll take most paddlers from zero to hero without issue. And for intermediates there's still enough performance to accommodate a more advanced level of SUP. For recreational SUP, in calmer weather, there's plenty of fun to be had with the All Round 10'.





# Vroom mode – Mistral Glide 14' X 28" X 290L

**Review & pics:** Tez Plavenieks

Mistral's Glide 14' comes along looking unlike most other iSUPs out there. In a world of all rounders this is a serious bit of kit, albeit with plenty of accessibility. Whilst not an all-rounder per se there's plenty of all round appeal.



**Price:**

£722

**Info:**

<https://shop.mistral.com/products/m-glide-14-inflatable-sup>

First up: Mistral's dropstitch quality should be acknowledged. I know from extensive conversations with Mistral's brand manager, Steve West, that there's been a lot of focus here. With 13,000 threads per inch when inflated the Glide 14' is super rigid. As inflatable technology improves comparable hard board performance creeps ever nearer.

Aesthetically the Glide is attention grabbing. The board's needle nose is extremely pronounced. It looks like it'll take your eye out! But more than looks this design trait translates to super efficient glide and tracking.



The Glide's squash tail is fairly narrow. But that means less drag when hammer down paddling. And the 14' length of the Glide offsets instability. It might look like a high end, elite machine but it's perfectly applicable to accomplished intermediates. As well as pro riders.

Straight out the blocks the Glide delivers. It has so much glide. Often I found myself smiling with how much ground I was covering off one paddle stroke. When you really rev things up the Glide reacts accordingly and vrooms off without a second glance.

**CONCLUSION**

Knowing the history of Mistral's design team, and where they're coming from, it's unsurprising the Glide is a fast machine. Who wants to go slow? But those years of shaping experience incorporate subtle design features that make this speed easy to tap into without sacrificing usability. Experienced riders will certainly find favour with the Glide but any progressing intermediate could happily pilot the Glide 14' without issue.





# Big rig – O’Shea QSx 10’8 X 34” X 6”

**Review & pics:** Tez Plavenieks

When you’re learning to SUP - even with stand up being relatively accessible - riders still need as much help as possible. There are many newbie paddlers entering the fold with little to no prior experience. So anything that can help the learning process is a good thing. Waters around the UK aren’t always the flattest. And we all have to contend with inconsistent weather. O’Shea’s (new for ‘22) QSx 10’8 is set to address all these issues.



**Price:**

£589

**Info:**

<https://osheasup.com/oshea-inflatable-sup-range-qsx/>

QSx technology is as follows. Two stringers running along the board’s top and two along the hull. This gives superior rigidity. But is tech that won’t break the bank.

There’s certainly no lacking of rigidity with the 10’8. And that 34” width gives plenty of rail to rail stability. During testing, I had the 10’8 out in some decidedly choppy conditions with no problem. Deflection is minimal (that QSx technology doing its thing again). And even with flotsam and froth buffeting the board, the 10’8 behaves impeccably.

Some may think that an iSUP with such dimensions would be heavy. Yet I can confirm the 10’8 is



lightweight and easy to lug about. All O’Shea’s iSUPs are light by the way! This just continues that trend.

Tracking straight and true with a decent amount of glide, the 10’8 chugs along dependably. Even with adverse conditions. Coupled with its stability and ease of use this will inspire confidence. Should the conditions turn nasty then the 10’8 is a ‘safe SUP’ that’ll allow less taxing passage back to shore.



**CONCLUSION**

I really like the O’Shea QSx 10’8. On paper, its dimensions suggest a big board but it doesn’t really feel it. Instead, you get a stable and fun platform that’s poised for all types of SUP scenarios. Bigger boned riders will appreciate the 10’8 but nervous (lighter) newbies will also love the O’Shea’s performance. And as with every O’Shea iSUP the aesthetics and manufacturing are tip top.





# Free as a – Bleubird Escape 10'6 x 33" x 310

**Review & pics:** Tez Plavenieks

Starting off as an apparel brand Ireland based Bleubird now enters the iSUP market with their Escape 10'6. Coming as a highly polished product the brand's double skinned inflatable stand up paddle board is easy on the eye and a sled for all comers. Billed as being able to cope with a variety of water states and SUP conditions I couldn't wait to get it on the water.



