



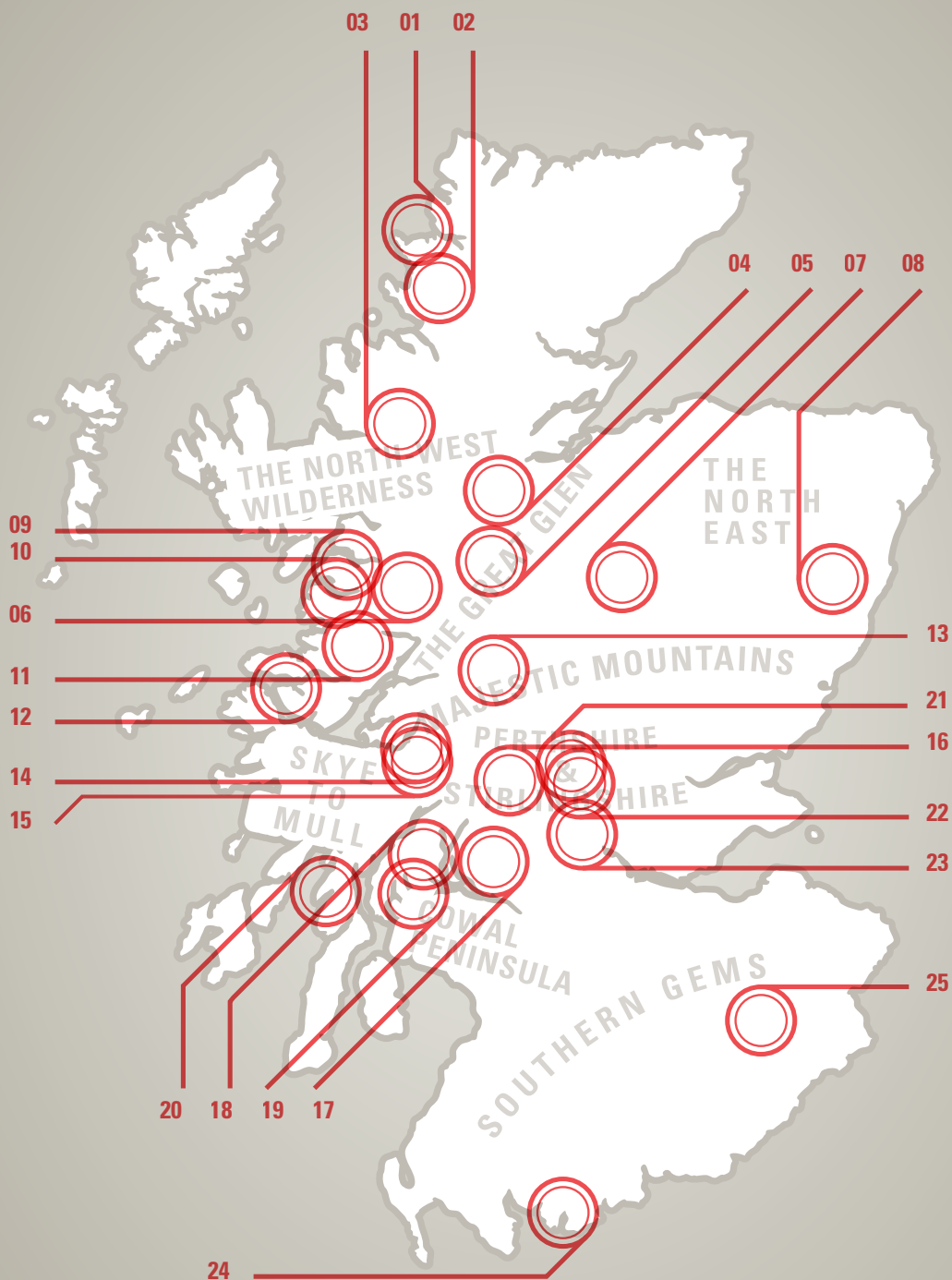
Scottish Canoe Classics

TWENTY-FIVE GREAT CANOE & KAYAK TRIPS

Eddie Palmer



2ND EDITION



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TWENTY-FIVE GREAT CANOE & KAYAK TRIPS

SECOND EDITION

Eddie Palmer

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Maps - Bute Cartographic

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Introduction

This is a book for any visitor to Scotland, not necessarily for experienced canoeists. It is a guide to the waterways, hinting at their scenery, ecology and history so that visitors (or those living in Scotland unaware of what is on their doorstep) can best enjoy this fabulous country.

The development of canoeing as a recreation and sport in Scotland started with the Victorians who became keen on sailing large canoes around the west coast of Scotland from the 1880s. There are written accounts concerning some very intrepid expeditions, long before the days of proper wet weather clothing! Whereas there are warnings in this book about exposed sections of the coastline, these fellows (and female partners) set to sea with little more than a spirit of adventure. In those days, steamers would deliver canoes and paddlers on holiday to west coast ports.

