

#OhioFindItHere



Paddle the timeline of Lake Erie's boating history, which can be traced back as early as the 1800s. The lake is a popular boating destination, having a variety of vessels from rare sights of the historical U.S. Brig Niagara to massive freighters.

Lake Erie is the most biodiverse of all the Great Lakes as well as claiming the title of warmest and most shallow. Walleye, steelhead and perch can be found swimming off the shores of Cleveland. By air, you might catch a glimpse of osprey, double-crested cormorant and even the great blue heron.

The coastline of Lake Erie is seen as unforgiving as near vertical cliffs seem to rise out of the lake in many spots. The Lake Erie Water Trail, encompassing nearly twenty-five miles of shoreline, displays incredible examples of Cleveland Shale as old as 400 million years.

The West Pierhead Light House guards the entrance of the Cuyahoga River. This area is also the gateway for freighters hauling cargo to and from the Port of Cleveland. Give these vessels a wide berth as some of these skyscraper sized vessels can be around 700 feet long.

The Lake Erie Water Trail provides opportunities to explore the shoreline throughout Cuyahoga County. Enjoy paddling along dramatic cliffs, peaceful beaches and the many landmarks of downtown Cleveland. We hope you use this guide, which was made possible through a partnership between many organizations, to stay safe and have fun. Let us know about your adventures by sharing on social media with #OhioFindItHere.

- Governor Mike DeWine and First Lady Fran DeWine.



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Are You Lake Erie Ready?

Paddling on Lake Erie can make you feel like you're on the ocean. Weather, wind and wave conditions can change quickly causing a pleasant paddle to become a dangerous situation with little notice. Know your ability. You can improve your paddling skills with local agencies or join one of the many paddling programs offered year-round by visiting clevelandmetroparks.com/or.

Follow the 120° rule where combined air and water temperatures nearing or below 120° indicate you should consider wearing a wet or dry suit. Dress to get wet. Carry extra layers in a dry bag. Cold Kills! The human body loses heat 25X faster when immersed in cold water.



Carry rescue equipment such as a bilge pump and paddle float that will assist with re-entering the boat.



- CLEAN equipment of any plants and mud.
- DRAIN cockpits and hatches of water before leaving the area.
- DRY equipment before launching into another body of water.

✓Clean ✓Drain ✓Dry

Don't Launch Without...



The Safety Essentials



✓ Radio

A VHF Radio allows you to communicate with the Coast Guard and listen to commercial boat traffic on **channel 16**.



✓ Phone & App

Carry a cell phone in a waterproof case. Use apps like MarineTraffic to track freighters and large vessels. Save important emergency numbers in your phone.



✓ Life Jacket

Don't be a statistic, always wear your life jacket. Over 75% of paddlesport fatalities were not wearing a life jacket!



✓ Follow the Law

Keep signaling devices such as a whistle, distress flag, flares and a white light readily accessible. Register your kayak. Stand up paddleboards are exempt from registration.



✓ Leash

Wear a leash on your stand up paddleboard.

Paddle Smart



Avoid Weather and Water Extremes

Even for paddlers who wear life jackets, extreme weather and water conditions are a source of trouble. High winds and storms over open water can turn flat waters into a wild and unfriendly place, especially in constricted areas like the mouths of river channels. If you encounter these conditions, get off the water!

Check the forecast

- ALWAYS check the nearshore marine forecast and lake condition warnings with NOAA.
- Monitor water quality using USGS NowCast Status and NEORSD: beaches and water quality.

Don't wait for bad weather

- Scan for dark clouds on the horizon, especially from the west, or changes in wind direction.

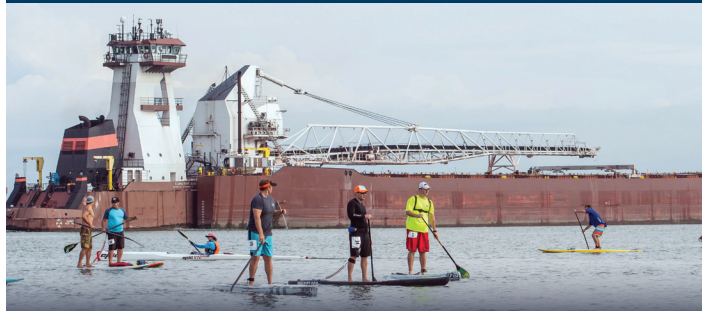


- Understand how wind affects wave height, lake levels, rip currents, and your ability to paddle. As you travel away from shelter/shore, make sure you have the necessary skills and energy to travel back using landmarks to gauge your distance from shore.

- Steep, rocky cliff lines dominate the water trail between access points. Always have an exit strategy and respect private property.

