

STRATFORD UPON AVON CANAL

Easy to Moderate Trail

Route Summary

Paddle over the longest navigable canal aqueduct in England, under split bridges and the beautiful but hidden Stratford [Canal](#) in Warwickshire.

The route is rural and sets off from the small hamlet of Preston Bagot, crossing the Stratford to Birmingham Road (A3400) at Wootton Wawen and finishing at the Edstone Aqueduct. There is a short additional route to Featherbed Lane Bridge in Wilmcote.

The route can be done in either direction, as a single trip or as a there and back. Wind direction can help determine which direction you do it in but ending on the magnificent Edstone Aqueduct is always a good climax.

There are convenient stopping points along the way with good access points, places to stop for breaks as well as buy provisions if necessary.

Nearest Town – Stratford Upon Avon

O.S. Sheets – Explorer Map (1:25 000) Stratford-upon-Avon & Evesham
OS Landranger Map (1:50 000) 151 Stratford-upon-Avon

Start

Warwick Old Road
Preston Bagot
Stratford upon Avon
Warwickshire
B95 5EF



Parking is on the old route of the Henley to Warwick Road at Preston Bagot, now a dead end layby. It has roadside parking. There is no charge but there are houses around so please respect local residents.

Preston Bagot is a small hamlet a mile east of Henley in Arden. Henley in Arden is 3.5 miles south of J16 of the M40.

There are no toilets or changing facilities at the start or end of the trail. Shops and pubs are available in Henley and Wootton Wawen. There is a train station in Henley, Wootton Wawen, Bearley and Wilmcote.

Finish

Salter's Lane
Bearley
Stratford upon Avon
Warwickshire
B95 6DT

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Parking at the end is in a marked layby specifically for parking underneath the aqueduct. It is free. The number of spaces is limited but there is scope to double park if you have the back space.

Salter's Lane is 3 miles south of Henley in Arden.

There are no toilets or shops at the get out but there are in Wootton Wawen 2 miles north.

The alternative get out is by bridge 59 (Featherbed Lane). Parking here is on street parking and it's a sensitive village as it's where [Mary Arden's House](#) is.

Type of Water - flat canal water with locks and low swing bridges. There is one narrow lock which should not be used in a canoe or kayak.

Access:-

North end (start) has good level access on grass paths.

To and from the canal at Wootton Wawen is good with some extended inclines to the village.

Southern end (Edstone Aqueduct) is down a long flight of steps (with a handrail).

If you choose to continue to Wilmcote, there is a good ramped access to the road. This is adjacent to the railway station.

Swing bridges are often very low and if you are not sure you can get under the bridge then portage on the tow path side. If you think there is enough clearance under the bridge take it into consideration that some of the structure might be jutting out eg nuts and bolts and pass under carefully.

Distance

4 miles - 3 hours (single trip). An additional 1.5 miles can easily be added on if you wish to extend the end of your journey.

Licence Information

A licence to paddle the river is included in the [Canoe England membership](#) fee. Otherwise licences can be obtained from [Canal & River Trust](#) (Take your Canoe England membership card with you as it is your licence as well)

Vehicle Shuttle Required- Yes (It is possible to do this trail as an out and back so no car shuttle would be required)

Portages – One

Description

The 'get in' is below the lock and is best done from the 'lock landing' below the bridge that you've driven over immediately below lock number 38. Take care walking down the road and use the gateway onto the towpath next to the bridge. The 'lock landing' is used by narrow boaters approaching the lock (and leaving it) to get their crew on and off. Don't leave canoe/kayaks right on the lock landing until you're ready to launch, leaving it clear for any boats coming up to the lock. There's plenty of space on the slope around it. When you get on the water, make sure that you can get straight on and go through bridge 47a as quick as possible as it can get a bit tight if you're on the water and a boat comes through and needs to use the lock landing.

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The interesting thing about this spot is you can see 3 ages of road building. The grandad- original one took the road across the old split bridge, the most southerly of the 3. Then the narrow steel daddy bridge (next to lock 38) and then the youngest current concrete bridge is the biggest and the only one with a towpath underneath it.

Set off south away from the lock.

Pass under numerous bridges. Always keep to the right when paddling down the canal. The split bridge never lifted but had fixed gaps for the ropes used to tow the boats to pass through as the horses plodded down the towpath. Why not try it with a throwline?

There are some wide points on the towpath at bridges to stop for a picnic. Alternatively stop at the Navigation pub in [Wootton Wawen](#). There are also good facilities in the village including a craft centre, post office and shops. To get to this, get out by bridge 53 and head down the lane. The craft centre is ahead at the bottom of the lane (100m) and local shops are in the village on the far side of the craft centre. Turn left down the lane and right down the main road.

Back on the water, cross the aqueduct at Wootton Wawen taking care to wave respectfully at the drivers passing beneath and seeing if one will honk their horn.

As you approach lock 39 (known as Odd Lock) make sure you're ready to jump out on the left at the lock landing. If there's a boat coming up the lock or following you to go down the lock, keep well clear. Immediately above the lock is a wide bit of canal known as a 'winding hole' where boats can turn. Best to keep well clear of any boats doing this!

Carry your boat around the lock and get on below. Help a boat through the lock if you fancy it and tell them about the wonders of canoeing.

Next is the [Edstone \(or Bearley\) Aqueduct](#), longest narrow aqueduct in England. Only set off across if there's nothing coming across. As it's quite exposed, cross winds can make paddling a little challenging. Edstone Aqueduct is one of three aqueducts on a 4 miles (6 km) length of the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal in Warwickshire. All are unusual in that the towpaths are at the level of the canal bottom. At 475 feet (145 m), Edstone is the longest aqueduct in England. It crosses a minor road, the Birmingham and North Warwickshire railway and also the track bed of the former Alcester Railway. There was once a pipe from the side of the canal that enabled locomotives to draw water to fill the loco's tank. The aqueduct was an early cast iron aqueduct crossing. It's now in the flight path for Birmingham airport so all major forms of transport meet here.

The get out is on the left immediately after the aqueduct. The steps down to the road start here.

If you're really keen, you can paddle back to the start and avoid having to move cars.

You can paddle on down to Wilmcote village with more bridges, twists and turns to explore. The get out is the bridge at Featherbed Lane. Access here is good but parking is limited.

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Featherbed Lane Bridge is arguably a trigger point for the conservation movement of the canal network. When it was threatened with destruction in the 1950s, it would have closed the canal. Supporters campaigned to keep it open, a campaign which had a far bigger impact.

Note: this can easily be paddled starting from the southern end. There's a small flow heading south but a northerly wind can be a big help!

Useful Information:

This section of canal is managed by the Central Shires team based at Peel's Wharf, Lichfield Street, Fazeley, Tamworth, B78 3QZ www.canalrivertrust.org.uk

Contact the Canal & River Trust on 0303 040 4040.

The Canal & River Trust website holds useful information and links about the [Stratford Canal](#).

Other nearby visitor attractions

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.

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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.

- 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.

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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)

(May 2013)

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