

River Lee Navigation; Hertford to Broxbourne

Level of Trail: Moderate. Please be aware that the grading of this trail was set according to normal water levels and good environmental conditions. Environmental conditions can change the nature of the trail within a short space of time. Please check weather and water level/conditions before heading out.

Route Summary

An easy trip down the Lee Navigation, towards London. This trip can be paddled as a one way, day trip or be broken down into three, out and back, trips.

The Lee Navigation runs from rural Hertfordshire in to the centre of London. It is a natural river which was been improved for navigation under an Act of Parliament in 1767.

Start Directions

Hartham Lane Car Park is a long car park, with the far end being only a 10 metre walk from the river. There is easy access to the navigation from here.

Description

The River Lee Navigation was extended to Hertford in 1767, increasing the prosperity of the town with its link to London. During the 18th century Hertfordshire was one of the most important counties in England for the production of crops, particularly barley, with malting being one of the town's principal industries.

From your put in you turn left, downstream. Before heading off, however, you may want to go slightly upstream to take a look at the former workmen's cottages, factories and malt houses served by the navigation. The Barge pub is on the right.

Distance: 8.75 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).

Waterways Travelled: Lee Navigation

Type of Water: Canalised River

Type of Trail: One way

Portages and Locks: 7

Nearest Town: Hertford

Start: Hartham Lane Car Park, SG14 1QN. Grid ref. TL 326130

Finish: Broxbourne Old Mill, EN10 7AX

O.S. Sheets: Landranger 166, Luton and Hertford

Licence Information: A licence is required to paddle this waterway. See full details in the Useful Information section below.

Local Facilities: All facilities are available in Hertford. There are opportunities for stops on the route for refreshments.

Turn back down the navigation and go past the marina on your right, with a large weir to the left. Pass under two bridges before reaching Hertford lock after 0.5 miles. Portage to the right of the lock. The navigation is wide, reflecting the amount of trade which was carried out on the navigation.



Head of the navigation in Hertford

The River Beane, from Stevenage, enters from the left and to the right of the navigation is a wide open space. Known as King's Meads, it is a flood plain which is important for wildlife and is managed by Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust. It is also the out take for the

New River, which was constructed in 1613 to provide water for London.

Half a mile after passing under the A10 viaduct you will reach Ware Lock.

This can be portaged to the left. It can be a little tricky descending the flight of steps but should not present any real problems.

Coming into Ware, you will notice the pretty, 18th century, riverside gazebo's which stand in the former gardens of the High Street coaching inns that used to run down to the river. There used to be more of these gazebos but many fell into disrepair until the remaining ten were recently restored. It is possible to stop here for refreshments in the town.



Gazebos at Ware

After leaving Ware the navigation turns south and enters the Lee Valley Park. The tow path is to the right, whilst to the left are flooded old gravel workings, inaccessible from the navigation.

At 3.25 miles you will reach Conveyor Bridge lock, which is portaged on the right. From here the navigation is very straight but retains a rural feel and is never far from the sights and sounds of the railway.

After another mile comes Stansted Lock; portage to the right and set back off through Stansted St Margaret's. This can be an alternative

finish or turn back point for your paddle. There are plenty of places to get out and a marina on the left hand side of the navigation. The railway station is close by, with a small car park and frequent trains back to Hertford, if you want to go to collect your car.

After this point the river becomes more meandering, passing underneath the busy A414. You will reach Rye House Stadium, on your left, after around 6 miles. At weekends you may be able to hear and even see the karting which takes place at the stadium.

A little farther along you will arrive at Fieldes Weir Lock and the confluence with the Stort Navigation, coming in from Harlow and Bishop's Stortford. Portage on the right and continue for one mile to Dobbs Lock. Just before arriving at the lock you will see a cafe and car park on your left. This is another option to stop for refreshments or to shorten your trip if you are shuttling. Dobbs Lock is portaged on the left.

In the past Dobbs Weir was regularly used for whitewater training and playboating but it is currently deemed unsafe and the sluice gates are locked. Continue along the navigation to the Carthage Lock, also portaged to the left. From here it is just over half a mile to your finish point.

As you approach a bend in the river, you will see a leisure centre on your right. Carry on around the corner and turn right into a spur which has a 'No Entry' sign (this only applies to narrow boats). Here you will see a canoe and cycle hire company with a small landing stage and the Old Mill cafe. If you finish your route

here it is only a short walk to the remains of Broxbourne Mill, which was powered by the original river. It is also worth walking up the short hill to the church, from which you can see the New River again.



Old eel traps at Dobbs Weir

Finish Directions

There is an all day car park by the Mill, free of charge and with public conveniences. It is only a five minute walk to the train station to catch a train back to Hertford and your car.

There are many options to end this route early and use a car shuttle, including at Ware, St Margaret's, Stansted Lock and Dobbs Lock.

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](#)

Further useful information can be found on the following websites:

www.hertford.net

www.visitleevalley.org.uk

www.leeandstort.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

Environmental Good Practice



Photo by James Carnegie

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 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 October 2016***

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