

Ness Marathon 2019

Course Description – Long Course

The race shall commence with a mass start by above Muirtown Locks on the Caledonian Canal. As per canal rules you should stay to the RIGHT side of the canal. Be careful on blind corners on the canal in case of oncoming boats.

At the A82 swing bridge duck your head, there is room to get underneath but not much. Boat and canal traffic shall be running as normal and it will be the racers responsibility to avoid them. If you encounter a cruise boat or other large craft turning and manoeuvring across the canal you must stop and allow them to finish or portage around them. This situation is not expected as the race start time has been adjusted to avoid clashing with the large Jacobite cruise boat – but other motorised craft may be encountered and they have right of way. Rowing sculls may be encountered (from Inverness Rowing Club). And expect them to be following canal rules by rowing on the right side of the canal.

As the race reaches Dochgarroch you will see the Canal Locks before you. Do not paddle into the Lock even if the gate is open! These can be portaged on either the grassy bank on the left side of the canal, or via the Great Glen Way low pontoons on the right immediately before and after the locks. Other boats may be moored close to these pontoons so care is needed if using them-especially at the get in above the locks. If any boats are waiting to access the locks, or leaving the locks when racers arrive, then give these boats plenty clearance. If this is the case then the advice is to exit the canal on the grassy bank on the left of the canal in plenty time and re enter the canal down the grassy bank above the locks, far enough up the canal to be clear of the boats.

Back on the canal carry on up the canal onto loch Dochfour, stay out of the boat lane and keep a wary eye for moving yachts as we must keep out of their way. Continue up past the river and turn round on the large green channel marker buoy at the start of the Loch Ness. A race marshal should be stationed there. Return to the weir. Stay clear of the dangerous sluice gates which are on the right. The main chute on the weir is not recommended at most water levels due to the likelihood of damage to craft. But if a paddler chooses to paddle the weir then that is their decision-but be warned-expect boat damage. Portage is advised. Portage across the weir at the place indicated by the marshal. The weir has grass and is rocky so take care underfoot and wear suitable footwear.

Continue down the river.

Course Description – Short Course and second half of the long course.

The Short race will commence with a mass start from the eddy below the Dochgarroch Weir and proceed down river.

There are several grade 1-2 rapids. Anyone with basic river skills would be expected to be able to find the route from the water.

1. At the first Island 700 meters take the right hand channel. Beware of trees on the right bank. Enter this channel angling left in order to be able to paddle away from the trees and avoid being swept into them by the current.

2. On the second Island a further 1.2km downstream either channel may be taken, the faster water and best route on the right.

3. A flat section follows and then after the left hand bend a central weir wall (Fast eddie rapid) is visible ahead, take the wide left hand channel.

4. Immediately after this section another central wall appears, stay on the left channel and continue straight on as the river bends around a prominent outcrop called the dragons tail.

5. Follow down another 1km and come to the Ness House Weir recognized by the broken rubble on the left hand of the river, take this on the right hand half of the river and follow straight through the standing waves.

6. After this you come to a very flat slow section for about 1.5km,

7. Torvean weir with visible concrete sluice gates on the right. Stay clear of these dangerous sluice gates.

The recommended route is to stay river left, following the weir down (the weir runs diagonally down the river and will be on your right). Run the largest chute which is approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way along the weir. The run out from this chute can be seen. This chute is normally deep enough for all types of craft to have a clear run through.

If you wish to portage the weir then exit the river on the right bank above the concrete wall on the right bank and make your way down the river bank. It is necessary to cross through a shallow side channel, before getting back into the main river on a shingle beach below the weir. Paddlers are not to attempt running any of the sluice gates on the weir. Depending on water level it may be possible to portage down the face of the weir which is rocky and slippery.

The river continues under the new road bridge, go round a left bend and the finish is under the white footbridge over the river channel between the left bank and island. Get out river left. There is car parking available here.

SAFETY ADVICE –

You must assess your own skill and ability level to paddle this canal and grade two river section safely in the craft of your choice, if in doubt please read the SCA Guide to Scottish rivers for advice or the UK rivers online guidebook.

All paddlers , long and short courses, are required to wear CE approved buoyancy aid, Paddlers in closed cockpit kayaks are required to wear a paddle-sport suitable helmet and footwear will be required for the portages.