

ACTON BRIDGE TO SUTTON WEAVER VIA MARSH LOCK – CRUISE DURATION 3.5 HOURS

Our transport will collect you from Anderton Boat Lift and transfer you to the start of the cruise from our berth below Acton Swing Bridge, which dates from 1933 and swings on a pontoon on the island. Built at a cost of £52,000, when the bridge swings most of the weight is borne on a floating pontoon on the island and a motor of only four horsepower is required to swing the bridge.

At this point on the river, The Trent & Mersey Canal is only 300 metres away passing through the hamlet of Bartington, while Acton Bridge village is around one mile up on Acton Hill.

Our journey continues down the Weaver Valley and after a further mile and a half we reach the idyllic setting of Dutton Locks with its pretty cottages.

Like Saltisford Locks, Dutton Locks were extensively modernised and enlarged around 1874 and the original locks were over a quarter of a mile away from the current position. Worthy of note is the large flood control sluices at Dutton where up to eight sluice gates can be lifted over two metres to deal with any flood water coming down from Northwich.

As soon as we leave Dutton Locks you will notice Dutton Horse Bridge with its unique twin span timber foot bridge, dating from 1919 and is a Grade 2 listed structure and is described as ‘an elegant structure in the functional waterways tradition’ and is believed to be the sole remaining laminated greenheart timber bridge in the country.

When passing Dutton Horse Bridge, you will not fail to notice the impressive Dutton Viaduct which takes the West Coast Mainline over the river. The viaduct dates from 1836 and costs £54,000 to build and the engineers were Joseph Locke and George Stephenson. Built in red sandstone with 20 arches and around 700,000 cubic feet of sandstone was used in its construction.

A quarter of a mile downstream from Dutton Viaduct we pass the hamlet of Pickering’s O’ the Boat. This small village is approximately one mile from Kingsley near Frodsham, and was the site of the first lock on the River Weaver, which dated back to 1759, and was the first attempt to tame the river from the vagaries of the tides, which made the river tidal over its full length and navigation to Northwich nearly impossible.

A small caravan park exists at Pickering’s along with a dozen houses, one of which is the former pub simply named The Boat Inn. We pass between some sandstone works and this was the site of the later Pickering’s Lock at the time when the River Weaver had 13 locks along its length. While we sail between Dutton Viaduct and Pickering’s look out for the winding course of the old river which can still be seen today.

The next 45 mins is spent gently meandering through the Cheshire countryside and passing locally given place names on the river such as Devil’s Gardens and Goulding Point, when eventually Frodsham Hill comes into view and we soon afterwards pass the now silted up Frodsham cut, which at one time led to the now disused Frodsham Lock.

Shortly after passing Frodsham Cut we pass the site of the former Sutton Level Lock. This twin chamber lock only had a small rise and fall, and was eventually taken out of use in the 1950’s when a new deep cutting bypassed them altogether, and the locks and their approach waterways became a boat

graveyard, the last resting place for dozens of redundant carrying craft as canal and river traffic dwindled.

Probably the most famous vessel to be sunk here was the Weaver flat Daresbury dating back to 1772.

The main channel continues to the left whilst the sluice/weir water runs to the right and we continue our journey and soon reach Sutton Weaver Swing Bridge. A slightly smaller version of Acton Bridge dating from 1926, carrying cars to and from the Cheshire market town of Frodsham about one mile away.

We then pass one of our berths at Sutton Weaver, which we use for departure and embarkation at the bridge, and continue down to Marsh Lock, which offers us our last chance to turn the vessel around and head back up the river.

While on passage to Marsh Lock we pass under the impressive M56 viaduct and also the small dock that once belonged to a soap manufacturer, and is now home to a Weaver Motorboat Club. Shortly afterwards we pass the recently upgraded facilities of Runcorn Rowing Club, whose members can often be seen out and about on the river.

The last mile or so can be described on one side as heavy industrial, with the site of the impressive and sprawling chemical manufacturing plant at Rock Savage belonging to INEOS, while on the other side the River Weaver old line can be seen winding its way towards the Manchester Ship Canal, and beyond we see Frodsham Marshes, which is a haven for bird life and wild life, and beyond that the impressive hills of Frodsham and Helsby and onwards to North Wales.

While turning at Marsh Lock you will notice the MSC beyond. Marsh Lock will drop you down approximately one metre onto the Manchester Ship Canal, and eventually at Eastham out into The River Mersey and beyond.

We will now make our way back to our berth at Sutton Weaver where our transport will meet you and return you to your car Anderton Boat Lift.