

RIVER MEDWAY TRAIL

CANOE • KAYAK • PADDLEBOARD



PADDLING THE RIVER MEDWAY



Take a trip along 29km of beautiful meandering waterway from the heart of historic Tonbridge, through the Kentish countryside to the county town of Maidstone and finish your journey at Allington.

Rising in the Ashdown Forest, the River Medway flows through West and East Sussex and into Kent before reaching the Thames Estuary some 120 kilometres downstream. Many tributaries flow into the Medway as it passes through the High Weald and Vale of Kent with its characteristic orchards and meadows.

You can enjoy 29 kilometres of this majestic river starting from Tonbridge and finishing at Allington Lock, its tidal point just north of Maidstone. Graded easy, it can be canoed in a couple of days, or longer for a more relaxed trip. There are a number of campsites and launch points along the route.

Paddling along the river you will see a wide variety of riverside plants, from the colourful purple loosetrife to the blue of the water forget-me-not. The orange and blue flash of the kingfisher and - if you are very lucky - a glimpse of an otter are just some of the wonders awaiting you along the River Medway. The trail meanders past woods, meadows, villages and towns with a wealth of interest.

Become a British Canoeing member which covers you to paddle a huge selection of Britain's waterways Go to britishcanoeing.org.uk/membership



HISTORY OF THE MEDWAY

People have lived in the Medway Valley since the Neolithic times on the fertile soils alongside the river.

The Medway has been a hive of activity as a transport route taking ragstone up to London, and iron and timber from the Weald to the docks. This industry was made possible in the 1740's with the extension of the navigation up to Tonbridge. In Tonbridge the river provided power to run the Leigh gunpowder works in the 1800's.

Agriculture was a prime industry in the early 20th Century with two thirds of England's hops produced in Kent. Hop gardens can still be seen alongside the river at Golden Green, although they are far fewer in number today. Also keep an eye out for pill boxes along the length of the river, built to defend the county in World War Two.

Today you can enjoy the river's wildlife, tranquillity and excitement from the water or from its banks.



ENVIRONMENT AND GOOD PRACTICE

Paddling is a low impact activity, giving you perfect opportunities to see and hear wildlife and get up close to the natural environment.



Please follow the below tips to ensure we continue to protect our environment:

- Respect the river and other users by leaving no trace of your visit, take your litter home with you.
- Minimise disturbance to wildlife by exiting the river at designated areas only.
- Keep a lookout for anglers, maintain a good distance from them to avoid their tackle and create as little disturbance as possible.
- Show consideration for other water users.
- Do not disturb wildlife, never approach wildlife head on, or so close that you disturb its natural behaviour. Stay quiet while keeping your distance.

CHECK, CLEAN, DRY

An invasive species is a non-native plant, animal, or organism whose introduction causes economic or environmental damage or is harmful to human health.

Invasive species can have a profound, negative impact on biodiversity. Always check, clean, & dry your kit after each trip to help stop the spread.

CHECK

Check boats, equipment, and clothing after leaving the water for mud, aquatic animals, or plant material. Remove anything you find and leave it at the site.

CLEAN

Clean everything thoroughly as soon as you can, paying attention to the inside of your boat and areas that are damp and hard to access. Use hot water if possible.

DRY

Dry thoroughly by draining water from every part of your boat and dry with a sponge or towel before leaving the site. Dry everything thoroughly for as long as possible before using elsewhere as some invasive plants and animals can survive for two weeks in damp conditions.

MORE INFORMATION

All vessels on Environment Agency waterways are required by law to be registered. A vessel includes boats, canoes, kayaks, SUPs and rowing skiffs.

You are registered to use the River Medway if you are a member of British Canoeing.

Further details can be found on the GoPaddling website: www.gopaddling.info/rivers/river-medway/

Failure to register your vessel can result in a £1000 fine and/or removal of the vessel from the waterway.

Visiting craft can purchase a daily, weekly or monthly registration from Allington Lock or Tonbridge Castle.

