



50th celebrations



12 & 13 August 2023

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NEWS
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A word from the Chair



It gives me great pleasure to invite you all as participants and spectators alike to the milestone year that sees the 50th running of the iconic adventure event that is the annual Avon Descent.

Who would have known back in 1973 when 49 participants challenged themselves to be the first 'Avon Descenders' to tackle their way through what was then 132 kms of river from the Town of Northam to Coode Street jetty in South Perth, that this event, featuring a unique combination of power craft and paddle entrants in competition against themselves and the elements, would still be the mainstay of adventure racing in Western Australia some 50 years on.

In that first year those 49 competitors navigated their way through sandbanks, ti-trees, whitewater rapids and long flat-water stretches with no rules other than to travel from the start to the finish over two-days. There were no checkpoints, no officials, no rescue and recovery units and very few spectators.

The stories from that first and subsequent events captured the interest and enthusiasm of not only the media and the general public, but some 35,000 competitors who have now participated in this iconic event over the last 49 years.

Having competed in my first event in 1973 and completing 10 straight Avon Descents, I know the dedication, training and commitment that goes into the challenge of competing over such a distance in often cold, wet and windy weather and water conditions. But the Avon Descent of today provides a variety of opportunities for both World Champion and Olympic athletes, novices and family alike to enjoy the atmosphere and adventure of the Avon Descent.

Like most public participation events of today, the Avon Descent offers a number of paddle and power craft entry options including short duration 'challenge' events of a few kilometres for the less experienced, and still enjoy the finish line atmosphere and be rewarded with a participant's medal.

And behind the Avon Descent is not a myriad of staff, but a dedicated group of volunteers who make an event like this happen each and every year.

We appreciate the ongoing annual support and commitment of the State Government, Local Governments and sponsors who support the 2023 Avon Descent. Entry fees alone are but a contribution toward the cost of delivering the annual event and it is essential we maintain the support of our event partners.

Additionally we appreciate the invaluable support of our local community groups, who provide the resources that ensure the event runs smoothly.

I also eagerly look forward to seeing the many spectators lining the banks from Northam through the Avon Valley and Walyunga National Parks and at the various Avon Descent Family Fun Days happening riverside to cheer on our participants.

In particular, I thank our Avon Descent Board of Management, our Volunteering Program and Support Unit (ADSU), and Event Management Committees. You all play a vital role in ensuring the Avon Descent is run professionally, successfully, and that everyone who participates has an outstanding time.

Maybe like me, you will want to get involved in the Avon Descent, other than as a competitor. If so, I would encourage you to consider joining our team where you will be warmly welcomed.

But for now, let's celebrate 50 years of excellence on the Avon and Swan River – I invite you to join me at the start line and riverside as we ready for the 50th Avon Descent and beyond!

GREG KAEDING, Chairperson,
Northam's Avon Descent Association (Inc)



Participating in the 1977 Avon Descent: Greg Kaeding (front) with Gert Sigmund (dec). Source P Kitney

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WALKING ON A DREAM

PERTH | BOORLOO

Perth is effortlessly Australian, the most relaxed and naturally adventurous capital city in the world.

Choose your dream adventure

- Feel the thrill of powerboating, skiing, stand up paddle boarding and kayaking in the region's stunning 295km long Avon River.
- Immerse yourself in Noongar culture on an Aboriginal tour – discover the cultural significance and ancient stories of this region.
- Soak up the sun and relax in one of the world's largest inner-city parks, Kings Park & Botanic Garden.
- Discover Rottnest Island / Wadjemup, where you'll be greeted by 63 wondrous beaches and the world's happiest animal, the adorable quokka.
- Discover our 'many stories' at WA Museum Boola Bardip, then explore the Perth Cultural Centre.
- Soar over the dreamlike Avon Valley in a hot air balloon, or experience true awe paragliding.
- Explore Optus Stadium's Halo Rooftop Walk or Matagarup Zip+Climb.
- Watch Mother Nature paint a fiery sunset over the sparkling Indian Ocean at one of Perth's 19 beaches.
- Cycle or walk along the Swan River / Derbarl Yerrigan and experience Perth's unique flora and fauna, or canoe or kayak and become immersed in the beauty of the natural world.
- Feast on the local flavours and feel the indie vibe at one of the many restaurants and cafes in Fremantle / Walyalup, or 'Freo' as it is affectionately known.

