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SC State Parks Host \$15 Kayaking 101 Classes to Launch National Safe Boating Week

Aiken, Black River, and Chester State Parks will host Kayaking 101 on May 16

Columbia, S.C. – South Carolina State Parks and the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary are partnering with the South Carolina chapter of the American Canoe Association (ACA) to offer basic kayaking instruction Saturday, May 16, to kick off National Safe Boating Week.

“As we open Black River State Park, our first riverine park network, we are thrilled to once again partner with South Carolina ACA to help more people gain skills and confidence in kayaks and canoes,” said Joy Raintree, director of South Carolina State Parks. “Whether you’re paddling at Aiken or Chester – two of our original Civilian Conservation Corps parks – or at our newest park on the Black River that runs through Williamsburg and Georgetown counties, this low-cost opportunity offers knowledge for a lifetime, all while spreading awareness of the importance of safety on the water.”

Kayaking 101 for National Safe Boating Week:

- **When:** Saturday, May 16, from 10 am to 4 pm. Rain or shine.
- **Where:** Aiken State Park, Black River State Park, and Chester State Park
- **Cost:** \$15 per person, including kayak rental and all necessary gear.
- **What:** This class covers essential kayaking skills, including trip planning and safety, equipment and boat basics, proper transport and posture, fundamental paddling techniques, safe entry and exit, and self- and assisted rescue methods such as reentry, emptying a swamped boat, and towing a swimmer. Instructors are ACA-certified volunteers backed by experienced safety teams. This training typically costs \$75 - \$150.
- **How to register:** [Register here](#). Each class is limited to 15 participants.

This is the fifth year of this educational celebration, which has grown to 40 participating locations across eight states.

“Our volunteer instructors are excited to welcome newcomers to our sport and give them some hard-won insights about how to stay safe and keep everyone smiling when you go on your paddling

adventures,” said Andrea White, ACA Southeastern chair. “A great first experience can spark a lifelong connection to paddling and love for our waterways.”

Supporting organizations for the event include ACA South Carolina, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, volunteer instructors certified by the ACA, Lowcountry Paddlers, Augusta Canoe and Kayak Club, Sun City Indian Land Paddling Club, and Edisto River Canoe and Kayak Commission.

A free [online course is also available on the ACA Paddlesports site](#), but in-person instruction with a nationally certified instructor is strongly encouraged.

About National Safe Boating Week

National Safe Boating Week is May 16-22, 2026, reminding all boaters to brush up on boating safety skills and prepare for the boating season. It’s part of the Safe Boating Campaign, a global awareness effort that encourages boaters to make the most of their boating adventure by being responsible. U.S. Coast Guard statistics show that drowning was the reported cause of death in three out of every four recreational boating fatalities, and that 87% of those who drowned were not wearing life jackets. Learn more at safeboatingcampaign.com.

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