



Music City's water ways are a great place to teach your dog a new trick

Stand-Up Paddling Goes to the Dogs

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Whether it was on the cover of the Athleta catalog that came in the mail or when you've seen folks looking like they are walking on water on J. Percy Priest Lake, you've likely raised an eyebrow at stand-up paddling (SUP). SUP is one of the country's fastest-growing sports. What looks like a hybrid of surfing and kayaking, SUP is a water sport that can be done on almost any kind of water, making Nashville's lakes and rivers prime territory. There are now more than a handful of companies in Middle Tennessee that coach and train folks to SUP, including mine, Nashville Paddle Company. People love it because it can be flexible: a real core workout or a fun way to spend the day with friends and family, including your canine companion.

Dogs of all energy levels love to sit or stand on the board and go for a ride. More hard-core water pups like to swim alongside paddlers and chase fish or ducks in the water, particularly as Nashville summertime temperatures rise. In fact, sometimes

Jacky Dustin, an instructor for Nashville Paddle Company, and her SUP-loving dog, LeRoy, enjoy any opportunity to get out on the water.

you just can't keep a dog off a paddleboard. On Mother's Day, I was paddling alone and rounded a corner near a picnic area on Percy Priest. Next thing I knew, someone else's Golden Retriever swam out to greet me and tried to jump on board.

There are lots of benefits to paddling with your dog. In addition to being a unique bonding activity and just being plain fun, SUP is also a great physical workout. According to Franklin-based veterinarian Tammy Perkins, SUP builds core strength for dogs and people alike. After my foxhound, Cooper, had surgery for a herniated disc, Dr. Perkins recommended SUP as a way for him to regain balance and core strength. Other dogs who like to swim more than Cooper does can benefit from the overall low-impact cardio boost swimming provides, too.

Of course, no activity is risk free. Dr. Perkins says some dogs will swim until they drop, and it is up to you to stop them before they suffer from exhaustion. Be on the lookout for "happy tail," a water-related tail injury that looks like constant wagging and which can happen after excessive wagging, swimming or exercise. And, like any new activity, SUP takes training, with lots of commands, positive reinforcement and, of course, treats.

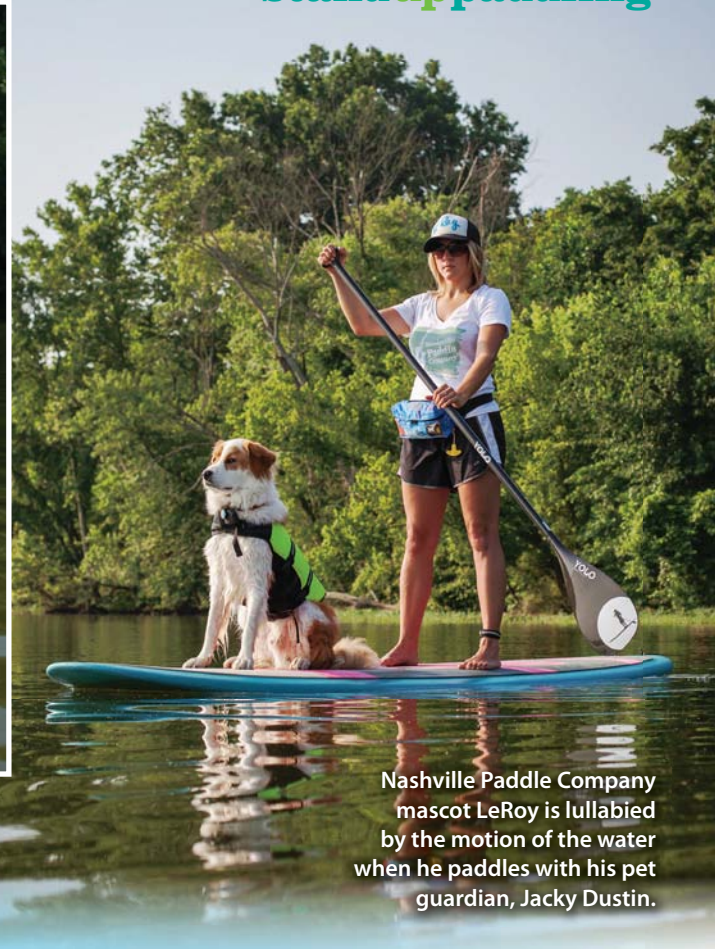
Teaching your dog to stand-up paddle isn't hard (nor is it hard for people to master). However, taking it slow is the key to helping your dog feel confident and have fun, says Maria Christina Schultz, the author of the new book, *How to SUP With Your PUP: A guide to stand up paddleboarding with your dog*.

Schultz offers these TIPS for getting your PUP PADDLING:

1. Be safe. Buy a personal floatation device (PFD) that fits your dog. Look for one brightly colored (so you can spot it in the water) and snugly sized. Schultz likes the ones with the handles on the back, so you can reach over and lift even a large dog out of the water. (Of course, you should wear a PFD, too.)



Liz Veyhl, owner of Nashville Power Yoga, takes a break from teaching SUP yoga for Nashville Paddle Company to show her dog, Austin, the pleasures of SUP on Old Hickory Lake.



Nashville Paddle Company mascot LeRoy is lullabied by the motion of the water when he paddles with his pet guardian, Jacky Dustin.

2. Introduce. Schultz trained her dog, Riley, on the board on the ground before she put it in the water. This got him used to the feel of the board and she could teach him specific commands, such as “hop on” and “hop off” that were important in the water. Putting a Kong or other favorite treat on the board on the ground will help your pup associate good things with the equipment.

3. Pick a spot. Paddling is a more challenging workout for you when your dog is on board (shifting weight on the board keeps you on your toes). Train your dog to be in a particular spot. Smaller dogs can be anywhere, but larger dogs should be more toward the center of the board, near your feet.

4. Train strategically. When you rent a paddleboard, talk to the company about where you’ll launch. Look for somewhere away from motorboats and other watercrafts to minimize risk and distraction.

Schultz knew Riley was as taken with SUP as she was when he was calm and peaceful out on the board. She says, “From the first time Riley and I paddled down the river we were both hooked on this sport.”

Where to Go

There are a number of **Nashville area SUP companies** that allow you to bring your dog along. Some limit dogs to specific equipment (certain paddleboards have no-slip padding that is good for paws), so ask about policies when you make reservations. Not all businesses stock canine PFDs, so bring your dog his own properly-sized floatation device.

- ▶ Adventure Paddle, adventurepaddle.com
- ▶ Music City Water Sports, musiccitywatersports.com
- ▶ Nashville Paddle Company, nashvillepaddle.com
- ▶ Paddle Up TN, paddleuptn.com
- ▶ Soulshine SUP, soulshinesup.com
- ▶ SUP Fit Paddle Co., supfitpaddleco.com
- ▶ SUP Guides, supguides.com
- ▶ SUP Music City, supmusiccity.com

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