



blackwood river

canoe trail



explore discover adventure

The Blackwood River, with 41 creeks and tributaries, is the longest river system in the South West of Western Australia. Beginning in the Southern Wheatbelt it flows 383km as it makes its way to the Southern Ocean at Augusta. The paddleable parts of the river between Arthur River and Augusta flow through farmland, pine plantations, national parks, regenerated Jarrah forests and townships (Boyup Brook, Bridgetown and Nannup). The River is considered to be one of Western Australia's premier canoeing locations. In winter, when the waterways are at their fullest, the more adventurous can go whitewater rafting. In summer there are opportunities for families to paddle the calmer waters and spend hours exploring the unique surroundings.



Indigenous Significance:

Respect the River ways. The Blackwood River and the Waigle (a snake like spirit of water) are of Indigenous mythological significance. The Waigle lives in these waters and played a part in the creation of this river, its tributaries and pools. In traditional times the Blackwood River was an access way through the forests and was known as a place to camp and gather food such as fish, marron, duck, sedges and other plants. The Blackwood River is a territorial boundary between the Pibbelmen and Wardandi language groups.

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The Canoe/Kayak:

- Check the canoe/kayak for fixed buoyancy, comfort when sitting, strength and quality



The Paddler:

- The paddler must be a proficient and confident swimmer in the clothing which is worn while paddling
- The paddler must always wear a Personal Flotation Device (PFD - either Type 2 or 3)
- Be honest with yourself about your ability, as paddling a canoe on quiet water doesn't qualify you for more difficult trips or conditions
- The waters of rivers, lakes and oceans are all very different and they demand different levels of knowledge and skill. Develop your paddling incrementally, preferably with people more skilled than yourself
- Cold water and weather extremes can be dangerous. Swimming ability and PFDs cannot protect against the effects of very cold water
- Be equipped for the conditions that could occur. Secure your spectacles, wear appropriate footwear and protect yourself against the effects of the sun, wind and rain
- Learn how to capsize and rescue yourself and others. Learn first aid so that you are prepared for an emergency
- Seek training. We recommend the AC Basic Skills Award as a minimum. AC Instructors are available through many canoeing clubs and other bodies
- Before accepting an invitation to undertake a trip, enquire about the group organising it, the leader and the trip itself
- Give the leader a frank assessment of your skill and experience and your full cooperation

The Equipment:

- Make sure your canoe/kayak is in good condition and that it is the right craft for the trip
- Test new and unfamiliar equipment before undertaking hazardous assignments. This includes alterations to gear
- The canoe/kayak, when filled with water, must be able to support its crew and sudden gear in deep water. Use expanded plastics or buoyancy bags or sealed air tight compartments
- Use spray covers whenever there is any possibility of water entering the canoe/kayak. The cover release must be immediate and function perfectly. If spray covers are used it is essential to have practised getting out of the canoe/kayak if it capsizes
- Carry appropriate repair equipment, torch, map, compass and survival kit
- Leave a plan of your trip with a responsible person and an expected time of arrival at your destination

2 safety guidelines

River Grading System

Grade 1: Easy

Slow to medium flowing water with very small, regular waves or riffles. Relatively few obstacles with an easy path to find and follow. Suitable for novices.

Grade 2: Medium

Rapids are straightforward with medium sized, regular waves. The path through rapids can be clearly seen from the water and is often indicated by well-defined chutes or Vs of water. There are some obstacles that require manoeuvring around, but paddlers with a good command of basic strokes can easily avoid them.

Grade 3: Difficult

Rapids have moderate, irregular waves and strong currents. Manoeuvring is required to follow the preferred route. Small to medium sized stoppers may have to be negotiated. The route is difficult for inexperienced paddlers to see and scouting is advisable. Suitable for experienced whitewater paddlers, with the ability to roll an advantage.

Grade 4: Advanced

Rapids have large waves and powerful, confused currents. Drops are big and stoppers can be large and unavoidable. Fast manoeuvres may need to be made. The route is not clear and scouting may be needed. Suitable only for very experienced whitewater paddlers with consistent skills and reliable rolls.

