

# UK Canal Boating

Escape with a canal boating holiday!

## Stoke on Trent Potteries from Middlewich

Cruise this route from : Middlewich

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[Stoke-on-Trent-Potteries-from-Middlewich-Cruising-Route.html](#)

Cruising Days : 8.00 to 0.00

Cruising Time : 32.00

Total Distance : 45.00

Number of Locks : 68

Number of Tunnels : 2

Number of Aqueducts : 0

This cruise is rich in Industrial Heritage.

Cruise through towns that have been extracting salt since Roman times, and see the lop-sided buildings that the extraction has caused!

Exert yourself with the Heartbreak Hill flight of 26 locks, frighten yourself by cruising through the 1.66 miles long Harecastle Tunnel where according to legend a young woman was decapitated in the Telford Tunnel in the 1800s and her body thrown into Gilbert's Hole, a coal landing stage within the tunnel. The man had hacked the woman's head from her shoulders with a piece of slate until it was removed. It is believed that she now haunts Harecastle Tunnel, either in the form of a headless woman, or a white horse, and her appearance used to forewarn of disaster in the local mines.

Educate yourself at Jesse Shirley's Etruscan Bone & Flint mill-

This is a Victorian steam-powered millers works built in 1857 and which ground bone, flint and stone for the pottery industry and the beam engine and mill are in steam at various times during the day. Also in The Potteries Museum & Art gallery where the history of the area is brought to life.

Finally indulge in a bit of retail therapy in the Intu Potteries Shopping Centre, with over 80 shops and restaurants it is the premier shopping destination in the heart of Staffordshire.

## Cruising Notes

## Day 1

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 descend into Middlewich there are 3 locks to be negotiated before you reach a canal junction, and Kings Lock just after the junction.

Ignore the Middlewich branch canal to your right, and continue south down the Trent & Mersey Canal past several salt works, which shows this areas industrial heritage. The Rock salt mining that has gone on since Roman times has resulted in severe local subsidence, and the canal has had to be banked up in some stretches, which makes it much deeper than normal. There is a chinese takeaway west of bridge 166.

Occasional locks mark a quiet and unspoilt area, the town of Sandbach is away to the left, as the canal reaches the village of Wheelock. This busy little village has a stores and fish & chip shop., and 3 pubs, 2 near bridge 154, and one Canalside- the Cheshire Cheese- with moorings outside.

It is 3.25 hours to here and a good place to moor for the night

## Day 2

Sandbach is 1 ½ miles north of Wheelock, and is an old market town that has retained its charm. In its old cobbled market place stand 2 superb Saxon crosses, there are 7 pubs to choose from around here.

After Wheelock the first of 26 locks called Heartbreak Hill will have to be negotiated before you get to Kidsgrove and the junction with the Macclesfield Canal,. First pass the village of Hassall Green, the village has a stores and a canal shop within the canal Centre, which also houses a cafe beside the canal, there is lockside seating.

You then negotiate 5 locks and pass the village of Rode Heath to your left, there is a canalside pub here and it has a useful shopping area.

There are another 10 locks before you get to the junction with the Macclesfield canal, Moor here for the night near Hardings Wood Junction as its 7.5 hours to here and you have done 26 locks, well done!!

## Day 3

Cruise straight on and then to the start of the 1.75 mile long Harecastle tunnel.

According to legend a young woman was decapitated in the Telford Tunnel in the 1800s and her body thrown into Gilbert's Hole, a coal landing stage within the tunnel. The man had hacked the woman's head from her shoulders with a piece of slate until it was removed. It is believed that she now haunts Harecastle Tunnel, either in the form of a headless woman, or a white horse, and her appearance used to forewarn of disaster in the local mines. It takes around 30 – 40 minutes to cruise through the tunnel. You need to find out the opening times but currently they are

Summer opening hours

8am – 5pm from 1st March to 17th May

8am – 6pm From 17th May to 6th September Last craft in the Tunnel at 5.15pm if the Tunnel is free both ways.

8am – 5pm From 6th September to 31st October. To be guaranteed a passage, craft must arrive by 4.00pm.

For any enquiries call 03030 404040 during office hours.

#### Winter opening hours

By appointment only – Telephone 03030 404040 giving at least 48 hours notice.

Mondays & Wednesdays - 8.30pm to 12pm (last passage 11.15am)

Fridays - 11.30am to 3.00pm (last passage 2.15pm)

Saturdays - 8.30am to 12.30pm (last passage 11.45am)

Closed: Tuesdays, Thursdays, Sundays and Christmas day, Boxing day and New Years day.

The Harecastle tunnel is only one boat wide, so you need to consult the friendly lock-keeper before you join the convoy of boats through the tunnel.

Once you reach daylight again you soon pass the Middleport Pottery on your left, with its attractive red brick & slate buildings. There are a few pubs just before at Bridge 126.

Signs of the pottery industry still survive as you pass the heart of Stoke on Trent, which was the centre of the potteries, the 30 foot high brick furnaces still stand, and although they are no longer used, they are being preserved.

At Etruria near the marina there is a useful Toby Inn with its lovely carvery on offer, and within a short walk is a retail shopping park, including Waterworld an indoor tropical aqua park, a cinema, & Ten pin bowling & many high street stores. Also Pizza Hut & other eateries.

Just past the British waterways Yard you turn left up the Caldon Canal.

At the Junction is Jesse Shirley's Etruscan Bone & Flint mill

It is open 11-4.30pm every day, and the beam engine and mill are in steam at various times during the day.

This is a Victorian steam powered millers works built in 1857 and which ground bone, flint and stone for the pottery industry, and there are plenty of moorings here.

Soon you cruise past a statue of James Brindley, the builder of the Trent & mersey canal. The first 2 locks you reach are combined to form a staircase. There are shops & pubs close to Planet Lock, and at Hanley park are good moorings.

Moor here it is 3.5 hours cruising to here.

Day 4 Day 5 Day 6 Day 7 ,

There are a few lift bridges along this stretch so you will need your BW key., also be aware that some of the

other bridges are very low, so if you have bikes on the top of your boat you may have to take them off.

Walk north from Bridge 8 along Lichfield street and you will find the Intu Potteries Shopping Centre, with over 80 shops and restaurants it is the premier shopping destination in the heart of Staffordshire.

To the left off Potteries Way you will find The Potteries Museum & Art gallery where the history of the area is brought to life. Just north of Bridge 8 is the Bridegwater factory shop.

Further on the village of Milton is on the side of a hill to your left, there are a couple of pubs here, & stores & take-aways.

Turn your boat just after Bridge 16a just beyond the pipe bridge. It is 1.5 hours to here from Hanley Park and 16 hours back to the marina, so 2 full days cruising and so plenty of time to do some shopping and visit the Potteries Museums!!

## 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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