**Price:**  
£595

**Info:**  
<https://bleubird.com/products/explore-sup-106>



The Escape looks bigger than its quoted dimensions (no bad thing) and indeed this translates to a very planted and easy going feel once afloat. Featuring a modern 10'6 shape, with a drawn out nose, it tracks great and glides brilliantly across the flat. Nervous beginners or early intermediates will do well with the Escape as it provides a confidence inducing platform to improve and progress.

It's also a great inflatable stand up paddle board for learning the art of pivot turns and general maneuvers. Often boards will taper towards the tail with stability decreasing in



tandem. Whilst there's certainly a reduction in the amount of board underfoot at the back it's still enough to forgive dodgy technique and help riders practicing their skills.

Rigidity of the Escape is pretty good, with deflection at a minimum. I'm sure Bleubird won't mind me saying but it's sometimes hard to get a handle on new inflatable SUP products, from brands you've never heard of, without having stepped aboard. There are plenty of 'pop up' companies with lesser quality gear being peddled. Bleubird are bona fide though with a quality and thought out sled that's right up there.

## CONCLUSION

I wasn't sure what to expect from Bleubird in terms of their Escape 10'6 inflatable stand up paddle board. Fortunately, it delivers on all fronts – from quality manufacturing to fun on water performance. It feels bigger than its quoted dimensions and therefore is great for true beginners. Heavier paddlers will also find favour here being able to spend more time up and paddling as opposed to falling in the drink. The Escape looks good to boot and at time of writing would be a unique investment away from the more well known iSUP brands.





# Pure Glyde – Glyde Paddle Boards Blue Sport Explorer 10'6 x 32" x 6"

**Review:** Peter Tranter

The Glyde Blue Sport Explorer hails from Glyde Paddle Boards based in Poole on the south coast. Their boards are constructed using the latest triple lamination technology and thermo fusion construction with a five-year warranty to boot! The Explorer spearheads the companies range of four iSUPs.



**Price:**

£ 449

**Info:**

<https://glydepaddleboards.com/products/blue-sport-explorer>



Inflating the Explorer uncovers the excellent build quality and the eye-catching design, and at a touch over 9 kilos, it's lightweight to boot!

The triple fused layers are covered by a tough military-grade PVC that keeps the board in shape with an attractive faux wood design and a 4-point bungee storage area to attach the supplied waterproof valuables bag. A carbon fibre reinforced side rail gives the board excellent strength when fully inflated to finish off the board's rigidity. The non-slip deck pad is easy on the feet and hands. Turning over the board reveals a triple-fin layout with the centre fin being removable.

The Explorer has that classic all-around shape that provides good stability and versatility that can be used for a wide range of paddling

activities, including recreational, yoga, paddling with a dog or small children, and more – it can handle heavy use and abuse.

While not designed to be a record-breaker in terms of speed, this board paddles well on the water, and you won't find it sluggish in any way. You're soon up to speed, and the Explorer drives through the chop admirably on what proved to be a windy day. You'll also find the Explorer to be equally responsive, being quick on the turn, plus it glides nicely, tracks well, and ultimately, is fun and relaxed to paddle.

The package includes a convenient storage backpack, a two-piece adjustable aluminium paddle, a coiled SUP leash, a removable centre fin, a repair kit, a double-action pump and waterproof valuables bag.



**CONCLUSION**

There is a crowded market out there for this size and type of board, and at the quoted price point, the Explorer sits in the middle - it's not the cheapest or the most expensive. It is a highly competent and good looking board that would be an excellent acquisition for beginners and intermediates and those wanting a fun craft but with high-quality build and construction instead of the flimsier and cheaper alternatives. It delivers on its promises – from quality manufacturing to its poise on the water. And it comes with that five-year warranty.





