

Paddle Europe Freestyle Championships 2026

Lieksa, Finland

Bulletin 2



Finnish
Canoeing
and
Rowing
Federation

Contents

1. Welcome.....	5
2. General information	8
Event title.....	8
Event dates	8
Preliminary schedule	8
Rules	8
Venue location and address	8
Key contacts	8
3. Location.....	9
Arrival.....	9
Weather.....	10
Currency.....	10
4. Venue.....	10
Description	10
Map.....	11
5. Event & competition program.....	12
6. Training	12
Official training.....	12
Unofficial training	12
Water quality.....	12
Water safety.....	12
7. Accomodation	13
8. Entry	15
Entry process & deadlines	15
Participation fee	16
Payment	16
9. Visa requirements	16
10. Medical services.....	16
11. Doping control.....	16
12. Media	17
Streaming	17

Drones.....	17
13. Event partners & sponsors.....	17

Website & WhatsApp Group for information sharing

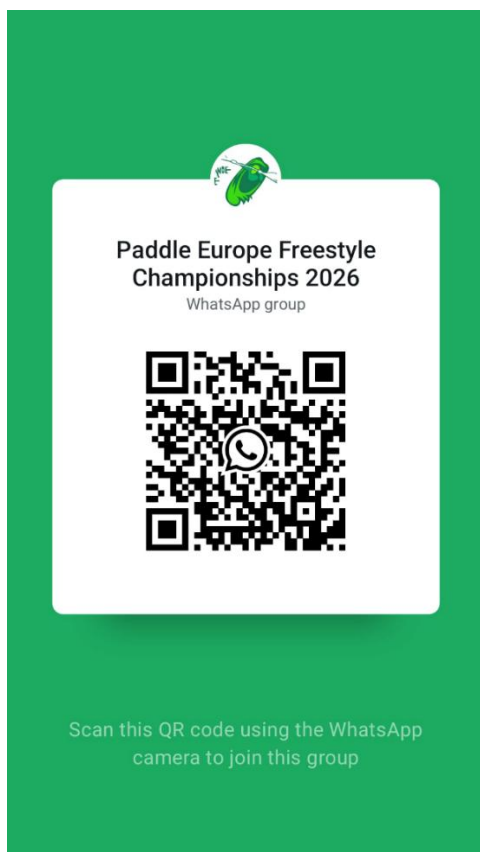
Follow the event website <https://canoefreestyle-lieksa.fi/> for any updates & additional information. We'll update it on regular basis and add information during spring.



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

Greetings from the organizers



It has been a truly exciting journey to arrange Europeans in Lieksa. Having an international competition Finland is something we have wanted already years ago – and finally we are there. We didn't only want to organize unique Europeans but wanted to showcase where the Finnish freestylers come from. Neitikoski is our #1 playspot that pretty much defines Finnish freestyle – easy enough for advanced beginners but perfect spot for Europeans too. And anything in between. I promise also the surroundings will be different to the recent Europeans. You will be experiencing clean waters running 24/7 and can enjoy nature pure!

So, what can I do in Lieksa when not on the water? As said, it's mostly about nature. If you come by car, take your mountain bike with you – there are very nice trails in the area. Or at least take your hiking boots – the hiking trails start from your doorstep wherever you stay. There are also great fishing opportunities in the area and there will be one of us on site showing the spots & explaining practices. We will add a section about activities off water soon to our website.

Saunas are also an essential part of Finnish culture. If you don't have one in your cabin, we will have the large sauna available next to the lake so everyone can enjoy it. Refreshing dip into the lake after sauna is something we Finns don't realize isn't necessarily common for everyone.

Town of Lieksa has some nice opportunities to spend a rainy day – we are gathering some hints to our website. Make sure you don't miss the regional speciality Karelian Pie – Lieksa Bakery (Lieksan Leipomo) is famous for making one of the best ones in the region if not in the country. And if you are travelling via Helsinki, worth spending a day or two in our capital on the way in or out.

Can't wait to greet you all in Finland this June!

Jyri Hämäläinen

Head of Communications for Europeans & Head of Finnish Freestyle Committee

2. General information

Event title

Paddle Europe Freestyle Championships in Lieksa, Finland

Event dates

Official training period 8-9.6.2026

Competition 10-13.6.2026

Preliminary schedule

Until 07.06.2026 Open training

08-09.06.2026 Official training

09.06.2026 Opening ceremony

10-11.6.2026 Preliminaries

12.06.2026 Semi-finals

13.06.2026 Finals

Rules

The new ICF 2026 [rules appendix](#) will be followed, both for competition format and moves.

