

This trail follows the Birmingham Canal, via the New Main Line. This is a journey through history; with towering iron bridges overhead and peaceful sections inside deep embankments.

Key Info

Start: Dudley Canal Trust,
Birmingham New Road DY1 4SB

Finish: Cambrian Wharf,
Birmingham B1 2AN

Distance: 9 miles

Time: 2.5 - 4.5 hours (approx)

Locks/Portages: 1 portage around 2 locks

OS Map: Explorer 220 Birmingham



Scan or visit
bit.ly/dudley-canal
to find the map in
Mapometer and download
the GPX file



- 1 Leaving Dudley Canal Trust, head out onto the Birmingham Main Line Canal, keeping left toward Factory Junction. Pass Malthouse Stables Activity Centre on your left, just before the locks.
- 2 Immediately after Malthouse Stables turn right under the footbridge towards the 3 locks. Note the now derelict gauging house (R) for weighing boats to enable tolls to be taken. Easy egress on the left hand side. Short carry to the bottom of the last lock, carry over footbridge and launch from the corner of a low bank.
- 3 The route passes over several aqueducts and a number of junctions Firstly the Netherton Tunnel branch (at around 2.5 miles), followed by Albion Junction - which goes up the Gower Branch 3 locks to the Old Main Line. Next is Pudding Green Junction, where the Walsall Canal joins from the left. Access and egress available here, park in Albion Road. Note the islands, which housed the toll houses, where clerks would gauge and charge passing boats.
- 4 At just under 4.5 miles you reach Bromford Junction, take the right branch, onwards to the Steward Aqueduct, notable for its double arches. Here old meets new and canal meets road as the Old Main line goes over the New Main line, with the M5 towering over both. From here the canal passes between the railway and the historic site of Chances Glassworks, which has exciting plans for refurbishment.
- 5 The Trail enters the Galton Valley, dug by hand over 100 years and 3 different canal levels. At its deepest the cast iron Galton bridge spans overhead, once the highest in the world. At 5.6 miles pass through Galton Tunnel (115m) and onwards past Smethwick Pumping Station on the left; built to lift water up to the Old Main Line.
- 6 Pass under Engine arm Aqueduct at 6.2 miles; built to supply the canal with water and the original engine with coal (the original 'Smethwick Engine' is the oldest working steam engine in the world, built in 1779).
- 7 Pass Rolfe Bridge and shortly after, Smethwick Junction, where the Old Mainline joins from the left. Follow straight ahead. Loops leave the mainline on the right and left, which were the course of the original Brindley canal. First on the left is the Soho Loop, which leads to 'Centre of the Earth Wildlife Centre'. Where the Soho loop rejoins, the Icknield leaves on the right with water fed from Edgbaston Reservoir above it.
- 8 Continue on to the city centre, passing the unique Roundhouse stables building on the left, shortly before the National Indoor Arena and National Sea Life Centre.
- 9 Finish at Cambrian Wharf, which is reached by going straight ahead at the 'island' outside the arena. Pass under 2 bridges into the wharf.

Find more
paddling trails at:
gopaddling.info



The Birmingham New Line was a 19th century version of a motorway. Designed by Thomas Telford, it is a feat of engineering, intended to straighten out the course of the Old Main Line.

At your start the Black Country Museum is on the opposite side. Boat Trips down the Dudley Tunnel by electric narrow boat can also be taken here.

James Brindley's 22 ½ mile engineering feat was opened in 1772, contouring and linking the Staffs & Worcester Canal to Birmingham. It was an immediate success, transporting goods and minerals into and out of Birmingham. It quickly became congested with traffic and by 1838, Thomas Telford had been appointed to shorten Brindley's route, digging huge cuttings and embankments to maintain a continuous level. This trail follows Telford's 'New Mainline' through the Galton Valley and under towering iron bridges.

Although the trail passes alongside much industry (old and new), there are sections of natural wilderness and genuine peace and quiet. Passing under the M5 is quite the contrast, but a unique experience nonetheless. Look out for signs of the many arms which came off the canal directly into factories.

Approaching the city centre, new buildings rise up in the shape of housing and tower blocks. The Roundhouse was formerly stables, housing the horses who worked along the canal. This venue will hopefully be a thriving hub of activity in future and a great place to stop off and explore.

The final few hundred metres past the National Sea Life Centre, National Indoor Arena and numerous bars and cafes, are very enjoyable, especially at dusk, with the sights and sounds of a bustling Brindley Place!

Dudley Canal Trust: <http://dudleycanaltrust.org.uk/>
Black Country Museum: <https://www.bclm.co.uk/>
Chances Glassworks: <http://www.cgwht.org/>



Safety and Licenses

We want you to enjoy a safe trip, so here are a few tips for staying safe and paddling responsibly.

Paddle Safe:

Be prepared and take the right kit:

- Wear a correctly sized buoyancy aid
- Mobile phone – in a waterproof case
- Whistle – to attract attention in case of emergency
- Map and / or route description
- Appropriate clothing for the weather conditions + spares in a dry bag
- Food, drink & suncream!

Paddle Responsibly:

Respect the natural environment and other users:

- Respect other waterway users #sharethespace
- Be environmentally aware, minimise your impact
- Ensure you have the correct licence if required
- Observe navigational rules – keep right and give other users space
- Check, Clean, Dry after every trip!

Licences: The waterways in this trail are managed by the Canal and Rivers Trust and require paddlers to hold a licence. British Canoeing membership includes a full annual licence for this waterway - please take your membership card with you as this acts as your licence. Non-members can either purchase a British Canoeing membership from www.britishcanoeing.org.uk or buy licences direct from www.canalrivertrust.org.uk

Visit our website
britishcanoeing.org.uk
for more information

