



28km
ROUTE

RIVER MERSEY CANOE TRAIL

STOCKPORT TOWN CENTRE - CARRINGTON

INTRODUCTION

The name 'Mersey' originates from Old English 'Maere' meaning boundary and the river was the boundary of the ancient Saxon kingdoms of Mercia and Northumbria. The river forms at the confluence of the River Tame and the River Goyt in Stockport, where the route begins. The length of the Mersey is 110km but don't worry, you don't have to paddle all of it!

In the 18th Century industrial expansion along the river was huge and it played a major part in the growth of the area. As a result the quality of the water suffered and, 50 years ago, the Mersey was considered one of the most polluted rivers in Europe. This is no longer the case, water quality in the Mersey has improved following an intensive clean up operation and fish, including salmon, are now thriving, a sign that the water quality of the river is getting better.

THE ROUTE

FORD STREET, STOCKPORT

The name Stockport is thought to have originated in Saxon times, meaning "the market place at the hamlet". The route starts at the end of Ford Street in Stockport. As you pass under Hollywood Way Bridge you emerge into a steep sided sandstone gorge. This sandstone is Triassic, formed between 205 to 250 million years ago.

(if dropping off groups at Ford Street please call Stockport Tourist information Centre for arrangements to open swing barrier 0161 474 4444).

BRINKSWAY & HEATON MERSEY WEIRS

Both weirs are sometimes shot by suitable equipped experienced paddlers with safety skills, knowledge to assess water conditions and who have inspected both weirs by land to ensure that trapped debris is not obstructing the area.

However Brinksway & Heaton Mersey Weirs are particularly dangerous at medium flows. They are low vertical crescent weirs, that appear to have recirculating aerated stoppers. Although these stoppers may not be as active during low flows and may be washed out during high flows paddlers are required to use the portage provided on north side of river.

HEATON MERSEY

The name Heaton Mersey can be literally translated as "the high farmstead beside the River Mersey". There are no farms there now. It was the site of an old bleach works, a reminder of the Mersey's industrial heritage. Stockport Council have created the new Mersey Vale Nature Park beside the river.

BURNAGE RUGBY CLUB

At the rugby club, paddlers will have use of changing and shower facilities, car parking, toilets (including facilities suitable for people with disabilities), a bar and even the option to camp!

Portage to and from the river is available at Burnage Rugby Football Club. Extensive facilities are available at the clubhouse, including parking, meeting room, showers and refreshments. To check availability or to make arrangements before you visit please call the Club 0161 432 2150.

Along this stretch of the Mersey you can expect to see sand martins and goosanders among other birds.

DIDSBURY

This is the site of the Environment Agency flood alleviation channel, which diverts water onto nearby golf courses when the river levels become dangerously high. Didsbury is known to pre date Saxon times, and in the 14th century victims of the Black Death were buried here in the churchyard of St. James, still in use today.

NORTHENDEN WEIR

Northenden Weir is a large sloping weir dangerous at high flows when a stopper builds up. Paddlers are requested to use portage next to the footbridge above the weir and you should be able to return to the water from the gentle sloping bank area below the weir. Look out for the new fish pass, built to enable free movement of fish up and down river. There are plans to create a new linear park along the river.

CHORLTON WATER PARK

Chorlton Water Park is designated as a Site of Biological Interest and has 70ha of woodland, grassland and wetland covered by 7 km of paths. The site has a wide variety of wildlife, from ducks such as pochard and goldeneye in the winter to a huge variety of wildflowers and butterflies in the summer. The Trans Pennine Trail continues past by the Water Park offering the opportunity for extended riverside walks.

SALE WATER PARK

The Water Park was formerly a gravel pit that was flooded in the 1970's after extraction of gravel for the M60. The site is now popular for all water sports including sailing and kayaking. Facilities at the Water Park include canoe hire, parking and 2 restaurants.

There is access to Jackson's Boat Pub. The pub was named after a local farmer named Jackson who cultivated land in the area and who regularly ferried people across the river by boat, charging them a small fee.

