

River Wear

Fatfield to North Hylton

Easy to Moderate Trail

Route Summary

The Wear is an amazing river and is 110km from Wearhead to the sea. It is full of changes, from the excitement of a Pennine contender, to a French gorge pretender. It is also famous for the wonderful setting of Durham Cathedral, high up above a horse shoe bend in the river. This canoe trail covers a section which is more like a west country wooded ria full of birch, oak, and hawthorn. The quiet of the river in the middle of an urban area is achieved by hiding at the bottom of a broad gorge. For about 200 years this river was dirty and full of activity: wagon ways brought coal to the river and they even processed asbestos on the north bank. Back to Roman times lead and silver were taken by river to the sea, but all that is long gone. There is also lots of wildlife to see so do keep your eyes open and enjoy your trip. The Washington development corporation and the City of Sunderland have recreated a natural wilderness.

This is a two hour paddle suitable for a lazy summer evening, or really anytime you want a short but interesting trip.

Nearest Town - Sunderland

O.S. Sheets - Landranger No. 88 Tyneside and Durham
or the Newcastle, Sunderland, and Durham A-Z which easier to use for access points.

Start - Mt. Pleasant Lake car park, GR NZ 314541 - This is best approached from the Shiney Row junction of A182 and A183: take Station Road off this roundabout and follow down the valley, take a right turn into Beatrice Terrace and the car park is on your right. The river is best accessed at the large sign on the river end of the lake.

Finish - The Shipwrights Arms, North Hylton, NZ 349570 is on the north river bank on Ferryboat Lane. Ferryboat lane is the first right turn on the A1231 east of the A19. Very easy access back onto the A19 or to the A1 to continue your journey north. Very nice pub: good beer and food if you are in no hurry.

Waterways Travelled – River Wear

Type of Water - River estuary – tidal

Distance – 3 miles

Licence Information – None required - tidal

Local Facilities – Local villages have pubs, cafes and toilets – Sunderland is a major city

Vehicle Shuttle Required - Yes

Portages and Locks - None

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Description

This part of the river is tidal so look at the tide tables for the Tyne: you may choose to paddle up on the rising tide even if this description is based on a high tide that has turned. This tidal stretch has no troubles about access as it is below the high water mark, and none of the risks of estuaries as the end is still some miles inland.

When you get on at Mount Pleasant, you see the first of the massive stone block staithes that form parts of the bank. Here at Fatfield, later at Cox Green and finally at Stony Heugh they dwarf the roman wall a few miles north. You are soon away from the houses and into the wilderness. Moving beside Reach Wood your eyes are captured by the Victoria viaduct: high elegant stone arches spanning the gorge. Built in 1836-8 it was based on a roman bridge at Alcantara in Spain and this design has a lightness that becomes more impressive as you approach: the river span is 162 feet wide, and the stone as clean cut as if it were new. This is a hidden wonder, less obvious than Penshaw monument on the hill above. Is there any other place where one can paddle beneath a 'Roman' viaduct and see a 'Greek' temple nearby? (Pevsner 1983:371)

The river bends slightly around James Steel Park and you may see walkers or cyclists. The next bridge is a functional green metal footbridge at Cox Green (good pub on the right bank) and there is the first clutch of boats. Like the top of a Cornish creek half a dozen at most: North Sea coble, and battered fishing vessels. Five minutes beyond is a nice get off for a cup of tea on the edge of a wood in a meadow.

Next on your left is the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust. A black barbed wire fence keeps you out but the birds observe no such niceties and it's a place of heron, wildfowl on the river as much as in the sanctuary. High Wood beyond is a fine example of natural woodland, and the river does another characteristic U-bend as it does higher in Durham.

The turn brings the river in view of a second dramatic viaduct: this concrete and box girder wonder 50 metres up takes the A19 across the narrow gorge. The contrast with the Victoria viaduct is striking. The Golden Lion pub on the right bank is tempting, but the Shipwrights is a bit further on the other side. Down river from the Shipwrights is an amazing pile of decaying iron ship and vessel parts, clearly the Poseidon of the north. You may have the curiosity to paddle past them and get out where the bank comes down. You may get off nearer the A19 viaduct. The finish is at the Shipwrights Arms at North Hylton, on your left side.

Useful Information

<http://www.visitnortheastengland.com/site/what-to-see-and-do/attractions/penshaw-monument-p293151>

http://www.picturesofengland.com/England/Tyne_&_Wear/North_Hylton

<http://www.durhamcathedral.co.uk/>

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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
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

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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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