

# SUPPM

Stand Up Paddle Mag UK

## #SHEPADDLES CYMRU

At Plas Y Brenin

## CHAT WITH HOWARD SHEP

By Tez Plavenieks

## JURASSIC JEWEL

By Andy Hill-Parker

## SUP PUP ELLA

With Stu Gammon

## JO MOSELEY... Q&A

By Sarah Thornely

## MISTY MORNING SUP

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## SUP FOILING IN DEPTH

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## GEAR SHED

Tons of stuff reviewed

## Loch Awesome Challenge

#ShePaddles chats: Emma Love speaks to

Kate Simmons & Vikki McPherson

SUPJunkie GBSUP Reports by Sarah Thornely;

SUP Scotty technique: Getting race ready



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SCAN ME

## Ed's note

# Travel to paddle

**With the ability to now travel again on the agenda, this season is primed to be your summer of SUP discovery. Inflatable SUPs - the most popular craft - are super easy to pack down and get gone with. (But hard boards are also just as worthy). As opportunities to head off present themselves, why wouldn't you load up the SUP kit in tandem with your other essentials? There's a whole world waiting.**

During the last few years of COVID enforced staycationing, doorstep paddling has been the go. There was never a thought about SUP travel for most new paddlers, and SUP has been seen as a toy to while away the hours locally. Yet there's so much potential with owning such a versatile craft. And SUP travel isn't just limited to domestic sojourns either.

I've done my fair share of overseas SUP trips with iSUPs and hard boards, among other watersports toys. I don't mind journeying with rigid boards. But I get many riders will see this as a hassle, and Inflatables do remove much of this.

There are no excess baggage fees; the ability to cram other belongings into your iSUP bag; zero worries about damaging your board; the list goes on. To me, it's a no brainer.

There's never been a better time to travel with SUP kit. Even if it's not your main priority whilst away, having an iSUP at your disposal whilst on holidobs gives the opportunity to make the most of those available paddling windows when they open. You might only get afloat once or twice, but if you didn't have gear, there'd be no opportunity at all.

Travel is a great way to experience new things. Add a SUP to the mix, and your experience will take on a whole new perspective and elevation. If you recently purchased stand-up paddle gear, don't leave it languishing. Utilise its versatility to the max as you renew your wanderlust. Trust me; your holidays will be enhanced considerably.

Moving on with summer just around the corner, longer days and improved weather should be motivation for getting wet (if you haven't done so already). Step those skills up, become more immersed in the activity you love and enjoy your recreational time. Stay safe, and love your time afloat. Having discovered paddling, it'd be a crying shame to get too caught up in all those pre-pandemic things (again) and not devote time to recreation.

Enjoy the latest mag, and we may see you on the water.

Thanks and praise to the many contributors that make SUPM possible. Also, a big up to SUPM's advertising supporters. Without these elements, you wouldn't be reading this or any other issue. No question times remain tough, so for anyone getting involved with us, we wholeheartedly appreciate it. Big up from Anne, Pete, me and the whole SUP Mag UK team. Onwards!



Tez Plavenieks – June 2022



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**Cover photo:** #ShePaddles Cymru weekend

**Photo:** Jake Webb @jakeyjakejacobs

**Thanks to:** Antony Thornely, Dave Adams, Tom Furey, Graham Woollven, Eilidh Connolly, Jim Gibson, Donald MacPherson, P3T Photography, Emily Crawshaw, Oli Lane-Peirce, Luke Ravenhill, Caroline Dawson, Rapid Skills & Paul Smith, SUP Shropshire Adventure Guiding, Landy Expedition, Loch Awesome, Sebastian Schoeffel, Dale Mears, Lloyd Scott, Robert Carroll, Steve Beaman

Not all contributors are professional writers and photographers, so don't be put off writing because you have no experience! **Next issue is August 2022 with a deadline of submissions on June 5th 2022.** Technical Information: Contributions preferably as a Microsoft Word file with 800-1200 words, emailed to 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.



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# SUPJUNKIE REPORTING:



**The level of exhilaration was high as this was the first race of the series and a chance to see all of the old faces and meet lots of the new ones. Hugs all around this time; not much holding back!**

After registration, paddlers were invited to visit the raffle with some incredible prizes donated, so thank you to all those that did. The raffle raises money for the RNLI, and we were blessed with some sponsorship from PROLIMIT, who are supporting the women's fleet this year with tech gear – all they were asking was for a minimum donation to the RNLI pot. The raffle and Prolimit donations raised an incredible £1,350 on the day! The GBSUP team would like to thank all of those who donated prizes for the event and all of the people who bought raffle tickets and came away with a cool Prolimit tech top.

So, onto the action – I was lucky enough to be on a boat again, which sat at the start line – the first wave was the 14' men, a field of around 80 paddlers! This year, there was a course change with paddlers going partway up the River Taff, returning past the white water centre, and up the River Ely before finishing right in front of the WW centre.

## STARTING THE SEASON WITH A BANG!

**Words:** Sarah Thomely

**Photos:** Antony Thomely for Supjunkie

### CIWW Paddlefest

Nothing could have prepared us for the incredible racing on Sunday 1st May at the Cardiff International White Water Centre, with over 220 paddlers registered to race. You always anticipate exciting racing, and some days it's better than others – this was one of those days.

The white water centre is such a great venue and had no issues coping with the 174 paddlers who took to the water on the day with their friends and families, volunteers, safety crew, trade stands and the GBSUP team.

### 14' men

A flying start from Bruce Ironsmith, SUP 11-City Tour 2021 winner Joep van Bakel and GBSUP National Champ Blue Ewer set the pace, with the latter two paddlers quickly establishing the lead, and that is how it stayed. Ben Moreham, a UK paddler who currently lives in Spain, recovered from a poor start to sit in third place. Will Keetley and Hector Jessel, two incredible junior paddlers who often battle together, sat squarely at fourth and fifth. Joep and Blue managed to pull away from Ben, who, despite his obvious strength, could not



reel them back in. He also made a minor course error which meant third place would have his name written all over it. Blue did everything to rein Joep in after some tense drafting on the last corner into the finish line, but it was not to be. Joep is a true champion and can now add a GBSUP national race win to his bio! Ben Moreham would have given Joep and Blue a run for their money without those minor errors; such is his talent.

### 14' women

Well, if we thought that was exciting, the women decided otherwise! Four dominated and worked together with clever drafting strategies. Ginnie Betts, Emily Evans, Marie Buchanan and Holly Pye gave us an inspiring and exhilarating race. Paddling back past the WW centre, Ginnie led Emily, Holly and Marie, but as they came back around the corner towards the finish line, Emily had pulled away with Holly and Marie battling it out for second and third – Holly just had the strength to get a second place by a second or two with Ginnie in fourth. Emily was spent but delighted to defend her win from last year and qualify for the Welsh team, as did Ginnie. Holly and Marie also qualified for the English team. Some super strong females will be representing the UK later in the year.

### 12'6 classes

On to the 12'6 classes and a thrilled new champion in Natalie Cant from Norfolk, with Felicity Hurst in second and reigning champ Emily King in third. In the men's 12'6, Al Hughes defended his title, with Philip Sparkes second and Dave Scott in third.

It was great to see such a healthy fleet in the UKN1Sco class – it's always got a great feel about it with paddlers competing on similar boards. Local girl Kerry Baker won for the ladies with Helen Russell second and Gemma Cone third and Simon Day for the men with Glyn Smith and Craig Hughes second and third. Some of these competitors have been racing the Naish One Design board for years – they love the concept!

We had a rare treat with tandem paddlers Allistair Swinsco and Alison Rennie showing us how it's done, paddling perfectly in sync on their beautiful 425Pro tandem board – this couple has competed all over the world and has such a skill.

### Prone

Not as many prone paddlers this year at Cardiff but special mention for the winners, Mark Norton and Kezia Elliott, with Mark Rees coming in second for the men.

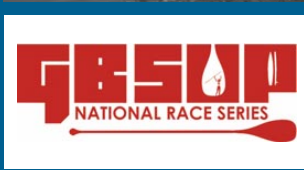


### 6km Challenge Tour

Twenty-four paddlers took part in the 6km Challenge Tour. Even though it's not a race, we can applaud Trevor Goodman and Victoria Utting for being the first man and woman to finish, with special mention to 10-year-old Jacques Thomas from Jersey coming in second – it was a 'race' for Jacques. He did superbly well against all the adults.

GBSUP is trying hard to nurture the juniors and was lucky enough to have six who benefitted from a creative and fun workshop from local instructors Emily Evans and Sarah Perkins with support from the Water Skills Academy and the white water centre. They then took part in sprints and technical races, and all came away with new skills, smiles, medals and prizes. Well done to Gracie, Flick, Isabelle, Jacques, Mylo and Tije. Mylo and Tije take after their father, Joep, as their sync turns were better than most adults! GBSUP hope to see ALL of these youngsters back at future events.





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@gbSUP.co.uk](mailto:info@gbSUP.co.uk).



### Sprints

Separate sprint qualifiers were held in the afternoon on a 200-metre course with excellent viewing from a bridge over the river right on the finish line. Superfast semi-finals had the crowds cheering, culminating in some great finals with results as follows:

#### Men:

- First:** Blue Ewer
- Second:** Joep van Bakel
- Third:** Ben Moreham

#### Women:

- First:** Emily Evans
- Second:** Holly Pye
- Third:** Alex Tyrer

It was a great day of racing and friendship – there was even a proposal of marriage before the raffle prize draw – it was greeted with a loud cheer and a huge round of applause! That’s not something you see every day at a SUP race.

### Regional races

GBSUP is slowly introducing the concept of regional races – this is something that has

been long in the making and is now getting off the ground.

The idea is to bridge the gap between local/club racing and national events. It is sanctioned by GBSUP and uses standardised rules, entry and regulations. Scott Warren of GBSUP said, *“It’s a progression step for paddlers new to racing and builds grass-roots possibilities. We are hoping it connects SUP racing communities across their regions.”*

It offers competitive racing and the ability to have regional champions and extends to supporting national championships by being qualifiers in the future. There would be less dependence on paddlers travelling across the country to race, and they would be run using the new divisional system.

One of the first regional events is part of the Welsh SUP Series and will be held on 21st May in Dale, Pembrokeshire, with Windswept Watersports hosting.

### The confirmed regional races are as follows:

#### South East regional:

- Medway River Raid:** 20th March
- The SHAC Technical:** 6th August
- Viking Bay Classic:** 1st October

#### Welsh regional

- 21st May:** Windswept Watersports (Dale)
- 11th June:** Cardigan Bay Watersports
- 2nd July:** Island SUP (Barry Island)

If you would like to get involved with hosting your own regional or even national race, please contact GBSUP via their website.

A great start to the season; next up, a new race ‘up North’, the wonderfully named Beadnell Belta – we cannot wait and look forward to seeing you all there.





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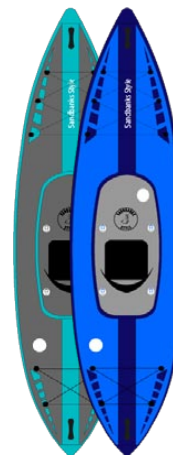
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# #ShePaddles

**Words:** Nicola Forsyth

**Pics:** Jake Webb @jakeyjakejacobs

Plas y Brenin, in partnership with Canoe Wales, hosted their first #ShePaddles Cymru event together from the Sport England owned National Outdoor Centre in Snowdonia.



Over the 7-8th May, the two-day event brought together 75 women to celebrate and encourage more women and girls to get into paddlesports. The event featured 16 workshops covering various paddlesports and levels – from beginners and enthusiasts to inspiring instructors and coaches.

Split across the two days; the weekend has something for everyone, from skills development workshops to masterclasses with the professionals and entertainment on Saturday evening.

As an increasingly popular paddlesport, Emily Evans and Olivia Hollins Roberts coached several dedicated SUP coaching and leadership workshops, and Leanne Bird hosted a SUP yoga session. Other workshops included kayaking, canoeing, safety and rescue, navigation, planning and kit preparation and kayak rolling.

Coaches included Lowri Davies, Eila Wilkinson, Emily Evans, Laura Wynne, Sarah Keight, Matt Giblin, Jon Green, Claire Pursey, Chris Evans and Dave Janes.

The event was supported by partners including Get on the Water, Peak PS, O'Shea, Pyranha Kayaks, P&H and Aber Falls Whisky Distillery.

Emily Evans, SUP coach, commented, *"This was my first time attending a #ShePaddles weekend, and I had the most wonderful time; it was a privilege to be part of it. I met the most amazing women over the weekend, and it was a pleasure to listen to their stories and coach them through some new SUP techniques."*

*"I also saw a lot of bravery over the weekend, people going outside their comfort zone to try new things, which was a testament to the friendly, supportive and encouraging atmosphere created by all staff and volunteers from the #ShePaddles team. I can probably speak for many when I say that it was a laugh a minute, and fun was had all round; thank you very much Plas y Brenin and the #ShePaddles team."*







# CYMRU 7-8TH MAY





Leanne Bird, #ShePaddles volunteer, commented. *“I thoroughly enjoyed the #ShePaddles Cymru and Plas y Brenin event. The staff team and volunteers made my job as a volunteer and SUP Yoga Instructor easy. I met some lovely new people and what was most important was seeing the participants enjoy it. Plas y Brenin itself is a fantastic high-quality venue, and the conditions were just perfect for SUP Yoga on Saturday evening. What a stunning backdrop to the session! Hopefully, I will be back again to deliver more SUP Yoga.”*

Chris Evans, Head of Paddlesports at Plas y Brenin, commented, *“Over the last few years, we’ve seen a steady increase in people taking up paddlesports – especially SUP. What was special about this weekend was seeing so many women and girls coming together to celebrate and continue their passion for SUP – or try it for the first time. The SUP workshops and the SUP yoga were very popular.”*

Dave Janes, Paddlesport Instructor, Plas y Brenin commented, *“Paddleboarding is an amazing activity to get out on the water and minimal gear. You don’t have to go far, and you don’t have to go too gnarly for some amazing adventures. Our #ShePaddles Cymru event was a brilliant opportunity to discover the ins and outs of paddleboarding to increase knowledge and experience around planning, safety and paddling skills. The atmosphere to learn and develop confidence on the water was second to none, and the resulting adventures that will be had this summer will be brilliant.”*





Photo Credit: Muqu Javad

## Selk'bag Lite 6G

The Selk'bag Lite 6G is designed to give maximum comfort and warmth while providing the greatest freedom of movement.

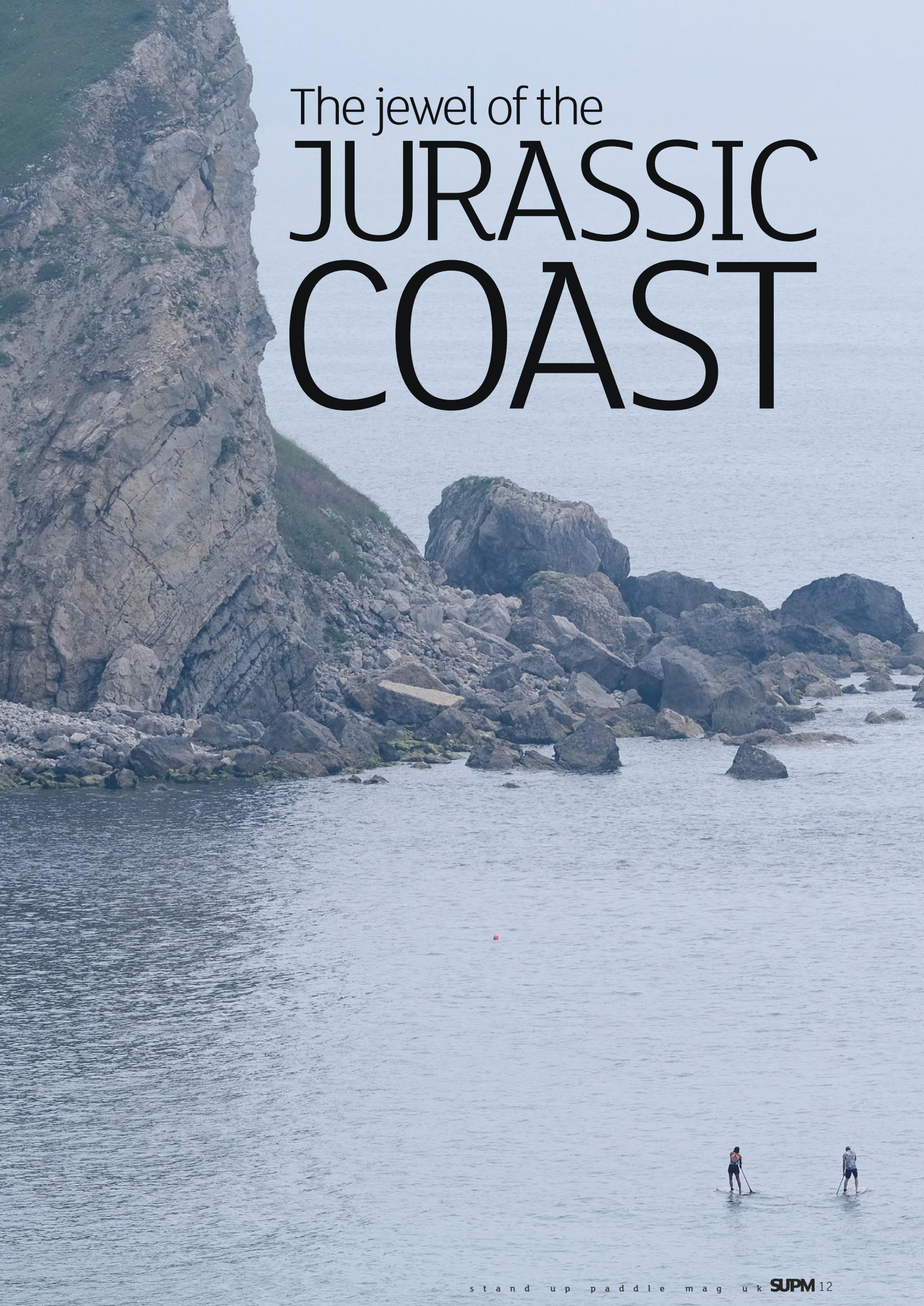
Featuring lightweight construction, the Lite is a sleeping bag with legs adults' can wear indoors, as well as outdoors in the spring and summer seasons in the UK.



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The jewel of the  
**JURASSIC  
COAST**

**Words:** Andy Hill-Parker

**Words and pics:** Howard Shep and Dave Adams

The 96 miles that make up the Jurassic coast offer many interesting paddling trips for us paddle boarders, the highlight being the most photographed arc of rock in England, otherwise known as Durdle Door. If simple geology is your thing, then Wiki is the place to go; if you're planning a trip out there, I hope to offer you some advice and a few interesting things to see while you are out on the water.

