

# UK Canal Boating

Escape with a canal boating holiday!

## North Pennine Ring from Skipton

Cruise this route from : Skipton

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Cruising Days : 22.00 to 0.00

Cruising Time : 109.00

Total Distance : 183.00

Number of Locks : 214

Number of Tunnels : 6

Number of Aqueducts : 0

The North Pennine Ring is also known as the Two Roses Ring after the War of the Roses, which we will negotiate in an anti-clockwise direction

The Ring takes in the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, Rochdale Canal, Ashton Canal, Calder & Hebble Navigation and Aire & Calder Navigation. The 185-mile route includes numerous aqueducts and swing bridges, 4 tunnels and 215 locks - 21 days at 6 hours cruising per day.

This big journey scrambles gloriously across the Pennines, following five canals and passing three of the Seven Wonders of the Waterways! Your cruise is a thriller for contrasting high moments. In a challenging adventure you'll climb and fall on moors and dales, weave through cities with secret histories, tiptoe into nostalgic skylines remembering 'dark satanic mills', and amble along some of Britain's most tranquil and uncrowded waterways. With terrific power, this landscape raves over its borders - Lancashire and Yorkshire may have once spewed blood in the Wars of the Roses, yet old rivalry has morphed into peaceful pleasures in this route today. The battle over who was going to be king lies in the heart of this route, but this holiday's highlight is to revel with wind in your hair enjoying the freedom of the water route that crosses the wild Pennines.

## Cruising Notes

Navigational notes

For such a long route plan your route on [canalplan.org.uk](http://canalplan.org.uk) and look at the Navigational notes as some booking is required and some locks have limited opening hours, also the Huddersfield Broad Canal can only take a

maximum of 57 foot boat .

Turning south from your mooring travel onwards through therapeutic views towards the cute cottages, tearooms, pubs and church of Gargrave. On the border of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, Gargrave knows how to pull out all the stops for English charm. The Pennine Way crosses the canal at bridge 170, so cyclists and walkers reliably join boaters in the Dalesman Café.

A series of locks lead you through a windswept landscape with views across the valley, then the canal wiggles onward to Greenberfield Locks.

Barnoldswick is set away from the canal to your right - it is steeped in living history. Its ancient heritage dates back to pre-Roman times. Nowadays, stone built streets surround a traditional town centre with a restful square at the heart of the community. The town even has a unique time of its own, with a clock based on the 12 different letters in Barnoldswick!

The town is well known for its industrial heritage. Aside from having the highest point of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, Barnoldswick is famous for being the place where Rolls-Royce developed the jet engine in the second World War. There's also the town's most iconic landmark - Bancroft Mill with its working steam engine with free entry on most Saturdays. It originally drove some 1250 weaving looms and generates over 600 hp.

Secretly along this stretch the canal soothes old wars, disregarding history's bloody boundary as it flows seamlessly from Yorkshire back into Lancashire.

Beyond Barnoldswick, the countryside is blissfully remote and outstandingly beautiful heading towards Foulridge .

Salterforth off to your left is a small village of narrow streets and terraced houses, there is a childrens playground to the north of Bridge 151 and the lovely Anchor Inn is canalside.

Foulridge Wharf, also at the northern portal, was built to unload cargoes of raw cotton from North America for weaving in the Lancashire mills. There is a tea-room on the wharf and the New Inn Pub in the village. Foulridge Lower Reservoir, built to supply water to the canal, was constructed almost directly above the tunnel.

Lonely stone farms frame the distant mountains, and soon the Foulridge Tunnel is reached.

Its 1640 yards long and is controlled by traffic lights. The traffic lights are on green from the top of the hour till ten past the hour at the Foulridge end e.g. 10.00 until 10.10, 11.00 until 11.10

The Foulridge Tunnel was a major construction achievement, but is today best known for the story of a cow who once swam the whole length of the tunnel. The tunnel is straight enough that you can see right through it, though the roof is quite low in places. Most of it was built using the 'cut and cover' method - but despite this, unexpectedly difficult rock conditions meant that construction took a whole six years. Travel through the tunnel, which has no towpath, is only possible in one direction at a time, so traffic lights control a ten-minute window in each direction each hour.

