

Canoeing & Kayaking in the Norfolk Broads. BY THE CANOE MAN

You don't have to be an experienced canoeist in order to get afloat on the Norfolk Broads you don't even need to have your own equipment – there are a variety of Hire centres throughout the broads as well as Guided trails that are run on a regular basis.

The Norfolk and Suffolk Broads and their feeder rivers offer a variety of canoeing opportunities for paddlers of all craft and all levels of experience. The major tributaries outside of the area controlled by the Broads Authority offer canoeing on quiet waters away from powered traffic there is only one company that offers access to these areas – TheCanoeMan.com, whilst the rivers within the Broads system there are numerous canoe hire centres that offer the opportunity to survey this special conservation area and its wildlife from close quarters, albeit in company with other, larger, craft. The Broads themselves offer what can be at times challenging canoeing for the more experienced paddler, particularly during less settled weather, whilst the advanced paddler can find extreme conditions around the mill races on the major rivers and on those rivers and broads subject to strong tidal flows.

Licences are not required on non-navigable stretches of Norfolk's rivers although access & egress points can often be difficult to find. For more information about the rivers outside the Broads authority area contact TheCanoeMan (details below). However all craft using the navigable stretches of the Broads are required to be licensed. Licenses may be obtained from the Broads Authority, Dragonfly House, Norwich, NR3 1BQ, tel: 01603 610734 or alternatively, membership of the British Canoe Union covers your craft for the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads as well as British Waterways Board and other navigation authority waters. Details can be found at www.bcu.org.

The Norfolk Broads are probably one of the most easily accessible wetlands in the country they offer many miles of canoeing & kayaking in beautiful surroundings. It is however important that you are aware of where you are allowed to get in / get out and what areas are suitable for the less experienced. It is important to note that there are few inland waters in which there is an automatic right to navigate. Within the Norfolk Broads many areas of water are privately owned, and their use regulated to varying degrees. There is limited land access to the rivers and broads, and access is often over land in the guardianship of parish councils or private trusts. Rivers outside the jurisdiction of the Broads Authority are also subject to riparian rights of ownership, and in some cases can only be canoed by arrangement with the riparian owner, normally through the BCU's voluntary Access Officers. Generally speaking, individuals and small groups are less likely to encounter difficulty. Larger groups should seek local advice before their trip. If in doubt current upto date access information can be sort from the BCU Local Coaching Officer Mark Wilkinson www.TheCanoeMan.com

REMEMBER - Do not canoe alone - wear a buoyancy aid - undertake a course of training - paddle within your ability.

The area can be broken down into the river systems:

Bure

Ant

Thurne

Waveney

Wensum

Yare



River Bure

This is the river system on which the bulk of the Norfolk Broads are found. The river runs from well above Aylsham all the way down to Gt.Yarmouth. Navigation (the point where larger powered craft cannot go beyond) stops at Horstead mill. Paddling above Buxton is fraught with portages and access challenges. Easiest access at Buxton is via TheCanoeman's Canoe Hire centre opening spring 2010 which will provide Canoe Hire, Guided Trails & Parking (at an additional charge for those not hiring equipment) for directions see www.TheCanoeman.com From here to Coltishall is probably one of the most beautiful stretches of river in the county. The river meanders initially through open grassland and then into a stunning tree line section. There is plenty of wildlife to be seen here from Kingfishers to if you are lucky Otters.

From Coltishall onwards you will have to endure the 'pleasure cruisers' ranging from the small electric dayboats all the way up to the 12 berth super cruisers. In reality they pose no threat to the canoeist – officially rule of the river is to stick to the right hand side to pass but so little room is taken up by a canoe that pulling in tight to either side of the river is usually more than enough. The river winds its way from Coltishall to Wroxham where the first of the Norfolk broads joins the river – Bridge Road.



Wroxham often referred to as the capital of the Broads is a buzzing thriving village – with the world famous 'Roys of Wroxham' stores who claim to being the 'largest village store in the world'. Many of the boatyards are based in and around Wroxham so motor cruiser traffic will significantly increasing from here on. Leaving Wroxham you will see many of the very expensive riverside holiday homes that are now an established part of the broadland landscape. Below Wroxham is where the main Broads 'run' starts with Wroxham broad, Salhouse broad, Blackhouse broad, Cockshoot broad, Great Hoveton broad.

By now the Bure is a large very wide river which in the height o summer can be very busy. Places well worth a visit are the Norfolk Wildlife Trust centre at Ranworth along with Ranworth church said to have the best view over the broads. Soon after passing the turn off for Ranworth the ruined remains of St Benets abbey will be seen on your left – these are well worth a visit if only to see graffiti dating back to the 13th century! Canoeing beyond this point is not recommended as the river is very wide becoming more tidal, exposed to high winds and very very busy.



