

Tees Barrage to Yarm

Route Summary

Yarm is a delightful place to paddle with picturesque meadows and town. In summer the still water reaches bath temperature. You can paddle from Yarm downstream and return to the start when you have done enough (the pubs are excellent). A paddle to Preston Park and back can take a couple of hours if you go slowly.

For a longer paddle start at the Barrage in Stockton and enjoy the whole range. Paddle through many different environments to experience some of the wonderful things this area has to offer- historical buildings, nature reserves and regeneration are all within reach of this urban and rural trail.

Nearest Town- Stockton on Tees/Middlesbrough

O.S. Sheets - Middlesbrough 93

Start Information

Tees Barrage Car Park
Tees Barrage Way
Stockton-on-Tees
Durham
TS18 2QW

(NZ462191) The car park is reached from the A66 junction west of the A19, the barrage is well signposted from the A19 and A66. The car park is on the north bank of the river and is reached across a bridge over the huge Tees rail marshalling yard, and then over the bridge on top of the barrage, follow the road to the left.

Parking at the Barrage is pay parking. It is usually peaceful but can be busy if a canoeing competition is on, either slalom on the white water course, or for a flat water race upstream.

Important Information-There is now quite a bit of river traffic for the first few miles upriver, including power boats, and also many rowing skiffs at times. In high winter flood, there would be movement of water downstream on the river.

Finish Information

Yarm Bridge
Yarm
Durham
TS15 9BY

There is an Environment Agency platform on the north river bank just on the west side of the A67 after the bridge out of Yarm to Egglescliffe. The platform is reached down a well made track through a locked 5 bar gate opposite the Blue Bell pub. Small groups will find enough parking space at the pub.

Waterways Travelled – River Tees

Distance - 17 Miles

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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](#) or [Waterscape](#) (Take your Canoe England membership card with you as it is your licence as well)

Local Facilities – Parking, toilets and a shop at the Barrage. Stockton centre is only a mile away.

[Local Accommodation](#)

Description

The Tees Barrage is one of man's wonderful new engineering efforts – not only did it bring an artificial canoe slalom course to the north-east, but it cleaned up one of the country's most polluted rivers. This part of the Tees used to be a 'no-go' area, with tidal mud up river for many miles, and much pollution from heavy metals. The whole area – Middlesbrough, Thornaby, Stockton, and Billingham used to be a land of petro-chemical plants, engineering, the remains of old iron ore and coal mining, and a major port. The port is now a container one way down at Teesport, and the whole landscape has changed. Much of the lower estuary is now a major bird reserve.

This trail does give you the opportunity to paddle a quiet and green long lake, through the modernised Stockton-on-Tees.

After launching (easy to find), watch out for rowers, as they can't see you – there is now a major club at the [Durham University site](#) just upstream, and they practice ferociously, as Durham is a major rowing University!

An obvious and rather beautiful new footbridge from the University campus NZ 452190 (on the left bank), crosses to Stockton.

Next is [Surtees bridge](#) and after this, you are in new country. The housing either side is new, and this was derelict land not long ago. The industrial estates on your left are the new part of Thornaby, and further upstream is the brand-new settlement of Ingleby Barwick, and the river winds for some two miles in large bends, passing a bird reserve on reclaimed marshes on your right. Many different species of bird and duck will be sighted, as this is bird heaven – no disturbance here. The footpath on the right bank is the start of the Teesdale way, which follows the river upstream.

The new road bridge in sight is the feeder road from Stockton into Ingleby Barwick, and after a couple more bends, the road on the right bank is the A135 Stockton to Yarm road. The footpath comes back to the right bank, and more habitation appears.

The river starts to straighten out, and after another mile, the small River Leven joins from your left side (NZ 430127). The Leven rises in the Cleveland Hills to the south, winding through several commuter villages. The river is an attraction to paddle up, but beware that it is small, and has barbed wire across in several places. It is technically possible to go up as far as Leven Bridge, over a mile away. However, please be warned that there is absolutely no landing here, as the house owners have totally fenced off the river from any land, and erected private and warning notices. The bridge itself is also on a very busy and dangerous main road (the A1044), and there is no parking.

Ahead of you are the outskirts of Yarm, a very pleasant market town. A mile and a bit ahead, there is a possible exit from the river between the road and railway bridges (NZ 417131) river left.

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Parking is possible for a small group if you speak nicely to the Blue Bell pub. Otherwise it is a pleasant paddle back to the start.

Visitors might be interested to note that there are many more miles of the Tees between here and Darlington, with the river flowing around giant bends, giving much possible mileage to paddle. The main snag is that the river flows mostly in a deep valley, with little road access, but it is both beautiful, and untouched, and apparently little fished. Years ago, most paddlers were only interested in the white water upper stretches of the Tees, jealously preserved for salmon angling, and ignored the lower river. Cleaning it up has been a boom for everyone – more fish, and cleaner water!

Local Attractions

[Durham Cathedral](#)
[Tees Barrage](#)
[Durham Castle](#)
[The Tees Barrage International White Water Centre](#)
[Nature Reserves](#)

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

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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.

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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