



## Prologue

### Planning for a Canal Boat Trip

Search for “England Canal Boat Rental” and you will find all sorts of information. We sent off for several brochures, finally settling on [Black Prince](#) because they seemed to offer the location, boats, timing, and prices we wanted.

Once we had an idea of what was available, we had to choose a starting (and ending) point and a route. Waterway guides are very useful. We have used the Nicholson Waterways Guides on two different trips and find them top-notch. We ordered two that cover the general area of interest for this trip:

- [\*Severn, Avon & Birmingham: Waterways Guide 2\*](#)
- [\*Birmingham & the Heart of England: Waterways Guide 3\*](#)

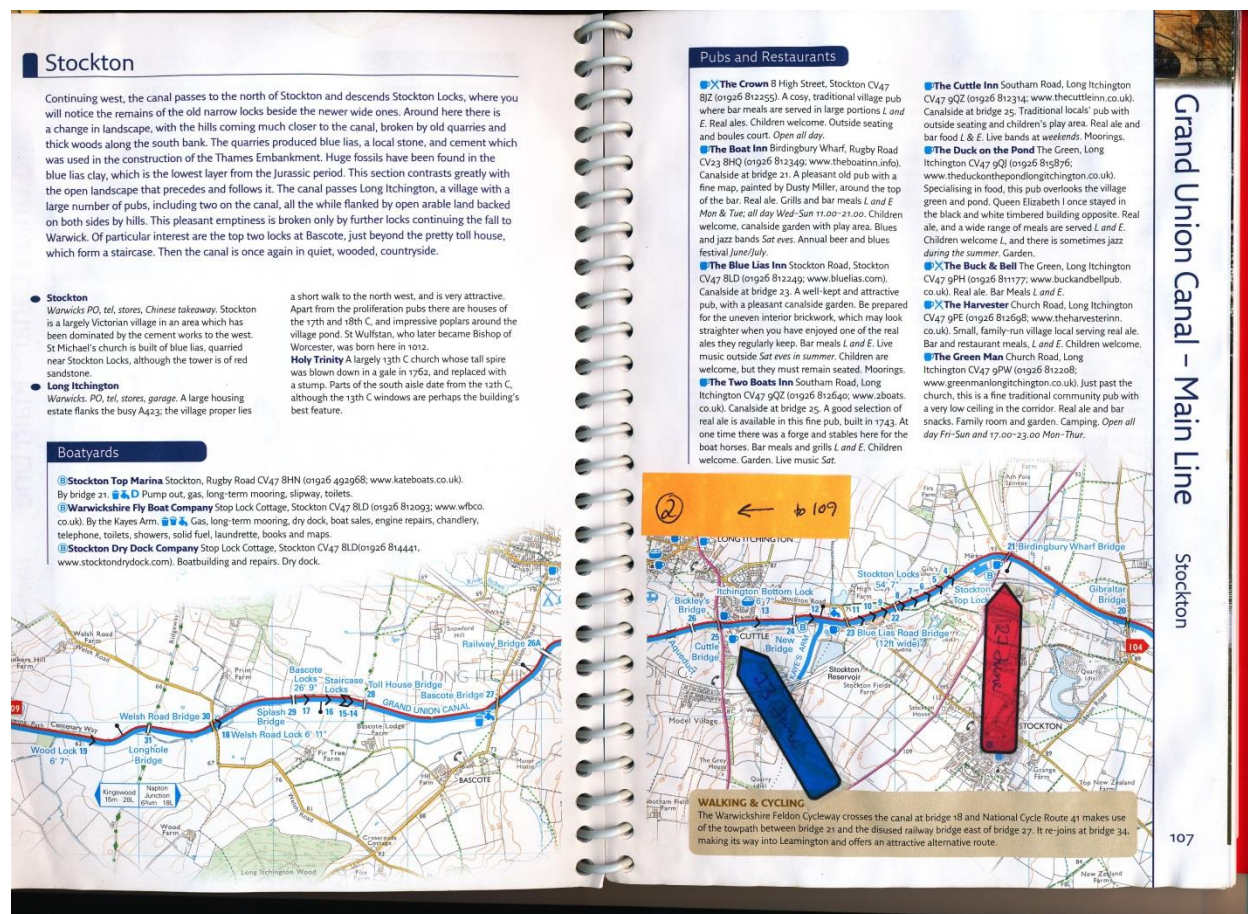
You will want to do more than just ply the canals, and a guidebook to the country is helpful. We do not follow all his advice, but we still recommend a book such as [Rick Steves' England 2013 Guidebook](#). Even if you never get to England, the books are amusing reading.

Once you have selected company, region/canal, and must-see sights, you can determine a specific starting place and duration. Use these two numbers when planning:

- Under ideal conditions, the boat will go a maximum of 3.25 miles per hour – but to be safe figure that it will take two hours to go five miles.
- Under ideal conditions, you can traverse a lock in about 15 minutes – but to be safe figure it will take an hour to traverse three locks.

The specific route we chose had 94 locks and slightly over 100 miles – so 33 hours for locks plus 20 hours for travel  $\approx$  53 hours of cruising. A week's charter is 6½ days, two weeks is 13½ days. Using the latter, we had to cruise about 4 hours each day on the average, which gave us the flexibility to spend a few afternoons sightseeing or on the internet at a friendly pub.

Some would stop their planning here, and just cruise and see what happens. That was our approach on our first canal boat trip nine years ago. This time, however, we went a bit further.



Using both the Nicholson's Guide and Google Earth, we were able to come up with a detailed itinerary – which we followed fairly closely. The picture above is one of the pages from the *Guide*, where we used red tags for evening stops and blue for lunch (our route in this area was from east to west). The picture on the next page is from Google Earth, showing three of the locks in that area.

We plotted the whole trip on Google Earth (third picture) which you should be able to see by following [this link](#).



