



The Trent Valley Paddle

Guide



Canal &
River Trust

Introduction

02 Introduction

03 The Trent Valley

04 Wildlife in the Trent Valley

05 The Paddlers Code

06 Safety

The Trails

07 Trail 1 - Trent and Mersey Canal - Alrewas to Fradley

08 Trail 2 - Hopwas to Burton Upon Trent

10 Trail 3 - River Trent and Mersey Canal - Alrewas Circuit

12 British Canoeing licences and membership

The Trent Valley has a long and interesting history, shaped by its rivers and altered by human activity on the landscape including the wonderful canal network which flows through towns, past homes and out into glorious countryside, bringing wellbeing opportunities to many. From the Vikings to the Romans through to World War Two pillboxes, wildlife has learnt to live next to humans and adapt to the continuing change today.



The Trent Valley

The River Trent

The River Trent in Staffordshire and Derbyshire has been a site of human settlement and industry for thousands of years with its idyllic backdrop for residents and visitors and picturesque surroundings. The third longest river in the UK, it has long been important for defence, navigation, natural resources and nature.

Romans once marched through the valley and evidence can be seen in the roads which still network the landscape today. The village of Repton, in Derbyshire, was the Saxon Royal capital of the ancient country of Mercia, and Vikings brought terror to the Anglo-Saxons when they invaded in 873AD, leaving their mark in the place names of towns and villages.

Burton Upon Trent was once a religious site for pilgrimage and healing due to its waters and rich mineral deposits which have been utilised by local breweries for centuries, playing a crucial role in the production of the town's famous beer.

The River Tame

The River Tame is a tributary of the River Trent and is 95 kilometres in length. It begins in the upland regions of the Peak District National Park before gradually descending through picturesque valleys, passing through towns and villages such as Tamworth, Elford, and Hopwas. The River Tame has played an integral role in the industrial history of the region. In the past it powered numerous water mills and served as a vital transportation route for goods and materials.

Today, the river's banks are adorned with remnants of the industrial era, including old mills and warehouses that stand as testament to the rich heritage of the area.

The River Tame is also appreciated for its ecological value, providing important habitat for a variety of wildlife and plant species. Work has been completed to restore and enhance sections of the river to promote biodiversity, mitigate the impacts of flooding and improve access for walkers and paddlers.

The Coventry Canal

The Coventry Canal was constructed to connect the rapidly expanding city of Coventry with the Trent and Mersey Canal. It winds its way south past Lichfield, to Tamworth, Atherstone, Nuneaton and Coventry and is a very important link in the London to Liverpool connection. It was built to carry coal both North and South from the Warwickshire Bedworth Colliery.

The Trent and Mersey Canal

This cross-country canal, engineered by James Brindley, takes in the best of what the area has to offer and was the country's first long-distance canal. The creation of the canal was a major factor in the development of Burton Upon Trent as the country's brewing capital.

Whether taking a leisurely stroll along the riverbanks, enjoying a paddle, or simply appreciating the peaceful ambiance, the waters in the Trent Valley offer a serene and scenic experience that connects the past with the present whilst providing a natural oasis.

Public toilets are available at:

A. Burton upon Trent Newton Road Park

SK259235 | [palm.palace.curry](#) |
(Point 15 map 2)

B. Elford Hall Gardens

SK183106 | [genetics.shower.shun](#) |
(Point 3 map 2)

Facilities including car parking and toilets are available at the pubs along the trails for their patrons.

Navigation Rules

Ensure to keep to the right where possible and take care around bridges and other infrastructure where visibility can be impaired. Give other river users as much space as possible.



Some of the waterways in these trails are managed by the Canal and River 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.

Hire & Guided trips

There are a number of commercial hire firms based in the Trent Valley, offering paddling trips. If you choose a British Canoeing Delivery Partner you will know they have agreed to a Delivery Partner Charter, which requires high standards of safety, value for money, sustainability and customer service. When searching for a paddling experience on the Go Paddling website, look out for the Delivery Partner Logo/Icon. Head to the Go Paddling website to find a hire or holiday provider who's the perfect fit for you: gopaddling.info/paddling-equipment-hirefinder

Rapids and Natural Weirs

Care is required on the River Trent and River Tame – although small, there are some Grade 1 rapids, and there can be overhanging trees, and high water will accentuate these difficulties.

Weirs can be dangerous, and you should only shoot a weir if you are confident of your ability to do so. An inspection should be made of all weirs to assess conditions. If you are unsure of the conditions for you and fellow paddlers do not attempt to shoot the weir.

