

# UK Canal Boating

Escape with a canal boating holiday!

## Banbury and return from Market Harborough

Cruise this route from : Market Harborough

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Cruising Days : 11.00 to 0.00

Cruising Time : 62.50

Total Distance : 120.00

Number of Locks : 88

Number of Tunnels : 6

Number of Aqueducts : 0

Very rural cruise starting off in the attractive town of Market Harborough and is a very rural tranquil cruise through the countryside to Banbury.

The marina is located at the northern end of Market Harborough - a quaint, traditional English market town that dates from 1203. You can enjoy delicious food and fine ales in the town's historic coaching inns or just potter around the market and the fine selection of family owned shops. From Union Wharf it's just two hours cruising to the 'Leicester Line' of the Grand Union Canal.

A nursery rhyme, 'Ride a Cock Horse', has made Banbury one of the best-known towns in England. It has been suggested that the 'Fine Lady' of the nursery rhyme may have been Lady Godiva or Elizabeth I. More likely it was a local girl who rode in a May Day procession. The original cross was pulled down at the end of the 16th century. The present cross was erected in 1859 to celebrate the wedding of the then Princess Royal to Prince Frederick of Prussia.

Banbury Cakes, a special fruit and pastry cake, are still produced. At one time they were being sent as far afield as Australia, India and America.

Banbury has a massive indoor shopping centre called Castle Quay where almost 250000 people visit every week. All the majors stores are here, also restaurants and cafes.

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# Cruising Notes

The marina is located at the northern end of Market Harborough - a quaint, traditional English market town that dates from 1203. You can enjoy delicious food and fine ales in the town's historic coaching inns or just potter around the market and the fine selection of family owned shops. From Union Wharf it's just two hours cruising to the 'Leicester Line' of the Grand Union Canal.

Market Harborough – A market town mid way between Leicester and Northampton. Visit Welland Park, the town's museum and the old grammar school, a 17th school built on stilts. Visit nearby Rockingham Castle built by William the Conqueror. If you need to entertain the children then visit Wicksteed Park, one of the biggest and best playgrounds in Europe.

The town has many nice pubs, and shops. there is an antique and collectors market every Sunday in the market hall.

Eat at the Italian Restaurant based at Union Wharf Marina. Open 12-14.15 & 18.00 til late.

The Old Union Canal Society gives guided walks along the canal during summer months and follow the historic town trail.

You are welcome to stay moored up in the Marina and use the car or public transport to visit the many local attractions.

The Grand Union canal boasts an extraordinary variety of wildlife, from feeding herons, and hunting owls, to water voles. A number of diverse species thrive in this tranquil and often unique environment.

## Day 1

The base at Union Wharf Marina is at the end of the Market Harborough Arm, & you need to cruise for about 2 hours (5 ½ miles) to get back on the the main Grand Union Canal.

It is a lovely rural cruise to Foxton which is at the base of the lovely Foxton flight of locks.

Foxton is the site of a steam powered Inclined Plane, which replaced ten locks and lifted narrow boats 75 feet. It was opened in 1900 but suffered from mechanical and structural problems. The locks were reopened in 1908 and now work beautifully. Whilst here visit the Foxton Museum and gift shop. The well stocked canalside shop offers you groceries, hardware as well as the traditional "roses and Castles" canalware, made and hand-painted on site.

Stop for a cream tea in the canal side cafe or a well deserved pint in the Foxton Locks Inn. Spend a couple of hours watching the colourful narrow boats passing through the staircase locks. British Waterways organise events based on Foxton Locks.

Cruising time from Market Harborough to here- 2 hours

## Day 2

On the 2nd morning walk along the tow path until you find the friendly British waterways lock-keepers by the Locks. They will take a note of your boat name & tell you roughly how long the wait will be to go through the

locks, but there is plenty to do whilst you wait.

The Canal weaves its way through an remote but attractive stretch. There are no villages on the canal here, Husband Bosworth being hidden by the tunnel.

Look out over the vale of Welland and to the nearby Laughton Hills. Slow down, cruise on and watch mile after mile beautiful and unspoilt countryside unfold .

Enjoy an easy cruise as the canal meanders through unspoilt surroundings passing through the Husband Bosworth Tunnel. The Tunnel is 1166 yards long and was opened in 1813. Stop and moor for a while, stroll into Husband Bosworth for a pub, newsagents and general store. The Bell Inn here serves Real Ale & food daily.

North Kilworth is off to your right, with a couple of pubs- The White Lion & the Swan Inn Kilworth Wharf Marina – overnight mooring maps & gifts  
The Battle of Naesy 1645 was fought 2 miles east of Welford. Here Fairfax's New Model Army routed the Royalists under King Charles I, ensuring the end of the Civil War.

Gently continue your journey passing the Hemplow Hills to your left, and open fields of grazing sheep.

2 Miles east of Bridge 31 is Stanford Hall, a William & Mary brick mansion built in the late 17th Century. On display also here is a replica on an experimental flying machine built in 1898. Teas, shop & craft centre. Open pm Easter -Sept.

The next stretch of the canal wanders southwards in a series of loops through wonderful rural scenery with not much signs of habitation.

