

Wicken Fen Cambridgeshire Lodes Easy Trail Grading

Route Summary -

An unusual paddling experience along very quiet reed lined lodes. The Lodes date from Roman times and were built as transport canals and were very busy in the 17th and 18th century when waterways provided the only reliable access to the remote villages and towns of the Fens. Reach lode is initially a wide ditch but soon rises above the surrounding fenland which has subsided due to drainage and there are good views across a bleak watery landscape and a wide variety of birdlife, including kestrels, marsh harriers, finches, warblers and wildfowl. Lunch stop is the café at the National Trust reserve at Wicken Fen – which has a very interesting interpretive centre (free). There is a charge for entry on foot to Wicken Fen reserve but you can paddle through for free! From Wicken you can either return to Reach or continue to Burwell.

Nearest Town - Burwell

O.S. Sheets - Landranger 154 Cambridge and Newmarket



Entrance to Wicken Lode

Start - Head of navigation on Reach Lode TL 564 663

Drive right through the village to The Hythe. Small parking area (OK to leave a couple of cars) and turning circle in front of Electricity substation; the lode is on the left. Launch down the grass bank.

Finish -

Football club car park (use the outer car park) near the end of Weirs Drove, Burwell. Follow Weirs Drove past a small bridge and right turn to Hythe Lane. The Sports Club is on the left. There is a 2m barrier at the gate. Egress is up the steep river bank either just before or just after the small bridge to Hythe Lane. There is a better landing stage at the head of navigation (further along Weir Drove – then at Anchor Lane) but parking is very limited.



Getting out at Burwell

Waterways Travelled - Reach, Wicken and Burwell Lodes

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Type of Water Rural Fen

Distance – 8 miles/12.9 Km

Canoe Trail Grading – Easy

License Information- A licence to paddle the river is included in the Canoe England membership fee. Otherwise licenses can be obtained from (<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/recreation/boating/31605.aspx>)

(Take your Canoe England membership card with you as it is your licence as well)

Local Facilities - Dykes End' pub in Reach, 'Five miles for anywhere-no hurry Inn' at Upware, Café at Wicken Fen reserve and several pubs in Burwell.

Vehicle Shuttle Required – Yes

Information for car shuttle. - Drive back into Reach village follow signs to Burwell (left turn) - Burwell Rd. In 1Km turn left into Weir Drove.

Portages and Locks – None - Access and egress at Reach and Burwell is not suitable for paddlers with limited mobility. There is a good landing stage with wheelchair access at Wicken; it might be possible to paddle the Lodes from Wicken by arrangement with the reserve manager.

Description -

Launch into the lode down the grassy bank its straight forward for both canoes and kayaks, but please no seal launching so we protect the bank. Initially the lode is enclosed by high banks but soon the surrounding land drops away and the waterway runs on the top of an embankment, giving good views across a lonely fenscape. In 2.5Km you will reach the junction of Reach and Burwell lodes and soon the wooden turnover bridge at the entrance to Wicken Lode. If you continue on Reach lode for another 1Km you will come to Upware lock which leads onto the river Great Ouse. Land on the right hand bank and you can walk to the "Five miles from anywhere – no hurry" riverside pub.

Pass under the wooden bridge and continue on Wicken lode. The lode is high above the surrounding land which has shrunk as the fen was drained. Wicken Fen itself is kept artificially wet to preserve an original fen environment. You will pass the high lookout hide on your left; you are 1km to the café. The navigation originally continued onto Monks lode but is now closed by a low bridge. Turn left along the narrow lode to the National Trust interpretive centre and café. Land at the landing stage on the left. Please do NOT sit at the picnic tables around the café and eat your own lunch or drink your own flasks; the tables are there for Café customers. The café sells coffee, light lunches, pasties, etc and excellent cakes!



Wicken Fen and Windmill

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Retrace your route to the junction of Reach and Burwell lodes. If you continue to Burwell, you can land at the EA stage at the head of navigation, but parking is very limited. It is best to turn right at the end of the navigation and continue along the narrow lode to the small bridge where you can get out up the bank either before or just after the bridge. The lode is shallow. A line will be useful for recovering your canoe or kayak up the bank.

Useful Information

Wicken Fen National Trust Reserve: 01353 720274
Lode Ln, Wicken, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB7 5XP

<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/wicken-fen/things-to-see-and-do/>

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

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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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