KEY

-  **Route Start Point**
-  **Route End Point**
-  **Car Park**
-  **Lock (with portage)**
-  **Lock (with a canoe pass)**
-  **Refreshment Stop**
-  **Campsite without facilities**
-  **Campsite**
-  **Road**
-  **Bridge/Footbridge**
-  **Medway Towpath Footpath**
-  **River Flow Arrow**



HIRE COMPANIES AND CANOE CLUBS

Elveys Canoes

www.elveys-canoe.co.uk

River Medway Canoes

www.rivermedwaycanoes.com

Paddle Cabin

www.paddlecabin.co.uk

SUP with us

www.supwithus.org.uk

Epic Life www.epiclife.co.uk

Maidstone Canoe Club

www.maidstonecanoeclub.net

Tonbridge Canoe Club

www.tonbridgecanoeclub.org.uk

WhiteWater Action Club

www.whitewateraction.co.uk

CAMPING FACILITIES

Camping is available along the trail at the following sites (varying degrees of facilities)

Riverview Camping

www.riverviewcamping.co.uk

Hop Farm Campsite

www.thehopfarm.co.uk

Marlin (WAM) Campsite

www.whitewateraction.co.uk

Allington Lock

www.therivermedway.co.uk

FREE WILD CAMPING

(No facilities, please take all your rubbish with you)

Oak Weir Lock

Porters Lock

Stoneham Lock

I TONBRIDGE CASTLE TO TOWN LOCK

Distance: 0.3 miles (0.5km)

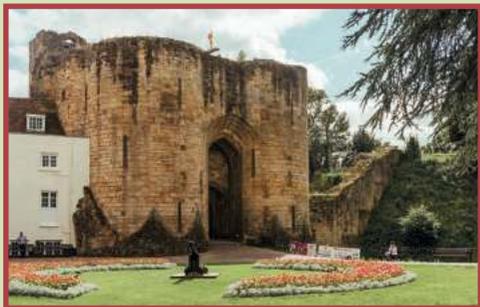
Time: Allow 15 minutes

Start: Tonbridge Castle TN9 1HR

What3Words: wants.puddles.field

Finish: Tonbridge Town Lock TN9 1GH

What3Words: with.events.decreased



B2260

The Bakehouse

TONBRIDGE

TONBRIDGE CASTLE

65mm Coffee

TONBRIDGE
TOWN LOCK

Access to the slipway is via the Lower Castle Field car park (off The Slade). Please note a height barrier is present (If the barrier is down please visit the neighbouring Tonbridge Swimming Pool for access).

This launch point is accessibility friendly due to the slipway.

Prior to getting on the water, why not take a stroll around the town of Tonbridge and visit the Castle which boasts Kent's best example of a Motte-and-Bailey Gatehouse. The original 11th Century wooden structure has been replaced by stone.

Following the river downstream you will pass Tonbridge Town Bridge to reach Tonbridge Lock. The canoe pass can be closed with low summer flows.



2 TONBRIDGE TOWN LOCK TO ELDRIDGES LOCK

Distance: 1.5 miles (2.4km)

