

>>Female Narrator: Water is America's #1 recreation activity, and Georgia has 12,000 miles of navigable water. So if you want to become a river rat, here's how to get started. Join us as we learn about whitewater and flat water, kayak and canoe racing. We'll also take a whitewater kayaking weekend course and we'll raft down the Chattooga River, coming up next.

**>>Male Narrator:
In the foothills of the Great Smokey Mountains lies one of the south's most beautiful rivers-- the Ocoee. Frolicking water plays with the rocky river bed creating bubbling rapids with eddies, holes and waves. And on the white water, humans play... or does the white water play with the humans?**

>>Nicholson:

Today is one of our typical summer Saturdays. Middle and Upper usage combined will be in the neighborhood of 8500. That's folks that we say actually get wet. You add the tourist traffic and just folks that are driving through the area, that number goes up to about 14 or 15,000 people today.

>>Narrator:

White water paddling is an increasingly popular sport in Georgia and the Ocoee River is an increasingly popular destination. In 1996 the Ocoee River hosted the Olympic debut of the whitewater slalom competition. Rapids named Broken Nose, Slingshot and Hell's Hole draw people from all over the world. On any given day the Ocoee River sees nearly all forms of white water crafts.

On this day the Ocoee saw a craft unlike all the others. A wildwater canoe.

>>Beavers:

Wildwater is one of two or three primary white water disciplines where you are going through roughly Class III, IV, V white water and you are trying to get from point A to point B, which can be three to four miles, and fastest horse wins. There are no gates or anything like you might see in slalom white water. This you just go really, really hard. You find the fastest piece of white

water between two banks. Theoretically, there's maybe an 18-inch wide ribbon of white water. It's faster than any other part on the river and your job as a wildwater racer is to find that ribbon and stay on it. And just try to stay faster than the water.

>>Narrator:

Michael Beavers is the premiere wildwater canoeist in the United States and is ranked in the top 25 in the world.

>>Skinner: We are really excited about watching you run this river today. First of all, just to watch your skill and just to see a boat that I've never seen run once before, so it should be a lot of fun.

>>Beavers: Great. I'm glad to have you. Welcome to my river.

>>Skinner: Well have a great run and we'll see you down at Hell's Hole right?

>>Beavers: Great. See you down there.

>>Beavers:

I actually first began interest in wildwater racing in 1994 when I saw some people blitzing down the Ocoee in wildwater canoes. I was a whitewater kayaker at the time. Then I saw these people totally bombing down the Ocoee in these wildwater C-1's. I thought, "Gosh, that's just a beautiful form. I've gotta learn how to do that." For the next year I went out and bought a white water C-1; taught myself how to that. Then bought a wildwater raceboat very shortly thereafter and went out for team trials. It's a worldwide sport and there are competitors from all over the world but the majority of the best competitors are in Europe. So in order to get good you do need to go over in Europe and compete either in the World Cups or the World Championships, some other international competition level where the depth of field is much greater. Here in the United States, I'm the top canoeist. Over there, I recently got back from France where I placed 24th in the world.

>>Narrator: In the 1996 Olympics, Lake Lanier hosted the flatwater sprint

Canoe/Kayak race events. World Championship sprint paddling is still going strong at Lake Lanier, and we were on hand to witness the Junior World Championships at the Olympic venue on Lake Lanier.

These young people competed in teams from one to four people in both canoes and kayaks. So a C1 is canoe for one, and a K4 is a kayak with a four person team. We asked Lanier's coach about the home lake advantage.

>>The biggest advantage is that we had the good training all year round.

>>We have a lot more people than everybody else. There are about 300 athletes here and we have about 100 of them.

>>I've got to steer, and I've got to keep it consistent so they can keep in stroke with me.

>>I have to stay in stroke with her and pretty much call ups and downs during the race.

>>I have to stay in stroke and keep the power going back here.

>>There's a big backup of parents that are at this and are supporting the team very well.

>>Narrator: The Lake Lanier Canoe and Kayak Club were the stars of the day.

>>We had a good crew. Good job you guys.

>>Gold feels nice.

>>Female Narrator: No matter where you

live, everything you put down the drain ends up in our streams, rivers, marshes and our seas. Some of the cleaning products we use at home, and often pour down the drain, are toxic to ourselves and to those who live downstream from us. Sewage treatment cannot remove all the harmful chemicals before releasing them into the environment. We do our part at home by using basic, non-toxic cleaning products found right in our own cupboards. A good rule to remember is that just about everything in your kitchen and bathroom can be cleaned with 6 products: liquid castile soap, borax, baking soda, corn starch, vinegar and lemons. Try these websites for cleaner recipes.

>>Male Narrator: So what do you do if you want to learn to kayak? Well, you can take a class. We found a group of willing students who are learning to whitewater kayak. They are learning from Wayne Dickert, a 1996 Olympian.

