

Downtown Boathouse

Pier 96, New York, New York

Phone: (646) 613-0375 Status: (646) 613-0740

www.downtownboathouse.org

Introduction

The Downtown Boathouse is a volunteer-run nonprofit organization dedicated to providing free public boat access to the Hudson River in New York City.

The Boathouse owns about 50 kayaks that are available for supervised public use on weekends, holidays, and weekdays after work (sometimes), from mid-May through mid-October. There is no charge for usage. Membership dues, contributions, and boat storage fees pay for the operation.

Our long-term goals are to create a public constituency that will maintain public water access in Hudson River Park and to provide an example for future waterfront park renovation that will make this environmentally responsible recreational activity available to everyone.

Locations

Pier 96, Clinton (at 56th St.)

Our new headquarters is at Pier 96 on the Westside Highway and 56th St. The nearest subway stop is the #1 and A/C/E station at Columbus Circle. The M57 and M31 busses run down 57th St. to West End Ave (one block east).

South side of Pier 40, West Village

Our temporary downtown boathouse is on the south side of Pier 40. The nearest subway stop is the #1 station at Houston St. Walk west on Houston St. to Pier 40. We are on the south-side promenade, about two thirds of the way out

72nd Street, Riverside Park

Our smallest boathouse is in Riverside Park at 72nd St. on the promenade, just south of where the bike path turns inland.

Users per Year

1995	100
1996	1,200
1997	2,800
1998	5,400
1999	6,700
2000	7,600
2001	10,200
2002	12,030
2003	13,480
2004	17,900
2005	22,900
2006	15,900
2007	22,100

Waivers signed per year. Because of repeat users, the total count of persons launched is approximately double.

Operating Dates and Times - 2008

Location	Weekends & Holidays	Weekday Evenings
Pier 96, Clinton	May 17 - Oct 13, 09AM - 6PM	Jun 14 - Aug 31, 5PM - 7PM
Pier 40, West Village	May 17 - Oct 13, 10AM - 5PM	
72nd St. Riverside	May 17 - Oct 13, 10AM - 5PM	Occasional

Weather and water conditions permitting. Last boat goes out half an hour before closing.

Status Line

The Boathouse is sometimes closed because of bad weather, high waves, or ongoing construction. To get our current status, please call our status line at (646) 613-0740. Also call to see if a class or a special event is on. We don't update this line all the time, but we try. Also check the status forum at downtownboathouse.org/phpbbs2.

Public Programs

Free Walk-up Kayaking

Free sit-on-top kayaks are available for public use in our embayments, which keep you away from the main river currents. You must sign our liability waiver and agree to our rules, then you will be given brief instruction and necessary safety equipment. Our volunteers will monitor your progress.

Almost all of our public boats are self-bailing, sit-on-top kayaks. Your feet and your pants will get wet, so wear shorts or a swimsuit, and bring a change of clothes. We have a hose you can rise off with, and changing sheds. We also have about thirty lockers in which you can store items at your own risk. Bring your own lock.

Free Harbor Trips

Every weekend and holiday morning (June 14 thru Sept 14 in 2008) we run a free three-hour (or longer) trip for more experienced kayakers out on the open river. The trips leave from Pier 96.

Before going on a trip, you should participate in our walk-up program a few times to get a feel for our boats and the river. The trip itinerary depends on the tides and the weather on the day. The trip may be canceled or shortened if the conditions are unsuitable. The trips are physically challenging. If you want to go, eat a big breakfast and bring a hat, warm clothes, sunscreen and plenty to drink. Adults only please.

To go on the trip, you must be at the Boathouse before 8AM on the day to sign up. We usually have more people than boats, so we run a lottery to select who goes. To be in the lottery, you must be present at 8AM. If you don't get to go, please stay for the embayment program or come back next week. The trip leaders determine the course. Our primary concern is your safety, and we base our decisions on the conditions on the river that day.

Other Free Events

The Boathouse is involved in many on-the-water events that are held on weekends throughout the summer. Many of these events are open to the general public, or to those who have acquired suitable skills via our free classes. Please refer to our website for an up-to-date calendar.

Rules - Free Kayaking Before You Go Out

- Sign a waiver (good for the year)
- You must know how to swim
- Put on a life jacket

On the Water

- Stay within the bay (between piers)
- Keep away from piers and wall
- Come back in 20 minutes
- Come back in if called
- No swimming

Under Eighteen

- One child per boat
- Guardian must be present
- Under 16, must go with guardian

Trip Preparation

- Try boats beforehand
- Eat a big breakfast
- Bring plenty of water
- Bring sunscreen/hat
- Arrive before 8AM

Free Public Classes

The Boathouse runs a series of free public classes on Wednesday evenings during the season. All classes are run at Pier 96.