Time: Allow 36 minutes

Start: Tonbridge Town Lock
TN9 1HG

What3Words:
with.events.decreased

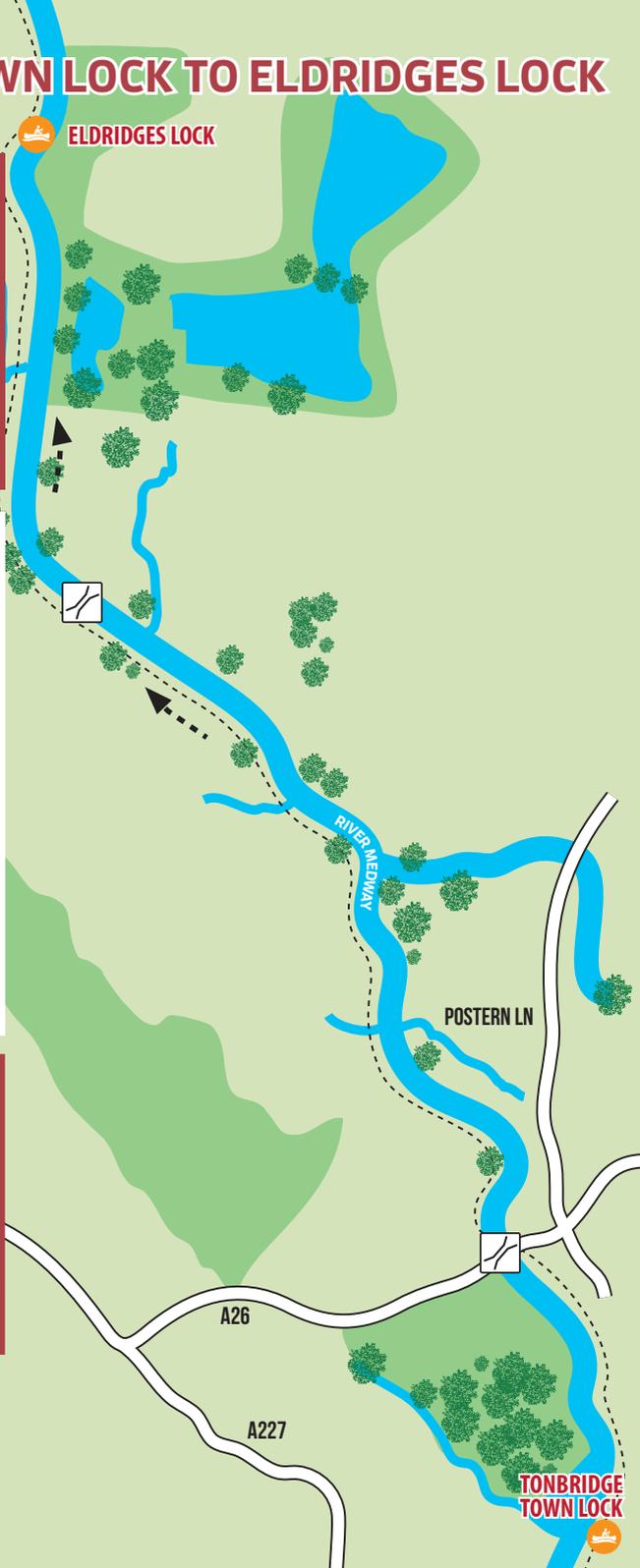
Finish: Eldridge's Lock **TN10 4HB**

What3Words:
sweep.brush.mount

Paddling downstream under Cannon Lane Bridge head into the countryside of the Medway Valley. Alongside the river you'll see wet meadows dotted with anthills. You might even see green woodpeckers feeding on the ants!

Passing under a girder bridge you then reach Eldridges Lock.

Keep your eyes and ears open for barn owls feeding over grassland areas at dusk. Feeding on field voles and mice. Barn owls make a variety of noises from hisses to shrieks but don't hoot. Did you know that it's been estimated that over a year, a breeding pair of barn owls need roughly 4,000 prey items?



3 ELDRIDGES LOCK TO PORTERS LOCK

Distance: 1 mile (1.6km)

Time: Allow 24 minutes

Start: Eldridge's Lock **TN10 4HB**

What3words: sweep.brush.mount

Finish: Porters Lock **TN11 0PG**

What3words: activism.bless.wanted

Continue downstream reaching Porters Lock where you can either use the fish friendly canoe pass or the portage platforms which are near to the lock. The pass helps fish move up the river so they can take advantage of the best spawning and feeding grounds.

The Medway boasts more than 21 species of freshwater fish.

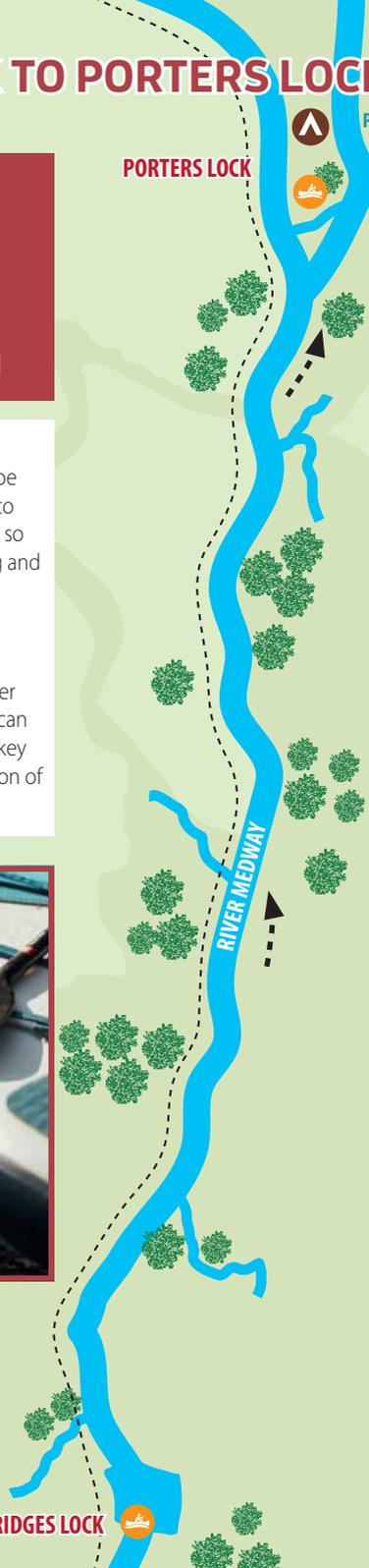
The biggest fish you are likely to find in the river is the Pike. Pike are opportunistic feeders and can grow more than a metre in length. They are a key component in maintaining a healthy population of fish within the river.



