

# Paddle Europe Freestyle Championships 2026

Lieksa, Finland

Bulletin 1



Finnish  
Canoeing  
and  
Rowing  
Federation

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## Website & WhatsApp Group for information sharing

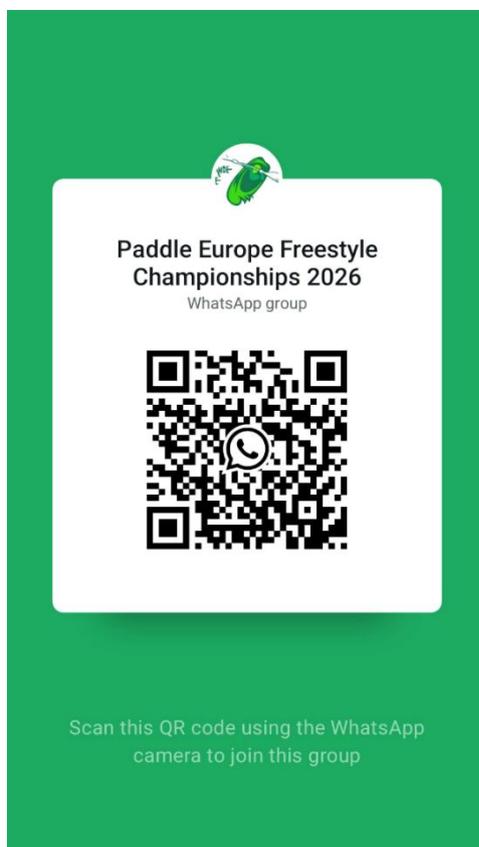
Follow the event website <https://canoefreestyle-lieksa.fi/> for any updates & additional information. We'll update it on regular basis and add information during spring.



Following the success of using the one-way WhatsApp group to share information at Graz Europeans, the same group will be used by the organizers to provide information in advance and during the 2026 European Championships.

To register for the WhatsApp group please use the following link:

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/Je4hBMALHxZCSEI9B1iZTY>



# 1. Welcome

## Welcome by city of Lieksa



### Greetings for the canoe freestyle competition

Welcome to Lieksa and Ruunaa Neitikoski, and to the Paddle Europe Freestyle Championships.

This is the first canoe freestyle European Championships competition organized in Finland and it is our great pleasure to welcome competitors from all over Europe to the city of Lieksa. Ruunaa and Neitikoski, with its stunning natural surroundings and demanding conditions, offers an excellent setting for top-level competition and memorable experiences.

Lieksa is known for its beautiful nature, clear waters, and warm hospitality. Surrounded by forests, rivers, lakes and landscapes, the area provides a peaceful yet inspiring environment for both competition and relaxation.

We hope you will enjoy not only the races, but also the unique atmosphere and beauty of our region.

We wish to all competitors fair and safe races, strong performances, and enjoyable days in Lieksa. May this competition be filled with sporting spirit, friendship, and unforgettable moments.

Best of luck to all teams!

Pirre Seppänen  
Mayor, City of Lieksa

## Welcome by Finnish Canoeing and Rowing Federation



### Welcome to the Paddle Europe Freestyle Championships!

We are extremely proud to have this opportunity to host the European Championships in Lieksa, Finland. It is an honour to welcome Europe's best freestyle athletes, coaches, spectators, and guests to Lieksa — surrounded by the beauty of Finnish nature — to enjoy clean waters, untouched wilderness, and the natural whitewater atmosphere of Neitikoski.

I would like to extend my warmest thanks to the organizing committee and to all the volunteers who have been preparing this event and ensuring that it provides unforgettable experiences for everyone involved. Hosting the European Championships offers us a valuable opportunity to showcase Finnish expertise in competition organization, our strong sense of togetherness, and our deep passion for canoeing sports.

We hope that the European Championships will bring together a large number of athletes from across Europe, and that many members of the European Freestyle Canoe community will have the chance to experience the unique competition atmosphere here in Finland. I sincerely wish that these competitions will offer not only a high level of competition, but also memorable experiences, long-lasting memories, and new friendships that you will remember for years to come.

I am looking forward to seeing you in Finland.

