

INTRODUCTION

The Canoe Loops are a series of self-guided circular canoeing/kayaking trails that link the River Exe and Exeter Ship Canal between Exeter Quayside and the Exe Estuary. There are four loops which can be paddled from different access points and in different combinations. Head down the river and back up the canal and join up loops for longer trips. It takes most people 2-3 hours to paddle each loop and the complete circuit from Exeter Quay to Turf Locks and back is 17km, which can take a full day.

To cross between the river and canal and avoid weirs and lock gates, it is necessary to carry craft overland (or pull on trolley). See map for routes and locations of numbered access points (look out for way marker posts with a canoe symbol). Read the 'Plan a Safe Trip' and 'Code of Conduct' sections of this leaflet before canoeing the loops.



Contacts

Environment Agency: www.environment-agency.gov.uk : 01392 316034
Exeter City Council: River & Canal Office: 01392 274306
Exe Estuary Partnership: www.exe-estuary.org
Haven Banks Outdoor Education Centre: www.haven-banks.co.uk 01392 434668
Canoe England: www.canoe-england.org.uk 0845 370 9500
British Canoe Union (BCU): www.bcu.org.uk
Exeter Canoe Club: www.exetercanoeclub.org.uk
AS Watersports: www.aswatersportsequipment.co.uk 01392 219600
Saddles & Paddles: www.sadpad.com 01392 424241
River Exe webcam at Thorverton: <http://eathorvertonwebcam.org.uk/index2.html>
The Blue Gym: www.bluegym.org.uk
Copies of this leaflet can be downloaded from:
www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/recreation/boating/38089.aspx

WHAT TO SEE

The routes pass many scenic areas and sites of interest. These include the historic Exeter Quayside and Ship Canal, Riverside Valley Park, Topsham Quay, two nature reserves and the Exe Estuary. The estuary is designated as a Special Protection Area, due to its international importance for wildlife. You may see kingfishers, egrets, sandpipers, cormorants, avocets (ospreys, seals and otters are occasionally seen). There are several pubs along the route where you can stop for refreshment.

In the middle ages, Exeter was an important centre for the wool trade. Sailing ships came up the River Exe to load/unload goods at the Quay. During the 13th century, disputes with the rival port of Topsham led to a weir being built to divert trade to Topsham. Exeter Ship Canal was consequently built in 1566 to enable ships to reach Exeter once more. Large sailing ships and barges were towed along the towpaths using horses. In 1827 the canal was extended to Turf. Many original features are still visible today but current use is mostly for recreation and conservation.



CODE OF CONDUCT

- 1 Park vehicles in car parks highlighted, not where they may cause an obstruction.
- 2 Minimise contact with riverbed, aquatic plants and bank-sides, particularly in the shallows.
- 3 Wildlife should be given a wide berth and passed quietly. Avoid disturbing wading birds roosting at the waters edge and breeding birds. Keep to the main river channel – avoid entering the reedbed nature reserve.
- 4 Only use recognised public access points and landing places. Do not trespass on private facilities or moor canoes where they may obstruct boats.
- 5 Keep well away from anglers - pass quietly by the opposite bank avoiding their lines and tackle.
- 6 Avoid lingering in river pools or below fish passes on weirs (where migratory fish rest).
- 7 Give way to and do not cross in front of oncoming craft (boats and rowers may have difficulty seeing you).

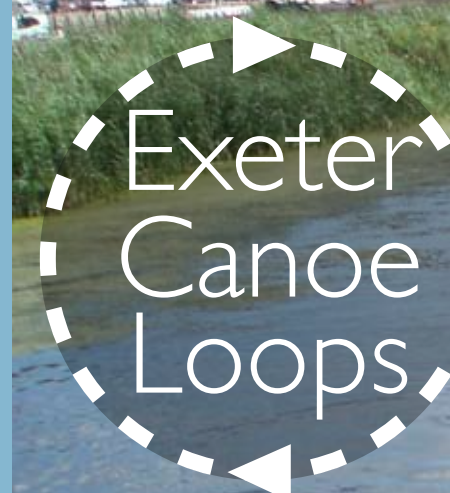
PLAN A SAFETRIIP

Canoeing can be hazardous and is undertaken at your own risk. You must make your own assessment of dangers based on your knowledge, skills, abilities, experience and the conditions.