ELDRIDGES LOCK

PORTERS LOCK

Porters Lock Camping



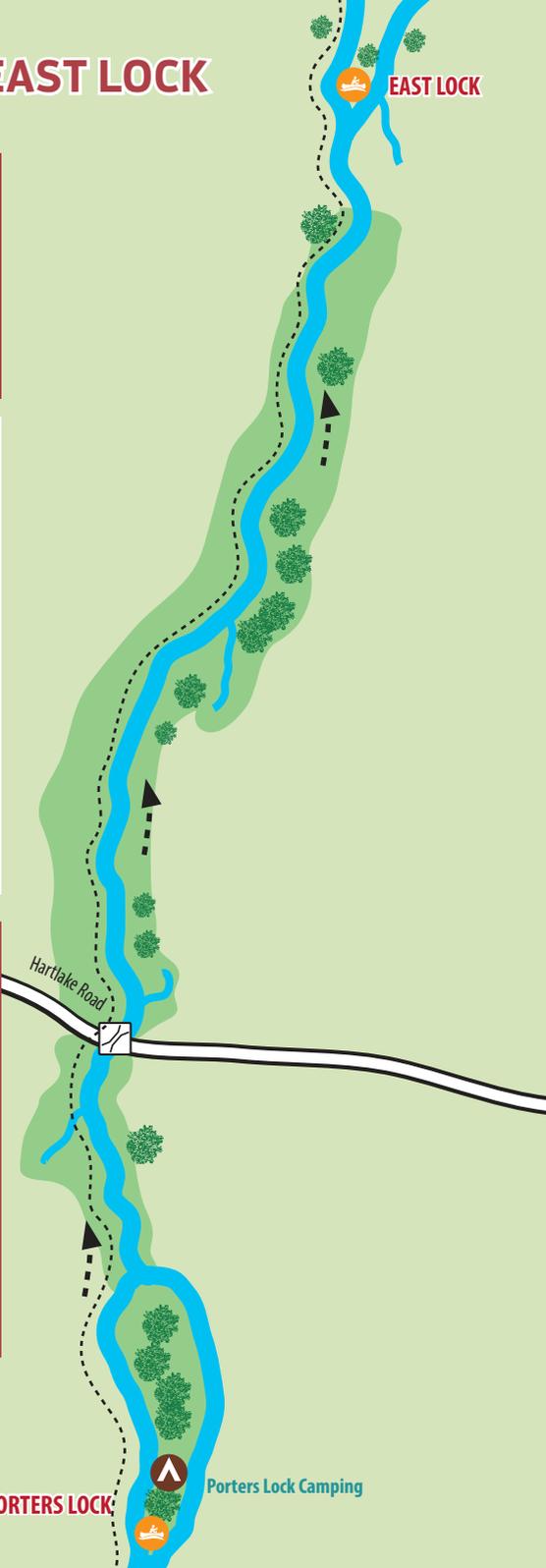
4 PORTERS LOCK TO EAST LOCK

Distance: 1.2 mile (2km)
Time: Allow 30 minutes
Start: Porters Lock TN11 OPG
What3words: activism.bless.wanted
Finish: East Lock TN11 OBD
What3words: custom.ends.inserting

The trail continues under Hartlake Bridge where there is a separate access point to the river. This access point has a poor launch from the bank and is unfriendly for accessibility needs. There is limited parking on the road at Hartlake Bridge.

Along this section you will see characteristic riverside trees such as alder and willow lining the banks. The tell-tale characteristics of the yellow male catkins and red flowers of the alder can be seen around March time before the leaves have come out.

You may see the majestic grey heron, often seen standing silently along the river. It's one of the first birds to start nesting in spring and does so high in the trees.



5 EAST LOCK TO OAK WEIR LOCK

Distance: 0.7 miles (1.2km)

Time: Allow 18 minutes

Start: East Lock **TN11 0BD**

What3words: custom.ends.inserting

Finish: Oak Weir Lock **TN11 0LB**

What3words: playing.curiosity.tint

Soon you will be at Oak Weir Lock with the lower portage platform off to the left via a small path through the lock island itself.

