

2023 BRIDGES TO BLUFFS PILOT GUIDE



Pilots play an integral role in race day — each swimmer/pilot pair works as a team. In this guide you will find a list of the primary responsibilities of a pilot during the swim.

But first, the Schedule of Events (for exact times/locations please see the Athlete Guide).

1. Pilots are required to attend the Saturday evening Pre-Race Dinner Cruise and Athlete Briefing. There is no need to purchase tickets, as Pilots are already included in the cruise. If you are paired with a swimmer you have not met, this will be your chance to meet your swimmer and see the course, learn the logistics of the race, and interact with other involved in the race.
2. Race morning: Pilot/Swimmers using a personal kayak or SUP will drop off their vessel at Suttree Landing Park. Race volunteers will be on site to help. If you are renting a kayak/SUP it will be delivered for you. All swimmers and pilots will then drive to Sequoyah Hills Park (race finish). There is ample parking and shuttle service to take you to the race start.
 - **IMPORTANT:** Swimmers and pilots are not dropped off at the same location. Your swimmer will be dropped off first (to board the Riverboat). Pilots are then shuttled to Suttree Park. Make sure you have your swimmer's nutrition and any gear they need for the swim (extra goggles, cap, phone, etc.). You will not see your swimmer until they've jumped from the boat to start the race.
 - Pilots will enter the water at Suttree Landing Park, race volunteers will assist. Swimmers jump from the Riverboat in a time-trial fashion (single file, based on projected finish time, slower swimmers going first). Prior to the swimmer "walking the plank" your swimmers NAME and RACE NUMBER will be announced via megaphone. You should then paddle towards the boat as the swimmer makes the jump. the pilot will paddle towards the boat as

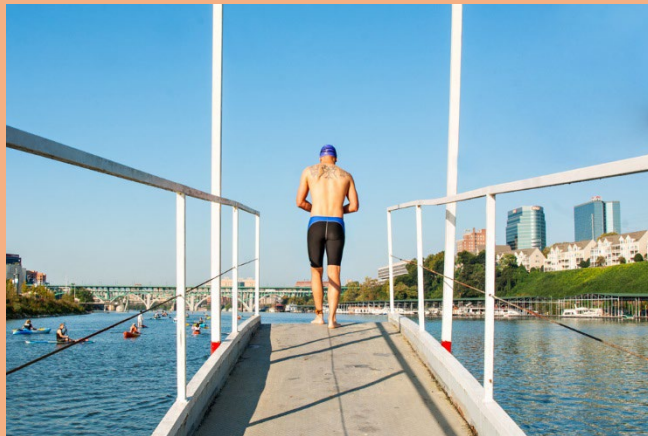
the swimmer makes the jump. Once the swimmer has cleared the splash zone the next team will go. This takes approximately 30 seconds.



Pilots waiting in water at Suttree Park.



Ready to jump!!!



The Jump!



Pilot waiting for swimmer.

- Once the pilot and swimmer have successfully paired after the jump, you begin the 6.2 mile swim down the Tennessee River to Sequoyah Hills Park. The course is very scenic, and we will have photographers along the course. Should you decide to bring your own camera/phone for photos we highly suggest a waterproof case. Please note: the majority of cases DO NOT FLOAT. B2B is not responsible for lost or damaged equipment. A lanyard or attachable flotation device is suggested.

- B2B does not provide “aid stations” so you’ll want to bring your own snacks/beverages for the trek. Consult your swimmer in advance — some will provide a cooler to share.



- Pilots will keep the swimmer on the LEFT side of the river until Mile 4 (approximately). You will see two large, yellow buoys marking the crossing to river RIGHT. The crossing is also noted by the famous “Castle Dock.”



Now on the right of the buoy



Castle Dock

- Please guide your swimmer around the buoys, where you will remain on the RIGHT side of the river until the finish.



Finish Chute — “for swimmers only”



Swimmer approaching finish chute

- **Swim Finish:** At the end of the 6.2mi course you will approach the finish chute. This is not easy for the swimmer to see (especially on a sunny day). You will see the finish chute and a pontoon boat. It's at this point the swimmer/pilot team will separate for the first (and only) time. Pilots will go around the chute — do not try to paddle into the chute or go between the pontoon (timing) boat and finish chute. You are free to take pictures near the area ... however we have sensitive (and expensive) timing equipment attached to the finish arch from the boat. The finish chute can also become crowded with multiple swimmers.
- You are free to hang out in the water (stay clear of the exit) for photos with your swimmer. We will have a race photographer in water taking finish pictures. A group of race volunteers will help you exit the water. You are then free to enjoy the finish area — lunch is included. There are bathrooms on site as well. If you have rented a kayak/SUP please take all personal items once you have exited.
- All kayaks/SUPS must be out of the park by 2pm. B2B is not responsible for any items left in the park after 2pm.





