

Trent and Mersey Canal and River Trent Alrewas Circuit Moderate Trail Grading

Route Summary

The River Trent is the third longest river in England, flowing from north Staffordshire east to the sea eventually via the Humber estuary. The Trent and Mersey Canal follows it for most of the way, from Preston Brook in Cheshire to Derwentmouth in Derbyshire.

The route is contained within a triangle formed by Rugeley to the west, Burton-on-Trent to the north, and Lichfield to the south.

This is a pleasant trip in the middle Trent valley, and a round canoe paddle is recommended because parking near to the canal and river meeting in Armitage is difficult. This means getting the hard work involved over first with the canal and the locks, and then proceeding down a delightful small rural river.

The area has been much more prominent since the National Arboretum and Memorial has been opened just over the other side of the A38 at Alrewas.

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

Nearest Town - Lichfield

O.S. Sheets - Landranger No. 128 – Derby and Burton-upon-Trent

Start – Alrewas – SK 169152 (Post Code DE13 7BE)

Finish - Alrewas – SK 169152 (Post Code DE13 7BE)

Waterways Travelled – River Trent, (Grade 1) and the Trent and Mersey Canal

Type of Water - Natural river, and canal

Distance – 14 miles

Licence Information - A licence to paddle the canal is included in the Canoe England membership fee. Otherwise licences can be obtained from Canal & River Trust (Take your Canoe England membership card with you as it is your licence as well)

Local Facilities – Alrewas has toilets and shops and pubs – Lichfield has more facilities

Vehicle Shuttle Required – No, this is a circular trail.

Portages and Locks – 9 locks and 1 weir to portage

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Description

The start point is at the hump-back bridge in Alrewas, the canal is a few yards away, the trip heading south-east through the village and the very small river is the mill lade below Alrewas weir, not the main river. 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 U.K. where this happens.

After the picturesque village of Alrewas, with many black-and-white houses, the first lock is reached at the A513 bridge. After this, Bagnall Weir is alone after a long straight, and then in another half mile, the first of the Fradley locks appears. The paddler now has to 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.

Fradley (SK 140140 is said to be the second busiest junction in England, where the Coventry canal joins, and the 'Swan' public house stands at a great place for business.

Then you come across Fradley Middle Lock No. 18, Shade House lock No. 19, and Wood End Lock No. 20.

The hard part is now over – the remaining 4 miles to Armitage are level. The canal now reaches the southern-most point of its travels, and the spire of Lichfield cathedral can be clearly seen two miles to the south. The A515 road bridge says you have now done all of 3.2 miles. Villages can be seen ahead, first Handsacre, and then Armitage, almost joined up. The former has a pub, shop, and fish and chip shop.

If Armitage is a familiar name, it is because of the old-established firm of Armitage Shanks, known world-wide for 'sanitary ware'. The village is quite industrial, and the canal winds under a railway bridge, and alongside the factory on its left bank. The canal comes near to the river, but with the railway in between. The route to the river is out on the right bank, walking under the railway by a tunnel, and out on to a footbridge (SK 079164).

You now join the river just after the Mavesyn Ridware railway bridge, and one 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.

Half a mile 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 in order to access here.

The hamlets of Pipe Ridware and Nethertown follow on the left bank, nothing on the right bank, and then the river divides, and 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. The two branches re-form just before Yoxall bridge, and the river winds pleasantly through green countryside.

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Alrewas Mill is the next feature, with a portage on the left bank, to follow the left branch under a farm bridge, and 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 200yds, and the Trent can be seen leaving to the right over a weir. For this trip, you turn sharp right into the canal, and paddle back towards Alrewas, portaging at the last lock just before the bridge. This area is usually very busy with moored narrow boats, and you will have plenty of company in the summer.

Useful Information

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/riverlevels

The National Arboretum is on the east side of Alrewas, the other side of the A38, and is open every day of the year, free, except for Christmas Day. There are the usual facilities here, including for people with disability, and a gift shop etc. The River Tame, a Birmingham river, joins the Trent just outside the Arboretum area.

Lichfield is a pleasant cathedral town, and Burton-on-Trent is famous for its breweries.

www.thenma.org.uk
www.thenma.org.uk/visit/visitorinformation
www.alrewas-staffs.info
www.alrewas.org.uk/
www.canalguide.co.uk/canals/britain

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 work out and spend time with friends and family. It can also be a dangerous journey, if appropriate safety guidelines are overlooked. Always follow these basic rules.

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.

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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
9. Sun cream, hat and sunglasses
10. Light waterproof jacket
11. Footwear
12. Licence

ALWAYS be certain to let other 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.

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- 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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