

Canoe Adventures Risk Assessment

List of hazards (Does not include trivial everyday hazards)	Control measures in place to reduce risk	Arrangements to ensure control measures are effectively implemented
Swamping	Buoyancy aids (BAs) worn. Avoid swamping hazards; standing waves, dangerous wash, and collisions. Bailing buckets to hand.	Equipment check. Daily forecasts known. Lookout underway.
Collision	Follow RULES FOR PREVENTION OF COLLISION AT SEA	Lookout underway. Take suitable action in good time.
Capsize	Capsize recovery training for Skippers. BAs worn. Guest-crew briefing and training exercise on capsize control/action prior to cast-off. VHF carried. See section on 'Water Pollution'	Equipment check. Non-swimmers identified. Guest-crew briefing and training before cast-off. Reminders appropriately.
Medical	Steersmen current First-Aiders and carry first-aid kits. Guest-crew medical info required before boarding; guests instructed to advise in advance of any medical conditions or we assume all others presenting themselves to paddle are medically fit do so. VHF to hand.	Equipment check. First-Aid certificates update logged. First-aid kit resupply routine.
Severe Weather Wind (<30mph, or less with lighter crew). Driving rain. Rain greater risk consideration outside of main summer months.	Postpone departure when possible, cancel or reschedule. Land early. Take shelter. Know emergency landings and access points.	Monitor forecast daily. All Lead Skippers know all-tide landings and access points.
Hours of Darkness (increased risk of collision)	360° steady white LED at flag-head and under bow. Head torch and Beam torch to hand.	Equipment check.
Special Needs	Appropriate ratio of able to special needs guest-crew determined beforehand.	Apply as required.

Canoe Adventures Risk Assessment

<p>Under 18s</p> <p>1. To ensure weight and strength of crew and</p> <p>2. To ensure safeguarding policy</p>	<p>Appropriate ratio of adults to youngsters agreed in advance of outing; standard practice being at least one adult known to youngsters per boat.</p>	<p>Apply as required.</p>
<p>Tidal riverbank landings with rocks, mud, seaweed, driftwood, running moorings etc.</p>	<p>Inform and warn guest crew of normal natural slip trip hazards and need for extra personal duty of care.</p>	<p>Repeat warning as appropriate. Assist guests in and out of boat and across shore as necessary.</p>
<p>Oyster shells cutting feet</p>	<p>Footwear to be worn on low tide landings where risk is known, especially swimming or paddling.</p>	<p>Skippers informed of landings with risk. Skippers to observe when landing and report new instances to Company Directors.</p>
<p>Fire & Kelly Kettle, scolds and burns</p>	<p>Fire lighting activity to be led or delegated by Lead Skipper. Only Skippers with previous experience to use Kelly Kettles</p>	<p>Fire lighting activity part of new Skipper induction.</p> <p>Parents/teachers involved in observing their youngsters.</p>
<p>Water Pollution from unsafe levels of faecal contamination, leading to risk of illness</p>	<p>Swimming at high tide only and after at least two complete tidal cycles following heavy rain, in areas of known (recent) historical issues. SG Mill Creek and up stream.</p> <p>Gurrow and 'Facing Beach' OK at low tide.</p> <p>No swimming in Totnes.</p> <p>Visual check every day of operating and monitoring of outflow status reports, especially during or after heavy rainfall.</p>	<p>New information shared with staff by email and in discussion when setting up trips.</p> <p>Keeping up to date with reports in water quality changes and seeking external advice. See appendix 1.</p>

Hal Gillmore
 Director, Canoe Adventures, March 2026



Canoe Adventures Risk Assessment

Appendix - Water pollution

Swimming is undertaken at customers' own discretion.

We have greater duty of care to U18s when in scope of AALA and Ofsted licence.

1. Rationale for swimming: risk / reward

'Wild Swimming' has become a popular 'phenomenon' for good reason. The broad benefits in terms of health, wellbeing, enjoyment, and deeper connection with and care for our environment are well documented.

Paddling and swimming are necessary ways to keep cool on hot days. We can be exposed to the sun for long periods when paddling and it is important to take shade and cool in the water.

For many young people we are their first and only water activity in their lives, particularly in the natural outdoors. Our activities have proven to inspire young people to want to learn to swim, to live more active lifestyles, and to make more of the outdoor opportunities available to them living where they do, in Devon.

Swimming enhances the quality of the experience available on a Canoe Adventure.

There is increased awareness of the current water quality issues associated with UK water ways, including sections of the Dart. We believe this can be managed in the following ways so as to ensure safety without losing the benefits of swimming on our trips.

