

Bradford on Avon Canoe Trail

Bradford on Avon to Warley weir & return by Kennet & Avon Canal



General Information

The Kennet & Avon canal was enabled by an Act in 1794 and was opened in 1810 thus allowing London and Bristol to be connected via water via the River Thames, River Kennet, Kennet & Avon Canal and finally the River Avon.

This is a generally easy paddle through open countryside with a little extra interest as you portage down the faces of the weirs and a little excitement as you shoot the bridge arches at Limpley Stoke. Returning along the K&A canal over aqueducts provides opportunities for good views and photographs along the river valley, and an excellent pub en route.

Maps

OS Explorer (1:25000) 156 & 155

Portages

There are several portages; some involve climbing down weir faces.

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>

Types of Canoe/Kayak

Limpley Stoke arches is navigable by anything from an open canoe to a racing boat. The water here would normally be too shallow for a K1 with an understern so an oversterm rudder, if using a K1, would be advised.

Start/Finish

There is a choice of two - either at the railway station car park or from Barton Farm Park. Access the river from under the railway bridge at the back of the railway station car park or from the area around the footbridge in Barton Farm Park. GB Grid Ref: ST 822 605.

Finish on the K&A Canal at Bradford on Avon, the paddle is a loop. Either carry from the canal through Barton Farm Park, or portage back to the river and paddle the short distance back to the start point. GB Grid Ref: ST 822 605.

The Route

Head downstream through Barton Farm Park passing Bradford on Avon Rowing (& Kayaking) Club <http://www.boarc.org.uk/> on the right-hand side just after the old stone bridge. From here the river gently flows away from Bradford on Avon with the Kennet & Avon Canal above you to the left. Be aware that there may be fast moving rowing boats and racing kayaks on the section of water up to the first weir, and remember that the rule on waterways is to keep to the right.

Approximately 1 mile of paddling will bring the traveller to Avoncliff Weir, a 6 foot high weir with many small steps which can be climbed down through the centre during times of low water. Please stay off the left hand side of the weir. Previous owners of the house on the left have objected to paddlers using that side in the past. Those paddling modern plastic kayaks may choose to shoot the weir on the right. A much longer portage is also available by following the path on the left which leads up to the canal, then along the towpath a short way before descending down to the river again to get in below the aqueduct. The portage up to the canal also allows for the short trip option back to Bradford on Avon giving a total trip length of 2 miles. The excellent Cross Guns Inn is right on the canal here at Limpley Stoke, perfect for those wanting an unusual way of travelling to the pub for Sunday lunch.

Below Avoncliff weir, shallow water and reed beds form swift moving water for a time. Above, the Kennet & Avon Canal passes from the left to the right of the river over the first of two aqueducts on this trip. The reed beds continue for around half a mile until the river Frome enters from the left and the river begins to deepen and widen a little perhaps due to the influence of the next weir at Limpley Stoke another half mile on. At the weir, most of the water goes over a 4 to 5 foot drop to the right of centre, and kayakers may choose this route to avoid the portage. To the far left, is a broken down old sluice gate which permanently has water passing through it, between this and the shoot to the right is a section of usually dry weir which can be climbed down in the same fashion as Avoncliff weir. There is also a long portage on the right-hand bank.

Just below the weir is a road bridge where the B3108 crosses the river. Under the bridge is a small weir just a few inches high, known locally as Limpley Stoke Arches. Shooting the arches is the only option as there is no portage available; however the shoot is easy and can be tackled in anything from a racing kayak to an open canoe. Carry on downstream through deep slow moving water until you pass under another aqueduct, this is Dundas. Here there is another opportunity to return to Bradford on Avon via the canal giving a total trip length of about 7 miles. To take this option, egress on the right below the aqueduct on the obvious landing stage, and carry up the steps to the canal.

Further paddling is available downstream of Dundas, approximately one mile downstream is Warley weir. Egress either on top of the very far left-hand side of the weir or in the millstream adjacent to it. To return from here, follow the millstream to the bridge and then cross it and follow the track up to the canal.

Follow the canal back to Bradford on Avon remembering to stop at the two aqueducts to admire the view along the river, and to have a refreshing drink at the Cross Guns at Limpley Stoke. Once past the Cross Guns, the paddler will reach a swing bridge, egress and follow the road downhill to the river before taking a short paddle back to the start point, or continue

along the canal another half a mile looking for a footpath with steps back down into the country park. Going slightly further along the canal from this point takes the paddler to the marvellous Lock Inn Café for more refreshments and where it is also possible to hire bicycles for an alternative means of enjoying the canal and riverside.

Additions to the trail

The trail could be lengthened by paddling further towards Bath <http://visitbath.co.uk/> either along the canal or the river, or by paddling upstream from the start point into historical Bradford on Avon town centre. <http://www.bradfordonavon.co.uk/index.php>

Good places for refreshments are The Cross Guns at Limpley Stoke and The Lock Inn Café in Bradford on Avon, where it is also possible to hire Bicycles. Local Canoe hire and Canoeing / Kayaking supplies are available from The Family Adventure Store in nearby Staverton.

Swing Bridges

This trail does have some swing bridges and we would advise that you ensure you have considered, the craft you are in, the river levels and the potential need to portage. If you do go under these bridges please look out for any nuts and bolts protruding below the bridge