

River Thames- Henley to Marlow

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.



Route Summary

This is a lovely part of the Thames, starting in historic Henley, and famous for two quite different canoe sports. Henley itself was the site in 1948 of the Olympic flat water kayaking course, as well as the more well-known rowing held here. Nine canoeing events were contested, eight for men, and one for women, and Sweden won four gold medals, and Czechoslovakia three. As the river winds down, it passes two weirs famous for slalom paddling, and now freestyle, Hambleden and Hurley.

Start Directions

Mill Lane, Henley, RG9 4HB SU 772817

Distance: 9 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: One Way

Waterways Travelled: River Thames

Type of Water: River

Portages and Locks: 3 locks

Nearest Town: Henley and Marlow

Start: Mill Lane, Henley, RG9 4HB SU 772817

Finish: Court Garden Leisure Centre, Marlow, SL7 2AE SU 848860

O.S. Sheets: - Landranger No. 175 –Reading and Windsor

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

Local Facilities: Both Henley and Marlow are sizable towns with all facilities.

Finish Directions

Court Garden Leisure Centre, Marlow SL7 2AE SU 848860

Description

From Marsh Lock, follow the river downstream and under Henley Bridge, the Royal Regatta H.Q. next to the bridge. The bridge is one of five arches, crossing from Remenham to Henley, built in 1786. The next straight is Henley Reach, site of the famous regatta, taking place every first week in July. The river and town are very busy during this time, but also very colourful.

A mile and a half downstream is Temple Island, marking the start of the regatta course, and with spectacular views. The Temple is a folly, designed by James Wyatt as a fishing lodge for Fawley Court, the Christopher Wren mansion further back up the river. Built in 1771, the folly is available for hire for events.



The river then bends to the right, leading to Hambleden Lock, possibly site of an old flash lock in days gone by. A pound lock, with heavy wooden manual beams, was built in 1773. Hambleden Mill is now flats.



The first Oxford and Cambridge boat race was rowed between Hambleden and Henley in 1829. The portage is almost at the lock cut, on the right side. There is a fast flow from the left on leaving the lock gates downstream, and often you might see slalom paddlers training here.

Many nice houses on the way down the river, and the next portage is at Hurley Lock, again with a weir paddled on. To reach the lock, the line of the weir is followed, keeping near to the right bank, and then under the footbridge at the start of the lock cut to portage almost immediately on the left side. Cross over the island and put in from the low portage area behind the building.



It is only a short distance to Temple Lock, with many boats and marinas on this stretch. In the lock cut, portage left almost up against the lock, with a put-in immediately after the lock. During the summer, drinks and snacks available for sale here.

Soon after Temple, on the right is Bisham Abbey, a Grade 1 listed manor house, the name taken from a former monastery here. The complex here is now a National Sports Centre run by Sport England. GB Canoeing have offices here. It is only around a bend now to Marlow, with the get-out above the suspension bridge on the left.

Useful Information

The waterways in this trail are managed by The Environment Agency 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 [The Environment Agency](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk) 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:

Henley Regatta – www.hrr.co.uk/acatalog/home.html
www.riverconnections.co.uk/temple-island.html
www.leander.co.uk/
www.utrc.org.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](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk) 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.



Photo by James Carnegie

- 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 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 May 2013***

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