

UK Canal Boating

Escape with a canal boating holiday!

Loughborough and return from Market Harborough

Cruise this route from : Market Harborough

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Loughborough and return from Market Harborough

Cruising Days : 8.00 to 0.00

Cruising Time : 43.00

Total Distance : 79.00

Number of Locks : 70

Number of Tunnels : 2

Number of Aqueducts : 0

Cruising north will take you towards Leicester and you can visit some of the pretty towns and villages on the way. The canal section just before Leicester is very rural, surrounded by pleasant, typical English countryside

In Leicester visit the NATIONAL SPACE CENTRE- close to the canal. A great day out for the whole family - view the space age building as you approach from you narrowboat. The opportunity to explore many facets of space travel, to meet the furthest reaches of our universe face to face & to interact with both science fact & science fiction.

Great Central railway in Great central Rd Loughborough is 8 miles of preserved main line taking you back to the days of express steam haulage. Voted number 12 on the list of the 50 greatest railway journeys in the world the Great Central Railway is the UK's only double track, main line heritage railway. It's the only place in the world where full size steam engines can be seen passing each other – just as it was when steam ruled the rails. Trains run every weekend of the year, bank holidays and selected week days through the summer

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Cruising Notes

The marina at Union Wharf has been redeveloped by British Waterways over the last two years. The marina is located at the northern end of Market Harborough - a quaint, traditional English market town that dates from 1203. You can enjoy delicious food and fine ales in the town's historic coaching inns or just potter around the

market and the fine selection of family owned shops. From Union Wharf it's just two hours cruising to the 'Leicester Line' of the Grand Union Canal.

Market Harborough – A market town mid way between Leicester and Northampton. Visit Welland Park, the town's museum and the old grammar school, a 17th school built on stilts. Visit nearby Rockingham Castle built by William the Conqueror. If you need to entertain the children then visit Wicksteed Park one of the biggest and best playgrounds in Europe.

The town has many nice pubs, and shops. there is an antique and collectors market every Sunday in the market hall.

Eat at the Italian Restaurant based at Union Wharf Marina. Open 12-14.15 & 18.00 til late.

The Old Union Canal Society gives guided walks along the canal during summer months and follow the historic town trail.

You are welcome to stay moored up in the Marina and use the car or public transport to visit the many local attractions .

The Grand Union canal boasts an extraordinary variety of wildlife, from feeding herons, and hunting owls, to water voles. A number of diverse species thrive in this tranquil and often unique environment.

This cruise can only be started if the River Soar is not in flood.

Day 1

The base at Union Wharf Marina is at the end of the Market Harborough Arm, & you need to cruise for about 2 hours (5 ½ miles) to get back on the main Grand Union Canal.

It is a lovely rural cruise to Foxton which is at the base of the lovely Foxton flight of locks.

Foxton is the site of a steam powered Inclined Plane, which replaced ten locks and lifted narrow boats 75 feet. It was opened in 1900 but suffered from mechanical and structural problems. The locks were reopened in 1908 and now work beautifully. Whilst here visit the Foxton Museum and gift shop. The well stocked canal side shop offers you groceries, hardware as well as the traditional "roses and Castles" canalware, made and hand-painted on site.

Stop for a cream tea in the canal side cafe or a well deserved pint in the Foxton Locks Inn. Spend a couple of hours watching the colourful narrow boats passing through the staircase locks. British Waterways organise events based on Foxton Locks

Once you reach the main Grand Union Canal at Foxton, you might want to moor up for the night as there is a nice pub by the Foxton Locks. You will be turning right away from the Foxton Locks, there might be more moorings around the corner.

It is 2 hours cruising to here.

Day 2

Cruising north will take you towards Leicester and you can visit some of the pretty towns and villages on the way. The canal section just before Leicester is very rural, surrounded by pleasant, typical English countryside.

Soon you will pass through Saddington Tunnel which is 880 yards long, lookout for the bats which naturalists

enthusiasts about. The Tunnel was built crooked in 1797.

Just a mile or so away is the village of Saddington, the award winning pub - Queens Head in the main street has superb views over Saddington reservoir, and serves a wide range of food. Visit Saddington reservoir built to keep the canal well watered now a wildlife haven

After the tunnel you will see the small town of Fleckney, about 10 mins walk from Bridge 73. There is a takeaway, stores & a bakery, chemist & off licence here. The Old Crown west of Bridge 73 serves food.

The first locks you reach are the Knibworth Locks, in fact there are 5 locks to negotiate along this stretch. Visit the Wistow Rural Centre www.wistow.com moor up at either bridge 78 or 80 for access. Call into the tea rooms for a traditional English tea, a light snack or a 3 course lunch - children's menus also available. Then stroll around the model village and the garden centre.

Wistan Le Dale model village- take the footpath south from Ivy Bridge (78) to the church and visit this acclaimed Model Village. Open daily exc Tues, with cafe.

