

RIVER AVON (WARWICKSHIRE)
Stratford-upon-Avon to Bidford
Moderate to Challenging Trail (In high water)

Route Summary

This part of the Avon lies about 30 miles south of Birmingham, not far from the M42, and near to Warwick, Kenilworth and Leamington Spa. It is very accessible from all of the Midlands, and just east of the major fruit-growing area of the Vale of Evesham, much visited during the Spring due to the tree blossom.

The upper Avon is a beautiful river, with long-slow stretches, and occasional small rapids and weirs. Both the start and finish towns are worth visiting in their own right; Stratford is of course world-famous for its long association with William Shakespeare, and is a major tourist spot.

Nearest Town - Stratford-upon-Avon

O.S. Sheets - 151 – Stratford-upon-Avon and 150 Worcester and Malvern

Start

Stratford-on-Avon – SP 204547

Both sides of the river below the main road bridge in Stratford are used by larger boats, and launching is easy, with car parks nearby. It is possible at quiet times to park on the street alongside the theatre, next to the river, and launch in front of the theatre. However, if the traffic is just too much, an alternative is to launch a bit further upstream at Tiddington village – over the main road bridge south, turn left on to the B4086, and after a mile, in Tiddington, turn left down a lane to the river (SP 221561). You are now near to the very top of the Avon Navigation.

Stratford has all tourist facilities, with many cafes, restaurants, and also public toilets near to the canal basin.

Stratford is 8 miles south-west off Junction 15 of the M40, about 25 miles south of Birmingham, 18 miles east of Worcester, and 40 miles north of Oxford.

Finish

Bidford-on-Avon – SP 098516

Waterways Travelled - River Avon

Type of Water - Rural river – a navigation with locks and weirs

Distance - 10 miles

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](#) or [Waterscape](#)

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Local Facilities

Both Stratford and Bidford have public toilets and plenty of cafes and restaurants

Vehicle Shuttle Required

Yes - The B439 runs along the north bank of the river from Stratford down to Bidford. At Bidford, cross the bridge over the Avon, and turn immediately right on to a large grass field, where parking is charge for at weekends and on bank holidays.

For all facilities, go back over the bridge into the town of Bidford.

Portages and Locks - 6 Locks and weirs,

Details of the weirs are in the text, but all should be inspected from the bank first. Although a navigation, the Avon is a natural river, and still has a flow downstream. In high water, this will be noticeable, and a major safety factor to be considered. If on any doubt, always head for the lock, and portage around the lock and weir.

Description

Launching at Stratford is quite easy – just find a car parking spot! Both sides of the river below the main road bridge are used by larger boats, and launching is easy, with car parks nearby. However, if the traffic is just too much, an alternative is to launch a bit further upstream at Tiddington village – over the main road bridge south, turn left on to the B4086, and after a mile, in Tiddington, turn left down a lane to the river (SP 221561). You are now near to the very top of the Avon Navigation.

This start will give the paddler the trip right through Stratford, with some shallow water above the main bridge, and then the older bridge, now used by pedestrians. The imposing and obvious theatre is the large brick building on the right bank, re-built in recent years.

Round a long bend to the left, after half a mile is Lucy's Mill Weir, and Stratford Lock, which can be portaged on the left bank (the right is a private garden), or maybe shot on the left. Soon after are the A4390 by-pass bridge, and a footbridge, followed by Brake lock and weir. Portage can always be made somewhere around the lock on this river. A disused railway bridge adds some more interest, with shallow water before it, and the River Stour joins from the right, one of very many Stours in England.

There is now nearly three miles of countryside before Luddington Weir and Lock, the weir being well-known for a rough ride if shot. Landing can be made on the concrete slipway to inspect, but there are many rocks below, and the way is down the right side in medium to high water. Binton Bridge then comes into view after a further mile and a half. This is the bridge for Welford village to the left, and there are several secret green islands here and many wildfowl, a very pretty place. The pub on the left is said to be a good one.

The river winds around Welford-on-Avon, another black and white half-timbered village, and very picturesque. Welford weir and lock is around a long bend to the left, the weir having an easy

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shoot in the centre as it is a gentle slope. Two more miles of gentle countryside brings you to Pilgrim Weir and lock, again find a way around.

One more weir follows, Barton, just above Bidford, weir on the left, the lock on the right. Bidford has a very easy place to finish, a landing-stage just below the B 4085 bridge on the left bank, up to a large car park on a field, busy all summer.

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Another pretty village, and a great end to an enjoyable day trip.

Useful Information

As indicated above, this area has much to offer to the holiday-maker. Evesham is only 8 miles away to the south-west, and Worcester 20 miles to the west (Fladbury, between the two, has one of the largest canoe clubs in the country).

Stratford, though, acts like a magnet, and has much entertainment to offer.

www.visitstratforduponavon.co.uk/

www.stratford-upon-avon.co.uk/

www.stratford-upon-avon.org/

www.avon-boating.co.uk/

www.stratford-upon-avon.co.uk/soaboats.htm

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, 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

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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