

## Kennet and Avon Canal Canoe Trail

**Crofton Beam Engines Pumping Station Crofton, Marlborough, Wiltshire to Hungerford, Berkshire**



### General Information

Historically, the Kennet and Avon Canal comprises three waterways, the Avon Navigation from Bristol to Bath (opened in 1727), the man-made canal section from Bath to Newbury (opened in 1810), and the Kennet Navigation from Newbury to Reading (opened in 1723).

The Kennet & Avon Canal crosses the country from Reading to Bristol. Passing and running through towns and villages such as Devizes, Bradford-on-Avon and Bath. Boats, locks, aqueducts, landscape and views with a level towpath to walk and cycle. The stretch from Devizes to the River Thames at Reading is well known amongst many canoeists as it forms the first part of the internationally renowned Devizes to Westminster Canoe Race.

[www.dwrace.org](http://www.dwrace.org)



The summit level of the Canal is 450 feet above sea level and 40 feet

higher than any reliable local water sources. A pumping station, complete with two beam pumping engines was to erected at Crofton to pump the water from natural springs in the area to the summit. The pumping station started operations in 1809 with one engine. A second Boulton and Watt engine was installed in 1812 and this engine is still in operation today.

Check before you paddle to see whether the Beam Engines are in steam as if they are a visit there will be an additional delight to your paddle.

<http://www.croftonbeamengines.org/intro.html>

This trail can be undertaken as a straight A to B paddle but will involve a car shuffle or can be done as a circular route.

### Map

OS Map 173 Swindon and Devizes  
OS Map 174 Newbury and Wantage.

### Portages

There are some 14 locks which need to be portaged and some require climbing out of your craft on to grassy and, sometimes, slippery banks. However, many of the egress points are on newly placed mooring and portage points. The portages are always on the tow path side of the canal.

## **Licences.**

A licence to paddle the Kennet & Avon Canal is included in the Canoe England membership fee. Otherwise licenses can be obtained from <http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/license-it> or <http://www.waterscape.com/>

**Distance** – 6 miles

## **Start**

The start is at Crofton Pumping Station which is 6 miles (10km) South East of Marlborough, and 6 miles (10km) South West of Hungerford.

This is the highest point on the canal and the trail goes east down towards Hungerford in Berkshire.

There is parking is at Crofton Beam Engine Pumping Station (pay machine) or on grass verge of road beside lock 59. There are many places where you can stop and picnic on the towpath on route.

Put-in just below lock 59. Gated access for unloading is beside bridge 101 over canal beside lock 60. Paddle down stream past Crofton Pumping Station (and generally downwind) along delightful countryside through Great and Little Bedwyn.

You will get some delightful view of the countryside and wildlife. You may also meet narrowboats as they are very popular on this canal.

Continue past Froxfield onto into Hungerford. Just before you get to Hungerford lock there is a very low footbridge near the church. This is the church of St Lawrence. Some people are able to “limbo” in their boat underneath it (kayaks only!!) but it is possible portage around it on the right hand side.

After this bridge you will see the Hungerford Lock and this is your destination. You may wish to put back in after the lock 74 and paddle slightly further to get out on the left grassy public bank just before bridge (84)

## **Finish**

The finish is at Hungerford Wharf. It is easy to load canoes here but please be very discrete when changing at it is in front of private houses and there may well be many other members of the public around as it is a popular area.

There is a public car park with toilet next to the library further up the High Street close to this bridge. There is a lovely tea shop on the opposite bank where meals and teas can fill the hungry canoeist!!

## **Additional information**

Hungerford – Hungerford is a lovely small town to explore <http://www.hungerford.uk.net/>

Kennet & Avon Canal  
<http://www.katrust.co.uk/index.html>

## **Cycling**

There is a towpath the all the way along the trail so it is possible to follow the paddlers on a bicycle or even walk! No permit is required to cycle along the Kennet & Avon Canal ... just need to be aware of the numbers of walkers and fishermen there are.