

UK Canal Boating

Escape with a canal boating holiday!

Cheshire Ring from Middlewich

Cruise this route from : Middlewich

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Cruising Days : 8.00 to 11.00

Cruising Time : 53.00

Total Distance : 97.00

Number of Locks : 92

Number of Tunnels : 6

Number of Aqueducts : 0

A fascinating trip that takes you through the heart of Manchester and the Peak District with its distinctive stone architecture.

The Cheshire Ring is a canal cruising circuit or canal ring, which includes sections of six canals in and around Cheshire and Greater Manchester in North West England: the Ashton Canal, Peak Forest Canal, Macclesfield Canal, Trent and Mersey Canal, Bridgewater Canal and Rochdale Canal.

It passes through contrasting landscapes between Manchester city centre and rural Cheshire with views of the Peak District and the Cheshire Plain.

Moor at Castlefields to explore the city of Manchester, including Old Trafford, home of Manchester United F.C., the huge Arndale shopping centre and the Science & Industry Museum. The trip will let you enjoy glorious scenery as the Pennine Range overlooks the canal and, if time allows, detour along the Peak Forest canal to its terminus.

Enjoy the stunning views from Marple and at Anderton pause to visit the fabulously restored boat lift which now operates throughout the cruising season to link the canal with the River Weaver.

Cruising Notes

Preston Brook Tunnel

Tunnel times are as follows:

Northbound: open on the hour, and remains open until 10 past the hour.

Southbound: open at half past the hour, and remain opens until 20 to the hour.

Saltersford Tunnel

Tunnel entry is as follows:

Northbound (Saltersford Tunnel to Preston Brook) - Entry on the hour until 20 minutes past the hour.

Southbound (Saltersford Tunnel to Barnton) - Entry 30 minutes past the hour until 10 minutes to the hour.

Day 1

Turn south down the Trent & Mersey Canal towards the Middlewich Junction, but do not turn right along the Middlewich branch, keep straight on the Trent & Mersey Canal past several salt works, which shows this area's industrial heritage. The Rock salt mining that has gone on since Roman times has resulted in severe local subsidence, and the canal has had to be banked up in some stretches, which makes it much deeper than normal. There is a Chinese takeaway west of bridge 166.

Occasional locks mark a quiet and unspoiled area, the town of Sandbach is away to the left, as the canal reaches the village of Wheelock. This busy little village has a store and fish & chip shop, and 3 pubs, 2 near bridge 154, and one Canalside - the Cheshire Cheese - with moorings outside.

It is just over 3 hours to here so a good place to stop for the night

Day 2

After Wheelock the first of 26 locks called Heartbreak Hill will have to be negotiated before you get to Kids Grove and the junction with the Macclesfield Canal,

First pass the village of Hassall Green, the village has a store and a canal shop within the canal Centre, which also houses a cafe beside the canal, there is lockside seating.

You then negotiate 5 locks and pass the village of Rode Heath to your left, there is a canalside pub here and it has a useful shopping area,

Your crew will now be busy as the next few locks appear, as you approach the very unusual junction with the Macclesfield Canal.

You have to go under the Macclesfield Canal, through locks 43 and 42, and cruise on through lock 41 to the Hardings Wood Junction, then turn right on the Macclesfield Canal to go back on yourself & cruise parallel to the Trent & Mersey canal in the same direction you have just come from, to then turn right over an aqueduct to cross the Trent & Mersey canal again, so you have come full circle!

There are various pubs to quench your thirst, The Red Bull Hotel by lock 43, The Canal Tavern by bridge 133, and the Blue Bell canalside at Hardings Wood Junction. It is a very busy interesting canal area, and as you leave it you enter glorious open countryside.

The Macclesfield Canal is very shallow so only moor at designated sites.

The Bleeding Wolf Hotel is canalside near bridge 94, it is a good place to moor for the night as it is 8 hours cruising, only 8 miles but you will have done 27 locks !!