There are two bays, with Durdle Door being the westerly bay, and the east side makes up what is known as Man O'War bay. Fear not; it's not full of jellyfish. The bay resembles their 'float' from above, which they use as a 'sail' – anyway, enough of jellies.

The first choice you have to make is how you will get there. For fans of inflatable paddleboards, one option is to walk down from the National Trust car park (toilet, shop etc.), put in at Man O'War bay and then paddle round. The stairs down to both bays are very small and steep but have been recently renovated. That's all fine on a quiet day, but get there on a busy day, and it will be heaving which can make things a bit more interesting, especially if you've got a massive backpack on your back.

Another option – and one that keeps you away from the crowds – is to put in at Lulworth Cove and paddle west. It takes around 30-40 minutes to get there on a calm day and at a leisurely pace, but it's worth giving yourself a bit more time as there's plenty to see along the way.





## Lulworth Cove

The Lulworth Estate have a large car park in Lulworth which has facilities, places to get food for humans and even ice creams for dogs if that's your thing. It's a short walk from the car park down to the cove, a World Heritage site that attracts over 500,000 visitors a year. The water in the cove is quite deep and can be a tad chillier than the surrounding waters. It's a haven for sailing boats, and there will be a few moored up.

As you leave the beach and head out beyond the cove, it's worth checking the conditions of the sea on the ocean side. With large cliffs, wave refraction can be a thing when there's a swell running, so it's worth checking the wind and wave forecast before you go. The Magicseaweed app can be pretty reliable for predicting such info.

## Firing range

Turning left out of the cove is not an option as you will be entering an army firing range. The red flags and large explosions are usually a good sign that the range is live. However, if you miss those, then some nice chaps will be out in their boat to correct you. Turning right and about 200 metres westward is the first point of interest known as Stair Hole. You can paddle through two rock tunnels, and the water at times can be crystal clear. It's a trendy spot for coastering groups. There is a small rocky beach you can land on but beware; many fin hungry rocks lurk beneath you.

From Stair Hole, it's around one and a half miles west to Durdle Door. As you approach Man O'War Bay, a small outcrop of rock can be landed on depending on your skill and board. The water on the beachside is much more sheltered from the elements and can be like a millpond; well worth a dip. As you paddle round to Durdle Door, it's worth stopping to assess the situation as to whether you can paddle through the archway.

Keep to the middle if you can, as there are a few rocks on either side of the archway. If there is a swell running, then time it right, and you can 'surf' through it. Once through, it's worth landing on the beach to soak up the surroundings. The ocean floor shelves away quite deeply from the beach, so beware of any swell; timing is everything! Tombstoning off the rocks is not the best way to fill your time. There are a few small caves to explore if you head west along the pebbled beach.

Safety-wise it's always good to travel with a buddy; if that isn't your thing, then a mobile phone or VHF radio should things go wrong.

A SUP paddle around Durdle Door is very rewarding and a definite paddle trip to put on your list. You get to see parts of the rock formation that others don't, and it is truly a remarkable example of nature just being awesome. It's well worth taking a camera as the scenery is stunning, and you'll soon fill up your memory card. A paddle around Durdle Door is the jewel of the Jurassic Coast. Safe paddles, and I hope to see you out on the water.





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# SUP PUP ELLA

**Words and pics:** Stu Gammon – <http://supdudestu.com>

My adventures with my wonderful pup Ella started the very first day I saw her when she was only ten weeks old - one of the first things I did was take her out on the beach for a walk to get her used to the sound of the ocean.

When the water was warmed up, I had her paddling in the shallow water, and soon Ella became confident enough to run in and out of the waves - she absolutely loved it!!

The next stage was to get her used to the paddleboard, and after pumping it up in my lounge and putting a few treats on it, I let her walk around and over it to get used to the board, which she also decided to christen to make her mark!

When the day finally came to get out on the water in March, I chose a very calm day and headed down to the Gower Heritage Centre for an early morning to paddle the river down to Three Cliffs Bay.

Finding a safe place to enter the water, I put Ella's buoyancy aid on and off we went. She took to it like a duck to water, and the river was so calm it looked like glass, with nothing but the sound of the birds and the occasional egret and heron flying past with a few cows grazing on the riverbank alongside us - it was a beautiful and surreal experience.

Approaching the beach at the entrance to the sea, Ella decided to jump into the water and swam across to the sandy beach, running around like a crazy puppy, rolling in the sand and running into the waves. It made me so happy as I knew that this would be a very special bond and friendship and we would have lots of adventures together.

## Three Cliffs Bay

Our first adventure started at Three Cliffs Bay, and since then, we have paddled this many times on our own and with friends. I have also taken many paddling tours down the river with Ella, and she has become very popular with the paddling community - everyone knows her and loves her.









On a summer evening, you might be lucky enough to see the most incredible sunset, where both the sky and the ocean turn red, and you can choose to paddle out to the Cliffs to sit and watch the sunset. There have been opportunities to paddle through the keyhole in the rocks underneath the Three Cliffs on a calm day. On more adventurous days, we have surf, which is excellent for SUP surfing, and when Ella's not rolling around in the sand, SUP surfing is on her radar.

At the entrance to the sea, there is a beautiful lagoon to paddle around and a sandbank where you can sit and relax before we paddle back up the river, which is Ella's favourite spot.

We have paddled this river numerous times, and it is one of the most amazing paddling experiences we have ever done and our number one paddle and experience.

The Gower Peninsula has some of the best beaches and places to SUP and take a walk and has the most spectacular scenery.

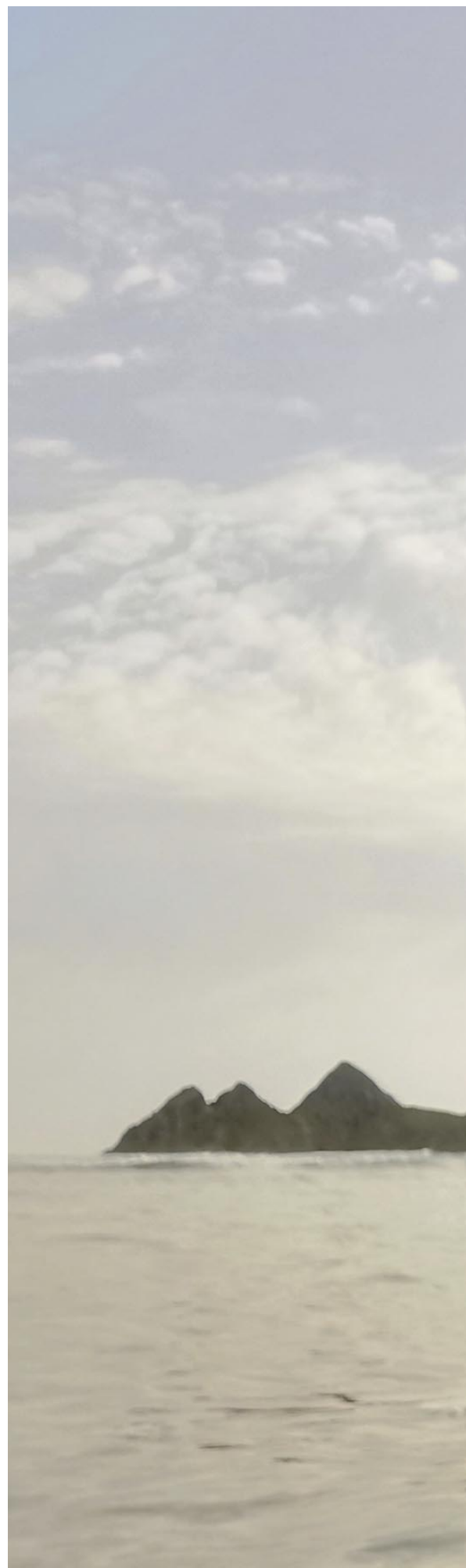
### **Oxwich Bay**

A short drive from the Gower Heritage Centre is another one of our favourites Oxwich Bay. With its huge bay and gorgeous golden sand on a calm day, we paddle out towards Oxwich point, passing the most incredible sight of a landslide that has fallen into the sea, with rocks as big as houses! You can paddle between the rocks on a high tide, which is impressive. However, we have to be careful paddling here as the tide can run very fast, so I'm always very aware of any changes in the weather conditions.

Paddling further on around the coast, there is a small cove and beach with overhanging rocks and a great place to stop for a swim and do some doggy paddling as it is pretty sheltered there.

### **dolphins and seals**

In the distance, you will see the famous Three Cliffs across the bay and if you have good weather and the sea is very calm, it's a fabulous paddle across the bay, and if you are lucky, you might even get to see some dolphins and seals.







Heading back close to the shore takes you past one of my favourite beaches, Crawley woods, with its tall dunes and golden sand - it is a great place to stop. Paddling back towards Oxwich is fabulous, and you get to see the whole beach close up and the small stream that runs into the sea.

It is also a great place to do some SUP surfing, and you can catch some cool waves here.

It's advisable to go in the water on an incoming tide and be very careful as the tidal flow here can be very strong.

Ella always gets excited, heading back towards the car park at Oxwich Bay as she knows it's time for a run and rolls around in the sand. Also, it's a great place to have a BBQ on the beach which means sausages for Ella, which she loves!

It's also a great place to hang out with friends, have a few beers, and light a fire on the beach, watching the sun go down.

### **Rhossili Bay**

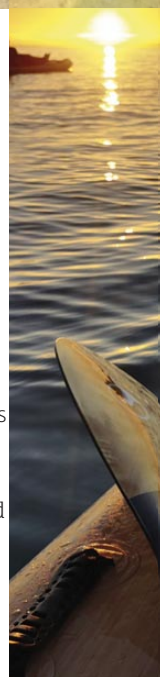
Another one of our favourites is Rhossili Bay, and at sunset, it is one of the most impressive sights to see. Last summer, a group of us headed down there with our boards, our dry bags filled with refreshments and a BBQ on the beach to finish off. It is a bit of a trek, but Ella is always up for the challenge.

The sunset at Rhossili is spectacular and very popular with paddleboarders, surfers, hand gliders, walkers and dog walkers, all wanting to take photos. With a seal colony at Worms Head, you may be lucky to see a seal or dolphin whilst sitting out on the ocean waiting for the sun to go down.

When the sun finally sinks into the sea, it is a magical sight with the sky and sea turning red, and it leaves you with such a calming feeling - knowing it is just you and nature, it is so peaceful and can be emotional.

### **BBQ**

After the sun goes down, the sky turns pink, and it is not long before darkness sets in and time to paddle back to the beach. There were also a few waves on this occasion, with Ella rising to the challenge and showing off her SUP skills. Arriving back at the beach, we quickly lit a fire and started cooking the sausages on the BBQ, with Ella already licking her lips and her eyes fixated on the food. It's a great way to finish off the evening with friends and have a social drink and a chat.





### After-dark glow paddles

At the end of the season last year, as the nights were drawing in, my mate Jon and a few others and I decided to do a few after-dark glow paddles down the river to Three Cliffs Bay with Ella leading the group, which she had got quite used to. The paddle started at dusk with everyone wearing head torches, and I also lined my board with green LED lights and a big torch on the front of the board.

### Bats

What greeted us was unexpected as after a few minutes into the paddle, we had bats flying around us, swooping down and in between us.

Ella looked around in amazement and was engrossed with what was going on and not phased at all and feel she was

the bravest dog I know as it was pitch black apart from our lights shining on the water.

“The sunset at Rhossili is spectacular and very popular with paddleboarders, surfers, hand gliders, walkers and dog walkers, all wanting to take photos.”



## Jumping fish

As we approached the entrance to the sea, we had fish jumping out of the water in front of our boards, attracted by our light again, and Ella was focused on what was happening.

Soon as we hit the beach, we lit a fire quickly as I had prepared earlier by collecting wood for the fire and burying it in the sand for when we arrived. With the fire burning, we toasted marshmallows on sticks dipped in chocolate; however, poor Ella was disappointed as there were no sausages to eat.

Heading back up the river towards Pennard Pill we had a fantastic view of Pennard Castle, lit up by the light of the moon and stars.

Arriving back at my van, we would quickly pack our boards away, light a fire on a fire pit, open a few beers and sit and chat about the experience. By this time, Ella is snuggled up nice and toasty in her blanket, whale eyeing us from the comfort of the van.

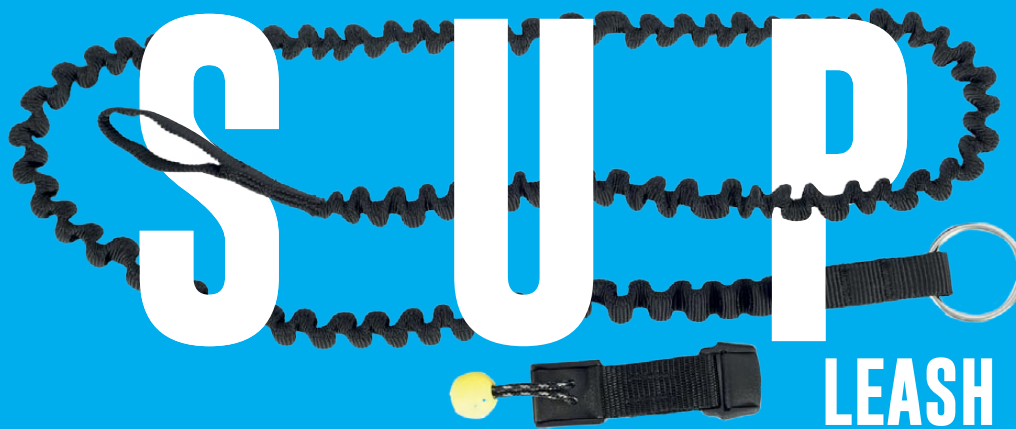
The Gower Peninsula truly is a special place with the most beautiful and fantastic scenery. I feel so lucky to live

here and to be able to share it with my beautiful and very talented SUP Pup Ella.

## Spain

My next planned adventure is a road trip in the summer with my partner Deb and Ella. We are heading over to Europe, starting in northern Spain, travelling south to explore the Spanish coastline first, and then working our way across to Portugal. I am looking forward to finding some fabulous lakes to paddle on and, of course, out on the ocean, and I look forward to sharing this experience with you in the future.





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# CALLING... TOO!



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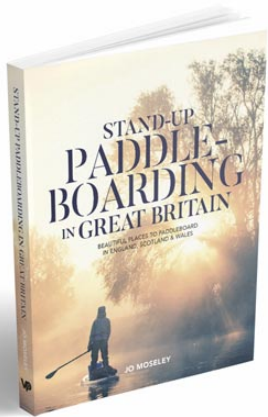
# Q&A

# JO MOSELEY

By Supjunkie

**Words:** Sarah Thornely **Pics:** Jo Moseley

Sarah first interviewed Jo in the June issue of SUPM last year (<https://standuppaddlemag.co.uk/jo-moseley/>). The subjects of the chat centred around Jo's coast to coast paddle and her new series of podcasts, 'The Joy of SUP'. Jo has now published her first book, 'Stand-Up Paddle Boarding in Great Britain', where Jo shares her joy of SUP with others and show what incredible places we have to explore by SUP in this country. Take it away Sarah...



**So much has happened in your life over the last year Jo, but can we first backtrack and remember your film Brave Enough. Can you let us know a little bit about the film for those who don't know and also the film's journey and where it took you?**

Thank you, Sarah; I'm hugely honoured to be invited back to share my SUP journey with you. It's so kind of you.

Our film Brave Enough - A Journey Home to Joy is about my coast to coast adventure in 2019, when I paddle boarded 162 miles from Liverpool to Leeds. The route took me through Merseyside, Lancashire and Yorkshire along the Leeds Liverpool Canal and Aire + Calder Navigation.

I was picking up litter and raising money for the surf therapy charity, The Wave Project and the 2 Minute Foundation, which encourages us to take just two minutes each day to pick up litter wherever we are. I'm proud to say I'm now an ambassador for the 2 Minute Foundation.

Award-winning filmmaker Frit Tam of Passion Fruit Pictures joined me on the adventure, and together, as firm friends, we created the film. I didn't expect it would be anything more than perhaps a three-minute YouTube film at the outset! In fact, Brave Enough is 57 minutes long and has been selected for five prestigious film festivals, including Kendal Mountain Film Festival, Sheffield Adventure Film Festival and Shextreme Film Festival.

It's also been screened online for four sell-out evenings. The outdoor store Alpkit recently held a wonderful film night with refreshments and Q&A.

As well as charting the journey coast to coast and the impact of plastic pollution on our inland waterways, Brave Enough is a story about the grief of losing my mum in 2013, my difficult menopause, juggling life as a single mum and ultimately, finding my way home to joy and happiness.

It's about recognising how short and precious life is, and if we have a tiny inkling of a dream, we should give ourselves the chance to make it come true. It's not about being hugely confident or courageous but more about being brave enough to take that first step and then the next. The coast to coast was a dream to pull me to the future as my youngest son left home for university. Aged 54, I was facing the prospect of being an empty nester and the start of a new chapter.



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**That's an incredible story Jo, and we know how much the film means to you – it's so much more than a film about the physical journey, it's your journey too – how can people view it?**

Brave Enough is available to rent and buy online to watch at home via Vimeo. We are also partnering with SUP instructors and schools who would like to hold a film night as an extra social event for their members. The lovely Ana Teubler, an instructor in Tonbridge, Kent, has screened the film twice, and we've had such fantastic feedback. Frit and I welcome all sorts of ideas to share Brave Enough. We appreciate the love it has received and enjoy following the film's journey. Here is the link to Brave Enough on Vimeo with a trailer of the film:

<https://vimeo.com/ondemand/braveenough>

**Your podcast, The Joy Of SUP Podcast, is now in season 3 – can you let us know how you choose your guests for the show?**

Thank you! Yes, I've just completed season 3 – another series of wonderful guests, concluding with our first international episode with Vikki Weston of She SUPs in Sydney, Australia.

My goal with the podcast is to share all the health, happiness, friendship, possibilities and adventure of SUP through uplifting stories.

My measure of success is if one listener is encouraged to get out on the water safely due to hearing an episode, and if that brings them joy, I'll be thrilled. As a result, I choose guests based on three things:

- 1) they love paddle boarding,
- 2) they have an interesting story and
- 3) they have a generous heart.

By that, I mean they also want to encourage and welcome others – usually but not exclusively women – onto the water happily and safely. It's about using their story and experience to support others. I'm not looking for the biggest social media followings or the fanciest reels on Instagram. I'm looking for the story behind the photos and how that can help the audience know they belong on the water and in the SUP community. We cover body confidence, plastic pollution, SUP with a pup, mental health and different disciplines such as white water SUP, SUP yoga, SUP surfing, adventuring and racing.

