

Beaulieu River Hampshire Moderate to Challenging Trail

Route Summary

The Beaulieu is a wonderfully attractive tidal river tucked away within the confines of the New Forest National Park. The river itself is very unusual in that it is one of a very few private rivers in the world, with the ownership having been given to the Monks of Beaulieu Abbey back in the mists of time. The rights have now passed to the Montagu family and their stewardship have ensured that the rivers development has been largely controlled keeping this a haven which is unusual for rivers in the area. As a result of this it is both a National Nature reserve and a site of Special scientific interest.

Nearest Town - Southampton

O.S. Sheets - Landranger no. 196 – The Solent and Isle of Wight

Start - Lepe beach (car parking charges apply), Lepe, Exbury, Southampton, Postcode: SO45 1AD

You can park and launch from Lepe,

It is also possible to park in Beaulieu car park and carry the boats to Beaulieu green to launch there, this is around 10mins walk.

Finish – Same

Waterways Travelled – Beaulieu River, tidal

Type of Water - Tidal estuary

Distance – 12 miles

Licence Information – No licence required, maybe a charge, see Harbourmaster

Local Facilities – Beaulieu village and Buckler's Hard

Vehicle Shuttle Required - No

Portages and Locks - None

Description

The most common place to start is at Lepe beach (car parking charges apply), this is a very popular beach with great views over to the isle of Wight and is a popular starting point for canoeists making the crossing. A top tip at this point is to check the tide times and estimate the time that you will want to start back (allow 2 hours for each way) then aim to set off so that the tide is beginning to fall as you leave Beaulieu.

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Lepe. Once you have launched off the beach turn to the west and left in to the river you will notice the Millennium Beacon on your right built in the year 2000 to celebrate the millennium and help guide boats into the river. At low tide Lepe can be very muddy so please watch your step. Gull Island is not actually an island but a spit, is home to a colony of Black Headed gulls and other rare species of sea birds. There is no landing on Gull Island.

Needs Ore Point is the base for the Beaulieu River Sailing club and is also the site of a short cut into the river known as Bulls Run in eighteenth century it was closed by an act of parliament in 1986.

Coast Guard cottages, these were built in the 1860s for coast guard officers in their fight against smuggling. They were rotated regularly to avoid the possibility of them participating in the illegal acts! The coastguard station closed in 1922 but the cottages are now owned by Beaulieu estate. Salt Pans - you will see over the top of the bank an area of water this was reclaimed from the sea to harvest salt which was an in demand commodity. There were special officers based on the river to check on the amount of salt produced. In autumn and winter this area provides an important feeding area for wildfowl such as Brent Geese.

Gins - Nowadays is a base for the Royal Southampton Yacht club, but in the past was the site that the Monks from Beaulieu abbey unloaded their craft and kept their fishing boats. Fiddlers Reach. This was where the Hulls of naval ships were anchored in the 18th Century before being taken to Portsmouth to be fitted out.

Mulberry Dock. - Components for the Mulberry harbour that was used in the D Day invasion were built here along with an experimental floating dock. Gilbury. This is the Exbury estates access to the river. Exbury is the site of a famous garden with a stunning collection of Azaleas and now a narrow gauge Steam Railway. Phone to contact the gardens.

Bucklers Hard - This was where Nelsons favourite ship was built and is now the centre of boating activity on the river. Liquid Logistics run canoe and Kayak courses and trips on the river from here. There is also a Pub and a hotel here. The Beaulieu River Harbour master is also based here they can be contacted on 01590 616200. There is a very pleasant walk from here to Beaulieu for the non paddling members of the group.

Baileys Hard. From the river you can see a tall brick chimney this is the site of the estate brick works, it was used between 1790 and 1935. It was also the here that the first Naval vessel was built on the river.

Curtle meadows. This was used as a stand in for an sixteenth century Thames in the Film A Man For All Seasons in 1966.

Beaulieu Village. This is a quaint oldy-worldy village, has a good variety of unusual shops, including a chocolate shop, garden centre, tea rooms, pottery and the Montagu arms pub. At the top of the river there is a green where you can stop and eat your sandwiches this is accessed at

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low tide by some steps. PLEASE DO NOT PADDLE ON THE RIVER ABOVE THE ROAD BRIDGE NO MATTER HOW INVITING THE POND LOOKS.