Day 3

There is another pub in the village of Scholar Green, and another near bridge 87 at the far end of the village.

You can walk to the top of Mop Cop east from bridge 85. It is a hill nearly 1100 ft above sea level, which gives you a magnificent view across the Cheshire Plain, beyond Stoke and into Wales. At the top is Mop Cop Castle which is an imitation ruin built in 1754. The canal loses itself in splendid countryside for several miles, to the east beyond the hills is the Pennine Chain.

$\frac{3}{4}$ mile west of the canal by footpath from bridge 86 is Little Moreton Hall, a national trust property. This fabulous moated house is one of the best examples of black and white timbered architecture in the UK, and is well worth the walk. It has hardly changed from when it was built in around 1559.

1 mile north of bridges 79 & 80 is the pretty village of Astbury, and Astbury garden centre is just along the road from the village.

The canal passes through the compact and busy town of Congleton, there are useful shops near bridge 75. If there are any cyclists amongst the crew, there is a 20 mile cycle ride suitable for families around Congleton which take you past Marton Church, the oldest half timbered name in Europe, and Cheshires oldest oak tree which is over 600 years old.

East of bridge 71 is the fell called the Cloud, over 1000 ft high and with the remains of ancient earthworks on top. There is a good walk to the top from here.

You can moor up near bridge 61- Congleton bridge, there is a pub & restaurant – the Robin Hood south of the bridge

Beyond bridge 57 you reach what effectively are the only locks on all the 27 miles of the Macclesfield Canal. The 12 Bosley locks raise the canal by 118 ft to well over 500ft above sea level in just one mile.

The facilities block beside bridge 54 includes a shower, toilet, and a laundry.

Approaching Oakgrove, the foothills and mountains of the Pennines, some over 1200 ft high, spill right down to the canal, the route follows open attractive countryside following the contours of the land.

The Royal oak Swing bridge is hydraulically operated & you will need your british waterways key to operate it, and just follow the instructions on the bridge.

Oakgrove is a delightful place with a superb backcloth of green hills.

There is a lovely country pub east of bridge 49- the Fools Nook. Sutton Reservoir is close to the bridge just to the north, there are walks and picnic areas.

You start to approach the town of Macclesfield, a very wide stretch of water is overlooked by an old flour mill, now some very upmarket apartments. This is the old Hovis Mill built in 1820 and home of the famous flour.

The best place to moor for the town is bridge 37, which is also handy for the shops. The town is just down the hill, and is an interesting mix of modern industry and old market town, with cobbled streets and picturesque medieval market place. In the 18th century the town was one of the leading silk producers, and there is a museum and heritage centre, where you can see Jacquard handlooms in action.

It is 8 hours to here and a good place to stop for the night

Day 4

The tree lined canal continues northwards through open countryside to Bollington, and there is a good view of this stone-built town from the huge canal embankment that cuts across it. From here it is only 1 mile to the boundary of the Peak District national park. West of bridge 27 is a sociable village pub. As the canal leaves Bollington it enters an isolated stretch through quiet countryside, there are pubs:- Windmill Inn 250yds west of bridge 25, Miners Arms near bridge 18- there are good moorings here. Also a picnic area of Hag Footbridge 16. The village of Higher Poynton is very picturesque, with lots of geese, ducks & swans, the Boars Head is down the hill from bridge 15. Moor up here for the night.

Also from this bridge is a footpath leading to Lyme Park, a magnificent Italianate palace, a national trust property set in 1400 acres of parkland containing deer. Originally a Tudor house it was converted by a venetian architect, but some Elizabethan interiors can be seen. The house featured in the BBC's production of *Pride & Prejudice*, and has lots to see, including countless works of art.

The house is open Fri-Tues 13.00-17.00.

Above Higher Poynton the canal becomes wider, be sure to stick to the main channel.