Juho Allonen  
General Secretary  
Finnish Canoeing and Rowing Federation

## 2. General information

### Event title

Paddle Europe Freestyle Championships in Lieksa, Finland

### Event dates

Official training period 7-9.6.2026

Competition 10-13.6.2026

### Preliminary schedule

Until 06.06.2026 Open training

07.-09.06.2026 Official training

09.06.2026 Opening ceremony

10.-11.6.2026 Preliminaries

12.06.2026 Semi-finals

13.06.2026 Finals

### Venue location and address

Neitikoskentie 47, 81750 Pankakoski, Finland ([Google map](#))

### Key contacts

NF Contact: General Secretary	Juho Allonen	Juho.allonen@smsl.fi
HOC Event Manager	Kari Nykänen	kari.nykanen@wwcf.fi
HOC Coordinator	Tuomo Rautio	tuomo.rautio@wwcf.fi
HOC Communications	Jyri Hämäläinen	jyri.hamalainen@yahoo.com
Event website	<a href="https://canoefreestyle-lieksa.fi/">https://canoefreestyle-lieksa.fi/</a>	
Event instagram	canoefreestyle_lieksa	

## 3. Location

### Arrival

#### Arrival to Finland by car & ferry

##### Via Stockholm (Sweden) to Turku harbour

By car to Ruunaa Outdoor center 7 h 40min / 680km

Ferries operated by [Tallink Silja](#) and [Viking Line](#).

##### Via Tallinn (Estonia) to Helsinki harbour

By car to Ruunaa Outdoor Center 6h 10min / 550km

Ferry operated by [Tallink Silja](#).

##### Via Travemunde (Germany) to Helsinki harbour

By car to Ruunaa Outdoor Center 6h 10min / 550km

Ferry operated by [Finnlines](#).

#### Arrival to Finland by plane

##### Plane – Car Rental; HOC recommendation if arriving by plane

Arrival to Helsinki-Vantaa (HEL) international airport.

Rental car from Helsinki airport to Ruunaa outdoor center:

6 h 0 min, 550km

##### Plane – Train – Car Rental

Arrival to Helsinki-Vantaa (HEL) international airport.

Train from Helsinki airport to Joensuu 4h 50 min,

Rental car from Joensuu to Ruunaa outdoor center 120km/1h 35min

##### Plane – Domestic plane – Car Rental

Arrival to Helsinki-Vantaa (HEL) international airport.

Flight from Helsinki-Vantaa international airport to Joensuu domestic airport 1h 5 min

Rentak car from Joensuu to Ruunaa outdoor center 120km/1h 35min

### **Plane – Train – Taxi**

Arrival to Helsinki-Vantaa (HEL) international airport.

Train from Helsinki airport to Lieksa 6h

Taxi from Lieksa to Neitikoski 30 min.

## Weather

Average June daytime temperature in the region is around 16 to 20 C°. However, on some occasions daytime temperature has been up to 30 C°, and close to 0 C° during the night. So worth preparing for cool and varying temperatures. If you come to train in May, make sure to prepare also for chilly river water.

[Local weather – Lieksa/Ruunaa](#)

## Currency

The currency in Finland is euro. Credit cards (Visa, Mastercard) are very widely accepted and you may encounter some outlets don't take cash at all. However, it is recommended to have a small amount of cash in hand.

## 4. Venue

Neitikoski rapids in Ruunaa recreational area, City of Lieksa

### Description

The competition site is located at the heart of the 100-metre-long Neitikoski rapid. This unique venue offers reliable conditions throughout the paddling season, which runs from May to November. In June, the midnight sun makes it possible to paddle in daylight around the clock. The Lieksanjoki River flows freely into Neitikoski with no upstream dams, while surrounding lakes and swamps naturally regulate water levels, preventing sudden changes in volume.

