

River Thames- Hurley Lock to Maidenhead

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

A beautiful trip past Marlow to Boulter's Lock, just upstream from Maidenhead, with scenic locks, and historic Bisham Abbey on the south bank.

Start Directions

Hurley car park, off Mill Lane, SL6 5NB

Finish Directions

Raymead Road, Lower Cookham Road SL6 8JB

Description

Head east (downstream) through Hurley Lock. Alternatively, go over the footbridge onto the island (public toilets) and launch at the canoe portage/landing stage on the backwater to the weir. After half a mile portage Temple Lock on the left hand side. During the summer months tea and ice creams are sold in the lock keeper's garden.

This is Marlow reach and, depending on the time of day, you may well find many rowing boats training for one of the many Thames regattas or sailing dinghies from the National Sports Centre at Bisham Abbey, where the GB Canoeing Sprint canoeists are also based. The 800-year-old Bisham Abbey also has a fitness centre, and a bar/restaurant.

The manor house of Bisham Abbey is a Grade I listed manor house at Bisham. Bisham Abbey was previously named Bisham Priory, and was the traditional resting place of many Earls of Salisbury. Now it is a Sport England centre and has a

Page 1 of 5

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 with locks

Portages and Locks: 4 locks (5 if passing through Hurley Lock at the start)

Nearest Town: Marlow

Start: Hurley car park, off Mill Lane, SL6 5NB

Finish: Raymead Road, Lower Cookham Road SL6 8JB

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

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

Local Facilities: In Marlow and Maidenhead



few of the national governing bodies for sport based there.

At the end of this long wide stretch is Marlow Suspension Bridge, opened in 1832 and restored in the 1960's after the failure of plans for it to be replaced with a ferro-concrete structure!! Under the bridge on the north bank is Marlow Canoe Club.

The approach to the lock passes a long weir on the right. Care needs to be taken if the river is flowing as the draw on the weir can be quite strong at times. The portage is on the left and you stay on the left bank and put back in just below the lock.

Not long after the Lock you travel under the Marlow by-pass bridge and pass the Longridge Water sports centre.

As you paddle down here you will notice a lot of countryside and some very attractive riverside properties. Just past Longridge is a home in the shape of a castle! There is an island after about a mile and you can pass either side of it. Soon after that on the left is Spade Oak where there is often an ice cream stall. From here and on the other side of the level crossing is the Spade Oak pub.

Round the next corner is Bourne End. Do watch out here as there are often sailing dinghies out and the occasional race too! There is a pub on the right bank, The Bounty, which could be another good place to stop. Further downstream there are lots of fields where one can picnic. Further still under Cookham Bridge is The Ferry public house. Cookham Bridge was first opened in 1840 in place of a ferry but the present structure dates from 1867. Since its opening a toll was payable but this ceased in 1947 when Berkshire County Council bought the bridge from its private owners. It is a beautiful iron bridge.

Once you turn off the main river in to Cookham Lock cut there is quite a long paddle with no flow. Portage the lock on the left hand bank and put in below the lock on the left bank. A short and interesting diversion is to canoe upstream, under the footbridge into Hedsor Water to explore this quiet backwater. This backwater was deemed private and the right of navigation denied for over 100 years. A successful action in the High Court by the Environment Agency restored public access in 2005.

It is at Cookham that the powerful waters of the Thames meet the Chiltern chalk at Cliveden Cliff. This causes the river to change direction suddenly. Centuries ago this area would have been a maze of narrow river channels between wooded, marshy islands but now it is full of foliage.

After Cookham Lock you come into Cliveden Reach with the large mansion (now a hotel) that was the scene of the Profumo Scandal that brought down the Tory government in the 1960s.

Two miles further on will bring you to Boulter's Lock. During Victorian times, Boulter's Lock won fame - and notoriety - across the country as thousands of people flocked to the river here to mess about and watch the wealthier classes indulge themselves. Nowadays the weir at Boulter's Lock is a popular kayaking site. A canoe/kayak flume is installed annually on the weir during the summer and there is a permanent fixed ramp in front of the third of the weir's six gates.

This is your destination so portage on the far right of the island just above the lock. The lock island has a cafe and public toilets.

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](#)

Ray Mill Island is the island at Boulter's Lock. The island is now a park administered by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. It is named after the Ray family who once had a flour mill here. The mill was constructed in 1726 on the site of a previous mill, and continued to produce flour until the 1920s. There is camping and public toilets available on Hurley Lock Island so this could form part of a longer trip! Marlow is a lovely historical market town ... well worth a visit too.

Further useful information can be found on the following websites:

<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-cliveden>

<http://www.visitthames.co.uk/about-the-river/river-thames-locks/cookham-lock>

<http://www.longridge-uk.org/home/>

<http://marlowcc.org.uk/w/>

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

<http://www.windsor.gov.uk/site/discover-the-area/cookham-p281711>

<http://www.visitthames.co.uk/about-the-river/river-thames-locks/boulters-lock>

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

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**.



Photo by James Carnegie

- **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***

© British Canoeing copyright 2015

This material may be freely reproduced except for sale or advertising purposes provided it is reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as British Canoeing copyright and the title of the publication specified.