I have a notebook of guests I'd love to interview for Season 4 and 5! I don't think I will ever run out of guests because so many incredible women have something special to share. I haven't dared approach most future guests I'd like to interview yet as I don't want to say, *"I'd love you on my podcast in about nine months, please,"* and then expect them to wait! It feels rude, but they are in my notebook!





**Have you been uplifted by the success and the number of downloads for the podcast?**

Oh absolutely! I've been blown away by download numbers and all the 5-star ratings and reviews on Apple. I'm also really touched when a guest or I receive a private message from a listener saying that they have been encouraged by the story and will take a lesson or get their board back out of the garage. It means the world to me.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank Simon Hutchinson of SUPfm podcast for really leading the way in paddle boarding podcasts and being such a support. Also, the team at SUP Hub NI for being fellow podcasters. The motto of my podcast is 'We Rise by Lifting Others', and they all embody that message too. I think we all have an 'abundance mentality' in that we see there is room for us all, and by promoting each other, we build a strong, safe SUP community.

It was a huge leap of faith launching with my first guest, world record holder and environmental campaigner Cal Major, on Christmas Eve 2020, and it's been a very steep learning curve from knowing nothing about podcasting. I genuinely believe we are just getting started.

Bluefin SUP has kindly sponsored the podcast this season, and I am hugely grateful for their generous support.

**I believe the podcast and film have both been nominated for various awards – can you let us know about them?**

Thank you, yes! The podcast was a semi-finalist for the Shextreme Film Festival and shortlisted for the Sports Podcast Awards. We are currently in the early stages of the British Podcast Awards. I've just submitted a 'highlight' reel showing the message of the podcast and the range of guests.

**Now, most people write a book first, which gets turned into a film! You have done the opposite – how did the book idea come about, and can you let us know a little bit about the Publisher?**

Ah yes! I think initially, people thought the book was my story of the coast to coast when in fact, it's a guidebook about beautiful places to paddleboard in the UK.

The inspiration came because SUP has changed my life so much for the better; I wanted to share that joy with others and show what incredible places we have to explore in this country. I could also see the huge growth in paddle boarding through 2020, and I wanted to use the book as an opportunity to welcome new people to the community and give them ideas about how we can be safe, responsible and environmentally responsible paddlers.

Although it is a guidebook, rather than simply writing about where I visited, I also share the history of the place, whom I paddled with, what the area means to them and what marine life we saw. I weave the stories together and share what I learned from each trip. Then there are the cake stops, maps, resources, transport and information about local SUP schools and guides who can accompany you if you want to visit with their knowledge and expertise. I give tips on getting started – take a lesson with a qualified instructor – kit and ways we can make a difference to marine conversation and our inland waterways.

The publishers are Vertebrate Publishing, based in Sheffield, and they recently won Small Press of the Year for the north of England in the British Book Awards. Their books are all around Inspiring Adventure and cover climbing, wild swimming, running, climbing and cycling and personal memoirs of adventuring. This is their first paddlesports book, so it is another leap of faith for them. I am deeply grateful they have trusted me with their first SUP book.



**When the framework for the book was established, how did you go about setting a plan for your research around the country?**

Great question! Although we have very few books about beautiful places to SUP in Great Britain, I wanted, as a courtesy to the authors and readers, to ensure I chose different places than those in current guides or magazines, so that was one element of the planning. I also was keen to show the possibilities of SUP and introduce different ideas of what a SUP trip might include. I wanted to show we can paddle in the city and the countryside, on canals, rivers, lakes, lochs, coasts, salt marshes, islands, docks and harbours. As far as possible, I hoped for a geographical spread, an option to make it any easier or more difficult paddle and extras like SUP snorkelling, sunrise SUPs and a very long tunnel! Having spoken at the Royal Geographical Society, I was also aware of the detrimental impact of 'honeypots' on the environment and people's experience of a place. Balancing this with 'dream lists' played a part too.

I decided at the outset that meeting people to paddleboard with and including their inspiring stories would be key. Their local knowledge as authors, instructors and adventurers would be invaluable and of course, paddling with others is a safety measure. I always remember a guest on the podcast, Anni Ridsdill Smith of Frangipani SUP and BSUPA, telling me that it could take a lifetime to understand your local body of water, and I had over 30 places to visit and write about in five months!

I had a year to complete the book, although, for the first seven months, we were in lockdowns one and two! I was very conscious of lockdown rules and respectful of people's time and wellbeing. Even though I could technically have possibly argued that writing the book was my work and perhaps could have travelled for research, I didn't feel that was the right thing to do in my heart. As I said, I knew meeting other paddle boarders would make a huge difference to the richness of the research. However, I couldn't justify asking them to spend time with me, even socially distanced on the water, when they maybe couldn't see their granny or best friend in person. So a lot of the initial time was spent looking at maps, researching ideas and contacting lovely people keen to share their special places.

"I decided at the outset that meeting people to paddleboard with and including their inspiring stories would be key."

I have a huge map of the country that I would look at for hours to visualise the routes and walk around!

**How did you find the hospitality of those you contacted for help?**

Oh wow, everyone was so generous and welcoming! Of course, we had Covid rules and challenges to work around, which did add a bit of logistical complexity. I was also so aware that people wanted to travel to see friends and family, so it was very humbling that they found time to see me.

**Did all of the places and people you visited make it into the book?**

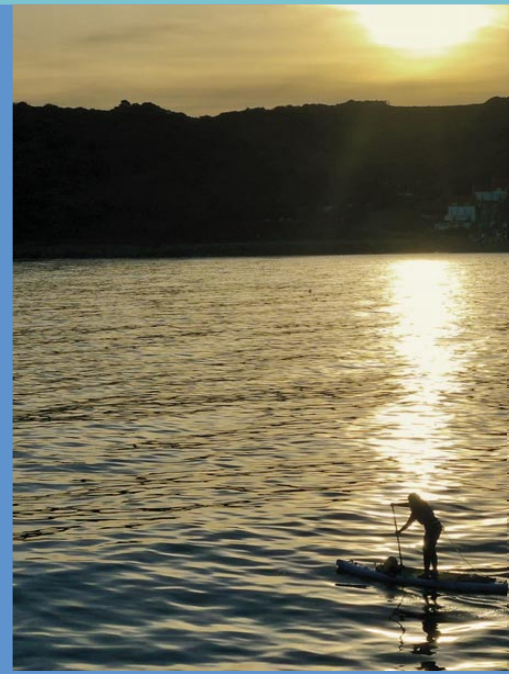
Just one place didn't make it into the book. It was a fantastic paddle, but the parking infrastructure was not in place, and it would be difficult to reach by public transport. I didn't think it would be responsible to the environment or local community to put it in the book.

Researching and speaking to so many paddlers who knew their areas well, I trusted that the places I visited would be amazing and would be included. That local knowledge was invaluable.

I would have liked to have gone to a couple of extra places, but I had a deadline and word count I was limited to! Another time maybe!

**Can you give us an idea of the practicalities of writing a book – we are guessing you would need to be pretty organised and methodical?**

Yes, absolutely, and I'll be honest, the process was much harder and more work than I ever imagined! I think that's probably the case for all first-time authors for a book like this. There were many moving parts to consider – weather and wind forecasts, tides, changing Covid regulations, a staycation boom meaning accommodation was sometimes hard to find, people needing to self-isolate, and changes to local cafes and transport! One cafe changed hands, closed because of a fire, was rebuilt and opened again in a few months! Keeping the book up to date at times was quite a task! Things developed in the SUP world too, as the community has grown, and I wanted the information to be as accurate and safety aware as possible until we went to print.







“Even if readers aren’t able to visit a place for themselves, I would love them to feel like they have in some way experienced them from home.”

Also, I was travelling so far, from the Lizard Peninsula to Inverness, Ullswater to Wells Next the Sea, Cullercoats in the northeast to Oxwich Bay on the Gower Peninsula – many miles apart, I had to plan my schedule wisely. I often had just ‘one shot’ to paddle because they were so far from where I live. I had so many notebooks and reminders in my diary and phone. As a single mum, I am used to juggling many different balls, but this was off the scale at times! However organised you are, sometimes things fall through, and you have to respond as calmly and positively as possible.

I think there are lessons in there for our paddle boarding journeys too. We can plan-plan-plan, and on the day, the conditions aren’t right or are safe but not as ‘blue skies and sunshine’ as we had hoped. We have to react wisely and do the right thing with as much grace and optimism as possible. Sometimes I had to bring my own sunshine to a location – this was the Great British summer, after all – and that was a great lesson! SUP can teach us a lot!

But then, there were such moments of spectacular beauty and magic – porpoises in turquoise Welsh waters, sleeping overnight on a beach on my board Grace, listening to the inspiring sound of band practice after a sunset paddle, the glassiest of waters – that no amount of planning could have foreseen. Sometimes they took my breath away. I won’t lie; I shed a few tears of joy and gratitude.

**How did you feel about writing the book? Did you have any self-doubt, or have you always felt confident about the content and subject matter and your ability?**

I knew that the places, people, and SUP were wonderful things to share, and I never doubted that. Having paddled in these

spots, I knew that they each had so much to offer and would lift people’s hearts. We had experienced each of them safely and joyfully, and I loved all the extra things I discovered and researched.

What I doubted was whether I could do them justice. Could I relay the story as well as I hoped? Could I share what a gorgeous place this was and what made it unique and convey the information so that someone else can experience it too? That’s where my doubts lay. I genuinely hope I have been able to do that.

Of course, you can’t book dolphins to swim by, ask an otter to play in the sea or a kingfisher to fly past just at the right time as they did for us! I hope people who go to the places will find their own special moments and the treasures that I know are there.

Even if readers aren’t able to visit a place for themselves, I would love them to feel like they have in some way experienced them from home.

I never wish to become complacent about the honour it has been to write the book, and I’ll always care that readers experience a place safely and happily that I’ve shared.

**You must be so proud to now add ‘published author’ to your skillset?**

Thank you, I am. It is a dream come true. I’m still not sure I believe it, to be honest. I’d pitched quite different book ideas before and been rejected, so this has been a wonderful opportunity.

**Can you let us know how readers can get a copy of your book?**

Of course, thank you! Vertebrate Publishing publishes it, and here is the link: [www.adventurebooks.com/products/stand-](http://www.adventurebooks.com/products/stand-up-paddle)





up\_paddleboarding\_in\_great\_britain. You can also buy it online from Amazon and Bookshop.org, and lovely independent shops.

**We also understand you have more exciting news. Are you able to share that with us at this time?**

Yes, I am writing a second book about 1001 Paddleboarding Tips! I hope it will give people many helpful ideas to plan safely and happily and develop their skills and experience. I have had the most fantastic help once again from the SUP community. Once again, I get to cheerlead and share their knowledge and expertise and bring my tips.

**You have an incredible SUP story, Jo. Do you believe that your confidence in completing the coast-to-coast paddle has led you to take on the bigger challenges of a film, podcast and book?**

Great question! The coast to coast taught me that you don't have to be super confident; you have to be brave enough to follow your dream by taking the first step and then the next, even though inside you might be feeling sick with nerves! I often think about a quote from the film *We Bought a Zoo*, where the character Benjamin Mee says, *"You know, sometimes all you need is 20 seconds of insane courage. Literally twenty seconds of just embarrassing bravery. And I promise you, something great will come of it."*

The last three years have been built on many moments of 'embarrassing bravery' coupled with everyday research and work hours. A bit like a long adventure, day by day, stroke by stroke, chipping away at your goal.

Whether it's creating a film with Frit, launching a podcast or writing a book, it's been about being stubbornly hopeful that I am celebrating SUP and the community and creating something that will bring joy to others and make a difference to the oceans.

**Jo, you are a constant supporter of paddlers and women in particular. Can you describe how others have personally supported you?**

Oh gosh, so many ways and no one could be more of a support than you, Sarah. You embody the SUP spirit!

In 2019 I was a British Canoeing She Paddles Ambassador, and the support I



received from Cadi Lambert and Becky Lovatt was extraordinary. They were there at the finish line of my coast to coast with fellow ambassador Emma Kitchen, and Emma joined me for the last few minutes in her kayak. There was a huge thunderstorm, and we were all soaking wet but laughing, crying and hugging.

Frit Tam offering to join me and make the film was an extraordinary act of generosity, and I value our friendship deeply. We appreciate everyone who watches *Brave Enough* and tells their friends about it as a team. Every guest on my podcast makes a huge difference by sharing her story and knowledge, and every single listener is important to me.

Of course, I couldn't have written the book without the help of the SUP community sharing their special places,

local knowledge and hearts with me and the experts who contributed to the technical information. Every time my wonderful editor Jess thought the acknowledgements page was finished, I was like, *"Oh, sorry Jess, there is another person I need to thank!"* My friend Jason Elliott, the first person to paddle the coast to coast trail, is always there encouraging me and stretching my dreams when I doubt myself.

**Are there any particular brands or paddlers you would like to thank?**

I am very grateful to Bluefin SUP for giving me Grace, my 12ft board, to paddle coast to coast in 2019. We have had such fun together researching the book. I want to thank Alex Feechan and FINDRA for gifting the fabulous merino wool neck warmers for the pre-order



### LINKS TO FOLLOW JO:

Website: [www.jomoseley.com](http://www.jomoseley.com)

Twitter: @healthyhappy50

Facebook: The Joy of SUP Podcast and Jo Moseley

Instagram: @thejoyofsuppodcast\_ and @healthyhappy50

The Joy of SUP Podcast:

<https://thejoyofsuppodcast.buzzsprout.com/>

launch of my book. They are so beautiful, and I have been wearing FINDRA for 6-7 years now. I am proud to be an ambassador for the 2 Minute Foundation.

I will never forget my first lesson on Derwent Water with Bo from Lake District Paddleboarding in 2016. That afternoon quite literally changed my life.

Huge thanks to Alan Taylor of SUP North UK for helping me choose my first board, a Starboard Astro Zen, one very cold day in Southport when I tested out his boards on the marina in the snow and hail!

I have also had a lot of support from the Canal & River Trust over the years and love partnering with them to share the joy of our inland waterways. So many paddle boarders have inspired me over the years.

I met Cal Major in 2017, and her adventures and commitment to the oceans from her SUP helped me believe that maybe I could make a difference in some way. I am proud to be an ambassador for her Seaful Charity.

And, of course, my thanks go to Vertebrate Publishing for trusting me with their first SUP book; I hope I have done them proud.

### Book review

I have been lucky enough to have been given a sneak peek of Jo's book, and I am mightily impressed. It is full of beautiful images, and it is a superb reference book for incredible places to paddleboard! There is a wealth of information on over 30 venues in Wales, Scotland and England – with everything you need to know about how to get there, where to launch, distance of paddle, route info, where to eat, local SUP and water-related businesses and further resource links.

At the beginning of the book is everything you need to know to start your SUP journey with a huge emphasis on safety, without taking anything away from the pure joy of paddle boarding – I look forward to fully reviewing Jo's excellent book in the next issue of SUPM.



Thank you so much for your time, Jo – and keep doing what you are doing, you are a force of uplifting positivity in the SUP community, and we wish you every success with your books!





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Emma coaching



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)

@WotbikiniSUP



# Kate Simmons



Katie describes SUP touring as a constant balancing act of fear of the unknown with a burning desire to explore. In this interview, Katie discusses how her paddling journey, which started at the age of 15, has led her to plan her most demanding adventure yet – a 1000km circumnavigation of Wales.

Photos: Tom Furey

[www.facebook.com/basecamp.paddleboarding](https://www.facebook.com/basecamp.paddleboarding)  
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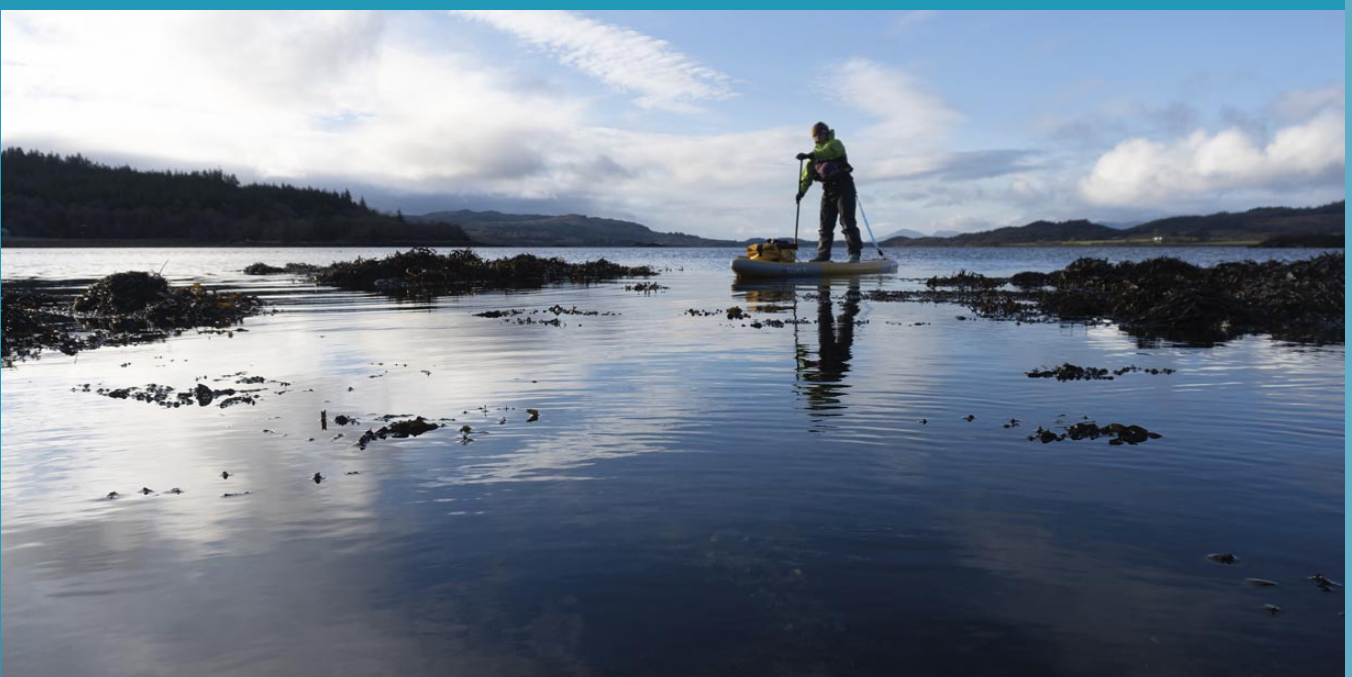


## How did you discover paddling?

I was quite a wild child! When I was fifteen, my mum and dad decided that I needed to get organised and have discipline in my life, so they made me join the Air Cadets - which I loved. Suddenly I was camping, learning about bushcraft, climbing, canoeing and kayaking. After my GCSEs, I completed an adventure training course that led to becoming an outdoor pursuits apprentice. This enabled me to complete my raft guide training and coaching qualifications. I then worked as a raft guide on the River Dee and the Tryweryn. Later on, I moved to South Wales and worked for the Cardiff International White Water Centre, where, at the time, I was one of only two female raft guides.