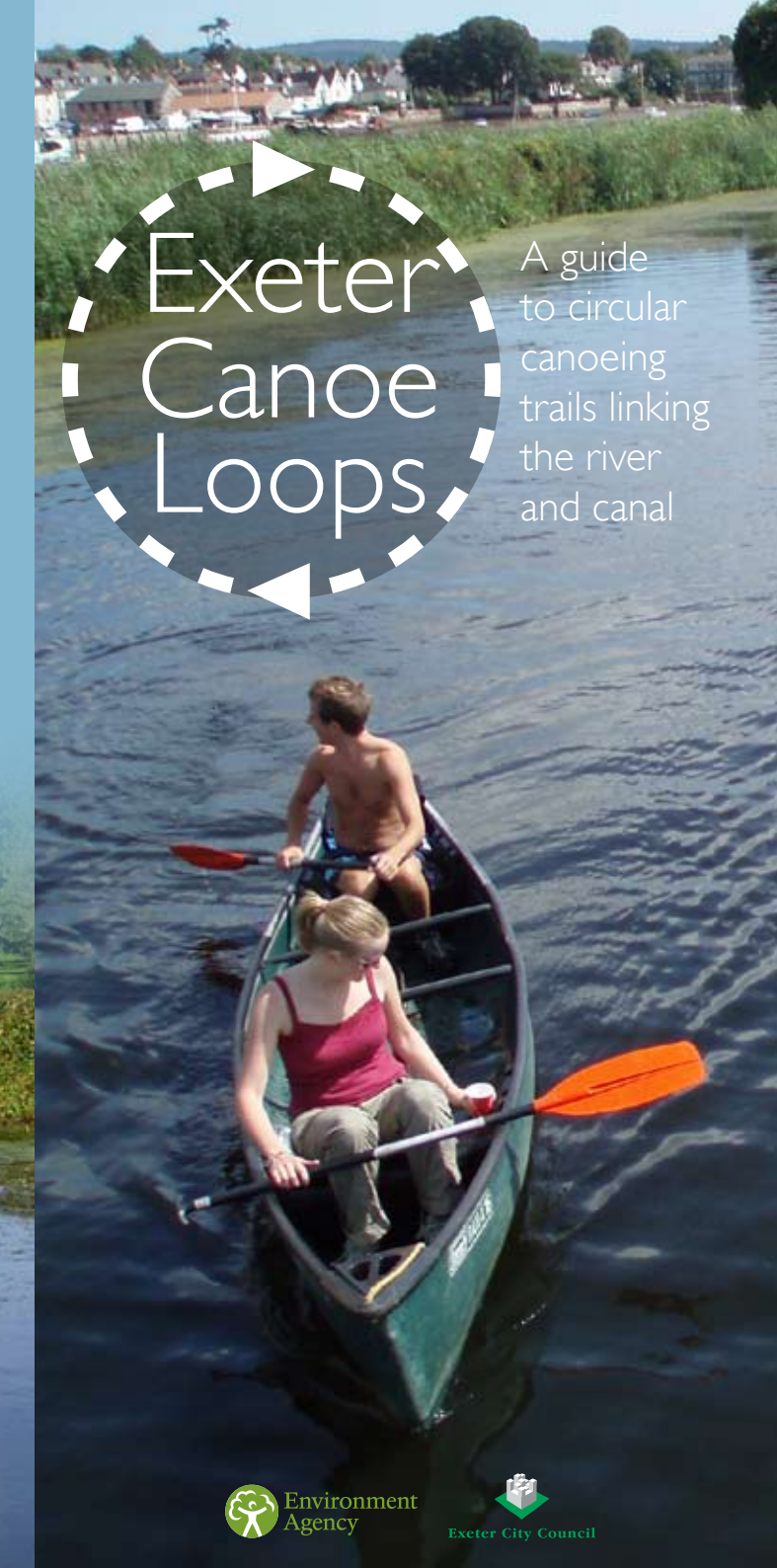
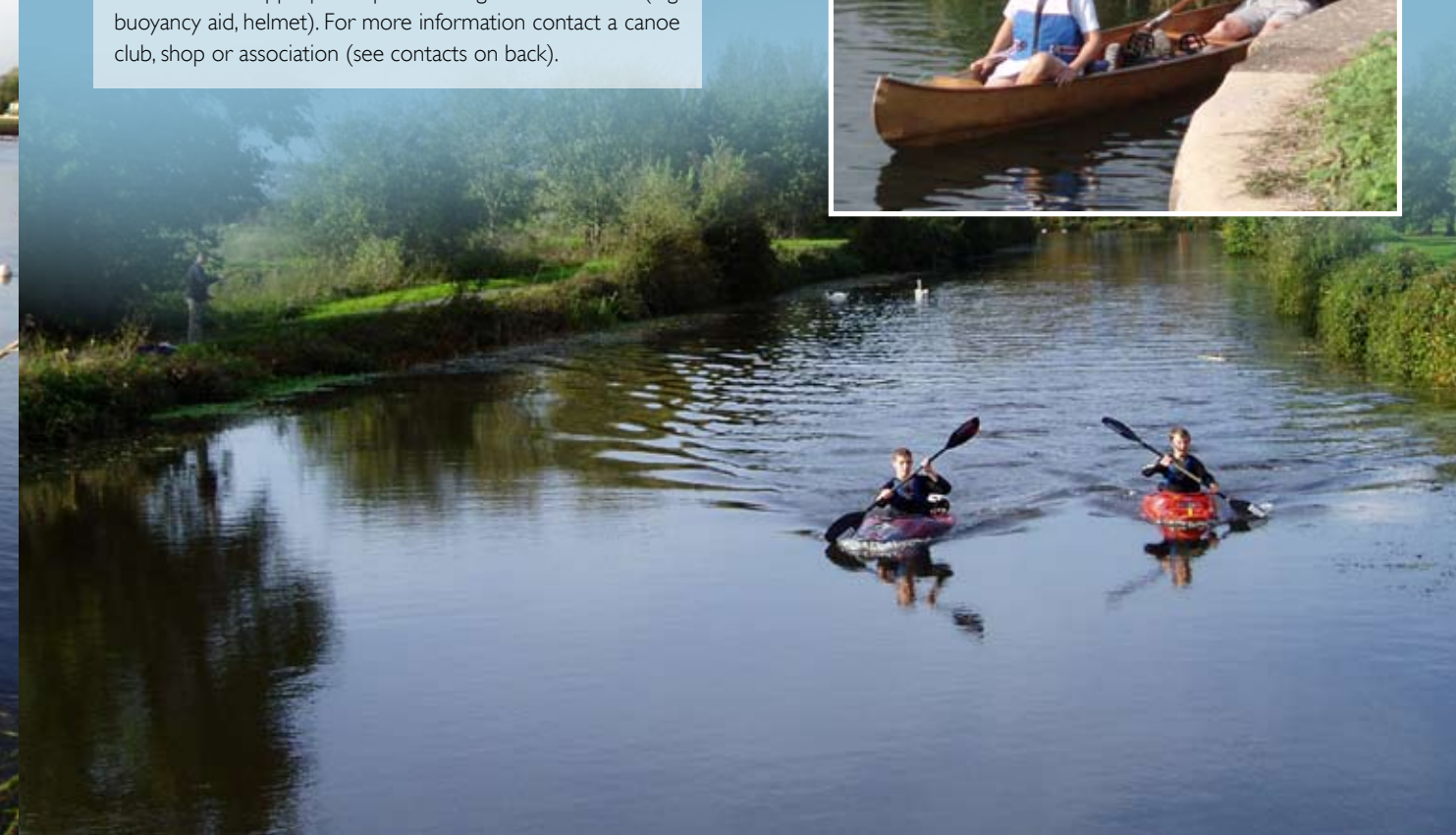
Water at the base of weirs can be dangerous, particularly in high flows. Hidden obstacles may be present under the surface. Portage points enable canoeists to safely avoid weirs. Ensure you are physically able to carry/pull your canoe over the portage distances and can use the access points (some are not suitable for larger craft).