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# Once bitten – SHARK SUPs All Round 10'6 x 32" X 5"

**Review & pics:** Tez Plavenieks

For 2022 SHARK SUPs have a much improved aesthetic, in my opinion. The new graphics give SHARK SUP kit a more refined and polished look. But it isn't all gloss and no substance.



**Price:**

£549

**Info:**

<https://supinflatables.co.uk/shark-10-6-all-round-paddleboard-2022.html>



The All Round 10'6 is a well manufactured and durable iSUP. You can feel the board's robust nature by just handling it on the beach.

Easily inflated it's a quick process getting afloat. And once atop the 10'6 the experience is confidence building. The SHARK has an elongated profile making it feel lengthier than quoted dimensions. Performance wise this means good tracking and decent glide. At 32" wide there's no issue with stability. Even with me being towards the top end of the recommended rider weight



category. It's a pretty planted platform which allows all manner of jumping and stepping about. Practising moves is fun. And on that note...

The SHARK SUP's kick block, located on the tail, helps riders sort their footwork. Especially when thinking about pivot turns. No more toe gazing, instead feel where the kick block is and focus on your paddle stroke.

Speed is admirable with the 10'6 happily chewing up distance. It's certainly not a tourer but adventures await none-the-less.

**CONCLUSION**

As a first test model from SHARK SUPs I'm suitably impressed. The board's construction is tip top and there's a really durable iSUP here. Performance wise the 10'6 is fun to pilot with a lot of attention being given to additional features, like the kick block. Special mention for the included fin. Which is a lot more efficient (and unusual looking) than a lot of iSUP fins you get.





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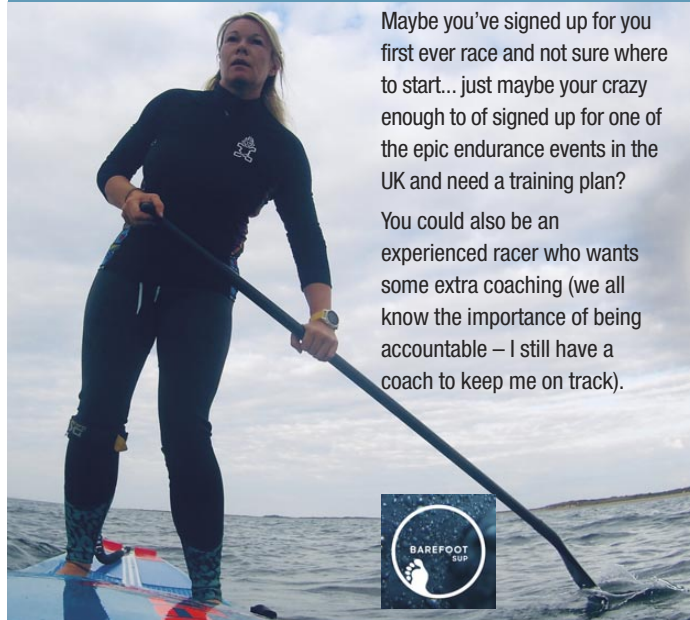
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# Bitesize –

## Cressi Tiger Shark 10'2 X 34" X 5"

**Review & pics:** Tez Plavenieks

Another new to SUPM SUP brand is Cressi. (Yep, the renowned dive brand have moved into inflatable stand up paddle boards). Coming in hot is the multi-purpose 10'2 Tiger Shark. Which has a few unique features that may prick paddler interest. The first of which is to be found right upfront.



**Price:**

£649.95

**Info:**

[www.cressi.com/easyUp/2022Catalog/Cressi\\_Hydrosports\\_2022.pdf](http://www.cressi.com/easyUp/2022Catalog/Cressi_Hydrosports_2022.pdf)

Beady eyed readers will observe the wide nose and integral storage well. The Tiger Shark comes with a netted bag that attaches to four security points and then sits in the well. With Cressi being a dive brand it'll be unsurprising that the Tiger Shark has use as a fishing platform. The net and storage well are good for keeping those caught fish secure. It doesn't need to be just fishing though. There are a whole host of other storage applications the bag and well can be used for. You just have to decide what.