WHAT DOES A PILOT DO?IMPORTANT INFORMATION DURING THE RACE

KEEPING SWIMMERS SAFE FROM MOTOR BOATS

The primary responsibility as a pilot is to keep your swimmer safe from boat traffic. Stay near your swimmer so that they are more visible to boats. If a boat is approaching you and your swimmer, wave your paddle in the air so the boat is aware of your position. If possible, position yourself in between the swimmer and the boat. We will have a safety boat out on the water patrolling the swim and assessing any needs you or your swimmers may have. In case your swimmer needs to drop out, the safety boat will pick up the swimmer and take them to the finish. You will need to paddle to the finish.

WHERE DO I STAY IN RELATION TO MY SWIMMER?

This will be up to your swimmer. Race rules require that a pilot remain within 30 feet of their swimmer. However, whether you remain behind them, beside them, or slightly to their right or left side is their discretion. **You cannot be immediately in front of your swimmer – this is drafting and against the rules.** Please do not fall too far behind your swimmer – sometimes this happens when a pilot needs to prepare for feeds/take care of personal issues. Catch up as soon as you possibly can. Do not allow your swimmer to hold onto the boat or make forward progress using the boat.

KEEP YOUR SWIMMER ON THE SWIM ROUTE/COURSE.

We have a permit with the Coast Guard which mandates that swimmers remain on the “river left” until mile 4, when they will cross to the RIGHT side of the river. You do not need to hug the bank exactly but keep your swimmers left of buoys while on river left, and then to the right of all buoys when the race crosses to stay out of the main channel in case of boat traffic.

FEEDINGS

You will need to know in advance of the race when your swimmer would like to feed. We suggest discussing the plan at the pre-race cruise, if not before. Most swimmers will feed on a 30/45 minute rotation. Ask your swimmer how they prefer to feed, and any signals they would like. Some swimmers want a five minute warning, some a simple hand gesture when it's time. Since this is a race you should to prepare the feed in advance of the stop – swimmers who will be racing for a chance at a National Championship will want to make the feedings as quickly as possible. An easy to follow guide is this:

- Wear a stopwatch or a GPS watch with a timer function. Five minutes before each feed retrieve the bottle/gel/snack and have it ready to go. MOST SWIMMERS will use liquid nutrition and a gel. Some will have the bottle attached to a rope for you to throw to them.
- Notify your swimmer when it's time to feed.
- If using a rope system, once the swimmer stops, toss the bottle to the swimmer. Otherwise hand the bottle/snack to the swimmer. There should be minimal contact

between the swimmer and the pilot boat. This is the responsibility of the swimmer, not the pilot.

- Retrieve the bottle and any trash (do not litter on course). Prepare for the next feed. This would also a good time for the pilot to grab something to drink, and for you to reposition things in the kayak/SUP.
- Reset your timer for the next break and catch up to your swimmer as quickly as possible.

WHAT TO WEAR?

It's up to you, really, but you may want to have layers if it's chilly or if it's warm. River shorts and a rash guard, a spray jacket and water shoes would be great (wear clothes that you would wear to go rafting). Wear clothes that you don't mind getting wet. Bathing suits are ideal! Sunglasses, sunscreen, hat, sandals or old sneakers, and a rain jacket are common. Note: all pilots must have a Personal Flotation Device (PFD) on board at all times, however you are not required to wear it. We suggest wearing a PFD if you are not a confident swimmer in case of an accident.

1. Bathroom breaks: Nature does call. Some pilots will be on the water for 4 hours. We suggest one of two methods: 1. Rinse bottle: simply go in the kayak and use a rinse bottle to wash off.
2. Notify your swimmer that you need to pull off to the shore. Sometimes swimmers will be in packs and you can ask a fellow pilot to keep watch of your swimmer as well. Exit on a nearby shore, take care of business, and return to the swimmer as soon as possible.

KAYAKING EXPERIENCE

You do need to have experience in a kayak on a river with current. If you are from Knoxville or Chattanooga there are plenty of opportunities to practice with the swim groups. The Knoxville Open Water Swimmers (KOWS) swim on Thursday evenings. The COWS (Chattanooga Open Water Swimmers) swim on Wednesday evenings. Check in with both groups on Facebook for more information. The swim course is flat water (with some downstream current). No upstream paddling is required.

PACKING LIST:

This is not a wholly comprehensive list, but merely a list of suggested items that you may choose to carry. For a more detailed list, please consult the Athlete Guide.

- A digital watch for timing your swimmer.
- A dry bag or box if you have one for your cell phone and keys.
- Your cell phone
- Wetsuit or river clothes to stay warm
- Hat (visor)
- Gloves (suggested)
- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Your swimmers should bring you some snacks and drink, but it's best to bring some snacks and drinks for yourself in case you do not like what they bring for you.

CAN I SUP INSTEAD OF KAYAK?

Kayaks, SUPs, canoe, and 2 person kayak/canoes are allowed.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE EMAIL: KNOX.OWS@GMAIL.COM