

GOIN' DOWN THE RIVER



In the Whirl of Wet Adventures

Water is an amazing element. When we are kids, we are fascinated by the way it **whirls**¹ as it goes down the **plughole**². Sometimes we let little wooden ships flow on rivers. Later, some of us turn to wild-water sports.

“In the Czech Republic, 100,000 people try water tourism every year,” according to a report by CzechTourism, a government agency supporting tourism in the Czech Republic. However, thousands of people try more adventurous sports than just paddling down a river on a canoe. On the same river, huge rafts can be ridden, young people have fun in the waves below a **weir**³, and slalomers race between the gates.

Jakub Turek (CR) www.horydoly.cz

Photo: Horydoly.cz, Bridge

Wild Water

Really wild water flows especially on mountain **slopes**⁴. Only a few kilometres from the **source**⁵, the river gets big enough to kayak on it. However, it is not for everybody. You must expect wild **rapids**⁶, rocky **gorges**⁷ and waterfalls. It is often necessary to get out of the boat and explore the situation from the river **bank**⁸. It is a very dangerous activity – one mistake can mean ‘game over’. Many people **have drowned**⁹ this way.



DOWN rafting

Fans of rafting need a wider river with a bigger **flow**¹⁰ of water. Six people sit on a huge **inflatable**¹¹ boat and compete with others. Three or more boats (depending on the width of the river) can ride at the same time, **overtaking**¹² other boats, and also hitting them and pushing them aside. It is an adrenaline sport for the competitors and attractive to watch.



Touring

In Germany and the Czech Republic people prefer riding in open canoes, but in other countries it is popular to go on slow rivers, lakes and along the sea shore in so-called sea kayaks. They are narrow, quick boats that can carry **supplies**¹³ for a week-long camping trip. The Polish enjoy sailing on their large lakes, Americans set out to the sea and so do Brits, who need to take warm clothing and safety equipment because their sea is cold and wild.



Slalom

Do you like precise rules, hard training and **zigzagging**¹⁴ between gates? Then try water slalom. Nowadays it is usually not practiced in natural conditions. Sometimes there is too much water, sometimes too little; the rain can raise the water **level**¹⁵ quickly. That's why the races take place in artificial canals built for this purpose. Artificial canals offer fair conditions to all racers and are safer than rivers. The best canals are totally independent of rivers, and water is pumped into them by giant pumps.

The best-known canal in the Czech Republic is in Troja in Prague. The water-slalom world championship and the final race of the European cup in freestyle took place there, as well as many other races. The most difficult Czech canal is Trnávka in Želiv, where even professional competitors are afraid to paddle.



Freestyle

Free and cool – these are the key words to describe the youngest discipline called freestyle or wild water rodeo. It resembles gymnastics and figure skating, and competitions are usually won by very young racers. The racers move in one spot (just several square metres), on one wave or **roller**¹⁶, performing as many difficult tricks as possible. The referees judge various kinds of **rolls**¹⁷ and **somersaults**¹⁸.



The Czech hopeful

Eighteen-year-old Jiří Dupal was the Czech junior champion in water slalom for two years. This year he enters adult competitions. He will compete with waves and gates in the men's kayak category. He has become a top kayaker, although he lives in Olomouc, where only the lazy Morava river flows and there are no artificial canals with wild water nearby.

Wild Water Glossary

wild water – wild, flowing rivers

flat water – calm water (pond, lake, swimming pool...)

raftboat – inflatable boat for 4–12 people

canoe – boat for 1–5 people, who kneel inside and use a paddle with a blade on one end

kayak – boat for 1–2 people, who sit inside and use a paddle with blades on both ends; such boats are used on the most difficult rivers

Eskimo roll – when the boat turns over but the person manages to turn it back and remain sitting or kneeling in it

playspot – a place where various tricks can be performed (a wave, a roller, a place where flow and counterflow meet...)

creaking – an extreme ride on wild narrow rivers with rocky rapids and waterfalls

fall – waterfall or weir from which one can jump with the boat to the foamy water below

head to head – a race in which two boats compete simultaneously against each other on one river (e.g. in rafting or in freestyle)



Canoepolo

How about a ball game on boats? Canoepolo has similar rules to water polo but is played in kayaks. Players throw a ball, hide it under water and **strike**¹⁹ it with a paddle. There are only a few teams in the Czech Republic, not even a league. Germans, however, love canoepolo and it is a common sport in other parts of northern and western Europe.

VOCABULARY

¹ to whirl [wɔ:l] – vířit

² plughole ['plʌghəʊl] – odtok

³ weir [wɪə] – jez

⁴ slope [sləʊp] – úbočí

⁵ source – pramen

⁶ rapids ['ræpɪdz] – peřeje

⁷ gorge [gɔ:dʒ] – soutěska

⁸ bank [bæŋk] – břeh

⁹ to drown [draʊn] – utopit se

¹⁰ flow ['fləʊ] – průtok

¹¹ inflatable [ɪn'fleɪtəbl] – nafukovací

¹² to overtake [əʊvə'teɪk] – předjet

¹³ supplies [sə'plaɪz] – zásoby

¹⁴ to zigzag ['zɪgzæg] – kličkovat

¹⁵ level ['lev(ə)] – hladina

¹⁶ roller ['rɔlə] – vodní válec

¹⁷ roll [rɔl] – obrat

¹⁸ somersault [səmə'sɔlt, -sɔ:lt] – salto

¹⁹ to strike [straɪk] – odpálit