

Wicken Fen, Cambridgeshire Lodes

Easy 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

An unusual paddling experience along very quiet reed lined lodes. The Lodes date from Roman times and were built as transport canals and were very busy in the 17th and 18th century when waterways provided the only reliable access to the remote villages and towns of the Fens.

Reach lode is initially a wide ditch but soon rises above the surrounding fenland which has subsided due to drainage and there are good views across a bleak watery landscape and a wide variety of birdlife, including kestrels, marsh harriers, finches, warblers and wildfowl. Lunch stop is the café at the National Trust reserve at Wicken Fen – which has a very interesting interpretive centre (free). There is a charge for entry on foot to Wicken Fen reserve but you can paddle through for free! From Wicken you can either return to Reach or continue to Burwell.

Distance: 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: One Way

Waterways Travelled: Reach, Wicken and Burwell Lodes

Type of Water: Rural Fen

Portages and Locks: None- Access and egress at Reach and Burwell is not suitable for paddlers with limited mobility. There is a good landing stage with wheelchair access at Wicken; it might be possible to paddle the Lodes from Wicken by arrangement with the reserve manager.

Nearest Town: Burwell

Start: Head of navigation on Reach Lode TL 564 663, drive right through the village to The Hythe (CB25 0JF).

Finish: Football club car park Hythe Lane (CB25 0EH).

O.S. Sheets: Landranger 154 Cambridge and Newmarket

Licence Information: A licence is required please see useful information below.

Local Facilities: Dykes End' pub in Reach, 'Five Miles For Anywhere-No Hurry Inn' at Upware, Café at Wicken Fen reserve and several pubs in Burwell.

Start Directions

Head of navigation on Reach Lode TL 564 663, drive right through the village to The Hythe (CB25 0JF). Small parking area (OK to leave a couple of cars) and turning circle in front of Electricity substation; the lode is on the left. Launch down the grass bank.

Finish Directions

Football club car park (use the outer car park) near the end of Weirs Drove, Burwell. Follow Weirs Drove past a small bridge and right turn to Hythe Lane (CB25 0EH). The Sports Club is on the left. There is a 2m barrier at the gate. Egress is up the steep river bank either just before or just after the small bridge to Hythe Lane. There is a better landing stage at the head of navigation (further along Weir Drove – then at Anchor Lane) but parking is very limited.

Description

Launch into the lode down the grassy bank it's straight forward for both canoes and kayaks, but please no seal launching so we protect the bank. Initially the lode is enclosed by high banks but soon the surrounding land drops away and the waterway runs on the top of an embankment, giving good views across a lonely fenscape. In 2.5Km you will reach the junction of Reach and Burwell lodes and soon the wooden turnover bridge at the entrance to Wicken Lode. If you continue on Reach lode for another 1Km you will come to Upware lock which leads onto the river Great Ouse. Land on the right hand bank and you can walk to the 'Five Miles For Anywhere-No Hurry' riverside pub.

Pass under the wooden bridge and continue on Wicken Lode. The Lode is high above the surrounding land which has shrunk as the fen was drained. Wicken Fen itself is kept artificially wet to preserve an original fen environment. You will pass the high lookout hide on your left; you are 1km from the cafe. Land at the landing stage on the left. Please don't sit at the picnic tables around the café and eat your own lunch or drink your own flasks; the tables are there for Café customers. The café sells coffee, light lunches, pasties, etc and excellent cakes!

Retrace your route to the junction of Reach and Burwell lodes. If you continue to Burwell, you can land at the Environment Agency stage at the head of navigation, but parking is very limited. It is best to turn right at the end of the navigation and continue along the narrow lode to the small bridge where you can get out up the bank either before or just after the bridge. The lode is shallow. A line will be useful for recovering



Entrance to Wicken Lode



Getting Out at Burwell

your canoe or kayak up the bank.

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](#) 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 main place of interest on this route is the Wicken Fen National Trust Reserve: 01353 720274
Lode Ln, Wicken, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB7 5XP

Further useful information can be found on the following website:

<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/wicken-fen/things-to-see-and-do/>

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



Photo by James Carnegie



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**.
- **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)





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 April 2014***

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