

UK Canal Boating

Escape with a canal boating holiday!

Whixall Moss and the Meres from Blackwater Meadow marina

Cruise this route from : Blackwater

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Cruising Days : 5.00 to 0.00

Cruising Time : 25.50

Total Distance : 45.00

Number of Locks : 26

Number of Tunnels : 2

Number of Aqueducts : 0

The Mere at Ellesmere is the largest and most spectacular of the nine glacial meres in North Shropshire. The Mere is surrounded by circular walks, woodlands and gardens and is a nature lover's paradise.

The Marches Mosses are National Nature Reserves in North Shropshire. Collectively the mosses form the third largest lowland raised peatbog in the UK and the second largest natural network of ponds and wetlands in England . Lowland raised peatbogs are one of the rarest habitats on earth.

Cruising Notes

Day 1

As you leave the marina on the Llangollen Canal, you will first head towards Ellesmere Tunnel, which is only 87 yards long.

Heading towards the tunnel, you will see why Ellesmere is known as the 'mini Lake District', as you pass some of the Mere's at Ellesmere. The largest mere is to the west of the tunnel as you approach it. Immediately after the tunnel is Blake Mere, then Cole Mere to the east. These Mere's were formed during the Ice Age.

You will now be cruising through a remote and underpopulated area, with no sign of life for several miles, but there are some pretty bridges.

If you cruise for 1.5 hours to Hampton Bank Bridge you can find a pub in either direction along the B5063 , The Sun Inn at Welshampton is 1.1 miles to the north and the Horse & Jockey at Northwood 1.1 miles to the south, a 20 minutes walk.

Day 2

If you fancy a fry up, cruise through the tiny village of Bettisfield and onto the Prees Branch (turn right) through 2 lift bridges to Whixall marina, where you will find the Waterside cafe which is open from 9-5 (during the winter 9.30 to 4pm) .

It is 1.5 hours to here from your mooring at Hampton Bridge.

Back onto the Llangollen Canal, opposite you is Whixall Moss, a local peat bog nature reserve, which in 1996 was declared a National Nature Reserve because of its importance to wildlife. The Marches Mosses are National Nature Reserves in North Shropshire. Collectively the mosses form the third largest lowland raised peatbog in the UK and the second largest natural network of ponds and wetlands in England . Lowland raised peatbogs are one of the rarest habitats on earth.

Turn right to continue towards Whitchurch along the Llangollen canal.

The canal now gently wends its way towards Whitchurch through a series of more lift bridges, peaceful countryside, until you reach the entrance to the Whitchurch Arm, on your right, where you can moor up and walk about ½ mile if you want to have a look around Whitchurch.

From its elevated position in the centre of Whitchurch, St Alkmund's Church is well worth visiting. It was opened in 1713, and in 1951 it was designated a Grade I listed building.

In the town, you will find lots of lovely pubs, shops and cafe's. Lots of the buildings are of Tudor style, giving this pretty market town a rather quaint feel to it.

The Black Bear is opposite St Alkmund's, so an ideal place to sit and people watch with a nice cool drink, and perhaps a meal if you've not yet eaten.

Once you leave Whitchurch, you will head towards the Grindley Brook Locks.

Grindley Brook locks are usually thought of as the three lock staircase but the name includes the three locks below the staircase. It is these locks that are locally thought to be the most attractive, with the area around the bottom lock the most attractive of all., where from April – October there is a friendly lock-keeper who you should find to get instructions from.

If there is no lock keeper then carefully read the instructions before proceeding:

The famous staircase lock needs extra care when navigating through.

Thousands of boats manage it each year so there is nothing to worry about just read the instructions at the top or bottom of the lock and keep your wits about you.

At busy times there can be delays. To operate the locks efficiently and make things fair for all concerned the general rule when boats are waiting is three boats in each direction.

A simple rule of thumb is that no matter what direction you are travelling in the first chamber should always be 'with you' i.e. ready for you to enter, and the rest of the chambers should be 'against you' i.e. empty when going

down hill or full when going up hill.

You will see the logic of it once you have done the 1st lock.

Nearby, is a cafe serving drinks and snacks, and Lockside Stores, selling local produce. Also is the Horse & Jockey Pub near the bottom lock, which accepts pets and muddy boots!

Moving on, you will encounter the occasional lock, the second one having a pub ideally situated right next to it – The Willey Moor Tavern, which was formerly the lock-keepers cottage. Inside, are some lovely canal paintings.

Today you have cruised 10 miles, and navigated 8 locks, in 6.5 hours.

Day 3 Day 4 Day 5

After a wide arc to the left, you will approach Marbury, right near Marbury Lock, and further again is Wrenbury, which you can access from Bridge 19 or 20, about 3/4 of a mile away.

Wrenbury is another pretty village with Tudor style cottages clustered around the village green, one of which – Elm House – is a Grade II listed cottage, dating from C17th, as are some of the others in the village, including the village school.

Parts of Wrenbury Hall date from C17th, and formerly belonged to the Starkey family, who were prominent landowners until 1920.

There are two pubs in the village – The Cotton Arms and The Dusty Miller.

Annually, the first weekend in July is Wrenbury's 'Scarecrow Trail', part of the Summer Fayre celebrations. It is well worth a visit if you are nearby at this time.

Leaving here, you will soon come across a lift bridge, which if down, you will need to let a crew member off to raise it using the windlass, and then there are the three locks at Baddley.

After lock 1 at Baddley you will see Baddley lane to your right, if you follow this to the village of Ravensmoor for 1.2 miles you will find the Farmers Arms Pub. Alternatively there is a track leading to the village at Greenfield Bridge 13 (follow the left track) which halves the distance. It is 4.5 hours to here from last night's mooring, so an ideal place to stop for lunch.

You can turn your boat just before Stoneley Green Bridge 10 and start making your way back. If you cruise for another 4-5 hours today you will leave 8 hours cruising for your last day.

To shorten the route by 6 hours, turn your boat at Thomasons Bridge 22 just this side of Wrenbury or to shorten it by 4.5 hours turn at Wrenbury Marina

Useful Links

Description : Ellesmere, Shropshire

Website : <http://www.ellesmere.info/>

Telephone : n/a

Description : The Meres & Mosses of North Shropshire

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

Telephone : n/a

Description : Shropshire Bird watching sites

Website : <http://shropshirebirder.co.uk/whixall.html>

Telephone : n/a

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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