Beaulieu Motor Museum is on the site of the ancestral home of the Montagu family, houses one of the world finest collections of cars and the remains of Beaulieu abbey where the monks lived. There is no boating access to the Mill Pond on the other side of the river please respect this.

Useful Information

Harbour Master can be contacted on 01590 616200 email river@beaulieu.co.uk

The Beaulieu is a tidal river and along with the Solent has the advantage of a double high tide this corresponds to the ebb being quicker than it may otherwise have been especially at springs. The section above Baileys hard is not a nice paddle at low tides and may become impassable at the top end of the river.

The Beaulieu River Harbour has several areas that are designated SSSI please do not land unless you are sure of authorised access. Familiarise yourself with Canoe England's You, Your Canoe and the Environment at <http://www.canoe-england.org.uk/access-and-environment/environment/you-your-canoe-and-the-environment/>

and <http://www.canoe-england.org.uk/access-and-environment/canoeing-on-the-sea/>

There are many boats and jetties on the river care should be taken to avoid these, also the river is used by fishermen please avoid their lines. When on springs the tide can drop very quickly, and can either carry you further than you want or trap you against obstacles.

Recommended Next Trail

If you have enjoyed this trail why not try out one of the many trails available.

Safety Information

Spending an afternoon canoeing can be a fun way to experience nature, get a great workout and spend time with family and friends. However, it can also be a dangerous journey, if safety guidelines are overlooked. Always follow these basic rules and comply with navigation rules- keep to the right of on-coming boats. Please be careful at points along the trail where there are sharp bends on the waterway and keep a look out at these points for oncoming traffic.

Wear appropriate clothing

Always wear shoes. Rocks, rough terrain and river beds present serious hazards to boaters without the proper attire. Nearly 90per cent of all boating injuries are attributed to lack of proper footwear. Other canoe safe clothing includes hats, additional dry clothing towels, and layered items which can easily be removed.

Be sure to

- Know the weather forecast before you set out canoeing.
- Familiarise yourself with the local area, it's sensitive places and protected areas.
- Leave the environment as you found it. Please read [You, Your Canoe and the environment](#)
- Take your litter home with you.

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- Follow the navigation rules for the waterway you are on.
 - Keep noise to a minimum.
 - Do not damage bank side vegetation when launching or landing. (No Seal Launching)
 - Where possible keep to any designated paths or launching points.
 - Canoe a safe distance away from wildlife.
 - Check your equipment.
 - Observe the navigation rules for this waterway.
 - Check to see if there are any events on the waterways when you wish to travel.
- Use the checklist below to make sure you have everything you need.

Checklist:

1. Boat
2. Paddle
3. Buoyancy Aid
4. Bailer/sponge
5. Small First Aid Kit
6. Penknife
7. Mobile telephone (in a waterproof bag....Please note that in some areas due to the location mobile telephone reception might be nonexistent)
8. Fresh drinking water
9. Sun cream, hat and sunglasses
10. Light waterproof jacket
11. Footwear
12. Licence

ALWAYS be certain to let others know where you're going and when you're expected to return.

Specific Environmental Information:

Please 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.

Canoeists and kayakers take very seriously environmental concerns and already follow existing voluntary environmental codes of conduct, including Canoe England's own guidance notes outlined in the "You your canoe and the environment" publication.

By following the simple steps below you can ensure your presence is not detrimental to the freshwater environment, minimize and avoid accidentally disturbing wildlife and their habitats.

- Find out about the area before you go, noting its sensitive places, species and breeding seasons.
- Leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home with you.
- When clearing litter left by others, handle it with care.
- Leave the environment as you find it
- Keep noise to a minimum.
- 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.
- Do not damage bank side vegetation when launching or landing.
- Where possible keep to any designated paths or launching points.
- On rivers, avoid paddling over gravel banks in low water conditions – they may contain fish spawn.
- Constantly assess wildlife. If you see signs of disturbance move away quietly.

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Be the eyes and ears on the water. Report pollution, wildlife problems, damage, incidents etc to the relevant authorities.

Canal & River Trust - Emergencies- Telephone 0800 47 999 47

RSPCA for wildlife and animals in distress – Telephone 0990 55 59 99 (24 hours)

Environment Agency - Telephone 0800 80 70 60 (24 hours)

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