

River Tees, Tees Barrage to Yarm Circular Trip

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

Yarm is a delightful place to paddle with picturesque meadows and town. In summer the still water reaches bath temperature. You can paddle from Yarm downstream and return to the start when you have done enough (the pubs are excellent). A paddle to Preston Park and back can take a couple of hours if you go slowly. For a longer paddle start at the Barrage in Stockton and enjoy the whole range. Paddle through many different environments to experience some of the wonderful things this area has to offer historical buildings, nature reserves and regeneration are all within reach of this urban and rural trail. Either way there is no significant current and the water is clean. Why not stop off on the way north to Scotland? Much nicer than a service station.

Start and Finish Directions

Tees Barrage Way Stockton-on-Tees TS18 2QW. Parking at the Barrage is pay parking – it will be busy if a canoeing competition is on, either a slalom on the course, or a flat water race upstream. Parking at to the north of the Barrage (north shore) is free.

Description

This trail does give you the opportunity to paddle a quiet and green long lake, through the modernised Stockton-on-Tees. After launching (easy to find), watch out for rowers, as they can't see you – there is now a major club at the Durham University site just upstream, and they practice ferociously, as Durham is a major rowing University! An obvious and rather beautiful new footbridge from the University campus NZ 452190 (on the left bank), crosses to Stockton.

Distance: 17 Miles

Approximate Time: 4-6 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 Tees

Type of Water: Fresh river water behind a dam, resembling a lake

Portages and Locks: None

Nearest Town: Middlesborough

Start and Finish: Tees Barrage car park, TS18 2QW – G.R. NZ 462191 Tel:- 01642 678000

O.S. Sheets: Landranger No. 93 - Middleborough

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

Local Facilities: The Tees Barrage, has pay car parking, toilets and café. Both Middlesborough and Stockton-on-Tees have all other facilities.

Next is Surtees bridge and after this, you are in new country. The housing either side is new and this was derelict land not long ago. The industrial estates on your left are the new part of Thornaby, and further upstream is the brand-new settlement of Ingleby Barwick, and the river winds for some two miles in large bends, passing a bird reserve on reclaimed marshes on your right. Many different species of bird and duck will be sighted, as this is bird heaven – no disturbance here.

The footpath on the right bank is the start of the Teesdale Way, which follows the river upstream. The new road bridge in sight is the feeder road from Stockton into Ingleby Barwick, and after a couple more bends, the road on the right bank is the A135 Stockton to Yarm road. The footpath comes back to the right bank, and more habitation appears. The river starts to straighten out, and after another mile, the small River Leven joins from your left side (NZ 430127). The Leven rises in the Cleveland Hills to the south, winding through several commuter villages. The river is an attraction to paddle up, but beware that it is small, and has barbed wire across in several places. It is technically possible to go up as far as Leven Bridge, over a mile away. However, please be warned that there is absolutely no landing here, as the house owners have totally fenced off the river from any land, and erected private and warning notices. The bridge itself is also on a very busy and dangerous main road (the A1044), and there is no parking.

Ahead of you are the outskirts of Yarm, a very pleasant market town. A mile and a bit ahead, there is a possible exit from the river between the road and railway bridges (NZ 417131) river left. Parking is possible for a small group if you speak nicely to the Blue Bell pub. Otherwise it is a pleasant paddle back to the start.

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](#)

The Tees Barrage is one of man's wonderful new engineering efforts – not only did it bring an artificial canoe slalom course to the north-east, but it cleaned up one of the country's most polluted rivers. This part of the Tees used to be a 'no-go' area, with tidal mud up river for many miles, and much pollution from heavy metals. The whole area – Middlesborough, Thornaby, Stockton, and Billingham used to be a land of petro-chemical plants, engineering, the remains of old iron ore and coal mining, and a major port. The port is now a container one way down at Teesport, and the whole landscape has changed. Much of the lower estuary is now a major bird reserve.

There is now quite a bit of river traffic for the first few miles upriver, including power boats, and also many rowing skiffs at times. In high winter flood, there would be movement of water downstream on the river. The Barrage straight is timetabled for different users (not including canoeists). At different times of the day it is allocated to power boating, such as water skiing and jet skis and at other times to rowing and sailing boats. Again passage is possible with care whilst not impeding allocated users.



Please follow navigation rules which require you to keep to the right hand side of the river especially around bends as the winding nature of the river makes seeing more difficult but staying on the correct side of the river will help with being seen.

Visitors might be interested to note that there are many more miles of the Tees between here and Darlington, with the river flowing around giant bends, giving much possible mileage to paddle. The main snag is that the river flows mostly in a deep valley, with little road access, but it is both beautiful, and untouched, and apparently little fished. Years ago, most paddlers were only interested in the white water upper stretches of the Tees, jealously preserved for salmon angling, and ignored the lower river. Cleaning it up has been a boom for everyone – more fish, and cleaner water! The paddler has all of the facilities of Middlesborough, Stockton, Darlington, and Yarm, a pretty market town, near at hand.

Further information can be found on the following websites:

[Durham Cathedral](#)

[Durham Castle](#)

[The Tees Barrage International White Water Centre](#)

[Nature Reserves](#)

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



Photo by James Carnegie

event of a capsized

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 January 2013***

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