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THE CHESHIRE RING ROUTE GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION



The Cheshire Ring. Encompassing 6 different canals and passing through many of the best towns and cities in the North West of England including Manchester City Centre. Spanning 97 miles and 92 locks. A wonderful route for a week or more with lots to see and do along the route for all the family.

It is impossible to detail all of the myriad of sights, sounds, attractions and places of interest along this route as there are simply too many. But we will do our best to highlight those places worth stopping and exploring further, so that you can plan your itinerary to see those things that pique your interest the most.

ATTRACTIONS



Manchester Attractions:

Venues; Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground, Manchester Arena, O2 Apollo, Manchester Central, Castlefield Bowl & O2 Ritz.

Theatres; Royal Exchange, Palace Theatre, Opera House, Bridgewater Hall, The Lowry, Home & Manchester Academy.

Museums; Manchester Museum, People's History Museum, National Football Museum, Museum of Science and Industry, Imperial War Museum.

Art Galleries; Manchester Art Gallery, Home , The Lowry, Whitworth Art Gallery, John Rylands Library, Castlefield Gallery, Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art.

Canal Side Attractions:

Canal Areas Of Interest; Anderton Boat Lift, Marple Aqueduct, Preston Brook Tunnel, Bridgewater Canal, Heartbreak Hill, Marple Locks, Bosley Locks,

Museums; Bollington Discovery Centre, Silk Museum (Macclesfield), Lion Salt Works Museum (Northwich)

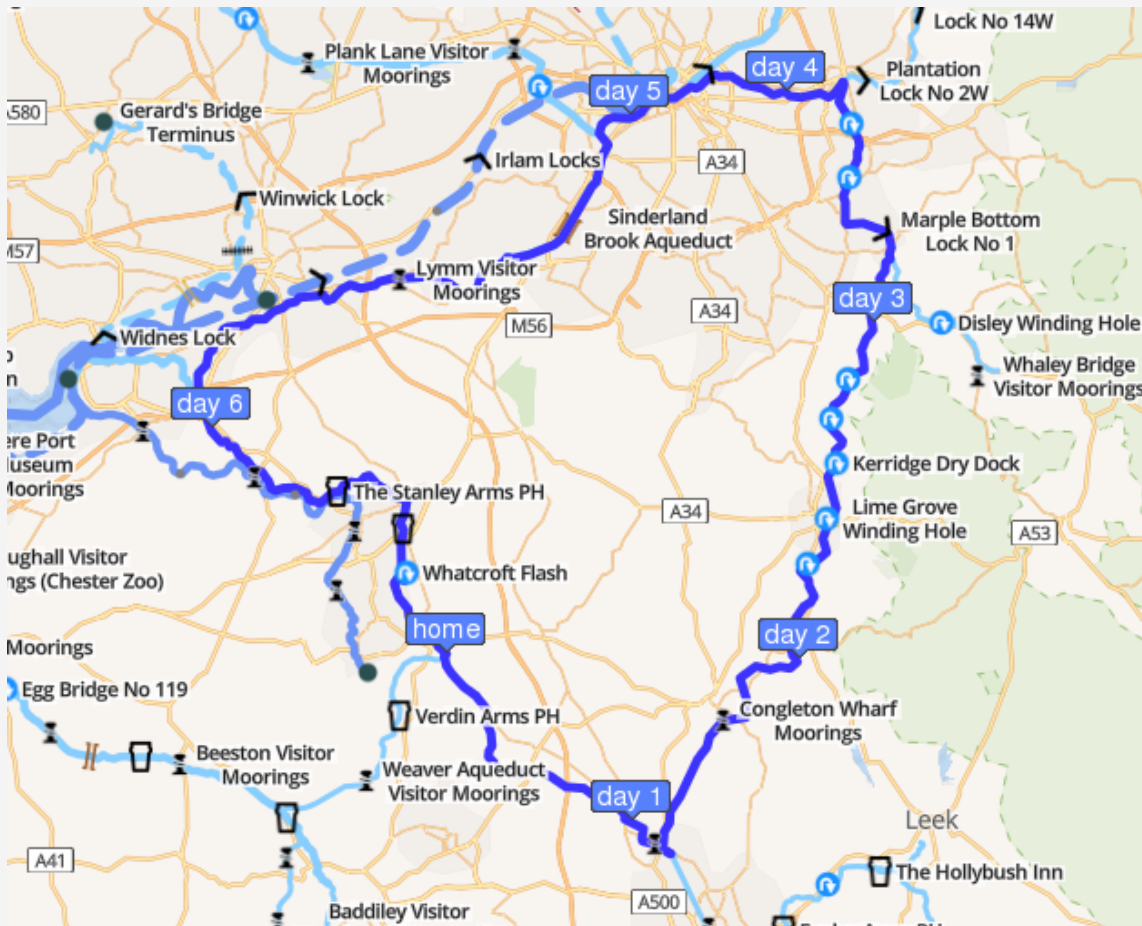
National Trust Estates; Dunham Massey Hall (Bridgewater Canal – National Trust Estate), Little Moreton Hall,

