



Buffalo Bayou Partnership

Tips and Helpful Hints for the
Buffalo Bayou Partnership Regatta
Presented by Gillman Subaru
Saturday, March 21, 2026

NEW FOR 2026:

NON-COMPETITIVE AND “JUST FOR FUN” BOATS WILL START AT 8:00 AM.

COMPETITIVE BOATS WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO GO THROUGH THE GATE AND STAGE ON THE BEACH NEAR THE BAYOU UNTIL AFTER 8:30 AM TO ALLOW THE 8:00 AM START TO CLEAR THE AREA.

RACE PREPARATION- before race day

Nutrition and Hydration: This is a long-distance endurance event that, depending on your paddling speed, may take up to 4 hours. Be prepared. Do some training. Hydrate. Get a good night's sleep. Eat something for breakfast. Bring a snack or energy bar to eat before the race starts. Bring water or a sports drink for the race.

Recommended Clothing: Wear comfortable, quick-drying tech fabrics.

Recommended footwear: closed-toe shoes with a solid sole, secure laces, and good drainage. Your feet will get wet and muddy when launching your boat. Rocks and gravel are present in many locations. Trail running shoes are ideal.

Equipment: The only things you need for this race are your boat, paddle, and PFD. Generally, the less clutter in your boat, the better, and you'll be able to focus on paddling. However, if you're bringing anything else extra, tie everything to the boat with ropes or duct tape!

RACE MORNING LOGISTICS

Arrive at the start area early, (6:30 if you're in the 8 AM start wave), to give yourself plenty of time to park, sign waivers and pick up your Regatta packet, pick up your boat from a vendor (if you're renting), put your race number on your boat, carry your canoe and gear down the trail to the boat launch area on the bayou, and get staged on the beach preparing to start. Plan to spend at least an hour completing your pre-race activities and remember there are 500 of your fellow boat crew members that will be doing the same thing! Free parking is available in several locations around the area. **The race will start as scheduled (Non-Competitive fleet at 8:00 AM, Competitive fleets first start at 9:00 am).**

- **If you are renting from a vendor or are picking up a boat for the Team Sponsor class,** get parked and then walk over to the sign-in area in the parking garage. Get signed in and ask a volunteer to point you in the right direction to pick up your boat and equipment. Once you pick up your boat, you'll need to carry it over to the boat launch area.

- **If bringing your own boat: you have two options:** (Option 1): drop off your boat at the main area and then find a parking spot. Be prepared to wait in line while others are dropping their boats off ahead of you. (Option 2): Many people find it faster and more efficient to find a parking spot with boat still on the vehicle, check in at packet pick-up, then return to the car and carry the boat and gear to the launch area.

CHECK-IN PROCEDURES:

REGATTA PACKETS – which include your boat number and wristband, which includes your food and drink tickets – will be distributed alphabetically by last name. For those with two or more paddlers, your packet will be under the last name of the person who registered as First Attendee. To receive your packet, you must present a signed waiver form. Blank waiver forms will be available at check-in. Hang on to your Regatta packet, as it includes your race number and a wristband with your food tickets for lunch and drink tickets for St. Arnold beer at the post-race party!

BOAT NUMBERS: At registration, each boat will be given a number to be placed on the front of the canoe/kayak, high (as far above the water as possible), on the **RIGHT (starboard) side of the bow (front end) of the boat**. Before placing your Regatta number on the hull, use a dry towel to clean off any dirt or moisture, since numbers don't stick well to a dirty or damp boat. Otherwise, your number won't stick and will fall off in the bayou! (And if we can't see your number at the finish line, there is a good chance your finish time won't get recorded.)

If there are any old Buffalo Bayou regatta race numbers on the boat, please remove them or cover them up, since as stated in the rules and regulations, "all old Buffalo Bayou Regatta race numbers from previous years must be removed from boats or competitors will be subject to disqualification."

RACE STAGING AREA and START AREA

Boat launch beach and STAGING AREA: Carry your boat along the designated path under the bridge to our boat launch area upstream of the bridge. **COMPETITIVE BOATS WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO ENTER THIS AREA UNTIL AFTER 8:30 AM.** This area of land and bayou upstream of the bridge is the "Staging Area". Please launch your boat (you will get your feet wet!) and then paddle up or across the bayou to one of the beaches to wait for your start time. You are allowed to paddle upstream to warm up your race paddle strokes, **BUT PLEASE REMAIN UPSTREAM OF THE BRIDGE, inside the STAGING AREA, until called to your start wave.**

START AREA: The area of the bayou between the bridge and the start line is the "Start Area". Do not enter this zone until called in by the race director for your class start wave. This will occur approximately 10 minutes before your air horn starts.

START LINE "DO NOT CROSS PRIOR TO AIR HORN START" RULE: Crossing the start line prior to the air horn start, even if the competitor returns before the air horn start, will result in disqualification from all results, no exceptions. (Observers will be at the start line to enforce this rule.)

Short version: If you need to warm up, go upstream from the bridge.

START WAVE SEQUENCE

8:00 AM: “Just for Fun” non-competitive fleet

8:30 AM: Competitive boats allowed through the gate and into the start area

9:00 AM: Recreational Kayaks and Tandem Recreational Kayaks

9:10 AM: Team Sponsors Canoe and Recreational Canoe

9:20 AM: Performance Unlimited and Solo Unlimited

RACE COURSE

You will be sharing the waterway with hundreds of other boats and paddlers just like you. Please be considerate and sportsmanlike to your fellow competitors.