Feel free to camp here. If you are very lucky you may spot an otter whilst on the water. These secretive mammals feed on fish and amphibians and live a discreet life in holts along the river. Often only their tracks and spraints containing fish scales show their presence.



EAST LOCK

6 OAK WEIR LOCK TO SLUICE WEIR LOCK

Distance: 1.2 mile (2km)

Time: Allow 30 mins

Start: Oak Weir Lock **TN11 0LB**

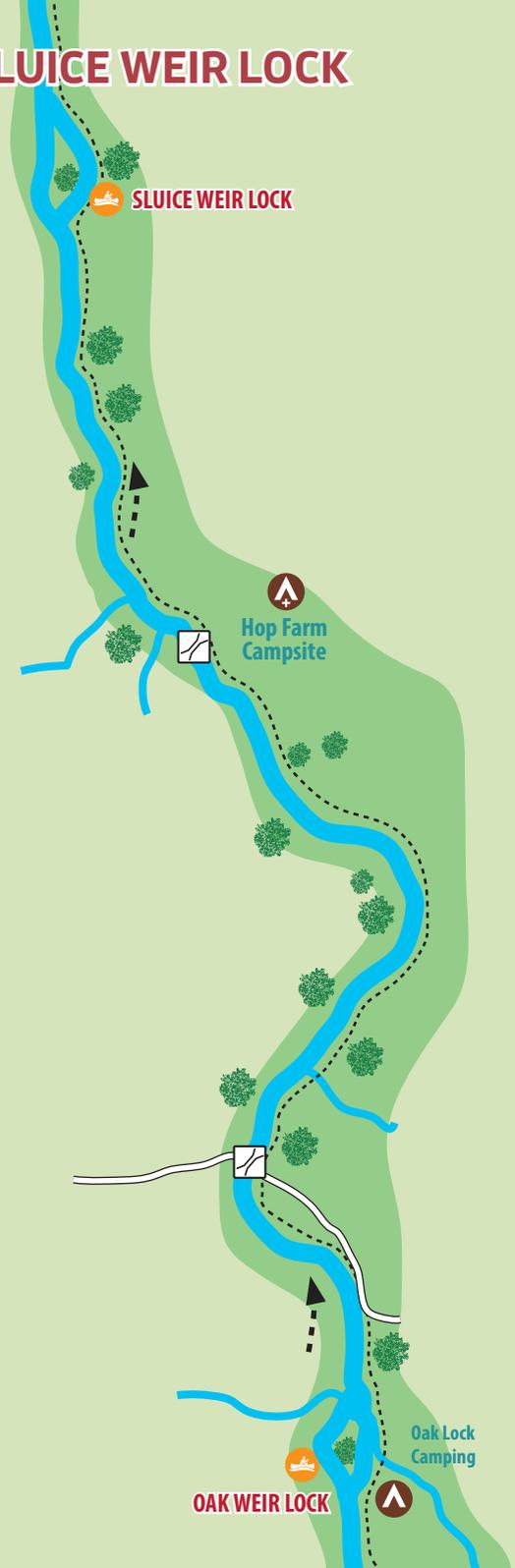
What3words: playing.curiosity.tint

Finish: Sluice Weir **TN12 5EU**

What3words: ballroom.measures.acrobats

Passing under Stilstead Bridge, the river winds its way onwards under the metal Wagon Bridge. Look out for the wooden footbridge on your right and go underneath this to find the Hop Farm Campsite.

Continuing on to Sluice Weir Lock you have the opportunity to use the canoe pass or the portage platform. In spring and summer the river is alive with dragonflies and damselflies in the marginal vegetation along the river and dykes.



