

# River Thames- Hampton Court to Richmond

**Moderate Trail:** Please be aware that the grading of this trail was set according to normal water levels and conditions. Weather and water level/conditions can change the nature of trail within a short space of time so please ensure you check both of these before heading out.

## 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

## Start Directions

Hurst Park, West Molesey, London, KT8 1ST 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.

**Distance:** 7 miles

**Approximate Time:** 2-3 Hours

*The time has been estimated based on you travelling 3 – 5mph (a leisurely pace using a recreational type of boat).*

**Type of Trail:** One Way

**Waterways Travelled:** River Thames

**Type of Water:** River urban

**Portages and Locks:** 2 locks

**Nearest Town:** Richmond

**Start:** - Hurst Park, West Molesey, London, KT8 1ST MR  
176/134691

**Finish:** River Lane, Petersham, Richmond Mr 176  
178735, TW10 7AG

**O.S. Sheets:** Landranger No. 176 – West London

**Licence Information:** A licence is required to paddle this waterway. See full details in Useful Information below.

**Local Facilities:** In Richmond, or other small towns nearby

## Finish Directions

River Lane, Petersham, Richmond Mr. 176 178735, 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).

## 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 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 Hogs Mill Stream enters the river on the right just before the bridge. From here to Teddington Lock is approximately 1 ½ 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

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.

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](http://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 canoed 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 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 ¼ 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

The waterways in this trail are managed by The Environment Agency and require paddlers to hold a licence. If you are an existing British Canoeing member the good news is that your membership includes an annual licence for the waterways covered within this trail – please ensure you take your membership card with you on the water as this acts as your licence, if stopped with no licence, you will be at risk of being fined.

You can buy a licence directly from [The Environment Agency](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk) for this waterway or by becoming a British Canoeing member you'll have a licence to cover you for a whole year. A British Canoeing membership gives you a whole range of benefits including licenses to paddle on 4500km of Britain's waterways and Civil Liability Insurance, worth up to £10 Million. If you are planning to paddle regularly this will save you great deal of money and hassle alongside having peace of mind. For more information on British Canoeing membership please [click here](#)

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](http://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/>

Further useful information can be found on the following websites:

<http://www.richmondcanoecub.com>

<http://www.royalcanoecub.com>

<http://www.hrp.org.uk/hamptoncourtpalace/>

## CANOEING SAFETY ADVICE

Spending an afternoon or day canoeing on a Canoe Trail can be a fun way to experience nature, help you to stay fit and healthy and enjoy spending time with friends and family. It can also be a dangerous journey, if appropriate safety guidelines are overlooked. To help make sure you remain safe at all times, read on to see our canoeing safety advice guidelines.

### Wear appropriate clothing

Always wear shoes. Rocks, rough terrain and river beds present serious hazards to boaters without the proper attire. Nearly 90% of all boating injuries are attributed to lack of proper footwear. Other canoe safe clothing includes hats, gloves, additional dry clothing, and layered items which can easily be removed. Take or wear a windproof top and course always wear a buoyancy aid - for children make sure the crotch straps are used.

## Be sure to:

- Know the weather forecast and check the water conditions before you set out canoeing. There is an [Environment Agency](#) website where information concerning river levels can be found. We recommend checking this before heading out as the river levels can rise and fall quite quickly in wet or dry conditions.
- Observe navigation rules for this waterway.
- Check to see if there are any events on the waterways when you wish to travel.
  
- Check that your equipment is well maintained and ready for the water.
- Check that your boat has the required buoyancy to keep it afloat in the event of a capsize

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

**MAKE SURE** that the journey you plan is within your capabilities.

**MAKE SURE** you never paddle alone.

## Equipment Checklist

Use the canoeing safety advice checklist below to make sure you have everything you need:

- Boat
- Paddle
- Buoyancy Aid
- Bailer/sponge
- Small First Aid Kit
- Phone (in a waterproof bag)
- Drinking water and snacks
- Suitable clothing for the weather



Photo by James Carnegie

## Environmental Good Practice

One of the great things about paddling a canoe trail is enjoying the journey and different environments that you paddle through. So when you are out on the water please consider the following things to help keep the wonderful waterways and environment as you found them and to avoid accidentally disturbing wildlife and their habitats.

- Take your **litter** home with you
- Keep **noise** to a minimum
- Where possible keep to any **designated paths or launching points**.
- **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.
- Canoe a **safe distance away from wildlife**. If you see signs of disturbance move away quietly.
- Familiarise yourself with the local area, its **sensitive places and protected areas**
- On rivers, **avoid paddling over gravel banks** in low water conditions – they may contain fish spawn.

- 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
- When clearing litter left by others, **handle it with care.**
- **Be the eyes and ears on the water.** Report pollution, wildlife problems, damage, incidents etc to the relevant authorities: **Canal & River Trust**, Emergencies: 0800 47 999 47  
**RSPCA for wildlife and animals in distress:** 0300 1234 999 (24 hours)  
**Environment Agency:** 0800 80 70 60 (24 hours)



### CHECK, CLEAN, DRY

Help minimise the spread of invasive aquatic species and disease by following the campaign advice before putting your canoe and equipment in and out of the water (some invasive species can survive in damp or wet conditions for five or six days on water recreation clothing and equipment).

- **CHECK** all your equipment and clothing for living organisms and plants fragments. Pay particular attention to areas that are damp and hard to inspect.
- **CLEAN** and wash all equipment, clothing and footwear thoroughly away from water source. If you do come across any organisms, leave them at the water body where you found them. When practical, completely dry out all equipment and clothing before going to a new site.
- **DRY** all equipment and clothing - some species can live for many days in moist conditions. Dry your kit with towels. Make sure you don't transfer water elsewhere.

Canoeists and kayakers take environmental concerns very seriously and already follow existing voluntary environmental codes of conduct. You can find more information about canoeing and the environment in British Canoeing's two publications covering inland and coastal paddling '**You and Your Canoe**'. Both are available on the [British Canoeing website](#).

*We have taken great care to ensure the currency, accuracy and reliability of this information. We cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions but where such are brought to our attention, the information will be amended accordingly. Users should be aware that environmental conditions outside of our control can change the nature of the Trail within a short space of time. It is recommended that weather and water conditions are checked beforehand, and tide timetables where applicable. **This trail was last reviewed in January 2013***

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