

There are many beautiful rivers and watercourses across the Environment Agency Waterways Anglian region. Below is an overview of the River Great Ouse from which you can explore the countryside by water.

The River Great Ouse is one of the major navigable rivers in East Anglia and its tributaries including the Rivers Cam, Lark, Little Ouse and Wissey provide approximately 255km / 158 miles of navigable waterway. It is the fourth longest river in the United Kingdom and flows through 5 counties; Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Norfolk.

The source of the river is around Brackley, Northamptonshire roughly 150m above sea level. The river then flows 143 miles down to The Wash in King's Lynn. From Kempston in Bedfordshire the river becomes navigable and passes through St Neots, Godmanchester, Huntingdon, St Ives and Earith. From Earith the river is tidal for a section before it splits into the channelised Old & New Bedford River, which remain tidal, and the natural course of the river which is not tidal (the New Bedford River remains navigable in accordance with the tides). The natural course of the river then passes through Hermitage Lock into the Old West River where it is joined by the River Cam before reaching Ely and then Denver Sluice.

Quick Facts

- 158 miles of navigable river
- One of the longest rivers in the UK
- Its course has been artificially changed over the years to relieve flooding in the wetlands and fens

The upper reaches of this river flow through one of the most peaceful and unspoilt water environments in Britain. They offer a wide range of natural and historical sites and pretty rural towns to visit. The lower reaches take boaters through the characteristic Fenland landscape with a skyline dominated by Ely Cathedral. There are many sites of interest to visit along the river, including Streatham Pump, Wicken Fen and the Pumping Engine Museum at Prickwillow. The Ouse Washes is a site of special value to nature conservation and the Welney Wildfowl Trust is one of the best places to view wildfowl all year round.

For the adventurous, the river continues past Denver Sluice in a tidal channel towards the port of King's Lynn and the Wash.

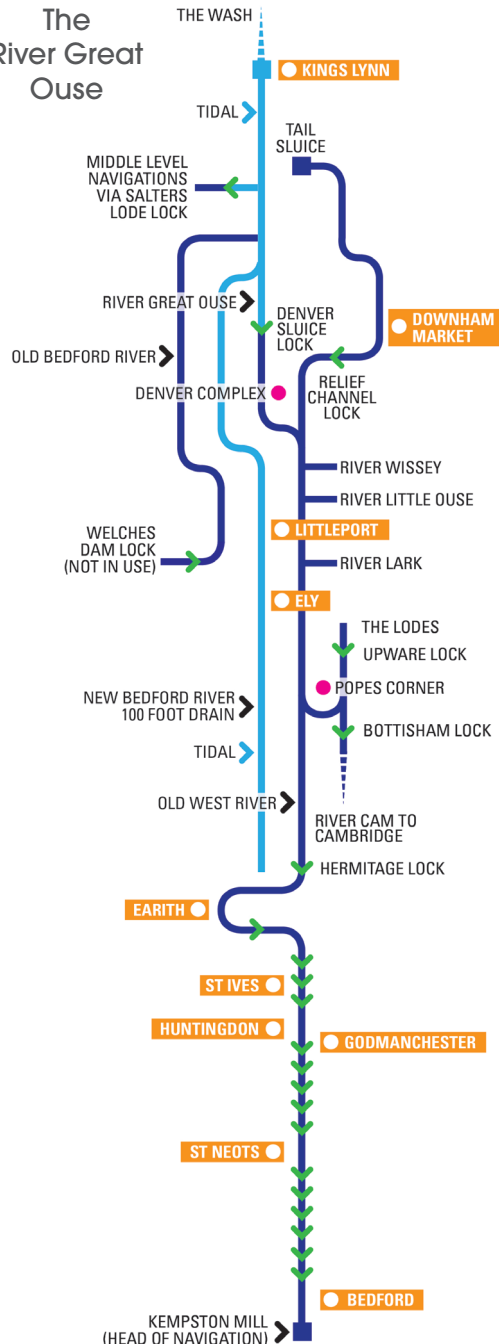
The Great Ouse Relief channel was opened to navigation in 2001 by a lock at the Denver complex. This wide, straight waterway runs for 6.5 miles between Denver and King's Lynn. There are short stay moorings at Downham Market, Stowbridge near the Heron public house and Magdalene Bridge with the Cock Inn nearby. The Environment Agency offer long term moorings at Denver and Upware.

The Great Ouse connects to the Middle Level after a short tidal crossing below Denver Sluice at Salters Lode. This waterway passes through Outwell, Upwell, March and Whittlesey before entering the River Nene at Stanground in Peterborough. Once on the River Nene narrow beam craft can navigate through the Northampton Arm onto the Grand Union Canal – the main artery of the inland waterways system.

There are several ambitious plans to extend cruising such as the Fens Waterway Link proposing to connect navigation from Lincoln to Cambridge. Another proposed scheme is a Bedford to Milton Keynes waterway thus connecting the River Great Ouse and Grand Union Canal. These proposals are long term and require huge capital expenditure.

The River Cam is managed by the Cam Conservators and the Middle Level by the Middle Level Commissioners.

The River Great Ouse



Useful Contacts and Information

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