

UK Canal Boating

Escape with a canal boating holiday!

Bath and return from Aldermaston

Cruise this route from : Aldermaston

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Cruising Days : 14.00 to 15.00

Cruising Time : 82.00

Total Distance : 130.00

Number of Locks : 164

Number of Tunnels : 6

Number of Aqueducts : 4

This is a 2 week trip.

Aldermaston wharf is close to the railway station with good connections to Paddington in London, taking 55 minutes from London Paddington , or 13 minutes from Reading railway station.

At Aldermaston Wharf is the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust Visitor centre, with a picnic area, and serving light refreshments from Easter -Oct. There is also the Butt Inn pub at Aldermaston Wharf, serving real ales and excellent food for all the family.

The River Kennet can make a considerable impact on the navigation when in spate. In such conditions do not cruise east beyond Hungerford, or west beyond Reading unless experienced.

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Cruising Notes

Day 1

Turning out of the marina westwards, you will immediately encounter a lift bridge which is electrically operated by canalboaters, and which spans a busy road. Follow the instructions by the bridge. You will then have your first lock, once through here you will see a disused gravel pit, some a haven for wildlife since the 1960's.

The scenery is very rural until you reach Thatcham, when you get to Woolhampton be careful of the current below the lock which can cause problems.

Woolhampton village is 200 yards north of the canal, there is a pub canalside, or a couple in the village, it is an hours cruising from Aldermaston to here, and makes an ideal place to stop for your 1st night.

Day 2

Passing Woolhampton you pass through 3 locks in this rural landscape until you reach the rapidly expanding village of Thatcham, which is now almost a suburb of Newbury. There is a railway station close to the canal near bridge 42. There are various pubs and restaurants in Thatcham access is from bridge 42, and a Nature Discovery centre north of Widmead Lock with shop and cafe.

It is 3.25 hours from Aldermaston to here.

You soon pass Newbury racecourse on your left. See their website for details of race days. Concerts are also hosted here, THE WANTED were there in May and the lovely TOM JONES has a concert on 13th August 2011 which is also LADIES DAY for racing at Newbury.

The River cuts right through the town and above Newbury Lock is the delightful quiet West Mills area where rows of terraced houses face the navigation and there are extensive moorings. Beware of the current below Newbury lock. It is 6 hours from Aldermaston marina to here, or 5 hours from Woolhampton and an ideal place for your 2nd nights mooring.

Victoria Bridge 59 is handy for getting to Newbury to the north, or the racecourse to the south. Newbury developed in the Middle Ages as an important cloth town, and the town has managed to retain much of its period charm. The District Museum is one of the most interesting buildings in Newbury built in 1626 as a cloth weaving workshop. The town centre has many shops, pubs and restaurants to choose from. A short bus or taxi ride away is the Living rainforest, which gives you the opportunity to experience rainforest life under glass.

Day 3

The canal soon leaves Newbury behind, and once more enters the rural Berkshire landscape. To the south of the canal is Hamstead Park, a very fine park which borders the canal, there is an old watermill by the lock. Soon the canal reaches Kintbury which is just a small village to the south of the canal up on the hill. It is a quiet village with a station, and attractive buildings by the canal, including a watermill and a canalside pub. There are also 2 pubs in the village, and stores.

It is 8.75 cruising hours from Woolhampton to Kintbury.

Once leaving Kintbury the River and canal run side by side through pretty woods, and soon Hungerford is reached. The handsome Hungerford Town Bridge gives easy access to the centre of the town which is set out along a wide main street. There are many pubs and restaurants in the town.

It is 5.75 hours cruising from Newbury to Hungerford.

You can moor up at Hungerford, or continue on to Froxfield and visit the Pelican pub just 2 mins from the canal, and in an area of outstanding natural beauty with a garden by the lake and river.

It is 7 hours cruising from Newbury to Froxfield.

Day 4

Little Bedwyn and Great Bedwyn are soon approached, the latter has attractive houses of all periods, a stores and pubs along its main street from bridge 95.

From Froxfield you have to negotiate 7 locks to take you past Great bedwyn, as the canal climbs higher. Then another 3 locks as you approach the Crofton Flight of 7 locks with the village of Wilton to the south. The Bruce Tunnel is just 502 yards long, but makes a pleasant change.

