

Deep Creek, Maryland Welcomes the World: Summer 2014



International Canoe Federation (ICF) Canoe Slalom World Championships



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2013: Prague, Czech Republic. 2014: Deep Creek Lake Region, USA. 2015: London, England. Here are three seemingly unrelated places. Two are major cities in Europe while the other is a resort community in rural Western Maryland. What unites them is their status as sites selected for the prestigious International Canoe Federation (ICF) Canoe Slalom World Championships. According to the host organization, “The ICF World Championships represent much more than a simple competition. It is a gathering of nations from around the globe, joining together in sport and camaraderie while establishing the legacy of this Olympic-style event.”

This summer, “Maryland Welcomes the World” when 500 athletes and team support representing more than 35 countries are expected to arrive in Garrett County around Labor Day to train for the 2014 ICF Canoe Slalom competition, set for September 17-21. “It is the largest inbound sporting event in the United States in 2014,” says Todd Copley, executive director of Deep Creek 2014, the event’s host organization.

In a canoe slalom, athletes compete individually and in teams using decked canoes and kayaks. Individual competition includes single men’s and women’s Kayak (K1 & K1W)

and Canoe (C1 & C1W) as well as the two man canoe (C2). During a kayak race, the athlete sits inside the boat and uses a double-bladed paddle. In the canoe competition, the athletes kneel inside the boat and use a single-blade paddle. Team events consist of paddlers in three boats who work to maintain close proximity to each other as they weave in and out of the course.

During competition, paddlers race down a 300-meter rapid and through a series of up to 25 gates consisting of red and green poles. A gate’s color indicates direction: paddlers race downstream through the green gates and upstream through the red gates. Formidable whitewater rapids with waves, “holes” and eddies challenge the athletes as they work to maximize speed while avoiding the gates. Each time touching a gate results in a 2-second penalty and each gate missed results in a 50-second penalty. The paddlers’ running time plus penalties determines their finish order. It’s a heart-pumping ride for athlete and spectator.

This summer’s World Championships will showcase its unique venue, the world’s only mountaintop whitewater course at the Adventure Sports Center International, atop Marsh Mountain near the Wisp Resort. Essentially a man-made riverbed, the course features state-of-the-art

technology involving wave shapers and hydraulics to form rapids ranging from Class I through IV.

2014 is a big year for whitewater competition in Garrett County. It marks the 25th anniversary of the 1989 ICF Canoe Slalom World Championships, held on the Savage River. It was the first time this competition was held in the United States, and this summer's Championships will be only the second.

Given the area's whitewater legacy, it should be no surprise that Garrett County has achieved international status in paddling sports. Bill Endicott, the most successful canoe coach in U.S. history and inductee in the International Whitewater Hall of Fame, lives in Maryland. In 1967, Richard Bangs, known as the "father of modern adventure travel," had his first whitewater experience on the Upper Youghiogheny River. Five years later, the Savage River was selected for the first U.S. Olympic Trials in whitewater slalom. In 1992, it was selected for the U.S. Olympic Team Trials.

The area's rivers, those who paddled them, and the aforementioned Olympic whitewater competitions influenced the development of two unique entities created to foster the growth of adventure sports in Garrett County and beyond. In 1992, the Adventure Sports Institute (ASI) was established at Garrett College, eight years after Mike Logsdon, a physics professor and paddling aficionado, conceived of the need for academic instruction in whitewater skills as he was shooting through rapids. The same year, at the Savage River Olympic Trials, the Adventure Sports Center International concept was "drawn on a napkin," according to Copley. An International Adventure Sports Symposium followed in 1995, and the Adventure Sports Center International was established in 1998. Later years saw the inception of the Race up the Face at the Wisp Resort, East Coast Adventure Racing Series, Gran Fondo cycling race, Savage Man Triathlon, and Garrett Trails with plans for an Eastern Continental Divide Trail.

To celebrate this quarter-century legacy of adventure sports in Garrett County, a "World Championship Summer" begins in late July with a non-stop schedule of events running a gamut of intensity, from the grueling Savage Man and Gran Fondo races to family fun at the Garrett County Agriculture Fair to the Deep Creek Lake Art & Wine Festival.

It's all about bringing the community and visitors together for a summer of outdoor fun to celebrate an area rich in adventure resources. A series of traveling AdventureFests will highlight a variety of outdoor adventure activities in five Garrett County communities. The last, held at the Savage River on September 7, will feature a Savage River Release and Inaugural Festival to honor the 1989 and 2014 World Championships. Eight athletes have signed eight different bandanas to raise funds for eight non-profit groups in the area. Volunteers who previously worked with the 1989 competition are eligible to join the

25 Year Club, entitling them to specially designated uniforms and responsibilities. The fun continues into the fall season, culminating in the Autumn Glory Festival.

On September 17, an Opening Ceremony and Olympic-style flag procession to the Wisp Resort will kick off the four-day Whitewater Fest on the Mountain. A flotilla of adventurers will leave Fort McHenry by boat and travel by bike and foot to bring the U.S. & International Canoe Federation flag to "Sport" McHenry in time for the ceremony. Activities begin the 18th and run from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day. Besides the Championships, visitors can enjoy live music and other entertainment, food, concessions, and an Adventure Sports Exposition.



"We are taking advantage of the opportunity to promote all outdoor recreation in the area," Copley says. The competition will be broadcast on NBC Sports and a live feed will reach over 20 million viewers in international markets (mostly in Europe).

This landmark event has sparked a full-court press from Deep Creek 2014 in partnership with Garrett County government, the Chamber of Commerce, Garrett College, ASCI, the Wisp Resort and numerous area businesses. The economic impact of this one event on the local area is anticipated at around \$20 million.

Deep Creek 2014 and its partners envision a bright future for Garrett County and surrounding area as a hub of adventure sports and outdoor recreation.

"Garrett County is already the epicenter," Copley says. "It's happening now."

For information, updates, tickets, merchandise, or volunteer & sponsor opportunities, go to www.deepcreek2014.com. Tickets are now on sale.