

WHAT

Stand-up Paddle-Boarding

WHY BUILD MUSCLE, BURN FAT, CALM THE MIND

Austin looks particularly beautiful at sunset. It looks even more beautiful standing on a paddle board in the middle of Lake Austin, only one or two evil motorboats in sight. It seems I'm metaphorically in good company: Kate Hudson, Jennifer Aniston and Austin's own Matthew McConaughey have all embraced **stand-up paddle-boarding**, said to be one of the world's fastest-growing sports.

Today, I'm with Andy Lukei, an Austinite who set up Austin Paddle Sports to let people like me take up the sport (think surfing, but standing up using giant oars and without the need for waves). There's no messing about on shore; we take the plunge (literally, in my case—I fall in the water after precisely three minutes on the board) and drift out into the middle of the lake. Lukei tells me to stay on my knees initially, and when I get my balance, he instructs me to stand up on the middle of the board, facing forward. Apart from the slight setback (I'm wet but, thankfully, not too cold), I manage to stand up fairly quickly. And it isn't long before I'm drawing each paddle through the water on either side of my board.

Lukei tells me lessons range from \$50 to \$100 an hour, depending on what you want to do and where you are in the country. The good thing about stand-up paddle-boarding, or SUP, as it's known, is that you can do it on a flat lake and you can pick it up in half an hour. If you like it, an entry-level board and paddle will set you back about \$900 (you can spend up to \$3,000 for a racing board), which isn't bad considering you don't need much more.

Although I start slowly—just a gentle paddle across the lake—it doesn't take long before I get my confidence up and I plow through the wake of one of the motorboats and explore the banks of this dammed-off section of the Lower Colorado. It's very peaceful, but the faster I go, the more I feel I'm getting a workout. I learned to surf earlier this year, and Lukei says this will definitely help me adjust to the board quicker.

SUP is a full-body exercise, too. "Your legs are getting worked out because you're constantly aiming for stability,"



Where can you try it?

AUSTIN PADDLE SPORTS

5214 Burleson Road, Ste. 118, 595-1410, austinpaddlesports.com

LAKE AUSTIN SPA RESORT

1705 S. Quinlan Park Road, 372-7300, lakeaustin.com

SUP MEETUP GROUPS

stand-up-paddle-boarding.meetup.com/cities/us/tx/austin

ROWING DOCK

(Membership required) 2418 Stratford Drive, 459-0999, rowingdock.com/boat_rentals.html



Andy Lukei and Allison Jennings of Austin Paddle Sports

Lukei says. "The paddling obviously works your chest, abs, upper body, back and shoulders. And depending on how much you want to push it, it's a great cardio workout, too. You can get your heart rate up as much as any kickboxing or spinning class."

Then there are the psychological benefits. "It's so serene and very relaxing," he says. "I like to go out paddling when I wake up, and just listening to the

drops coming off the paddle, the birds in the morning, is very therapeutic for the mind, body and soul."

Another convert is Linda McCoy-Schriever, 43, who owns a textbook consulting company in Austin. She first witnessed stand-up paddling in Hawaii, then she saw a woman giving SUP classes under the MoPac bridge a few years ago and signed up for a class. That woman happened to be Kristy

Murphy, the 2005 women's world long-board champ, who was in Austin to give SUP classes for a few weeks. McCoy-Schriever says she was instantly hooked and ended up buying three boards from Murphy and getting her friends to buy boards, too.

"Now I go at least twice a week," McCoy-Schriever tells me. "It really works your core—your stomach, especially the tops of my legs and arms, of course. I

love it because you're on the water, it's a lot of fun and you're getting a good tan! I'd do it every day if I had the time."

My introductory class is almost over. I will definitely be doing this again. Lukei says I could also head to the coast and tackle some waves, but I'm quite content on serene Lake Austin. The motorboats have long since disappeared, leaving just us and a couple of ducks as the sun sets over the city. —A. HANNAFORD