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Photograph by David Merrett
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WHITE WATER THRILLS

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February 17th, 2014

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When you think of English water sports, relaxing images of punting down a glassy river at Cambridge come to mind. But add a few class-four rapids and some Olympic-quality amenities to the mix and you'll get [Lee Valley White Water Centre](#), one of London's most adrenaline-fueled outings. After queueing up with your friends, snagging your rafting supplies, and watching your guides tug and tweak your gear to its optimum fit, hop into your white water raft. If your friend calls shotgun, don't argue—that front row seat comes with some serious splashing.

After a few training exercises that look a bit like a group dance routine, you'll be ready to hop in the practice pool for some whitewater action. Float down the churning channel, hop out and sign a waiver, and you're finally ready to launch. There's some dorky delight in rowing in sync with your buddies as you approach the tumultuous tide at the mouth of the run. When you get the signal, let out a war cry and dig your paddles into the water until you get through the roughest of the rapids. It's a wild ride with plenty of ups and downs, so don't despair if one of your crew goes overboard. "Throw bags" are immediately lobbed at the ousted oarsmen by a team of safety professionals who will drag your soaked chum to dry land. As you spin the boat around to

hit the course another time, there's no denying that you're in the midst of an epic Olympic adventure that you'll all remember for years to come.

LEE VALLEY WHITE WATER CENTRE

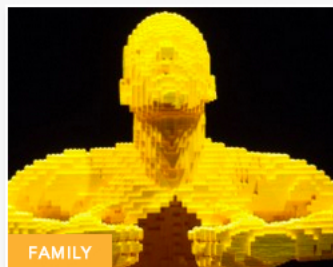
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