## How did you discover SUP?

I discovered SUP over ten years ago, so this was way before it gained the popularity it has now here in the UK. A good friend of mine, Anthony Ing (Stand Up Paddleboard UK), had returned from a trip to America and bought a few of Corran Addison's Soul SUPs. He was looking for a couple of enthusiastic paddlers for a photo shoot so, along with Peter Glyn Firth, I volunteered. Ant taught us the basics, and by the afternoon, we were paddling the Grade 2 rapids at Mile End Mill, Llangollen. I remember us spending all day running and re-running the drops, playing on the waves and constantly falling in! I just loved the challenge, and it was such great fun!





### **I know SUP adventure coastal touring has become the focus for you these days. How did this come about?**

I was paddle boarding on white water, but at that time, the scene hadn't developed in North Wales – people would occasionally pop over, but more often than not, I would find myself paddling alone. This meant I didn't have anyone to bounce off ideas with apart from a few kayaking friends. So, a few years ago, I took up SUP touring. I had always been interested in coastal paddling, but admittedly, I found it very confusing and consequently off-putting – it's a process that takes a lot of time and commitment. With lots of training and practice, I now enjoy the intricacies of planning and executing these trips and circumnavigations. And I have been so lucky with my partner Tom Furey. He assists with planning the bigger expeditions and accompanies me on them. It is really interesting working together because we see journeys slightly differently. It's just great bouncing ideas off each other to ensure our successful adventures. His belief in me is fantastic.

### **What is it about coastal paddling that keeps you going back for more?**

I find there is this fire that burns deep inside me, that wants to complete further exploration and equally has a fear of the unknown. Both these elements drive me to do more. I love being fully immersed in the wilderness, and I feel you have to earn your adventures. You must be switched on with your tide timings and understand where weather windows fall to allow your trip to go well. There's nothing better than getting tidal assistance or timing your arrival right at a particular headland to gain safe passage.

### **What drives this passion?**

The love for the sea has always been there - from completing my diving courses to sailing across the Atlantic. I've seen the ocean in so many different ways, but SUP adds that extra vulnerability because I feel so much more connected to the ecosystems and the incredible wildlife of the British Isles. It doesn't matter how many times I see a seal, a pod of dolphins or a bazaar of Guillemots - it is always incredible and a privilege to share the water with them.

### **How did your fascination for paddling the Menai Strait develop?**

The Menai has always intrigued me since I was a little girl. We would drive over Britannia Bridge, and I would stare at the water, wondering what was going on and why. The first time I SUP'd this area of water was on a course – a group of us paddled on a full spring tide, and it was incredible! From the speed of the water to standing waves to a huge peeling eddy, I was in and out of the features and playing on every element! Even now, when I paddle this water, it gives me very different experiences. I love the puzzle I have to put together to ensure the timing is right for the particular experience I am after. Whether it is understanding the times of the tides correctly, wanting to play on the Swellies or the magical experience of paddling under the bridges, it is a special place to be.

### **What's on your 'to do' list?**

Having resigned from working full time for the NHS, I am now focused on building upon my professional accreditation. I aim to complete my Expedition Guide assessment with the Water Skills

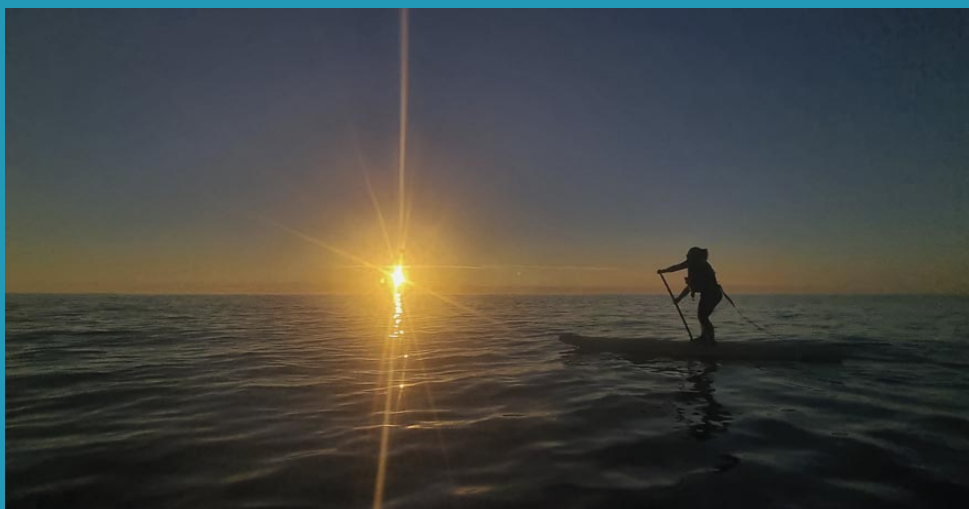


Academy. I launched my business (Basecamp Paddle Boarding), and it's already shaping up to be a busy year, so I'm stoked about this. And I am involved in many events for #shepaddles which I am really excited about.

### **Any self-goals?**

Tom and I plan to circumnavigate Wales (if the weather window allows) while supporting a few different charities. Our planned trip is over 1000km - this will test us both and hopefully not the marriage we are about to start! I am also keen to paddle around a few of the Scottish isles, but we will need an extended period of settled weather to allow safe crossings. Some of the isles have over 10km of open ocean between them. My list never seems to get any smaller!

“I had always been interested in coastal paddling, but found it very confusing and consequently off-putting – it's a process that takes a lot of commitment.”



# Vikki McPherson

Vikki's paddling journey can only be described as inspiring! We discuss how stepping out of her comfort zone has led to her supporting women in her local community and why the role of a British Canoeing #ShePaddles Ambassador is so important in celebrating the diversity of women's voices.



Photo: Eilidh Connolly

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## What tempted you to have a go at paddleboarding?

For a couple of years, my older children had been going SUP'ing, and I would sit watching them, thinking it looked terrific fun. At the time, I didn't want to go on a paddleboard because I didn't have a lot of water confidence or energy – this was when my youngest son was still very little. Then in May 2020, I booked a family session, and it turned out that my daughter could not come along, so we had this free space. I suddenly felt brave and decided I would take her place!

## What was your overriding memory of your first time on the water?

I remember just feeling so fortunate that we could paddle on such a beautiful and local loch. It was very tranquil that day, and I was just blown away by this fantastic feeling - of both physically being surrounded by water and experiencing nature!



Photo: Jim Gibson



**Congratulations on being selected as a British Canoeing #ShePaddles ambassador. How has your paddling journey influenced your view of the role?**

I am just so passionate about being an ambassador because of the change I experienced. Before SUP, I would describe myself as quite shy. When you have been a parent (as I have) for 13 years, it is easy to forget your sense of self, have fun, look after your mental health, and make time for yourself. Paddleboarding has made me jump outside my box! These days I am like, where did this person come from? I want to encourage and support women to get out of their comfort zones. I

paddle with ladies in my village, with other mums, and it has become quite clear to me how important it is (as adults) that we find our passion, find our joy and just go for it!

**Can you describe what it was that made you want to continue to develop your SUP skills?**

That first time I got on a SUP, I remember I was shaking, and it felt like such an alien experience. But by the end of the two hours, I was totally hooked. I think I had only two or three sessions before I knew I needed to learn more and wanted to know more, and I just wanted to be able to push my boundaries, improve my knowledge and

technique, and do as much paddling as I could. This was quite a shocker for my kids because I had previously been so scared of trying SUP!

**How do you achieve a family/SUP balance?**

It's easier in the summer because the kids and I can all go and stay the whole day at the loch, swimming and paddling. The little one comes on the front of my board, and we all have a great time. In the winter, it's more challenging because it's cold and the kids don't want to go. It takes a bit of planning to make sure everyone is looked after so I can go out with a friend for a weekly paddle.



“Paddleboarding has made me jump outside my box! These days I am like, where did this person come from?”

Photo: Eilidh Connolly

Photo:  
Donald MacPherson



Photo: Eilidh Connolly



Photo: Eilidh Connolly

### What are your plans for this year?

There are so many local women who would like to have a go at SUP. They see my posts on social media and post comments - they are so keen and think it looks amazing. Unfortunately, it is too expensive for us to book a provider regularly, and I don't have the equipment to lend. So, I am just at the beginning stages of speaking with my local canoe club, and hopefully, we will be able to develop SUP as part of their provision, which would be fantastic. If this is not possible, my alternative plan would be to start a paddleboarding club.

### And for yourself?

In terms of my development, I feel I could learn a lot from watching other coaches and working alongside another coach until I'm qualified. I would love to offer SUP sessions weekly for all age ranges eventually.

### What qualifications are you hoping to achieve?

I am starting with the British Canoeing Sheltered Water Coach Award. I don't have a background in outdoor sports or coaching, but when I did my BC Core Coach course in August of last year - I loved it! It was such a different perspective from what I have studied before, and it was amazing!

### As well as flat water, I have seen some of your social posts showing you playing on white water. How did this develop?

I had my first go on white water in the winter of 2020, not long after my first time on a paddleboard. White water is my latest challenge. Some days I like a tranquil paddle on my local loch, and then some

Photo: Eilidh Connolly



days, I like some excitement, and I get on the river Dee. I am supported by Jim Gibson, a fantastic coach and pivotal here in Scotland. He encourages many female paddlers and has quite a few prodigies, including Emy McLeod and Jessica Phillip.

### What would you say to women who have watched the #ShePaddles ambassadors over the past few years, who would love to apply but are doubting whether they have anything to offer the role?

It is fantastic that there are just so many different ways to approach the role of a British Canoeing Ambassador. Passionate female voices come in so many different forms - whether it's about nature, women's rights, being a leisure paddler or moving up the ladder professionally - and they are all great to hear and celebrate. I am constantly messaging women and saying you have to do it next year because you'd be amazing, and you'd bring this or that aspect to it. If you've got a passion for paddling, then you just have to go for it.

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# HOWARD SHEP

**Interview:** Tez Plavenieks **Pics:** Howard Shep

Howard Shep is a master snapper from Dorset. With plenty of cracking spots to shoot from, and riders to point a lens at, Howard's always on hand for some camera action (or at least, that's how it looks from his Instagram feed). We caught up with Howard to get more about the man himself.



**Tell us a little about your background. Are you a SUP or watersports nut yourself, or do you like the subject matter?**

I was born in Kampala, Uganda. After which, I lived and grew up in Vanuatu in the South Pacific islands, where I guess my love affair with the ocean grew. I'm certainly not a technical photog at all, not in the slightest bit, as you can no doubt tell from my pics. For me, it's about the 'moment' and documenting a split second. I tend to try and keep my feet dry. But man, if I had a housing and wetsuit, I could visualise my next chapter.



**Where are your usual shooting haunts, and what makes them special?**

I'm fortunate that where I live is on the UK's south coast here in Dorset, where I use the spectacular Jurassic Coast to satisfy my love of the awesome rugged coastline on offer, with its clifftops and stunning beaches. You'll find me wandering the sand mostly though somewhere west of Bournemouth's pier where my footprints are etched probably forever in Branksome's beach.

I do tend to look for somewhere I get to enjoy being, and the quieter the car park, the more remote, the better.

**Do you have any particular favourite locations to photograph – home or away?**

I love finding new places, the more rugged, remote and quiet, the better. And love Chapmans Pool locally and Kimmeridge Bay mainly because of the effort it takes me to get to them. The sense of adventure is always what adds to my day out. I love road trips, probably from days in California, Nevada and Arizona. We're fortunate and take it for granted with what's around our corners for those of us who enjoy the outdoors here. However, I wouldn't turn down a trip to a warmer climate if I was offered one.

**What are your favourite type of conditions to shoot in? (Sunny, obvs – ed).**

I'm not a big 'sunny photog' type photographer, and I'd naturally love to occasionally enjoy great light and big blue sky. I mean, I'd be totally nuts not to, right, but the golden hour is excellent for those photogs who chase that particular light and



are motivated by that kind of shot, but I chase whatever the conditions might be on any given day and whoever might be going in the water on that given day.

**And what about watery disciplines.**

**Which do you prefer to shoot and why?**

This is a fantastic reminder to me of what I enjoy. I really and truly love watching anyone taking on a wave - wave riders for sure. But any discipline, truthfully... and any kinds of conditions.





**Got any particular riders who are always suitable for some action?**

I'm lucky where I live to know and see Olympians. British team representatives and former world champions, sponsored riders, touring pros and athletes in the water. But it's the 'anonymous' wetsuits I love watching. I can relate. There are well-known names to those who know those said names. Those are the magical split seconds. No matter who you are. My camera aims for 'everyman' rather than the 'name'.

**Do you walk through the shots you snap beforehand, or are they spontaneous?**

Yes, sometimes I do. Although it purely depends on who might be around. If it's like the wind and waves. Have to go with it organically and let it play out naturally. Let's see where this goes today, kind of sessions are the best for me.







**What's your fave pic you captured to date, and why?**

I think my favourite pics are usually the ones that aren't necessarily technically the best. If I thought for one minute that I could take a technically correct pic, I'd be truly shocked anyway...

I like authenticity, so if I can find an athlete and take a pic with a connection, an eye contact, or a smile, I love capturing smiles. A natural enjoyment, a natural thrill of catching a wave, those are my favourite. Smiles and laughter, interactions and connections. Stories... And I have a lot.



**Do you find the same old faces appear when they know you're on the ground with camera equipment?**

Absolutely YES! But that's ok because it works both ways. Although I'm quite sure some people will avoid me if they know I'm there. I might get a call or text to see if I'm around..., but mainly I think they humour and tolerate me mostly.

**Is there a noticeable change to how each rider conducts his/herself when you're firing off shots?**

Oh, there are always some of you guys who're up for some extra photo fun when they see my white lens. I love that too. The body language changes; I can see the whites of their eyes looking, searching..., but in truth, it makes my part all the easier – done deal.

**Got any specific photography goals you're working on?**

I'd love to see the balance of women locally. I'm 100% story-driven, so I'd like to chase and support that aspect more to improve

naturally and to 'get that shot'. I'm driven by not having got it yet. I'm not a front cover type photographer. Although that would be awesome and make me super proud, of course. I'd love to be able to honour them, and to get the shot that I'll know shows the respect I have for that person. Lots of goals. One day at a time.

**What about riders you want to work with? Does anyone spring to mind you haven't already captured?**

I'd love to rhyme off many household names for you, but I'd like to find a new local rider who is open to being photographed and doesn't mind my lens being aimed at them for an hour.

I think and believe I might have photographed every local rider there is. But there's always one more surprise to try and be prepared for. My batteries are always charged in total readiness.

Otherwise, I rely on someone pointing out to me that that person over there is worth a shot.



**Tell us what equipment you use and why?**

I use a Fuji X system, and I have and love my Fuji X-T3 with battery grip and pockets full of spare batteries. Mainly because of its ergonomics, and I love the idea of it looking like a film camera firstly. And I know my camera's controls like the back of my hand and without needing to feel as though I should have a university degree.

I shoot manually, so I love the controls I can change without taking my eyes from the viewfinder, and I get the in-camera results I like and that are 'real' to me.

**What's your favourite ever shot and why?**

I love the iconic James Dean shot taken in the rain in Times Square, New York City, 1955 and photographed by Dennis Stock. And would love to have taken that one for sure, and I'd also love to have taken the iconic Bridget Bardot pic of her smoking that Terry O'Neil took.

**Any final thoughts on the SUP and watersports scene in the Bournemouth area?**

It's incredible; it's huge, it's thriving, it's friendly, it's supportive, it's varied, it's the place to be, and it's positive. I'm a lucky guy.

**Thanks and praise?**

Thanks to you for giving me such a huge and very grateful lift. I love film, thank you, Dad...I miss you.

There are just so many paddlers, SUP surfers, foilers, etc. RW at Hypr Hawaii (in particular, thank you for your generous and unwavering support).

What a great ride finding one's vocation and following one's passion... I am just living my balance with continued naive energy and keeping it simple and riding 'my wave' sincerely super grateful.



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# Misty morning PADDLES

**Words and pics:** Mike Spencer

Dawn call paddles can often be special. It certainly takes motivation to get up and at them early doors. But if you can muster the energy, it'll usually be worth it. A case in point is here. Read on for Mike Spencer's ode to misty morning paddles.

**I've always been a water baby! Whether that was competitive swimming when I was younger or catching a wave on a plywood bodyboard on family holidays, I've always enjoyed getting wet! In time, it progressed to surfing and windsurfing, and whilst I became reasonably proficient in both, my location was the drawback to more time on the water.**

Family and work were located in the centre of the country, and whilst this may seem a significant drawback, in reality, it did have some advantages. The UK's east, west, and south coasts were a mere 2½ hours away maximum by car, which is not a big deal to me, especially at 'daft o'clock', when, barring the lorry traffic recent times, the roads are relatively quiet.

An often overlooked benefit is that there are usually waves somewhere on one of our coasts, so being centrally-based, a day off or weekend could usually score some interest!

All very nice, and then along came paddle boarding into my life. Suddenly here was my toy of choice! Hardboard or inflatable, flat water, wavy water, windy (windsup option available), ocean, river, or canal – even easy to put on a plane! (well, the ISUP version anyway!).

The iSUP must be the most versatile toy created for watersports and outdoor enthusiasts. Mine is forever in the boot on day trips where there's a chance for a float. Unlike hardboards which invariably get transported on roof racks and are therefore vulnerable to theft when leaving a vehicle parked, ISUP is simply deflated and stored in a locked boot! It leaves you free to climb the mountain or hike the route, knowing there's a good chance your kit will be safe upon your return! It meant that many of us were exploring different parts of the ocean where we would usually spend time. For myself, it has led to more wildlife encounters than I've previously experienced.

I used to float down the canal on my lunch breaks to colleagues' amusement as the canal was almost adjacent to the office!

Anyway, thank you, all was going nicely when along came a certain pandemic.

Suddenly we are being instructed to 'stay at home', 'work from home', and certainly do not travel except for 'work' or to collect groceries! Indeed watersports were initially off the agenda, even for those living by the sea or waterways, due to the possibility of an accident placing more pressure on the beleaguered NHS.

For me, it was a busy time. Sitting at my computer, 'working from home, and doing the basic work of my entire team to enable the company I worked for to keep some cash-flow rolling in. 'Daily exercise' was a 'local walk', and the days rumbled on with updates on infections, the main story on the TV.

The understanding of what we were encountering grew, people were called back to work, and we entered the 'new normal' phase. With new working procedures, things were moving on as people tiptoed about their days.



“The ISUP must be the most versatile toy created for watersports and outdoor enthusiasts. Mine is forever in the boot on day trips where there’s a chance for a float.”