Further useful information can be found on the following websites: environment-agency.gov.uk/riverlevels

River And Weather Conditions

Know the weather forecast before you set out and be prepared for this to change; sometimes quickly and without warning. If you are unsure of your ability to deal with the weather conditions, leave the trip for another day.

River levels can change rapidly on the River Tame and River Trent due to rainfall across a large catchment area. You will need to be aware and take account of changing water levels in and immediately after heavy rainfall. The river should not be paddled in flood conditions unless you are a very experienced paddler.

If you are hiring a boat, the hire company can advise you on conditions and safety. River levels can be checked and viewed at riverlevels.uk or check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk



Wildlife in the Trent Valley

The Rivers of the Trent Valley are appreciated for their ecological value, providing habitats for a variety of wildlife and plant species. Part of the joy of your journey can be found in spotting the wonderful wildlife, flora and fauna along the trail.

Can you spot an otter? They're pretty shy creatures but they are known to live all along the River Trent and Tame. Look for large ripples on the surface of the water, lots of bubbles and a 3 to 4 foot-long, dark, sleek animal with a long thick tail. It is an exciting animal to catch a glimpse of, but please keep your distance. Take care not to disturb dense vegetation, tree roots or rocky cavities that might harbour an otter when getting on or off the river.

Snap! Grey herons are very distinctive with a long neck, long legs and grey, white and black feathers. They are large birds growing up to 98 cm in length with a wingspan of up to 195cm, creating quite a presence when in flight. They can often be seen wading in the shallows, hunting for fish and small birds.

A flash of striking blue and orange, it can only be the Kingfisher diving into the water to catch a small fish, if you pause at a distance away you will see it fly back to its favourite branch to finish its lunch. Kingfishers are small birds growing up to 16 cm in length with a wingspan of just 25 cm, though they are as fast as lightning. They nest in underground burrows along banks of rivers, close to their source of food.

Along the paddle trail also look out for Large Red Damselflies darting above the shallows and Grass Snakes which you might see swimming in the water.





The Paddlers' Code

Respect · Protect · Enjoy



Respect

If you need to drive, team up with others to reduce pollution and congestion on roads.



Respect

Park respectfully, do not cause obstructions or damage the local area. Leave space for emergency vehicles.



Respect

Keep group sizes small and discreet where possible.



Respect

Unpack equipment and change in a discreet and considerate way.



Respect

Avoid climbing over and damaging fences and walls.



Respect

Give other users space, avoid lingering and causing a disturbance. Pass others on the right hand side.



Respect

Be friendly, be welcoming and respectful of those you meet along the way. Be nice, say hello and share the space!



Protect

Be kind to nature and wildlife. Be aware of breeding and nesting seasons. Minimise noise and keep a distance.



Protect

Avoid gravel beds in rivers. Disturbing spawning grounds for fish and other species can be considered a criminal act.



Protect

Banks can be sensitive to erosion or home to vulnerable species. Try to avoid them by sticking to established paths.



Protect

Avoid dragging or sliding craft on the bankside. Try to float your craft for launching and landing.



Protect

Always check, clean, & dry your kit after each trip. This is key to helping stop the spread of invasive, non-native species.



Enjoy

Be prepared! Always wear a buoyancy aid and carry a means of contacting the emergency services on your person.



Enjoy

Check you have the appropriate leash for the environment if paddling SUP. Or your craft/equipment before each trip.



Enjoy

Plan your adventure! The weather can change rapidly due to rain, wind or tide. Check river levels and avoid offshore winds.



Enjoy

Ensure you are equipped for the trip and that it is within the capabilities of you and your group.



Enjoy

Be aware of potential hazards such as weirs, overhanging trees and tidal waters. Look out for warning signs.



Enjoy

Look out for bacteria, viruses or toxic algae. Don't enter water that looks or smells bad. Report to the Environment Agency.



Enjoy

Leave no trace, take only photographs and leave only ripples.



Enjoy

Having the correct waterways licence helps to preserve our precious rivers and canals

Paddle Safety

- Always wear a buoyancy aid or personal floatation device
- Ensure you wear the correct leash when stand up paddleboarding
- Have the right equipment & clothing for the conditions
- Plan your trip within your capabilities
- Check weather, tides, water levels and hazards. At the coast avoid paddling if there is an offshore wind
- Carry a means of communication about your person
- Paddle together and inform others of your plans
- In an emergency call 999. If you are at the coast ask for the coastguard. If you are inland ask for the fire & rescue service.