>>Kaila Ramsey: I have been interested in getting into kayaking, but I didn't know how to start off with the basics.

>>Matthew Ramsey: We took this course with Wayne Dickert and—"Wayner," as we know him.

>>Dickert: I really enjoy seeing the light bulb go off in people's heads. You know, when they get something new? That's what I live for is to see the light bulb go off.

>>Matthew: First we started off and just went over the basic gear.

>>Dickert: So what we've got here is we've got the 5 critical things that we need for kayaking: the kayak, paddle, PFD – personal flotation device, brain bucket and a spray skirt.

>>Matthew: Basically we got into the pool and just started from the beginning. We'd never been in a kayak before, never done anything with having to do with a kayak. The wet exit is basically you lean forward, tuck, pull your skirt off and slide out of the boat doing the front barrel roll. It's basically an easy way to get out of your boat when you're flipped over.

>>Dickert: The next step is, say, maybe you don't want to come out of your boat, but you've got a buddy to help you out. You can do an Eskimo rescue. And with an Eskimo rescue, you can kind of reach up, grab the front of somebody's boat, put your hands on the top of their boat, put your head on your hands and then do a hip snap up and you'll pop right up out of the water. The key is use the lower body and not your arms and upper body to push off their boat.

And then the next step, once you've got the hip snap going, is the C to C roll. So with the C to C roll, you set up, sweep out to the side and then you do your hip snap and the paddle just goes along for the ride. And you can come up that way using your hips to right the boat.

>>Narrator: **Well, our group has learned**

some skills in the pool, so we're going outdoors. It's chilly today so extra gear is required!

>>Dickert: We went to just a flat water lake formed by the damming of the Chattooga River and just paddled on the flat water to get comfortable in the kayak. The kayak has a lot more stability and everything that you'd think.

>>Matthew: You don't really realize that you're learning it, but afterwards, you're like, "Wow, I learned how to control a boat!"

>>Kaila: We played a really fun game where you try to actually lift the bow of your boat up to get over someone else's boat to practice your skills and flexibility. So it was great because it was calm water so you got to practice without any threat of whitewater to carry you down, so you could practice your rolls. And if you flipped over, it was ok. The best thing about yesterday was definitely sliding down the bank.

>>Dickert: On the other side of the lake we found a large embankment where we could put the kayaks on and do a mudslide into the lake.

>>Kaila: We had to haul our boats up. It was a lot of work to get ourselves and our boats up this walkway up to the bank, but it was definitely worth it in the end because you got this rush.

>>Today we got here at the outpost and

Wayner briefly discussed whitewater safety.

>>Dickert: Remember, what's the first thing to do when you flip over?

>>group: Lean forward

>>Dickert: Yeah, you tuck forward and get in a tight little ball.

>>Kaila: What to do; what not to do; and how to be safe in the water and different obstacles we might come across and how to deal with them.

>>Dickert: Lean into the rocks a little bit. As we're going down stream. Like let's say I'm coming in – boom, boom, boom, boom, boom – Keely's my rock – Boom! I hit the rock. Ok, so I lean my boat downstream towards Keely because if I lean away from Keely, water's coming this way, it's going to pile up on top of the boat, so what I want to do is I want to be Keely's friend; lean towards Keely, and since I've greeted Keely for a minute or two, then I'll just kind of wash off back behind Keely and the paddle, and...on down stream no problem.

>>Kaila: Then we actually got in the water and learned the basics, you know, how to avoid rocks, how to avoid trees and how to scout a rapid and see which way you want to go down, the safest way and the most fun. Whitewater rafting, definitely in the smaller waves and the smaller rapids, you don't experience as much because you're in a big boat, so you just bounce along. Definitely with kayaking, it's much easier to go into

the smaller rapids and you can surf them or go behind the eddies, and it's much easier to do and much more room to play around in the water.

>>Pitt: I've been in a kayak only twice before and never in fast moving water. I mean it's really amazing what you can learn in two days. The two rivers that are most accessible to folks in Georgia is the Chattooga, and we were on section two—there's section three and section four, and they get progressively more difficult—and then the Ocoee, which is a 1996 Olympic river, which is right on the corner of Tennessee and Georgia.

>>Matthew: Well a section that we did did have a lot of flat water, but the rapids that we did go down, they were fun. They were challenging in a way that it was the first time we were going down rapids before.

>>Dickert: In the bigger rapids, it's kind of nice to be able to spread out a little bit so that we're not banging into each other all the time. And in Big Shoals what we did is we came down one at a time and we would flag the boats down and say, "Ok, next." And everybody else would wait at the top. And then once one boat made it through, we had a safety boat at the bottom. We had somebody kind of directing from the rock, and then they could make it through. And everybody did a really good job in the big rapid and made it down great because we were able to spread out. People weren't kind of playing bumper boats going through the rapids, which made it really nice.