Venue location and address

Neitikoskentie 47, 81750 Lieksa, 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 webiste	https://canofreestyle-lieksa.fi/	
Event instagram	canofreestyle_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.

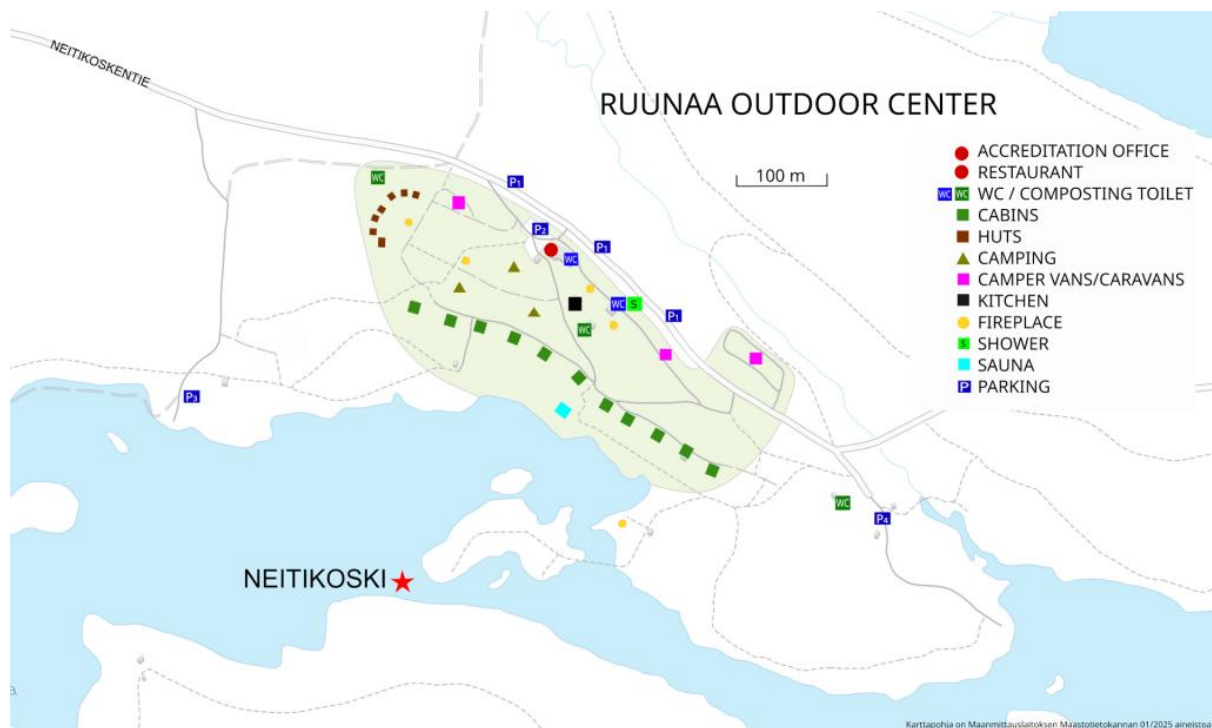
Depending on the flow, Neitikoski forms either a mid-sized hole, a mid-sized wave, or a versatile mix of both. The feature consistently delivers world-class conditions for paddlers of all levels—from beginners to seasoned experts. At flows below 100 m³/s, it behaves more like a hole; above 100 m³/s, 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 m³/s. The feature works reliably up to 200 m³/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 m³/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:

Class	Max team size per country
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.

Additionally, we are planning to organize a Cadet camp similar to the one in Plattling for freestyle kayakers under 15 years during the competition week. We will announce details on our website, once finished.

6. Training

Official training

Dates: 8-9.6.2026

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 , 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 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.

The champions from European Championships 2024 in Graz will have the right to sign up on top of their national quotas. In case you want to take advantage of this, please contact directly Terry Best, tbest@canoe-eca.eu

Participation fee

Participation fee is 255€ euros (Participation fee is 240€ + Paddle Europe accreditation fee 15€). Athletes that compete in two classes (e.g. K1W and C1W) will only have to pay the participation fee once.

Payment

Whitewater Canoeing Finland ry

Bank account:

BIC/SWIFT: DABAFIHH

IBAN: FI49 8146 9710 3811 37

When making payments please quote "Entry fee" followed by your country code. Payments must be made in EUR €. Bank and currency charges must be paid by national federations in addition to the accreditation fee. If you require an invoice, please contact

tuomas.pantsar@wwcf.fi

Proof of payment must be available at the time of signing up.

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

13. Event partners & sponsors

