

LOWER HEYFORD TO OXFORD OXFORD CANAL

1

TRIP TYPE: SOLO CYCLE

OBJECTIVE: CYCLE FROM LOWER HEYFORD TO OXFORD ALONG THE OXFORD CANAL, RETURNING BY TRAIN FROM OXFORD TO HEYFORD.

DISTANCE: 16 MILES

TIME: 2.5 HOURS, 6.4 mph

NICHOLSON: GUIDE 1, PP 153-159

COSTS: FREE PARKING IN LOWER HEYFORD. TRAIN FROM OXFORD TO HEYFORD £6.40, INFREQUENT

DIFFICULTY: HARD

OVERVIEW: Only attempt this ride in April or May, after a couple of dry weeks, otherwise it is too difficult. There are a number of sections where the towpath is sloping or has collapsed completely, and a lot of uncut undergrowth which make riding very difficult later in the year.



1. LOWER HEYFORD TO KIDLINGTON (9 MILES)

Park your car in Heyford station car park, OX25 5PD. If the car park is full you can park in lower Heyford village. The streets are narrow but there are no restrictions. Access to the towpath lies between the station platform and the canal. Cross the old footbridge parallel to the road bridge and drop down the slope, then turn back on yourself under Station Road to head south on a narrow grass and earth towpath.

At the next bridge, Cleaves Bridge, 207, the towpath is sloping and collapsed, and you get the picture of what sort of ride it's going to be.

After Dashwood Bridge, 209, the towpath is sloping and collapsed and you will need to walk 300m along this section.



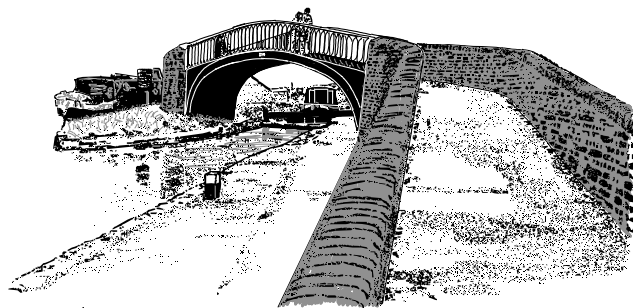
It is bumpy and difficult going, but there is a slight improvement at Tadley, although there are sandbags to fill a breach there. Continue to Kirtlington, where the canal runs next to the River Cherwell, and riding conditions are better.

At Thrupp there is a sharp right hand bend by Annise's Tea Rooms, and the towpath switches back to the right. Just past Thrupp there is a narrowboat lodged on the banking (as of 2025), which apparently happened after a flood and there is no way of getting a crane close enough to refloat it.

Where the main road crosses there is no towpath, just bumpy roads. However the towpath is generally better.

2. KIDLINGTON TO OXFORD (7 MILES)

Once in the outskirts of Kidlington the towpath is better again, and from the A44 (Woodstock Rd.) bridge it is metalled all the way into Oxford.



Isis Lock and Bridge,
Oxford

At the junction, just before you pass under the A40, Northern

Bypass, turn right on Dukes Cut. This 200m stretch is populated by many off-griders, and you need to weave your way through the wood between old sofas and barbecues. Once you reach the River Thames turn round, return to the junction and turn right to continue down the Oxford Canal. It is easy going into the city centre. Just before the canal ends at Hythe Bridge, cross the bridge at Isis lock to continue between Castle Mill Stream and the canal to the slight ramp up to Hythe Bridge Street.

Turn right on Hythe Bridge Street / Botley Road to cross Castle Mill Stream, and at the second roundabout turn right into the station.

Trains are approximately 2 hourly, so if you time it right you'll have time to find a nice hostelry in Oxford, of which there are many.

Perhaps try the Eagle and Child, St. Giles, OX1 3LU, the famous watering hole of

Tolkien and CS Lewis, only 6 minutes from the station (temporarily closed for refurbishment as of end 2025). The Bell Inn, in Lower Hafford, is sadly no longer open.

