



# THE MIGHTY RIVER DART

BY MARK ALLEN

The source of the River Dart is high up on Dartmoor, forming the East and the West Dart. The East flows through Postbridge and the West through Two bridges. From here on down both rivers grow in size as side tributaries join – They join together and become the River Dart at Dartmeet, a beautiful and popular spot for tourists and the Start of the hardest kayaking section – The Upper Dart.

**T**he Upper Dart runs at a variety of flows – But basically, the higher it is the harder and more dangerous it becomes. Due to the large catchment the River Dart is one of the most reliable rivers to kayak in the whole of the UK. The Upper Dart sees lots of carnage and some kayakers end up having to walk out. So experts only.

This section finishes at Newbridge Carpark and is Also the start of the next section down – The Loop.

The Loop is a great section for intermediates and is a very popular trip, with local club, groups of friends and commercial operators. Great value white water, with rapids called Washing Machine, Lover's Leap, Triple Steps and Spin Dryer!! Most people finish this trip at The River Dart Country Park – This is convenient as it offers great value for money, parking, food and drinks and a wide variety of accommodation. I would class myself as a local!

Next Up is the Lower and Lower Lower Dart. These sections are idea for beginners. Offering gentle rapids and islands. Care needs to be taken at several weirs – Most people walk around these / Portage. Like all sections on The River Dart – The higher the Flows the harder and more dangerous the river becomes.





**For those wanting to get involved in the sport have a couple of options:**

1. Join a local canoe Club
  2. Get some professional coach and guiding
- Before venturing out on your own it is essential that you learn a few basics and know how to rescue your buddies.

Kayaking is very dependant on rainfall. We are very lucky because there are online river gauges, webcams, rainfall gauge and lots of local knowledge available on Facebook .

**This is a group I have set up and is very useful:**

[www.facebook.com/groups/kayakingriverdart](http://www.facebook.com/groups/kayakingriverdart)

**Rain Gauge:**

[www.dartcom.co.uk/weather](http://www.dartcom.co.uk/weather)  
20mm is perfect!

**River Level:**

<https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/station/3212>

Above 0.58 the river is good to go!!

**Dartcam at River Dart Country Park:**

<http://riverdart.co.uk/kayakers/dartcam> ▶



PHOTOGRAPH © MARK ALLEN





## Access

Access to The River Dart used to be done in seasons but now it is common to see paddlers on all sections of The River Dart when the river level is about 0.58 on the river level gauge. This is better than the previous season arrangement. The river gets very low so people used to scrape on down because it was in season – Now we see a lot less off this.

Dartmoor National Park Authority welcomes canoeists to Dartmoor who undertake their recreational activity in a responsible manner and continues to actively work with British Canoeing, riparian owners and fishing associations to facilitate access arrangements.  
see - [www.dartmoor.gov.uk/enjoy-dartmoor/outdoor-activities/canoeing](http://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/enjoy-dartmoor/outdoor-activities/canoeing)

*White Water kayaking is truly exceptional, give it a go!*

