

Trent and Mersey Canal Armitage to Fradley Easy to Moderate Trail Grading

Route Summary

The Trent and Mersey Canal runs from Preston Brook in Cheshire to Derwentmouth in Derbyshire. The waterway was conceived in the mid- 1700s by both Liverpool Corporation, and Josiah Wedgwood of the Potteries, and the plan was for the Grand Trunk canal, to link the ports of Liverpool and Hull. It was completed in 1777, and was the largest and most successful project for James Brindley. The 'Grand Cross' plan was to join the Mersey, Trent, Severn and Thames, and it was mostly achieved.

For its middle part, it parallels the River Trent as it flows from north Staffordshire east to the sea eventually via the Humber estuary. The two waterways come near together at Stone in Staffordshire, and stay together until Shardlow, east of Derby, where the Trent becomes canalised.

The route is contained within a triangle formed by Rugeley to the west, Burton-on-Trent to the north, and Lichfield to the south.

The area has always been popular with narrow boat owners, perhaps because it is so accessible, the main A38 road running up from Alrewas to past Burton alongside the canal, and has been much more prominent since the National Arboretum and Memorial has been opened just over the other side of the A38 at Alrewas.

Nearest Town - Lichfield

O.S. Sheets - Landranger No. 128 – Derby and Burton-upon-Trent

Start - Crown Inn, Armitage – SK 092162 (Post Code WS15 4DT)

Finish - Crown Inn, Armitage – SK 092162 (Post Code WS15 4DT)

Waterways Travelled – The Trent and Mersey Canal

Type of Water - canal

Distance – 9 miles

Licence Information - A licence to paddle the canal 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)

Local Facilities – Both Alrewas and Armitage have toilets and shops and pubs – Lichfield has more facilities

Vehicle Shuttle Required - No

Portages and Locks – 6 to portage (3 out and 3 back)

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Description

Armitage is a pleasant village, maybe not as pretty as others in the Trent valley, as it has had an industrial heritage for many years. Its main trade, due to being near to the Potteries of north Staffordshire, was production of sanitary ware and if passing the factory at certain times, one can see hundreds of toilet bowls being loaded on to lorries.

Spode is just west of Armitage, as are 'The Narrows', indeed a narrow part of the canal, once a tunnel, where the roof has been removed. A new A513 road bridge did, in effect, make it another tunnel, due to the angle the bridge crosses the canal.

From the start point, heading east, the separate village of Handsacre is on the right bank, and then after the houses, one is soon in pleasant countryside.

Within half a mile are two road bridges, and the hamlet of Tuppenhurst on the left bank. The scenery is of heathland, oaks, birch, gorse and scrub. Several power lines cross the route, the lower Trent valley being a productive one for electricity generation.

At two miles, the canal goes under the A515, with a marina near the road, and woodland increases, pines and rhododendron on the right bank.

Before the sharp turn to the left, the southernmost point on this trip, is a large private estate bridge, and once at the turn, the locks are not far ahead.

The paddler has ahead three locks, No. 20, Wood End, and then the drop to Fradley Junction, with No. 19, Shade House, and No. 18, Fradley Middle.

Fradley (SK 140140) is said to be the second busiest junction in England, where the Coventry Canal joins, and the 'Swan' public house stands at a great place for business.

The Coventry Canal winds its way south past Lichfield, to Tamworth, Atherstone, Nuneaton, Bedworth and Coventry, a very important link in the London to Liverpool connection. It was built to carry coal both north and south from the Warwickshire coalfield centred on Bedworth.

The canal now only goes south for 5.5 miles, to Huddleston Junction, although restoration is planned to join up to the south.

Useful Information

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/riverlevels

The National Arboretum is on the east side of Alrewas, the other side of the A38, and is open every day of the year, free, except for Christmas Day. There are the usual facilities here, including for people with disability, and a gift shop etc. The River Tame, a Birmingham river, joins the Trent just outside the Arboretum area.

Lichfield is a pleasant cathedral town, and Burton-on-Trent is famous for its breweries.

www.thenma.org.uk

www.thenma.org.uk/visit/visitorinformation

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www.alrewas-staffs.info

www.alrewas.org.uk/

www.canalguide.co.uk/canals/britain

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.

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)

(Aug 2013)

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