

Key Information

The Conwy Estuary is truly spectacular, with stunning views of the mountains of northern Snowdonia, the imposing Conwy Castle, vibrant marinas and the solitude of rolling countryside. And, if you get the timings right, you'll get some tidal assistance all the way!

Start and finish:
Deganwy slipway
LL31 9EJ

Portages: 0
Time: 3.5–6 hours
Distance: 19 miles
(return, can be shortened)
OS Map: Explorer OL17
Snowdon/Yr Wyddfa



For more
information
scan the QR code
or visit:
bit.ly/3nV8BFL



This is a tidal trail – if you aim to arrive at Dolgarrog footbridge at high water (this is approx 30 mins after high water at Conwy) you'll get tidal assistance and fewer mudflats. For tide times, visit:

www.ukho.gov.uk/easytide

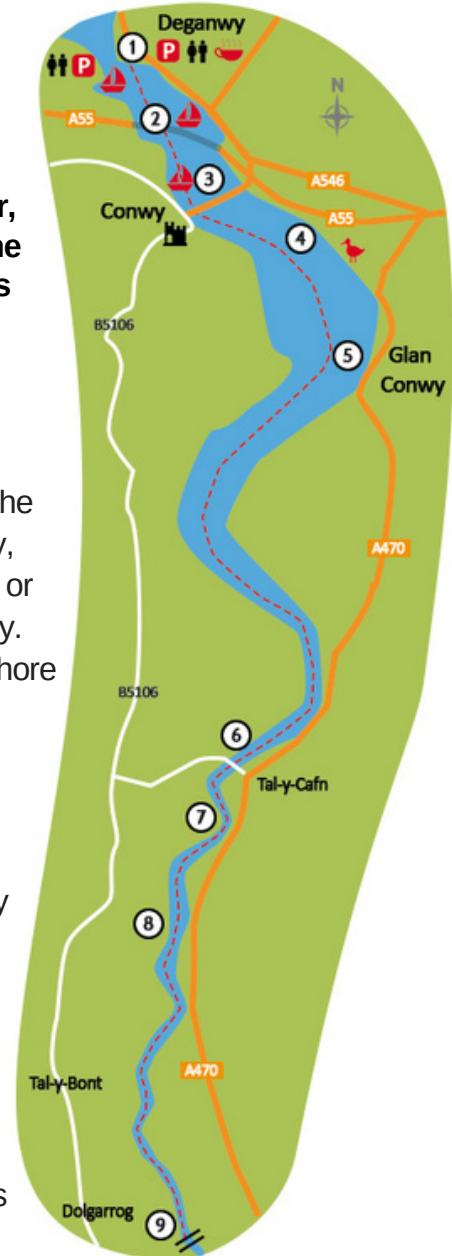
It is best paddled as a return trip; the route described is 19 miles, however, it can be easily shortened, just choose a distance and turning point! As the tide drops the mudflats at the edge of the estuary become exposed, so it's best to paddle at high water. This is an open stretch of water that is exposed to the wind, which can have a serious impact on the conditions and the ability to paddle. A strong wind can create waves and difficult, choppy conditions. Check the forecast and choose a calm day

1. Park in the Deganwy station car park (pay and display, accessible bays) on the east shore; it's 100m to the slipway along the road (level crossing). Alternatively, the slipway can be driven onto to unload. Access to the water is via the slipway or an adjacent floating pontoon. There are public toilets (accessible) on the slipway. (There is an alternative parking/access point near Conwy marina on the west shore – see 'Variations').

2. Paddle into the estuary and head inland, towards the obvious arch of Conwy bridge on the west shore. As you float past Deganwy marina on the east shore you'll be paddling over the A55, which runs through a tunnel under the estuary!

3. Continue towards the bridge and Conwy harbour. As the tide is constricted by the bridge the flow can strengthen and speed up, so be careful to avoid any moored boats or moorings.

Paddle past the harbour, the walled town and towards the imposing towers of Conwy Castle. As you paddle under the bridge have a quick look up; there are actually 3 bridges; road, foot and rail! If you're confident in the flow you can 'break out' of the current immediately after the bridge on the right (watch out for moored boats). There is a small bay here that is directly behind the castle and is a great place to get a closer look at its impressive towers.



