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Leicestershire Promotions Ltd for

For ideas of great short-breaks and holidays in the area please visit www.staylayxplora.com

For tourist information about Leicester visit www.visitleicester.info

For tourist information about Leicestershire including bookable accommodation visit www.goleicestershire.com

To find out about the many opportunities for volunteering opportunities please see the relevant section of www.leicestershirewaterways.com



USEFUL INFORMATION (DETAILS OF ACCESS/CAR PARKS)

www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk
www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/carparklocations
www.leicester.gov.uk/transport-and-streets/parking-in-leicester
www.canalrivertrust.org.uk

BOAT YARDS/MARINAS (SEE MAP OVERLEAF FOR LOCATIONS)

- A North Kilworth Marina**
Station Road, North Kilworth, Leicestershire
LE17 6HY
www.northkilworthmarina.co.uk
01858 450550
(opening during 2017)
- B Union Wharf Narrowboats Ltd**
Canal Basin, Leicester Road, Market Harborough
LE16 7UW
Moorings, pump out, day boat hire.
www.unionwharfmarina.com
01858 432123
- C Debdale Wharf Marina**
Moorings, repairs, docking, fuel, chandlery, pumpout.
enquiries@debdalewharf.co.uk
01162 793034
- D Leicester Marina**
Pinfold Road, Thurmaston, Leicester
LE4 8AS
Moorings, Pump out, fuel, Laundrette, Showers, Water, Calor gas, Slipway, Brokerage, Coal.
www.leicestermarina.co.uk
0116 2606166
- E Sileby Mill Boatyard**
Moorings, repairs, docking, fuel, chandlery, pumpout, boatsales.
silebymill@tiscali.co.uk
01509 813583
- F Pillings Lock Marina Ltd**
Flesh Hovel Lane, Quorn, Loughborough
LE12 8FE
Moorings, repairs, docking, fuel, chandlery, pump out, boat sales, day boat hire, café and restaurant.
www.pillingslock.com
01509 620 990
- G Redhill Marina**
Ratcliffe On Soar, NG11 0EB
Moorings, chandlery, marine storage, boat hire and boat sales, pump-out, fuel.
01509 672770



THE NEXT STOP – THINGS TO DO AND SEE ALONG THE WATERWAYS

If you've been inspired by our virtual cruise along Leicestershire's waterways, here you'll discover everything you need to quickly get stuck into a wide range of activities based around the water.

1. AWESOME ANGLING
Angling is a relaxing way to experience the natural surroundings of the waterways. You must purchase an Environment Agency Rod Licence - available at any post office, or order online at www.getfishing.org.uk. It's free if you are under 16.

There are many chances to fish, but it is worth checking that the traditional 'close season' does not apply at www.canalrivertrust.org.uk before you pack up your tackle. Top recommendations include:

River Soar Loughborough. With access via Swingbridge Road, LE11 5B, this stretch is full of silver fish and large perch. You can buy a day ticket from Netbusters on Nottingham Road in Loughborough.

Grand Union Canal at Crow Mills, South Wymesdale. The canal has a sizeable stock of tench, roach & carp, and you can pick up day tickets on the bank from the Wigston Angling Society's baits.

For further information please visit www.getfishing.org.uk.

BRIGHT BIRD WATCHING

The Soar Valley features multiple places of interest to birdwatchers. Specific picks for ornithologists in the area include Watermead Country Park as well as Wantlip Meadows and Cossington Meadows which are both Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust nature reserves. Access and parking details can be obtained from their website at www.ltrw.org.uk

Close to Leicester city, Aylestone Meadows is another fantastic location in which to find varieties including bullfinch, willow tit, little owl, sparrowhawk and kestrel. In spring, warblers return in their droves, and this is also the perfect time of year to come across fieldfares and black redstart. More fascinating facts can be found on the Leicestershire & Rutland Ornithological Society's website at www.lros.org.uk

3. SCENIC CYCLING
The site has been designed to encourage overwintering birds including lapwing, snipe and redshank. Visitors are asked to use the viewing platform as this ensures an unobstructed view of the reserve without causing disturbance to the wildlife.

