

## Medway Canoe Trail (Courtesy of the Environment Agency)

**Start-** In Tonbridge, (<http://www.tonbridge-kent.com/>) at [Tonbridge Slipway](#) there is a small slipway available. There is a car park near to the slipway. For additional information about this area do contact Tonbridge Tourist Information Centre. (TN9 IBG) 01732 770929

**Length and Possible Duration** – 31 km roughly 2 days depending on speed of travel but can be undertaken in smaller sections where there are access and egress points. The river is a public navigation from Allington to the Leigh barrier

**Maps Covering the trail** - OS Explorer Maps 148,147,136

**River Grade** - Easy –Placid Water - Grade 1 Care needed in high flow events (usually the winter)

**Accessibility** - Allington Lock is suitable for wheelchair users and has disabled access facilities such as toilets etc. Some places are very accessible such as Allington Lock which has a slipway and car park right next to the water. Other places are more remote, having car parking a distance from the water. There are landing stages at each lock and canoe passes have and are continuing to be installed at some locks.

**Licences** - Annual or short term ( weekly, monthly) licences are available. Licences are available at Allington Lock, Bow Bridge Marina, Portguide Ltd, Allington Marina, Tonbridge Tourist Information Centre and the Environment Agency Kent and East Sussex Area Office. (01732 223222).

Licences aren't required if you are a Canoe England member, please display your sticker and take your membership card with you.

**Camp sites** – Allington, Hop Farm, Marlin Canoe Club, Stoneham Lock (no facilities)

### Leigh Barrier to Town Lock, Tonbridge (3km)

The launch site for this area is Tonbridge Slipway. Above this point you can paddle up to the footbridge just below the Leigh Barrier. Do not be tempted to travel above the bridge as the weir gates on the barrier can move at any time suddenly releasing extra flow. You can paddle around Tonbridge sports ground and also explore some of the smaller tributaries.

Downstream from the slipway is Tonbridge Town Bridge and Tonbridge Lock. At this point keep right and you will see the portage platform to aid you crossing the lock. Keep away from the orange booms to the left of the lock. Cross the lock over the downstream lock gates and get back in on the downstream landing stage.

### Tonbridge Town Lock to Eldridges Lock (2.4km)

Paddle downstream under Cannon Lane Bridge and past the small launch point on the left. The river now becomes rural as you leave Tonbridge behind. Pass under a girder bridge and eventually you come to Eldridges Lock. The portage platform is on the left hand side just upstream of the lock. Keep away from the orange booms and weir on your right.

### Eldridges Lock to Porters Lock (1.6km)

Put your canoe back into the water using the lower portage platform at the end of the lock then continue downstream. Eventually you will see the orange booms of Porters Lock weir. Keep away from these and turn left towards the lock. At this point you have two choices. You can either carry on to the lock and get out on the portage platform on the left or you can slide down the new canoe friendly fish pass on your immediate right, just after the orange booms. (not suitable if you have a fixed under stern rudder)



Canoeists using Porters Lock Combined Canoe and Fish Pass.

### **Porters Lock to East Lock (2km)**

This section passes under [Hartlake Bridge](#) which is another launch point on the river. Carry on under the bridge towards East Lock. At East Lock you will see the familiar orange booms, go past these and you will see the portage platform in front of you.

### **East Lock to Oak Weir Lock (1.2km)**

Get back into your boat on the downstream side of the lock by walking down on to the timber landing stage. The portage platform is at the very end of this. This section is the shortest between locks, so it won't take long before you arrive at Oak Weir Lock. You will see the orange booms on the left hand side of the river and just ahead of that is the portage platform. When you get out here, you will find the lower portage platform is off to the left via a small path through the lock island itself.



The canoe portage platform downstream of Oak Weir Lock

### **Oak Weir Lock to Sluice Weir Lock (2km)**

After 500m you pass under Stilstead Bridge, then the river winds its way onwards to Wagon Bridge which is a steel girder bridge. After this bridge you will see a wooden footpath bridge on your right. Under this bridge is access to the Hop Farm camp site (<http://www.thehopfarm.co.uk/touring/>). A further 500m downstream is Sluice Weir Lock. To the right of the orange booms is a steep canoe pass. Note this pass is not suitable for long touring boats. For those not using the pass, you will see the portage platform ahead of you to the left, keeping the orange booms on your right.