Follow us at @WesternAustralia | #WAtheDreamState



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Welcome



HON RITA SAFFIOTI MLA,
DEPUTY PREMIER;
MINISTER FOR TOURISM
AND
HON DON PUNCH MLA,
MINISTER FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT



The Avon Descent, 12 & 13 August 2023

The State Government is a proud sponsor of the Avon Decent through Tourism Western Australia's Regional Events Scheme (RES).

RES was established to support event holders across WA with the development of events to drive tourism to regional Western Australia. The scheme plays an important role in positioning the state's five tourism regions as exciting destinations to visit and great places to live by showcasing and promoting the host region's unique and diverse attractions.

A total of 65 regional events across WA have been funded through the 2023-24 RES, which also includes a \$250,000 funding pool for the Regional Aboriginal Events Scheme, which exclusively allocates funding to events delivering Aboriginal activities and experiences.

The State Government, through Tourism WA, is proud to sponsor these regional events, which help bring vitality to local communities and drive visitor spend, injecting millions into regional economies.

Tourism is a key part of the State Government's plan to diversify the economy, create jobs and develop business opportunities, especially in regional Western Australia.

Events play an important role in this plan, with the State Government sponsoring a range of sporting, cultural, arts and culinary events across Western Australia through Tourism WA, to attract visitors to our state and encourage them to stay longer, disperse further and spend more while they are here.

We hope everyone enjoys this event and takes the time to explore the Wheatbelt region.

HON RITA SAFFIOTI MLA
DEPUTY PREMIER;
MINISTER FOR TOURISM

HON DON PUNCH MLA
MINISTER FOR REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

Partners

Northam's Avon Descent Association thank Official Partners and key stakeholder groups for supporting the delivery of Avon Descent events.



WESTERN
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2023 Merchandise Partner

Roy Hill Olympians Challenge Team



ROY HILL

ROY HILL

Olympians Challenge Team



A dream relay team of Olympic paddle legends will feature in this year's 50th Avon Descent.

Keep your eye out for the bright national colours of Ukraine, as special guest Olympian Leonid Kamlochuk returns to Australian waters for the first time since Sydney 2000; joining our own Aussie heroes in green and gold.

Western Australian Institute of Sport Head Coach Canoeing, Ramon Andersson, bronze medalist at Barcelona 1992, will be a leading figure of this prestigious Olympian relay team.

Ramon and Leonid will be joined by triple-Olympian gold medalist Jacob Clear and bronze medalist Lachlan Tame, to complete the 124km course in the 50th official Avon Descent in a four-person team relay.

Together they are the Roy Hill Olympians Challenge Team.

Roy Hill is a world class iron ore operation in WA's Pilbara and is the valued sponsor of this outstanding team.

Through their generosity, Roy Hill have also made it possible for Leonid's wife Victoria — Ukraine-Australia Schools Ambassador — to travel to Australia. Victoria runs the highly successful volunteer pen pal program 'West Aussie Kids for Rivne Kids, Ukraine'.

The Relay Team Members



Leonid Kamlochuk



Ramon Andersson



Jacob Clear



Lachlan Tame

Celebrating fifty Avon Descents

As we gear up for the 50th event, it is interesting to look back on the last five decades and connect with those who were involved in those early days.