SUP Leashes

Wearing a leash is highly recommended for safety. Depending on where you're paddling and the conditions you face, you might need to wear a leash in a different position for safety and security.



Coiled or straight?

Leashes can be coiled/ curly or straight/ The types of leash is important depending on the environment you paddle.

Quick release belt system

For use on any moving or flowing water where there is a risk of snag/entrapment

COILED

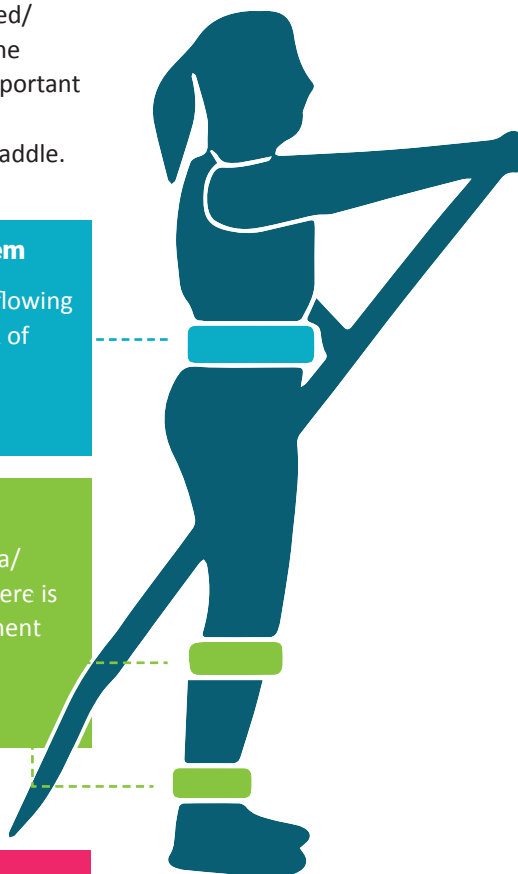
Calf/Ankle leash

For use on lakes/canals/sea/ coastal bays/surf where there is NO risk of snag or entrapment

COILED - General SUP

STRAIGHT - Surf

For a whitewater environment we recommend that no leash is required



Scan me!



We'd recommend developing your paddling skills and knowledge by attending a course with a British Canoeing Delivery Partner or a British Canoeing Affiliated Club.

Quality Assured: Look out for British Canoeing Delivery Partners they are nationally recognised for high quality safe and value experiences.



#RESPECTTHEWATER



Trent and Mersey Canal

Alrewas to Fradley

The Trent and Mersey Canal runs from Preston Brook in Cheshire to Derwent Mouth in picturesque Derbyshire.

For its middle part, it parallels the River Trent as it flows from north Staffordshire eastwards, to eventually meet the sea via the Humber estuary. Fradley first appeared in the 12th-Century records as 'Frodeleye' or 'Frod's lea' and became famous for its network of canals, the most popular location being Fradley Junction, where you may want to take a rest and enjoy the atmosphere.

Distance: 4.1 Miles 6.6 km

Time: 1 - 2 hours

Start: Hump back bridge, Church Road, Alrewas, DE13 7BE

Finish: Hump back bridge, Church Road, Alrewas, DE13 7BE

OS Map: Explorer 245 The National Forest

1 The start point is at the hump back bridge in Alrewas. Put in and turn away from the bridge to travel south-east through the village. The very small river is the mill lane below Alrewas weir, not the main river.

2 After the picturesque village of Alrewas, with many black-and-white thatched houses, the first lock is reached at the A513 bridge.

