

UK Canal Boating

Escape with a canal boating holiday!

Grand Union Canal cruise from Iver

Cruise this route from : Iver

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Cruising Days : 15.00 to 15.00

Cruising Time : 67.00

Total Distance : 108.00

Number of Locks : 138

Number of Tunnels : 0

Number of Aqueducts : 0

A leisurely cruise along the Grand Union Canal from Buckinghamshire through Hertfordshire to Bedfordshire in this 2 weeks cruising route passing through some delightful towns like Hemel Hempstead which is a well planned new town with excellent shops built around a charming old town with attractive streets.

Also Berkhamsted is a market town with buildings of all periods. There are also the ruins of a Norman castle where William 1 received the offer of the English crown in 1066. Berkhamsted lies on the western edge of Hertfordshire, bordering the Chiltern Hills. Together with the adjoining village of Northchurch it is separated from other towns and villages by lovely countryside, all of it in the Metropolitan Green Belt and much of it classified as being an area of outstanding natural beauty.

Leighton Buzzard is a picturesque market town with 17 and 18th century half timbered houses in the streets around the Market Cross which has stood for over 600 years in the centre of the town. There is a steam railway in the town , and Whipsnade Zoo is a short taxi ride away, its a sprawling, 600-acre home to more than 2500 animals, with tours, & adventure play areas

Milton Keynes has a lot to offer , it is one of the major shopping areas around this area, and is great for the more adventurous where you can toboggan on real snow, and where you can go indoor sky-diving.

Cruising Notes

This route takes you along the delightful Grand Union Canal, with lots of interest along the way with towns and

villages to stop off and explore.

Day 1

Leaving your mooring cruise east towards the end of the Slough Arm at Cowley Peachey Junction.

The Slough Arm was almost the last canal to be built in Britain, in 1882, and on the way to Cowley Peach Junction you pass over 3 small aqueducts as you pass over the picturesque Cowley lake.

The main traffic on the Canal in the late 1800's was bricks made from the local clay.

Turn left at the junction onto the Grand Union Canal.

You will reach your first lock at Cowley Lock as you start the climb up the Colne Valley and the Chiltern Hills.

Cowley and Uxbridge to your right is the last of the outer suburban belt that surrounds London, and you will soon leave all that behind.

There is a large shopping centre in Uxbridge, access from Bridge 186.

The Battle of Britain was directed by the late Air Marshal Lord Dowding from the RAF HQ in Uxbridge.

The town has a selection of modern and futuristic buildings.

In the early 19th Century the Paddington Packet Boat used to run daily from Paddington to Cowley, pulled by 4 horses, it made the 15 mile lock free journey in a remarkable time, taking passengers up and down the canal.

Moor for the night along this stretch, it is 2 hours to here. There are many pubs near Bridges 185/186, The Crown & Treaty is near Bridge 185, The Dolphin is at Bridge 186 as is the General Elliott.

Day 2

Uxbridge Lock is in an attractive setting with a lock-keepers cottage at the side, and a modern flour mill with lovely landscaped gardens right down to the waters edge.

Between the A40 Road bridge and 183 Denham Bridge there is a gravel wharf on the off-side loading into large barges, so beware of them operating and allow them to manoeuvre in the deepest part of the channel.

The canal continues northwards past the village of Denham through a landscape of lakes, woods and mills across Harefield Moor, a stretch of common land with much wildlife to enjoy.

East of Bridge 80 there are shops at South Harefield.

Black Jack's lock and Copper Mill Lock are very attractive with tiny timbered cottages, a small mill, and attractive canal side buildings.

The big mill at Copper Mill was once a paper mill, but when the Canal was built it re-invented itself and made copper sheets for the bottom of boats.

There are canal side pubs at bridge 180 and 177.

After heavy rain there is a strong current between bridge 177 and Copper Mill Lock.

The canal turns eastwards towards Rickmansworth, and old chalk quarries adjoin the Canal.

There are some interesting 16th century farm buildings close by to Stockers Lock.

You can Moor close to bridge 173 it is 4 hours to here , at Blatchworth Locks in a marquee on the lawn between the locks is Annis Kitchen serving drinks and snacks in conjunction with the Canal Centre there.

