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## Shropshire Union Canal & return

**Guides: P4, N4, L10**

**7 nights, 6 hours per day, 58 locks**

If this is your first time out or if you are just looking for a relaxing and easy time away from it all, this trip is ideal. Leaving Gailey, you head south down the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal to Atherley Junction, where you join the start of the Shropshire Union Canal (Shroppie).

You soon get to appreciate the contrast between the earlier 'contour' canal that you have just left and the gem that is the 'Shroppie'. Your journey northwards towards the Cheshire Plains through the rural Shropshire countryside, takes in impressively deep cuttings, dramatic embankments and splendid architecture.

Market Drayton, Audlem and Nantwich are all delightful places to visit along the way, either on the way out or on the return leg of your journey. Finally though, you need to turn around and head back to Gailey, retracing your steps and enjoying the new perspective that cruising in this direction brings.



Four Counties Ring

**Guides: P4, N4, L10**

**7 nights, 8.5 hours per day, 94 locks**

A fascinating voyage of discovery and well worth the extra bit of effort! The journey takes you along the wonderfully rural Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal to Great Haywood Junction where, passing under a distinctive roving bridge, you join the Trent and Mersey Canal heading north towards the Potteries and Peak District. The rolling Staffordshire countryside leads you to Stoke-on-Trent, the Wedgwood Visitors Centre and the impressive 2926-yard long Harecastle Tunnel.

Beyond Harecastle the 13 miles to the salt town of Middlewich sees the canal descend 31 locks to the Cheshire Plains.

The short Middlewich arm links the Trent and Mersey Canal to the Shropshire Union Canal again through more glorious countryside. The scenery on the climb up 'Heartbreak Hill' to the summit at Kidsgrove is fantastic.

As well as sights of the potteries such as the Bottle Kilns at Etruria, the Wedgwood Pottery Centre at Barlaston is not to be missed.

01782 204218      [www.thewedgwoodstory.com](http://www.thewedgwoodstory.com)

The National Trust's Shugborough Hall is a short walk from moorings at Great Haywood.      01889 881388      [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)



## Caldon Canal and return

**Guides: P4, N4, L10**

**7 nights, 8 hours per day, 78 locks**

As an alternative to the four counties ring, but equally energetic, you could follow the above route as far as Stoke-on-Trent where you branch off onto the Caldon Canal which must rate as one of the most delightful waterways in the country.

You will head up towards the Peak District and enter the Churnet Valley with its stunning countryside.

The canal terminates at Froghall where you turn and retrace your steps.



## The Black Country Ring

**Guides: P1, N3, L12**

**7 Nights, 7 hours per day, 76 locks**

This route is packed with options for family activities and also includes a rich mixture of canal scenery. Birmingham centre boasts the NIA, Symphony Hall and Brindley Place, all with canal frontage.

Encounter life as it was when the canals were built for commercial use at the Black Country 'Living Museum' at Tipton. 0121 557 9643

[www.bclm.co.uk](http://www.bclm.co.uk)

Amongst other attractions on the route are Dudley Zoo & Castle

01384 215313

[www.dudleyzoo.org.uk](http://www.dudleyzoo.org.uk), Drayton Manor Park

01827 287979



## Stourport & return

**Guides: P1, N2, L16**

**7 Nights, 6 hours per day, 58 locks**

This is a comfortable one week cruise to Stourport and back, along what is almost certainly one of England's prettiest waterways. Throughout its length, this historic canal follows the local land contours as it winds its way south towards its junction with the River Severn at the unique inland port of Stourport. Along the way you pass the entrance to the Shropshire Union Canal, which heads northwards through Shropshire towards the Cheshire Plains.

As you continue south you soon reach Bratch Locks, which is a distinctive and unusual flight of three locks, together with an octagonal toll office. From here the canal adopts an even more rural aspect: secluded woodlands with rocky cliffs of red sandstone, give way to an area of quiet water meadows as you approach the outskirts of the carpet-manufacturing town of Kidderminster.

Kidderminster also hosts the southern terminus of the Severn Valley Steam Railway, which is well worth a half-day trip. Finally, you reach Stourport with its intriguing combination of engineering features and fine period buildings.

