

Bridgwater and Taunton Canal- Maunsel Lock to Creech St Michael (and return)

Easy to Moderate Trail Please be aware that the grading of this trail was set according to normal water levels and conditions. Weather and water level/conditions can change the nature of trail within a short space of time so please ensure you check both of these before heading out.



Cutting in Bridgwater

Route Summary

Canoe along one of England's best kept secrets. The Bridgwater and Taunton Canal opened in 1827 and links the River Tone to the River Parrett. It is a well-kept secret but a well-managed one! Local people, have set up a volunteer wardens scheme to look after their canal and their success can be shown in its beauty and peacefulness.

This canal might be cut off from the rest of the system, but it has well-maintained towpaths and fascinating lock structures which make for idyllic walking and peaceful boating.

Distance: 8 miles

Approximate Time: 2-3 Hours

The time has been estimated based on you travelling 3 – 5mph (a leisurely pace using a recreational type of boat).

Type of Trail: Out and Back

Waterways Travelled: Bridgwater and Taunton Canal

Type of Water: Rural Canal

Portages and Locks: 2

Nearest Town: Bridgwater/ Taunton

Start and Finish: Maunsel Lock TA7 0DH

O.S. Sheets: OS Map 182 Weston-Super-Mare OS Map 193 Taunton and Lyme Regis

Licence Information: A licence is required to paddle on this waterway. See full details in useful information below.

Local Facilities: At the start and part way down the canal

Because the canal is so quiet, it is very good for wildlife – fantastic dragonflies, kingfishers, etc – so if you are able do take your binoculars with you!

Start and Finish Directions

There are many possibilities for journeys on this canal. This particular trail starts from Maunsel Lock, where you can easily park and travels south. It is possible to go north too.

Postcode: TA7 0DH

Grid ref: ST316294

Lat: 51:03:37N (51.06041)

Lon: 2:58:35W (-2.97631)

Maunsel Lock is mid-way along the beautiful Bridgwater & Taunton Canal. It is along the edge of the picturesque Somerset Levels, and as well as a lock there is a Canal Centre and Tea Shop. Whether you arrive by boat, bike, car or on foot, Maunsel Lock is a beautiful starting or rest point for walkers, cyclists, canoeists and boaters of all ages.

Description

To begin your journey carry your canoe over the bridge and launch at the other end of the lock, and this will point you in a southerly direction. Not long after you start you will encounter Higher Lock. Portage on the towpath side. Don't forget to find out where the Sun model is!

After just over a mile you come in to the outskirts of Durston. The parish lies on undulating ground between the lowest slopes of the Quantock Hills and the valley of the River Tone at the Curry and Hay Moors.

The Bridgwater and Taunton Canal runs through the village. It is crossed by two bridges, Headworthy and Swan's Neck.

You reach Creech St Michael after another one and a half miles. The name derives from a Creech, or creek, on the River Tone, which creates an island in the river to the south of the village, and the parish church of St. Michael, which dates from the 12th century. On the canal at Creech St. Michael is the site of the former junction with the Chard Canal which was opened in 1842 (the last "small" canal to be built in Britain) but was closed just 26 years later.

The Bridgwater & Taunton Canal provides a picturesque route through the village for pleasure boats, and the tow path is open to pedestrians and cyclists. There are also dramatic remains of the Chard Canal, including the (filled) junction with the Bridgwater & Taunton Canal, a raised embankment leading south from the village, a ruined aqueduct that would have carried the canal over the River Tone and the abutments of a second aqueduct across a local road.

This is the end of your journey before you turn to head back to Maunsel. It is possible to picnic on the bank here and the village has some good amenities including a variety of public houses.

To extend your journey you could paddle on for another mile to Bathpool and then from there another two miles to Firepool Lock and the junction with the River Tone in Taunton. You may wish to turn here as portaging this lock can be quite challenging.



If you chose to go on keep right away from the weir and paddle through Taunton where you will find several landing places. There is a park (French Weir Park) after Priory Bridge and the castle which has amenities and a place to picnic.

Alternative routes:-

You can start at Maunsel and head north. From here you can paddle all the way up to the River Parrett in Bridgwater docks where there is no access. This is a distance of just over seven miles with 3 portages (6 for a round trip) This route takes you up through North Newton, Kings Lock (No. 4), Standards Lock (No. 5), Fordgate, Huntworth and Mead before you reach Lock No, 6 Bridgwater Dock which is the end of the canal.

Useful Information

The waterways in this trail are managed by Canal and Rivers Trust and require paddlers to hold a licence. If you are an existing British Canoeing member the good news is that your membership includes an annual licence for the waterways covered within this trail – please ensure you take your membership card with you on the water as this acts as your licence, if stopped with no licence, you will be at risk of being fined.

You can buy a licence directly from [Canal and Rivers Trust](http://www.canal-rivers-trust.org) for this waterway or by becoming a British Canoeing member you'll have a licence to cover you for a whole year. A British Canoeing membership gives you a whole range of benefits including licenses to paddle on 4500km of Britain's waterways and Civil Liability Insurance, worth up to £10 Million. If you are planning to paddle regularly this will save you great deal of money and hassle alongside having peace of mind. For more information on British Canoeing membership please [click here](#)

The towpath is part of Route 3 of the National Cycle Network.

