

River Tweed

Route Summary

This is a lovely trip on a relatively easy estuary, with plenty to see. Berwick has really three entities; Berwick itself is the old walled town on the north side of the River Tweed, with massive and impressive stone town walls. The river is crossed by four bridges, three roads and one rail. An ancient bridge in the centre of town crosses, still carrying traffic, upstream is a more modern road bridge, and the rail bridge, with great views, a quarter of a mile further upstream. More than a mile even further upstream, and halfway along this trip, is the recent by-pass bridge, high above the river. On the south side of the Tweed is first of all Tweedmouth, really the docks for the town, and still harbouring ships. Further out east is situated Spittal, a separate village, and now a minor holiday town. Spittal has all of the amenities you might desire.

Tides +0348 Dover, Standard Port North Shields

Nearest Town – Berwick-upon-Tweed

O.S. Sheets - Landranger No. xx Berwick-upon-Tweed

Start - Spittal Point car park, Sandstell Rd – NU 00542 51392 (Post Code TD15 1RX)

The start point is reached by crossing to the south side of the town via the oldest bridge, turning left, and carrying on heading outwards until reaching a parking sign for Spittal Point down Sandstell Road. Launching is on to sand immediately from the car park. The conditions of the river and sea here will inform you about the trip – in high winds, waves will be driving in from the open sea. There are two other possible launch points, each with problems – further inland at Tweedmouth is launching off seaweed-covered rocks, and below the Berwick town walls at the seaward end, is a sea level road, but again mud makes life difficult.

Finish – Spittal Point car park, Sandstell Rd – NU 00542 51392 (Post Code TD15 1RX)

Waterways Travelled – River Tweed

Type of Water - Tidal River and estuary

Distance – 8 miles – 3 to 4 hours

Licence Information – No licence required - tidal

Local Facilities – In Berwick-upon-Tweed, or in Spittal, near to the start

Vehicle Shuttle Required - No, not if completing the out-and-back route. If wishing to stop at West Ord,

If wishing to finish after 4 miles up at West Ord, parking is limited to one or two vehicles on open pasture land by the river - NT 94708 51983

The inland end of this trip is found by leaving Berwick on the south side of the river on the A698 towards Coldstream. About two miles after crossing the by-pass (A1 trunk road), is a turn to the right to Hornccliffe. Take this, and after a short distance this road goes left, go straight on (signposted West Ord), and at West Ord House (there is not a real village), again straight on. The

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road suddenly dips down a steep hill, the land is now unfenced, beware of animals, especially sheep, and turns right to run alongside the river. There is obvious parking at the entrance to a cottage some few hundred yards away, and don't block this. Access is very easy down a short bank to the river.

Portages and Locks – None

Description

The trip should be undertaken using high tide. Setting off from Spittal about an hour before high tide would bring the paddler nicely up to West Ord at slack tide, and the ebb can then be used to turn back to Spittal. The river is tidal for about a mile above your inland destination, ending at Union Bridge near to Horncliffe. Your trip will all be in England, the Scottish northern bank commencing at West Ord.

Leaving Spittal gives a great view of the layout of Berwick as a town, the red pantile roofs being obvious. This was as a result of the considerable Dutch and German trade with the east coast of both England and Scotland, and the tiles being imported in exchange for other goods.

On the left bank, Tweedmouth is a bit industrial, but it does not last long. As you will be on the water at near to high tide, keep an eye out for ships coming in or out.

You pass under the original old road bridge, then the more modern one, the river narrows and turns to the left, and after the railway bridge are sand or mud banks on both sides, so keep to the centre of the river, and do not proceed up the channel on your left, Yarrow Slake, which is a dead end!

The town is left behind, the river continues to bend to the left, and the new A1 bridge comes into sight looking like many a modern motorway bridge.

Immediately after the bridge, the Whiteadder water (pronounced 'Whitadder') joins on the right (north) side as you paddle up. This is a lovely little whitewater river further up its length, tumbling down from Border hills, and a delight in high water.

Houses and farms are on both banks, and in summer this is a very green and rich farming area, and very quiet. On the right side a couple of long islands signal the end of the trip. West Ord house is high on the left bank, but will be hidden in summer by trees. A lone cottage on the left bank, at near to river level, will tell you that the parking place in coming into sight on the left bank, but you might have to see your vehicle to ascertain the exact spot – it is all low and green!

The end of the trip is likely to be one amongst many sheep, but no people – a nice quiet end to the expedition. It is possible to paddle a bit further up to Paxton House on the north bank, and walk through the grounds to a café, but no egress by vehicle here. If returning back to Spittal, merely retrace your paddle strokes

Useful Information

At the start at Spittal, the promenade just round the corner from the river mouth has toilets and cafes etc. No facilities at West Ord

Berwick-on-Tweed is well worth visiting in its own right, its town walls being some of the most complete in England.

To the south is a fantastic range of Northumberland castles, a result of the constant Border wars.

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Cheviot hill, and the Kielder Forest and Kielder water are to the south, and the ancient island of Lindisfarne and the Farne islands are also south down the coast

www.englishsnotheast.co.uk/BerwickuponTweed.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 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 and comply with navigation rules- keep to the right of on-coming boats.

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)

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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.

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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