7 SLUICE WEIR LOCK TO HAMPSTEAD LOCK

Distance: 2.2 mile (3.6km)

Time: Allow 54 minutes

Start: Sluice Weir **TN12 5EU**

What3words: ballroom.measures.acrobats

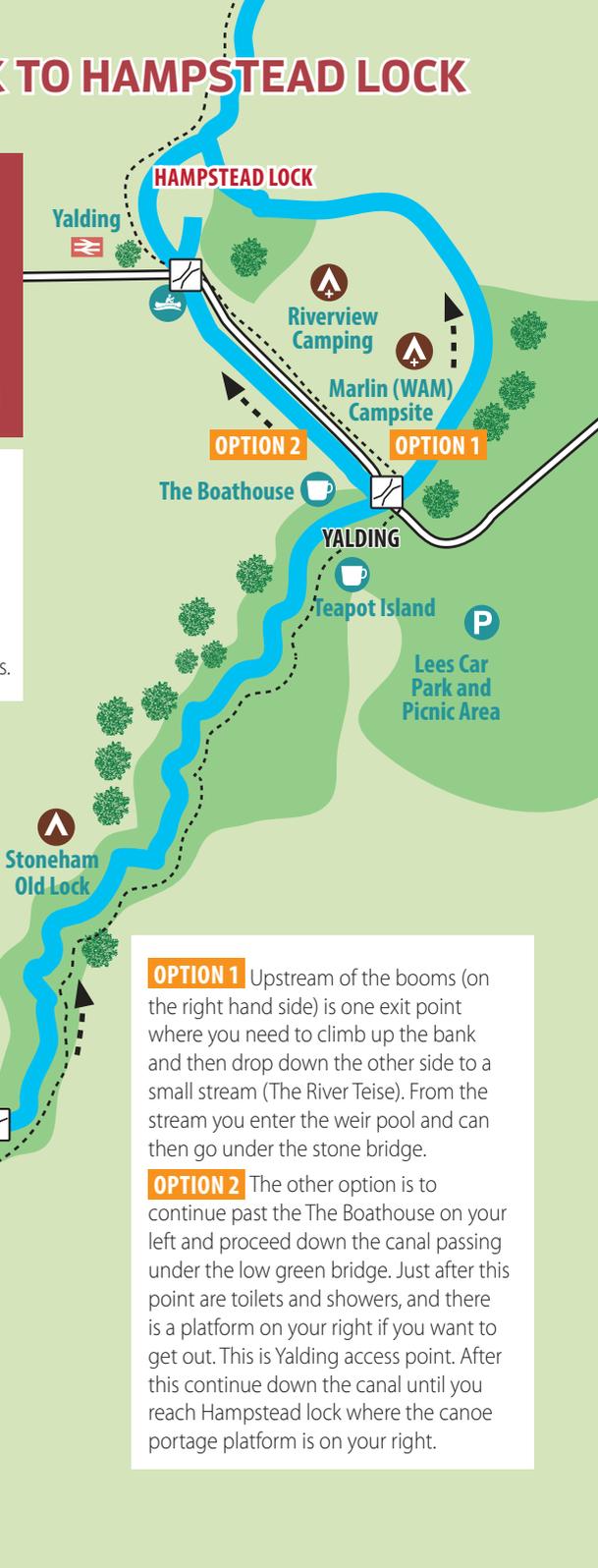
Finish: Hampstead Lock **ME18 6AD**

What3words: laces.responded.jogged

Passing the village of East Peckham on your right, you'll pass by Branbridges Leisure with refreshments, toilets, camping and home to Paddle Cabin, offering lessons, hire and events.

Soon after you'll reach Stoneham Old Lock (now disused) where you can camp (no facilities).

Paddling into Yalding you have two route choices.



OPTION 1 Upstream of the booms (on the right hand side) is one exit point where you need to climb up the bank and then drop down the other side to a small stream (The River Teise). From the stream you enter the weir pool and can then go under the stone bridge.

OPTION 2 The other option is to continue past the The Boathouse on your left and proceed down the canal passing under the low green bridge. Just after this point are toilets and showers, and there is a platform on your right if you want to get out. This is Yalding access point. After this continue down the canal until you reach Hampstead lock where the canoe portage platform is on your right.

SLUICE WEIR LOCK

8 HAMPSTEAD LOCK TO TESTON LOCK

Distance: 3 miles (4.8km)

