

R. Exe and Exeter Ship Canal Loop 2 Salmonpool to Countess Wear Easy Trail

Route Summary

This is a pleasant trip just south of the centre of a major city, taking a circular route down the River Exe, and back up the Exeter Ship Canal, which was built to enable sailing ships to reach the city centre. It is 2.8 miles long, and gives great views of the city to the east side, and an increasingly rural view downstream, and is an easy paddle. There are two portages - one to lift over to the canal from the river, and another at a set of locks on the canal. There are Waymarker points at these locations with a canoe on them.

Exeter was an important wool trade exporter from centuries back, until a dispute arose with Topsham downriver, a weir being built to divert off trade. To enable ships to still reach the centre of Exeter, the canal was built in 1566. The main traffic today is recreational.

Nearest Town – Exeter

O.S. Sheets - 192 Exeter & Sidmouth

Start and Finish

Canal Banks car park, reached from the west side of the river, via Alphin Brook Road, the B3123, Exeter Devon

The start is at a car park reached by crossing the canal from the west side, via Marsh Barton industrial (signposted). This area of Exeter is to the west of the city centre, and on the west bank of the Exe. From the city centre, cross the main bridge, and turn left to follow the river, heading for the industrial estate.



From the M5, approaching Exeter from the east, cross the river on the motorway, to the junction with the A30 to the north and west, and after 1.5 miles, turn right towards the city centre, turning off to the right before the river bridge.

Cafes and toilets back upstream at Exeter Quay.

Waterways Travelled - River Exe and Exeter Ship Canal

Type of Water - Urban river and canal

Distance – 2.8 miles

License Information – A license to canoe on these waterways is currently not required.

We have taken great care to ensure the currency, accuracy and reliability of this information. We cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions but where such are brought to our attention, the information will be amended accordingly. Users should be aware that environmental conditions outside of our control can change the nature of the Trail within a short space of time. It is recommended that weather and water conditions are checked beforehand, and tide timetables where applicable.

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Local Facilities

Cafes and toilets back upstream at Exeter Quay. Exeter Quayside (both sides of the river), have ample facilities and many eating places. There is the canoe shop also between the river and canal.

Vehicle Shuttle - is not required

Portages and Locks – 2. 1 lock at Double Locks to portage.

There is a portage of 5m only between the river and the canal

Description

The trip commences with a portage of 150m from the canal over to the river. The direction of the trip is to the right side, downriver. Please keep to the right side of the river, to avoid going too close to the houses on the east bank, and also often salmon anglers. To the right is the greenery of a Country Park. The river sweeps around a long bend to the left, and then a sharper bend to the right, and Countess Wear bridge is reached. The Exe was tidal as far as the present position of Head Weir prior to 1282, and ships could dock as far upstream as our starting point. This was changed when Isabella de Fortibus built a barrier at Countess Wear, diverting shipping trade to Topsham, and a canal was built in 1563 to bypass this. At certain states of the tide there are strong eddies and standing waves downstream of the bridge. Below the bridge it is possible to portage along the old Exeter bypass to the canal, but our portage is an easier one 200 yards downstream over a narrow neck of land by the sewage works entrance.



The canal narrows, and the paddler reaches the crossing point of the old A38, the Exeter by-pass. Here there are two bridges, the old swing bridge and a newer lifting bridge opened in 1971. At Double Locks there is another Inn, dating from 1701. The lock pond is very large, 312 ft by 25 ft. and the gate paddles which let water in and out are operated by wheels instead of hand windlasses. The gates nearest the Inn have wooden balance beams, which came from the mast of HMS Exeter following a re-fit at Devonport in 1940, after the action in the River Plate.

The canal now skirts the edge of the Marsh Barton Trading Estate and away in front is a magnificent view of the City and the Cathedral. Land back where you parked, on the right side of the canal by the road bridge.

Useful Information

On the Quay in Exeter is [A/S Watersports](#) - a canoe shop - and they are more than happy to help you with canoeing information in the area.

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www.exeter.gov.uk/

www.exeterviews.co.uk/

www.exeter-cathedral.org.uk/

Recommended Next Trail

If you have enjoyed this trail why not try out one of the many trails available.

Safety Information

Spending an afternoon canoeing can be a fun way to experience nature, get a great workout and spend time with family and friends.. However, it can also be a dangerous journey, if safety guidelines are overlooked. Always follow these basic rules and comply with navigation rules- keep to the right of on-coming boats. Please be careful at points along the trail where there are sharp bends on the waterway and keep a look out at these points for oncoming traffic.

Wear appropriate clothing

Always wear shoes. Rocks, rough terrain and river beds present serious hazards to boaters without the proper attire. Nearly 90per cent of all boating injuries are attributed to lack of proper footwear. Other canoe safe clothing includes hats, additional dry clothing towels, and layered items which can easily be removed.

Be sure to

- Know the weather forecast before you set out canoeing.
- Familiarise yourself with the local area, it's sensitive places and protected areas.
- Leave the environment as you found it. Please read [You, Your Canoe and the environment](#)
- Take your litter home with you.
- Follow the navigation rules for the waterway you are on.
- Keep noise to a minimum.
- Do not damage bank side vegetation when launching or landing. (No Seal Launching)
- Where possible keep to any designated paths or launching points.
- Canoe a safe distance away from wildlife.
- Check your equipment.
- Observe the navigation rules for this waterway.
- Check to see if there are any events on the waterways when you wish to travel.

Use the checklist below to make sure you have everything you need.

Checklist:

1. Boat
2. Paddle
3. Buoyancy Aid
4. Bailer/sponge
5. Small First Aid Kit
6. Penknife

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7. Mobile telephone (in a waterproof bag....Please note that in some areas due to the location mobile telephone reception might be nonexistent)
8. Fresh drinking water
9. Sun cream, hat and sunglasses
10. Light waterproof jacket
11. Footwear
12. Licence

ALWAYS be certain to let others know where you're going and when you're expected to return.

Specific Environmental Information:

Please ensure you don't remove or damage any plants or animals from the waterway as they may be protected or harmful if transferred to other catchments.

Canoeists and kayakers take very seriously environmental concerns and already follow existing voluntary environmental codes of conduct, including Canoe England's own guidance notes outlined in the "You your canoe and the environment" publication.

By following the simple steps below you can ensure your presence is not detrimental to the freshwater environment, minimize and avoid accidentally disturbing wildlife and their habitats.

- Find out about the area before you go, noting its sensitive places, species and breeding seasons.
- Leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home with you.
- When clearing litter left by others, handle it with care.
- Leave the environment as you find it
- Keep noise to a minimum.
- Do not "seal" launch or drag boats to avoid wearing away natural banks. Float your canoe for launching, lift out when landing and carry it to and from the water.
- Do not damage bank side vegetation when launching or landing.
- Where possible keep to any designated paths or launching points.
- On rivers, avoid paddling over gravel banks in low water conditions – they may contain fish spawn.
- Constantly assess wildlife. If you see signs of disturbance move away quietly.

Be the eyes and ears on the water. Report pollution, wildlife problems, damage, incidents etc to the relevant authorities.

Canal & River Trust - Emergencies- Telephone 0800 47 999 47

RSPCA for wildlife and animals in distress – Telephone 0990 55 59 99 (24 hours)

Environment Agency - Telephone 0800 80 70 60 (24 hours)

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