

# UK Canal Boating

Escape with a canal boating holiday!

## Warwickshire ring from Alvechurch

Cruise this route from : Alvechurch

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Warwickshire ring from Alvechurch

Cruising Days : 10.00 to 15.00

Cruising Time : 65.00

Total Distance : 116.00

Number of Locks : 121

Number of Tunnels : 8

Number of Aqueducts : 0

Cruise from the medieval village of Alvechurch with its pretty half-timbered houses through idyllic stretches of countryside to Stratford on Avon or to Warwick.

This route combines historic castles, like Warwick, daredevil rides at Drayton manor, tobogganning or ski-ing in Tamworth, the Stairway to heaven at Hatton's 21 locks, Braunston's pretty canal village and much more. (May require a longer stay) or take a detour up the beautifully tranquil Ashby Canal if you are not stopping elsewhere.

Are you looking for a holiday combining relaxing narrowboating with adventures on and off the water? One offering traditional 'Olde English' towns, cosmopolitan cities and memorable waterway sights? Then you will love the Warwickshire Ring.

Sections of the Coventry, Oxford, Grand Union & Birmingham & Fazeley canals are components in the Warwickshire Ring which, despite the almost constant proximity of conurbation and industry, manages to carve a surprisingly rural route through manicured fields and ancient meadows for much of its length.

Warwickshire ring from Alvechurch

## Cruising Notes

## Day 1

Once setting off from Alvechurch, you soon leave the traffic behind and cruise through lovely Worcestershire countryside to your 1st Tunnel at Wast Hills which at 2726 yards is one of the longest in the country!

Soon after the Tunnel moor up by Parsons Hill bridge no 71, there is a pub called the Navigation about 100 yards west of the bridge.

It is 2 hours cruising to here.

## Day 2

For those with children you might want to stop at the visitor moorings at Bournville, which is 1 mile north of the Kings Norton Junction (booking is advisable Tel. 0844 8807667 ).It is signposted from the canal. There is an exhibition dedicated to the history of chocolate, audio visual displays, Victorian Birmingham and a Jungle to explore!

About 3 miles later you arrive at the Gas Street basin which is in the heart of Birmingham's canal network, It has been has been redeveloped into a unique experience where traditional narrow boats moor up next to cosmopolitan cafes and bars. The surrounding area is a vibrant arts and entertainment area and there are many shopping options within a short walk.

Amongst some of the attractions are the National Sea Life Centre and the Jewellery Quarter Discovery centre, also many fine Art galleries and over 500 restaurants offering every choice of food!

For shopping a visit to the new Bullring is a must, which covers an area the size of 26 football pitches and a has a huge range of shops.

Close by is the National Indoor Arena, one of the busiest large scale indoor sporting and entertainment venues in Europe.

Total cruising hours from Alvechurch to Gas Street basin is 4  $\frac{3}{4}$  hours.

From the Gas Street basin, cruise up to the Deep cuttings Junction & turn right where you will soon encounter your first locks as you begin your descent from Birmingham, the flight of 13 locks at Farmers bridge.

You will only have time for a short breather before you get to the next flight- the 11 locks at Aston. (Do not turn right onto the Digibeth branch just beforehand). Bear right at Salford Junction onto the Birmingham & Fazeley canal.

Continue on to Tyburn bridge which is convenient for shops, also water & refuse point at next lock.

It is 8 hours cruising to here from Kings Norton, so an ideal place to moor up for the night.

## Day 3

After the 3 locks at Minworth you will start seeing the countryside again, and if you stop at Curdworth there is a pub and a steak house. There is a lovely pub at Bodymoor Heath by Cheatle's farm bridge. You may like to indulge in a spot of fishing or walking at Kingsbury water Park, the park is 600 acres and includes 30 lakes and

pools, and has walks, fishing, horse riding, sailing, power-boating and sailing.

Cruise up the Birmingham & Fazeley Canal, you will soon pass Drayton Manor -The UK's best family theme park with kids rides, family fun, zoo, and thrill rides. The entrance to the Theme park & Zoo is a short walk from here .

Featuring Stormforce 10 with a backward water drop, Maelstrom, Shockwave- Europes first stand up roller coaster, and the vertical drop -New for 2011 is Ben 10 Ultimate Mission the ride, Ben needs you to stop Vilgax from stealing the Omnitrix and the only way is to board the "Mecha Vehicle", Good luck on your mission! . Adults & children will love the white knuckle rides, but the park has many family rides and a Thomas Land area for the younger children, and a Zoo to explore. The park is closed during November to March.