Towards Wootton Rivers the canal climbs down through a series of locks , the pub in the village to the north of the canal is an attractive 16th century pub in the main street. The village is very pretty & composed almost entirely of timber framed thatched houses.

The canal continues through the vale of Pewsey. Pewsey Wharf is a mile from the town centre, and has developed as a Canalside settlement on its own, with a pub, warehouses and cottages.

To the North hills descend to the waters edge, to the south the land opens out giving fine views over the Vale of Pewsey. A miniature suspension bridge carries a private footpath from Stowell Park across the canal, as is the only surviving example of its kind. Stowell park House was built in the early 19 century, and can be clearly seen from the canal.

It is 8.5 hours cruising from Froxfield to Pewsey Wharf.

Day 5

The pretty village of Wilcot is soon reached with several thatched houses scattered around the green. There is an annual carnival every year which draws large crowds, lasting for 2 weeks it starts on the 3rd Sat in September and there is plenty going on.

On its run to Devizes the canal meanders through rich agricultural land and small attractive villages like Honeystreet- Pub on canal, Stanton St Bernard, All Cannings- pub in village just south of Bridge 128, & Bishop Cannings- access from Bridge 133 with pub in village, or pub by Bridge 134.

Devizes itself has the atmosphere of an old country market town. Handsome 18th century buildings now surround the square.

Devizes museum has one of the finest prehistoric collections in Europe including the Stourhead collection of relics excavated from burial mounds on Salisbury Plain.

Devizes visitor centre is home to an interactive exhibition introducing visitors to the medieval origins of the town.

Wharf Theatre is canalside and hosts a variety of performances throughout the year. There are the usual pubs, restaurants, take-aways. Shops and a cinema in the town. The battle of Roundway was fought near here in 1643 between the Roundheads and the Royalists and the Roundheads were all killed or captures. The battlefield is largely intact & can be explored on foot.

It takes about 3.5 hours to get to Devizes from Pewsey Wharf, but you can spend the afternoon exploring the town, and walking to the Caen locks to get some photos in before you make the attempt tomorrow!!

Day 6

Today is the day you tackle the famous Caen Hill flight of locks, but first there is the Kennet Lock in the town to pass through.

As you pass out of the town there are another 4 locks as you go down the Caen Hill, then the flight of 16 locks follow each other in quick succession. The scale of the whole flight is very impressive, with 29 locks in just 2.5 miles.

It will take you most of the day to go just a short distance of 4.5 miles, but the views are fantastic, and when you have finished you can pat yourself on the back!

If you want to moor up near Sells Green Swing bridge, it will take 8.5 hours to get there. The Three Magpies Pub is 200 yards south of Sells Green bridge.

Day 7

If you do not feel too worn out, there are another 5 locks to negotiate at Seend Cleeve, but it all adds to the interest!!

Trowbridge is soon reached and Hilperton marina, where we have a base. There is a pub just south of Hilperton Road Bridge 166, and a convenient stores and post office here also.

Two fine stone aqueducts cross the River Biss and a railway.

Bradford on Avon to the North of the canal, is a lovely town, one of the beauty spots of Wiltshire, and one of the highlights of the Canal. It is a miniature Bath, rich with architectural treasures from the Saxon period to the 19th Century. Bradford upper Wharf is very attractive, with a small dock with some of its original buildings still standing, and an old canal pub by the lock. The town centre is very compact, you can walk down the hill from the Canal wharf. There is also a swimming pool near the canal. The Great Tithe barn stands below the canal embankment and is one of the finest in the UK, dating from the 14th century with a massive cathedral like structure. The splendid 9 arch Town Bridge is very unusual as it has a chapel in the middle, dating from medieval times, but used during the 17th & 18th centuries as the town prison.

Westwood manor lies 1 mile south west of Bradford on Avon, a 15th C stone manor house open through the National Trust.

The River Avon rushes along beside the canal, Avoncliff is a nice place to stop with its tearoom and pub overlooking the river. If you moor at Limpley Stoke Bridge, walk down the the Railway bridge & turn left you will find a lovely 400 year old Pub called the Hop Pole, which was originally a monks wine lodge.

After crossing Dundas Aqueduct you will see a restored ¼ mile section of the old Somerset Coal Canal, the canal collected coal from 30 collieries throughout the 19th C.

The Dundas Aqueduct was built in 1804 and is one of the most well known features of the canal.

It is best viewed from the valley below to appreciate its full beauty and architecture.

