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Llangollen and return from Middlewich

Cruise this route from : Middlewich

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Cruising Days : 8.00 to 14.00

Cruising Time : 58.00

Total Distance : 111.00

Number of Locks : 50

Number of Tunnels : 6

Number of Aqueducts : 4

This very beautiful canal is one of the most popular waterways in Europe and includes the famous Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, which is one of the most spectacular and amazing feats of engineering on the canal network.

Built by Thomas Telford in 1805, the Aqueduct is 126 feet high and spans over 1000 feet across a valley with the River Dee thundering away in the distance below.

The Chirk Aqueduct is another impressive structure built by Thomas Telford. It is 70 feet high, and beside it at 100 feet high, is an impressive viaduct built in 1848, to take the Shrewsbury & Chester Railway across the valley.

The Chirk Tunnel is 1,377 feet long, and once through this, you can moor up and walk to Chirk Castle, a 700-year-old Castle managed by the National Trust.

Llangollen, a very pretty Welsh town at the western end of the Canal, is easily reached from our marina in a couple of days, and is a pleasant base to moor up at for 24 hours.

Cruising Notes

Day 1

Day 1

From Middlewich Top wharf - cruise south & you turn off right down the Middlewich Branch Canal. 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 go under the Bridge on the Middlewich Branch you encounter a lock, and after Bridge 27 as you head out of town there is another lock- Stanthorne Lock, and then you can relax & enjoy the scenery in the next lock free section of the canal.

This attractive & often under rated canal provides some wonderfully tranquil rural moorings. This is a quiet section of the canal, passing through rich farmland interspersed with woods. There are no towns and only one small village- Church Minshull, a good place to moor as the Badger pub is in the village- about 10 minutes walk from Bridge 14 to your right along Cross lane . It is 2.5 hours to here

Day 2

Cruise along this lovely quiet Canal until until you reach the Junction of the Shropshire Union Canal at Barbridge where you'll find the Jolly Tar pub or the Olde Barbridge Inn in canalside with moorings.

Turn left at the junction, towards Nantwich.

In a short while you will see the Llangollen Canal to your right, turn right at the Hurleston Junction and you immediately come 4 locks in a row - the Hurleston Locks.

After climbing the Hurleston Locks the canal runs through a shallow valley to reach Swanley Locks , the scenery is farmland.

You will soon reach the 3 locks at Baddiley before reaching the lift bridge at Wrenbury which is automated and operated by a push button, a BW key is required to operate it.

The Dusty Miller Pub is canalside- a splendid converted old canalside wharf and the Cotton Arms just down the road off to the left.

Moor for the night here it is 7.5 hours to here.

Day 3

Soon the first of many delightful lift bridges is reached, although many are left open.

The green Cheshire countryside leads through Marbury and Quoisley and Willey Moor Locks, where there is a pub – The Willey Moor Lock Tavern, which is canalside.

After Willey Moor Lock, there is Poveys lock to negotiate just a little bit further on.

The open quiet countryside continues, but as you approach Grindley Brook, prepare your crew as there are 6 locks ahead, including 3 in the form of a staircase.

You will cruise through the Grindley Brook staircase locks which are very interesting.

Grindley Brook locks are usually thought of as the three lock staircase but the name includes the three locks below the staircase. It is these locks that are locally thought to be the most attractive, with the area around the bottom lock the most attractive of all. The famous staircase lock needs extra care when navigating through. Thousands of boats manage it each year so there is nothing to worry about just read the instructions at the top or bottom of the lock and keep your wits about you. There is often a lock-keeper here, so it is worth mooring up when you reach the actual staircase & finding him.

At the end of a straight stretch a massive railway embankment precedes a sharp bend, around which is the start of the locks. Boats should remain below the railway embankment, and between April to October 08.30 to 18.30, obtain the advice of the lock-keeper before starting to negotiate the locks, as he will know which boats are queuing to go up and down.