Cossington Meadows and Wantlip Meadows have both been created on the site of former gravel works. Although most have been filled, some of the pits have been left to produce a more diverse habitat. As the reserves also lie in the flood plain of the River Soar, when flood water recedes shallow pools form. These dry up in the summer to expose areas of mud, attracting plentiful birds. For more information, please visit www.ltrw.org.uk/nature-reserves.

NEIGHBOURHOOD NATURE RESERVES

Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust manages over 30 important wildlife and geological sites which contain amazingly varied animal and plant species, some of them extremely rare.

Some fall along the waterways. To the north, Loughborough Big Meadow is within a Site of Special Scientific Interest and one of the few Lammas meadows left in England (areas of common land dating back to mediaeval times). Accessed by a stile near the River Soar, Kingfishers are year-round visitors, and skylarks are seen during Spring. Further south, Mountsorrel Meadows lies on the floodplain of the River Soar and is a patchwork of valuable wetlands. The site has been designed to encourage overwintering birds including lapwing, snipe and redshank. Visitors are asked to use the viewing platform as this ensures an unobstructed view of the reserve without causing disturbance to the wildlife.

WATERSIDE WALKING

Savour the sights and sounds of our waterways on foot. In addition to the attractions and destinations mentioned in this guide, there are numerous other access points to the river and canal towpaths. You can plan a walking route and view walks on www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk and there are plenty more walking routes around the river and canal on The Ramblers website www.ramblers.org.uk not follow the water from Castle Gardens down to Aylestone Meadows? Visit www.canalrivertrust.org.uk for more ideas and insights.

6. WHERE FOR WATERSPORTS?
If you'd like to ramp up your enjoyment of the water up to a new level, there are plenty of ways to get well! A number of exciting watersports are available at both Watermead Park and Leicester Outdoor Pursuits Centre which is situated on the banks of the River Soar between Birstall and the National Space Centre.

You could try out canoeing, kayaking, bell boating or 'katakaning' - where the boat is a hybrid of canoe and a bell boat. Sailing, windsurfing and stand-up paddle boarding are also available. Visit www.leicestersailboardclub.co.uk, www.lysa.org.uk, www.lopc.co.uk and www.gocanoehing.org.uk for information.

In addition, the Leicester Triathlon Club runs open water swimming sessions at King Lear's Lake within Watermead Park from May to October, if you feel like a challenge.

www.leicestertriathlonclub.co.uk

You can take a boat trip at Foxton Locks or hire a narrowboat from there or various providers along the waterways including Barrow upon Soar, Pillings Lock Marina, Union Wharf and Sileby Mill Boat Yard.

More independent 'paddlers' can find lots of routes and inspiration by visiting www.soartrout.org.uk

Continue to the bustling village of **Birstall** ⭐, which offers a range of local shops, pubs, restaurants and a garden centre. The river runs alongside the village, just minutes from the centre.

North of Birstall is the junction of the Leicester Navigation with the River Wreake, canalised to Melton in 1797 and now under restoration. Note the former Toll House and metal corrugated isolation hospital.

Follow the river north, past Rothley Brook, Sileby Marina and **Mountsorrel lock** ⭐ to arrive at **Barrow upon Soar** ⭐ (approx 6 miles) which enjoys an enviable riverside location in a conservation area. The village is famous for a plesiosaur excavated there in 1851, nicknamed the "Barrow Kipper". Barrow is a lovely place for an amble, topped off with a drink in a selection of pubs set along or near the river.

A few miles on, Pillings Lock is a flood lock built to protect the Grand Union Canal route when a neighbouring branch of the River Soar floods. The nearby marina is the location of Pillings Boat House restaurant and bar which is well worth a visit in its own right.

Loughborough ⭐ where the renovated canal basin is five to ten minutes on foot from many attractions which include the fascinating Charnwood Museum, Carrillon War Memorial in spacious Queen's Park, the atmospheric Great Central Railway and numerous places to eat and shop.