From the 1930s a select group of kayakers, in wood and canvas kayaks, set out from clubs in Edinburgh and the university cities such as Aberdeen to paddle the major rivers. Only the larger rivers and the more sheltered coastal stretches could be safely paddled in such fragile craft.

The advent of fibreglass in the early 1960s provided the first post-war boom in canoesport, followed by the explosion of rotomoulded plastic boats in the 1980s. This opened up a vast range of Scottish watercourses, including the very steepest. No longer did paddlers repair boats after every outing on water. This has led to the current boom in all types of paddlesport.

I am aware of some epic canoe voyages around Scotland's coasts, and some arduous cross-Scotland routes, but I have attempted to bring together some of the more accessible trips in this book. My personal choice was a delight to compile. It had to include the four great Scottish touring rivers of the Spey, Tay, Dee and Tweed, absolute classics, but I have also tried to choose routes from across the land.

Scotland is gaining greater interest from new canoeists who wish to explore one of Europe's last genuine wildernesses. We have a country where you can paddle and camp for days with the lochs and hills to yourself. Hopefully, the greater interest in encouraging sustainable tourism will mean more campsites and canoe trails and even more opportunities to get afloat.

Eddie Palmer

Eddie Palmer is a kayaker and canoeist with over 50 years' experience. He has sampled virtually all types of paddling, including competition in slalom and white water racing and has paddled widely outside of the UK. He is also a yacht, dinghy, and canoe sailor.

In 2004, Eddie started a journey, paddling recreational routes all over the UK and Ireland. He is now on the last 'Canoe Classic' trip in Wales. Researching Welsh Canoe Classics has taken him to many places he visited in his youth, while growing up in the West Midlands.

After 10 years on the Board of the Scottish Canoe Association (SCA), he is now both Chairman and President.



Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Mary Connacher, our 'elderly Dundee open canoe holiday group', friends and colleagues in the Scottish Canoe Association, and those paddlers I met along the way.

Special thanks to my neighbour Dave Walsh, who either took or sourced many of the photographs, and also Allan Bantick from Speyside who helped out on the wildlife information.

Photos have been acknowledged in the captions.

Using the Guide

Each route description begins with some quick reference information such as the type of water you might expect, the OS map numbers which cover the area, the places en route and the approximate distance covered by the described route. The expected shuttle time is given (the journey you may make by motor vehicle to get to the start and leave a vehicle at the finish) followed by a brief description of any expected portages (places where you may have to carry your canoe overland). It is strongly suggested that you always inspect the egress (end) of your trip before you set off, as both parking and landing places can change over time. The start and finish points for the described route are given with six figure grid references.

TYPES OF WATER



Canals, slow-moving rivers and small inland lochs which are placid water, and easy to cope with.



Inland lochs, still with no current or tide, but which in high winds can produce large waves.



Rivers where flood conditions can make paddling difficult, and requiring a higher level of skill. The grade of any rapids is denoted from 1 to 3 within the icon.



Estuaries and sea lochs, where the direction of the tide is all-important, and usually cannot be paddled against.



Open sea, safer coastal routes suitable for placid water touring kayaks and canoes (in calm, stable weather).

The text points out the individual difficulties of the various waters. Readers with little experience are urged to look at (inspect) any water they are uncertain of, and to have access to up-to-date weather information. The mountains and lochs of Scotland are subject to frequent, sudden and local changes in weather due to the topography and prevailing weather patterns, and these should be regarded with great respect. Particular attention should be paid to weather forecasts when deciding whether to undertake one of the journeys which includes open sea.

PORTAGES

Portaging is the carrying of canoes. Portage distances have been restricted to the occasional 100m or so, around rapids, canal locks, etc. unless specifically mentioned. These portages are generally along the length of the waterway, that is downstream, not over heights.

RIVER GRADES

This book does not include whitewater paddling of grade 3 and above, except for some stretches of river where such rapids are easily portaged, or carried around. The book *Scottish Whitewater* (Pesda Press) describes these other rivers. The international river grading scale ranges from 1 to 6:









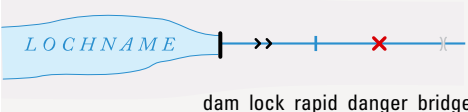


- GRADE 1** Easy. Occasional small rapids or riffles, waves regular and low. Most appropriate course, with deepest water, easy to see from canoe or kayak and steer down. Obstacles e.g. pebble banks, very easy to see. Presents really no problems to paddlers able to steer canoes and kayaks. Steering is needed, especially on narrow rivers.
- GRADE 2** Medium. Fairly frequent rapids, usually with regular waves, easy eddies, and small whirlpools and boils. Course generally easy to recognise, but may meander around gravel banks and trees, etc. Paddlers in kayaks may get wet, those in open canoes much less so.
- GRADE 3** Difficult. Rapids numerous, and can be continuous. Course more difficult to see, landing to inspect may be wise. Drops may be high enough not to see water below, with high and irregular waves, broken water, eddies and whirlpools/boils. There is no water with rapids of above grade 3 advised in this guide. Where there are grade 3 rapids, avoiding or portaging is possible.
- GRADE 4** Very Difficult. Long and extended stretches of rapids with high, irregular waves, difficult broken water, strong eddies and whirlpools. Course often difficult to recognise. High falls, inspection from bank nearly always necessary.
- GRADE 5** Exceedingly Difficult. Long and unbroken stretches of whitewater with individual features, and routes, very difficult to see. Many submerged rocks, high waterfalls, falls in steps, very difficult whirlpools and very fast eddies. Previous inspection absolutely necessary, risk of injury, swims always serious.
- GRADE 6** Absolute limit of difficulty. Definite risk to life.