West of Claverton Road bridge is the American Museum in Britain, housed in a manor built in 1820. The museum houses American decorative arts from the late 17C to the mid 19C.

Claverton Pumping station to the east of the canal has a waterwheel pump which is the only one of its kind on British canals. The pumping station is run by volunteers and is open every weekend during the season.

Bathampton & Bathwick are on the outskirts of Bath, if you want to avoid the Bath Locks the best place to moor up for Bath is at the top of the Bath Lock, it is only a short distance from here into the city.

It is 9 hours from Sells Green bridge to here.

Day 8

Spend the day exploring Bath, there is so much to see.

Bath was first developed as a spa town by the Romans because of its natural warm springs.

There are extensive Roman buildings to be seen, the Roman Baths are in the heart of the city which is a World heritage Site.

The fantastic sweeping architecture of the Royal Crescent built around 1770 and the Circus which dates from 1760 have to be seen. In the Royal Crescent is the Jane Austen centre- a tribute to Bath's famous resident.

The Thermae Bath Spa the only place in the UK where you can bathe in natural warm waters.

Bath Abbey is also in the centre of the city, it was established in 1499, and is famous for its fan vaulted ceiling, also it has interesting memorials to the vast range of people who in times gone by have died in Bath.

Days 9-14

It is 43.5 hours back to Aldermaston marina, so if you cruise for about 7 hours a day, you will have plenty of time to get back at a leisurely rate.

Useful Links

Description : Newbury Race Course

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

Telephone : 01635 40015

Description : The Living Rain Forest

Website : <http://www.livingrainforest.org/>

Telephone : 01635 202444

Description : The Devizes Museum

Website : <http://www.wiltshiremuseum.org.uk/>

Telephone : 01380 727369

Description : Visit Bath

Website : <http://visitbath.co.uk/>

Telephone : n/a

Description : The Roman Baths

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

Telephone : 01225 477785

Description : Hungerford Tourist Information

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

Telephone : n/a

Description : Devizes Tourist Information

Website : <http://devizes.org.uk>

Telephone : 01380 500276

Description : Wadworth Brewery Devizes Visitor Centre

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

Telephone : 01380 732277

Description : The Kennet and Avon Canal Trust

Website : <http://www.katrust.org.uk>

Telephone : 01380 721279

Description : Wharf Theatre Devizes

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

Telephone : 01380 725944

Description : Crofton Beam Engines

Website : <http://www.croftonbeamengines.org/>

Telephone : 01672 870300

Description : Trowbridge Museum

Website : <http://trowbridgemuseum.co.uk/>

Telephone : 01225 751339

Description : Beale Park Wildlife Gardens

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

Telephone : 0844 826 1761

Description : Bradford on Avon tourist information

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

Telephone : 01225 865797

Description : Westwood Manor

Website : <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/westwood-manor/>

Telephone : 01225 863374

Description : Wilton Windmill

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

Telephone : 01672 870266

Description : Shaw House was built in 1581 by Newbury clothier Thomas Dolman. This fine Elizabethan building was home to successive Dolman families, the flamboyant Duke of Chandos and the Andrews and Farquhar families. Shaw House then began a new life as a school for g

Website : <http://info.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=29158>

Telephone : 01635 279279

Description : Newbury Tourist information

Website : <http://www.newbury.tourist-information-uk.com/>

Telephone : n/a

Description : Basildon Park, an 18th century Georgian mansion restored in the 1950

Website : <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/basildon-park/>

Telephone : 0118 984 3040

Description : Bucklebury Farm Park offers a magical experience and a great value day out in the countryside

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

Telephone : 0118 971 4002

Description : Highclere Castle, home to Lord & Lady Carnarvon and where Downton Abbey was filmed

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

Telephone : 01635 253210

Description : Donnington Castle. The striking twin-towered 14th-century gatehouse of this castle, later the focus of a Civil War siege and battle, survives amid impressive earthworks.

Website : <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/donnington-castle/>

Telephone : 0870 333 1181

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Website : <http://www.shawhouse.org.uk/>

Telephone : 01635 279279

Description : The Nature Discovery Centre offers a great day out for all the family. This fantastic visitor centre is packed full of interactive wildlife and natural history displays

Website : <http://www.bbwt.org.uk/nature-discovery-centre>

Telephone : 01635 874381

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](#).

