

# RIVER TWEED, NORTHUMBERLAND



**NEAREST TOWN** – Berwick-on-Tweed

**O.S. SHEETS** – 75 Berwick-upon-Tweed & surrounding area

**START** – Spittal Point car park, Sandstell Rd – NU 00542 51392

**FINISH** – Either return to same point, or park at West Ord – NT 94708 51983

**TYPE OF WATER** – Tidal, Tides +0348 Dover, Standard Port North Shields

**DISTANCE** – 8 miles return trip

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION** – This is a tidal river and is also open to winds

## VEHICLE SHUTTLE REQUIRED

Yes if wishing to finish after 4 miles up at West Ord, but parking is limited to one or two vehicles on open pasture land by the river (see directions in text)

## PORTAGES

None

## LOCAL FACILITIES

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

## DESCRIPTION

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 road 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.

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.

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 Horncliffe. 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 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.

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 is 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

## **NEARBY VISITOR ATTRACTIONS**

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.

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.englandsnortheast.co.uk/BerwickuponTweed.htm](http://www.englandsnortheast.co.uk/BerwickuponTweed.htm)