Walks; White Nancy, Mow Cop

Detours; Bugsworth Basin & Whaley Bridge,

ROUTE DETAILS

97 MILES, 92 LOCKS, 5 MOVEABLE BRIDGES, 48 AQUEDUCTS AND 6 TUNNELS (1 MILE, 4³/₄ FURLONGS UNDERGROUND). TOTAL CRUISING TIME 53 HOURS, 30



ROUTE DETAILS

Departing from our Middlewich base and heading south along the Trent and Mersey Canal, there are a couple of locks which are a good distance apart and you weave your way out of the town and into the countryside before approaching the first challenge along this route, Heartbreak Hill. Aptly named as the canal here climbs to its summit via 31 locks over 12 miles.

After completing Heartbreak Hill you reach Kidsgrove and the Hardings Wood Junction that leads onto the Macclesfield Canal to being to head North. Once through Red Bull Lock No 42 you take a right turn at 90 degrees onto the Macclesfield Canal gradually turning until you pass over on an aqueduct above the canal you have just been up. It is a rare location on the canal where one canal passes above or below another.

As you continue along the Macclesfield canal you will go through a small stop lock at Hall Green which has a drop of only a few inches. This seems like the most pointless lock until you realise that it prevents rival canal companies stealing each other's water supply and allows the lock keeper to levy a toll to passing boats back in the day when passage on the canal was paid for when entering / leaving each section. Often at the locks on that stretch.

You continue through picturesque countryside until the town of Congleton, here there is a good fish and chip shop and also two lovely pubs just above the canal called The Queens Head and The Railway. Make sure your fresh for the next section however as coming up is the 12 locks across a mile stretch at Bosley, sweeping views reward your climb up the Bosley Flight of locks and there is also a water point at the summit, shower and toilet block with rubbish bins.

Next you are on your way to Macclesfield following the contours of the Peak District Hills along this canal all the way to the terminus of the Macclesfield Canal at the Village of Marple. On your way you will pass through Macclesfield itself, a large town built upon the silk industry. Just before Macclesfield you pass over Gurnett Aqueduct, with some great views up the valley and two stops worth exploring here are Sutton Hall and Ye Olde Kings Head Pub. Macclesfield itself announces your arrival with the imposing Hovis Mill abutting the canal at Macclesfield Marina with the Puss in Boots Pub opposite. Further on the next town is Bollington, which is a chocolate box village with pubs a plenty, two large mills up at the canal edge (Adelphi Mill and Clarence Mill), and its most famous landmark of White Nancy. White Nancy is a bowling pin shaped folly atop the hill overlooking the town built to celebrate The Duke of Wellington's victory of Napoleon after the battle of Waterloo and has been a feature of the town since 1817.

As you proceed through the rolling countryside you'll next pass through Higher Poynton, High Lane (plenty of shops and pubs here) and onwards to Marple. The Marple Locks were built quite a while after the canal and prior to their construction the cargo brought along the canal was unloaded in containerised hoppers onto horse drawn trams which would roll down the hill to be reloaded onto another boat at the bottom to continue its journey. With the then empty trams being dragged by horses back up the hill to start the process again. The Locks after being built significantly speeded up this part of the journey which as you can imagine was a serious bottle neck. If you take a walk around the area you can still see the remnants of the old horse drawn tramways just past the marina at Marple on the offside between the towpath and the busy strines road below.

At the Marple junction if you are to stop for the evening some highly recommended places to visit would be Dolce Vita (Italian Restaurant), The Navigation Inn, The Ring O Bells Pub and if your lucky enough to be there on the right evening why not take in a movie at the old neighbourhood picture-house the Regent Movie Theatre Cinema.

The Marple locks now drop you down through 16 chambers to the Lower Peak Forest Canal and you continue your journey into the suburbs of South Manchester towards Portland Basin, where the Portland Basin Museum is located on the junction, and then onto Manchester City Centre. The canal here twists and turns through residential housing areas and eventually leads to the junction with the Ashton Canal. Before this though you take a journey through your first tunnel at Hyde Bank and onwards over the Marple Aqueduct, an amazing piece of engineering given the limited tools of the time and certainly one of the canal highlights of your journey.

ROUTE DETAILS

Once on the Ashton canal your journey into Manchester starts a proper. Many locks face you ahead so it's best to get a good rest and have your "handcuff key" for the locks ahead ready as well as your strongest members of the lock wheeling crew. As you come into Manchester there are 24 locks before you reach Castlefield. If your planning to stop over in Manchester during your holiday we would recommend either New Islington in Ancoats (near The Northern Quarter & Etihad Stadium, the home of Manchester City FC) or Castlefield (Deansgate area of Manchester). In these areas there are good moorings which are considered the best in the town and also to be the safest. Also you have good access to bars restaurants and the other attractions of Manchester City Centre from both of these sites.

