Pura Vida Paddle: Stand Up Paddleboarding Yoga Classes

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SUP? No, I’m not using 90’s jargon trying to convince you I used to be super cool. SUP is short for Stand Up Paddleboarding and it has come to the Brazos (plus the Y)!

Pura Vida Paddle opened its dock in March of 2017 and offers a unique, fun way to enjoy the river. If the idea of SUP is too daunting, they also offer single and double person kayak rentals. Their website, [www.puravidapaddle.com](http://www.puravidapaddle.com) makes finding their hours, rates, and services easy peasy. Their Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/PuraVidaPaddle>, is the go-to place to see a list of service schedules and to make class reservations.

One of the services they offer is SUP Yoga Classes. They’ve recently started offering SUP yoga classes at the Waco Family YMCA location. This is the perfect solution to combat those frigid temperatures as the classes take place in a heated pool. If you’ve been tossing around the idea of trying this or perhaps this is the first time you’ve heard of it and you’re intrigued... here’s my first hand account of what to expect.

I’ll be honest y’all, I was intimidated. I was scared. But I was excited too. I’ve been taking yoga classes for over a year and love it. On the other hand, I have never been on a stand up paddleboard. But after meeting Erin Ward, the owner of Pura Vida Paddle, I was convinced to take the leap, err stand?

**So, first things first: What do I wear?!?**

Number One: Sunscreen. Be sure to lather up before getting out on the river. That Texas sun is relentless. However, because you’re on the river, there’s this amazing thing called “a breeze” that brings the temperature down a few degrees and feels amazing. But that breeze doesn’t protect you from that sun. Protect yo’self –wear sunscreen.

As far as clothing, wear something that’s comfortable and moisture wicking. If you’d like to rock your poses in swim wear – go for it! Just be sure to test-drive Downward Facing Dog at home and look out for “wardrobe malfunctions.” Active wear is another great choice. Avoid heavy, unbreathable fabrics (denim, cotton, crushed velvet…). I chose active wear and went in my capri leggings, sports bra, and a loose fitting shirt. When I go again, I’ll probably wear my bikini top under my shirt instead to really take advantage of those breezes.

**What do I bring?**

Sunglasses or a hat, again that sun is no joke.

We left our shoes on the deck and boarded bare foot, but if you have a pair of yoga footwear you prefer to wear, just make sure you’re ok with them getting wet.

If you want to bring your phone on the board – be sure to rent a dry bag. A wet phone or a phone at the bottom of the river is no bueno.

There’s a potential you may fall into the river. So, I brought a towel and a change of clothes and left them in the car, just in case.

**Where do I go?**

Pura Vida Paddle is located on the lower dock of Buzzard Billy’s (100 North Interstate 35 Waco, TX 76704). Their signage is large, bright, and easy to follow. You will be surrounded by paddleboards and take off to the high seas from there.

**But safety first!**

Once there, you will get to meet Erin and your Yoga instructor. After simple safety instructions, you’re led to your paddleboard. Each board is equipped with a life jacket, if needed. Once on your board, you will put a Velcro leash around your ankle. This connects you to your board and is quite an important tool – in case you fall in, the current of the river won’t take your board along for the ride without you ‘cause you’re attached to it… but wait? Does this mean you’re actually doing yoga in the middle of the river?? Technically, no.

**So then what?**

The yoga classes are taught in a cove that is about a 10-15 minute paddle away. On this day, because it was quite breezy, we paddled out towards the cove on our knees. If this would be too much stress on your knees, no fear – you can easily paddle sitting on your bum. I’m just gunna stop right here and say the peace and serenity you feel while paddling to the cove sets the tone for this class. You get a unique vantage point as you paddle under IH35 and past McLane Stadium. Also, it offers an incredible dual-purpose to serve as your upper body/core warm-up (and if the wind isn’t as bad, you could include lower body in this as well). And most importantly, you become comfortable on the board before you start moving into different poses.

**STOP! Yoga time!**

Once you get to the cove, you get to practice your paddling skills as you line up to the tether line. The front of your board has a carabiner, or clasp, that you will attach to the tether. You can now remove your ankle leash as your board is attached to the tether line and will not float downstream. If you fall in the water here, no worries as it’s about 4 feet deep. As with all yoga classes, it’s important to let your instructor know of any illness/injury/pregnancy before practice. The class I attended was focused on meditation/relaxation. Sheridan, an Austin-native- turned-Baylor-graduate, was very calming with her instructions and allowed more time in between poses for you to find your balance. Some poses you can expect with the meditation/relaxation classes are: table top, cat/cow, half pigeon, downward facing dog, high plank, locust, spinal twist, and (my favorite) corpse pose. I’ll say, going from table top to downward dog was exhilarating and nerve-wracking at the same time. You really get to test your balance and your strength – and once you find it, it’s awesome. The confidence you build in your body and in yourself is worth the experience. It’s important to add here that you don’t have to be a yoga expert to attend this class. In fact, this could be your first yoga class. The verbal instructions are very clear and concise and you can easily follow along by watching others. Just be sure to take your time as you transition between poses. And that’s part of the beauty of yoga – you move at your pace, it’s not a race with your neighbor. You do you. Also, dudes are most definitely encouraged to attend class – it’s not just for chicks.

After class is finished, you simply re-leash your ankle, untether your board and paddle back to dock.

**So Why Should I Take a SUP Yoga Class?**

I wasn’t sure what to expect from this class. As I said, I was intimidated and scared but also excited. I was intimidated that I didn’t have the right body-type for SUP. I was scared of falling into the water and making a fool out of myself. But I was excited to put myself out there and try something that I’d never done before; something that intimidated me, something that scared me. And what happened was something amazing. I found that I could do it; that there isn’t “a right” look; that if I fell in the river the cold water would feel incredible on my skin; and that my body is capable of more than I give it credit for. So if you feel like I did, if the idea of this activity intimidates you, if it scares you – I have one thing to say: Do it scared.

You’ll be thankful you did.

**A Bit About the Owner of Pura Vida Paddle: Erin Ward**

Erin is a Waco-native. While attending Texas State University in San Marcos, she found her love of everything-water during her summer job at Jerry’s (tube) Rentals in New Braunfels. She and her husband, Blake, opened Pura Vida Paddle in March 2017. When asked where the inspiration to name her business “Pura Vida” came from, she replied: *It's from Costa Rica and means “Pure Life”. My mom and sister went there few years back and brought me some jewelry that said it. They said how beautiful it was and the people truly lived by that phrase. It's always stuck with me and when we went to Colorado in August (where I SUP'd for the first time), my friend there had a phone case that said Pura Vida on it. In Colorado is where we started throwing around the idea of opening this business so I named it Pura Vida Paddle in August, while in Colorado. I love it because that's what I want to bring to Waco. A place for people to come, and leave their troubles behind and enjoy “Pura Vida”.*