WITH GIRLS ON SUPS

A WINTER SUP GUIDE

The Girls on SUPs are out on the water in all seasons. Around 30.000 followers from all over the world follow their adventures on their instagram channel sgirls_on_sups. Winter is one of their favourite seasons though! And they always get a lot of questions: How do you stay safe on the board, what belongs in the drybag and what does the right outfit look like? In this little guide, Julia and Anja reveal their tips and tricks for standup paddling in winter.

Once you've experienced the magic of gliding along on a mountain lake in a snowy winter landscape, you won't want to stop winter standup paddling. Taking your favorite summer hobby with you through the cold season sounds tempting to many. But what do I need to consider to stay safe on the water - and what equipment do I need? The Girls on SUPs reveal what really matters when it comes to winter paddling.

If you want to strike up a conversation with strangers, you can either walk through the pedestrian zone with a puppy. Or he can grab his standup paddle board in winter and pump it up in the parking lot at the lake between incredulous strollers. Most people can't resist a comment à la "summer is over, by the way." but then watch in fascination as we carry our boards through the snow to the water in our dry suits and paddle away almost silently.

In front of us on this tour lies the mirror-smooth Eibsee. We cover the first meters quickly, as always, because we know that our magic moment is about to come. In the middle of the lake, the time has come - we turn around for the first time and there it is: the Zugspitze, snow-covered and reflected in the almost black water. While the Eibsee is known for its Caribbean turquoise color in summer, it looks different in winter. More mystical, darker and somewhat greener. And in addition this peace. We are once again in love.

Not even our friends have all gotten used to the fact that we are among the "nuts" who get on the board even in winter. Again and again we are asked: "But why? You could also go skiing. You're bound to freeze to death. What's so great about it?". And again and again we like to explain that no one has to freeze in the right outfit, that skiing is great, but so is SUPing, and that it's hard to put into words what makes it so appealing. Most of the time this conversation ends on Instagram, where we have been capturing our tours in pictures on our account for almost four years now. Seeing a snowy Winter Wonderland from this special perspective and feeling the fresh air while the boards glide silently over the empty lakes is always a highlight for us. The images that emerge are magical. Frozen waterfalls, meter-high snow mountains that have to be overcome on the way to the shore, icy little boys - there is so much to discover.

Just like here on Lake Eibsee, where we have now reached the other side. We paddle around one of the famous islands and land. Time to unpack the cameras and immortalize the breathtaking panorama of the Zugspitze completely reflected in the lake.

But what do you need to be safe and warm on the water even in winter? The best outfit is, of course, the dry suit (for example, from Supskin or Starboard) with latex cuffs on hands and feet and a neoprene collar. Its zippers and material are waterproof. So not only will you stay dry in the "event of a fall," but the air in the drysuit acts as an insulating layer between your body and the cold water - preventing cold shock. In addition, the air pushes upward, so that you first float like a cork in the water. These are valuable seconds in which you can climb back onto your board in the worst case. Under the dry suit, ski underwear is sufficient for fast, not so cold tours. Since our tours always last several hours and are interrupted by photo stops, we also wear warm jogging pants and fleece sweaters - sometimes even two.

Our secret recipe for the feet, tried and tested for years, is thick neoprene boots without split toe (e.g. Plasma Boots 6/5 NS from Ion), which we wear one size too big. Underneath, you can find warm and waterproof socks from Seaskins, who also offer waterproof gloves. A cap on your head is just as important as having a second cap in a drybag for emergencies.

A reusable PFD (short for personal floating device, i.e. a self-inflating life jacket or buoy) provides protection when falling into the water. It is triggered with nitrous oxide capsules that can be easily replaced. A whole selection is available at Restube. The board is fixed to the foot with a leash, just like in summer. Apart from a spare hat, we always put a towel, hot tea, a few euros (in case we have to get off at the wrong end of the lake due to the weather and have to take a bus or a cab) and our smartphone in the drybag.

Sure, it takes a bit of effort to make standup paddling a year-round sport. But does it all really have to be? Absolutely. The cold water is not to be trifled with, and even the most skilled athlete can quickly find themselves in life-threatening situations if they experience cold shock. But if you stick to the rules, you will quickly gain routine, stay fit even in winter, and experience unforgettable hours on the water - that's a promise.

EQUIPMENT CHECKLIST:

- DRYSUIT
- WATERPROOF SOCKS
- THICK NEOPRENE BOOTS
- WATERPROOF GLOVES
- TWO HATS
- SKI UNDERWEAR
- POSSIBLY SWEATPANTS AND FLEECE
- DRYBAG
- HOT TEA
- TOWEL
- MONEY
- SMARTPHONE
- PFD
- LEASH

WINTER SUP - DOS & DON'TS:

Don't:

- Even if it's hard sometimes: don't try stunts and jokes on the board
- Don't go too close to the ice edges - they can be very sharp and damage the boards
- Don't go alone - it's safer and more fun in pairs anyway
- Don't overestimate yourself and rather plan short tours in perfect conditions first
- Never go on the water without your leash

Do:

- Practice, practice, practice - and do it in the summer. Practice keeping your balance, maneuvering and landing safely.
- Keep your eyes open: especially in winter, there are many branches and trees in the water that you could get caught on.
- Respect nature protection zones in winter to avoid disturbing animals.
- Check the weather very carefully to avoid unpleasant surprises
- Always stay close to the shore and paddle in pairs

Our top 5 winter SUP spots in Bavaria/Germany and Tyrol/Austria:

Eibsee

The Bavarian Caribbean with small islands at the foot of the mighty Zugspitze.

There is a parking lot directly at the lake.

Unfortunately, the water freezes quickly due to the lack of sun and thaws only in spring.

Achensee

A Tyrolean gem with rugged limestone cliffs and frozen waterfalls. Thanks to current, the lake almost never freezes over. The thermal winds are difficult to estimate, which is why this spot is not for beginners and requires good weather knowledge.

Walchensee

A mystical, deep and large lake in the middle of Bavarian idyll. The water is turquoise-green at the edge and with luck you can visit a small herd of Scottish Highland cattle living on a farm on the shore.

Plansee

Canadian feeling between Tyrolean mountains. A small canal connects Plansee with Heiterwanger See, which is at least as beautiful.

Tegernsee

A royal blue lake in a postcard-worthy landscape.

There is always something going on on the paths along the shore - as a winter paddler you will quickly strike up a conversation here. Be careful not to get too close to the swans, because they can get a bit cheeky.

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