

13. SHARE THE LOVE

Where would you be if not for that mentor, or mentors, who connected you to paddlesports? Somewhere along the way—perhaps after you swore off this hideous sport after your umpteenth swim—someone showed you that one little technique, complimented your improvement, or just kept you in the group. And as a result, you kept paddling. Better. Now it's time for you to be the guru who brings along a struggling paddler and make him realize the height of his potential.

Take an instructor certification or advanced-teaching course through the ACA (www.americancanoe.org).

14. SET UP A Z PULLEY

While guides who work sections with wrap-happy rapids can set up Z pullies in their sleep, many paddlers will never use it. The ones who do will tell you how important it is to know this skill in a pinch. “When you need to use one, chances are good that you need it right now, and don't have time to wait for someone else who might know it,” says Robin Pope, chair of the ACA Safety Education and Instruction Committee. Knowing this system could save some of your gear, or possibly someone's life and you don't want to be flustered when someone's life is on the line. Action-hero moments aside, “Even if you never use it on the river,” Pope says, “it can help pull your car out of a muddy take-out.”

Take a swiftwater rescue course with an ACA-certified instructor (www.americancanoe.org). It is an easy skill to forget, so make sure you practice setting it up after you learn it. You can use small pulleys and twine from a hardware store and to set mini Z-drags on your desk if you don't have the space to rig the real deal at home.

15. READ A TIDAL CHART

Grounding your hull in the muddy shallows of a tidal basin is certainly not the easiest way to learn the importance of tidal charts. So practice reading a tidal chart, even on days when you know you won't need to use it. Rather, just observe how the character of the water changes along with the predicted ebb and flow. This will give you a base

16. BE A RESCUE HERO

Want to meet people of the opposite sex? Rescue them. Given, the hand signals and gear will make you feel awkward. Patting the top of your head to see if someone is okay is worse than asking, “So, do you come to this river often?” Outside of a boat, a wetsuit just looks like a pair of tights, but hey, it worked for Spiderman. No matter how ridiculous you feel, if you pull off the rescue you will always look like a champ.

Get safety and rescue training from the ACA (www.americancanoe.org) to become a certified action hero.

of knowledge for longer trips in unfamiliar water—times when you *will* need a chart.

Log on to www.tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov for a broad compilation of tidal and weather information, including a selection of charts.

17. PRACTICE SELF-RESCUES IN A SEA KAYAK

True, you could go years without needing to self-rescue, but don't get lackadaisical about practicing it. Get a group of friends to commit to working on self-rescues. Watch each other. Advise each other. And if you do this in conditions where a capsized could happen, even better.



“You Americans are all the same... Hey, is that money?”

18. PAY OFF A FOREIGN COP

Bribing an officer of the law in a foreign country is a delicate balance, but here's a start: “Always bring a map and a mirror with you—so you know where you are and what you look like,” says Kelly Clinton, a veteran river sage, who's used that piece of pricey advice more than once. Also, never forget the fact that YOU ARE IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY, and Napoleonic Law (guilty until proven innocent) is possibly the standard. First off, ensure the cop is just looking for some extra bucks rather than legitimately wanting to arrest you. Once you have gauged this, it is just like bartering for a product—except instead of scoring a ceramic donkey, you'll score your freedom. If you offer too much, they might assume you're rich and automatically demand more. If you offer too little, you can offend the officer's sensibilities and end up in jail.

To keep the value of local currency into account, lead with the cost of two meals at a middle-of-the-road restaurant in the area in which you are traveling. Establish a maximum bribe (they will usually bid you up). And when you hit that max, fake panic and say, “This is it. Now, I don't even know how I'm going to get home.” Show them your wallet, which holds just \$10 because you previously dispersed the rest of your money in other places, such as your socks, shoes, etc. When they accept your bribe, thank them for their injustice, because let's face it, YOU ARE IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY.

19. SEAL LAUNCH

Why seal launch? Because you can't always count on a nice trail to take you to the river and you might have no other choice. Because it's easier to snap on your skirt when you're on land than when waves are splashing into your cockpit. When practicing, however, remember the water into which you are launching is probably not aerated, like the base of a waterfall. The impact, as a result, is going to be more severe. So don't land flat. Also



For information about Instructor Certification, Swiftwater Rescue, additional safety and rescue training, and much more, please visit the ACA online (www.americancanoe.org).