It was, therefore, quite a shock to receive a letter confirming I was to be made redundant with immediate effect! There was no conversation, even though I held a senior position. Okay, so I presumed I was being cut to enable the company to save on overheads under challenging times. Then within a couple of weeks, my partner was also made redundant from the same company in similar circumstances!

It's a good job we get on well because the prospect of spending even more time together was dropped on us!

We started looking at our options moving forwards and decided that we were in a position to grab more control in our lives over how we spent our time. I'd always been an OK photographer (purely based upon feedback and winning a few competitions and published images), so the idea of becoming a full-time freelance was hatched.

I had time to explore online courses to extend my knowledge, bought a pro camera body, and moved my Instagram account to 'business'! I bought a 'portfolio' website and submitted images to photo libraries. In the last year, I had attended a day course on setting up a photo business, with also back-story examples of some of his images, by the

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### Follow Mike on:

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adventure/watersports photographer Chris Burkard. I'd always admired his work and storytelling style, which I alluded to, and his style of photography was similar to mine, so it was great to hear of his pathway and business model.

I liked how he created his ideas and explored the possibilities by researching locations and lighting conditions for the best chances of the image he's after. I do similar things myself, but his resources enable him to be somewhat scaled up!

Now I was taking photographs as a 'job' I felt justified in going around the local area on my bike every morning for my 'exercise' with my camera. For example, I got to know the local area well – the angles of light from the rising sun. I thought I knew it quite well anyway, but when you slowed down and took it in, you noticed the beauty in smaller details you would usually pass by in a rush.

I managed to engage with my local council to produce a daily image to promote the area and inspire people with the beauty on their doorsteps. I also produced an 'e' Christmas card with local scenes (I still do!). The local newspaper also used my images to show a brighter picture than the pandemic's terrible scenes, which dominated their pages.

The subsequent 'staycations' we have been able to take have led to the increased popularity of SUP as recreation many people have found they can enjoy. Boards were seemingly snapped up as soon as the manufacturers released them.

### Favourable weather forecast

The opening image is a result of one of my 'ideas'! I knew the angle of the rising sun on the canal and watched for a favourable weather forecast – preferable to a still, cold, and potentially misty morning.

I set the camera up on a tripod and composed the view on this particular morning. I jumped on my board, having worked out where there would be a reflection of myself on the board and paddled into position. The day was unusually cold for the time of year, with splashes of water on the deck of my board immediately freezing!

My partner, Donna, had decided to tag along, despite the pre-dawn start and freezing conditions (she's not a fan of the cold!), which was very fortunate as the connection between my device and the camera proved troublesome. With a bit of instruction, she could fire the shutter for me when I was in position. She now says she is my 'assistant' so I'm sure there'll be a catch! Anyway, the mist appeared as I'd hoped, and I'm pleased with the image.

With the sport's popularity, I hope the subsequent picture might become an 'earner' for me!

I have a camper van now (like many!), so we've had quite a few very early/late missions (depending on where your day begins!), usually with the iSUP on board ready for the chance to pump it up and get out on the water.



“I managed to engage with my local council to produce a daily image to promote the area and inspire people with the beauty on their doorsteps.”

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**SUPSCOTTY**



**Words: Scott Warren**

**Pics: P3T Photography, Emily Crawshaw, Scott Warren, GioRez stock.adobe.com & lilkin stock.adobe.com**

P3T  
photography



# Getting RACE READY



SUP racing is an incredibly diverse part of the sport and something not just reserved for the ultra-fit or younger paddler. SUP racing offers something for everyone, including novices with local club racing through to ultra distance events over several days, and right here in the UK, you can take part in them all.

## Setting the scene

In many ways, SUP racing is similar to running. There are similar steps in the distances from sprints to short courses, mid distances to marathon races and beyond. The most popular events attract around 200 paddlers and are often around 10km in length. There are multiple board or paddler categories depending on the specific event setup, offering a competitive spirit through the fleet and a challenge for newcomers.

Getting race ready isn't some dark art, and it certainly doesn't have to be complicated. Many of the basic principles for helping a novice racer will apply to regular racers with years of experience.



## Training

### Training, does it work?

The simple answer is yes, any training you do will have benefits. It is, however, not quite as straightforward as that. Whilst time on the water is a very beneficial way to spend your time, if you constantly repeat the same training repeatedly, your fitness will likely plateau, and you could lose speed over time. Considering we train to increase our fitness or gain speed, we need to change things to keep finding more from ourselves.

### Different types of training

Your training will depend on what kind of event you're doing, so for this example, we will stick to the most popular mid-distance events, including technical and distance races up to 16km. Generally, you can do three types of training without getting too complex: endurance, intervals, and whatever the conditions allow.

Endurance is best trained using time. This way, you're not restricted by your speeds against the water or conditions on the day. Instead, you set your time and paddle until you reach it. Paula Radcliff used this method for endurance training a lot, and it's a great way to build your mental strength as you lengthen your paddle time.

Interval training can be a very complicated way to train, partly due to the almost endless nature of sessions you can run. Interval training can build endurance, help your tolerance for the lactic build-up and, of course, build speed. One of the biggest mistakes with interval training is the tendency to overdo it by not having enough rest time, so it's best to run a shorter effort and longer rest than you might think to get the best returns.

Paddling to the conditions might not seem like training, but it teaches you paddle and board control and mimics potential conditions you might face come race day. For example, getting into a strong headwind and paddling for 20 minutes will push your body in ways you can't do through other methods in calm conditions. It also allows you to take advantage when the conditions are good and push your ultimate speed or get out on the water and have some fun through your training.

## Session ideas

Here are a few session ideas so you can mix up your training.

- **Endurance session:** paddle for one hour. Start slow for a 10-minute warm-up, then increase your speed to a moderate pace until 50 minutes. Cool down for 10 minutes by working on technique. To build your endurance, extend the middle part – a simple yet effective session.
- **Speed session:** the rule of three interval session. This one is made up of effort intervals and rest periods, with one of each making a set. To keep it simple, it's three minutes of effort followed by three minutes of rest. Aim to do ten of these or ten sets, so you're doing an hour session. The aim here is to build your speed throughout the session, so start slow and gradually increase to a very fast pace at the last one. Then cool down by working on your technique for 10 minutes. If you need to shorten the session, reduce the number of sets.
- **HIIT session:** short and sweet. HIIT workouts have become a popular form of exercise, and this session is taking the principle of HIIT Training onto the water. Go hard or go home and trust me, you won't be asking for more at the end of this one! It's super simple. Just do one minute of effort and one minute of rest and repeat ten times. Don't sprint them. Just go as fast as you can on your efforts and make sure you warm-up for ten minutes first.

### Overtraining

One of the biggest mistakes keen amateurs make in any sport, such as running or cycling and SUP, is not managing their training load. It usually comes from trying to fit training sessions around daily life or a lack of knowledge that less is often better than more.

This is particularly true if all the sessions push you to a heavy state of fatigue by doing the most distance you can or pushing a fast pace every time without sufficient days to recover.

What you end up with is someone who's never quite recovered, and so the fitness benefits drop off as the sessions become increasingly harder due to fatigue before your start. This can trigger injuries and a lack of motivation. You need to listen to your body and mix your training up sufficiently.



By GioRez  
stock.adobe.com

## Nutrition and hydration

**Nutrition and hydration are your fuel. What you put in will help you paddle for longer or faster, and of course, how you replace the energy used during training and racing is key. It's also a hugely complex subject that can take many different paths, depending on you as an individual. This makes Nutrition and Hydration one of the hardest elements of your paddling to get right... or does it?**

### The big secret

Before you get carried away buying loads of sports gels or fancy supplements, for most amateur paddlers, just keeping it simple is probably more than enough. Water is fine when paddling for anything up to a couple of hours or so, which covers short to mid-distance events for most people, and simply having a good meal and light breakfast before will probably cover your nutrition needs for most events as well. Look at some electrolyte tablets for your hydration bottle or pack if you get fatigue kicking in. These will help replace lost salts during exercise and help fight cramps.

### What not to do on race day

All too often (and I've done it myself), I see people trying out new gels, supplements or energy drinks on race day. This is the last thing you want to do if you haven't already flushed most of it down the loo before you start. When you do get going, your body will likely react

in a not so favourable way whilst paddling. If you haven't trained on it, my golden rule is to don't use it on race day!

### Training with supplements

If you decide to add supplements or energy drinks to your Nutrition and Hydration, then make sure you train on it for an extended period first. You can experiment with what works for you without affecting your race day performance. Generally, if you feel good and not tired during your sessions, then it's probably working. You might need to increase or decrease the amount that's recommended for you, so it's no good trying this two weeks before an event. Do your homework, and there are plenty of brands out there that have online tools to help guide what you need.

### Preparation

Ok, so you have put the training in, worked out your Nutrition and Hydration, are feeling good, and it's race day. What can go wrong? This is where preparation comes in as just a simple moment to double-check the course, pack your bag or check the conditions that can bring your race crashing to the ground.

### Getting in the zone

You have probably heard of athletes getting themselves worked up for a race or in the zone, and you can do the same thing. Different people like to prepare differently, so do what you feel is right. If

that's going for a little run, then run. If it's listening to music, then blast away, or chilling out and chatting, then do that. Another good method is visualisation. Put yourself on the start line and think about how you want your race to go. What can you expect, how will you react, and what will it feel like. You don't have to do this on race day. You can start the process weeks before. When you get to the start line, it's familiar, allowing you to concentrate on what's ahead.

### Try it in training

By now, you should be picking up on a theme. Training isn't just about pounding out the laps chasing fitness; it's as much about mental preparation as physical. If it works in training, it will work come race day, so try some race starts, do a mock race distance and change your approach before you get on the water to see what happens.

### When to pack your kit

This is an interesting one, and I always start with a list of what I'm going to pack my race gear. I like to leave packing my kit to the last minute. I've already gathered what I need from my list, so I know where everything is, but I don't physically pack until it's time to leave. This way, I'm sure I have everything in my mind, so I can load it and go when I'm ready. Invest in a suitable box or bag (maybe a couple) that you use just for race day, and your preparation will become that much easier.

# Kit and clothing

## Boards and paddles

Today's SUP market is full of almost every piece of SUP kit you can imagine, with boards and paddles being no exception. But do you need the latest race-specific kit to go racing? Well, the honest answer is no, you don't. Sure the latest race paddle and carbon board will be the fastest ever, but buying the best kit won't instantly make you a superstar overnight. The training and effort you put in away from race day will make the biggest difference. If you're getting into racing, you can join many others who race their day to day boards, and it's very common to see iSUP touring and race shapes on the start line. The same goes for paddles, yes you should probably upgrade from the basic aluminium paddle, but you don't need to go crazy. Most manufacturers offer a good selection of mid-range paddles, which are more than up to the job.



By lilkin stock.adobe.com

## Ask advice

Before you whip out the credit card, one thing to do is ask for some advice from an experienced racer, coach, or retailer. This way, you can be sure you are looking at the right bit of kit for you and not wasting your time and money on something not quite right. It would help if you avoided the marketing pitfalls that the narrowest board you can find is the best one. Just because the top paddlers in the world are using it day in and day out doesn't mean it's suited to you and the conditions you will be in.

## Demo if you can

Whilst you could easily spend all your time demoing kit and get lost in the process, with a specific list or idea of what you're looking for, the chance to demo should undoubtedly be taken. This way, you can feel what the board and paddle are like and whether will it suit you. Just bear in mind that jumping on any unfamiliar kit and expecting to see instant results is very, very unlikely to happen.

## The other stuff

So you're all sorted with your board and paddle, so what else might you need? You will need some clothing options, including lightweight fitness style gear, sup specific items like jackets perhaps, some mid-weight options to offer wind or rain protection, and some options for cold days out training.

You will also need a decent coiled leash, and most likely, a waist attachment with a quick release is the way to go. Depending on the types of event you will be doing, specific leash rules will be used, so again, have a couple of options. Other must-have items are a good hydration pack and a waterproof phone case. There are stacks of options to choose from, including running and biking packs and SUP specific manufacturers. Finally, a Buoyancy Aid. Whilst not always a requirement, it's good to have just in case, and many of the kayak and canoe brands now offer a tailored SUP specific option with extra pockets and comfort for SUP style paddling.

## And finally...

If you're looking to take a step into racing and want to push yourself, then it's worth investing in some coaching and maybe even a training plan. Depending on where you are, there is most likely a SUP coach close to you but do always check what they have done in SUP racing if you want the best results. It's also worth finding out if there are local training groups or sessions for you, as these are a great way to push your fitness, develop your skills, and get some advice.

Through Haywood Sports, we offer training sessions, free training packs, season plans, and coaching, and we are always happy to offer advice, so be sure to get in touch.

SUP racing is a brilliant challenge, offers a huge amount of variety and has a whole SUP community of its own.





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# SUP foiling in depth



**Words:** Tez Plavenieks

**Pics:** Tez Plavenieks, Oli Lane-Peirce

SUP foiling, as with all flight disciplines, is attention grabbing. There are plenty of experienced SUP surfers thinking about getting involved with flying above water. But it can be a confusing and anxious leap pulling the trigger. SUPM's editor, a fan of all things foil (and watersports in general) delves deep into the topic to shed some light.

Ever since I first discovered SUP, it's the wavier side of the sport that really pricked my interest (and still does). Coming from a surfing background, this stands to reason. Added to the mix is my local area, that's perfect for a spot of SUP surfing. Whilst many traditional prone surfers may scoff at adding a paddle, for me, it's a tool that's enhanced the whole act of riding waves. Plus, with my backyard in mind, it's the most efficient solution to accessing where the surf breaks – sometimes a mile offshore.

When hydrofoils first came around, I jumped at the chance to take this new-fangled kit for a whirl. The first foiling discipline I got involved with was windsurf foiling (which will not surprise those who know me and my other penchant for wind-driven sports). But this was closely followed by attaching a hydrofoil to a SUP board. Pretty soon, I was loving flying along in the gusts and above barely breaking waves.

Fast forward to now, and I'm still very much a foil lover – even more so of late! Wings have also entered the mix. And whilst some paddlers may struggle to see the synergy, there's plenty if you paddle and don't partake when it's breezy. A wing, in many ways, is an extension of the paddle when it's blowing. But more on winging in a while. For now, it's back to stand up paddleboarding and hydrofoils.

### **Why SUP foil?**

SUP foiling can generally be split into two main categories. Riding swells, ala SUP surfing (but with a foil attached). And downwind SUP foiling (riding rolling open ocean swells with the breeze adding further propulsion). My passion is the former. Although SUP foil downwinding is starting to catch on more and more in the UK. It's still more of a thing overseas in Hawaii and Australia. Yet it's catching up here.

One of the big reasons to stand up paddle surf is because riding an oversize SUP board, in tandem with using a paddle, allows exploiting surf conditions that prone surfers will turn their noses up at. Think too small, too weak or too far off the beaten track. SUP boards carry additional momentum than surfboards. And coupled with paddle propulsion, riders are poised to enjoy longer rides than previously thought possible. Of course, anyone into sliding atop 10'+ nose riding longboards will enjoy the same benefits. But the paddle is where the efficiency bar is raised. You simply get 'more' from utilising a paddle's many benefits. Purists will still scoff, but you can't fault the fun element.





I'm pretty sure you'll discover a SUP foil sled that suits you and the general conditions you ride in.

Adding a foil turbocharges all of the above – and then some! Glides on small waves with a finned board are one thing. But a foil adds even more efficiency, speed and glide. Plus, the silent, frictionless feel is unique and addictive in its own right. If you thought you were getting long waves before then, you're in for a shock with foiling. Having dialled your SUP foiling skills in, you'll be beating your own records by some margin. I can now ride one wave for nearly a mile before pulling off (still elevated) and pumping back out to the next pulse, caving round and gliding once again. The only reason to touch back down is my fatigue, halting the fun.

### Dispelling a few SUP foiling myths

Looking at any foiling discipline, you'll probably have thought: 'wow, that's impressive but no doubt hard and not for me'. Social media and marketing have a lot to answer for. We're so used to the elite level of sport being shoved in our faces that it's hard to imagine something like SUP foiling can be super mellow, relaxing and meditative. Real-world riding (of which I'm a big champion of) is never as extreme as all those Instagram videos would have you believe. SUP foiling on dribbles is pretty chilled out and accessible for most riders with previous SUP surfing experience.

Riding a foil is also seen by many as dangerous. I won't lie that you have to be mindful of that long dangly thing protruding from under your board. But with a sensible approach and a few precautions put in place, you'll be enjoying your foil riding without too much hassle. I've seen more accidents from paddlers coming into hard contact with fins than I have foils. Also, most brands these days have designed their foil gear with as much safety in mind as

they can. Wingtips of the foils, for instance, are often rounded out or angled down. So there aren't any sharp edges to fall on. And if you take things slow and easy, working your way up the skill ranks incrementally, there shouldn't be any mishaps (other than damaged pride from time to time).

I mentioned above that some perceive SUP foiling to be hard. Yet really, it isn't. Yes, you need to put some time in, persevere and practise – the same as you would with any other new hobby. But if you already SUP surf, you'll have all the necessary fundamental skills to get involved with SUP foiling.

## SUP foiling equipment

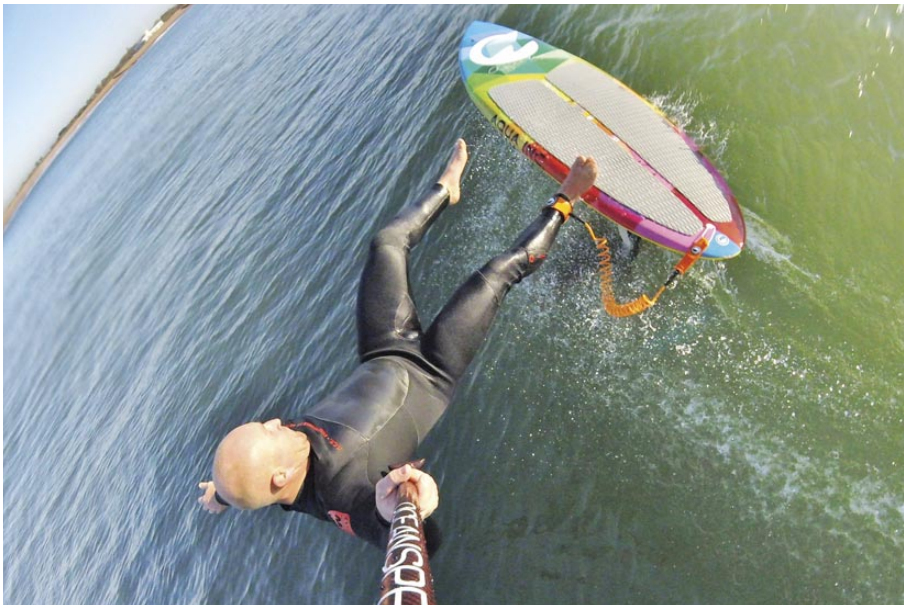
### Boards

With the explosion of wing foiling, there's a bit of a shortfall in terms of SUP foiling board choices. There's so much scope to develop SUP foil boards but winging is the current industry focus, and as such, you'll find way more wing foil board options available. Still, even with that in mind, I'm pretty sure you'll discover a SUP foil sled that suits you and the general conditions you ride in.