The Horse & Jockey Pub is near the bottom lock, and there is also Lockside Stores where you can obtain provisions.

The canal now approaches Whitchurch, and it is worth exploring this fine old Roman town which has some beautiful old houses of all periods at its centre. The streets are narrow and it has a variety of shops and pub.

Moor up along the Whitchurch Arm, after the lift bridge turn a sharp left and cruise to the end. From here it is about 15 minutes walk into the town.

It is 6 hours to here

Day 4

From Whitchurch, the canal once again goes through the open countryside passing no villages for miles.

Continue your cruise and you will shortly reach Whixall Moss, a raised bog with rare insect and plant life. The bog was formed during the Ice Age. There are walks and cycle routes aplenty here at Whixall Moss.

The canal branches away to your left, but it only leads to a nature reserve and marina, so keep right.

The canal passes into England and then into Wales, going back and forth past a remote and unpopulated area. At Bridge 48 is the small village of Bettisfield, where you will find local stores and an off-licence.

Soon the open countryside gives way to a more hilly wooded landscape, as you start to cruise through the Meres that make this area, famously called the mini Lake District.

Cole Mere is first, on your left, then Blake Mere further along on your right. The largest Mere is by Ellesmere itself. You can walk to it from Bridge 57, just after the short Ellesmere Tunnel. The Meres were carved out during the Ice Age.

You will soon be approaching Ellesmere. A fine old warehouse and small canalside crane, old canal company offices, all testament to the canal trading that used to be carried out from here.

Ellesmere is a busy C18th market town with delightful pubs and restaurants, also a variety of small shops and a Co-op. Moor up the end of the Ellesmere Arm, a canal branch to your right.

It is 5 hours cruising to here

Day 5

From Ellesmere, the countryside once again becomes quiet and rural, until you pass the Montgomery Canal at the Frankton Junction. This canal had been restored for about 7 miles.

To access the canal there are 4 locks called the Frankton Locks, which are only opened by a lock-keeper between 12-2pm (Please check hours when booking, as 48 hours notice of passage is required). Only boats with a booking will be allowed through the locks. Please note that no passages will be allowed outside of the published hours. To book a passage call 01606 723800 during normal office hours, from Monday to Friday.

Cruise to Maestermyn Bridge there is a pub after Bridge No. 5 called The Narrow Boat Inn, just before the Maestermyn Marina at Whittington.

Shortly after Bridge 11 you will come to 2 locks quite close together. After the second lock, you can moor up and fill up with water if you need to.

A little further on, after Bridge 15, there are some very nice moorings outside the Lion Keys Pub and Restaurant, just prior to going under the A5 road. There are 20 moorings available here for customers.

At Bridge 21 you can moor up and walk to The Bridge Inn, the last pub in England, before you cross the Chirk Aqueduct into Wales. Make sure there is nobody coming over the aqueduct before you attempt it.

The Aqueduct is 70 feet high and was built between 1796 and 1801 by Thomas Telford and William Jessop. It is smaller than the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, but it is just as beautiful, and crosses over the River Ceiriog.

Once on it, you will have spectacular views of the River flowing down the valley below, and the Chirk Viaduct above you. As the Aqueduct is only wide enough for one boat, do make sure there is not a boat coming from the other end before you go over it.

You cannot go very fast across the Aqueduct, so just enjoy the view, as very soon you come to the end, and approach the beginning of Chirk Tunnel, which at over 400 metres long, is one of the longest tunnels on the canal network, which has a towpath running through it.

After the tunnel you can moor up and walk back into Chirk to explore the town, which has many historical buildings. A fascinating town trail has been devised in order to show it all at its best.

If you want to visit the medieval castle at Chirk, moor up just after the Tunnel and walk along the road westwards to the castle gates. It is about a 20 minute walk but well worth it. This magnificent 700 year old fortress was built by Edward 1, and has family apartments, state rooms, servants quarters and dungeons which can all be seen.