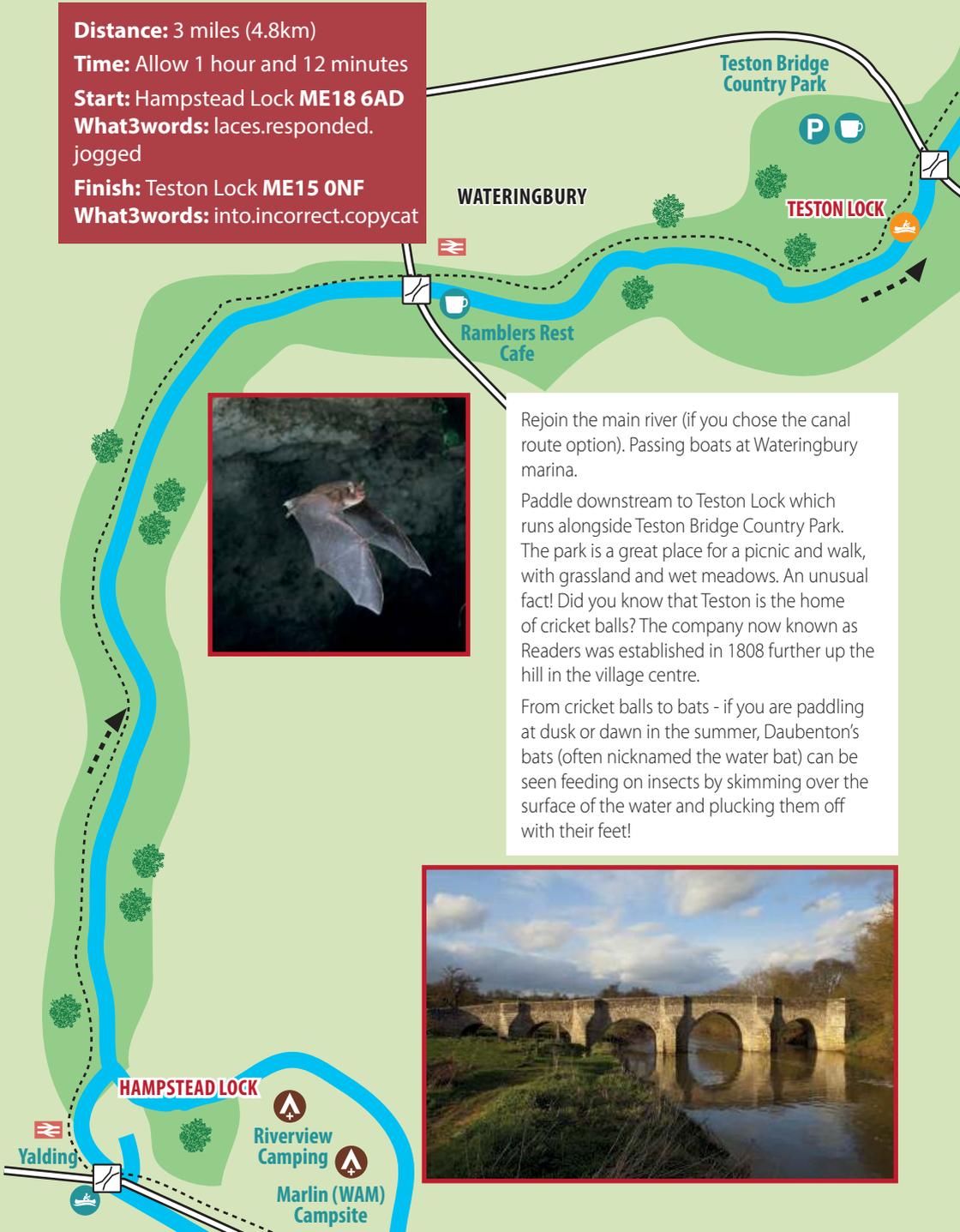
Time: Allow 1 hour and 12 minutes

Start: Hampstead Lock **ME18 6AD**

What3words: laces.responded.jogged

Finish: Teston Lock **ME15 0NF**

What3words: into.incorrect.copycat



Rejoin the main river (if you chose the canal route option). Passing boats at Watingbury marina.

Paddle downstream to Teston Lock which runs alongside Teston Bridge Country Park. The park is a great place for a picnic and walk, with grassland and wet meadows. An unusual fact! Did you know that Teston is the home of cricket balls? The company now known as Readers was established in 1808 further up the hill in the village centre.

From cricket balls to bats - if you are paddling at dusk or dawn in the summer, Daubenton's bats (often nicknamed the water bat) can be seen feeding on insects by skimming over the surface of the water and plucking them off with their feet!