Broad Ees Dole is a wetland site, designated as a Local Nature Reserve. The site is nationally important for birds and you can expect to see a huge variety including heron, snipe and kingfisher. There are no footpaths running through the reserve but there is a perimeter path offering great views of the wildlife.

There is another reserve at The Mersey Valley Wardens visitor's centre. The centre has seasonally changing displays and is the start of 5 "health walks", all of which are accessible by wheelchair users. There is a café at the site and toilet facilities.

TRAFFORD METROVIK RFCC PLAYING FIELD, SALE

Portage to and from the river is available at Trafford Metrovik Rugby & Cricket Club. Extensive facilities are available at the clubhouse, including parking, meeting room, showers and refreshments. To check availability or to make arrangements before you visit please call the Club 0161 973 7061.

ASHTON WEIR

This weir is dangerous and should not be canoed under any circumstances, regardless of your skill level! This is because the weir has a hidden wall below the weir to prevent erosion of the riverbed. Portage around Ashton Weir is provided via a set of steps on the left bank before the road bridge. You can re-enter the Mersey from a small beach area below the weir.

BANKY MEADOW

This section of the river has not been canalised so offers a glimpse of how the river used to be before the Environment Agency and its predecessors carried out works to protect against flooding.

There is a colony of sand martins on the north side of the riverbank. The sand martin is a summer visitor and is the smallest of the martin and swallow family. The best time to see it is between March and October before it migrates to Africa for the winter. These birds have become rarer in recent years and sand martins and their nests are fully protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Banky Meadow is managed as a nature reserve and has a large circular path taking you through a meadow of rough grassland, great habitat for ground nesting birds and small mammals.

Model aircraft are often flown from a designated field, flying times are posted at the site.

CARRINGTON PLAYING FIELD

This is the end of the trail. Carrington is the smallest district within the borough of Trafford. There are several theories as to how Carrington got its name one of which is that it is derived from the Old English word "caering" meaning "river bend". Until recently most of the land in Carrington was the property of the Earls of Stamford.

Extensive facilities are available at the playing fields including parking, meeting room and showers. The site is often locked, to check availability or to make arrangements before you visit please contact Carrington Parish Council 0161 775 7813 / 07751427425.

There are a number of riffles along the route, made up of rubble and gravels which are shootable at all water levels taking care to avoid exposed or shallow boulders

This is the end of the trail. After Carrington there are no exit points from the river. There is also a dangerous weir leading into the Manchester Ship Canal where canoeing should not be attempted.



HEALTH AND SAFETY

The River Mersey can be dangerous where there are strong currents, when there are high water levels and during cold weather conditions. **DO NOT** take any risks and **NEVER UNDERESTIMATE** the power of the river.

The Mersey can be a fast flooding river, which can rise after heavy rain. **When in flood, it is advisable not to go on the river at all.** The Environment Agency monitors water levels at all times and provides a recorded river levels service. **RiverCall 0906 619 7744 (calls charged at 60p per minute at all times).**

For instruction or safety advice, please contact the canoeing governing body the British Canoe Union (Canoe England). First Aid knowledge may be required on the river so a first aid course should be considered.

Weil's disease/leptospirosis is a bacterial infection caused when bacteria carried in the urine of infected animals enters the blood stream. The severity can vary from mild flu-like symptoms with severe headache, to jaundice and meningitis associated with Weil's disease.

The infection is caught by direct contact with bacteria in urine or a polluted environment. The bacteria can enter through skin abrasions or via eyes, nose or mouth. The usual incubation is 2 to 12 days. The illness resolves in 2-3 weeks. A few cases develop jaundice, and then the condition is known as Weil's Disease.

Leptospirosis is very rare, and its deterioration into Weil's Disease even more rare. Weil's Disease is however a very serious illness, and must be swiftly diagnosed and treated.

Hepatitis A is a virus infection in the liver. Infection is caused by swallowing water contaminated with the virus. The incubation period is between 2 and 6 weeks and the onset of the illness can be abrupt. Symptoms include loss of appetite, fever, nausea and abdominal discomfort, followed by jaundice.