There are many tales to be told about the Avon Descent — from the lowest of low river levels, running with craft in ankle deep waters from Northam to Katrine bridge; to the raging high water years with water streaming over Katrine Bridge and the old Bell's Rapids bridge, with Emu Falls non-existent replaced by a torrent of white water; the dinners and overnight hi jinks and fun of the Cobbler Pool overnight campsite and campfire, and of course the elation, relief and fun atmosphere of the Family Fun Day finish line, now at Riverside Gardens in Bayswater. Each and every story a vivid memory told with enthusiasm and joy at being part of something as challenging and incredible as the Avon Descent.

Keep your eye out for the only original 1973 competitor participating in the 50th Anniversary Event — Charlie Elliott

At age 83, Charlie will be the oldest person in the 2023 event, and the only competitor to have entered in the 1st and 50th Avon Descents.

Charlie competed in the inaugural Avon Descent in 1973 (pictured top right with wife of 62 years, Jean Elliott (dec)), with little to no paddling experience. He went on to compete in 35 Avon Descents in Canadian, slalom, DR boats, marathon K1's, single, double and triple surf skis — mostly all his own designs.

Along the way, Charlie gained several class wins in single kayaks. He was the first to design, build and compete in the Marathon K1 class in the 1983 Avon Descent and still holds the race record for this class when it was a class in its own right. Completing the race in his Marathon K1 design helped the Avon Descent register as an international event. In 1982 Charlie broke a world record for the longest solo distance paddled in 24 hours in flat water, on the Swan River outside the Ascot Kayak Club. This was acknowledged in the 1985 Guinness Book of World Records.

In the same year Charlie was acknowledged by the Town of Kwinana as "Sports Person of the Year" and still proudly wears his blazer. It was from these humble beginnings on the Avon in 1973 that sparked Charlie's interest in paddling and he went on to achieve great things in the sport.



Source: Charlie and Tony Elliott

Tony followed in his father's footsteps and first competed in the Avon Descent at age 19. At age 53, Tony has competed in 15 Avon Descents in single, double and triple surf skis and best placed 5th in the Men's single surf ski division. Tony has competed three times with wife Phyllis in a double surf ski. Together they won the Mixed Double Surf Ski class twice and was best placed 4th in the open division. In 2006, Phyllis was the first female over the finish line.



In 2023, to celebrate the 50th official running of the Avon Descent, Charlie will team up with his son, Tony, and daughter-in-law, Phyllis, to compete in a triple surf ski aptly named 'Triple Bypass' (pictured bottom right in 2021).

The Avon is very important to Charlie and his wife Jean and family have built their lives around supporting him in this annual race.

Northam's Avon Descent Association wish Charlie and the Elliott family all the best in the 50th event!



Milestone year

The most experienced driver on the river — Gary McNamara

Gary McNamara agrees — four decades of Avon Descent is a feat and a half! And that is Gary's achievement this year, as he undertakes his 44th Avon Descent.

In the 10 horsepower Sports Class category of power craft, Gary (pictured below in the yellow life vest) will be the most experienced driver on the river this August. With all that experience comes a long memory of the highs and lows of powering down the Avon and Swan Rivers. Gary's first Avon Descent was during 1977 when we experienced one of the lowest river levels of the event's history — with around 30 power craft starting day 1, but only nine starting day two... there was a lot of walking to be done that year!

He's had his teeth knocked out and got a few prop scars, but he has loved every minute of it because with the 'lows' come the highs. Gary has placed third twice, and come first in 1989.

Gary has raced with his son, stepsons and grandson — ensuring the love of the Avon Descent transcends generations. This year, he will take on his 44th Avon Descent alongside current teammate, Josh Dewar. Together, they look forward to taking on the 50th Avon Descent and celebrating at the Bayswater finish line.





Forty years going strong for power entrant, Dave Gentry

Dave Gentry first entered the Avon Descent in 1981 as a paddler in a secondhand Canadian canoe. After paddling two Avon Descents, he was offered a go in a power dinghy by Bob Bernhardt and rest, as they say, is history!

