

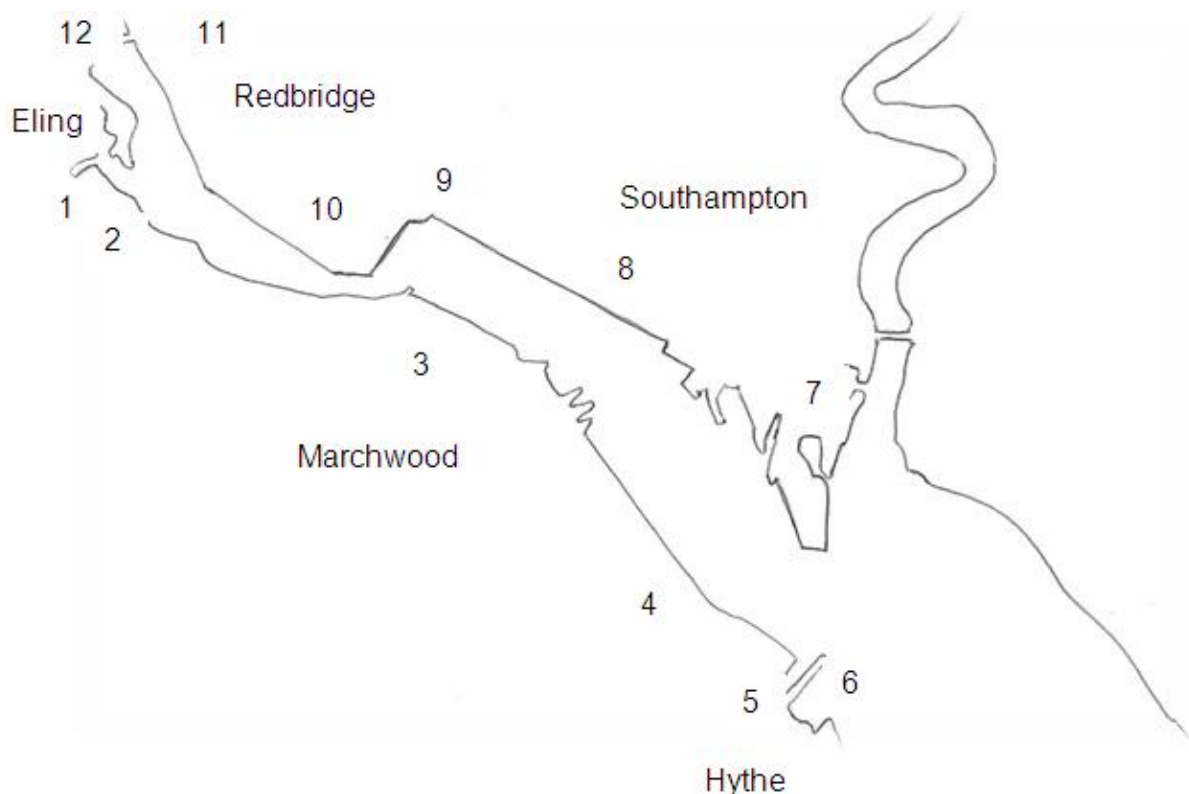
A Canoeing Guide - Southampton Water

The world famous River Test flows from Ashe 10km to the west of Basingstoke, Hampshire to the location of this canoe trail at the head of Southampton Water. The river rises near the village of Ashe, and flows west through many villages including Overton, Laverstoke, the town of Whitchurch, Longparish, Middleton to Wherwell and Chilbolton, where the Rivers Dever and Anton contribute to its flow.

The river continues south and the River Dun add to the flow. It continues through the grounds of Roke Manor before reaching the town of Romsey. On the western edge of Romsey, where Sadler's Mill which is an 18th Century watermill, sits astride the River Test.

South of Romsey, the river flows past the country house of Broadlands, past Nursling that was once the site of a Roman bridge, and between Totton and Redbridge. Here the river is joined by the River Blackwater and soon becomes tidal, widening out into a considerable estuary that is lined on its northern bank by the container terminals and quays of the Port of Southampton. Finally the Test estuary meets that of the River Itchen and the two continue to the sea as Southampton Water.

