



The Forth rail bridge | Doug Cooper

# Firth of Forth



**No. 48 | Grade A | 20km | 5 Hours | OS Sheet 65 & 66 | Tidal Port Leith**

- Start** △ South Queensferry (136 784)
- Finish** ○ South Queensferry (136 784)
- HW/LW** HW/LW at Cramond Island is the same as Leith.
- Tidal times** Between the Forth Bridges: The E going stream starts 30 minutes after HW Leith. The W going stream starts 5 hours 30 minutes before HW Leith.  
Beyond Oxcars: The W going stream starts 5 hours 55 mins before HW Leith. The E going stream starts at HW Leith.
- Tidal rates** There are three areas on this trip where the tidal streams run at their fastest: Under the Forth bridges the average spring rate can reach 4.5 knots. In Mortimer's Deep the average spring rate can reach 2.5 knots. Between Oxcars and Inchcolm the average spring rate can reach 3 knots.
- Coastguard** Forth, tel:01333 450666, VHF Weather 1005 UT

**INTRODUCTION** Launching and looking up to the Forth Rail Bridge provides an awe-inspiring view of this historical monument. This journey proves a unique paddling experience with Edinburgh City and its Castle as the backdrop.

**DESCRIPTION** The launch site under the Forth Rail Bridge is shared with the Inchcolm Ferry, which is well signposted from the main roads. With good parking and the Hawes Inn that can provide welcome refreshment at the end of the journey. On leaving the launch site, head out under the rail bridge to the first island, Inch Garvie. Look out for workers on the bridge and avoid passing beneath them. Arriving at Inch Garvie the remains of the fortified defences can be seen. Over the years these have been used as a state prison as well as a quarantine hospital for those with infectious diseases. Leaving the island head past the tanker berth and on towards Inchcolm. This area is used by heavy shipping, so keep an eye out and keep outside the main buoyage. At Inchcolm the sandy bays on the north side of the island give the most sheltered landing, as well as great views of St Colm's Abbey found on the island. It is well worth spending the time to explore Inchcolm that is justifiably known as the 'Iona of the East'. Moving onward, look left and right before crossing the main shipping lane past Oxcars light and on to Inchmickery. The paddle up the Forth

back to the starting point will soon pass. All that is left are the refreshments waiting for you in the Hawes Inn; watch out for the whisky Sir Benjamin Baker warned about!

**TIDE & WEATHER** The tidal streams in this area are very strong, and noticeable even on a small neap tide. Any wind against the tide can produce rough water, a surprise considering its relatively sheltered location. The most efficient way (and only way on spring tides), is to go out to Inchcolm on the E going stream, which starts about 30 minutes after HW Leith. Then return from Inchmickery on the W going stream, which starts about 5 hours 55 minutes before HW Leith. This is done by leaving South Queensferry at about 4 hours 30 minutes after HW Leith.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION** An alternative start and finish from North Queensferry is also possible, starting at (122 803). This will save crossing the Forth Road Toll Bridge if you are coming from the north. For more about Inchcolm see [www.historic-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk)



Excerpt abridged and adapted from *Scottish Sea Kayaking* by Doug Cooper & George Reid ISBN 0954706129, published by Pesda Press, Caernarfon. For details of this and other books, as well as downloads of further mini-guides and route cards in this series, visit: [WWW.PESDAPRESS.COM](http://WWW.PESDAPRESS.COM)

Trip Name & Number	
Page Number	VHF Weather
Date	Weather Forecast
Coastguard Contact	

TIDAL INFORMATION

Tidal Port		Mean Sp Range			Local Port		
		Mean Np Range					
Tidal Port Tide Times (UT)	Height in Metres	Tidal Range in Metres	HW/LW	+1 Hr for BST?	Local Port HW/LW Time Difference	Local Port HW/LW	Sp or Np Tides

TIDAL STREAM TIMES

Location	Direction of Tidal Stream	Tidal Stream Time Diff.	Tidal Port HW (BST?)	Tidal Stream Start Time	Tidal Rate	Est. Max Speed
Location	Direction of Tidal Stream	Tidal Stream Time Diff.	Tidal Port HW (BST?)	Tidal Stream Start Time	Tidal Rate	Est. Max Speed
Location	Direction of Tidal Stream	Tidal Stream Time Diff.	Tidal Port HW (BST?)	Tidal Stream Start Time	Tidal Rate	Est. Max Speed

ROUTE PLAN

Location	Notes	ETA	ETD
Start			
1st			
2nd			
3rd			
4th			
5th			
Finish			