

the Class III section and a Class II sections downstream.

Even closer to town, the West Fork of the Hood can challenge Class III-IV kayakers and terrify Class V boaters, depending on the water level. The Columbia River Gorge that divides Washington from Oregon is majestic, with erratic winds, heavenly sunsets, and some islands well worth exploring.

The Achilles heel of Hood River's paddling opportunities is its play boating. Rattlesnake on the lower section of the White Salmon looks perfect but is quite finicky. Hood River is where freestyle kayakers go when they retire.

—Christian Knight

## SAN MARCOS, TX

**THE TOWN:** Remember that scene in the 1932 version of *Tarzan the Ape-man* in which Johnny Weissmuller swings from a vine down to a quiet jungle river and takes a drink from it? The Internet Movie Data Base ([www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com)) says it was filmed in Southern California. But San Marcos locals will tell it was on their beloved, geo-thermally heated river. In Texas. True, most people don't think of a tropical river when they think of the Lone Star State, but in many ways the

San Marcos River is just that, to the extent that some are convinced their backyard river once passed for the deep African wild.

On Valentine's Day, you can comfortably dine at night on the outdoor patio of the San Marcos River Bar and Grill and watch boaters play in the whitewater park, beautified thanks to \$2 million city dollars, below. After dessert, you can join them for a quick late-night session lit up 24 hours by security lights.

San Marcos is home to Texas State University, which brings jobs, arts, and culture to the town, yet most of the Animal Housers take their party to Austin. Its proximity (about 30 miles) between the state capital and San Antonio gives locals the opportunity to get a big city-fix, like discovering new music at world-renowned Austin music festival South by Southwest, but come home to a slower pace.

**THE PADDLING:** The San Marcos River is the only watershed in Texas that has never dried out. As a result, it is one of the oldest human-inhabited spots in the Northern Hemisphere. "Ancient civilizations found water [in San Marcos] and stayed, kind of like we did," says Michelle Kvanli co-owner of the Power Olympic



### Paddler's Rating

After Work: ★★★★★  
Weekending: ★★★★★  
Vacations: ★★★★★  
Near Home: ★★★★★

### Vitals

**Pop:** 47,181 (2006 est.)  
**Median Home Price (end of 2007):** \$130,000  
**Climate:** Jan.; 65/40; July; 95/73; Rainfall 37 Inches  
**Who:** Anyone who hates the cold and loves variety, an added

bonus for masochistic marathon kayakers and canoeists  
**Dirtbag Quotient:** Find a job with the university; fill a house with students and yourself.  
**Who Knew?:** President Lyndon Baines Johnson attended College in San Marcos at what was then called The Southwest Texas State Teacher's College (now Texas State University) where he was an editor for the school newspaper.  
**2004 Presidential Election:** 56% Bush, 42% Kerry, 1% Other

LOWER PHOTO BY PATRICK CAVAN BROWN; ABOVE BY MARK CHRISTAL



Whether playing Tarzan (above) or playing EJ, you'll be comfy in the year-round, 72-degree San Marcos River.

remember you don't have natural momentum sending you off the lip, so you might over-rotate and land on your belly. Avoid both by practicing on smaller launch spots, such as a dock.

Read Eric Jackson's Know-How article in the July/August 2006 issue of *Paddler*.

## 20. FEED 20 HUNGRY PADDLERS

Two large Dutch Oven (D.O.) lasagnas can feed 20 hungry paddlers from the Sasquatch family. Throw a D.O. peach cobbler in there, and you will have some seriously satiated Yeti. The myth that cooking with a D.O. involves some sort of magic is perpetuated by people who want to seem cooler because they cook with D.O.s. It's actually as simple as cooking gets. Put whatever you want to cook in the D.O. as if it is a baking pan. Put five to 10 coals on the bottom, depending on the size of the D.O. The amount of coals you place on the bottom of the D.O. doesn't matter as much as the amount you place on the top. Place a solid ring of coals around the outer edge of the lid, and don't open it until you can smell what is cooking inside (that usually means it's done).

Expand your D.O. repertoire at [www.dutchovendude.com](http://www.dutchovendude.com).

## 21. KNOW YOUR KNOTS

In this age of cam-strap proliferation, mastery of tying knots has fallen the way of the portable CD player. But a time will surely come when you won't have enough straps, and there, in the back of your car, you'll find your old pal, the rope, dutifully waiting to be contorted into a trucker's hitch. Will you be able to do it? **Tip:** Trucker's hitches are notoriously hard to pull out, especially with older, rougher ropes. Add another twist or two to make it slip easier.

Log on to [www.netknots.com](http://www.netknots.com) for a full list of knots for paddlers.

## 22. BREAK INTO A CAR

Thwump! "Oh no! Where are your keys?" "In the car." "Where's your cellphone?" "In the car." All the doors are locked, and you can't even call a locksmith. You could break a window, but that would be like using a high-powered nail gun to repair a birch-bark canoe. Better yet, find a spot on your vehicle to hide your key or learn to use a few handy MacGyver-like tools (wood wedge, coat hanger, blunt object) and save your window, and your paddling trip.

Log on to [www.everything2.com](http://www.everything2.com) and search for "Break Into Car." If you're prone to losing your keys in the water, log on to [www.chow.com](http://www.chow.com) and search for "Hot Wire Car."

## 23. CIRCUMVENT THE GRAND CANYON PERMIT SYSTEM

No, we're not suggesting you use a dead person's identity to work around the permit system (see "He Uses Dead People", May/June '07). We are saying you should hitch a ride on someone else's permit. You can make yourself more marketable as a Grand companion in several ways. One is to learn how to guide Class V. People intimidated by Lava will be happy to hand you the oars if you can legitimately use terms like, "We need to ferry left for our lives to escape that manky lateral!" Another is to buy an expensive piece of equipment that is very Grand Canyon specific. It will be easier (and cheaper) for a permit holder to invite you than it will be to hunt down and buy the Eco Safe Expedition Toilet (\$174.95). To sweeten the pot, bring a large ammo can that goes with the toilet—they are more difficult to get these days, however, because U.S. troops are using them in the Middle East. And always smile when you paddle. You never know who you are going to see on the river, and who has a permit on the way. One grumpy face can seal your impression as a sour paddler on a future Grand Canyon.

Whitewater Voyages ([www.whitewatervoyages.com](http://www.whitewatervoyages.com)) in El Sobrante, California, has a very reputable guide school.

## 24. BOMBPROOF YOUR OFF-SIDE ROLL

It's easier for right-handers to roll on their right side, and for southpaws to roll on their left. Correct? Maybe not. It's certainly simpler to fall back on your bomber on-side roll, but you'll be safer if you can roll on either side.

"Ahhh! Through the rabbit ears and around the tree? Around the tree and through the rabbit ears? I can never remember!"



Work on it with a friend. You might be surprised how coordinated you are on the opposite side and how easily you pop back up.

## 25. PRACTICE PADDLING P.R.

Regardless of your clothing choice, personal appearance, or linguistic skills, you are always going to stand out if you are paddling abroad. The reason: 'That crazy boat.' This is especially true in areas that don't see many paddlers at all. So while you are boating, do us all a favor—smile often. It's a universal sign of happiness and will perpetuate a view that, regardless of our background, paddlers are an easy breed to have around. Like language, boating ethics, logistics, and signals can change drastically in different countries. Don't assert that your way is best; just enjoy what may seem like total shuttle carnage as another part of the cultural experience.