River Ant

Starts well above North Walsham but unfortunately the river has little to offer, other than narrow field ditch paddling, until you reach Honing. Access at Honing Lock is somewhat challenging to find and has very



limited parking (a maximum of 2 cars). If you intend to use this access point you are better off to arrange a shuttle transport (getting you and your equipment dropped off. Whilst leaving your vehicle at the get out point) this can be arranged via TheCanoeMan. The first half a mile of this trip is along a very narrow reed lined stream which at the wrong time of the year can be a 'jungle warfare' but all good fun. The further along you get the river widens – this is the disused North Walsham Canal – very peaceful and beautiful. Just before you reach the main (A149) road bridge a network of dykes joins from the right. Well worth an explore if you have the time. Immediately on the right after the road bridge

is a very easy get out at the Weyford Parish Staithe beside Banks boat there is also parking available here. From here on you are likely to encounter more day boats and cruisers but you should still find quieter stretches. The river winds and widens on its way down to Barton Broad just before it enters the broad a tributary enters from the left – this runs down from Stalham where there are several boatyards, a hotel as well as 'The museum of the broads' which is well worth a visit. The Ant runs through Barton Broad a wonderful broad a real haven for wildlife probably Norfolk's best Otter spotting territories. It is also home to the Norfolk Punt Club and has regular sailing regattas. As with all the broads it is recommended that paddlers should stay close to the windward bank for several reasons but not the least to avoid being run over by a high speed sailing yacht!

There is good access and egress as well as parking at Barton Turf and an excellent pub and Tea room at Neatishead accessibly by a small network of dykes marked on the right hand side of the broad. You leave Barton via 'The Shoals' just above Irstead. When you reach Irstead church (on your right) there is a nice green where you can picnic or access or egress. Please be aware the locals have added signs saying no canoes but as this is a Broads Authority key heading access/egress is allowed. The river here is initially quite pleasantly tree lined but soon deteriorates into quite desolate open fields, combine this with the river being relatively narrow, putting you in close proximity to other river users. Having passed by 2 or 3 derelict windmills you will eventually reach Ludham Bridge where there is a small general store, boatyard and 200yds down the road a pub. The river before Ludham bridge is generally of little interest and tends to be quite busy at peak times. The Ant finally joins the Bure just before St. Benets Abbey.

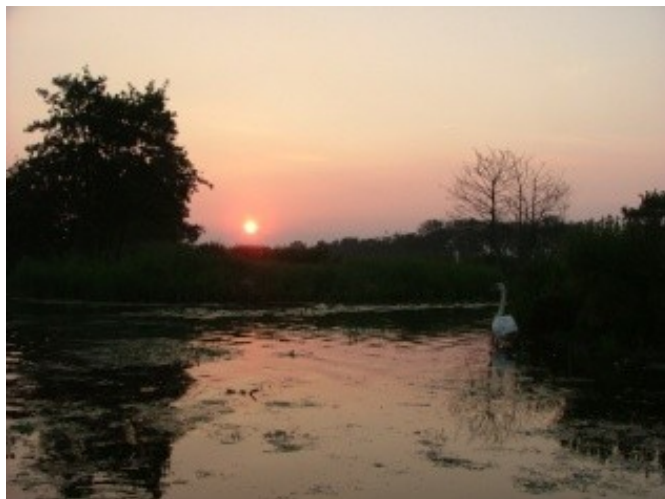


River Yare

As a canoeing river the Yare is very much a river of 2 halves – The highest point of easy entry is Bawburgh and the run down for the first couple of miles is truly jungle warfare and at the wrong time of year virtually impossible. From Earham church initially the river can be very shallow but quickly deepens into a very pleasant tree lined meander running behind the UEA. Next bridge in Cringleford where access/egress is easy long as you can carry the 300 meters to the small car park. From here on down the Yare become more challenging – despite a pretty river – negotiating the next three miles as Keswick, Lakesham and Trowse can prove hard work and is not for the fainthearted. The Yare starts to widen and soon is joined by the Wensum and suddenly turns into a very big, wide and tidal river.

The final run from Whittlingham to Thorpe green is pleasant enough especially as it finishes beside the local hostelry! By this point the Yare is of no real interest to most paddlers being wide and flat and exposed there are however a couple of areas of interest and worth a visit in their own right and that is Rockland

& Surlingham broads. Beyond the Whittlingham the river becomes more tidal and is unsuitable for less experienced paddlers.



