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CALDON CANAL ROUTE GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION



The Caldon Canal takes you through stunning countryside, amazing industrial history, the potteries of Stoke as well as much more to see along the way. Originally intended as a canal to supply water to the Trent and Mersey it eventually became a commercial success in its own right during its hey day. A wonderful canal that has something for everyone, plenty of locks and gorgeous scenery.

ATTRACTIONS



The Caldon Canal and the Trent and Mersey are intrinsically linked. The Caldon was initially built to enable water to be brought down to the Trent and Mersey canal from the hills of the Peak District. The commercial element of the route was a secondary priority. However the route takes the canal into some stunning areas of the country. The route decided upon by the engineers eventually looked to carry cargo of limestone, flint and coal for the iron and potteries industries that it served. The canal was a commercial cargo carrying success but later the need for more water for the Trent and Mersey necessitated the building of the Leek Arm of the Caldon. The residents of Leek where disappointed that the original route of the canal hadn't reached them and the plans for the arm to be for the moving of water only and not for boats was changed in the end to make it a navigable channel.

The Caldon was used for cargo up until the 1950s and then eventually fell into disrepair and abandon as cargo traffic was lost to the railways over time. However the Caldon was one of the last canals to have a working cargo run, if only a small one, as finished pottery was moved from one site to the other after being made to be decorated. This was due to the local roads being considered to bumpy and likely to damage the delicate cargo. This continued until the 1990s.

The Churnet Valley Railway which is a heritage line, also passes next to and over the canal with their steam locomotive which is run in the summer season at weekends, and follows over the previous additional length of the canal from Froghall to Uttoxeter which has been lost to the Railway which built over it in 1845.

At the end of the Caldon canal there is a tunnel which is one of the lowest on the canal network, as you approach you will go through a red and white hanging plastic barrier which marks the profile of the roof of the tunnel, anything that hits this profile will likely not survive the journey through the tunnel.

ATTRACTIONS



At the far end of the tunnel is a lovely secluded basin with tea room, and visitor centre. Served by a few floating pontoons the basin is a quiet and peaceful mooring, and one of the gems you find off the beaten track on the canal network.

As you make the return journey the Leek Arm of the Caldon is worth exploring if you are making good time. Again at the end there is a short tunnel, it is also worth watching out for the last winding hole to turn around at in order to avoid needing to reverse back if you go past it. The canal here doesn't reach Leek village any longer as it was built on in the past and stops short of the southern reach of the town.

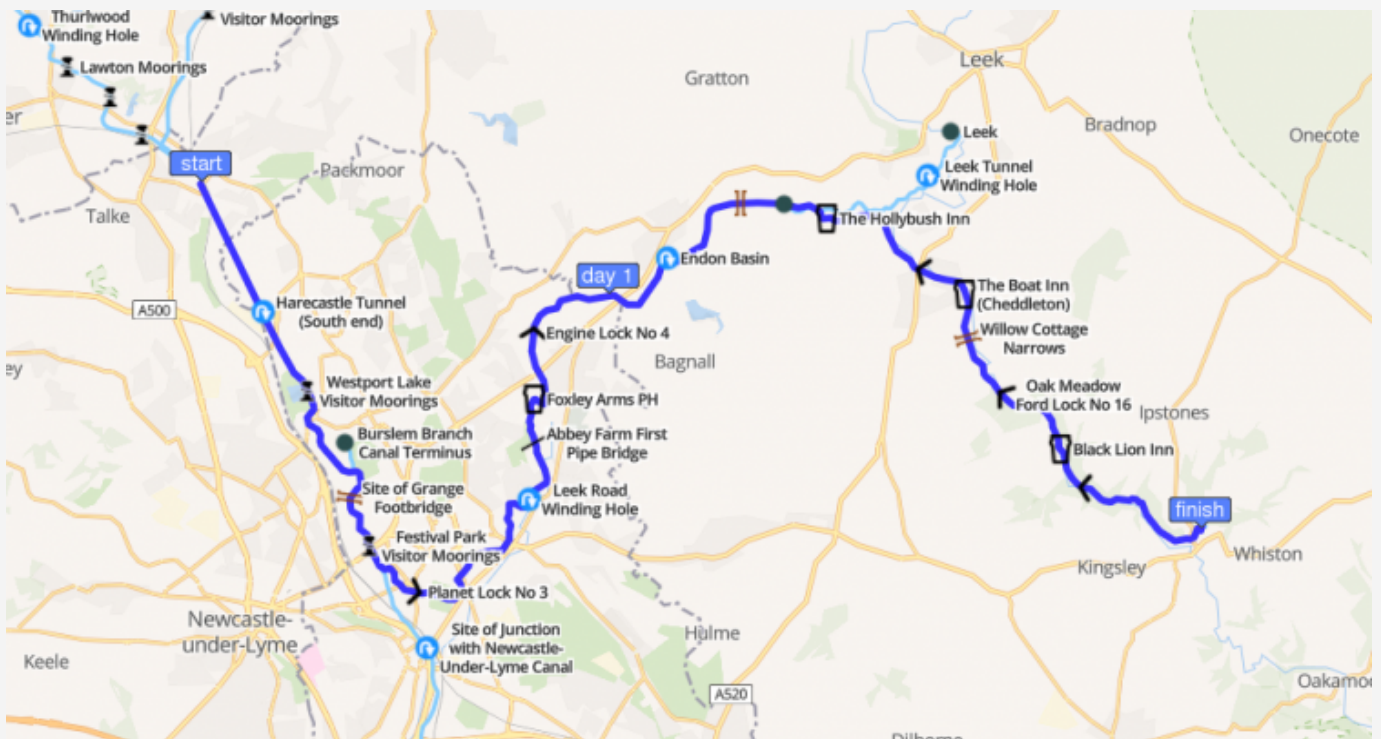
There are several popular pubs along the route of the Caldon, some of our favourites include The Sportsman, The Black Lion and The Hollybush.