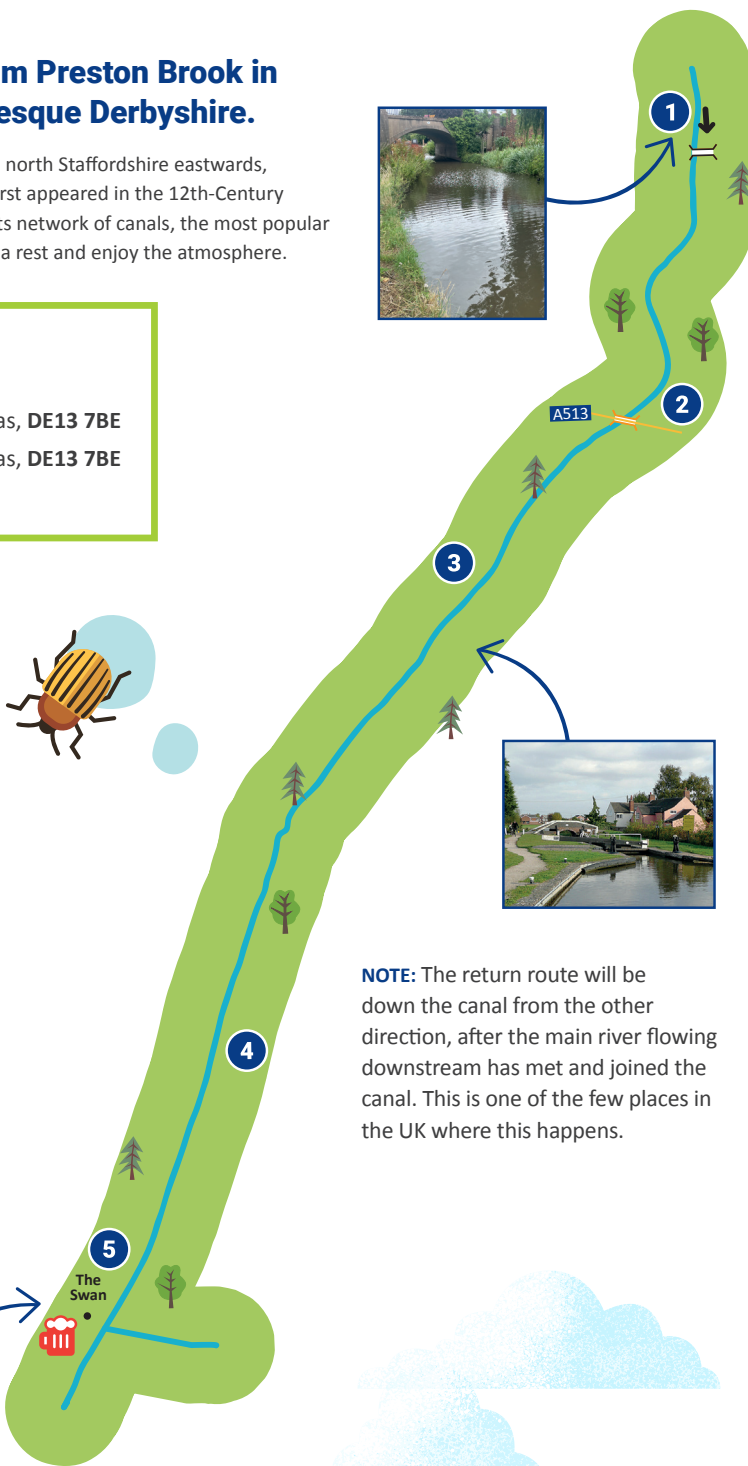
3 After this, Bagnall lock is alone after a long straight followed by the first of the Fradley Locks after another half mile.

4 You now negotiate Locks No. 14, Common Lock, Fradley Bottom, No. 15, Hunt's Lock, No. 16, Keeper's Lock, and then Fradley Junction Lock No. 17.

5 Fradley is said to be the second busiest junction in England, where the Coventry Canal joins. The Swan pub also stands here; a great place for you to refresh before retracing your journey back to your start point at Alrewas.



NOTE: The return route will be down the canal from the other direction, after the main river flowing downstream has met and joined the canal. This is one of the few places in the UK where this happens.

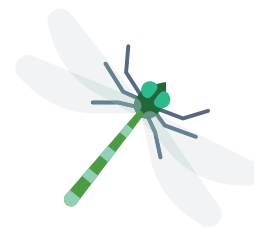




Hopwas to Burton Upon Trent

Start on the Coventry Canal at Hopwas, in the old Kingdom of Mercia, surrounded by red brick cottages and woodlands, before portaging onto the River Tame where the trail passes through flat and undulating countryside.

Stop off at Elford Hall Gardens, a once secret garden now open to the public, before heading on towards Croxall Nature Reserve, where you can stop and visit the adjacent lakes which attract wildfowl and waders during the autumn. Continue, before joining the River Trent and heading on towards Burton Upon Trent, renowned for its breweries, where the trail finishes.



