



Hovercraft Cruising Site ***Beachley Slip – River Severn***

Location:

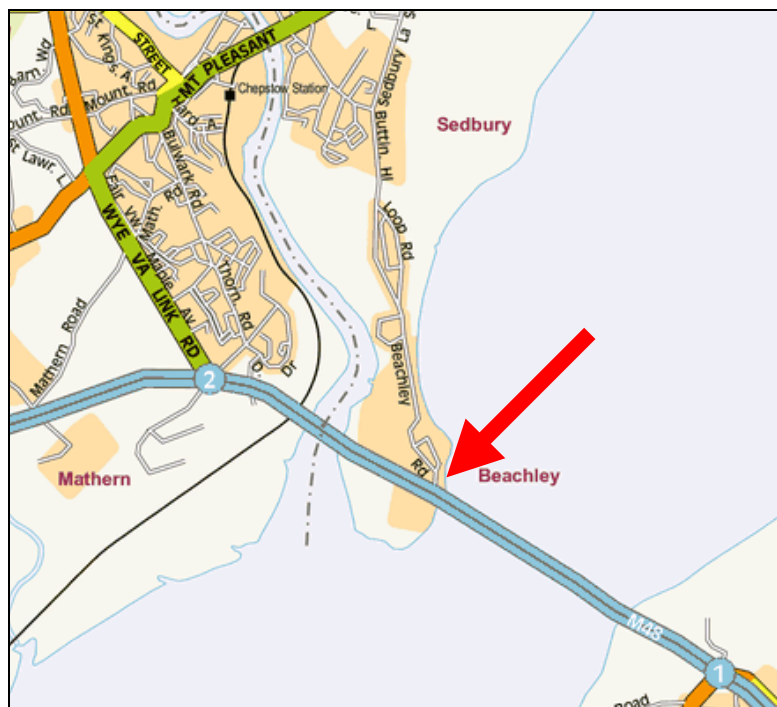
Beachley, Chepstow, Monmouthshire, NP16 7HH

Directions:

Leave the M48 at junction 2, then at Newhouse Roundabout take the 3rd exit onto the A466 (Chepstow). At Highbeech roundabout take the 3rd exit onto the 48 (Chepstow, Gloucester).

Turn right (Sedbury, Beachley). Turn right again. At roundabout take the 1st exit onto Beachley Road (Sedbury). Turn right onto Buttington Hill. Continue onto Beachley Road, and continue to end.

Drop off craft on slip and park trailer in the car park beyond the lifeboat station.



Ramp/access Description:

This is the old slipway used by the car ferry until the '60's, before the bridge was built. It is a large, wide stone built ramp which until recently was falling into disrepair, but has now been restored by SARA as they have their lifeboat station at the head of the slip.

The slipway is useable for almost all of a moderate (9m) tide but will not be useable for 3 hours on a spring (12m) tide. However, you won't be launching here on a spring tide unless you are crazy!

Charges:

There is no charge for using the slipway. Park (considerately) in the car park behind the lifeboat station.

Suitability:

The ramp is long and wide, and can be hovered down with care proving there is no wind. Caution is advised – the best idea is to reverse the trailer down close to the waterline.



Facilities:

At the top of the ramp is the Severn Area Rescue Association boathouse – hopefully you won't need this! Above the slip is the Old Ferry public house – great meals and good beer can be had in a small beer garden overlooking the river. It is reasonably smart, so take the overalls off first.

Access restrictions and other permissions:

The slipway is open for informal use by the public without charge. Take note of the river byelaws, posted on a sign at the top of the slipway. A 12 knot (15mph) speed limit is in force in certain areas – check for details.

Navigational Hazards:

This river is very hazardous, and is **only suitable for very experienced pilots** and category 2 craft. Local knowledge is advised. The Severn throws up random areas of standing waves which appear quickly in an otherwise calm water, caused by the tidal flow over submerged rocks. You need to keep careful watch for these, as an otherwise flat calm can suddenly become a 3 foot chop.

To the left of the slipway are the Hen and Chickens rocks, the tidal stream around these is very strong and results in localised standing waves sufficient to swamp a smaller craft. This area should be avoided.

About 4 miles downstream of the slip is The Shoots, a notorious danger spot where the entire Severn flow is forced through a small channel. Do not enter this area except at highwater. **If you are drifting towards The Shoots without power, this warrants an immediate mayday call.**

Cruising Area:

From this slip, access is possible to the Severn and Wye.

Severn:

The cruising range upstream is about 40 miles to Gloucester, passing various villages, pubs and interesting spots. It is possible to get out at several pubs, with good food etc. The weir at Maisemore is an interesting destination, and Alney Island can be circumnavigated so long as there is not too much water over the weirs at Maisemore and Llanthony. A 6mph speed limit is in force above the weirs, and a BW day pass is required for this 3 mile section.

