

UK Canal Boating

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Escape with a canal boating holiday!

Telephone : 01395 443545

Email : contact@ukcanalboating.com

Booking Office : PO Box 57, Budleigh
Salterton. Devon. EX9 7ZN. England.

Cotton Mills of the 19th Century in the southern Pennines

Cruise this route from : Bollington

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[Cotton-Mills-of-the-19th-Century-in-the-southern-Pennines-Cruising-Route.html](#)

Cruising Days : 8.00 to 0.00

Cruising Time : 40.50

Total Distance : 58.00

Number of Locks : 94

Number of Tunnels : 8

Number of Aqueducts : 0

This cruise takes you through the history of the cotton and Weaving industry that dominated this area in the late 18th century.

Through the heathland of Saddleworth Moor and into the heart of the Southern Pennines which dominate the landscape.

Past delightful traditional Pennine villages with their winding streets and traditional cottages.

Cruising Notes

There is open countryside around Bollington, and there is a good view of this stone built town from the huge canal embankment that cuts across it.

From the Wharf turn north.

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.

Higher Poynton is a pretty place to moor up and its only 2 hours cruising to here, and the canal is wider here too. There are ducks and swans, and nearby is a recreation ground, also a pub just near Bridge 15 (Brownhills Bridge), called the Boar's Head. Children are welcome, and there is a garden with play area for the children.

Nelson Pit Visitor Centre is one of Poynton's hidden gems and is perfectly situated near to Poynton Marina for a relaxing afternoon.

Built on the site of a former colliery, this bijoux centre features displays about Poynton's mining history, the origins of the Middlewood Way and the local canal network.

Anson Engine Museum is also just a short walk from the Marina- it houses a unique collection of over 250 gas and oil engines, also a fantastic display showing the development of the internal combustion engine. The museum has a collection which tells the story of the engine from the cannon to the sophisticated, electronically controlled engine of the future.

The museum also has a steam section with two Robey engines; an A frame and a beam engine. Pride of place goes to the Stott engine that used to drive a cotton wadding mill in Hazel Grove.

The Macclesfield Canal wends its way through largely unspoilt countryside, with little villages and occasional pubs along the way. You will very soon encounter a tall aqueduct over a railway. Looking to the west, you may glimpse the suburbs of Stockport and Manchester. Close to Eccles Bridge 3 at Goyt Mill, there is a fish and chip shop.

The village of High lane is soon reached and a useful stop for supplies if there is anything you have forgotten! There are moorings between the High Lane Arm (branch of the canal) and bridge 11, with shops close by.

Marple is a busy boating centre, and there are some excellent walks in this area where the stunning scenery combines with often unexpected remains of early industry.

Soon you have to turn left to ascend the Marple flight of locks.

By the bridge is the Ring O' Bells Pub. It has a canalside patio and garden, and children are welcome.

On the Peak Forest Canal after turning left at Marple Junction the 1st lock is just after you turn so get your crew ready. The first four are quite close together, the rest spaced further apart, making the total distance around a mile long. At this point, the canal is 500ft above sea level.

Not far from the canal, to the left, is the town of Marple. Ludworth Moor is quite nearby, where there are ruins of an old Celtic Druid's temple, known as 'Robin Hood's Picking Rods'.

Once through the locks, it's not far to Marple Aqueduct, a three-arched ancient monument, over the River Goyt. It

stands at almost 100ft above the River. Then you will go through Hyde Bank Tunnel, which is 308yds long, continuing northwards, then over a couple of minor aqueducts, and cruising through Romily, Bredbury and Woodley, where you will cruise through the narrow Woodley Tunnel, 176yds long.

There are a couple of pubs in Romily -the Duke of York, east of Bridge 14; children welcome and outside seating, and the Friendship Inn, also east of Bridge 14; children welcome, but only until early evening.

Continuing northwards, as you make your way to Dukinfield Junction, the canal becomes more suburban, and to the right, beyond the M67 Bridge, you can see the industrial town of Hyde, which is in Greater Manchester. There is a pub at Dunkinfield called the Globe Hotel, near Bridge No. 2, with an outdoor patio and children welcome.

Ashton under Lyne is at the junction, and if you have time you might like to moor up and have a look around.

At the junction, bear right onto the Huddersfield Canal, towards Stalybridge. The canal is the focus of this bustling town, and there are many colourful boats moored along the canal. There is plenty of mooring space between locks 4W and 8W. In the distance, above the rooftops, you can make out the Pennines.

Pubs are plentiful in Stalybridge – Station Buffet Bar; Q Inn; Old Fleece Hotel; White House; Bridge Inn, and Bull's Head. The town is around 8 miles from Manchester city centre, and has its own football club.

For more information about Stalybridge, visit their website. (useful links below)

The town of Stalybridge was the creation of the Industrial Revolution. In 1776 came the event that was to lead to the development of Stalybridge as a town - COTTON!

Cotton manufacture in the village was growing rapidly, and more water-powered mills were being built along the local streams as well as along the river.

The Parish of Saddleworth, which lies east of the large town of Oldham is broadly rural, historically in the West Riding of Yorkshire, for centuries Saddleworth was a centre of woollen cloth production in the domestic system. Following the Industrial Revolution, in the 18th and 19th centuries, Saddleworth became a centre for cotton spinning and weaving. By the end of Queen Victoria's reign, mechanised textile production had become a vital part of the local economy. The boom in industry called for greater transport links, including the Huddersfield Narrow Canal and several railways.

Following the Great Depression Saddleworth's textile sector declined. Much of Saddleworth's architecture and infrastructure dates from its textile processing days however, notably the Saddleworth Viaduct and several cottages and terraces, many built by the local mill owners.