Distance: 18.6 Miles 30 km

Time: 6 - 8 Hours

Start: The Tame Otter, Tamworth **B78 3AF**

Finish: Newton Park, Burton Upon Trent, **DE15 0TUE**

OS Map: OS Landranger 128 Derby & Burton upon Trent

Toilets: Yes

FACT:

On the opposite bank, is the National Memorial Arboretum, a memorial to those who died in warfare since WWII, you may catch a glimpse of another Pillbox as you paddle by.

For more details about the National Memorial Museum including facilities: thenma.org.uk

- 1** The trail leaves Hopwas on the outskirts of Tamworth along the Coventry Canal. Put in on the Coventry Canal by the Tame Otter Inn and paddle right, away from the village for 500 metres, where you will see a marker post. Here you will need to portage from the canal down the steps to the River Tame.
- 2** Winding its way through the peaceful South Staffordshire countryside, the River Tame passes through both flat and undulating countryside. Follow the River Tame downstream towards Elford Bridge. The river winds its way with some gentle riffles and deeper slower sections.
- 3** At 6km Elford Bridge is reached, the river pushes through the three arches, using the flowing water to find the best line to take, taking care to avoid the bankside on river right and trees. A stop-off point is located here at the Elford Hall Gardens boat house, on river right. Care will be needed here to get back on the river.
- 4** On leaving Elford, keeping to the main River Tame, the river snakes its way through the countryside with some wider points and sharp curves.
- 5** Immediately after the brick road bridge, river right you will arrive at Croxall Nature Reserve where a launch/land platform is located, you may want to take a rest here and view the wildfowl on the reserves adjacent lakes.
- 6** A metal span railway bridge comes into sight above the river, here the current quickens and river right – right hand arch – will provide the necessary depth of water to pass through. Paddlers will enjoy working with the current here, avoiding the bank on river right and vegetation.



Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Croxall Lakes

NOTE: For more details about Elford Hall Gardens including facilities: elfordhallgarden.org

Please note: portage point

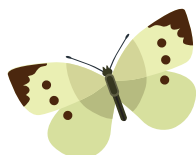
NOTE: Please speak to the pub owners before parking and launching from the Tame Otter Inn, Hopwas.



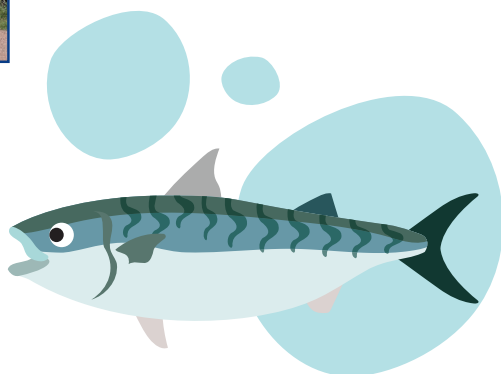
© Mark Knight

FACT:

Look out for the **Type 24 Pillboxes** along the banks of the river, they are a small fortification built during the early years of the Second World War to provide a barrier to invading forces. thetrentvalley.org.uk/discover/stop-line-5



NOTE: For more details about Croxall Lakes Nature Reserve: staffs-wildlife.org.uk/nature-reserves/croxall-lakes



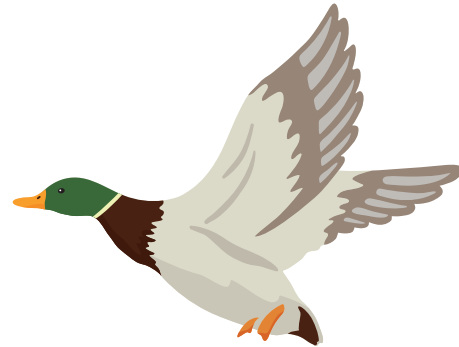
- 7 Shortly after the railway bridge, the river sweeps to the left and then right before dividing. Both branches are able to be paddled, but the left hand leg is generally more overgrown and sometimes has a quicker current. The right hand leg has a small beach on the river right where a short break can be taken before joining the River Trent under the railway bridge.
- 8 Continuing downstream now along the River Trent, the banks are lined with mature trees where kingfishers and other wildlife are regularly seen.
- 9 A short distance downstream, the river again forks around an island and once more, either leg can be paddled. Depending on river levels, the riffles may prove shallow in places. Catton Hall and its grounds will now be in view on the river right.
- 10 The river bends left and right snaking its way through the area with nature reserves located on the left hand bank, produced from the area's former quarries. In normal flow conditions, small beaches are home to wildlife along this stretch.
- 11 At the end of the Catton Hall grounds, a derelict house is located on river right and the river turns to the left where it soon reaches a sharp right bend where a flow in from the nature reserve lakes on river left provides a quick flow along the edge of a large shingle/pebble beach.
- 12 About 4km downstream, the Bailey Bridge taking the road over the river at Walton on Trent provides both a marker for remaining distance and a useful get out on river right for those wanting a shorter trip. A small car park is located on the river right off the road and a concrete sloping bank allows for exit. The get out and walk up to the car park can be a scramble and care should be taken here.
- 13 On entering Burton Upon Trent, the River Trent passes under a brick railway bridge and then a short distance of about 1km the suspension footbridge and A5189, alongside is the rowing club and Stapenhill Gardens.
- 14 At the river fork, take the right hand side and follow this around the right hand bend which follows passing under the road bridge. The left hand fork passes over the nearby weir and bypasses the car park get out point.
- 15 Keeping to the main river and a short distance along the right hand bend in the river, a small low grassy area next to Burton Canoe Club can be seen by the car park. Burton Canoe Club is a large building in the trees on the right with small launching/landing platforms directly after this grassy area, this is where the trail finishes.