In 1912, a cow named Buttercup fell into the canal by the southern portal. Rather than wade out as usual, she chose to swim the whole 1640 yards to the northern end, where she was revived with brandy by drinkers in the nearby Hole in the Wall pub which is sadly no longer there.

A C&RT Handcuff key is needed to open the Barrowford Locks,

The Pendle Heritage Centre is open daily and includes a Garden Tearoom, 18th Century Walled Garden, Cruck

Frame Barn, a Parlour shop, Tourist Information Centre, Pendle Arts Gallery.

The Museum explains the fascinating history of Park Hill and the ancient Bannister family. It tells about the mysterious Pendle Witches of the seventeenth century and of George Fox, whose vision on Pendle Hill inspired the international Quaker movement.

The M65 crosses over the canal at Barrowford then temporarily races alongside the water as you continue south. This sleepy 'motorway' village has an itchy relationship with speed. It's the ancestral home of Roger Bannister who ran the first 4-minute mile in 1954. Boats passing through at their unhurried 4 miles an hour today may spare a smile. Although the faint-hearted may not want to dawdle too long, since Barrowford is renowned for the Pendle Witches!

You can follow a trail from Pendle Heritage Centre to explore their spooky story from 400 years ago. Pendle Hill wafts ghostly stories over the village below, but it whispers a powerful story of religious reform too. George Fox scrambled to the top of the hill in 1652, and was moved to form the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) shortly afterwards. This spot is poignant for canal travellers, since many of the early canals were built by the businesses and philanthropy of the Quaker movement.

Heading south, you soon bump into one of the Seven Wonders of the Waterways. Burnley Embankment carries the Leeds & Liverpool Canal over the rooftops of Burnley. It's known as the 'straight mile' and, at 60ft high, the view over row after row of terraced houses is spectacular. You're treading in the footsteps of the Industrial Revolution in this region called the Weavers' Triangle. Burnley was once the weaving capital of the world, and if you listen hard enough you can imagine the sound of a staggering 79,000 looms going clickety-clack in the 19th century. If time allows, go to the visitor centre housed in the former toll house and discover more about Burnley's weaving heritage.

Continuing southwards through a mix of glorious views and industrial development, you eventually reach the Wigan Flight of 21 locks – a great challenge for a willing crew! Water conservation/anti vandal key is required for these locks

Exhausted and exhilarated, the canal skips onwards towards Manchester. It's worth taking time to explore Worsley and the Delph where underground mines led to the development of canals. This stretch of the Bridgewater Canal was an early pioneering route used by the Duke of Bridgewater to carry coal by boat from his mines to the city. The era known as 'Canal Mania' followed the Duke's success.

Soon another of the Seven Wonders adds to the excitement. Barton Swing Aqueduct carries the Bridgewater Canal over the Manchester Ship Canal. C&RT licence holders may remain on the Bridgewater Canal for periods not exceeding seven consecutive days.

The aqueduct swings at ludicrous right angles over the Ship Canal to allow water traffic to pass. Shortly even this great feat of canal engineering drifts from mind as the buzz of Manchester city nears. In the 19th century the area was named Cottonopolis due to the amount of textile factories here, but today you'll find everything a contemporary city can offer - shopping, eating out, night life, museums and art galleries, including the Lowry arts complex. There's also the attraction of a certain football ground and the fascination of the Museum of Science and Industry.

Your route heads northwards along the heavily locked Rochdale Canal, passing through the town of Rochdale, with old mills and weavers' cottages and the lure of Pennine views ahead. Some locks are locked at 4.30pm and re-opened at 9.30am.

Canal & River Trust has a number of volunteer lock keepers working on the Rochdale Canal flight of 17, between Lock 65 at Failsworth and Lock 81 at Miles Platting., and between Littleborough and the Summit.

Although booking is no longer required on the flight, it can be hard work and a number of boaters have requested assistance. The volunteers are happy to help when they can. Their help is given voluntarily so assistance is not guaranteed, but if you would like help call 0303 040 4040 at least 24 hours before your planned passage (longer if possible) and we will try to arrange this with the volunteers. The lock keepers have all trained with the Trust and have excellent local knowledge which can really add to your experience of the flight.