The tunnel, bridges and locks which begin the descent into Leicester provide plenty of Canal interest.

Brocks Hill Country Park & Environment Centre is a 2 & half mile walk north along a footpath from Clifton Bridge (85) & then via A5199 & B582, but it is well worth the effort as it makes a very worthwhile day out. It is a unique environment centre built to demonstrate wind & solar power. Set in 67 acres of parkland with a cafe. Entrance is free.

The navigation follows the north westerly course of the River Sence, until you reach Kilby Bridge (87) where indications of the City of Leicester begin. there is a good pub here.- The Navigation Inn a friendly pub serving real ales & food.

About half a mile north of Kilby Bridge is the award winning Wigston Framework Knitters museum. open every Sunday.

Moor near here, it is 7 hours cruising to here.

Day 3

The navigation from Blaby into Leicester runs through a linear Country park & mostly parallels the off road cycleway along an old railway track.

Moor up if you wish just before Blaby bridge 98, the town is to your south, and has all the usual facilities.

Aylestone off to the right still retains the feel of a country village with narrow streets and pretty brick cottages. There are tearooms here besides the lock. The gas museum www.gasmuseum.co.uk is situated in a Victorian gatehouse in one of the city's first gasworks.

East of Packhorse Bridge 105 (fork left up Sanvey lane, then left) is the Black Horse. The Union Inn is east of Freestone bridge 106. The canal follows the River Sence to its junction with the Soar, sometimes they share the same bed, and because of this flooding can occur after heavy rainfall. Watch out for signs and for the enormous weir just above Freemans meadow lock where the Canal & the River Soar meet.

The Canal enters Leicester along a pleasant cutting, a variety of buildings line the canal banks and a series of ornamental bridges lead straight into the town centre by the West bridge, making this a lovely route into

Leicester considering it is a large City.

There are secure moorings at Castle Gardens (on the right past Newarke Bridge 2). The city centre is remarkably compact with everything surprisingly close to these moorings.

It is 5.5 hours to here

Places to see in Leicester:

Visit the new visitor Centre of Richard III in Leicester and follow the story of the most ambitious archaeological projects ever attempted: no less than a search for the lost grave of King Richard III. The last English king to die in battle.

Incredibly, the excavation uncovered not only the friary of Grey Friars but also a battle-scarred skeleton with spinal curvature. On 4th February 2013, the University announced to the world's press that these were the remains of King Richard III.

Belgrave House & Gardens,- 1709 Queen Anne House www.leicestermuseums.ac.uk

Abbey Pumping Station- 1891 with Victorian steam powered beams engines that used to pump the towns sewerage. Also unique public health exhibition & managers house circa World War 2. Moorings here.

Castle Gardens & Motte (where you moor) The Motte or raised mound dates from the 11th C.

Cathedral- Guildhall Lane, dating from 14th & 15th Centuries & restored in 19 C.

Eco House- Environmentally friendly show house Tel 0116 285 5489. Buses from High Street.

NATIONAL SPACE CENTRE- close to Belgrave Lock 44. www.spacecentre.co.uk . A great day out for the whole family is at The National Space Centre. View the space age building as you approach from you narrowboat. The opportunity to explore many facets of space travel, to meet the furthest reaches of our universe face to face & to interact with both science fact & science fiction. Open Tues -Sun all year & Mon pm -school hols.

St Mary de castro- Founded in 1107 with excellent examples of Norman glass, stone & wood carving.

Theatres

De Montfort Hall- Prime venue for touring Opera & Ballet companies & Orchestras & Soloists

Haymarket Theatre- Venue for hit shows bound for the West End

Phoenix Arts Centre - Cinema & live performances of contemporary dance, mime, jazz & folk.

Restaurants

Golden Mile- an area centred on Belgrave Rd., to the north of the city, where the focus lies on the superb range of Asian cultural delights & cuisine. In a large city such as Leicester, there is a wide range of pubs & restaurants , these are near the canal:

The Hat & Beaver- close to the Shires shopping centre. The Northbridge Tavern- by North Lock. The Mulberry Tree , Birstall, riverside gastro pub.

Markets

Market Place - the Food hall selling fresh meat , poultry, dairy produce & fish from all over the world. Tues - Sat. The retail market with over 300 covered stalls is open also.

Museums

Jewry Wall Museum- Collection of the count's archaeology up to the Middle Ages, overlooking the Jewry Wall,

which dates from 2nd C & is thought to be part of Roman Baths. Two Roman Mosaic pavements can be seen in situ.

New walk Museum & Art gallery- www.Leicestermuseums.ac.uk you will discover the mighty dinosaurs as you walk in their footprints, be on the lookout for the 'Barrow Kipper' and the Rutland dinosaur.

Newarke Houses Museum- The social history of the area from 1500 to the present day, inc the history of hosiery, costume & lace industries.

Royal Infirmary Museum- history from 1771. Wygston's House Museum of Costume.