3

River Trent and Mersey Canal Alrewas Circuit

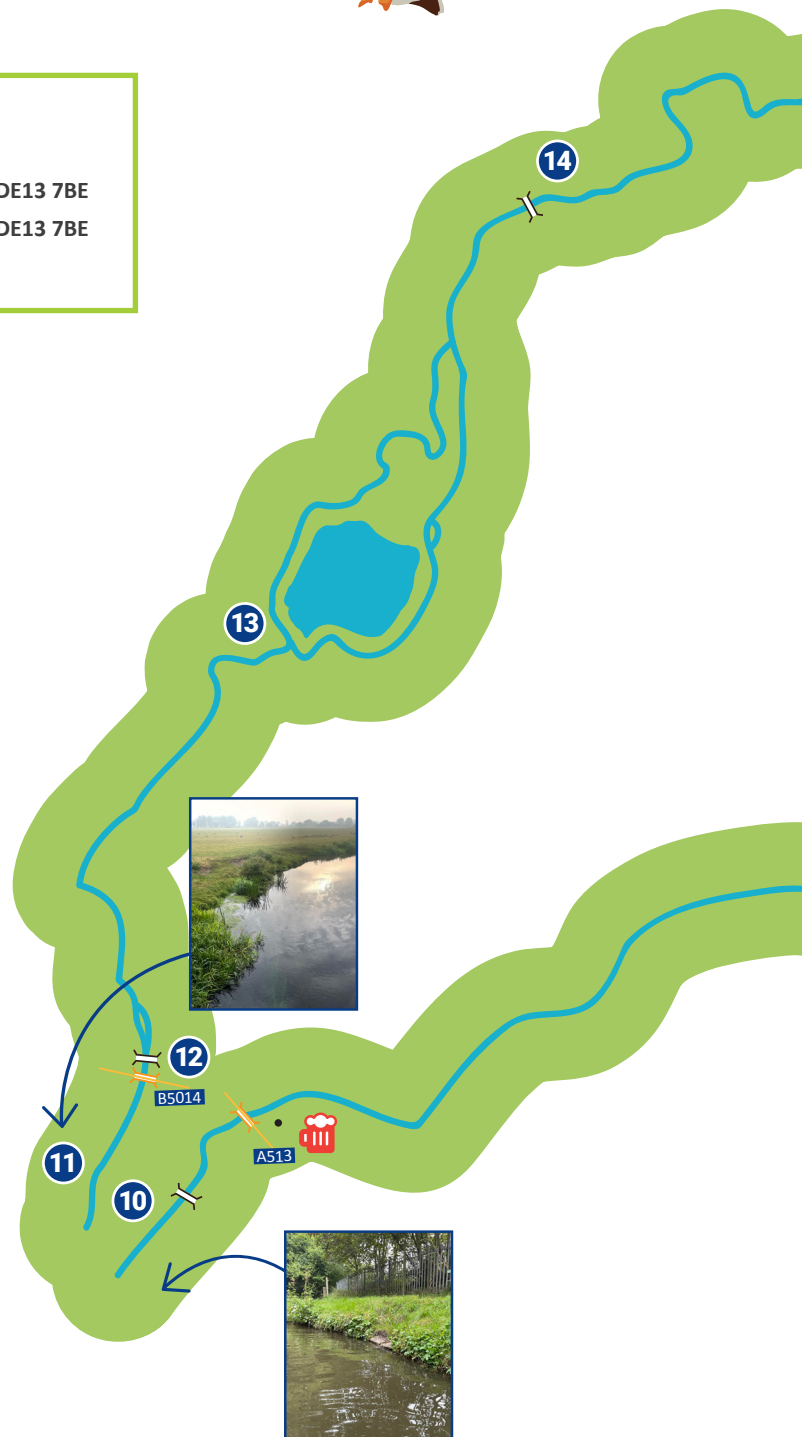
This is a pleasant trip in the middle of the Trent Valley, getting the hard work over first with the canal and its locks, before proceeding down a delightful small rural river.

