

The Lancaster Canal with Canal Boat Escapes

We are a married couple of thirty years with a grown up daughter. Both of us have high pressure occupations.

Our normal holiday is perhaps a continental city break followed by a week in the UK in a cottage.

I have always wanted to take a canal boat holiday; my wife Lyn however, had other ideas.

It was therefore a gradual process of persuasion.

I knew I had to find the right boat; the right hire company and the right canal.

After much research and much walking up and down the banks of the canal system in the north of England I eventually managed to persuade Lyn that the Lancaster Canal was the one. No Locks you see!! Well there are but it wouldn't affect our break.

We then started looking for the right boat and the right company. Not easy.

However, by chance I located Canal Boat Escapes on the internet and noticed that they had two boats on the Lancaster Canal. The process began.

They had two boats Rosa May and Green Man. As soon as I saw the pictures on the website I was convinced that Green Man was the boat for us. We therefore booked the boat for a five day mid week break in July. The process was simple and Karen, one half of the team, was very helpful over the telephone.

We arrived in good time on the Monday morning. The weather was glorious and when I saw Green Man I knew we had made the right decision although the boat looked huge.

Green Man is beautifully appointed, designed with comfort in mind and what was really appreciated was that there was no overt sign that the craft was a rental craft.

Once we had settled in we were given the safety advice and Karen showed us the ropes. In all truth it didn't take long but when she jumped off the boat onto the canal bank I admit to being slightly nervous.

Well we thought, how far should we travel?

During the numerous planning sessions we had discussed navigating the entire canal. For those of you unfamiliar with the Lancaster Canal it is approximately 50 miles long and stretches from Ashton near Preston to a small village called Tewitfield just short of Kendal. The Canal passes through

some beautiful countryside and as mentioned earlier has the advantage to the novice canal boater that there are no locks.

On the first day we got as far as Garstang, reputed to be the first 'Fair-trade Market town' in the Country. It is essentially a lovely regional market town with a great range of shops and pubs. We moored near the 'Owd Tithebarn' and enjoyed their hospitality for the evening. The weather was gorgeous, unbroken sunshine. Could it continue?

Day two dawned and the weather was again great. Tewitfield here we come!

Well that was the idea but you have to remember the 4mph speed limit. The journey from Garstang to Galgate, another lovely small village with a really good pub and a canal side tea room took us about two and a half hours. En route we saw Kingfishers, Herons and Swans with their young. So peaceful!!

Whilst at Galgate we decided to make for Lancaster, another two hours away and on arriving we were fortunate to get a mooring right outside the Waterwitch pub. Serves excellent food and wine!!

The following morning we took the short walk into the city of Lancaster. I have previously worked here and I thought I knew the city. It has changed almost beyond recognition.

We visited the city museum. Well worth a visit and free of charge!!

By now our navigational skills had improved no end and we did not fear mooring or manoeuvring Green Man, all fifty seven feet of her. We also had a decision to make. Do we press on for Tewitfield or turn round and start the return journey at a leisurely pace? We chose the latter option and are glad we did. Late on Wednesday afternoon we set off for Galgate.

The weather was still very kind and we enjoyed the late afternoon sunshine sitting by the boat on the canal towpath sipping wine. The wildlife was lovely. Watching the swans guide their young is fascinating.

On Thursday morning we set off for Garstang, arriving mid afternoon. Again we found a good mooring and we had a walk round the town. For those unfamiliar with the area, Thursday is market day in Garstang and the main street comes alive with the temporary market stalls. A good day to visit!

More good food on Thursday evening, together with the company of a good friend who joined us. We retired fairly early and slept well.

Friday was our last day. The day dawned with heavy black clouds and strong winds. Were our navigational skills up to the task?

We were lucky. The weather, apart from one shower seemed to pass us by. But, a word of warning, the strong winds do affect the boat. Just slow down a bit and the steering becomes easier and more predictable.

We arrived back at Catforth fully relaxed and regretful that we could not spend more time on Green Man.

Everything on board worked and was to a very high standard.

Richard and Karen were really helpful even when we rang them with a silly question about the shower.

The bug has bitten. We will certainly try another such holiday. I didn't expect a tan or to sleep so well but fresh air is fantastic.

Our thanks go to Canal Boat Escapes for a fantastic holiday. You never know in time we might even buy a boat and what better example than Green Man.

A number of other holiday boaters got talking to us and could not believe the standard of the boat. I also believe that the regular users of the canal were more open to us because of the discreet advertising.

In all a fantastic holiday.