The river leaves Leicestershire at **Kegworth** ⭐ where it is truly a focal point for the village, making this the perfect place to enjoy the river and surrounding meadows which are renowned for walking, cycling, bird watching, fishing, boating and picnicking.

For times, prices and more details of all the places mentioned visit www.goleicestershire.com

The river continues north, winding just behind the award-winning **National Space Centre** ⭐, which promises a day full of wonder for all ages just a minute from the towpath. With six interactive galleries and a unique 3D simulator, it also houses a collection of fascinating artefacts and exhibits and the UK's largest planetarium. There is a gift shop and café, accessible even if you don't buy a ticket for the whole attraction.

Next door is the **Abbey Pumping Station** ⭐, an extraordinary Victorian building displaying Leicester's industrial, technological and scientific heritage complete with its magnificent original steam powered beam engines. Just north of here, a new wildlife park has been created on the banks of Leicester's River Soar as part of a major scheme to improve flood defences. Ellis Meadows is a new pond area and wetland habitat, bridged by boardwalks to encourage people to explore the aquatic wildlife for themselves.

Leaving the river here, a walk of around 10 minutes takes you to the Leicester north terminus of the **Great Central Railway** ⭐ where you can take a round trip on a heritage train and which also has refreshment facilities.

Follow the river to **Watermead Country Park** ⭐ - an extensive network of lakes created from 340 acres of former gravel works and extremely popular for fishing and water sports along with walking, picnicking and cycling. A stretch of the Grand Union Canal from the River Wreake flows into the River Soar in the park, where three nature reserves celebrate the diversity of local birdlife, and include hides from which you can sometimes witness sand martins, plovers or even the elusive kingfisher. Look out for the woolly mammoth!

Leave the Leicester Line of the **Grand Union Canal** ⭐ at Aylestone Meadows - a nature reserve spanning 271 acres. Look out for the Glen Parva local nature reserve, accessed off Parsons Drive or over the locks from the tow path.

The meadows contain pasture, scrubland and small pools which are the habitat for many diverse species and are criss-crossed by numerous footpaths. The canal forms the eastern border of the reserve and King's Lock can be found in its southern half along with a children's play area and tea rooms.

Leicester's **Castle Gardens** ⭐ are just a ten-minute stroll from the lively city centre and attractions. Featuring a rock garden and mixed borders, the formal gardens are bounded on one side by the waterway. Nearby cobbled lanes house important buildings such as Mary de Castro church and the castle hall.

The **King Richard III visitor centre** ⭐ is a 'must see.' Re-live the incredible story of the King's life, death and discovery. See the original site of his burial in the now famous car park, and take a short walk to the Cathedral where he was re-interred in March 2015. Explore 2000 years of history and take in the Jewry Wall roman museum and mediaeval Guildhall along the way.

Continue to **Abbey Park** ⭐, a haven on the northern edge of Leicester. Opened in 1882 and expanded in 1932 to include the area west of the river that had formerly been St Mary's Abbey. Large mediaeval walls are still visible today, along with ruins of the Abbey and 17th Century Cavendish House. With decorative planting, boating lake, tea rooms and miniature railway, you can enter the Park from the river near St Margaret's Pastures.

Enjoy Leicestershire's beautiful rivers, canals, waterways and beyond



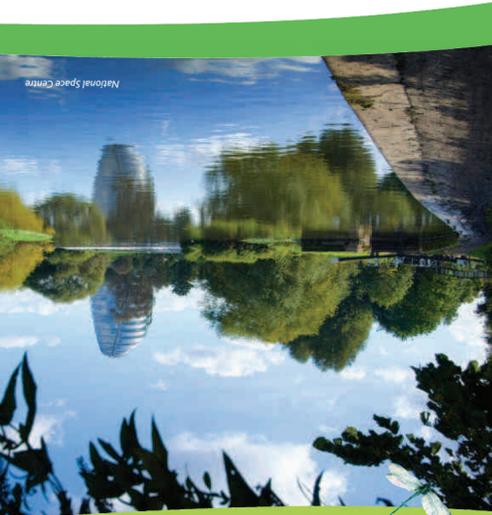
INTRODUCTION

As the Grand Union Canal & River Soar meander through Leicestershire, they visit numerous places of interest and beauty along the way. A rich part of the county's heritage, parts of the waterways were once profitable commercial navigation routes. As early as 1776, the Soar Navigation Company began to 'canalise' the River Soar, starting at the Soar's junction with the River Trent.