After Chirk Tunnel there are some factories hidden away to the right, behind the embankment. This is a convenient place to moor, but you may want to spend the night a little further along the canal.

If you want to moor up off the canal, you can do so at Chirk Marina, which is a little further. There is a Golf Club there, that has a bar and restaurant open to the public. Charges may apply for mooring. It is 6.5 hours

cruising to here .

Day 6

Once the canal veers away from the railway, you will find the Offas Dyke path following the Canal.

There is a very quaint lift bridge to negotiate at Froncysyllte, you will have to lift it up using your windlass key.

You might have to queue for Pontcysyllte Aqueduct. One of your crew will need to go ahead to see if any boats are coming over it towards you, if not you are free to enter from your end. There are sometimes British Waterways staff here who will help to organise everyone.

The views are spectacular, so don't miss the photo opportunity. There is a walkway on your right, should you want a 'closer' view of the River Dee flowing along far beneath you.

You immediately come into Trevor Wharf, where you can moor for the night if you wish, or carry on to Llangollen. If you turn sharply to the left as you leave the aqueduct, there is a pub called The Telford Inn, right next to the Anglo Welsh Marina.

You will encounter shallow water and narrow sections of canal between here & Llangollen, and in some cases it will be down to single file. Be careful along the Canal and try to avoid going too close to the banks, as you may get grounded. Should this happen, you will need to reverse and use your pole to push yourself away from the bank, or get off the boat and try to push it away.

It takes about 3 hours to cruise to Llangollen, and requires a bit of concentration and some reversing, but it is well worth the effort.

At Bridge 41, there is a pub called The Sun Trevor, and is very well placed for welcome refreshment.

As you meander on towards Llangollen, you will see the ruins of Dinas Bran Castle on top of a very steep hill. Now is the narrowest part of the canal to negotiate, so it is all single file boats, with just a few passing places. You will need to send a crew member ahead again, to see if it is OK to carry on.

Eventually you will emerge into Llangollen. If the ticket office is open you can purchase a ticket to moor overnight in the Canal Basin. If the ticket office is closed, just purchase a ticket when it reopens. Alternatively, there are some moorings on the left where you can tie up for a few hours.

The Canal Basin has electric hook ups and water, so you can connect to the mains, then go off for some sightseeing for a day or so, if you wish.

It is 3.5 hours cruising to here from Chirk.

Llangollen is very pretty, with the River Dee wending its way through the town, white water crashing over the rocky river bed.

You may see the steam engines at the Llangollen Steam railway, as you walk into the town, and perhaps go for a ride on one. It will take you to Carrog and back, through some 8 miles of the most stunning scenery in Britain. There are many craft and souvenir shops, plus cafes, bars, tearooms & restaurants.

If you want some exercise after being on a boat for a few days, take a walk to the beautiful Horseshoe Falls, a couple of miles along the towpath, at the end of the canal. On the way back, perhaps stop for a pub lunch at the Chainbridge Hotel, where you can enjoy spectacular views of the River Dee.

You can take a detour near here as just off the A542 are the ruins of the beautiful Valle Crucis Abbey, one of the most complete Cistercian Abbey's in Wales.

Back on the towpath, you pass a very quaint Canal and Motor Museum, which is worth a look.

In Llangollen there is more to see & do, including Plas Newydd, an C18th house open to the public, now housing a museum. Visit <http://www.llangollen.com/plas.html> for more information.

Every July, the International Eisteddfod is held here. The world renowned International Musical Festival presents some of the best artist from around the world.

Days 7 8 9

It is 28 hours back to the marina at Middlewich so you can either spend the afternoon on Day 6 cruising after you have turned the boat at Llangollen, or if you wish to have some time to explore this lovely town, you need to do just over 9 hours cruising a day to get back to Middlewich, but if you are on a 11 nights cruise you have an extra day to get back

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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