

Gloucester & Sharpness Canal Purton to Slimbridge Trail

Easy Trail Grading

Route Summary

This trail on the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal is an excellent place for a first canoe or kayak trip. In the distance you can glimpse the Forest of Dean. At the turn point you could visit the famous Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust Reserve.

Nearest Towns - Gloucester

O.S. Sheets - 162 Gloucester & Forest of Dean

Start & Finish

Purton Village Car Park
Purton
Gloucester
Gloucestershire
GL13 9HU

Latitude: 51.7377381, Longitude:-2.448420

Waterways Travelled - Gloucester & Sharpness Canal

Type of Water - Mostly rural canal

Distance – 4 miles

Licence Information - Canoe England Membership covers a licence for this waterway. You need to take your membership card with you as it is your licence too. Licence and navigation information (stoppages and events) can also be obtained from Basingstoke Canal Authority, Canal Centre, Mychett Place Road, Mychett, Surrey, GU1 6DD. - Tel. 01252 370073

Local Facilities – There are no public toilets at Purton, however at the turnpoint at Slimbridge there is a cafe and toilets next to the canal

Vehicle Shuttle Required – A vehicle shuttle is not required as this is an out and back trail

Portages and Locks – There are no locks, however, this trail does have some low 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.

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.

Directions

From the South:

Leave M5 Northbound Junction 14 signposted Dursley (1st exit) turn left to join A38 (sign posted Dursley);

Turn right onto A38 head North (signposted Dursley/Gloucester;

Pass through several villages including Stone;

Enter Berkeley Heath and pass turning on left signposted Sharpness - Docks (adjacent to independent petrol station);

Continue on A38 for 1 mile to take next turning on left signposted Breadstone Halmore – Purton;

Travel for 2 miles, take right turning on sharp left hand bend, signposted Purton. Continue until you enter village, approx 1.5miles;

Park in car park opposite the church.

From the North

Leave M5 Southbound Junction 13 signposted Stroud, take 3rd exit marked Dursley;

0.5 miles to next roundabout on A38;

Take 1st exit marked Dursley;

Travel 8 miles South passing through Cambridge with the public house The George on your right (caution speed camera in area);

Continue to roundabout taking second exit, straight across, marked Bristol (Slimbridge WWT can be accessed from 3rd exit);

1.5m Pass petrol station on left, continue straight on;

2.0m Pass public house The Prince of Wales on left 0.1m;

Turn right signposted Breadstone, Halmore – Purton;

Travel for 2 miles, take right turning on sharp left hand bend, signposted Purton. Continue until you enter village, approx 1.5miles;

Park in car park opposite the church.

Car Parking is £1 for 4 hours.

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More about the canal

The Gloucester & Sharpness Canal was built and opened in 1827. This trail is the first of four possible trails taking you a little bit further along the historic [Gloucester & Sharpness Canal](#). This trail is ideal for a first canoe or kayak trip- little traffic, very quiet, wide enough not to hit anybody.

[Purton](#) is usually very quiet and deserted, and has a landing stage next to a car park, £1 for four hours. Otherwise, access can be from banks next to the [swing bridges](#), unless there is traffic coming through the bridges.

From Purton northwards, there are fields on both sides, and in the distance, the Forest of Dean can be glimpsed on the left (west) side, and the Cotswolds on the east side.

It is two and a half miles up to Slimbridge, (approximately one hour) which has a café and toilets next to the canal. The [Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust Reserve](#) is half a mile up the road towards the Severn, and this area is the busiest on your route, with much traffic going up the road to see the birds, and many boats moored. From Slimbridge this is your turn point back to Purton.

You could look to combine this trail with a visit to the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust Reserve- this would involve a car shuttle, drop off at Purton or Slimbridge (with a 1/2 drive to the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust) and then pick up a Slimbridge or Purton.

Useful Information

[Purton](#) has the largest ships' graveyard in maritime Britain and is an important locality for studies of [vertebrate palaeontology](#). It is also a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) [Sharpness and Gloucester Docks](#)

Other Nearby Visitor Attractions

[Gloucester Docks](#)
[Cattle Country Park](#)
[Berkeley Castle](#)
[The Edward Jenner Museum](#)
[Local pubs](#)

There is a towpath for most of the canal. Easy road access from both A38 and M5. Good provision of toilets and places to stop.

Recommended Next Trail

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If you have enjoyed this trail why not try out another one of the four trails on this beautiful canal.

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
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

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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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