Lancaster Canal, Garstang to Lancaster

*Easy Trail:* Please be aware that the grading of this trail was set according to normal water levels and conditions. Weather and water level/conditions can change the nature of trail within a short space of time so please ensure you check both of these before heading out.

### Route Summary

As a navigation the Lancaster Canal is a delight and has a 42½ miles navigable pound the longest in the country.

### Start Directions

Kepple Lane Bridge Bridge no.62, Garstang, Preston, Lancashire PR3 1PB. Map ref 489450. Parking is available on Moss Lane near the junction with Church Street which is the continuation of Kepple Lane but is restricted to 2 hours. Access to the canal is along a short footpath past a children's play park.

### Distance

12 miles to Lancaster or 8 miles to Galgate

### Approximate Time

3 - 5 Hours  
The time has been estimated based on you travelling 3 – 5mph (a leisurely pace using a recreational type of boat).

### Type of Trail

One Way

### Waterways Travelled

Lancaster Canal

### Type of Water

Mainly rural canal

### Portages and Locks

None

### Vehicle shuttle required

No

### Nearest Towns

Garstang, Galgate, Lancaster

### Start

Kepple Lane Bridge Bridge no.62, Garstang, Preston, Lancashire PR3 1PB.

### Finish

Aldcliffe Road LA1 5BE map ref. 469605

### O.S. Sheets

OS Explorer Map OL41 Forest of Bowland and Ribblesdale. OS Landranger Maps 102 and 97.

### Licence Information

A licence is required to paddle on this waterway. See full details in Useful Information below.

### Local Facilities

Full facilities Garstang and Lancaster. There is also an excellent café and craft centre at Galgate next to the marina.
Description

This trail begins at Garstang once the most important market town in Lancashire. Leaving the town and heading north the canal enters delightful country as it winds its way north past Nateby Hall and on to Cabus and Winmarleigh. After passing over the River Cocker it passes through the beautiful tree lined Ellel Grange Estate which is now a religious retreat. Soon a branch leads to the left down to Glasson Dock and eventually into the estuary of the River Lune. Your route is straight ahead and immediately past the junction is Galgate Marina, one of the busiest parts of the canal with an excellent café including a craft centre and pub nestled between the navigation and the busy A6 road. From here the waterway continues through more beautiful undulating countryside on an embankment until it passes through Burrow Heights cutting which is an unusually long wooded section before it reaches the outskirts of Lancaster.

Enter the towpath at the bridge, paddle under it and head north. Leaving Garstang the second bridge no. 63A is an ornamented concrete bridge that carries water over the canal and then immediately passing under the A6 road the canal enters delightful countryside as it passes through Nateby, Winmarleigh where there is a large caravan park and on to Cabus Nook where there is another excellent camp site at Greaves Farm.

Although the countryside is quiet and agreeable with the hills of Bleasdale Fell easily visible in the east the canal is never far away from the A6 road and the main rail link to Glasgow.

After passing over the River Cocker aqueduct the canal passes through the beautiful tree lined Ellel Grange private estate. The bridge that carries the estate’s driveway over the canal is an ornamental bridge. John Rennie the designer basically transformed a standard bridge to suit the needs of the landed proprietor by adding groups of balusters and moulded coping stones. This is followed by another unusual bridge called Double Bridge which basically carries two roadways across the navigation divided by a central wall which marks the boundary of the estate.

At the end of the cutting the Glasson Dock branch and top lock can be seen. Built in 1826 it was in part an effort to revive the falling trade of the port of Lancaster. It joins the estuary of the River Lune and is the subject of another canoe trail which should only be paddled by experienced canoeists.

Galgate is a busy little village with a marina sitting on the A6 road and close to J33 of the M6 motorway. There is a craft centre which includes an excellent café where canoes can be moored so refreshments can be purchased.
Next door is the Ellel Village Hall which shares facilities with the local football and cricket club where the canal can be egressed down some steps on the right hand bank by some permanent moorings.

Passing over the River Condor and by a housing estate you again enter pleasant undulating country with the canal sitting on top of an embankment. Past New Park bridge no.89 there are several picnic benches placed on the tow path for the use of walkers or boaters so there are plenty of place to stop and picnic on a warm summers day.

After bridge no.90 an unusually long wooded cutting at Burrow Heights is entered and it is difficult to imagine the canal is manmade as the woodland encroaches the water, wildlife abounds all year round including kingfishers which swoop to feed on tiny fish as you chase them down the navigation. In November the autumnal colours of the foliage are absolutely magnificent and a photographers delight.

At the end of the cutting you pass under Ashton Lane Bridge, it is then only a short distance to the large lay-by on Aldcliffe Road where the road runs next to the canal and your final egress point. Aldcliffe Road LA1 5BE map ref. 469605. There is a long lay-by alongside the canal.

**Useful Information**

The waterways in this trail are managed by Canal and Rivers Trust and require paddlers to hold a licence. If you are an existing British Canoeing member the good news is that your membership includes an annual licence for the waterways covered within this trail – please ensure you take your membership card with you on the water as this acts as your licence, if stopped with no licence, you will be at risk of being fined.

