

River Severn Haw Bridge to Tewkesbury Moderate Trail

Route Summary

Paddle along the Severn which is one of the longest rivers in England, rising in Wales, and giving well over 100 miles of very canoeable water and some spectacular scenery as well as towns upon its lowest reaches which are all worth visiting, Worcester, Tewkesbury and Gloucester.

This trip overcomes two of the main problems in paddling the lower Severn – that of the very high banks, and difficulty of access, and also undertaking a short trip, as access points from roads can be few and far between.

Nearest Town – Tewkesbury

O.S. Sheets - 162 Gloucester & Forest of Dean and 150 Landranger Map (1:50 000) Worcester & The Malverns

Start - Haw Bridge SO 844278, Tewkesbury Gloucestershire (Post Code GL19 4HJ)

Haw Bridge is situated on the B4213, reached from Tewkesbury by driving south for 3 miles on the A38, and turning right on to the Ledbury road, the B4213 for 2.75 miles. Haw is very useful, in that it has floating BWB pontoons, avoiding the dreaded mud problem on many lower reaches of river.

The pontoon is beside the pub, which is the only building.

Tewkesbury is near to Junction 9 on the M5.

Finish - Same as the start, or egress at Lower Lode, SO 880316 (Post Code GL19 4HJ), Upper Lode Lock, SO 880328 (Post Code GL19 4HJ), or at Tewkesbury SO 891329 (Post Code GL19 4HJ)

Waterways Travelled – River Severn

Type of Water - River rural

Distance - 12 miles

Licence Information - A licence to paddle the river is included in the Canoe England membership fee. Otherwise licenses 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 facilities are mainly in the town plus there is a pub nearby.

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Vehicle Shuttle – is not required as it is an out and back trail.

Portages and Locks - 1 portage

Two factors will affect the time to paddle the trail – any possible wind, and the flow of the river. Do not attempt if river is very high, as paddling against the flow will be difficult or impossible. If there is a high wind, then paddling this distance would be very difficult against the wind.

The 'official' tidal limit is at Maisemore Weir, 5 miles below Haw Bridge, above Gloucester, BUT at Spring high tides, the tidal affect can be felt up to Tewkesbury. Therefore, paddling during, or just after stormy weather is not advised.

Description

Haw Bridge is a very useful as a start point, in that it has floating BWB pontoons, avoiding the dreaded mud problem on many lower reaches of river.

These act as moorings for the inn, so paddlers should both be careful and considerate, using either one of the four parking places on the road above the pontoon, or the pub car park (asking first). If leaving vehicles here, and returning, the suggested trip, it would be reasonable to go in and use the pub afterwards. Launching from the pontoons is very straightforward.

Haw Bridge is a modern structure, built in 1961, the former bridge being demolished by an empty tanker barge heading downstream. You will have worked out already that you are paddling upstream, heading towards Tewkesbury – this is comparatively easy if there are not winter floods. In fact, at very high Spring tides, the weir at Gloucester can be overpowered, and water flow upstream. Proceeding under the bridge, there is 4.5 miles of river, with several pubs on the way, both sides (the sites of old ferry points), and then, with a pub or hotel on both sides, and an island ahead, you will see the impressive Cheltenham School Rowing club on the right bank.

Just upstream of this is a public launch point and slipway and parking area. In summer months, a small passenger ferry plies back and forth here.

It is impressive to think that a couple of hundred years ago, rivers such as the Severn had many ferries, and almost no bridges.

At this point, Lower Lode, a tiny stream, winds up for about a mile into Tewkesbury, ending at an old mill, and a large weir. This is an interesting paddle, but there is no easy way off the river, so you have to retrace your steps. The other side is the main river, and it is a mile up to Upper Lode Lock. It is possible to portage this lock, which is on the left

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side of the river as you proceed upstream, with the large weir on the right side. It is best to aim up the left bank, and land on the left side before the lock. You can then move upriver to the loop around the lock and weir island, and in half a mile, Tewksbury can be seen, and the lock above which is the River Avon.

Be careful here, as this area is designed to let boats out of the Avon into the Severn, not as a transfer place for canoes, and egress is not easy.

Coming back downstream, obviously, you will have the current with you, and the 6 miles or 4.5 miles will go past very quickly!

The Severn is one of the longest rivers in England, rising in Wales, and giving well over 100 miles of very canoeable water. It does not end in an industrial conurbation as do the Thames and Trent, and the towns upon its lowest reaches are all worth visiting, Worcester, Tewkesbury and Gloucester. With experience, a very enjoyable canoe-camping trip can be had upon the Severn. Below Stourport, the Severn is canalized, and then one comes across a series of very large weirs at islands, each with an attendant lock on the other side. As the river valley broadens out near to Worcester, the river is subject to great flooding in wet winters, one of the main reasons for there being few villages or towns on the river.

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Useful Information

River Level advice www.environment-agency.gov.uk/england-gloucestershire

Tewkesbury is a gem of a town, with its Abbey of the Blessed Virgin Mary being the second-largest parish church in England. It was consecrated in 1121.

<http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/canals-and-rivers/river-severn>

www.tewkesburyabbey.org.com/

www.ringing.demon.co.uk/abbey/twxbells.htm

www.tewkesbury.cotswolds.info/

Recommended Next Trail

If you have enjoyed this trail why not try out one of the many trails available.

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Safety Information

Spending an afternoon canoeing can be a fun way to experience nature, get a great work out and spend time with friends and family. It can also be a dangerous journey, if appropriate safety guidelines are overlooked. Always follow these basic rules.

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

ALWAYS be certain to let other know where you're going and when you're expected to return.

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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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