This year, Dave will participate in his 40th Avon Descent.

When looking back on his forty year journey, Dave fondly remembers all the forms of boats they have raced — from alloy boats, pop riveted and welded together, to the introduction of fiberglass. Dave was one of the first powerboaters to develop his own mold for quick and easy boat production.

Dave remembers varying river levels too, particularly the floods of 1983 where, when navigating from Bells Rapids, Dave and his partner took a ‘wrong turn’ and ended heading up Ellenbrook river instead of the Swan!

For more than a decade, Dave has partnered with mate, Gary Waldock, to compete in the iconic race this. Gary himself will celebrate his 35th Avon Descent this year and will once again be teaming up with Dave in the Super Standard power class.

The wealth of knowledge and experience in boat #193 this year is something to behold, but at the end of the day, it’s about mateship, fun and having a great weekend.

□ Tay and Tony Overstone, of Yokine, were a little luckier — only one pair of feet were wet.

SUNDAY TIMES 22 JULY 85

Torrid descent for Avon crews

COMPETITORS in this year's Avon Descent yesterday slogged through one of the roughest race sections on record — with worse to come.

But spectators suffered more from freezing winds and driving rain.

About 20mm of rain turned the tarmac at Northam into a quagmire and violent squalls at the overnight camp at Cobbley Pool made life miserable for 15,000 spectators.

People huddled in any shelter they could find as the gale uprooted tents and sent camp chairs and gear flying.

Warning riders from the few first aids to be kept afloat were blown throughout the site and many vehicles were bogged to the axle.

Race officials leaved their today with 2000 vehicles using the area's water-logged dirt roads.

The race began at Northam Weir at 7am, when 425 competitors started the 56km run to Cobbley Pool.

□ It was an action-packed start and low water levels meant many competitors such as Bob Bernhardt, of Duroong, and David Gentry, of Ballajura, had to battle the course from outside their boats.

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AVON Descent Festivals

Celebrating
50
Years



FREE EVENTS!

FRI
11
AUG

Northam Bilya Festival

Bilya Koort Boodja Centre
Garden, Northam, **5pm - 9pm**

SAT
12
AUG

Toodyay International Food Fest

Stirling and Duidgee Parks,
Toodyay, **10am - 4pm**

SUN
13
AUG

City of Swan Avon Descent Festival

Lilac Hill Park, Caversham,
10am - 3pm

SUN
13
AUG

City of Bayswater Finish Line Festival

Riverside Gardens,
Bayswater, **11am - 5pm**

Find out more www.avondescent.com.au/festivals



Festival Fun!

For some perfect family fun, check out the Avon Descent Festivals!

During the annual Avon Descent weekend, spectators can enjoy all the action from the river bank during the Northam, Toodyay, Swan, Belmont and Bayswater family fun day events.

