



LITHUANIAN WATER TOURISM MARATHON “MERKIS MARATHON 2026” REGULATIONS

1. Objectives

To promote paddling as a sport, leisure and healthy lifestyle, to identify the strongest crews in different classes, to attract participants from abroad and to promote the name of the Republic of Lithuania internationally, to introduce the participants of the marathon to the beauty of the Dzukija National Park and the Varena District.

2. Definitions

2.1 Merkys Marathon - a paddling race in which crews in different classes compete to find out who can cover the distance from the start to the finish line the fastest.

2.2 The marathon course - the course of the River Merkys from the start line to the finish line.

2.3 Crew – one competitor racing in a single boat or several competitors racing together in one boat.

2.4 Class of competitors – crews are divided into classes based on the number of paddlers on board, gender, and type of boat.

2.5 Start time – the time recorded by the umpire when the crew crosses the start line and begins the race.

2.6 Finish time – the time recorded by the umpire when the crew crosses the finish line.

2.7 Course completion time – the time interval between the start and finish times during which the crew completed the marathon course.

2.8 A boat - a kayak, canoe, paddleboard (SUP), or other watercraft powered solely by the physical power of the crew.

2.9 The prize winners - the three crews with the best course times in each class of competitors.

2.10 Special prize winners – the youngest and the oldest competitor, regardless of gender, who have completed the entire marathon course and crossed the finish line.

2.11 Entry fee – a fixed fee per crew member.

3. Crew classes

3.1 All paddling enthusiasts are welcome to Merkys Marathon, regardless of age. Paddlers under the age of 18 must have parental or team leader consent, or race in the same crew with an adult competitor.

3.2 In order to promote paddling and provide an opportunity for crews with various experience to compete for prizes, they are divided into 16 classes. Kayak crews in sport, narrow bats compete in the Sport classes for single women (K1W) and men (K1 M), double women (K2 W), double men (K2 M) and mixed double (K2 Mix). Kayak crews in wider boats compete in the same Tourist classes. The widths of the kayak hulls are indicated in the table below. In the K2 Turist Rent class, all crews compete only with pre-rented two-seater identical boats (**advance boat reservation is required**). **Please note, we recommend to paddle boats with over stern rudders. Under stern rudders can be damaged due to insufficient river depth or obstacles.**

Class	Crew	Boat	Start time
SUP W	Women	any type of paddleboard	12:00
SUP M	Men	any type of paddleboard	12:00
K2 Turist Rent	Two women / Two men / Women and men	rented tourist / recreational type plastic double kayak wider than 56 cm	12:02
UNK - unknown	Women / men	any type of boat with unlimited crew (raft, rowboat, homemade boat and other)	12:02

K1 Tourist M	Men	any type of single kayak wider than 51 cm	12:04
K1 Tourist W	Women	any type of single kayak wider than 51 cm	12:04
K2 Tourist M	Two men	any type of double kayak wider than 56 cm	12:06
K2 Tourist W	Two women	any type of double kayak wider than 56 cm	12:06
K2 Tourist Mix	Women and men	any type of double kayak wider than 56 cm	12:06
K1 Sport M	Men	any type of single kayak up to 51 cm wide	12:08
K1 Sport W	Women	any type of single kayak up to 51 cm wide	12:08
K2 Sport M	Two men	any type of double kayak up to 56 cm wide	12:10
K2 Sport W	Two women	any type of double kayak up to 56 cm wide	12:10
K2 Sport Mix	Women and men	any type of double kayak up to 56 cm wide	12:10
C1	Women / men	any type of canoe	12:12
C2	Two women / Two men / Women and men	any type of double canoe	12:12

3.3 K1 and K2 kayaks can be paddled using only a two-bladed paddle. SUP, C1 and C2 canoes can be paddled using only a single-bladed paddle. All boats can be powered using only the physical strength of the crew. Kayaks cannot be modified in such a way as to obviously meet the requirements of another class, even though they could not be classified in that class based on their original characteristics.

3.4 The crew and boat cannot be changed during the race.

3.5 Crew may be disqualified for failure to comply with these rules.

4. Registration

4.1 Once the organizers announce the start of registration, the crew should submit pre-entry application. Applications can be submitted up until the day of the race, but the entry fee increases significantly if you register later.

4.2 Pre-entry application must clearly indicate:

- the full name and surname of each crew member, year of birth, class in which they going to race;
- e-mail address, phone number;
- country represented, club, organization or team represented (optional);
- whether they will need a shuttle service from the finish to the start (very important, more information in the Logistics section);
- to book a kayak for the K2 Tunist Rent class and make a payment for the rental along with the entry fee.