You can moor here if visiting Drayton Manor it is 5.5 hours to here.

After the intensity of Fradley Junction, Fazeley is remarkably serene, it is the location of british Waterways central shires office and offers limited facilities such as cruising information but regrettably no shops or eateries.

From Fazeley we veer eastwards (turn right) through Tamworth and pass over the aqueduct over the River Tame and come to the Glascote Locks.

There are plenty of mooring places around the locks and if you need provisions there are facilities nearby in Tamworth home of the Tamworth Manifesto in the 19th century and Tamworth castle, an Historic Fortification which is well worth a visit. Also there is the fantastic snowdome where you can ski or snowboard, but you do have to pre-book.

For lovers of the rural setting this is where the finer section of the canal is, on the run from Alvecote there are nature reserves at Hodge Lane and Pooley Fields and Pooley Hall .

At Alvecote you can see the remains of a Benedictine priory through the trees.

It is a good place to moor for the night, it is 8.75 hours to here.

The is the Samuel barlow Bar & restaurant here, (closed Mondays).

Day 4

The rural setting is largely due to reclaimed mining land, the spoil heaps have grassed over and lakes now fill the sinkholes caused by mining, all in all it's nicer than it sounds.

As well as Pooley Hall, Polesworth offers shops and pubs but also remnants of an Abbey and a tithe barn which lends the village considerable character and interest. Onwards from Polesworth the rural scenery is ever improving, giving a chance to unwind and take in the scenery to charge the batteries before the downward journey through Atherstone Locks, with views out to the Anker Valley in the west and rolling hills to the east.

The town of Atherstone borders the east bank of the canal, only running alongside the canal on the bottom half of the flight of locks beyond bridge 45, despite this, the setting of the entire flight feels detached from an urban setting other than some well kept homes and gardens in view of the canal. The locks are usually in a series of two or three with long pounds between most that offer some of the best moorings along the canal due to the quiet setting and proximity to local pubs and shops a short walk away. Atherstone flight will now be a quick process whether by design or not, despite being in good working order the locks operate reasonably sedately,

take time to take in the architecture of some interesting footbridges such as footbridge 47 or the old buildings along the canal or the re-creation of a canal side yard.

Moor up after the Top Lock , there are a few pubs and a few shops in the town. The town has a pleasant 18 century feel with a market place in front of the church.

It is 4.5 hours cruising to here.

After Atherstone we once again find ourselves cruising through the 'nicer than it sounds' reclaimed industrial land towards Nuneaton .

Hartshill yard houses a splendid clock tower, and some attractive british Waterways buildings.

The canal passes near to the recently redeveloped pedestrianized shopping centre in Nuneaton, and offers large supermarket shopping, pubs and modern shops within easy walking distance of boat wharf at bridge 20.

Moor here it is 7 hours cruising

Day 5

Nuneaton and Bedworth (pronounced Bedearth by locals) almost merge into one but between them is Marston Junction which leads to the Ashby canal which is 22 miles of some of the laziest, lock free canal boating in the country. If you have given yourself enough time a detour up the Ashby Canal is recommended, at the very least, to see the sight of the Battle of Bosworth

Bedworth lies to the west of the canal and is barely seen at all, in fact the remainder of the cruise the canal winds through urban centres yet is surprisingly rural in nature for much of it. On the lower edge of Bedworth lies Hawkesbury and the entrance to the Oxford Canal at Hawkesbury Junction. Hawkesbury Junction boasts nicely redeveloped industrial architecture and one of the most striking bridges on the network in black and white cast iron. Turn a sharp left onto the Oxford canal but be aware that at peak times the stop lock can cause surprisingly large queues for a six inch drop.

The canal meanders past the village of Ansty offering a chance to moor up and visit a pub, The Rose & castle is canalside.

The canal turns southwards after cutting through the middle of a golf course and passes under the M6. The canal follows a southerly course into deeper countryside, trading motorway for railway line which follows the canal on and off into Rugby, with only intermittent passing trains.

The canal skirts past Brinklow village which requires a bit of a walk to get to enjoy some of the amenities there, but the canal starts to dish up wooded areas as it plunges through mostly arable countryside with only the occasional passing train reminding boaters that they are in a busy corner of the country.

The canal runs past Rugby through its northern side, missing the busy centre. The canal provides more striking examples of cast iron bridges and an aqueduct giving much to keep the eyes busy.

Newbold Tunnel is short at 250 yards and there are pleasant moorings with a choice of pubs closeby.