9 TESTON LOCK TO EAST FARLEIGH LOCK

Distance: 2 miles (3.2km)

Time: Allow 48 minutes

Start: Teston Lock **ME15 0NF**

What3words: into.incorrect.copycat

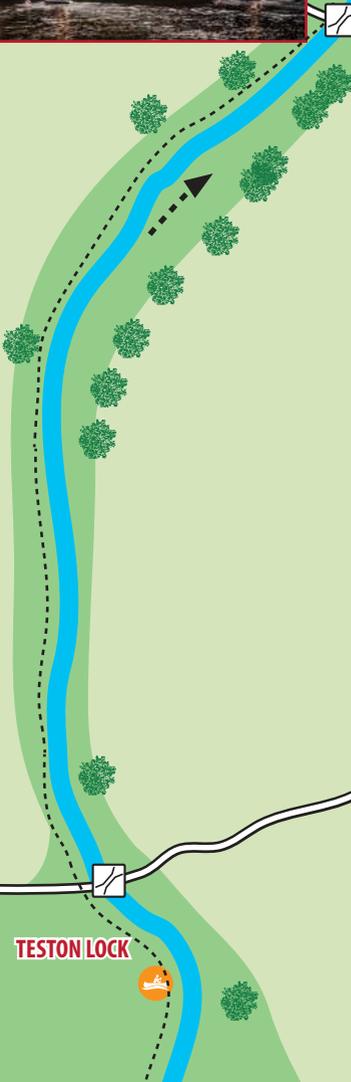
Finish: East Farleigh Lock **ME16 9NB**

What3words: precautions.curving.relay



EAST FARLEIGH LOCK

EAST FARLEIGH



Beyond Teston, the river becomes wider with a mosaic of orchards, gardens and woodlands running alongside.

Pass under Barming footbridge, did you know that before the installation of the locks, the river was fordable here at Barming? The wooden bridge was replaced in 1996 by the current metal footbridge. Traditionally, local Morris dancers, known as the "Kettle Bridge Clogs", dance over the footbridge each year on 1st May.

Downstream of Barming the village of East Farleigh is reached, with the church spire visible on the hill. Reaching East Farleigh Bridge you can paddle through the arches to reach the platform. The bridge has its own claim to fame with the 'Battle of East Farleigh Bridge' taking place in 1648, during the 'Second' English Civil War.



P 
Teston Bridge Country Park

TESTON LOCK

10 EAST FARLEIGH TO ALLINGTON LOCK

Distance: 4.5 miles (7.2km)

Time: Allow 1 hour 48 minutes

Start: East Farleigh Lock, ME16 9NB

What3words: precautions.curving.relay

Finish: Allington Lock, ME16 0LU

What3words: bits.croaking.slimming

Launch from the portage at East Farleigh and paddle downstream leaving the tranquil village setting of East Farleigh towards the town centre of Maidstone.

Spot the 14th century Archbishop's Palace used originally as an overnight stop when the archbishop was travelling between London and Canterbury.

Travelling beyond Maidstone and 1.6km downstream, pass by Whatman Millennium Park on your left.

From here onwards enjoy a mix of woodlands, parks and natural green spaces alongside the river.

Pass by the stately named Allington Castle, visible on your left through the trees.

As you approach the lock, pass the Malta Inn on your right, one of four public houses situated along the River Medway, built in the 18th century and all named after British Naval bases.

This is the end of the route, exit the river on the slipway on your left.



SAFETY ADVICE

Always carry a means of contacting the emergency services about your person.

Be Certain that the route you plan is within your capabilities.

EQUIPMENT

- Always wear a buoyancy aid, if paddling a stand-up paddleboard ensure you have the appropriate leash for the environment.
- Take footwear you don't mind getting wet and clothing suitable for the weather conditions. Ideally take dry clothing in a suitable dry pack, especially in colder weather conditions.
- Other useful items include: drinking water, pen knife, whistle, small first aid kit, mobile phone, head torch, and helmet if required. A quick release belt system is ideal for use in any moving/flowing water including rivers.

BE PREPARED

- We recommend that paddlers have some prior formal instruction and do not paddle alone.

- Plan your adventure! The weather can change rapidly due to rain, wind or tide. Check river levels and avoid offshore winds. If on the water after sunset use an all round white light.
- River conditions can be checked by signing up to the Strong Stream service at www.therivermedway.co.uk/strong-stream-advice

NAVIGATION RULES

- Give other users plenty of space, avoid lingering where this might disturb others and pass other craft by moving to the right side.
- Remember it is difficult for rowing craft to see paddlers. For the same reason do not follow close behind larger vessels.
- Be aware of potential hazards such as weirs, overhanging trees and tidal waters. Ensure you are equipped for the trip and that it is within the capabilities of you and your group.
- To report an environmental incident phone the 24hr Environment Agency hotline number **0800 80 70 60**.

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