

Macclesfield Canal

Moderate to Challenging Trail

Route Summary

This canal was opened in 1831, and was an alternative and faster route from the Midlands to Manchester, rather than the Trent and Mersey canal, which it joins at Kids Grove in Staffordshire. At the northern end, it joins the Peak Forest Canal at Marple, which joins the Ashton Canal. This was an engineering feat by Thomas Telford, who designed a shorter route than just by a simple contour canal, by the use of embankments and cuttings ('cut and fill'), seen by many as producing a more pleasant and eye-pleasing landscaping than any modern motorway. The engineer on site, William Crossley, managed to cut a couple of miles off Telford's design, to result in the fastest line to Manchester, and a delight for the canoeist, with no locks! One feature of the canal are the roving bridges, designed to enable towing horses to cross over sides of the canal, and of beautiful elliptical design in brick. The shapes meant that tow ropes did not become jammed. The towpath is on the lower, west side of the canal, crossing over to the east in Marple and Macclesfield. The whole route has much old industrial heritage interest, this being basically the southern boundary of the former Lancashire coal mining area.

Nearest Town – Marple and Macclesfield

O.S. Sheets - Landranger No. 109, Manchester, and 118, Stoke-on-Trent and Macclesfield

Start - Marple – SJ 961884

Finish – Bosley Top lock – SJ 905669

Waterways Travelled – Macclesfield canal

Type of Water - Canal

Distance – 16 miles

Licence Information – A licence to paddle the canal is included in the Canoe England membership fee. Otherwise licenses can be obtained from Canal & River Trust (Take your Canoe England membership card with you as it is your licence as well)

Local Facilities – In Marple and Macclesfield (also local canal and pit Visitor Centres along the route)

Vehicle Shuttle Required - Yes - The road route for shuttles can be via rather small lanes, unless the main road to Bollington and Macclesfield is taken. Marple to Macclesfield is by the A626 and A627 to Hazel Grove, and then the A523 south to Macclesfield and Bosley, Bollington being just off this road via the B5091. At the finish, also do not obstruct access to the canal by leaving vehicles in appropriate places.

Portages and Locks – None

Description

The start at Marple is at the head of the spectacular rise of 16 locks from the Goyt valley, leading to the 500 ft. contour. This route ends at Bosley, with a 100 ft. drop down 12 locks. This upper

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section gives views over the east to the Pennines, and west over the Cheshire Plain. The rural scenery is delightful, the urban scenes short-lived and not unattractive.

At Marple, canoes could be unloaded at the actual junction, but parking is limited, so vehicles should be moved immediately to street parking on Brick Bridge Road 200 yds away. The junction is picturesque, with the Lower Peak canal dropping down the locks, the Upper Peak heading for Whalley Bridge.

There is always plenty of life at the junction. The first lock is a 'rising lock' or 'stop lock' designed so that the older canal, the Peak Forest, would not be short of water (i.e. the Macclesfield Canal would always be topping up the other canal).

After Goyt Mill, built in 1905, the canal leaves the town, and the first village is High Lane, with shops and pub. Near to Poynton, is Prince's Incline, where an inclined plane tramway brought coal up from Poynton's collieries.

At 3 miles is Nelson Pit car park, Higher Poynton, where there is a visitor centre at the bottom of the car park, with toilets. A pub and café are nearby. At 4 miles, Elm Beds campsite and at 5 miles, the Miners' Arms pub down the road. This area has many small lanes, but the pretty countryside now hides the former mining past.

At 7 miles, bridge 25, Whitely Green, is a nearby car park, and a possible intermediate access point, and at 7.5 miles, Clarence Mill, with a visitor centre.

The valley at Bollington is crossed by an aqueduct, the River Dean below. Bollington Wharf is at 8.3 miles.

Rather than access in Macclesfield, with busy roads, and a shortage of nearby parking, there are possible access points at both Kerridge, before the town (Bridge 29, 9 miles), SJ 928764 and at Sutton (Bridge 44, 12.5 miles), SJ 924715.

As with many large industrial towns, Macclesfield is almost unaffected by the canal nowadays, it mostly avoiding the town by a higher route along the eastern edge.