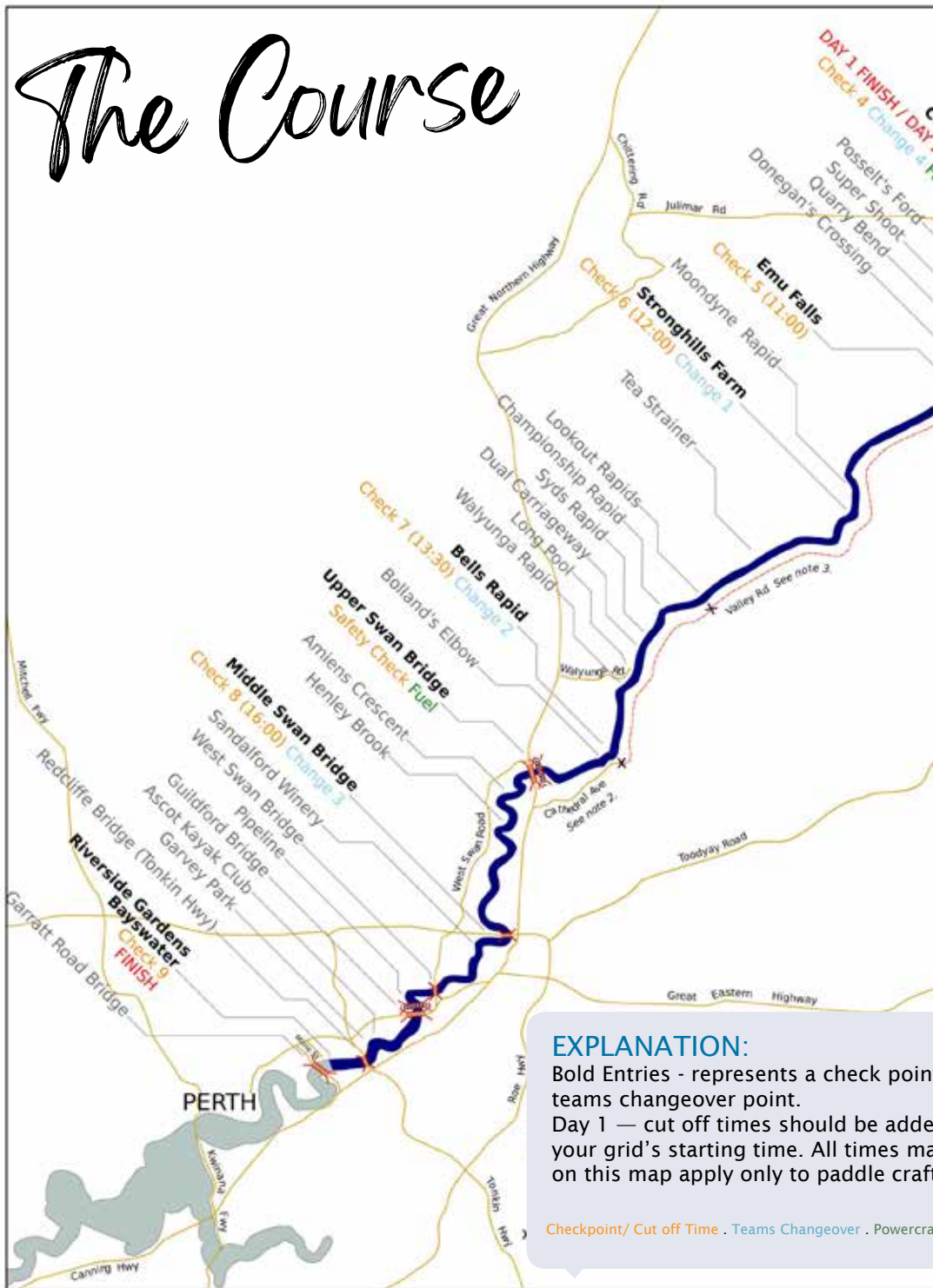
Enjoy race commentary, free entertainment and much more. Fun for all the family!

Northam's Avon Descent Association is proud to work alongside the Shire of Northam, the Shire of Toodyay, the City of Swan, the City of Belmont, the City of Bayswater and the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council to deliver these fantastic events.

For more information, please head to www.avondescent.com.au/festivals



The Course



EXPLANATION:

Bold Entries - represents a check point where teams changeover point.

Day 1 — cut off times should be added to your grid's starting time. All times marked on this map apply only to paddle craft.

Checkpoint/ Cut off Time . Teams Changeover . Powercraft

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AVON Descent Festivals

Celebrating
50
Years



FREE EVENT!

FRI
11
AUG

Northam Bilya Festival

Bilya Koort Boodja Centre Garden,
Northam, 5pm - 9pm

Find out more www.avondescent.com.au/festivals



Friday



NORTHAM BILYA FESTIVAL & AVON DESCENT START LINE SHIRE OF NORTHAM

Date: Friday 11 August 2023

Time: 5:00pm – 9:00pm

Location: Bilya Koort Boodja Centre Garden, Avon Mall, Minson Avenue, Northam

Come to Northam's Bilya Festival!