### **Sluice Weir Lock to Hampstead Lock (3.6km)**

After passing under two road bridges and a railway bridge, you will come to [Stoneham Lock camping ground](#). The best place to get out is just after you have passed through the lock on the right hand side.

After this the river continues to Yalding. Yalding is a small village between East Peckham and West Farleigh about 5 miles from Maidstone. (<http://www.villagenet.co.uk/highweald/villages/yalding.php>) As you approach Yalding, you will see the distinctive orange booms in front of you. You have two choices here. Either get out on the right hand side just upstream of the booms, or continue around to the left with the Anchor pub on your left hand side. If you take the first option you will have to climb up the river bank then drop down the other side to a small stream (The River Teise) As you will see there is a good tea and cake stop here - this being Tea Pot Island. Once you have put your boat into the stream head to the left and you will appear into the weir pool. Carry on through one of the bridge arches and approx 50 metres further

downstream is [Marlin Canoe Club's campsite](#).

If you take the second option of turning left at the orange booms, you will see a low bridge in front of you. Pass under here minding your head. On your right hand side is [Yalding Canoe Platform](#). A further 500m on is [Hampstead Lock](#). To portage this lock, use the standard portage platform on the right hand side just upstream of the lock and cross the upstream lock gates.

### Hampstead Lock



Walk across the island and you can see the downstream portage platform and slipway. Hampstead Lock is also another launch point.

### Hampstead Lock to Teston Lock (4.8km)

Paddle past the moored boats and then turn left where the other part of the river comes in. This section passes Watlingbury marina with boats moored both sides. Next you will find Teston Lock this time with the weir on the right hand side (orange booms). There are no purpose built portage platforms on this lock (due winter 09/10), so you will have to get out on the lock side on the left bank just upstream of the lock. On the downstream side again the portage platform has not been replaced here so is a little tricky. It is best to use the downstream landing stage as there is a low section tagged to the end. Alternatively walk down the river bank a short while to find a beach area to launch from. [Teston Country Park \(http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/explore-kent/parks-and-open-spaces/teston-bridge-country-park.htm\)](http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/explore-kent/parks-and-open-spaces/teston-bridge-country-park.htm) is another launch point on the Medway

### Teston Lock to East Farleigh Lock (3.2km)

After Teston Bridge the river continues around a very slow right hand bend. Just after this and on the right hand bank is [Barming Bridge campsite](#). Carry on past here and you will start to see moored boats from the marinas at East Farleigh. At East Farleigh bridge go through the second arch from the left (as directed) then lift out on the concrete wall just before the lock. Again this lock is due for new canoe portage platforms during the winter of 09/10.



Paddling under East Farleigh Bridge

### East Farleigh Lock to Allington Lock (7.2km)

You can regain entry to the river via the downstream landing stage which is a 75 metre walk down the riverside path. This platform is also due for replacement in the winter of 09/10.

This is the last and longest section of river down to Allington Lock Slipway. This is the most urban section of the river and is also the busiest in terms of motorised vessels. Keep an eye open also for rowing boats as they cannot see you as well as you can see them. Your sign that you have finished the trail is the sight of Allington Sluice and the Malta Inn on your right hand side. By this point you will see Allington Lock slipway and canoe launch point on your left.



The end of the trail - Allington Slipway and canoe launch point

The end of the trail is at - [Allington Lock slipway and canoe launch](#). Allington Lock, Castle Road, Allington, ME16 0LU 01622 752864. Here there is a Slipway, Car Parking, Boaters Facilities and Toilets, Showers and camping are also available for a fee.

It is possible to go up further from Tonbridge on to the Leigh Barrier, however, this is currently a more overgrown area.

#### **For more information**

Canoe England Access Officers (<http://www.canoe-england.org.uk/riverinformationservice.aspx> )

Tonbridge Canoe Club (<http://www.btinternet.com/~colin.duff/index.htm> )

Maidstone Canoe Club (<http://www.maidstonecanoeclub.net/>)

Website for Medway Trail ( <http://www.medwaycanoetrail.co.uk/home.php> )

Environment Agency ([www.environment-agency.gov.uk/rivermedway](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/rivermedway))

Safety information (December 2012)

There is an [Environment Agency](http://riverconditions.environment-agency.gov.uk/) website (<http://riverconditions.environment-agency.gov.uk/>) where information concerning river levels can be obtained for the River Thames. It is important to check this as the River rises and falls quite quickly in wet or dry conditions.