Some of the classes require prior kayaking knowledge, but most are ideal for beginners. Likewise, some are shore-based, while some are held in kayaks on the water, and some involve actually getting in the water. If more people show up for a class than we have boats, people take turns.

2008 Class Schedule

- 05-21** Local Conditions. Hudson River tides, traffic, and wind. *
- 05-28** Boat repair and construction. *
- 06-04** Forward Stroke Clinic. Efficient forward paddling in a kayak.
- 06-11** Kayak Turns, using sweep and rudder strokes.
- 06-18** Recovery, getting back into a capsized boat.
- 06-25** Alternative Paddling, Polo, racing, whitewater, etc
- 07-02** Forward Stroke Clinic. Efficient forward paddling in a kayak.
- 07-09** Kayak Turns, using sweep and rudder strokes.
- 07-16** Recovery, getting back into a capsized boat.
- 07-23** Kayak Swim Support. Techniques for supporting swimmers.
- 07-30** Alternative Paddling, Polo, racing, whitewater, etc
- 08-06** Forward Stroke Clinic. Efficient forward paddling in a kayak.
- 08-13** Kayak Turns, using sweep and rudder strokes.
- 08-20** Recovery, getting back into a capsized boat.
- 08-27** Kayak Swim Support. Techniques for supporting swimmers.
- 09-03** Forward Stroke Clinic. Efficient forward paddling in a kayak.
- 09-10** Kayak Turns, using sweep and rudder strokes
- 09-17** Recovery, getting back into a capsized boat.
- 09-24** Local Conditions. Hudson River tides, traffic, and wind.*
- 10-01** Camping, Expeditions and Gear, Preparing for longer kayak trips.*
- 10-08** Cold Water Paddling. Equipment and techniques. *

Classes marked with "*" are on land (in Boathouse), and held any weather.

Help Wanted

Volunteers

Our volunteers provide all of the staff and support for the Boathouse. We always need more people to help with our programs. At each location, we need coverage by about four people for over 20 hours each weekend. If you have some time and want to get

Class Notes

- Classes start at 6PM - OK if late
- Check web page if weather or water conditions doubtful
- The recovery and swim support classes involve going in the water
- The usual Boathouse rules apply: Sign a waiver, you must know how to swim, wear a life jacket, etc.

involved, please speak to a volunteer. No experience is necessary, but you must know how to swim. Adults only please.

Helping out at the Downtown Boathouse is a lot of fun in itself, but in return, we also offer volunteers lots of additional free classes, free trips, and use of our more sophisticated kayaks. Volunteering is an excellent way to get into the sport of kayaking. All you need is enthusiasm and a willingness to help out during our operational hours. And if you have special skills - boat related, construction, graphics production, promotional, or fund-raising - so much the better. Just let us know.

How to Volunteer

The easiest way to volunteer is to speak to one of the volunteers on duty. They will answer any questions.

We do not publish a list of volunteer trips or classes because they are usually arranged at short notice. To be informed about these events, join the Downtown boathouse bulletin board at <http://downtownboathouse.org/phpbbs2>.

Members

Membership in the Boathouse is open to any person. Voting members fill in a form and contribute a \$50 yearly donation. This tax-deductible donation provides the money to pay for our public programs and equipment.

Members receive no exclusive benefits, other than the privilege of voting in our elections. Membership is primarily a way to show your support for the Boathouse and its objectives.

Contact Information

The Boathouse is an all-volunteer organization. There is nobody to pick up the phone, or to answer emails promptly. So please be patient when you send us a question. The best way to get hold of us promptly is to come and visit.

Mailing Address

The Downtown Boathouse Inc.
West Village Station Box 20214
New York, NY 10014-9998

Voice: (646) 613-0375

Status: (646) 613-0740

Web: www.downtownboathouse.org

Email: Info@downtownboathouse.org

Volunteer Activities

- Work information desk
- Assist public on dock
- Patrol embayment
- Use safety boats
- Run public program
- Assist leader on trips
- Lead harbor trips
- Teach classes
- Do swim support
- Organize activities
- Do repairs/construction

Volunteering Rewards

- Plenty of fun
- Meet lots of people
- Special volunteer trips
- Special volunteer classes
- Use (after suitable training) of lots of different types and models of kayaks

Donate a Kayak

Have a kayak that you don't need? If we can use it in our public programs, you can donate it to us, and take a tax deduction. Ask for details.

Monthly Meeting

The Boathouse holds a meeting at Pier 96 on the first Tuesday of each month where we discuss our plans and review our progress. All are welcome. *Arrive* at 6:00PM to talk to friends. The meeting begins at 6:30PM.

Be Safe - Always Wear a Lifejacket