Important Notice – Disclaimer

Canoeing and kayaking are healthy outdoor activities which always carry some degree of risk, as they involve adventurous travel, often away from habitation. Guidebooks give an idea of where to access a river, where to egress, the level of difficulty, and the nature of the hazards to be encountered. However, the physical nature of river valleys change over time, water levels vary considerably with rain, and features such as weirs, walls and landings are changed by man. Trees block rivers, and the banks erode, sometimes quickly. Coastal sections, sea lochs, and large inland lochs, are subject to the effect of tides and weather.

This guidebook is no substitute for inspection, personal risk assessment, and good judgement. The decision of whether to paddle or not, and any consequences arising from that decision, must remain with the individual paddler.

Map Symbols

	start & alternative start		ferry, passenger & car
	finish & alternative finish		campsite / bivi site
	waypoint		bunkhouse
	portage	● Placename	town / buildings
	described route	▲ Peakname	significant peak
	dam lock rapid danger bridge		castle
			prohibited area

WATER LEVELS

In this guide, an indication is given of a suitable level to paddle by simple viewing on site, for example 'if the rocks are covered downstream from the bridge'. Most 'flatter rivers' can be easily seen from a road or bridge, and judgements on level are reasonably easy to make.

The SCA website www.canoescotland.org offers an invaluable service, as does SEPA (the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency) and Visit Scotland, providing current, live river levels from gauges on mostly the smaller rivers. Common sense must be used to make judgements on the levels in the larger rivers. For example, if several tributaries of the Tay are 'huge', then within a few hours, the Tay itself will also be very high.

ACCESS TO THE WATER

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 provides a clear framework for everybody to enjoy outdoor sports and activities. It is important to understand the responsibilities inherent in this act, one of the best in Europe. Much of this is common sense, so ... think!

There is now a statutory right of access to most land and inland water in Scotland. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code explains how (see the page at the back of this book). As a canoeist – please pay special regard to parking near rivers or lochs, and do not park in passing places on single-track roads. Remember that parking for a van and canoe trailer requires lots of space. Whilst driving on single-track roads, allow overtaking by faster traffic (you can incur penalties for obstruction!) and pull into passing places in good time, avoiding the need to reverse trailers.

Whereas 'wild camping' can be very enjoyable, the guidance to paddlers nowadays has to be: if there is a formal campsite available, for example right next to a river or loch, you are advised to use it. The far north and west of Scotland lend themselves to real wilderness camping. Wherever you are, please be discreet, and *leave no trace!*

For more information on the Code, and contact details for river advisors, visit:

www.outdooraccess-scotland.com or www.canoescotland.com

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Southern Gems

An Introduction

Borders region is dominated by the Tweed valley with its major river and many fast-flowing tributaries. The area is 1,800 square miles. The western part is entirely moorland and conifer forest. The land slopes gently east to rich agricultural farmland and a rocky North Sea coast. Abbeys, stately homes and museums abound.

The two itineraries described cannot do justice to the wealth and diversity of this region. Many tourists rush through to the north, either up the M74 past Dumfries and Galloway, or on the A1 near the coast, oblivious of the eastern Borders.

The history of the area is commemorated each summer by 'Ridings' through the Border towns. These horseback pageants follow the ancient boundaries of the settlements, with their origins in the necessary establishment of territory in turbulent medieval times. Near the border with England raids were carried out over the border into Northumberland, and the mayhem was reciprocated. Cattle and sheep were stolen, and the townsfolk built fortified manor houses and 'bastles' (fortified farmhouses) in defence.

In the Tweed valley you will find interesting castles and historic houses at Peebles, Melrose and Dryburgh. Further down the valley is Kelso with some unusual town centre architecture and Floors Castle. Mellerstain House is just to the north-west of Kelso, and Manderston House is to the north near Duns. The Tweed itself is festooned with ruins of castles down the length of its valley. Peebles area is enjoying a boom due to the development of the surrounding forest for mountain biking. Thousands now flock to the Forestry Commission forest trails, especially for the world-class competitions.

Dumfries and Galloway is quite different, stretching 120 miles from Gretna west to Stranraer. The rivers flow south from the high moors to the Solway Firth, however there are few rivers of any great length or volume.

The scenery is very varied, from deserted sandy beaches and lonely estuaries to rich farmland, coastal machair, wooded river valleys and the moorland of the Southern Uplands. The Ken and Dee system appears in this book because, apart from the pleasant scenery there is always a good depth of water as a result of the damming of the valley.

