

From the Chilterns to the Heart of England

David says...

'While the Upper Thames, Oxford and Kennet & Avon canals are deservedly popular with many of our holidaymakers, spare a thought for the often overlooked jewels in the waterways crown - the canals of the Heart of England.

This area has it all: fabulous scenery, cruising to suit all tastes and abilities, a landscape steeped in history and, of course, the majestic Grand Union Canal itself. I've personally selected the following routes to give you a better idea of the delights that await you in this fascinating region. Do take the time to explore them, I can assure you that you won't be disappointed!'



David

Weekend Breaks

Lock free cruising!

Head south through rolling Northamptonshire farmland with outstanding views. Find your own peaceful mooring in the countryside an hour or so away and discover a different, more relaxed pace of life. Next morning cruise

through one of Britain's longest canal tunnels to the famous canal village of Stoke Bruerne with its Canal Museum. Savour the atmosphere of the historic Boat Inn, the many historic working boats, or browse one of the waterside shops selling the uniquely decorated canalware.

On Sunday head back through the tunnel and north to the foot of Whilton Locks. Stroll

up the lock flight before turning and cruising homebound, perhaps stopping for some retail therapy at the Heart of England Shopping Village nearby. It's just an hour's cruise back to base but the pretty village of Weedon is worth exploring, and don't forget there's the Narrowboat Inn close by for that final evening's memorable meal...



Braunston, Stoke Bruerne & the Leicester Line

Easy cruising through a tunnel and a few locks to Braunston, possibly cruising onward onto the Oxford Canal south to Napton before returning. Try the beautifully remote Leicester Line of the GU taking you through the unusual 'staircase' locks, winding through rolling countryside onto the secretive Welford Arm, or South along the lock-free pound and through one of Britain's longest canal tunnels at Blisworth to the archetypal canal village of Stoke Bruerne. Here you'll find a thatched pub and the original and still superb Canal Museum. For the more active, descend the locks and cruise through the outstanding Tove Valley toward and around Milton Keynes, which really is nothing like you'd imagine it: attractive waterside properties, good moorings, two aqueducts, a windmill and much else besides!

Midweek Breaks

With the extended time a midweek break offers cruise past Braunston to Rugby (home of Rugby football - great museum!), or beyond Napton to the remote summit of the Oxford Canal. You could reach Foxton Locks and the



famous inclined plane, cruising along the Leicester Line. Heading south past Milton Keynes you might choose to reach as far as Linslade, nestling at the foot of the Chilterns. Perhaps turn onto the Northampton Arm and head east onto the unspoiled River Nene as far as Cogenhoe, a small village with a watermill.

One Way Midweek Break for Adventurers!

For a mini-adventure take our one way cruise between Stowe Hill and Heyford taking in the beautiful Oxford Canal, the magnificent Grand Union Canal, Braunston and its tunnel, and with enough time to reach Stoke Bruerne and its Waterway Museum and olde-worlde village and



pubs. Lots of boating, with tunnels, wide locks, narrow locks and lift bridges all thrown in. No speeding though... quite achievable in three 8-hour boating days! So many choices... so much to discover... and don't forget, our out of season midweek breaks attract a 20% discount to the Short Break rate!

One Week Cruise

The choices are limitless!! South into the Chilterns or perhaps down the sleepy Aylesbury Arm. East onto the River Nene as far as Thrapston and soak up this beautifully rural waterway full of watermills, tall spires, and charming villages. North as far as Warwick, its famous Castle, and its 'Stairway to Heaven' - the 21 locks at Hatton; or along the North Oxford Canal to the famous 'Sutton Stop' at Hawkesbury Junction. For the adventurous, long cruising days offer the opportunity to cruise the Warwick Ring into Birmingham and back via the Birmingham and Fazeley, Coventry, and Oxford Canals, or the Leicester Ring (a serious commitment!) along the Soar, Trent & Mersey, Coventry, and Oxford Canals.

The Warwickshire Ring

An adventurous cruise with lots of locks and a wide variety of both urban and rural scenery. Head north to Braunston, then turn left



towards Warwick or right towards Rugby. Either route leads you to the fascinating canal city of Birmingham - more miles of canal than even Venice! Discover Warwick Castle, the Stairway to Heaven, and cruise under Spaghetti Junction.

Wide locks, narrow locks, tunnels and aqueducts this route has it all...

The Leicestershire Ring

One of the most popular cruising Rings - a largely rural and very pretty cruise with outstanding countryside - a relatively easy one week cruise of about eight hours per day. Highlights include the descent of the Foxton Staircase Locks, the sublime River Soar, the pretty canal villages of Hopwas, Fradley Junction and Braunston, and the huge variety of locks and tunnels this cruise offers.

One Week - One Way:

London, Oxford Canal & the Thames

Enjoy a one way trip between Stowe Hill and Heyford taking in the beautiful Oxford Canal, the magnificent Grand Union Canal, Braunston and its tunnel, with enough time to reach Stoke Bruerne, with its Waterway Museum, olde-worlde village and pubs. For serious boaters the alternative one way cruise is to venture downstream to London on the Grand Union, followed by an upstream cruise on the Thames past Windsor Castle and Henley, to Oxford and, finally, the very pretty South Oxford Canal to our Heyford base.

Two Week Cruise

Two Weeks - The Grand Circle

This is considered one of the 'must do' waterway cruises - taking in the Chilterns, Hampton Court, Windsor, Henley and Oxford. Many classic canal villages and waterside pubs add to the rich variety of cruising including wide and narrow canals and the River Thames - there's even a short tidal section through Richmond, past Kew Gardens. A thoroughly recommended cruise.