- Tell a friend where and when you're leaving and what time you expect to be back.

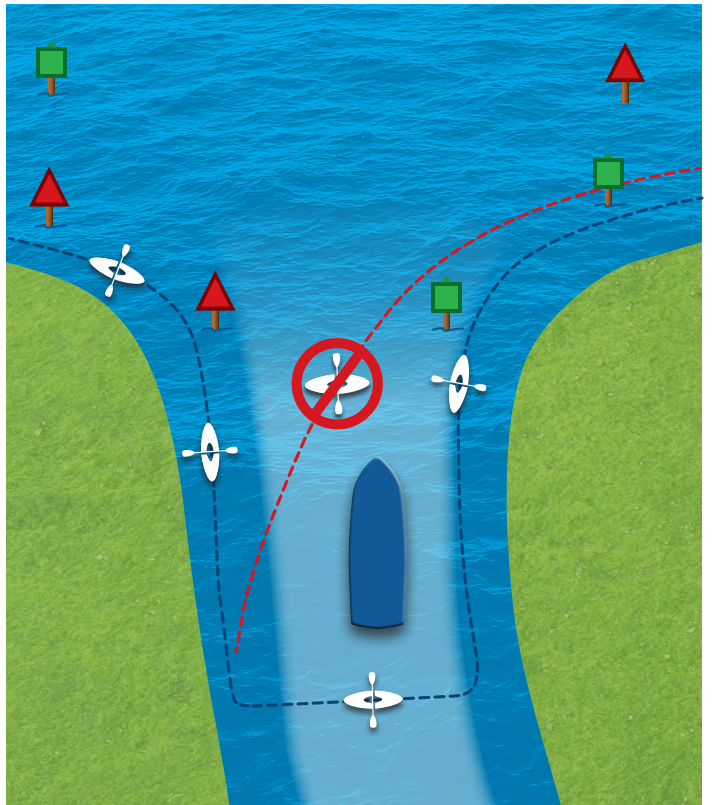
See and Be Seen



It is imperative to know the **Rules of the Road** (navigation rules all boaters must follow) and how paddlers should interact with oncoming traffic.

Practice defensive paddling...

- Be vigilant; always looking out for other boaters.
- Never pass in front of powerboats; always pass behind moving through high traffic areas quickly. Do not impede a large ship's passage; commercial traffic always has the right of way.
- Travel close to shore where powerboats cannot travel. In a narrow channel, such as the Cuyahoga River, keep as near to the right side of the channel as is safe and practical.
- Make yourself visible with bright, reflective clothing, life jacket and paddle. Carry a white light at night.



Know Your Boat



Know what type of water conditions your boat is designed to handle. Longer touring or sea kayaks are better designed for the waters of Lake Erie.

Know your boat will float when flipped!

If your boat does not have barrier walls (known as bulkheads) that create dry air spaces, you should equip your kayak with float bags to add extra buoyancy.



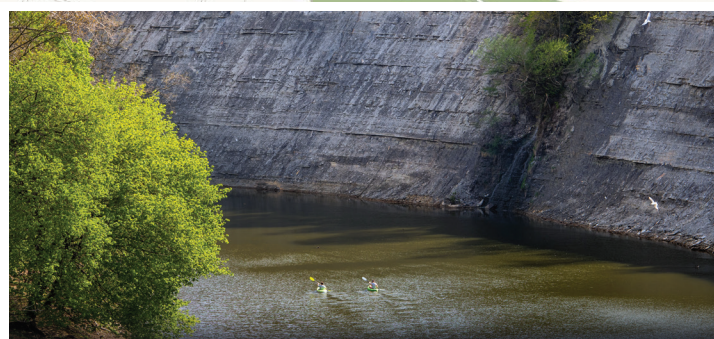
Know how to get back into your boat after a capsiz.



Practice rescues in controlled conditions.



Rocky River



Cuyahoga River



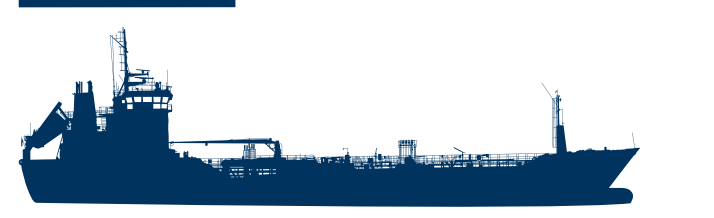
Euclid Creek - Wildwood



How Big Is a Freighter?

(700 feet +/-)

This is the Terminal Tower on its side.



This brochure was a cooperative effort between Cleveland Metroparks, the Lake Erie Water Trail - Cuyahoga County partners and ODNR Division of Parks and Watercraft.

