

So, you want to know more about outrigger canoeing?



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LHCOCC and our History

Lake Havasu City Outrigger Canoe Club was born July 25, 2007, and formally established as a 501 c3 Non-Profit organization on February 20, 2010.

LHCOCC's founders are David and Liz Vidad. In November 2003, David and Liz were on vacation in Maui, Hawaii. David noticed a sleek vessel on a pickup truck. He struck up a conversation with the owner and learned about outrigger canoes, specifically the OC-1. In the summer of 2004, David purchased a used OC-1 in Maui and had it shipped to Lake Havasu. He had never paddled in an outrigger canoe, but something was calling him. You can read David's entire story at lhcocc.com.

Mission and Vision

Our Mission is to provide educational and recreational Outrigger Canoe paddling programs for all skill levels.

It is the Vision of LHCOCC to expose people from all walks of life to the ancient cultural traditions and Aloha Spirit which embodies the sport of Hawaiian Outrigger Canoe paddling and racing. We encourage members of our "Ohana" (family) to grow and develop the skills necessary to become racers if they so desire. The LHCOCC Ohana gives back to the community by sharing team building principals of outrigger canoe paddling with local corporations and charitable organizations, representing Lake Havasu City in a positive, professional, and welcoming manner.

Leadership

The business and affairs of the Corporation is managed by its Board of Directors which consists of the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Directors. You can find information about the Board of Directors as well as club Coaches at lhcocc.com.

Outrigger Canoeing – Everything you need to know

Welcome to the vibrant world of outrigger canoeing! This exhilarating sport combines teamwork, physical fitness, and a deep connection with the ocean. With roots in ancient Polynesian culture, outrigger canoeing has evolved into a beloved activity worldwide, enjoyed by both recreational paddlers and competitive athletes. Whether you're drawn to rhythmic paddling, the camaraderie of a close-knit team, or the allure of the water, this guide will provide you with everything you need to get started.

What Is Outrigger Canoeing?

Outrigger canoeing involves paddling a canoe equipped with one or more lateral support floats called outriggers or amas. These structures provide balance, allowing paddlers to navigate both calm waters and challenging waves with ease. Historically used for transportation, fishing, and exploration, outrigger canoes today serve as the foundation for a sport that emphasizes endurance, teamwork, and a respect for the water.

Understanding the Canoe: Parts and Functions

Familiarizing yourself with the components of the outrigger canoe will help you appreciate its design and functionality:

- **Hull (Wa'a or Va'a):** The main body of the canoe where paddlers sit. It's long and narrow to reduce water resistance.
- **Ama:** The outrigger float attached to the side of the hull, providing stability and preventing the canoe from capsizing.
- **'Iako:** The wooden or aluminum spars that connect the ama to the hull. Typically, there are two 'iakos in an outrigger canoe.
- **Seats:** Numbered from 1 at the bow (front) to 6 at the stern (back) in a six-person canoe (OC6).
- **Foot Wells:** Indentations where paddlers place their feet for stability and leverage during each stroke.
- **Paddles:** Single-bladed paddles designed specifically for outrigger canoeing, often featuring a T-grip handle for control.

Understanding these basic parts helps you see the engineering brilliance that makes outrigger canoeing both a competitive sport and a deeply cultural experience.

Roles of Each Seat in an OC6 Canoe

Each seat in the canoe has a specific responsibility, contributing to the team's overall performance and balance:

Seat 1: Stroke or Pacer

The pacer sets the paddling rhythm for the rest of the team. Seat 1 is responsible for maintaining a consistent pace and adjusting strokes based on water conditions. As the leader of the crew's timing, this paddler is crucial in keeping everyone synchronized.

Seat 2: Support and Synchronization

Seat 2 mirrors the stroke set by Seat 1, reinforcing the rhythm. This paddler ensures the timing remains consistent and helps monitor water conditions, providing subtle feedback to the stroke. This seat is an ama watcher as well as seat 4, ensuring balance in turbulent conditions.

Seat 3: Caller and Engine Room

Seat 3 is part of the "engine room" (Seats 3-5) responsible for power. This paddler also acts as the caller, signaling the crew when to switch paddling sides with the "hut" command. Strong communication and timing are essential in this role.

Seat 4: Powerhouse

Seat 4 is another powerhouse of the canoe as well as a watcher of the ama. This paddler contributes to the canoe's propulsion with strong, steady strokes while staying in sync with the team.

Seat 5: Ama Watcher and Powerhouse

In addition to providing power, Seat 5 watches the ama to ensure balance, especially in turbulent conditions. If the canoe tips, Seat 5 shifts weight to stabilize the vessel.