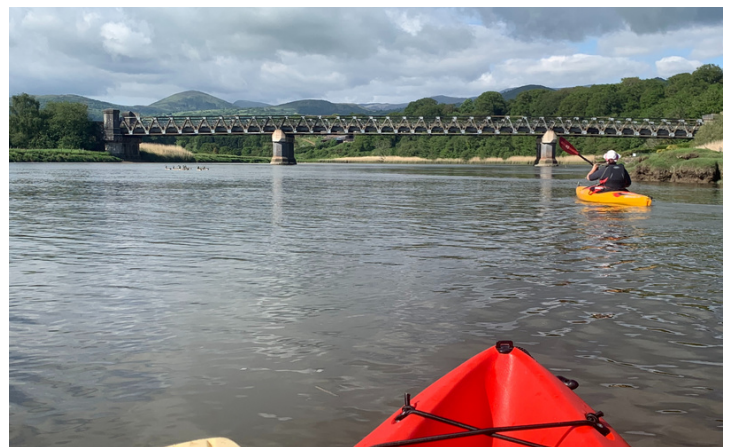
4. After you've paddled under the bridge(s) the flow eases again and you'll head towards an obvious bend in the river. On the outside of the bend (east shore) is Conwy RSPB Nature Reserve so keep an eye out for the local birdlife.
5. The small town of Glan Conwy will be obvious on your left (east shore), after this the estuary starts to narrow and the scenery changes to fields and woodland. Enjoy the spectacular views of the mountains of northern Snowdonia; these will dominate the horizon for most of your journey inland.
6. The next major landmark is the road bridge at Tal-y-Cafn, there is a pub here but access is virtually impossible.
7. About 1km after the bridge the river narrows into a small rocky gorge and the Tal-y-Cafn rapids. In deep (high) water there a few riffles but at lower levels (low water) there can be exposed rocks and rougher water. There is a small cave in the west wall of the gorge, with a walled entrance.
8. The river continues its winding course through low-lying farmland, with the occasional reed-covered island to paddle around.
9. Dolgarrog footbridge soon comes into view – there is a footpath at the west end of the footbridge, so you can get out here to stretch your legs. The bank is a little awkward to negotiate; a 1m grassy bank with some muddy gaps in. Wait here for the tide to turn then follow it back to Conwy. Don't forget the Tal-y-Cafn rapids and the strong currents under Conwy bridge on your return journey!

VARIATIONS

There is an alternative access point at the Beacons car park (near Conwy marina). This a staffed car park (fee payable) with a Portaloo. There is a concrete slipway which can be driven onto to unload – 50m from car park across sand. There is also a floating pontoon, however, it is long and narrow and not the easiest for carrying paddlecraft on!



Conwy Castle and bridge from the east shore



Tal-y-Cafn bridge on the return journey

The highlight of this trip has to be the town of Conwy with its quaint harbour, medieval buildings and 13th century castle and walls (a World Heritage Site). The castle and walls are part of the 'iron ring' of fortresses built around Snowdonia by King Edward I to contain the Welsh. Completed in just 4 years the castle has 8 lofty towers and the walls form a three-quarter mile ring around the town, guarded by 22 towers.

Two of the three bridges also have historical significance. The suspension bridge was built by Thomas Telford in the 1820s and its crenelated towers were designed to match the castle. In the 1840s Robert Stephenson built the railway bridge alongside it; originally designed as a suspension bridge it was decided that it would be unsuitable for trains, so it was re-designed as a wrought-iron box girder structure, bridging the river in a single span, again with crenelated towers to match the castle.

The route you paddle from Deganwy to Dolgarrog follows the course of the Conwy Ascent; an annual upstream paddlesport event. Run in May by the Dyffryn Conwy Paddlers it's open to most paddlecraft and can be completed as a race or as a more sedate tour. The quickest time for kayak is 53 minutes and 1hr 16min for SUP ... if you're up for a paddling challenge! www.bit.ly/3cbufTf

The Afon Conwy was also once the home of the legendary Afanc, a monster that caused floods with its angry thrashings; drowning livestock and ruining crops. To stop the destruction it was lured to the shore by a singing maiden, where it was captured, bound and dragged by oxen to Llyn Ffynnon Las, where its thrashings would cause a little less destruction.

Further information can be found at the following websites:

www.canoewales.com

www.britishcanoeing.org.uk

www.gopaddling.info

www.visitconwy.org.uk



Safety and Licences

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 waterway on this trail doesn't require you to have a licence to paddle on it. However if you paddle regularly you should consider becoming a member of Canoe Wales (or British Canoeing if you live in England). Membership gives you a whole range of benefits including a licence to paddle on 4500km of Britain's waterways and Civil Liability Insurance, worth up to £10 million. Not only will membership help save you money, it will give you peace of mind when out on the waterways. For more information on Canoe Wales membership please click [here](#).