

## River Thames Via St. Patrick's Stream to Henley Easy Trail

### Route Summary

This is a pretty alternative to the main river route from Reading to Henley, using one of the best-know backwaters, St. Patrick's Stream.

**Nearest Town** – Reading and Henley

**O.S. Sheets** - Landranger No. 175 – Reading and Windsor

**Start** - Wokingham Waterside Centre, Thames Valley Park Drive, Reading,  
Postcode: RG6 1PQ

The centre is at the Reading end of the A329M.

Huge field for picnics, and parking on the road (height restriction at the Centre car park). Public toilets.

All other facilities in Reading itself.

**Finish** – Mill Lane car park, Henley-on-Thames. SU 772817

Mill Lane is off the A4156 Reading Road. From the start, follow the A4 sign for Maidenhead, and after 2 miles, turn off towards Sonning. Cross the river bridge over the Thames, and turn right for Henley. After Shiplake, at a round-a-bout with a Tesco on the right, go straight on, and Mill Lane is just after a small garage, on the right side, after 100m.



**Waterways Travelled** – River Thames and St. Patrick's Stream

**Type of Water** - main navigable river and natural river all rural

**Distance** – 6 miles

**Licence Information** – A Thames Licence is required (<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/recreation/boating/31605.aspx> )

Canoe England Membership includes a Thames licence (take your membership card with you as it is your licence too)

**Local Facilities** – In Reading

**Vehicle Shuttle Required** - Yes - From the start, follow the A4 sign for Maidenhead, and after 2 miles, turn off towards Sonning. Cross the river bridge over the Thames, and turn right for Henley. After Shiplake, at a round-a-bout with a Tesco on the right, go straight on, and Mill Lane is just after a small garage, on the right side, after 100m.

**Portages and Locks** – 2 locks

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## Description

Paddle downstream towards Sonning lock. This section is known as Dreadnought Reach. As you go down stream to your left is the Caversham Rowing Lakes otherwise known as the Redgrave-Pinsent Rowing Lake. It was created by the selective dredging and reclamation of part of the Caversham Lakes, a string of lakes that adjoin the River Thames, which were originally created as a result of gravel extraction.

Sonning Lock is a particularly pretty lock and as you enter the lock area the canoe portage is on the right hand side near the lock gates. In the summer months there is the opportunity to buy snacks here. The entry point for canoes (if you are not going through the lock) is just the other side of the lock but do take care carrying your canoe through the gates. The portage is signposted well.

Once back on the water you paddle under the Sonning Bridge. It is a brick arch bridge completed in 1775, to replace an earlier wooden bridge. It is only the width of one car so the traffic is controlled by traffic lights. To the left of the bridge is the Mill Theatre. This Dinner Theatre produces all its own electricity from the old mill stream. To the right is the village of and it has a few good restaurants.

As you leave Sonning you are once again out in the countryside with the occasional house on the bank. About 1.5 miles downstream after Sonning you will see a largish turning off to the right and this is the entrance to St Patrick's Stream. It is marked by a small bridge and a notice declaring "it's not suitable for launches". The stream is not as wide at this all the way, but never the less it is a beautiful trip.



St Patrick's Stream can be paddled all year round but do be aware of anglers if paddling it out of the closed fishing season, March 15th to June 15th. The river level can drop dramatically in dry periods so if you are using a boat with an under stern rudder especially at the start of the stream as you need to stay left as the small lip there on the right can remove rudders!

St Patrick's Stream bypasses a lock and drops about 5 feet over about two miles. The stream winds its way through countryside and about two thirds of the way down is another stream which comes in from the left. There is a small weir a few meters up this stream and although very small is fun to paddle in.

There is a lot of really interesting wildlife here so one can just enjoy the sheer beauty of it all. You pass a few large houses here ..please be considerate .. and just enjoy the waterway . The stream then joins the River Loddon and from there it's back on to the River Thames just below Shiplake Lock. Turn back to look at the exit as that is a scene worth enjoying too.

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Continue downstream under the railway bridge and past some boat yards. On the right before the bend is Wargrave Boat Club. Just after the bend is the George and Dragon Public House and restaurant. There are mooring places alongside the pub so if you desire you can stop and “refuel” here.

Continue on downstream keeping to the main channel. You pass some really beautiful houses many of which are extremely old. Because the next lock is unusually situated on the opposite side of the river to the towpath, a long wooden bridge is how one crosses from the lock back to the towpath. This feature is unique on the River Thames.

Upon approaching the next lock (Marsh Lock) you need to move to the right hand side of the wooden posts which mark the lock as the canoe portage is on the right hand side of these in the side channel. You cross the lock gates and climb over the chain and then carry your boat across Monkey Marsh Bridge. This is the end of the journey. At the end of the bridge you can carry your boat up the road (Mill Lane) to the car park (150 metres) or continue along the Thames path to the field and cross in to the car park from there.



### Useful Information

River Thames Conditions <http://riverconditions.environment-agency.gov.uk/>

This trail is best paddled from 15th March to 15th June which is in the closed coarse fishing period.

<http://www.millatsonning.com/>

<http://www.sonning.net/>

<http://www.wargraveboatingclub.co.uk/>

<http://www.marsport.co.uk/>

<http://www.wokinghamwatersidecentre.com/>

### 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 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

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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.

### **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.

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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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