

The Beaulieu River

General information

The Beaulieu is a wonderfully attractive tidal river tucked away within the confines of the New Forest National Park.

The river itself is very unusual in that it is one of a very few private rivers in the world, with the ownership having been given to the Monks of Beaulieu Abbey back in the mists of time. The rights have now passed to the Montagu family and their stewardship have ensured that the rivers development has been largely controlled keeping this a haven which is unusual for rivers in the area. As a result of this it is both a National Nature reserve and a site of Special Scientific Interest (SSI). A right derived from the monks however is the ability to charge water users – run by the Harbour Master

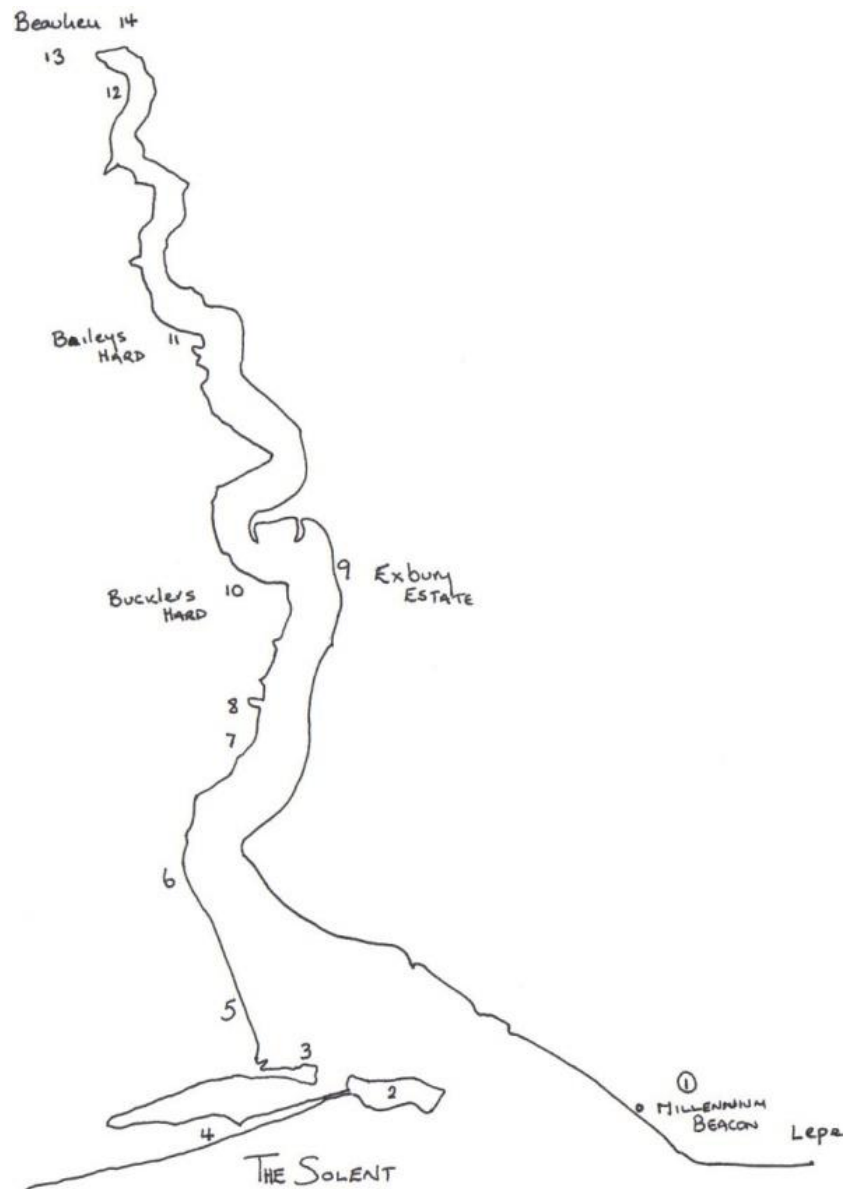
As a canoeist there are many different sights that make the Beaulieu worth visiting and this guide mentions some of them.

Starting point

The most common place to start is at Lepe beach (car parking charges apply), This is a very popular beach with great views over to the isle of Wight and is a popular starting point for canoeists making the crossing. A top tip at this point is to check the tide times and estimate the time that you will want to start back (allow 2 hours for each way) then aim to set off so that the tide is beginning to fall as you leave Beaulieu.

Getting there.

Getting to Lepe: leave the M27 at junction 2 follow signs to Fawley and then on to Lepe.



Launching points.

You can park and launch from Lepe (car parking charges apply), if launching at Bucklers hard please contact the Harbour Master to arrange parking there may be a parking fee. It is also possible to park in Beaulieu car park and carry the boats to Beaulieu Green to launch there, this is around 10mins walk.