We understand our local conditions, and stay informed and connected with other groups using and monitoring the same areas, such as SGBA and Friends of the Dart. Such specific details of our local are below.

Swimming takes place in shallow zone, chest and shoulders, ie depth to which UV light penetrates and kills harmful bacteria.

Where we have reason to suspect poor water quality (smell, or excess algae, or any blue-green-red algae) swimming not allowed.

Washing hands and face if submerged or exposed to water for long periods.

Stoke Gabriel Mill Creek and upstream:

- Swimming at high tide only and after at least two complete tidal cycles following heavy rain, in areas of known (recent) historical issues. SG Mill Creek and up stream.
- Swimming mainly out of main river flow. ie inside of bends in river.

Rationale being the water at this time is marine, tidal water that has come up from areas of the estuary monitored as 'excellent'. At low tide the water is more influenced by river water from Totnes (Dart) or Yalberton which can be poor quality.

2. Specific Local locations

Overflows of significant note:

- Stoke Gabriel, 3. Bathing area downgraded 2025 in winter conditions. Monitored with initial results showing satisfactory to excellent. Not considered safe for swimming winter 2025/6 but likely to be OK for summer 2026.
- Totnes. Monitored and not considered satisfactory for swimming at any time of year.

Canoe Adventures Risk Assessment

- Three Oak Field, Cornworthy Court Farm, Bow Creek. Not monitored. Visual check each use.

Stoke Gabriel

Stoke Gabriel has now been designated a bathing site and therefore seasonally monitored by EA. Friends of the Dart have been conducting some monitoring out of season.

There is a Combined Sewer Outfall at The Quay in Stoke Gabriel Creek and near the Scout Hut which discharge in the event of pump failure and / or the storage tank capacity being exceeded. These can be seen at low tide; near the Scout Hut field just where the adjacent stream flows into the MillPond, and on the estuary side of the dam near the steps and the covers to the underground pumps and reservoir (visible near low water) covered in sea weed.

There is a further overflow discharge from the Tor Park pumping station into the Yalberton Stream near Collaton St Mary (down stream of the Parkers Arms).

The SWW site waterfit live: <https://www.southwestwater.co.uk/stoke-gabriel> and the Surfers Against Sewage app (SSRS) to look at actual real time discharge data.

The water is now tested weekly for Escherichia coli (E. coli) & Intestinal Enterococci. The environment agency designates bathing water accordingly and suggest that Tidal areas should be treated as coastal.

Most “no swim” notices are lifted in 2 tidal cycles in tidal waters.

Classification Thresholds (percentile)

Coastal Bathing Waters

Excellent EC: ≤250 cfu/100ml IE: ≤100 cfu/100ml (95th percentile)

Good EC: ≤500 cfu/100ml IE: ≤200 cfu/100ml (95th percentile)

Sufficient EC: ≤500 cfu/100ml IE: ≤185 cfu/100ml (90th percentile)

Poor means that the values are worse than the sufficient Data from Bathing Water Quality (data.gov.uk)

Intermittent pollution incidents, heavy rainfall and permitted discharges will cause fluctuations in water quality.

The Environment agency publish weekly Escherichia coli (E. coli) & Intestinal Enterococci results.

Environmental health does not stipulate any safe level of E.coli but advise all open water has a potential to cause infections.

EA advise pollution incidents resulting in “no swim” areas should be avoided.

Incident updates can be checked online.

<https://environment.data.gov.uk/bwg/profiles/index.html>

3. RYA on CONTAMINATED WATER (Revised / Updated 26.7.25):

Blue/green algae

Blue-green algae (or cyanobacteria) occur in fresh, brackish and sea water throughout the world; in the UK they can sometimes appear in large blooms during the summer months in ponds, lakes, reservoirs and old gravel pits and can cause problems for boating activity.

While usually green, or blue-green in colour (hence the name), they may be khaki, blue, black, dark brown or red. Blooms of blue-green algae can form thick scums on the surface of the water and are often cause for concern because as they start to break down, they can release a range of toxins. If these toxins are ingested in large quantities, they can present

Canoe Adventures Risk Assessment

risks to human health and long-term exposure of human skin to the toxins can cause irritation. The effect on humans in the UK has been limited to illness rather than death and there are a number of steps that you can take to minimise the risk associated with blue-green algal blooms.

There are a wide variety of types of blue-green algae and the fact that each of them can behave differently means there are no strict guidelines on whether it is safe to continue using recreational waters in the event of an algal bloom. Instead, it is recommended that a risk assessment be made on a case-by-case basis to establish what is necessary to protect the health of water users.