There were several schemes to join the Bristol and English Channels but the only sections built were the Bridgwater and Taunton canal and the Grand Western Canal.

The Canal is part of the Taunton Stop Line – a World War Two fortification – there are pill boxes and dragons' teeth along the canal. Many people find this interesting and anyone in a canoe would be sure to notice the pill boxes.

The Cutting in Bridgwater is unusual and it's lovely to go through in a canoe! This leads to the docks, where there is some unusual poetry carved on the beams.

The Somerset Space Walk is on the canal walk between Bridgwater and Taunton. Along the canal are scaled models of the planets which are placed at accurate intervals along the canal in both directions from the sun at Higher Maunsel Lock. The scale model (530 million: 1) of the Solar System is centred around the 'Sun' at Maunsel lock.

Further useful information can be found on the following websites:

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

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



CANOEING SAFETY ADVICE

Spending an afternoon or day canoeing on a Canoe Trail can be a fun way to experience nature, help you to stay fit and healthy and enjoy spending time with friends and family. It can also be a dangerous journey, if appropriate safety guidelines are overlooked. To help make sure you remain safe at all times, read on to see our canoeing safety advice guidelines.

Wear appropriate clothing

Always wear shoes. Rocks, rough terrain and river beds present serious hazards to boaters without the proper attire. Nearly 90% of all boating injuries are attributed to lack of proper footwear. Other canoe safe clothing includes hats, gloves, additional dry clothing, and layered items which can easily be removed. Take or wear a windproof top and course always wear a buoyancy aid - for children make sure the crotch straps are used.

Be sure to:

- Know the weather forecast and check the water conditions before you set out canoeing. There is an [Environment Agency](#) website where information concerning river levels can be found. We recommend checking this before heading out as the river levels can rise and fall quite quickly in wet or dry conditions.
- Observe navigation rules for this waterway.
- Check to see if there are any events on the waterways when you wish to travel.
- Check that your equipment is well maintained and ready for the water.
- Check that your boat has the required buoyancy to keep it afloat in the event of a capsize

ALWAYS be certain to let others know where you're going and when you're expected to return.

MAKE SURE that the journey you plan is within your capabilities.

MAKE SURE you never paddle alone.

Equipment Checklist

Use the canoeing safety advice checklist below to make sure you have everything you need:

- Boat
- Paddle
- Buoyancy Aid
- Bailer/sponge
- Small First Aid Kit
- Phone (in a waterproof bag)
- Drinking water and snacks
- Suitable clothing for the weather



Photo by James Carnegie

Environmental Good Practice

One of the great things about paddling a canoe trail is enjoying the journey and different environments that you paddle through. So when you are out on the water please consider the following things to help keep the wonderful waterways and environment as you found them and to avoid accidentally disturbing wildlife and their habitats.

- Take your **litter** home with you
- Keep **noise** to a minimum
- Where possible keep to any **designated paths or launching points**.
- **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.
- Canoe a **safe distance away from wildlife**. If you see signs of disturbance move away quietly.
- Familiarise yourself with the local area, its **sensitive places and protected areas**
- On rivers, **avoid paddling over gravel banks** in low water conditions – they may contain fish spawn.
- 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
- When clearing litter left by others, **handle it with care**.
- **Be the eyes and ears on the water**. Report pollution, wildlife problems, damage, incidents etc to the relevant authorities: **Canal & River Trust**, Emergencies: 0800 47 999 47

RSPCA for wildlife and animals in distress: 0300 1234 999 (24 hours)

Environment Agency: 0800 80 70 60 (24 hours)



CHECK, CLEAN, DRY

Help minimise the spread of invasive aquatic species and disease by following the campaign advice before putting your canoe and equipment in and out of the water (some invasive species can survive in damp or wet conditions for five or six days on water recreation clothing and equipment).

- **CHECK** all your equipment and clothing for living organisms and plants fragments. Pay particular attention to areas that are damp and hard to inspect.
- **CLEAN** and wash all equipment, clothing and footwear thoroughly away from water source. If you do come across any organisms, leave them at the water body where you found them. When practical, completely dry out all equipment and clothing before going to a new site.
- **DRY** all equipment and clothing - some species can live for many days in moist conditions. Dry your kit with towels. Make sure you don't transfer water elsewhere.

Canoeists and kayakers take environmental concerns very seriously and already follow existing voluntary environmental codes of conduct. You can find more information about canoeing and the environment in British Canoeing's two publications covering inland and coastal paddling '**You and Your Canoe**'. Both are available on the [British Canoeing website](#).

*We have taken great care to ensure the currency, accuracy and reliability of this information. We cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions but where such are brought to our attention; the information will be amended accordingly. Users should be aware that environmental conditions outside of our control can change the nature of the Trail within a short space of time. It is recommended that weather and water conditions are checked beforehand, and tide timetables where applicable. **This trail was last reviewed in May 2013***

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