There can also be a risk of physical injury caused by debris in the river. Common sense measures should be followed to prevent illness:

- Avoid unnecessary immersion in the river
- Avoid swallowing the water
- Always wash hands before eating
- Always wash or shower straight after contact with the water
- Cover any cuts or scratches with waterproof plasters
- Wear footwear to protect your feet
- Avoid capsizing drill or rolling practice

Further information on water quality can be found on the Environment Agency's website at www.environment-agency.gov.uk follow the "what's in your backyard" link.

If you feel ill, or have any of the above symptoms after canoeing on the river, contact your doctor immediately and inform them that you participate in water sports.

RIVER MERSEY: TERMS OF AGREEMENT FOR CANOEING

You can canoe on the River Mersey between Ford Street, Stockport and Carrington Recreation Ground, Carrington. Access and egress points are marked on the map. These are the only places at which you can enter and leave the river (or moor up against the bank) other than in the case of emergencies. There are also designated portage points to get around obstructions such as weirs. Directions should be followed and the portages used solely for this purpose.

Part of this stretch of the river is dedicated as access land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The stretches covered by the Act are indicated on the map. On these stretches you are subject to the provisions of the Act. On the remaining stretches of the river covered by this agreement, you may canoe by permission of the land and riparian owners. On these stretches you are subject to the provisions set out below, and to the code of conduct currently in force on the river (see page 9).

By using the river, you agree that:

- Boating (including canoeing, rowing and the use of any self-propelled watercraft) is an assumed risk activity. The degree of risk may be related to factors such as water conditions, your experience and ability, and to unrecognised hazards in the river channel.
- This agreement does not imply that the river is safe; you must make your own assessment of the river's dangers before accessing the water.

- Riparian owners cannot be held responsible for any accident or incident that may result from boating on the River Mersey.

You should only use the river for boating if you accept these conditions.

This document is not to be taken as evidence that there is, or is not, a public right of navigation on this section of the river. Use of the river for boating cannot invoke such a right.

Boating should only take place where there is sufficient water to avoid damage to the river bed.

Riparian and fisheries owners and tenants and their agents agree that they will not knowingly obstruct the course of the river.

Riparian and fisheries owners can close their parts of the river on the following grounds: public health; pollution and dangerous obstructions; protection of fauna and flora; engineering works; events. In all cases the duration of the restrictions or closure will be set by the provisions of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

Disclaimer: No organisation, their representatives nor individuals involved in the development of this agreement can be held responsible for any loss, damage or accident. You park and canoe/row at your own risk. Please accept and respect this.

CODE OF CONDUCT

All must use and enjoy access to the river in a responsible and safe manner

The Countryside Code applies to this agreement. It is available as a leaflet, or via www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk.

In addition to the Countryside Code, you should observe the following provisions when canoeing on the River Mersey:

- Boating should normally take place only during daylight hours;
- You should be a member of a recognised club or association;
- It is recommended that you have personal liability insurance; this may be included in your club or association membership, otherwise you should contact your insurer;
- It is good practice to display a registration or other mark on your craft.

Before Entering and After Leaving the Water

- 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;
- Get changed out of public view;

On the Water

- Safety is paramount; boaters must use the river in a safe fashion and must have appropriate safety equipment. At all