You will be taking the right hand lock when continuing northwards.

Just before the lock is a Tesco supermarket with moorings for patrons.

Rickmansworth is off to your left north of bridge 173.

You can moor here for the nights it is 4.5 hours to here

Day 3

North of Rickmansworth is Common Moor to your right and Croxley to your left where part of the old village still survives with several attractive houses around the village green, and Watford where the canal keeps well away from the town and instead climbs through Cassiobury Park, a long and lovely stretch of wooded parkland. The park was once part of the 17th C gardens of the Earls of Essex , and in the avenue of limes many of the trees are 300 years old. The Park stretches for 190 acres.

You can moor here for the night if you fancy a lovely setting. It is 6 hours to here.

If you want to have some refreshment tonight then continue northwards through the Park and Whippendell woods off to your left to Grove Mill, a water mill .

Just to the north is a famous ornamental stone bridge that the Earl of Essex insisted that the canal company build before he allowed them to build a canal through his park.

The canal follows the course of the River Gade, so twists and turns through the valley.

Kings Langley off to your left is soon reached, there is a useful store just west of bridge 158.

Kings Langley is a small country town and there are the remains of a palace there. The tomb of Edmund de Langley, brother of the Black Prince lies in the Norman church.

The canal climbs steeply passing several large paper mills in Apsley. The shops south of bridge 152 are much closer to the canal than those in Hemel Hempstead.

There are several large Canal side pubs as you pass Hemel Hempstead , like the Paper Mill pub near Apsley marina - Large waterside pub with open fires, balcony and terrace serving classic British food and real ales. Also the Fishery Inn near Bridge 149, - Rustic pub, with an open fire, waterside terrace and banquette seating, serving British grub.

Moor for the night here, it is 6 hours from last nights mooring to Apsley Mill.

Hemel Hempstead is a well planned new town with excellent shops built around a charming old town with attractive streets. The Old Town Hall is an Arts centre in a Victorian building with an imaginative programme of theatre, comedy and music.

To the east of the canal close to Lock 67 is the Paper trail- a fully working Victorian paper Mill, with visitor centre and tours . - Frogmore Paper Mill is the world's oldest mechanised paper mill - the birthplace of paper's industrial revolution. Today it is still a working paper mill producing around 100 tonnes of specialist grade paper every year on historic paper machines. Open- 2017 – Every Thursday and the first Sunday of each month from 11.00 to 16.00. Open for pre-booked group visits only on all other days.

Day 4

The canal enters Berkhamstead by its back door and proceeds through the middle of the town.

There is a useful supermarket on the towpath between bridges 53 and 52.

Berkhamsted is a market town with buildings of all periods. There are also the ruins of a Norman castle where William 1 received the offer of the English crown in 1066. Berkhamsted lies on the western edge of Hertfordshire, bordering the Chiltern Hills. Over much of the last millennium it was an important market town with strong royal and literary connections; today it is a vibrant residential and cultural centre, and while it is now part of the Borough of Dacorum it has retained its own strong identity. Together with the adjoining village of Northchurch it is separated from other towns and villages by lovely countryside, all of it in the Metropolitan Green Belt and much of it classified as being an area of outstanding natural beauty.

The Old Mill Pub is in a great location beside the Grand Union Canal in Berkhamsted. Its old mill-race thunders (or trickles, according to the season) over a weir and through the secret courtyard off the bar and the building retains the character of its Georgian & Victorian origins.

Throughout the length of the canal running past the town there are interpretation boards depicting local industry and navigation.

Moor for the night at Berkhamsted Visitor Moorings, it is 5 hours to here from Apsley Mill.

Day 5

The canal is still climbing up the Chilterns as you negotiate more locks as you pass through Berkhamsted. Together with the adjoining village of Northchurch it is separated from other towns and villages by lovely countryside, all of it in the Metropolitan Green Belt and much of it classified as being an area of outstanding natural beauty.

By Pitstone Wharf is a Pub, chandlery and tea shop

The lovely named Cowroast lock with its old toll office ,marks the summit level , and a short respite of an hour or so from the locks!