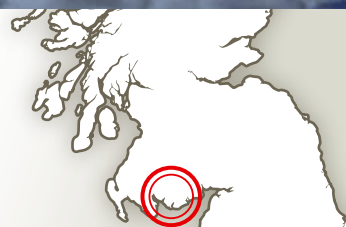
Historical interests are well served by Drumlanrig Castle, north of Dumfries, built between 1679 and 1691, Dundrennan Abbey at Kirkcudbright, and Glenluce Abbey in the west. Near Dalbeattie is Orchardton Tower, Palnackie, the only Scottish tower built in the cylindrical Irish style, and to the east at Lockerbie, Rammerscales House, an 18th century sandstone manor.

The area has a much milder climate than most of Scotland, enabling the cultivation of some breathtaking gardens. Threave Castle, virtually on the Dee at Castle Douglas, has magnificent gardens, as has Castle Kennedy near Stranraer.





24 Loch Ken & River Dee



OS Sheets 77 & 83 | St John's Town of Dalry to Bridge of Dee | 23/34km

Shuttle

Two routes: either A713, A75 and A711 via Castle Douglas, 21 miles, 40 minutes, or A762 and A711 via Tongland, 20 miles, 35 minutes.

Portages

Over the dam at Glenlochar, end of Loch Ken.

Start

▲ Alangibbon bridge, St John's Town of Dalry (615 820).

Finish

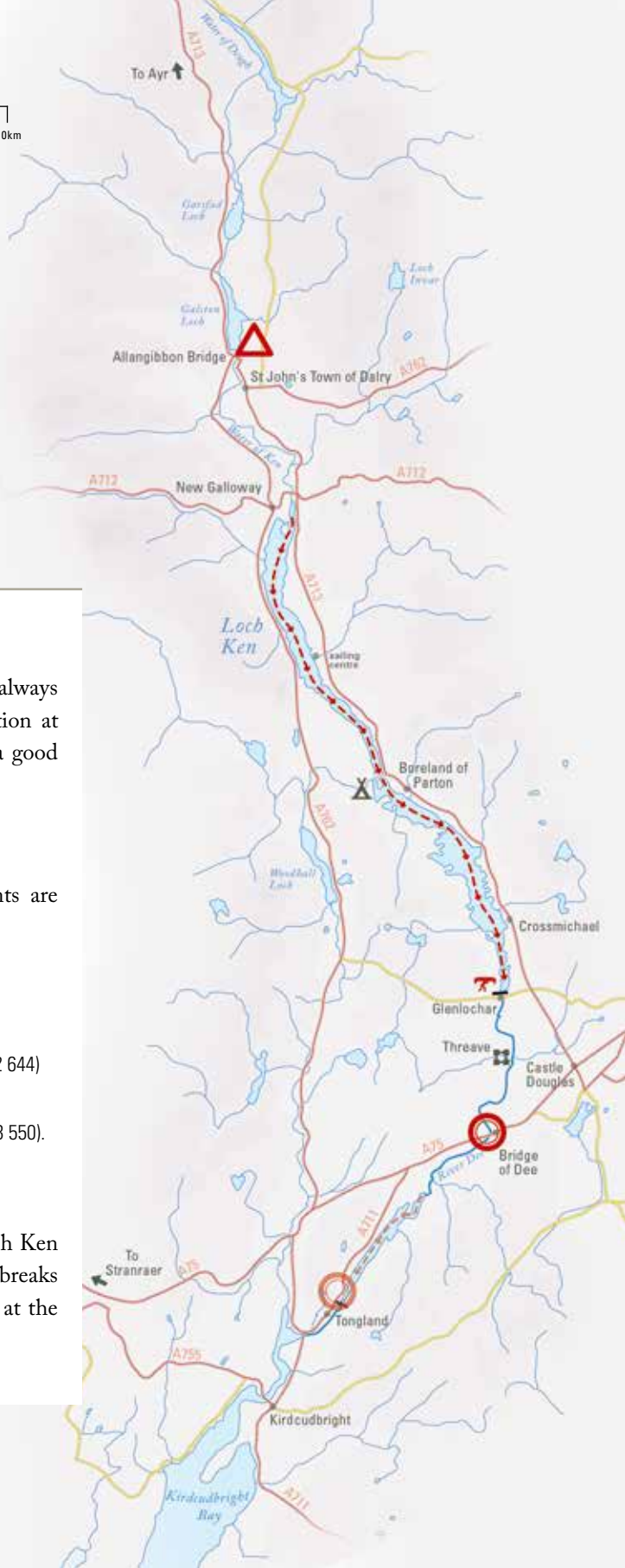
○ Bridge of Dee (734 600).

