

# The River Wye

Welcome to the River Wye in the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). We hope you have a pleasant trip. By following the code of conduct at all times it will help you enjoy the river without reducing the enjoyment of others or damaging the environment.

## Safety on the River

The Wye can be dangerous and has been the cause of many accidents. It is at its most dangerous when there are strong currents, high water levels or cold weather conditions. Don't take risks and never underestimate the power of the river. The Wye is a fast flooding river, which can rise after heavy rain at a rate of over 30cm an hour.

### Tides

Below Bigsweir Bridge the Wye is tidal and can be very dangerous, especially below Tintern. If you intend to canoe this stretch, leave Tintern no later than one hour after high water and travel down without stopping. Inexperienced canoeists are advised to avoid this stretch and should on no account travel below Chepstow, as currents in the Severn Estuary are extremely dangerous.

### Health and Hygiene

The water quality of the Wye is generally good, but contains natural bacteria and other micro-organisms. Although the risk of contracting an illness is small, there are sensible precautions which can help you stay healthy:

- Do not swallow river water;
- Cover cuts or sores with gloves or waterproof plasters;
- Where possible, wash or shower after taking part in water sports, especially if you have capsized;
- Wash your hands before eating;
- See your doctor if you feel ill after exposure to the water. If you develop flu like symptoms it is possible you may have contracted Leptospirosis (a rare disease, but one which can have serious complications).

Have a good trip!



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# Code of Conduct for Canoeists on the Wye





# NEW THREATS TO THE RIVER WYE

## Important information for canoeists

All river users benefit from a healthy aquatic environment. Clothing and equipment that has not been thoroughly dried or disinfected can carry invasive species and diseases that can infect water bodies, often with devastating effects. Crayfish plague is just such a disease.

Another potentially damaging plague is *Gyrodactylus salaris* (GS) which affects salmon and could be brought in from the continent. It has devastated rivers in Norway.

Another, more recent threat has come from the killer shrimp *Dikerogammarus villosus*, a destructive species that has arrived in UK waters from Eastern Europe. It too could have a devastating effect on wildlife and fish. They can easily be transported in the webbing and water in the bottom of canoes and kayaks.

To reduce the risk of Crayfish plague, GS and killer shrimp spreading in UK waters it is important to take the following precautions.

### WHAT YOU MUST DO

If you intend to reuse your canoeing equipment on trips to different UK waters or abroad and there will be less than a seven day gap between your trips, you must ensure that your clothing and equipment has been properly sterilised through one of the following methods.

#### METHOD A

Drying to a minimum of 20 degC for at least 2 days.

#### Method B

Heating to above 60 degC for at least one hour.

#### Method C

Deep freezing for at least one day.

#### Method D

Immersion of materials in a solution of, or addition of one of the following chemicals to the concentration indicated for a minimum of 10 minutes:

- Virkon 1%
- Wescodyne 1%
- Sodium chloride (common salt) 3%
- Sodium hydroxide 0.2%



## Care for Wildlife

One of the joys of a trip on the River Wye is watching its abundant wildlife. We have a responsibility to protect our countryside now and for future generations, so make sure you don't harm animals, birds, plants and trees.

Some fish species are particularly sensitive to disturbance, especially during the spawning seasons. During winter salmon spawn in the upper reaches of the Wye. Between 1st of April and 31st July many coarse fish are breeding and Twait and Allis Shad use shallow gravel beds for egg laying. Please do not land on gravel beds during this period and at all other times try to:

- Avoid disturbing nesting birds along the river banks, particularly in spring time
- Avoid damaging beds of waterweed
- Stop your activity if you are clearly disturbing wildlife

The river habitat and many of the species it supports are protected by law. Ignoring this advice could result in a criminal offence being committed, and you may be subject to enforcement action.

## Stay Safe

You are responsible for your own safety and for others in your care, so be prepared for changes in the weather and other events. The river conditions can change rapidly. We advise you to check the river level just prior to your trip via the Environment Agency's automated telephone service on 0906 6197755 (BT premium rate) or on their website <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/floods/riverlevels/120743.aspx>. Alternatively the Wye and Usk Foundation provide free river level information on their website [www.wyeuskfoundation.org/conditions/index.php](http://www.wyeuskfoundation.org/conditions/index.php) When planning or partaking in your river trip always consider:

- That you use the river in a safe fashion and that you have the appropriate safety equipment
- That any groups of young novice boaters are led by suitably experienced responsible persons - preferably a qualified instructor
- That you don't drink alcohol during and just prior to your trip on the river
- That you follow instructions given to you by your canoe hire operator and/or group leader

And finally. ...if in doubt, don't!



## Help Keep a Healthy River

The River Wye boasts excellent water quality in a largely unmodified water course. You can help maintain a healthy river by:

- Taking your rubbish away with you
- Avoiding damage to banks, the riverbed and bankside vegetation - this can lead to erosion. You can help by only launching and landing at purpose made launch points
- Avoid dragging boats and equipment over rock slabs and stones



## Consider Other People

Showing consideration and respect for other people makes the countryside a pleasant environment for everyone. Pay particular respect to local residents and avoid situations that may result in argument and remember to always:

- Park sensibly without causing obstruction, do not block gateways or load and unload vehicles in awkward places.
- Keep noise to a minimum
- Get changed out of public view
- Whenever possible come ashore at recognised landing places; do not trespass on private property or moorings
- When canoeing have special regard for beginners, as you would for learner drivers on the road



## Be Fishing Friendly

Canoeing and kayaking can have a bigger impact on anglers than any other river users, particularly if you are in a large group. By following a few simple guidelines you can limit the effect your boating will have on anglers and their enjoyment. If you are travelling in a group please keep together and pass anglers in one go to prevent prolonged disturbance, and in all instances try to:

- Pass anglers with as little noise and disturbance as possible
- Keep away from banks being fished and fishing tackle
- Avoid loitering in pools if anyone is fishing
- Comply with reasonable directional requests

Please also note that fishing from a boat is not allowed unless you have a valid rod licence and permission from the owner/tenant of the fishery rights.



- Remember that larger boats are less manoeuvrable and cannot use such shallow waters as canoes, rafts and rowing boats
- Give way to those engaged in organised competition and have regard to any instructions given by officials
- Hail to draw a person's attention to a situation which might otherwise result in inconvenience, damage or collision. Please treat a hail as a friendly warning and not as an insult

There is an agreement for canoeing on the upper river. Details can be found at [www.wyeuskfoundation.org/navigation/index.php](http://www.wyeuskfoundation.org/navigation/index.php)