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Warwick and return from Kings Orchard

Cruise this route from : Kings Orchard

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Cruising Days : 7.00 to 8.00

Cruising Time : 48.00

Total Distance : 87.00

Number of Locks : 102

Number of Tunnels : 6

Number of Aqueducts : 0

A cruise that sneaks past the surroundings of Birmingham, the capital of the canals, with the junctions of Fazeley, Salford, Bordesley offering a glimpse of the Industrial Revolution and 'canal mania'.

Energetic lock flights contrast with the peace and quiet of sweeping countryside and stunning views.

This is a journey of trade, heritage and railways, with medieval tales and the resilience of nature.

The county town of Warwickshire' is famous for its magnificent castle and historic charm.

The original Castle at Warwick was built on a motte and bailey constructed by William the Conqueror in 1068, with the present exterior being a good example of a C14th fortification. The gardens of the Castle were designed by Capability Brown.

Warwick is enriched with independent businesses offering an enticing blend of the old and the new, from gift shops, antique centres and traditional tea rooms to fashion shops, art galleries and fine restaurants. Market Place is the heart of the town, hosting a variety of cafes, pubs and shops and a thriving market every Saturday.

Cruising Notes

Before setting off on your journey, you may want to take time to explore the city of Lichfield. Lichfield Cathedral is the only three-spired medieval Cathedral in the UK and is world renowned. One of its treasures is an 8th-century carved panel of the Archangel Gabriel which was discovered in 2003. The close around the

Cathedral dates back to medieval times, and the city is also renowned for its Georgian architecture. The writer often referred to as Dr Johnson, Samuel Johnson, was born here in 1709, his birthplace now a museum. His most famous work 'A Dictionary of the English Language' was published in 1755 and, according to the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, Johnson is the second most quoted Englishman.

Head southwards past Huddlesford Junction (the Lichfield Canal) along the Coventry Canal through open countryside. A stone by bridge 78 at Whittington marks where the Coventry Canal changes to the Birmingham & Fazeley Canal - the result of a peculiar situation. The Coventry Canal Company ran out of money at Fazeley so the Birmingham & Fazeley Canal carries on for a couple of miles to the northwest of Fazeley Junction while the Coventry Canal heads northeast beyond the junction – though the Company later managed to buy the section from Whittington through to Fradley Junction, now a stranded portion of the Coventry Canal! No mooring is allowed by the wooded hillside at Hopwas and look out for danger flags as this is the Whittington Firing Ranges. Carry on through open landscapes to Fazeley Junction, where the Birmingham & Fazeley Canal heads off south towards Birmingham.

Just south of the junction, you may want to moor up near Drayton Manor Swing Bridge for any children aboard who may like a quick detour to Drayton Manor Family Theme Park. Kingsbury Water Park lies to the left of the canal at Bodymoor Heath. The park was created from industrial gravel and sand extraction pits, and the resulting 600-acre park has around 30 pools and lakes. A Visitor Centre sets out the history of the park, and as many as 230 different species of bird have been spotted here so a must for any twitchers on board. The 11 Curdworth Locks alongside the M42 take the canal uphill now before popping through the diminutive Curdworth Tunnel (57yds/52m long), and into the countryside beyond.

The three locks at Minworth mark the edge of the trailing industrial outskirts of Birmingham as you head towards Salford (or Spaghetti) Junction. Turn south at the junction onto the Grand Union Canal and soon you will climb the five Garrison Locks up to Bordesley Junction, where the Digbeth Branch heads off right towards the Birmingham & Fazeley Canal and central Birmingham. Your journey continues left through Camp Hill Locks and beneath the arches of numerous railway viaducts. The railway shadows the canal before crossing over again at Railway Bridge 88E. Tyseley Locomotive Works Visitor Centre, on the site of a former Great Western Railway locomotive depot, is a short walk from Bridge 88 and has a huge collection of vintage and steam locomotives. It is only open for special open days so get in touch first if you're interested in timing your journey to fit.

Heading now through Tyseley and Solihull, your surroundings are primarily suburban housing and former busy wharves before entering a tree-lined cutting with high bridges. The canal finally breaks into open countryside just before the village of Catherine-de-Barnes with its welcoming pub and restaurant. Crossing the River Blythe over a short aqueduct, the proximity of the M42 makes itself known but once you've cruised under it peace returns with the descent of the five Knowle Locks. The village of Knowle is a short walk from the top of the locks and dates in part from the Middle Ages, with a church dating from 1402. It was built to prevent the villagers from having to walk the three miles there and back to Hampton in Arden for mass on Sundays, which involved the treacherous crossing of the Blythe (now much less threatening!).

Just beyond Kingswood Bridge 65, it's worth mooring up to take the short walk via a short boat-filled branch line to Kingswood Junction, with its moored boats, split bridges and white-washed cottages, which connects the Grand Union Canal to the Stratford Canal. Also a short walk from the bridge to the northeast along the Heart of England Way is the National Trust's Baddesley Clinton House, a medieval manor house complete with its own moat.

After the short Shrewley Tunnel (433yds/396m long), there is a breather for a couple of miles before reaching

the highlight of the journey, the rather daunting 21 Hatton Locks. At the top of the flight, which has the nickname 'Stairway to Heaven', there's a welcome teashop and pub before the hard work of descending the locks begins. The views are magnificent down towards Warwick and don't forget to look back up the flight as you go down – an impressive sight. Moor near at Budbrooke Junction to walk into Warwick beyond the short Saltisford Arm, now used for mooring. Its most famous attraction is of course Warwick Castle, built in 1068 by William the Conqueror and dramatically overlooking the River Avon at the foot of the town. Despite the age of the fortifications, the castle's grounds were created by Capability Brown in the 18th century.

The timber-framed buildings of the Grade I-listed Lord Leycester Hospital are some of the best preserved examples of medieval courtyard architecture in England. Under Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester in the time of Queen Elizabeth I, the Hospital became a place of retirement for old warriors who had fought in the Elizabethan era wars. Those soldiers and those who live here now are known as the Brethren and live within the walls of the building. It's possible to have tea and cake in the Brethren's Kitchen, which has for 500 years served royalty, nobles, monks and of course the Brethren.

Once you've done all your sightseeing and perhaps a spot of shopping, it's time to retrace your route back to the marina.

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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