The cruising range downstream is limited, due to The Shoots. About ½ mile downstream the mouth of the Wye is found. Navigation in the area of the second Severn Bridge (the far one) is restricted – to the Shoots only! This could be passed at high water, and then one could cruise as far as the Avon to Bristol and beyond.

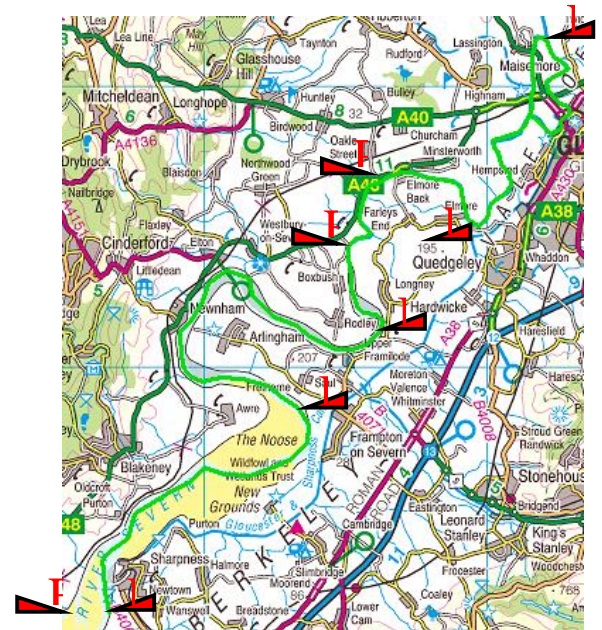
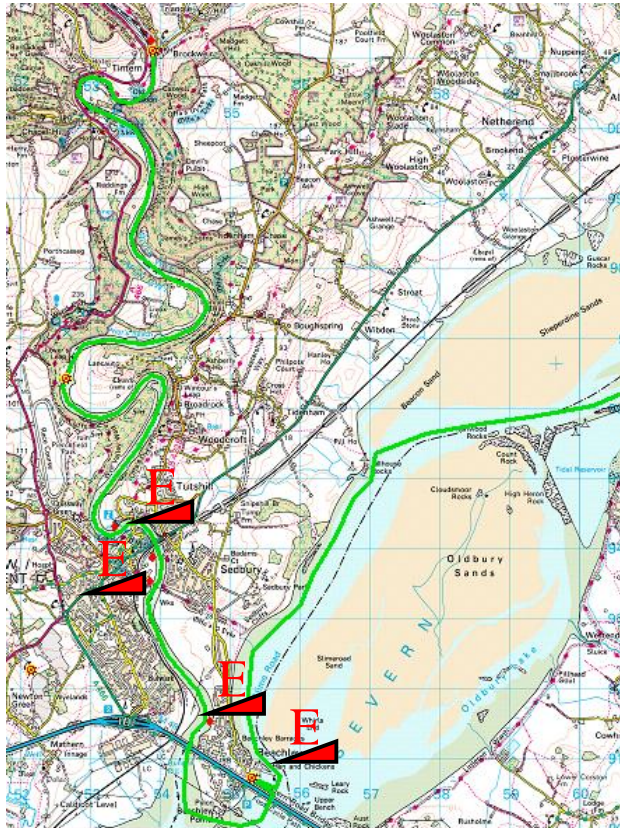
Wye:

Navigate about ½ mile downstream on the Severn sticking close the west bank to avoid standing waves, and round Beachley Point into the Wye. This is an outstanding cruise, but ensure you have read the byelaws so that you know where the speed limits apply. Water-skis and jet skis operate in this area, be sure that you understand the collision regulations.

You can proceed about 11 miles up the Wye, passing the dramatic ruins of Chepstow Castle high on the cliff, navigating rapids deep in the Wye Gorge, and later on passing Tintern Abbey, largely hidden by the high banks. Navigation beyond Brockweir is limited by a 7mph (upstream) and 10mph (downstream) speed limit, and further progress is not advised due to extensive use by children in canoes.

Possible recovery sites with road access

There are very few slipways into the Severn or Wye. The higher reaches have a few private slipways, see the map, and it is possible to alight in several places on the mud in an emergency. The Wye has a few private slips which are only useable at high water. This area is only recommended for reliable craft!



Other Considerations:

Keep a sharp eye out for floating debris, especially after a spring tide. Also watch for the salmon fisheries, consisting of many poles sticking out of the mud near to the bank, ideal for ripping skirts to shreds! Independent communication is absolutely essential, marine radio plus mobile phone. Good navigation is essential.

The sandbanks present particular hazards. **DO NOT TRAVEL AT SPEED ON THE SANDBANKS.** They are crossed by gulleys, sudden banks and drop-offs, and if you crash there is no-one to help you. SARA do not have hovercraft! **DRY SAND IS DANGEROUS SAND** because it is high above the water, meaning gulleys are likely.

When navigating at speed, keep to the water skirting the edges of the sandbanks – apart from the safety aspects, these sandbanks go on for miles and they can rip your skirt apart in no time.

If you stop on sand or mud with no dry passage to land, keep your engines running.