It is 7 hours cruising to here

There are frequent buses from Newbold into Rugby town centre, which has a pedestrianised shopping centre, a leisure centre and an open market. Rugby's reputation is inextricably linked with its public school, where one day in 1823 a schoolboy picked up the ball in a game of football, & ran with it, thereby founding the game of 'Rugby'. The selection of shops to supply food is brilliant in Rugby, offering deli's, supermarkets, organic shops, local produce, bakers and butchers, and making it worth a stop just for the shopping opportunities alone, bear in mind that after Hillmorton there is only limited opportunity to shop for food for quite some time. The centre of Rugby is a very pleasant place offering nice parkland and places to eat and drink in abundance.

Day 6

There are shops to the south of bridge 59 and a picnic area below bridge 58 with a huge Tesco supermarket nearby.

The canal dips into green parkland and a golf course on the way out of Rugby, crossing over the River Avon before arriving at Hillmorton Locks. There are some great renovated old buildings in this area and aside from some unsightly radio masts near the canal, Hillmorton Locks is an area with of peaceful beauty that belies its proximity to rail lines and Hillmorton directly to the south. Rugby Radio Station dates from 1926 and was used to operate the first trans-atlantic radio telephone link between London & New York.

By bridge 71 there is Bardsey's Lock stop Cafe bistro, which is open Wednes-Sat for meals or takeaways & has won awards for the best waterside restaurant.

By bridge 73, the Royal oak is canalside.

The canal winds southwards and aside from crossing under the M45, dives in to expansive areas of arable farming and not a settlement to be seen in miles.

The village of Willoughby lies to the west of the canal, there are pubs and a few shops here and it is a bit of a walk from the canal, those seeking civilisation should maybe wait until Braunston slightly south from here which is a bit more accessible from the canal. Braunston also marks the point at which the Grand Union joins the Oxford Canal for a few miles before the southern arm of the Oxford Canal begins and the Grand Union veers northwards at Napton on the Hill, this can be an exceedingly busy stretch of canal due to the convergence of boat traffic and the proximity to multiple marinas in the area.

Moor after bridge 90 but don't turn left when the canal splits keep right, and walk back to Braunston for the pubs and shops.

It is 5 hours cruising to here.

Day 7

At Braunston Turn turn right onto the Grand Union Canal.

The village of Flecknoe is by bridge 102 off to your left, The Old Olive Bush is a nice pub about a mile from the canal in the village.

The Oxford Canal and Grand Union part ways just before the village of Napton on the Hill, the Grand Union veers off to the north so turn right here, and soon you will encounter the Calcutt locks- 3 locks quite close together. The canal passes the villages of Stockton and Long Itchington, the canal descends through the

Stockton locks (8 locks) and the 2 locks at Itchington.

The local quarries produced blue lias, a local stone, and huge fossils have been found in the blue lias clay. At bridge 23 is the Blue Lias Inn, and the Cuttle Inn is canalside at bridge 25, and there are several pubs in the village of Long Itchington off to your right. There is also a store in the village.

At Bascote the only staircase locks you will encounter are reached, these are just 2 staircase, followed by 2 other locks. This is the last rural stretch before you reach Leamington Spa.

The canal descends through the quiet Fosse locks & the village of Radford Semele is an outlying village to Royal Leamington Spa.

You can moor up by Radford Bottom lock and walk to the village of Radford Semele off to your left.

The canal heads westerly through the suburbs of Leamington getting to within half a mile or so of the town centre.

There are plentiful visitor moorings in Leamington, the old high street is just a minutes walk from the moorings next to the Aga factory by bridge 40 offering a few convenience stores and a lot of Indian restaurants. The walk into the centre goes past the old Pump Rooms that gave the town its name, over the River Leam and the beautiful main shopping street called the Parade begins. There are so many restaurants in Leamington that every taste and budget is catered to, there are even more pubs to enjoy and if walking through pleasant parkland is appealing then stop at Jefferson Gardens next to the Pump Rooms for a good picnic spot and some impressive plants and flowers.

It is 9 hours cruising to here.

Day 8

The gap in between Leamington and Warwick is almost indiscernible but the difference in the two towns could not be mistaken. Where Leamington has wide straight roads and white buildings in the spa style, Warwick's twisting roads, old buildings of every type and shape and more olde world feel is a pleasant contrast, most famous for its incomparable castle Warwick offers much from its racecourse to the beautiful Priory Park there is certainly enough to do here to fill a couple of days. The historic centre of Warwick lies a ten minute walk from the canal to the south, it is well worth getting off the boat for, moor up by bridge 49.