This expansion meant that industry could start to develop along the canal, as it created a vital transportation mechanism. Industries including wind and watermills, brewing and malting became established. It was also thanks to the canal that Leicester's hosiery industry expanded so rapidly, as it needed both a constant supply of water and excellent transport links.

What became known as 'The Leicester Line' of canals was eventually bought by the Grand Union in 1932 to become part of the Grand Union Canal - Britain's longest route of canals linking London to Birmingham.

Today the waterways offer numerous opportunities to enjoy the city and county, whether walking or cycling along the many miles of towpath, or leaving the waterside to enjoy a wealth of facilities for recreation and leisure.



EXPLORE AND ENJOY THE RIVER SOAR TRAIL

MAP KEY

PLACES TO VISIT

MARINAS

See details overleaf



ROUTE 7
LOUGHBOROUGH TO REDHILL MARINA
 (9 MILES)

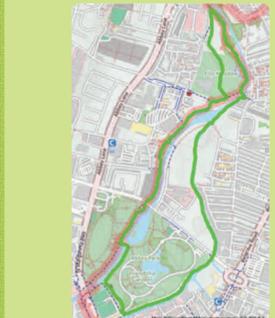
Follow the full route and return by train from East Midlands Parkway, or stop at Normanton on Soar and visit the 12th century St James Church. Not suitable for family cycling.

www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/riversoartrail-route7

ROUTE 3
ABBEY PARK TO WOLSEY ISLAND AND ELLIS MEADOWS
 (3 MILES)

Follow the canal to where it rejoins the river at Swan's Nest Weir, visit the newly created Ellis Meadows, with boardwalks over wetland areas and a picnic area, and then follow the river back to Abbey Park. Suitable for family cycling or walking, although you may need to dismount at pinch points around bridges.

www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/riversoartrail-route3



ROUTE 1
MARKET HARBOROUGH UNION WHARF TO FOXTON LOCKS
 (5.5 MILES)

This well surfaced section of the towpath allows access for family cycling and walking.

www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/riversoartrail-route1



ROUTE 6
MOUNTSORREL TO BARROW UPON SOAR AND BACK
 (4.4 MILES)

Follow the river as it meanders through the Soar Valley. Not suitable surfaces for family cycling. Refreshments available at riverside pubs.

www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/riversoartrail-route6



ROUTE 5
WATERMEAD NORTH & SOUTH
 (4.2 MILES)

Starting at either Watermead North or South car parks, linked by the river. Suitable for family cycling or walking.

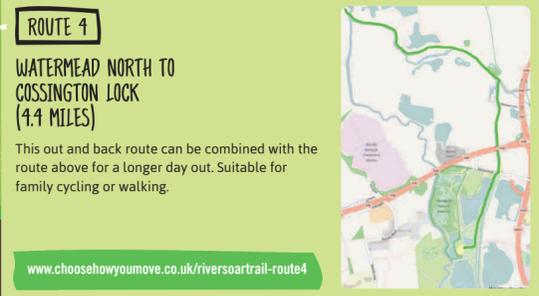
www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/riversoartrail-route5



ROUTE 4
WATERMEAD NORTH TO COSSINGTON LOCK
 (4.4 MILES)

This out and back route can be combined with the route above for a longer day out. Suitable for family cycling or walking.

www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/riversoartrail-route4



ROUTE 2
AYLESTONE MEADOWS TO GLEN PARVA LOCAL NATURE RESERVE AND BACK VIA THE GREAT CENTRAL WAY
 (4 MILES)

Visit Pebble Beach and stop off at the Kings Lock Tearooms for refreshments. The towpath is muddy in places and not suitable for family cycling. The Great Central Way is fully paved and suitable for all users.

www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/riversoartrail-route2