There are useful moorings and supplies at High Lane, the Bulls Head is canalside. There is a useful shop downhill from bridge 6 as you pass hawk Green & Goyt Mill on your way to Marple.

At Marple Junction the Macclesfield Canal leaves to the south west, by the attractive buildings of Marple Yard, this busy canal centre is framed by the mountainous country across the Goyt Valley. The canal here is 500 ft above sea level.

Turn a sharp left at the junction, onto the Peak Forest canal, the 16 Marple Locks carry the canal down towards Manchester.

There are various pubs- The Ring o bells by bridge 2 and the Pineapple Inn just a short walk from there. There is no mooring once you start the Marple Flight, so you cannot stop once you have started.

Once through the locks you go over the ancient monument that is the Marple Aqueduct which carries the canal over the River Goyt about 100 feet above the river, alongside is the even bigger railway viaduct. The canal then dives into Hyde Tunnel, just 308 yards long, you pass over 2 small aqueducts near Hatherlow, there are 2 pubs to the east of bridge 14.

Romiley, Bredbury & Woodley are all passed along this stretch as the canal heads northwards, although the scenery is less rural it is nevertheless still very interesting.

Just after Woodley Tunnel, the Navigation Inn is just along the road to your right. It is 7 hours to here.

The Haughton Dale nature reserve near bridge 9 has walking & cycling through pasture and woodlands. The canal travels under the M67 as you pass Hyde to the East, moor up near bridge 2 Ashton Street bridge, the Globe Hotel is canalside. You can moor anywhere along the approach to Dukinfield Junction, right up to Portland Basin, the towpath is tidy with plenty of grass, trees and seats.

It is 9.5 hours to here.

Day 5

Your next day will take you through the heart of Manchester, along the Ashton canal, and you need to take the usual precautions as with any built up area- lock any front hatches or doors, and put valuables out of sight. There have been few incidents along the canal, but if cruising during school holidays or weekends, plan to do this stretch earlier in the day as it only takes 3-4 hours to travel the whole length of the canal. Don't be afraid to venture into urban areas where the industrial archaeology can be very interesting. The contrasts along the route are part of what makes the Cheshire Ring so rewarding!

Once you start off you soon reach the Portland basin , and the approach is very pleasant. The Huddersfield narrow Canal starts is journey east across the Pennines away to your right, you turn sharp left up the Ashton canal. By Portland basin is the Portland basin Social & Industrial History Museum which is housed in a superb reconstruction of a canal warehouse dating from 1834. It tells the rich story of this area and features a 1920's street, working models, and various displays. [Www.tameside.gov.uk](http://www.tameside.gov.uk)

The Ashton canal takes you past steaming factories, tall chimneys, into Manchester proper! The canal is a welcome escape from the city life, and it continues its tranquil path through the city.

Your crew will be busy though as the 1st of 18 locks soon approaches as you drop down the canal to the Dulcie Street Junction. The Fairfield Junction is a picturesque canal scene with traditional canal buildings dating back to the 1800's, giving the area a quiet dignity.

By the well cared for Beswick flight of 4 locks is a new stadium giving you a good look at the wonderful 'B of the Bang' sculpture an explosion of spikes designed to commemorate the 2002 Commonwealth Games which were held here.

At Paradise Wharf and Piccadilly Village the area has been re-developed into smart flats and canal basins. At the Dulcie Street Junction, the Rochdale canal joins, from its journey to Manchester across the Pennines to the north. Turn left onto the Rochdale Canal where another 9 locks are waiting for you!

After this first lock the canal disappears under an 18 storey office building . You will now see tantalising glimpses of Victorian buildings and elaborate railway arches, and the bottom lock is beside the restored Merchants warehouse. The excitingly restored Castlefield Junction is also here and you pass through onto the bridgewater Canal.

