

If you fancy some outdoor adventure on the water but can't get to the countryside, Pinkston Watersports at Port Dundas, close to Glasgow city centre, is perfect place to hone your skills – whether a beginner or an expert.

Scotland boasts a network of fabulous rivers, a dramatic coastline and numerous top spots for white-water kayaking.

But to reach these amazing places can take time, energy and a fair amount of travelling.

Now a new city-centre watersports centre is bringing the excitement of white water to the people.

Pinkston Watersports is just a hop and a skip from the heart of Glasgow and offers the thrills – and the spills – of a 100m grade two-equivalent white-water course.

The facility, in the canal basin at Port Dundas, is the first of its kind in Scotland and one of only a few purpose-built white-water courses in the UK.

Only a few months after opening, it is one of the hottest places to be this winter for kayakers and canoeists.

Weekend and evening sessions buzz with the sights and sounds of paddlers of all ages and abilities.

A large adjoining flat-water pool is the perfect environment for beginners to learn the basics.

Faster-moving water close to the outlet of the white water course offers more challenging conditions.

The white-water course has water pumped at up to seven tons per second whooshing down the 100m "flume".

The course drops gently over 1.5m but careers sharply around several bends to create a 180-degree half loop from top to bottom.

Man-made plastic "rocks" create obstacles that must be negotiated and the turns are very tight.

The course might sound dangerous but it's shallow enough to stand up in and is deemed a "safe and accessible adventurous activity".

Pinkston's man-made white-water course is described as canoeing's equivalent of an artificial ski slope.

Richard Cree, of the West Coast Paddlers, attends regularly with his club. He said: "It is such an amazing

KICKS Tackling the white-water course at Pinkston is a real white-knuckle ride



WET AND WILD IN

“You need guts in the frothing current but it's brilliant fun too”



FIONA RUSSELL

facility for so many reasons. Pinkston is so convenient, especially for a quick evening paddle.

"In the autumn and winter it makes access to the water and white-water practice so much more practical.

"And it's a great place for people to learn the skills of paddling in faster-flowing water before giving the real thing a go."

Andy Watt is chairman of the charity set up to build and run the centre, on the former Pinkston power station site on North Canal Bank Street.

He explains how people can use the facility, whether for beginner sessions or to paddle the white water.

He says: "Because Pinkston is run as a charity we operate a minimal staff policy and a model of cheaper community access rates.

"What this means is the centre can be hired by organisations, rather like a council sports hall being hired out to a local club group."

So if you are a local youngster you can go to Pinkston through a youth club. From early next year, Glasgow

pupils will be able to visit Pinkston through their school.

Established canoeists can also access the site through open sessions called Park & Play, at a cost of £7.50.

The community rate for bookings is £30 per club for a flat-water session and £75 per club for an hour of the white-water course.

If you want to turn up and paddle, or join a fast-track experience, the private partner, Tayler Made Adventures, offers intensive sessions that take participants through canoeing skills.

This Wednesday, from 6pm to 8pm, they are hosting a ladies' night, which they hope will become a popular, regular session.

Pinkston have trained 16 youth workers as Level One kayak coaches.

These coaches have formed their own partnership club called Pinkston Paddlers and they are now bringing children from the local communities to the water.

Adults can also make use of Pinkston by joining a kayak club, such as



More information

- Pinkston is online at pinkston.co.uk
- Tayler Made Adventures at taylormadeadventures.co.uk
- Contact West Coast Paddlers on Facebook
- GKC at glasgowkayakclub.com
- Monklands Canoe Club at monklandscanoecub.co.uk