A foil specific board between 6' and 7' in length will give just enough glide to allow riders to pick up waves. Compact foil boards will never be great at covering distance, with the yaw being brutal. I've paddled sub-6' foil boards nearly a mile out to sea to access waves and can tell it ain't fun! (Once up and flying, however, it all seems worthwhile). Swapping back to a slightly longer 7' makes all the difference in scenarios like this. The shorter the SUP foil board, the less swing weight there is. And less swing weight gives







zipper turning and a more direct connection to the foil. As with standard SUP boards, it's a fine line between being comfortable and enjoying your sessions and top drawer performance.

Width plays a BIG part in SUP foil boards, as does volume and volume distribution. Thicker, wider nose/tail foil boards with less volume can feel more stable than platforms with more volume and narrower tails/drawn out noses.

For first-timers I'd suggest choosing something slightly longer, with more volume (130L-160L) and widths around 78cm (30"). This is based on a rider weighing 85kg-95kg. Feel free to adjust these numbers according to your build and weight.

Those riders looking to tentatively dip their toe in the world of SUP foiling could find a convertible board may be the best bet. There are a few available that can be ridden with fins or foil. Convertibles are fine for those wanting to test the water or for paddlers who have limited space and need a one board solution. Usually, though, they're a compromise on both types of performance. So a foil specific board will be the go if and when you get bitten by the foiling bug proper. (You can also buy convertible foil specific boards that accommodate SUP foiling, wing foiling and windsurf foiling. Be foil specific; these are a better option than convertible sleds offering fin and foil performance. At least a foil specific type is focused on flying so that it will be optimised for that).

And don't forget inflatables, which can be good choices if you have even less space for storage and transport. These days, foil-specific inflatable boards are pretty good performance-wise, and though still not quite as on par with hard foil boards.



## Foils

Hydrofoils generally come in two styles: low aspects and hi aspects. Low aspect foils are more shovel-like, whilst high aspect foils are wider and much thinner. Low aspect foils can be measured in  $\text{cm}^2$  surface area, whereas this doesn't equate to high aspects. At around  $1800\text{cm}^2 - 2000\text{cm}^2$ , low aspect foil wings have oodles of lift and will rise progressively with even the merest hint of a wave to propel you along. Low aspects are also slower and easy to dial in, so they are often a better choice (generally) than faster hi aspect foils.

Rider weight and conditions will be dictated by how big you need to go to achieve easy takeoffs. I'm 90kg (dry) and would use a low aspect foil with  $2000\text{cm}^2$  to lift in 2ft waves. If the swell's bigger or punchier, I'd drop the front foil wing's size to something smaller and more manageable.

It's possible to get hold of hi aspect foils that perform well for beginners. Some have a low stall speed (the amount of forward speed it needs to start and lift). Stall speed is critical as it can make or break a session – especially if you're learning and haven't yet

“If you already SUP surf, you'll have all the necessary fundamental skills to get involved with SUP foiling.”



acquired the skills to make foils with higher stall speeds work. Hi aspects mostly require more oomph from the wave, rider input, and a more refined way of riding. If you're torn between choosing a hi or low aspect foil, I'd suggest going down the low aspect foil route to start with. You can always swap it out later down the line.

Foils aren't just made up of front foil wings, though. You also have the foil mast, fuselage and tail wing (stab). Don't get caught up with the techy details at first. You can start playing around with different fuselage lengths and tail wing sizes (if you wish) when you get better. A longer fuselage will give more manageable pitch (nose to tail up and downs) control. Whilst bigger tail wings will deliver more overall foil stability and leverage for early flights.

Foil mast length will come down to your most ridden spot and how deep the water is. I swap between 40cm and 60cm (mostly 60cm) depending on how big the waves are and where they're breaking. Be aware that the shorter your foil mast, the less leeway you have. Riding high on the face of a wave, for instance, will mean you're far more likely to experience breaching of the front wing (over foiling) and suffer crashes as a result. You could have a selection of foil masts to accommodate different conditions and tidal states. But appreciate more gear equals more cost.

## Paddles

As with standard SUPing, you should consider your SUP foiling paddle. It needs to deliver efficient power from standing, so it should be an efficient design. It also needs to be strong as it can suffer knocks when foiling. But this shouldn't be to the detriment of weight. A tough but lightweight carbon paddle is usually the best route.

I favour a narrow, teardrop-shaped blade that's full carbon. The narrower blade allows me to paddle with quick, powerful strokes at high cadence. In tandem with pumping (a foiling skill you should aim to learn) and a low stall speed foil, I can leave the water's surface almost immediately on an ankle-high wave.

I will also say that a slightly shorter paddle helps – which may be contrary to what you were thinking. The shorter paddle shaft length allows me to hunker down on take off. When up and foiling but still needing a few short, sharp paddle strokes to stay elevated, the shorter shaft length allows me to pump the board/foil down, stick the stroke in, release and come back up to full ride height without efficiency loss. The bottom line with SUP foiling paddles is: don't overlook them! A paddle is your engine.

## Leashes

There's much talk about SUP leashes and quick-release belts in tandem with coiled styles, and this is a significant safety point when discussing SUP generally. With SUP foiling, you should also pay attention to leashes.

Some riders do wear straight surf style leashes, and I find these have an annoying habit of getting tangled around the foil. Therefore I opt for a coiled waist leash. This brings the leash up onto the deck of my board and reduces drag and the risk of snagging. Being attached to my waist means I can pull it off if need be – in an emergency. A quick-release belt and coiled leash will also work.

One BIG reason to wear a SUP foil leash is not to have your SUP foil kit blasting away from you, shoved shoreward by waves or white water. You shouldn't be foiling near others – especially when learning. Occasionally, however, water users may put themselves in the shallows of the area you're riding. And you don't want to hit them. So wear a leash most definitely!



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## SUP foiling conditions (for learning and progressing)

As I said at the start of this article, the reason to SUP foil is because of the additional efficiency, speed, glide and overall length of ride you get compared to finned SUP surfing. But conditions do play a massive part in achieving this. In time, with finely honed foiling skills, any kind of wave can be ridden (in theory). To start with, though, you'll be looking for specific conditions.

The first thing is go where there's plenty of space. Avoid headline surf breaks on busy summer days. Lesser quality breaks with junky waves are perfect. You ideally want a slow, crumbly wave breaking in deep enough water to have a face form. With the best will in the world, you're not going to take off on unbroken rollers without the aid of something like a jet ski. There needs to be some vert and shape. But likewise, you don't want the wave to be too steep, fast and sucky.

Size also matters (in terms of what to avoid). Give overhead bombs a miss. And also, skip nasty shore break that'll pummel you and your gear into the beach. Up to waist high is ideal. Trust me when I say the first time you take off on a knee-high piece of flotsam, you'll feel like you've just dropped into Nazare! But give it time, and you'll get comfortable and used to the forces.

As you improve your SUP foiling, you'll look for slightly better conditions. And by better, I don't necessarily mean bigger. Foiling in waves allows you to fly for significant distances. Therefore, a wave that walls and peels will be great for SUP foiling. Even

better if the break happens to be lined up where you can start linking and pumping back out to follow on swells. In some cases point, breaks may be worth hitting up. Just be aware of rocks and reefs as not only will this damage your foil kit, but it could also damage you.

## SUP foiling safety

Another point I touched on at the start was SUP foiling safety. To reiterate: SUP foiling isn't as dangerous as perhaps perceived with a few precautionary steps taken before getting involved. Falling and wiping out will happen. Even once you've become a frequent flyer, mistakes will be made. It's, therefore, a good idea to wear some form of impact protection.

Impact vests, doubling as buoyancy jackets, will protect your torso. Boots will save feet if they accidentally kick the foil. And a helmet will give head protection whilst also aiding confidence. I've heard how wearing a lid helps riders get over the mental barrier of balancing on a stick a few times! You could also wear knee and elbow pads. Although be careful of not overdoing and impacting your movements by wearing too much kit!

When you fall, which inevitably you will, it's wise not to try and stop the wipeout. As you instinctively want to save the ride, this is quite hard to do. Go with the flow, though. And if anything, kick your kit away. You'll feel it when things go awry. Better to suffer a (seemingly) spectacular bail than hit your equipment.





I've mentioned leashes already, but to reiterate: get a good quality coiled waist leash. And use it.

Never stick yourself in a crowded line-up. Avoid, as much as possible, other water users. Even when you become competent, riders of non-foiling craft won't know you or your skill level. They may also be intimidated, which could cause them to react in ways that'll result in an accident. Not everyone appreciates foiling and foilers. Be courteous, and if in doubt, don't go out. Better to sit out a sesh than cause issues with others or yourself. As a foiler, you'll be the centre of attention. Don't be judged a kook.

### **A note on wing foiling (and other foiling disciplines)**

Yet another point I raised earlier in this article is how wing foiling wings can be the extension of a SUP paddle in breezy conditions. Even more so if you're already SUP foiling. Your SUP foil board and hydrofoil will almost certainly lend themselves to winging. When the breeze puffs, why not add a wing to your quiver?

If you've been learning the art of SUP foiling, it's a small step to learn the ropes with a wing then. You'll already have a grasp of the foil, so it won't be such a big leap to add a wing. And this will open up even more fun riding options and deliver additional time on the water. Plus, wings can be used in various other guises as well. Such as wing skating on land, for days when it's not looking too pukka on the water.

This article may sound evangelical to some. And perhaps it is. But there's no denying just how much fun riding waves on a foil is. If you're someone whose interest has been pricked here, do your research first. And don't be afraid to ask questions. Hit me up also. I'm only happy to talk about all things foil, paddle and watersports in general.



# McConks SUP

## safety initiative



A scenic river landscape with a blue and white SUP in the foreground and dense trees in the background. The water is calm, and the trees are mostly bare, suggesting a late autumn or winter setting. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

**Words:** Andy McConkey/McConks

**Pics:** McConks, Luke Ravenhill, Caroline Dawson, Rapid Skills, Paul Smith of Rock and Water adventures & SUP Shropshire Adventure Guiding

McConks have always been SUP safety conscious. As a brand, the Cotswolds based company have always strived to educate and get new paddlers doing the right thing, keep themselves (and others) safe and enjoy their time on the water. Recently McConks launched a new (and innovative) SUP safety initiative. We caught up with brand head Andy McConkey to find out more.

**Firstly, tell us why McConks is so focused on SUP safety?**

Why wouldn't we be? Paddleboarding is probably THE watersport with the easiest transition to getting on the water. Anyone can buy a board, rock up at a launch spot, and get on the water. The issue with this is that people with zero experience of the risk associated with water sports (cold water shock, entrapment, being blown offshore, risks associated with weirs and obstructions) and expose themselves to those risks. And this sadly has meant that lives have been lost in the last couple of years. We don't want to stop anyone's fun or overhype the risks; we just want to make sure that paddlers are aware of the risks and make the right safety decisions about when, where, how they paddle, and with what safety equipment.

**What things have you done in the past to raise SUP safety awareness?**

We produce a lot of content regarding SUP safety and work with many instructors and SUP Schools to help promote their content. We proactively email our customers with safety hacks. Back in the bad days of SUP user guides, when a single A4 with some badly drawn Chinese images was the standard, we produced high-quality information, including safety and responsibility guidance. We've not always got every bit of messaging right, and we've been criticised fairly for using images of paddlers without buoyancy aids, for example. But in general, we try to portray best practice through our content and make that content freely available.

“There are avoidable risks that can be avoided with a bit of education.”

### **What’s your opinion of the industry and its approach to the topic?**

It varies, and we’re not in the business of naming and shaming. It comes down to whether you’re a retailer or a manufacturer. At McConks, we’re both and think that both segments have a part to play. However, there is a valid argument that some have made, which is that the responsibility is more on the part of the retailer than the manufacturer to make sure customers are given the right safety messages. But when brands are producing marketing videos showing people wearing the wrong gear on the wrong type of board with the wrong type of safety equipment in the wrong environment, then questions need to be asked.

### **What’s needed to bring all brands in line and communicate the same message?**

Without regulation, it won’t happen. That’s not to say that we’re in favour of regulation - we’re not. SUP is an open, welcoming community, and the sport is easily accessible. Lots of regulation will destroy much of the appeal. And in the grand scheme of things, it isn’t that risky or dangerous. It’s just that there are avoidable risks that can be avoided with a bit of education. We’d like to see the four key training bodies representing SUP: British Canoeing, ASI, BSUPA, and WSA, get together to produce a simple code – similar to the New Zealand SUP safe initiative <https://www.sup.org.nz/safety/>.

The New Zealand SUP scene has been through what we have with avoidable deaths and fatalities. But this initiative has saved many lives. At the moment, each training body is doing its own thing, which means that it can weaken messages. A

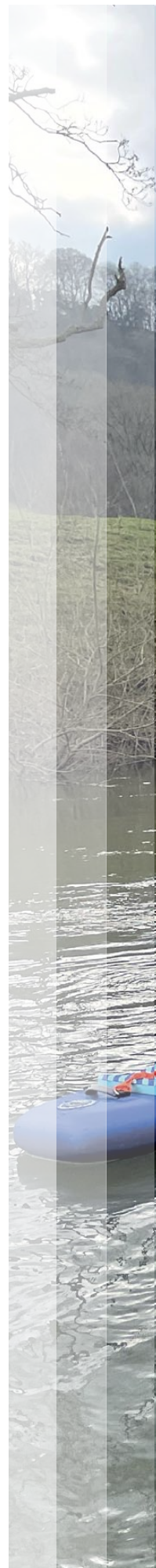
single unified code of practice, as simple as the NZ one, agreed by the Sport England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, and endorsed by British Canoeing, ASI, BSUPA, and WSA would carry authority and make it easy for those brands and retailers reticent to get involved for profit-based or liability based reasons to share.

### **Talk us through what McConks has recently introduced?**

New for this year, we’re offering everyone who takes a free lesson with one of our recommended partners/instructors a 5% discount. Search #GetSUPsafe.

### **What sparked the idea?**

There have been several fatalities over the last couple of years. Sam Foyle, the best mate of paddler Simon Flynn who died in 2020 on the Camel Estuary through leash entrapment, has been on a mission to make the industry better aware of the risks of leash entrapment and encourage the wider uptake of quick-release belts. We’ve been speaking to Sam Foyle since 2020, supporting his campaign. Because we work closely with several whitewater SUP businesses, we’ve always been aware of the dangers of leash entanglement. We have been selling QR belts (HF belts from paddle people and the Whetman Water belt) since 2018. Towards the back end of 2020, we had decided to give a QR belt with every SUP package we sold, and we formed a partnership with Panda Board Sports Ltd to make that happen in 2021. Over the winter of 2021/2022, we planned to fund a series of videos and articles on SUP safety. But we realised that organisations with more authority and reach were already doing this (BC, WSA, ASI). So we pivoted and instead decided to work with our instructors to fund face to face lessons for customers.





“Towards the back end of 2020, we had decided to give a QR belt with every SUP package we sold, and we formed a partnership with Panda Board Sports Ltd to make that happen in 2021.”



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“We want to give people enough knowledge to make their own safety decisions.”



### **Does this mean McConks will lose money?**

We don't exist to make a profit at McConks. Although we are set up as a limited company, we consider ourselves more as a not for profit company and reinvest our profits back into the sector, whether through our Go Inspire initiative to help more people on the water or through the information and education we provide. So this was funded from the budget had set aside to invest in SUP safety anyway.

### **What's the initiative's reception been like so far?**

Great. We've many instructors and schools signed up – over 40 at the last count, and from all over the UK – from Cornwall to Kent, from Wales to Scotland. It's been an outstanding response from the SUP instructor community. You can find your nearest recommended instructor here <https://mcconks.com/home/story/mcconks-recommended-sup-demo-centres-and-instructors/>.

### **Is there a risk of sounding like the fun police with something like this?**

Totally. One of the real benefits of SUP is the easy transition. Anyone can do it without months of frustration, unlike, for example, windsurfing or surfing – it is so accessible, and that's precisely why it's been so popular

and has exploded in the last couple of years. But as we've already said, the risks are easily avoidable with a little education. We want to give people enough knowledge to make their own safety decisions.

### **How'd you get over that hurdle?**

It's about setting the right tone. We're not trying to stop anyone's fun. But if people see it that way, that's absolutely their prerogative. And even if it turns some people off us as a brand, if it's made them think twice, we've still achieved something.

### **Got any SUP safety predictions moving forwards?**

We suspect there will be a national governing body for SUP recognised by the national sports agencies (Sport England, Sport Wales, SportsScotland and Sports NI). Hopefully, this will be formed from or bring together the relevant organisations (e.g. BC, WSA, ASI, BSUPA, RNLI, RLSS) and generate some consistent principles and messaging.

### **Shouts and thanks?**

We're too scared of missing anyone out! But we can't mention two influential and passionate ambassadors for SUP safety – Ben from Panda Board Sports, who is doing so much to promote QR safety belts and make them affordable, and Sam Foyle, who has tirelessly led a campaign to raise the risks of leash entanglement

# #getSUPsafe

Photo: SUP shropshire adventure guiding

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 **McConks**

An aerial photograph of Loch Lomond in Scotland. The lake is dark and occupies the lower half of the frame. Several people are on stand-up paddleboards (SUPs) in the water, scattered across the lower right and bottom center. The middle ground is dominated by a dense forest of green trees and shrubs along the shoreline. In the background, rolling green hills and mountains are visible under a cloudy sky. The overall scene is a mix of natural beauty and outdoor recreation.

# LOCH AWESOME CHALLENGE

first-ever  
endurance event



**Words:** Emma Ross

**Pics:** Loch Awesome – @lochawesome, Emma Ross, Ländy Expedition & SUPjunkie

It's only taken me three days to gather my thoughts and write about what I can only describe as an EPIC adventure! I didn't think about what we were signing up for but sign up we did and decided an endurance paddle of 75km on the UK's largest freshwater loch sounded like fun, so off we set for Loch Awe... Little did I know, it was going to test my physical and mental endurance as much as it did

### Day one

We get brekkie on board at 06:00, and then at 08:20, we all start on a 47k paddle. Everyone was in great spirits, and it wasn't raining (bonus!). We even have the wind on our back (tailwind), which helps with the paddle to checkpoint 1 (15k away)

The team and others are paddling away, but at the back of my mind, I knew that if we have a tailwind right now, we may very well have a hard slog back against it. We reach checkpoint 1: a small jetty point, so the girls have a toilet stop and commented on a bit of fatigue; we were told that if anyone drops out, two cannot continue (we would need to join another team). Noted

Now, we head for checkpoint 2 (roughly 8.5/9k away). However, the weather started to do what Scottish weather does best and change; the wind, and the waves, all started to pick up a bit – so the energy stores and physical work required went up! By the time we neared checkpoint 2, one of my fantastic teammates had called out; she was fatigued and was going to have to stop, followed by my other SUP buddy who was feeling the same (100% they made the right call. As what came next would probably have meant they wouldn't have got back on the water for day two).