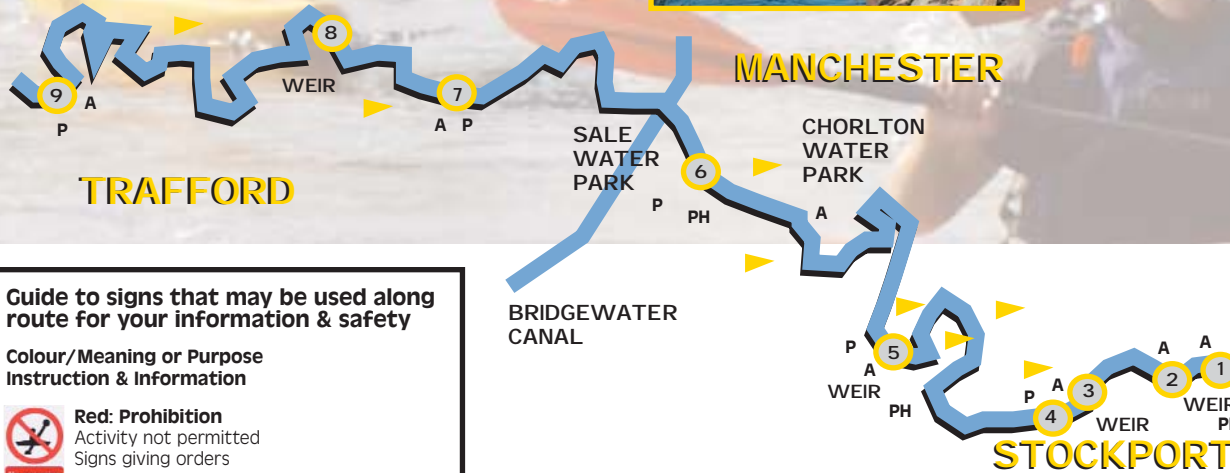
CODE OF CONDUCT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

times on the River Mersey this should include protective headgear.

- It is good practice to canoe in a group of at least three boats;
- Weirs are dangerous and you should keep clear of them at all times;
- Consideration must at all times be given to landowners and users of the river and on no occasion should any use take place that may impair the river environment or the enjoyment of other legitimate users;
- All people using the river have a duty of care to themselves and others, and will be responsible for any damage caused to private property;
- Keep away from the banks (except at access and portage points) and keep disturbance to the river bed to a minimum;
- You should not tie up or moor to any apparatus, kit or infra structure in the river or on the banks, except in an emergency or where it has been provided for access to and from the water;
- Remain quiet 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;
- 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 arguments;
- Refuse must not be deposited in the river or on the bank of the river.

CANOE TRAIL ON THE RIVER MERSEY

STOCKPORT TOWN CENTRE - CARRINGTON



Guide to signs that may be used along route for your information & safety

Colour/Meaning or Purpose
Instruction & Information



Red: Prohibition
Activity not permitted
Signs giving orders



Yellow & Black: Warning/Hazard
Be careful or take precaution



Blue: Mandatory
These signs indicate that a particular course of action MUST be undertaken (i.e. use portage, keep left etc.)



Black on White: Information
For information only

- A - Access Point
- P - Car Park
- PH - Public House
- PA - Picnic Area
- ▶ Golf Course

- 1 FORD STREET, STOCKPORT
- 2 BRINKSWAY WEIR
- 3 HEATON MERSEY (BLEACH WORKS) WEIR
- 4 BURNAGE RUGBY CLUB
- 5 NORTHENDEN WEIR
- 6 WATER PARKS AND BRIDGEWATER CANAL
- 7 TRAFFORD METROVIK RFCC
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CONTACTS

BRITISH CANOE UNION (Canoe England) CONTACTS:

River Mersey Local River Advisor www.bcu.org.uk/northwest

refer to the access page or telephone 01625 878838

General enquiries www.bcu.org.uk or telephone 0115 982 1100 (office hours only)

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY 24 HOUR INCIDENT:

Tel: 0800 80 70 60 for reporting - pollution, damage to banks, suspicious activity.

CANOE HIRE:

Trafford Water Sports Centre 0161 962 0118

CAR PARKING AND ACCESS:

Call in advance to arrange long-stay parking.

Burnage Rugby Football Club, Heaton Mersey 0161 432 2150

Trafford Water Sports Centre, Sale 0161 962 0118

Trafford Metrovick Rugby and Cricket Club, Sale 0161 973 7061

Carrington Parish Council Recreation Ground 0161 775 7813

OTHER CONTACTS:

Mersey Valley Wardens: 0161 881 5639

Trafford Tourist Information Centre: 0161 912 5931

Manchester Tourist Information Centre: 0871 2228223

Stockport Tourist Information Centre: 0161 474 4444

Environment Agency Recreation Officer, Christie Webster: 01925 543374

British Canoe Union Regional Officer: Chris Cleaver 01625 878 838

