

Kennet & Avon Canal Newbury to Aldermaston Moderate Trail

Route Summary

This linear canal route passes through lovely countryside, with many more water bodies such as lakes and former gravel pits, and the meanders of the River Kennet between Newbury and Aldermaston. The villages of Thatcham, Midgham, and Woolhampton are encountered, before Aldermaston Wharf is reached, some distance from the town of Aldermaston, synonymous with nuclear weapons. The canal gives views of many narrow boats, locks, aqueducts, and landscapes, with a level towpath to either walk or cycle on. Many paddlers know the stretch from Devizes (west of this route), to London, through taking part in the annual Devizes to Westminster Canoe Race, run every year since the 1960s.

O.S. Sheets - Landranger 174 Newbury & Wantage and 175 Reading and Windsor

Start

Newbury – Newbury Wharf car park, on the south side of the river, just upstream from the A339 road bridge. RG14 5AS and GR - SU 472671. This is a pay and display car park next to the library unless you manage to get a space next to the public toilets where the parking is free.

The car park has public toilets, plenty of refreshment places, and the Granary building here is now home to a museum, and the 'Stone Building' is used by the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust.

Finish

Aldermaston Wharf RG7 4JS GR - SU 600671

The car park behind the basin area, with public toilets. There might be space on the road side but do watch for the larger car park as the height restriction is often across. There is also a pay and display car park near the canal shop just the other side of the road past the lock cottages and has no height restriction.

Aldermaston Wharf is on the A4, and easy to reach from either Newbury to the west, (9 miles) or the M4, Junction 12, to the east (4 miles)

Waterways Travelled - Kennet & Avon Canal

Type of Water - Rural Canal

Distance - 9 miles

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Licence Information

A license to paddle the river is included in the [Canoe England membership](#) fee. Otherwise licences can be obtained from [Canal & River Trust](#) (Take your Canoe England membership card with you as it is your licence as well)

Local Facilities

The car park in Newbury has public toilets, plenty of refreshment places, and the Granary building here is now home to a museum, and the 'Stone Building' is used by the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust.

The Visitor Centre car park at Aldermaston Wharf does not have any height restriction. There is a tea room, small shop and toilet – not open all the time, as it is run by volunteers.

A shuttle could be done by rail on local trains

Vehicle Shuttle Required

Portages and Locks

9 - The portages are mainly up grassy banks, which can be slippery. The locks are now being supplied increasingly with mooring and portage points, which are always on the towpath side of the canal.

Also beware of low swing bridges. If using a canoe, portages might be required, depending on the height of water. Kayaks will be less affected. Underneath the bridges, look out for protruding nuts and bolts.

Description

The start is at Newbury Wharf, and away, with the slight flow of the canal, from the Visitor Centre. A boat yard is passed, and then the first lock. Portage on the left, and put back in either just before the bridge, or cross the bridge and put in from the moorings below, which is Greenham Lock.

The canal becomes more countrified, and then Ham Lock is reached, with a very low bridge ahead, so both have to be portaged on the right, even though the towpath is on the left here. Now one is back on the river, with pleasant meanders. The river goes right, and you left, into the navigation, and Widmead Lock.

After this is a paddle into [Thatcham](#), with Monkey Marsh Lock before the village, and a low footbridge which might not have enough height in low water. A portage is on the right.

Monkey Marsh lock (SU 524662) was built between 1718 and 1723 under the supervision of engineer John Hore of Newbury, and is one of the only two remaining turf-

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sided locks left on the canal, and it is listed as an ancient monument by English Heritage. These locks are wider, as they have to slope (stone or brick locks have vertical sides), and so they require more water, and are slower to fill.

Thatcham is an optional place to stop, if wanting to paddle only 4-5 miles, and the railway station is nearby (SU 572 666), with a pay car park.

The route then takes in Colthrop Lock after another half mile, and then Midgham Lock also a half mile after. Two low footbridges are between Midgham and the next two locks, Heals, and Woolhampton, which might require portaging.

[Woolhampton](#) has a lovely public house, followed by a section of nice river with flow and meanders, before a left turn (at Old Mill, SU 586663) towards Aldermaston Wharf, a section lined with trees.

Aldermaston lock, your finish point, has beautifully scalloped edges. It was built by John Hore in the early 1700s, and re-built about 1750. The lock was further re-built and raised in level in 1984.

Useful Information

[Newbury](#)
[Aldermaston](#)
[Kennet & Avon Canal](#)
[Horse drawn boat trips on the canal](#)
[Devizes to Westminster canoe race](#)

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.

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Be sure to

- Know the weather forecast before you set out canoeing.
 - Familiarise yourself with the local area, its 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

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.

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- 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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