



CANAL RACE

GUCR 145

Birmingham - London

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1 WELCOME TO THE GUCR 145

Welcome to the GUCR 145 - where the miles roll gently on and the canal becomes your constant companion.

This is a journey best taken one steady step at a time, with towpaths stretching ahead and the quiet rhythm of the water keeping you company.

Whether you're chasing a goal or simply drifting along to see where the day (and night) takes you, you're now part of a wonderfully quirky, slightly muddy, and thoroughly unforgettable adventure.



2 RACE DETAILS

THE COURSE:

A linear, 145-mile adventure. The route map can be found [HERE](#).

ELEVATION GAIN:

The course has approximately 3,159 feet of ascent.

WHEN:

Saturday May 23rd, 2026 at 06:00

START LOCATION:

Gas Street Basin, Birmingham, UK

FINISH LOCATION:

Little Venice, London, UK

All participants must download a digital GPX copy of the route (when the final version is emailed out to participants) onto the mobile device they will be using on the day. If you do wander off track then it will help you get back on route.

Whilst you do follow the canal, just keep an eye out for bridge crossings and always double check if unsure.

You can take a look at the route [HERE](#). Please note we will be adding in any diversions closer to the event date, once the Canal & River Trust have confirmed any ongoing work that may effect the course.

3 COURSE DESCRIPTION

The GUCR 145 meanders like a patient old narrowboat all the way from Gas Street Basin in Birmingham to the charming waters of Little Venice. It's a point-to-point romp along one of Britain's most storied waterways, steady, linear, and full of gentle surprises.

Leaving the bustle of Birmingham behind, you'll soon fall into the comforting rhythm of the towpath. The canal becomes your companion: quiet, loyal, and occasionally muddy. You'll greet famous landmarks like the legendary "Stairway to Heaven" at Hatton Locks, wave at the impressive Braunston Tunnel, and maybe even tip your hat to the crossroads at Braunston Junction.

There's something hypnotic about the canal's slow insistence, its long, flat pounds, quiet villages, and occasional splash of wildlife keeping you company. You'll float past the engineering marvel of Blisworth Tunnel, enjoy the gentle urban nudge through Milton Keynes, and finally arrive at the capital's canalside oasis. Little Venice in London feels like a serene finish to a long, winding adventure: satisfying, well-earned, and thoroughly charming.

Towpath conditions vary, sometimes smooth, sometimes sticky with mud, but elevation is gentle, almost polite, nudging rather than confronting. Navigation is simple: keep the water on your right (or left, if you fancy a change). The challenge lies not in hills, but in the rhythm, settling into the flow, embracing the quirkiness of the canal, and letting it guide you mile by mile toward the final, very well-deserved sense of accomplishment.



4 REGISTRATION

When you arrive for the GUCR 145, the first order of business is a friendly stop at registration. Here you'll pick up your race number, if you're using one, your bag-drop label and new for 2026, your tracker (on the Saturday morning only).

Your kit will get a quick once-over, and you'll also complete the 'Important participant information' on the back of your race number, think of it as giving your canal companion a little hello before you set off. This all needs to be done before you start your towpath adventure.

A cheerful race briefing will take place at 05:45 on race da and everyone must be registered and present to hear the essential tales, tips, and nudges to help you float smoothly from Birmingham to London.

You have two chances to check in, collect your essentials:

EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION

Location: Gas Street Basin, Birmingham, UK

Date: 22nd May 2026

Time: 18:00 to 20:00

ON THE DAY REGISTRATION

Location: Gas Street Basin, Birmingham, UK

Date: 23rd May 2026

Time: 05:00 to 05:30

If you're sending a bag on its own little adventure, simply tuck your belongings inside, fasten the provided label, and leave it with us at the start. From there, it'll set off on its own steady journey to Checkpoints 2, 4, 6 and 8 and then on to the finish - quietly making its way along while you take the scenic route on foot.

By the time you arrive, it'll be waiting patiently, like a well-travelled companion ready to welcome you back.

We do recommend wrapping your clothes and essentials in waterproof layers inside your bag, just in case the canal weather decides to add a splash of personality. A little drizzle is all part of the charm out here - but dry socks at the finish are a joy best not underestimated.