River Wensum

Undoubtedly one of, if not, the most beautiful paddling river in Norfolk. Starting high above Fakenham the Wensum winds its way through beautiful unspoiled Norfolk Countryside – the top sections from Fakenham down are more suited to the experienced paddler as regularly trees block the river or convoluted portages are required to bypass the many mills on route. The Wensum is the only river in Norfolk to hold barbel and a good head of trout which unfortunately makes it an angling paradise this has and continues to cause friction between paddlers and fishermen. The lower section are more often paddled with the section from Attlebridge down being quite popular despite a 400yd portage in the middle! It is worth contacting either the river access officer or TheCanoeMan prior to paddling this stretch to get an up to date picture. The river continues to meander through open farmland working its way closer and closer to Norwich. The head of the navigation is at New Mills Yard where a portage is required through a housing estate! After this the river runs right through the centre of the city (which makes for a very pretty night time paddle) before joining the Yare.



River Waveney

Meandering along the Norfolk, Suffolk border is the very pretty river Waveney. The upper sections are clear and gently flowing and offer a haven for all sort of wildlife – Otter sightings are not uncommon. Scole is an easy access point, from here down there are relatively easy access, egress points for most of the way along the river – in the last few years there has been an excellent guide to canoeing the Waveney written in conjunction with The Environment Agency and is well worth getting a copy. Similar information can be found within TheCanoeMan guide to canoeing and kayaking in Norfolk and Suffolk.



The stretch from Ellingham Mill down is still somewhat contentious despite many attempts over the years to negotiate an access agreement with the angling club who own the fishing rights.

The highest point of navigation for motor launches is Geldeston Lock (the site of an excellent pub) and you will notice a significant change in the river from this point on as it widens, deepens and becomes more tidal.

The river continues past Beccles and Bungay heading towards Oulton Broad and ultimately the sea. Below Bungay the river holds little interest to the paddler.

Safety Points

Before and after leaving the water

- All river users must enjoy access to the river in a responsible and safe manner.
- Be friendly and polite to local residents and other water users.
- Park sensibly without causing any obstruction. Use designated car parks where available (this may involve unloading equipment and parking at a distance from the river).
- Be as quiet as possible.
- Unload kit tidily, take all litter home and leave no trace of your visit.
- Get changed out of public view.
- Avoid disturbing farm animals and wildlife and causing environmental damage.
- Follow the Countryside Code.

On the Water

- Respect other people.
- Safety is paramount and you should always wear a buoyancy aid and appropriate protective gear. It is good to practice to paddle in a group of at least three boats (it is not always best practice to stay with the boat, and three boats is recommended, one to stay with the casualty and the other to seek assistance).

- Wash your hands before eating/drinking and cover cuts on the skin.
- When lifting/moving your canoe follow approved H&S guidelines. On lifting i.e. straight back.
- When paddling on large expanses of open water, such as broads, hug to windward shoreline.
- Ensure you have suitable emergency equipment i.e. map, spare clothes, mobile phone, compass, First aid kit.
- Take advice on river levels before paddling
- Never paddle on stretches for which you are not suitable qualified/experienced i.e. tidal stretches.
- Respect wildlife and the environmental at all times noting sensitive places, specie and breeding seasons. This is particularly important in the breeding season and the fishing closed season, when canoeing should be kept to a minimum. At all other times, keep away from the banks (except at official access and portage points), and minimise disturbance to the river bed.
- Remain quite whilst approaching and passing anyone on the river.
- Normally pass on the far side of the river from someone fishing from the bank, or as directed by that person.
- If and when it is necessary to stop or to land in an emergency or at one of the approved landing places, keep reasonably still and quiet and in a small area.
- Refuse must not be deposited in the river or on the bank of the river.
- Visiting groups should not normally exceed 15 craft (larger groups should consult the BCU Local River Advisor). Individual members within a group must keep as close together as possible, especially when passing someone fishing, so as to cause minimum impact on other people and the environment.
- If in any doubt about where to pass or on any other point, group leaders should make their presence known to those fishing and ask for guidance.
- All river users should do their best to avoid argument.

In the event of a capsize with a canoe

- Do NOT panic.
- Ensure all other members of your party are ok.
- Do not climb on top of the upturned canoe.
- Drag the boat to the bank/or shallow area and empty it of water.
- Try to secure any lose items i.e. paddles, kit.

Paddling on the Sea

Sea Canoeing even in calmer conditions is a serious undertaking requiring a strong canoeing ability, appropriate craft and equipment and good local knowledge. More information can be obtained from TheCanoeMan.com or direct from the British Canoe Union.

Click here for [Tide Tables](#).