Introduction

Galloway is an unhurried and quiet area of Scotland. It offers peace and quiet and plenty of wildlife. People come here for cottage holidays, birdwatching and outdoor activities. The river and loch system offers many different types of paddling. The river sections are generally grade 2 and, together with the long and narrow Loch Ken, make a decent open canoe trip from below Allangibbon Bridge, near St John's Town of Dalry. The placid loch gives fairly safe paddling without too much wind, and is a haven for wildfowl. With a pleasant campsite halfway down, the route offers a nice and easy introduction to canoe camping with a 'getting away from it all' atmosphere.



Loch Ken & River Dee



The river above Loch Ken is virtually always canoeable. Below the loch an inspection at Bridge of Dee on the A75 will give a good indication of the level on the Dee.

The following access and egress points are recommended:

- Allangibbon Bridge (615 820)
- Ken Bridge, New Galloway (640 784)
- Loch Ken viaduct (684 703)
- Crossmichael (72 67); Glenlochar dam (732 644)
- Final egress Bridge of Dee (734 600)
- Variation egress before Tongland dam (703 550).

Loch Ken, east side, just south of Loch Ken Viaduct; and Kirkcudbright. This trip breaks nicely into two easy days, with a stop at the campsite on Loch Ken halfway down.



Description

At Allangibbon Bridge near St John's Town of Dalry, the Water of Ken is a broad river with good water. Anglers are often found on this stretch. The quiet market town is to the left (east) of the river. The river is always paddleable below here and after 6km it passes under the Bridge of Ken, and imperceptibly becomes a loch with no current. New Galloway, another quiet little town, is 1km to the right.

The scenery changes from upland wooded hills to marsh and more open agricultural land. Kenmure Castle stands on the right bank.

Loch Ken is 17km long, and there is interest all the way down, with inlets and islands. Roads follow the loch down on both sides, the east side being easiest for access.

After 6km Loch Ken Sailing Centre is on the left bank, with canoes and dinghies for hire, instruction available, and a café. This upper part of the loch is ideal for canoe sailing. Small islands follow.

The Ken Viaduct (a disused railway line, now a footpath) provides a landmark at the narrowest part of the loch. There are power boats and water-skiing on this stretch. The campsite soon follows, with very easy access onto the water. The Black Water of Dee joins on the right. The loch then becomes interesting with islands, shallows and narrows. The scenery is more open, resembling a large marsh, and the way through islands is more difficult to see. The flats are

crowded with wading birds. About halfway down this lower half of the loch there are narrows, followed by Crossmichael village on the left bank. At the end of Loch Ken is Glenlochar dam, with a lift over on the left side into the River Dee.

The Dee is a wide, deep river with few rapids. After a couple of kilometres Threave Island splits the river, with Threave Castle on the right-hand channel. There is a rapid where the two channels rejoin below the island. The large Lodge Island follows, with the main channel on the right then an old railway bridge and the main A75 Bridge of Dee. There is no easy access or egress here, nor vehicle parking. Castle Douglas is 4km to the left. Just downstream is the old Bridge of Dee, and a minor road on the left bank. Egress is possible (advised) on the right bank at this bridge. Parking is available in the village.

Variation

The remaining 6km has islands, shallows, and about halfway down this stretch becomes Tongland Loch. The egress is about 200m above the dam onto the busy A711 on the right bank. Park with care at a former lay-by, now fenced off. This egress is dangerous, due to the very small parking spot, and a very fast and busy main road. There is another possible exit point about 150m back upstream. Overall, if unsure, egress is better and safer at Bridge of Dee village.

Galloway Forest Park

The region immediately around the Ken and Dee is a large forest area planted for timber and used for a variety of outdoor activities.

There are walks, interpretive facilities, wildlife, guided events and a variety of accommodation, perhaps making this area the nearest to a North American national park.

A few miles north of the Ken and Dee route is Loch Doon, just over the border in Ayrshire, and a forest drive to Loch Bradan.

The Forest Park extends westwards as far as the A714 road from Newton Stewart to Girvan, and includes at its centre Glen Trool with a forest village and visitor centre. The route up Merrick, at 843m the highest hill in Southern Scotland, starts from Buchan at the end of the road. The area is worth visiting for the ancient oak woodland, at its best in autumn with a stunning array of colours from golden browns to russet reds. A scenic road runs from Glentool village due north to Straiton in Ayrshire.

In the south of the area is Clatteringshaws Loch, on the A712 from Newton Stewart to New Galloway, with wild goats nearby.

The area offers children's activities, orienteering, mountain biking and much more. To find out full details and current events, go to Forestry Commission Scotland's website (www.scotland.forestry.gov.uk).



25 River Tweed



OS Sheets 72, 73, 74 & 75 | Peebles to Coldstream | 82km

Shuttle

50 miles, 1 hour 20 minutes, via A72, A6091, A699 and A698.

Portages

Some weirs might be portaged, depending on conditions. The 'caulds' are sloping weirs, most very easy and shallow-sloping. Makerstoun lower rapid (3-).

Start

▲ Peebles (250 403).

Finish

○ Coldstream caravan site (845 396)

Introduction

The Tweed is one of the original great Scottish touring rivers, a classic to be completed by canoeing visitors to Scotland, along with the Tay and Spey.

