

BOOKS

Reviews of books and publications

Paddle & Pub



Gemma Bowes
Adlard Coles
978 1 3994 1057 1
2025
230 x 160mm
240 pages, paperback
£19.99

Gemma Bowes wrote *The World's 100 Greatest Places to Paddle* for the ICF (Nov, p13), including the Basingstoke Canal at number 13, also featured in this book. She is primarily a paddleboarder but also uses kayaks and canoes here.

The claim is to present the best British pubs it is possible to reach by paddling.

With 47 venues on sea, river, lake and canal across the whole of the UK, they are thinly spread, predominantly in southern England, although some have brief alternatives in the vicinity. Her favourite is possibly the Hamble.

One of the options on the Llangollen Canal (in the Vale of Glamorgan!) only does crisps although there are plenty of others for which you might need a gastronomic dictionary. While it is possible to go too far down market, you could have the converse problem and there is an expensive restaurant in Bray where it might not be appreciated if you drip on the floor.

The paddles range from a couple at 800m each to as many kilometres as you want to go before turning round and returning to the start.

They usually have an outdoor centre, hire venue and sometimes instructors or guides nearby. Could these centres have been found first and asked to suggest suitable pubs? Accommodation is often available and comments might include bedroom colours to garden plants. There are usually selections from the menu and local brews on offer. Websites for all of these are given. Pictures are supplied mostly by the outdoor centres, by the pubs or by agencies. One half page picture appears twice in the first dozen pages.

At the start of each chapter is a panel with information such as the paddle distance (usually there and back), the direction, the nature of the water and whether a licence or launching fee is involved. There are also three words, not the sort for which you need to go online to find a location but three words describing the trip. I love it (except for the Thames from Buscot to Lechlade with 'coastal, dramatic, cave').

Together with a sketch map, each chapter begins with some history and general background, details including rental and parking, overnight accommodation and alternative routes.

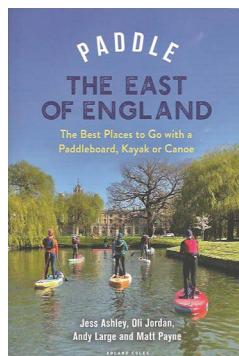
There are some missed points, such as why the Mathematical Bridge in Cambridge is so called or the thinking on which side of the river you should paddle when a rower in a fast boat with a sharp end is approaching from behind, neither of you looking at the other, a point I debated with a Cam rowing coach who did not understand this.

This is a book with plenty of variety.

Paddle the East of England

Jess Ashley, Oli Jordan, Andy Large & Matt Payne
Adlard Coles
978 1 3994 1843 0
2025
230 x 160mm
192 pages, paperback
£17.99

Written by four members of East of England Paddlesports, this book presents 31 selected paddles from Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. Primarily aimed at paddleboarders, it does also include some kayaks.



Tollesbury.

Each trip is stand alone but there is a small amount of overlap between trips, resulting in some repetition. Again, the Mathematical Bridge in Cambridge is included but its significance not mentioned. (It was built about 1750 without bolts, screws, nails or other fixings and dismantled by Victorians to see how it was done, then being unable to reassemble it without bolts.)

The authors have a good stab at licences, not fully successfully. Of the Great Ouse they say, correctly, 'As with most rivers in the UK, it was historically used for commercial navigation, but these days is mainly populated by pleasure craft including canal boats, motorboats, rowers and paddleboarders.'

Elsewhere they say 'As with most inland rivers and waterways, you need a licence from either Paddle UK or the Environment Agency to paddle the River Stour'. Only about 4% of the waterways in England and Wales require licences, mostly from the CRT for their canals and navigations, and Scotland's waters are nearly all free to use at all times. The EA have been unable to produce any evidence that some 96% of inland waters south of the border are not still free for the public to use as well, as in the past.

In a couple of pages on the complexity of different licences, the authors say 'If that wasn't enough to put you off paddling unlicensed, there is the incentive that, in all cases, the money goes back into gaining access to the water (remember, a lot of our rivers go through private land), maintaining the water and improving facilities at the water's edge, for example portage points.' Really? At least they have attempted to address this thorny problem.

Anyone looking for places to paddle in East Anglia will find plenty of interest in this book.

Great British Paddling Adventures

Richard Harpham & Ashley Kenlock
Adlard Coles
978 1 4729 8914 7
2025
230 x 160mm
336 pages, paperback
£20.00

Richard Harpham and Ashley Kenlock run Canoe Trail, based near Bedford but taking clients out on the water with canoes, kayaks or paddleboards all over Britain. This chunky book cherry picks from 50 locations, sea, rivers, canals, lochs and lakes across the country. Usually they are one day or half day trips but with extensions suggested, generally up to grade 2 although they do include the Serpent's Tail. The routes are primarily ones they use with the business and there is no shortage of pictures with their logo and with their dogs. Even when they do not have customers they go paddling again.

Each route is introduced, its difficulty level noted and the distance and trip time given, as are the shuttle distance, time and directions. A couple of dozen icons indicate hazards and which craft would be suitable. Relevant points are given with grid references, postcodes