Shopping

Shires Shopping Centre- All the usual big name stores under one high, glass-arched roof plus cafes, pizzeria, etc.

St Martins Square & Loseby Lane- speciality shopping centre in the heart of the City, Food, fashion, wine & flowers amongst the street entertainers.

Continue on to Birstall to moor up for the night, there are several pubs here & moorings & useful shops for supplies. Birstall is a quiet suburb of Leicester.

You pass the national Space centre by Belgrave Lock 44 which is where the canal joins the River Soar.

It is 2 hours from Newarke bridge to Birstall

You will have cruised for 7.5 hours today.

Day 4

Cruise past Watermead Country park and Boating lakes, which are now the attractive remains of old gravel workings. You are now out in the countryside again with the River Soar and River Wreake joining the canal. No canalside villages are past until you get to Mountsorrel, the lock here is a waterways showcase and the extensive moorings and canalside pub make it quite a busy scene.

It is yards from the canal to the centre of the village which has good facilities for supplies & takeaways.

Stonehurst Family farm & museum is in Loughborough Rd., Mountsorrel,.

A chance to see a working farm, a museum of memorabilia & old cars & small animal farm for the kids to touch. Also tea shop & farm shop.

You soon pass Barrow on Soar a village to the right of you, with good moorings before Mill bridge 28, and various shops in the village for supplies. There is a train station in the village for those attractions not so close at hand.

Barrow deep lock is just that, a very deep lock to change the level of the canal.

Pillings Flood lock gates are usually kept open during the summer months, you will need to avoid the weir here.

The canal circles Loughborough to a T Junction. You can turn or moor near Loughbrough Wharf, or moor further back just past Bridge 36, or before Bridge 38.

Loughborough has all the usual services for a busy town.

The Bell Foundry museum is south of bridge 38.

The museum at John Taylor & Co, tells the story of the Bellfoundry going right back to its links with bellfounding in the 13th Century. An extensive range of exhibits and memorabilia tells the story of one of the oldest manufacturing industries in the world.

Charnwood museum in Granby street features a wide range of exhibits reflecting the history, geology, archaeology and industries of Charnwood and the surrounding area. Permanent displays include 'Coming to Charnwood', 'The Natural World of Charnwood', 'Living off the Land' and 'Earning a Living'. Each contains exhibits from the past and present including interactive displays, computers and audio-visuals. Visitors can handle rocks from Charnwood's volcanic past, walk beneath the giant oak tree, investigate the 4,000 year old burial of the Cossington Boy, visit the Victorian grocers shop or zoom-in on a fly's eye with the video microscope.

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It is 5 hours to here

Day 5

It is 21.5 hours back to Market Harborough,

Moor at Newarke bridge , Leicester's city centre moorings just after West bridge 3.

It is 7.25 hours to here

Day 6

Moor at Kilby Bridge 87 for the 6th night

It is 5.5 hours to here

Day 7

Day 8

Cruise back to Market Harborough

It is 8.75 hours to here

Moor up in the marina basin at Union Wharf, and enjoy the delights of the Italian restaurant in the marina, or walk into the lovely market town of Market Harborough.

Useful Links

Description : Leicestershire Tourist Information

Website : www.visitleicester.info

Telephone : 0116 299 4444

Description : Rockingham Castle
Website : <http://www.rockinghamcastle.com/>
Telephone : 01536 770240

Description : St.Martins Square Shopping Centre
Website : <http://stmartinssquare.co.uk/>
Telephone : 0116 255 2694

Description : Leicester Museums
Website : www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council-services/lc/leicester-city-museums/
Telephone : 0116 225 4900

Description : National Space Centre Leicester
Website : <http://www.spacecentre.co.uk/>
Telephone : 0116 261 0261

Description : Brocks Hill Country Park and Visitor Centre
Website : http://www.oadby-wigston.gov.uk/pages/brocks_hill_visitor_centre_and_country_park
Telephone : 0116 257 2888

Description : Wistow Maze
Website : <http://www.wistow.com/maze.asp>
Telephone : 07884 403889

Description : Loughborough Bell Foundry
Website : <http://www.taylorbells.co.uk/>
Telephone : 01509 212241

Description : Great Central Railway
Website : <http://www.gcrailway.co.uk/>
Telephone : 01509 632323

Description : Charnwood Museum
Website : <http://www.leics.gov.uk/charnwoodmuseum>
Telephone : 01509 233754

Description : Stonehurst Family Farm
Website : <http://www.stonehurstfarm.co.uk>
Telephone : 01509 413216

Description : Leicester Tourist information
Website : www.visitleicester.info
Telephone : 0116 299 4444

Description : Leicester Cathedral
Website : www.leicestercathedral.org/
Telephone : 0116 261 5200

Description : Leicester Castle
Website : <http://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council-services/lc/parks-green-spaces/local-parks/castlegardens/>

Telephone : 0116 252 7003

Description : Highcross Shopping Centre

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

Telephone : 0116 242 8644

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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