Soon you will reach the tiny village of Bulbourne and pass the old British waterways workshops where lockgates were made by traditional craftsmen.

Ignore the Wendover arm that joins the canal from your left , and make your way through the Marsworth Locks passing Marsworth Reservoir on your left . The Marsworth Reservoirs act as a magnet for anglers, dogwalkers, boats, birdwatchers and walkers. Bluebells Tearooms by lock 39 are canalside, with lovely home made cakes and huge sandwiches, also available for take-away!

To you right is College Lake and there is a wildlife centre here , a top bird watching site also rare breeds of sheep, cattle and poultry.

At Startops End there is Grand Junction Arms canalside by bridge 133 and the Anglers Retreat Pub and The Bluebells Pub (by lock 39) closeby.

Moor just after the lock near Lower Ickniel Way Bridge 132 , it is 5 hours to here.

Day 6

At Marsworth Junction take the right fork, as to the left is the Aylesbury Arm which cannot take a widebeam.

The locks continue to take the canal descending away from the Chilterns and Dunstable Downs , the canal gives way to open grassland passing through a more remote quiet section with the locks are in remote and attractive settings.

Look out for the Whipsnade White Lion cut into the hills which is visible from the Canal around Horton and Slapton. It was cut in 1935 and is over 480 feet long.

Just before you approach Leighton Buzzard you pass Tiddenfoot Waterside Park to your left. This former sand quarry has reverted to nature as wild plants and animals have been encouraged to reoccupy the land. The park is now a place for people and wildlife, open to anyone for walking or cycling on the surfaced paths. The walk around the lake is just less than one mile. Wooden benches have been placed at several locations providing pleasant vistas. The absence of steep gradients makes the circular route ideal for visitors with pushchairs, and most is accessible to wheelchairs.

The River Ouzel follows the canal for some way now, as the canal meanders its way through the Ouzel valley.

There are useful supermarkets north of bridge 114 on the towpath path.

Linslade is now an extension of Leighton Buzzard and there is a large Tesco on the canal-side and a leisure centre and swimming pool close to the canal.

Leighton Buzzard is a picturesque market town with 17 and 18th century half timbered houses in the streets around the Market Cross which has stood for over 600 years in the centre of the town.

There is a steam railway in the town , The Leighton Buzzard Railway is one of the last survivors of the hundreds of 2 foot (610mm) gauge light railways. Today's Leighton Buzzard Railway offers an 85-minute round trip from Page's Park to Stonehenge Works, which is in the Bedfordshire countryside to the north of the town. The current track is just under 3 miles (4.8km) long.

Check the website for the timetable.

Whipsnade Zoo is a short taxi ride away, it is a zoo and safari park located at Whipsnade, near Dunstable, its a sprawling, 600-acre home to more than 2500 animals, with tours, adventure play areas

You can moor here for the night it is 5.5 hours to here.

Day 7

As you leave Leighton Buzzard and Linslade the Canal meanders like a river, still following the River Ouzel. Steep hills rise to the east and west, with thick woods to the east, and the canal continues its fall to Bletchley. The 3 locks at Soulbury make an attractive landscape with a canalside pub.

The village of Stoke Hammond lies half a mile to the west of Bridge 106 with the Dolphin pub in the village. The countryside soon ends after Bridge 99, as you reach the outskirts of Bletchley.

Fenny Stratford is by bridge 96 also on the outskirts of Milton Keynes but near a train station from where you can get into the city very easily. The lock is just short of Bridge 22 and a pub is just by the Bridge. Fenny Stratford has Local shops and pubs and the lock with the smallest fall in the system.

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You can moor at Great Linford and turn just before Linford Wharf bridge. It is 5.75 hours to here

Behind the Giffard park pub by bridge 78 there is a late opening store and an off-licence.

Great Linford is a lovely village built in the traditional golden stone, it is a magnificent canal village with church, manor, farm and almshouses close to the canal.

From Great Linford you can get into Milton Keynes on a 15 minute bus journey.

Days 8-14

Make your way back home!

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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