The best place to moor in Manchester is Castlefield, either in the main Castlefield Basin or in the Staffordshire Arm, leading under the railway viaducts towards the Museum. There is a water point on the Staffordshire Arm, next to the railway arch. Boaters regard Castlefield as a safe place to leave boats unattended and it is a good starting point for exploring what Manchester has to offer. The trams crossing the viaduct are noisy but they don't run all night! The Museum of Science and Industry is only across the road from the Staffordshire Arm.

It is nearly 9 hours cruising to here.

Day 6

The canal follows the Manchester Ship Canal which is off to your right.

By Pomona Lock is the new Metrolink- the new electric supertram.

The Canals route takes you close to the Manchester United Football ground, the new stand towers above the

canal, to the south is Old Trafford Cricket ground, home of Lancashire Cricket club, and a test match venue.

To the North here is the Imperial War Museum North right beside the Ship Canal at Trafford Wharf, the building is stunning clad in shimmering aluminium, and representing a world shattered by war. Visitors enter through a 55 meter high air shaft giving fine views across the city.

At Waters Meeting Junction, turn left onto the main line of the Trent & Mersey canal, and cruise towards Sale. The area around the town hall has been rebuilt, and a couple of pubs and restaurants along with the Robert Bolt Theatre and the Waterside Arts centre take full advantage of their canal frontage. You can get a tram from here on the Manchester Metrolink, it takes 10 minutes to get into the city centre.

You are now on the last leg, and start heading south back to Middlewich Wharf. You soon leave Sale behind, and enter open countryside again on your journey to Lymm.

From bridge 26a in Little Bollington, you can walk for a few minutes into the village to the lovely named pub the Swan with two Nicks.

If you cross over the footbridge near the pub, it will lead to Dunham Massey Hall, once the seat of the Earl of Stamford. It is a beautiful 18th century house, with gardens considered to be the best in the North West. The house itself has a sumptuous interior, and the house is managed by the National Trust, there is a restaurant and shop on site as well.

Soon the town of Lymm is reached, the town itself is very pleasant with the streets coming right down to the water's edge, a 17th century cross stands a few yards from the canal in this hilly but attractive town. There are various stores & pubs, and a bank, most of the pubs are by bridge 23.

More urbanisation is reached with Grappenhall, Stockton Heath and Lower and Higher Walton all merging into one, the Manchester Ship Canal leads a straight course about ¼ mile to the north.

A short walk from Thelwall Underbridge will bring you to the Penny Ferry, where for a minimum charge, you can be carried across the Ship Canal.

Grappenhall is worth a look, as there is a fine group of buildings on cobbled streets which have survived around the church, and also the village stocks. The Rams Head in Grappenhall is in a conservation village and was where Sherlock Holmes was filmed.

There are good services 400 yards north of London Road bridge.

Between bridges 13 and 11 at Higher Walton is Walton Hall, 20 acres of gardens and parkland, facilities include a children's zoo, outdoor games, heritage centre, play area, & cafe.

It is 6 hours to Bridge 11

As the M56 passes over the canal, so the Runcorn branch of the canal splits off to your right, and makes its way to Runcorn. It is a dead end, but it makes an interesting diversion, if you want to cruise down the 4 miles, it takes 1.5 hours to reach the end of the canal. The old town is to be found down by the docks, where the elegant curved 1092 single span of the steel road bridge with the railway beside it, leaps over the Ship Canal and the Mersey. There are pubs along the route & in the town, to the left by bridge 76, & just past bridge 82 (Grapes Inn), and to the north by bridge 84 and 89 at the end of the canal (Waterloo).

Norton Priory Museum can be reached north east of bridge 75. There is a supermarket & PO south of bridge 74.

Moor near Preston Brook bridge 1 , it is 7 hours to here

Day 7

Heading southwards on the main Trent & Mersey canal, through Preston brook Tunnel, which is 1239 yards long. Passage is timed, see navigational notes.