Downstream of St James's Weir, low tides can make the river too shallow to canoe and some access points unusable. It's safer to restrict tidal trips to fair conditions and 2 hours either side of high tide. During lower tides, follow the main buoyed river channel in the estuary. Increased hazards on the estuary can include wind, waves, currents, boats and their wakes.

Check conditions beforehand via weather reports, river levels and tide tables. Membership of canoe clubs, personal liability insurance and appropriate protective gear are advised (e.g. buoyancy aid, helmet). For more information contact a canoe club, shop or association (see contacts on back).



A guide to circular canoeing trails linking the river and canal





LOOP 1: EXETER QUAY TO SALMONPOOL

- Down river (includes two weirs) & up canal (2.5km).
- To avoid Trews Weir, paddle down canal entrance and carry canoe between canal & river using points 4 & 3 (150m).
- If canal entrance lock gates from river are closed, portage using landing stages on LB.
- To avoid St James's Weir, carry canoe between portage points 5 & 6 (50m).
- To cross between river & canal, carry canoe between points 7 & 8 (150m).
- Immediately downstream of Trews Weir, keep right until you go under the suspension footbridge, then keep left to avoid any anglers.

LOOP 2: SALMONPOOL TO COUNTESS WEAR

- Down river & up canal (4.5km).
- Be careful of the low canal swing-bridge below access point 8.
- To cross between river and canal, carry canoe between points 7 & 8 (150m) and 10 & 11 (5m).
- The canal lock gates at Double Locks can be portaged using landing stage/steps on LB or RB.

LOOP 3: COUNTESS WEAR TO TOPSHAM

- Down river/estuary & up canal (5km).
- To cross between river and canal, carry canoe between points 10 & 11 (5m) and 13 & 14 (20m).
- Follow the main river channel, keep left heading downstream, under the M5 bridge to Topsham Lock cottage.
- Access restricted at low tide - use ferrymans slipway at AP 13 if necessary.

LOOP 4: TOPSHAM TO TURF LOCK

- Down estuary & up canal (5km).
- To cross between river and canal carry canoe between points 13 & 14 (20m) and between points 16 & 17 (up to 200m) to portage the canal lock gates at Turf Lock.
- In adverse estuary conditions, emergency exit at AP 15.

ACCESS & PORTAGE POINTS

- 1 Quayside slipway RB river
- 2 Quayside slipway LB river
- 3 Steps RB river downstream of Trews Weir (**LA**)
- 4 Steps & ramp LB canal
- 5 Landing stage RB river upstream of St James's Weir
- 6 Steps RB river downstream of St James's Weir (**LA**)
- 7 Steps RB of flood relief channel, just before it adjoins river
- 8 Landing stage LB canal by Bromhams playing fields car park
- 9 Landing stage RB canal off Water lane
- 10 Slipway RB river off entrance road to Sewage Works (**LA**)
- 11 Landing stage LB canal off entrance road to Sewage Works
- 12 Landing stage LB canal at Countess Wear swingbridge car park
- 13 Stone steps by Topsham Lock cottage & Ferryman's slipway RB river (**LA**)
- 14 Landing stages LB canal by Topsham Lock cottage
- 15 Topsham church stone causeway LB river
- 16 Concrete steps at Turf Lock Pier & by canal lock gate (**LA**)
- 17 Small slipway & pontoon on LB immediately upstream of Turf Lock hotel
- 18 Landing stage RB canal by canal-side car park, Exminster Marshes

KEY:
LB/RB left bank or right bank (as looking downstream/south-easterly).
LA limited access point - may not be suitable for all due to steep narrow steps
● canoe portage point – involves carrying craft overland to cross between river and canal or bypass a weir or lock gate.

Map not to scale • Printed on waterproof paper

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