The bayou scenery sets the stage for our technically challenging course, featuring many sharp turns, partially submerged logs and stumps, rapids, overhanging tree limbs, bridge support columns, and various debris. If the water is high, there will be strong current eddies present, which can push you in a direction you don’t want to go. Keep your eyes open and be prepared to react to changing conditions. Do your best to maintain headway to maneuver as needed to avoid obstacles.

PACE YOURSELF! You will need to paddle and make steady progress. To have a reasonable chance of making it to the finish by 2pm, you’ll need to clear the Woodway Bridge by 1130. Keep in mind that the bayou current slows down after crossing under Shepherd.

IF YOU CAPSIZE: First rule, **do not panic!** Hang on to your paddle and let your PFD float you. Swim or wade to your boat and then bring everything to shore when possible. Right your boat, dump out the water, retrieve your gear, get back in, and continue the race.

SUPPORT AND SPECTATORS: Not including the start and finish areas, there are multiple public access locations to observe the race, including the Woodway boat launch area (just west of I-610), Bayou Bend (located at the foot of Westcott), and anywhere along the shores of Buffalo Bayou Park between Shepherd and Allen’s Landing.

FINISH LINE AND POST RACE

The Finish Line will be between two sighting pins located upstream of the arch of the Main Street bridge (a banner hanging above will also identify the Regatta finish but does not define the line). If the water is running at the normal Regatta speed (approximately 500 CFS) and you are a steady paddler, you can expect to finish in 3 to 4 hours (between 12:00 and 1:00 pm). Fast competitive paddlers can expect to finish in 2.5 hours or less. Then take your boat up to the grassy area, grab a lunch, and a St. Arnold beer, and enjoy historic Allen’s Landing Park and DJ tunes while you bask in the glory of your Buffalo Bayou Regatta accomplishment! The Awards Ceremony will begin at 1:30 pm.

PARKING AND TRANSPORTATION BACK TO START

Free parking is available at the start and paid parking is available at the Finish line area.

Four transportation options are available for you:

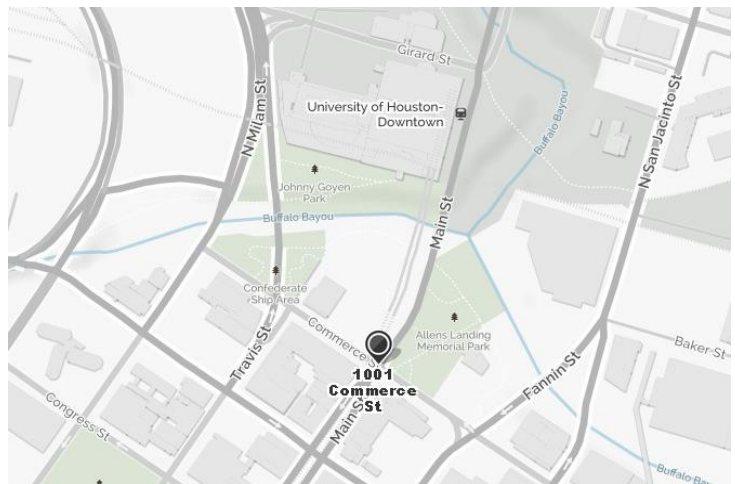
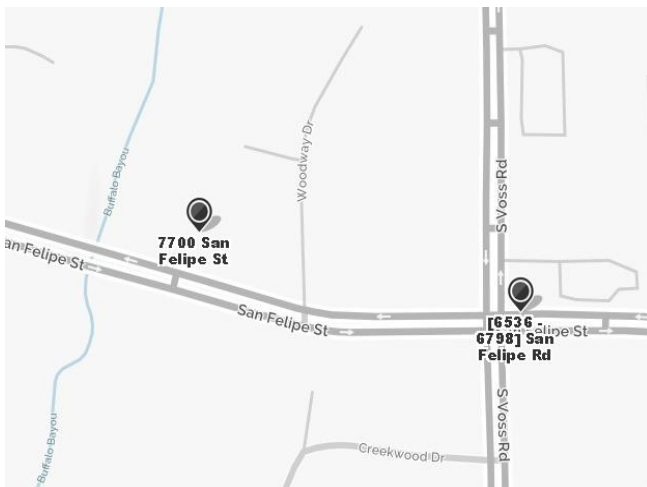
- a) Drive to the start, paddle to the finish, and have someone meet you at the finish area.
- b) Drive to the finish area early in the morning and leave a second car. Then drive to the start, paddle to the finish, and pick up the vehicle you dropped off in the morning. (Note that Commerce Street between Main and Fannin will be closed off and will only be accessible when picking up your boat after the race)
- c) Have a friend drop you and your boat off at the start and then meet you at the finish.
- d) Drive to the start, paddle to the finish, and let the shuttle service drive you (but not boats) back to the start. **PLEASE NOTE THERE WILL BE FREE SHUTTLE SERVICE AVAILABLE FROM 11:30 AM TO 3:30 PM AT ALLEN'S LANDING TO TRANSPORT PARTICIPANTS FROM THE FINISH LINE TO THE STARTING POINT.**

MAPS

LEFT: Starting Point at **7700 San Felipe**, just west of Voss.

RIGHT: Finish Line at Main Street Bridge at Allen's Landing (**1019 Commerce St. at Main Street**)

[Click here](#) for the race route of the Buffalo Bayou Partnership Regatta.



Buffalo Bayou Partnership

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Buffalo Bayou Partnership creates and stewards welcoming parks, trails, and unique spaces, connecting Houstonians with our city's most significant natural waterway.

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