The Pennines beckon from over the rooftops of Stalybridge as you continue your climb towards the short Scout Tunnel.

The canal passes through leafy glades with occasional views of past industry, the coal mining in this area. There are attractively sited picnic areas along the route.

Impressive mills although sadly now derelict, line the canal, reminding us of its past history as this was the centre of the cotton and weaving industry in the 18th century.

Mossley was a prosperous cotton town in the 19th century and Mossley Industrial heritage Centre brings the old industry back to life in this old cotton spinning Mill. The centre is very small but has a collection of old photographs for visitors to browse through as well as some artefacts from the town's history of cotton spinning. The centre is usually open from 2.00 to 4.00 pm from Wednesday to Saturday. please phone first to check opening times. There are 2 pubs- Roaches Lock which is a real canal oriented Pub and canalside patio, and Tollemarche Arms with outside seating overlooking the Canal.

The scale of the textile industry is subdued by the imposing Saddleworth Moor, along with scattered attractive villages along lovely views over the high ground. The canal continues its steep rise across the heathered Moorland deep beneath the Pennines.

Uppermill is a traditional Pennine Village just after Wade Lock 21, tourism has long replaced the Cotton and Weaving industry . Saddleworth Museum and Art Gallery are by Wade Lock , telling the story of Saddleworth's past with many intriguing objects. The Granby Arms in the High street is a traditional village pub.

Dobcross is soon reached , another delightful traditional Pennine village with its winding streets and traditional cottages and again with its past very much in the Cotton and Weaving Industry. There are a couple of Pubs- The Swan Inn and Navigation Inn.

Brownhill Countryside Centre is by Brownhill Bridge and is surrounded by the dramatic Pennines scenery.

After a climb of 9 locks you reach the end of your journey at Diggle, at the heart of the local hand weaving industry in the late 18th century. Turn just after Summit Lock 32 where there is moorings. Just east of bridge 66 is the Hanging gate pub and the Diggle Hotel is close to the western tunnel portal. The village is situated on the moorlands of the Pennine hills.

It is 2.5 hours from Dobcross to Diggle.

The dark entrance to the Standedge Tunnel lies a short distance away. Standedge Tunnel is Britain's longest, deepest, highest canal tunnel, deep below the Pennines. It's one of the seven wonders of the waterways You can actually hop on a visitor boat and take a 30 minutes boat trip , see links below for opening times . If you are tempted to take your own boat through, the bad news is that its only open to boaters on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from March to November from 1pm to 2.30pm and from the other direction at Marsden from 8.30am to 10.30am and passage has to be booked 3 days in advance.

Four parallel tunnels make up the Standedge Tunnels in northern England. These four tunnels are comprised of three railway tunnels, and one canal tunnel. All of the tunnels are linked by cross tunnels to provide access and escape routes for the people who use them. Perhaps most importantly is the historic significance of the tunnels. The canal tunnel was built in 1811, and the railway tunnels, particularly the central tunnel, was completed in 1848 by the London and Northwestern Railway. All of the tunnels provided important transportation routes.

The canal tunnel is known as the highest, deepest, and longest tunnel in the area. Amazingly, it lies 636 feet underground. Once the tunnel was completed after 17 years of man hours, it provided a through route. The canal tunnel is wide enough for a narrow boat to pass. Interestingly, engineers created wider areas throughout the tunnel to provide passing lanes for people. This contributed to a safer route for people to use. Today, a lock chain is used to prevent two-way traffic from becoming a problem. The last boat to use it was a commercial boat in 1921. This

tunnel was officially closed in 1944, and it deteriorated as a result. Restoration efforts have enabled people to use it once again.

Three railway tunnels run parallel to the canal tunnel, and to each other. The 1848 tunnel is the most well-known of them all. It became notorious for its intense traffic during peak travel hours. It has a length of 3 miles, and it is level throughout its length. This is important because water troughs were built along the sides to provide steam locomotives with water supplies without having to stop for any length of time. The busy nature of the tunnel required the construction of the parallel tunnel in 1871. Both of these tunnels became important business routes.

Although all 3 railway tunnels are still maintained, the 1894 tunnel is the only one that remains in use. Perhaps most importantly, this tunnel serves as an escape route for emergency situations. It provides an emergency escape for important rescue personnel such as police, ambulance drivers, and fire fighters. Consider this importance during the height of traffic in northern England. The ability to quickly get from one area of England to the other, could mean the difference between life and death. Connector tunnels make this feat possible.

It is 20 hours back to Higher Poynton, so 3 days cruising ,

Useful Links

Description : Anson Engine Museum

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

Telephone : 01625 874426

Description : Stalybridge,

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

Telephone : n/a

Description : Nelson Pitt Visitor Centre

Website : <http://www.visitcheshire.com/things-to-do/nelson-pit-visitor-centre-p128411>

Telephone : n/a

Description : Cheshire Tourist information

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

Telephone : n/a

Description : Mossley heritage Centre

Website : <http://www.mossley.net/heritagecentre.htm>

Telephone : n/a

Description : Standedge Visitor Boat trips

Website : <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/places-to-visit/standedge-tunnel-and-visitor-centre/boat-trips>

Telephone : n/a

Description : Walks around Marple

Website : <https://www.marple.website/walks-around-marple.html>

Telephone : n/a

Description : Brownhill Countryside Centre

Website : https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/200393/parks_countryside_and_canals/678/brownhill

Telephone : n/a

Description : Saddleworth Museum

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

Telephone : n/a

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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