Also, dotted along the Tiger Shark's rails are fixing point that can utilised how you see fit. These are nice to have, although they do tend to catch the paddle if you stroke



close to the board's rails. A wider arc will therefore be needed.

The Tiger Shark isn't an iSUP for covering huge distances. Its glide and tracking are admirable but this is a utility SUP to be used for freediving and spearfishing. If riders should encounter any chop or flotsam, that washes over the deck, the locker gets full of salty brine and is hard to get rid of. Therefore, flatter, calmer waters are where the Tiger Shark best fits.

Plenty of stability, with the board's 34" width, makes the Tiger Shark 10'2 a board that most will be able to pilot without issue. Being short it does feel manoeuvrable but not to the point of being overly lively.



**CONCLUSION**

It's nice to see a board like Cressi's Tiger Shark 10'2 in the UK. SUP's versatility and broad range of use is tangible. You don't just have to be recreationally paddling, SUP surfing or racing. Free diving and spearfishing, with your SUP as a point of entry, is another arm of the sport that deserves more attention. For anyone into these kinds of activity, the Tiger Shark is a worthy companion from a brand that knows its stuff when it comes to dive orientated watersports.





# Gun slinger – Hypr Hawaii Gun 9’6” x 29” 121L

**Review & pics:** Tez Plavenieks

Hypr Hawaii has certainly hit on something unique with their range of Gun hard board SUPs. Bucking the trend these shapes - initially designed as big wave paddle board machines - have gained an audience because of their individual design and broad versatility. Having tested a number of Hypr Hawaii Guns the 9’6” comes looking like a traditional pin tail surfboard shape. Think Lightning Bolt style from the 70s...



**Price:**

£1599

**Info:**

[www.hyprhawaii.co.uk/store/Boards-c37904097](http://www.hyprhawaii.co.uk/store/Boards-c37904097)

The described UV (purple and gold) livery give the Gun a distinctive look. Coupled with that sharp pin tail and signature hull chines it’s these traits which have unique appeal. As well as performance.

Other, bigger Guns I’ve tested (for me as a heavier paddler) have plenty of touring SUP performance inbuilt. This size errs more towards waves. For sure, it will cover some water on the flat but underfoot it prefers swell. Lighter riders will find more flat water performance alignment.



Testing Hypr’s Gun SUP boards I’ve been relatively unlucky during review periods for surf. With the 9’6” though I managed to get on a few bumps. Not big, but enough.

These boards may have big wave pedigree but their small swell prowess is undeniable. True to my earlier comment it loves a liquid wall. There’s plenty of glide for early roll ins and the Gun generates speed with minimal drag. The tail releases and with enough juice it’s a nimble and throw about sled that’ll slap a smile on your face.

## CONCLUSION

The Hypr Hawaii Gun 9’6” harks back in some ways to how surf SUPs used to be (pre 2010). Longer outlines, with doable volume and performance orientated widths. The Gun is, for most, a real world performance surf SUP that doesn’t take the balance of a gymnast to unlock its potential. It works in small waves, as well as big, and does have some degree of flat water prowess. Lighter riders in particular will discover this. Another fine example from a very individual range of SUP boards.





# Double bubble –

## Indiana Wing Foil 5'8 x 128L x 28"

**Review & pics:** Tez Plavenieks

Indiana Surf & Foil is a new brand to the UK with a large range of gear covering a wide range of disciplines. From SUP, to foil, surf to skate they really do it all. A large portion of that equipment is wending its way to the UK as I write and should, at time of publishing this article, be widely available.



**Price:**  
£1520

**Info:**  
<https://foilshop.co.uk/>

Whilst the Wing Foil 5'8 says 'wing' on the label it's another example of a cross discipline flight board that'll accommodate riders with multiple tastes. Indiana also do a (supposed) SUP foil specific model. The difference between a more rounded shape with wider tail. We also assume this can be wing foiled as the Wing Foil 5'8, tested here, can be SUP foiled.



acquainted with flying above water.