Yelvertoft is a delightful village to stop for a while and there are moorings between bridges 19 and 20. The local is the Knightly Arms which serves real ales & home cooked food. You can stock up on supplies here as there is a stores, off licence & butcher.

Before you pass through the Crick Tunnel, you can moor up at bridge 12 & visit Edwards of Crick, a restaurant & coffee house offering a wide ranging menu. Stroll into the village of Crick, home of one of Britain's largest annual boat show held each year in May and have a pint and a meal at one of the local pubs . There is an intriguing second hand shop here open Wed - Fri & Sat that is worth a visit (14.00-18.00)

it is a good place to moor up for the night as it is 8 hours cruising to here.

Day 3

Crick Tunnel is 1528 yards long, & has no tow path so if you wish to walk it you will have to go over the top.

Meet the lock-keepers at the Watford Locks and they will cheerfully help you on your way through their complex set of locks. Watford Locks raise the canal to it summit level of 412 feet. Four of these locks form a staircase, with a 'one up one down procedure.

The new Inn is Canalside at Buckby Top lock & has moorings.

The small village of Watford is not to be confused with the large town of Watford in Hertfordshire. Moor up at

Bridge number 6 for a true taste of the Orient at the Thai Garden, Restaurant in Station Road.

Once through the Watford Locks continue towards the Norton Junction where we meet the Oxford Canal. (You soon will find that the M1 motorway swings away from you, but if you want 24 hr provisions you can moor up by Bridge 6 which is right beside The Watford Gap motorway services.)

At Norton Junction you can then go down the Grand Union towards London, or we recommend that you head west towards Braunston.

From Norton Junction to Braunston the canal runs westward through hills and wooded country, then into a wooded cutting which leads to Braunston Tunnel.

Off to the north on your right you will pass the small village of Welton on a hill. At Bridge 6  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile from the Canal you can find a 400 yr old pub – The White Horse Inn.

Braunston Tunnel was opened in 1796 & is 2042 yards long.

Long rows of moored craft flank the canal, but there is usually plenty of places to moor, as it is worth strolling into Braunston as there are a fine selection of old buildings here. The British Waterways office in the Stop House, was originally the Toll office between the Oxford and the Grand Union canal.

At Braunston Turn turn left at the junction, the canal now passes open countryside with a backdrop of hills, there are no locks or villages and you continue on until you reach Napton Junction. You will be travelling north at this junction, but if you want a nice pub to stop at for the night, it is worth continuing left down the Oxford canal to bridge 111, as the haunted pub The Bridge at Napton is by the Bridge. Best access to the hilltop village is by Bridge 110, the village is scattered all over the hill, but the pubs and shops are at the bottom.

Day 4

It is 7 hours cruising to here

The Oxford canal continues a very twisting path through countryside with occasional villages dotted around.

After leaving Napton, head south along the Canal, there is a useful shop by bridge 113.

The village of Priors Hardwick is east of Bridge 124 by footpath, there is a smart village restaurant called the Butchers Arms here. Wormleighton is about a mile east of Bridge 135, but has no pubs, and Fenny Compton is 1 mile west of bridge 136, or bridge 137 by footpath. There are 2 pubs in Fenny Compton, and a small shop.

It is 6 hours cruising to here

Day 5

The Bygones museum is found in the village of Claydon, just west of bridge 145, and is a fascinating museum of local relics which children love to handle. Outside there are tractors, a traction engine, and a steam roller and steam engines. There is a restaurant and gift shop on site too.

There are another 4 locks before you reach the quiet village of Cropedy, which bursts into life during the annual Folk Festival, now Europe's largest, which is held on the 2nd weekend in August. It originally started in 1979 when Fairport Convention held their farewell concert here

Cromwells forces came under attack at the battle of Cropedy in 1644, and the Royalist cavalry managed to defeat the Roundheads despite being outnumbered, and thus protected Oxford.

Banbury is soon reached after another 3 locks which should take just under 3 hours.

It is 6 hours cruising to here.

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Day 6

Day 7

Day 8

Day 9

Day 10

Day 11

It is 28.5 hours back to Market Harborough, so cruising for just over 5 hours a day should get you back to the marina. You must time your arrival to the flights of locks at Braunston/Watford & Foxton for when they are open.

## Useful Links

Description : Wicksteed Park

Website : <http://www.wicksteedpark.co.uk/>

Telephone : 01536 512475

Description : About Britain

Website : <http://www.aboutbritain.com/>

Telephone : n/a

Description : Bygones Museum

Website : [www.daytripfinder.co.uk/attractions/bygones-museum](http://www.daytripfinder.co.uk/attractions/bygones-museum)

Telephone : 01295 690258

Description : Fairport Convention

Website : <http://www.fairportconvention.com/>

Telephone : n/a

Description : Leicestershire Tourist Information

Website : [www.visitleicester.info](http://www.visitleicester.info)

Telephone : 0116 299 4444

Description : Rockingham Castle

Website : <http://www.rockinghamcastle.com/>

Telephone : 01536 770240

Description : Castle Quay Shopping Centre, Banbury

Website : <http://www.castlequay.co.uk>

Telephone : 01295 256296

The information above is provided in good faith to assist you with planning your canal boat holiday. Information accuracy cannot be guaranteed, however, if you do see something that needs updating, please don't hesitate to [contact us](#).

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