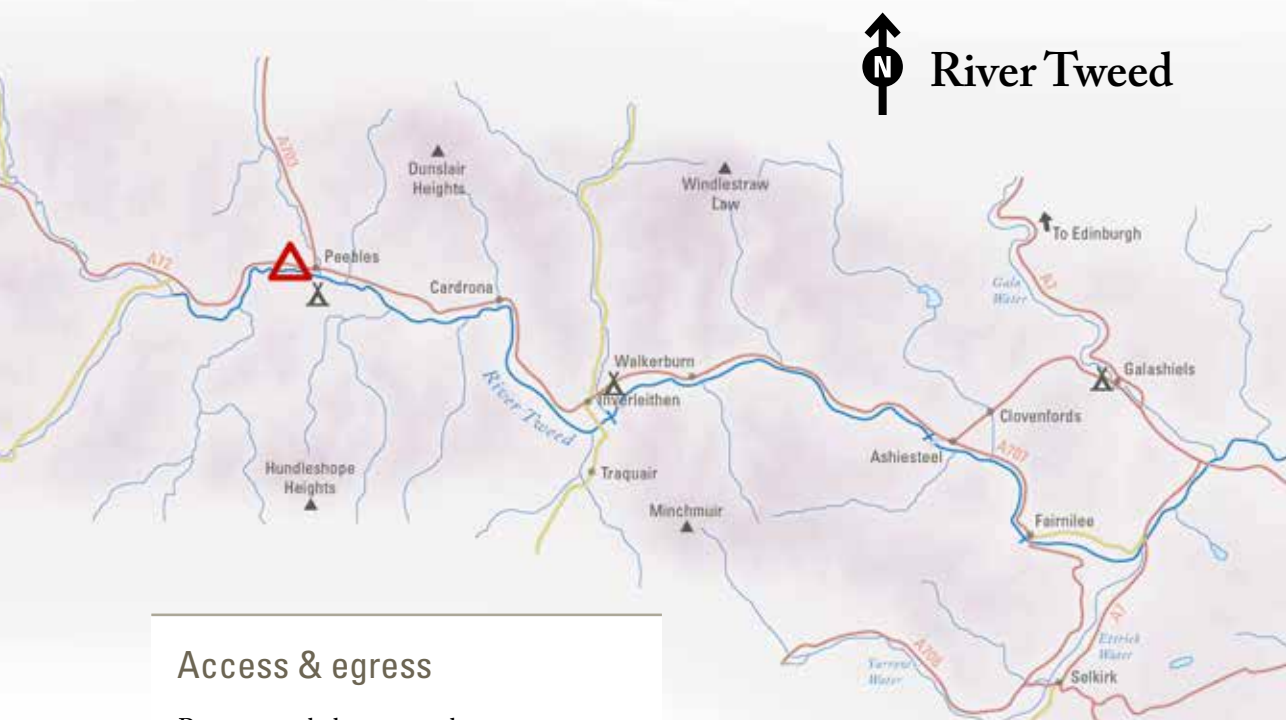
The Tweed valley has a fascinating history of land improvements and raids from over the border by the 'reivers'. It was always a rich area, as shown by the large farms and great houses still visible today. Many castles were built through the ages, and the remains and ruins are still there to be visited.

The upper valley is wooded and beautiful; the middle stretch through Galashiels and Melrose a bit more urban; from the A68 crossing down to Kelso is a broad agricultural valley; and Kelso

to Coldstream is different again, a busy angling river with high banks. There is interest all the way down, with frequent little towns, and the 'caulds' or weirs to wake you up. These are mostly of a very gradual gradient, sometimes no more than a gentle slope of small stones and easy to inspect or portage. The river gives a fulfilling trip of three or four days.