Grade 5: Expert

Extremely long, obstructed or powerful rapids. Rapids may contain very large unavoidable drops, waves and stoppers with turbulent, unpredictable currents. Fast and accurate manoeuvring is necessary. Eddies may be very small, turbulent and scarce. The route is complex and scouting is highly recommended. Suitable only for expert paddlers who are willing to accept the higher level of risk. Rolling in adverse conditions is essential. Swimming is very dangerous.

Grade 6: Extreme

Rapids are extremely technically difficult, powerful and unpredictable. They are rarely paddled and if they are paddled successfully they are usually downgraded to Grade 5 plus. The river cannot be paddled without severe risk to life.

Personal Ability

Novice: Paddler is new to canoeing with little or no experience.
Intermediate: Paddler has canoeing experience and the ability to safely navigate potentially dangerous sections of river.
Experienced: Paddler has extensive experience and can safely navigate extreme sections of river that present serious risk of injury or death.

River conditions should be checked on:
<http://kumina.water.wa.gov.au/waterinformation/felem/stage.cfm>



Normally, the best time to canoe the Blackwood River region is in the winter months (June, July & August).

- Plan your journey and advise someone of your itinerary
- Obtain detailed maps and trail information of the section(s) that you intend to paddle
- Check water levels (refer to Dept. Water WA website)
- Assess water depths, flows and submerged objects
- Ensure you are appropriately equipped (refer to Canoe WA website for required clothing, sun protection, equipment etc)
- Mobile coverage varies considerably between networks and providers with the potential of little or no coverage in some areas
- Supervise children at all times

Emergency Contact Details
In an emergency call 000

- General Information:**
- Camping is only permissible in designated areas
 - Observe campfire restrictions at all times (refer to Shire website)
 - Respect nature (observe and conserve)
 - Leave no trace (take your rubbish with you)

Disclaimer: Kayakers/canoers using this map do so at their own risk. The Shires of Bridgetown-Greenbushes, Boyup Brook, Nannup and Manjimup and the Department of Environment and Conservation do not accept any responsibility for personal injury and/or damage to property arising from the use of this map. Every care has been taken in the preparation of the map. No responsibility will be accepted for any errors or omissions.

Camping Sites/Caravan Parks:

Boyup Brook (30 powered sites, camping, canoe hire, kiosk, BBQ facilities)

Bridgetown (cabins, powered/unpowered sites, water sport hire) www.bridgetowncaravanpark.com.au

Marannup Ford Caravan Park (cabins, powered/unpowered sites, B&B, canoe hire, BBQ facilities)

Wrights Bridge on the Nannup-Balingup Rd

Nannup (powered/unpowered sites, BBQ facilities, cabins)

Sues Bridge (shaded camping/picnic sites, firewood, long drops, BBQ facilities)

Information Centres /Accommodation:

Boyup Brook: Boyup Brook Visitor Centre
Cnr Bridge & Abel Streets
www.boyupbrooktourism.com.au

Bridgetown: Bridgetown-Greenbushes Visitor Centre
154 Hampton Street
www.bridgetown.com.au

Nannup: Nannup Visitor Centre, 4 Brockman Street
www.nannup.wa.gov.au

Commercial Tour Guides/Operators:

Cape Kayaks 0417 961 689 www.capekayaks.com

Blackwood River Canoeing (08) 9756 1209
www.blackwoodrivercanoeing.com

Bush Tucker Tours (08) 9757 9084 www.bushtuckertours.com

Augusta Eco Cruises 0419 759 562 www.margaretriver.com

Canoeing at Nannup (08) 9756 1252

Further Resources:

- o Regional Trails www.totaltrails.com.au
- o Canoe WA www.wa.canoe.org.au
- o Bureau of Meteorology www.bom.gov.au
- o Toilet locations www.toiletnmap.gov.au



5 resources & further information

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