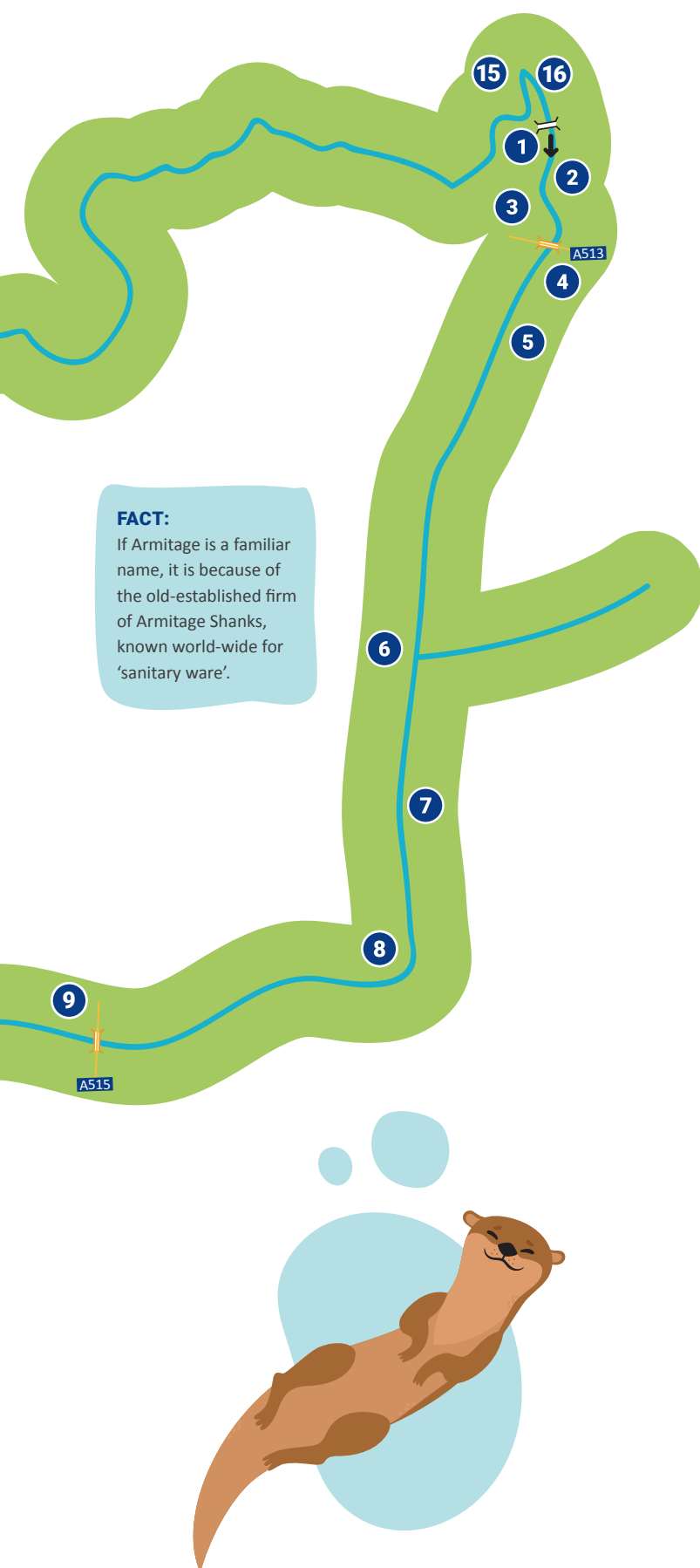
Alrewas is an idyllic place to paddle to take in nature and the quaint 16th century half-timbered cottages with thatched roofs, as it lies where the Trent and Mersey Canal meets the River Trent. The name Alrewas originates from "Alder Wash" which was a swamp of alder trees which grew in the flood plains of the nearby River Trent.