1. **Lepe.** Once you have launched off the beach turn to the west and left in to the river you will notice the Millennium Beacon on your right built in the year 2000 to celebrate the millennium and help guide boats into the river. At low tide Lepe can be very muddy so please watch your step
2. **Gull Island** is not actually an island but a spit It is home to a colony of Black Headed gulls and other rare species of sea birds. There is no landing on Gull Island.
- 3 **Needs Ore Point** – This is the base for the Beaulieu River Sailing club and is also the site of a short cut into the river known as Bulls Run in the 18th Century. It was closed by an Act of Parliament in 1986.
4. **Coast Guard cottages** - These were built in the 1860s for coast guard officers in their fight against smuggling. They were rotated regularly to avoid the possibility of them participating in the illegal acts! The coastguard station closed in 1922 and the cottages are now owned by Beaulieu estate.
5. **Salt Pans** - You will see over the top of the bank an area of water this was reclaimed from the sea to harvest salt which was desired commodity. There were special officers based on the river to check on the amount of salt produced. In autumn and winter this area provides an important feeding area for wildfowl such as Brent Geese.
6. **Gins.** Nowadays this is a base for the Royal Southampton Yacht club, but in the past was the site that the Monks from Beaulieu Abbey unloaded their craft and kept their fishing boats.
<http://www.rsyc.org.uk/>
<http://www.beaulieu.co.uk/beaulieu/lotstosee-beaulieu-abbey>
7. **Fiddlers Reach.** This was where the hulls of naval ships were anchored in the 18th Century before being taken to Portsmouth to be fitted out.
8. **Mulberry Dock.** Components for the Mulberry harbour that was used in the D Day invasion were built here along with an experimental floating dock.
9. **Gilbury.** This is the Exbury estates access to the river. Exbury is the site of a famous garden with a stunning collection of Azaleas and now a narrow gauge Steam Railway.
<http://www.exbury.co.uk/website/estate.aspx>
10. **Bucklers Hard.** This was where Nelson's favourite ship was built and is now the centre of boating activity on the river. Liquid Logistics run canoe and Kayak courses and trips on the river from here. There is also a Pub and a hotel here. The Beaulieu River Harbour master is also based here they can be contacted on 01590 616200. There is a very pleasant walk from here to Beaulieu for the non paddling members of the group.

<http://www.bucklershard.co.uk/bucklershard/index>

11. **Baileys Hard.** From the river you can see a tall brick chimney this is the site of the estate brick works, it was used between 1790 and 1935. It was also the here that the first Naval vessel was built on the river.

12. **Curtle meadows.** This was used as a stand in for a sixteenth century Thames in the Film - A Man for All Seasons in 1966.

13. **Beaulieu Village.** This is a quaint oldy-worldy village, has a good variety of unusual shops, including a chocolate shop, garden centre, tea rooms, pottery and the Montagu arms pub. At the top of the river there is a green where you can stop and eat your sandwiches this is accessed at low tide by some steps. ***PLEASE DO NOT PADDLE ON THE RIVER ABOVE THE ROAD BRIDGE NO MATTER HOW INVITING THE POND LOOKS.***

<http://www.beaulieuvillageplan.org.uk/>

14. **Beaulieu Motor Museum-** This is on the site of the ancestral home of the Montagu family, houses one of the world finest collections of cars and the remains of Beaulieu abbey where the monks lived. There is no boating access to the Mill Pond on the other side of the river please respect this.

<http://www.beaulieu.co.uk/beaulieu/index>

Tide.

The Beaulieu is a tidal river and along with the Solent has the advantage of a double high tide this corresponds to the ebb being quicker than it may otherwise have been especially at springs. The section above Baileys hard is not a nice paddle at low tides and may become impassable at the top end of the river.

Distance.

A round trip from Lepe to Beaulieu and back is around 12 miles and can easily be completed in four hours, a clever person will check the tides and paddle up on a rising tide and wait at the top as the tide changes then paddle back with the tidal assistance.

Canoe Clubs in the area.

The Beaulieu is regularly used by New Forest Canoe Club and the Solent arm of Southampton Canoe Club,

Hazards on the river.

There are many boats and jetties on the river care should be taken to avoid these. The river is also used by fishermen - please avoid their lines. When on springs the tide can drop very quickly, and can either carry you further than you want or trap you against obstacles...so be very aware of tide times and flow conditions.



Maps

The area is covered by the OS Outdoor Leisure map for the New Forest.

Helpful Links

- **Harbour Master** tel 01590 616200 email river@beaulieu.co.uk
- British Canoe Union www.bcu.org.uk
- Canoe England <http://www.canoe-england.org.uk/>
- Canoe England Southern Region www.canoesouth.org.uk
- Beaulieu Website www.beaulieu.co.uk
- New Forest Canoe Club www.nfkcc.org.uk
- Southampton Canoe Club www.southamptoncc.org.uk