The end, in open countryside, is at Bosley Top lock, the road bridge being just after this first lock.

Useful Information

Macclesfield sits on the south side of Greater Manchester, with the moorland of the Peak District to the east, and to the south and west the pleasant market towns of Congleton, Northwich, Middlewich, Winsford and Knutsford (the original 'Cranford'). Nearer in to Manchester are Alderley Edge, Altricham and Wilmslow, viewed as desirable and rich commuter towns.

The attractions of the city are nearby in Manchester, and the countryside on the doorstep.

www.macclesfieldcanal.org.uk

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www.cheshirepeakdistrict.com/

www.knutsfordheritage.com/

www.virtual-knutsford.com/

Recommended Next Trail

If you have enjoyed this trail why not try out one of the many trails available.

Safety Information

Spending an afternoon canoeing can be a fun way to experience nature, get a great workout and spend time with family and friends. However, it can also be a dangerous journey, if safety guidelines are overlooked. Always follow these basic rules and comply with navigation rules- keep to the right of on-coming boats. Please be careful at points along the trail where there are sharp bends on the waterway and keep a look out at these points for oncoming traffic.

Wear appropriate clothing

Always wear shoes. Rocks, rough terrain and river beds present serious hazards to boaters without the proper attire. Nearly 90per cent of all boating injuries are attributed to lack of proper footwear. Other canoe safe clothing includes hats, additional dry clothing towels, and layered items which can easily be removed.

Be sure to

- Know the weather forecast before you set out canoeing.
 - Familiarise yourself with the local area, it's sensitive places and protected areas.
 - Leave the environment as you found it. Please read [You, Your Canoe and the environment](#)
 - Take your litter home with you.
 - Follow the navigation rules for the waterway you are on.
 - Keep noise to a minimum.
 - Do not damage bank side vegetation when launching or landing. (No Seal Launching)
 - Where possible keep to any designated paths or launching points.
 - Canoe a safe distance away from wildlife.
 - Check your equipment.
 - Observe the navigation rules for this waterway.
 - Check to see if there are any events on the waterways when you wish to travel.
- Use the checklist below to make sure you have everything you need.

Checklist:

1. Boat
2. Paddle
3. Buoyancy Aid
4. Bailer/sponge
5. Small First Aid Kit
6. Penknife

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7. Mobile telephone (in a waterproof bag....Please note that in some areas due to the location mobile telephone reception might be nonexistent)
8. Fresh drinking water
9. Sun cream, hat and sunglasses
10. Light waterproof jacket
11. Footwear
12. Licence

ALWAYS be certain to let others know where you're going and when you're expected to return.

Specific Environmental Information:

Please ensure you don't remove or damage any plants or animals from the waterway as they may be protected or harmful if transferred to other catchments.

Canoeists and kayakers take very seriously environmental concerns and already follow existing voluntary environmental codes of conduct, including Canoe England's own guidance notes outlined in the "You your canoe and the environment" publication.

By following the simple steps below you can ensure your presence is not detrimental to the freshwater environment, minimize and avoid accidentally disturbing wildlife and their habitats.

- Find out about the area before you go, noting its sensitive places, species and breeding seasons.
- Leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home with you.
- When clearing litter left by others, handle it with care.
- Leave the environment as you find it
- Keep noise to a minimum.
- Do not "seal" launch or drag boats to avoid wearing away natural banks. Float your canoe for launching, lift out when landing and carry it to and from the water.
- Do not damage bank side vegetation when launching or landing.
- Where possible keep to any designated paths or launching points.
- On rivers, avoid paddling over gravel banks in low water conditions – they may contain fish spawn.
- Constantly assess wildlife. If you see signs of disturbance move away quietly.

Be the eyes and ears on the water. Report pollution, wildlife problems, damage, incidents etc to the relevant authorities.

Canal & River Trust - Emergencies- Telephone 0800 47 999 47

RSPCA for wildlife and animals in distress – Telephone 0990 55 59 99 (24 hours)

Environment Agency - Telephone 0800 80 70 60 (24 hours)

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