



Kent Canoes
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CANCHE RIVER - Northern France

The river Canche is about one hour's drive south of Calais and is ideal for paddlers with some experience of moving water who want to experience the fun of paddling abroad without the long drive down to the Alps. The river is basically flat water but always has a current on it. It does however, have numerous weirs and canoe passes which liven things up a little. It is ideal for kayakers who want to experience grade 1 and 2 conditions, or open canoeists of any level. Like any river, the difficulty varies according to weather and river conditions. **All the information below is based on our experience at the time of paddling, and we advise that you always check carefully before running any of the obstacles on the day.**

N.B. "River left" and "river right" refer to the left and right hand side of the river as you face downstream

N.B. All distances are approximate, we didn't have a GPS with us at the time!

The river can be divided up into two easy days paddling which will allow you loads of time to play on the weirs and have a leisurely lunch etc. The upper section from Guisy to the road bridge just west of Beaurainville is the more technical section and we always paddle this on day 2 of a 2 day trip. On the first day, we paddle from the road bridge just west of Beaurainville to the campsite on the river in Montreuil. Tackling the river this way, saves the best to last for the more experienced paddlers, and gives the less experienced a chance to get a feel for the river.

Directions to the Canche - about 50 minutes drive from Calais.

A26 from Calais

After about 2 miles turn onto the A16 heading towards Boulogne

Follow A16 until J26 (this is a toll auto route - cost is about 2.5 Euros)

Follow D939 east towards Montreuil

At the roundabout intersecting the D901, turn right.

After about a mile, turn right at the traffic lights, sign posted Montreuil

Drive over the river and railway and turn immediately right on the left-hand bend and then right again.

Follow signs to campsite

If you would prefer to stay in a hotel there are lots to choose from in Montreuil itself.



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Day one:

Bridge just west of Beaurainville to Montreuil campsite

Only use this get out if you are staying at the campsite. If you aren't, you can get out on "river left" just before the road bridge by the slalom course

Directions to get in:

Follow the D349 south east from Montreuil until you come to a roundabout. Turn left. Follow the road towards Beaurainville, go over the railway and take the first turning on the left after the bike shop which is on the right. Follow the road for about half a mile and fork left. Follow the road until you see the river on your right and park in the lay-by just upstream of the bridge.



N.B. Steep high bank

Picture taken from upstream of bridge
Photo copyright Kent Canoes

A few miles from the get in:
Sluice gates 100 metres downstream of ruined mill which is on "river left". Get out on "river left" just after mill stream (river left) and inspect. This is usually shootable with care, but inspection is essential due to logs etc often blocking the sluice. Portage if unsure on "river left".



Picture taken from downstream
Photo copyright Kent Canoes



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About a mile downstream of these sluice gates is another set of sluice gates with a canoe pass on "river right". This unfortunately is not shootable at the moment due to the sluice gate above it being set too low. The easiest way round these sluices is to get out about 100 yards before them on river left. Lower you boat into the little stream on the other side of the road. Paddle down this stream taking care at the low bridge under the road. Portage this if in any doubt.

Pictures to follow:

As you approach Montreuil, you will go under a main road bridge. About half a mile after this is the Montreuil slalom course. There are no drops as such, but there are small standing waves and the current can be quite strong. The local French club also put obstacles in the water to increase the flow and create breakouts so watch out for these. Get out here on "river left" if you are not using the campsite.



Picture taken from downstream
Photo copyright Kent Canoes

Once you are through the slalom course you will go under the road bridge. From here to the campsite is about half a mile. The current can be very quick here, and there are low hanging trees on "river right" which need to be avoided. You will need to make your way over to "river left" and line up with the shoot which leads into the mill pond by the campsite.



Picture taken from downstream
Photo copyright Kent Canoes



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Directions to get in:

Take the D349 from Montreuil towards Hesdin. About a mile before Hesdin, turn left sign posted Guisy (by the church). Park in the lay-by by the river. Carry the boats to the slipway on the upstream side of the bridge.



Picture taken from upstream

About a mile downstream is a metal foot bridge. Half a mile beyond this is a set of sluice gates which can usually be navigated on "river left". Make sure you are well over to the left approaching these sluices, the current can be quite fast. There is a factory here and the locals are not very friendly so we suggest you carry on downstream from here.



N.B. boat facing upstream
Photo copyright Kent Canoes



Photo copyright Kent Canoes

Several miles downstream, you will go under a road bridge and see a huge factory on "river left". Go under a metal foot bridge. About 400 yards from here is a grade 2+ rapid. This is less intimidating than it looks and has always been shootable. It is worth inspecting from "river left" if you are not sure. Be aware that there are rocks on "river right", and wooden stakes on "river left" which can be just under the surface at higher water levels. You don't have to take photographs from the front of the boat if you don't want to!



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About a mile from here you will start to approach Beaurainville. Go under a road bridge and shortly afterwards you will see the bridge above the slalom course. The weir is immediately under this bridge. This has always been shootable on river left. Be aware however, that this is a popular site and the weir pool can be full of French slalom paddlers practising their techniques. The drop is simple enough but the weir pool can be grade 2-3 depending on river levels.



Picture taken from downstream - Photo copyright Kent Canoes

About half a mile downstream of the slalom course is the "Play wave". The river bends round to the right and there is a small play wave on "river left" with a good eddy to breakout into on "river right".



Photo copyright Kent Canoes

Half a mile after the play wave, the river splits left and right. We strongly recommend that you take the right hand shoot through the single arch bridge, since the left hand shoot with two bridge arches is followed by a small drop which can have a powerful stopper on it in some water conditions.



And that's it. The get out at Beaurainville is about a mile from the weir bridge.

Good luck, and enjoy this beautiful part of France from the river!