I paddled ahead and jumped off at the castle checkpoint to shout to everyone there, “Will anyone adopt an extra paddler into their team?” ‘Nae’/not shy about putting myself out there, but I also didn’t want my paddle to end there – I wanted to see exactly what I was capable of. Two lovely groups said, yep, come with us.

So I inhaled two peanut butter and blueberry jelly sandwiches, gugged some water, and hopped back on my board (as they had all had a break and were ready to leave). We go around the corner, and boom, the headwind and now sidewind are coming as us in all its ‘Scottishness.’

One girl’s board went sideways, and off she came; another teammate went to support her, and the other three of us just had to put our heads down and paddle, paddle, paddle. If you stopped, your board was either going nowhere, backwards or in ultimately the wrong direction.

So I’m gritting my teeth, digging in and watching paddlers way ahead, all separated based on their paddling abilities in these conditions. Three of us made it to the next island and then discussed how we would cross the loch (i.e. finding the narrowest point) to get to the next checkpoint.

Again, this one had even more chop, white horses could be seen on the waves, and at this point, the wind speed was hitting around 30-34mph. (I’ve only ever paddled in 27/28 - with the wind pushing the right way).

### **No chat, just head down**

Basically, for a girl that likes to talk, there was no chat happening, just head down, and keep your board pointing in the right direction – that was the aim of the game.

We get to the other side of the loch, and another teammate had tired and picked up by the rescue boat. So we were down to three.

It was mind over matter, as one of the team had exhausted her arms, with the help she had given to the teammates and had to go on the rescue boat. To support her, she then got a tow as we headed to the next



“Basically, for a girl that likes to talk, there was no chat happening, just head down, and keep your board pointing in the right direction – that was the aim of the game.”



checkpoint, but we were aware we might have had to take turns towing for the remainder of the paddle. However, we get to checkpoint 3, and she chooses to stop at this point.

I looked at Amanda Stollery, and she looked at me, and I said, “I’ve done 15k in three hours before” (not in this weather, or having paddled 20k+ already), but I had energy in the tank and felt like I could do it. And for a girl I only met four hours ago and now think of as a SUP soul sister, she said she was game too.

### Songs on the way

And so, the mental and physical mindset test went up a level. There was a time limit on the paddle, and we had been on the water since 08:20; it was now 17.45, and we set off, heading for the finish line. We paddled, kept another team within our sights, and set ourselves paddle goals to try and pick up the pace to get home (Oooh, and we also made up some silly lyrics to songs on the way, we had to keep ourselves amused somehow).

### Red Bull finish line

The safety boat swung by to keep an eye on us and told us that the weather had calmed around the corner. My hands were blistered, our legs were starting to tell us they had been working pretty hard, and eventually, we saw the Red Bull finish line. That was the longest 3k paddle to the finish. No wind, and on a 10’ 6 inflatable SUP that needs a paddle in the water to keep moving forward, I wished right then I had taken up my neighbour’s offer of borrowing his touring board!

As we came to the finish, the final thought in my head was, “What are my legs going to do when I step off this board? Am I going to fall over and faceplant in the water in front of everyone?”

However, the cheers as we came into shore put THE biggest smile on my face; we did it! We got off the water at 20:50, so it was around 12 solid hours of paddle time with 30 minutes break. I may be possibly wired slightly different from some of you, But I

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## Top tips

### Do not take a 10' 6 board to a paddle endurance event.

It's like taking a mountain bike to a road bike race in the Alps. If you can get your hands on a bigger board than a 10' 6, with a pointy nose, so it cuts through the water, DO IT! Get out and paddle in as many weather conditions as you can (obviously while staying safe/within your capabilities). The changes in weather and choppier water can happen at any time; it takes away the 'fear' factor; I have never paddled in these conditions before.

### Snacks and hydration

Keep easy/nutritious snacks near to hand (I had an extra running belt with just this) - things like a trail mix or mini energy balls are great, as you can take a small handful as you are paddling (and keep your blood sugar/energy levels topped up). The same goes for water, lack of hydration can zap your energy and cause a lack of focus, and you need both of those to be switched on.

### Your team

Depending on how competitive you are – If it's a team event, go there with people you know will laugh with you, and push you on when things get tough, but also be ok with if you don't have the best paddle and also be prepared to do the same for them.

loved every minute. I walked like a stick person up the hill, got my calves massaged and then hobbled into the community centre for the yummiest food! And then bed at 22:30, as we had to get up at 06:00 to do it all again!

### Day two

Wakey, wakey, was the body ready to go? Can I get out of the campervan without doing an impression of a tin man?

The body was feeling a little tired, but a few stretches to loosen off and the buzz of all the paddlers ready to get after the day

helped a lot! Today is much more leisurely, with a slightly later start to the water and only a 28k paddle.

Which we did, with only a few things holding us back. One being a bloody stick at the checkpoint. I shout bye to Jazmin (one of the wonderful volunteers), and off I go. Wait, why am I paddling and not moving? It might be because my safety leash is attached to a bloomin' stick!

We round the corner, and we had been warned a tailwind that should have helped us paddle home had disappeared!

So no assistance for the three amigos, but we were determined to get this paddle done and have all three of us get through the Red Bull arch together. A seven-hour paddle and we even get a little sun at one point. All the wonderful teams came down to the beach to cheer us in as we headed in!

### Conclusion

I didn't appreciate the challenge properly until we started driving home on the Sunday around the loch, and I realised how huge it is, and I even got a little 'emotional' I paddled THAT; it's huge!

Loch Awe itself is a magical place, and the community of people that live there are so warm and welcoming that you must visit Dalavich. LochAwesome team and volunteers; you all rocked and made this Scots girl's first paddle event AWESOME. And it was so good to make new friends at the event; I'm enjoying getting to know the SUP community. I love people, and I love water, so it's a win, win!







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# It is the season for SUP YOGA



**Words:** Danique van Oosterhout

**Photos:** Sebastian Schoeffel

Summer in Europe means SUP Yoga season. Nothing but jumping on board and enjoying the fresh air while practising your favourite SUP Yoga poses!

Water, sun, fresh air, and yoga can hardly do more for our physical and mental well-being. SUP Yoga can be practised in a group or alone in a quiet place by the lake. Our two Fly Air Fit platforms (small and large) are the perfect base station for all SUP schools & stations, fitness centres or hotels. Whether in the open water or the pool - both models can be used anywhere and are extremely practical.

SUP Yoga is suitable for all levels, especially for those who want to take their practice to the next level. The water instantly brings serenity, the instability trains muscles and balance, and new challenges help you quickly land in the here and now. SUP Yoga collects the mind, body and



soul, injecting them with a certain 'je ne sais quoi' that keeps us coming back for more.

Fanatic ambassador Danique van Oosterhout is a full-time yoga instructor and runs a SUP school at Mattsee in Austria, where she loves to teach SUP yoga on our platform during the summer. Before Danique settled in Austria, she worked as a kite instructor in the Caribbean, where she discovered her love for SUP and SUP Yoga. The Austrian Alps are her new home of choice.

Danique here explains one of her favourite SUP Yoga sequences you can try by yourself!



### 1. Stow your paddle, take a breath and arrive

After you've warmed up, sit down for a few deep breaths. Notice the gentle swaying of the water beneath you with your eyes closed to get used to your yoga mat substitute.



### 2 Eagle arms in sitting position

Pass your left arm under the right arm so that the forearms touch each other and point vertically upwards. The palm of your left-hand faces out to the right, the backs of your hands are touching, or you place your palms together. The upper arms are at the height of the shoulders. With your inhalation, raise your elbows and, with your exhalation, lower them. Stay five breaths, then switch arms.



### 3. Downward dog

Place your hands shoulder-width in front of you on the board. Move your butt to your heels, and activate your core. Now lift your ischial tuberosities towards the sky and actively push your heels back. If the stretch in the back of your legs is too intense, bend your knees. Your spine is long, and your shoulders remain active. Stay for five breaths.



## 4. Lunge

### For beginners – deep lunge:

Raise your right leg. Bring your knee to your chest and make yourself as compact as possible. Arms are extended; you press away from the board, lift your pelvis, and step forward between your hands. Now place the left knee down; the right knee is aligned over the right foot joint and 90 degrees bent. Now imagine pushing your front foot and your back knee towards each other. This way, you activate the inside and back of your legs for more stability on the SUP board. The pelvis remains in a neutral position. Raise your arms with a tight core, keeping your lower rib cages closed. Stay for five breaths.

### For advanced – high lunge:

Raise your back knee and powerfully extend your back leg into your heel, lifting the back of your thigh to the sky. Five breaths. Come back into the downward-facing dog and repeat this sequence on your left side.



## 5. Child's pose

Put your knees down hip-width apart, put your butt down and stretch your arms to the front. Pause for five breaths in the child's pose.



## 6. Camel pose

Stand on your toes, sit on your heels, then put your hands on your heels and tense your thighs, buttocks, and abdomen. Raise the pelvis and stretch the sternum towards the sky. This way, you open your heart area and your chest. Your gaze is gently directed forward and upward; to the cervical vertebrae. Do not overstretch the cervical vertebrae! Stay for five breaths.



### 7. SUP yoga garudasana

Come down on all fours and push the right knee to the right hand; your right foot slides out. Bring the left knee to the right calf as if your legs were crossed. Press your inner thighs firmly together and straighten up with body tension. Now add the eagle arms, your left arm resting on the right. Stay for five breaths.

### 8. Eagle push-up

Bring your hands back on the board under your shoulders. Exhale and bend your elbows to a maximum of 90 degrees without losing body tension. With your inhalation, straighten your arms again. Stay for five breaths. Repeat steps 7 and 8 (change if necessary) with the left leg in front.



### 9. For advanced: headstand with eagle legs

If headstand is a regular part of your yoga practice, you should try this pose on the SUP board! Get on all fours, place your forearms shoulder-width apart, and cross your fingers into each other. Place your head in your hands, and lift your knees and pelvis. Walk with your feet as close as you can to your elbows until they lift almost by themselves. Shift your weight to your forearms (not to the top of your head!). Pull one knee toward your chest and slowly extend the other leg upwards. When you have found your balance, raise the second leg and press the insides of your legs firmly together. If necessary, hook your right foot into the left calf. Stay at least five breaths, then come into the child's pose and rest.



### 10. Shavasana

The best part of your SUP yoga practice comes at the end! Lie on your back for a few minutes, eyes closed, feet hip-width apart, arms resting by your side with open hands. Feel the sun's warmth on your skin, the light breeze and the gentle swaying of the water. Breathe and let go.

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

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# Gear shed

SUP Mag UK's test station. If you want your product reviewed and think it will be of interest to SUPers  
Email: tezwoz1@hotmail.co.uk

## Get in the ring! – Gladiator Elite 11'4 x 32" x 4.7"

**Review & pics:** Tez Plavenieks

Inflatable SUP manufacturing has come on leaps and bounds in the last few seasons. It's now perfectly applicable to own an iSUP less than 6" thick. As long as it incorporates up to the minute materials and quality production techniques. It should also be noted that these ways of doing things don't automatically add up to an astronomical price tag. A quality iSUP doesn't need to break the bank, instead, delivering a fair cost. As is the case here with Gladiator's 2022 Elite 11'4 compact touring SUP.

**GLADIATOR**

**Price:**

£649

**Info:**

<https://gladiatorpaddleboards.com/en/paddleboards/elite-114>

The phrase 'touring SUP' is a bit of a misnomer. Often conjuring up images of long miles in the saddle (or should that be with a paddle?). When actually a touring board for many will be what I'd describe as a performance all rounder. For me, the style of board the Gladiator Elite 11'4 is will be perfect for any paddler starting out as well as progressing. Touring SUPs aren't just elitist machines, regardless of the board's namesake.

Having rolled the Elite out it's notable how well the board's made.



The minimal graphics make you take note of things like the triple rail edge, quality fibreglass fin, fixtures and fittings and overall board quality. It's also nice to see a slightly different deck pad lay up which adds to the Elite's aesthetic.

Lifting and carrying the 11'4 is lush. The board's light so it's easy to move around. This, however, can often translate to a corky nature on the water. Yet being slightly thinner it sinks a little more in the brine and gives a more planted feel than many iSUPs which float on

top of it. This said it's not a sinker, don't get me wrong, it just does what it should.

Being 11'4 the Gladiator Elite has decent tracking and glide. Even with a strong tide pushing against me during testing it keeps its line and doesn't deviate. This is good news for all paddlers, whatever your style, as it'll need less corrective strokes to deliver you where you're going. Stability is good. Those riders looking to learn pivot turns will need to concentrate a little. But practicing moves aboard the Gladiator is perfectly

### CONCLUSION

As Gladiator say, if you're a rider that wants to go anywhere and do a bit of everything you should really consider the Elite 11'4. And I concur. It's a board for every paddler rather than being super specialist. And for the majority, this is a good thing. For my money, if I was heading for a float with family, friends, doing a bit of moderate adventure paddling or surfing small waves then I'd definitely choose the Gladiator Elite 11'4. The board's lightweight nature, yet with negatively impacting rigidity, makes this one of the main reasons. I'm all about efficiency, even with recreational paddling. Otherwise, it's just no fun.





# Light as a... –

## Indiana Feather 12'6 x 32" x 351L

### Review & pics: Tez Plavenieks

This is the first inflatable stand up paddle board I've tested from Indiana SUP (new to the UK). The brand's Feather range of iSUP touring boards is promoted as being super light. In the instance of the 12'6 tested here, the quoted weight is 7.5kg. Most air boards come out around 10kg (ish).



**Price:**  
£925

**Info:**  
<https://shop.indiana-paddlesurf.com/inflatable-boards/feather/indiana-12-6-feather-inflatable.html>

To achieve this Indiana have gone all minimalist. That's minimal number of layers used to manufacture the board (just one woven layer of Dropstitch here!). A reduced length deckpad to further cut down weight. Same with the fin. No fin box used, instead the fin relies on the slide and lock method. Basically anywhere the Swiss team has seen fit to cut down on weight they have. And I can confirm the Feather 12'6 is one of the lightest inflatables I've tested.

Now, I know what you're thinking. A single layer of woven Dropstitch material isn't going to be that rigid. Deflection is probably awful and the board will

bend and paddle like a banana. Again, I can confirm, that's absolutely true. IF. You don't inflate the Feather to its correct PSI - in this case 15. At which point the Feather 12'6 becomes rigid and bend free. Well, mostly. It's still an air filled board. And as such has some deflection. Which all iSUPs do. But not as much as you'd think. In fact, the Feather does a better job at rigidity than some supposed

higher end iSUPs. This is due mostly to the improved Dropstitch material being used which has more fibres per square inch. New technology = less materials needed for optimum performance results.

On the water, the Feather's minimal weight does mean it sits on top of the water as opposed to in it. This isn't unusual in the world of iSUP as a lot do just the same. That said the Feather is very lively. Again, born of using less materials and having the board sit higher on top of the water. Reducing the amount of PVC increases manoeuvrability which is great for anyone wanting a nimble iSUP.



### CONCLUSION

There's no question the Indiana Feather 12'6 is one of the lightest inflatables available currently. This in itself will make it desirable to many. You get the benefits of riding a longer, more glidey iSUP with the 12'6 but with considerably less weight. It's very much a flat water board. Paddlers venturing into choppy waters mightn't appreciate the lively feel in this environment. Those who do will definitely have some fun though. You just have to be a little more careful if paddling next to rocks and hard. Abrasive surfaces as my hunch is it'll puncture easier than double lay up inflatables. But this is no biggy if you stick to flat water and keep your eyes peeled.



# (Female) adventure ready – O’Shea Siren 11’ x 31” x 240L HDx touring iSUP

**Review & pics:** Tez Plavenieks

The second of O’Shea’s female specific inflatable stand up paddle boards tested is the Siren touring board (we checked out the 10’ version a few issues back). Both aesthetically and dimensionally the Siren 11’ board has been designed to accommodate lady riders.



**Price:**

£739

**Info:**

<https://osheasup.com/>

As is typical of O’Shea iSUPs the manufacturing, in the brand’s HDx construction, is top shelf. (HDx construction offers high durability more rigidity and stiffness in all directions with shape integrity for the long term, a pro surface finish and enhanced glide when breezy). Lightweight, durable with all parts in exactly the right place it’s a quality looking product that’ll go the distance.

On the water the Siren 11’ fits the compact touring board mould that’s common these days. It displays a familiar feel to all of O’Shea’s SUP boards. If you’ve had any experience riding other models you’ll be well served here. There’s decent stability (the secondary in fact is really good), but still with a liveliness that’ll engage the experienced. The last thing



anyone wants is a board to feel lifeless. The Siren 11’ doesn’t. Ambitious beginner paddlers will do fine atop the Siren with plenty of performance waiting to be unlocked moving forwards. I’ve said it on countless occasions but I’ll say it again: touring boards often make the best all rounders with better performance than a standard 10’6. A touring SUP will have much more longevity and therefore would be a great choice for all SUPers.

Being a pointy nosed, longer iSUP there’s efficient tracking and glide. If you’re after a stand up paddle board to chew up some miles then here you go. Likewise, recreational paddlers will do just fine when gentle pootles are all that’s needed. And should the rest of your family want a ‘jumping in’ platform then no probs. The Siren works well for all areas.

**CONCLUSION**

The O’Shea Siren 11’ touring iSUP is poised to take female paddlers wherever they choose, whenever they choose. Whilst no means a hardcore touring SUP it’s still a board that’ll deliver on the adventure front but also find favour with ambitious newbies and progressing intermediates. From multi day excursions to stand alone recreational sessions the Siren 11’ does everything you could ask of a quality iSUP. O’Shea have always been a reputable inflatable brand. The Siren just adds to their reputation. If you’ve been searching for a touring board aimed at the fairer sex then this might just be it.



# Freedom found – McConks Freedom 10'6 x 32" x 165L

**Review:** Tez Plavenieks **Pics:** Oli Lane-Peirce

Even though the demand for inflatable stand up paddle boards eclipses hard board sales there's still a demand for something that's not air filled. Hence why (in part) Cotswolds based inflatable SUP brand McConks offer a number of made to order hard SUPs. This is the second time the Freedom 10'6 has made an appearance. But as is the way with Mother Nature the first time round the weather only saw fit to deliver a few sessions. I've since had much more time to assess how the Freedom 10'6 performs across all areas of SUP.



