

# Christchurch Circle Canoe Trail

## General Information

This canoe trail is at the seaward end of the Dorset Avon where it empties into Christchurch Harbour. This River Avon rises in the county of Wiltshire and flows through the city of Salisbury and the county of Hampshire before reaching the English Channel through Christchurch Harbour.



The Devizes to Westminster Canoe race that is held each Easter was inspired by a trip from Pewsey to Christchurch following the Avon. The river forms acts as the natural boundary between Hampshire and Dorset although currently this canoe trail is entirely within Dorset.

## Start

Start at the Christchurch Slipway in the Car Park off Sopers Lane (BH23 1HU). This is a fee paying car park.

This is a circular trail so there is no need for a car shuffle.

## Timings

You need to plan to be paddling around high tide so do check tide times and weather conditions before setting off.

## Distance

2 miles approx 1 hour

## OS Maps

Land ranger 195

## Route

Launch from the Christchurch slipway and turn left towards the harbour and the sea, there are many moored boats here so please beware. As soon as you are round the corner the buildings disappear for a while leaving you to paddle through open fields after about a 1400 metres you need to carry straight on to enter the River Avon, if you follow the river to the right you will end up in the Harbour.

Keep going around the corner and again the river will fork for the purposes of this trail we will take the left fork again. You may be able to glimpse the abbey on your left. As you approach the bridge there will be a barge that is used for very expensive game fishing, you are able to paddle here but please if there are fishermen present ask where they would like to you paddle past them. The bridge can create a strong flow as it squeezes the water under it please take care not to get caught in the trees on either side as you pass through.

Once under the bridge again the buildings disappear and again the river will divide, beware of the river pushing you into the bank at this point. At this junction take the right fork to continue around the circle. If you are quiet in this area you may be lucky enough to see

Kingfishers hunting their prey. Follow the river around the circle under the second bridge of Bridge Street and continue back to where the river divided and from there back to your car.

Take your time and explore all the small inlets and keep your eyes open as there is so much to see.

You could extend your trip by paddling the Stour Trail to Iford Bridge.

### **Safety**

Slipways are called that for a reason so do be mindful that they can be covered in slime and when wet are very slippery!

Christchurch Harbour has several areas that are designated SSSI please do not land unless you are sure of authorised access. Familiarise yourself with Canoe England's You, Your Canoe and the Environment at <http://www.canoe-england.org.uk/access-and-environment/environment/you-your-canoe-and-the-environment/> and <http://www.canoe-england.org.uk/access-and-environment/canoeing-on-the-sea/>

The Estuary, by definition, is tidal please ensure that you will have enough water to get back (or be prepared for a muddy wade). At times the tide moves with great speed so be aware of objects that you could become trapped against. Check the tide times and weather conditions before you set out. At low tide there are large mud banks. There can also be very strong tidal flows near the entrance to the harbour (known locally as "The Run").

