

# GRAND UNION CANAL, LEICESTER BRANCH SOUTH WIGSTON TO SYSTON

TRIP TYPE: SOLO CYCLE

OBJECTIVE: CYCLE FROM SOUTH WIGSTON TO SYSTON THROUGH  
LEICESTER CITY CENTRE

DISTANCE: 17 MILES (CAN BE EXTENDED EITHER WAY)

TIME: 2 HOURS, 7.3 mph

NICHOLSON: GUIDE 3 pp 100-109

COSTS: FREE PARKING IN SOUTH WIGSTON TRAIN FROM SYSTON  
TO SOUTH WIGSTON £5.70, 1 PER HOUR.

DIFFICULTY: FAIR

OVERVIEW: An interesting if fairly straightforward ride through the centre of Leicester. Can be combined with the Market Harborough to South Wigston ride if you feel up to it, or continue on towards Loughborough (the towpath continues for a good way, but it's not yet clear to me how much is cyclable - I will update once I've done it).

## 1. SOUTH WIGSTON TO FROG ISLAND

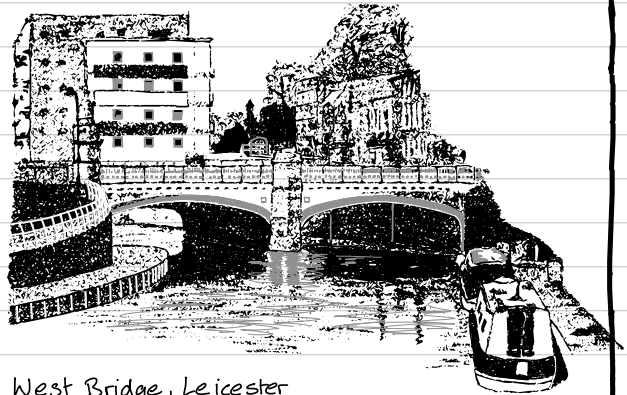
Park on Cornwall Road, South Wigston, LE18 4XG. There is unrestricted parking alongside the industrial park.

Head down Marstown Avenue past the station entrance, and turn left on Saffron Road. Turn left onto St. Thomas Road, then right on Countesthorpe Road, which bends sharp left then sharp right towards the canal, which it meets at Crows Mill Bridge (q2). Cross the Dridge to join the towpath via a path on your right and head west (turn left once you've doubled back to the towpath), towards Leicester.

The towpath is earth, but decent to ride. The canal bends north

after Glen Parva. It is now running alongside the River Soar, with which it exchanges water via a series of weirs. At Aylestone Meadows (by the 4 miles to Leicester marker) the surface is metalled for a stretch. At the 3 mile marker it improves greatly and continues to be good for the rest of the ride.

At Kings Lock (38) there is a tearoom for refreshments, open 10am - 4 pm Wednesday to Sunday.



West Bridge, Leicester

The towpath continues on the left through the city centre, where the canal joins the river and is wide. Plenty of pedestrians to avoid here.

## 2. FROG ISLAND TO SYSTON

400m past the Holiday Inn, at Frog Island, bear right over 2 weirs as the canal bends away from the river. Shortly after don't miss the path under the busy A50, and continue along the towpath.

The towpath continues on the left until it rejoins the River Soar at Swans Nest Weir (Belgrave Lock 44), where it briefly crosses to the right at Holden Street Bridge (11). Once over the bridge turn sharp right to stay on the path through a wood. The towpath changes sides again at Thorcaston Old Bridge (12) and back at Birskill Lock (45) before entering Watermead Country Park.

There are good metalled paths through the park, which has many lakes (former sand and gravel pits). Follow the green route, or cycle route 48 signs, staying close to the canal.

Just before reaching the Leicester Western Bypass (A166), the footpath heads up a slope to Wanlip Road, where it changes sides, and you will see the Hope and Anchor pub to your right. Cycle past the pub along Wanlip Road and into Syston. At the end of Wanlip Road turn left, and the railway station is 100m to your left.

Unfortunately I failed to find a good pub in Syston, but if you are taking the train all the way back to South Wigston there's plenty to choose from during your change in Leicester.

Once back at South Wigston, turn north out of the station and onto Cornwall Road.

As the train times didn't fit very well, I just took the train into Leicester, and cycled the 4 miles back to South Wigston, which, as I avoided the main roads as much as possible, was a bit hilly.

Note: the ride could be combined with the Market Harborough to South Wigston ride, making it about 35 miles, or continued up to Loughborough (I will update once I've completed it).