Norfolk has many places to hire canoes below is just a few

TheCanoeMan specialises in offering canoeing on the quietest most tranquil sections of Norfolk's Rivers they offer Guided Canoe Trails, including Otter & Bittern spotting trails, Canoe camping, Bushcraft trails as well as canoe hire from over 10 locations throughout the Broads including:

Buxton Canoe Hire Centre

Fairhaven Garden Canoe Hire Centre

Horning Canoe Hire Centre

Attlebridge Canoe Hire Centre

Online booking is available at www.TheCanoeMan.com or call 01603 499177

For further information about canoeing,
BCU Local Coaching Officer : Mark Wilkinson (TheCanoeMan)
T:01603 499177 e: info@TheCanoeMan.com

or contact The Broads Authority, Dragonfly House, 2 Gilders Way, Norwich, NR3 1BQ, tel: 01603 610734

Coastal Waters

The most important thing to remember is safety. The waters around the Norfolk coast are to be respected at all times, as the tides and rip currents can be very strong. Most beaches can be sailed from but you are advised to check with the local coastguard and find out what the tide and wind strength and directions are before you venture out. Remember the three golden rules, never canoe alone, never canoe in offshore winds and always tell someone where you are going.

Emergency Services

Lifeboat Stations

- In emergency ask operator for Lifeboat (dial 999)

Motor Lifeboats at:

Caister
Sheringham
Lowestoft
Great Yarmouth

Inshore Boats at:

Wells-next-the-Sea
Cromer
Gorleston

Coastguard:

Marine Rescue Co-ordination Centre
Havenbridge House,
Great Yarmouth,
Norfolk, Tel: 01493 851338.

Weather Forecasts:

Weathercall Recorded Weather Service for Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire.
Land & Sea:- 09068 500 408

Marine Rescue Centre - detailed sea conditions tel: 01493 851338.

Other enquiries and national forecasts :-
Norwich Weather Centre tel: 01603 660779.

Main Hospitals - with accident and emergency

Norwich - 01603 628377
King's Lynn - 01553 766266
Great Yarmouth - 01493 600611

Local Clubs

Norfolk has many canoe clubs, most of whom have a long history in the county.
This list contains those which are associated with the NCA with links to their individual club websites, where available.

Dereham Canoe Group

A friendly local club based at Swanton Morley on the Upper Wensum. They offer BCU Star courses and a range of activities.

www.derehamcanoeing.co.uk

Norwich Canoe Club

One of the leading Marathon/Sprint racing clubs in the east of England. A range of training opportunities are offered.

www.NorwichCanoeClub.org.uk

Eagle Canoe Club (Norwich)

Based in the heart of Norwich this is a friendly family club that offers a wide range of courses and activities including racing, surfing, whitewater trips, canoe polo as well as regular touring/camping trips :- an all-round club which also offers courses towards BCU Star awards.

www.eaglecanooclub.org.uk

Activ-8 Norfolk Whitewater Canoe Club

This club is designed for individuals interested in paddling Whitewater – organises trips to Wales, Scotland, Yorkshire, French Alps, Slovenia etc.

E: Wwater@Activ-8.org.uk

Waveney Valley Canoe Club (Bungay)

A friendly family club that offers a wide range of courses and activities including racing, surfing, whitewater trips, canoe polo as well as regular touring/camping trips.

www.waveneyvalleycanooclub.co.uk

Wensum Ospreys (Fakenham)

A busy club offering a range of courses and trips away.

www.wocc.org.uk

Useful Contacts

The following are a list of local contacts in Norfolk who can provide information about various aspects of the sport in the county.

British Canoe Union

Local Coaching Officer: Mark Wilkinson (TheCanoeMan)

Tel: **01603 499177** - Email: info@TheCanoeMan.com Web : www.TheCanoeMan.com

Disability Advice: Ali Foyster

Tel: **01953 606910**

Sea Kayaking/Coastal Access: Dick Foyster

Tel: **01953 606910**

Racing: Rob Lines

Tel: **01603 619846** - Email: roblines@yahoo.co.uk

Whitewater/Playboating: Richard Brookes

Email: sales@suescanoes.co.uk

LOCAL RIVER ADVISORS.

Local river advisors are appointed by the BCU to monitor the access situation on rivers in the UK. LRAs will know the current situations about any access agreements on the rivers they are responsible for. Please contact the relevant LRA before attempting to paddle a river - if not we may lose the right to paddle sections of river.

For free county wide advice and the most upto date access information on all rivers in the county including all of those listed below speak to the Local Coaching Officer :

Mark Wilkinson (TheCanoeMan)

Tel: **01603 499177** - Email: info@TheCanoeMan.com

Bure East & Norfolk Broads (East) - Chris Wright

Tel: **07711 584953** - Email: chris2wright@tiscali.co.uk

Thet (East) - Dick Foyster

Tel: **01953 606910**

Thurne (East) - Rod Cooke

Tel: **01508 518083** - Email: rod@cooke112.freeserve.co.uk

Waveney (Diss to Beccles) - Tim Bacon

Tel: **01502 713163** - Email: timothy_bacon@btopenworld.com

Waveney (Below Beccles) - Rod Cooke

Tel: **01508 518083** - Email: rod@cooke112.freeserve.co.uk

Wensum (Fakenham to Norwich East):

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