Moving on, you will now enter Saltersford Tunnel, again, two boats cannot pass in this tunnel, so do take care when entering and leaving it.

Passage is timed - northbound is on the hour to 20 past , southbound is half past the hour for 20 minutes.

This northernmost stretch of the canal is very rural, most of the way the navigation follows the south side of the hills that follow the River Weaver, and as you are 60 ft up you are rewarded with excellent views of this splendid valley, and the occasional large vessels that go up and down the River.

Anderton is soon reached, and the amazing and enormous Anderton Boat lift is passed. This was built in 1875 to carry the boats down to the River weaver 50 feet below, and has been restored to full working order. Thousands of sightseers are drawn to it each year .

A stunning feat of 19th Century engineering, the lift carries two boats at a time hydraulically, one up and one down between the Trent & Mersey canal and the River Weaver 50 feet below.

If you fancy a detour the River Weaver is a navigation that is tidal and occasionally carries commercial traffic, in small seagoing ships, and the locks are quite large.

The bridges are either very high or are big swing bridges operated by british Waterways staff.

The shortest bridge between the Anderton Boat lift and Winsford is 6 foot 4 inches high, so you should be able to duck under it, so you don't have to call the BW staff to open it.

If you arrive at the boat lift in season, you can just turn up & wait for a slot, as the glass topped trip boat goes up and down the lift all day, but you might have to wait in the high season, but it is no hardship, as it is fascinating to watch the amazing structure of the Boat lift.

The Lift connects the River Weaver with the Trent & Mersey Canal. There is a large Operations Centre housing an extensive interactive exhibition, and a shop and a cafe with a seating area offering good views out over the River. There is also a pub opposite the Boat lift- The Stanley Arms, where children are welcome & they have an outside seating and childrens play area Tel 01606-75059.

The trip down the River Weaver towards Winsford takes just 3 and half hours, but is a nice diversion to take in the Boat Lift. The whole trip takes 7 hours and can be done in a day, or you can take longer , some guests even spend a week on the River!

There are moorings near Northwich which is a rather attractive town on the junction of the Rivers Weaver & Dane.

As with every town in the area, salt has been responsible for the towns prosperity and there is a salt museum in Northwich 01606 41331 which is open all year

For 200 years Northwich was prominent also for building and repairing ships and barges, because if you go

northwards along the River Weaver you reach the Manchester Ship Canal.

Navigation is not advisable in this direction, as you are not allowed onto the Manchester Ship Canal, and the River is tidal.

Nowadays the wharves by Town bridge are empty and are an excellent mooring site for visitors to the town. The town centre is very close, much of it has been completely rebuilt with an extensive shopping precinct.

There is a floating Hotel close to the Northwich marina- The Floatel, tel 01606 44443,

You can cruise down to Winsford and turn here, do not go under the bridge into Winsford Bottom Flash, as it is very shallow. There are a few pubs near Winsford bridge, and shops.

From Anderton marina you head south along the Trent & Mersey canal.

Away on your left you will see Marbury Country park which has woodlands carpeted with bluebells in the springtime, or relax under the shade of the lime avenues. Wander along the mere with splendid views over the water to the church at Great Budworth, or explore the arboretum and community orchard. Children will enjoy the play area, close to the picnic area.

There are attractive short stay moorings here if you have had a long trip and want to moor up somewhere local for the night.

As the canal heads towards Middlewich you move out into fine open country on a beautiful stretch of canal, often overhung by trees following the delightful valley of the River Dane.

There are pleasant moorings with picnic tables & BBQ just before bridge 176. (just over 3 hours to here from Anderton marina)

The canalside area of Middlewich is a haven of peace below the busy streets. The town has been extracting salt since Roman times, and there is an interesting town trail north of bridge 172. There are various pubs canalside along this stretch.

As you descend into Middlewich there are 3 locks to be negotiated before you reach the Middlewich Top wharf., It is 8.5 hours back to the marina

Useful Links

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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