**Price:**  
£990

**Info:**  
<https://mcconks.com/>

For many, a 10'6 will be the go to size for recreational paddling. The Freedom 10'6 certainly accommodates. Its slightly elongated profile gives a decent amount of tracking. And the board's hull contours help it glide. And even though this is a 10'6 there's a decent amount of load carrying capacity. You can see this from the pics where I have a passenger. It's also relatively stable feeling planted yet still nimble enough when conditions require a manoeuvrable platform.



The beady eyed will have noticed a funny centreline feature on the Freedom's deck. This is where the board's additional versatility comes in. Originally the Freedom was conceived as a windSUP with additional paddling performance. And having spent a fair amount of time on it with a sail I can confirm it's an adept machine in this guise. Most notably when you fancy windSUPing in light winds with waves pulsing through. For light wind wave sailing, it's a lovely SUP to pilot. Although it does the flat water windSUP thing equally well.

Lastly, for any wave heads you'll be pleased to hear the McConks Freedom 10'6 loves a bit of swell. Following on from the windSUP wave sailing performance comments above this should come as no surprise. What makes it well positioned for that makes it also well positioned for SUP surfing.



What's also surprising is the Freedom 10'6 has quite a bit of speed. Obviously, it's not a race SUP but with a few hammer down paddle strokes it's feasible to get a wriggle on. All in, for recreational stand up paddle boarding you'd do a lot worse if shopping for a hard shell SUP.

## CONCLUSION

McConks' Freedom 10'6 hard SUP will surprise many. You'd be forgiven for thinking a iSUP brand wouldn't know jot about hard boards. Yet the design is worthy of your attention - whether recreational paddling, windSUP or waves in mind it'll serve your purpose. And do so extremely well. Personally, I love the Freedom 10'6 which offers a variety of ways to use it across a broad spectrum of watersports and SUP scenarios. It also looks great to boot!



# New flights – Mistral foil gear (board, foil & wing)

**Review:** Tez Plavenieks **Pics:** Oli Lane-Peirce

Being given the opportunity to test Mistral’s foil gear - right from conceptualisation stage through to final production kit - has been a fun learning experience. Early designs have certainly been built upon and refined. This is in large part down to Mistral International brand Manager Steve West bringing onboard designer and naval architect Thom Partington. Their Mistral Sabre foil shape is an original product in line with Westy’s Tempest 120L foil board and the radial cut Mistral 5m wing. And all have been created on UK soil for real world conditions.



As is usual I wanted to test the kit in as many scenarios as possible. If you’re not aware many of the higher volume wing foil boards available can also be used for SUP foiling so have additional versatility. Whilst not a massive focus for the brand it’s nice to see that the Sabre 2000cm<sup>2</sup> low aspect carbon foil and Tempest board do a brilliant job in this guise.

**Price:**

- Mistral Sabre 2000/F82/M82 complete with travel bag £1369
- Mistral Sphinx 5.0M Wing £1069
- Mistral Tempest 120L Wing and SUP foil Board £1239

**Info:**

<https://shop.mistral.com/collections/sup->

lovely foil for anyone wanting to learn and there are no sushi knife edges to worry about. It’s also a solid and dependable foil, tested fully by myself after hitting a reef at full chat whilst in wing foil mode. The foil survived, my foot didn’t! Whilst not the ideal way to test durability it certainly proved the point.

Supper light, but stable and forgiving, pretty much sums up the Tempest board. There’s plenty of buoyancy for all foilers to get up on their feet before surging forwards and learning the art of lift. Once flying the Tempest feels a tad smaller than its quoted size. Due in part to how light and nimble it is. And once again, because of my crash, it proved its worth on the durability front. For anyone fancying a paddle on the Tempest the board is easily positioned at the wave’s take off. Although because of its compact nature don’t go expecting to cover

distance with any great efficiency!

For wing riders, the Mistral radial cut 5m delivers a lot of oomph in marginal wind strengths. Yet equally its range copes well with stronger gusts. Keeping its shape efficiently the 5m doesn’t warp and succumb to larger puffs. Instead, it drives riders forwards with ease. And because of this efficiency, there’s minimal effort required at take off to get up and flying. It’s an effortless and lovely wing to use.



**CONCLUSION**

I’m well aware of the amount of work that’s gone into all of Mistral’s foiling equipment. This is no off the shelf copied gear. Instead, all the products tested here are original Mistral kit that’s had serious time and effort put in. As such you’re getting equipment that’s top shelf and performance orientated yet aimed squarely at those entering the world of foiling whilst still remaining applicable to the progressing intermediate. Whether winging or SUP foiling you’ll have the best experience possible with Mistral’s foil gear. And look out for more performance orientated equipment coming soon.



# Step up engine – Freshwater Bay Paddleboard Co. two-piece adjustable carbon paddle

**Review & pics:** Tez Plavenieks

SUP paddles are so specific. It's extremely important to get the right type for your style and way of paddling. Oftentimes riders miss the importance of SUP paddles, thinking more about the board. You certainly need a platform to stand on but, with the paddle being stand up's defining piece of kit, due attention should be given to the 'engine'. But where to start?



## Price:

£165

## Info:

<https://freshwaterbaypaddleboards.co.uk/product/matt-carbon-paddle/>



Fortunately, Isle of Wight based Freshwater Bay Paddleboard Co's two piece carbon adjustable SUP paddle is a worthy consideration when looking at upgrade options. Even if you know little about paddle performance, what suits you best and which model to go for this'll start you off on the correct footing.

With quality manufacturing and attention to detail, the Freshwater Bay Paddleboard Co. two piece carbon adjustable paddle is lightweight yet robust. It features an anti-twist shaft and easily adjustable settings with a visual

gauge on the top part of its shaft. The mid section is fairly stiff leading to a wide blade with a flat face. During the catch and pull part of the stroke, this delivers a fair bit of power allowing riders to dig deep and paddle with a slower cadence. Not everyone wants to sweep at high cadence, so having the option to stroke slower but get the same result is a good thing.

It should be noted how comfortable the paddle

is in hand. It feels dependable and solid. Plus, although I wasn't actively going out of my way to belt rocks and solid objects, it's definitely durable. Less than careful riders will tank the brand for this, not needing to delicately place it when not in use.

Rounding out a nice mid-range SUP paddle is the inclusion of the padded bag. Even though the Freshwater Bay Paddleboard Co' two piece carbon adjustable SUP paddle will take a few knocks it's nice to know you can protect it properly when off the water.



## CONCLUSION

Having tested the brand's three piece version for last issue the two-piece comes in being slightly more efficient. Having less moving parts is a good thing when it comes to SUP paddles. This isn't to say either are bad. They're not. But personally, I'd stump for this model. With its accurate power delivery and ability to dig the Freshwater Bay Paddleboard Co. two piece carbon adjustable SUP paddle is worth the upgrade and should definitely be considered as your step up 'engine'.



# Safety first! – Palm Equipment’s Quick SUP belt and SUP leash

**Review & pics:** Dale Mears @Standuppaddleuk

It’s safe to say the knowledge and education about quick-release systems in SUP has been pushed to the forefront of our minds. We at @Standuppaddleuk have been pushing with many others to educate the UK paddle scene and hopefully further afield on the benefits of having the right gear.



**Price:**

SUP belt – £30

SUP leash – £25

**Info:**

[palmequipmenteurope.com](http://palmequipmenteurope.com)

**Video:**

[www.instagram.com/tv/CcQZM9MAiOV](https://www.instagram.com/tv/CcQZM9MAiOV)



Quick-release waist belts are becoming mainstream, and the reason is simple, easier access in an emergency, easier to put on/off, and less trip hazard on your board. I was lucky enough to test Palm Equipment’s new waist belt before it hits the market at the end of June.

Is this just another redesign to freshen up this season’s gear on sale? Absolutely not! Palm has conducted plenty of research into the design of belts and made an active decision to remove user error by limiting the tail length of the belt that the user can put through the Fixlock buckle to less than 10cm. This is because research suggests that when tested, there are fewer risks associated with the tail of the belt twisting, jamming or getting caught on anything, therefore, releasing faster from the buckle every time.

So how do you adjust the belt if the tail is kept short? Palm has made the opposite side of the buckle adjustable using an adjustable buckle similar to a PFD adjustment strap. If it’s strong enough for your PFD, then, of course, it will hold a release belt. This has meant the new offering has plenty of adjustable sizes for the

end-user making it great to use for coaching or if you pop on a few kilos with that winter spread. Access into and out of the belt is by unclipping this buckle.

What else has changed from the previous rescue belt Palm offered? The secondary release system/loop has gone, and instead, there are loops to fasten a range of add on extras from Palm. Such as a cargo pouch (used on this review), ideal for carrying essentials on the water (note this isn’t waterproof so would need to be lined if wanting to carry first aid kit or a phone. The actual grab toggle is bright yellow and slightly larger than most sup belts quick release toggle and more like a PFD quick-release toggle, making it easier to grab and use.

To the rear of the belt, the anchor point for the leash has also been changed; generally, belts have a large webbing loop to attach your standard coiled leash to. This belt does not allow you to do so but does offer a small loop that can be used with a paracord loop to attach to a standard leash if wanting to chop and change your leash for different environments.

The belt itself is sturdy and well constructed of nylon and polypropylene material, and it will last you a long time and is a premium belt like all Palm gear. The belt is padded and designed with fast-drying materials, and to wear it is extremely comfortable. The belt width is 70mm.

**Quick SUP leash**

Onto the Quick SUP leash. Again not just settling for this is how SUP leashes must be designed. Palm has thought this one through and utilised several features seen before in the SUP world but not entirely on the same product. The leash itself is a bungee cord leash, preventing the leash from being able to tangle up as many coiled leashes do. It is roughly 10-foot in length, fully extended, and I measured the sample leash at 6-foot.

So what else has changed? Palm has removed the historic and poorly designed, in my opinion, rail saver (the bit of annoying velcro that fastens your leash to your board) and instead made this a release point by using a velcro sandwich as a tension release. With enough breaking strain and tension on the belt, the velcro is designed to fail and release from the board.

This same velcro release system has been used on both sides of the leash, and the user can alter the point at which the belt releases by adjusting the position of the velcro. It’s straightforward; the more surface area, the more force required to release. The idea behind this is that if you get into an emergency and are unable to release your belt, the belt will automatically release for you. Again the actual leash has a buckle that you can quickly remove the leash from the belt when not in use.

**CONCLUSION**

This belt has been tested for over a year by Water Skills Academy instructors and other testers to ensure that the design and functionality of the product are second to none, and my personal opinion is that this is the best and most well thought out belt on the market. When released, the belt will be sold as separates so you can decide if you want the quick belt only, quick leash and add one. My recommendation is that you utilise the belt and leash combo, as these are designed to complement each other.



# Jump in

A woman and a young girl are captured mid-air, jumping into the water. The woman, on the right, has her hair in a high ponytail that is flying upwards. She is wearing a blue jacket, a purple life jacket with 'PALM EQUIPMENT' written on it, and dark wetsuit pants. The girl, on the left, is wearing a red jacket and dark wetsuit pants. Both are smiling and looking down towards the water. The background is a vast, calm body of water under a cloudy sky.

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# Night rider! – Black Swan SUP lamps

**Review:** Tez Plavenieks **Pics:** Lloyd Scott - @nightsurfuk

With longer days, lighter evenings and earlier dawn calls then the need for lighting up your SUP paddling sessions might not seem a priority. Yet trust me, there'll still be sessions missed due to falling darkness and times when you wished you had a tool to make night paddling doable.

**BLACKSWAN**

**Price:**

€890

**Info:**

<https://blackswansurfing.com>

Enter stage left Black Swan surfing lamps - poised to get you riding even in the darkest depths of winter. Custom made in France these lamps aren't your run of the mill head mounted lights you can buy in outdoor shops. Black Swan have been optimised to make your night riding as illuminated as possible. At full charge the Black Swan surfing lamps offer from 90 minutes at 7,000 lumens with a bonus 21 hours at 275 lumens. That's super bright! If you want a gauge of how bright then when I first turned the lights on I was looking directly at the bulbs and nearly blinded myself! That's like accidentally glancing at the sun! You'll therefore need to be a little cautious and avoid staring straight into the brightness.



## CONCLUSION

Black Swan surfing lamps are awesome pieces of kit. For flat water stand up paddle boarding at night it's a nifty way to make it possible and not intimidating. I can't stress how bright, at full beam, these lamps are. You really do light up the night and can see all you need to. Night SUP may sound bonkers to some but it can be extremely fun in the right environment and weather. With Black Swan lights in the mix it'll be even more fun. And for additional versatility, they can be applied to various other outdoor night riding situations.



As mentioned above the lamp part mounts to a helmet via M3 sticky pad. The battery pack is then worn like a rucksack with robust shoulder straps keeping it in place. The lamp's extension is long and I'll not lie it can feel a little weighty whilst on your bounce. But you get used to it quickly and once on the water is worth the effort.

Black Swan surfing lamps are super heavy duty. It's definitely a built to last product. You can appreciate that if you take surfing into the equation. Being tumbled in waves, at night no less, will see any bit of kit needing to be up to the task. But have no fear, Black Swan lamps are!



Photo: @surfingdevon



# Snug as a bug – Selk'bag Original 6G

**Review & pics:** Robert Carroll

Some would say that considering the mummy sleeping has stood the test of time so well; there would be no need to reinvent the wheel. I wanted to see if the Selkbag Original (6G) concept could prove them wrong.



## Price:

£159.99

## Info:

[www.selkbag.co.uk/collections/original-6g/products/original-6g-green-pasture](http://www.selkbag.co.uk/collections/original-6g/products/original-6g-green-pasture)



## SPECS:

**The bag, which is both lined and filled using synthetic, Polyester fabric, comes complete with pockets, zipped ventilation, an adjustable hood and removable booties:**

- **The non-detachable hood is insulated and adjustable for the best fit, keeping you warm and comfortable.**
- **A quick, practical dual zipper design allows you to access your pockets or fly.**
- **A kangaroo pocket lets you bring your hands to rest and stash anything you need comfortably.**
- **Elastic no-hassle hand openings allow you to bring your hands in and out of the bag quickly and effortlessly.**
- **Wear your shoes when you're out and about. Then swap for removable, zip-off booties with nylon soles when you're sleeping.**



Beginning optimistically, as all new ventures should, I held high hopes as I rarely enjoy a good night's sleep in the often-uncomfortable confines of a sleeping bag. I was already semi convinced that the Selk'bag could offer some distinct advantages over its mass-produced cousin.

The onesie style bag is appropriate for all seasons in the British Isles and has a thick double layer fill to meet the lower temperature brackets. As the bag manufacturer has opted for synthetic fill

instead of the smaller and lighter offerings provided by down feather fill, the sack and contents end up larger than its peers. This could make it a challenging companion for camping trips, and some compression straps on the sack itself could help alleviate this.

Following the maker's guidance, I went a size up for comfort and flexibility, which proved to be an excellent recommendation; the XL bag suits those up to 6'2 with booties and allowed me (6ft) to move, sit and lie without being restricted.



The cosiness and overall comfort of the suit in a camping setting was refreshing, especially with the bonus of being able to cook, walk to the toilet, and be active around the site while retaining warmth and avoiding the hassle of climbing in and out of a mummy bag. The pre and post-sleep manoeuvrability of the Selk'bag has to be its most significant advantage and would be even more valuable in colder weather when swapping a warm bag for the cold dew of the night is never a pleasant experience.

The weather for the review was relatively warm, with night temperatures only dropping to high single figures. I was sufficiently warm, but from experience, the damp Irish climate can have a severe bite for much of the year. Another test would be required to confirm its capability in colder conditions.

Whilst the bottom of the detachable boots do have an extra layer of durable fabric, I would avoid wearing these outside in all but very dry weather. It's surprisingly quick and efficient to zip off the boots and replace them with shoes, but it seems worthwhile to retain cleanliness in the tent and avoid significant wear to the boot fabric.



## Airbank D6 electric SUP pump

<https://www.airbankpump.com>

By Steve Beaman



Inflatable SUPs and kayaks are typically quick and easy to inflate with a manual pump that inflates a SUP in around 10 minutes. However, younger or much older SUPers might find inflating them difficult, while others want to spare themselves from the strain and sweat that comes with manual pumping and why not?

Airbank is a US-based company established in the electric pump market across the pond. The D6 is their new 2022 model. It's a good looking pump with clean lines and an easy carry handle and is very tidy at storing the power cable within the pump and attaching the inflation hose around the outside of the pump itself, in short - sound design.

The D6 can inflate paddleboards up to 20 psi from an in-car 12 volt DC connector. The pump has two stages; the first will inflate using high volume, and the second will inflate using higher pressure. The pump took a few seconds over eight minutes to inflate our Glyde iSUP to 18psi. The D6 comes with five different nozzles for inflating various types. Four bottom silicone pads provide better gripping and prevent slippage.

The D6 automatically switches itself off when it reaches its desired pressure. Many paddleboarders forget that they can use their electric pump to help to finish deflating their SUP, as it will be able to suck out the air that you can't get out by hand or by sitting on it. When used for deflating, keep an eye on the process as the D6 will not auto switch off and may overheat!

### CONCLUSION

All in all - an elegant pump that will do all that you ask for it whilst avoiding taking up too much space and messy storage.

Available to buy in the UK at either: <https://m.tomtop.com/> or [www.cafago.com](http://www.cafago.com). Price: £80.00



## Men's Drift Creek H2 Sandal

<https://www.keenfootwear.com>

By Robert Carroll



The Keen Drift Creek H2 is Keen's new hybrid watersports/hiking closed-toe sandal that's comfortable to wear and designed to feel at home both in and out of the water.

Out of the box, the lace-lock bungee system allows the user to fit into the shoe quickly and easily. The low-profile design is lightweight and flexible for improved ground contact, whilst the integrated lateral supports help to stabilise both the ankles and heel, whilst the design follows the contours of your feet for a secure fit.

The open sandal drains very quickly and is complemented by the quick-dry lining. The only caveat is that the closed-toe design can collect debris from the river bed, which can be difficult to dislodge as opposed to an open sandal. It depends on how you view it and whether you prefer the protection that closed-toe affords you both in and out of the water. The EVA insoles have contoured arches for mid-foot support and all-day comfort on land.

The shoe's construction is sound and reliable, with the washable quick-drying upper webbing made from recycled plastic bottles with an Eco natural odour control.

### CONCLUSION

With its waterproof materials, protective toe box, and excellent wet traction, the Keen Drift Creek H2 stands out as an excellent all-round performer from a company that produces excellent sandals as standard. They are available for both men and women plus different colour combos.

- Non-marking TPR outsole
  - An integrated heel support structure
  - Lace-lock bungee system
  - 10-Point Fit
- RRP: £79.99



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