On the brine there's plenty of stability whilst paddling for the accomplished rider. Of course, this is a 5'8 board so there's definitely yaw and straight line tracking isn't exactly efficient. But then that's not the point. The board's nimbleness off foil makes getting into position super easy. Picking up waves is

Straight off, Indiana's eye catching livery will grab attentions. The tribal influenced graphic is a real head turner. As is the brand's top end carbon construction. Chinned rails make the 128L look futuristic, which is common among foil boards. And the sled's compact nature only adds to the intrigue. Especially to those not

then a case of hammer down time. You have to paddle hard due to the board's short length (again). Relying on glide, as you perhaps would with a longer board, isn't the correct technique. Instead, powerful paddle strokes in tandem with pumping the foil (and board) will see early lift and flight achieved. (Top tip: a foil with low stall speed will aid this process no end – for wing or SUP foil).

### CONCLUSION

The first board from Indiana I've tested and it's lovely. Whilst certainly not a distance machine it's a worthy contender for your attention if SUP and wing foiling are to your taste. The unusual aesthetics only add to its appeal. Whilst performance is right up there. If you fancy some flying above water antics, with double bubble versatility, you could do a lot worse.





# Ain't fazed –

## AK Durable Supply Co Phazer 6' x 110L x 28.5"

**Review & pics:** Tez Plavenieks

AK Durable Supply Co are a South African watersports who've come at foiling full power in recent seasons. Having such high profile riders as Zane Schweitzer on their team means there should be no lacking in performance with any of their kit.



**Price:**  
£1209

**Info:**  
<https://foilshop.co.uk/product/ak-durable-supply-co-phazer-v2-wing-surf-sup-pump-kite-foil-board/>



The Phazer 6' V1 reviewed here is a surf inspired shape which bucks the trend a little in terms of foil board design. Aiming to give a more direct foil feel the reduced tail width, and main volume up front, is implemented for manoeuvre orientated riding.

At time of testing the 6' Phazer is the biggest model available. There's a newer, 140L V2 ASAP. For wing foiling the 6' is more than doable for light weight or intermediate riders. It feels nimble, even at rest when getting going, but still remains achievable.

For SUP foilers the Phazer 6' requires agile, proactive piloting. I'm 90kg dry and could happily paddle it about.

Although due to its short, compact nature distance is never going to be covered. But that's not the point.

Even with the Phazer's short length it lifts and releases on foil extremely quickly. Riders will need to find the paddling sweet spot. Having done that a few hard strokes will see

momentum gained. And with momentum comes lift.

The Phazer's hard release rails aiding the process further.

Up on foil it's a blissful glide. The Phazer's super light construction, zero swing weight and direct foil feel gives a fun and playful experience. I mainly tested the Phazer in SUP waves around knee to waist high. Turbo charging the conditions it made the swell feel more like head high! But that's also foil in general.



### CONCLUSION

AK's Phazer 6' V1 is an adept performer across multiple foiling disciplines. Already revered in wing foiling circles I also found it a lovely SUP foil board. Yes, you'll need to concentrate when piloting with a paddle. And have your SUP strokes dialled in. But experienced riders will adore its performance in small clean waves. Bombproof, lightweight carbon Bi-Ax construction round out what's a lovely board of the flying variety. Foilers looking for easier SUP flights should check out the 140L Phazer V2.





# Part(s) of the story – Freshwater Bay Paddleboard Co. three-piece carbon SUP paddle

**Review & pics:** Tez Plavenieks

Traditionally three-piece SUP paddles were a back up to a rider's regular fixed paddle, or an addition for travelling - specifically overseas. These days three piece SUP paddles are often included in inflatable SUP package bundles. And have come on leaps and bounds in terms of how rigid they are.



*Freshwater Bay* PADDLEBOARD CO.

**Price:**  
£165

**Info:**  
<https://freshwaterbaypaddleboards.co.uk/product/mat-t-carbon-paddle/>

Rigidity – specifically where the handle meets the shaft and the shaft meets the blade – is important. If any of these connections are wobbly then all efficiency is lost. And not only is it bad news for actual paddle strokes it's not great for rider bodies either.

