

Peak Forest Canal, Marple to Whaley Bridge

Easy: 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

The Peak Forest Canal was completed in 1800 except for the flight of locks at Marple which were completed four years later to transport lime and grit stone from the quarries at Dove Holes to industrial Manchester and beyond. It was constructed on two levels and goes from the junction with the Macclesfield Canal at Marple six and a-half-miles to the termini at Whaley Bridge or Buxworth. At 518 feet above sea level it's the highest stretch of navigable water in the whole canal system as it clings to the hillside with fabulous views on a clear day of the Pennines and the flat plateau of Kinder Scout to the south. Approaching Whaley Bridge there is a branch to the left leading to Bugsworth Basin the only [inland interchange basin](#) in Britain's narrow canal system.

Distance: 6½ Miles.

Approximate Time: 1-3 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: Peak Forest Canal

Type of Water: Urban and rural canal.

Portages and Locks: None

Vehicle Shuttle is required

Nearest Town: Marple, Disley, and Whaley Bridge

Start: Lockside, Marple, SK6 6BN

Finish: Whaley Bridge SK23 7LS

O.S. Sheets: OS Landranger Map 109 Manchester, Map 110 Sheffield & Huddersfield.

Licence Information: A licence is required to paddle on this waterway. See full details in useful information below.

Local Facilities: There are lots of facilities in the towns and villages that lie along the canal including an excellent fish and chip shop close to the terminus at Whaley Bridge.

Start Directions

At the top of the flight of locks and junction of the Macclesfield Canal in Marple. You can unload your boats on Lockside, Marple SK6 6BN (OS Landranger 109, map ref 961887), but as this is a residential street move the cars to one of several car parks around the village. The nearest being on Canal St. opposite the Rex Cinema.

You can also

Alternatively there is an access point at Haag Bank Lane, Disley SK12 2LA. (OS 109 Map ref 973856) As there is plenty of parking by the canal it makes a pleasant there and back paddle to Whaley Bridge.

Description

This is an interesting area so well worth looking around before you set off. There is a lovely crossover bridge at the junction with the Macclesfield Canal and the interesting Possett Bridge. It is so called because it is said that Samuel Oldknow promised the workmen a possett of ale if they completed the construction by a certain date. They did so and earned their reward. The bridge has 3 arches one for the main channel, a second smaller one for the towpath where the horses passed (including a tunnel for the boatmen), the third arch is no longer used but used to carry an arm round to some old lime kilns.



Leaving the village of Marple there is an eclectic mix of industrial and rural scenes as the navigation clings to the side of Goyt Valley.

Soon you reach Disley where a simple timber swing bridge crosses the canal to provide access to adjacent farms. Here you may either limbo underneath, portage it or open it up but it must be returned to its

original position as the track predates the building of the waterway. This is the first of several similar bridges on the route, all of which you will need to negotiate in a similar fashion.

One and half miles further, the sweet smell of sweets is in the air as New Mills is the home of Swizzels Matlow the maker of Love Hearts and other assorted children's sweets.

Heading out towards Furness Vale, past a large marina and boat builders, the canal winds its way precariously across the county boundary into Derbyshire, towards Whaley Bridge. A fabulous vista soon opens up looking across the Peak District National Park towards the dark peaty plateau of Kinder Scout and its neighboring hills including Chinley Churn and South Head.

The paddling becomes secondary to the views until you need to negotiate under a draw bridge similar to those which appear on Dutch canals.



Beyond Bridgemont the canal forks left towards Bugsworth Basin which for anyone interested in industrial archeology is a must visit. It consists of 3 large basins which formed part of a large inland port built to bring the canal as close as possible to the limestone from the quarries at Dove Holes. Spend time reading the information board which explains its connection with the Peak Forest Tramway of which much evidence remains. Imagine how busy this place once was before the days of road transport and have a drink at the Navigation Inn.

Retrace your route to where the canal forks and heads left for half a mile to a smaller basin at Whaley Bridge where the canal ends in a small stone-built railway interchange building. There are a number of picnic benches in this pretty area between the canal and River Goyt.



Possett Bridge at Marple

Finish Directions

At the canal basin on Canal Street, Whaley Bridge SK23 7LS where there is a picnic area by the canal. There is a free car park situated on the adjoining road Tom Brads Croft.

Useful Information

The waterways in this trail are managed by Canal and Rivers Trust 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 [Canal and Rivers Trust](#) 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](#)

Portages and Locks: There are no locks or tunnels but there are 2 low bridges. This trail does have some swing bridges and we would advise that you ensure you have considered the craft you are in, the water levels and the potential need to portage. If you do go under these bridges please look out for any nuts and bolts protruding below the bridge.(Portage on the towpath side)

Marple, a once famous hat-making centre, now a suburb of Stockport is an interesting place to look around. It has a thriving centre. The Rex cinema is one of the few independent cinemas still operating. [www.Marple-uk.com](http://www.marple-uk.com).
<http://www.marple-uk.com/Marple.htm>

Disley a pretty village situated up the hill from the navigation with several excellent pubs with lots of independent shops including an artisan bakery and a delicatessen. It is also close to Lyme Park, the National Trust property featured in the BBC's adaptation of Jane Austin's Pride and Prejudice. Unfortunately the village centre is slightly spoilt by the busy A6 road.

Bugsworth Basin- find out more about the history of this scheduled ancient monument at www.brocross.com. The Navigation Inn is an excellent pub for a meal or a drink www.navigationinn.co.uk.

Whaley Bridge is a small town in the High Peak district of Derbyshire situated on the banks of a juvenile River Goyt. www.whaleybridge.com

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](http://www.environmentagency.gov.uk) 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 capsized



Photo by James Carnegie

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

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 November 2016***

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