You can buy a licence directly from [Canal and Rivers Trust](#) for this waterway or by becoming a British Canoeing member you’ll have a licence to cover you for a whole year. A British Canoeing membership gives you a whole range of benefits including licenses to paddle on 4500km of Britain’s waterways and Civil Liability Insurance, worth up to £10 Million. If you are planning to paddle regularly this will save you great deal of money and hassle alongside having peace of mind. For more information on British Canoeing membership please [click here](#)

Garstang is a pretty market town nestling in the foothills on the scenic Bowland Fell and as a regular winner of Britain in Bloom awards its streets are lined with colourful flower displays. It has a weekly market every Thursday selling an array of local produce which has been existence since 1310.
Greaves Farm Caravan and Camping Site, Cabus Nook Lane, Garstang, PR3 1AA. Tel 01524791726. A fairly basic but pretty site situated on the banks of the canal at bridge no.73.

Alternate Access or Egress point
Ellel Village Hall, Galagate, Lancaster LA2 OL2 map ref. 483551. Approximately half a mile north of J33 of the M6 on the A6 road turn left by the Plough Inn car park. Under no circumstances park in the pub car park but follow the track past the football pitches and round the back of the village hall. By the cricket field there is parking for several cars and a flight of steps that leads up to the canal. Access or egress the canal between the boat moorings. A word of caution- at the weekend when there are football or cricket matches on it may be very busy.

CANOEING SAFETY ADVICE

Spending an afternoon or day canoeing on a Canoe Trail can be a fun way to experience nature, help you to stay fit and healthy and enjoy spending time with friends and family. It can also be a dangerous journey, if appropriate safety guidelines are overlooked. To help make sure you remain safe at all times, read on to see our canoeing safety advice guidelines.

Wear appropriate clothing
Always wear shoes. Rocks, rough terrain and river beds present serious hazards to boaters without the proper attire. Nearly 90% of all boating injuries are attributed to lack of proper footwear. Other canoe safe clothing includes hats, gloves, additional dry clothing, and layered items which can easily be removed. Take or wear a windproof top and course always wear a buoyancy aid - for children make sure the crotch straps are used.

Be sure to:
• Know the weather forecast and check the water conditions before you set out canoeing. There is an Environment Agency website where information concerning river levels can be found. We recommend checking this before heading out as the river levels can rise and fall quite quickly in wet or dry conditions.
• Observe navigation rules for this waterway.
• Check to see if there are any events on the waterways when you wish to travel.
• Check that your equipment is well maintained and ready for the water.
• Check that your boat has the required buoyancy to keep it afloat in the event of a capsize

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

MAKE SURE that the journey you plan is within your capabilities.

MAKE SURE you never paddle alone.

Equipment Checklist

Use the canoeing safety advice checklist below to make sure you have everything you need:
• Boat
• Paddle
• Buoyancy Aid
• Bailer/sponge
• Small First Aid Kit
• Phone (in a waterproof bag)
• Drinking water and snacks
• Suitable clothing for the weather

Environmental Good Practice

One of the great things about paddling a canoe trail is enjoying the journey and different environments that you paddle through. So when you are out on the water please consider the following things to help keep the wonderful waterways and environment as you found them and to avoid accidently disturbing wildlife and their habitats.

• Take your litter home with you
• Keep noise to a minimum
• Where possible keep to any designated paths or launching points.
• 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.
• Canoe a safe distance away from wildlife. If you see signs of disturbance move away quietly.
• Familiarise yourself with the local area, its sensitive places and protected areas
• On rivers, avoid paddling over gravel banks in low water conditions – they may contain fish spawn.
• 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
• When clearing litter left by others, handle it with care.
• Be the eyes and ears on the water. Report pollution, wildlife problems, damage, incidents etc to the relevant authorities: Canal & River Trust, Emergencies: 0800 47 999 47
RSPCA for wildlife and animals in distress: 0300 1234 999 (24 hours)
Environment Agency: 0800 80 70 60 (24 hours)

CHECK, CLEAN, DRY

Help minimise the spread of invasive aquatic species and disease by following the campaign advice before putting your canoe and equipment in and out of the water (some invasive species can survive in damp or wet conditions for five or six days on water recreation clothing and equipment).

• CHECK all your equipment and clothing for living organisms and plants fragments. Pay particular attention to areas that are damp and hard to inspect.
• CLEAN and wash all equipment, clothing and footwear thoroughly away from water source. If you do come across any organisms, leave them at the water body where you found them. When practical, completely dry out all equipment and clothing before going to a new site.
• DRY all equipment and clothing - some species can live for many days in moist conditions. Dry your kit with towels. Make sure you don’t transfer water elsewhere.

Canoeists and kayakers take environmental concerns very seriously and already follow existing voluntary environmental codes of conduct. You can find more information about canoeing and the environment in British Canoeing’s two publications covering inland and coastal paddling ‘You and Your Canoe’. Both are available on the British Canoeing website.

We have taken great care to ensure the currency, accuracy and reliability of this information. We cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions but where such are brought to our attention the information will be amended accordingly. Users should be aware that environmental conditions outside of our control can change the nature of the Trail within a short space of time. It is recommended that weather and water conditions are checked beforehand, and tide timetables where applicable. This trail was last reviewed in February 2014

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