Freshwater Bay Paddleboard Co.'s carbon three-piece paddle comes along looking well finished and manufactured. All the fixing points are solid with snap lock mechanisms delivering good security. The blade is quite big and shovel like. It doesn't feature any bells and whistly traits like dihedral. But it should be powerful.



And once fitted together the paddle is indeed powerful. The wide blade needing a deeper, slower paddle stroke cadence. For newbies, who don't tend to hammer down this will be welcome as it vrooms SUPers out of the starting gate quick smart.

The blade's flat surface does require a little concentration in terms of accurate placement to avoid flutter. None the less it's still a very usable and friendly piece of kit. In fact, a far cry from what used to be thought a worthy inclusion in SUP packages. (Note: this doesn't reference Freshwater Bay Paddleboard Co. specifically – more the wider industry).



## CONCLUSION

Putting the Freshwater Bay Paddleboard Co. carbon three piece SUP paddle to use across various environments I found it to be an admirable performer with plenty of performance that'll keep all paddlers happy. Obviously - being three piece - it'd make a great traveling companion. Or be a decent back up option for any rider looking to keep a spare aboard their SUP whilst off on SUP adventures. Or alternatively, those with lack of space and storage will find themselves with a very good SUP paddle from the off. It's also a wallet friendly price and comes with a padded bag for additional protection when not in use.





## Bern Macon 2.0 Unisex H2O Helmet

[www.bernhelmets.com](http://www.bernhelmets.com)

By Sarah Thornely



The first thing you notice about this helmet, apart from the very cool Matte Mint colour, is the weight – it's super light at just over 300 grams. This certainly doesn't detract from the quality, which is immediately apparent. Certified EN 1385, it's designed for anything on the water, including my chosen activity of whitewater paddling (beginner level).

Here's the tech info – the lightweight ABS shell is lined with a soft EPP foam, fused to closed cell EVA faced with a piece of neoprene fabric, soft enough to be comfortable on your skin, which all makes for excellent technical protection. There are 12 air vents to let the water out and stop your head from getting too sweaty!

There is a removable and adjustable elastic fit system meaning flexibility of fit. The Macon 2.0 H2O also includes easy to fit removable ear cups for protecting that delicate area. The comfortable adjustable straps lay flat and are auto-adjusted using the EZ-fit system.

Quality and protection should win out over design any day, but we all want to look good, right? So, you've got a pretty cool skater-style vibe going on with this helmet, and it comes in nine different colours with a few gradient designs if that's your preference. Small, medium and large are the size options.

The medium in this helmet was a great fit for me, and I felt really comfortable and confident whilst wearing it. Three days of testing on a whitewater safety technician course put the helmet through its paces. I was on, in and under the water during that time. The helmet did not move around, and the ear protectors stayed on the helmet – they are straightforward to clip on and off, and because the straps thread through them as well, there is no danger of them being lost.

### CONCLUSION

Bern has a 15-year legacy of designing stylish, innovative and purpose-built helmets. I think this upgraded version of their classic Macon helmet would suit many depending on their chosen water sport. Helmets are often not flattering or stylish, but that's not really the point – saying that, I felt pretty cool and very protected in the Bern Macon 2.0 H2O.

[www.bernhelmets.com/collections/water/products/macon-2-0-water](http://www.bernhelmets.com/collections/water/products/macon-2-0-water)

Price as tested: £59.99

## Helly Hansen Men's LifaLoft Air Insulator Jacket

[www.hellyhansen.com](http://www.hellyhansen.com)

By Chris Stubbs

Helly Hansen produced the LifaLoft Air Insulator primarily for the ski market. However, anything that can be as light as this jacket (just 280gms) and still be toasty warm is a winner for me whatever you're doing – it's just a great jacket for being outside in these changeable spring months.

The jacket is a mid-layer, and HH rates its windproof factor as a four, which means 'slightly windproof' and says it's best for hiking and walking use. This jacket rates as a two for its waterproof qualities, which means only water repellent. However, that's as a standalone jacket, and when you add a shell, you then have a six in both categories!

