



Find out about the third longest river in England, the River Trent.



The River Trent meandering through the Lincolnshire countryside.
Can you spot the Fossdyke Canal joining the river at the top of the picture?

At 274 km (170 miles) long, the River Trent is the third longest river in England. The Trent's source is at Biddulph Moor in North Staffordshire and its mouth is where it joins the Humber Estuary.

The River Trent flows through places such as Stoke-on-Trent, Burton-on-Trent, Shardlow – where it becomes navigable, Nottingham, Newark and Gainsborough.

From the Humber Estuary to Cromwell Lock (north of Newark-on-Trent), the River Trent is tidal, which means the water level rises and falls twice a day like the sea.

Some of the main tributaries that feed into this river are the Rivers Derwent, Dove, Soar and Idle.



The castle at Newark-on-Trent

In Britain many settlements have grown around rivers. Here are some of the reasons for this:

1. Rivers provided a source of water for people to drink.
2. Rivers were a main form of communication and transport when roads were poor and before railways were invented.
3. Castles were often built by rivers for defensive reasons e.g at Newark-on-Trent. The inside of a bend on a river offered the best defensive position, particularly before bridges were built. People would settle around castles as they offered protection from enemies.

It is believed that the River Trent has had at least 2 different names in the past. Under the Romans it was known as the 'Tristantona', and in the 8th century it was called the 'Treonte'.

The River Trent has been one of England's main trading rivers as far back as the Bronze age. Through the ages the Trent has been used to transport cargoes such as coal, pottery and corn. The Romans recognised the River Trent's importance as a trading route and built the [Fossdyke Canal](#) to link it with the River Witham at Lincoln, one of its main settlements. Later the Vikings used the Trent as a means to invade England.

River floods happen when the river catchment receives more water than usual e.g. because of heavy rainfall or melting snow. This causes the water level of the river to rise and this can lead to flooding. Often floods develop over a few days so that people are warned about them before they happen. However 'flash floods' occur with little or no warning at all, when lots of heavy rain falls over a short period of time.

There are records of flooding on the River Trent going back more than 650 years. In fact the name 'Trent' comes from the Celtic word for 'trespasser', (meaning someone who goes on to another person's land without permission), because it floods nearby land so often.

When a river floods it can cause a lot of damage to the land and nearby homes. Buildings and food crops can also be destroyed.

River flooding can bring rich fertile soil along the river banks which is ideal for farming once the waters have drained away again.





Here you can see that the River Trent has flooded the fields on either side of this main road. Railway lines were also flooded and many schools had to be closed.

In November 2000 very heavy rain across Nottinghamshire led to serious flooding of the River Trent. On 9th November many people had to spend the night sleeping on mattresses in leisure centres around the county. A number of roads were closed. Gas and electricity supplies to homes were cut off. The army was called in to help evacuate people from their houses or deliver sandbags to others.

In the village of Bartin in Fabis, south of Nottingham, the emergency services sent boats to rescue families stranded in their homes.

Many precautions have been taken to try to prevent the River Trent from flooding such as:

1. making the river banks, or dykes, higher.
2. dredging the river bed to make the river channel deeper.
3. building extra channels and ditches alongside the river to take any excess water. This water is held back by sluice gates.



Mute swans are common water birds seen along the River Trent.

Today the River Trent is used in many different ways. West Burton power station uses an average of 200 million litres a day from the Trent. One of the main uses of the river water is to cool the turbines that generate electricity. Most of the water is then returned to the river.

Severn Trent Water operates the Stoke Bardolph treatment plant, which treats the sewage and waste water from people living in Nottingham. Once the water has been treated and cleaned it is pumped back into the river.

The River Trent continues to be used for carrying commercial loads such as sand and gravel. It is also used for transporting large heavy freight on special barges. In May 2004 a 2210 tonne barge carried a 270 tonne transformer from the Lincolnshire coast to Cottam power station in Nottinghamshire. Using the road system would have caused major traffic jams.

People also use the River Trent for leisure activities such as boating, angling, canoeing or simply walking along the banks where they can enjoy the wildlife.