5 KIT LIST

Along the GUCR 145, your kit is more than just gear - it's your trusty companion on the towpath. Everything we ask you to carry should stay with you at all times. Think of it as keeping your canal essentials within reach, ready for whatever the waterway - or the weather - might throw your way.

Here's what every runner should have on them:

- **Digital Route maps** – especially important for unsupported runners, so you always know where you are if you need a lift off the canal.
- **Foil 'space' blanket** – your portable patch of warmth, perfect for those quiet, misty stretches by the water.
- **Mobile phone** – charged, switched on, and ready to reach out if needed.
- **Torch or headlamp** – with spare batteries, plus reflective clothing for night-time road sections. Let your light be a friendly glow along the towpath.
- **Personal cup** – for sipping hot or cold drinks at aid stations, keeping your hands free for the occasional canal-side wave.

We will peek at your kit during registration and at checkpoints, just to make sure you've packed wisely for the journey ahead.

Please also remember, you'll need to carry at least **1 litre of fluid** and some extra food to tide you over between checkpoints. Hydration and nutrition are your best friends on this long, meandering adventure - think of them as the towpath's way of keeping you afloat.

6 DROP BAGS

Participants are allowed one drop bag for the event. There is a 15kg maximum weight limit. Drop bags will be weighed at registration and may be refused if overweight.

Please note - drop bags are available at the following checkpoints:

- **Checkpoint 2**
- **Checkpoint 4**
- **Checkpoint 6**
- **Checkpoint 8**

They will be transported between checkpoints by the Canlarace team and should contain everything required during the event. It must be a waterproof drop bag.





**WHAT DID ONE CANAL SAY TO THE
OTHER DURING A DISAGREEMENT?
WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE!**

7 SAFETY

Underfoot, the GUCR 145 is classic towpath through and through - settling quickly into long stretches of tarmac, hard-packed gravel and dirt that carry you all the way to London. It's steady, consistent, and quietly relentless in that familiar canal sort of way.

Road shoes will do the job just nicely, offering comfort and a bit of protection from those famously "flat as a pancake" miles. That said, if the weather has been feeling a little mischievous in the lead-up, you may find the odd muddy patch waiting to greet you - so do keep a watchful eye on the forecast and pack accordingly.

Mobile reception comes and goes in places, like a shy canal-side visitor. If you do find yourself needing a signal, you may need to wander back to your last spot of connection.

There will be a roaming support vehicle making its way along the route, ready to assist if needed, with Race HQ on hand to coordinate any help. First aid will be available throughout, so you're in safe and steady hands as you make your way along the water.

As for kit, you'll already know the essentials: suitable footwear, a means to carry at least 1 litre of water, your mobile phone, head torch, foil blanket, reusable cup, and digital copy of the route. A comfortable pack to carry it all is key - and, of course, don't forget to bring along a healthy sense of adventure. The canal rather likes that sort of thing.



These beautifully kept towpaths make for wonderfully runnable trails, but like any good canal journey, they come with their own little quirks and considerations along the way.

First and foremost, the towpath is a shared space. Pedestrians and fishermen always have priority, so a courteous approach (and the occasional friendly “hello”) goes a long way.

Take extra care when passing others, whether they’re out for a stroll or sharing in the event, and be mindful of your surroundings. Follow all advisory signs and notices, as they’re there to keep everyone moving safely and smoothly along the water’s edge.

In narrower stretches, you may need to travel in single file. When overtaking, do so only where it’s safe and with at least a metre of space. Anything less thoughtful may see your day ending earlier than planned, and not in the way you’d hoped.

The canal itself is a calm companion, but it’s best admired from a respectful distance, so do keep safely away from the edge wherever possible.

If you do happen to take an unexpected dip, keep calm, make your way to the side, and use your survival bag to keep warm. Contact Race HQ as soon as you can for assistance. If your phone has decided it’s had enough of the water, kindly enlist the help of a passer-by and ask them to call the number on the reverse of your race bib.

Bridges, locks, and tunnels add plenty of character to the route, but they do require a little extra care. Watch for low headroom underbridges, take care around lock gates and edges, and be mindful of uneven or unprotected drops. A steady approach and a watchful eye will see you through nicely.

