

# SOUTH EAST 01 HAMPSHIRE EASTLEIGH



7.5 miles/12km



4.5 hours



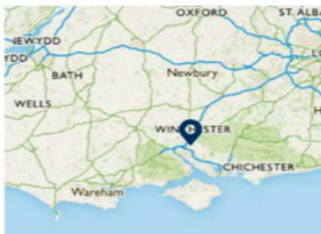
Moderate



96m



Compton Lock on the Itchen Navigation is a popular wild swimming and paddling spot for families



**Walked by  
Adrienne Wyper**

**O**pened in 1710, the Itchen Navigation is a straightening and controlling of the River Itchen, so it doesn't resemble a conventional canal. The river winds along nearby, with many offshoots, and at times the two waterways run near each other and even reunite.

Photo: Alamy

Despite its industrial heritage, when horsedrawn barges transported coal, corn, iron and timber from Southampton to Winchester, the Navigation is still a rare chalk stream habitat. It teems with life: dragonflies, damselflies, grey wagtails, otters, water voles, salmon and trout. In his youth, Chris Packham lived nearby and described it as "where I really cut my teeth as a naturalist".

This well-waymarked walk heads upstream from Eastleigh to Winchester.

You can swim, but the current is quite strong. Cross a couple of footbridges and pass twice under the London-Southampton railway line, which caused the Navigation's demise.

## 2 4.3 MILES

After 4.3 miles, the tree-shaded towpath delivers you to Shawford. To your left is the Bridge Inn, and Shawford station for Eastleigh trains. Pass behind pretty cottages to rejoin the towpath.

## 1 START

Start at Bishopstoke Road car park. Walk north past Stoke Lock with its fish ladder. Steps lead into the reed-edged water here.

## 3 4.7 MILES

At Compton Lock, the waterway widens into a tempting pool, another popular swim spot. To the right is Twyford Meads.

