

River Thames Hampton Court to Richmond

Route Summary

This section of the River Thames has much of interest en-route with activity on the water, the mixed landscapes of parkland and town, and historic landmarks. The trail is suitable for all abilities by either canoe or kayak in normal river conditions.

For ease of parking and launching the trail commences at West Molesey, approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ mile upstream of Hampton Court Bridge.

The reaches between Molesey and Richmond are some of the busiest on the river with canoes, rowers, sailing dinghies, motor cruisers, hire boats and passenger launch services, especially at weekends. Do keep an eye on other river traffic and comply with navigation rules.

Nearest Town - Richmond

O.S. Sheets - Landranger No. 176 – West London

Start - Hurst Park, West Molesey, London, Postcode: MR 176/134691

Hurst Park open space (free and height restriction) car park, West Molesey (MR 176/134691), off the A3050 Walton to Hampton Court Road. Turn off into Saddlers Ride for the (signed). Parking for higher vehicles is available on the approach road to the car park.

Finish – River Lane, Petersham, Richmond Mr 176 178735, Postcode: TW10 7AG
River Lane, Petersham, Richmond, off the A307.

or - Ranelagh Drive, St Margarets, Twickenham TW1 1QZ, (MR 176/171749), off the A3004, turn into St Margarets Drive opposite the Ailsa Tavern.

On street parking at both locations is liable to flooding on higher tides.

It is quite practical to arrange a car ferry by public transport. There are frequent bus services from Richmond and Petersham to Kingston (No's 65, 371) and from Kingston to Hampton Court Bridge or Station (No's 111, 216, 411, 461).

Waterways Travelled – River Thames

Type of Water - River urban

Distance – 7 miles, about 3 hours

Licence Information – 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)

Local Facilities – In Richmond, or other small towns nearby

Vehicle Shuttle Required - Yes

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Portages and Locks – 2 locks

Description

The island by the launch point is Garrick's Ait and Hampton and its church across the river on the Middlesex bank provide a fine backdrop for the start of the trail. Setting off with Hampton to your left, almost immediately, Garrick's Temple comes into view on this bank. It was built by the great 18th century actor-manager David Garrick in 1756 to celebrate the genius of William Shakespeare

A short distance on is Taggs Island noted for the interesting design of both the multi story house boats and properties. These are best seen by taking the channel on the Hampton side and under the bridge to the island.

On rejoining the main navigation channel, keep well to the right to avoid any pull from the weirs that flank the cut to Molesey Lock. The Corporation of the City of London built the first pound lock at Molesey entirely of timber in 1815 along with the lock keepers house. In 1906 it had to be rebuilt and enlarged by the Thames Conservancy. The current house was built in 1925.

To the right and just before the lock gates, rollers provide a short easy portage or lock through. There are public toilets across the road from the lock.

As you travel away from the lock the majestic towers of Hampton Court Palace <http://www.hrp.org.uk/hamptoncourtpalace/> come into view. It is a magnificent sight all the better from being seen from a canoe! The River Mole enters the Thames opposite the Palace. The first 2 1/2 miles to Kingston Bridge curves round Hampton Court Park that has a rural aspect, whilst the opposite Surrey bank by contrast is London suburbia. There are two islands in this reach. Thames Ditton Island on the right bank, and you can take the backwater channel that leads to the Crown Inn and a public slipway. Backwaters are nearly always of interest.

Ravens Ait sits and looks like a boat in mid-stream. It was used as a boating activity centre and has become a conference and functions establishment. Take the right hand channel and to the right is the Thames Sailing Club, home to sailing craft with high masts known as Thames A Class Raters. Unique to the Thames, they are specially designed for sailing conditions at Surbiton and extremely fast with the large sail area.

Kingston Bridge now comes into view and the riverside promenade area nearer to Ravens Ait provides a stop off point for a break with kiosks open in summer months. The Hoggs Mill Stream enters the river on the right just before the bridge. From here to Teddington Lock is approximately 1 1/2 miles and after the railway bridge there are a number of places on the right bank to also land for a break. On your way to Teddington look out for Royal Canoe Club accredited with being the world's oldest canoe club, founded in 1866 <http://www.royalcanoeclub.com>

Teddington Lock cut is flanked by a continuous weir and can have a noticeable pull. Across the other side of the weir pool is Teddington TV Studios. The portage across the rollers to the tidal Thames is easy and to the left of the lock entrance.

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Back on the water and 265 yards below the lock is an obelisk marking the boundary of the Environment Agency and the tideway under the control of the Port of London Authority. High water: Dover plus 4 hrs 4 mins (London Bridge plus 1 hr 15 mins).

Tides times are posted on the PLA web site (www.pla.co.uk). Whilst useful to know if you are leaving a car next to the river, the influence of the tide in the 3 miles from Teddington to Richmond is small. The water level and flow is controlled by a half-tide sluice below Richmond and normally the river in this reach can be canoeed in either direction without difficulty.

Beyond Teddington Lock the entrance to Ham Dock (Thames Young Mariners) will be seen on the right. Further on to the left is Pope's Villa, an imposing large red brick building. Built on the original site of the poet's mansion, his famous Grotto is underneath the present building and is open to the public.

Eel Pie Island is about halfway to Richmond with a good landing on the left hand channel. The facilities of Twickenham town centre are a few hundred yards away.

Horse Reach is entered below Eel Pie, and unseen from the river are two historic residences. Marble Hill House is to the left and Ham House to the right. In full view is the magnificent sight of Richmond Hill and the Star & Garter Home set behind Petersham Meadows.

River Lane, alongside Petersham Meadow is an option for a finishing point and has a slipway - TW10 7AG

Alternatively, continue through Richmond past Richmond Canoe Club (<http://www.richmondcanooclub.com>) and Richmond Bridge to see the impressive riverside development noted for the mix of English and Italian influenced architecture. You could turn here and return to River Lane.

The other finishing point is a further $\frac{1}{4}$ mile past the mansion of Asgill House, the railway and Twickenham Bridges to arrive at Ranelagh Drive on the left hand bank. Work your way through the moorings to land at the steps between the road bridge and the half tide sluice. Keep well away from the sluice if the gates are down.

Useful Information

This trail moves from the non-tidal Thames under the Environment Agency jurisdiction above Teddington to the tidal Thames which comes under the control of Port of London Authority. Both issue navigation notices for river closures and temporary restrictions and it is always best to check beforehand:

For up to date information visit:

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/thamesclosures with a link to flow conditions.
<http://www.pla.co.uk/> see Notices to Mariners and information for recreational users.

Canoe England has a voluntary Local Waterway Advisor. Contact details:

<http://www.canoe-england.org.uk/waterways-and-environment/waterways-information-service/>

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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.
- 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

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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.

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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