>>Kaila: Well it was scary at first, but having been in the pool and having been on the lake, you caught on really fast.

The best part of today was definitely Big Shoals. It was the big rapid. And it was big enough to be fun, but not big enough to be scared. It was intimidating at first, but once you got down it, you forgot that it was supposed to be scary and you had a great time. I tried my hardest not to flip over because it was very cold water and very cold rain. And I know that, had I flipped over, I could have easily hit the bottom of my boat and rubbed my hands along it to wait for someone to come help me so I could Eskimo roll and use their boat. Or I could have just set myself up with my paddle to do my own roll.

>>Dickert: I think most people, as long as we kept moving down the river, were able to stay reasonably warm, given enough gear and everything.

>>Pitt: I can see why people do want to be in the river and play on the waves. I think you spend enough time out there and it's almost addictive.

Matthew: I'm hooked, yes.

>>Kaila: Well with the upcoming summer, I really plan on working hard to get better so I can—I know there's lots of good rivers around here, and I plan on becoming a river rat.

>>Dickert: Probably the best thing to do

when you're wanting to start kayaking is to find an experienced person to learn from. Whether it be a professional school like us or an experienced friend who does a lot of kayaking. So then that way they can tell you all the obstacles that you need to know about to overcome. They can help you learn the really important stuff. Whitewater may not necessarily be for everybody, but kayaking has a lot of different opportunities. So you can have recreational kayaks out on the lake. You may go sea kayaking on the coast. There's some amazing opportunities out around the islands on the coast or the intercoastal waterways. There's some beautiful, although a little bit different kind of areas than what we have here, there's some amazingly beautiful places to go that you can access only by kayak.

>>Female Narrator: In 1968, the United States Congress passed into law the National Wild and Scenic River System. In part, the act read, "It is declared to be the policy of the United States that certain selected rivers of the nation, which their immediate environments possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural or other similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. Georgia enjoys just one of these premier rivers, the Chattooga. It's a river renowned for its whitewater rafting, fishing and wildlife. It's ours to enjoy and

to protect.

>>Skinner: The Chatooga River creates a physical border between Georgia's Chattahoochee National Forest and South Carolina's Sumter National Forest. For almost 40 miles the Chatooga River enjoys a primitive and undeveloped shoreline. A perfect place me and the crew to try out some white water rafting.

>>Touhy: The first thing you'll need is your PFD, your personal flotation device. Now you put this on. You're looking pretty stylish. Buckle this up. Ok, so this is now loose because you just loosened all your straps to put it on. And it's going to feel kind of comfortable because it's not hugging you very tightly, however this jacket floats regardless of whether you're in it or not, so if you're swimming around today in the water, you will find, if this is not tight, this will float up like so. And you're swimming around, wondering why you can't see, ok? So tighten this up. Moreover, if somebody's going to pull you back in the raft when you're in the water, they want to pull you in by these straps here, not by your arms, by these straps of the jacket. And you want your friends to rescue you with the jacket and not the jacket with you in the water. So you want to make sure these get tightened up before you get on the trip. Questions? Ok, if you don't have any questions, grab your gear, make your last-minute stops to the bathrooms.

>>Linscott: Three companies have permits from the forest service for operating guided trips on the Chattooga. There's Southeastern Expeditions. There's Wildwater Limited. And then my team, Nantahala Outdoor Center. All of the trips that we

operate, that all of the companies operate on the river basically are in two categories. There's what we call a Section 3 trip and a Section 4 trip. For Section 3 trips, the minimum age is 10. There's no maximum. We've had some senior citizens out there. For Section 4, the minimum age is 13. Folks who come here we tell them they need to be in reasonable physical condition because they need to be able to help carry the raft. Part of the wild and scenic experience is to walk into the river carrying all the gear. You're a self-contained unit once you get out on the river. It's a wilderness trip.

>>Skinner: With our outfitter lunch is served and a few stops are made to dip in the cool frothy water. When you are swimming in white water it is important to keep your feet at the surface of the water. Standing up on a rocky river bed in fast moving water can be very dangerous and potentially fatal.

>>Linscott: It's real important to all of us as individuals and as companies that we take care of the river. Folks come here from widely varied backgrounds. Maybe they've been doing' outdoor activities all their lives; maybe they're right straight off the streets of the big city. So we the outfitters consider it a serious obligation to try to educate people on the importance of the river. The importance of protecting the river. The river speaks for itself as far as the beauty and the splendor of the place. It makes a big impression on people.

>>Skinner: As we've just seen, Georgia's whitewater opportunities are many and varied. Let's keep rivers like the Chattooga wild and scenic. We'll see you next time on Georgia Outdoors.