HH developed LifaLoft in partnership with PrimaLoft® to create insulation with more air pockets and a lighter fibre structure, which means a 20% lighter warmth to weight ratio than other similar products, trapping more heat allowing for maximum comfort and agility. This synthetic insulation, which has a smaller carbon and water footprint than comparable polyester, is the outstanding performer on this jacket, being so lightweight and yet so good at holding heat.

I don't have anything wrong to say about the comfort. I felt comfortable with the fit, which was neither too tight nor too loose, and the fleece-lined hood is much appreciated. The materials used to make the jacket are of excellent quality, and the insides of the pockets are lined with fleece. The waistband has an elastic that a toggle can trap to tighten the fit when required. There are three zipped pockets with the waist pockets quite deep, and the chest pocket is suitable for a phone, etc. To top it off – it does look excellent and stylish.

### CONCLUSION

Staying warm without the bulk of an oversized jacket is what the Helly Hansen LifaLoft Insulator Jacket is all about. I appreciated the jacket on its own for spring and autumn weather or when used as a mid-layer in the colder winter under a quality shell jacket. Just one to look out for is the fabric is super light, so be mindful of sharp surfaces.

[www.hellyhansen.com/en\\_gb/lifaLoft-air-insulator-jacket-65792](http://www.hellyhansen.com/en_gb/lifaLoft-air-insulator-jacket-65792)

Price as tested: £170.00





# Elevated fun! –

## Eleveight WFS 4m & 5m V2 wing

**Review** Tez Plavenieks **Pics:** Oli Lane-Pierce.

Eleveight are a kitesurfing brand that entered the wing market with their highly rated WFS V1 boom style wing. Recently the V2 was launched offering more refinement. An integrated, narrow diameter boom is the big draw. Booms giving infinite hand holds to incrementally tune grip. I got hold of Eleveight’s 4m and 5m to put to the test.



**Price:**

WFS 4m – £749

WFS 5m – £799

**Info:**

[www.kites-and-more.com/collections/wing-surfer/products/eleveight-wfs-v2-2021](http://www.kites-and-more.com/collections/wing-surfer/products/eleveight-wfs-v2-2021)



I’ve tested a number of boom style wings. Eleveight’s WFS V2 is one of the nicest I’ve used. Often wings with booms can be heavier than their handle counterparts. The WFS remains super light and throw about.

The WFS comes with large integrated windows. Windows are marmite, and I must admit I tend to err towards wings without. Windows can be a weak point and cause canopy inefficiency. Eleveight’s WFS windows are solid. During testing I had no issues.

The WFS V2 build quality is exemplary. All materials are top notch and right at the forefront of new generation wing designs. Wings have evolved considerably since earlier incarnations. Wings are much more engineered and fit for purpose now.

Once inflated the 4m and 5m offer a rigid and solid feel. The WFS is a preloaded design. There’s a lot of pumpability inbuilt ready to propel riders along. Stiff and taught is how the canopy, leading edge and middle strut feel. The boom locks in with air pressure and is dependable.



I tested the WFS in both wing skate (on land) and wing foil mode. Wing skating is a good way to dial in wing handling. It also highlights additional performance traits. The WFS is extremely dependable with a solid pull.

On the water this dependable pull translates to efficiency. The WFS isn’t the gruntest wing but both the 4m and 5m are responsive to rider input and can lift foilers into the air with ease. Efficient shapes like this are often just as early to foil as wings with a more powerful bottom end. Once flying they slip through the air with minimal drag ensuring less fatigue for the rider. Manoeuvres are a joy, the WFS being easily positioned. And both the 4m and 5m deliver similar handling traits across both sizes. Not all wings do this, with performance sometimes differing as you change up or down a size.

**CONCLUSION**

I love the Eleveight WFS. Both the 4m and 5m are enjoyable wings with familiar handling traits. Efficient when getting on foil it’s then a predictable and feather light ride as you fly along. Round corners, through tacks and gybes, the WFS is a joy. The well thought out boom design giving reassurance and dependability. Great for wing skating on land, if you fancy some of that. And also a good choice for newbie wingers looking to learn the ropes in wing SUP mode.





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