

Itchen Navigation Heritage Trail

The Itchen Navigation is one of the best chalk rivers for wildlife in Europe. It is home to otter, water vole, salmon, rare dragonflies and lots of other plants and animals.

A 'navigation' is a modified river. The Itchen Navigation was created in 1710 to transport barges of coal and timber from Southampton to Winchester. The old towpath is now a public footpath, allowing rare access to a beautiful river.

The Itchen Navigation Heritage Trail Project has been conserving the Itchen Navigation by:

- Using wildlife friendly engineering to ensure the long-term survival of the Navigation and make it even better for wildlife.
- Improving the quality of the footpath for walkers.
- Preserving the Navigation's important archaeology by repairing old locks and hatches.
- Raising awareness about the Navigation's wildlife and history through public events and on-site information.

Walk highlights

Views across the Itchen Valley

Itchen Valley Country Park, Shawford Down and St. Catherine's Hill are great vantage points to get views across the valley.



View from Shawford Down © Polly Whyte

Old locks and mills

Some examples of the Navigation's old locks have been preserved by the Project with help from volunteers. Can you spot the old lock brickwork and mill buildings?



Woodmill, Swaythling © Dennis Bright

Milestones

There are four milestones to discover which were installed by the Project in 2010 and give clues to the history of the Itchen Navigation.



Milestone © Polly Whyte

Fish spotting

The clear waters of the river are an ideal place to look for salmon, trout, grayling, minnows and pike. The channel has been improved to help fish migrate and breed.



Salmon parr © Matt Doggett

Riverside plants

The banks of the Navigation are edged with a variety of plants. Some of the vegetation has been purposely planted to protect the banks from erosion and provide food and shelter for wildlife.



Plants by the river © Dennis Bright

Water voles

These rare rodents are often spotted swimming across the Navigation. They live in the river banks and feed on plants by the water.



Water vole © Darin Smith

Kingfishers

Look out for the flash of turquoise blue when a kingfisher flies down the river. Kingfishers feed on small fish like minnows and sticklebacks. The project has installed artificial nesting banks to help kingfishers breed and survive.



Kingfisher © Graham Long

Dragonflies and damselflies

In summer, banded demoiselles and other dragonflies flit around the river. They also benefit from the new plants along the river banks.



Banded Demoiselle © Mark Heighes

Water crowfoot © Lawrence Talks

Water crowfoot

This plants grows in the channel of the river and produces white flowers on the surface of the water from May to August. It is a sign of good water quality in chalk rivers and provides shelter for aquatic insects.

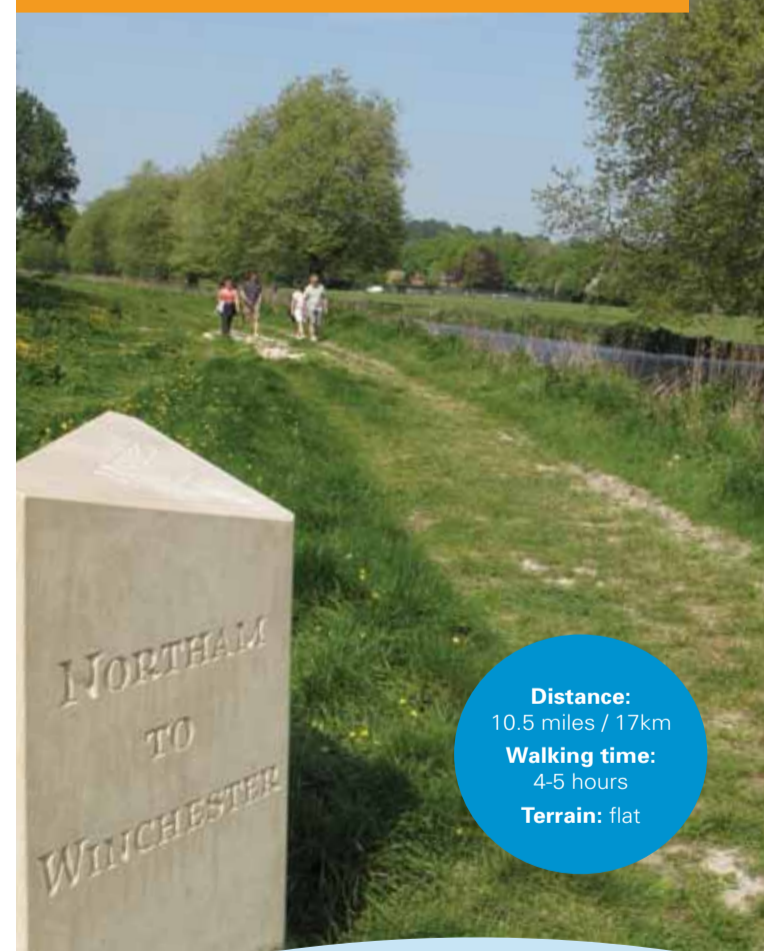
Pausing place

Stop for a breather at the bottom of St. Catherine's Hill nature reserve and take in the view to St. Cross on this special barge shaped seat, which acknowledges the bargemen who used to work on the Navigation.