From Castlefield your now on the Bridgewater Canal for a considerable lock free stretch all the way to Preston Brook. Along the route you pass Old Trafford Stadium (why not stop in and take in a match and see Manchester United play) as well as the industrial areas of Trafford Park and affluent towns of Altrincham, Dunham Massey (a national trust estate), Lymm, Sale & Stockton Heath. The Bridgewater Canal is famous for many reasons, it is the first privately built canal, linked the major trading cities of Manchester and Liverpool. Effectively made Manchester a port city despite being around 30 miles inland. A really interesting brief history of the Bridgewater Canal can be found on the Bridgewater Canal Company Page [Here](#).

At the end of the Bridgewater at Preston Brook the canal goes underground once more taking you through to Dutton, as you emerge the tunnel there is a stop lock again and shortly after the stop lock on the left hand side is Dutton Dry Dock. This covered structure once ran by the Railway company that once owned the canal and the cover bears a striking resemblance to Georgian railway stations with the design of the woodwork.

Now back on the Trent and Mersey canal proper it is a straight line (without any more junctions or change of canal) all the way back to base at Middlewich.

The most notable place along the route from hereon out is the Anderton Boat Lift. This descends the canal to the River Weaver below which goes all the way into the centre of the town of Northwich. An absolute marvel of Victorian engineering and still operating to this day. The boat lift still takes craft up and down to the level of the River Weaver and back up to the Trent and Mersey Canal. If you plan on going on the River Weaver please let us know so that we can book your passage before you depart and ensure you have the correct gear for the journey. Additional equipment is required when taking a canal boat on a river. Even if your not planning to go on the lift with your boat, it is well worth a visit to the Anderton Boat lift visitor centre.

The Last leg of the journey with a few locks left is ahead back to base at Middlewich Top Wharf. There are two notable spots to take in on the way back, one is big lock as you come into Middlewich. It was designed to be wide enough to enable salt barges to come to Middlewich to take the salt cargo through to Preston Brook. However since the aqueduct at Croxton Lane was damaged by flooding in the early 20th Century it was rebuilt with a narrow channel, adding to the mystery as to why Middlewich Big Lock exists as the passage of wide barges isn't possible past this point any longer.

The last notable place on the route is Middlewich Top Wharf – or home base and the end of the journey. We hope you have had a great time exploring the Cheshire Ring, any additions you think would be useful to this guide please do let us know and we will update it for future guests.

NAVIGATION NOTES

- Tetton Bridge
 - Beware of the change in bridge profile when heading south.
- Wheelock Botto Lock No 66
 - Towpath side lock appears intact but is closed.
- Wheelock Lock No 61
 - The towpath-side lock is open, but marked as “narrow” and unsuitable for boats with a beam of over 6’10”
- Lower Thurlwood Lock No 54
 - The towpath side lock is narrow and not suitable for boats with a beam of over 6’10”
- Church Lawton Bottom Lock No 48
 - The lock opposite the towpath side is apparently intact but closed.
- Red Bull Lock No 45
 - Offside lock is not operational due to paddle problems.
- Buxton Road Bridge No 37
 - The water-point has now been moved to Swettenham Maintenance Yard between Black Road Bridge No 38 and Swettenham Wharf.
- Chorlton Street Lock No 86
 - there is no longer access to/from the towpath/Canal Street at this lock. Make sure you have your crew aboard after lock 85 or 87.
- Castlefield Junction
 - Information for Canal & River Trust Licence Holders visiting the Bridgewater Canal. All C&RT craft are subject to the terms and conditions of the Bridgewater Canal whilst they remain on our waterway. C&RT licence holders may remain on the Bridgewater Canal for periods not exceeding seven consecutive days. C&RT craft wishing to extend beyond the 7 day reciprocal arrangement period must obtain a temporary short term Bridgewater Canal Licence at a cost of £40 for 7 consecutive days. If you wish to obtain a temporary short term Bridgewater Canal licence please contact the Bridgewater Canal Company on telephone 0161 629 8266. Any such costs or charges are the responsibility of the hire boater.
- Preston Brook Tunnel
 - Tunnel times are as follows:
 - Northbound: open on the hour, and remains open until 10 past the hour.
 - Southbound: open at half past the hour, and remains open until 20 to the hour.
- Saltersford Tunnel
 - Tunnel entry is as follows:
 - Northbound: Entry on the hour until 20 minutes past the hour.
 - southbound: Entry 30 minutes past the hour until 10 minutes to the hour.
- Barnton Road Bridge
 - the bridge is on a blind bend – care should be taken when approaching from either side.