Distance: 25.3km 15.75 Miles
Time: 4- 7 Hours
Start: Hump back bridge, Church Road, Alrewas, DE13 7BE
Finish: Hump back bridge, Church Road, Alrewas, DE13 7BE
OS Map: Explorer 245 The National Forest

- 1 The trail leaves Alrewas along the Trent and Mersey Canal. The start point is at the hump-back bridge number 48 in Alrewas. Put in under the bridge and paddle away from the bridge to travel south-east through the village. The very small river is the mill lade below Alrewas weir, not the main river.
- 2 The return route will be down the canal from the other direction, after the main river flowing downstream has met and joined the canal. This is one of the few places in the UK where this happens.
- 3 After the picturesque village of Alrewas, the first lock is reached at the A513 bridge.
- 4 After this, Bagnall Weir is alone after a long straight followed by the first of the Fradley Locks after another half kilometre.
- 5 You now negotiate Locks No. 14, Common Lock, Fradley Bottom, No. 15, Hunt's Lock, No. 16, Keeper's Lock, and then Fradley Junction Lock No. 17.
- 6 Fradley is said to be the second busiest junction in England, where the Coventry canal joins. The Swan public house also stands here, a great place for business.
- 7 Next up is Fradley Middle Lock No. 18, Shade House Lock No. 19, and Wood End Lock No. 20.



**FACT:**

If Armitage is a familiar name, it is because of the old-established firm of Armitage Shanks, known world-wide for 'sanitary ware'.

- 8 The hard part is now over – the remaining 6.4km to Armitage are level and the canal reaches the southernmost point of its travels. The spire of Lichfield cathedral can be clearly seen two miles to the south.
- 9 The A515 road bridge signifies you having paddled around 7km. Villages can be seen ahead; first Handsacre, then Armitage. The former has a pub, shop, and fish and chip shop. The village is quite industrial, and the canal winds under a railway bridge, and alongside the factory on its left bank.
- 10 The canal comes near to the river but with the railway in between. To get on to the river, get out on the right bank, walking under the railway via a tunnel, and out on to a footbridge.
- 11 You now join the river just after the Mavesyn Ridware railway bridge. You will find that most bridges on the Trent have a vague bit of fast water underneath them, many where there was once a former weir.
- 12 0.8km on, the river quickens up under High Bridge, where the B5014 passes over. There is an island, old bridge, and small rapid downstream. This bridge has no real parking place for access.
- 13 The hamlets of Pipe Ridware and Nethertown follow on the left bank and then the river divides. You take the left branch, with a small weir. The right has little water, and an awkward portage through undergrowth at an old mill. The water on your right side is former gravel workings, a favourite industry in the Trent valley.
- 14 The two branches re-form just before Yoxall bridge, and the river winds pleasantly through green countryside.
- 15 Alrewas Mill is the next feature, with a portage on the left bank, to follow the left branch under a farm bridge to the weir, portage on the left bank. This branch, carrying much more water, soon re-joins the other mill stream and, under a long footbridge, joins the Trent and Mersey canal. This only lasts for about 180 metres, and the Trent can be seen leaving to the right over a weir.
- 16 For this trip, you turn sharply right into the canal, and paddle back towards your start point at Alrewas, portaging at the last lock just before the bridge. This area is usually very busy with moored narrow boats.

Become
a Member

Some of the waterways in these trails are managed by the Canal and River Trust and require paddlers to hold a license. British Canoeing membership provides a license for these waterways.

Licences are easy to get and the fee from them contributes towards the work that waterways authorities carry out to protect and maintain the waterways you paddle on.

British Canoeing Membership

Membership for all paddling interests and crafts (kayaks, SUPs, canoes, inflatables). Fantastic paddler benefits.

- **Waterways licence** - most comprehensive licence available, including 4500km of waterways managed by Canal and River Trust, Environment Agency, Broads Authority and many more.
- **Insurance** - £10,000,000 civil liability cover included, plus the option to purchase craft insurance at a great price.
- **Guidance, training and top tips** - regular member communications and advice, plus access to training courses and qualifications.
- **Discounts** - exclusive paddler focused offers



Become part of our community today and support campaigns and projects to improve access and the environment.

£47 - discounts available for children, families and couples.

gopaddling.info/bcmembership

Getting Started?

- Learn to stay safe
- Find places to paddle
- Learn top tips and advice
- Develop your skills
- Find local clubs and centres

Discover more: **gopaddling.info**