As you approach Todmorden there's a distinct change in the air as the scenery bursts with Yorkshire charisma. The snarling old boundary between Yorkshire and Lancashire once stabbed through Todmorden, and though many folk still muse over where 'Toddy' belongs today, it's now firmly declared a Yorkshire town. The bloody Wars of the Roses, with seething battles over who should be king, and the great lurch into the Tudor dynasty, have been silenced by the years and soothed by the region's uplifting vistas. The journey sings through delicious landscape, soon reaching the friendly town of Hebden Bridge. Once famous for producing corduroy and moleskin, Hebden Bridge is now much-loved for its free-range hempy image.

Just beyond Hebden your route travels through Mytholmroyd, birthplace of Ted Hughes, the late poet laureate. Then your glorious trans-Pennine journey continues into Sowerby Bridge where the Rochdale Canal meets the Calder & Hebble Navigation. Take a deep breath for the excitement of navigating Tuel Lane Lock before you arrive at the wharf. It's the deepest lock on Britain's canals, at over 19½ feet deep (don't worry - a lock keeper will assist at this lock on Fridays to Mondays, other days book passage on 03030 404040 during office hours, giving 24 hours' notice of your booking.). In the era of Canal Mania, the wharf was frenetic with boats loading and unloading cargoes of salt, cotton, wool, coal, limestone, timber and general wares. Today it's a welcoming hub packed with quiet charms. Don't miss the powerful and stirring sculpture, Jack O' The Locks, which stands at the entrance to the wharf.

As you cruise by Halifax it's worth visiting the Piece Hall, which dates from 1779 and was once the place to trade cloth. It's the only surviving cloth hall in Britain and scheduled as an Ancient Monument. It claims to be Yorkshire's most important secular building.

The Calder & Hebble Navigation passes through Brighouse and Dewsbury, then joins the Aire & Calder Navigation at Wakefield (home of the renowned Hepworth Wakefield art gallery). On the Calder & Hebble Navigation, you will need a handspike to open some of the lock paddles. Passing Stanley Ferry, the celebrated place where lock gates are built, you reach Castleford where your route heads north to re-join the Leeds & Liverpool Canal at Leeds. The city offers shopping, museums, opera, ballet, art galleries and the Henry Moore Institute. Leaving the dizzy fun of Leeds behind, you can look forward to a complete contrast as the Leeds & Liverpool Canal drifts towards more tranquil green countryside. With sentimental nostalgia you can imagine the fire-spitting chimneys that once choked the landscape across the north of England over 200 years ago. Working people mostly had to endure poor conditions, but Sir Titus Salt was a philanthropist who built an entire village for his mill workers. The village of Saltaire, and Salt's Mill, are immaculately preserved and open to visit today. Explore cobbled streets, tuck into tea and cake and soak up oodles of living heritage, before setting off again.

Just beyond Saltaire lies Bingley Five-Rise, the steepest lock staircase in Britain. Your crew and your boat is about to conquer a 60ft canal climb in these staircase locks. It's another of the Seven Wonders and a thrilling ride through an engineering marvel that has remained virtually unchanged since it was built in 1774. Passages down through Bingley Five and Three Rise Locks as well as Newlay, Forge and Kirkstall Locks in the morning between 08:00am - 12.00pm (last entry). Passages up through these locks in the afternoon from 1.00pm with last entry into Bingley Three Rise and Kirkstall Locks at 4:00pm.

As from the 1st October, the last entry through these locks will be 3:00pm due to the reduced daylight hours.

After the drama of the climb, the route flings into some of the best open countryside in England. Uncluttered

and uncrowded, the landscape has romance in the air as Haworth (home of the Brontes) is only 4 miles from here. Then your route swims in a rollercoaster of more emotion as it approaches Keighley where steam trains pull every traveller's eye away from the canal, and tissues should be at the ready since this railway line was made famous during the filming of 'The Railway Children'.

Skipton is Saxon for sheep, but today the canal basin in Skipton is a hub for boats and ice cream. Explore Skipton's many interesting sights, including a Medieval castle.

Your home mooring is just beyond Skipton at Thorlby Swing bridge 174.

## **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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