ROUTE DETAILS

22 MILES, 4 FURLONGS, 18 LOCKS, 4 MOVEABLE BRIDGES & 7 SMALL AQUEDUCTS. CRUISING TIME APPROX 14 HOURS.

DON'T FORGET TO ADD THE CRUISING TIME FROM MIDDLEWICH (22 HOURS) OR POYNTON (23 HOURS & 30 MINUTES)

TOTAL CRUISING TIME CIRCA 37 HOURS



ROUTE DETAILS

Starting from our Middlewich location this route guide begins from Harecastle Tunnel at Kidsgrove, please review our guide to Kidsgrove from Middlewich to reach the start point of this guide.

Starting our Higher Poynton location the for the first leg please review our guide to Kidsgrove.

This part of the guide will go into detail regards the section from Kidsgrove & The Harecastle Tunnel up the Caldon Canal.

Once you approach Hardings Wood Junction which joins the Macclesfield Canal with the Trent and Mersey you will turn right to approach the Harecastle Tunnel. The tunnel is operated by Canal and River Trust (CRT) personnell and you need to moor up and speak with the Tunnel Keeper for guidance on when to enter the tunnel. They will also give you a briefing and you should follow their instructions.

The Harecastle tunnel can have an eery feel (it is also known as the Scarecastle) as you enter the doors and shut behind you and large fans start up to keep the diesel fumes blowing through the tunnel emitted by the boat engines. It gets noisy, dark and some people think a bit spooky!

Once you emerge from the Tunnel a short cruise brings you to Westport lake which has some nice moorings with a good path next to them. The lake beyond and visitor centre with some facilities for boaters make this a good place to stop. There are also a few shops a short walk away to stock up on provisions.

From here we approach Etruria Junction. Avoiding the lock on the right hand channel we will be taking the left channel onto the Caldon Canal. The first obstacle after going around Etruria basin is the staircase lock of two. Being only two locks in the staircase it shouldn't prove to challenging, however it is always best to check no one is coming the other way before you start your ascent.

From here the canal cruises through suburbia that gradually melts away to take you into the beautiful hills of the Peak District. As it does so however you also get a glimpse of the industrial past of the canal with many of the old Victorian Potteries, iron works and kilns still visible from the canal.

There are a few lift bridges along the route which use the CRT facility key to operate and although at times interrupt road traffic are clearly labelled in their operation and straight froward to use.

As you make the return journey it is worth if you have the time taking a short cruise up the 3 mile Leek Arm. This takes you through further lovely countryside and also up and over the Hazelhurst Aqueduct. Which is similar to the Pool Lock Aqueduct you would have travelled before Hardings Wood Junction, in that it takes the canal over the canal.

Once you reach Froghall basin it is the end of the line and time to turn around and make the journey back for home, the Leek Arm being a lovely diversion if you have the time.

NAVIGATION NOTES

Harecastle Tunnel opening times

Spring & Autumn – 8am to 5pm (last arrival for guaranteed passage 3pm)

Summer – 8am to 6pm (last arrival for guaranteed passage 4pm)

Winter – check Canal and River Trust Website

Foxley Bridge Narrows #17

The narrow gap as you exit the 90 degree bend becomes visible relatively late and can catch the unwary by surprise! Churnet River (northern junction)

This can be fast flowing when in flood, especially in the upper narrower section. As you enter/leave Old Meadow Ford Lock 16 there can be strong eddies. There is a depth gauge in the bridge hole below the bottom lock gate. A very pretty run through trees.

NOT suitable for winding a narrow boat of any size.

Froghall Tunnel

low headroom – DO NOT PROCEED IF YOU DO NOT FIT.