Enjoy our spectacular community street parade and immerse yourself in a winter wonderland, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Avon Descent. Offering the most exciting amusements, food stalls, and live entertainment that you'll find in the Avon Valley this year!

Come and celebrate the evening in style with the Shire of Northam.

Supported by Lotterywest.



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AVON Descent Festivals

Celebrating
50
Years



FREE EVENT!

SAT
12
AUG

Toodyay International Food Fest

Stirling and Duidgee Parks, Toodyay,
10am - 4pm

Find out more www.avondescent.com.au/festivals



Saturday



TOODYAY INTERNATIONAL FOOD FEST SHIRE OF TOODYAY

Date: Saturday, 12 August 2022

Time: 10:00am – 4:00pm

Location: Stirling and Duidgee Parks, Toodyay

Combine the thrill of the Avon Descent with delicious international cuisine.

The Shire of Toodyay's International Food Fest will keep visitors fed and entertained on Saturday, 12 August 2023. Just an hour's drive from the CBD, come and enjoy international cuisine from all corners of the globe including international music and entertainment.

Supported by Lotterywest.



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AVON Descent Festivals

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Years



FREE EVENT!

SUN
13
AUG

City of Swan Avon Descent Festival

Lilac Hill Park, Caversham,
10am - 3pm

Find out more www.avondescent.com.au/festivals



Sunday



AVON DESCENT FESTIVAL CITY OF SWAN

Date: Sunday, 13 August 2022
Time: 10:00am – 3:00pm
Where: Lilac Hill Park, Caversham

This year's City of Swan's Avon Descent Festival will feature a series of family-orientated events held alongside the 50th Avon Descent race.

This fun-filled weekend is the perfect opportunity to get outdoors and experience the excitement of the race, which passes through the Swan Valley vineyard region, Upper Swan Bridge and Bells Rapids. At the festival sample delicious gourmet food and wine from local growers as you wander through pop-up artisan markets.

Watch and cheer from arguably the best seat in the house, the banks of Lilac Hill, as competitors paddle and race by.

Supported by Lotterywest.

BOND TO BAYSWATER BELTER

Starting at 9.30am at Reg Bond Reserve, Viveash
Arriving at the Riverside Gardens in Bayswater from 11am

The Bond to Bayswater Belter is an opportunity for anyone to take part in the excitement of the iconic Avon Descent! It is a unique event that will take participants from Reg Bond Reserve in the City of Swan, through to the City of Bayswater's Riverside Gardens.

Participants include the Dragonboats, surf boats, stand up paddlers, outriggers and more! Cheer loudly as they head to the finish line!

CITY OF BELMONT

AVON DESCENT

AT GARVEY PARK

- ◆ Live race commentary
- ◆ Covered viewing of the race
- ◆ Family friendly activities
- ◆ Free food vouchers*

FREE
EVENT!



Sunday 13 August, 11am to 3pm



Garvey Park, Ascot



Book your
tickets here



Visit belmont.wa.gov.au for further information

This smoke free and alcohol free event is proudly brought to you by the City of Belmont
– the City of Opportunity.

TravelSmart – why not cycle, walk or take public transport?

*Conditions apply

City of Belmont

215 Wright Street, Cloverdale WA 6105
Locked Bag 379, Cloverdale WA 6985
Open 8:30am - 4:45pm, Monday - Friday
PH: (08) 9477 7222
A/H: (08) 9477 7224

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BELMONT
CITY OF OPPORTUNITY



Sunday



AVON DESCENT AT GARVEY PARK CITY OF BELMONT

Get up close to all of the action at the free family fun day and celebrate the Avon Descent.

Date: Sunday, 13 August 2023

Time: 11am – 3pm

Where: Garvey Park, Ascot

Enjoy live race commentary on the banks of the beautiful Swan River. There will be free children's activities, giveaways, discounted helicopter rides and much more!