Water level

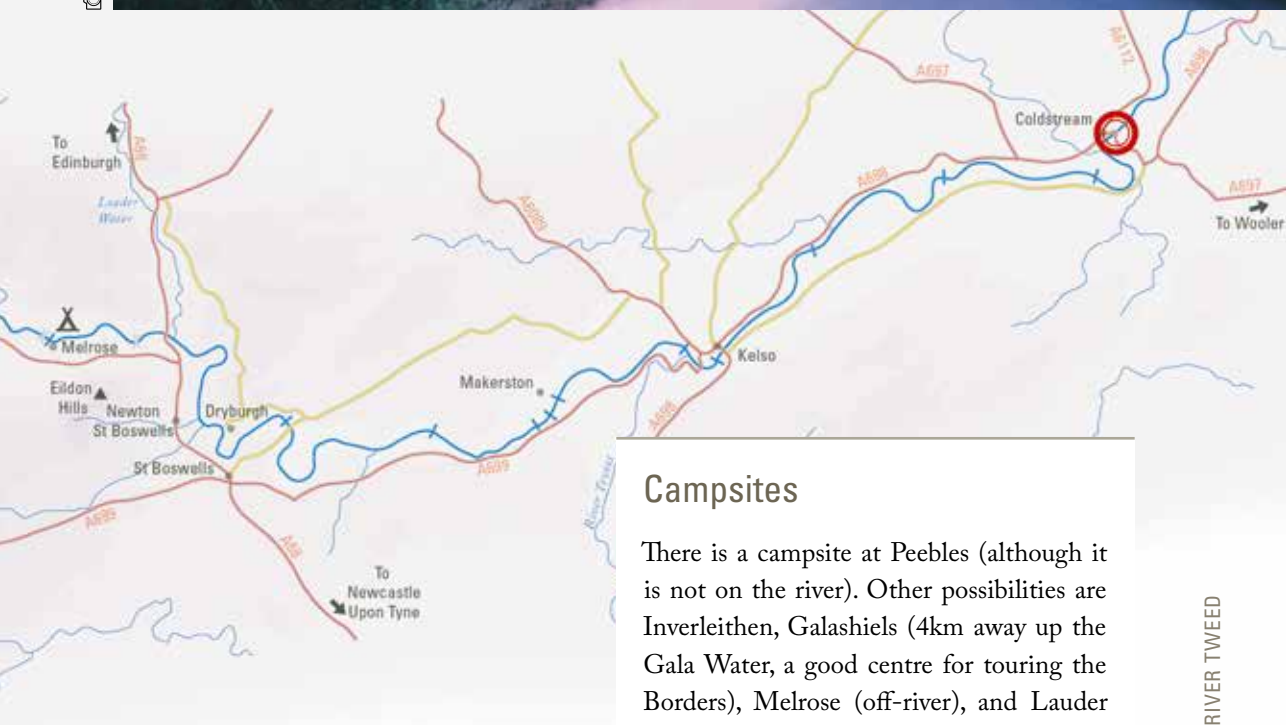
A look over most bridges in the middle section of the river will tell you what the level is like; a good place is at Fairnilee. The rapid and drops down river left should be easily negotiable, as well as the cauld above the bridge. Many paddlers feel that water levels have dropped in recent years, maybe due to agricultural abstraction.



Access & egress

Recommended access and egress:

- Peebles bridge (250 403)
- Innerleithen campsite (340 366)
- Walkerburn bridge (361 369)
- Ashiesteel bridge (438 351)
- Fairnilee bridge (459 325)
- Old bridge off A7, with steps down (488 323)
- Melrose ford (544 345)
- Leaderfoot (575 346)
- Mertoun bridge (610 320)
- Kelso riverside, above the weir (723 343)
- A698 alongside river (80 39)
- Coldstream caravan site (845 396).



Campsites

There is a campsite at Peebles (although it is not on the river). Other possibilities are Inverleithen, Galashiels (4km away up the Gala Water, a good centre for touring the Borders), Melrose (off-river), and Lauder (10 miles to the north).

Rough camping is not possible or welcome down much of the valley. Avoid farmland and look for riverside woodland or islands.



Springtime in the Tweed valley | VisitScotland/Scottish Viewpoint

SUGGESTED ITINERARIES

A trip could be split thus: Peebles to Galashiels (32km), Galashiels to Kelso (30km) and Kelso to Coldstream (17km). Or alternatively: From Peebles to Inverleithen riverside campsite (14km), Inverleithen to Melrose (28km), then Melrose to Coldstream (45km).

Description

The Tweed rises in the extreme south-west corner of the Borders just over the hill from Moffat, at Tweed's Well, an obvious spring near the A701 Moffat to Edinburgh road. It can be canoed or kayaked in high water from only a few kilometres down the road as the valley bottom is quite flat. At Tweedsmuir road bridge there is a considerable fall. A traditional place for starting trips was Stobo, about 25km downstream. However, in most summers there is no chance of paddling loaded open canoes from here so distances are given from Peebles where the river has been joined by three small tributaries.

The start at Peebles is convenient and easy to find, a car park downstream of the bridge, on the right side of the river and only a short walk back over the bridge to the heart of this bustling town. The car park is large with toilets and easy access down onto the river. There are roads close to the river almost the whole way down.

This first day of some 32km is easy, pleasant paddling with occasional highlights. The 'new town' of Cardrona, 6km down, is marked by a hotel on the left bank and a housing estate on the right bank. Inverleithen follows after another 6km with a bridge, a rapid and the famous Traquair



House to the right. The village is a little way to the left, and after a disused railway bridge there is a convenient campsite on the left bank, one of the very few on the river.

Walkerburn has the first cauld on this stretch and the village, one of the Tweed valley wool settlements, is on the left bank. A long, pretty wooded stretch follows, a good bet for a secluded lunch stop. Ashiesteel rapid is upstream of an old bridge, with a settlement on the right bank. The line is down the right bank.

Up on the road on the left side is a roundabout where the main road leaves the river valley to take a shorter way over to Galashiels. A few kilometres on is the main excitement of this first day. It starts at Yair Cauld (often shallow) upstream of Fairnilee bridge and continues with Fairnilee rapid, a couple of drops on the left side of the river followed by fast water. Although not very difficult, Fairnilee can still give open canoe paddlers a shock. A useful parking spot below the bridge gives access for viewing the rapid.