To summarise the River Test starts as a chalk stream flowing through unspoilt English countryside to Redbridge where its commercial development starts.



Start - Eling Quay, Map Reference: SU362131

Distance - 14km / 3 hours

Facilities

There is a public slipway, public toilets (across the bridge) Eling Tide Mill, and the Anchor Pub.

Route:

1. Starting from Eling Quay slipway you can paddle up to Eling Tide mill the only working Tide mill left in the world, as the water runs from the tidal pool above the mill it powers the water wheel to mill the grain, as the tide comes in the mill pool is refilled.
2. Alternatively turning left from the slipway you can head out past the container storage area on to Southampton Water and then follow the coast to the right you are now paddling towards the open sea. Look out for Eling church above Goatee Beach on your right dates from the 11th Century although the tower is Tudor and the whole building was extensively restored in the 19th Century.
3. As you paddle around the corner at Marchwood Sailing club (public slipway and parking) you will see a futuristic incinerator. This shiny dome was built in the late 1990s. It provides an inspiring backdrop to the industrial looking section of coast. The big docks on the right hand side of the river are Marchwood Military port where the British Army embarks and disembarks from. Marchwood Church has a memorial for fallen with a large boulder from the Falklands, remembering the ships and sailors that were lost and showing the links between the village and the port.
4. On your right you will now pass a large area of reclaimed land – Dibden Bay, over the last 10 years this has been a hotly disputed area as to its future with Southampton Docks wanting to develop it and the council wanting to keep it as an important nature area.
5. From your canoe you will now be able to see Hythe Marina (public slipway and parking) constructed during the 1980's. It was the first of the marina villages in the UK inspired by Port Grimaud near St Tropez. St Christopher Cockrell laid the first brick in the construction and his house is just outside the entrance gate.
6. The next big object you come across is Hythe pier. Hythe is home to the world's oldest pier railway; disaster struck this railway in 2003 when a dredger sliced through the pier about halfway along its length. The Ferry from the Pier connects Hythe to Town Quay in Southampton.

Hythe is a small town with amenities easily accessible from the water, and as a town was heavily involved with the construction of flying boats, hovercraft and the development of power boats. (<http://www.hythe-hants.org.uk/>)

7. From here you retrace your paddle strokes to Marchwood Military port before crossing the Shipping channel towards Mayflower Park in Southampton. Mayflower Park is supposedly the site where the Mayflower began her voyage to the Americas

with the Pilgrim Fathers. <http://www.southampton.gov.uk/news-events/events/allevnts/mayflower-park.asp>

8. You will now paddle past the cruise terminals where the P&O liners and others dock (the Cunard Ships such as the QM3 dock at the QE2 Terminal on dock head behind you)
9. In the apex of the corner in front of you is the King George V Dry dock this was built in 1933 to repair boats up to 1000 feet long and 100,000 tonnes including the Queen Mary, the four pumps in the dock could empty the water out in four hours!
<http://www.plimsoll.org/Southampton/TheDocks/WesternDocks/KingGeorgeVDry/default.asp>
10. Rounding the corner you will now pass the modern container docks which are normally a very busy place with constant movement of ships and cargo.
11. Southampton Water bends around to the right and at the end of this straight is Redbridge causeway with a railway bridge for the South Western main rail line and the A31 which bypasses the old stone bridge on the upstream side. As you pass under the bridges you will see the Sea Lock for the now filled in Andover Canal. You can paddle through one of the openings of the old bridge (launching Point and Parking) and back out through the other before returning to Eling.
12. Beyond Redbridge is a nature reserve operated by the Hampshire Wildlife Trust, there are board walks and hides accessible within the area.
<http://www.hwt.org.uk/pages/our-reserves.html>

Hazards

Southampton Water is extremely busy with commercial and leisure shipping all of which are bigger than you! Stay to the right of any channel and where possible stay out of the shipping channel completely. Be aware of other water users. The estuary, by definition, is tidal so please ensure that you will have enough water to get back (or be prepared for a muddy wade) Check the tide times and weather conditions before you set out.



Marchwood Incinerator