

MARKET HARBOURGH TO SOUTH WIGSTON GRAND UNION CANAL

1

TRIP TYPE: SOLO CYCLE

OBJECTIVE: CYCLE FROM MARKET HARBOURGH TO SOUTH WIGSTON ALONG THE GRAND UNION (MARKET HARBOURGH ARM AND LEICESTER BRANCH), RETURNING BY TRAIN FROM SOUTH WIGSTON.

DISTANCE: 16 MILES

TIME: 2.5 HOURS, 7.6 mph

NICHOLSON: GUIDE 2, pp 96-100

COSTS: FREE PARKING IN MARKET HARBOURGH

DIFFICULTY: MODERATE

OVERVIEW: A dumpy old ride starting on the Market Harborough Arm of the Grand Union, up to the stunning Foxton locks (viewed from below) and inclined plane, and along the Grand Union Leicester Branch, including a detour round Saddington Tunnel.



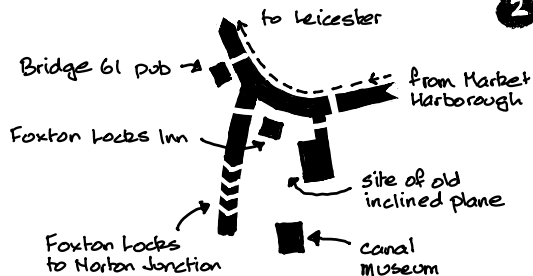
You could combine this with the South Wigston to Syston ride, at least to Leicester (+8 miles), if you are feeling fit - the train back will then be easier with no change to make.

1. MARKET HARBOURGH TO SADDINGTON TUNNEL (8 MILES)

Park on King Street, Market Harborough, LE16 9QR, or any adjacent road. Round the corner on Logan Crescent there is a cut through to the canal, which is signposted.

Turn right on the towpath to the canal basin, where there is a café and bar (but not yet!). Return along the towpath past the cut-through and continue the 5 miles to Foxton

Junction. The towpath is decent compacted earth and gravel. Just before the junction you can see the site of the old inclined plane, which carried boats in counterbalanced 'buckets'

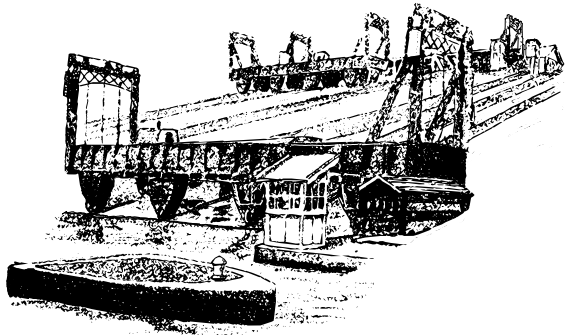


up the height of the locks - there is a museum by the locks. At the junction take a look at the magnificent narrow locks to your left and bear right, avoiding the temptation of a quick pint at Bridge 61 and continue on the towpath, which is on the right.

The towpath is good to Binley's Bridge (67), after which it worsens to just earth with some large roots to negotiate, but at least it is flat.

At Saddington Tunnel continue up the slope and straight on along the path, crossing Kibworth Road. You will arrive at the railing above the north entrance to the tunnel. Do not attempt to go down to join the towpath at this point. Instead turn right as the arrow points, then bear left across

the old inclined plane



scrub ground for 400m. The path veers right to a lane, where you bear left across the canal bridge, and round the hedge on your right to rejoin the towpath which is now on the left.

2. SADDINGTON TUNNEL TO SOUTH WIGSTON (8 MILES)

Continue to Kilworth Bridge, where there is an awkward stile as the towpath changes sides again. The towpath is poor, sloping and narrow with tree roots (but still not as bad as it is between Foxton locks and Norton Junction).

At Newton Harcourt continue down the locks. Turnover Lock (27) may flood when wet due to a stream flowing over the towpath. The towpath is poor, narrow, stony with puddles and holes in the banking all the way to Crows Mill Bridge (a2).

Leave the canal here, turn right on Capesthorpe Road, briefly left on St. Thomas Road, right on Saffron Road. The station is 300m along on your right. Trains to Leicester are 1 per hour, where you change for Market Harborough (2 per hour).

Note that trains from Leicester to Market Harborough are inter-city only. You should be OK without a reservation as it's just one stop, and note the cycle compartment on EMS trains is at the opposite end to the First Class carriage.