As ever on the canal, a little patience and awareness go a long way, helping everyone enjoy a safe and smooth journey from start to finish.

At some of the lower bridges, you may find a slightly loftier option, if so, we recommend taking the “high road” and following the path around rather than ducking underneath. It’s often the simpler (and slightly more dignified) choice.

If you do pass through darker tunnels, be sure to switch on your torch or headlamp to light the way. A little glow makes all the difference in those shadowy stretches.

And a gentle reminder, one we’ll no doubt repeat with a smile at the race briefing, the towpath is for everyone. Do your best to keep it clear, move considerately, and share the space with good spirit. A bit of courtesy keeps the whole canal flowing nicely for all.



8 CHECKPOINTS

There are 9 checkpoints along the route. Please note we have hyperlinked the checkpoint locations and cut off times are listed for each checkpoint;

Start: [Gas Street, Birmingham](#) – Mile 0

06:00 Sat Start

Checkpoint 1: [Catherine De Barnes](#) – Mile 10.7

09:00 Sat Cut off

Checkpoint 2: [Hatton Locks](#) – Mile 22.4

Drop Bags & Hot Food - 12:00 Sat Cut off

Checkpoint 3: [Birdingbury Bridge, Calias Lane](#) – Mile 36

15:45 Sat Cut off

Checkpoint 4: [Heart of England, Weedon](#) – Mile 53

Drop Bags & Hot Food - 20:15 Sat Cut off

Checkpoint 5: [Cosgrove Village Hall](#) – Mile 71.4

02:00 Sun Cut off

Checkpoint 6: [Bridge 99, Water Eaton](#) – Mile 84.5

Drop Bags & Hot Food - 07:00 Sun Cut off

Checkpoint 7: [Tring Reservoirs, Startop's End Car Park](#) – Mile 99

12:00 Sun Cut off

Checkpoint 8: [Springwell Lock, Rickmansworth](#) – Mile 120.3

Drop Bags & Hot Food - 19:00 Sun Cut off

Checkpoint 9: [Hambrough Tavern, Southall](#) – Mile 133

23:00 Sun Cut off

Finish : [Little Venice, London](#) – Mile 145.4

03:00 Mon Cut off



There will be a chance to rest, gain nutrition and rehydrate - along with some big smiles and encouraging words!

If you have any dietary requirements that didn't make it onto your entry form, do let us know as soon as you can by editing your entry on SiEntries - our aim is to keep you well fuelled and happily moving along the towpath.

In keeping with our love for the waterways and the world around them, this is a cupless event. There won't be any disposable cups at checkpoints, so please bring your own trusty vessel for refilling along the way.

Our wonderful crew will be waiting at each checkpoint, keeping a careful eye to make sure every runner is accounted for. As you pass through, do give them a little sign - a wave, a nod, or even a cheerful thumbs up - just so they know you're safely on your way.

The team cares deeply about these beautiful canal paths we get to enjoy, and we do our very best to leave them just as we found them. A little thoughtfulness goes a long way, helping us all tread lightly and keep the towpath as charming as ever for those who follow.

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT AT CHECKPOINTS?

A bottomless pit of food and drink to fill your stomachs and top up your energy levels for the next section of the course.

Drink items will include: H2O, Coca Cola, Lemonade, Squash, Tea, Coffee, Hot Chocolate. Remember to bring your own reusable cup (we are a cupless organisation).

Food items will include: Fresh fruit, chocolate, nuts, snack bars, crisps, cake (everyone loves cake).

HOT food items will include: soup, hot dogs, scrambled egg, bacon, cheese sandwiches, bacon sarnies, mild bean chilli (won't blow your head off), loaded nachos with mild bean chilli and cheese and more!

Vegan and gluten free equivalents of the above will be available (if you haven't already let us know about any dietary requirements, please edit your entry on SiEntries asap so that we can cater for you).

Shelter: all checkpoints will have cover in the form of a gazebo / building to provide adequate shelter for runners to change, eat and gear themselves up for the next section.

Drop bags: these will be available at Checkpoints 2, 4, 6 and 8.

Crew: each checkpoint will be manned by Canalrace crew and volunteers. They will be there to help you and perhaps offer up a motivational speech if you need it.

