

# River Severn- Haw Bridge to Tewkesbury

**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.

## Route Summary

Paddle along the Severn which is one of the longest rivers in England, rising in Wales, and giving well over 100 miles of very canoeable water and some spectacular scenery as well as towns upon its lowest reaches which are all worth visiting, Worcester, Tewkesbury and Gloucester.

This trip overcomes two of the main problems in paddling the lower Severn – that of the very high banks and difficulty of access, and also undertaking a short trip, as access points from roads can be few and far between.

## Start Directions

Haw Bridge SO 844278, Tewkesbury Gloucestershire  
(Post Code GL19 4HJ)

## Finish Directions

Same as the start, or egress at Lower Lode, SO 880316),  
Upper Lode Lock, SO 880328 or at Tewkesbury SO 891329  
(Post Code GL19 4HJ)

**Distance:** 12 miles

**Approximate Time:** 3-4 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:** River Severn

**Type of Water:** Rural River

**Portages and Locks:** 1 portage

**Nearest Town:** Tewkesbury

**Start:** Haw Bridge SO 844278, Tewkesbury  
Gloucestershire GL19 4HJ

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**O.S. Sheets:** 162 Gloucester & Forest of Dean and 150  
Landranger Map (1:50 000) Worcester & The Malverns

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

**Local Facilities:** The facilities are mainly in the town  
plus there is a pub nearby.

## Description

Haw Bridge is very useful as a start point, in that it has floating pontoons, avoiding the dreaded mud problem on many lower reaches of river.

These act as moorings for the inn, so paddlers should both be careful and considerate, using either one of the four parking places on the road above the pontoon, or the pub car park (asking first). If leaving vehicles here, and returning, the suggested trip, it would be reasonable to go in and use the pub afterwards. Launching from the pontoons is very straightforward.

Haw Bridge is a modern structure, built in 1961, the former bridge being demolished by an empty tanker barge heading downstream. You will have worked out already that you are paddling upstream, heading towards Tewkesbury – this is comparatively easy if there are not winter floods. In fact, at very high Spring tides, the weir at Gloucester can be overpowered, and water flow upstream. Proceeding under the bridge, there is 4.5 miles of river, with several pubs on the way, both sides (the sites of old ferry points), and then, with a pub or hotel on both sides, and an island ahead, you will see the impressive Cheltenham School Rowing club on the right bank.

Just upstream of this is a public launch point and slipway and parking area. In summer months, a small passenger ferry plies back and forth here. It is impressive to think that a couple of hundred years ago, rivers such as the Severn had many ferries, and almost no bridges.

At this point, Lower Lode, a tiny stream, winds up for about a mile into Tewkesbury, ending at an old mill, and a large weir. This is an interesting paddle, but there is no easy way off the river, so you have to retrace your steps. The other side is the main river, and it is a mile up to Upper Lode Lock. It is possible to portage this lock, which is on the left side of the river as you proceed upstream, with the large weir on the right side. It is best to aim up the left bank, and land on the left side before the lock. You can then move upriver to the loop around the lock and weir island, and in half a mile, Tewksbury can be seen, and the lock above which is the River Avon.

Be careful here, as this area is designed to let boats out of the Avon into the Severn, not as a transfer place for canoes, and egress is not easy.

Coming back downstream, obviously, you will have the current with you, and the 6 miles or 4.5 miles will go past very quickly!

The Severn is one of the longest rivers in England, rising in Wales, and giving well over 100 miles of very canoeable water. It does not end in an industrial conurbation as do the Thames and Trent, and the towns upon its lowest reaches are all worth visiting, Worcester, Tewkesbury and Gloucester. With experience, a very enjoyable canoe-camping trip can be had upon the Severn. Below Stourport, the Severn is canalized, and then you come across a series of very large weirs at islands, each with an attendant lock on the other side. As the river valley broadens out near to Worcester, the river is subject to great flooding in wet winters, one of the main reasons for there being few villages or towns on the river.

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## 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](#) 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](#)

Two factors will affect the time to paddle the trail – any possible wind, and the flow of the river. Do not attempt if river is very high, as paddling against the flow will be difficult or impossible. If there is a high wind, then paddling this distance would be very difficult against the wind. The 'official' tidal limit is at Maisemore Weir, 5 miles below Haw Bridge, above Gloucester, BUT at Spring high tides, the tidal affect can be felt up to Tewkesbury. Therefore, paddling during, or just after stormy weather is not advised.

Tewkesbury is a gem of a town, with its Abbey of the Blessed Virgin Mary being the second-largest parish church in England. It was consecrated in 1121.

Further useful information can be found on the following websites:

River Level advice <http://apps.environment-agency.gov.uk/river-and-sea-levels/120741.aspx?stationId=2063>  
<http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/canals-and-rivers/river-severn>  
<http://www.tewkesburyabbey.org.uk/>  
[www.ringing.demon.co.uk/abbey/twxbells.htm](http://www.ringing.demon.co.uk/abbey/twxbells.htm)  
[www.tewkesbury.cotswolds.info/](http://www.tewkesbury.cotswolds.info/)

## 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



Photo by James Carnegie

**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

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 August 2013***

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