

Gloucester & Sharpness Canal Purton to Sharpness Return Very Easy Trail

Route Summary

This trail on the [Gloucester & Sharpness Canal](#) is an excellent place for a first canoe or kayak trip and is one of many along this historic canal. Glimpse the [River Severn](#) from the lower end of this canal and get chance to see the [hulks](#) (old, disused barges) sunk into the bank.

Nearest Town - Gloucester

O.S. Sheets - 162 Gloucester & Forest of Dean

Start and Finish

Purton Village Car Park
Purton
Gloucester
Gloucestershire
GL13 9HU

Latitude: 51.7377381, Longitude:-2.4484206

Purton SO 777106



From the South

- Leave M5 Northbound Junction 14 signposted Dursley (1st exit) turn left to join A38 (sign posted Dursley);
- Turn right onto A38 head North (signposted Dursley/Gloucester);
- Pass through several villages including Stone;
- Enter Berkeley Heath and pass turning on left signposted Sharpness - Docks (adjacent to independent petrol station);
- Continue on A38 for 1 mile to take next turning on left signposted Breadstone Halmore – Purton;
- Travel for 2 miles, take right turning on sharp left hand bend, signposted Purton. Continue until you enter village, approx 1.5miles;
- Park in car park opposite the church.

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From the North

- Leave M5 Southbound Junction 13 signposted Stroud, take 3rd exit marked Dursley;
- 0.5 miles to next roundabout on A38;
- Take 1st exit marked Dursley;
- Travel 8 miles South passing through Cambridge with the public house The George on your right (caution speed camera in area);
- Continue to roundabout taking second exit, straight across, marked Bristol (Slimbridge WWT can be accessed from 3rd exit);
- 1.5m Pass petrol station on left, continue straight on;
- 2.0m Pass public house The Prince of Wales on left 0.1m;
- Turn right signposted Breadstone, Halmore – Purton;
- Travel for 2 miles, take right turning on sharp left hand bend, signposted Purton. Continue until you enter village, approx 1.5miles;
- Park in car park opposite the church.

Car Parking is £1 for 4 hours.(2012 prices!)

There are no public toilets at Purton,

Waterways Travelled - Gloucester & Sharpness Canal

Type of Water - Rural Canal

Distance - 3 miles

Licence Information



A license to paddle the river is included in the [Canoe England membership](#) fee. Otherwise licences can be obtained from [Canal & River Trust](#) or [Waterscape](#) (Take your Canoe England membership card with you as it is your licence as well)

Local Facilities

There are no public toilets at Purton,

Vehicle Shuttle

A vehicle shuttle is not required as this is an out and back trail.

Portages and Locks

No locks but some low swing bridges. Swing bridges are often very low and if you are not sure you can get under the bridge then portage on the tow path side. If you think

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there is enough clearance under the bridge take in to consideration that some of the structure might be jutting out e.g. nuts and bolts and pass under carefully.

Description

The Gloucester & Sharpness Canal was built and opened in 1827. The canal was built and opened in 1827, after a period from 1793 of stops and starts on the project due to ongoing financial difficulties. The purpose was to by-pass a long and dangerous bend on the Severn estuary at Arlingham.



The Sharpness to Gloucester canal is a new experience for most English canoeists – much more like a continental European Canal, or like the Caledonian Canal in Scotland, easily wide enough to avoid anglers' lines, and with large ships going up to Gloucester docks at times. At weekends, the paddle steamer 'Oliver Cromwell' plies up and down.

The heyday of the canal as a commercial freight and oil carrying route was between 1905 and about 1955. By the mid-1980s, trade had come almost to a standstill, the closure of the Gloucester oil depot making a large difference.

Your start point is [Purton](#) which is usually very quiet and deserted, and has a landing stage next to a car park, (£1 for four hours). Otherwise, access can be from banks next to the swing bridges, unless there is traffic coming through the bridges.

Follow the canal alongside the [River Severn](#) and glimpse from this lower part of the canal, [hulks](#) (old, disused barges) sunk into the bank to strengthen it.



Your turning point is where the canal splits into two.

At Sharpness, the docks are unable to be explored. Enjoy a leisurely paddle back.

The paddle from Purton to Sharpness and back is about 1-2 hours.

Useful Information

[Purton](#) has the largest ships' graveyard in maritime Britain and is an important locality for studies of [vertebrate palaeontology](#). It is also a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) [Sharpness and Gloucester Docks](#)

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Other Nearby Visitor Attractions
[Gloucester Docks](#)
[Cattle Country Park](#)
[Berkeley Castle](#)
[The Edward Jenner Museum](#)
[Local pubs](#)

There is a towpath for most of the canal. Easy road access from both A38 and M5. Good provision of toilets and places to stop.

Recommended Next Trail

If you have enjoyed this trail why not try out another one of the four trails on this beautiful canal.

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.

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Checklist:

1. Boat
2. Paddle
3. Buoyancy Aid
4. Bailor/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.

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

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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)

(May 2013)

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