9 WHEN NATURE CALLS

There's something quite reassuring about knowing where your next toilet stop might be - true peace of mind on a long canal wander. The obvious place to look is the wonderful Canal & River Trust's [*interactive map*](#) which provides information about areas along the Grand Union, including nearby facilities and toilets (some of which are open to the public and some of which need a key to open them).

In addition, if the need arises, we've also found [*Toilet Map UK*](#) to be a wonderfully handy companion for tracking down the nearest facilities.

Do keep in mind that some toilets sit just a little off the towpath, so you may need to use Google or What3Words to guide you in. A short detour is sometimes all part of the adventure.

You'll also find period products available at all checkpoints and at the finish. They're there for you whenever needed - just ask one of our friendly volunteers, who will also be more than happy to point you in the direction of the nearest facilities.

A little preparation (and knowing where to go!) can make all the difference on a journey like this.



**WHY DID THE CANAL START A BAND?
BECAUSE IT HAD THE BEST FLOW!**

10 RACE RULES

1. Along the GUCR 145, the journey is yours to complete on foot, step by steady step, sticking as closely as possible to the well-trodden towpath as it winds its way to the finish.
2. If your day on the canal comes to an early close, do let Race HQ know as soon as you can (even if you've already mentioned it at a checkpoint). The same goes if you find yourself drifting behind the cut-off times, keeping us informed helps us keep everything running smoothly.
3. Each checkpoint has its own closing time, marked clearly in this manual. When you arrive, you'll have up to 40 minutes to gather yourself before continuing on. Any longer pause, and your journey will be considered complete for the day. You're welcome to rest in a vehicle for warmth or a moment of comfort, but the vehicle must stay put. If it rolls along with you inside, your race gently comes to an end there and then.
4. Your race number should be worn proudly on the front at all times, think of it as your towpath calling card. Be sure to show it at every checkpoint so the team can log your progress. Don't forget to complete the medical details on the back before you set off, including an emergency contact.
5. If you're running with your own support crew, they'll need to be with you from the very start and remain part of your journey throughout.



6. A mobile phone is essential, switched on and ready at all times, along with the means to look after yourself should plans change unexpectedly. You'll also need to carry a whistle and a survival blanket, just in case the canal decides to test your resilience.
7. As night falls, a head torch or handheld light (with spare batteries) becomes your guiding glow, and reflective clothing is required for any road sections, helping you stay visible as the towpath quietens.
8. This is a cupless event, so keep your own cup handy for refuelling stops.
9. Unsupported runners may bring one clearly labelled kit bag (or two for those travelling from overseas), packed thoughtfully and kept within a 15kg limit. A well-packed bag is a happy bag.
10. If you're joined by a buddy runner (from mile 53 onwards – new for 2026), they must stay beside or just behind you, never leading the way. Think of them as quiet company rather than a guide. Only one buddy is allowed at a time, joining from Cosgrove, and they must carry only their own essentials. No pacing, no muling, just shared miles and good company.
11. Any sharp items must be safely secured within your kit bag to avoid any unwanted surprises.
12. Above all, every participant, crew member, and buddy shares responsibility for their own actions along the route, looking out for themselves and others as the canal gently carries everyone forward.
13. And if your plans change and you're unable to take part, please do let the organiser know ahead of race day. It helps keep everything ticking along as smoothly as a calm stretch of water.



11

LAST BUT NOT LEAST

At Canalrace, we're all about creating an experience that stays with you long after the final mile has drifted by. In true ultra spirit, there's a quiet camaraderie on the towpath - so do look out for one another, share a kind word when you can, and keep that lovely sense of togetherness flowing.

As always, please be mindful of other towpath users. A little courtesy and patience help keep everything moving smoothly for everyone enjoying the canal.

Our events simply wouldn't happen without our wonderful volunteers, who give their time and energy to keep things ticking along so beautifully. They're there to support you every step of the way, and they truly appreciate a smile, a thank you, or a few kind words as you pass through - even when the miles are starting to bite.

And finally, thank you for being part of the GUCR 145. We wish you a truly memorable journey - steady steps, kind moments, and a long, winding adventure you won't soon forget.



CANALRACE

GUCR 145

Birmingham - London