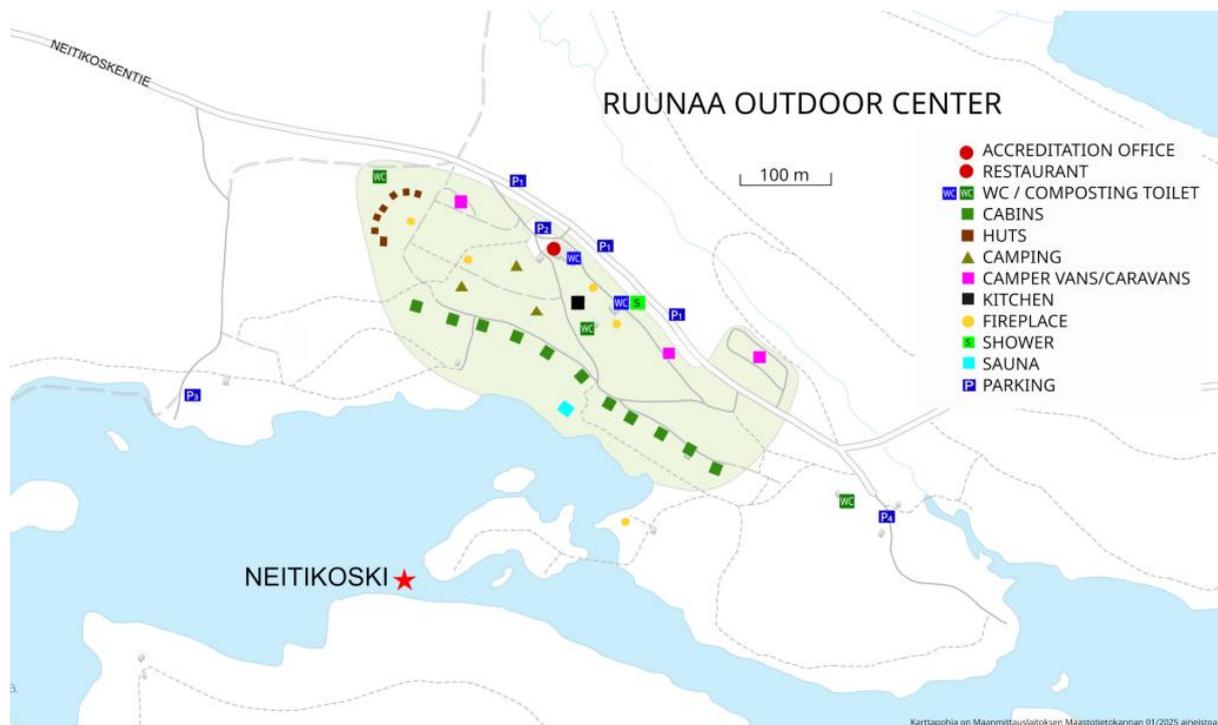
Depending on the flow, Neitikoski forms either a mid-sized hole, a mid-sized wave, or a versatile mix of both. The feature consistently delivers world-class conditions for paddlers of all levels—from beginners to seasoned experts. At flows below 100 m<sup>3</sup>/s, it behaves more like a hole; above 100 m<sup>3</sup>/s, it develops into a wave. Almost every water level, however, allows for both hole and wave moves.

In mid-June, the median flow is about 120 m<sup>3</sup>/s. The feature works reliably up to 200 m<sup>3</sup>/s and exceeding that flow happens more seldom than every 10 years. The feature spans 10–15 metres in width, depending on the flow, with a large eddy conveniently positioned on the lake side. The water is deep and safe, with contact with rocks possibly only when flows drop below 60 m<sup>3</sup>/s.

**Paddling at Neitikoski is free of charge.**

Water level: <https://wwwi2.ymparisto.fi/i2/04/q0400600y/wqfi.html>

## Map



## 5. Event & competition program

Competition has the following classes:

<b>Class</b>	<b>Max team size per country</b>
K-1 Surface Men	5
K-1 Surface Women	5
K-1 Surface Junior Men	5
K-1 Surface Junior Women	5
C-1 Surface Men	5
C-1 Surface Women	5

The last year an athlete can compete in the junior age group is the year of their 18th birthday.

## 6. Training

### Official training

Dates: 7-9.6.2026

Detailed schedule to be announced later.

### Unofficial training

You are free to train 24/7 during the paddling season.

### Water quality

Water quality is excellent for swimming but not for drinking so take your own water bottle with you.

### Water safety

The Lieksanjoki River is not dangerous at any water level during paddling season. The rapid flows into a lake after the playspot, making it a very safe location, but make sure to wear your personal safety equipment while being on the water! During winter months (November to April) when the lake below the rapid is frozen, paddling may however be dangerous. During the competition and official training a safety crew will be available.

**Watch out for rafts!**

Local companies in the Ruunaa area organize rafting trips daily, normally around mid day. The program also includes running the Neitikoski rapids, either with a raft or a wooden boat.

Never enter to the feature if you see the raft or boat approaching. You should always observe upstream before entering to the feature and it is your duty to yield downstream traffic, is it rafts, boats or canoes. Use your paddle to show the “stop” sign if someone is in the feature – or “all clear” sign if the feature is free for rafts. Normally after shooting through the rapid they make loop back to the rapid and head downstream for the second time.