The Ettrick Water joins from the right lower down, two road bridges follow and signs of civilisation announce the urban sprawl of Galashiels and Melrose, the population centre of the Borders. Abbotsford House (Sir Walter Scott's house) is on the right bank near the main road bridge. The egress is on the left bank, if completing a first day and going to the Galashiels campsite.

There is a good landing place for Melrose, 4km further on near the cauld which in this case is steep and rocky. This area is reached from the centre of Melrose by following signs for Newstead, and then taking a left turn for the Chain Bridge and riverside walk. This is a cul-de-sac with some parking. After a further 3km the river is spanned by the very obvious and high Leaderfoot Viaduct, a remnant of a picturesque borders railway line. The A68 bridge follows with access on

the right bank. The Tweed winds between high wooded banks as it turns south for a time, and Scott's View and Monument are visible high up on the left bank for several miles. At Dryburgh Abbey on a long bend there is a hotel, the abbey, and a large house. Landing and parking are difficult here.

After the occasional island, rock ledge and shallows, the first excitement of this stretch is Mertoun Cauld, a weir just upstream of Mertoun bridge on the B6404. In high water, the extreme right may be the easiest route, in lowish water the centre is quite difficult. The scenery has changed to a much flatter agricultural landscape, hills and woods have mostly been left behind. A further 5km or so is a favourite amongst the cauld; Rutherford Cauld – just a bit larger than most, usually with a good flow and large waves. This cauld can just be seen from the A699.

Rutherford is the signal that the trickiest section of the Tweed is starting, especially for open canoes. Makerstoun House follows on the left bank, and then the three rapids traditionally known as Makerstoun rapids. In lowish water they all appear to be one long shallow stretch.

The first two rapids have channels down the right side. You will know that Lower Makerstoun rapid is approaching when the drop ahead appears substantial, and a row of cottages can be seen on the right bank (no vehicle access down from these cottages). Lower Makerstoun rapid presents little problem for kayaks but is tricky for open canoes, and warrants inspection. The usual route in medium water is down the extreme right side, over four drops, with the very narrow last one requiring some skill. In high to very high water there is a route down the left side of the river. The river now quietens down considerably and is shallow all the way down to Kelso, with the spectacular Floors Castle on the left bank.

As Kelso comes fully into view, the line of Kelso Cauld can be seen ahead. Above it there is a landing with car parking on the left bank. Kelso Cauld can be difficult and should be inspected. It is shot on the right in high water. The River Teviot joins from the right, then the old road bridge crosses the river, followed by another stony cauld and the new road bridge high above. There is a landing place on the right bank under the new road bridge, reached by a minor road.

The Tweed now widens and slows down. After 4km you reach Banff Mill weirs. It is wise to stop at the wall across the river and inspect, or if the river is high, land on left bank. The left-hand route has two steep and quite difficult drops, not recommended for open canoes. The best route is to start left, and immediately after the first drop, go sharply right, and turn left down the central chute. The rest of the way down is then simple.

Slow progress to Coldstream is enlivened by Carham Cauld (usually shootable), followed by a large island, and then the final event; a shallow cauld only 2km from the town. Coldstream appears on the left bank, and there is a good landing at an obvious green space which used to be a seasonal caravan site. You may have to park in the town, further back from the river. Coldstream is a pleasant border market town, with the A697 providing fast access either to England or back up to Edinburgh.



Red squirrels

The Borders region of Scotland is home to red squirrels, as are the river valleys of the Spey and Dee with their extensive Scots pine woodlands. Most visitors from south of the border have never seen a red squirrel, and there is currently a battle royal taking place regarding 'what should be done about grey squirrels'.

The grey is quite a bit larger than the red, which is slight, with very obvious ear tufts. Greys have swiftly populated cities in Scotland. They are very common in Edinburgh and Glasgow and are now appearing in Dundee and Aberdeen. Although greys do not attack reds, they host a virulent pox to which the red is susceptible and have taken over their food supplies. The reds have retreated into conifer forests, particularly pine where they feed on cones with large seeds, as well as other seeds and acorns. It is becoming clear that the culling of greys will not help the red, unless the appropriate habitat is kept. The practice of clear felling large areas of pine in one go has undoubtedly contributed to the demise of the red squirrel, and altering forestry practices will help them.

One certain sign of reds is a pile of munched pine cones under a tree – squirrels often seem to have a favourite tree to sit in and eat, often in pairs, as they are sociable animals. They are most often seen at dawn. If reds keep to the upper branches of trees they are safe, being predated on the ground by foxes, birds of prey or cars.

If camping on a river bank under pines, the sound of scampering animals and a 'chattering' at daybreak may well tell you that the red squirrel is present.

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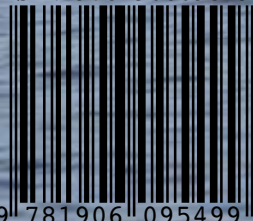
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