In case of any doubts, the crew can contact the organizers using the specified contacts for assistance. Crews still have the option to race without a pre-entry application, by arriving directly at the start registration, but paying a significantly higher start fee.

Dear friends, in our sincere efforts to organize the marathon in a quality manner, to ensure sufficient amount of prizes and meals, and organizing transportation for crews, we need to know the number of crews and their needs as early as possible. We kindly ask for your understanding and encourage you to register by submitting pre-entry application.

4.3 Upon arrival at the race start location, crews must register at the start registration, confirming their arrival, receiving a start number and information about their assigned start time.

5. Entry fee

5.1 After submitting pre-entry application, the crew pays a entry fee **for each crew member**. The pre-entry application becomes effective upon receipt of the payment order by the organizers. The Merkys Marathon is a non-profit event. The entry fee is required for partially cover the costs of event.

Entry fee per crew member	Pre-entry before 30 04 2026	25 eur
Entry fee per crew member	Pre-entry from 01 05 2026 to 04 06 2026	35 eur
Entry fee per crew member	05 06 2026 or without pre-entry on 06 06 2026	45 eur

5.2 The entry fee should be paid by bank transfer to the account: IBAN account LT877300010116134650, "Swedbank" AB, Konstitucijos 20A, Vilnius, SWIFT code: HABALT22. The recipient - Active leisure club "4 ELEMENTS". The payment purpose must include First Name / Last Name / Merkis Marathon.

5.3 If the crew doesn't arrive to the race or disqualified, the entry fee will not be refunded.

6. Completing the course

6.1 The start line of the Merkys marathon - Old Varena Bridge (54.24564737464226, 24.553113451126393). The finish line - Puvočiai campsite near the village of Puvočiai, at the confluence of the Grūda and Merkys rivers, Varėna district municipality (54.12029674811841, 24.308471143711294). The length of the course is approximately 32 km.

6.2 Crews racing only in the Merkis River bed. No portages allowed. Any shortening of the course distance by the crew moving on land is prohibited. An exception may be made only if the river is blocked by fallen trees or other obstacles that cannot be overcome in any other way except by land.

6.3 Any assistance from outsiders or technical equipment to racing crews is not permitted.

6.4 Crews must organize their meals and liquids in such a way that no litter enters the river. Littering - strictly prohibited. Part of the Merkis River is located in the Dzūkija National Park.

6.5 Crews must race honourably and fairly. The use of prohibited substances and doping in sports is prohibited. Unsportsmanlike conduct is prohibited. For unsportsmanlike conduct, the organizers may restrict the crew's ability to participate in the following year's Merkys Marathon, and may also impose a time penalty and adjust the final position or disqualification. The crew is disqualified for the use of prohibited substances and doping.

7. Logistic and accommodation

7.1 For crews from further cities or countries, we recommend to arrive on Friday, 06 06 2025. Overnight stays are not allowed at the start location in Senoji Varena. Overnight stays are allowed at the finish location, at the Puvočiai campsite (We ask to purchase a Dzūkija National Park visitor ticket).

You can do this: <https://dnp.lrv.lt/lt/informacija-lankytojams/lankytoju-bilietas/>

7.2 On the morning of the race, crews arriving at the start location in Senoji Varėna, to the lower car park by the river, next to the church (54.24587988036156, 24.55229246474036). The lower car park next to the start zone is very small, so please arrive earlier, and after unloading your boat please move your car to the upper car park on Vytauto Street. See Appendix No. 1. *If your boat is light enough and you can carry it about 350 meters to the start zone, we kindly ask you to park your cars immediately in the upper car park on Vytauto Street.*

7.3 Crews are advised to have their own car drivers who will be able to drive your cars from the start to the finish. Crews that do not have drivers can drive their cars from the start to the finish (Puvočiai campsite) themselves and return to the start point using the organizers' transport.

7.4 Crews or their drivers at the finish shall follow Appendix No. 3.

7.5 Crew fans can support the paddlers with smiles and applause in Perloja, near the pedestrian bridge (54.21207824265636, 24.420435742744285), where the crews will have covered about 13 km.

8. Preparation, start time and procedure

8.1 The Marathon will take place **on June 6, 2026. Starts begin at 12:00.**

8.2 Check-in at the start zone is compulsory for all crews and takes place from 8:00 to 11:30. At check-in, the crew receives a start number and is informed about its assigned start time. We recommend arrive and check-in earlier. This will help us avoid congestion and give you more time to prepare for the race, get to know and communicate with other crews.