Pausing Place © Rod Varley

ITCHEN NAVIGATION HERITAGE TRAIL



Distance:
10.5 miles / 17km
Walking time:
4-5 hours
Terrain: flat

The Itchen Navigation Heritage Trail Project is a Heritage Lottery Fund project managed by the Wildlife Trust, preserving an internationally important chalk river system for future generations. Find out more about the Itchen Navigation at:

www.itchennavigation.org.uk

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Itchen Navigation Heritage Trail

- 1 From Woodmill Lane, head upstream through Riverside Park.
- 2 At Mansbridge, cross the bridge and immediately turn right under the A27.
- 3 Follow the path along the edge of the meadow and over the footbridge at Mansbridge Lock.
- 4 The path loops up to the river to cross under the motorway then loops back to the old Navigation channel.
- 5 The stretch of the Navigation alongside Itchen Valley Country Park isn't flowing, but you can clearly see the old channel next to the path.
- 6 After walking under the railway line, the old Navigation channel is no longer visible. Continue on the path through the fields. In a wooded area, the dry channel becomes visible on the right side of the path again.
- 7 The path joins a track.
- 8 Turn right onto the path which leads to a footbridge across the river.
- 9 Carefully cross Bishopstoke Road and continue north.
- 10 Carefully cross Highbridge Road and continue north.
- 11 The path swaps sides of the Navigation at the Kiln Lane road bridge.
- 12 After you pass a fenced in building on your left, the path crosses a wooden footbridge.
- 13 The path is diverted away from the Navigation for 500m.
- 14 The path swaps sides of the Navigation at a farm bridge.
- 15 At Shawford Road, the path swaps sides of the Navigation.
- 16 At Compton Lock, continue upstream on the path along the river bank.
- 17 Just before the wooden footbridge, take the right hand path away from the river.
- 18 At Twyford Road/B3335, turn left and follow the pavement along the road, under the motorway to Hockley Link Road. Cross Hockley Link Road at the pedestrian crossings. Take the footpath straight ahead and bear right.
- 19 Where the path forks, take the right hand route. The Navigation is a dry channel here for around 500m.
- 20 North of Garnier Road there is a footpath along both banks of the Navigation. The old towpath and Itchen Navigation Heritage Trail follow the west bank.
- 21 At Wharf Bridge the path heads up to Domum Road. This is the end of the Navigation, but a little further on a path continues alongside the River Itchen into the centre of Winchester.



KEY

- Itchen Navigation (wet)
- Itchen Navigation (dry)
- - - Itchen Navigation Heritage Trail
- Waterways
- ⋯ Rights of way
- ▬ Highways
- Woodland
- Urban areas
- P Parking
- ☒ Public House or café
- ⚓ Train Station
- ▲ Milestone
- Landmark

Go by public transport

Winchester, Shawford, Eastleigh and Swaythling train stations are all close to the Navigation. Why not walk up the Navigation and catch the train back to where you started? Frequent buses run between Winchester and Southampton, stopping at Shawford Down and Chandlers Ford.

Easy access

The path from Woodmill Lane to Mansbridge Lock and between Compton Lock and Garnier Road are described as 'easy access' and are suitable for pushchairs and some wheelchairs.



Riverside Park © Bob Paimton

Dog dips

If your dog likes to swim in the river, please encourage it to use the 'dog dips' at Allbrook and Shawford to get in and out of the water. This helps to stop the banks eroding, and wildlife, such as water voles and moorhens, can live along the rest of the riverbank undisturbed.



Dog Dip © Dennis Bright

Stop for lunch

There are several pubs and cafés along the Navigation. There is also space to stop for a picnic at: Riverside Park, Itchen Valley Country Park, Shawford Down, Compton Lock and north of Garnier Road.

Park your bike

The Itchen Navigation Heritage Trail follows a public footpath. Cycling is not permitted on the path, as it is not wide enough for both walkers and cyclists. The only exception is the stretch between Garnier Road and the M3 which is a bridleway.