## 7. Accommodation

Venue is located in Ruunaa Outdoor Center which has a number of options for accommodation. Since the location is in the middle of nature, the nearest accommodation is mainly in cabins.

Hotel level accommodation is available at the city of Lieksa, 30 km (30 min by car) from the Neitikoski.

### **Nearest HOC recommended accommodation options:**

[Ruunaa Outdoor Centre](#) (Ruunaan Retkeilykeskus)

*Distance: 0 km / Driving time: 0 min*

Cabins (max 6 persons), cost 150 €/day or 950 €/week, heating, kitchen, shower, toilet, sauna, sheets and towels with extra fee.

Huts (max 3-4 persons), 45 €/day or 295 €/week, bunk beds, microwave oven, water cooker, heating,

Tents: 5 €/day/person, shared kitchen, toilets and showers  
Caravans, with electricity (220VAC)

Sheets and towels: 25€/set

### [Ruunaan Metsäkoti](#)

*Distance: 5.3 km / Driving time: 8 min*

11 rooms in total. 2-4 person rooms with shared kitchen, wc and shower.

Price starts from 75€/day/2 person room, sheets included.

Ruunaan Metsäkoti originally served as Ruunaa's school and student dormitory. After the school was closed, the premises functioned as a home for forestry workers. Now the beautiful buildings and the charming yard in the middle of the forest have found a new life and purpose, offering visitors of Ruunaa peaceful and nature-friendly accommodation surrounded by its stunning wilderness.

See the pictures of the rooms on the [website](#). Contact information [ruunaanmetsakoti@gmail.com](mailto:ruunaanmetsakoti@gmail.com) , phone [+358 40 525 9017](tel:+358405259017)

### [Ruunaan Matkailu](#)

*Distance: 14 km / Driving time: 17 min*

Cabins: 8 cabins for 4-10 persons, 54 person in total

Caravans: 10

Tents: 10

### **Other options:**

[Hotel Puustelli](#) \*\*\*

*Distance: 29 km / Driving time: 30 min*

30 rooms for 64 persons

[Hotel Kaatrahovi](#) \*\*\*

*Distance: 30 km / Driving time: 31 min*

15 rooms for 40 persons

[Airbnb](#)

*Distance: < 35 km / Driving time:< 36 min*

10 private apartments/houses

[Sokos Hotel Koli](#) \*\*\*\*

*Distance: 116 km / Driving time: 1 h 30 min*

[Hotels in city of Joensuu](#) \*\*\*\*

*Distance: > 120 km / Driving time: 1 h 40 min*

## 8. Entry

### Entry process & deadlines

Entries and accreditation requests must be made by the National Federation using the ICF's online entries system (SDP): <https://icf.msl.es/icf/icf.jsp>

For detailed instructions on how to submit entries, please read the SDP user guide. Any questions or issues relating to entries or accreditation should be sent to [sdp@canoeicf.com](mailto:sdp@canoeicf.com) prior to the respective deadline.

#### **Numerical Entries**

Numerical entries close: May 10th, 2026

- You must submit through SDP the number of athletes you will enter into each event.
- Please also give indicative numbers for the overall number of athletes and team personnel who will attend the event with your delegation.

#### **Nominal Entries**

- Nominal entries close: May 31st, 2026
- Each athlete competing must be entered by name.
- Team personnel must also be submitted for accreditation at this time.

These entries will be used to produce the accreditation cards for all teams. Entries or accreditation requests sent directly to the committee or the event organiser will NOT be accepted.

### Participation fee

To be announced later.

## Payment

Details to be announced later.

## 9. Visa requirements

Individuals from EU nations and Schengen area do not need visa to visit Finland. However, you always need an official travel document.

Check if you need the visa, or what type of travel document is accepted, by visiting <https://um.fi/visa-requirement-and-travel-documents-accepted-by-finland/>

## 10. Medical services

To be added later

## 11. Doping control

Doping control will be performed in accordance with the Paddle Europe anti-doping requirements and WADA standards

## 12. Media

### Streaming

A competition YouTube stream and on-line results service will be provided. Details will follow.

### Drones

Area is located close to EU outer border and thus flying with drone is strictly forbidden without special permission. See more at [sky.fintraffic.fi](http://sky.fintraffic.fi)

## 13. Event partners & sponsors