8.3 Start numbers must be affixed by crews in such a way that they are clearly visible. If the number is glued, it must be glued to the left side of the boat. If the number is a T-shirt issued by the organizers, it must be worn by the crew member sitting at the front of the boat.

8.4 After check-in, crews with their own drivers shall bring their boats to the start zone from 8:00 to 11:30 and prepare for the start.

8.5 After check-in, crews without their own drivers shall bring boats to the start zone from 8:00 to 10:00 and prepare for the start. One crew member must leave for the finish by their own car **no later than 10:00**. We recommend to go to the finish by the route marked in Appendix No. 2. Crews leave their cars at the finish car park. The bus from the Puvočiai campsite to the start departs at exactly 11:00. *Please do not be late. We kindly ask crews to indicate the need for transportation in the pre-registration form, as the number of seats on the bus is limited. The organizers are not responsible for late crews.*

8.6 At 11:40, a short briefing for the crews will begin at the start zone.

8.7 After the briefing, at 11:45, the crews head to the river and line up in the warm-up zone according to their start times. **Attention, the number of entry places is limited, please do not delay.**

8.8 **Starts begin at 12:00.** Crews of different classes start at 2-minute intervals. Time lost in case of late start is not compensated. Start times and order are indicated in the table.

9. Safety requirements

9.1 The Merkys is a safe river, suitable for paddlers with less experience. However, crews must make adequate judgements about distance, weather conditions, skills, clothing, drinks, and food.

9.2 Crews take personal responsibility for their health and safe behaviour on the marathon course.

9.3 Crews take personal responsibility for ensuring that in case of a capsizing, their boats remain afloat, all items in them are properly secured, will not be and will not cause pollution. The organizers are not responsible for the consequences of incidents, lost or damaged items, or injuries sustained.

9.4 Life jackets are compulsory for all crews. Crews are responsible for providing their own life jackets. For Tourist Rent class life jackets may be provided by the rental company. Crews not wearing life jackets will be disqualified.

9.5 All crews must have at least one fully charged phone in waterproof case (in life jacket pocket) with saved organizers' phone number.

9.6 The consumption of alcohol and other intoxicating substances by crews before and during the marathon **is strictly prohibited**. If the organizers determine a crew member visibly intoxicated, the entire crew will be disqualified, no prizes will be awarded.

9.7 The race distance is accessible to everyone, but in the event of an unforeseen situation, the crew may finish the race earlier, without reaching the finish line. Any crew that decides to finish the race earlier must inform the organizers by phone and do so in settlements where access by car is available (Perloja, Milioniškės, Mardasavas). No prizes will be awarded to crews who do not finish the race. The organizers do not guarantee logistics services for crews that do not finish the race. They may be subject to additional charges.

10. Results and awards

10.1 The results of the crews are determined by the time they complete the course. All crews that complete the marathon course are awarded with exclusive Merkys Marathon medals.

10.2 All crews who complete the marathon course will be treated to refreshments.

10.2 Prize winners and special prize winners will be additionally awarded prizes established by the organizers, sponsors and the Varėna Education, Culture and Sports Department. The awards ceremony will begin at 17.00.

10.3 The time limit for completing the marathon course is 5 hours. If the crew exceeds on the course, the organizers have the right not to record the time taken by the crew to complete the course. Any crew that exceeds the time limit on the marathon course is requested to contact the organizers by phone.

10.4 Merkys Marathon course time record - 2 hours 3 minutes 57 seconds belongs to Vytutas Mažeika and Darius Styra. It was achieved in 2008 while racing in a tourist double kayak. The crew that breaks the record will be awarded a **special prize of 200 euros established by sponsors**. If several crews break the record, the prize will be awarded to the crew with the fastest time on the course. Crews that break the record gain the right to run the marathon for free the following year.

11. Mandatory for the marathon

Every crew member and supporter must bring a good mood, a smile, and a dose of positivity to the Merkys Marathon for themselves and a friend ;)

12. Consents

By registering for the marathon, crews agree that the organizers may, at their discretion, publicly publish race protocols (indicating the names, surnames, class in which the participants are racing, the country and team represented, and the results achieved), images and footage captured by video recording devices during the event.

13. Organizers

The marathon is organized by “Lithuanian Kayak Marathon Team”, Active leisure club "4 ELEMENTS" (VŠĮ “4 Stichijos“) and Varena Sports Center.

Information: +37060405905 Julius Survila j.survila@gmail.com

+370 657 76060 Arnoldas Latvėnas arnisl@yahoo.com