Seat 6: Steersperson

The steersperson is in command of the canoe and responsible for guiding the canoe and crew. This paddler uses special steering strokes and communicates key decisions, such as navigating obstacles or adjusting for wind and waves. A good steersperson maintains a straight course while coordinating with the rest of the crew.

Paddling Techniques

Mastering the basics of paddling is essential for efficiency and injury prevention. Here's how to perfect your technique:

The Basic Stroke

1. **Setup:** Sit upright with a slight forward lean from the hips. Hold the paddle with your bottom hand near the blade and your top hand firmly on the T-grip.
2. **The Catch:** Reach forward and plant the paddle blade fully into the water, keeping it vertical. This is where you generate the most power.
3. **Power Phase:** Rotate your torso to pull the paddle back towards your hip, engaging your core for strength. This technique protects your arms and shoulders from strain.
4. **Exit:** Lift the paddle out of the water once it reaches your hip to maintain efficiency.
5. **Recovery:** Smoothly return the paddle to the front for the next stroke, slicing it through the air to minimize resistance.

A fluid, rhythmic stroke will conserve energy and keep the canoe moving efficiently.

Synchronization and Timing

Success in outrigger canoeing relies on the crew's ability to paddle in unison. Here's how to ensure synchronization:

- **Follow the Lead:** Always watch the paddler in front of you to match their stroke rate.
- **Smooth Transitions:** Avoid sudden, jerky motions that could destabilize the canoe.
- **Communication:** Stay tuned to verbal cues from the caller and steersperson to maintain harmony and direction.

The "Hut" Call and Switching Sides

To prevent fatigue and keep the canoe balanced, paddlers switch sides periodically. This is done with the "hut" call:

- **Stroke Count:** The team agrees on a set number of strokes per side, often between 12 and 15.
- **The Call:** On the second-to-last stroke before switching, Seat 3 calls "Hut."
- **Switching Sides:** After the "hut" call, take one more stroke and then switch the paddle to the opposite side during the recovery phase.

This coordinated movement ensures smooth side changes without disrupting the canoe's momentum.

Safety First

Prioritizing safety is key to enjoying your time on the water. Here are some tips to ensure a safe paddling experience:

1. **Wear a Personal Flotation Device (PFD):** Even experienced swimmers should wear a PFD for open-water paddling.
2. **Stay Hydrated:** Bring water, especially for longer sessions.
3. **Check Conditions:** Always check weather forecasts, wind speeds, and tide patterns before heading out.
4. **Learn Emergency Procedures:** Familiarize yourself with capsize drills and re-entry techniques.
5. **Never Paddle Alone:** Beginners should paddle with experienced team members or under the guidance of a coach.

Joining a Club and Building Community

Joining an outrigger canoe club offers numerous advantages, from learning the sport correctly to becoming part of a supportive community:

- **Structured Learning:** Clubs provide beginner-friendly training programs to help you master techniques safely.
- **Access to Equipment:** Use club gear before deciding to invest in your own canoe and paddle.
- **Camaraderie:** You'll build lasting friendships with fellow paddlers, sharing experiences on and off the water.
- **Cultural Connection:** Many clubs celebrate the cultural heritage of outrigger canoeing, enriching your experience.

Physical and Mental Benefits

Outrigger canoeing offers both physical and mental benefits, making it a holistic sport:

- **Full-Body Workout:** The sport engages your entire body, improving muscle strength and endurance.
- **Cardiovascular Health:** Paddling strengthens your heart and boosts aerobic fitness.
- **Mental Clarity:** The serenity of the water helps reduce stress and improve mood.
- **Team Skills:** You'll develop communication, leadership, and cooperation through teamwork.

Respecting Cultural Traditions

Outrigger canoeing is deeply rooted in Polynesian traditions. As you embark on this journey, it's important to respect its cultural significance:

- **Learn Terminology:** Familiarize yourself with traditional terms for canoe parts and techniques.
- **Participate Respectfully:** Engage in cultural rituals and practices with an open and respectful mindset.
- **Educate Yourself:** Take the time to learn about the history and importance of outrigger canoeing within indigenous cultures.

Tips for Success

To get the most out of your outrigger canoeing experience, consider these helpful tips:

- **Consistency:** Regular practice will improve your skills and endurance over time.
- **Accept Feedback:** Listen to advice from coaches and teammates to accelerate your learning.
- **Cross-Train:** Incorporate other exercises, like swimming or yoga, to enhance your overall fitness.
- **Set Goals:** Whether it's mastering a new technique or preparing for a race, setting personal goals will keep you motivated.
- **Enjoy the Process:** Above all, have fun and savor every moment on the water.