



River Thames – Hurley Lock to Maidenhead

Licence

A Thames Licence is required (<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/recreation/boating/31605.aspx>)

Canoe England Membership includes a Thames licence (take your membership card with you)

Map

OS Map 175 Reading-Windsor

Distance – approximately 9 miles

Portages – 4 (or 5 if you put in above Hurley lock)

Facilities

There is camping and public toilets available on Hurley Lock Island so this could form part of a longer trip!

Start

The start is at Hurley on the river Thames. Park in the car park in Hurley adjacent to the church and then carry your boat along the public footpath and launch under the footbridge. SatNav SL6 5NB.

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. They serve tea and sell ice creams during the summer months in their garden.

This is Marlow reach and, depending on the time of day, 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 Flatwater 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 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.

<http://www.marlowcc.org.uk/j/>

Just past the bridge, on the north bank is a public slipway, an alternative launching point although parking is a problem. 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 watersports centre. <http://www.longridge-uk.org/home/>

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 otherside 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 and a quiet interesting paddle.

http://www.visitthames.co.uk/text/211/cookham_lock.html

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

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. http://www.visitthames.co.uk/text/203/boulters_lock.html Nowadays the weir at Boutler'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.

If not continuing go into the lock cut on the far right of the river and exit there. Ray Mead Road/Lower Cookham Road (A4094) runs alongside the lock, and there is a car park (pay and display with height restrictor). There is a track onto the lock island (postcode SL6 8JB) that has a cafe and public toilets.

If you want to extend your trip, portage across Boulters lock Island. Take the channel to the left of the lock cut and just past the weir on the left is the portage point. Put back in just below the weir face. In about two miles you will have passed under Maidenhead Bridge and you will come in to Bray Lock where there is a fisherman car park nearby or you can use the slipway at Bray (postcode SL6 2AT).

Additional Information

Marlow - Marlow is a lovely historical market town ... well worth a visit too.

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

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

Boulter's Lock - http://www.visitthames.co.uk/text/203/boulter's_lock.html

River Thames flow conditions – <http://riverconditions.visitthames.co.uk/> -

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.