

River Wey and Godalming Navigations- Guildford to Shalford

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

Enjoy a paddle along the Wey which was one of the first British rivers to be made navigable and opened to barge traffic in 1653. It is quite unusual waterway. The Wey has two separate sources in two different counties. The two River Weys unite near the historic Tilford Oak in Surrey

The Wey and its two Navigations flow across 87 miles (140 km) of countryside yet drop a mere 98 feet (30 m) by the time the waterway joins the Thames at Weybridge

Start and Finish Directions

Riverside Road, Bellfields, Guildford (Post Code GU1 1LN) just off the A320 by Stoke Bridge MR186/997512

Park in the Riverside Road. Please check to see that there are no events on at the Waterside Centre (home of Wey Kayak Club) as the roads can be very full. Park down by the river to the left of the Row Barge Public House. Do not launch or land from the fenced public house grounds and use the small triangular area of land nearest the road bridge

Otherwise walk down to Wey Kayak Club and put on and off there.

From the A3, take the slip road off, and either left into Stoke Road, or right, and under the bridge into Stoke Road. First left into Maple Grove, turn right at the river.

Distance: 7 or 8 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: Out and Back

Waterways Travelled: River Wey and Godalming Navigations

Type of Water: Rural and Urban River

Portages and Locks: 3 or 4 dependent on your choice of route

Nearest Town: Guildford

Start and Finish: Riverside Road, Bellfields, Guildford GU1 1LN

O.S. Sheets: Landranger No 187 – Dorking, Reigate & Crawley and No. 176 – West London

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

Local Facilities: In Guildford

For this trail you are going to paddle up stream to start with i.e. away from the bridge which has the word NAVIGATION across it.

Description

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As soon as you leave the bank you have countryside on your left and a wide variety of houses to your right. The river meanders gently towards Guildford Town centre. The first bridge you pass under is the A3 and from then on in to Guildford there is a mix of countryside, pretty bridges, historic and industrial buildings. On your right just after the A3 bridge is Woodbridge Meadows. These natural meadows have some amazing wooden sculptures in them and they are well worth a look. Have a look at the car park gate entrance too.... sadly the barrier is too low for a car with a roof rack but the train and insect sculpture on the barrier make up for that! A few hundred yards further on the left is Dauphne Wharf and again it is worth a look. Keep a look for other boats on the blind bends at this point.

As you come in to Guildford the river appears to branch left and right. Debenhams will be on your left and it's the right hand side you need. Go under the footbridge and up to the sluice. This is your first portage by Millmead Lock. Portage across the island (an easy get out) and put in clear of the lock. There is a narrow boat hire company on the opposite bank next to the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre so do watch out for narrow boats. After a short distance the river bends sharply right. On the opposite bank is Guildford Rowing Club and also look out for rowers.

From here on you leave Guildford and head off into open countryside and the river continues to meander. If you are interested in geography there are some good examples of Ox Bow lakes here as well as other geological features created by the river.

Paddling along you will then come across a wooden footbridge, then a fork in the river ... take the right hand side as this is the main river channel (you have the option to return via the channel to the left and this is where you will come out!)

St Catherine's Lock is reached a few hundred yards further on. The lock is portaged on the towpath side and you may see the Highland cattle on the adjoining water meadow from this vantage point. The scenery is very rural and peaceful between the passage of trains on the nearby mainline. Back on the water; continue a few hundred yards, passing a weir on the left before the railway bridge.

From this point you can choose to return to Guildford as one of the options for this trail. For this, land on the grassy bank between the weir and railway bridge to portage about the weir and transfer into the natural river course. It is a 50 yard portage to the get in point immediately below the weir. Take care as the water can flow quite quickly with a back eddy.

From then on you can enjoy the pleasures of this meandering section of Natural River, past the water works and ending up at the place where the river first divided.



If you decide to carry on beyond the railway bridge towards Shalford, after the next road bridge (A248) there is the junction with the Wey & Arun Canal. This remaining short section of canal is now a stretch of private moorings and worth exploring.

If you wish to stop and picnic on your journey there are lots of opportunities so the choice is yours!

Continuing a further 2.5 miles and portaging two locks brings you to Godalming and a one way trip from here to Guildford is worthwhile if you can arrange a car ferry. A starting point in this area is Catteshall Lock, Farncombe, (Grid Ref 981445) with on road car parking or in the nearby car park (free on Sundays) on the A3100 adjacent to the Leathern Bottle PH

At times of high flow the locks are padlocked and the waterway is closed to all navigation.

Useful Information

License Information: The waterways in this trail are managed by The National 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 [The National Trust](#), Dapdune Wharf, Wharf Road, Guildford Surrey GU1 4RR tel 01483 561389. 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](#)

During the seventeenth century the river was made navigable to Guildford and extended in the eighteenth century to Godalming. The Basingstoke Canal and Wey and Arun Junction Canal were later connected to the river. The navigable sections are now owned by the National Trust.

The river has long been used as a source of power for mills, and many are recorded in the Domesday Book. At one point there were 22 mills on the river, and more on its tributaries. At various times they have been used for grinding grains, fulling wool, rolling oats, crushing cattle cake, leather dressing, paper production and gunpowder manufacture. Willey Mill was still in use in 1953 (Cox's Mill closed in the 1980's and saw the end of commercial traffic on the waterway). There were more watermills per mile along the River Wey than anywhere else in Britain.

This 15½-mile waterway linked Guildford to Weybridge on the Thames, and then to London. The Godalming Navigation opened in 1764, enabled barges to work a further four miles upriver. The award-winning visitor centre at Dapdune Wharf in Guildford tells the story of the Navigations and the people who lived and worked on them. Visitors can see where the huge Wey barges were built and climb aboard Reliance, one of three surviving barges.

The entry to the Wey from the Thames is below Shepperton Lock and even though the river is very close to London you soon feel a sense of peace and remoteness.

The river has been recorded in history as the Wegan (956–1225) and Waie (1190–1193).



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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



Photo by James Carnegie

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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