Warwick Castle is well worth a visit and is possibly the finest medieval castle in the country, it is open all year except Xmas, see the Kingmaker exhibition which uses wax sculpture to recreate the preparations for battle in 1471, as well as the dungeons, ghost tower & sumptuous state rooms.

Warwick itself is a lovely little town with some Tudor buildings, you can get all your provisions here.

The Warwick County museum in the Market Hall houses a tapestry of Warwickshire dating from 1588. The Lord Leycester Hospital is a superbly preserved group of 14th century timber framed buildings.

Soon after Warwick the Hatton Locks loom, they are undoubtedly a large undertaking being 21 locks in total, but the lock gates are in good working order and towards the top the views back over Warwick are worth the effort, there is of course room for two narrowboats side by side to help share the load.

The Waterman Pub & restaurant has fine views over the Hatton Locks.

Hatton Country World is south of bridge 55, there are 20 independent shops in the shopping village, and the Hatton Farm Village is great for kids with farmyard animals, fun fair rides and adventure play areas.

IT IS 5 HOURS CRUISING TO HERE, SO YOU CAN STOP OFF & EXPLORE WARWICK ON THE WAY, OR SHOP AT HATTON COUNTRY WORLD.

Day 9

A couple of miles further up from Hatton is the 400 metre long Shrewley Tunnel which comes out into open farmland as the canal heads into the northern reaches of Warwickshire.

By bridge 63 is a lovely pub- Tom O' the Wood.

Soon the Stratford Canal branches off to the left which you should take, then take the right turn and then turn right again at Kingswood Junction.

After the heavy Hatton Flight of locks, the Lapworth Flight of locks are much simpler and easier to use. The locks are surrounded by very pretty countryside so it is worth having a brief look around.

The locks are interspersed with the old cast iron split bridges that are a feature of the Stratford upon Avon canal. There is a useful canal shop by lock 14 selling groceries, home made bread & cakes & gifts. bridges 26 & 28 operate hydraulically using a windlass.

At Hockley Wharf there is a tiny arm that once served as a coal wharf, and you can moor for the night , several shops are near the canal bridge and the pub is pleasant.

It is 6 hours cruising to here.

Day 10

Day 11

The Canal continues to pass through quiet countryside only temporarily interrupted by the Motorway. There is a good bakery north of bridge 20.

After bridge 8 the countryside is lost and replaced by the outskirts of Birmingham, continue through brandwood tunnel to King's Norton Junction and turn south or left, back to Alvechurch marina.

It is 6.5 hours back to Alvechurch.

If staying for 14 days spend some time to explore along the way or take the 2 day detour up the Ashby canal

## Useful Links

Description : Coventry Cathedral

Website : <http://www.coventrycathedral.org.uk/>

Telephone : 024 7652 1200

Description : Packwood House, Tudor Manor House near Lapworth

Website : <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/packwood-house/>

Telephone : 01564 782024

Description : Drayton Manor Theme Park

Website : <http://www.draytonmanor.co.uk/>

Telephone : 01827 285551

Description : Herbert Art Gallery and Museum

Website : <http://www.theherbert.org/>

Telephone : 024 7623 7521

Description : Coventry Transport Museum

Website : <http://www.transport-museum.com/>

Telephone : 024 7623 4270

Description : Tamworth Snowdome

Website : <http://www.snowdome.co.uk/>

Telephone : 0844 800 0011

Description : Hatton Country World

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

Telephone : 01926 843411

Description : The Bullring Shopping Centre, Birmingham

Website : <http://www.bullring.co.uk/shops>

Telephone : 0121 632 1500

Description : The Mailbox, Shopping Centre, Wharfside

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

Telephone : 0121 632 1000

Description : Warwick Castle

Website : <http://www.warwick-castle.com/>

Telephone : 0871 265 2000

Description : Baddesley Clinton, Moated Manor House

Website : <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/baddesley-clinton/>

Telephone : 01564 783294

Description : Earlswood Lakes

Website : <http://www.fisheries.co.uk/earlswood/>

Telephone : 01908 302556

Description : Kingsbury Water Park

Website : <http://countryparks.warwickshire.gov.uk/country-parks/kingsbury-water-park/>

Telephone : 01827 872660

Description : Tamworth Castle

Website : <http://www.tamworthcastle.co.uk/>

Telephone : n/a

Description : Leamington Spa Royal Pump Rooms

Website : <http://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/royalpumprooms/>

Telephone : 01926 742762

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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