

Kennet and Avon Canal Canoe Trail

Hungerford to Newbury, Berkshire



General Information

Historically, the Kennet and Avon Canal comprises three waterways, the Avon Navigation from Bristol to Bath (opened in 1727), the man-made canal section from Bath to Newbury (opened in 1810), and the Kennet Navigation from Newbury to Reading (opened in 1723).

The Kennet & Avon Canal crosses the country from Reading to Bristol. Passing and running through towns and villages such as Devizes, Bradford-on-Avon and Bath. Boats, locks, aqueducts, landscape and views with a level towpath to walk and cycle.

The stretch from Devizes to the River Thames at Reading is well known amongst many canoeists as it forms the first part of the internationally renowned Devizes to Westminster Canoe Race. (www.dwrace.org)

This trail can be undertaken as a straight A to B paddle but will involve a car shuffle or can be done as a circular route.

Distance

Approximately 9 miles

Portages - 11

Map

OS Map 174 Newbury and Wantage.



Licences.

A licence to paddle the Kennet & Avon Canal is included in the Canoe England membership fee. Otherwise licenses can be obtained from <http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/license-it> or <http://www.waterscape.com/>

Start

The start is at Hungerford Wharf, Hungerford next to Bridge 75. It is easy to unload canoes here but please be very discrete when changing at it is in front of private houses and there may well be many other member of the public around as it is a popular area.

There is a public car park with toilet next to the library further up the High Street close to this bridge. There is a lovely tea shop on the opposite bank where meals and teas can fill the hungry canoeist!!

Setting off towards Newbury you will firstly pass under bridge 75. From here there is a mile or so before the next lock at Dunn Mill. You need to portage on the right hand bank (towpath side) and then cross over the bridge to put back in on the left bank... just watch out for traffic as it is a bit of a blind bend.. Parking is also available here.

From Hungerford the canal is shadowed by the River Kennet. Towards the end of this trail there is a bit of flow but otherwise the canal is static water.

After Dunn Mill Lock you head off into the country. As a lot of this area is an SSI you should be on the look out for unusual species of flora and fauna. You are also entering Red Kite territory as from now on Red Kites can be occasionally seen searching for food.



After about 3 miles you come into Kintbury which is lock 78. On the right hand side is a public house and on the left is a car park and public toilets. Portage on the left and cross the road before putting back in. During the summer months you may catch sight of a horse drawn narrow boat which offers days trippers a traditional journey on the canal.

http://www.sharebritain.com/horse_drawn_canal_boat_rides.htm

The canal here continues to be very rural but one the main railway lines to Paddington follows the canal and occasionally criss-crosses the canal. Apart from the occasional train it's a very peaceful trip often through a tunnel of trees which, when the sun is out produce a wonderful light pattern on the water.

Three miles before Newbury you come in to Benham lock.(no. 82) Here you portage on the left hand side (towpath) and cross over the small road crossing to put back in on the left hand bank. The canal is still very rural and about a mile or so before Newbury the once controversial Newbury By-pass crosses the canal.

Just before Newbury is a low swing bridge some may like to limbo it but you may wish to portage around it and this is done on the right hand side. The next lock is actually Newbury Lock (no 85) As you portage on the left hand side you will find a lovely picnic area with easy access to a public house and nearby shops (the finish of the trail is only 500 metres away so you can always walk back!) Just beyond the park is a small tributary of the Kennet and as you put back in after the lock do be aware of the current coming from the left. At times when the water is high the flow can be challenging. Follow the canal under the bridge and past Newbury Waterside Centre and then under another road bridge and on one side is Victoria Park and the other is Newbury Wharf car park your destination.

Many of the wharf buildings have been demolished, but the Granary building is now home to the museum and the 'Stone Building' is now used by the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust. The shop has souvenirs, great hot drinks and delightful bacon sandwiches!

There are public toilets in the car park and lots of other establishments nearby where you can find refreshments.

Additional information

Hungerford – Hungerford is a lovely small town to explore <http://www.hungerford.uk.net/>

Newbury – Is a market town and has a lovely shopping centre with places to eat and a racecourse in walking distance from the canal. - <http://www.newbury.net/>

Kennet & Avon Canal
<http://www.katrust.co.uk/index.html>

Cycling

There is a towpath the all the way along the trail so it is possible to follow the paddlers on a bicycle or even walk! No permit is required to cycle along the Kennet & Avon Canal ... just need to be aware of the numbers of walkers and fishermen there are.