Gear up for the 50th Avon Descent



SCAN ME!



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AVON Descent Festivals

Celebrating
50
Years



FREE EVENT:

SUN
13
AUG

City of Bayswater Finish Line Festival

Riverside Gardens, Bayswater,
11am - 5pm

Find out more www.avondescent.com.au/festivals



Finish line



AVON DESCENT FINISH LINE FESTIVAL CITY OF BAYSWATER

Date: Sunday, 13 August 2023

Time: 11:00am - 5:00pm

Location: Riverside Gardens, Milne Street, Bayswater

Nothing beats an exciting finish!

Join support crews and spectators in welcoming competitors over the finish line of the 50th Avon Descent at the City of Bayswater Finish Line Festival.

Listen to live commentary and watch the race live on the big screen. Enjoy a sensational day of free entertainment, children's activities, food and more, while celebrating the natural beauty of the Swan River (Derbal Yerrigan) and its cultural and spiritual significance to the Noongar people.

Supported by Lotterywest.



JOIN US ON THE WATER



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visit www.paddlewa.asn.au
or phone 9285 8501

John D. Gillies



Paddle WA is Proudly supported by:



**"With you
on the
Water"**

Volunteers

The Avon Descent has a long and intimate history with volunteering with more than 99% of its organising teams consisting entirely of volunteers.

Over its 49 year history, Northam's Avon Descent Association has engaged thousands of volunteers and hundreds of different volunteer groups to deliver our events.

Opportunities to get involved include:

- Parking Official
- Start Marshal
- Scrutineering Support
- Registration Volunteer
- Marketing and Social Media
- Race and Community Photographers
- Recovery Team
- Flag Marshal
- Rescue Boat Crew
- Rescue Swimmer
- ... and more!

Register your interest with volunteermanager@avondescent.com.au





The Power Dinghy Racing Club was formed in 1978. Even though it is a highly competitive sport, the club is very much family orientated with many family teams competing in all events.

We hold 10 races each calendar year including 4 river races, one of which is the Avon Descent. Our Clubrooms are based at Burswood and also play host to race day events.

We cater for juniors starting in formula 8 craft at 10 years, junior dinghy from 14 years and more arduous river races at 17 years.

Contact: 0417 977 553 Kris Parnell (Commodore)

Email: PDRCinformation@gmail.com

www.DinghyRacing.com.au

When do the Boats arrive?

		High Water		Medium Water		Low Water	
		Power	Paddle	Power	Paddle	Power	Paddle
Day One	Northam	8:00	8:30	8:00	8:30	8:00	8:30
	Extracts Weir	8:20	10:20	8:25	10:30	8:30	10:45
	Duidgee Park	8:25	10:30	8:30	10:40	8:35	10:55
	Cobbler Pool	8:45	11:45	8:55	12:00	9:05	12:30
Day Two	Cobbler Pool	12:00	7:00	12:00	7:00	12:00	7:00
	Bells Rapids	12:45	9:10	12:55	9:50	13:15	10:15
	Middleswan	13:05	10:30	13:15	11:15	13:30	12:00
	Lilac Hill Park	13:05	10:50	13:15	11:35	13:35	12:25
	Garvey Park	13:10	11:05	13:20	12:00	13:40	12:45
	Bayswater	13:15	11:15	13:25	12:15	13:45	13:00

The above arrival times are a guide only. These indicate when the first paddle and power craft will pass by each spectator location at high, medium and low river levels. Many factors affect these times including rainfall and start times.

For instance, higher river levels means faster flowing water and faster moving participants... which could be the case this year! For more information on current and historical river levels visit water.thebeatentrack.org

Be aware that start times may be delayed 30-minutes or more if there is fog along the course to allow time for it to clear, and this will affect times throughout that day.

Please visit the Avon Descent website for historical race times and current participant information www.avondescent.com.au